

INGRATITUDE OF MAN

NO. 1055

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.”
John 1:11.***

I WOULD very frankly confess at the outset that I am not about to preach from the words of this text and that I have selected it solely because it contains an epitome of man's behavior towards the Savior. He came unto His own people, the Jews, and answered in every particular to the descriptions which their Prophets had given. But as they were looking for a *temporal* leader who should dazzle them with an earthly kingdom, they would not acknowledge the true Messiah. And though He continued to come unto them preaching and working such miracles among them as no other man did, so that their unbelief was without excuse, they still rejected Him. This was a gross act of ingratitude. It was superlative kindness which brought Jesus to that nation in particular and to the sons of men in general—it was supreme ingratitude when that nation, alas, in this representing us all, would not receive Him, but rejected the Lord of Glory.

I use our text as an illustration of the ingratitude of men towards our Lord, and it is upon that subject that I intend to preach at this time. I lay the charge against not only those who lived in Christ's day, but against mankind in general—against this assembly in particular—and against myself, also, in sad measure. We have treated the Lord ungratefully and have not rendered unto Him according to the benefits received. In commencement, we shall speak upon the fact that those among whom Jesus lived were guilty of ingratitude towards Him. Secondly, coming home to ourselves, we shall dwell more at length upon the lamentable fact that we, too, are guilty of ingratitude towards Him. We shall close by observing, What then? What follows out of this? What lessons are we to learn from it?

I. First then, THE PEOPLE AMONG WHOM OUR LORD DWELT WERE GUILTY OF INGRATITUDE TOWARDS HIM. They were a favored people above all nations. It was a distinguishing mark of Divine favor that the Messiah should be born among them. They ought to have received Him with delight. His signs and evidence of Messiahship were clear enough. He worked among them unexampled miracles, and He spoke as no other man spoke, yet they rejected Him, treating their best friend as though He had been their worst foe. This was a high-handed act of national ingratitude!

Special cases occurred in our Lord's life involving still greater ingratitude. Among the people of Israel many became partakers of our Lord's healing power. Many blind eyes did He bless with sight. Into many deaf ears did He cause sound to enter. Not a few lame men leaped as an hart at His bidding, and many that were sick of palsy and all manner of diseases were suddenly restored by His word. Yet the mass of these healed

ones did not become His disciples, for the number of His male disciples, after He had ascended, was about 120—yet our Savior had not healed merely 120, but, according to the Evangelists, many hundreds—I might, without exaggeration, say many thousands had been partakers of His healing benefits! They were in their own persons testimonies to the Lord's Divine power and yet they did not worship Him!

From where did this obstinate unbelief come? Strange ingratitude this must have been, that a man should owe to Christ his eyes, and yet refuse to see in Christ his Savior—that he should owe to Christ the tongue with which he spoke, and yet should be silent in the great Physician's praise! Yet so it was. Many were healed, but few believed. We know, moreover, that our Lord fed thousands of hungry persons. He multiplied loaves and fishes, and fed crowds so that they did all eat and were filled. For a time He was very popular with them—as anyone will be who has loaves and fishes to distribute—and they would have made him a king, for idle men much desire a monarch who will supply their needs and relieve them from personal labor.

Yet these persons had no affection for His person or doctrine, but followed Him simply and alone for what they could get from Him. Many of these selfish followers, doubtless, gave their voices against Him and shouted, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" They ate bread with Him and lifted up their heel against Him. Surely, after sitting at a table so marvelously supplied, reason itself would have suggested to every feaster that their Host must be a Prophet sent of God, if not God Himself. 'Tis strange, 'tis passing strange, 'tis amazing that men receiving so much at His hands should still remain unbelievers in Him.

The same treatment was dealt out to our Lord when He acted as the Teacher of the people. He taught them pure Truths of God in the best conceivable manner, and small, indeed, was His reward. They could not complain of His sermons, that they were dull and unattractive, or that they were austere and devoid of sympathy. We never read that a hearer ever fell asleep under Christ's preaching, as Eutychus did under the lengthy discourse of Paul. Neither were any terrified by His looks, as men have been by fierce fanatic leaders—His ministry was pleasing and charmed the ear—yet it was ill received. When His sermon at Nazareth was finished, what was His reward? They took Him to the brow of the hill and they would have cast Him down headlong had He not escaped!

When He taught the Jews in the Temple, "they took up stones again to stone Him." In return for His arguments of mercy, they assailed Him with the weapons of malice. Though, by declaring the glad tidings of salvation He rendered to His hearers the most precious service, some of them, in return, sought to entrap Him in His speech and others gnashed their teeth in rage against Him. He brought light into the darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not. Sometimes, when He found around Him a more select audience than usual, the great Teacher would not merely preach the elements of the Gospel, but would go more deeply into the mysteries of it, but He had no thanks for doing so. On one occasion He spoke to them concerning eating His flesh and drinking His blood—but He had cast His pearls before swine—they turned again to tear Him apart! And many of

those who had followed Him up to that point forsook Him and walked no more with Him.

Even the disciples who were true at heart to Him did not always prize His sayings well enough to keep them in their minds—and they were not influenced by His teaching and example so much as they should have been. How often must the tender bosom of our Lord have been wrung with anguish over human unkindness? The adder's tooth of ingratitude left its print upon Him. Men returned unto Him evil for good, and for the heaped-up measure of His benevolence they filled up equally high the measure of their hate. What a plaintiveness is there in that question which He asked after He had healed 10 lepers, and only one of them returned to thank Him—"Were there not 10 cleansed, but where are the nine?" as if He had expected at least that they would thank Him—it was the least they could do in return for so matchless a blessing as deliverance from a deadly disease!

Surely, whenever our Lord looked upon the handful of His followers He must have recollected the hosts upon whom He had conferred benefits, and said within himself, "Where are the nine?" From that thankless generation the meek and lowly One received no recompense of love for His temporal and spiritual bounties. Here and there a grateful woman ministered to Him of her substance, and now and then a thankful soul became His disciple. But, for the most part there was no response to His love, save such as that which Jerusalem heard when, for His tearful cries of compassion, He received shouts of murderous hate demanding that He should be crucified!

Dear Brothers and Sisters, the further our Lord Jesus Christ went on in life the more did He *experimentally* know the base ingratitude of mankind. He lived for them—in obedience to His Father He spent His whole life for men. He lived first for God's Glory, and next for love of men. His meat and drink was to do men good. He forgot Himself—He utterly renounced all ambitious purposes and gave Himself away that He might seek and save the lost. As a mother devotes herself to her babe so did Jesus lay Himself out for men. No! No mother ever loved her babe as Jesus loved His own which were in the world! And yet, continually, in every way, men sought to take away His life, which was more valuable to them than it was to Him—for it was for *their* sakes, only, that He continued, still, to live on earth.

How often had He to escape their cruel hands, and when His hour was come how eagerly did they conspire to hound Him to His death! One would have thought when the mob stood in the street of Jerusalem howling out, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" that He must have been a common informer who had betrayed men for self—or a poisoner who had secretly tainted the bread of the people with a deadly drug! Or a blasphemer who had profaned every holy thing! Or a wretch whose character was doubly dyed in infamy! Instead of which, there stood before that furious crowd the meekest among men! The most inoffensive, and, at the same time, the most generous! The most self-denying, the most tender Man of all of woman born. Yet, how lustily they cry, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" and when the question is put by the Roman Governor, "Why, what evil has He done?" they can give no answer to it, and, therefore, they drown the ques-

tion with their shouts, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" Oh, base ingratitude of men to recompense such a life as His with such a cruel death!

At last that evil generation had its way with the Man of Sorrows and they took Him after He had been scourged, and led Him away to be crucified. We know well that He needed not have died even then. One thought of His could have averted the arrows of death. He had but to will it and the nails would have sprung from their places, and from the Cross the Lord would have leaped into the midst of His foes—to their horror and dismay. He was dying for *men*! He suffered each pang for *men*! For men the crown of thorns! For men the nailed hands! For men the pierced side! For men the bleeding feet! For men the gall cup! For men the pain! And for men the thirst! "He saved others, Himself He could not save."

It was the greatest sacrifice that man had ever made for man, and yet how was it repaid? The cruel crowd stood around Him and scoffed at His pains. They made jests upon His Person—they insulted His faith—they mocked His prayers! O You dear Christ of God, gladly would we have covered Your sacred body from those lewd and brutal eyes, and sheltered Your tender spirit from those inhuman taunts, but so it could not be! Man is allowed to be infamous that You may suffer to the uttermost, and, in so doing redeem Your people! See the contrast—Jesus loves and man hates! He dies for sinners, and sinners insult Him in His agonies.

When our Lord had died and had lain in the grave three days, and had risen again, His rising was for men. He might have gone into His Glory if He had pleased, but He tarried for 40 days to minister blessings to His people. The requital which He received from the Jewish people was of the same evil character. They doubted whether He had risen from the dead at all, and there were those who were base enough to invent that idle tale concerning the stealing of His body at night by His disciples. They laid imposture to the door of the Son of God, and charged the Perfect One with acting a lie!

O man, how mad you must be! What strange insanity of iniquity is this that you do thus requite your loving Lord! I think I hear a murmur among you, as though you said, "Ah, but this was the guilt of the *Jews*—the crime of unbelievers. All were not so cruel." But surely you have forgotten that in this ingratitude even those who were nearest to Him had a share! Those who were His immediate companions were ungrateful to Him. What do you think of him who said, when his Lord had been anointed by a loving woman's hand for His burial, that it was a waste? That what was given to anoint the King of Glory might have been sold for much, begrudging an offering to that divinely generous One who had given up all for us? One would have thought that those who abode with Him would have unanimously delighted in every honor shown to Him, and one is apt to imagine that they should more often have interposed to screen Him, if they might, from the ills of poverty, weariness and need.

Among them all, was there not *one* who should have pressed hospitality upon Him again and again, that He might no longer cry, "Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but I, the Son of Man, have not where to lay My head"? At any rate, when it came, at last, to the dying struggle, should not His bosom friends have watched with Him one hour? Might they not have guarded Gethsemane's gates when He left them outside the

wall? And the three who came within a stone's cast of His grief and could hear His groans—could they not have forborne to slumber? Must they *sleep* while the Lord is in agony? He excused them, but could they excuse themselves?

The case of Judas was peculiarly afflicting to our Redeemer's sensitive soul. In him treason reached its climax and base ingratitude outdid itself. Yet Judas was an *Apostle*—the keeper of his Master's purse, the friend who ate bread with Him and lifted up his heel against Him. Shame on you, Judas! But, alas, you are not alone—others follow your hideous example, and some such may be among us! "Lord, is it I?" But, where were the rest of the disciples? Did they not accompany their Lord to the judgment seat and come forward and boldly bear witness to the righteousness of His Character? Not one of them was there to do Him service! "All the disciples forsook Him and fled." One ventured where he saw his Master's ill-treatment, but he thrice denied Him and added oaths and curses, saying, "I know not the Man." Thus acted those whom He had carried in His bosom and loved even to the end!

Those to whom He had opened up His inmost soul—who had eaten with Him His last solemn meal before His passion—untrue to all their professions of affection, sought every man his own safety, and left Him to His fate. Call you not this ingratitude? What is worse than the ingratitude of bosom friends and Brethren? The indictment lies against all that were of His day with whom He came in contact, from the worst even to the best. Where is the advocate who will plead their cause? There was none faithful, no, not one. Ingratitude stained all.

II. But let us not think severely of them and forget *ourselves*, for we, too, are in the same condemnation. This is our second point—**WE ALSO HAVE BEEN UNGRATEFUL TO OUR LORD.** While I have been turning over this subject in my own mind it has deeply affected me. But I feel quite powerless to produce it before you so that you shall be affected in the same manner unless God the Holy Spirit shall now be pleased to melt your hearts. Remember that to bring a charge of ingratitude against a man is a very strong thing to do. I would not like to be called untruthful. I should grievously *feel* it, but to be called ungrateful is equally as degrading.

Can any accusation be more dishonoring? Ingratitude is a mean and despicable vice! He who is guilty of it is unworthy of the name of man. A soldier who had been kindly rescued from shipwreck and hospitably entertained, was mean enough to endeavor to obtain from Philip of Macedon the house and farm of his generous host. Philip, in just anger, commanded that his forehead should be branded with the words, "The ungrateful guest." That man must have felt like Cain when the mark of God was upon him—he must have desired to hide himself forever from the gaze of man. Prove a man ungrateful and you have placed him below the beasts, for even the brutes frequently exhibit the most touching gratitude to their benefactors.

The old classic story of Androcles and the lion rises before us—the man healed the lion, and years after, the lion, being let loose upon him, crouched at his feet and acknowledged him as a friend. Only the most despised creatures are used as metaphors of ingratitude! For instance, we

speak of the donkey which drinks, and then kicks the bucket it has emptied, but we never speak thus of nobler animals. An ungrateful man is thus lower than the animals! Inasmuch as he returns evil for good, he is worse than bestial—he is devilish. Ingratitude is essentially infernal. Ingratitude to friends is vile, to parents it is worse—but to the Savior it is worst of all!

Therefore, what I shall have to say must not be received with coolness, as though the charge were a trivial one. It is a very serious matter that we should be open to an indictment of ingratitude towards the Lord Jesus Christ. Hear, then, and sorrow as you hear, for I also mourn as I speak! I lay the charge, first, against Believers—against those of us who are Christians—and are, therefore, most indebted to Christ's love and Grace. And we will observe at the outset that every sin of the Believer has in it a measure of ingratitude, for, since our Savior has suffered by reason of our *sins*, we are ungrateful when we wander into sin! Since He came to destroy the works of the devil—it is ungrateful to build, again, that which He has destroyed.

Shall that very sin which was the murderer of our Beloved be harbored by us? The very thought is treason! Since these sins of mine were my best Friend's worst enemies, and more to be blamed than the Jews or the Romans, would it not be a shameless need of love to make them my bosom companions? Our sins were the nails and our unbelief the spear! Away, then, with them all! Brothers and Sisters, if we do not watch most carefully against our besetting sins we shall be false to our Redeemer. If a woman saw her husband's murderer before her and gave her heart to him, what should we think of her? May the Lord, by His Grace, prevent us from being equally shameless! May Grace enable us to take vengeance on our sins because they drew down vengeance on our Savior!

Saints are especially ungrateful to the Lord Jesus when they allow any rival to set up his throne in their hearts. He, "the chief among 10,000 and the altogether lovely," deserves to be admired and adored by our souls—not only beyond all others—but to the *exclusion* of all others. If your hearts were capacious enough to hold a thousand times more affection than they now contain, the Lord Jesus would deserve it all! If our hearts were as wide as Heaven, yes, as vast as seven heavens in one—Jesus, having bled and died for us ought to monopolize all our love! Yet we must confess that a wife, a child, a friend will steal away our hearts. Ambition for position, love of pleasure, desire to please, joy in wealth will invade and conquer a province of our hearts. Oh, base ingratitude which allows us to set up Dagon in the temple where the Crucified One, alone, should reign!

Oh, wretched unfaithfulness, which pines after these fleeting things in preference to the eternal Lover of souls! How common is this ingratitude! Do I address a single child of God but what must acknowledge, "I am, indeed, guilty"? I sorrowfully confess my own offenses against the infinite love of Jesus in this respect, and will do so before God far more at large than here would be either fit or profitable. How often, too, might we be charged with ingratitude when we lose large measures of the Grace which we have already received. We have power given us, at times, by the Holy

Spirit, to rise above the dead level of man's ordinary life, and we climb the mountain and stand upon a higher platform altogether.

There are times with us when we love the Lord with all our hearts—when our faith mounts to assurance and all our graces are bright and strong—but we come down from that mountain almost immediately! Our feet slide from the glorious elevation! It seems far easier to mount than it does to tarry aloft upon the wing. The Holy Spirit admits us into peculiar nearness to the heavenly Father and then we act inconsistently and lose our communion, and come to follow afar off as so many do. We have the sweet flavor of Divine love in our mouths and yet desert the banquet table—what is this but ingratitude? Is it not a slighting of the precious gifts of Jesus' Divine Grace?

He permits us to lean our heads on His bosom and we will not do so! He stands at our door and knocks, and we refuse to open to him! He calls us to take our fill of love, and we turn to the poor husks of earth. Have we not grievously provoked Him? Would He not long ago have divorced His unfaithful spouse if it had not been true that He hates putting away? Beat on your breasts, Beloved, and confess your ill manners towards your best Beloved!

Could we, any of us, plead innocence if the charge were brought in another way, namely, that we render Him but little service and give Him but lukewarm love? How much have we done for Jesus, after all? How much have we ever loved Him? How much do we love Him now? I must correct myself—I ought to have said how *little*. If we hear of the death of Christ upon the Cross, we listen to it as coldly as though it were a thrice told tale with which we had no concern. How is this? Are our hearts like an adamant stone? A silly story of a lovesick maid will bring tears to our eyes far sooner than the tragedy of the Cross!

If we did but see one of our fellow creatures suffer but a millionth part of what the Lord of Glory bore for us, we should be moved infinitely more than we are, now, when Calvary is before us. Why? Is not this black ingratitude? Who can extenuate such need of tenderness? Our love to Jesus, is it love at all? When I read of some of the saints giving up all that they have, crossing the sea, penetrating into barbarous regions, bearing their lives in their hands, sacrificing comforts, and living day by day on the verge of death amid fever and wild beasts—and all that they might honor Christ—I am utterly ashamed! What are we, my Brethren? Unto what shall we liken ourselves? Like a Colossus such men bestride their age, while we, base things, hide our dishonorable heads for shame at our spiritual littleness!

The love of Christ to us is like that ancient furnace which was heated seven times hotter, while our love is like a solitary spark which wonders within itself that it is yet alive. May the Holy Spirit change this and give us yet to glow and burn with sacred fire like the bush in Horeb when it was aglow with Deity!

The same humiliation reflections arise when we meditate upon the consecration, or rather non-consecration, of our substance to the Redeemer's cause. What a small portion do the most of us give to His work, or to His poor! If you were to take the numbers of Church members, and the contributions to missions, you would hardly dare to say how little per head is

given! It is so trifling that it is rather an *insult* to the Savior than an offering to Him. Some hearers even try to cheat the minister whom they flock to hear and evade every claim, even from the Church to which they belong. For the most part, when Christians take stock of what they have, and then calculate what they have given, they have great cause for shame. If our estimate of Christ's worth is according to our gifts to Him, there are some who would not give 20 pieces of silver for Him. To some these remarks are more applicable than to others—to many congregations more necessary than to you, for, thank God, there are those among you who delight to honor the Lord with their substance. But these are the last persons to think that they have done enough—in fact, those who do most for Christ are the first to feel that they do far too little!

Furthermore, Brethren, how often is ingratitude shown to our Lord Jesus by neglect of His commands. Some professors need to be driven to obedience. If you tell the man who earnestly loves Christ his duty, he is charmed to know it, and to attend to it at once. But love to Christ is so low in some professors' hearts that you must hammer the precept into them again and again, and again, and again! And yet they will linger long before they will fulfill their Master's will. They must be persuaded and threatened before they will yield. Fervent gratitude runs with winged feet wherever Jesus bids it go. If we were more jealously obedient to our Lord, it would be evident that we were more grateful to Him.

Now, I feel, Brothers and Sisters, in my heart as if I would be glad to have done preaching, for I need to get alone and sigh and weep this sermon over by myself. I need to confess and mourn over my own conscious ingratitude to my ever-blessed Lord, whom, nevertheless, I love. I do remember well the time when I imagined that if the Lord would only give me pardon through the atoning blood, *nothing* would be too difficult for me to attempt for His dear sake. And yet, though I have been cleansed from sins and accepted in Christ Jesus, I am too often sluggish in my Master's errands. Well do I remember when I first began to preach His Word—I thought if I might but have opportunities of pleading with men for Jesus I would pour out my very soul while I urged them to flee from the wrath to come!

Alas, although I am not altogether without zeal for God, my zeal falls far short of what it should be. Gladly would I speak fire—fire which should melt your hearts—and then set them on flame with ardent love to Jesus! I cannot reach my own ideal and I doubt not that if I could, I should still be faulty. I charge you not, my Brethren, with ingratitude without confessing and acknowledging it in myself. Come, my Brothers and Sisters, let us not confess with our lips only, but with inward penitential grief! Let us seek godly sorrow which works practical repentance! May we, in the power of the Holy Spirit, resolve that we will love our Lord better for the future and yield to the sweet constraints of His love.

Now I have a heavy task, indeed, and that is to speak of some whose ingratitude to Christ is even greater, if greater can be, for they utterly refuse to trust Him. I desire to speak with you to whom I have preached in vain these many years. The one topic of every Sabbath in this place is Jesus Christ crucified. I have other things to say to you, but this is repeated over and over again. You are told without ceasing that Jesus Christ came

into the world to save sinners and that, “whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.” Notwithstanding all this, up to this moment many of you refuse to trust Him! You “stumble at the Word being disobedient,” and you thus make the rock of salvation to be a rock of offense to you.

If you deny it, I will ask you, Why, then, have you not accepted Him for your Savior? Why are you still alienated in your hearts from Him? Perhaps your reply is that you do not think of these things. Is this, then, your conduct towards the dying Savior—that you will not even think of Him? Is He nothing to you? Do you despise His blood? Perhaps it is that you do not understand. Then surely, in your case it must be a willful blindness of understanding, for the Truth of God has been put before you as plainly as words could utter it! And neither do I know how I could have spoken more clearly. You have rejected, up to this moment, the Christ who died for sinners! Do you know what you have done? I wish He would stand here upon this pulpit at this moment, that you might see who it is that you have despised.

See Him with the ruby drops still glistening upon His crown of thorns, His face bruised, His countenance lined with grief, His eyes red with tears, His shoulders furrowed with the lash, His hands and feet wounded with the nails and His side gashed with the lance—this is the Man of Sorrows whom you have refused! Look, now on Him whom you have pierced! Can you, in His Presence, continue your rejection? Will you still bar your hearts against Him? Will you now say to Him to His face, “Son of God, bleeding for human sin, we will not trust You! Son of Man, dying in the place of sinners, we will not yield to You”? Yet you have said that in His Presence, which is everywhere real, though undiscerned by eye or ear. With those eyes of fire which discern from Heaven everything that is done on earth, He has seen you impudently refusing to be saved by Him.

Alas, I have to go further. Some of you have not been content with rejecting the Lord, but have gone the length of opposing Him! You have made His Gospel the theme for jest and treated His people with indignity. It always staggers me that men should treat the meek and lowly Jesus and His gracious Gospel so roughly. There is something so tender and so meek about the Savior that I pity from my soul the wretch who had the heart to strike Him in the face, or was so base as to insult with spit that dear and sorrowful visage! Once in the sack of a city, when the fierce soldiers had commenced a general massacre, a little child was seized by a rough warrior, who was about to kill him, but stayed his hand when the little one said, piteously, “Please, Sir, don’t kill me, I am so little.”

I think the Savior’s meek and gentle manners might be a similar argument for staying the hand of wrath. Who can harm the harmless Lamb of God? Persecutor, what evil has Jesus done to you? Reviler, what has He ever said to injure you? When has He given you an ill word or look? Ah, it is to His silence that you owe your life! Should He accuse you, you would be undone forever! Yet He has not accused you to the Father, but has pleaded for your reprieve! Sometimes in our police courts you may have seen an inhuman husband brought before the magistrate for having maltreated the poor unhappy woman who is linked to him for life. The po-

liceman has taken him in the very act of assaulting her—her poor sickly face bears evidence of his brutality.

She can scarcely stand, for his cruelty has put her life in jeopardy. Watch her closely. The magistrate asks her to give evidence against the creature who has so cruelly injured her. She weeps and shakes her head, but says not a word. She is asked, “Did he not ill-treat you yesterday?” She is long before she speaks, and then not a word is uttered against the husband whom she still loves, though there is nothing loveable about him. She declares that she cannot bear to appear against her husband and she will not. What a stone must that man’s heart be if he does not love her from then on all her days!

But, see a nobler counterpart! There is the Lord whom you have injured by your hard speeches and cruel mockeries. See you not His face all marred with your bruises? Yet He does not accuse you to the Father but when He opens His mouth to speak for sinners, He cries, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” He must be ingratitude incarnate who can continue to use Him or His cause despitefully! There is no chivalry, no—there is no *manhood* in the heart which treats despitefully one who neither provokes nor retaliates. I must add, before I close this point, that some are ungrateful to Christ, from whom, above all others, such conduct ought never to have proceeded. The text says—“He came to His own, and His own received Him not.”

In this very place the Lord Jesus has come to those who appeared to be His own. You, Sir, were your mother’s own boy, and she, now in Glory, was an ardent lover of the Savior. And when Jesus came to you He might have said, “This is the son of one of My dearest friends, the son of a woman whose whole heart was Mine—surely her son will love Me, too.” Yet you did not respond to Him. Jesus has come to your house and found there a wife who ardently loves Him, and He might well have said, “Surely the husband of My handmaiden will receive his wife’s Friend.” Yet you have shut the door upon Him.

Possibly I address an unconverted person who is not only the son of a Christian father, but the child of one of God’s own ambassadors, yet he himself is an enemy to God! Surely a minister’s children should be the Lord’s, and yet ministers’ sons and daughters have been seen among reprobates. I know not why it is, but sadly often has this been the case. Do I address one such? I pray that you may no longer be ungrateful to your father’s God. Yes, and there are some here who years ago were sorely sick and on the borders of the grave, and they said, “Please, God, if we ever get up again, we will seek the Lord.” You were thus in a sense, “His own” by your own voluntary vow—but you have not received Him.

Today the Lord Jesus comes to you again, and shows His hands and side, and asks you why it is you break your promises to Him? He asks why it is you love not your mother’s Savior? Why it is you care not for your father’s God? And what it is that has turned you against Him? Many good works has He shown you, and for which of these do you stone Him? He is full of love, and pity, and mercy and power to save—for what reasons do you reject Him?

May the Lord grant that these appeals may have power with you by the voice of the Holy Spirit.

III. I close by answering the question WHAT THEN? What comes of all this? Why, first, let us appreciate the sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ! We must never lower our estimate of the bodily pains of Jesus. They were undoubtedly very great, but, after all, His *mental* sufferings were far greater and among the most acute of them must have been this—to be always treated with ingratitude by those whom He loved so well. Do I address, here, a tender heart which has bled from the stabs of ingratitude? A mother with an ungrateful son? A friend with a treacherous friend?

You know that nothing stings more than ingratitude, yet your Lord had to feel it every day! He was always occupied in doing everything *for* men, and men, on the other hand, were doing everything *against* Him. He was from day to day like Sebastian the martyr who was bound to a tree and made the target for a thousand arrows. The archers have sorely shot at Him and wounded Him, but His love abides in strength and so remains to this day.

Next, admire the Savior's love. When a man is kind and loving he will continue so until he meets with base returns, and then he is very apt to become indignant and stay the course of his benevolence. When we try to bring men together who have fallen out with each other—where ingratitude has been the cause of it—we use strong arguments. We have to say to the injured person, "You have been badly used, but labor to rise superior to it all. It is true that such ingratitude does deserve to forfeit your kindness, but do more than ordinary men would do—heap coals of fire on the ungrateful head!"

The Savior *knew* that men would be unkind to Him. He knew it all beforehand, and when men were ungrateful He did not merely hear their words, but He read their *hearts*—and He knew that their hearts were yet more opposed to Him—yet He never turned aside from His course of love. He pressed on, still, through reproaches and shame and derision and every form of human evil till He had *finished* the redemption of His people! Admire His love and let it kindle in you love in return.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, see next the mighty power of the pardoning blood of Jesus. Jesus can take away even this scarlet sin of ingratitude! Though He came to His own and His own received Him not, yet to as many as received Him to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to as many as believed on His name. Have you rejected Jesus 50 years? Come to Him even now, and He will blot out your sins in a moment! Have 70 years rolled over your guilty head, and have you remained deaf to all His appeals of mercy? Yet come and welcome, come and welcome! The gentle Savior has not exhausted His pity! May His Spirit draw you now, and you shall find Him as ready to receive you as He would have been 50 years ago. Admire the Grace which continues to invite and the efficacy of the blood which is still able to cleanse.

Another practical lesson is to let us see how *we* ought to forgive. If another man has injured me it is no reason why I should injure myself. Perhaps you do not see the application of that utterance. Well, here is the explanation of it. If I have loved a man and his only return is unkindness, shall I injure myself by leaving off loving him? After all, it will be a great injury to my heart to become unkind. If I have sought a man's good and he has only returned me evil, do not let me bring myself down to his level.

Let me rather seek to rise higher! And because of his evil let me seek to do more good to him—then I shall be like Christ, for He did! When our sin abounded, His Grace did much more abound! In our Lord's life, sin and love contested which should win the day. Man sinned yet more and more, and Christ loved yet more and more. On the Cross He loved to the death and won the battle, and this day human ingratitude is beneath the feet of the conquering Savior. Love has won the day and sin is crushed beneath its feet. O Christian, do battle in the same spirit and the Lord help you to be more than conqueror through Him that loved you!

Dear Brothers and Sisters, lastly, let us judge how we ought to live in the light of this subject. If we have been ungrateful up till now, shall we be so any longer? No, let us now, on bended knee, with earnest soul, cry to God to inflame us with something of the fire which set the Savior on a blaze with sacred ardor for our good! Let us devote ourselves wholly to Him. Let us cry, "Bind the sacrifice with cords, even with cords to the horns of the altar." What manner of people ought we be who owe so much to the Grace of God?

And there is this mournful reflection—what will become of those who shall die after having lived a life of constant ingratitude to Christ? There is a limit even to His mercy, for death shuts the golden gate of love. Justice takes the place of mercy as soon as the impenitent man has closed his dying eyes. An excellent writer has well said that, "Divine justice is love in flames," and so it is. When once love turns to jealousy, it is cruel as the grave—the coals thereof are of juniper that have a most vehement flame. You may despise Him, whose feet were pierced, and reject the Savior whose heart was opened with the spear—but He will come again. I know not when, but His Word is, "Behold, I come quickly."

Beware, I pray you, for in that day this shall be the word, "Behold, you despisers, and wonder and perish!" In that pierced hand shall be a rod of iron and He shall break His enemies in pieces like potters' vessels! His pierced feet shall be sandaled with light and out of the mouth which now speaks promises shall come forth a two-edged sword with which to strike His adversaries.

"Kiss the son lest He be angry and you perish from the way while His wrath is kindled but a little." He will forgive you now! He waits to be gracious to you now! Mercy now rules the day! But let the sun of mercy go down and the blackness of darkness shall abide forever. O provoke not the Lord! May His mercy turn your hearts by the power of His ever blessed Spirit and unto Him shall be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

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FAITH AND ITS ATTENDANT PRIVILEGES

NO. 1212

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

***“He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them which believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”
John 1:11-13.***

ACCORDING to this text, the principal matter in our salvation is faith. Faith is described as “receiving” Jesus. It is the empty cup placed under the flowing stream. It is the penniless hand held out for heavenly alms. It is also described in the text as “believing on His name.” And this reception, this *believing*, is the main thing in real godliness. Faith is the simplest thing conceivable! When we hear people sing, “Only believe and you shall be saved,” they sing the Truth of God, for we have the Divine assurance that “whoever believes on Him is not condemned.” The Gospel message is, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.”

The act of faith is the simplest in the world. It may be performed by a little child. It has often been performed by persons so short-witted that they have been almost incapable of any other intellectual act. And yet faith is as sublime as it is simple, as potent as it is plain! It is the connecting link between impotence and Omnipotence, between necessity and all-sufficiency. He that by faith lays hold on God has accomplished the simplest and yet the grandest act of the mind. Faith is apparently so small a matter that many who hear the Gospel can hardly believe it possible that we can really mean to teach that it brings salvation to the soul. They have even misunderstood us and imagined that we have meant to say that if persons *believed* they were saved, they were saved.

If that were the doctrine of Justification by Faith, it would be the most wicked of delusions. It is not so! Faith in Jesus as our Savior is a very different thing from persuading ourselves to believe that we are saved when we are not! We believe that men are saved by faith, alone—but not by a faith which is alone. They are saved by faith without works, but not by a faith which is without works. The faith which saves is the most operative principle known to the human mind, for he that believes in Jesus for salvation, being saved, and knowing that he is saved, loves Him that saved him—and that love is the key of the whole matter!

The loving Believer ceases from everything which would displease Him whom he loves. He tries to abound in that which will please Him, his beloved Redeemer. So salvation becomes the great reason for gratitude and changes the heart! And, the heart being changed, all the issues of life are

changed. The man is like a watch which has a new mainspring—not a mere face and hands repaired—but new inward machinery with freshly adjusted works which act to a different time and tune. And whereas he went wrong before, now he goes right, because he is right within. Faith is so simple that the little child who believes becomes, before long, strong in the Lord. It is a vital force which gets such mastery over men that it makes them other men than they ever were before!

And as it grows, it lifts them up from being mere men, to be men of God, and then beyond that it leads them on till they become heroes and they stop the mouths of lions, quench the violence of flames, obtain promises and enter into rest. Faith the size of a grain of mustard seed develops into faith that moves mountains! Faith of the little child increases into faith of the giant! May we know by *experience* how true this is! Our object is to show what faith does. And, O, while I am trying to speak of this great gift of the Lord to men by which they obtain every other gift, may many of you who have not believed come to believe in Jesus! If you do, there is nothing in this text but what shall certainly be yours.

I. We shall begin by saying that FAITH MAKES THE GRANDEST OF DISTINCTIONS AMONG MEN. This is clear from the text. Faith makes the grandest distinctions among men, for the text begins, “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not”! That is one company—“but as many as received Him”—that is another company. Were an angel to come here with a drawn sword and to suddenly separate the righteous from the wicked with one stroke, you would find that his sword had for its edge the question, “Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ?” This divides men into saved Believers and *unbelievers* with the wrath of God abiding on them.

“He that believes has passed from death unto life, and shall never come into condemnation; but he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed on the Son of God.” There are many distinctions among men—some proper and some improper—and there always will be such distinctions while this age lasts. There are rich and poor—and I fear there never will be a form of society in which there will be no poor. Even in the kingdom of Christ, when He comes, it seems there will be poor, for He shall judge the poor and needy. There will be the governors and the governed. The wise and the foolish. The teachers and the taught. But, mark you, these distinctions pass away. The grave is an awful leveler.

There in the sepulcher Caesar is no more than his vassal, Socrates no greater than the slave who washed his feet! The great emperor who swayed the scepter has, in the tomb, no higher rank than the bondwoman who toiled at the mill. Death recognizes no caste, the sepulcher believes in equality. At the Judgment Seat temporal distinctions will not be recognized except so far as they involve responsibility—and so far as that point goes, some of the great and mighty will then wish that they had been slaves—and regret that they cannot hide their heads among those whom they oppressed! The grand distinction which will outlast all time is that of faith or lack of faith. Do you believe or do you doubt? This makes the

broad line of distinction! To the receivers of Christ or the non-receivers—to which do you belong, dear Friend?

I want you to observe that the faith which makes the distinction is described here as *a receptive faith*. Saying faith becomes a working faith by degrees, but at first it is a *receptive* faith. And in fact, work as it may, afterwards, it must *always* be a receptive faith! We only work out our salvation as God works in us—and even the highest actions that are ever done for God are performed with the strength which God supplies. Working faith is merely receptive faith in action. A receiving faith is the vital point and it is absolutely necessary that the soul should receive Jesus to be its All in All. “To as many as received Him.” Have you ever received *Him*, the Lord Jesus, the *real* Christ? Do you talk to Him? Do you know Him? Is He a companion? Is He a friend of yours? If you have received a personal Christ by confiding, trusting and depending upon Him, you are on the safe side of the house!

The text further says, “Even to them that believe *on His name*.” Now, what is it to believe on His name? It struck me it would be a fair and a right way of illustrating the text to notice what are the names which are used in the former verses of this chapter. Please notice, in the first chapter of John, where our text is, what name of Jesus is used. “In the beginning was *the Word*”—that is the first name. The Word. What is the meaning of that? Why is Jesus Christ called the Word? Why, because, Brothers and Sisters, if I want to communicate to you by writing or by speech, I use a *word*. My thought is here—and there is your mind.

I could get the thought partly to your mind by a *picture*—that is what God has done in Nature. But we cannot use pictures for a full communication of knowledge—we must employ words. So God, wanting to speak to man, spoke by sending Christ and Christ is God’s Word. Have you ever received Christ as God’s Word? Will you just think of it, what a wonderful Word He was? God said, “Men, stand no longer at a distance from Me. I will come and dwell among you”—33 years the Son of God dwelt among the sons of men! “Men,” He said, “Men, I must punish your sins.” There hung His Son bleeding on the tree for sin—God saying in a wonderful way—“I hate sin and therefore Jesus must die.”

The Lord next cries, “Men, I can now be just and yet can justify you. Come unto Me.” There is Jesus risen from the dead, in newness of life, and He goes into Heaven a Man and, as Man, is received to the Throne of God—and thus God says in a word to us, “I am willing to receive you up to My very Throne.” Actions speak louder than words, but Christ, Himself, is the Word, the love-Word, the tender Word, the very heart-Word of God—with acts attending and following which make His utterance the more convincing! God kept nothing back when He spoke Christ. He spoke that Word and that Word is the fullness of God’s soul to sinners!

Have you ever accepted Christ as the Word between you and God? Have you ever spoken to God that Word back again by pleading the name of Christ? Lord, there is no communication between me and You except this!

Whenever You speak, you say, “Christ,” and my reply is, “Christ.” When I want You to pardon me, I say, “Christ.” When I need You to bless me, indeed, and give me answers to my prayers, I plead, “Christ.” That is the Word from God to man, and back again from man to God.

Now, to as many as believe on His name as the Word, to them He gives power to become the sons of God. But many have never accepted Him as, “the Word,” any more than if God had never spoken. They are deaf. At any rate, there is the Word and they have never received it. Look down the chapter and you will find that Jesus is described as *the Life*. “All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life.” Have you believed on His name as the Life? Man is *dead* by nature. When God said to Adam, “In the day you eat thereof you shall surely die,” Adam did die that very day and that is the key word to what is meant by death in the Scriptures. Did he cease to exist? No, nor will you.

But he ceased to *live* and that is a very different thing. To exist is not to live, there is a wide distinction there. To die is not to cease to exist—no thoughtful man should fall into such an error. What is death? Practically it is the separation of a living being into its component elements. When the seed is put into the ground, the Apostle says, it is not quickened unless it dies, or dissolves into its constituent elements. It dies in order more perfectly to live. When we die, neither body nor soul ceases to *exist*, but they cease to be united and their *separation* is death. When a soul departs, (and the life of the body is the soul), the life of the body is gone. When a soul dies, it is separated from God, for union to God is the soul’s true life. *That* is the death which Adam died and which every impenitent sinner will have to die. No, that is the death which every sinner is under *now*, for, “he that believes not shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”

Listen well that, “he that believes not has not life.” He has an existence and always will have, but he has not *life*— he abides in death. But as for the man who believes in Jesus, he gets back his God and that is his life! Jesus says, “He that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and he that lives and believes in Me shall never die.” “I am the Resurrection and the Life.” When we are brought back to God, God has made our soul alive! A soul without God is like a fair palace which has been deserted—you pace through all its halls and there is not a sound. It is all death, decay and emptiness. But when the king comes back, again, to his palace, the merry bells peal out their joyful notes! All is rejoicing and there is life again throughout the house. God is the life of the soul and as many as receive God in Christ, receive the Life.

Now see, Jesus is first the Word, that is God speaking to men. Secondly the Life, that is God quickening man and dwelling in him. Have we so received the Christ of God? Note the third name here. “In Him was life, and the life was the *Light* of men.” Notice that this name of Jesus is repeated many times if you read through the chapter. “John came for a witness to

bear witness of the *Light*. He was not that *Light*, but he was sent to bear witness of that *Light*. That was the true *Light*,” and so on. So that the next name of Christ we have in this chapter is the *Light*. Have we received Christ as the Light? What is it to have Christ to be your Light? What is light? It is that by which we see. Everybody sees in a light.

Take an illustration—only an illustration. A merchant comes to a city, town, village. He calculates whether it is a good place for business. “Bad place, this,” he says. “A man cannot live here. It is a bad situation.” And he is not content unless he gets near the Bank or in Lombard Street, or some other business quarter. Now look at the artist. He has another light. You take that artist into the city and he says, “I could not live here in this dreary wilderness of brick, amid these fogs! Let me get away to North Wales, or somewhere where the picturesque is to be seen.” And he settles himself down in Bettws-y-coed, and he says, “This is beautiful.”

Take the rich man there and say to him, “You are to live here for 20 years.” “Twenty years?” he says, “I could not live here a month! It is preposterous. This is not a place where a man can live.” Bring a man of gaiety into a religious circle and he says, “O, I need a place where there is some life.” I have been traveling, sometimes, where I thought the scenery very beautiful and I have heard young men say, “This is a hateful place: there is no life here.” Everybody sees according to the light he sees by.

My dear Hearer, have you ever seen things in the Light of Christ? Did you ever feel, “this is the place where I can live, for here are Christians with whom I can commune. Here is the Gospel preached and my soul will be fed here. I shall learn much of Christ. This is a sphere in which I can be useful”? When you have Life you will get Light—and you will see things in that Light. You will see yourself in the Light of Christ. You will say, “O God, be merciful to me a sinner.” Everything looks according to your light. Yellow spectacles will make everything look yellow, but get the true Light, the only Light that can lighten any man that comes into the world, and things will be seen in the Truth of God. If you get Christ within you, you have Light, indeed!

So the question comes back—have we believed on the name of Jesus as the Word, the Life and the Light? If we have, it has made a distinction between us and others, and there is a deep gulf fixed between us, across which, thank God, men may come to us by Sovereign Grace, but across which we shall never return—for he that has received the *Word* will find in it an incorruptible Seed! He that has received the *Life* has received with it the assurance, “Because I live, you shall live also.” And he that has received the *Light* knows that it shines more and more unto the perfect day. This distinction, then, is a very grand one and it is one which obliterates all others, for the text puts it, “As *many* as received Him”—that is, if the chimney-sweep receives Christ, he is a child of God, and if the Czar of Russia receives Christ, *he* is a child of God—but not the one more than the other. If they *receive* Him—that is the point—they become the sons of God!

It is a distinction, therefore, which is to be sought after abundantly by us, and which has to do with present things. "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God." Now I charge you, do not think of religion as a thing to be run after when you *die*, as your friends may seek after an undertaker to bury you. My bell sometimes sounds at the dead of night or at three in the morning. "Would you come and pray for a dying person?" They even say, "Pray to some dying person." Why do they send for *me*? Why do they not think of sending for me when the man is in good health?

They send for me when the man has taken stupefying drugs, perhaps, to lull pain, or he is half asleep with coming death, or his suffering is so intense that he cannot think! Or if he *can* think, he counts on my coming and my visit rather ministers to his superstition than to his benefit! Religion is for life as well as death. It is for today. "*Now* are we the sons of God." Oh, have the Gospel today, today, today, today! It is said that every man ought to repent on the last day of his life—this day may be yours—"therefore, today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." I have many things to say unto you, but time flies and I have much more left. This is the first head, then. Faith makes the grandest of all distinctions.

II. Secondly, FAITH OBTAINS THE GRANDEST OF ALL ENDOWMENTS. Read, "To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God." The margin says the "privilege." The margin is right, but so is the common reading. The word *exousia* is a very great word in the Greek. It cannot be comprehended in the word, "privilege," at all. It means power, privilege and a great deal more. Everyone that has believed in Jesus has received the privilege, the power and everything else that lies in being a son of God. This is described as being a privilege peculiar to Believers and yet there are rogues who are everlastingly talking about the "fatherhood" of God because He made them.

I suppose the man who made that table is the father of the table. They assert that the Creator is the Father of all His creatures. That is not the sense in which Believers say, "Our Father which art in Heaven." If you are children of the devil and doing *his* works, why call *God* your Father? How *dare* you? If you have not believed on the Son of God, He is not your Father in the sense of the text—and you have no right to think of yourself as His son! The privilege of the text is, "to as many as *received* Him," for, "to *them* gave He the power" or, "the *privilege* to become the sons of God." As for the unbeliever, what is written concerning him? "The wrath of God abides on him."

Now, there is a distinction intended here in the use of this word, "son," rather than the old legal word *servant*. The most that they could attain to under the old dispensation was to be servants. "Moses was faithful in all his house as a servant." Yes, that is all. And what a blessed thing to be a servant of God! The poor prodigal would have been glad enough to have been one of the hired servants. But says our Master, "Henceforth I call

you not servants, for the servant knows not what his Lord does, but I have called you Friends.” And we know who has said, “For this cause He is not ashamed to call them Brethren,” because they are sons in the same house. Oh, what a pleasure to rise from slavery to sonship! From the bondage of the Law to the glorious liberty of the children of God!

And that is where we all are who have believed. Only sometimes, you know, we do not live up to this sonship privilege. Those who are under the Law do not rise to sonship. They may be sons, but they are in their minority and the child, while he is yet in his minority, differs little from a servant, though he is lord of all. He is under tutors until he is of age. Christ has come and we are no longer under a schoolmaster, but now, blessed be His name, we are the sons of God! Are we not His servants, too? O, yes! Jesus Christ was first His Father’s Son and then His Father’s Servant. So we, being sons, have the joy of serving our Father. And I tell you it is a very different thing to serve your Father to what it is to serve a mere prince or ruler!

We are sons, then, rather than servants. We are called sons of God because of our new nature. We are the children of God by birth. We are also sons by likeness, for the Spirit of God dwells in us and we are made like unto God. The likeness between a son of God and God, Himself, is real and true. Have you ever seen the likeness between yourself and your child? Yes. Yes, he is very much like you. Some points of his character are caricatures of yours! You can see your image, distorted somewhat, and imperfect, but it is yourself. It is as near like yourself as a child can be like a man—but a child is not a man, for all that. So God makes His children like Himself, but they are miniatures, they are little, childish, weak. There are many imperfections and shortcomings, but still, mark that word, I often stagger as I read it—“He has made us partakers of the Divine Nature.”

In moral qualities and spiritual actualities, He has given us power to become the sons of God, that is, by making us like unto God, showing us that as He is who was the Chief Son, so are we, also, in this world. Oh, the privilege of this! I assure you I would enlarge upon it if I did not feel that I am quite incompetent. I can only stand as John did when he wanted to tell us about it, and could only cry, “Behold,” as much as to say—“Look yourself, I cannot tell you!” “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us that we should be called the children of God.” We are such by prerogative, by nature, by growing like He and by privilege. We are *now* the sons of God.

Some of you do not know what this means. Children, you know, take many liberties with their father and are very familiar. I wonder what the little children of a judge think of him if they are ever taken into court to see him with his big wig on, sitting there trying prisoners? Well, I have no doubt they feel a great awe of him. But you should see him when he is at home! Why there he is down on the rug with the children on his back! He is the father and the father somehow swallows up the judge! And the child

does not seem to remember that he *is* a judge, but only that he is his *father*. O, how many times has my soul, while prostrate with awe in the Presence of my God, laid hold on Him and said, “My *Father*, great as You are, You are not so great as to forget that You are my Father. You have taught me to say it, You have said, ‘When you pray, say, ‘Our Father,’ and I do say it, and I feel that, ‘Abba, Father,’ is the natural cry of the spirit that is within me. Will you not answer to the cry?”

He does answer us and like as a father pities his children, He pities us. He bows His Omnipotence to help us in our little labors—and bows His mighty arms to help us in our little troubles. “He counts the number of the stars, and calls them all by their names. He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds.” Is not that a grand stoop from rolling the orbs and wheeling the worlds along, to stoop down to bind broken hearts and to strap their wounds with Heaven’s court plaster lest they should bleed too much? Blessed be his name!—

***“The God that rules on high,
And thunders when He pleases.
That rides upon the stormy sky
And manages the seas—
This awful God is ours,
Our Father and our love!
He shall send down
His heavenly powers
To carry us above.”***

But we must pass on. Faith makes the grandest of distinctions and obtains the grandest of endowments.

III. Thirdly, FAITH IS THE EVIDENCE OF THE GRANDEST EXPERIENCE, for the text speaks of, “them that believe on His name which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of man, but of God.” This teaches us that every man who believes in Jesus is a regenerate man. He has been born of God! What a wonderful thing it is to be born again! There are poor blind men about who say that persons are regenerated by the application of *water*, though they have no faith, and grow up without any! May the Lord open their eyes! We will say no more, but wherever there is true regeneration there must be faith. Read the third chapter of John. See how faith and regeneration run together. Read this very passage—“To as many as believe on His name which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of man.” Faith is the first, the unique token of being born again!

Now, what is it to be born again? I saw a big man once. A strong, rough fellow, and he was evidently under conviction of sin. He said, “Would God I had never been born.” He thought again and he said, “I remember when I used to pray at my mother’s knee. I knew nothing, then, of the wickedness and vice through which I have gone. Would God I could begin life again like a little child!” I was pressed to hear him say that, for it enabled me to say, “That is exactly what you shall do if you believe in Jesus. You shall be born again.” But if we could be born again as we were born at first, that is, of the will of the flesh, we should do as we did before—for

that which is born of the flesh, if it could be born twice of flesh—would be still flesh.

That which is born of the Spirit is spirit and, “you must be born again from above”—you must be born of the Spirit of God. What the Spirit of God does for us is to give us a new life to start us afresh with a new nature upon a new career. Whoever believes in Jesus is born again! Regeneration is a great mystery, but you have that mystery. Do not puzzle yourself about the new birth—you have experienced it if you really believe in the Lord Jesus. As I tried to explain it just now, you are born again. You are a new creature in Christ Jesus. You have begun life again. It is of little use to attempt to mend the old nature, it is too far gone. There was a certain prince who used to swear this oath, “God mend me!” But a good man says, “I think He had better make a new one.”

Some men think God will mend them, but they err. I like the drunkard to become sober and the thief to become honest and mend himself as much as he can. But what he *really* needs is making over again. I have heard of a man who brought his gun to the gunsmith’s to be repaired. “You want it repaired,” says the smith. “Well, what it needs is a new stools dock and barrel.” That looked very much like making a new one! You had better begin *de novo*. The old Law had for its token the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the distinguishing ordinance of the New Covenant goes much further.

What does Christ say to His people in the act of Baptism? He says, “You are dead. You must be buried and must rise into newness of life.” *Baptism* cannot do this, but it sets forth our need of the death of the old nature and of resurrection into new life. We must be born again—not washed, not cleansed, not mended up—but made new creatures in Christ Jesus. And every man who believes in Jesus has undergone that wondrous change! He is not born of blood, that is not born according to the natural way of birth. He is born in a new, celestial manner. He is not born of the will of the flesh—man’s bad carnal will—nor of the will of man, man’s best will, for the will of man, when it has done all it can, has done nothing at all savingly. If you were born of the will of man, it would not answer the purpose—“born not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

We need renewal by a supernatural power. God alone can create and God alone can new-create. To make a new creature is a greater wonder than to make a world, because when God made a world there was nothing to stand in His way. But when He makes a new creature there is the old creature in conflict with Him. If I may be allowed to commit so palpable an error of speech, I would say it takes *double* Omnipotence to re-create! We must be born from above, but we are saved if we have believed in the Lord Jesus. God grant that if any here have *not* believed, the new birth may be given them—and *faith* in Christ Jesus.

IV. Now, lastly, lest I weary you, FAITH RAISES THE BELIEVER TO THE NOBLEST CONCEIVABLE CONDITION. The man who has received

Christ has undergone a new birth which fits him to be a child of God. Now, note, first, the *inconceivable honor* of being a child of God. Ah, if all the degrees, dignities, honors and titles that were ever conferred by men could be put into a heap, they would not make enough of *real* honor to be seen by a microscope—compared with the glory that belongs to the humblest, poorest and most despised *son of God!*

Son of God! “Unto which of the angels did He say at any time, You are My Son, this day have I begotten You?” I know the text applies to Christ, but it applies, also, to all His people. His angels are servants—they are not sons. It is their delight to keep watch and ward about us, as servants do over young princes of the blood. “They shall bear You up in their hands, lest You dash Your foot against a stone.” About the child of God there is even, here, a splendor which is none the less bright because carnal eyes cannot see it. It is like the splendor of God—invisible because too excessive for eyes to see.

I will picture a child of God, if you please, a daughter of Zion. She is a poor seamstress. She has stitched a shroud as well as a shirt and she lies upstairs dying. You would not like to fare as she does. She dwells in a wretched little room. It is scantily furnished. The bed is hard and she lies there in agony. She can scarcely breathe. She gasps for life. She is very poor and those upon whom she is depending have begun to feel her a burden and sometimes say hard words to her. This is a gloomy place, is it not? Come here. I will touch your eyes as the Prophet did the eyes of his servant. And what do you see? You see one of the members of Christ’s body struggling for the last time—and about to win the victory!

Listen to her! She tells you that Christ is with her! Do you see Him? There He stands in the deepest sympathy, bending over His beloved, smiling upon a soul that He has chosen from before the foundations of the world—a daughter upon whom He has put a garment without spot, meet for royal wear! She is a King’s daughter! Look about the room. Angels are there, they are waiting all around her, waiting to take her Home! The Holy Spirit, Himself, is within her soul. Do you see the light of His consolations and revelations? If your eyes are open, you can see it. Yes, the Father Himself is here, for He is never away from the deathbeds of His children! “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.” She has grown worse. Her eyes are dim. Her voice is feeble. Listen to her! I am picturing no fancy scene—I have heard it!

She is just about to enter into Life, and she cries—

**“And when you hear my heart-strings break,
How sweet my minutes roll!
A mortal paleness on my cheek,
But Glory in my soul!”**

If she has strength enough left, you will hear her sing—

**“Midst darkest shades, if He appears,
My dawning is begun;
He is my soul’s bright morning star,
And He my rising sun.”**

Do not talk to me of Joan of Arc! This is the true heroine! She is battling with Death and singing while she dies. Fear? She has long forgotten what that means. Doubt? It is banished! Distress? Despondency? She has left them all behind. She is a Believer! She has received Jesus and she has power to be a child of God! O, the honor and dignity of being born from above!

Now, note again the *safety* of this birth. If you are a child of God, how safe you are! I am sure there is no father and mother here that would let any harm come to their children. None of us would if we could protect them. Do you think God will suffer His children to be harmed? He will cover them with His feathers and under His wings shall they trust. His Truth shall be their shield and buckler. There shall no evil befall them—neither shall any plague come near their dwelling. “I, the Lord, do keep it. I will water it every moment lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.” “I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand. My Father which gave them Me is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of My Father’s hand.”—

“Safe in the arms of Jesus.”

Well may you sing that, for so you are if you are the children of God!

And, last of all, though much more might be said, what *happiness* this brings to a man to know that he is a child of God. I remember, some 22 years ago, being waited upon by a Mormon who wanted to convince me of the Divine mission of Joseph Smith. And after hearing some of his talk, I said, “Sir, would you kindly tell me what you have to offer me and how I am to get it? I will listen to you if you will let me tell you *afterwards* what I have to offer you and the way to it.” I heard him with a great deal of patience. He listened to me not quite so patiently, but when I had done he saluted me thus, “If what you say is true, you ought to be the happiest man in the world!” To which I replied, “Sir, you are correct. I ought to be and, more, I am!” And so I left him.

And so I am, and so is every child of God that lives up to his privilege. You are a child of God—forgiven, accepted, beloved—what more do you need? In the name of goodness, what more do you need? If a man were to become an imperial prince, would he say, “I need more”? My dear Man, what more can you need? If you are a son of God, what more can you ask? I remember the time—perhaps you remember it for yourself—when I was in bondage under sin and I thought I should be sent to Hell. If the Lord had said to me, “I will forgive you, but you must live on bread and water till you die,” I would have clapped my hands for joy! I would have said, “Lord, do but save me. If I can get rid of my sins, the very hardest lot will be a pleasure to me.” Let us never complain, since we are possessors of salvation. The joy of the Lord is your strength. “Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, rejoice.”

Remember this as a practical word. There is an old French proverb which says, “Nobility obliges.” There is an obligation upon nobles. You do

not expect to see great princes sweeping the street crossing. You would not expect to hear of Her Majesty the Queen acting like a milkmaid. Well, now, if you are a son of God, you must act like it! If I hear of a man who says, "I am a child of God," and he gives short weight and is hard in his bargains—I am ashamed of him! He a son of God? He who must make money! And hold it, and keep it? He, a son of God? He is not very much like his Father! Son of God? And yet sharp, quick-tempered, angry, spiteful! He is not very much like his Father. A child of God and do a mean thing? My dear Brothers and Sisters, what are you? A son of God and tell a lie?

A son of God and afraid of anybody? A son of God and cannot look your fellow man in the face without a blush? A son of God and at home a tyrant? Such conduct will never bear a thought—and he who is guilty of it gravely offends. When the great Emperor Napoleon was in his power, if a member of his family married below his rank, he was made to know the emperor's anger, for members of the imperial house were under bonds of honor to keep up their dignity. You girls here, who are daughters of God, dare you marry out of the imperial family? Never do that! Take care that you are not unequally yoked. When a king was taken prisoner, Alexander asked him how he would be treated, and he said, "Like a king."

Christian, act like a king! When a quarrelsome person offends us, we should say in our heart, "I would have quarreled with you, but I could not stoop to it. I am a child of God." I read a bitter remark of Guizot's to his enemies the other day, which ran something like this, "Come up the steps and mount as high as you can. And when you reach the top you will be beneath my contempt." So oftentimes may the child of God think of the world and all the shams, and all the temptations which are in it, "I have a great work. How can I come down to you? I am a son of God. My conversation is in Heaven! I cannot leave my position to come down to you."

Walk as children of light. "What manner of persons ought you to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" You are "a peculiar people, a royal priesthood, a chosen generation, zealous for good works." Do not demean yourselves! Go your way and may the Spirit of your Father rest upon you. Amen and amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 John 3.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—533, 448.**

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THE SIMPLICITY AND SUBLIMITY OF SALVATION NO. 2259

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 5, 1892.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
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*“He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”
John 1:11-13.*

EVERYTHING here is simple. Everything is sublime. Here is that simple Gospel by which the most ignorant may be saved! Here are profundities in which the best-instructed may find themselves beyond their depth. Here are those everlasting hills of Divine Truth which man cannot climb! Yet here is that plain path in which the wayfaring man, though a fool, need nor err, nor lose his way. I always feel that I have no time to spare for critical and captious persons. If they will not believe, neither shall they be established. They must take the consequences of their unbelief. But I can spare all day and all night for an anxious enquirer—for one who is blinded by the very blaze of the heavenly Light of God that shines on him and who seems to lose his way by reason of the very plainness of the road that lies before him! In this most simple text are some of the deep things of God and there are souls here that are puzzled by what are simplicities to some of us. And therefore my one aim shall be to handle this text as to help and encourage and cheer some who would gladly touch the hem of the Master's garment, but *cannot* for the press of many difficulties and grave questions which rise before their minds!

Let us go to the text at once and notice, first, *a matter which is very simple*—“As many as received Him...even to them that believe on His name.” Secondly, *a matter which is very delightful*—“to them gave He power to become the sons of God.” And thirdly, *a matter which is very mysterious*—“Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

I. Here is, first, A MATTER WHICH IS VERY SIMPLE—receiving Christ and believing on His name. Oh, that many here may be able to say, “Yes, I understand that simple matter. That is the way in which I found eternal life!”

The simple matter of which John here speaks is receiving Christ, or, in other words, believing on His name.

Receiving Christ is *a distinctive act*. “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.” The very people you would have thought would have eagerly welcomed Christ did not do so! But here and there a man stood apart from the rest, or a woman came out from her surroundings, and each of these said, “I receive Christ as the Messiah.” You will never go to Heaven in a crowd! The crowd goes down the broad road to destruction, but the way which leads to life eternal is a narrow way, “and few there are that find it.” They that go to Heaven must come out *one by one* and say to Him that sits at the wicket-gate, “Set my name down, Sir, as a pilgrim to the Celestial City.” They who would enter into life must fight as well as run, for it is an uphill fight all the way—and few there are that fight it out to the end and win the crown of the victors.

Those who received Christ were different from those who did not receive Him—they were as different as white is from black, or light from darkness. They took a distinctive step, separated themselves from others and came out and received Him whom others would not receive. Have you taken such a step, dear Friend? Can you say, “Yes, let others do as they will, but as for me, Christ is all my salvation and all my desire—and at all hazards I am quite content to be counted singular and to stand alone. I have lifted my hands to Heaven and I cannot draw back. Whatever others may do, I say, ‘Christ for me’?”

As it was a distinctive act, so it was *a personal one*—“To as many as received Him.” They had to receive Christ, each one, by his own act and deed. “Even to them that believe on His name.” Believing is the distinct act of a person. I cannot believe for you any more than you can believe for me! That is clearly impossible. There can be no such thing as sponsorship in receiving Christ, or in faith. If you are an unbeliever, your father and mother may be the most eminent saints, but their faith does not overlap and cover your unbelief. You must believe for yourself. I have had to even remind some that the Holy Spirit, Himself, cannot believe for them. He works faith in you, but you have to believe! The faith must be your own distinct mental act. Faith is the gift of God, but God does not believe for us—how could He? It is for you distinctly to believe. Come, dear Hearer, have you been trying to put up with a national faith? A national faith is a mere sham! Or have you tried to think that you possess the *family* faith? “Oh, we are all Christians, you know!” Yes, you are all hypocrites—that is what that comes to! Unless each one is a Christian for himself, he is a Christian only in name—and that is to be a hypocrite. Oh, that we might have the certainty that we have each one laid our sins on Jesus, the spotless Lamb of God! God grant that if we have never done so before, we may do so this very moment!

Mark, next, that as it was a distinctive and personal act, so *it related to a Person*. I find that the text runs thus, “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He

power to become the Sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.” That religion which leaves out the Person of Christ has left out the essential point. You are not saved by believing a doctrine, though it is well for you to believe it if it is true. You are not saved by practicing an ordinance, though you should practice it if you are one of those to whom it belongs. You are not saved by any belief except this—believing on Christ’s name and receiving Him. “I take in a body of divinity,” says one. Do you? There is no body of divinity that I know of but Christ, the Son of God in human flesh, living, bleeding, dying, risen, ascended, soon to come—you must lean on Him—for the promise is only to as many as receive Him.

This reception of Christ *consisted in faith in Him*—“As many as received Him...even to them that believe on His name.” He was a stranger and they took Him in. He was food and they took Him in and fed on Him. He was living water and they received Him, drank Him up, took Him into themselves. He was light and they received the light. He was life and they received the life, and they lived by what they received. As the empty cup receives from the flowing fountain, so do we receive Christ into our emptiness. We, being poor, naked and miserable, come to Him, and we receive riches, clothing, and happiness in Him! Salvation comes by receiving Christ!

I know what you have been trying to do—you have been trying to give Christ something. Let me caution you against a very common expression. I hear converts continually told to give their hearts to Jesus. It is quite correct and I hope they will do so. But your *first* concern must be not what you give to Jesus, but what Jesus gives to you! You must take Him from Himself as a gift to you—then will you truly give your heart to Him. The first act and, indeed, the underlying act all along the way, is to receive, to imbibe, to take in Christ—and that is called *believing on His name*. Note that, “name.” It is not believing a fanciful Christ, for there are many christs, nowadays—as many christs as there are books, nearly—for every writer seems to make a christ of his own. But the christ that men make up will not save you! The only Christ who can save you is the Christ of God, that Christ who, in the synagogue at Nazareth, found the place where it was written, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.”

You are to believe on *the Christ as He is revealed in the Scriptures*. You are to take Him as you find Him here—not as Renan, not as Strauss, or anybody else pictures of Him—but as you find Him *here*. As God reveals Him you are to believe on His name—“The Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” Emmanuel, God With Us; Jesus, saving from sin; Christ anointed of the Father. You are to believe on His name, not on the Christ of Rome, nor the Christ of Canterbury, but the Christ of Jerusalem, the Christ of the eternal Glory!

Not a christ of a dreamy prophecy with which some are defaming the true prophetic spirit of the Word, no christ of idealism, no man-made christ, but the eternal God, Incarnate in human flesh, as He is here pictured by Psalmist, Prophet, Evangelist, Apostle, very God of very God, yet truly Man, suffering in your place, bearing the sin of men in His own body on the Cross. It is believing in *this* Christ that will effectually save your soul! To believe is to trust. Prove that you believe in Christ by risking everything upon Him—

***“Upon a life I did not live,
Upon a death I did not die,
I risk my whole eternity.”***

On Him who lived for me and died for me, and rose again for me, and has gone into Heaven for me—on Him I throw the whole weight of past, present, future and *every* interest that belongs to my soul, for time and for eternity!

This is a very simple matter and I have noticed a great many sneers at this simple faith—and a great many depreciatory remarks concerning it, but, let me tell you, there is nothing like it under Heaven! Possessing this faith will prove you to be a son of God—nothing short of it ever will. “To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become sons of God,” and He has given that power to nobody else! This will prove you to be absolved, forgiven. “There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” But if you have no faith in Christ Jesus, the wrath of God abides on you! Because you have not believed on the Son of God, you are condemned already! One grain of this faith is worth more than a diamond the size of the world—yes, though you should thread such jewels together, as many as the stars of Heaven for number, they would be worth *nothing* compared with the smallest atom of faith in Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God!

But where does this wonderful power of faith come from? Not from the faith, but from Him on whom it leans! What power Christ has! The power of His Manhood suffering, the power of His Godhead bowing on the Cross, the power of the God-Man, the Mediator, surrendering Himself as the greatest Sacrifice for sin! Therefore, he who touches this has touched the springs of Omnipotence! He who comes, by faith, into contact with Christ, has come into contact with boundless love, power, mercy and Grace. I marvel not at anything that faith brings when it deals with Christ! You have a little key, a little rusty key, and you say, “By use of this key I can get all the gold that I need.” Yes, but where is the box to which you go for the gold? When you show me and I see that it is a great chamber filled full of gold and silver, I can understand how your little key can enrich you when it opens the door into such a treasury. If faith is the key which unlocks the fullness of God, “for it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell,” then I can understand why faith brings such boundless blessings to him who has it. Salvation is a very simple business. God help

us to look at it simply and practically—and to receive Christ and believe on His name!

II. Now, secondly, here is A MATTER WHICH IS VERY DELIGHTFUL—
“To them gave He power to become sons of God.”

If I had a week to preach from this text, I think that I should be able to get through the first head, but at this time I can only throw out just a few hints. Look at the great and delightful blessing which comes to us by our faith in Christ. We give Christ our faith and He gives us power to become sons of God! The authority, liberty, privilege, right—something more than mere strength or force—to be sons of God!

When we believe in Jesus, He indicates to us *the Great Father's willingness to let us be His sons*. We who were prodigals, far away from Him, perceive that when we receive Christ—the Father, who gave us Christ—is willing to take us to be His sons. He would not have yielded up His Only-Begotten if He had not willed to take us into His family!

When we believe in Jesus, *He bestows on us the status of sons*. We were slaves before—now we are sons! We were strangers, aliens, enemies and every word that means an evil thing might have been applied to us! But when we laid hold on Christ, we were regarded as the sons of God, as a man in Rome, when he as adopted by some great citizen and publicly acknowledged in the forum as being, from that day forward, that man's son, was regarded as such, so, as soon as we believe in Jesus, we get the status of sons! “Beloved, now we are the sons of God.”

Then Christ does something more for us. *He gives us Grace to feel our sonship*. As we sang just now—

**“My faith shall ‘Abba, Father,’ cry,
And You the kindred own.”**

God acknowledges us as His children and we acknowledge Him as our Father and, therefore, “Our Father, which are in Heaven,” is no meaningless expression, but it comes welling up from the depths of our heart!

Having given us Grace to feel sonship, *Christ gives us the Nature of our Father*. He gives us “*power to become the sons of God*.” We get more and more like God in righteousness and true holiness. By His Divine Spirit, shed abroad in our hearts, we become more and more the children of our Father who is in Heaven, who does good to the undeserving and the unthankful, and whose heart overflows with love even to those who love Him not.

When this Nature of sons shall be fully developed, *Christ will bestow His glory upon us*. We shall be in Heaven, not in the rear rank, as servants, but nearest to the eternal Throne of God. Unto angels He has never said, “You are My sons,” but He has called *us* sons, poor creatures of the dust who believe in Jesus! And we shall have all the honor, joy, privileges and delight that belong to the princes of the blood royal of Heaven—members of the imperial House of God—in that day when the King shall manifest Himself in His own palace!

Some of us could draw parallels about being made sons, from our own lives. You were once a very tiny child, but you were a son, then, as much as you are now. So is it with you who have only just begun to believe in Christ—He has given you authority and right to become sons of God. Very early in our life, our father went down to the registrar's office and wrote our name in the roll as his sons. We do not remember that, it was so long ago, but he did it and he also wrote our name in the Family Bible, even as our Father in Heaven has enrolled our names in the Lamb's Book of Life! You recollect that, as a child, you did not go into the kitchen to dine with the servants, but you took your seat at the table. It was a very little chair in which you first sat at the table, but, as you grew bigger, you always went to the table, because you were a son.

The servants in the house were much bigger than you and they could do a great many things that you could not do, and your father paid them wages. He never paid you any—they were not his sons—but you were. If they had put on your clothes, they would not have been his sons. You had privileges that they had not. I remember that, in the parish where my home was, on a certain day in the year, the Church bell rang and everybody went to receive a penny roll. Every child had one and I remember having mine. I claimed it as a privilege because I was my father's son. I think there were six of us, who all had a roll—every child in the parish had one. So there are a number of privileges that come to us very early in our Christian life, and we mean to have them, first, because our Lord Jesus Christ has given us the right to have them and, next, because if we do not take what He bought for us, it will be robbing Him and wasting His substance! As He has paid for it all and has given us the right to have it, let us take it!

You were put in school because you were a son. You did not like it. I daresay that you would rather have stayed at home at play. And you had a touch of the rod, sometimes, because you were a son. That was one of your *privileges*, "for what son is he whom the father chastens not?" One day you were in the street with other boys, doing wrong, and your father came along and punished you. He did not touch your companions, for they were not his sons. You smile at those little things, but you did not, at the time, count your punishments as privileges—but they were. When the chastening of the Lord comes, call it a privilege, for that is what it is! There is no greater mercy that I know of on earth than good health unless it is sickness—and that has often been a greater mercy to me than health!

It is a good thing to be without a trouble, but it is a better thing to have a trouble and know how to get Grace enough to bear it. I am not so much afraid of the devil when he roars, as I am when he pretends to be asleep. I think that, oftentimes, a roaring devil keeps us awake—and the troubles of this life stir us up to go to God in prayer—and that which looks to us as bad turns to our good. "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose."

III. Now I come to my last point, that is, A MATTER WHICH IS MYSTERIOUS. We are not only given the status of children and the privilege of being called sons, but this mysterious matter is one of heavenly birth—“Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

This new birth is *absolutely necessary*. If we are ever to be numbered among God’s children, we must be born again! Born from above. We were born in sin, born children of wrath, even as others—to be God’s children, it is absolutely necessary that we should be born again!

The change worked thereby is *wonderfully radical*. It is not a mere outside washing, nor any touching up and repairing. It is a total renovation. Born again? I cannot express to you all that the change means, it is so deep, so thorough, so complete.

It is also *intensely mysterious*. What must it be to be born again? “I cannot understand it.” Says one. Nicodemus was a teacher in Israel and he did not understand it. Does *anybody* understand it? Does anybody understand his *first* birth? What do we know of it? And this *second* birth? Some of us have passed through it and know that we have, and remember well the pangs of that birth, yet we cannot describe the movements of the Spirit of God by which we were formed anew, and made new creatures in Christ Jesus, according to that Word from Him who sits on the Throne, “Behold, I make all things new!” It is a great mystery.

Certainly it is *entirely superhuman*. We cannot contribute to it. Man cannot make himself to be born again. His first birth is not of himself and his second birth is not one jot more so. It is a work of the Holy Spirit, a work of God! It is a new creation—it is a quickening—it is a miracle from beginning to end!

Here is the point to which I call your special attention, it is *assuredly ours*. Many of us here have been born again. We know that we have and herein lies the evidence of it, “As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name, which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” If you believe on Christ’s name, you are born of God! If you have received Christ into your soul, you have obtained that birth that comes not of blood, nor of the will of parents, nor of the will of man, but of God! You have passed from death unto life!

Let no man sit down here and cover his face, and say, “There is no hope for me. I cannot understand about this new birth.” If you will take Christ, to have and to hold, henceforth and forever, as your *ONLY* trust and confidence, you have received that which no line of ancestors could ever give you, for it is “not of blood.” You possess that which no will of the father and mother could ever give you, for it is, “not of the will of the flesh.” You have that which your own will could not bring you, for it is, “not of the will of man.” You have that which only the Giver of Life can bestow, for it is, “of God!” You are born again, for you have received Christ and believed on His name. I do not urge you to look within, to try and see whether this

new birth is there. Instead of looking within *yourself*, look to Him who hangs on yonder Cross, dying, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God! Fix your eyes on Him and believe in Him. And when you see in yourself much that is evil, look to Him. And when doubts prevail, look to Him. And when your conscience tells you of your past sins, look to Him!

I have to go through this story almost every day of the year and sometimes half a dozen times in a day. If there is a despairing soul anywhere within 20 miles, it will find me out, no matter whether I am at home, or at Mentone, or in any other part of the world! It will come from any distance, broken down, despairing, half insane, sometimes, and I have no medicine to prescribe except, "Christ, Christ, Christ—Jesus Christ and Him crucified! Look away from yourselves and trust in Him!" I go over and over and over with this and never get one jot further. Because I find that this medicine cures all soul sicknesses, while human quackery cures none! Christ *alone* is the one remedy for sin-sick souls! Receive Him! Believe on His name! We keep hammering at this. I can sympathize with Luther when he said, "I have preached justification by faith so often, and I feel, sometimes, that you are so slow to receive it, that I could almost take the Bible and bang it into your heads!" I am afraid that the Truth of God would not have entered their *hearts* if he had done so. This is what we aim at—to get this one thought into a man, "You are lost and, therefore, such an One as Christ came to save."

One said to me just lately, "Oh, Sir, I am the biggest sinner that ever lived!" I replied, "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." "But I have not any strength." "While we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died." "Oh, but," he said, "I have been utterly ungodly." "Christ died for the ungodly." "But I am lost." "Yes," I said, "this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." "The Son of man has come to save that which was lost."

I said to this man, "You have the brush in your hand and at every stroke it looks as if you are quoting Scripture. You seem to be making yourself out to be the very man that Christ came to save! If you were to make yourself out to be good and excellent, I would give you this word—Jesus did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. He did not die for the good, but for the bad. He gave Himself for our sins—He never gave Himself for our *righteousness*. He is a Savior. He has not come, yet, as a Rewarder of the righteous—that will be in His Second Advent. Now He comes as the great Forgiver of the guilty and the only Savior of the lost. Will you come to Him in that way?"

"Oh, but," my friend said, "I have nothing to bring to Christ." "No," I said, "I know that you have not—but Christ has everything." "Sir," he said, "you do not know me, otherwise you would not talk to me like this." And I said, "No, and you do not know yourself—for you are *worse* than you think you are, though you think that you are bad enough in all conscience. But be you as bad as you may, Jesus Christ came on purpose to

lift up from the dunghill those whom He sets among princes by His free, rich, Sovereign Grace.”

Oh, come and believe in Him, poor Sinner! I feel that if I had all your souls, I would believe in Christ for their salvation! I would trust Him to save a million souls if I had them, for He is mighty to save! There can be no limit to His power to forgive! There can be no limit to the merit of His precious blood! There can be no boundary to the efficacy of His plea before the Throne of God! Only trust Him and you will be saved! May His gracious Spirit lead you to do so now, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON **JOHN 1:1-34**

May the Holy Spirit, who inspired these Words, inspire us through them as we read them!

Verse 1. *In the beginning was the Word.* The Divine Logos, whom we know as the Christ of God. “In the beginning was the Word.” The first words of this Gospel remind us of the first words of the Old Testament—“In the beginning God created the Heaven and the earth.” Even then “the Word” Was—He existed before all time, even from everlasting.

1. *And the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* I know not how the Deity of Christ can be more plainly declared than in His eternal duration. He is from the beginning. In His glory He was “with God.” In His Nature He “was God.”

2. *The same was in the beginning with God.* As we have been singing—
“Before sin was born, or Satan fell,”
before there was a creation that could fall, “the same was in the beginning with God.”

3. *All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made.* He that hung upon the Cross was the Maker of all worlds. He that came as an Infant, for our sake, was the Infinite. How low He stooped! How high He must have been that He could stoop so low!

4. *In His was life.* Essentially, Eternally.

4, 5. *And the light was the light of men. And the light shines in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.* It never has done so; it never will. You may sometimes call the darkness, the ignorance of men, or the sin of men. If you like, you may call it the wisdom of men and the righteousness of men, for that is only another form of the same darkness. “The light shines in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.”

6. *There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.* How very different is the style of this verse from the one that precedes it! How grand, how sublime, are the Evangelist’s words when he speaks of Jesus! How truly human he becomes, how he dips his pen in ordinary ink when he writes, “There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.” Yet that was a noble testimony to the herald of Christ. John the Baptist was “a man sent from God.”

7. *The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through Him might believe.* Dear Friends, if you and I know our real destiny and are the servants of God, we are sent that men might, through us, believe in Jesus. John was a special witness, but we ought all to be witnesses to complete the chain of testimony. Every Christian should reckon that he is sent from God to bear witness to the great Light, that, through Him, men might believe.

8, 9. *He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light that was the true Light, which lights every man that comes into the world.* There was no light from John except what he reflected from his Lord. All the Light of God comes from Jesus. Every man who comes into the world with any Light borrows his Light from Christ. There is no other Light—there can be no other. He is the “Light of the World.”

10. *He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not.* This is a sad verse. He was a stranger in His own house! He was unknown amidst His own handiwork. Men whom He had made, made nothing of Him. “The world knew Him not”—did not recognize Him.

11. *He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.* That favored circle, the Jewish nation, where Revelation had been given—even there, there was no place for Him. He must be despised and rejected even by His own nation!

12, 13. *But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.* To receive Christ, a man must be born of God. It is the simplest thing in all the world, one would think, to open the door of the heart and let Him in—but no man lets Christ into his heart till, first, God has made him to be born again—born from above.

14. *And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory of the Only-Begotten of the Father), full of Grace and Truth.* They who saw Christ on earth were highly privileged, but it is a *spiritual* sight of Him that is to be desired—and even now we can have that! How full of Grace, how full of Truth He is to all those who are privileged to behold Him!

15, 16. *John bore witness of Him, and cried, saying, This was He of whom I spoke, He that comes after me is preferred before me: for He was before me. And of His fullness have we all received, and Grace for Grace.* I wish that we could all say that. Even out of this company, many can say it and, linking our hands with those who have gone before us, and those who are still with us in the faith, we say unitedly, “Of His fullness have we all received,” and we hope to receive from it, again, tonight, for it is *still* His fullness! There is never a trace of declining in Him. It was fullness when the first sinner came to Him and it is still fullness—it will be fullness to the very end. “And Grace for Grace.” We get Grace to reach out to another Grace, each Grace becoming a steppingstone to something higher!

I do not believe in our rising on the “steppingstones of our dead selves.” They are poor stones—they all lead downwards. The steppingstones of the living Christ lead upwards! Grace for Grace, Grace upon Grace, till Grace is crowned with Glory!

17. *For the Law was given by Moses, but Grace and Truth came by Jesus Christ.* We know that the Law came by Moses. The Law has often burdened us, crushed us, convinced us, condemned us. Let us be equally clear that Grace and the Truth of God come by this Divine channel, “Jesus Christ.”

18. *No man has seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.* We do not need to see God apart from Christ. I am perfectly satisfied to see the Eternal Light through His own chosen Medium, Christ Jesus. Apart from that Medium, the light might blind my eyes! “No man has seen God at any time.” Who can look on the sun? What mind can look on God? But Christ does not hide the Father—He manifests Him. “The only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.”

19 - 23. *And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who are you? And he confessed and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? Are you Elijah? And he said, I am not. Are you the Prophet? And he answered, No. Then said they unto him, Who are you? That we may give an answer to them that sent us. What say you of yourself? He said, I am the voice—not, “I am the Word,” but—I am the voice.”* Christ is the essential Word—we are but the voice to make that Word of God sound across the desert of human life.

23. *Of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the Prophet Isaiah.* You see, even as a voice, John was not original. That straining after originality of which we see so much of today, finds no warrant among the true servants of God. Even though John is only a voice, yet he is a voice that quotes the Scriptures: “Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the Prophet Isaiah.” The more of Scripture we can voice, the better. Our words, what are they? They are but air. His Word, what is it? It is, “Grace and Truth.” May we continually be lending a voice to the great Words of God that have gone before!

24 - 27. *And they which were sent were of the Pharisees. And they asked him, and said unto him, Why do you baptize, then, if you are not that Christ, nor Elijah, neither that Prophet? John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there stands One among you, whom you know not; He it is, who, coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoelace I am not worthy to unloose.* Ah, Dear Friends, although it was a lowly expression that John used, you and I often feel that we need something that goes even lower than that! What are we worthy to do for Christ? Yet there are times when, if there is a shoelace to be unloosed, we are too proud to stoop to do it! When there is something to be done that will bring no honor to us, we are too high and mighty to do it! O child of God, if you

have ever been in that condition, be greatly ashamed of yourself! John was first in his day, the morning star of the Light of the Gospel, yet even he felt that he was not worthy to do the least thing for Christ. Where shall you and I put ourselves? Paul said that he was “less than the least of all the saints.” He ran away with a title that might have been very appropriate for us. Well, we must let him have it, I suppose, and we must try to find another like it. But if we cannot find suitable words, God help us to have the humble feeling, which is better still!

28, 29. *These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing. The next day John saw Jesus coming unto him, and said, Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world! John preached a sacrificial Savior, a sin-bearing Savior, a sin-atoning Savior. You and I have nothing else to preach. Let each of us say—*

***“Tis all my business here below
To cry, Behold the Lamb!”***

30, 31. *This is He of whom I said, After me comes a Man which is preferred before me: for He was before me. And I knew Him not. Although John knew the Savior, personally, he did not know Him officially. He had a token given to him by God, by which he was to know the Messiah, and he did not officially know Him till he had that token fulfilled.*

31 - 33. *But that He should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bore record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from Heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him. And I knew Him not: but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom you shall see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizes with the Holy Spirit. John could not know of his own judgment. No doubt he was morally certain that Jesus was the Christ. He had been brought up with Him. He knew His mother, he had heard of His wondrous birth. John and Jesus must have been together often, but he was not to use his own judgment in this case, but to wait for the sign from Heaven. And until he witnessed it, he did not say a word about it. When he saw the Holy Spirit descend upon Him, then he knew that it was even He!*

34. *And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God. Hear you, then, the witness of John! The Christ, who came from Nazareth to be baptized of him in Jordan, He on whom the Holy Spirit descended like a dove—“this is the Son of God.” This is the sin-bearing Lamb! Oh, that you and I might fulfill John’s expectation, for he spoke that we might believe. He, being dead, yet speaks! May we believe his witness and be assured that “this is the Son of God!”*

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—249, 549, 728.

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THE NEW YEAR'S GUEST

NO. 1757

A SERMON PREACHED ON LORDS-DAY AFTERNOON,
DECEMBER 16, 1883,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT MENTONE, BEFORE THE COMMUNION,
TO A SMALL COMPANY OF BELIEVERS.

*"I was a stranger, and you took Me in."
Matthew 25:35.*

*"But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become
the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name."
John 1:12.*

I LATELY received a New Year's card which suggested to me the topic on which I am about to speak to you. The designer of the card has, with holy insight, seen the relation of the two texts to each other and rendered both of them eminently suggestive by placing them together. There is freshness in the thought that, by receiving Jesus as a stranger, our believing hospitality works in us a Divine capacity and we thereby receive power to become the sons of God. The connection suggested between the two Inspired words is really existent and by no means strained or fanciful, as you will see by reading the context of the passage in John—"He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not." So He was a stranger in the world which He Himself had made! "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." So He was a stranger among the people whom He had set apart for His own by many deeds of mercy! "But as many as received Him"—that is to say, gave entertainment to this blessed Stranger—"to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name."

I thought that this might prove to be a suitable and salutary passage to discourse upon at the beginning of a New Year, for this is a season of hospitality and some among our friends will think it well to commence a New Year by saying to the Lord Jesus, "Come in, You blessed of the Lord; why do You stand outside?" This Divine stranger has knocked at many doors till His head is wet with dew and His locks with the drops of the night. And now I trust there are some who will rise up and open unto Him so that at the end of the year they may say with Job, "The stranger did not lodge in the street: but I opened my doors to the traveler." Verily, in so do-

ing, you will not only entertain angels unawares, but you will be receiving the Lord of angels!

The day in which you receive Him shall be the beginning of years to you—it shall be the first of a series of years which, whether they are few or many, shall be, each one, in the best sense happy! I would say a few words, first, about *the Stranger taken in* and then, about *the Stranger making strangers into sons*.

I. THE STRANGER TAKEN IN—this is a simile given to us by our Lord, Himself—a royal metaphor presented to us from His own Throne. Note that the passage begins, “I was hungry and you gave Me meat: I was thirsty and you gave Me drink.” These are two good works which prove faith in Jesus and love of Him and, therefore, they are accepted, recorded and rewarded. But it is a distinct and memorable growth when it comes to, “I was a stranger, and you took Me in.” A place to stay is a larger gift than refreshment at the door. It is good, believingly, to do *anything* for Christ, however small, but it is a much better thing to give entertainment to Jesus within our souls, admitting Him into our minds and hearts.

We have not come to the full of what our Lord has a right to expect of us until we have given from our stores to Him by benefiting His poor and aiding His cause—then we deliberately open the doors of our entire being to Him and install Him in our souls as an honored Guest! We must not be satisfied with giving Him cups of cold water, or morsels of bread, but we must “constrain Him, saying, Abide with us.” Our hearts must be as a Bethany, where, like Mary, Martha and Lazarus, we give our Master a grand welcome! Or as the house of Obededom where the Ark of the Lord may dwell in peace. Our prayer must be that of Abraham’s, “My Lord, if now I have found favor in Your sight, pass not away, I pray You, from Your servant.”

The most important word of our text is *stranger* and its light casts a hue of strangeness over the whole passage. Here are three strange things. The first is, *that the Lord Jesus should be a Stranger here below*. Is it not a strange thing that, “He was in the world, and the world was made by Him,” and yet He was a stranger in it? Yet is it not a whit more strange than true, for when He was born there was no room for Him in the inn? Inns had open doors for ordinary strangers, but not for Him, for He was a greater Stranger than any around Him. It was Bethlehem of David, the seat of the ancient family to which He belonged, but alas, He had become “a Stranger unto His brethren, and an alien unto His mother’s children”! And no door was opened unto Him.

Soon there was no safe room for Him in the village, itself, for Herod the king sought the young Child’s life and He must flee into Egypt, to be a Stranger in a strange land and worse than a stranger—an exile and a fugi-

tive from the land where, by birthright, He was king! On His return and in His public appearing, there was still no room for Him among the mass of the people. He came to His own Israel—to whom Prophets had revealed Him and types had set Him forth—but they would have none of Him. “He was despised and rejected of men.” He was the Man “whom men abhorred,” whom they so much detested that they cried, “Away with Him! Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” Yes, the world so little knew Him that they must necessarily hang up the Lord of Glory on a Cross and put “the Holy One and the Just” to a felon’s death! Jew and Gentile alike conspired to prove how truly He was a stranger—the Jew said, “As for this Fellow, we know not from where He is.” And the Roman asked Him, “Where are You from?”

Now, that Christ should be such a Stranger was, indeed, a sadly singular thing, and yet we need not wonder, for how should a wicked, selfish world know Jesus or receive Him? The Lord’s own had been forewarned of this in ancient type, for long before the Lord appeared in the flesh, He had shown Himself as a Stranger to the faithful. He came in angelic form to Abraham and thus we read the story—“And he lifted up his eyes and looked and, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground. And said, My Lord, if now I have found favor in Your sight, pass not away, I pray you, from Your servant: Let a little water, I pray You, be fetched, and wash Your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree: and I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort you your hearts.”

The Lord, who stands out in the center of the three, was a Stranger, and the father of the faithful entertained Him, in type of what all the faithful of every age will do. This is He of whom Jeremiah said, “O the hope of Israel, the Savior thereof in time of trouble, why should You be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turns aside to tarry for a night?” Yet with this fair warning, it still remains sadly singular that, coming on an errand of mercy, our Lord should find so scant a welcome; should be so little known; so seldom recognized, so harshly entreated. Truly as Egypt made Israel to serve with rigor, so have we made this patient Stranger to serve with our sins and wearied Him with our iniquities.

The Son of Man had not where to lay His head. Luke says the barbarians showed Paul and his friends no little kindness—but men were worse than barbarians to their Savior! Shall the servant be better treated than his master, or the disciple than his Lord? “Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knows us not, because it knew Him not.” Another strange thing is that *we should be able to receive the Lord Jesus as a stranger*. He has gone into Glory and will He always say of us, “I was a

stranger and you took Me in"? Yes, He will say so, if we render to Him that spiritual hospitality of which He here speaks.

This can be done in several ways. Brothers and Sisters in Christ, for such I trust you are, we can receive Christ as a stranger when Believers are few and despised in any place. We may sojourn where worldliness abounds and religion is at a discount—and it may need some courage to swear our faith in Jesus. Then have we an opportunity of winning the approving word, "I was a stranger, and you took Me in." There is a sure proof of love in receiving our Lord as a stranger. If the Queen desired, again, to visit Mentone, every villa would be gladly placed at her disposal! But were she driven from her empire and reduced to be a poor stranger, hospitality to her would be a greater test of loyalty than it is today.

When Jesus is in low esteem in any place, and He sometimes is so, let us be all the more bold to acknowledge our allegiance to Him. I fear that many professors take their color from their company and are fellows with the irreligious and the unbelieving. These cry, "Hosanna," with the multitude of the Lord's admirers, but in heart they have no love to the Son of God. Our loyalty to Christ must never be a matter of latitude and longitude—we must love Him in every land, honor Him when the multitude disregard Him—and we must speak of Him when all forget Him. Again, we have the Lord's own warrant for saying that if we show brotherly kindness to a poor saint we entertain the Lord, Himself.

If we see Christians in need, or despised and ridiculed and we say, "You are my Brother in Christ. It matters not what garb you wear, the name of Christ is named on you and I suffer with you. I will relieve your needs and share your reproach," then the glorious Lord, Himself, will say to us at the last, "Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these, My brethren, you have done it unto Me." It does seem passing strange, though I thus speak, that you and I should still be able to entertain our Lord and yet it is so! We do not wonder that the righteous, with a humble truthfulness exclaim, "Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You? Or thirsty and gave You drink? When did we see You a stranger and took You in?" Neither are we free from admiring surprise. We also cry, "Will God in very deed dwell with men upon the earth? Will He accept hospitality at *our* hands?" It is even so!

Again, we may entertain the Stranger, Christ, by holding fast to His faithful Word when the doctrines taught by Himself and His Apostles are in ill repute. Nowadays the Truth which God has revealed seems of less account with men than their own thoughts and dreams! And they who still believe Christ's faithful Word shall have it said of them, "I was a stranger and you took Me in." When you see the revealed Truth of God, as it were, wandering about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, af-

flicted, tormented, and no man says a good word for it, then is the hour come to acknowledge it because it is Christ's Truth—and to prove your fidelity by counting the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt!

Oh, scorn on those who only believe what everybody else believes because they must be in the swim with the majority! These are but dead fish borne of the current and they will be washed away to a shameful end! If living fish swim against the stream, so do living Christians pursue Christ's Truth against the set and current of the times, defying alike the ignorance and the culture of the age! It is the Believer's honor, the chivalry of a Christian, to be the steadfast friend of the Truth of God when all other men have forsaken it. So, also, when Christ's precepts are disregarded, His day forgotten and His worship neglected, we can come in, take up our cross and follow Him—and so receive Him as a stranger.

To be sure, some will say, "Those people are fanatical Methodists, or strait-laced Presbyterians," but what of that? It matters nothing to us what the world thinks of us, for we are crucified to it and it to us! If our Lord has laid down a rule, it is ours to follow it and find rest unto our souls in so doing! Yes, and a special rest in doing it, when by so doing we are securing that blessed sentence, "I was a stranger, and you took Me in." Death, itself, for His sake, would be a small matter if thereby we secured that priceless word!

Once more, that spiritual life which is the innermost receiving of Christ—that new life which no man knows but he that has received it; that quickening of the Spirit which makes the Christian as much superior to ordinary men as men are above dumb, driven cattle—if we receive that blessed gift, then shall we with emphasis be entertaining our Lord as a stranger. Profession is abundant, but the secret life is rare. The name to live is everywhere, but where is the life fully seen? To *be* rather than to *talk*; to *enjoy* rather than to *pretend*; to have Christ truly within—this is not every man's attainment, but those who have it are among the God-like ones, the true sons of God!

A third strange thing is the fact that *Jesus will deign to dwell in our hearts*. Such a One as Jesus in such a one as I am? The King of Glory in a sinner's bosom? This is a miracle of Divine Grace, yet the manner of it is simple enough. A humble, repenting faith opens the door and Jesus enters the heart at once. Love shuts the door with the hand of Penitence and holy Watchfulness keeps out intruders. Thus is the promise made good, "If any man hears My voice, and opens the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with Me." Meditation, contemplation, prayer, praise and daily obedience keep the house in order for the Lord!

And then follows the consecration of our entire nature to His use as a temple—the dedication of spirit, soul, body and all their powers, as holy vessels of the sanctuary! It is the writing of, “Holiness unto the Lord,” upon all that is about us till our everyday garments become vestments, our meals sacraments, our life a ministry and *ourselves* priests unto the Most High! Oh, the supreme condescension of this indwelling! He never dwelt in angels, but He resides in a contrite spirit! There is a world of meaning in the Redeemer’s words, “I in them.” May we know them as Paul translates them, “Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

II. A few words must suffice upon THE STRANGER MAKING STRANGERS INTO SONS. “As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.” Yes, Beloved, the moment Christ is received into our hearts by faith, we are no more strangers and foreigners, but of the household of God, for the Lord *adopts us* and puts us among His children! It is a splendid act of Divine Grace, that He should take us, who were heirs of wrath, and make us heirs of God, joint-heirs with Jesus Christ! Such honor have all the saints, even all that believe on His name.

There is more to follow—the designation of sons brings with it *a birth* into the actual condition of sons. The privilege brings with it the power; the name is backed up and warranted by the nature—for the Spirit of God enters into us, when Christ comes, and causes us to be born again. To be adopted without being born again would be a lame blessing, but when we are both adopted and *regenerated* then have we the fullness of sonship and the Grace is made perfect towards us. “Except a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” And this mysterious birth, which comes with the reception of Christ, makes us free, not only in the kingdom of God, but in the house and the heart of God!

Don’t forget that when the Lord Jesus enters our hearts, there springs up between us and Him a living, loving, *lasting union* which seals our sonship—for as we become one with the Son, we must be sons, also. Jesus puts it, “My Father and your Father.” It is the Spirit of His Son in our hearts by which we cry, “Abba, Father.” “He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.” We are unto the Father even as Jesus is, as He says, “You have loved them as You have loved Me.” Thus you see that in receiving Jesus, we receive, as the Revised Version puts it, “the right to become the sons of God.”

Yet once more—the practical reception of Jesus into the life becomes a proof to ourselves and others that we are the sons of God, for *it creates in us a likeness to God* which is apparent and unquestionable. For look, although Jehovah, our God, is incomprehensible and Infinite, and His Glory is inconceivable in its splendor, yet this fact we know of Him, that in His

bosom lies His Son, with whom He is always well-pleased. When we receive Jesus into our bosom, as one with us, and when our joy and delight are in Him, we do, in that matter, become like the Father. Having thus, with the Father, the same Object of love and delight, we are brought into fellowship with Him and begin to walk in the Light of God as He is in the Light.

A small window will let in the great sun—much more will Jesus, as the blessed meeting place between our souls and God—let in the Life, Light and Love of God into our souls, making us like God! Moreover, having received Jesus as a stranger, we feel a tenderness towards all strangers, for we see in their condition some resemblance to our own. We have love to all who, like ourselves, are strangers with God and sojourners, as all our fathers were, and thus again we are made like God, of whom it is written, “The Lord preserves the strangers.” Our God is “kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.” Our Lord Jesus, therefore, bade us be the children of our Father which is in Heaven, “For He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.”

By becoming doers of good, we are known as children of the good God. “Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.” A man is a son of God when he lives beyond himself by a thoughtful care for others; when his soul is not confined within the narrow circle of his own ribs, but goes abroad to bless those around him, however unworthy they may be. True children of God never see a lost one without seeking to save him; never hear of misery without longing to bestow comfort. “You know the heart of a stranger,” said the Lord to Israel. And so do we, for we were once captives, ourselves, and even now our choicest Friend is still a stranger, for whose sake we love all suffering men.

When Christ is in us, we search out opportunities for bringing prodigals, strangers and outcasts to the great Father's house. Our love goes out to all mankind and our hands are closed against none if it is so that we are made like God, as little children are like their father. Oh, sweet result of entertaining the Son of God by faith! He dwells in us and we gaze upon Him in holy fellowship so that, “we all with open face beholding as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

“Love is of God and everyone that loves is born of God and knows God.” May we daily feel the power of Jesus within our hearts, transforming our whole character and making us to be more and more manifestly the children of God! When our Lord asks, concerning us, “What manner of men were they?” may even His enemies and ours be compelled to answer, “As You are, so were they—each one resembled the children of a King.” Then

shall Jesus be admired in all them that believe, for men shall see in the children, the Divine Stranger's handiwork.

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OPEN HEART FOR THE GREAT SAVIOR NO. 669

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, DECEMBER 17, 1865,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become
the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name:
who were born, not of blood,
nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”
John 1:12.***

DIVINE Truth is one, but it is many-sided. When you have looked at it from one point of view you may reverse your position, and, though the Truth at which you look will be the same, you will marvel at its freshness as seen from another aspect. This morning we sought to show you how Jesus Christ received sinners [Volume 11, Sermon #665—*Open House for All Comers.*] Tonight it shall be our endeavor, as the Holy Spirit may enable us, to set forth how *sinners receive Christ*.

It is perfectly true that the work of salvation lies first and mainly in Jesus receiving sinners to Himself to pardon, to cleanse, to sanctify, to preserve, to make perfect. But, at the same time the sinner also receives Christ. There is an act on the sinner's part by which, being constrained by Divine Grace, he opens his heart to the admission of Jesus Christ and Jesus enters in and dwells in the heart, and reigns and rules there. To a gracious readiness of heart to entertain the Friend who knocks at the door, we are brought by God the Holy Spirit, and then He sups with us and we with Him.

We shall take, tonight, the view of the subject opened up before us by this text. We shall begin by simply and shortly describing how the sinner receives Christ. Secondly, the privilege, or power, which is conferred as the result of this reception of Christ. And thirdly, the great change which is involved in the fact that the sinner has received Christ, the fact that the sinner has been born again from above, “not of the will of man, but of God.”

I. As briefly, then, as may be, and very simply, indeed, we will describe **WHAT IT IS FOR THE SINNER TO RECEIVE CHRIST**. This receiving Christ lies in several things. If a man would receive Christ he must, first of all, receive Him in His Person as He is revealed in the Sacred Scriptures. We are taught over and over again in Scripture that Jesus Christ is Immanuel, God with us, God manifest in the flesh, Jehovah's equal in fashion as a man.

The “WORD”—that “Word” of which it is said, “the Word was God”—was “made manifest” in flesh among men, and they “beheld His glory.” Though He “thought it not robbery to be equal with God,” yet “He made Himself of no reputation, but took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in

the likeness of men.” This was a new and startling doctrine when first preached to heathen sages, that God should take humanity into so intimate a connection with Himself, as really and truly to be Man and God in the same Person.

But it is a doctrine which must be received by you or else you cannot receive Christ. My Master will not be satisfied with the acknowledgment that His Character is lovely, His doctrine pure, and His moral teaching super-excellent. He will not be content with your admission that He is a Prophet greater than any Prophet that ever came before or after Him. He will not rest satisfied with your admission that He is a teacher sent from Heaven, and a Being who, on account of His virtues, is now peculiarly exalted in Heaven.

All this is well, but it is not enough! You must also believe that He, who as Man was born of the Virgin, and was dandled upon her lap at Bethlehem, was as God none other than the everlasting Lord, without beginning of days or end of years. You do not receive Christ in very deed and truth unless you believe in His proper humanity and actual Godhead. Indeed, what is there for you to receive if you do not receive this? A Savior who is not Divine can be no Savior for us! How can a mere man, however eminent, deliver his fellows from sins such as yours and mine? How can he bear the burden of our guilt any more than we can ourselves bear it, if there is no more about him than about any other singularly virtuous man?

An angel would stagger beneath the load of human criminality, and much more would this be the case with even a *perfect* man. It needed those mighty shoulders—“Which bear the earth’s huge pillars up,” to sustain the weight of human sin, and carry it into the wilderness of forgetfulness! You must receive Christ, in order to be saved by Him, as being God though man. But, my dear Friends, the mere belief of this doctrine will not save anybody! There are many persons who have no need to fear the curses of the Athanasian Creed, nor the test of any other dogmatic way of expressing the fact of the Deity of Christ. But they are, nevertheless, very far from having received Christ Jesus Himself! A man may believe another to be a clever physician, and yet if he has a personal objection to him, he may refuse to receive him as such.

If a man would receive Jesus rightly, he must, in the next place, accept Him in all His offices. Our blessed Lord has three main offices. We find Him spoken of as “Prophet,” “Priest,” and “King,” and men must be willing to take Him in each and all of the three. As a “Prophet” He teaches—what He has received of God He manifests to man. Am I willing to abide by His teaching? Do I take His words, and the words which He delivered by His Apostles, as being my directory and rule? I have a certain “doxy” which some call, “heterodoxy,” but which, perhaps, I think to be “orthodoxy.” Can I sincerely say that Jesus Christ is the Dictator of my orthodoxy?

Do I take Him and His teaching to be the Truth by which I will abide? I find one Church holding one creed, and another Church holding another. Do I look at all these standards of faith, and say of them, “I will follow them as far as they follow Christ, but neither to cardinal, bishop, synod, nor presbytery will I yield my faith”? I must first know whether the teach-

ing of these men is in accordance with the teaching of Him whom I take to be my Master and my Teacher. Whether you are Calvinists, or Arminians, or anything else, dear Friends, be first and chiefly Christians—Christians following Christ—receiving Him as the great Expositor to you of God, and of the great Truths of Revelation.

You will tell me you have your “bodies of divinity.” There never was but one “body of divinity,” and that was the “body” of the Man, Christ Jesus! Do you, abating all prejudices and self-formed opinions, receive our Lord as the great embodiment of Truth? The truest and the best system of theology is Jesus Christ! If you learn Him you have all Truth—you have nothing in excess, and nothing is omitted. He is the mold of Truth into which your prepared mind must be delivered to receive form and shape from His perfect wisdom. Our hearts must receive Him as the Truth of God—

***“You are the Truth, Your Word alone
True wisdom can impart.
To You I yield a willing mind,
And open all my heart.”***

If I receive Jesus as “Prophet,” I must also take Him as “Priest.” Herein, indeed, mainly lies His work. He came to purify men from sin. He stood before God offering a sacrifice of propitiation by which the guilt of man is removed. If I am not willing to receive Him as an atoning sacrifice, it is in vain for me to esteem Him as an exemplar. His Cross of Atonement is inseparable from Himself. We must not only glory in Christ but in Him Crucified, or else we shall surely be led forth with His enemies. Jesus must be my only ground of confidence for pardon. I must leave all human priests. I must have done with all trusting in priest-craft in any shape or form, whether it is in the Popish, Anglican, or any other fashion.

I must neither make myself a priest, nor look upon any other man as being priest for me. I must look upon Jesus Christ as being the only Priest in whom I confide—for, mark you—my Master claims the sole prerogative of priesthood and He only permits us, His people, to hold it as being in Him. And then we all, without exception, can say—“He has made us kings and priests unto God.” But any special form of priesthood, peculiar to a certain class, is as alien to the spirit of Christianity as any dogma can possibly be. Every regenerated man becomes a priest by virtue of his union with Christ Jesus. But out of this union, it is treason to think of priesthood.

You have not received Christ as the truly regenerated children of God have received Him unless you have accepted Him as the Anointed of God, the *only* Priest in whom to trust for the salvation of your soul—

***“I other priests disclaim,
And laws, and offerings, too.
None but the bleeding Lamb
The mighty work can do.
He shall have all the praise, for He
Has loved, and lived, and died for me.”***

If I yield to the Lord Jesus Christ as Prophet and Priest, I must also give Him allegiance as my “King.” He will reign where He purifies. He is not content to teach me, but He will also govern me. What do you say, my Hearers? Will you give yourself up, body and soul, to be ruled absolutely

by Christ? Shall His Laws be binding upon your conscience and carried out in your life?

Do you say now, as before the Searcher of all hearts—"I desire in everything to be guided by Him, to submit myself to His absolute control"? You cannot really and truly receive the Savior unless you are willing to do this. God has not sent His Son to be the messenger of sin! He will forgive your past offenses, but you must in the future submit yourselves to His gentle sway. "Kiss the Son," is one of the first Gospel commands—"Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the Way when His wrath is kindled but a little." Remember the doom of those men who said, "We will not have this Man to reign over us."

Take His easy yoke. Bow before His Throne of love. Touch the silver scepter of His Divine Grace. "He is your Lord, and worship Him." Crown Him in the palace of your soul and set Him on the throne of your affections, for He is the King of angels and should be the King of men—

***"My King supreme, to You I bow,
A willing subject at Your feet.
All other Lords I disavow,
And to Your government submit.
My Savior King this heart would love,
And imitate the blest above."***

Can we, dear Friends, thus accept Christ tonight, as Prophet, Priest, and King? If not, it is idle to talk about receiving Jesus Christ—we do not know Him—and are not known of Him! Our Lord is not to be divided and parceled out. You must have Him altogether or not at all. You must admit Him in all His offices, or He will not come under your roof.

But a man may agree to all this and yet not receive Christ! All this is necessary as a steppingstone, but we must go on to something more. I must receive Jesus Christ as being all this to me. I must give myself to Him and take Him as mine, as having near relationship to me and influence upon me. Another man's Christ will not save you. He must be *your* Christ. You have been accustomed to go to a place of worship and you think, perhaps, "Well, I have gone with the rest, and therefore it is all right with me." And when you have heard a sermon it has been addressed to the congregation in the plural and you have been content to get a little share of it, but a very little one, indeed.

Now, you have never heard aright unless the Truth has come to you in the *singular* number, as to *you* alone. The gate of salvation is too narrow for two persons to go through arm-in-arm. You must all singly and separately pass the portal of Eternal Life just as you did the portal of natural life. You must feel not only that such and such things are true, but that they are true to *you*. If you receive our dear Redeemer as a Prophet, He begins to exercise that office by telling you that you are naturally lost, ruined, and undone. Do you believe this? Do you believe it to be true of you—not of chimney-sweeps, not of streetwalkers, not only of thieves in prison, but of you—that you are condemned under the Law of God? Do you take home the doctrine of the Fall, and of the depravity of human nature as being true to *you*?

He tells you, next, that the only way to remove your sin is by His precious blood. Has that blood any reference to you? Have you trusted it?

Has it washed you from sin? You have not taken the Lord Jesus as a Priest unless you have believed in His blood as presenting a propitiation for your sins, and as cleansing you before the holy Presence of the Most High God. You have not truly accepted Jesus as King unless you have personally submitted yourself to Him. In everything else people are so self-ish that nothing but personal possession will content them! Why are they not thus careful in religious matters?

They do not rejoice in the gold in the bank cellars—they aspire to have a good account at their own bank account. They do not consider themselves fed because there may happen to be a fine dinner provided at the London Tavern—they wish to see a feast on their own tables. But in eternal matters of infinitely more importance, men are, alas, so satisfied with generalities. “Yes! Oh yes, we are a Christian nation.” Wonderfully so! “Of course, we, as a family always go to a place of worship. We are not heathens! We were born in a Christian land.” A “Christian land.” It is, we must all admit, a very Christian land!

Very Christian, indeed! Look at our gin palaces and our divorce courts! But what of that? How can national religion content private conscience any more than national wealth can console personal poverty? Still, the most of men care so little about their souls that they are satisfied with generalities! They do not come to particulars, to personalities. Why should they be so particular in other matters and not in religion? Why seek a personal interest in gold and land and estates, and then leave Heaven and the eternal world to be matters of universal speculation? You have not received Christ truly if you have not gripped Him with your own hands and claimed Him as your own!

You must get right hold of Him for yourselves. There is no receiving a thing unless the thing received is held by the receiver. Water is poured into a vessel and anything received is contained within the thing receiving it. So Christ Jesus must come right into you, into personal, conscious relationship with your own spirit so as to act upon you and influence you or else you have not received Him! I hope I shall not make what is very plain, very difficult.

One is sometimes afraid, in giving explanations, that one may do what a good Divine did with Bunyan’s “Pilgrim’s Progress” which he edited with explanatory notes. He went round among his flock and said to one good woman, “Do you understand Mr. Bunyan’s Pilgrim?” “Oh yes, Sir,” was the answer, “very well, indeed. And I hope that one day I shall be able to understand your explanations.” So, perhaps, you will say of me, that you understand the text very well, and you hope that one day you will be able to understand my explanations!

Well, I really do not know how to make it more plain. My desire is to say very distinctly that we must receive the Lord Jesus Christ as a Divine Being—receive Him in all His offices—and receive Him to ourselves in all those offices. The pith and marrow of receiving Christ we find in the next remark: we must *trust* Him. The true reception of Christ is explained in the text, “Even to them that believe on His name.” To “receive” then, is to “believe,” or, in other words, to credit, to rely upon, to *trust*.

Now this is the simplest matter in all the world, and yet, by reason of its simplicity, it is the hardest possible act for human nature to perform. So hard, that although faith still remains the act of man, it is an act which he never performs till he receives faith as the *gift of God*. We do not naturally care for a plan of salvation so simple and devoid of merit—but there it is and we cannot alter it—nor ought we desire to do so. As many as trust Christ, to them He gives power to become the sons of God. The whole act of faith lies in the simple matter of *believing* that Jesus is God's appointed Savior, and then throwing ourselves upon Him to save us.

You know what trust is in *earthly* matters. You rely upon a friend in cases of difficulty, and then you do not trouble yourself about the matter any more. A person offers to pay your debts and you go home and consider yourself out of debt—you trust the person. Now Jesus says to you, "I have suffered for the sin of all Believers. God can now forgive sin and yet be a just God. He has punished *Me* instead of sinners who believe on Me. Trust Me. Rely upon Me and your reliance will be at once evidence to you that I died for you—that I carried your sin—that God punished Me for you. He, therefore, never can punish *you* because in justice He cannot punish both Substitute and offender for one and the same sin."

God can never punish Christ for your sin and then lay the sin at your door. He will not send your Substitute to the wars for you and then demand you to go for whom the Substitute has already gone. The act of trusting Jesus Christ is the act which brings a soul into a state of Grace and is the mark and evidence of our being bought with the blood of the Lord Jesus. Do you *trust* Him, dear Hearers? Then, if so, you *receive* Him. When the soul has thus trusted Christ there comes another form of reception. The outer golden door of faith being first opened, the inner pearly gate of affection is next thrown open. They who trust Christ, *love* Christ—

**"Sure I must love, or are my ears
Still deaf, nor will my passions move?
Lord! Melt this flinty heart to tears—
This heart shall yield to death or love."**

I do not love Christ first, and *then* trust Him. I, in the dawn of spiritual life, trust Him to save me. I find He does save me and I then love Him because He first loved me. I trust Him to deliver me out of the bondage of my daily sins. And then I find that I am stronger against those sins than I ever was before—that I can tread a corruption under foot when I trust Jesus, which I could not battle with before I trusted Him. I find He really does come to my rescue, and therefore I then say to him, "I love You, O my Helper and Friend." And from that time on Jesus Christ lives in my heart!

We cannot help using expressions such as, "Christ living in us," "Jesus formed in us," and the like, when talking about these things. And to spiritual men they are very simple, but to the carnal mind they are very difficult. Let us in a word expound them. Just as when a man is attached to a certain friend, that friend is said to, "live in his heart." So Jesus lives in the hearts of His people because they love Him.

And, just as when a man has devoted himself to the pursuit of science, that science fills his soul, lives in his soul, makes an abode of it, makes a kingdom of it where it will rule and reign. So, love to Jesus, faith in Him,

and devotion to His cause enter into the soul of the Believer and fill it, and thus that soul receives Him. The first door is the door of simple faith—a door which has been opened in many a sinner's heart by the loving hand of the Holy Spirit—a door, which we pray, may be opened in yours tonight. Oh, how gently does the door of faith turn on its hinges! A babe taught of God may push it open!

You may not understand all the doctrines of the Bible but you can understand this—if you trust in Jesus Christ you will be a son of God! You cannot perform a complex act of an educated mind. Sympathy with poetic imagery and enjoyment of metaphysical refinements are quite beyond you. But if the Holy Spirit teaches you, you will see that the act of faith is not a complex act, but a very simple one, indeed! It is so simple that children of three and four years of age have doubtless been capable of it. And there have been many persons but very little removed from absolute idiocy who have been able to believe.

A doctrine which needs to be reasoned out may require a high degree of mental development—but the simple act of *trusting* requires nothing of the kind. If you cannot read a letter in a book you may believe this—that God came down from Heaven in the Person of Jesus Christ and suffered for sin Himself that He might forgive sin and yet be just. I wonder that a man can hear it and not believe it! It is an amazing thing that such good news is not at once believed. Let me repeat it, and oh, may the blessed Spirit work faith in you who hear it! God was so just that He could not forgive sin without violating His Nature! He must award punishment to transgression.

But to make mercy consistent with the severest justice, the Lawgiver came Himself among men and gave His own shoulders to the scourge, and stretched out His own hands to feel the nails, to suffer, bleed, and die! And now if you trust God in the Person of Christ, and do rely upon Him to put away your sin. And if you take Him from now on to be your King and Ruler, you shall be saved! God be thanked that we have so simple a Gospel to preach and may the Lord bring many to receive it, that they may become His sons!

II. We now turn to THE GREAT PRIVILEGE, which is said in the text to be given to those who trust in the Son of God. “But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God.” The word “power” here may be translated “privilege,” and one of the older commentators and translators renders it “honor.” “To them gave He the honor to become the sons of God.” Now, what is it to be a “son of God”? This theme demands a seraph to discourse upon it! Yes, even an *archangel* might fail to describe what it is to be a son of God!

Certainly it is a point of dignity beyond what any angel ever attained. “Unto which of the angels said He at any time, You are My son, this day have I begotten you?” But every man, woman, and child that believes in Jesus Christ is from that time on a child of God. You know what it is to be the son of a good man and true, and some of you would not willingly renounce your birthright. You claim from your father a child's privileges. You expect, that being a son, you shall inherit certain rights, and those rights you will duly receive.

If I could stand here tonight and say I were a king's son, many would be wonderfully envious. But what do you say to *this*—I claim to be one of the sons of God? Does no man's heart aspire to this felicity? Are there no spirits which pine for this dignity? Oh, the stolid baseness which does not rise to a desire after this glory! Do not suppose that when we say "son of God," we merely use a metaphor without meaning! No, every person who believes in Christ Jesus is entitled to all rights and privileges which go with son-ship relationship in any case, but which emphatically go with son-ship in the case of a son of God!

What, then, are we entitled to, and what do we receive? A complete list I cannot attempt to make out for you, but as my mind suggests the gifts of adoption, they shall come before you. If we are the sons of God, we are dearly beloved of God. Did you ever try to get that thought into your mind, that God loves you? I can understand that God *pities* me—that is a feeling which so vastly superior a Being might well feel to so inferior an existence—but that He *loves* me is scarcely conceivable, although it is most sure and certain! Who can drink this well dry? Who can bear home this fruitful sheaf of delights, this purple cluster of Eshcol?

Sons of God are loved of their Father with a love surpassing thought! They are, indeed, intimately related as well as dearly loved. There is a union between God and His sons. There is the same Nature in the son as there is in the Father, for we become "partakers of the Divine Nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." These are no words of mine, but of the Holy Spirit! One would not have dared to have uttered them if inspiration had not made them ready to our hand. We are most near and dear to the blessed God who fills all in all. Being sons we are graciously treated. "Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him." "He spares them as a man spares his own son that serves him." Goodness and mercy shall follow us all the days of our life and we shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Being sons, again, we are wisely educated. Parents do not think they have done their duty unless they bring their children up to understand knowledge, and to be fitted to take their part with full grown men. We are trained in the school of God. We receive chastisement and are made to smart under His rod. We read in the illuminated Book of His Grace, and are "made meet," when fully educated, "to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." "All your children shall be taught of the Lord." There is no school like that in which love is the head master. As children we are admitted to a familiarity which servants cannot know. A child may say and do to his father what no stranger could.

God manifests Himself to us as He does not unto the world. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His Covenant. We have access to God at all hours! The Father's door is never locked against His much-loved children. Our cry He knows even as a father knows his child's cry from every other sound. All our needs are provided for, and our Father's loving heart watches over all our wanderings and forgives all our offenses. Remember that a father's relationship is one which cannot be suspended.

I know the old proverb says, "A father's a father till he gets a new wife," which implies that he is not afterwards, but that only means as to his *actions*, for he must be a father always. He cannot break off that relationship. He must cease to be before he can cease to be a father so long as his children live. When I have heard people say that you may be a child of God one day and a child of the devil the next, I have felt inclined to buy them a dictionary so that they might know the meaning of the word "father." What a mistake! What a misuse of words do they commit! If I am my father's child I am so, and there is no power, human or Divine—I speak with reverence—that can disown me!

Adoption might cease to operate, but *birth*, never! I must be the child of him that begat me. And so, if I am a child of God, begotten unto God by the incorruptible seed of His Word, there is no power, infernal or Divine, that can possibly rob me, as a child of God, of this privilege! As a child I am, and a child I must be. So then, we have honorable standing, safe, abiding, blessed inheritance, and perfected education all belonging—to whom? Why, to as many as receive Christ! That is, to as many as trust Him! Poor trembling Soul, why should not *you* be in that number?

III. The third point was to be, THE GREAT WORK, WHICH IS NECESSARILY INVOLVED IN THIS ACT OF RECEIVING CHRIST. Every man who trusts the Lord Jesus has been born again. The question was once argued in an assembly of Divines as to whether a person first had faith or regeneration, and it was suggested that it was a question which must forever be unanswerable. The process, if such it is, must be simultaneous—no sooner does the Divine life come into the soul than it believes on Christ. You might as well ask whether in the human body there is first the circulation of the blood or the heaving of the lungs—both are essential ingredients in life, and must come at the same time.

If I believe in Jesus Christ I need not ask any question as to whether I am regenerated, for no unregenerate person ever could believe in the Lord Jesus Christ! And if regenerated I must believe in Jesus, for he who does not do so is clearly dead in sin. See, then, the folly of persons talking about being regenerated who have no faith! It cannot be! It is impossible! We can have no knowledge of such a thing as regeneration which is not accompanied with some degree of mental motion and consciousness.

Regeneration is not a thing which takes place upon *matter*—it is a thing of *spirit*. The birth of the spirit must be the subject of consciousness, and though a man may not be able to say that at such and such a moment he was regenerated, yet the act of faith is a consciousness of regeneration. The moment I believe in Jesus Christ my faith is an index to me of a work that has gone on within. And the secret work within, and the open act of faith which God has joined together let no man put asunder. Those who believe not are unregenerate, though they may have been sprinkled by the best priest who ever had Episcopal hands laid on his head!

If a man believes not he is unregenerate, whether baptized or not. But if he believes, he is regenerate, though he may never have been baptized at all. Baptism may outwardly express regeneration after it has been received, and then the symbol becomes valuable—but without faith there

can be no regeneration, even though Baptism is administered a thousand times!

Observe what kind of new birth it is which all Believers have received. It is one which comes “not of bloods,” (so the original has it). Neither by the blood of circumcision, nor of the Passover, nor especially by the blood of descent. Sin runs in the blood, if you will, but Divine Grace does not. We are not born Christians by the mere fact of our being the children of godly Christian people. Neither are we born Christians “of the will of man.” The best men in the world cannot create us anew—if they pray for us ever so much—the power of their will apart from the will of God cannot avail.

We are not born “of the will of the flesh,” that is to say, our own free will does not cause it. If a man could will himself into a state of newness of heart, the fact of his being willing to be in such a state would, I suppose, be evidence of his being in that state already—but the human will is powerless in itself to produce regeneration. We must be born again from above! The Holy Spirit must, by His Divine energy, enter into us and make us new creatures—for such a heavenly birth is essential to eternal life.

Now, I think I hear some troubled conscience saying, “When you said just now that if I trusted in Christ I should be saved, I rejoiced, but when you say we must be born again, that saying seems so mysterious that I am troubled.” My dear Friend, there is no need to be troubled. If you trust in Christ, then you *are* born again! I have already told you that there is no possibility of a soul ever truly relying upon the Savior unless there has been a previous new birth to produce his faith.

If you are, tonight, able to put your whole trust in Jesus Christ as God’s dear Son, and to take Him to be yours, though your new birth may be too mysterious a thing for you to know much about it, for, “the wind blows where it likes, and you hear the sound of it, but can not tell from where it comes, and where it goes.” Yet, your faith is a sufficient index that you are really a partaker of the new birth. I do not want to open the boiler of a steam engine for the sake of knowing what quantity of water there is in it—I am perfectly satisfied by looking at the “tell-tale.”

Now faith is the “tell-tale” of the human soul! Where there is faith there is new life. Where there is no faith there is no life. There is no need to dissect a man, anatomize him, and cut him up in order to find out his spirit—you would destroy him in so doing. But when you see the man has action, motion, energy—when you put your hand upon his breast and feel the heaving of the lungs—you know that there is life. Now, if I may so say, faith is the heaving of the spiritual lungs! If you believe in Jesus Christ you are a living man—you have been born, “not of the will of man, but of God.”

I should like to ask one question before I am done—have all of you received Christ? “Yes,” or “No”? You good people up in the gallery there, I am not going to ask you where you worship generally, nor to what Church you belong, but have you received Christ? “Well, Sir, we were baptized.” I do not care a farthing at this moment whether you were baptized or not! I leave that question till we have settled an earlier one. Have you received Christ? “Well, we take the sacrament.” Never mind that! Have you received Christ? Do you trust Him and Him only?

To the point now—can your soul say—

**“On Christ the solid Rock I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand”?**

Have you received Jesus Christ, each one of you? And if you have not, why not? Is there anything so hard in receiving Him? I have sometimes thought I should like to tell the tale of the Cross for the first time to a number of savages who would just have sufficient culture to understand it—God was made flesh and dwelt among us. And rather than men should suffer God suffered Himself! And because Justice required punishment, “He bore the punishment instead” of sinners. Why, I think I see their eyes glistening, and I think their hearts must melt!

But you have heard the tale so often that it has become an old story to you! However, I would like to put the question to you again—have you received Jesus Christ? “Well, I have not had much experience,” laments one, and another says, “I do not know much,” and another cries, “We have had family prayer for twenty years,” and another says, “My name is down for twenty guineas in several charitable institutions.” Well, all that is very well, but I do not care about any of these matters tonight! All I want to know is, have you received Christ?

“Oh!” says one, “Of course! I was always brought up to it.” But you cannot be “brought up to it.” You must be brought *down* to it by being born again! There must be a change in your *nature*. We do not preach the Gospel, as I have said before, to the depraved and debauched alone. We preach it to you good, excellent people—you whose honesty in trade, and whose moral character set you on high among your fellows, as upon a pinnacle. Even YOU must be born again! Ladies and Gentlemen, *you* must be born again, as well as the lowest of the low and the poorest of the poor. We have the same Gospel to preach to Her Majesty the Queen as we have to the sinners in a refuge or the rogues in a reformatory. We know of no difference in this matter between any of you. A difference of morality there is, and we are thankful for it—but you must be born again as much as the worst rebels in the world!

And you below here, have you received Christ? I know that many of you have, and that your hearts leap at the sound of His name. You can say—

**“Jesus, the very thought of You,
With rapture fills my breast.”**

But there are *some* of you who have not received Christ—I mean not merely you who are occasional hearers—but my constant hearers. You have received *me*—you believe what I say—but you have not received Christ, and you do not believe what HE tells you. It is one thing to believe in your minister, but quite another to believe in Jesus Christ! I pray you never stop short in receiving anything because we say it, or because we seem to prove it—you must get it burned into you as with a red-hot iron by God the Holy Spirit’s power or else it will be of no service to you.

I stood a few hours ago at the bedside of one of our Brethren in Christ who seemed sorely sick and at the point of death. He could not speak aloud but the soft and gentle words which he whispered in my ear were very precious. He had not his peace to make with God in his last hour—he had not *then* to seek Christ—but was full of perfect peace and rejoicing in unbroken calm. “He will not leave me, will He?” he asked—“He cannot

deny Himself. I may sink, but I cannot sink lower than He will go, for underneath me are the everlasting arms.”

Oh, my Brothers and Sisters, the mere letter of Gospel doctrine will not do to die on—you must have the *spirit* of it in your heart or you cannot be comforted by it! Believe me, it is stern work to die. A Christian dies peacefully, but it is no child’s play, even to him. Some of us, when we have been sick and racked with pain, know that we have had to search for our evidences with much care and anxiety. I have turned over many a moldy old deed that laid by in the chest of my evidences to try if I could—

**“Read my title clear
To mansions in the skies,”**

and glad enough have I been to light on some such word as this—

**“Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee,”**

and to sing—

**“Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to Your Cross I cling.”**

But, my Hearers, what of some of you? The day is coming when the great assemblies of this house will seem but as nothing—when this immense gathering will be but as a drop in a bucket compared with that greater gathering! The trumpet, ringing through earth and Heaven, shall awaken the dead! The righteous and the wicked shall stand in judgment. We shall all be there—this company shall have no exception—there shall be no excuse for being absent on that tremendous day, and then there will be no question which will have so much weight as this one—HAVE YOU RECEIVED CHRIST?

I think I see the Reaper coming. He is hastening to gather the vintage of the world, for the grapes are fully ripe. The ungodly must be gathered first and there they are—thrown in clusters into the winepress of the wrath of God—while the dread angels of avenging Justice tread the grapes until the blood flows out. Will you be there among the accursed clusters of Sodom and Gomorrah? Will you be there, you men of London, you dwellers in Newington and Walworth, who hear the Gospel constantly—will you be cast into the winepress of Jehovah’s wrath? And shall the streets be red with *your* blood?

Or will you be yonder, where, with golden sickle, trusting no angel to do the work, Christ Himself shall reap His golden corn, ear after ear, and take it all home with shouts of delight to His Father’s garner? Will you see Him, in that day, as the God that died for *you*? Will you see Him with exultation? Will you meet Him in the air, and so be forever with the Lord? If so, then receive Jesus, and He will receive you. Take Him into your hearts and He will take you into Heaven. Take Him, His Cross, His people, His Gospel, His doctrines! Take Him, to “have and to hold” Him, “for better and for worse,” and then not even “death” shall “part” you, but you shall be with Him “in the day of His appearing.”

May the Lord seal His Word with His own blessing!

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THE GLORY OF CHRIST—BEHELD!

NO. 414

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 20, 1861,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and Truth.”
John 1:14.***

I CANNOT refrain from mentioning an incident connected with the perusal of the first chapter of John. I suppose there is not a passage in God’s Word which has not at some time or other been blessed to the conversion of a soul. Even the fifth chapter of Genesis which is so uninteresting to most readers, because the verses continually end, “And he died,” “And he died,” “And he died,” has been blessed to one—who from the reiteration of the fact that men who lived nine hundred years nevertheless died—was led to think of his own death.

Now the first chapter of John was the means of the conversion of a celebrated writer, Junius the younger, who did good service in the Church. His father, perceiving him to be an ungodly young man, put in his way as much as possible the New Testament and the following is an extract from Junius’ account of his own life. “My father, who was frequently reading the New Testament and had long observed with grief the progress I had made in infidelity, put that book in my way in his library in order to attract my attention, if it might please God to bless his design, though without giving me the least intimation of it.

“Here, therefore, I unwittingly opened the New Testament thus providentially laid before me. At the very first view, although I was deeply engaged in other thoughts, that grand chapter of the Evangelist and Apostle presented itself to me—‘In the beginning was the Word and the Word was God.’ I read part of the chapter and was so greeted that I instantly became struck with the divinity of the argument. I was amazed by the majesty and authority of the composition as infinitely surpassing the highest flights of human eloquence. My body shuddered. My mind was in amazement and I was so agitated the whole day that I scarcely knew who I was. Nor did the agitation cease, but continued till it was at last soothed by a humble faith in Him who was made flesh and dwelt among us.”

One of the Platonic philosophers who considered all Christian writers to be but barbarians, nevertheless said of the first chapter of John, “This barbarian has comprised more stupendous stuff in three lines than we have done in all our voluminous discourses.” And we will to this day glory

in the power of the Holy Spirit that an unlearned and ignorant man like John, the son of Zebedee the fisherman, should be enabled to write a chapter which excels not only the highest flight of eloquence, but the greatest depths of philosophy.

But now for the verse before us. I think, if you look attentively at it and if you are in some slender measure acquainted with the original, you will perceive that John here compares Christ to that which was the greatest glory of the Jewish Church. Let me read it, giving another translation—“The Word was made flesh and tabernacled among us and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and Truth.” Now you remember that in the Jewish Church its greatest glory was that God *tabernacled* in its midst—not the tent of Moses, not the various pavilions of the princes of the twelve tribes—but the humble tabernacle in which God dwelt was the boast of Israel.

They had the King Himself in the midst of them. A present God in their midst. The tabernacle was a tent to which men went when they would commune with God and it was the spot to which God came manifestly when He would commune with man. To use Matthew Henry’s words, it was the “trysting place” between the Creator and the worshipper. Here they met each other through the slaughter of the bullock and the lamb and there was reconciliation between them.

Now Christ’s human flesh was God’s tabernacle and it is in Christ that God meets with man and in Christ that man has dealings with God. The Jew of old went to God’s tent, in the center of the camp, if he would worship—we come to Christ if we would pay our homage. If the Jew would be released from ceremonial uncleanness—after he had performed the rites—he went up to the sanctuary of his God that he might feel again that there was peace between God and his soul. And we, having been washed in the precious blood of Christ, have access with boldness unto God, even the Father through Christ who is *our* tabernacle and the tabernacle *of God* among men.

Now let us draw the parallel a little further. The greatest *glory* of the tabernacle itself was the Most Holy Place. In the Most Holy Place there stood the ark of the covenant, bearing its golden lid called the mercy seat. Over the mercy seat stood the cherubim, whose wings met each other and beneath the wings of the cherubim there was a bright light known to the Hebrew believer by the name of the Shekinah. That light represented the presence of God. Immediately above that light there might be seen at night a pillar of fire and by day a spiral column of cloud rose from it—which no doubt expanded itself into one vast cloud which covered all the camp—and shielded all the Israelites from the blaze of the broiling sun.

The glory of the tabernacles, I say, was the Shekinah. What does our text say? Jesus Christ was God’s Tabernacle and, “we beheld His glory,

the glory as of the only begotten of the Father.” Jesus is not the tabernacle without the glory—He is not as the temple when the voice was heard with the rushing of winds before the siege of Jerusalem, crying, “Arise, let us go.” But it was a temple in which God Himself dwelt after a special manner—“for in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.”

The Apostle however points to a *surpassing excellence* in Christ the Tabernacle, by which He wondrously excels that of the Jewish Church. “Full of grace and Truth.” The Jewish tabernacle was rather full of Law than full of grace. It is true there were in its rites and ceremonies foreshadowings of grace. But still in repeated sacrifice there was renewed remembrance of sin and a man had first to be obedient to the Law of ceremonies before he could have access to the tabernacle at all—but Christ is full of *grace*—not a little of it but abundance of it is treasured up in Him. The tabernacle of old was not full of *Truth*, but full of image and shadow and symbol and picture.

But Christ is full of substance. He is not the picture—but the Reality. He is not the shadow—but the Substance. Herein, O Believer, do you rejoice with joy unspeakable—for you come unto Christ—the real Tabernacle of God. You come unto Him who is full of the glory of the Father. And you come unto One in whom you have not the representation of a grace which you need, but the grace *itself*—not the shadow of a Truth ultimately to be revealed, but that very Truth by which your soul is accepted in the sight of God. I put this forth as a matter for you to think over in your retirement.

It might have constituted the divisions of the sermon but as I want more especially to dwell upon the glory of Christ, we leave these observations as a preface and go more particularly to that part of the subject where the Apostle says, “We beheld His glory, the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and Truth.”

I. In the first place, we have here A FAVORED PEOPLE. “We beheld His glory.”

And who are these—the “we” to whom the Apostle here refers? They were first of all an *elect company*, for Jesus said, “I know whom I have chosen.” “You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you.” He came unto His own and His own received Him not. But they who did receive Him are described as men who were “born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” The elect in Christ’s day, though they were but a small remnant, nevertheless did exist. There were a few, else had that generation been as Sodom and been made like Gomorrah.

There were twelves and seventies and afterwards we read of three thousand and then of many others who were added to the Church of such as should be saved. In Christ’s own day, however, the lines of manifest election seemed to be but very narrow, for there were but few that followed

Him and of those who followed Him it is said, many from that day went back and walked no more with Him. For His Truth had sifted the mere professors and reduced them but to a slender company who followed the Lamb wherever He went. The “we,” then, who “beheld Christ’s glory,” were a chosen company.

They were also a *called company*, for of many of them we read their special calls. Of John himself we read that Jesus walked by the sea and “saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father unending their nets. And He called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father and followed Him.” Of most of the Apostles and immediate attendants upon Christ’s Person we have a record of their divine and special call by Christ’s own voice. And in the case of those respecting whom there was no record preserved, yet was it, nevertheless, the fact—for He had called them as the shepherd calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. Indeed, in all of us who shall at any time perceive Christ’s glory, it must be because He has called us unto this special privilege as the result of His election of us.

These who beheld His glory were also an *illuminated people*. For Christ’s glory was not manifest unto the rest of mankind. None of the princes of this world knew Him. The priests who had studied the Law could not discover Him. The members of the Sanhedrim, who were under some expectation of His advent, could not perceive Him. In vain was the star in the east. In vain the miraculous appearance of angels to the shepherds—the blind generation would not perceive Him. In vain the opening of blind eyes and the preaching of the Gospel to the poor. In vain the raising of the dead—in vain all those innumerable signs and wonders. They could not perceive His glory. But of those who did perceive it it may be said, as of Simon Barjona, “Blessed are you, for flesh and blood has not revealed this unto you.”

We may say, then, of those who beheld His glory, the favored people—that they were chosen of sovereign grace, that they were called effectually by the Holy Spirit—and that they were anointed by the same Divine Person. And to this day, Brethren, it is the same. None believe in Christ but those who are His sheep. No man comes unto Him except the Father who has sent Him draws them and none ever perceive Him but those whose eyes are opened by His own healing fingers. Let the question be passed round among us—Do I perceive His glory? Have I seen something of the splendor of God in the humble Man of Nazareth? Have I learned to magnify Him in my soul and have I desired to glorify Him in my life, as my God, my life, my love, my All in All, though once despised and rejected of men?

If so, Beloved—if we can say this from our heart, we are favored indeed and especially favored if we remember how many there are who have

never obtained this grace. Not many great men after the flesh see any glory in Christ. They find their glory in the clash of arms and in garments rolled in blood, but not in Him who is meek and lowly of heart, who gives rest to weary souls. Not many wise men have seen any glory in Christ. They find glory in philosophy. They can see glory in nature, but not in Him who is nobler than God's creation, inasmuch as He is the only perfect one among the sons of men. They say they see something of glory in Providence and yet fail to perceive anything wonderful in *grace*.

Not many wise men are called. Oh, let us be astonished at the sovereignty of God! Let us be filled with gratitude at His compassion. Let us pray that if we know something of the glory we may know more of it day by day and may set it forth among the sons of men, that they, too, may by-and-by perceive His glory—"the glory as of the only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and Truth."

II. But now, secondly we have spoken of the favored people—let us now spend a minute or two in dwelling upon THEIR EXALTED PRIVILEGE. "We beheld His glory."

What is this word "Beheld"? It says not we *heard* of His glory, we *read* of it in prophecy, or we listened to it from the lips of others—but we *beheld* His glory. What a privilege was this, which was accorded to the first disciples! Have you not often envied them? To see the Man, the very Man, in whom God dwelt—to walk with Him as one's companion along His journeys of mercy—to listen to the words as they stream all living from those eloquent lips—to look into His eyes and mark the depth of love that glistened there—to see His face, even though it was more marred than that of any man. I have often sympathized in that child-like hymn—

***"I think when I read that sweet story of old,
When Jesus was here among men,
How He called little children as lambs to His fold,
I should like to have been with them then.
I wish that His hands had been placed on my head,
That His arm had been thrown around me,
And that I might have seen His kind looks when He said,
'Let the little ones come unto Me.'"***

But better still to have *been* with him—to have leaned this head upon His bosom—to have told Him my griefs, as they did who took up the body of John and went and told Jesus. To have asked of Him the explanation of difficulties, as they said, "Show us the Father and it suffices." To have had one's faith encouraged by touching His very flesh, as he did of whom it is written that he put his finger into the print of the nails and thrust his hand into His side. But what are we talking about? All this is carnal, all this is of *sight*—and the Christian is a nobler being than to live and walk by sight. He lives by *faith*. And to this day, Brethren, there is a sight of

Christ which can be had by faith. And therefore we need not murmur because we are denied the privilege of sight.

The sight of Christ, it seems, did but little good to those who had it—not even to His disciples—for they were sorry dolts even though He was the Master. It was only when the Spirit came down at Pentecost that they began to *know* Christ and to understand what He had said to them though He himself had said it. And truly 'tis better to see Christ by faith than it is to see Him by sight, for a sight of Him by *faith* saves the soul. But we might see Him with the eye and yet crucify Him and be found among the greatest rebels against His government and power.

Now we say to you, have you *beheld* His glory by faith? Oh, you have all of you *heard* of it. We, the ministers of Christ, have tried Sabbath after Sabbath to lift Him up and it is such sweet and blessed work that I would love to do every day. When we have to preach the Law we feel it a hard and toilsome servitude, but to preach *Christ*—O how sweet and blessed is the labor! Happy is the man whose lips are ever overflowing with the news of Jesus! Blessed is he whose ministry is full of Christ! He is blessed in his own soul, as well as blessed unto others.

You have heard of Him, then, but what of all this? You may hear of His glory and perish in your sins. You have *read* of His glory. This book is in your houses and you read it, I trust, each day. Thus you have read the story of the Man of sorrows and grief's acquaintance. And you know how He ascended on high, leading captivity captive and ever sits at the right hand of God. But you may read all this—and yet it shall be a curse and not a blessing, for you knew Him and yet rejected Him. You were among His own and He came unto you and you received Him not. Oh, to behold His glory! This is *soul* work, saving work, blessed work, everlasting work—have you any interest in it?

But you answer, “How can we behold His glory?” Why *faith* sees it. Faith looks back to the Man who lived and died for us and sees glory in His shame, honor in His disgraces, riches in His poverty, might in His weakness, triumph in His conflict and immortality in His death. No, Faith is sometimes assisted by Experience. And Experience sees His glory—it sees the glory of His grace in rolling away all our sins. The preciousness of His blood in giving us reconciliation with the Father. The power of the Spirit in subduing the will. The love of His heart in constantly remembering us upon the Throne. And the power of His plea in its perpetual prevalence with God.

Experience shows us the glory of Christ in the deep waters while He puts His arm beneath us and says, “Fear not, you shall not be drowned.” It shows us the glory of Christ in the blazing furnace while the Son of Man treads the glowing coals with His afflicted Israel. Experience shows us the glory of Christ in all the attacks of Satan. While He is our shield He wards

off every poisoned arrow and shows us the glory of Christ in helping us to live and enabling us to die and by-and-by it shall show us the glory of Christ in enabling us to rise and take possession of the crown which He has purchased for His children.

And with Experience there is another that helps us to behold the glory of Christ, namely, communion. Beloved, I hope you know what that means—when shut in your chamber with God and the world shut out, our eyes behold Him and not another—this is communion. Communion is when we can kneel down in the very posture of the poor agonizing victim of Gethsemane and see by fellowship the sweat of blood as it streams from the pores of His frame—when we can mark Him hounded, hissed, scouted through all the streets of His own city and taken to Calvary to die. Communion knows something of the bitterness of the cup which He then drank, somewhat of the sharpness of the nails that pierced His hands and somewhat of the death which was endured when at last He said, “It is finished!” and gave up the ghost.

Yes, communion can show us the glory of Christ even in His shame. And then it can take to its wings and show us His glory beyond the skies. These eyes have never seen the Savior—but this heart has seen Him. These lips have never kissed His cheek, for that they might do and I might be a Judas—but the soul has kissed Him and He has kissed me with the kisses of His mouth, for His love is better than wine. Think me not enthusiastic or fanatical when I say that the children of God have as near access to Christ today in the spirit as ever John had after the flesh. There is to this day a rich enjoyment to be obtained by those who seek it—in having actual fellowship with the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

Oh, it is a joy worth worlds! Worldling, if you had ever known the sweetness of this bread you would never eat your own ashes again. O pleasures of the world! You would cease to tempt us if you knew how much more sweet are the pleasures of His face. O thunders of this world! You would cease your attempts to frighten us if you knew the sweet satisfaction and solace which we find in Him, when everything is bitter and disconsolate abroad. Yes, we have beheld His glory, just as surely as if we had seen it with our eyes—as certainly as if we had heard with our ears the acclamations of the glorified and taken our seat with them at the foot of His Throne, or with them had veiled our faces with wings and cried, “Holy holy, holy, Lord God omnipotent!”

Just as truly, though not so fully, we have beheld His glory—the glory of the Only-begotten of the Father—full of grace and Truth.

III. Thirdly we have in the text A MOST BLESSED VISION.

We have had the favored persons, their exalted privilege and now we have their blessed vision. We have beheld His glory. Let us dwell upon the thought of His glory for awhile. My Brethren, what a glory have we beheld

by faith! By faith, in the first place, we have beheld the glory of His *complex Person*. We have known and believed that He is the everlasting Word, the veritable Son of the Father. We have beheld Him by faith as dwelling with the Father before the world was. The Beloved of His Father's soul. We have seen Him and we have marked that His goings-forth are of old, even from everlasting. We have seen Him weighing the clouds, measuring the channels of the great deep, planning the heavens and meting out the sea.

We have seen Him with the line and with the plummet making all things according to His wisdom and the purpose of the counsel of His will, for “without Him was not anything made that was made.” We have seen Him as God, seated upon the Throne of His Father and we have believed that the sea roars only as He bids it, that the earth with all the creatures that are therein obey His glorious will. Lo, in His hands today the keys of Heaven and death and Hell! We have had no doubts whatever as to His Divinity for we have seen and known that He is “very God of very God.” “God over all, blessed forever Amen.”

We have seen him, too, as *Man*. We have perceived that He is of the substance of His mother, bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh. He is man in all infirmities, but not man in any guiltiness of His own. We see Him as man weak, suffering, hungry, thirsty, dying but without spot or wrinkle—pure, the immaculate Lamb of God. We have beheld Him in the glory of this complex Person—not God deteriorated to man, not man deified to God, but God, very God and very Man. God in all that is God-like, Man in all that is man-like and we have adored Him as such. We have seen in Him the luster of a beauty which far outshines all that earth can present us, or all that Heaven can offer. Whom have we on earth but Jesus? Who is there in Heaven that we can desire beside Him?

Next we have beheld His glory, not merely in His Person, but in the *motive for which He undertook His great work*. That motive was love. Love which could have His self-interest to be an alloy, love to worthless creatures, love to those who could never repay His love. Love to rebels, love to men who crucified the Lord of Glory—and we have said as we have seen this love sparkling like a jewel in a black setting, lying in the heart of the pool, injured, poverty-stricken, houseless, comfortless Man of Nazareth—“There is a glory here in this love that is never to be found elsewhere.”

Then, we have beheld the glory of His *self-sacrifice*. We have looked upon Him giving up everything for us, renouncing His crown and scepter, laying aside His royal robes and splendor, leaving His Father's house and palaces and honor—becoming man, no, a poor man, a despised afflicted man—no, becoming obedient to death, even the death of the Cross. We have read history through but we never saw a self-sacrifice that could equal His. In Him selfishness never lived and therefore, never needed to be kept in check. He was not His own. His whole history could be written in

this—“He saved others, Himself he cannot save.” Glorious Christ, in this while You were rejected of men, we have beheld Your glory.

We have beheld, moreover, the glory of *His endurance*. He is tempted in every point yet fails in none. The world’s glory lies at His feet. He chooses rather our salvation than the glories of earth. He counted the reproach that He should bear for us greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt. We see Him mocked, yet never reviling—spit upon, yet never spitting back again even so much as a word of venom. We see Him despised, yet never attempting to clear Himself—accused, yet silent before the judgment seat—so giving up Himself that He can bear all things, whatsoever they may be.

Many waters could not quench His love, neither could the floods drown it. Though all the substance of the world’s house were offered Him that He might renounce His love, yet did He utterly despise the world. Who was ever such a martyr as the Savior? Who endured as He did? Who bore such contradiction of sinners against Himself? Great God, O Jesus—for such You are—Great God, there is none like You in the omnipotence of Your endurance. We have seen Your glory, even when You did tabernacle among men.

And we have seen His glory also in His great and blessed *perseverance* even to the end, having loved His own which were in the world He loved them to the end—having undertaken He went through with it. He never paused till He could say, “It is finished.” Then He gave up the ghost, but not till then. Now today behold His perseverance. For Zion’s sake He does not rest and for Jerusalem’s sake He never holds His peace day nor night until God shall be pleased to make her glory come forth as the brightness and her righteousness as a lamp that burns. On, on, on—neither to the right nor to the left turning for a moment, without pause, without making a moment’s question—onwards to His destined work He speeds and never does He cease till He can say to His Father, “I have finished the work that You gave Me to do.”

And then, not to keep you too long even upon such a subject as this, we have beheld His glory in His *final triumph*. Yes, Brethren, by faith we have seen in the very moment when the sun was darkened and when the earth was shaken and the rocks rent asunder—we have seen Christ darkening the world’s glories. We have seen Him rending rocky hearts and bidding the dead arise. We have seen Him in the very instant when He gave up the ghost leaping from the Cross, pursuing with thunderbolts the prince of Hell and driving him to darker shades below. We have seen Him grasping at last the tyrant in His hands and chaining Him to His chariot wheel. Our faith has beheld Him riding up the everlasting hills, leading captivity captive.

We have seen the gates wide open flung while angels said, “Lift up your heads, O you gates and be you lift up, you everlasting doors. And the King of Glory shall come in.” We have joined by faith the triumph and have swelled the train. We have heard the acclamation of the spirits of the just made perfect. We have heard above all the voice of God, “Well done. You have finished your Father’s will.” We have seen Him ascend in august majesty the Throne which is His resting place and we have seen Him sit down on the right hand of the Father, while from Heaven and earth and even Hell, there went up one prolonged note of praise, “Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah! The Lord God omnipotent reigns.”

No, our faith has gone beyond the mere matters of the past. We have beheld His glory, we have seen Him as one by one His sheep are brought and His prayer is heard, “Father, I will that they also whom You have given Me be with Me where I am.” We have seen Him going forth day after day in the chariot of Salvation scattering with both His hands His mercies among the poverty-stricken sons of men and we have cried unto Him, “Gird Your sword upon Your thigh, O You most mighty.” Often has our prayer been, Come forth, O Jesus. Heaven obeys You, earth shakes at Your presence, Hell trembles at You, devils are dismayed. Come forth, put Your arrow to the string and lift up Your glittering spear. Who, who shall stay Your course, or in Your presence stand?

Like chaff before the wind so shall they be driven and as stubble before the flame so shall they be utterly consumed. We have been helped to fly even to the great end of all things and by faith have seen His second advent. We have beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father. We have seen Him come—

***“But not the same
As once in lowliness He came —
A silent Lamb before His foes,
A weary Man and full of woes.”***

We have seen Him come —

***“With dreadful form,
With rainbow-wreath and robes of storm;
On cherub wings and wings of wind,
Appointed Judge of all mankind!”***

We have beheld His millennial reign. We have marked the dwellers in the wilderness blowing before Him, the kings of Sheba and Sheba offering their gifts. We have heard the universal song from the dwellers in the rocks and the islands of the sea. We have seen the halcyon age of love when no strife shall vex Messiah’s reign. When they shall—

***“Hang the useless helmet high
And study war no more.”***

And then we have seen the judgment. We have beheld the reeling earth unable to bear the splendor of His triumph. We have heard the wailings of

His enemies. We have seen them melt as wax before the flame, utterly consumed like the fat of rams upon His altar.

We have at last, by faith, seen the end—when He shall give up the kingdom to God, even our Father. We have heard, I say, the last word of the whole history in the shout of complete victory—

***“Lo, Jehovah’s banners furled
Sheathed His sword—He speaks—’tis done!
And the kingdoms of this world
Are the kingdoms of His Son.
Then the end—beneath His rod,
Man’s last enemy shall fall;
Hallelujah! Christ in God,
God in Christ is All in All.”***

IV. Have patience with me while I now conclude. In the fourth place the text reminds us of THE TESTIMONY WHICH WE WHO HAVE SEEN HIS GLORY ARE SURE TO BEAR.

We bear our testimony that He is *“the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and Truth.”* Brothers and Sisters, instead of preaching, let me bear my testimony—my testimony of what I have seen, what my own ears have heard and my own heart has tasted—that Christ *is the only begotten of the Father.* He is Divine to me, if He is only human to all the world besides. He has done that for me which none but a God could do. He has turned my stubborn will, melted a heart of adamant, broken a chain of steel, opened the gates of brass and snapped the bars of iron. He has turned my mourning into laughter and my desolation into joy. He has led my captivity captive, made my heart rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Let others think as they will of Him, to me He must be the only begotten of the Father—blessed be His name!—

***“O that I could now adore Him,
Like the heavenly host above,
Who forever bow before Him,
And unceasing sing His love. Happy songsters!
When shall I your chorus join?”***

Your name is precious even as ointment poured forth. You are indeed my Lord and my God, as certainly as ever You were the God of Thomas. Like Paul, my soul shall say, “God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world.”

Again—I bear my testimony that He is *full of grace.* Ah, had He not been, I should never have beheld His glory. I was full of sin to overflowing. I was condemned already because I believed not upon Him. He drew me when I wanted not to come and though I struggled hard He continued still to draw. And when at last I came all trembling like a condemned culprit to His mercy seat, He said, “Your sins which are many are all forgiven you, be of good cheer.” “He took me up out of the horrible pit and out of the

miry clay. He has set my feet upon a Rock—Himself—and put a new song into my mouth and established my goings.”

Let others despise Him. But I bear witness that He is full of grace. Oh, I would that some poor sinner here who is full of sin would remember that Christ is full of grace—I would that you, poor despairing one—you who have given yourself up as a lost soul, would remember that—

**“Plenteous grace with Him is found,
Grade to pardon all your sin
May the healing streams abound,
Make and keep you pure within.”**

Finally I bear my witness, that as He is full of grace He is *full of Truth*. True have His promises been, not one has failed. I have often doubted Him—for that I blush. He has never failed me—in this I must rejoice. His promises have been yes and amen. I do but speak the testimony of every believer in Christ, though I put it thus personally to make it the more forcible. I bear witness that never servant had such a Master as I have. Never brother had such a kinsman as He has been to me. Never spouse had such a husband as Christ has been to my soul. Never sinner a better Savior—never soldier a better captain—never mourner a better comforter than Christ has been to my spirit.

I want none beside Him. In life He is my life and in death He shall be the death of death. In poverty Christ is our riches, in sickness He makes our bed. In darkness He is our star and in brightness He is our sun. He is the manna of the camp in the wilderness and He shall be the new corn of the host when they come to Canaan. He is the Rock that follows them to-day—He is the Rock on which they shall rest and within which they shall dwell forever—

**“All hail Immanuel, all Divine,
In You Your Father’s glories shine;
You brightest, sweetest, fairest One,
That eyes have seen or angels known.
O may I live to reach the place
Where He unveils His lovely face.
Where all His beauties saints behold,
And sing His name to harps of gold.**

—So be it, Lord, by Your grace. Amen.

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THE TRUE TABERNACLE AND ITS GLORY OF GRACE AND PEACE

NO. 1862

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 27, 1885,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His Glory, the Glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father,) full of Grace and Truth.”
John 1:14.

*“For the Law was given through Moses, but
Grace and Truth came through Jesus Christ.”*
John 1:17.

THERE was a time when God freely communed with men. The voice of the Lord God was heard walking in the Garden in the cool of the day. With unfallen Adam, the great God dwelt in sweet and intimate fellowship—but sin came and not only destroyed the Garden, but destroyed the communion of God with His creature, man. A great gulf opened between man, as evil, and God as infinitely pure—and had it not been for the amazing goodness of the Most High, we would have, all of us, been forever banished from His Presence and from the Glory of His power! The Lord God, in infinite love, resolved that He, Himself, would bridge the distance and would again dwell with man. And, in token of this, He made Himself manifest to His chosen nation, Israel, when they were in the wilderness.

He was pleased to dwell in type and symbol among His people in the very center and heart of their camp! Do you see yonder tent with its curtains of goats' hair in the center of the canvas city? You cannot see within it, but it is all glorious within with precious wood, pure gold and tapestry of many colors. Within its most sacred shrine shines forth a bright light between the wings of cherubim, which light was the symbol of the Presence of the Lord! But if you cannot see within, yet you can see *above* the sacred tent, a cloud which arises from the top of the Holy of Holies and then expands like a vast tree so as to cover all the host and protect the chosen of God from the intense heat of the sun, so apt to make the traveler faint when passing over the burning sand! If you will wait till the sun is down, that same cloud will become luminous and light up the whole camp! Thus it was both shade and light—and by its means was enjoyed that safety which was afterwards set forth in the promise, “The sun shall not smite you by day, nor the moon by night.” Over all, the Glory was a defense and a comfort. The Lord dealt not so with any nation, save only His people Israel, of whom He said, “I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.”

The day of the type is over. We see no more a nation secluded from all others and made to be as “the Church in the wilderness.” God does not now confine His abode to one people, for, “The God of the whole earth shall He be called.” There is now no spot on earth where God dwells in preference to another. Did not our Lord say, at the well of Sychar, “Woman, believe Me, the hour comes when you shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. But. . .the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth”? Wherever true hearts seek the Lord, He is found of them. He is as much present on the lone mountain’s side as in the aisles of yonder abbey, or in the galleries of this tabernacle. “Howbeit the Most High dwells not in temples made with hands; as says the Prophet, Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool: what house will you build Me? says the Lord: or what is the place of My rest?”

Yet there is a true House of God, a real Temple of the Infinite, a living abode of the Godhead. The Epistle to the Hebrews speaks of “the true Tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man.” There is a place where God does still meet with man and hold fellowship with Him. That place is the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, “in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” The Manhood of Christ is become to us the anti-type of that tent in the center of the camp! God is in Christ Jesus! Christ Jesus is God! And in His blessed Person, God dwells in the midst of us as in a tent—for such is the force of the original in our text. “The Word was made flesh, and tabernacled, or *tented*, among us.” That is to say, in Christ Jesus the Lord dwelt among men, as God of old dwelt in His sanctuary in the midst of the tribes of Israel. This is very delightful and hopeful for us—the Lord God does dwell among us through the Incarnation of His Son.

But the Substance far excels the shadow, for in the wilderness, the Lord only dwelt in the abode of man, but now His approach to us is closer, for He dwells in the *flesh* of man. “The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.” Note that word, “flesh.” It does not say, “The Word was made *man*”—it means that, but the use of the word, “flesh,” brings the Lord Jesus still closer to us and shows that He took on Him the very *nature* and substance of manhood! He did not merely assume the name and notion and appearance of manhood, but the *reality*—the weakness, the suffering, the mortality of our manhood He actually took into union with Himself! He was no phantom, or apparition, but He had a human body and a human soul. “The Word was made flesh.” When the Lord became bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, His Incarnation in a human body brought Him far nearer to man than when He only abode within curtains and occupied a tent in the midst of Israel.

Moreover, it is to be noted that God does, in the Person of Jesus, not merely dwell among men, but He has joined Himself unto men—the Word not only dwelt in flesh, but, “was *made* flesh.” It is impossible to use words which are exactly accurate to describe the wonderful Incarnation of the Son of God in human flesh, but these words are used to show that our Lord is as truly and as really Man as He is God. Not only does God dwell

in the body of man, but our Lord Jesus is God and Man in one Person. He is not ashamed to speak of men as His brethren. "Forasmuch then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also, Himself, likewise took part of the same." So that the Lord Jesus is one with us! This approach to us is exceedingly close. God was never one with the tabernacle, but in Christ Jesus He is one with us. This union has in it a sweetness of sympathy, a tenderness of relationship and a condescension of fellowship greatly to be admired. Now we listen to the music of that blessed name, Emanuel, "God With Us." In the Person of the Only-Begotten, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, we see God reconciling the world unto Himself. Let us rejoice and be glad that we have in Jesus more than Israel had in the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High! The ancient Believer gazed upon the sacred tent, he thought of the holy place of sacrifice and the Holy of Holies, the inner shrine of the Lord's indwelling—but we have infinitely more—we have God in our nature, and in Him, "truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ."

In and around the tent where the Lord dwelt in the center of the camp, there was a manifestation of the Presence of God. This was the Glory of that house, but how scanty was the revelation! A bright light which I have already mentioned, the Shekinah, is said to have shone over the Mercy Seat—but only the High Priest could see it and he only saw it once in the year when he entered, with blood, within the veil. Outside, above the Holy Place, there was the manifest Glory of the pillar of cloud by day, and of fire by night. This sufficed to bear witness that God was there, but still, cloud and fire are but *physical* appearances and cannot convey a true appearance of God, who is a spirit! God cannot be perceived by the senses—the fiery, cloudy pillar could appeal only to the eyes. The excellence of the indwelling of God in Christ is this—that there is in Him a Glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, the moral and spiritual Glory of Godhead! This is to be seen, but not with the eyes—this is to be perceived, but not by the carnal senses. This is seen, heard and known by spiritual men whose mental perceptions are keener than those of sight and hearing!

In the Person of the Lord, there is a Glory which is seen by our *faith*, which is discerned of our renewed spirits and is made to operate upon our hearts. The Glory of God in the sanctuary was seen only by the priest of the house of Aaron. The Glory of God in the face of Christ is seen by all Believers who are *all* priests unto God! That Glory the priest beheld but once in the year—but we steadily behold that Glory at all times and are transformed by the sight. The Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ is not a thing of outward appearance to be seen with the eyes, like the pillar of cloud and fire, but there is an abiding, steady luster of holy, gracious, truthful Character about our Lord Jesus Christ which is best seen by those who, by reason of sanctification, are made fit to discern it.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Yes, they do see Him in Christ Jesus! "No man has seen God at any time; the Only-Begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him." Many of us besides the Apostles can say, "We beheld His Glory, the Glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth." We have

not seen Jesus raise the dead; we have not seen Him cast out devils; we have not seen Him hush the winds and calm the waves; but we do see, with our mind's eyes, His spotless holiness, His boundless love, His superlative truth, His wondrous heavenliness—in a word, we have seen, and do see His fullness of Grace and Truth—and we rejoice in the fact that the tabernacling of God among men in Christ Jesus is attended with a more real Glory than the mere brilliance of light and the glow of flame!

The condescension of Christ's love is to us more glorious than the pillar of cloud. And the zeal of our Lord's self-sacrifice is more excellent than the pillar of fire. As we think of the Divine mysteries which meet in the Person of our Lord, we do not envy Israel the gracious manifestations vouchsafed her when "a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the Glory of the Lord covered the tabernacle," for we have all this and more in our Incarnate God who is with us always, even to the end of the world!

As the Holy Spirit shall help me, I shall, at this time, say, first of all, *Let us behold this tabernacling of God.* And, secondly, *Let us avail ourselves of this tabernacling of God in all the ways for which it was intended.*

I. First, then, LET US BEHOLD THIS TABERNACLING OF GOD WITH US. "We beheld His Glory, the Glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth." In Jesus Christ all the attributes of God are to be seen—veiled, but yet truly there. You have only to read the Gospels and to look with willing eyes—and you shall behold in Christ all that can possibly be seen of God. It is veiled in human flesh, as it must be, for the Glory of God is not to be seen by us absolutely. It is toned down for these dim eyes of ours, but the Godhead is there, the perfect Godhead in union with the perfect Manhood of Christ Jesus our Lord, to whom be Glory forever and ever!

Two Divine things are more clearly seen in Jesus than anything else. Upon these I would speak at this time, considering the two, together, and then each one separately—"Full of Grace and Truth."

Observe the two glorious qualities, joined inseparably—Grace and Truth—and observe that they are spoken of *in the concrete*. The Apostle says that the Only-Begotten is "full of Grace and Truth." He did not come to tell us *about* Grace, but actually to *bring* us Grace. He is not full of the *news* of Grace and Truth, but *of* Grace and Truth, themselves. Others had been messengers of gracious tidings, but He came to bring Grace. Others teach us truth, but Jesus *is* the Truth of God. He is that Grace and Truth whereof others spoke! Jesus is not merely a teacher, an exhorter, a worker of Grace and Truth, but these heavenly things are in Him. He is full of them! I want you to note this. It raises such a difference between Christ and others—you go to others to hear *of* Grace and Truth, but you must go to Christ to *see* them! There may be—there is Divine Grace in other men, but not as it is in Christ—they have it as water flowing through a pipe, but He has it as water in its fountain and source! He has Grace to communicate to the sons of men, Grace without measure, Grace essential and abiding. There is the Truth of God in others where God has worked it, by His Spirit, but it is not in them as it is in Christ. In Him dwell the depth, the substance, the essence of the fact! Grace and Truth come to us by

Him and yet they always abide in Him! I say again, our Lord did not merely come to teach Grace and Truth, or to impress them upon us, but He came to exhibit in His own Person, life and work, all the Grace and Truth which we need. He has brought us Grace in rivers and the Truth of God in streams—of these He has an infinite fullness—of that fullness all His saints receive!

This Grace and Truth are *blended*. The, “and,” between the two words I would treat as more than a common conjunction. The two rivers unite in one fullness—“Full of Grace and Truth”—that is to say, the Grace is truthful Grace, Grace not in fiction nor in fancy, Grace not to be hoped for and to be dreamed of, but Grace, every atom of which is fact! It is redemption which redeems, pardon which blots out sin, renewal which actually regenerates, salvation which completely saves! We have not, here, blessings which charm the ears and cheat the soul, but real, substantial favors from God that cannot lie. Then blend these things the other way. “Grace and Truth”—the Lord has come to bring us Truth, but it is not the kind of truth which censures, condemns and punishes—it is *gracious* Truth, Truth steeped in love, Truth saturated with mercy! The Truth which Jesus brings to His people comes not from the Judgement Seat, but from the Mercy Seat! It has a gracious drift and aim about it and always tends to salvation. His Light is the life of men. If you are overshadowed with a dark Truth of God which seems to deepen your despair, look at it again and you will perceive, within it, a hidden Light of God which is sown for the righteous. The darkness of convincing and humbling Truth makes for the Light of God—by engendering despair of self, heart-searching Truth is meant to drive you to the true Hope.

There is Grace to God’s people in everything that falls from the lips of Jesus Christ. His lips are like lilies dropping sweet smelling myrrh. Myrrh, in itself, is bitter, but such is the Grace of our Lord Jesus that His lips impart sweetness to it. See how Grace and Truth thus blend and qualify each other! The Grace is all true and the Truth is all gracious. This is a wondrous compound made according to the art of the Divine Apothecary. Where else is Grace so true, or Truth so gracious?

Furthermore, it is Grace and Truth *balanced*. I wish I were able to communicate my thoughts, this morning, as they came to me when I was meditating upon this passage, but this thought almost speaks for itself. The Lord Jesus Christ is full of Grace, but He has not neglected the other quality which is somewhat sterner, namely, that of Truth. I have known many in this world, very loving and affectionate, but they have not been faithful. On the other hand, I have known men to be sternly honest and truthful, but they have not been gentle and kind. But in the Lord Jesus Christ there is no defect either way. He is full of Grace which invites the publican and the sinner to Himself, but He is full of Truth which repels the hypocrite and Pharisee. He does not hide a Truth of God, however terrible it may be, from man—He plainly declares the wrath of God against all unrighteousness. But when He has spoken terrible Truth, He has uttered it in such a gracious and tender manner, with so many tears of compassion for the ignorant and those that are out of the way, that you

are as much won by His Grace as convicted by His Truth! Our Lord's ministry is not Truth, alone, nor Grace, alone, but is a balanced, well-ordered system of Grace and Truth. The Lord Himself is, in His Character, "just and having salvation." He is both King of Righteousness and King of Peace. He does not save unjustly, nor does He proclaim Truth unlovingly. Grace and Truth are equally conspicuous in Him.

Beloved, notice, here, that both these qualities in our Lord are *at the fullest*. He is "full of Grace." Who could be more so? In the Person of Jesus Christ, the immeasurable Grace of God is treasured up. God has done for us, by Christ Jesus, exceeding abundantly above all that we ask, or even think. It is not possible, even, for imagination to conceive of any person more gracious than God in Christ Jesus! You cannot desire, certainly you cannot *require*, anything that should exceed what is found of Grace in the Person, offices, work and death of the Only-Begotten. Come, you that have large minds and intellects that are creative, and see if you can devise anything that should be mentioned in the same day with what God, in the infinite Glory of His Grace, has given us in the Person of His Son!

And there is an equal fullness of Truth about our Lord. He, Himself, as He comes to us as the Revelation and Manifestation of God, declares to us, not some Truth, but all Truth. All of God is in Christ—and all of God means all that is true, all that is right, all that is faithful, all that is just and all that is according to righteousness and holiness. Christ Jesus has brought to us the Justice, Truth and Righteousness of God to the fullest—He is the Lord our righteousness! There are no reserves of disagreeable fact in Christ. There is nothing hidden from us of Truth that might alarm us, nor anything that might have shaken our confidence. Nor, on the other hand, is any Truth kept back which might have increased our steadfastness. He says, "If it were not so, I would have told you." Admire the full-orbed splendor of the Sun of Righteousness. Ask not with Pilate, "What is truth?" but behold it in God's dear Son! Oh, I know not how to speak to you upon themes so full and deep! How shall I, that am but as a twinkling dewdrop on a blade of grass, reflect the full Glory of this Sun of Righteousness? But all Truth and all Grace dwell in Christ in all their fullness beyond conception—and the two lie in each other's bosoms forever—to bless us with boundless, endless joy and Glory!

Thus have I taken the two together. Now I want to dwell briefly on each one by itself.

Grace is put first. "We beheld His Glory, the Glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of Grace." Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He is His only-begotten Son. Others are begotten of God, but no other was ever begotten of God as Christ was. Consequently, when He came into this world, the Glory that was about Him was a Glory as of the Only-Begotten. A very singular, very special and *incommunicable* Glory abides in the Person of our Lord. Part of this was the Glory of His Grace. Now, in the Old Testament, in that 34th Chapter of Exodus, which we read, in part, this morning, you notice that the Glory of God lay in His being, "the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and Truth." The Glory of the Only-Begotten of the Father must lie in the same

things as the Glory of the Father, namely, in long-suffering, goodness and Truth. In Christ there is a wonderful display of the gentleness, patience, pity, mercy and love of God. Not merely did He *teach* the Grace of God and *invite* us to the Grace of God, but in Himself He *displayed* the Grace of God!

This is to be seen, first, in His Incarnation. It is a wonderful instance of Divine Grace that the Word should be made flesh and dwell among us and reveal His Glory to us. Apart from anything that springs out of the Incarnation of Christ, that Incarnation, itself, is a wondrous act of Grace. There must be hope for men, now that man is next akin to God through Jesus Christ. The angels were not mistaken when they not only sang, "Glory to God in the highest," but also, "on earth peace, goodwill towards men," because in Bethlehem, the Son of God was born of a virgin! God, in our Nature, must mean God with gracious thoughts towards us! If the Lord had meant to destroy the race, He never would have espoused it and taken it into union with Himself. There is fullness of Grace in the fact of the Word made flesh, tabernacling among us!

More than this, there is fullness of Grace in the life of Christ when we consider that He lived here in order to perfect Himself as our High Priest. Was He not made perfect through His sufferings, that He might sympathize with us in all our woes? He was compassed with infirmities, bore our sorrows and endured those crosses of the human life which press so heavily on our own shoulders—and all this to make Himself able to deal graciously with us in a tender and brotherly way! Apart from that which comes out of this wonderful brotherhood, there is a bottomless depth of Grace about the fellowship, itself. The Lord Jesus cannot curse me, for He has borne my curse. He cannot be unkind to me, for He has shared my sorrows. If every pang that rends my heart has also rent His heart and, if into all my woes He has descended even deeper than I have gone, it must mean love to me—it cannot mean anything else and it must mean Truth, for Jesus did not play at fellowship—His griefs were real. I say then, that this manifestation of God in the Person of Christ Jesus is seen in His sorrowing life to be full of Grace and Truth.

Then think, for a minute, of what He did. He was so full of Grace that when He spoke, His words dropped a fatness of Grace! The dew of His own love was upon all His discourses and when He moved about and touched men, here and there, virtue went out of Him because He was so full of it. At one time He spoke and pardoned a sinner, saying, "Your sins are forgiven you." At another moment He battled with the consequences of sin, raising men from sickness and from death! He turned Himself and fought with the Prince of Darkness, himself, and cast him out from those whom he tormented. He went about like a cloud which is big with rain and, therefore, plentifully waters arid and dry places. His life was boundless compassion! There was a power of Grace about His garments, His voice, His look—and in all He was so true that none ever thought Him capable of subterfuge. Everywhere He went, He scattered Grace among the children of men—and He is just the same now—fullness of Grace still abides in Him!

When it came to His death, which was the pouring out of His soul, then His fullness of Grace was *seen*! He was full of Grace, indeed, for He emptied Himself to save men. He was, Himself, not only man's Savior, but his salvation! He gave Himself for us! He was, indeed, full of Grace when He bore our sins in His own body on the Cross. His was love at its height, since He died on the Cross, "the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God." Pronounce the word, "substitution," and you cannot help feeling that the Substitute for guilty man was full of Grace! Or use that other word, "representative," and remember that whatever Jesus did, He did as the Covenant Head of His people. If He died, they died in Him. If He rose again, they rose in Him. If He ascended up on high, they ascended in Him and if He sits at the right hand of God, they also sit in the heavenly places in Him.

When He shall come a second time, it shall be to claim the Kingdom for His chosen as well as for Himself—and all the Glory of the future ages is for them—not for Himself alone. He says, "Because I live, you shall live, also." Oh, the richness of the Grace and Truth that dwell in our Lord as the Representative of His people! He will enjoy nothing unless His people enjoy it with Him! "Where I am, there, also, shall My servant be." To him that overcomes will I grant to sit with Me on my Throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father on His Throne."

There is yet another word higher than "substitution," higher than "representation," and that is "*union*." We are one with Christ, joined to Him by a union that never can be broken. Not only does He do what He does, representing us, but we are joined unto Him in one spirit, members of His body and partakers of His Glory! Is not this Grace, Grace unspeakable? Is it not a miracle of love that worms of earth should ever be one with Incarnate Deity? And so one that they never can be separated throughout the ages?

Thus I have shown you that there is, in our Lord, a fullness of Grace. Your own thoughts will dig deeper than mine.

But then it is said there is also in Him a fullness of *Truth*, by which I understand that in Christ Himself, not merely in what He said, did and promised, there is a fullness of the Truth of God. And this is true, first, in the fact that He is the fulfillment of all the promises concerning Him that went before. God had promised great things by His Prophets concerning the coming Messiah, but all those predictions are absolutely matters of fact in the Person of the Well-Beloved. "All the promises of God are yes and Amen in Christ Jesus." Verily He has bruised the serpent's head. Verily He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. Verily He has proclaimed liberty to the captives. Verily He has proved Himself a Prophet like unto Moses.

According to my second text, in verse 17, I understand our Lord Jesus to be "Truth" in the sense of being the Substance of all the types. The Law that was given through Moses was but symbolical and emblematical. But Jesus is the Truth of God. He is really that Blood of sprinkling which speaks better things than that of Abel—He is, in very deed, the Paschal Lamb of God's Passover. He is the Burnt-Offering, the Sin-Offering and

the Peace-Offering—all in one! He is the true Scapegoat, the true morning and evening Lamb. In fact, He is, in Truth, what all the types and figures were in pattern. Blessed be God, Brothers and Sisters, whenever you see great things in the Old Testament in the *type*, you see the real Truth of those things in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ! The Jew had nothing that we have not—they had nothing, even in outline and shadow, which we have not obtained in Substance! The Covenant in its fullness is in Christ! The prophecy is in Moses, the fulfillment is in Jesus! The foreshadowing is in the Law, the Truth is in the Word made flesh!

Further than that, our Lord Jesus Christ is said to be Grace and Truth in this sense, that He truthfully deals with matters of fact in the case of our salvation. I know the notion of the world is that the salvation of Christ is a pretty dream, a handsome piece of sentiment. But there is nothing dreamy about it. It is no fiction—it is fact upon fact! The Lord Jesus Christ does not gloss over or conceal the condition of man in his salvation. He finds man condemned and takes him as condemned in the very worst sense—condemned of a capital offense. And as man's Substitute, He endures the capital penalty and dies in the sinner's place. The Lord Jesus views the sinner as depraved, yes, as dead in trespasses and sins, and He quickens him by His resurrection life. He does not wink at the result of the Fall and of actual sin, but He comes to the dead sinner and quickens him—He comes to the diseased heart and heals it!

To me, the Gospel is a wonderful embodiment of Omnipotent Wisdom and the Truth of God. If the Gospel had said to men, "The Law of God is certainly righteous, but it is too stern, too exacting and, therefore, God will wink at many sins and make provision for salvation by omitting to punish much of human guilt," why, my Brothers and Sisters, we would always have been in jeopardy! If God could be unjust to save us, He could also be changeable and cast us away! If there was anything rotten in the state of our salvation, we should fear that it would, at last, fail us! But our foundation is sure, for the Lord has excavated down to the rock! He has taken away every bit of mere sentiment and sham and His salvation is real throughout. It is a glorious salvation of Grace and Truth in which God takes the sinner, as He is, and deals with Him as He is—yes, and deals with the sinner as God is, on the principles of true righteousness—and yet saves him!

But it means more than that. The Lord deals with us in the way of Grace and that Grace encourages a great many hopes—and those hopes are all realized, for He deals with us in Truth. Our necessities demand great things and Grace actually supplies those great things. The old Law could never make those who came to it, perfect as pertaining to the conscience, but the Grace of God makes Believers perfect as pertaining to the conscience! If I were to sit down and try to imagine a flaw in the ground of my salvation by Christ, I could not do it! Believing, as I do, in Him who bore my sins in His own body on the Cross, I feel that by no possibility can His Atonement fail me. I have not imagination strong enough to feign a reason for distrust—I do not see hole or corner in which any charge

could lurk against the man that believes in Jesus Christ. My conscience is satisfied—more than satisfied!

Sometimes it even seems to me that my sins could not have deserved that the Son of God should die. The Atonement is greater than the sin. Speak of the vindication of the Law? Is not the vindication even greater than the dishonor? Does not the Law of God shine out more lustrous in its indescribable Glory through the Sacrifice of Christ as the penalty for sin, than it would have done had it never been broken, or had all the race of Law-breakers been swept into endless destruction? O Brothers and Sisters, in the salvation of Jesus there is Grace unrivalled! There is a deep Truth of God, a substantiality, an inward soul-satisfaction in the Sacrifice of Christ which makes us feel that it is a full Atonement—a fountain of “Grace and Truth.”

Nor have I yet quite brought out all the meaning, even if I have succeeded so far. Christ has brought to us “Grace and Truth,” that is to say, He works in Believers both Grace and Truth. We need Grace to rescue us from sin—He has brought it. We need the Truth of God in the inward parts—He has worked it. The system of salvation by atonement is calculated to produce truthful men. The habit of looking for salvation through the great Sacrifice fosters the spirit of justice, begets in us a deep abhorrence of evil and a love for that which is right and true. By nature we are all liars and either love or make a lie—for this cause we are content with refuges of lies and we compass ourselves with deceit. In our carnal state we are as full of guile as an egg is full of meat—but when the Lord comes to us in Christ, no longer imputing our trespasses to us—then He takes out of our heart that deceit and desperate wickedness which had otherwise remained there! I say it, and dare avow it, that the system of salvation by the indwelling of God in Christ and the Atonement offered by Him for men has a tendency in it to infuse Grace into the soul and to produce Truth in the life! The Holy Spirit employs it to that end. I pray that you and I may prove it so by the Grace which causes us to love both God and man—and the truthfulness with which we deal in all the affairs of life.

Thus has our Lord displayed the Glory of God in the Grace and Truth with which He is filled. I am sorry I have spoken so feebly on so grand a theme. May the Spirit bless you even through the infirmities of my speech!

II. Now I want a few minutes to say to you, Come Brothers and Sisters, LET US AVAIL OURSELVES OF THIS TABERNACLING OF GOD AMONG US.

First, then, if God has come to dwell among men by the Word made flesh, *let us pitch our tents around this central tabernacle*—do not let us live as if God were a long way off. To the Israelites, God was equally near from every quarter of the camp. The tabernacle was in the center and the center is equally near to every point of the circumference. No true Israelite could say, “I must go across the sea, or soar up into the air, or dive into the depths to find my God.” Every Israelite could say, “He dwells between the cherubim: I have but to go to His Tabernacle to be in His Presence and speak with Him.” Our God is not far from any of His people this day. We are made near by the blood of Christ. God is everywhere present, but

there is a higher presence of effectual Grace in the Person of the Only-Begotten. Do not let us live as if we worshipped a far-off God. Let us not repine as if we were deserted. Let us not feel alone, for the Father is with us—

“God is near you; therefore cheer your sad soul.”

Open your window towards Jerusalem, as Daniel did. Pray with your eyes upon Christ, in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily in the greatest nearness to us. God is never far away since Christ has come to dwell among men!

Next, *let us resort to this central Tabernacle to obtain Grace to help in time of need.* Let us come to Christ without fear, for He has Grace to give and He will give it to us abundantly whenever we need it. I like to think of the wording of my text. Leave out the parenthesis, and it runs, “He dwelt among us full of Grace.” He could not have dwelt among such provoking ones if He had not been full of Grace! But if He dwells among us full of Grace, we need not fear that He will cast us away because of our sins and failings. I invite you, therefore, to come boldly to Him who is full of forgiving love. I beg you to come and receive of His fullness, for Grace is truly Grace when it is communicated—Grace which is not distributed is Grace in name only. “Alas!” you say, “I need so much Grace.” Brother, it is treasured up in Christ for you without measure! It is placed in Him that you may have it. Do we not try to persuade the sinner that there is life in a look? Shall I need to persuade saints that Grace is equally free to *them*? Do we not tell the sinner that God is not to be sought for as far away, but that He is waiting to be gracious? Must I tell the *Believer* the same?

You may, at this moment, obtain all the Grace you need. The door is open! Enter and take what you will. Do not stop till you reach home and go through a set of religious exercises, but *here*, and *now*, believe in Jesus to the fullest! In the center of the camp is the Incarnate God; Israel had but to go to the central tent to find present help in time of trouble. In the Person of Christ, who has said, “I am with you always, even to the end of the world,” there is, in Truth, all the Grace you can possibly need! Come to this well and drink. Receive of His fullness and go on your way rejoicing.

What shall we do next? Brothers and Sisters, since God in Christ is in the midst of us, *let us abide in joyful, peaceful confidence in Him who is Grace and Truth to us.* Do not let us wander to other sources. To whom would we go? Shall we leave our God? Shall we leave His Grace, His Truth? Do not let us *dream* that He is changed, for He is God! Do not *imagine* that He has left, for He has said, “This is My rest forever: here will I dwell, for I have desired it.” Do not let us conceive that His Grace and Truth are exhausted, for His fullness is eternal! Let us receive strong consolation and remain steadfast, unmovable. Let us quietly rest in the firm belief that all we can need between here and Heaven, all that we need this moment and in all moments yet to come, is treasured up in Christ Jesus who is abidingly the center of His Church and the manifestation of God.

Once more. If this is so and God does really dwell in Christ in the midst of His people “full of Grace and Truth,” *let us tell everybody of it.* I am sure

if I had been an Israelite in the wilderness and had met an Amalekite or an Edomite, I should have gloried in my God and in the privileges which His Presence secured me. We know that Amalekites and Edomites could not have come into the house of the Lord, but nowadays, if we meet with one who is a stranger, we can tell him of our privilege with sweet persuasion, on the desire that the stranger can be brought near through the blood of the Lamb. Therefore let us abundantly speak of the dwelling of God with men! Let us proclaim to all that the Lord has come to man, not in wrath, not in judgement, but “full of Grace and Truth.”

O my unconverted Hearer, come to Jesus! He is able to save to the uttermost those that come unto God by Him. Draw near to the meek and lowly Jesus and you draw near to God! He says, “He that has seen Me, has seen the Father.” Publish the invitation of Grace to the four winds! Ring out your silver trumpets, or if you have them not, sound your rams’ horns—but somehow let all people know that the Tabernacle of God is with men and He dwells among them! Proclaim this news in the far country, that the wandering prodigal may hear it and cry, “I will arise and go to my Father.” God has come to men! Will not men come to God? In Christ Jesus, God invites men to come to Him—will you not come to receive Grace and Truth?

One more lesson remains and that is—*what manner of people ought we to be among whom Jehovah dwells?* It must have been a very solemn thing to be a member of that great camp of millions in the wilderness of Sinai. God’s Presence in the midst of the camp must have made every tent sacred. As we walked through the streets of that canvas city, if we had been Israelites and in our right minds, we would have said, “These tents are none other than the House of God and the very gate of Heaven, for look, Jehovah is in the midst of us! Can’t you see the bright light that shines above His sanctuary?” We would have felt that in such a camp all should be holy. The pollution of sin should be unknown there! In such a camp constant prayer and praise should be presented to Him whose Presence was its Glory and defense!

Today let our congregation be a holy convocation—and as for ourselves, let us be holiness unto the Lord! We are consecrated men and women, seeing the Lord has come so very near to us! I spoke of solemnity—I meant not dread and sorrow—but a solemnity full of joy! It is a solemn thing to have God so near, but the joy is equal to the solemnity! Glory be unto God most high, for He is here! Let us spend our days and nights in gladness and delight! God is reconciled to us in the Person of His dear Son and we have fellowship with God in Christ Jesus! Therefore let us rejoice forevermore! Amen and amen!

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—

Exodus 34:1-8; 40:34-38; John 1:1-18.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—249, 256, 250.

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THE FULLNESS OF CHRIST THE TREASURY OF THE SAINTS NO. 1169

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 19, 1874,
BY C. H. SPURGEON
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell.”
Colossians 1:19.***

***“And of His fullness we have all received, and Grace for Grace.”
John 1:16.***

THESE two texts make up a very beautiful sketch of the plan of salvation. Put before your mind's eye the sinner, empty of all holiness, of all hope, despairing and ready to die. Put, also, before your mind, God, full of mercy, willing to come and fill the sinner's emptiness, to bring all His communicable attributes, dwell in that sinner and give him, first, the mercy which can blot out his sin, and then the holiness which can lift him up from his ruined condition. Next note the difficulty in the way—God cannot come as *half* a God—all His attributes must come together. And should the just God come into this guilty sinner to fill his emptiness, the flame of Justice would destroy him. It is not possible for God, even our God, who is “a consuming fire,” to come into contact with that which is sinful without destroying it. What then? Shall the sinner remain empty and shall God's fullness remain uncommunicated?

Behold the plan which infinite Wisdom has devised! The Eternal Son of God becomes Man! The Divine Nature comes in all its fullness and dwells in the Mediator Christ Jesus! Coming into Him, *He* was made to feel the mighty burning of Justice, which caused Him agony but could not consume Him, for in Him there was no sin. Justice burned and blazed within Him and cast Him into a bloody sweat—yes, brought Him to the Cross and to death because He stood in the sinner's place. But this golden Vessel, though heated, was not melted! It could contain the Divine fire and yet not be destroyed—and now in Christ Jesus dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily and, moreover, the Divine Nature is in Him in such a way as to be capable of communication to the sons of men. Of course the *essence* of Deity is not communicated, for that would be to make men into Gods—but we are “made partakers of the Divine Nature” in the sense of receiving the same character—and becoming the *children* of God. That which God could not bring to us directly by reason of our inability to receive it, He has now brought to us through a Mediator, by placing it in the Man, Christ Jesus, that we, coming to Him, might freely receive of it.

The next step in the plan of salvation is this—that after the fullness of God has come to man in the Person of His Son, everyone that comes to Him by faith receives His Divine Grace. Salvation is not by what you *bring* to Christ, but by what you *take* from Him. You are to be receivers first,

and then, by-and-by, through the power of Grace, you shall give forth from yourselves rivers of living water to others. In your first coming you come empty, having nothing but your sin and misery—as empty, undeserving sinners you receive of His fullness—and all your life continue to do the same. The Grace already given is not the climax or the conclusion—you go on receiving more and more! Grace increases your capacity for Grace and that enlarged capacity becomes filled! And so the fullness of God comes into you till you are filled with it and you rise from Grace to Glory, being made like unto God and fitted to dwell where He is forever and ever.

Now, unconverted ones, take note that this is the plan of salvation, and the *only* plan. You must obtain God's love and mercy and holiness by receiving it through the Mediator, Jesus Christ! You have not yet received it—I ask you, How long will you tarry without it? You are, in some degree, aware of your need, for you are not ignorant of the Gospel. Oftentimes you have heard the voice of its invitation and have been almost persuaded to receive the fullness revealed in Christ Jesus. How long will you waver between two opinions? How long will you hesitate? This is the way, the safe way, the suitable way, the *only* way which is open to you—and it is open to you at this very moment—will your feet never tread it? Will your disobedient steps forever wander, till, at last, you sink in despair and die eternally? God have mercy upon you and bring you to receive of the fullness which the Father has stored up in His Son, Jesus Christ!

Needy Sinners, I warn you, do not insult the fullness of Christ by thinking that you are full enough yourselves! Never think of putting your own righteousness side by side with the Divine, nor think of mixing your tears with Jesus' blood, nor of bringing your prayers or your faith to increase the all-sufficiency of Christ's atoning Sacrifice! He needs nothing from you! Come and take everything from Him, for all fullness dwells in Him. As you may not insult His fullness, so I pray you, do not *neglect* it. Do not stand by this Fountain and refuse to drink. Do not pass by the riches of His Grace as though they were nothing to you, lest haply, when you come to die, your heart should be wrung with terrible remorse because you have despised the Savior's love. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" Put not off these matters from month to month, but, "today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." Hasten now unto the place where God Himself has come to meet you—namely, in the Person of His Son.

Moreover, as I charge you not to neglect the Grace of our Lord Jesus, so would I encourage you not to distrust it. All fullness dwells in Jesus—a fullness which is meant to be given out to all who receive it as the gift of Divine Grace! Believe in this fullness and, empty as you are, do not despair any longer when you remember that Jesus has a supply for every possible need. Come, though your head is bowed with grief, for Jesus never did reject a sinner and he never can. It is His office and calling to cleanse the guilty and to receive the lost. Come to Him, now, and may we, before this service is done, be able, all of us, to sing, "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell," and, "of His fullness have all we received, and Grace for Grace."

Let not these words be forgotten by those for whom they are meant. But still, I have not taken my text, this morning, with the view of so preaching from it. I have another aim altogether. Moreover, it will be right for me to say that I do not intend to go into an exposition of these texts, having explained them several times before. I have only taken them with one object, namely, to address myself vehemently to the *servants of God*—that they may be exhorted to lay hold of the fullness of the power and holiness which dwell in their Covenant Head.

During this last week I have given to my Brothers in the Conference, a motto which lay on my own heart. It is, “Forward! Upward!” These are the watchwords of this morning—Forward! Upward! I want you, dear Brothers and Sisters, to see that every preparation is made for greater growth and greater success. I want you to be encouraged to seize upon that which lies before you, but which is too often treated as if it did not exist, and to rise, by the power of the Eternal Spirit, to something higher than you have, up to now, accomplished or even attempted.

I. My first point this morning is this—THERE IS A GLORIOUS FULLNESS IN JESUS. Brothers and Sisters, if it is so, why are we so weak, unfurnished and unhappy? There is an infinite fullness in Jesus! A fullness of all that any saint can ever need *to enable him to rise to the highest degree of Divine Grace*. If there is anything lacking for the attainment of the Divine image in us, it is not a deficiency Christward—it is occasioned by shortcomings in *ourselves*. If sin is to be overcome, the conquering power dwells in Him in its fullness. If virtue is to be attained, sanctifying energy resides in Christ to perfection. If I see before me an eminent child of God, whose conversation is in Heaven, I may not dare to say that I am not capable of being as sanctified as he is—for the same Lord is mine as well as his.

I have in my flesh no power whatever, for I am emptiness itself. In me the Truth of God is realized, “Without Me you can do nothing.” But, on the other hand, the power to do all things lies in Christ and the power to become fully consecrated streams forth from Him. “With God all things are possible.” “In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily,” and they who dwell in Him shall find things impossible with man become simple everyday facts with themselves if they will but have faith in the mediatorial fullness.

Beloved, I am going to say nothing but what you all know. And I do not mean to garnish it with finery of words. The truth is that there are many who are barely Christians and have scarcely enough Grace to float them into Heaven. The keel of their vessel is grating on the gravel all the way. My prayer is that we may reach deep waters and have so much Grace that we may sail like a gallant ship on the broad ocean with a glorious cargo on board and all colors flying—and so there may be administered unto us an abundant entrance into the kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Everything is provided for this. Christ has not merely placed enough bread on the table to keep us from starving, His oxen and fatlings are killed—He has spread a royal feast.

He has not provided a scanty garment which may barely hide your nakedness, but He has brought forth the best robe and has procured ear-

rings for your ears, jewels for your necks and a royal crown for your heads—for it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell for all His saints. If you have not these riches, the fault lies with yourself. It is there—you might have it if you had but faith to take it. Too often we sit down like beggars on the dunghill and groan and cry because of the poverty of our nature when we ought to be rejoicing in the Lord. I thank God that we can groan, for that is something! But there is a more excellent way—a better gift to be earnestly coveted. In Christ you are rich to the fullness of riches! Get up, I pray you, to the high places and realize for yourselves the fullness of God in Christ Jesus!

The fullness which dwells in our Lord we may rest assured is *sufficient for the conquest of the world*. It is not enough for you or me that we should be wholly consecrated to Christ—our desire is that the whole *world* should be filled with the knowledge of the Lord! We can never be satisfied while there remains one sinner unsaved, one idol upon its pedestal, or one single error to darken the minds of men. For Christ we do not desire England, only, and the civilized nations, but we claim for Him the darkest dens of cannibalism and the vilest haunts of piracy. The banner of the Cross shall wave where now black flags poison the breeze! It shall be lifted high where today Kalee and Juggernaut set up their ensigns, for the Lord God Omnipotent *shall* reign from shore to shore!

We have in Christ Jesus all the might which is needed for subduing the nations, for all power is given unto Him in Heaven and in earth. We have, dear Brothers and Sisters, I fear, too often been considering the amount of *money* and the number of men which would be needed. Indeed, I remember a remarkable paper being read explaining to us how much money it would require to evangelize the world—a calculation which I regarded as vanity of vanities and nothing more—for if *mountains* of money were put before us it might just as well be shoveled into the infernal deep for all the good it could do—if regarded as at all essential! Our checkbook needs more golden treasure and, thank God, we have it!

Depend upon it, when the Church is fit to be trusted with money, she will have it. Pecuniary straitness is only an index of lack of Divine Grace and is so far a *good* thing, because it brings before us in palpable form our real poverty before the Most High. But Brothers and Sisters, for the conquest of the world, the strength lies in the man Christ Jesus, since in Him all fullness dwells! And in Him we have all the necessary power at our disposal. We are never to say, “Those thieves and criminals are too depraved to be converted,” for in our Lord there is fullness of power to convert the most abandoned! We are not to say, “That alley in the darkest part of the city will never be cleansed from its abominations.” Jesus could cleanse Sodom, itself! We are never to leave a tribe of savages unevangelized because they are too degraded, nor are we to quail before an uneducated and subtle nation because it is too skeptical—all power for all cases is in Jesus—He is the armory of the house of David! In Him we shall find a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men! Let us go to the armory and we shall receive the invincible weapons of our Holy War, yes, and the strength with which to wield them—the might which ensures victory!

Beloved, the text puts away from us, as far as the east is from the west, every conceivable objection that may be raised as to what a saint can do, for surely the very thought of difficulty is rendered absurd by the fact of all fullness residing in our Lord on our behalf! It is not a fullness for merely *teaching*, but a fullness for convincing! It is not a fullness for simply convincing of sin, but for *converting* and bringing to full salvation! It is not a fullness for justifying the Believer, alone, but a fullness for *sanctifying* him—and not a fullness for sanctifying him merely for a little while—but a fullness to keep him to the end! It is a fullness which can fill him with all the fullness of God! Come to whatever place you may, you shall not say, “Here I am at a nonplus,” but there will you find a new illustration of the might of the eternal God which dwells in Christ Jesus!

The fact is, Beloved, we have a superabundant force in Christ and if we did but know it, instead of talking about the struggles of the Church and the strain that is put upon us to hold our own, the joy of the Lord would give such strength to us that we should not remember our own efforts, but like the flood which rushes down the mountain after the rain, the flush of life from Jesus would speed on with a tremendous force, leaping over every obstacle and filling our souls to the brim! God grant us to feel that we do not serve a little Christ nor a stingy Lord. Our God is the God of the hills as well as the valleys! And in the strength of the Lord Omnipotent we triumph in every place! Only let us serve God in real faith and we know not what we may live to see!

God grant us to know this first Truth of God that there is a fullness in Christ—and in the strength of that fullness we may cry—“Forward and upward!”

II. The next encouraging fact is that THE FULLNESS IS IN JESUS NOW. “It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness *dwell*.” The glory of *the past* exercises a depressing influence upon many Christians. “We have heard with our ears and our fathers have told us the wondrous things which You did in their day and in the old time before them.” But we dolefully complain that the golden age of Christianity is over—its heroic times are matter of history. Indeed, this feeling is transformed to fact, for scarcely any Church now existing realizes that it can do what its first promoters did! All appear to be quite sure that these are bad times and but little is to be done in them. We do not expect, nowadays, to find a Methodist so full of fire as the first field preachers. The Quakers are never as fanatical and even the Primitives are not Ranters now! The old reproach has ceased because the old ardor which provoked it has cooled down. So far so *bad*.

I see grave cause for sorrow in all this. A people are in an evil case when all their heroism is historical. We read the biographies of former worthies with great wonder and respect. But we do not attempt to follow in their steps with equal stride. Why not? It has pleased the Father that in Jesus all fullness should *dwell*, a fullness for Paul, a fullness for Luther, a fullness for Whitfield, and blessed be God, a fullness for me and a fullness for you! All that Jesus has given forth has not exhausted Him! Christianity has not lost its pristine strength—we have lost our *faith*—there’s the calamity! Oh, ignoble sons of glorious sires, *you* have degenerated, but not

your Master! And if, even in your degeneracy, you would cast yourselves upon your unchanging God, you would rise to more than the strength of your sires and do yet greater things than they!

The fullness of Jesus is not changed. Then why are our works so feebly done? Pentecost, is that to be a tradition? The reforming days, are these to be only memories? I see no reason why we should not have a greater Pentecost than Peter saw and a Reformation deeper in its foundations, and truer in its building up than all the reforms which Luther or Calvin achieved! We have the same Christ, remember that! The times are altered, but Jesus is the Eternal and time touches Him not. "But we are not such men as they." What? Cannot God make us such? Are we weaker than they? The fitter to be instruments for the mighty God! Away with the cowardice which thinks the past is never to be outdone! Is not the Lord of Hosts with us? Is anything too hard for Him? We must labor to eclipse the past as the sunlight eclipses the brightness of the stars!

The mass of professors have their eyes only on *the future*. The good times are coming, by-and-by, but they are not here yet. We look forward with much hope to the golden age that is to be, when we shall see the fullness of Jesus and nations will be born in a day! Brothers and Sisters, does my text say, "It pleased the Father that in Him all fullness shall *one day* dwell"? No, but, "in Him should all fullness dwell." Whatever has been done can be done now—and whatever shall yet be done, can be done today, by His Grace. Our laziness puts off the work of conquest. Our self-indulgence procrastinates. Our cowardice and lack of faith make us dote upon the millennium instead of hearing the Spirit's voice today! Happy days would begin from this hour if the Church would but awake and put on her Strength, for in her Lord all fatness dwells.

When the Son of Man comes, shall He find faith on the earth? Some doubting ones say, "We do not wonder that there is success in such a place," but we cannot have it. We hear of earnest ministers and we conclude that where *they* labor God will send the blessing, but not to *our* ministry. We conclude that when yonder woman gathers the young people around her, it is no wonder that blessing comes. Does Christ depend on ministers or on holy women? Have you said, "Alas, I cannot have the blessing." Why not? How dare you limit the Holy One of Israel? You who dwell in towns where all is cold around you, do you despair? Is it in your minds that Christ is dependent upon the *circumstances* in which He has placed His servants? "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell." What if the servants are empty—their Master is not! If the *means* of Grace lack power, Grace from above is still Omnipotent. Only fly to the Fountain and the dried up streams need not distress you.

Furthermore, our Churches believe that there is a great fullness in Christ and that *sometimes* they ought to enjoy it. The progress of Christianity is to be by tides which ebb and flow. There are to be revivals like the spring and these must alternate with long lethargies like the winter. O accursed Unbelief, will you always pervert the Truth of God? Will you never understand this Word of God—"It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness *dwell*"? It is *not* the Lord's purpose that a fullness should reside in Jesus during revivals and then withdraw. Jesus Christ is the same

yesterday, today, and forever! The highest state of revival should be the normal condition of the Church. When her martyrs are most self-sacrificing, her missionaries most daring, her ministers most bold, her members most consecrated, she is, even then, below her standard—she has not fully reached her high calling—to come down from her position would be sin!

God grant us Grace to feel that we have not to drink of an intermittent spring, nor to work for Christ with an occasional industry—but as all fullness *dwells* in Him—it is ours to believe that *today* we can have all the blessing of a true revival! That *today* we can go forward in the power of God! That at this very hour we lack for nothing which can lift the Church into her highest condition of spirituality and power! God grant us to receive Grace for Grace today!

III. Thirdly, THE POSITION OF THIS FULLNESS IS RICHLY ENCOURAGING TO US IN THE MATTER OF OBTAINING IT. “It pleased the Father that in *Him* should all fullness dwell.” Brothers and Sisters, you have heard what we have said about the fullness—our words are very poor and poverty-stricken compared with the fact—but listen! The fullness is placed where you can receive it—where you can receive it now, for it is placed in Him who is your Brother—bone of your bone and flesh of your flesh! It dwells in Him who loves to give it, because, as our Head, He delights to communicate with His members!

The plenitude of Divine Grace dwells in Him who is, Himself, yours! Since He is yours, all that is in Christ is yours! You need not pray as if you had no inheritance in the blessing which you seek. Christ is the Trustee of the fullness of God and the property of it is vested in His people—you have only to ask of Him and He will give you that which is yours, already! Why do you hesitate? How can you linger? The Father has placed His Grace in Christ because it gratifies His love to His Son. It pleases the heart of the great God to see Jesus adorned with the fullness of Deity and every time Jesus gives to Believers, the great heart of God is gladdened! How can you hesitate about receiving it if it pleases God for you to partake in it? You may go with great spirit and comfort, since Jesus Himself is honored by your going to Him. He obtains Glory by distributing of His fullness to empty sinners, who, when they receive Grace, are sure to love Him—how can you think Him reluctant to bestow the gift which will increase His Glory?

Do you not know, too, that when you go to Christ, you gain even by the act of going? I am so thankful that Christ has not put my fullness in *myself*, for then I should not require to go to Him so often, or if I did go to Him I should not have an errand to go upon of such importance as to justify my seeking an audience. But now, every time I get to Christ’s door I can plead *necessity*. We go to Him because we *must* go. When is there an hour when a Believer does not need to receive from Jesus? Go, then, Beloved, since it blesses the Church, it honors Christ, it pleases God and it is the way of soul enrichment for yourselves! What place of resort could be so attractive as the Person of the Well-Beloved? If God had put His fullness into an angel, we should not feel greatly drawn to *him*—but since He has caused it to dwell in *Jesus*, He has put it where we love to have it—

where we feel at home, where we are glad to go often! Yes, where we would love to abide and never to go away, but to be forever receiving of Him.

I delight to think that this fullness is placed in Christ because He is the Man who receives sinners and, therefore, you saints who have lost your evidences, you Believers who have acted inconsistently and have not lived up to your privileges, you may say, “we cannot go for this fullness to God, Himself, but we will joyfully go to the Savior of sinners.” If you have been, till now, self-deceived, and your experience has all been a mistake, you can still come to the sinner’s Savior, to whom the thief looked up in his expiring *hour*—and from whom *your* first mercy came! Come, Brothers and Sisters, why do you hesitate? Why do you linger? You who know what Christ is, come, I pray you, with swift feet to the place where all you need is stored—and take all your heart requires! Yes, come for the highest degrees of Grace and for the largest measures of success—and you shall have them, for Christ delights to give exceeding abundantly above what we ask or even think!

IV. And now I have to pass on to another argument. I want to use each head as a hammer—and may God’s own Spirit wield it. The next is this, that FROM THIS FULLNESS WE HAVE, MANY OF US, ALREADY RECEIVED. Is not that an argument for still further exercising faith in Jesus? I know of no argument equal to that of practical experience. They must come who have come before! The sweetness of this honey remains upon the tongue and we long for more and cannot be satisfied till we have taken up the dripping honeycomb once again.

Now, see, Beloved, the text says, “Of His fullness we have all received.” That is, all the saints in former days have received of this fullness. There was not in John any good thing but what he received from his Master. There was not in the noble martyr Stephen one grain of courage but what he received from Christ. Paul, Apollos, or Cephas—these had *nothing* but what they took from Him If *they* received everything, why should *we* hesitate to do the same? Of ourselves it is also true that all our Graces came from Jesus. This is true of the greatest saint and true of the least. Do you remember when you first received Divine Grace? It brings to my mind right joyful memories of the hour when first these eyes looked to Him and were lightened—when I received pardon from His dying love and knew myself forgiven!

Since your conversion, dear Brothers and Sisters, *everything* good you have ever had, you have received from our Lord. What? Have you drunk out of your own cistern? What treasure have you found in your own fields? Nakedness, poverty, misery, death—these are the only possessions of Nature. But life, riches, fullness, joy—these are gifts of Divine Grace through Jesus Christ! Are you accepted before God? He justified you! Have you been kept? He has preserved you! Are you sanctified? He has cleansed you by His blood! Do you know, by full assurance, your interest in the Father’s love? He gave you that assurance! All you have and all you ever *will* have—all that every saint that shall ever be born shall have that is worth having comes out of the fullness of Christ!

The crowded ranks of the white-robed above, without exception, confess, "Of His fullness we have all received." I hear them sing, this morning, as they keep a glorious Sabbath Day above—and this is one sweet stanza of their song, "Of His fullness we have all received, and Grace for Grace." Come then, Brothers and Sisters, what prevents us from receiving? "Ah," you say, "I cannot imagine that I can be a Christian of the highest type." Why not? Have you not received life? Why should you not receive life more abundantly? Have you not already been pardoned? Why should you not have the full assurance of that pardon? Have you not already been taken up from the horrible pit and out of the miry clay? What hinders but that Christ should set you upon a rock and put a new song into your mouth and establish your goings?

"But I cannot hope to be so useful as some are." Why not? According to your faith so shall it be to you! God has given you one convert, why cannot He give you a hundred? You have been blessed to a dear child in Sunday school and you have rejoiced over that one jewel as a precious God-send! Why should you not dive, again, and bring up other pearls for your Immanuel's crown? I would stir in you a sacred ambition! I would provoke you to the highest style of Christian manhood and the most heroic form of Christian service! What you have received is the pledge of what you may receive, but, indeed, you have already obtained a good deal more than yet remains to be received!

Christ is yours and by that fact all things are yours! What you now need is included in what you already have! You only need to realize it—by faith call it your own—and practically to live upon it. May God enable you to do so! Of His fullness have we all received—why should we not receive more?

IV. The last blow of the hammer shall be this—THE GIFTS WE HAVE ALREADY HAD ARE NOT TRIFLES, for John says we have received "Grace for Grace," which is a mode in the Greek language of expressing the superlative. We have received the highest Grace, *superlative* Grace. The gift of Jesus Christ is the highest Grace that even God, Himself, can bestow—nothing can go beyond that! Listen to this, then—"He that spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" I charge you, let that text enter into your hearts—and when you feel straitened in prayer and tempted to say, "No, not here, I cannot rise so high, I am not qualified for that attainment"—do, I pray you, remember the gifts already received by which Jesus opens your mouth and bids you ask great things.

The Father has given you His Son! How can He deny you anything? The expression, "Grace for Grace," may mean Grace answering to Grace—Grace which was in accordance with Grace already given—Grace preparatory to what is yet to come. Has not the Father given you such Divine Grace as you had capacity to receive? If there had been more room you would have had more. If you had exercised more faith, He would have given you more joy. If you had possessed more hope, you would have had more realization. He has always come up to, and even gone beyond, the measure of our expectation. Is there, in your soul, this morning, an enlargement? I feel it in my own heart! I feel a dissatisfaction with my pre-

sent attainments! I pant to know my Lord better! I am discontented with what I have done for Him up to now! I long to do 10 times more for His Glory!

Do you feel the same? Oh, then He will keep in touch with you! Yes, He will do exceeding abundantly above all you ask, or even think! That text does not say, "Above what you *can* ask or think," as people will persist in saying. That is not true because we *can* ask and *can* think as great things as God Himself will give, and He means us to ask *before* He gives. Our capacity for asking is, as a general rule, the measure of His giving, but the Scriptures say He will do exceeding abundantly *above* what you ask or think. Now, are you thinking great things and asking great things? Do not be afraid! The Lord will not let you outstrip Him! Be enlarged—and as large as your faith—so large shall the blessing be.

Then, dear Friends, Grace for Grace may mean Grace *upon* Grace, like Pelion upon Ossa—one mountain piled upon another—each Grace eclipsing the light of that which went before. This we have already known. When we first believed in Christ, pardon for sin seemed everything. But when we came to know that we were justified in Christ Jesus, that appeared to be a much greater blessing. And when we understood that we were adopted and were the sons of God, that new delight surpassed the former joy! The Lord has led you into Divine Grace which has surprised you and lifted you up from one point to another. I speak to many Brothers and Sisters here who must confess that their present state is very different from their Christian infancy—they now know what they never thought they could know. Why, there are doctrines that some of you can enjoy this morning which you used to think frightfully high doctrines! You once could not appreciate them, yet they are simplicities to you now! And there are conquests over sin which you could not have achieved in your boyhood. But now in your Christian manhood you can take up dragons and destroy them.

Now, dear Brethren, as you have been surprised with mercy, you are to be surprised with *more* mercy, and the Lord says to you, "Son of man, I will show you greater favors than these." Greater joys are yet to be known! You have entered the room of silver—that inner door will lead you to a chamber of gold! And beyond that there is a door in the wall which he that is taught of God shall open—a door which will admit you into a chamber of diamonds! And when you shall come there and have seen the Glory and the exceeding riches of the Grace of God, there is still an inner chamber where that which eye has not seen nor ear heard shall be revealed to you—a joy unspeakable, unthinkable, indeed! May we comprehend with all the saints what are the heights and depths—and *know* the love of Christ which passes knowledge.

Now of the things which we have spoken, this is the sum. We have a fullness in Christ as Believers which we ought to use in the following manner—First, believe in great things! Do not sit down, as some do, in the little Meeting House where about 50 Brethren meet and expect the Lord to send a convert once every 12 months. And when He does send him, they worry him by the month together for fear he should not be one of the right sort! And when he finally comes in, they rejoice over him as

one that finds great spoil in having picked up one solitary soul after 12 months' ministry!

Oh, Brothers and Sisters, we have a greater God than this would imply! The little narrow thoughts which Christians have had as to the success of the Gospel cannot have come from a great God, can they? The day was when the very idea of sending the Gospel to the heathen was regarded by our orthodox Brethren as a piece of Don Quixotism, not to be attempted, and even now, if you say, "All the world for Jesus," they open their eyes and say, "Ah, we are afraid you are tainted with universal redemption, or are going off to the Arminian camp." God grant these dear Brethren new hearts and right spirits—at present their hearts are too small to bring Him much glory! May they get larger hearts, hearts something like their Lord's—and may they have Grace given them to estimate the precious blood at a higher rate—for our Lord did not die to buy a few hundred souls, or to redeem to Himself a handful of people! He shed His blood for a number which no man can number—and His elect shall excel in multitude the sands which belt the sea!

Let us have great faith in what God intends to do. Believing these great things, let us *expect* them. Be on the *qui vive* for spiritual miracles. Expect to see hundreds converted! Wonder, when you hear a Gospel sermon, that the Holy Spirit does not save 3,000 by it! "Ah," says one, "I should be very much astonished if He did." I know you would, and that is why we do *not* see it! But we ought to wonder that there are not, and when we are as we should be, we shall see greater things than these! There is no weakness with God! That limping sinew is in Jacob's thigh, it is not in the Angel's. That palsied arm is man's, not God's—no sinew of His arm can decay.

Sirs, do you think that He who smote the fields of Zoan with plagues is not Lord of idols and King of heathens? Do you think that He who divided the Red Sea cannot lead His people like a flock through the wilderness and bring them into the promised possession? Do you think that He cannot bring up His Church out of her bondage and set her feet in a large room? The Lord of Hosts is with us! Therefore let us *expect* things! Expecting great things, let us *attempt* great things! Let us each set about doing something for Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit! Let us try what can be done! Let us not, if we are Sunday school teachers, be satisfied with going through the day's lesson and feeling, "There, that will do." Aim at the immediate conversion of every child in the class!

Do not let us say, as we go round with the tracts this afternoon, "We will leave them and not say a word." Aim at getting a word about Jesus Christ with every person you meet with! As for myself, the preacher, let me come here to preach to you, not with the hope that perhaps, here and there, one will find a Savior, but with an earnest cry to Heaven that the Holy Spirit will comprehend, in the lines of His electing and redeeming love, the whole mass of you, and make this Tabernacle into a golden casket in which all of us shall be the jewels, and take it right up and keep it in His bosom forever!

Last of all, let us not *talk* about this, but let us set about *doing* it! Shall we never have, in our midst, men who will go among the heathen to preach Jesus Christ? We had two lately, are there not two more? Young

men and young women, will you not consecrate yourselves to the Lord and go into exile for His sake? Have we none such? We have here, this morning, good women and good men, too, who are at work among the heathens of the east end of London and the worst parts of our city. Are there no others to do the same? There is room for scores of you to be as devoted to God as our dear Brother, Dr. Barnardo, or our Sister, Miss MacPherson—and why not *you*? Why should not the same anointing come upon you and qualify you for useful work?

Will you not, this very day, preach Christ in the streets? Will you not consecrate yourselves to be whole burnt offerings unto Christ, for Him to live, for Him to die? O soldiers of the Cross, will you loiter in the march? The enemy still holds citadels which belong to Christ and you, by a desperate push, may seize them! Swift as eagles and strong as lions, press onward and win the victory! Why do you hesitate? The powers of evil linger not! The hosts of Hell are raging—they call up all their strength against the Lord of Hosts—and will you stand back? Have you no courage? Is your blood turned to water? Has the Spirit of God departed from you?

Oh, let it not be so, but may God launch us upon the enemy like thunderbolts from His own Omnipotent hand! And yet may it be seen throughout the world that there are men who have received of the fullness of the Crucified One and who, therefore, can give it forth to others and point them to Him in whom the Father is well-pleased that all fullness shall dwell. The Lord be with you all. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*John 1:1-34*.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—436, 415, 249.**

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THE FULLNESS AND THE FILLING

NO. 3553

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 1, 1917.**

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

***“And of His fullness have we all received, and Grace for Grace”
John 1:16.***

ONE Sabbath I was staying in an Italian town on the other side of the Alps. Of course, the whole population was Romish. Two or three of us, therefore, being Protestants, held a little service for the worship of God in the simple manner that is our habit. After this, I went out for a walk. The weather being hot and sultry, I sought the outskirts of the town to get to as quiet and cool a spot as possible. Presently I came to an archway at the foot of a hill where there was an announcement that any person who would climb the hill with proper intentions should receive the pardon of his sins and five days' indulgence. I thought I might as well have five days' indulgence as anybody else, and if it were of any advantage, to have it laid by in store. I cannot tell you all I saw as I went, first one way, and then another, up that hill. Suffice it to say that there was a series of little churches, through the windows of which you might look, as one in his boyish days looked through a peepshow. The whole scene and circumstance of the Passion and death of Christ were thus modeled, beginning with His agony in the Garden, where He was represented in a figure as large as life, with the drops of bloody sweat falling to the ground. The three disciples were a stone's throw off, and the rest of the Apostles outside the garden wall. Every feature looked as real as if one had been standing upon the spot! I scrutinized each group narrowly and carefully read the Latin text which served as an index, till I reached the top of the hill, where I saw a garden, just like an English garden, and as I pushed open the door I faced these words, "Now there was a garden, and in the garden there was a new sepulcher." Walking down a path I came to a sepulcher—so I stooped down and looked in—as Peter had done. There, instead of seeing a picture of the corpse of Christ, I read in gilded letters these words—of course, in the Latin tongue—"He is not here, for He is risen! Come, see the place where the Lord lay." Passing on, I came to a place where His Ascension was represented. On the summit was a large church, into which I entered. No one was there, yet the place for me had a marvelous interest. High up in the ceiling there swung a rude represen-

tation of the Lord Jesus Christ, and round it were statues of the Prophets, all with their fingers pointing up to Him. There was Isaiah, with a scroll in his left hand, on which was written, "He was despised and rejected of men, a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief." Further on stood Jeremiah, and on his scroll was written, "Behold and see if there was ever sorrow like unto My sorrow, which was done unto Me." All round the church I read in great words, that were large enough to be seen, though they were blazoned on the top of the ceiling, "Moses and all the Prophets spoke and wrote concerning Him."

Now, though I cannot take you to see that remarkable sight, which I shall never forget, I would gladly bring before your mind's eye something like it. Suppose that all the saints who lived from the days of Adam, down to the times when Malachi closed the Old Testament—all the saints who lived in Christ's time and then on through the early ages of the Church in the days of Chrysostom, and Augustine, and all the holy men who afterwards gathered around the Reformers, and all who in every place have served God since then—suppose they all stood in one vast circle? To whom do you suppose they would, every one, point? To whom would they all bear witness? Why, with outstretched arm, everyone of them would turn to the Lord Jesus Christ and speak His praise! Could you then enquire into their individual history, you would find among them characters exceedingly diverse, though all remarkably beautiful. Some renowned for courage, others for gentleness. Some for patient endurance, others for diligent labor—and yet all inspired by a common faith—all of them aglow with fervent gratitude! All of them looking with steadfast gaze and intense love towards ONE from whom they had received every gift that profited them—and that One, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Savior of men! The rule would admit of not a single exception. From each man in his own proper position, from every man in his own particular calling, from all the individuals severally in their own personal experience, the innumerable voices—distinct, but blending in chorus—would go up from earth to Heaven, saying, "Of His fullness have we all received, and Grace for Grace." Then I think from the excellent Glory would come a response. The inhabitants of Heaven would echo back the strain, "Of His fullness have we all, the glorified spirits, received, and Grace for Grace." This is the testimony of the Church militant, *and* of the Church triumphant! Yes, it is the testimony of all who in every place and at every time have come and put their trust under the shadow of His wings!

Our text seems to suggest two thoughts—*the fullness and the filling*—upon each of which I will attempt to say a little, a very little. With so infinite a theme, we can do no more than children do when they take up a little seawater in a shell—their tiny scoop cannot embrace the ocean. I

stand on the narrow edge of a vast expanse and leave the boundless depths to your contemplation! *His fullness!* An inexhaustible reservoir! *Our filling!* An illimitable endowment! Beloved, the river of God, which is full of water, can well supply the little canals that are fed from such a fountain with Grace for Grace!

I. I said THE FULLNESS. It is His fullness, the fullness of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Oh, what a fullness He has! The fullness which *belongs to Him personally!* Note this well! Forget it not! Our Redeemer is essentially God. By Nature He is Divine. He has condescendingly taken upon Himself our nature and He is most truly and assuredly Man. Very God! For to Him belong all be attributes of Jehovah. Very Man! For when He took our flesh and blood, He accepted the entire sympathies of our creatureship. In His complex Nature, He possesses fullness. In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. He has the fullness of Omnipotence and all power is given unto Him as Mediator in Heaven and in earth. Omnipresence is His to perfection, “for where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I (He said) in the midst of them.” He has essential wisdom. Even when on earth, “He did not commit Himself, because He knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man, for He knew what was in man.” In Him is fullness of justice. The Father has given all judgment unto the Son. “Shall not God judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He has ordained, whereof He has given assurance unto all men in that He has raised Him from the dead?” In Him is fullness of mercy, for, “through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins.” The attributes of God make up a perfect total. The unity, with all its uniqueness, is His! Divisions and subdivisions are ours. The fractional parts of which we take account are but the breaking up of a great fact to our weak understanding. Think as you may, your thoughts cannot describe or compass God, for God is all that is good and blessed! And as is God, so is Christ—all the Divine Attributes are contained and represented in Christ Jesus in their fullness—not diminished by His humiliation, but resplendent by His triumph!

“In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead.” He is the express Image of the Father’s Person, the brightness of His Father’s Glory—not more Glory—but the brightness of His Father’s Glory. What confidence this ought to inspire in our hearts! The fullness from which you and I derive the Divine Grace we receive is none other than the Infinite fullness of God Over All, blessed forever, whose name is Immanuel, God With Us! *There was also a fullness in Christ in respect to His Manhood.* Nothing was lacking to Him that is involved in being by Nature and Constitution a *perfect* Man. He was pure. He did not inherit any sin. His disposition did not tend towards any evil. Still, all that pertains to the original creatureship of man as created by God did Christ possess in the fullness of

development. Hence, my Brothers and Sisters, there is in Him at this moment a fullness of sympathy. He is not such a High Priest as cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, but He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin! Do not suppose that Jesus is less human than you are, yourselves—He is fully human. Do not imagine that He is less tender than you would be towards the weak and suffering—He is full of tenderness. His heart melts with love. A mother has often a tenderness that we do not find in a father. Masculine strength and courage do not always blend with the gentle, sympathetic qualities of woman. Howbeit when God created man in His own image, male and female created He them. The virtues, if I may say so, of both sexes were combined in our Lord—the suavity as well as the staunchness—the feminine as well as the masculine of our common humanity! Human nature in its totality and completeness was fully possessed and thoroughly represented by Him. The sympathetic nature which melts at a tear and smiles at the joy of others, was as truly His as the heroic nature that parleys not with fear, but acts with promptitude and suffers with fortitude, like a warrior in the hosts of the Lord! There is thus a fullness of humanity as well as a fullness of Divinity in Christ Jesus, our Savior—a fullness of perfection in His blessed Person which may well fix your trust and rivet your admiration!

In our Lord, likewise, there is what I may venture to call, for lack of a better word, *an acquired fullness*. He has sojourned on earth and rendered entire and undeviating obedience to the Law of God, having taken upon Himself the form of a Servant, and by His righteousness earned wages—a fullness, an everlasting wellspring of merit! Throughout His whole life He honored the Divine Law and glorified God on the earth. In doing His Father's will, His action was so voluntary and so vicarious, that He has accumulated an inexhaustible fund of merit which all of us who believe in His name may plead before the Father's Throne. More especially did His death consummate the obedience and constitute its sterling worth, its intrinsic virtue. His death, with all its surroundings—from the bloody sweat in the Olive Garden to the last cry, "Into Your hands I commend My spirit"—was sublime. All through the scourging and the spitting, the shame, the wounding, His Crucifixion, the thirst, the desertion and the death, itself, He was working out an Atonement for us—

***"Bearing, that we might never bear
His Father's righteous ire."***

And now with Him risen from the dead, raised to the right hand of the Majesty on high, there is a fullness of prevalence in His intercession when He pleads His blood—a fullness of cleansing power when the Spirit applies the blood to the guilty conscience—a fullness of peace to the heart when His blood speaks better things than that of Abel! In that fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel's veins there is a full-

ness that never can be exhausted by all the sin of man! He has finished the work which His Father gave Him to do. Now the Covenant is ratified with Him that He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied. In these respects we are convinced that there is an acquired as well as a personal fullness in our precious Lord!

No less has He a *fullness of dignity, of high prerogative*. He is a Prophet. By Him are all His people taught, warned, counseled and encouraged with a blessed hope. He is a Priest, and by Him they are cleansed from sin and consecrated to God. Moreover, He is also a King, spreading the patronage of protection over all His liege subjects and ordaining peace for them. Under His beneficent rule, they prosper! You good Shepherd! You great Shepherd of the sheep! There is no office or obligation that was necessary for our welfare, but You have taken it and undertaken it on our behalf! You are to us all that we require and all that we could desire! Join all the qualities involved in name or fame that commend themselves most closely to your heart, because they meet your necessities, or draw forth your sympathies, and you shall find that He comprises them all in liberal, lavish fullness! Nor has His prerogative any limit. As a Priest, who has once offered a Sacrifice of everlasting prevalence, His absolution or His benediction is final and irrevocable! As a Prophet, His authority is unimpeachable—the authority with which He teaches allows of no appeal. As a king, He has right as well as might on His side. In the midst of Zion, willing subjects yield to His beneficent sway! In the outer world, reluctant rebels must submit themselves to His scepter! He is no Priest whose vain pretense has no valid prescript. He is no Prophet whose teaching is uncertain in its tone, or limited in its range. He is no King whose prerogative is not sanctioned by His wisdom and whose government awakens no fealty of love. But in the administration of all His offices, our Lord Jesus Christ shows a fullness of qualification and gives a fullness of satisfaction! In such respects He has no rival—nor is there any room for a rival to arise!

And let me say here that the power with which our Lord exercises these offices may well command our devout confidence. Do you need to learn the truth? Oh, come to the Prophet of Nazareth, and you shall find that there is a satiety of truth in His teaching such as was never found in heathen groups, or even to the same extent in Hebrew Seers! Or do you need acceptance before God. Oh, then, come you to the Priest who is not of the tribe of Levi, but a Priest after the order of Melchisedec, whose royalty confers dignity on His sacerdotal office! He can present your sacrifice with the much incense of His merit that is acceptable before the Throne of God. Or do you need strength? Do you need one to fight your battles, to take hold of the shield and the buckler, draw out the spear and handle the bow? Behold, the Hero of Israel, whose exploits are told

in your songs—Jesus, the King by right of conquest, as well as by right Divine—has a fullness of power and majesty with which no adversary can overcome! He reigns! His reign is the consolation of His people, the guarantee of their peace! These are bare outlines. Time would fail me to enumerate all His offices. They are very numerous but, however numerous, Christ possesses them all! He enjoys the prerogatives peculiar to them all in the fullest degree. He possesses the power to exercise them all to the fullest extent!

But in Christ there is verily a blessed fullness *of every kind of perfection*. Whatever there may be that is lovely or of good repute is to be found in Christ. All that is virtuous or amiable in the character of men—all that is noble and illustrious in the endowments that Heaven bestows on the most privileged of creatures—our Lord possessed. It was said of Henry the Eighth that if all the likenesses of tyrants had been lost out of history, they might have been reproduced out of the one character of that monstrous tyrant-king! So if all the holy features of Patriarchs and Prophets, of saints and martyrs that ever lived were blotted from the canvas of history, they all might be painted afresh from the one life of the Divine Person of our ever-adorable Lord Jesus Christ! In Him there was not only one perfection, but all perfections meet and blend to make up one matchless perfection. There was not one sweet alone in Him, but in Him all sweets combine in a perfect sweetness! John has love, Peter courage, Paul zeal—each saint has his own peculiarity, but in Christ all the qualities of goodness and Grace converge! He exhibits them in the highest degree and the purest harmony. After such manner are they incorporated in Him as to produce a Character the like of which was never known before, nor ever shall be witnessed again!

And never forget that *a fullness of the Holy Spirit* abides in Christ. The Lord gives not the Spirit by measure unto Him. He has the residue of the Spirit. His is the head upon which the anointing oil is fully poured. We, who are but as the skirts of His garments, are favored with some droppings thereof, but the fullness of the anointing of the Spirit was bestowed upon Jesus Christ our Lord—and from Him, His members must receive the portion they enjoy!

His fullness! I linger on the word, for I revel in the meditation. Such a fullness as admits of no diminution, for it is an abiding fullness! What though all the saints of every age have come to Christ, and drawn their supplies from Him, He is just as full as ever! Think not that those who first came drank of a copious fountain that has been partly drained by the myriads who have since slaked their thirst. The Apostles received of His fullness and so do we! They without prejudice to us—we without prejudice to those who shall follow after us. When I came to Christ 1800 years after the Apostles came, yet I received of the fullness at just the

same rate as when Peter, John, or Paul received it. Should this dispensation last another thousand years, and some poor, trembling wretch should come to the foot of the Cross to receive mercy, he will not receive Christ half-full, but He shall receive of Christ's fullness, for it is an abiding fullness! It is never less than full—never can be more than full. In Him there is an Infinity of Grace and Truth. Such fullness is there in Him at all times, under all your circumstances of trial, yes, and under all conditions of sin, too! The fullness of Christ to supply will always exceed the faith of the Believer to seek. And when you feel your emptiness more than you ever did before, then you will set the most store upon His abounding towards us in all wisdom and prudence. Considering, then, His abiding fullness, His inexhaustible fullness, His available fullness, I entreat you to avail yourself of this fullness now without demur, without delay! As there is a fullness, so there is—

II. A FILLING.

This is to be our second part. I must speak of it with brevity. "Of His fullness have we all received." Surely, then, *all the saints were empty before!* You are empty, my Brother, and so was Abraham, so was Paul. Grace, the free Grace of God, has made all the difference between Peter and Judas, though the one repented and the other despaired—the one traveled the heavenly road—the other went down quickly to Hell. They stood on equal footing in transgression, till Grace made them to differ! What radical difference is there between one man and another from a legal point of view?

"All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." All alike have to come to Christ, empty of merit, or they would never come at all! That was a pretty tale we heard the other day, and it points to a right good moral. A worthy, consistent, industrious woman was married to a low, worthless, dissipated husband. Both of them, however, were alike ignorant of the Gospel. They came together to the House of Prayer. They heard together the tidings of mercy. They each believed and each of them received the Savior—and they both were saved the same way—they both found mercy on the same terms! To the rich, free, Sovereign Grace of God they cried with one another in ascribing the praise. That is a fact. It occurred last week. I do not know whether this makes it more convincing to you, but I might say, as Elihu said to Job, "Lo, all these things works God oftentimes with men, to bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living!"

Observe that the filling is universal. All the saints partake of it. "Of His fullness have *we all* received." There are manifold diversities of experience among the Lord's people, but in some things they share and share alike. Some saints do not undergo the stress of trial and tribulation that others pass through. Here, however, there is no partiality. They have,

everyone of them, received out of Christ's fullness! Not one of them could do without receiving it! Not one of them could receive it from any other hand than that of the Divine Benefactor! They earned it not. They accepted it. They received it from Jesus Christ!

This is peculiar to the saints. While it says, "Of His fullness have we all received," manifestly a certain body of people have become partakers of a privilege which it is no less evident that all men have *not* received. What thousands and tens of thousands there are who, when invited to the Gospel feast, reject the call, "make a wretched choice, and rather starve than come." "We all!" That is, all of those who have believed! And who are, "we," or what are "we," that such Grace should be given to us in preference to anybody else? Ah, Brothers and Sisters, little cause enough have we for self-satisfaction! On the score of deserving, no choice had ever fallen on us! We were the vilest, the least worthy, the least attractive and, in some respects, the least hopeful! Oh, Grace, it is your practice to come into the unlikeliest hearts, and it is the glory of Divine Love to find in darkest spots a home! "We all"—we who were once dead in trespasses and sins. We who were once lost like the prodigal son, lost like the wandering sheep, lost like the piece of money—we who needed seeking, needed finding, need saving—yet of His fullness have we *all* received. Recollect that the reception is peculiar to Believers—it does not go beyond them.

Be it clear, however, that there is, and must be, *a personal reception in every case*. "Of His fullness have we *all* received." No one of us can receive it transmitted from another, but each one of us receives it directly from Him. Your father's Grace cannot save you! It was a wise speech of the wise virgins. When the foolish virgins said to them, "Give us of your oil," they replied, "Not so, lest there be not enough for us and you; go rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves." Family piety involves responsibilities, but it cannot stand in the place of personal godliness! Dear Hearer, you must go to Christ for yourself! All who ever were saved have done so, and you certainly will not be saved unless you are led to do the same! It is a personal filling. "Of His fullness have we all received."

The bounty is gratuitous. Notice the next words, "*and Grace for Grace*." It is not said, "Of His fullness have we all *purchased*," nor, "Of His fullness have we all *earned* a share." It is all passive. We have *received*. What does the vessel do to fit itself for the water that flows into it? Why, it does nothing! All its doing can fit it to recede is an undoing—that is to say, it empties itself to prepare itself to be filled. Oh, if any of you desire to find Jesus Christ, the doing must be in the way of undoing! You must be emptied to be filled! The preparation is a consciousness that you are not prepared! In such unpreparedness you are prepared for Christ! This is an enigma and a riddle. Those who think themselves prepared

for Him are not—but those who know that they are not prepared are just the souls upon whom His Grace will come! Poverty, not riches. Blindness, not sight. Emptiness, not fullness. Sinfulness—not virtue—these are the things Christ looks for. He is come to seek and to save that which was lost—not that which had won victories! Not that which was splendid in its own esteem, but that which was defeated, ruined, lost! If you are lost, He comes to seek and to save such as you are! Oh, you who were once lost, but now are found, bless His name that you have received of His fullness!

“*And Grace for Grace!*” What do these words mean? We can only just touch them as a swallow with its wing touches the pool—we cannot pretend to enter into their depth. “Grace for Grace.” Does that mean that those who receive Grace under the old dispensation were afterwards led to receive the Grace of the new dispensation? Does it mean that we who have the Grace of conviction, with the Holy Spirit as a spirit of bondage, shall receive, by-and-by, the spirit of liberty, and get out of conviction, through conversion, into full pardon and enjoyment of peace with God? Is that the Grace, when Grace turns into Glory and we come before the Throne of God? Does it mean Grace by degrees—Grace upon Grace—a little Grace to begin with, and more Grace afterwards? “He gives more Grace.” Grace following on Grace and, further on, superabounding Grace, when Grace turns into Glory and we come before the Throne of Grace forever and ever? Does it mean that God leads us on, step by step, adding to our spiritual wealth, initiating us first into simple things and afterwards leading us into deeper matters? “Grace for Grace.”

Yes, it means that, but it means more! God gives *Grace in preparation for further Grace*—the Grace of a broken heart—to make room for deep repentance and abhorrence of sin! The Grace of hatred of sin to make way for the Grace of holy and careful walking, humiliation and faith in Jesus! The Grace of careful walking to make room for the Grace of close communion with Christ! The Grace of close communion with the Lord Jesus Christ to make room for the Grace of full conformity to His Image! Perhaps the Grace of conformity to His Image to make room for the higher Grace of brighter views of Himself and still closer incomings into the very heart of the Lord Jesus! It is Grace that helps us on in Grace. When a beggar asks you for a penny, and you give him one, he does not ask you for a sixpence. Or if you give him a shilling, he would not consider that an argument why you should give him a sovereign! But you may deal thus with God—if you have only got, as it were, an ounce of Grace, that is a reason why you should then pray God for a greater weight of Grace—and afterwards for a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory! Believe that He gives Grace for Grace—that is, Grace that you may open your mouth for more Grace! The Grace you have expands your

heart and gives you capacity for receiving yet more Grace. Do you not send your child to school to learn his ABCs? You may call that the Grace of learning his alphabet. Yes, but it is preparatory to his learning to read the spelling book. Well, but why does he learn to read the spelling book? Why, that is a preparation for something else! So one Grace gives us a preparation for another Grace, and thus as we have more Grace, we realize the blessedness of this Divine filling out of His fullness!

Or, suppose we read the passage thus—*Grace answerable to Grace?* Even this will admit of two constructions. Let God give me Grace to be a preacher—He will surely give me Grace to discharge the office! Perhaps He has given you Grace to teach in a Sunday school? Then you need a further supply of Grace to enable you to be an efficient teacher! Perhaps you have the Grace of resignation to suffer for Christ's sake. You will need the Grace of patience to support you in the midst of pain or persecution! You are called to pray, and you yield yourself up to be a wrestler with God in prayer. This is a great Grace. Oh, may you have Grace answerable to that Grace, that when you get with the Angel by the brook Jabbok, you may take hold of His strength, plead His promise, His Covenant, His oath and never let Him go until He blesses you! Thus, a halt and fainting Jacob comes off as a prevailing Israel! May we thus always have Grace answerable to Grace! "Grace for Grace" may imply Grace received by us answerable to the Grace that is in Christ. Oh, that we Christians had Grace in some measure commensurate with the Grace that is treasured up for us in Him! All that is in Him belongs to you. Then the degree of your daily supplies ought to be proportionate to His ample, unlimited wealth and fullness!

A young heir to a large estate, though not of full age, generally gets an allowance made to him by the executors, or the trustees, or the Court of Chancery, suitable to the position he is presently to occupy. If he has £100,000 a year in prospect, he would hardly be limited to a penny a week, like a poor man's child. We cannot suppose that he would have a mean allowance made him such as would barely enable him to live in a humble cottage on the rich domain he is entitled to. Oh, no, that would be a meager pittance out of all proportion to his position. When I see one child of God always mourning, another always doubting, and yet another always scheming—I feel a kind of disappointment—I see they are living below their privileges! They do not seem to have Grace in possession answerable to the Grace they have had. We always advocate propriety, on the part of all our people, of living within their incomes, but I will defy the child of God to live *beyond* his income in a spiritual sense! You that have but little spending money are like the elder brother in the parable. You say, "You never gave me a kid that I might make merry with my friends." And your Father replies, "Son, you are always with Me and *all*

that I have is yours.” If you do not have it, it is your own fault—it is all there and is freely yours! You have but to ask, and you shall receive—to seek, and you shall find. Oh, could we once get Grace in us at all like the Grace that is in Christ, what Christians we would be! No longer starlight Christians and moonlight Christians, but sunlight Believers, letting our light shine before the sons of men! Oh, to be among the three Mighties of our royal David! May each of us covet such a position as this and God grant it to us for His love’s sake!

“Grace for Grace” obviously means *Grace in abundance*. Like the waves of the sea, when one comes, there is another close behind it. Before you can say that one is gone, there is another coming to fill its place. There they come. Who shall count them? In long succession, wave follows wave. So is God’s Grace. “Grace for Grace.” One Grace has hardly come into your soul but there is another one! You have heard the story of Rowland Hill having a hundred pounds entrusted to him for the benefit of a poor minister. He thought that if he sent him the hundred pounds, it would be too large a sum to give him all at once—he would scarcely know how to handle it and, perhaps, he would not be as thankful for it as if he had it doled out in smaller amounts. So he sent him five pounds, and wrote in the letter, “More to follow.” Letters did not come often in those days of nine penny or eighteen penny postage, but in about another week he forwarded another five pounds, and a note with it, “More to follow.” After a short interval he did the same, again, still saying, “More to follow.” So it went on for a long time, always with, “More to follow,” till the dear good man, I should think, must have been at his wits’ end to know what could follow when so many good presents came to one who needed them so much!

Now that is just how God has done with me, and I believe He is doing the same with all of you who are His people. He has sent you a mercy and when He has sent it, you might have seen, if you had looked at the envelope, that it was an earnest of further benefits and benefactions—“More to follow.” The mercy you have received today has written upon it legibly, “More to follow,” and that which will come tomorrow will have upon it, “More to follow.” “Grace for Grace.” Oh, sing unto Him a new song! Let Him have fresh songs for fresh mercies and, as He multiplies the mercy, so do you multiply the praises you ascribe to His name!

“Grace for Grace!” Does it not mean *Grace from Him to produce Grace in us*? We receive from the fullness of Christ, of His Grace, in order that it may be a living seed that shall produce Grace in us as its natural fruit! The Grace of gratitude should be produced in us by the Grace of generosity from God. We ought to be gracious with a holy joyfulness for all His goodness. I hope we shall have the Grace of patience under all sufferings and the Grace of zeal in all our labors. At a time like this, my Brothers

and Sisters, when we are seeking the conversion of sinners with special efforts, may we have Grace from Jesus that shall make all the Graces fruitful and fragrant in us! So shall we be to the Savior as a garden of olives and pomegranates, of lilies and sweet flowers—and may He take a delight in us! When Cyrus took the Greek Ambassador through his garden, he challenged him to admire its charms. The Spartan approved all he saw, but still his admiration was cool and critical. “This garden,” said its master, “yields me more pleasure and satisfaction than you can imagine, or I can express.” “And why?” asked the visitor. “Because,” replied Cyrus, “I planted every tree in it myself. I planned all the paths and all the flowers have I reared. No hand but mine has dug the soil, tended the plants, pruned the trees, or done anything but my own.” As toil and his trouble thus endeared the place to the king, so, truly, Christ can say when He looks upon His people, “There is a fruitful branch there—I pruned that. He was sick, long laid aside from business. He feared his family would be starved—I was pruning him, then, but I love the fruit that is on him because I know how it came there. That plant yonder which is blooming now and shedding such a sweet perfume of love, well do I recollect when it was drooping and ready to die. I came and watered it. She, timid disciple, would say, ‘Blessed be the gentle hand that shed the dew and poured nourishment on my poor, parched and withered root!’” Yes, the Savior gives us “Grace for Grace” that we may produce Grace! I leave the thought with you for meditation, and the issues for your edification, only praying that His Holy Spirit may work in you “Grace for Grace.”

Oh, that all of you might receive Grace from Him. You will never get Grace anywhere else! Go to Him at once by faith, with humble prayer. Plenteous Grace with Him is found—all the Grace you shall ever require between now and Glory, you shall find stored up in Him! His Grace is our benediction. Of it may you one and all partake! Amen.

—Adapted from the *C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

THE FULLNESS OF CHRIST—RECEIVED!

NO. 415

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 20, 1861,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

“And of His fullness have all we received.”
John 1:16.

THERE is no occasion to inform the Christian heart who the Person is to whom reference is here made. The name of Jesus is to you a household word. No, it is *the* word which will be found written upon your hearts when you die. That immortal word shall be the keynote of your eternal song when you shall enter into the immortality which remains for God’s people. Jesus! How sweet is Your name to Your people. It is a sonnet of itself. It is the sum of all music summed up in two syllables. It is a hallelujah and the groundwork of an eternal hosanna in five letters. Jesus! We defy earth to equal it and Heaven itself to excel it. Jesus is Heaven’s highest melody—as it is earth’s sweetest delight.

The text informs us that there is a fullness in Christ. There is a fullness of essential Deity, for “in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead.” There is a fullness of perfect Manhood, for in Him bodily, that Godhead was revealed. Partaker of flesh and blood, made in all things like unto His brethren, there was nothing lacking that was necessary to the perfection of humankind in Him. There is a fullness of atoning efficacy in His blood, for “the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleans us from all sin.” There is a fullness of justifying righteousness in His life, for “there is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.”

There is a fullness of divine Providence in His plea, for “He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him; seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them.” There is a fullness of victory in His death, for through death He destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil. There is a fullness of efficacy in His resurrection from the dead, for by it “are begotten again to a lively hope.” There is a fullness of triumph in His ascension, for “when He ascended up on high He led captivity captive and received gifts for men.” There is a fullness of blessings unspeakable, unknown. A fullness of grace to pardon, of grace to regenerate, of grace to sanctify, of grace to preserve and of grace to perfect.

There is a fullness at all times. A fullness by day and a fullness by night. A fullness of comfort in affliction, a fullness of guidance in prosperity, a fullness of every Divine attribute, of wisdom, of power, of love. A

fullness which it were impossible to survey, much less to explore. There is everything summed up in a total—"the gathering together of all things in One" in Jesus. "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell." In vain we strive to recount the holy wonder. It were a theme which would exhaust an angel's tongue to tell—the fullness which resides in Jesus our Head and ever abides to answer our need.

And now what shall we say to these things? "Of His fullness have all we received." The text seems to me to suggest four reflections. First, an *appeal to our gratitude*. "Glory be to Christ! For of His fullness have all we received." Secondly, a *notion of character*, "Thus may you know the people of God, for of His fullness have they all received." Thirdly, a *sentence of admonition to believers*, "Be wise, oh you people of God, be grateful and be humble, for it is of His fullness you have received." And in the last place here is to the sinner a *word of sweet encouragement*, "Come, all the saints invite you, for of His fullness have all they received."

1. To begin with the first the text constrains us to say, "GLORY BE UNTO CHRIST FOR HIS FULLNESS, for of it have all the saints received."

Appeal to those who died before the flood. Ask those who trod in the steps of Enoch. Go forward to Noah, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Put the question to David and Samuel—come on through the Prophets, to Isaiah and Jeremy—ask them all, "From where came your faith? From where your power to suffer and your strength to conquer?" With united breath they answer, "Of His fullness who as yet had not come in the flesh we by faith received." Ask the saints in later times. I summon you, oh you bright Apostles of the Lamb, "From where came your noble testimony and your unwavering constancy?" They reply with the voice of John, their leader, "Of His fullness have all we received."

Appeal to the martyrs on their racks, on their blood-stained gibbets, on their stakes and glowing fires. In their dungeons and damp dying places—ask the tenants of ten thousand graves, "From where came your triumph?" And they reply at once, "We have overcome through the blood of the Lamb." "Of His fullness have all we received." You should go through the list of the Reformers. You should ask Luther and Calvin and Zwingli and Melancthon and Wickliffe and Huss and Jerome and Knox. And there is not one of them who will dare to say that he had anything of his own.

You should turn over the list of the great preachers and summoning them one by one, you should say to Augustine, to Chrysostom, to Bernard and to those in later days, such as Latimer, Tindal and Hooper and to later still the men with Whitfield and with Wesley preached the Word, "From where came your boldness in confession? From where your strength to bear the calumny of the age and to be the butt of human

scorn and yet never to flinch, much less to withdraw your testimony.” And they all reply, “Of His fullness have all we received.”

Brethren, what a fullness must this be—when you think that a multitude which no man can number—a company beyond all human count have all received Him! And there is not one of them that has received too little—they are all, as Rutherford has it—“drowned debtors to His grace.” Or, as we put it, “over head and ears” in debt to Him. They are so indebted that they will never know how much they owe but they feel that an eternal song will not be too long to utter their grateful praise. Fullness, indeed, must there be in Him when all these streams have been continually flowing and yet He is not dry—when all these mouths have been filled and yet the granary is not empty. When all these thirsty ones have had their drink and yet the well springs up as free, as rich, as full as ever.

But you must note again, to the praise of Christ, not only did they all receive of His sense, they all received all that they had. They had not, any of them, a part of their own. No Apostle could say, “So far I am a debtor. But here I stand and claim the honor for myself.” With *sin* begins and ends the whole story of man. But where *good* appears, there *grace* begins. Or, rather, the grace began *before* the good. For every good desire, for every holy thought, for every well-spoken word, for every deed of daring, for every act of self-sacrifice let Christ be honored—for everything has come of Him. If there is any virtue, any praise—anything that is lovely or of good report—go and cast it at His feet, for from Him it came. He sowed the seed out of which it grew. He created the nature out of which these good things sprung.

Oh what must the fullness be from which all the saints received all that they have! But there is another way of estimating the fullness—by remembering that, albeit, all the saints have received all these things, yet it remains undiminished—a fullness still. There is not a drop less in Christ though oceans have been taken away. There is not a spark less in that furnace though many fires have been kindled therefrom. There is not a farthing less in that treasury though millions of souls have been enriched. There is not a grain less in that granary nor shall there be a grain less even when the whole world shall be sown—and all these sheaves shall come to the harvest.

It is always blessed for the child of God to know that in Christ there is enough for all the saints, enough for each, enough for evermore. And when they have had all and everything that they can have still there is as much left as when they began. I noticed in Venice at the wells that the people came to them early in the morning because very soon afterward they were almost dry and it needed some two or three hours for the well to spring up again. Ah, but it is never so with Christ. Come early in the

morning, O you thousands of seekers and that well is full—come you at hot noon tide, O you thirsty ones and the well is full—come when the sun is going down, you that are wearied with your day of toil, for the well is ever full.

Ah, come at midnight, you whose sun is set, who are lost in the darkness of despair, for still you shall find that the well is full—never exhausted. No, never diminished—always springing up, always overflowing. So long as there shall be souls found who need to drink of His fullness, the supply shall be abundant.

Though there are many things to say on each division of my subject, you must excuse me if I say but little. You must take the text home and think of it for yourselves. Spirits around the Throne, I hear you sing tonight, “Of His fullness have all we received.” Saints on earth, speeding your way to the eternal triumphs, join their song and say, “Of His fullness have all we received.” Let no voice be silent, let no tongue be dumb, but let every soul say, “Of His fullness, too, have I received and glory be unto His name.”

II. Now for our second point. The text also teaches us HOW TO KNOW WHO IS THE CHRISTIAN, for it says, “Of His fullness have all we received.”

There are some in this world who obtain their religion from their fathers and mothers. They go to church, or perhaps to chapel, because there is a family pew there and all their family used to go. They speak about “*our* church” and “*our* denomination” as though their grandfather had left his religion in his last will and testament for a legacy to them. Let such know that religion is not to be inherited. It is a *personal* matter. No man can stand sponsor for another. One of the most ridiculous and pestilent of human inventions is the idea of making one man stand representative for another, or an adult for a child—everyone must appear before God and be judged for ourselves.

Jesus Christ is the only Surety. Verily, we should have enough to do to answer for ourselves at the last, without attempting to make a reply for other people. To our own Master we must stand or fall. We have a divinely appointed Substitute. Therefore we shall all gather around the judgment seat of Christ. But you have received your grace, you say, from your parent. If you have got it anywhere but from Christ then please remember you do *not* belong to the family of Christ. Others there are who have a religion of their own—they have got it by good works. They have always acted uprightly. They have shut their shops on a Sunday. They do not cheat—at least not often, not more than other people. They speak the truth and they endeavor to do their best.

They would not mind helping a poor neighbor. Or if they are in richer circumstances, their guinea is always ready whenever the subscription list is placed before them. And they say, “Well, if it does not go well with me, it will be hard with a great many people.” That is quite correct—indeed it will go very hard with a great many people. But this religion of theirs is of their own making. Then sometimes when men get rich they think they will, as it were, put the finest fruit on the top of the bushel and they leave a donation to some society. A very good plan, indeed, by the way—but a pitiful thing if it is left with the view of getting merit by it. So now they say, “It will all be well—there will be two or three alms-houses built. I have been a good fellow while I have lived and it will surely be well with me at the end.”

You do *not* belong to the same company as the saints who have gone before. You have evidently nothing to do with the Apostle John—for *his fullness came from Christ*. It is quite apparent you can never share his Heaven. You can never enjoy his bliss. You can never enter into his rest. What he had he owed to grace divine. But it seems what you have is of your own earning. Your robes are of your own spinning, your fire of your own kindling, your coin of your own minting, your merits of your own merchandise. Oh, be not deceived, these things will fail you at the last and you will find them as a dream when one awakes. All your fine righteousness shall disappear as a shadow when your conscience is aroused upon your dying bed.

But others have a better sort of religion than this. They do not believe the Calvinistic doctrine—that without Christ we can do nothing. They acknowledge that without Him we cannot do *much*—still they pretend that with Him they can do just a little. If we cannot save ourselves yet we can believe in our own strength. So they take the first step. They begin the good work in *themselves*. And then their divines teach them that they must persevere—yes, if they do not, if they will not do their part, God will leave them. The grace of God is dependent upon *their* good behavior—so they try to behave themselves to keep the grace of God.

They “use the grace of God” as they call it. They try to hold on to the end of themselves. And what does it all come to? To which I say, it is very obvious that you *do not* belong to those old-fashioned saints who lived in the Bible times—for all they had they received from Christ. They did not get the beginning from themselves—He was Alpha—they did not get the ending—He was Omega. They did not get anything from self. They sought and they found Christ for us. If you had asked an old saint his opinion about salvation he would have replied in the language of Jonah, “Salvation is of the Lord.”

Free will doctrines, creature power and human strength, were unknown in Bible times. They were the invention of one Pelagius. They were new vamped and made a little tidy by Van Harmin, called Arminius. There are some who to this day have adopted “these old shoes and clouted upon their feet and old garments upon them and all the bread of their provision is dry and moldy.” And they appear like Gibeonites in the Lord’s hosts. I do not say but what many of them shall be saved—but they shall be hewers of wood and drawers of water in the midst of the congregation in their days—for they never can come into the liberty wherewith Christ makes us free while they believe those adulterated doctrines, those traditions of men, instead of the doctrine and revelation of Christ Jesus the Lord.

Now, let us try to find out the true Christian—the enlightened Christian. The true Christian has *all* from Christ. The Heaven-taught Christian feels it is so. You remember that the Apostle Paul said of himself that he was the chief of sinners. A little while before he says he was the least of all the saints and last of all he says, “Though I am nothing.” John Newton says, “Young Christians think themselves little—growing Christians think themselves nothing—full-grown Christians think themselves less than nothing.” So as we *grow up we grow down*. As Christ increases we must decrease. As He is glorified, the flesh gets dishonored in our esteem.

Now, what do you say, Brothers and Sisters? Did you receive all the grace you have from Christ? Is He All in All to you? Are you resting wholly and simply and only on Him? Can you say as poor Jack did in that story I once told you—

***“I’m a poor sinner and nothing at all,
But Jesus Christ is my All in All!”***

Have you learned to depend on Him for all things and on self for nothing? Have you seen the rottenness and emptiness of all human merit? Have you learned the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of all human trust? If so, rejoice, for you belong to that company who can say, “Of His fullness have all we received.”

Sometimes the devil will say to us, “Well, you do a great deal in the cause of Christ. You do not have a moment’s rest from the moment you wake in the morning to the time you go to sleep at night—always thinking of something for Christ and doing something for Him.” And, then, proud flesh says, “Ah, you have labored more abundantly than they all.” No, no, my Brethren. When we come to look upon all our works, those of us who have toiled the most for Christ—I am sure we cannot find any satisfaction in them. In reviewing all that I have attempted to do, I can only say, so far as my own personal experience goes, I am as heartily sick of my own righteousness as I am of my sins.

I feel as much reason to have God's grace over the best deeds as over the worst. I often lie down in the very dust of self-abasement feeling that I have not anything—no, not a rag of my own—no, not a grain of merit, not an atom whereon I can trust. As abject a sinner as there is out of Hell—if I look into myself—it is my only satisfaction that I am enabled to look to Christ and to Christ alone. All that is of Nature's spinning must be unraveled. All that is of Nature's manufacture must be broken in pieces. We must unhoof the horses and burn the chariots of human strength in the fire, for thus says the Spirit, "I will stain the pride of all glory and bring into contempt all the excellent of the earth." "Yes, doubtless and we count all things His for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord." Here is our struggle—"that we may win Christ and be found in Him, not having our own righteousness which is of the Law, but the righteousness which is of God by faith."

III. Thirdly, we draw from the text A SENTENCE OF ADMONITION TO THE BELIEVER—"Of His fullness have all we received."

Should not the believer be of all men the most honorable? I have heard sometimes of a man being a Christian and yet being proud. Now a proud Christian is a singular contradiction. Yet you do know some—you would not say they were not godly people—but then, their coat is made of the best broad cloth and they think it would be a little going down if they were to speak to those who wear fustian or white coats during the week. They are a little better off in the world and so they do not receive their poorer Brethren. This is the most silly pride in the world. I have not a word to say about it. It is too mean to be worth a man's words spent upon it.

But there is some pride which a Christian man will entertain and almost think it is humility. It is a pride about his experience—a pride of having grown wise at last. He thinks he has learned too much ever to be proud, which proves that he is puffed up beyond measure. He says, "Well, those young people are very self-conceited." He looks down on beginners and says, "Their greatest danger is to be lifted up with pride." While as for himself—good sober man, so old and experienced—it is not possible that he should be proud—yet proud all the while. To such we say, "What have you that you have not received?" I know people say it is more respectable to owe thirty thousand pounds than it is to break for three. But if I must be in debt, methinks I would rather be the smaller debtor.

Yet how many there are because they have received more from God than others—that is they are greater *debtors* than others—they are proud. You have more gifts than I have. Well, it only means you have got twice as much work to do as I have. So you have got more wealth than I. That means you are more in debt to God than I and are you *proud* of being in debt? Let the Christian be a humble-minded man. We talk of humility.

What a lump of pride we are—fussy, stuck-up, wanting to have respect paid to us. If somebody comes between the wind and our nobility, we are upset. If somebody abuses us, what a state we are in. And oh, if anybody calls us ill-names, how harshly we consider ourselves treated.

If we thought less of ourselves we should not be quite so sensitive. Where should dust go but on the dunghill? And where should they put the man who knows himself to be vile but in the worst place? Yes, let them put us there—they will not give us worse than we deserve if we come to know ourselves in the sight of God. Yes, we may say of the slanderer, “Man, you have not hit it, you have not found out my fault. If you knew me better you could hit me harder.” Yes, we might sometimes say to some cruel enemy, “You have made some mistake there, for I am innocent of that before God. But if you had read my heart and known how false I have been to my Lord and how unbelieving, you might have exposed me and hit me in a sore place and smitten me under the fifth rib.”

I think we ought always to say, “Well, we do not deserve it for that, but we deserve it for something else, so we will take it patiently and be willing that men should wipe their shoes on us if it will but glorify Christ.” Yes, let them call us devils if we may but help to do angel’s work in redeeming men. Let them scout us, hiss at us and say, “Yah! there goes a hypocrite!” or anything else they like, if we may but magnify Christ while living and enjoy Him when we shall come to die. Be humble Christian, for what have you that you have not received?

Next, let us be *grateful*. All that we have we have received from Christ. Let us love Him. When our friends give us love we give them love in return. But what is that which we owe mother, father, husband, wife, or friend compared with what we owe to Christ? Let your hearts burn, let your love be inflamed. Fall at His dear feet—embrace them with affection. Spend and be spent for Him. Live unto Him and be ready to die for Him. For all you have you have received of His fullness. I think that what we want as a Church is more recognition of the gifts we have as coming from Christ. I do not think we have the gratitude we ought to have to Him. We do not make sacrifices for Him. We give, it is true, to this cause and to that, but are there half-a-dozen Christians here that have ever made a *sacrifice* for Christ?

He gives us blood and we give Him a few tears. He gives us sweat and we give Him cold services. He gives us groans and we give Him languishing hymns. He gives us life and death, body, soul and spirit and we give Him only what we can spare after we have first looked to ourselves—and not all that in most cases. Let us feel, O God, let us feel gratitude to Christ—a fire within our bones and a flame within our hearts and a sev-

enfold strength in our spirits—not only to believe in His name, but also to suffer for His sake. Let gratitude be the inspiration of our lives.

IV. I have not time nor strength to enlarge further upon these points. Therefore the last and not the least important. The text seems to me to be A MOST SWEET INVITATION—A MOST BLESSED ENCOURAGEMENT TO POOR NEEDY SINNERS.

So, Sinner, you need tonight a new heart. You will never be able to make your heart new yourself—He must give it to you. So, Sinner, you need repentance—you can never repent of yourself. He is exalted on high to give repentance. So you need a sense of your own sin and sinfulness—He can make you feel it, for He felt it all Himself. So you do feel your sin, you say and you want to have it pardoned—He can pardon it and without exception He has power to forgive sins on earth. Tell me not how vile you have been—He can pardon you. Say you are guilty of aggravated crimes—He can forgive you. Tell me not, even, that you have stained your hands with blood—He is able to wash out that stain and make you whiter than snow.

Sinner, Sinner, Sinner! Do you need tonight to have your aching heart filled with peace?—He can do it. Of His fullness have all the host in Heaven received. Of His fullness have all the saints on earth received. And you, poor weeping Sinner, you may, you *shall* receive, too. They had nothing to bring to Him any more than you have. They came to Him black in sin—as black as you and He washed them. They came to Him lost—lost as you can possibly be—He saved them and He can save you. He asks you to do nothing of yourself, but to trust Him and Him alone. He is God. Oh, trust the Omnipotent One. He is perfect Man. Oh, trust the Meritorious One. He died. Oh, trust His dying sacrifice.

He lives. Oh, trust His authoritative plea. Sinner, if we asked you to trust a *man*, we should think it right that you should object. If he pretended to be a priest and asked you to trust him, you might turn upon your heel with a sneer. But I bid you trust in no mere man but in Him that died upon the Cross. And He is worthy of your trust. Yonder millions redeemed from death and Hell will tell you, “Worthy is the Lamb!”—and thousands here below will tell you, too, “That He is worthy of all your confidence.” May the Spirit of God graciously lead you out of self into Christ and enable you once for all to put your trust in Him.

I will tell you, tonight, an anecdote which I think I have repeated before, but not in this house. There was a poor man who had been a long while burdened in spirit—one night he had a dream. To dreams we attach no importance. But this dream happens to be an allegory. He dreamed that he stood at the gates of Heaven, longing to enter but he dared not and could not, for sin had shut him out. He was longing to come but he dared

not. At length he saw approaching the pearly gates a company of men who came on singing. They were goodly to look upon, dressed in white robes.

So he stepped up to one of them and he said to them, “Who are you?” And they replied, “We are the goodly fellowship of the Prophets.” He said, “Alas! I cannot enter with you.” And he watched them until they had passed the gates and he heard from outside the voice of song as they were received with welcome. Cast down and troubled, he watched until he saw another company approach and they came with music and rejoicing. He said to them, “Who are you?” They were great hosts who had washed their robes and they replied, “We are the noble army of martyrs.” He said, “I cannot go with you.” And when he heard the shouts a second time ascending from within the gates, his heart was heavy within him at the thought that it was not possible for him to enter there.

Then came a third company and he detected in the main the Apostles and after them there came mighty preachers and confessors of the Word. He said in his heart, “Alas! I cannot go with you, for I am no preacher and I have done nothing for my Master.” His heart was ready to break, for they entered and were lost to his sight. And he heard the triumphant acclamations as the Master said, “Well done, enter into the joy of your Lord.” But as he waited, he saw a greater company approaching. He marked in the forefront Saul of Tarsus, Mary Magdalene, the thief that died upon the Cross. And they came streaming on.

So he said to one of them, “Who are you?” And they replied, “We are a company of sinners whom no man can number. We are saved by blood—through the rich, free, sovereign grace of God.” Indeed, all the companies might have said the same and the dream would have been more complete. But as this poor man, with the tears in his eyes heard this word, he said, “Thank God, I can go with you, for I am a sinner like you and like you I trust in the merit of Him that died on Calvary.” So he joined their ranks and was about to enter but he said in his heart, “When we come, there shall be no songs. They will admit us, but it will be in silence, for we bring no honor to God. We have done nothing for Him—there will be no voices of music when we come in.”

But to his surprise the acclaim was *louder*, the music was more melodious and the shouts of acclamation were louder far, while they said, “Here are they who come to complete the number of the host whom Jesus bought with His blood.”

Now, Sinner, let your ear be attentive and let your heart bow down to listen while I admonish you. What? Though you are a poor sinner—if you believe in Christ, you can come in as a poor sinner! Indeed, this is the way we *all* must come, for there are *not*, after all—though our imagination, like

the dream, may suggest it—there are *not two ways* of entrance. We all come to Him empty—to be filled—naked, to be clothed—lost to be saved. Let me, then, just put the way of salvation plainly to you all.

“He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” So said Christ. This was the commission which He gave to His Apostles. What is it to believe? To believe is to trust Christ. To put it as the Negro said, “Massa, I fall flat down on de promise.” That is to believe—to fall flat on the finished work and sure promise of Christ.

The Lord enable you to be rid of self and self-confidence and to trust Christ. Then let Hell roar, let earth rage, let the Law thunder, let the precept threaten, let condolence accuse. But oh, let the Son of God arise. Bound by His Word, He will display a strength proportioned to your day. He will never suffer you to perish, neither shall any pluck you out of His hand. Amen.

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THE FULLNESS OF JESUS THE TREASURY OF SAINTS NO. 858

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 28, 1869,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Of His fullness have we all received and Grace for Grace.”
John 1:16.*

THESE are not words spoken by John the Baptist, as a cursory reader might imagine, but they were written by John the Evangelist. The verse preceding is a paragraph cast into the midst of the Gospel, causing a temporary break. Omitting that verse, we read as follows: “The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father), full of Grace and truth; and of His fullness have we all received and Grace for Grace.”

In its more limited meaning, as it stands in its connection, the text appears to teach that while Jesus Christ dwelt on earth there was a Divine Glory about His Person and Character which His Apostles and disciples clearly beheld, perceiving in Him and in His teaching a fullness of Divine Grace and the Truth of God. And further, that this Grace and Truth were Divinely contagions, so that the disciples participated in it and men took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus and learned of Him—this being especially true of the Apostles who drank most fully into the life and power of Jesus and continued to reveal to the world, after their Master was taken up—the Grace and Truth of the Gospel committed to them.

But this passage is not to be restricted to so limited a sense—it is of far wider range and of much greater depth. We understand it of our Lord Jesus in the whole of His Character and work. Looking beyond His earthly life we see Him in His Crucifixion, His Resurrection, His Ascension, His sitting at the right hand of God and His Second Advent. And beholding Him as the all-sufficient Savior, we this day behold His Glory, the Glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth! And *we*, that is, the whole range of the saints in all ages past and in all periods to come—we receive out of this fullness superabundant Grace!

I. In discussing this text I shall first remind you of the ONE GLORIOUS PERSON concerning whom this verse is written. There are other persons in the verse, but they are comparatively insignificant. “We all” are mentioned as the receivers—we occupy the most humble place. The one throne of the text, (and a glorious high throne it is), is reserved for Him who is intended in the pronoun, “His.” “Of His fullness have we all received.” We know that this is no other than that august Person whom John calls, “The Word,” or the speech of God, so called because God in Nature has revealed Himself, as it were, inarticulately and indistinctly—

but in His Son He has revealed Himself as a man declares his inmost thoughts—by distinct and intelligible speech.

Jesus is to the Father what speech is to us. He is the unfolding of the Father's thoughts, the revelation of the Father's heart. He that has seen Christ has seen the Father. "Would you have me see you?" said Socrates, "then speak," for speech reveals the man. Would you see God? Listen to Christ, for He is God's Word, revealing the heart of Deity. Lest, however, we should imagine Jesus to be a mere utterance, a mere word spoken and forgotten, our Apostle is peculiarly careful that we should know that Jesus is a *real* and true Person, and therefore tells us that the Divine Word, out of whose fullness we have received, is most assuredly God!

No language can be more distinct. He ascribes to Him the eternity which belongs to God—"In the beginning was the Word." He clearly claims Divinity for Him—"The Word was God." He ascribes to Him the acts of God—"Without Him was not anything made that was made." He ascribes to Him self-existence which is the essential characteristic of God—"In Him was life." He claims for Him a Nature peculiar to God—"God is light and in Him is no darkness at all." And the Word is "the true light, which lights every man that comes into the world." No writer could be more explicit in his utterances, and beyond all question he sets forth the proper Deity of that Blessed One of whom we all must receive if we would obtain eternal salvation.

Yet John does not fail to set forth that our Lord was also Man. He says, "the Word was made flesh"—not merely *assumed* manhood, but was *made*. And made not merely Man as to His nobler part, His Soul, but Man as to His flesh, His lower element. Our Lord was not a phantom, but One who, as John declares in his Epistle, was touched and handled. "The Word dwelt among us." He tabernacled with the sons of men—a carpenter's shed His lowly refuge and the caves and mountains of the earth His midnight resort in His later life. He dwelt among sinners and sufferers, among mourners and mortals, Himself completing His citizenship among us by becoming obedient to death, even the death of the Cross.

See, then, my beloved Brothers and Sisters, where God has treasured up the fullness of His Grace! It is in a Person so august that Heaven and earth tremble at the majesty of His Presence and yet in a Person so humble that He is not ashamed to call us, "Brethren." The Apostle, lest we should by any means put a second person in comparison with the one and only Christ, throughout this chapter continually enters caveats and disclaimers against all others. He bars the angels and shuts out cherubim and seraphim by saying, "Without Him was not anything made *that was made*!" At the creation of the world no ministering spirit may intrude a finger. Angels may *sing* over what Jesus creates, but as the Builder of all things He stands alone.

Further on the Apostle guards the steps of the Throne against John and virtually against all the other witnesses of the Messiah, albeit among those that are born of women there was not a greater than John the Baptist, yet, "he was not that Light." The stars must hide their heads when the sun shines—John must decrease and Christ must increase. No, there

was One whom all the Jews revered and whose name is coupled with that of the Lamb in the triumphant song of Heaven! They sang the song of Moses, the servant of God and of the Lamb. But even he is excluded from the glory of this text, "For the Law was given by Moses, but Grace and Truth came by Jesus Christ." Moses must sit down at the *foot* of the Throne with the tablets of stone in his hands, but Jesus sits *on* the Throne and stretches out the silver scepter to His people.

Lest there should remain a supposition that another person yet unmentioned should usurp a place, the Apostle adds, "No man at any time has seen the Father." The best and holiest have all, alike, been unable to look into that excellent Glory! But the Word has not only seen the Father, but has declared Him unto us! The text is as Tabor to us and while in its consideration, at the first we see Moses and Elijah and all the saints with the Lord Jesus, receiving of His fullness, yet all these vanish from our minds and our spirit sees "no man, but Jesus only." Gazing into this text, one feels as John did when the gates of Heaven were opened to him and he looked within them and he declared, "I looked and lo, a Lamb stood on the Mount Zion."

He saw other things afterwards, but the first thing that caught his eye and filled his mind was the Lamb in the midst of the Throne! Brothers, it becomes us as ministers to be constantly making much of Christ, to make Him, indeed, the first, the last and the midst of all our discourses! And it becomes all Believers, whenever they deal with matters of salvation, to set Jesus on high and to crown Him with many crowns. Give Him the best of your thoughts and works and affections, for He it is who fills all things and to whom all things should pay homage.

II. Secondly, there are TWO PRECIOUS DOCTRINES in the text. The first doctrine teaches us that in this glorious Person of Jesus all fullness is treasured up, and the second—without which the first might yield us little comfort—that all this treasure of Divine Grace is received by His saints, so that all His saints receive all they have that is gracious and truthful from Him.

1. First consider this master Truth of God, *that all Divine Grace is treasured up in Christ Jesus*. "His fullness," says the text. Ah, what a word, "His fullness!" If I had no other text given me to preach from until all preaching should be ended, this might suffice. His fullness! O Brothers and Sisters, here is a fullness which cannot be measured for length, or breadth, or depth—for He is filled with all the fullness of God! "In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." The fullness of which the text speaks *particularly* is His double fullness of Grace and Truth. There is in Jesus Christ a fullness of essential Grace for it is His Nature to overflow with free mercy to the miserable sons of men.

It was a fullness of Grace in Him that made Him enter into the Eternal Covenant and undertake Suretyship engagements for us. It was a fullness of love and Grace which sustained Him in the discharge of His liabilities as our Great Substitute and the fullness of Grace it is which constrains Him, still, to persevere in His work, saying, "For Zion's sake I will not rest, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not hold My peace." In Christ there is a

fullness of Grace to impart to us and to that the text refers a fullness of *pardoning* Grace, so that no sin can ever exceed His power to forgive!

It refers a fullness of *justifying* Grace, so that He justifies the ungodly. A fullness of *converting* Grace, so that He calls to Him whom He pleases. A fullness of *quicken*ing Grace, for “He quickens whom He wills.” Here is a fullness of *purifying* Grace, for His blood cleanses us from all sin and a further fullness of *comforting* Grace, of *sustaining* Grace, of *satisfying* Grace, of *restoring* Grace—Jesus has a fullness in whatever office you regard Him—and with whatever needs. He is never limited in any gift or Grace, but always full thereof. This fullness, time would fail us to rehearse! Drink of it! Plunge into it, and you shall know far more than I can, by any possibility, tell.

This, however, I may say—the fullness which dwells in Christ is, from the text, clearly proved to be an abiding fullness, for, mark, “We all,” says he, “have received of it.” And yet he calls it a “fullness,” still. It was a fullness before a single sinner came to it to receive pardon—before a solitary saint had learned to drink of that river the streams of which make glad the Church! And now, after thousands and even myriads of blood-redeemed saints have drank of this life-giving stream, it is just as overflowing as ever!

We are accustomed to say that if a child takes a cupful from the sea it is just as full as before, but that is not literally true—there must be just so much the less of water in the ocean. But it is literally true of Christ, that when we have not only taken out cups full—for our needs are too great to be satisfied with such small quantities—when we have taken out *oceans* full of Divine Grace—and we need as much as that to carry us to Heaven—there is actually as much left! Although we each have drawn upon the treasury of His love to an extent so boundless that we cannot understand it, yet there is as much mercy and Divine Grace left in Christ as there was before. And it is a “fullness,” still, after *all* the saints have received of it.

Brethren, there is a fullness of Truth in our Lord as well as Grace, that is to say, everything which Christ says is not only true, but *emphatically* true. And not only true in one sense, but true in multiple senses—true to the letter and to the jots and to the tittles—true today and true tomorrow and true forever! True to one saint and true to every saint! True at one season and true in all seasons! There is a blessed emphasis of Divine reality in Christ Jesus. Every word He speaks is as the decree of God. Every doctrine that He promulgates is clear as the Great White Throne. In Him there is no admixture of error. “Never man spoke like this Man,” because His teaching is *unalloyed* gold. All doctrine which He reveals is as pure and celestial as the dew from Heaven.

Brethren, there is an abiding fullness of truth in Christ! After you have heard it for 50 years, you see more of its fullness than you did at first. Other truths weary the ear. I will defy any man to hold together a large congregation, year after year, with any other subject but Christ Jesus! He might do it for a time. He might charm the ear with the discoveries of science, or with the beauties of poetry. And his oratory might be of so high

an order that he might attract the multitudes who have itching ears, but they would, in time, turn away and say, "This is no longer to be endured. We know it all."

All music becomes wearisome but that of Heaven! But oh, if the minstrel does but strike this celestial harp, though he keeps his fingers always among its golden strings and is but poor and unskilled upon an instrument so Divine, yet the melody of Jesus' name and the sweet harmony of all His acts and attributes will hold His listeners by the ears and thrill their hearts as nothing beside can do! The theme of Jesus' love is inexhaustible! Though preachers may have dwelt upon it century after century, a freshness and fullness still remain.

2. The second doctrine is that *all the saints have received all of Grace out of the fullness of Christ*. It is not *one* saint who has derived Grace from the Redeemer, but *all*. "Of His fullness have we all received." And they have not merely derived a *part* of the blessings of Grace from Jesus, but all that they ever had they received from Him. It would be a wonderful vision if we could now behold passing before us the long procession of the chosen, the great and the small—the goodly fellowship of Apostles, the noble army of martyrs—the once weeping but now rejoicing band of penitents. There they go! I think I see them all in their white robes, bearing their palms of victory.

But you shall not, if you stop the procession at any point, be able to discover one who will claim to have obtained Grace from another source than Christ. Nor shall one of them say, "I owed the first Grace I gained to Christ, but I gained other Grace elsewhere." No, the unanimous testimony is, "of His fullness have we all received." My inner eye beholds the throng as the procession pauses before the Throne of God. Oh, can you see how every man prostrates himself before the Throne of the Lamb and altogether they cry, "Of His fullness have we all received"?

Whoever we may be. However well we may have served our Master. Whatever honor we have gained—though our Lord has helped us to finish our course and to win the prize—yet it is ALL of him—"Non nobis Domine!" Not unto us, not unto us, but unto Your name be all the praise! What a precious Truth of God, then, we have before us, that *all* the saints in *all* ages have been just what you and I must be tonight if we would be saved—*receivers*! They did not, any *one* of them bring anything to Christ, but *received* from Him.

If they, at this moment, cast their crowns at His feet, their crowns were first *given to them* by Him! Their robes are wedding garments of His providing. The whole course of saintship is *receptive*. None of the saints talk of what they *gave*. None of them speak of what came of themselves, but they all bear testimony without a solitary exception that they were all receivers from Jesus' fullness! Oh, but this casts mire into the face of human self-sufficiency! What? Not *one* saint who had a little of his own? Not one of all the favored throng who could furnish himself? No, not one! Did none of them look to the works of the Law? No, they all went to Jesus and His Grace and none to Moses and the Law.

Did none of them trust in priests of earthly anointing? Did none of them bow down before holy fathers and saintly confessors to obtain absolution? There is not a word said about such foolishness! Nor even a syllable concerning appeals to saints—but all the saved ones received direct, “from His fullness,” who fills all in all. I must not leave this second doctrine, however, without noting that these receptive saints received very abundantly. They drew from an abundance, even a fullness—and they also drew largely, as indicated by the words, “and Grace for Grace,” which words are only difficult to understand by reason of the extent of meaning hidden in them—for they might be translated a dozen ways with equal accuracy.

Do they not mean this?—Just as Samson slew so many Philistines that he cried out, “Heaps upon heaps,” so our Lord has given to His people Divine Grace at such a rate that they have Grace upon Grace for abundance? They have received from Him such a plenty, such a *plenitude* of Divine Grace and the Truth of God that as the ancients fabled Mount Pelion to be piled upon Ossa by the giants to make a staircase to the skies, so our great Savior has piled mountains of Grace upon mountains of Grace—that on these, as on a stupendous ladder—His elect might climb to the Throne of God! Not one step to Heaven is other than of Divine Grace—and all comes out of His fullness.

III. We advance to the third point and mark THREE EXPERIENCES indicated by the text. And first, Beloved in the Lord, if you and I would receive of the fullness of Christ, it is imperatively necessary that we should have an experience of *our own emptiness*. All saints receive of Christ, but no vessel can receive beyond the measure of its *emptiness*. The more full it is, so much the less is its capacity for reception. And the more *empty* it is, so much the greater the space which can be filled. This is a hard lesson for human nature, for we firmly believe in ourselves.

You say, “I am rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing.” We learn this with our mother tongue and we repeat it so often that we believe it! And like the Pharisee, we make it our daily boast, “God, I thank You that I am not as other men are.” The Pharisee would see no chaff in *his* wheat, whereas Divine Grace makes us to be like the publican who could see no wheat in his chaff and would only say, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” It is hard going *down* the ladder of self-knowledge. We give up with great reluctance our flattering opinions of ourselves. We are hard to empty of the notion of our own inherent merit—and if the Lord spills that upon the ground—we then hold to the idea of our own inherent strength!

What if we have no merit, yet at least we will have some, by-and-by, and we spin out our poor resolves as freely as a spider spins her web and the fabric is as frail. And if our notion of power is taken from us, we then betake ourselves to our self-justification by endeavoring to persuade ourselves that we are not responsible! Or, wrapping ourselves in despair, we declare that we cannot help ourselves and wickedly cast our ruin upon destiny. Man is hard to be dragged away from the rock of self-justification. Like Theseus in the old mythology, he is glued so fast to the great stone of

self-conceit which lies hard by the gates of Hell, that a stronger than Hercules is needed to tear him from it! And even such a deliverer must rend him from it, leaving his skin behind.

When the Lord comes and makes the sinner stand before His bar and plead, "Lord, I am guilty," the man is made ready to receive of Christ's merits because he is emptied of his own. Hear him again: "Lord, I would gladly repent and believe, but oh, for this I have no strength! Be You my Helper." The man's own power is gone and with it his hardness of heart. He confessed that he has willfully and wickedly sinned, and now the Lord pours out His Grace and mercy. Our Lord withholds from those who are *full*—but He is always ready to give to those who are empty! Never does He keep back anything from those who are consciously in need. Never does He *give* anything to those who say they need nothing.

There must be in each of us, then, an emptiness of *self* if we are to enjoy the fullness of Christ. But he who knows the emptiness of self is not, therefore, saved. The man who knows he has the fever is not cured by that *knowledge*. The man who *knows* he is condemned to die is not, for that reason, pardoned. It is a dreadful thing to stop short with a mere *sense* of sin—we must go on to the second experience—a *personal reception of Christ Jesus*. Here I shall put the question to each of my hearers, especially to professors of religion—Have you received out of Christ's fullness? I am not asking you whether you are Church members. We sorrowfully know that it is one thing to be that, and quite another thing to receive Christ.

I do not ask you whether you received the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. Alas, to receive bread and wine is a very different thing from feeding upon the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ! The one is a carnal act which Judas might perform, who had a devil, but the other is a *spiritual* act, possible only for spiritual men. "Oh," says one, "do not put high standards before us." No, I am not. I am putting the *lowest* standard that can prove a soul to be saved—have you received Christ? I want to call your attention to the marvelous simplicity of this one act by which salvation comes to all the saints. It is *receiving*. Now, receiving is a very easy thing. There are 50 things which you and I *cannot* do, but, my dear Friend, you could undoubtedly *receive* a penny, could you not?

There is not a man, nor woman, nor child here, so imperfect in power as to be unable to *receive*. Everybody seems capable of receiving any amount. Mark, then, in salvation you do *nothing but merely receive*. There is a hand, a beggar's hand and if it is needed to write a fair letter, it cannot do that, but be assured it can receive! Try it, and the beggar will soon let you know. Look at that hand again. Do you see that it has the palsy? It quivers and shakes! Ah, but it can *receive*, for all that! Many a palsied hand has received a jewel. But do you not see that in addition to being filthy and palsied, it has a foul disease? The leprosy lies within and is not to be washed out by any mode of purification known to us, and yet it can *receive*!

The saints all came to be saints and remained saints through doing exactly what that poor dirty, leprous, quivering hand can do. All their Divine

Grace came by receiving! So, dear Hearer, I am not setting up a high test, though I am assuredly setting up a very safe and necessary one. Have you received out of the fullness of Christ? Did you come all empty-handed and take Jesus Christ to be your All? I know what you did at first. You were for accumulating the shining heaps of your own merits and esteeming them as if they were so much gold—but you found out that your labor profited not, so at last you came empty-handed and said, “My precious Savior, do but give me Yourself and I will have done with merit. I renounce all merit and all doing and working and I take You to be everything to me.”

Then, Friend, you are saved if that is true, for the acceptance of Christ is the mark of the saint. I said there were three experiences—the first was emptiness. The second is receiving. And the third is that blessed experience, *the discovery that all we receive comes to us by Divine Grace*. Look at the last words, “And Grace for Grace,” which words may be read, “And Grace because of Grace,” that is to say, the only reason why we get Grace is because of Grace! Grace is the cause of itself. It is a self-creating thing. God will have mercy on whom He will have mercy. He is gracious because He is gracious and He gives Divine Grace to men NOT because they *deserve* it, or *ask* for it—but because He is gracious and chooses to bless them. I trust, beloved Brethren, you all have experienced this. If you know your own emptiness and Christ’s fullness, I am sure you know, in a measure, the doctrine of Divine Grace and I hope you will go on to know it more and more. May you also get Grace to have more Grace—Grace to qualify you for a higher degree of Grace!

Now, you do not get *some* Grace from God’s Grace and then the rest from your own efforts, but every step you have to go from the gate of the City of Destruction up to the pearl gates of the New Jerusalem, is all Grace. The road to Glory is paved with stones of Grace. The chariot in which we ride to Heaven is all of Grace. The strength that draws it and the axle that bears it up is all of Grace and Grace alone. In the whole Covenant of Grace, from the first letter of the charter down to its last word, there is nothing at all of *merit* or man’s goodness, but it is Grace, Grace, Grace. As Grace laid the foundation, so Grace brings out every stone and as we sing—

**“It lays in Heaven the topmost stone,
And well deserves the praise.”**

I cannot make out where some of the Lord’s children get their creed when they preach up the dignity and free will of man. There are good people but who seem to me to use part of the speech of Ashdod and only part of the speech of Jerusalem. To my mind, free will seems such an incongruity when tacked on to Divine Grace and makes a man’s ministry like Nebuchadnezzar’s image, with its head of gold and its feet of clay—the two things do not consort. O for a Gospel that is all of one piece—that reveals the sinner as saved by Grace from first to last—that God may have all the praise!

IV. As briefly as possible we shall speak of FOUR DUTIES.

1. First, if we have received from Christ all we have, then *let us praise Him*. If we live on His fullness, let us magnify and bless His name. Grati-

tude is a natural virtue and it ought always to be in us a spiritual Grace. O let our tongues talk well of Him to whom we owe everything! There was a poor man who was a pauper, but a kind friend had taken care of him and the old man was never better pleased than when he could ramble out his thanks to passing strangers. "That's a dear man who lives up at the white house, there, Sir.

"Do you see these clothes? He has given me all. I have not a rag on me but what is of his finding and I have a nice little cottage down there and, you know, he gave it to me—told me I might live there rent free! He lets me walk through his grounds and tells me I am welcome to all I can desire." It was the old man's joy to expatiate upon the extraordinary goodness of his benefactor. I wish we all imitated him. Do you see anything that is happy and peaceful in me? It all came from Jesus. I am a poor worm with nothing at all in myself that I could boast of, but if there is anything at all that could commend the Gospel, I received it all from my dear Lord and Master who has done more for me than tongue can tell!

Brethren, speak more of Him and sing more His praise! If you have the gift of song, never prostitute it (as I think it must be) to light, giddy, loose verses. Keep your sweetest notes for Him. Music, reserve your charms for him. If the things of this world might claim a note or two, yet, oh, let Him have the loudest of your harmony. You daughters of Israel, go forth to meet your David—for if any of this world has helped you—if Saul has slain his thousands—this David has slain His ten thousands! The mightiest of your foes He has overthrown. One of the best ways of praising Jesus is by trusting Him more. Faith is often compact praise. A trustful heart has in it the quintessence of music. Jesus loves to be trusted—it is a true, if indirect, form of gratitude, when we repose confidence because of mercies received.

Once more, if you wish to praise the Prince of Peace, as I trust you do, go and beg harder of Him. Go to Him this very night and say—

***"The best return for one like me,
So wretched and so poor,
Is from Your gifts to draw a plea,
And ask You still for more."***

You cannot do your Lord a better turn nor make His heart more glad by way of praising Him, than by opening your mouth wider than ever tonight that you may *receive* more out of His fullness than you have ever had since you have known Him!

2. The second duty is this—if up till now we have received out of Christ's fullness, then *let us repair to Him again*. As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk *in Him*. I find it my best and safest way and I recommend it to you all, to live daily on Christ, as I did when first I trusted in Him. If I have ever known Him at all. If He has ever been revealed to me and in me. If He has ever answered my prayers. If He has ever blessed me to your souls and made me the spiritual parent of any that are in the skies, I do know that I had it all from Him, for I never had a grain of anything good of my own—all my Grace has been the free grant of His sovereign will!

But Satan says, "Ah, but you never knew Jesus!" Well, if I never did, I know what to do now. I will go to Jesus at once. If I never did go to Him before, I will hasten to Him now. Now, when I go to Jesus Christ in that way, not as a saint but as a *sinner*—not as a preacher but as a poor, miserable offender—I find my comfort returns to me. I would like to be as a babe, always hanging on the breast of Jesus' love. I would like to be the fruit which remains on the bough and so grows ripe and sweet. I would like to be always locked up in Christ's pantry and never live on what I had before fed on, but feeding evermore! To this duty I invite you tonight. If you have received—come and receive again—you have not received the whole of Christ's fullness yet!

But all that is in Christ is meant to be received. Jesus Christ is like the sun—He is a storehouse of light, but the light is there to be shed abroad. He is like the clouds—a storehouse of waters, but all that is in Him is to descend in showers upon thirsty souls. There is nothing in Christ but what was meant to be distributed! He is like Joseph's granaries in Egypt, full of corn for hungry men. Do you read of mercy in Christ?—say, "That mercy was meant for a needy sinner. Even I will have it." Little children, when they come to the table, seem to know by instinct that everything there is meant to be eaten, so they cry, "Give me this. Give me that."

Now, in this be children. If you see anything in Christ, however rich and rare, however precious and choice, say, "Lord, give me that and give me that," for it is all meant to be given away—it is all provided on purpose to meet the needs of the Lord's people. So we leave that duty, but I trust not till we have attended to it.

3. The third duty is, if you have been receiving of Christ, *try to obtain more*, for the text says, "Grace for Grace"—that is, Grace upon Grace—Grace to fit you for higher Grace. If you are no richer than the old Believers under the Law and you have found only Jewish Grace, come and ask for clearer views. If you have Grace as a babe, ask Grace to be a young man. And if you have grown to be a young man, ask Grace to be a father. Aspire to the highest point of Christian perfection! In other matters we are very covetous, but in the things of God, what an accursed contentment we soon fall into!

I use the word advisedly, for it is accursed, since it brings the curse of barrenness upon us. I loathe to hear a Believer say, "Well, if I am but just saved, that is enough for me. If I may but just get in behind the door in Heaven, I shall be content." So you will, my dear Brother, but you ought not to talk that way! Your business is to show forth as much of Christ to His Glory as you possibly can. What? Are you so selfish that if you can *creep* into Heaven that will content you? I would like to carry my Master a whole casket of jewels in my bosom! I would gladly say to Him, "Here am I and the children whom You have given me." I would desire to die with the sweet satisfaction, "I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, therefore there is laid up for me a crown of life that fades not away."

Wrestle for more Grace! If you are up to your ankles, wade into this river of gracious fullness up to your knees. If you are up to your knees, be thankful, but do not be content. I ask you to advance till you are up to

your loins and be not fully satisfied even then. Forget the things that are behind, be not satisfied till you find a river to swim in! Strike out till you feel you are utterly out of your depth and then dive into it and strike out! Glory in Christ to think that it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell and be glad that you have learned to comprehend with all saints what are the heights and depths and to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge.

4. The last duty and the last word. If you have received of Christ, *encourage others to receive of Him*. Indeed, you need not go far for the encouragement, for you may first of all look at home. If Jesus Christ received you, whom will He not receive? If my Master's heart opened wide its doors to let *me* in, I know He has received one of the blackest that ever was accepted. And I feel confident in recommending you, poor, needy, troubled, conscience-stricken Sinner, to come to Jesus by simple trust tonight! I am sure if He had meant to reject you, He would not have accepted *me*. If you want to encourage souls to come to Christ, what a wonderful text this is: "Of His fullness have we all received."

I must bring that little dream of mine up to your mind's eye again. There are all the saints—millions of them—and they tell you, all of them, that they were all *receivers*. Now, suppose you were a beggar. You know what beggars do. If they go to a door and get anything, they make a little mark—you and I do not understand it, but it means, "Good house to knock at." And the next beggar who comes sees that token and he knocks boldly. If they get nothing, of course, they make some scurvy remark or another, after their own fashion, which the next beggar understands.

Now, I have already made that mark on Christ's door and I have told you of it! It is a good house to knock at, for I have tried it. But suppose, being a beggar, you were to meet some 50 or 60 tramps, all coming down the street and they were to say to you, "Are you in the same trade as we are?" "Yes, I am a beggar." "Well," they say, "there's a good house down there, we have all of us been to it and they have given us all something." "What? Given something to *all* of you?" "Yes, to every one of us." "What? To that man yonder? Why, he looks good for nothing!" "Ah, well, they gave him something." "What? To the whole of you?" "Yes." "Then I shall be as quick as I can to knock and get the next turn."

Why, of course, everybody would feel that that is the shop to beg at where nobody has been rejected. Now, since the world began there never has been a sinner who sincerely asked for mercy through faith in the precious blood of Jesus who has been rejected! Since Adam was cast out of the Garden, there has never been a sinner, whoever he might have been, that has cast himself by simple trust upon the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, whom God has cast out! Well, but if they all received and all received, "of His fullness," why not you?

One thing more—it may be that you will still say, "Perhaps the Lord will change His mode of dealing and reject me!" Oh, but let me tell you, He has pledged Himself that He will not, for, in addition to all those who have received at His hands, there is a promise given, "Him that comes unto Me, I will in no wise cast out." He cannot cast you away, for He has said He will

not and that word, “no wise,” is like the flaming cherub’s sword, which turns every way, not to keep you *out* of the garden of life, but to keep out all your doubts and fears.

Observe, “I will *in no wise* cast out.” Then, if any man says, “But I am too old,” that cannot be the reason for your rejection, for Christ has said, “Him that comes, I will in no wise cast out.” “Oh, but I have sinned beyond all reason. I have gone to an excess of riot. Sir, I’m a damnable sinner. No one can say too bad of me.” I do not care what you are! He cannot cast you out, for He has said, “in no wise,” that is, on no account, on no consideration, under no circumstances! If you come to Christ, Heaven and earth may pass away and yon blue sky may be folded up and put away as a worn-out mantle, and the stars shall fall like withered leaves in autumn, and the sun be turned into darkness and the moon into blood—but NEVER shall a praying, trusting sinner be cast away from the Presence of God!

O come, then, you most guilty, you most empty, you most worthless! Come and welcome! Hark! The silver trumpet sounds tonight, “Come and welcome! Come and welcome! Come and welcome!” Come to the dear wounds of Jesus and be hidden there! Come to the fountain filled with blood and be cleansed there! Come to the heart of Christ in Heaven by trusting Him and be saved both now and forever!

May God bless you and everyone in this great house tonight! May He bless every one of you young women up there and of you men down there and you strangers thronging the aisles! May every one of us have to say, “Of His fullness have we all received and Grace for Grace.” The Lord bless you. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*John 1:1-18.*

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“BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD”

NO. 1987

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 16, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said,
Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”
John 1:29.***

JOHN the Baptist’s one business was to bear witness to Christ. He was the morning star which heralds the rising sun. When the Sun appeared, he had no more reason for shining. You cannot account for John except by Jesus—the one reason for John’s existence is Jesus. I wish it might be so with us. May we be able to say, “For me to live is Christ.” May our life be such that it cannot be understood apart from Jesus—take Him away and our whole character would become an inexplicable mystery! I am afraid that some professors could be easily interpreted apart from Christ—perhaps could be better accounted for if there were no Christ. But if we are like John, true witnesses to Jesus, we shall find in Jesus the conscious purpose of our being and His Glory will be the clue to all the windings of our lives. For this purpose were we born and for this end have we come into the world, that we may bear witness to the Lord Jesus Christ! Search and look, my Brothers and Sisters, whether it has been so with you.

When our Lord was thus set forth by John, it is well to note the special character under which He was declared. John knew much of the Lord Jesus and could have pictured Him in many lights and characters. He might especially have pointed Him out as the great moral example, the Founder of a higher form of life, the great Teacher of holiness and love. Yet this did not strike the Baptist as the head and front of our Lord’s Character, but *he proclaimed Him as One who had come into the world to be the great Sacrifice for sin*. Lifting up his hand and pointing to Jesus, he cried, “Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.” He did not say, “Behold the great Exemplar”—no doubt he would have said that in due season. He did not even say, “Behold the King and Leader of a new dispensation”—that fact he, by no means, would have denied, but would have gloried in it. Still, the first point that he dwells upon, and that which wins his enthusiasm is, “Behold the Lamb of God.” John the Baptist views Him as the Propitiation for sin and so he cries, “Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.”

My Brothers and Sisters, we may depend upon it that this must be a very practical Truth of God, for John was pre-eminently practical. What is the sum and substance of his teaching but, “Repent. Bring forth fruits meet for repentance. The axe is laid unto the root of the trees”? He has a

word for everybody that comes—even the Roman soldiers are told to be content with their rations. John is no theorist or quibbler about dogma. He deals with life and character and demands works meet for repentance. Yet he makes a great point of our Lord's being the Sacrifice for sin. This, indeed, is the text of his life-sermon! Rest assured that there is something wonderfully practical about that Truth of God! And those who becloud it under the notion of being practical are laying aside the best instrument of doing good to men. For the reformation of manners and the overthrow of evil, and the setting up of the Kingdom of Righteousness throughout the world, there is no Truth of God like that which reveals Jesus as the Sacrifice provided by God for removing the sin of men!

The stern Baptist, the true Elijah who grappled hard with sin and laid the sword of repentance to its throat, saw that nothing could be done unless he pointed out the Lamb of God, by whom the world's sin is taken away. When repentance is the sermon, Jesus must be the text and the substance of the discourse! He puts life, power, energy into what otherwise would be a dead moral essay. O you who would save men from sin, take care that you preach the great Sacrifice for sin! It is clear that this doctrine has to do with repentance, for the Apostle of repentance introduced it—he whose first word was, "Repent," brought forward Jesus as the great Sin-Bearer, for he saw what I wish all would see, that there is a very intimate connection between the creation, growth and purity of repentance and the sin-bearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Brothers, the fact is, the more we have to do with penitent sinners, the more we feel the need of a sin-bearer. O you that have never sinned and are wrapped up in your own self-righteousness, you imagine that you can enter Heaven by your own works! The bearing of sin by the Lamb of God does not seem to you at all necessary, but if you once dwelt, as John did, in the midst of a burdened people who came lamenting and confessing their sins, you would feel that nothing could bring them into reconciliation with God but faith in the appointed Atonement. "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world," is the text which evangelists love because without it they cannot face the troubled ones who throng around them!

My Brothers, in proportion as you wisely love your fellow men you will prize the Sacrifice for sin. Your practical dealing with a perishing people will make you prize the Savior. Oh, what would I do if I were sent to preach to this vast throng and had no sin-offering to declare to you! Might I not break my heart before a task so useless, so cruel, as to have to denounce sin and yet to have no pardon to declare and, consequently, no hope? Now that I can tell of One who bore in His own body on the tree the transgression, iniquity and sin of men, I find my task a solemn one, but certainly not hopeless, nor even dreary! Happy, indeed, am I to be permitted to set forth so blessed a salvation! Blessed are the lips which are allowed to cry, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." You see, then, that the practical character of John's mission made him all the more at home in setting forth the sacrificial Character of our Lord.

If John the Baptist had not felt that the Character of our Lord, as a Sin-Offering, was the chief matter, he might have fitly pointed Him out as an example at the time when he delivered the words of our text. The Savior had not yet revealed to anyone the fact and meaning of His future death. His Passion was as yet a thing in the dim future, while His life was just blossoming out into public observation. He had newly left the holy quiet of the parental roof at Nazareth and the charm of early holiness was on Him. Should not the world now mark Him, that His example might be known throughout its entire length? In His retirement, His conduct had been such that the austere and devout Baptist had noticed it—and had felt bound to acknowledge that his younger relative was a worthier Person than himself, saying, "I have need to be baptized by You." But John does not seem, when he beholds the Lord after His baptism, to think of His godly life already commenced, nor of that holy life which he could foresee in Him. Rather he fastens his eyes upon the *sacrificial* Character of that wondrous Personage and dwells on that, alone, saying, "Behold the Lamb of God." Brothers, that age needed an example as badly as ours does, but it needed a Savior still more—and John sees first that which is first!

Let me add that the time was doubly opportune for dwelling upon our Lord's example, since He had just returned from His famous temptation in the wilderness, wherein He had rehearsed His life-struggles. You cannot, in reading the narrative, piece in the 40 days' temptation in the wilderness anywhere else but just here. We read that our Savior, after His Baptism, was led up immediately into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil. Tempted He was, but He yielded in no point. In the threefold battle He vanquished the power of darkness at every point, and now, armed for the fray, in mail which He had tried and proven, the Champion stood before John! And it would not have been singular had the man of God cried out, "Behold the Perfect One, in whom the prince of this world has no place. Copy His supreme example!" But no, the great Baptist's eyes rest not on that—the blood and wounds of the Passion are before his mind's eye and beyond all else he sees the sacrificial Character of the wondrous Being who now stands in the midst of the throng. The fact that He is the appointed Victim for human sin enwraps the whole soul of the preacher and he cries, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world."

Brothers and Sisters, I desire to be in the same case with John the Baptist. I would have my thoughts of Christ concentrated upon His atoning death henceforth and evermore! During the little time in which I may be spared to lift up my voice in this wilderness, I would bear witness to the Lamb of God! The years may be short in which I may guide this flock, but around the Cross shall be to me, forevermore, the place of green pastures—and from the Sacrifice of our Lord shall flow the still waters. Many others are dealing with other aspects of our Lord's work. Some, I doubt not, faithfully, and others with evil intent. I may very well leave them to do their best or their worst, for at least one may be allowed to be baptized for the Crucified, separated unto the Cross, dedicated to the Atonement by blood. I know no Atonement but Substitution, no Substitute but Christ. "Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." To the declaration of that fact I set myself apart to life's end.

I. To come still closer to our text, I would have you notice, in the first place, that JOHN SET FORTH CHRIST AS A SACRIFICE WITH EVIDENT PERSONAL PERCEPTION OF THE FACT. When a man says, "Behold!" he sees something *himself*. He sees that something with clearness and he desires you to see it and, therefore, he cries, "Behold! Behold!" John had, from his birth, been ordained to be the herald of the Christ. But he evidently did not know who the Lamb of God might be. As a babe, he leaped in the womb when he came near to the mother of our Lord. But yet he did not know Jesus as the Lamb of God. He says, "I knew Him not."

Some suppose that John and Jesus had never met during their early years, but I find it hard to believe. I see quite another meaning here. John knew Jesus, but did not know Him as the Sin-Bearer. I think he must have known the life of the Holy Child, his near relative, while He grew in favor both with God and man, but he had not yet seen upon Him the attesting seal which marked Him as the Son of God. John admired the Lord's Character very much, insomuch that when He came to be baptized by him, John said, "I have need to be baptized by You." Yet John says, "I knew Him not." He knew Him as one of high and holy character, but as yet he saw not the token which the Lord God had secretly given to his servant—for he saw not the Spirit of God descending and resting upon Him. John shrewdly suspected that Jesus was the Son of the Highest, of whom he was the forerunner, but a witness must not follow his own surmises, however correct they may be! John, as the Lord's servant, did not dare to know anything of his own unguided judgement—he waited for the secret sign. Certain preachers tell their people anything they invent out of their wonderful brains, but the true servant of God has no business to put forth his own thoughts or opinions—he must wait for a word from God. The message should come straight from the Master—"Thus says the Lord." John, though he saw about this wondrous Jesus such marvelous traits of Character that he was sure He was much greater than himself, yet says, "I knew Him not." He would know nothing but as it was revealed to him by the Lord God who sent him.

But when, at last, he received that personal token when he plunged our blessed Master into the waters of the Jordan—and saw the heavens opened and the Dove descend—and heard the Voice saying, "This is My beloved Son," then he knew Him and was, therefore, sure. When he afterwards spoke, he did not say, "I *think* this is the Lamb of God," or, "I am under the impression that this is the Son of God." No, he boldly cried, "Behold Him! See for yourselves. This is the Lamb of God! I speak with the accent of conviction! Nothing can shake me. The Master has given the sign and, therefore, I bear confident witness. Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world."

From then on, to John the Baptist, the Lord Jesus Christ was more than He appeared to be to any others. To those who looked at the Savior, He would have seemed to be a plain, humble Jew, with nothing particular to mark Him out, except it were the gentleness of His demeanor and a certain heavenliness of carriage. But to the Baptist, He was now before all and above all! When a person was to be baptized, he confessed his sins to John. But when Jesus came with no sins of His own to confess, *did He*

whisper in John's ear, "I bear the sin of the world"? I think He did, but in any case, this was true to the Baptist's mind—and to him, Jesus was the matchless Sacrifice, the one Atonement for human sin.

This was an extraordinary Truth of God to John. It took a miracle of Grace to make a Jew see, "The Lamb, who takes away the sin of *the world*." The Jew thought that the Sacrifice of God must be only for His chosen people—but John saw beyond all bounds of nationality and restrictions of race—and clearly perceived in Jesus "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." Remember that John was of a priestly race—he was familiar with lambs for sacrifice. But as a priest, he never saw a lamb for sacrifice in a place far off from the consecrated shrine. There was only one altar and that was at Jerusalem—and there the lamb of sacrifice must be—not by Jordan's lonely stream. Yet John saw, in a place never dedicated in any peculiar manner to the service of God, the one great Sacrifice standing in the midst of the people. "Behold," he says, "this is the Lamb of God." See how well the Lord had taught him and how fully he had broken away from natural prejudices!

Beloved, I pray that each one of us may know, for himself, Jesus as the Sacrifice for sin. You were brought up as children to believe that Jesus is the Lamb of God, but all Revelation in the Book must again be revealed to the *heart*, or it will not be really known and perceived. For the life of the Truth of God to enter into our life it must become a matter, not of head-creed only, but of heart-belief. That Jesus is the Substitutionary Sacrifice, the Propitiation for our sins, the Expiation for our iniquity, must be taught us by the Holy Spirit. I can truly declare among you that I do not preach this doctrine of vicarious Sacrifice as one among many *theories*, but as the saving fact of my experience! I *must* preach this or nothing! I know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and Him Crucified, because I have neither hope nor comfort outside of the great atoning Sacrifice. He was made sin for us, even He who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. "He was made a curse for us, as it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree."

Pray that each one of God's people may have a clear knowledge of Christ as the sin-bearing Lamb and have it written on his individual consciousness, for then nothing will shake him out of it. When men find their own deliverance from sin and their own peace with God flowing out of the atoning Sacrifice, this great Truth of God becomes a part of their inward experience and it can never be torn from them. O my Brothers and Sisters, when the great Sacrifice has saved you, you will never be able to doubt it! You will sooner doubt your own existence than doubt this blessed fact, that He bore our sin in His own body on the tree, and that through Him we are reconciled unto God! It was a matter with John of personal perception.

II. Let us advance a little. JOHN SET FORTH OUR LORD AS EMPHATICALLY THE SACRIFICE—"Behold *the* Lamb of God." This is more than John would have said of all the lambs that he had ever heard or read of since the first appointment of sacrifice. He remembered the firstling of the flock which Abel offered and the sacrifice of a sweet savor which Noah presented. He knew the sacrifices of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He was

familiar with the lamb of the Paschal Supper and those of Israel's high festivals. He remembered the thousands of offerings that had been presented by David and by Solomon, and by other kings in the great national acts of worship. But passing them all by as if they were all mere shadows, he points his finger to the Man, Christ Jesus, and he says of Him, "This is THE Lamb of God."

In this I think the Baptist comprehended everything that went before. There was *the daily lamb* of which I read to you in the commencement of the service, from Exodus 29. There had been slain before the Lord a lamb every morning, and a lamb every evening, all the year round throughout the centuries of Israel's history. Always and ever the continual sacrifice of the lamb was the symbol of Jehovah's dwelling with His people. But John puts his finger down upon a single Sacrifice and says, "This is *the Lamb*." All the other daily lambs had been but prefigurations of this! "Behold the Lamb."

Let me also call your attention to another wonderful lamb, *the Paschal lamb*, slain on the night when Israel went up out of Egypt, when each Hebrew smeared the lintel and side-posts of his door with blood—and the sight of that blood sufficed for the deliverance of the family, according to the Word of Jehovah, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." These Passover lambs were many and sacred to every Jewish mind! But John passes them all over and says, "Behold *the Lamb of God*."

Do you not think he also had in his mind *the lamb spoken of by Isaiah*, the great evangelical Prophet? Had he not in his memory that famous passage, "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter"? John the Baptist cries, "This is He of whom the Prophet spoke, Behold the Lamb of God."

Yes, and if John's eyes had been turned to the future as well as to the past, so that he could have looked down the centuries and shared the visions of the Seer of Patmos, he would have seen *the Lamb in the midst of the Throne*, and have heard the song unto Him that was slain! But after seeing all the visions of the coming Glory of the Lamb, he would still have kept his finger pointed towards the blessed Christ of God, standing among the people, and would have said, "Behold *the Lamb*." All that you read of sacrifice and sin-bearing in the Old or the New Testament. All that you have ever heard, or ever shall hear, of the putting away of sin, if it is true, is all centered in this line, "Behold the Lamb." It is a great thing when we can focus our testimony upon a single point! Let every servant of God do so and bear his witness that there is none other name given among men whereby we must be saved! There is no other purgation for sin in the whole universe save that great Sacrifice which takes away the sin of the world!

III. We will go a step further again—JOHN, IN DESCRIBING OUR LORD JESUS IN HIS SACRIFICIAL CHARACTER, WAS VERY EXPLICIT IN DECLARING HIM TO BE THE SACRIFICE OF GOD. He says: "Behold the *Lamb of God*." These words contain a great depth of meaning. "The Lamb of God." Did not the Baptist thus recall the day when Abraham walked with Isaac towards the mount that God had told him of? "And Isaac said to his father, My Father, behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham answered, My Son, God will pro-

vide Himself a lamb for the burnt offering." John, standing centuries after, seems to say, "Now is the saying of the Father of the faithful fulfilled! Behold how God provides! Behold the Lamb of God."

Under the old Jewish dispensation, if a man sinned, he said to himself, "I must go and find a lamb." And he went out to his own flock, or else to his neighbor's and he bought a lamb. That was his lamb which he brought for his own trespass. But you and I have not to go and find a lamb—God has already provided a Lamb—and we have only to accept the Lamb of God. And is it not a wonderful thing, that He, Himself, against whom all sin was leveled, provided the Sacrifice for sin? Behold the sin of *man* and the Lamb of *God*. Jesus is the Father's best Beloved, His choice One, His only One and yet He delivered Him up for us all—and God's Son became God's Lamb! O my Father, my Father, do I sin and do You find the Sacrifice? But if a Sacrifice must be found by the Father, why was it found so near His heart? He could find the Sacrifice for sin nowhere but in His own bosom. He had but one Son, His Only-Begotten—and "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son." Jehovah gave His only Son to be a Sacrifice! Let Heaven and earth be filled with astonishment!

Beloved, if you think of it, who else could have provided a Sacrifice for the sin of the world? None will pretend to such ability. And when God, Himself, provided a Sacrifice, what other could He have found but His co-equal Son? Who else could render the honor which was due to the broken Law? Who else could offer to Divine Justice the vindication which it demanded? Justice must be violated, or else man must perish forever—there remained no way of escape from this dilemma until the Son of the Highest condescended to become a Sacrifice and put away sin by His own death. So, you see, the Lord must, Himself, provide the Sacrifice—and that Sacrifice must be His only-begotten Son.

I do not think I can preach more, for a faintness has come over me, nor is there need for more if you will but chew the cud of this one precious Truth of God—Jesus is the Lamb which God provided and He is the Lamb which God Himself presented at the altar. Yet I must rouse myself to say a little more. Who was it that sacrificed the Lamb of God? Who was the priest on that dread day? Who was it that bruised Him? Who put Him to grief? Who caused Him the direst pang of all when He cried, "Why have You forsaken Me?"

Was it not the Father, Himself? This was one point in the hardness of Abraham's test—"Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and offer him for a sacrifice." He must, himself, officiate at the sacrifice! This, the great Father did! He is the Lamb, the Lamb of God. And now, today, the bright side of this Truth remains. He is the Lamb that God always accepts, must accept, glories to accept! Bring you but Jesus with you and you have brought God an acceptable Sacrifice! You cannot fail to be forgiven when you come pleading the name of Jesus. If you should bring the fattest of your flock and the choicest of your herd, you might hear God say, "I will not accept your sacrifice"! But when you bring God's own Sacrifice, He cannot reject you! You are accepted in the Beloved! There is such acceptance of Christ with God that it overlaps your unac-

ceptableness. It covers your sin. It covers *you*—it makes you to be dear to the heart of God!

Thus far have we come with this blessed text, even unto "waters to swim in." "Behold the Lamb of God."

IV. Lend me your ears a little longer while, in the fourth place, I show you that JOHN SET FORTH THIS BLESSED SAVIOR AS BEARING AND BEARING AWAY OUR SIN. You that have the Revised Version will please notice that the Revisers follow the Authorized Version in the body of the translation and say, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world," but they have done wisely by putting in the margin, "bears the sin." Both meanings are here. In order to the bearing away of sin, there must *first* be the bearing of it. The Lord Jesus both took sin and took it away.

Dwell for a minute on the first fact, that sin was actually laid on Christ. I saw the other day, among the abominations of the Stygian Bog, across which I have been compelled to gaze of late, such a foul teaching as this—that the transference of sin is *immoral*. Yet is not Scripture full of it? "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Sin was borne by Christ—yes, actually borne by Him. "He Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree." They may make what they like of it. I am not going to explain or apologize, but I say without hesitation that the sin of the world was laid upon Christ—and He bore it—and bore it away! The heaviest thing in the universe is sin! The earth has been known to open beneath the unbearable load of it. Neither angels nor men can stand under the load of sin—it sinks them lower than the lowest Hell! When sin was laid upon the Lamb of God, He bore it—but He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood, and He was exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death. To have borne up *the weight* of the world would have been nothing compared with bearing *the sin* of the world.

The best of all is, however, that our Lord did not only bear the load, but He took it away. "He takes away the sin of the world." The sin which was laid upon Christ did not remain there! He took it away—it remains no more. We read in Scripture many things about sin, as that God forgives it, blots it out, forgets it, casts it into the sea, puts it behind His back and a great many other expressive figures—but this is, in some respects, the best of them—He takes it away! Blessed be His name! My Hearer, if you believe in Jesus, you need not ask, "Where is my sin?" Jesus took it away! By bearing it, He bore it away. It is gone, gone forever—it is utterly abolished. "The day comes when the sins of Jacob shall be sought for, and they shall not be found; yes they shall not be, says the Lord." Our glory is that by the Sacrifice of Christ upon the Cross, sin was made an end of. He finished transgressions, made an end of sin and brought in everlasting righteousness! This is a Gospel worth believing, worth living for, worth dying for! Let all teaching be accursed that comes in opposition to it! This is Heaven to a soul whose sins are dragging it down to Hell—sin can be forgiven, for Jesus is "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." What a sight is this to see! Those eyes can never again be sore that have once seen sin put away by Jesus!

V. I must, however, call your attention to another point which is that JOHN REPRESENTS OUR LORD AS REMOVING SIN CONTINUALLY. "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." Behold the sin of the world as one huge mass and Jesus deals with it as a whole and takes it away. John does not speak in the past tense nor in the future, but He speaks in the present—"He takes away the sin of the world." Our Savior's atoning Sacrifice, though it was but once offered, is perpetual in its effect. He must die at a certain point of time and there were reasons why His death should have taken place at the particular moment when it did. Yet *time* does not enter into the essence of it. The Sacrifice might have been offered a million years ago and, as the Lamb of God, He would still take away sin. Or the actual Sacrifice might further have been postponed, if Infinite Wisdom had so chosen, and yet the Lamb of God would now have taken away sin.

The date of His death is not the question—His Sacrifice is effectual *before* and *after* the event. Our Savior was the Lamb slain *before the foundation of the world*, in the purpose, Covenant and thought of God. His Sacrifice saved Adam, Noah, Moses, David and all the elect before the name of Calvary had become illustrious. Before He died, He stood before John the Baptist as taking away the sin of the world! And now, today, though His death is a matter of 1800 years ago, He still "takes away the sin of the world." In His Person He was always the Sin-Bearer and through His death He puts sin away forever. By one Sacrifice He has forever put away sin! His eternal merits forever remain a sweet savor unto the Lord God and forever remove the foul offense of human transgression. As the Great Purifier, He continually takes away and will continue to take away the sin of the world!

Blessed be God, I have, today, a Savior as fresh and full of power as if He had been crucified this very morning for my sin! He is now as able to save me as if He were at this hour on the Cross! Those dear wounds of His, in effect, perpetually bleed—in His case, the print of the nails is the token of an inexhaustible fountain of merit which is always flowing forth for the removal of my guilt, eternally efficacious, ceaselessly sin-cleansing. This is where we rest! It is the most grand fact in the history of all ages that Jesus takes away the sin of the world. We do not know what happened before this solar system was created and we do not need to know. We cannot prophesy what is going to happen when yon sun and moon and stars shall disappear like transient sparks from the anvil of power. But there never will be any new fact which can equal this first of the Truths of God—that the Son of God assumed human nature and, in that Nature, bore sin and bore it away. This is the Truth to be looked at beyond all others—"Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world."

Although I am too weak to preach to you as I desire, I feel great joy for myself in looking to the Sin-Bearer who has taken away my sin. How I wish that all of you felt the same! This is the pith and the marrow of my theology. But you must take the Lamb of God for *yourselves*—you must know Him for *yourselves*—you must believe in Him for *yourselves* and He will surely take away that sin which now burdens you. He will take it right

away, so that it shall never burden you again. He will blot it out—it shall cease to be! You shall be no more under condemnation, but shall be free from it forever! God help you to know Jesus, of whom I speak to you!

VI. The last point is this—JOHN WITNESSED TO THE ALL-SUFFICIENCY OF THE DIVINE SACRIFICE—"Who takes away the sin of the world." No other in all the world can take away sin but the Lamb of God. There is no sin which He cannot take away. There is no limit to the value of His great Sacrifice—He takes away the sin of the world. There is no other sin-bearer, no other atonement, no other satisfaction. No "purgatory" in the present nor in the future can take away sin! No supposed remedial pains in Hell are possible—neither lapse of years, nor bitterness of regret can take away sin! Jesus takes away the sin of the world and beside Him there is no other!

Mark you, "He takes away the sin of *the world*"—all manner of sin that was ever done in the world, by all sorts of men, of all races, in all places! He removes sins of long duration, of aggravated criminality, of crying heinousness—any sin that can be compassed within the bounds of the world—Christ takes away! O repenting sinner, though your sins should be as many as the hairs of your head and each one as black as the midnight of Tophet, yet Christ takes away each sin! Though you should have cursed God and slain your fellow men, yet such sin as this comes within the range of "the sin of the world." Even as another text puts it, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life," so is this text to be understood! Jesus so takes away the sin of the world that whoever believes in Him shall no longer be guilty of sin, but shall be forgiven and be justified before God!

Do you hear this? There is nothing in this text to shut any man out of mercy! Behold, I set before you an open door. There is everything in my text to induce every one of you who is conscious of guilt to come to the Lord Jesus and accept Him as your Substitute and Sacrifice. Christ shall take away no man's sin that does not believe in Him. Christ has so taken away sin that whoever believes in Him shall live. If you will come, now, and lay your hand on this Divine Sacrifice, you shall find it All-Sufficient, whatever the nature of your guilt may be. O delightful Gospel! How sweet to preach it!

I have done when I have said this. John the Baptist appears to me to have relieved his mind by the utterance of my text. He was full of weariness because of the scribes and Pharisees, doctors and doubters who had been warring around him. He had been put on the defensive and had been harried with innumerable questions. First one and then another—this question and that question. And now John ends the wordy duel by pointing to One whose Presence was joy to his heart! There stands the Savior and John stops his argument and cries, "There He is! Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world."

It is to me a supreme joy to turn aside from those who becloud the everlasting Gospel—to leap out of the midst of controversy and to cry to you with exultation—Jesus is the Son of God! He is the Sacrifice for sin! He takes it away! Believe on Him and live! There is more joy in one sermon

than in years of disputation. Oh, that everyone in this congregation might believe in Jesus and live! What a refreshment it is to the preacher's mind to get to his message at last, to get away from the bamboozlement of those who confound plain Truth, and to come to matter-of-fact dealing with eternal salvation. There, let them question and quibble—the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanses us from all sin!

With what certainty the Baptist speaks! He does not, for a moment, hesitate, or speak with cautious reserve. No debate disturbs the foundation of his confidence. Before his eyes he evidently sees the Sin-Bearer and he bids others see Him as he sees Him. To him no doubt remains, for he had seen the heavens opened above the head of Jesus—and he had heard the voice of God, Himself, saying, "This is My beloved Son." Dear Friends, the marks which prove our Lord Jesus to be the vicarious Sacrifice for sin are as clear to me as ever they were to John the Baptist! I dogmatize because I feel more than sure as to my Lord's being the great Sacrifice for sin! I could not doubt this doctrine if I were to try to do so. My hope, my joy, my very *being* hinge on my Lord's Substitution. This truth is woven into the warp and woof of my being. Jesus suffered in my place!

A leader in the religious world tells us that we have not yet obtained a satisfactory theory of the Atonement. Let him speak for himself! Thousands of us know what we believe and know what Jesus did for us! Where has the man lived? What comfort in life and death is there for one who cannot see clearly this first of Truths? I thank God I have a definition of the Atonement which is to me most clear, sure and full of comfort! Here it is—"He Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree." I can live by that and I can die by that. I am sick to death of the ever-repeated cant about, "theory of the Atonement." I have no *theory*, for I believe in the Atonement, itself! God keep us steadfast in the faith once delivered to the saints and our consolation will abound.

And yet, once more, there seems to be a deep anxiety on John's part in the words of my text. He says, "Behold the Lamb of God." And he does so for the sake of those around him. We do not desire others to believe with us because we need them to keep us in countenance. John was not a man cut out of brown paper, in the same shape as thousands of others—he was an original, self-contained individual. He knew how to see the Lamb of God for himself, whether other people did or did not see Him. When I preach to you the doctrine of the vicarious Sacrifice, it is not because I am unable to believe this Truth, alone. Long ago I ceased to count heads. Truth is usually in the minority in this evil world. I have faith in the Lord Jesus for myself, a faith burned into me as with a hot iron. I thank God what I believe I shall believe, even if I believe it alone! If I am the last man to glory in the Substitution of the Lord Jesus, I shall count myself honored to bear His Cross alone.

But there is great love to his fellows in the heart of every man who has seen the Lord Jesus Christ as bearing sin. That great deed of love makes the beholder feel that he would have all men look and live. Were you ever half-starved and did you find bread? Then I know you pitied your famishing brother. Our very instincts lead us to spread the blessing which we

have received. Even dogs would do that. A poor dog had his broken leg healed at the hospital and not many weeks after, he brought another lame dog to the same house of mercy. We also long to see men come to Christ because we have had our broken hearts healed by His tender hands. We love because He first loved us! Brothers and Sisters, I was ready to perish under a sense of sin! I was all but damned! I felt the wrath of God surging in my soul like a sea of fire! I found no relief or comfort. Even the Word of God did not cheer me. They told me of believing in Jesus, but till I learned that this Jesus was God's great appointed Sacrifice for sin, I saw nothing in Him to cheer me. When I learned that He had borne the penalty and satisfied Justice, then I found out the glorious secret and my conscience was at rest! Conscience within us reflects, as in a mirror, the facts of the case as God sees them.

God causes an awakened conscience to require that which His justice requires. The demand of the conscience is the echo of the demand of the Divine Government. Conscience requires Atonement because the necessity of the case and the nature of God require it. When I learned that there was such an Atonement provided, oh, then I rested most sweetly! I wish you all did! You that have no atoning sacrifice to plead, how can you bear the weight of your sins? What will you do with them when the death-damp is on your brows? You for whom, according to your own creed, no debt was paid, no penalty endured—how will you answer Justice in her great and terrible day? Believers look to Jesus as discharging all their debt and they are not afraid of the day of account! But where will you look? Oh, what will you do?

Do not remain without faith in Him who stood in the sinner's place! His work is exactly what your mind needs, to give it peace. The satisfaction of Jesus will give your mind satisfaction, but nothing else will. Conscience, like the horse-leech, cries, "Give, give," and it will never cease its cravings till it meets with Christ, whose one full satisfaction will content it forever. "Behold the Lamb of God." I shall meet you all in the Day of Judgment and I tremble not to do so, for I have told you all the Truth of God so far as I know it. If you reject the Sacrifice for sin, I cannot help it! But, I beseech you, receive it and find that the Lamb of God has taken away your sin! Go in peace. The Lord go with you. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
Exodus 29:38-46; Isaiah 53; John 1:19-51.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—412, 331, 416.

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THE BAPTIST'S MESSAGE

NO. 2646

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 29, 1899.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 2, 1882.**

***"The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said,
Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"
John 1:29.***

JOHN was the herald of Christ. He came to bear witness to Him and to prepare the way for Him. In olden times when kings traveled, they were accustomed to send heralds before them to announce their coming, and to prepare the way for them. And I have read that on several occasions the herald wore such gorgeous apparel—adorned with gold and lace—that when he went into some of the towns and villages, the people thought that *he* must be the king, himself! So they made ready to receive him with royal honors. When he said, "No, I am not the king, I have merely come to sound the trumpet and to say that he is coming," they wondered what the king, himself, must be like if his herald was so resplendent—and it is said that in several instances they refused to receive the king when he came, for they said, "The man who told us that he was only your servant was a far finer looking man than you are, and much more grandly dressed." So, when the king arrived and they saw that he was but plainly dressed, as kings usually are when not wearing their state robes, they would not receive him.

Something like that happens with some of Christ's heralds, but it did not occur in the case of John the Baptist. He was not arrayed in soft raiment or rich apparel. He came straight up from the wilderness clothed in a garment of camel's hair and with leather trousers about his loins—and his food was locusts and wild honey. Nor was there anything at all about John's mode of speech which was likely to attract attention to himself and make men think less of his Master when He should come. I wish that all of us, when we go forth as Christ's heralds, crying, "Behold the Lamb of God"—and that is our main business here below—would take care that we were never so grand in our style of thought or language that when the Master, Himself, comes in all His wondrous simplicity, men would begin to despise Him because they remembered the fine tones of His pretended herald! No, let us be simple and plain whenever we have to speak of Christ and when our King, Himself, comes, let us step back and get out of sight, that He, alone, may be seen, and that all the people's hearts may be won to Him.

I have plunged into the middle of my subject at the very beginning of my sermon, for that is the theme on which I want to speak to you. First, I

am going to describe *the true messenger*, John the Baptist, or anyone else who is like he. Then, secondly, I hope to talk about *the true message*—"Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." And then, thirdly, I must say a little upon *the true reception of this message*, telling what they do who really hear and believe the true messenger of God.

I. First, then, let us think of THE TRUE MESSENGER and, as I know that there are many here who try to do good by speaking for the Lord to their fellow men, let this first part of my subject be a lesson in self-examination—not by way of discouragement, but rather of encouragement, I hope, to those whom I am addressing. Who are they who will be acknowledged by Christ, at the Last Great Day, as the true messengers of God? What are the special characteristics by which they may be known?

Well, first, the true messenger is *one who sees the Lord Jesus for himself*. "The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him." To be His herald and witness, John must see Jesus and he must see Jesus coming to him. Those Prophets who lived a long while before the coming of Christ were but dim seers compared with John the Baptist. He was like the morning star which is so near the sun that it is the brightest of the stars. We see it shining almost like a little sun and then, when the sun rises in all its brightness, the star disappears. John was "a burning and a shining light" and all who came before him were, in Christ's judgment, inferior to him. He said to the multitudes concerning John, "What did you go out to see? A Prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a Prophet. For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, who shall prepare Your way before You. Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there has not risen a greater than John the Baptist." This was the difference between John and the Prophets—his sight of Christ was clearer than theirs because he was nearer to Christ. And his view of Christ was brighter, fuller and clearer than that of all who had gone before.

Yet they were also true witnesses to Christ, according to the light they had. Our Savior said to the Jews, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day: he saw it and was glad." And if he had not seen Christ by faith, he could not have been one of the witnesses who testified beforehand concerning Him. All the Prophets looked through the haze of the ages and, by faith, perceived their Lord. And then they wrote of Him and spoke of Him to the people. The ancient name for a Prophet was a very instructive one—he was called a *seer*—and you and I, Beloved, must see Christ or else we cannot bear witness to Him. As the Prophets saw Christ by faith and as John actually looked upon Him and then bore witness to Him, so must you and I see Him. Not with these *eyes*—that sight is reserved until the Resurrection—but with the eyes of our spirit, with the eyes of our mind and heart we must see Jesus before we can rightly speak of Him.

Are you anxious, my Brother, to go and preach? Have you seen Jesus? If not, what can you say when people ask you, "What is He like? Who is He that we should believe in Him?" You must look unto Him before you can speak of Him and, the more steadfastly you gaze upon Him, His

work, His offices, His humiliation, His glorification, the better will you be able to bear your witness concerning Him. You will then speak more surely and confidently for your God if you can testify concerning that which your heart knows to be true because you have perceived and enjoyed it yourself!

Yes, and if you have seen Him in the past, try to see Him, again, and to be continually "looking unto Jesus." Let not any of us go and talk to our Sunday school class, or preach from the pulpit, or write a letter about our Lord until we have had a fresh glimpse of Him. It is wonderful how nimbly the pen or the tongue moves when the eye has just feasted itself upon Christ! The Psalmist said, "My heart is overflowing with a good theme: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer." When you have, yourself, been with Christ. When you have just come forth from the ivory palaces of communion and fellowship with the Lord Jesus, all your garments will smell of myrrh, aloes and cassia! And your words will have some of the precious savor clinging to them. So again I say that we must see Christ or else we cannot be witnesses to Him.

And, therefore, let us fix our hearts, our thoughts and our meditations so completely upon Christ that when we cry to other men, "Behold the Lamb of God," it will be because we have just beheld Him ourselves! If a man who is blind were to stand up in the street and cry, "Behold," people would be apt to ask, "What can a poor blind man bid us look at? He cannot see anything himself." If you say to the people, "Behold Christ," yet all the while your eyes are turned toward *yourself* and you are wondering whether you will get through the sermon all right—whether you will have a fine conclusion at the end and what the congregation will think of it when you have done—that will be like saying, "Behold!" while you, yourself, are looking the other way! And other people will look in the same direction! They will be sure to do as you *do* and not as you *say*. And if you do not behold Christ, neither will they! Our inward thought, conviction and belief must be in strict accordance with our outward speech, or else we shall misrepresent ourselves—and our message will be poorly delivered and will fall without power upon our hearers.

I also remind you that we must preach Christ as *coming*. "Why," says one, "He *has* come!" I know that He has, but He is coming again. It is a blessed thing that, whereas the Prophets saw Him as coming, they only differed from us in this respect—that we can look *back* to His first coming, as they looked *forward* to it. And we can also look *onward* to His coming a second time, "without sin unto salvation"—and so we are to speak of Him as coming. It is grand preaching when the preacher can see Christ coming, when he can behold the Throne of Judgment set and can gaze upon the King in His beauty sitting upon it, and see Him reigning over all, King of Kings and Lord of Lords! It is glorious when he hears the hallelujahs of the approaching millennial age even while he is preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ! "Lo, He comes," he says, and he sees Him coming, for he is not like the virgins who had fallen asleep and so did not watch for the bridegroom's appearing. Oh, for open eyes, expectant hearts and earnest tongues to see, and long for, and tell of our coming Lord! This is the way the faithful witness preaches Him to the people.

But, next, the true messenger *calls upon men to see Jesus*. He calls them away from seeing other things and bids them look, and, "behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" God-sent servants do not say, "Look to the priest! Look to the altar! Look to the sacraments! Look to yourself—come and confess your sins and I will give you absolution!" No, no, no, no! Forever and forever NO! They do nothing of that sort. The priests of Antichrist do that, but the servants of Christ cry, "Behold the Lamb of God." Our great difficulty is to get men's eyes off themselves, off their works, off their forms and ceremonies, off mere creed-religion and to get them to look at the living Christ who is still among us bearing the sin of all who truly seek His face!

O dear Hearers, I know that I am, in this respect, a faithful witness. Wherever else I fail in my testimony, for my soul's labor and travail, even unto anguish, is to get you away from depending even in the slightest degree upon anything else but what Christ has done! I would not wish you to have the shadow of a shade of a ghost of a pretense of a confidence anywhere out of Christ! Jesus is the *only* hope of sinners! Let Him be A to you, and Z, and all the letters between—the beginning and the end—and the middle and everything else! Take your eyes off all ministers, all books, all feelings and even all believing! Do not even fix your gaze on your own faith. You know that the eye cannot see itself. Did you ever see your own eye? In a mirror, perhaps, you may have done so, but that was only the *reflection* of it and you may, in like manner, see the evidence of your faith, but you cannot look at the faith itself. Faith looks away from itself to the Object of faith, even to Christ! And this is what the true witness desires. He will, if he can, keep men from looking anywhere but on his Master!

Some look at their repentance, but if you cannot keep your eyes on Christ, then away with your repentance! Some are always looking to their faith, but if there is a faith that hides Christ, away with it! Some need feelings and right feelings we may wish to have—but as for those feelings which come between us and Christ, away with them! It is not fit that they should live. Our one business is to get men away from anything and from everything, however good it is, that they may look alone to Christ Jesus, the Lamb of God!

The third mark of a true witness is that *he leads his own disciples to Jesus*. It is generally thought to be a good thing to lead another man's disciples beyond their master, but it is not always so easy to lead our own disciples beyond ourselves. The preacher is often conscious that there are many weak persons who stop short at what he says. To them it is a great help to faith that their pastor or their minister says such-and-such. Well, for lame people, we do not object to crutches for a time, but we always anxiously pray that the faith of these poor cripples may not stand—at least, for any length of time—in the power of man, but in Christ alone! I would say to you what the Apostle Paul wrote to the Galatians, though I wish I could say something that would be worthy to be placed beneath what he said, and so be more suitable for one so much inferior to him. He says, "Though we, or an angel from Heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." That is, "Let us, ourselves, be accursed if we ever

dare to lead you away from Christ. It is an imprecation upon our own souls if we dare to make ourselves your masters instead of your *servants* for Jesus' sake!"

It was a beautiful trait in the character of John the Baptist that he was so ready to pass on to Christ his own disciples—he did not want to keep them merely to swell the number of his own followers, but only kept them with him until he could point them to his Master. When we try to win souls, if we find that people have confidence in us and affection for us, let us use that influence not to attach them to ourselves except with the earnest desire to pass them on to Christ—that they may become disciples of the Savior for themselves and grow up from being babes who have to be nursed to become strong men in Christ Jesus.

One more thing about John the Baptist which is also a characteristic of the true witness for Christ is that *he lost himself in his Master*. Without a single atom of regret he said, "He must increase, but I must decrease." Oh, how grandly he witnessed for Christ by sinking himself until he was lost in Christ! And my Brother, it must be the same with you—if you would be a true witness for Christ, you must say that which glorifies Him, even though it dishonors yourself! Perhaps there is a very learned man sitting over yonder and the temptation to the preacher is to say something that shall make him feel that the minister to whom he is listening is not so ignorant as some people suppose. But if there is an unlearned, simple sinner anywhere in the place, the preacher's business is just to chop his words down to that poor man's condition and let the learned hearer receive the same message if he will!

Luther said, "When I am preaching, I see Dr. Jonas sitting there, and Oecolampadius, and Melancthon and I say to myself, 'Those learned doctors know enough already, so I need not trouble about them. I shall fire at the poor people in the aisles.'" That is the way Luther preached and God richly blessed his ministry because he did it. Though he was a truly learned man, he was willing to be reckoned as knowing nothing at all if by that means he could the better serve his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Dear Brothers and Sisters, when you are serving Christ, do not also seek to serve yourself in a sneaking kind of way. It is easily done—under the appearance of glorifying Christ, you may really be extolling yourself. You may even seek to win souls with the view of having the credit of doing it—and if you do, you will spoil the whole work! It must not be so with you. This royal crown must be touched by none but Christ. You and I cannot really put the crown on His head, though we may wish to do so. Christ is greater than that monarch who, when the Pope was about to crown him, took the crown out of his hands and said, "I won it myself, so I will put it on my own head." And Christ must crown Himself! The words we sometimes sing—

***"Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all,"***

are very good and right, but, after all, Christ is His own Glory and the Holy Spirit truly glorifies Him. How can we be worthy to put the crown on His head when we are not worthy to unloose the laces of His shoes! Oh, what poor things we are! We are not fit to be the dust under His feet! Glory, glory, glory be unto Him and unto Him alone!

Thus I think I have said enough about the true messenger. Aim at being like John the Baptist in these respects, Brothers and Sisters, as God shall help you.

II. But now, secondly, we are to consider THE TRUE MESSAGE which is this—"Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

In these few words we have the substance of the message to be delivered by God's faithful ministers. *First, John declared that God had sent His Son into the world that men might live through Him.* He taught that Jesus of Nazareth is the eternal Son of God, appointed by Him to redeem mankind and that He came into the world on purpose that He might save His people from their sins. Oh, tell this wondrous story! Tell it till every wave bears onward the message and every wind moves it till all born of woman have heard the glad tidings that "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." All our hopes spring from Christ and Him crucified! They begin with Him and they end with Him. And whoever believes on Him has everlasting life! But whoever rejects Him by not believing Him, there remains no hope for him—he must be lost forever! There is but one way to Heaven, and that one way is marked by the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Further, in telling the true message, we must go on to explain that *Jesus Christ is thus the Savior because He is the one Sacrifice for sin.* This verse reads, in the margin, "Behold the Lamb of God, who *bears* the sin of the world." And in that rendering there is a great Truth of God which is not to be kept back. Christ Jesus did actually bear the sin of His people in His own body on the tree. It was lifted bodily off those whom it would have crushed forever—and it was laid on Him. He was, indeed, the great Sin-Bearer—He who knew no sin was made sin for us, "that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Now here is a point at which some are always sticking. Robertson, of Brighton, with his magnificent genius, practically taught the Atonement in some such fashion as Dr. Duncan used to say, that Jesus Christ did something or other which, in some way or other, in some degree or other, made it possible for men to be forgiven! That was Robertson's notion of the Atonement, but we say not so! We say that He really took the sin of men upon Himself and who can read that marvelous 53rd Chapter of Isaiah without seeing that this is no figure, no metaphor, but literal Truth of God—"the Lord has made to meet upon Him the iniquity of us all"! So says the Prophet. But what says the Apostle? "Who His own Self bore our sins in His own body on the tree." And I cannot preach the Gospel without proclaiming this great Truth of Christ's atoning Sacrifice and I do not mean to try to do so! I know of no way by which sin can be taken off us except by laying it on Him who was our Surety and our Substitute. And He did take it and He did bear it—and the true messenger, sent from God, tells you that—whatever else he may say or may not say.

And he tells you more than that, namely, what the text says in our Authorized Version. "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away"—as well as takes upon Himself—"the sin of the world." Oh, blessed word—*takes it away!* Where did He take it! I will tell you—"As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us." He took the sin

of all Believers away so completely that it sank into the bottom of the sea! God has cast it behind His back and it shall not be mentioned against them any more forever. There is no such thing, now, as the sin of the saints, for Christ has utterly annihilated it. He came to finish transgression and to make an end of sins—and if He made an end of them, there is an end of them—they are gone forever and those who believe in Jesus are washed white as the driven snow and clothed in His matchless righteousness! This is what the true messenger has to tell, that Jesus bore the sin of His people and that He took it right away. Oh, what joyous work is ours!

This is to be our message—we are to *set Christ forth as the Object of faith*. We are to say to men, “Behold the Lamb of God.” Is that all the sinner has to do? Yes, behold Him! Never was there another Savior like Christ Jesus our Lord. The mere looking at Him saves the soul! Whoever looks to Christ lives by that look and shall live forever. There is not a sinner in Hell who ever looked on Christ with the eyes of faith—and there never shall be such a soul! And all who are in Heaven entered there simply through beholding the slain Lamb who takes away the sin of the world. Would you get there, young man? Then behold the Lamb of God and you shall get there! There is life in a *look* at the Lamb of God. Would you get there, poor sinner, driven and hunted about by the devil? Then behold the Lamb of God! Do but look out of the corner of your eye, if that is all that you can do. Look through your blinding tears. Look through the mists and clouds that surround you. Do but look unto Jesus and, as every bitten one who looked at the bronze serpent, lived, so every sick soul that looks to Christ shall live—and live forever!

That is the Gospel, and it is a blessed Gospel to have to preach! And blessed is the messenger who proclaims boldly and plainly, in the name of Jesus, saying on Christ's behalf, “Look unto Him, and be you saved, all you ends of the earth. Look and live.” May many do so at this very moment!

III. Now I close by turning to the third head of my discourse which is THE TRUE RECEPTION OF THE MESSAGE. How can I truly receive this true message of the true messenger? Well, Brothers and Sisters, if we, by faith, “behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world,” observe what we shall do.

First, *we shall follow Jesus*. Read from the 35th verse to the 37th — “Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples. And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, Behold the Lamb of God! The two disciples heard him speak and they followed Jesus.” That is to say, they did behold the Lamb of God and, believing in Him, they followed Him. And if you have really believed in Christ, you will try to walk in His footprints. You will call Him Master and Lord. He will be your Leader and Commander and you will willingly follow where He leads and cheerfully do what He commands. Christ has not come to give you license to sin, but He has brought you to liberty from sin. Blessed liberty! If you do, indeed, thus look to Christ, follow Him at once! Become His disciple, do what He bids you, feeling that it is—

***“Yours not to reason why,
Yours not to make reply”***

but just to do as He commands—and believe what He teaches by the implicit faith which yields itself up entirely to Him. This is the test of real faith in Jesus, that the man is no more his own master, but takes Jesus to be his Master and follows wherever He leads.

The next thing that happens with those who give a true reception to the message is that *they want to abide with Christ*. The two disciples followed Jesus and, “They said unto Him, Master, where do You dwell?’ He said unto them, “Come and see. They came and saw where He dwelt and remained with Him that day.” I do not know where He dwelt. I am sure that it was not a very luxurious mansion and, in later days, he had nowhere to lay His head. But as soon as ever these men had looked to Him and followed Him, they wanted to live with Him! Oh, that is the highest joy of a Christian, to live with Christ! A look of faith saves the soul because it is the beginning of a life of living with Christ forever and ever! I am afraid that some of God’s people fail to realize this blessed living with Christ. They get a little joy and they seem very pleased with it, but in a little time they lose it. Why is that? Because they rejoiced merely in *their own joy* and when a man does that, he will soon lose it. It is as old Master Brooks says, “If a loving husband were to give his wife earrings, bracelets, jewels and then, instead of loving him for his gifts, she began to be in love with his presents and cared little for him, he would be inclined to take them away from her so as to have all her love for himself.”

And surely it is so with Christ. He puts the earring of holy joy in His bride’s ears and she begins to say, “Oh, how joyful I am!” No, no, do not talk like that! I heard one, the other day, bragging about his own holiness and I thought to myself, “That holiness which talks about itself is an unholy holiness.” Do you think that holiness is a thing to be proclaimed about the streets, or set up for a show? Oh, no! As I think of the thrice-holy God, I lay my face in the very dust before Him. O Brothers and Sisters, true holiness is something very different from this tinsel stuff that men, in these days, boast about as they beat their drums! True holiness beats on its breast and gets away into its place of secret communion—and if it has any beauties, it shows them only to the Lord in secret, with many a blush and many a lament that it is not much more nearly what it ought to be. O Beloved, may God grant us Grace to follow Jesus and to live with Jesus!

I said that some of God’s people do not seem to understand this living with Jesus, but why should not we? Why need we have doubts and fears? Why need we get away from Christ? Had we but the faith He deserves and believed in Him as He ought to be believed in, we might go from joy to joy and so ascend to Heaven as on a ladder of light! God give us this Grace of living with Christ! It is to be had by those who seek it aright.

Then, lastly, the proof which these people, who had seen Christ and followed Him, gave that they had really found Him was *that they went and tried to bring others to Him*. They said to their kinsfolk and acquaintances, “We have found the Messiah!” “We have found Jesus!” Ah, you have never truly found Jesus if you do not tell others about Him! You know how children act—we ought to be children in all things before God. If a little child, in its rambles, were to find honey and its brothers and

sisters were all around, I feel certain that it would give such a cry after it had first sucked its own fingers, that all of them would soon be plunging their hands into the honey, too! You have never tasted its sweetness if it has not made you cry, "Come here! Was there ever such joy as this? Was there ever such delight, such rapture as this?" It is the instinct of true children of God to desire to fetch others in to taste and see that the Lord is good—to share the unspeakable bliss which is already their own!

Many of you are coming to the Lord's Table. As you come to it, I would whisper in your ear, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" Never mind that bread and wine unless you can use them as poor old folks often use their spectacles. What do they use them for? To look at? No, to look *through* them. So, use the bread and wine as a pair of spectacles—look through them and do not be satisfied until you can say, "Yes, yes, I can see the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" Then shall the Communion be really what it ought to be to you. God make it so, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 1:19-51; MATTHEW 4:12-24.**

John 1:19, 20. *And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who are you? And he confessed, and denied not, but confessed, I am not the Christ. "I am not the One anointed of God to save mankind."*

21. *And they asked him, Who then? Are you Elijah? "Are you Elijah come back to earth?"*

21. *And he said, I am not.* For, though indeed he was the true *spiritual* Elijah who was to come as the forerunner of the Messiah, yet, in the sense in which they asked the question, the only truthful answer was, "I am not."

21. *Are you that Prophet?* The long-expected prophet foretold by Moses?

21-23. *And he answered, No. Then they said unto him, Who are you, that we may give an answer to them that sent us? What do you say of yourself? He said, I am the voice.* That is all. A voice and nothing more. John did not profess to be the Word—he was only the voice which vocalized that Word and made it audible to human ears. He came to bear witness to the Christ, but he was not, himself, the Christ. "I am the voice"

23-27. *Of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the Prophet Isaiah. And they which were sent were of the Pharisees. and they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptize you then, if you are not that Christ, nor Elijah, neither that Prophet? John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there stands One among you, whom you know not; He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe laces I am not worthy to unloose.* How wisely does God always choose and fashion His servants! John is evidently just the man for his place—he bears testimony to Christ very clearly. He earnestly turns away all attention from himself to his Master and he has such a reverent esteem for Him of whom he is the herald that he puts all honor and glory upon Him.

28-30. *These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing, The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. This is He of whom I said, after me comes a Man which is preferred before me: for He was before me.* You know, dear Friends, that Christ existed from all eternity, so, in very truth, He was before John. You know, too, the glory and the excellency of our Divine Master, so that, in another sense, He was and is before John and all other creatures whom He has made.

31-34. *And I knew Him not: but that He should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bore record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from Heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him. And I knew Him not: but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom you shall see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizes with the Holy Spirit. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.* The secret sign of the descent of the Spirit, in dove-like form, upon our Lord, was given to John. And as soon as he saw it, he knew for sure that Jesus was the Sent One, the Messiah, and that he must point Him out to the people.

35, 36. *Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples. And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, Behold the Lamb of God!* This was the same text from which he had preached the day before and it was the same sermon, somewhat shortened. So should it be with us—

**“His only righteousness I show,
His saving truth proclaim
'Tis all my business here below
To cry, ‘Behold the Lamb!’”**

37. *The two disciples heard him speak and they followed Jesus.* Thus John was losing his own disciples. By his testimony to the Truth of God, he was sending them to follow the Lord Jesus Christ. And he did it well and gracefully. There are many who would find it a hard task to reduce the number of their disciples, but it was not so with John.

38-46. *Then Jesus turned and saw them following, and said to them, What do you seek? They said unto Him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master) where do You dwell? He said unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where He dwelt, and remained with Him that day (now it was about the tenth hour). One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother, Simon, and said unto him, We have found the Messiah, (which is, being interpreted, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, He said, You are Simon the son of Jonah: you shall be called Cephas, (which is by interpretation, A Stone). The following day Jesus wanted to go into Galilee, and found Philip, and said unto him, Follow me. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael, and said unto him, We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law, and the Prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip said unto him, Come and see. It was all a seeing Gospel. John said, “Behold the Lamb of God!” Then Jesus said, “Come and see.” And now Philip says the same. Faith is that blessed sight by which we discern the Savior! Whoever looks to Christ by faith shall live!*

47. *Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him and said of him, Behold an Israelite, indeed, in whom is no guile! "There is no craft or deception in this man, as there was in Jacob; he is a true Israelite, like Israel at his best."*

48. *Nathanael said unto Him, How do You know me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.* What Nathanael had been doing there, we do not know. Probably he had been meditating, or he may have been engaged in prayer. But this announcement was proof to Nathanael that Jesus could see all things and read men's hearts—and know what they were doing in their chosen retreats. "When you were under the fig tree, I saw you." Christ knows all of you who came in here tonight, in a prayerful spirit, seeking Him! And whenever men are seeking Him, you can be sure that He is also seeking them!

49. *Nathanael answered and said unto Him, Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel.* "You saw what I was doing in secret and by that token I perceive that You are God's own Son."

50. *Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto you, I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You shall see greater things than these.* Those who are ready to believe Christ, on what may be thought to be slender evidence, shall "see greater things than these." "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." They shall gaze upon a wonderful sight, by-and-by!

51. *And He said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter you shall see Heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.* "You are a true Israelite, and you shall have Israel's vision. You shall see the same sight as your father, Jacob, saw when he fell asleep with a stone for his pillow! Only your vision shall be far grander than his." Christ always knows how to meet the needs of our hearts and to give us something in accordance with our own expressions, and to make His answers fit our requests—only He always far exceeds all that we ask or even think, blessed be His holy name!

Matthew 4:12. *Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, He departed into Galilee.* Notice that there were at that time only two great ministers of God, John the Baptist, he must go to prison and to death—Jesus, the Son of God, He must go to the desert to be tempted of the devil. If any Christians escape temptation, they will not be the leaders of the hosts of God! Those who stand in the van must bear the brunt of the battle. Oh, that all who are called to such responsible positions might be as prepared to occupy them as John was and as Jesus was!

13-16. *And leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zebulun and Naphtali: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the Prophet, saying, The land of Zebulun, and the land of Naphtali, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; the people which eat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.* Oh, the tender mercy of our God! Where the darkness is the deepest, there the Light of God shines the brightest! Christ selects such dark regions as Naphtali and Zebulun that He may dwell there and shine in all His Glory.

17. *From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand.* He was not afraid to give an earnest exhortation to sinners and to bid men repent. He knew better than we do the inability of men concerning all that is good, yet He bade them repent!

18-23. *And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon, called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And He said unto them, Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets and followed Him. And going on from there, He saw two more brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John, his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets. And He called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed Him. And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.* I like those words, “all manner”—that is, Christ met every kind and every sort of sickness and disease. Perhaps you, dear Friend, are afflicted in your soul after a very peculiar fashion. Yes, but this great Physician heals all manner of diseases! None are excluded from the list of patients whom He can cure! Twice the words, “all manner,” are used—“Healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.”

24. *And His fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto Him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatics and those that had the palsy; and He healed them.* Our Lord Jesus lived as in a hospital while He was on earth! Wherever He went, the sins and sorrows of men were all open before His sympathetic gaze. But oh, what joy it must have been to Him to be able to deal so well with them all! Am I addressing any who are sick in soul? Our Master is used to cases just like yours! Your malady is not new to Him. He has healed many like you—of all that were brought to Him, it is written, “He healed them.” Lie before Him, now, in all your sin and misery, and breathe the prayer, “Son of David, have mercy on me,” and He will surely hear you and heal you, for He delights to bless and save all who trust Him!

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—492, 331, 276.

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“THE LAMB OF GOD”

NO. 3222

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 1910.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 20, 1870.**

***“Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world.”
John 1:29.***

[Two other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon the same text are #1987, Volume 33—
“BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD” and #2646, Volume 45—
THE BAPTIST’S MESSAGE—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at
<http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

BEFORE we plunge into our main subject, it is necessary to notice what is implied in our text, which is that “the world” was lost through sin and that all mankind had become guilty before God. You, therefore, my dear Hearer, are one of those who are thus guilty. Though you may never have broken the laws of your country, nor even the rules of propriety. Though you may be both amiable and admirable in your general deportment, yet, for all this, as “there is none righteous, no, not one,” you, also, are included among the unrighteous! It matters not what religious professions you may have made, or what outward forms of godliness you may have observed—unless you have a better righteousness than your own, you are a lost sinner! I believe there is now present a Brother who, when he was first convicted of sin, tried hard to make himself a better man under the mistaken idea that this was the way of salvation. And when, one Sabbath night, he heard me say that all the reforms you could ever make upon your old nature would be useless as to the matter of salvation, but that, “you must be born-again,” he felt very angry and made a vow that he would never be found listening to me again! Yet here he is, rejoicing that the Lord has taught him to see himself as a lost, ruined sinner and to put his heart’s trust in Jesus Christ, the sinner’s Savior!

It is very likely that if I had time to explain to you, my Hearer, the fullness of your sin and the utter ruin of your natural state, you, also, would grow angry. You would have no cause to be angry, for all that I could say would fall far short of the truth about your real condition in the sight of God! And it is most solemnly important for you to know that however high you may stand in the ranks of merely moral men, you are a lost soul and a condemned soul, as long as you remain without living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ! If you are angry with the minister of the Gospel who tells you this Truth of God, you are as foolish as a certain Brahmin whom I have heard of. His religion consisted chiefly in not eating any animal food or destroying any kind of life. The missionary told him that it

was impossible for him to carry out such a "religion" as that, "for," he said, "in every drop of water that you drink, you swallow thousands of animals and so destroy vast quantities of animal life." Then he put a drop of water out of the cup from which the Brahmin had been drinking, under his microscope and so convinced him of the truth of what he had said. When the Brahmin saw the creatures moving in the water, instead of abandoning his false theory, he grew very angry and dashed the microscope upon the ground! He was not angry, you see, with the *fact*, but with that which *revealed the fact!* Like the lazy housemaid who said she was quite sure that she always kept the rooms clean but, it was the nasty sun that would shine in and make everything look so dusty! The fault is not in the Gospel which we preach—so you should not be angry with it, or with us—the fault is in yourselves, in your own hearts and lives, and if you do not like to be told the truth about sin, it is a sure sign that your heart is not right in the sight of God! It is still true that "everyone that does evil hates the light, neither comes to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd."

Well then, with that Truth of God taken for granted—that you, whom I am now addressing, have sinned and are, therefore, under God's condemnation unless you are trusting in Christ—we now come directly to our text. We shall take it not merely as though John the Baptist were speaking it, but as we may now use it from our point of view. It appears to me to be the whole Gospel in a very brief form. You may sometimes write much in a very few words and here you have an epitome of the whole Gospel of God in these few syllables—"Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world." I am going to ask and try to answer three questions. First, *what is to be beheld?* Secondly, *what is to be done?* And thirdly, *why should we do this?*

I. First, then WHAT IS TO BE BEHELD?

The text mentions a *Lamb*, by which is meant a sacrifice. Under the Jewish Law, those who had offended brought sacrifices and offered them to God. These sacrifices were representations of our Lord Jesus Christ who is, "the Lamb of God." Listen, my dear Hearer, and I will tell you the Gospel in a few sentences. As God is just, it is inevitable that sin should be punished. If He would pardon you, how can this be righteously accomplished? Only thus—Jesus Christ, His Son, came to earth and stood in the place of all those who believe on Him and God accepted Him as the substitutionary Sacrifice for all those who put their trust in Him. Under the Jewish Law, the lamb was put to death that the man might not be put to death and, in like manner, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, suffered the pangs of death by crucifixion and the greater agony of the wrath of God that we might not suffer the pangs of Hell and the eternal wrath which is due to sin. There is no other way of salvation under Heaven but this! God cannot relax His Justice and He will by no means clear the guilty. But He laid upon Christ the full punishment that was due to sin and smote Him as though He had been the actual offender, and now, turning round to you, He tells you that if you trust in Jesus, the merits

of His great atoning Sacrifice shall be imputed to you and you shall live forever in Glory because Jesus died upon the Cross of Calvary. If any of you would have your sins forgiven, and so enjoy peace with God, you must look by faith to that Sacrifice which was offered upon Calvary and keep your eyes of faith fixed there—and sooner or later you will certainly receive the blessings of peace into your souls!

But the text not only mentions a Lamb, it says, “Behold *the Lamb of God,*” and I draw your special attention to that expression. It is not merely a Sacrifice to which you are to look, but *the* Sacrifice that God has appointed and ordained to be the one and only Sacrifice for sin! This is an all-important point. “The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all...It pleased the Lord to bruise Him, He has put Him to grief.” If Christ had not been sent of God to be the Savior of sinners, our faith would have had no firm foundation to rest upon. But as God Himself has set forth Christ to be the Propitiation for human guilt, then He cannot reject the sinner who accepts that Propitiation! I need not raise any questions as to whether Christ’s Atonement is sufficient, for God says that it is and as He is satisfied with the Sacrifice offered by His only-begotten and well-beloved Son, surely the most troubled conscience may be equally satisfied with it! Your offense, my Friend, was committed against God. If, then, God is content with what Christ has done on your behalf, and so is willing to pardon you, surely you need not enquire any further, but with gratitude you should at once accept the reconciliation which Christ has made! It is “the Lamb of God” whom I have to bid you, “behold.” It is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who died on Calvary, “the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.” It was God who appointed Him to die as the Substitute for sinners. It was God who accepted this Sacrifice when He died and now, Jehovah, Himself, speaking from His Throne of Glory, says to the sinner, “Believe on My Son whom I have set forth as the Propitiation for human sin. Trust in Him and you shall be eternally saved.”

Still further, to bring out the full force of the text, notice the next words, “*Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world.*” When Jesus Christ was put into our place, our sin was laid upon Him and sin, like anything else, cannot be in two places at one time. If, then, I, being a Believer in Jesus, know that all my sin was laid upon Christ, it necessarily follows that I have no sin left upon me! It has become Christ’s burden. He has taken it away from me. “Yes,” you say, “but then the sin is still on Christ.” Ah, but my Hearers, if our Lord Jesus Christ, “Himself bore our sins in His own body up on the tree,” He there endured all the punishment that was due to us, or an equivalent for it, and those sins were by that means put away—that is to say, they ceased to be—so they do not exist any longer! All my indebtedness to God was transferred to Christ and He paid all my debts! Then where are my debts now? Why, there are none! They are all gone forever. This is what Christ does for everyone who truly trusts in Him—He takes that man’s sins absolutely out of existence so that they cease to be! Christ has accomplished the

great work described to Daniel by the angel Gabriel—He has finished the transgression, made an end of sins—what a strong expression that is!—made reconciliation for iniquity and brought in everlasting righteousness! How gloriously He has put sin right away for all who believe in Him! “As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.” Of all sinners in the whole world who believe in Jesus Christ, it may be truly said that all their sins are gone past all recall—God has cast them into the depths of the Red Sea of the Savior’s blood and they shall not be remembered against them any more forever! It is thus that the Lamb of God takes or bears away sin!

But *whose sin does He take away?* The text says, “*the sin of the world.*” By this expression I believe is intended the sin not only of the Jews, but of Jews and Gentiles, alike—the sin not only of a few sinners, but of all sinners in the whole world who come to Jesus and put their trust in Him! He has so taken away “the sin of the world” that every sinner in the world who will come to Him and trust in Him, shall have all his sins put away forever! Whether he is Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, Barbarian or Scythian, bond or free, if he truly believes in Jesus, it is certain that Christ took all his sins away. Whether he was born 1800 years ago, or whether he shall be born in the ages that are yet to come, does not make any difference to this fact—Christ has borne his sins if he trusts in Jesus as his own Savior. This is the sign and token by which he may assuredly know that he has a saving and eternal interest in the precious blood of Jesus—“He that believes on Him is not condemned.” The gate of Divine Grace is set very wide open in our text—if it were not, some poor sinners would be afraid to enter! “Oh,” asks one, “is this mercy for *me*? Is it for *me*?” Well, Friend, I will ask you a question—will you trust Christ? Will you come to Him this very moment and take the mercy that He freely presents to all who will accept it? If so, I am sure that it is yours—as sure as I am that it is mine!

Possibly someone has come in here tonight hoping to hear something new, but I have nothing new to tell, nor do I wish ever to have anything more new than this—“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” Or this, “God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” When Dr. Judson went home to America from Burma, there was a large congregation gathered together and they requested the returned missionary, the veteran of so many years of service, to address the assembly. He stood up and simply told the story that I have again told you tonight—the story of Christ suffering in the place of sinners and of Christ saving all who trust Him. Then he sat down and one who sat next to him said to him, “I am afraid the friends are rather disappointed—they expected to hear something interesting from you.” He said, “I have spoken to them to the best of my ability upon the most interesting subject in the whole world! What could I have done better than that?” “Yes,” said the other, “but after having been so long abroad, they thought that you would tell them some interesting story. They did not think you would

come all the way from Burma just to tell them only that." The missionary then rose and said, "I should like to go home feeling that although I have come all the way from Burma, I do not know anything that I can tell you that I think is half as good for you to hear, or half as interesting, as the story of the love of Christ in dying to save sinners."

The good doctor was right and I feel just as he did—that there is nothing so interesting as the story of the Cross! You need to hear it, you who are already saved. And you need to hear it, you who are not yet saved! You *must* hear it, for there is no hope of salvation for you except as faith shall come to you by hearing—and especially hearing that portion of the Word of God which deals most closely with the Cross of Christ!

One night, a dissolving-view lecture upon the Holy Land was being given and, as the audience, sitting in darkness, looked at a picture of Jerusalem, they were startled by a voice asking, "Where is Calvary?" Ah, and that is the question that many of you need to ask—"Where is Calvary?" There must you turn your eyes where, between the two thieves, your Savior died. If you really look to Him as He dies there for guilty sinners, you are saved! And then whatever else you do not know, you know enough to save you, for you are wise unto eternal life! May the Lord graciously make you thus wise through the effectual working of His ever-blessed Spirit! So then, God in human flesh, the Divinely-appointed Sacrifice for human guilt, "the Lamb of God," is what you are bid, in our text, to "behold."

II. But now, secondly, WHAT ARE WE TO DO?

How are we to have a part and lot in that great Sacrifice which Christ offered on Calvary? The answer of the text is, "*Behold*"—that is, look to "*the Lamb of God.*"—

"There is life in a look at the Crucified One!"

"Behold the Lamb of God" means believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, trust in Him as your Savior, accept God's Revelation concerning Him and rely upon Him to save you. This is the way of salvation!

Notice *how opposed this is to the idea that we are critically to understand the Doctrines of the Gospel before we can be saved.* How many persons there are who want to know this and to understand that! They come to us and say, "Here are two texts that do not seem, to us, to square with one another, and there are those two Doctrines of Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility which do not appear to be consistent with each other. Must we understand all the mysteries before we can be saved?" O foolish people! They remind me of one who is shipwrecked and who, as the lifeboat comes up to the sinking ship, or to the spar upon which he is floating, says to the captain, "Before I can get on board that lifeboat, I want to know the exact number of planks there are in it. And I really do not think that knowing that would content me—I would also like to know how many rivets and bolts there are in the boat. And I also need to know what is the theory of the operation of the oars upon the waves and how it is that boats are propelled." If a man ever did talk thus, I am pretty sure that the captain of the lifeboat would exclaim, "What a fool that man is!

He is in danger of drowning, yet he talks like this! Come into the boat at once, or we must leave you to perish!” And I also feel that you unconverted sinners have no business to set yourselves up as critics of the Word of God! There is something much simpler than that for you to do—and the text bids you do it—“Behold the Lamb of God.” Do not sit down to manufacture difficulties—“believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” There are various ways of using a piece of bread. One man may take it and employ it in rubbing out the pencil marks which he has made upon a sheet of paper. Another man may take it to an analyst and ask him to see how much alum the baker may have put into it. But the really hungry man—the one who gets the most good out of the piece of bread—eats it! And that is what I recommend you to do with the Gospel—not begin to turn it about this way and that, not ask all manner of questions concerning it—but feed upon it! And the way to feed upon it is to accept it, believe it and especially to put your trust in Jesus Christ, who is the very Essence of the Gospel!

“Behold the Lamb of God,” says the text—then *that command is opposed to the question that troubles so many—whether they are elect or not!* That is like wanting to read Hebrew before one has learned to speak English! Such people are not content to learn the A B C, the elements, the rudiments of the Gospel, first—they first want to know the Gospel’s classics, or mathematics, or metaphysics—but that cannot be! During the recent hard frosts I have struck up an acquaintance with a little friend who, I am afraid, may desert me, by-and-by, but our friendship has been exceedingly pleasant to each of us thus far. On the little balcony outside my study windows, I observed a robin frequently coming, so I took an opportunity, one morning, to put some crumbs there and I have done the same thing every morning since. And my little feathered friend comes close up to the window frame and picks up the crumbs. And I do not perceive that he has any difficulty about whether the crumbs were laid there for him, or whether I had any electing love towards him in my heart. There were the crumbs—he needed them and he picked them up and ate them! And I can tell you that in doing so, he exactly fulfilled my purpose in putting the crumbs there! I thought that he acted very wisely and I think that if a poor sinner wants mercy—and he sees that there is mercy to be had—he had better not pause to ask, “Did God decree me to have it?” But go on and take it and he will then find that in doing so, he is fulfilling God’s decree! My little robin friend is very wise in his way, for he has called a friend of his to join him at the feast on the balcony. How he did it, I do not know, but he managed to tell a blackbird all about the crumbs—and he brought him last Friday morning to see them for himself. The blackbird was rather shy at first, and stood for a while on the iron bar of the balcony. But after looking in at the study window, he happened down and neither he nor the robin asked whether it was my purpose that the blackbird should have any of the crumbs! But there were the crumbs and they were both hungry, so they came and fed together. So, if any of you find Jesus Christ for yourselves and you know

some poor soul who needs Him, do not begin asking whether it is God's purpose or decree that he, also, should find the Savior—go and invite him to come to Jesus and then both of you come to the Savior together—and then, just as the robin and blackbird exactly fulfilled my purpose in throwing out the crumbs, so, when you and your friend come to Christ, you will rejoice to find that you have, both of you, fulfilled the eternal purpose of the Divine Decree of the great heart of God! It is not your business to look into the book of God's secret purposes, but to look to Christ, or, as our text puts it, to, "behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world."

Ah, but this beholding of the Lamb of God is a thing to which men cannot readily be brought! I know many whose consciences are truly awakened and who see themselves as sinners in the sight of God, but instead of beholding the Lamb of God, they are continually beholding themselves! I do not think that they have any confidence in their own righteousness, but they are afraid that they do not feel their guilt as much as they ought. They think that they are not yet sufficiently awakened, sufficiently humbled, sufficiently penitent and so on, and thus they fix their eyes upon themselves in the hope of getting peace with God! Suppose that yesterday or the day before, you had felt very cold and, therefore, you had gone outside your house and fixed your gaze upon the ice and the snow—do you think that sight would have warmed you? Now you know you would have been getting colder all the time! Suppose you are very poor and you studiously fix your mind's eye upon your empty pocket—do you think that will enrich you? Or imagine that you have had an accident and that one of your bones is broken—if you think very seriously of that broken bone, do you think that your consideration will mend it? Yet some sinners seem to imagine that salvation can come to them through their consideration of their lost and ruined condition! My dear unconverted Hearers, you are lost whether you know it or not! Take that fact for granted. If you would be saved, look not at yourselves, but "behold the Lamb of God." He has been sent by His Father to be the Savior of sinners and it is by trust in Him that peace and pardon will come to you! I pray you not to suppose, for a single moment that your repentance, your tears, or your softened heart can prepare you for Christ! Do not come to Christ because you have a tender heart, but come to Christ to *get* a tender heart! Do not come to Him because you are fit to come, but because you need to be *made* fit! And remember that—

**"All the fitness He requires
Is to feel your need of Him.
This He gives you -
'Tis the Spirit's rising beam!"**

Give up looking at yourself and "behold the Lamb of God."

Let me also, dear Friend, warn *you against the notion that your prayers can save you apart from beholding Christ.* I believe that it is both the duty and the privilege of every living soul to pray—but that the first command to a sinner is to pray, I deny! There first command is, "Believe on the

Lord Jesus Christ.” And when you have done that, you will soon get to praying. I think it is stated in McCheyne’s life, that after an earnest sermon, he found a man under deep concern of soul. And after saying a word or two to him, he said, “I cannot stay longer with you, myself, but there is one of my elders who will pray with you.” The elder did so and he prayed in so fervent a fashion that it was remarked that he seemed to be like Jacob wrestling with the Angel until he prevailed. The man afterwards came to see Mr. McCheyne and said to him, “I am very thankful that I was at your Church that night. I feel very happy and I believe I am saved.” “Well,” said McCheyne, “what makes you feel so happy?” “Oh,” he said, “I have great faith in that good man’s prayers.” McCheyne at once said, “My Friend, I am afraid that good man’s prayers will ruin you! If that is where you are putting your confidence, you are utterly mistaken.” He was quite right. And your own prayers will be just such an obstacle in your way if you trust to *them* instead of trusting to Christ! “I know I pray,” says one, “and I am very earnest in prayer.” Well, I am glad of that as far as it goes, but if you have not something better to trust to than your own prayers, your prayers will ruin you—for the look of faith is not to be given to prayer, but to Christ! Our text says, “Behold the Lamb of God.” I have told you what that means—look by faith to the Sacrifice that Christ made for sinners on the Cross at Calvary—but if you look to anything else for salvation, you will not find it! Even your prayers, apart from faith in Christ, will not save you from everlasting destruction! O Sinner, get away from everything else and come to Christ—

**“None but Jesus, none but Jesus,
Can do helpless sinners good!”**

This great Truth of God, that *believing* is the Divinely-appointed means of salvation, may be illustrated by the old story of the children of Israel and the serpent of brass. [Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon this subject, are as follows—#153, Volume 3—THE MYSTERIES OF THE BRONZE SERPENT; #285, Volume 5—MAN’S RUIN AND GOD’S REMEDY and #1500, Volume 25—NUMBER 1500—OR, LIFTING UP THE BRONZE SERPENT—Read/download all these sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] YOU have heard it scores of times, yet I beg you to listen to it once more! When the people were bitten by the fiery serpents in the wilderness, they were commanded to look at the serpent of brass that was lifted upon a pole—and whoever looked, lived. They had nothing to do but look! Moses lifted up the serpent and pointed to it and cried, “Look! Look! Look! And be healed.” Possibly there were some who said they were bitten too badly to look. Well, if they could not or did not look, they would die. They might think it was a proof of their humility to say, “We are too sick to be cured,” but if they did so, they would die whether they were humble or not! O my Hearer, do not be lost through a mock humility which is really abominable pride! You are not too great a sinner to be saved! I will venture to say that you will dishonor Christ if you ever think such a thing! So let not that sinful thought destroy you!

There may have been others who said, “We shall not look to the bronze serpent for we have only got a mere scratch—it will soon be gone.” But you know a poison scratch means death and if your sin were only a

scratch (it is much more than that) it would mean eternal damnation for you! So look to Jesus, I implore you, just as you are! Look now! Look and live!

Perhaps there was one who said, "My father had a famous recipe for serpent bites. It was given to him by a celebrated doctor in Egypt, so we will mix up the proper ingredients and so get cured." Well, if any who were bitten were to act and speak like that, they would all die—the deadly venom would certainly destroy them, whatever ointments they might use! A look at the bronze serpent gave life, but the refusal to look brought death.

There may have been some fine gentlemen there who had imbibed skeptical notions during their life in Egypt. They were so clever that they thought they knew a great deal more than the Lord's servant to whom God had specially revealed the only effectual remedy, so they turned on their heels and said, "Such a remedy as this is utterly ridiculous! It is not according to the laws of physics that the mere looking at a piece of brass can heal people of the bites of snakes!" So they perished. Notwithstanding all their learning and wit, notwithstanding their jeers at the Divinely-appointed remedy, they perished. And nobody in the whole camp was healed except those who were simple enough and wise enough to take God at His word. Then, though they were terribly bitten, though their blood was set on fire by the poison and though some of them were in a truly desperate state—when they just looked at the bronze serpent—in a moment their blood again flowed healthily through their veins and their strength returned to them in all its former vigor! And, dear Friends, there shall be no soul saved in the whole world except by looking to the crucified Christ of Calvary! All trust in christening, (or even in Baptism), in confirmation, in sacraments, in ceremonies, in priests, popes and relics—are all lies—but as long as God's Word remains true, he who looks by faith to Christ, alone, must and shall be eternally saved! Oh, how can I utter this Truth of God so as to make it plainer, or how shall I plead with you so as to bring you all to trust in Christ? I cannot do this, but I pray the Holy Spirit to do it, for He can—and then you will believe in Jesus and so receive everlasting life!

III. I must not detain you longer, as our time has fled. Otherwise I was to have answered a third question, WHY SHOULD WE THUS LOOK?

The answer would have been that God has appointed this as the only way of salvation, that those who obey the command of the text will obtain immediate salvation and that, being saved, they shall have joy and peace in believing! But you who neglect or refuse to "behold the Lamb of God" must, without doubt, everlastingly perish! Of His infinite mercy, may God graciously grant that none whom I am now addressing may refuse to believe in Jesus, but may everyone look to Him and live—live now, and live forever!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 1:1-34.**

Verse 1. *In the beginning was the Word.* Christ the Word has existed from all eternity! He is the Eternal Son of the Eternal Father. He is really what Melchisedec was metaphorically, "having neither beginning of days, nor end of life." "In the beginning was the Word."

1. *And the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* The Word was as truly God as the Father was God, and as the Spirit was God. "These Three are One," and have always been One. "Very God of very God" is that Jesus whom we trust, love and adore!

2-5. *The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.* The light of Christ shone many times amid the darkness that enshrouded the world before His coming to live here in the flesh, yet comparatively few recognized that light and rejoiced in it. Christ's light shines more brightly now, but the dark, benighted soul of man perceives not the brightness of our spiritual Lord until the Holy Spirit works the mighty miracle of Regeneration and so gives sight to those who have been blind.

6. *There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.* What a descent it is from, "The Word of God," to the "man sent from God, whose name was John." Jesus Himself said concerning John, "Among them that are born of women there has not risen a greater than John the Baptist." Yet, from the greatest of Prophets, what a climb it is to get up to Jesus Christ, the Son of God! "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John."

7-9. *The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through Him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lights every man that comes into the world.* John could not do *that*—he could only bear witness to Christ, the true Light, who alone is able to illuminate, in a larger or lesser degree, "every man that comes into the world."

10. *He was in the world, and the world was made by Him and the world knew Him not.* Oh, what terrible estrangement sin has caused between God and man! What dreadful ignorance sin has created in the human mind! The world was made by Christ, yet "the world knew Him not."

11. *He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.* To those who were chosen as "His own" out of all the nations upon the earth, to those to whom He was especially promised of old, to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—to these Jesus came, yet they "received Him not."

12. *But*—This is a blessed, "But." Though Christ's own nation, the Jews, as a whole "received Him not," there was "a remnant according to the election of Grace," there were some who received Him. "But"—

12. *As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.* How came those per-

sons to receive Him when others rejected Him? There must have been some great change worked in them to make them different from the rest of their countrymen. And truly there was, for these were twice-born men—

13. *Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.* [See Sermon #2259, Volume 38—THE SIMPLICITY AND SUBLIMITY OF SALVATION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] So that those who receive Christ, those who truly believe on Christ, are people who have been born, as others have *not* been born, by a new birth from Heaven—a supernatural birth, so that they are a people set apart by themselves as those who have been created twice—first as human beings just like others, and then as new creatures in Christ Jesus!

14-18. *And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father), full of Grace and Truth. John bore witness of Him and cried, saying, This was He of whom I spoke, He that came after me is preferred before me: for He was before me. And of His fullness have we all received, and Grace for Grace* [See Sermons #858, Volume 15—THE FULLNESS OF JESUS THE TREASURY OF SAINTS and #1169, Volume 20—THE FULLNESS OF CHRIST THE TREASURY OF THE SAINTS—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] *for the Law was given by Moses, but Grace and Truth came by Jesus Christ. No man has seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.* There is no way of knowing God and being reconciled to God except as we receive Jesus Christ, His Son, into our hearts and learn of Him all that He delights to reveal to us concerning His Father through the Holy Spirit’s teaching.

19-23. *And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who are you? And he confessed, and denied not but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then, Are you Elijah? And he said, I am not. Are you that Prophet? And he answered, No. Then said they unto him, who are you, that we may give an answer to them that sent us? What say you of yourself? He said, I am the voice—Not the Word, but “the voice” by which the Word was to be made known—“I am the voice”—*

23-27. *Of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the lord, as said the Prophet Isaiah. And they which were sent were of the Pharisees. And they asked him, and said unto him, Why do you baptize, then, if you are not that Christ, nor Elijah, neither that Prophet? John answered them saying, I baptize with water: but there stands One among you, whom you know not. He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe laces I am not worthy to unloose.* See the true humility of this faithful servant of Christ! He does not dream of putting His own name side by side with his Master’s. The unloosing of shoe laces was work for a slave to do, but if we are privileged to perform this work for Christ, it will make us as kings before Him! To do *anything* for Christ—to have even a menial’s place in His palace is better than being an emperor

among men! May we have the portion of those who are not ashamed to unloose the laces of Christ’s shoes!

28-31. *These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordon, where John was baptizing. The next day John saw Jesus coming unto him, and said, Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world. This is He of whom I said, After me comes a Man which is preferred before me: for He was before me. And I knew Him not—“When first I saw Him”—*

31-34. *But that He should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bore record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from Heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him. And I knew Him not: but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom you shall see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizes with the Holy Spirit. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God. Since John’s time, many others have borne similar testimony. We, also, have received Him and rejoice to say that He has baptized us with the Holy Spirit. All that John said of Him is true—and much more than John said is also true. He is the Lamb of God who has taken upon Himself the sin of all who believe in Him and, therefore, He is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by Him. Oh, that all men would receive the testimony concerning Him which we find in this blessed Book—and which we delight to repeat in His name!*

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

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

THE LAMB OF GOD IN SCRIPTURE

NO. 2329

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 8, 1893.
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“Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples. And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, “Behold the Lamb of God!”
John 1:35, 36.

You all know the old, old story. The world was lost. God must punish sin. He sent His Son to take our sin upon Him that He might honor the Law of God and establish God's government by being obedient to the Law of God and yielding Himself up to the death penalty. He whom Jehovah loves beyond all else came to earth, became a Man and, as a Man, was obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. It is He who is called, in our text, “the Lamb of God,” the one Sacrifice for man's sin. There is no putting away of sin without sacrifice—there is only one Sacrifice that can put away sin—and that is Jesus Christ, the Righteous. He is Divine, yet Human—Son of God, yet Son of Mary. He yielded up His life, “the Just for the unjust,” the Sinless for the sinful, “that He might bring us to God,” and reconcile us to the great Father. That is the story and whoever believes in Him shall live. Any man, the world over, who will trust himself to Christ, God's great Sacrifice, shall be saved, for this is our continual witness, “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life.” “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

Tonight I do not intend so much to preach a sermon as to urge those who have seen the Lamb of God to look at Him more intently, to study Him more and especially to plead for the power of the Holy Spirit to reveal Him to them. I want to entreat men who have looked elsewhere, to now turn their eyes away from the fruitless search after peace and life, and to come and, “Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world.” May the Spirit of God open their eyes and incline their hearts that, tonight, even tonight, they may look unto Him and live!

When John saw Jesus Christ on that memorable day, he, first of all, beheld Him, himself, and then he said to others, “Behold the Lamb of God.” “Looking at Jesus as He walked,” steadfastly beholding Him, watching Him, gazing with humble admiration at Him, he said, “Behold the Lamb of God!” Brethren, we cannot preach what we have not practiced! If these eyes have never looked to Jesus, how can I bid your eyes look at

Him? Beholding Him, I found peace to my soul. I, who was disposed, even, to despair, rose from the depths of anguish to the heights of joy by looking unto Him! And I, therefore, dare to say to you, “Behold the Lamb of God!” Oh, that each one of you might believe our testimony concerning Jesus and look to Him and live!

What did John mean by saying, “Behold the Lamb of God”? Behold, in the Latin, “*ecce*,” is a note of admiration, of wonderment, of exclamation. “Behold the Lamb of God!” There was nothing of greater wonder ever seen than that God, Himself, should provide the Lamb for the Burnt Offering, that He should provide His only Son out of His very bosom, that He should give the delight of His heart to die for us! Well may we behold this great wonder! Angels admire and marvel at this mystery of godliness—God manifest in the flesh! They have never left off wondering and adoring the Grace of God that gave Jesus to be the Sacrifice for guilty men. Behold and wonder, never leave off wondering—tell it as a wonder, think of it as a wonder, sing of it as a wonder! Even in Heaven you will not cease to wonder at this glorious Lamb of God!

I think that John also meant his disciples to *consider*, when he said to them, “Behold the Lamb of God!” So we say to you, “Think of Him, study Him, know all that you can about Him, look Him up and down. He is God—do you understand that He stood in the sinner’s place? He is Man—do you know how near akin He is to you, how sympathetic He is—a Brother born for your adversity? The Person of Christ is a great marvel—how can God and man be in one Person? It is impossible for us to tell. We believe what we cannot comprehend and we rejoice in what we cannot understand! He whom God has provided to be your Savior is both God and Man—He can lay His hand upon both parties. He can touch your manhood in its weakness and touch the Godhead in its All-Sufficiency! Study Christ! The most excellent of all the sciences is the knowledge of a crucified Savior. He is most learned in the university of Heaven who knows most of Christ. He who has known most of Him still says that His love surpasses knowledge. Behold Him, then, with wonder! And behold Him with *thankfulness*.

But when John says, “Behold the Lamb of God!” he means more than wondering or considering. “Looking” is used in Scripture for faith—“Look unto Me and be you saved.” Therefore we sing—

**“There is life for a look at the Crucified One,
There is life at this moment for you!”**

Beholding is a steady kind of looking. Believe then, in Christ with a solid, abiding confidence. Come, you sinners, come, and trust your Savior, not for tonight, only, but forever! Believe that He is able and willing to save you and trust Him to do so—

**“Venture on Him, venture wholly,
Let no other trust intrude.”**

Take your eyes off everything else and behold the Lamb of God! You need not see anything else, nothing else is worth seeing, but behold Him.

See how He takes your guilt, see how He bears it, see how He sinks under it and yet rises from it, crying, "It is finished!" He gives up the ghost. He is buried. He rises again from the dead because He is accepted of God and His redeeming work is done. Trust Him, trust Him, trust Him! "Look and live," is now our message—not, "do and live," but, "live and do!" If you ask how you are to live, our answer is look, trust, believe, confide, rest in Christ—and the moment you do so, you are saved!

But, once more, when John said to His disciples, "Behold the Lamb of God!" it was a hint that they should leave off looking at John and turn their attention wholly to Jesus and follow Him. Hence we find that John's two disciples left him and became the disciples of Christ. Beloved, we who preach long to have your attention, but when you give your attention to *us*, our longing, then, is to pass it on to Christ our Lord. Look on Him and follow Him, not us! What can we do, poor creatures that we are? Look unto Him! Mark His footsteps! Walk in them. Do as He bids you! Take Him for your Lord, become His disciples, His servants. Behold the Lamb of God and always behold Him! Look to Him, look up to Him and follow where He leads the way.

Thus I have put the text before you pretty simply. Now I want to talk to you a little about beholding this Lamb of God, taking a hasty run through various Scripture references to the lamb. And I will ask you, first, to Behold the Lamb of God in His connections with men. And secondly to Behold the Lamb of God in His benedictions to men.

I. Let us, first, BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD IN HIS CONNECTIONS WITH MEN.

How was the Lamb of God first seen in the world? It was the case of *the lamb for one man*, brought by one man for himself, and on his own behalf. You all know that I refer to Abel, who was a shepherd, and brought of the firstlings of his flock, that is, a lamb, and he brought this lamb for himself, and on his own account, that he might be accepted of God, and that he might present to God an offering well-pleasing in His sight. Cain brought of the fruit of the ground as an offering to God. I think that there was a difference in the sacrifice, as well as in the man bringing it, for the Holy Spirit says little about the difference of the man, but He says, "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain," and he was accepted because he brought a more excellent sacrifice. The one sacrifice was bloodless, the fruit of the ground—the other was typical of Christ, the Lamb of God and was, therefore, accepted. "And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering."

Now, Beloved, our first view of Christ usually is here, to know Him for *ourselves*. I am a sinner and I want to have communion with my God—how shall I obtain it? I am guilty, I am sinful—how shall I draw near to the holy God? Here is the answer. Take the Lord Jesus Christ to be yours by faith and bring *Him* to God! You must be accepted if you bring Christ with you! The Father never repelled the Son, nor one who was clothed with the Son's righteousness, or who pleaded the Son's merit. Come you,

as Abel came, not with fruits of your own growing, but with the sacrifice of blood— with Christ, the Holy Victim, the spotless Lamb of God—and so coming, whoever you may be, you shall be acceptable before God by faith. Now, behold Him, each one of you for yourself!

I know what someone will say, “I hope to do that, by-and-by.” I hope you do not so deceive yourself! I have heard that there was once a great meeting in the den of the arch-enemy and he was stirring up his lackeys to seek the destruction of men. One of them said, “I have gone forth and I have told men that there is no God, and no hereafter, and no difference between sin and righteousness, and that they may live as they like!” And there was considerable approbation among the evil spirits. But Satan, himself, said, “You have done small service, for man has a conscience, and his conscience teaches him better. He knows that there is a God. He knows that there is a difference between sin and righteousness. He knows that there must be future punishment. You have done but little.” Then another stood up, and said, “I have done better, I think, most Mighty Chieftain, for I have told them that the Bible is a worn-out book, that it was a fable at the first, and that they need not believe it.” There was a round of cheers, for they said that he had done splendid service for the cause of darkness.

But Satan said, “It is in vain that you meddle with the old Book! It has taken care of itself and it can still do so. There is no shaking it, it is like a rock. You have done service for a time, but it will soon pass away.” And scarcely did any of the fallen spirits, after that, venture to bring forward his boasting in the presence of the terrible master who sat in the midst of them. But, at last, one said, “I have told men that they have souls, and that there is a God, and that the Bible is true. I have left them to believe as they will, but I have whispered in their ears that there is plenty of time to consider all this.” Then there was a hush—and the great master of demons said, “You have done best of all. This is my great net in which I take more souls than with any other, this net of procrastination or delay.”

Therefore say I to you, my Hearers, disappoint the fiend! Fly to Jesus. Fly to Jesus at once! Behold, not tomorrow, but tonight! Behold the Lamb of God, each man for himself!

Now turn over the pages of this grand old Book and you will find the Lamb, next, in another connection. Israel was in Egypt and there they had the *lamb for the family*—“In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house.” Oh, I wish that you would all go on to behold the Lamb of God for your households! “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” Why do you stop before you finish the verse? What said the Apostle to the trembling jailor? Not merely all that I have quoted, but more—“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, *and your house*.” Are there not many Believers who do not believe for their house? Come, now, and believe in this provision of the Lamb for the house! Trust the Grace of God for that little girl, the last born, and for that boy who is

still at school, who does not think much of these things as yet—and for that son of yours who has left home and gone out as an apprentice. Oh, that the Lamb of God might be for him! Pray for him, tonight, and you older parents, pray for your sons who are married, and your daughters who have taken to themselves husbands and are away from you! The Lamb is for the house, pray for the whole household, tonight—take in your grandchildren, all you old folks—all of them who are in your house. Pray that the Lamb may be for the house!

I bless God that I can look upon all my household and rejoice that they are converted to Christ! My father has this joy, too! And my grandfather also had that joy! Oh, it is a great bliss to have families, generation after generation, all brought to Christ without exception! Why should it not be so? Let us cry for it! Surely we may expect the same blessing that God gave to His chosen people under the Law and expect it more largely. Grace does not run in the blood, but Grace often runs side by side with it, so that Abraham is loved, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Joseph, and Ephraim, and Manasseh. Thus the Covenant blessing goes on from one to another. Plead with God, tonight, that all in your house may be beneath the sprinkled blood of the Lamb and be saved from the destroying angel—and that all with you may go out of Egypt to have a possession in the land of the promise!

A little further on, following the Scripture, and asking you to still behold the Lamb, in the 29th chapter of that famous Book of Exodus, at the 38th and 39th verses, we come across God's command for *the lamb for the people*—"Now this is that which you shall offer upon the altar; two lambs of the first year, day by day, continually. The one lamb you shall offer in the morning and the other lamb you shall offer at even." Here is the lamb for all the chosen people, the lamb for Israel! It began with the unit, it went on to the family and here the Lord, who "loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob," makes His Tabernacle to be the central place where a lamb shall be offered for the whole nation! Think of it with delight, tonight, that Christ died for all His chosen people! He has redeemed them from among men. Though they are as many as the stars for number, or as the sand on the seashore, innumerable, yet that one Sacrifice has redeemed them all! Glory be to God for the blood of the Lamb by which the whole of Christ's people are redeemed!

Then let your mind take wing right out of the Old Testament into the New, for I have not time to trace all the successive steps. Come now to John, saying, in the 29th verse of this chapter, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world." Now you have gone beyond the bounds of Israel, and have come to *the Lamb for the world*. You have come to the Lamb of God who dies for Gentiles as well as for Jews, for men in the isles of the sea, for men in the wilds of Africa, for men of every color and every race, and every time, and every clime! Oh, glory be to God, wherever there are men, we may go and tell them of Christ! Wherever there are men born of Adam's race, we may tell them of the Second Adam,

to whom looking, they who look shall live—and in Him they shall find eternal life! I love to think of the breaking down of the boundaries that shut in the flow of Grace to one nation! Behold, it flows over all Asia Minor, at first, and then over all Greece, and then to Rome, and Paul talks of going to Spain and the Gospel is borne across the sea to England, and from this country it has gone out unto the utmost ends of the earth!

Well now, take your flight, if you can get beyond that, away to Heaven, itself, and there you will see the Lamb for all Heaven! Look at Revelation, the seventh chapter, and the 14th verse. No, you need not look it up, for you know it. All the saints in Heaven are standing in their glittering ranks, white-robed, pure as the driven snow. They sing and praise one glorious name, when one of the elders first asked the question, “What are these which are arrayed in white robes, and from where did they come?” He, himself, gave the answer, “These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”—

**“Round the altar priests confess,
If their robes are white as snow,
‘Twas the Savior’s righteousness,
And His blood that made them so.”**

The blood of the Lamb has whitened all the saints who are in Heaven! They sing of Him who loved them and laved [washed] them from their sins in His own blood! I have often wondered why that second word was not brought into our translation, for it so beautifully fits the language of the beloved Apostle John—“Unto Him that loved us, and laved us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.” There is no whiteness in Heaven but what the Lamb has worked, no brightness there but what the Lamb has bought! Everything there shows the wondrous power and surpassing merit of the Lamb of God!

If it is possible to think of something more glorious than I have already described, I think you will find it in the fifth chapter of Revelation, at the 13th verse—“And every creature which is in Heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power be unto Him that sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever.” The day shall come when, from every place that God has made, there shall be heard the voice of praise unto the Lamb—there shall be found everywhere men and women redeemed by blood, angels and glorious spirits, rejoicing to adore Him who was, and is, and is to come, the Almighty Lamb of God!

I think I have given you something to consider if you turn over the pages of Scripture and follow the track of the bleeding Lamb.

II. But now, taking you again over the same road a little, I want you, in the second place, to BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD IN HIS BENEDICTIONS TO MEN.

The first blessing of all is that of Abel. *He was accepted of God.* He offered a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain. Well now, let anybody here who does not know it, try to learn this lesson tonight. You can only be “accepted in the *Beloved.*” God loves His Son with such an overflowing love that He has love enough for you, love enough for me—if we are in Christ Jesus. He is the great conduit or channel of God’s love and that love flows through all the pipes to every soul that believes in Jesus. Hide behind your Lord and you are safe! Trust His name, living and dying, and nothing can harm you. How many dear hearts, when passing through the Valley of the Shadow of Death—when grim thoughts have clustered about them—have been cheered and comforted by the thought of Christ! Remember the monk who, as he died, put away the priest, the crucifix and everything else, and cried, “*Tua vulnera, Jesu! Tua vulnera, Jesu!*” “Your wounds, Jesus! Your wounds, Jesus!” I am not saved by what I can do, but by what *He has done*—not by what I have suffered, but by what *He has endured.* There hangs our everlasting hope—we trust to Christ in life and in death and we are accepted for His sake! Come, every sinner, bring the Lamb of God! Put Him on the altar and you shall be accepted at once, and you may at once begin to praise the name of the Lord!

But then, as we go on, we find this Lamb of God useful, not only for acceptance, but also for *rescue and deliverance.* It is a dark and dreadful night. Egypt shivers and stands aghast. And just at midnight flies forth an angel, armed with the sword of death. In every house of Egypt there is heard a wail, for the firstborn is dead, from the firstborn of Pharaoh to the firstborn of the woman who turns the mill to grind the daily corn. Death is in every house! No, stop—there are houses wherein there is no death! What has secured those habitations? The father took a lamb, shed its blood, dipped a bunch of hyssop in it and smeared the lintel and the two side posts—and then all sat down and feasted, undisturbed, on the lamb—calm and happy. They rejoiced to have for food that lamb whose blood was the ensign of their safety. There was no crying, there, no dying there! Death could not touch the inhabitants of the house that was marked with the blood of the paschal lamb. Beloved, you and I are perfectly safe if we are sheltered beneath the blood of the Lamb of God! Nothing can harm us, everything must bless us—and we may go to our beds, tonight, singing—

**“Sprinkled afresh with pardoning blood,
I lay me down to rest,
As in the embraces of my God,
Or on my Savior’s breast.”**

We may rise tomorrow morning, if we are spared, and go into this busy world without any fear. The broad arrow of the King is set upon us in the blood-mark of the atoning Sacrifice, and we are safe, and safe forever. Glory be to the name of the Lord for this!

Nor was that all. As I have told you, the blood of the paschal lamb was not only sprinkled for the protection of the house, but its flesh was the

food of the inhabitants. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, we do not, at first, know what it is to feed on Christ! We are satisfied to be sprinkled with His blood, but the Believer, afterwards, finds that Christ is the food of his soul. His blood is drink, indeed, and His flesh is meat, indeed. Oh, what a festival have we kept over the Person of our Lord! Sometimes, when faint and hungry, we have begun to think of the Incarnate God, the bleeding Lamb, the full Atonement paid, and we have said, "My soul is full, satisfied with favor, full of the blessing of the Lord." I do not know what there is in the Gospel if you take away the Atoning Sacrifice. It seems to me that there would be nothing left but chaff which might suit asses and horses, but would not be fit for men. Look to Jesus Christ dying in our place and here is something for the soul to feed upon, yes, and to be satisfied with, as with marrow and fatness!

I pointed you, a little further on, to the lamb in the wilderness, the lamb offered up every day. That brings us to another point in our Lord's work. We have had Christ for acceptance, Christ for safety, and Christ for food, now we have Christ for perpetual *resort*. The Lamb of God in the morning! Oh, blessed be God for a Savior in the morning! If the night has gathered anything of evil, He does then disperse it, as the sun dispels the darkness. But oh, what a precious thing to also have the Lamb of God in the evening! If in the day we have soiled our feet in traversing this busy world, here we come to the Fountain and we are made clean through the blood of the Lamb! Perpetual merit, perpetual intercession, perpetual life-giving, perpetual salvation flow from Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God! He is not slain twice. His one wonderful offering has finished transgression and made an end of sin, but its efficacy continues as though He were sacrificed often, always supplying us with merit, so that, in effect, His wounds continually bleed. He is always a new Savior for me every morning, always a new Savior every night and yet always the same Savior, the same Christ! There is no getting weary of Him, there is nothing "stale" in Him. They may talk about "a new view of the Atonement." I have no view of the Atonement but this—"Who loved me, and gave Himself for me." "Who His own Self bore our sins in His own body on the tree." And that old view of the Atonement is always fresh and always new to the heart and conscience!

Well now, Beloved, when we again come to John, following our former run of thought, we find the Lamb of God useful for guidance, for when John said, "Behold the Lamb of God," the two disciples followed Jesus and we read of some, "These are they which follow the Lamb wherever He goes." The Lamb is our Guide. The Lord is a Shepherd as well as a Lamb, and the flock following in His footsteps is safely led. My Soul, when you need to know which way to go, behold the Lamb of God! Ask, "What would Jesus do?" Then do what Jesus would have done in such a case and you can not do amiss.

Further on we find such a passage as this, telling us of *victory* through the Lamb of God—"They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb." The

Lamb is a great Warrior—there is none like He. Is He not the Lion of the tribe of Judah? Though He is gentle as a lamb, yet against sin and iniquity He is fiercer than a young lion when it roars on its prey. If we follow Him, hold fast His Truth, believe in His Atonement and perpetually proclaim His Gospel, we shall overcome all error, all sin and all evil!

Well now, this blessed Lamb—it is not easy to leave off talking about Him when one once begins—one is so blessed that you may well behold Him, for all *happiness* comes through Him. In Heaven you will see nothing without Him. “Nothing,” you ask? No, *nothing*—here is a proof of my words. “The city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it, for the Glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.” All the light, the knowledge, the joy, the bliss of Heaven come through the Atoning Sacrifice of Christ! Not Jesus only, but Jesus slain, Jesus the Lamb of God is the very Light of Heaven!

And what do you think is the joy-day of Heaven, the time for the highest *exultation*? Why, the joyous day when all the golden bells shall peal out their glorious melodies, and all the silver trumpets shall ring out their jubilant notes will be the day of the marriage of the Lamb! It is the Heaven of Heaven, the climax of ineffable delight!! And the voice of the great multitude, as the voice of many waters and as the voice of mighty thunder, sings, “Alleluia: for the Lord God Omnipotent reigns. Let us be glad and rejoice and give honor to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife has made herself ready.” So that, at the topmost round of the ladder of eternal bliss, there you find the Lamb! You cannot get beyond Him. He gives you all He has, even Himself. Behold Him, then, and go on beholding Him throughout the countless ages of eternity!

I would to God that you had all beheld Him, and I pray you to behold Him tonight. It is but a little while and the death-film will gather about your eyes—and if you have not seen the Lamb while yet you have mortal eyes, you *will* see Him, you will certainly see Him—but your vision will be like that of Balaam. “I shall see Him, but not now: I shall behold Him, but not near.” If it is with you, “not now,” it may be, “not near.” It will be an awful thing to see the Lamb with a gulf between yourself and Him, for there is a great, impassable gulf fixed in the next world—and when you see Him across that gulf, how will you feel? Then shall you cry to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sits on the Throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb!” Jesus will still be a Lamb, even to the lost—it is “the *wrath* of the Lamb” that they will dread! The Lamb is always conspicuous. He may be neglected, rejected, refused tonight, but He will be beheld in eternity and beheld to your everlasting confusion and unutterable dismay if you refuse to behold Him now. Let it not be so with any of you—

**“You sinners, seek His face,
Whose wrath you cannot bear!
Fly to the shelter of His Cross,
And find salvation there.”**

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 1:1-37.**

John is the majestic Evangelist. He is the high-soaring eagle with piercing eyes. His is the Gospel of the Son of God!

Verses 1-3. *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made.* We cannot describe the Deity of Christ in clearer language than John uses. He was *with* God. He *was* God. He did the works of God, for He was the Creator. If any doubt His Deity, they must do so in distinct defiance of the language of Holy Scripture!

4, 5. *In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.* Christ is still not understood. Jesus is still not known. How should darkness understand the Light of God? It opposes the Light of God—it has to flee before light, but it does not, it cannot understand the Light of God! O God, work a miracle in our dark hearts and fill them with the Light of Christ!

6, 7. *There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through Him might believe.* That is our business, too. We who are ministers sent from God bear witness of the Light, that all men through Him may believe. Oh, how often we go home and cry, “Who has believed our report?” We do not ask you to believe in *us*—no, but in our Master, whose heralds we are. If we can lead you to faith in Him, we shall be glad, indeed! But, if not, we will sorrow because we have missed our mark and failed in our purpose.

8, 9. *He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lights every man that comes into the world.* If any man has saving Light, true Light, he gets it through Christ. There is no other Light—all other light is but darkness visible. The Light in which we see God comes from Jesus.

10. *He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not.* Strange was it that the Creator came to His own earth and yet He was unknown. Men mistook Him, they hated Him, they crucified Him whom they ought to have entertained with sacred hospitality and worshipped with holy loyalty.

11, 12. *He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.* All men are not the sons of God! The doctrine of the universal Fatherhood is utterly untrue! They only become the sons of God who receive Christ and believe on His name. Otherwise they are heirs of wrath, even as others—

“To them gave He power to become the sons of God.”

13. *Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.* There is another birth beside the natural one—never does the birth of the flesh make us Christians! If our ancestry should be a line of saints, yet are we born sinners—we must be born again if we are to become saints. If we could trace our pedigree to a perfect man, if such there is, yet the birth by the flesh would not avail us. Sons of God are, “born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

14. *And the Word was made flesh.* Here was the Incarnation of Him who made all things. He that is God, “was made flesh.”

14. *And dwelt among us, (and we—The Apostles*

14. *Beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father), full of Grace and truth.* Oh, all you who would know Christ, learn that He is worth the knowing! He is full of Grace for your sinfulness and full of truth for your ignorance! He can cleanse and He can teach. There is everything in Him that you need. You shall not be deceived, for He is full of the Truth of God—you shall not be rejected, for He is full of Grace.

15-18. *John bore witness of Him and cried, saying, This was He of whom I spoke, He that comes after me is preferred before me: for He was before me. And of His fullness have all we received, and Grace for Grace. For the Law was given by Moses, but Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. No man has seen God at any time.* He is too high, too spiritual to be perceived by human senses.

18. *The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.* What of God we need to know, we may see in Christ—enough to save us, enough to sanctify us, enough to make us all like the only-begotten Son of the Father.

19, 20. *And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who are you? And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ.* With indignation he must have repelled the idea that he was the Messiah—

“I am not the Christ.”

21-23. *And they asked him, What then? Are you Elijah? And he said, I am not. Are you that Prophet? And he answered, No. Then said they unto him, Who are you? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What say you of yourself? He said, I am the voice—*Humbly he reduces himself to a voice, but he was not “a voice and nothing more.” There was much that was mighty and wise in that voice.

23-27. *Of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the Prophet Isaiah. And they which were sent were of the Pharisees. And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptize you, then, if you are not that Christ, nor Elijah, neither that Prophet? John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there stands One among you, whom you know not; He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoelaces I am not worthy to unloose.* How John hides himself behind his Master! He was a most worthy man, a truly great man, but he counted

himself unworthy of the most menial service for Christ and felt honored by filling the office of a slave to unloosen His Master's shoelaces. It is better to be the slave of Christ than to rule vast empires! He who truly serves Him is glorified thereby.

28, 29. *These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing. The next day John saw Jesus coming unto Him, and says, Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world. Now is he bringing out his message! Now is he pointing out his Master.*

30, 31. *This is He of whom I said, After me comes a Man which is preferred before me: for He was before me. And I knew Him not. John knew Jesus very well, but he did not know Him as the Sent One of God, the Messiah, till after he had received the sign and token at His baptism. "I knew Him not."*

31-34. *But that He should be made manifest to Israel, therefore have I come, baptizing with water. And John bore record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from Heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him. And I knew Him not: but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom you shall see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizes with the Holy Spirit. And I saw and bare record that this is the Son of God. Jesus and John must have been well acquainted with one another—they were closely related—but John was not to know anybody as the Messiah till he received the token from God. When he saw that token, then he officially knew and he bore instant witness—"This is the Son of God."*

35, 36. *Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples. And looking at Jesus as He walked. With holy reverence, with loving awe, gazing upon this extraordinary Person—"as He walked"—*

36, 37. *He said, "Behold the Lamb of God!" And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. This is our one business tonight, to cry, "Behold the Lamb of God!"*

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BEHOLD THE LAMB!

NO. 1060

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 14 1872,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Behold the Lamb of God!”
John 1:36.***

IT IS the preacher's principal business—I think I might say, his *only* business—to cry, “Behold the Lamb of God!” For this reason was John born and sent into the world, and such were the prophecies which went before concerning him. If he had been the most eloquent preacher of repentance. If he had been the most earnest declaimer against the sins of the times, he would, nevertheless, have missed his lifework if he had forgotten to say, “Behold the Lamb of God.” He did well when he baptized the repenting crowd. He spoke nobly when he faced the Pharisees and was a true hero when he rebuked Herod. But above all his chief errand was to herald the Messiah, to bear witness to the Son of God!

What we have said of John we may say of every God-sent minister—he is sent to bear witness to the Christ of God and whatever else he may do, if he does not this continually, habitually, earnestly—he is not fulfilling the errand for which his Master sent him, but has turned aside to baser ends. When any one of us who are called ministers shall die and come before the Lord to give our account, it will be a sorry thing for us if we can only say, “Lord, I have preached the dogmas of the Church to which I belonged,” unless we can also add that we have directed men to the living Savior.

Vain will it be to have argued with accurate logic and persuaded with lofty rhetoric unless we have uplifted Christ among the people. It will be idle to say, “I have preached against the skepticism of the times. I have rebuked the sins which raged around me and have proclaimed what I knew of the glory of God in Nature and in Providence,” for our chief and distinguishing work is to declare the name of the Lord Jesus and the power of His precious blood. As the stars called “the Pointers” always point to the Pole star, so must we always point to the Redeemer.

I think the minister who has failed to cry, “Behold the Lamb of God,” may expect at the last to be cut in pieces and to have his portion with the tormentors. I can scarcely conceive a doom too terrible for the man who dazzled his hearers with oratorical fireworks when he ought to have lifted up the Cross, or mocked immortal souls with the carved stone of his elocution when they were starving for the Bread of Heaven. Sermons without Christ condemn the preacher and delude the hearer. Sermons which do not point to Christ in them will be as hard to answer for as blasphemy or murder when the Judge is on His great white throne. It is cruel to amuse with trifles those whose souls are in jeopardy of eternal fire! Playing with men's souls is murderous work and truly, if the Lamb of God is not preached, the ministry is playing with souls, if not worse.

John, however, most thoroughly discharged his lifework, for he was ever saying, "Behold the Lamb of God." Notice in the text the attitude of the preacher, for it is very instructive. "Looking upon Jesus as He walked," John said, "Behold the Lamb of God!" The preacher's eyes should be upon his Master while he points to his Master. They preach Christ best who see Him best. John had his own eyes fastened upon Jesus and therefore he did, by his own example as well as by his words, say, "Behold the Lamb of God."

If you will take your place in a crowded street and stand for a few minutes looking at a certain object in the heavens, or gaze upward as if something were there to be seen, you will soon find that without asking others to do the same, a company will gather round you and begin to look in the same direction. Indeed, a vast crowd might be collected by no other action than by your gazing intently into the air! So John, in addition to his saying, "Behold the Lamb of God," was doing the best thing to attract others to behold Him—when he fixed his own eyes on Jesus—with a fixed wondering, admiring, adoring gaze.

John had no eyes for anyone but "the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world," and therefore his words had point and power in them. And note that John's eyes were upon Christ not only when Christ was coming to him, but as He walked by him! Well may the preacher have his Master before him when his Master is cheering him with His fellowship and honoring him with His Presence. But on this occasion Jesus was walking alone, as though in meditation, with His eyes probably bent upon the ground. It was not meet that He should always be coming to John—He had done that once and so had put an honor upon His servant.

But this time He came not to him lest men should think that He had a dependence upon John—He walked in quiet musing as though His thoughts were otherwise occupied. Nevertheless the Baptist had not forgotten his Lord, but again pointed Him out. If the Lord denies to the preacher His comfortable Presence; if no light of fellowship shines forth from the brow of the Crucified, it is still ours whenever and wherever we preach to let the eye of faith realize Christ as present and still to cry to others with a heart that palpitates in union with our words, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world."

Even when I preach in chains I would labor to honor Jesus, looking to Him as the End and Object of every word I utter! It is mine to preach a Savior in whom I believe, whom having not seen, I love. I am looking to Him now for everything, even as I would have you do. I see in Him superlative beauties which I wish you to see and I worship a Divinity in Him which I desire you to worship. I preach not to you an unknown God or an untried Savior! There is something notable in our text as to the hearers. This was a brief but weighty sermon, worthy to be preached a thousand times. Nobody needs a new sermon when, "Behold the Lamb of God," is the old one!

John had delivered this same discourse before an assembled crowd, but now he had only two hearers and those two were not unconverted persons—they were his own disciples—and they were at least very near to the kingdom if not already in it. Yet to the solitary two and those already

discipled he had only the same message to deliver, "Behold the Lamb of God." He was a man of rich mind and ready utterance yet he kept to this one point in all companies. It is thought that if we go into the theater to preach to the mob, we must be sure to preach Christ—let me ask you what subject would be fitter for an assembly of *saints*? I pray you tell me!

It has been said that he who preaches in the street ought to confine himself to the simple Gospel—my Brothers, in what place would that subject be *inappropriate* or *unprofitable*? Paul knew nothing among the Corinthians save Jesus Christ and Him crucified—the resolve is a safe one for all companies. In this respect some preachers know too much and the sooner they join the holy know-nothings the better. Christ is appropriate as a subject for two disciples as well as for a thousand scoffers, for while He is the Resurrection to those who are dead, He is also the Life of those who have been already quickened.

No subject is more sweet, more refreshing, more inspiriting, more sanctifying to the saint than the Cross of our dying Lord! The sinner needs it if he would be saved, but the saint requires it that he may persevere, advance, conquer and attain perfection. Give me that harp and let my fingers never leave its strings—the harp whose strings resound the love of Christ alone! To harp upon the name of Jesus is the blessed monotony of a true ministry—a monotony more full of variety than all other subjects besides. When Jesus is the first, the midst, and the last, yes, All in All, then do we make full proof of our ministry. We do well when we are able to say, "of the things which we have spoken, this is the sum, we have such an High Priest who is set on the right hand of the Throne of the Majesty in the heavens." May Christ be "All in All" in all our ministries, for so shall we prove that God has called us to testify concerning His Son Jesus!

This may serve as an introduction to our subject. Now let us take the text itself. John says, "Behold the Lamb of God." And first let us behold Jesus and know Him to be the Lamb of God. It will be well to be fully assured upon that point and heartily to accept the witness of God concerning His Son. When we have done so, let us secondly behold Him—that is contemplate Him and humbly and attentively view Him as the great Propitiation, the true Sacrifice for sin. Then thirdly, beholding Him again, let us gather instruction from the Redeemer's appearance as the Lamb of God. And fourthly, let us *behold* Him, that is, reverently adore Him in His blessed capacity as the Lamb slain.

I. First, then, let us behold our Lord and LEARN THAT HE IS THE LAMB OF GOD. What does the term, "the Lamb of God," mean? The Hebrews are accustomed that a thing is "of God" when they mean that it is the greatest, the noblest, the chief of the kind. For instance, they call the cedars, "trees of God," and the thunder is the "voice of God." Therefore we may understand, in the first place, by the expression, "the Lamb of God," that Jesus is the chief of all sacrifices, the first of all offerings by which atonement is made to God for sin.

And truly He is so. He stands above all others because He contains all others. All other sacrifices of God's ordaining were but pictures, representations, symbols and shadows of Himself. There is only one Sacrifice for sin—there never was another and there never can be. All those offerings

under the Aaronic priesthood which were presented because of sin were only representations of the one Sacrifice—they were that and nothing more. Jesus far excels them all. Beloved, if you need to see the Lamb that Abel offered on the altar, the lamb because of which God accepted his faith and had respect unto him, you must see Jesus Christ, for we are accepted only in the Beloved.

God has respect unto any man who brings this Sacrifice—but unto any who bring a bloodless sacrifice, such as the priests of Rome foolishly do when they offer the unbloody sacrifice of the mass, unto them God has no respect and never can have. The blood of Jesus once presented has forever put away sin and no further sin-offering can be brought. Whoever rests in Jesus as the true and only Sacrifice is accepted in his faith. If you desire to see the Lamb which Noah offered when he came out of the ark, together with other sacrifices of which it is said that, “The Lord smelled a sweet savor of rest,” you must look to Jesus Christ—for the bullocks, rams and lambs of Noah all pointed to the one sweet savor offering of Christ Jesus offered upon the Cross, where God and the souls of all Believers meet in blessed union and find sweetest rest.

This, Beloved, is the Lamb of which Abraham spoke when he said to Isaac, “My son, God will provide Himself a Lamb.” And today if you would understand the paschal supper, first of all, spread on that dread night when the destroying angel went through Egypt and smote the first born of all her land—if you would know who it is whose blood is the true Passover when it is sprinkled upon the conscience and whose flesh is meat, indeed, when it is fed upon by the children of God—you must look to Jesus, for He is the Lamb of God’s Passover.

And if, pursuing your studies, your thoughts should turn into the tabernacle of old, or into Solomon’s Temple and you should see each morning a lamb slaughtered and its blood poured out, and each evening the same sacrifice repeated—if you desire to know what was intended by the morning and evening lambs you will find that they were but lambs of men, lambs presented by men, but they pointed to the Lamb of God in whom their teaching is all summed up. He is the Substance of that of which they were but the shadow. Jesus is the Lamb of the morning slain from before the foundation of the world and He is the Lamb of the evening offered up in these last days for His people.

Thus might we speak of all other sacrifices and show that in Jesus they are all fulfilled. Atonement for sin is truly and in very deed to be found in the Son of God. In Him, alone, is there remission, for in His blood, alone, is there efficacy to satisfy the Law of God. Stern as the Truth of God is, we ought never to flinch from repeating it—that sin cannot be put away under the moral government of God without *punishment*. This is a rule from which there is no variation and there *should* be none, for if justice is left unsatisfied, the foundations of society are out of course.

Infinite Wisdom has found for us a door of escape by the way of a vicarious Sacrifice, but that way does not violate justice. Seeing that we originally fell by the sin of another, namely, our representative Adam, God has seen fit that we should rise through the righteousness and sufferings of another, namely, Jesus, the second Adam. Because Jesus was one with

His people, and their federal Head, it was just to allow Him to suffer in their place and He has so done. Apart from this, every man must bear his own burden of sin and punishment. The only possible way by which a man can be forgiven his sin is by that sin being punished in his legal Representative—the Lord Jesus.

Jesus has borne, Himself, what every believing sinner ought to have borne, or an equivalent for it, sufficient to recompense the injury done to eternal justice. No other person could be a Substitute for our sin, for no other is our Head and Representative before God, and yet Himself innocent. There is none other name given under Heaven by which we may be saved. The Lord Jesus is of God appointed and provided to be the one vicarious Sufferer, the true bearer away of the sin of the world by enduring its penalty in His own Person so that whoever believes in Him is redeemed from the punishment of sin. That is the Gospel!

I would sooner state it in the most simple language than have the power to deliver an impromptu poem, though it should excel the productions of Homer or Milton. There is more of precious truth and priceless learning in that faithful saying that, “Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners” than in the most profound discourse, or the most stately epic. Be thankful that you have heard it! Be thankful that there is forgiveness with God because Jesus Christ has become the Savior of men. O fellow Sinner, you may approach your God without being plunged into suffering yourself, or needing to bring a victim with you, for Jesus Christ has been brought as a lamb to the slaughter and His soul has been made an offering for sin! Tremble not, but receive the reconciliation effected by the Lamb of God! Come boldly, for the way is open and man is invited to approach his God.

Moreover, our Savior is called the Lamb of God, not only, par excellence, because He is, beyond all others such, but, secondly, because He is the Lamb of God’s appointing. God from all eternity appointed the Lord Jesus! He was chosen and ordained to be the great Sacrifice for Sin. So was it decreed and written of Him in the volume of the Book, that oldest of books, “I delight to do Your will O God.” In the fullness of time Jesus came to do the Father’s will and therefore it is plain that there was such a will to do, such a decree to fulfill. Jesus is elect, precious!

Peter tells us that the Lord Jesus is “a Lamb without blemish and without spot, who verily was foreordained from before the foundation of the world.” Jesus is the choice of the Father. Our hearts rejoice that it is so, for when we rely upon Jesus Christ to save us, we trust in One whom God has appointed to save His people. If, as a poor guilty sinner, I leave my sin upon Christ, the Lamb of God, I leave it where God has bid me cast it, namely, on the appointed Scapegoat. I rest in a Sacrifice which God, Himself, ordained of old to be the Sacrifice for sin. O Soul, there can be no question that if you come to the Father in the way in which He, Himself, appoints, you come acceptably!

For if you were not accepted, you might well say, “O God, You have set forth Christ as a Savior and yet You do not save men through Him. You have bid Him say, ‘Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out,’ yet I have come and You have cast me out! This is far from You, Lord.” Such an

event shall never happen. No human lips shall utter such a complaint. God's appointment is the guarantee of the acceptance of everyone that believes in Jesus.

Thirdly, Christ is called the "Lamb of God" because He is of God's providing. The Father not only appointed His Son to be the Sacrifice for sin, but He gave Him freely to be such. Out of the bosom of God came Jesus Christ as love's richest blessing. He is the Father's only begotten, God's dear Son, and to us, "His unspeakable gift." "He spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all." "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the Propitiation of our sins."

Men were bid to provide the sacrifice under the Law, but the one Sacrifice of the Gospel is the gift of God. "This is the record that God has given to us, eternal life, and that life is in His Son." It endears Jesus to us to know that He is the dearest pledge of Jehovah's love to His chosen. And then, fourthly, He is not only of God's appointing and God's giving, but He is of God's *offering*. Let us never forget that Jesus Christ was not presented to God by a *human* priest—there might, then, have been some mistake in the sacrifice. It was not left to the sons of Aaron to offer up this true sacrifice to God. We may be quite sure that the Offering was presented in fit order and in an acceptable way—it is written, "It pleased the *Father* to bruise Him, *He* has put Him to grief. The *Lord* has laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

God Himself had a hand in the sufferings of His Son! What does that cry mean, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" but that God, Himself, had turned away from Him and so had brought His soul into the extremity of woe? What do the Scriptures say? Is it not the Father's voice which says, "Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the Man that is My Fellow"? Oh, Beloved, when I think of this, that God chose His Son to be the Atonement, that He gave His Son—and then, Himself, did, as it were, like another Abraham, offer up His own Isaac—I feel that the Sacrifice must be acceptable and all sufficient, so that he who rests in it need not have a shadow of a doubt but that his soul is saved!

One other reflection here—this Sacrifice is also of God's setting forth to the sons of men. Remember the text, "Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." When we, as God's ambassadors, tell you of Jesus Christ, we do not so in *our* name but we do our Lord's bidding and God Himself, by us, is setting Christ forth, showing Him, revealing Him, exhibiting Him and bidding you come to Him. "Behold," says God "I have given Him for a Covenant to the people, a Leader and Commander to the people."

This is God's will, that Christ should be made known to the ends of the earth! Everywhere Jesus is to be preached, whether men will bow before Him or not. We are quite sure we are doing God's will when we are setting forth Christ, for we are bid to go into all the world and preach Him to every creature. Assuredly, what the Lord thus sets forth He intends to give to those who seek it. There are no mockeries with God! He does not exhibit bread and refuse it to the hungry, or set garments before the naked

and refuse it to them. Happy are the men who see Jesus set forth manifestly crucified among them, for they have good ground to hope in Him!

Now then, Sinner, look at this. You want to be rid of your sin. You are conscious of it this morning, and you do confess it with shame. Well then, God's way of pardoning you is that your sin be laid on Jesus. As far as you are concerned, you can obtain all the merit of the great Atonement of Calvary by a simple act of faith. As of old the Jew laid his hands upon the victim and then the victim was his substitute, so if you do but lay your trembling hands upon Christ, He suffered for you! He was an Atonement for you, and what a blessed Atonement! Let us rehearse that point again—He is the Chief of all sacrifices, the Sacrifice of God's ordaining, of God's bestowing, of God's presenting, and now of God's setting forth to you!

What more would you have? In order that all things might be of God in this matter, from first to last, Jesus is the Lamb of God—is not this well? Jesus is God's own chosen Savior—what can be better? On what surer ground would you wish to rest? O that you were led to receive Him now to be yours forever! Jesus is my All, and I am a man as you are! Why should He not be your All, also? I feel as if I could tarry here just a minute and pass round among all this audience this one solemn question for each one to answer—will you accept Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, to be unto your soul the Lamb of God which takes away your sin? Come, what do you say?

It is ours to point to Him and to bear our witness—will you accept our testimony? Truly He is a great God and a Savior! We have trusted in Him and we are not confused. Oh, if the Spirit of God sweetly leads you, now, to say from your heart—

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

it is indeed well with you both for time and eternity . Be of good cheer—your sins, which are many, are forgiven you! Go your way, you are accepted in the Beloved! Your iniquities are blotted out like a cloud—not one of them shall be mentioned against you any more forever! O blessed Spirit of God, out of Your great mercy grant that many and many a heart may lay hold upon the Lord Jesus at this hour!

II. But now we most pass on to a second point. “Behold the Lamb of God,” that is, let us CONTEMPLATE JESUS UNDER THAT CHARACTER. Let us meditate upon Him for a few minutes and then let us constantly fix our thoughts upon Him. Jesus Christ, as the atoning Sacrifice, ought to be the principal Object of every Believer's thoughts. There are other subjects in the world which we must think of, for we are yet in the body—but this one Subject ought to engross our souls, and, as the birds fly to their nests so ought we, whenever our minds are let loose—to fly back to Jesus Christ.

He should be the main Topic of each day's consideration and of each night's reflection. We might, with truthfulness, transfer the words of the first Psalm, and say, “Blessed is the man whose delight is in the Christ of God and who meditates in Him both day and night; for he shall be as a

tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither, and whatever he does shall prosper.”

To meditate much upon the Lamb of God is to occupy your minds with the grandest Subject of thought in the universe! All others are flat compared with Him! What are the sciences but human ignorance set forth in order? What are the classics but the choicest of Babel’s jargon when compared with His teachings? What are the poets but dreamers, and philosophers but fools in His Presence? Jesus alone is wisdom, beauty, eloquence and power! No theme for contemplation can at all equal this noblest of all topics—God allied to human nature! Just think—God the Infinite—Incarnate among sons of men! Marvel at God in union with humanity taking human sin—out of stupendous love condescending to be numbered with the transgressors and to suffer for sin that was not his own!

O Wonder and Romance, if men desire you, they may find you here! O Love, if men seek you, here alone, they may behold you! O Wisdom, if men dig for you, here shall they discover your purest ore! O Happiness, if men pine for you, you dwell with the Christ of God and they enjoy you who live in Him. O Lord Jesus, You are all we need!—

***“Such as find You find such sweetness
Deep, mysterious and unknown;
Far above all worldly pleasures,
If they were to meet in one.”***

You may search the heavens above and the earth beneath. You may penetrate the secret mysteries to find out the callow principles and the beginnings of things, but you shall find more in the Man of Nazareth, the equal with God, than in all else besides!

He is the Sum and Substance of all truth, the Essence of all creation, the Soul of life! He is the Light of light, the Heaven of heavens, and yet He is greater, far, than all this, or all else that I could utter! There is no subject in the world so vast, so sublime, so pure, so elevating, so Divine! Give me to behold the Lord Jesus and my eyes see every precious thing! Brothers and Sisters, no subject so well balances the soul as Jesus, the Lamb of God! Other themes disturb the mental equilibrium and overload one faculty at the expense of others.

I have noticed in theology that certain Brethren meditate almost exclusively upon *doctrine*, and I think it is not severely critical to say that they have a tendency to become hard, rigid, and far too militant. It is to be feared that some doctrinalists miss the spirit of Christ in fighting for the words of Christ. God forbid I should speak against earnestly contending for the true faith, but still, without fellowship with the living Savior we may, through controversy, become ill-developed and one-sided.

I think I have noticed that Brethren who give all their thoughts to experience are also somewhat out of square. Some of them dwell upon the experience of human corruption until they acquire a melancholy temperament and are at the same time apt to censure those who enjoy the liberty of the children. Other Brethren turn all their attention to the brighter side of experience and these are not always free from the spirit of carnal security which leads them to look down upon trembling and anxious hearts as though they could not possess true faith in God. I think, also, that I have noticed that those who pay all their homage at the shrine

of practical theology have a tendency to become legal and to exchange the privileges of Believers for the bondage of servants. This also is a grievous fault.

But when a man takes Christ Jesus crucified to be his mind's main thought he has all things in one—doctrine, experience and practice combined! As Canaan contained Carmel, and Sharon, and Eshcol, and Hermon, so Jesus comprehends all good things. If “the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world” is the object of our thoughts we have wine and milk, butter and honey, the fat of the kidneys, wheat and oil out of the rock, all in one. “A bundle of myrrh is my beloved unto me,” “a cluster of camphor in the vineyards of Engedi.”—

***“All human beauties, all Divine
In my Beloved meet and shine.”***

Beloved, this, indeed, is the most necessary Subject of contemplation that can be brought before you! You may forget many other things without serious damage, and even upon important matters you may somewhat err and yet be safe—but you must live upon Christ, your souls must meditate on Him—or else you have left the bread from the feast and missed the water from the well! The crucified Savior is as necessary for our meditation as the air is for our breathing. The blood of Jesus is the life-blood of true religion—a bloodless faith is a lifeless faith.

I stood yesterday by the little open grave of one of our orphans and it said far more to me than I could say to those who mourned around it, for it reminded me that there is nothing worth living for beneath the sky, since all things are as a dream. Then I thought within myself, as I looked on the poor orphan lads around me—yes, there is something to live for—to help the poor and train the young, and to make men holier and happier. But then I remembered that they, too, like myself, were dying creatures and therefore even the benefit received by them would also pass away. To live, then, for men is, as far as eternity is concerned, an unsatisfactory thing unless there is some higher light in which to view it.

But when the heart lives for Jesus it is not less philanthropic, for it loves men for His sake, but its object melts into the Divine, for we love God when we love Jesus since He is very God of very God. Beloved, this leads me to the very marrow of the matter—to believe in Jesus as Divine is essential to real Christianity—and one of the distinguishing subjects of faith which separate Christians from other men. Individuals are to be found who possess great admiration for the Prophet of Nazareth but they know Him not as the Son of God, or as the Lamb of God. They deny His Divinity and reject His Atonement.

With fair words and oily speeches they compliment His Character and bedaub His name with their worthless praises. Yet they are not Christians and the name is dishonored when they wear it! Of late we have heard deniers of our Lord's Divinity spoken of as Christian Brethren. Now my common sense does not enable me to see how a man can be called a Christian who rejects Christ! Charity by all manner of means, but not falsehood! Union certainly, but not union in deadly error! Confederacy with those who do not believe Jesus Christ to be God and deny His atoning Sacrifice? It is treason to the Lord of Glory!

Such persons may be excellent Muslims, or Jews, or pure Theists, but they are not Christians! And if they wrongly assume that title we ought not to concede it to them. In this matter he that is not with our Lord is against Him, and he that gathers not with Him scatters abroad. Without a distinct and hearty recognition of our Lord's Deity and Atonement, how can a man be a partaker of Christ at all? True Christians have no questions about these Truths of God—Jesus is to them the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world, and the Son of God whom the world shall yet adore!

III. Now let us pass on to a third run of thought, but indulge in it very briefly. Let us behold the Lamb of God, that is, GATHER INSTRUCTION FROM JESUS UNDER THAT ASPECT. I beg you to gather some *doctrinal* instruction. If the Sacrifice provided by God for human sin must be none other than the Son of God Himself, then sin is a gigantic evil, and necessarily the punishment of sin is stupendous, too.

I observe with pain the attempt that is made to lower the meaning of Scripture upon the subject of the penalty due to sin. It has been usually believed to be everlasting, but this is now denied—denied in the teeth of express Scriptures! Now the moment we begin to mitigate our thought of Hell's terrors, we also lower our idea of sin's evil—and with it we also decrease our estimate of the Savior. All things in the temple of Truth are to scale. If you take the inch scale which now seems to be getting popular you diminish the dimensions throughout! A little Hell involves a little Atonement. But, to be consistent, grant a Divine Savior an infinite Sacrifice and you grant the infinite demerit of sin and then the eternity of future punishment is seen to be consistent.

All these Truths in Scripture lean the one upon the other and your judgment upon every other will be affected by your opinion of any one. Do not err, I pray you. Uplift the Christ of God and believe in the Lamb of God as none other than "very God of very God" and have Him in high reverence whatever that reverence may involve. What though your inmost soul is awed with the deepest dread and made to tremble at the fate of those who reject the Savior and perish in their sins, yet seek not to save your feelings at your Savior's cost.

Moreover, what a conception of the love of God the gift of the Lord Jesus for our salvation gives us. Despite the terrible wrath of God against sin, He loved the sinner so much that He gave His only son to die for his redemption! Here is love! Let us infer from that gift His willingness to answer prayer. "He that spared not His own Son but freely delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things." Let us also see here sure proof of the security of the saints, for if Christ is the Lamb of God and no less than Divine, how shall they perish for whom such a Sacrifice was offered? If it is the blood of the Son of God which has bought us, we must be most effectually redeemed beyond all fear of perishing. So far you get doctrinal Truth from beholding the Lamb of God.

Now, if you desire *experimental* aid look to the Lamb of God, also. Is there a heart here troubled with sin? Do not meditate upon your *sin* hoping to find comfort from any consideration connected with it—as well look for Heaven in Hell! Do not look to your own resources for consolation—as

well search the Arctic ocean for tropical heat! “Behold the Lamb of God!” Sin vanishes when the Savior appears. Are you tormented with the power of sin? Beloved, if you long to conquer sin within you, behold the Lamb of God! Crucified, your sin shall be upon that Cross where Jesus died. Contemplations of the Savior are the death of sin—no other weapon will destroy them.

If you suffer today from personal affliction and need fresh strength to bear it, “Behold the Lamb of God!” His way was much rougher and darker than yours—pluck up courage, He will bear you through it! He is familiar with all your griefs, His pitying eyes behold your sorrows. And oh, if you are getting weary in the battle of life and tired of serving God, “Behold the Lamb of God!” wrestling unto blood, and your courage will return! Reaper in the summer’s heat, see Him as He grasps with that pierced hand the sickle! What strides He makes! How untiringly He labors till His bloody sweat falls on the ground. Up and do your reaping, too, working at His side!

Builder in the House of God, if you don’t see the temple rising as you desire, do not lay down your trowel or the mallet, but see the Master-Builder standing there with indefatigable perseverance following out His glorious design! Let not self-denial or self-sacrifice be difficult when the Lamb of God is before you. Let not perseverance be difficult, or shame, or scorn be hard to endure—or defeat, or death itself be impossible to triumph in—when the Lamb of God is before them! He conquered upon Golgotha, perhaps you will conquer there. Only keep your eye upon the Lamb of God and this will make you strong to do and to endure!

I might thus continue urging children of God to their profit to look to the Lamb of God, but I shall only add this, that if at any time we grow discouraged about God’s work and are afraid that it will not succeed and so on, the very best encouragement for us is to Behold the Lamb of God! You are afraid that sin will conquer in your soul—how can it, when Jesus died for you? Sin seemed to win the day when Christ was dead, but He rose again and so shall *you* rise, and you shall be more than a conqueror!

And in this world is it not a very weary business to be a minister of Christ today? If I might have my choice I would sooner follow any avocation, so far as the comfort of it is concerned, than this of ministering to the sons of men! For we beat the air and this deaf generation will not hear us! What is this perverse generation the better for after years and years and years of preaching? This land is going back to the foul doctrines which its fathers would not bear—those who know better are in concert and continue in fellowship with the priests of Rome! The world is not worth preaching to—we have piped unto it and it has not danced! We have mourned unto it, but it has not lamented! It needs an Elijah, a man of fire and thunder to deal with such an age as this!

But for all that, there is no room for discouragement, for the Truth of God will win the day! It is in the hands of One who cannot fail or falter. He shall not fail or be discouraged till He has set judgment in the earth and the isles wait for His Law. The fight may seem to hang in the scales today, but the conquest is sure to come unto Him whose right it is. He shall gather all the scepters of kings beneath His arm in one mighty sheaf and

take their diadems from off their brows, and be Himself crowned with many crowns, for God has said it, and Heaven and earth shall pass away but every promise of His must and shall be fulfilled!

Push on, then, through hosts of enemies, you warriors of the Cross! Fight up the hill, you soldiers of Christ, through the smoke and through the dust! You may not see your banner just now, neither do you hear the trumpet that rings out the note of victory, but the mist shall clear away and you shall gain the summit of the hill—and your foes shall fly before you, and the King Himself shall come and you shall be rewarded who have continued steadfast in His service.

IV. Now the last thought was to be this. Behold the Lamb of God WITH REVERENCE. I will not dwell upon it for I have not time. Lift up your eyes and worship Him now. He exists, He is as truly there in Heaven as He was here on earth. Behold Him! Worship Him! Trust Him! Love Him, for be this remembered, He will come before long and that which we shall have to dread if we are unbelievers will be the wrath of the Lamb!

Read through the book of Revelation and you shall find there, I think, more than 20 times the Lord described as a Lamb. The song is the “song of Moses and of the Lamb.” Worship is given “unto the Lamb, for He is worthy.” He it is that takes the book and looses the seven seals, and it is the Lamb that shall come “to judge the quick and the dead.” “Therefore kiss the Son lest He be angry and you perish from the way while His wrath is kindled but a little.” Worship Him at this hour for He comes before long! As the Lord lives before whom I stand, He will summon every one of you to His bar. Take heed that He is not an object of terror to you as He will be if you continue in unbelief, but turn unto Him that He may be your joy and gladness in the day of His appearing! Amen.

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THE FIRST FIVE DISCIPLES

NO. 570

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 15, 1864,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And the two disciples heard him speak and they followed Jesus. Then Jesus turned and saw them following and said unto them, What do you seek? They said unto Him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master), where do You dwell? He said unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where He dwelt and abode with Him that day for it was about the tenth hour. One of the two which heard John speak and followed Him was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. He first found his own brother, Simon, and said unto him, We have found the Messiah, (which is, being interpreted, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, He said, You are Simon the son of Jona: you shall be called Cephas, (which is by interpretation, A Stone). The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee and find Philip and say unto him, Follow Me. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said unto him, We have found Him, of whom Moses in the Law and the Prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip said unto him, Come and see. Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him and said of him, Behold an Israelite, indeed, in whom is no guile. Nathanael said unto Him, Why do You know me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you. Nathanael answered and said unto Him, Rabbi, You are the Son of God, You are the King of Israel. Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto you, I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You shall see greater things than these, And He said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter you shall see Heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.”
John 1:37-51.

IF it is true that “Order is Heaven’s first law,” I think it must be equally true that variety is the second law of Heaven. The line of beauty is not a straight line but always the curve. The way of God’s procedure is not uniform but diversified. You see this with a glance, when you look at the creation around us. God has not made all creatures of one species but He has created beasts, birds, fishes, insects, reptiles. All flesh truly is not the same flesh, neither are all bodies of the same order. The dull dead earth, itself, is full of variety. Gems sparkle not all with the same ray. The grosser and less precious rocks are marked and veined. Each one according to its own fashion. In the vegetable world what a variety of plants, shrubs, herbs, flowers and trees we have about us! In any one of the kingdoms of Nature, whether it is the animal, vegetable, or mineral, you

shall find so many subdivisions that it would need a long schooling to classify them and a lifetime would not suffice to understand them all.

Consider the winged creatures which flit through the air—what a diversity there is between the tiny humming bird, which seems to be but a living mass of gems, and the eagle which, with soaring wings ascends to the sky and sports with the lightning! The whole world is full of marvels and no two marvels alike. You shall never be able to find God repeating Himself. This great Master may often paint two pictures which seem alike, but investigated with the microscope, what differences at once are revealed!

Even those stars which seem to shine with rays of the same brilliance are discovered by the aid of the telescope to be of different colors, forms and orbits. No, even the very clouds are piled in varied forms and the masses of nebulae which make up the Milky Way are distinguishable from each other. God, in no instance that we can ever find, has used the same mold a second time. He is so affluent of designs, so abundant in the wisdom that devises, so prolific in plans that even when He would accomplish the same end He chooses to take another road to it. And that new road is quite as direct as those by which He has formerly reached His purpose.

Certainly this observation holds good in Providence. What strange diversity there has been in the dealings of God with His Church! When He has chastened His people He has scarcely ever made use of the same rod twice. At one time Midianites shall come up and devour the land of Israel. Another day the Philistines with their giants shall invade the country. Then shall come the Babylonians and the Assyrians. Later the Roman power shall tread Judea under foot. And as the rods of His chastisement have been always different on the great scale, so *you* have found it on the little scale.

God has seldom chastened you twice in the same way. You could trace diversities either in the manner of the blow or the instrument you were struck with, or in the part of your mind which seemed to be the most affected by His chastisements. In deliverers, again, how great a variety—you scarce find two alike! God raises up a Gideon, but Jephthah is not like Gideon and Samson is not like Jephthah, nor is David to be compared to Samson or Gideon. They are all diverse. And their weapons are varied, too. One man has to use an ass' jawbone, another must use a sling and a stone—one shall be content with the ox goad, while another must draw the dagger.

Different methods God ordains as well as different forms of man. And He delivers His people just according to His own will, but ever in a different form. Well may Providence be so diverse when you consider that men themselves whom God uses to be His principal instruments are so unlike each other. There are not merely the great differences of race and of nationality, nor even the differences of birth and education, but we are all different in constitution—no two minds being alike. There is an individuality about every one of us which will prevent our ever being mistaken for anyone else.

We might by accident be undistinguished, but let us be known and very soon important differences will be discovered. God is ever the God of variety and He will be so to the end of the chapter. He will do new things before He rolls up the book of history—we shall see new acts of the Lord—He will fight His battles after fresh methods, raise up deliverers different from

any who have come before and will exalt and glorify His name upon new instruments of music. Let us expect it. He is the God of variety, both in Nature and in Providence.

My text is a very clear illustration that the same law applies in the work of Grace. There is ever the same *kind* of operation and yet ever a difference in the *manner* of operation. There is always the same Worker in the conversion of the soul and yet different methods for breaking the heart and binding it up again are continually employed. Every sinner must be quickened by the same life, made obedient to the same Gospel, washed in the same blood, clothed in the same righteousness, filled with the same Divine energy and eventually taken up to the same Heaven. And yet in the conversion of no two sinners will you find matters precisely the same.

From the first dawn of the Divine life to the day when it is consummated in the noontide of perfect sanctification in Heaven, you shall find that God works this way in that one, and that way in the other, and by another method in the third—for God still will be the God of variety. Let His order stand fast as it may, still will He ever be manifesting the variety, the many-sidedness of His thoughts and mind. If, then, you look at this narrative—somewhat long, but I think very full of instruction—you may notice four different methods of conversion. And these occur in the conversion of the first five who formed the nucleus of the college of Apostles—the first five who came to Christ and were numbered among His disciples!

It is very remarkable that there should be among *five* individuals *four* different ways of conversion! Were you, however, to examine any five persons, I suppose you would find similar disparity. Pick out five Christians indiscriminately and begin to question them how they were brought to know the Lord. You will find methods other than those you have here. And probably quite as many as four out of the five would be distinct from the rest.

I. The first case we have in the text is THE CONVERSION OF THE TWO DISCIPLES. One was probably John. We cannot speak with absolute certainty, but it was very probably John. We know it to have been the habit of this Evangelist to omit his own name whenever he could. Sometimes he speaks of “that other disciple,” when he means himself. And now and then he puts it, “that disciple whom Jesus loved.”

His love nurtured in him a kindly esteem of others, but an humble estimate of himself. While, therefore, he never omits to record the need of praise others obtained from the lips of Christ, as often as he can he omits his own name. It is supposed then—and I think rightly—that one was John. The other was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. The first two disciples are the fruits of *preaching*.

May we not expect to find that the major part of our conversions are the result of the public ministry? “The two disciples heard him speak and they followed Jesus.” Let us offer a few words concerning this first matter. We expect, Beloved, to see a great number of souls brought to God by the preaching of the Truth of God. The preaching of the Cross may be and it actually is to those who perish, foolishness. But unto us who are saved, it is the power of God and the wisdom of God. Wherever there is the most Gospel preaching, you will find the most conversions.

Many of our societies for carrying the Gospel to the heathen forget their main work. And while setting up colleges, translating Bibles and publish-

ing tracts, they neglect to use this great hammer of God, this mighty battering ram which is to dash down strongholds. The preaching of the Cross, the crying of, "Behold the Lamb of God!"—this is God's appointed agency. Other labors are to be entered into, but this is the main and chief agency for the conversion of souls.

Observe in the case before us, the preacher. He was a man Divinely illuminated. Jesus Christ came to John's Baptism, but at first the Baptist did not know Him. After awhile, however, when the descending Spirit marked out the Messiah, John then knew to a certainty that this was He of whom Moses in the Law and the Prophets did write. Ever afterwards John's testimony was clear and bold. Though he ended his ministry with the loss of his head, he never lost the honesty of his purpose or the lucidness of his testimony. He continued faithfully to declare that the Messiah had come.

Brethren, it is of importance in the work of the ministry that the preacher be a God-illuminated man. Not that education is to be despised—on the contrary, we cannot expect the Spirit of God in these days to give to men the knowledge of languages if they can acquire that knowledge by a little perseverance. It is never the Divine rule to work a superfluous miracle. With the faculties and powers we possess, we must yield up our members unto God as instruments of righteousness. So far, then, as the education of the man is concerned, we believe God leaves that with us, for if we can do it there is no need that any miracle should be worked.

But let the man be educated ever so well, he is then but as the lump of clay—God must breathe into his nostrils the breath of spiritual life as a preacher, or else he will be of no service—just a dead weight upon the Church of God. What shall we say, then, of those men who enter into a pulpit because the family living is vacant, or because, indeed, being too great fools for either the army or the law, they must needs be put where their livelihood can be more easily obtained—in the Church? How crying is this *sin* in our times, that men should have Episcopal hands laid upon them, declaring that they are moved to the ministry by the Holy Spirit, when they know not whether there is a Holy Spirit, so far as any experimental knowledge of His power upon their own hearts is concerned!

The day, I hope, is passing away when men shall be more skilled at hunting the fox than at fishing for souls. And on the whole, God is raising up in this land a spirit of decision upon this point—that the Christian minister *must* be a man who knows experimentally in his own soul the Truths of God which he professes to preach. God may convert souls, it is true, by a bad preacher. Why, if the devil preached, I should not wonder at souls being converted—if only the devil preached the Truth. It is the Truth and *not* the preacher. Ravens, unclean birds though they are, brought Elijah his bread and his meat—and unclean ministers may sometimes bring God's servants their spiritual food. But for all that, unto the wicked, God says, "What have you to do to declare My statutes?" The minister must be a God-taught man whose eyes have been opened by the Holy Spirit. This, at least, is the standing rule—whatever exceptions may be pleaded.

Then, mark you, granted that this is the case we must not expect his ministry to be alike successful at all times, for in the present instance, on one occasion the Baptist gave a very clear testimony for Christ, but none

of his disciples left him to follow Jesus. The next time he preached he was successful, for two of his disciples joined the Master, though on the former occasion we read not that one of his hearers was led to declare himself on the Lord's side.

My Brethren, God suffers His ministers to cast the net sometimes on the wrong side of the ship. Even a whole night they may toil and take nothing. They may sow upon the barren ground, upon the highway and among the thorns. They may cast their bread upon the waters, and as yet they may not find it, for the promise speaks of "many days." Still the minister must persevere. If souls are not saved today, they may be tomorrow. I was wondering, as I read this passage, whether there were some who heard last Sunday in vain, who perhaps would hear to profit today. I was lifting up my heart in prayer to God that these words, "the next day after," might come true to some here.

Whereas, the other day, I cried, "Behold the Lamb!" and you did not see Him or trust Him, I will repeat the cry, "Behold the Lamb!" again today. O that you may be led to follow Jesus! When you have well considered the preacher and his success, I would have you observe his Subject. How short the sermon!—a rebuke to our prolixity. How plain it was—no difficult phrases—no high-flown elocutionary embellishments—no feats of oratory here! It is just, "Behold the Lamb!" But observe the Subject—John preaches of Jesus Christ, of nothing else but Christ. And of Christ, too, in that position and in that form in which He was most needed but least palatable.

The Jews accepted Christ the *Lion*. They looked for the mighty Hero of the Tribe of Judah who should break their bonds. Such Jesus was. But John did not preach Him as such. He preached Him as Christ the Lamb—the Lamb of God, the suffering, despised, meek, and patient Sacrifice. The Baptist held Him up to the sons of men on this occasion as the great Sin Bearer. He seems to have brought out most prominently in his own thoughts and before the minds of the people the picture of the paschal lamb and of the scapegoat. He dwelt upon this, that Jesus was the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

If there are to be many conversions worked in any place, the preacher must be a man taught of God and he must persevere, even though he has been unsuccessful. But he must see to it that this is the staple of all his sermons, the raw material out of which he makes every discourse—"Jesus and Jesus the Lamb! Jesus the Sin Bearer." He must ever be crying, "You Sinners, see your sins laid on Him! You guilty, look to Him! Trust Him! There is life in a look at Him. He has taken your sins and carried your sorrows—look to Him!" Let the preacher stammer here and he is undone. Let him be unsound on the Atonement. Let him speak in feeble strains, as though he apologized for so old-fashioned a doctrine and you shall hear of no conversions from January to December.

But let him hold this to be the first and most important Truth—that Jesus Christ came into the world to be a Sin Bearer for sinners, even the chief, and there must be conversions! God were not true to His promise, the Truth were no longer the potent thing it has proved itself to be in the olden times if souls were not quickened and turned to God by such a ministry as this! O you who preach the Gospel, keep close to this, "Behold the Lamb of God!" You young men who stand up in the streets, make this

your topic! And you who minister to the Church of God, give them all the doctrines of the Gospel, but still always come back to this as the needle comes to its pole—"Behold the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world!"

In these two conversions by public ministry it is interesting to observe the process. Carefully notice the narrative. A spirit of enquiry was stirred up in Andrew and his companion and they began to follow Christ, not exactly as disciples as yet, but as *searchers*. If I may say so, they followed Christ's *back*. They had not come to see His face yet, or to sit at His feet. They followed His back as some do who, being impressed under the Word, have a desire after Christ and intend to set about an honest investigation of His claims to their faith. While they are following behind Christ, He turns round and faces them.

Oh, what a blessed turning for them! It was a blessed turning for Peter when the Lord turned and looked upon him! And in this case while they are, as it were, following His back, He turns and He looks upon them. I cannot tell you how much love there was in His eyes. The love of a mother to her first child may perhaps picture the love of Jesus Christ to these, His first disciples. He was God, He was Man, He was God's own Son. But He had never been a Master of disciples till that moment. Now He springs to a rank which He had not obtained before. Now He has some who will call Him "Rabbi," and will be willing to be guided by His teaching. He looks round upon them. Even so, when enquiry is excited by the ministry, and men begin to search, Jesus Christ looks upon them. With an eye of earnest affection He regards them and assists them in their search.

Jesus put to them the question, "What do you seek?"—a very modest question. Notice it. It is the first word of Christ's ministry. It is the first word I find Christ speaking at all in public—"What do you seek?" And was not it a very comprehensive question? "What is that you seek?" If there are any honest enquirers here after salvation, He puts the same question to you this morning—"What do *you* seek?" Are you seeking pardon? You shall find it in Me. Are you seeking peace? I will give you rest. Are you seeking purity? I will take away your sin. A new heart will I give you and a right spirit will I put within you. What are you seeking? Some solid resting place for your soul upon earth and a glorious hope for yourself in Heaven? Whatever you seek, it is here.

What a text this might be for a missionary when first consulted by some of the awakened heathen, when he should say, "You are on the search after Truth. Now what is it you really want? What do you seek? What is it? Because whatever it is that the human heart in its right state can possibly seek after—all that is to be found in Christ." Christ meets the man who is in an enquiring frame of mind by suggesting to him further enquiry. He stirs up the heart. While the soul's fire is burning He puts fuel to the flame.

They say, "Master, where do you dwell?" And His answer to them is, "Come and see." This is just how the process of conversion is worked in men's hearts. They want to know more of Christ and He says to them, "Come and see." You would have peace—come and see whether I can give it to you. I tell you that if you trust Me, your peace shall be like a river and your righteousness like the waves of the sea. "Come and see." You say you want purity—just try now the effect of the obedience of faith. See if it

does not change your heart and renew your spirit. “Come and see.” O you who are seeking and asking questions about Christ and about His Gospel and His Person and His pedigree, “Come and see.”

The best way to be convinced of the potency of our holy Gospel is to try it for yourselves. If you are honest seekers, if the Grace of God has made you so, then come and test and try! “Blessed is every man that trusts in Him.” This is our witness and our testimony. But if you want to be sure of it for yourselves, “Come and see.” They took Christ at His word. They came and they saw. We are not told *what* they saw, but we are told what was the result—they stopped with Him that night and they remained with Him all His days and became His faithful disciples.

O my dear Friend, if you would but come and see Christ! If by humble earnest prayer you would give your heart up to Him and then trust in Him implicitly to be your Guide, you would never lament the decision! If Jesus proves a liar to you, then desert Him! If His promises are not true, then stand no longer numbered with His disciples. But give Him a trial—

***“O make but trial of His love!
Experience will decide how blest are they and only they,
Who in His Truth confide.”***

You see, then, the way in which God’s Grace works through the Word—it excites a spirit of enquiry, then a still further enquiry, then the test of experience—and afterwards leads to the giving up of the heart to Christ.

II. The next case is a very different one. The third of Christ’s disciples, one Simon Peter, was brought in by PRIVATE INSTRUMENTALITY and not by the public preaching of the Word. Observe the forty-first verse, “Andrew first finds his own brother Simon, and says unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ.” This case is but the pattern of all cases where spiritual life is vigorous. As soon as ever a man is found by Christ, he begins to find others.

The word “first” implies that he did not give it up afterwards—he *first* found his own brother Simon! How many he found afterwards I cannot tell, but I will be bound to say that Andrew continued to be a fisher of men till he was taken up to the third Heaven. He found very many after he had found Peter. The first instinct of the new-born life is to desire the good of others. I will not believe that you have tasted of the honey of the Gospel if you can eat it all yourself. True Grace puts an end to all spiritual monopoly.

I know there are some who think there is no Grace beyond their own Chapel. They believe that God never works beyond the walls of their own tabernacle. Beyond the range of the voice of *their* minister everything is unsound, unorthodox, pretensions perhaps, but still fatally delusive. They hold that all others are out of the bond of the Covenant and, not unlike those ancient wranglers in the land of Uz, they say, “We are the men and wisdom will die with us.” Surely God’s people never talk in that fashion, or if they do, they are then speaking the language of Ashdod and not the speech of the child of Israel, for the Israelite’s tongue drops with love and his speech is full of the anxious desire that others may be brought in!

Look at our Apostle Paul. You shall never find stronger predestinarianism than you read in the ninth chapter of Romans, and yet what does he say? His heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. He had heaviness of heart, he says, for his Brethren, his kinsmen

according to the flesh. There was no man more anxious to convert souls than Paul, though there was no man more sound in the doctrine of the election of God. He knew it was not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but yet he could say as Samuel did, "God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you."

See, then, that the first desire of a Christian man is to endeavor to bring others to the Savior. Relationship has a very stern demand upon our first individual efforts. Andrew, you did well to begin with Simon. I do not know, my Brethren, whether there are not some Christians giving away tracts at other people's houses who would do well to give away a tract at their own. I wonder whether there are not some going out to the villages preaching who had better remain at *home* teaching their own children—or whether even in the Sunday school there may not be those who come before God to perform one duty, while their hands are stained blood-red with the murder of another duty. Your first business is at home. You may have a call to teach other people's children—that may be—but certainly you have an imperative call to teach your own. You may or you may not be called to look after the people of a neighboring town or village, but certainly you are called to see after your own servants, your own kinsfolk and acquaintances. Let your religion begin at home.

We have heard of some people who export their best commodities—many traders do—I do not think the Christian should imitate them in that. At least let the Christian have all his conversation everywhere of the best savor, but let him have a care to put forth the sweetest fruit of spiritual life and testimony at home and in the circle of his own kinsfolk and acquaintances. Andrew, you did well, first, to find your brother Simon. When he went to find him he may not have thought of what Simon would become. Why, Simon was worth ten Andrews, as far as we can gather from the Evangelists! Peter was a very prince among the Apostles! And with that ready tongue of his and that bold, dashing, daring spirit—with that confident, resolute soul—there were none of them a match for Peter!

John might excel in love, but still Peter was verily a leader among the Apostles, and Andrew would but little compare with him. You may be yourself but very deficient in talent and yet you may be the means of bringing a great man to Christ. Ah, dear Friend, you little know the possibilities which are in you! You may but speak a word to a child and in that child there may be slumbering now a great heart which shall stir the Christian Church in years to come. Andrew has only two talents, but then finds Peter. Andrew's testimony to Peter is worthy of remark. There was great modesty in it and that, I dare say, commended it to Peter.

He did not say, "I have found the Messiah"—he says, "We." Whoever was the other disciple, he gives him his share of the discovery. Our speech never loses force by losing pride but generally increases its power in proportion to its modesty, though that modesty must never interfere with boldness. His testimony was very plain and very positive. He did not beat around the bush or hesitate, but it is just this—"We have found the Messiah." Plain and unadorned was the statement, very positive. He did not say, "I *think* we have," or, "I *trust* we have," but, "we *have*." And this was just the thing for Simon Peter.

Peter wanted positive and plain dealing and he was a man who wanted it pushed home by a brother's friendly voice, or else it had little availed

him to speak of Christ at all. When he was brought to Jesus, observe the process of conversion. Jesus describes to him his present state. He said, "You are Simon, son of Jona." Some interpret this, "You are Simon, the son of the timid dove." He explains to him what he was—shows that He knew him—that He understood both his boldness and his cowardice—both his rashness and his constancy. And then, when He had told him what he was, Jesus gave him a new name indicative of the nature which His Grace would give—"You shall be called Cephas, a stone."

Now this is the general plan of conversion. It is the plan in every case, really, though not apparently. Nature is discovered and Grace is imparted. The old name we are taught to read with sorrow and a new name is given to us and we rejoice in it. There may be some here who have not been converted to God under the ministry but under the words of a Sunday school teacher, or a sister, or a friend. Thank God and take courage. It does not matter how you are converted, so long as you are resting upon Jesus only!

If you have not been a searcher of the Word, if Christ has never seemed to say to you, "Come and see," yet if your nature has been changed and you have received a new name—if there is a radical change in the rest—you are a child of God. That you are brought into the fellowship of the saints is an illustration of the unity of God's purpose. That there should be distinctive marks in your conversion is quite in harmony with the diversity of His operations.

III. "The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee and find Philip and say unto him, Follow Me." The fourth disciple is called without either the public Word or private instruction—he is called directly BY THE VOICE OF JESUS. Now in truth all men are so called, for the voice of John or the voice of Andrew is really the voice of Jesus Christ speaking through their instrumentality. But in some cases no apparent instrumentality is used. We have known some who on a sudden have felt impressions, from where they came or where they tended they did not know.

In the midst of business we have known the workman suddenly check his plane—a great thought has entered into his brain—where it came from he could not tell. We have known a man wake up at midnight—he could not tell why, but a holy calm was upon him and as the moon was shining through the window there seemed to be a holy light shining into his soul and he began to think. We have known such things to occur—surprising cases—when men have been planning deeds of vice.

Was it not so with Colonel Gardner—that very night about to perpetrate a crime and yet stopped by Sovereign Grace upon the very brink of it, without any apparent instrumentality? We can not tell, Brethren, when God may regenerate His elect, for though we are to use means and cry to God to send forth laborers into the vineyard, yet the Sovereign Lord of All will frequently work without them. The Word which has been heard in years gone by. The Scripture which was known in childhood may, by the direct power of the Holy Spirit, without any immediate apparent means, turn the man from darkness to Light. Jesus Christ spoke but two words, but those words were enough—"Follow Me"—and Philip at once obeyed. What preparation of heart there had been before, I cannot tell. What still small voice had been speaking before this in Philip's ear, we do not know. Certainly the only outward means was this voice of Christ, "Follow Me."

And there may be in this House some who will be converted this morning. You do not know why you are here. You cannot tell why you strayed in. But yet it may be—God knows—Christ would have you come here because He would come here Himself. Is not there something which invites a pause in that word, “would,” as we read it in this verse?—“The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee.” Is not there something of the Divine necessity which we have often noticed in another place?—“He must needs go through Samaria.” Did not He feel instinctively that there was a soul there which He must meet with and He must go after it and speak the all-commanding, sin-subduing Word?

Perhaps this morning Jesus would come to the Tabernacle! Jesus would come here because He knows that Philip is come here, too. Philip, where are you? You may have lived in sin and despised Christ, but if He says, “Follow Me,” I beseech you obey His word and follow Him! To follow Christ is the picture of Christian discipleship in every form. Follow Christ in your doctrines—believe what He teaches! Follow Christ in your faith—trust Him implicitly with your soul! Follow Him in your actions—let Him be your example and Guide! Follow Him in ordinances—in Baptism follow Him and at His Table follow Him!

To every deed of daring, to every place of spiritual communion, to the mountain of secret prayer, or to the crowd in open ministry, follow Him! According to your measure tread in the footsteps of your Lord and Master. And this, I say, may be directed to one who has had no other instrumentality used upon him, but just the mysterious voice of Christ—“Follow Me.” It was so with the third case. Perhaps of the three this experience is the highest. The first two were told, “Come and see,” and they came to understand the value of Christ. But this one is made to *follow*—he carries out practically that which the others did but *see*.

The second conversion before us attains a higher degree than the first. But this is the highest of all when the change of nature, as in the case of Peter, now leads to a change of action, as in the case of Philip, who arises and follows Christ.

IV. I hope I have not wearied you, for there is yet the fourth case of the fifth disciple, which differs from them all—Nathanael. What shall we say of Nathanael? Was he converted by ministry? It does not appear so. Was he converted by PRIVATE INSTRUMENTALITY? He was partly so. Philip finds Nathanael, but Philip’s finding of Nathanael was not quite so effectual as Christ’s finding of Philip. When Christ found Philip, Philip believed. But when Philip found Nathanael, Nathanael would *not* believe. He said, “Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?”

Philip is *partly* the instrument, but there is something more. Jesus Christ Himself shows His own power BY TELLING TO NATHANAEL THE SECRETS OF HIS HEART. But still, Nathanael’s conversion to Christ seems to me to be PARTLY OWING TO THE STATE IN WHICH HE THEN WAS. He was already in some sense a saved man—he was a devout Israelite. He was a true seeker of the Messiah beneath the fig tree. Well, then, there were these things put together—there was a preparation of heart which was doubtless worked of God.

But this preparation did not bring him to Christ, though it made him ready *for* Christ. It brought him to God in prayer, but it did not bring him yet to the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Then came

Philip's instrumentality and then came Christ's Divine Word which convinced Nathanael and led him to put his trust in the Messiah. This is a sort of composite case and doubtless there are many in the Church of God, who, if you should ask them, "How were you converted?" would be somewhat puzzled to give the answer.

We find in our Church Meetings a very large proportion of people who say, "Well, I cannot trace my conversion to any one sermon—many sermons have impressed me—indeed, most do. I cannot say, Sir, that I was converted when I was a child, but I sometimes think I was, for even at that time I was the subject of many impressions and I certainly did offer prayer. Yet there was a time," they will tell you, "there was a time when I seemed to come out more distinctly into the Light. And when I could say of Christ, 'You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel,' but I cannot say exactly when the sun rose."

Now this, I think, was Nathaniel's case. Perhaps trained and brought up by godly parents, he had been in the habit of prayer—that prayer was somewhat ignorant—but it was very sincere. He sought the solitude of his shady garden and under the fig tree poured out his heart unto the Lord. That man is not saved. No! But there is a great part of the work done. Do not tell me that that man in his prayer has nothing in him more than the blasphemer. I tell you that he needs as much as the blasphemer does to have an effectual Word from Christ, but still there is a preparatory work in this man which there is not even in Philip, or in Simon Peter. There is a something, *not meritorious*, but still preparatory to the reception of the Gospel of Christ.

And when you labor for the conversion of such a man as this—and I do hope there may be some in this crowd—then it does not matter whether it is the ministry, or whether it is private instrumentality—there is sure to be good result because there is good ground to begin with. God has already furrowed and plowed the soil and so when the seed is scattered, there may be a little objection at first, but ultimately it will take root. Be looking out then, dear Friends, you who know how to talk to others about their souls! And wherever you see anything like devotion, even if it is mistaken and ignorant, look at that case! Be especially hopeful about it and try, if you can, to inform that person, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and the Prophets did write."

Introduce Christ, talk of Jesus, bring these Nathanaels to Jesus—these who are like the honest and good ground, these men without guile or cunning—bring them to Jesus! Still, mark you, their prayers and your instrumentality will not be enough unless *Christ* shall meet them with some startling, soul-discovering Word and shall say, "Before that Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." Ah, you seeking Soul, Christ sees you! Before you came here this morning Jesus saw you! Before you hear the challenge, "Look to Christ," Christ has looked upon *you*. If you are truly seeking in the loneliness of that upper room, or in that field behind the hedge, Jesus sees you!

When you are by the wayside and your heart is going up, "Lord, save me, or I perish," Jesus sees you! One of you has been writing to me this morning, and you say, "Pray for me that I may be saved, for I want to be saved." Ah, my Friend, if you want to be saved, Jesus wants to save you and so you are both agreed on that point! You, like Nathanael, are seeking

Him. And I come this morning, like Philip and I long to bring you to Jesus, my Master. Oh, how I pray Him to speak to you and if so, He will tell you that He knew you when you were dead in sin and loved you, notwithstanding all!

And therefore He brought you to this House to hear His Word. Mark you, Nathanael's is the best case of the whole! He was favored above many. Who was the first man that ever had a promise from Christ? It was Nathanael! What was that? Why, that promise seems to me to be the sum of the Gospel—or rather the token-promise of the Gospel—which every Christian should carry in his hand. Jesus said, "Because I said unto you, I saw you under the fig tree, believe you? You shall see greater things than these." Nathanael was the *first man* who ever received a promise from the lips of the Lord Jesus when He was here on earth!

O you seeking Nathanaels, I think this is a promise for you—"You shall see greater things than these"—you shall see yourself pardoned! You shall see your prayers ascending Jacob's ladder and blessings coming down from God to rest upon your soul! I had hoped to have brought out many more points, but indeed, the chapter is too full for any to handle in so brief a time. You will observe, however, that I have given you just a glance at the surface of it which will suffice to show that the means of conversion and the general tenor of conversion will be found to differ in each case. Perhaps Nathanael's is the highest of all—he receives Christ in a fuller way than any of the others and he enjoys greater promises than they do.

But still they are *all* genuine, though they are not one of them like the other, except that John and Andrew may be put together. Judge not, therefore, your conversion by its means or by its particular form, but judge it by its *fruit*. Does it bring you to Jesus? Are you depending upon Him now? If so, go your way—your sins, which are many, are forgiven you! Eat the fat and drink the sweet, for God accepts you—therefore rejoice! But and if you have had a thousand conversions, if you are not resting on Jesus this morning, tremble, for your refuge is a refuge of lies! Your hope is a spider's web—God deliver you from it and bring you now to rest upon the finished work and the perfect Sacrifice of the Lord Jesus! And then, with Andrew and Peter and John, and Philip and Nathanael you shall meet before the Throne to praise Him who is the Son of God and the King of Israel! The Lord bless you, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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EVERYDAY USEFULNESS

NO. 855

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 14, 1869,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And he brought him to Jesus.”
John 1:42.

WE have a most intense desire for the revival of religion in our own midst and throughout all the Churches of our Lord Jesus. We see that error is making great advances and we would gladly lift up a banner for the cause of the Truth of God. We pity the mighty populations among whom we dwell for they are still godless and Christless and the things of their peace are hidden from their eyes. Therefore we would gladly behold the Lord performing miracles of Divine Grace. Our hope is that the set time to favor Zion is come and we intend to be importunate in prayer that God will reveal His arm and do great things in these latter days.

Our eager desire, of which our special services will be the expression, is a right one. Challenge it who will, it is ours to cultivate and prove by our zeal for God that the desire is not insincere or superficial. But, my Brothers and Sisters, it is very possible that in addition to cultivating a vehement desire for the revival of religion, we may have been daydreaming and forecasting in our minds a conception of the form which the Divine visitation shall take. Remembering what we have heard of former times of refreshing, you expect a repetition of the same outward signs and look for the Lord to work as He did with Livingstone at the Kirk of Shotts, or with Jonathan Edwards in New England, or Whitefield in our own land.

Perhaps you have planned in your mind that God will raise up an extraordinary preacher whose ministry will attract the multitude, and while he is preaching, God the Holy Spirit will attend the Word so that hundreds will be converted under every sermon and other evangelists will be raised up of a like spirit and from end to end this island shall hear the Truth and feel its power. Now it may be that God will so visit us. It may be that such signs and wonders as have frequently attended revivals may be again witnessed—the Lord may rend the heavens and come out and make the mountains to fall down at His feet!

But it is just possible that He may select quite another method. His Holy Spirit *may* reveal Himself like a mighty river swollen with floods and sweeping all before its majestic current. But if He so wills, He may rather unveil His power as the gentle dew which, without observation, refreshes all the earth! It may happen unto us as unto Elijah when the fire and the wind passed before him, but the Lord was not in either of those mighty agencies—He preferred to commune with His servant in a still, small voice. Perhaps that still, small voice is to be language of Divine Grace in this congregation. It will be useless, then, for us to be mapping out the way of the eternal God! It will be idle for us to be rejecting all the good which He may be pleased to give us because it does not happen to come in the shape which *we* have settled in our own minds to be the proper one.

Idle, did I say? Such prejudice would be *wicked* to the extreme! It has very frequently happened that while men have been sketching out imaginary designs they have missed actual opportunities! They would not build because they could not erect a palace—they therefore shiver in the winter's cold. They would not be clothed in homespun, for they looked for scarlet and fine linen—and before long they were not content to do a little and therefore did nothing! I want, therefore, to say, this morning, to every Believer here, it is *vain* for us to be praying for an extensive revival of religion and comforting each other in the hope of it, if, meanwhile, we allow our zeal to effervesce and sparkle—and then to be dissipated.

Our proper plan is, with the highest expectations and with the greatest longings, to imitate the woman of whom it is written, "She has done what she could," by laboring diligently in such holy works as may be within our reach, according to Solomon's precept, "Whatever your hands find to do, do it with all your might." While Believers are zealously doing what God enables them to do, they are in the high road to abundant success. But if they stand all the day idle, grasping after wonders, their spiritual need shall come upon them as an armed man. I have selected the text before us in order that I may speak upon matters which are practical and efforts within the reach of all. We shall not speak of the universal triumph of the Gospel, but of its victory in *single hearts*. Nor shall we deal with the efforts of an entire Church, but with the pious fervor of *individual* disciples.

If the Christian Church were in a proper and healthy state, the members would be studious of the Word of God and would themselves have so much of the Spirit of Christ that the only thing they would need in the great assemblies, over and above worship, would be a short encouraging and animating word of direction addressed to them, as to well-drilled and enthusiastic soldiers who need but the word of command and the deed of valor is straightway performed. So would I speak and so would I have you hear at this hour.

Coming then, to the subject. Andrew was converted by Christ to become His disciple. Immediately he sets to work to recruit the little army by discipling others. He finds his brother, Peter, and he brings him to Jesus.

I. First, I shall call your attention, this morning, to THE MISSIONARY DISCIPLE. Andrew is the picture of what all disciples of Christ should be! To begin, then. This first successful Christian missionary *was himself a sincere follower of Jesus*. Is it necessary to make that observation? No, rather, will it ever be *needless* while so many make a profession of a faith which they do not possess? While so many will wantonly thrust themselves into the offices of Christ's Church, having no concern for the Glory of His kingdom and no part or lot in it, it will always be necessary to repeat that warning, "Unto the wicked, God says, What have you to do to declare My statutes?"

Men who have never seen the beauties of Emmanuel are not fit persons to describe them to others. An experimental acquaintance with vital godliness is the first necessity for a useful worker for Jesus. That preacher is accursed who knows not Christ for himself! God may, in infinite sovereignty, make him the means of blessing to others, but every moment that he tarries in the pulpit he is an impostor! Every time he preaches he is a mocker of God and woe unto him when his Master calls him to his dread account! You unconverted young people who enter upon the work of Sun-

day school instruction and so undertake to teach others what you do not know yourselves, place yourselves in a position of unusual solemnity and of extraordinary peril! I say, “of extraordinary peril,” because you do, by the fact of being a *teacher*, profess to *know* and will be judged by your profession—and, I fear, *condemned* out of your own mouths!

You know only the *theory* of religion and of what use is that while you are strangers to its *power*? How can you lead others along a way which you yourself refuse to tread? Besides, I have noticed that persons who become active in Church work before they have first believed in Christ are very apt to remain without faith, resting content with the general repute which they have gained. O dear Friends, beware of this! In this day hypocrisy is so common and self-deceit is so easy that I would not have you place yourselves where those vices become almost inevitable. If a man voluntarily puts himself where it is taken for granted that he is godly, his next step will be to mimic godliness and by-and-by he will flatter himself into the belief that he really possesses that which he so successfully imitates.

Beware, dear Hearers, of a religion which is not true—it is worse than none! Beware of a form of godliness which is not supported by the fervor of your heart and soul. This age of shams presents but few instances to self-examination, therefore am I the more earnest that every one of us, before he shall seek to bring others to Christ, should deliberately ask himself, “Am I a follower of Christ myself? Am I washed in His blood? Am I renewed by His Spirit?” If not, my first business is not in the pulpit, but on my knees in prayer! My first occupation should not be in the Sunday school class, but in my closet, confessing my sin and seeking pardon through the atoning Sacrifice!

Andrew was earnest for the souls of others, though he was but a *young* convert. So far as I can gather, he appears to have beheld Jesus as the Lamb of God one day and to have sought after his brother, Peter, the next. Far be it from us to forbid you who but yesterday found joy and peace, to exert your new-born zeal and youthful ardor! No, my Brothers and Sisters, delay not, but make haste to spread abroad the Good News which is now so fresh and so full of joy to you! It is right that the advanced and the experienced should be left to deal with the captious and the skeptical, but you, even you, young as you are, may find some with whom you can cope—some brother like Simon Peter, some sister dear to you who will listen to your unvarnished tale and believe in your simple testimony. Though you are but young in Divine Grace and but little instructed, begin the work of soul-winning, and—

“Tell to sinners round

What a dear Savior you have found!”

If the religion of Jesus Christ consisted in abstruse doctrines, hard to be understood. If the saving Truths of Christianity were metaphysical points, difficult to handle—then a matured judgment would be needed in every worker for God and it would be prudent to say to the young convert, “Hold back till you are instructed.” But, since that which saves souls is as simple as A, B, C. Since it is nothing but this, “He that believes and is baptized, shall be saved,” he that trusts the merits of Christ shall be saved! You who have trusted Him know that He saved you and you know that He will save others! And I charge you before God, tell it, tell it right

and left, but especially tell it to your own kinsfolk and acquaintances that they, also, may find eternal life!

Andrew was a disciple, a new disciple and I may add, *a commonplace disciple*, a man of average capacity. He was not at all the brilliant character that Simon Peter, his brother, turned out to be. Throughout the life of Jesus Christ Andrew's name occurs, but no notable incident is connected with it. Though in later life he, no doubt, became a most useful Apostle, and according to tradition, sealed his life's ministry by death upon a cross, yet at the first Andrew was, as to talent, an ordinary Believer—one of that common standard and nothing remarkable. Yet Andrew became a useful minister and thus it is clear that servants of Jesus Christ are not to excuse themselves from endeavoring to extend the boundaries of His kingdom by saying, "I have no remarkable talent, or singular ability."

I very much disagree with those who decry ministers of slender gifts, sneering at them, as though they ought not to occupy the pulpit at all. Are we, after all, Brethren, as servants of God, to be measured by mere oratorical ability? Is this after the fashion of Paul, when he renounced the wisdom of words lest the faith of the disciples should stand in the wisdom of *man* and not in the power of God? If you could blot out from the Christian Church all the minor stars and leave nothing but those of the first magnitude, the darkness of this poor world would be increased sevenfold! How often the eminent preachers, which are the Church's delight, are brought into the Church by those of less degree, even as Simon Peter was converted by Andrew!

Who shall tell what might have become of Simon Peter if it had not been for Andrew? Who shall say that the Church would ever have possessed a Peter if she had closed the mouth of Andrew? And who shall put their finger upon the brother or sister of inferior talent and say, "These must hold their peace"? No, Brother, if you have but one talent, the more zealously use it! God will require it of you—let not your Brethren hold you back from putting it out to interest. If you are but as a glowworm's, lamp, hide not your light, for there is an eye predestinated to see by *your* light, a heart ordained to find comfort by *your* faint gleam. Shine, and may the Lord accept you!

I am saying all this in this way that I may come to the conclusion that every single professor of the faith of Christ is bound to do *something* for the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom. I would that all the members of this Church, whatever their talents were, would be like Andrew in *promptness*. He is no sooner a convert than he is a missionary! He is no sooner taught than he begins to teach! I would have them like Andrew, *persevering*, as well as prompt. He first finds Peter—that is his first success—but how many afterwards he found, who shall tell? Throughout a long life of usefulness it is probable that Andrew brought many stray sheep to the Redeemer's fold, yet certainly that first one would be among the dearest to his heart.

"He first finds Peter"—he was the spiritual father of many sons, but he rejoiced most that he was the father of his own brother Peter—his brother in the flesh, but his son in Christ Jesus! Could it be possible for me to come to every one of you personally and grasp you by the hand, I would with most affectionate earnestness—yes, even with tears—pray that you, by Him to whom you owe your souls, would awake and render personal

service to the Lover of your souls! Make no excuse, for no excuse can be valid from those who are bought with so great a price! Your business, you will tell me, requires so much of your thoughts—I know it does—then use your business in such a way as to serve God in it.

Still there must be some scraps of time which you could devote to holy service. There must be some opportunities for directly aiming at conversions. I charge you to avail yourselves of such occasions lest they be laid to your door. To some of you the excuse of “business” would not apply, for you have seasons of leisure. Oh, I beseech you, let not that leisure be drived away in frivolities, in mere talk, in sleep and self-indulgence! Let not time slip away in vain persuasions that you can do nothing, but now, like Andrew, hasten at once to serve Jesus! If you can reach but one individual, let him not remain unsought. Time is hastening and men are perishing! The world is growing old in sin! Superstition and idolatry root themselves into the very soil of human nature!

When, when will the Church become intent upon putting down her Master’s foes? Possessing such little strength, we cannot afford to waste a jot of it. With such awful demands upon us we cannot afford to trifle. O that I had the power to stir the heart and soul of all my fellow Christians by a description of this huge city wallowing in iniquity—by a picture of the graveyards and cemeteries fattening on innumerable corpses—by a portrayal of that lake of fire to which multitudes yearly descend! Surely sin, the grave, and Hell are themes which might create a tingling even in the dull cold ear of Death! O that I could set before you the Redeemer upon the Cross dying to ransom souls! O that I could depict the Heaven which sinners lose and their remorse when they shall find themselves excluded!

I wish I could even set before you in vivid light the cases of your own sons and daughters, the spiritual condition of your own brothers and sisters without Christ and therefore without hope! Unrenewed and therefore “heirs of wrath even as others”! Then might I expect to move each Believer here to an immediate effort to pluck men as brands from the burning.

II. Having described the missionary disciple, we shall now speak briefly in the second place upon a GREAT OBJECT. The great object of Andrew seems to have been to bring Peter to Jesus. This, too, should be the aim of every renewed heart—to bring our friends to *Jesus*—not to convert them to a party. There are certain unbrotherly sectarians, called “Brethren,” who compass sea and trod land to make proselytes from other Christian Churches. These are not merchants seeking goodly pearls in a legitimate fashion, but *pirates* who live by plunder. They must not excite our wrath so much as our pity, though it is difficult not to mingle with it something of disgust.

While this world remains as wicked as it is, we need not be spending our strength as Christian denominations in attacking one another—it will be better for us to go and fight with the Canaanites than with rival tribes which should be one united Israel! I should reckon it to be a burning disgrace if it could be said, “The large Church under that man’s pastoral care is composed of members whom he has stolen away from other Christian Churches.” No, but I value beyond all price the godless, the careless who are brought out from the *world* into communion with Christ! These are true prizes—not stealthily removed from friendly shores—but captured at the edge of the sword from an enemy’s dominions!

We welcome Brethren from other Churches if, in the Providence of God they are drifted to our shores, but we would never hang out the wrecker's beacon to dash other Churches in pieces in order to enrich ourselves with the wreck! Far rather would we be looking after perishing souls than cajoling unstable ones from their present place of worship. To recruit one regiment from another is no real strengthening of the army—to bring in fresh men should be the aim of all. Furthermore, the object of the soul-winner is not to bring men to a merely outward religiousness. Little will you have done for a man if you merely make the Sabbath-breaker into a Sabbath-keeper and leave him a self-righteous Pharisee. Little will you have done for him if you persuade him, having been prayerless, to be a mere user of a *form* of prayer, his heart not being in it.

You do but change the form of sin in which the man lives—you prevent him being drowned in the salt water, but you throw him into the fresh. You take one poison from him, but you expose him to another. The fact is, if you would do real service to Christ, your prayer and your zeal must follow the person who has become the object of your attention till you bring him absolutely to close with Divine Grace and lay hold on Jesus Christ and accept eternal life as it is found in the atoning Sacrifice! Anything short of this may have its usefulness for this *world*, but must be useless for the world to come. To bring men to Jesus—O, be this your aim and desire!—not to bring them to *Baptism*, nor to the Meeting House, nor to adopt *our* form of worship, but to bring them to His dear feet who alone can say, “Go in peace. Your sins which are many are all forgiven you.”

Brothers and Sisters, as we believe Jesus to be the very center of the Christian religion, he who gets not to Christ gets not to true godliness at all. Some are quite satisfied if they get to the priest and obtain his absolution. They are fine if they get the “sacraments” and eat bread in the church—if they get to prayers and pass through a religious routine—but we know that all this is less than nothing and vanity unless the heart draws near to Jesus. Unless the soul accepts Jesus as God's appointed Sin-Offering and rests alone in Him, it walks in a vain show and disquiets itself in vain. Come then, Brethren, nerve yourselves to this point, that from this day forth let your one ambition be in dealing with your fellow men, to bring them to Jesus Christ Himself! Be it determined in your spirit that you will never cease to labor for them till you have reason to believe that they are trusting in Jesus, loving Jesus, serving Jesus and united to Jesus in the hope that they shall be conformed to the image of Jesus and dwell with Him, world without end.

But some will say, “We can very clearly understand how Andrew brought Peter to the Lord, because Jesus was here among men and they could walk together till they found Him.” Yes, but Jesus is not dead and it is a mistake to suppose that He is not readily to be reached. *Prayer* is a messenger that can find Jesus at any hour. Jesus is gone up on high as to His body, but His *spiritual* Presence remains with us. And the Holy Spirit, as the Head of this dispensation, is always near at hand to every Believer. Intercede, then, for your friends! Plead with Christ on their account! Mention their names in your constant prayers! Set apart special times in which you plead with God for them. Let your dear sister's case ring in the ears of the Mediator. Let your dear child's name be repeated again and again in your intercessions.

As Abraham pleaded for Ishmael, so let your cry come up for those who are round about you, that the Lord would be pleased to visit them in His mercy. Intercession is a true bringing of souls to Christ and this means will prevail when you are shut out from employing any other. If your dear ones are in Australia, in some settler's hut where even a letter cannot reach them, prayer can find them out! No ocean can be too wide for prayer to span, no distance too great for prayer to travel. Far off as they are, you can take them up in the arms of believing prayer and bear them to Jesus and say, "Master, have mercy upon them." Here is a valuable weapon for those who cannot preach or teach—they can wield the sword of all-prayer. When hearts are too hard for sermons and good advice is rejected, it still remains to love to be allowed to plead with God for its wayward one. Tears and weeping are prevalent at the Mercy Seat and if *we* prevail *there*, the Lord will be sure to manifest His prevailing Grace in obdurate spirits.

To bring men to Jesus you can adopt the next means, with most of them, namely, that of instructing them, or putting them in the way of being informed concerning the Gospel. It is a very wonderful thing that while, to us, the light of the Gospel is so abundant, it should be so very partially distributed in this country. When I have expounded my own hope in Christ to two or three in a railway carriage, I have found myself telling my listeners perfect novelties! I have seen the look of astonishment upon the face of many an intelligent Englishman when I have explained the doctrine of the substitutionary Sacrifice of Christ. I have even met with persons who have attended their parish Church from their youth up who were totally ignorant of the simple truth of justification by faith!

Yes, and I have known some who have been to *dissenting* places of worship who do not seem to have laid hold of the fundamental Truth of God that no man is saved by his own doings, but that salvation is procured by faith in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ. This nation is steeped up to the throat in self-righteous doctrine, and the Protestantism of Martin Luther is very generally unknown. The Truth is held by as many as God's Grace has called, but the great outlying world still talk of doing your best and then hoping in God's mercy—of legal self-confidence, and I know not what beside—while the master doctrine that he who believes in Jesus is saved by Jesus' finished work, is sneered at as enthusiasm, or attacked as leading to licentiousness.

Proclaim it, then! Proclaim it on all sides! Take care that none under your influence shall be left in ignorance of it! I can bear personal witness that the statement of the Gospel has often proved, in God's hand, enough to lead a soul into immediate peace. Not many months ago I met with a lady holding sentiments of almost undiluted popery and in conversing with her I was delighted to see how interesting and attractive a thing the Gospel was to her. She complained that she enjoyed no peace of mind as the result of her religion and never seemed to have *done* enough. She had a high idea of priestly absolution, but it had evidently been quite unable to yield repose to her spirit. Death was feared. God was terrible—even Christ an object of awe rather than love.

When I told her that whoever believes on Jesus is perfectly forgiven and that I knew I was forgiven—that I was as sure of it as of my own existence—that I feared neither to live nor to die, for it would be the same to

me, because God had given me eternal life in His Son—I saw that a new set of thoughts were astonishing her mind! She said, “If I could believe *that*, I should be the happiest person in the world.” I did not deny the inference, but claimed to have proved its truth and I have reason to believe that the little simple talk we had has not been forgotten. You cannot tell how many may be in bondage for lack of the simplest possible instruction upon the plainest Truths of the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

Many, too, may be brought to Christ through your *example*. Believe me, there is no preaching in this world like the preaching of a holy life! It shames me, sometimes, and weakens me in my testimony for my Master, when I stand here and recollect that some professors of religion are a disgrace not only to their religion, but even to common morality. It makes me feel as though I must speak with bated breath and trembling knees when I remember the damnable hypocrisy of those who thrust themselves into the Church of God and by their abominable sins bring disgrace upon the cause of God and eternal destruction upon themselves!

In proportion as a Church is holy, in that proportion will its testimony for Christ be powerful. Oh, were the saints immaculate, our testimony would be like fire among the stubble! Like the flaming firebrand in the midst of the sheaves of corn! Were the saints of God less like the world, more disinterested, more prayerful, more godlike, the tramp of the armies of Zion would shake the nations and the day of the victory of Christ would surely dawn! Freely might the Church barter her most golden-mouthed preacher if she received in exchange men of Apostolic life! I would be content that the pulpit should be empty if all the members of the Church would preach Jesus by their patience in suffering, by their endurance in temptation, by exhibiting in the household those Graces which adorn the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

Oh, so live, I pray you, in God’s fear and by the Spirit’s power, that they who see you may ask, “From where has this man this holiness?” and may follow you till they are led by you to Jesus Christ to learn the secret by which men live unto God! You *can* bring men to Jesus by your example, then. And once again, let me say, before I close this point, our object should be to bring men to Jesus—having tried *intercession* and *instruction* and *example*—by occasionally, as time and opportunity may serve us, giving a word of importunate entreaty. Half-a-dozen words from a tender mother to a boy who is just leaving home for an apprenticeship, may drop like gentle dew from Heaven upon you. A few sentences from a kind and prudent father given to the daughter, still unconverted, as she enters upon her married life, and to her husband, kindly and affectionately put, may make that household forever a house for God.

A kind word dropped by a brother to a sister. A little letter written from a sister to her brother, though it should be only a line or two, may be God’s arrow of Divine Grace. I have known even such little things as a tear or an anxious glance work wonders. You perhaps may have heard the story of Mr. Whitefield, who made it his wish wherever he stayed to talk to the members of the household about their souls—with each one personally. But stopping at a certain house of a Colonel, who was all that could be wished except a Christian, he was so pleased with the hospitality he received and so charmed with the general character of the good Colonel

and his wife and daughters, that he did not like to speak to them about a decision as he would have done if they had been less amiable characters.

He had stopped with them for a week and during the last night, the Spirit of God visited him so that he could not sleep. "These people," he said, "have been very kind to me and I have not been faithful to them. I must do it before I go. I must tell them that whatever good thing they have, if they do not believe in Jesus they are lost." He arose and prayed. After praying he still felt contention in his spirit. His old nature said, "I cannot do it," but the Holy Spirit seemed to say, "Leave them not without warning." At last he thought of a device and prayed God to accept it. He wrote upon a diamond-shaped pane of glass in the window with his ring these words:—"One thing you lack."

He could not bring himself to speak to them, but went his way with many a prayer for their conversion. He had no sooner gone than the good woman of the house, who was a great admirer of his, said, "I will go up to his room—I want to look at the very place where the man of God has been." She went up and noticed on the window pane those words, "One thing you lack." It struck her with conviction in a moment. "Ah," she said, "I thought he did not care much about us, for I knew he always pleaded with those with whom he stopped and when I found that he did not do so with us, I thought we had vexed him, but I see how it was—he was too tender in mind to speak to us."

She called her daughters up. "Look there, girls," she said, "see what Mr. Whitefield has written on the window, 'One thing you lack.' Call up your father." And the father came up and read that, too, "One thing you lack," and around the bed where the man of God had slept they all knelt down and sought that God would give them the one thing they lacked. And before they left that chamber they had found that one thing and the whole household rejoiced in Jesus! It is not long ago that I met with a friend, one of whose Church members preserves that very pane of glass in her family as an heirloom.

Now, if you cannot admonish and warn in one way, do it in another! But take care to clear your soul of the blood of your relatives and friends, so that it may never crimson your garments and accuse you before God's bar. So live and so speak and teach, by some means or other, that you shall have been faithful to God and faithful to the souls of men.

III. I must now take you to a third point. We have had the missionary disciple and his great object. We have now, thirdly, HIS WISE METHODS. I have touched upon this subject already, but I could not help it. Andrew, being zealous, was wise. Earnestness often gives prudence and puts a man in the possession of tact, if not of talent. *Andrew used what ability he had.* If he had been as some young men are of my acquaintance, he would have said, "I would like to serve God. How I would like to preach! And I would require a large congregation."

Well, there is a pulpit on every street in London—there is a most wide and effectual door for preaching in this great city of ours beneath God's blue sky. But this young zealot would rather prefer an easier berth than the open air, and, because he is not invited to the largest pulpits, does *nothing*. How much better it would be if, like Andrew, he began to use the ability he had among those who are accessible to him, and from *there*

stepped to something else and from that to something else, advancing year by year!

Sirs, if Andrew had not been the means of converting his brother, the probabilities are that he never would have been an Apostle. Christ had some reason in the choice of His Apostles to their office and perhaps the ground of His choice of Andrew as an Apostle was this—"He is an earnest man, he brought me Simon Peter. He is always speaking privately to individuals. I will make an Apostle of him." Now, you young men, if you become diligent in tract distribution, diligent in the Sunday school, you are likely men to be made into ministers. But if you stop and do *nothing* until you can do *everything*, you will remain useless—an impediment to the Church instead of being a help to her!

Dear Sisters in Jesus Christ, you must, none of you, dream that you are in a position in which you can do nothing at all. That is such a mistake in Providence as God cannot commit. You must have some talent entrusted to you and something given you to do which no one else can do. Out of this whole structure of the human body, every little muscle, every single cell has its own secretion and its own work. And though some physicians have said this and that organ might be spared, I believe that there is not a single thread in the whole embroidery of human nature that could well be spared—the whole of the fabric is required.

So in the mystical body, the Church, the least member is necessary. The most uncomely member of the Christian Church is necessary for its growth. Find out, then, what your sphere is and occupy it! Ask God to tell you what is your niche and stand in it, occupying the place till Jesus Christ shall come and give you your reward! Use what ability you have and use it at once! Andrew proved his wisdom in that *he set great store by a single soul*. He bent all his efforts at first upon one man. Afterwards, Andrew, through the Holy Spirit, was made useful to scores, but he began with *one*. What a task for the mathematician, to value one soul! One soul sets all Heaven's bells ringing by its repentance. One sinner that repents makes angels rejoice! What if you spend a whole life pleading and laboring for the conversion of that one child? If you win that pearl it shall pay you your life's worth. Be not, therefore, dull and discouraged because your class declines in numbers, or because the mass of those with whom you labor reject your testimony.

If a man could earn but one in a day he might be satisfied. "One what?" asks one. I meant not one penny, but 1,000 pounds. "Ah," you say, "that would be an immense reward." So if you earn but one soul you must reckon what that one is—it is one for numeration, but for *value* it exceeds all that earth could show. What would it profit a man if he gained the whole world and lost his soul? And what loss would it be to you, dear Brother, if you did lose all the world and gained your soul and God made you useful in the gaining of the souls of others? Be content and labor in your sphere, even if it is small, and you will be wise.

You may imitate Andrew in *not going far afield to do good*. Many Christians do all the good they can five miles off from their own house, when the time they take to go there and back might be well spent in the vineyard at home. I do not think it would be a wise regulation of the parochial authorities if they required the inhabitants of St. Mary, Newington, to remove the snow from the pavement of St. Pancras and the inhabitants of

St. Pancras to keep the pavement of St. Mary, Newington, clean. It is best and most convenient that each householder should sweep before his own door—and so it is our duty, as Believers, to do all the good we can in the place where God has been pleased to locate us and especially in our own households.

If every man has a claim upon me, much more my own offspring. If every woman has some demand upon me as to her soul, so far as my ability goes, much more such as are of my own flesh and blood. Piety must begin at home as well as charity. Conversion should begin with those who are nearest to us in ties of relationship. Brothers and Sisters, during this month I stir you up—not to be attempting missionary labors for India, not to be casting eyes of pity across to Africa, not to be occupied so much with tears for popish and heathen lands—as for your own children, your own flesh and blood, your own neighbors, your own acquaintances. Lift up your cry to Heaven for them and then afterwards you shall preach among the nations!

Andrew goes to Cappadocia in his later life, but he begins with his brother. And you shall labor where you please in years to come, but first of all your own household! First of all those who are under your own shadow must receive your guardian care. Be wise in this thing. Use the ability you have and use it among those who are near at hand. Perhaps somebody will be saying, “How did Andrew persuade Simon Peter to come to Christ”? Two or three minutes may be spent in answering that enquiry. He did so, first, by narrating his own personal experience. He said, “We have found the Messiah.”

What you have experienced of Christ tell to others. He did so next by intelligently explaining to him what it was he had found. He did not say he had found someone who had impressed him, but he knew not who He was. He told him he had found Messiah, that is, Christ. Be clear in your knowledge of the Gospel and your experience of it and then tell the Good News to those whose soul you seek. Andrew had power over Peter because of his own decided conviction. He did not say, “I *hope* I have found Christ,” but, “I have found Him.” He was sure of that! Get full assurance of your own salvation. There is no weapon like it. He that speaks doubtfully of what he would convince another, asks that other to doubt his testimony. Be positive in your experience and your assurance, for this will help you.

Andrew had power over Peter because he put the good news before him in an earnest fashion. He did not say to him, as though it were a commonplace fact, “The Messiah has come,” but no, he communicated it to him as the most weighty of all messages with becoming tones and gestures, I doubt not, “We have found the Messiah, which is called Christ!”

Now then, Brothers and Sisters, to your own kinsfolk tell your belief, your enjoyments, and your assurance! Tell all judiciously, with assurance of the truth of it, and who can tell whether God may not bless your work?

IV. My time is past. I meant to have spoken of THE SWEET REWARD Andrew had. His reward being that he won a soul—won his brother’s soul—won such a treasure! He won no other than that Simon who at the first cast of the Gospel net, when Christ had made him a soul-fisherman, caught 3,000 souls at a single haul! Peter, a very prince in the Christian Church! One of the mightiest of the servants of the Lord, in all his later

usefulness, would be a comfort to Andrew. I should not wonder but what Andrew would say in days of doubt and fear, “Blessed be God that He has made Peter so useful! Blessed be God that ever I spoke to Peter! What I cannot do, Peter will help to do. And while I sit down in my helplessness, I can feel thankful that my dear brother, Peter, is honored in bringing souls to Christ.”

In this house today there may sit an unconverted Whitefield! In your class this afternoon there may be an unsaved John Wesley, a Calvin, and a Luther—mute and inglorious—yet who is to be called, by God’s Grace, through you. Your fingers may yet wake to ecstasy the living heart that up till now has not been tuned to the praise of Christ! You may kindle the fire which shall light up a sacred sacrifice of a consecrated life to Christ! Only be up and doing for the Lord Jesus! Be importunate and prayerful! Be zealous and self-sacrificing. Unite with us, during this month, in your daily prayers!

Constantly, while in business, let your hearts go up for the blessing, and I make no doubt of it, that, when we have proved our God by prayer, He will pour us down such a blessing that we shall not have room to receive it! The Lord make it so, for His name’s sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 1:19-51.

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

FOUND BY JESUS—AND FINDING JESUS

NO. 2375

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, AUGUST 26, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 24, 1888.

“The day following, Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and He found Philip, and said to him, Follow Me. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael, and said to him, We have found Him, of whom Moses in the Law, and the Prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”
John 1:43-45.

FOR a soul to come to Jesus is the grandest event in its history! It is spiritually dead till that day, but it *then* begins to live—and a saved man may reckon his age from the time in which he first knew the Lord. That day of first knowing Christ is important in the highest degree because it affects all the man's past life. It sheds another light on all the years that have gone by. If he has lived in sin, as no doubt he has, the transaction of that day blots out all the sin. The day in which a man comes to Christ—that very day—his transgressions and iniquities are blotted out, even as the thick clouds are driven from the sky when God's strong wind chases them away! Is not that a grand day, in which our sins are cast into the depths of the sea so that from then on it can be said of them, “They may be sought for, but they shall not be found; yes, they shall not be, says the Lord”?

I say that the day in which a soul comes into contact with Christ is the greatest day of its history because all the past is changed by it! And, as for the present, what a different life does a man begin to live on the day in which he finds the Lord! He commences to live in the Light of God instead of being dead in the darkness! He begins to enjoy the privileges of liberty, instead of suffering the horrors of slavery! He is started on the way to Heaven, instead of continuing on the road to Hell! He is such a new creature that he cannot tell how changed he is. One said to me, “Sir, the change in me is of this kind—either the whole world is altered, or else I am.” So is it when we are brought to know Christ—it is a real, total, radical change.

With many, it is a most joyous alteration. They feel like the man who had been lame, and who, when Peter spoke to him in the name of Jesus, and lifted him up so that his feet and ankle bones received strength, was not satisfied with walking, for we read, “He, leaping up, stood and walked, and entered with them into the Temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God.” He was walking, leaping and praising God! Do you wonder at it? If you had lost the use of your legs for a while, you would feel like leaping and praising God when you had them all right, again!

And thus is it with a soul when it first finds the Savior. Oh, happy, happy day when the miraculous hand of Christ takes away the infirmities of the soul and makes the lame man to leap as a hart, and causes the tongue of the dumb to sing!

The day in which a man comes to Christ is also a wonderful day in its effect upon all his future. It is as when the helm of a ship is put right about—the man now sails in a totally different direction. His future will never be what his past was. There may be faults. There may be infirmities and shortcomings, but there will never be the old love of sin any more. “Sin shall not have dominion over you.” This is God’s own promise to us, given through His servant, Paul. When Christ comes to our soul, He so breaks the neck of sin, that though it lives a struggling, dying life and often makes a deal of howling in the heart, yet it is doomed to die. The Cross of Christ has broken its back and broken its neck, too, and die it must! Henceforth the man is bound for holiness and bound for Heaven!

Now, dear Friends, have any of you come to Christ? I know that you have, the great mass of you, and I bless God, and so do you, that it is so with you. But if there are any of you who have never come to the Savior, I wish that this might be the night when you should find Him. I am but a poor lame preacher—you are not often troubled with the sight of one sitting down and preaching—yet I think that if I had lost my legs and had always to lie on my back, I would like, even then, to preach Christ Crucified, and to—

**“Tell to sinners round,
What a dear Savior I have found.”**

I do pray that some of you, tonight, made to think all the more by the infirmity of the preacher, may be led to seek and to find the Savior. And then it shall be a happy day, indeed, for you, as it has been for so many more.

I am going to talk to you about Philip’s conversion and first, I ask you to notice, in our text, *the convert’s description of it*—“Philip found Nathanael and said to him, We have found Him, of whom Moses in the Law, and the Prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” That is Philip’s description of it—“We have found Jesus.” It was a true description, but it was not *all* the truth, so, in the second place, we will notice *the Holy Spirit’s description of it*—“The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and He found Philip.” Philip’s account of the incident is that *he* found Christ, but the Holy Spirit’s record of it is that *Christ found Philip*. They are *both* true, however, although the latter is the fuller. We will talk a little about both descriptions of Philip’s conversion.

I. First then, THE CONVERT’S DESCRIPTION OF HIS COMING TO CHRIST is given in these words, “We have found...Jesus,” and what he says is perfectly true.

If any of you is saved, it will be by finding Christ—by your *personally* making a discovery of Him, as that man did who found the treasure that was hid in the field. There must be a search for Christ, but if there *is* a search for Him, we may be certain of this one thing—there will *first* be a consciousness of *needing* Him.

Philip had sought Christ, or else he would never have said that he had found Him, but, before that, *Philip knew that there was need of a Messiah*. When he looked round about on the world and on the Church, he said to himself, “Oh, that the promised Messiah would come! There is great need of Him. The people need Him, the Church needs Him, the world needs Him.” When Philip looked into his own heart, he said, “Oh, for the coming of the Messiah! I feel that I need Him! I have urgent need of Him.”

Dear Hearer, do you feel that you need a Savior? You never will seek Him until you feel your need of Him. You must recognize that there is sin in you, sin for which you cannot make Atonement, sin that you cannot overcome. You must realize that you need another and a stronger arm than your own, that you need Divine help, that you need One who can be your Brother to sympathize with you, and be patient with you, and yet who can be the Mighty God to conquer all your sin for you! You need a Savior—that is the first thing that will prompt you to search for Him.

Needing a Messiah, *Philip read the Scriptures concerning Him*. He speaks about Moses and the Prophets and of what they had written concerning the promised Deliverer. O my dear Hearers, if you need to find Christ, you *must* search the Scriptures, for they testify of Him! Oh, that you did search the Scriptures, more, with the definite objective of finding the Savior! Probably the great majority of unconverted people never read their Bibles at all, or they read only just enough to satisfy their curiosity, or their conscience. Perhaps they read the Bible as a part of literature which cannot be quite ignored, but they do not take down the Holy Book and read it carefully and prayerfully, saying, “Oh, that I might find holiness, here! Oh, that I might find Christ, here!” If they did, it would not be long before they found Jesus. Well does Dr. Watts sing—

**“Laden with guilt and full of fears,
I fly to You, my Lord,
And not a glimpse of hope appears
But in Your written Word!
The volume of my Father’s Grace
Does all my griefs assuage,
Here I behold my Savior’s face
Almost on every page.”**

He who reads the Bible with the view of finding Christ will not be long before some passage of Scripture will seem to leap up to attract his attention, as though it were set on fire—and then it will speak to him of Jesus, whispering to him of the great Sacrifice on Calvary and speaking to his heart of Divine Love and Mercy. Philip was a searcher after Christ in the place where Christ loves to be—in the pages of Scripture—and you must be the same if you desire to find Jesus!

But then *Philip also gave himself to prayer*. We are not told so, but we feel sure of it. He asked the Lord to reveal Christ to him, to guide him to where the Christ would be, to let him know the Christ. Oh, if you want to be saved, be much in prayer! I do not mean merely *saying* prayers—what is the good of that? I do not mean simply saying fine words of your own, merely for the sake of uttering them. Prayer is communing with God! It is

asking the Lord for what you really feel that you need. What wagon loads of sham prayers are shot down at God's door, as if they were so much rubbish thrown away! Let it not be so with *your* prayers, but speak to the Lord out of your very soul when you come to the Throne of Grace. I cannot give you a better prayer than the one we have been singing—

**“Gracious Lord, incline Your ear,
My requests vouchsafe to hear!
Hear my never ceasing cry—
Give me Christ, or else I die!
Lord, deny me what You will,
Only ease me of my guilt.
Suppliant at Your feet I lie,
Give me Christ, or else I die!
You freely save the lost.
Only in Your Grace I trust:
With my earnest suit comply—
Give me Christ, or else I die!
You have promised to forgive
All who in Your Son believe—
Lord, I know You cannot lie
Give me Christ, or else I die!”**

With the open Bible before you to guide your understanding, kneel down and say, “O God, graciously reveal Christ to me by Your Holy Spirit. Bring me to know Him! Bring me, this day, to find Him as my own Savior!”

It is certain, also, that *Philip realized that he might claim the Messiah for himself*. One of the things that every man, who would find the Savior must do is to make sure of his right to come and take the Savior. The question that puzzles many is, “May I have the Savior?” My dear Friends, every sinner in the world is permitted to come and trust the Savior, if he wills to do so. “Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” “But,” asks some troubled soul, “will Christ have me?” That is not the question—the question is, “Will you have Christ?” He says, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” It is *you* who cast out the Savior, not the Savior who casts you out! The bolt to the door is on the *inside*—it is you who have bolted it and it is you who must undo the bolt and invite the Savior to enter your heart. He is willing enough to come in—wherever there is a soul that wants Him, He comes at once! Therefore, do not raise any quibbling questions about whether a sinner may come to Christ, or may not come! Is he not *commanded* to come? We are told to preach the Gospel to every creature, and He who gave us our great commission also added, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned.”

Philip accepted Christ as the Messiah. Do you ask, “What am I to do that I may find the Savior?” Well, what you have to do is, practically, this—*accept* Him! If you were sick and the doctor stood before you with the medicine ready prepared, you would not say, “What am I to do with this medicine, Sir? Am I to rub my hand on the outside of the bottle?” You know very well that there are certain directions as to how much is to be taken and how often. What you have to do with the medicine is to take

it! “But I cannot make that medicine work for my restoration.” Who said you could? All you have to do is to *take* it. It is just this that you have to do with Christ—*take* Him, *accept* Him, *receive* Him. Remember the 12th verse of this chapter out of which our text is taken—“As many as *received* Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.”

That is it, you see, *receive* Him, believe on His name. “But surely I am to do some good works.” Certainly, you *will* do good works *after* you have received Christ. But for your soul’s salvation, you are to do no good works, but simply to receive Christ. “Oh, but I must lead a holy life!” Yes, and you *will* lead a holy life *after* you have received Christ. But in order to the leading of a holy life you must have a *new heart*—and to get a new heart—you have to receive Christ! He will change you, He will renew you, He will make you a new creature in Himself! What you have to do is to *receive Him and to believe on His name*. O my dear Hearers, I trust that I am speaking to some, this evening, who will understand what I am saying! I fear that I am addressing many who will not believe, though I may put the Truth of God as plainly as it can be preached. You know that you may hold a candle right against a blind man’s eyes and yet he will not see, even then. The Holy Spirit must open your eyes to see what is meant by this receiving Christ, or else you will not understand what you are to do. You are not to *give* anything to Christ—you are to *take* all from Him! You are not to bring anything to Christ—you are to come to Him just as you are—and He will bring to you everything that you need. Then, when you have accepted Him by the simple act of faith, you will say with Philip, “We have found Jesus!” That is the convert’s description and a very good one, too—“We have found Jesus.”

II. But now, secondly, what is THE HOLY SPIRIT’S DESCRIPTION? I will read to you the very words again. Here they are—“The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and He found Philip.” Jesus finds Philip before Philip finds Jesus. *Philip finds Jesus because Jesus has found Philip.*

Now, notice, that *this is the previous work*. It came before Philip’s own finding. Jesus would go forth into Galilee to find Philip. Dear Friends, I remember very well that after I had found the Lord, I did not, at first, fully understand the Doctrines of Grace. I had heard them preached, but I had not comprehended them. I think at the time I would have been very much puzzled with the Doctrine of Election if anybody had spoken to me about it. But I was sitting down, one day, gratefully reflecting on what God had done for me. I knew that my sins were pardoned, I knew that I was accepted in Christ Jesus and I knew that I was renewed in heart—and in one moment the revelation came to me—“All this is the work of God!” The instant I saw that Truth of God, I said to myself, “Yes, that is the fact, and God be glorified for it! But why has this great work been worked in *me*?”

I knew that there was no merit in me before the Lord had dealt in mercy with my soul, so I said to myself, “This is the effect of Sovereign, Distinguishing Grace.” Then I understood in a moment how it is that *God*

begins with us and that it is God's will and God's eternal purpose, which, after all, lie deeper down than *our will or our purpose*—and God's will and God's eternal purpose must have the Glory! What a revelation it was to me! I saw the Doctrines of Grace immediately and I think that anybody who has been brought to find the Savior and who, *prayerfully studies the reasons for his salvation*, can see the same Truths of God that the Lord revealed to me.

Because, first of all, you began to be thoughtful, did you not? Who made you thoughtful? You would never have found the Savior if you had not become thoughtful instead of careless and indifferent. Who made you think of Divine things? What influence was it which worked upon you and caused you to feel that you must think about eternity, and Heaven, and Hell? Surely it was *God the Holy Spirit* going forth, in the name of Jesus Christ, and dealing with you in mercy!

Then you had a sense of your need and of your sinfulness. There was a time when you had no such sense. Who gave it to you? Where do you think that repentance, that sorrow for sin, that desire after Christ came from? Did all that grow in your own fallen human nature? Ah, believe me, that dunghill never brought forth such fair flowers as these! No, it was Christ who sowed the good Seed in your soul—it was He who made you feel your need of Him!

Next, when you read the Bible, you understood it. You perceived that Jesus was the only Savior of sinners. You saw His fitness to meet your case and you understood the plan of salvation. Who made you understand it? I know that it is plain enough for a child to comprehend, but *no one ever understands* spiritual things except by the operation of the Spirit of God! It was the Holy Spirit who gave you the spiritual power by which you were able to grasp the simple Truth concerning the way of salvation.

Then you began to pray. I have already spoken of that matter. But who taught you to pray? You had not been accustomed to real prayer—you had often had great mouthfuls of words—that was all. But now you began to cry, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" Oh, the groaning of your spirit and the anguish of your heart as you cried to God! Who gave you that anguish? Who broke you all to pieces and made every broken bone cry out for mercy? Who, indeed, but Christ who worked mightily in your soul by the power of the Holy Spirit?

And when you yielded yourself up to Christ, when you believed in Jesus and found salvation, where did that faith come from? Is it not always the work of the Spirit of God? Is not faith the gift of God and do you not confess that it is so in your case? Once, when I was a little child, I thought I saw a needle moving across the table and I would have been wondering who made the needle march as it did, but I was old enough to understand that somebody was moving a magnet underneath the table and the needle was following the magnet which I could not see. Thus the Lord, with His mighty magnet of Grace, is often at work upon the hearts of men, and we think that their desire after God and their faith in Christ are of themselves. In a sense, the desire and the faith *are* their own, but

there is a Divine Force that is at work upon them, producing these results! It is Jesus finding Philip, though Philip does not know it. Philip thinks that *he* is finding Jesus, but behind the veil it is Jesus finding Philip! This was the previous work.

And, dear Friends, *this was very delightful work for the Lord Jesus Christ.* Notice how it is put—“The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and He found Philip.” O my blessed Lord, how He will go forth to find a soul! A journey is never too long for Him and He never wastes a day. “The day following Jesus would go forth, and He found Philip.” Oh, may my Lord delight to come forth and find some of you! You are, tonight, in a place where He has found a good many. I pray that He may find some of you. Perhaps you do not know how it was that you came here. You did not mean to come out, tonight, but here you are in this crowd, in the thick of this great throng. My Lord has found many a precious jewel here—to itself it seemed nothing but a poor pebble, but to Him it was a diamond of the first water! O my Master, find some more of Your jewels tonight! Lord Jesus, come and find Philip, and find Mary, and then let Philip and Mary declare that they have found You!

When our dear Master goes forth to find a soul, *it is very effectual work.* He said to Philip, “Follow Me,” and Philip at once followed Him. Christ did not need to preach a long sermon. His discourse contained only two words, “Follow Me.” I will gladly end my sermon here if my Master will preach to some of you His two-worded sermon, “Follow Me,” “Follow Me,” “Follow Me!” “Come, poor Soul, you do not know the way! ‘Follow Me.’ You need someone to go before you, to be your leader, ‘Follow Me.’ You need someone to be your shelter, your companion, your all, ‘Follow Me.’” That is what you have to do, good woman. You have been worrying about what you have heard from different preachers. Christ says to you, “Follow Me.” That is what you have to do, young man! You have been reading those modern thought books till you do not know whether you are on your head or on your heels. *Burn them!* Jesus says, “Follow Me.” I know that some of you have been distracted with all sorts of silly talk—let that go to the dogs. Jesus says, “Follow Me.” The crucified Savior says, “Follow Me.” Take Him for your Atonement! The risen Savior says, “Follow Me.” Take Him for your life! The Savior on the Throne of God says, “Follow Me.” Take Him for your joy! The Savior coming in Glory hereafter says, “Follow Me.” Take Him to be your hope! “Follow Me.” “Follow Me”—that is the text for tonight—and that is the sermon, too! Jesus said to Philip, “Follow Me,” and Philip followed Him, directly. And he not only followed Christ, but he immediately began to try to get others to follow Him!

Please notice, also, that *Philip was found by Christ in a very different way from the other disciples.* Two of them had been found through the teaching of John the Baptist, but Philip had apparently had no teaching. Another of the little company had been found through the private call of his brother. Philip may not have had any relative or friend to speak to him, but the Savior just said to him, “Follow Me,” and he followed Him! Dear Friends, do not begin comparing your conversion with somebody

else's. If the Lord Jesus Christ calls you and says to you, "Follow Me," and you follow Him, if there never was another soul converted in exactly the same way, it does not matter at all! If you have come to Him, if you have trusted in Him, you are saved.

The pith of all that I have to say is this. Do not get to worrying yourselves, as some of you do, about God's eternal purpose and about the secret working of the Holy Spirit—and about how this can be consistent with your following Christ when He bids you. They are perfectly consistent! Some persons have asked me, at times, to reconcile these two things, and I have said to them, "Very well, tell me the difficulties, and I will reconcile them." It would be quite as easy to state them as to meet them, for, in fact, there are none! "Oh, but," says one, "you tell me to believe in Christ and yet you constantly preach that faith is the work of the Spirit of God!" I know that I do. "You say that God has a chosen people." Yes, I do. "And yet you say that men are to choose Christ?" I do. "Well, how do you reconcile those two things?" Show me that there is any difficulty about the two things and then I will reconcile them. You *imagine* the difficulty, for there is none in reality! There does not exist any in practical life!

I believe that God has predestinated whether I am going down to the Lord's Supper at the close of this service, but I shall go down as well as my legs can carry me. "Oh," you say, "you make it out to be a matter of your own free will?" Yes, I do. "And yet you believe it to be God's eternal purpose?" Yes, I do. "Well, then, reconcile the two things." Again I say that there is no difficulty in the case! There is nothing to be reconciled, for both statements are true! You might as well ask me to reconcile the land and the water, or to reconcile the dog-star, Sirius, and a farthing rushlight. There is no quarrel between them and I have no time to waste on needless argument. Come to Christ! And if you do, it will be because the Holy Spirit draws you! If you find the Savior, it will be because the Savior first found you! Perhaps, in Heaven, you may see some difficulties and get them explained. Down here you need not see them and you need not ask to have them explained. Salvation is all of God's Grace, from first to last—yet is it true that the Grace of God leads men to do what Moses did, according to our subject this morning [See Sermon #2030, Volume 34—*Moses—His Faith and Decision*—Read/download entire sermon at <http://www.spurgeongems.org> .] to make a choice and to choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. God grant that you may make an equally wise choice!

I have done when I have said this one thing more. Philip, Peter and Andrew were all of Bethsaida—"Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter." These three good men, these three Apostles, were all of Bethsaida. That ought to be some comfort to many of you, my dear Hearers, because there are numbers of you who are here, tonight, who are of Bethsaida. Sitting all round me, I see people who, I believe, are of Bethsaida. "Oh," you say, "we were never there in all our lives!" Listen. Bethsaida was one of the places in which Christ had done many of His mighty works and you remember that when the people repented not, Je-

sus uttered over them that sad lamentation, “Woe unto you, Chorazin! Woe unto you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the Day of Judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, which are exalted unto Heaven, shall be brought down to Hell: for if the mighty works which have been done in you, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the Day of Judgment, than for you.”

Now, there are some of you here who have heard the Gospel for many years and have seen the power of the Grace of God in your families—and it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, and for Sodom and Gomorrah in the Day of Judgment, than it will be for you, inasmuch as you have rejected the Savior! But, as there were these three men—Philip and Peter and Andrew who were of Bethsaida—and I should think that the home of James and John was not very far off from the same place—why should *you* not come to Christ? Why should *you* not become members of His Church and, if it is the Lord’s will, preachers of His Word? God grant that it may be so!

Oh, how I long in my soul for the salvation of every one of you! Many of you who have come here, tonight, are strangers to me. I trust that you will not be strangers to my Master! Tonight, I pray you, here in the very heat of midsummer, before the harvest shall be past and the summer shall be ended, “Seek you the Lord while He may be found! Call you upon Him while He is near! Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.” Receive Christ! Trust in Him! God grant that you may do so, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: *John 1:29-51*

Verse 29. *The next day*—This chapter is a record of the events that occurred on different days. Sometimes God does great things in a single day—one extraordinary day may have more in it than a hundred ordinary years! It is well for us to try to live by the day and not to let any day pass without some good action having been done in it. Let us never have to cry, “I have lost a day.”

29. *John saw Jesus coming unto him, and said, Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.* We ought never to be slow in delivering such a message as that which John the Baptist uttered! I do not wonder that as soon as John knew that Jesus was the Messiah, he told the good news to others! Have you found Jesus? Tell your brother, tonight, or, if not tonight, go as soon as you can, and bid him, “Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.”

30-34. *This is He of whom I said, After me comes a Man who is preferred before me: for He was before me. And I knew Him not: but that He should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bore record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from Heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him. And I knew Him not: but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom you shall see the Spirit descending and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizes with the Holy Spirit. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.* John was acquainted with Jesus, for they were related to one another, and were brought up together, but he did not officially know Him as the Messiah until He saw the Holy Spirit descending and remaining on Him, for that was the Lord's token by which he was to recognize Him. He refused, therefore, to follow any knowledge or judgment of his own. He would not know Jesus as the Christ until he saw the private sign for which the Lord had told him to look. As soon as he saw that, then John said that he knew Him, and as soon as he thus knew Him, he began to preach Him! Has the Lord given you in your soul a token that Christ is your Savior? Do you know Him by the witness of the Holy Spirit? Then go and speak of Him to others and, like John, say, "Behold the Lamb of God!" Let this be your one business between here and Heaven.

35, 36. *Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; and looking upon Jesus as He walked, he said, Behold the Lamb of God!* "Again the next day." See how the Evangelist goes by *days* in his record. John preached the same sermon two days running—and if you proclaim Christ and Him crucified—you may preach Him 200 days running, but you will never preach Him too often! If you preach Christ as the Lamb of God, the great Sin-Bearer, you may be always at that blessed work. There are some who very seldom preach Christ as bearing the sin of men, so that others of us must do it all the more often to make up for their shortcomings. As for me, I can say with Charles Wesley—

***"His only righteousness I show,
His saving Truth proclaim;
'Tis all my business here below,
To cry, 'Behold the Lamb!'"***

37. *And the two disciples heard Him speak and they followed Jesus.* It is hard preaching when you preach away your congregation, but John did this deliberately. He wished these two no longer to be his disciples, but to become the disciples of Jesus. He had mastered the meaning of his own words, "He must increase, but I must decrease," and he was quite willing that it should be so—"The two disciples heard Him speak and they followed Jesus."

38, 39. *Then Jesus turned and saw them following, and said unto them, What do you seek? They said unto Him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where do You dwell? He said to them, Come and see.* He gave them a full invitation to come to the place where He tarried and see for themselves. That is what Jesus still says, "Come and see." If any of you want to know Him, "Come and see." You are perfectly welcome to "Come and see" all that Jesus has to show you!

39. *They came and saw where He dwelt and abode with Him that day: for it was about the tenth hour.* The best part of that day was the portion which they spent with Jesus—it was the best day they had ever enjoyed, for they lived with Jesus! It was also the beginning of better days for these two disciples, for, having once lived with Jesus, they learned never to live without Him. Oh, that we, also, may abide with Him!

40, 41. *One of the two which heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother, Simon, and said to him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ.* Where should missionary work begin? A brother should begin with his brother. It is all very well to have a desire to go to the heathen in Africa, but you had better begin work as a missionary in England, and then go to Africa. He who cannot win his brother is not likely to win anybody else. "He first found his own brother, Simon." This Andrew, who was afterwards to bring so many to Christ, must begin at home and succeed there. If we are not faithful with one or two relatives, how can God trust us with a pulpit and a congregation?

42. *And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, He said, You are Simon the son of Jonas.* "Simon, son of a dove, your name may point you out as being timid—mind where you wing your flight."

42. *You shall be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, a stone.* Something more solid than the son of a pigeon! Something more stable than the son of a dove! Christ changes men's names and changes their natures, too. He can make the most fickle of us to become firm and steadfast. Oh, that He would thus work by His Grace upon us!

43, 44. *The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and found Philip, and said to him, Follow Me. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.* "The day following." See, Friends, what a wonderful chapter this is! There is a book called, *The Book of Days*. I call this chapter, the *Chapter of Days*. Every day seems memorable for some great event. "Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter," was a poor, miserable village, but God greatly honored it. Great works often begin in little places. The best of beings came out of the despised town of Nazareth! And three of the best of men—Philip, Andrew and Peter—came out of Bethsaida.

45. *Philip found Nathanael, and said to him, We have found Him, of whom Moses in the Law, and the Prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.* True faith may make blunders. Jesus was *not* the son of Joseph, except by reputation, and He was Jesus of Bethlehem quite as much as He was Jesus of Nazareth—but true faith is accepted of God even though it makes some mistakes. It believes God's Word and it believes God's Son and, therefore, it shall be accepted.

46. *And Nathanael said unto him, Can there be any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip said to him, Come and see.* Christ had said, "Come and see." Now Philip used the same words, "Come and see." It is always right to follow the example that the Lord Jesus has set for us!

47, 48. *Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him and said of him, Behold an Israelite, indeed, in whom is no guile! Nathanael said to Him, When did*

You know me? You may remember that, a short time ago, I preached a sermon upon Nathanael. [See Volume 34, No. 2021, “Nathanael—Or, the Ready Believer and His Reward.”—Read/download entire sermon at <http://www.spurgeongems.org> .] He was a kind of Jewish John Blunt, a man who always spoke his mind. He had a mind and he had a mind to speak it—and he spoke his mind! So, the moment that Christ spoke of him, he asked, “When did You know me?” He was conscious that Christ knew him and, being a man who was altogether free from cunning and craftiness, he pointedly asked how Christ came to know him.

48. *Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.* What was he doing under the fig tree? Jesus knew and Nathanael knew, but nobody else knew and, perhaps, nobody else ever *will* know. That was a secret between Christ and Nathanael. He was doing something there that he regarded as quite private—and the Savior’s allusion to his being under the fig tree was the most plain proof he could have of Christ’s Divinity. “Oh,” he thought, “He who can remind me of that secret transaction must be God.”

49, 50. *Nathanael answered and said to Him: Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel. Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto you, I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You shall see greater things than these.* You who are honest in heart. You who can be convinced by a single argument—and, mark you, one good argument is as convincing as 20 good arguments, and a great deal better than a 100 bad ones—you who are willing to be led by a single thread shall be led! If you are willing to believe on what is clear evidence, you shall have more evidence—“you shall see greater things than these.” God will show much to that man who has eyes with which to see. He who will not see and does not wish to see, shall grow more and more blind—and the darkness shall thicken about him.

51. *And He said to him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter you shall see Heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.* He could see *actually* what Jacob saw only in a dream when he beheld that wonderful stairway of Light which leads from earth to Heaven, even the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by His Manhood and His Godhead bridges the distance between us and God!

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—605, 576, 606.

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FINDING AND FOLLOWING CHRIST

NO. 3225

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 24H, 1910.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 21, 1870.

"We have found Him."
John 1:45.

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon on verses 43 to 45 is #2375, Volume 40—
FOUND BY JESUS—AND FINDING JESUS
—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

I HOPE there are many here who are seeking Christ, but I feel sure that there are with us many more who can truthfully say, "We have passed beyond that stage, for we have found Him." Others may declare that there never was such a Person as Jesus of Nazareth, but we know there was and still is, for, "we have found Him," and we are living in happy daily fellowship with Him! We bear our glad testimony to what the Grace of God has done for us and we say with Philip, "We have found Him, of whom Moses in the Law and the Prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph," whom we also worship as the Son of God.

Notice how positively Philip speaks. He had, himself, only just been found by Christ, yet he does not say, "We think we have found the Messiah," or, "We *hope* we have found the promised Deliverer." No, without the slightest hesitation he says, "We *have* found Him." This is a matter about which it is possible for us to be quite as positive as Philip was. There are abundant reasons why we may have a well-grounded assurance that Christ is our Savior if we have truly trusted in Him. Some have thought and said that it is not possible for us to know we are saved. Thank God that is not true and many can adopt the Inspired Language of the Apostle John and say, "We *know* that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son, Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." Such positiveness as this is attainable, by God's Grace, by every true Believer in Jesus Christ!

Let me remind you, first, that *it ought to be so*. Whether we are saved or not is a matter of the greatest importance to us. We cannot afford to let it rest upon a, "perhaps," or a, "maybe." If I have really found Christ, my sins are forgiven me for His sake—and this is a fact of which I ought to be quite certain. If I have found the Lord Jesus Christ, I am reconciled

to God by the death of His Son, I have been adopted into the family of God, I may confidently look to God for the supply of all my needs, both for this life and for that which is to come—and I may expect to be taken at the right time to dwell with Him forever. Such glorious blessings as these ought not to be mere matters of speculation with us! Our possession of them ought to be the result of clean, unmistakable evidence. If I have not found Christ, I am in danger of death every day and of the Hell that is the everlasting prison of all unbelievers. If I have not found Christ, I am still without hope and without God in the world—“condemned already”—because I have not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God! Surely I ought not to go to bed tonight with that all-important question unsettled. I can understand a man being in doubt upon this matter, but I cannot understand his resting comfortably while it is a matter of doubt! If you are content to be in doubt as to whether you are entitled to your estates, or as to whether you are mortally diseased or not, well, those are only minor matters compared with the salvation of your souls! God forbid that you should be willing to let the far greater matter remain in suspense! Seek the aid of the Holy Spirit and never rest satisfied until you know assuredly that you have found the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior!

A poor woman, some nights ago, wrapping around herself her poor thin shawl, was walking along the street because she had nowhere else to go. And as she was passing a certain building, she saw written over the door, “For the homeless.” “That is the place for me,” she said, and in she went. Now, my Friend, are you a sinner? Then I have to tell you that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. Are you lost? Then I have to tell you that He came to seek and to save the lost. It would have done that poor woman no good at all to sit down on a rich man’s doorstep and consider how poor she was—she got what she needed by going to the Home for the Homeless—and Jesus Christ is a Home for Homeless souls, so away with you, poor homeless soul, and find in Him the shelter that you need! May God’s Grace enable you to flee straight away to Christ, for if you do, He will not refuse to receive you!

Remember, also, that *no real spiritual comfort can come to us until we know that we have found Christ*. Perhapses and maybes are like thorns in our pillow—they prevent us from resting. Or they are like stones in a pilgrim’s shoes—they make walking very uncomfortable for him. To be able to say with Paul, “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day,” is to have a fountain of consolation springing up within your heart! But to have to cry—

**“Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought—
Do I love the Lord, or no?
Am I His, or am I not?”**

is to be in continual unhappiness! The man who is in such a state as that may be safe, but he cannot have joy and peace. He must be weak, trembling and tossed to and fro, like the waves of the troubled sea when it cannot rest. It is only when we can say with David, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise," that there is the music of deep and lasting joy in the songs that we send up to Heaven!

Let me add that you may confidently hope to attain this assurance of knowledge because *so many others have already done so*. I have reminded you of Philip, John and Paul, but such knowledge as this was not confined to the Apostolic age—it is at this moment the priceless privilege of tens of thousands of Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ! If I were now to say, "Let all those Brothers and Sisters who know that Christ is theirs stand up and testify to this fact," I believe that the bulk of this congregation would at once rise! And I pray that you weaker ones, you timid and trembling souls may seek Him who can work this great Grace in you, also, so that you, too, may be able to say as positively as Philip did, "We have found Him."

I. Now I am going, with the Holy Spirit's help, to suggest a few reflections for those to bear in mind who can say, "We have found Him." And the first is this—IF WE HAVE FOUND CHRIST, HE MUST HAVE FIRST FOUND US.

Two verses (v 43) before our text, we read that this very man who had found Christ, had himself been found by Christ. It is probably true, my dear Brother or Sister in Christ, that you were brought to know the Lord through some human instrumentality. A godly father or mother, a faithful minister of the Gospel, a loving Sunday school teacher or other Christian friend. Or the reading of the Word under the guidance of the Holy Spirit may have been the means of your conversion. There is a very precious link between the instrument of your salvation and yourself which you ought never to forget. Surely we can never cease to thank God for the man or the woman whom He used to lead us out of darkness into His marvelous Light! Yet that holy man did not convert us. That gracious woman could never have given us a new heart and a right spirit. We must trace our new birth to its superhuman origin—*it was the Lord, and the Lord alone* who worked that wondrous miracle of regeneration! "You has HE quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." If the Lord has not turned you from the error of your ways, you are still in the broad road that leads to destruction! If He has not found you as the shepherd finds his lost sheep, you are still wandering on the dark mountains of sin and woe! And, as the sheep would never find its shepherd unless he first found it, so you, if you have found Christ, must first have been found by Christ!

I want you to go still further back and to remember that, inasmuch as you never imagined that it was wrong for Christ to save you, although He

has not saved all other sinners and although some in your own family have not yet found Him— and although some who attend the same place of worship as you do have not found Him, while you have found Him and been found by Him—you have never thought that it was wrong for Christ to make this difference between you and others. I want you to also remember that whatever Christ has done, He must have always meant to do—it must have been His eternal purpose to do it! Unless you are a careless blunderer, you do not do anything without having made up your mind to do it. And certainly, the Lord Jesus Christ has not acted in this great matter of the salvation of souls without thought and deliberation! Do you not see that this brings us to the Doctrine of Election? Many people do not like that Doctrine, but all Christian people, though they may not believe it as we do, must believe that which is the very essence of it—for if there is a difference between ourselves and others, it must have been Christ who made it by His Grace! And as He made it, then it must have been right for Him to make it, and it could not have been wrong for Him to purpose to make that difference! We do not believe that Christ does anything without a plan and a purpose. And it makes no difference whether the purpose was in His mind a year ago or from all eternity! I mean that there would be the same difficulty with regard to the Doctrine, though I see no difficulty in it at all. Well then, the Lord Jesus Christ purposed from all eternity to work His good work in you by His Holy Spirit—to bring you to repent of your sin and to trust in His atoning Sacrifice—and, therefore, it is a part of His promise to bring you home to Heaven to dwell with Him forever! Yet there have been and still are many in this world who have not found Him—more eminent than you are, people of greater ability and loftier station. There are wise men who have never become wise unto salvation and rich men who do not possess this heavenly treasure. There are mighty kings who lord it over mighty hosts of men, who know not the Lord of Hosts and yield not homage to the Lord Jesus Christ! When you think of all this, do you not marvel that *you* should have been found by Christ and that you should have found Christ? Do you not wonder that God should have chosen *you*, that Christ should have redeemed *you*, that the Holy Spirit should have regenerated *you*? And will you not bless and praise the Lord to all eternity for making you the simple subject of His Grace while such multitudes and so many far more mighty ones have been passed by?

This teaching, which seems to me to be so simple and plain, lies at the root of the most profound Doctrines of Holy Writ and it is, at the same time, one of the most practical Truths of God in the whole of the Divine Revelation! Nothing makes us love Christ more than knowing that He has loved us with an everlasting Love and, therefore, with loving kindness has drawn us unto Himself. Nothing makes us crave for likeness to Him so much as the knowledge that He has chosen us and ordained us, that

we should go and bring forth fruit and that our fruit should remain even, "fruit unto holiness, and the end, everlasting life." I wish that this Truth was understood and believed by all Christians, for it is God's Truth, and a very precious Truth. I feel sure that it is believed by many who have not recognized it or fully understood it. I remember preaching in the open air to a great crowd of miners, most of them Methodists. And as I preached, they shouted, "Glory!" "Hallelujah!" "Praise the Lord," and so on. Just as they were in full cry in that fashion, I paused a moment and then said, "This brings me to the Doctrine of Election." I could almost feel the cold shiver of disappointment that seemed to pass through the crowd. And it appeared likely that there would be no more "Hallelujahs" during that discourse. But I said to them, "In your hearts you really believe that Doctrine, though you imagine you do not. And before I have finished my sermon, I will prove it to you, and many of you will shout, 'Praise the Lord,' for it even more loudly than you were doing just now." I saw the look of incredulity upon their faces, but I went on. "Here is a man who was once a drunk, a swearer, a Sabbath-breaker, a thief, a liar and everything that was bad. But a great change has somehow come over him and he is quite a new man compared with what he used to be. There is no such alteration in many of his old companions and friends—who can have made him so different from what he once was? Here is a glorious golden crown and whoever has made this man to be such a contrast to what he was before ought to have this crown placed upon his head!" Then I said, "Shall I put the crown on the man's own head? Did he make this change in himself?" "No, no" came the answer from all parts of the crowd. "Well then," I asked, "On whose head shall I put the crown? Who is to have the glory of this man's conversion?" At once they cried, "The Lord, the Lord alone! Put the crown on His head." So far we were all agreed and I, therefore, asked next, "Was it wrong for God to make this difference?" No one dared to say that it was, so I advanced to my next question, "As it was right for God to make this difference, was it not also right for God to plan beforehand that He would do so? The Lord did not act without a set purpose and, therefore, as He is to be crowned for the action, is He not also to be crowned for the purpose to do it?" "Yes, that He is!" cried the crowd. "Bless His name, hallelujah!" So I won the hallelujahs, by His Grace, of my Methodist friends for the Doctrine of Election as I said I would!

We do not preach, we have never preached and we shall never preach that God has created any man for the purpose of destroying him! But we do preach and shall preach as long as we live, that salvation is of the Lord and all of Grace from first to last! And, therefore, that all the glory of it must be given to the Divine hand that worked the work, to the eternal mind that planned the work and to the great heart of love that was the

Fountain and Source from which the gracious purpose sprang! The only explanation of the whole matter is the one we have so often sung—

***“What was there in you that could merit esteem,
Or give the Creator delight?
‘Twas even so, Father,’ you always must sing,
‘Because it seemed good in Your sight.’
Then give all the glory to His holy name,
To Him all the glory belongs,
Be yours the high joy to still sound forth His fame,
And crown Him in each of your songs.”***

II. My second observation is—IF WE HAVE FOUND CHRIST, LET US FOLLOW HIM. Philip found Him and followed Him all his days.

Christ was given to be the Leader and Commander of His people, so His people should all follow Him. You have followed Him, Beloved, but can you not follow Him yet more closely? You are His disciples, but can you not learn more of Him than you have yet learned? Let us follow our Jesus promptly. I want to be in such a state of heart and mind that the moment I know what Christ’s will concerning me is, I do it! I would like to be a leaf borne along by the blessed current of His Divine Purpose—having no will or wish to resist the sacred influences of His unerring mind and loving heart—to obey His commands promptly and cheerfully and, not only to obey cheerfully, but also to *suffer* cheerfully if He so pleases! It is a blessed condition to be in to take anything and everything from Christ, whether it is a kiss or a blow—to do anything for Christ, whether it is pleasing to the flesh or not—to yield up everything for Christ, to be, indeed, a divine sacrifice for Him, which is, after all, only the “reasonable service” which He is fully entitled to claim from us! We read in the Revelation concerning some, “These are they which follow the Lamb wherever He goes.” And happy are they who imitate them, even while here on earth! Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, I entreat you to leave no path untrodden where you can see the footprints of your Lord and Master! Jesus went to Jordan’s stream and was baptized there by John—have *you* followed Him in this blessed ordinance? Jesus, even while living and laboring among sinners, was separate from them—are *you* living the separated life? What He did, let us do as far as it is in our power! What He was, let us be as far as that is possible! He was reviled, despised and rejected of men—so let us count it an honor to receive similar treatment for His sake. He was content to walk on the bleak side of the hill—let us not seek the sunny side by craving the world’s esteem. Is this your heart’s desire, Beloved? Do you sing—

***“Through floods and flames, if Jesus leads,
I’ll follow where He goes”?***

Then mind that you not only *sing* those lines, but make them true in your life! Are any of you following Christ afar off, as Peter did? Then beware lest you fall as Peter did! Are you following Christ in your business, or do you forget Him when you are in the office or in the market? Do you

follow Christ in your home, or do you forget Him when you are there? Some of you used to follow Jesus very closely and to be very warm friends of His—have you been growing cold towards Him? Oh, let this no longer be the case! If you have found Him, follow Him and follow Him “wherever He goes.”

III. Now, thirdly, IF WE HAVE FOUND CHRIST, LET US PRIZE HIM. It is no trifle that we find when we find Him, for He is the priceless pearl whose worth no man fully knows!

If I have found Him, how shall I prove that I prize Him? First, *let me be willing to lose all that I have for Him*. Does my present position in life involve me in sin? Then let me leave it rather than grieve my Lord. Is my business an evil one? Then let me renounce it at once, for if I do not, I shall have to renounce Him! Have I any companions who are the enemies of Christ? Then I dare not call them my friends. Is there some dear one with whom I have entered into such close association that it will draw me away from Christ? Then, while I can, let me break the connection, for I must give up all for the Christ who gave up all for me! The captain of a vessel, when his ship is in danger of sinking, will throw the most valuable cargo into the sea if, thereby, he may save the ship and the lives of all on board. And I must be willing to part with my joys, my pleasures, my money, my friends and all that I have rather than give up my Lord and Savior, for I must have Christ at any cost!

Further, if you have found Christ and want to prove that you can prize Him, *study to find out all that you can about Him*. Jesus Christ is a great mine of untold wealth and no man has ever yet perfectly explored that mine. Read the Scripture to learn all you can about Christ. Listen to any preacher or teacher who can tell you anything about Christ—and be sure to meditate as much as you can upon Christ. He is the chief among ten thousand—“yes, He is altogether lovely.” At our first sight of Him, we fall in love with Him, but His choicest beauties are the hidden ones which we only find by diligent search and much fellowship with Him. As you get to know more of Him in His Person, in His work, in His office, in His promises, in His power, in His love—you will prize Him all the more until you would not set even Heaven, itself, in comparison with Him—for what would Heaven be if He were not there?

Further, Beloved, if you prize Christ as you ought, *you will make all the use you can of Him*. And He loves to be of use to His people. Is there any sin upon your conscience? Run to Him to remove it from you! Is there any trouble on your mind? Go and tell Jesus! Is there anything that is a burden to you? Cast your burdens upon Him and He will relieve you of them, or give you the Grace and strength to carry them! Remember that Jesus Christ is an everyday Savior, an all-the-year-round Savior, a whole-of-life Savior, a Savior for the body as well as for the soul! Whatever there may be lacking in you, there is nothing lacking in Him

and He can supply all that you lack! He is the Bread of Life, so feed upon Him! He is the Light of the World, so see everything in the light that comes from Him! He is your All-in-All, so look for all in Him!

Show, too, that you prize Christ as you should by *letting others see how you value Him*. A bride who has many precious jewels will wear them where they can be seen and admired by others. And we, too, are to put on the Lord Jesus Christ who is more precious than all the gems in the universe! Some professing Christians are apt to blush at any allusion to their Christianity—but if it is the blush of shame, they have cause to be ashamed of such blushing! I never hear of any man blushing because he is a peer of the realm, though there have been many of the so-called “nobility” who might well cause their fellow peers to blush. But to blush because one is a Christian, oh, this must never be! As well might we blush at being likened to an angel! Suppose the ungodly point the finger of scorn at you—that is the only way in which such people can really honor you. Will you strike your colors because the enemy attacks you? No, no! Nail the flag to the mast and fight so bravely for Christ that the enemy has to strike *his* colors! It is the act of a pirate to sail under another flag, so whatever ship you meet on life’s wide sea, fly the flag of your King and defy the devil and all his legions to do their worst! At home and abroad, in the House of God or in the street, in the market or wherever you may be, let friend and foe, alike, know that you belong to Christ! I would that all of us who are members of this Tabernacle might love the Lord with a far deeper and more fervent love than we have ever yet experienced. I know that there are some eminently gracious souls among us and I pray that their number may be greatly increased, but I am anxious lest, as a Church, we should fall to the low level of so many of the professing Christians of this age! Our Lord Jesus Christ deserves the very best that we can bring to Him, so let us give Him our hearts, our minds, our time, our talents and all we have, to show how greatly we prize Him whom we have found!

IV. Fourthly, and briefly, IF WE HAVE FOUND CHRIST, LET US NEVER PART WITH HIM. Philip became one of Christ’s disciples, then one of His Apostles—and now he is with Christ forever!

Tomorrow you will go, young man, into the workshop or to the counter and your companions will laugh at you if you say you are a Christian. But do not part with Christ because of the laughter of fools! Some of you will be going to the Stock Exchange or to the various markets of this great city—but part not company with Christ by doing what is wrong. Hold Him fast and keep to that which is right, honest and true, for he is a traitor to Christ who gets even a penny by an unrighteous action! Tomorrow some of you may hear that which is blasphemous or foul—rebuke it in your Lord’s name, for he who is silent when he ought to speak is tacitly denying his Lord and Master. Again I say to you, hold

Him fast however much men may scoff at you for doing so, for such a treasure as Christ is well worth holding! Let no man separate you from your Lord. If you are truly His, I am persuaded that no one and nothing shall be able to part you. Though the devil himself should try to tear Christ away from you, he cannot do it, for Christ is stronger than Satan and He holds you with a Divine grip which the devil and all his hosts cannot relax!

I especially urge you not to let Jesus slip away from private prayer, or the reading of the Scriptures, or your intimate personal communion with Him. Make your prayers more fervent, your study of the Word more intense and real, and your daily walk with Christ more close and tender. Abide in Him! Never give Him or anyone else cause to think that you have left Him. The good soldier of Jesus Christ never has a furlough—he is like the knights of old who slept in their armor and were ready for the fray at any moment. A Christian is to always be a Christian and in every place! He may not do wrong once a year, nor once in a lifetime. What would you say to a man who told you he was only going to poison himself once? What would you think of a wife who said she was going to cease loving her husband just once? We, too, are married to Christ, so we are His and wholly His—and only His! Hold us fast, O blessed Lover of our souls, for only so can we continue to hold You fast!

V. My last injunction is this—IF YOU HAVE FOUND CHRIST, TELL OTHERS ABOUT HIM, even as Philip said to Nathanael, “We have found Him.”

I have sometimes feared that some professing Christians fancy that they are to keep Christ all to themselves. They seem to have an idea that Heaven is just—

“A little spot enclosed by Grace”—

where only they and a small select company of like-minded persons will gain admittance! I cannot congratulate them upon harboring such a notion and I very strongly urge them to imitate the example of a man who found that he had a forged bank-note in his possession—he threw it over a hedge and ran away as fast as he could for fear anybody should think it belonged to him! Such a spirit as that seems to me to be quite contrary to the mind of Him who wept over Jerusalem and who said, “How often would I have gathered the children together, even as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you would not!”

Have you found this great hive of honey and is it very sweet to your taste? Then tell others of it, for there is abundance for them and you, too. You are not like the poor people in a besieged city who feel that every mouthful that someone else eats leaves so much the less for them. Oh, no! There is “bread enough and to spare” in the great Father’s house, so no prodigal son need perish with hunger! At the Gospel banquet you may eat as much as you want, but there will be just as much left for others.

We have to deal with the God who is Infinite and Omnipotent, whose supply is inexhaustible and who will be glad and gratified as we spread far and wide the invitations to the great feast in honor of His Son! My Brothers and Sisters in Christ, as you love Him, follow His blessed example by going after the lost sheep until you find them! If you had only common humanity, it ought to make you earnest in seeking to deliver others from going down to the Pit, by telling them of Him who has paid the ransom price for all who put their trust in Him! A battlefield must present a terrible sight to all who gaze upon it. I wish all those who are so eager for war could see the horrors of which we can scarcely bear to read. Yet this great London presents a still more terrible sight to those whose eyes have been opened to see sinners as they really are in the sight of God! Our streets swarm with the unregenerate! Many of you live next door to them when they are at home. Some of you live in the same house with them. Some even sleep in the same room with them. Plead for your husbands or wives, your brothers and sisters, your parents or children—and plead *with* them as well as *for* them! God forbid that you should be eternally separated from those who are so near and dear to you! Pray for them night and day! You who are the Lord's remembrancers, take no rest and give Him no rest, and give them no rest until they are saved! Next to your own relatives, plead with and for your employees, your employer, your neighbors and all with whom you come in contact! And then widen your sympathies and supplications until they shall embrace all of woman born! Remember Richard Krill's question, "Brethren, the heathen are perishing, will you let them perish?" Do not neglect the heathen abroad or the heathen at home! An earnest minister said to his people one Sabbath, "I am going, this week on a mission to the heathen." The deacons looked at one another, for the pastor had not mentioned the matter to them. And the members thought, "We are about to lose our dear minister, but whatever has made him think of going as a missionary to the heathen?" While these thoughts were passing through their minds, he quietly added, "But I am not going out of this town in order to be a missionary."

And there is no need for anybody to go out of town in order to be a missionary to the heathen! There they are, Brothers and Sisters, all around you! And you are the missionaries. There is your work—go and do it—and may God bless you in it—and so may many precious immortal souls through you be led to find Jesus and to trust in Him for salvation, for His name and mercy's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ACTS 2:1-21.**

[The following Exposition is the earlier portion of the one published with Sermon #3224,
Volume 56—"REPENTANCE AND REMISSION"—

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

Verses 1-8. *And when the day of Pentecost [See Sermons #511, Volume 9—PENTECOST and #1783, Volume 30, also named PENTECOST—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from Heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem, Jews, devout men out of every nation under Heaven. Now when this was told abroad, the multitude came together and were confounded because every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marveled, saying, one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak, Galileans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? These men, so far from being able to speak many languages, could not, by themselves, speak even one correctly! The Galileans dialect was a base degradation of the true Jewish tongue, so that the Galileans were always the subject of sneers and scoffing on account of their mispronunciation. There are several stories in the old Rabbinical writings, all intended to ridicule the Galileans—yet these men had now been taught to speak their own language perfectly and, what was still more marvelous—languages that they had never heard now came pouring forth from their lips with the greatest fluency! How wide the range of those foreign tongues was, we learn from the following verses—*

9-11. *Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts in Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. Babel's curse was now removed—not by a reversing of God's curse, for God's curses and blessings are both like the laws of the Medes and Persians which never can be altered. Men still spoke the tongues of confusion, but the Apostles were able to speak to them all after receiving that miraculous gift of tongues. Thus was fulfilled that promise of Jesus, "He that believes on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do because I go unto My Father." Christ never spoke with many tongues, nor did He enable His disciples to do so during His life on earth! But when He had gone back to Heaven to His Father and had received gifts for men, they were enabled to do greater works than He had accomplished by His personal ministry here below.*

12,13. *And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What means this? Others mocking, said, These men are full of new wine. That is to say, if a Libyan, for instance, had been listening to*

one who was preaching in the language of Cappadocia, he might think that the man was merely babbling strange sounds without any meaning in them. To others, the Inspired Speech of the Apostles was only like the incoherent utterance of drunken men!

14-20. *But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said to them, You men of Judaea, and all you that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: for these are not drunk as you suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the Prophet Joel; and it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions* [See Sermon #806, Volume 14—A YOUNG MAN'S VISION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] *and your old men shall dream dreams: and on My servants and on My handmaidens I will pour out in those days of My Spirit; and they shall prophesy: and I will show wonders in Heaven above and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke: the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord comes.* Doubtless this refers first to the siege of Jerusalem, when those strange portents were seen in the heavens, and afterwards to that far greater and more notable day of the Lord, the Day of Judgment, when the moon shall become as blood and the sun shall become black as sackcloth of hair.

21. *And it shall come to pass, that whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.* What a glorious Gospel verse this is! This is one of the great lifeboat-texts of the Bible. He who can get into this boat shall certainly sail to Glory in safety! “Whoever”—there is no exception of character, whatever his past life may have been! “Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord”—here are no hard conditions—prayer, trust, confession of that trust—all these make up calling upon the name of the Lord. And whoever shall do this, not only may be but, “shall be saved.” There is no perhaps, no maybe about it—“Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

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

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

NATHANAEL AND THE FIG TREE

NO. 921

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 20, 1870,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Philip found Nathanael and said to him, ‘We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law, and also the Prophets, wrote; Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said to him, ‘Can anything good come out of Nazareth?’ Philip said to him, ‘Come and see.’ Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, ‘Behold, an Israelite, indeed, in whom is no deceit!’ Nathanael said to Him, ‘How do You know me?’ Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.’ Nathanael answered and said to Him, ‘Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!’ Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Because I said to you, ‘I saw you under the fig tree,’ do you believe? You will see greater things than these.’ And He said to him, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see Heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.’ ”
John 1:45-51.

VERY often we address the Gospel to the chief of sinners. We believe it to be our duty to do this with the greatest frequency. For did not our Lord, when bidding His disciples to preach the Good News in every place, use the words, “beginning at Jerusalem”? Where the chief of sinners lived, there was the Gospel first to be preached. But at the same time it would show great lack of observation if we regarded all mankind as being equally gross, open offenders against God. It would not only show a want of wisdom, but it would involve a want of truthfulness.

For though all have sinned, and deserve the wrath of God, yet all unconverted men are not precisely in the same condition of mind in reference to the Gospel. In the parable of the sower we are taught that before the good seed fell upon the field at all, there was a difference in the various soils. Some of it was stony ground, another part was thorny, a third was trodden hard like a highway, while another plot is described by our Lord as “honest and good ground.” Although in every case the carnal mind is enmity against God, yet are there influences at work which in many cases have mitigated, if not subdued, that enmity.

While many took up stones to kill our Lord, there were others who heard Him gladly. While to this day thousands reject the Gospel, there are others who receive the Word with joy. These differences we ascribe to God’s prevenient Grace. We believe, however, that the *subject* of these differences is not aware that Grace is at work upon him—neither is it precisely Grace in the same form as saving Grace—for the soul under its power has not yet learned its own need of Christ, or the excellency of His salvation.

There is such a thing as a preparatory work of mercy on the soul, making it ready for the yet higher work of Grace, even as the plowing comes before the sowing. We read in the narrative of the creation that before the

Divine voice said, "Let there be light," darkness was upon the face of the deep, yet it is added, "The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." Even so in the darkness of human nature, whereas yet no ray of living light has shone, the Spirit of God may be moving with secret energy, making the soul ready for the hour when the true light shall shine.

I believe that in our congregations there are many persons who have been mercifully restrained from the grosser vices. They exhibit everything that is pure and excellent in moral character—they are persons who are not maliciously opposed to the Gospel and are ready enough to receive it if they did but understand it. They are even anxious to be saved by Jesus Christ, and have a reverence for His name, though as yet it is an ignorant reverence. They know so little of the Redeemer that they are not able to find rest in Him. This slenderness of knowledge is the only thing that holds them back from faith in Him.

They are willing enough to obey if they understood the command. If they had but a clear apprehension of our Lord's Person and work, they would cheerfully accept Him as their Lord and Savior. I have great hopes that the Lord of Love may guide the Word which is now to be spoken so that it may find out such persons, and may make manifest the Lord's secretly chosen ones—those prisoners of hope who pine for liberty—but know not that the Son can make them free.

O captive Soul, abhorring the chains of sin, your day of liberty is come! The Lord, the Liberator who looses the prisoners, is come at this very hour to snap your bonds!

I. In dwelling on this narrative, I shall first say a few words concerning NATHANAEL HIMSELF. We are told that he was a guileless man, "an Israelite, indeed, in whom is no guile." That is to say, like Jacob, "he was a plain man," and not like Esau, "a cunning hunter." Some minds are naturally serpentine, tortuous, slippery. They cannot think except in curves—their motives are involved and intricate, and they are of a double heart. These are the men who look one way and row the other. They worship the god Janus with two faces, and are of the same practice, if not of the same persuasion as the Jesuits. They cannot speak a thing plainly or look you in the face while they talk, for they are full of mental reservations and prudential cautions. They guard their speech. They dare not send abroad their own thoughts till they have mailed them up to the throat with double meanings.

Nathanael was just the very opposite of all this. He was no hypocrite and no crafty deceiver. He wore his heart upon his sleeve. If he spoke, you might know that he said what he meant and that he meant what he said. He was a childlike, simple-hearted man, transparent as glass. He was not one of those fools who believe everything. But on the other hand, he was not of that other sort of fools so much admired in these days who will believe nothing, but who find it necessary to doubt the most self-evident Truth in order to maintain their credit for profound philosophy. These "thinkers" of this enlightened age are great at quibbles, mighty in feigning or feeling mistrust concerning matters which common sense has no doubts about.

They will profess to doubt whether there is a God, though that is as plain as the sun at noonday. No, Nathanael was neither credulous nor mistrustful. He was honestly ready to yield to the force of Truth. He was willing to receive testimony and to be swayed by evidence. He was not suspicious, because he was not a man who, himself, would be suspected. He was true-hearted and straightforward—a plain dealer and plain speaker. Cana had not within her gates a more thoroughly honest man. Philip seems to have known this, for he went to him directly, as to a man who was likely to be convinced and worth winning to the good cause.

In addition to being thus a simple-hearted man, Nathanael was an earnest seeker. Philip went to him because he felt that the good news would interest him. “We have found the Messiah,” would be no gladsome news to anyone who had not looked for the Messiah. Nathanael had been expecting the Christ, and perhaps had so well understood Moses and the Prophets that he had been led to look for His speedy coming. The time when Messiah would suddenly come in His temple had certainly arrived, and he was day and night with prayer, like all the faithful of the ten tribes, watching and waiting for the appearing of their salvation. He had not as yet heard that the Glory of Israel had, indeed, come, but he was on the very edge of expectation.

What a hopeful state of heart is yours, my dear Hearer, if you are now honestly desirous to know the Truth, and intensely anxious to be saved by it! It is well, indeed, for you if your soul is ready, like the photographer’s sensitive plate, to receive the impression of the Divine Light—if you are anxiously desiring to be informed if there is, indeed, a Savior—if there is a Gospel, if there is hope for you, if there is such a thing as purity and a way to reach it. It is well, I say, if you are anxiously and earnestly desiring to know how and when, and where—and determinately resolved, by God’s Grace, that no exertion shall be spared on your part to run in the way that shall be marked out, and to submit yourself unto the will of God. This was the state of Nathanael, an honest-hearted lover of plain truth, seeking to find the Christ.

It is also true that he was ignorant up to a certain point. He was not ignorant of Moses and the Prophets, these he had well considered. But he knew not that Christ as yet had come. There was some little distance between Nazareth and Cana, and the news of the Messiah’s coming had not traveled there. If it had been bad news, it would have flown on eagles’ wings, but being good news its flight was slower, for few persons are so anxious to tell out the good as the evil. He had not, therefore, heard of Jesus of Nazareth till Philip came to him. And how many there are even in this country who do not know yet what the Gospel means, but are anxious to know it, and if they did but know it would receive it?

“What?” you say, “where there are so many places of worship and so many ministers?” Yes, just that. Yes, and in the very heart of our congregations and in the midst of our godly families, ignorance has its strongholds. These uninstructed ones may be Bible readers, they may be Gospel hearers, but as yet they may not have been able to grasp the great Truth that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. They may never have seen what it is for Christ to stand in the sinner’s place, and for

that sinner, by an act of trust, to obtain the blessings which spring out of a substitutionary sacrifice. Yes, and here in this house where I have tried and labored to put the Gospel in short Saxon words and sentences that cannot be misunderstood, there may be some who are still saying, "What is this all about? I hear much of believing, but what is it? Who is this Christ, the Son of God, and what is it to be saved from sin, to be regenerated, to be sanctified? What are all these things?"

Well, dear Friend, I am sorry you should be in the dark, yet am I glad at heart, that though you do not know what I would have you know, yet you are simple-hearted, truth-loving, and sincere in your seeking. I am persuaded that light will not be denied you, you shall yet know Jesus and be known of Him.

In addition to this, however, Nathanael was prejudiced—we must modify that expression—he was *somewhat* prejudiced. As soon as Philip told him that he had found Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph, Nathanael said, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Here let us remark that his prejudice is exceedingly excusable, for it arose out of the faulty testimony of Philip. Philip was a young convert. He had only found Jesus the day before, and the natural instinct of every truly gracious soul is to try and tell out the blessed things of Christ. So away went Philip to tell his friend, Nathanael. But what a many blunders he made in the telling out of the Gospel! I bless God, blundering as it was, it was enough to bring Nathanael to Christ.

But it was full of mistakes. Dear Souls, if you know only a little about Christ, and if you would make a great many mistakes in telling out that little, yet do not hold it in—God will overlook the errors and bless the Truth. Now observe what Philip said. He said, "We have found Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph," which was our Lord's popular name, but was in no way correct. He was not Jesus of Nazareth at all. He was not a native of Nazareth—our Lord was of Bethlehem. He had dwelt at Nazareth, certainly, but He was no more entitled to be called of Nazareth than of Jerusalem.

Then Philip said, "Son of Joseph," but He was only the reputed son of Joseph, He was in truth, the Son of the Highest. Philip gave to our Lord the common and erroneous titles which the unthinking many passed from hand to hand. He did not say, "We have found the Son of God," or "the Son of David," but yet he uttered all he knew—and that is all God expects of you or me. Oh, what a mercy it is that the imperfections of our ministry do not prevent God's saving souls by us! If it were not so, how little good would be done in the world!

Mr. John Wesley preached most earnestly one view of the Gospel, and William Huntingdon preached quite another view of it. The two men would have had a holy horror of each other and censured each other most conscientiously. Yet no rational man dares say that souls were not saved under John Wesley, or under William Huntingdon either, for God blessed them both. Both ministers were faulty, but both were sincere—and both made useful. So is it with all our testimonies. They are all imperfect, full of exaggerations of one Truth, and misapprehensions of another. But as long as we witness to the true Christ foretold by Moses and the Prophets

our mistakes shall be forgiven, and God will bless our ministry, despite every flaw.

So He did with Nathanael—but Nathanael’s prejudice rose out of Philip’s blundering way of talking. If Philip had not said, “of Nazareth,” then Nathanael would not have said, “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” If Philip had said that Jesus was of Bethlehem, and of the tribe of Judah, and that God was His Father, then this prejudice would never have beclouded the mind of Nathanael, and it would have been easier for him to have acknowledged Jesus as the Messiah. We must, therefore, try to avoid mistakes, lest we cause needless prejudice. We should so state the Gospel that if men are offended by it, it shall be the Gospel which offends them, and not our way of putting it.

It may be that you, my Friend, are a little prejudiced against Christ’s holy Gospel because of the imperfect character of a religious acquaintance, or the rough manners of a certain minister. But I trust you will not allow such things to bias you. I hope that, being candid and honest, you will come and see Jesus for yourself. Revise the report of the disciple by a personal inspection of the Master. Philip made up for his faults when he added, “Come and see.” And I would try to prevent mine from injuring you by using the same exhortation—

“Come and see Jesus and His Gospel for yourself.”

One other mark of Nathanael I would mention. He was in all respects a godly, sincere man, up to the measure of his light. He was not yet a Believer in Jesus, but still he was an Israelite, indeed. He was a man of secret prayer, he did not mock God as the Pharisees did by mere outward worship. He was a worshipper of God in his heart. His soul had private dealings with the God of Heaven when no eye saw him. So it is, I trust, with you, dear Hearer. You may not yet have found peace, but you do pray, you are desirous of being saved. You do not wish to be a hypocrite. You dread, above all things, falling into formality. You pray that if ever you become a Christian you may be a Christian, indeed. Such is the character I am endeavoring to find out, and if it is *your* character, may you get the blessing that Nathanael did.

II. Now secondly, we have seen Nathanael, let us for a moment consider NATHANAEL’S SIGHT OF JESUS. “Philip says unto him, Come and see.” And so Nathanael came to see the Savior, which implies that although he was somewhat prejudiced against this new Messiah, yet he was candid enough to investigate His claims. Beloved Friend to whom I have already spoken, if you have any prejudice against the true Gospel of Jesus Christ, whether it is occasioned by your birth and education, or previous profession of some other faith, be honest enough to give the Gospel of Jesus Christ a fair hearing. You may hear it in this House of Prayer. You may read it in these pages. Do not dismiss it until you have thoroughly examined it. All that we would ask of you is now—knowing you to be honest, knowing you to be earnest—seriously sit down and weigh the Doctrines of Grace as you shall find them in the Scripture. And especially the life of Christ and the blessings which He brings to those who believe in Him.

Look these things over carefully. They will commend themselves to your conscience, for God has already prepared your conscience to judge righteously. And as you judge you will perceive a peculiar beauty and a charm

about the Truths of the Gospel which will surely win your heart. Latimer had preached a sermon against the doctrines of the Gospel, and among his hearers there was a holy man who afterwards became a martyr. He thought, as he listened to Latimer, that he perceived something in his tone which showed him to be an honest opponent. Therefore he hoped that if light were brought to him he would be willing to see by it.

He sought him out, obtained an interview with him, and his explanations entirely won honest Hugh to the Reformed opinions—and you know what a valiant and popular minister of the New Covenant Latimer became. So, my honest Friend, give to the Gospel of salvation by faith in the precious blood of Jesus a fair hearing, and we are not afraid of the result.

Nathanael came to Christ, again, with great activity of heart. As soon as he was told to, “come and see,” he did come and see. He did not sit still and say, “Well, if there is any light in this new doctrine, it will come to me.” No, he went to it. Do not believe in any teaching which bids men sit down and find peace in the idea that they need not strive to enter in at the strait gate of Truth. No, Brethren, if Grace has ever come to you, it will arouse you from lethargy and lead you to go to Christ. And by His Grace you will be most earnest, with all the activity of your spirit, to search for Him as for hidden treasure. It is a delightful thing to see a soul on the wing.

The majority of our population are, as regards religion, down on the ground and unwilling to rise. They are indifferent to spiritual Truth. You cannot get them to give earnest heed to eternal matters. But once get a mind on the wing with a holy earnestness and solemn thoughtfulness, and we do believe, with God’s Grace, that it will, before long, be brought to a saving faith in Christ. “Come and see,” said Philip, and come and see Nathanael did. He does not appear to have expected to be converted to Christ by what he saw with his natural eyes—his judgment was formed from a mental view of Him.

It is true he saw the Person of the Messiah, but he did not expect to see in the human form any lineaments that might guide his judgment. He waited until the lips of the Messiah had spoken, and then, when he had seen the Omniscience of that mysterious Person, and how He could read his thoughts and spy out his secret actions, then he believed. Now I fear some of you live in darkness because you are expecting some kind of physical manifestation. You hope for a vivid dream, or some strange feeling in your flesh, or some very remarkable occurrence in your family. Except you see signs and wonders you will not believe.

But a saving sight of Christ is another matter! Truth must impress your mental faculties, enlighten your understanding, and win your affections. The Presence of Christ on earth is a *spiritual* one, and you will come to see Him not with these mortal optics just now, but with the eyes of your soul. You will perceive the beauty of His Character, the majesty of His Person, the all-sufficiency of His Atonement. And as you see these things the Holy Spirit will lead you to believe in Him and live. I pray God that such a sight as this may be vouchsafed to every honest seeker who may hear or read these words.

III. A far greater matter now demands our attention—CHRIST'S SIGHT OF NATHANAEL. As soon as Jesus saw the man, He said, "Behold an Israelite, indeed," which shows us that Christ Jesus read Nathanael's heart. I do not suppose that our Lord had ever seen Nathanael with His own human eyes. But yet He understood Nathanael's character—not because He was a great judge of physiognomy and could perceive at once that He had a simple-hearted man before Him. But because He was Nathanael's Creator, being the searcher of hearts and the trier of the reins, He could read Nathanael as readily as a man reads a book which is open before his eyes.

He saw at once all that was within the enquirer, and pronounced a verdict upon him that he was free from falsehood. And then to prove to Nathanael still further how clearly He knew all about him, He mentioned a little incident which I cannot explain, nor can you, nor do I suppose anybody could have explained it except Nathanael and Jesus—a special secret known only to them both. He said to him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." What he was doing under the fig tree we may guess, but we cannot know to a certainty. Perhaps it would be true of all to believe that the fig tree was to Nathanael what the Hermonites and the hill Mizar had been to David.

David says, "I will remember You from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, and from the hill Mizar." What were those sacred recollections he does not tell us, and although we can form a shrewd guess, David and his God, alone, knew the full mystery. So between Christ and Nathanael there was a common knowledge connected with that fig tree which we cannot hope to discover. And the moment our Lord mentioned that hallowed spot, its remembrances were to Nathanael so secret and so sacred that he felt that the Omniscient One was before him. Here was evidence which he could not doubt for an instant, for one of the most private and special secrets of his life, which he had never whispered into any human ear, had been brought up as by a talismanic sign. A red-letter day in his private diary had been revived by the mention of the fig tree, and He who could touch so hidden a spring in his soul must be the Son of God.

But what was Nathanael doing under the fig tree, according to our best surmise? Well, as devout Easterns are accustomed to have a special place for prayer, this may have been a shadowy fig tree under which Nathanael was accustomed to offer his devotions. And perhaps just before Philip came to him, he may have been engaged in personal and solitary confession of sin. He had looked round the garden and fastened the gate that none might come in—and he had poured into the ear of his God some very tender confession under the fig tree shade. When Christ said to him, "When you were under the fig tree," it brought to his recollection how he poured out his broken and his contrite spirit, and confessed sins unknown to all but God. That confession, it may be, the very look of Christ brought back to his remembrance and the words and look together seemed to say, "I know your secret burden, and the peace you found in rolling it upon the Lord." He felt, therefore, that Jesus must be Israel's God.

It is very possible that in addition to his confession, he had under the fig tree made a deliberate investigation of his own heart. Good men generally mingle with their confessions self-examination. There it may be that this man who was free from guile had looked into the tendencies of his nature and had been enabled with holy surprise to see the fountains of the great deep of his natural depravity. He may have been taken, like Ezekiel, from chamber to chamber to see the idols in his heart, beholding greater abominations than he suspected to be there—and there humbled before the Lord. Beneath that fig tree he may have cried with Job, “I abhor myself in dust and ashes.” This, also, Jesus had seen.

Or under the fig tree he may have been engaged in very earnest prayer. Was that fig tree to Nathanael what Peniel was to Jacob, a spot where he had wrestled till the break of day, pleading with God to fulfill His ancient promise, to send the Promised One who should be a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of His people, Israel? Was it so? We think it probable. That fig tree had been to him a Bethel, no other than the House of God and the very gate of Heaven.

And what if we should suggest that, perhaps in addition to his prayer, Nathanael had vowed some solemn vow under the fig tree—if the Lord would but appear and give to him some sign and token for good, then he would be the Lord’s and spend and be spent for Him? If the Lord would but send the Messiah, he would be among His first followers. If he would but speak to him by an angel or otherwise, he would obey the voice. Jesus now tells him that he shall see angels ascending and descending. And reveals Himself as the Messiah to Whom he had solemnly pledged himself. It may he so.

Once more, it may be that under that fig tree he had enjoyed the sweetest communion with his God. Beloved Friends, do you not remember well, certain hallowed spots? I have one or two in my own life too sacred to mention. If my memory should forget all the world besides, yet those spots will evermore be green in my memory—the truly holy place where Jesus, my Lord, has met with me and showed me His love. One time it was “the King has brought me into His chambers.” Another time I got me to “the mountain of myrrh and to the hill of frankincense.” Once He said, “Come, My Beloved, let us go forth into the field. And let us lodge in the villages,” and another time He changed the scene and said, “Come with Me from Lebanon, My Spouse. Look from the top of Amana, from the top of Hermon, from the lions dens, from the mountains of the leopards.”

Have we not sometimes had special festivals when He has broached the spiced wine of His pomegranate? When our joy has been almost too much for the frail body to endure, for our joyous spirit, like a sharp sword, has well-near cut through its scabbard? Ah, it is sweetly true. He has baptized us in the fire of His love, and we shall forever remember those secret spots, those dear occasions. This, then, was a token, a secret token between Christ and Nathanael, by which the disciple recognized his Divine Friend and future Master and Lord. He had met the Messiah in spirit before, and now he meets Him in very flesh and blood. And by this token does he know Him. In spirit the Lord set His seal upon Nathanael’s heart, and now, by the sacred signet, the Israelite discerns his King.

Thus we see the Lord had seen Nathanael in his previous engagements, before he became actually a Believer in Jesus. This fact suggests that each of you who have been sincerely seeking to be set right, and to know the Truth, have been fully perceived in all your seeking and desires by the God of Grace. When you let fall a tear because you could not understand the Word, Jesus saw that tear. When you groaned because you could not get satisfaction of heart, He heard that groan. Never true heart seeks Christ without Christ's being well aware of it. Well may He know of it, for every motion of a trembling heart towards Himself is caused by His own love.

He is drawing you, though you perceive not the hands of a man which encircle you. He is the hidden loadstone by which your heart is moved. I know it is night with you, and you grope like a blind man for the wall. But if your heart says, "O that I could but embrace Him! O that He were mine! If I could but find rest in Him, I would give all that I have." Then be assured that Jesus is close to you—your prayers are in His ear, your tears fall upon His heart. He knows all about your difficulties, all about your doubts and fears, and He sympathizes in the whole—and in due time He will break your snares, and you shall yet, with joy, draw water out of the wells of salvation.

This Truth is full of consolation to all who seek with sincerity, though as yet in the dark. Before the minister's voice spoke to you—when you were under the fig tree, when you were by the bedside, when you were in that inner chamber, when you were down in that saw pit, when you were in the hayloft, when you were walking behind the hedge in the field—Jesus saw you. He knew your desires, He read your longings, He saw you through and through. Even from of old He has known you.

IV. So we have seen Nathanael's sight of Christ, and then Christ's sight of Nathanael. Now the fourth thing is, NATHANAEL'S FAITH. I must go over much the same ground again under this head. Nathanael's faith—note what it was grounded on. He cheerfully accepted Jesus as the Messiah, and the ground of his acceptance lay in this—Jesus had mentioned to him a peculiar incident in his life which he was persuaded no one could have known but the Omniscient God. He concluded, therefore, Jesus to be the Omniscient God, and accepted Him at once as his King. This was very frequently the way in which persons were brought to confidence in Christ.

The same thing is recorded in this very Gospel a few chapters further on. The Lord sat down on the well and talked to the Samaritan woman, and there was no kind of impression produced upon her until He said, "You have had five husbands, and he whom you now have is not your husband." Then it flashed upon her, "This stranger knows my private history! Then He is something more than He appears to be. He is the Great Prophet." And away she ran with this on her tongue, because it was in her heart, "Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?"

The same was the case with Zaccheus. You may think, however, that this mode of conversion was confined to the days of our Lord's flesh, and the age of miracles, but it is not so. The fact is that at this very day the discovery of the thoughts of men's hearts by the Gospel is still a very po-

tent means in the hands of the Holy Spirit of convincing them of the Truth of the Gospel. How often have I heard enquirers say, "It seemed to me, Sir, as if that sermon was meant for me. There were points in it which were so exactly like myself, that I felt sure someone had told the preacher about me. And there were words and sentences so peculiarly descriptive of my private thoughts, that I was sure no one but God knew of them. I perceived that God was in the Gospel speaking to my soul."

Yes, and it always will be so. The is the great revealer of secrets. It is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Jesus Christ in the Gospel knows all about your sins, all about your seeking, all about the difficulties which you are meeting with. This ought to convince you that the Gospel is Divine, since its teachings lay bare the heart, and its remedies touch every spiritual disease. The knowledge of human nature displayed in the simplest passage of the Gospel is more profound than the productions of Plato or Socrates. The Gospel, like a silken thread, runs through all the windings and twisting of human nature in its fallen state. O that its voice may come home personally to you! May it, by the Spirit, convict you of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment—and bring you to lay hold on eternal life!

Nathanael's faith, it must be mentioned, was peculiar not only in its ground, but in its clear and comprehensive character. He accepted Jesus at once as the Son of God. He was Divine to him, and he adored Him. He also accepted Him as the King of Israel. He was a royal personage to him, and he tendered Him his homage. May you and I receive Jesus Christ in this way, as a real Man, but yet certainly God—a Man who was despised and rejected, but yet the Man anointed above His Brethren—who is King of kings and Lord of lords.

I admire Nathanael's faith, again, because it was so quick, unreserved, and decisive. "You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" Christ was glorified by the decision, the quickness of this faith. Delay in believing Him dishonors Him. O honest Heart, O sincere Mind, pray that you may as quickly come into the light and liberty of true belief! May the Holy Spirit work in you a ready satisfaction in the atoning sacrifice and Divine Person of the ever blessed Immanuel.

V. This brings us to the last point of consideration. We have shown you Nathanael and his sight of Christ, and Christ's sight of him. And then the faith that Nathanael received. Now notice NATHANAEL'S AFTER-SIGHT. Some persons want to see all that there is in Christianity before they can believe in Jesus, that is to say, before they will go to the primary school they must clamor for a degree at the university. Many want to know the ninth of Romans before they have read the third of John. They are all for understanding great mysteries before they understand that primary simplicity, "Believe and live."

But those who are wiser and, like Nathanael, are content to believe at first what they are able to perceive, namely, that Christ is the Son of God and the King of Israel, shall go on to learn more. Let us read our Lord's words, "You shall see greater things than these. Verily, verily, I say unto you, hereafter shall you see Heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." To full grown disciples Je-

sus promises, "Greater things than these shall you *do*." To young converts He says, "Greater things than these shall you *see*."

He gives promises in proportion to our ability to receive them. The promise given to Nathanael was a most fitting one. He was all Israelite, indeed—then he shall have Israel's vision. What was the great sight that Israel or Jacob saw? He saw the ladder whereon angels ascended and descended. Precisely this shall Nathanael see. He shall see Jesus Christ as the communication between an opened Heaven and a blessed earth—and he shall see the angels ascending and descending upon the Son of Man!

If you bear the character of Israel, you shall enjoy the privileges of Israel. If you are an Israelite, indeed, you shall have the blessing that made Israel glad. Nathanael had owned Jesus as the Son of God—here he is told that he shall see Him in His glory as the Son of Man. Note that last word of the chapter. It is not so much that Christ humbly called Himself the Son of Man—though that is true—but that to see the glory of Christ as God is a simple thing. To see and understand the glory of Christ as Man, this is a sight for faith, and probably a sight which, so far as our senses are concerned, is reserved for the day of His coming.

When He shall appear—the very Man that suffered upon Calvary—when He shall appear upon the Great White Throne to judge the quick and the dead, if you believe in Jesus as the Son of God, you shall yet see Him in His glory as Man swaying the universal scepter, and enthroned as King of all the earth. He had called Jesus the King of Israel, if you remember. Now he is to see his Lord as the King of the angels—to see the angels of God ascending and descending upon Him. Believe, my dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, as far as you know Him, and you shall know more of Him. Open your eyes but to the candle light of the Law, and you shall soon behold the sunlight of the Gospel. The Lord is very gracious to fulfill the Gospel rule, "To him that has, shall be given, and he shall have abundance."

If you acknowledge the King of Israel, you shall see Him as the Lord of Hosts before whom archangels veil their faces, and to Whom seraphim are servitors. The great sight, I suppose, Nathanael saw as the result of his faith was not the transfiguration, nor the ascension as some suppose, but a spiritual view of Christ in His mediatorial capacity as the great link between earth and Heaven. This is, indeed, a sight transcending all others. We are not divided from the invisible. We are not separated from the infinite. The mortal has communion with the Immortal. The sinner speaks with the Holy One—prayers climb up to Heaven, and benedictions descend by way of the Great Substitute.

Can you see this, O Soul? If so, the sight will make you glad. You are not exiled now, you are only at the foot of the stairs which lead to the upper chamber of your Father's House. Your God is above and bright spirits traverse constantly the open gangway of the Mediator's Person. Here is joy for all the saints—for this ladder can never be broken—our communion is abiding. No doubt, to Nathanael's view, the promise would be fulfilled as he perceived the Providence of God as ruled by Christ Jesus who orders all things for the good of the Church. Was not this intended in the figure of angels ascending and descending upon the Son of Man, that is, all

agencies, whether living or material, all subject to the Law and the dominion of Christ?

So that all things work together for good to them that love God! Do not go fretting to your homes and say, "Here are new doctrines springing up, and new gods that our fathers knew not, and ministers are slipping aside from the faith, and bad days have fallen upon the Church, and Romanism is coming up, and infidelity with it." All this may be true—but it does not matter one fig—for God has a great end in view. He has a bit for the mouth of leviathan. He can do as He wills with His most powerful enemies. He rides upon the wings of cherubs and rules the storm. The clouds are but the dust of His feet. Never believe that Providence is out of joint. The wheels of this great engine may revolve some this way and some that, but the sure result will be produced, for the great Artist sees the final result to be secure.

God's glory shall arise from it all! Angels descend, but they as much do the will of God as those which ascend. Some events seem disastrous, and even calamitous. But they shall all, in the end, prove to be for the best. For he —

"From seeming evil still educes good,"

And better still, and better still—in infinite progression. Until the crown shall come upon the head of Him who was separated from His Brethren, and all the glory shall roll in waves of mighty song at the foot of His Throne, may you and I continue to see this great sight more and more clearly. Until the Lord shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the trump of the archangel, and the voice of God, and once and for all we shall see Heaven and earth blended, may we continue to see angels ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.

All this matchless glory will come to us through that little window by which we first saw the Savior. If we will not see Him as our Lord until we can see all the future, we shall perish in darkness. If you will not believe, neither shall you be established. But if, with simple and true hearts you have been seeking Jesus, and now come and accept Him as the Lord, the King of Israel—then greater things than these shall be in store for you! Your eyes shall see the King in His beauty and the land that is very far off.

And the day of His pompous appearing, when Heaven and earth shall hang out their streamers for overflowing joy because the King has come unto His own. And the day the crown is put upon the head of the Son of David—then shall you see it and see it all—for you shall be with Him where He is, that you may behold His glory, the glory which the Father gave Him before the foundation of the world. Come Lord Jesus! Come quickly!

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NATHANAEL—THE MAN NEEDED FOR THE DAY NO. 2068

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY,
FEBRUARY 3, 1889**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 20, 1885.**

***"Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!"
John 1:47.***

THIS morning we had a "behold"—a behold about a new convert. "Behold, he prays!" It seemed to me most suitable to occupy the evening with another "behold"—a behold about another new convert who is just having his eyes opened to see the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ and to become His disciple. "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!" When Jesus says "Behold!" we may be sure that there is something worth seeing. A man in whom is no deceit is so rare a person nowadays that we ought not to grudge an evening for such a sight. We are always beholden to a man who enables us to see an honest man—such a man is one of the noblest works of God and will reward our observation. Diogenes looks for an honest man with a lantern. But Jesus finds him.

I shall not go into the full meaning of what "an Israelite indeed," is, but I shall dwell, principally, upon the fact that Nathanael was a man with no deceit in him. The Lord Jesus Christ made that discovery. And who so fit to spy out a man in whom was no deceit—as the Christ in whom there is no deceit? Two guileless men were that day together, for in our Lord Jesus there is neither guilt nor deceit. In us there is guilt but we trust that by Divine Grace deceit has been cast out of us. It will be so if the Lord does not impute iniquity to us, according to the words of David, "Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord *imputes* not iniquity and in whose spirit there is no deceit." The Lord is sure to put all deceit out of us when He removes all guilt from us.

Men generally see what they are. And because Christ has no deceit, therefore He spies out the man with no deceit in his heart and at once commends him and welcomes him and says, "Behold," as if delighted and charmed to see him. The Lord Jesus appreciates the sincerity which He perceives in Nathanael. I am afraid that a man without deceit is not much esteemed by the ordinary run of mankind. He will be wise, however, not to trouble himself about that matter. The approbation of Jesus is better than the approbation of the whole world. They say of a man nowadays who has no deceit, "Well, he is a very simple-minded kind of fellow. Exceedingly good, but rather blunt. Quite unsuspecting and therefore you may readily take him in."

Mark you, there is no reason why a man without deceit should be taken in. For while we are harmless as doves we can also be wise as ser-

pents if we are rightly taught. But in the ordinary way, a man that is not crafty and cunning—a man that speaks his mind and practices no policy and is not acquainted with tricks and shifts—is thought to be a poor creature by the wise and deceitful men of this day. But if Jesus Christ takes delight in a guileless man, the guileless man may be perfectly satisfied with this high measure of acceptance. God grant to each one here present, man and woman, that we all may be found free from deceit!

I am going to speak upon the text in two ways. First, here is a happy sign in a seeker of Christ—a man in whom there is no deceit. And secondly, here is a vital point about a Believer in Christ—about the man who has passed the stage of seeking and has become a Believer. He must have in his spirit no deceit. It is vital to him that it should be sincere and straightforward.

I. Here, first, we clearly see A HAPPY SIGN IN A SEEKER—he is a man in whom is no deceit. We were talking, some time ago—a few of us ministers of Christ who have been familiar with the souls of men for years—and I made a remark that seemed to startle my Brethren. The remark was this—although I had spoken with thousands of men and women who had been converted and I had seen persons brought to Christ of every age and of every character, yet I scarcely remembered the conversion of a man who was double-minded, crafty, false, deceitful.

Of course, God's Grace is sovereign and God chooses whomsoever He wills and He does not choose according to human merit. But it is very singular that of the ground which is mentioned in the parable, which brought forth fruit to the Divine Sower, it is said that it was "honest and good ground." By this was not intended any spiritual grace, nor even any moral virtue of high degree in the condition of the persons who received the Gospel. But there was sincerity about the people so described—they were honest, straight, unsophisticated and free from subtlety and cunning. It is in the honest heart that sowing Truth takes root.

I have known the drunkard saved. Blessed be God for that! I have seen the swearer have his mouth washed so that he has spoken sweet and goodly words for the rest of his life. I have known the fornicator and adulterer and the harlot delivered from the Stygian ditch of abominable lust. I have known men guilty of almost every sin delivered from the power of evil. And concerning all these, the living evidence of holy conduct has proved their sincerity beyond all question. But I still say that my memory does not bring before me a single person habitually guilty of the double-shuffle, habitually a liar, habitually a cheat, converted to God at all. The insincere, the canting, the hypocritical, the habitually deceptive—I know not of converts from these classes.

There may have been such and I should not wonder if there have been. But I do not happen to have met with them. The most of the converted people I have seen have been straightforward and true after a way. They might curse and swear, they might deny the Gospel, they might occasionally lie under strong pressure or from sheer flippancy. They might commit all manner of criminalities but as a rule, there they were and you could see them to be what they were. They were bad fellows, enough, but they did not dissemble—they sinned most grievously but they never pretended to be saints. Such were the men that Christ converted. Such was Paul, of

whom we spoke this morning—intensely earnest and honest in all that he did—even when he persecuted the saints of God.

It seems to me that often in the man who is filled with deceit there is a want of something for the Grace of God to work upon. When this creature repents it is only a skin-deep business—his heart is never wounded. When he believes something you do not know that he believes it. His faith is no better than another's unbelief. He begins at once putting another meaning on what he professes to believe—you cannot hold such an eel. If anything comes home to his feelings, he has such a very minute conscience left that there is no room for conviction to light upon, when it does pay him a visit.

He has got into such an habitual condition of cheating that he cheats himself as well as others. He cannot be true and thorough—it is not in him. When the Truth of God shines full upon his face he does not openly pull down the blind to shut out the light—he talks about how delightful it is and yet manages to shut his eyes to it. He praises the Truth of God but he does not love it. He is a lover of the Gospel in words but he cunningly spreads abroad sentiments which undermine it. I am sick of such men and yet they are not hard to find. We have all around us the hollowness which would, if it were possible, deceive even the very elect.

There is scarcely anything under Heaven so damnable as deceit, deceit and craft. The ingrained deceiver is capable of everything evil and incapable of anything good. Out of that kind of man the devil manufactures his chief instruments. Traitors like Judas Iscariot are carved out of the ebony of deceit. I say, again, that it is horribly difficult for any of these people ever to be converted and it seldom happens that they are. They may get into the Church even like Ananias and Sapphira, but they have to be carried as corpses outside of her—such a dishonor are they to the company of God's people.

The man of whom we have great hope is one in whose spirit there is no deceit. Now I will show you the sort of man he is. He is one who, when he is spoken to about Christ, has difficulties but in his difficulties he is honest. Nathanael is told by his friend Philip that he has found the Messiah. Nathanael enquires, "Where did you find Him?" Why, He comes from Nazareth! "Well," says he, "but can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Now, when a man will plainly state his objection, his friend can do his best to meet it and to answer it with some such word as, "Come and see."

Around us are a number of persons who object to our Lord. But the objections which they mention are not their real objections. Their pretended difficulties are a red-herring—to turn the scent from their real reasons for opposition. Many scorn Christ because they do not want to give up their sin. They pick up some technical question—some difficulty raised by geology or evolution, or something or other and they make a fuss over it—while the real impediment is that they are living an unclean life and do not want to give up their evil ways. The difficulty is that they are making gain in a wrong way and to be Christians would not suit their pockets, for they would have to quit a bad trade, or conduct their business with less profits.

There is where the true difficulty lies. But they do not care to mention the real impediment, and therefore they pretend that they are the victims of some awful mystery or terrible dogma which frightens them out of their salvation. We know the bugbears which these deceivers set up. They deceive themselves more than they deceive anybody else. He is the sincere seeker who does not play at sham difficulties but who speaks out at once and tells his friend what the point is that hinders him.

Of the man in whose spirit there is no deceit, we may also say that, as a seeker, he is also candid—he is willing to examine. Consequently, like Nathanael when Philip said, “Come and see,” he does come and see for himself and he examines on his own account to see if it is so. Oh, if half the people that object to the Gospel would but read the Bible for themselves they would not object any longer! Few people nowadays care to read solidly good books. But when they do so they are usually greatly the better for it. I saw a young Brother last Friday and in answer to the question, “How were you converted?” he said, “It was through reading Luther.”

I was somewhat surprised and I said, “Luther? What book of Luther?” “I read Luther on the Galatians.” “You did? I am glad to see the man that reads Luther on the Galatians.” He was a young man employed in the city and I admired him for preferring Luther to the wretched novels of the period. “I read it two or three times,” he said, “and I saw the difference between the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace. I saw how man was ruined by his works and how he must be saved by faith and I found the Savior while reading that book.” I was delighted with the young man and I feel persuaded that one day we shall hear of him in another capacity.

Oh, if people would but read the Bible and books about the Bible which explain the Gospel with the desire to know what the Gospel is, they would find Him of whom Moses and the Prophets did write! Alas, men do not find Jesus, for there is deceit in their spirit and they do not *desire* to find Him. They do not *want* to know and so they remain ignorant. They do not want to discover and so do not discover. In the Last Great Day, when that curtain shall be drawn back which hides from our eyes all souls that are lost—if we are permitted to look into that dreadful place—we shall not find there a soul that ever sincerely cried to God for mercy through Jesus Christ.

Nor do I think that we shall find one who searched the Scriptures and heard the Gospel with the desire to find Christ. Hell is filled through that deceitfulness of the natural heart which will not let them receive Jesus and His salvation. They blind their own eyes to the light of God. Happy is the pastor to whom enquirers state their difficulties honestly and who can persuade them to examine the subject about which they are in doubt!

Now, dear Friends, a man who is really free from deceit in his heart—a downright, upright, straightforward man—is open and ready for the work of God’s Holy Spirit. For instance, such a man is open to conviction. When he reads the Bible or hears a sermon, he says, “I desire to know all about it.” Tell me the Truth of God, however unpleasant it may be. He does not want the preacher to flatter him. Some do, you know. They must have very pretty words spoken about the dignity of human nature, the universal Fatherhood of God, the almost unavoidable character of sin and the

hopeful destiny of universal manhood or else their proud hearts sneer at the preacher.

But the man in whose spirit there is no deceit loves best the preacher who uses the surgeon's knife without partiality and cuts down to the root of the cancer. "No," says he, "I did not come here to be fooled and amused. I want to know about that which concerns my soul for life and for death and to know the truth of it." Such a man is open to conviction. He has laid aside prejudice. He does not dictate to the minister of God but he is ready to hear all the Truth and to feel the power of the message if it is, indeed, from God. He is ready to confess his sin when he finds that he has broken the Law of God. When he perceives that the Law deals with thoughts and words and deeds. When he sees how wide its range is, so as to take in every action of this mortal life, he is ready to bow his head and say, "I am a sinner. God be merciful to me a sinner."

The man who is crafty and double-minded will not do that—indeed, it is the last thing he cares to do. He begins excusing himself in some fashion or other. He is no worse than other people. He was misled by others. He could not help it. Everybody else did it. He only followed his natural passions and he could not help his constitutional inclinations. It was his fate to do it. He had intended to do better but was overcome. These are a few of the forms of the shuffling of deceit. If the man were an honest man he would say, "Yes, it is so. I broke the Law and did wrong. I am not going to dispute the question. I am forced to plead guilty. And if you condemn me, O my God, You will do no more than is just." That is the kind of man who, before long, will find salvation and enter into peace with God.

This is the man who lies open also to the power of the Holy Spirit in reference to conversion. You have proved to him that he is wrong and with his whole heart he desires to turn from evil. Show him his mistake and he will be eager to redress it. His honest soul will not rest in wrong-doing. Look at the Apostle Paul before his conversion. He is a desperate Pharisee and a furious persecutor. He tears along like a wild horse in his mad career of self-righteousness. But he no sooner perceives that Jesus really is the Christ than he is just as intense in his attempts to make known the glory of Christ as he was before to overthrow His kingdom. He sinned through ignorance and unbelief and not from malice.

If we spoke to honest hearts at all times, we should see plentiful conversions. But, alas, "the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked: who can know it?" Further than this I believe that a sincere heart, a true heart, is a great guard to a man against pretended plans of salvation. "Come here," says one, "I will prove to you salvation by works." The honest man replies, "That will not suit me. For salvation by works would require that my works should have been perfect throughout life and mine have not been so. Mine have been imperfect—are still imperfect—and will be imperfect till I die. I cannot stand on the footing of merit for an hour."

"Come," says another, "here is salvation by sincerity. Sincere obedience is the patent article by which men are saved. Do your best and be sincere and the matter is squared." But the man who is upright in heart answers, "I do not see that. Neither can I rest therein." Indeed he ought not to do so. For such a hope is based on a lie. If a man were to take poison sincerely, thinking it to be medicine, it would not cure him, but kill him. If a

man most sincerely stands in the way of an express steam-engine and thinks he can stop it, it will “stop him” and his life altogether. The candid, thoughtful mind cannot believe that invention of self.

You see, the man whose heart is quite honest wants something real and solid and has no desire to arrive at an easy peace by deceitful means. Being truthful himself, he cannot bear a lie. And when somebody offers him a comforting falsehood, he replies, “I cannot be comforted except by the Truth of God. I will not let my conscience be stayed and eased except by that which is legitimate and right. I want to be justly and truly saved and not merely tempted to believe that I am saved, when I am not.”

I believe that many persons will never be a prey to priest craft, or any of the thousand inventions of mankind, because God, in great mercy, has made them men in whose spirits there is no deceit. And therefore they search after that which is true and have an inward perception of what is the Truth of God. They may be mistaken in some things and will be, for we are all fallible. But a true heart is very much like the mariner’s needle which is true to its own pole and therefore helps a man in his steering. God grant us all to have an instinct for truth and to be led by its aid to Christ, who is the Truth, so that we may truly find Him and be saved by His great salvation.

To be free from deceit also helps us to see our need of the Spirit of God. The right-minded man who will examine himself carefully will perceive that what is required of him is more than he can ever give, unaided and unassisted. He will discover that there is that about a Christian’s life to which he cannot attain unless he is born again. He will feel that there is a something about the child of God which he does not possess and cannot imitate and can only gain by a work of the Spirit of God in the heart.

Brethren, a man whose heart has been made to be true—even though as yet he may not have found Christ—is one of those men who are pretty sure to find Him. He is on the outlook for such a Savior as Christ, and therefore he will spy Him out when He passes by. To such men I like to tell the story of substitution—how a just God cannot pass by sin without a penalty. How that just God, in the Person of His Son, came here on earth and took human nature into connection with His own. How in that perfect Manhood He took the sins of all who believe in Him and bore them in His own body on the tree. That, by bearing what was due to the dishonored Law, He might put away sin, so “that God might be just and the Justifier of him that believes.”

Why, I have seen true hearts leap at this. They have said, “Yes, that is the secret—that is the solution of the dread problem of my conscience. I see now how righteousness and peace can kiss each other—how an offending sinner can meet his offended God—how they can justly stand on terms of mutual amity and love. The sinner washed in the atoning blood and God rejoicing in the sinner as He sees him in the righteousness of His dear Son.” The truthfulness which God puts into men’s hearts seems, somehow, to open wide the doors of the understanding and the entrances of the entire being to the glories of the Cross of Christ. And Jesus enters—the Truth and the Life—and takes possession of that honest spirit and dwells there to the salvation of the sinner, world without end.

Now, if any man or woman here is resolved to come to Jesus, let them carry out the resolve. Come along with you! The true Savior shuts out no true man. If you mean to pray tonight, pray. If your heart means the prayer, God will hear it. O my Hearer, if you will turn from your sin in real earnest, God will help you and enable you to overcome your sin. If you will give yourself up to Jesus Christ at once—not in words but from your very soul—He will receive you and save you. Let there be no trifling, no mocking God. No stopping to talk with a Christian friend to chat away your feelings with pious words. But come as you are! Only come really and truly and Jesus will meet you and welcome you and say, “Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!” Those who come thus are always welcomed by Him. Come and see for yourself!

II. But now, secondly, I am going to give a picture of A SINCERE MAN AFTER HE BECOMES A CHRISTIAN. It is the sine qua non for a Christian that he should be thoroughly sincere. Of every man who is really a child of God it must be said—or we shall question whether he is a child of God at all—“an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!” Just let me briefly state how the true Christian’s portrait is here painted in life—like colors in the words, “in whom is no deceit.”

First, the real Believer in Christ desires to be what he thinks he is. That is to say, if he judges himself to be converted he desires to be soundly converted. If he judges himself to be a Believer, his desire is that he may not be anything else than a true Believer. If upon examination he perceives that he is regenerate, his prayer is that there may be no mistake about it, but that he may be really born again from on high. Some people do not like to be examined on these points but the genuine Christian loves to be searched and tested.

He prays, “Search me, O God.” Because searching by his own conscience may not be enough. He asks God Himself to search and test him whether he is true or not. It would be an awful thing if you or I should form the comforting conclusion, “I am all right, for I am in the light!”—and it should turn out that we are abiding in death and darkness. It would be an awful thing to find out that terrible truth just when we are in the valley of death and wading through the dread river. Let us find it out at once, if we must find it out at all! Startling as the discovery would be to some of us, yet we would rather know it now than go an inch further—for every inch we go, we are further away from the right road, if we are on the wrong track.

I heard of one who got into the backwoods and went traveling on all day long and at nightfall he discovered that after the most weary plodding he had arrived at the exact place from which he started in the morning. He had been wandering in a circle and spending his strength for nothing. It is a fearful business, when one is starving, to be at the same time losing one’s way. We pray that it may not be so with us. We wish to be what we think ourselves to be. We want to carry out to the full any profession that we may have made—we desire to go beyond it rather than fall short of it.

And, next, every true Christian desires to do what he thinks he does. You will understand me when I say that when we go upstairs to pray, if we are true Christians, we shall want to feel that we really pray. For there may be times when we have not prayed at all, though we have been on

our knees and have repeated very excellent words. When you read the Bible you know well that there is no practical good in getting through a chapter of the Bible any more than a passage of any other book if the heart has not received the teaching of the Holy Spirit.

John Bradford vowed that he would never leave off a holy exercise until he felt that his heart had entered into it. He resolved that if he sang, he would sing until he did sing. If he prayed, he would pray until he did pray. If he heard the Word, he would hear it until he did hear it, so as to profit by it. But O dear Friends, how easy it is to fall into the hypocritical cant of talking and not doing, doing and half-doing and flattering ourselves that we have done it when, indeed, we have only talked of doing it! Let us be straight and sincere. If you have given alms, take heed that you have given alms—and not spent your money in buying for yourself a name for generosity.

If you preach the Gospel, mind you have preached it—and have not merely played the orator and aimed at being thought a man of admirable parts. If you have engaged in public prayer, let it never be merely because you were called upon by the leader of the meeting. But let it be a prayer in which you breathe out a burning desire to speak with God. When you plead on behalf of your Brethren, do not compel them to think of you. But lead them to the Mercy Seat. Let us cultivate a spirit in which there is no deceit. If you have had a quarter of an hour for prayer and you have not prayed, rather mark it down as a wasted quarter of an hour than reckon it a season of devotion. It will never answer to keep false accounts with the Lord.

If you have been reading the Bible and you really have not read it and have got nothing out of it, do not say that you have read it—just say I pretended to do so. That is the honest way. Be very straight with yourself, for he must be a great knave who is willing to cheat his own soul. If you are not very watchful and severe with yourself, you may be giving your heart and your life credit for things which are but the names of things and not the things themselves.

The Christian man in whom there is no deceit is true to his convictions. This is an age in which convictions are sadly rare and where they do exist they are singularly sleepy and torpid. I take it, as a Christian man and minister, that I have no right to occupy the pulpit of a congregation if I do not believe those doctrines which I professed to believe when I became the pastor of the Church. I have no right to undermine the basis upon which the Church was formed. As a private member of a Church, I have no right to be a member of a Church whose doctrines I do not accept. Indeed, I ought not to regard it as a possibility that I could remain to profess what I do not agree with. I am responsible, as a member of a Church, for all that is taught and all that is done by that Church in its capacity as a Church.

And if I am protesting in my heart, and yet in my proper person continue part and parcel of that Church—I am not acting truthfully to God. We want, in this century, a class of men who are endowed with a double portion of conscience to what is generally exhibited by professors. For there are many of them who have got enough conscience to make them miserable and disagreeable but not enough to make them honestly quit

their positions. They have enough conscience to make them feel uncomfortable but not enough to force them to act bravely for what they believe.

Who wants to have a conscience that will only be quiet by being drugged? Trifling with conscience, though common enough, is one of the most deadly sins against a man's self of which he can be guilty. If you are following a trade and you know that it is evil, quit it. Quit it at once. Quit it before you get comfortable in it. For after a while, by continuance in it, you will become saddened with dishonesty and you will not be able to see the dishonor of it. I do not doubt that many persons in London who get their living by the most infamous vices entered into those infamous ways by degrees. They began with some little divergence from morality and then turned decidedly into wickedness. It was a very little fault at first and it troubled them—but they soon grew used to it and said, "Oh, well, everybody does it."

Then they went on a little farther and a little farther till they were out of sight of the right road and had lost all desire to return to it. Sad is that man's case who has lost all power to hear the foghorn and yet is nearing a rock. Blessed is that man who will not listen to the common talk about making small nicks in his conscience. For he that makes a little rent will find that in the wear and tear of life those little rents soon gape wider and wider. Be true to your conscience, though it cost you your honor or your life. What if your barn is empty and your purse is taken from you? What if your reputation sinks? If you are true to God and to yourself you need not fear, for you shall have the approbation of Him who said of Nathanael, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!"

I do not myself like the doing of things for which I have to make an apology. I do not refer to apologies to my fellow men. For what matters what people think about us? We need not mind the judgments of erring mortals. But I refer to apologizing to myself and to my God. Every man who respects himself feels that the first thing he has to do is to deserve his own good opinion. And numbers of men and women have not won that good opinion yet. If they were to talk to themselves, they would say to themselves, "Why, you know you are not acting straight. You know you are not doing right. You are mean and cowardly and afraid to do right."

But they will not give themselves an opportunity of talking to themselves, lest they should be uneasy. He that never likes to be alone probably knows that when he is alone he is in bad company. And this fact ought to startle him. Would he be so mightily afraid to commune with his own heart in solitude if he did not suspect something to be rotten within? Never violate your convictions. If you do, you are not one in whom is no deceit.

Again, a genuine Christian man is simple in his aims. He is aiming at God's glory. He is aiming at the good of his fellow men. He is aiming to lead a holy life. That is what he says. And if he is, indeed, a child of God, he is really aiming at these things and he is not basely taking up with godliness for the sake of gain and reputation. Are not many looking one way and rowing another? Do you not know Mr. Facing-Both-Ways, who looks this way and the other way, too? He runs with the hounds when there is anything good to be hunted. But he is off with the hare when a little fear surprises him.

Trimming is a despicable business—a diabolical thing and those who follow it are the worst of men. Such men are common as blackberries and base as dirt. Oh, be not so! Let your life be laid like a gun that is sighted for the center of the target and then let it be fired at once that the bullet may go straight to its place, driven on by all the powder of your energy. God give us to be like thunderbolts hurled from His own hand against all falsehood and sham. Never caring what the consequences may be—so far as we ourselves are concerned—let us be resolved that if the heavens fall we will follow the Truth of God and justice, and righteousness, and leave those whose likings run the other way to shift for themselves by trickery and policy.

The Christian man is clear in his aims, and if he is a true Christian, he is also very clear in his modes of pursuing his aims. Some people have a sort of spiritual or moral squint. If they want to look over there, they turn their eyes up this side of the gallery. They never say plainly and exactly what they mean, but use words in a double and doubtful sense. I abhor this most in a teacher of religion but it is far too common. Some preachers are great men at beating around the bush. They never go to work as a truthful man would go to work because, they say, “No, I must play my cards.” Beware of all that moral card-playing. Hate the idea of playing your cards for this and that.

I do not say that you and I might wish with the Roman that we had a window in our breast, that all men might see our thoughts. For he that had a window in his breast would sometimes need to pull down the blind. But I do say this—that if we are walking as Christ would have us walk, we shall so live that our design and our mode of getting at our design will bear the test of the judgment of the Last Great Day. I say yet further that he among you who is proposing to do one thing—as his fellow man judges but who is really aiming to do another thing, as God knows—is not “an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit.”

Brethren, in your trade, in your business, in all that you do, be straight as a line. Policy may be a guide for the world but it should never be the rule of life of Church members. O my Brothers and Sisters, be true in all things! Do that which will bear the burning heat of the last fire and the fierce light of the last day and then you do that which you can sleep upon on your deathbed, can remember in the Day of Judgment and remember without fear before your God. Live unto God. Live as in the sight of God. Live under the command of God. Court His approbation and care for nothing else. Set your helm towards the right course, and then fasten it there and turn not aside an inch, God helping you, all your days.

Such a man as this need never be afraid. He may live or die without apprehension. He may face any company without a blush. It is a great mercy when you do not get into the way of talking one way to one set of people and another way to another. I know some professed Christians who are so delightfully sweet and earnest that they try to make things pleasant all round and therefore never speak out the whole truth in any company—unless it happens to be such as will be agreeable. It is, “Oh, yes, my dear Sir.” And though there is something hard said about an absent person they quite agree with it.

When they get with that very person it is again, “Yes, my dear Sir.” And they join hands with him in tearing up the character of the opposite party. This method of talking is very liable to accidents. A person who acts this double part must always live a very unquiet life because he does not know when No. 1 and No. 2 may meet and put their accounts together and find out his treachery to both parties. Brethren, let no one among you be guilty of such conduct. Always say anything you have against a man straight to his face. When you speak behind his back, speak as kindly of him as truth permits. You need not do that before his face—for that might seem flattery on your part.

To his face you may tell him a few things that do not please him, if it is just to do so. But when he is absent, be silent on such themes. Double-facedness often brings a bitter reward in this life. Do not play the double in your conversation, either towards God or man. Be an Israelite, indeed, in whom is no deceit. Such a person who has lived honestly in the sight of God—trusting alone in the precious blood of Jesus and not to his own sincerity—need not fear in time or in eternity.

I remember seeing a good but very timorous woman whose gracious life was drawing to a close. I was sitting by her bedside and she seemed to be very low and filled with fear as to her future state. But at last she was comforted by a word I spoke. Then she said to me very tremblingly, “I do not think that God will send me among the wicked who did not love Him and did not trust His dear Son, for I never sought their company here. I have always loved the people of God and I have loved His house and I have loved His Word and I have loved holiness, and therefore I think that He will let me go among my own people.”

This was sound reasoning. The true shall go with the true at the last. The man whom God has made to be upright and truthful shall not be driven down to the place where all liars go. He shall keep his own way and go to his own company. Up there in Heaven it is all Truth of God—the God of Truth is there and the Christ of Truth is there—and men are there who loved the Truth and who, despite all their imperfections, came to the light that their deeds might be made manifest that they were worked in God. If you are truthful, you will go with these truthful people. Oh, may God make you so at once!

Remember that there is an absolute necessity that a Christian should possess thoroughbred sincerity and intense, downright reality. The child of God may have spots on his countenance but he must not paint his face. It is the hypocrite that paints. There may be a speck here and a speck there upon the countenance of the true Believer but he is sorry that it should be so and he tries to wash off all such stains. But he never uses the color-box. In this he is the reverse of the world’s religious professors. Oh, the multitude of hypocrites that rouge themselves up to their eyes! They are such beauties as Jezebel made herself.

You would suppose that they possessed the beauty of holiness. But see them when the paint is off—catch them at home—watch them in their own families—trace them into their secret places and there you will say, “Can these be the same men?” When one saw a woman of eighty tricked out like a girl of eighteen, he shouted, “What old hag is this?” So might you say of many a brave professor, “What disgraceful creature is this?”

That which we thought was the beauty of Divine Grace we find to be the worn and shriveled countenance of the old man hidden beneath coats of deceptive coloring. Loathe all this and be as free from it as you would wish to be free from theft or murder.

O Sirs, if any of us are lost, let us at least know that we are so. If we hope that we are saved, God grant that it may be a true hope and a vital experience. I will speak to you, one and all, the Gospel of the Grace of God and I have done. To each one the Word of the Lord says, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved”—saved from hypocrisy, saved from falsehood, saved from deceit and guilt—for “he that believes and is baptized shall be saved. But he that believes not shall be damned.” May God set His seal upon this admonition, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

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LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON

DEAR FRIENDS—Writing at this present time I must personally sing of tender mercy and restoring love. Health is returning. And if I could but gain sufficient strength to stand through a sermon, I would come home at once. Morning by morning my knee becomes just a little better and therefore I look forward with joyful hope to a return to my pulpit from which I have been so long absent. If I may be favored to preach on February 17th, I shall be happy, indeed.

The last few months have been crowded with more trials than it would be worthwhile to mention. But in nothing has Divine Grace failed to support the struggling heart. More sure than ever am I of the Truth of the Gospel, the faithfulness of God and the certainty of His purpose. The Lord lives when comfort dies and reigns when nature fails. Not a line of His Revelation has proved erroneous. There is not a syllable of the inspired Book which has ever started from its place. You may hang the weight of your soul on any one of the Words which have proceeded out of the mouth of God. This I have proved by personal experience time out of mind.

Although I am not worthy to wash the feet of the servants of my Lord, I yet most boldly ask the prayers of my fellow workers that I may not, upon this occasion, be disappointed, but may be allowed to rise from pain and return to my happy sphere of service. I beg this specially of choice friends, to whose intercessions I already owe so much.

Yours heartily,

C. H. SPURGEON.

Mentone, January 26, 1889.

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NATHANAEL—OR, THE READY BELIEVER AND HIS REWARD NO. 2021

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

***“Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto you, I saw you under the fig tree, you believe? You shall see greater things than these.”
John 1:50.***

NATHANAEL was by nature a man free from cunning and deceit. He was a specimen of that “honest and good ground” of which our Savior speaks in the parable, upon which, when the seed fell, a hundred-fold harvest was produced. We have some such men about us, thank God, in this country—regular John Blunts, as we say, clear as crystal, true as the sun in the heavens. Many men are well known to us who are upright, downright, truthful, honest, candid and openhearted. You might trust them anywhere. Yes, trust them to repeat a conversation without misrepresenting it and that is saying a good deal in these times.

Such people do not understand the clever arts of craft and cunning for they do not take to them naturally and have never been trained in the practice of policy. Speech is not to them the medium for concealing their thoughts. When they have a mind to speak, they speak their mind. You know where they are. They may have a great many faults but they have not the faults of deception and dissimulation. They are Israelites, indeed, in whom is no guile. You know the kind of people—they may at times speak too harshly and hurt your feelings. They may put things in an ugly shape and tread on people’s corns—but they are as straight as a plumb-line and you may be sure that you know them when you have heard what they say.

In the end they cause far less pain to people’s feelings than those who have a great deal of finesse and policy, whose words are softer than butter but inwardly they are drawn swords. Smooth and oily tongues, with lying hearts at the back of them are fit instruments for Satan. But truth-speaking lips, which are joined to an honest heart are precious things which the Lord Himself delights to use. Now, when the good Brethren who had joined the Savior came to tell Nathanael that they had found the Christ he blurted out his objection at once.

They said, “We have found Him, of whom Moses in the Law and the Prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth.” But he did not take everything for Gospel which his friends told him. Nathanael had been born and bred in the midst of people prejudiced against Nazareth and he had sucked in their prejudice and felt sure that the Messiah could no more come from Nazareth than a profound philosopher could come from Gotham. He does

not beat about the bush but he says at once, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?"

It is always a good thing, when a man has a prejudice, if he will but state it and "out" with it. You can always deal with this kind of fellow. If he will say what is troubling him and tell you what keeps him back from faith, why, then you can put your finger on his difficulty and try to remove it. It is a great miracle when a dumb devil is cast out. If the evil will but speak and so declare itself we have a chance of overcoming it.

Nathanael's question was met at once by his comrades, who said to him, "Come and see." And like the honest man that he was, he took up their challenge. He would "come and see." How many there are who make objections but they will not "come and see"! They have heard concerning a certain preacher, perhaps, such-and-such absurd things. But another says, "It is not so. Come and see." Not they. They do not want to come and see—for they are unfair and prefer to cherish a bad opinion of the man. They have heard that Calvinistic doctrine is cruel, harsh and unjust. "Ah," says a Believer in Free Grace, "you have only seen a caricature of it. You should read for yourself and judge by Scripture."

Oh, no—they do not want to read! They have made up their minds—not that they have much of a mind to make up. If they had more mind it might take them longer to make it up. But, having once made up their little mind, they have no mind to unmake it. They prefer to go blindly on whether they are right or wrong. They know so much that they do not wish to learn any more. Nathanael was not of that sort. "Come and see," was an invitation which commended itself to his judgment. "Oh, yes," said he, "by all means! I am open to conviction. I will come and see."

I wish I could prevail on each one of my hearers to search the Bible for himself to see what the true doctrine is, that he may have a firm foundation to build upon and not take his religion second-hand from another. Nathanael is on his way to see for himself, when the Lord Jesus Christ, turning to those round about Him, says, in a voice loud enough for Nathanael to hear, "Behold an Israelite, indeed, in whom is no guile!" Here comes a man with no craft, no cunning in him. Nathanael is startled to find his real character so clearly read and somewhat bluntly asks, "From where do You know me?"

I must do him the justice of believing that he said it respectfully, yet, nevertheless, he curtly said, "From where do You know me?" As much as to say— "You have hit the nail on the head. But how came You to know this?" You see, the enquiry that was in his mind is soon upon his tongue—his words at once declare his thought. It is a great mercy when men dare speak upon that which troubles them. Instead of letting a doubt or a difficulty fester in their souls, they bring it out—that the light may play upon it and it is soon gone.

"Jesus answered and said to him, Before that Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." What Nathanael was doing under the fig tree I do not know. Some think that he was there in meditation.

Others say in prayer. Very possibly, but *I* do not know, and the wisest expositors do not know, and *you* do not know. Nobody knew but Jesus and Nathanael. He was doing something of which he was not ashamed but which he modestly did not wish to have known and so he had chosen a private place. That transaction was a secret between himself and the Lord, his God, and He who knew that secret must have come from God.

Perhaps he was doing nothing there but sitting still before the Lord in anguish of spirit. Possibly he there had looked towards the God of his fathers with hope, or had enjoyed hallowed fellowship with Heaven. Anyhow, Jesus mentioned to him something which he remembered and thought much of, though it was entirely between God and his own soul. Between Jesus and Nathanael—"under the fig tree"—served as a password. They were known to one another by that. And at once Nathanael cried, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God. You are the King of Israel."

He is fairly won and by an open confession he commits himself at once to what he believes. He is not ashamed of his convictions. He has enlisted beneath the banner of the King of Israel once and for all. Forth he comes without a moment's reservation with that blessed confession of faith—"Rabbi, You are the Son of God. You are the King of Israel." Our Lord Jesus, charmed with the grace which He had Himself given, delighted with the faith which He had Himself created, answers, "Because I said unto you, I saw you under the fig tree, you believe? You shall see greater things than these." This ready convert, so speedily convinced, was very acceptable to the Lord Jesus.

Now, we have tonight here, first, one who believed readily. I am going to speak of that. Secondly, here is one who was highly commended for it—"You shall see greater things than these." Thirdly, here is one who might possibly in after days be subject to a peculiar temptation on account of his very readiness to believe. And, lastly, here is one who, I doubt not, was peculiarly grateful. And if there is another here like he, he ought to be very grateful, too.

I. First, then, HERE IS ONE WHO BELIEVED READILY. The first time he saw the Savior he was converted to the faith. The first sentences that were addressed to him by the Lord Jesus Christ fairly won him to hearty faith and loyal service. Why was that? Why was he so soon brought to discipleship?

I think, perhaps, it was because he was such a true man himself that the element of suspicion was not in his character. Persons who are remarkably suspicious and constantly incredulous are seldom very truthful themselves. If you follow them home, you will discover that they are suspicious of others because they are not true themselves and their difficulty in believing others arises from the fact that they measure other people's corn with their own bushel. They imagine that other people are as big liars as they are themselves. I believe that this is the bottom of much of the mistrust and questioning which seethes around us.

Sometimes that suspiciousness comes upon men's minds through long dealing with deceptive persons. But if you find that a man began life with a general suspicion and doubt of others, you may conclude that he was a born deceiver, radically false from his birth. He judges human nature from his experience within his own heart. He has observed his own trickiness and he thinks that everybody else is going to trick him. And so he is full of suspicion. Nathanael had never taken anybody in nor tried to mislead anyone in his life and therefore he did not expect to be deceived.

I wonder whether he was a sailor. I should think that he must have been, for sailors are generally as open as the sea they sail over. He never said anything with reserve. Not he. He was accustomed to wear his heart on his sleeve even if the crows did peck at it. He could not conceal anything, nor think that others did so. He was just as honest as the day. And so he came to the Savior with a heart that was open to faith, ready to believe Him. I should think the very sight of the Savior's blessed face had half won him and the tone of that truthful voice had moved him. But when it came to his laying bare a secret in his life which he was sure that nobody knew but himself and God, then Nathanael yielded to conviction at once and became a Believer straightway.

Now I do hope that there are some here to whom the Lord has given, from their very birth, a truthful, openhearted nature—and if you should believe in Jesus Christ tonight straightway, even though it is the first time you have ever heard of Him, I shall bless the grace of God which has led you to so speedy a closing in with Christ. Oh that the Holy Spirit may complete the work of which there is already so hopeful a beginning! But, further, this Nathanael, this rapid Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, had, I have no doubt, been seeking guidance beforehand and that guidance he had honestly followed.

I should think that he had for years been expecting the coming of the Messiah. The tone of his language argues that. Therefore, when Philip came to him and told him that he had found the Messiah and indicated to him that he had better come and see for himself, he was willing at once to come and without delay he came with the view of seeing for himself whether this Jesus of Nazareth was the Promised One. He was not only candid but he was interested. He was concerned about Divine things and in thorough earnest to know the Truth of God in reference to them. So he came to Jesus with solemn intent and eager desire.

O dear Friends, if you came to hear the Gospel in sincerity, we should expect to see more of you converted. But people come into our great assemblies to see the congregation, or to inspect the building, or to hear the preacher. Their motive is mere idle curiosity. If they get a blessing we shall heartily thank God for it and admire the sovereignty of His Grace. But when persons come, as they often do, I thank God, even from a great distance with the desire to know what the Gospel is and with a wish to find the Savior for themselves, then we have surer hope. These enquirers are the people that are likely to be converted.

When fish want to be caught, it is good fishing. When they are anxious to take the bait, then the fisherman have fine times. If, my dear Hearers, you would come here saying, "I will go and see whether I can find salvation. I will hear with the intention that the hearing may be a means of grace to my soul," none of you would come long in vain where Christ Jesus is faithfully preached. If you come with a desire of understanding and knowing Him, He will come and reveal Himself to you. This was one main reason why Nathanael so speedily believed—that he came having sought guidance and desiring really to find the Messiah of whom Philip had spoken.

Observe that he was satisfied with one piece of clear evidence. That one item of evidence convinced him. The Lord Jesus said, "Before that Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." Nobody knew that he had been under the fig tree except the Lord who sees all things. No mortal living was aware of what Nathanael had done, or thought, or purposed in that shady retreat. When Jesus, therefore, with a peculiar look, said "I saw you," Nathanael also saw Him that spoke to him. "Godhead alone could speak thus," said he—"there is the Spirit of God in that man. He knows the secret things of my life. He has revealed me to myself." "Rabbi," said he, "You are the Son of God. You are the King of Israel." The conclusion was a sound one but how speedily it was reached!

One argument, if it is sound, is enough. If a matter is in dispute and if one man can solemnly declare that he saw such-and-such a thing and that one man is of high repute, his evidence is sufficient for a truthful man to rest upon. Twenty may come and say that they think it is so-and-so but twenty weak links will not make a strong chain. And I would rather trust to one solid link than I would trust to a chain of twenty worn and rusted links—each one of which is ready to snap. If it is so, it is so. If it is not so, it is not so. If a man has proved anything to me by one infallible proof that is enough. Hence, I believe that those who come to Christ on one bit of evidence are justified in so doing. They afterwards receive a host of confirming evidences but one is quite enough for them to begin with.

Oh that I might have some tonight who shall hear in this sermon some one thing which shall strike them as being of the Lord! I pray that some secret matter, which I do not personally know, shall yet be uttered by me so that my hearers will say to themselves, "How came that to be spoken? That fits me exactly, yet the minister could not have known it. God must have spoken to me. Only the Lord knew what I did in the back kitchen. Only He knew what I was thinking of this afternoon. But speaking through His servant He has touched a secret spring and opened a drawer in my cabinet that nobody knew of, save myself! This is the finger of God."

God grant that some may thus be led to Jesus Christ by one piece of evidence and may not tarry to feel fifty impressions on their hearts. Oh, that you would not wait for whole weeks of invitations and months of pressure and years of expostulation. But oh, that you would yield tonight! Sometimes, in warfare, cities have been taken without a shot being fired.

The valiant men have come up to the gates and they have said, "Capitulate and you shall be spared." And the townsmen have opened wide their gates. I know that many other cities have had to be battered till there has been scarcely a house without tokens of shot and shell. But what has been their gain when they have been captured after all? Do not let it be so with your souls but yield at once to the conquering Savior who comes forth in the robes of His glorious Grace and bids you yield. He promises that if you accept His scepter you shall see the greatness of His Grace.

Notice, however, that although Nathanael yielded at once and believed on one bit of evidence, yet his faith went a long way! He did not merely say, "Rabbi, I believe that you are the Messiah," but he said, "You are the Son of God." This was farther than anybody else had gone at that time so far as I remember. He added, "You are the King of Israel." And this again was a great declaration to make. He worshipped Jesus and he crowned Him. He owned Him as God and he magnified Him as King. Do not suppose that the faith which is quickly born is therefore weak. No, but that faith which comes suddenly and quickly is often the very best and strongest faith in all the world. And I trust that some of you may prove it to be so tonight by flying to Christ at once—as the doves fly to their windows—and rest in Him till you find fullness of peace.

Thus much concerning the Israelite, indeed, who believed readily.

II. In the second place, **HERE IS ONE WHO WAS HIGHLY COMMENDED.** The Lord Jesus owned his faith to be true faith. He said, "You believe?" But He meant that He perceived that he truly believed. He owned that though his faith was born then and there, it was the genuine article. Christ owns, as true faith, that faith which is not long in coming. Fear not, dear Hearer, that if you believe at this very moment your faith will be any the less sincere and effectual.

Jesus did more than own it to be faith. He commended it as rarely excellent. He spoke as if He were astonished. "Because I said, I saw you under the fig tree, you believe?"—as much as to say, "Many see Me work miracles and do not believe. Do you believe so soon? They see Me heal lepers and raise the dead and yet they will not believe. But you believe merely because I said I saw you under the fig tree?" He is charmed with him for his readiness to own the Truth. Why, there are some young people who come to Christ and believe in Him by one little word from their mother. And on the other hand there are men and women who have been for fifty years hearers of the Gospel and yet have not believed.

Now, the text proves that Christ has an admiration of those who readily, willingly, obediently and cheerfully come. Those who make no questions, raise no difficulties but on comparatively slender evidence, that evidence being quite sufficient, yield their full trust to Jesus Christ their Lord. And our blessed Lord was so pleased with this ready faith that He made a promise to Nathanael. Said He, "You shall see greater things than these. If you can see so much in My one saying that I saw you under the fig tree, you have the kind of eyes that are fit to see great sights."

He that will see shall see, but he that closes his eyes shall be blinded. Many are the people in this world who, if you show them the greatest marvel, do not wonder. They look at it and see nothing. When you meet with such an unobservant person, you say to yourself, "I shall not show that man anything more. It does not pay to unveil rarities to him, he has no appreciation of them." But here is another who, when you show him some curio that you have in your house, is pleased with it and spies out at once the excellence and beauty of it. You say, "I have something more which I will gladly show you!" When your visitor appreciates your choice treasure, you say to him, "I will unlock all my cabinets. I will take you into my private room and every little thing I have that can interest you, you shall see, because I perceive that you have eyes and a mind which finds gratification in rare curiosities."

Oh, you that readily believe in Christ—you are the men and women to whom Christ will make known His secrets! Those of you who are "fools and slow of heart to believe" must mend your manners, or the Holy Spirit will never lead you into the mysteries of the kingdom. Did not Jesus say to one who came to Him by night, "If I have told you earthly things and you believe not, how shall you believe if I tell you of heavenly things?" But, you Israelites, indeed, you quick Believers—to you will He reveal Himself as the Ladder that father Jacob saw, reaching from earth to Heaven, upon which the angels ascend and descend between God and His chosen. You shall see the deep things of God. You are the people out of whom He will make such men as John, who, in Patmos, beheld a glorious Apocalypse.

O my beloved Hearers, may it be so with you! Because your faith so readily chimes in with what Christ reveals, may you have visions of God and may none of you be so dull of heart that it shall be said, "He could not show them many mighty works because of their unbelief"!

III. I have thus spoken and I come, thirdly, to notice that **HERE IS A MAN WHO MIGHT POSSIBLY BE TROUBLED WITH A PECULIAR TEMPTATION.**

People of this kind are subject to a special trial with which I will now deal. In this Church a considerable number of us, beginning with the pastor, came to Christ after an awful amount of conviction and despondency. We are none the better for this but we are at least free from one particular temptation of the Evil One. Oh, how I look back upon those times in which I felt my bondage but could not attain liberty—those days in which Christ was preached to me but I could not hear Him and I wandered up and down everywhere before I found peace!

In this Church and in the officers of the Church among the deacons, there is especially one dear Brother who sometimes can hardly understand me when I speak about the difficulties some have in coming to Christ for he never experienced them. You all know him, one of the sweetest and best of men. But he came to Jesus Christ as a boy readily enough. He heard the Gospel and he believed it and without any sort of terror he

rejoiced in the Lord and he continues to do so to this day. He is none the worse saint for this but in some respects all the better.

I know, however, what is the peculiar temptation of those who come so readily to Christ. The devil comes to them and he says, "Now, look at you. You have read Mr. Bunyan's 'Grace Abounding,' have you not?" "Yes," says the good man. "Well," says he, "you never went through the like battle and struggle." "No, I never did." "Then," says he, "You are no child of God. You see you were easily converted—there was no deep work in your soul. You came to Jesus Christ one sunshiny day and you will go away from Him one dark day. You are like the stony-ground hearer, the seed sprang up in you on a sudden, because there was no depth of earth and you will soon die away when the sun is risen with fervent heat."

Now, the next time the devil comes to any of you with that, I want you to talk to him, if he is worth it, for your own good. I want you to quench the fiery dart which he will fling at you. It is true that many come to the Lord Jesus under extreme difficulties and are long before they can rest in faith. But you must not compare yourself with others, nor expect that the work of God will take precisely the same shape in every heart. Some, like Nicodemus, say, "How can these things be?" But others believe in Jesus as readily as Nathanael did and they come just as truly, just as really, just as lastingly as those who find it difficult to come.

Let me help you with a few considerations. Those you have read of, who came to Christ under so much terror—it may be that they had some other trouble at the same time—as well as the trouble of their conscience. Perhaps, in addition to being convinced of sin, they were suffering from poverty, or sickness, or indigestion, or remorse, or some other vexation of spirit. Discern carefully between spiritual trouble and temporal trouble. Temporal trouble may help to aggravate the spiritual but it is not a necessary part of it—in fact, very much the reverse. It may increase the apparent depth of the work of repentance but it may detract from its real worth.

In the next place, it may be, and probably is, the fact that those who found so much difficulty in coming to Christ were worried by Satan. Perhaps he injected into their minds blasphemous thoughts or he suggested doubts concerning the Scriptures, or the Truth of God. Because they were just escaping from his power he worried them most maliciously. Do you want to be worried in that way? Do you think that there is any advantage in Satan's attacks? If you can get to Christ without them, ought you not to be thankful to escape them? How can you desire an affliction so utterly undesirable? How can you wish to feel that which those who suffer from it would give their eyes to be rid of? I beseech you, be reasonable.

In many persons their difficulties in coming to Christ were caused very largely by their melancholy temperament. We are not all alike cheerful by natural constitution. Why, here is one man who is bright-eyed by nature and when he is down he is higher up than others are when they are up. He is always bright and hopeful. Yonder is another Brother who seems inevitably to take a dark view of matters. He is an unhappily constituted

person. A person with whom it is not easy to live except in a very large hotel, in which the dinner-table is many yards long. You know and avoid the style of man.

If there is a melancholy disposition, it tends to darken the work of the Spirit in the heart. And whereas the work of the Spirit makes the man sorrowful, his own melancholy disposition, perhaps caused by mental disease, darkens that sorrow into black despair. Few of us are perfectly sane. In fact, I do not think anybody is altogether so. I see you smile but I am not jesting—we have each one a peculiarity which we could hardly defend by the rules of strict reasoning. Have we not? We are all a little “touched” by that black hand which sin stretched out when it shook our universal manhood in all its faculties.

Some are touched with melancholy from their birth and so a part of their great terror, when under conviction, may arise from the fact that they are not absolutely free to form a hopeful judgment. Why should you wish to be like they? What can there be desirable about feelings which spring from a disease?

Again, there is no doubt that many in coming to Christ are greatly troubled because they are ignorant. They do not know that which would comfort them if they did but know it. They are vexed with fears which would not exist if they were better acquainted with Scripture. If they knew more of the Doctrines of Grace they would not be vexed with the fears which their ignorance creates. You who are taught in the Word are all the more likely to find speedy peace. Now, dear Friends, do you want to be bothered with fears which only spring out of ignorance? Must it not be much better for you, having a clearer light and a brighter knowledge, to say, “Yes, that is it. I believe in Jesus Christ and I am saved. Blessed be His name! I ask no questions. I believe and am saved at once”?

May it not also be that those who are so hard put to it in coming to Christ are without the helps that you have? Perhaps they cannot read. Possibly they have nobody to explain the Scriptures to them. They may be misled by their religious guides and have no one to keep them out of the ditch. It may be that they are placed where they are rather hindered than helped—they have no Sunday school teacher, no Christian friend to sympathize with them. And so they have a hard fight of it. Many a man who is wounded in battle is soon restored because the surgeon takes him up as soon as the bullet lays him low. Whereas the wound of another, who has to lie and bleed for hours, will prove far more serious. Do you not think that you ought to be very thankful that you have so many things to help you, and that thus you the more readily come to Christ?

Very possibly, too, many of those who had those terrors and horrors in coming to Christ, as I had myself, must lay them to the door of their unbelief. Had they believed, they might have had comfort long before. But they went to the Law for comfort, or they looked to feelings instead of looking to Christ and so they remained in darkness. Now, if you have the privilege of believing at once, as I pray you may have, should you not be

glad of it and instead of envying those others, should you not thank God that you were brought to find Jesus Christ by so sunny and speedy a route?

There is a story that I have told you before but I must tell it to you again, for I do not know anything better. A young man in Edinburgh went out and he thought he would speak about Jesus to the first person that he met with. He met a Musselburgh fishwife carrying a great load on her back. I cannot speak Scotch—I have not that useful acquirement—so I will put the conversation into English. He said to her, “Here you are with your burden.” “Yes,” said she. “Well,” he said, “did you ever feel a spiritual burden?” “Yes,” said she, “that I did, long ago, long ago and I soon got rid of it. For I did not go the same way to work that John Bunyan’s pilgrim did.”

“Oh,” thought the young man, “I hoped that I had met with a Christian woman, but she must be a great heretic to talk in that way.” “Now,” said she, “Bunyan’s Evangelist that he speaks of was not half a Gospel preacher. He was one of the usual sort. He was not clear in the Gospel. For when he met with the poor pilgrim, weary with his burden, he said to him, ‘Do you see that wicket-gate?’ ‘No,’ said the man, ‘I do not see it.’ ‘Do you see that light over the gate?’ ‘Well,’ he said, ‘I think I do.’ ‘Now,’ he said, ‘you run that way with your burden.’ Why man,” said she, “that was not the way to do at all. What had that man to do with the wicket-gate or with the light over it?

“The Gospel does not say run to a gate or a light. What he should have said was, ‘Do you see that Cross? Look at that and your burden will fall from your shoulder.’ I looked straight away to the Cross and not to the wicket-gate. And at the Cross I lost my burden. Now,” said she, “what did Pilgrim get by going round to the wicket-gate? He tumbled into the Slough of Despond and was like to have lost his life there.” “Ah,” said the young man, “did you never go through the Slough of Despond?” “Ah, yes!” she said, “I have been through that slough many a time. But, let me tell you, it is much better to go through it with your burden off than it is with your burden on.”

And so it is. I do not want any of you to attempt to flounder through the Slough of Despond with your burden on. I want you to have done with the Slough of Despond and the wicket-gate and all that bother and just look to Christ alone. For salvation lies in a look at Him and there is salvation in none other. Peace comes to sinners by nothing else but faith in Jesus. All else is vain, be it what it may. Frames and feelings, sinkings and risings, doings and fretting—all these may go for nothing. Believe in Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. This is God’s short way to Heaven and blessed is he who knows how to take it.

Listen yet once more. You say, “But I have heard of some who endured a dreadful Law-work within their souls. They were plowed and cut up dreadfully and I never was.” I will further tell you that certain persons need rougher handling than others. The needle in surgery will do for certain cases, whereas the lancet is wanted for others. If the Lord can, with a

needle, do for you all that is needed, why do you want more? The Lord required to take the knife to me and are you going to fret because you have never felt the deep gashes which made me cry out in agony? I pray you, be not such a fool—I cannot speak a softer word if you have a craving after anguish.

Again, the Lord may deal roughly with some because He means to qualify them for comforting despairing souls. He puts His servants through the furnace when He means them to work at pulling others out of the fire. He chastens them every morning because He means to make Barnabases of them, that they may be sons of consolation to souls in distress. I have been through the thick darkness at times for your sakes. If ever a soul was in a horror of great darkness, I was, one day, when I preached in this pulpit from “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” I could not understand why I felt in such an awful state as I did, till that evening there came into the vestry a man whose hair seemed to stand on end.

He looked at me and said, “I have never found a preacher that met my experience before.” We sat down and he told me his tale of woe. By God’s grace I rescued that man, by seasonable comfort, from being sent to a lunatic asylum and perhaps from committing suicide. And then I said to the Lord my God, “Let me go through the fire again if it will help me to meet the case of your poor afflicted children. Let me feel the horror of great darkness, if so I may thereby find light with which to cheer the victims of despair.”

But you, my dear Brother, my dear Sister, may not be called thus to cut your way through the forests of sorrow as the pioneer of others. You are not sent to be a guide to thousands but quietly to pursue your own lowly way. And why do you want all this painful experience? You cannot make use of it. Be thankful that you are spared the ordeal. These who have to be champions must be trained for war after a sterner sort than those who only make up the rank and file of the army. If your Lord means to lead you only as sheep at His heel into the green pastures by the still waters, you will see but little of the war and little of the rough side of the march. And why should you be so stupid as to desire distress and condemn yourself because you have it not?

Be a Nathanael. Take the happier and better side and believe your God without a doubt or a quibble. And go to Heaven following the Lamb wherever He goes, without doubt or fear. I was going to have another head but I think that I will not, I will venture no further but close with a word to sinners, although I have in truth been speaking to them all through my discourse.

Hear me, you that would be saved! The way of salvation is by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. That is, by trusting Him. There are two things I have to say to you. First, God **COMMANDS** you to believe in Jesus Christ—and, secondly, nothing you can do will please God so much as for you to believe at once in His Only-Begotten Son, whom He has set forth to be the propitiation for sin.

These are two strong things to say and so I will not say them, of myself, but give you God's Word for them. Please note these texts down, all of you. First Epistle of John, third chapter, at the twenty-third verse—"And this is His commandment, that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ." Let me tell you where it is again. First Epistle of John, third chapter, twenty-third verse—"This is His commandment, that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ." If you are commanded to do it, do it. If you have salvation promised you when you do believe on the name of Jesus, why then, believe, and have salvation. Believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ. That is the first point. God commands you—will you disobey?

The second thing I said was that nothing you can do will please God so much as for you, now, to believe in Jesus Christ. Look at the sixth chapter of John's Gospel and the twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth verses. There you have it. "Then said they unto Him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?" They meant, "What are the best works, the works most pleasing to God?" "Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that you believe on Him whom He has sent." If you could build a row of almshouses, or endow a Church, or pay the salaries of a hundred missionaries, it would not half so well please God as for you to believe on His Son Jesus Christ.

Trust Christ and you have worshipped God as acceptably as cherubim and seraphim. Trust Christ and you have brought unto the Lord that which will charm Him more than the hallelujahs which day without night, circle His Throne with praise. You poor guilty man, you poor guilty woman—humble, unknown, obscure, a nobody—God bids you trust His Son and assures you that this will please Him more than all else you can do! Will you not do it? Oh, end your ramblings! End your strivings! End your seeking! Come and trust my Lord Jesus and you shall receive eternal life. Your fretting and your hoping and your doubting, your coming and your going—end them all by simply trusting Jesus and it is finished—you are saved from wrath and the life of holiness has begun in you.

Now shall you live after a nobler sort. Now shall you be filled with good works to the praise of His Glory, seeing you are no more trusting in *them*. I beseech you, trust in the Lord Jesus Christ alone and you shall receive power to become a child of God.

May the Lord bless you, dear Friends! May we all meet in Heaven, the whole company of us, without exception, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

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GREATER THINGS YET WHO SHALL SEE THEM? NO. 1478

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 8, 1879,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

***“Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto you, I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You shall see greater things than these. And He said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Henceforth you shall see Heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.”
John 1:50, 51.***

WE cannot help making a few remarks upon the narrative before we proceed to the distinct subject of discourse. Certain catch words are exceedingly worthy of notice since they are abundantly full of instruction. When Nathanael had doubts as to whether the Messiah could come from Nazareth, Philip answered Him, “Come and see.” Now, those were the precise words which the Lord Jesus had Himself used to His earliest disciples when they began to follow Him—He said to them, “Come and see.” It is always safe for us to use over again words which God has blessed. Did the Master say, “Come and see”? Then we cannot do better than say what Jesus said and use, as near as possible, the Inspired expressions.

Was that short sentence, “Come and see,” made useful to other souls? Then those who would win souls cannot do better than use such Gospel nets as have been tried and proven efficient in their own cases. Let none of us say that we cannot speak to others about their souls. There was one passage of Scripture which was the means of our conversion and we cannot do better than repeat it in hearty tones to others, hoping that what God has blessed to us, He may bless to others. Short as were the inviting words, “Come and see,” it was full of wisdom. Our Lord knows the philosophy of the human mind and understands how best to produce faith in doubting hearts. “Come and see” is the sure cure for unbelief.

Some would tell doubters to sit down and think and *create* faith by reflecting on the nature of things. We may long consider the state of man and the condition of our own nature before we shall thereby be enlightened as to the way of salvation. If we would judge of Christ we must consider Christ, Himself. He is His own best argument! The cobweb spinnings of conceited brains are easily broken through, but the facts, the indisputable *facts* of the Savior's life and death hold the understanding and the heart as with iron bands. As our Savior said and as His servant, Philip, said, even so say we to all who would know Christ, “Come and see”!

Be not blinded by prejudices or misled by preconceptions, but read His story for yourselves. Seek His face for yourselves and taste and see that the Lord is good! Personal communion with Jesus is still the best evidence of His personal excellence and His power to save. Brothers and Sisters, have you any doubts about the Master? “Come and see.” Do you say within yourself, “Can He save such an one as I am?” “Come and see.” Do

your sins cast you down and cause you to despair because you fear that even the Redeemer's blood cannot cleanse you? "Come and see." See Him as the Son of God and the Son of Man! See Him in His life of holiness and in His death of substitution! Or see Him, if you will, up yonder at the right hand of God, making intercession for sinners!

And as you are looking upon Him, faith will steal in upon you through the power of the Holy Spirit. It is the mind's eye that must look and by that look, repentance and faith find entrance to the soul. "Come and see," for nothing will save a man but a *personal sight* of a *personal Savior*. Therefore, "Behold the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world." The Lord Himself says, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." Our Lord Jesus Christ seems to have so approved of the advice of Philip that He, Himself, followed it up and kept to the same form of expression.

Did Philip say, "Come and see"? Then the Lord Jesus says, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I *saw you*: you have come to see *Me*, but I have already seen *you*: there has been an antecedent look on My part: I saw you before you did know anything about Me, or had even heard of Me from Philip." Nor does our Lord change His note even to the end of the conversation, but closes it by saying, "Because I said unto you, I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? *You shall see* greater things than these." There, you see, is the great plan of salvation as it is worked in us! First the Savior sees us, even when we are a great way off. Then we come and see and our hearts find rest in our Redeemer. And then, in later days, He gives us yet brighter and clearer views of Himself and of His Kingdom!

Oh, who would not come and see if this is so? If at our first coming and seeing we find life and rest, what must those still greater things be which are yet to be revealed? All that faith has yet discovered is but a foretaste and an earnest of more glorious sights which shall yet be opened up before our favored eyes, for Jesus Himself says, "You shall see greater things than these."

Other parts of the conversation are equally worthy of notice, as showing how fully the mind of the childlike Nathanael and the holy Child Jesus responded to each other, as all true and childlike minds always do. Our Lord, as soon as He saw Nathanael, called him, "an Israelite, indeed, in whom is no guile." Jesus knew his simple, frank, open-hearted character and he produced an example of it, for Nathanael did not blush with mock modesty and pretend to question the praise, but in the simplest and most unaffected manner, he tacitly admitted the description to be true and said, "From where do You know me?" He felt in his own conscience that he was a true son of that wrestling Jacob who became prevailing Israel and, in accepting the title, he made his words responsive to those of Jesus, for he said in effect, "True, I am an Israelite, but You are the King of Israel."

To this our Lord seemed to reply, "You are an Israelite, and you have acknowledged Israel's King. And now you shall have Israel's privileges for, like he, you shall see Heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." Thus, as in water, face answers to face, so did the heart of man to man in the communion of these two guileless

spirits! Their thoughts were so true that they harmonized like the parts of well-composed music! Their words so frankly bespoke their hearts that they answered to one another like the echo to the voice. This is the character of the communion between our Master and His sanctified ones. He says, "I am the Good Shepherd," and the heart replies, "The Lord is *my* shepherd; I shall not want."

The spouse says, "Yes, He is altogether lovely," and her Bridegroom replies, "You are all fair, My love, there is no spot in you." Our Lord calls us, "My love, My dove, My undefiled," and we, being in full communion with Him, reply, "My Beloved is mine and I am His." As upon the sea in time of storm, deep calls unto deep, so within the sanctified heart, in heavenly calm, truth calls unto truth—one word of love wakes up another—the commendation given by condescending love brings forth the praise of grateful affection. But to produce this mutual sympathy there must be a common character, a similar absence of guile, for this is the great condition of fellowship with Jesus.

God's ways towards us are made to meet our own in a most instructive way. "With the merciful You will show Yourself merciful. With an upright man You will show Yourself upright. With the pure You will show Yourself pure and with the obstinate You will show Yourself obstinate." When His children open their hearts to Him, He opens His mind to them. When they are true Israelites, He gives them the true Israel's privileges. When they acknowledge Him to be a great and glorious King, He makes them to see the great things of His Kingdom. May it be ours through Grace to be as little children, even as Nathanael was, for so shall we behold the Kingdom of God!

With those prefatory remarks we come at length to consider the promise of our Lord Jesus to Nathanael. May the Holy Spirit instruct us! I think I am warranted in saying that this is the Savior's first personal Word of promise and it is instructive that He gave it, not to the most talented, but to the most simple-hearted of His disciples. It was, moreover, no mean promise, but full of the largest conceivable meaning. "You shall see greater things than these." Those must be very great things which were greater than what Nathanael had already seen—there is room for boundless expectation in the words! It was promise which brought another linked with it as part and parcel of it. How often one Divine blessing is like a link of a chain of gold and draws another with it—"You shall see greater things than these" is followed by, "henceforth you shall see Heaven open."

The beauty of it, in this instance, is that albeit Nathanael obtained a promise for himself at first, "*you* shall see," yet this drew on the promise for all his brethren, for the 51st verse does not run, "hereafter or henceforth *you* shall see Heaven open," but henceforth, "you shall see Heaven open." It is a great thing to receive a personal promise, but it is a greater thing, still, to secure a promise for all our Master's household! Happy Nathanael to have been the occasion for the proclamation of the opening of Heaven and the commerce between Heaven and earth—the communion of saints with the things in Heaven through their Mediator and Lord! This is the highest form of blessing when we are not only favored, ourselves, but

are made the occasion for enriching others! Was not this the choice inheritance of Abraham, "I will bless you and you shall be a blessing"?

In considering the words which our Savior spoke to Nathanael, I should like you to notice first, *the favored man* to whom He spoke them. Then the *gracious reward* which is described in them. And lastly, *the special sight* comprised in that reward. In all this may we be actual partakers and not mere lookers.

I. Let us think of THIS FAVORED MAN. Nathanael was "an Israelite, indeed, in whom is no guile." He was one of those who were not only of the chosen seed after the flesh, but after the Spirit. He was noted for being a simple-minded, unsophisticated person—as honest as the day. He was a truthful man who knew nothing of policy, or craft, or double dealing, or reserve. He was a man out of whom all the twists had been taken—an upright and downright man—true to the core and transparent as clear glass!

He was not a Jacobite, a child of the crafty supplanter, but an Israelite, an Israelite, indeed, with the Jacob extracted out of him. He was pure, simple-hearted, ingenuous—not childish, but yet thoroughly childlike. To such a man the Word of God was given, "You shall see greater things than these." Notice, first, that *he was a man who honestly made enquiries which fairly suggested themselves*. Before he became a Believer, he did not, as some do, invent doubts and raise questions, which questions are merely raised for question's sake. He did not put queries to Philip which he could have answered himself, nor seek to entangle his instructor by artful speech. Nothing of the sort. He sought truth, not controversy and word-chopping.

The two questions which he put came out of his heart and were points which seemed to be vital to him. He did not go about to discover difficulties, but they occurred to him then and there and he spoke them out with honest plainness. He was told that the Messiah had been found and that He was Jesus of Nazareth. I am sure he was well acquainted with Holy Writ and he did not recollect any text in which the Christ was said to come out of Nazareth and, therefore, he thought within himself, "I read of Bethlehem Ephratah, that out of *it* shall He come forth who is to be Ruler in Israel, but I do not remember a word concerning Nazareth." Without a moment's hesitation, he put the question, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?"

Nazareth was a poor, miserable little place of unsavory reputation. This, then, was a difficulty—a true and real difficulty—and he stated it and was content to, "come and see." When the Savior met him with the words, "Behold an Israelite, indeed, in whom is no guile," he enquired, "From where do You know me?" A most natural question to ask, for on its answer would depend the value of the words. Might it not happen that this accurate description of himself might have come to Jesus by report? If a correct description of Nathanael's character had reached the Savior by Philip or any other friend, then it did not prove anything. But if Jesus knew it by His own perception and could read the character of a man to whom He was a stranger, then Nathanael knew what conclusion to draw! So he only asks the question because it ought to be asked and not to be a trick question.

How I love to meet with seekers who, though they are in difficulties, are willing to be led out of them and are not studying how to invent more! Some of you cannot find peace in Christ because you willfully darken the atmosphere around yourselves. You are not assailed by doubt, but you invite doubt to assail you! You believe a great deal more than you care to admit, but you do not want to believe and are fishing for excuses for your unbelief. It is a sad state of mind for a man to be in—to be trying to discover reasons why he should *not* be saved—but that is what many are doing. That is a wretched mind which manufactures difficulties and complicates plain things because it cannot or will not take a thing in its straightforward, simple meaning, but must be puzzled and perplexed.

Some men are too intellectual to believe the poor man's Gospel—the poor man runs and reads the Gospel—the Gospel of, “Believe and live.” The intellectual must be mystified, or excited, or driven to despair—or else they refuse to believe. There is a craving in some men for something that will appall them and fill them with despair. Is not this folly? Wait not for such sensations, I pray you! If you do, you will miss the blessing! But if, even while as yet you have not received full faith, you are honest enough to admit of none but honest difficulties, there is in you some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel and the Lord is praised for it.

This Nathanael without guile was, next, *a man who honestly yielded to the force of the Truth of God*. Omniscience was proven to be an attribute of Christ to Nathanael by the pointed remark which Jesus addressed to him. What was Nathanael doing under the fig tree? “I know,” says one, “for I have heard it said he was praying.” Well, I did not say he was *not* praying, but I will defy anybody to prove that he was! What was Nathanael doing under the fig tree? We frequently read, in the Talmudic writers, of learned rabbis who studied the Law under the fig tree. Was Nathanael studying the Law? I did not say he was not, but I will defy anybody to prove that he was! What was he doing under the fig tree? There are only two people who could have told us and both of these are silent on the matter. Both Jesus and Nathanael knew, but no one else!

What he was doing under the fig tree, we may not pretend to guess, for it is more instructive to leave it in the dark—our Lord's words were a kind of secret sign to Nathanael, all the more conclusive because perfectly unknown and uninterpreted by the rest of mankind. Whether he was going to be baptized by John the Baptist and sat down there to think of what he was doing. Or whether, having been baptized, being on the way home, he suddenly felt an impression that he must sit in that place and wait—he knew not why—I may not profess to know. But it was an important moment to his own mind and he remembered it as such. As soon as Jesus said, with a look, “When you were under the fig tree,” Nathanael was startled into a conviction that his secret heart was known to Jesus.

Under that tree he had done, or said, or thought something known only to himself. How had the Person before him known of that deed? It was true that his deed, or word, or thought under the fig tree was a pure, simple and honest one, but how did Jesus know? “If He knows that I was under the fig tree and knows what I was doing there. And if He read my simple-minded, guileless character when I was there, then He is the Son of

God, the King of Israel!” This was Nathanael’s immediate conclusion and the argument was very clear and complete.

Similar reasoning was used by others soon after Nathanael’s conversion and with the same result. When our Lord said to the woman of Samaria, “Go, call your husband and come here,” and she replied, “I have no husband,” He answered, “You have well said, I have no husband, for you have had five husbands and he whom you now have is not your husband: in that said you truly.” Then the woman said, “Come, see a Man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?” It was good argument, for Omniscience proves Godhead. An Omniscient one here in human flesh among the sons of men must be the Anointed of God! He must be the Lord’s Christ!

I do not know whether Nathanael remembered the passage of Scripture, but this was the kind of argument used by the great God, Himself, when He proved Himself to be God in Isaiah 44:5. Notice how the passage, in many of its words, is parallel to our text. One shall say, I am the Lord’s and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel. “Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel, and His Redeemer, the Lord of Hosts; I am the First, and I am the Last; and beside Me there is no God.” And what is the proof of it? “Who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for Me, since I appointed the ancient people? And the things that are coming, and shall come, let them show unto them.” He challenges the false gods to tell what was being done in secret places and what was to be done in the future and He gives this as a proof of His Godhead!

The heathen oracles attempted prophecy because they saw how clearly it would prove the existence of their gods. Our Lord is a discerner of hearts, reading them as a scholar scans his books and we know Him to be our God. Nathanael had drunk into the very essence of that wonderful 139th Psalm. No greater proof of Godhead can be given than the fact that all things are naked and open before the Lord! “O Lord, You have searched me. You know my sitting down and my rising up. You understand my thoughts afar off.” When I sat under the fig tree You did read my heart.

“You compass my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word on my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, You know it altogether. You have beset me behind and before, and laid Your hands upon me. Where shall I go from Your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from Your Presence?” All this, you see, is a manifestation of Godhead. Nathanael argued, therefore—“He saw me when nobody else did! He read my character in a simple act, an act which other people might have misunderstood and thought me a fool! He perceived the uprightness of my heart and now I know that He is certainly Divine!”

Notice, further, the blessing of our text comes to a man who in *simple honesty believes much upon the evidence of one assured fact*. It is proven that Christ can see in secret and read men’s hearts—and from this, in addition to His Divinity, Nathanael infers that “He is a great Teacher”—and he makes his first confession of faith by calling Him, “Rabbi.” He is sure that He who knows all things is worthy to be a teacher and he gives Him the teacher’s title. Then, as we have already said, he perceives that if He is

Omniscient, He is Divine and he makes the confession, "You are the Son of God." And, not satisfied with that, he sees that if He is, indeed, the Son of God, He must be Ruler and Lord and, therefore, he calls Him the King of Israel.

See here how he drinks into the spirit of the second Psalm, where Son and King are the two great notes of harmony. "Yet have I set *My king* upon My holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the Lord has said unto Me, You are My Son; this day have I begotten You. Kiss *the Son* lest He is angry and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him." Gladly does Nathanael submit Himself to the Son and proclaim Him King of Israel. Was not this the first time that our Lord had been actually proclaimed as King since He had come into His public ministry? Was not this the answer to the wise men's question when they followed His star from regions far remote?

Here was He who was born King of the Jews! This guileless man, who seemed to lack shrewdness, had seen more than his fellows. His eyes, undimmed by falsehood or suspicion, had seen the King, though His humiliation had unclothed Him of His royal mantle and taken off His crown. See, then, Beloved, that the gist of our first head is this—It is the pure in heart that shall see God! We must be honest and sincere; we must be clear of all subtlety and craft; we must be transparent as glass before Him or else the Lord will not reveal Himself to us or by us! He loves the guileless and the true—and when He has made us thus, He will fill us with light but not till then. Note, again, that those who are ready to believe upon sure evidence—for Nathanael needed that—are the men who shall see more and more. Nathanael did not require the evidence to be repeated to Him again and again—he saw the argument at once and yielded himself to it. When a point is once proven, it is proven—and that is an end of it.

One conclusive argument is as good as 20 to an unsophisticated mind. Those who are willing to see shall see. Heaven is open to those from whose eyes the scales of prejudice are removed. The Lord manifests Himself to those who manifest themselves to Him. If you will be Christians of the highest type, you must be true to the core and you must realize Christ and believe in Him with that mighty faith which sees Him and realizes Him as close at hand. The Presence and the power of Jesus must be undoubted by your soul—they must be as much a matter of fact to you as your own existence—and then yours shall be the words which we are now about to consider—"You shall see greater things than these."

II. Let us now look at THE GRACIOUS REWARD. Only a few words upon it. Because this simple-hearted man had believed upon the one argument of the Lord's discernment of his heart, he was favored with the promise of seeing greater things. By these words our Lord meant that *His perceptions would become more vivid*. Do you believe? You shall see! If we demand to see *first*, we shall never believe! But if we are willing to believe we shall, by-and-by, see.

There is a growth in faith which renders it not the less faith and yet approximates it more and more nearly to sense. I mean, "sense," in its best signification—so that what at first we believe, simply upon the testimony of God, we come, by-and-by, to believe upon personal experience. We believe until we so realize the Object of faith that we look at the things which

are not seen and see Him who is invisible. From this we go further, still, until we both taste and handle of the good Word of Life and faith becomes the substance of things hoped for. From looking to Christ we come to live, move and have our being in Him. The eye of faith gathers strength. At first it sees Christ through its tears and that look saves the soul, though it perceives comparatively little of Him. But in later days the eye of faith becomes so powerful that it emulates that of the eagle which can gaze upon the sun at midday. Thus faith becomes a second sight. Remember our Lord's words to Martha, "Said I not unto you, that if you would believe you should see the Glory of God?" "Do you believe? You shall see."

This was not all our Lord's meaning. He virtually promised that Nathanael *should discover other Truths of God than he as yet knew*. "You shall see greater things than these." Now, what is there greater to be seen than the Omniscience of Christ? "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me: it is high: I cannot attain unto it." Is there anything greater than this? Yes, so the Savior says! I suppose He means this—First, as you have seen My Omniscience in your own case, you shall go on to see it in the case of all mankind, for by My Cross shall the thoughts of many hearts be revealed and by My Gospel shall men be revealed unto themselves. The Word of God is quick and powerful and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart—and when Nathanael came to preach it in later years, he found it so and saw for himself that Christ read every man's heart.

How wonderfully do we know this to be true in our time and in this place, for here the Word of God finds us out and lays us bare to our own consciences! You have been startled in your seats, sometimes. You have wondered how it could be that not only in the gross has your experience been set before you, but even in little details there have been minute touches which have amazed you with the distinctness of the Divine knowledge! Our Lord did not say, "I saw you under a tree," as if it might have been an oak or an olive, but He spoke definitely of "the *fig* tree." Even so does He cause His ministers to be very minute and particular so that you wonder where their knowledge comes from! And so, when this is done on a large scale—as it is done whenever Christ is preached—then is it true that we see greater things than when, for the first time, we perceive that our own character is revealed.

He would see "greater things," next, because *he would see more of the Godhead*. Did you see Omniscience? You shall see Omnipotence! Did you discover that I could read your heart? You shall learn that I can *change* your heart! Did you find that My eyes could glance into the secrets of your soul? You shall find My Word casting out devils, healing the sick and hushing the storms! You shall see clearer ensigns of My Godhead than this one experiment in the reading of the heart. *The Lord, in calling Himself the Son of Man, opens up to Nathanael one of those greater things*. He had perceived Him to be the Son of God by His reading his heart and it was a great thing to perceive the Godhead, but it was a greater wonder, still, to see that Godhead linked with humanity!

Jesus, as Son of God, is glorious, but at the same time as Son of Man, He has a double Glory! Our Lord seemed to say to Nathanael, "You have believed that I am the Son of God—you shall see the Son of Man." And is this a greater thing? In one sense it is a *descent* for Jesus to be the Son of

Man, but yet, you who know how to read the riddle aright will say that the Godhead is not half so wonderful in itself as when it comes to be united with our humanity. The Incarnation has about it a mystery which is not seen, even in the mystery of the Godhead! That there should be a God, heathens might spell out—but that this God should come in human flesh among us—*this* is the mystery which angels desired to look into! Nor may I forget that the idea of our Lord as *King of Israel* is not so great as His connection with all nations which is displayed in His title, Son of man. He is not confined in His Grace to Israel, as Nathanael probably thought, but He is Brother to our entire humanity! Here was another of the greater things!

Note further that Nathanael had only seen an opened heart, but now he was to see *an opened Heaven*. He had seen Christ's eyes entering into his secrets, but he was now to see communications established between the lowly hearts of men and the secrets of Heaven! He saw how Christ, Son of God, dwelt among men—he is now to see how the abodes of God and man shall be blended in one and high communion maintained between earth and Heaven. I come back to the one thought, that the sight of greater things is reserved for guileless Believers. To those who already have much by faith, more shall be given. Beloved, as a Church and people, we have seen great things in this place in the work of the Lord among us. And we have lately celebrated with much joy and thankfulness the loving kindness of the Lord to us—let us make this a new starting point and hear the Lord say—"From this day will I bless you."

We desire to see much greater things than we have known and, in order to this, we must have more faith. And that faith must be more simple and childlike. The rule of the Kingdom is that according to our faith, so shall it be unto us. Unbelief bars the way of mercy. We tie the hands of Jesus if we have no faith. Is it not written, "He could not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief"? We must *believe* or we shall not be established, nor shall our works prosper. Whatever we have accomplished has been worked by faith, but we believe that we might have done a hundred times more if we had manifested a hundred times more faith. May the Lord grant us downright, honest, simple faith and then we shall see greater things than these, for all obstacles will be removed and eternal love will work wonders among us!

Faith makes a man a fit instrument for God to use and, therefore, God does great things by him. If you are unbelieving, God will no more use you than a warrior would use a reed for a weapon! He works no wonders by unbelieving ministers and unbelieving churches, for these are not prepared to be blessed—they are not vessels fit for the Master's use—rust is upon them of the worst kind. When your heart is resting in the Lord, expecting to see His arm made bare and quietly waiting to see how He will glorify Himself and fulfill His promises, then will you see greater things! When faith fails, it disqualifies us and sets us aside even as in the case of Moses and Aaron, to whom the Lord said, "Because you believed Me not, to sanctify Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this congregation unto the land which I have given them."

We must have faith, for faith fulfils the condition which is virtually appended to every promise. Has not the Lord promised to answer the

prayers of those who cry unto Him believingly? But as for the wavering, He has said, "Let not that man expect to receive anything of the Lord." Is not faith our very *life*? "The just shall live by faith." Is it not our entrance into blessedness? We see that Israel in the wilderness could not enter into Canaan because of unbelief. All the promises are for Believers—there are none for unbelievers. "As you have believed so be it unto you," stands as the measure of blessing—there is no other. Strong faith, coupled with a guileless character, brings a man into the special, complacent love of God, for, albeit that He loves all His elect, He does not delight in all alike. There were Apostles among the disciples—there were three choice ones out of the twelve—there was one peculiar favorite out of the three!

He is dearest to God who trusts Him most completely and is most childlike and true. God will do most by that man who is most reliant upon Him and most open with Him. David, who makes the Lord, alone, to be his confidence, is the man after God's own heart. And Abraham, who in faith could even give up his only son, is the friend of God. We shall never be full-gown with God until we become too little to dare to doubt; too insignificant to venture to question and too true to suspect the Lord. Increase in faith is the one thing necessary to our advance in the Divine life and work—and may the Holy Spirit work it in us for Christ's name's sake!

III. We have only a minute or two in which to mention THE SPECIAL SIGHT which was promised to Nathanael. He was to see an opened Heaven. The gates of Glory are not only opened now to Believers, but they are carried right away and Heaven is laid open to all its citizens, even to those who dwell below. This is a great joy to the believing heart, for free communion with Heaven is the delight of our spirit.

I cannot enlarge upon this, which is worthy of another sermon, but I may not say less than this—that in Christ the saints are brought very near to God, for even now they have come to the heavenly Jerusalem. The franchise of the new Jerusalem is extended to these low-lying regions in which we sojourn. The veil is torn and we have access to the holiest. The wall of separation is removed and now the abode of the Church below is an adjunct of Heaven, a suburban district of the metropolitan city of the New Jerusalem. The gates shall not be shut, nor a division created, nor communion suspended. Is not that a glorious thing, that in the Person of Christ Jesus, Heaven is laid open to earth and earth laid open to communications with Heaven?

Do you know that, Beloved? It is a simple thing to talk of, but do you *know* it? Have you taken up your citizenship, so that you can say, "Truly our citizenship is in Heaven"? While you are sitting under that fig tree do you know what it is to sit in the heavenly places, together with Christ? Are you risen and reigning with Him even now? If so, this is a joyful state of things and one which should cause you much assurance! We are now dwelling in the house of our God, or at the very least we are sitting by the very gate of Heaven! Our condition is known to the Lord and He is near to help us. We suffer not unseen and labor not unobserved. Nothing hinders God from helping us—nothing hinders us from securing His aid.

Then the Lord went on to promise that he should see that the communion between Heaven and earth, by the way of the Mediator, is not only possible, but actual. The ladder is set and there are angels ascending and

descending upon it. God hears, helps and speaks with believing men of pure heart. Observe, that according to the text, the angels *ascend* first. It does say, "Descending and ascending," as we might naturally suppose, but they ascend first because when Jesus was on earth they were already here and ascended at His bidding to carry His messages upward! When Jesus Christ was here, He was never without His bodyguard of angels and these were His messengers to the courts above.

We, today, Beloved, are surrounded by the forces of the Eternal—they have not to come to us for the first time—lo, they have, these many years, kept watch and guard around the fold of the redeemed! And when a new danger comes, they are prompt to do the part of watchers and of guardians and to carry tidings to the sentinels of Heaven. Let us pray, for as we pray our prayers ascend to Heaven and our praises, too. If we lead an angelical life, our thoughts will always be going up to Heaven or returning. Beloved, have you realized this—that as you have believed in Christ upon the testimony of His Word, you have now the right of access to the Eternal Throne at all times? You have but to speak and God will hear you!

Some of God's people do not know much about this. Praying is a religious exercise with them—a very proper exercise, but it is not speaking with God—it is not doing business with God and obtaining supplies at His hands. It is a ladder without angels, or, if you please, with ascending angels only, but none coming down with heavenly gifts! Beloved, I hope you have not fallen into this error. What? Is not prayer *real* with you? Do you expect nothing from it? Would you send an angel on a fool's errand? Do these ascend to Heaven in mere sport and rush up and down to do nothing? Let us mean business when we pray, or we shall be mockers of the Divine Majesty! Too many come before God and ask for everything in general but nothing in particular—and they get but scant answers to their pointless prayers.

Many more are very slack in prayer and, therefore, they starve their souls. Many angels must go up if many are to come down! Prayer must be constant and real with us. We should live as if we really had power with God, as if like, Elijah, we could go the top of Carmel and pray a bronze sky away and deluge the earth with showers of blessings! Are you unable so to live like this? Then the fault lies at your own door.

What was next? Nathanael was to see angels descending upon the Son of Man, that is to say, he was to see heavenly spirits and blessings coming down to man by Jesus Christ. He who truly believes in Christ and is without guile, shall have continual blessings from on high—all Heaven shall be opened to him! God will help him by Providence; will help him by Grace; will help him by actual angels and will help him spiritually by the all power which He has given unto Christ in Heaven and in earth. How earnestly do I desire that this Church, this morning, may see for itself what my eyes have seen for myself—for my faith sees Heaven opened to supply the needs of Christ's work and all the might of God working to achieve His purposes!

I am just entering upon another work for God. We have had enough of these enterprises, some say, why not wait? I am forced to go forward and onward! I must go, nor do I fear, for lo, I see Heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending, by the way of Christ Jesus, to

bring us help! We may venture. There is no *venture* in it—we may trust God for *anything*! We may trust God for everything and just go straight on! It looks like walking on water, sometimes, to trust Christ—especially about gold and silver—but we need not fear! The waters shall be a sea of glass beneath our feet if we can but simply trust!

But oh, we must purge ourselves! We must be without guile! There must be no self-seeking! There must be a simple-hearted desire for God's Glory and for nothing else! We must sink self—Christ must reign! And then we must trust and go forward. I hope we are right in this matter. And if so, we shall see the salvation of God! Nothing can stop us. Behold, this day all things work together for good to them that love God. The stones of the field are in league with us! Yes, it is not on earth, alone, that we find allies, but the stars in their courses fight against our foes and all Heaven is on the stir to befriend us in the service of God! See how the ladder swarms with coming and going angels! Heaven surrounds those who are doing Heaven's work! God Himself is with us, for our Captain and His host, which is very great, is round about us even as horses of fire and chariots of fire were round about the Prophet.

All things shall be given that are needed and as our day, our strength shall be. Brace yourselves, my Brothers and Sisters, for a new endeavor! Be strong in the Lord and you shall see greater things than these. Full of weakness, yet stand in *His* strength, each one, and play the man! Say, "I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me." Omnipotence is waiting to gird your loins! Buckle it about you and become mighty through God! Our Head, Christ Jesus, has all power in Heaven and in earth and that power He pours into all His members!

By faith I commit myself and I trust, also, my beloved Church and Friends, to farther efforts for our Lord, relying upon His Word, "You shall see greater things than these," and fully believing that through Christ Jesus all the forces of Heaven are in alliance with us and the will of the Lord shall surely be accomplished!

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—

John 1:35—51; Genesis 28:10—22.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—412, 335, 317.

[Mr. Spurgeon alludes to the Girls' Orphanage. The fund has just commenced and land has been purchased. A large amount will be needed, but there is a great God to look to!]

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OBEYING CHRIST'S ORDERS

NO. 2317

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 16, 1893.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 13, 1889.**

***“His mother said unto the servants, Whatever He says unto you, do it.”
John 2:5.***

IT does not need a strong imagination to picture Mary, probably at that time the widowed mother of our Lord. She is full of love and of a naturally kind, sympathetic disposition. She is at a marriage and she is very pleased that her Son is there, with the first handful of His disciples. Their being there has made a greater demand upon the provisions than was expected and the supply is running short, so she, with an anxiety that was natural to such a mother of her years, and of her gentle spirit, thinks that she will speak to her Son and tell Him that there is a need. So she says to Him, “They have no wine.”

There was not much amiss in that, surely, but our Lord, who sees not as man sees, perceived that she was putting to the front her motherly relationship at a time when it was necessary that it should be in the background. How necessary it was, history has shown, for the apostate church of Rome has actually made Mary a Mediatrix and prayers have been addressed to her! She has even been asked to use her maternal authority with her Son. It was well that our Savior should check anything that might tend to give any countenance to Mariolatry which has been altogether so mischievous. And it was necessary for Him to speak to His mother with somewhat more of sharpness than, perhaps, her conduct, in itself, alone, might have required. So her august Son felt bound to say to her, “Woman, what have I to do with you in such a matter as this? I am not your Son as a miracle-worker. I cannot work to please you. No, if I work a miracle as the Son of God, it cannot be as *your* Son—it must be in another character. What have I to do with you in this matter?” And He gives His reason—“My hour is not yet come.”

It was a gentle rebuke, absolutely necessary from the prescience of all that would follow. You can easily picture how Mary took it. She knew Christ's gentleness, His infinite love, how for 30 years there had never come anything from Him that had grieved her spirit. So she drank in the reproof and gently shrank back, *thinking* much more than she said, for she was always a woman who laid up these things and pondered them in her heart. She says very little, but she thinks a great deal—and we see in her later conduct, in respect to this very miracle, that she thought very much of what Jesus had said to her. Brothers and Sisters, you and I, with the very best intentions, may sometimes err towards our Lord. And if He,

then, in any way rebukes us, and puts us back—if He disappoints our hope, if He does not allow our ambitious designs to prosper—let us take it from Him as Mary took it from Jesus. Let us just feel that it must be right and let us, in silence, possess ourselves in His Presence.

Notice, then, this holy woman's quietude, ceasing to say a word, quietly drinking it all in. And then observe her wise admonition to the servants who were there to wait at the feast. Inasmuch as she had run before Him, she would have them to follow after Him and she very wisely and kindly says to them, "Whatever He says unto you, do it. Do not go to Him with any of your remarks. Do not try to press Him forward. Do not urge Him on—He knows better than we do. Stand back and wait till He speaks, and then be quick to obey every single word that He utters." Beloved, I wish that when we have learned a lesson, we would try to teach it. Sometimes our Master gives us a sharp word all to ourselves and we would not tell anybody else what He has said. In our private communions He has spoken to our conscience and to our heart—and we need not go and repeat that, as Mary did not. But, having learned the lesson well, let us then say to our next friend, "Do not err as I have done. Avoid the rock on which I struck just now. I fear that I grieved my Lord. My Sister, I would not have you grieve Him. My Brother, I would try to tell you just what to do that you may please Him in all things." Do you not think that we would minister to mutual edification if we did that? Instead of telling the faults of others, let us extract the essence from the discoveries which we make of our own errors and then administer that as a helpful medicine to those who are around us.

This holy woman must have spoken with a good deal of power. Her tone must have been peculiarly forcible and her manner must have made a great impression upon the servants, for you notice that they did exactly what she told them. It is not every servant who will let a guest come into the house and set up to be mistress. But so it was when she spoke to those servants, with her deep, earnest tones, as a woman who had learned something that she could not tell, but who, yet, out of that experience, had extracted a lesson for others. She must have spoken with a wonderful melting force when she said to them, "Whatever He says unto you, do it." And they were all looking on with awe after she had spoken, drinking in her message to them as she had drunk in the message of the Lord.

Now I want, tonight, to try to teach that lesson to myself and to you. I think that our own experience goes to show us that our highest wisdom, our very best prosperity, will lie in our cautiously keeping behind Christ and never running before Him, never forcing His hand, never tempting Him as they did who tempted God in the wilderness—prescribing to Him to do this or that—but, in holy, humble *obedience*, taking these words as our life motto henceforth, "Whatever He says unto you, do it." I will handle my text in this way—First, *What?* Secondly, *Why?* Thirdly, *What then?*

I. WHAT IS IT THAT WE ARE HERE TOLD TO DO? In a word, it is to *obey*. You who belong to Christ and are His disciples, take heed to this word of exhortation, "Whatever He says unto you, do it."

I want you to notice, first of all, that these words were spoken, not to the disciples of Christ, but to the servants who, in the Greek, are here called *diakonois*, the persons who were brought in to wait at the table and to serve the guests. I know not whether they were *paid* servants, or whether they were friends who kindly volunteered their services, but they were the waiters at the feast. They were not told to leave their master. They were not told to give up their avocation as waiters. They were servants and they were to continue servants, but still, for all that, they were to acknowledge Christ as their Master without casting off their obedience to the governor of the feast. Mary does not say to these people, "Put down those pots. Leave off carrying those dishes." But while they continue to do what they were doing, she says to them, "Whatever He says unto you, do it." I thought that point was well worthy of our notice, that these servants, still abiding as they were, yet were to render obedience to Christ.

That obedience, in the first place, would be *prepared obedience*. Mary came to get their minds ready to do what Christ should bid them. No man will obey Christ on a sudden and keep on doing so. There must be a weighing, a considering. There must be a thoughtful, careful knowledge of what His will is—and a preparedness of heart—that whatever that will may be, as it is known, so it shall be done! At first these servants did nothing. The guests needed wine but the servants did not go to Jesus and say, "Master, wine is needed." No, but they waited until He bade them fill the waterpots with water—and then they filled them to the brim. But they did nothing till He bade them. A great part of obedience lies in *not doing*. I believe that in the anxiety of many a trembling heart, the very best faith will be seen in not doing anything. When you do not know what to do, do nothing, and, doing nothing, my Brothers and Sisters, will be found to be, sometimes, the very hardest work of all. In the case of a man in business who has come into a difficulty, or of a Sister with a sick child, or a sick husband, you know the impulse is to do something or other. If not the first thing that comes to hand, yet we feel that we must do *something*. And many a person has aggravated his sorrow by doing something, when, if he had bravely left it alone, believingly left it in God's hands, it would have been infinitely better for him.

"Whatever He says unto you, do it." But do not do what every whim or fancy in *your poor brain* urges you to do! Do not run before you are sent. They who run before God's cloud will have to come back, again—and they will be very happy if they find the way back! Where Scripture is silent, be you silent! If there is no command, you had better wait till you can find some guidance. Blunder not on with a headlong anxiety lest you tumble into the ditch! "Whatever He says unto you," do *that*. But until He speaks, sit still. My Soul, be patient before God and wait until you know His bidding!

This prepared obedience was to be the obedience of the spirit, for obedience lies mainly there. True obedience is not always seen in what we do, or do not do, but it is manifest in the perfect submission to the will of God—and the strong resolve that saturates the spirit through and through—that what He bids us, we will do!

Let your obedience, in the next place, be *perfect obedience*. "Whatever He says unto you, do it." It is *disobedience*, and not obedience which prompts us to *select* from the commands of Christ which ones we care to obey. If you say, "I will do what Christ bids me as far as I choose," you have, in fact, said, "I will *not* do what Christ bids me, but I will do what I please to do." That obedience is not true which is not universal! Imagine a soldier in the army who, instead of obeying every command of his captain, omits this and that, and says that he cannot help it, or that he even *means* to omit certain things. Beloved, take heed of throwing any precept of your Lord upon the dunghill! Every Word that He has spoken to you is more precious than a diamond! Prize it! Store it up. Wear it. Let it be your ornament and your beauty. "Whatever He says unto you, do it," whether it relates to the Church of God and its ordinances, or to your walk out of doors among your fellow men, or to your relationship in the family, or to your own private service for the Lord. "Whatever." See, there are to be no trimmings, here, no cutting off of certain things—"Whatever He says unto you, do it." Breathe this prayer at the present moment, "Lord, help me to do whatever You have said! May I have no choice! May I never let my own will come in to interfere, but if You have told me do anything, enable me to do it, whatever it may be!"

This obedience, then, being prepared and perfect, is to also be *practical obedience*—"Whatever He says unto you, do it." Do not think about it, especially for a very long time, and then wait until it is more impressed upon you, or till there is a convenient season. "Whatever He says unto you, do it." One of the great evils of the times is that of deliberating about a plain command of Christ and asking, "What will be the result of it?" What have you to do with *results*? "But if I follow Christ in all things, I may lose my job!" What have you to do with that? When a soldier is told to go up to the cannon's mouth, he is very likely to lose his "job" and something else—but he is bound to do it! "Oh, but I might lose my opportunities of usefulness!" What do you mean? That you are going to do evil that good may come? That is what it comes to. Will you really, before God, look that matter in the face? "Whatever He says unto you, do it." At any expense, at any risk, do it!

I have heard some say, "Well, I do not like doing things in a hurry." Very well, but what says David? "I made haste, and delayed not—to keep Your Commandments." Remember that we sin every moment that we delay to do anything *commanded* by Christ. Whether every moment of delay is a fresh sin, I cannot say, but if we neglect any command of His, we are living in a condition of *perpetual sinning* against Him—and that is not a desirable position for any of Christ's disciples to live in! Beloved, "whatever He says unto you, *do it*." Do not argue against it and try to find some reason for not doing it. I have known some Believers who have not liked to have certain passages of Scripture read at the family altar because they have rather troubled their consciences. If there is anything in the Bible that quarrels with you, *you* are wrong—the Bible is not! Come to terms with it at once and the only terms will be obey, obey, obey your Lord's will! I am not holding this up to you as a *way of salvation*—you know I would never think of doing that! I am speaking to those of you who are saved!

You are Christ's servants—His saved ones! And now you have come to the holy discipline of His house and this is the rule of it, "Whatever He says unto you, do it."

Do it practically. Have we not been talking too much about what should be done by our friends, or observing what others do not do? Oh, that the Spirit of God would come upon us that our own walk might be close with God, our own obedience be precise and exact, our own love to Christ be proved by our continual following in His steps! Ours should be practical obedience.

It must also be *personal obedience*—"Whatever He says unto you, do it." You know how much there is done by proxy, nowadays. Charity is done so. A is in a great deal of need. B hears of it and is very sorry, indeed. And so he asks C to come and help A. And then B goes to bed and feels that he has done a good thing! Or else when A has told his story to B, B looks out to see if there is some Society that will help him, although he never subscribes to the Society because he does not *think* of doing that! His part is just to pass A on to C, or to the Society and, having done that, he feels satisfied. Do you wish the Savior to say, in the Last Great Day, "I was hungry, and you sent Me to somebody else," or, "I was thirsty and you directed Me to the parish pump for a drink"? Nothing of the kind! We must do something *personally* for Christ.

So is it in the matter of endeavoring to win souls to Christ. There is nothing like personally speaking to people, button-holing them, looking them in the eyes, talking your own personal experience over with them and pleading with them to fly to Christ for refuge! Personal obedience is what is needed. If one of these persons who were waiting had said, when the command had come from Christ to fill the waterpots, "John, you go and do it. William, you go and do it"—he would not have followed out Mary's command, "Whatever He says unto you, do it." Do I touch the conscience of anybody here? Well, if so, from this time forth cease to be a *servant of God* by proxy lest you be *saved* by proxy—and to be saved by proxy will be to be lost! But trust Christ for yourself and then serve Him for yourself, by His own mighty Grace—"Whatever He says unto you, do it."

It must also be *prompt obedience*. Do it at once—delay will take the bloom from the obedience. "Whatever He says unto you," stand ready to obey. The moment that the command, "March," is given to the soldier, he marches. The moment a command comes to your heart and you see it to be really in the Word of God, do it! Oh, the murdered resolutions that lie round about most men's lives! What they would have done! What they *could* have done, if they had but done it! But they have been building castles in the air, imagining lives they would like to lead and not actually doing Christ's commands. Oh, for a prompt, personal, practical service to the Lord Jesus Christ!

And in our case it is to be *perpetual obedience*. Mary said to these waiters, "Whatever He says unto you, do it." "Keep on doing it. Not only the first thing He says, but whatever He says unto you. As long as this feast lasts and He is here, do what my Son commands you." So, Beloved, as long as we are in this world, until life's last hour, may the Holy Spirit en-

able us to do just what Jesus bids us do! Can you say, my Brothers and Sisters—

***“Jesus, I my cross have taken,
All to leave, and follow You”?***

Is it your wish that until you enter into His rest, you should always bear His yoke and follow His footsteps? *Temporary* Christians are not Christians! Those who ask for furlough from this Divine service have never entered it. We have put on our uniform to never take it off. As certain old knights in times of war slept in their armor and had the lance and shield always ready to hand, so must the Christian be, from this time forth and forever. “Ours not to reason why,” ours not to delay when the command comes, but ours, while there is breath in our body, and life in our spirit, to serve Him who has redeemed us with His precious blood!

Thus I have feebly set before you what it is that we are called to do—that is, to obey Christ's orders.

II. Now for a few minutes let us ask, WHY IS THIS TO BE DONE? Beloved, why were these men to do what Jesus told them? Let that melt into, “Why are you and I to do what Jesus tells us?”

First, *Christ is, by Nature, worthy of obedience.* I count it an honor to serve Christ. Oh, what is He? Perfect Man, rising nobly above us all! Perfect God, infinitely majestic in His two Natures. Why, it seems to me as if we ought to love to do His bidding and long to be conformed to His image! Here is the rest for our aspiring spirit. Here are the glory and the honor and the immortality for which we pant! By the glory of Christ, whom you adore unseen, “Whatever He says unto you, do it.”

Beside that, *Christ is our only hope.* All our prospects for the future depend upon Him. Glory be to His blessed name! There is none like He. If He were gone from us and we could not trust in Him, life would be an endless darkness, an abyss of woe! By all the glory of His Nature and all that we owe to Him, and all that we look for from Him, I charge you, beloved Friends, “Whatever He says unto you, do it.”

More than that, *He is All-Wise, and so fit to lead.* Who but He could get these people out of their trouble at the feast when they needed wine? He knew the way out of it all—a way that would manifest His own Glory, make His disciples believe in Him and make everybody round about happy. But if He did not show the way, nobody could. So let us obey Him, for His commands are so wise. He never has made a mistake and He never will. Let us commit our way unto His keeping and whatever He says unto us, let us do it!

Besides, Beloved, *Christ has rewarded our obedience before.* Did you ever act rightly and, after all, find it a mistake? Some of us have had to do very grievous things in our time that have gone sorely against the grain. Would we do them again? Yes, that we would, if they cost 10 times as much! No man has ever, in looking back, regretted that he followed the voice of conscience and the dictates of God's Word—and he never will, though he should even go to prison and to death for Christ's sake! You may lose for Christ, but you shall never lose *by* Christ! When all comes to be added up, you shall be a greater gainer because of the apparent loss. He has never deceived you and never misled you. Obedience to Him has

always brought you real solid peace. Therefore, "whatever He says unto you, do it."

Yet once more, *Christ is our Master and we must obey Him*. I hope, Beloved, that there is no one among us here who would call Him, Master, and yet not do the things that He says. We do not talk about Him as one who was once great, but who is gone away and whose influence is now upon the wane because He is not up to "the spirit of the age." No, but He still lives and we still commune with Him. He is our Master and Lord! When we were baptized into His death, it was no mere matter of form—but we were dead to the world and we lived to Him. When we took His sacred name upon us and were called Christians, it was no sham—we meant that He should be Captain, King and Master of our spirits! He is no Baali, that is, domineering lord but He is *Ishi*, our Man, our Husband and, in His husbandly relationship He is Lord and Governor of every thought and every motion of our nature! Jesus, Jesus, Your yoke is easy and your burden is light! It is joyous to bear it! To get away from it would be misery, indeed, and that is one reason why I say to you, tonight, "Whatever He says unto you, do it," because if you do not, you cast off your allegiance to Him—and what are you going to do, then?

To whom will you go if you turn away from Him? Every man must have a master. Will you be your own master? You cannot have a greater tyrant! Will you let the *world* be your master? Are you going to be a servant of "society"? There are no worse slaves than these! Are you going to live for self, for honor, for what is called, "pleasure"? Ah, me, you may as well go down to Egypt, to the iron furnace, at once! To whom can we go? Jesus, to whom can we go, if we go away from You? You have the words of eternal life! "Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar." Throw another bond of love about me, another cord of sweet constraint and let me never ever think of parting with You! Let me be crucified to the world and the world to me!

Do not your hearts pray after that fashion? Oh, to be wholly Christ's, entirely Christ's, forever Christ's! Yes, yes, we will listen to the command, "Whatever He says unto you, do it." I have given you the reason why we should obey Christ's orders.

III. And now, Beloved, let me occupy the last few minutes in answering this question, WHAT WILL FOLLOW FROM THIS OBEDIENCE? Suppose we do whatever Christ commands us, what then? I will tell you what then.

The first thing is, that you will feel *free from responsibility*. The servant who has done what his master has told him, may, in his own mind, fear that some dreadful consequences may follow, but he says to himself, "It will be no fault of *mine*. I did what I was told to do." Now, Beloved, if you want to get rid of the whole burden of life, by faith do whatever Christ commands you! Then, if the heavens should seem about to fall, it would be no business of yours to shore them up. You have not to mend God's work and keep it right. I remember what Mr. John Wesley said to his preachers—"Now, Brothers, I do not want you to mend my rules. I want you to obey them." That is pretty strong from John Wesley, but from our Lord Jesus Christ it comes most suitably. He does not want us to get to altering, mending, touching up and looking at consequences. No! Do ex-

actly what He tells you and you have nothing to do with the consequences! You may have to bear them, but He will give you Grace to do that—and it shall be your joy to bear all ill consequences that come of firm obedience to Christ.

This kind of doctrine does not suit the year 1889. If you go over to Scotland and see where the Covenanters' graves are, anybody who thinks according to the spirit of *this* age will say that they were just a lot of fools to have been so stubborn and so strict about doctrine as to die for it. Why, really, there is not anything in the new philosophy that is worth dying for! I wonder whether there is any "modern thought" doctrine that would be worth the purchase of a *cat's* life? According to the teaching of the broad school, what is supposed to be true, today, may not be true tomorrow, so it is not worth dying for. We may as well put off the dying till the thing is altered—and if we wait a month, it *will be* altered and thus, at the last, you may get the old creed back again! The Lord send it and send us yet a race of men who will obey what He bids them, do what He tells them, believe what He teaches them and lay their own wills down in complete obedience to their Lord and Master! Such a people will feel free from responsibility.

Then you shall feel a *sweet flow of love to Christ*. The disobedient child—well, he will not be turned out of the house because he will not do the bidding of his mother and father. But when he does not submit to the rule of the house, he has a hard time of it and he *ought* to have. There is that evening kiss, it is not as warm as it would have been. And that morning greeting, after long disobedience, has no happiness in it. And, indeed, the more kind father and mother are, the more unhappy he is! And the sweet love of Christ is such that it makes us unhappy in disobedience. You cannot walk contrary to Christ and yet enjoy fellowship with Him. And the more dear and near He is to you, so much the wider does the gap seem to be when you are not doing His bidding.

Besides, there is no *carrying out your faith except by doing as He bids you*. That faith which lies only in a creed, or in a little pious book is not good for much. Faith does what Christ bids it do and it delights to do so! It rejoices to run risks, it delights to put off from the land and get out to sea. It is glad to sacrifice itself when Jesus calls for it because faith cannot be satisfied without bearing fruit—and the fruit of faith is obedience to Him in whom we believe.

Beloved, I also think that if we will obey Christ in what He says, we shall be learning to be leaders. Wellington used to say that no man is fit to command until he has *learned to obey*—and I am sure that it is so. We shall never see a race of really first-rate men unless our boys and girls are made to obey their parents in their childhood. The essential glory of manhood is lost when disobedience is tolerated and, certainly, in the Church of God, the Lord does put His leading servants through very severe ordeals. The best place for the books of a minister is not his library, but very often a sick-bed. Affliction is our school and before we can deal with others, God must deal with us. If you will not obey, you shall not be set to command.

And lastly, I do believe that learning to obey is *one of the preparatives for the enjoyments of Heaven*. Why, in Heaven, they have no will but God's will! Their will is to serve Him and delight themselves in Him. And if you and I do not learn, here below, what obedience to God is, and *practice* it, and carry it out, how can we hope to be happy in the midst of obedient spirits? Dear Hearers, if you have never learned to trust Christ and obey Him, how can you go to Heaven? You would be so unhappy there that you would ask God to let you run to Hell for shelter, for nothing would strike you with more horror than to be in the midst of perfectly holy people who find their delight in the service of God! May the Lord bring us to this complete obedience to Christ! Then this world will be an inclined plane, or a ladder such as Jacob saw, up which we shall trip with holy gladness till we come to the top and find our Heaven in perfect obedience to God!

It is not Mary who speaks to you, tonight, but it is the Church of God, the mother of all who truly love Christ, and she says to you, "Whatever He says unto you, do it," and if you will do it, He will turn the water into wine for you. He will make your love more glad and happy than it ever would have been without obeying Him and He will provide for you. Obey Him and He will comfort you. Obey Him and He will perfect you. Be with Him in the ways of duty and you shall be with Him in the home of Glory!

The Lord grant this, of His infinite Grace, giving to us to know the will of Christ, and then working in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure! Amen and Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON. JOHN 2:1-11.

Our Savior had lived on the earth for 30 years and had worked no miracle. There was the hiding of His power. He had been subject to His parents and had lived in obscurity. Now He has broken through the obscurity and He begins His public ministry by working a miracle.

Verse 1. *And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee.* "The third day." John keeps a kind of diary for Christ. In those first days there was something for every day and they were a specimen of the whole life of the Savior. He could never say, like Titus, "I have lost a day." Every day had its deed—glorifying to God and blessed to men. Let us also try to labor for Christ every day—let there be no day without its mark. May God grant that there may be something to make every day memorable! "And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee." The first miracle of our Lord was not worked at Jerusalem, but away there in the back settlements, in "Galilee of the Gentiles." It was necessary for Him to be seen and to work miracles which might be seen, but He began in an obscure region, among a despised people.

1. *And the mother of Jesus was there.* This expression leads to the belief that there was some kind of kinship between the bridegroom or the bride and the mother of Jesus, for it is not said that she was *invited* to be there, but that she "was there."

2. *And both Jesus was called and His disciples to the marriage.* Happy marriage, where Christ is invited to be present! Where Christ goes, His

disciples go. If they suffer with Him, they also rejoice with Him. If He goes to a feast, they must go, too—"Both Jesus was called and His disciples." They were only five, but five is a large number to add to a poor family's wedding party. It shows the generosity of their heart that they invited Jesus to come and bring His disciples. And He went to put honor upon marriage, especially as He foresaw that the day would come when the apostate church of Rome would reckon marriage to be dishonorable and not permit one who was married to officiate as a minister.

3. *And when they needed wine, the mother of Jesus said unto Him, They have no wine.* I notice that John calls Mary "the mother of Jesus." I suppose he had in his mind the dying words of Christ, "Behold your mother!" Such things make a deep impression upon us and we are apt, when writing, to use the phrases that have been burnt into the memory. "The mother of Jesus." Because she has been too much exalted in the Romish church, I fear that we run to the other extreme, and think too little of this woman to whom the angel Gabriel said, "Hail, you that are highly favored, the Lord is with you: blessed are you among women." "They needed wine." They had not been long married before there was need in the house. Even in the brightest days of life, they needed something more. And when the mother of Jesus saw that they were in need and that the marriage festival would be dishonored, so she went to her Son and she said, "They have no wine." I fear she spoke a little like an ordinary mother addressing her son, but the time had come when that discipline was to end. Mary was not His mother as the Son of God. He was about to work a miracle and He would have her and all His relatives know that He would not use His miraculous powers merely for their advantage, but for the Glory of God and the instruction of men.

4. *Jesus said unto her, Woman, what have I to do with you? My hour is not yet come.* It was a very difficult position for Him to be in—to act the part of a loving and obedient son as far as His Manhood was concerned, and yet, as the Son of God, by no means to compromise His Divine Character, but to stand out there as being under no influence of the flesh. Just as we are not to know Christ after the flesh, so He no longer knew mother, or brother, or friend, according to earthly relationship. And when Mary intruded her motherhood upon Him, it was but right and fitting that He should say, "What have I to do with you? My hour is not yet come." The Savior had an hour for *everything*—an hour for suffering and an hour for working. And He did everything punctually, promptly to the minute. That was one of the beauties of His life—"My hour is not yet come." Perhaps He meant, "My hour to work this miracle is not yet come" and He would not be hurried by anybody. Beloved, it is not easy to be familiar with Christ, as I trust we are, and yet always to maintain humble deference to His sacred will. Never let us pray as if we were dictators, or His equals. We must keep our place, however near we come to the dear bosom of our Lord. He is still in Heaven and we are upon earth. He is the Master, we are the servants—and if we are as favored as His mother was, we must not go too far, as she did.

5. *His mother said unto the servants, Whatever He says unto you, do it.* This holy woman took the rebuke in silence. She said nothing. She felt the

force of Christ's words—she proved that she did by now fully believing that He would do something or other. Had He not said, "My hour is not yet come"? Did not that mean that the hour *would* come and that He would do something, by-and-by? So she quietly accepted His reproof. Oh, you who are in great trouble, you feel as if you could force the hand of Christ, but you must not think of doing that! Even if you could have power over Him, you would be very foolish to use it. Let Him alone! He knows best how and when to show His Grace towards you. Keep silence before Him and in patience commit your way unto Him.

6. *And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece.* I admire the accuracy of the Holy Spirit. John does not know exactly how much these vessels held. They were not made to measure things in, so he writes, "containing two or three firkins apiece." Let us always speak correctly. Sometimes, "almost," or, "thereabouts," will be words that will save our truthfulness. Let us not speak positively when we do not know! And when the accuracy of a statement is necessary and we cannot give it in terms that are definite, let us give it in words like these, "containing two or three firkins apiece." These were great "waterpots of stone." Stone will not, as a rule, hold the flavor of anything that has been in it, like an earthen vessel would do. So these pots, which had contained nothing else but water, could not be suspected of having any lees of wine concealed therein, or any flavoring material that would make the water taste like wine. No, they were genuine stone waterpots!

7. *Jesus said unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim.* There was no fear of anything but water being there—"They filled them up to the brim." They obeyed Christ to the letter. If Christ says to you, "Fill the waterpots with water," fill them up to the brim! Never cut down His commandments—carry them out as far as the largest interpretation can go. When you are told to believe in Him, believe in Him up to the brim! When you are told to love Him, love Him up to the brim! When you are commanded to serve Him, serve Him up to the brim!

8. *And He said unto them, Draw some out, now, and take it to the governor of the feast. And they took it.* "Draw some out, now." "Now." He had not turned the water into wine by any incantation. He simply willed it and it was done! He said, "Draw some out, now." He did not need to leave it unnoticed because He had not worked a miracle before—and He could not really say whether this was one. He was sure it was, so He said to the servants, when they had filled the waterpots with water, "Draw some out, now. Do not bring it to Me for Me to taste it. I know what it is. Take it to the chairman of the festival, to Him who sits at the head of the table and is the judge of the wine." "And they took it." The holy confidence of Christ is admirable. May we be able, by faith, so to work, with a calm consciousness of Divine help! But notice this. Whenever the Lord fills any of you with a blessing, think that you hear Him say, "Draw some out, now." He does not fill these pots that they may be *kept full*. "Draw some out, now." Did you have a good time last Monday night at the Prayer Meeting? Some of us had. "Draw some out, now." Have you lived near to God of late, and are you very happy? "Draw some out, now." If He has filled you up to the

brim, draw some out, now, for, if you try to store it up, it will become useless. Selfishness will poison it all!

9. *When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not from where it came, (but the servants which drew the water knew), the governor of the feast called the bridegroom.* There was no collusion, for the governor, who tasted it, did not know where it came from. And the servants, who knew where it came from, did not taste it, so that they did not know what it was like. If anybody objects to the Savior making wine, I think that the best reply is that all the wine which is made of water will do nobody any hurt—and the more of it the better! And this was so made, certainly. They say that there is a devil in every grape. There were no grapes, here! And I am afraid that there is not much of them in most of the wine that is made, nowadays—there is something worse than devil in that.

10. *And said unto him, Every man at the beginning does set forth good wine, and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse, but you have kept the good wine until now.* That the governor of the feast did not understand, but he admired it and here is a picture of what our Lord always does. He gives His people the best, last. At first, the wine of the Kingdom is mingled with much bitterness—salt tears of sorrow flow into it. But it improves as we go on and when we shall drink it with *Him*, in the Kingdom of God, what will it be like? The joy of Christ's love on earth is Heaven, but when we get to Heaven and drink it fresh from the everlasting spring, what will that joy be? Oh, the blessedness laid up for the people of God! We pluck some of the fruit from the trees and eat it, but the fruits laid up in the fruit-chamber, to get ripe, by-and-by, are the very pick of the fruit of the Tree of Life! You who live for the world have already had your best, but, as for our feast with Christ, we go from good to better and from better to the best!

11. *This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His Glory.* Moses turned water into blood. Christ turned water into wine. One brought a curse upon the common things of daily life. The other put an added sweetness and blessing into them.

11. *And His disciples believed on Him.* They believed on Him before, but now they had an ocular demonstration of His Divine Power and Godhead, and they believed as they had not believed before! May you and I often make distinct progress in faith, so that it may be said of us, also, "His disciples believed on Him"!

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

THE WATERPOTS AT CANA

NO. 1556

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

***“Jesus said unto them, Fill the waterpots with water.
And they filled them up to the brim.”
John 2:7.***

You know the narrative. Jesus was at a wedding feast and when the wine ran short, He provided for it right bountifully. I do not think that I should do any good if I were to enter upon the discussion as to what sort of wine our Lord Jesus made on this occasion. It was wine and I am sure it was very good wine, for He would produce nothing but the best. Was it wine such as men understand by that word now? It was wine, but there are very few people in this country who ever see, much less drink, any of that beverage. That which goes under the name of wine is not true wine, but a fiery, brandied concoction of which I feel sure Jesus would not have tasted a drop. The fire-waters and blazing spirits of modern wine manufacturers are very different articles from the mildly exhilarating juice of the grape which was the usual wine of more sober centuries.

As to the wine such as is commonly used in the East, a person must drink inordinately before he would become intoxicated with it. It would be possible, for there were cases in which men were intoxicated with wine, but, as a rule, intoxication was a rare vice in the Savior's times and in the preceding ages. Had our great Exemplar lived under our present circumstances, surrounded by a sea of deadly drink which is ruining tens of thousands, I know how He would have acted. I am sure He would not have contributed by word or deed to the rivers of poisonous beverages in which bodies and souls are now being wholesale destroyed. The kind of wine which He made was such that, if there had been no stronger drink in the world, nobody might have thought it necessary to enter any protest against drinking it. It would have done nobody any harm, be sure of that, or else Jesus, our loving Savior, would not have made it.

Some have raised a question about the great quantity of wine, for I suppose there must have been no less than 120 gallons and probably more. “They did not need all that,” says one, “and even of the weakest kind of wine it would be a deal too much.” But you are thinking of an ordinary wedding *here*, are you not, where there are 10 or a dozen, or a score or two, met together in a parlor? An Oriental wedding is quite another affair. Even if it is only a village, like Cana of Galilee, *everybody* comes to eat and drink and the feast lasts on for a week or a fortnight. Hundreds of people must be fed, for often open house is kept. Nobody is refused and, consequently, a great quantity of provision is required. Besides, they may not have consumed all the wine at once.

When the Lord multiplied loaves and fishes, they had to eat the loaves and fishes directly or else the bread would grow moldy and the fish would be putrid. But wine could be stored and used months afterwards. I have no doubt that such wine as Jesus Christ made was as good for keeping as it was for using. And why not set the family up with a store in hand? They were not very rich people. They might sell it if they liked. At any rate, that is not my subject and I do not intend getting into hot water over the question of cold water! I abstain, myself, from alcoholic drink in every form and I think others would be wise to do the same—but of this, each one must be a guide unto himself.

Jesus Christ commenced the Gospel dispensation, not with a miracle of vengeance, like that of Moses who turned water into blood, but with a miracle of liberality, turning water into wine! He does not only supply necessities, but gives luxuries—and this is highly significant of the kingdom of His Grace. Here He not only gives sinners enough to save them, but He gives abundantly, Grace upon Grace. The gifts of the Covenant are not stinted or stunted—they are neither small in quantity nor in *quality*. He gives to men not only the Water of Life that they may drink and be refreshed, but “wines on the lees well-refined” that they may rejoice exceedingly! And He gives like a king, who gives lavishly, without counting the cups and bottles. As to 120 gallons, how little is that in comparison with the rivers of love and mercy which He is pleased to bestow freely out of His bountiful heart upon the most needy souls. You may forget all about the wine question and all about wine—bad, good, or indifferent—the less we have to do with it the better, I am quite sure.

And now let us think about our Lord’s mercy and let the wine stand as a type of His Grace and the abundance of it as the type of the abundance of His Grace which He does so liberally bestow. Now, concerning this miracle, it may well be remarked how simple and unostentatious it was. One might have expected that when the great Lord of All came here in human form He would commence His miraculous career by summoning the scribes and Pharisees, at least, if not the kings and princes of the earth, to see the marks of His calling and the guarantees and warrants of His commission. Gathering them all together to work some miracle before them, as Moses and Aaron did before Pharaoh, they might be convinced of His Messiahship.

He does nothing of the kind. He goes to a simple wedding among poor people and there, in the simplest and most natural way, He displays His Glory. When the water is to be turned into wine; when He selects that as the first miracle, He does not call, even, for the master of the feast, or for the bridegroom or for any of the guests and begin to say, “You clearly perceive that your wine is all gone. Now, I am about to show you a great marvel, to turn water into wine.” No, He does it quietly with the servants—He tells them to fill the waterpots. He uses the baths—He does not ask for any new vessels, but uses what was there, making no fuss or commotion. He uses water, too, of which they had abundance and works the miracle,

if I may so speak, in the most commonplace and natural style—and that is just the style of Jesus Christ.

Now, if it had been a Roman Catholic miracle, it would have been done in a very mysterious, theatrical, sensational way with no end of paraphernalia! But, being a genuine miracle, it is done just as nearly after the course of Nature as the Supernatural can go. Jesus does not have the waterpots emptied and then fill them with wine, but He goes as far with Nature as Nature will go and uses water to make the wine from it, therein following the processes of His Providences which are at work every day. When the water drops from Heaven and flows into the earth to the roots of the vine and so swells out the clusters with ruddy juice, it is through *water* that wine is produced. There is only a difference as to *time* whether the wine is created in the cluster, or in the waterpots.

Our Lord does not call for any strangers to do it, but the ordinary servants shall bring ordinary water—and while they are drawing out the water, or what appears to them to be water—the servants shall perceive that the water has been turned into wine. Now, whenever you try to serve Jesus Christ, do not make a fuss about it because He never made any fuss in what He did, even when He was working amazing miracles! If you want to do a good thing, go and do it as naturally as you can. Be simple-hearted and simple-minded. Be yourself. Do not be affected in your piety, as if you were going to walk to Heaven on stilts—walk on your own feet and bring religion to your own door and to your own fireside.

If you have a grand work to do, do it with that genuine simplicity which is next akin to sublimity, for affectation and everything that is gaudy and ostentatious, is, after all, mean and beggarly. Nothing but simple naturalness has about it a genuine beauty. And such a beauty there is about this miracle of the Savior. Let all these remarks stand as a kind of preface, for now I need to draw out the principles which are hidden in my text. And then, secondly, when I have displayed those principles, I need to show how they should be carried out.

I. “Jesus said unto them, Fill the waterpots with water.” WHAT ARE THE PRINCIPLES INVOLVED IN OUR LORD’S MODE OF PROCEDURE? First, that as a rule, when Christ is about to bestow a blessing, He gives a *command*. This is a fact which your memories will help you to establish in a moment. It is not always so, but, as a general rule, a word of *command* goes before a word of power, or else with it. He is about to give wine and the process does not consist in saying, “Let wine be,” but it begins by a command addressed to *men*—“Fill the waterpots with water.” Here is a blind man—Christ is about to give him sight. He puts clay on his eyes and then says, “Go to the pool of Siloam and wash.”

There is a man with his arm swinging at his side, useless—Christ is going to restore it and He says, “Stretch forth your hand.” Yes, and the principle goes so far that it holds good in cases where it would seem to be quite inapplicable, for if it is a child that is dead, He says, “Maid, arise!” Or if it is Lazarus, who by this time stinks, being four days buried, yet He cries, “Lazarus, come forth!” And thus He bestows a benefit by a *com-*

mand. Gospel benefits come with a Gospel precept. Do you wonder that this principle which is seen in the miracles is seen in the wonders of His Divine Grace? Here is a sinner to be saved. What does Christ say to that sinner? “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” Can he believe of himself? Is he not dead in sin? Brothers and Sisters, raise no such questions, but learn that Jesus Christ has bid men believe and has commissioned His disciples to cry, “Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand.”

“The times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commands all men everywhere to repent.” And He bids us go and preach this Word of God—“Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” But why *command* them? It is His will to do so and that should be enough for you who call yourself His disciples. It was so even in the olden times, when the Lord set forth in vision His way of dealing with a dead nation. There lay the dry bones of the valley, exceedingly many and exceedingly dry—and Ezekiel was sent to prophesy to them! What said the Prophet? “O you dry bones, hear the Word of the Lord.” Is that His way of making them alive? Yes, by a command to *hear*—a thing which dry bones *cannot do*. He issues His command to the dead, the dry, the helpless and, by its power, life comes. I pray you, be not disobedient to the Gospel, for faith is a duty, or we should not read of “the obedience of faith.”

Jesus Christ, when He is about to bless, challenges men’s obedience by issuing His royal orders. The same thing is true when we come away from the unconverted to Believers. When God means to bless His people and make them blessings it is by issuing a command to them. We have been praying to the Lord that He would arise and make bare His arm. His answer is, “Awake, awake, O Zion.” We ask that the world may be brought to His feet and His reply is, “All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth. Go you therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them.” The *command* is, to us, the vehicle of the blessing! If we are to have the blessing of converts multiplied and Churches built up, Christ must give us the gift—it is altogether His gift, as much as it was His to turn the water into wine—yet, first of all, He says to us, “Go and proclaim My salvation unto the ends of the earth,” for thus are we to fill the waterpots with water. If we are obedient to His command, we shall see how He will work—how mightily He will be with us and how our prayers shall be heard!

That is the first principle that I see here—Christ issues commands to those whom He will bless. Secondly, Christ’s commands are not to be questioned, but to be obeyed. The people need wine and Christ says, “Fill the waterpots with water.” Well, now, if these servants had been of the mind of the captious critics of *modern* times, they would have looked at our Lord a long while and objected boldly—“We do not need any water! It is not the Feast of Purifications, it is a wedding feast! We do not require *water* at a wedding! We shall need water when we are going up to the synagogue, or to the Temple, that we may purify our hands according to our custom—but we do not need water just now—the hour, the occasion and the fitness of things call for *wine*.”

But Mary's advice to them was sound—"Whatever He says to you, do it." Thus, too, let us neither question nor quibble, but do His bidding straight away. It may sometimes seem that Christ's command is not pertinent to the point in hand. The sinner, for instance, says, "Lord, save me! Conquer my sin in me." Our Lord cries, "Believe," and the sinner cannot see how *believing* in Jesus will enable Him to get the mastery over a besetting sin! There does not, at first sight, appear to be *any* connection between the simple trusting of the Savior and the conquest of a bad temper, or the getting rid of a bad habit such as intemperance, passion, covetousness, or lying. There *is* such a connection, but remember, whether you can see the connection or not, it is yours, "not to reason why," but yours to do what Jesus bids you do, for it is by way of the *command* that the miracle of mercy will be worked!

"Fill the waterpots with *water*," though what you need is wine! Christ sees a connection between the water and the wine, though you do not. He has a reason for the pots being filled with water, which reason, as yet, you do not know—it is not yours to ask an explanation, but to yield obedience! You are, in the first instance, to just do *what* Jesus bids you, *as* He bids you, *how* He bids you and *because* He bids you! And you shall find that His commandments are not grievous and in the keeping of them there is a great reward.

Sometimes these commands may even seem to be trivial. They may look as if He trifled with us. The family was in need of wine. Jesus says, "Fill the waterpots with *water*." The servants might have said, "This is clearly a mere putting off of us and playing with us. Why, we would be better employed in going round to these poor people's friends and asking them to contribute another skin of wine! We would be much better employed in looking for some shop where we could purchase more—to send us to the well to fill those huge waterpots that hold so much water seems altogether a piece of child's play."

I know, Brothers and Sisters, that sometimes the path of duty seems as if it could not lead to the desired result. We want to be doing something more—that something more might be *wrong*, but it looks as if we could, thereby, complete our design more easily and directly and so we hanker after this uncommanded and, perhaps, forbidden course. And I know that many a troubled conscience thinks that simply to believe in Jesus is too little a thing. The deceitful heart suggests a course which looks to be more effectual. "Do some penance! Feel some bitterness! Weep a certain amount of tears! Goad your mind, or break your heart!" So cries carnal self! Jesus simply commands, "Believe." It does appear to be too little a thing to be done, as if it could not be that *eternal life* would be given upon putting your trust in Jesus Christ—but this is the principle we need to teach you—that when Jesus Christ is about to give a blessing, He issues a command which is not to be questioned, but to be obeyed at once. If you will *not* believe, neither shall you be established, but if you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land. "Whatever He says unto you, do it."

The third principle is this—whenever we get a command from Christ it is always wisdom to carry it out zealously. He said, “Fill the waterpots with water,” and they filled them up to the brim. You know there is a way of filling a waterpot and there is another way of filling it. It is full and you cannot heap it up, but still, you can fill it up till it begins almost to run over—until the liquid trembles as if it must surely fall in a crystal cascade! It is a filling fullness. In fulfilling Christ’s commands, my dear Brothers and Sisters, let us go to their widest extent. Let us fill them up to the brim! If it is, “Believe,” oh, believe Him with all your might! Trust Him with your whole heart! If it is, “Preach the Gospel,” to you men, preach it in season and out of season and preach the Gospel—the whole of it. Fill it up to the brim! Do not give the people a half Gospel. Give them a brimming-over Gospel! Fill the vessels up to the very brim.

If you are to repent, ask to have a hearty and a deep repentance—full to the brim. If you are to believe, ask to have an intense, absolute, childlike dependence, that your faith may be full to the brim. If you are bid to pray, pray mightily—fill the vessel of prayer up to the brim! If you are to search the Scriptures for blessing, search them from end to end! Fill the Bible-reading vessel up to the brim! Christ’s commands are never meant to be done in a half-hearted manner. Let us throw our whole soul into whatever He commands us, even though, as yet, we cannot see the reason why He has given us the task. Christ’s commands should be fulfilled with enthusiasm and carried out to the extreme, if extreme is possible.

The fourth principle is that our earnest action in obedience to Christ is not contrary to our dependence upon Him, but it is *necessary* to our dependence upon Him. I will show you that in a moment. There are some Brothers, I know, who say, “Ha! You hold what you call ‘revival services’ and you try to arouse men by earnest appeals and exciting addresses. Do you not see that God will do His own work? These efforts are just your trying to take the work out of God’s hands. The proper way is to trust in Him and do *nothing!*” All right, Brother. We have your word for it—that you trust in Him and do nothing. I take the liberty not to be so very certain that you trust Him, for if I remember who you are and I think I have been to your house—you are about the most miserable, desponding, unbelieving person that I know! You do not even know whether you are saved, yourself, nine times out of ten!

Well now, I think you should hardly come and cry yourself up for your faith. If you had such a wonderfully great faith, there is no doubt, whatever, that according to your faith it would be unto you. How many have been added to your Church through your doing nothing this year—that blessed Church of yours where you exercise this blessed faith without works? How many have been brought in? “Well, we do not have very many additions.” No, and I think you are not likely to have! If you go about the extension of the Redeemer’s Kingdom by *inaction*, I do not think that you go the way to work which Jesus Christ approves!

But we dare to say to you that we who go in for *working* for Christ with all our heart and soul, using any means within our reach to bring men in

to hear the Gospel, feel as much as you do that *we cannot do anything* at all in the matter apart from the Holy Spirit and we trust in God, I think, almost as much as you do, because our faith has produced rather more results than yours has done! I should not wonder if it turns out that your faith without works is *dead*, being alone, and that *our* faith, having works with it, has been *living* faith, after all.

I will put the case thus—Jesus Christ says, “Fill the waterpots with water.” The orthodox servant says, “My Lord, I fully believe that You can make wine for these people without any water and, by Your leave, I will bring no water. I am not going to interfere with the work of God. I am quite certain that You do not need our help, gracious Lord. You can make these waterpots be full of wine without our bringing a single bucket of water and so we will not rob You of the Glory of it. We will just stand back and wait for You. When the wine is made, we will drink some of it and bless Your name. But meanwhile we pray You excuse us, for pails are heavy carrying and a good many must be brought to fill all those waterpots. It would be interfering with the Divine work and so we would rather take our ease.”

Do you not think that servants who talked so would prove that they had no faith in Jesus at all? We will not say that it would prove their *unbelief*, but we will say that it looks very much like it. But look at the servant there who, as soon as Jesus commands, “Fill the waterpots with water,” says, “I do not know what He is doing. I do not see the connection between fetching this water and providing the feast with wine, but I am off to the well. Here, hand me a couple of pails. Come along, Brother. Come along and help fill the baths.” There they go and soon come joyfully back with the water, pouring it into the troughs till they are full up to the brim! Those seem to me to be the believing servants who obey the command—not understanding it, but expecting that, somehow or other, Jesus Christ knows the way to work His own miracle! By our earnest exertions we are not interfering with Him, dear Friends! Far from it. We are proving our faith in Him if we work for Him as He bids us work and trust in Him, alone, with undivided faith.

The next principle I must lay equal stress upon is this—our action, alone, is not sufficient. That we know, but let me remind you of it again. There are these waterpots, these troughs, these baths—they are full and could not be fuller. What a spilling of water there is! You see that in their trying to fill them the water runs over here and there. Well, all these six great baths are full of water. Is there any more wine, for all that? Not a drop. It is *water* that they brought, nothing but *water* and it remains water, still. Suppose that they should take that water into the feast? I am half afraid that the guests would not have thought cold water quite the proper liquid to drink at a wedding!

They ought to have done so, but I am afraid they were not educated in the school of total abstinence. They would have said to the master of the feast, “You have given us good wine and water is a poor finish for the feast.” I am sure it would not have done. And yet water it was, depend

upon it! And nothing else but *water* when the servants poured it into the pots. Even so, after all that sinners can do and all that saints can do, there is *nothing* in any human effort which can avail for the saving of a soul till Christ speaks the Word of Power. When Paul has planted and Apollos watered, there is no increase till *God* gives it! Preach the Gospel, labor with souls, persuade, entreat, exhort—but there is no power in *anything* that you do until Jesus Christ displays His Divine might. His Presence is our power! Blessed be His name, He will come and if we fill the waterpots with water, He will turn it into wine! Only He can do it and those servants who show the most alacrity in filling up the waterpots are among the first to confess that it is He, alone, who can perform the deed!

And now the last principle here is that although human action, in itself, falls short of the desired end, yet it has its place and God has made it necessary by His appointment. Why did our Lord have these waterpots filled with water? I do not say that it was *necessary* that it should have been done. It was not absolutely necessary in itself, but in order that the miracle might be all open and above board it was necessary, for suppose He had said, “Go to those waterpots and draw out wine”? Those who watched Him might have said that there was wine there, already, and that no miracle was worked. When our Lord had them filled up with water, there remained no room for any wine to be hidden away. It was just the same as with Elijah, when, in order to prove that there was no concealed fire upon the altar at Carmel, he bade them go down to the sea and bring water and pour it upon the altar and upon the victim till the trenches were filled.

He said, “Do it a second time,” and they did it a second time. And he said, “Do it a third time,” and they did it a third time and no possibility of deception remained. And so, when the Lord Jesus bade the servants fill the waterpots with water, He put it beyond all possibility that He should be charged with deception—and thus we see why it was necessary that they should be filled with water. Moreover, it was necessary because it was so instructive to the servants. Did you notice, when I was reading it, that the master of the feast, when he tasted the good wine, did not know where it came from? He could not make it out and he uttered an expression which showed his surprise, mingled with his ignorance. But it is written, “The servants which drew the water knew.”

Now, when souls are converted in a Church, it happens much in the same way with certain of the members who are good people, but they do not know much about the conversion of sinners. They do not feel much joy in revivals. In fact, like the elder brother, they are rather suspicious of these wild characters being brought in—they consider themselves to be very respectable and they would rather not have the lowest of people sitting in the pew with them. They feel awkward in coming so near them. They know little about what is going on. “But the servants which drew the water knew”—that is to say, the earnest Believers who do the work and try to fill the waterpots know all about it! Jesus bade them fill the vessels

with water on purpose so that the men who drew the water might know that it was a miracle.

I guarantee you if you bring souls to Christ, you will know His power! It will make you leap for joy to hear the cry of the penitent and mark the bright flash of delight that passes over the new-born Believer's face when his sins are washed away and he feels himself renewed! If you want to know Jesus Christ's miraculous power, you must go and—not work miracles—but just draw the water and fill the waterpots. Do the ordinary duties of Christian men and women—things in which there is no power of themselves, but which Jesus Christ makes to be connected with His Divine working and it shall be for your instruction and your comfort that you had such work to do! “The servants which drew the water knew.” I think that I have said enough upon the principles which lie concealed within my text.

II. You must have patience with me while I try to apply these principles to practical purposes. LET US SEE HOW TO CARRY OUT THIS DIVINE COMMAND, “Fill the waterpots with water.” First, use in the service of Christ such abilities as you have. There stood the water pots—six of them and Jesus used what He found ready to His hand. There was water in the well—our Lord also used that. Our Lord is accustomed to employ His own people and such abilities as they have rather than angels or a novel class of beings created fresh for the purpose.

Now, dear Brothers and Sisters, if you have no golden chalices, fill your earthen vessels. If you cannot consider yourselves to be goblets of rarest workmanship in silver, or if you could not liken yourselves to the best Sevres ware, it does not matter—fill the vessels which you have. If you cannot, with Elijah, bring fire from Heaven, and if you cannot work miracles with the Apostles, do what you can! If you have no silver and gold, yet such as you have, dedicate to Christ. Bring water at His bidding and it will be better than wine! The most common gifts can be made to serve Christ's purpose. Just as He took a few loaves and fishes and fed the crowd with them, so will He take your six waterpots and the water and do His wine-making! Thus, you see, they improved what they had, for the waterpots were empty and they filled them.

There are a good many Brothers here from the College tonight and they are trying to improve their gifts and their abilities. I think you do right, my Brothers. But I have heard some people say, “The Lord Jesus does not need your learning.” No, it is very likely that He does not, any more than He needed the water. But then He certainly does not need your stupidity and your ignorance and He does not need your rough, uncultivated ways of speaking! He did not seek for empty pitchers on this occasion—He would have them full and the servants did well to fill them. Our Lord today does not need empty heads in His ministers, nor empty hearts. So, my Brothers, fill your waterpots with water! Work away and study away and learn all you can and fill the waterpots with water.

“Oh,” somebody will say, “but how are such studies to lead to the conversion of men? Conversion is like wine and all that these young fellows

will learn will be like water.” You are right! But still, I bid these students fill the waterpots with water and expect the Lord Jesus to turn the water into wine. He can sanctify human knowledge so that it shall be useful to the setting forth of the knowledge of Jesus Christ. I hope that the day has gone by when it is so much as *dreamed* that ignorance and coarseness are helpful to the Kingdom of Christ. The great Teacher would have His people know all that they can know and especially know Himself and the Scriptures that they may set Him forth and proclaim His Gospel. “Fill the waterpots with water.”

Next, to apply this principle, let us all use such means of blessing as God appoints. What are they? First, there is the reading of the Scriptures. “Search the Scriptures.” Search them all you can. Try to understand them. “But if I know the Bible, shall I be, therefore, saved.” No, you must know *Christ Himself by the Spirit*. Still, “fill the waterpots with water.” While you are studying the Scriptures you may expect the Savior will bless His own Word and turn the water into wine. Then there is attendance upon the means of Grace and hearing a Gospel ministry. Mind you, fill that waterpot with water. “But I may hear thousands of sermons and not be saved.” I know it is so, but your business is to fill this waterpot with water and while you are listening to the Gospel, God will bless it, for, “faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.” Take care to use the means which God appoints.

Since our Lord has appointed to save men by the preaching of the Word, I pray that He will raise up those who will preach without ceasing, in season and out of season, indoors and in the streets. “But they won’t be saved by our preaching.” I know that. Preaching is the water—and while we are preaching, God will bless it and turn the water into wine. Let us distribute religious books and tracts. “Oh, but people won’t be saved by reading them.” Very likely not, but while they are reading them, God may bring His Truth to remembrance and impress their hearts. “Fill the waterpots with water.” Give away abundance of tracts! Scatter religious literature everywhere. “Fill the waterpots with water,” and the Lord will turn the water into wine.

Remember the Prayer Meeting. What a blessed means of Grace it is, for it brings down power for all the works of the Church—fill that waterpot with water! I have not to complain of your attendance at Prayer Meetings, but oh, keep it up, dear Brothers and Sisters! You can pray. Blessed be His name, you have the spirit of prayer. Pray on! “Fill the waterpots with water” and in answer to prayer, Jesus will turn it into wine. Sunday school teachers, do not neglect your blessed means of usefulness. “Fill the waterpots with water.” Work the Sunday school system with all your might. “But it will not save the children merely to get them together and teach them of Jesus. We cannot give them new hearts.” Who said that you could? “Fill the waterpots with water.” Jesus Christ knows how to turn it into wine and He does not fail to do it when we are obedient to His commands.

Use all the means, but take care that you use those means right heartily! I come back to that part of the text—"And they filled them up to the brim." When you teach the young ones in the Sunday school, teach them well. Fill them to the brim! When you preach, dear Sir, do not preach as if you were only half awake—stir yourself up—fill your ministry to the brim! When you are trying to evangelize the community, do not attempt it in a half-hearted way, as if you did not care whether their souls were saved or not—fill them to the brim—preach the Gospel with all your might and beg for power from on high! Fill every vessel to the brim! Whatever is worth doing is worth doing well.

Nobody ever yet served Christ too well. I have heard that in some services there may be too much zeal, but in the service of Christ you may have as much zeal as you will and yet not exceed, if prudence is joined with it. "Fill the waterpots with water" and sincere work and it shall be for your instruction and your comfort that you had such work to do! "The servants which drew the water knew." "Fill the waterpots with water" and fill them to the brim. Go in for doing good with all your heart and soul and strength!

Further, in order to apply this principle, be sure to remember, when you have done all that you can do, that there is a great deficiency in all that you have done! It is well to come away from tract-distributing and Sunday school teaching and preaching and go home and get on your knees and cry, "Lord, I have done all that You have commanded me and yet there is nothing done unless You give the finishing touch! Lord, I have filled the waterpots and though I could only fill them with water, yet I have filled them to the brim. Lord, to the best of my ability I have sought to win men for You! There cannot be a soul saved, a child converted, or any Glory brought to Your name by anything I have done, in and of myself—but, my Blessed Master, speak the miracle-working Word and let the water which fills the vessels blush into wine! You can do it, though I cannot. I cast the burden upon You."

And this leads me to the last application of the principle, which is—trust in your Lord to do the work. You see, there are two ways of filling waterpots. Suppose these people had never been commanded to fill the waterpots and their doing it had had no reference to Christ whatever? Suppose that it had been a freak of their own imagination and they had said, "These people have no wine, but they shall have a bath if they like and so we will fill the six waterpots with water"? Nothing would have come of such a proceeding. There would have stood the water. The Eton school-boy said, "The conscious water saw its God and blushed"—a truly poetic expression—but the conscious water would have seen the servants and would *not* have blushed. It would have reflected their faces upon its shining surface and nothing more would have happened.

Jesus Christ Himself must come and, in present *power* must work the miracle. It was because He had commanded the servants to fill the waterpots with water that, therefore, He was bound, if I may use such an expression of our free King—bound to turn it into wine, for otherwise He

would have been making fools of them and they, also, might have turned round and said, "Why did You give us such a command as this?" If, after we have filled the waterpots with water, Jesus does not work by us, we shall have done what He bade us and, if we believe in Him, I make bold to say that He is bound to come through for, though we should be losers and dreadful losers, too, if He did not display His power, we would have to lament, "I have labored in vain and spent my strength for nothing." Yet we should not be such losers as He would be, for straightway the world would affirm that Christ's commands are empty, fruitless, idle!

It would be declared that obedience to His Word brings no result. The world would say, "You have filled the waterpots with water because He told you to do it. You expected Him to turn the water into wine, but He did not do it. Your faith is vain! Your whole obedience is vain and He is not a fit Master to be served." We should be losers, but He would be a greater loser, for He would lose His Glory. For my part, I do not believe that a good word for Christ is ever spoken in vain. I am sure that no sermon with Christ in it is ever preached without results. Something will come of it—if not tonight, or tomorrow—something will come of it. When I have printed a sermon and seen it in the volume, I have, before long, been delighted to hear of souls saved by its means. And when I have not printed, but only preached a discourse, I have still thought something will come of it.

I preached Christ. I put His saving Truth into that sermon and that Seed cannot die! If it shall lie in the volume for years, like the grains of wheat in the mummy's hand, it will live and grow and bear fruit! For instance, I have heard, but lately, of a soul brought to Christ by a sermon that I preached 25 years ago! I hear almost every week of souls having been brought to Christ by sermons preached at Park Street and Exeter Hall and the Surrey Gardens and, therefore, I feel that God will not let a single faithful testimony fall to the ground. Go on, Brothers! Go on filling the waterpots with water! Do not believe that you are doing much when you have done your utmost. Do not begin to congratulate yourselves on your past success. All must come from Christ—and it *will* come from Christ!

Do not go to the Prayer Meeting and say, "Paul *may* plant and Apollos *may* water, but"—and so on. That is not how the passage runs! It says just the contrary and runs thus—"Paul plants, Apollos waters, but *God* gives the increase." The increase is surely given by God where the planting and sowing are rightly done! The servants fill the water pots—the Master turns the water into wine. The Lord grant us Grace to be obedient to His commands—especially to that command, "Believe and live!" and may we meet Him in the marriage feast above to drink of the new wine with Him forever and ever. Amen and amen!

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SATAN'S BANQUET

NO. 225

**DELIVERED OF SABBATH MORNING, NOVEMBER 28, 1858,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

*“The governor of the feast called the bridegroom and said unto him,
every man at the beginning does set forth good wine. And
when men have well drunk, then that which is worse.
But you have kept the good wine until now.”
John 2:9, 10.*

THE governor of the feast said more than he intended to say, or rather, there is more truth in what he said than he himself imagined. This is the established rule all the world over—“the good wine first and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse.” It is the rule with men and have not hundreds of disappointed hearts bewailed it? Friendship first—the oily tongue, the words softer than butter and afterwards the drawn sword. Ahithophel first presents the lordly dish of love and kindness to David, then afterwards that which is worse, for he forsakes his master and becomes the counselor of his rebel son. Judas presents first of all the dish of fair speech and of kindness, the Savior partook thereof, he walked to the House of God in company with Him and took sweet counsel with Him. But afterwards there came the dregs of the wine—“He that eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me.” Judas the thief betrayed his Master, bringing forth afterwards “that which is worse.”

You have found it so with many whom you thought your friends. In the heyday of prosperity, when the sun was shining and the birds were singing and all was fair and gay and cheerful with you, they brought forth the good wine. But there came a chilling frost and nipped your flowers and the leaves fell from the trees and your streams were frosted with the ice—and then they brought forth that which is worse—they forsook you and fled. They left you in your hour of peril and taught you that great truth, that “Cursed is he that trusts in man and makes flesh his arm.” And this is the way all the world over—I say it once again—not merely with men, but with nature, too—

*“Alas, for us, if you were all,
And nothing beyond O earth,”*

for does not this world serve us just the same? In our youth it brings forth the best wine. Then we have the sparkling eye and the ear attuned to music. Then the blood flows swiftly through the veins and the pulse beats joyously.

But wait a little and there shall come forth afterwards that which is worse, for the keepers of the house shall tremble and the strong men shall bow themselves. The grinders shall fail because they are few, they that look out of the windows shall be darkened, all the daughters of music shall be brought low. Then shall the strong man totter—the grasshopper shall be a burden and desire shall fail—the mourners shall go about the streets. First there is the flowing cup of youth and afterwards the stagnant waters of old age, unless God shall cast into those dregs a fresh flood of His loving kindness and tender mercy, so that once again, as it always happens to the Christian, the cup shall run over and again sparkle with

delight. O Christian, trust not in men, rely not upon the things of this present time, for this is evermore the rule with men and with the world—"the good wine first and when we have well drunk, then that which is worse."

This morning, however, I am about to introduce you to two houses of feasting. First, I shall bid you look within the doors of the devil's house and you will find he is true to this rule. He brings forth first the good wine and when men have well drunk and their brains are muddled therewith, then he brings forth that which is worse. Having bid you look there and tremble and take heed to the warning, I shall then attempt to enter with you into the banqueting house of our Beloved Lord and Master Jesus Christ and of Him we shall be able to say, as the governor of the feast said to the bridegroom, "You have kept the good wine until now." Your feasts grow better and not worse—Your wines grow richer, Your viands are daintier far and Your gifts more precious than before. "You have kept the good wine until now."

I. First, we are to take a warning glance at the HOUSE OF FEASTING WHICH SATAN HAS BUILT—for as wisdom has built her house and hewn out her seven pillars, so has folly its temple and its tavern of feasting, into which it continually tempts the unwary. Look within the banqueting house and I will show you four tables and the guests that sit there and as you look at those tables you shall see the courses brought in. You shall see the wine cups brought and you shall see them vanish one after another and you shall mark that the rule holds good at all four tables—first the good wine and afterwards that which is worse—yes, I shall go further—afterwards, that which is worst of all.

1. At the first table to which I shall invite your attention, though I beseech you never to sit down and drink there, sits the PROFLIGATE. The table of the profligate is a gay table. It is covered over with a gaudy crimson and all the vessels upon it look exceedingly bright and glistening. Many there are that sit there. But they know not that they are the guests of Hell and that the end of all the feast shall be in the depths of perdition. See now the great governor of the feast, as he comes in? He has a bland smile upon his face. His garments are not black, but he is girded with a robe of many colors. He has a honeyed word on his lip and a tempting witchery in the sparkle of his eye. He brings in the cup and says, "Hey, young man, drink here, it sparkled in the cup, it moves itself aright. Do you see it? It is the wine cup of pleasure."

This is the first cup at the banqueting house of Satan. The young man takes it and sips the liquor. At first it is a cautious sip. It is but a little he will take and then he will restrain himself. He does not intend to indulge much in lust, he means not to plunge headlong into perdition. There is a flower there on the edge of that cliff—he will reach forward a little and pluck it, but it is not his intention to dash himself from that beetling crag and destroy himself. Not he! He thinks it easy to put away the cup when he has tested its flavor! He has no design to abandon himself to its intoxication. He takes a shallow draught. But O, how sweet it is! How it makes his blood tingle within him. What a fool I was not to have tasted this before! he thinks. Was ever joy like this? Could it be thought that bodies could be capable of such ecstasy as this? He drinks again. This time he takes a deeper draught and the wine is hot in his veins.

Oh, how blest he thinks he is! What would he not say now in the praise of Bacchus, or Venus, or whatever shape Beelzebub chooses to assume? He becomes a very orator in praise of sin! It is fair, it is pleasant, the deep damnation of lust appears as joyous as the transports of Heaven. He drinks, he drinks, he drinks again, till his brain begins to reel with the intoxication of his sinful delight. This is the first course. Drink, O you drunkards of Ephraim and bind the crown of pride about your head and call us fools because we put your cup from us—drink with the harlot and sup with the lustful—you may think yourselves wise for so doing, but we know that after these things there comes something worse, for your vine is of the vine of Sodom and of the fields of Gomorrah—your grapes are grapes of gall, the clusters are bitter. Your wine is the poison of dragons and the cruel venom of asps.

Now with a leer upon his brow, the subtle governor of the feast rises from his seat. His victim has had enough of the best wine. He takes away that cup and he brings in another, not quite so sparkling. Look into the liquor. It is not beaded over with the sparkling bubbles of rapture. It is all flat and dull and insipid, it is called the cup of satiety. The man has had enough of pleasure and like a dog he vomits, and like a dog he will return to his vomit again. Who has woe? Who has redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine. I am now speaking figuratively of wine, as well as literally. The wine of lust brings the same redness of the eyes. The profligate soon discovers that all the rounds of pleasure end in satiety. "What?" says he, "What more can I do? There! I have committed every wickedness that can be imagined and I have drained every cup of pleasure. Give me something fresh! I have tried the theaters all round—there! I don't care so much as one single farthing for them all. I have gone to every kind of pleasure that I can conceive. It is all over. Gaiety itself grows flat and dull. What am I to do?"

And this is the devil's second course—the course of satiety—a fitful drowsiness, the result of the previous excess. Thousands there are who are drinking of the tasteless cup of satiety every day and some novel invention whereby they may kill time, some new discovery whereby they may give a fresh vent to their iniquity would be a wonderful thing to them. And if some man should rise up who could find out for them some new fashion of wickedness—some deeper depths in the deeps of the nethermost Hell of lasciviousness—they would bless his name—for having given them something fresh to excite them. That is the devil's second course. And do you see them partaking of it? There are some of you that are having a deep draught of it this morning. You are the jaded horses of the fiend of lust, the disappointed followers of the will-o-the-wisp of pleasure. God knows, if you were to speak your heart out you would be obliged to say, "There! I have tried pleasure and I do not find it pleasure. I have gone the round and I am just like the blind horse at the mill, I have to go round again. I am spellbound to the sin, but I cannot take delight in it now as I once did, for all the glory of it is as a fading flower and as the hasty fruit before the summer.

And while the feaster remains in the putrid sea of his infatuation, another scene is opening. The governor of the feast commands another liquor to be broached. This time the fiend bears a black goblet and he presents it with eyes full of hellfire, flashing with fierce damnation. "Drink of that, Sir," says he and the man sips it and starts back and shrieks, "O

God! That ever I must come to this!" You must drink, Sir! He that quaffs the first cup, must drink the second and the third. Drink, though it is like fire down your throat! Drink it, though it is as the lava of Etna in your bowels! Drink! You must drink! He that sins must suffer. He that is a profligate in his youth must have rottenness in his bones and disease within his loins. He who rebels against the Laws of God must reap the harvest in his own body here.

Oh, there are some dreadful things that I might tell you of this third course. Satan's house has a front chamber full of everything that is enticing to the eye and bewitching to the sensual taste. But there is a back chamber and no one knows, no one has seen the whole of its horrors. There is a secret chamber where he shovels out the creatures whom he has himself destroyed—a chamber beneath whose floor is the blazing of Hell and above whose boards the heat of that horrible pit is felt. It may be a physician's place, rather than mine, to tell of the horrors that some have to suffer as the result of their iniquity.

I leave that. But let me tell the profligate spendthrift that the poverty which he will endure is the result of his sin of extravagance. Let him know, also, that the remorse of conscience that will overtake him is not an accidental thing that drops by chance from Heaven—it is the result of his own iniquity. Depend upon it, Brothers and Sisters, sin carries an infant misery in its bowels and sooner or later it must be delivered of its terrible child. If we sow the seed we must reap the harvest. Thus the law of Hell's house stands—"first, the good wine, then, afterwards, that which is worse."

The last course remains to be presented. And now, you strong men who mock at the warning which I would deliver to you with a brother's voice and with an affectionate heart, though with rough language, come here and drink of this last cup. The sinner has at the end brought himself to the grave. His hopes and joys were like gold put into a bag full of holes and they have all vanished—vanished forever. And now he has come to the last. His sins haunt him, his transgressions perplex him. He is taken like a bull in a net and how shall he escape? He dies and descends from disease to damnation. Shall mortal language attempt to tell you the horrors of that last tremendous cup of which the profligate must drink and drink forever?

Look at it—you cannot see its depths—but cast an eye upon its seething surface. I hear the noise of rushing to and fro and a sound as of gnashing of teeth and the wailing of despairing souls. I look into that cup and I hear a voice coming up from its depths—"These shall go away into everlasting punishment." "Tophet is prepared of old, the pile thereof is wood and much smoke, the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, shall kindle it."

And what do you say to this last course of Satan? "Who among us shall dwell with devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" Profligate! I beseech you, in the name of God, start from this table! Oh, be not so careless at your cups. Be not so asleep, secure in the peace which you now enjoy! Man, death is at the door and at his heels is swift destruction! As for you, who as yet have been restrained by a careful father and the watchfulness of an anxious mother, I beseech you shun the house of sin and folly. Let the wise man's words be written on your heart and be you mindful of them in the hour of temptation—"Remove your way

far from her and come not near the door of her house—for the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb and her mouth is smoother than oil—but her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death. Her steps take hold on Hell.”

2. Do you see that other table yonder in the middle of the palace? Ah, good easy souls! Many of you had thought that you never went to the feast of Hell at all. But there is a table for you, too. It is covered over with a fair white cloth and all the vessels upon the table are most clean and comely. The wine looks not like the wine of Gomorrah, it moves aright, like the wine from the grapes of Eshcol. It seems to have no intoxication in it. It is like the ancient wine which they pressed from the grape into the cup, having in it no deadly poison. Do you see the men who sit at this table? How self-contented they are! Ask the white fiends who wait at it and they will tell you, “This is the table of the self-righteous—the Pharisee sits there. You may know him. He has his phylactery between his eyes. The hem of his garment is made exceeding broad. He is one of the best of the best professors.” “Ah,” said Satan, as he draws the curtain and shuts off the table where the profligates are carousing, “be quiet, don’t make too much noise, lest these sanctimonious hypocrites should guess what company they are in. Those self-righteous people are my guests quite as much as you, and I have them quite as safely.”

So Satan, like an angel of light, brings forth a gilded goblet, looking like the chalice of the table of communion. And what wine is that? It seems to be the very wine of the sacred Eucharist. It is called the wine of self-satisfaction and around the brim you may see the bubbles of pride. Look at the swelling froth upon the bowl—“God, I thank You that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.” You know that cup, my self-deceiving Hearers. Oh, that you knew the deadly hemlock which is mixed therein. Sin as other men do? Not you—not at all. You are not going to submit yourself to the righteousness of Christ—what need you? You are as good as your neighbors. If you are not saved, you ought to be, you think. Don’t you pay everybody twenty-shillings in the pound? Did you ever rob anybody in your life? You do your neighbors a good turn. You are as good as other people.

Very good! That is the first cup the devil gives and the good wine makes you swell with self-important dignity, as its fumes enter your heart and puff it up with an accursed pride. Yes! I see you sitting in the room so cleanly swept and so neatly garnished and I see the crowds of your admirers standing around the table, even many of God’s own children, who say, “Oh that I were half as good as he.” While the very humility of the righteous provides you with provender for your pride. Wait awhile, you unctuous hypocrite, wait awhile, for there is a second course to come. Satan looks with quite as self-satisfied an air upon his guests this time as he did upon the troop of rioters. “Ah,” says he, “I cheated those gay fellows with the cup of pleasure—I gave them, afterwards, the dull cup of satiety and I have cheated you, too. You think yourselves all right, but I have deceived you twice, I have befooled you, indeed.”

So he brings in a cup which sometimes, he himself does not like to serve. It is called the cup of discontent and unquietness of mind and many there are that have to drink this after all their self-satisfaction. Do you not find, you that are very good in your own esteem, but have no interest in Christ, that when you are alone and begin to turn over your ac-

counts for eternity, that they do not square somehow—that you cannot strike the balance exactly to your own side after all, as you thought you could? Have not you sometimes found that when you thought you were standing on a rock, there was a quivering beneath your feet? You heard the Christian sing boldly—

***“Bold shall I stand in that great day,
For who anything to my charge shall lay?
While, through Your blood, absolved I am
From sin's tremendous curse and shame.”***

And you have said, “Well, I cannot sing that. I have been as good a Churchman as ever lived, I never missed going to my Church all these years, but I cannot say I have a solid confidence.”

You had once a hope of self-satisfaction, but now the second course has come in and you are not quite so contented. “Well,” says another, “I have been to my Chapel and I have been baptized and made a profession of religion, though I was never brought to know the Lord in sincerity and in truth and I once thought it was all well with me, but I want a something which I cannot find.” Now comes a shaking in the heart. It is not quite so delightful as one supposed, to build on one's own righteousness. Ah, that is the second course. Wait awhile and perhaps in this world, but certainly in the hour of death, the devil will bring in the third cup of dismay at the discovery of your lost condition. How many a man who has been self-righteous all his life, has, at the last discovered that the thing whereon he placed his hope had failed him? I have heard of an army, who, being defeated in battle, endeavored to make good a retreat. With all their might the soldiers fled to a certain river, where they expected to find a bridge across which they could retreat and be in safety, but when they came to the stream, there was heard a shriek of terror—“The bridge is broken, the bridge is broken!” All in vain was that cry, for the multitude hurrying on behind, pressed upon those that were before and forced them into the river, until the stream was glutted with the bodies of drowned men.

Such must be the fate of the self-righteous. You thought there was a bridge of ceremonies. That Baptism, Confirmation and the Lord's Supper made up the solid arches of a bridge of good works and duties. But when you come to die, there shall be heard the cry—“The bridge is broken, the bridge is broken!” It will be in vain for you to turn round then. Death is close behind you. He forces you onward and you discover what it is to perish, through having neglected the great salvation and attempting to *save yourself* through your own good works. This is the last course but one. And your last course of all, the worst wine, your everlasting portion must be the same as that of the profligate. Good as you thought yourself to be, inasmuch as you proudly rejected Christ, you must drink the wine cup. The wrath of God. That cup which is full of trembling. The wicked of the earth shall wring out the dregs of that cup and drink them. And you also must drink of it as deep as they. Oh, beware in time! Put away your high looks and humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.

3. Some of you have as yet escaped the lash, but there is a third table crowded with most honorable guests. I believe there have been more princes and kings, mayors and aldermen and great merchants sitting at this table, than at any other. It is called the table of worldliness. “Humph,” says a man, “Well, I dislike the profligate—there's my eldest

son—I've been hard at work saving up money all my life and there's that young fellow, he will not stick to business—he has become a real profligate, I am very glad the minister spoke so sharp about that. As for me—there now. I don't care about your self-righteous people a single farthing. To me it is of no account at all. I don't care at all about religion in the slightest degree. I like to know whether the funds rise or fall, or whether there is an opportunity of making a good bargain. That's about all I care for." Ah, worldling, I have read of a friend of yours who was clothed in scarlet and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. Do you know what became of him? You should remember it, for the same end awaits yourself. The end of his feast must be the end of yours.

If your God is this world, depend upon it you shall find that your way is full of bitterness. Now see that table of the worldly man—the mere worldling—who lives for gain. Satan brings him in a flowing cup—"There," says he, "Young man, you are starting in business. You need not care about the conventionalities of honesty or about the ordinary old-fashioned fancies of religion—get rich as quick as ever you can. Get money—get money—honestly if you can, but, if not, get it anyhow," says the devil. And down he puts his tankard. "There," says he, "is a foaming draught for you." "Yes," says the young man, "I have abundance now. My hopes are indeed realized." Here, then, you see the first and best wine of the worldling's feast and many of you are tempted to envy this man. "Oh, that I had such a prospect in business," says one. "I'm not half so sharp as he is, I could not deal as he deals. My religion would not let me. But how fast he gets rich! O that I could prosper as he does." Come, my Brother, judge not before the time, there's a second course to come, the thick and nauseous draught of care.

The man has got his money but they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare. Wealth ill-gotten, or ill-used, or hoarded, brings canker with it—that does not canker the gold and silver—but cankers the man's heart and a cankered heart is one of the most awful things a man can have. Ah, see this money-lover and mark the care which sits upon his heart. There is a poor old woman that lives near his lodge gate. She has but a pittance a week, but she says, "Bless the Lord, I have enough!" She never asks how she is to live, or how she is to die, or how she is to be buried, but sleeps sweetly on the pillow of contentment and faith. And here is this poor fool with untold gold. He is miserable because he happened to drop a sixpence as he walked along the streets, or because he had an extra call upon his charity to which the presence of some friend compelled him to yield. Or perhaps he groans because his coat wears out too soon.

After this comes avarice. Many have had to drink of that cup—may God save any of us from its fiery drops. A great American preacher has said, "Covetousness breeds misery. The sight of houses better than our own, of dress beyond our means, of jewels costlier than we may wear, of stately equipage and rare curiosities beyond our reach—these hatch the viper brood of covetous thoughts—vexing the poor, who would be rich—tormenting the rich, who would be richer. The covetous man pines to see pleasure. He is sad in the presence of cheerfulness. And the joy of the world is his sorrow because all the happiness of others is not his. I do not wonder that God abhors him. He inspects his heart as he would a cave full of noisome birds, or a nest of rattling reptiles and loathes the sight of its crawling tenants. To the covetous man life is a nightmare and God lets

him wrestle with it as best he may. Mammon might build its palace on such a heart and Pleasure bring all its revelry there, Honor all its garlands—it would be like pleasures in a sepulcher and garlands on a tomb.”

When a man becomes avaricious, all he has is nothing to him. “More, more, more!” says he, like some poor creatures in a terrible fever, who cry, “Drink, drink, drink!” and you give them drink, but after they have it, their thirst increases. Like the horseleech they cry, “Give, give, give!” Avarice is a raving madness which seeks to grasp the world in its arms and yet despises the plenty it has already. This is a curse of which many have died. And some have died with the bag of gold in their hands and with misery upon their brow because they could not take it with them into their coffin and could not carry it into another world. Well, then, there comes the next course.

Baxter and those terrible old preachers used to picture the miser and the man who lived only to make gold, in the middle of Hell. And they imagined Mammon pouring melted gold down his throat, “There,” say the mocking devils “that is what you wanted, you have got it now. Drink, drink, drink!” and the molten gold is poured down. I shall not, however indulge in any such terrible imaginations. But this much I know, he that lives to himself here, must perish—he who sets his affections upon things on earth, has not dug deep—he has built his house upon the sands and when the rain descends and the floods come, down must come his house and great must be the fall. It is the best wine first, however. it is the respectable man—respectable and respected—everybody honors him—and afterwards that which is worse, when meanness has beggared his wealth and covetousness has maddened his brain. It is sure to come, as sure as ever you give yourself up to worldliness.

4. The fourth table is set in a very secluded corner, in a very private part of Satan's palace. There is the table set for secret sinners and here the old rule is observed. At that table, in a room well darkened, I see a young man sitting today and Satan is the servitor, stepping in so noiselessly, that no one would hear him. He brings in the first cup—and O how sweet it is! It is the cup of secret sin. “Stolen waters are sweet and bread eaten in secret is pleasant.” How sweet that morsel, eaten all alone! Was there ever one that rolled so delicately under the tongue? That is the first. After that, he brings in another—the wine of an unquiet conscience. The man's eyes are opened. He says, “What have I done? What have I been doing? Ah,” cries this Achan, “the first cup you brought me I saw sparkling in that a wedge of gold and a goodly Babylon garment. And I thought, ‘Oh, I must have that.’ But now my thought is, ‘What shall I do to bide this, where shall I put it?’ I must dig. Yes, I must dig deep as Hell before I shall hide it, for sure enough it will be discovered.”

The grim governor of the feast is bringing in a massive bowl, filled with a black mixture. The secret sinner drinks and is confounded—he fears his sin will find him out. He has no peace, no happiness, he is full of uneasy fear. He is afraid that he shall be detected. He dreams at night that there is someone after him. There is a voice in his ear telling him, “I know all about it. I will tell it.” He thinks, perhaps, that the sin which he has committed in secret will break out to his friends. The father will know it, the mother will know it. Yes, it may be even the physician will tell the tale and blab out the wretched secret. For such a man there is no rest. He is always in dread of arrest. He is like the debtor I have read of, who, owing a

great deal of money, was afraid the bailiffs were after him—and happening one day to catch his sleeve on the top of a palisade, said, “There, let me go. I’m in a hurry. I will pay you tomorrow,” imagining that some one was laying hold of him.

Such is the position in which the man places himself by partaking of the hidden things of dishonesty and sin. Thus he finds no rest for the sole of his foot for fear of discovery. At last the discovery comes—it is the last cup. Often it comes on earth. For be sure your sin will find you out and it will generally find you out here. What frightful exhibitions are to be seen at our police courts of men that are made to drink that last black draught of discovery. The man who presided at religious meetings, the man who was honored as a saint, is at last unmasked. And what said the judge—and what said the world of him? He is a jest and a reproach and a rebuke everywhere. But, suppose he should be so crafty that he passes through life without discovery—though I think it is almost impossible—what a cup he must drink when he stands at last before the bar of God! “Bring him forth, jailor! Dread keeper of the dungeon of Hell, lead forth the prisoner.” He comes! The whole world is assembled. “Stand up, Sir! Did you not make a profession of religion? Did not everybody think you a saint?” He is speechless. But many there are in that vast crowd who cry, “We thought him so.” The book is open, his deeds are read—transgression after transgression all laid bare.

Do you hear that hiss? The righteous, moved to indignation, are lifting up their voices against the man who deceived them and dwelt among them as a wolf in sheep’s clothing. Oh, how fearful it must be to bear the scorn of the universe! The good can bear the scorn of the wicked but for the wicked to bear the shame and everlasting contempt which righteous indignation will heap upon them! Oh that will be one of the most frightful things, next to the eternal endurance of the wrath of the Most High, which, I need not add, is the last cup of the devil’s terrible feast with which the secret sinner must be filled, forever and ever.

I pause now, but it is just to gather up my strength to beg that anything I may have said, that shall have the slightest personal bearing upon any of my Hearers, may not be forgotten. I beseech you, Brothers and Sisters, if now you are eating the fat and drinking the sweet of Hell’s banquet, pause and reflect what shall the end be? “He that sows to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption. He that sows to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting.” I cannot spare more time for that, most assuredly.

II. But you must pardon me while I occupy only a few minutes in taking you into the HOUSE OF THE SAVIOR, where He feasts His Beloved. Come and sit with us at Christ’s table of outward providences. He does not feast His children after the fashion of the Prince of Darkness—for the first cup that Christ brings to them is very often a cup of bitterness. There are His own Beloved children, His own redeemed—who have but sorry cheer. Jesus brings in the cup of poverty and affliction and He makes His own children drink of it, till they say, “You have made me drunk with wormwood and You have filled me with bitterness.” This is the way Christ begins. The worst wine first. When the sergeant begins with a young recruit, he gives him a shilling and then afterwards come the march and the battle. But Christ never takes His recruits so. They must count the cost, lest they should begin to build and not be able to relish. He seeks to have

no disciples who are dazzled with first appearances. He begins roughly with them and many have been His children who have found that the first course of the Redeemer's table has been affliction, sorrow, poverty and want.

In the olden time, when the best of God's people were at the table, He used to serve them worst, for they wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented—of whom the world was not worthy and they kept on drinking of these bitter cups for many a day. But let me tell you afterwards He brought out sweeter cups for them and you that have been troubled have found it so. After the cup of affliction, comes the cup of consolation and, oh, how sweet is that! It has been the privilege of these lips to drink that cup after sickness and pain. And I can bear witness, that I said of my Master, "You have kept the best wine until now." It was so luscious that the taste did take away every taste of the bitterness of sorrow. And I said, "Surely the bitterness of this sickness is all past, for the Lord has manifested Himself to me and given me His best wine."

But, Beloved, the best wine is to come last. God's people will find it so outwardly. The poor saint comes to die. The Master has given him the cup of poverty, but now no more he drinks thereof, he is rich to all the intents of bliss. He has had the cup of sickness. He shall drink of that no more. He has had the cup of persecution but now he is glorified, together with his Master and made to sit upon His Throne. The best things have come last to him in outward circumstances. There were two martyrs once burned at Stratford-le-Bow. One of them was lame and the other blind and when they were tied to the stake, the lame man took his crutch and threw it down and said to the other, "Cheer up, Brother, this is the sharp medicine that shall heal us. I shall not be lame within an hour of this time nor shall you be blind."

No, the best things were to come last. But I have often thought that the child of God is very much like the crusaders. The crusaders started off on their journey and they had to fight their way through many miles of enemies and to march through leagues of danger. You remember, perhaps, in history, the story that when the armies of the Duke of Bouillon came in sight of Jerusalem, they sprang from their horses, clapped their hands and cried, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, Jerusalem." They forgot all their toils, all the weariness of the journey and all their wounds, for there was Jerusalem in their sight. And how will the saint at last cry, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem," when all sorrow and all poverty and sickness are past and he is blest with immortality! The bad wine—bad did I say? No, the bitter wine is taken away and the best wine is brought out and the saint sees himself glorified forever with Christ Jesus.

And now, we will sit down at the table of inward experience. The first cup that Christ brings to His children, when they sit at that table, is one so bitter that, perhaps, no tongue can ever describe it—it is the cup of conviction. It is a black cup, full of the most intense bitterness. The Apostle Paul once drank a little of it but it was so strong that it made him blind for three days. The conviction of his sin overpowered him totally. He could only give his soul to fasting and to prayer and it was only when he drank of the next cup that the scales fell from off his eyes.

I have drank of it, Children of God and I thought that Jesus was unkind, but, in a little while, He brought me forth a sweeter cup, the cup of

His forgiving love, filled with the rich crimson of His precious blood. Oh, the taste of that wine is in my mouth this very hour, for the taste thereof is as the wine of Lebanon, that abides in the cask for many a day. Do you not remember, when, after you had drunk the cup of sorrow, Jesus came and showed you His hands and His side and said, "Sinner, I have died for you and given Myself for you. Believe on Me." Do you not remember how you believed and sipped the cup and you have believed again and took a deeper draught and said, "Blessed be the name of God from this time forth and forever. And let the whole earth say, 'Amen,' for He has broken the gates of brass and cut the bars of iron in sunder and let the captives go free"? Since then the glorious Master has said to you, "Friend, come up higher!" and He has taken you to upper seats in the best rooms and He has given you sweeter things.

I will not tell you, today, of the wines you have drunk. The spouse in Solomon's Song may supply the deficiency of my sermon this morning. She drank of the spiced wine of His pomegranate. And so have you, in those high and happy moments when you had fellowship with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. But tarry awhile, He has kept the best wine yet. You shall soon come near the banks of the Jordan and then you shall begin to drink of the old wine of the kingdom that has been barreled up since the foundation of the world. The vintage of the Savior's agony. The vintage of Gethsemane shall soon be broached for you—the old wine of the kingdom. You are come into the land "Beulah," and you begin to taste the full flavor of the wines on the lees well refined. You know how Bunyan describes the state which borders on the vale of death. It was a land flowing with milk and honey. A land where the angels often came to visit the saints and to bring bundles of myrrh from the land of spices.

And now the high step is taken, the Lord puts His finger upon your eyelids and kisses your soul out at your lips. Where are you now? In a sea of love and life and bliss and immortality. O Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, you have indeed kept the best wine until now! My Master! I have seen You on the Sabbath, but this is an everlasting Sabbath. I have met You in the congregation, but this is a congregation that shall never break up. O my Master! I have seen the promises, but this is the fulfillment. I have blessed You for gracious providences, but this is something more than all these—You did give me grace, but now You have given me glory—You were once my shield, but You are now my sun. I am at Your right hand, where there is fullness of joy forever. You have kept Your best wine until now. All I ever had before was as nothing compared with this."

And, lastly, for only time fails me, I could preach a week upon this subject. The Table of Communion is one at which Godly children must sit. And the first thing they must drink of there is the cup of communion with Christ in His sufferings. If you would come to the Table of Communion with Christ, you must first of all drink of the wine of Calvary. Christian, your head must be crowned with thorns, your hands must be pierced—I mean not with nails, but, spiritually you must be crucified with Christ. We must suffer with Him, or else we cannot reign with Him. We must labor with Him first, we must sup of the wine which His Father gave Him to drink, or else we cannot expect to come to the better part of the feast. After drinking of the wine of His sufferings and continuing to drink of it, we must drink of the cup of His labors, we must be baptized with His Baptism, we must labor after souls and sympathize with Him in that ambition

of His heart—the salvation of sinners. And after that He will give us to drink of the cup of His anticipated honors.

Here on earth we shall have good wine in communion with Christ in His resurrection, in His triumphs and His victories. But the best wine is to come at last. O chambers of communion, your gates have been opened to me. But I have only been able to glance within them. But the day is coming when on your diamond hinges you shall turn and stand wide open forever and ever. And I shall enter into the king's palace and go no more out. O Christian! You shall soon see the King in His beauty. Your head shall soon be on His bosom. You shall soon sit at His feet with Mary. You shall soon do as the spouse did, you shall kiss Him with the kisses of His lips and feel that His love is better than wine. I can conceive you, Brothers and Sisters, in the very last moment of your life, or rather, in the first moment of your life, saying, "He has kept the best wine until now."

When you begin to see Him face to face—when you enter into the closest fellowship—with nothing to disturb or to distract you, then shall you say "The best wine is kept until now."

A saint was once dying and another who sat by him said—"Farewell, Brother, I shall never see you again in the land of the living." "Oh," said the dying man, "I shall see you again in the land of the living that is up yonder, where I am going. This is the land of the dying." Oh Brothers and Sisters, if we should never meet again in the land of the dying, we have a hope that we shall meet in the land of the living and drink the best wine at last!

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THE FEAST OF THE LORD

NO. 226

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH EVENING, NOVEMBER 28, 1858,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.**

*“The governor of the feast called the bridegroom and said unto him,
every man at the beginning does set forth good wine
and when men have well drunk, then that
which is worse. But you have kept
the good wine until now”
John 2:9, 10.*

I HAD exhausted my time this morning by describing the feast of Satan—how at the four tables, where the profligate sat, the self-righteous, the worldly and the secretly sinful. The course of Satan, was always on this wise—first the good wine and when men had well drunk, that which was worse. His feast diminished in its value as it proceeded and went from the bright crackling of the thorn under the pot to the blackness of darkness forever. I had then in my second point to show that the rule of Christ’s banquet is just the very reverse—that Christ does always give the best wine last—that He does save the good things until the end of the feast. Not that sometimes the first cups at the table of Christ are full of wormwood and gall and are exceedingly bitter, but that if we tarry at the feast, they will grow sweeter and sweeter and sweeter, until at last, when we shall come into the land Beulah and especially when we shall enter into the city of our God, we shall be compelled to say, “You have kept the good wine until now.”

Now, my dear Friends, this is a great fact, that Christ’s feast increases in sweetness. When first the Lord Jesus Christ proclaimed a feast for the sons of men, the first cup He set upon the table was but a very little one and it had in it but few words of consolation. You remember the inscription upon that ancient vessel, the first cup of consolation that was ever held to the sons of men—“The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s head.” There was to them but little sweetness there—much to us, because we can understand it better and some to them, because God’s Spirit might help them to understand it, but still in the revelation of it there seemed but little promise. As the world went on, there were greater cups of precious wine brought forth, whereof Patriarchs and ancient saints did drink. But Beloved, all the wine they ever had under the Old Testament dispensation was far behind that of which *we* drink. He that is

least in the kingdom of Heaven is more highly favored than he who is chief under the Old Testament dispensation.

Our fathers ate manna, but we eat the Bread that came down from Heaven. They drank of water in the wilderness, but we drink of that Living Water whereof if a man drinks he shall never thirst. It is true they had much sweetness. The cups of the ancient tabernacle had precious wine in them. There was in the outward symbol the sign and the shadow—much that was delightful to the faith of the true Believer. But we must remember that we are drinking today of that wine which Prophets and kings desired to drink, but died without a taste. They guessed its sweetness. They could by faith foresee what it would be. But lo, we are allowed to sit at the table and quaff full draughts of wines on the lees well refined, which God has given to us in this mountain, wherein He has made a feast of fat things for all people.

But, Beloved, the text still stands true of us—there is better wine to come. We are in our privileges superior to Patriarchs and kings and Prophets. God has given us a brighter and a clearer day than they had; theirs was but the twilight of the morning, compared with the noonday which we enjoy. But think not that we are come to the best wine yet. There are more noble banquets for God's Church. Who knows how long before the best of the precious wine shall be broached? Do you not know that the King of Heaven is coming again upon this earth? Jesus Christ, who came once and broached His heart for us on Calvary, is coming again, to flood the earth with glory. He came once with a sin-offering in His hand—behold, He comes no more with a sin-offering, but with the cup of salvation and of thanksgiving, to call upon the name of the Lord and joyously to take unto Himself the throne of His father David. You and I, if we are alive and remain, shall yet set that cup to our lips. And if we die, we have this privilege, this happy consolation, that we shall not be behind hand, for "the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible," and we shall drink of that millennial wine which Christ our Savior has reserved to the last.

Saints! You cannot tell what golden goblets those are of which you shall drink in the thousand years of the Redeemer's triumph. You cannot tell what wine, sparkling and red, that shall be, which shall come from the vintage of the hills of glory, when he whose garments are red with treading the wine-press shall descend in the great day and stand upon the earth. Why, the very thought of this cheered Job. "I know that my Redeemer lives and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth—and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." Let this rejoice and cheer you, Christian, that the good wine is kept even unto that time.

And now, having shown that this is the rule of Christ in the great dispensation which He uses to all His Church I shall come to the subject of this evening, which is this—First, the fact that the Believer shall find that Christ keeps for him the best wine till the last. Secondly, the reason of Christ for so doing. And thirdly, the lesson which we ought to learn from there.

I. First, THE FACT THAT CHRIST KEEPS HIS GOOD WINE TILL LAST. I was thinking as I rode here how very true this is of some of God's people. Why there are some of God's best Beloved who have their names upon the breastplate of the great High Priest, who are purchased with His blood and are very dear to his soul. And yet they who have not known from their youth up what it is to get out of the depths of poverty. They have to live from hand to mouth, not knowing one day where another meal shall come. How many more there are of God's people that are lying on beds of affliction? Some of the most precious of God's diamonds are lying on the dunghill of disease. You may go and climb to many a chamber where you shall see the victims of all kinds of diseases, loathsome, protracted and painful and you shall see God's dear ones languishing out a dying life.

I might point you to others of God's servants, whose days are spent in toil. There is needed for the human body and especially for the soul, a little rest and a little of the food of knowledge. But these have had so little instruction that they cannot get mental food ready for themselves. If they read they can scarce understand and they have hard bondage in this life, which makes their life bitter and hinders them from knowledge. They have to work from morning to night, with scarce a moments rest. Oh, Beloved, will it not be true of them, when death shall give them their discharge, when they shall leave this world, which has been to them, with an emphasis, a vale of tears? Will not they have to say—"You have kept the good wine until now"?

Oh, what a change for her who has come limping along these many Sabbath days to the sanctuary! For there she shall go no more up to the Lord's house limping and lame, but the "lame man shall leap like the hart," and like Miriam, she shall dance with the daughters of Israel. Ah, you may have had to suffer sickness and sorrow and pain, blindness and deafness and a thousand of this world's ills—what a change for you, when you find them all gone! No racking pains, no pining want, no anxious care. You shall not have to cry for the sunlight to penetrate your abodes, or weep because your sight is failing through incessant labor with that murderous needle. No, you shall see the light of God, brighter than the light of the sun and you shall rejoice in the beams that proceed from His countenance.

You shall have no more infirmities—immortality shall have covered and swallowed them up—that which was sown in weakness shall be raised in power. That which was sown disordered, full of pain and sorrow and disjointed and full of agony, shall be raised full of delectable delights, no more capable of anguish, quivering with joy and bliss unspeakable. You shall no more be poor. You shall be rich, richer than the miser's dream. You shall no more have to labor, there shall you rest upon your beds, each one of you walking in your uprightness. You shall no more suffer from neglect and scorn and ignominy and persecution. You shall be glorified with Christ, in the day when He shall come to be admired of them that love Him. What a change for such! The best wine, indeed, is kept to the last, in their case, for they have never had any good wine here to the eyes of men, though secretly they have had many a drink from the bottle of Jesus. He has often put His cordial cup to their lips. They have been like the ewe lamb that belonged to the man in Nathan's parable—they have drunk out of Christ's own cup on the earth, but still even sweeter than that cup shall be the draught which they shall receive at the last.

But, my dear Friends, although I put these first, as especially feeling the change, because we can see the difference, yet will it be true of the most favored of God's children, all of them shall say, "The best wine is kept till now." Of all the men whom I might envy, I think I should first of all envy the Apostle Paul. What a man! How highly favored! How greatly gifted! How much blessed! Ah, Paul, you could talk of revelations and of visions from on high. He heard things which it was unlawful for a man to utter,

and he saw that which few eyes have ever seen. He was caught up into the third Heaven. What draughts of joy the Apostle Paul must have had! What looking into the deep things of God! What soaring into the heights of Heaven! Perhaps there was never a man who was more favored of God. To have his mind expanded and then to have it filled full with the wisdom and the revelation of the knowledge of the Most High.

But ask the Apostle Paul whether he believes there is anything better to come and he tells you, "Now we see through a glass darkly, but then shall we see face to face. Now we know in part, but then shall we know even as we are known." He was evidently expecting something more than he had received. And, Brethren, he was not disappointed. There was a Heaven as much above all the enjoyments of Paul, as the enjoyments of Paul were above the depressions of his spirit, when he said, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" There are children of God who have all that they can need of this world's goods. They seem to be free from earthly care and they have faith enough to trust their God with regard to the future. Their faith is firm and strong. They have much

love to the Redeemer. They are engaged in some delightful work and the Holy Spirit attends that work with great success. Their days follow steadily one after another, like the waves of the still calm sea. God is with them and they are greatly blessed. They spread out their roots by the river, their leaf also does not wither and whatsoever they do, they prosper. Whichever way they turn their hand the Lord their God is with them. In whatsoever land they put their feet they are like Joshua, that land is given to them to be an inheritance to them forever.

But, Beloved, even these shall see greater things than they have as yet beheld. High as their Master has taken them into the house of banqueting, lofty though the room is in which they now feast, the Master shall say to them, "Come up higher." They shall know more, enjoy more, feel more, do more, possess more. They shall be nearer to Christ. They shall have richer enjoyments and sweeter employments than they have had. And they shall feel that their Master has kept his good wine even until now.

Entering into particulars for a moment, very briefly, I must just observe that there are many aspects under which we may regard the heavenly state. And in each of these we shall have to say that Christ has kept the good wine until then. Here on earth the Believer esters into rest by faith—the Christian enjoys rest even in the wilderness. The promise is fulfilled—"they shall dwell safely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods." God gives to His Beloved sleep. There is a peace that passes all understanding, which we may enjoy even in this land of turmoil, strife and alarms—a peace which the worldling knows not of, nor can he guess it—

***"A holy calm within the heart,
The pledge of glorious rest.
Which for the Church of God remains,
The end of cares, the end of pain."***

But, Beloved, drink as we may of the cup of peace, the good wine is kept until a future time. The peace we drink today is dashed with drops of bitter. There are disturbing thoughts, the cares of this world will come, doubts will arise—live as we may in this world, we must have disquietudes, thorns in the flesh must come. But, oh, the rest that remains for the people of God! What good wine shall that be! God has a sun without a spot, a sky without a cloud, a day without a night, a sea without a wave, a world without a tear. Happy are they who, having passed through this world, have entered into rest and ceased from their own works, as God did from His, bathing their weary souls in seas of heavenly rest.

View Heaven under another aspect. It is a place of holy company. In this world we have had some good wine of sweet company. We can tell of many of the precious sons of Zion with whom we have taken sweet counsel. Blessed be the Lord—the righteous have not all failed from among

men. Some of you can remember golden names that were very dear to you in the days of your youth—of men and women with whom you used to go up to God’s House and take sweet counsel. Ah, what words used to drop from their lips and what sweet balm you had in the days of your sorrow when they comforted and consoled you. And you have friends still left to whom you look up with some degree of reverence, while they look upon you with intense affection. There are some men that are comforters to your soul and when you talk to them you feel that their heart answers to your heart and that you can enjoy union and communion with them.

But Beloved, the good wine is kept till the last. All the fellowship with the saints that we have had here is as nothing compared with what we are to enjoy in the world to come. How sweet it is for us to recollect that in Heaven we shall be in the company of the best men, the noblest men, the most mighty men, the most honorable and the most renowned. We shall sit with Moses and talk with him of all his life of wonders. We shall walk with Joseph and we shall hear from him of the Grace that kept him in his hour of Peril. I doubt not you and I shall have the privilege of sitting by the side of David and hearing him recount the perils and the deliverances through which he passed. The saints of Heaven make but one communion. They are not divided into separate classes. We shall be allowed to walk through all the glorious ranks and hold fellowship with all of them. Nor need we doubt but that we shall be able to know them all. There are many reasons which I could not now enumerate, for it would occupy too much time, that seem to my mind to settle the point that in Heaven we shall know even as we are known and shall perfectly know each other and that, indeed, makes us long to be there. “The general assembly and Church of the first-born, whose names are written in Heaven.”

Oh, to get away from this poor Church here, that is full of strifes and divisions and bickering and jealousies and animosities—to get away from the society of men that are full of infirmities, although they have much Grace and to get into a place where there shall be no infirmities in those with whom we talk—no hasty tempers—where we cannot possibly strike a chord that would make a jarring note—when it shall not be in our power to raise among those holy birds of Paradise a cause of strife—when we shall walk in the midst of them all and see love beaming from every eye and feel that deep affection is seated in every heart. Oh, that will be the best wine! Are you not longing to drink of it?—to enter into that great Church fellowship and attend those glorious Church meetings?—

***“Where all the chosen race
Shall meet around the Throne,
To bless the conduct of His Grace,
And make His wonders known.”***

Again—look at Heaven, if you will, in the point of knowledge. We know very much on earth that makes us happy. Jesus Christ has taught us many things that give us joy and gladness. It is a world of ignorance, but still through Grace we have entered into the school of the Gospel and we have learned some sweet truths. It is true we are very much like the boy who is beginning to write. We had to make many ugly pothooks and hangers and we have not yet learned to write the sweet running hand of joy. But nevertheless, the Lord has taught us some great truths to fill our heart with joy—the great doctrine of election, the knowledge of our redemption, the fact of our security in Christ. These great but simple doctrines have filled our hearts with bliss. But, Brethren, the best wine is kept till the last, when the Lord Jesus Christ shall take the book and break the seals thereof and permit us to read it all. Then shall we rejoice indeed, for the best wine will be at our lips. There are old cases of knowledge that contain the richest wine and Christ shall stave them in and we shall drink of them to the full. It is not fit that we should know all things now—we could not bear many things and therefore Christ keeps them back. But—

***“There shall you see and hear and know
All you desired or wished below,
And every power find sweet employ
In that eternal world of joy.”***

You may, if you please, look at Heaven in another sense—as a place of manifestations and of joys. Now this world is a place of manifestations to the Believer. Shall I venture for a moment, or even for a second, to talk of manifestations of Himself which Christ is pleased to afford to His poor children on earth? No, Beloved, your own experience shall supply my lack. I will only say that there are times when the Lord Jesus said unto His Beloved, “Come, my Beloved, let us go forth into the field. Let us lodge in the villages. Let us get up early to the vineyards. Let us see if the vines flourish, whether the tender grape appears and the pomegranates bud forth—there will I give you My loaves.” But what must be the fellowship of Heaven? I fail tonight in attempting to talk to you of the best wine for this simple reason—I believe there are very few men that can preach of Heaven so as to interest you much, for you feel that all we can say is so far behind the reality, that we might as well have let it alone.

Baxter might write a Saint’s Rest, but I am no Baxter—would God I were! The day may come perhaps when I may talk more copiously of these blessings. But at present, in my own soul, when I begin to talk of the communion of Heaven, I seem overcome, I cannot imagine it. For the next thought that always succeeds my first attempt to think of it, is a thought of overwhelming gratitude, coupled with a kind of fear that this is too good

for such an unworthy worm as I. It was a privilege for John to put his head on the Master's bosom, but that is nothing compared with the privilege of lying in His embrace forever. Oh, we must wait until we get there and as one of old said, "In five minutes you shall know more of Heaven than I could tell you in all my life." It needs but that we should see our Lord, that we should fly into His arms, that we should feel His embrace, that we should fall at His feet and, was I about to say, weep for joy? No, that were impossible, but lie there, as it were dissolved away in ecstasy—to feel that we at least have arrived in that dear place which He has spoken to us of when He said—"Let not your heart be troubled, you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house there are many mansions. If it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." Truly He has kept the best wine until the last.

II. And now, WHAT IS OUR LORD'S REASON FOR DOING THIS? That was the second point. Very briefly. The Lord might have given us the best wine last, but He will not act as the devil does. He will always make a broad distinction between His dealings and the dealings of Satan.

Again—He will not give us the best wine first, because that is not His good pleasure. "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." That is the only reason why you will get it at all. And the reason why you do not receive it now is because it is not your Father's good pleasure that you should have it just yet. Again. Your Father does not give you the good wine now, because He is giving you an appetite for it. At the old feasts of the Romans men used to drink bitter things and all kinds of singular and noxious mixtures, to make them thirsty. Now, in this world, God is, as it were, making His children thirsty, that they may take deeper draughts of Heaven. I cannot think that Heaven would be so sweet to me if I had not first to dwell on earth. Who knows best the sweet of rest? Is it not the laborer? Who understands best the joy of peace? Is it not the man who has dwelt in the land of war? Who knows most the sweetness of joy? Is it not the man who has passed through a world of sorrow? You are having your appetites sharpened by these trials. You are being made ready to receive the fullness of joy that is at the presence of God forever.

Again—the Lord has this also in view. He is making you fit for the best wine, that He may be glorified by the trial of your faith. If it were in my power to go to Heaven tonight and I could enter there, yet if I should have a suspicion that there was more to do or more to suffer here, I would infinitely prefer to wait my Father's time, because, methinks, in Heaven we shall bless God for all we have suffered. When it is all over, how sweet it will be to talk of it! When you and I shall meet each other in the streets of Heaven—and there are some of you that have had but few trials, but few

doubts and fears and tribulations and conflicts—you will talk of how God delivered you. But you will not be able to talk as some of the tried saints will. Ah, what sweet stories some of them will tell! I should like to go by the side of Jonah and hear how he went down to the bottom of the mountains and how he thought the earth with her bars was about him forever.

And Jeremiah—I often think what a deal we shall get out of Jeremiah in eternity—what he will have to tell, who took such plunges into the sea of sorrow! And David, too, the sweet Psalmist, so full of experience he will never have done talking of what the Lord has done for him! And I think you and I, when we get to Heaven, will have enough to think of. As a poor woman once said, when she was in great doubt and fear whether she should be saved at all—she said in her prayer, “Lord, if You will save me, only one thing I can promise You. If You will take me to Heaven You shall never hear the last of it, for I will praise You while immortality lasts and I will tell the angels that You saved ME.” And this is the constant burden of Heaven. They are each one amazed that he is there. Beloved, if we did not have to pass through these trials and troubles and these soul conflicts and such like we should have very little to talk about in Heaven. I have no doubt that the babes in paradise are as happy as the rest, but I do not wish to be a babe in paradise. I bless God I did not go to Heaven when an infant—I shall have the more to praise God for, when I shall look back through a life of mercies, a life of trials and yet a life of sustaining Grace—there will be a louder song, because the deeper have been our troubles. These, I think, are some of God’s reasons.

III. And now, dear Brothers and Sisters, what shall I say about the LESSON WE ARE TO LEARN FROM THIS FACT of Christ keeping the best wine until now? Going home the other night I noticed the difference between the horse’s pace in coming here and going home and I thought to myself, “Ah, the horse goes well, because he is going home.” And the thought struck me, “How well a Christian ought to go, because he is going home.” You know, if we were going *from* home, every rough stone in the road might check us and we might need a good deal of whip to make us go. But it is *going* home. Bless God, every step we take is going home. It may be knee-deep in trouble, but it is all on the road. We may be ankle-deep in fear, but it is going home. I may stumble, but I always stumble homewards. All my afflictions and griefs, when they cast me down, but cast me onwards towards Heaven. The mariner does not mind the waves, if every wave sends him nearer his haven and he does not care how loudly the winds howl, if they only blow him nearer port. That is the Christian’s happy lot—he is going homeward. Let that cheer you, Christian, and make you travel on joyfully, not needing the whip to urge you to duty, but al-

ways going on with alacrity through duty and through trial, because you are going homeward.

Again—if we have the best things to come, dear Friends, do not let us be discontented. Let us put up with a few of the bad things now, for they only seem to be so. A traveler who is on a journey in a hurry, if he has to stay for a night at an inn, he may grumble a little at the want of accommodation, but he does not say very much, because he is off tomorrow—he is only stopping a short time at the inn. He says, “I shall get home tomorrow night,” and then he thinks of the joys of home and does not care about the discomforts of his hard journey. You and I are travelers. It will soon be over. We may have had but a very few shillings a week compared with our neighbor, but we shall be equal with him when we get there. He may have had a large house, with a great many rooms, while we had, it may be, only one upper room. Ah, we shall have as large a mansion as he in Paradise.

We shall soon be at the journey’s end and then the road will not matter. Come! Let us put up with these few inconveniences on the road, for the best wine is coming. Let us pour away all the vinegar of murmuring, for the best wine shall come. Once more, if the Christian has the best wine to come, why should he envy the worldling? David did—he was discontented when he saw the prosperity of the wicked and you and I are often tempted to do it. But you know what we ought to say when we see the wicked prosper, when we see them happy and full of delights of sinful pleasure? We ought to say, “Ah, my good wine is to come, I can bear that you should have your turn—my turn will come afterwards. I can be put off with these things and lie with Lazarus at the gate, while the dogs lick my sores. My turn is to come, when the angels shall carry me into Abraham’s bosom and your turn is to come too, when in Hell you lift up your eyes, being in torments.

Christian, what more shall I say to you? Though there are a thousand lessons to learn from this, that the best wine is kept to the last—“Take heed to yourself, that you also keep your good wine until the last. The further you go on the road, seek to bring to your Savior the more acceptable sacrifice. You had little faith years ago—Man, bring out the good wine now! Seek to have more faith. Your Master is better to you every day and you shall see Him to be the best of all masters and friends. Seek to be better to your Master every day. Be more generous to His cause, more active to labor for Him, more kind to His people, more diligent in prayer. And take heed that as you grow in years, you grow in Grace, so that when you come at last to the river Jordan and the Master shall give you the best wine, you may also give to Him the best wine and praise Him most loudly

when the battle shall just be over and when the whirlwind is dying away into the everlasting peace of Paradise.

And now, dear Friends, I am conscious that I have totally failed in endeavoring to bring forth this good wine. But it is written that God has revealed it unto us by His Spirit, but that ear has not heard it. Now, if I had told it to you tonight and your ear would have heard it, then the text would not have been true. And as I have unwittingly proved the truth of this Scripture, I cannot be very sorry at having helped to witness the truth of my Master's word. Only this I say—the nearer you live to Christ the nearer you will be to Heaven—for if there is one place next door to Pisgah it is Calvary. It may seem strange but if you live much on Calvary you live very near Nebo. For although Moses may have seen Canaan from Nebo, I have never seen Heaven anywhere but close to Calvary.

When I have seen my Savior crucified, then I have seen Him glorified. When I have read my name written in His blood, then I have seen afterwards my mansion which He has prepared for me. When I have seen my sins washed away, then I have seen the white robe that I am to wear forever. Live near to the Savior, Brothers and Sisters, and you shall not be very far off Heaven. Remember, after all, it is not far to Heaven. It is only one gentle sigh and we are there. We talk of it as a land very far off, but close it is and who knows but that the spirits of the just are here tonight? Heaven is close to us. We cannot tell where it is, but this we know, that it is *not* a far off land. It is so near, that, swifter than thought, we shall be there, emancipated from our care and woe and blessed forever.

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REGENERATION

NO. 130

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MAY 3, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“Unless one is born-again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.”
John 3:3.***

In daily life our thoughts are most occupied with things that are most necessary for our existence. No one murmured that the subject of the price of bread was frequently on the lips of men at a time of scarcity because they felt that the subject was one of vital importance to the mass of the population and, therefore, they murmured not—though they listened to continual declamatory speeches and read perpetual articles in the newspapers concerning it. I must offer the same excuse, then, for bringing before you, this morning, the subject of regeneration. It is one of absolute and vital importance. It is the hinge of the Gospel! It is the point upon which most Christians are agreed, yes, all who are Christians in sincerity and truth. It is a subject which lies at the very basis of salvation. It is the very groundwork of our hopes for Heaven and as we ought to be very careful of the basement of our structure, so should we be very diligent to take heed that we are really born-again and that we have made sure work of it for eternity. There are many who fancy they are born-again who are not. It well becomes us, then, to frequently examine ourselves. And it is the minister's duty to bring forward those subjects which lead to self-examination and have a tendency to search the heart and try the reins of the children of men.

To proceed at once, I shall first make some remarks upon *the new birth*. Secondly I shall note *what is meant by not being able to see the Kingdom of God if we are not born-again*. Then I shall go further on to note *why it is that “Unless we are born-again we cannot see the Kingdom of God.”* Then I will expostulate with men as God's ambassador before I close.

I. First, then, THE MATTER OF REGENERATION. In endeavoring to explain it, I must have you notice, first of all, *the figure that is employed*. It is said a man *must* be born-again. I cannot illustrate this better than by supposing a case. Suppose that in England there should be a law passed that admission to royal courts, preference in office and any privileges that might belong to the nation could only be given to persons who

were born in England? Suppose that birth in this land was made a *sine qua non* and it was definitely declared that whatever men might do or be, unless they were native-born subjects of England, they could not enter into her Majesty's presence! Nor could they enjoy any of the emoluments or offices of the State nor any of the privileges of citizens. I think if you suppose such a case, I shall be able to illustrate the difference between any changes and reforms that men make in themselves and the real work of being born-again. We will suppose, then, that some man—an American Indian for instance—should come to this country and should endeavor to obtain the privileges of citizenship, well knowing that the rule is absolute and cannot be altered—that a man must be a born subject—or else he cannot enjoy them. Suppose he says, "*I will change my name*, I will take up the name of an Englishman—I have been called by my high sounding title among the Sioux. I have been called the son of the Great West Wind, or some such name, but I will take an English name. I will be called a Christian man, an English subject." Will that admit him? You see him coming to the palace gates and asking for admission. He says, "I have taken an English name." "But are you an Englishman born and bred?" "I am not," he says. "Then the gates must be shut against you, for the law is absolute. And though you may have the name of even the royal family, itself, upon you, because you have not been born here, you must be shut out." That illustration will apply to all of us who are here present. At least, nearly the whole of us bear the professing Christian name. Living in England, you would think it a disgrace to you if you were not called Christian. You are not heathen, you are not infidel. You are neither Muslim nor Jew. You think that the name, Christian, is a creditable one to you and you have taken it. Be you quite assured that the *name* of a Christian is not the *nature* of a Christian and that your being born in a Christian land and being recognized as professing the Christian religion is of no use whatever unless there is something more added to it—the being born-again as a subject of Jesus Christ!

"But," says this American Indian, "I am prepared *to renounce my dress* and to become an Englishman in fashion. In fact, I will go to the very top of the fashion! You shall not see me in anything differing from the accepted style of the present day. May I not, when I am arrayed in court dress and have decorated myself as etiquette demands, come in before her Majesty? See, I'll take off this plume, I will not shake this tomahawk, I renounce these garments. The moccasin I cast away forever. I am an Englishman in dress, as well as name!" He comes to the gate, dressed out like one of our own countrymen, but the gates are still shut in his face because the law requires that he must be born in this country. And

without that, whatever his dress might be, he could not enter the palace. How many are there of you who barely take the Christian name upon you, but have adopted Christian manners? You go to your churches and your chapels, you attend the House of God—you take care that there is some form of religion observed in your family—your children are not left without hearing the name of Jesus! So far, so good. God forbid that I should say a word against it! But remember, it is bad because you do not go further. All this is of no use whatever for admitting you into the Kingdom of Heaven—unless this is also complied with—*the being born-again!* Oh, dress yourselves ever so grandly with the clothes of godliness. Put the chaplet of benevolence upon your brow and gird your loins with integrity. Put on your feet the shoes of perseverance and walk through the earth an honest and upright man. You are not a Christian, remember, unless you are born-again! “That which is of the flesh is flesh,” and you, not having the operations of the Spirit in you, still have Heaven’s gates shut against you because you are not born-again!

“Well,” says this Indian, “I will not only adopt the dress but I will *learn the language*. I will put away, far away from my lips, my brogue and my language that I once spoke in the wild prairie or in the woods. I shall not talk of the Shu-Shuh-Gah and of the strange names wherewith I have called my wild fowl and my deer, but I will speak as you speak and act as you act! I will not only have your dress but precisely your manners. I will talk in just the same fashion. I will adopt your brogue. I will take care that it shall be grammatically correct. Will you not then admit me? I have become thoroughly Anglicized. May I not then be received?” “No,” says the keeper of the door, “there is no admittance, for unless a man is born in this country, he cannot be admitted.” So with some of you—you talk just like Christians! Perhaps you have a little too much cant about you. You have begun so strictly to imitate what you think to be a godly man that you go a little beyond the mark and you gloss it so much that we are able to detect the counterfeit! Still you pass current among most men as being a right down sort of Christian! You have studied biographies and sometimes you tell long tales about Divine experience. You have borrowed them from the biographies of good men. You have been with Christians and know how to talk as they do. You have even adopted a Puritanical twang, perhaps! You go through the world just like professors do. And if you were to be observed, no one would detect you. You are a member of the Church. You have been baptized. You take the Lord’s Supper. Perhaps you are a deacon, or an Elder. You pass the sacramental cup around. You are all that a Christian can be—except that you are without a Christian heart—you are whitewashed sepulchers, still full of

rotteness within, though fairly garnished on the outside! Well, take heed, take heed! It is an astonishing thing, how near the painter can go to the expression of life and yet the canvas is dead and motionless. And it is equally astonishing how near a man may go to a Christian and yet, through not being born-again, the absolute rule shuts him out of Heaven! And with all his profession, with all the trappings of his professed godliness and with all the gorgeous plumes of experience—he must be borne away from Heaven's gates.

“You are uncharitable, Mr. Spurgeon.” I do not care what you say about that—I never wish to be more charitable than Christ. I did not say this—Christ said it. If you have any quarrel with Him, settle it there. I am not the maker of this Truth but simply the speaker of it. I find it written, “Unless a man is born-again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.” If your footman should go to the door and deliver your message correctly, the man at the door might abuse him ever so much, but the footman would say, “Sir, do not abuse *me*, I cannot help it. I can only tell you what my *Master* told me. I am not the originator of it.” So if you think me uncharitable—remember you do not accuse *me*—you accuse *Christ*! You are not finding fault with the messenger, you are finding fault with the Message. Christ has said it—“Unless a man is born-again.” I cannot dispute with you and shall not try. That is simply God's Word. Reject it at your peril! Believe it and receive it, I entreat you, because it comes from the lips of the Most High!

But now note *the manner in which this regeneration is obtained*. I think I have none here so profoundly stupid as to be Puseyites. I can scarcely believe that I have been the means of attracting one person here so utterly devoid of every remnant of brain as to believe the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration. Yet I must just hint at it. There are some who teach that by a few drops of water sprinkled on an infant's brow, the infant becomes regenerate! Well, granted. And now I will find out your regenerate ones 20 years afterwards! The champion of the prize ring is a regenerated man. Oh, yes, he was regenerated, because in infancy he was baptized and, therefore, if all infants in Baptism are regenerated, the prize fighter is a regenerate man! Take hold of him and receive him as your Brother in the Lord. Do you hear that man swearing and blaspheming God? He is regenerate, believe me, he is regenerate! The priest put a few drops of water on his brow and he is a regenerated man. Do you see the drunkard reeling down the street, the pest of the neighborhood, fighting everybody and beating his wife, worse than a brute? Well, he is regenerate, he is one of those Puseyite regenerates—oh, goodly regenerate! Do you see the crowd assembled in the streets? The gallows is erected. Palmer is about

to be executed, the man whose name should be execrated through all eternity for his villainy! He is one of those Puseyite regenerates! Yes, he is regenerate because he was baptized in infancy! Regenerate while he mixes his strychnine! Regenerate while he slowly administers his poison—that he may cause death and infinite pain all the while he is causing it! Regenerate, indeed! If that is regeneration, such regeneration is not worth having—if that is the thing that makes us part of the Kingdom of Heaven, verily, the Gospel is, indeed, a licentious Gospel! We can say nothing about it. If that is the Gospel—that all such men are regenerate and will be saved—we can only say that it would be the duty of every man in the world to ignore that Gospel, because it is so inconsistent with the most common principles of morality that it could not possibly be of God, but of the devil!

But some say all are regenerate when they are baptized. Well, if you think so, stick to your own thoughts. I cannot help it. Simon Magus was certainly one exception—he was baptized on a profession of his faith, but so far from being regenerated by his baptism, we find Paul saying, “I perceive that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.” And yet he was one of those regenerates because he had been baptized? Ah, that doctrine only needs to be stated to sensible men and they will at once reject it! Gentlemen that are fond of a filigree religion and like ornament and show—gentlemen of the high Beau Brummel school—will very likely prefer this religion because they have cultivated their taste at the expense of their brain and have forgotten that what is inconsistent with the sound judgment of a man cannot be consistent with the Word of God! So much for the first point.

Neither is a man regenerated, we say, in the next place, *by his own exertions*. A man may reform himself very much and that is well and good. Let all do that! A man may cast away many vices and forsake many lusts in which he indulged and conquer evil habits. But no man in the world can make himself to be born of God! Though he should struggle ever so much, he could never accomplish what is beyond his power. And, mark you, if he could make himself to be born-again, he would still not enter Heaven because there is another point in the condition which he would have violated—“unless a man is born of the *Spirit*, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.” So that the best exertions of the flesh do not reach this high point—the being born-again of the Spirit of God!

And now we must say that regeneration consists in this—God the Holy Spirit, in a supernatural manner. Mark, by the word, *supernatural*, I mean just what it strictly means—supernatural, more than natural—works upon the hearts of men and then they, by the operations of the Di-

vine Spirit, become regenerate men. But without the Spirit, they never can be regenerated. And unless God the Holy Spirit, who, “works in us to will and to do,” should operate upon the will and the conscience—regeneration is an absolute impossibility and, therefore, so is salvation! “What?” says one, “Do you mean to say that God absolutely interposes in the salvation of every man to make him regenerate?” I do indeed! In the salvation of every person, there is an actual putting forth of Divine Power whereby the dead sinner is quickened, the unwilling sinner is made willing and the desperately hard sinner has his conscience made tender—and he who rejected God and despised Christ is brought to cast himself down at the feet of Jesus! Maybe this is called fanatical Doctrine—that we cannot help—it is a Scriptural Doctrine—that is enough for us! “Unless a man is born of the Spirit, he cannot see the Kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” If you like it not, quarrel with my Master, not with me! I do but simply declare His own Revelation that there must be in your heart something more than *you* can ever work there. There must be a *Divine* operation! Call it a miraculous operation if you please. There must be a Divine interposition, a Divine working, a Divine influence, or else, do what you may, without that you perish and are undone—“For Unless a man is born-again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.” The change is radical. It gives us new natures, makes us love what we hated and hate what we loved. It sets us on a new road, makes our habits different, our thoughts different—makes us different in private and different in public! So that being in Christ, it is fulfilled—“If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things are passed away, behold all things are become new.”

II. And now I must come to the second point. I trust I have explained regeneration so that all may see what it is. Now WHAT DOES THE EXPRESSION, “SEEING THE KINGDOM OF GOD,” MEAN? It means two things. To see the Kingdom of God on earth is to be a member of the mystical Church—it is to enjoy the privileges and liberty of the child of God. To see the Kingdom of Heaven means to have power in prayer, to have communion with Christ, to have fellowship with the Holy Spirit and to bring forth and produce all those joyous and blessed fruits which are the effect of regeneration. In a higher sense, “to see the Kingdom of God,” means to be admitted into Heaven. “Unless a man is born-again,” he cannot know about heavenly things on earth and he cannot enjoy heavenly blessings forever—“he cannot see the Kingdom of God.”

III. I think I may just pass over the second point without remark and proceed to notice in the third place, WHY IT IS THAT, “UNLESS A MAN IS

BORN-AGAIN, HE CANNOT SEE THE KINGDOM OF GOD”? And I will confine my remarks to the Kingdom of God in the world to come.

Why, he cannot see the Kingdom of God *because he would be out of place in Heaven!* A man that is not born-again could not enjoy Heaven! There is an actual impossibility in his nature which prevents him from enjoying any of the bliss of Paradise. You think, maybe, that Heaven consists in those walls of jewels, in those pearly gates and gates of gold? Not so. That is the habitation of Heaven! Heaven dwells there, but that is not Heaven. Heaven is a state that is made here, that is made in the heart, made by God’s Spirit within us and unless God the Spirit has renewed us and caused us to be born-again, we cannot enjoy the things of Heaven! Why, it is a physical impossibility that ever a swine should deliver a lecture on astronomy. Every man will clearly perceive that it must be impossible that a snail should build a city. And there is just as much impossibility that a sinner could enjoy Heaven. Why, there would be nothing there for him to enjoy! If he could be put into the place where Heaven is, he would be miserable. He would cry, “Let me go, let me go! Let me out of this miserable place!” I appeal to yourselves. Very often a sermon is too long for you. The singing of God’s praises is dull dry work. You think that going up to God’s House is very tedious. What will you do where they praise God day and night? If just a short discourse, here, is very wearying, what will you think of the eternal talking of the redeemed through all ages of the wonders of redeeming love? If the company of the righteous is very irksome to you, what will be their company throughout eternity? I think many of you are free to confess that Psalm singing is not a bit to your taste, that you care nothing about any spiritual things! Give you your bottle of wine and set you down at your ease—that is Heaven for you! Well, there is no such a Heaven yet made! And, therefore, there is no Heaven for you. The only Heaven there is, is the Heaven of spiritual men and women, the Heaven of praise, the Heaven of delight in God, the Heaven of acceptance in the Beloved, the Heaven of communion with Christ! Now, you do not understand anything about this. You could not enjoy it if you were to have it! You have not the capabilities for doing so. You, yourselves, from the very fact of your not being born-again, are your own barrier to Heaven—and if God were to open the gate wide and say, “Come in,” you could not enjoy Heaven if you were admitted—for unless a man is born-again, there is an impossibility, a moral impossibility, of his seeing the Kingdom of God! Suppose there are some persons here who are entirely deaf, who have never heard sounds. Well, I say they cannot hear singing. Do I, when I say it, say a cruel thing? It is their disability that prevents them. So when God says you cannot see the King-

dom of Heaven, He means it is your disability of not being born-again that prevents you ever entering there.

But there are some other reasons. There are reasons why—

***“Those holy gates forever bar
Pollution, sin and shame.”***

There are reasons, besides those in yourself, why you cannot see the Kingdom of God unless you are born-again. *Ask yon spirits* before the Throne of God—“Angels, principalities and powers, would you be willing that men who do not love God, who believe not in Christ, who have not been born-again, should dwell here?” I see them, as they look down upon us and hear them answering, “No! Once we fought the dragon and expelled him because he tempted us to sin! We must not and we will not have the wicked here! These alabaster walls must not be soiled with sin-black and lustful fingers. The white pavement of Heaven must not be stained and rendered filthy by the unholy feet of ungodly men. No!” I see a thousand spears bristling and the fiery faces of a myriad seraphs thrust over the walls of Paradise. “No, while these arms have strength and these wings have power, no sin shall ever enter here.” I address myself moreover to the saints in Heaven redeemed by Sovereign Grace—“Children of God, are you willing that the wicked should enter Heaven as they are, without being born-again? You love men. Say, are you willing that they should be admitted as they are?” I see Lot rise up and he cries, “Admit them into Heaven! No! What? Must I be vexed by the conversation of Sodomites again, as once I was?” I see Abraham. And he comes forward and he says, “No. I cannot have them here. I had enough of them while I was with them on earth—their jests and jeers, their silly talk, their vain conversation vexed and grieved us. We don’t want them here.” And, heavenly though they are, and loving as their spirits are, yet there is not a saint in Heaven who would not resent, with the utmost indignation, the approach of anyone of you to the gates of Paradise if you are still unholy and have not been born-again!

But all that were nothing. We might, perhaps, scale the ramparts of Heaven, if they were only protected by angels, and burst the gates of Paradise open, if only the saints defended them. But there is another reason than that—*God has said it Himself*—“Unless a man is born-again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.” What? Sinner! Will you scale the battlements of Paradise when God is ready to thrust you down to Hell? Will you, with impudent face, brazen Him out? God has said it! God has said it with a voice of thunder, “You shall not see the Kingdom of Heaven!” Can you wrestle with the Almighty? Can you overthrow Omnipotence? Can you grapple with the Most High? Worm of the dust! Can you over-

come your Maker? Trembling insect of an hour, shaken by the lightning when far overhead they flash far across the sky, will you dare the hand of God? Will you venture to defy Him to His face? Ah, He would laugh at you! As the snow melts before the sun, as wax runs at the fierceness of the fire—so would you—if His fury should once lay hold of you! Think not that you can overcome Him. He has sealed the gates of Paradise against you and there is no entrance. The God of Justice says, “I will not reward the wicked with the righteous. I will not suffer my goodly, godly Paradise to be stained by wicked ungodly men. If they turn I will have mercy upon them, but if they turn not, as I live, I will tear them in pieces and there shall be none to deliver.” Now, Sinner, can you brazen it out against Him? Will you rush upon the thick bosses of Jehovah’s shields? Will you try to scale His Heaven when His arrow is stringed upon the bow to reach your heart? What? When the glittering sword is at your neck and ready to slay you, will you endeavor to strive against your Maker? No, Potsherd, no! Contend with your fellow potsherd! Go, crawling Grasshopper. Go, fight with your brothers! Strive with them, but come not against the Almighty! He has said it and you never shall, you never shall enter Heaven unless you are born-again!

Again, I say quarrel not with me. I have but delivered my Master’s message. Take it, disbelieve it if you dare. But if you believe it, rail not at me, for it is God’s message and I speak it in love to your soul, lest, lacking it, you should perish in the dark and walk blindfolded to your everlasting punishment!

IV. Now, my Friends, A LITTLE EXPOSTULATION WITH YOU. And then farewell. I hear one man say, “Well, well, well, I see it. *I will hope that I shall be born-again after I am dead.*” Oh, Sir, believe me, you will be a miserable fool for your pains! When men die their state is fixed—

***“Fixed is their everlasting state,
Could they repent, ‘tis now too late.”***

Our life is like that wax melting in the flame. Death puts its stamp on it and then it cools and the impression never can be changed. Today you are like the burning metal running forth from the cauldron into the mold. Death cools you in your mold and you are cast in that shape throughout eternity! The voice of doom cries over the dead, “He that is holy, let him be holy still. He that is unjust, let him be unjust still. He that is filthy, let him be filthy still.” The damned are lost forever! They cannot be born-again! They go on cursing, ever being cursed, ever fighting against God and ever being trampled beneath His feet. They go on ever mocking, ever being laughed at for their mockery, ever rebelling and ever being tortured

with the whips of conscience because they are ever sinning. They cannot be regenerated because they are dead!

“Well,” says another, “*I will take care that I am regenerated just before I die.*” Sir, I repeat again, you are a fool in talking thus! How do you know that you shall live? Have you taken a lease of your life, as you have of your house? Can you ensure the breath within your nostrils? Can you say in certainty that another ray of light shall ever reach your eyes? Can you be sure that as your heart is beating a funeral march to the grave, you will not soon beat the last note and so you shall die where you stand or now sit? Oh, Man, if your bones were iron and your sinews brass and your lungs steel, then you might say, “I shall live.” But you are made of dust! You are like the flower of the field—you may die right now! Lo! I see Death standing yonder, moving to and fro! The stone of time upon his scythe, to sharpen it. Today, today, for some of you, he “grasps the scythe”—and away, away, he mows the fields and you fall, one by one! You must not and you cannot live. God carries us away as a flood, like a ship in a whirlpool—like a log in a current dashed onward to the waterfall. There is no stopping any one of us—we are all dying! And yet *you* say you will be regenerated before you die? Yes, Sirs, but are you regenerated *now*? For if not, it may be too late to hope for tomorrow! Tomorrow you may be in Hell, sealed up forever by adamant destiny which never can be moved.

“Well,” cries another, “*I do not care much about it.* For I see very little in being shut out of Paradise.” Ah, Sir, it is because you do not understand it! You smile at it now, but there will be a day when your conscience will be tender, when your memory will be strong, when your judgment will be enlightened and when you will think very differently from what you do now. Sinners in Hell are not the fools they were on earth! In Hell they do not laugh at everlasting fires. In the pit of Hell they do not despise the words, “eternal fire.” The worm that never dies, when it is gnawing, gnaws out all jokes and laughter. You may despise God, now, and despise me, now, for what I say, but death will change your tune! Oh my Hearers, if that were all, I would be willing. You may despise me, yes, you may. But oh, I beseech you, do not despise yourselves! Oh be not so foolhardy as to go whistling to Hell and laughing to the Pit. For when you are there, Sirs, you will find it a different thing from what you dream it to be now. When you see the gates of Paradise shut against you—you will find it to be a more important matter than you judge of now. You came to hear me preach, today, as you would have gone to the opera or playhouse. You thought I would amuse you. Ah, that is not my aim! God is my witness, I came here solemnly in earnest to wash my hands of your

blood! If you are damned, any one of you, it shall not be because I did not warn you! Men and women, if you perish, my hands are washed in innocence. I have told you of your doom. I again cry—REPENT, REPENT, REPENT—for, “unless you repent you shall all likewise perish.” I came here determined this morning if I must use rough words to use them—to speak right out against men and for men, too. For the things we say against you, now, are really for your good. We do but warn you, lest you perish!

But ah, I hear one of you saying, “I do not understand this mystery, pray explain it to me.” Fool, fool that you are! Do you see that fire? We are startled up from our beds, the light is at the window. We rush downstairs. People are hurrying to and fro. The street is trampled thick with crowds—they are rushing towards the house which is in a burst of flame. The firemen are at their work. A stream of water is pouring upon the house. But hark! Hark! There is a man upstairs—there is a man in the top room! There is just time for him to escape, but barely. A shout is raised—“Aho! Fire! Fire! Fire! Aho!”—but the man does not make his appearance at the window. Look, the ladder is placed against the walls. It is up to the window sill—a strong hand dashes in the easement! Where is the man? What? Is he tied down in his bed? Is he a cripple? Has some fiend got hold of him and nailed him to the floor? No, no, no—he feels the boards getting hot beneath his feet, the smoke is stifling him, the flame is burning all around, he knows there is but one way of escape—by that ladder! What is he doing? He is sitting down—no! You cannot believe me! He is sitting down and saying, “The origin of this fire is very mysterious. I wonder how it is to be discovered? How shall we understand it?” Why, you laugh at him! You are laughing at yourselves! You are seeking to have this question and that question answered—when your soul is in peril of eternal fire! Oh, when you are saved, it will then be time to ask questions. But while you are now in the burning house and in danger of destruction, it is not your time to be puzzling yourselves about free will, fixed fate, absolute predestination. All these questions are good and well enough afterwards, for those who are saved. Let the man on shore try to find out the cause of the storm. Your only business, now, is to ask, “What must I do to be saved? And how can I escape from the great damnation that awaits me?”

But ah, my Friends, I cannot speak as I wish. I think I feel, this morning, something like Dante, when he wrote his “*Il inferno*.” Men said of him that he had been in Hell. He looked like it. He had thought of it so long that they said, “He has been in Hell.” He spoke with such an awful earnestness. Ah, if I could, I would speak like that, too! It is only a few days

more and I shall meet you face to face. I can look over the lapse of a few years, when you and I shall stand face to face before God's bar. "Watchman, Watchman," asks a voice, "did you warn them? Did you warn them?" Will any of you then say I did not? No, even the most abandoned of you will, at that day, say, "We laughed, we scoffed at it, we cared not for it, but, O Lord, we are obliged to speak the truth. The man was in earnest about it. He told us of our doom and he is clear." Will you say so? I know you will!

But yet this one more remark—to be cast out of Heaven is an awful thing. Some of you have parents there. You have dear friends there. They grasped your hands in death and said, "Farewell, until we meet again." But if you never see the Kingdom of God, you can never see them again! "My mother," says one, "sleeps in the graveyard. I often go to the tomb and put some flowers upon it, in remembrance of her who nursed me. But must I never see her again?" No, never again! No, never, unless you are born-again! Mothers, you have had infants that have gone to Heaven. You would like to see your family all around the Throne of God—but you will never see your children again unless you are born-again! Will you bid adieu this day to the immortal? Will you say farewell this hour to your glorified friends in Paradise? You must say so, or else be converted! You must fly to Christ and trust in Him and His Spirit must renew you, or else you must look up to Heaven and say, "Choir of the blessed, I shall never hear you sing! Parents of my youth, guardians of my infancy, I love you but between you and myself there is a great gulf fixed. I am cast away and you are saved."

Oh, I beseech you, think on these matters! And when you go away, let it not be to forget what I have said. If you are at all impressed, this morning, put not away the impression. It may be your last warning. It will be a sorrowful thing to be lost with the notes of the Gospel in your ears and to perish under the ministry of Truth. May it, by the Grace of God, never be so. Amen and Amen.

Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

THE BEGINNING OF MIRACLES WHICH JESUS DID NO. 2155

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 20, 1890,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested
forth His Glory; and His disciples believed on Him.”
John 2:11.*

AT this time I shall not consider the relation of this miracle to total abstinence. The wine which Jesus made was good wine and it was made of water—we are not likely to meet with anything of the kind in this country where the wine is seldom made from the pure juice of the grape—and where it is not known who made it, or of what it is made. What is now called wine is a very different liquid from that which our Lord Divinely produced. We use our Christian liberty to abstain from wine and we judge that our Savior would approve of our avoiding that which, in these days, makes our brother to offend. We who quit the intoxicating cup of today have our ways of viewing our Master's action in this instance and we do not find it difficult to see wisdom and holiness in it. But even if we could not so interpret what He did, we should not dare to question Him. Where others quibble, we adore.

Even this is more than I meant to have said, for my object, this morning, is far removed from this controversy. I pursue a *spiritual* theme and pray for help from on high to treat it aright. We find this miracle only in John. Neither Matthew, nor Mark, nor Luke has a word of it. How did John come to know of it? In part it was because of his being present. But the preface in reference to the mother of Jesus came to him in another way, we think. Remember our Lord's words to John from the Cross and how it is written, “From that hour that disciple took her unto his own home”? I believe that no one heard the words of Jesus to His mother but Mary herself. It was after the manner of His delicacy to utter a reproof to her when she was alone.

But when John and the honored mother conversed together, she, in all probability, reminded him of the miracle and told him of her mistake. Saints gain precious things from God's poor and tried servants—and those who entertain the widow and the fatherless shall not go without reward. If my conjecture is correct, I see the holy modesty of “the mother of Jesus”—that she narrated her own fault and did not forbid John to mention it. The Holy Spirit moved the Evangelist to chronicle not only the miracle, but the error of Mary. It was wise, for it is a conclusive argument against the notion that the mother of Jesus can intercede for us with her

Son and use authority with Him. It is evident from this narrative that our Lord would tolerate no such idea, either in her mind or in ours.

“Woman, what have I to do with you?” is a sentence which rings the death knell of any idea of our Lord’s being moved by relationships according to the flesh. With all loving respect He yet very decidedly shuts out all interference from Mary—for His kingdom was to be according to the *spirit* and not after the flesh. I delight in believing, concerning the mother of Jesus, that though she fell into a natural mistake, yet she did not for an instant persist in it. Neither did she hide it from John, but probably took care to tell it to him that no others should ever fall into similar error by thinking of her in an unfitting manner.

Let it never be forgotten that “the mother of Jesus” had a very firm and practical faith in her Son, concerning whom angels and Prophets had borne witness to her. She had seen Him in His infancy and watched Him as a Child—and it could not have been easy to believe in the Divinity of One whom you have held as an Infant to be nourished at your breast. From His marvelous birth she believed in Him and now that she receives a kind of rebuff from Him, her faith does not fail her, but she calmly turns to the servants and bids them stand ready to obey His commands, whatever they might be. She felt that He was quite certain to do the kind and necessary thing. Even from His words, “My hour is *not yet* come,” she probably gathered that His hour to work would arrive.

Her faith was accompanied with imperfection, but yet it was of the right kind. It persevered under difficulty and in the end it was triumphant, for the wine which had failed became plentiful again and that which He provided was of surpassing quality. May we have a faith which will outlive a rebuke! May we, like Mary, sing, “My spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior” and may Jesus be to us, as He was to her—a trusted and beloved One upon whom our soul has learned to wait with confidence.

With that end in view I have taken this subject for discourse. Oh, that His disciples may trust Him more and more! John said, in another place, concerning the doings of our Lord, “These are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you might have life through His name.” Truly, I can say this sermon is preached that my beloved hearers may believe on the Lord Jesus and be saved! We shall consider three things in connection with the text. First, the *significance of this beginning of miracles*. Read “signs” instead of “miracles” and you will be nearer the meaning of the original. This “beginning of miracles” was intended, like all that followed it, to be an instructive sign.

Secondly, let us observe its *specialty as a manifestation*—“And manifested forth His glory.” And then, thirdly, *its sufficiency as a confirmation of faith*—“And His disciples believed on Him.” It was calculated to establish their faith and it did so.

I. To begin with, let us think upon THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS BEGINNING OF SIGNS. May the Holy Spirit graciously assist our thoughts and warm our hearts! The first sign-wonder that Christ worked was the

turning of water into wine at the wedding at Cana of Galilee and as we may often judge of a man's course by its beginning—and the beginning is often the key of all that follows—so we may learn the whole tenor of our Lord's miracles from this one. Note, first, that this miracle *displayed His self-denial*. Our Lord had been a few days before in the wilderness and after 40 days' fasting He was hungry. It was in His power to have commanded the stones to become bread—and had He done so the beginning of signs would have been a miracle worked for His own necessities.

But such a beginning would not have been like His life-course and especially would it have been wide apart from the conclusion of His life when it was said of Him, "He saved others; Himself He cannot save." He would not make bread for Himself, but He will make wine for others. And the fact that it was wine and not bread that he made, makes the miracle all the more remarkable. He did not merely make bread for men, which is a necessity, but He even went further and made wine for them, which is a *luxury*, though He would not make even bread for Himself. You see the sharp contrast between His refusal to help Himself, even to a crust of bread, and His readiness to give to men not only what might be necessary for life, but that which was only necessary for their joy.

When the wine failed, the only danger was that the bride and bridegroom would be pained and the wedding dishonored—and this our Lord prevents. He would not allow the humble festival of two villagers to come to an untimely end when they had so kindly invited Himself and His disciples. He repaid their courtesy by His spontaneous bounty. How greatly is our Divine Lord to be admired and beloved by us! Behold His kindness! He has no selfishness about Him. We can each one cry, "He loved me and gave Himself for me." He laid down His life for men—He gave His all to others. No selfish aim ever tinctured that consecrated life of His! For Himself He reserved no measure or degree of power—for others He used that power without stint. This beginning of miracles is a display of unselfish working. Thoughtfulness for others shone in that miracle like the sun in the heavens.

Next, observe that this miracle *was marked with beneficence*. It was "the beginning of miracles" and the first is the keynote for the rest—happy are we that the first miracle is full of blessing! Moses commenced his work in Egypt with a miracle of *judgment*. He cast down a rod and it became a serpent—and he turned water into blood—but Jesus overcomes the serpent with the rod of Scripture and turns water into wine! He works no plagues but heals our sicknesses. Blessed Master—

***"Your hand no thunder bears,
No terror clothes Your brow,
No bolts to drive our guilty souls
To fiercer flames below."***

The mission of Jesus is a happy one and so it opens at a marriage feast. It is intended to bring joy and gladness to heavy hearts and so it begins with a deed of royal bounty. At the coronation of kings the conduit in Cheap-

side has run with wine and here the water pots are filled with it to the brim!

The after-miracles were all beneficent. True, He withered a fruitless fig tree, but it was a beneficent act to wither a tree which drew men out of their way by false promises of fruit and so caused bitter pangs of disappointment to hungry and fainting wayfarers. It was a good thing to teach us all a practical lesson of sincerity at so small an expense as the withering of a good-for-nothing tree. All our Lord's actions towards men are full of royal benevolence and Grace. There will be a day when the Lamb will be angry and, as a Judge, He will condemn the ungodly—but while this dispensation lasts, He is to us all mercy, love, kindness and bounty. If you, my Hearer, will come to Him, you will find that His heart will go out to you and He will freely bless you with life, rest, peace and joy. The Lord will bless you and remove the curse far from you.

This beginning of miracles was worked at a wedding to show great beneficence. Marriage was the last relic of paradise left among men and Jesus hastened to honor it with His first miracle. Marriage is His Father's ordinance, for He it was that brought Eve to Adam—and our Lord worked in harmony with the Father. He symbolically touched the very springs of manhood and gave His sanction to that ordinance whereby the race is perpetuated. Jesus comes to a marriage and gives His blessing that we may know that our family life is under His care. How much we owe to the joys of our domestic relationships! Thereby life is raised from water into wine. We have sometimes thought it was almost a proof of the Divinity of Christianity that there could be homes so happy as some of our homes have been made by the Presence of our dear Lord whom we invited to our wedding feast—and who has never gone away—but has stayed with us all these happy years! It was a miracle which, by honoring marriage, confirmed an institution fraught with happiness to our race.

But, next, it was *a miracle most compassionate*. Our Lord's miracles were worked, in each case, to meet a need. The wine had failed at the wedding feast and our Lord had come in at the time of the pinch, when the bridegroom was fearful of being made ashamed. That need was a great blessing. If there had been sufficient wine for the feast, Jesus had not worked this miracle and they had never tasted this purest and best of wine! It is a blessed need which makes room for Jesus to come in with miracles of love. It is good to run short that we may be driven to the Lord by our necessity, for He will more than supply it.

My dear Hearer, if you have no need, Christ will not come to you. But if you are in dire necessity, His hands shall be stretched out to you. If your needs stand before you like huge empty water pots, or if your soul is as full of grief as those same pots were filled with water up to the brim, Jesus can, by His sweet will, turn all the water into wine—the sighing into singing! Be glad to be very weak, that the power of God may rest upon you! As for me, I am more and more dependent upon the Lord for every particle of strength. My deacons and elders know how often on a Sunday morning, before coming into the pulpit, I have thanked God that it is so. I am glad

to be entirely dependent upon the Lord and to have such a failure as to all my natural wine of ability that there may be occasion for my Lord to come in and supply wine of strength, of another and more Divine quality.

We are likely to do our work best when we feel most our insufficiency and are driven to God for help. If we go blundering to our service, we shall fail. But if we go tremblingly as to ourselves, by confidently looking up to the Lord, we shall be more than conquerors! If we have a great need. If something essential has given out. If we are likely to be despised for failure—let us in faith expect the Lord Jesus to come for our deliverance! I gather from this miracle that our Lord looks to man's necessities and not to his possessions. He has an eye to our failures and needs—and He makes our distress the platform upon which He manifests His Glory by supplying all our needs.

Further, I cannot help noticing *how condescending was this miracle!* We are told, twice, that it was performed at Cana in Galilee. Twice is this mentioned so that we may observe it well. Our Lord did not choose the high places of Jerusalem, nor any of the notable cities of Palestine as the scene of His first miracle—He went to a quiet village in Galilee, Galilee of the Gentiles, a district much despised—and there He worked His first miracle at the city of rushes and canes, even Cana in Galilee. He worked the sign, not on a spiritual and sacred occasion, nor before ecclesiastics and scientists. Some seem to fancy that all our Lord does must be done in churches or cathedrals. No, no! This miracle was in a private house and that not at a Prayer Meeting or a Bible reading, but at the marriage of a couple of poor peasants, names unknown.

See how Jesus condescends to the common places of life and sheds a blessing upon the secular side of our existence! Those who gave that feast were people of slender means. The wine would not have been so soon exhausted if they had been very rich. It is true that seven more came to the wedding than they had expected, but still, if they had been wealthy people they would have had more than enough to satisfy seven extra guests, for Easterns kept open house for almost everybody during the marriage week. They were by no means an aristocratic party, or a set of Israel's notables. Why did not our Lord begin His miracles before the king, or the governor, or at least in the presence of the high priest and the scribes and doctors of the Law? Our Lord chose not to make His first appeal to the great and dignified.

I feel much comfort in this fact—that He comes to commonplace individuals is bliss to me! You and I may, in station and in wealth, be low down in the scale, but Jesus stoops to men of mean estate. To common spots like this Newington, on the south side of the Thames, the Lord has come to visit His people! Here, also, has He worked His transformations and many a watery life has been made rich and full through His Grace! My dear Hearer, Jesus can come to you, though you are only a laborer or a servant, or a poor tradesman, or the wife of an artisan! Our Lord loves the poor! He is a great frequenter of cottages. He stops not for grand occasions, but He makes His abode with the lowly. He is full of condescension.

This first of miracles was most munificent. He did not, at the wedding, multiply the *bread*—He dealt with a luxury and rejoiced their hearts with that which was as the pure blood of the grape. When our Lord fed the multitudes in the wilderness, He might have given them each a bit of bread to keep them from famishing. But He never does things in a beggarly, workhouse style and therefore He added fish to be a relish with their bread. Our Lord not only gives existence, but happy existence which is truly life. He does not give to men just enough for their necessity, but He gives up to the higher degree which we call enjoyment. Here He turns good wholesome water into a sweeter, richer, more nourishing beverage—perhaps we little know how truly good and sustaining that God-made drink was to those who were privileged to taste it.

Our dear Master will give to all those who are His followers a joy unspeakable and full of glory. They shall not only have enough Grace to live by so as barely to hope and serve, but they shall drink of “wines on the lees well-refined” and shall have Grace to sing with, Grace to rejoice with, Grace to fill them with assurance and cause them to overflow with delight. Our Beloved has not only brought us to the house of bread, but to the banquet of wine! We have Heaven here below. Jesus does not measure out Grace by the drop, as chemists do their medicines—He gives liberally—His vessels are filled to the brim. And the quality is as notable as the quantity—He gives the best of the best—joys, raptures and ecstasies.

O my Soul, at what a royal table do you sit! He daily loads you with benefits. *What a gracious miracle it was!* How free! How unconstrained! He did not need pressing to do it. Mary must not interfere. Stand back, good woman, for the Lord knows what need there is without your telling Him! Dear Friend, you think, perhaps, that you must pray up to a certain quantity, but the Lord is much more ready to give than you are to pray. It is not your prayer that will make Him willing to bless you, for He is willing, even now, to do for you exceeding abundantly above what you ask or even think! To obtain the supply of wine it is noteworthy that nothing was required from men but what was very simple and easy. Hasten, you obedient servants, to fetch *water*—just draw it from the well and pour it into those large water pots—that is all you have to do!

The Lord Jesus does not come to us with hard conditions and exacting terms. Dream not that to be saved you have to do or feel some great thing. As you are you may believe in Jesus to eternal life! Have faith enough to draw out at the Lord’s bidding and, to your own amazement, there will be wine where before there was only water! The Lord, by His Spirit, can come and change your heart and renew your spirit so that where only a little natural thought has been, there will be spiritual life and feeling! He will do this without pressing and persuading. Grace is free! Jesus has a tender heart towards needy sinners—the spear has laid it open—a prayer will touch it.

The first miracle was *prophetic*. At a wedding our Lord begins His signs. To a marriage feast He invites us now. At a glorious marriage supper all will end. The story of our Bible ends like all well-told tales, with—they

were married and lived happy ever afterwards—for proof read the Book of the Revelation. Our Lord will come to celebrate a wedding between Himself and His Church and all the wine they will drink at that high festival will be of His own providing and all the joy and bliss will be of His own giving! He is the sun of Heaven's day! He is the glory of the glorified! He will take care that throughout the millennial age, yes, and throughout *eternity*, the joy of His chosen shall never fail but they shall joy in God and in Himself without measure and without bound.

Our Lord began with this special miracle as if to show us that He had come here to transform and transfigure all things—to fulfill the Law and its types—putting into it substance and reality. He began with this special miracle to take man and lift him up from a fallen creature into a Heaven-born son and heir! Jesus has come to rid this planet of her mists and to array it in garments of glory and beauty. Soon shall we see new heavens and a new earth! The new Jerusalem will come down out of Heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband! Jesus has come to elevate and to fulfill—and He gives the token of this in this beginning of signs.

II. Secondly, I want you to notice in this miracle ITS SPECIALTY AS A MANIFESTATION. “This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory.” I believe that there is a very clear connection between the first chapter of this Gospel and the passage before us. John, in the first chapter, said, “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His Glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of Grace and truth.” Here you have an unveiling of that Grace and Glory. Observe that *He manifested forth His Glory*. Truly, He glorified the Father, for that was His great end and aim, but yet He manifested forth His own Glory in that very act.

Notice that it was His own Glory which was manifested. This was never said of any Prophet or saint. Moses, Samuel, David, Elijah—none of these ever manifested their own glory—indeed, they had no glory to manifest! Here is One greater than a Prophet! Here is One greater than the holiest of men! He manifested His own Glory—it could not be otherwise. I feel that I must adore my Lord Jesus while I read these words. Jesus revealed His own Glory as God and Man. During all those former years it had been veiled. He had been a Boy obedient at home, a young Man industrious as a carpenter at Nazareth—then His Glory was a spring shut up, a fountain sealed—but now it began to flow forth in the ruddy stream of this great miracle!

If you will think of it, you will see more clearly what Glory it was. He was a Man like other men and yet at will He turned water into wine! He was a Man with a mother—His mother was there as if to remind us that He was born of woman. He was a Man with a mother and yet He was so truly “God over all” that He created, by His will, an abundance of wine. He was but one among many wedding guests with His six humble followers, but yet He acted the Creator's part! He sat not arrayed in high priest's garments, nor did He wear the Pharisee's phylacteries, nor any other form

of ornament betokening ecclesiastical office or profession—yet He did greater wonders than they could attempt. He was simply a Man among men and yet He was God among men! His wish was Law in the world of matter so that water received the qualities of wine. Adore Him, Brothers and Sisters! Adore Him reverently! Bow low before Him who was a Man, a real Man and yet worked as only Jehovah Himself can work! Worship Him who counts it not robbery to be equal with God and yet is found among the guests at a lowly marriage, manifesting His Glory even there!

Observe, *He manifested His Glory by operating beyond the power of Nature.* Nature does not in an instant turn water into wine—if this is done it must be by the direct hand of the Lord. It is true there are processes by which the dewdrop enters the berry of the grape and is gradually, by secret arrangements, turned into refreshing juice. But by what power could *water* be taken from an earthen vessel and be transmuted into wine while being carried to the table? None but God Himself could do this and as Jesus did it, He therein displayed His Godhead. By doing this He showed that He had all power on earth. He can do as He wills and by His one act of creation, or transformation, He makes manifest the glory of His power.

He did this by partly operating without any instrument. When Moses sweetened the bitter water it was by a tree which the Lord showed to him. When Elisha purged the springs he threw salt into the water. We have no instrumentality here. Whenever our Lord did use visible means He took care to select such as in themselves were evidently insufficient for the purpose, if not opposed to His design as, for instance, when He healed the blind man by making clay with spittle and putting it on his eyes—a thing to blind him, rather than to open his eyes. Here, however, our Lord had no instrument whatever. He did not even speak a word and say, “Water, bluish into wine.” No, He simply willed and it was done! How divinely does He manifest His Glory in this respect!

And *He operated so easily and so majestically* that He therein reminds us of the method and way of the great God. He simply says, “Fill the water pots,” and the servants do His bidding with enthusiasm, for He is Master of all minds. “Draw out now,” He says, and in the process of bearing it to the ruler of the feast the water is turned into wine! Here is no effort, no breathing as of one gathering up his strength to perform a feat. The earth revolves, but the wheel of Nature never grinds upon its axle. God acts by His Laws in a perfectly natural and unconstrained manner. Creation and Providence abide in that majestic silence which comes of Omnipotence. All goes easily where God is. With His own will He can do all things for us and in a moment turn the waters of our grief into joy.

Our Lord manifested His Glory by *operating naturally and without display.* I really believe that if you could have worked this wonder you would have said to the ruler of the feast, “Call upon all the guests to remark that the wine has failed and I am about to create a new supply. See this huge water pot? Mark how I have it filled with water that you may know that there is no wine in it. Observe me while I work the transformation.” Then you would have spoken aloud, or you would have gone through a series of

performances. Jesus did nothing of the kind! He hates display. He will not have His kingdom come with observation. He shuns pomp, noise and ceremony. He but acts like a God whose wonders are too many to be made matters of note to Himself. It was God-like on our Lord's part to perform so great a work without appearing to be doing anything uncommon.

That He did literally perform the miracle was certified by impartial witnesses. John, or Philip, or the whole six might have said, "Master, we will fill the water pots with water." But this must not be so, lest there should be a suspicion of collusion between the Master and the disciples. The ordinary servants must fill the water pots with water. Again, the disciples would have been very pleased to bear the wine to the ruler of the feast, saying, "Here is the wine which our great and good Master has made for you." No, the servants shall bring in the wine and say nothing at all about from where it came—and the chief witness that what they bring is really wine, and wine of the best quality, shall be the master of the ceremonies—a gentleman not at all spiritually-minded, but one who has been at many such feasts and knows the custom of them and has a proverb ready to set it forth.

He was evidently a man who was a judge of the quality of wine and we may safely accept his verdict—"You have kept the best wine until now." The less spiritual the man in this case, the better the witness to the reality of the miracle! If he had been a follower of Jesus he might have been suspected of being in the swim with Him and His disciples. But you can see he is a man of another mold altogether. God's work is fact, not fiction—it appeals to *faith*, not to imagination. God does His transforming work in such a way that He will have witnesses ready to attest it. As when Christ rose from the dead there were appointed witnesses to certify it—so His first miracle is certified beyond all question as real and true by the best of witnesses.

There was a special reason for this. Oh, my beloved Hearers, if you come to Christ He will not deceive you! His blessings are not dreams! If you will come and trust in Jesus, the work He will do for you will be as real as what He did at Cana! Even the ungodly shall be obliged to see that God has made a change in you. When they see your new life, they will say, "Here is something good, the likes of which we never saw in him before." Come, I pray you, and take Christ to be your All in All and He will be, in very truth, all that you need! Trust Him with your sins and He will bring real pardon. Trust Him with your troubles—He will give you perfect rest! Trust Him with your evil nature—He will renew you! He is no pretender to deeds which He does not perform. He did by the witness of everybody at the marriage actually turn water into wine of special quality—and so He can now transform your character and make it such as Nature, when best educated, can never produce!

I say again, the specialty of this manifestation lies in the fact that it revealed the Lord Jesus, by His own Almighty power, uplifting everything He touched, transforming men, things and facts into nobler ones than they were before, or could ever have become. This is the specialty of the mani-

festation of Christ—He says, “Behold, I make all things new.” He brings forth the best last! He raises the poor from hunger to feasting! He lifts up fallen humanity into something so glorious that it stands, in His Person, near to the Throne of God! In all this Christ is revealed and His name is glorified!

III. And now, lastly, I think we have here A REASON FOR THE CONFIRMING OF FAITH. It is said, “And His disciples believed on Him.” Brothers and Sisters, notice something here. How did John know that the disciples believed on Him? Why, because he was one of them and he himself believed on Him. The best witness is that of one who has a share in the fact. When you feel a thing yourself, you have a full assurance of it. John knew that the other five disciples believed on Jesus by what they said to him, for their feelings coincided with his own. Let us see to it that we, also, share in the faith which the marvels of our Lord are designed to produce.

Note that the guests at that feast all partook of the wine but the disciples at that feast had something far better—they had an increase of faith. An increase of faith is better, far, than all the dainties of a feast. Others ate and drank but these men saw God in Christ Jesus manifesting His Glory! Our enquiry is, What was there in this miracle which would tend to *confirm* their faith? Notice that I say to *confirm* their faith. It did not *originate* their faith, but it established it. Their faith had been originated by the Word of the Lord preached by John the Baptist—they had believed in Jesus as the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world.

Secondly, they had enjoyed personal communion with Jesus, by going to Him and dwelling with Him. This had greatly strengthened their faith. And now they begin to taste of the benefit of being associated with Jesus and to see for themselves what Jesus was able to do. Thus their faith grew. His disciples believed on Him already, but this miracle confirmed their confidence. The miracle abundantly justified the disciples in implicitly believing in Jesus for it is manifest that *one miracle proves the power to work every miracle*. If Christ can turn water into wine by His will, He can do anything and everything. If Jesus has once exercised a power beyond Nature, we may readily believe that He can do it again—there is no limit to His power—He is God and with God all things are possible. Thus, the first miracle rightly confirmed their faith.

But, next, *it showed their Master’s readiness to meet unexpected difficulties*. Nobody had foreseen that the wine would fail. Jesus had not gone to the marriage, prepared and primed, as we say among men. The demand came all of a sudden and the supply came, too. The wine ran out and He was ready for the difficulty. Does not this confirm your faith? Christ is always ready for every emergency! Something may happen tomorrow that you have not thought of—Christ will be ready for the unexpected. Between here and Heaven you will meet with a great many unlikely events, but they will not be surprises to Him. He has clear foresight—when the trial comes He will provide—“In the mout of the Lord it shall be seen.”

Again, their faith was confirmed because He had showed that *He could allow nothing to fail with which He was connected*. I like to feel sure that Jesus is with me in any business, for then I know that the pleasure of the Lord will prosper in His hands. True, it was not the wedding of one of His relatives or disciples, but still it was a marriage at which He was a guest and He would not suffer it to be said that they ran short of provisions when He was there. His connection with the feast may seem to have been remote, but it was a connection—and slight connections are observed by our Lord Jesus! O my Soul, if I can but touch the hem of His garment, virtue will come from Him to me! I get into the same boat with Jesus and if I drown Jesus must drown, too, and therefore I know that I am safe! O my Heart, if I do but get the hand of Christ in my hand, or my hand in His hand, I am linked with Him and none can separate us! In that union is my life, my safety, my success—for nothing that He touches, or that touches Him, will ever fail.

He is only one of a party at a wedding, but because He is there things must go well. I think this must have encouraged the disciples much when, in later days, they began to preach. Their confidence would be that Jesus was with them and they must prevail. They were poor, unlearned men and all the scholarship of the age was arrayed against them—but they said to themselves, “We fear not, for Jesus is in this controversy and He will see it through.” Let us get Christ into our quarrel for God’s Covenant and Truth and the battle is no longer doubtful! If, in the matter of your salvation, faith brings the Savior into the business, you may rest assured of eternal life!

It showed to them, next—and this must have greatly confirmed their faith—that *He could use the poorest means*. To make wine the Lord had only water and six large water pots. Yes, but He can make better wine out of water than men can make out of grapes! Behold His vats and His wine-presses—six water pots of stone. You and I—what are we? Well, we are poor earthen vessels and a little cracked, I fear. There is little enough in us and what there is weak as water—but the Lord can bring forth from us a wine which will cheer the heart of God and man—words of faith which will please God and save man! The disciples would, in later days, know themselves to be nothing but earthen vessels and they would remember that their Lord could work miracles with them. When they saw *the majestic ease of His working*, do you not think it confirmed their faith? He did not call for angels. He did not deliver a long prayer, much less repeat a sacred incantation. He did but will it and the deed was done!

Next time they came into a difficulty, the disciples would believe that the Lord could easily enough appear for them. They would stand still and see the salvation of God! In some way or other the Lord would provide and He would do wonders without trouble to Himself. Brothers and Sisters, we shall come out at the big end of the horn, yet, for God is with us! It showed them, also, that from now on *they need never be anxious*. Will you that read your Greek Testament notice the expression here? Is it said, “His disciples believed Him”? No. Is it “Believed *in him*”? No. “Believed *on*

him”? Yes. It is so in our version, but *into* would be more correct. The Greek is, “eis”—His disciples believed *into* Him. They so believed that they seemed to submerge themselves into Jesus!

“Into him”—think what that means! John, Andrew, Nathanael and the others cast their life-long concerns upon Jesus and felt that they need never have another care! Jesus would see them through to the end. They would leave everything to Him. Mary took the matter a little into her own hands, but she erred therein—the disciples entered *into* Jesus by the open door of this confirming miracle and there they rested. Be this *your* condition—“Casting all your care on Him, for He cares for you.” They believed right *into* Jesus. It is one thing to believe *in* Him and another thing to believe Him—it is a restful thing to believe *on* Him, but it is best of all to believe right *into* Him so that your very personality is swallowed up in Christ and you feel the bliss of living, loving, lasting union with Him!

Those six men could not have produced a drop of wine for the wedding—but count their Master in with them and the seven could flood the streets with it if there had been need! Entering into partnership with Jesus, their faith rose as a morning without clouds. Now were they sure, steadfast, strong—for their weak and watery faith had gained the fullness and richness of generous wine!

I have done when I have said to any here who are undecided—see, my dear Hearer, Jesus Christ will come and visit such as you are! He is willing to go to plain men’s houses even when they have a feast going on. Ask Him to come to you just as you are. See how He is able to bless human joy! You think, perhaps, that you will go to Jesus next time you are in sorrow, but I say to you, come to Him at once, while you are in joy. You that are getting on in business, you that rejoice over a new-born child, you that are lately married, you that have passed an examination with honors—come to Jesus in your joy—and ask Him to raise your happiness to a higher degree and quality and elevate it till it touches the joy of the Lord!

Jesus is able to raise you, beloved Friend, from what you now are into something better, fuller, grander, nobler, holier and more God-like! May He do it now! Believe in Him! Believe Him! Believe on Him! Believe into Him and it shall be done! Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*John 1:35-51; 3:1-11.*
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—257, 775, 435.**

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JESUS CHRIST'S IDIOM

NO. 3053

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 15, 1907.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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"Jesus answered, Verily, verily."
John 3:5.

THIS expression, "Verily, verily," seems to me to have been the peculiar idiom of our Lord Jesus Christ. He has absolutely forbidden His people ever to take an oath. His command upon that matter is most explicit, "I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by Heaven; for it is God's Throne: nor by the earth; for it is His footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King: neither shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yes, yes; No, no: for whatever is more than these comes of evil." My text was Jesus Christ's strongest form of affirmation—when He wished to speak most emphatically, He said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you." Every prominent public speaker has his own peculiar idioms and very much of the man's character will be found in the idioms that he uses. And I may add that the attention which the man deserves may sometimes be gauged by his idioms, for as his style of speaking will reveal to you the man, you will discover how far you ought to lend him your ears. If, from his speech, you judge that he is flippant, or insincere, or that there is something sinister in his motives, or that he is aiming at the display of himself rather than at the proclamation of the truth, you may straightway say, "Then there is no particular reason why I should listen to him." But if, from the very idiomatic force of the words which he uses, you feel that the man is true, sincere and earnest, then you say, "I shall be wise to give heed to his words and to let his thoughts operate upon my own."

There are three qualities which these words reveal to us in our Savior's teaching. First, there was *clearness*—"Verily, verily." Secondly, there was *certainty*—"Verily, verily, I say this and that unto you." Thirdly, there was *solemnity*—"Verily, verily, I say unto you." We must, therefore, give to Him, in return for clearness, the desire to understand Him. In return for certainty, the conviction of the Truth of what He says and, to His solemnity, we must respond with a deep sense of the importance of His teaching and act in accordance with what He says.

I. I am to speak, first, upon Christ's idiom, "Verily, verily," as denoting to US THE CLEARNESS OF WHAT THE SAVIOR SAID.

He knew what He meant when He spoke. Some people, when they speak, do not know what they mean and, when a man does not make

you understand what he means, it generally is because he does not know the meaning of what he says. Indistinct speaking is usually the result of indistinct thinking. If men think clouds, they will preach clouds, but the Savior never spoke in that style which, at one time, was so common in our pulpits—a style imported partly from Germany and which was excessively cloudy and smoky, though it was thought by some people to be wonderfully profound and to be the very trademark of intellect! But there was not a sentence of that kind in all Christ's teaching. *He was the clearest, most straightforward and most outspoken of all speakers.* He knew what He meant to say and He meant His hearers also to know. It is true that the Jews of His day did not comprehend some of His teaching, but that was because judicial blindness had fallen upon them. The fault was not in the light, but in their bleared eyes. Turn to His teaching and see if anyone else ever spoke as simply as He did. A child can comprehend His parables. There are, in them, hidden Truths of God which are a mystery even to Christ's deeply-taught disciples, but Christ never mystified His hearers—He talked to them like a child, as He was—God's "Holy Child Jesus." He never laid aside the simplicity of childhood though He had all the dignity of fully-developed Manhood. He wore His heart upon His sleeve and spoke out what was on His mind in such plain, clear language that the poorest of the poor and the lowest of the low were eager to listen to Him.

Now, Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, *if you wish to imitate your Master, speak with the same clearness.* Say to your hearers, "Verily, verily, I have to proclaim to you, in Christ's name, this simple yet sublime Truth of God which I have myself grasped, and which I would also have you grasp." Never affect profundity among the poor and never use a theological jargon among the uneducated anywhere! If you have, in speaking, to show the Savior to your hearers, show Him in His own dress—do not cover Him up with the tawdry vestments of your gaudy language, for He will count them only as filthy rags. Tell sinners, in simple words, first about their sins and then about the Savior who can wash away their sins in His most precious blood. But go not a-hunting after novelties, for they will be of no service to perishing souls. If you are to be like Jesus, your teaching must be clear!

But next I need to say to those of you who are still unconverted, *how necessary it is that you should clearly understand this clear teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ!* There are some Truths upon which He spoke with very wonderful clearness—as for instance, concerning what sin is—how a look may be a sin and how a longing may be as much a sin as an action or a word is. Christ has also told us very clearly that sin must and will be punished. There never was anyone else so kind in heart as He was, yet He clearly taught the dreadful Truth of God that sinners shall be punished in Hell forever! There never can be any question about the Savior's view of sin as being a very evil thing and of the punishment of sin as being a very terrible thing. How very plainly, too, He speaks about the new birth! He said to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born-again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." And He was equally explicit concerning

the way of salvation. He tells us that just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness and every bitten Israelite who looked to it was healed, so He, Himself, was lifted up upon the Cross and every sinner who trusts Him is saved forever! The teachings of Christ and of His Apostles concerning sinners being saved through faith in Him are blessedly clear. The Gospels and Epistles tell us that a perfectly holy and Divine Substitute for sinners was required—and that Jesus was that Substitute and stood in the place of all His chosen people—and bore the punishment which was due for all their sins. If we are Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, all our liabilities to Infinite Justice are forever discharged, for Jesus bore all our sins in His own body on the tree—and bore them so completely away that they shall be remembered against us no more forever!

I want to ask you who have not yet believed in Jesus, whether you really understand this Truth of God of which I have been speaking. Lest there should be anyone here under a delusion upon this matter, let me say, once and for all, that *there is no salvation in any charm or ceremony invented or performed by men*. The common notion is that there is some kind of charm which operates upon a person, young or old, who is brought to a font—that some virtue or other goes through the fingers of the “priest” who sprinkles the water because at his “ordination” he received something or other, from somebody or other, who received that something or other from some other body and so on, and so on, and so on right up to the Apostles! All that is sheer superstition as base as the witchcraft for which old women were burned in the evil days of the past! [See Sermons #581, Volume 10—CHILDREN BROUGHT TO CHRIST, NOT TO THE FONT and #573, Volume 10—BAPTISMAL REGENERATION, the sermon by Mr. Spurgeon which has had a larger circulation than any other in the 3,052 published sermons to date—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] How I wish that all men, women and children could be undeceived concerning it! Then there is a notion that a piece of bread, or a drop of wine, “consecrated” and dispensed by properly-authorized persons, will, somehow or other, charm away evil from a dying person. That is another superstition not a whit better than the fetish of the pretended rainmakers of South Africa! Neither the water, nor the bread and wine can convey Divine Grace to an unbeliever! But if I am a Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, my being buried with Him in Baptism [See Sermon #1627, Volume 27, BAPTISM—A BURIAL—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] reminds me that I am saved through His death and burial—and if I, as a Believer in Christ, eat the bread and drink the wine at the Communion Table, those suggestive symbols help me, as Paul says, to “show the Lord’s death till He comes.” That is all. There is no charm in the water, or the bread, or the wine in themselves, whatever incantations any so-called “priest” may have muttered over them!

Then, *never imagine that we cannot understand what the Gospel of Christ really is*. Someone perhaps says, “Well, you see, Sir, I am not learned. I am no scholar, so I cannot understand the Gospel.” My dear Friend, there are many people who cannot understand the Gospel just because they *are* scholars! They know too much to understand it—they

have so much of what they think is knowledge that they are prejudiced against it! Knowledge may prejudice a person as much as ignorance does. What you need to know is simply this—that you are a sinner and that if you trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, He is your Savior. The result of believing in Him will be this—knowing that you are saved because God tells you that you are, you love God whom you dreaded before and, loving Him, you naturally ask, “What can I do to please Him?” So you give up your old sins and, led on by the impulse of love, which is the work of the Holy Spirit in your heart, you seek after holiness! The things that concern your soul's salvation are plain enough for a child to comprehend! If you are lost, it will not be a mystery that damns you—and if you are ever to be saved, it is the simplicity of the Gospel that will save you! The Truths of God that relate to your ruin through sin—and the only remedy for that ruin—through the Grace of God, are “as plain as a pikestaff,” as our common proverb puts it.

“Still,” says one, “I have often listened to the preaching of the Gospel, but I have failed to understand it.” Then ask the Spirit of God to guide you into it! He is waiting to instruct sincere seekers. Let me ask you whether you have ever really tried to understand the Gospel. “Well, Sir, I have heard Dr. So-and-So and Mr. So-and-So.” Yes, but perhaps they have only muddled you. Have you read the Bible itself? He who wishes to drink pure water had better go to the wellhead. He who wishes to find the Truth of God had better come to these sacred pages, for here he will find it pure and unalloyed. Have you imitated the Jews at Berea who “searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so”? There are many people who condemn the Scriptures, but no man who has read them in the right spirit ever condemns them. You may remember the story of the City Missionary who was arguing with a cobbler—a man who thought himself a very wise skeptic although he had never read the Bible. He said he never would do so, yet he knew it was a very bad book! So the missionary said to him, “I bought a pair of boots yesterday which cost me twelve and sixpence—do you think they were worth the money?” He replied, “Possibly they were, but I can't say positively without seeing them.” The missionary said, “But, if you are a cobbler and understand your business, you can certainly tell me their value without seeing them.” “Why you must consider me a fool to think that I can judge of a thing I never saw.” “Yes,” said the missionary, “I *did* think you were a fool because you have been judging and condemning the Bible which you have never studied.” So I ask you, dear Friend—Have you read the Bible? Have you studied it? If you say that you cannot comprehend it, I ask—Have you ever tried to do so? Do not plead that you cannot understand the Gospel if you have never tried to understand it! But if you humbly ask the Holy Spirit to teach you its meaning as you read it, I believe the Light of the Truth of God will soon enter your soul.

Let me ask you another question—Have you put into practice what you really *do* understand of the Scriptures? You know that you are sinful—have you confessed your sinfulness to God? You know that there is a Savior from sin and that He is to be laid hold of by faith—have you

trusted Him to save you? With the Truth of God so clear there is no need for you to perish in the dark! I read in the paper, yesterday, the notice of a reward to be given to anyone who would furnish information concerning the injury done to a certain buoy off the coast. The buoy was described as being on such-and-such a sand and, as it was 20 feet in height, it must have been injured through sheer carelessness or willful wickedness. So, if you have rightly read the Scriptures, or have heard the Gospel plainly preached, it will be impossible for you to perish by accident—you will perish willfully and your blood will be upon your own head. When Christ brings the printed Gospel before your eyes, as it were, in capital letters—if you will not read it and understand it—you must perish as a spiritual suicide, which may God forbid!

II. The time flies so quickly that I must pass on to notice, in the next place, that THE EXPRESSION, “VERILY, VERILY,” AS THE SPECIAL IDIOM OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, SIGNIFIED CERTAINTY.

He knew that what He said was true and, therefore, He said, “Verily, verily, I say unto you.” Untold mischief has been done in our country by the kind of preaching which was very common at one time, namely, for the preacher to speak as if he *did not know* what the Truth of God is and must be pardoned for intruding his opinions! If a man does not know the Truth, let him hold his tongue until he does. “I believed, therefore have I spoken,” said the Psalmist. And he alone has the right to speak who speaks that which he believes and, therefore, knows. The Lord Jesus never hesitates as to what He shall say, His language never halts! His “Verily, verily, I say unto you,” is the utterance of One who knows the Truth of God and who speaks it as One who is assured that it is the Truth of God.

On our part, there should be a suitable response to Christ's certainty. If we believe Him to be the Son of God speaking the Truth of God to us with absolute certainty, let us receive with certainty what He says to us. “But,” says one, “there are so many different opinions that I do not know which to believe.” What have you to do with men's opinions? Supposing there are 10,000 “isms” in the world—what have they to do with you? If you are lost, it will not abate the flames of Hell if you say, “There were so many isms in the world I did not know which to choose.” There was but one Truth, for Christ said, “I am the Truth.” If you had believed Him you would have been saved by Him. There are, today, many persons who raise all sorts of questions—there always have been and there always will be such persons while this dispensation lasts—but what have you to do with them? Your business is to trust the Lord Jesus Christ and leave all those questions alone!

“But,” says another, “even good men differ.” I know they do, but if you go into a watchmaker's shop, you find that even good watches and clocks differ in some respects. Yet that fact does not affect Greenwich mean time which is the standard for all the watches and clocks in the country! So, supposing that one good man sees one side of a Truth and another sees another side of it—what good man ever asks you to trust in him? You have listened to my preaching—some of you for many years—did I

ever ask you to follow my guidance except just as far as the Scriptures prove the truth of what I preach to you? With God's Word in your hand as the map of the road to Heaven, ask His Spirit to guide you and He will guide you all the way!

All that Christ teaches is certainly true and *there are some things which He tells us which are absolutely essential for us to learn.* For instance, "You must be born-again." Or this, "Except you repent, you shall all likewise perish." There is no doubt that at the Last Great Day, Christ "will judge the world in righteousness." We must all stand before His Great White Throne to receive from Him the final sentence which shall fix our eternal destiny. If you are an unbeliever, you are condemned already—and if you live and die an unbeliever, you must be driven from His Presence into a hopeless eternity. All these things are certainties. There are many fictions in the world, but these things are not fictions—neither are they trifles. And I do pray you to believe these Truths of God and to draw the right practical inferences from them.

There are also some Truths about which Christ says, "Verily, verily," which ought to be a great comfort to you. For instance, it is certainly true that if you confess your sins to Him, He will forgive you. It is certainly true that if you trust in Jesus, He will give you rest and peace, and you shall be, "accepted in the Beloved." It is certainly true that if you commit your soul into Christ's hands you shall never perish, and no one shall ever be able to pluck you out of His hands. [See Sermon #726, Volume 12—LIFE ETERNAL and #2120, Volume 35—THE SECURITY OF BELIEVERS—OR, SHEEP WHO SHALL NEVER PERISH—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] There are many blessed assurances in the Word of God upon which you may surely rely. God help you to rely upon them now!

There are other Truths in God's Word which you will find to be sure if you test and try them. I might address myself to many a man here and say to him, "Brother, did you not put Christ's Word to the test in the time of trouble, and did you not prove it to be true?" And I know that the answer would be, "Yes, that I did!" I might pick out many a humble man and woman here who have had a heavy task to bring up their children as they have done and many stern struggles with poverty and affliction, and I might say to them, "My Brother, my Sister, has not Christ been precious to you?" And I know that the answer would be, "Yes! That He has! He has fulfilled every word of promise that He ever gave us to rely upon." There is no one who can ever convict Christ of a lie—there is not a friend or a foe who can truthfully say, "He deceived me." "Verily, verily," is stamped upon every promise, every precept and every threat—and He will prove all of them to be true to the end of time and throughout eternity!

Then, *as these things are certain, let us act upon them.* O Sirs, in a short time we shall have done with preaching and hearing the Gospel! I fear that many people come to our places of worship in the same spirit in which they go to places of amusement and that the main things of which they think are—how the preacher puts his message, whether he is fluent and eloquent and whether he interests them or not. Yes, but that is not the principal matter about which we should be concerned! You and I will

soon be before the bar of God! I shall have to prove that I faithfully preached what I believed to be the Truth of God—and you will have to prove whether you accepted it and acted upon it! And I charge you all, before the living God, at whose bar you must soon stand, not to treat the Gospel as if it were mere fiction. Go not away from this building as though you had been watching a play, or listening to an organ recital which might or might not mean anything to you. There is a real Hell—will you be shut up in it forever? There is a real Heaven—will you be shut out of it forever? There is a real Savior who died upon the Cross for sinners—will you despise and reject Him? And, above all, there sits a real God in whom we live, and move, and have our being—shall we continue to forget Him, break His Laws as if we had liberty to do what we would and despise Him as if He were a man like ourselves? Oh, by the “Verily, verily,” of the Christ of God, I beseech you to lay to heart the certainty, the reality of His teachings and let them have their due weight upon your spirits! May the Spirit of God make it to be so!

III. The third point was to be that CHRIST'S “VERILY, VERILY” MEANT SOLEMNITY.

Christ was a very solemn Preacher, though He was by no means a dull Preacher. There are some speakers who confound dullness with solemnity, but Christ's discourses were always interesting. How He abounded in parables and metaphors! The children listened with pleasure to His teachings, yet how solemn it always was, and how forcibly the Master proved the solemnity of His speech by the solemnity of His life! Those nights of prayer that He spent on the lone mountainside show that His was no mock earnestness. And that life of untiring labor showed how real and intense was His zeal. And His death, as with blood-red seals proved that, “having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.” It was the same Christ who said, “Verily, verily,” who died upon the Cross, rose again and went up into Glory to make intercession for the transgressors!

The solemnity of Christ's words and work should cause us to listen to His Gospel with a corresponding seriousness and solemnity. If you are worldly and earth-bound, you will not attach that importance to the Gospel of Christ that you should. To many of you, the Truth that you need to be saved does not seem to come home with power. If I were, in the middle of a sermon, to begin to talk about the way to get money, the attention of many of you would be far more intense than it is when I am speaking about the salvation of immortal souls. If I were to discuss the price of British bonds, many ears would be at once opened to catch every syllable! Whereas when I talk of the incalculable price that Jesus paid for the redemption of the souls of men, the Truth makes no more impression upon many men's minds than oil would upon a slab of marble! Your souls, the best part of your real selves, concern you not, O you foolish sons of men! You treat your souls as if they were dirt, yet you prize the things of time and sense as if they were all that you had! You have a notion that these things concern people a long way off—people who are very wicked and do not go to any place of worship, or other people in this

congregation who are somehow more fitted than you are to receive my message! But, Sir, the Gospel is *for you*, and God is speaking by His Word and by His servant, *to you!* I wish that you would end this folly of passing on to others the Gospel that is meant for yourself.

In closing, I must just mention one or two reflections concerning the solemnity of the Gospel message. First, remember that *the Gospel concerns our never-dying souls*. Most people think a great deal about that which concerns the body. There is much talk about an operation, wisely performed by an eminent surgeon upon the poor body which must soon become food for worms. Yet little or nothing is said about the *soul* which is so vastly more precious! The soul of an emperor or the soul of a beggar is of the same value in God's sight. "Where does it take its flight when its earthly cage is broken?" Is that a question which is never asked by some of you? If so, what arrant fools you must be! O blessed Spirit of God, teach us the solemnity of the Gospel which concerns the soul which must live forever in raptures or in woe!

This Gospel also concerns the never-ending eternity. We are not going into another time-state that shall come to an end, but into that eternity which shall know no close. I can make no meaning out of Christ's words if it is not so—and He said, concerning the wicked, "These shall go away into *everlasting* punishment; but the righteous into life *eternal*." The word is the same in each case in the original. Oh, eternity, eternity, eternity, who can conceive what it is? A million millions of years would be less than a moment compared with eternity—and that sum multiplied by a million millions a million times told would be but as a drop in a bucket compared with that which is everlasting! O Sirs, as I know that I am to live forever in such a state as I shall die in, my first concern is to be ready for death that I may be ready for my eternal future! Is it not so with you also? Oh, I do implore you, trifle not with eternity and with your never-dying souls! Trifle not with the God who can cast you into Hell forever! Trifle not with Christ whose hands and feet were nailed to the accursed tree for sinners such as you! Trifle not with His precious blood for that is your only hope of redemption! Trifle not with the Holy Spirit for if He should leave you to perish, your case would be hopeless! Trifle not with your Sabbaths—you will wish to have them back again when you are near death. Trifle not with the Gospel—what would the lost in Hell not give to hear another proclamation of mercy? The devil does not trifle—he is very earnestly seeking your destruction! God, Christ and the Holy Spirit are not trifling with you—and we are not trifling with you! We long to preach the Gospel to you more earnestly, more fully and more faithfully than ever—and we pray to God to help us do so and lament when we fear that we have failed. Trifle not when everything around you seems to be in earnest and especially when the Lord Jesus Christ, speaking out of this chapter, says to you, "Verily, verily, I of the crown of thorns. I of the pierced hands and feet speak plainly, certainly and solemnly to you and bid you look unto Me that you may be saved."

I never go out of this pulpit feeling so utterly cast down as when I have been trying to deal with the consciences of the ungodly. I wish I could

grip each one of you by the hand and look you in the face, and say, "Man, Woman, are you going to die without a Savior? Oh, be not so foolish, so mad!" I would tell every young man here how, when I was myself a young man, I was led to look by faith to the Savior and I have found it a blessed thing to rest in Him ever since. And I would say to him, "Brother, come with me to the Cross of Calvary and rest in Jesus, and begin to live a holy and useful life—and you shall find yourself truly blessed among men." I cannot come round and speak personally to you all, but will you let me follow you to your bedside and, if you think of getting into bed tonight without a prayer for your soul's salvation, just imagine that you feel my hand upon your shoulder and hear me say to you, "What? No offering of a prayer to God?" I was about to say, "Stepping into your bed," but I thought that it might become your sepulcher, for you may die there! As many have done who went to bed as thoughtlessly and prayerless as you have often done. But if you trust in Jesus and then fall asleep for the last time on earth, you will wake up amid the splendors of eternal bliss!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 3:1-18.**

If we were asked to read to a dying man who did not know the Gospel, we would probably select this chapter as the most suitable one for such an occasion. And what is good for dying men is good for us all, for that is what we are—and how soon we may actually be at the gates of death, none of us can tell.

Verses 1, 2. *There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came to Jesus by night.* We do not know the names of many other Pharisees, but we do know the name of this one because God had loved him with an everlasting love and, therefore, with loving kindness did He draw him to the Savior's feet! "The same came to Jesus by night." Possibly he was too busy to come during the day. Anyway, it was better to come to Jesus late at night than not to come to Him at all! From the fact that after our Lord's death, it is said that he was the man who "at the first came to Jesus by night," I gather that he did come then partly out of timidity and partly also out of candor. He wanted to know more about Christ before he committed himself, so he came privately to see and hear for himself. It does not matter if any of you also come to Christ by night if you like. Our Savior has a night-bell to His door and He is quite willing to be the Physician of your soul—even if you ring Him up at midnight!

2. *And said unto Him, Rabbi.* He begins very respectfully, and so far, so good. But then, Judas said, "Hail, Master," and kissed Christ when he went to Gethsemane to betray Him.

2. *We know that You are a Teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that You do, except God be with him.* Dear Friends, if any of you do not know all about Christ that you wish to know, or that can be known, make use of what you do know about Him. Nicodemus had

not yet learned the truth of Christ's Deity, but he knew that He was a teacher sent from God, and that God was with Him.

3. *Jesus answered and said unto Him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man is born-again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.* [See Sermon #130, Volume 3—REGENERATION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Christ's formula, "Verily, verily, I say unto you," was a new style of speech for the Pharisees to hear, for they quoted Rabbi this, and Rabbi that—but Jesus gives Himself as His own sufficient authority, with an egoism which cannot be blamed and which no true disciple of His ever questions, for Christ is, Himself, the Truth, and whatever He says is to be humbly received by all His followers. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man is born-again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." He has no notion of what it really is. He cannot even see it, for he is blind to it until he is born-again. It is for this reason that our most lucid explanations of the Gospel are altogether lost upon unregenerate men and women. However bright a light God may make our ministry to be, bright light is of no use to blind men and they must be born-again before they can even see the Kingdom of God.

4. *Nicodemus said unto Him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born?* His questions proved that he could not see the Kingdom of God. He blundered over the letter of Christ's message. He misunderstood the metaphor that Christ used—but did Jesus therefore not give Nicodemus any further instruction? Oh, no! Listen.

5. *Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man is born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.* There must be a purifying operation upon his heart and mind, he must be spiritually washed and cleansed, and the Spirit of God must create him anew. Otherwise he cannot possibly enter into the Kingdom of God.

6. *That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.* So that the best child who was ever born, even though he were, like Saul of Tarsus, "of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews," yet even he, inasmuch as he "is born of the flesh, is flesh," and not "spirit." Everything which comes to us by our first birth can be nothing better than flesh—and what can you get out of flesh but flesh? The only "evolution" that can come of the flesh is corruption! There must be another birth if you are to get anything but flesh—"that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Fleshly things are understood by the flesh, and spiritual things must be spiritually discerned. Hence the absolute necessity of a second birth, a Spirit birth, that we may first see and then enter the spiritual Kingdom of God.

7. *Marvel not that I said unto you, You must be born-again.* This ruler of the Jews was full of astonishment at this strange Doctrine, so Christ said to Him, "Marvel not."

8. *The wind blows.* That is, the Spirit blows.

8. *Where it wills, and you hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell from where it comes, and where it goes: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit.* This is a great mystery and our Savior connected it with the most mysterious thing in the whole realm of Nature—the wind—a thing which

has never been seen and which must remain a mystery to us, at least while we are upon the earth. Christ uses this mysterious force as an emblem of the Holy Spirit and of those who are “born of the Spirit.”

9. *Nicodemus answered and said unto Him, How can these things be?* He was puzzled and perplexed, like a man in a maze. The Savior had given him something to think about—and I wish that when we preach to a congregation, or when we talk to individuals, we would not aim at dazzling them with our fine phrases, but would seek to set the Truth of God before their minds, that it might lie there to be studied, and thought of, and to be like seed which, in later days, would germinate and bring forth a harvest to God's praise and Glory! Our Savior is an example to all of us who preach and, in this instance, He shows us the wisdom of not keeping back the mysteries of the Kingdom of God! I am greatly afraid that many preachers would have begun by talking to Nicodemus of some point that was common to both Judaism and Christianity and that they would have gone on to apologize for the peculiar mysteries of Christianity, all of which would have been a waste of breath and worse than that. Do not so, my Brothers, but speak out the Truth boldly and leave the Eternal Spirit to make use of it as He pleases!

10-12. *Jesus answered and said unto Him, Are you a master of Israel, and know not these things? Verily, verily, I say unto you, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and you receive not Our witness. If I have told you earthly things, and you believe not, how shall you believe if I tell you of heavenly things?* The Savior as good as told Nicodemus that He did not come to argue or to reason with him, but to bear witness to absolute certainties of which He Himself was absolutely sure. So He said to him, “If you do not receive Our witness concerning these things, which lie on the very threshold of the Kingdom”—yet, mark you, He had been speaking about regeneration, the great mystery of the new birth—“it is of no use going on to still higher themes.” So it is evident that the Kingdom of Christ requires great faith—faith on the very threshold of it—to believe the wondrous mystery of the new birth and still greater faith as deeper Truths, the more heavenly things of the Kingdom are revealed to us.

13. *And no man has ascended up to Heaven, but He that came down from Heaven, even the Son of Man which is in Heaven.* Now Nicodemus must have been indeed puzzled! Here was a Man who had come down from Heaven, yet who had gone up to Heaven and was still there, although He was at that moment talking to Nicodemus! Without the Spirit of God to explain the mystery, he could not make heads or tails of it.

14, 15. *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.* [See Sermon #153, Volume 3—THE MYSTERIES OF THE BRONZE SERPENT—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Mark, dear Friends, the blending of the different Truths of God in this wonderful chapter! There is no keeping back the necessity of the new birth and there is no cutting down of the glorious

Doctrine of Salvation by Faith in Jesus! He puts the whole matter as broadly as it could be put.

16, 17. *For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved.* If any one of you says, "I cannot cause myself to be born-again," that is quite true. Yet listen to this message in the same chapter which speaks of the new birth—"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

18. *He that believes on Him is not condemned.* [See Sermons #361, Volume 7—NONE BUT JESUS—FIRST PART and #362, Volume 7—NONE BUT JESUS—SECOND PART—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] That is a grand Truth of God!

18. *But He that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.* His not believing is the master-sin, the surest evidence of his being, in his heart, an enemy to God. If he refuses to trust Christ, the matchless gift of the Father's love, he must be desperately set on mischief and he "is condemned already." These two Truths of the necessity of the new birth and of the fact that everyone who believes on Christ is saved, are quite consistent and in perfect harmony with each other. God grant to us the Grace to know them both by experience! Never talk about "reconciling" them, for they have never fallen out with one another!. God grant that we may find them both true in our own lives, for His dear Son's sake! Amen.

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

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EVERY MAN'S NECESSITY

NO. 1455

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

***"You must be born again."
John 3:7.***

WHEN men are perishing all around you it would be cruel to waste time in attempting to interest their minds or to amuse their fancies. We must do something more practical and give earnest heed to their pressing necessities. Is it famine which slays them? Let us feed them. Is it cold? Let us supply them with covering. Is it disease? Let us administer medicine. When the case is urgent, we confine ourselves to necessities and attend with our whole heart to that which *must* have our attention. That which *may* can wait, but that which *must* demands our immediate care.

Now, the *spiritual* needs of men are urgent and among them the most pressing is their *regeneration*—they must be born again or they are lost! Therefore, at this time we will dwell on this topic and give it our whole consideration, letting other interesting matters wait till this most weighty business is happily over. This is a *must* and we must press it upon you at once with our whole heart! Our earnest desire is for a great ingathering of souls to the garner of salvation, but in order to this they must be born again. We have had many of you hovering round about us like birds around the fowler, but you are not, as yet, taken in the Gospel net. This state of things cannot content us—we need to see you decided for Christ and truly born again.

You have long been hearers, but, alas, you remain hearers, only, and are not “doers of the Word of God.” We do not want the fault to lie with us—if you continue unsaved it shall not be because we have not preached the Gospel and kept to preaching it and preached it as a matter of life and death! Again, then, we aim at the one point, the point of absolute necessity—“You *must* be born again.” We trust that if one arrow does not reach the mark, another may. At any rate, we will continue driving at the one target—the conversion of your souls. O you who as yet have not been brought to know the Lord, may the Holy Spirit guide the arrow at this hour!

And now we will have a little simple talk about the great experience called regeneration, or the new birth, without which no man can see the kingdom of Heaven, much less enter it.

I. And we shall remark concerning it, in the first place, that the change which is worked in us by the new birth is MOST THOROUGH. “You must be *born again*.” A new birth is the most sweeping and entire process conceivable. It is, in fact, more than a change, it is a *creation*. Regeneration is a great deal more than reformation of life, or a becoming religious, for it is not, “You must be *washed*, you must be *improved*, you must be *elevated*,” but, “you must be *born*.” It is not enough that the present life, as already possessed, should be renovated; that the existing nature should receive

fresh vigor and new tone, but “you must be *born again*”—a new life must be received and no improving the present life will suffice in its place.

It is also a great deal more than any change of opinion. I am always afraid of those persons who glory in being converted from one set of religious opinions to another. The best converts to a Church are those who are brought into it from the *world*—those who migrate from other sections of Christianity are not often the most valuable acquisitions. Sometimes, like the convicts who leave their country for their country's good, they benefit their party best by leaving it and do not come to the newly adopted section of the Church as an unmixed gain. The text says not, “You must change your opinions and drink in new notions,” but, “You must have a new nature; you must be born again.” Notions may be altered again and again and yet the man may be no nearer being a child of God—but let the *nature* be changed by the Holy Spirit—and then the matter is accomplished!

This it is and nothing short of this can land a man in Heaven—he must become a new creature in Christ Jesus. The process of the new birth is so thorough that it is a great deal more than an alteration of a man's way of thinking, even upon the best of topics. A man may now think it his duty to be religious, whereas once he was debauched. He may now conceive it to be his duty to be sober, whereas before he was a drunk. He may feel it his duty, now, to be diligent, whereas before he was a sluggard. But all these put together would not amount to a new birth! We rejoice in reformation of any sort. The less sin there is in the world the better, but, for all that, the vital point will not have been reached with all the alterations of thought and even of life, of which a man is capable!

The text remains in force after all the renovations, conversions and reformations that are possible to unaided flesh and blood—and it cries with stern, unchanging voice—“You must be born again.” The person concerned may have passed through a long series of ceremonies. He may have been received with a welcome into a so-called church and from the hands of those who think themselves priests there may have distilled the aqueous imposture which is said to regenerate the soul. But there is something more needed than priests can convey, or than water can effect. Our Lord Jesus Christ meant something far other than the hocus pocus of an empty form when He said, “You must be born again.”

I say in the presence of all that have been baptized in infancy and all that have been baptized in adult age but were not Believers—you, even you, baptized *infidels*—“You must be born again!” If you have been baptized and re-baptized, but are still unbelievers and have not the Spirit of God in your souls, “you must be born again.” What does all this mean? And what is the signification of this so thorough change? Do not the words evidently mean that a *new nature* must be created in us? For a life, a nature is the production of a birth. At a birth there comes into the world a life which was not there before.

There must come into us a *new life* to which, by nature, we are perfect strangers—something far beyond that which belongs to us as we are born after the flesh—a life that was not latent in the infant, to be gradually developed in the training of the child, but a life which is altogether absent till Divine Grace implants it there. “You must be born again”—you must

be *created* again, or as the Scriptures say, "Begotten again unto a lively hope." The life within you must be as fresh a creation as was the light when God spoke it, or as was the world when God formed it out of nothing! A work of Divine power must be exercised upon you equal to that which raised the Lord Jesus from the dead and gave Him Glory!

With a new life in the matter of our ordinary birth there begins a *new experience*. To the new-born child everything is new. Every pain, every sensation of pleasure is all novel to him—he has known nothing of all this before. And though we may have attained to manhood, or even to old age when we are born again, the *spiritual* life is all a fresh experience. There are new feelings of contrition; there is a new faith; there is a new joy, a new hope—everything is new—"Old things have passed away and all things have become new." Though the man may have traversed many paths and experienced many sensations, yet the moment he is born again, he is a stranger in a strange land and he is led in a way which he knows not and in paths which he has not seen. All young souls just born to God, however old they may be as to the bodily reckoning, rejoice in the sacred novelty of the new life and they thank and bless God who has put His hands, a second time, to the work and quickened them into newness of life.

Now, as there is a new life, a new nature and a new experience, so is there to the child born and the man regenerated a *new world*. It is all new to the child—its brothers and sisters surprise it. When it is taken into the open air and sees the green fields for the first time, it marvels at them! To the little one everything is fresh. It lives in a museum; it is surrounded with wonders! Even the toys which grown-up people look upon with so much contempt are quite marvels to the little one—it is charmed with them all. A Christian, a man or woman born again, lives in a new world. It is all new to him now, as I remember to have heard a young girl say, when first she found the Savior. When she came to confess her faith in Christ she said, "Either I am altogether changed, or else the world is"—and I could not help telling her I hoped it was both—I hoped she herself was changed and that this change had produced the other, so that all things had become new.

There is a new Heaven and a new earth reserved for us, by-and-by, and even now, while we are in this world, it is no longer to us what it is to the carnal man. To the twice-born, the world is turned upside down. The things we once loved we cease to care for. Former objects of ambition we count but dross, while things that were contemptible become to us objects of supreme solicitude. The Holy Spirit having changed us, our views of all around us are entirely different. Such must be your experience, dear Hearer, or you will live as carnal men and die in your sins. You *must* experience this Divine creation, no matter who you may be—there can be no exceptions—you must know this great change or be lost!

You may have been dandled on the lap of piety; the name of Jesus may have mingled with the hush of your first lullaby; you may scarcely, at first, have heard any music but that of holy hymns; you may have been taught morality and sanctity by the example of many generations of ancestors. But, be you *who* you may, or *what* you may, you must receive a new life and you must pass through a new experience—and you must live

in a new world or be lost! You must live in the spiritual world where all is new. You must converse with God, a thing unknown to you before. You must converse with His Son to whom you have been a stranger. You must feel the power and energy of the Spirit working in you, a matter which you have never known till now, or there is no hope for you!

Note that every birth brings into operation a *new force*. A new worker is born. He is feeble as yet, but those little feet will yet be strong for running and those tiny hands will yet become dexterous at some useful craft. And so, when a soul is born to God, it feels a new power within and it becomes a new force. It is obedient to a power which it never recognized before and a power is put forth from it which it had not been able to exercise before and did not even understand. A new power has come among men when another soul is born to God—the spiritual world is stronger and the carnal world is all the weaker for the birth of another spiritual man.

I do not know how to put the matter better than this, but I think I have shown you that regeneration is a most thorough change. To be born again is no child's play. It is not enough for a man to rise under a sermon and say, "I have been impressed and touched by it and I believe I am converted." There is a vast difference between saying, "I am born again," and really undergoing the heavenly birth. It is not making a profession, or even maintaining it with credit for years which will suffice, for, alas, some have seemed almost Apostles and yet have been altogether sons of perdition! You must come to know vitally, indeed, and of a truth in your own soul what it is for the flesh to be crucified with Christ and for a new life to be implanted in you *supernaturally* as the work of the Holy Spirit, or else you cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. The work is radical, spiritual, marvelous, Divine!

II. In the second place it is MOST WONDERFUL. It is most wonderful in the sense of mystery—as to *the manner of it*. It is not easy to preach from this text and attempt to go minutely into details for, if we did so, we might venture too far. I have read treatises upon the subject which were far too destitute of delicacy and calculated to disgust rather than to impress. We do not pry and must not pry into a Divine secret. "You hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell where it comes, or where it goes; so is everyone that is born of the Spirit."

Who knows how the Holy Spirit works? That He works by means of the Word of God we know. That He blesses the Truth of God read in a book or heard from the minister—this we know—but how it is He enters into the heart; how it is He creates a spirit within us; how he begets in us the spiritual life—who can tell but God only? But then we do not need to know—it is enough for us to be assured of the fact—the manner we need not pry into. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." They know experimentally what it is to be born again, but they themselves could not explain how it is that the sacred wind blows, nor how the Spirit operates upon the human heart.

Many discussions there have been as to whether the Spirit of God, as it were, comes nakedly into contact with the nature of man, or whether He always works in and by Truth and thought, and so on. Into all this it is not necessary for us to go. We would rather admire, wonder and adore, for these are better than merely to comprehend since a man may understand

all mysteries and yet be as a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. It is a mystery as to the *supernaturalness of the operation*, for true regeneration is always *supernatural*. There is no doubt that moral persuasion does much with men; that the influence of association will often improve men's manners and habits; that great results may flow from education, especially if it is of the right kind. And that much may be developed in mankind that is admirable, honest, lovely, and of good repute.

But this is nothing to the purpose, since it is not what our Savior meant—it falls short of the new birth and is, indeed, quite another thing. The Holy Spirit, the third Person in the blessed Trinity must as much come to work upon us as God came forth to work upon this world in its creation, or else we are not born again. It is not enough that we, of ourselves and in the energy of our old nature begin to pray, repent and so on, for all that which can come of our flesh will still be flesh. In regeneration it is the Spirit who begins by infusing the life and then the new nature begins to pray and repent. That which is born of the Spirit is spirit and, therefore, the new birth must be a *spiritual* operation in order to produce that spiritual nature without which we cannot see and enter into the things of God.

This is a solemn matter for you, my Hearer, if you have been merely an attendant upon the means of Grace and a lover of the outward forms of religion. Do I mean to tell you that you must undergo a change which is beyond your own working, which all the men in this world and all the angels in Heaven could not work in you, but which God Himself must perform? I *do* mean that—I mean nothing less than that! “Am I to understand,” you say, “that almighty power must work upon me as much as in my creation?” I mean that and that it needs as much power to cause you to be born again as it did to make a world! Yes, and that the same power which raised Jesus Christ from the dead when He had slept three days in the grave is needed in all its fullness to raise you from your death of sin—and must be exerted if ever you are raised at all.

It is a wonderful thing that the Spirit of God should condescend to undertake this work and that the Lord should set Himself a second time to the work. It is surprising that when the vessel was marred upon the wheel and spoiled, instead of breaking it up and consigning it to destruction, He should put forth all His power again and fashion the clay to His own model! He stoops to make us twice born, new-created, begotten again, that we might at the last come to wear the image of Jesus, the First-Born among many Brethren. “You must be born again”—the Infinite Jehovah must deign to be, a second time, our Creator or we must hopelessly perish!

This work is wonderful because of *the grandeur of the relationship into which it introduces us*. The child that is born has a father from the very fact of its birth and we that are born from above cry, “Abba, Father,” from the very fact that we are regenerated! Adoption gives us the *rights* of children, but only regeneration gives us the *nature* of children! Because we are sons, God sends forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, whereby we cry, “Abba, Father.” If I have been born again, no matter what my station in life or position in society, God is my *Father* and it follows that Jesus Christ is my Brother—and this not merely in form and in name as

men call each other Brethren when there is no actual relationship—but there is a real relationship between us and Christ Jesus and the Divine Father, for we are made “partakers of the Divine Nature.”

We are the sons of God, and if sons of God, then are we brothers and sisters of Christ! It must be so and it follows from this that if children, then heirs, and if Christ is the heir, we are joint-heirs with Him. My Brethren, what privileges spring out of the relationship which arises from the new birth, for our Father pledges Himself for our support, for our comfort, for our education, for all that is necessary for our perfection in the day of the home-bringing when we shall see Him face to face! What can happen to a man so great as to be born again? Suppose some of the poorest of the earth who have swept the streets for a paltry pittance should suddenly be elevated by royal favor to the peerage. Or imagine that by some revolution of the wheel of Providence they should become emperors and kings—yet what of that?

The change would be extraordinary and men would wonder at it, for the passages in history which have been thought most noteworthy have been those wherein paupers have mounted from the dunghill to the throne and fishermen have cast aside their rough garments to put on the imperial purple. But these strides from nothingness to greatness are inconsiderable and trifling compared with rising from being a slave of Satan to become a son of God! To be elevated by God Himself from the darkness and degradation and bondage under which we are brought by the Fall and by actual sin, to the liberty, to the glory, to the eternal blessedness of the children of God—this surpasses all conception! This can only be ours through our being born again!

Our first birth makes us sons of Adam; our second birth makes us sons of God! Born of the flesh, we inherit corruption—we must be born of the Spirit to inherit incorruption. We come into this world heirs of sorrow because we are sons of the fallen man. Our new life comes into the new world an heir of Glory, because it is descended from the Second Man, the Lord from Heaven! Thus I have spoken upon the wonderful character of this work as well as upon the thoroughness of it.

III. Now, let us remark, in the third place, that wonderful and mysterious as the new birth must always be, it is MOST MANIFEST. The house knows when a child is born. There are mysteries surrounding its birth, but the fact is apparent enough. You shall soon hear its cry in the nursery and before long its prattle in the parlor. You shall see the joy of the parents as they clasp their offspring and the care with which they watch for its good. So in the new birth, we know not how the Spirit works, but we know that He does work and we soon see that a marvelous change has come over those whom He has made possessors of the heavenly seed, creatures of the new life! Those who know converted persons best are among the first to perceive the transforming miracle of Grace.

Do you not think that Elstow knew when John Bunyan had found the Savior? The bell-ringers knew it—there was no more Sabbath-breaking! And the few poor, godly people that used to meet at Bedford knew it, for he crept into their midst and began to ask them about the things which had become the delight of his soul. We sometimes hear of a person being born again and not knowing it—a somewhat singular matter. Yet I sup-

pose that such an event, after a fashion, very commonly happens in the Episcopalian denomination, because if persons are born again in infant baptism there are thousands in London who have undergone the change! But I am sure that they cannot be sure of it, for their own lives would not tell them so and their own emotions and feelings would not lead them to any such belief.

Regeneration is a poor business if these baptized rebels are regenerate! Why, at that rate our prisons swarm with regenerated thieves and our streets are infested with regenerated harlots! And occasionally we have regenerate murderers—all born again in their baptism, made children of God, members of Christ and inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven. The lie is sickening! The devil himself laughs at it! Of all transparent falsehoods, surely that of baptismal regeneration is the grossest! It is a marvel that men who live and walk among sane persons should ever fall into it. Ah, Sirs, where the true Heaven-given life is found, there is something to show for it!

Does a man say, "I am regenerate"? Come, then, Sir, what is the difference in you? What life do you lead? Have you a higher objective than the ordinary sons of men? Are you swayed by higher motives? Are there diviner impulses pulsing in your soul than those which stir the hearts of worldlings? "For except your righteousness exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees," the best of worldlings, "you cannot enter into the kingdom of God." If the love of Christ within does not make us better than the best of worldly men, we give no evidence of having experienced the renewing work of God the Holy Spirit! The heavenly life is very manifest—and it is all the more so from the fact that there are certain signs which always attend and attest the new birth.

Persons may be born again and yet they may not be able to see with us in certain points of doctrine, but there are some things which *all* the regenerate agree about. For first, *every soul that is born again repents of its sin*. If a man lives in his sin as he used to do, he must not pretend that he is a twice-born man, or he will mightily deceive himself. If he can look upon sin in the same light as he did before; if he can find pleasure in it, yes—if he does not unfeignedly turn from it with loathing and seek the mercy of God to blot it out—he knows nothing of what regeneration is! Again *all the regenerate have faith*. They all agree in finding the sole ground of their hope in the blood and merit of Jesus. Meet them anywhere and they will tell you they have no confidence except in the Savior's precious blood. He is all their salvation and all their desire. They rest upon this Rock, every one of them, and no matter what high professors they may be, or what lofty offices they hold in the Church, if Christ is not their one and only trust, they know not what it is to be born again!

In addition to this, all that have passed from death unto life *pray*. If it really rises from the heart, prayer is an infallible mark of the new birth. If it can be said of a man, "He does not pray," then he is still dead in his sins, the Spirit of God has not renewed his soul. I might mention some other holy signs which are invariable accompaniments of the new birth, but these three will suffice for all practical purposes. You can test yourselves, Beloved, by them. Have you repented? Have you faith towards God? Do you rejoice to draw near to God in prayer? If these things are in

you, they are marks of the new life, for they were never yet found in the spiritually dead!

Do you groan over sin? A corpse does not groan—gracious mourning over transgression is one of the surest proofs of inward spiritual life. Trust in Jesus is an equally clear sign of spiritual life, for the dead man does not know what it is to trust. And genuine prayer is equally a certain token of life received from above. A pang of penitential grief, a thought of holy trust and a yearning of inward prayer are more than all the unregenerate upon earth can compass, even though they should be doctors of divinity or cardinals of the church!

This new life, the new birth, is a very manifest thing from the power that it puts into men after it has had time to develop itself. At first converts are trembling and weak, but if they have received the new life they gather strength and there is a power in it which the Church soon rejoices in and which the devil trembles at. This power, of course, can be kept under restraint by unbelief and other follies, but it ought to have full range and should never be repressed. I often wish our Christian people were a little more natural in their expression of what they feel. If any Brother cries, "Amen" very heartily after prayer, many look at him, but in the primitive Church it was the universal custom of those who joined in prayer to say, "Amen," by way of endorsing it and making it their own. I wonder why Christian people have, to so large an extent, given up the practice? It is a most fit and proper one and ought to be restored.

I read the other day of a good Bible Christian Brother who sometimes, when his heart was merry within him with joy in the Holy Spirit, would even leap for joy as he went to the pit to work. Why should he not do so? Yet you do not like the look of it, do you? I would a good deal sooner a man should be as nimble as David before the ark than be as sleepy as some Christians are, who, if they have any joy, repress it and never let it out—they are afraid of expressing their joy for fear they should be misjudged. Let it not be so with you! If you let the new life within you have its own course, you may be thought eccentric, but in those eccentricities will lie your force! Who is he that shall cramp us and hold us in when the eternal Spirit quickens us? If God has blotted out our sins, we will praise and magnify His name! And if we have been delivered from going down into the Pit, we will tell others of it and not hold our tongues!

Even though our testimony may not be delivered in the most classical style and our telling forth of the precious Savior's love may not be all that the educated may wish it to be, yet if we should hold our peace, the stones of the street would cry out and, therefore, we must and we will speak! He that has a well within him bubbling up must let it gush forth—and he that has the new life within him will, in one form or other, become a power in the midst of his fellow men and the secret will ooze out that he is a twice-born man! I cannot linger longer. Regeneration is a thorough change and a wonderful change—but it is a *manifest* change and in some men it is especially so. Be it our aim to prove to a demonstration that we are born from above!

IV. But now, very briefly, regeneration is a MOST IMPERATIVE change. You must, you must, *you must* be born again! You may be rich or you may be poor, but "you *must* be born again." You may be intelligent, you may be

educated, you may be talented, but “you *must*, you *must* be born again.” Many things are desirable, but one thing is necessary, imperatively necessary—you must, you must, you *must* be born again!

This imperative necessity may be seen from many points of view. We cannot mention them all, but just one or two. *If you are not born again, you have no life, no spiritual life.* The first birth gave you bodily life and mental life, but it did not give you *spiritual* life—it could not do so, for that which is born of the flesh is flesh and no more. Now, you must have spiritual life or else you are dead in trespasses and sins and to all that has to do with *spiritual* blessings—to a spiritual Gospel, a spiritual salvation, a spiritual Heaven—to all these things you are dead as the corpses in their graves are dead to the business of today.

There may be great changes taking place in politics—trade may be very prosperous, or it may be depressed, but the dead man has no interest in the nation or its commerce—how can he have? So is it with you. Until you are born again, the spiritual world is shut to you and you are indifferent to it. Angels may be rejoicing and Believers may be rejoicing over saved souls, but you care nothing about it. The Lord Jesus Himself may be seeing of the travail of His soul, but it is nothing to you and it *must be* nothing to you because you are dead! Oh if our bodies could take the shape of our souls, there would be many carcasses sitting before me in these pews! Ah, strange and ghastly sight! We thank God that He conceals the spiritual from our eyes, else we might, in horror, leave the places where we sit because we should find ourselves in close companionship with the dead! What a horrible thing a dead soul must be if our spirits could now perceive it as our senses would perceive a corpse!

Let us pause here to realize striking facts in this connection. Some of you are linked in marriage with the spiritually dead. Some of you have dwelling in your house the children of your care who are dead while they live. You will sit to-night at the supper table with the spiritually dead! Regard them in that light and your hearts will, perhaps, be moved to pray more intensely for them than you have ever done. You that sit regularly in this place, I would like you to remember this fact when this house is crowded. Think, “In my pew there are sitting an unconverted man and an unconverted woman—and they are dead.” We don’t expect them to feel for themselves, but we do expect the living to feel for them. My dear Hearers who are unrenewed, do you not see that you must be born again, for unless you are so, you will remain dead to spiritual things?

Furthermore, remember that a man who is not born again *has no spiritual capacity.* We must be *receivers*, first, in the spiritual life, but the dead sinner as yet, until God quickens Him, can *receive* nothing. How often are the saints of God spiritually comforted, instructed and enriched under the preaching and hearing of the Word of God? But it is their *spiritual* nature that receives the enrichment. The unregenerate have no spiritual nature—they are carnal, sold under sin—their mental powers, as well as their bodily appetites, are enslaved. Therefore they have no power to *receive* the blessing. The gracious and ever-blessed rain of the Spirit comes, but they are not like Gideon’s fleece ready to drink it in, but like a hard stone upon which the drops may descend but cannot be saturated with the moisture, nor softened by it. Unregenerate men are broken cisterns which it is vain

to attempt to fill. Even if God's own Grace were to come to them it could not be retained, for they have not the capacity to hold it.

Only the spiritual can receive the spiritual! You must, then, be born again to have a spirit by which spiritual things are discerned and received. Do you not see that you must be born again? Once more, you must be born again because *without the Spirit of God you are not the children of God and, consequently, you have no spiritual inheritance*. The Spirit causes us to be born—that birth makes us children and our being children makes us heirs. If we are not born again we are not children, therefore we are not heirs and we are out of the heritage, for God's heritage of Glory is for the heirs of Grace and for none others. And none shall come into the eternal portion but those who are born in His house and are His true sons and daughters. Universal fatherhood, whatever that may be, brings us common mercies, but it is the *special* fatherhood which God has towards the living in Zion which brings us special blessings!

You must, then, be born again or lose all share in the Divine inheritance. No soul can ever cross the threshold of Heaven that has not received the new life. No matter how abundant its prayers, nor how multiplied its acts of religiousness, unless it has been born again, the gates of Paradise are forever fastened against it. Banished from the Presence of Jehovah's Glory, there is only one other place where it can dwell—and that must be where their worm dies not and their fire is not quenched. "You must be born again."

V. I will finish my discourse by saying that this new birth is EMINENTLY PERSONAL. "You must be born again." The idea of *proxy* is quite apart from the figure of the text. A man is born himself, *in propria persona*—no other can be born for him—so here the change which must be worked in us must be personally experienced and individually known and felt. What delusion it is to fall back upon a parent's godliness or a godfather's promises, or to imagine that the minister or the so-called priest can stand before God for us! "You"—"*you* must be born again" and if you are not, you shall never enter the Kingdom of God!

Now, I think I hear passing through the congregation at this moment the whisper of many hearts who are saying, "This is very discouraging. We like to hear, 'Only believe and you shall be saved.' We are glad to be told that, 'whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ has everlasting life.' But this distresses us, for it does not open the door as wide as we could wish." Believe me, I am very glad to tell you of the free and wide Gospel of Grace! It is joyful work for me to bring that welcome message to you and I am sure I bring it as constantly as I come upon this platform. My most frequent note is—"Look unto Christ and be saved all you ends of the earth." But at the same time, God forbid that you should be built up upon a false foundation, or that your faith and confidence should stand apart from the Truth of God as it is in Jesus. It will be found to be wood, hay and stubble if it is so.

But you say my sermon is discouraging—had you not better ask, "Is it true?" A person has been building a house and we see him piling up stones, but he has never dug out a foundation! It is certainly discouraging to him to tell him that it is not the right way to build a house, but it will be a great mercy for him to be discouraged in a work which is so foolish. It

will be a great saving to him, in the long run, if all that he has already built should come down at once and he should even now begin at the beginning once more and lay a good foundation and make sure work of it. It would be foolish to cry out, "Do not discourage him!" He *ought* to be discouraged. Yes, indeed, we would discourage all that will end in disappointment. The fact is, your efforts, your doings and your merits, all of them, at their very best, must be a failure and it is a good thing for us to tell you so.

"But what am I to do?" asks one. That, permit me to remind you, is not the best question for you to ask, for if the work of salvation were what *you* must do, surely it would be left undone! You may put the question, "What must I do to be saved?" but we will point you away from *doing* and we will tell you to *believe* in the Lord Jesus Christ, that you may be saved. If you persist in saying, "What must I *do*," we will tell you that the sooner you look away from all that you can do, the better—for the work of salvation from sin is the work of the Spirit of God in you and you must come to look to Him through Jesus Christ that He may work in you all those graces and gifts which shall adorn your future life. Faith looks to the blood of Jesus for the pardon of sin and then looks to Him for His Spirit to overcome the power of sin within the heart—nor does she look in vain—but if you look elsewhere you will search till your eyes fail you and never see your desire.

Would to God we could bring you, not only to discouragement, but to despair of yourselves! When you shall feel you are *powerless* we shall have hope of you, for then you will leave yourselves in the hands of Him who can do all things! When self's strength is gone, God's strength will come in. "Oh, but you tell me I must have Divine power working in me." We do tell you that—we can tell you nothing less—and if that power is ever at work in your soul, its first effect will be to bring you to confess this and you will fall down before the footstool of Divine Mercy and say, "Lord save me, or I perish. God be merciful to me a sinner." I do not want to rouse your activity, you unconverted people—I want to rouse you to the conviction that you are lost and I pray God the Holy Spirit may so convince you! I wish not to make you think, "we can cure ourselves," but oh that you would feel that you are diseased and that, though you have destroyed yourselves, your remedy lies in a higher hand—that you must look to Jesus, only, for healing!

To get the supernatural element into the matter is that which we would strive for and may God the Holy Spirit help us in it. We would have you look away from what is in *you* or can come *from* you and trust to what Christ *did on the Cross*, to what the gracious Father is waiting, still, to do and what the Holy Spirit is sent on purpose to work in you that you may be saved! Oh that you may begin to pray for the Divine power! May you never rest in anything short of the Divine working in your spirit. It is to this we would bring you!

Now you know all this and have known it for years, the most of you. To know it—ah, how great a privilege if not abused! How great a responsibility if the knowledge shall end here! Yet to know it, oh how sad unless you feel it! To feel that, "I must be born again," and to be wretched till I am renewed in heart is a good beginning! I pray that you may go home and feel,

“There is no pillow in this world that will suit my head till I have laid it upon the Savior’s bosom. There is no bliss that can give me solace till I have found pardon in the wounds of my Redeemer.” God grant you may sigh and pant in this way and we shall then believe that you are regenerate! May you receive the Lord Jesus and He will give you power to become the sons of God, for those who believe in Him were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God!

Then shall you know the secret of regeneration and the Lord, Himself, shall be revealed in you. Then shall you know that you are blessed of the Lord, for flesh and blood could not have revealed this unto you. May the Holy Spirit be within you evermore. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 3:1-21.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—456, 448, 461.**

**TO MY HEARERS AND READERS AT THE TABERNACLE
AND ELSEWHERE:**

BELOVED FRIENDS—By the tender kindness of God, the journey here was made without excessive fatigue and now I trust that genial weather will bring with it rapid restoration. This place has participated in the severe weather which has swept over the Continent, so that I miss, just now, the bright sunshine to which I have been formerly accustomed. Yet it is comparatively warm and so far is beneficial to an invalid. Rest is the main thing and rest I hope to find, that I may come back to you strengthened for sacred service.

It is at the request of many that I write these few lines, otherwise I should be better content to say nothing about myself. Tottering on my staff today in weakness, I hopefully look forward to the time when I shall stand among you in fullness of vigor. God grant that mental and, above all, spiritual strength may be given me for the preaching of the Word in your midst and that my long bodily affliction may assist to that end.

I trust I shall not be forgotten in your prayers when it is well with you. I hope also that the various enterprises such as the College and Orphanage will not be allowed to languish because their President is ill. Peace be to you all. Yours very heartily,

C. H. SPURGEON.

MENTONE, January, 1879

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

THE NECESSITY OF REGENERATION NO. 3121

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 3, 1908.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 29, 1874.

*“Marvel not that I said unto you, You must be born-again.”
John 3:7.*

[See Sermon #130, Volume 3—REGENERATION—
Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

WE need not wonder that there are some mysteries in our holy faith, for there are mysteries everywhere. In Nature there are ten thousand things that we cannot understand. In our own bodies there are inexplicable mysteries. He who thinks for only a little while, even of so simple a matter as to how it is that food is gradually turned into flesh, knowing how impossible it would be for us to do it by any chemical process or mechanical apparatus, will see that there is a mystery in every human life—a secret chamber into which the eyes of man cannot look. There are mysteries all around us at this very moment. If we go outside this building, we shall, like Nicodemus, observe that the wind blows. We know it blows, for we hear the sound of it, but as to from where it comes, or where it goes, we know nothing. As there are mysteries in Nature, as there are mysteries in our own bodies, as there are mysteries all around us even in the most commonplace things, it is not remarkable that there should be mysteries in the Kingdom of God!

Yet Christ, by using the metaphor of the wind, shows us that the mystery is a matter of fact and that the mystery can be turned to practical account, for though we do not understand all about the wind, yet we know when it is blowing. And though we cannot comprehend it, we can make use of it. The wind has been employed in a thousand ways in the service of man and it is not necessary that we should understand it in order to make use of it. A man may be an admirable sailor and yet know nothing about the origin of the wind. If he does but understand how to hoist, or shift, or furl his sail, he will do well enough. So is it with the mysteries of the Kingdom of God—although we cannot understand them, the practical use of them is a matter of such simplicity that we shall do well to learn what it is.

I am not going to attempt to explain the mystery of the new birth—that is altogether beyond my powers. I can only explain its results. But there is one point upon which I want to fix your attention and that is that if you are ever to be saved, you must experience this new birth. “Must is for the king,” we say, and it was the King of kings who said, “You must

be born-again.” My text belongs to the absolute necessities—this is a Truth of God that cannot be put aside! “You must be born-again.” If you are ever to enter the Kingdom of God, or even to see it—if you are ever to be reconciled to the God whom you have so greatly offended—“You must be born-again.”

But what is it to be born-again? I have already said that I cannot tell you how the Spirit of God operates upon the unregenerate, making them to be new creatures in Christ Jesus. I know that He usually operates through the Word—through the proclamation of the Truth of the Gospel. So far as we know, He works upon the mind according to the laws of mind by first illuminating the understanding. He then controls the judgment, influences the will and changes the affections. But over and above all that we can describe there is a marvelous power which He exerts which must remain among the inscrutable mysteries of this finite state, even if we can never comprehend it. By this power such a wondrous effect is produced that a man becomes a new man as much as if he had returned to his native nothingness and had been born-again in an altogether higher sphere! A new nature is created within him, although the old nature is not entirely eradicated. It will ultimately be destroyed, but it is not destroyed at first. Yet a new nature is born within the man, a nature which hates what the old nature loved, and loves what the old nature hated—a new nature which is akin to the Nature of God! That is a wonderful sentence in Peter’s second Epistle, “that by these you might be partakers of the Divine Nature.” In his first Epistle, he writes concerning “being born-again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God which lives and abides forever.” This living seed is sown within our hearts and there it begins to grow, “first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.” The new birth is the implanting of that living seed within the soul—it is the creation within us of that new, Divine, immortal life. We must have that life or we cannot see or enter the Kingdom of God.

My subject is the imperative necessity of regeneration and I want to show you, first, that *the new birth is a great necessity*. And, secondly, to ask, *have we all experienced it?*

I. First, then, I want to show you that THE NEW BIRTH IS A GREAT NECESSITY.

That it is a necessity is quite certain, *because it is Jesus Himself who says*, “You must be born-again,” and Jesus cannot err. Unless we are prepared to reject Him altogether, we must believe Him to be the Infallible Teacher sent from God. Yet He says, “You *must* be born-again,” and you may depend upon it that you *must* if you are ever to be saved. He was of a gentle, loving spirit. He never bound heavy burdens upon men’s shoulders which they were not able to bear. He was so gentle that the little children gathered around His knees and He took them up in His arms and blessed them. I am sure that if He could have said, “You can enter the Kingdom of Heaven without experiencing the new birth,” He would have said so. He said, “Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way

which leads unto life,” because He must speak the Truth of God. In other places, how blessedly has He set the gate of mercy wide open, saying, “If any man thirsts, let him come unto Me and drink.” And His last Gospel invitation is, “Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” The words of our text become all the more solemn because they drop from the lips of Him who would not exclude a single soul from everlasting happiness unless the Truth of God required Him to do so. It is the kinder, gentle, loving Christ who says, “You must be born-again,” and so shuts and bars the gate of Heaven against the admission of the unregenerate!

The necessity of regeneration is universal, for Christ addressed this message to a man who was the type of a class of persons who might be exempted from the new birth if any might. It was Nicodemus, a man who sincerely wished to know the Truth and who was truly desirous to be informed as to the way of salvation. He came to Christ, not with any traitorous design of catching Him in His speech, but keenly desirous to learn what the God-sent Teacher had to tell him. Yet Nicodemus could not enter the Kingdom of God until he was born-again, nor can the most earnest enquirer nor the keenest searcher after the Truth of God! It is an excellent thing to have an honest heart and a candid mind, but Christ says even to such men, “You must be born-again.” I delight to meet with honest-minded persons even if they are opposed to the Gospel, for I have often found that their honesty compels them to yield to the claims of the Gospel when it is faithfully set before them. Several of the first followers of Christ were plain, blunt fishermen, honest after their fashion, yet they had to be born-again—it does not matter how good a man may be, or how earnest he may be in seeking to find the Truth of God—he cannot escape from the necessity which applies to the entire human race! “You must be born-again.”

Moreover, Nicodemus was a wise man, well taught in the Scriptures. To be a Rabbi required a thorough education in the Old Testament Scriptures and doubtless Nicodemus was equal to the rest of the Sanhedrim to which he belonged. But the study of Scripture, admirable as that is, will not save the soul without the new birth. It is not merely reading about Christ, but having Christ formed in us, the hope of Glory, that will really save us. The Spirit of God has written the Scriptures in this blessed Book but that same Spirit must write those Truths in our heart, or else the Truths will, so far as salvation is concerned, be valueless to us. No amount of knowledge that you can acquire, even a doctor’s degree of divinity—no amount of skill in imparting knowledge to others, even though you should be a master in Israel—will enable you to enter Heaven without being born-again!

Moreover, in addition to being a wise man, and a naturally good man, Nicodemus was a very religious man. He was “a man of the Pharisees, a ruler of the Jews.” The Pharisees were very specially a religious sect—they pushed their observances to the extreme point and all the minutiae of external ritual were carefully attended to by them. They were great

believers in fasting, in almsgiving, and in oft-repeated prayers. They were the High Churchmen of that period, yet to the most conscientious Pharisees, Christ had to say, “You must be born-again.” The Pharisee might be particular as to the tithing of mint and anise and cummin, and the straining out of gnats from the wine that he drank, or he might abstain from it altogether—but all this availed him nothing unless he was born-again! Regeneration is the universal necessity of the entire human family. This text would suit a congregation of kings and princes, peers of the realm and bishops, quite as well as a congregation of vegetable sellers, drunks, harlots and convicts. To all of woman born, this necessity comes without a single exception—“You must be born-again.”

This necessity is evident if we consult the authority of Scripture. Consider its testimony conceiving what man is by nature. The Word of God never flatters us. It tells us that “there is none righteous, no, not one; there is none that understands, there is none that seeks after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that does good, no, not one.” “The whole head is sick and the whole heart faint. From the soles of the feet even unto the head there is no soundness in it, but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores.” “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.” Now, if this is your ruined condition, “you must be born-again” if you are ever to enter the Kingdom of God. Mending you, patching you up, revising you, reforming you will be of no avail—you must be new-created, nothing less than that will suffice for you—

***“Not all the outward forms on earth,
Nor rites that God has given,
Nor will of man, nor blood, nor birth,
Can raise a soul to Heaven.
The Sovereign Will of God alone
Creates us heirs of Grace—
Born in the image of His Son,
A new peculiar race.”***

Remember also what even the Gospel requires of men. Men can hear the Gospel, for they have ears, but they cannot understand it until the Spirit of God opens their minds and hearts to receive it. Unto this day it happens unto men as unto the generation in Christ’s day that though they have ears, they hear not, and though we speak unto them, they do not perceive, for how shall the fleshly man receive spiritual things? The unregenerate heart can no more understand the Gospel than a horse can understand astronomy—it is altogether beyond the comprehension of the carnal man! When we use a simple metaphor, he takes it as literally, as Nicodemus did when the Lord said to him, “Except a man is born-again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God,” and he foolishly asked, “Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” When Christ talked to the woman at the well of Sychar about the living water, she said at once, “Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come here to draw.” And, today, when Christ says concerning the bread at the

communion, "Take, eat, this is My body," the carnally-minded say that the bread is turned into flesh, not having the spiritual discernment to be able to comprehend even the simplest metaphors which the Lord Jesus Christ is pleased to use! Spiritual things must be *spiritually* discerned and, therefore, the carnal mind cannot discern them!

The Graces which appear at the very dawn of the Gospel in the heart are wholly above the reach of man. The Gospel says, "Repent." The unregenerate man loves his sins and will not repent of them. He presses them to his bosom and until his nature is changed, he will never look upon them with abhorrence and sorrow. The Gospel says, "Believe; cast away all confidence in your own merits and believe in Jesus." But the carnal mind is proud and it says, "Why should I believe and be saved by the works of another? I want to do something myself that I may have some of the credit for it, either by good feelings, or good prayers, or good works of some kind." Repentance and faith are distasteful to the unregenerate—they would sooner repeat a thousand formal prayers than shed a solitary tear of true repentance! They would sooner work their way to Heaven even if they had to pass through Hell itself to get there, than come and simply receive salvation for nothing as the gift of God by Jesus Christ. Brothers and Sisters we must be born-again because the Truth of the Gospel cannot be understood and the commands of the Gospel cannot be obeyed except where the Spirit of God works regeneration in the heart!

As for *the privileges of the Gospel*, such as communion with Christ, what does the unregenerate man care about that? Access to God, acceptance in the Beloved, adoption into the family of God—he knows nothing about these things and does not want to know about them. Give him prosperity in his business and happiness in his household, and he is perfectly satisfied without the treasures of the Covenant of Grace, or a saving interest in the Lord Jesus Christ. You may call him to the Gospel feast, but he will not come, for he sees nothing to come for. You may invite him, as you ought to do, but he will say, "I must go to my farm to try my new yoke of oxen" or, "I must go to my newly-wedded wife, so I pray you have me excused." He will do anything rather than come to the banquet which eternal love has spread because, until he is regenerated, he cannot appreciate the privileges which the Gospel presents to him.

And, Brothers and Sisters, "you must be born-again," *because it is impossible for you to ever enter Heaven unregenerate*. On earth you cannot have peace with God without the new birth. God will never be reconciled to the flesh. It is a filthy thing which must be put away. The old nature must be dead and buried. The ordinance of Believers' Baptism is meant to teach us that great Truth of God. It is not the putting away of the filth of the flesh that was done by circumcision, but in the New Covenant it is the burial of the flesh altogether! It must be reckoned to be dead and buried with Christ and so be put right away once and for all. Oh, that the Holy Spirit would work this with each one of us! "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God." And that which, in our mental

nature, is called the flesh cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. It must die and be utterly put away as a corrupt thing! We can only enter Heaven through the possession of the heavenly life by virtue of having been made new creatures in Christ Jesus. Do you, dear Friends, know experimentally what this mean?

I have to make this further observation, that *this necessity is not to be escaped*. You may do what you will, my dear Hearer, and I trust you will be in real earnest in seeking the salvation of your soul, but when you have done your best and your utmost, you must be born-again! Were you from this time to give yourself diligently to searching the Scriptures, you must be born-again. Did you ever notice the very strong light in which Christ put that matter of searching the Scriptures? Read aright, the text says, "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me: but you will not come unto Me that you might have life." Many a Bible-reader is content with his Bible-reading but never comes to Christ! Yet Bible-searching alone will not suffice for salvation, "You must be born-again." If you were to become, from this time, regular in private devotion and constant in attendance upon public ordinances, this declaration would still stand, "You must be born-again." If you are to be saved, you must have a new heart and a right spirit and these you cannot get for yourself. A tree may shoot out a new branch, but it cannot change its nature. "You must be born-again, born from above," so our Savior tells us. There must be worked in you a work which is impossible to you, a work which only God, the Holy Spirit, Himself, can perform, or else you cannot see the face of God with acceptance.

Yes, and in addition to anything that you can do, ministers may do all that they can do for you, but they cannot take you to Heaven, nor make you God's child—you must be born-again. I thank God for any revival that produces any genuine results but just because I rejoice in revivals of the right kind, I tremble as I think of many of the supposed converts who are only converted to self-conceit and other delusions—and not to real faith in Jesus Christ. I charge you, by the living God, everyone of you, not to trust to mere excitement, or fancy as a ground of salvation! You must be made new creatures in Christ Jesus—your very nature must be changed—the whole bent, current and tenor of your life must be altered and that not by human arguments and persuasions, but by the Holy Spirit's power, or else into God's Kingdom you cannot come! All the praying parents, praying preachers, praying ministers and revivalists in the world cannot save a single soul! It must be born-again and when it is born-again, they do not work the miracle—God may bless their teaching, but the Holy Spirit must have all the praise for it—for He alone works this wondrous change!

Let me also say to you that *there is nothing in the world that can stand in the place of your being born-again—*

***"Could your zeal no respite know,
Could your tears forever flow,"***

this text would still remain true, “You must be born-again.” There it stands in front of the gate of Heaven and to every one of you the question is put, “Can you produce the evidences and tokens of the new birth?” If you can, you may enter. But if you cannot, you can in no wise enter the Kingdom of Heaven. This necessity is most pressing upon you all. I feel as if I could stand over some of you and weep as I say to you, “You must be born-again.” I have told you again and again about judgment to come, but it does not affect you. I have preached to you about Christ’s life, death and Resurrection, but it does not move you. In a short time you will be upon your dying beds and no one will be able to help you, then, unless you are born-again! In a little while you will be in eternity—and unless you are born-again, you will be driven from the Presence of God forever into the outer darkness where there will be weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth! O Sirs, “You must be born-again” or you will be damned! “You must be born-again” or you can never stand among the white-robed throngs that hymn the praises of Jesus! By the love we bear to you, we declare that you must be born-again! A mother’s tears, a father’s prayers, a minister’s entreaties all seem to cry to God, “Lord, our children, our hearers must be born-again. Oh, work this great miracle for Your love and mercy’s sake!” I should weary you if I kept on harping upon this string, but I do want to get this Truth of God right into your souls. It does not much matter whether you remember what I say or what any other preacher says, for we may err, but our text does not err, it is the Infallible Truth of God— write it in capital letters—YOU MUST BE BORN-AGAIN!

II. Now, secondly, I want very briefly to answer this question, HAVE WE EXPERIENCED THIS NEW BIRTH?

Perhaps somebody says, “Well, I was born-again by baptism. I am told that in my baptism, I was made ‘a member of Christ, a child of God and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven.’” Yes, you were told that, but I will ask you one question, *were* you really made all that by your so-called baptism? I was sprinkled when I was a child, but I know that I was not thereby made a member of Christ, a child of God and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven! I know that nothing of the kind took place in *me*, but that, as soon as I could, I went into sin and continued in it. I was not born-again, I am sure, till I was about 15 years of age, when the Lord brought salvation so my soul through the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit and so I was enabled so trust in Jesus as my Savior. You say that your prayer book teaches you that you were born-again in baptism but again I ask you, “Were you?” Have you lived like one who has been born-again? Have you loved Divine things? Have you really been a child of God? Have you really hated sin and put your trust in Christ? If you have, I am not going to deny facts. But when I see myriads of persons who were said to have been born-again in baptism, turn out as bad as drunkards, swearers, adulterers and even murderers who have *not* been sprinkled, I really cannot put any confidence in such a “baptism” as that! The fact is, baptismal regeneration [See Sermon #573, Volume 10—BAPTISMAL

REGENERATION—the Sermon which has had the largest circulation of any in the whole of Mr. Spurgeon’s discourses!—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>] is a lie, a wicked invention of Popery, without the slightest warrant in the Word of God! Not one has ever been born-again in baptism, nor ever can be! Regeneration, in the Scriptures, is always put side by side with faith, as anybody can see who will read the Scripture without prejudice, seeking to know the Truth of God that is there revealed. There is nothing in so called sacraments upon which a soul can rest for salvation. If you have been baptized and even if you have been immersed—which is the only true Baptism—unless the Spirit of God has regenerated you, “You must be born-again, born from above.”

Someone asks, “How am I to know whether I have been born-again?” Well, *one of the first evidences of regeneration is faith in Jesus Christ*, for wherever there is a sincere trust in Jesus Christ, the new birth must have been experienced. This belief was described by Christ as “the work of God.” When He was asked, “What shall we do that we might work the works of God,” He answered, “This is the work of God, that you believe on Him whom He has sent.” To Nicodemus, Jesus said, “He that believes on Him is not condemned.” To the Jews who sought to kill Him, He said, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that hears My word, and believes on Him that sent Me, has everlasting life.” So that faith is the evidence of the possession of that new life which shall last forever—that life which is imparted in regeneration.

Another evidence of the new birth is *repentance*. Sorrow for sin is one of the sure signs of the new Nature. The new-born Christian hates the sins he loved before and continues to hate them. And the longer he lives, the more he mourns that he ever committed them. His loathing of sin grows with his growth in Divine Grace and sin is never so hateful to a man as when he is most fully sanctified. The nearer we get to Heaven the more ashamed we shall be of ever having been guilty before God.

Sincere prayer is another sure evidence of regeneration. What was said to Ananias concerning Saul of Tarsus, as a proof that he was “a chosen vessel” unto the Lord? “Behold, he prays.” It was not in a Prayer Meeting that he was praying, but all by himself—and the man who is in the habit of communing with God in secret prayer is a living man, for prayer is the vital breath of the soul. One of the signs that a new-born child is living is a cry—when a man cries to God out of his very soul, you know that he is a living child of the living God.

You may also know whether you are born-again by asking yourself another question—*Do you feel a new life within you which you never had before?* “Well,” says one, “I never experienced any change that I know of. I always was good.” Then I am afraid you have formed a wrong estimate of yourself and that you never were what you call, “good.” “Well,” says the self-righteous man, “I really do not think there was any necessity for any such change as you have been speaking of.” Ah, but it is not a question of what *you* think—what says the text? “You *must* be born-again.” “But,” say others, “we had godly parents. We had an excellent example set before us. We were taken, when we were little children, to hear the Word

of God and we have been regular attendants upon the ministry all our days.” All that does not alter the fact, “you must be born-again,” or else all these privileges will only increase your responsibility! Jesus still says to you, “Except you are converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.” “Repent and be baptized, everyone of you,” was the answer of the Apostle Peter to those who asked what they must do to so saved. Repentance is necessary in every case—there must be this radical change which shall make you loathe what you once loved and love what you once loathed. I dare not diminish one jot or tittle of the absolute necessity of the case, for I have to answer at the judgment bar of God for what I tell you. If I should flatter you into some vain hope for which there is no solid foundation, you might at the last turn round upon me and say, “You deceived us into the belief that we were saved when we were not!” I will not do that and, therefore, I say to you “You must be born-again.”

Do you, then, feel this new life within you? Have you desires that you never used to have? Have you hopes you never had before? Have you fears you never had before? In fact, have you got into a new world where old things have passed away and all things have become new? Do you feel like that woman who said, “Either the world is altogether changed, or else I am”? And is this the result of the change that has taken place in you—you now love God, you now seek to please Him, spiritual things are now realities to you, now the blood of Jesus is your only trust—you now desire to be made holy, even as God is holy? If there is such a new life as that in you, however feeble it may be, though it is only like the life of a new-born child, you are born-again and you may rejoice in that blessed fact!

“Ah,” somebody says, “I fear that this kind of preaching will be very discouraging to a great many people.” Well, how will it discourage them? “It will discourage them from trying to save themselves.” That is the very thing that I want to do! I would like not only to discourage them from attempting that impossible task, but to cast them into despair concerning it! When a man utterly despairs of being able to save himself, it is *then* that he cries to God to save him—so I believe that we cannot do a man a better turn than to discourage him from ever resting upon anything that he can do towards saving himself!

“Well,” says another, “but it is apt to make sinners look within.” It is? Have I ever said a word about sinners looking within? I have not said that you are to make yourselves to be born-again, but I have said that “you must be born-again” by the effectual working of the Holy Spirit. Surely that does not make sinners look within! It makes them look above to Someone infinitely higher than themselves. The fact is, dear Friends, that the preaching of the necessity of the new birth must be continued because it is true. It is in the Word of God and, as it is there, it is there for a definite purpose and it ought not to be put into the background, or must not be so treated. I believe that wherever there is the work of Grace in the soul, preaching the necessity of the new birth deepens that work. I

know that a great many profess to come to Christ and I hope that they really do come to Him, although they have never felt what some of us experienced when we were under conviction of sin. Well, if they have come to Christ, it is all right and I am glad. But I am still a believer in the old-fashioned type of conversion and I do not think there are many new births without pangs, or that many souls come to Christ without alarms of conscience and much sorrow of heart on account of sin. When I was converted, sinners used to come to Christ in this way. They looked by faith at Him whom they had pierced by their sins and mourned for Him as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. I think I have seldom seen a conversion turn out well that had not the foundations of it laid in some measure of abhorrence of sin, loathing of self and utter despair of any salvation except by the Sovereign Grace of God. Remember, Brothers and Sisters, that “that which is born of the flesh is flesh” and nothing better, and—“all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower thereof falls away.” It is only “the word of the Lord” and the work of the Lord that shall endure forever! Therefore I pray that if there is any work in you at all, it may be God’s work and not my work, or the work of any earnest man striving to stir you up, but the real work of God the Holy Spirit from first to last.

If I were in a state of anxiety about my soul and heard such a sermon as this, it would make me feel, “Oh, how dependent I am upon the Spirit of God!” It would compel me to breathe from my inmost soul this prayer, “O Lord, save me!” I think that it would drive me, in despair of doing anything to save myself, to cast myself into the Savior’s arms that He might give me of that Spirit by which I should be born-again. And remember that the moment a sinner does that, he is born-again! As soon as ever he casts himself upon Christ, he has passed from death unto life and the miracle of regeneration has been worked in him!

I think, dear Friends, that when we solemnly preach the necessity of regeneration, it has the good effect of overthrowing all that which is false in men and most, if not all of that which comes of humanity, is false. You may grow mushrooms out of almost any filthiness you choose to put down, but the Rose of Sharon needs a different soil from that! You can easily grow men and women who say they are Christians and who are very earnest for a month or two, and then go back to the world again. It is the Holy Spirit alone who creates that life which is everlasting! In the case of those who are mere professors, a very little reproof has the effect of making them go away because they are offended, but it is not so with the true possessors of Divine Grace. That which is of our heavenly Father’s planting will never be rooted up, but it will endure all tests that may so applied to it. I know that when I went to see the minister about making a profession of my faith in Christ, I hoped that he would test me, and try me, and probe me, for I wanted him to find me out if I was a hypocrite or self-deceived—and I think that every genuine convert feels very much as I did. We do not want to have any superficial work. We do not want the work to be slurred, we want it to be done thoroughly so that

it will last throughout eternity! I do not want to have any peace except it is real peace through the precious blood of Jesus. To cry, "Peace, peace" where there is no peace, is a terrible thing which will be sure to end in overwhelming despair, or else in fatal presumption which is still worse.

I am sure that the preaching of the necessity of regeneration is one of the most effectual ways to injure Satan's cause, for nothing else will avail for the conversion of a big sinner, a ringleader in the devil's army. John Bunyan once said a very strange thing. He said that he had great hopes concerning the generation following his own because the young people in his time were so very wicked. He thought that if they were saved—and he expected that many of them would be—such great sinners as they had been would make great saints. He knew what he had, himself, been, and what the Grace of God had made of him—and that gave him hopes for others. It was an odd way of putting it, but he was right. And if the Lord should take some big sinner here and transform him or her into a saint, what a grand alteration it would make in their homes! Perhaps it would affect a whole parish! I have known some leaders in sin whose conversion has really had a wonderful influence over the whole countryside where they lived—those who used to be drinking and sporting with them have said to one another, "Have you heard what has come to old Tom?" "No, what's up with him?" "Why, he says that he has been converted! I met him the other day and I said to him, 'What's the latest news?' and he said to me, 'The best news I have ever heard is that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the chief.' I can't make out what has happened to him!" Then everybody says, "There is something in that religion which has laid hold of him."

I remember well, in my first pastorate, the time when the biggest drunk in Waterbeach joined the Church. His conversion crowded the place at once! People said, "Well, if that young man's ministry has been a blessing to such an old sinner as that, there is something in it, you may depend upon it!" And they came out of curiosity to hear the Word of God. The best gamekeepers are those who used to be poachers and the best preachers to great sinners are those who were once just such as they themselves are! They know the ins and outs of a sinner's heart and they can talk from experience instead of from theory. When a man has been in the fire and has the smell of it still upon him, he is the one to warn others not to meddle with fire and by means of such sinners, saved by Grace, God shakes Satan's kingdom to its very center and translates sinners from it into the Kingdom of His dear Son! Such conversions as these, like all true conversions, can only be worked by the Holy Spirit.

I pray you all to adore the Holy Spirit, think of Him always with the profoundest reverence. Christian men and women who have been quickened by His power, invoke His might to rest upon you whenever you go about God's work, for without Him you can do nothing! Pray in the Holy Spirit, preach in the Holy Spirit and do not believe in the conversion of a single soul apart from the Spirit of God! Go and preach, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved," as fully and as freely as

you can, but remember that your preaching cannot, of itself, raise one soul out of its lost estate. This will be your comfort—that the Spirit of God will work with you and through you if you rely upon Him and depend wholly upon Him! I tell you, Sinners, all of you without exception, that if you will come to Jesus Christ and simply trust Him, you shall have salvation and shall have it at once! But my reliance upon any result of my proclamation of the Gospel is not based upon my hope that you will be so well disposed as to come, or upon my confidence that my way of putting the Truth of God will lead you to come to Christ. No! I have not a shadow of reliance, either upon you or upon myself! But I do have this confidence, that if I faithfully preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified, He will draw sinners unto Himself and I believe that He will save some out of this congregation, though I know not who they may be. You are like a heap of steel filings and ashes before me—it is no business of mine to separate you. My business is to thrust in the magnet and that will do it! You who will accept Christ as your Savior may have Him—you who will not accept Him must perish in your sin!

But if you do accept Christ, it is because the Spirit of God has led you to do so and has given you the new birth which enables you to do it! If you reject Him, on your own heads be your blood forever. This is a solemn matter. I hope that what I have said will make you think that it is so and that before you go to your beds, you will shake off the idea that this is a very small matter to be attended to whenever you like and to be trifled with as long as you please—but that, instead thereof, you will each one say, “O God, I see that You alone can save me! You can crush me, or You can save me. I have no claim upon You. If You destroy me, You will be just, yet save me, Lord, for Your dear Son’s sake!” Amen.

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

THE HEAVENLY WIND

NO. 1356

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 27, 1877,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it,
but cannot tell from where it comes, and where it goes:
so is everyone that is born of the Spirit.”
John 3:8.***

THE Holy Spirit is to be admired, not only for the great Truths of God which He teaches us in Holy Scripture, but also for the wonderful manner in which those Truths are balanced. The Word of God never gives us too much of one thing or too little of another. It never carries a doctrine to an extreme, but tempers it with its corresponding doctrine. Truth seems to run at least in two parallel lines, if not in three, and when the Holy Spirit sets before us one line He wisely points out to us the other. The truth of Divine Sovereignty is qualified by human responsibility and the teaching of abounding Grace is seasoned by a remembrance of unflinching Justice. Scripture gives us, as it were, the acid and the alkali—the rock and the oil which flows from it—the sword which cuts and the balm which heals.

As our Lord sent forth His Evangelists two and two so does He seem to send out His Truths two and two, that each may help the other for the blessing of those who hear them. Now in this most notable third of John you have two Truths of God taught as plainly as if they were written with a sunbeam and taught side by side. The one is the necessity of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and the fact that whoever believes in Him is not condemned. This is a vital doctrine, but there is a possibility of preaching it so baldly and so out of relation to the rest of God's Word that men may be led into serious error. Justification by faith is a most precious Truth of God. It is the very pith and heart of the Gospel and yet you can dwell so exclusively upon it that you cause many to forget other important practical and experimental Truths and so do them serious mischief.

Salt is good, but it is not all that a man needs to live upon, and even if people are fed on the best of dry bread and nothing else they do not thrive. Every part of Divine teaching is of practical value and must not be neglected. Therefore, the Holy Spirit, in this chapter, lays equal stress upon the necessity of the new birth or the work of the Holy Spirit and He states it quite as plainly as the other grand Truth of God. See how they blend—“You must be born again,” but, “whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.” “Except a man is born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God,” but, “He that believes on Him is not condemned.”

Two great Truths are written in letters of light over the gate of Heaven as the requisites of all who enter there—Reconciliation by the blood of Jesus Christ and Regeneration by the work of the Holy Spirit. We must not

put one of these Truths of God before the other, nor allow one to obliterate or hide the other. They are of equal importance, for they are revealed by the same Divine Spirit and are both necessary to eternal salvation. He who cares to preach either of these ought, also, diligently to teach the other, lest he be found guilty of violating that salutary precept, "What God has joined together let no man put asunder."

Avoid all neglect of faith and equally shun all undervaluing of the work of the Holy Spirit and so shall you find that narrow channel in which the way of the Truth of God lies. You must rest in Christ that you may be accepted before God, but the work of the Holy Spirit within you is absolutely necessary that you may be able to have communion with the pure and holy God. Faith gives us the rights of the children of God, but the new birth must be experienced that we may have the nature of children! Of what use would rights be if we had not the capacity to exercise them?

Now, it is of the work of the Spirit of God and of the man in whom the Spirit of God has worked, that I shall speak this morning, according to the tenor of the text. The text may be read two ways. First it may evidently refer to the Holy Spirit Himself. Do you not expect the text to run thus—"The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell from where it comes, and where it goes: so, *also*, is the Spirit of God"? Is not *that* the way in which you, naturally expect the sentence to end? Yes, and I doubt not that such was really the Savior's meaning, but frequently, according to the New Testament idiom, the Truth of God is not stated as our English modes of speech would lead us to expect.

For instance, "The kingdom of Heaven is like unto a man that sowed good seed in his ground." Now the kingdom is not like the *man*, but like the whole transaction of the parable in which the man is the principal actor. "The kingdom of Heaven is like unto a merchantman seeking goodly pearls," but the kingdom is not like the *man*, but the comparison runs into all that the man *does*. So here the Lord Jesus lays hold of one grand sphere of the Spirit's operations and puts it down, intending, however, a *wider* sense. There are certain readings of our text which would make this more clear if we could think them allowable, as, for instance, that which does not render the Greek word by, "wind," at all, but translates it "Spirit," and makes it run, "The Spirit blows where He wishes, and you hear the sound of Him." I do not adopt that reading, but there are several great authorities in its favor and this tends to show that our first head is correct.

When we have spoken upon that, we will take the language in its second sense—in reference to the regenerate man—and then we read, "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell from where it comes, and where it goes: so is every man that is born of the Spirit." He himself, like the Spirit of which he is born, is free and is mysterious in his ways, but discerned by the sound of his works and life.

I. Take the text in reference to THE HOLY SPIRIT HIMSELF. The figure is the wind and, as most of you know, the Hebrew word for, "wind," and for, "spirit," is the same. And it is interesting to note that the same is true with the Greek word, "pneuma," which signifies both, "breath," and,

“spirit,” so that the figure which the Savior used might very naturally grow out of the word which He employed. The wind is air in motion and is, of course, material. But air is apparently more *spiritual* than any of the other elements, except fire, since it is not to be grasped by the hand nor seen with the eyes.

It is certain that wind really exists, for we hear the sound of it and observe its various effects, but it is not to be touched, handled, or gazed upon. Men cannot traffic in it, or measure it in scales, or weigh it in balances. We may watch the clouds for hours as they hasten along like winged birds, but the wind which drives them is out of our sight. We observe the waves roused to fury in the tempest, but the breath which so excites them we cannot see. Therefore the word becomes all the more excellent a figure of that mighty power, the Holy Spirit, of whose existence no man ever doubts who has come under His influence, but who, nevertheless, is not to be tracked in His movements, nor to be seen as to His Divine Person. He is mysterious, incomprehensible and Divine.

The metaphor of the wind cannot fully set forth the Holy Spirit, as you know, and, consequently, many other natural figures are employed, such as fire, dew, water, light, oil and so on, in order to exhibit all the phases of His influence. But still, the wind is a most instructive metaphor, as far as it goes, and as we cannot draw forth all its teaching in one sermon, let us be content to keep as closely as we can to the text. First, the wind is a figure of the Holy Spirit in its freeness—“the wind blows where it wishes.” We speak of the wind as the very image of freedom. We say to those who would enthrall us, “go bind the winds.” As for ourselves, we claim to be “free as the winds which roam at their own will.” No one can fetter the wind.

Xerxes threw chains into the Hellespont to bind the sea, but even he was not fool enough to talk of forging fetters for the winds! The breezes are not to be dictated to. Caesar may decree what he pleases, but the wind will blow in his face if he looks that way. The Pope may command the gale to change its course, but it will blow around the Vatican neither less nor more for the “holy father” and the cardinals. A conference of plenipotentiaries from all the powers of Europe may sit for a week and resolve unanimously that the east wind shall not blow for the next six months, but it will take no heed of the arrangement and will cast dust into the counselors’ eyes and whistle at their wisdom!

No proclamation nor purpose under Heaven will be able to affect the wind by so much as half a point of the compass. It will blow according to its own sweet will, where it pleases, when it pleases, how it pleases and as it pleases, for “the wind blows where it wishes.” So is it, only in a far higher and more emphatic sense, with the Holy Spirit, for He is most free and absolute! You know that the wind is in the hands of God and that He ordains every breeze and each tornado—winds arise and tempests blow by order from the supreme Throne, but as for the Holy Spirit, He is God Himself and absolutely free. He works according to His own will and pleasure among the sons of men.

One nation has been visited by the Holy Spirit and not another—who shall tell me why? Why do the heathen lands lie in the dense darkness while on Britain, the Light of God is concentrated? Why has the Reformation taken root in England and among the northern nations of Europe, while in Spain and Italy it has left scarcely a trace? Why blows the Holy Spirit here and not there? Is it not that He does as He wills? “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion” is the declaration of the Divine Sovereignty—and the Spirit of God, in His movements, confirms it.

Among the nations where the Spirit of God is at work, how is it that He blesses one man and not another? Why is it that of two men hearing the same sermon and subject to the same influences at home, one is taken and the other left? Two children nursed at the same breast and trained by the same parents grow up to different ends? He who perishes in sin has no one to blame but himself, but he who is saved ascribes it all to Divine Grace—why came that Grace to him and not to the other? We never dare to lay the fault of man’s not repenting and believing upon God—that rests with the evil will which refused to obey the Gospel—but we dare not ascribe the *saving* difference in the case of the one who believes to any natural goodness in himself! We attribute it all to the Grace of God and believe that the Holy Spirit works in such to will and to do according to His own good pleasure.

But why works He in us? Why in *any* of the chosen? Ah, why? “The wind blows where it wishes.” So, too, is it with the blessing which rests upon ministries. One man wins souls to God and, as a joyous reaper, returns with full sheaves. But another who goes forth with strong desires and seems to be as earnest as his fellow, comes home with a scanty handful of ears which he has painfully gleaned. Why is one man’s net full of fish and another’s utterly empty? One servant of the Lord seems, whenever he stands up to preach the Gospel, to attract men to Jesus as though he had golden chains in his mouth which he did cast about men’s hearts to draw them in joyful captivity to his Lord! But another cries in bitterness of soul, “Who has believed our report?” Truly, “the wind blows where it wishes.”

Yes, and these changes happen to each man differently. One day the preacher shall be all alive, his spirit shall be stirred within him and he shall speak evidently with the Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven. But tomorrow he shall find himself dull and heavy, even to his own consciousness and even more so to his people’s experience, for the power rests not upon him. One day he speaks like the voice of God and another day he is but as a reed shaken of the wind. His fat time of years gone by are devoured by the lean cattle of the present! He has his famine as well as his plenty. You shall see him come forth today with the unction of the Lord upon him and his face shining with the Glory of fellowship with the Most High! And tomorrow he shall say, “Look not upon me, for I am evil,” for the glory shall have departed.

We know what it is to come forth like Samson when his locks were shorn and to shake ourselves as at other times and discover that the Lord

is not with us. Why all this? Is it not because “the wind blows where it wishes”? The Holy Spirit, for His own wise reasons, puts not forth an equal power upon any man at all times. We cannot control nor command the Spirit of the living God! He is, in the highest sense, a free agent. “Your Free Spirit” is a name which David gave Him and a most appropriate name it is.

Yet, Beloved, do not fall into a misapprehension. The Holy Spirit is absolutely free in His operations, but He is not arbitrary. He does as He wills, but His will is Infallible Wisdom. The wind, though we have no control over it, has a law of its own, but the Holy Spirit is a law unto Himself. He does as He wills, but He wills to do always that which is for the best. Moreover, we know, with regard to the wind, that there are certain places where you will almost always find a breeze—not here, in the teeming city, nor down in the valley shut in by the mountains, nor on yonder steaming marsh! But lift up your eyes to the hills and mark how the breeze courses along the downs and sweeps the summits of the mountain ranges!

In the morning and the evening, when the inland air is hot as an oven, gentle winds come to and from the sea and fan the fishermen’s cheeks. You may find places where the air seems always stagnant and men’s hearts grow heavy amid the feverish calm, but there are elevated hillsides where life is easy, for the air exhilarates by its perpetual freshness. Brothers and Sisters among lively saints, in the use of the means of Grace, in private prayer, in communion with the Lord, you will find the wind that blows where it wishes always in motion! The wind, too, has, at least in some lands, its times and seasons. We know that at certain times of the year we may expect winds and if they come not to a day or two, yet, as a rule, the month is stormy. And there are, also, trade winds, monsoons which blow with remarkable regularity and are counted upon by mariners.

And so with the Spirit of God. We know that at certain times He visits the Churches and under certain conditions puts forth His power. If, for instance, there is mighty prayer, you may be sure the Spirit of God is at work. If the people of God meet together and besiege the Throne of Grace with cries and tears, the spiritual barometer indicates that the blessed wind is rising. Besides, the Holy Spirit has graciously connected Himself with two things, truth and prayer. Preach the Truth of God, publish the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and it is the habit of the Holy Spirit to make the Word of God quick and powerful to the hearts of men. If we falsify His Word, if we keep back part of the Truth of God, if we become unfaithful—we cannot expect the Holy Spirit to bless us.

But if our teaching is Christ Crucified, lovingly set forth, and if the Grace of God in its fullness is really declared, the Holy Spirit will attend the Truth and make it the great power of God. I will not say that it is always and without exception so, but I think exceptions must be rare. Almost invariably the Spirit bears witness with the Truth of God in the conversion of men. So, too, with prayer. The Holy Spirit is pleased to connect Himself with that, also, if it is *believing* prayer. Here the connection is exceedingly intimate because it is the Spirit of God who Himself gives the

believing prayer and it is not only true that the Spirit will be given in answer to prayer, but the Spirit is already given or the believing prayer would never have been offered!

The spirit of prayerfulness, the spirit of anxiety for the conversion of men is one of the surest indications that the Holy Spirit is already at work in the minds of His people. Coming back, however, to the great fact that we cannot command the Holy Spirit, what influence ought that Truth of God have upon us? Should it not be just this?—It should lead us to be very tender and jealous in our conduct towards the Holy Spirit so that we do not grieve Him and cause Him to depart from us. Vex not the Spirit! When you enjoy His gracious operations be devoutly grateful and walk humbly before God that you may retain them. And when He is at work, let not negligence on your part cause you to receive the Grace of God in vain.

The wind blew, but the sailor was asleep. It was a favorable breeze but he had cast anchor and his boat moved not. If he had but known it, all through the night he would have spread his sail and have made good headway towards his port. But he slumbered and the blessed wind whistled through the cordage and the ship lay idle at its moorings! Let it not be so with us! Never suffer the Spirit of God to be with us and find us not aware of His Presence. In the olden times, when country people depended more than they do now on the use of windmills to grind their corn, some parishes would be half-starved when, week after week, there had been no wind. The miller would look up anxiously and everybody in the parish would become a watchman for his sails, hoping that they would soon be set in motion.

If the breeze stirred at the dead of night and the miller was sound asleep, somebody or other would run and wake him up. “The wind is blowing, the wind is blowing, grind our corn.” So it ought to be whenever the Spirit of God is vigorously working in His Church—we should eagerly avail ourselves of His power! We should be so anxious for His Divine operations that all should be on the watch, so that if some did not discover it, others would, and observant ones would cry, “The Holy Spirit is working with us! Let us arise and labor more abundantly.” Hoist sail when the wind is favorable! You cannot command it, therefore carefully value it.

But we must pass on. The Holy Spirit is described as being like the wind as to His manifestations. “You hear,” says Jesus, “the sound of it.” It has been suggested and some have enlarged upon it, that there are many other manifestations of the presence of wind—you can *feel* it, you can *see* its results upon the trees and the waves and sometimes you can be sure that the wind has been at work by the devastation which it has caused. But in this place our Savior was not so much alluding to a great wind as to the gentler breezes. The Greek word, “pneuma,” is translated, “breath,” and can hardly be made to mean a tempest! It was a *gentle* wind like a zephyr of which the Lord was here speaking.

The great winds, as I have already said, can be somewhat calculated upon, but if you sit in the garden in the cool of the evening it is utterly impossible for you to tell from where the zephyrs come and where they go. They are so volatile in their movements and untrackable in their course!

They are here, there, everywhere—the soft breezes of evening steal among the flowers. Our Lord tells us that such gentle zephyrs are *heard*. Nicodemus, in the stillness of the night could hear them. “You hear the sound of it.” The leaves rustle and that is all. You hear a gentle movement of branch and stem and, as it were, the tinkling of flower-bells, and so you discover that the wind is flitting among the beds and borders.

Now, Beloved, this shows us that the hearing ear is intended, by God, to be the discerner of the Spirit to men—to the most of men the *only* discerner that they have. “You hear the sound of it.” What a wonderful dignity the Lord has been pleased to put upon this little organ, the ear! The Romish Church gives the preference always to the eyes. Her priests are always for astonishing men into grace with their wonderful “performances”! But God’s way is, “Faith comes by hearing,” and the first detector of the Holy Spirit is the ear. To some men this is the only revealer of His mysterious Presence, as I have already said—they hear the sound of it, that is to say, they hear the Gospel preached—they hear the Word of God read.

Truth, when it is couched in Words of God, is the rustling of the holy wind, it is the footstep of the Eternal Spirit as He mysteriously passes along a congregation. Oh, what grief it is that some never get any further than this, but abide where Nicodemus was at the first—they hear the sound and nothing more. Some of you are now daily hearing the Truth of God which has saved thousands, but it does not save *you*! You are hearing the very Truth of God which peoples Heaven, but yet it leaves you without a hope of eternal life! Yet be you sure of this, the Kingdom of God has come near you. “You hear the sound of it,” and that wind whose whispers you hear is not far off your own cheeks. When you hear the rustling among the branches of the trees, the breezes are not far to seek, nor is the Spirit of God far away when His sound is heard.

Some hearers, however, go further, for they hear the sound of the Spirit in their consciences and it disturbs them. They would sleep as others do, but as the wind sometimes comes whistling through the keyhole or howls down the chimney and wakes the sluggard, or if the man is lying in a garden, asleep, the breezes play around his ears and face and startle him, so it is with many unconverted people! They cannot be quiet, for they hear the sound of the Holy Spirit in their consciences and are troubled and perplexed. There is a revival and they are not saved, but they are startled and alarmed by it. Their sister is converted, they are not, but still it comes very near them and they feel as if an arrow had gone whizzing by their own ear. It is hard living in a careless state in the midst of revival. “You hear the sound of it.”

But some of you, in your conscience, are hearing the sound, now, in your family circle, from the fact that one after another of your relatives have been brought to know the Lord. You cannot avoid feeling that there is something powerful abroad, though it has not yet exerted its regenerating power upon you. As for the man who is saved, he hears the Holy Spirit in the most emphatic sense and with what variety that sound comes to him! At first he heard it as a threatening wind which bowed him in sad-

ness and seemed to sweep all his hopes to the ground, as the sere leaves of the forest are carried in the autumn's wind.

When the Spirit's voice sounded in my ears at the first it was as a wail of woe, as a wind among the tombs, as a sigh among faded lilies! It seemed as if all my hopes were puffed away like smoke, or as the night mists in the morning breeze. Nothing was left for me but to mourn my nothingness. Then I heard a sound as of the hot south wind of the East, as if it issued from a burning oven. You know the text, "The grass withers and the flower thereof fades away, because the Spirit of the Lord blows upon it: surely the peoples are grass." In my soul there had bloomed a fair meadow of golden kingcups and fair flowers of many dainty colors, but the Spirit of God blew on them and withered them all and left a dry, brown, rusty plain where there was neither life nor comeliness.

So far the sacred wind destroys that which is evil, but it ends not there, for we thank God we have heard the sound of the Spirit as a quickening wind. The Prophet cried, "Come from the four winds, O Breath, and breathe upon these slain that they may live," and the Wind came and the dead arose an exceedingly great army! The same miracle has been worked on us. The sere bones of our own death have crept together, bone unto his bone, and flesh has come upon them and now, because of the Divine Breath, we have begun to live! Now, also, when the Holy Spirit visits us, He renews our life and energy and gives us life more abundantly.

The Holy Spirit has, since then, been to us full often a melting wind, "He causes His wind to blow and the waters flow." Locked up in the chains of ice all through the winter, the waters are still as a stone, but the spring winds come, the brooks find liberty and leap away to the rivers! And the rivers flow in all their free force to add their volume to the sea! So has the Spirit of God oftentimes broken up our frost and given our spirits joyous liberty. He melts the rocky heart and dissolves the iron spirit—at the sound of His goings men are moved to feeling. We know the sound of this wind, also, as a diffusive breath, drawing forth and diffusing our slumbering graces. "Awake, O north wind; and come, you south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out."

Oh, what a sweet freeing of holy gratitude, love, hope and joy has there been in our heart when the Spirit of God has visited us! As sweet essences lie hidden in the flowers and come not forth until the loving wind does entice them to fly abroad and so do sweet Graces lie within renewed spirits until the Holy Spirit comes and speaks to them! And they know His voice and come forth to meet Him and sweet fragrances are shed abroad. Yes, my Brothers and Sisters, all this we know! And we have heard the sound of the Holy Spirit in another sense, namely, as going forth with us to the battle of the Lord. We have heard that sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees which David heard and, by God's Grace, we have bestirred ourselves and victory has been ours!

If we have not heard that rushing mighty wind which came at Pentecost, yet have we felt its Divine effect, which ceases not, but still brings life, power, energy and all that is needed for the conversion of the sons of men to us who are bid to go forth and preach the Gospel among the na-

tions. In all these respects the Holy Spirit has manifested Himself, as wind does, by His sound. "You hear the sound of it." "Their sound went into all the earth and their words unto the ends of the world."

A third likeness of the Spirit to the wind is set before us in the point of mystery. "You cannot tell from where it comes nor where it goes." Of the wind we may tell that it comes from such-and-such a quarter or point, but you cannot put your finger on the map and say, "The north wind began in this region," or, "here the west wind was born." Indeed, we know very little about the winds—their origin or their laws. One of the best and most accurate observers of the wind during 30 years, recorded every wind in his regions until, at the end of the term, he abandoned the few rules which he had laid down during the first two or three years, for he found that no rule held good. No man can say from where the wind leaps forth.

The heathen dreamed of a certain cave where the winds were enclosed as in a prison and suffered to go abroad one by one—it was but a fable. We know not where the winds first spread their wings, or where they sleep when all is still. So is it with the Holy Spirit in the mind of man. His first movements are hidden in mystery. You know that you are converted, my dear Friend, and you know somewhere about the time. And you probably remember somewhat as to the means which the Lord used for your salvation. Those outward circumstances you know, but how the Holy Spirit operated upon you, you do not and cannot tell any more than you can tell how the life swells within the seed until it springs up and becomes the full corn in the ear, or how the sap in the trees first descends in the winter and afterwards climbs, again, in the spring.

There are secrets which Nature does not reveal—the work of the Spirit is even more a secret—and no man can explain it to his fellow or to himself. Why is it, my Friend, that you obtained a blessing under one sermon but not under another? And why, when you spoke to your sister, was she more blessed under the second than the first? The power does not come from the preacher, then, it is clear—and "you cannot tell from where it comes." There are times in which you feel not only that you can pray but that you *must* pray—how do you come to be in that state?

I know what it is to feel a very ecstasy of delight in the Lord, for which I can scarcely account. And, at another time, when I have been engaged in the same work and I think with the same earnestness, I have not been conscious of any such delight in God! At one time the heart will be full of penitence as if it would break because of sin. At another season it will overflow with such delight in Christ that the sin seems almost forgotten in the pardoning Sacrifice. Why these various operations? We know what it is, at times, to feel such a sense of death upon us as to be earnestly preparing for our last hours. At another time we seem to be altogether forgetful of death and to be living, as it were, the immortal life already, raised up together and made to sit together with Christ!

But how these various modes and forms and workings of the Spirit come, who among us shall tell? Go trace the dewdrops, if you can, to the womb of the morning, and discover which way the lightning flashes went, or how the thunder rolled along the mountain tops! But you cannot tell

nor can you *guess* from where comes the Spirit of God into your souls! Nor can we tell where He goes. Here, again, is another mystery. Oh, it charms me to think that when we let loose the Truth of God in the power of the Spirit we never know where it will fly! A child takes a seed, one of those little downy seeds which has its own parachute to bear it through the air. The little one blows it into the air, but who knows where that downy seed shall settle and in whose garden it shall grow?

Such is the Truth of God, even from the mouths of babes and sucklings. Whole continents have been covered with strange flowers simply by the wind blowing foreign seeds there! Mariners have discovered sunny islets out there in the Southern Sea where foot of man has never trod, yet covered with abundance of vegetation which the wind has, by degrees, blown there! Scatter the Truth of God on all sides, for you cannot tell where the Spirit will carry it! Fling it to the winds and you shall find it after many days. Scatter the living Seed with both hands—send it north, south, east, and west—and God will give it wings!—

***“Float, float you winds the Story,
And you, you waters roll,
Till like a sea of Glory
It spreads from pole to pole.”***

I had a letter but the other day when I was sorely sick. It was written by a Sister in Christ in the very heart of the empire of Brazil. She said that she had met with a copy of my, “Morning Readings,” and had found, thereby, the way of peace and, therefore, she wrote me such a loving, touching letter that, as I read it, it brought tears to my eyes. There was something more affecting yet, for at the end was written in another hand, some words to the effect that his dear wife who had written the above letter had died soon after finishing it, and with a bleeding heart the lone husband sent it on to me, rejoicing that the Word of God came to his wife’s soul in the far-off land.

Brethren, you do not know where the Word will go and the Spirit with it! In Bohemia the papists thought they had stamped out the Gospel and with cruel edicts they kept down all thought of Protestantism. But just lately, since the Toleration, the Gospel has been preached in that country and, to the surprise of everybody there, men and women have come forward from lone cottages in the woods and from different corners of the great cities of Bohemia, bringing with them ancient copies of the Word of God, themselves being eager to know the precious Truths of God for which they remember that their fathers died!

A Truth of God will go down the centuries—like the river, it sings—

***“Men may come and men may go,
But I go on forever.”***

“You can not tell where it goes,” it will travel on till the millennium! Send that saying abroad that the Truth of God cannot die! The persecutor cannot kill it, it is immortal like the God who sent it forth! The persecutor cannot even stay its course! It is Divine! Popery will always be in danger so long as there is one leaf of the Bible upon earth, or one man living who knows the Savior! Antichrist cannot triumph! The Holy Spirit wars against it with the sword of the Word of God and you cannot tell how far into the

heart of error any Truth may be driven. To the overthrow of falsehood and the death of sin, the Spirit speeds on, but you know not how. "You cannot tell where it goes."

If you have received the Holy Spirit into your heart, you cannot tell where He will carry you. I am sure that William Carey, when he gave his young heart to Christ, never thought the Spirit of God would carry him to Serampore to preach the Gospel to the Hindus! And when George Whitefield first drank of the life-giving Spirit, it never occurred to him that the pot-boy at the Bell Inn at Gloucester would thunder the Gospel over two continents and turn thousands to Christ! You know not to what blessed end this Wind will take you!

Commit yourselves to it—be not disobedient to the heavenly vision. Be ready to be borne along as the Spirit of God shall help you, even as the dust in the summer's breeze. And O child of God, you do not know to what heights of holiness and degrees of knowledge and ecstasies of enjoyment the Spirit of God will bear you. "Eye has not seen nor ear heard the things which God has prepared for them that love Him," and though He has revealed them by His Spirit (for the Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God), yet even to the best taught child of God it is not yet known, to the fullest, where the Spirit of God goes.

"Trust in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah there is everlasting strength," and He will bear you onward and upward, even to perfection, itself, and you shall be with Jesus, where He is, and behold His Glory!

II. I have but a few minutes left for my second head, but I do not need many, since I do not wish to say much upon it. The text relates TO THOSE WHO ARE BORN OF THE SPIRIT. "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell from where it comes, and where it goes: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit." The birth partakes of the nature of the parent. That which is born of the Spirit is like unto the Spirit of which it is born, even as that which is born of the flesh is flesh and is similar to the flesh by which it is begotten.

The twice-born man is like the Holy Spirit who produced him, and he is like He in each of the points which we have already dwelt upon. As to freedom, you may say of him, "He blows where he wishes." The Spirit of God makes the Believer a free man, bestows on him the freedom of his will which he never had before. He gives him a delightful consciousness of liberty. "If the Son makes you free, you shall be free, indeed." I do not affirm that every spiritual man does as he wishes, because, alas, I see another law in our members warring against the law of our mind and bringing us into captivity to the law of sin and death. But still, "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."

Now you can pray, which you could not do before. Now you can praise, though before you could not extract a note of praise from your ungrateful heart. Now you can cry, "Abba, Father." Now you can draw near to God. You are no longer under man's control, you go where you wish. You are not now ruled by priestcraft, nor domineered over by the opinion of your fellow man. The Lord has set you free and you wish to go where God's Word bids you go. And you find the utmost liberty in going that way. Oh,

Brothers and Sisters, I cannot tell you the change which is felt by a regenerate man in the matter of spiritual liberty! When you were under the bondage of the law of custom and of sin, and of fear of death and dread of Hell, you were like a man shut up in one of those cells in Venice which lie below the level of the water mark, where the air is foul and the poor prisoner can only stir half-a-dozen feet and then walk back again in the darkness.

But when the Spirit of God comes, He brings the soul from darkness into light, from clammy damp into the open air! He sets before you an open door. He helps you to run in the ways of God's commands and, as if that were not enough, He even lends you wings and bids you mount as the eagle, for He has set you free! Again, the man who is born of the Spirit is somewhat manifested and is known by his sound. "You hear the sound of it." The most ungodly man, if he lives near a Christian, will hear the sound of him. The secret life within will speak words, for Christians are not dumb. But *actions* will speak more loudly, still! And even apart from actions, the very spirit and tone of the man who is really regenerated will speak and the ungodly man will be compelled to hear it. "You hear the sound of it."

And now notice the mystery there is about a Christian. You know nothing, if you are unregenerate, about the life the Believer leads, for he is dead and his life is hid with Christ in God. You know not from where he comes forth in the morning—those beds of spices which have made his garments fragrant, you have not seen. That weeping in prayer or that rejoicing in fellowship with which he opened the morning you know nothing of—and you cannot know until you are, yourself—born of the Spirit! Neither can you tell where the spiritual man goes. In the midst of his trouble you see him calm. Do you know where he went to win that rare quietude? In the hour of death you see him triumphant! Do you know where he has been to learn to die so joyously?

No, the unregenerate man knows not where the Believer goes. There is a secret place of the Most High and they shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty who have once learned to enter there, but carnal men come not into this secret chamber. The Christian life is a mystery all through, from its beginning to its end. To the worldling it is all a mystery and, to the Christian, himself, a puzzle. He cannot read his own riddle, nor understand himself. This one thing he knows, "Whereas I was once blind, now I see." This, also, he knows, "O Lord, I am Your servant! I am Your servant and the son of Your handmaid: You have loosed my bonds." This, also, he knows, that when his Lord shall be revealed, then will he, also, shine forth as the sun!

The Life within him, in its coming and going, is all a mystery to him, but he blesses God that he has fellowship in it. He goes on his way feeling that though men know not from where he is, nor where he is going, yet the Lord knows him, and he, himself is sure that he is going to his Father and his God! O that every one of you had so delightful a hope! The Lord grant it to you, for Jesus' sake.

THE SPIRIT AND THE WIND

NO. 2067

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 2, 1888.**

***“The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it but cannot tell from where it comes and where it goes. So is everyone that is born of the Spirit.”
John 3:8.***

OUR Savior’s words are infinite. Some men use a great deal of language to convey a very little meaning. But our Savior compacts boundless instruction into short sentences. If all the preachers in Christendom were to preach from this one verse for the next twelve months they would still leave much of its teaching undeveloped.

These words remind us of the Holy Spirit. Is it not to be feared that we have lost a great deal of power in our lives because we have not been sufficiently mindful of the power of the Spirit of God? When our Savior compared the Holy Spirit’s operations to the movements of the winds did He not show us how absolutely needful they are, how indispensable they are? Imagine a world without winds! Why, we should soon stagnate into death. Without wind what would be the use of the great highway of the sea? A thousand mischiefs would follow—ininitely more than we could calculate—if henceforth the air had no motion and there were no living, breathing winds.

Without the Spirit of God, the scene were infinitely worse. O ship of the Church, how could you speed over the sea of time? The trees of the forest would no more clap their hands. Stagnation of progress would take place. The dry bones of the valley would lie unquickened and even the odors of the rose of Sharon would no more be shed abroad. We must have the Spirit of God. Even as the Sun of Righteousness brings healing beneath His wings so does the Holy Spirit bring all that is living to us all. Let us adore the third Person of the Trinity in Unity and think of Him often, with deep reverence in our spirits, so that we never go to work, nor to prayer, nor even to the singing of a hymn without seeking that He would Himself be the life of the holy engagement.

With the view of bringing out the Truth about the Spirit of God, I shall first mention certain minor lessons contained in the text. Then, the lesson of the mystery of the Holy Spirit. And thirdly, the mystery of the man that is born of the Spirit. For it is not merely said, “so is the work of the Spirit.” But “so is everyone that is born of the Spirit.” The child of a mystery is himself a mystery.

I. First, there are CERTAIN MINOR LESSONS TO BE TAUGHT HERE. The Spirit of God is like the wind. Note well that His operation is unexpected. The wind blows where it wishes so that you know not what wind to expect. In this land, especially, we can never tell what wind will blow

tomorrow. A few days ago it was the south-west and it brought a rapid thaw. But the next morning it was nearly north and a frost was upon us. We may well put vanes upon our public buildings, for without them we could never tell from the day of the year or the season of the year, from what quarter the wind would come. I feel thankful when I remember that, like the wind, the Holy Spirit blows where He wishes for I cannot tell where next He may operate.

Perhaps tomorrow He may save a prince—it would be an unexpected thing. Another day He may save some great backslider, who knows? He may graciously work upon the more degraded part of the people or He may deal with certain of our great merchants and bring them to His feet. He that knows the work of the Holy Spirit must have learned to expect the unexpected. The last thing expected in Jerusalem was that Saul of Tarsus would be converted. But he was converted. And you may now hope that the most violent opposer of the Gospel may become a trophy of its power. And might not that same wind blow on you who come here simply to be a spectator of solemnities—willing to hear what the preacher has to say but not at all desirous to be affected by it?

How often have we seen men and women the least likely, the very first to be impressed by this Divine power? O heavenly Wind blow where the feeble faith of Your people has scarcely dared to think that You can come, and where every influence has operated to shut You out! The movement of the Holy Spirit is like the wind, too, because it is inexplicable. Who can tell me why the wind was north-west on Monday, or why it was east on Friday? There are persons who profess to tell us but they use great words which mean nothing. As a general rule, science signifies bamboozlement, riding upon hypotheses, or mystifying with long words.

The explanations of modern savants are often more difficult to understand than the fact which requires the explanation. Now I cannot tell why the Spirit of God works here or there. Why was England favored with the Gospel when other nations, who were in advance of Britain in civilization, were left without it? Why is it that the islands of the sea seem almost always to accept the Gospel, while continents are left in darkness? “He gives no account of His matters”—take that for your answer. It is all that He will give you.

The Holy Spirit moves like the wind for suddenness and freeness. None of us can raise the wind. We use the expression, but the fact is beyond our power. The wind comes without our call or direction. Who shall tell whether tomorrow we shall wake up with a thaw or a sharp frost? The wind springs up just where it likes and moves just where it pleases. And it is so with the Holy Spirit. I grant you that prayer such as that of Elijah can chain the winds and stay the clouds, or unseal the bottles of Heaven and bring down the rain—but it is because the Lord wills it. Still, the Spirit is absolutely free and He moves as the dew which tarries not for men, neither waits for the sons of men.

If He wills to break forth tomorrow across this country with His Divine energy He cannot be stopped. If, in answer to the prayers of His people, He should be pleased to work in India or in China, as I trust He will, we

shall soon see how free is the blessed Spirit to bring glory to God. God may be glorified thereby. The Spirit is like the wind—His movements are not to be accounted for.

And, next, the Holy Spirit is like the wind because He is absolutely sovereign. Preachers scarcely like to tell their congregations nowadays that God gives His Grace according to His own good pleasure. I learned, when I was a boy, that the chief end of man was to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. But I hear now, according to the new theology, that the chief end of God is to glorify man and enjoy him forever. Yet this is the turning of things upside down. The glory of God is still the chief end of the world's existence. And whether men will have it so or not, the Lord has settled it. "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."

So that, "it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs but of God that shows mercy." No voice is more glad than mine to preach the free salvation of God to them that perish. But God has not sunk His sovereignty in His bounty. Jehovah still reigns and the wind blows where it wishes and not where man wills that it shall blow. Further, the Spirit of God is comparable to the wind because of the variety of His operations.

The wind does not blow at all times alike. Soft and mild, it brings us summer heat. Rough and rugged, it makes us bind our cloaks about us as the sharp breath of winter chills us to the bone. The Spirit of God works differently at different times, according to the necessity of the case and according to His own will. For He blows as He wishes as well as where He wishes. Sometimes I have almost trembled to pray for the power of the Holy Spirit. I remember a Brother praying that we might be filled with the Spirit of God and I was but very young then but ventured to ask him whether he knew what he meant.

He looked at me with astonishment when I added, "Where He comes He is the Spirit of judgment and the Spirit of burning." It is a blessing, no doubt, to be filled with the Spirit. But who may abide the day of His coming? Like the Lord Jesus, He is as a refiner's fire. We might have had the Spirit much more copiously had we been able to bear His wondrous work within us. I know He is a Comforter but I know also that His fan is in His hand. He is a searcher as well as a healer, a destroyer of evil as well as a creator of good.

Thus you see that His working is not always of one kind. One gracious soul has gone out weeping, broken-hearted—the Spirit of God had wounded the heart. Another has gone forth rejoicing in full salvation—it was the Spirit of God. One day the Word of God comes like a hammer and a fire—at another time it drops like the gentle dew from Heaven upon the parched heart. All these are works of the same Spirit. Judge not, I pray you, so as to deny this humble hope or that trembling trust to be of the Spirit, for the Spirit works all good things.

Even in the same individual the Spirit of God works very differently at different times. One day He makes us leap like young harts upon the mountains. And then Naphtali is a hind let loose—the Spirit of God is on him. At another time the true Prophet is shut up and cannot come forth.

He is filled with sighs and groans which cannot be uttered and the Word of the Lord is as a pent-up fire in his bones. But the Spirit of God is as much in the silence as in the eloquence—possibly more so—for the flesh may go with the first but it is the Spirit which works in the second.

Let us not judge ourselves to be abandoned by the Spirit of God because after autumn eventides, in which we sat under our own vine and fig tree, we have had wintry nights of darkness, leafless and fruitless. Don't you know that the Spirit of God is that Wind which passes over the green field when the flowers are all in bloom and the grass withers and the flower fades because the Spirit of the Lord blows upon it? Surely the people are grass. The withering work of the Holy Spirit is as necessary for our eternal benefit as when the Spirit, at another time, opens the buds of those fair flowers which shed their perfume at the feet of love.

Note then, that like the wind, He varies in His modes of manifestation. And note, again, the Spirit of God is like the wind because His operation is manifest. "The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound thereof." Yes, we cannot *see* the wind but we can *hear* it. So may you *hear* the Spirit of God. When you hear the Scriptures and read the Word, the Spirit of God speaks to you. It is well to hear the Spirit whisper in the ear of conscience when He presses home the Truths of God and makes the mind to feel its power. Sweetest of all is it when the newly-opened ear hears the Spirit of God speak to it with its own peculiar, "still small voice." Then it is sweetly true. "You hear the sound thereof."

My dear Hearers, do you know anything about this? Has the Spirit of God so worked in you that you have recognized the sound? It is a manifest work—have you felt it?

In all respects, the work of the Spirit of God remains mysterious and wonderful. Men cannot tell us much about the wind but when the wind rises to a tornado and carries everything before it, we see what the wind can do. I would to God that we had a cyclone of the Holy Spirit! What a sweep it would make of a great many rotten Church buildings which now stand upright! Many a magnificent pile would fly before it like dust and chaff from the summer's threshing-floor! But the Spirit of God, whether He works so gently that He scarcely disturbs the tear that hangs in the eye like a dewdrop on a blade of grass, or whether He comes with such tremendous force that the most stubborn infidelity is swept away before it—in either case it is very marvelous—for He is God and He works after the Divine manner.

I am half inclined to pause here and say, "For the rest of our time let us worship in the presence of this mighty God, who does His pleasure and works the will of the Most High forevermore."

II. But I must take you on—in the second place to consider THE GREAT LESSON OF THE MYSTERY WHICH IS TAUGHT US BY THE SYMBOL OF THE WIND, WHICH IS THE TYPE OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD.

Now dear Friends, concerning the wind, our Savior says, "You can not tell from where it comes and where it goes." Yet we know that it comes from the east, or the south and passes on its way and it goes towards the west. The text cannot mean that we do not know the *direction* of the wind,

or the direction in which the Spirit of God is moving, for we do know that. We know that He is a power that makes for righteousness and for eternal life. But then, we do not know where any wind *begins* to blow. No one can explain where the north wind commences.

The heathen had an idea about the wind rushing out of a cave, or of its being let loose from a bag. We know that this is but a dream. We cannot imagine a place where the wind starts on its journey. And we do not know when the Spirit of God begins to work in any person's heart, or even in our own. Some persons are troubled because they cannot tell the day of their conversion. Let them not be troubled about that question. Even those who know that on such-and-such a day they took a decided step, and the light burst in upon their spirit, will find, if they look back, that a great deal of gracious experience went before their decision to prepare their minds for the final step.

We do not know how early the Divine processes begin within a soul. Our very parentage has something to do with it. That we were born of such-and-such godly parents is a part of the arrangement of Divine Grace. I do not think you can tell, with regard to yourself, when the first gracious thought was sown in you when first you lived towards God. You can tell when you first *perceived* that you believed in God. But there was an experience before that. You cannot put your finger upon such-and-such a place and say, "Here the east wind began," nor can you say, "Here the Spirit of God began to work on me."

Neither can we always tell what was the first process. Does a man pray first or believe first? If he prays without faith he will not be heard. Which comes first, repentance or faith? A repentance that has no faith in it is no repentance. A faith that has no repentance with it is no faith. These gracious products are like the spokes of a wheel, they all move at the same time. When the wheel of spiritual life moves we cannot tell which grace in it moves first. The processes of Divine Grace may, in your case, begin with a downcast soul and in the case of another person they may begin with a lifting up of holy faith. We cannot tell from where it comes.

Neither can we always tell the exact means of our receiving the Spirit. You say it was by this minister's preaching. Be grateful. But before that sermon an unknown person did a deal of plowing within your heart. How would the one have sown had not the other plowed? Many a man who thinks he has never done any good will find out at the Last Great Day that he did much more than he fancied and that he accomplished an essential part of the work though it remained hidden. "You can not tell from where it comes."

Equally mysterious is the other point as to "where it goes." We know which way the Holy Spirit points but you can not tell where He goes—that is to say what special fashion His work will take in the person who has received it tonight—whether it shall go towards a deeper and deeper sense of sin and the life shall be most noticeable for its repentance. Or whether it shall rise into a higher and a higher view of Christ and the life shall be noticeable for its joyfulness. You can not tell where it goes. How far the Grace of God can go in any man is impossible for us to say. Let none of us

begin to measure by ourselves and say, "Nobody can be holier than I am. Nobody can have more Divine Grace than I have."

Brothers and Sisters, you yourself can obtain ten times as much Divine Grace as you now have. You are but a babe yet. You do not know what the stature of a man in Christ may be. The boy converted but a week ago may become a Moffat or a Livingstone. The girl who is now a trembling Believer, you can not tell what a Mary or Hannah, God may make her. You can not tell where the Spirit goes. When Martin Luther's father first taught Martin about Christ and prayed for him, he could not tell how the Spirit of God in him would work and how the whole world would be the better for the miner's son. "You can not tell where it goes."

Oh, if some of you get the Spirit of God just now, I cannot guess what it will make of you! There are wonderful possibilities sleeping within the breast of every man who receives the Spirit of God. Should the Spirit work in you, you would not know yourself in the sanctifying experience of a thousand years time. And what are a thousand years? Project yourselves beyond the growths of time to that grandest of all growths, when "we shall be like He, for we shall see Him as He is." Even then you have not reached the end of the Divine way. You can not tell where it goes.

You are yet to outstrip the angels. Jesus your Lord is the First-born and you are to be one of the First-born's many Brethren. Measureless advancement lies before you. I have opened the window—look through and contemplate with the eye of faith what yet may come of the entrance of the Grace of God into your heart! You can not tell where the north wind stays its course, nor where the east wind falls asleep. Is there such a place? You have not seen where it begins, nor can you guess where it shall end, yet even when you are in Glory the life which the Spirit imparted to you here shall be your life.

III. The last few minutes must be occupied with THE LESSON CONCERNING THE MYSTERY OF THE MAN HIMSELF—"So is everyone that is born of the Spirit."

The Spirit-born man is a mysterious person. Only those who are like he is can pretend to know him. Even they do not know him. And what is more wonderful—he does not know himself. Perhaps no man is more amazed at him than the godly man himself. He has experienced a change but he cannot describe it to you. He knows the things in which he is changed—the effects of the Spirit—but how it was worked he knows not.

As no man can tell anything about his first birth, so neither can he describe his second birth—it remains a mysterious operation even to him who has passed through it. "Oh," said one to me, "Sir, either the world's quite altered, or else I am." So, indeed, it is—everything is changed. The world itself is altered and in some things it seems altered for the worse. We find we are not at home in it, though we used to be. We should not know ourselves if we met ourselves. And when, unfortunately, we do meet ourselves, we fall to quarrelling with ourselves—for we have no greater enemy anywhere than our own selves.

It is a strange thing that we should have to say so—but the greatest paradox that can be is a regenerate man still in a body which remains

under corruption. The man is a strange mixture of old and new, nature and Grace. While he is himself a mystery to himself, his sorrows are a mystery to other people and they cannot make out why he is sad. His business prospers, his children are about him, he has good health and yet he is mourning. And if they hear him say, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" They reply, "This is a wretched man, though he ought to be the happiest of beings!"

From the best man in the world we hear the deepest sigh that he is not better. The man that thanks God who can give him the victory is the man who groans in the battle. The world does not understand this. It cannot make out how we can fight and yet be at peace. How we can be torn asunder, yet never torn away from the Cross. How we can live by dying and die every day in order that we may never die at all. The Believer's riddle is a very hard one. He is a mystery as to his sorrows and his joys—these are secrets with which the world cannot intermeddle. This is a mysterious business—a man in poverty, rich. A man in affliction, rejoicing. A man alone, yet in the best of company. The unregenerate cannot comprehend this singular person.

The man that lives near to God is a mystery, more or less, at all times. He is not all he desires to be, nor all he hopes to be but he is far beyond what he ever expected to be. Strange impulses move him at times so that he does things which he cannot himself account for. He feels that he is bound to do them, and he does them, and has the warrant of having done rightly in the result of what he does. I am sure that every child of God who walks in the light of His countenance will understand what I mean when I say that we are moved in singular ways. So moved that we ourselves hardly know how. But so moved that Wisdom is justified of all her children.

Strange is the power of the Holy Spirit over the heart of the regenerate. And this is made manifest in the singular changes of which they are the subjects. God's own people know what it is to sound the deeps and outsoar the heights. Up, up, up, where the callow lightning first spread his wings, we mount in ecstasy. And then down we go, down into the abysses where sea-monsters have their dens—such strange beings are we when under the highest power. The wind sighing through the trees, or singing amid the cords of an Aeolian harp is not more strange than the experience of a genuine child of God.

I know what it is to run before Ahab's chariot with Elijah and I am afraid I know what it is to faint under the juniper and need to be awakened that I may partake of food, that I may go forty days in the strength thereof. The Christian man does not understand himself but his varying experiences go to make up that sickness of self and fondness of Christ which is so desirable.

I will give you two words you cannot explain, just to show the mystery of our manhood. "Spirituality"—now then, turn to your dictionaries and see whether they define it. You know what it is—you cannot tell me and I shall not tell you, because I cannot. There is another word—"unction." You know what it is. If you hear a sermon that has none of it you know

what the absence of it is. But when an unction rests upon the Word, can you tell me what it is? I cannot tell you. But I pray that I may have that unction myself. Of course, the ungodly make jests upon the expression, because it has no meaning to them. Yet the children of God delight in it.

Do not expect the world to understand you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. But inasmuch as Christ has chosen you out of the world, do not expect that the world will know you. If it knew Him not, who was so much better and clearer than you, how should it know you? And you, my dear Hearers, who are *not* born again, to whom all this must seem a foreign language—I pray you to believe that there is something which you need to understand and that in order to understand it you must be born again.

May the Spirit of God make you feel, experience, and enjoy this mystery by causing you to know the power of that gracious word, “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life”—if you believe in Jesus, if you look to Him, if you trust Him—if the Holy Spirit has given you faith, He has begun His work in you and He will carry it on and perfect it to the praise of His glory forever. May it be so, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON

DEAR FRIENDS—“Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof,” and therefore I will not repeat any of the fears which naturally thrive around such a shock as I have received. The doctor says, “You may be well soon of that knee but do not deceive yourself by trying the brain till it has had a fair chance of recovery.” I know what he means and I feel I must submit to be away from my delightful work till I can begin again without absolute folly.

The good points of the whole matter are very many. The name of the Lord is prayed for the splendid way in which, in the sorrowful absence of both pastors, all the Church has stuck to its work and the blessing has not ceased. I am cheered and comforted by this. And I am sure that the Lord has some great design of love to answer by the heaped up coals of fire which have burned upon our hearth. He is good. As surely good in the dark as in the sunlight. All is well. Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him. Perhaps by the way of bodily weakness may come increased spiritual strength.

Love unbroken, from your suffering pastor,

C. H. SPURGEON.

Mentone, January 17, 1889.

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THE HOLY SPIRIT COMPARED TO THE WIND

NO. 630

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

“The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell from where it comes and where it goes. So is everyone that is born of the Spirit.”
John 3:8.

AT the present moment I am not able to enter fully into the subject of the new birth. I am very weary, both in body and mind and cannot attempt that great and mysterious theme. To everything there is a season and a time for every purpose under Heaven and it is not the time to preach upon regeneration when the head is aching, nor to discourse upon the new nature when the mind is distracted. I selected my text with the intention of fixing upon one great illustration which strikes me just now as being so suggestive, and with Divine assistance I may be able to work it out with profit to you and ease to myself.

I shall endeavor to bring before you the parallel which our Savior here draws between the wind and the Holy Spirit. It is a remarkable fact, known, I dare say to most of you, that both in the Hebrew and Greek languages the same word is used for spirit and for wind—so that our Savior, as it were, rode upon the wings of the wind, while he was instructing the seeking Rabbi in the deep things of God. He caught at the very name of the wind as a means of fastening a spiritual truth upon the memory of the enquirer, hinting to us that language should be watched by the teacher that he may find out suitable words and employ those which will best assist the disciple to comprehend and to retain his teaching. “The wind,” said He, “blows,” and the very same word would have been employed if He had meant to say, “The Spirit blows where He wishes.”

There was intended, doubtless, to be a very close and intimate parallel between the Spirit of God and the wind, or otherwise the great Ruler of Providence who invisibly controlled the confusion of Babel would not have fashioned human language so that the same word should stand for both. Language, as well as nature, illustrates the wisdom of God! It is only in His light that we see light—may the Holy Spirit be graciously pleased to reveal Himself in His Divine operations to all our waiting minds.

We are taught in God’s Word that the Holy Spirit comes upon the sons of men and makes them new creatures. Until He enters them they are “dead in trespasses and sins.” They cannot discern the things of God because Divine Truths of God are spiritual and spiritually discerned—and unrenewed men are carnal and possess not the power to search out the deep things of God. The Spirit of God creates new in the children of God and then in their new-born spirituality they discover and come to understand spiritual things, but not before. And, therefore, my beloved Hearers,

unless you possess the Spirit, no metaphors, however simple, can reveal Him to you.

Let us not mention the name of the Holy Spirit without due honor. Forever blessed are You, most glorious Spirit, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and with the Son! Let all the angels of God worship You! Be You had in honor world without end!

I. We will consider IN WHAT SENSE THE HOLY SPIRIT MAY BE COMPARED TO THE WIND. The Spirit of God, to help the spiritually-minded in their study of His Character and Nature condescends to compare Himself to dew, fire, oil, water and other suggestive types. And among the rest our Savior uses the metaphor of wind. What is the first thought here but that of mystery? It was the objection on the score of mystery which our Lord was trying to remove from the mind of Nicodemus. Nicodemus in effect, said, "I cannot understand it. How can it be? A man born again when he is old, created over again and that from an invisible agency from above? How can these things be?"

Jesus at once directed his attention to the wind, which is none the less real and operative because of its mysterious origin and operation. You cannot tell from where the wind comes—you know it blows from the north or from the west—but at what particular place does that wind start on its journey? Where will it pause in its onward flight? You see that it is blowing to the east or to the west, but where is it going? From where did these particles of air originate which rush so rapidly past? Where are they going? By what law are they guided in their course and where will their journey end?

The gale may be blowing due east here, but it may be driving west a hundred miles away. In one district the wind may be rushing from the north and yet not far from it there may be a strong current from the south. Those who ascend in balloons tell us that they meet with crosscurrents—one wind blowing in this direction and another layer of air moving towards an opposite quarter—how is this? If you have watched the skies you must occasionally have noticed a stream of clouds hurrying to the right, while higher up, another company is sailing to the left! It is a question whether thunder and lightning may not be produced by the friction of two currents of air traveling in different directions. But why is it that this current takes it into its head to go this way, while another steers for quite another port? Will they meet across each other's path in regions far away?

Are there whirlpools in the air as in the water? Are there eddies, currents, rivers of air, lakes of air? Is the whole atmosphere like the sea, only composed of less dense matter? If so, what is it that stirs up that great deep of air and bids it howl in the hurricane and then constrains it to subside into the calm? The philosopher may scheme some conjecture to prove that the "trade winds" blow at certain intervals because of the sun crossing the equator at those periods and that there must necessarily be a current of air going towards the equator because of the rarefaction. But he cannot tell you why the weathercock on yonder church steeple turned this morning from south-west to due east.

He cannot tell me why it is that the sailor finds that his sails are at one time filled with wind and in a few minutes they fall loosely about so that he must steer upon another tack if he would make headway. The various motions of the air remain a mystery to all but the infinite Jehovah. My

Brethren, the like mystery is observed in the work of the Spirit of God. His Person and work are not to be comprehended by the mind of man. He may be here tonight, but you cannot see Him—He speaks to one heart, but others cannot hear His voice. He is not recognizable by the unrefined senses of the unregenerate.

The spiritual man discerns Him, feels Him, hears Him and delights in Him, but neither wit nor learning can lead a man into the secret. The Believer is often bowed down with the weight of the Spirit's Glory, or lifted up upon the wings of His majesty. But even he knows not how these feelings are worked in him. The fire of holy life is at seasons gently fanned with the soft breath of Divine comfort, or the deep sea of spiritual existence stirred with the mighty blast of the Spirit's rebuke. But still it is forevermore a mystery how the eternal God comes into contact with the finite mind of His creature, man. God is filling all Heaven, meanwhile, and yet dwelling in a human body as in a temple—occupying all space and yet operating upon the will, the judgment, the mind of the poor insignificant creature called man.

We may enquire, but who can answer us? We may search, but who shall lead us into the hidden things of the Most High? He brooded over chaos and produced order, but who shall tell us after what fashion He worked? He overshadowed the Virgin and prepared a body for the Son of God, but into this secret who shall dare pry? His is the anointing, sealing, comforting and sanctifying of the saints—but how does He work all these things? He makes intercession for us according to the will of God. He dwells in us and leads us into all the Truths of God—but who among us can explain to his fellow man the order of the Divine working?

Though veiled from human eye like the Glory which shone between the cherubim, we believe in the Holy Spirit and therefore see Him. But if our faith needed to sustain it, we should never believe at all. Mystery is far from being all which the Savior would teach by this simile. Surely He meant to show us that the operations of the Spirit are like the wind for Divinity. Who can create a wind? The most ambitious of human princes would scarcely attempt to turn, much less to send forth, the wind! These steeds of the storm know no bit nor bridle, neither will they come at any man's bidding. Let our senators do what they will, they will scarcely have the madness to legislate the winds!

Old Boreas, as the heathens called him, is not to be bound with chains and welded on an earthly anvil, or in a vulcanian forge. "The wind blows where it wishes." And it does so because God directs it and suffers it not to stay for man nor to tarry for the sons of men. So with the Spirit of God. All the true operations of the Spirit are due in no sense whatever to man, but always to God and to His Sovereign will. Revivalists may get up excitement with the best intentions and may warm peoples' hearts till they begin to cry out, but all this ends in nothing unless it is Divine work. Have I not said scores of times from this pulpit, "All that is of Nature's spinning must be unraveled"?

Every particle which Nature puts upon the foundation will turn out to be but "wood, hay and stubble," and will be consumed. It is only "the gold, the silver and the precious stones" of God's building that will stand the fiery test. "You must be born again from above," for *human* regenerations are lies. You may blow with your mouth and produce some trifling effects

upon trifles as light as air. Man in his zeal may set the windmills of silly minds in motion. But, truly, to stir men's hearts with substantial and eternal Truths of God needs a celestial breeze such as the Lord alone can send!

Did not our Lord also intend to hint at the Sovereignty of the Spirit's work? For what other reason did He say, "The wind blows where it wishes?" There is an arbitrariness about the wind. It does just as it pleases and the laws which regulate its changes are unknown to man. "Free as the wind," we say—"the wild winds." So is the mighty working of God! It is a very solemn thought and one which should tend to make us humble before the Lord—that we are, as to the matter of salvation—entirely in His hands! If I have a moth in my hand tonight I can bruise its wings, or I can crush it at my will and by no attempts of its own can it escape from me. And every sinner is absolutely in the hands of God and—let him remember he is in the hand of an angry God, too.

The only comfort is that he is in the hand of a God who, for Jesus' sake, delights to have mercy upon even the vilest of the vile. Sinner, God can give you the Holy Spirit if He wills. But if He should say concerning you, "Let him alone," your fate is sealed, your damnation is sure! It is a thought which some would say is "enough to freeze all energy." Beloved, I would to God it would freeze the energy of the flesh and make the flesh dead in the sense of powerlessness—for God never truly begins to show His might till we have seen an end of all human power. I tell you, Sinner, you are as dead concerning spiritual things as the corpse that is laid in its coffin! No, as the corpse that is rotting in its grave and has become, like Lazarus in the tomb, stinking and offensive.

There is a voice that can call you forth out of your sepulcher, but if that voice comes not remember where you are—justly damned, justly ruined, justly cut off forever from all hope. What do you say? Do you tremble at this? Do you cry, "O God! Have pity upon me"? He will hear your cry, Sinner, for there never yet was a sincere cry that went up to Heaven, though it were ever so feeble, but what it had an answer of peace. When one of the old saints lay dying, he could only say, "O Lord, I trust You *languida fide*," with a languid faith. It is poor work that, but, oh, it is *safe* work. You can only trust Christ with a feeble faith. If it is such a poor trembling faith that it does not grip Him, but only *touches* the hem of His garment, it nevertheless saves you!

If you can *look* at Him, though it is only a great way off, yet it saves you. And oh, what a comfort this is, that you are still on pleading terms with Him and in a place of hope! "Whoever believes is not condemned." But, oh, do not trifle with the day of Divine Grace, lest having frequently heard the warning, and hardened your neck just as often, you should "suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy!" If He shuts you out, none can bid you come in! If He does but close the iron bar, you are shut out in the darkness of obstinacy, obduracy and despair forever—the victim of your own delusions!

Sinner, if God saves you, He shall have all the glory—for He has a right to do as He wills—for He says, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." But still, I think I have not yet brought out what is in the text. Do you not think that the text was intended to show the varied methods in which the

Spirit of God works in the conversion and regeneration of men? “The wind blows where it wishes.” Now observe the different force of the wind. This afternoon the wind seemed as if it would tear up every tree and doubtless, had they been in leaf, many of those noble princes of the forest must have stretched themselves prone upon the earth. But God takes care that in these times of boisterous gales there should be no leaf and therefore the wind gets but little purchase with which to drag up a tree.

But the wind does not always blow as it did this afternoon. On a summer’s evening there is such a gentle zephyr that even the gnats who have been arranging a dance among themselves are not disturbed, but keep to their proper places. Yes, the aspen seems as if it could be quiet, though you know it keeps forever quivering, according to the old legend that it was the tree on which the Savior hung and therefore trembles still as though through fear of the sin which came upon it. It is but a legend. There are times when all is still and calm, when everything is quiet and you can scarcely detect the wind at all.

Now just so it is with the Spirit of God. To some of us He came like a “rushing mighty wind.” Oh, what tearing of soul there were then! My spirit was like a sea tossed up into tremendous waves, made, as Job says, “To boil like a pot,” till one would think the deep were hoary. Oh, how that wind came crashing through my soul and every hope I had was bowed as the trees of the wood in the tempest! Read the story of John Bunyan’s conversion—it was just the same. Turn to Martin Luther—you find his conversion of the same sort. So might I mention hundreds of biographies in which the Spirit of God came like a tornado sweeping everything before it and the men could not but feel that God was in the whirlwind.

To others He comes so gently they cannot tell when first the Spirit of God came. They recollect that night when mother prayed so with brothers and sisters and when they could not sleep for hours because the big tears stood in their eyes on account of sin. They recollect the Sunday school and the teacher there. They remember that earnest minister. They cannot say exactly when they gave their hearts to God and they cannot tell about any violent convictions. They are often comforted by that text, “One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see.” But they cannot get any farther—they sometimes wish they could.

Well, they need not wish it, for the Spirit of God, as a Sovereign, will always choose His own way of operation. And if it is but the wind of the Holy Spirit, remember it is as saving in its gentleness as in its terror and is as efficient to make us new creatures when it comes with the zephyr’s breath as when it comes with the hurricane’s force. Do not quarrel with God’s way of saving you! If you are brought to the Cross be thankful for it—Christ will not mind how you got there. If you can say, “He is all my salvation and all my desire,” you never came to that without the Spirit of God bringing you to it. Do not, therefore, think you came the wrong way, for that is impossible!

Again, the wind not only differs in force, but it differs in direction. We have been saying several times the wind is always shifting. Perhaps there never were two winds that did blow exactly in the same direction. I mean that if we had power to detect the minute points of the compass, there would be found some deviation in every current, although, of course, for

all practical purposes it blows from certain distinct points which the mariner marks out. Now, the Spirit of God comes from different directions.

You know very well, dear Friends, that sometimes the Spirit of God will blow with mighty force from one denomination of Christians. Then suddenly they seem to be left and God will raise up another body of Christians, fill them with Himself and qualify them for usefulness. In the days of Wesley and Whitefield there was very little of the Divine Spirit anywhere except among the Methodists. I am sure they have not a monopoly of Him now. The Divine Spirit blows also from other quarters. Sometimes He uses one man, sometimes another. We hear of a revival in the North of Ireland. By-and-by it is in the South of Scotland. It comes just as God wills, for direction.

And you know, too, dear Friends, it comes through different instrumentalities in the same Church. Sometimes the wind blows from this pulpit—God blesses me to your conversion. Another time it is from my good sister, Mrs. Bartlett's class. On a third occasion it is the Sunday school. Again, it may be another class, or the preaching of the young men, or from the individual exertion of private Believers. God causes that wind to blow just which way He wills. He works, also, through different texts of Scripture. You were converted and blessed under one text—it was quite another that was made useful to me.

Some of you were brought to Christ by terrors, others of you by love, by sweet wooing words. The wind blows as God directs. Now, dear Friends, whenever you take up a religious biography, do not sit down and say, "Now I will see whether I am just like this person." Nonsense! God never repeats Himself. Men make steel pens—thousands of grosses of them—all alike, but I will be bound to say that in quills from the common, there are no two of them precisely the same. If you look, you will soon discover that they differ in a variety of ways. Certain gardeners cut their trees into the shape of cheeses and a number of unnatural forms, but God's trees do not grow that way, they grow just anyway—gnarl their roots and twist their branches.

Great painters do not continually paint the same picture again and again and again, and my Divine Master never puts His pencil on the canvas to produce the same picture twice. Every Christian is a distinct work of Divine Grace on God's part which has in it some originality, some portion distinct from all others. I do not believe in trying to make all history uniform. It is said that Richard III had a humpback. Whether he really was deformed, or whether history gave him the humpback, I cannot tell. But it is said that all his courtiers thought it was the most beautiful humpback that ever was seen and they all began to grow humpbacks, too!

And I have known ministers who had some peculiar idiosyncrasy of experience which was nothing better than a spiritual humpback—but their people all began to have humpbacks, too—to think and talk all in the same way and to have the same doubts and fears. Now that will not do! It is not the way in which the Most High acts with regard to the wind and if He chooses to take all the points of the compass and make use of them all, let us bless and glorify His name! Are not the different winds various in their qualities? Few of us like an east wind. Most of us are very glad when the wind blows from the south. Vegetation seems to love much the south-west.

A stiff northeaster is enough to make us perish. And long continuance of the north may well freeze the whole earth! While from the west the wind seems to come laden with health from the deep blue sea. And though sometimes too strong for the sick, yet it is never a bad time when the west wind blows. The ancients all had their different opinions about wind. Some were dry, some were rainy. Some affected this disease, some touched this part of men, some the other. Certain it is that God's Holy Spirit has different qualities. In the Canticles He blows softly with the sweet breath of love. Look farther and you get that same Spirit blowing fiercely with threats and denunciation.

Sometimes you find Him convicting the world "of sin, of righteousness, of judgment." That is the north wind. At other times opening up Christ to the sinner and giving him joy and comfort. That is the south wind that blows softly and gives a balminess in which poor troubled hearts rejoice. And yet "all these works the same Spirit." Indeed, my subject is all but endless, and therefore I must stop. But even in the matter of duration you know how the wind will sometimes blow six weeks in this direction and, again, continue in another direction. And the Spirit of God does not always work with us—He does as He pleases—He comes and He goes. We may be in a happy hallowed frame at one time, and at another we may have to cry, "Come from the four winds, O Breath!"

II. We will consider, in the second place, THE PARALLEL BETWEEN THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE EFFECTS OF THE WIND. "You hear the sound of it." Ah, that we do! The wind sometimes wails as if you could hear the cry of mariners far out at sea, or the moans of the widows that must weep for them. And, oh, the Spirit of God sets men wailing with an exceedingly bitter cry for sin, as one that is in sorrow for his first-born.

"You hear the sound of it." Oh, it is a blessed sound, that wailing! Angels rejoice over "one sinner that repents." Then comes the wind at another time with a triumphant sound, and if there is an Aeolian harp in the window, how it swells, sweeps, descends—then rises again! It gives all the tones of music and makes the air glad with its jubilant notes. So with the Holy Spirit—sometimes He gives us faith, makes us bold—other times full of assurance, confidence, joy and peace in believing. "You hear the sound" of a full diapason of the Holy Spirit's mighty melody within the soul of man filling him with peace and joy and rest and love.

Sometimes the wind comes, too, with another sound as though it were contending. You heard it, perhaps, this afternoon. We who are a little in the country hear it more than you do—it is as though giants were struggling in the sky together. It seems as if two seas of air, both lashed to fury, met and dashed against some unseen cliffs with terrible uproar. The Spirit of God comes into the soul sometimes and makes great contention with the flesh. Oh, what a stern striving there is against unbelief, against lust, against pride, against every evil thing.

"You hear the sound of it." You that know what Divine experience means—you know when to go forth to fight your sins. When you can hear "the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees," then you bestir yourself to destroy your sins. Sometimes the wind comes with a sweep as though it were going on forever. It comes past and dashes through the trees, sweeping away the rotten branches. Then away it goes across the Alps, dashing down an avalanche in its course, still onward. And as it

flies, it blows away everything that is frail and weak. And on, on, on it speeds its way to some unknown goal.

And thus it is sometimes the Spirit of God will come right through us, as if He were bearing us away to that spiritual heritage which is our sure future destiny—bearing away coldness, barrenness, everything before it. We do not lament then that we do not pray. We do not believe that we *cannot* pray—“I can do everything,” is our joyful shout as we are carried on the wings of the wind. “You hear the sound of it.” I hope you have heard it sometimes in all its powerful, overwhelming, mighty influence till your soul has been blown away.

“You hear the sound of it.” But then the wind does something more than make a sound. And so does the Holy Spirit. It WORKS and produces manifest results. Just think what the wind is doing tonight. I cannot tell at what pitch it may be now. It is just possible that in some part of the ocean a vessel scuds along almost under bare poles. The mariners do their best to reef the sails—away she goes—now the mast is gone—they do their best to bear up but they find that in the teeth of the gale they cannot stand.

The ship dashes on the rocks and she is wrecked. And, oh, the Spirit of God is a great wrecker of false hopes and carnal confidences! I have seen the Spirit of God come to a sinner like a storm to a ship at sea. He had to take down the top gallants of the sinner’s pride. Then every thread of carnal confidence had to be reefed and then his hope, itself, had to be cut away. And on, on the vessel went, until she struck a rock and down she went. The man from that time never dared trust in his merits for he had seen his merits wrecked and broken in pieces by the wind.

The wind, too, remember, is a great leveler. It always aims at everything that is high. If you are down low in the street you escape its fury. But climb to the top of the Monument, or St. Paul’s and see whether you do not feel it! Get into the valley, it is all right. The lower branches of the trees are scarcely moved, but the top branches are rocked to and fro by it. It is a great leveler! So is the Holy Spirit. He never sees a man high but He brings him down. He makes every high thought bow before the majesty of His might.

And if you have any high thoughts tonight, rest assured that when the Spirit of God comes He will lay them low, even with the ground. Now do not let this make you fear the Holy Spirit. It is a blessed thing to be rocked so as to have our hopes tested and it is a precious thing to have our carnal confidences shaken. And how blessedly the wind purifies the atmosphere! In the Swiss valleys there is a heaviness in the air which makes the inhabitants unhealthy. They take quinine and you see them going about with big swellings in their necks.

From Martigny to Bretagne, there is a great valley in which you will see hundreds of persons diseased. The reason is that the air does not circulate. They are breathing the same air, or some of it, that their fathers breathed before them. There seems to be no ventilation between the two parts of the giant Alps and the air never circulates. But if they have a great storm which sweeps through the valleys it is a great blessing to the people. And so the Spirit of God comes and cleanses out our evil thoughts and vain imaginations—and though we do not like the hurricane, yet it brings spiritual health to our soul.

Again the wind is a great trier of the nature of things. Here comes a great rushing up the street. It sweeps over the heaps of rubbish lying in the road. Away goes all the light chaff, paper and other things which have no weight in them! They cannot stand the brunt of its whirling power. But see, the pieces of iron, the stones and all weighty things are left unmoved. In the country you will often see the farmer severing the chaff from the wheat by throwing it up into a current of air and the light husks all blow away, while the heavy wheat sinks on the heap, cleansed and purified. So is the Holy Spirit the great testing power and the result of His operations will be to show men what they are.

Here is a hypocrite, he has passed muster up to now and reckons himself to be a true and genuine man. But there comes a blast from Heaven's mighty Spirit and he finds himself to be lighter than vanity—he has no weight in him, he is driven on and has no rest. He can find no peace. He hurries from one refuge of lies to another. "There is no peace, says my God, to the wicked." Thus also we try the doctrines of men, we bring the breath of Inspiration to bear upon them—do they abide the test? Or are they driven away? Can you hold that truth in the presence of God? Can you cling to it and find it stable in the hour of trial?

Is it a nice pleasant speculation for a sunny day when all is calm and bright, or will it bear the rough rude blast of adversity when God's Holy Spirit is purifying you with His healthful influence? True Christians and sound doctrines have ballast and weight in them—they are not moved nor driven away. But empty professors and hollow dogmas are scattered like chaff before the wind when the Lord shall blow upon them with the breath of His Spirit. Therefore examine yourselves—try the doctrines and see if they are of God. "What is the chaff to the wheat?" says the Lord.

Have root in yourselves—then you will not wither in the hot blast, nor be driven away in the tempestuous day. Is not the Spirit moreover like unto the wind in its developing of character? See the dust is lying all over the picture, you cannot see the fair features of the beauteous sketch beneath. Blow off the dust and the fine colors will be seen and once more the skill of the painter will be admired. Have you ever noticed some piece of fine mosaic, or perhaps some well-cut engraving on metal all hidden and the fine lines filled up with dust?

You have blown off the accumulation and then you could admire the work. So does the Spirit of God. Men get all covered with dust in the hot dusty roadside of life till they are nearly the color of the earth itself. But they come to the hilltop of Calvary and here they stand till the wind of Heaven has cleansed them from all the dust that has gathered around their garments. Oh there is nothing like communion with the Spirit of God to counteract the earthly tendencies of a business life! There are some men that get covered with a yellow dust till they are almost hidden by it. They can talk of nothing else but money. Gold, gold, gold is getting to occupy nearly every thought.

Now I have no quarrel with money in its right place, but I do not like to see men live in it. I always try to drive away that mean and groveling spirit which lives for nothing else but to accumulate money, but I cannot always succeed. Now the Spirit of God will make a man see his folly and put his money into its right position and place the Graces of the Christian character where men can see them and glorify God in them. Never let your busi-

ness character or professional skill dim and hide your Christianity. If you do, God's Spirit will come to brighten you up and He will have no mercy on these, but will, in love to your soul, cleanse and give luster to God's work which is worked in you.

I have also noticed how helpful the wind is to all who choose to avail themselves of it. In Lincolnshire, where the country is flat and below the level of the sea, they are obliged to drain the land by means of windmills and hundreds of them may be seen pumping up the water so as to relieve the land of the excess moisture. In many parts of the country nearly all the wheat and corn is ground by means of the wind. If it were not for the wind the inhabitants would be put to great inconvenience.

The Spirit of God is thus also a mighty helper to all who will avail themselves of His influences. You are inundated with sin, a flood of iniquity comes in—you can never bale out the torrent. But with the help of God's Spirit it can be done! He will so assist that you shall see the flood gradually descending and your heart once more purified. You need always to ask His help—fresh sin, like falling showers, will be poured into you by every passing day and you will need a continuous power to cast it out—you may have it in God's Spirit! He will, with ceaseless energy, help you to combat sin and make you more than a conqueror!

Or, on the other hand, if you need some power to break up and prepare your spiritual food for you, you will find no better help than what God's Spirit can give. In Eastern countries they grind corn by hand, two sitting at a small stone mill. But it is a poor affair at best—so are our own vain attempts to prepare the bread of Heaven for ourselves. We shall only get a little and that little badly ground. Commentators are good in their way, but give me the teaching of the Holy Spirit. He makes the passage clear and gives me to eat of the finest wheat. How often we have found our utter inability to understand some part of Divine Truth—we asked some of God's people and they helped us a little—but after all, we were not satisfied till we took it to the Throne of heavenly Grace and implored the teachings of the blessed Spirit!

Then how sweetly it was opened to us! We could eat of it spiritually. It was no longer husk and shell, hard to be understood. It was as bread to us and we could eat to the full. Brethren, we must make more use of the wisdom which comes from above, for the Spirit, like the wind, is open to us all to employ for our own personal benefit. I see also here a thought as to the co-operation of man and the Spirit in all Christian work. It has pleased God to make us co-workers with Him—fellow laborers—both in the matter of our own salvation and also in the effort to benefit others. Look for a moment at yon stately boat—she moves not *because* of her sails but she would not reach the desired haven without them.

It is the *wind* which propels her forward—but the wind would not act upon her as it does unless she had the rigging all fixed—her masts standing and her sails all bent so as to catch the passing breeze. But now that human seamanship has done its best, see how she flies! She will soon reach her haven with such a favoring gale as that. You have only to stand still and see how the wind bears her on like a thing of life. And so it is with the human heart. When the Spirit comes to the soul that is ready to receive such influences, then He helps you on to Christian Grace and Christian work and makes you bear up through all opposition till you

come to the port of peace and can anchor safely there. Without Him we can do nothing—without us He will not work.

We are to preach the Gospel to every creature and while one plants and another waters, God adds the increase. We are to work out our own salvation—He works in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure. We must go up to possess the goodly land with our own spear and sword—but the hornet goes before us to drive out the foe. Jericho shall be captured by a Divine and miraculous interference, but even there rams' horns shall find a work to do and must be employed. The host of Midian shall be slain, but our cry is, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon." We give God all the glory, nevertheless we use the means.

The water of Jordan must be sought out and used by all who desire a cleansing like Naaman the Syrian. A lump of figs must be used if other Hezekiahs are to be healed—but the Spirit is, after all, the great Cleanser and Healer of His people Israel. The lesson is clear to all—the wind turns mills that men make. It fills sails that human hands have spread. And the Spirit blesses human effort, crowns with success our labors, establishes the work of our hands upon us and teaches all through that, "the hand of the diligent makes rich." And, "if a man will not work, neither shall he eat."

Another thought suggests itself to my mind in connection with the wind and human effort. It is this—How completely dependent men are upon the wind as to what it shall do for them. They are entirely at its mercy as to its time of blowing, its strength and the direction it will take. I have already dwelt upon this thought of the sovereignty of the wind, but it comes up here in a more practical form. The steamer now can steer almost anywhere they please and at all times it will proceed on its voyage.

But the sailing ship must tack according to the wind and when becalmed must wait for the breeze to spring up. The watermill and steam mill can be worked night and day, but the mill that depends upon the wind must abide by the wind's times of blowing and must turn round its sails so as to suit the direction of the current of air. In like manner we are compelled to wait on the pleasure of the Spirit. There is no reservoir of water which we can turn on when we will and work as we please. We would forget God far more than we do now if that were the case. The sailor who is depending on the wind anxiously looks up to the masthead to see how the breeze is shifting and turning round the vane. And he scans the heavens to see what weather he is likely to have.

He would not need to care nearly so much as he does now that he is absolutely dependent on the wind, if he had steam power so as to sail in the very teeth of the storm if he so willed. God, then, keeps us looking up to Heaven by making us to be completely at His mercy as to the times and ways of giving us His helping power. It is a blessed thing to wait on God, watching for His hand and in quiet contentment leaving all to Him. Brethren, let us do our part faithfully, spread every sail, make all as perfect as human skill and wisdom can direct and then in patient continuance in well-doing, wait the Spirit's propitious gales, neither murmuring because He tarries, nor be taken unawares when He comes upon us in His Sovereign pleasure to do that which seems good in His sight.

Now tonight I have only given you some hints on this subject—you can work it out for yourselves. As you hear the wind you may get more ser-

mons out of it than I can give you just now. The thing is perfectly inexhaustible. And I think the business of the minister is not to say all that can be said about the subject. Somebody remarked concerning a certain minister that he was a most unfair preacher because he always exhausted the subject and left nothing for anybody else to say.

That will never be said of me and I would rather that it should not. A minister should suggest germs of thought, open up new ways and present, if possible, the Truth of God in such a method as to lead men to understand that the half is not told them. And now, my dear Hearer, whether you listen often to my voice or have now stepped in for the first time I would like to ring this in your ear. Do you know the Spirit of God? If you have not the Spirit, you are none of His. "You must be born again." "What, Lord, 'MUST?' Do You not mean 'may?'" No, you *must*. "Does it not mean, 'You can be?'" No, you must. When a man says, "must," it all depends upon who he is. When God says, "must," there it stands and it cannot be questioned.

There are the flames of Hell—would you escape from them? You must be born again. There are Heaven's glories sparkling in their own light—would you enjoy them? You must be born again! There is the peace and joy of a Believer, would you have it? You must be born again. What, not a crumb from off the table without this? No, not one. Not a drop of water to cool your burning tongues except you are born again. This is the one condition that never changes. God never alters it and never will.

You must, must, MUST. Which shall it be? Shall your will stand, or God's will? O, let God's "must" ride right over you and bow yourselves down and say, "Lord, I must! Then I will! Ah, and it has come to this—I must *tonight*. Give me Christ, or else I die. I have hold of the knocker of the door of Your mercy and I must, I WILL get that door open. I will never let You go except You bless me! You say, must, Lord, and I say, must, too." "You must, you must be born again." God fulfill the "must" in each of your cases, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

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THE MYSTERIES OF THE BRONZE SERPENT NO. 153

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, SEPTEMBER 27, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: That whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.”
John 3:14, 15.***

WE are told by wise men that all languages are based upon figures—that the speech of men who are uncivilized is mainly composed of figures—and that, indeed, the language of the most civilized, when cleaved so as to bring it to its natural foundation, is based upon a set of metaphors perceived by the mind and then used in language. This much I know, that when we would teach children to speak, we are accustomed to call things not exactly by the names by which they are known to us but by some name which it represents. For instance, the kind of noise which is uttered by some animal but which in some way or other, by a species of figures, is easily understood by the child to represent the things.

But certain it is that among savage nations, the speech is almost entirely composed of metaphors. Hear an Indian warrior addressing the chiefs and inflames them for war. He gathers together all the metaphors of Heaven and earth to make his speech. And you will note the same thing is true even in the names which the Indian warriors have. Those of you who are acquainted with their nomenclature will remember that the strangest names are given to their great men, by way of figure and metaphor to set forth the qualities of their mind.

Now, Beloved, it is the same in spiritual language as it is in natural speech. Nicodemus was but a child in grace—when Jesus Christ would teach him to speak concerning things of the kingdom, He did not talk to him in abstract words but He gave him metaphorical words whereby he might understand the essence of the thing better than by giving him a mere abstract term. When He talked to Nicodemus, He did not say anything about sanctification. He said, “Except a man be born of water.” He did not talk anything to him about the great change of the heart. But He said, “Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” He would not tell him much about the Spirit when He began but he said, “The wind blows where it lists.”

And when Jesus wanted to teach him faith, He did not begin by saying, “By faith we are allied to Christ and derive salvation from our living Head,” but He said—“Like as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness.” And

so the first religious talk of converted men must always be in figures. Not the Epistles of Paul—which are pure didactic teaching—but the words of Jesus must first be applied to the sinner before he is enlightened by the Holy Spirit and understands the mysteries of the kingdom. And I believe I have hit upon the reason why our Master used this figure and talked to Nicodemus with metaphor after metaphor and figure after figure—because the root of all language must be in figures.

And now, today, I am about to address the mass of my congregation concerning that simple subject of faith in the Lord Jesus whereby men are saved. And instead of addressing them in a didactic and doctrinal manner, I shall adopt the parable of my text and endeavor to imitate the example of my Lord in trying to make faith plain to those who are but children in grace.

Allow me, then, dear Friends, to describe first, *the people in the wilderness*—the representatives of men who are sinners. Let me describe next, *the bronze serpent*—the type of Jesus Christ crucified. Let me then note what was to be *done with the bronze serpent*—it was to be lifted up. And so was Christ to be lifted up. And then let us notice *what was to be done by the people who were bitten*—they were to look at the serpent and so sinners must believe in Christ.

I. Our first figure represents MEN IN THE STATE OF SIN. And the figure is borrowed from the children of Israel in the wilderness when they were invaded by the fiery serpents. Can you imagine the horror and dismay depicted upon the countenances of the Israelites, when, for the first time, they saw themselves invaded by an army of fiery flying serpents? They had stood valiantly in battle against Amalek. But these were things that trembled not at the sword. Moses had taught them the use of the bow, as it is written in the book of Jasher, but these were things against which the arrow could not prevail.

They had endured weariness and thirst and hunger. The sun had sometimes smitten them by day and the frost by night. And but for God's preservation, the hardships of the wilderness would have cut them off. All these they had endured and were inured to them but these fiery serpents were novelties. And all new terrors are terrible from their very novelty. Can you imagine how they began to tell one another of the awful visitants which they had beheld? And can you imagine how their terror spread like wildfire through the camp and before the rumor had spread the serpents were devouring them?

And now, dear Friends, if we could all of us see our position in this world, we should this day feel as Israel did when they saw the serpents coming upon them. When our children are born into this world we believe there is sin in them but it is a terrible thing for us to reflect that even if the serpent had not bitten them in birth, yet they are surrounded everywhere by innumerable evils! Can a father send his son into this wicked world with a consciousness of all the evils that will surround him, without

a sense of terror? And can a Christian man trust himself to walk in the midst of this ungodly and libidinous generation without feeling that he is surrounded with temptations, which, if he were left to himself, would be a thousand times more dangerous to him than the most destroying of serpents?

But the picture blackens. We must have deeper shades to paint it. Behold the people after they were bitten! Can you picture their writhing and contortions when the poison of the serpent had infected their veins? We are told by the old writers that these serpents, when they bit, caused vehement heat so that there was a pain throughout the body, as if a hot iron had been sent along the veins. Those who had been bitten had a great thirst. They drank incessantly and still cried for water to quench the burnings within. It was a hot fire which was lit in the fountain and which ran through every nerve and every sinew of the man. They were racked in pain and died in most fearful convulsions.

Now, my Brethren, we cannot say that sin *instantly* produces such an effect as this upon the men who are the subjects of it. But we do affirm that if we let sin alone it will develop itself in miseries far more extreme than ever the bite of the serpent could have caused. It is true the young man who quaffs the poisoned cup of intoxication knows not that there is a serpent there. For there is no serpent except in the dregs. It is sure that the woman who boasts herself of her riches and arrays herself right gaudily in her pride knows not that a serpent binds the zone of her waist. For there is no serpent there as she knows but she shall know it when the days of her frivolity are ended.

It is true he that curses God knows not that a viper has infused the poison which he speaks out against his Maker. But he shall know it in days to come. Look at a bloated drunkard—see him after years of intoxication have defaced all that was manlike in him—as he totters to his grave a poor feeble creature. The pillars of his house are shaken, his strength has failed him and that which God had meant to be His own image has become the image of misery incarnate! See the lascivious debauchee after his brief day of pleasure has closed! No, it is too loathsome for me to paint—my lips refuse to depict the miseries which our hospitals see every day.

The awful loathsomeness, the accursed disease which eats up the very bones of those who indulge in sin. Fiery serpents, you are nothing when compared with fiery *lusts*. You may infuse poison into the blood but lusts do that and do something more—they infuse damnation into the soul! When sin has had its perfect work, when its last fair conception has been brought forth and has developed itself in the dire crime and the loathsome iniquity—then we have a picture which serpent-bitten Israel would not set forth to us in all its horrors!

And the shades thicken yet again. The darkness lowers and the clouds are heavier! How awful must have been the death of those who died by the

serpents! There are some deaths which are sweet to think upon. The death of the late eminent preacher, Dr. Beaumont, who died in his pulpit, was a death which all of us might envy. His released spirit, while the singing of God's praise was ascending up to Heaven, left his body and was forthwith raised to the Throne of God. The death of him who having served his Master sinks like a shock of corn fully ripe, or like a sun that has run its race. It is something to be noted and remembered with delight.

But the death of the *sinner* who has been bitten by his lusts and has not been saved by faith in Christ—oh, how terrible! It is not in the power of mortal language to depict the horrors of the deathbed of a man who has lived without God and without Christ. I challenge all the orators that have ever lived to draw forth from their vocabulary words full enough of horror and of terror to depict the departing scene of the man who has lived at enmity with God and who dies with his conscience quickened then.

Some men, it is true, live in sin and take the last dregs of their infatuation before they die and sink into the pit blindfolded—without the slightest pang of horror. But other men who have had their consciences awakened die not so. Oh, the shrieks, the yells, the screams! Oh, the face of anguish, the contortions, the misery! Have you ever heard how men do shake their fists and swear they will not die and how they start forth and declare—"I cannot and I must not die, I am unprepared!" Starting back from the fiery gulf, they clutch the physician and desire him, if possible, to lengthen out the thread of their existence! Yes, many a nurse has vowed that she would never nurse such a man again, for the horrors would be with her till she died.

And now, my dear Hearers, you are not dying now. But you will be dying soon. None of you have taken a lease of your lives. It is impossible for you to guarantee to yourselves existence for another hour. And if you are Godless and Christless you have all in your veins the venom of that death unutterable which will make your departure doleful beyond expression! I would to God I could cut the cords of my stammering tongue so as to address you with vehemence and passion upon this subject. Men are dying every day around us—at this very hour there are thousands departing into the world of spirits. In upper chambers mourning relatives are pouring floods of tears upon their burning brows.

Far away on the wild sea, where the sea gull utters the only scream over the shipwrecked mariner, down, deep, deep, deep, in the lowest valley and high upon the loftiest hills, men are dying now and dying in all the agonies I have sought to describe but have failed to do. Ah and you must die also! And will you march on heedlessly, will you go on step after step, singing merrily all the way and dreaming not of that which is to come?

Oh, will you be like the silly bullock that goes easily to the slaughter, or will you be like the lamb that licks the butcher's knife! Mad, mad, O Man, that you should go to eternal wrath and to the chambers of fell destruction and yet no sigh comes from your heart—no groan is uttered by your

lips! You die every day but never groan till the last day of your death—which is the beginning of your misery. Yes, the condition of the mass of men is just like the condition of the children of Israel when they were bitten by the serpents.

II. And now comes THE REMEDY. The remedy of the bitten Israelites was a bronze serpent. And the remedy for sinners is Christ crucified. “Stupid nonsense,” said some of the children of Israel when they heard that a bronze serpent lifted up on a pole was to be the means of their cure. Many of them laughed in the jollity of unbelief—“absurd, ridiculous—who ever heard of such a thing, how can it be? A serpent of brass lifted up upon a pole to cure us of these wounds, by being looked upon? Why all the skill of the physicians cannot do it—will a glance at a bronze serpent do it? It is impossible!”

This much I know, if they did not despise the bronze serpent, there are many that despise Christ crucified. Shall I tell you what they say of Him? They say of Him as they did of the bronze serpent. Some wise one said—“Why it was a serpent that did the mischief, how can a serpent undo it?” Yes and men will say, “It was by man that sin and death came into the world and can a man be the means of our salvation?” “Ah,” says another, having the prejudice of a Jew about him, “and what a man He was! No king, no prince, no mighty conqueror. He was but a poor peasant and He died upon a Cross.”

Ah, so said some in the camp. They said it was only a bronze serpent, not a golden one and how could a bronze serpent be of any use to them? It would not sell for much if it were broken up. What was the use of it? And so men say of Christ. He is despised and rejected of men—a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief—and they hide their faces from Him because they cannot see how He is adapted for their cure.

But some will have it that the preaching of the Cross not only *cannot* save, but will *increase* the evil. Old physicians tell us that brass was the most likely thing in the world to make people die the quicker. The sight of anything that is bright would have the effect of making the poison yet more strong in its effects, so that it would be death at once to look upon brass. And yet strange to say, to look at the bronze serpent saved them. “Now,” says the infidel, “I cannot see how men are to be saved from sin by the preaching of Christ.” “Truly Sir,” he says “you go and tell men that though they have sinned never so much, if they do but believe, their sins shall all be washed away!

“Why they will take advantage of that and they will be more wicked than ever they were. You tell men that their good works are of no avail whatever, that they must rest on Christ alone!” “Why,” says the skeptic, “my dear Fellow, it will be the destruction of all morality, instead of a cure, it will be a death. Why preach it?” Ah, the preaching of the Cross is foolishness to them that perish. But unto us who are saved, it is Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. I cannot myself but admit that

at first sight the bronze serpent seems to be the most absurd invention, in itself, for curing those who were bitten that ever mind of man could have invented.

And yet I see in the bronze serpent, when I come to study it, the highest wisdom that even God Himself could develop. I grant you that the Cross of Christ also does in its outward appearance seem to be the simplicity of simplicities, something which anyone might have thought of, but which would have been beneath their thought. But when you come to study and understand the marvelous scheme of God's justice vindicated and man pardoned through the atoning blood of the Cross, I say that not even the mighty intellect of God could have conceived a wiser plan than the wisdom of God displayed in Christ Jesus crucified.

But remember that much as those who heard of the bronze serpent might have despised it, yet there was no other means of cure. And, now hear me for one moment while I tell the whole story of salvation. Men, brethren and fathers we are born of a sinful generation and we have ourselves increased our guilt. For us there is no hope—do what we may—we cannot save ourselves—

***“Could our zeal no respite know
Could our tears forever flow
All for sin could not atone.”***

But Brethren, Christ Jesus, God's eternal Son, came into this world and was born of the virgin Mary. He lived a doleful life of misery and at last He died a death accompanied by unutterable pangs—that was the punishment of the sins of those who, as penitents, come to Christ. If you this day so repent and put your trust in Jesus, you have in your trust and repentance a sure proof that Christ was punished for you.

III. And now WHAT WAS TO BE DONE WITH THE BRAZEN SERPENT? The text says, “Moses lifted it up,” and we read he was to lift it up upon a pole. Ah, dear Friends, and Christ Jesus must be lifted up. He has been lifted up—wicked men lifted Him up, when, with nails on an accursed tree, they crucified Him! God the Father has lifted Him up. For He has highly exalted Him, far above principalities and powers. But the minister's business is to lift Him up. There are some ministers who forget that their errand in the world is to lift up Christ.

Suppose Moses, when God told Him to lift up the bronze serpent, had said in himself, “It is becoming in me, before I lift it up, that I should give some explanatory remarks. And instead of lifting it up before the vulgar crowd, I will initiate a proved few, so that they may understand about it. I will arrange around this serpent a few golden cloths, I will garnish it with silver tapestry so that it may not be looked upon by vulgar eyes and I will endeavor to explain it to them.”

Now this is what many priestly persons in this age and in ages past have tried to do. They think the Gospels must not be preached to the poor! “The Bible” says the Church of Rome, “must not be read by the vulgar crowd! How can they understand it? It is a thing too sacred for the

common people to see! No, wrap up the bronze serpent! Wrap it up in a cloth, do not let it be exhibited.” “No,” say our Protestant ministers, many of them, “the Bible must be given but we must never alter the translation of it!” There are some passages in the present translation that are so dark that no man can understand them without an explanation.

“But no,” say the Divines of this age, “we will not have the Bible translated properly, the people must always put up with a faulty translation. The bronze serpent must be wrapped up because it would unsettle matters if we were to have a new translation!” “No,” say others, “we will have a new translation, if need be. But there are some parts of the Truth that ought not to be preached!” I am not now misrepresenting some of my Brethren in the ministry. I know they hold that some doctrines of God’s Word ought not to be preached—every day at least.

They say Election is true. But they never mention it. They say Predestination is no doubt a godly doctrine but it ought to be kept from the people. It must be in their *creed*, or else they would not be sound. But in the pulpit it must not be mentioned at all. “No,” says the Church of Rome, “if we have a bronze serpent, we will put it in the sanctum, where it cannot be seen and we will have the smoke of incense before it, so that it shall not be plainly discerned. The pomp and ceremony and trappings of formality shall shield it from the vulgar gaze of the people. We will have it girt all round with a thousand ceremonies which will abstract the Gospel and leave the people to be content with the ceremonies!”

Now in these days there are great tendencies to that. The Puseyites are trying, instead of preaching the simplicity of the Gospel, to give us figures. “Oh,” they say “what an elevating thing is a Gothic church! How it lifts the soul to Heaven to sit in a place where there is a forest of Gothic pillars! Oh, what a sweet influence a well played organ has on the mind!” They tell us there is a kind of heavenly influence poured forth from vestments when well worn and that to see the priest discharge his functions in a holy and reverent manner is a most excellent way of impressing souls.

They will have us believe that holly at Christmas time is a most Heavenly and spiritual thing. They teach us that our passions will be carried to Heaven by these little sprigs of green. That putting flowers now and then where the gas lamps should be has a most extraordinary influence in carrying away our souls to Paradise. That burning candles in the daylight is just the most splendid way in all the world of showing forth the sun of righteousness!

Now, we do not exactly fall in with their views. We believe that these places are good for children. They are not so liable to cry there, for there are more things to amuse them. But we never could see how a man—who was a man—could ever sit down to a thing so infamously namby-pamby as the religion of a Puseyite. There is nothing in it but pure nonsense and all that the Gospel may not be seen. It is as if Aaron had filled his censer full of incense and waved it before the bronze serpent and made a great

smoke so that the people could not see it. And then poor Moses tarried behind and tried to look but none of the poor souls could see because there was the smoke before them.

No, the only thing we have to do with Christ Jesus crucified is just to lift Him up and preach Him. There is many a man who can only speak in a plowman's dialect who will wear a bright and starry crown in Heaven because he lifted Christ up and sinners saw and lived. And there is many a learned doctor who spoke with the brogue of the Egyptian—with the dark and mysterious language he talked—after having ended his course, shall enter Heaven without a solitary star in his crown, never having lifted up Christ, nor won crowns for his Master.

Let each of us who are called to the solemn work of the ministry remember that we are not called to lift up doctrine, or Church government or particular denominations. Our business is to lift up Christ Jesus and to preach Him fully. There may be times when Church government is to be discussed and peculiar doctrines are to be vindicated. God forbid that we should silence any part of Truth. The main work of the ministry—its every day work—is just exhibiting Christ and crying out to sinners, “Believe, believe, believe on Him who is the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world.”

And let it be remembered that if the minister does but preach Christ plainly, that is all he has to do. If with affection and prayer he preaches Christ fully, if there were never a soul saved—which I believe would be impossible—he would have done his work and his Master would say, “well done.” I have gone away from this hall, after preaching upon different doctrines and though many have complimented me, foolishly, I have said to myself, “I can but groan that I had such a subject at all.” And at another time, when I have been faltering in my delivery and committed a thousand blunders in my speech, I have gone away as happy as a prince, because I have said, “I did preach Christ.”

There was enough for sinners to be saved by. And if all the papers in the world should abuse me and all the men in the world should say, ‘cry him down,’ I will still live and still breathe as long as I can feel in myself, “I have preached to sinners and Christ has been preached to them so as they could understand and lay hold on Him and be saved.”

IV. And now, dear Friends, I have almost concluded but I have come to that part of the discourse which needs most of power. WHAT WAS ISRAEL TO DO? What are convicted sinners to do? The Israelites were to *look*. The convicted sinner must believe. Do you picture Moses with his reverend head standing erect and boldly crying out with all his might—“Look, look, look!” Do you see him, as with his right hand he grasps the pole and lifts it up and marches with it through the camp? He is like a great standard-bearer, pointing with his finger and speaking with hand and eye and lip and foot and every part of the body—as he passionately bids poor bitten Israel to look.

You can, perhaps, conceive the scene as men roll over one another. And the dying and almost dead behold the bronze serpent and begin to live. Now note, there may be some in the camp who would not look. They obstinately shut their eyes and when the pole was brought near them they would not look. Perhaps it was through unbelief. They said, "What is the use of it? It can do us no good!" There is the wretch, the pole is before him and yet he will not look. Well, what will become of him? Oh, the death-pangs are upon him! See how death is twitching him! How his flesh seems to writhe in agony!

He has shut his eyes with all the force and passion he can command, lest they should be opened on that bronze serpent and he should live. Ah, my Hearers, I have such an one here today. I have many here who will not come to Christ that they may be saved—men who, when the Gospel is preached to them resist it, despise it and reject it. Though the reception of the Gospel is all of grace, yet the rejection of it is all of man. And I have some here who have often been touched in their conscience. They have often been moved to believe, but they have been desperately set on mischief and they would not come to Christ.

Ah, Sinner, you little know how direful your doom shall be. You may this day tell me you do not believe in the Savior. You may turn away your ear from the warning and say, "What need to make so great a noise about it? I would rather die than believe, for I do not think that Christ can save! What good is there in it?" Ah, Sir, you may reject *me*—but remember there is a greater preacher than I am coming to you soon. He with a skeleton arm and bony finger and cold speech—he will freeze and yet convict! It is one called Death! Look me in the face today. And tell me I preach you a lie—you can do that easily! Look Death in the face tomorrow and tell him that and you will find it harder work.

Yes and if you have the foolhardiness to do that, you will not look at the face of the Great Judge, when He shall sit upon the Throne! Tell Him that His Gospel was not true! Frightened and alarmed you shall rush here and there to hide yourselves from the face of Him that sits upon the Throne. Perhaps there were some in the camp who said they would look by-and-by, "Oh," said they, "there is no need to look now, the venom has not yet worked its effects—we are not yet dead. A little longer!" And before they uttered the last word they were stiff and cold as clay! How many do the same? They will not be religious yet—another day, another hour.

They believe they can be pious when they like, which is a fallacy. And therefore they will postpone the matter as long as they may. How many have postponed the day of salvation until the day of damnation has come before they had repented? Oh, how many have said, "A little sleep, a little folding of the hands" and they have been like men on shipboard, when the ship was foundering, who would not escape while they might but still tarried on deck? At last the sea swallowed them and they went down alive into the depths. Take heed of procrastination. Delays are dangerous and

some delays are damnable! Look here, look here to Christ bleeding on the Cross. Look now, for the Spirit says, “*today*, if you will hear His voice harden not your hearts as in the day of provocation.”

I doubt not, there were some there who tried physicians—“Look at the bronze serpent?” said they, “not we. Doctor, come here, bring your balsam. Can you not take the caustic and burn out this poison from my arm and then pour in some cordial that will save me? Physician, have you no antidote that might cool my blood? Ah, I laugh at that bronze serpent. I will not look at it. I trust to your skill, O learned physician!” And how many now do the same? They say “I will not believe in Christ. I will try and do better, I will reform *myself*, I will attend to all the *ceremonies* of the Church. Can I not help myself and so improve myself that I shall have no need of Jesus?”

Ah, you may try—you may lay that flattering unction to your souls and film the ulcerous wound—but all the while dark corruption shall sleep within and shall at last break out in sore flames upon you. Then you shall have no time to attempt a cure but shall be swept away—not to the hospital of mercy but like the leper without the city—you shall be cast away from hope of blessedness.

It may be there were some who were so busy looking at their sores that they did not think of looking at the serpent. Poor creatures, they lay in their misery and kept looking first at that wound on the foot and then at that one on the hand and crying over their sores and never looked at the serpent. Scores and hundreds perish in that way. “Oh,” says the sinner, “I have been so sinful!” Man, what has that to do with it? Christ is all meritorious—look at Him. “No, no,” says another, “I cannot look at Christ. Oh, Sir, you do not know what crimes I have committed. I have been a drunkard, I have been a swearer, I have been a whoremonger—how can I be saved!”

My dear Man, your wounds have nothing to do with it—it is just Christ on the Cross. If any poor creature, bitten by the serpent, had said to me—“Now it is no good my looking there. See how often I have been bitten. There is a huge serpent twisting round my loins, there is another devouring my hand, how can I live?” I should say to him, “My dear Fellow, do not take any notice whether you have got one serpent or fifty serpents, one bite or fifty bites. All you have to do is *look*. You have nothing to do with these bites except that you have to feel them and perish by them unless you look. But just look straight to Christ.”

And now you chief of sinners, believe in the Lord Jesus. And be your sins ever so many, He is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him. And yet how many perish through many delusions, with the Gospel before their very eyes, lifted up on the pole so plainly that we wonder they do not see it?

And now I must tell you one or two sweet things for the encouragement of the poor sinner. Oh, you that are guilty this morning and know that

you are so, let me say to you, “Look to Christ.” For remember the bronze serpent was lifted up that everyone in the camp who was bitten might live. And now Christ is lifted up to you that “whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.” Sinner, the devil says you are shut out. Tell him that “whosoever” shuts out none. Oh that precious word, “whosoever”! Poor soul, I see you clutch at it and say, “Then, Sir, if I believe, He will not cast me away?” I see the harlot in all her guilt bemoaning her iniquity. She says it is impossible that Christ should save her.

But she hears it said, “Whosoever,” and she looks and lives! Remember, it mattered not how old they were, nor how much bitten they were, or whereabouts in the camp they lived. They did but look and live. And now you that have grown gray in iniquity, whose hair might rather be black than white if they showed forth your character—for it has been blackened by years of vice—remember there is the same Christ for big sinners as for little sinners. The same Christ for gray heads as for babes, the same Christ for poor as for rich, the same Christ for chimney sweeps as for monarchs, the same Christ for prostitutes as for saints—“Whosoever.”

I use broad words that I may take a broad range and sweep the whole universe of sinners through—*whosoever looks to Christ shall live*. And remember it does not say that if they looked but little they should not live. Perhaps there was some of them so bitten that their eyelids were swollen and they could

scarcely see. Old Christopher Ness says, “There may have been some of them that had so little sight that they could but squint from one eye.” Says he, in his strange language, “If they did but dart a little glance at the bronze serpent, they lived.”

And you who say you cannot believe. If God gives you only half a grain of faith, that will carry you to Heaven. If you can only say, “O Lord, I would believe, help You my unbelief,” if you can but put out your hand with Simon Peter and say “Lord save, or I perish,” it is enough. If you can only pray that poor publican’s prayer—“God be merciful to me a sinner,” that will do. And if you cannot sing with some of the old experienced saints—

***“My name from the palms of His hands,
Eternity cannot erase.”***

remember it is quite enough, if you can only sing—

***“I can but perish if I go,
I am resolved to try;
For if I stay away, I know
I must forever die.”***

And now poor Soul I have almost done. But I cannot let you go. I see you with the tear in your eye. I hear you confessing your guilt and bemoaning your sin. I bid you look to my Master and live. Be not afraid to try my Lord and Master. I know what your bashfulness is. I have felt the same and thought He never would save me. Come Soul, you are in secret now with yourself—for though there are thousands around you—you

think I am speaking alone to you. And so I am. My Brother, my Sister—you are weeping today on account of sin—look to Jesus.

And for your encouragement note these three things. Note first that Jesus Christ was put on the Cross on purpose for you to look at. The only reason why He died was that poor sinners might look at Him and be saved. Now, my dear Brethren, if that was Christ's purpose in being hung on the tree, you need not think you may not do it. If God sends a river and sends it for us to drink of, will you disappoint Him in not drinking? No, rather you will say, "Did He design me to drink it? Then will I drink it." Now, Jesus hung on the Cross on purpose to be looked at. Look at Him, look at Him and live.

Remember again for your encouragement He *asks* you to look. He *invites* you to believe, He has sent His minister this day, even to *command* you to do it. He has said to me, "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized, shall be saved." Now I need not simply say that my Master's door is wide open for you. I will say something more—He has told me to ask you to come in. Wisdom cries aloud, she utters her voice in the streets, she invites you—she says, "My oxen and my fatlings are killed, all things are ready, come to the supper."

Yes, my Master has given instructions to His Holy Spirit that if men will not come of themselves, He should compel them to come in that His house may be filled. Then, poor Sinner, you must be welcome, He will have enough sinners to fill His table. And if He has made you feel your sinnership—come and welcome, Sinner, come! And my last encouragement is this—Come to my Master and try Him, because He promises to save you. The promises of Jesus Christ are all of them as good as oaths. They never fail. He says—"Whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life."

Now, if I had here a man who declared himself to be the vilest wretch on earth, I would say to him—Young man, I am very fond of proving the Truthfulness of God's promises. Now God says if you believe you shall not perish. My dear Friend, when a common sinner tries and it does not fail, it is some proof of its truthfulness—but you are an extraordinary sinner. Now, you extraordinary Sinner, venture yourself on this promise—He says you shall not perish—come and try Him!

And remember, God must undeify Himself and cease to be true before He can ever damn a sinner who has believed in Christ. Come risk it, you who are so laden with sin that you stagger under your burden. Fall down on the simple promise, "He is able to save to the uttermost." Just cast yourself wholly on Christ and if you are not saved, God's Book is a lie and God Himself has broken His Truth. But that cannot be. Come and try it. "Whosoever believes in Christ shall not perish but have everlasting life."

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IMMEASURABLE LOVE

NO. 1850

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 26, 1885.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THE EVENING OF JUNE 7, 1885.**

***“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”
John 3:16.***

I WAS very greatly surprised the other day, in looking over the list of texts from which I have preached, to find that I have no record of ever having spoken from this verse. This is all the more singular because I can truly say that it might be put in the forefront of all my volumes of discourses as the sole topic of my life's ministry. It has been my one and only business to set forth the love of God to men in Christ Jesus. I heard lately of an aged minister of whom it was said, “Whatever his text, he never failed to set forth God as love and Christ as the Atonement for sin.” I wish that much the same may be said of me. My heart's desire has been to sound forth as with a trumpet the good news that “God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

We are about to meet around the communion table and I cannot preach from this text anything but a simple Gospel sermon. Can you desire a better preparation for communion? We have fellowship with God and with one another upon the basis of the infinite love which is displayed in Jesus Christ our Lord. The Gospel is the fair white linen cloth which covers the table on which the Communion Feast is set. The higher Truths of God, those Truths which belong to a more enlightened experience, those richer Truths which tell of the fellowship of the higher life—all these are helpful to holy fellowship—but I am sure not more so than those elementary and foundational Truths of God which were the means of our first entrance into the Kingdom of God. Babes in Christ and men in Christ, here, feed upon one common food. Come, you aged saints, be children again! And you that have long known your Lord, take up your first spelling book and go over your A B Cs, again, by learning that God so loved the world that He gave His Son to die—that man might live through Him!

I do not call you to an elementary lesson because you have forgotten your letters, but because it is a good thing to refresh the memory—and a blessed thing to feel young again. What the old folks used to call the Christ-Cross Row, contained nothing but the letters. But all the books in the language are made out of that line and, therefore, do I call you back to the Cross and to Him who bled there! It is a good thing for us all to return, at times, to our starting place and make sure that we are in the way ever-

lasting. The love of our espousals is most likely to continue if we, again and again, begin where God began with us and where we first began with God. It is wise to come to Him afresh, as we came in that first day when, helpless, needy and heavy-laden, we stood weeping at the Cross and left our burden at His pierced feet. There we learned to look, live and love—and there would we repeat the lesson till we rehearse it perfectly in Glory!

Tonight we have to talk about the love of God—"God so loved the world." That love of God is a very wonderful thing, especially when we see it set upon a lost, ruined, guilty world. What was there in the world that God should love it? There was nothing lovable in it. No fragrant flower grew in that arid desert. Enmity to Him; hatred to His Truth; disregard of His Law; rebellion against His commandments—those were the thorns and briars which covered the waste land—but no desirable thing blossomed there. Yet, "God loved the world," says the text. "So" loved it, that even the writer of the book of John could not tell us how much! But so greatly, so Divinely did He love it that He gave His Son, His only Son, to redeem the world from perishing and to gather out of it a people to His praise.

From where did that love come? Not from anything outside of God Himself. God's love springs from Himself. He loves because it is His Nature to do so. "God is Love." As I have said already, nothing upon the face of the earth could have merited His love, though there was much to merit His displeasure. This stream of love flows from its own secret source in the eternal Deity and it owes nothing to any earth-born rain or rivulet. It springs from beneath the everlasting Throne of God and fills itself full from the springs of the Infinite. God loved because He would love. When we enquire why the Lord loved this man or that, we have to come back to our Savior's answer to the question, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight." God has such love in His Nature that He must let it flow forth to a world perishing by its own willful sin! And when it flowed forth, it was so deep, so wide, so strong that even Inspiration could not compute its measure and, therefore, the Holy Spirit gave us that great little word, SO—and left us to attempt the measurement, according as we perceive more and more of Divine love.

Now, there happened to be an occasion upon which the great God could display His immeasurable love. The world had sadly gone astray. The world had lost itself. The world was tried and condemned. The world was given over to perish because of its offenses—and there was need for help. The Fall of Adam and the destruction of mankind made ample room and verge enough for Almighty Love. Amid the ruins of humanity there was space for showing how much Jehovah loved the sons of men, for the compass of His love was no less than the world, the object of it no less than to deliver men from going down to the Pit and the result of it no less than the finding of a Ransom for them. The far-reaching purpose of that love was both negative and positive, so that, believing in Jesus, men might not perish, but have eternal life. The desperate disease of man gave occasion for the introduction of that Divine Remedy which God, alone, could have devised and supplied. By the plan of mercy and the great Gift which was

needed for carrying it out, the Lord found means to display His boundless love to guilty men.

Had there been no Fall and no perishing, God might have shown His love to us as He does to the pure and perfect spirits that surround His Throne. But He never could have commended His love to us to such an extent as He now does. In the Gift of His only-begotten Son, God commended His love to us, in that while we were yet sinners, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. The black background of sin makes the bright line of love shine out the more clearly. When the lightning writes the name of the Lord with flaming finger across the black brow of the tempest, we are compelled to see it—so when Love inscribes the Cross upon the jet tablet of our sin, even blind eyes must see that, “herein is love.”

I might handle my text in a thousand different ways, tonight, but for simplicity’s sake and to keep to the one point of setting forth the love of God, I want to make you see how great that love is by five different particulars.

I. The first is the GIFT—“God so loved the world, *that He gave His only-begotten Son.*” Men who love much will give much and you may usually measure the truth of love by its self-denials and sacrifices. That love which spares nothing, but spends itself to help and bless its object, is love, indeed, and not the mere name of it. Little love forgets to bring water for the feet, but great love breaks its box of alabaster and lavishes its precious ointment!

Consider, then, *what this Gift was* that God gave. I would have to labor for expression if I were to attempt to set forth to the fullest this priceless Gift—and I will not court a failure by attempting the impossible! I will only invite you to think of the sacred Person whom the Great Father gave in order that He might prove His love to men. It was His only-begotten Son—His beloved Son in whom He was well pleased. None of us had ever such a son to give. Ours are the sons of men. His was the Son of God! The Father gave His other Self, One with Himself. When the great God gave His Son, He gave God, Himself, for Jesus is not, in His eternal Nature, less than God! When God gave God for us, He gave Himself! What more could He give? God gave His all—He gave Himself. Who can measure this love?

Judge, you fathers, how you love your sons—could you give them to die for your enemy? Judge, you that have an *only* son, how your hearts are entwined about your first-born, your only-begotten. There was no higher proof of Abraham’s love to God than when he did not withhold from God his son, his only son, his Isaac whom he loved. And there can certainly be no greater display of love than for the Eternal Father to give His only-begotten Son to die for us! No living thing will readily lose its offspring—man has peculiar grief when his son is taken—has not *God* yet more? A story has often been told of the fondness of parents for their children—how in a famine in the East, a father and mother were reduced to absolute starvation and the only possibility of preserving the life of the family was to sell one of the children into slavery.

So they considered it. The pinch of hunger became unbearable and their children, pleading for bread, tugged so painfully at their heart-strings that they must entertain the idea of selling one to save the lives of

the rest. They had four sons. Who of these should be sold? It must not be the *first*—how could they spare their first-born? The second was so strangely like his father that he seemed a reproduction of him—and the mother said that she would never part with him. The third was so singularly like the mother that the father said he would sooner die than that this dear boy should go into bondage! And as for the fourth, he was their Benjamin, their last, their darling—they could not part with him. They concluded that it were better for them all to die together than willingly to part with any one of their children. Do you not sympathize with them? I see you do. Yet God so loved us that, to put it very strongly, He seemed to love us better than His only Son—and did not spare *Him* that He might spare *us*! He permitted His Son to perish from among men “that whoever believes in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life.”

If you desire to see the love of God in this great procedure, you must consider *how He gave His Son*. He did not give His Son, as *you* might do, to some profession in the pursuit of which you might still enjoy his company. He gave His Son to exile among men! He sent Him down to yonder manger, united with a perfect Manhood which, at the first, was in an infant's form. There He slept, where horned oxen fed! The Lord God sent the Heir of all things to toil in a carpenter's shop—to drive nails, push the plane and use the saw. He sent Him down among scribes and Pharisees, whose cunning eyes watched Him, and where cruel tongues scourged Him with base slanders. He sent Him down to hunger, thirst and poverty so dire that He had nowhere to lay His head. He sent Him down to the scourging and the crowning with thorns, to the giving of His back to the smiters and His cheeks to those that plucked off the hair.

At length He gave Him up to *death*—a felon's death, the death of the crucified! Behold that Cross and see the anguish of Him that dies upon it! And mark how the Father has so given Him that He hides His face from Him and seems as if He would not acknowledge Him! “Lama Sabachthani” tells us how fully God gave His Son to ransom the souls of the sinful! He gave Him to be made a curse for us! He gave Him that He might die, “the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God.”

Dear Sirs, I can understand your giving up your children to go to India on her Majesty's service, or to go out to the Cameroons or the Congo upon the errands of our Lord Jesus. I can well comprehend your yielding them up, even, with the fear of a pestilential climate before you, for if they die they will die honorably in a glorious cause—but could you think of parting with them to die a felon's death, upon a gallows, condemned by those whom they sought to bless, stripped naked in body and deserted in mind? Would not that be too much? Would you not cry, “I cannot part with my son for such wretches as these! Why should he be put to a cruel death for such abominable beings who even waste their hands in the blood of their best friend?” Remember that our Lord Jesus died what His countrymen considered to be an accursed death. To the Romans it was the death of a condemned slave—a death which had all the elements of pain, disgrace and scorn mingled in it to the uttermost. “But God commends His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Oh, wondrous stretch of love, that Jesus Christ should die!

Yet, I cannot leave this point till I have you notice *when God gave His Son*, for there is love in the *time*. “God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son.” But when did He do that? In His eternal purpose, He did this from before the foundation of the world! The words here used, “He gave His only-begotten Son,” cannot relate exclusively to the *death* of Christ, for Christ was not dead at the time of the utterance of this third chapter of John! Our Lord had just been speaking with Nicodemus and that conversation took place at the beginning of His ministry. The fact is that Jesus was *always* the Gift of God. The promise of Jesus was made in the Garden of Eden almost as soon as Adam fell! On the spot where our ruin was accomplished, a Deliverer was bestowed whose heel should be bruised, but who should break the serpent’s head beneath His foot.

Throughout the ages, the great Father stood to His Gift. He looked upon His Only-Begotten as man’s hope, the inheritance of the chosen seed who, in Him, would possess all things. Every sacrifice was God’s renewal of His Gift of Grace, a reassurance that He had bestowed the Gift and would never draw back from it. The whole system of types under the Law promised that, in the fullness of time, the Lord would, in very deed, give up His Son, to be born of a woman, to bear the iniquities of His people and to die the death in their behalf! I greatly admire this pertinacity of love, for many a man, in a moment of generous excitement, can perform a supreme act of benevolence—and yet could not bear to look at it calmly and consider it from year to year! The slow fire of anticipation would have been unbearable.

If the Lord should take away yonder dear boy from his mother, she would bear the blow with some measure of patience, heavy as it would be to her tender heart. But suppose that she were credibly informed that on such a day her boy must die and thus had, from year to year, to look upon him as one dead? Would it not cast a cloud over every hour of her future life? Suppose, also, that she knew that he would be hanged upon a tree to die as one condemned? Would it not embitter her existence? If she could withdraw from such a trial, would she not? Assuredly she would! Yet the Lord God spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all—doing it in His heart from age to age. Herein is love—love which many waters could not quench—love eternal, inconceivable, infinite!

Now, as this Gift refers not only to our Lord’s death, but to the ages before it, so it includes also all the ages afterwards. God “so loved the world that He gave”—and *still* gives—“His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him might not perish, but have everlasting, “life.” The Lord is giving Christ away tonight! Oh, that thousands of you may gladly accept the unspeakable Gift! Will anyone refuse? This good Gift, this perfect Gift—can you decline it? Oh, that you may have faith to lay hold on Jesus, for thus He will be yours! He is God’s free Gift to all free receivers—a full Christ for empty sinners! If you can but hold out your empty, willing hand, the Lord will give Christ to you at this moment! Nothing is freer than a gift! Nothing is more worth having than a Gift which comes fresh from the hand of God, as full of effectual power as ever it was! The fountain is eternal, but the stream from it is as fresh as when first the fountain was opened. There is no exhausting this Gift!—

“Dear dying Lamb, Your precious blood

***Shall never lose it's power
Till all the ransomed Church of God
Is saved to sin no more.***

See, then, what is the love of God, that He gave His Son from of old and has never revoked the Gift! He stands to His Gift and continues, still, to give His dear Son to all who are willing to accept Him! Out of the riches of His Grace He *has* given, *is* giving and *will* give the Lord Jesus Christ—and all the priceless gifts which are contained in Him—to all needy sinners who will simply trust Him! I call upon you from this first point to admire the love of God because of the transcendent greatness of His Gift to the world, even the Gift of His only-begotten Son!

II. Now notice secondly, and, I think I may say, with equal admiration, the love of God in THE PLAN OF SALVATION. He has put it thus—“That whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” The way of salvation is extremely simple to understand and exceedingly easy to practice when once the heart is made willing and obedient. The method of the Covenant of Grace differs as much from that of the Covenant of Works as light from darkness. It is not said that God has given His Son to *all who will keep His Law*, for *that* we could not do and, therefore, the Gift would have been available to none of us! Nor is it said that He has given His Son to all that experience terrible despair and bitter remorse, for that is not felt by many who, nevertheless, are the Lord's own people. But the great God has given His own Son, that, “whoever believes in Him” should not perish. Faith, however slender, saves the soul! Trust in Christ is the certainty of eternal happiness!

Now, what is it to believe in Jesus? It is just this—it is to *trust* yourself with Him. If your hearts are ready, though you have never believed in Jesus before, I trust you will believe in Him now. O Holy Spirit graciously make it so!

What is it to believe in Jesus?

It is, first, to give your *firm and cordial assent* to the Truth of God that God did send His Son, born of a woman, to stand in the place of guilty men—and that God did cause to put on Him the iniquities of us all—so that He bore the punishment due to our transgressions, being made a curse for us. We must heartily believe the Scripture which says—“The chastisement of our peace was upon Him and with His stripes we are healed.” I ask for your assent to the grand doctrine of Substitution which is the marrow of the Gospel! Oh, may God the Holy Spirit lead you to give a cordial assent to it at once, for wonderful as it is, it is a fact that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them! Oh that you may rejoice that this is true and be thankful that such a blessed fact is revealed by God, Himself!

Believe that the substitution of the Son of God is certain! Question not the plan, nor question its validity, or efficacy, as many do. Alas, they nick at God's great Sacrifice and count it a sorry invention! As for me, since God has ordained to save man by a substitutionary Sacrifice, I joyfully agree to His method and see no reason to do anything else but admire it and adore the Author of it! I joy and rejoice that such a plan should have been thought of, whereby the justice of God is vindicated and His mercy is set free to do all that He desires! Sin is punished in the Person of the Chr-

ist, yet mercy is extended to the guilty! In Christ, mercy is sustained by justice, and justice satisfied by an act of mercy! The worldly wise say hard things about this device of Infinite Wisdom, but as for me, I love the very name of the Cross and count it to be the center of Wisdom, the focus of Love, the heart of Righteousness. This is a main point of faith—to give a hearty assent to the giving of Jesus to suffer in our place and to agree, with all our soul and mind, to this way of salvation.

The second thing is that you *accept this for yourself*. In Adam's sin, you did not sin personally, for you were not, then, in existence. Yet you fell—and neither can you now complain about it—for you have willingly endorsed and adopted Adam's sin by committing personal transgressions. You have laid your hand, as it were, upon Adam's sin, and made it your own by committing personal and actual sin. Thus you perished by the sin of another which you adopted and endorsed—and in like manner must you be saved by the righteousness of Another which you are to accept and appropriate. Jesus has offered an atonement and that Atonement becomes yours when you accept it by putting your trust in Him. I want you now to say—

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

Surely this is no very difficult matter. To say that Christ, who hung upon the Cross, shall be my Christ, my Surety, needs neither stretch of intellect nor splendor of character! And yet it is the act which brings salvation to the soul!

One more thing is necessary and that is *personable trust*. First comes assent to the Truth, then acceptance of that truth for *yourself*—and then a simple trusting of yourself wholly to Christ as your Substitute. The essence of faith is trust, reliance, dependence. Fling away every other confidence of every sort except confidence in Jesus. Do not allow a ghost of a shade of a shadow of a confidence in anything that you can *do*, or in anything that you can *be*, but look only to Him who God has set forth to be the Propitiation for sin! This I do at this very moment—will you not do the same? Oh, may the sweet Spirit of God lead you, now, to trust in Jesus!

See, then, the love of God in putting it in so plainly—so easy a way. Oh, you broken, crushed and despairing sinner, you cannot work, but can you not believe that which is *true*? You cannot sigh, you can not cry. You cannot melt your stony heart, but can you not believe that Jesus died for you and that He can change that heart of yours and make you a new creature? If you can believe this, then trust in Jesus to do so and you are saved, for he that believes in Him is justified! “He that believes in Him *has* everlasting life.” He is a saved man! His sins are forgiven! Let him go his way in peace and sin no more!

I admire, first, the love of God in the great Gift. And then in the great plan by which that Gift becomes available to guilty men.

III. Thirdly, the love of God shines forth with transcendent brightness in a third point, namely, in THE PERSONS FOR WHOM THIS PLAN IS AVAILABLE and for whom this Gift is given. They are described in these words—“Whoever believes in Him.” There is, in the text, a word which has

no limit—"God so loved the world." But then comes in the descriptive *limit* which I beg you to notice with care—"He gave His only-begotten Son that *whoever believes in Him* might not perish." God did *not* so love the world that *any* man who does *not* believe in Christ shall be saved. Neither did God so give His Son that any man shall be saved who refuses to believe in Him. See how it is put—"God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish." Here is the compass of the love—while every unbeliever is excluded, every Believer is included. "Whoever believes in Him."

Suppose there is a man who has been guilty of all the lusts of the flesh to an infamous degree. Suppose that he is so detestable that he is only fit to be treated like a moral leper and shut up in a separate house for fear he should contaminate those who hear or see him. Yet if that man shall believe in Jesus Christ, he shall, at once, be made clean from his defilement and shall not perish because of his sin! And suppose there is another man who, in the pursuit of his selfish motives, has ground down the poor, has robbed his fellow traders and has even gone so far as to commit actual crimes of which the law of the land has taken cognizance. Yet if he believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, he shall be led to make restitution and his sins shall be forgiven him!

I once heard of a preacher addressing a company of men in chains who were condemned to die for murder and other crimes. They were such a drove of beasts, to all outward appearances, that it seemed hopeless to preach to them! Yet were I set to be chaplain to such a wretched company, I should not hesitate to tell them that, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." O man, if you will believe in Jesus as the Christ, however horrible your past sins have been, they shall be blotted out! You shall be saved from the power of your evil habits and you shall begin, again, like a child, newly born, with a new and true life which God shall give you. "Whoever believes in Him"—that takes you in, my aged Friend, now lingering within a few tottering steps of the grave! O gray-headed Sinner, if you believe in Him, you shall not perish!

The text also includes you, dear Boy, who has scarcely entered your teens—if you believe in Him, you shall not perish. That takes you in, fair Maiden, and gives you hope and joy while yet young. That comprehends all of us, provided we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ! Neither can all the devils in Hell find any reason why the man that believes in Christ shall be lost, for it is written, "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out." Do they say, "Lord, he has been so long in coming"? The Lord replies—"Has he come? Then I will not cast him out for all his delays." But, Lord, he went back after making a profession. "Has he, at last, come? Then I will not cast him out for all his backsliding." But, Lord, he was a foul-mouthed blasphemer! "Has he come to Me? Then I will not cast him out for all his blasphemies." But, says one, "I take exception to the salvation of this wicked wretch! He has behaved so abominably that in all justice he ought to be sent to Hell." Just so. But if he repents of his sin and believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, whoever he may be, he shall not be sent there! He shall

be changed in character so that he shall never perish, but have eternal life!

Now, observe, that this, “whoever,” makes a grand sweep, for it encircles all degrees of faith. “Whoever believes in Him.” It may be that he has no full assurance. It may be that he has no assurance at all! But if he has *faith*, true and childlike, by it he shall be saved. Though his faith is so little that I must put on my spectacles to see it, yet Christ will see it and reward it! His faith may be such a tiny grain of mustard seed that I look and look, again, but hardly discern it—and yet it brings him eternal life—and it is, itself, a living thing! The Lord can see, within that mustard seed, a tree among whose branches the birds of the air shall make their nests!

***“My faith is feeble, I confess,
I faintly trust Your Word.
But will You pity me the less?
Be that far from You, Lord!”***

O Lord Jesus, if I cannot take You up in my arms as Simeon did, I will at least touch Your garment’s hem as the poor diseased woman did to whom Your healing virtue flowed! It is written, “God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” That means me! I cannot preach at length to you, tonight, but I would preach with strength! Oh that this Truth of God may soak into your souls! Oh, you that feel yourselves guilty, and you that feel guilty because you do not feel guilty—you that are broken in heart because your heart will not break—you that feel that you cannot feel! It is to you that I would preach salvation in Christ by faith! You groan because you cannot groan! But whoever you may be, you are still within the range of this mighty Word of God, that, “whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.”

Thus have I commended God’s love to you in these three points—the Divine Gift, the Divine method of saving and the Divine choice of the persons to whom salvation comes.

IV. Now fourthly, another beam of Divine Love is to be seen in the negative blessing here stated, namely, in THE DELIVERANCE implied in the words, “that whoever believes in Him should not perish.”

I understand that word to mean that whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ shall not perish, though he is ready to perish. His sins would cause him to perish, but he shall never perish. At first, he has a little hope in Christ, but its existence is feeble. It will soon die out, will it not? No, his faith shall *not* perish, for this promise covers it—“Whoever believes in Him shall not perish.” The penitent has believed in Jesus and, therefore, he has begun to be a Christian. “Oh,” cries an enemy, “let him alone! He will soon be back among us. He will soon be as careless as ever.” Listen! “Whoever believes in Him shall not perish” and, therefore, he will *not* return to his former state. This proves the final perseverance of the saints, for if the Believer ceased to be a Believer, he would perish. And as he cannot perish, it is clear that he will continue a Believer. If you believe in Jesus, you shall never leave off believing in Him, for that would be to perish! If you believe in Him, you shall never delight in your old sins, for that would be to perish. If you believe in Him, you shall never lose spiritual life. How can you lose that which is *everlasting*? If you were to lose it, it

would prove that it were *not* everlasting and you would perish! And thus you would make this Word of God to be of no effect.

Whoever, with his heart, believes in Christ, is a saved man! Not only for tonight, but for all the nights that ever shall be—and for that dread night of death—and for that solemn eternity which draws so near. “Whoever believes in Him shall not perish,” but he shall have a life that cannot die, a justification that cannot be disputed, an acceptance which shall never cease!

What is it to perish? It is to lose all hope in Christ, all trust in God, all light in life, all peace in death, all joy, all bliss, all union with God. This shall never happen to you if you believe in Christ! If you believe, you shall be chastened when you do wrong, for every child of God comes under discipline—and what son is there whom the father chastens not? If you believe, you may doubt and fear as to your state, as a man on board a ship may be tossed about, but you have gotten on board a ship that never can be wrecked! He that has union with Christ has union with Perfection, Omnipotence and Glory. He that believes is a member of Christ—will Christ lose His members? How should Christ be perfect if He lost even His little finger? Are Christ’s members to rot off, or to be cut off? Impossible!

If you have faith in Christ you are a partaker of Christ’s life and you cannot perish. If men were trying to drown me, they could not drown my foot as long as I had my head above water—and as long as our Head is above water, up yonder in the eternal sunshine, the least limb of His body can never be destroyed! He that believes in Jesus is united to Him and he must live because Jesus lives! Oh what a Word of God is this, “I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father which gave them to Me is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father’s hand.”

I feel that I have a grand Gospel to preach to you when I read that whoever believes in Jesus shall not perish! I would not give two pins for that trumpery, temporary salvation which some proclaim—which floats the soul, for a time, and then ebbs away to apostasy! I do not believe that the man who is once in Christ may live in sin and delight in it and yet be saved. That is abominable teaching and none of mine! But I do believe that the man who is in Christ will *not* live in sin, for he is saved from it—nor will he return to his old sins and live in them, for the Grace of God will continue to save him from his sins. Such a change is worked, by regeneration, that the new-born man cannot live in sin, nor find comfort in it, but he loves holiness and makes progress in it.

The Ethiopian may change his skin and the leopard his spots, but only Divine Grace can work the change—and when Divine Grace has done the deed, the Blackamoor will remain white and the leopard’s spots will never return. It would be as great a miracle to undo the work of God as to do it! And to destroy the new creation would require as great a power as to make it! If only God can create, so only God can destroy, and He will never destroy the work of His own hands. Will God begin to build and not finish? Will He commence a warfare and end it before He has won the victory? What would the devil say if Christ were to begin to save a soul and fail in the attempt? If there should come to be souls in Hell that were Be-

lievers in Christ and yet perished, it would cast a cloud upon the diadem of our exalted Lord! It cannot, shall not, be! Such is the love of God, that whoever believes in His dear Son shall not perish—in this assurance we greatly rejoice.

V. The last commendation of His love lies *in the positive*—IN THE POSSESSION. I shall have to go, in a measure, over the same ground again. Let me, therefore, be far shorter. God gives to every man that believes in Christ everlasting life. The moment you believe, there trembles into your bosom a vital spark of heavenly flame which never shall be quenched. In that same moment when you cast yourself on Christ, Christ comes to you in the living and incorruptible Word which lives forever. Though there should drop into your heart but one drop of the heavenly Water of Life, remember this—He who cannot lie, has said it —“The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” When I first received everlasting life, I had no idea what a treasure had come to me! I knew that I had obtained something very extraordinary, but of its superlative value I was not aware. I did but look to Christ in the little chapel and I received eternal life! I looked to Jesus and He looked on me—and we were one forever! That moment my joy surpassed all bounds, just as my sorrow had, before, driven me to an extreme of grief.

I was perfectly at rest in Christ, satisfied with Him and my heart was glad—but I did not know that this Grace was everlasting life till I began to read in the Scriptures and to know more fully the value of the Jewel which God had given me. The next Sunday I went to the same chapel, as it was very natural that I should. But I never went again, for this reason, that during my first week, the new life that was in me had been compelled to fight for its existence and a conflict with the old nature had been vigorously carried on. This I knew to be a special token of the indwelling of Grace in my soul—but in that same chapel I heard a sermon upon, “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” And the preacher declared that Paul was not a Christian when he had that experience! Babe as I was, I knew better than to believe so absurd a statement! What but Divine Grace could produce such sighs and cries after deliverance from indwelling sin?! I felt that a person who could talk such nonsense knew little of the life of a true Believer. I said to myself, “What? Am I not alive because I feel a conflict within me? I never felt this fight when I was an unbeliever! When I was not a Christian, I never groaned to be set free from sin! This conflict is one of the surest evidences of my new birth and yet this man cannot see it! He may be a good exhorter to sinners, but he cannot feed Believers.” I resolved to go into that pasture no more, for I could not feed there.

I find that the struggle becomes more and more intense. Each victory over sin reveals another army of evil tendencies and I am never able to sheathe my sword, nor cease from prayer and watchfulness. I cannot advance an inch without praying my way, nor keep the inch I gain without watching and standing fast! Grace alone can preserve and perfect me! The old nature will kill the new nature if it can and, to this moment, the only reason why my new nature is not dead is this—because it cannot die! If it could have died, it would have been slain long ago. But Jesus said, “I give

unto My sheep eternal life.” “He that believes on Me has everlasting life.” Therefore, the Believer cannot die! The only religion which will save you is one that you cannot leave because *it possesses you and will not leave you!* If you hold a doctrine which you can give up, give it up! But if the doctrines are burnt into you so that, as long as you live, you must hold them—and so that if you were burnt, every ash would hold that same truth in it because you are impregnated with it—then you have found the right thing!

You are not a saved man unless Christ has saved you forever. But that which has such a grip of you that its grasp is felt in the core of your being is the power of God! To have Christ living in you and the Truth of God ingrained in your very nature—O Sirs, this is the thing that saves the soul—and nothing short of it. It is written in the text, “God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” What is this but a life that shall last through your three-score years and ten? A life that shall last you should you outlive a century? A life that will still flourish when you lie at the grave’s mouth? A life that will abide when you have quit the body and left it rotting in the tomb? A life that will continue when your body is raised, again, and you shall stand before the Judgement Seat of Christ? A life that will outshine those stars and yon sun and moon? A life that shall be coeval with the life of the Eternal Father?

As long as there is a God, the Believer shall not only exist, but live! As long as there is a Heaven, you shall enjoy it! As long as there is a Christ, you shall live in His love! And as long as there is an eternity, you shall continue to fill it with delight! God bless you and help you to believe in Jesus. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 3.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—291, 538, 539.**

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NONE BUT JESUS—FIRST PART

NO. 361

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, FEBRUARY 17, 1861,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.

“He that believes on Him is not condemned.”
John 3:18.

THE way of salvation is stated in Scripture in the very plainest forms and yet, perhaps, there is no Truth about which more errors have been uttered than concerning the faith which saves the soul. Well has it been proved by experience that all doctrines of Christ are mysteries—mysteries not so much in themselves but because they are hid to them that are lost, in whom the God of this world has blinded their eyes. So plain is Scripture that one may say, “He that runs may read,” but so dim is man’s eye and so marred is his understanding that the very simplest Truth of Scripture he distorts and misrepresents.

And indeed, my Brethren, even those who know what faith is, personally and experimentally, do not always find it easy to give a good definition of it. They think they have hit the mark and then afterwards they lament that they have failed. Straining themselves to describe some one part of faith, they find they have forgotten another and in the excess of their earnestness to clear the poor sinner out of one mistake, they often lead him into another. So that I think I may say while faith is the simplest thing in all the world, yet it is one of the most difficult upon which to preach, because from its very importance our soul begins to tremble while speaking of it and then we are not able to describe it so clearly as we would.

I intend this morning, by God’s help, to put together sundry thoughts upon Faith, each of which I may have uttered in your hearing at different times but which have not been collected into one sermon before and which, I have no doubt, have been misunderstood from the want of their having been put together in their proper consecutive order. I shall speak a little on each of these points, first, *the object of faith*, to what it looks. Next, *the reason of faith*, from where it comes. Thirdly, *the ground of faith*, or what it wears when it comes. Fourthly, *the warrant of faith*, or why it dares to come to Christ. And fifthly, *the result of faith*, or, how it speeds when it does come to Christ.

I. First, then, THE OBJECT OF FAITH, or to what faith looks.

I am told in the Word of God to believe—What am I to believe? I am bid to look—to what am I to look? What is to be the object of my hope, belief and confidence? The reply is simple. The Object of Faith to a sinner is Christ Jesus. How many make a mistake about this and think that they are to believe on *God the Father!* Now belief in God is an after-result of faith in Jesus. We come to believe in the eternal love of the Father as the result of trusting the precious blood of the Son.

Many men say, “I would believe in Christ if I knew that I were elect.” This is coming to the Father and no man can come to the Father except by Christ. It is the Father’s work to elect—you cannot come directly to Him—therefore you cannot know your election until first you have be-

lieved on Christ the Redeemer. And then through redemption you can approach the Father and know your election.

Some, too, make the mistake of looking to the work of God *the Holy Spirit*. They look within to see if they have certain feelings and if they find them their faith is strong—but if their feelings have departed from them, then their faith is weak, so that they look to the work of the Spirit which is not the object of a sinner's faith. Both the Father and the Spirit must be trusted in order to complete redemption—but for the particular mercy of justification and pardon the blood of the Mediator is the only plea.

Christians have to trust the Spirit after conversion, but the sinner's business, if he would be saved, is not with trusting the Spirit nor with looking to the Spirit, but looking to Christ Jesus and to Him alone. I know your salvation depends on the whole Trinity but yet the first and immediate object of a sinner's justifying faith is neither God the Father nor God the Holy Spirit, but God the Son, incarnate in human flesh and offering atonement for sinners. Have you the eye of faith? Then, Soul, look to *Christ as God*. If you would be saved, believe Him to be God over all, blessed forever. Bow before Him and accept Him as being "Very God of very God." If you do not, you have no part in Him.

When you have thus believed, believe in him as *man*. Believe the wondrous story of His incarnation. Rely upon the testimony of the Evangelists who declare that the Infinite was robed in the infant, that the Eternal was concealed within the mortal, that He who was King of Heaven became a servant of servants and the Son of man. Believe and admire the mystery of His incarnation for unless you believe this, you cannot be saved. Then, especially, if you would be saved, let your faith behold Christ in His *perfect righteousness*.

See Him keeping the Law without blemish, obeying His Father without error, preserving His integrity without flaw. All this you are to consider as being done on your behalf. You could not keep the Law, He kept it for you. You could not obey God perfectly—His obedience stands in the place of your obedience—by it you are saved. But take care that your faith mainly fixes itself upon Christ as *dying and as dead*. View the Lamb of God as dumb before His shearers. View Him as the Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief. Go with Him to Gethsemane and behold Him sweating drops of blood.

Mark, your faith has nothing to do with anything within yourself—the Object of your faith is nothing within you, but a something without you. Believe on Him then, who on yonder tree with nailed hands and feet pours out His life for sinners. There is the Object of your faith for justification. Not in yourself, nor in anything which the Holy Spirit has done in you, or anything He has promised to do for you but you are to look to Christ and to Christ Jesus alone.

Then let your faith behold Christ *rising from the dead*. See Him—He has borne the curse and now He receives the justification. He dies to pay the debt. He rises that He may nail the handwriting of that discharged debt to the Cross. See Him ascending up on high and behold Him this day pleading before the Father's Throne. He is there pleading for His people—offering up today His authoritative petition for all that come to God by Him. And He, as God, as Man, as living, as dying, as rising and as reign-

ing above—He and He alone is to be the Object of your faith for the pardon of sin.

On nothing else must you trust. He is to be the only prop and pillar of your confidence and all you add thereunto will be a wicked antichrist, a rebellion against the sovereignty of the Lord Jesus. But take care that your faith saves you, that while you look to Christ in all these matters you view Him as being a *Substitute*. This doctrine of substitution is so essential to the whole plan of salvation that I must explain it here for the thousandth time. God is Just. He must punish sin. God is merciful. He wills to pardon those who believe in Jesus. How is this to be done? How can He be Just and exact the penalty—merciful—and accept the sinner?

He does it thus—He takes the sins of His people and actually lifts them up from off His people to Christ so that they stand as innocent as though they had never sinned and Christ is looked upon, by God, as though He had been all the sinners in the world robed into one. The sin of His people was taken from their persons and really and actually, not typically and metaphorically, but really and actually laid on Christ. Then God came forth with His fiery sword to meet the Sinner and to punish Him. He met Christ. Christ was not a sinner Himself, but the sins of His people were all imputed to Him. Justice, therefore, met Christ as though He had been the sinner—punished Christ for His people's sins—punished Him as far as its rights could go—exacted from Him the last atom of the penalty and left not a dreg in the cup.

And now he who can see Christ as being his Substitute and puts his trust in Him is thereby delivered from the curse of the Law. Soul, when you see Christ obeying the Law—your faith is to say, “He obeys that for His people.” When you see Him dying, you are to count the purple drops and say, “Thus He took my sins away.” When you see Him rising from the dead, you are to say—“He rises as the Head and Representative of all His elect,” and when you see Him sitting at the right hand of God, you are to view Him there as the pledge that all for whom He died shall sit at the Father's right hand.

Learn to look on Christ as being in God's sight as though He were the sinner. “In Him was no sin.” He was “*the Just*,” but He suffered for the unjust. He was the Righteous but He stood in the place of the unrighteous and all that the unrighteous ought to have endured Christ has endured once and for all and put away their sins forever by the sacrifice of Himself.

Now this is the great Object of faith. I pray you, do not make any mistake about this, for a mistake here will be dangerous, if not fatal. View Christ, by your faith, as being in His life and death and sufferings and resurrection the Substitute for all whom His Father gave Him—the vicarious sacrifice for the sins of all those who will trust Him with their souls. Christ, then, thus set forth, is the Object of justifying faith.

Now let me further remark that there are some of you, no doubt, saying—“Oh, I should believe and I should be saved if”—if what? If Christ had died? “Oh no, Sir, my doubt is nothing about Christ.” I thought so. Then what is the doubt? “Why, I should believe *if I felt this, or if I had done that*.” Just so. But I tell you, you could not believe in Jesus if you felt that, or if you had done that, for then you would believe in yourself and not in Christ. That is the English of it. If you were so-and-so, or so-and-so, then you could have confidence. Confidence in what? Why, confidence in your

feelings and confidence in your *doings* and isn't that the contrary of confidence in Christ?

Faith is not to infer from something good within *me* that I shall be saved. But it is to say that despite the fact that I am guilty in the sight of God and deserve His wrath, yet I do nevertheless believe that the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleans me from all sin. And though my present consciousness condemns me, yet my faith overpowers my consciousness and I believe that, "He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him."

To come to Christ as a saint is very easy work. To trust a doctor to cure you when you believe you are getting better, is very easy. But to trust your physician when you feel as if the sentence of death were in your body, to bear up when the disease is rising into the very skin and when the ulcer is gathering its venom—to believe even then in the efficacy of the medicine—that is *faith*. And so, when sin gets the mastery of you—when you feel that the Law condemns you—then, even then, as a sinner, to trust Christ—this is the most daring feat in all the world—and the faith which shook down the walls of Jericho.

The faith which raised the dead—the faith which stopped the mouths of libels—was not greater than that of a poor sinner, when in the teeth of all his sins he dares to trust the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ. Do this, Soul, then you are saved, whosoever you may be. The Object of faith, then, is Christ as the Substitute for sinners. God in Christ, but not God apart from Christ, nor any work of the Spirit, but the work of Jesus alone must be viewed by you as the foundation of your hope.

II. And now, secondly, THE REASON OF FAITH, or why does any man believe and from where does his faith come?

"Faith comes by *hearing*." Granted, but do not all men hear and do not many still remain unbelieving? How, then, does any man come by his faith? To his own experience his faith comes as the result of *a sense of need*. He feels himself needing a Savior. He finds Christ to be just such a Savior as he wants and therefore because he cannot help himself, he believes in Jesus. Having nothing of his own, he feels he must take Christ or else perish and therefore he does it because he cannot help doing it. He is fairly driven up into a corner and there is but this one way of escape, namely, by the righteousness of Another.

He feels he cannot escape by any good deeds, or sufferings of his own and he comes to Christ and humbles himself, because he cannot do without Christ and must perish unless he lay hold of Him. But to carry the question further back, where does that man get his sense of need? How is it that *he*, rather than others, feels his need of Christ? It is certain he has no more necessity for Christ than other men. How does he come to know, then, that he is lost and ruined? How is it that he is driven by the sense of ruin to take hold on Christ the Restorer?

The reply is—this is *the gift of God*. This is the work of the Spirit. No man comes to Christ except the Spirit draw him and the Spirit draws men to Christ by shutting them up under the Law to a conviction that if they do not come to Christ they must perish. Then by sheer stress of weather they tack about and run into this heavenly port. Salvation by Christ is so disagreeable to our carnal mind, so inconsistent with our love of human

merit that we never would take Christ to be our All in all if the Spirit did not convince us that we were nothing at all and did not so compel us to lay hold on Christ.

But then, the question goes further back still—how is it that the Spirit of God teaches some men their need and not other men? Why is it that some of you were driven by your sense of need to Christ while others go on in their self-righteousness and perish? There is no answer to be given but this, “Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.” It comes to divine sovereignty at the last. The Lord has “hidden those things from the wise and prudent and has revealed them unto babes.” According to the way in which Christ put it—“My sheep hear My voice,” “you believe not because you are not of My sheep, as I said unto you.”

Some Divines would like to read that—“You are not My sheep, because you do not believe.” As if believing made us the sheep of Christ. But the text puts it—“You *believe not*, because you are not of My sheep.” “All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me.” If they come not, it is a clear proof that they were never given. For those who were given of old eternity to Christ, chosen by God the Father and then redeemed by God the Son—these are led by the Spirit through a sense of need to come and lay hold on Christ. No man yet ever did or ever will believe in Christ unless he feels his need of Him. No man ever did or will *feel his need* of Christ unless the Spirit makes him feel and the Spirit will make no man feel his need of Jesus savingly unless it be so written in that eternal book—in which God has surely engraved the names of His elect.

So then, I think I am not to be misunderstood on this point—that the reason of faith—or why men believe, is God’s electing love working through the Spirit by a sense of need and so bringing them to Christ Jesus.

III. But now I shall want your careful attention while I come to another point upon which you, perhaps, will think I contradict myself. And that is—THE GROUND OF THE SINNER’S FAITH—or on what ground does he dare to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

My dear Friends, I have already said that no man will believe in Jesus unless he feels his need of Him. But you have often heard me say and I repeat it again, that I do not come to Christ pleading that I feel my need of Him. My reason for believing in Christ, is not that I *feel* my need of Him, but that I *have* a need of Him. The ground on which a man comes to Jesus is not as a *sensible* sinner, but as a sinner and nothing but a sinner. He will not come unless he is awakened, but when he comes, he does not say, “Lord, I come to you because I am an awakened sinner, save me.”

But he says, “Lord, I am a sinner, save me.” Not his awakening, but his sinnership is the method and plan upon which he dares to come. You will, perhaps, perceive what I mean for I cannot exactly explain myself just now. If I refer to the preaching of a great many Calvinistic Divines, they say to a sinner, “Now, *if you feel* your need of Christ, if you have repented so much, *if you have been harrowed* by the Law to such-and-such a degree—then you may come to Christ on the ground that you are an awakened sinner.” I say that is false.

No man may come to Christ on the ground of his being an awakened sinner. He must come to Him as a sinner. When I come to Jesus I know I am not come unless I am awakened, but still, I do not come as an awa-

kened sinner. I do not stand at the foot of His Cross to be washed because I have repented. I bring nothing when I come, but sin. A sense of need is a good feeling, but when I stand at the foot of the Cross, I do not believe in Christ because I have got good feelings. I believe in Him whether I have good feelings or not—

***“Just as I am without one plea,
But that Your blood was shed for me,
And that You bid me come to You,
O Lamb of God I come.”***

Mr. Roger, Mr. Sheppard, Mr. Flavell and several excellent Divines in the Puritan age and especially Richard Baxter used to give descriptions of what a man must *feel* before he may dare to come to Christ. Now, I say in the language of good Mr. Fenner, father of those Divines, who said he was but a babe in grace when compared with them—“I dare to say it that all this is not Scriptural. Sinners do feel these things before they come, but they do not come on the ground of having felt it. They come on the ground of being sinners and on no other ground whatever.” The gate of Mercy is opened and over the door it is written, “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save *sinners*.”

Between that word “save” and the next word “sinners,” there is no adjective. It does not say, “penitent sinners,” “awakened sinners,” “sensible sinners,” “grieving sinners” or “alarmed sinners.” No, it only says, “sinners.” And I know this—that when I come I come to Christ *today*—for I feel it is as much a necessity of my life to come to the Cross of Christ today as it was to come ten years ago—when I come to Him I dare not come as a conscious sinner or an awakened sinner, but I have to come still as a sinner with nothing in my hands.

I saw an aged man this week in the vestry of a chapel in Yorkshire. I had been saying something to this effect. The old man had been a Christian for years and he said, “I never saw it put exactly so, but still I know that is just the way I come. I say, ‘Lord—

***“Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to Your Cross I cling;
Naked, look to You for dress;
Helpless, come to You for grace;
Black—(“Black enough,” said the old man)
I to the fountain fly,
Wash me, Savior, or I die.”***

Faith is getting right out of yourself and getting into Christ. I know that many hundreds of poor souls have been troubled because the minister has said, “if you feel your need, you may come to Christ.” “But,” say they, “I do not feel my need enough. I am sure I do not.” Many a score of letters have I received from poor troubled consciences who have said, “I would venture to believe in Christ to save me if I had a tender conscience. If I had a soft heart—but oh, my heart is like a rock of ice which will not melt. I cannot feel as I would like to feel and therefore I must not believe in Jesus.”

Oh, down with it, down with it! It is a wicked anti-Christ. It is flat Popery! It is not your soft heart that entitles you to believe. You are to believe in Christ to renew your hard heart and come to Him with nothing

about you but sin. The ground on which a sinner comes to Christ is that he is black with sin. That he is dead and not that he knows he is dead. That he is lost and not that he knows he is lost. I know he will not come unless he does know it, but that is not the ground on which he comes. It is the secret reason why, but it is not the public positive ground which he understands.

Here was I, year after year, afraid to come to Christ because I thought I will not feel enough. And I used to read that hymn of Cowper's about being insensible as steel—

**“If anything is felt 'tis only pain
To find I cannot feel.”**

When I believed in Christ, I thought I did not feel at all. Now when I look back I find that I had been feeling all the while most acutely and intensely and most of all because I thought I did not feel. Generally the people who repent the most think they are impenitent—and people feel most their need when they think they do not feel at all. We are no judge of our feelings and hence the Gospel invitation is not put upon the ground of anything of which we can be a judge. It is put on the ground of our being sinners and nothing but sinners.

“Well,” says one, “but it says, ‘Come unto Me all you that are weary and heavy-laden and I will give you rest’—then we must be weary and heavy-laden.” Just so. So it is in *that* text, but then there is another. “Whosoever will, let him come.” And that does not say anything about “weary and heavy-laden.” Besides, while the invitation is given to the weary and heavy-laden you will perceive that the promise is not made to them *as* weary and heavy-laden but it is made to them *as coming* to Christ.

They did not know that they were weary and heavy-laden when they came. They thought they were not. They really were, but part of their weariness was that they could not be as weary as they would like to be and part of their load was that they did not feel their load enough. They came to Christ just as they were and He saved them—not because there was any merit in their weariness, or any efficacy in their being heavy-laden—He saved them as sinners and nothing but sinners and so they were washed in His blood and made clean. My dear Hearer, do let me put this Truth home to you. If you will come to Christ this morning, as nothing but a sinner, He will not cast you out.

Old Tobias Crisp says in one of his sermons upon this very point, “I dare to say it but if you do come to Christ, whosoever you may be, if He does not receive you then He is not true to His word, for He says, ‘Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.’ If you come, never mind qualification or preparation. He needs no qualification of duties or of feelings either. You are to come just as you are and if you are the biggest sinner out of Hell, you are as fit to come to Christ as if you were the most moral and most excellent of men. There is a bath—who is fit to be washed? A man's blackness is no reason why he should not be washed, but the clearer reason why he should be.”

When our City magistrates were giving relief to the poor, nobody said, “I am so poor, therefore I am not fit to have relief.” Your poverty is your preparation, the black is the white here. Strange contradiction! The only thing you can bring to Christ is your sin and your wickedness. All He asks is that you will come empty. If you have anything of your own you must

leave all before you come. If there is anything good in you, you cannot trust Christ—you must come with nothing in your hand. Take Him as All in all and that is the only ground upon which a poor soul can be saved—as a sinner and nothing but a sinner.

IV. But not to stay longer, my fourth point has to do with THE WARRANT OF FAITH, or why a man dares to trust in Christ.

Is it not imprudent for any man to trust Christ to save him and especially when he has no good thing whatever? Is it not an arrogant presumption for any man to trust Christ? No, Sirs, it is not. It is a grand and noble work of God the Holy Spirit. For He makes a man admit his sins and still to believe and set to his seal that God is true and believe in the return of the blood of Jesus. But why does any man dare to believe in Christ, I will ask you now. “Well,” says one man, “I summoned faith to believe in Christ because I did feel there was a work of the Spirit in me.” You do not believe in Christ at all. “Well,” says another, “I thought that I had a right to believe in Christ, because I felt somewhat.” You had not any right to believe in Christ at all on such a warrant as that.

What is a man’s warrant, then, for believing in Christ? Here it is. Christ tells him to do it—that is his warrant. Christ’s Word is the warrant of the sinner for believing in Christ—not what he feels nor what he is, nor what he is not—but that Christ has told him to do it. The Gospel runs thus: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. He that believes not shall be damned.” Faith in Christ, then, is a commanded duty as well as a blessed privilege and what a mercy it is that it is a duty—because there never can be any question but that a man has a right to do his duty.

Now on the ground that God commands me to believe, I have a right to believe, be I who I may. The Gospel is sent to every creature. Well, I belong to that tribe, I am one of the every creatures and that Gospel commands me to believe and I do it. I cannot have done wrong in doing it for I was commanded to do so. I cannot be wrong in obeying a command of God. Now it is a command of God given to every creature that he should believe on Jesus Christ whom God has sent. This is your warrant, Sinner. And a blessed warrant it is. For it is one which Hell cannot gainsay and which Heaven cannot withdraw.

You need not be looking within to look for the misty warrants of your experience. You need not be looking to your works or to your feelings to get some dull and insufficient warrant for your confidence in Christ. You may believe Christ because He tells you to do so. That is a sure ground to stand on and one which admits of no doubt. I will suppose that we are all starving, that the city is by sin besieged and shut up and there has been a long, long famine and we are ready to die of hunger. There comes out an invitation to us to repair at once to the palace of some great one there to eat and drink, but we have grown foolish and will not accept the invitation.

Suppose now that some hideous madness has got hold of us and we prefer to die and had rather starve than come. Suppose the king’s herald should say, “Come and feast, poor hungry souls and because I know you are unwilling to come, I add this threat, if you come not my warriors shall be upon you. They shall make you feel the sharpness of their swords.” I think, my dear Friends, we should say, “We bless the great man for that

threat because now we need not say, 'I may not come,' while the fact is we have to go or die. Now I need not say I am not fit to come for I am *commanded* to come and I am threatened if I do not come. And I will even go."

That awful sentence—"He that believes *not* shall be damned" was added not out of anger, but because the Lord knew our silly madness and that we should refuse our own mercies unless He thundered at us to make us come to the feast, "Compel then to come in." This was the Word of the Master of old and that text is part of the carrying out of that exhortation, "Compel them to come in." Sinner, you cannot be lost by trusting Christ, but you will be lost if you do not trust Him. Yes and lost for not trusting Him. I put it boldly now—Sinner, not only may you come, but oh! I pray you, do not defy the wrath of God by refusing to come. The gate of mercy stands wide open. Why will you not come? Why will you not? Why so proud? Why will you still refuse His voice and perish in your sins?

Mark, if you perish, any one of you, your blood lies not at God's door, nor Christ's door, but at your own. He can say of you, "You will not come unto Me that you might have life." Oh, poor Trembler, if you are willing to come, there is nothing in God's Word to keep you from coming, but there are both threats to drive you and powers to draw you. Still I hear you say, "I must not trust Christ." You *may*, I say, for every creature under Heaven is commanded to do it and what you are commanded to do, you may do.

"Ah! well," says one, "still I do not feel that I may." There you go again, you say you will not do what God tells you, because of some stupid *feelings* of your own. You are not told to trust Christ because you *feel* anything, but simply because you are a *sinner*. Now you know you are a sinner. "I am," says one, "and that is my sorrow." Why your sorrow? That is some sign that you do feel. "Yes," says one, "but I do not feel enough and that is why I sorrow. I do not feel as I should." Well, suppose you do feel, or suppose you do not, you are a sinner and "this is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

"Oh, but I am such an old sinner, I have been sixty years in sin." Where is it written that after sixty you cannot be saved? Sir, Christ could save you at a hundred—yes, if you were a Methuselah in guilt. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleans us from all sin." "Whosoever will, let him come." "He is able to save to the uttermost them that come onto God by Him." "Yes," says one, "but I have been a drunkard, a swearer, or lascivious, or profane." Then you are a sinner. You have not gone further than the uttermost. He is able to save you still. "Yes," says another, "but you do not know how my guilt has been aggravated."

That only proves you to be a sinner and that you are commanded to trust Christ and be saved. "Yes," cries yet another, "but you do not know how often I have rejected Christ." Yes, but that only makes you the more a sinner. "You do not know how hard my heart is." Just so, but that only proves you to be a sinner and still proves you to be one whom Christ came to save. "Oh, but, Sir, I have not any good thing. If I had, you know, I should have something to encourage me." The fact of your not having any good thing just proves to me that you are the man I am sent to preach to.

Christ came to save that which was lost and all you have said only proves that you are lost and therefore He came to save you. Trust Him.

Trust Him. “But if I am saved,” says one, “I shall be the biggest sinner that ever was saved.” Then the greater music in Heaven when you get there, the more glory to Christ—for the bigger the sinner, the more honor for Christ when at last he shall be brought home. “Yes, but my sin has abounded.” His grace shall much more abound. “But my sin has reached even to Heaven.” Yes, but His grace reaches above the heavens.

“Oh, that my guilt is as broad as the world.” Yes, but His righteousness is broader than a thousand worlds. “Yes, but my sin is scarlet.” Yes, but His blood is more scarlet than your sins and can wash the scarlet out by a richer scarlet. “Yes, but I deserve to be lost and death and Hell cry for my damnation.” Yes and so they may, but the blood of Jesus Christ can cry louder than either death or Hell. And it cries today, “Father, let the sinner live.” Oh, I wish I could get this thought out of my own mouth and get it into your heads—that when God saves you, it is *not* because of *anything in you*. It is because of something in Himself. God’s love has no reason except in His own head. God’s reason for pardoning a sinner is found in His own heart and not in the sinner. And there is as much reason in you why you should be saved as why another should be saved, namely, no reason at all. There is no reason in you why He should have mercy on you but there is no reason wanted—for the reason lies in God and in God alone.

V. And now I come to the conclusion and I trust you will have patience with me, for my last point is a very glorious one and full of joy to those souls who as sinners dare to believe in Christ—THE RESULT OF FAITH—or how it speeds when it comes to Christ.

The text says, “He that believes on Him is not condemned.” There is a man here who has just this moment believed. He is not condemned. But he has been fifty years in sin and has plunged into all manner of vice. His sins, which are many, are all forgiven him. He stands in the sight of God now as innocent as though he had never sinned. Such is the power of Jesus’ blood, that “he that believes is not condemned.” Does this relate to what is to happen at the day of Judgment? I pray you look at the text and you will find it does not say, “He that believes on Him shall not *be* condemned,” but he *is* not. He is not *now*. And if he is not now, then it follows that he *never* shall be. For having believed in Christ that promise still stands, “He that believes on Him is not condemned.”

I believe today I am not condemned. In fifty years time that promise will be just the same—“He that believes on Him is not condemned.” So that the moment a man puts his trust in Christ he is freed from all condemnation—past, present and to come—and from that day he stands in God’s sight as though he were without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. “But he sins,” you say. He does indeed, but his sins are not laid to his charge. They were laid to the charge of Christ of old and God shall never charge the offense on two—first on Christ and then on the sinner.

“Yes, but he *often* falls into sin.” That may be possible—though if the Spirit of God is in him he sins not as he once did. He sins by reason of infirmity—not by reason of his love to sin—for now he hates it. But mark, you shall put it in your own way if you will and I will answer, “Yes, but though he sin, yet is he no more guilty in the sight of God, for all his guilt has been taken from him and put on Christ—positively, literally and actually lifted off from him and put upon Jesus Christ.”

Do you see the Jewish host? There is a scapegoat brought out. The high priest confesses the sin of the people over the scapegoat's head. The sin is all gone from the people and laid upon the scapegoat. Away goes the scapegoat into the wilderness. Is there any sin left on the people? If there is, then the scapegoat has not carried it away. Because it cannot be *here* and *there*, too. It cannot be carried away and left behind too.

"No," you say, "Scripture says the scapegoat carried away the sin. There was none left on the people when the scapegoat had taken away the sin." And so, when by faith we put our hand upon the head of Christ, does Christ take away our sin, or does He not? If He does not, then it is of no use our believing in Him. But if He does really take away our sin, our sin cannot be on Him and on us, too. If it is on Christ, we are free, clear, accepted, justified and this is the true doctrine of justification by faith. As soon as a man believes in Christ Jesus, his sins are gone from him and gone away forever. They are blotted out forever.

What if a man owes a hundred pounds, yet if he has got a receipt for it, he is free, it is blotted out, there is an erasure made in the book and the debt is gone. Though the man commit sin yet the debt having been paid before even the debt was acquired, he is no more a debtor to the Law of God. Does not Scripture say that God has cast His people's sins into the depths of the sea? Now, if they are in the depths of the sea, they cannot be on His people. Blessed be His name, in the day when He cast our sins into the depth of the sea He views us as pure in His sight and we stand accepted in the Beloved.

Then He says, "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us." They cannot be removed and be here still. Then if you believe in Christ, you are no more in the sight of God a sinner, you are accepted as though you were perfect, as though *you* had kept the Law—for Christ has kept it and His righteousness is yours. You have broken it, but your sin is His and He has been punished for it. Mistake not yourselves any longer—you are no more what you were. When you believe you stand in Christ's place even as Christ of old stood in yours. The transformation is complete. The exchange is positive and eternal. They who believe in Jesus are as much accepted of God the Father as even His Eternal Son is accepted and they that believe not, let them do what they will, they shall but go about to work out their own righteousness, but they abide under the Law and still shall they be under the curse.

Now, you that believe in Jesus walk up and down the earth in the glory of this great Truth. You are sinners in yourselves but you are washed in the blood of Christ. David says, "Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow." You have lately seen the snow come down—how clear! How white! What could be whiter? Why, the Christian is whiter than that. You say, "He is black." I know he is as black as anyone—as black as Hell—but the blood drop falls on him and he is as white—"whiter than snow." The next time you see the snow-white crystals falling from Heaven, look on them and say, "Ah! though I must confess within myself that I am unworthy and unclean, yet, believing in Christ, He has given me His righteousness so completely that I am even whiter than the snow as it descends from the treasury of God."

Oh, for faith to lay hold on this! Oh, for an overpowering faith that shall get the victory over doubts and fears and make us enjoy the liberty wherewith Christ makes men free! Go home, you that believe in Christ—go to your beds this night and say, “If I die in my bed I cannot be condemned.” Should you wake the next morning, go into the world and say, “I am not condemned!” When the devil howls at you, tell him, “Ah, you may accuse, but I am not condemned.”

And if sometimes your sins rise—say, “Yes, I know you, but you are all gone forever. I am not condemned.” And when your turn shall come to die, shut your eyes in peace—

***“Bold shall you stand in that great day,
For who anything to your charge can lay?”***

Fully absolved by grace you shall be found at last and all sin’s tremendous curse and blame shall be taken away, not because of anything you have done.

I pray you to do all you can for Christ out of gratitude, but even when you have done all, do not rest there. Rest still in the Substitution and the Sacrifice. Be what Christ was in His Father’s sight and when conscience awakens, you can tell it that Christ was for you all that you ought to have been—that He has suffered all your penalty and now neither mercy nor justice can smite you, since justice has clasped hands with mercy in a firm decree to save that man whose faith is in the Cross of Christ. The Lord bless these words for His sake. Amen.

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
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NONE BUT JESUS—SECOND PART

NO. 362

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH EVENING, FEBRUARY 17, 1861,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET, SOUTHWARK.**

***“He that believes on Him is not condemned.”
John 3:18.***

IN the morning sermon our time was mainly taken up with the description of Faith—what it is. We had only a few minutes left at its close to describe what it leads to—the privilege of justification which is a gift to the soul as the result of Faith. Let this high privilege, then, occupy our attention tonight. The text says, “He that believes on Him—(that is on Christ Jesus)—is not condemned.”

To take up the subject in order, we shall notice first *the satisfactory declaration here made*. Secondly, *we shall endeavor to correct certain misapprehensions respecting it, by reason of which the Christian is often cast down*. We shall close with *some reflections, positive and negative, as to what this text includes and what it excludes*.

1. First of all, then, WHAT A SATISFACTORY DECLARATION!—“He that believes on Him is not condemned.”

You are aware that in our courts of law a verdict of “not guilty” amounts to an acquittal and the prisoner is immediately discharged. So is it in the language of the Gospel. A sentence of “not condemned” implies the justification of the sinner. It means that the believer in Christ receives *now* a present justification. Faith does not produce its fruits by-and-by, but *now*. So far as justification is the result of faith, it is given to the soul in the moment when it closes with Christ and accepts Him as its All-in-All.

Are they who stand before the Throne of God justified tonight?—So are we—as truly and as clearly justified as they who walk in white and sing His praises above. The thief upon the Cross was justified the moment that he turned the eye of faith to Jesus who was just then, hanging by his side—and Paul, the aged, after years of service was not more justified than was the thief with no service at all. We are *today* accepted in the Beloved, *today* absolved from sin, *today* innocent in the sight of God. Oh, ravishing, soul-transporting thought! There are some clusters of this vine which we shall not be able to gather till we go to Heaven, but this is one of the first ripe clusters and may be plucked and eaten here.

This is not as the corn of the land which we can never eat till we cross the Jordan. But this is part of the manna in the wilderness and part, too, of our daily raiment with which God supplies us in our journeying to and fro. We are *now*—even *now* pardoned. Even now are our sins put away. Even now we stand in the sight of God as though we had never been

guilty—innocent as father Adam when he stood in integrity—before he had eaten of the fruit of the forbidden tree, pure as though we had never received the taint of depravity in our veins.

“There is, therefore, *now* no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” There is not a sin in the Book of God, even now, against one of His people. There is nothing laid to their charge. There is neither speck, nor spot, nor wrinkle, nor any such thing remaining upon any believer in the matter of justification in the sight of the Judge of all the earth.

But to continue, the text evidently means not simply present, but *continual* justification. In the moment when you and I believed it was said of us, “He is not condemned.” Many days have passed since then, many changes we have seen. But it is as true of us tonight—“He is not condemned.” The Lord alone knows how long our appointed day shall be—how long before we shall fulfill the hireling’s time and like a shadow flee away. But this we know—since every Word of God is assured and the gifts of God are without repentance—though we should live another fifty years, yet would it still be written here, “He that believes on Him is not condemned.”

No, if by some mysteries dealing in Providence our lives should be lengthened out to ten times the usual limit of man and we should come to the eight or nine hundred years of Methuselah, still would it stand the same—“He that believes on Him is not condemned.” “I give unto My sheep eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand.” “The just shall live by faith.” “He that believes on Him shall never be confounded.” All these promises go to show that the justification which Christ gives to our faith is a continual one which will last as long as we shall live.

And remember, it will last in eternity as well as in time. We shall not in Heaven wear any other garment but that which we wear here. Today the righteous stand clothed in the righteousness of Christ. They shall wear this same wedding dress at the great wedding feast. But what if it should wear out? What if that righteousness should lose its virtue in the eternity to come? Oh Beloved, we entertain no fear about that! Heaven and earth shall pass away, but this righteousness shall never wax old. No moth shall eat it. No thief shall steal it. No weeping hand of lamentation shall rend it in two.

It is, it must be, eternal—even as Christ Himself—Jehovah our righteousness. Because He is our righteousness, the self-existent, the everlasting, the immutable Jehovah, of whose years there is no end and whose strength fails not, therefore of our righteousness there is no end. And of its perfection and of its beauty there shall never be any termination. The text, I think, very clearly teaches us that he who believes on Christ has received forever a continual justification.

Again—think for a moment—the justification which is spoken of here is *complete*. “He that believes on Him is not condemned”—that is to say not in any measure or in any degree. I know some think it is possible for us to be in such a state as to be half-condemned and half-accepted. So far as

we are sinners so far condemned and so far as we are righteous so far accepted. Oh Beloved, there is nothing like that in Scripture. It is altogether apart from the doctrine of the Gospel. If it is of works, it is no more of grace and if it is of grace, it is no more of works.

Works and grace cannot mix and mingle any more than fire and water. It is either one or the other, it cannot be both. The two can never be allied. There can be no admixture of the two, no dilution of one with the other. He that believes is free from all iniquity, from all guilt, from all blame. And though the devil bring an accusation, yet it is a false one, for we are free even from accusation, since it is boldly challenged, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” It does not say, “Who shall *prove* it?” but “Who shall *lay* it to their charge?”

They are so completely freed from condemnation that not the shadow of a spot upon their soul is found. Not even the slightest passing by of iniquity to cast its black shadow on them. They stand before God not only as half-innocent, but as perfectly so. Not only as half-washed, but as whiter than snow. Their sins are not simply erased, they are blotted out—not simply put out of sight, but cast into the depths of the sea. Not merely gone and gone as far as the east is from the west—but gone forever, once and for all. You know, Beloved, that the Jew in his ceremonial purification never finds his conscience free from sin. After one sacrifice he needed still another, for these offerings could never make the comers thereunto perfect.

The next day’s sins needed a new lamb and the next year’s iniquity needed a new victim for an atonement. “But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God.” No more burnt-offerings are needed. No more washing, no more blood, no more atonement, no more sacrifice. “It is finished!” hear the dying Savior cry. Your sins have sustained their death-blow, the robe of your righteousness has received its last thread. It is done, complete, perfect. It needs no addition. It can never suffer any diminution.

Oh, Christian, lay hold of this precious thought!. I may not be able to state it except in weak terms, but let not my weakness prevent your apprehending its glory and its preciousness. It is enough to make a man leap, though his legs were loaded with irons and to make him sing though his mouth were gagged, to think that we are perfectly accepted in Christ, that our justification is impartial. It does not go to a limited extent, but goes the whole way. Our unrighteousness is covered. From condemnation we are entirely and irrevocably free once more.

The non-condemnation is *effectual*. The royal privilege of justification shall never miscarry. It shall be brought home to every believer. In the reign of King George the Third, the son of a member of this Church lay under sentence of death for forgery. My predecessor, Dr. Rippon, after incredible exertions obtained a promise that his sentence should be remitted. By a singular occurrence the present senior deacon—then a young man—learned from the governor of the jail that the reprieve had not been

received. And the unhappy prisoner would have been executed the next morning had not Dr. Rippon gone post-haste to Windsor, obtained an interview with the king in his bed-chamber and received from the monarch's own hand a copy of that reprieve which had been negligently put aside by a thoughtless officer.

"I charge you, Doctor," said his majesty, "to make good speed." "Trust me, Sire, for that," responded your old pastor and he returned to London in time, just in time and only just in time, for the prisoner was being marched with many others on to the scaffold. Yes, that pardon might have been given and yet the man might have been executed if it had not been effectually carried out. But blessed be God our non-condemnation is an effectual thing. It is not a matter of letter. It is a matter of fact.

Ah, poor Souls, you know that condemnation is a matter of fact. When you and I suffered in our souls and were brought under the heavy hand of the Law we felt that its curses were no mock thunders like the wrath of the Vatican, but they were real. We felt that the anger of God was indeed a thing to tremble at. A real substantial fact. Now, just as real as the condemnation which Justice brings, just so real is the justification which Mercy bestows. You are not only nominally guiltless, but you are really so, if you believe in Christ. You are not only nominally put into the place of the innocent, but you are really put there the moment you believe in Jesus.

Not only is it said that your sins are gone, but they *are* gone. Not only does God look on you as though you were accepted, you *are* accepted. It is a matter of fact to you, as much a matter of fact as that you sinned. You do not doubt that you have sinned, you cannot doubt that—do not doubt, then, that when you believe your sins are put away. For as certain as ever the black spot fell on you when you sinned, so certainly and so surely was it all washed out when you were bathed in that fountain filled with blood which was drawn from Emanuel's veins.

Come, my Soul, think of this! You are actually and effectually cleared from guilt. You are led out of your prison. You are no more in fetters as a bond-slave. You are delivered now from the bondage of the Law. You are freed from sin and you can walk at large as a free man. Your Savior's blood has procured your full discharge. Come, my Soul—you have a right now to come to your Father's feet. No flames of vengeance are there to scare you now. No fiery sword. Justice cannot smite the innocent. Come, my Soul, your disabilities are taken away. You were unable once to see your Father's face. You can see it now. You could not speak with Him, nor He with you. But now you have access with boldness to this grace wherein we stand.

Once there was a fear of Hell upon you. There is no Hell for you now. How can there be punishment for the guiltless? He that believes is guiltless, is not condemned and cannot be punished. No frowns of an avenging God now. If God is viewed as a Judge, how should He frown upon the guiltless? How should the Judge frown upon the absolved one? More than all the privileges you might have enjoyed if you had never sinned are

yours now that you are justified. All the blessings which you would have had if you had kept the Law and more are yours tonight because Christ has kept it for you. All the love and the acceptance which a perfectly obedient being could have obtained of God belong to you, because Christ was perfectly obedient on your behalf and has imputed all His merits to your account that you might be exceeding rich through Him, who for your sake became exceedingly poor.

Oh that the Holy Spirit would but enlarge our hearts—that we might suck sweetness out of these thoughts! There is no condemnation. Moreover, there never shall be any condemnation. The forgiveness is not partial, but perfect. It is so effectual that it delivers us from all the penalties of the Law, gives to us all the privileges of obedience and puts us actually high above where we should have been had we never sinned. It fixes our standing more secure than it was before we fell. We are not now where Adam was, for Adam might fall and perish.

We are rather where Adam would have been if we could suppose God had put him into the garden for seven years and said, “If you are obedient for seven years, your time of probation shall be over and I will reward you.” The children of God in one sense may be said to be in a state of probation—in another sense there is no probation. There is no probation as to whether the child of God should be saved. He is saved already. His sins are washed away—his righteousness is complete—and if that righteousness could endure a million year’s probation, it would never be defiled. In fact, it always stands the same in the sight of God and must do so forever and ever.

II. Let me now endeavor to CORRECT SOME MISAPPREHENSIONS BY REASON OF WHICH CHRISTIANS ARE OFTEN CAST DOWN.

What simpletons we are! Whatever our natural age, how childish we are in spiritual things! What great simpletons we are when we first believe in Christ! We think that our being pardoned involves a great many things which we afterwards find have nothing whatever to do with our pardon. For instance, we think we shall never sin again. We fancy that the battle is all fought. That we have got into a fair field with no more war to wage—that we have got the victory and have only just to stand up and wave the palm branch. That all is over, that God has only got to call us up to Himself and we shall enter into Heaven without having to fight any enemies upon earth.

Now, all these are obvious mistakes. Though the text has a great meaning, it does not mean anything of this kind. Observe that although it does assert, “He that believes is not condemned,” it does not say that he that believes shall not have his faith exercised. Your faith will be exercised. An untried faith will be no faith at all. God never gave men faith without intending to try it. Faith is received for the very purpose of endurance. Just as our Rifle Corps friends put up the target with the intention of shooting at it, so does God give faith with the intention of letting trials and troubles and sin and Satan aim all their darts at it.

When you have faith in Christ it is a great privilege. But recollect that it involves a great trial. You asked for great faith the other night—did you consider that you asked for great troubles, too? You cannot have great faith to lay up and rust. Mr. Great-Heart in John Bunyan's *Pilgrim* was a very strong man but then what strong work he had to do. He had to go with all those women and children many scores of times up to the Celestial City and back again. He had to fight all the giants and drive back all the lions, to slay the giant Slay-Good and knock down the Castle of Despair.

If you have a great measure of faith, you will have need to use it all. You will never have a single scrap to spare. You will be like the virgins in our Lord's parable—even though you are a wise virgin—you will have to say to others who might borrow of you, "Not so, lest there be not enough for us and for you." But when your faith is exercised with trials, do not think you are brought into judgment for your sins. Oh, no, Believer, there is plenty of exercise, but that is not condemnation. There are many trials, but still we are justified. We may often be buffeted but we are never accursed. We may oftentimes be cast down but the sword of the Lord never can and never will smite us to the heart.

Yet more—not only may our faith be exercised but our faith may come to a very low ebb and still we are not be condemned. When your faith gets so small that you can not see it, even then you still are not condemned. If you have ever believed in Jesus, your faith may be like the sea when it goes out a very long way from the shore and leaves a vast track of mud and some might say the sea was gone or dried up—but you are still not condemned when your faith is almost dried up. Yes! and I dare to say it—when your faith is at the flood-tide, you are not more *accepted* then, than when your faith is at the lowest ebb.

Your acceptance does not depend upon the *quantity* of your faith—it only depends upon its *reality*. If you are really resting in Christ, though your faith may be but as a spark and a thousand devils may try to quench that one spark, yet you are not condemned—you shall stand accepted in Christ. Though your comforts will necessarily decay as your faith declines, yet your acceptance does not decay. Though faith does rise and fall like the thermometer, though faith is like the mercury in the bulb, all weathers change it—yet God's love is not affected by the weather of earth, or the changes of time. Until the perfect righteousness of Christ can be a mutable thing—a football to be kicked about by the fleet of fiends—your acceptance with God can never change. You are, you must be perfectly accepted in the Beloved.

There is another thing which often tries the child of God. He at times loses the light of his Father's countenance. Now, remember, the text does not say, "He that believes shall not lose the light of God's countenance." He may do so, but he shall not be condemned for all that. You may walk, not only for days, but for months in such a state that you have little fellowship with Christ, very little communion with God of a joyous sort. The promises may seem broken to you, the Bible may afford you but little

comfort. And when you turn your eye to Heaven you may only have to feel more of the smarting that is caused by your Father's rod. You may have vexed and grieved His Spirit and He may have turned away His face from you. But you are not condemned for all that.

Mark the testimony—"He that believes is not condemned." Even when your Father smites you and leaves a welt at every stroke and brings the blood at every blow—there is not a particle of condemnation in any one stroke. Not in His anger, but in His dear Covenant love He smites you. There is an unmixed and unalloyed affection in every love-stroke of chastisement from your Father's hand as there is in the kisses of Jesus Christ's lips. Oh, believe this—it will tend to lift up your heart—it will cheer you when neither sun nor moon appear!

It will honor your God. It will show you where your acceptance really lies. When His face is turned away believe Him still and say, "He abides faithful though He hides His face from me." I will go a little further still. The child of God may be so assaulted by Satan that he may be well-nigh given up to despair and yet he is not condemned. The devils may beat the great Hell-drum in his ear till he thinks himself to be on the very brink of perdition. He may read the Bible and think that every threat is against him and that every promise shuts its mouth and will not cheer him—and he may at last despond and despond and despond—till he is ready to break the harp that has so long been hanging on the willow.

He may say, "The Lord has forsaken me. My God will be gracious no more," but it is not true. Yes, he may be ready to swear a thousand times that God's mercy is gone forever and that His faithfulness will fail forever more, but it is not true, it is not true. A thousand liars so swearing to a falsehood could not make it true and our doubts and fears are all of them liars. If there were ten thousand of them and they all professed the same, it is a falsehood that God ever did forsake His people, or that He ever cast from Him an innocent man—and you are innocent, remember, when you believe in Jesus.

"But," you say, "I am full of sin." "Yes," I say, "but that sin has been laid on Christ." "Oh," you say, "but I sin daily." "Yes," I say, "but that sin was laid on Him before you committed it, years ago. It is not yours. Christ has taken it away once and for all. You are a righteous man by faith and God will not forsake the righteous nor will He cast away the innocent." I say, then, the child of God may have his faith at a low ebb. He may lose the light of his Father's countenance and he may even get into thorough despair. But yet all these cannot disprove my text—"He that believes is not condemned."

"But what," you say, "if the child of God should sin?" It is a deep and tender subject, yet must we touch it and be bold here. I would not mind God's Truth lest any should make a bad use of it. I know there are some, not the people of God, who will say, "Let us sin, that grace may abound." Their condemnation is just. I cannot help the perversion of Truth. There

ARE always men who will take the best of food as though it were poison and make the best of Truth into a lie and so be damning their own souls.

You ask, “What if a child of God should fall into sin?” I answer the child of God *does* fall into sin. Every day he mourns and groans because when he would do good, evil is present with him. But though he falls into sin, he is not condemned for all that—not by one of them, or by all of them put together, because his acceptance does not depend upon himself, but upon *the perfect righteousness of Christ*. And that perfect righteousness is not invalidated by any sins of his. He is perfect in Christ. And until Christ is imperfect, the imperfections of the creature do not mar the justification of the believer in the sight of God.

But oh, if he falls into some glaring sin—O God, keep us from it!—if he falls into some glaring sin, he shall go with broken bones, but he shall reach Heaven for all that. Though, in order to try him and let him see his vileness, he is allowed to go far astray, yet He that bought him will not lose him. He that chose him will not cast him away—He will say unto him, “I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake and will not remember your sins.” David may go ever so far away, but David is not lost. He comes back and he cries, “Have mercy upon me, O God!” And so shall it be with every believing soul—Christ shall bring him back. Though he slip, he shall be kept and all the chosen seed shall meet around the Throne.

If it were not for this last Truth—though some may stick at it—what would become of some of God’s people? They would be given up to despair. If I have been speaking to a backslider, I pray he will not make a bad use of what I have said. Let me say to him, “Poor Backslider! Your Father’s heart yearns over you. He has not erased your name out of the registry. Come back, come back now to Him and say, “Receive me graciously and love me freely.” And He will say, “I will put you among the children.” He will pass by your backsliding and evil. He will heal your iniquities and you shall yet stand once more in His favor and know yourself to be still accepted in the Redeemer’s righteousness and saved by His blood. This text does not mean that the child of God shall not be tried, or that he shall not even sometimes fall under the trial. But it does mean this—once and for all—he that believes on Christ is not condemned. At no time, by no means is he under the sentence of condemnation, but is evermore justified in the sight of God.

III. Now, dear Brethren, but little time remains for the last points. Therefore, in a hurried manner let me notice WHAT THIS TEXT EVIDENTLY INCLUDES. And may God grant that these few words may nevertheless do good to our souls!

“He that believes on Him is not condemned.” If we are not condemned then at no time does God ever look upon His children, when they believe in Christ, as being guilty. Are you surprised that I should put it so? I put it so again—from the moment when you believe in Christ, God ceases to look upon you as being guilty. For He never looks upon you apart from Christ. You often look upon yourself as guilty and you fall upon your

knees as you should do and you weep and lament. But even then, while you are weeping over inbred and actual sin, He is still saying out of Heaven, “So far as your justification is concerned, you are all fair and lovely.”

You are black as the tents of Kedar—that is yourself by nature. You are fair as the curtains of Solomon—that is yourself in Christ. You are black with sin—that is yourself in Adam. But lovely—that is yourself in the Second Adam. Oh, think on that!—that you are always in God’s sight lovely, always in God’s sight as though you were perfect. For you are complete in Christ Jesus and perfect in Christ Jesus, as the Apostle puts it in another place. Always do you stand completely washed and fully clothed in Christ. Remember this. For it is certainly included in my text.

Another great thought included in my text is this. You are never able as a believer to be punished for your sins. You will be *chastised* on account of them, as a father chastises his child. That is a part of the Gospel dispensation. But you will not lie smitten for your sins as the law-giver smites the criminal. Your Father may often punish you as He punishes the wicked. But never for the same reason. The ungodly stand on the ground of their own demerits—their sufferings are awarded as their due deserts. But your sorrows do not come to you as matter of desert. They come to you as a matter of love.

God knows that in one sense your sorrows are such a privilege that you may account them as a *blessing* you do not deserve. I have often thought of that when I have had a sore trouble. I know some people say, “You deserved the trouble.” Yes, my dear Brethren, but there is not enough merit in all Christians put together to deserve such a good thing as the loving rebuke of our heavenly Father. Perhaps you cannot see that. You cannot think that a trouble can come to you as a real blessing in the Covenant.

But I know that the rod of the Covenant is as much the gift of grace as the blood of the Covenant. It is not a matter of desert or merit. It is given to us because we noted it. But I question whether we were ever so good as to deserve it. We were never able to get up to so high a standard as to deserve so rich, so gracious a Providence as this Covenant blessing—the rod of our chastening God. Never at any time in your life has a law-stroke fallen upon you. Since you believed in Christ you are out of the Law’s jurisdiction. The law of England cannot touch a Frenchman while he lives under the protection of his own Emperor. You are not under the Law—you are under Grace.

The Law of Sinai cannot touch you, for you are out of its jurisdiction. You are not in Sinai or in Arabia. You are not the son of Hagar or the son of a handmaid—you are the son of Sarah and are come to Jerusalem and are free. You are out of Arabia and are come to God’s own happy land. You are not under Hagar, but under Sarah—under God’s Covenant of Grace. You are a child of Promise and you shall have God’s own inheritance. Believe this, that never shall a law-stroke fall on you—never shall God’s anger in a judicial sense drop on you. He may give you a chastising stroke—not as the result of sin—but rather as the result of His own rich

grace. That would only get the sin out of you that you may be perfected in sanctification, even as you are now perfect and complete before Him in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ.

I was about to go into a list of things which this text includes, but the time fails me—therefore I must spend the last minute or two in saying WHAT THIS TEXT EXCLUDES.

What does it exclude? Well I am sure it excludes boasting. “He that believes is not condemned.” Ah, if it said, “He that *works* is not condemned,” then you and I might boast in any quantity. But when it says, “He *that believes*”—why, there is no room for us to say half a word for old self. No, Lord, if I am not condemned, it is Your free grace, for I have deserved to be condemned a thousand times since I have been in this pulpit tonight.

When I am on my knees and I am not condemned, I am sure it must be sovereign grace, for even when I am praying I deserve to be condemned. Even when we are repenting we are sinning and adding to our sins while we are repenting of them. Every act we do, as the result of the flesh, is to sin again and our best performances are so stained with sin that it is hard to know whether they are good works or bad works.

So far as they are our own, they are bad and so far as they are the works of the Spirit they are good. But then the goodness is not ours, it is the Spirit’s and only the evil remains to us. Ah, then, we cannot boast! Be gone, pride! Be gone! The Christian must be a humble man. If he lifts up his head to say something, then he is nothing indeed. He does not know where he is, or where he stands, when he once begins to boast—as though his own right hand had gotten him the victory. Leave off boasting, Christian. Live humbly before your God and never let a word of self-congratulation escape your lips. Sacrifice self and let your song be before the Throne—“Not unto us, not unto us, but unto Your name be glory forever.”

What next does the text exclude? Methinks it ought to exclude—now I am about to smite myself—it ought to exclude doubts and fears. “He that believes is not condemned.” How dare you and I draw such long faces and go about as we do sometimes as though we had a world of cares upon our backs! What would I have given ten or eleven years ago if I could have known this text was sure to me that I was not condemned? Why, I thought if I could feel I was once forgiven and had to live on bread and water and be locked up in a dungeon and every day be flogged with a cat-o-nine tails, I would gladly have accepted it if I could have once felt my sins forgiven.

Now you are a forgiven man and yet you are cast down! Oh, shame on you! No condemnation! And yet miserable? Fie, Christian! Get up and wipe the tears from your eyes. Oh, if there is a person lying in jail now, to be executed next week, if you could go to him and say, “You are pardoned,” would he not spring up with delight from his seat? And although he might have lost his goods and though it would be possible for him, after pardon, to have to suffer many things, yet, so long as life was spared, what would all this be to him? He would feel that it was less than nothing.

Now, Christian, you are pardoned. Your sins are all forgiven. Christ has said to you, “Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you”—and are you yet miserable? Well, if we must be so sometimes, let us make it as short as we can. If we must be sometimes cast down, let us ask the Lord to lift us up again. I am afraid some of us get into bad habits and come to make it a matter of practice to be downcast. Mind Christian, mind, it will grow upon you—that peevish spirit—if you do not resist that sinfulness at first, it will get worse with you. If you do not come to God to turn these doubts and fears out of you, they will soon swarm upon you like flies in Egypt.

When you are able to kill the first great doubt, you will perhaps kill a hundred. For one great doubt will breed a thousand and to kill the mother is to kill the whole brood. Therefore look with all your heart against the first doubt lest you should become confirmed in your despondency and grow into sad despair, “He that believes on Him is not condemned.” If this excludes boasting, it ought to exclude doubts, too.

Once more—“He that believes on Him is not condemned.” This excludes sinning any more. My Lord, have I sinned against You so many times and yet have You freely forgiven me all? What stronger motive could I have for keeping me from sinning again? Ah, there are some who are saying this is a licentious doctrine. A thousand devils rolled into one must the man be who can find any licentiousness here. What? Go and sin because I am forgiven? Go and live in iniquity because Jesus Christ took my guilt and suffered in my place?

Human nature is bad enough but methinks this is the very worst state of human nature when it tries to draw an argument for sin from the free grace of God. Bad as I am I do feel this—that it is hard to sin against a pardoning God. It is far harder to sin against the blood of Christ and against a sense of pardon than it is against the terrors of the Law and the fear of Hell itself. I know that when my soul is most alarmed by a dread of the wrath of God, I can sin with comfort compared with what I could when I have a sense of His love shed abroad in my heart. What more monstrous—to read your title clear—and sin?

Oh, vile reprobate! You are on the borders of the deepest Hell. But I am sure if you are a child of God, you will say when you have read your title clear and feel yourself justified in Christ Jesus—

***“Now, for the love I bear His name,
What was my gain, I count my loss;
My former pride I call my shame,
And nail my glory to His Cross.”***

Yes and I must and will esteem all things but loss for Jesus’ sake. O may my Soul be found in Him, perfect in His righteousness!

This will make you live near to Him—this will make you like unto Him. Do not think that this doctrine by dwelling on it will make you think lightly of sin. It will make you think of it as a hard and stern executioner to put Christ to death—as an awful load that could never be lifted from

you except by the eternal arm of God. And then you will come to hate sin with all your soul because it is rebellion against a loving and gracious God and you shall by this means, far better than by any Arminian doubts or any legal quibbles, be led to walk in the footsteps of your Lord Jesus and to follow the Lamb wherever He goes.

I think this whole sermon, though I have been preaching to the children of God, is meant for sinners, too. Sinner, I would that you did say so. If you know this, that *he that believes is not condemned*, then, Sinner, if you believe, you will not be condemned and may all I have said tonight help you to this belief in your soul.

Oh, but you say, “May I trust Christ?” As I said this morning, it is not a question of whether you may or may not, you are *commanded*. The Scripture commands the Gospel to be preached to every creature and the Gospel is—“Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” I know you will be too proud to do it unless God by His grace should humble you. But if you feel tonight that you are nothing and have nothing of your own, I think you will be right glad to take Christ to be your All-in-All.

If you can say with poor Jack the Huckster—

“I’m a poor sinner and nothing at all,”

You may go on and say with him, this night—

“But Jesus Christ is my All-in-All.”

God grant that it may be so, for His name’s sake. Amen.

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THE ESSENCE OF THE GOSPEL

NO. 964

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 4, 1870,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“He that believes on Him is not condemned. But he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”
John 3:18.

I MAY have preached from this text before. I may have done so several times. If I have not, I ought to have. It is the whole Bible in miniature. We may say of it so many words, so many volumes, for every single syllable here is charged to the full with meaning. We may read it, and re-read it, and continue still to read it day and night, yet ever find some fresh instruction in it. It is the essence of the Gospel. The good news in brief. When our Lord Jesus Christ shall come a second time, before Him shall be gathered all nations, and He shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd divides the sheep from the goats.

That will not, however, be the first time in which the Presence of the Lord Jesus has acted as a separator. It is always so wherever He comes. Men are as one body in their fallen condition—all alike estranged from God until He appears. But His coming finds out the chosen and calls them apart, and on the other hand, the unbelievers are discovered. Two camps are formed out of the once-mingled multitude. Each goes to each, each one after its own kind finds its fellows, and between the two fellowships there is a deep gulf which divides them as clearly as light is distinct from the darkness, or death is divided from life.

Other distinctions sink into insignificance in the Presence of Jesus—riches or wealth, learning or ignorance, power or weakness—are matters of too small account to divide mankind in the Presence of the great Discerner of spirits. Only these two characters—Believers and unbelievers—stand out in clear relief. As it is in our text, so is it as a matter of fact in the entire universe—the only two really vital distinctions for time and for eternity are just these—Believers and Unbelievers, receivers of Christ and rejecters of Him.

Furthermore, as today the Presence of Christ divides the masses, and gathers men into assorted companies, so also does that Presence ensure a present *judgment*. It is written that He shall say to them on His right hand, “Come, you blessed,” and to those on His left, “Depart, you cursed.” And even so at this moment His Presence, with equal certainty, produces a judging. For here in the text we find Believers not condemned, or in other words, acquitted, and we find Unbelievers condemned already.

The, “Come, you blessed,” is anticipated in the non-condemnation, and the, “Depart, you cursed,” is, as it were, already heard in the verdict,

“Condemned already.” I charge you, therefore, this morning, while the Word is preached in your hearing, to remember that a clear and all-important division will be worked while this sermon is being delivered. This day the Son of David holds His Throne, and in this house He sits in judgment. In the preaching of the Gospel at this moment His majestic voice divides the sinners from the saints, and if sensitive to His Presence, we shall either tremble or rejoice.

God grant that while this division shall go on, as it *must* go on, for He will be this day a savor of death unto death or a life unto life to every one of our souls, we may all be found among Believers, and none of us shut out as condemned already by being Unbelievers.

I. I shall ask you, this morning, first, to CONSIDER TO WHICH OF THE TWO CLASSES MENTIONED IN THE TEXT WE BELONG. “He that believes on Him is not condemned.” Have we a share in that character? Let us see to it. What is meant by believing on Him, or rather *in* Him, for the word “eis” is rather *in* Him than *on* Him. If I mistake not, the word, “believes in Him,” means a great deal more than most of us have seen in it.

I think I see many shades of believing. There are some who believe concerning Christ, that is to say, they believe that He is the Messiah and is the Savior of men. Many accept this for a Truth of God because their fathers did so, and it is to them a matter of unquestioned *tradition*. They are born in what is commonly thought to be a Christian country, and therefore have they taken up with the Christian faith, and theoretically and notionally they believe that Jesus is the Son of God and the Redeemer of the world. They would not hesitate to stand up and say, “I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was begotten of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried,” and so on.

But remember, you may believe all that is orthodox concerning the Lord Jesus, and yet it will be no token that you are justified in Him. No one may dare to say that a belief in the Athanasian creed will ensure us of salvation. If you reject His Deity, if you deny His Atonement, such errors will be conclusive evidence that you are not a believer in Him, because you are not a believer of the Truth of God concerning Him. Therefore you must take your place among unbelievers, who are condemned already.

But on the other hand, if you hold the Scriptural Truth, and believe accurately concerning the Lord Jesus, yet if you go no further, your mere faith about Him, or concerning Him, will not bring you salvation. To know Christ is of no avail, unless it can be said, “Flesh and blood has not revealed this unto you.”

It is a step further when we have come to believing Him. This is sometimes mentioned in Scripture—*believing* Him. “I know whom I have believed.” Believing concerning Him that He is God’s Christ, His Anointed, His Sent One, His Messiah, we therefore should, as a matter of course, accept whatever He says as being true. And if with our hearts we do this, I think we are saved. But we may think we do this and notionally may give our assent to His teaching, and yet, notwithstanding, we may not have at-

tained unto His salvation. We may still be condemned Unbelievers, though we may think, and say, and profess that we believe Him.

Frequently in Scripture there is another form of the believing which clusters about the Greek word, “epi,” believing *upon Him*. Our translators seem to have placed the word “on” here as though it were in our text, but it is hardly so in the Greek. There is a difference between believing *on* Him and believing *in* Him. To believe *on* Jesus is, indeed, a saving faith, for He that believes *on* Him shall not be confounded. To believe *on* Him is, as it were, to *lean* upon Him, to receive Him as God has set Him forth, and, in consequence, to make Him the foundation of our hope.

Believing concerning Him, and believing Him, we then come to repose upon Him, and to make Him our confidence. We believe that He can save us, we trust in Him to save us, and this is the essence of saving faith—to believe upon the appointed Redeemer. But in this particular case our text speaks of believing *in* Him, and this is something more than believing upon Him. Every man who really believes *upon* Christ will before long come to believe *in* Him. But there is a growth—believing *in* Him is more than believing upon Him.

How is that? If I thoroughly believe in a man, what is the result of it? Is he an advocate, and am I immersed in law? Then I trust my case to him—I leave the affair in his hands without fear—for I believe in my advocate. Very good. So far that may be believing *upon* him. But now he gives me directions and rules of action. If I believe *in* him I shall certainly follow those rules to the letter, being fully convinced that they will lead me to a right issue. I commit the matter practically as well as theoretically to the man whom I have chosen to represent me, and I do so cheerfully, for I believe in him.

I am like a man on board a vessel—I believe in him who is the captain. What then? If he bids me do this, or that, or the other, I may hear someone call his orders foolish, but I believe in him, and I do, at once, whatever he bids me. His bidding may appear absurd to one who has no faith in him, but to me it is wise and right. Suppose there should be raised up at this juncture for poor unhappy France, a man of high military genius, a man who shall be capable with such material as may come to hand to meet the terrible foe, and to disperse the cloud which now hangs over the capital city.

If the people shall believe in the man, what then? Why they will surrender the direction of affairs to him. They will implicitly follow his lead. Does he command a sortie, does he bid the army advance? They believe in him, and the sortie is made, and the troops advance gallantly to the conflict. Should he counsel delay, and the avoidance of a great battle, those who believe in him will entrench themselves, or retire before the foe.

If they are absolutely sure in their hearts that he is the man who guarantees victory, they will be certain to obey his orders. He will be their oracle, their dictator, and that most joyfully on their parts. So that to believe in our Lord means this—that I believe Him to be the Son of God, and believe all other Truths of God concerning Him. That I also believe whatever

He says to be the Truth of God. In other words, I believe Him. Yet more than this, I cast my soul upon His atoning merits that He may save it, and so believe *upon* Him.

And furthermore, having so done I give myself up entirely to the Savior's holy guidance. I believe Him to be infallible as the director of my spirit. I feel a union with Him. I come to be *in* Him—His cause is my cause, my cause His cause—I believe in Him. Now this is the Man of whom the text says, "He that believes in Him is not condemned," and the question I put this morning to myself and to you is, Have we believed in Jesus? Do we really take Him to be our All in All? Do we consent that He should guide and lead us till He brings us to eternal felicity?

The connection of our text will help us to form a judgment as to whether we are, indeed, Believers in Jesus. Brothers and Sisters, have you realized, by a true exercise of faith, what is meant by the fourteenth and fifteenth verses of the present chapter? "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." As the serpent-bitten Israelite looked to the bronze serpent when it was uplifted, have you, in the same way, looked to Jesus and found healing through looking to Him?

By this you may judge yourselves. Have you been healed of the wounds of sin and quickened into a new and heavenly life? Have you in very deed made the crucified Savior your soul's resting place? In the verses which follow the text, you find such words as these, "He that does the truth comes to the light." Do you, my Brethren, as the result of having trusted in Christ come to the light? Is it your desire to know God's Truth, God's will, God's Law, God's Word? Are you seeking after the light, and are you desirous that the works worked in you should be seen to be the fruit of God's own Spirit? By this, also, can you judge yourself?

It is vain to say, "I trust in Christ," if you have never looked to Him with that same childlike look with which the Israelite looked to the bronze serpent—and equally vain for you to profess to be a believer in Him, unless you desire the light. You may be in partial darkness still, as doubtless you are, but are you seeking more light, seeking God, seeking Truth, seeking right? By this shall you know whether the Father has begotten you unto a new birth, whether you are to a certainty a new man, no longer a light-shunner but a light-seeker. No longer, because your deeds are evil, seeking to conceal yourself from the convicting Word of God, but because your deeds are truthful, seeking to receive more light, that your works may be made manifest to your own conscience as being truly worked of God in your soul.

The consideration which I proposed just now has to be taken up with regard to the second class. Are we Unbelievers? It is to be feared that there are some such here. If that is so, it may be of some service to them to know where they are, and what they are. "He that believes not is condemned already." Some of you here are very inconsistent, because though you believe not in Christ Jesus, that is to say, do not trust your souls with

Him, nor give yourselves up obediently to serve Him, yet you believe concerning Him that He is the Christ of God.

And if He were here today and spoke to you, you would believe His Words, though I cannot say you would so believe them as to *act* upon them. It is so very strange that you should believe Him to be the Son of God and yet should not trust Him! You believe what He speaks is true, and after He has warned you of the wrath to come you still sit down in stolid indifference and do not seek the salvation which He provides. Instead of looking to the bronze serpent, you act as the Israelites would have done had they sought out another remedy.

You have not believed *in* Christ, but if you have any belief that you need a Savior, I suppose your own common reason makes you seek one. You are evidently, therefore, seeking another salvation than that which God provides. You are refusing what God has ordained, that you may find something of your own. There is but one Savior—that Savior this day you will not trust in—you are refusing Him to your own destruction. You are this day shutting your eyes to the one only Light, and though you have some desire towards light at times, yet you love darkness rather than light, and still continue as you were—dark, dark, dark—for you do not like to be reproved.

You cannot bear that the Gospel should come too cuttingly home to touch you in your conscience and rebuke you for your sins. To this day you remain an Unbeliever and a lover of the darkness. Search, I pray you, and look! While this heart which now addresses you will pity you, I trust God's heart may pity you, too, and may you yet escape out of the condition of the Unbeliever, and yet be numbered with the Believers in Christ.

Thus much on our first point, which I leave to your earnest self-examination, hoping that it may not be treated lightly.

II. Now, secondly, and for a very short time, let us CONSIDER THE CONDITION OF THE BELIEVER. "He that believes on Him is not condemned." What a joyful sentence is this! Provided you have ascertained that you do believe in Jesus, turn this sweet word over and over in your souls, my Brethren. Is it not delightful to think that you have it from God's own mouth by inspiration, and to note that the inspiration is of a remarkable kind, for you have it not only by the Spirit of God, but you have from Jesus Christ Himself the sweet assurance that you are not condemned!

What joy, what peace this Word should speak unto your soul! Let me show you for a minute how the Believer escapes condemnation. "He that believes on Him is not condemned." One reason is because he does not offer himself for judgment. He that believes in Christ does not present himself to be tried. He says, "No, my Lord, I have no argument with You, I plead guilty, I confess the condemnation. There is no need of trial. You are justified when You speak, and clear when You condemn." There sits the Judge, and the prisoner should stand opposite to him, for they are two parties. But behold, in this case the prisoner leaves the place, declines a

trial, falls at the Judge's feet, acknowledges that the sentence, if carried out, would be just, and pleads guilty.

Having done this the Believer sees that the sentence which he acknowledges and confesses to be right has been already laid upon his Surety—and in that Surety he believes. What does he believe about Him? Why, that God, that He might magnify His Justice and His Grace, was in Christ Jesus! And that the Son of God did hang upon the Cross, and bleed and die, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. The Believer confesses the justice of the sentence, and therefore is at one with God. He comes to the Light, and his deeds are reproved, and he accepts the reproof, and acknowledges it to be true.

Then he looks to the Cross, and he says, "This very sentence to which I do subscribe with my own hands that it is just, has been laid upon my ever glorious and blessed Surety, the Only Begotten of the Father, and He has been punished instead of me. And I am therefore free, since Christ died as my ransom." This is the way in which the Believer comes not to be condemned—he accepts the condemnation, and then sees it laid upon his Surety! This brings him peace. The Justice of God would have disturbed his mind. He sees that Justice satisfied, and he declares in his own heart that if God is satisfied, he is satisfied.

If God's Justice is honored, then conscience feels that all is well. And now what happens? Why this believer in Christ, not being condemned, seeks the light—from this day forward he desires more and more to walk in the light of knowledge, the light of the Divine Presence, the light of Divine holiness. O my Brethren, there was a time when our souls inclined after sin! But now, though we sin, we mourn over it, and because we mourn it we have evidence that "it is no longer I," as the Apostle says, "but sin that dwells in me."

The very inmost I, the true, most real ego within my soul now desires holiness. If we could be as we would, we would be pure as God is pure. Our heart hungers and thirsts after righteousness. We come to the Light, and now, having believed, we are in such a condition that our deeds, though discovered, do not bring us shame and confusion. In that very Light our works are made manifest that they are worked in God—and we rejoice that God is working in us by His Spirit holy desires, emotions, and actions—which shall go on increasing until we shall be perfectly delivered from sin.

This is the condition of the man who believes in Christ! It is a very happy condition, a very hopeful condition, a very heavenly condition—who would not desire to be in it? It all hinges upon the *believing*, for with the believing in Jesus there comes the new birth. With the new birth comes the desire after Light. With the desire after Light there arises a progress towards it—and a manifestation of the secret working of the Holy Spirit within the soul. Happy Believers, thrice happy in what you are as well as in what you shall be!

III. And now, thirdly, and here comes our most solemn work—may God's Holy Spirit help us in it. **CONSIDER THE CONDITION OF THE UN-**

BELIEVER. "He that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God." Observe the fact, itself, which is here stated! "He that believes not is condemned already." Let me enlarge upon this very solemn Truth of God.

First, the Unbeliever offers himself for judgment. "He has not believed on the name"—what is the name? It is the Savior, Jesus. He who believes on Jesus, the Savior, confesses that he needs saving and declines to stand on the footing of Law. But he who refuses the Savior does in effect say, "I do not require a Savior, I am willing to stand my trial by the Law." I tell you, every soul that declines a Savior, does, in effect, ask to be judged by the Law. There stands the alternative—are you guilty—will you confess it? If so, accept the Savior.

But if, on the other hand, you say, "I will not accept the Savior," in the bottom of your soul there lies the presumptuous conceit, "I can stand the judgment. I do not want pardon and Grace." Then, Sir, if you ask for judgment you shall have it! And behold the result of it—God declares you to be condemned already. You have not believed, you have asked for judgment, you shall have it, but it is your ruin.

The Unbeliever, himself, gives personal evidence to his own condemnation. Do you enquire how he does this? The text points us to his not believing. Is yonder person a condemned or not condemned man? Ask him what he thinks of Christ. If he replies honestly, he says, "I do not accept God's testimony about Jesus Christ. I do not receive Jesus as my Savior." Either he claims that he does not need a Savior or else he does not feel that Jesus is the Savior he needs. He rejects the testimony of God concerning Christ—is not that enough to condemn a man? If a man, in the very presence of the judge, committed theft or murder, he would condemn himself. But is it not a still higher offense than this, in the very Presence of God to do despite to His Son by practically declaring His work and blood to have been unnecessary?

Is it not the height of daring that a soul should stand in the Presence of the God of Mercy and hear Him say in His Word, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world," and that the soul should reply, "I have nothing to do with the Lamb of God"? What further witness do we want with regard to your enmity to God? He that will not believe in Christ would murder God if He could. His not believing in Christ is virtually to make God a liar.

Still further, he that believes not in Christ gives evidence against himself, for he rejects "the name." Observe the text, "He has not believed on the name." As I had already hinted, that name is Jesus, the Savior. The man says, "I will not have the Savior." Many of you have not said so much in words, but you practically say it. For you do not believe in the Savior. You remain at this moment Saviorless—out of Christ—without hope, without pardon, without mercy. And you have continued to do so under the preaching of the Gospel now for many years.

What more evidence do you want? If a man will reject God, even as a Savior, there must be a dreadful venom in his heart against God. If God

appoints Christ to be King, and I reject Him, that rejection shows that I dislike God. But when He appoints Him to be a Savior, the errand being one entirely of mercy and goodness, if I reject Him I must in my soul have an amazing depth of enmity against God. By this clear proof I condemn myself!

My Brothers and Sisters, if you look at the text again you will see that he who believes not, rejects a most exalted Person. For he has not believed on the name “of the only begotten Son of God.” What a word is that, “On the Jesus, who is God’s only begotten Son.” I wish I had language suitable for the utterance of a thought which presses down my very spirit, as it did last Sunday evening. That God should send a Savior, and for a Savior the Only Begotten, the Lord of Heaven and earth, without whom was not anything made that is made, and that He should come with testimony of love, the love of God to sinners, and seal that testimony with His blood. And that men should refuse to believe in Him!

It is the most monstrous iniquity that could be imagined! I cannot see that Satan, himself, with all his blasphemy, has ever gone this length. He was never placed where he could reject, as a Savior, the only begotten Son of God. When men rejected Moses they perished without mercy, for he was sent of God. But when a man despises the Only Begotten, in whom dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily, we may well say—“Call no witnesses against the man, rake up none of the details of his past life, this is quite evidence enough.”

If he has not believed on such a One as this, he is condemned already. There is no need of a trial. Unbelief itself is the vilest of all treasons—out of his own mouth the sinner is condemned. Do you not see, O Sinner, how the matter stands? The infinite Lord of Mercy, that you might not perish, has devised a wondrous way of salvation which has astonished cherubim and seraphim, and made Heaven ring with song, and this you utterly reject! The plan so stupendous in conception is briefly this—that the *Creator* should *suffer* that the created *rebel* might escape—that the Infinite should come into this world and be put to shame that the guilty might be clear! And all you are asked to do, all that is demanded of you is that you submit to be saved by this plan—that you do but trust in the Jesus who is Divine, who is also Man—do but trust Him to *save* you!

Will you not? Oh, will you not? Sirs, will you spurn almighty love? Can you turn away from boundless mercy? Then what shall I say of you, but just what the text says—you condemn yourselves, you are “condemned already”? You must be infinitely wicked! You must be enormously, monstrously, diabolically at enmity with God, or else, surely, a benefit so precious you would not slight! Surely a plan of mercy so adapted to your condition you could not have the impertinence to reject! “Condemned already because he has not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God.” Solemn words! Hear them and tremble!

From the verses following the text we gather that you Unbelievers go on to give further evidence against yourselves, for every man who rejects Christ, the true Light, always goes on to reject other forms of the Light of

God's Word, God's Spirit, and his conscience. He loves darkness rather than light, and comes not to the Light lest his deeds should be reprov'd. You quench the Spirit, I know you do, if you reject the Savior. You turn a deaf ear to your conscience, you do violence to your own judgment. The Truth of God you do not wish to learn. It is not possible that you can be a candid seeker after light if you refuse to receive Him who is Truth's central Sun.

Your further rejection of Light is confirmatory evidence that you are condemned already though your not believing is, in itself, evidence enough. And now solemnly, and in the name of Him that lives, and was dead, and is alive forevermore, speaking for that Christ who, though once He was slain, now sits at the right hand of God, I ask those who are under this second character to listen to these simple but weighty words of admonition. Consider, I pray you, O Unbeliever, that the condemnation which is pronounced upon you already is no matter of form. Our judges sometimes read out sentences of death upon a certain order of criminals. And the sentence is recorded though it is never intended that the sentence shall be executed.

But from God's bar there never proceeds a sentence that is meant needlessly to alarm. You are condemned already, and as surely as you live, and as surely as God lives, He will not let His Word remain a dead letter. That sentence shall be no idle threat! In your proper person you shall be made to know what the power of His wrath is. "Who knows the power of your anger?" says the Psalmist. They only know it who *feel* it, and you will feel it before long, for the sentence will assuredly be fulfilled.

The Lord has power at this or any moment to fulfill His sentence. What power have you to resist it? Who is there that can help you to withstand Him? You are utterly in His hands, you cannot escape from His prison. If you climbed up to Heaven He is there. If you dove to Hell He is there. The whole universe is but one great prison for an enemy of God. You cannot escape Him—neither can you resist Him. If your bones were granite and your heart were steel, His fires would melt down your spirit. Against Him you can no more stand than the chaff against the fire or the dust against the whirlwind. O that you would feel this and desist from your insane rebellion!

Remember, there is no promise given to you that He will not execute the sentence of His wrath this very day. You have no warrant either from His Word or from His angels to assure you that God has suspended the sentence even for the next hour. You are living by His forbearance, spared by the Divine Sovereignty. Some rave against Sovereignty, but in this case it is not Justice that spares you, it is the mere *will of God* that for awhile keeps you out of Hell. You tell me that nothing endangers your life at this moment—how do you know that?

The arrows of death often fly imperceptibly. I have stood in congregations preaching on two occasions when the unseen darts of death struck one of my hearers, so that one died on each occasion while listening to the Word of the Gospel. God needs no miracle to put His sentence into execu-

tion at this moment. He need not disturb the natural order of affairs for you to die instantly. And if He so willed it, your soul's destruction would, without the slightest effort on His part, take place at this very moment, even where you are.

Remember with deep concern that God is angry with you right now. This statement is no invention of mine—it is written by the pen of Inspiration that, "God is angry with the wicked every day. If he turns not He will whet His sword. He has bent His bow, and made it ready." God is more angry with some of you than He is with some in Hell. Are you startled by the assertion? "It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the Day of Judgment than for you." The sins you have already committed are greater than those of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the anger is in proportion to the guilt.

An angry God holds you over the gulf of Hell. Justice demands that you fall into it—and it is nothing but His merciful will that keeps you out of it. He has but to will it and you who are condemned already would be forever where the worm dies not and the fire is not quenched, before next time the clock shall tick.

Up to this time, let me remind you, you have done nothing to appease the Divine wrath. You have gone on sinning. Or if you tell me you have reformed, that you have thought of these things, that you have prayed—do you think that such things will remove the Divine wrath? The Lord has told you that the only way of salvation is to believe in Jesus, but you try to find another. Do you think that such conduct will please Him, that such a procedure will make Him less angry with you? You insult His Son when you suppose that you can save yourself by your tears and prayers—will this turn away the Lord's anger?

When you imagine that your Church attendance and Chapel attendance will save you, you set a low estimate upon what Jesus did. You do despite to the Cross as long as you remain Unbelievers. You say, "We are doing what we can." You are doing *nothing*, I tell you, that can appease the anger of God! You are rather, by these very actions of yours, which you think to be good, setting up in opposition to Him an Antichrist upon which He will look with abhorrence. He says He will save by *Christ*, and no way else. And so long as you seek another way, you, as it were, spit into the very face of the Only Begotten by the insolence of your self-righteousness.

Meanwhile, let me remind you that God's wrath, though it comes not on you yet, is like a stream that is dammed up. Every moment it gathers force—if it bursts not the dyke—yet every hour is swelling. Each day and each moment of each day in which you remain an Unbeliever, you are treasuring up wrath against the Day of Wrath when the measure of your iniquity is full. How earnestly would I persuade you to escape from condemnation! If you dream that to be condemned of God is a trifle, deceive your souls, for those who have passed where the sentence is executed, could they come back to you, need not tell the tale of woe, the very sight of them would convince you that to be lost is an awful thing!

On their heads must fall the wrath of God, who, by softening down the punishment, become the means of hardening sinners in their sins. It is not within the power of thought to conceive what God's wrath is. No language, even though it should make both ears tingle, can ever fully express it. I am not one of those who would so delude your poor souls, O Unbelievers, as to make you think it a light thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

O turn, turn, turn! Why will you die? Why will you reject Him whom you have such reasons to receive? Concerning whom His very Person is the best argument for love? The Christ of God must be worthy of our hearts' affections—His very errand on earth, as it seems to me, would, if we were not mad, ensure our confidence. For He came to SAVE, to PARDON, to pass by the sin of the past! Oh, why do you stand out against Him, and in this way pull down upon your heads the wrath of an angry God?

Let me point out to you the way to escape. The only way of escape for any man or woman here is to believe in Jesus Christ. "I am praying about it," says one. My text says nothing of the sort. "I will think of it." Think of it? You will think yourself into Hell before long! *Immediate* faith is what I, as God's ambassador, demand of you in the name of the Christ of God—immediate, instantaneous *faith in Jesus!* Behold the emblem of the Gospel minister and of his message! Moses lifted up the bronze serpent in the wilderness upon the great central standard in the very midst of the camp where men were dying all around him. They are bitten with the serpent, and what has Moses to declare to them as a remedy? He bids them look and live!

Some of them will think of it, some of them will consider it, others of them will pray about it. But he has no commission to console any of these—his one command is an *immediate* look—he has no promise to those who will not look. Even thus is Jesus lifted up among you. There is life in a look, life now, life at this moment. I cannot guarantee you that the serpent's bite shall not be your eternal ruin if you linger for a single hour. The Prophet's one word is, "Look now." Today, God in mercy sends to everyone in this house this message—"The times of your ignorance God winked at," but now commands all men everywhere to repent. He sends His Gospel message, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved."

That message I cannot be certain will ever come to you again. "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." Every moment you do not believe, you are sinning against God by that unbelief. I cannot, therefore, tolerate that you should wait a moment. Jesus is God! He became Man! He died! He lives and bids you trust Him—promising that you shall live. Trust Him now, then! He is worthy of your confidence. Sin not against Him. Sin not against your own souls by rejecting Him. Remember what it was which Moses lifted up—it was a serpent—the image of that same serpent which bit them.

Were they healed by looking to that which poisoned them? Assuredly they were. What is that which has poisoned you, Sinner? It is the curse of sin. What is that which I hold up today in the Gospel? It is *Christ* made a *curse* for us! He takes upon Himself our sin! Though in Him was no sin, yet He was made sin for us—and if you trust Him to be the sin-offering for you, to suffer for you, to bleed for you—and so trust in Him as to take Him from now on as your standard, resolving to follow the uplifted Crucified One throughout life, even until He brings you to God Himself in Heaven, you are NOT condemned!

But if Jesus is lifted up and you refuse to believe, on your heads is your guilt, I say, with trembling solemnity, on your own heads is your guilt! Those words of mine, O Unbelievers, will be swift witnesses against you at the Last Great Day. As truly as ever Christ came to Jerusalem, so truly does He come to you, this morning, in the preaching of the Word. I am a poor feeble man, but I speak to you as best I can. Nevertheless, if you refuse my word it is not *me* you reject, that were nothing—you reject the *Gospel* which I preach to you. In the name of Him that made Heaven and earth, that made you, and holds you in life, against whom you have sinned, these terms of mercy are presented to you—will you have them?

This Grace is brought home to you, and I am bid to press it upon you, even as the Word says, to “compel them to come in.” If you reject the only begotten Son of God there must still abide against you this solemn sentence, “He that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed.” Did I hear you say, “I *hope* I shall believe.” Sir, I have nothing to do with *that*, and I have no hope for you. “I hope I shall repent one day.” I despair of you while you talk so. It is TODAY that God separates this congregation into the two parts, the Believer and the Unbeliever.

Today He blesses the Believer and testifies that he is not condemned! Today He curses the Unbeliever and tells him he is condemned already. My business is not with tomorrows, nor can I promise that the white flag of mercy will be hung out tomorrow. Today the Cross is the banner of Grace. Look to it and live! It is the ladder which reaches to Heaven. The crucified Savior is the gate of salvation. O that you would receive Him! May God grant you may, and He shall be glorified by you in this life and in the world to come. God bless you. Amen.

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CHRIST'S TESTIMONY RECEIVED

NO. 2158

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 10, 1890,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*"He that has received His testimony has set to his seal that God is true."
John 3:33.*

IN opening this discourse I would call your attention to the different statistics given by John's disciples and by John himself. In the 26th verse, the disciples say, "All men come to Him"—that is their judgment of how the ministry of Jesus was succeeding. John, in the 32nd verse, said, "And no man receives His testimony." If we view them as both correct, then the disciples looked at outward appearances and in their view the cause of Jesus seemed to be prospering to an overwhelming degree—"All men come to Him." But John looked below the surface, at the true *spiritual* results and his verdict was, "And no man receives His testimony."

Be very doubtful of *statistics*—they depend very much upon the person compiling them. Some, with sanguine spirit, say everything that is delightful and encouraging. Others, with more serious and with, perhaps, more severe judgment, say much that is depressing. I am inclined to take both these opinions with a grain of salt. Each one was intended for truth, but neither of them was exact. We often hear persons say that there are crowds attending such a ministry, the people block up the gangways, they fill every seat and the preacher is very useful for "all men come to him." This may be true and yet there may be few conversions and little spiritual results so that another may as truly say, "No man receives his testimony."

Ah, dear Friends, we can never be satisfied with a numerous congregation—we want souls to receive the testimony of Christ! Even though we may thank God that all sorts and conditions of men lend willing ears to our teaching, yet only one note sounds the knell of our joy! If we hear it said, "No man receives His testimony," we are sad at heart. Forgetting what the disciples reported, let us now look at what John said, "No man receives His testimony." He did not mean, literally, that no one received the Truth of God, for his next word was, "He that has received His testimony." He meant that *comparatively* none received it. Compared with the crowds who came to Him, compared with the nation of Israel, compared with the human race, those who received Christ's testimony were so few that his sadness made him call them *none*.

John, though he went a little below the mark, was not far from the truth when he said, "No man receives His testimony." In these profound and wordy days, this is called the "pessimist" view of things. However, if it were not precisely the truth, it was mournfully near it. Today, Christ is preached and many will come to hear about Him but, alas, few receive the

Gospel into their hearts! Go through these crowded streets and mark how few receive the sacred testimony! Go into our provincial towns and country villages and note how few receive the Truth as it is in Jesus. When you look at the denominational rolls at the end of the year, what small additions have been made! I think one section of the Church reports one addition for the year. If any community reports as high as three or four per cent, people think wonders are accomplished!

The world can never be converted at the rate at which we are now going, for the increase of population is greater than the increase of the Churches. We are relatively further back than we were. There are more Christians, but there are fewer Christians in proportion to the population! There is much reason for crying earnestly to God to work more mightily upon the hearts of men. How glad was John to think that some had received Christ's testimony! How hungry he was that there should be more! In what earnest tones does he set forth his Lord's claims in the verses around our text! He would have men go beyond himself and find Christ and receive *His* testimony. This is how the case stands. Men had wandered far from God. God desired that men should come back to Him and therefore He sent a witness to men to tell them of His kindly feelings towards them and to show in His own Person, teaching, life and death how really and truly God desired that men should be at peace with Him.

The only-begotten Son was born into our world and took our Nature, that He might be a witness to the people of the Character of God towards us, that we, knowing how God felt, might be led to cry, "Come, and let us return unto the Lord." He would have us touched with tender relentings when we discover the greatness of the love and mercy of God towards us by seeing Him seeking and saving the lost in the Person of His only-begotten Son. Of that subject I am going to speak this morning, keeping as closely as I can to the text and crying to the Holy Spirit for aid.

First, *observe the Testifier* carefully. Look at Him and see who it is that has come to reveal the Father unto us. Secondly, *hearken to His testimony*. What is it? Know it and believe it. Thirdly, *note the rejecters*—"No man receives His testimony." How sad is the fact! Then, coming closer, still, to the text, *commune with those who do receive His Heaven-given testimony*. Of these it is said that they have set to their seal that God is true.

I. First, let us OBSERVE THE TESTIFIER. Jesus, our Lord, as a Witness, is so wrapped up with the testimony which He bears, that you have to know Him before you can understand His witness—in fact, to receive *Him* is the same thing as to receive His testimony! If we have received Christ as what He is, we have received the testimony which He came to bear. Who is this Testifier? This Witness? We answer that, according to the context, it is "*He that comes from above.*" To save us there has not come to us a man whose origin was at his birth, but One who existed long before and descended from above! It is true that Jesus was born at Bethlehem, but it is equally true that He had a preexistence from before all worlds! The Word was from the beginning with God—"without Him was not anything made that was made."

He was God as truly before He became Man as ever He was afterwards. He that has come to save us has, in the highest sense, come from above. Let this kindle hope in the sinner's mind and let it draw forth faith in the Divine Ambassador. One has come from the highest heavens to lift those up, who, apart from Him must have sunk into the lowest Hell. Nearly 1,900 years have passed since He came and trod the roughest ways of this world and lived, sorrowed and suffered here below. From the hills of Heaven He came to this land of sin that He might lift us up and give us a Divine inheritance.

He was one of the very highest Character. Observe—"He that comes from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth: He that comes from Heaven is above all." All other messengers that God has sent have had much earthliness about them and, assuredly, we who are now His messengers have much of it. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels," but there was nothing in our Lord Jesus that could debase the Messenger. He was pure, perfect, heavenly—and though He bore our Nature, yet He shared not our sinfulness. And though He spoke in our tongue and brought down the mysteries of Heaven to our comprehension, yet still He spoke them in a heavenly style—a style to which a mere man could never have reached!

Moses wrote as a man and the Spirit of God only revealed Truth measurably by him. But our Lord Jesus Christ was full of Grace and Truth and He spoke with a Manhood united to Godhead, having the Spirit without measure. In all Jesus said there was a fullness, a power, a reality which mere men were not capable of containing. He was above all and others derived their authority from Him, "for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." Will you not listen to one so supreme? "God, who at sundry times and in different manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the Prophets, has in these last days spoken unto us by His Son." Surely it shall go ill with him that refuses such a Messenger!

As He was above all in Character, *so was He above all in rank.* None can be compared with Him for dignity—the angels may be peers of the heavenly realm, but He is the Crown Prince of the blood-royal of eternity! He is God over all, before whom cherubim and seraphim veil their faces. He deigned to become subject to parents, but He was, none the less, above all—Lord, Ruler, Head over all things! Though He stooped to seek and save the lost, He was still higher than the highest! Though He laid His Glory by, that He might wash His disciples' feet—yes, and wash our sins away in His own blood—yet He was still Master and Lord. "See that you refuse not Him that speaks. For if they escaped not who refused him that spoke on earth, much more shall not we escape if we turn away from Him that speaks from Heaven."

I cannot too highly speak of the Glory and honor and majesty which belong to our Emmanuel! If I had the tongue of men and of angels I could not sufficiently extol Him. He is the First-Born of every creature, yes, the Creator Himself! King of kings and Lord of lords is He and it is through so glorious a Person as this that God has sent to us a message of peace. Our

ambassador is of a rank above all ranks that the Lord may show how highly He esteems His chosen of the race of man. We are greatly honored by dealing with so august a Messenger. Come, you willing hearts, and gladly receive the testimony of Him who is above all!

We are further told by John a very important fact which ought to weigh with every thoughtful mind. *The testimony of Jesus is Personal testimony*—"what He has seen and heard, that He testifies." The Prophets received their prophecies from the Holy Spirit who spoke to them of things which they had not seen. Sometimes they did not even understand what they wrote. They did not see those things of which they wrote for it is written that "many Prophets and kings have desired to see those things, but have not seen them." These things even angels desired to look into, but they were too mysterious for them. Our Lord Jesus Christ knows heavenly things of His own proper knowledge, for He has ever dwelt in the bosom of the Father. He knows the mind of God, for He is God. The secret intent and purpose of the Most High God are with His Son Jesus.

All that He reveals to men of the mercy of God He has Himself seen and heard. He was an eye and ear witness of the mind and will of Jehovah. Christ's teaching is not second-hand—"No man knows the Father, save the Son." Who taught Him wisdom? From where has this Man knowledge? From Himself, from His own eternal experience—as dwelling with God before all worlds He speaks to us. Do you want a better Messenger, my Hearers? How can the Lord serve you better than by sending One who knows what He declares—knows it by having heard and seen and handled it? With the God who made the heavens and fashioned the earth He ever dwelt, as One brought up with Him and He was daily His delight. The Lord God has sent as Ambassador to you One whom He "possessed in the beginning of His way, before His works of old." What more can you desire?

And then, further, the Baptist goes on to tell us that *the testimony of Jesus is identical with the Words of God Himself*. "He that has received His testimony has set to his seal that Christ is true." Do you think I am reading amiss? The Scripture says, "that God is true." The testimony of Jesus and the testimony of God are one—and when you believe Christ Jesus, you believe God! Further on we read, "for He whom God has sent speaks the Words of God: for God gives not the Spirit by measure unto Him." If you deny what Christ says, you make God a liar, for you have not believed His testimony concerning His Son. So fully is the witness of Jesus backed up and supported by the Words of God—so fully does Jesus represent the purpose and the mind of the Father—that to doubt Him is to doubt the Eternal God!

Now, if you have a plan of salvation put before you by God's Messenger—which is most assuredly the very mind of God Himself—will you reject it? Will you fly in the face of God by rejecting salvation which comes stamped in every letter of it with Divine authority? I pray you, my Hearers, if you have not yet believed in Jesus, remain no longer in unbelief of Him, for it is unbelief of the Lord God, unbelief of the Triune Jehovah who made you and who keeps the breath in your nostrils! See what a Messen-

ger we have, then, who speaks not His own words, but the words of Him that sent Him. Those words are full of Grace and Truth for they are full of God.

Read a little further on, in the next verse and you will see that this Messenger whom God has sent is One *in high esteem with God*. "The Father loves the Son." To show His great love of Him, He "has given all things into His hands." You have not, now, to deal with God out of Christ, for all things are now put under the mediatorial government of the Son of God. Christ Jesus, the Mediator between God and men, has all things in His power—the government is upon His shoulder. It has pleased the Father to put all things under the Man Christ Jesus—

***"Life, death, and Hell,
And worlds unknown
Hung on His sacred will."***

Jesus is absolute Master of all things. Angels fly and devils tremble at His nod and all the wheels of Providence revolve in perfect order according to His will. If you listen to His testimony of Grace, remember that He has all power to back it up and make it true to you. "He is able to save to the uttermost." All power is given unto Him in Heaven and in earth. God has put all things under His feet—and He who is thus the Lord of All—has come to treat with you concerning reconciliation. Turn not on your heels, you busy men! Say not that you have no time to attend to Him! You must attend to One whose kingdom rules over all. Dare you treat Him with indifference? Will not the awe of His majesty constrain you to hearken to His voice?

Once more only. Concerning this Testifier, we learn that *He is the Lord and Giver of life* and if we will but accept His testimony we shall live thereby. He has life in Himself and He has power to quicken whomever He will. "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." And to make the matter still more pressing, the word of warning is added, "He that believes not the Son shall not see life but the wrath of God abides on him." God can never be pleased with a person who gives the lie to His own Son. He has, in boundless pity, sent His Son, His only-begotten Son, to live and die that men might be saved—how shall He endure to see Him rejected? "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

And if this Son of His love is refused. If the guilty insult the Father by rejecting the Son, what can remain but righteous wrath? If a deed of mercy, unspeakable, immeasurable, comes to be despised by you, then the anger must abide *upon* you. There is no hope for those who refuse Jesus. Flatter not yourselves that there is another way of escape, in some future state, for if there could have been another way, God would not have given up His Son to shame, suffering and death! Faith in Jesus is the only door of hope! Shut that upon yourselves and you shut yourselves in utter darkness, in helpless, hopeless misery! What can help you if the wrath of God abides on you? This must mean a misery unspeakable, without the slightest alleviation.

O my dear Hearers, I wish I had the power to set forth my Lord as the Witness! As I cannot do this as I would, I commend to you the passage of Scripture itself. The sentences are short, sharp, crisp, clear—and they show you who He is whom God has sent on the great errand of Divine love. Refuse Him not, I implore you!

II. Secondly, HEARKEN TO HIS TESTIMONY. What is the testimony of Jesus? What has the Christ to tell us concerning God? I will only use the three chapters which precede my text and I shall gather enough from them to give a fair outline of what Jesus tells us of the Father and His willingness to forgive and save. First, he tells us, *God has provided an Atonement*. Look at the 29th verse of the first chapter, where John says, “Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world.” The very fact that the Son of God came here as Man to suffer for our sin proves that God has provided a great and all-sufficient Sacrifice.

God could not deal with a sinful world—it was too defiled with sin for Him to look upon it—but that sin of the world which prevented a holy God from dealing with a condemned race has been taken away by Jesus, so that now the Lord can visit man and favor him with the Gospel of peace and the work of salvation. This was necessary before a single individual could be saved. “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself.” The death of Jesus has enabled God to commune with men. Oh, hear this! There is a Sacrifice for sin! My Hearers, believe it and make much of it. The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin! Jesus has died and in that death He has finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness. All Believers are forgiven through His death. God is willing that you, believing in His dear Son, should be so forgiven as to be washed whiter than snow. That is Christ’s testimony to you and he that receives it has set to his seal that God is true.

The next testimony of Jesus is that *the Lord has made a way of access between man and God*. Look at the 51st verse of the first chapter. He said to Nathanael, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, hereafter you shall see Heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.” Jacob’s ladder is not now before you as a dream, but as a reality. The Son of Man, the Incarnate God, God in Christ Jesus, is the way by which there can be commerce between man and God. We can go up to God and the angels of God, loaded with blessings, can come down to men. The gulf is bridged—a glorious stairway has been made across the dread abyss which separated guilty man from his offended God. Jesus Christ Himself, in His own Person, is that ladder and He bears witness thereof to you. Sin is put away and distance is removed.

What is the next part of His testimony? You will find it in the third chapter—*God is only to be approached in a spiritual way*. To come to God, “you must be born again.” That which is born of flesh is flesh and cannot commune with God, who is a Spirit. That which is born of the Spirit is spirit and can commune with the holy God and understand spiritual things. My Hearers, there is no coming to God by a priest of human consecration! There is no coming by outward ritual, form, or ceremony—“God

is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." You must have a spiritual Nature, that the Spirit of God may commune with you. Only by a spiritual Nature can you have communion with the great Invisible.

Your spirit can be in fellowship with God, the mighty Spirit, but what can you do till a spirit is created in you? This was our Lord's testimony to Nathanael and I suppose that, by some means, John the Baptist had heard of it. But whether he had or had not does not matter to my purpose at this time—it is certainly a part of the testimony of Jesus. Furthermore, our Lord bore testimony to the great fact that *God gives salvation to all Believers in Jesus* and to make that very plain, He puts it thus—"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

You know the type. Bitten by the fiery serpents, the people looked to the bronze serpent and they were healed. Now, bitten by sin, you look to Him who was made sin for us and, looking to Him, your guilt passes away and the poison of your sinfulness meets its antidote. We look to Jesus and live! Our Lord bore witness to this with His own lips and then by the lips of His Apostles. He still cries, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." Yes, there is life in a look at the Crucified One! Believing is receiving. Accept Christ, whom God sends as a Messenger to you and in accepting Him you shall be saved.

Jesus also testified plainly that *from all who believe in Him the Lord has removed condemnation*. It is written, "He that believes on Him is not condemned." He that believes is justified and, "being justified by faith, we have peace with God." Guilty and condemned as you may be at this hour, if you accept the Son of God to stand for you, you are not condemned! "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though by nature robed in rags, the Lord says, "Take away the filthy garments from him." Your glorious challenge is, "who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" "Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died."

Oh, this message of mercy from Jesus, is it not full and blessed? If I had the time I should like to have enlarged much upon the testimony of God in Christ Jesus, but here it means just this, that you, being guilty and condemned, can be justly forgiven through the sacrifice of Jesus! You may be beloved of God because of His love to Jesus. You may be delivered from all the evil results of sin because of the death of the Well-Beloved. You can be saved! Yes, if you now believe in Christ Jesus, you are saved. All heavenly privileges are yours now—where you now sit—and shall be yours world without end. Glory be to God!

II. With great heaviness we have now to NOTICE THE REJECTERS—"No man receives His testimony." You would have thought that the moment this testimony was delivered to the world every man would have hastened to hear it and would have believed it with joyful readiness! But

alas, the very reverse happened! If I went to fish with such bait as this, I should expect to have a sea full of fish rushing towards me, but it was not so. Men, as a rule, will not accept this heavenly salvation—no man will receive it except moved by God the Holy Spirit. Why is this? In the case of many, *it is because they are earthly* and the message and the messenger are too heavenly for them.

They are earth-bound and earth-buried. They are so busy—how can they consider the grand fact that God has come down to save men? They will think of that great spiritual Truth of God one of these days when they have made sufficient money and can retire—when they have nothing better to do than to attend to the claims of God. God is second-rate, no, seventh-rate in their esteem! They are really so occupied and their thoughts are so taken up with daily cares of this life that God's Grace must wait their convenience. I fear they will never be startled into thought until it is said of each one of them, "In Hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments." The rich man had kept his eyes downward upon his sumptuous fare and had never looked up to heavenly things—but the realities of eternity have awakened him. O God, grant that none of my hearers may keep their eyes down until they lift them up in Hell!

Some rejecters of the Word of our Lord, I have no doubt, were *too learned to believe in anything so simple* as the statement that God was among them in human form to live and die for men. Though this is, in very truth, the most sublime of all mysteries, yet human pride counts it a small matter. It is to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness. Men know so much that they will not know God! I am struck every day, when reviewing books of the present period, with how wise fools are nowadays. Pardon me. I will put it differently and say—how foolish the wise are nowadays. I mean the same thing whichever way I say it. They get a hold of the tail of a dead thing and they shout like men that find great spoil! Here is a great discovery—a discovery of nothing!

At one time they find Deuteronomy to be a fraud. Now there are two Isaiahs. Then the book of Ruth was written far down in the centuries after the exile. Jonah is a myth. Esther is a romance and so forth. Their criticisms are all false, as others of the same breed soon show. They are always finding some dead oat or other and setting it out on the table where the children's bread ought to be. What mighty discoveries of mans' nests we have lived to see! Men of this nature will not receive the witness of Jesus—it is a pity that they should—He is honored by their rejection. You can scarcely read a book nowadays but you come across a bit of rotten stuff, the fondly-cherished nonsense of some writer who has a taste for that which is far gone in decay. They will not believe God. How can they while they receive honor one of another, as learned critics?

It is today as it was in our Lord's time, "not many wise men after the flesh are called." Still have we to ask, "Where are the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world?" Those who glory in fleshly wisdom cannot receive the testimony of the carpenter's Son—a testimony so plain that the poor and illiterate can understand it and enter into eter-

nal life! I hope this will not be the case with any of the more cultured among *you*. Be willing to take Christ's yoke upon you and learn of Him.

Certain people did not receive the testimony of Jesus because they were too proud. Pedigree and privilege kept many away. Read this verse in the first chapter—"He came unto His own and His own received Him not." Why? Because they thought they were God's own already! Did they not wear a text of Scripture between their eyes? Had they not broad fringes of blue on their dress? Did they not tithe mint, anise, cumin and other pennyworths of herbs? Did they not fast thrice in the week and so on? What did *they* want with Jesus? Those who professed to belong to God and cried, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we," were too good to accept a Savior—too near to Heaven to need a Messenger from God.

But the real reason for rejecting the testimony of Jesus was this—*they were too evil to receive it.* Read verse 19—"Light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone that does evil hates the light, neither comes to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved." Ah, my unbelieving Hearers, if you were better men you would more readily accept the light of Christ! If men were not such sinners as they are, they would come to Him to learn the way of the Lord. Alas, the depth of man's guilt has hardened his heart and darkened his perceptions—and made him prefer darkness to light! Men do not see that they need deliverance—they hear music in the rattle of their chairs. May the Spirit of God come and convict men of sin—and when they are once convicted of it and foresee their doom, they will change their minds towards the Savior and be willing to hear the message of Divine Grace!

May God, of His boundless Grace, save every man and woman and child to whom this sermon shall come! [And may He be as merciful to those who read this in the 21ST Century!] I am greatly pleased to see so many of you present on such a wet and stormy day as this—I hope the Lord means to bless you now that you are here. I remember going to the house of God one morning when there were only a few persons able to reach the place, there being a heavy snowstorm at the time. That morning I found the Savior by looking to Him upon the Cross and now I look with great interest upon services which are held in rough weather. I hope that those who have had the determination to come are more than common hearers—I trust that they have hearts that the Lord God has touched.

I hope you have come here with a desire to find salvation and if so, may you find it in the Lord Jesus at once! O Lord, grant it, I beseech You! All the while, remember, these rejecters of Christ *were under the wrath of God.* What a terrible condition! I will not dwell upon the awful fact, but let a man only know the meaning of these words and he will tremble in his seat—"He that believes not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides on him." O Souls, how can you bear it?

IV. We will conclude by speaking upon the fourth point. Let US COMMUNE WITH THOSE WHO RECEIVE CHRIST'S TESTIMONY. The text

says, "He that has received His testimony has set to his seal that God is true." To receive is, in still plainer Saxon, "to take in." There is here the idea of retaining as well as receiving. We take in the testimony of Jesus that it may abide in us. We hear what Jesus says and we answer to it, "Lord, I believe." Our word is, "Master, say on. Whatever You say, I believe." We take in all that Jesus witnesses and we hold to it. We believe and we keep on believing. We come to Jesus and we are always coming to Him.

Some people begin with believing in Jesus and then turn aside to believe in their own feelings, but you must not do so—you must believe and keep right on believing. The just shall live by faith. We receive Christ and keep on receiving Him. "He that receives His testimony." Do you refuse *anything* to which Jesus witnesses? This is evil! Receive His testimony with unquestioning faith. Some men will believe any monstrous assertion of scientists, or spiritualists, or rationalists—but they cannot believe the plain witness of the Lord Jesus Christ! The man who takes in the teaching of Jesus and keeps to it, he is the blessed man!

He takes in the testimony of Jesus for himself and receives it as his own possession. That Jesus saves from sin is true. That He saves me from sin is a more personal truth! Christ will save those who believe. This is good. But, "I believe and therefore I am saved," is better. Personal appropriation is the best receiving! Accept the Truth of Jesus for your own soul—seize it by the grip of a personal faith and then you have it! You have seen a boy with a burning-glass—he concentrates all the rays of the sun so as to produce a fire. Even so, by faith, concentrate the testimony of Jesus upon your own case and you will soon feel a wonderful power working in your soul! He that receives the testimony of Jesus makes it his own, feeds on it and is saved thereby.

Receivers of Christ's testimony allow nothing to make them doubt what He has said. When the Believer is down in the dumps and is passing through a dark time, he says, "What Jesus has said is true for all this. He has told me that if I believe in Him I have eternal life and I have it, however gloomy things may appear. I have a sluggish liver and it makes me feel low and miserable, but I have eternal life! My wife is sick to death and I have buried child after child and lost friend after friend—but I have eternal life! God's waves and billows go over me, but I have eternal life, for He says it and I cannot doubt Him." It is a grand thing to have your confidence outside yourself! It is glorious to have it all in Christ!

As long as you keep your confidence in your own self it will be a very poor stay for you. There is a ship at sea and a foolish landsman feels very confident of the safety of the vessel because they have a big anchor on board. My dear Man, what is the good of that anchor while it is on board? It would rather tend to sink the ship by its weight than to be of service to it. "Oh," he says, "but it is one of the best Admiralty anchors and we are safe while that is on board!"

O simple Soul, an anchor is of no use while you can see it! Drop it down into the deep sea, out of sight, and then it will be of service. Hear

the chain run out! Now the anchor is far down. It grips and holds the vessel. You must fix your confidence *within* the veil. Your anchorage of hope must be where mortal eyes can never see. Our rest lies in simply believing the Word of the Lord Jesus. I believe it though I do not feel it. I believe it though I cannot argue the matter out logically. I believe it because God says it to me through His great Witness, the Lord Jesus Christ. The foregoing will enable you to see the truth of the statement, "He that has received His testimony *has set to his seal that God is true.*"

In the olden time men did not often write their names because they could not write at all! Even kings set their seals because they could not give a signature. To this day, how often does it happen to me, as a trustee to a chapel or a school, to have a paper laid before me and I not only sign my name, but I put my finger on that red wafer which represents my seal and I say, "This is my act and deed"? When you believe in Jesus you have set your seal to the testimony of Jesus, which is the Revelation of the Lord. You have certified that you believe in God as true. What does that mean? It means not only that He has kept His promise as made to the fathers in the Old Testament and will keep it in Christ Jesus, but it means, also, that to you God is real. By faith in Jesus you have come to know the reality of God.

Before, you talked about an unknown God, but now you know Him and declare your faith in His reality and fidelity. Now you perceive substance and not shadow. Now you see mystery, but not myth. God is Truth and all that Jesus said of Him is Truth. He says, "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life," and you find that God is true, for you live in newness of life! Jesus says, "He that believes on Him is not condemned," and you know it is so, for you enjoy a sense of pardoned sin! You have sealed the testimony of God by resting your own *soul* upon it. It seems a very joyful thing to me that I should be allowed to be a witness to the Truth of God. I feel honored by being allowed to subscribe my name to the testimony of Jesus.

Can you not do the same? Remember what it involves. You doubting Christians, what are you doing? You have already put your hand and seal to the promise of God and are you going to contradict your own signature and seal? When you first believed in Jesus you set to your seal that God is true. And now, because you have met with a little trouble, are you going to retract your witness? Do you fear that the Lord will not help you and save you? What are we to understand by that seal of yours? Is it, after all, untrue, or unreal? You know better! Shame on you for contradicting yourself! Remember, when you make God a liar you make yourself a liar, for you have already set your hand and seal to it that God is true—and seals and handwritings remain. You accepted the real Savior for your real sin and you believed in the real death of Christ for you—are you going to run back? Will you doubt your Lord after this?

God grant you may not, but, on the contrary, may you go on confirming the testimony of Jesus and setting it to your seal again and again that God is true! Give glory to God believing that what He has promised He is

able also to perform. Never stagger at the promise through unbelief. All the promises of God are yes and amen in Christ Jesus to the glory of God by us—why, we set to our seal that God is true!

I have done, when I have said just this. Avoid, dear Hearers, anxiously, the double sin of unbelief. If you do not believe Jesus, you do not believe God. If you reject His Son, you reject Him. If you give the lie to the teaching of Christ, you give the lie to God. Flee from this deadly sin! Note well the simple matter upon which eternal life depends. “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life.” He has it *now*. It is in his heart now and it is not for a time, for it is *everlasting* life. Note that as soon as a man believes God, he sets to his seal that God is true and then away flies all suspicion of his God!

Our sins are largely caused by our mistrust of God. You think that God denies you something that would be good for you and therefore you go and take it. You suspect God of being so cruel as to command you to do that which is to your injury and so you refuse to obey Him. Now if you believe that God is true, you will from now on give up what He bids you give up because you feel that it is well to do so. And you will act as He bids you because you are sure His command is wise and good. Between you and God there will be, from now on, a holy confidence—and what will that lead to? It will lead to holiness of life and earnest seeking to please God in whom you unreservedly believe.

You will love Him with all your heart and with all your soul, now that confidence is created. See what a change faith makes! Have you ever heard of a servant who believed hard things of her mistress? She thought her a tyrant and resolved that she would do nothing to please her. When she did her work, she did it very badly and thought it was quite good enough for such a creature as her mistress. But she heard something about her which entirely changed her opinion. Instead of thinking her a demon, she judged her to be little less than an angel! It might have seemed a small matter, but it was not so. She did her work zealously and gladly now that her suspicions were ended. Faith in her mistress affected her whole life.

So is it in spiritual things! Faith in Christ Jesus is the fountain of obedience, the ensign of a change of heart. God grant it to you all! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURES READ BEFORE SERMON—*John 3:13-36*.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—909, 249, 631.**

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THE UNBELIEVER'S UNHAPPY CONDITION NO. 1012

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 24, 1871,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*"He that believes not the Son shall not see life.
But the wrath of God abides on him."
John 3:36.*

THIS is a part of a discourse by John the Baptist. We have not many sermons by that mighty preacher, but we have just sufficient to prove that he knew how to lay the axe at the root of the tree by preaching the Law of God most unflinchingly. And also that he knew how to declare the Gospel, for no one could have uttered sentences which more clearly contain the way of salvation than those in the text before us. Indeed, this third chapter of the Gospel according to the Evangelist John is notable among clear and plain Scriptures—notable for being yet clearer and more plain than almost any other.

John the Baptist was evidently a preacher who knew how to discriminate—a point in which so many fail—he separated between the precious and the vile, and therefore he was as God's mouth to the people. He does not address them as all lost nor as all saved, but he shows the two classes. He keeps up the line of demarcation between him that fears God and him that fears Him not. He plainly declares the privileges of the Believer. He says he has even *now* eternal life. And with equal decision he testifies to the sad state of the unbeliever—"he shall not see life. But the wrath of God abides on him."

John the Baptist might usefully instruct many professedly Christian preachers. Although he that is least in the kingdom of Heaven is greater than John the Baptist, and ought, therefore, more clearly to bear witness to the Truth, yet, there are many who muddle the Gospel, who teach philosophy, who preach a mingle-mangle which is neither Law nor Gospel. And these might well go to the school of this rough preacher of the wilderness, and learn from him how to cry, "Behold the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world."

I desire this morning to take a leaf out of the Baptist's lesson book. I would preach as he did the Gospel of the Lord Jesus, "whose shoes I am not worthy to bear." It is my earnest desire to enjoy the delight of expounding to you the deep things of God. I feel a profound pleasure in opening up the blessings of the Covenant of Grace and bringing forth out of its treasury things new and old. I should be very happy to dwell upon the types of the Old Testament, and even to touch upon the prophecies of the New. But, while so many yet remain unsaved, my heart is never content except when I am preaching simply the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

My dear unconverted Hearers, when I see you brought to Christ I will then advance beyond the rudiments of the Gospel! Meanwhile, while Hell is gaping wide, and many of you will certainly help to fill it, I cannot turn aside from warning you. I dare not resist the sacred impulse which con-

strains me to preach over and over again to you the glad tidings of salvation. I shall, like John, continue laying the axe at the root of the trees and shall not go beyond crying, "Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand." As he did, we shall now declare the sad estate of him who believes not the Son of God.

This morning, with the burden of the Lord upon us, we shall speak upon the words of the text. Our first point shall be a discovery of *the guilty one*, "he that believes not the Son." Next, we shall consider *his offense*. It lies in "not believing the Son." Thirdly, we shall lay bare the *sinful causes which create this unbelief*. And, fourthly we shall show the terrible result of not believing in the Son—"he shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." May the Spirit help us in all.

I. To begin, then, who is THE GUILTY ONE? Who is the unhappy man spoken of here? Is he a person to be met with only once in a century? Must we search the crowds through and through to find an individual in this miserable plight? Ah, no. The persons who are here spoken of are common. They abound even in our holy assemblies. They are to be met with by thousands in our streets. Alas, alas, they form the vast majority of the world's population! Jesus has come unto His own and His own have not received Him. The Jewish race remain unbelieving—while the Gentiles, to whom He was to be a Light—prefer to sit in darkness and reject His brightness.

We shall not be talking, this morning, upon a recondite theme with only a remote relation to ourselves. There are many here of whom we shall be speaking, and we devoutly pray that the Word of God may come with power to their souls. The persons here spoken of are those who believe not the Son of God. Jesus Christ, out of infinite mercy, has come into the world, has taken upon Himself our nature, and in that nature has suffered—the Just for the unjust—to bring us to God. By reason of His sufferings, the Gospel message is now proclaimed to all men, and they are honestly assured that, "whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life."

The unhappy persons in this text will not believe in Jesus Christ—they reject God's way of mercy. They hear the Gospel, but refuse obedience to its command. Let it not be imagined that these individuals are necessarily avowed skeptics, for many of them believe much of the revealed Truth of God. They believe the Bible to be the Word of God. They believe there is a God. They believe that Jesus Christ is come into the world as a Savior. They believe most of the doctrines which cluster around the Cross. Alas, they may do this, but yet the wrath of God abides on them if they believe not the Son of God!

It may surprise you to learn that many of these persons are very much interested in orthodoxy. They believe that they have discovered the Truth and they exceedingly value those discoveries, so that they frequently grow very warm in temper with those who differ from them. They have read much and they are masters of argument in the defense of what they consider to be sound doctrine. They cannot endure heresy—and yet, sad is the fact that believing what they do, and knowing so much—they have not believed the Son of God! They believe the doctrine of election, but they have not the faith of God's elect. They swear by final perseverance, but

persevere in unbelief. They confess all the five points of Calvinism but they have not come to the one most necessary point of looking unto Jesus that they may be saved.

They accept in creed the Truths of God that are assuredly believed among us, but they have not received that faithful saying, worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. At any rate, they have not received it personally and practically for their souls' salvation. It must be admitted that not a few of these persons are blameless as to their morals. You could not, with close observation, find either dishonesty, falsehood, uncleanness, or malice in their outward life. They are not only free from these blots, but they manifest positive excellences. Much of their character is commendable. They frequently are courteous and compassionate, generous and gentle-minded.

Often times they are so amiable and admirable that, while looking upon them, we understand how our Lord, in a similar case, loved the young man who asked, "what do I lack?" The one thing necessary they are destitute of is they have not believed in Christ Jesus, and loath as the Savior was to see them perish, yet it cannot be helped—one doom is common to all who believe not. They shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on them.

In many cases these persons are, in addition to their morality, religious persons after a fashion. They would not absent themselves from the usual service of the place of worship. They are most careful to respect Sundays. They venerate the Book of God. They use a form of prayer, they join in the songs of the Sanctuary. They sit as God's people sit, and stand as God's people stand. But, alas, there is a worm in the center of that fair fruit—they have missed the one essential thing, which, being omitted, brings certain ruin—they have not believed on the Son of God.

Ah, how far a man may go, and yet, for lack of this *one* thing, the wrath of God may still abide upon him! Beloved of parents who are hopeful of the conversion of their boy. Esteemed by Christians who cannot but admire his outward conversation, yet for all that, the young man may be under the frown of God, for "God is angry with the wicked every day." The wrath of God abides on the man, whoever he may be, that has not believed in Jesus!

Now, if our text showed that the wrath of God was resting on the culprits in our jails, most persons would assent to the statement and none would wonder at it. If our text declared that the wrath of God abides upon persons who live in habitual unchastity and constant violation of all the laws of order and respectability—most men would say, "Amen." But the text is aimed at another character. It is true that God's wrath does rest upon open sinners. But, oh Sirs, this, too, is true—the wrath of God abides upon those who boast of their virtues but have not believed in Jesus, His Son!

They may dwell in *palaces*—but if they are not Believers—the wrath of God abides on them. They may sit in the senate house and enjoy the acclamations of the nation—but if they believe not on the Son—the wrath of God abides on them. Their names may be enrolled in the peerage and they may possess countless wealth—but the wrath of God abides on them—if they believe not on the Son of God. They may be habitual in their chari-

ties, and abundant in external acts of devotion—but if they have not accepted the appointed Savior, the Word of God bears witness that—“the wrath of God abides on them.”

II. Now let us, with our hearts awakened by God's Spirit, try to think upon THEIR OFFENSE. What is this peculiar sin which entails the wrath of God upon these people? It is that they have not believed the Son of God. What does that amount to? It amounts to this, first of all, that they refuse to accept the mercy of God. God made a Law, and His creatures were bound to respect and obey it. We rejected it, and turned aside from it. It was a great display of the heart's hatred, but it was not, in some respects, so thoroughly and intensely wicked a manifestation of enmity to God as when we reject the Gospel of Grace.

God has now presented not the Law, but the Gospel to us. He has said—“My Creatures, you have broken My Law. You have acted very vilely towards Me. I must punish your sin, else I were not God, and I cannot lay aside My justice. But I have devised a way by which, without any injury to any of My attributes, I can have mercy upon you. I am ready to forgive the past and to restore you to *more* than your lost position, so that you shall be My sons and my daughters. My only command to you is believe in My Son. If this command is obeyed, all the blessings of My new Covenant shall be yours. Trust Him and follow Him, for, behold, I give Him as a Leader and Commander to the people. Accept Him as making Atonement by His Substitution, and obey Him.”

Now, to reject the Law of God shows an evil heart of unbelief. But who shall say what a depth of rebellion must dwell in that heart which refuses not only the yoke of God, but even the *gift* of God? The provision of a Savior for lost men is the *free gift* of God! By it all our wants are supplied, all our evils are removed, peace on earth is secured to us, and Glory forever with God—the rejection of this gift cannot be a small sin! The All-Seeing One, when He beholds men spurning the supreme gift of His love, cannot but regard such rejection as the worst proof of the hatred of their hearts against Himself.

When the Holy Spirit comes to convict men of sin, the special sin which He brings to light is thus described—“Of sin, because they believed not on Me.” Not because the heathen were licentious in their habits, barbarians in their ways, and bloodthirsty in their spirit. No—“Of sin, because they believe not on Me.” Condemnation has come upon men, but what is the condemnation? “That Light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than Light, because their deeds are evil.” Remember, also, that expressive text—“He that believes not is condemned already.” And what is he condemned for! “Because he has not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God.”

Let me remark, further, that in the rejection of Divine Mercy as presented in Christ, the unbeliever has displayed an intense venom against God, for observe how it is. He must either receive the mercy of God in Christ, or he must be condemned—there is no other alternative. He must trust Christ whom God has set forth to be the Propitiation for sin, or else he must be driven from the Presence of God into eternal punishment. The unbeliever in effect says, “I had sooner be damned than I would accept God's mercy in Christ.”

Can we conceive a grosser insult to the infinite compassion of the great Father? Suppose a man has injured another, grossly insulted him—and that repeatedly. And yet the injured person, finding the man at last brought into a wretched and miserable state, goes to him and simply out of kindness to him, says, “I freely forgive you all the wrong you ever did me, and I am ready to relieve your poverty, and to succor you in your distress.” Suppose the other replies, “No, I would sooner rot than take anything from you.” Would not you have in such a resolve a clear proof of the intense enmity that existed in his heart?

And so when a man says, and every one of you unbelievers do practically say so, “I would sooner lie forever in Hell than honor Christ by trusting Him,” this is a very plain proof of your hatred of God and His Christ. Unbelievers hate God. Let me ask for what do you hate Him? He keeps the breath within your nostrils. He it is that gives you food and clothing, and sends fruitful seasons. For which of these good things do you hate Him? You hate Him because He is good. Ah, then, it must be because you, yourself, are evil—and your heart very far removed from righteousness. May God grant that this great and crying sin may be clearly set before your eyes by the light of the Eternal Spirit! And may, by His Grace, you repent of it, and turn from your unbelief and live this day!

But yet further, the unbeliever touches God in a very tender place by his unbelief. No doubt it was to the great Maker a joyous thing to fashion this world, but there are no expressions of joy concerning it at all equal to the joy of God in the matter of human redemption. We would be guarded when we speak of Him, but as far as we can tell, the gift of His dear Son to men, and the whole scheme of redemption is the master work even of God Himself. He is infinite in POWER, and wisdom, and love. His ways are as high above our ways as the heavens are above the earth. But Scripture, I think, will warrant me in saying—

***“That in the Grace which rescued man
His brightest form of Glory shines.
Here on the Cross it is fairest writ,
In precious blood and crimson lines.”***

Now, the man who says, “There is no God” is a fool. But he who denies God the glory of redemption, in addition to his folly, has robbed the Lord of the choicest jewel of His regalia and aimed a deadly blow at the Divine honor. I may say of him who despises the great salvation, that, in despising Christ, he touches the apple of God’s eye. “This is My Beloved Son,” says God, “hear Him.” Out of Heaven He says it, and yet men stop their ears and say, “We will not have Him.” No, they wax wrath against the Cross and turn away from God’s salvation. Do you think that God will always bear this? The times of your ignorance He has winked at, but, “now commands all men everywhere to repent.”

Will you stand out against His love? His love that has been so inventive in ingenious plans by which to bless the sons of men? Shall His choicest work be utterly despised by you? If so, it is little wonder that it is written, “The wrath of God abides on him.” I must, still further, unveil this matter by saying that the unbeliever perpetrates an offense against every Person of the blessed Trinity. He may think that his not believing is a very small business, but, indeed, it is a barbed shaft shot against the Deity.

Take the Persons of the blessed Trinity, beginning with the Son of God who comes to us most nearly. It is to me the most surprising thing I ever heard of that, "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." I do not wonder that in Hindustan the missionaries are often met with this remark—"It is too good to be true that God ever took upon Himself the nature of such a thing as man!" Yet, more wonderful does it seem to be that, when Christ became Man, He took all the sorrows and infirmity of man, and, in addition, was made to bear the sin of many. The most extraordinary of all facts is this—that the infinitely Holy should be "numbered with the transgressors," and, in the words of Isaiah, should "bear their iniquities."

The Lord has made Him who knew no sin, to be made sin for us. Wonder of wonders! It is beyond all degree amazing that He who distributes crowns and thrones should hang on a tree and die—the Just for the unjust—bearing the punishment due to sinners for guilt. Now, knowing this, as most of you do, and yet refusing to believe, you do, in effect, say, "I do not believe that the Incarnate God can save." "Oh no," you reply, "we sincerely believe that He can save." Then it must be that you feel, "I believe He can, but I will not have Him save me." Wherein I excuse you in the first place, I must bring the accusation more heavily in the second.

You answer that "you do not say you will not believe Him." Why do you, then, remain in unbelief? The fact is you do not trust Him—you will not obey Him. I pray you account for the fact. "May I believe Him?" asks one. Have we not told you ten thousand times over that whoever will, may take the Water of Life freely? If there is any barrier, it is not with God, it is not with Christ—it is with your own sinful heart. You are welcome to the Savior now, and if you trust Him now He is yours forever.

But oh, Unbeliever, it appears to be nothing to you that Christ has died! His wounds attract you not. His groans for His enemies have no music in them to you. You turn your back upon the Incarnate God who bleeds for men, and in so doing you shut yourselves out of hope, judging yourselves unworthy of eternal life. Furthermore, the willful rejection of Christ is also an insult to God the Father. "He that believes not has made God a liar, because he has not believed the record that God gave of His Son." God has Himself often borne testimony to His dear Son. "Him has God the Father set forth to be a Propitiation for our Sins."

In rejecting Christ, you reject God's testimony and God's gift. It is a direct assault upon the truthfulness and loving kindness of the gracious Father when you trample on or cast aside His priceless, peerless gift of love. And, as for the blessed Spirit, it is His office here below to bear witness to Christ. In the Christian ministry, the Holy Spirit daily cries to the sons of men to come to Jesus. He has strived in the hearts of many of you, given you a measure of conviction of sin, and a degree of knowledge of the glory of Christ—but you have repressed it—you have labored to your utmost to do despite to the Spirit of God.

Believe me, this is no slight sin. An unbeliever is an enemy to God the Father, to God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Against the blessed Trinity in Unity, O Unbeliever, your sin is a standing insult—you are now to God's face insulting Him by continuing an unbeliever. And, I must add that there is also in unbelief an insult against every attribute of God. The

unbeliever in effect declares, "If the justice of God is seen in laying the punishment of sin upon Christ—I do not care for His justice—I will bear my own punishment." The sinner seems to say, "God is merciful in the gift of Christ to suffer in our place—I do not want His mercy—I can do without it. Others may be guilty, and they may trust in the Redeemer, but I do not feel such guilt and I will not ask for pardon."

Unbelievers attack the wisdom of God, for, whereas the wisdom of God is in its fullness revealed in the gift of Jesus, they say, "It is a dogma, unphilosophical and worn out." They count the wisdom of God to be foolishness, and thus cast a slight upon another of the Divine attributes. I might in detail mention every one of the attributes and prerogatives of God, and prove that your refusal of the Savior is an insult to every one of them, and to God Himself—but the theme is too sad for us to continue upon it. Therefore let us pass to another phase of the subject, though I fear it will be equally grievous.

III. Thirdly, let us consider THE CAUSES OF THIS UNBELIEF. In a great many, unbelief may be ascribed to a careless *ignorance* of the way of salvation. Now I should not wonder if many of you imagine that if you do not understand the Gospel, you are therefore quite excused for not believing it. But, Sirs, it is not so! You are placed in this world, not as heathens in the center of Africa, but in enlightened England, where you live in the full blaze of Gospel days. There are places of worship all around you, which you can without difficulty attend. The Book of God is very cheap—you have it in your houses. You can all read it or hear it read.

Is it so, then, that the King has been pleased to reveal Himself to you, and tell you the way to salvation, and yet you, at the age of twenty, thirty, or forty, do not know the way of salvation? What do you mean, Sir? What *can* you mean? Has God been pleased to reveal Himself in Scripture—tell you how to escape from Hell and fly to Heaven—and yet have you been too idle to inquire into that way? Dare you say to God, "I do not think it worth my while to learn what You have revealed, neither do I care to know of the gift which You have bestowed on men." How can you think that such ignorance is an excuse for your sin? What could be a more gross aggravation of it?

If you do not know, you ought to know. If you have not learned the Gospel message, you might have learned it—for there are some of us whose language it is not difficult for even the most illiterate to understand, and who would, if we caught ourselves using a hard word, retract it, and put it into little syllables so that not even a child's intellect need be perplexed by our language. Salvation's way is plain in the Book. Those words—"Believe and live"—are in this Christian England almost as legible and as universally to be seen as though they were printed on the sky. That trust in the Lord Jesus saves the soul is well-known news.

But, if you still say you have not known all this, then I reply, "Dear Sir, do try to know it. Go to the Scriptures, study them, see what is there. Hear, also, the Gospel, for it is written, "Incline your ear to come unto Me. Hear, and your soul shall live." Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." For your soul's sake I charge you, be no longer ignorant of that which you must know, or else must perish. In some others, the cause is *indifference*. They do not think the matter to be of any very great

consequence. They are aware that they are not quite right, but they have a notion that somehow or other they will get right at last. And meanwhile, it does not trouble them.

Oh Man, I pray you, as your fellow creature, let me speak with you a word of expostulation. God declares that His wrath abides upon you as an unbeliever, and do you call that nothing? God says, "I am angry with you," and you say to Him, "I do not care, it is of very small importance to me. The rise or fall of the government bonds is of much more consequence than whether God is angry with me or not. My dinner being done to a turn concerns me a great deal more than whether the Infinite God loves me or hates me."

That is the English of your conduct, and I put it to you whether there can be a higher impertinence against your Creator, or a direr form of arrogant revolt against the eternal Ruler? If it does not trouble you that God is angry with you, it *ought* to trouble you! It troubles *me* that it does not trouble *you*. We have heard of persons guilty of murder whose behavior during the trial has been cool and self-possessed. The coolness with which they pleaded, "not guilty," has been all of a piece with the hardness of tears which led them to the bloody deed. He who is capable of great crime is also incapable of shame concerning it. A man who is able to take pleasure and be at ease while God is angry with him shows that his heart is harder than steel.

In certain cases, the root of this unbelief lies in another direction. It is fed by pride. The person who is guilty of it does not believe that he *needs* a Savior. His notion is that he will do his very best, attend the Church or the meeting house very regularly, subscribe occasionally or frequently, and go to Heaven partly by what he does, and partly by the merits of Christ. So that not believing in Christ is not a matter of any great consequence with him because he is not naked, and poor, and miserable. He is rich, and increased in goods in spiritual things. To be saved by *faith* is a religion for harlots, and drunkards, and thieves. But for respectable persons such as he is, who have kept the Law from their youth up, he does not see any particular need of laying hold upon Christ. Such conduct reminds me of the words of Cowper—

***"Perish the virtue, as it ought, abhorred,
And the fool with it that insults his Lord."***

God believed it necessary, in order to save man, that the Redeemer should die. Yet you self-righteous ones evidently think that death a superfluity—for if a man could save himself, why did the Lord descend and die to save him? If there is a way to Heaven by respectability and morality without Christ, what is the good of Christ? It is utterly useless to have an expiator and a Mediator, if men are so good that they do not require them. You tell God to His face that He lies to you, that you are not so sinful as He would persuade you, that you do not need a Substitute and Sacrifice as He says you do. Oh, Sirs, this pride of yours is an arrogant rebellion against God! Look at your fine actions, you that are so good—your motives are base, your pride over what you have done has defiled, with black fingers, all your acts. In as much as you prefer your way to God's way, and prefer your righteousness to God's righteousness, the wrath of God abides on you.

Perhaps I have not hit the reason of your unbelief, therefore let me speak some more. In many, *love of sin*, rather than any boasted self-righteousness keeps them from the Savior. They do not believe in Jesus because they have any doubt about the truths of Christianity, but because they have an enslaving love for their favorite sin. "Why," says one, "if I were to believe in Christ, of course, I must obey Him—to trust and to obey go together. Then I could not be the drunkard I am, I could not trade as I do, I could not practice secret licentiousness, I could not frequent the haunts of the ungodly where laughter is occasioned by sin, and mirth by blasphemy. I cannot give up these my darling sins."

Perhaps, this sinner hopes that one day, when he cannot any longer enjoy his sin, he will meanly sneak out of it and try to cheat the devil of his soul. But meanwhile he prefers the pleasures of sin to obedience to God, and unbelief to acceptance of his salvation. O sweet Sin! O bitter Sin! How are you murdering the souls of men! As certain serpents before they strike their prey fix their eyes upon it and fascinate it, and then at last devour it, so does sin fascinate the foolish sons of Adam. They are charmed with it, and perish for it. It yields but a momentary joy, and the wage thereof is eternal misery, yet are men enamored of it.

The ways of the strange woman, and the paths of uncleanness lead most plainly to the chambers of death—yet are men attracted to them as moths to the blaze of the candle—and so are they destroyed. Alas, that men wantonly dash against the rocks of dangerous lusts and perish willfully beneath the enchantment of sin! Sad pity it is to prefer a harlot to the eternal God, to prefer a few pence made by dishonesty to Heaven itself, to prefer the gratification of the belly to the love of the Creator, and the joy of being reconciled and saved. It was a dire insult to God when Israel set up a golden calf, and said, "These are your gods, O Israel."

Shall the image of an ox that eats grass supplant the living God! He that had strewn the earth with manna, had made Sinai to smoke with His Presence, and the whole wilderness to tremble beneath His marching—is He to be thrust aside by the image of a bullock that has horns and hoofs? Will men prefer molten metal to the infinitely holy and glorious Jehovah? But, surely, the preference of a lust, to God, is a greater insult still—to obey our passions rather than His will, and to prefer sin to His mercy—this is the crime of crimes. May God deliver us from it, for His mercy's sake.

IV. We have heavy tidings in the last head of my discourse, THE TERRIBLE RESULT of unbelief. "He shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." "The wrath of God!" No words can ever fully explain this expression. Holy Whitfield, when he was preaching, would often hold up his hands, and, with tears streaming down his eyes, would exclaim, "Oh, the wrath to come! The wrath to come!"

Then he would pause because his emotions checked his utterance. The wrath of God! I confess I feel uneasy if anybody is angry with me, and yet one can bear the auger of foolish, hot-tempered persons with some equanimity. But the wrath of God is the anger of One who is never angry without a cause. One who is very patient and long suffering. It takes much to bring anger into Jehovah's face, yet is He angry with unbelievers. He is

never angry with anything because it is feeble and little, but only because it is wrong.

His anger is only His holiness set on fire. He cannot bear sin! Who would wish that He should? What right-minded man would desire God to be pleased with evil? That were to make a devil of God! Because He is God, He must be angry with sin wherever it is. This makes the sting of it—that His wrath is just and holy anger. It is the anger, remember, of an Omnipotent Being who can crush us as easily as a moth. It is the anger of an Infinite Being, and therefore Infinite anger, the heights and depths and breadths and lengths of which no man can measure. Only the Incarnate God ever fully knew the power of God's anger. It is beyond all conception, yet the anger rests on you, my Hearer. Alas for you, if you are an unbeliever, for this is your state before God! It is no fiction of mine, but the Word of inspired Truth—"the wrath of God abides on him."

Then notice the next word, it "*abides*." This is to say, it is upon you *now*. He is angry with you at this moment—and always. You go to sleep with an angry God gazing into your face. You wake in the morning, and if your eyes were not dim you would perceive His frowning countenance. He is angry with you, even when you are singing His praises, for you mock Him with solemn sounds upon a thoughtless tongue. He is angry with you on your knees, for you only pretend to pray—you utter words without heart. As long as you are not a Believer, He must be angry with you every moment. "God is angry with the wicked every day." That the text says it abides, and the present tense takes a long sweep, for it always will abide on you.

But may you not, perhaps, escape from it, by ceasing to exist? The test precludes such an idea. Although it says that you, "shall not see life," it teaches that God's wrath is upon you so that the absence of life is not annihilation. Spiritual life belongs only to Believers. You are now without that life, yet you exist, and wrath abides on you, and so it ever must be. While you shall not see life, you shall exist in eternal death, for the wrath of God cannot abide on a non-existent creature. You shall not see life, but you shall feel wrath to the uttermost. It is horror enough that wrath should be on you now—it is horror upon horrors, and Hell upon Hell—that it shall be upon you forever! And notice that it must be so because you reject the only thing that can heal you.

As George Herbert says, "Whom oils and balsams kill, what salve can cure?" If Christ Himself has become a savor of death unto death to you, because you reject Him—how can you be saved? There is but one door, and if you close it by your unbelief, how can you enter Heaven? There is one healing medicine, and if you refuse to take it, what remains but death? There is one Water of Life, but you refuse to drink it. Then must you thirst forever. You put from you, voluntarily, the one only Redeemer—how, then, shall you be ransomed? Shall Christ die again, and in another state be offered to you once more?

O Sirs, you would reject Him then as you reject Him now! There remains no more sacrifice for sin. On the Cross God's mercy to the sons of men was fully revealed—and will you reject God's ultimatum of Grace—His last appeal to you? If so, it is at your own peril—Christ being raised from the dead dies no more. He shall come again, but without a sin offer-

ing unto the salvation of His people. Remember, Sirs, that the wrath of God will produce no saving or softening effect. It has been suggested that a sinner, after suffering God's wrath awhile, may repent, and so escape from it. But our observation and experience prove that the wrath of God never softened anybody's heart yet, and we believe it never will—those who are suffering Divine wrath will go on to harden, and harden, and harden.

The more they suffer, the more they will hate—the more they are punished, the more will they sin. The wrath of God abiding on you will produce no good results in you, but rather you shall go from evil to evil, further and further from the Presence of God. The reason why the wrath of God abides on an unbeliever is partly because all his other sins remain on him. There is no sin that shall damn the man who believes, and nothing can save the man who will not believe. God removes all sin the moment we believe. But while we believe not, fresh cords fasten upon us our transgressions. The sin of Judah is written as with an iron pen, and engraved with a point of a diamond. Nothing can release you from guilt while your heart remains at enmity with Jesus Christ your Lord.

Remember that God has never taken an oath, that I know of, against any class of persons, except unbelievers. "To whom swore He that they should not enter into His rest, but to them that believed not?" Continued unbelief God never will forgive, because His Word binds Him not to do so. Does He swear an oath, and shall He go back from it? It cannot be! O that you might have Grace to relinquish your unbelief, and close in with the Gospel and be saved!

Now, I hear someone object, "You tell us that certain people are under the wrath of God, but they are very prosperous." I reply that yonder bullock will be slaughtered. Yet it is being fattened. And your prosperity, O ungodly Man, is but a fattening of you for the slaughter of justice. Yes, but you say, "They are very merry, and some of those who are forgiven are very sad." Mercy lets them be merry while they may. We have heard of men who, when driven to Tyburn in a cart, could drink and laugh as they went to the gallows. It only proved what bad men they were. And so, whereas the guilty can yet take comfort, it only proves their guiltiness.

Let me ask what ought to be your thoughts concerning these solemn Truths of God which I have delivered to you? I know what *my* thoughts were. They made me go to my bed unhappy. They made me very grateful because I hope I have believed in Jesus Christ. Yet they made me start in the night, and wake this morning with a load upon me. I come here to say to you—must it be so that you will always remain unbelievers and abide under the wrath of God? If it must be so, and the dread conclusion seems forced upon me, at any rate, to look it in the face, to consider it. If you are resolved to be damned, know what you are doing. Take advice and consider.

O Sirs, it cannot need an argument to convince you that it is a most wretched thing to be now under the wrath of God? You cannot want any argument to show that it must be a blessed thing to be forgiven—you must see that! It is not your reason that wants convincing—it is your *heart* that wants renewing. The whole Gospel in a nutshell is this: Come, you guilty One, just as you are, and rest yourself upon the finished work

of the Savior, and take Him to be yours forever. Trust Jesus now. In your present position it may be done. God's Holy Spirit, blessing your mind, you may at this moment say, "Lord, I believe, help you my unbelief."

You may now confide in Jesus, and some who came in here unforgiven, may make the angels sing because they go down yonder steps saved souls—whose transgressions are forgiven—and whose sins are covered! God knows that if I knew by what study and what art I could learn to preach the Gospel so as to affect your hearts I would spare no cost or pains. For the present I have aimed simply to warn you, not with adornment of speech, lest the power should be the power of man.

And now I leave my message, and commit it to Him who shall judge the quick and the dead. But this know, if you receive not the Son, I shall be a swift witness against you! God grant it be not so, for His mercy's sake. Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
Hebrews 2:14-18; Hebrews 3.**

"*THE SWORD AND THE TROWEL*" edited by C. H. Spurgeon, CONTENTS FOR OCTOBER, 1871: *The Pastor's Wife*. A True Narrative, Translated from the German by Mary Weitbrecht. *Among the Rookeries of Smithfield*, by Edward Leach. *On the Religion of Childhood*, by Vernon J. Charlesworth, of Stockwell Orphanage. *Prayer: The Primitive Church of Ireland, A Visit to Christ's Hospital*, being a short sermon by C. H. Spurgeon. "Waiting for the Verdict"—"The Acquittal," by John Aldis, Jun. Spasmodic Workers and Baptist Country Mission Reviews. Memoranda. Pastors' College Account. College Buildings Fund. Stockwell Orphanage. Colportage Association. Golden Lane Mission. Annual Report of the Stockwell Orphanage. (Supplement Gratis.) Price 3d. Post free, 4 stamps. London Passmore & Alabaster, 18 Paternoster Row, and all Booksellers.

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JESUS SITTING ON THE WELL

NO. 2570

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 15, 1898.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 25, 1883.

*“Jesus therefore, being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well:
and it was about the sixth hour.”
John 4:6.*

IF we were wise, dear Friends, we would find a thousand things in the world to remind us of our blessed Lord. It is well to form the habit of connecting things that are seen with Him, “whom, having not seen, we love.” If we do so, there will not be an hour in the day when we shall not be helped to think of Him and scarcely anything that we see in our trade, or in the street, or in the field, or in our house which will not be the means of reminding us of Him. When we rise in the morning, would it not be well to think of how He rose a great while before day that He might have time for private prayer? He had a hard day's work before Him and, therefore, He needed strength with which to do it. And He gained it, not by a longer sleep, but by stealing time from sleep in which to draw near the strengthening Father in prayer! Even when the morning is ended and we come to the middle of the day, if we are hot and weary and the sun scorches us, we shall do well to think of our text, “Jesus therefore, being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well.”

When the clock strikes three, Christians should not forget that it was about that hour when He yielded up the ghost and passed away. When it comes to eventide and we go to our comfortable bed, or to our hard pallet, as the case may be, would it not be sweet to remember Him who said, “Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head”? The whole world might constitute a system of helps to memory if we were but wise enough to use it so. The stars speak of Him to those who have but ears to hear. The morning sun reveals Him and even the setting of the sun is not without instruction concerning Him. As God is everywhere, so are the footprints of the Only-Begotten. He has so taken up materialism into connection with His spiritual and Divine Nature that He has left His impress upon all materialism and in His temple of Creation everything speaks of His Glory!

Our second observation shall be how truly Human was the Lord Jesus Christ! Nowadays, we do not have to insist much upon that because it is not often denied—we have to fight for His Deity, but not often for His Humanity. Perhaps it is none the better for us that it is so. You know

that there were some, soon after the Apostle John's days, who denied that Christ took upon Himself a real body. They believed that He existed as a phantom. I will not go into the philosophical way in which they put it, but their main attack was against the Humanity of the Son of God. Now, times have changed and men admit that He existed and they admit His Humanity—yes, they so much admit it that they deny that He was anything more than Man! We must fight against that thrice-cursed doctrine as long as we have any being, but we must not forget how truly Human Jesus was. How really Human He appears when the burning sun smites Him, the sweat rolls off Him and He is thoroughly weary! And, being weary, He must do what we do when we are tired and worn-out—He must sit down. And the sun is so hot that He thirsts—He is parched with heat and there is the water in the well, but He has nothing to draw with, so He must sit there in the heat and bear the thirst.

You remember also, dear Friends, how He hungered. You will never forget how “Jesus wept.” You all know how He suffered and how, at last, He died. Treasure up in your mind and heart the assured fact that Christ was most really and truly Man—and though the Godhead was most mysteriously united to His Manhood—He was none the less completely and intensely Man. Because He was perfectly and supremely God, His Godhead did not take away from Him His power to suffer and to be wearied.

It seems rather singular, but it is worthy of notice that our Lord appears to have been more weary than His disciples were, for they had gone away into the city to buy food. I suppose that He might have gone with them if He had not been more fatigued than they were. He was quite worn out and thoroughly weary, and so, while they went into Sychar to purchase provisions, He sat down on the well. I take it that, in all probability, the reason is this—He had mental weariness associated with His bodily fatigue—and when the two things come together, they make a man wearied, indeed. I know that there are some who fancy that to think and to care for others, to preach and to teach, is not much of work. Well, my dear Brothers and Sisters, I can assure you that you may keep on working much longer with your arms than you can with your brain! And I am speaking from experience when I say that careful thought and great anxiety to do good bring much wear and tear with them to a man's whole constitution. And if the life is taken out of a man in two ways at once—by fatigue of body and by fatigue of mind, too—then you will see that such a man will necessarily be the first to give way. The disciples had little to do but to follow implicitly as their Master led them. He had to be the Leader and upon the leader comes the strain and stress of thought and care. No man knows what were the cares that agitated the great heart of Christ. Surely, in one sense, He *never* rested—He was constantly thinking, not only of the twelve, but of all those who were with Him. And not merely of them, but it was as He said in His great intercessory prayer, “Neither pray I for these, alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word.” All Believers had a share in His thoughts of love even then, for He was bent upon no less a mission than the salvation of a countless number who shall be His in the day of His appearing!

His mind and heart were always at work. That busy brain of His was never still, so I do not wonder that though the disciples could go into the city to buy food, their Master could not go, but He must sit down on the well. "Jesus therefore, being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well"—in a thoroughly exhausted condition. He sat down as if He could go no further, could do no more—and there it was that the Samaritan woman found Him. How perfectly human all this proves our Lord to have been!

I want you, while we are speaking of that fact, to admire the great self-constraint which our Divine Master put upon Himself in bearing weariness, because, although He was Man and could be weary, I have also reminded you that He was God and, therefore, He could have refreshed Himself if it had been right for Him to do so. According to the Divine order of things, it would not have been right. When our Lord was in the wilderness 40 days, He hungered. Why did He not turn the stones into bread? He certainly could have done so, but to do so was evidently quite out of order with Him who had come to be a Servant and to suffer as a Man. The devil tempted Him to do it, which proves to us that it would have been wrong for Christ to do it. But, only think—if you and I were hungry and we could turn stones into bread—would we not do it? If we were weary and could immediately give ourselves the rest we required, would we not do so? Why, I think the water would have been glad to leap out of the well to refresh the lips of Him who had created it! That well would have been honored by suddenly pouring forth all its liquid refreshment that He might drink and be satisfied, but Jesus never worked a miracle merely for His own comfort. He felt that His miraculous power was to be used for others in His great work, but as for Himself, His Humanity must bear its own infirmity, it must support its own trials—so He keeps His hands back from relieving His own necessities. Oh, I never imagined how strong Christ was till I saw His love hold back His Deity! That Omnipotence which restrains Omnipotence—it cannot be something more than Omnipotence and yet, in a sense, it must be! The Love of Christ restrains the Omnipotence of Christ! He might have broken through all the infirmities of manhood, but He must not do so if He is to be perfectly bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh—and He does not do it. He bears exhaustion, He bears deprivation of comfort, He bears, in fact, the very curse of labor which our father Adam brought upon us, that in the sweat of our brow we should eat our bread—and He bears it still with a magnanimity of condescension which cannot be imitated. It is far beyond our conception and infinitely beyond our venturing to follow this. We can only admire and adore. We worship You, O Son of God, that for our sins You could even deign to be wearied and to sit thus on the well!

Another thought I put before you is this. Behold the wonderful sympathy of the Lord Jesus Christ with us. You have been on a very long journey, and your feet are tired and you are weary and worn—you could not go a step further. Now Christ, in the days of His flesh, was like you. He knows what is meant by all that heaviness and heat of the feet, that blis-

tering of the soles, that drawing of the sinews, that testing of every muscle! And the next time you go a long tramp and sit down because you are weary, think to yourself, "He who is at the right hand of God remembers when He felt as I do, and He sympathizes with me in this, my present distress." Or take it to be another case, that your daily work is very hard—and I know that I speak to many who earn their bread with very severe toil and labor—and when the hour, at last, comes (alas! alas! how late it often is!) when the shop can be closed, or when your work is finished, you are thoroughly exhausted. You can scarcely crawl up to your bed, you feel so weary. It is often so with you and getting to be more often so, now that you are growing old and years are telling upon your once stalwart frame. Well, the next time you sit down, say to yourself, "Jesus, my Lord, You know all about this and You can pity Your poor servant, and help and comfort me as I have to bear it."

Do you not remember the story about Alexander's soldiers? When they went on long, forced marches, they, none of them, grew weary because although Alexander had a horse, he never rode. He said, "No, not while one man walks shall Alexander ride." So he tramped side by side with them and once, when a cup of water was brought for the king, he said, "There is a soldier who looks more faint than I am; pass it over to him." And every man felt strong because of that sympathy. Now, you who toil, think of Him who is the King Eternal, Immortal, Invisible, the Prince of the kings of the earth—and for your comfort read the text again—"Jesus therefore, being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well."

Yes, but there are other kinds of toilers beside these. There are holy workers who, I think, ought to have a drink of water out of this well. You try and speak for Christ, or you go about and visit—you are very earnest to bring sinners to Jesus and, sometimes, you feel as if you could not do any more. You have not succeeded, perhaps, and you are disappointed and heart-weary. Well, when you are so, say to yourself, "My Lord knows all about His servant. 'Jesus therefore, being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well.'" Or, perhaps, your weariness comes of suffering. The pain is very sharp, you get very little rest, it seems to you as if all night long you had never slept. You steal a little sleep and when you wake again, in the morning, you feel more tired than when you went to bed. And sometimes you say to yourself, "I am so weary and worn. Will these pains never end? Is there no release from this, my chain? Must I always drag it with me?" But when you fall back upon the pillow, oh so weary—and some of us know all about this weariness, for we have many times felt as if we could not even breathe, or lift a finger—remember, then, "Jesus being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well." Oh, the deep sympathy of Christ! He knows it, not only by having heard of it, and seen it, but by having *felt* it. Go to Him without any fear, with a childlike confidence that He who has been tried in all points like as we are, and who was, Himself, compassed with infirmity, is able to succor us in all times of weariness! And be assured that if we come to Him, He will give us rest.

I am just getting into my sermon, now—all these observations which I have made are only preliminary, but the discourse, itself, will be a short one.

First, dear Friends, if I have, here, a weary sinner who longs to find rest, I want *his conscience to paint a picture*. And after his conscience has painted it, I want *his faith to come and study it*. And when that has been done, I want *his gratitude and his love to remove that picture and to paint another*.

I. First, then, I want every conscience here that is awakened, but has never been quieted by the blood of Christ, to PAINT A PICTURE—and that picture is the portrait of a wearied Savior, a Savior wearied by you, worn out by you—wearied, not with His journey, but *wearied with your sin*.

“Can that be?” someone asks. Yes, the Lord has said it in Isaiah. “You have wearied Me with your iniquities.” You have wearied Christ by doing wrong and doing it again and again, and sinning against conscience and against light. You are wearying my Lord, my loving Lord! In the Book of Amos He says, “I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves.” You know how they heap the sheaves on till the wagon creaks and the axle is ready to break—do you treat my Lord like an old wagon and load on your sins, sheaf upon sheaf, till He can bear no more? He says that it is so with some of you and I want you to paint the picture of a wearied Christ, wearied with your sin.

Perhaps in the case of some of you Christ is *wearied with your religion*. “Wearied with our religion?” asks one. When you get home, will you read the first chapter of the Book of the Prophet Isaiah and you will see there how God declares Himself to be tired of the empty formalism of the people? “Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto Me. The new moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot endure. It is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates: they are a trouble unto Me; I am weary to bear them.” It was a weariness to Him and, if you pray, but do not pray sincerely, my Lord will be tired of hearing your mockery of prayer! If you go to sacraments, or come to public worship and think that this will save you, my Lord will be weary of you, for it is all a sham! There is a shell, but there is no kernel. You mock Him with the solemn sound upon a thoughtless tongue. You sit as His people sit and your minds are far away on the mountains of vanity. You hear, you join in the hymn and listen to the prayer, but there is no true worship, praise, or supplication. I tell you, Sirs, my Lord is getting weary of you—getting sick and tired of your religion! What a picture! Christ wearied with sin and wearied with dead religion!

I fear that I might also say that there are some here of whom Christ is *weary because of their broken promises*. When they were sick, they said, “We will repent if the Lord will spare our lives.” They vowed, when they were in danger, that they would turn to Him if He delivered them—but nothing of the kind has happened. My dear Friend, you are still here undecided! Twelve months ago you would not have believed that another

year would have passed and found you just where you are. The wheels of time are running round swiftly as flames of lightning, but you make no advance whatever! On the contrary, I am afraid that you are going backward. My Lord is getting wearied of your excuses and your procrastination! "You have lied to Me," says the Lord, and He will not always endure this treatment from you.

With some, my Lord is getting *wearied because of their resistance to His Spirit*. Remember that God said of some who rebelled and vexed His Holy Spirit, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." He shall not always be put to the indignity of striving with men who resist Him, as did their fathers. When holy thoughts arise, you quench them—and you have done this, oh, so long! How many years has this been the case with some of you? If some persons whom I know are provoked for only five minutes, their anger boils over. If they stood to be insulted for half-an-hour, they would count it a miracle! I know some with whom it is "a word and a blow" and, often, the blow comes faster than the word! But only think of anyone having lived to provoke God for five years, 10 years, 20 years, 30 years, 40 years! Shall I go further? I believe that there are some here who have outdone the Israelites in the wilderness, for they provoked God 40 years, but these people have provoked Him 50, sixty, or even 70 years!

My Lord is weary! My Lord is weary! You remember, when He grew weary with the Israelites, He lifted His hand to Heaven and swore that they should not enter into His rest. What was the sin that shut them out? "So then," says the Apostle, "they could not enter in because of unbelief." Christ will not always be quibbled at, nor have His promises belied, nor His sweet invitations cast behind your backs. He is getting very tired and very weary of you—and I fear that He will one day say, "I will ease Me of My adversaries." Be thankful that He has not said it, yet, and turn to Him with true repentance and faith!

But there is the picture and to me it is a very pitiful picture, to see Jesus sitting down by the well of Eternal Life, wearied by men whom He came to bless.

II. Now I want you to STUDY THAT PICTURE of the wearied Christ.

Look closely at it—not merely with the eyes of your conscience, but with the eyes of faith—and if you have not any, I must try to lend you mine. For a few minutes I must believe for you, in the hope that what I tell you—and know to be true—God the Holy Spirit may enable you to believe, too, that you may, yourselves, spiritually see. Yes, I can see Jesus Christ, very weary, sitting on the well. Let me look at Him a while. I like the picture so, it seems to comfort me as I look at the well, for, albeit that He is very weary, yet I perceive that *He is waiting*. He sits on the well, for there is a woman coming—a poor fallen woman—and He is waiting to bless her. She ought to have been here early in the morning, and it is now twelve o'clock. The sun has reached its zenith and is shining at its hottest. The woman will be here soon. Jesus is very weary, but He still waits. Sinner, that is just the attitude of my Lord towards you! You say you cannot see Him—you have not the eyes of faith, but I can see Him. I remember when I first saw Him that He had long been waiting for Me. He

waits to be gracious. He is in no hurry, He allows the sinner time, wicked though the spending of that time is on the sinner's part—but Christ spends that time in patiently waiting.

I must look again at the picture. As I look, I can see that He is not only waiting, but He *is watching*. I can see that He is turning His eyes toward the city gate. "She will be out very soon," He says to Himself. "She must come here and I know that she is coming." He is not looking round at the scenery. That is not the chief thing to Him, just now—He is looking for this poor soul that is coming. Oh, my dear Friend, though you have wearied Christ, yet He is still waiting and watching for you! There is many an elect soul that my Lord is spying out over there in the first gallery, or up there in those boxes almost in the roof, or down below in that area! And Jesus is waiting and watching for them.

Now I must look again, for my Lord, though He is very weary, has at last spied out the person for whom He is waiting and watching. Here she comes! And now I perceive *how willing He is*. His heart seems to beat more quickly, His eyes are brighter than usual, He is not half as weary as He was. You may have seen the faint and tired hunter suddenly grow strong when, at last, he spies on the crag, the deer he has come to seek. Or the fisherman standing wearily in the stream, holding his rod, but ready to go home to his long-needed meal, but, at last, the salmon begins to part away at his line—now how strong a man he is! He will go on for an hour at that work and he will not need to eat or drink. The whole of his being is in the fishing. So was it with my blessed Master. That woman was coming and Christ was "all there," as we say. He was ready to speak the right words—a word in season to one who was weary—to speak the word of admonition, or of comfort, or of invitation. And He is "all here" at this moment. I thought, when I stood here tonight, to speak to you, "I am constantly coming to the Tabernacle to talk to this great throng," and something seemed to say to me, "You ought to be glad to have such an opportunity!" I thought, "Yes, and I *am* glad, and I will try my very best to preach Christ to them as long as this tongue can move, for it is a delightful privilege to be allowed to tell men about my Master's pardoning love." But, oh, if He were here in bodily Presence, He would do it so much better than any of us can, for His heart is so much more full of love than our poor hearts are!

He was at the well, waiting, and watching, and willing. And though He was very weary, yet, when the woman came to Him and she believed His message, *He saved her right away*. A weary Christ is most willing to save a weary sinner! Though He was tired, yet He could save that great sinner and now, exalted in the highest heavens, though you have wearied Him with your sins, yet He will blot out those sins, even now, the moment you put your trust in Him! And even with His weary hands He will wipe away your transgressions. He is, in fact, so weary with your sins that He will put them away, that He and you, too, may never be wearied with them again! He is so sick of your wanderings that He will end them and receive you into His heart, that you may never wander again!

This picture looked very sad when I saw it at a distance and when you saw it with the eyes of your conscience, but, oh, if you can put on the blessed glasses of faith and see it as I have tried to describe it, the picture grows very lovely! “Jesus therefore, being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well”—waiting, watching, willing and able to save—yes, to so save the woman as to make her the means of saving others! And, maybe He will now save you who have wearied Him, and start you at once to bringing others to Him. I shall not be surprised if it is so! I shall be concerned if it does *not* happen, for we have sought it at His hands and we expect to have it!

III. Now I want to ALTER THE PICTURE ON THE CANVAS.

I suppose I have not an artist here who can help me with his brush. I want to take a little out and put a little in, for the new picture is to be a portrait of the weary Savior sitting on the well, refreshed by the very sinner who had helped to weary Him! A woman must be put into the picture now, Mr. Painter. There she is and the Master is saying to her, “Give Me a drink.” And did she do it? She did not dip her water pot into the well, but did she give Him a drink? Yes, that she did! I am sure she refreshed Him even more than she would have done by a draught of water, because when the disciples came back to their Master, He said to them, “I have meat to eat that you know not of,” so that He had evidently been refreshed. And how was it done? Why, by that woman! What had she given Him which had so refreshed Him?

Well, first, *she had put to Him various enquiries*. She began asking Him a number of questions and the Lord Jesus Christ is always refreshed when He meets with enquirers. If you only want to know all you can about Christ, that will be some sort of refreshment to Him, for the mass of men pass by Him with indifference, so that He has to say—

***“Is it nothing to you, all you that pass by?
Is it nothing to you that Jesus should die?”***

I am sure that my Master will be glad if some of you will begin to enquire, as the woman did, “Are You greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well?” Or, “From where, then, have You that living water?” I do not mind even if your question is a foolish one, because that will only show the state of mind you are in—and Christ can cure the foolishness and give you wisdom. Read the New Testament carefully. Go down on your knees and say, “Lord, teach me what the meaning of this passage is.” You will thus refresh my Master’s heart and I shall expect to see you, before long, among the saved!

Next, *this woman refreshed the Savior’s heart with prayer*, for when she had asked Him questions, she prayed in her poor way, “Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come here to draw.” She hardly knew what she said, but, as far as she knew *anything*, she meant to ask Jesus to give her what He had to give! Dear Heart, may the Lord help you to begin to pray even now! The Master’s spirit will be wonderfully refreshed by your supplication. He will have a deep draught of cold water from the well when He gets to hear your voice in prayer. “Take with you words,” says the Prophet Hosea,” and turn to the Lord. Say to Him, Take away all

our iniquity and receive us graciously.” If one poor soul in this Tabernacle, far away at the back, there, who cannot see, and perhaps can hardly hear, is moved to pray, “God be merciful to me a sinner,” that petition will touch the heart of the Son of God! Even on the Throne of the highest heavens, He will be refreshed—He always is when He hears a sinner pray!

But, further, this woman not only prayed, but *she confessed her sin*. The confession was not very explicit, but she acknowledged that what the Lord laid to her charge was true. “Sir,” she said “I perceive that You are a Prophet.” And to the men of the city she said, “Come, see a Man who told me all things that ever I did.” A hearty confession to God, while it is good for your soul, is good for Christ’s soul, too—He gets refreshed thereby.

Best of all, *this woman believed in Jesus*. When He said that He was the Christ, she accepted His declaration as true and, therefore, she said to the men of the city, “Is not this the Christ?” O my Lord, You will again see of the travail of Your soul and You will be once more satisfied if some poor sinner does but receive You! Does not a mother rejoice when, after her pangs, she fixes her eyes upon her first-born child? That is the very picture that Isaiah drew of the Lord Jesus Christ—“He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied.” Oh, to think that you and I can give satisfaction to the heart of Christ for all the anguish that He bore when He poured out His soul unto death! That is no metaphor of mine—it is a Scriptural symbol! I have only given you what the Holy Spirit, Himself, has said and, oh, dear Friends, I do pray that some of you may thus gratify, satisfy, refresh, invigorate, delight and glorify the Christ who now, though He reigns on high, has never forgotten that He did once sit on the well and thirst! And while He so thirsted, saved a Samaritan sinner and found Himself refreshed in the doing of it!

God bless you, Beloved, and bring you to the Savior, for His name’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: JOHN 4:1-29.

I have often read this chapter in your hearing and you have often read it yourselves, but the Word of God is not like the grapes of an earthly vine which, when once trodden, are exhausted. You may come to Holy Scripture again and again—it is like an ever-flowing fountain—the more you draw from it, the more you may draw.

Verses 1-3. *When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (though Jesus Himself baptized not, but His disciples), He left Judaea and departed again into Galilee.* Observe, here, that our Lord at first shunned conflict with the Pharisees. When He knew that they were jealous of Him, He went away from Judaea to a more remote district, “into Galilee.” May He help us always to take that which may be the wiser course in every emergency! He was not guilty of cowardice—that He could not be—for He was the bravest of the brave, but sometimes it will be most courageous

on our part to shun a conflict. When you believe it is right to do so, never mind what anybody may say, but do as your Master did on this occasion.

4. *And He must go through Samaria.* It is true that it was the nearest way, yet He might have gone round about. But He would not do so, for there were souls in Samaria who were to be blessed by His Presence. He had a constraint upon Him, an inward impulse, so that, "He must go through Samaria." Dear Friends, whenever you feel the drawings of the Spirit in any particular direction, do not resist them, but yield yourself entirely to His gracious influence, even as your Lord did.

5, 6. *Then He came to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour.* About twelve o'clock, in the middle of the day, at high noon. You will observe, dear Friends, that our Lord spoke to Nicodemus at night, but when He was about to talk to a fallen woman, alone, He did it in the middle of the day. There is a time for everything—so let those who serve God be careful as to the best time of their service. Our Lord had a tender delicacy about Him which led Him instinctively to do the right thing at the right time.

7. *There came a woman of Samaria to draw water.* That was not the usual time for drawing water. Women generally went to the well in the morning and in the evening, but this poor fallen creature was not one with whom other women would associate, so she came alone, at the hour when the sun was hottest—and when nobody else would likely to be there.

7. *Jesus said unto her, Give Me a drink.* This was quite a natural way of beginning a conversation and they will best touch other people's minds and hearts who do not harshly *interject* religion, but who wisely *introduce* it, leading up to it with a holy dexterousness such as our Lord always exhibited. He begins not with any remarks about the woman's life, or her sin, or even about His great salvation, but with the simple request, "Give Me a drink."

8, 9. *(For His disciples were gone away unto the city to buy food). Then said the woman of Samaria unto Him, How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? For the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.* But our Lord did not come to maintain these distinctions of race and caste. It is altogether foreign to the spirit of Christianity for nationalities to be despised! We sometimes hear people say of a person, "Oh, he is only a So-and- So!" mentioning some nation that happens to be in the background. Christ was cosmopolitan! He loved men of every nation, tribe, tongue and people. To Him there was neither Jew nor Samaritan—all such distinctions were banished from His mind. The woman might well say what she did, but her words would have sounded strangely out of place from the lips of Christ.

10, 11. *Jesus answered and said unto her, If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that says to you, Give Me a drink; you would have asked of Him, and He would have given you living water. The woman said unto Him, Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from where,*

then, have You that living water? Holy knowledge is very advantageous—it often is the means of breeding prayer. “If you knew...you would have asked, and He would have given.” Therefore, Beloved, let us teach the Truth of God to all who come in our way, for it may be that we, too, shall meet with many of whom it can be said that if they know what the gift of God is, they will ask for it—and if they ask for it, Christ will give it to them.

12. *Are You greater than our father Jacob who gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle?* Ah, she did not know how infinitely superior Jesus was to Jacob! There could be no comparison between the two. Jesus is the true Father of all Israel and, in that respect, He is like Jacob, but He is immeasurably greater than “father Jacob.”

13, 14. *Jesus answered and said unto her, Whoever drinks of this water shall thirst again: but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.* Hence he will always be content. He who has Divine Grace in his heart is a happy man—he grows more and more satisfied with the Grace as it wells up increasingly in living power in his character and life. Oh, if you have never received that Living Water, may God give it to you now! You shall never regret receiving it, and you shall rejoice over it forever!

15. *The woman said unto Him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come here to draw.* Up till now she has not imbibed a single idea from Christ. The Lord has spoken to her in parables, but she has not seen through the thin veil, so she has missed His meaning. Now He fires another shot and deals with her in another fashion.

16-18. *Jesus said unto her, Go, call your husband, and come here. The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, You have well said, I have no husband, for you have had five husbands; and he whom you now have is not your husband: in that said you truly.* It was necessary to awaken this woman to a sense of her sinfulness. It was no use putting on plasters where there was no knowledge of a sore, and no use attempting to fill the void where there was no feeling of emptiness. So first she must be brought low. She must be made to see herself in the glass of the Truth of God. And then she would begin to understand her need of salvation. Oftentimes, in seeking to bless people, the kindest way is not to build them up, but to pull them down—not to begin to encourage their hopes—but to let them see how hopeless their case is apart from Sovereign Grace.

19. *The woman said unto Him, Sir, I perceive that You are a Prophet.* She did not deny Christ’s charges. She could not, for they were so accurately descriptive of her whole life.

20-23. *Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and you say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus said unto her, Woman, believe Me, the hour comes when you shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship you know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the*

hour comes, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth. It is not the *place* which makes the true worship—it is the heart. It is not even the *day*—it is the state of a man's mind. It is not that the place is said to be holy and, therefore, prayer is accepted—every place is equally holy where holy men worship God. All distinctions of buildings are heathenish or, at the best, Jewish—they are done away with by Christ.

23-26. *For the Father seeks such to worship Him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. The woman said unto Him, I know that Messiah comes, which is called Christ: when He is come, He will tell us all things. Jesus said unto her, I that speak unto you am He.* And she believed it, for what she had heard had prepared her mind for this declaration! Christ's reading of her heart had convinced her that He was the Messiah. How many have been brought to Christ's feet by having their characters laid bare in the preaching of the Word! The very thing they did in secret, yes, the very *thought* of their heart which they never communicated even to their best friend, has been told them. Their dream has been revealed to them and the interpretation of it, too—and, by God's Grace, they have been convinced that He who can thus read their hearts must be the Son of God!

27, 28. *And upon this came His disciples and marveled that He talked with the woman, yet no man said, What do You seek? Or, Why do You talk with her? The woman then left her water pot, and went her way into the city.* So that blessed interview was broken up by Christ's own disciples! What a set of blunderers we are! We sometimes come in between Christ and poor sinners whom He is going to bless. There is many a lover of stern doctrine, with an unsympathetic heart and a harsh tone of speech, who has intruded just when he was not needed! If we cannot help poor souls, Brothers and Sisters, let us never hinder them! What Christian would not wish to help a poor sinner to her Savior? Yet these disciples, unconscious of what they were doing, had by their very looks driven this poor woman from their Master. She "went her way into the city."

28, 29. *And said to the men, Come, see a Man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?* May we be made useful, even as this woman was, in bringing others to Christ's feet, for His dear name's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—430, 431, 473.

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY
TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

THE MODEL SOUL-WINNER

NO. 2423

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, JULY 28, 1895.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 10, 1887.**

*“There came a woman of Samaria to draw water:
Jesus said to her, Give Me a drink.”
John 4:7.*

THIS was the beginning of that interesting conversation which not only blessed this woman, but has been a means of Grace to many others ever since, for this chapter and the previous one must be looked upon as among the most soul-winning parts of God's Word. I suppose that every portion of Scripture has had its use in the experience of men and women, but these two chapters have very, very largely been blessed in the commencement of the Divine Life. Many have been led through the door of regeneration and the gateway of faith by the Truth of God so plainly taught in them.

I shall not delay you with any preface, but shall take you at once to the subject mentioned in our text.

I. You have before you, here, first, THE MODEL SOUL-WINNER. Jesus said to the woman of Samaria, “Give Me a drink.” I speak to many here who are wise to win souls. I hope that I also address many more who, although they have not yet learned this wisdom, are anxious, if possible, to be used of God to bless their fellow creatures. Here, then, is a perfect model for you—study it and copy it.

First, observe that our Savior, as the model Soul-Winner, was *not reserved and distant*. “Jesus therefore, being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well.” If He had not been wonderfully anxious to win a soul, He would have kept Himself to Himself—and if this woman had spoken to Him, He would have answered her shortly and have let her see that He did not desire any conversation with her. There is a way of being civil, but, at the same time, of repressing anything like familiarity. There are some persons who have great gifts of freezing—they can freeze you, almost, with a look! You never dare to speak to them, again. In fact, you stand and wonder how you could ever have had the impertinence to address such exalted personages! They evidently live in a very distinct world from that in which your poor self resides—they could not sympathize with you—they are too good or too great, too clever. And if you do not complain of their conduct, yet you give them a wide berth and keep clear of them in the future, for they are not at all the sort of people that

attract you. They repel you by their coldness. They are not magnets, or, if so, they exercise the very opposite influence from that of attraction.

Now, if any of you are in such a frame of mind as that, pray the Lord to bring you out of it! But do not attempt to do any good while you are in such a condition, for you might as well try to heat an oven with snowballs as to win souls for Christ with a distant cold, dignified manner of speech! No, cast all that away, for nothing can render you so feeble, and so useless, as to cultivate anything like separateness from your fellows. Come close to the sinner, draw near to him or to her—show that you are not keeping yourself to yourself, but that you regard the person you are addressing as a brother or sister—as one who will find, in you, a sympathizer who is touched with the feeling of his infirmities, seeing that you have suffered in many points like he has suffered and are, therefore, on the same level, and desire to stand on the same platform with him—and to do him good.

There was nothing stiff and starched about the Savior. He was the very reverse of that and even *children* felt that they might go to Him freely. He was like a great harbor into which sailors run their ships in stress of weather—they feel as if it was made on purpose for them. The very look of Christ's face, the very glistening of His eyes, everything about Him made people feel that He did not live for Himself at all, but that He desired to bless others! There is the model Soul-Winner, therefore, for your imitation, in Jesus sitting on the well and condescending even to speak to a poor fallen woman!

In the next place, our Savior was *aggressive and prompt*. He did not wait for the woman to speak to Him, but He addressed her. "Give Me a drink," He said. He did not wait until she had drawn the water from the well and was about to go—and so give her an excuse for saying, "I cannot be detained. I must get home with the water and the sun is hot," but no sooner has He seen her and her waterpot, than He begins a conversation with His request to her, "Give Me a drink." The true soul-winner is like a man who goes out shooting—he is not half asleep so that when the game presents itself, he waits till it has taken wing and has gone. He is on the alert—if a feather or a leaf moves, he has his gun all ready, and he is prepared for action at once! The cunning fowler spreads his nets early in the morning before the birds are awake, that when they first begin to move, they may be taken in his traps. And the Lord Jesus, with a loving wisdom, went about His work. He began with the woman at once—as soon as she came to the well where He was resting, He spoke to her and soon led the talk to the things which concerned the Christ and her own sin—and the way by which the Christ might lift her out of her sin and make her useful for the conversion of others.

I am afraid that there are some of you who cannot do that—you are so reserved, you say. How often have I told you that the soldier who was so "retiring" was shot? There was a battle going on and the man was so modest and retiring that he went to the rear of the fight—and they called him a coward and shot him dead! I am not going to call you a coward,

nor to shoot you! Still, I wish you would not get into the rear so much. While souls are perishing, it does not do to be reserved and retiring! A man who can swim and would let his fellow man sink would hardly be excused if he said, "I was so retiring that I could not push myself upon him. I never had the good man's card and I did not want to force myself upon him without an introduction, so I let him drown. I was very sorry, but still, I never was a pushing person."

Are you going to let men be damned? Are you going to let the masses of people in this city perish in their sins? If so, God have mercy upon you! The question will not be, "What will become of London in this case?" But the question will be, "What will become of you who let men die in their sins without trying to rescue them?" Carry the war into the enemy's country! Speak to people whom you do not know, whom you have never seen before, as Jesus did! Speak to that woman whom you meet casually and Providentially, as He did! Speak to her when the last thing she wants is that you should speak to her. Speak out at once and let yours be an aggressive Christianity that is prompt to seize every opportunity of doing good! What a model Soul-Winner, then, you have here!

Next, the Savior was *bold, but He was also wise*. You cannot sufficiently admire the wisdom of our blessed Lord that He spoke to this woman while she was alone. He could not have said to her what He said and she would never have said to Him what *she* said, if anybody else had been there. It was necessary that this interview be held in private. But, oh, you who are so zealous that you are imprudent, you who would gladly win souls but attempt the task without that care which ought to come naturally to every sensible and prudent man, remember that although Christ spoke alone with this woman, it was in broad daylight, at twelve o'clock, by the well. If some people had been as prudent as the Savior was, they could have afforded to be as zealous as they have been! In the case of such a woman as this, I would have you remember the Savior's wisdom as well as His wondrous condescension!

With Nicodemus, the ruler of the Jews, He speaks by night, but with the harlot of Samaria He speaks by day. The soul-winner looks about him, he is wise in his plan of going to work. There are fish that will only bite in troubled waters. There are some that are not to be taken except at night and there are others that are only to be caught by daylight. Fit yourself to the case of the person you are seeking to bless! I do not say be so prudent that you will run no risk, but I *will* say, be so prudent, especially in certain difficult cases, that you run no *unnecessary* risk! The Savior could not have selected a better time for talking to such a person—you will see at once that if even the disciples marveled that He spoke with the woman—it was infinitely wise on His part that it was done at the well side and done at noon.

O Soul-Winners, win souls any way you can! Be willing to risk your own reputation, if necessary, to win them, but it is not necessary, or not *usually* necessary, and it never should be done except when it *is* necessary. Your Savior sets you that wise example. Follow Him in this speak-

ing to people singly. I do so much of public preaching that, perhaps, I lose a measure of adaptation for private conversation, yet have I sometimes done the most successful work I have ever done in private rather than in public! Sitting at a table, I have marked a young man who was a stranger to me, and I have asked him to accompany me to the place where I was to preach. I did not know the way and I asked him to walk with me. A few words on the road won him for Christ and he has been, ever since, an earnest upholder of the Gospel and a very useful one! I do not know whether any were saved by the sermon, but I know that *one* was converted by the talk on the way there!

I know an Evangelist who is useful in his public service, but he is also greatly useful to the families in the homes where he stays. Almost in every case the minister's sons and daughters are converted before he leaves the house, or the servant or a visitor is won by his private conversation. I like that kind of work! Oh, that we all studied this art of speaking to persons one by one! So I say to you, again, here is the model Soul-Winner—copy His example.

Observe how the Savior begins with this woman—"Jesus said to her, Give Me a drink." When you are fishing, it is not always wise to throw your fly straight at the fish's mouth. Try him a little on one side, and then a little on the other side, and maybe, presently, you will get a bite. So the Savior does not begin by saying to her, "You are a sinful woman." Oh, dear, none but an amateur in such a business would begin like that! Neither did He begin by saying, "Now, good mistress, I am the Messiah." Well, that was the truth, was it not? Yes, but that was not to come *first*—He began by saying, "Give Me a drink." He must first attract her attention and influence her mind—then would come the closer work of probing her conscience and changing her heart!

It was only a very ordinary, commonplace request that Jesus made. "Give Me a drink." It might have occurred to any one of you to say it, but not to use it as He did. Yet it was a word that was wisely chosen, for it fitted in with the woman's thoughts. She was thinking about drawing water and Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." There could be no more suitable metaphor or mode of expression than that of water and drinking if you are talking to a person who has come to draw water for herself or others to drink.

Besides that, it was an exceedingly pregnant expression, as full of meaning as an egg is full of meat. "Give Me a drink." It contained much within itself. It gave the Savior as wide a field as He could wish for to talk to her about her *spiritual* thirst, and about that Living Water which He could put within her, which would abide in her, and be a well—not one to which she should come—but a well that she would carry about with her and that would be always springing up within her unto everlasting life! So let us learn how to begin wisely with observations that are apparently commonplace, but such as will easily lead to higher things.

I think that the Savior, as the model Soul-Winner, is also to be imitated in that *at the very beginning He broke down a barrier*. The Lord Je-

sus Christ was evidently dressed as a Jew and this woman came out of Samaria. Now, at once, there was a barrier between the two, for the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans. Our Lord broke through that caste by saying to her, "Give Me a drink." No other expression would do this so well, for to eat and to drink with persons was, after the Oriental fashion, to come into communion with them. "Give Me a drink," therefore, shook off from Him all Judaism which would separate Him from this Samaritan. If you are going to try to win people for Christ, always seek to break down everything that would separate. Are you a man of wealth? Well, I do not believe in converting souls by making your diamond rings glitter and flash when you are talking to workingmen.

Are you a scientific man? Now, that word of 17 syllables that you have been so fond of—do not use it, but say something very plain and simple! Or do you happen to belong to any political party? Do not bring that question in—you will not win souls that way—you will be more likely to excite prejudice and opposition. If I were talking to the French, I would devoutly wish I were a Frenchman. If I had to win a German, I should wish to know as much of the idiosyncrasies of that nation as I possibly could. I shall never be ashamed of being an Englishman, but if I could win more souls by being a Dutchman, or a Zulu, I would gladly have any kind of nationality, that I might get at the hearts of men! And our Lord Jesus acted just in that spirit when He said to the woman, "Give Me a drink." He sank the noble dignity of being a Jew—for, mark you, a Jew is the aristocrat of God—Jesus, even in His humanity, came of a race that is made up of the oldest and noblest of earthly nobility, but He dropped that dignity in order that He might talk to this Samaritan woman who was nothing better than a mongrel, for her race was made up of nobody knows what! They pretended to be Jewish when there was anything to get by so doing—and to be Gentile whenever the Jews were in any kind of difficulties. But Jesus did not snub her, nor did He hint that she was in the least degree inferior to Himself. There is no winning souls in any other way than as the Savior won them. God teach us how to win them!

This must suffice for that first point, the model Soul-Winner.

II. Now for just a few minutes I want to exhibit our Divine Lord and Master in another light. Not this time as the model Soul-Winner, but as THE MASTER OF CONDESCENSION. He seems to me to be so thoughtful—this blessed Lord of ours, the Son of God, the Creator, the First-Begotten of God.

He takes His seat there on the well in weariness and thirst. Do you not see Him almost ready to faint? What condescension this was, that *He was so straitened that He had not even a drink of water*, or the means to get it. Maker of all springs! Bearer of the key of the rain! Lord of the ocean and yet He needs water to drink? What a stoop is this, for your Lord and mine to come to this! When He said, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head," He had come very low, but now, even the water, which is such a common thing around us that it ripples from the hills and streams

through the vales—even that has fled from Him—and He says, “Give Me a drink.” Bless your Lord, O you who love Him! Kiss His feet and wonder at His marvelous condescension!

I wonder at His condescension, next, that He not only came into such straitness, but that *He was so humble as to ask for a drink of water*. He that hears prayer, Himself prays! He that listens to the cries of His redeemed and, with the fullness of His majestic bounty, opens His hands and supplies the needs of every living thing, sits there and says to the woman, “Give Me a drink.” O Master, how You have straitened Yourself! How You have humbled Yourself, that You should be a beggar of one of Your own creatures, asking for a sip of water!

Admire that condescension still more when you think that HE asked it of her, of her who had had five husbands and he with whom she was living was not her husband! Yet Jesus says to her, “Give Me a drink.” Some of you good women would not have touched her with a pair of tongs, would you? And some of you good men would have passed by her on the other side. Jesus, however, was not only willing to give to her, but He was willing to *receive* from her! He would put Himself under obligation to a Samaritan sinner! So He says to her, who was not fit to come near Him to unloose the laces of His shoes—John the Baptist said that He was not worthy to do that—but what was she worthy to do? Yet Jesus says even to her, “Give Me a drink.”

Then notice His condescension, again, when she answers Him tartly with a reply that was perhaps civil in tone, but that was virtually a refusal, *He did not upbraid her*. He did not say to her, “Oh, you cruel woman!” No, not a syllable or look of reproof did He give her. He needed not the water that was in the well—He meant to have her *heart*—and He did have it and, therefore, He went on to speak to her. Is not that a beautiful text, “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that gives to all men liberally, and upbraids not”? So the Savior will not give this woman a word of upbraiding—she shall be led to upbraid herself—but it shall be for her *sin*! She shall not be upbraided for her ungenerous reply that the Savior has passed over.

This is the crown of Christ’s condescension, that He led her not to do what He asked her to do, but *He led her to confess her sin*. He said, “Give Me a drink,” but apparently she did not let down that waterpot, neither did He put it to His lips, parched as they were. But He led her to her confession of sin, her faith in Him, her running to call the men—and all this gave Him meat to eat and water to drink that others knew not of! He had won a soul and this had refreshed Him after His weariness. We do not hear of His being weary any more—He shook it all off at sight of that sinner saved! He was Himself, again, for He had received what He would die to win. He had received a heart returning to the great Father, He had found a soul that trusted in Him!

I wish that I knew how to preach better so that I might lead you to my Master, for I do want you to glorify Him. I have often tried to set Him before you as He hung upon the Cross, and as He will come again in His

glorious Second Advent. But just now I ask you to adore Him in His weariness as He sits upon the well! He is never lovelier than in His lowliness. There is a grandeur about Him when He rides to battle on His white horse and summons the kites and eagles to devour the slain, but we start back from that terrible vision of majesty to the attractiveness of His Love when He thus humbles Himself and makes Himself of no reputation and talks with a fallen woman! Seeing Him thus condescending, we love, reverence, admire and adore Him! Let us do so now.

III. I shall have done when I have taken up my third point with considerable brevity, but with no little earnestness. It is this. You have seen the model Soul-Winner and the Master of condescension. Let us now notice THE MANNER OF THE WORKING OF GRACE with the view that we may see it here this evening.

So you have come here, my Friend. You have not come to be saved. Oh, no! That is very far from your mind. You came to see the place, you came to look at a building to which a crowd will come and listen to a minister of the Gospel. Yes, yes, but even that is no reason why you should not get a blessing, for *this woman only came to draw water.* "There came a woman of Samaria to draw water." She had no desire to see Jesus, or to learn of Him. She was only looking for water! Saul went to seek his father's asses and found a kingdom! So you may find what you never sought and you may be found of Him whom you never sought!

Listen! Open your ears! Perhaps your Day of Grace has come and the great silver bell is striking the hour of your salvation—I hope that it is so. It may be so, though you have no thought of it. You are not converted, you are not a Christian, but you would like to do good in the world, would you not? You desire to do some kindly action, something generous. I have known that thought arise in a great many who yet did not know the Lord. Some people will not ask an unconverted person to give money. I would, for my Master said to a woman who was a great sinner, "Give Me a drink." It may be to the everlasting good of some of you to do something for the Church of God, to do something for the Christ of God! Before you know where you are, it may be that you will commit yourselves by some kindly act. I wish you would do so.

The way to win a person to yourself is not always to do him good, but to let him do you good. Jesus knew that, so He began by saying, "Give Me a drink." So sometimes it may be wise—and I would try it now—to say to some of you, "You would like to do someone good, would you not? You would like to do some kindly action." Well, notice, the Master is here, tonight, and He has come with much the same cry as He came to the Samaritan woman. *Jesus says to you, "Give Me a drink."* "Oh," you say, "What could I give Christ to drink? If He were here, I would gladly give Him a drink. I am sure that if I were at my cottage door and He passed by on a dusty day, I would gladly turn the handle of the well and bring up a bucket of water. Though I am not converted, I would do that." Well, dear Heart, you may do that! I want you to do it! It is your privilege to refresh the very heart of Christ! If you were not a sinner, you could not do

it, but being a guilty sinner, you can do it! Your very guilt and sin give you the possibility of refreshing Him. "How?" you ask. Why, repent of your sin! Have done with it, quit it, turn from it. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents." It does not say that the *angels* rejoice, though I have no doubt that they do, but it is said, "There is joy *in the presence* of the angels." That is, the angels see the joy of Christ when a sinner repents! They spy it out and notice it. If you let fall a tear of repentance. If in your heart there is a sense of shame because of your sin. If in your soul there is the resolve to escape from it, you have refreshed Him!

Next, guilty as you are, *you can refresh Him by seeking salvation from Him*. Did He not say to the woman, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that says to you, Give Me a drink, you would have asked of Him, and He would have given you living water"? And when she said to Jesus, "Sir, give me this water," that refreshed Him! Ask this of Him, now, quietly in your soul. Oh, may God the Holy Spirit persuade you to do so! Cry to Him to save you! Say, "Lord Jesus, save me! I am but a girl and careless, but save me." "I am a young man and thoughtless, but save me tonight." By so doing, you have given Him a drink, and He is already refreshed! The sweetest drink of all is when you perceive that He is the Christ, and that God has sent Him to save you—and you give yourself up to be saved by Him!

Trust Him now—may the good Spirit lead you to trust Him now! So will you refresh Him—this is the recompense for all His wounds and even for His death—when sinful souls come and trust Him. I remember hearing of one who, while walking the fields, found a little bird fly into his bosom. He could not understand why the creature should come there, but when he looked up, there was a hawk which had pursued the bird, and the little thing had flown into the bosom of the man for shelter. What do you think? Did the man tear it in pieces? No. He kept it safely till he had taken it away from the place where the hawk was—and then he gave it its liberty again. The Lord Jesus Christ will do just that with you if you trust Him! Sin pursues you—fly to His bosom, for only there are you safe!

I have heard of a great king who had pitched his royal pavilion and when he was about to move it, he found that a bird had come and built its nest there. He was such a king that, although the pavilion was of silk, he ordered his soldiers not to take it down until that bird's young ones were hatched and could fly. I love the generosity of a prince who will act like that, but my Lord is a nobler and kinder Prince than all others! Oh, what a Prince He is for generosity! Poor bird, if you will dare to trust Him and make your nest in the pavilion where He dwells, you shall never be destroyed, nor your hope, either, but you shall be safe forever!

Oh, that I knew how to bring you to Christ, dear Hearers! This is a hot summer's night and you are weary, perhaps, of my talking, but I would not mind that if I could bring you to Jesus! Oh, that I might have fruit from this sermon! This week I believe I might say that I have met and heard of hundreds who, in past years, have been brought to the Savior

by the printed sermons. They came to me, grasped my hand, and thanked me—and I praised God—but then I thought, “Yes, God did bless me, and He has blessed the printed sermons, but I want *present* fruit, and to see sinners, *now*, close in with Christ and be eternally saved.” Is all that I preach to you only a dream or a fiction? Then, fling it away from you and despise both it and me! But if it is true and if I only tell you of a true salvation, and a true Savior, come and have it, come and trust Him now, for He casts out none who come to Him! May this be the deciding time with many of you, for our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 4:1-32.**

Verses 1-4. *When, therefore, the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (though Jesus Himself baptized not, but His disciples), He left Judea and departed again into Galilee. And He needed to go through Samaria. When He was needed in so many places, He did not care to stay among the Pharisees where He was not wanted. They would not receive His message, so He left the lordly professors and went to look after a fallen woman! Christ’s estimates of usefulness are not always the same as ours. We think it a grand thing to be the means of converting a great man—Christ thinks it a worthy work to convert a great sinner!*

5. *Then He came to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son, Joseph. You remember how the Patriarch said to his favorite son, “Moreover I have given to you one portion above your brothers, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow.” This was “the parcel of ground” which was near to Sychar.*

6. *Now Jacob’s well was there. Jesus, therefore, being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well. What could the wearied Savior do? Why, He could save a great sinner! And now that He is no more wearied, what can He *not* do? Brethren, when you go to preach or to teach, you like to feel fresh and vigorous, but do not think that this state is at all necessary! Your wearied Master won the woman at Samaria. So may you win souls, even in your weariness! Let us not make excuses for ourselves because we do not feel fit for our work. God may bless us more when we feel weary than He does at any other time.*

6. *And it was about the sixth hour. Twelve o’clock in the day, I suppose. Was that the time when the women usually came to draw water? No, but it was the time when a woman who was shunned by other women would be most likely to come—and the Savior knew that. She had to take odd times to get to the well, for her neighbors did not care to be seen in the company of such a reprobate as she was—and she was probably just as anxious to avoid them.*

7, 8. *Then came a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus said to her, Give Me a drink. (For His disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat). Or, "food."*

9. *Then said the woman of Samaria unto Him, How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.* The woman seemed to say to the Savior, "You Jews will not acknowledge us until You want something from us! Now that You happen to be thirsty, You do not mind asking for a drink from me, but, at other times, You will have no dealings with us." This was a tart reply to our Lord's request, but He did not answer the woman in the tone *she* had adopted. When you are dealing with a soul, you must not lose your temper because of a sharp word, a hard saying, or even a blasphemous reply. Soul-winners must be very tender and gentle. God make us so!

10. *Jesus answered and said unto her, If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that says to you, Give Me a drink; you would have asked of Him, and He would have given you living water.* Oh, that ignorance, that baneful ignorance! "If you knew, you would have asked of Him, and He would have given you." Sometimes, my Brothers and Sisters, the key of a man's salvation may lie in your instructing him in the simplest matters of the Gospel, for, if he does but *know*, he will ask—and Christ will give! Great issues may depend upon this, which seems but the turning of a straw. Therefore, go and tell men the way of salvation, for, in the most of cases, ignorance, alas, bars the door! I mean not among those who have long heard the Gospel, but I mean the outsiders who do not know anything about it. Tell it to them and you may, thereby, open to them the Kingdom of Heaven.

11-14. *The woman said to Him, Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from where, then, have You that living water? Are You greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? Jesus answered and said to her, Whoever drinks of this water shall thirst again: but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.* So you see, my dear Hearer, if you get Grace from Christ, you really possess it and it is of that nature that it remains in you and becomes, itself, a spring within you, "springing up into everlasting life." It is not that temporary, trumpery salvation which some preach, which saves you for a quarter of a year and then lets you perish! It is everlasting salvation! Once received, it does not pass away like that little dribbling shower that watered the pavement just now, and is gone, but it shall be in you a well of water, springing up, a living and enduring principle, or, to use another Scriptural expression, "incorruptible seed, which lives and abides forever." This salvation is worth your having! Then, get it! It is worth your pining after, praying for and believing. Oh, that you might have it, even you! As soon as you trust the Lord Jesus Christ, it is yours, and yours forever!

15. *The woman said to Him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come here to draw.* The woman had not even the faintest idea of the *spiritual* truth of which Christ had spoken to her. The fact is, *conviction* must come before conversion. No sinner is made alive till he is first killed. You cannot clothe him till he is naked. So now the Savior began that conviction work in this woman—and He did it very wisely. He did not, at first, charge her with criminality, but He led her to *accuse herself*.

16, 17. *Jesus said to her, Go, call your husband, and come here. The woman answered and said, I have no husband.* And, as she said it, no doubt she tried to look as innocent as possible. But a guilty flush stole over her face despite her attempt to keep it back.

17. *Jesus said to her, you have well said, I have no husband.* Always give people credit for what is well said. If you want to win them, you must mind that you are not rough with them, but admit what you can of the truth in their utterance—“you have well said, I have no husband.”

18, 19. *For you have had five husbands; and he whom you now have is not your husband: in that said you truly. The woman said unto Him, Sir, I Perceive that You are a Prophet.* It would have been better if she had perceived that she was a sinner! Perhaps she did perceive it, but scarcely cared, yet, to confess it openly, so she said, “I perceive that You are a Prophet.” Now she has a religious difficulty and what man or woman is there in the world, however far gone from morality, who has not some religious difficulties? And the more immoral they become, the more difficulties they are pretty sure to have. I hate that style of preaching which is everlastingly pandering to difficulties which never would exist except in a dissolute generation like the present! We preach a plain Gospel and when men’s hearts are right, it is all plain to them. To him who desires to understand, difficulties soon cease to be a trouble! We had better deal with men’s hearts and lives than try to answer their quibbling questions. This was the woman’s dilemma—

20. *Our fathers worshipped in this mountain.* That is, Mount Gerizim—

20-23. *And You say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus said to her, Woman, believe Me, the hour comes when you shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship you know not what—we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour comes, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeks such to worship Him.* You see, Brothers and Sisters, all the difficulties that arise are but temporary! Put them away and get to the great spiritual business that concerns us all—the truly seeking after God in spirit and in truth! If you really want to find God, you shall find Him. He is already seeking you and your very desire after Him is the proof that He has already had dealings with you by His Spirit! Therefore, come unto Him and come at once, “for the Father seeks such to worship Him.”

24-27. *God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. The woman said to Him, I know that Messiah comes, which is called Christ: when He is come, He will tell us all things. Jesus*

said to her, *I that speak unto you am He. And upon this came His disciples.* This gracious work of the Master had been done in private. Christ knew that such a person as this woman was not to be spoken to in the presence of His disciples, who were scarcely sympathetic enough for such service. But her heart is now won by the Messiah! So now you may come in, you disciples! Providence shut the door and kept them waiting a while until this delicate piece of work was done!

27. *And marveled that He talked with the woman.* These men who had, themselves, been picked off the dunghill, marveled that Christ spoke to this woman! So have I known some who were, themselves, once grievous sinners, yet they have become horribly conceited some years after conversion. And they have thought that other great sinners might not be saved as they were! God deliver from such abominable pride any soul that professes to be saved! Every Believer should feel, "If the Lord has saved *me*, He can save *anybody*." And that state of mind ought always to be ours.

27. *Yet no man said, What seek You? or, Why talk You with her?* They had some sense left, sense enough to keep silent.

28. *The woman then left her waterpot—*Possessed only with one thought, going to tell others the glad news she herself had believed! She "left her waterpot."

28, 29. *And went her way into the city, and said to the men, Come, see a Man which told me all things that ever I did. Is not this the Christ?* They must have been surprised to hear her talking about good things. There was no more likely messenger to win men, or to strike them with curiosity, than such a woman as this.

30-32. *Then they went out of the city and came to Him. In the meantime His disciples urged Him, saying, Master, eat. But He said unto them, I have meat to eat that you know not of.* So has every man who lives to win souls for Christ! There is a table which he enters where the very delicacies of God are brought before him and his soul is sustained and his strength is renewed by the dainties that the Lord has provided for those who do His will! Brothers and Sisters, may we often feed upon this heavenly meat! Amen.

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY
TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

SYCHAR'S SINNER SAVED

NO. 2277

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 9 1892.
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*“Jesus answered and said unto her, If you knew the gift of God,
and who it is that says to you, Give Me to drink;
you would have asked of Him, and He
would have given you living water.”*
John 4:10.

I COULD not help saying, in the reading, that the woman's answer to our Lord was, at least, somewhat abrupt, if not really rude, but, with great meekness, Jesus took no notice of it so as to blame her for her tone, or for her unkind manner. He was too intent upon saving her soul to care about a little rudeness on her part. Learn a lesson from your Lord's conduct! When you are dealing with souls, do not always expect them to yield to you at once. Do not expect them, even, to receive your expostulations with thankfulness. Be prepared to be repelled and even to be ridiculed. And when it so happens, do not be put out of temper, or out of heart, but go straight on with your work whichever way they may go.

Our Savior, instead of being vexed at the rudeness of the woman, said to her, “If you knew.” “Ah, poor Soul, you do not know to whom you are speaking thus rudely!” “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that says to you, Give Me to drink; you would have asked of Him, and He would have given you living water.” Oh, that we might have a passion for the souls of men! May we be vehement in our desire, with a love that burns like coals of juniper! May we not be put off by any discouragements, but let us resolve that before we have done with any poor sinner, we will do all in our power to bring him to Christ, so that, if men are lost, it shall not be our fault—and if they are saved, we will, at least, have this part in it—that we have set Christ plainly before them as their soul's only hope!

Now, our Savior, having thus set us an example of great meekness, went on to read this woman's heart in a amazing manner and, reading her heart, He foretold what her action would be when her ignorance was removed. It is a difficult thing to tell what people will do under such and such circumstances, for men and women are very unaccountable creatures. But the Savior made a prediction as to what this woman would do. That will be my first point—Jesus foretold what her action would be when her ignorance was removed. And then, secondly, I will show you that the fact justified the prediction. As soon as the woman knew who it was that spoke to her, she asked Him for the Living Water—Jesus gave it to her and she went on her way rejoicing!

I. First, then, JESUS FORETOLD WHAT HER ACTION WOULD BE WHEN HER IGNORANCE WAS REMOVED. He saw in her a kindly disposition towards right things, but she was hindered by her ignorance. If that hindrance could be taken away, she would at once travel in the right road.

Let me mention the points of saving knowledge which it was desirable for her to know.

These were, first, the nature of salvation. "If you knew the gift of God." Thousands of people in the world do not know what salvation means. They conceive, if they have any notion of it at all, that it means escaping from Hell and going to Heaven when they die, which is a very imperfect and incorrect idea of salvation. "The gift of God is eternal life"—and that is salvation! God gives to all who believe in Christ a new life, a vital principle, something to be within them always—the reigning and ruling principle of their lives. Salvation means salvation from sin. To the drunk, it is salvation from the drink. To the swearer, it is salvation from a profane heart. To the unchaste, it is salvation from impurity. It means deliverance from the power of evil in the life and submission to the power of that which is good and gracious, by which sin shall be cast out.

Do you remember the meaning of the name, Jesus? "You shall call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." The salvation that we have to preach produces a change of heart, a renewal of nature, a deliverance from the power of the devil and brings the renewed man under the supreme power of the Holy Spirit of God! If some men knew this, they would begin to seek for it. Are there not many here who feel that they ought to turn over a new leaf and they do not know how to do it? They have not the power, even though they have, in a measure, the will. Now, salvation brings you both will and power—it saves you not only from the wrath to come, but from the sin that is now within you. That is the nature of salvation.

This woman did not know the freeness of salvation. "If you knew the gift of God"—"the gift of God." She thought, perhaps, that it had to be bought with money, or procured by sacrifices, or attained by good works after a long period of preparation. The Savior assured her that salvation was the *gift of God*—freely given, not because it is deserved, but because God delights to bless even the unthankful and the evil! Given, not because of penances, or austerities, or myriads of prayers, or floods of tears—but freely given to every soul that is willing to accept it by faith in Jesus Christ! Oh, if many knew this, they would seek to have it! But they do not know what salvation is. And they do not know that it is to be had for nothing and to be had on the spot. "If you knew the gift of God."

Further, it was necessary for this woman to know the Person of Christ. "If you knew who it is that says to you, Give Me to drink." Some do not know who the Christ is. Though He has been here and lived, and died, and is gone to Heaven and is preached by tens of thousands of preachers, and His blessed Book is with you to this day, yet you do not know that the Savior is God over all, blessed forever, the second Person of the sacred Trinity, the Son of God and yet Man! He took upon Himself the nature of man, was born into this world, lived a suffering and obedient life, died an

ignominious and painful death! And now He has risen from the dead and He is sitting at the right hand of God, even the Father, and will shortly come to judge the quick and the dead according to our Gospel. Now this is He, this God, this Man, this Mediator between God and men who is to be trusted! He was commissioned of God and, therefore, He was called the Christ, the Anointed. He has come into the world on purpose to do the will of Him that sent Him and to finish His work. Oh, you sons and daughters of men, if you would be saved, you must come and trust yourselves with the Incarnate God who is bone of your bone, and flesh of your flesh!

This woman also did not know the freeness of Christ, for when our Savior said, "If you knew the gift of God," He really meant Himself. Paul said, "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable *gift*." This is He, the Gift of the Father! Christ has not come into the world simply to save the rich, or the learned, or those who struggle through many examinations to obtain a high degree of human wisdom. He died, also, for the poor, for you who know your own ignorance and bewail for you who know your sinfulness and repent of it. He came not call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. God has given His Son Jesus Christ, freely given Him! You may have Him for the asking! You may have Him for the taking! "Whoever believes in Him has everlasting life." And if you will but trust Him, there is eternal life for you! It was important that this woman should know this. "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that says to you, Give Me to drink."

If you look at the text, you will now see the conduct which follows this saving knowledge. Christ foretold what this woman would do when her ignorance was removed. What would she do? Well, first, she would forget about the idea of *giving* Christ anything! He began by saying to this sinful woman, "Give Me to drink," but He afterwards said, "If you knew the gift of God, you would have asked of Him."

I am continually hearing, from converts and others, the expression, "*I gave my heart to Christ*," as a description of conversion. Now I do not find fault with that expression, for we must give our hearts to Christ—but very seriously let me say that I am afraid that that phrase will do much mischief unless it is well guarded and looked after. The Gospel is not, "Give your hearts to *Christ*, and *you* shall be saved." The Gospel is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ"—that is, TRUST Him—"and you shall be saved." When you do that, you will be sure to give Him your heart, by-and-by, if not at once. Salvation is not by *your* giving anything to Christ, but by Christ giving something to you! I am glad that you have given your heart to Christ—but have you learned, first, this lesson—that He gave His heart *for you*? We do not find salvation by giving Christ anything! That is the *fruit* of it, but salvation comes by *Christ giving us something*—did I say *something*—by Christ giving us *EVERYTHING*! By His giving us Himself!

I used to notice that a good deal of Sunday school teaching to the children was, "Dear child, love Jesus." That is not the way of salvation! The way of salvation is to *trust* Jesus. The *fruit* of salvation is that the dear child does love Jesus, but that is not the way of salvation. The way of salvation is to take Christ, to trust Christ. When you are saved, the proof of

it will be that you will give your heart to Christ, but do not let us turn things upside down lest, beginning with a little blunder, we should go on to some great error and set up, again, the ruinous doctrine which once sank the world in darkness—the doctrine of an imaginary salvation by our own works!

Next, the text suggests the idea of asking of Christ as the first thing for us to do. How many there are who know that salvation is a gift, but they never seek it! They know that it is all of Grace, but they never ask for it. An occasional prayer, when you are half-asleep at night—now and then an expression of a wish that you were better—that is all the effort you put forth. The Lord says, “You shall seek Me, and find Me when you shall search for Me with all your heart.” Men seek after gold as if they had a thousand hearts—but they seek after Grace as if their heart were cut into a thousand pieces and only one solitary thousandth part of it went after the blessing! This woman did really ask of Christ, and asked with earnestness. And so must you. If you did but know Christ. If you did but know the value of His salvation. If you did but know the freeness of it, my Hearers, you would get to your knees and you would never rise from them again till you had found Him who alone can save your souls!

Let me ask you unsaved ones, do you cry to God for mercy? Are you in earnest about it? Does your very soul go up to God in prayer? If not, do not wonder that you still remain in the gall of bitterness! How can you expect God to give to you that which you do not value enough to heartily ask for?

This woman, when her ignorance was removed, would be led to put *asking*, first, and then *really* to ask. And, next, receiving would graciously follow the asking! I call your attention to the words, “You would have asked of Him, and He would have given you.” Dear Hearer, if you had asked, you would have had! “You have not because you ask not.” Sitting in that pew, tonight, without God, without Christ—it is because you have not sought Him, you have not cried for Him! Had you sought Him, you would have found Him, “for everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him that knocks, it shall be opened.” I do not like merely to utter this Truth of God—I wish I could press it home upon your heart and that you would feel that if you have not asked, it is right that you should not have received—and that if you *had* asked, you would not have asked in vain! “You would have asked and He would have given.”

Then she would have received and the preciousness of the gift would have been apparent. The result would have been that she would have been a happy woman, greatly prizing the gift of God, greatly valuing the dear Savior, singing in her delight because she had found Him who could take all her sin away and send her back to Sychar a renewed woman. Instead of being a destroyer of the souls of men, she would become a herald of the Cross to them and the means of their salvation.

So our Savior pictured what she would have done. I wonder whether it is true about any of you, here, that you have only kept from prayer because you have not known better? Have you not found Christ because you really did not know anything about Him? You have been making mistakes

and blunders and that is why you are not saved. Now we have explained the matter to you and you can see it—I trust that not another day will begin and end without your seeking and finding Christ—and so entering into eternal life.

Now consider the line of action which this teaching suggests to us.

If it is, in many cases, the fact that nothing but *ignorance* is keeping men out of eternal life. If it is true of many that if they did but know, they would ask and they would receive, then if you have not found Christ, be wise enough to try and learn all about Him! Do not remain in ignorance where that ignorance is not bliss, but endless woe. Wake yourself up and say, "If I can find out what salvation is, I will find it out, even if I have to burn the midnight oil, and wear my eyes out in searching through the sacred Book. I will hear as well as read. I will know all that I can about salvation and about this Jesus, the Son of God, the unspeakable Gift of God." Well, take care that you go where Christ is most preached! A little girl heard her mother say, "We went to the House of God to hear about Jesus." "Mother," she said, "at the place where Aunty goes, they do not hear anything about Jesus, I am sure, for I went with her many times, and I never heard anything about Him."

Do not go to places where Christ is not preached! Let those go who have no souls to be saved, if there are such people, but you, dear Hearers, are in an anxious state. You need to find salvation and, lest ignorance should hinder you, take heed *what* you hear and take heed *how* you hear. I was but a child when I first began to seek the Savior, but I have a distinct recollection that as soon as the sun shone into my little bedchamber, I was awake—and what was I reading? Doddridge's, "Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul," Alleine's, "Alarm to the Unconverted," and books of that order! I read when I was but a child, in the hope that I might somehow find Christ and be saved. When I went to a place of worship, I took no notice of the music of the organ, or the eloquence of the preacher. I kept listening with this one thought in my mind—"Oh that I might but find salvation! Oh, that I might but find Christ!" Whenever that is the case with anyone, depend upon it, sooner or later the ignorance that bars the way will melt and disappear! And you will ask, and God will give, and there will be joy in Heaven and joy in your own heart because you are saved!

One thing more. If you discover the Truth of God, then go on learning more about it so that you may tell it to others. It is of the nature of the Grace of God, when it gets into one heart, that it needs to flow into another. The woman of Sychar believes in Jesus. Now she must go and tell the men of the city about the Christ. I wonder whether she went to the men with whom she had sinned? Women did not often speak openly to men in those Oriental regions, but this woman did. She had broken through the laws of decorum and of the Word of God, so away she goes and says to the men, "Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did: is not this the Christ?" Go on learning about Christ, I say, that you may teach it to others—and never think a day is well spent unless you have spoken to someone about your Master, unless you have at least dropped one tiny seed somewhere to bring forth fruit to His praise! Our

Savior predicted that the woman would ask and that she would receive if she could but get rid of the ignorance that weighed her down.

II. My second point is that all this came true. THE FACT JUSTIFIED THE PREDICTION. When this woman's ignorance was taken away, she did what Christ said she would do!

First, let me remind you that what she *did* know stood her in good stead. She was not converted when she came to Christ—very far from it—but she did know something about Him, for she said to Him, “I know that Messiah comes, which is called Christ.” It is a good beginning when you know *anything*. I heard, yesterday, a piece of bigotry concerning Dissenters which astonished me for the moment, and then I said, “I am rather glad to hear it, for I like to meet with men, nowadays, who believe *anything*—for the majority of people do not believe anything at all! And there is hope for a man, or a woman, who really knows and believes something.” If you have one solid bit somewhere, we can get a fulcrum for our lever and so can move you. This woman said, “I know that Messiah comes.” Teachers of the children in the Sunday schools, it may be years hence, but if you have taught a child to really know *something*, that knowledge may be the beginning of his salvation. It was partly by common tradition, partly by conversation and partly by the belief of her associates that this woman came to say, “I know that Messiah comes.”

Then she had got into her head another thing, that when He did come, He would tell them all things. “When He is come, He will tell us all things.” In effect, the woman's belief led her to say, “When the Messiah comes, we shall all be set right. Now, we Jews and Samaritans have had a quarrel about where we ought to worship. The Samaritans say that Mount Gerizim is the place where the blessing was pronounced, and that we ought to worship here. They only believe, as you know, in the Pentateuch. Those five books of Moses do not say much about Jerusalem, or about a Temple. Clinging to that grand old Pentateuch, I believe in worshipping here at Gerizim. But the Jews say that we ought to worship at Jerusalem. Well, when Messiah comes, He will tell us all things.”

She had that idea firmly fixed in her mind. Where did she get it? I will read you the passage in order that you may see how a single text may give a hook on which a soul may hang. One single text may be a little bit of solid rock on which you may plant your lever and begin to lift the heavy weight of an immortal soul! In the 18th Chapter of Deuteronomy, beginning at the 15th verse, we read as follows—“The LORD your God will raise up unto you a Prophet from the midst of you, of your brethren, like unto me; unto him you shall hearken; according to all that you desired of the Lord your God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the Voice of the LORD my God, neither let me see this great fire anymore, that I die not. And the LORD said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken.” They need a Mediator—they shall have a Mediator to speak to them from Me.

NOW, here is the special verse, “I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto you, and will put My words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.” This woman

pulled the text about a little, but she gathered this from it, "There is a great Prophet to come, God's anointed Prophet, the Messiah, or Christ; and when He comes, we shall know Him by this, that He will tell us all things. He will more fully expound the Truth of God about which we may now be in doubt." That is what she knew and that helped her a great deal.

But, next, what our Lord told her was a still greater help to her, for He directed her to Himself. He began, first, by preaching the Gospel to her. He would give her Living Water and if she drank it, it would remain in her forever a well of water, springing up unto everlasting life. And He was ready to give her this Living Water then and there.

Next, He unveiled her life before her. He told her that she had had five husbands and that the man with whom she then lived was not her husband. With two or three strokes He drew her portrait. She marveled at this. It is a great thing for a man to see himself—it is a greater thing for him to see his Savior. After you are once converted, do not study yourself. Study your Lord! God has given one objective for the soul's eye to rest upon, and that is Christ! Keep your eyes always resting upon Him. But, in order to her conversion, she was made to see herself, a wretched woman, living in abominable sin—and she was astonished at the sight! But even that helped her.

Then the Savior took her off from all outward religion. He said to her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour comes when you shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father." Jesus told her that the hour had come when the true worshippers would worship the Father in spirit and in truth. Notice, too, that Christ took her off from the Samaritan worship. He said, "Salvation is of the Jews." But then He took her off the Jewish worship, too, and said, "Neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem." It is all very well for you to try to convert a Roman Catholic into an English Churchman—that is, converting him from a Samaritan to a Jew. It is all very well for you to turn him from a Wesleyan into an Independent, or from an Independent into a Baptist, or from an Arminian into a Calvinist. The fact is, though, you have to get him off *everything* but Christ! And you have not done your work until you have brought him to know that no profession of religion, no outward ceremonies, whatever, can save the soul. "They that worship God must worship Him in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeks such to worship Him."

The Savior had done this woman great service. He had preached to her the Gospel, unveiled her sin, taken her off herself and off all external religiousness. Then came the main point of all—He revealed Himself to her, unveiling the sacred majesty of His Divine Glory. He said to her, "I that speak unto you am He." When she said, "I know that Messiah comes," He at once spoke that grand word, "I am He." Now, dear Friend, if the Lord has given you only to know one Truth, hold on to it! And may He teach you more of yourself, more of Himself and bring you to know that Jesus Christ is the one and only Savior even as He brought this woman to know it!

Well, once more, her own experience of Christ settled her faith. I do not know whether you see my drift. The woman had the idea in her mind that

when the Messiah came, He would tell all things. She listened to Christ and when He drew a picture of her entire life, something began to whisper in her heart—"He is telling you all things that you ever did. Is not this the Christ?" And when Christ said to her, "I that speak unto you am He," the work was completed and off she went and said to the men the first thing that she could think of. She said, "You know that the Messiah, when He comes, is to tell us all things. Moses said that in Deuteronomy. You remember the passage in the Pentateuch! Now," she said, "I have met with a Man who has told me all things that ever I did. At least, He has told everything in one particular line. Do you not think that this could be the Messiah?"

In her poor, womanly way, she had argued herself into that belief—and I think that it was a good, reasonable argument, too. I have known many a soul get to Heaven with no better guidance than some one text of Scripture. One Truth of God will guide a man to Heaven, though 50 may feed him better than one. When a bridge is to be made across some deep chasm, what is to be done? The first thing is to shoot an arrow across, or a gunshot that will carry a thread. When you have a thread across, you can pull a string over the gulf. When you have the string across, you can pull a thicker and stronger cord across. That can pull a rope and that rope can carry a bigger rope that can bear a cable! And, by-and-by, when you have got your cables across, you can begin to make your iron bridge.

Now, in this woman's heart, that one belief, "I know that Messiah comes, which is called Christ," was like the thread shot across the chasm! "When He is come, He will tell us all things," was like the piece of string. And when she found that she had met with One who did tell her all things, she had a *cable* across the chasm! This is the way in which God removes ignorance! This is the way in which God builds up faith—little by little—and I, therefore, pray any of you who believe even a little, to hold on to it, and not to give up! Search the Scriptures. Hear the Gospel until you believe a great deal more and, believing that Jesus is the Christ, sent of God to save sinners! Trust Him wholly. Trust only Him! And so you shall enter into eternal life.

I think that I hear one ask, "Do you mean to say that that woman was saved?" Yes, I expect to meet her in Heaven. Among the fair daughters of the New Jerusalem, the woman that was waiting at the well will surely be found! "But she was such a shocking character," says one. She *was* a shocking character—I hope that there is not any woman here half as bad as she was, though there may be, and there may even be some *worse* than she was—but she was saved and so will you be, if you go the same way that she went. There may be men here who are steeped in vice much worse than this poor woman ever was. You generally blame the woman and the man is allowed to go scot-free. But tonight, man or woman, I do not care which you are—even if you have committed the same sin—the very same and are guilty in the sight of God, and before your own conscience, yet listen to two things that Jesus said to that woman.

The first was, "Woman, believe Me." Woman, believe Christ. Man, believe Christ. Never mind me. Never mind ministers or priests. Believe

Christ, the Sent One of God, for He cannot lie! He speaks the truth! Believe Him and believe in Him, that is, trust Him, rest upon Him for salvation!

And then Jesus left her with this word ringing in her ears, the last word that He spoke, "I that speak unto you am He." Believe that Christ is He whom God has sent to save sinners! Believe that Christ is He who took our sin, the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world! Believe Him as He says, "I am He," and say to Him, "I, Lord, am like this woman, one of the chief of sinners, but I believe that You are the Savior of sinners, and I trust myself with You. Save me, Lord, for Your own name's sake!"

Now, you see, I have brought the horses to the water. But I cannot make them drink! I have set Christ before you, but I cannot make you have Him! May the Holy Spirit help you to take Him, tonight, once and for all! Do not go away till He has done so. Give not sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eyelids till you have closed in with Christ and accepted Him as your Savior! For when you fall asleep, tonight, you may never wake up again on this earth. It will be a dreadful thing to wake up in the land where hope can never come—where you shall see afar off God's chosen ones, but, as for yourself, you shall be told that there is a great gulf fixed between you and them so that they cannot come to you, and you cannot go to them "Repent and believe the Gospel!" May the Holy Spirit cause you to do so even now, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON **JOHN 4:1-42.**

Verses. 1-3. *When, therefore, the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (though Jesus Himself baptized not, but His disciples), He left Judea, and departed again into Galilee.* Our Lord knew that the Pharisees would assail Him now that He was prospering, and gathering disciples. He, therefore, went away from them as He did on other occasions. Whenever the cause of God grows, Satan is sure to be violent against it. Notice that our Savior did not, Himself, baptize His followers. Now, if Baptism depended upon the character or the office of the baptizer, Jesus would certainly have done it! But to show us that the person baptizing does not impart any Grace to the person baptized, our Lord baptized not, but left that work to His disciples.

4. *And He must needs go through Samaria.* Men say that, "Must' is for the king." But our King puts Himself under an imperative, "must," under a Divine necessity. Though obliged to do nothing, yet He obliges Himself to do deeds of mercy and Grace.

5, 6. *Then He came to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob's well was there.* Holy men often impart an interest to the very place which they inhabit. We should not have cared anything about Sychar, or its well, if

Jacob had not been there. Where godly men have been, the ground is sacred. How much more so where the God of men comes to visit us!

6. *Jesus, therefore, being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well and it was about the sixth hour.* Only half a day spent on His journey, yet He is weary. See, Brothers and Sisters, how He was compassed with infirmity! Our Great High Priest so truly took our flesh that He was wearied with His journey. He that rolls the stars along was weary in the middle of the day! So weary was He that He sat in the very attitude of weariness, as best He could, on the curb of the well—“Jesus, therefore, being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well.”

7. *There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, Give Me to drink.* Wonderful words of condescension! The Creator is asking drink of His creature! Perfect holiness is asking of a sinner! He without whom there were no clouds, or rain, or springs, or wells, says to a sinful woman, “Give Me to drink.”

8, 9. *(For His disciples were gone away unto the city to buy food). The woman of Samaria said unto Him, How is it that you, being a Jew, ask drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? For the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.* In effect, the woman said, “Now that You are thirsty, You can ask drink of me. But at another time, proud Jew that You are, You would not speak to a Samaritan.” Surely, this was rather a gruff answer, if not really rude. If she had known who it was to whom she was speaking, she would not have answered Him thus.

10. *Jesus answered and said unto her, If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that says to you, Give Me to drink; you would have asked of Him, and He would have given you living water.* Something better than the water from Jacob's well! Though you have denied Him a simple draft of water, He would not have denied you something infinitely better, namely, Living Water. She little knew what that Living Water was.

11, 12. *The woman said unto Him, Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from where, then, have You that living water? Are You greater than our father, Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle?* That last word, “cattle,” lets us see wherein the water of Jacob's well could never be compared to the Living Water that Jesus gives! If beasts can partake of it, it is not that high and *spiritual* thing which immortal souls need, which Jesus came to give. Unwittingly, the woman had answered her own question, “Are You greater than our father Jacob?”

13, 14. *Jesus answered and said unto her, Whoever drinks of this water shall thirst again: but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.* If Christ gives you Grace, it is eternal life that He gives you! It is not a life that can die. It is not a Grace that you can lose. It is *everlasting life*—a supply of living water which turns to a spring or well—and always remains within the heart that receives it.

15. *The woman said unto Him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come here to draw.* She had caught the Lord's meaning so far as

the perpetuity of the *water* was concerned, but she still did not know what the Living Water was. It was all a riddle to her, as I am afraid it is to some of you. There is many a Doctor of Divinity who cannot explain what the Living Water is.

16. *Jesus said unto her.* As she had apparently learned nothing by His instruction, He now tried another plan with her and began to deal with her conscience.

16, 17. *Go, call your husband, and come here. The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, You have well said, I have no husband.* Praise people whenever you can. There was nothing good about this woman, but she had spoken the truth—"You have well said, I have no *husband*." Our Lord purposely laid the emphasis on the last word.

18. *For you have had five husbands; and he whom you now have is not your husband: in that said you truly.* What an exposure of the life she was living! Jesus laid bare what she and her companion in sin may have thought that no man knew—"He whom you now have is not your husband: in that said you truly."

19. *The woman said unto Him, Sir.* She is getting more respectful now. When conscience begins to work, men treat the ministry with greater deference.

19, 20. *I perceive that you are a Prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain.* How pleased she was to get away from that unpleasant subject of her five husbands and the man who was not her husband! How anxious people are to salve their consciences by discussing religious matters of a general character! When you come a little too close to them, they edge off if they can. So this woman said, "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain."

20, 21. *And You say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus said unto her, Woman believe Me.* Our Savior gave the woman good Gospel advice, "Woman, believe Me"

21, 22. *The hour comes when you shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father. You worship you know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews.* They have the oracles of God. The Savior comes of the Jews. They are right as far as they follow the instruction they have received, and you Samaritans are wrong in keeping to the Law of Moses, alone, and rejecting the rest of the Scriptures.

23, 24. *But the hour comes, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeks such to worship Him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth* All the true worship in the world is of God's seeking. None would ever worship Him aright if He did not lead them to it. He seeks them—and then they seek Him.

25, 26. *The woman said unto Him, I know that Messiah comes, which is called Christ: when He is come, He will tell us all things. Jesus said unto her, I that speak unto you am He.* Now her eyes were opened. That last word had made her see!

27. *And upon this came His disciples, and marveled that He talked with the woman.* How big they were, how wise in their own conceit to be astonished that Christ was talking with a woman! The followers of Christ often get much too big for their places—and too big to please their Master, too. Though “they marveled that He was speaking with a woman,” as the Revised Version translates it.

27. *Yet no man said, What do You seek? or, Why do You talk with her?* They dared not do that. They had too much awe of Him. But, do you know I have often wished that they had done so? I should like to have read what Christ would have said to them. How He would have reproved them for thinking that He had degraded Himself by talking with a woman, or with anybody. Our Savior would have vindicated woman's place in the world in a way that one might have liked to have heard.

28. *The woman then left her water pot and went her way into the cit.* Why should she stay any longer? The faces of the disciples did not look pleasant, but their Master had comforted her. She would not stop to lose that comfort by hard words from the disciples—she “went her way into the city.”

28-32. *And said to the men, Come, see a Man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ? Then they went out of the city, and came to Him. In the meanwhile His disciples prayed Him saying, Master, eat. But He said unto them, I have meat to eat that you know not of.*

39, 40. *And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on Him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did. So when the Samaritans were come unto Him they besought Him that He would tarry with them: and He abode there two days.* Two days of Christ's personal ministry—what might not come of that?

41, 42. *And many more believed because of His own word; and said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of your saying: for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is, indeed, the Christ, the Savior of the world.* Would God that many might be brought to know that Christ, the Savior, tonight! Amen.

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SAVING KNOWLEDGE

NO. 782

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 24, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Jesus answered and said unto her, If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that says to you, Give Me to drink; you would have asked of Him, and He would have given you living water.”
John 4:10.

THE matter will turn, this morning, upon those few words, “If you knew the gift of God.” The woman of Samaria, who was met by our Lord at the well, was an object of electing love but she was not yet regenerated. One difficulty alone lay in the way—she was willing to receive the Truth of God, perfectly willing to be obedient to it—but ignorance lay like a stone before the door of her sepulcher. “If you knew the gift of God,” says Christ, “then you would have asked, and I would have given.” There was the one barrier! If that could be removed she would be a saved soul.

The impediment which lay so much in her way was ignorance concerning the Lord Jesus Himself. She was not an uninstructed woman. She was evidently acquainted, at least, with portions of Biblical history. she could speak of “Father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank there himself, and his children, and his cattle.” She was versed certainly in the peculiarities of her sect—“How is it that You, being a Jew, ask drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? For the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.”

She was equally well acquainted with the hopes, which were common to her people and to the Jewish nation—“I know that Messiah comes, which is called Christ. When He is come, He will tell us all things.” She was not, therefore, kept out of the kingdom on account of ignorance. In these matters she was better instructed than, I am afraid, are some of you—for, alas, in this age there are hundreds of people who are educated in everything *except* their Bibles—who could answer questions upon most sciences, but concerning Christ Crucified they know not even so much as the very elements! But the point which kept this woman, I say, out of the kingdom was this—that she did not *know* Christ—she knew not “the gift of God,” and who it was that said unto her, “Give Me to drink.”

And this, indeed, is enough to keep any of us out of peace, and life, and joy, for, until we know God in human flesh, we cannot find peace and comfort. The great riddle of, “What must I do to be saved?” remains unsolved till we know Christ and are found in Him. We may go about and we may study this, and that, and the other, but we shall remain fools in the matters of eternal salvation until we come and sit at the feet of the great Teacher, and know Him, and are known of Him.

I shall attempt, this morning, as God may help me, to speak with you upon *spiritual ignorance*. And then upon what would follow if that igno-

rance were removed, hoping that I may be allowed to say a few stirring things to some of you to induce you to get rid of any ignorance which now bars you out of peace, and that others of you who know the Truths of Jesus Christ may be more earnest to tell to the unenlightened what you know yourselves, lest they should perish and their blood should be required at your hands. I shall commence, then, this morning, by some few remarks upon the gift of God and the knowledge of it. And then, secondly, I shall turn to the "if" of the text, and what then? And thirdly, I shall take up the "if" of the text once more, and show what it has to do with the Believer.

I. First, our text speaks of A GIFT AND OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF IT. The latter half of the verse informs us that the gift of God is no other than the Man who spoke to the woman and said, "Give me to drink." In fact, Jesus Christ is "God's unspeakable gift" for whom we should daily and hourly lift up our hearts in gratitude to God. Christ was God's gift to the fallen seed of man. Long before this world was made, He ordained in the eternal purpose that Christ should be the Covenant Head of His elect, their Surety, and their Redeemer. He gave Christ to us *before* He spread the starry sky. He was the Father's goodly gift when the fullness of time was come.

Many promises had heralded the Master's coming, and at last He appeared a Babe of a span long in His mother's arms. His holy life and His suffering death were the gifts of God to us, for "He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all." To the whole company of God's elect, Christ Jesus is the priceless gift which the Father's love has bestowed upon them. And when you and I receive Jesus Christ into our heart He evermore comes as a gift. The faith by which we receive Him is a gift—the gift of God is faith, but Jesus Christ Himself never comes to a soul that has faith, as a *reward*. No man ever received Christ by the works of the Law or the deeds of the flesh.

It is not possible, my Brothers and Sisters, that the highest and most perfect obedience should ever deserve such a reward as the gift of the Son of God! Conceive of any virtue and you will not dare to blaspheme so much as to think that it could deserve the death of Christ. No, the price is too great to be a recompense for any of our exertions. It is the spontaneous gift of Heaven given to us, not on the footing of the Law, but on the grounds of the Sovereign Grace of God who gives as He wills to the unworthy sons of men.

If you come to God with a price in your hands, you shall not have Christ. If you come to God thinking to force your way to Heaven, or supposing that you could even contribute towards your entrance there, you shall find the gates of the Law shutting you out forever. But if you come humbly penitent, confessing your soul-poverty, and plead with the Father that He would give to you His Son, you shall receive the gift of God into your soul most freely. "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life." "We are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Man is dead in sin, but Christ is a gift bringing life to the dead.

The text uses the definite article, “*If you knew the gift of God,*” setting Christ as God’s gift beyond all other gifts. True, the light of the sun is the gift of God to us. There is not a piece of bread we eat, nor a drop of water we drink but what it may be called the gift of God. But the gift which comprehends, excels, and sanctifies all other gifts is the gift of Jesus Christ to the sons of men! I wish I had the power to speak as I should of this gift, but I am reminded by God’s Word that it is “unspeakable.” “Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift.” I can comprehend God’s giving the earth to the children of men—giving to Adam and his seed dominion over all the works of His hands.

I think I can understand God’s giving Heaven to His people, and permitting them to dwell at His right hand forever and ever. But that God should give the Only Begotten, “very God of very God,” to take upon Himself our nature, and in that nature actually to be “obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross”—this we cannot understand, and even the angels with their mightier intellects cannot grasp it fully! They look into it, but as they gaze they desire to see more, for even *they* feel they cannot search this out to perfection.

A depth unfathomable of Divine love is there in the condescending loving kindness which gave Jesus Christ to die for us when we were yet sinners. Beloved, it is an unrivalled gift! God has given to us such a treasure that if Heaven and earth were melted down, the price could not buy another like Jesus! All eternity cannot yield such a Person as the Lord Jesus! Eternal God, You have no equal! And becoming Son of Man, Your condescension has nothing that can rival it! Oh, what a gift! You cannot conceive of anything that you can put side by side with it! It is a gift, Beloved, which comprehends all things within itself. “He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?”

Get Christ and you have the pardon of sin, the justification of your person—in the heart of that redemption you shall find sanctification, adoption, regeneration. Every Covenant gift is wrapped up in Christ Jesus. “A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me.” Not one sprig of it, but a whole bundle! All things that can possibly be needed for the Christian for time and for eternity are given to him in the Person of the Lord Jesus. And as this gift comprehends all, so it sweetens all. Temporal mercies without Christ are like ciphers without a figure. But when you have these temporal mercies and Christ stands in front of them, oh, what an amount they make!

Temporal mercies without Christ are unripe fruit—but when Christ shines upon them, they grow mellow and sweet. Temporal mercies without Christ are the dry rivers—Christ fills them to the brim. They are like trees with leaves only, but Christ comes to give them fruit upon which we may live. Brethren, what are all the mercies of this life to us without Christ? Would they not make our souls hunger? “Whom have I in Heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside You.” The full wine vat, or the barn that needs to be enlarged—what would these be without a Savior? O God, take them all away if You will, but give us more

of Christ! Fill our hearts with the love of Christ, and You may empty the cupboard and purse if You will.

Mercies are blessed when we have Christ with them, but if Christ is gone, they are but empty vanities. Our Lord Jesus Christ is a gift most precious, my Brothers and Sisters, because he who gets it is sure that he has the favor of God. Other mercies do not necessarily bring with them God's favor. God gives the most of this world full often to wicked men. He pours the husks out to the swine. As for His children, He often wrings out to them a full cup of bitterness. This world is not our portion, as we know right well. The wicked have their portion here, and they are full of fatness. Their houses are full of provisions and they leave the rest of their substance unto their babes.

But get Christ and you have God's favor—you are sure of it! This is "The blessing of the Lord that makes rich, and He adds no sorrow with it." It is a right-hand and a left-hand blessing. Get Christ and it is *all* blessing and no curse whatever. If you have Christ, as sure as you live, God loves you for there never was a soul that had Christ's name written upon its forehead but what eternal love had inscribed it there—and in that writing had given a sure evidence and pledge of love that could not end.

If you have Christ, again, you must prize the gift, because this is a token of your everlasting salvation. Hell never did enclose within its gates a single soul that rested on the Cross of Christ—and it never shall—if you have Christ you have the melodies of Heaven. You have the goodly land that "flows with milk and honey." You shall never bear the wrath of God, Christ has borne it for you. You shall never hear it said, "Depart, you cursed," for Christ has said, "You are blessed forever and ever." Yes, and you shall be blessed!

We shall now turn to the further thought which stands linked to the one I have thus tried to lay before you. In the text *knowledge* is put with the gift: "If you *knew* the gift of God." Yonder woman in the wilderness is sorely vexed, her heart is ready to break. She has left the abode of her master and journeyed far. She is faint herself, but a far greater trouble depresses her—her child, her only boy—lies under yonder shrubs to die for need of a drop of water. Do you see the anguish depicted on her face? Do you hear her bitter cries?

Ah, Woman, you may well wipe your eyes, your distress is causeless. You have room for thanksgiving, and not for sorrow! Yonder is a spring of water, dip your pitcher and refresh your child. But, Beloved, what was the use of the spring of water to her if she could not *see* it? Till her eyes were opened, Hagar could not see that God had provided for her—she must suffer and her child must die till she could *perceive* the supply. It is so with the gift of God. Beloved, until we *know* Christ, we famish for Him but we find no relief. A *sense of need* is a very blessed work of Divine Grace, but it will *not* save you! You must get beyond knowing your *need*, you must perceive, accept, and enjoy the *supply*, or else assuredly you will perish, none the less because of your knowledge of your need.

Now, a *knowledge* of Christ is the *gift* of God. No man ever knew Christ experimentally and truly except by the operation of the Holy Spirit upon his heart. It is in vain for those who are the advocates of free agency and

human power to talk for wherever you meet with a gracious spirit you will be sure to find the confession that it was as much the work and gift of God to give us *faith* as to give us the *Object* of faith—

**“Twas the same love that spread the feast,
That sweetly forced us in;
Else we had still refused to taste,
And perished in our sin.”**

If God did nothing more for men than *provide* a Savior, and leave it for them to accept—if He never operated upon their souls and affections by His Holy Spirit—not one of Adam’s race would ever enter into eternal life! If you would have a knowledge of Christ you must have it through the Holy Spirit, for this comes not by the works of the Law, nor by the efforts of the flesh.

That which is born of the flesh is still flesh. Only that which is born of the Spirit is spirit and can make you acquainted with *spiritual* Truth. A saving knowledge of Christ is always *personal*. The man does not take it at second hand. He does not catch it up from what his mother told him. She may be the instrument—the happy instrument—but the man learns for himself, or else he does not know *savingly*. Beware, Beloved, of copying your religion out of other men’s books. It must be written with the pen of the Holy Spirit upon the fleshy tablet of your own heart, or else you know nothing aright.

Observe also, that as this knowledge is *spiritual*, so, as it is spoken of in the text, it immediately concerns Christ. All other knowledge, whatever it may be, will fail to save unless we know the gift of God—unless we are clearly acquainted with the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. I say, with the Person, for let me insist upon it—it is necessary for you and me to rest wholly upon the Person, work, and righteousness of Jesus. You may know a great deal about His offices. You may have read much about what He did, but you must pass through all these and get to Him—“Come unto ME,” He says, “all you that labor and are heavy laden.” At His feet your soul must cast itself down, kissing the Son lest He be angry. Before Him, the Great High Priest, you must present yourselves, desiring to be sprinkled with His precious blood, and to be saved in Him.

Remember He is a Man like yourselves. Though “God over all, blessed forever,” yet is He Man of the substance of His mother. Let your soul advance to Him in thought this morning. Lay hold upon Him! If you cannot put your finger into the print of the nails, and your hand into His side, literally, with Thomas, yet do it *spiritually*. Remember, it is to *know* Christ and His Cross which is the saving knowledge—everything short of this will leave you short of eternal life. Brothers and Sisters, it must be *spiritual* knowledge. Any acquaintance with Christ that can be derived from pictures or that may come to us through the use of outward symbols will be all valueless.

We must *know* Christ, not after the flesh, by the eyes and ears—we must comprehend Him by our inmost *souls* being acquainted with Him. Our *heart* must trust Him. Put away the crucifix! Let your *soul* wear the cross, not your body! Hang not up the picture of Christ on the wall, hang it upon the walls of your heart—*there* let His image be stored. Bear about

you the marks of the Lord Jesus Christ in your life and character and let your contemplations and thoughts be continually exercised about Him. This is the kind of knowledge of Christ—heart-knowledge, spiritual fellowship—the knowledge of the most vital part of the man, his soul, his new-born spirit.

Now, such knowledge as this, when God has once given it to us, becomes very operative upon the entire man—he has found the great secret and he feels inched to tell it! He has learned a great mystery and it at once affects all the parts and passions of his nature, making a new man of him. This knowledge he never loses—he may forget much, but he never can forget Christ if he has once known Him. Like the dying saint who had forgotten his wife, forgotten his children, forgotten his *own name* and yet smiled sweetly when they asked him if he remembered Christ Jesus! This is printed on the Believer's heart—the warp and woof of his being bears this, like a golden thread, right through its center.

Jesus, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, and let my right hand forget its cunning, but never shall my heart forget You who has given Yourself for me! This is the knowledge which we should desire, the knowledge spoken of in the text. Desire it, I beseech you, above gold! Yes, seek it above much fine gold! O you that have it not, open your mouths and pant after it! Hunger and thirst to know Christ and take no rest, and get no satisfaction till you do know Him! If you ask me how this can be, I remind you that God alone can reveal Him to you, but yet you are to use the *means*.

“Search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life,” and these are they which testify of Christ. Attend a Christ-honoring ministry! If you have been sitting under any minister who does not extol Christ and lift Him up before you—however eloquent and intelligent he may be, leave his ministry—it is not fit for poor dying souls to listen to! You that need salvation can only find it in Christ! Seek, therefore, a ministry that is full of Christ! Christ the first, and Christ the middle, and Christ the last and without end.

Depend upon it, as men would think it folly to deal at a shop where the bread (so called) was not bread—where the food that was given was so adulterated as to yield no nutriment—so is it a sin on our part if we do not seek out the pure unadulterated milk of the Word of God and endeavor to grow thereby. Oh, how many souls are poisoned by listening to a ministry that is not full of Christ! But oh, if you do get a ministry that savors of the Lord Jesus, hear with both your ears! Drink it in! Be like the thirsty furrows that do not refuse a single drop of Heaven's rain. Receive with meekness the living Word.

Add to this an earnest prayer for illumination. Wait upon God each day and say, “Show me Your Son. Lo, I would know Christ: I would know Him so as to be saved by Him.” And remember, “He that seeks finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened,” “Ask and it shall be given you.” They that seek the Lord shall in due time be found of Him. “He that calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

II. The first word of the text is “If.” “If you knew the gift of God.” “IF.” AND WHAT THEN? The “if” seems to me to wear a black side. It supposes

that there are many who do *not* know “the gift of God.” Alas, no supposition, but a fearful fact. Dear Hearer, may I ask you to look to your own soul now? You are a Church member. You have been considered to be a Christian from your youth till the present time. At least you have reckoned yourself to be so. But ask yourself if you now know the gift of God. Is Jesus Christ All in All to you?

Do you rest on Him as the unbuttressed pillar of your confidence? Do you love Him? Is He your Master? Are you conformed unto His image? Have you ever spoken to Him? Has He ever had communion with you—supping with you, and you with Him? As the Lord my God lives, before whom I stand, if you know not Christ your high profession is but a painted pageant to go to Hell in! Your fancied experience is a will-o’-the-wisp leading you to destruction, and all your fond hopes shall come tumbling about your ears like a house that is founded on sand which totters in the day of storm! I pray you, then, dear Hearers, as you would be right at the last, make heart-searching enquiries *now*, and let this be the question: Whether you know the gift of God in your soul or not?

But we will deal better with the bright side. Knowing that there are many here who do *not* know the gift of God at all, it is a mercy to think that they *may* know it, for the, “If you knew,” implies that some who do not know it yet may know it before they die! And, thank God, some of you shall know it and glorious results will follow at once. “If you knew the gift of God.” My dear Hearer, you who are not yet converted, what a change would come over you! Let me single you out. You are here, this morning, quite uninterested in religion. You have come here this morning out of curiosity to look at the large assembly and hear the strange preacher, but religion has no interest in it for you. Life and death, and all the problems that connect themselves with time and eternity are nothing to you. You are a butterfly, flying from flower to flower. You have no deeper sense of things than a man of the world who thinks to live and die, and so to come to his end.

Ah, but if you knew Christ, it would soon be different with you! That vain mind of yours would soon be full of thoughts. These worldly toys which are now so engrossing would then be put into their proper places. You would become thoughtful, and, let me tell you, you would become infinitely happier than you are now, for your present ease is a hollow thing. You are afraid to try it. You dare not sit down and think for an hour of your own state and future—you know you dare not. But, oh, “if you knew the gift of God,” you could endure sober thought, yes, it would be your delight! And as for the future, you would dare to look into it, too. Yes, it would be your greatest comfort to anticipate the glories which God has prepared for them that love Him!

As I think on some of you indifferent ones, I could gladly weep over you, not merely because of the Hell which will be your portion, but because of the Heaven which you are losing even now. A Heaven below is to know Christ, and you are missing this. Man of pleasure? Christ is pleasure! Men who would have ease and peace? Christ is the true ease, and if you knew Him you would find true peace! Possibly there may be some few in this assembly to whom religion is not even a matter of indifference, but

worse—they have persecuted it. They are accustomed to vent their sharpest wit upon anything religious. To them godliness is always known by the name of cant, and if a man is known to be a professor of religion, he is at once the butt of every joke.

Ah, but if you knew Christ, you would not do this. Saul of Tarsus sought much the destruction of the people of God, but when once Christ had said to Him, “Why do you persecute Me?” and he understood that Christ was no other than God over all, the Redeemer of men, and he said, “Lord, what will You have me to do?” Ah, Persecutor! You would be just as warm for the cause as you are hot against it if you did but know Christ! Man, you would not have the heart to spit into the face of the Crucified—you would never crucify Him afresh who died for His enemies. You would never be so cruel and barbarous as to trample on the members of Christ when you know that Christ, out of pure love, suffered for the sons of men. “If you knew the gift of God,” Persecutor, it would be otherwise with you than it is now.

Yes, and there are some here who would never persecute, but nevertheless they trifle with religion. Many more belong to this class than to the two I have just mentioned. I know many of you are impressed when we are delivering the Truth of God earnestly, and you vow what you do not pay. And you promise reformations which are never made. Ah, you triflers, you who halt between two opinions, who, like Felix, would wait for a more convenient season, “if you knew the gift of God,” this morning would be the convenient season! Oh, if God did but give you an understanding of the preciousness and sweetness of Christ, you would not delay!

Who delays to be crowned when the time has come for him to receive a kingdom? What heir would ever postpone the day in which he should enter into the heritage? Does the bridegroom put off the hour of his marriage? Do men wish their happiness to be removed far away? Oh, no! And if you knew what Christ would be to your soul, and what joy and blessedness you would have in receiving Him, you would say, “Now is my time as it is God’s time. O God, I give myself to You!” Trifler, may you yet know the gift of God!

Alas, there are some here who are not *exactly* triflers. They have serious thoughts, but they have some *sin* which they cannot give up. I cannot particularize cases, but there are such here. There are men here who would be Christ’s, but the habit of taking intoxicating drink to excess clings hard to them. Have I not talked to some of you who have, with tears confessed the sin, and longed to be delivered from the snare, but you could not? Your besetting sins are too dear to you for you to give them up. With some it may be filthier vices, still. With others it is the thought, “Religion is too severe. To follow Christ is to give up so much. I must have a little more indulgence. I must for a little time, at any rate, drink of the wine of Satan’s banquet.”

Ah, “if you knew the gift of God,” you would give up the sweetest thing earth ever knew to know the *greater* sweetness of Christ. What? Will you put my Lord and Master in comparison with the painted harlot of this wicked world? Will you put the solid gold of Heaven’s kingdom in contrast with the filthy draft and dross of this world’s merchandise? O my Master,

You are no more to be compared to the riches and enjoyments of life than the sun is to be likened to a glowworm! Let Christ arise in your soul and all your starry joys will be gone. You will find this one great joy fills your spirit to the brim and overflows so that there is an exceeding and eternal weight of glory too great for your spirit to be able to handle! If you knew the gift of God, Sensualist, you would turn from your tables to feed on Him! You would leave your gilded couches of pomp and vanity, and everything else the world calls good or great—you would leave it all, turning from ashes to feed upon angels' food—even upon Christ the Lord, and the Redeemer of men!

There is another class here present, represented by some few who would gladly be saved, but they fear they are too bad. They think that they could never be saved after delaying so long and sinning so foully. "If you knew the gift of God," you would never think that, for my Lord Jesus loves great sinners! "This Man," it is said, "receives sinners, and eats with them." When the woman that had been a sinner washed His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head, He did not utter an upbraiding word. The Lord is gentle and full of compassion and tenderness and truth. He came not with a sword to slay, but He came to be slain Himself, that we might not die.

You have only to *come* to Him, and let this encourage you. He has said it, "Him that comes unto Me, I will in no wise cast out." He cannot cast you out! He must receive you! His word binds Him to it—He cannot deny Himself and therefore He cannot refuse you. If it were proper for us to prolong this addressing of separate characters, I think there would be in this suggestion, "If you knew the gift of God," something for *everyone*. I am sure if any of us who are now at enmity to God did but know what Christ is—if they could but know as with the knowledge I have before described, the Person of the Lord Jesus—faith would immediately follow! We should trust our souls to God and feel safe in the hands of God's appointed Propitiation.

Faith would be sure to be followed by *prayer*—we should cry to Him whom we now know—and prayer would be followed by *His blessing*. At the heels of that would come holy love to Him. And holy love would prompt us to serve! Service would be followed by increasing strength and increasing strength would augment daily joy till we should go up Jacob's ladder, gaining virtue after virtue by the power of the Son of God till we were meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light! Each point in Christ's Character, if known, would work good to us. For instance, "if you knew the gift of God," that He came to save the vilest of the vile, how could you doubt or despair because of your sins? If you knew that the salvation of Christ is finished by Him, and not by us, how could you dream of adding to it, or think it necessary to bring your own feelings, and frames, and doings to make the salvation complete which Christ has finished altogether apart from you?

If you knew that Christ never forsook His people, would you be trembling and fearing lest in the hour of temptation He should fail you? If you knew how suitable Christ is to you, how ready He is to receive you, how full of love He is to all His people, how He feels in His heart all your pains

and all your groans, how His honor is bound up in your salvation, how He has pledged Himself to bring every one of the saints to the Father's right hand—if you knew all this, Christian, you would live *above* your doubts, and fears, and frames, and feelings—you would live a heavenly life, like one who has seen Christ and then has been made like unto Him.

Beloved, if we were to take a walk, this morning, through the streets of London, how many cases we should see where we might say sorrowfully of the persons we looked upon, "Alas for you! If you knew the gift of God, what a difference would come over you!" Perhaps at this very hour you will find the great mass of the working men in London in their shirt sleeves. It has not struck them at all that going to a place of worship is desirable. They will be lounging about. The penny paper has been taken, and they have begun to read that—but as yet the public house is not open—they feel as if there is nothing in the world to do but just lounge about and let the time run on.

Ah, stepping into such a house you might say, "If you knew the gift of God, your Sabbaths would assume quite a different appearance. You would not talk about Pharisaic Sabbatarians, and the strictness of shutting up the house of drink and only opening the house of worship. You would feel the Sunday a delight, and the holy of the Lord honorable. Instead of wasting your time, it would seem to you as though Sabbaths were too short and opportunities and means of Divine Grace too few. If you knew the gift of God, it would be otherwise with you, working man."

Step into the next Church or Chapel, I do not care which, and observe the multitudes of the people going through the worship with mere formality, confessing what they never felt, and professing to believe what they know nothing of. Ah, we might look into the face of each worshipper and say, "If you knew the gift of God, you would give up this formalism, and worship God in spirit and in truth." We need not go far. There are many of you here in that state. May you know the gift of God, and forget formalities, and worship God in truth!

At some places you may step into the Church or Meeting House and listen to the minister—an eloquent address, but altogether Christless—no care about the souls of men, no dealing with human consciences. Pompous sentences, sounding periods, high flights, climaxes, and I know not what oratorical flower—but nothing concerning the weighty matter of eternity, about the undying soul, and the precious cleansing blood, Ah, Preacher, "if you knew the gift of God." If you had in your soul any sense of the preciousness of the salvation of Christ, you would preach in another fashion.

Step in where the Ritualist has dressed himself in all his gaudy apparel, flaunting like a peacock before God Himself, and you may well say to him, "If you knew the gift of God" you would lay aside these fooleries and come before God sooner in sackcloth than in your tag-rags, humbling yourself before the Most High as a poor, guilty sinner, most accursed of all the human race for having dared to call yourself a priest! For priest you are not for your fellow men, for One is Priest, even Christ Jesus, and no other is priest, save only that all saints have a common priesthood which some cannot usurp to themselves alone unless they dare to bring upon

themselves the vengeance of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, who called themselves priests and were not. "If you knew the gift of God," poor simpleton that you are, you would doff that priestly array and bow before the great High Priest of our profession and worship Him alone!

While going down the street, yonder, I might knock at a door after leaving that ritualistic mass house, and might find the merchant in his counting house. He looks a little disconcerted that I should call upon him on Sunday morning and find him with his pen behind his ear. But he says he has no time to cast up his accounts at any other period. Ah, but "if you knew the gift of God," you would find other time and find another occupation for this time, rather than spending upon yourself what God claims to be His own. I pass on into the chamber of sickness, and I see on the bed of death a sinner full of fears and dread about the world which lies before him.

Listen to his groans. He has no hope! He has lived without Christ. The world has been his portion, and now he has to leave it, and he is unprepared to meet his Judge. All is dark as the pit where he is going. How miserable his state as he feels he is parting with all he has loved, and for which he has lived, and that there is nothing before him but a dread unknown existence in another world! Ah, if he only knew the gift of God, what a change there would be at once! What light, joy, and peace would come into that chamber! All its gloom would pass away and in the place of it would come such rapture as would lead men to say, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."

I shall not detain you longer. We might go down one street and up another for many a day and we should find thousands to whom we should say, "If you knew the gift of God, you would be another and different man from what you are."

III. It seems to me to concern Believers this way. Evidently there are tens of thousands who do not know the gift of God. Enquiry, then, of the most solemn kind should at once be made, "Has this ignorance of theirs been *my* fault? These men know not the gift of God—how *can* they know it unless there is someone to teach them? How shall they hear without a preacher? Is this ignorance to be laid at my door? Beloved, in the name of Jesus Christ, I ask you seat-holders and members of this place who know Christ yourselves—is there a person sitting next to you in the pew who does not know Christ, and have you done your best to tell him about Christ?"

I pause, that conscience may give its reply. And you who do often speak about Christ in the school or in the street, preaching or not preaching, let me ask you—do you so talk about Christ that people can understand you? Believe me, I try to use very simple words, but I often hear of words I have uttered which have not been understood by people present. I am always grieved when such is the case. God knows I would speak the most vulgar words I could find if people could understand them better. To me the finery of language is less than nothing! I would sooner preach Christ's Cross in the tongue of Billingsgate, if all would understand, than speak in the most polished tongue so that the poor could not comprehend me.

My dear Brothers and Sisters, that a soul should go to Hell—lost through our fine sentences—who shall be accountable for this? The watchman is not to speak in Greek to those who only know English, or even in good English to those who do not understand the language if it is well spoken! Augustine, I believe, frequently preached in exceedingly bad Latin because it was the common talk of the people. If he had spoken classic Latin he would not have been understood. And so must we do. If any man does not know Christ, have you told it to him in all the ways which you can find out of making it plain and clear? If you have not, then some responsibility lies with you.

Then next, suppose you have not. Will you, my Brethren, for the future resolve in God's strength that if any man perishes for lack of knowledge, it shall not in the future be your fault? Make no rash vows, but do solemnly put it to your heart. And if you cannot speak as you would, yet you will distribute such publications and give away such tracts as may tell the Gospel *simply*. If you cannot do what you would, O resolve, dear Brethren, to do what you *can*, that none here may be without the knowledge of Christ!

And though a professor, I shall venture to say to you that the text seems to say to *you*, Do you know the gift of God yourself? When I asked you whether you told others about it, I think a question might have been raised—if you have not told others, it is very questionable whether you know it yourself. If you never weep for other men's sins, and never desire their salvation, you are not a saved soul! One of the first instincts of the saved soul is to say, "What can I do that others may be saved, also?" Now, if you have done nothing, let a suspicion arise! And to us all, I think, there may be this query put—judging by my efforts, judging by my actions, judging by my inward feelings—may I not often ask myself, Do I know this gift of God? And may I not come, this morning, just as I did at the first, as a sinner, and look up to the wounds of Jesus and cast myself again upon Him?

If I never did believe before, Lord Jesus, I trust You now. Up till now if I have been a deceived one, here I am—

***"My faith looks up to You,
You Lamb of Calvary,
Savior Divine!
Now hear me while I pray;
Take all my guilt away.
Oh let me from this day be wholly Yours."***

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THE SOURCE

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A SERMON
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JULY 6, 1876.

“The woman said unto him, Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water?”
John 4:11.

THIS was a sensible and very important question. May the Holy Spirit graciously enable us to answer it aright! Our Lord’s great objective in His talk with this woman at the well was not to convince her of His oratorical power, for He spoke to her as simply as one would speak to a child. Many sermons are far too elaborate in their construction—they are evidently intended to display the preacher’s own powers. But if we would imitate the Lord Jesus Christ, the true Prince of Preachers, we would not strain after effect—and we would get a better effect without any straining—by taking the living Truth of God and telling out, as simply as possible, the story of salvation.

Jesus Christ’s sole objective in talking with this woman was to bring her to salvation. That is also my objective with regard to my hearers and readers and, my dear unconverted Friends, if you shall agree with me in that objective and shall breathe the prayer, “Lord, help the preacher to speak to my soul that I may find Christ,” there will be joy among the angels of Heaven over sinners repenting and returning to the Lord!

Our Savior, in seeking to win this woman to Himself, was completely successful. He hit the mark He aimed at. His shot struck the very center of the target. Only one sermon was preached to her—no, it was hardly a sermon—just a brief talk with her and the woman received the Living Word! Alas, there are some of you who have had a great many affectionate talks from godly mothers and fathers, or from earnest ministers, teachers, or other Christian friends—but, so far, they have not been as successful as Jesus of Nazareth was on this occasion! You have heard many sermons—you cannot tell how many you have heard—and some of them have produced some effect upon you, but, up to the present, you have not been slain by the sword of the Spirit, nor quickened by Jesus Christ the Life-Giver. I hope the Lord is about to do what has not been done before! And, with the accumulated responsibility upon you of having heard the Gospel so often in vain, I think you should the more earnestly breathe the prayer to God, “O Lord, let this be the effectual time of speaking to me! Call me as You did the Samaritan woman. While the

preacher is speaking and I am listening to Your Word as it shall be proclaimed, graciously grant that Jesus may be revealed to my soul and that He may say to me, 'I that speak unto you am He.'" If you are brought to pray that prayer from your heart, I believe that it will be answered and so, as I have already said, there will be joy in the Presence of the angels of God over you! Our Lord aimed at this woman's conversion by simply instructing her and bringing the truth home to her conscience. Let us see whether if we do the same thing, trusting in the same Spirit that anointed our Master, similar results will follow here as followed at the well of Sychar.

First, then, I am going to *expound the teaching which preceded the woman's question and suggested it*. Then, secondly, I will *answer the question*. And thirdly, I will *draw some inferences from it*.

I. First, then, WHAT WAS IT THAT LED THIS WOMAN TO ASK OUR SAVIOR THE QUESTION, "Where then do You get that living water?"

Jesus Christ had told her that had she known Him, she would have asked of Him and He would have given her Living Water. There was Jacob's well. They were, both of them, close to it and they could look down into it. There was some water in it, but the well of Sychar was not a well of "living water." You probably know that the expression which is translated, "living water," refers to water that springs up from a fountain. But the well of Sychar is not a well of that kind. The water in it is surface water—the gathering of the neighboring hills—land water, not spring water. Jesus Christ seemed to draw His illustration from that fact—"The water in that well runs into it and is drawn out from it. But if you had asked Me, I would have given you water that bubbles up—water that is full of life, very different from this well water—water from the great deep that 'couches beneath.'" You know the difference between those two sorts of water. I have illustrated it before by the two wells which are in the courtyard of the Doge's palace at Venice. One of them has its copper or bronze margin worn with holes cut by the string by which little cans are let down to fetch up the water that wells up from the spring. It is so precious because it springs up from a living fountain. The other well, which looks very much like the one I have mentioned, is not worn at all. Very few people care to draw from it—and the reason is because it is simply filled with water brought into the city. It is flat, dead water, not "living water" at all. So Jesus Christ had used this illustration in speaking with the woman—"You have come here to draw this water out of the well—the mere rain water that runs into Jacob's well. But if you had asked of Me, I would have given you water of a far better sort—water with life in it—water which would be life to you—water which would be in you a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

The woman caught the figure, though she did not at first understand its *spiritual* meaning. Its spiritual meaning is this—that *Jesus Christ has Grace in Himself—Grace to give to sinners—Grace to give to those who ask Him for it*, for He said to the woman, "You would have asked of Him and He would have given you Living Water." In the Lord Jesus Christ, then, there is a deep fountain of Grace always springing up within Himself. "It

pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell.” And it does dwell in Him! To Him, the Spirit has been given without measure! There is no meager supply of Grace in Christ. He has an abundance and I might almost say a redundance forever springing up within Himself. And this He has on purpose to give away! He has it not for Himself, for He needs it not. Almighty and ever-blessed as He is by Nature, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit, He needs no Grace for Himself—what He has is all to give away! He came into this world to open up channels by which He might distribute all His Grace to thirsty souls!

And He gives it all away far the asking—Almighty Grace to be had for the asking! No human merit can demand it and no performance of any earthly ceremony is required in order to obtain it. Here it is in a nutshell—“*You would have asked and He would have given.*” “If any man lacks wisdom, let him ask of God.” And if any man lacks pardon, let him do the same. If any man lacks *anything* that is essential to his purity, to his happiness, to his present life, or to his future life, it is stored up in Christ and it can be had from Him for the asking! “He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?”

The teaching of the text to you unconverted people is this—if ever you are saved, it must be by the Grace of God. That Grace is in Jesus Christ. It has been put into Jesus Christ not because He needs it Himself, but that He may distribute it—and He does distribute it—whoever asks it of Him receives it from Him. “For everyone that asks receives and he that seeks finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened.” And when you receive this Grace, it will remain in you. It will not be like ordinary water which you drink and which then is done with, but it will live in you. It shall turn into a well of Living Water! Inside your soul there shall be an ever-springing Well of Life which never shall cease to flow, either in summer or in winter and which, in Glory, shall enable you to understand what that eternal life was which Jesus gave to you and of which He said to His Father, “This is life eternal, that they might know You the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent.”

II. Now, secondly, I am going TO ANSWER THE QUESTION THAT THIS WOMAN PUT TO CHRIST.

Her question was, “Where then do You get that living water?’ How did You come to have it? If You have living water, how is it that You have it? It is not in that well. And even if it were there, You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep: ‘Where then do You get that living water?’” What an important question this is to put in a spiritual sense! Lord Jesus, we hear that You have an abundance of Grace treasured up in You which You freely distribute among those who ask You for it, but where did You get it? How is it that You have this Grace? In what way did it come to be stored up in You? ‘Where then do You get that living water?’”

While I am asking this question, I pray every unconverted one who desires to find peace with God to say to himself or herself, “I am now to hear how it is that Christ can save. I am now to learn why it is that He is the Giver of Grace to the guilty.” Perhaps, dear Friends, while you are lis-

tening you may see something in Christ which you never saw before and faith may spring up in your soul almost insensibly to yourself—and before you go out of this place, you may be able to say, “I cannot fully explain this great mystery, but I know enough of the Lord Jesus Christ to believe in Him. I cannot but believe in Him, now that I see how it is that He is so mighty to save!”

The first answer to the question, “Where then do You get that living water?” is this—*He has it in His very Nature*. Jesus Christ is able to save because He is Divine. “With God, all things are possible” and Jesus Christ is God, so all things are possible with Him! “God is Love” and Jesus Christ is God, so He, too, is Love! God possesses all things and Christ is God, so He has all things freely to distribute among the sons of men! Jesus of Nazareth, as He sat on the well at Sychar, seemed to that woman, at first, to be only an ordinary Jew and she wondered that He, being a Jew, should even *speak* to her, a woman of Samaria. But veiled under the form of that Son of Mary, there was God, Himself, made flesh and dwelling among men! Oh, it is glorious to think that He who has come to redeem you is no mere man, but over all God blessed forever!

If a man were to tell me that he was going to take the world upon his shoulders, I would distrust his power to bear such a burden, even though he were as strong as Samson! But Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cannot only bear up this world, but the entire universe in His *hand*, for all fullness of power dwells in Him! If any man were to say that he would take upon himself the sins of the whole world, I would be even more diffident than if he proposed to play the part of Atlas and to bear the world upon his shoulders. But when Jesus, who counted it not robbery to be equal with God, takes upon Himself the form of a Servant and yet has the iniquity of us all laid upon Him, I can understand how He can bear the tremendous load, for He bears the earth’s huge pillars and spreads the heavens abroad! When we think of Jesus as Divine, nothing seems to be impossible to Him! The strength of sin, which is the Law, is not too great for Him who made the Law and kept it, too! The sting of death, which is sin, shall certainly not be able to destroy, or even to resist the Almighty Power of Him who has the keys of death and of Hell!

If you commit your soul, my dear Friends, to the keeping of a man, or of an angel, you will have made a fatal mistake! If all the angels in Heaven were to band themselves together to save a soul and were to ask me to be the soul that they would seek to save, I would have nothing to do with them! Nobody who is less than Deity can save sinners! But Jesus is “mighty to save” because He is God as well as Man! This is a basis upon which the soul’s hope may well be founded and established forever. If the interposing Mediator is, indeed, “very God of very God”—and He is—we see from where He has this Living Water and we can come to Him with the utmost confidence, knowing that He is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by Him!

Another answer to the Samaritan woman’s question is that Christ has this Living Water *by the Divine Purpose and Appointment*. It was the Divine Plan that Jesus Christ, the second Person of the blessed Trinity in

Unity, should be appointed to be the Treasury of Grace for all His elect ones. In the council chamber of eternity it was ordained that the Son of God should, in due time, come into this world and take upon Himself our nature and also our sin. And He was set apart, in the eternal purpose, to do so and, in the proclamation of the Gospel, that decree of the Lord is published to the sons of men! The Lord God has set forth His Son Jesus as the one Propitiation for the sins of men! He is authorized by God to be a Savior and He comes here, by Divine appointment, to bestow upon us the blessings of His Grace. When an ambassador comes to this land from another country, he brings credentials to prove that he is duly accredited by the authority that he represents—and our Lord Jesus Christ comes to men with credentials which prove that He was appointed by God to this service before all worlds were made—and that He will be Divinely sustained in that Appointment till time shall be no more! And then, having completed His mediatorial work, He will surrender the Kingdom to His Father—and God shall be All-in-All. So now, as Mediator, He stands, appointed by the Most High to distribute the blessings of His Grace which is the Living Water of which our text speaks!

To me, this Truth of God is inconceivably sweet, for, when I trust in Jesus Christ to save me, I rejoice to know that He is no amateur Savior who has come on His own authority and at His own bidding. But, behold, the Father Himself has sent Him! He is the Messiah, the Sent One, the Anointed, the Christ of God! God must accept His Son, for He sent Him into the world for this very purpose. If I bring to God the blood of Jesus as the Atonement for my sin, He must accept it, for He Himself ordained it as the medium of reconciliation! My blessed Savior, if I hide in You, I cannot be either dragged or driven from You, for God has set You apart to be the City of Refuge to which my poor soul may flee for protection and shelter! God has appointed Jesus “to be a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.” It seems to me that these are two grand answers to the question of the Samaritan woman, “Where then do You get that living water?”—first, from His own natural and essential Deity and, secondly, as the Mediator appointed and sustained by the eternal Father!

But, thirdly, the Lord Jesus could give a further answer to the woman’s question by referring to *the anointing which He had received from the Holy Spirit*. On the day of His Baptism in the Jordan, the Spirit descended upon Him like a dove and sat upon Him. He could truly say, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me because He has anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised and to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.” He was anointed by the Holy Spirit for the work of distributing the Living Water to the sons and daughters of men. He was God’s CHRISTOS—God’s “Anointed.” Those are two very precious titles which are often put together, Jesus Christ—the Anointed Savior—they describe both His office and His qualification for that office. Well, then, behold Jesus Christ, with the fullness of the Spirit abiding upon Him, coming into the world

endowed with all those Divine gifts which, as Mediator, He needed, that He might be able to carry out the work which the Lord had of old appointed Him to do! The Spirit of God is still with Him and He gives the Spirit to those who seek Him. This, then, is the third answer to the woman's question, "Where then do You get that living water?" He has it because the Spirit of God is upon Him.

There is another answer which may convince some who have not been comforted or enlightened by the previous ones. It could not have been given to the woman, at the time she put the question, except by way of anticipation. But say that Christ has this Living Water *because His redeeming work is finished*. He had it, virtually, during His life on earth, in foresight of the work which He had undertaken to finish. Hence it was that multitudes of souls went to Heaven long before Christ had paid the ransom for them. His pledge and promise being a guarantee that the great deed would surely be accomplished. Think of this—that the Son of God whom the holy angels worshipped without ceasing, should have come here in the form of a Baby who nestled in a woman's arms that He might save us! Oh, let the joy-bells ring as we think of God in human flesh! Does not the thought of Christ's Incarnation bring hope to the lost? May not sinners see, in it, how the Living Water finds a channel in which it can flow down to them in the Person of the Incarnate God—"Emmanuel, God With Us"? "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulders: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." He lived for 30 years in this world, a quiet, humble life, working out a righteousness for all His people, fulfilling all the relationships of life into which He was brought and so, when He came to be baptized, He openly revealed the work that He was doing all His life, namely, fulfilling all righteousness! Throughout the whole of His earthly career He was living for us and working for us—and the merit of His unique life stands to the credit of all who believe in Him.

At last the time came for Him to die, for, "without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins." The Living Water could not come to us unless Christ's heart was opened to let it out. He must give His life a ransom for many or else there could never be any ransomed souls. You know the sad, sad story. Jesus goes forth from the place where He had instituted the memorial supper. He enters Gethsemane's garden, utters a series of agonizing prayers in the course of which a shower of His precious blood falls upon the earth where He kneels. He rises from the ground, meets His betrayer and receives the cruel traitor kiss. He thrusts aside the sword with which His too eager disciple would have defended Him and He is led like a lamb to the slaughter. And like a sheep dumb before her shearers, He opens not His mouth to answer His accusers. He gives His back to the smiters and His cheeks to them that pluck out the hair. He hides not His face from shame and spitting. Yes, though He is Lord of All, He voluntarily yields Himself up to a felon's death and gives up His immaculate body, which had never been stained by sin, to be

pierced with the nails and every bone to be dislocated by the jar as the Cross is first lifted up and then hurled down into its place!

He hangs in the burning sun, parched with fever. He has no friend or comforter, for even God has forsaken Him while He is bearing His people's sin! His enemies mock and laugh at His agonies. He yields up His soul unto death without a murmuring word. He knew that the price of pardon was His blood, but His pity never withdrew and, until He could say, "It is finished," He held on to life. When it was finished, He submitted Himself to death—and the Lord of Glory was laid in the new tomb in the garden. Now, if you ask me, from where, then, has Jesus of Nazareth, God Incarnate, got that Living Water, I answer in three words—"Gethsemane, Gabbatha, Golgotha." Put these three together—the place where He sweat great drops of blood, the place where He was scourged and the place where He died—and you can comprehend why He has this Living Water!

Another answer to the woman's question, "Where then do You get that living water," is that He has it in *the reward which His Father promised to Him for His mediatorial work*. "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied: by His knowledge shall My righteous Servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities" God's only-begotten and well-beloved Son is to receive a full reward for all that He endured—and all that He has so far received of His Father is not for Himself—for He needs nothing—but He has received it that He may distribute it among the rebellious children of men! The Psalmist truly sang, "You have ascended on high, You have led captivity captive: You have received gifts for men; yes, for the rebellious, also, that the Lord God might dwell among them." And this is where He got that Living Water! Poor Soul, groping in the dark and trying to believe in Jesus, ought not this to enable you to believe in Him? Christ has lived, loved, bled, died and now there is a reward due to Him which can only be met by the salvation of all for whom He died! See, then, how He has the Living Water and come and trust Him to give it to you freely!

There is one other answer to the woman's question, "Where then do You get that living water?" It is this. *Because of His intercession at His Father's right hand in Glory*. Jesus, the God-Man, the Mediator between God and men, ever lives to make intercession for us. "Therefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them." Look at Him, my Brothers and Sisters! The risen Christ at God's right hand! If you can, see Him standing there in His robes of glory and beauty, for He is no longer a sacrificing Priest, for His one Sacrifice in which He offered up Himself is finished forever! Now He has put on the royal robes of the High Priest, for He is both a Prince and a Priest—and there He stands with our names engraved upon His breastplate—each glittering jewel dear to the eyes of God. Wherever He moves, the bells and the pomegranates upon His glorious garments pour forth sweet music in the ear of the Most High, for Christ is altogether lovely in the eyes of His Father and He is always dear to the heart of His Father.

There He stands as the great Representative Man, fully acceptable to God—no, more—dearly beloved of God and, for His sake, God looks upon all who are in Him with Infinite Love and Divine Complacency! Some of you may know what it is to have a beloved son away in America or Australia for many years. By-and-by he comes home and he brings his wife. You have never seen her, but you love her for his sake. Possibly he also brings home a dozen children. Well, that is a large addition to your family, but you welcome them all for your boy's sake, do you not? I am sure you do! And you seem to see his image in them all! All who belong to him are dear to you for his sake. So, the ever-blessed God looks with unspeakable love upon the whole family of Christ because of the love which He bears to their Covenant Head, Lord and Surety. This eternal life that is in Him—this boundless love that God gives to Him—this intercessory power that He has with the Father and that He uses on our behalf—this is from where He got that Living Water!

III. Now may God the Holy Spirit especially aid us while we briefly notice, in the third place, THE INFERENCES TO BE DRAWN FROM THIS TRUTH OF GOD. If this is from where Christ got this Living Water, then *He is still able to bless the children of men.*

If He had received Divine Grace from some temporary source of supply, it would have been exhausted long ago. But, since He received it from His own Divine Nature, from the purpose and plan of God, from the anointing of the Holy Spirit, from His own finished work and from His ever-living power and infinite merit—since all these fountains of Grace are as full today as they ever were and since they always will be just as full—the stream of Grace will continue to flow from the same Source! If the deeps from which a well draws its water are always the same, then depend upon it, the supply in the well will always be the same! If, therefore, the great deeps from which Christ draws the Living Water cannot be supposed to be lessened, the Living Water is in Him, at this moment, as much as it was 1800 years ago!

The remembrance of this Truth should bring consolation to the soul of anyone who may have said, “I wish that I had lived long ago when Christ was upon this earth in visible form.” You should not speak so, for you may as readily receive Grace from Christ as did the woman of Samaria. The very words which Jesus spoke to that poor fallen creature, He also addresses to you, “If you knew the gift of God...you would have asked of Him, and He would have given you Living Water.” Ask and you shall have, even as she asked and received! It is abundantly clear that there is an ample supply of Grace stored up in Christ Jesus for all who trust Him.

It is equally clear that *He needs nothing from us.* If He had drawn the living water out of the well at Sychar, He would have wanted to borrow the woman's water pot. He would have said, “Now, Mistress, you must lend Me your rope and your water pot, for, otherwise, I cannot get at the water in the well.” But, as the Living Water comes only from Himself, He needs nobody's water pot or rope! This is a very important matter, because you, Sinners, will persist in bringing your water pots and your

ropes to help Christ. You want to aid the Lord Jesus Christ, in some way or other, in His work of saving you. "Ah," you say, "I know that He is a Savior, but then I must..." Well, what "must" you do? "Oh," says one, "I must do this," and another says, "I must do that." I will tell you all, the "must" there is about your case—you must be willing to *be nothing* and let Christ be everything! You must be the emptiness and He must be the fullness. You must be the poverty and He must be the riches. You must be the poor miserable beggar and He must be your great Enricher, your All-in-all. That is all that is needed.

Then, once more, since this Living Water comes to Christ from His essential Deity and all the other grand things of which I have spoken, *it is not exhausted at this present time*. There is an abiding fullness in Christ since the Living Water comes thus to Him. Millions of happy spirits are now in Heaven who have drunk of this Living Water, but Christ is just as able to save millions upon millions more! Your sins cannot exhaust Christ's fullness! I remember when the thirst of my soul was so strong, by reason of my acute sense of sin, that I compared myself to behemoth, of whom the Lord said to Job, "He trusts that he can draw up Jordan into his mouth." Well, now, if your soul's thirst is so great that it will take more than Jordan to satisfy you—and the rivers of Abana and Pharpar after that and Kishon after that. And the Mediterranean Sea after that and the Pacific and Atlantic oceans after all those—if you could drink up all that is good in the whole universe and still thirst for more—if you will receive Grace from Christ, He will fill you to the full, yet He will still be just as full of Grace as He ever was!

There was a sailor, who, if I remember the story rightly, once called at Lubbock's Bank to cash his pay notes. I think he was to draw £50, so he said to the clerk, "I don't like to be hard on anybody. As you have to pay out all this money, I will take ten pounds now and I will call again another day for some more, as I don't want to break you up." Of course, you may imagine how they smiled at the simplicity of the man who thought that he might break the bank by drawing out such an enormous sum of money as fifty pounds all at once! You smile at the illustration, yet that is just exactly how many sinners treat the Lord Jesus Christ. They seem to think it is too much to expect to receive from Him the full and free forgiveness of all their sins. They imagine that it is too much for Christ to give all at once, but they do not know that the Lord Jesus Christ has already pardoned enough sinners to make Heaven as bright with redeemed spirits as the sky is with stars! And yet He has as much pardoning mercy left as He ever had! After you draw from a perennial fountain as much water as you need, it still springs up as copiously as ever and so is it with the Living Water which is stored up in Christ! And you may have it, poor thirsty Soul—as much as you need. I will not underestimate the greatness of your sin. It is, indeed, enormous. But since Christ has borne it in His own body on the tree, He knows its weight and all about it. And as soon as you trust in Him, you will realize that He has put it all away forever!

So I think that the final inference to be drawn is that *we should all take of this Living Water which Christ so freely gives*. “Ah,” says one, “I bless God that I drank of it years ago.” Never mind, Brother. Never mind, Sister. Come and drink of it again! Keep on receiving Jesus Christ again and again, continually looking unto Him as the Author and Finisher of your faith. Let us all go to Him—saints and sinners, saved and unsaved—this very moment. May the Holy Spirit draw us and may we all, as one man, say, “I give myself up to You, O Savior, to save me; and I trust You to cleanse me from all my sin and to present me at last, faultless, before the Presence of Your Glory with exceeding joy. I am nothing, and I have nothing that I can bring to You to merit Your esteem. I am nothing but a mass of sin and misery—not even feeling my sin as I ought to feel it. Look upon me, O Savior, in love and mercy, and give me the Grace to drink of the Living Water this very hour, if I never drank of it before. And if I did drink of it long ago, let it spring up within me just now, and may I be conscious of its power to my own comfort and to Your praise and Glory!”

If this is your prayer, my Brothers and Sisters, God will bless you! And we shall meet in Heaven, by His Grace, still to drink of the Living Water forever and ever! And to His blessed name we will ascribe all the praise and glory for our salvation, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 4:1-34.**

Verses 1-4. *When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (though Jesus Himself baptized not, but His disciples), He left Judaea, and departed again into Galilee. And He needed to go through Samaria. And, surely, not only because it was the more convenient way, but because He had designs of love for some souls there that His Father had given Him. There are many needs in Divine Providence because of the needs of Divine Grace!*

5, 6. *Then He came to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob’s well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with His journey, sat on the well: and it was about the sixth hour. Wearied and needing rest, yet there was no rest for Him except that He found His sweetest rest in winning immortal souls unto Himself!*

7. *There came a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus said unto her, Give me a drink. That is practically what Jesus still says to the sons and daughters of men—“Give me a drink.” He asks for your love, for your trust, for your confidence. It is His food and drink to bless your soul and to give you the blessing that you need—and it is a refreshment to His spirit when you give Him the opportunity of thus blessing you.*

8. *(For His disciples were gone away unto the city to buy food). It was a great mercy that the disciples were out of the way just then. Had they been there, they might have tried to keep this poor woman from speaking*

to the Savior and, sometimes, Brothers and Sisters, it may be well for us to be laid aside. God may do more good without our presence than with it. Who can tell?

9, 10. *Then the woman of Samaria said unto Him, How is it that You, being a Jew, asks a drink of me, who am a woman of Samaria? For the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. Jesus answered and said unto her, If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that says to you, Give Me a drink; you would have asked of Him, and He would have given you living water.* See, then, the evil of spiritual ignorance! And also see how the chain of Grace works, “If you knew...you would have sought...and He would have given.” When God gives the knowledge of Christ to the soul, then there comes the spirit of prayer—and then consequent blessings!

11, 12. *The woman said unto Him, Sir, You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water? Are You greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle?* She took the Savior’s figure literally—and there are still many who cannot see the spiritual meaning of God’s Word and run their heads against the hard stern letter which kills—instead of seeking and finding the inner living spirit which gives life. These are the people who build their hopes of salvation upon outward ordinances and who impute saving power to “sacraments.” Would God that they knew better!

13-15. *Jesus answered and said unto her, Whoever drinks of this water shall thirst again: but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.* *The woman said unto Him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come here to draw.* She was still unable to see the inner meaning of the Savior’s words! The outward sense still held her fast. She needed to have her conscience aroused, for that would prove to be the way into her heart. Christ has different doors for entering into different people’s souls. Into some He enters by the understanding. Into many, by the affections. To some, He comes by the way of fear. To another, by that of hope—and to this woman He came by way of her conscience.

16-19. *Jesus said unto her, Go, call your husband and come here. The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, You have well said, I have no husband: for you have had five husbands; and he who you now have is not your husband: in that said you truly.* *The woman said unto Him, Sir, I perceive that You are a Prophet.* Something had come home to her conscience through what the Savior said to her, so she began to speak about what He was, not about what *she* was! This often happens when the preacher is enabled, by Divine Grace, to come home to the conscience. The result is that the hearer says, “What a wonderful preacher he is!” But that will do no good—that is not the point at which we are aiming. “The woman said unto Him, Sir, I perceive that You are a Prophet,” and off she goes, on a tangent, to enquire about various forms of religious observance! Evil as she was, she was still a person who wished to be regarded as a religious woman! And it is strange how often

a certain religiousness will flourish even in the most depraved heart—not true godliness, however. So she propounded this difficulty to the Savior—

20. *Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and You say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.* “There are so many sects, can You tell me which is the right one?” That is the question which men often put to us when we begin to touch their consciences.

21. *Jesus said unto her, Woman, believe Me, the hour comes when you shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.* This question is of very temporary interest. The hour comes when neither of these places, nor yet any other, shall be considered sacred!

22-24. *You worship you know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour comes, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeks such to worship Him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.* No longer is any consecrated building necessary to true worship! Indeed, no building can be consecrated. No longer are we to be confined to canonical hours. No longer is God to be sought with the sensuousness of sweet music or of fragrant incense—He is to be sought with the heart, soul and spirit!

25, 26. *The woman said unto Him. I know that Messiah comes, which is called Christ: when He is come, He will tell us all things. Jesus said unto her, I that speak unto you am He.* This great Truth of God burst upon her with all the force of a Divine Revelation—and faith came with the information! The words that had gone before had prepared her to expect this manifestation of Christ to her soul.

27-34. *And at this point His disciples came and marvelled that He talked with a woman: yet no man said, What do You seek? Or, Why do You talk with her? The woman then left her water pot and went her way into the city, and said to the men, Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did: is not this the Christ? Then they went out of the city, and came unto Him. In the meanwhile His disciples urged Him, saying, Master, eat. But He said unto them, I have food to eat that you know not of. Therefore said the disciples, one to another, Has any man brought Him something to eat? Jesus said unto them, My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.*

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

HOLY WATER

NO. 1202

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 8, 1874,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst.
But the water that I shall give him shall be in him a
well of water springing up into everlasting life.”
John 4:14.***

ALL things that are of earth are unsatisfactory. Our spirit craves for something more than time and sense can yield. Nothing which comes of earth, even if it should yield a transient satisfaction, can long maintain its excellence. Pointing to the water in Jacob's well, our Lord said, “He that drinks of this water shall thirst again.” And therein He took up His parable against all earthly things, whether they are fame, or riches, or fleshly pleasure, or anything else beneath the sun. He that drinks at these shallow wells shall not quench, but thirst, or if, for a time, he imagines that he has done so, he will be deceived and, in a little season, the old craving will return. That which is born of the flesh is still flesh at its best—and all flesh is grass and the goodness thereof is as the flower of grass—the grass withers and the flower thereof fades away and in like manner fades the flesh and its glory.

The religion of the *flesh* shares in the common fate. If it has a man's own self for its author, his own energy as its impulse and his own opinions for its creed, it may, for a little while, flourish like the flower of the field, but the wind passes over it and it is gone. Waters from his own cistern may stay a man's desires for a while, but before long he must thirst again. Nothing can abide forever but that which comes from the Eternal One. Not from the will of man, but from the work of the Holy Spirit, all truly satisfying religion must proceed. It is the prerogative of the Gospel of Christ to thoroughly satisfy the soul of man and to do this abidingly. The chief object of our present discourse is to set forth that most admirable fact.

I. Finding that it greatly helps the memory of the hearer if the preacher keeps to the words of the text, I shall do so, and note, first, that we have here before us THE WAY OF OBTAINING TRUE RELIGION. “Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst.” It is clear from this that *true religion must come to us as a gift*. The water that I shall give him, says Christ. There is no suggestion as to digging deep with much learning into the deeps of mysterious truth to find the water for ourselves. This priceless drink is freely handed out to us by our Redeemer, without our bringing either bucket or line.

There is no hint in the text that we are to purchase the life-giving water. It is presented to us without money and without price. There is no allusion to a certain measure of fitness to qualify us for the drink—it is purely a gift to be received by us here and now. Our Lord Jesus told the

woman that had she known the gift of God she would have asked and He would have given. Sinner as she was, she had only to ask and have! There is no other way of obtaining eternal life but as the free gift of Sovereign Grace. The Divine Life is not in us by nature. It cannot be produced in us by culture, nor infused into us by ceremonies. Nor can it be propagated in us by natural descent—it must come as a blessing of infinite charity from Heaven—unpurchased, undeserved.

Wisdom cannot impart it. Power cannot fashion it. Money cannot buy it. Merit cannot procure it. Grace, alone, can *give* it! If men desire wages they may earn them beneath the mastership of sin, for, “The *wages* of sin is death.” On the side of God all is of Grace, for, “the *gift* of God is eternal life.” Whoever, then, is to be saved, must be saved by the boundless charity of God. In other words, by the free gift of the Father through Jesus Christ our Lord. This is an elementary Truth of the Gospel, but it needs to be told in every sermon, for man is so hostile to it and the natural mind so runs upon *merit* and its own boasted *doing*, that man will not understand the doctrine of Salvation by Grace though it is as plain as the sun at noonday.

Observe, next, that *true religion is a gift from Jesus*. Our Lord says, “the water that *I* shall give him.” The only true religion in the world is that which comes from Jesus Christ. And the only realization of that true religion in your own soul is by receiving it from the hands of Christ, for it is, in all its details, connected with Him. Do we want peace of conscience because sin is forgiven? We have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins! Do we desire deliverance from the power of sin within us? We can only overcome by the blood of the Lamb! Do we need teaching? The best instruction comes from His lips! Do we desire an example which will inspire us to obey the teaching? He is our pattern, yes, “He is made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption.” He is our All in All!

If any man dreams that he has a God-given religion, he is in deadly error if there is not the mark of the pierced hands upon it. That peace which does not come to us sealed with the blood of the Mediator’s sacrifice is a false peace! Your soul is deceived with the semblance of satisfaction, but its thirst will soon be upon you again, like an armed man, unless you have been drinking from the fountain opened upon Calvary. Drink from the cup which Jesus fills! Do not think that satisfying waters can be drawn from any well but Himself!

True godliness is next described in the text as *a gift which must be received*. “Whoever *drinks* of the water that I shall give him.” It is received, you see, not merely into the hands, but inward. When we drink water it enters into us, saturates us, becomes a part of our being and helps to build up the fabric of our body. Even so we must receive Jesus Christ into our innermost self. We must not profess to believe with the creed of the head while the heart remains in unbelief. We must not pay to our Lord the empty compliment of praising His Character while we reject His mission. We must so trust Him, depend upon Him, love Him, follow Him, yield ourselves up to Him, live upon Him and in Him that it may be clear that He has entered into and become one with us forever! We need Christ *in* us—

Christ in the secret fountain of our being. The Holy Spirit must create in us a new heart and a right spirit—and then dwell in our renewed nature as a king in his palace.

My Brothers and Sisters, be sure that this is so with you. Be not content with the outward name which is no more a part of yourself than if it were a label hung about your neck. Be not satisfied with mere externals which do not enter into the heart. Never rest till you have the Divine Life within you. We need not the faith which prates and talks, but the faith which eats the flesh of the Son of Man and drinks His blood. What we need is not Jesus Christ pictured on the wall, nor His name on the lips, nor words about Him from pious books! We need the Lord Himself received into our heart—“Christ in you the hope of glory.” Oh for Christ living, dwelling, reigning within our entire nature, looking out from our eyes, speaking by our lips, blessing the poor by our hands, going about doing good with these feet and magnifying God in these mortal bodies as once He did on earth in His own body! This, then, is true religion—Jesus Christ received by an act of faith into our inner-most soul.

Dear Friend, have you got this? Before we go an inch further let every man and woman among us press this question home. Do I know what it is to drink of the life-giving stream which Jesus Christ bestows?

II. We notice, in the second place, THE SATISFYING POWER OF TRUE RELIGION. We are told in the text, “Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst.” *Grace relieves our soul-thirst as soon as it is received.* In Eastern countries the idea of thirst is much more vivid than it is with us. Owing to the great heat and the dryness of the atmosphere—and the frequency with which thirst *really* happens to men—they feel it to be one of the most severe physical sufferings.

To the Oriental, thirst would be a forcible metaphor of the longing of an awakened soul. Let it be so to us. A man, once startled from the sleep of sinful indifference so as to look about him and to ask *what* he is, and *where* he is, and where he is *going*, finds in his spirit an eager craving. He scarcely knows what it is, nor what will satisfy it—but urged on by an insatiable sense of need, he searches after a something which will fill what Dr. Watts has very aptly called the “aching void” within him. He tries the virtue of riches, but gold and silver cannot fill a soul. He seeks after knowledge, and it is no mean pursuit, but science has no well from which a weary spirit may be refreshed. “Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh.”

It may be he dazzles his fancy with fame, or charms his eyes with beauty and his ears with music, but, “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity, thus says the Preacher.” And the Preacher’s verdict finds a thousand echoes in experience. There is a horseleech in human nature which continually cries, “Give, give!” And had it all the stars for a possession, it would still cry for more, for like the sea it cannot be quiet. Man, though he knows it not, needs his God. He needs reconciliation to his offended Maker, and until he gets it, he cannot rest. He is like “a rolling thing before the whirlwind”—he is tossed up and down like a thistledown in the breeze. And like Noah’s dove, he finds no rest for the soles of his feet.

He who believes in Christ has received the Atonement and finds in it an at-one-ment with God—the great quarrel is ended! His Nature is also changed and now he seeks after that which God delights in—and in the Lord his soul is satisfied. He has the new birth. He belongs to the family of God. He begins to understand Divine realities and to see them, taste them, handle them and to find rest for his soul in them. “Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Faith in Jesus quenches our souls’ thirst and *it continues to do so*. This is the beauty of it. He that drinks of the water from earth’s wells is refreshed, but after a little while the effect of his drinking is gone, and he thirsts again.

But he that drinks of the water that Christ shall give him, shall never thirst. That one draught has created in him an inexhaustible fountain of supply which will satisfy his mouth with good things, so that his youth shall be renewed like the eagle’s. Though the thirst will forever strive to return, yet shall it be always met by the well within which shall spring up into everlasting life! Accept the Gospel of Christ, poor thirsty Heart, and you have accepted a satisfaction which will endure as long as you endure! Glory be to God that we have such living water to present to you in Jesus Christ’s name this morning!

Here is the secret cause of this abiding satisfaction—it continues because Divine Grace continues. Our Lord adds, “The water that I shall give him *shall be in him*.” The water drank today has its uses and is gone. It serves our present purpose and disappears. But he that drinks of the water which Jesus gives, has it always in him and hence he always enjoys a freedom from spiritual thirst. Whatever effect the Grace of God produces today, it will be capable of producing the same tomorrow—and other effects as they shall be required—for it retains its potency and the same cause will produce the same effect. O the matchless draught, which never leaves the man who drinks it, but remains in him as part and parcel of his noblest self, forever contenting his whole nature and causing rivers of living water to flow out of him, even the Spirit which those who believe in Jesus have received! Well may every instructed heart pray, “Lord, give us this water.”

Now this final and abiding removal of thirst by a draught of Grace, which remains in the man, *is a matchless blessing and averts a thousand ills*. It is often useful to measure our mercies by their negative aspect, asking ourselves, What should we have been without them? O Sinner without the living water, you are thirsting now—or if not thirsting, a deadly stupor is upon your soul—which is worse than thirst! How mournful is your condition! And yet, my Brother in the Lord, you would be in the same pitiable case had you not believed! You would be cast into the same lethargic sleep with which sin steeps the senses of your fellow man! Or had you been awakened out of that sleep, you would be in bondage to fears, dreads and innumerable horrors!

Sin would have been as a burning fever to your nature and all the joys of earth a mockery to your anguish. You would have been crushed beneath an awful sense of present wrath and a deadly fear of coming judgment! Perhaps, also, at this time you had been going from bad to worse,

trying to satisfy your cravings with the delusions of Satan, poisoning your heart by drinking down what seemed to be water but turned out to be liquid fire, inflaming your passions with intoxicating vices and preparing in your heart a fame which shall burn even to the lowest Hell! Your fleshly lusts might at *this* hour have been steeling your spirit more and more with a dreadful hate of God and proud disdain of His Gospel. Ah, perhaps at this moment you would have been in Hell—where thirst rages both in body and in soul forever—and not a drop of water can be found to allay the torment.

But now you have drunk of what Jesus Christ has given you and you are satisfied and at peace. Blessed be the Lord for this! The ills averted and the good bestowed you can not sufficiently calculate, but you can, to-day, adore that dear hand which bestowed this matchless draught upon you. I think I hear someone interpose the observation that there is still in the Believer a thirst. I answer, yes, it is true, and blessed be God for it! We sang right well in our hymn just now—

***“I thirst, but not as once I did,
The vain delights of earth to share.
Your wounds, Immanuel, all forbid
That I should find my pleasure there.”***

The moment a man knows Christ, he thirsts to know more of Him. But there is a very great difference between the thirsting of horrible unappeased longings—and the thirsting of unutterable joy which longs to continue—and of burning love which gladly would know more and more of its adorable Lord.

The inward desires of the Christian after more holiness, more communion with God and more love to Christ are not so much a thirst for Grace as the bubbling up of the well of spiritual life which is in the soul already! I would not wish to be in such a state as to be satisfied with myself, or satisfied with my attainments. Satisfied with Christ, the Christian always is. But altogether and entirely satisfied with his own realization of the blessings which Jesus brings—so as to desire no more—I think he never will be till he gets to Heaven! Have you never heard of that great painter who, one day breaking his palette and putting aside his brush, said to a friend that he should paint no more, for his day was over. And when his friend inquired why he had come to that singular conclusion, he said, “Because the last painting which I executed perfectly contented me and, therefore, I feel that the high ideal which led me on has departed and I shall succeed no more.”

It is so. There is in every man who is a master of his art a high ideal after which he strains. And the fact that he has that ideal ever above him is one of the tokens of his lofty genius. I suppose that Milton, as a poet, never reached the “height of that great argument” as he desired to reach it. When he had composed a portion of his wondrous epic he would feel that his thoughts were above his words and that he had an inner, unshaped conception towering higher than his actually formed and shaped thoughts. He was a poet because that was the case. Other rhymesters are not poets because their verses *please* them.

That man is holy who mourns the unholiness of his holiest deeds—and that man is no longer holy who conceives himself to be without sin and to

have reached the highest attainable excellence. The mariner who has reached the Ultima Thule and dreams that he has cast anchor hard by earth's utmost boundary, where the universe comes to an end, will never be a Columbus. Up with your anchor, my Brother, for there are wide seas beyond and a land of gold across the main! Self-satisfaction is the grave of progress! He who thinks himself perfect is never likely to be so. Brothers and Sisters, shun the spirit of self-content! Whatever doctrinal views you may hold as to the higher life, I will not dispute with you. But I practically beseech you to shun the spirit which lulls the heart into soft slumbers by the music of spiritual flattery.

Whoever you are, I make bold to say that you are not all you should be, nor all you can be. There is a blessed hunger and thirst after righteousness—a panting after God as the hart pants after the water brooks—which still abides in the Christian. But it is in no degree akin to the thirst which is mentioned in the text. Grace in the heart gives rest, peace, joy and holy calm of soul. It satisfies our cravings and fills our largest desires—and all because by the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit it daily enables us to realize Jesus and God in Jesus. What fullness there is in Him—

***“In want, my plentiful Supply;
In weakness, my almighty Power;
In bonds, my perfect Liberty;
My Refuge in temptation’s hour;
My Comfort ‘midst all grief and thrall,
My Life in death, my All in All.”***

III. Having noticed the way of obtaining true religion and the satisfying effect of it, we will now observe ITS ABIDING CHARACTER. “The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” There is a theory of religion which supposes that a man may be regenerated and yet may so depart from the Lord that the inner life may become extinct. And I have met with persons of whom I have been told that they have been born again three or four times—that after experiencing regeneration they had fallen from Grace altogether—and yet had been renewed again unto repentance.

I must confess I have not believed what I have been told, for it is contrary to those many Scriptures which declare that “if these shall fall away it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance,” for, “if the salt has lost its savor wherewith shall it be seasoned?” My heart believes, and as I read the Scriptures I believe it more and more, that where a good work is begun by God, He will carry it on and that the new life bestowed upon us is an *incorruptible* seed which lives and abides forever, so that, “the righteous shall hold on his way and he that has clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger.”

Notice how the text describes the matter. “The water that I shall give him *shall be in him*—not *of him*, not upon him, not around him—but *in him*—and hence it cannot be lost. You know how we use that expression. Here is a man trying to write poetry. (Ah, how many are guilty of that folly)? But it is not *in him* and it cannot come out of him. So he rhymes his nonsense, but a poet he never becomes. But if a man has it in him, who can take it away? Another sits down to paint. But if it is not in him,

he becomes eminent in the school of Van Daub, but reaches no further—it is not *in* him—but if in him who shall deprive him of the gift?

True religion is, however, more than a faculty, it is a new life. And so it is even more abidingly in the man than my illustration sets forth. The poet may be despoiled of his goods. He may be deprived of his liberty. He may be shut up within iron bars—but he still sings—you cannot rob him of his poetic faculty, for it is *in* him. The artist may scarcely be allowed a ray of light in the dark dungeon into which he is thrust. But he follows the lone sunbeam around his prison wall and works by its light, for his art is *in* him. We all agree with the remark that it is better to give a lad an education than a fortune, for the one he carries in him and cannot lose, but the other may soon be gone, since it is no part of himself. That part of our inheritance which we carry *in* us is beyond the thief's cunning and the tyrant's power.

If we have the Grace of God we shall have it still, for Jesus says—"it shall be *in* him." Blessed be God it is not in our frail body nor in our feeble mind, but in our Heaven-born *spirit*—and so it is in that part of our nature which Death, itself, cannot cause to die—which no power on earth is able to touch. If religion were a garb it could be laid aside. If it were a rite, its efficacy might cease. But since it is a *life*, a vital principle, an essential part of our new nature and is interwoven with the warp and woof of our renewed manhood, it is ours eternally! Christ has said it, and we believe it, "The water that I shall give him shall be in him," and in us it shall be as long as we live!

Our Lord also promises that this water shall be in the man, "*a well of living water.*" It shall always remain in him as an operative *force*, full of freshness and life. It shall not be there like water in a cistern which may gradually evaporate and cannot have the freshness of spring water. Nor as a stagnant pool which becomes useless and even pestilential to all around. It shall not even be as water forced into our houses by pressure—it shall have a springing up power of its own! It shall be as permanent and changeless as Jacob's well which was there in the Patriarch's day and is there, still, as full as ever! It shall be forever new, yet ever the same. It shall have an energy and force in it which shall cause a perpetual uprising in the soul.

Like the village brook born at the springhead, our new life shall flow on, and as it flows it shall sing—

***"Men may come and men may go,
But I go on forever."***

As surely as the well continues to fill itself without machinery of man's invention, or a pump of earthly power, so surely shall the new life within the Christian continue to stir and move and bubble up. There will always be in it a vitality which comes from the quickening Spirit. Mechanical religion, which consists in ceremonies and observances, is a very stale thing. I should think, after seeing the mass, or any other Popish display some 50 times, it must become rather a dreary business, however prettily the show may be arranged. And the mere repetition of a liturgical service, without heart, with the same words and tones, must become very monotonous. Certainly extempore prayer and the most varied service is heavy enough when the soul is taken out of it.

Anything which has not *spiritual* life in it becomes, in due time, insipid, flat, wearisome. As well be a blind horse going round in a mill as the performer of religious acts without the inner life. Coming to this place, sitting in these seats and listening to me may soon become a piece of mere clockwork to you if your hearts are not alive towards God. How very different is worship in Spirit and in Truth! Real inward vitality is as perpetually beautiful as the sea which never appears to be twice alike, though it is always the same. Or like the rising of the sun, a perpetual novelty, forever exhibiting some new phase of God's Glory. It is a joy for me to linger near a spring and mark the widening circles, the countless wavelets, the sparkling ripples and the translucent streams which, in their perpetual variety and laughing joyousness, are the very image of youth and freshness.

True religion is like a well because it is independent of its surroundings—it flows in summer and in winter. The pond overflows because there has been a shower of rain, but the deep well is full in the drought and the villagers flock to it in the driest season, for they never knew it to fail. Its secret sources are too abundant to be affected by a few weeks of parching heat. Would you go in search of them, they are far away on yonder cloud-capped hills, where the river of God, which is full of water, empties itself into reservoirs which the Lord has dug. "I will look unto the hills from whence comes my help," says the Christian. He directs his expectations to the all-sufficiency of God and sings, "All my fresh springs are in You."

He knows that it is the Lord who "sends the springs into the valleys which run among the hills." The Believer is independent of his outward surroundings. He is not exalted by riches, nor crushed by poverty. He trusts not in man whose breath is in his nostrils, for in which he is to be accounted. Nothing earthly can feed or famish the Divine Life in man and even the visible means of Grace are not absolutely necessary to it, for concerning them it may be said, "man shall not live by bread alone." Should a Christian be cast into a heathen land, or cared to live where the Truth of God has fallen in the streets, and zeal is dead, and corruption abounds, he is greatly tried—but still the inner well springs up because his faith has tapped "the deep which lies under"—and he draws his supplies from the Infinity of God—not from outward ordinances.

Elijah is strong amid idolaters and Paul's faith is vigorous on board ship among heathen, just as wells are found in places where all around is arid as a desert. Elim was in the wilderness, not in the king's garden. And many a Believer is found in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water. God is Infinite and All-Sufficient—and the man whose sources lie in the All-Sufficient One receives of His fullness! When natural religion and fleshly excitement are gone, the faith, hope and joy of vital godliness manifest the dew of their youth. Alas, how often is the contrast seen! Do I not know some who were converted under a very earnest preacher and as long as they heard *him* they remained in their apparent godliness? But when he was gone, what became of them?

I enquired the other day as to the permanent results of a certain revival which, at the time, I hoped was a genuine one. Some two or three hundred were added to a certain Church, but the pastor left and I asked his successor whether the converts remained. He replied, "I cannot give a

good account of them. Very few are with us now.” That is not a rare case. I have other instances within my knowledge where Churches have been revived into absolute annihilation! The balloon has been filled till it burst! Warmed up into a furnace heat by tremendous blasts of excitement, a cold of corresponding intensity has set in when the heating apparatus has consumed its fuel. Not a word have I to say against *real spiritual* revivals, but I warn you excitable people that *principle* is the main matter, not *passion*.

Give me a man who does not depend upon a preacher, nor drink in his inspiration from warm-hearted friends and crowded meetings—but has inward, vital experience by which he knows the Lord for himself—and has had personal dealings with a *personal* Savior! Such a man will follow the Lamb though every preacher should die and every outward ministry should be struck dumb. The indwelling power of the Holy Spirit rises superior to all disadvantages, like a spring which cannot be kept under, do what you may! Our engineers and builders know how hard it is to bind up the earth-floods from overflowing—and the spiritual floods are yet more unconquerable!

It is wonderful how springs will bubble up in places where we least expect them. The great Sahara Desert will, no doubt, be made a very easy country to traverse and, perhaps, may even become a fertile plain, from the fact that there is water everywhere at no great depth below the surface—and when it is reached an oasis is formed. The Government of Algeria has sent engineers into parts of the Sahara bordering on the French possession—and these men have bored the rock by Artesian wells and greatly astonished the natives, for in the wilderness have waters leaped out and streams in the desert! At the magic touch of the living water, palm trees have sprung up and an undergrowth of vegetation, so that the solitary places have been made to sing together.

When the Lord gives our souls to drink from the fountains of the great deep of His own eternal Love and to have a vital principle of Divine Grace within us, our wilderness rejoices and blossoms as the rose! Neither can the Sahara around us wither our verdure—our soul is as an oasis, though all around is barrenness! Happy is the man whose life is hid with Christ in God, for he shall be filled with all the fullness of God—

***“From You the overflowing spring,
His soul shall drink a fresh supply;
While such as trust their native strength
Shall melt away and droop and die.”***

When God shall fail, the Believer will fail, but not till then. On him He fits the blessing given to Joseph, securing to him the precious things of Heaven and of the dew and of *the deep which couches beneath*. Observers tell us, and we may have noticed ourselves, that wells are not always equally full, for verily earthly things must change and none of them are full types of the heavenly.

Springs which are never frozen in the coldest winter and never dry in the hottest summer, yet exhibit certain ebbs and flows and, even so, the Christian, because he is still in the body, is not always at his best by reason of infirmity and fault. There are happy times when we overflow delightfully—and there are other seasons when we have to cry most anx-

iously, "Spring up, O well." Yet, blessed be God, the well is always there and as it is never disconnected from its springs, it never utterly fails. Our Lord says the well shall always be in us and, therefore, we may exultantly cry, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Who shall destroy the life which is one with His?"

The notion that our Lord's spiritual body is undergoing a constant change in the loss of its members and the growth of new ones is so strange—and so dishonoring to Him—that I must leave its defense to those who can tolerate it. I believe that no member of Christ shall be amputated from His body and, "not a bone of Him shall be broken." He says, "I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand." "Because I live, you live also." He has said, moreover, "Verily, verily I say unto you, he that believes in Me has everlasting life." But a life which expires is not *everlasting* and, therefore, we are sure that it will live on eternally. The principle implanted in us when we believe is an abiding one, for we were, "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which lives and abides forever." If it is so, how can we perish? No, Brothers and Sisters, Grace will remain in us and the Lord will perfect that which concerns us.

The text further says it is a well which is *springing*, a well which never ceases to flow—upon which we will not dwell. We will only say this—that God works up to now, and works always—therefore the life of God in the soul is usually operative in some form or other. The great motives which set the Christian working at first are as forcible in his old age as in his youth. And his obedience to them is even more complete. Therefore he ceases not from spiritual activity. His soul bubbles up in prayer, praise, love, hope and joy forevermore. He must do the will of Him that sent him. He cannot but work out his own salvation, for God continues to work in him to will and to do of His good pleasure. Thus all that happens to a Christian, overruled by the Grace of God, tends to keep him springing up.

Is he surrounded by the wicked? He feels it his duty to bear his protest the more vigorously. Is he in the midst of the righteous? He owns that in such congenial society he ought to do more for Christ. Is he poor? He feels that he had need be rich in faith to sustain his spirits. Is he rich? He knows that uncertain riches are certain temptations—and that he needs great Grace, both to escape the snare and bear up under the responsibility of his station. Thus even adverse things are made to help him! And even as the Nile overflows in the hot season because of the melting of the snows on the far-off mountains, so does the inner life. How all the more when we might have imagined it would be drawn dry.

The text adds, "Springing up *into everlasting life*"—not to *life*, merely, but to that life which is everlasting! I, for one, shall never be able to attach any meaning to the word *everlasting* but that of lasting forever! The Believer lives on forever and Divine Grace blossoms into Glory. The life of the saints on earth is of the same essence as the life of the saints in Heaven—they receive no new life when they enter into Glory—only that which they received in regeneration is purged from every hindrance and is developed to perfection! Our life below tends in the same direction as the heavenly

life, for both flow towards God and seek His Glory and delight in fellowship with Him.

We have now within us the germs of the glorified character—a holy life, a humble life, an obedient life, a blessed life, we always have here—and such is the life of the golden city. Our life is sustained by the same power as the life of those in Heaven. “Because I live, you shall live also,” is the gift both of saints in Heaven and saints on earth. It is guaranteed by the same Covenant and if a child of God on earth can perish, a child of God in Heaven may, for anything I can see. The fidelity which will keep the blessed is the same fidelity which preserves us while here below. And if our life, which is hid with Christ, can fail, I know not what additional security belongs to a soul in Heaven. The whole text together gives us this full assurance, that if we have drunk of the water which Christ gives us, it cannot be extracted from us or fail to save us! It is a *living* well, and must spring up into everlasting life!

The practical outcome of it all is just this. Let each one answer this question—*where did you get your religion?* Does anyone reply, “I am of the religion of my father before me, and that’s enough for me.” Yes, that is what the old heathen chieftain said when he had one foot in the baptismal font. He turned round to the missionary and asked where his ancestors’ souls were. And when he heard that they had gone to Hell, he said he would not be parted from them. I see no sense in such talk! I suppose if your parents had been blind you would have put your eyes out. Or if they had been lame, you would have made yourself a cripple!

No, dear Friends, we should follow our parents so far as they followed *Christ*, but when they leave Jesus we must take another road! Where did you get your religion from? Is it of your own manufacture? Is it the creature of your own power and will? Then it will come to nothing! Nothing is worth having as to everlasting life but that which comes from the hand which was nailed to the Cross—and there bought our redemption—and now freely bestows it upon us. The next question is, *what has your religion done for you?* Has it satisfied your heart? Does it bring rest to your soul? Has it quenched your thirst?

Now, there are many religions in the world which do not profess to do this. When nine persons out of 10 talk of what they call the Christian religion, their notion is that perhaps a man may know he is safe when he is dying. Perhaps he may get his sins forgiven in the last solemn article. But as to any idea of being saved *now*, they do not comprehend it—their religion does not deal with *present* salvation. How few rejoice in that text, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like He, for we shall see Him as He is”! How few can say, “Being justified by faith we have peace with God”! They think it presumption, for they are ignorant of the power of faith. Go to Jesus Christ then, dear Friends, and receive from Him the free gift of His mercy and you will say, “Lord, it is enough, my soul is satisfied.”

The next question is this—*Does your religion abide with you?* You had great joy in it once. Do you possess it *now*? Is it *in* you? That religion which you can lose, it might be well to lose at once so that you might be

driven to seek a better! But that religion which you never can lose is the religion of Christ! Now for a straightforward question. Does your religion always dwell in you? I know some people whose godliness lies in their best hats. They put them on when Sunday comes round and then they are wonderfully religious! And when they get into a place of worship they look into the hats to which they owe so much—but when the new garments are laid by and the work-day hat is on in which they go to the city or the workshop—they act as badly as other men.

The Sunday bonnet and go-to-meeting dress make a deal of difference to some people. When the hymn book and the Bible are near at hand, they are devout. When the ledger and the day book are near, what a change comes over the scene! Genuine religion is *in* a man. You cannot lay it aside as the soldier may hang up his sword or put away his uniform—you carry it with you everywhere—it is your delight to do so.

Lastly, *does your religion spring up within your soul by the secret energy of the Spirit of God?* Do you feel emotions, longings, regrets and desires arising in you without any outward prompting? You do not pray by order, but because you cannot help it—you are in need and *must* pray. Nobody stands by and says, “Lament before God.” You groan because you *must* groan, and sing because you feel like singing! You pray continually because your soul’s needs are constant. And you praise frequently because your soul’s gratitude bursts forth like a mighty spring. Your obedience does not arise from a Law upon stone, but from a Law written on your hearts, from life in you, from heavenly instinct, from the sacred impulses of the Spirit!

“For me to live is Christ.” Happy is the man who feels the well within him bubbling up, so that it is in his very *life* to obey the Lord Jesus! God grant we all may drink of the living water for Jesus’ sake Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 4:1-42.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK” 435, 775, 805.**

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LIFE'S EVER-SPRINGING WELL

NO. 864

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 4, 1869,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*"The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well
of water springing up into everlasting life."
John 4:14.*

YOU have been busy all the week with external things. You have had to deal with the questions, "What shall we eat and what shall we drink and with what shall we be clothed?" It is well that at least on this one day in seven we should turn our eyes away from the external to the internal—from the less to the greater—for as life is more than meat and the body than raiment, so is the *soul* more important than all that which surrounds it. It were most unwise in any man to be so continually attending to the exterior of his house as to neglect the comforts of the inner apartments and the warmth of the fireside. It were extreme folly in any of us to be very careful in the dressing of our person and meanwhile to permit our body to pine away under some dreadful disease.

That which is the more important should have the most of our thoughts, and if it must, necessarily, be otherwise during the week, at least let it be so now. Let us forget our buying and selling, toiling and suffering, caring and enjoying! And turning away from all that lies abroad, let us look at home and view our inner natures by the light of the Word of God. We have a great tendency, dear Friends, to make even our *religion* too much external. There are certain externals of religion which are exceedingly important, but the danger is lest in our great zeal for these, we forget that, after all, there is something better and higher to be thought about.

I pity the man who takes no interest in the great discussion of the hour with regard to the separation of Church and State, but I should far more pity him if he were so absorbed in that discussion as not to enquire whether he was, himself, a member of the true Church of Jesus Christ. Assuredly the questions concerning ritualism, liturgies, episcopacy and so on, are very important and a man who takes no interest in them is unmindful of great interests. But still, if a man were so occupied with the circumstances of outward worship as to forget the inward drawing near unto God with heart and soul, it were a thing to be deeply deplored.

I shall invite you, this morning, to forget everything that has to do with the external part of religion, whether correct or incorrect. Forget the form of worship, the mode of song, the manner of prayer, the way of celebrating ordinances—all these may, for awhile, be put upon the shelf and left there. We have now to do with the *interior* life, the secret power which dwells within—we have to consider that water which the Lord Jesus gives to Believers, which is in them, "a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

In a word, the subject of this morning is *the spiritual life*—the inward work of Divine Grace—the life which proves a man to be saved. The life which comes from God and labors to ascend to God. The life on earth which is the bud of the eternal life in Heaven.

I. Our first observation is that THE SPIRITUAL LIFE IS A DIVINE GIFT. Observe the words, “The water that *I shall give him.*” First, the new life is a *gift*. It is not a principle dwelling in the man naturally and to be brought out from obscurity. I have heard it said and I have been horrified when I have heard so gross a falsehood, that there is in man something good, noble, spiritual and that the object of the Christian minister in delivering the Gospel is to take away the ignorance and folly that may overlay this innate nobility and so to bring out and train up the precious vital principles which otherwise had lain latent within the human heart.

Taking holy Scripture to be the Truth of God, the doctrine I have just stated is, of all lies, one of the grossest! There is *nothing* spiritually good in man whatever by nature. The carnal mind is enmity against God and is not reconciled to God, neither indeed can be. We might long enough rake the dunghill of human nature before we found the priceless jewel of spiritual life concealed within it. Man is *dead* in sin! How long will you hunt the sepulcher before you shall discover life within the ribs of death? Long enough may you ransack yonder moldering bones in the cemetery before you shall discover the germs of immortality within the ashes of the departed.

If man were but faint, we might, perhaps, by a sort of spiritual friction or electricity, arouse him to life. If he were lying in a state of coma, we might, by some gracious surgery, at length rekindle the embers and make the life burn forth in its strength. But when we are informed, over and over again, by the Holy Spirit Himself, that man is not only *dead*, but that he is *corrupt*—where is the hope of finding life within him? The living and incorruptible seed of Divine Grace is a gift, yet further, because it is not produced in men by efforts of their own, through the imitation of good example, or through early instruction, or gradual reform.

Though for centuries the dead should be located in the neighborhood of the living, they will not, thereby, come to life. The example of life is lost upon dead men! For many a day might you read a homily upon life in the ears of the corpse before you shall thereby cause the skeleton to make any effort towards vitality. In fact, efforts after life are efforts of life. Life is where there is a desire *for* life. Life is already, in a measure, kindled in that heart where there is a true and sincere effort made to lay hold on eternal life. Life, *spiritual* life, is a *gift*, wholly a gift. It is given according to the good-will and purpose of God. If the Lord gives the new life to some and not to others, He is perfectly free to do as He wills with His own.

Gifts are not regulated according to the law of debts. If God owes to any man eternal life, he shall have it, for God will be debtor to no man. But He owes nothing to sinful man but wrath! And if He chooses according to His good pleasure to give a new and spiritual life to His chosen, none shall dare to question Him, or say to Him, “What are You doing?” The Divine challenge is, “May I not do as I will with My own? Is your eye evil because Mine is good?” The spiritual life which is possessed by any man was given to him as the result of an eternal purpose on God’s part, framed abso-

lutely according to His Sovereign good will and pleasure—concerning which He has Himself told us—that He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy and He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion.

This life is never received in any other way than as a *gift*. It is not obtainable in any other way but as a gift and, coming as a gift, it always illustrates the sovereign rights of God to give or to withhold as may please Him. Now, I said that it is not only a gift, but according to the text it is a *Divine gift*. Christ has put it—"the water that I shall give him," by which we are to understand that Jesus Christ does not give us the inner life apart from the Father and the Holy Spirit, but that still He does give it.

The fact is that the Father causes spiritual life in us in some respects, for He has begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. As we are the children of God the Father, we, therefore, salute Him by the name, "Abba, Father." But this life also comes to us through Jesus Christ. "In Him was life and the life was the light of men." He is the medium of life. It is as the *result* of His atoning sacrifice that we receive it. It is when by faith we look to Him that we begin to live and it is in proportion as we live upon Him that we enjoy true life.

At the same time, this life comes to us from the Holy Spirit and is a result of the Holy Spirit's graciously dwelling in us. He consecrates our hearts into a temple. He resides within our spirits. Then we, who once were dead, are made to live. It is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit within the soul which is the great secret Source and spring of the Divine Grace which wells up within us and causes us to live in the life of Christ. Observe, then, if you or I would be real and true Christians, renewed and quickened into celestial life, we must receive a mysterious life from God Himself as a *gift*.

Take this doctrine to be true! And what is the practical lesson of it but this? If this day I tremble lest I have it not, let me learn the way by which this life must come to me if it come at all. Certainly not by my own striving and struggles in the way of merit, for it is represented not as a reward, but as a *gift*. Certainly not by any power of my own apart from God, for it is spoken of as coming from Jesus Christ and not as growing out of human nature. What, then, had I better do than make a solemn appeal to the mercy of God?

This is the only attribute which smiles upon me! Justice awards me nothing but death. Grace alone can bring me life! If the Lord should refuse the living water to me, I could not complain, but His name is love and I know that He has made a promise that whoever believes in Christ shall not perish, but have everlasting life. Let me come as an undeserving sinner, then, this day and appeal to the bounty of God, and ask Him for His name's sake and for His mercy's sake, to have pity upon me!

Some of you think, perhaps, because you have been to a place of worship from your youth up and have been doing your best to lead reputable and respectable lives, that perhaps you shall obtain salvation as a matter of course! But it is not so. You must learn that saving Grace can only come to you as the *gift* of mercy—to that end you must feel that you do not deserve any good thing from God and you must confess your unwor-

thiness, as I beseech you to confess it this morning. You must turn to the Lord your God with penitential confession on your lips and pray Him in all His infinite compassion to give to you a life which you cannot create for yourself and cannot find within yourself, but which He alone can bestow according to the riches of His mercy in Christ Jesus.

I wish not, this morning, to preach mere dry doctrine which may seem to be an iron bar to shut up a sinner in the prison of despair, but, rather, I desire to turn this Truth of God to a practical and stimulating purpose. You Sinners, seek the favor of your offended God in Christ Jesus, for He is the Lord and Giver of life and your quickening must come from Him and from Him alone!

II. Secondly, we gather from the text that the principle which makes the Christian is something INWARD AND PERSONAL. "The water that I shall give him shall be *in* him." "*In* him." Put the emphasis on another word and we get another sense, "*In him*," that is, in the man himself. The worth of true religion, like the value of gold, prompts men to counterfeits. Where there is a life within, it naturally shapes for itself some kind of outward manifestation. Unconverted men find it too much trouble to look after the *inward* life, so they take an easier method and carefully imitate its outward manifestation.

If a man who really hears God does this and that, then, although they do not sincerely fear the Lord, they count it decorous to do the same. Do they suppose that it is as easy to deceive the Lord as to satisfy themselves, or having the imitation of godliness are they satisfied to enquire no further and to rest without the reality? Many of the superstitions which encrust the Christian religion, have, no doubt, taken their rise from some harmless eccentricities on the part of really gracious men. In them a practice might be pardonable and possibly commendable, which in others, who have not their holy zeal, has degenerated into a vain oblation. Life demands and should be allowed great latitude of methods in its display—even Siamese twins, dwarfs and giants must not be slain—but to set up mere monstrosities of life as *models* is ridiculous! We can endure the odd ways of a really fervent lover of Jesus, but the mere wax-work of superstition is not to be tolerated.

I frequently see persons coming into a place of worship looking into their hats, or shading their eyes with their hands, as if they were praying to God to grant a blessing on what they were about to hear. But I suppose, in three cases out of four, they are doing nothing of the sort—it is only because it happened to be the custom with some good people thus to pray, that, therefore, formalists must pretend, at any rate, to do the same. In days gone by, certain Christian people set apart days of fasting and then, in due time, everybody took to a course of salt fish. True Christians love the Cross of Christ, therefore formalists must needs wear crosses of wood or ivory on their bosoms.

If earnest Believers practice true family prayer, others must sham the doing of it, though their heart is not in it. There is no Christian practice, there is no Christian habit but what has been, or will be before long, imitated by people who have no vital godliness whatever! If there is no good cheer within, at least the landlord will hang out a sign. If there is no kernel, men put up with the shell. Let all washers of the outside of cups and

platters remember that true religion is not an outward but an *inward* thing! It is not a matter of the surface, but of the core of our nature! It is not a robe to be put on and to be taken off—it is a *life*, an *inward* principle which becomes a part of the man's self! And if it is not so, it is not real at all. "The water that I shall give him shall be in him."

How like to a Christian a man may be and yet possess no vital godliness! Walk through the British Museum and you will see all the orders of animals standing in their various places and exhibiting themselves with the utmost possible propriety. The rhinoceros demurely retains the position in which he was set at first. The eagle soars not through the window. The wolf howls not at night. Every creature, whether bird, beast, or fish, remains in the particular glass case allotted to it. But you all know well enough that these are not the creatures, but only the outward semblances of them! Yet in what do they differ? Certainly in nothing which you could readily *see*, for the well-stuffed animal is precisely like what the living animal would have been!

And that glass eye even appears to have more of brightness in it than the natural eye of the creature itself—yet you know well enough that there is a secret inward something lacking, which, when it has once departed, you cannot restore. So in the Churches of Christ! Many professors are not living Believers, but stuffed Believers, stuffed Christians! There are all the externals of religion—everything that you could desire—and they behave with a great deal of propriety, too! They all keep their places, and there is no outward difference between them and the living, except upon the vital point—the life which no power on earth could possibly confer! There is this essential distinction—the *life* is absent.

It is almost painful to watch little children when some little pet of theirs has died, how they can hardly realize the difference between death and life! Your little boy's bird moped for awhile upon its perch and at last dropped down in the cage—do you not remember how the little fellow tried to set it up, and gave it seed and filled its glass with water—and was quite surprised to think that Birdie would not open his little eyes for his friend as it did before and would not take its seed, nor drink its water? Ah, you had at last to make him know that a mysterious something had gone from his little favorite and would not come back again.

There is just such a *spiritual* difference between the mere professor and the genuine Christian. There is an invisible, but most real indwelling of the Holy Spirit—the absence or the Presence of which makes all the difference between the sinner and the saint. Beloved, as saving Grace is an inward thing, so I also remark that it must be a *personal* matter. The presence of life in 50 relatives of a family is of no service to the 51st person if he is dead. If in the midst of this vast congregation there should be one dead person, the existence of life in us all could have no power whatever to resuscitate that corpse. Everybody knows that is true and the remark is therefore trite, but everybody does not appear to perceive that in religion the same statement is correct!

"We are all Christians"—that is the common talk—"Why, we belong to a Christian nation—are we not born Christians?" Or, "Surely we must all be right. We have always attended our parish Church and is not that enough?" Or, with some, "Our parents were always godly. We were born

into the Church, were we not? Did they not take us up in their arms when we were little and make us members of Christ? What more do we need?" Our solemn answer is that all the religion which is not *personal* is vain and void! Men have no spiritual birthrights which can take them into Heaven that come to them by the way of the *flesh*, for that which is born of the flesh is flesh!

All Covenant heritages come by the new birth. We are not heirs of God after the flesh but by the Spirit! You must be born of the Spirit in order to partake of spiritual things! And if you are not so born, there is no truth that you need more to hear than this, "You must be born again." All the virtue that adorned your ancestors cannot save you. The Divine Grace that was in your grandmother, Lois, or your mother, Eunice, can be of no good to you unless you are a Timothy and love the Scriptures for *yourself*!

Unless you unfeignedly *repent* and heartily believe in Jesus Christ, you might as well, perhaps better, have been a Caffer than a Christian! Unless you, yourself, lay hold on eternal life, you might as well be a street Arab as the son or the daughter of the most godly saint in our Zion! The water which Jesus gives us must be in each of us if we would be saved. I shall now pause again and invite you to heart-searching, for my one object is to be practical and to deal with each one personally.

Dear Hearer, what about this matter? How fares it with you? Have you this life within you? I do not ask, "Have you been baptized?" I make no enquiry about whether you have taken the communion of late. Have you within you a life which only God can give? Is your religion only a thing of saying prayers and reading chapters and singing hymns, or is it a life? Come, now, suppose there were no Churches, no Chapels, no sermons, no assemblies for worship—would you still be a Christian? Have you a secret something within you which cannot be weighed in the scales, nor measured, nor comprehended in the balance? Have you a secret something within you which the eagle's eyes have not seen and which the lion's whelps have not discerned—a secret inner life which philosophy cannot detect, which carnal reason will not perceive, but which is most sure and true—the incorruptible seed within your soul?

Have you a life within you, strange, unearthly, supernatural? Do your prayers come from within? Do your praises well up from the deeps of your spirit? Have you had personal dealings with God? Say, have you ever told Him your sins out of a broken heart? Have you looked to Jesus with tearful, but believing eyes and for yourself rested on Him? For oh, remember, as surely as this Book was written by the finger of God, so is it true that you can never enter Heaven unless you have within your own heart the Holy Spirit dwelling there and unless you are yourself renewed in the spirit of your mind. "Except you be converted and become as little children, you cannot enter into the kingdom." You must be born again! How is it with you? God help you to search yourself and give a just and true answer.

III. We must pass on to a third point which is clearly in the text. The inward principle which Christ implants within those who are His is a **VIGOROUS AND ACTIVE PRINCIPLE**. "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water *springing up*." Not a pool of water standing still and becoming stagnant. Nor even a stream of water gently gliding

on—but a spring perpetually forcing itself *upward*. You have seen springs at work and you have noticed that they never cease, they never pause—there is never a moment in which they are quiet. Let all things else change their occupation, the spring could fairly say—

***“Men may come and men may go,
But I go on forever.”***

In the silent night watches, when no eyes gaze upon them, the springs bubble on. And when the hot and broiling sun is parching the meadows, cool and clear is the ever-flowing springs. Springs are in perpetual motion and no known power can stop them. If for mischief heaps of rubbish are piled upon them, they somehow percolate the mass, upheave and find a vent for themselves at last—for their force must win a course for itself. So Brethren, when God puts the new life into a man, it is a very active and vigorous principle! How have I seen Divine Grace well up from under a mass of ignorance! The man hardly understood the Gospel, but yet he had a love to Christ and that love displayed itself despite his defects.

Even when a man falls into error, if Divine Grace is in his heart it will yet reveal itself. Even in the case of Romanists, where there has been a true and genuine love to Christ, it is apparent in their looks to every candid spiritual eye. Though all around it is the desert of superstition, the gracious heart, like a wellhead, makes a little verdure and creates a few lovely flowers which none could disdain. We have known persons who could not read the Scriptures and have, therefore, had very crude notions of what the doctrines of the Gospel were and have, in fact, been much misled and much mistaken, to their own sorrow and injury. But yet, for all that, God the Holy Spirit being in them, they have shown a crystal life like sparkling well water for purity.

How am I to account for it that there have been men of every extreme of doctrine, from Dr. Hawker down to Fletcher of Madeley—men ranging from semi-Pelagianism right up to the verge of Antinomianism—who, nevertheless, were so eminently holy that one has hardly room for selection, because they have been equally seraphic, equally consecrated to Christ! Their doctrinal sentiments were so divergent that in some of their minds it is clear that there must have been much confusion. But the life-spring within was not to be stopped by the rubbish of their misapprehensions—and through all their mistakes of doctrine the Divine life came welling up in all its delightful purity and produced its legitimate results!

God forbid we should foster ignorance, or that we should for a moment settle down quietly under any errors of creed! But still it is a delightful thought that the inner life is not destroyed by our misapprehensions or lack of knowledge—it still gushes upward a vigorous and powerful principle, overcoming all. The Divine life is such a thing of force that surrounding circumstances do not operate upon it as you might have supposed. In frosty weather, when we have seen the rivers frozen across, we have been told by peasants that the old springhead on the side of the hill was flowing on the same as ever. Decorated with icicles up to the edge of the old spout, still the stream gushes out!

So a Christian may be placed in the worst imaginable circumstances. He may live in a family so ungodly that the name of Christ is only used to blaspheme with. He may scarcely ever meet with a Christian associate. He

may even be denied the means of Grace—the Bible itself may be taken from him—but if the inner life is there, such is its native heat that you cannot freeze it! Such is its constant force and power that it will continue flowing, still! It might have been more happy with the man—it certainly would have been more for his comfort and usefulness—if he had been under other conditions. But here is joy for our heart to recollect that under the worst possible conditions such is the energy of the Divine Grace which God implants, that it will continue to spring upward into everlasting life!

Brothers and Sisters, pause a minute to remember that the life which Jesus Christ places in our souls is one which passes through the most severe ordeals and yet survives them. Some of you have been in acute bodily suffering, but your love to Christ was not destroyed by that long period of sickness. You have been very poor, but your faith made you rich. You have been slandered—a trial always hard to bear—but your heart was not broken. You still maintained and upheld your integrity. Perhaps you have been under desertions of God's Spirit, which are worst of all—the light of the Divine Countenance has been hidden from you—still you have said, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." And when you have walked in darkness, and seen no light, you have still continued to trust in God.

Rough usage from God's hand is a severe trial to the life of the true-born Christian and yet it is a trial in which the true Christian life has triumphed a thousand times and it has come forth out of the furnace like gold seven times purified. No afflictions, however severe, can separate the child of God from Christ! None of the trials which surround the believing heart can stamp out the vital spark of heavenly flame. Temptations, too—how frequently they threaten to devour our spiritual life! Have not some of you known temptations of so severe a character that you would not like to communicate them to your closest friends?

Or, there have been times with some of us, when the temptation which has beset us has been perfectly horrible, devilish! We have stood still and wondered with amazement how such a thing could be suggested to us and, on the other hand, how we have marveled that we came out of it untouched, without the smell of fire having passed upon us! Ah, there may be temptations yet to assail us of which we have not dreamed. Satan is studying us. He knows most of our weak points already. Every day he is considering the Lord's servants to see where will be the best joint in their armor through which to send a poisoned arrow—and he will probably assail us from some fresh quarter in a way quite new to us.

But here is the blessed part of it—let man cast what rubbish he may or will into a living spring, the spring will still, by degrees, purify itself and eject the filth and still continue to flow—and so will the truly living Christian! Whatever may be the temptations that would beset him, his life within him will conquer all, to the praise and the glory of Divine Grace. If afflictions and temptations thus are overcome, so is it with prosperity. Many a professed Christian has been ruined by his prosperity. When the man was poor, he was well enough, but when he grew rich—then he did not like to associate with the poor saints—he carried his head much too high to enter the gates of Heaven.

Alas! Alas! Alas, Prosperity! If Adversity has slain its thousands, you have slain your ten thousands! Garnished as you are with gold and silver, yet are your robes purple with the blood of men who have fallen, slain under you. But the genuine Christian is not destroyed by his prosperity. He might be rich as Croesus, yet would he serve his God. He might be wrapped in purple and fine linen and fare sumptuously, yet would he still banquet with Christ! As poverty could not make him envious, so wealth could not make him vain!

Brethren, the inward spiritual life is so vigorous that it is not suffered to be destroyed by negligence and sins. I speak guardedly here—I wish to do so, at any rate. Alas, alas, some Believers have become very negligent in spiritual things. Who among us must not confess that he has been? But though I hope we shall never try this in order to discover what comes of it, yet we are bound to say that such is the power of life in a genuine Christian that no Believer ever could be happy while living in disobedience and backsliding! Whenever I have been base enough to restrain prayer, I have never been at peace. There was no one to drag me to my knees, but I could not help praying! Nobody would report upon me whether I spent so many minutes or so many hours in supplication, but, for all that, I could as soon cease to breathe as cease to pray!

What if I could not rise from my bed, or reach my accustomed place to kneel, it did not matter—the inward life pleaded, “Forget not to draw near unto God. Lift up your heart! And if the monitor was put aside and multiplicity of work called one away, yet if there was a minute’s peace, the inner life could be felt welling up and producing a condemnation of conscience not to be endured. “You have forgotten your God today! You are not walking in communion with Him today as you should!” Such voices as these would ring in the ears and the conscience would whisper, “You are out of joint today with yourself and out of order with your God.”

A true Christian finds it impossible to live long away from his God—the Divine life will not let him leave his Father’s house. Though he may sin and this is a dreadful possibility—he may even sin foully—yet this Divine life checks him the moment the sin is past. “How could you do this great wickedness and sin against God?” He cannot go on in sin as another man does! His heart smites him! And when the heart smites, it is a strike, indeed! A wandering Believer is not merely pricked by conscience, but all the powers of the mind together cry to him, “After such love, such mercy and such goodness and such favor, can you, the elect of God, redeemed by Jesus’ blood, act as you have acted? Oh, what shame is upon you! What a disgrace are you to the name of Christian, that after receiving so much you could act so ungratefully!”

No, the Divine life will not be quiet! Like the troubled sea, it will not rest! If it is really in a man, he will have no peace except when he is walking in conformity with God’s will. And when he once gets out of the straight and narrow path of obedience and of communion, the Divine life will be a continual source of pain to him. Like David in the penitential Psalms, he will groan and cry out because his heart feels the Divine displeasure—till with many a sigh and many a cry he comes back again to the Cross where his Master waits to be gracious, still—receives once more

pardon through the precious blood and goes on his way restored to acceptance with God and to conscious enjoyment of communion with Him.

Thus you see, Beloved, the power of the inner life as it works within the soul. It is a living, active, energetic principle, like a spring within a man. I shall earnestly ask all of you again, before leaving this point—are you conscious of the existence within yourself of such an active power as this? I pause to let every man give the reply honestly. “My spiritual life seems very dead,” says one. But do you mourn your deadness? Do you feel you cannot be happy while it is so dead? Well, that mourning is one of the signs that you are alive! It is a poor sign, but still it is a true one. “Ah,” says one, “I am not what I want to be.” No, my dear Friend, I am glad to hear you say that, for if you were all you wanted to be, I should be afraid you had set up a very poor standard of what a Christian ought to be.

“Alas!” cries another, “I am very conscious that my private prayers, my secret inner life, is not at all in the healthy state it should be.” Then amend it, my dear Brother! Earnestly seek to improve it, but at the same time be very thankful that you do not feel satisfied. Bless God that you are not content, that you do not say, “Peace, peace,” where there is no peace. I tell you the living spring cannot be stopped in its *action*. If you have but a cistern full of water, it will be quiet enough, but if it is a *spring*, it is forever seething, bubbling, gushing.

When I have watched certain springs, I have seen them apparently casting up little particles of sand and dust, making and casting down little circular mounds of earth—and so the inner life within the spirit often brings to light to our own minds, our faults and our imperfections, so that nothing appears to be so active as our corruptions! Then we anxiously ask, “Is it living water that is bubbling up, or is it only the sand of my sin that is so full of energy?” Beloved, Grace lives and aspires! It is a rising flame, a springing well and not a waterfall flowing down! It is a great mercy when the master principle within our spirits is not a going down, but a springing up! Be thankful for upward tendencies and say unto the Lord—

***“You of life the fountain are—
Freely let me take of You.
Spring up within my heart,
Rise to all eternity.”***

IV. I shall now turn, in the fourth place, to another Truth of God taught us by the text. This Divine life is A CONTINUAL AND EVERLASTING THING—“It shall be in him a well of water, springing up into *everlasting life*.” Jesus was sitting upon Jacob’s well and He might well have brought to the woman’s memory how many classes of people had gathered around that well and had passed away forever. Men had gone. Harvests had been reaped. Cattle had drunk and flocks had been watered. Generations of men and beasts innumerable had come and gone—but there was the old well unchanged.

So all in the world may change and alter, but the life within the Christian is intrinsically identical. It is evermore the same. Because Jesus lives we live, also. Some tell us of a godliness which comes and goes—beware of it, it is of no use! I have heard some speak of a grace that may be in a man and yet he may lose it! Brethren, lose it? It is not worth having—lose

it at once and so avoid disappointment! But there is a Grace—and of that the text speaks—which cannot be expelled from a man, but springs up into everlasting life! Get it, my Brethren! And if you get it, it shall hold you fast and abide in you, not to some *degree* of life—but to life *everlasting*!

What is the reason why the inward principle in a Christian does not decay? Is it not because it is essentially immortal? This flesh would soon corrupt, but it is kept from corruption by the presence of the soul which acts as a refined salt to preserve the frame! Genuine Grace is preserving and is in itself incorruptible! The Christian's spring never dries up for this reason—he has struck the main fountain. I have heard of some wells which are drained dry by drought, or because some deeper well has taken away the supplies. The well which strikes the main fountain can never be dried under the severest drought.

I am not afraid that anybody will reach a deeper life than the true Christian has found, for his life is hid with Christ in God! All his fresh springs are in God! He has struck into the eternal fountains of the Divine life in Christ Jesus! None can go deeper! None can deprive him, therefore, of the hidden sustenance of his soul! You who live upon excitement will be but deceitful brooks. You whose religion depends upon the elocution of the preacher, you whose piety depends on sacraments, you whose godliness rests in your own doings—you may very well become like the dry and stony beds of occasional torrents—but those who depend upon the work of Christ which He has finished and upon the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, who shall abide with them forever—shall renew their strength like the eagle's! They shall run and not be weary! They shall walk and not faint!

V. The last point is this. According to the text, this inward principle is **PRE-EMINENTLY AND CONSTANTLY SATISFACTORY**. Read the whole verse—"Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." That is to say, he who has Christ in him, the hope of Glory, is perfectly satisfied. He could not have been content with all the world beside—learning would only have revealed his ignorance! Fame would only have made him more ambitious! Wealth would have bowed him down with avarice! But Christ in his soul has filled him—he is perfectly satisfied!

His heart is satisfied. He needs no better Person to love than Christ. Once he pined for a lover worthy of his immortal nature, but he has found the Son of God and his soul goes out in rapturous affection towards Him. As for his intellect, the more that expands with ripening years and enlarged experience, the more satisfied he is with the Truth which is in Christ Jesus. He believed it once, but he perceives its Truth more clearly now! He accepted it before on the testimony of others—he receives it now on the testimony of the Holy Spirit within his own spirit! As year rolls after year, he becomes more in love with his Savior than ever he was.

Other things lose their novelty, but Jesus has the dew of his youth. Strange is it, but I am sure it is so, the Gospel never seems so fresh to a man as when he is just about to close his eyes on earth! It never beams with so new and glorious a light as when he has known it longest. The babe in Christ thinks that he has perceived the whole of the doctrines of

the Gospel, but the veteran soldier feels that he is at the doorsteps, and has scarcely entered upon the knowledge of Christ Crucified.

Dear Hearers, I shall leave you when I have put to you again the same question which I have before suggested, namely, "Have you a satisfying life within your soul? Have you a life which makes you feel that there is nothing more for you to desire except to know more of God and more of Christ? Is your soul at peace?" Now suppose the result of these questions should be to make you reply, "I am persuaded I do not know anything about this!" I shall be much more happy if you come to that conclusion, than if you should merely listen to my sermon and think of the preacher only. Forget *me*, but do, I pray you, reason with yourself, "This man has told us very simply and in plain language, about a spiritual, supernatural, inward life—I do not understand it. Then is the man mistaken, or am I in deplorable ignorance?—Which of the two is the fact?"

I invite you to try that question by the standard of God's Word. If you find I am mistaken according to the tenor of this Book, why it need give you no further anxiety! You may pity me for my fanaticism! But if you find that I am right, as I am sure you will, O then, do not hesitate to condemn yourself for ignorance, but rather confess it and seek your chamber and say, "Now, in the name of God, if there is this new life to be had, I will have it! If there is no entering Heaven without it, I will not live without it! If I must be cast away if I possess it not, then I will find it—I will find it now."

Never did a man sincerely seek but what he found the Lord willing to give! Go to your chamber. Look at your past life—survey your mistakes and your sins and confess them! And then lift up your eyes to the Cross and say, "O Jesus, given for sinners, have mercy upon a guilty one—have mercy upon me!" He cannot refuse you! As I read in an old Puritan this week, he says, "Come to Jesus, Sinner! And if you are lame, come lame! And if you say you have no feet, come on your stumps! Come as you can, for He cannot reject you till He denies Himself. He must cease to be faithful before He can reject any sinner that comes humbly to rest upon Him."

Try Him today, you aged people! Seek Him and He will be found of you! You young people, turn not your backs upon Him! And you in middle life, O close in with Him this day, and may He give you the water of life! Did not He say to that woman, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that says to you, Give Me to drink, you would have asked of Him and He would have given you living water"?

Ask and He will give! What? Not ask when it is to be had for the asking? Ah, Lord, we ask! Grant it now for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Romans 8.

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THE WATER OF LIFE

NO. 770

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

“The woman said unto Him, Sir, give me this water.”
John 4:15.

You will remember that our Savior had been speaking to the woman of Samaria concerning living water. He had endeavored to catch her attention by using a metaphor to her work and her position. Water was uppermost in her thoughts and Jesus sanctified the element to His own gracious end. Sitting at the well's mouth, I think I can see His earnest face and note the woman's wondering eyes while He talked to her as she had never been spoken to before concerning water which caused a man never to thirst again.

At first the woman raised questions: the skeptical part of her nature took its turn and quibbled, and carped, and argued. “Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep,” and so on. Do you not see all the elements of the infidel in her? But she is in good hands, and soon she has passed from the period of questioning into that of petitioning, and she cries this time, “Sir, give me this water.” She was still, I am afraid, very ignorant. She did not even understand her own petition. That is clear from the words which follow the text, “That I thirst not, neither come here to draw.”

She was giving a *material* meaning to a *spiritual* utterance. She was thinking of the water that could moisten her lips, when Christ was speaking of that Living Water, His own Grace and love which touches the heart, and the heart only. Her eyes were dark but her face was turned the right way. And, best of all, Jesus was there, who can lead the blind in a way which they know not. It will be all well with her—you may leave her alone and think of yourselves.

I hope I am now conversing with some here who have gotten clear of this woman's ignorance and have passed away also, as she did, from the period of questions. You know best who you are and where you are, but I hope you are desirous to partake of the Divine Grace which saves. You have got away from raising difficulties. You have had enough of that unprofitable hair-splitting and cobweb-making. You feel that you get no good by constantly insinuating doubts as to the possibility of your salvation and questioning whether Christ is a Savior or not.

And so you are about to leave the skeptical business, and try another route. You are now arrived at the point of desiring, not, I hope, the terminus of the route, but only the first or second station. I am glad that you have come so far. If there is Grace to be had, you are saying, “O that I might have it!” If there is pardon, peace, eternal life—you believe all that Jesus Christ says of it and you want to possess it. You are stretching out your hands like the drowning man who is ready to catch at the plank.

Your desires are awake. Your better thoughts are no longer slumbering. You have broken away from indifference and obstinacy—you are now anxious and desirous to obtain salvation by Jesus Christ. It is to you that I wish to speak this evening, and I shall first take the text and try to use it to excite your desire still further by a description of the water spoken of in the text. Secondly, I shall try to assure your hearts by some remarks upon the likelihood of your obtaining this water. And then we shall close by urging you not to leave this House of Prayer until the prayer has been registered in Heaven, “Lord, give me this water; give me this water tonight!”

I. To begin, then, I am TO TRY TO EXCITE YOUR DESIRE BY A DESCRIPTION OF THE WATER SPOKEN OF IN THE TEXT. Water is an essential element in the natural world. There is a *spiritual* world, in which describing we are obliged to use analogies taken from the natural world. And the Grace of God in the mental and the spiritual world is just what water is in the natural world. You need water as a man. You must have it—on certain occasions it becomes an imperative necessity—you must drink or die.

You need Divine Grace as a man—not for your body—but for your *soul*, and it is imperative that you should have it or else your soul will first be in pain here, and then at death the pangs of remorse will seize it, and afterwards an everlasting thirst—an unsatisfied need will be the second death to you. The Grace of God is like water in no less than eight senses. But let me not alarm you. I will not weary you, be sure of that, for I long to win you and weariness will not serve my purpose. I shall only mention the eight parallels with a few remarks, and pass rapidly on from each one.

1. Water, first, is thirst-removing, and so is the Grace of God. The man who drinks water thirsts not. His bodily need is removed. The man who receives the Grace of God in his heart gets that which his nature is lacking, and his painful longings are over. Man by nature is so foolish that he does not know what his nature needs, but he feels that it needs *something*. Awakened men talk to themselves in this fashion, “I need—I do not know what I need—but I know I need something which the world cannot give me, which I cannot find within myself, which my fellow men cannot bestow upon me. I know I need something: O my God, what is it? Tell me what it is!”

Friend, if you are in this condition, the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is just the thing for you, for in it the Lord not only tells you what you need, but He presents it to you! He tells you that you need His love, that if His Grace is shed abroad in your heart, and your sin is pardoned, and you are made to be His child and accepted through Christ Jesus, then will your soul say, “Now I have what I needed. Now I need no more—I can sit still and say, Blessed be God that my desires are full. The aching void which the world could never fill is now filled to overflowing, and my soul has what it was always needing though it did not know what it really needed. I can sit down now perfectly content!”

It is a grand thing for a man to be able to say, “I am satisfied,” but the genuine Believer in Christ can say that. “You have satisfied my mouth with good things, so that my youth is renewed as the eagle’s.” Believers in Jesus carry the pearl of content in their bosoms. Jesus takes away the

restless spirit and gives us rest. Jesus is the door that fits the heart, and when He is near to us He shuts out the world's cold and heat and gives us sweet content.

O ambitious Man, you that run after something and you cannot tell what it is that can gratify your immortal spirit, turn to the Cross! At the foot of it there springs a sacred fountain of soul-satisfying delight, and if you will but stoop and drink, your ambition shall be over and you shall want no more. There is satisfaction for the deepest longings of heart, and head, and conscience in the fountain which springs from the wounds of Jesus! Faith is the silver cup. Dip it into the overflowing stream and drink! O Holy Spirit, put the cup to my poor thirsty Brother's lips!

2. Secondly, water is also life-preserving. In the wilderness, where there is no water, the lips becomes chapped. The skin is dried—the tongue is like a firebrand, and the mouth is like an oven—and the weary traveler must drink or die. O for a draught of water there! A bag of diamonds could not buy a flagon there! Priceless is the life draught. And far out on the salt, salt sea, with—

***“Water, water everywhere,
But not a drop to drink,”***

the mariner, though he may seek to satisfy himself with the brine around him, feels that it will be death sooner or later to him unless he can get some pure, clear, refreshing drops of water to drink.

Drop, you heavens in pity, or let some friendly boat see the castaways. Such is the Grace of God to the soul of man. The whole world over there is nothing that can save a soul apart from the Grace of God. Your good works can no more save you than the salt sea can give the sailor drink. Ceremonies can no more fill your heart with peace, and give it life, than the hot sand of the wilderness can quench the thirst of the weary traveler. God must lead you to the river of Eternal Life flowing out of the Rock that was struck!

You must get Grace through Jesus Christ, or hope shall never dawn upon you—despair's midnight shall be your everlasting portion where lost spirits wail out their undying lives in one endless death. O Soul, if you get God's Grace, you shall never die! Do you believe this? If that Grace of God shall come flowing into your soul, you shall possess eternal life, an immortal principle which shall bid defiance to the grave and make you sing in the very jaws of death! He that drinks of this water shall live in Christ forever.

“He that lives and believes in Me shall never die.” “He that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.” This Grace of God, then, is life-preserving, as well as thirst-quenching! Have you found it so? Friend, I cannot afford to let you hear me, and yet escape a squeeze or two. If you forget this sermon, it shall not be because I did not press you to remember it.

3. Water, in the third place, is filth-purging. Man seeks no more than to get to the stream to wash when he is defiled. Many and many a time in passing through a country, the poor traveler comes to a brook so clear that he can see his face reflected in it, and he stoops down and washes his brow again and again, and takes his bath and goes his way all bright

and shining as though he had exchanged sorrow for gladness, and received the oil of joy for mourning! Now, the guilty sinner, and such are we *all* by nature, however foul he may be, has but to stoop down at the river of Eternal Grace and wash and he shall be clean!

This stream can take out spots which nothing else can remove. Our sin is of such a crimson dye, naturally, that it might incarnate the Atlantic before it should be washed away. But this Water of Life can do it—it takes away the stain of blasphemy and lust. It removes the pollution of theft and murder. All manner of sin shall be forgiven unto that man who comes to the Cross and trusts in Jesus. Whoever believes in the world's great Redeemer shall find full and complete pardon for every offense that he has committed.

O try it, you blackest of the black, if you are here! You who have gone to the greatest extent of sin, cast your guilty soul into this fountain and see if you do not rise from it with your flesh like unto that of a little child, clean and pure, and not a spot remaining on you! This filth-removing is the Grace of God streaming from the Cross where Jesus suffered in our place the wrath which was due to us for our transgressions—

***“Calvary’s wonders let us trace,
Justice magnified in Grace.
Mark the purple streams and say,
Thus my sins were washed away.”***

Friend, can you do this by faith, trusting for pardon in the blood of God's dear Son?

4. Water, again, is well known, very frequently, to be softening. There are some things which, when laid in water, soon lose their hardness and become soft and pliable. This water of the Grace of God, which it is my longing desire to commend to you, has a marvelous softening power. Adamant millstone—yes, the nether millstone, northern iron and steel—have been melted when laid to soak in this fountain. The hardest heart yields before the power of the love of God revealed in Christ Jesus.

I think I hear one of you exclaim, “That is good news for me! I know that Christ can pardon me, but I cannot feel my sin as I ought. I am such a stiff-necked sinner, so hardened, so perverse, I cannot feel my need as I would wish to.” Soul, if the Grace of God shall flow upon your heart it shall turn the stone, by a wondrous transformation, into flesh at once! There is no stubbornness which the Grace of God cannot overcome. What a blessed thing it is for the preacher that he has not to give his hearers soft hearts, nor even to find tender hearts in them to begin with! How delightful it is for him to remember that he preaches a Gospel which works wonders—wonders even greater than the rod of Moses—for when with the Gospel we smite even a rock, penitential streams gush forth, and yet more—the rocky soul is itself dissolved under a sense of sin.

O that some Saul of Tarsus might be washed by this stream tonight! He would no longer be the enemy of God's Church, but would seek out some poor disciple to ask him what he must do to be saved. It is a heart-softening water. May the Lord give it to every one of us who have hard hearts remaining! Gladly would I bathe in it anew, that I might the more tenderly feel for you. Friend, will you never feel for yourself?

5. In the fifth place, this water has the property, like earthly water, of being fire-quenching. There is nothing like water, after all, with all your new inventions, for putting out fire. We run for the engines and turn on the main—what can we do better? But there are fires that burn within the human heart! Deep volcanic fires fed from the depths of Hell! Furious flames which roar within the inner man and soon roll over in torrents of sin—lava in his daily life! These are fires which never will be put out except by *heavenly* water.

Oh, that fire of lust! How many a man has been consumed by it! It has devoured him as the fire devours the stubble. But when the Grace of God comes, how soon that fire is dampened and even quenched forever! And there are other fires which burn in the soul—the fire of envy and of malice, the flames of anger and of unholy desire—how these will rage and glow until the Grace of God comes! I know it puzzles many a man to know how he could live without such-and-such sins. “Oh,” he says, “I could not live without them! I have fallen into the habit of them, and I must have them.” Ah, but you shall be made a *new man*, such a new man that if you were to meet your old self, you would avoid the wretch or struggle with him in deadly hand-to-hand combat!

Let me tell you, you will never be on good terms with your old self so long as you live. You will hate that old self of yours and it will be your daily desire to kill him. You will try to drive the nails through his hands and feet, and crucify him upon the Cross of Jesus! And you will not be content unless you can kill him daily, mortifying him with his affections and his lusts. Oh, mighty Grace of God that can put out the flames of sin! O Sinner, the very flames of Hell are put out by this Grace of God! I mean so far as the saved soul is concerned—for the soul that is washed in this fountain—there is no Hell in which God can punish it. How can He punish a *pardoned* sinner? How can he that is in Christ Jesus be cast into the flames?—

**“No condemnation now I dread,
For justice smote my Surety’s head.”**

“Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” He that has Christ to be his Substitute is beyond all fear of Hell. He can look down into that dread abyss and feel that there is not a burning coal there for him, and that whoever may perish, yet he, being in Christ Jesus, can never die. Friend, have the fires in your soul met with this glorious Antagonist? Are the engines of Grace casting their floods upon your soul? Let conscience give its reply, and let it have your ear.

6. A sixth property is one that is not found in ordinary water, and that is that it is a spring-creating water. Wherever the Water of Life falls it makes a new spring which begins to bubble up directly. By this I mean that if the Grace of God enters into a man’s heart it is an immortal principle, and, as the Savior says, “Out of the midst of him shall flow rivers of living water.” “The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”

What a great difference there is between a pool and a running spring! Frequently in crossing the Alps, when one has been very faint and thirsty, it has been a sweet rest to sit down by a running spring and wash one’s

face and feet, or bathe one's self in it. You may have walked till you are very footsore—you sit down to bathe your feet, and if you have found a mere pool, you will stir the bottom of it, and it will soon be very filthy—but when it is a running spring, you can sit and wash, and wash, and wash again, and if you do stir the sand at the bottom, the earth is all gone in a moment, because the water still comes bubbling up clear and fresh, and therefore it is always clean.

So it is with the Grace of God in a Christian: it never gets flat, and dull, and dead—and the daily pollutions and washing of our feet do not stain it—because it is a *living* spring and arises from those “fresh springs” which David sings about which he rejoiced to find in the Lord his God. It is very hard work to play the part of a Christian if you have not a spring within you. For a man to have to keep up, year after year, a profession without life, why, it must be slavish work! Do you think that I would come and take a seat in this place, or in any other place of worship, and occupy it merely because it was respectable to do so if I had no care for it? I would as soon be a slave!

Base is the man who even in his religion is the serf of tyrant fashion! To come up to the House of God because you love to be there, and to sing because you cannot help singing, and to unite with God's people because “birds of a feathers” must “flock together” and you love to be among them—why there is something in that, something which tastes of reality and sincerity! He who has no great deeps of godliness in his soul makes a bondage of religion. He lives the life of a dog and does not even get the crumbs from under the table as his portion. Mark you, Brethren, it is harder to preach without this spring than it is to *hear* without it, because if you have not a spring in you, you may go foraging this dead man's books, and that other dead man's stores to find a subject, but you will soon run dry.

But if God the Holy Spirit is a spring within you, you may remain full of the precious Truth of God, and pour it out so long as God shall give you utterance—and you shall not run dry! What a blessing it is when the Living Water makes a spring within the Christian! What a curse to be one of the stagnant ponds of formality exhaling the putridity of hypocrisy! Friend, where are you? I must have my hand on you again! What are you in this matter as in the sight of God?

7. Seventh, it is fruit-producing water. What fruit would there be upon the trees, what pasture in the meadows, what harvest in the field if it were not for the rain? Everything would be barren without water and even where there is fruit, if there is not, also, a fair share of water, what poor stuff it is! When I was in the country in June, and there were some heavy showers, I could not help thinking what good they were doing. There was the wheat just needing plumping out, and the rain came to fill it and to make the ears full. It might have been wheat, of course, without it, but the ear is likely to be more full of grain when the drought is gone.

So, Brothers and Sisters, we may produce some little fruit when we have but little Grace, but if we had more Grace, how that fruit would plump out! How would our fruit be more rich, and fat, and mellow! How would our service to God be improved and perfected if we had more of this

fruit-producing water! You cannot serve God without His Grace. You cannot give Him true praise, nor true prayer, nor true service, nor anything that is acceptable unless He first shall give you of the rain of His Grace—Grace for Grace. “By their fruits shall you know them.” Friend, what fruit have you? O that Grace may turn the barren fig tree into a good fruit-bearing tree!

8. And lastly upon this point, it is Heaven-ascending water. You know there is a rule of this sort in hydrostatics, that water will rise to its own level. Not long ago I thought such things were gone out. I was riding along where the road was in a little cutting, and a spout was actually taken over the road to carry water from one field to the other, it was dripping fast upon the passengers and making an ugly place in the road.

Now they might easily have taken the little stream *under* the road and up again in a pipe, but I suppose when the spout was made it was not known to those who made it that water will rise as high as its source. Now, the Grace of God will rise as high as *its* source. If you and I have grace that began with *us*, it will never get higher than we are. If you have grace that the priest gave you when you were christened, it will never get higher than the priest. But if you get the true Grace of God which descends from Heaven, it will take you as high as the New Jerusalem from which it came!

High up in the Throne of God are the everlasting springs of Divine Mercy. At the foot of Divine Sovereignty it wells up a spring, clear as crystal, pure without a stain, and it flows down to earth, leaping down by the way of the Cross. And it will ascend as high as its Source. It will go up to the Throne again—that is where it came from—and it will rise to its own level and it will float you up there with it. If, by the Grace of God, you have been taken up by the stream of Jesus’ dying love, it will take you up to its own Source, and where God is there you shall be.

Because you have been made to taste, to feel, and to be saturated with the Grace that came from God, from a Divine Source, you shall also have a Divine portion forever. The rivers go to the sea because they originally came from the sea. Did not the sun kiss the sea and make it ascend to him in clouds, that it might descend in rain? And so all the rivers of Grace in us shall flow into the sea from where they came—the bottomless, shoreless sea of everlasting love—because that is the eternal Source and Fountain of them all! Clouds of suffering went up from the heart of Jesus to return to earth in showers of mercy for poor sinners. Friend, do you know anything about this in your very soul?

Now, I have thus spoken of the Grace of God which is revealed in Jesus Christ. I only hope that someone here may say, “I wish I were washed in it! I wish my thirst were satisfied with it! I wish that my soul were made to overflow with it! I wish that I might be lifted up to Heaven though its energy!” Oh, then, Soul, I am glad you have the desire! Turn it into a prayer and let the prayer be the text, “Give me this water!”

II. And now, with great brevity, indeed, we shall take the second point, that is, TO CHEER YOUR HEARTS WITH SOME REFLECTIONS UPON THE LIKELIHOOD OF YOUR GETTING THIS LIVING WATER. I am supposing, now, that you really want it. If you say, “Sir, give me this water,”

you will have it. And I will tell you why I think you will have it—because, in the first place, I do not think that an ordinary man would deny another water. If I stood by a well, and you approached me, and said, “Sir, give me this water,” I should say, “As much as you like of it”

Who would not give water? It is the most common of gifts. Even in the East, with all the value that is attached to water there, the Savior mentions that as one of the most ordinary acts of benevolence. “Whoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, He shall in no wise lose his reward.” Who will deny another a glass of water?

Then note that according to our text, the giving of Saving Grace is to the great Redeemer no more than the giving of water to you! Grace is a priceless gift for you to receive, but to Jesus it is a delight to give it. If you give water, you have a little less water left—but if Christ gives Grace, He has not any Grace the less. He still has as much Grace in the inexhaustible fullness which dwells in His adorable Person. As the sun is just as bright for all its shining, and the ocean still full, notwithstanding all the clouds exhaled from it, so Jesus is as abundant as ever in pardoning mercy and saving power! I tell you that for Jesus Christ to be gracious is as much according to His Nature as it is for you and for me to be generous enough to give away water.

The blessing of poor needy souls is no labor with Jesus, no loss to Him, no tax upon Him. All the pain and cost He has borne long ago, and *now* to save the guilty is His reward in which He sees the recompense of His travail. Now, if in this place the Grace of God had been compared to gold, that metaphor would have suited well to express its value. But you would have said, “Who gives gold away?” But here it is compared with water—water which man freely gives—and which our Lord Jesus never denies to those who seek it of Him. I do not believe, then, if an ordinary man will give away water—and Christ compares His Grace with water—that He will let you say, “Sir, give me this water,” and then send you away without it! Friend, be not so unbelieving as to think that the Lord Jesus is ungenerous and unkind, but ask for the Living Water and it shall be given you.

Again, even if you would refuse water to some persons, I am very sure that you would not refuse it to a thirsty person. If you saw him panting and the hot sweat starting to his brow, and if he could scarcely speak, but had only strength enough to gasp out, “Sir, if you would but give me a cup of water, I would bless you for it with all my heart,” why, you would run and bring out the sparkling crystal and feel a great pleasure in seeing him drink. Would you not? I am sure you would!

Now, if you are a thirsty soul I am quite sure Christ will give you the Water of Life. He will give it to any that ask, for He refuses none—and to you He will give it so quickly that He will seem to give it twice over. He will not let you thirst in vain, for has He not promised, “When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue fails for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys. I will make the wilderness a pool of water and the dry land springs of water.” “Oh,” says one, “how I desire to be saved! How I long to have Christ!”

You may have Him, then, for Jesus Christ never did deny a thirsty sinner, never did refuse to give of His substance to the poor, His clothes to the naked, or His medicine to the sick. He came on purpose to bless such. I say that in all likelihood you shall have the blessing if you will but pray earnestly, "Lord, give me this water." No, more, there is a *certainty* of it! Another reason gives me comfort for you, and that is there certainly is plenty of it, for the Apostle John says he saw "a river of the Water of Life." Now, nobody is afraid, when there is a deep, broad flowing river to draw from! Who fears to exhaust the Thames or drain the Danube by his thirst? Moreover, as John Bunyan reminds us, a river is free to everybody to drink.

The source of it is private. Many rivers rise in a park or private grounds, but the river itself is public. As soon as it becomes a considerable stream it becomes a public highway, and a universal water supply. It is free, it flows the way it wills. Rivers possess a sort of sovereignty—you cannot bid them flow in a straight course, or order them by rules of geometry. They will have their own sweet will. If the river chooses to go by one town and not by another, it will have its way! Who may try to stop it? But while it is sovereign in its course and direction, yet it is free for public use. The cattle come to drink and even a poor dog is not refused when he gets to the river's brink. If he wants to lap and cool his feverish tongue in the dog days, who shall say no to him?

And you, poor Sinner, you shall find the Grace of God free to you, for there is enough of it—it is up to the banks—no, it overflows the banks, there is a flood of it! Such a flood that there never can by any possibility be any lack, though all men should come. Though 10,000 times 10,000 should come, there would still be found sufficient Grace in Jesus to meet the needs of all—for whom the Lord brings, the Lord can provide for in Christ Jesus. The Grace of God is sovereign in its choice and discriminating in its course, but still it is free to all thirsty ones who long to partake of its everlasting fullness.

I am comforted, also, by another thought, namely, that this river is on purpose for the thirsty. I am sure I do not know what there is mercy in the world for unless it is for those who need it because of their sin and misery. What could Christ have made an Atonement for except for sinners? It is not possible that the beloved Physician came all the way from Heaven to heal those who were well and needed no medicine! It is not likely that He opens His great granaries to feed the nations who have a harvest of their own! It must be that our Joseph has stored up the wheat for hungry perishing ones!

O you that need, come and welcome, for the Fountain is opened especially for you! It flows that such as you may come and drink. Friend, shall our invitations have no power with you? O Holy Spirit, make men willing in this the day of Your power! I feel sure, too, that you who seek the Lord will find His Grace because there never has been one refused yet. A dear Brother, who I believe is now present, told me that he owed his conversion in early life to hearing a sentence or two of a sermon from a man whose name he never knew but whom he heard preach standing on a log of wood on a village green.

He had never gone to listen to the Gospel anywhere, but happened to be straying through the village and he heard the man say that there never was a soul that sincerely sought God through Jesus Christ, but what ultimately, sooner or later, it was brought into a state of peace. And let me say to you all—it may sink into some heart and one day yield it comfort—it shall not be said by you in eternity that you sought the Lord and He would not hear you! I remember what comfort this gave to me when I heard my mother say that she had heard many wicked things in the world, but she never heard a man wicked enough to say that he had sincerely sought God through Jesus Christ and yet had been refused.

When I heard that, I thought *I* could say it, for I was confident that I had sought the Lord, but I had had no comfortable answer. But I have never said it. I have never had cause to say it, for before I could be driven to that state of despair I looked unto Him and was lightened, and so I am persuaded it shall be with you! There never was one refused who said, “Give me this water,” and you shall not be the first!

To close this point, it is to Jesus Christ’s glory to give of His saving mercy, and therefore be certain that He will not withhold it. It cannot make Christ more glorious to deny a poor sinner His mercy. It cannot be to His profit to shut His door in a seeking sinner’s face. It is impossible that the bleeding Lamb should cease to be pitiful to poor bleeding hearts. By everything that can make the name of the great Physician glorious. By every pang of His soul on account of sinners I am persuaded that He will not deny you! Why, the more a physician cures, the greater is his fame! The more the Savior saves, the higher is His honor! The more Jesus Christ can bless, the more lofty will be the praise and the more exalted that mighty shout of “Hallelujah,” that shall go up from 10,000 times 10,000 of sinners who have been washed in His blood!

Come, then, seeking Sinner! Come now, and by humble faith trust in the Mediator’s sacrifice. Wipe those eyes of yours. Be of good cheer! Be bold in heart! He calls you! There is room at His table! The door is open! There is room in His heart! He died for those who rest in Him! If you wish for Christ, He wishes for you! If you long to go to the feast, He wants guests as much as you want the feast! Only trust Him! God help you to trust Him by His Spirit and you shall live.

III. The last thing was to be to urge you tonight, before you leave this house—but my urging will be of no service unless God the Holy Spirit owns it—**TO URGE YOU TO PRAY THE PRAYER OF THE TEXT.** A desire is like seed in the bag, but prayer sows it in the furrow. A desire is like water in the bottle, but prayer drinks it. Now I commend to you the prayer of my text—“Sir, give me this water.” Begin then, your prayer by honoring Christ. Do not call Him, “Sir,” but call Him, “Lord.” She gave Him the highest title that her respect could accord. She did not know Him in any other capacity, so she called Him, “Sir.”

Now call Jesus, “Lord,” for you will get no mercy if you dishonor Christ. Think of Him as God’s only Son suffering for sinners. Call him, “Lord.” Can you do that? If you reject His Divinity, you shut yourself out of His kingdom! He must be owned as Lord and God as well as Savior. “Oh,” you say, “I have long ago called Him Lord. I know Him to be Divine. I rejoice in

the thought of His eternal power and Godhead. I would honor Him with all that I have.” Well, then, you have well begun, but may Divine Grace make you go further!

Now in the next place, if you would pray this prayer aright, notice it, and confess your undeservingness. It is not, “Sir, *sell* me this water,” but, “Sir, *give* me this water.” Confess that it is a *gift*. You shall never have it otherwise. Away with your merit-mongering. Away with your trusting in your prayers, and your tears, and your sense of need! Mercy must be given or else you shall never have it. “Sir, give me, give me, give me this water. O Lord, give me Grace, or else I die! Give it to me of Your free mercy because You have promised to save the chief of sinners. Give it to me, Lord. I have done with boasting. I have done with the Pharisee’s thanking You that I am not as other men are. I come with empty hands. I come naked, poor, and miserable! Give it to me! I have nothing to buy it with. Oh, give it to me without money and without price! Give me Your salvation!”

Friend, does your pride kick at this? Be wise, I pray you, and bow your neck to the yoke of Divine Grace. Take care, too, that you make it a *personal* prayer—“Lord, give it to *me*.” Never mind your neighbors just now. Care for them after you are saved. Look after their salvation when your own is secure—but just now you have first to do with yourself. Your children? Yes, pray for them. Your relatives? Yes, consider them. But meanwhile, *now* it is *yourself*—your own proper self that is concerned. Do not think of the whole congregation. Think now personally of your own soul, and say, “Lord, give me this water.”

I mean you, Mary. And you, Thomas. And you, John—let the prayer come from your own lips as distinctly being from yourself. As you sit or stand now in this House of Prayer, silently breathe the petition—“Lord, give Your Grace to me, even *me*.”—

**“Pass me not, O gracious Father,
Sinful though my heart may be.
You might curse me, but the rather
Let Your mercy light on me,
Even me. Pass me not,
O tender Savior!
Let me love and cling to You!
I am longing for Your favor.
When You come, call for me,
Even me.”**

Once more, I want you to offer this prayer in the *present* tense—not, “Give me this water *tomorrow*”—but, “*Tonight* give it to me, Lord, save my soul *now*!”

The worst of most of men is this—they want to be saved, but it must be when they die. You would serve the devil all your life and then cheat him of your soul at the last? Mean, miserable thought! If God is God, serve Him, serve Him now! And may the Lord have us in life as we hope He may have us in our death. “Give me this water.” But you are going out next Wednesday—that will be awkward! “Yes,” said some young woman at a revival meeting, who was in much concern, “but I am going to a ball tomorrow.” And so everything good was put off for that! But she dropped down dead at the ball!

God grant there may be no such cases of postponing here, lest we postpone ourselves into eternity where there are no acts of pardon past. May we have Christ now! We may not live to see tomorrow's sun. Albeit that the sun is well-near gone down, yet the light of this evening may not have gone before our life may be ended. How near to death we stand, and yet we scarcely think of it! Right on the edge of our graves sometimes we are, and yet we sport and laugh as though we had a lease on life! You forget death, most of you. The cemetery is so far out of town but still you should not quite forget, for the hearse goes to and fro with awful regularity, and the Church bell that tolls is not rusty! And those words, "Earth to earth, dust to dust, ashes to ashes," are still familiar to the ears of some of us.

It will soon be *your* turn to die. You, too, must gather up your feet in the bed and meet your father's God. God grant that you may then be found right with Him. Little do I know for whom these sentences may have a special bearing, but they may have a bearing, dear Friend, upon you! I see some of you dressed in black—you have had to go to the grave mourning because of others. That black will be worn by others soon for *you*, and the place that now knows you shall know you no more forever.

Oh, by the frailty of life, by the near approach of the Master, or by the certainty of death, I pray you see to it that you breathe the prayer, "Lord give me of Your Grace." The Lord help you to pray it. Amen.

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THE AXE AT THE ROOT— A TESTIMONY AGAINST PUSEYITE IDOLATRY NO. 695

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 17, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”
John 4:23, 24.***

THE woman's conscience had been aroused by Christ's declaration of her sin. He was touching upon matters of the most vital importance and her depraved heart naturally shrunk from the lancet. From the truth which was becoming inconveniently personal she flew to that natural resort of the carnal mind, namely, to religious discourse upon points of outward observance. Instead of confessing her sin and asking how it may be forgiven, she said, "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, and You say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship."

The carnal heart dreads the contact of spiritual truth and finds a most convenient way of avoiding it by running to questions of holy places, holy times, and holy customs. Jesus, to her astonishment, informs her that the question which she had asked was of only temporary importance. There had been a time when it was well to know that salvation was of the Jews and that the rival temple of the Samaritans was an imposter—but He says in effect to her, "Woman, believe Me that question is of no importance now, for the hour is coming, yes, and now is, when the external is to be abolished and the ritualistic is to be put away, and a purer, simpler, and more spiritual worship is to take its place."

The worship which our Lord Jesus Christ established involved a change. That is implied in the expressions used. He announced to her that the hour was just then come when all questions about this or that place must cease and be superseded by *spiritual* worship. Our Lord gave a very brief, but I think a very instructive description of what this worship was to be. If you carefully observe the words you will see that it was a distinguishing kind of worship, for He mentions *true* worshippers. There had been but little distinction before—so long as they all passed through the same outward form they all seemed to be worshippers.

But a distinction was now to be made clear and manifest. Merely outward worshippers were now *false* worshippers and only those who pressed into *spiritual* worship were to be regarded as true. The Gospel of Christ is a great discerner and an accurate judge. Christ has the winnowing fan in His hands. He sits as a refiner. He is compared by the Prophet to the "refiner's fire" and to "fuller's soap." And therefore you see He discerns at once between worshippers and worshippers.

There they stand both alike with bended heads, perhaps both repeating the same words, but the Savior distinguishes—"there is," said He, "a false worshipper, and there is a true worshipper, and he alone who is spiritual is true." He announces further that under the Gospel God is to be worshipped in the Character of a Father—true worshippers shall worship the *Father*. This had not been the case before. The Lord had been adored as the Adonai and revered as Jehovah, but to say, "Our Father which are in Heaven" remains the prerogative of the enlightened Christian who, having believed in *Christ*, has received power to become a son of God!

True Christian worship addresses God, not merely as Creator and Preserver, or as the great Lord of the Universe, but as One who is very near of kin to us—our *Father*—beloved of our souls. Jesus likewise states that Gospel worship is to be of a kind which does not result merely from the man himself, but comes from God, and is a work of Divine Grace. This is implied in the sentence, "The Father is seeking such to worship Him," as if no true worship would come from any man unless God sought it.

True devotion under the Christian dispensation is not merely human but also Divine. It is the work of the Spirit in the soul returning to its Author, or as our hymn puts it—

***"Prayer is the breath of God in man,
Returning from where it came."***

These are very grave points and draw a broad line of distinction between the living worship of the chosen of God and the dead formal worship of the world which lies in the Wicked One. Furthermore, the Savior goes on to say that they who worship God are to worship Him "in spirit." No longer with the visible sacrifice of a lamb, but *inwardly* trusting in Him who is the Lamb of God's Passover. No more with sprinkled blood of goats, but heartily relying upon the blood once shed for many. No longer worshipping God with ephod, breastplate, and miter, but with prostrate soul, with uplifted faith and with the faculties not of the body but of the inward spirit.

We who worship God under the Christian dispensation are no longer to fancy that bodily exercise in worship profits anything, that genuflections and contortions are of any value—but that *acceptable* worship is wholly mental, inward, and spiritual. But He adds, lest there should seem an omission in the description, "must worship Him in spirit and in *truth*." For though we should profess to worship God only with the spirit and so despise *forms*, yet unless the soul shall truly love, and really adore, and sincerely bow—our worship will be as unacceptable as though it were formal and outward.

See then, Brothers and Sisters, putting the whole three together, the worship under the Christian dispensation which God ordains and which He accepts through Christ Jesus is a worship distinguished by an inward vitality from the outward worship of the carnal mind. It is the worship of a child towards a father, feeling within himself a kinship with the Divine. It is a worship worked *in us by* God the Holy Spirit, because the Father has sought us out and taught us how to worship Him. It is a worship which is not outward, but of the inner man and occupies not hands, eyes and feet, but heart and soul and spirit. And it is a worship which is not professional and formal, but real, hearty, earnest, and so acceptable before God.

Let me give a sketch of this worship as it actually exhibits itself. A man may have been to a place of worship from his youth up and he may have fallen into a habit of repeating a sacred form every morning and every evening. He may even have been a tolerably diligent reader of the Word of God! And yet, though this may have been continued for sixty years and more, he may never once have worshipped God after the fashion prescribed in the text. But look at him! The Father seeks him! The Truth of God comes home to his soul and in the light of that Truth he feels himself a sinner—and feeling himself so, he cries, “Father, I have sinned.”

That is his first true worship! See, Brothers and Sisters, his spirit feels it and he means what he says. All that he said before was as nothing, but that first cry, “I have sinned,” has in it the vitality of worship. He hears the story of the Cross, the full Atonement made by God’s appointed Sacrifice and he prays, “Lord, I believe in Jesus, and I trust Him.” Here is another specimen of true worship. Here is the spirit resting upon God’s appointed sacrifice and reverencing God’s way of salvation by accepting it. Being saved by the precious blood of Jesus, he cries, “Father, I bless You that I am saved! I thank You that my sins are washed away.” This is true worship.

Whether a man sings in the assembly, or sings alone—whether he prays aloud, or prays in silence—if he feels gratitude to God for pardon received, he offers the true worship. The whole of the Christian’s life—consisting as it must of dealings with the invisible God through Jesus Christ by his heart—is a life of worship! And when at last he comes to die, you perceive that his worship will not cease with death because it has always been *spiritual* and did not depend upon the body. So that while the outward man fails him, the inward spiritual man grows more strong in devotion than ever it was before. And when at last the spirit leaves its earthly tenement and is disembodied, it has still a song for God and throughout eternity its spiritual worship can continue—which worship must have been suspended if it had been connected with the body and not with the immortal part of man.

If I understand the Savior’s words, and I hope I do, not only theoretically but practically, He means that those of us who are His true worshippers must worship Him with our better and our nobler part—our *soul*—with all the power she has, must pay reverence to the unseen God. Brethren, this is the kind of worship that men will not render to God. They will render Him anything else but this! And until effectual Grace shall work such worship in man’s heart it is obnoxious to him! He will worship God with robes, and incense, and flowers, and banners, but he will not consent to worship Him in spirit and in truth.

I. I shall proceed to my work by giving A BRIEF OUTLINE OF THE HISTORY OF WORSHIP in connection with the doctrine that we are now to worship God more manifestly than ever in spirit and in truth. It appears from Scripture that worship before the flood was of the very simplest form. The outward ordinances were very few—the chief of them being the offering of sacrifice. This was probably instituted by God Himself when He clothed Adam and his wife with skins of beasts.

It has been thought that He then indicated to them the slaughter of beasts for sacrifice. Certain it is that the first worship of fallen man was by sacrifice. There was connected with this, no doubt, the meeting of gra-

cious hearts for prayer and also the ministration of the Truth of God, for Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied concerning the coming of the Lord. So that they appear to have had what was tantamount to a ministry, and the sons of God had appointed times for meeting.

But this simple form of worship seems to have been too high, too spiritual for fallen man at first. At any rate the seed of the serpent could not endure it, for Cain, at the very first commenced a schism. Instead of bringing a sacrifice by blood he brought a sacrifice of the fruits of the ground. Perhaps he was a man of taste and desired to bring something that should look more decorous than a poor bleeding victim. He would lay those rich grapes, those ruddy fruits upon the altar, and those fair flowers that gemmed the bosom of the earth—surely he might consecrate those! At any rate he was the first man who set up taste and self as the guide in religious worship—and God had no respect unto his sacrifice.

The two stood by their altars. Abel, by faith, exercising spiritual worship offered a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain. Cain's offering was possibly even more fair to look upon but it was of his own invention. Abel was accepted, but Cain discarded. The ultimate result of man's sinfulness in connection with this early type of worship was general neglect of *all* religion. The sons of God seem to have maintained their simplicity for a time, but at last, by unholy alliances with the ungodly race, there arose a widespread neglect of all thought of God so that they were married and given in marriage. They ate and they drank till the day when the Flood came and swept them all away.

Depraved nature thus refused to render spiritual worship. After the Flood we find worship restored in very much the same form—let us distinguish it as the Patriarchal method of worship. The head of a family was accustomed to offer sacrifice, and no doubt if Job is taken as a type, family prayer and household religion were maintained. But you see very early the indication that man, although he could not forget God—for the deluge had struck to the very heart of manhood an awful dread of the Most High—began to interpose symbols and visible objects between God and himself.

The use of teraphim became very common, so that even in the house of Abraham's ancestors teraphs were found. And when we come down to the time of Jacob, we find one of his wives stealing her father's images, thus proving that Laban, one of a once God-fearing family, had become a worshipper of God through the medium of images. Thus was it among those who still had some knowledge of God—but the nations, being dispersed—soon lost the pure idea of the invisible One, and worshipped gods of their own devising.

From the plagues of Egypt, which were no doubt intended to be a blow against all Egypt's gods, we find out that in addition to the worship of the calf or bull, the Egyptians paid religious reverence to flies, the river Nile, the elements, beetles, and all kinds of creatures. And throughout the world, as a general rule, through the introduction of visible symbols of the unseen Being, the Lord Himself had become forgotten and spiritual worship had almost ceased, except in one elect household.

And even there, alas, how fallen had spirituality become! Keeping to the line of Divine Grace, we shall now introduce you to the ceremonial form of worship which God instituted after the more spiritual method had entirely

broken down. He saw that the children of Israel whom He loved were but a mob of slaves. Their spirits had been broken by bitter bondage. Like the poor African race of the present day, they seemed as a whole incapable of rising at once to mental dignity and needed to pass through a generation or two before they could, as a nation, achieve manly self-government.

So when He brought His people out of Egypt, the Lord did not try them with an altogether spiritual form of worship. Because of the hardness of their hearts, among other reasons, though He was still to be worshipped as a Spirit, yet He gave them certain outward signs by which they might be enabled to understand His Character. A great deal has been made of the symbolical worship of the Jew, as if it were an excuse for the man-made symbolism of the Roman and Anglican Antichrist. We would remark that nothing ought to be made of it at all, now, since it has been positively declared many times in Scripture that the age of the shadow has gone, and that the age of the substance now reigns.

Whatever may or may not have been the excellence of the old Jewish economy—and being divinely ordained, God forbid we should say a word against it—yet the Apostle Paul always talks of it as being but a yoke of bondage to which we are no more to submit ourselves—being but the shadow and not the very image of the good things which were to come. And he speaks of it as a thing so passed away, that to go back to it is to go back to the rudiments, and not to go onward in the full-grown manliness of Christianity. If there were no other passage, my text might show that the ceremonialism of the Jew is no excuse whatever for ceremonialism *now*, but that we ought to stand in direct contrast to that, hearing the Savior declare that whatever may have been *before* His time, the hour had come when the true worshipper must worship the Father in spirit and in truth.

Remember that symbolic worship was suitable merely to the infancy of God's Church, and that now, having received the Spirit of God to dwell in us, it would be as unsuitable as would the swaddling bands of babyhood to full-grown men. Besides, even while it existed it was spoken of as soon to be superseded by a new and better covenant. It was frequently broken through by Divine authority. Elijah, though not of the house of Levi, offered sacrifice! Prophet after Prophet, as he arose, manifested and declared by his actions that God did not intend to give the Levitical form of worship undivided sway, but that when He poured His Spirit upon special men they were to break through all ritual regulations in order to show that they were not meant to be fixed and permanent.

It is not sufficiently remembered that the most of God's people in the Jewish nation had very little to do with this symbolic worship. When they were all in the wilderness and gathered round the one tent called the tabernacle, they might all see the fiery cloudy pillar. But when they came into the land which God had given them, what had they, most of them, to see? Why the Temple itself—the most would only see once or twice in a year. Scarcely anyone ever saw the ark, the cherubim, or the golden candlestick—they were always within the veil—and only once in the year did the High Priest enter that sacred place.

Even the place where the sacrifices were carried on continually, no one entered but the priests. So to at least eleven tribes out of twelve the ceremonies were mainly invisible. Little was done outside the court of the

priests. Most of the sacrifices and the typology of Judaism was as much a hidden thing as the spiritual things of God are to us at the present day. And thus there was a great exercise of the spiritual faculties and comparatively little of outward display!

Moreover, it is to be remembered that there was nothing whatever visible for the Jew to worship. It is not so in the symbols of that false church which is trying to raise up and revive the beggarly elements! There men bow before a cross! A piece of bread inside a box is revered and treated with worship! Cast-off cloths and rotten rags, called relics, are the objects of adoration! But there was nothing like this with the Jews. They did worship *toward* the temple, but they did not *adore* the temple, or Mercy Seat, the altar, or any other emblem.

Is it not said expressly, "You saw no similitude"? When God descended upon Sinai, and all the people worshipped there, they saw nothing which they dared to worship—God was to them still invisible—they had to exercise their *mental* faculties in the worship of the invisible God. When at one time it was thought that the miraculous powers of the bronze serpent entitled it to be worshipped, Hezekiah called it Nehushtan, that is, a piece of brass, and broke it to pieces. So with all its splendor of imagery, embroidered vest and glittering breastplate, to a great extent there was a powerful element of spirituality even about Aaronic worship—I mean, of course, only to *spiritual* men.

David himself utterly outstripped the outward when he declared, "Sacrifice and offering You do not desire." And when he said again, "You desire not sacrifice, else would I give it You." The Prophet declares that God is weary of their sacrifices. And in another place the Lord Himself says that if we could come before Him with rivers of oil, or ten thousand of the fat of fed beasts, He would not accept us with these. To obey is better than sacrifice is told us even under the Law, so that even there, though not so distinctly as now, the spirituality of worship was taught and declared.

But, dear Friends, what became of this accommodation of worship to the childhood of the Church? You know that very soon after Israel came out of Egypt they said, "Let us make gods that they may go before us." They could not do without a *visible* God. Do not think that when they set up the calf they meant to worship the *calf* instead of Jehovah, that would be a slander upon them. They worshipped Jehovah *through* the calf—that was their plea, for they said, "Tomorrow is a feast unto Jehovah."

They thought to represent Jehovah by a bull! "They changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eats grass." Though severely rebuked, it was the constant sin of Israel to desire to worship God under the favorite Egyptian emblem of the bull. At last they had gone so far into idolatry that they were driven far away—and in captivity they were so chastened and brought into such contact with the abominations of idolatry that they were heartily sick of it—and no Jew has been an idolater since.

Still, *spiritual* worship they would not offer and therefore fell into rigid ritualism, reverencing the mere letter of the law and fighting over trifling refinements of regulation and observance—in Christ's day they made broad their phylacteries and the borders of their garments—and they forgot the Great Spirit who is to be worshipped in spirit and in truth. Since that day the Lord has been treated by carnal men in one of three ways—either God is adored by outward symbols as among Brahmins, Romanists,

Puseyites and other idolaters—or else He is worshipped through ritualism, as among too many who claim to be orthodox, who contend for prearranged, and unbending forms—written or unwritten as the case may be. Or else men show an utter indifference to God altogether and then rush into superstitious reverence for something or other which is evil and therefore to be dreaded and spoken of with awe.

This is the history of religious worship. Let spiritual worship assume what form it may, man always will, if he can, get away from it and forget God and set up something *seen*, instead of bowing down before the unseen. Hence the necessity of the Second Commandment in the Decalogue, “You shall not make unto you any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in Heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: you shall not bow down yourself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord your God am a jealous God,” and so on.

This is not a command against worshipping another God—*that* is the First Commandment—but a command against worshipping God under any shape, or through any medium, or under any symbol. For He is a Spirit and must be worshipped in spirit and in truth and not by symbols. Against this command the human mind is always dashing itself, and in one shape or another idolatry is the ruling religion of mankind. Christ comes to tell us that now His worship is to be wholly spiritual, even the altar which belongs to antediluvian times is gone, for we have an Altar of another kind.

Even the sacrifice which belonged to the early period has departed like a shadow because we have the Sacrifice of Christ in which to trust. As for the institutions which suited the infancy of the Church, they also have disappeared, for now Jesus would have the worship of men enlightened by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. He would have us understand that a perfect revelation demands of us that in the perfection of our spiritual powers we should adore the invisible God without the interference of visible signs.

Now He would have us cast away all outward types and signs, except the two which He has Himself ordained, and even these are types of the Savior’s *manhood* and not of His Godhead at all, to be only valued because of the spiritual communion which they enable our hearts to hold with Jesus. Baptism being intended for spiritual men, that they may enter into the Savior’s death and burial, and the Lord’s Supper that the same persons may remember His body broken and His blood shed for them. The water, the bread, the wine being mere emblems, not to be treated with reverence, but put to their proper emblematic use.

II. I shall now, in the second place, try to ACCOUNT FOR THE EXTREME RARITY OF SPIRITUAL WORSHIP. The reason is, my Brothers and Sisters, because man has fallen. If man were what he once was, pure and holy, I cannot conceive of his wanting holy places and crosses, capes, and dalmatics, crosiers, and chasubles. I cannot conceive of the temptation to bow down before a bull, or a Virgin Mary, or a wafer. Had men been un-fallen, the noble creature would have walked in Paradise, and if he reclined beneath a shady tree, he would have lifted up his eyes and said, “My Father, You have made this grateful shade, here I will adore You.”

Or if he had walked in the full heat of the sun, he would have said, “My God, it is Your light that shines on me—I adore You.” Up yonder on the mountain’s brow, or down by the gleaming river, or the silvery lake, he

need build no altar. His Altar is within himself. He needs make no temple, his temple is everywhere. The morning is holy, and the evening is holy. He has no prescribed hour of prayer, it is devotion all day long. His morning bath is his baptism. Each meal is his Eucharist. Depend upon it, the nearer we get back to the nakedness of worship, the nearer we get to its truth and purity. But it is because man has fallen, that as his body wants clothing, so he is always dressing up his religion.

Moreover, it is far more difficult to worship God in spirit than in form. To patter through a dozen Ave Marias or Pater Nosters is so easy that I can nearly go to sleep over them! To repeat a form of prayer in the morning and evening is a very small matter and one can be thinking of the shop all the while! To go to Church or Chapel so many times a week is a cheap duty, and one may still be a thief or a hypocrite! But it is difficult, very difficult, to bring the heart down to humble penitence and the soul to holy meditation.

The last thing that most people will do is think. The noblest part of our nature is still the least exercised. Humbly to tremble before God, to confess sin before Him, to believe Him, to love Him—this is *spiritual* worship! Because this is so hard, men say, “No, no, let me crawl on my knees around a shrine! Let me kneel down before a pyx, let me help to make a cape, or to manufacture some pretty piece of millinery for the priest to wear. Let me go every morning to the steeple house and come out in half an hour, and feel I have done my religion.” That is quite easy, but the hard part of religion is the part of *spiritual* worship.

And yet again, to worship God spiritually men would have to part with their sins. There is no effect produced upon a man’s conscience by his being sprinkled, or by his taking the sacraments. He can do all that and be as much a pleasure-lover, or a worshipper of mammon as he was before. But to worship God *spiritually*, a man must give up his sins! He must overcome his pride and lust, and his evil concupiscence must be cast out of him. Many persons might honestly declare, “I do not mind worshipping God if it consists in doing penance, or going without meat on Fridays. But if I am to give up my sins, love God, seek Christ, trust Him—I cannot attend to that.”

Furthermore, man, for the most part, somehow cannot get the idea of this spiritual worship into his brain. Oh the many times I have tried to preach spiritual worship here and yet I am conscious that when I try at it I do not interest many of you! And some of you think, “if he would only give us more metaphors, more anecdotes, and so on.” I say I will do that, for I believe we should speak by parable, but sometimes I do not know how to clothe these spiritual things without making you look at the clothing rather than the spirit.

It is not your worshipping God by words in hymns and prayers, or sitting in a certain place, or covering your faces at certain times that is acceptable to Him! True worship lies in your *heart* paying reverence to Him, your *soul* obeying Him, and your inner *nature* coming into conformity to His own Nature by the work of His Spirit in your soul. And because men can scarcely get the idea of this till the Holy Spirit gives it to them, this is a reason why it is so rare, so exceedingly rare!

There is one other reason, dear Friends, why spiritual worship is unusual, and that is because man cannot traffic in spiritual religion. The

priest is up at arms directly. “Oh,” he says, “spiritual! Spiritual! Why they will do without me one of these days. Spiritual—why, if you tell these people that every place is holy and that there are no holy places, and that one Believer is as much a priest as another, and that prayer is as acceptable at home as it is in a particular spot, why,” he says, “that is the end of me.” Yes, Sir, that is the end of you, and the sooner the better for the world—for of all the curses that have ever fallen upon the human race, the priesthood is the worst! Its claims are false and its actions are full of deceit.

In the age of witches and ghosts the priesthood might be tolerated, but he who now sets himself up as a priest is as much a common nuisance as a fortuneteller. Nothing has been such a nightmare upon the intellect of man! Nothing has sat like old Sinbad the Sailor upon the back of humanity as the pretensions of the priesthood! God forbid that Christianity should even for a moment endorse the lie! Christ has put it all down. Christ says, “All you are brethren,” and He says of the whole body of His elect, “You are a royal priesthood.”

Concerning all the saints, Scripture declares, “You are God’s clergy,” for that is the Greek word in the passage—“You are God’s heritage.” We know no clergy and no laity! We know nothing whatever now of priesthood and of the common people, for you are made priests and kings unto God to offer *spiritual sacrifice*, holy and acceptable to God by Jesus Christ!

III. Turning from that point, a third subject is this—WHY IS SUCH WORSHIP TO BE RENDERED? Why did not God ordain worship by windmills as in Tibet? Why has He not chosen to be worshipped by particular men in purple and fine linen, acting gracefully as in Roman and Anglican churches? Why not? He gives two reasons which ought to suffice. The first is, He Himself *seeks* spiritual worship. It is His own wish that the worship should be spiritual. And in the second place, He is Himself a Spirit and is to be spiritually worshipped. Whatever kind of worship the great Ruler desires, He ought to receive—and it is impertinence on my part if I say to Him—“No, not that, but this.”

It is true, I may say, “I am very sincere in all this, very earnest in it. It suits my taste. There is a beauty about it. It excites certain emotions which I think to be devotional.” What is all that but saying, “Great God, You have chosen such-and-such a way of being worshipped, but I will not render it to You”? Is not that in effect saying, “I will not worship You at all”? For must not worship, to be worship, be such as the person worshipped himself will accept? To invent our own forms of worship is to insult God! And every mass that is ever offered upon the Romish altar is an insult to Heaven, and a blasphemy to God who is a Spirit!

Every time any form of worship by procession, celebration, or ceremony of man’s invention is offered to God it is offered in defiance of this Word of Christ, and cannot and will not be received. However earnest people may be, they have violated the imperative canon of God’s Word—and in fighting for rubrics they have gone against the eternal rubric that God as a Spirit must be worshipped in spirit and in truth.

The second reason given is that God is a Spirit. If God were material, it might be right to worship Him with material substances. If God were like ourselves it might be well for us to give a sacrifice congenial to humanity. But being as He is, pure Spirit, He must be worshipped in spirit. I like the

remark made by Trapp in his commentary on this passage, when he says that perhaps the Savior is even here bringing down God to our comprehension. “For,” Trapp said, “God is above all notion, all name.” Certainly this we know, that anything which associates Him with the grossness of materialism is infinitely removed from the Truth of God.

Augustine said, “When I am not asked what God is, I think I know, but when I try to answer that question, I find I know nothing.” If the Eternal were such an one as you are, O Man, He might be pleased with your painted windows! But what a child’s toy must colored glass be to God! I can sit and gaze upon a cathedral with all its magnificent architecture and think what a wonderful exhibition of human skill—but what must that be to God who piles the heavens, who digs the foundation of the deep, who leads Arcturus with his sons? Why, it must be to Him the smallest trifle, a mere heap of stones!

I delight to hear the swell of organs, the harmony of sweet voices, the Gregorian chant—but what is this artistic sound to Him more than sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal? As a sight, I admire the choristers and priests, and the whole show of a grand ceremony—but do you believe that God is imposed upon by those frocks and gowns of white and blue, and scarlet, and fine linen? It seems to me as if such a notion brings down God to the level of a silly woman who is fond of finery!

The infinite God, who spreads out the heavens and scatters stars with both His hands—whom Heaven and earth cannot contain, to whom space is but a speck, and time is as nothing—do you think that He dwells in temples made with hands, that is to say, of man’s building? And is He to be worshipped with your organs, and your roodscreens, and your gaudy millinery? He laughs at them! He treads on them as being less than nothing and vanity! Spiritual worship is what He regards because He is Spirit.

My Brethren, if you could get together a procession of worlds! If you could make the stars walk along the streets of some great new Jerusalem dressed in their brightest array! If, instead of the songs of a few boys or men you could catch the sonnets of eternal ages! If, instead of a few men to officiate as priests you could enlist time, eternity, Heaven and earth to be the priesthood! Yet all this would be to Him but as a company of grasshoppers, and He would take up the whole as a very little thing.

But let me tell you that even God Himself, great as He is, does not despise the tear that drops from a repentant eye, nor does He neglect the sigh that comes from a sinner’s soul. He thinks more of your repentance than of your incense, and more of your prayers than of your priesthods. He views with pleasure your love and your faith, for these are spiritual things in which He can take delight. But your architecture, your music and your fine arts—though they lavish their treasures at His feet—are less than nothing and vanity. You know not what spirit you are of. If you think to worship my God with all these inventions of man, you dream like fools!

I feel glowing within me the old iconoclastic spirit. Would God we had men now like Knox or Luther who with holy indignation would pull in pieces those wicked mockeries of the Most High against which our soul feels a hallowed indignation as we think of His loftiness, and of that poor paltry stuff with which men degrade His name!

IV. WHAT THEN? What is the practical drift of this? Why two things. The first is, my dear Brothers and Sisters—I mean you who have learned

to worship God in spirit and in truth—who have got above the beggarly elements of the outward and can worship Him in spirit and in truth. What then? Why, in the first place, let us be particularly jealous of anything which looks at all like going back to ceremonialism.

As a matter of taste I have a great liking for noble architecture. Many an hour have I lingered in the ruins of some splendid abbey or our own majestic buildings still used for sacred worship. I have a great delight in a well-painted window. I cannot say that I like most *Dissenting* painted windows because they look to me as if they were a sort of would be if you could. I cannot say I have any kind of liking for most of our Dissenting Gothic, for it seems to me such a paltry thing to build a front just like St. Paul's or Westminster Abbey, and then as if to cheat the Lord to make the back part shabby. I cannot say I care for that kind of thing.

But a really splendid place of worship I admire as a matter of taste. I like an organ very well, as a matter of musical taste. But, my Brothers and Sisters, I feel that these are times when we must stand out even against allowable things, lest going one step we should go another. I do pray that you, therefore, if you have any influence anywhere, always use it in favor of *simplicity*. And if you see at any time in the churches of which you are the members a tendency to creep on to something a little nearer, a little towards the way of Rome, cry "Halt!"

Let us go back to the barns in which our fathers worshipped, or better still to the hill side, and to the green sward than go forward to anything like symbolism which will tempt the soul away from spiritual worship. We ought ourselves to guard against falling into formalism by means of simplicity, for we may do it the one way as well as the other—by laying it down as a rule that a service must begin with prayer or begin with singing—that the preacher must preach at such a time in the service—that the service must commence, continue, and conclude in some fixed fashion.

That seems to me to have a tendency to breed another form of ritualism inconsistent with worshipping God in spirit and in truth. I am afraid I have hardly Divine Grace enough to worship God for two or three hours in silence as our Quaker friends do. I do enjoy a quarter of an hour's silence every now and then—to sit quite still seems to me to be an admirable way of getting into contact with God. Our service is so much words, words, words, that I am almost afraid you get to think as much of words as other people do of banners, and flags, and so on.

Now, to sit still—to get away from words, if so your heart keeps to God—is better even than preaching and singing. Juan De Yaldes, a Catholic, but a good Protestant for all that, remarks that the vulgar in seeking to remember Christ by the crucifix do not exercise their mind but stop at the crucifix. And therefore that which was intended to be a help becomes a hindrance. So the learned get their Bibles which should help them to think upon Divine things, but being content with having read the letter of Scripture they often fail to reach the spiritual truth which it contains, and so after all do not worship God.

Remember that while we should be jealous of anything which would make it easy to be of formal worship which might be adopted, yet we may still, after all, have missed the main thing—the worshipping of God in spirit and in truth. Let us make it a matter of heart-searching as to

whether we, ourselves, have been in the habit of worshipping the Father in spirit and in truth.

Dear Friends, I am fearful of some of you that you do not do this. If the preacher happens to be away you do not feel in so good a frame. Somebody else takes my place and there are certain feeble folk among you who feel as if the Sabbath had lost its enjoyment. But *God* is here and you might worship God as much surely without me as with me! And though the instruction received from one man may not seem so edifying as that which may come from another, and possibly may not be so, yet still if your object is the worship of God, which should be the main object of our gathering, surely you should do that as well under the ministry of Mr. A as Mr. B!

I am afraid, too that many of you are content with singing through the hymns. Now all that singing which is not thought-singing is of no use. You may have very sweet voices but God does not regard your voice—He hears your *heart*—and if your *heart* does not sing you have not sung at all. When we stand up to pray it may be that the preacher's words may happen to be suitable to your case. But it is not prayer so far as *you* are concerned, though it may be as far as he is, unless you join in it. Remember that if you do not put your hearts into the worship of God, you might as well be at home as here!

You are better here than at home for other reasons because you are in the way where good may come to you. But for worship's sake you might as well have been in bed as here. You who have no spiritual worship may even clog the devotions of those who have! An invisible savor of death unto death may be oozing from you, helping to pollute or to render dead the worship of those who truly adore God. At any rate, my dear Hearers, if you have not with your whole hearts loved and worshipped God, repent over it and pray the Holy Spirit to make you *spiritual*.

Go to Christ's Cross, and trust in Him! Then, and not till then, will you be capable of adoring the most High God in a style in which He can accept your worship. God grant that this may be impressed upon the hearts of all of us, that we may worship God in spirit and in truth.

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THE SAMARITAN WOMAN AND HER MISSION NO. 1678

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 10, 1882,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And upon this came His disciples, and marveled that He talked with the woman, yet no man said, What do You seek? or, Why are You talking with her? The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and said to the men, Come, see a Man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ? Then they went out of the city, and came unto Him.”
John 4:27-30.

Behold our Lord and Master with divinely skillful art seeking after a single soul! We must have large Congregations or we are disinclined for soul-winning. The habit of the age is to do nothing but what is ostentatious—every work must be with beat of drum or sound of tambourine! I pray that the Lord may work in us the steadfast desire to do good on the quiet, by stealth, when no one looks on, when not a single disciple is near. Oh that we may have such an estimate of the value of a single soul that we count whole days well spent to bring one fallen woman or one drunk to the Savior's feet! Blessed is he who works on though he is never heard of and looks for his reward from his Master.

In the heat of the day the Lord Jesus found rest and refreshment in speaking to one whom many would scarcely look upon except with eyes of scorn. Blessed Savior, we do not marvel, as the disciples did, that You did speak with the woman, but we do wonder with a higher kind of astonishment that You ever did speak to the likes of us who have so sadly fallen, done You dishonor and grieved Your heart! We are amazed that He who is the Glory of Heaven, “Light of light, very God of very God,” should shroud Himself in the likeness of sinful flesh and, being found in fashion as a Man, should seek after us unworthy ones. Oh, the compassion of the Redeemer's heart!

Read this chapter through carefully and see the skill which that compassion taught Him. How sweetly ready He was to converse with her and take up her questions. Never imagine that the 30 years of retirement at Nazareth were wasted. I would gladly go, if I were young, for 30 years to learn how to talk as He did, if His own Spirit would teach me the lesson. He was a perfect Teacher because as Man, He had lent a willing ear to the heavenly instruction of the Holy Spirit and, therefore, grew in knowledge and fitness for His work. As says that notable Scripture, “The Lord God

has given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: He wakens Me morning by morning, He wakens My ear to hear as the learned. The Lord God has opened My ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back.”

By communion with God in private and by watching men in seclusion, He learned both the mind of God and the nature of man, so as to know how to handle the human mind. Men are “unpredictable cattle,” and can only be managed by a wise hand. Many an earnest fool has driven a soul to Hell in his endeavor to drag it to Heaven by force, for human wills yield not to such rough force, but rebel the more. Souls have to be brought to salvation by a gentleness and wisdom such as the Savior used when He fascinated the Samaritan woman into eternal life and enticed her to the truth—so I can only describe that wondrous power which He exercised over her in the few short but blessed sentences with which He addressed her.

Now, turn a moment from that Glorious One, that perfect Man and yet infinite God, whom we would lovingly adore before we look away from Him. Here come His disciples! They have been in the city to buy food—an errand most necessary—that they and their Teacher might live. But look! When they perceive Him talking with a woman, they marvel, each in his own way. Some are dumfounded and cannot explain the phenomenon! Others look as if they would interpose, if they dared, and would cry to the woman, “Away you vixen! What right have you here, speaking to such a One as our Leader, whose shoe-laces even we are not worthy to unloose? Your approach dishonors Him! Take yourself away.”

They did say so with their eyes, though awe of their Lord restrained their tongues, for these disciples of Jesus were steeped in the customary antipathies of the age. First, it was sufficiently offensive that the person with whom Jesus was conversing was a woman. My beloved Sisters, you owe much to the Gospel, for it is only by its agency that you are raised to your proper place. For what said the Rabbis? “Rather burn the sayings of the Law than teach them to women.” And, again, “Let no man prolong conversation with a woman. Let no man converse with a woman in the streets, not even with his own wife.” Women were thought to be unfit for profound religious instruction and altogether inferior beings. My Sisters, we do not think that you are *superior* to us, though some of you, perhaps, fancy so, but we are right glad to acknowledge your *equality* and to know that in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female! Jesus has lifted you up to your true place, side by side with man!

Even the Apostles were tainted, at first, with that horrible superstition which made them marvel that Jesus openly talked with a woman. Moreover, they wondered that He could talk with such a woman! I do not suppose they knew all about her character, but there is a look about the fallen which betrays them—they cannot conceal the boldness which a course of vice usually produces. They may have thought, “If He had talked with an aged matron, a saintly mother in Israel, it might not have been surprising; but how can He converse with such a woman?” They did not, as yet, understand His mission to rescue the perishing and save the lost. This poor woman, also, had the misfortune to be a Samaritan and, above

all things, Jews hated Samaritans as aliens and heretics who dared to call Jacob their father and to believe themselves orthodox!

Jews and Samaritans were much alike and you know the sects that approach nearest to each other usually reserve their most bitter hatred for their next of kin. They will tolerate those who are far removed from them because they are altogether in the darkness of error and so, are somewhat excusable. But those who have so much light, they detest for not seeing eye to eye with themselves. We pity a dumb man, for he cannot speak at all, but we are indignant that one who can say, "Shibboleth," will not take a little more trouble and pronounce it, "Shibboleth," as we do! Surely he might go that other inch and be quite right. This woman was one of those Samaritan heretics who had dared to set up an opposition temple to the one at Jerusalem and say that they, also, were the people of God—so the disciples shrank from her and marveled that Jesus did not do the same. How could so good a man mix Himself up with such people?

I have, myself, heard a great deal of foolishness spoken about mixing up with certain people because we dare to meet with them upon some common ground to accomplish a right purpose. I have sometimes wondered whether people ever read of Abraham, when he fought for the cause of the king of Sodom. A horrible man, I have no doubt, that monarch was, yet when his country had been plundered by the invading kings, Abraham marched out on behalf of the King of Sodom—not that he cared for him—but that he desired to deliver his nephew, Lot. For that reason he is found in some measure of association with Sodom's king—but when the object upon which they were united was achieved, then see how the princely Abraham washes his hands of the man. He says, "I will not take from you a thread even to a shoe-lace lest you should say, 'I have made Abraham rich.'" Thus there may be a temporary union among men, between whom there is the widest difference, and this apparent unity may be lawful and expedient because the end to be gained is altogether good.

Our blessed Lord was seeking the good of this unholy woman and, therefore, He was fully justified in talking with her. Thereby He rebuked the superstition of His followers more effectually than by words. There is another side to the question. How could these disciples marvel that He spoke with *anybody*, after having chosen *them* and called them? Surely, when they frowned on others, they forgot the dunghills where they grew! If they had only remembered where they were when He found them and how often they had grieved Him by their perverseness, they would have reserved their surprise for their own cases. Ah, Brothers and Sisters, ever since the Lord spoke with me, I have *never* marveled that He spoke with *anybody*—it has not crossed my mind to make it any subject of wonder that He should stoop to the lowest and meanest, now that He has stooped to me!

Yet I fancy I have seen, in certain Brothers and Sisters, evident signs that they forget that they were, themselves, once strangers in Egypt. They forget that Grace washed and cleansed them, or else they would have been filthy still, for Paul truly says, "such were some of you." I am sorry when saved ones affect superfine purity and marvelous spirituality—and turn away from such as Jesus would have welcomed. Alas, such disciples

have little of the tenderness of their Master! Our Divine Lord has more tenderness for sinners than the whole of us put together! There is more love in His soul towards lost ones than there is in all these thousands of Believers here present, though I hope that many of your hearts beat high with a loving desire that the guilty may be delivered from the wrath to come.

But look at the disciples! Look, yonder is John, that sweet-souled John, and yet he marvels! And there is Peter, good but faulty, and he marvels! And there is Thomas, the thoughtful, and he marvels! They are all good men and yet they are marveling that Jesus is gracious to a poor woman! Oh, Peter, and John, and James and the rest of you, look into your own hearts and let a glance of the Holy Spirit lighten up the darkness of your spirits—and you will renounce this self-righteous marveling which grieves the woman—and you will enter into deeper sympathy with your Lord's love. Dear Friends, let us never disdain the worst of men or women, but seek, with all our might, to woo and win them for our Lord! Oh, to have hearts of mercies as Jesus had! This will well become the followers of the compassionate Son of Man.

Look, as the result of this conduct of the disciples, one of the sweetest conferences that was ever held was broken up and brought to a close at its very climax. Just when Jesus had said, "I that speak unto you am He," then it must end, for here they come, these cold, unsympathetic ones! Yet they were disciples, were they not? Oh, yes, and true disciples, too! But, alas, no breakers of communion are more blamable or more frequent in the offense than Christ's own disciples when they are out of sympathy with their Master. You see, they are thinking about the meat and about the Savior's need of it—and these thoughts were most proper—but not very elevated or spiritual. They come, amazed that Jesus speaks with a woman, and so the holy conference ends and the woman must go!

Oh, when any of you draw near to Christ and He is just lifting the silver veil from His dear face, and your eyes are beginning to behold Him, mind that you keep your door shut! "Oh, but it is a good man at the door." Yes, but he will be just as likely to mar your fellowship as anybody else! The best of men may sometimes intrude between you and the Well-Beloved—and fellowship which seemed as if it must mellow into Heaven, itself, will come to a speedy and sorrowful close! I do not blame Peter that he wanted tabernacles in which to remain upon the top of the mount, for he was pretty well aware of what he might meet upon the plain. Do you not often wish that you could sing—

***"Sequestered from the noise and strife,
The lust, the pomp, and pride of life;
For Heaven I will my heart prepare,
And have my conversation there"?***

Although the conference was thus broken up, the consequence was the Lord's Glory, even as often out of evil He works good. Since the woman cannot sit and gaze upon the Divine face of her Lord, nor hear the strange music which flowed from His blessed lips, she will give herself to holy activity—she goes her way to the city and she speaks to the men. This is well—there is little to deplore when men's hearts are so right that you cannot take them away from glorifying Christ, do what you may! When, if

you disturb their private communion, they are ready, at once, for public service! Driven away from sitting, like Mary, at the Master's feet, let us rise to play the Martha, by preparing a table for the Lord! Always reckon, dear Friends, whenever you are taken off from your usual course of life, as it were, by a jolt, that the Lord has some special work for you to do.

Do not fret, or try to buck the engine to get on the old lines again. No, if the switch is turned by the Divine hand, go on—He that has the management of all the railroads of your life knows better which way your soul should go than you, yourself, can know! I have observed Christian people jerked out of a pious family, where they were extremely happy, and placed in the midst of ungodliness—a situation not of their own choosing or seeking, but appointed of the Lord—that they may bring godliness into that house and shed light in the midst of the darkness. Friend, you, too, may be taken away from this Church where your soul has flourished, and you may feel like one banished and bereaved. Well, never mind! If you are sent to some Church where everything is dreary and dead, go there like a fire-brand to set them on fire!

Your Lord would not have permitted the breaking up of your peace unless He had some high service for you. Since you are His servant, find out His will and do it! God will thus honor Himself in you and, by-and-by, He will honor and comfort you, also. Observe that the woman, now, becomes a messenger for Christ. She has to quit conferring *with* Him to go and testify *about* Him! She did not go unbidden though, for she remembered that the Lord had said at an early period of the conversation, "Go, call your husband and come here." So she goes to call her husband! It is well to have a warrant for what we do. Observe she interprets her orders very liberally. She thought as the Christ had said, "You have had five husbands, and he whom you now have is not your husband," He could not have limited her errand to one who was not her husband except in name—and so she might as well call any of the six men with whom she had dwelt and, therefore, she might speak to all the men who were loitering about the public square and tell them what she had seen!

Remember how our Savior gave a large interpretation of His own prophetic mission. He was not sent as a Teacher except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, but He went to the very edge of His diocese, if He did not go over it. He went to the borders of Tyre and Sidon and when a woman came out of those parts, He had healing for her daughter! Though He did sow most of His seed upon the acres of the Holy Land, yet He made it fly over the boundary. In fact, He sowed all the ages and, on this once barbarous island there have fallen blessed handfuls which are bringing forth fruit to His Glory! Always go to the verge of your commission—never stop short of it. Try to do more good than you can and it is very possible that you will be successful. Indeed, if you only try to do what you *can* do, you will do little! But when, in faith, you attempt what you cannot, alone, accomplish, God will be at your back—and in your weakness His strength shall be made clear!

Notice that the woman leaves her waterpot. The Spirit of God thought well to record this circumstance and, therefore, I think there must be a measure of teaching in it. She left her waterpot, first, for speed. Perhaps

you have got it into your head that it was an ordinary English waterpot, such as you water the garden with—possibly you so picture it, rose and all. Nothing of the sort! It was a big jar, or large pitcher of earthenware she had to carry on her head or her shoulder. It was quite a load for her and so she left it, that she might run the more quickly. She was a wise woman to leave her waterpot when she needed to move rapidly. Others think she did so because she was so taken up with her errand that she forgot her pitcher. It is blessed forgetfulness which comes of absorption in a holy design!

When the King's business requires haste, it is wise to leave behind everything that would hinder. Our Lord Jesus, Himself, forgot His hunger in His zeal to guide a soul to peace. And it is said of Him in the Psalm, "I forget to eat My bread." He was so absorbed in His heavenly work that He said, "I have meat to eat that you know not of." A man has hardly felt the power of eternal things, unless, at times, he forgets some earthly matters. If a man is called to rush for his life through a room full of crockery there will, probably, be a number of breakages. You cannot think of everything at once—your mind is limited and it is not advisable that you should divide the strength of your thoughts by having two or more aims.

So she left her waterpot. Without thought she hit upon as good an action as thought would have suggested. The waterpot would have hindered her, but it might be useful to the Christ and His disciples. Thus they could give Him to drink. He was thirsty and probably so were they—and with her pitcher, they could help themselves. Besides, it was a pledge that she was coming back. She said, "I am running away on an errand, but I shall come back again. I have not listened to the great Teacher for the last time. I shall return and hear Him further, till I know Him better and trust Him more fully." So it was significant that she left her waterpot.

Sometimes you will have to leave your shop to win a soul. You will cast up a row of figures wrongly and wonder why—and the reason will be that before your mind there fluttered the soul of a swearer or the figure of a drunk, or the image of a fallen woman—and your heart was filled with the longing to find the lost sheep. Never mind. I dare say the woman had her water pot, again, and you will get back to business, again, and rectify your blunder, attend to the shop and set all matters right. And if a soul is saved, you will have made a profit by any loss you have sustained.

We have started the woman on her mission. Now I want you to observe particularly her mode of address, for there is teaching here. She said to the men, "Come, see a Man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" Observe first, when she did go back to the men, she had but one aim and that was to bring them to Jesus. She cries, "Come, see." She did not tell them anything about their sin at the time, nor try to reform their habits. She called them at once to Him who could set them right. She knew that if she could bring them to Christ, all things would inevitably come right. It is good for you to shoot only at one target. Choose your design and aim at it, but not at two objects. Drive away at the souls of men in the name of God to get them to Christ, and nothing short of Him. Labor for this. Be willing to live for this and to die for this, that men may be saved by Immanuel's love, blood and Spirit.

This Samaritan woman aimed at this object and tried to gain it by an exceedingly earnest address. I guarantee you she said it very prettily—"Come, come, come, see a Man that told me all things that ever I did!" Perhaps with all her charms, with all the softness of her winsome tongue, with all the entreaty of her bright eyes, she cried, "Come, every one of you; come, see for yourselves, a Man which told me all things that ever I did." If you go upon the Lord's errands, take your heart with you! Speak every single syllable earnestly and, if you are thoroughly alive, you will not need to be taught the way of doing it! The way comes naturally to those whose hearts are set upon the end. She spoke self-forgetfully—she seemed entirely to have forgotten herself and yet she remembered herself—a paradox, but not a contradiction. She said, "Come, see a Man which told me all things that ever I did."

She quoted herself and yet if she had thought of herself, she would not have said a word on the subject of her own life. She might have feared that the men would have replied—"A pretty story that must be!" They knew her well and might have turned round and said, "You are a beauty, to come here and talk to us in this style!" No, she let them talk of her as they pleased. "Come, see a Man which told me all things that ever I did." That putting aside of all affectation; that genuine simplicity was part of her power. Never try to be otherwise than you are. If you have been a great sinner, be ashamed of it, but do not be ashamed of that love which saved you from it, so as to refuse to bear witness to its power! Put away the thought of what people will think of you and only look to what they will think of Jesus for having forgiven and renewed you!

Note how short she was. Ralph Erskine calls her the female preacher. I am not so sure of the correctness of the title. If women preached just as long as she did, and no longer, no one could find fault with them. Her testimony lies all in one verse and is an *invitation* and a *question*. There needed no more words, no, not another *half* a word. She said exactly enough, for she was successful in leading the men to Jesus, who could do the preaching far better than she could. I cannot call her words a sermon—at any rate, you would not care for me to preach so briefly! However, brevity is a great virtue. Do not crave to be fluent, only ask to be earnest. Then, how vivacious she was. "Come, see a Man." The words are all alive and very far from being dull and heavy. "Come, see." It is almost as laconic as Julius Caesar's famous dispatch—"I came, I saw, I conquered." "Come, see a Man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?"

Then, it was so sensible. There is a dispute about the exact force of what the woman said, but most of those who give us precise translations differ from our common version. It is what she meant and believed, but not exactly what she said. She probably said, "Come, see a Man which told me all things that ever I did: Can this be the Christ?"—or, "This is not the Christ, is He?" She did not say He was, but she suggested it with great modesty for the men to examine. She believed that Jesus was the Christ, but she knew that men do not like to be taught by such as she and so she humbly threw it out for their examination. "Can this be the anointed One whom we are expecting? Come and judge."

She did not express all she believed, lest she should provoke them to opposition—she was adept and wise. She fished after the manner of her Master, for she could not but feel how dexterously He had fished for her. She was an apt scholar and humbly copied the Friend who had blessed her—“Come, see a Man who told me all things that ever I did: can this possibly be the Christ?” This led them to come, if it was only to set the woman right! Possibly they thought her a poor, mistaken woman, but, in their superior wisdom, they would look into the matter and so the thing she desired was granted her. Oh, to have our wits about us for Jesus!

But the argument is exceedingly strong, let her put it how she may. “This Man has told me all things that ever I did.” She might have said, if she thought it wise to say it, “He must be the Christ.” And that is my last point, namely, the grand argument drawn from herself and adapted to the men. Observe the force of her reasoning. His power to read her heart and manifest her to herself, was conclusive evidence to her that a special anointing was upon Him. But before I get at that I must have you examine more fully the whole of the woman’s little message, of which it was a part. It divides itself into two parts. You have been looking for my firstly and secondly all this while, and now you shall have them! There are two parts in her sermon. The first is the invitation—“Come, see a Man which told me all things that ever I did.” The second is the argument—“Is not this the Christ?”

I. Consider at once THE INVITATION. It is a clever as well as a genuine and hearty invitation. She says, “Come, see.” This was putting it most fairly and men like a fair proposal—and the Holy Spirit works by means which suit the mind. She does not say, “You must and shall believe what I say.” No, no, she is too sensible. She says, “Come and see for yourselves,” and that is exactly what I want to say to every unconverted person here, this morning. My Lord Jesus is the most precious Savior that I ever dreamed of. Come and test Him! He is altogether lovely and He has blessed my soul unspeakably, but I do not want you to believe because of *my* saying so—come and see for yourselves! Can anything be fairer?

Seek Him by prayer. Trust Him by faith. Test His Gospel for yourselves. It is an old-fashioned exhortation—“Oh taste and see that the Lord is good!” And, again, “Prove Me now, says the Lord of Hosts.” In fact, this is Christ’s own word to the first disciples, “Come and see,” and they used it when pleading with others, saying to them, “Come and see.” Moreover, this woman’s invitation throws the responsibility upon them. She says, “Come and see.” Thus would I say to you—If you do not come and see, I cannot help it and I cannot help you, either. I cannot stand sponsor for you—use your own judgments and clear your own consciences. Come and see on your own accounts. If you do not, then the blame must rest with you. If you do, then your personal investigation will be sure to end in a blessing.

O dear Hearers, I may preach the Gospel to you, but I cannot go to Christ in your place! It is mine to entreat and persuade and to use every kind of means by which I may get you to the Savior, but it is a *personal* matter with each of you! Oh that the Holy Spirit would lead you to come, yourselves, to Jesus, for it must be your own act and deed through His

blessed working upon your nature! You must come, you must repent, you must believe, you must lay hold on eternal life for yourselves! Nothing but *personal* religion can possibly save you. The woman's call was a good exhortation in that respect.

Then, is it not pleasantly put, so as to prove the sympathy of the speaker? She does not say, as she might have said, "Go, see a Man." No—"Come, see a Man," as much as to say, "Come along. I will go with you and lead the way. You shall not say I have seen enough of Him and do not care to go again, and now want to send you packing there alone because I am tired of Him. No, come! Come along! Come with me—we will all go together. The more I have seen of Him the more I want to see. Come, see the wondrous Man." Dear Friends, when you try to win a soul, do not try the, "go," system, but use the, "come," system! When man cries, "I cannot go to Christ," or, "I will not go to Christ," look at him through your tears and cry out, "Friend, I am a sinner like yourself, and have no hope but in the precious blood of Jesus. Come, let me pray with you! Let us go to Jesus together!"

Then, when you pray, do not say, "Lord, I am one of your saints and come to you bringing this sinner." That may be true, but it is not a wise way of speaking. Cry, "Lord, here are two sinners that deserve Your wrath and we come to ask You in Your pity to give the Savior to us and renew our hearts by Your Spirit." That is the way God helps soul-winners to draw others—when we say, "Come," let us lead the way ourselves. What you wish another to do, it will be wise to do yourself, for example has more power than precept! How would you like the sinner to turn round upon you and say, "You may well give away advice when you do not intend to use it, yourself." No, but, "Come, see a Man that told me all things that ever I did." A Sister's heart spoke out in that word, "Come."

Again, what a blessed vanishing of the speaker there is! I have heard of Brothers whose preaching is spoiled because they are so self-conscious. The man wishes you to feel that he is speaking in first-rate style and is an eminent divine. When he has finished, the common exclamation is, "I never heard such a clever man." But he was not so wise as he might have been or should have been, for he who preaches rightly makes you forget himself! In fact, the observation about him, if it comes out at all, is in this fashion—"I did not detect any eloquence; anybody might have talked like that, but somehow I have felt as I never felt before."

The fish knows little about the angler, but he knows when he has swallowed the hook. When the Truth of God has gone right home to the hearer's heart, the form of speech is of little consequence. This woman does not say anything to make the Samaritan men admire her, but she draws them to Jesus with the exhortation, "Come, see a Man." What she does mention about herself is with the design of extolling the Savior. That is a grand sentence of John the Baptist, "He must increase, but I must decrease." Less, less, less of John, that there may be all the more of Christ! There is but one great universe and Christ and you are in it. The more space *you* occupy, there must be so much the less for Jesus. When you get less and less there is more for Jesus—and when you reach the

vanishing point, then Jesus is All in All—and that is exactly what you should aim at!

This sensible woman's invitation deserves to be copied by every worker.

II. Now for THE ARGUMENT, with which I close. An argument lies concealed here and if you look at the text a minute or two, you will discover it. She conceals it because she is persuaded that they have already agreed to it. It is this—"If Jesus is the Christ, the Anointed, then it is fit that you should come with me and see Him." She does not argue that point because every Samaritan agreed to it. If Jesus is the Christ, then we ought to go and listen to Him, look at Him and become His followers. Alas, my dear Hearers, I am obliged to urge that argument with many of you because you are not so practical as these Samaritans.

You believe that Jesus is the Christ. I suppose every man and woman of you does that. Why, then, do you not believe in Him as your Savior? You never had a doubt about His Godhead—why is He not your God? "If I tell you the truth," says Christ, "why do you not believe Me?" If this is the Anointed One whom God has sent to take away the sins of men, why have you not sought Him, that He may rid you of your sins? If this is the Propitiation which God has set forth, why have you not accepted this Propitiation? If this is the Fountain wherein sin can be washed away, why are you not washed? There is no *reason* in your course of action—it is illogical and irrational. If there is a Savior, the man who is taught right reason vows that he will have Him! If there is a fountain that can wash away sin, he resolves to be washed in it—if he can get right with God by any process, he hastens to be rectified. I say this woman did not argue the point because it did not need arguing. It goes without saying and there let it stand.

But what she *did* argue was this—"This Man who was just now sitting on the well, is He not the Christ?" How did she prove it? First, she did as good as say, "He must be Christ because He has revealed me to myself—He has told me all things that ever I did." The words are wide. Stop, dear woman, surely He has not revealed *all* your life, certainly not in words! He has revealed your unchastity, but nothing else. But she was right. Were you ever out in a black and murky night when a single lightning flash has come? It has only struck one oak in the field, but in so doing it has revealed all the landscape. It struck one object, but all around you was light as day for the moment! So, when the Lord Jesus Christ revealed this woman's lustfulness, she saw clearly the whole of her life at a single view and the Lord had, indeed, told her all things that ever she did!

Do you wonder that she said, "Is not this the Christ?" Beloved, no one proves Himself to be truly anointed unless He begins by showing you your sins! If any teacher leads you to hope that, without repentance, or any sense of sin, you may be saved, he is not of Christ! I charge you, fling away any hope which is not consistent with your own entire hopelessness apart from Jesus! If you have not known yourself a sinner, you *cannot* know Christ as a Savior. Some are preaching, nowadays, a dry-eyed faith and men seem to jump into assurance as if there were no new birth, no conviction of sin and no repentance. But it is not so—"You must be born again." That birth is not without pangs. Trust in Christ brings a hatred of

sin and a mourning because of it. A man cannot hate what he does not know, but this woman was made to see her sin and that sight proved that the Messiah was dealing with her.

The non-repentance prophets cry, "Peace, peace," where there is no peace! They film the sore, but Jesus puts the knife into it, lays it wide open and makes the patient see the gangrene of the wound—and then He closes it up and, with His heavenly ointment makes a sure cure of it. There is no binding up the heart that was never broken! There is no comforting a man who has always been comfortable! There is no making a man righteous who always was righteous—there is no washing a man who has no filthiness. No, and this is what the Messiah does—He lays bare the disease and this is a proof that He is sent of God because He does not adopt the flimsy, flattering mode of deceivers, but goes straight to the truth. Her argument is—He must be the Messiah, for He revealed me to myself!

Secondly, He must be the Messiah, for He has revealed Himself to me. "No sooner did I see my filthiness than I saw at once that He was every way ready to cleanse me." A sinner's eye is never ready to see the Savior till first it has seen the sin. When the man sees despair written across the face of human strength, then he turns and sees hope mildly beaming from the kind eyes of the Son of Man—but not till then. Jesus has revealed Himself and now she says, "I see that He knows me and knows all about me." Wonderful it is how the Gospel robe exactly fits a man—when he gets it and puts it on, he feels that He who made this garment knew His form. Perhaps you have some special weakness or singular deformity, but you soon perceive that Jesus knew all about it, for His salvation exactly meets the lack.

There is a bath. Ah, He knew I was filthy. There is a robe. Ah, He knew I was naked. There is eye salve—He knew that I was blind. Here is a ring for my finger—He knew I wanted a forget-me-not to keep me in memory of mercy received. Here are shoes for my bare feet and a banquet for my griping hunger. Every need is taken care of and this proves the Omniscience of my Savior! "Therefore," she said, "He knows all about me. He must be infinitely wise; He must be the Christ." This is good arguing, is it not?

Then she seemed to say to them, too, "This is a great deal more to me than it can be to you, for He has dealt personally with me and, therefore, I abide in my assurance that He is the Christ. But go and learn the same arguments for yourselves." Brothers and Sisters, if the Lord Jesus Christ had told this woman all that ever her third husband did, it would have had far less power over her than telling her all she had done, herself! When conviction comes *personally* home and the discovery is all about your own state and character, it has a special power over your heart and mind to make you say, "This is the Christ." Also, my Brethren, at the remembrance of my Lord's surgery when I was wounded and sorely broken, I am ready to cry, "See how He handled me! Never was a hand so strong and yet so tender! Never a physician with such a lion's heart and such a lady's hand. I can feel His strength as He holds me up and I can feel His tenderness as He embraces me. Surely He is the Anointed and sent of the

Lord to bind up the brokenhearted, for He has bound up my broken heart! The case is proven to me—come and experience the same conviction within yourselves.”

Moreover, and perhaps there is force in this which has not been noticed, she says, “Come, see,” as much as to say, “You may come, I know, for when I came to the well, He did not look daggers at me. And when I did not give Him water, He did not grow hot with me and say, ‘Disrespectful woman, I will not speak to you.’ No, but I was at home with Him in a moment! Come, see a Man who made Himself so at home with me that He told me all that ever I did. I am sure He must be the Messiah. The Messiah is to come to open the blind eyes and He must necessarily be among the blind to perform the miracle! He is to fetch prisoners out of prison and they are the lowest class that are in prison—and yet He goes to them! So, come along! I will go first and introduce you to Him.”

That is the woman’s little speech and how good it is! I am going to add a bit to it which she did not know, but which we know. I wish I knew how to say something that would make you unconverted ones hurry to Christ, but if anything ought to do it, it is this. Suppose you never do come to Christ in this life and die without Him? God grant you may not die without having listened to Him and received Him, but if you do, you will be awakened at the Last Day from your grave with the blast of a terrible trumpet and with the cry of, “Come to judgment! Come to judgment! Come away!” Whether you will, or not, you will *have* to come and see a Man sitting upon the Great White Throne, judging the nations!

And do you know what He will do with you, then? He will tell you all things that ever you did—and as the scenes pass before your mind’s eye and as your own words go ringing, again, through your ears, you will be sorely distressed! Perhaps this morning’s scene will be revived before you and conscience will tell you, “You were at the Tabernacle that morning. The Gospel was put plainly to you, by one who in his heart longed for you to be saved, but you did despite to all those entreaties and turned away.” I tell you it will be your Hell for Jesus to tell you all things that ever you did! And you will *then* see the argument—“Is not this the Christ?” But, alas, He will be no Savior to *you*, for you refused Him! He will, then, tell you, “I called, but you refused. I stretched out My hands, but no man regarded.”

Still shall proceed that awful tale of all things that ever you did, concluding with this—you refused mercy, you rejected Jesus, you turned away from salvation, you would not have this Man to save you and, therefore, have you come to have your past made the fuel for your everlasting burning! God grant that no one, here, may ever come to that! No, if I had the task to select one man out of this congregation that would have to spend an eternity in having his life rehearsed to him, where should I find him? No, I cannot see one that I dare to pitch upon, not one—not one—not even the worst man or woman here! I would not if I could!

O God, of Your mercy suffer no one here to know the terror of being driven away forever from Your Presence and the Glory of your power, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

MYSTERIOUS MEAT

NO. 1901

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 23, 1886,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“In the meantime His disciples urged Him, saying, Master, eat. But He said to them, I have meat to eat that you know not of. Therefore the disciples said to one another, Has anyone brought Him anything to eat? Jesus said to them, My meat is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to finish His work. Do you not say, There are yet four months, and then comes harvest? Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look at the fields, for they are already ripe for harvest! And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. For in this the saying is true, One sows, and another reaps. I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labors.”
John 4:31-38.*

THE disciples had gone away into the city to buy meat and for this they cannot be censured. It was necessary that food should be provided and it naturally fell to their lot to perform that duty. Do not say that they were carnal or unspiritual because of this, for the most spiritual people must eat to live. When they came back from making their purchases, they found their Master sitting by the well, as they had left Him. They naturally expected that He would be as ready to partake of the provision as they were to offer it to Him, but He made no movement in that direction. His mind was evidently far away from the idea of food. He was absorbed in something else and, therefore, His disciples sought to call Him back to a sense of His need. I do not suppose that they had, themselves, eaten. It was hardly like them to do so while their Lord was not with them. They, therefore, wished to eat and they were all the more struck with the fact that He had no care for refreshment. Knowing how weary He had been when they left Him—so weary that He bade them go alone into the city—they were perplexed at His indifference to food and, perhaps, judged that He was over-fatigued and, therefore, they urged Him to eat. Importunately, one after another said, “Good Master, it is long since You have eaten; the way has been weary, the day is hot, You seem very faint. We pray You, eat a little that You may be revived. The woman to whom You spoke has gone. Your good work, for a while, is over, let us eat together.”

Again I confess that I do not agree with those who blame these disciples. If it is true that there is nothing very elevated in providing food, there is certainly nothing unworthy in the act. I admire their care for their Mas-

ter. I praise them for so lovingly pressing upon Him the supply of His necessities. It is right for the spiritual man to forget his hunger, but it is equally right for his true friends to remind him that he ought to eat for his health's sake. It is commendable for the worker to forget his weakness and press forward in holy service, but it is proper for the humane and thoughtful to interpose with a word of caution and to remind the ardent spirit that his frame is but dust. I think the disciples did well to say, "Master, eat." What is more, I will hold them up to your imitation! Jesus has gone from you, now, in actual Person, but His mystical body is still with you and, if you meet with any part of His body in need, make it your earnest care. Still pray to Him, saying, "Master, eat." If you know any of His people in poverty, ask them to partake of your abundance, lest your Lord should say to you at the last, "I was hungry and you gave Me no meat. I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink." Our Lord's spirituality is not of that visionary sort which despises the feeding of hungry bodies! Look after His poor and needy ones. How can you be truly spiritual if you do not? "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." There is much in the commonplace attentions of charity—Jesus commands our consideration of the weaknesses and needs of others—therefore, I say again, I commend the disciples that they urged Him saying, "Master, eat."

Having done this justice to the 12, let us do higher honor to the Divine One about whom they gathered. His mind was, at that time, absorbed in spiritual matters and, being so, He wished to lead them into that higher field wherein He was so much at home and, therefore, He transfigured their common words by giving them a higher meaning. "You pray Me to eat," He said, but, "I have meat to eat that you know not of." They did not comprehend what He meant. As the Samaritan woman did not understand Him, when He spoke of water, neither did His disciples when He spoke of meat. But you see, the Lord endeavored to use the lower expression as a ladder to something higher and more spiritual. This was the Master's way from the beginning to the end—always to be making similitudes of things seen to set forth the things unseen—always to take the thing which men had grasped and use it as the means of helping them to lay hold on some great Truth of God which, as yet, was out of their reach. Inasmuch as refreshments were spoken of and His disciples saw the need of those refreshments, the Master turns that thought into a deeper channel and tells them of other refreshments which He, Himself, enjoyed and wished them to share with Him. In effect our Lord's reply to the request, "Master, eat," is this—"I *have* eaten, in the best sense, and I wish you, also, to eat with Me." He would have them enter into that service which had yielded so intense a satisfaction to Himself—He would have them know His joy in it!

This morning the run of my subject will be just this—first, *there are refreshments for our hearts which are but little known*—"I have meat to eat that you know not of." Secondly, *these refreshments satisfied our Lord*—so satisfied Him that He forgot to eat! And thirdly, and a very *practical* thirdly, I hope it will be, *let us seek these refreshments at once, that we,*

too, may forget our earthly needs in a heavenly enthusiasm. O blessed Spirit of all Grace, give us secret, sacred food this morning while meditating upon this theme!

I. First, THERE ARE REFRESHMENTS WHICH ARE LITTLE KNOWN. Generally men know enough about refreshments of the body. Those questions—What shall we eat, and what shall we drink?—have been long and carefully studied. It seems obvious to all men that if we are to be restored and lifted above fatigue or weakness, it must be by corporeal food. Yet there is, in the Word of God, an intimation of another principle. As we read, “Man shall not live by bread, alone, but by every Word that proceeds out of the mouth of God shall man live.” The Lord has been pleased to make it generally necessary that the body should be sustained with food, but that is only because the body is to be destroyed, for it is written, “Meats for the body, and the body for meats, but God shall destroy both it and them.” That *new* body, which will never be destroyed, will probably need no meats. If God so willed it, this frame might be sustained without visible food. There is no absolute necessity that the order of Nature or of Providence should be just as it is. Even now we know that there are many ways by which waste can be suspended and the need of food greatly lessened. And there are conditions under which life has been sustained upon an almost incredibly small portion of food. If God willed it, He could secretly infuse strength into the system, keeping the lamp of life burning by means of a subtle, invisible oil. We are not so absolutely dependent upon the bread we eat as, at first sight, seems—food is but the vehicle of sustenance—God could sustain us without it.

Now, Brothers and Sisters, our Lord Jesus Christ found for Himself a sustenance other than that of food—a food superior to the ordinary meat of men. But these refreshments were not known to His disciples. The common throng of mankind have no idea of spiritual food, but the disciples were not of the common throng—they were chosen out of the world and they had been with their Lord for some little time! And yet they had not grasped the idea of a man being fed and strengthened by an influence upon his *spiritual* nature which could raise him above the dragging down of his bodily needs. They could not yet enter into their Lord’s secret—He had a meat to eat which even they knew not of.

The reason for His knowing what they knew not was, in part, the fact that *this nourishment was enjoyed upon a higher plane than these servants of Christ had yet reached.* They were spiritual men in some degree, but they were not highly spiritual—they were mere babes in Grace, though men in physical development. They had not yet reached to the height of letting their spirits rule the rest of their nature, nor had they yet learned the proper occupation of their spirits. They could not yet enjoy spiritual meat to the fullest because they were so little spiritual. Our Savior was full of the Holy Spirit and, in His inmost Nature, He was deeply and intensely spiritual. He lived in constant communion with invisible things and, therefore, it was that He perceived that “meat to eat” which they knew not of. Oh, that we may not miss the delicacies of Heaven from lack of a purified taste! It is a sad ignorance which comes of lack of spirituality. The Lord lift us out of it!

Further, these refreshments were unknown to the Apostles, as yet, because *they implied a greater sinking of self* than they as yet knew. “My meat,” said Jesus, “is to do the will of Him that sent Me.” How condescendingly does our Lord sink Himself in this expression! He does not even say, “My meat is to do My Father’s will.” He takes a lower position than that of sonship and dwells chiefly upon His mission, its service and the absorption in the will of God which it involved. He finds His refreshment in being the commissioned officer of God and in carrying out that commission. In being a Servant obeying the will and doing the work of Another, He feels Himself so much at home that it revives Him to think of it! Others have been refreshed by gaining *honor for themselves*—our Lord is refreshed by laying that honor aside! The carnal mind finds its meat and drink in self-will, but Christ, in doing the will of God! Doing his own work and carrying out his own purpose is the meat and drink of the natural man—the very opposite was the joy of our Lord Jesus!

Is it so with you, my Hearer, that you will have your own way and be your own lord and master? You feed upon wind! You seek after emptiness and, in the end, your hunger shall devour you! But oh, Believer, have you ever tried your Lord’s plan? Have you taken your Lord’s yoke upon you and learned of Him? Thus it is that you shall find rest unto your soul! Not in self, but in *self-surrender*, is there fullness for the heart! You are no longer to live unto yourself, for you are not your own, but you are the servant of Him who has bought you with a price—you will find peace in taking up your proper place. Your lifework is, from this day on, not to be one of your own selecting, but the work which your great Lord and Master has chosen for you. Servants lay their wills aside and do what they are bid. When a man gets fully into this condition, I bear witness that he will be refreshed by it! If I felt that my calling were of my own choosing and that my message were of my own inventing, I should have no rest—the responsibility would crush me! But now that I feel that I am doing the will of Him who sent me and know that I am committed wholly to the work of the Lord, I pluck up courage and put my shoulder to the wheel without misgiving!

In the name of Him who has sent me to do this work, I find a fountain of fresh strength! But, Brothers, we must get low down. We must come right away from the idea of being original and inventing something and carrying out a novel purpose of our own—we must act only upon commission—we must say only our Lord’s Words and do only His work! And then we shall eat of that same loaf on which Jesus fed when He had food to eat which even the 12 knew not of. When we get to know that we are sent of the Most High, there is nourishment in that very fact! We need to feel that as the Father has sent Christ into the work, even so has Christ sent us into the world—and if we do not so feel, we shall miss a choice form of spiritual meat.

Further, our Lord not only lived on a higher plane and felt a greater sinking of Self, but *He was in fuller harmony with God than His disciples*. He says. “My meat is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to finish His work.” God’s will was His will, not only passively, but actively, so that He *wished* to do it. God’s work was His work *completely*, so that He wished to

finish it. He longed to go all the length of God's eternal purpose and carry it out as far as that purpose concerned Himself. Now, when a man feels, "My one desire is that I may do God's will. I have no other will but His will. My own will has fallen into God's will as a brook falls into a river"—then he is at peace! It is a blessed thing to rejoice in being crossed in our own purpose in order that the purpose of the Lord may be more completely fulfilled. When a man wants to do God's work and to get through with it, whatever it may cost, he is sure to feel strength in his heart. He who will glorify God, whatever it may cost him, is a happy man! He that serves God in body, soul and spirit to the utmost of his power, finds new power given to him hour by hour, for God opens to him fresh springs!

Perhaps you do not see this truth, but if you have ever experienced what it is to lay your whole soul on the altar and feel that for Christ you live and for Christ you would die, why then you will know, by experience, that I speak the truth! If your heart's desires were as ravenous as that of the young lions when they howl for their prey, they would be abundantly satisfied by your soul's being tamed into complete submission to the will of God! When your will is God's will, you will have your will! When your will rings out in harmony with the will of God, there must be sweet music all around your steps! Our chief sorrows spring from the roots of our selfishness. Hang up self before the face of the sun, as Joshua hung up the Canaanite kings, and your soul will no longer be consumed with the hunger and thirst of discontent. When you are tuned to perfect harmony with God, you begin your Heaven upon earth, even though your lot is cast in the hut of poverty, or on the bed of sickness. I know by experience that the way to renew your strength for suffering or for service is to become more and more at one with the will and the purpose of the Most High. As God's Glory becomes the one objective of life, we find in Him our All in All!

Once more—our dear Savior was sustained by these secret refreshments because *He understood the art of seeing much in little*. Our Master had been feasting. He had partaken of a more than royal banquet. How? He had been made a blessing to a woman—an ill-famed, very sinful woman. He had led her up to the point at which she could perceive that He was the Messiah—this was, to Him, a festival! Some would have thought it a trifle, but, as a wise man sees a forest in an acorn, so did Jesus see grand results in this little incident. Many a man would say, "I could easily forget hunger and a thousand other inconveniences if called to preach to a vast congregation like that which assembles in the Tabernacle. It ought to inspire a man to see so many faces." But note well that it inspired your Master to see only *one* face and that the common face of a villager of mournful character who had come forth from Sychar with her water pot upon her head. It was not an oration that He delivered—He had not even preached a sermon which would command admiration as a masterpiece of eloquence—His whole soul was absorbed in what He had done! It was only a talk such as a city missionary would have at any door, or such as would naturally fall from a Bible-woman in her calls from room to room. Yet our Divine Exemplar saw so much in one soul and so much valued one opportunity of enlightening it, that He felt a sacred satisfaction

in His simple conversation! He saw in the woman the seed-corn of a harvest and, therefore, drew a large refreshment from her conversion.

We do not usually measure things rightly. I am persuaded that our weights and scales are out of order. We think we are doing a great deal when we get into a big controversy, or write an article that is read all over the nation, or create a sensation which startles thousands. But, indeed, it is not so! The Lord is not in the wind, nor in the tempest—we must go on with the still small voice of loving instruction and persuasion. You must go on talking with your little children in your classes; you must go on speaking to the few sick persons you are able to visit; you must try and preach Jesus Christ in little rooms, or to dozens and scores in the street corner or on the village green. It is the old-fashioned, quiet personal work which is effective! If we get to think that everything must be big to be good, we shall get into a sorry state of mind. In the little bit of work thoroughly done, God is glorified much more than in the great scheme that is superficial. That word, superficial, gives a true description of very much Christian work nowadays. A huge piece of moral architecture is carried out by jerry-builders to whom appearance is everything and reality is nothing! It tumbles down before long and then its authors begin, again, in the same wretched manner, with the same flourish of trumpets and bragging of what is going to be done!

It is worthwhile to spend a year upon the conversion of a single woman, yes, worthwhile to spend a *lifetime* on the conversion of a single child, if it is soundly done. And there might more come of the true conversion of that woman or child than of all your noise and shouting over a hundred supposed conversions, forced by excitement like mushrooms in a hotbed! We need real work, not noisy work—work done in the center of the soul of man, such as Jesus did upon the well! This sort of work will bring refreshment to our spirit, but any other will end in bitter disappointment. I am sure if we are content to do little things in the power of the great God, we shall find our meat in it. Someone here gets up and says, “I see, I see! I always thought that ministers and other workers who are always before the public would have most joy, but now I see that there is a reward for the obscure and hidden worker.” The Lord Jesus Christ was satisfied to sit by a well and talk to *one*—be you satisfied, from this day on, to keep on with your mother’s meeting, or your tract district, or your Bible class, or your family of little ones. Plod away, for infinite possibilities lie concealed within the least work done for Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit by a sincere heart! Perfume which may fill the halls of princes lies asleep within a tiny rosebud—despise no little service—but be grateful for permission to render it.

Thus the Master found satisfying meat—meat little known, even by His disciples and, therefore, He said, “I have meat to eat that you know not of.”

II. Advance with me, dear Friends, to our second theme—THESE SECRET REFRESHMENTS SATISFIED OUR LORD. I bring this forward to remind you that where He found refreshment, we, also, should find it. Why did it satisfy our Lord to be doing the will of Him that sent Him and to be finishing His work?

Well, first, because *He had so long hungered to be at it*. For thousands of years the Christ had longed to be here among men. He said, "My delights were with the sons of men." Before He actually appeared in human flesh and blood, our Lord made many appearances in different forms because He was eager to be at His work. And when He was born, while He was yet a Boy, He said, "Know you not that I must be about My Father's business?" This was the spirit of Him all His life. "I have a baptism to be baptized with and how am I straitened until it is accomplished!" He longed to be at work saving men. He hungered to perform His chosen deeds of mercy. Read in the second chapter of John at the 17th verse. He went into the Temple and He purged it and, then we read, "His disciples remembered that it was written of Him, the zeal of Your house has eaten Me up." That was before He had told them that it was His meat to do the will of Him that sent Him. Our Lord was so full of such zeal to be serving God and blessing men that when He did get at it, He was so joyful that everything else fell into the background as if it were not worth a thought! If you and I felt our Lord's anxiety to be serving God and winning souls, we should find refreshment in the service, itself, even as He did.

When our Lord did get at His work, He gave Himself wholly up to it—He went in for soul-winning, heart and soul. There was a wonderful concentration of purpose about our Savior. His face was always steadfastly set to His work. He was instant and constant in it—He was all there and always there. Time was—and I hope the time has gone forever—when there were professed ministers of Jesus Christ whose hearts were in the hunting field. Do you wonder that their ministry was a scandal? Others have been naturalists, first, and divines afterwards! Do you wonder that their ministry proved to be a failure? Time was and time is, I am sorry to say, when many professed ministers of Christ have their hearts more set upon criticizing the Gospel than preaching it! They are more at home in scattering doubts than in promoting faith! They preach what they are not sure of and what they have no interest in. It is not their meat to do the Lord's will, for He never sent them! They get their meat by preaching, but it is not their meat to preach. Surely it must be misery to them to have to tell out an old tale which, in their souls, they despise. Wretches that they are! I cannot call them better than that. It seems an awful thing, to me, that a man should profess to be a servant of Christ and not put his heart into the Redeemer's service. You may go and sell your calicoes and your teas and your sugars, if you like, half-heartedly—it will not spoil your calicoes or your teas! But if you preach the Gospel half-heartedly, that is another matter! You will spoil every bit of what you preach. What good can come of half-hearted preaching?

And you, good Friends, who teach in the school or do any work for Jesus, remember you spoil with that touch of yours all the work you do if your hand is numbed with a cold indifference. If your soul is not in what you do, you had better leave it undone—you will do mischief rather than service unless your heart is in it! When Jesus talks with that woman, He is, every bit of Him, there. He avails Himself of every opportunity and catches up every chance. He converses like a master of the art of teaching because *teaching* is the master passion of His soul! Now, Brothers, when

we get to work like that, we, too, shall be refreshed by it. If you do what you do not like to do, it will be weariness to you. But if your work is the joy of your heart, you will find in the doing of it that you have meat to eat that idlers know nothing of!

Our Lord found great joy in the work itself. I believe it was an intense delight to Him to be telling about that Living Water to a thirsty soul. It was a high pleasure to Him to be liberating a spirit which had so long been shut up in prison—to be creating new thoughts in a mind which had long groveled in the mire of sin. How pleased He was to hear the woman say to Him, “Why, then, have You that Living Water?” What a host of thoughts it stirred up in His own soul! The woman had given Him to drink, though she had not let her water pot down into the well. It was such glad, such happy work to Him to be doing good that it was its own reward!

I think the Lord forgot to eat bread that day partly because of *the enthusiasm which filled Him in the pursuit of that soul.* The chamois hunter quits his couch long before the sun is up and climbs the mountains. He watches from the first gray light for the creature which is the object of his pursuit. Ask him how it is when he returns late in the evening that he has had nothing to eat all day long. He answers, “I never thought of it. I saw a chamois on a distant crag and I hastened after it. I leaped the ravines, I climbed the steep faces of the rocks, I sprang down again. I was almost on my prey, but it was gone. I crept up within range again, holding my breath lest my scent should alarm the watchful chamois. I thought of nothing but my sport and I never knew what hunger meant until my bullet found its mark in the heart of my prey and I had drawn out my hunting knife. It was not until I began to lift the game to my shoulder that I thought that I had neither eaten nor drunk that day.”

You understand what this enthusiasm means and how it refreshes the hunter. Some of you have been salmon fishing in the Scot rivers. You have fished on and on until you have hooked a huge fish and, by the time you have landed him, on taking out your watch, you discover that it is long past your dinner hour and you are surprised that you had not noticed that you were almost faint! Your excitement kept you going—only when it was over did you begin to hunger. Thus the Master was so taken up with soul-saving that He had meat to eat that others knew not of. I hope we sometimes get into this state of entire absorption under the influence of a burning desire to bring sinners away from sin to their Savior and lead them to put their trust in Him who is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him. I see the riddle all solved. They said, “Master, eat,” but I see that He had meat to eat that they knew not of, for the enthusiasm of soul-winning was strong upon Him!

Moreover, the Master had not only felt the enthusiasm of pursuit but *He was moved greatly by the sympathy of pity.* The man that hunts the chamois has no sympathy with his prey. The man who would take his salmon has no pity for the creature. But he that labors to bless souls is full of tenderness. Many noble women love nursing the sick. Their hearts are at home at the bedside of the suffering. They do not sleep at night while pain needs relief and cold sweat needs to be wiped away. Their tender pity gives them a more than ordinary power of endurance. They watch

and wait hour after hour. Exhaustion comes, at last, to them and then they begin to enquire of themselves, "How was it I held out so long?" Generous sympathy conquered fatigue! How mothers can and do endure with sick children! They feel that they cannot sleep while the dear one tosses to and fro in fever, or moans in pain. They have lost all care for eating while they guard the brittle thread which threatens so soon to snap. Real sympathy seems as if it swallowed up everything else, as Aaron's rod swallowed up all the other rods! Sometimes you have seen suffering which you could not help and you have come away forgetful of all else but the dreadful scene. You loathed the sight of food. You were sick at heart. The sorrow had become your own! You started in your sleep weeks afterwards for the person wounded in the accident had come before you. Thus was our Savior carried away with pity for lost souls—He knew the danger of that Samaritan city—and that thought caused Him to forget to eat.

More than that—it was not only sympathy—*He felt great joy in present success*. He delighted to see that He had led a soul into life and light. He had the bliss of seeing a sinful woman believe in the Messiah and of knowing that her heart and life would thus be purified. I do not know anything that can make a man forget his pain and weariness like grasping the hand of a sinner saved. "Oh," says the saved one, "God Almighty bless you! You have brought me to Jesus." This nerves us to new effort! I speak, here, from experience, for yesterday evening, when I was thinking of this subject, I was myself somewhat dull through pain and weakness and, as God would have it, I took up the Report of the Baptist Missionary Society which will be issued to you on the 1st of June. And as I glanced over it, I saw my own name. It seems that our missionary in San Domingo has had a discouraging year, but it was lighted up with one most pleasing incident. A man had come down from the interior of Haiti to ask for Baptism. Finding him to be a most intelligent Christian, well instructed in the Gospel, the missionary asked how he came to know anything about it. In reply he told him that he had fallen in with a sermon translated into the French language which was preached by Mr. Spurgeon.

Oh Friends, I was dull no longer! I had meat to eat! Had an angel stood in the study, I could not have felt more delighted with his visit than I did when I read of a sinner saved! Here was a sermon translated into French, which was carried far away to Haiti, I do not know how, and there was read by a Romanist who found salvation by it! God bless him! You cannot faint after such a success, can you? As for myself, despite my sickness I resolve to go on again, preach with all my might and print more sermons! And send them out to the ends of the earth! Brethren, never say die! Never dream of giving up! Let God's blessing on your work refresh you!

To complete the list, the blessed Master had something else which made Him forget hunger—it was that *He saw the prospect of better things*. Enquirers were coming out of the city—that one female missionary had gone back and told her story and the men were coming to hear what Jesus had to say! Our Lord, also, with prescient eyes, beheld the day when Philip the Evangelist would go down to Samaria and when many Samaritans would be brought to the knowledge of the Truth of God. O Friends, let us open our eyes and find refreshment in what God is about to do! Let

us have bright views of the future! The Gospel which has saved 20 can save twenty thousand! The same kind of preaching which has blessed this one congregation can bless all congregations! We have only to exercise more faith in it and proclaim it with greater confidence—and make it more our lifework to proclaim it—and the world shall yet come to Jesus' feet and the old, old Gospel now despised shall yet again be had in honor! Let us be of good cheer. If we do but serve God as Jesus served Him, we shall have meat to eat that will fully satisfy us as it did our Lord!

III. Thirdly, LET US AT ONCE SEEK THIS REFRESHMENT. That is our practical business. If there is meat to eat that we know not of, let us try to know of it at once. I am speaking, of course, only to you who are converted and are thus saved by faith in Jesus Christ. You who are not yet Believers cannot eat of this secret meat, for you are not alive unto God—you need to be quickened by the Spirit of our God—you must be born again before you can eat the Bread of Heaven. May the Lord lead you to saving faith in Jesus Christ at once! But I speak to you that know the Lord, you who labor for Him and need to be refreshed this day. Look you to the right place for nourishment. Are we weary? Then let us seek refreshment by following out the directions of our Lord in the text before us.

First, *let us remember that we are sent of God.* Do not forget that. Say with your Lord, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me." Each redeemed one is sent forth by his Redeemer. I do not know what the Lord has sent you to do. I hope you know that, each man for himself, but when you know what work you are called to do, do not be held back by anyone! Wait for no man's consent, patronage, or help. Strengthen your soul upon the persuasion that God has sent you and then go forward. If God has sent you, who can stand against you? A Queen's messenger insists that we clear the road for him. An officer who bears the Queen's authority is authorized to lay all persons under orders to help him. He who rides on royal business has precedence over all others. Get to feel, Christian Friend, that Jesus has sent you and herein will lie food for your courage! Know that you have a mission and go for it—and let it be unsafe for anyone to stand in your way! Let opposers know that somebody will have to clear out, for if God sent you, in that sending there is a force and an energy which nothing can safely resist! Do not make a noise. Forbear all blustering, but *quietly* set yourself to work. If God has sent you, you will be like the greater Sent One, of whom we read, "He shall not strive, nor cry, nor cause His voice to be heard in the streets," but at the same time, "He shall not fail, nor be discouraged."

Next, if we desire to be refreshed, let us *find joy at once in God's work and will.* You have been trying to find joy and refreshment in your own work and your own will—and you have failed. Come, then, and sail in another direction. But upon this I have already spoken. If all the work you and I have to do can be made to be *God's* work. If we will do all things for His Glory, whether it be mending of shoes, or making garments, or preaching sermons, or plowing of fields, then shall we be happy in God and our souls shall be fed upon the finest of the wheat! No drudgery remains when the lowliest labor is seen to be part of a priestly service. When the meanest work glows with the Glory of a Divine call, there is refresh-

ment in it! I am sure I am directing you in the right way to find sweet morsels for your heart when I urge you to have joy in God's work rather than in your own.

Next, *let us get to work*. The Master says to His Apostles, "Do you not say, There are yet four months and then comes harvest"? This was a common saying among the lazy. The time for work was never come—they always found reason for delay—the harvest was always four months off. Many are going to do a lot of work one of these days. Just now they take things easy, but in four months they will let you see how they can labor! We have too many Christian people around us who find no joyful satisfaction in Divine things because they do not, at once, spend themselves for Christ. One enquires, What is the best way to do good? Our answer is, do it! I cannot give you any better recommendation. The best way to serve Christ is to serve Him! A man who was hungry, when he was asked what was the best way to dine, said, "Give me a knife and fork. Give me a chance and I will soon show you." When asked how you can serve God, reply by seizing the first opportunity and doing it! For our joy and comfort, be it remembered that opportunities are many and present. "Do you not say, There are yet four months and then comes harvest? Lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already ripe for harvest!"

Further, if we want to have joy and refreshment in our own Christian life, *let us leap into our place at once*. These disciples were not to be sowers, but reapers. Many others are not to be reapers, but sowers. You must get to work in the place into which the Lord puts you—there must be no picking of positions—you must jump into the saddle and be off! It may be that you say, "I should like to begin an altogether new work," but if the Lord appoints you to go on with the work that someone else has carried on for years, do not hesitate. Perhaps you say, "I would like to labor where the first rough work is done," but if your Lord directs you to commence on the uncleared forest, do not raise an objection. It may be you wish to carry up the last load of bricks to put on the chimney, but if the house has not reached that condition yet, be quite as willing to dig out the cellar. We must be willing to hook on anywhere. Be leader or shaft-horse! Be first or last. Be sower or reaper, as the Lord ordains! Dear Friends, you will never get refreshment in Christ's service if you bring a dainty self-will into the field and set it to make a *selection*, for this is contrary to the true spirit of service. Have no choice and then you will find satisfaction.

If we are to get refreshment for our souls we may also *anticipate the wages*. There is to be a time when workers together with Christ are to receive wages. The text says, "He that reaps, receives wages." In our own country agricultural laborers have been paid so little that we could hardly call it receiving wages. But when harvest time comes, then the reaper is paid and truly receives wages. The hardest-fisted churl must pay for reaping, must he not? Even the most grudging miser must pay his reapers. There must be special money for mower and reaper. Let us work on, for our Master speaks to us of wages and He always pays liberally. Your reward is not what you get at present—it lies in the glorious future! When the Lord Jesus comes, He will reward all His stewards and servants. No Truth of God is more plain in the four Gospels than this fact, that when

Jesus returns to this earth, He will distribute recompense in proportion to work done. Herein is meat for us to eat which may well sustain us under the burden and heat of the day.

Then comes the end. If any of you wish to be refreshed, remember the end. What is the end of sowing and the end of reaping? Is it not the completed harvest? See you not the last wagon loaded with grain? See the children on the top there! Listen how the servants shout their joy as they bring in the precious fruits of the earth! And there is a supper at night. The master has been killing his fatlings and he invites all his laborers to supper. How they feast with him! Sow on! Work on! Reap on, for there will come a day when Heaven and earth shall be moved with joyous acclamations because the Lord's purpose is accomplished and His work is finished! Then shall we sit down at the supper of the Lamb and rejoice together, as many of us as have had a hand in the blessed work and service in which our Master laid down His life! Therefore gird up the loins of your mind. Be sober and hope to the end. Be encouraged and refreshed this morning. Feed upon the eternal dainties which are provided for you by your Lord and be glad in His name!

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

JESUS ABOUT HIS FATHER'S BUSINESS

NO. 302

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MARCH 4, 1860,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.**

***“Jesus said to them, My food is to do the will of Him that sent Me and to finish His work.”
John 4:34.***

IT is peculiarly pleasing to the Christian to observe the interest which God the Father takes in the work of salvation. In our earlier days of childhood in grace, we conceived the idea that God the Father was only made propitious to us through the atonement of Christ—that Jesus was the Savior and that the Father was rather an austere Judge than a tender Friend. But since then, we have learned the Father through the Son—for it was not possible we could come unto the Father except through Jesus Christ. But, now, having seen Christ, we have seen the Father also and from henceforth, we both know the Father and have seen Him, since we know the love of Christ and have felt it shed abroad in our hearts.

It is always refreshing then, to the enlightened Christian, to call to mind the intense interest which the Father takes in the work of salvation. Here you find in this verse it is three times hinted at. Salvation-work is called the Father's *will*. “It is not the will of your Father which is in Heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.” But more, it is His will that His chosen, the blood-bought ones of Christ, should every one of them be redeemed from the ruins of the Fall and brought safely home to their Father's house. Note, again, we are told that Jesus was sent of the Father.

Here, again, you see the Father's interest. It is true that Jesus rent Himself away from the glories of Heaven, from the felicities of blessedness and voluntarily descended to the scorn, the shame and spitting of this lower world. Yet His Father had a part therein. He gave up His only begotten Son. He withheld not the darling of His bosom, but sent away His well-Beloved and sent Him down with messages of love to man. Jesus Christ comes willingly, but still He comes by His Father's appointment and sending.

A third hint is also given us. Salvation is here called God's work—“It is My food to do the will of Him that sent Me and to finish His work.” We know that when this world was made, the Father did not make it without reference to the Spirit, for “the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters,” brooded over chaos and brought order out of confusion. Nor did He make it without the Son. For we are told by John the Apostle, “Without Him was not anything made that was made.”

Yet, at the same time, creation was the Father's work. So also is it in salvation. The Father does not save without the Spirit, for "the Spirit quickens whom He will." He does not save without the Son, for it is through the merit of the Redeemer's death that we are delivered from the demerit of our iniquity. But, notwithstanding this, God the Father is the Worker of salvation as much as He is the Worker of creation. Let us look up then, with eyes of delight, to our reconciled God and Father. O Lord our GOD, You are not an angry one! You are not an austere ruler! You are not merely the Judge but You are the grand Patriarch of Your people! You are their great friend! You love them better than You did Your Son! For You did not spare Him—You did send Him down to suffer and to die, that You might bring Your children home. "Glory be unto the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end."

The particular contemplation of this morning will be however, to describe Christ Jesus as He manifests Himself as doing His Father's will and finishing His Father's work. Our Lord and Master had but one thought, but one wish, but one aim. He concentrated His whole soul, gathered up the vast floods of His mighty powers and sent them in one channel, rushing towards one great end—"My food is to do the will of Him that sent me and to finish His work."

1. In bringing out the great truth of Christ's entire devotedness to the work of salvation—a devotedness so great that He could say, "The zeal of Your house has eaten Me up"—I shall want to call your attention first of all to the fact, verified by the gospels, that His soul was in all that He did. Mark our Master when He goes about doing good. The task is not irksome to Him. There are some men who if they distribute to the poor, or if they comfort the fatherless, do it with such reserve, with such coldness of spirit, that you can perceive that it is but the shell of the man that acts and not the man's whole soul.

But see our Divine Lord. Wherever He walks, you see His whole self in flame, His whole being at work. Not a single power slumbers, but the whole man is engaged. How much at ease he seems among His poor fishermen! You do not discover that His thoughts are away in the halls of kings. But He is a fellow with them, bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh. He walks in the midst of publicans and harlots and He is not ill at ease. Not as one who is condescending to do a work which he feels to be beneath him. Jesus is pleased with it, His whole soul is in it.

Mark how He takes the little children on His knee and though His disciples would put them away, yet His whole spirit is set truly with the poor, with the sinful, whom He came to save. He says, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven."

Look up into that face and there is a whole man there. Not as one whose thoughts are set on dignity and power and who is schooling himself *down*, toning *down* his mind to the circle in which he moves, as a matter of constraint and duty. No, Jesus' vocation becomes His delight. His Fa-

ther's service is His element. He is never happy when He is out of it. He casts His whole being, His whole spirit into the work of man's redemption.

2. As a further proof of *man's* devotedness, you will observe that whatever he takes anything to heart as being the object of his life, it always makes him glad when he sees it succeeding. How you notice in our Savior's life that when He goes into a Pharisee's house to eat bread He always seems under constraint. In any chapter which records what Jesus said in the house of a Pharisee there is a want of vivacity. He speaks solemnly, but evidently His spirit is spell-bound, He is unhappy. He knows that He is watched by cavilers who resist His good work and He there says but little, or else His discourse has but little joy and brilliance to it.

But see Him among publicans! When He is sitting down with Zaccheus. or when He is come into some poor man's house and is sitting down to His ordinary meal—there is Jesus Christ with His eyes flashing, His lips pouring forth eloquence and His whole soul at ease. "Now," says He, "I am at home. Here is My work—here are the people among whom I shall succeed." How the common man snaps Jesus' chain! You see the Lord Jesus Christ as the child-man, no more restraining Himself before the watchers, but speaking out of His full soul all that His heart thinks and feels.

Now you generally know when a man's heart is in his work, by the joy he feels in it. You see some preachers go up into their pulpits as though they were going to be roasted at the stake. And they read their sermons through as if they were making their last dying speech and confession. What do you think they call it?—why, doing their duty. True ministers call preaching *pleasure*, not duty. It is a delight to stand up to tell others the way of salvation and to magnify Christ. But mere hirelings cannot go higher than the idea of doing their duty when they are telling out this glorious tale.

Jesus Christ was none of these. "My food is" He said, "to do the will of Him that sent Me." The only times that Jesus ever smiled and rejoiced are the times when He was in the midst of poor sinners. At that time, "Jesus rejoiced in Spirit and said, I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, that You have hid these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them unto babes." Let Him see a penitent, let Him hear the groan of a sinner mourning over his evil way, let Him discern a tear trickling down the cheek of one of His hearers, and Jesus Christ begins to be glad, and the Man of Sorrows wears a smile for a moment upon that pale and sorrowful face. At all times there is a travailing in birth for souls—He is only happy when He sees the family of God enlarged.

3. There is another test by which you may know when a man's spirit is in his work. When a right noble lord, some little time ago, stood up in the House of Lords to speak against the infamous productions and prints of Holywell Street, I felt quite sure that His Lordship was thoroughly in earnest, because he grew angry. After some person had ventured to defend the filth that comes forth from that street, as if it had some connection with the glories of art, His Lordship replied in a very tart speech, which at

once let you see that he meant what he said and that he felt the work upon which he had entered to be an important one.

Now, our Lord Jesus Christ sometimes grew warm in speech, but He was never angry except with men who opposed the good work with which He came—and not even with them if He saw that they opposed it through ignorance—but only with those who stood up against Him on account of pride and vain glory. Did you ever read such a mighty tirade of threats as that which roars from Christ when He is speaking against the Pharisees? “But woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you shut up the kingdom of Heaven against men—for you neither go in yourselves neither suffer you them that are entering to go in. Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you devour widows’ houses and for a pretense make long prayer—therefore you shall receive the greater damnation. Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you compass sea and land to make one proselyte and when he is made, you make him two-fold more the child of Hell than yourselves. You blind guides, which strain at a gnat and swallow a camel. You serpents, you generation of vipers, how can you escape the damnation of Hell?”

Methinks I see His holy cheeks glowing with a Divine furor, when He hurls His thunderbolts about Him and denounces the men who shut up the gates of Heaven and will not enter in themselves and they that would enter in they hinder. Now, you can see that His soul is in it, because the Man grows warm. The loving spirit of Jesus, who was trod on like a worm, who would never defend Himself, who had not a spark of resentment towards His persecutors, but “when He was reviled, reviled not again,” who gave blessings for curses—oh, how He kindles into a flame when He sees enemies in the way of His poor people whom He has come to save! Then, indeed, He spares no words. Then can He ply the lash with a mighty hand and let them see that the voices of Jesus can be as terrible as thunder, while, at other times, it can be sweet as harpers harping with their harps.

4. A sure evidence that a man has espoused some mighty purpose and that his purpose has saturated his whole soul and steeped him in its floods, is that if he is unsuccessful, he will weep. Now, see our Lord. Were there ever such tears shed as those which He poured forth over Jerusalem? Standing on the hilltops, He saw its towers and its glittering temple and He discerned in the dim future the day when it should be burned with fire and the plowshare of destruction should be driven over its once fair, but then desolate, foundations and He cries, “O Jerusalem! Jerusalem! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings and you would not!”

Oh that wail of his—“O Jerusalem! Jerusalem!” Does it not remind you of those words of God in one of the old Prophets, where weeping over Ephraim, He says “How shall I give you up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver you, Israel? How shall I make you as Admah? How shall I set you as Zeboim? My heart is turned within Me, My repentings are kindled together.” Jehovah’s heart yearned to clasp His Ephraim to His breast.

And so with Jesus. They may spit in His face and He weeps not. They may drag Him out of the synagogue and seek to cast Him headlong down the brow of the hill, but I find not that He sighs. They may nail Him to the Cross and yet there shall be never a tear. The only thing that can make Him weep is to see that they reject their own mercy, that they put away from them their only hope and refuse to walk in that only way of peace. This alone might serve as a proof of the intensity of Jesus' soul in His great purpose. He must save others. And if they are not saved, He will weep.

If others oppose their salvation He will grow angry—not for Himself but for them. Careless of what happens to Himself, He has no fear, no anger for injuries that are poured on Him, but His whole spirit is given up to the one great work of rescuing souls from sin and sinners from going down into the pit.

5. It often happens, however, that when we are really earnest about some purpose, some enemy will rise up. Unconscious, perhaps, of the nobility of our purpose, he will misconstrue our motives, vilify our character and tread our fair name in the dust. There is a strong temptation at such seasons to defend one's self. We want to say just a word about one's own sincerity and heartiness of purpose. The temptation comes very strongly on us, because we think that we ourselves are so wrapped up, so intimately connected with the work, that perhaps if our name is injured the work may suffer also.

How many good and great men have fallen into this snare, so that they have left their work in order to take care of themselves. They have at least diminished some little of their ardor, or commingled the ardor which they feel for those objects with another fervency of spirit—the fervency of self-defense. Now, in our Lord Jesus Christ you see nothing of this. He is so set upon His purpose that when they call Him a drunkard He does not deny it. When they say He is a Samaritan and is mad, He takes it silently and seems to say, "Be it so. Think so, if you will." Now and then there is a word of complaint, but not of accusation. When it is really for their good He will rebuke them and say, "How can Beelzebub cast out Beelzebub?" But there is no elaborate defense of His character.

Christ has left on record, in His sermons, no apology for anything He said. He just went about His work and did it and left men to think what they pleased about Him. He knew right well that contempt and shame from some men are but another phase of glory and that to suffer the despite of a depraved race was to be glorified in the presence of His Father and in the midst of His holy angels. Yet we might wonder (if we did not know who He was) that some little personal animosity did not sometimes creep in. But you never detect a shade of it. Many there were, I dare say, whom He knew to be His dire enemies. He has not a word to say against them. Some would come up in the street to insult Him. I do not find that He took the slightest notice of them.

Many there were, too, that spread all manner of ill reports, but He never told His disciples to try and stop the ill tale that was abroad. He

treated with silent pity the calumnies of men and walked on in the majesty of His goodness, defying all men to say what they pleased, for all their devices could no more make Him turn aside from His course than the baying of the dog can make the moon stand still in her orbit. And so, too good to be selfish, too glorious to care for anyone's esteem, He could not and would not turn aside, but, as an arrow from the bow of some mighty archer, He sped on His way towards His destined target.

6. Then, mark again—another proof of the full devotedness of Christ to His ministry namely, that you always see Him laboring. The three years of Christ's ministry were three years of ceaseless toil. He never rested—one wonders how He lived at all. It is but little marvel that His poor body was emaciated and that His visage was more marred than that of any man. Think of the stern conflicts with Satan in the desert—conflicts so severe, that if you and I were to undergo them, they might make our hairs turn gray in a single night.

Think of the conflicts with the crowd of men who all seemed to rise up at once against Him, like warriors armed to the teeth, while He stood like a defenseless lamb in the midst of cruel wolves. Think of the preaching, the more private teaching, the healing the sick and the lepers, restoring the maimed, the deaf, the blind. Think of His going about everywhere doing good and never ceasing in His journeys, walking every inch of the way on foot, save when He was tossed on the stormy bosom of the lake, in some small boat which belonged to His disciples—never having a home wherein to dwell, crying, “the foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head”—surely never man labored like this Man!

That three years of our Savior's ministry reads like the history of three centuries. It is the life of a Man who is living at a matchless rate. His minutes are all hours. His hours all months. His months all years. Or longer still than that. He does enough in one day to give a man eternal fame and yet, thinking nothing of it, He goes to something yet more arduous. And on and on and on, He toils His whole life through. The most hard working man among us has his hours of sleep. Give us but sleep and we can do anything, we rise up from our beds like giants refreshed with new wine, to run our course anew. But Jesus sleeps not—

***“Cold mountains and the midnight air,
Witness the fervor of His prayer.”***

He has stood up to preach all day long. He has fed thousands. And at last He faints. His disciples take Him even as He is, for He cannot walk, His strength is gone. And they carry Him down to the boat and lay Him there. He shuts His eyes, He is about to have some little repose but they come to Him and cry, “Master, why do You sleep? Awake! We perish.” And He arises to rebuke the waves and finds Himself on another shore and in another field of labor, upon which He enters at once without delay. He seems to have known no moment of repose. He preaches day by day, He prays by night. He seemed to be a sun that never had a setting, always shining always progressing in His mighty course. Oh, there never was

such a worker never such a toiler as this Lord Jesus, who toiled not for Himself but for others.

7. And here let me remark, again, that I may give you another proof that His food was to do the will of Him that sent Him, namely, that at many times when He was in full labor He does not seem to have felt fatigue at all. He had been walking one hot day along the dusty road, under the burning sun. He comes at last to the well of Sychar. Being very weary, He sat down on the well. He was hungry, too, for His disciples had gone away to buy food. That little wallet which Judas carried was not often full enough to afford food for luxury. They could only buy for mere necessity. They doubtless had enough in that little bag, which was filled by the voluntary gifts of those among whom He labored, to keep those twelve men with daily bread, but they had none to spare.

I conclude, then, that our Savior needed food, or they would not have gone away to buy it. They come back after they have bought their food and they find their Master sitting on the well preaching to a woman. She goes away and they wonder how it is He does not eat. He tells them he needs no food, He has been refreshed, He had seen that woman converted. A woman who had had five husbands and was then living with one who was not her husband, had listened to His voice and she had been saved and He saw her go away to bring the men to hear. He expected a harvest. He saw the fields white and ready for it. And this so refreshed His spirit that He did not need to eat.

And we read at another time He forgot to eat bread and at another season we read they thronged Him in, "insomuch that He was not able to eat." Yet he could say, "I have food to eat that you know not of." He seemed to get refreshed in His work to grow stronger amid His toils. Instead of growing tired, He renewed His strength as He went on with His sacred labors. Now, this could not have happened to Christ, unless His whole soul was in it. Those of you who have ever undertaken an enterprise with all your might, know that as you have been going on you have been so absorbed that you did not know when it was time for you to eat—and when at last you have seen success dawning upon you, if anyone had hinted that you needed bread, you would put him by and say, "Don't disturb me. Let me watch. Let me see this light come to its full blaze of noon day." You have needed no other refreshment than that which success, has given you.

I could myself give an illustration of this, which occurred to me a little while ago, to prove that fact. Coming from home early in the morning, I went to the Chapel, sat there all day long seeing those who had been brought to Christ through the preaching of the Word. Their stories were so interesting to me that the day went on. I may have seen some thirty or more during the day, one after the other, as they came up to me. I was so delighted with the tales they told me and the wonders of grace that God had worked in them, that I did not know anything about how the day went. Seven o'clock came for Prayer Meeting. I went in and prayed with the Brethren.

After that came the Church meeting. A little before ten o'clock I felt faint and I began to think at what hour I had had my dinner and I found that I had had none. I never thought of it, I never felt hungry, because God had made me so glad with success. I think we could live right on, almost without food, if God would sustain us daily with this Divine manna—this heavenly food of success—in winning souls. This showed that our Master's heart was in it—for the toil needed no refreshment.

8. Then, again, if I have not said enough to convince you that He gave His whole spirit to the work—let me remark that many a man has espoused a purpose and, as he imagined, has betrothed himself to it by eternal nuptials, yet at last he has been divorced from the darling object. He has seen some path of brightness opening to him with some glittering honor at the end and he has turned aside to self-aggrandisement and glory. But our Lord had a prospect before Him, such as no man ever had. Satan took Him to the brow of a hill and offered Him all the kingdoms of this world—a mightier dominion even than Caesar had—if he would bow down and worship Him.

That temptation was substantially repeated in Christ's life a thousand times. You remember one practical instance as a specimen of the whole. "They would have taken Him by force and would have made Him a king." And if He had but pleased to accept that offer, on the day when He rode into Jerusalem upon a colt, the foal of an ass when all cried, "Hosanna!" when the palm branches were waving, He had needed to have done nothing but just to have gone into the temple, to have commanded with authority the priest to pour the sacred chrism publicly upon His head and He would have been king of the Jews. Not with the mock title which He wore upon the Cross, but with a real dignity He might have been monarch of nations.

As for the Romans, His omnipotence could have swept away the intruders. He could have lifted up Judea into a glory as great as the golden days of Solomon—He might have built Palmyras and Tadmors in the desert—He might have stormed Egypt and have taken Rome. There was no empire that could have resisted Him. With a band of zealots such as that nation could have furnished and with such a leader capable of working miracles walking in the van, the star of Judea might have risen with resplendent light and a visible kingdom might have come and His will might have been done on earth, from the river unto the ends of the earth.

But He came not to establish a carnal kingdom upon earth, else would His followers fight—He came to wear the crown of thorns, to bear our griefs and to carry our sorrows. And from that single object the most splendid temptation could not make Him diverge. You may heap together the glittering pomps and the gaudy jewels, but He treads them all beneath His feet. The Cross to Him is brighter than a crown, the suffering more dear than wealth and honor. So then, in this, too, we may see how full was His purpose and how firmly He was set on the salvation of man.

9. One other thought here. If we knew that some purpose which we had undertaken could never be achieved unless by our death, suppose that we

could bring our mind to give up our blood as the price of success? If we knew that after the most toilsome effort, though the walls of the structure might rise, yet our own tomb must furnish the topstone—if we resolve to die for it, yet I can well conceive that firmly as our purpose might be set, we should dread the hour. Let it be at a distance, we should say. And if we were told it was drawing near, we should sigh and our spirit would sink.

But not so, Christ. Do you observe throughout His life in what a hurry He is? Read the Gospel according to Mark. The Gospel of Mark is the Gospel of the Servant. The chosen emblem in the old Church windows represents St. Mark as the ox, the laborious ox. Each of the Evangelists had his own particular idiom and the idiomatic expression of St. Mark is the word, Eutheos, which we translate “straightway,” “immediately.” You will see, if you read the Evangelist through, that the word “straightway,” “immediately,” occurs more frequently in that book than in any other, perhaps more times than in all the rest of the Word of God besides, to teach us this lesson—that Christ as a Servant was in haste to fulfill His mission—never loitering, but always doing it straightway.

He seems to me to be always stretching out his hands after the Cross. Not standing back from it, as if he knew it must come to him by necessity. No, he said, “I have a baptism to be baptized with and how am I straitened till it be accomplished.” His soul was speeding towards the Cross and his body seemed to be straitened, encaged, imprisoned, that it could not get to the end of this three years of labor. His soul was panting after suffering—groaning, crying out to be permitted to drink of the cup of our redemption even to the dregs.

Now, this majesty of purpose, not merely to die, but to pant for death—not simply to climb the wall, to lead the forlorn hope and to long to do it, to be panting for the battle, desiring the fight, longing for the suffering—this is heroic ardor, self devotion entirely unexampled! I could imagine a man panting for the fight an hour before it begins, but all His life to be desiring to enter upon it, to be panting for that bloody sweat, to be sighing for those nails, that shame, that spitting—this showed how strongly our Lord Jesus Christ had bent all His thoughts to the Divine purpose of doing his Father's will and finishing His Father's work. Now, I shall say no more upon this subject by way of proof. I come very briefly to make the practical application thereof.

The first practical inference is addressed to the timid, agonized soul who desires salvation, but who thinks that Christ is unwilling to give it to him. Timid Spirit, timid spirit, put away the thought that He is unwilling to save. It is a lie against your own soul. It is a libel against His character. What? He unwilling to distribute that which He so freely bought at so immense a price! Do you see in any one period of His life an unwillingness to save? There might be once a shrinking of the flesh, but that is over now. No more the crown of thorns. The Cross and nails no more. The flesh has nothing more to shrink at. It is done. Redemption is accomplished and do

you think He was so earnest and so intent on the work of redemption and now is unwilling to reap the fruits of it?

Why, do you not know, poor Penitent, that He died to save you and do you think that it needs much argument to move the heart that once was pierced to pity and compassion? Scout the thought once and for all. He is able to forgive. That you know. He is as willing as He is able. Infinite is His ability and as infinite His willingness. I beseech you, distrust Him not. Come as you are, with all your sins about you. Come, now and put your trust in Him. You shall find the door of Heaven's gate not creaking on its hinges, but standing ajar and opening easily.

John Bunyan says the posts of the gates of the temple were made of olive trees. And he allegorized it thus—They were made of that fat and oily tree, that so the hinges might move readily and smoothly, that there might be no difficulty in opening the temple gates when timid souls came flying in. When mothers are unwilling to receive their children, when fathers are unwilling to give food to their own offspring, then—no, not even then, will Jesus be unwilling to forgive. When the hard working man is unwilling to take his wage, when the toiling politician is unwilling to grasp the honor which he has achieved, then—no, not even then, may Christ be unwilling to lay hold upon the sheep which are His own, purchased with His own blood and to pluck that jewel from a dunghill which He has redeemed with His own suffering.

He is not unwilling. *You* are unwilling. If there is any hardness of heart, it lies with you and not with Him. If there are difficulties in the way of your salvations they are difficulties in yourself, not in Him. Come, and welcome. This is the invitation which reaches you today from Heaven's festal board. Come, and welcome. Come, and welcome. Come, and welcome, Sinner, come! Let nothing make you linger. He thirsts to save. He pants to bless. He longs to redeem and ransom. Only trust Him—and if you are made glad when you trust, He will be glad, too. If the prodigal is glad when he returns, the father's joy is not an atom less. If there is mirth in the heart of the returning one, there is as much mirth in the heart of the parent to whom he returns. So come, and make your Savior glad. Come, and make Him see of the travail of His soul that He may be abundantly satisfied. This is my first practical inference.

There is yet another. Christian Brothers and Sisters, it is but fair that we should give you one lesson from such a subject as this. Let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus. I would not be censorious, but solemnly and seriously I fear there are not very many whose whole heart is set on Christ's glory. We have Church members, men of wealth. Do they not spend more upon themselves than upon Christ? And may I not infer from this that they love themselves better than Christ? We have other members of our Churches, men who are but comparatively well-to-do. These spend more on their mere pleasures than on Christ. What am I to suppose, but that they find more pleasure in the enjoyments of the flesh than they do in serving Christ?

Oh, have we not tens of thousands in the army of the Lord that strike for themselves in their own battles with an arm as strong as that of king Arthur of our table, but when they come to fight for Christ their arm drops nerveless at their side? We have men who are all eye, all ear, all hand in business, but they are blind and deaf and impotent when they come into Christ's Church. The fact is, we have in too many of our Churches the chrysalis of men, but not the real body. They give us their names, but they keep their whole influence for the world.

Ah, and is this what Christ deserves of you? Is this the reward of His self-devotion? Do you thus repay Him who saved others but could not save Himself? And you profess to be a follower of the Lamb, is this your following? An imitator of Jesus and is this the imitation? Oh, Sirs, the likeness is marred and blotted. You are poor sculptors, indeed, if you imagine yourselves to be sculptured in the image of Christ. Brothers and Sisters, this matter may not seem to be of interest to you, but I feel it to be a subject of the most intense importance to the world that lies in the wicked one.

If we were more like Jesus it would be a happy day for the poor dying sons of men. Oh, if our divided aims could but be exchanged for singleness of heart. If our littleness of zeal could be consumed in the intensity of love to Christ, what better men should we be and what a happier world would this be. Do you imagine that you are pleasing to God when you are living for fifty aims instead of one? When you bring to Christ your lukewarm love, your lukewarm zeal, do you think He is pleased with you and that he accepts your offer? Oh, Church of Laodicea, you have moved from Asia, you have come to England and taken up your abode in London!

Truly might the Lord say to many of our London Churches, "You are neither cold nor hot, you are lukewarm and I will spew you out of My mouth." There is nothing God abhors more than our cold Christianity, such as we have in these modern times—a religion which professes to live, but which lives like a gasping, fainting, trembling creature, that is on the verge of death. And you think to shake the world while you are shaking yourself with the chill of your cold indifference! You cry to God, "Arise!" And yet you rise not yourself! You ask a blessing and yet you will not win it! You crave for victory and yet your swords rust in their scabbards!

Out with you, Sirs, be rid of this hypocrisy. Begin first to ask for singleness of soul and devotedness of purpose. And when this is given you, then shall there come days of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. Then shall sinners be converted and Christ shall see of the travail of His soul. But for all this we want the influence of the Holy Spirit, for without that we shall never give our whole hearts up to the sacred mission of winning souls for Christ.

Spirit of the living God! Descend upon us now. Rest on Your saints and fill them with love for perishing souls and rest on the sinner, to bring him to this willing Savior and make him willing in the day of Your power.

A GOLDEN SENTENCE

NO. 3135

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 11, 1909.

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

***“Jesus said unto them, My meat is to do the will of Him
that sent Me, and to finish His work.”
John 4:34.***

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon, upon the same text, is Sermon #302, Volume 6—
JESUS ABOUT HIS FATHER’S BUSINESS and another, *upon verses 31 to 38, is*
#1902, Volume 32—MYSTERIOUS MEAT—
Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

THIS text contains in it *much consolation for those who are desirous of salvation, more of example to those who are saved and most of all of matter for praise concerning our Lord Himself, who is its Spokesman.*

I. Let us begin by noticing that THE TEXT CONTAINS MUCH CONSOLATION FOR THOSE ANXIOUS ONES WHO WOULD FIND MERCY THROUGH JESUS CHRIST.

You who are trembling under a sense of sin will perceive that *the work of saving souls is called by Christ, “His Father’s will.”* I know you are very prone to imagine that Christ is full of pity, but that the Father is austere, severe, an avenging Judge. You slander your God by such a supposition! “The work of mercy is the will of Him that sent Me,” says Christ. “All that I am doing, when I am seeking the soul’s good of a poor sinful Samaritan woman at the place of this well is according to My Father’s mind.” Christ was not, as it were, introducing men to a mercy from which God would keep them, but He was bringing to reconciliation with God those concerning whom the benevolent will of God was that they should be saved—and more—concerning whom the effectual will of God was that they should also be brought into Covenant relation with Himself and should enjoy eternal life!

Sinner, if you get into the garden of the Lord’s Grace, you have not come there as an intruder. The gate is open. It is God’s will that you should come in. If you receive Christ into your heart, you will not have stolen the treasure—it was God’s will that you should receive Christ! If with broken heart you shall come and rest upon the finished Sacrifice of Jesus, you need not fear that you will violate the eternal purpose, or come into collision with the Divine Decree—God’s will has brought you into a state of salvation! One of the most vain fears that a man can entertain is the dread that the Father will be unwilling to forgive or the equally absurd fear that he may possibly find a decree of God shutting him out when he is anxious to be reconciled. Where God gives the will to come to Jesus, we may be sure that the eternal purpose has gone before! O awakened Sinner, your anxious desire, your prayerfulness, your longing for

God are but the shadows of the Divine Will upon your own will! Imagine not that you can get the best of God in the race of mercy—

**“No sinner can be beforehand with Thee—
Your Grace is almighty, preventing and free.”**

If you desire, God has long ago desired. If you purpose in your heart, God has long ago purposed. You need never be troubled about Divine Predestination. The Gospel which we preach is that to which you should give your attention. Rest assured that God has never spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth and said, “Seek you My face in vain.” He has never passed a secret decree in the council chamber who shall contravene the open promise of His mercy. “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life.” If you come to Christ and cast yourself upon Him, you need entertain no suspicion that you are violating the will of God, for salvation is the will of God which Jesus Christ has come to fulfill!

Another consolation is here given to every seeking soul, namely, that *Jesus Christ is sent into the world on purpose to save*. If I know that I am sick and that a physician has come into the street on purpose to heal, I feel no difficulty about inviting him into my house. If I know that I am poor and that a princely social worker has come with plentiful liberalities to distribute to the poor, I have no difficulty in asking of him! Why should I, if I know that he has come with the very objective and intent to do that which I need him to do? Now, wherever there is an empty sinner, a full Christ has come on purpose to fill that empty sinner! Wherever there is a thirsty spirit, the river of the Water of Life is poured out on purpose for that thirsty soul to drink! If you hunger after Christ, rest assured that Christ has met with you and discerns in you one of those whom He came to call. He would not have made you hunger, nor made you thirst, nor made you feel your emptiness if it had not been His intention to remove your hunger, slake your thirst and fill your emptiness to the full! Look upon the Savior as being commissioned by His Father to save sinners. Never indulge the thought that He came to save better ones than you are and that you are just beyond the pale of His mercy! Instead thereof, let your sinfulness, your nothingness, your conscious weakness, your utter ruin and Hell-deserving inspire you with a surer hope that you are such a sinner as Jesus Christ came to deliver! He came to seek and to save that which was lost. Who is more lost than you are? Believe, then, that He came to seek and to save *you*—and cast yourself upon Him—and you shall find it so!

Perhaps the greatest consolation to a despairing sinner which this text affords is *the delight which Jesus Christ experiences in the work of saving souls*. It was His one objective. From of old He looked forward to the day when a body would be prepared for Him that He might come into the world to redeem His people. When the fullness of time was come, He was no unwilling servitor to our souls. “In the volume of the Book it is written of Me, I delight to do Your will, O My God!” Down from the portals of the skies the Savior came with glad alacrity—willing, panting to save! When He was on earth, He was not loath to seek out the guilty—no, it was alleged against Him, “This Man receives sinners, and eats with them.” He could have healed the leper, if He had pleased, while He stood at a dis-

tance, but He chose to touch Him when He healed Him, to show how near He had come to humanity, that He did not shrink from it, but that it was His delight to come into contact with all the woe and suffering of our fallen race! He did not retire from sinners to guard His holiness in solitude. He did not surround Himself with a bodyguard to keep off the throng, but there He was among them, surrounded by a press of common folks. Many thronged Him and some touched Him who received healing virtue through their believing touch. He was at the beck and call of everybody! He had not time so much as to eat. And when He did, through weariness, seek a little rest, they followed Him on foot and hounded Him with their entreaties. Yet He was never angry, but always full of compassion towards them.

He was a willing Savior and found His soul's delight in winning souls. That great crowning work of suffering and death, by which souls were effectually redeemed, was no unwilling service. He said He had a baptism to be baptized with and that He was straitened until it was accomplished. The cup was bitter as Hell, but He longed to drink it. His death was to be at once the most ignominious and the most painful that could be devised, and yet He thirsted for it. "With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer," said Christ to His disciples. He did not hide Himself away when He was hunted, but He went to the Garden of Gethsemane—and Judas knew the place—and when they found Him, He was willing to yield Himself up. No bonds could have bound Him, yet He bound Himself. They could not have dragged Him to the Cross, nor could myriads like them—but He went like a lamb to the slaughter—and like a sheep before her shearer He was dumb and opened not His mouth. All that wondrous passion upon Calvary was a free-will offering for us! It was a voluntary Sacrifice to the fullest possible extent. What if I say that even in His deepest agony, Christ had an unknown joy? I think we have too much forgotten the wonderful joy which must have filled the Savior's heart even when going to the Cross. Beloved, you cannot suffer for others if you have a benevolent nature, without feeling joy that you are taking the suffering from them! And we know that it was because of "the joy that was set before Him" that He "endured the Cross, despising the shame." As He dived into the black waves of grief, He could see the precious pearl which He counted to be of greater price than all—and that sight sustained Him with a latent joy, if I may so call it, which did not sparkle at the time, but which lay there slumbering within even when His soul was "exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death." And now that Christ has gone up on high, poor trembling Sinner, He has no greater joy than this—in seeing of the travail of His soul in souls redeemed by Him, both by price and by power, from death and sin! Jesus wept over Jerusalem because it would not be saved, but Jesus rejoices greatly over sinners who repent! This is His joy and His crown of rejoicing—even you poor tremblers who come and look to Him upon the Cross and find life in His death and healing in His wounds!

I cannot bring out the comfort of this text to you as I could wish. Words fail me, but I would urge those of you who want to find peace and

faith, to make a point of thinking very much about Christ. We not only lay hold on the Cross by faith, but it is the Cross which works faith in us. If you would think more often of the mercy of God and the will of God, and the mission of Christ, and the loving kindness of Christ, your soul would probably be led by the Spirit, by that course of thought, to believe in Jesus! Your constant dwelling upon your sin and your hardness of heart has a great tendency to drive you to despair. It is well to know your heart to be hard and your sin to be great, but as a man is not healed by simply *knowing* that he is sick and is not likely to get his spirits comforted by merely studying his disease, so you are not likely to find faith by raking amongst the filth of your fallen nature, or trying to find something good in yourselves which is not there and will never be there! Your wisest course is to think much of Jesus and look to Him. You will soon find hope in Him if you look for it there. You will soon discover grounds for comfort if you look to God in the Person of His Son. If you regard the will of God as it is revealed on Calvary, and read it in the crimson lines written upon the Savior's pierced body, you will soon perceive that His will is love. Turn away from the wounds which the old serpent has given you and look to the bronze serpent! Look away from your own death to the death of Jesus and recollect that your repentance, apart from Christ, will only be a *legal repentance*, full of bondage, and will be of no use to you. As old Wilcocks says, "Away with that repentance which does not weep at the foot of the Cross!" If you do not look to Jesus Christ when you repent, your repentance is not an evangelical repentance, but a repentance which needs to be repented of. Do, I pray you, receive the Truth which I have put before you, or rather, which the text so plainly presents to you. The salvation of sinners is the will of God, the work of Christ and the joy of Christ! Is not this good news?

II. But I said that the text was MUCH MORE AN EXAMPLE TO BELIEVERS, and so it is.

Note in the text, first of all, *Christ's subservience*. He says, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me." He says nothing about His own will. Thus early did He say, "Not My will, but Yours be done." The man of the world thinks that if he could have his own way, he would be perfectly happy—and his dream of happiness in this state or in the next is comprised in this—that his own wishes will be gratified, his own longings fulfilled, his own desires granted to him. This is all a mistake! A man will never be happy in this way. It is not by setting up his own will and crying, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians," but perfect happiness is to be found in exactly the opposite direction, namely, in the casting down of our own will entirely and asking that the will of God may be fulfilled in us! "This is my meat," says the sinner, "to do my own will." Jesus Christ points to another table and says, "This is My meat, to do the will of Him that sent Me. My greatest comfort and the most substantial nourishment of My spirit are not found in carrying out My own desires, but in submitting all My desires to the will of God." Beloved, our sorrows grow at the roots of our self-will. Could a man have any sorrow if his will were utterly subdued to the will of God? In such a case, would not everything please him? Pain, if we did not kick against it, would have a wondrous sweet-

ness. Losses would positively become things to rejoice in as affording opportunities for patience! We would even take joyfully the spoiling of our goods. When we have conquered ourselves, we have conquered all. When we have won the victory over our own desires and aversions, and have subdued ourselves, through Sovereign Grace, to the will of God, then must we be perfectly happy!

Notice in the text, however, in the next place, not only subservience, but also *a recognized commission*. O Christian, cultivate full subservience to the Divine Will and let it also be your desire to see clearly your commission from on high! It is the will of God, yes, but it is well for us to add, “the will of Him that sent me.” If I am a soldier, when I am sent upon an errand, I have not to consider what I shall do, but having received my commander’s orders—I am bound to obey them. Do not many Christians fail to see their commission? It has come to be a dreadfully common belief in the Christian Church that the only man who has a “call” is the man who devotes all his time to what is called “the ministry,” whereas all Christian service is ministry and every Christian has a call to some kind of ministry or another! It is not every man who will become “a father in Israel,” for “you have not many fathers.” It is not every man who can become even an instructor, or an exhorter, but each man must minister according to the gift he has received. You are a nation of priests! Instead of having some one man selected who becomes a priest and so maintains the old priestcraft in the Christian Church, Jesus our Lord and Head has abolished that monopoly forever! He remains the one great Apostle and High Priest of our profession and we in Him are made, through His Grace, kings and priests unto God. You are, each of you, as Believers, sent into this world with a distinct commission—and that commission is very like the commission given to your Master! In your measure, the Spirit of the Lord is upon you and He has sent you to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and to preach the acceptable year of the Lord! Into the Atonement you cannot intrude. Christ has trod the winepress alone and of the people there was none with Him. But in the place of service you will be no intruder, it is your dwelling place. You are called to follow Christ your Lord in all holy labor for souls. “As the Father has sent Me, even so send I you.” Is not this a part of His dying commission, not to the Apostles, only, but unto all the saints? Let us endeavor to recognize this. When Christ was sent of God, He did not forget that He was sent. He did not come into this world to do His own business after He had been sent to do His Father’s will. So you and I must not act as though we were living here to make money, or to bring up our families and make matters comfortable for ourselves. We are, if we are Christians, sent into the world upon a Divine errand and oh, for Grace to recognize the errand and to perform it!

Further, notice *the practical character of our Lord’s observations on these two points*. He says, “My meat is”—what? To consider? To resolve? To calculate? To study prophecy as to when the world will end? To meditate upon plans by which we may be able, one of these days, to do something great? Not at all. “My meat is *to do* the will of Him that sent Me.”

The meat of some people is to find fault with others who do Christ's will—they never seem to have their mouths so well filled as when remarking upon the imperfections of those who are vastly better than themselves! This is like glutting one's self with carrion and is unworthy of a man of God! Did you ever know a man whom God blessed who had not some oddity or singularity? I think I never knew such a man or woman either! Whenever God blesses us, there is sure to be something or other to remind men that the vessel containing the treasure is an earthen vessel! Foolish people are so fond of crying, "Look at the meanness of the vessel," as though no treasure were contained within. Were they wise, they would understand that this is a part of the Divine appointment, that we should "have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." Do *you* think you could do God's work better? I wish you would try! It is generally true that those who quibble at others find it inconvenient to walk in any path of usefulness at all.

There are others, of a somewhat better disposition, who find it their meat to project new methods. They invent grand schemes! There is a house to be built for God's people to worship in—they always know how to build it! They say so many people are to give so much, and so many so much—the practical part of the business being how much they will give, themselves! But upon that point they have remarkably little to say. They are always talking of some grand scheme or other for impossible Christian union, or some magnificent but impracticable Christian effort. Our Lord was practical. You are struck, in the whole of His life, with the practical character of it. He was no visionary and no fanatic. Though His holy soul was on fire as much as the most fanatical zealot who ever lived, all His plans and methods were the wisest that could possibly be arranged, so that if men had sat down in their coolest prudence to devise schemes, had they been rightly led, they would have devised the very schemes which this warm-hearted, passionate Savior carried out! He did not theorize, but acted! My dear Brothers and Sisters, I hope we shall earn the same commendation!

Many Christians are too fond of mysticisms, quibbling, oddities and strange questions which minister not unto profit. I heartily wish they would try to win souls for Jesus in the old-fashioned, Biblical way. Every now and then some particular phase of Truth crops up and certain Christians go perfectly mad about it, wanting to pry between leaves that are folded, or to find out secrets which are not revealed, or to reach some fancied eminence of self-conceited perfection in the flesh. While there are so many sinners to be lost or to be saved, I think we had better stick to preaching the Gospel! As long as this world contains millions of those who do not know even the elementary Truths of Christianity, would it not be as well for us, first of all, to go into the highways and hedges and tell men of our dying Savior, and point them to the Cross? Let us discuss the millennium, the secret rapture and all those other intricate questions, by-and-by, when we have got through more pressing needs! Just now the vessel is going to pieces—who will man the lifeboat? The house is on a blaze, and who is he that will run the fire-escape up to the window? Here

are men perishing for lack of knowledge and who will tell them that there is life in a look at the Crucified One? He is the man who shall give men meat to eat! But all others, though they may carry a dish of most exquisite china, will probably give them no meat, but only make them angry at being tantalized with empty wind. Christ's satisfaction of heart was of a most practical kind—He was subservient to God as a commissioned Servant, and busy with actually *doing* the will of God!

But the gist of the text lies here. *Our Lord Jesus Christ found both sustenance and delight in thus doing the will of God in winning souls.* Believe me, Brothers and Sisters, if you have never known what it is to pluck a brand from the burning, you have never known that spiritual meat which, next to Christ's own Self, is the sweetest food a soul can feed upon! To do good to others is one of the most rapid methods of getting good to yourselves. Read the diaries of Whitefield and Wesley and you will be struck with the fact that you do not find them perpetually doubting their calling, mistrusting their election, or questioning whether they love the Lord or not. See the men preaching to their thousands in the open air and hearing around them the cries of, "What must we do to be saved?" My Brothers and Sisters, they had no time for doubts and fears. Their full hearts had no room for such lumber. They felt that God had sent them into this world to win souls for Christ and they could not afford to live desponding, mistrustful lives. They lived unto God and the Holy Spirit so mightily lived in them that they were fully assured that they partook of His marvelous power! Some of you good people who do nothing except read little Plymouth books, go to public meetings, Bible-readings, prophetic Conferences, and other forms of spiritual dissipation, would be a good deal better Christians if you would look after the poor and needy around you! If you would just tuck up your sleeves for work and go and tell the Gospel to dying men, you would find your spiritual health mightily restored, for very much of the sickness of Christians comes through their having nothing to do! All feeding and no working makes men spiritual dyspeptics. Be idle, careless, with nothing to live for, nothing to care for, no sinner to pray for, no backslider to lead back to the Cross, no trembler to encourage, no little child to tell of a Savior, no gray-headed man to enlighten in the things of God, no objective, in fact, to live for, and who wonders if you begin to groan, to murmur and to look within until you are ready to die of despair? But if the Master shall come to you and put His hand upon you, and say, "I have sent you just as My Father sent Me—now go and do My will," you will find that in keeping His commandments there is great reward. You would find meat to eat that you know nothing of now.

Let us have practical Christianity, my Brothers and Sisters! Let us never neglect doctrinal Christianity, nor experimental Christianity, but if we do not have the practice of it in being to others what Christ was to us, we shall soon find the Doctrines to be without savor and the experience to be flavored with bitterness! Christ found joy in seeking the good of the Samaritan woman. Her heart, up to now unrenewed, satisfied Him when He had won it to Himself. Oh, the joy of winning a soul! Get a grip from

the hand of one whom you were the means of bringing to Christ—why, after that, all the devils in Hell may attack you, but you will not care—and all the men in the world may rage against you and say you do not serve God from proper motives, or do not serve Him in a discreet way—but since God has set His seal upon your work, you can afford to laugh at them! Do but win souls, Beloved, through the power of the Holy Spirit, and you shall find it to be a perennial spring of joy in your own souls!

But, notice also that our Lord says, in addition to His finding it His meat to do God's will, that He also *desired to finish His work*. And this is our satisfaction—to persevere till our work is finished. You do not know how near you may be to the completion of your work. You may not have to toil many more days. The chariot wheels of eternity are sounding behind you. Hurry, Christian! Use the moments zealously for they are very precious. You are like the work-girl with her last inch of candle. Work hard! The night comes wherein no man can work. "I paint for eternity," said the painter, so let us do—let us work for God as those whose work will endure when selfish labors shall burn as wood, hay and stubble till the last tremendous fire. To finish His work! To finish His work! Be this our aim. When the great missionary to the Indians was dying, the last thing that he did was to teach a little child its letters. And when someone marvelled to see so great a man at such a work, he said he thanked God that when he could no longer preach, he had at least strength enough left to teach that poor little child. So would he finish his life's work and put in the last little stroke to complete the picture. It should be our meat and our drink to push on, never finding our meat in what we have *done*, but in what we are doing and still have to do—finding constantly our refreshment in the present work of the present hour as God enables us to perform it—spending and still being spent for Him. Never let us say, "I have had my day. Let the young people take their turn." Suppose the sun said, "I have shone so long, I shall not rise tomorrow"? Imagine the stars in their beauty saying, "We have for so long a time shot our golden arrows through the darkness, we will now retire forever." What if the air should refuse to give us breath, or the water should no longer ripple in its channels, or if all Nature should stand still because of what it once did—what death and ruin would there be! No, Christian, there must be no loitering for you—each day be this your meat—to do the will of Him that sent you and to finish His work!

III. And now, lastly, I have not strength, neither have you the time to consider THE GLORY WHICH JESUS CHRIST SHOULD HAVE FROM us, when we know that He could truly say, "It is My meat to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work."

How could He ever have loved us? It is strange that the Son of God should have set His affections upon such unworthy beings. I should not have wondered, my Brother, at His loving you, but it is a daily marvel to me that Jesus should have loved me. It is a wonder of wonders that He should come to save us—that when we were so lost and ruined that we did not even care about His love, but rejected it when we heard of it, and despised it even when it came with some degree of power to our hearts—that He should still have loved us notwithstanding all. "Tis strange! 'Tis

passing strange, 'tis wonderful!" Yet so it is. He has no greater delight than in saving us and in bringing us to Glory. Shall we not praise Him? Do not our hearts say within themselves, "What shall I do, My Savior to praise You? How shall I crown His head? How shall I show forth my gratitude to Him who found such delight in serving me?" Beloved, may the love of God be shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given to us! From this day forth may it be our meat and our drink to do the will of Him that sent us—and to finish His work!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 4:1-39.**

Verses 1-3. *When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (though Jesus Himself baptized not, but His disciples), He left Judea, and departed again into Galilee.* Our Savior was not a Man of strife. He was quite ready to contend with the Pharisees on fit occasions, but just then He avoided an encounter with them. Besides, one woman of Samaria, whom He was going to save, was worth more to Him than ten thousand Pharisees who would not be saved by Him! Most of the learning and culture of Palestine was possessed by the Pharisees, but Christ thought nothing of it in comparison with the soul of the one poor woman of Samaria whom He was going to save.

4-7. *And He must go through Samaria. There came He to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son, Joseph. Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well, and it was about the sixth hour. There came a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus said unto her, give Me a drink.* [See Sermons #2570, Volume 44—JESUS SITTING ON THE WELL and #2423, Volume 41—THE MODEL SOUL-WINNER—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] The "sixth hour" means noonday, and that was a very unusual time for a Samaritan woman to draw water. But the reason why she went at that unusual hour was because she was one whom other women shunned so that if she went to the well at all, she must go alone, for they would not be seen in her company. What a wonderful thing it is that this woman who was not thought to be fit company for her fellow creatures was, nevertheless, thought by Christ to be worth looking after and saving! But those who are the castaways of men are often among those who are the sought-out and chosen ones of Christ.

8. *(For His disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat).* This was quite a right thing for the disciples to do, for meat must be bought for men to eat. No doubt it is better to pray than to eat, but if one never ate, he would not long be able to pray. I have heard these disciples condemned for their worldliness and carnality, but I fail to see anything of the kind—it seems to me necessary that somebody should go into the city to buy meat—and although it is not the noblest kind of work, yet, being necessary, it may be the steppingstone to higher service.

9, 10. *Then said the woman of Samaria unto Him, How is it that You, being a Jew, ask drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? For the*

Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. Jesus answered and said unto her, If You knew the gift of God. [See Sermons #782, Volume 13—SAVING KNOWLEDGE and #2277, Volume 38—SYCHAR'S SINNER SAVED—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] How much we lose through ignorance! Ignorance is often like a great stone laid upon the well so that the flocks cannot be watered—blessed is everyone who helps to roll away that stone! It is a great thing to know the gift of God—“If you knew the gift of God.”

10. *And who it is that says to you, give Me a drink; you would have asked of Him, and He would have given you living water.* There are two things worth knowing—what Grace is and Who it is that gives it. Lack of this knowledge often leads to lack of prayer—and lack of prayer leads to lack of receiving. Perhaps someone asks, “Why does not God give without prayer?” Because it is not His will to do so! His will is that we should pray about everything. Did you ever notice that even when the harvest is ripe, it cannot be gathered in without prayer? Jesus said to His disciples, “The harvest is truly plenteous, but the laborers are few. Pray you, therefore, the Lord of the Harvest, that He will send forth laborers into His harvest.” Prayer seems indispensable! It is part of God’s necessary machinery. He has pleased to make it so. But what condescension of love it is that the prayer of man should be necessary to effect the purposes of God! God even said to Christ, Himself, “Ask of Me and I shall give You the heathen for Your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Your possession.” So that, from the woman at the well up to the Lord Jesus, Himself, prayer seems to be the indispensable requisite of blessing!

11. *The woman said unto Him, Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from where, then, have You that living water?* [See Sermon #2897, Volume 50—THE SOURCE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] You who reverence the majesty of Christ’s Deity, the perfection of His Humanity, the glory of His atoning Sacrifice, the splendor of His Resurrection power—you who know from where He has this Living Water, the power to save and to bless—worship and adore Him with all your heart and soul!

12-14. *Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? Jesus answered and said unto her, Whoever drinks of this water shall thirst again: but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst.* You know that there are some who preach of a salvation that does not save—they teach that one may be a child of God today and a child of the devil tomorrow! That is like the water in Jacob’s well—“Whoever drinks of this water shall thirst again.” But Christ’s salvation is of a very different kind—“Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst.”

14. *But the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.* [See Sermons #770, Volume 13—THE WATER OF LIFE; #865, Volume 15—LIFE’S EVER-SPRINGING WELL and #1202, Volume 20—HOLY WATER—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] The Grace of God is a living thing, a springing and abiding thing, an everlasting thing—and he that has it in his heart has that which has saved him forever!

15. *The woman said unto Him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come here to draw.* Christ's words were coming true. He said that if she had known, she would have asked. And then, in her poor groping way, she began to pray, hardly knowing what she was asking for! I advise you, also, to pray even before you quite understand your own prayers, before you are sufficiently instructed to know what you really need! Ask God to give you what you need. Very often we make a discovery of our needs through having them supplied.

16-19. *Jesus said unto her, Go, call your husband, and come here. The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, You have well said, I have no husband: for you have had five husbands; and he whom you now have is not your husband: in that said you truly. The woman said unto Him, Sir, I perceive that You are a Prophet. She perceived that there was something about Him which marked Him out as a Prophet, so she seemed to say to Him, "As You are a Prophet, solve me this riddle."*

20-24. *Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and You say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus said unto her, Woman, believe Me, the hour comes when you shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship you know not what: We know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour comes and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeks such to worship Him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.* Let us never forget this. Even if we all believe it, we do not always act according to that belief. For instance, we sing through a hymn, but it might almost as well be an old song, for our hearts do not go with the words. Or while our heads are bowed in prayer, perhaps our thoughts are back with our children, or our shops, or far away in some foreign land. Yet there is no benefit in coming up to a place of worship, or in listening to sermons and prayers, or joining in the singing of sacred songs unless our heart is there! Let us always remember this, and sigh and cry rather than rejoice if we have been up to the holy assembly and yet have not worshipped God "in spirit and in truth."

25, 26. *The woman said unto Him, I know that Messiah comes, which is called Christ: when He is come, He will tell us all things. Jesus said unto her, I that speak unto you am He.* Now she had made the greatest of all discoveries, for the Messiah, Himself, had come to her and told her "all things." This was her test of the Messiah and Christ had answered it!

27. *And about this time His disciples came and marvelled that He talked with the woman: yet no man said, What are You seeking? or, Why do You talk with her?* They had too much respect for Him to ask such questions, except in their own hearts, but their Oriental prejudices made them marvel that He was talking with a woman!

28-33. *The woman then left her water pot and went her way into the city and said to the men, Come, see a Man who told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ? Then they went out of the city and came unto Him. In the meanwhile His disciples prayed Him, saying, Master, eat. But*

He said unto them, I have meat to eat that you know not of. Therefore said the disciples, one to another, Has any man brought Him something to eat? They did not like to ask Him plainly, although they were very curious about the matter, they scarcely dared to pry further into it. And His next words may have deepened the mystery still further.

34, 35. *Jesus said unto them, My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work. Say not you, there are yet four months, and then comes harvest? Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.* [See Sermon #707, Volume 12—FIELDS WHITE FOR HARVEST—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] *“Look at those Samaritans trooping out of the city, drawn by that woman’s testimony concerning Me. They are coming, at her invitation, to learn more about the Christ.”*

36-38. *And He that reaps, receives wages, and gathers fruit unto life eternal: that both he that sows and he that reaps may rejoice together. And herein is that saying true, One sows and another reaps. I sent you to reap that whereon you bestowed no labor: other men labored, and you are entered into their labors.* The Prophets had spoken and written concerning the Messiah. Their words had prepared the minds of the Jews and also of the Samaritans, to receive the Gospel. So the great success of the Apostles must not be traced merely to their teaching, but also to the preparatory work of the other laborers who had gone before—“Other men labored, and you are entered into their labors.” The Church is always ready to praise her reapers, but let her not forget her sowers. There are some of us who bring many souls to Christ, who are greatly indebted to the work which was done by other men who preceded us. There are some who, perhaps, have few conversions although they preach the Gospel faithfully—they are sowing and there shall come others, by-and-by, who shall reap bounteous harvests as the result of their sowing the Good Seed of the Kingdom! No matter who sows, or who reaps, the glory of the harvest shall be unto the Most High.

39. *And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on Him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did.*

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

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

FIELDS WHITE FOR HARVEST

NO. 706

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, JULY 29, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Do you not say, ‘There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest’? Behold, I say to you, Lift up your eyes and look at the fields for they are already white for harvest.”
John 4:35.***

MANY unbelieving Christians have a very large stock of reasons for not expecting to see many conversions. They suppose that any present manifestation of the Divine power in connection with the Truth of God is not to be expected. They read the history of past ages and they wonder, and sometimes, when their eyes are sufficiently clear, they look forward with some sort of hope to the repetition of these scenes in future years, that is to say, when they, themselves, are dead and buried, and a new age shall have come upon the world.

But as to God working any wonders in the world *now*—as to the conversion of thousands *now*—they do not expect it. And if it were to happen they would be surprised, and beyond all measure astonished. They are forever dwelling in the past, or seeking to roost in the future—but as for now, now seeing God’s arm made bare, now setting to work for the conversion of men, now expecting that God will win hearts unto Himself—they are not brought up to this mark yet. Their common reason for expecting nothing now is this—that there are yet four months, and then comes the harvest. They say, “This is not the time. We must have patience. We must wait. This is not the man. This is not the hour. This is not the place. We must wait till, under other circumstances, other men being given, we look for grander results. But we must not expect them now—there are yet four months, and then comes the harvest.”

You know that this is the general feeling at present in the Christian Church—not to expect any great things now, but to be waiting and watching for something or other which may one of these days, in the order of Providence, “turn up.” Meanwhile, it is true that death does not cease to slay! Meanwhile, it is a fact that our cemeteries and graveyards are being crowded, and that multitudes are perishing for lack of knowledge. Meanwhile, it is most true that error stalks like a pestilence through the land. It is true that, as yet, Christ does not see of the travail of His soul and that few are the travelers who go through the strait gate.

But these good people seem indifferent to the perishing millions, and only say, “There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest.” I have noticed that this kind of feeling has crept into the smaller agencies—to the individual workers, too. In the Sunday school, how many a teacher does not expect to see the children of his class converted, but fondly hopes that

perhaps, when they are grown up, the benefit of the instruction which he imparts to them may be apparent? "There are yet four months," they say, "and then comes the harvest." The most of those who teach our young people have become hopeful that perhaps before those young persons shall actually die, or before they come to be gray-headed, some Truth that has been dropped into their hearts may perhaps germinate, and bud, and come to perfection—but they do not expect a present blessing. "There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest."

Take the most of our ministers, and what are they looking for? They hope that God may visit their congregations. But as to holding enquirers' meetings every week, and expecting to find people crying, "Sir, what must I do to be saved?" after their sermons—all this is not according to their notions. "There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest." One of these bright sunny days, one of these long-expected months of which the Prophets have talked so long, perhaps in the Millennium year, which some say is drawing so near, they are expecting wonderful things, for "there are yet four months, and then comes the harvest."

Truly, my Brethren, one's ears have been dinned and dunned with it till one has got sick of hearing that "there are yet four months, and then comes the harvest." Patience is a virtue, but sometimes decision is a greater one! To wait long is well, but not when the harvest is ripe and ready—for then it will lie upon the ground and rot! To wait may be well, but not when men are dying—no, when Hell is filling! Not when immortal souls are in jeopardy! Not when the plague is raging, and we have, today, to stand between the living and the dead, and wave the censer of the Gospel of Jesus Christ that the plague may be stopped!

Four months, indeed. Four months! Have there not been months enough already? We have waited long! We have waited till our patience may well have exhausted itself. It was to be four months in the days of our grandfathers. It was to be four months in the days of our fathers! And now it is to be four months still! Oh that we would learn the Savior's words, and say no longer that "there are four months, and then comes the harvest"! But let us do as He says, "Lift up your eyes and look at the fields for they are already white for harvest." *Expect a present blessing!* Believe that you will have it! Go to work to get it, and do not be satisfied unless you do have it!

Let me dream dreams of the future and put you off from looking for a blessing only in the future—for though it may be true that your words will be blessed after you are dead—yet do not be content with that hope, but want them to be blessed NOW. Though, possibly, a sermon may bring a soul to God twenty years after it is preached, yet do not think of that! Think of those who are present while it is preached, and be not satisfied unless *now*, on the spot, you reap some of that wheat which is already white for harvest!

We shall now come directly to our subject, and may we have strength given by God's Grace to stir up Christian laborers to great and instantaneous diligence. We shall take our text in three ways—signs of harvest, needs of harvest, and fears of harvest.

I. SIGNS OF HARVEST. “Do you not say, ‘There are yet four months, and then comes harvest’? Behold, I say to you, Lift up your eyes and look at the fields for they are already white for harvest.” What signs were there, when the Savior uttered these words, from which the disciples might effect an immediate gathering of souls? I answer, first, that there was this sign—that the Savior had preached a sermon and that the whole of His congregation had been converted!

You will remind me that He had but *one* hearer. Yes, but that is the first point to which I want to come. The conversion of *one* soul by the Gospel should be to you a hopeful sign that God intends to convert others! For look—the cholera is raging in certain towns, say, on the Continent—and a physician has been studying the disease. He has administered a variety of drugs but in every case without success. He has prescribed different methods of treatment, but in no case has he succeeded in effecting a cure.

At last he has hit upon the right drug, and, administering it, he sees his patient rallying. Strength evidently given by the medicine, the struggle ends favorably, and the patient rises to life and health. “Now,” says the physician, “I know that I shall have a harvest of men who will be preserved from this disease because the same medicine which heals one will heal two, will heal twenty, will heal a thousand, or even twenty thousand! It only has to be administered—that one person has been healed by this compound, and it is clear that as many more may be healed as are willing to receive it.”

Brethren, we do not lack this sign with regard to the Gospel! We have had it! We have it still! It is clear to you that the Gospel has been blessed to the conversion of some. We, as a Church, can show every week some whom God converts by His Divine Grace. We have not been left without our witnesses at any time. During the last twelve years God’s hand has continually been stretched out. Now we ought to take this as an omen of good! If some have found the Savior, why not more? Christian Soldier, you have a sword in your hand that has won one battle—why should it not win another, and another, and another? You have the Omnipotence of God with you which has already broken one hard heart—why should it not break other hard hearts?

Already one stronghold of the enemy has been captured by the sounding of the silver trumpet! Why should not the rest fall, too, when, with the confidence of faith we sound the silver trumpet yet again? When Napoleon landed on his return from Elba, and one man came and presented himself as willing to serve the Emperor, “Here,” said Napoleon, “is at least one recruit.” So may we say when we have converts—“Here is one recruit, and thank God for one! For the same attractive influence which draws one will draw multitudes more.” We have got the right medicine! We have got the right power! Therefore let us hope that there is a harvest to be reaped *now!*

But, again, there was another hopeful sign, namely, that this one convert was at that very moment diligently engaged in making more converts. “The woman then left her water pot and went her way into the city, and

said to the men, Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did." We hear a great deal of strategy. It was our Savior's strategy to bless the men of Samaria through this woman. He said to her, "Go call your husband, and come here." This is the blessing about the Gospel—that if it gets into one person's heart it is sure to run from that one to all those who live in the neighborhood and who are the surroundings of that saved one!

Just strike the match and let the spark drop in the prairie, and what a roaring ocean of flame shall soon come from it! Let God's Grace fall into one soul and who knows what the end shall be? When this country of ours was all asleep and religion was at the lowest possible ebb, six young men at Oxford felt the inspiration of God and they met together to pray. They were expelled by the college for the horrid crime of meeting together to pray, but what was the result of it? Soon, from the Land's End to John O'Groat's House that same inspiration which had fallen upon those young men had descended upon the multitudes, till from peers of the realm down to the black-faced colliers, men of all ranks and grades confessed the power of the God of Israel!

One of those young men, as you remember, wrote the hymn we sang just now—

***"Saw you not the cloud arise,
Little as a human hand?"***

It only needs a beginning! Get one soul saved and you have got a preacher of Christ at once! There is not a plant that grows by the hedge-side but takes care, as it dies, to scatter all down the bank the seeds of succeeding generations of plants. And you cannot get the Grace of God into a soul but it is sure to try to disseminate the spiritual life, and to bring others to know the holy joy which it itself experiences.

Here, then, were two signs of harvest—there was one saved, and that one was trying to bring others to be saved. But there was a third sign that was better still, namely, that the others were coming to hear. There they came, a whole troop of them from that little town, all anxious to listen to the Savior! Oh, it is a blessed sign in these times of ours that men are willing to listen to the preaching of Christ! We can scarcely find places large enough now in which to accommodate the multitude. It is true they will not go to hear some ministers—who would? Who cares to go to hear where the preaching is dull?

Some charity boy being asked why the eunuch "went on his way rejoicing," replied that, "It was because Philip had done preaching to him," and I do not doubt that there are some now who from the same cause go on their way rejoicing when the sermon is over. But simple speech, plain talk about Christ, does win the ear still, and if it is but tried, and it really is the *Gospel* that is preached, there will never be a lack of hearers! See how Sunday night after Sunday night the theatres have been filled when our Brethren have gone there to preach to the working classes the Gospel of Jesus Christ! It is false that the working men of London do not care to hear the Gospel—they *do* care to hear it. Only preach it so that it can be understood—take the velvet from your mouths and speak plainly—and they will be sure to come to listen.

This is always a good sign, and we may fairly expect a harvest when once we get the people to hear. When the fish get round the net, surely some of them will be taken. And when the furrows lie open, surely he who scatters good seed may have hope that he shall see it spring up. Brothers and Sisters in Christ, I am persuaded there never was a time when people were more willing to listen to the Gospel of Christ than now! They will hear it if you only preach it so that it can be understood! Do not, of course, expect them to listen to you if you are not earnest about what you have to say. But if you have something to tell them that is worth their hearing, never fear but what they will give you the hearing. This was another sign of harvest.

But there was yet a better one. Our Savior knew that a harvest was approaching because the persons who were coming to hear were the very people who seemed the least likely to listen to His Word. They were Samaritans who were coming. "Oh!" said the Jew, "a Samaritan!" If he merely heard the word, "Samaritan," he turned on his heels and went his way very much in the same style as some of our gentlemen do if they merely hear the word, "rough," which is supposed to be the conglomeration of everything that is horrible! And yet the person who happens to be called a "rough" may be rough in nothing but his garments, and may have as gentle a heart as ever beat beneath broadcloth. But so it is. Sometimes the very people come to hearken to the Gospel whom you would least expect to see listening to it, and this is a good sign.

When the Samaritans will hear, when the giddy multitude are willing to stand crowded together to listen to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, when the working man is not ashamed to come to the House of God to hear Christ preached, and will even stand at a corner of the street and listen to it—it is a good sign, and it is a sign that we see now. The publican and the harlot are willing to receive the Gospel of Jesus, and God blesses them, and they enter into the kingdom of Heaven! All these are good signs of a coming harvest! It is, moreover, an omen for good when we remember the men who have labored before us. How much of labor has been spent upon this city! How many earnest men have wept and toiled among our teeming masses, and have gone back to their Master with, "Who has believed our report, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?"

Here for three centuries, I may say, since the days of old Hugh Latimer, right on from the time of the preaching at Paul's Cross, there has never been a lack of ministrations of God's Truth in this city of London and in the surrounding parts of the metropolis. Some of you can almost look back to the days when John Newton was at St. Mary Woolnoth, and can almost remember Romaine at St. Ann's, Blackfriars—when we had among Dissenters such men as Dr. Gill, and afterwards Dr. Rippon, and Abraham Booth, and others who labored and toiled for Christ, and yet, after all met with but little comparative success.

There must be some good come from all this! Has all this labor been spent for nothing? Has the ground been watered by the sweat of these men, and have they plowed it and sown it, and is there never to come a harvest? Our Savior seems to say, "Those Samaritans over yonder, they

have the Word of God. They have heard something about it—even the Jews could not keep the light of prophecy away from them—other men have prepared them to receive our teachings.” And, doubtless, the days that are past have been preparing the population of England to receive the Gospel. And we may hope that when it does come to them it will come with a mighty power, for when the Holy Spirit is pleased to work mightily we shall see something done, the like of which England has never seen before, and which shall be the result of the accumulated labors of many years gone by.

We have a right to expect a harvest when we remember what has been done already. And Brethren, I think it is a sign of some good for the Church of Christ when there is a stir among the people. The worst thing, perhaps, for true religion is the stagnation of the human mind. When people are not thoughtful about other things, it is very seldom that you can get them to be thoughtful about religion. It is generally supposed that our country friends, some of whom seem to vegetate rather than to live, and who are not so pressed with business from morning till night as we are in London, must have a great deal of time to give to religion, and that they must, therefore, be the most hopeful of congregations.

My country Brethren do not confirm the supposition, and for myself—for I preach more in the country than I do in the town—and often spend three or four days a week in addressing country audiences—for myself I must say that glad as I am to address the assembled crowds in a field or anywhere else, I do not find that the supposition that their having less to do makes them think more of Divine things is at all correct. I believe that where the intellect is most exerted, above other things, there is, on the whole, the most hope of sending home some thought about Divine things. It is true that thorns may be a hindrance, and are, but at any rate they prove that the soil will grow *something*, and I think if I were going to take a farm, I would sooner take one that was overgrown with thistles than one which grew nothing at all.

It is better to lay hold of a man who really does think about something than of one who thinks about nothing at all, and has nothing at all to think about. It is said—I do not know how truly—that a singular apathy had seized the public mind, and that there was nothing that could stir it up. Continually it was said that was an age in which nobody cared for anything, and I think it is pretty nearly the fact. Nobody cared what anyone did or did not do. As long as people could be tolerably easy, they seemed to be pretty well satisfied. If you did not put on the income-tax too heavily, nothing else would much concern the people.

But now it is not so. I think I see the beginning of a stir in the public mind. Even the political stir of the last few days, with all about it which one would deplore, shows that the public mind is stirring, for there generally comes a waking up about every twenty years or so. People go to sleep for a long time, but all of a sudden they begin to rub their eyes, and to enquire about this, and about that, and about something else. Well, now is the time when the spirit is thus aroused to preach the Gospel to that awakened mind! It seems to me that no nobler opportunity could present

itself than now. Now is the time when the corners of the streets should ring with ministers' voices! When the Word of God should be distributed in every house! When you should give away tracts, not such poor tracts as are mostly given away, but tracts with something solid in them, and these should be given away by millions, for just now men are thoughtful, and let them have the grand revealed reality to think about!

I believe on this account, let others think what they will, that there are the signs of a coming harvest. And, to conclude on this point, it is quite certain that at the present period the old priest-crafts do not hinder men from hearing the Gospel. Time was, I dare say, in Sychar and Samaria, when the people dared not have come out to hear Christ. They had to ask some Samaritan Rabbi whether it was proper for them to go to hear the new Prophet. You know in half the country towns in England this is the case. The people there no more dare to think for themselves in religion than they dared to think of old in the days of serfdom and slavery.

Squire-craft and priest-craft still tread the people in the country down. But it is not so in London. Nobody here thinks of asking the parish priest where he shall go. We can get at the people! We can bring the Gospel to their doors! There is no dominant priest-craft to keep us back, and I say, Brethren, if Martin Luther could have lived in such an age as this, how he would have rejoiced to see it! And if John Bunyan, after lying twelve years in Bedford Jail—if Richard Baxter, and Alleine, and men of that stamp could have lived in days where there is such perfect liberty that every man may hear the Gospel if he cares to hear it—they would have been almost ready to say, "Lord, let Your servants depart in peace, for our eyes have seen Your salvation."

This is the hour of the flowing of the tide which taken at its flood leads on to fortune. If the Christian Church does not avail herself of the present crisis, she deserves to have an age of infidelity to make her mourn over her laxity and her indolence! If now the Christian Church dares not bestir herself, now when the minds of men are ready, when their ears are open, when there is nothing to stand between us and the multitude—then I fear she will have cause to repent and mourn in days of darkness and bitterness which will inevitably follow.

Up, then, Believers! If the Bible is worthy of your belief proclaim it to others, and proclaim it especially just now. Now is the day and now is the hour, for the fields are already white for the harvest.

II. Supposing all this to be true, we shall now speak of HARVEST NEEDS. The needs of harvest are, first, many laborers. If many souls are to be converted, there must be many to preach to them. If we are to expect a great ingathering, as I think we ought, there must be much energy used and much effort put forth. "Pray you, therefore, the Lord of the harvest that He would send forth laborers into His harvest," and ask Him to be pleased to stir up Christian zeal throughout the whole of Christendom that advantage may be taken of this auspicious hour.

You cannot reap without laborers. I saw a reaping machine the other day doing the work very well and very fast, but somehow or other one liked the old-fashioned look of the field when the laborers were in it at

work. Certainly there is no machine that can do this work of soul-reaping. It must be done by *men*—chosen men, who, filled with the Spirit of God, shall go forth to ingather souls. The first need, then, is more laborers. Who is there among you who will consecrate himself to God? I do not ask for young men for the College just now. We have enough. But I do ask for young men, old men, and all sorts of men, and women, too, to be laborers in the great work of ingathering souls. Many sinners perish, and many saints do nothing. Oh, you who know Christ, be indifferent no longer!

The next thing that is needed is sharp sickles as well as more laborers. A laborer is no good unless he has got a sickle, and if he can keep his sickle sharp, so much the better. You must get a hold, dear Friends, of God's Truth. You will do nothing without that Truth of God, and you must have that Truth well understood. You must grind your sickles—you must go to work with such cutting Truths as justification by faith, as the total ruin of mankind—the hope that is laid up in the Cross, the energy of the Holy Spirit.

And when you know these Truths, and know how to use them, you shall then be made great reapers in the Master's harvest! It is idle to say, "I will go," and then go with no tool in your hands. Get the Truth. Get hold of it well, get it sharp and in good order, and who knows, under the blessing of God the Holy Spirit, what you may do! The next need of harvest is some close binders. When the wheat is cut down you must tie it up with sheaves. We want some of you who cannot preach, who cannot use the sickle, to go and gather up the wheat which falls under the sickle when it is used by others.

Invite them to come into Church fellowship. Talk to them, get them into union with the people of God. And oh, if you happen to be in the Church yourselves, try to keep the Church knit together in love. Bind the sheaves together! We cannot have good harvest work without loving hands to bind the people of God in one. Then we need beside these some to take the sheaves home. The Church of God is the barn, it is the Master's garner here—He has another garner yonder on the hilltop in Heaven—but here we want you to assist in bringing them into the Church of Christ. When God has served them, try, if you can, to get them to practice the ordinances of God, and to be joined with His people.

And we need some of you, if you cannot do anything yourselves either in reaping, or binding, or bringing the sheaves home, at least by kind words and loving speeches to bring refreshments to the reapers. You can sometimes remind them of the success you know they have had in certain places. You can cheer them when they begin to grow uneasy. You can go to those who are working hard and say, "Be not discouraged! God has blessed you to my soul. God has owned your work in such-and-such cases. Persevere, and God is with you!"

As I look round this congregation I cannot help thinking what a mass of strength there must be here for the Lord's cause if it could but be brought out! You, young man, who are full of ability, who would take the lead in any society into which you choose to enter—oh, young man, how I long for you as a recruit for my Master and to enlist you in His service! If you were

a Christian, or if being a Christian, you were all on fire with love to Christ, what might you not accomplish! I would desire have that matron yonder, with her family about her, to enlist for the Savior. Oh, what a position of usefulness she has!

And that great employer of labor there, how influential he is! How a good word from him might be blessed to hundreds of people! And even you who are servants in families, nurses and so on, you may not have so wide a sphere of labor, but you have still your place of influence. Oh, if every talent we possess were but consecrated to Christ! London, you need not be in the dark if all God's lamps which are in you were but lit! O you mighty city! You need not be ignorant of the Gospel if the tongue of every child of God would but tell it out. If we were all enlisted, all made soldiers for Christ, might not this country yet feel the power of Christ? And what are we? A slender few, a handful compared with the masses of our fellow Christians! Would God that they were all baptized with the Holy Spirit and with fire, and then we might see such a harvest as would make Heaven itself ring as we shouted our harvest home!

I charge you who love the Lord—I charge you by the nearness of death, by the shortness of the time in which you can serve your Master—do not one of you be idle! Oh, my dear Hearers, I would almost say if you are members of my Church here, and are doing nothing, get out! Of what service can you be? You are drags on the wheels! You are an impediment to the Church's course! You are like the heavy baggage which impedes the armies of Israel! Do *something!* In God's name I charge you, do *something*, or else be ashamed of yourselves!

Hasn't Christ done much for you? Do you profess to have been bought with His blood? Have you dared to sing—

***“I love my God with zeal so great
That I could give Him all”***

and are you doing nothing? Some of you drink in the Doctrines of Grace, but if they are, indeed, true to you, show the Grace of the doctrines by spending and being spent in the Master's cause!

These, then, are the needs of harvest.

III. And now, lastly, THE FEARS OF HARVEST. The farmer sometimes fears that through lack of laborers he may be obliged to leave the wheat out in the field till it is considerably damaged. After a certain time the wheat spears out and there is a loss sustained. Birds, also, will feast upon it, and the farmer's gains are going. My dear friends and fellow reapers, this great city is the field that is white for the harvest! And every hour in which men are not saved there are capabilities of usefulness that are falling out and Satan is running away with opportunities for good!

Supposing those souls to be saved in a few years, yet there are all the years between now and then lost for God. I am jealous, not only to have souls saved, but to have them saved while young. Why should Satan have so much of their time? Why should so many years of their influence be thrown into the wrong scale? The wheat, even if you do not get it in before it perishes, is losing part of its value every hour. Oh, should we not be moved by this to take the sickle and go at once to the work?

But there is a worse fear than this, namely, that some other wheat may remain unharvested and so be destroyed. It may rot in the place where it grows! And instead of gladdening the farmer, it may be there to become a mere mass of rottenness—the very thing which might have been so useful! Ah, how much of London may be destroyed for want of laborers to go and take in the harvest! Ah, the millions that never enter a place of worship! I speak within bounds, for even if they all wished to enter there is hardly room for one million out of three, and a great mass never come at all—but how few of us there are who go after them! They perish, my Brothers and Sisters, they perish! They perish with an overwhelming destruction!

You know how they perish! You know how you were once on the brink of perishing, and how mercy snatched you from it. You have read in that old Book of everlasting destruction which is the portion of the men who die unwashed in the blood, and unforgiven. I charge you, if you would not see souls lost, rise, and with the sickle get to the harvest, for meanwhile do you not know that there are other reapers at work? If the Christian does not work, there are others who will labor. If the Truth of God does not now spread among the masses, *error* is spreading! You cannot silence the tongue of infidelity if you shut your own mouth. You cannot stop the voice of priest-craft if you are quiet yourselves. You know that the messengers of Satan are busy.

As Hugh Latimer said, “The busiest bishop in England is the devil. He is always traveling up and down his diocese. He neither neglects town nor village, nor hamlet, nor so much as one of those who live in his see. He is seeking both by night and by day the ruin of souls.” Other hands—they are gathering the harvest. But it belongs to your Master, and will you endure it, will you endure it? You servants of Christ, will you allow it? Shall the harvest be taken away? No! By the love you bear your Master take the prey from the mighty.

And now, lastly, perhaps the most solemn reflection is that whether we gather in the harvest or not, there is a reaper who is silently gathering it every hour. Just now it is whispered that he is sharpening his sickle. That reaper is DEATH! You may look upon this great city as the harvest field, and every week the bills of mortality tell us how steadily and how surely the scythe of Death moves to and fro, and how a lane is made through our population. Those who were once living men are taken like sheaves to the garner—taken to the graveyard and laid aside. You cannot stop their dying, but oh, that God might help you to stop their being damned! You cannot stop the breath from going out of their bodies, but oh, if the Gospel could but stop their souls from going down to destruction!

It *can* do it, and nothing else can take its place. Just now this cholera has come. There can be little doubt, I suppose, about it being here already in some considerable force, and probably it may be worse. The Christian cannot dread it—he has nothing to lose—and everything to gain. Still, for the sake of others he may well pray that God would avert His hand and not let His anger burn. But since it is coming, I think it ought to be a motive for active exertion. If there ever was a time when the mind is sensitive it is when death is abroad.

I remember when first I came to London how anxiously people listened to the Gospel, for the cholera was raging terribly. There was little scoffing then. All day and sometimes all night long I went about from house to house and saw men and women dying. And oh, how glad they were to see one's face, and when many were afraid to enter their houses for fear of disease, we who had no fear about such things found ourselves most gladly listened to when we spoke of Christ and of Divine things.

And now, again, is the minister's time! Now is the time for all of you that love souls! You may see men more alarmed than now, I hope they may not be—I pray to God that they may not be—but if they should, avail yourselves of it. You have the balm of Gilead—when their wounds smart, pour it in! You know of Him who died to save, tell them of Him. Lift high the Cross before their eyes. Tell them that God became Man that man might be lifted up to God. Tell them of Calvary, and its groans, and cries, and sweat of blood. Tell them of Jesus hanging on the Cross to save sinners. Tell them that there is life for a look at the Crucified One!

Tell them that He is able to save to the uttermost, all them that come unto God by Him. Tell them that He is able to save at the eleventh hour, and to say to the dying thief, "Today shall you be with Me in Paradise." Oh, dear Hearers, while I am exhorting you who are Christians to look after strangers, I may well ask you to look over those who are sitting in the pews with you! For there are some of you who, if you were to die tonight—if, instead of going down yonder steps beneath the columns you were to die in your seats—where would your souls go? If you reached your home and staggered into your bed, and found it your tomb, what would be your eternal fate? Will not conscience tell you that you could not plead a Savior's blood? You have never trusted it!

You cannot expect a living Savior to meet you in a dying moment, for you have never loved Him! Oh, may God's Grace make you love Him now, tonight! Sinner, look to Jesus, and you shall be saved! Trust Christ now! Trust Him only! Trust Him wholly! Trust Him earnestly and you shall rejoice, even tonight, and you shall be a part of that wheat which is white already unto harvest! Oh, my Hearers, I am concerned for your souls! I would gladly reap, myself, and bind up some sheaves to be carried into our earthly sheltering place in prospect of our heavenly home. I cannot bear the thought that any of you should ever be bound in bundles to be burned!

What? Will any of you be lost, and be borne into the flame which never can be quenched? It must not be! Turn! Turn! Why will you die? Are there any reasons you can urge for your choice when you select companionship with sinners here and devils hereafter, and despise the Gospel of salvation, and reject the overtures of Grace? There are none! You know you are wrong! You are persuaded that your present position is false and you are not without some dread of the result at last. Are there not at times fears which sting like serpents and poison your peace of mind so that you would gladly be free from them if you could?

Well, listen to me, or rather hearken to God's Word as spoken by me—"Come unto Me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you

rest.” I speak of no untried remedy! I have myself tasted it! I am a witness of the efficacy and power of the blood of Christ to cleanse from all sin. I am surrounded by thousands who are all so many proofs of its value and unchanging might—

**“Venture on Him, venture wholly,
Let no other trust intrude.
None but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good.”**

He is waiting to be gracious, near at hand, and not afar off. There are, in some parts of the Continent where I have traveled, places so sparsely inhabited and the people so poor, that no medical man resides in the district. And in such cases, if anyone falls sick he must write to the nearest wayside inn to have a notice put up that if any doctor or medical man is passing by, they would be glad if he would in kindness stay and pay them a visit, so as to give them a chance of being healed, if human help can avail in their case. Should no physician pass that way, then the man must die—there is no help for him. The ignorance of his friends and their poverty cannot help him—he must go to his grave.

But here, my dear Hearers, is the difference in your case. The Physician knocks at your door and tells you of your disease. He proffers to you the remedy, assures you of a complete and of an immediate cure. And you—oh madness and folly unspeakable!—you hesitate to welcome Him! And you reject, it may be, all His offered care. Then you must perish! For your ignorance and poverty are such that no help of *man* can avail. You cannot effect your own cure and therefore you will go down to the pit with your blood upon your own head.

May this folly soon cease, and you be inclined to listen to Him whose touch gives health, yes, life from the dead! In His name I proclaim salvation! Look, then, to Him! Believe, and life everlasting shall be yours. May God Almighty bless you, and may we meet in Heaven. Amen.

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TESTIMONY AND EXPERIENCE

NO. 1053

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 2, 1872,
 BY C. H. SPURGEON,
 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the saying of the woman, who testified, ‘He told me all that I ever did.’ So when the Samaritans had come to Him, they urged Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days. And many more believed because of His own word. Then they said to the woman, ‘Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we have heard Him ourselves, and we know that this is, indeed, the Christ, the Savior of the world.’ ”
John 4:39-42.

THE most important question concerning any man living is this—is he a saved soul or not? It is of comparatively little consequence whether he is rich or poor, educated or uneducated, compared with this—is he among the living before God—or is he dead in sins? Is he pardoned or unpardoned? Is he a child of God or an heir of wrath? Is he walking in the darkness or has he passed into light? Therefore of all the days of a man's history the most important is the day in which he is born-again.

If the man is, indeed, saved, and a new man in Christ Jesus, he will look back upon the day of his regeneration as his chief birthday. His new birth is second in order of time, but he will always put it first in importance. His birth gave him his being, but his new birth secured his well-being. Being born first we might have descended into Hell, but, being born a second time we are assured of Heaven! If we were to observe those days with the greatest festivity which deserved best to be commemorated, we should certainly make high days and holidays of the days in which we looked to Jesus, and “found in Him our star, our sun.”

For this reason the circumstances which surround our new birth are to us among the most deeply interesting incidents of our own or any other human history. The details may be very simple. They may not suffice to make a biography, but still, to us, they are most important. We delight to think of the place where Jesus met with us, the Providence which brought us to the spot where we first heard the words which convicted us of sin. We feel pleasure in remembering every detail of our sorrows when we were seeking rest and finding none—and we are charmed as we read in our diary the story of how it was that we found the way of salvation—how it was that we looked to Jesus and lost our burden in a moment!

Our memory lingers and our heart loves to remember where it was, and by whose lips it was, that the life-giving message came and we looked to the Crucified One and were lightened. This is the reason why this chapter is so interesting, because it is the story of a *conversion*—the registry of a new birth—the record of salvation. It is the story of the

conversion of a remarkable woman, great in sin and afterwards great in zeal! It tells us how the work was effected, what was said to her by the Lord, how she replied, what she felt, and how she was brought out into light. This fourth chapter of the Gospel of John has in it not only that touch of nature which makes the whole world kin, but that touch of Divine Grace which creates sympathy in all regenerate hearts. And, consequently, it will always remain one of the most interesting portions of Holy Writ.

But it is not for itself alone that I shall conduct your minds to this suggestive history. While I shall be talking of this woman, my earnest desire is to feel in my own soul whatever of the Truth of God is uttered, and that each one here may be putting every Truth to himself in the form of searching questions—saying concerning each thought now uttered—“Do I understand that Truth? Am I partaker of that Grace?” Thus, our hearing will be profitable, by the blessing of the Holy Spirit, and the woman of Samaria will become a prophetess to us, also.

First, then, our text most naturally suggests the remark that testimony is frequently the means of creating faith. “Many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the saying of the woman, who testified, “He told me all that I ever did.” But, secondly, where personal testimony fails, faith may yet arise, apart from human witness, for “many more believed because of His own word.” Then, thirdly, even where faith has been begotten through testimony, personal experience very soon eclipses all human witness. “Now we believe,” they said, “not because of what you said, for we have heard Him ourselves, and we know that this is, indeed, the Christ, the Savior of the world.”

I. The first doctrine, this morning, is that HUMAN TESTIMONY IS FREQUENTLY MADE THE MEANS OF PRODUCING FAITH IN MEN’S HEARTS. That is evident to all. Hundreds of instances in proof thereof are present here this morning. A very large number of us owe our conversion to God to the personal testimony of others who told us what the Lord had done for them—told us in words, but also showed us in their actions—for we perceived the change that was in them. We saw their calm mind under trouble. We noticed their general happiness. We noticed and we admired their holiness. And we were led, both by their verbal and practical testimony, to seek a Savior.

This is the usual mode of Divine operation, that the testimony of one renewed soul should be blessed to another, and so the kingdom of Christ should be propagated in men’s hearts. To encourage all here who know the Lord to bear testimony for Him, let us notice the case before us. It was that of a woman. Paul’s preaching is very plain upon the subject of female preaching. He does *not* allow a woman to preach, but this by no means bars her from bearing testimony in her own way—and she can so bear it as to do God’s work quite as effectually as if she occupied the pulpit!

A woman was the founder of the Church in Samaria, which was afterwards multiplied by Christ’s teaching, which continued till the time of Philip—and was then in a state of gracious revival. The first person baptized in Europe was a woman, therefore let none of our Sisters in Christ exempt themselves from bearing witness for Jesus Christ! Neither

let them think that their witness is unimportant. God will put high honor upon it if it is rendered in simple faith in Him and, perhaps, where public ministry may have failed, their private testimony may yet succeed!

Again, the testimony was not only that of a woman, but of a *sinful* woman—one who would usually be condemned to silence by the customs of society. She had lost her character. It was fit for her to be quiet. How could she be expected to be a witness for holiness, whose life had been unholiness? How should she bear witness to the pure Savior who had been, herself, impure? It is best for the unchaste to be little seen and never heard. The objection would have been unanswerable had not the woman been *changed* in character. She was washed, she was sanctified and renewed—and now the very life which had otherwise been so just a cause for silence, became an impelling motive for witness-bearing since she loved much because much had been forgiven!

In her own person she was a notable proof of the Savior's power to pardon and reclaim. She had become a saint who formerly had been one of the chief of sinners and her witness for Christ was all the weightier. If any of you shall have been, up till now, great offenders against God, this is no reason why you should not come to Jesus at once and seek and find mercy! And after you have come to Him, your past transgressions shall be no bar to your future usefulness—on the contrary, you shall the more zealously and powerfully declare the power of His Grace! The more mischief we have done in the past the more good we should try to do in the future—that by any means we may undo the evil we have done. How often has it turned out that the chief of sinners, like Paul, have become not a whit behind the very chief of the Apostles, and the very force of character which made them ringleaders in evil has aided in bringing them to the front as captains of the Lord's host! We ought to be thankful, therefore, that we are allowed to bear testimony, and that our testimony may be useful even though much of our past life has been such that we would wish to blot it out forever.

Observe that this woman's testimony was personal, and *there* was the secret of its power. She said, "Come, see a Man that told me all things that I ever did: is not this the Christ?" Now, suppose that she had said, "Come, see a man who has opened up the prophecies to me"? Why they would have said, "Prophecies? What have *you* to do with prophecies? Go and fetch your water pot, attend to your business, mend your character, and do not talk to us about prophecies." Or, if she had said, "I find, by reference to the words of Rabbi Simeon, that the Messiah is to be very much like a person in whom I have just now seen sitting on the well." They would have cared very little for the Rabbi, or for her inference from his words.

It was not because of any learning in what she said that they were convinced, but the personality of her declaration puzzled them. Now, we make a mistake, I believe, when we assail men's consciences with quotations from the fathers and passages from the reformed Divines. Human hearts will not be conquered by such poor artillery! And if we think that explaining a doctrine will suffice to win most men to Christ, we labor under a mistake. This woman did far better than that. She did as good as say, "You know what I have been, all of you! It is of no use for

me to attempt concealing it. But I went to draw water at the well and there sat a stranger, a Jew. And though He could not have known anything about me by report, yet He directed a question to me which led me to discourse upon my character, and then He told me in detail all that I had ever been, and mentioned some facts which you do not know, and which I had forgotten myself. Surely, He must be the Messiah.”

They were very startled as they heard the woman’s tale. She was startled herself! How surprised she appeared! They listened to her eagerly, wondering why she should talk of *holy* things. And, let me say, Beloved, if we wish to win souls to Christ, there is nothing like telling to others what the Lord has done for our souls. It is of small use to tell them what we have learned in books—we must declare what God has written on our *hearts*! It is not describing what was said by the *preacher*, but what has been felt in *our* souls. Many a husband has been won to God by his wife’s witness to the power of religion in her own soul—and many a child has been brought to the Savior’s feet by the father’s speaking to him of what Divine Grace had done for him. Proclaim, then, your personal testimony, each of you, for this is the most effectual weapon for overcoming human unbelief and bringing men to Christ!

But, then, you will note that the woman’s personal testimony was delivered very earnestly. In the first place she had left her water pot, which was not only left for Christ to use, but much more likely because she was absorbed in the purpose to tell others what she had learned and she was so full of her message that she left the water pot behind! The men would notice that it was so—they would observe the hurried way in which she came back from the well, and, above all, they would see the way in which her eyes shone—the manner in which every muscle of her body bespoke the excitement under which she labored.

She said, “Come, come, see, see, a man that told me all things I ever did.” How much depends in bearing testimony upon the way in which it is done! If our sermons were to hang like icicles around our lips they would not be very likely to melt the ice in your minds. And if, in speaking to your Sunday school class, your words fall like snow, they are not very likely to make children’s hearts burn within them. If, in speaking privately to an individual, you treat your own conversion as though it were a commonplace affair, or aim at his conversion whom you address as though it were a matter that was not very significant, you might as well be silent! O Brothers and Sisters, you waste your breath! You waste your time! No good will come of it!

Your testimony must be earnest or it will be fruitless! There must be passion and there must be pathos. The soul must run over at the mouth, and the speech must be the lava flowing out of a heart that swells and heaves with inward fires. I would have you notice the judiciousness of the woman’s testimony. It is very striking. She did not say, “Come, see a Man that told me all things that I ever did: I am sure He is the Christ.” She was too wise to be peremptory. If you positively assert a thing it is very likely that somebody will deny it. There is a propensity in many minds to question inferences drawn by others, though they would draw those very inferences themselves if let alone. So, though she did not

doubt that it was the Christ, yet she did not say it *is*, but she deferred to the self-assumed wisdom of the men!

And she said to them, “Is not this the Christ? Don’t you think it is?” as though she would have her belief confirmed by their judgment and humbly requested them to come and see. This is a kind of Pauline taking them by guile—a method which is commendable—because there is no *sinful* guile in it. It is all plain, innocent guile. She knew something about human nature from herself, and, judging the men by herself, she did not dogmatize, but she put it in such a way that she knew what answer they must give to her question, “Is not this the Christ?” In fishing for the souls of men you need as much judgment as you do in angling—for men are curious fish and they will often be frightened at a shadow! And, in the very way of throwing the line and managing the fly, there is an art not very readily learned.

Some never learn the way and are never able to attract souls, while others are endowed with sacred instincts by which they know how to handle men’s hearts and win power over them. We must be wise to win souls! Souls are not won by fools. We must have a sympathy with men, even reaching to their infirmities—and we must woo them as men, dealing with them not as they ought to be, but as they are—and putting the Truth of God in the shape in which it is likely to be acceptable to them. David chose out a smooth stone from the brook—he knew what sort of stone he could sling best, what sort of a stone was suited to his sling, what stone was best adapted to Goliath’s forehead—and he sent the right stone in the right way.

And so must you. If you bear witness for Christ, ask the Spirit of Wisdom to guide you. Pray to be directed lest your earnestness should lead you into an injudicious mode of speech. Let prudence be mingled with your zeal. He is the Christ, but if you need men to believe that He is, you will sometimes do better to *ask* men if He is than actually to assert His claims. The woman bore her testimony, and bore it well.

Now, observe the result. There were many that believed on Christ at once, because of the woman’s speech. Happy woman, thus to become a mother in Israel! Blessed testimony, which was thus fruitful on the spot a hundred-fold! I guarantee you that many a bishop and doctor of divinity, and many a mighty orator has spoken hundreds of times with less result than this poor untrained, un-ordained, female Apostle of Jesus Christ! Her simple talk did more than eloquence could accomplish, though it should be as mighty as that of Cicero or Demosthenes! Her heart was in the words she spoke! Her speech was simple—there was nothing to recommend it of beauty of verbiage, or gaudiness of oratory. She said what she knew and testified what she had seen with an earnest desire that others would know and see what she had learned. Therefore God blessed her. Oh, may God bless many of us, whether men or women, to the same end—the bringing of many to Jesus!

Those who were not converted under her were awakened and stirred up so that they went to see the Lord Jesus and brought Him into their city, and asked Him to stay with them. Many of these were afterwards converted, so that she became, in some sense, the instrument of their salvation. Would to God that each one of us aimed at the same thing!

But, I have more practical work to do than this. I have a question to put to many here who have not believed in Jesus. Your not believing in Jesus, many of you, does not arise from need of testimony about Him. The Samaritans only heard the testimony of a woman of very doubtful character—but they believed in Jesus Christ through it! I need to speak very pointedly to some here. You have heard the testimony of the best people who have ever lived, and yet you have not believed! Had you not the testimony of a mother who loved the Savior and loved you, and above all things in this world coveted that you should love her Savior, too?

You know how earnestly she has spoken to you with as many tears as words, and how often she has backed her testimony with her prayers—but you have not believed. She told you that Jesus could pardon sin, could give rest to your conscience and could preserve you unto His eternal kingdom and glory. And she besought you to come to Him, but you did not come. In her case there was a good character to back her testimony. You saw, year after year, her quiet, patient, godly life, and what is more, it may be I speak to some who saw the triumphant death of that same mother—and yet you have not believed!

I have seen death beds which I have thought would have been enough to have convinced the most hardened, for there has been about the dying saint evidence conclusive of the power of Divine Grace. The body has been pained but the soul has been placid. Storms have swept through every nerve, and yet perfect peace has ruled the spirit—yes, and more than peace—for the soul has rejoiced with unspeakable joy and full of glory! That is an unbelieving heart, indeed, which will not be convinced by the testimony of a near and dear one—a testimony supported throughout a holy life and crowned by a glorious death!

There are husbands here, probably, whose wives always bear good witness for Christ. Your wife is not dead and you know very well, in the bottom of your heart, that religion has done great things for her. If she were to die you would feel deep regrets for the ridicule you sometimes pour upon her. Why, if I were not this day a Believer in Christ, I think I should be of all men the most incorrigible, for I have seen the fruits of Grace in a beloved mother and in a gracious father! I could not be so base as to doubt their truthfulness, and yet I must do so or else accept their witness for the Lord Jesus. Did I not believe in the depravity of the human heart, I should wonder how so many can reject the pious testimonies which everywhere surround them—testimonies of persons of the most honorable character, who, on any other matter would be at once believed!

Perhaps there may be some here who will say, “I do not know that I have ever had any testimony of the sort borne to me.” Now, if you will allow me, you shall not be able to say that any longer. I will bear *my* testimony for Jesus Christ at once. When I preach Christ and His salvation to you I do not preach what I learned in a college or was taught by men! I preach to you what I would die for! I preach to you what is the chief joy of my soul! I preach to you what I know and believe and have experienced! Years ago I was under the greatest conceivable darkness of spirit. I was but a lad, but my sin haunted me. I had such an idea of the guilt of my past life that my heart was heavy within me, and at intervals I

was crushed down with fear. I would get away into corners, where no one could see me, and cry and pray. And I labored under the belief that everybody else might be saved, but that I should perish.

Now I heard of Jesus Christ, that He was able to put away sin at once from anyone who simply looked to Him and trusted Him. I heard that, and I was enabled by Divine Grace, as soon as I heard it, to trust the Savior. I did then and there rest the whole weight of my soul for time and eternity upon the Person and work of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God. And my witness is that, in one single moment, a load was rolled from off my spirit and as swiftly as a flash of lightning I passed from darkness into light—from misery into joy! From that hour I bless God that, being not exempt from trouble, and especially not free from a tendency to despondency which is always with me, I yet rejoice and will rejoice, and am happy, unspeakably happy in resting upon Jesus Christ!

Moreover, I have found that those points of my character which were most weak have been strengthened, while strong passions have been subdued, propensities have been kept under, and new principles have been implanted. I am changed! I am as different from what I was as a man could be who had been annihilated and had then been made again. Nor do I claim any credit for this—far from it! God has done great things for me, but He has done the same for others, and is willing to do it for *any* soul that seeks His face! He is willing to do it for every seeker here! There is such a thing as a new heart and a right spirit—I know there is. There is such a thing as perfect happiness in death, yes, and even a longing to depart! I know that peace with God is to be had, for I have felt it and bear witness to it!

Do you reject my witness? Perhaps you doubt my truthfulness. Then I must endure your injustice, for I know that I do not lie. But, if my character is right, and if you think I speak the truth, then I ask you to receive the witness I bear! I wish I could bear it more judiciously and more earnestly, but I do bear it in all sincerity with this desire in my soul—I would that not only some of you, but *all* that hear me this day knew the preciousness of Christ Jesus my Lord, and understood that beneath God's Heaven there is nothing so blessed as to be resting upon the blood and merits of the once crucified but now exalted Savior!

I bear my testimony as the woman from the well did. If you reject it, so must it be. But I pray you do not, but come and see Jesus for yourselves, for He is, indeed, the Christ, the Savior of the world!

II. FAITH MAY ARISE APART FROM THE TESTIMONY OF MEN. I shall speak of this second head for this reason. When you, who are earnest soul-winners, have borne testimony to any man about Christ, and he does not yield to it, do not despair of him. When you have preached to a man and he is not converted, do not think that there is no other hope for him. The Lord has other ways of work besides the witness of His servants. Some of those Samaritans who had not received the woman's testimony believed because of His own word. Have we God's own Word among us now? Yes, thank God, we have.

We have it in the Scriptures! There are some who will not listen to the witness of men, though it is loving and personal, who will yet bow before the majesty and power of the infallible Word of God. Let us hope that

those who refuse our persuasions will yield homage to the Word of God. Let us trust that some, in quietly reading their Bibles, may yet be convicted and converted. If all our arrows shall miss them, let us hope that God's Word will yet dart an arrow between the joints of their harness. Remember, the Spirit of God can work on men's hearts through Truths of God which they heard a long time ago. He will not reveal *new* truths to anybody—the complete Revelation is in the Scriptures—but He will often freshen up old Truths in the mind.

I have hopes of many men in London who never go to a place of worship, that they will be converted, because when they were children they were at a Sunday school and there they obtained knowledge which the devil will never be able to make them forget. The seed is hidden, but not dead! I have seen in the country men digging a ditch, throwing up the earth from 10 or 12 feet deep, and yet in that earth there were strange seeds, long covered with earth, which only wanted unearthing and exposure to rain and sun to develop them to the amazement of the neighborhood. And so there may die seeds of Truth deep down in the memory, and God the Holy Spirit may quicken them! We have known persons at their work not thinking of Divine things at all, but yet a sudden thoughtfulness has come over them, and they have considered their ways.

The Spirit of God, in fact, moved upon them! They began to meditate, and meditating they confessed their sins and turned to God. Besides, remember that God has many preachers that are not in human flesh. For instance, fever is a terrible *Elijah*. When the cholera came to London it was a *Jonah* in our streets! Many, then, began to think who would have gone blindfold down to perdition! When poverty visits some men's houses and they can no longer indulge in drunkenness and gluttony, *then* they think of their Father's house and the hired servants who have bread enough and more to spare. Omnipotence has servants everywhere! God can make use of even the ills of life to work eternal good.

I have even known cases in which sin has been overruled by God to the awakening of souls. I remember a young man whose life had been strictly moral and upright but who had disregarded all religion. He was a working man, and on one occasion he upset a can of varnish at his work. He was afraid of his master's anger and, when asked who did it, he denied the fact. He had never lied before—at least not in such a manner—and he felt himself so mean, so degraded in having told a lie that he felt himself to be no longer righteous before God. He bowed his knee and confessed his sin, and with a burdened conscience he went to hear the Gospel and found peace and pardon through the precious blood of Jesus!

Disease within a man may be as dangerous as when it breaks out and throws its pustules through the skin. When the man sees sin in eruption, he only sees what was in him before—it could never come out if it were not first in him! The wrong act could never come forth if it was not in the man and, sometimes, the wrong act has convinced the man that his nature was impure, and so sin, though evil in itself, has been the means of bringing conviction to the soul. God has many ways of bringing men to Himself and we should pray that where we fail, the Word

of God, accompanied by the power and energy of the Divine Spirit may convert them that they may be saved!

There are persons in the world of a singular disposition, and of a peculiarly independent mind who do not care to be shown anything, but prefer to find it out for themselves. And the probability is that if you wish them to see they will shut their eyes. The very thing they would find out and rejoice in, they will not learn from *you*. They keep themselves to themselves and will never be brought in by testimony. But they will be converted, let us hope, by the effectual working of the Spirit. I have known some, too, who are of such a skeptical turn of mind so that testimony is not received by them. They have seen so much of persons being led by the nose by priests that they will not believe anybody! And, whereas some will swallow a lie, these will only, with difficulty, accept the Truth of God itself from fear of being credulous.

They are something like Thomas. Mary Magdalene said she had seen the Savior. "Ah, no doubt you are an excellent woman, but you have certainly been deceived. You are so imaginative." Then Peter said, "I have seen the Lord." "I am sure you think so, but you must be in error." Then John said, "But, indeed, I have seen the Lord." "That is good evidence for yourself. But it does not convince me." Then Bartholomew and others would say, "We have seen the Lord. And five or six others have told you so. Do you think we have conspired to tell a lie?" "To, my Brethren, far from it! Yet I have known such things in the world as for five or six persons to be mistaken. I feel that your witness deals with such improbabilities that I cannot receive it."

At last Thomas declared downright, "Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe." Now this was not right, but at the same time it was so—and our Lord was graciously pleased to yield to the infirmity of Thomas, and He said, "Reach here your finger, and behold My hands, and reach here your hand and put it into My side, and be not faithless but believing." Persons of this character make eminent saints when once convinced—and our Lord has, in some cases, dealt with them in a special way. And, where the word of man has failed, His own Word, attended with special power of the Holy Spirit, has brought them to believe.

We must tarry no longer. I only introduce the point by way of encouragement to you who work for Jesus, not by way of sedative to you who will not believe! You have no right to expect you will ever have any other testimony than you have already received. You have Moses and the Prophets—if you will not hear *them*, neither would you be converted though one rose from the dead! You are not to expect miracles to convert you! Christ may go out of His way, but He is not *bound* to do so, and you have no right to look for it. You may say, "Except I see signs and wonders I will not believe," but the probabilities are that you will *not* see signs and wonders, and will perish in your unbelief! Beware, I pray you!

III. PERSONAL EXPERIENCE ECLIPSES HUMAN TESTIMONY. The very people who believed through the woman, afterwards said, "Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we have heard Him ourselves, and we know that this is, indeed, the Christ, the Savior of the world."

Personal experience is far more convincing than any testimony can be! You may believe a thing because you are credibly informed of it, but you believe it a great deal more deeply and thoroughly when you have seen it for yourself! In the times of famine Jacob was told there was corn in Egypt, and the Patriarch believed the word. But when they had gone to Egypt and had their sacks full, there was a deeper conviction in their minds about Egypt's corn than ever before.

A missionary, speaking to the inhabitants of a tropical region, informed them that water in our country, through cold, sometimes became solid. The generality of the natives would not believe him! It was too absurd a thing to be true! One, however, who knew the missionary's character, did believe that water could become solid so that persons could walk upon it. And when he came to England and saw a river frozen over, his faith was very different from what it had been before! It was the same in essence, but of a deeper degree. So when we heard that Jesus Christ is precious and that He is a Savior, we believed it. But when we were saved by Him, and found peace through Him, we received a far deeper faith! The faith that is based upon personal experience is more essential than any other, for until we have this faith we cannot know that we are saved.

Those doctors who advertise their medicines know that the public depends very much upon testimony and therefore they generally give us a list of cures with the names of persons who have been healed. They expect that the readers of such testimonials will look with favor upon their medicine—and I suppose it is so. But if ever you have taken any medicine and you have yourself been perfectly restored from some very painful and dangerous ailment, your faith in that medicine is quite another thing! Before, you said, "I do not know that all those people live at the addresses which are given, and perhaps they never lived anywhere." Or, if you really believed that the thing was correct enough, you did not take any interest in it, but, after your own disease has been removed by it, you are certain to talk about it to other people and say to them, "You know such-and-such a medicine? It is wonderful how it acts—perfectly marvelous the restoration I have received through it!" Now, it is just so when we come to Jesus. We are so fully convinced that we begin to tell others.

But my point is that it is essential we come. If I believe in the man's medicine, and yet do not take it, it is of no use to me. If I believe in Christ's saving sinners, but do not go to Him to save *me*, He is nothing to me. If I am in danger at sea and there is a lifeboat, and I believe in her, such faith will not save me—I must get into her! If I am hungry and believe in bread—it will not take away my hunger—I must eat it! If I am dying of thirst and see the crystal spring by my side—it will not save me merely to believe in the water—I must stoop down and drink it for myself! Personal experience is the essential proof and we must have it.

And, let me add, that personal experience is always a more complete witness than testimony can ever be. Testimony can tell you something about Christ, but not much compared with what you will learn by going to Him yourself! The Queen of Sheba was told of Solomon that he was wise, that his court was richly furnished and that his dominion was

magnificent. But, when she had herself entered the royal presence, her heart failed her, and she said, "The half has not been told me." Witnesses about other things exaggerate, but witnesses concerning, Jesus Christ always fall short! Painters have frequently won repute by making portraits fairer than the originals, but none can ever paint Jesus with a pencil that shall give too much of luster to His noble face. He is so glorious that even angels, who have seen Him all their lives, and bowed before Him where His splendor is best revealed, could not tell man nor one another the thousandth part of His excellences!

If you need to know Him you must see Him for yourself. You must make Him your *personal* acquaintance. You must press by faith into the inner circle and cry with the spouse, "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth, for His love is better than wine." This kind of evidence is the most enduring. What you receive from another man you might, perhaps, give up. In days of persecution those who believed the Bible on second-hand have denied the faith, but those who have had it worked into the warp and woof of their being—who have had their souls dyed and tintured through and through with it, because they have lived upon Christ, and Christ has lived in them—those were the people who stood on the firewood to burn, and learned to sing the high praises of God while their flesh and bones were being consumed! If we need to become stalwart men who cannot be turned aside by every wind of doctrine—whom neither Rationalism nor Sacramentarianism can shake from the Gospel—we must be those who have been with Jesus! In that way we learn experimentally from Him—and such experimental Christians can never give up the Truth of God.

Now, to close, I would observe this—only those who know the Savior experimentally can bear testimony to others, for this woman, through whose secondary testimony many were converted, had, first of all, a *personal* experience herself. She said, "He told me all things that I ever did." If she had not personally learned of Him, she could not have gone out and spoken to others. So you who would be useful must get the Truth into your own souls by personally feasting upon it. Only that which is in yourself can you communicate to others. Out of an empty bottle nothing comes. The Lord says to you as to Ezekiel, "eat this roll." Digest in your own soul the doctrine you would preach! Have within yourself a well of living water, and then out of you shall flow rivers for others!

Let me add that while it is a serious thing to reject the personal witness of others, it is a *fatal* thing to reject this other test of Truth, namely, the trying for *yourself* whether Jesus is what He professes to be. When the offer is made to a man concerning any article of commerce, "This is an excellent production and here are recommendations given by persons able to judge. But, moreover, you can take it home with you. You can try it for a month and if it does not answer your purpose it can be taken back"—that is always considered to be an honest system of trade.

Now, we say concerning the things of God—if you do not care to take our testimony, do not take it. But, do another thing, try the Lord Jesus for yourself! God hears prayer—go and see if He does. God accepts

penitent hearts and He has regard to contrite spirits—come and see, come and see for yourself—

“There is life in a look at the Crucified One.”

Go and try it, go and try it! If you can prove Jesus Christ to be false. If, after having tried Him, He rejects you, very well—then it must be so—but there has never been anything of the kind yet! “Him that comes unto Me, I will in nowise cast out.” Did He ever cast out one of you? If so, He has broken His Word, and that shall never be! Heaven and earth shall pass away, but none of His Words shall ever fail! He declares that He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him. Go to God by Him and see!

If He does not save you. If it turns out that you are beyond His power—that He cannot save to the uttermost—then proclaim it! Preach the devil’s gospel all the world over, and say the truth, however horrible it may be! We challenge you to the test! If God is God, serve Him! If the Gospel is true, believe it! If it is a lie, don’t come here worshipping, or anywhere else pretending to worship a God you know to be false! Be not as double-faced persons who say, “We are Christians,” and yet do not worship the Savior. One thing or the other! If the Gospel is true, it ought to be accepted. If it is not true, bear your witness honestly like men and let the world be undeceived! We challenge the trial!

In the name of Him that died and rose from the dead. In the name of ten thousands times ten thousands arrayed in white robes who have washed them in His precious blood! In the name of the Church militant, which is on its way to Heaven, we challenge you to the test this day whether Jesus is a Savior or not! And we pray God to lead you to try it, for we know that your conclusion will be—“We have heard Him ourselves, and we know that He is the Christ, the Savior of the world.” May God’s Spirit rest on these words, and may we meet in Heaven, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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HOW FAITH COMES NO. 2623

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 21, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 2, 1882.

*“And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on Him for the saying of the woman who testified, He told me all that I ever did. So when the Samaritans were come unto Him, they sought Him that He would tarry with them: and He abode there two days. And many more believed because of His own word; and said unto the woman, Now we believe not because of your saying: for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is, indeed, the Christ, the Savior of the world.”
John 4:39-42.*

WHEREVER faith exists, it is the gift of God. It is a plant that never sprang up spontaneously from the soil of corrupt human nature. Whether it is little faith or great faith, it is equally of Divine origin, and wherever it is found—whether in the child of pious parents who was brought up with the utmost care, or in one who has lived all the former part of his life in the vilest sin—it is equally and alike the fruit of the Spirit and the effect of God's Grace. From this fact I gather great encouragement because, if it needs Divine power to implant faith in the heart that looks more favorable, it needs no more to implant and preserve it in the soul that appears most unprepared to receive it. Casting our eyes over the whole map of Palestine, we might have said that Samaria was probably as unlikely a place as any in the entire country in which we might expect to find followers of the Lord Jesus, for, at the very threshold of Christ's announcing Himself, there would be found this prejudice, that the Samaritans would not believe in a Jew.

They would not even *listen* to a Jew, for, while the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans, the Samaritans reciprocated the feeling and had no dealings with the Jews. Yet it was among the Samaritans, the members of the mongrel faith into which Judaism had deteriorated, that Christ was to find a large number of His followers! My Brothers, you will be wise to go, first, to those places where there seems to be least likelihood of conversions. You will often find that God judges not as man judges—“Man looks on the outward appearance”—but God, who reads the hearts of men, can see a certain readiness where we reckon that there is the most unreadiness! The Lord knows that the soil where the Seed of the Kingdom is sown may be in the best condition for fruitfulness even when we fancy that it cannot possibly yield us any return for our labor. If faith is the work of God—a supernatural thing—as it certainly is,

what have you and I to do with judging according to natural appearances?

You may go and speak, my Brother, feeble as you feel yourself to be, for the Seed owes very little, indeed, to the hand that sows it. And you may go, my Brother or my Sister, and scatter this precious Seed upon what you may regard as waste soil, but the Seed owes very little, after all, to the soil! God can make it spring up like a root out of a dry ground and, as of old He brought water out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock, so can He bring a harvest to His Glory where everything seems utterly barren. If it is God's work, let us have no doubts, much less any despondencies, concerning it, but let us continue to put ourselves into His hands that He may use us anywhere that He pleases, for we know not where He will most glorify His name through our feeble instrumentality.

I am going to talk about faith—faith as it came to these Samaritans. And we shall notice, first, *faith's annunciation*—"Now we believe." Secondly, *faith's nativity*—where it is born. Thirdly, *faith's upbringing*—faith's Nazareth—for, according to the text, it grows and takes higher ground as it develops. "Now we believe, not because of your saying: for we have heard Him ourselves." I give these names to my three divisions in order to assist your memories.

I. First, then, I call your attention to FAITH'S ANNUNCIATION. Here we have it, in the 42nd verse—"we believe."

Genuine faith may, through timidity, be hidden for a little while, or, possibly, the love of carnal ease may lead some to conceal their faith in Christ. But it is of the very nature of faith that it should make its appearance known and felt. As Christ had what our Church of England friends call His Epiphany, when He was manifested to men, so faith, though it may, for a while, be swaddled and laid in a manger, and kept in a stable, must have its coming out—it must have its manifestation and men must see it! Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea managed, for three years or so, to conceal their faith to a great degree. Every now and then the light would burn a hole through the bushel, for they could not quite hide the fire that was within them, but when Jesus died, then the thoughts of many hearts were revealed and both these men stood out in the clear light of day as His avowed disciples. They could not help it! The occasion had come when their faith must be manifested and they must, by their actions, say, "Now we believe." Our Lord has always put, side by side with the faith that saves, *the duty of confession of that faith*. His own words are, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." And Paul, guided by the Holy Spirit, wrote, "If you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. For with the heart man believes unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Christ loves not a tongue-tied faith—He would not have Faith dumb, but would have her speak to the glorifying of her Lord on whom she depends! So these Samaritans, when they had come to believe in Jesus, must confess their faith and they did so by saying, "Now we believe."

Possibly, dear Friends, they felt some little difficulty—I suppose that it was but little in their case—in saying, "Now we believe," *because they had previously undergone a period of doubt*. Evidently these people did

not receive the woman's testimony, although others had done so. They listened to it and were sufficiently moved by it to go out and see the Teacher of whom she spoke, but they were not brought to faith by it. Perhaps they even battled with her and raised questions—I will not say quibbles—but, at last, to her great joy, they said to her, "Now we believe." We have got out of all the muddle and confusion in which we were. We have left the darkness, the doubt and the difficulty. And 'now we believe.'"

Are there any of you, dear Friends, who have been amusing yourselves for years with the notion that you were infidels? Have you tried to make up, in your own minds, a sort of belief that you were "agnostics"? I think that is the favorite word for those who are proud of being known as *nothings* or *ignoramuses*. Have you tried to bolster up in your mind the idea that you were something very amazing in the form of a skeptical person—all the while, I doubt not, believing a great deal more than you liked to admit—believing and trembling at the same time? But have you played that foolish game out and have you now truly trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ as your own Savior? If so, then do not be ashamed to say, "Now I believe." You may have to eat your own words—well, then, eat them! You may have to be very humble when you meet your old friends—well, then, be humble—there will be no harm to you in that! And, perhaps, they will bring against you some of your own arguments. Well, it will serve you right if they do and, besides, it will give you the pleasure of breaking those arguments in pieces and, perhaps, of winning your friends for Christ, for you have seen those fallacies broken in your own case and you may be the means, in the hand of God, of breaking the bow and cutting the spear in sunder in the case of those who have been your fellow doubters!

Do not be ashamed of confessing your past folly. I think a man who says, "I was wrong," really says, in effect, "I am a little wiser, today, than I was yesterday." But he who never admits that he has made a mistake and who claims that he has always been in the right, has evidently never made much growth in knowledge of himself. So, do not be ashamed to say, "Now I believe," though that confession may have been preceded by many a doubt.

And do not hesitate to *say it to the person who has, up to now, been baffled by you*. I expect the tears were in that poor woman's eyes when she said to the men, "You remember what sort of person I used to be, and you see the change that has been worked in me. You know that I always spoke straight out what I believed, and this blessed Man, who read my very soul, is the Christ! I know He is. Then, why do you not believe what I say about Him?" I should not wonder if she pleaded very hard with them, and prayed, and entreated them to believe her testimony. And now, at last, when they did believe, it was due to her that they should cheer her heart by saying, "Now we believe." And, even though they had to add, "not because of your saying," that qualification would not grieve her. "Oh," she would say, "so long as you believe, I do not mind how you came into that happy condition! I would have been glad if God had used my saying to bring you to faith, but, inasmuch as He blessed the saying of the great Preacher, the Lord and Master, Himself, I am the more glad

on that account, for He will have all the glory of it and, so long as you do but believe, you give gladness to my heart.”

There are some of you, dear Friends, to whom I have preached in vain for a long while and God knows that when I have been laid aside, I have often felt a holy joy in my heart at the thought that the man who has been preaching for me will be blessed by God to some who have never been converted under my ministry. Sometimes, when I have longed to be fishing for souls, but could not even stand and, therefore, had to lie at home in pain, it has been my hope that some other fisherman would throw the fly better than I might have done, and that you would take the bait from him, though you have often refused it from me. And when you come forward to join the Church, and say to me, as many have done, “Sir, we believe, but it was through Fullerton and Smith’s mission,” or, “it was through the teaching in the Sunday school,” or, “it was through the agency of someone who spoke to us in the aisle,” I am sure that I have been just as glad and happy as if you had told me that it was by my own personal testimony that you had found the Lord. Glad, indeed, am I to be the instrument of saving souls, but still, if you are saved, the instrumentality by which that blessed result is reached is, after all, a very small matter! But, when you do really believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, take care that you tell us, for we have wept over you and prayed for you. And when you are converted, it seems but a fair and honest recompense that you should say to the individual whom God has honored to be your spiritual parent, “Now we believe.” By doing so, you will strengthen and encourage him to go on with his work more earnestly than before! Perhaps you will even stave off a heartbreak and make the Christian sower fill his hands the fuller and scatter the seed more deftly because he knows that he has not labored in vain, nor spent his strength for nothing!

In this annunciation of faith, I want you to observe, also, that *it was very speedy*. The Lord Jesus Christ was only in that place for two days, so that those who said, “Now we believe,” must have testified very speedily after they believed. I do not think that it is the duty of people to wait several months before they come forward and confess Christ—it may sometimes be the wisdom of the officers and members of the Church to say to some persons, “We would like to see a little of your life, that we may judge by your fruit, before we receive you into fellowship.” It may even be their *duty* to say that, and to keep them waiting outside the Church for a while to test their genuineness, but it is not the duty of the candidate, himself. His business is, as speedily as may be convenient after he has believed in Jesus, to confess his faith and to seek to be baptized and added to the Church. You do not find Paul waiting several months, after he was converted, before he was baptized. You see, in Scripture, no trace of what our old people in the country used to practice, namely, “summering and wintering” converts, to see what they were like before they permitted them to make a confession of their faith in Jesus. No, no—if you have believed in Him, come along with you!

The next step is to say so, and to say it as quickly as you can, “Now we believe.” If tonight you are brought to faith in Jesus Christ, I would say to you, find some Christian Brother and tell him at once that you have believed in Jesus. When this precious child of the Spirit of God, namely,

Faith, is born, let it be known to the King's house that it has come! In Heaven they make such blessed tidings known for, "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents." Though it is but the initial stage of faith, hold not the glad news back from the Church of God, but let it be speedily proclaimed, "Now we believe." What a joyous moment it is when any can say, "Now we believe!" It is the end of suspense—it is the end of the kingdom of darkness, it is the end of fear, it is the end of despair—it is the dawn of hope, it is the dawn of Heaven! Oh, what a world of meaning there is in those three words! What glory is opened up to the poor tearful eye by faith! What sights are visible when we can say, "Now we believe!"

O my dear Hearers, can you all say, "Now we believe"? If you can do so, truthfully, you can say a greater thing than Cicero or Demosthenes, with all their eloquence, ever uttered! Have you been seekers for months and years? Have you been tempest-tossed and driven up and down upon the sea of doubt? May you now cast your anchor overboard into the depths of Jehovah's love and when you find that it holds, may you cry out, with ecstasy, "Now we believe!" There, then, is the annunciation of faith.

II. Now, very briefly, I want you to look, in the second place, on FAITH'S NATIVITY. How does faith come into men's hearts?

According to the plain teaching of Scripture, "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." But faith is not always created in the human heart by the same form of instrumentality. It is *always* the fruit of the Spirit of God but it comes in different ways. Some of these Samaritans believed because of the saying of the woman and, I suppose that in the Christian Church, a very large number derive their faith through the power of God's Spirit, from *the personal witness of others who have been converted*. Now look, dear Friends, all of you, at this woman, and be encouraged to use your personal testimony for Christ! She was the spiritual mother of many a Samaritan believer, yet she was a woman of bad character. An ill savor was about her name—everybody in Sychar must have looked upon her as a dangerous person of fickle love and of foul ways—and yet, after she had found Christ, she did not hesitate to tell her neighbors about Him—and God did not refuse to bless her testimony! I believe that there are thousands of persons whom no man would ordain, but who are ordained of God, for all that—and there are many whom we would say that the Church could not employ, whom the great Head of the Church employs, and employs grandly, too! What if you have been converted from great sin? Be careful and watchful that you sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto you, but let not shame with regard to the past make you ashamed to confess the Christ of the present, and to acknowledge that He has worked a great work upon you! Here was a poor fallen woman and yet, after her conversion, she became a missionary of Christ to the city of Sychar! She was, altogether, quite an unofficial person. She does not appear to have been called a sister of mercy, or to have put on any peculiar garb, but she ran straightway to the people with whom she had lived and, perhaps, to the very men with whom she had sinned! She went to tell the story that Christ had come to her and had given to her that Living Water, of which, if a man shall drink, he shall never thirst

again! Well, Believer, if no man sends you, go all the same, for *God* sends you! Perhaps no man has laid his hands upon you, but of what use is the laying on of hands? Full often I fear it is only empty *hands* laid on empty *heads*—so, if no man has laid his hands on you, go without the laying on of hands, in the name of Him who has laid His pierced hands upon you and said to you, “Fear not, for I am with you: be not dismayed, for I am your God: I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, yes, I will uphold you with the right hand of My righteousness.”

If you ask, “What shall my message be?” let your message be your own personal testimony—what you have, yourself, seen, heard, tasted, handled and felt of the good Word of God. I do not suppose that this woman arranged her discourse under three heads, or that she had an introduction and a conclusion and all that, but she just went to the men of the city and said, “Come see a Man who told me all things that I ever did—is not this the Christ?” That was her little sermon and as often as she repeated it over and over again, she spoke out and bore her personal testimony—and so she brought the men of Sychar to Christ. “Go home,” said Christ to one whom He had healed, “go home to your friends and tell them how great things the Lord has done for you, and has had compassion on you.” It is amazing how attractive a personal narrative is! If you begin to explain to some people the doctrines of the Gospel, your audience will diminish one by one. But tell them your own experience of the power of Christ and they will listen as listened the wedding guest when “the ancient mariner” laid his hand upon him, detained him and told him that strange legend of the sea! You will have attentive hearers when you speak about your own dealings with Christ, the wonders that Christ has worked in you and for you, and of which you can testify because they are your own experience! That is, in many a case, the nativity of faith. The mother tells her child, the husband tells his wife, the brother tells his sister and, more often, still, the sister tells her brother. One man communicates it to his co-workers—a gentleman speaks of it in the drawing room to those of his own class—and so faith is born in other hearts as the result of the personal testimony of Believers!

But, dear Friends, there are some persons who do not seem as if they would ever be converted by that means. Personal testimony evidently fails with them as it did with some of these Samaritans. What, then, remains? Why, it will suffice if personal testimony leads the way and excites attention to the subject! Then, if the man is wise, he asks for time and thought—and our Lord Jesus is always ready to attend to those who are anxious about spiritual matters, but are not quick to believe. Two days did He remain in Sychar and those unbelievers who were candid sat at His feet and heard Him through the two days. Now, what did Jesus preach during those two days? Turn to your New Testaments and find the sermon. Even though you look very carefully, you will not discover it, for it is not there! And it is a very curious thing that when the woman preached, we have notes of *her* sermon, but when Christ preached, we are not told what He said. Very remarkable is it that, frequently, we have those discourses of Christ which did not convert anybody and we have *not* those discourses which *did* convert people! Why is that? I suppose that the Holy Spirit gives us the discourses which were rejected in order

to let us see that there was no fault in the sermon, but that the fault was in the people. But as for those that were received, He simply tells us the result and does not state the particular form of the discourse. I would infinitely rather preach sermons that win souls and are then forgotten, than go on preaching and having my discourses printed from week to week, and hear of no results! Happily, I have not to choose either alternative, but these people who were not persuaded to believe by the witness of the woman, were converted through hearing Christ, Himself.

“Well,” says one, “but we cannot personally come to Christ right now.” No, I know that you cannot, but you can do what is very much like it. I recommend every man who finds faith to be a difficult thing, to carefully read through the four Gospels, asking the Holy Spirit to enable him to believe what is recorded and revealed there. I usually find that the greatest doubters are the people who do not read the Bible. Holy Scripture has within itself a mighty convincing power—and when men lie soaking in it, it soon penetrates into their very souls! A man says, “I cannot believe,” and yet he does not read or hear about the very thing that is to be believed! He keeps out of the way of it and yet says, “I cannot believe it.” If there is something in the newspaper today, about which you felt compelled to say, “Other people seem to believe it, but, somehow, I am unable to do so—I would be very glad to believe it, but I cannot”—what would you do? You would read the statement again! You would refer to any other account that would be likely to confirm it. You would candidly examine the whole affair to see whether it was true or not. Yet how few—how very, very few have thus come to Holy Scripture, itself, and virtually listened to Jesus, Himself, and then have gone away and still said, “We do not believe.” Unless they are really given up to hardness of heart, the result, in every case, seems to be that when they search the Scriptures, and seek to know what Christ did and said, they are soon subdued by His sweet power and are found sitting at His feet, believing in His name! If anybody has not done this and yet remains an unbeliever, I charge his unbelief upon himself as his own fault and sin. If I will not examine the evidence, I am to blame if I do not believe the Truth of God!

Do you ask, “What evidence shall I examine?” I say again, examine the documents themselves! Let Christ speak for Himself. “Had I not better read a, ‘Life of Christ?’” Listen, there is no, “Life of Christ,” extant but the one written by the four Evangelists. All the attempts that have been made at lives of Christ, whatever value they may have, are not biographies of Christ! They are somebody’s idea of what He *may* have been. We need no other, “Life of Christ,” than the fourfold one given to us in the Gospels! Those Inspired Evangelists have told us all we ought to wish to know. And if you read those Books—not men’s books which have been written upon those Books—I believe that through the blessing of God the Holy Spirit, you will yet be able to say, with these Samaritans, “Now we believe.” God grant that it may be so! It is in this way that faith is often born. Holy Scripture is the Bethlehem of faith! There is this blessed Child brought forth and happy are they who take it, and nurse it, that it may grow.

III. This is our last point, FAITH’S UPBRINGING, or, as I called it, “faith’s Nazareth.”

It is possible that there were some of the Samaritans who believed and who, when they said to the woman, "Now we believe, not because of your saying, for we have heard Him ourselves," meant that they did, at first, believe because of the woman's saying, but, after a while, they outgrew that first stage of faith and they came to believe in Jesus still more strongly because they had heard Him themselves.

This was a higher form of faith. The beginnings of faith are as a spider's web. It would be difficult to say how little a thing faith may be at first. I doubt not that many believe the Bible because they were always taught by their parents that it is the Word of God—although they have never thoroughly examined that question for themselves. Some have believed the Truth of God, at first, because their minister preached it. Well, I would not discourage even that form of faith, for it may be like a very tiny thread which may be fastened to a string—and the string may be tied to a rope and the rope be attached to a cable—and, at last, the shipwrecked mariner may thus be saved from drowning! Anything that links men to Christ may, nevertheless, be overruled of God to their salvation. When that woman said, concerning our Lord, "If I may but touch His clothes, I shall be made whole," I fear that there was some superstition in the notion, but, nevertheless, Christ overlooked that and, seeing the real faith that lay hidden underneath, took care that it should live. Do not discourage *anything* that tends towards faith in Christ, but it is a grand thing when men grow, by God's Grace, till they can say, "Now I do not believe simply because of what my dear mother taught me. I do not believe merely because of what my minister preached. I do not believe because of any human being at all, but I believe because I have heard Christ for myself, I have had personal dealings with Him and, now, I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."

The faith that sprang from Christ's own testimony would also be *much more vivid faith*. The other day there was a meeting held to protest against the barbarities indicted on our Jewish brethren. All the speakers spoke very strongly, but if any one of you had seen what has been done and had come fresh from the deeds of blood, I guarantee that you would have spoken very intensely, indeed. Your indignation would have flamed fiercely if you had seen the homes of the people burned down and men murdered and women ravished, for the sight of the cruelties and abominations would have affected you far more than merely hearing about them! So, when Faith gets to deal with Christ for herself—when she sees sin forgiven—when she feels the weight taken from her troubles—when she realizes the great possessions of joy which Christ has given to her—to her, herself—then she becomes much more vivid and truly living than the faith that rests simply upon the testimony of others!

And, Beloved, as our faith becomes more vivid, so, also, it becomes more independent. We need more independent Christian people in the present day! I hope that we are growing a race of them, here, and I pray that we may grow far more of them. I have seen young people and, for all that matter, old people, too, behave excellently and seem to be admirable Christians while they have lived here in the midst of other warm-hearted Believers. But they have gone down into the country to live and it has

been very grievous to see how cold-hearted they have become—how some of them have even, at last, forsaken the assemblies of God’s House and, if they have not utterly turned aside, yet they have been very different from their former selves! Beloved, if you have seen Christ and are truly one with Him, you will live with Him when all Christian association is withdrawn! Look at many of the houses in our London streets. If a giant were to pull one of them out of the middle of the row, they would all come tumbling down! They only stand because they lean on one another. But Christians should be detached houses—no, semi-detached—for they must be attached to Christ—but they ought to stand alone, apart from men, because of their living faith in Him!

This kind of faith has grown beyond that which was at first exercised and it has become broader. If you will kindly look at the chapter, you will notice that all the woman could tell the men was this, “Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did—is not this the Christ?” But these men had learned more than that, for they had listened to Jesus Himself! They wondered, at first, that He, being a Jew, should care for them. But, by-and-by, it darted into their mind that He had not come to be the Savior of Jews, alone, so they said, “We have heard Him, ourselves, and know that this is, indeed, the Christ, the Savior of the world.” Oh, that was grand, broad faith, when they saw that this Christ was not the Jews’ Christ alone, but the Christ of the Samaritans—the Christ of the Gentiles, too—the Savior of sinners all over the world! May your faith and mine, dear Friends, grow broad! May we believe for others! May we hope for others! May we expect to see God’s salvation extending even unto the ends of the earth and, moved by this faith, may we be stirred up to go out and find the lost sheep, that we may bring them to the Great Shepherd, that He may fold them in safety by His tender care! Let us be so much with Christ that we may catch His spirit, and that our faith may grow exceedingly, and our love to all the saints be increased!

The Lord give His blessing, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 4:1-42.**

Verses 1-6. *When, therefore, the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (though Jesus Himself baptized not, but His disciples), He left Judea and departed again into Galilee. And He must needs go through Samaria. Then came He to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son, Joseph. Now Jacob’s well was there. Jesus, therefore, being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour. Do not be surprised, dear Brothers and Sisters, if you sometimes grow weary in the Lord’s work. I trust that, even then, you will not be weary of it, but that you will believe that your blessed Master can still use even His tired servants and bless their labors. The Lord Jesus Christ worked great marvels even when He sat wearily on the brink of Jacob’s well—and you, perhaps, are at this moment as fatigued and worn as you well can be—yet, will you not awaken all the energies of your soul if you should see an opportunity of doing good, even if it*

should be to some poor fallen woman, as in the case here mentioned? It is a blessed thing never to be too tired to pray and to never be too tired to speak to an anxious enquirer!

7. *There came a woman of Samaria to draw water.* Providence was at work so that when Christ reached the well, this woman was on her way there. It was very late in the day for anyone to go to draw water, but, probably, the other women, who went to the well early in the morning, were not willing to associate with her, so she had to go by herself. Late as she was, however, she was all in good time, for she reached the spot just when Christ was waiting to bless her!

7, 8. *Jesus said unto her, Give Me to drink. (For His disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat).* Or else they might have drawn water from the well to refresh Him.

9, 10. *Then said the woman of Samaria to Him, How is it that You, being a Jew, asks drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? For the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. Jesus answered and said unto her, If you knew the gift of God, and Who it is that says to you, Give Me to drink; you would have asked of Him, and He would have given you living water.* See the deadly mischief of ignorance concerning spiritual things? If she had known, she would have asked, and Christ would have given! But the first link was missing and, therefore, the rest of the chain was not drawn on. Sometimes all that people need is a little wise instruction and they will then trust the Savior. God grant that we may always be ready to give it! Alas, there are some who need much more than that, but Christ could truly say to this Samaritan woman, "If you had known, you would have asked, and I would have given." O dear Hearers, do not perish through ignorance! You have your Bibles—then, search them! You have a Gospel ministry among you—take care that you give diligent heed to what you hear from the servants of the Lord!

11. *The woman said unto Him, Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from where, then, have You that living water?* Christ told the woman that He could give her living water, but it puzzled her to know how He could get at it. The well where they had met was deep and He had nothing to draw the water out of it—how, then, could He go still deeper to get the living water of which He had spoken? She could not understand His simile and, to this day, it is the same with many of our Hearers. The simplest language of God's ministers goes right over the heads of the people. They take our words literally when they ought to see that they are spiritual and, on the other hand, I have known them spirit them away when they ought to be accepted literally. Such is the perversity of man's mind that, often, he will not understand the Truth of God.

12-14. *Are You greater than our father, Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? Jesus answered and said unto her, Whoever drinks of this water shall thirst again: but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.* These words set forth the wonderful nature of Divine Grace! They greatly err who suppose that we can receive it and yet, after all, be left to perish without it! No, but when it is once imparted to us, it continues to spring up within us like a well that never runs dry! It is the

living and incorruptible seed, “which lives and abides forever.” It is of the very nature and essence of the Grace of God that it is indestructible—it cannot be taken away from the heart in which it has been implanted by the Holy Spirit!

15. *The woman said unto Him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come here to draw.* This was an ignorant prayer on the part of the woman, but it is one which I would commend to every enlightened soul—“Sir, give me this water.” Do you want a form of prayer? Here is one for you! “Sir,” *Lord*—“give me this water.” The Lord is ready to hear that petition and to give this precious living water even now.

16, 17. *Jesus said unto her, Go, call your husband and come here. The woman answered and said, I have no husband.* The Lord Jesus knew all about her character and here He touched the weakest point in it. His plainest teaching had so far missed the mark, for He had not reached her conscience—but He was about to do so.

17, 18. *Jesus said unto her, You have well said, I have no husband: for you have had five husbands; and he whom you now have is not your husband: in that said you truly.* You can imagine her astonishment—her blank amazement as the secret story of her life was thus repeated to her!

19. *The woman said unto Him, Sir, I perceive that You are a Prophet.* It would have been a sign of better things if she had said, “Lord, I perceive that I am a sinner,” but that confession had to be made a little farther on. How apt people are rather to think about the preacher than about themselves! If half the criticisms which are passed upon ministers of Christ were bestowed upon the hearers, themselves, how much sooner they might receive the blessing they need! The woman then asked our Lord a question about religion which was strangely out of place from such a woman as she. Yet, often, those who have least morality will have the most ceremonialism and concern about the *externals* of worship!

20. *Our fathers worshipped in this mountain.* This Mount Gerizim—

20. *And You say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.* This she thought was a very important matter.

21. *Jesus said unto her, Woman, believe Me, the hour comes when you shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.* “There shall be an abolition of all specially-holy shrines, for all places shall be, alike, holy. There shall be a putting an end to all your traditions and your forms of worship, for God shall be worshipped after another fashion than that which is merely formal and superficial.”

22-26. *You worship what you do not know: we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour comes and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeks such to worship Him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.* *The woman said unto Him, I know that Messiah comes, who is called Christ: when He is come, He will tell us all things.* *Jesus said unto her, I that speak unto you am He.* That majestic word of Christ carried conviction with it—the woman believed it then and there!

27, 28. *And upon this came His disciples, and marveled that He talked with the woman: yet no man said, What do You seek? or, Why do You talk with her? The woman then left her water pot.* She was too glad, too happy

to recollect so poor a thing as a water pot! It was much to her before, but very little now. As one who finds a precious pearl forgets some trifle that he carried in his hands, so she “left her water pot.”

28, 29. *And went her way into the city, and said to the men, Come, see a Man, who told me all things that I ever did—is not this the Christ? Her notion was that when Christ came, He would tell all things. Here was a Man who revealed her innermost secrets—was not He the Christ?*

30-32. *Then they went out of the city and came unto Him. In the meantime, His disciples urged Him, saying, Master, eat. But He said unto them, I have meat to eat that you know not of. O Beloved, there is a wonderful fascination about the blessed work of soul-seeking! When one is really anxious to bring a sinner to the Savior, eating and drinking are often forgotten! As the hunter of the chamois, in the heat of the chase leaps from crag to crag, and is oblivious of danger, and forgets all about the time for his meals, so he that hunts after a precious soul, to win it for Christ, forgets everything else! He is altogether absorbed in this holy pursuit—the Master was more absorbed in it than any of us are ever likely to be.*

33-35. *Therefore said the disciples, one to another, Has any man brought Him anything to eat? Jesus said unto them, My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work. Say not you, There are yet four months, and then comes harvest? Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes and look on the fields for they are white, already, to harvest. That was probably an old Oriental proverb, used by lazy men who never thought it time to get to work, but Jesus said, “Do not use the idler’s language any longer. Now, at once, there is work for you to do.”*

36-42. *And he that reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit unto life eternal: that both he that sows and he that reaps may rejoice together. And herein is that saying true, One sows, and another reaps. I sent you to reap that whereon you bestowed no labor: other men labored and you are entered into their labors. And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on Him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that I ever did. So when the Samaritans were come unto Him, they besought Him that He would tarry with them: and He abode there two days. And many more believed because of His own word and said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of your saying: for we have heard Him, ourselves, and know that this is, indeed, the Christ, the Savior of the world. The Lord bring us all to trust in Him for His dear name’s sake! Amen.*

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—766, 547, 549.

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

“There was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum. When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judea into Galilee, he went unto Him, and besought Him that He would come down, and heal his son: for he was at the point of death. Then said Jesus unto him, Except you see signs and wonders, you will not believe. The nobleman said unto Him, Sir, come down before my child dies. Jesus said unto him, Go your way, your son lives. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him and he went his way. And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, Your son lives. Then inquired he of them the hour when he began to mend. And they said unto him, yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. So the father knew that it was at the same hour in which Jesus said unto him, Your Son lives: and he believed, and his whole house.”
John 4:46-53.

THIS narrative illustrates the rise and progress of faith in the soul. While I try to speak of it, I pray that we may experimentally follow the track, desiring that such faith may have a rise in our hearts, may make progress in our spirits and may become even stronger in us than it was in this nobleman. The point, my Brothers and Sisters, is not to hear about these things, only, but to have them repeated in your own soul. We need to come to real business and to make the things of God matters of downright fact to ourselves. We need not only to hear about this nobleman from Capernaum, or anybody else—but to see in our own souls the same work of Grace as was worked in him. The same living Christ is here and His help we as greatly need as ever did this nobleman. May we seek it as he sought it and find it as he found it! Thus will the Holy Spirit, who inspired the narrative before us, be found writing it over again, not upon the pages of a book, but upon the fleshy tablets of our hearts!

Observe then, at the commencement, that *trouble, first of all, led this courtly person to Jesus*. Had he been without trial, he might have lived forgetful of his God and Savior. But sorrow came to his house and it was God's angel in disguise. It may be, dear Friend, that you are in trouble this morning and, if so, I pray that affliction may be the black horse upon which Mercy shall ride to your door! It is a sad, sad thing with some men that the better the Lord deals with them in Providence, the worse return they make. On the other hand, there are hearts that turn to the Lord when He smites them. When they drift into deep waters, when they can scarcely find bread to eat, when sickness attacks their bodies and especially when their children are smitten, *then* they begin to think of God and

better things. Blessed is the discipline of the great Father in such a case! It is well for the troubled if their tribulation bruises their heart to repentance and repentance leads them to seek and find pardon.

The particular form of trial which visited this nobleman was the sickness of his child. He had a little son whom he dearly loved and who was down with a deadly fever. The father appears to have been a naturally kind and affectionate person. His servants evidently took a great interest in him and in the domestic affliction which grieved him, for you observe with what eagerness they came to meet him, to tell him of the recovery of his child. The father's heart was sadly wounded because his dear boy was at the point of death. No doubt he had tried all the remedies known to the times, had sent for every physician that could be found within miles of Capernaum and now, having heard of one, Jesus of Nazareth, who at Cana had turned water into wine and at Jerusalem had done many mighty works, he resorts to Him with eager petition and desperate hope.

He might never have thought of seeking Jesus if it had not been for that dear dying boy. How often does it happen that children, though they are not angels, yet are used to do better work than angels could accomplish, for they sweetly lead their parents to God and Heaven! They twine themselves about our hearts and then, if we see them sicken and mark their pains, our sympathetic hearts are wrung with anguish and we cry, "O God, spare my child! Lord, have mercy upon my little one!" The first prayers that come from many hearts are, under God, fetched forth by grief for little ones most dearly loved. Is it not written, "And a little child shall lead them"? It was so with this man—he was brought to Jesus by trouble—brought to Jesus by anxiety about a child. I have it strongly upon me, at this moment, that I am speaking to certain persons who are not converted, but they have come here because they are in great sorrow—possibly a dear little one is pining away—and their hearts are crying to God that, if possible, the precious life may be spared. In the House of Prayer they feel somewhat comforted, but their hearts are ready to break because of the loss they so much dread. How much I pray our Lord to make this trouble a means of Grace!

Trial was the occasion, the preface to the work of Divine Grace. We will now proceed to look upon the saving part of it, namely, the faith which was born in this nobleman's heart. We will first spy out *the spark of faith*; then *the smoldering fire of faith*—much heaped over and dampened, so as to be smoke rather than fire. Then, thirdly, we will look upon *the flame of faith*, or faith at last showing itself decidedly. And fourthly, *the conflagration of faith*, when faith, at last, blazed up in the man, fired his whole nature and spread to his whole house—"And he believed, and his whole house." Again, I say, let us try to follow in fact as well as in meditation.

I. I want you carefully to mark THE SPARK OF FAITH, all the while saying—I am going to look and see if I have such a spark of faith. And if I find it, I will prize it much and pray the Holy Spirit to breathe softly upon it, that it may rise to something more permanent and powerful.

The faith of this nobleman *rested, at the first, entirely upon the report of others*. He lived at Capernaum, down there by the sea. And among the newsmongers it was common talk that there had risen a great Prophet who was working great wonders. He himself had never seen Jesus, nor

heard Him speak, but he believed the report of others and he was right in doing so, for they were credible persons. No doubt many were in the early stages of faith—they have heard friends say that the Lord Jesus receives sinners. That He puts away sin. that He calms the conscience. That He changes the nature; that He hears prayer; that He sustains His people under trouble. These things they have heard from persons of good repute, whom they esteem and, therefore, they believe them.

Friend, are you saying to yourself, "I have no doubt it is all true, but I wonder whether it would be true for *me*. I am in trouble this morning—will the Lord Jesus help *me*? I have a present pressure upon my spirit—will prayer to Him relieve *me*?" You cannot say that you know, from anything you have ever seen of Him, that Jesus would thus bless you, but you infer that He will do so from what friends have told you. Well, faith often begins in that way. Men believe the report which is brought to them by well-known persons who have experienced the power of Divine Love and thus, at first, like the Samaritans, they believe because of the woman's report. In future time they will come to believe because of having heard, seen, tasted and handled for themselves, but the beginning is good. This faith which comes of a report by others is a spark of true fire. Take care of it! May God grant you Grace so to pray about it, that that spark may increase into a flame!

Observe that this faith was such a little faith that *it only concerned the healing of the sick child*. The nobleman did not know that he needed healing in his *own* heart—he did not perceive his own ignorance of Jesus and his own blindness to the Messiah. He did not, perhaps, know that he needed to be born again. Neither did he understand that the Savior could give him spiritual life and light. He had little knowledge of the Savior's spiritual power and thus his faith had a very narrow range. What he did believe was that the Lord Jesus, if he would come to his house, could prevent his child from dying of the fever. He had reached as far as that—and such faith as he had, he turned to practical use at once. Friend, you do not as yet know how great my Lord is and what wonderful things He does for those who put their trust in Him. But you are saying, "Surely He could help me, this morning, in my present trial, and deliver me out of my present difficulty." So far, so good. Use what faith you have. Bring before the Lord the trial of the hour. Let me encourage you to do so. If you cannot come to Him for heavenly things, you may, for the present, begin with the sorrows and trials of earth.

If you cannot come to Him for an eternal blessing, you may come to Him for a passing favor and He is ready to hear you. Though your prayer is only about worldly things and nothing more than a merely natural prayer, yet pray it, for, "He hears the young ravens when they cry," and I am sure they do not pray spiritual prayers! All that ravens can ask for will be for worms and flies—and yet He hears them and feeds them! And you, a man, though you may but pray at this time for a very commonplace mercy—one of the slighter blessings—yet you may pray with confidence if you have any faith in the gracious Lord. Though that faith is only a spark and nothing more, I would not blow it out, nor will the Lord Jesus do so, for He has said that a smoking flax He will not quench. If you have any

desire towards Him and any degree of faith in Him, let it live and lead you to the dear Master's feet!

The nobleman's faith was so feeble that *he limited the power of Jesus to His local Presence*. Hence his prayer was, "Sir, come down before my child dies." If he could but induce the Lord Jesus to enter the room where the sick child lay, he believed that He would speak to the fever and the fever would be cured—but he had no idea that the Lord Jesus Christ could work at the distance of 25 miles! He had no notion that the Word of the Lord could operate apart from His Presence. Still, it was better to have that limited faith than to have none at all! You, children of God, when you get to limiting the Holy One of Israel, are guilty of gross sin! But if those who are seeking the Lord, through ignorance and weakness of faith, are found *limiting* Him, it is far more excusable in them. The Lord Jesus treats it graciously and removes it by a gentle rebuke. It is not the same thing for a beginner to be weak of faith as for you who have enjoyed long experience of God's goodness, to fall into mistrust of Him. Therefore I say to you, in whom the Lord is beginning to work, if you have no more faith than just to say, "The Lord Jesus could heal me if He were here—the Lord would help me and answer my cry if He were here"—it is better to have such a faith than to be unbelieving! Your narrow faith limits Him exceedingly and shuts Him up in a very close place and, therefore, you may not expect Him to do many mighty works for you—and yet, up to the measure of your faith, He will go with you and bless you.

As a matter of unpromised Sovereign Grace, He may even do exceeding abundantly above what you ask or even think. Therefore I would treat your faith like a little babe—I would nurse it until it can stand alone and hold out my finger to help it till its tottering steps become firm. We will not blame the babe because it cannot run or leap, but we will cherish it and urge it to greater strength—to which strength it will come in due time. Our Lord Jesus Christ deserves the largest faith from each one of us. Grieve Him not by suspicions of His ability! Give Him what faith you have and ask for more.

The nobleman's faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, though it was only a spark, *yet influenced him*. It led him to take a considerable journey to find our Lord. From Capernaum he went up the hills to Cana that he might plead with Jesus. And he went personally. This is the more remarkable because he was a man of rank and position. I do not know whether he was Chuza, Herod's steward. I should not wonder if he were because we do not hear of any other noble family being on the side of Christ. But we do hear of the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, as among those that ministered to our Lord of their substance. We hear, also, of Manaen, foster-brother to Herod. It may have been one of these. We do not know, but noblemen were scarce birds in the Church in those days as, indeed, they are now! We naturally expect, therefore, to hear of such a person as this again. And as we have honorable mention of those two, we are not very rash in conjecturing that this nobleman may have been one of them.

Now noblemen do not, as a rule, think of taking journeys themselves while they have so many servants at their disposal. But this nobleman came to Christ, himself, and personally sought Him that He would come and heal his son. If your faith is weak in some respects and yet strong

enough in others to drive you personally to Christ, personally to pray to Him, it is faith of an acceptable order! If it leads you to pray to our Lord with all your heart, beseeching Him, then your faith is of the right sort. If it leads you to beseech Christ to have mercy upon you, it is the faith which saves the soul! It may be little as a grain of mustard seed, but its importunity shows that there is pungency in it—it is true mustard! Dear Sir, are you beginning to pray, at this time, because of sorrow? In the silence of your soul are you crying, “O God, save me today! I have come up to London to see other things and I have dropped in here, this morning—oh, that this may be the day in which I shall be helped out of my trouble and myself be saved”? If your faith brings you to prayer, it is the acknowledged child of Grace, for true-born faith always cries! Your faith helps you to lay hold of Jesus with a resolute grip, saying, “I will not let You go, except You bless me!” It may be little faith, but it is true faith. It is worked in your soul by the Spirit of God and it will bring a blessing with it. You shall be saved by this faith, to our Lord’s Glory and to your own comfort!

I notice that *this man’s faith taught him how to pray in the right style*. Notice the argument he used. He sought Him that He would come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death. He urged no merit, but pleaded the misery of the case. He did not plead that the boy was of noble birth—that would have been very bad pleading with Jesus. Nor did he urge that he was a lovely child—that would have been a sorry argument. But he pleaded that he was at the point of death. His *extremity* was his reason for urgency. The child was at Death’s door and, therefore, his father begs that Mercy’s door may open. When you, my Friend, are taught by Grace to pray aright, you will urge those facts which reveal your own danger and distress—and not those which would make you appear rich and righteous. Remember how David prayed. “Lord,” he said, “pardon my iniquity, for it is great.” That is evangelical pleading. Most men would have said, “Lord, pardon my iniquity, for it was excusable and by no means reached to the heinousness of my fellow men.” David knew better. His cry is, “Pardon my iniquity, for it is great.” Plead with God, poor Sinner, the greatness of your necessity, the direness of your needs! Say that you are at the point of death. Say that the matter about which you plead is a matter of life and death—this will be an argument calculated to move the heart of Infinite Compassion.

Any tint of goodness that your pride would tempt you to throw into the picture would spoil it. Lay on the black colors thick and three-fold. Plead with God for His mercy’s sake, for mercy is the only attribute which you can hopefully address while you are an unforgiven sinner! You cannot ask the Lord to bless you because of any desert or merit you have, for you have no trace of any such thing! But you will be wise to plead your necessities. Cry, “O God, have mercy upon me, for I need mercy!” State your child’s case and say, “For he is at the point of death.” This is the key which opens the door of Mercy!

Do you follow me, dear Hearers, you that are not yet converted? Is there, at any rate, in you some desire to come to the Lord Jesus Christ, though it is only because a temporal trouble is pressing you sorely? A horse does not need a dozen spurs to make it run. The one which now wounds your flank is sharp enough and it is plunged in so deep that you

must feel it. Yield to it, lest there should be need of whip as well as spur to make you stir. If you are the Lord's chosen, you will have to come and the more readily you do so, the better will it be for you. Come at once! Be you not as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding—but come to Jesus while He gently draws. Though it is with such a feeble faith that you fear it is rather unbelief than faith, yet draw near to Him! Come just as you are and look up to Jesus and pray—for in that prayer shall lie the hope, no, the *certainty* of relief! The great heart of Jesus will feel your prayer and say, "Go in peace."

II. Thus have we seen faith in the spark. We will now look at THE FIRE OF FAITH struggling to maintain itself and gradually increasing. Let us see how the fire smolders, the heap begins to smoke and thus betrays the inner fire.

This man's faith was true as far as it went. That is a great thing to say. He stood before the Savior resolved not to go away from Him. His only hope for his child's life was in this great Prophet of Nazareth and, therefore, he did not intend to leave Him till his request was granted. He does not, at first, get the answer that he wants, but he perseveres and pleads on. This showed that his faith had heart and vitality in it. It was no whim or sudden impulse, but a real persuasion of the power of Jesus to heal. What a mercy it is to be delivered from all sham faith! Better to have little faith and that faith *real*, than to possess a great creed and give the Lord Jesus no hearty credit! Tell me, my Hearer, have you any real practical faith in the Lord Jesus?

The nobleman's faith was true as far as it went—but *it was hindered by a desire for signs and wonders*. Our Lord, therefore, gently chided him, saying, "Except you see signs and wonders, you will not believe." Now I know that many of you believe that the Lord Jesus can save, but you have fixed in your mind the way in which He must do it. You have been reading certain religious biographies and you find that such a man was driven to despair, had horrible thoughts and so on—therefore you settle it in your minds that you must have similar horrors or you will be lost. You lay it down as a program that you must be saved in that way, or not at all. Is this right? Is this wise? Do you mean to dictate to the Lord?

Perhaps you have read or heard that certain eminent persons were converted through amazing dreams, or by remarkable movements of Providence and you say to yourself, "Something equally singular must happen to me, or I will not believe in the Lord Jesus." In this you err like the nobleman! He expected the Savior to *come down* to the house and perform some *act peculiar* to His prophetic office! In fact, this nobleman is the New Testament reproduction of Naaman in the Old Testament! You remember how Naaman said, "Behold, I thought he would surely come out to me and stand, and call on the Lord, His God, and strike his hand over the place and recover the leper"?

Naaman had planned it all in his own mind and had, no doubt, arranged a very proper and artistic performance! And, therefore, when the Prophet simply said, "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times," he could not receive so simple and bald a Gospel—it was too commonplace, too free from ritual! Many persons, by their mental prejudices, would bind the Lord of Mercy to such and such a way of saving them! But our Lord will

not be thus laid under constraint! Why should He? He will save *whom* He wills and He will save *as* He wills. His Gospel is not, "Suffer so much horror and despair, and live," but, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." He comes to many and calls them effectually by the soft whispers of His love—they do but trust Him and they enter into immediate rest. With little striking feeling, either horrible, or ecstatic, they quietly exercise a child-like confidence in their Crucified Lord and they find eternal life! Why should it not be so with you? Why should you keep yourself out of comfort by laying down a program and demanding that the Holy Spirit should pay attention to it? Let Him save you as He wills! Away with foolish prejudices!

Yet this is to be said of the nobleman's faith—*it could endure a rebuff*. Think of the Master only saying to this poor anguished father, "Except you see signs and wonders, you will not believe." It was sadly true, but it sounded honestly sharp. Oh, the dear lips of Jesus! They are always like lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh! Myrrh, you know, is bitter to the taste and there was a seeming bitterness about this speech to the nobleman. Yet the father did not give up his suit and turn on his heels and say, "He treats me harshly." He said within himself, "to whom should I go?" and, therefore, he went not away. He was like that woman for whom the Lord's lips dropped a far more pungent morsel of myrrh, as He said, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs." Yet she found a sweet smell in that myrrh and perfumed her prayer with it as she said, "Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." This man answered our Lord by still greater importunity. He would not go away, not he! Oh, dear Heart, may you have such faith in Christ that though He should rebuke you, you will not leave Him! Jesus is your only hope, therefore do not turn away from Him. Imitate Bunyan when he spoke words to this effect—"I was driven to such straits that I must of necessity go to Jesus. And if He had met me with a drawn sword in His hand, I would sooner have thrown myself upon the edge of His sword than have gone away from Him, for I knew Him to be my last hope." O Soul, cling to your Lord, come what may!

Then see *how passionately this man pleaded*. He cried, "Sir, come down before my child dies." As much as if he had said, "Lord, do not question me just now about my faith. O my Lord, I pray you do not think of *me* at all, but heal my dear child, or he will be dead! He was at the point of death when I left him: do hurry down and save him." Limited was that faith, for he still asks Christ to *come down* and seems to think it essential that our Lord should make a journey to Capernaum to work the cure. But note how intense, how eager, how persevering was his pleading! If His faith failed in breadth, it excelled in force! Dear anxious Friend, keep close to the example now before us! Pray and pray again! Hold on and hold out! Cry on and cry out! Never cease till the Lord of Love grants you an answer of peace.

III. We come to a higher stage and watch THE FLAME OF FAITH. The spark increased as a smoldering fire and now the fire reveals itself in flame. Observe that Jesus said to the petitioner, "Go your way, your son lives." And the man truly believed—and went his way.

Here note that *he believed the Words of Jesus over the head of all his former prejudices*. He had thought only that Christ could heal if He came down to Capernaum, but now He believes, though Jesus remains where He is and only speaks the Words. Friend, will you, at this moment, believe the Lord Jesus Christ on His bare Word? Without laying down any rules as to *how* He will save you, will you trust Him? You have prescribed dark convictions, or vivid dreams, or strange sensations—will you cease from such folly? Will you believe in Jesus Christ as He is revealed in the Scriptures? Will you believe that He can and will save you right now upon your simple *trust*? Have you not heard of His passion and death upon the Cross for the guilty? Have you not heard it said that all manner of sin and of iniquity shall be forgiven unto men if they believe in Him? Do you not know that he that believes in Him has everlasting life? Will you have done with your nonsense about, “Come down and save me,” or, “Make me *feel* this and I will believe You”? Will you believe in Him, now, despite all your former thoughts, pretensions and desires—and just say, “I will trust my soul with Christ, believing that He can save me”? You shall be saved as surely as you do thus trust!

The next thing this man did to prove the sincerity of his faith was that *he at once obeyed Christ*. Jesus said to him, “Go your way,” that is, “Go home”—“your son lives.” If the man had not believed the Words, he would have lingered there and kept on pleading and looking for favorable signs. But as he has believed, he is satisfied with the Word of the Lord and goes his way without another word. “Your son lives” is enough for him! Many of you have said, when you have heard the Gospel preached, “you tell us to believe in Christ, but we will continue in prayer.” That is not what the Gospel commends you. Do I hear you say, “I shall continue to read my Bible and attend the means of Grace”? That is not the precept of the Savior. Are you not satisfied with His Word? Will you not take that Word and go your way? If you believe in Him, you will go your way in peace—you will believe that He has saved you and act as if you knew it to be true. You will joy and rejoice in the fact that you are saved. You will not stop to quibble and to question, or to follow after all kinds of religious experiences and feelings but you will exclaim, “He tells me to believe Him and I believe Him. He says, ‘He that believes on Me has everlasting life’ and I do believe in Him and, therefore, I have everlasting life! I may not feel any peculiar emotion, but I have eternal life! Whether I see my salvation or not, I am saved! It is written, ‘Look unto Me, and be you saved, all you ends of the earth.’ Lord, I have looked and I am saved. My reason for believing it is that You have said it. I have done as You have bid me and You will keep Your promise.” This mode of reasoning is due to the Lord Jesus. He *deserves* to be taken at His Word and trusted in real earnest.

Now, the nobleman's faith has flamed up, indeed. He believes not upon mere report, but upon the Word of Jesus. He does not wait for a sign, but he hears the Word and on that Word he hangs his confidence. Jesus said, “Your son lives; go your way”—and he goes his way that he may find his son alive! O seeking Soul, may God, the Holy Spirit, bring you to this state at once, that you may now say, “O Lord, I will wait no longer for any sort of feeling, or evidence, or sign, but on Your Word, Your blood has sealed, I

will trust my everlasting all, for I do now accept Your promise and since I believe it, I will go my way in peace.”

Still, I am bound to say, concerning this man's faith at this stage, that *it still fell somewhat short of what it might have been*. It was a great thing for him to have come so far, but he had farther yet to go. He expected less than he might have expected and, therefore, when he saw his servants, he asked them when the dear child began to mend. He was overjoyed when they virtually said, “He never did begin to mend. The fever left him all at once; at the seventh hour he *recovered*.” You see, he expected a *gradual* restoration. He looked for the ordinary course of Nature, but here was a miraculous work! He received far more than he reckoned on. How little we know of Christ and how little we believe in Him, even when we do trust Him! We measure His boundless treasure by our scanty purses. Yet the faith that saves is not always full-grown—there is room for us to believe more and to expect more of our blessed Lord. Oh, that we would do so!

But one thing I want to mention here, though I do not quite understand it—perhaps you can make it out. *The father traveled with the leisure of confidence*. It was about 25 or 30 miles to Capernaum and I have no doubt the good man started off as soon as the Master said, “Go your way.” No doubt he would go at once in obedience to such a command and make progress on the road home. But we read that the servants met him. Did they start as soon as the child was cured? If so, they might meet him half-way, or thereabouts. It was uphill. Say, therefore, that they came 10 miles and that 15, or even 20, remained for the nobleman to travel. The servants said, “Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him.” The seventh hour was about one o'clock in the day and that day was “yesterday.” I know that the day closed at set of sun, yet one would hardly talk of “yesterday” without a night between.

Did the nobleman take 15 or 16 hours for that partial journey? If so, he did not travel with any excessive speed. It is true that 25 miles was a good day's journey for a camel, for in the East the roads are very bad, but still, it seems to me that the happy father moved with the ease of a Believer rather than with the hurry of an anxious parent! A nobleman's usual progress through the villages was slow and he did not alter the usual pace because he would not even seem to hurry, now that his mind was believingly at rest. He felt quite sure that his son was all right and, therefore, the fever of anxiety left the father, even as the fever had left his child! Anxious minds, even when they believe, are in a hurry to see—but this good man was so sure, he would not allow parental love to make him act as if the shadow of a doubt remained! It is written, “He that believes shall not make haste” and in him it was *literally* fulfilled!

He journeyed on in such style as a member of the royal household would be expected to travel, accompanied by a fitting retinue, and thus all saw that his mind was at ease about his son. I like this consecrated restfulness. It befits a solid faith. I want you all, when you believe in Jesus Christ, to believe right up to the hilt. Give Him not a half faith, but a whole faith—whether about a child, or about yourself—believe in earnest. Say, “Let God be true, but every man a liar.’ On His bare Word, my soul reposes. I will ‘rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him.’ What, though no amazing joys flash through my spirit? God has said, ‘He that believes

on Me has everlasting life' and, therefore, I have everlasting life! What if I do not rise up and dance for joy? Yet will I sit still and sing within my soul because God has visited His believing servant. I will wait until high joys shall come to me, but meanwhile I will trust and not be afraid."

Dear Hearer, are you accompanying me in all this? Are you ready, in this manner, to exercise a substantial, restful confidence in Jesus?

IV. So far, the nobleman's faith has grown, but now we shall see it become THE CONFLAGRATION OF FAITH. As he went home, his servants met him with good news. In the quietude of his faith, he was exceedingly delighted when they said, "Your son lives." The message came upon him like the echo of the Words of Jesus. "I heard that," he said, "yesterday, at the seventh hour, for then Jesus said, 'Your son lives.' Another day has come and, behold, my servants salute me with the same words, 'Your son lives.'" The repetition must have astonished him! I often notice about the preaching of the Word of God, how the sentences strike you as to their very words when God blesses them. People say to me, "You said, Sir, the same thing that we were talking of when we were on the road—you described our cases even to our thoughts and you mentioned certain expressions which had been used in our conversation—surely God was speaking through you." Yes, it is often so. Christ's own Words find many echoes from the mouths of His commissioned servants. The Lord's Providence rules words as well as deeds and makes men say the right words without their knowing why they say them! God is so graciously Omnipresent that all things reveal Him when they are bid to do so.

Now the nobleman's faith is *confirmed by the answer to his prayers*. His *experience* has come in to the aid of his faith. He believes in a more assured sense than he did before. He has proven the truth of the Lord's Words and, therefore, he knows and is persuaded that He is Lord and God. The faith of a sinner coming to Christ is one thing. The faith of a man who has come to Christ and has obtained the blessing is another and stronger matter! The first faith, the simpler faith, is that which *saves*, but the further faith is that which brings comfort, joy and strength into the spirit.

"My prayer is heard," he said and then he spoke to the servants, and *after enquiry his faith was sustained by each detail*. He cried, "Tell me all about it: when was it?" When they replied, "At the seventh hour the fever left him," he remembered that at that very moment, when over there above the hills at Cana, the Lord Jesus Christ had said, "Go your way; your son lives." The more he studied the case, the more wonderful it became! The details were singularly confirmatory of his confidence and, by their means, he rose to a clearer and firmer faith. Brothers and Sisters, how many such confirmations some of us have had! Doubters attempt to argue with us about the simplicities of the Gospel and they want to fight with us upon their own ground of mere speculative reasoning. Dear Sir, this is hardly fair to us! Our own ground is of quite another kind! We are not strangers to the business of faith, but adepts in it—and you ought to allow something for our personal experience of the faithfulness of the Lord our God!

We have a thousand treasured memories of happy details which we cannot tell you. We do not call you swine, but at the same time we dare

not throw our pearls before you! We have a host of things laid by, but we cannot repeat them, for to us they are too sacred—thus we are not able to use those reasons which to our own hearts are the most convincing! We have other arguments than those which we choose to bandy in open court. Be not surprised if we seem obstinate—you do not know how intensely sure we are. You cannot argue us out of our secret consciousness—you might as well try to argue our eyes out of their sockets! We know and are sure, for we have seen, heard, tasted and handled of the good Word of the Lord. Certain things are so intertwined with our lives that we are anchored by them. “Coincidences,” you say. Ah well! Say what you please—to us they are other than to you! Our soul has cried out, time after time, “This O Sir, this seems a very cold-blooded remark!”

If you had been where I have been and experienced what I have experienced, you would acknowledge that the Lord stretched out His hand and saved His servant! You would have the same solemn conviction as I have that God was there, working out salvation. I know that I cannot create those convictions in you by telling you my story. If you are determined not to believe, you will not accept my testimony, but will think me a deluded person, though I am no more apt to be deluded than you are. However, whether you are inclined to believe or to disbelieve, I am in no such hesitation. I am forced to believe, for the more carefully I examine my life, the more I am convinced that God must have been at work with me and for me.

At the same moment that Christ said, “Your son lives,” the nobleman’s son did live! The same word that Jesus used to the father was used, also, by the servants who had been 30 miles away and, therefore, the father felt that something more than human had crossed his path. Do you wonder at it? Besides, that dear boy, whom he found sound and well, was a potent argument. You could not argue the happy father out of a faith which had brought him such joy. The child was at the point of death till faith received the Words of the Lord Jesus—and then the fever left. The father *must* believe—would *you* have him doubt?

Strengthened in his faith by his experience, after having believed the bare Words of Jesus, the good man now sees that Word fulfilled and *he believes in Jesus in the fullest sense*. He believes for everything—for his body and for his soul—for all that he is and for all that he has. From that day forth he becomes a disciple of the Lord Jesus! He follows Him, not only as a Healer, nor only as a Prophet, nor only as a Savior, but as his Lord and his God! His hope, his trust and his confidence are fixed upon Jesus as the true Messiah.

What follows is so natural and yet so joyous, that I pray it may be true to all of you—his family also believe! When he gets home, his wife meets him. Oh, the delight that sparkles in that woman’s eyes! “The dear boy is well,” she said, “He is as well as ever he was in his life. He did not need to lie in bed for weeks to recover his strength after the weakening influence of the fever! The fever is all gone and the boy is well. Oh, my dear Husband, what a wonderful Being this must be who has heard your prayers and at all that distance has spoken our child into health! I believe in Him, Husband. I believe in Him.” I am sure she would speak in that fashion!

The same processes which had been working in her husband had been working in her by God's Grace!

Now, think of the little boy. Here he comes, so happy and cheerful. And his father tells him all about his fever and his going to see that wonderful Prophet at Cana, and how He said, "Your son lives." The little boy cries, "Father, I believe in Jesus! He is the Son of God." Nobody doubts the dear child's faith—he was not too young to be healed and he is not too young to believe! He had enjoyed a special experience, more personal than even that of his father and mother. He had felt the power of Jesus—and it was no marvel that he believed. Meanwhile, the father is rejoicing to find that he will not be a solitary Believer, for there are his wife and boy also confessing their faith. But we are not at the end of the matter, for the servants standing around exclaim, "Master, we cannot help believing in Jesus, also, for we watched the dear child and saw him recover, and the power which healed him must have been Divine."

One and all, by His Grace, they emulate their master's faith in Jesus. "I sat up with the dear boy," says the old nurse. "I would not go to sleep, for I felt that if I did sleep, I might find him dead when I awoke. I watched him and just at the seventh hour I saw a delightful change come over him and the fever left him." "Glory be to Jesus!" shouted the old woman, "I never saw or heard of such a thing! It is the finger of God." All the other servants were of the same mind. Happy household! There was a grand Baptism soon after, when they all went to confess their faith in Jesus. Not only was the child cured, but the whole household was cured! The father did not know, when he went pleading about his boy, that he, himself, needed to be saved—the mother, also, probably thought only of her son—but now salvation has come to the whole family and the fever of sin and unbelief is gone away with the other fever!

May the Lord work such a wonder as that in all our houses! If any of you are groaning under a burden of grief, I trust you will be so relieved that when you tell your wife of it, she will believe in Jesus, too. May the dear child of your care believe in Jesus while yet a child—and may all who belong to your domestic circle also belong to the Divine Lord! Grant, at this time, Your servant's desire, O Lord Jesus, for Your Glory's sake! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 4:28-54.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—406, 603, 595.**

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CHARACTERISTICS OF FAITH

NO. 317

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MAY 27, 1860,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.**

***“Then said Jesus unto him, Except you see signs
and wonders, you will not believe.”
John 4:48.***

You will remember that Luke, in his letter to Theophilus, speaks of things which Jesus began both to do and to teach as if there was a connection between His doings and His teachings. In fact, there was a relation of the most intimate kind. His teachings were the explanation of His doings—His doings confirmations of His teachings. Jesus Christ had never occasion to say, “Do as I say, but not as I do.” His words and His actions were in perfect harmony with one another. You might be sure that He was honest in what He said, because what He did forced that conviction upon your mind. Moreover, you were led to see that what He taught you must be true, because He spoke with authority—an authority proved and demonstrated by the miracles He worked.

Oh my Brethren in Christ! When our biographies shall come to be written at last, God grant that they may not be all sayings, but that they may be a history of our sayings *and* doings! And may the good Spirit so dwell in us that at the last it may be seen that our doings did not clash with our sayings! It is one thing to preach, but another thing to practice. And unless preaching and practice go together, the preacher is himself condemned and his ill practice may be the means of condemning multitudes through his leading them astray. If you make a profession of being God’s servant, live up to that profession and if you think it necessary to exhort others to virtue, take care that you set the example. You have no right to teach, if you have not yourself learned the lesson which you would teach to others.

Thus much by way of preface. And now concerning the subject itself. The narrative before us seems to me to suggest three points and those points each of them triplets. I shall notice in this narrative, first, the three stages of faith. In the second place I shall notice the three diseases to which faith is subject. And then I shall come, in the third place, to ask three questions about your faith.

I. To begin, then, with the first point. It seems to me that we have before us FAITH IN THREE OF ITS STAGES.

Doubtless, the history of faith might with propriety be divided just as accurately into five or six different stages of growth. But our narrative suggests a threefold division and therefore we stand to that this morning. There is a nobleman living at Capernaum. He hears a rumor that a celebrated Prophet and preacher is continually going through the cities of Galilee and Judea and is given to understand that this mighty preacher does not merely enthrall every hearer by His eloquence, but wins the

hearts of men by singularly benevolent miracles which He works as a confirmation of His mission. He stores these things in his heart, little thinking that they would ever be of any practical service to him. It comes to pass on a certain day that his son falls sick—perhaps his only son, one very dear to his father's heart—the sickness, instead of diminishing, gradually increases.

Fever breathes its hot breath upon the child and seems to dry up all the moisture in his body and to blast the bloom from his cheek. The father consults every physician within his reach. They look upon the child and candidly pronounce him hopeless. No cure can possibly be worked. That child is at the point of death. The arrow of death has almost sunk into his flesh. It has well near penetrated his heart. He is not merely near death, but at death's very point. He has been forced by disease upon the barbed arrows of that insatiate archer.

The father now remembers and calls to recollection the stories he had heard of the cures worked by Jesus of Nazareth. There is a little faith in his soul—though but a little—still enough to make him use every endeavor to test the truth of what he has heard. Jesus Christ has come to Cana again. It is some fifteen or twenty miles. The father travels with all speed. He arrives at the place where Jesus is—his faith has got to such a stage that as soon as he sees the Master, he begins to cry, "Lord, come down before my child die." The Master, instead of giving him an answer which might console him, rebukes him for the littleness of his faith and tells him, "Except you see signs and wonders, you will not believe."

The man, however, pays little regard to the rebuke, for there is a desire which has absorbed all the powers of his soul. His mind is so overwhelmed with one anxiety that he is oblivious of all besides. "Sir," said he, "come down before my child dies." His faith has now arrived at such a stage that he pleads in prayer and earnestly importunes the Lord to come and heal his son. The Master looks upon him with an eye of ineffable benevolence and says to him, "Go your way, your son lives."

The father goes his way cheerfully, quickly, contentedly—trusting in the word which as yet no evidence has confirmed. He has now come to the second stage of his faith. He has come out of the seeking stage into the relying stage. He no more cries and pleads for a thing he has not. He trusts and believes that the thing is given to him, though as yet he has not perceived the gift. On his road home, the servants meet him with joyful haste. They say, "Master, your son lives." He enquires quickly at what hour the fever left him. The answer is given him—about the seventh hour the fever abated.

Then he comes to the third stage. He goes home. He sees his child perfectly restored. The child springs into his arms, covers him with kisses. And when he has held him up again and again to see if he was really the little one that lay so wan and pale and sick, he triumphs in a higher sense still. His faith has gone from reliance up to full assurance. And then his whole house believed as well as himself.

I have given you just these outlines of the narrative that you may see the three stages of faith. Let us now examine each more minutely. When faith begins in the soul, it is but as a grain of mustard seed. God's people

are not born giants. They are babes at first. And as they are babes in grace, so their graces are as it were in their infancy. Faith is but as a little child, when first God gives it. Or to use another figure, it is not a fire, but a spark—a spark which seems as if it must go out—but which is nevertheless fanned and kept alive until it comes to a flame, like unto the vehement heat of Nebuchadnezzar's furnace. The poor man in the narrative, when he had faith given him, had it but in a very small degree. It was *seeking* faith. That is the first stage of faith.

Now just notice that this seeking faith excited his activity. As soon as ever God gives a man the seeking faith, he is no more idle about religion, he does not fold his arms with the wicked Antinomian and cry, "If I am to be saved, I shall be saved and I will sit still, for if I am to be damned, I shall be damned." He is not careless and indifferent, as to whether he should go up to the House of God or no. He has got seeking faith and that faith makes him attend the means of grace, leads him to search the Word, leads him to be diligent in the use of every ordained means of blessing for the soul. There is a sermon to be heard—no matter that there are five miles to walk—seeking faith puts wings upon his feet.

There is a congregation where God is blessing souls. The man, if he enters, will probably have to stand in the crowd. But it does not matter—seeking faith gives him strength to bear the uneasiness of his position, for, "Oh," he says, "if I may but *hear* the Word." See how he leans forward that he may not lose a syllable for, "Perhaps," says he, "the sentence that I lose may be the very one that I want." How earnest he is that he may not only be sometimes in the House of God, but very often there. He becomes among the most enthusiastic of hearers, the most earnest of men that attend that place of worship. Seeking faith makes a man active.

More than this, seeking faith, though it is very weak in some things, gives a man great power in prayer. How earnest was this nobleman—"Lord, come down before my child dies." Yes, and when seeking faith enters into the soul, it makes a man pray. He is not content now with muttering over a few words when he rises in the morning and then, half asleep, ringing the same chimes at night when he goes to bed. But he gets away—he steals a quarter of an hour from his business if he can—that he may cry to God in secret. He has not the faith yet which enables him to say, "My sins are forgiven." But he has faith enough to know that Christ can forgive his sins and what he wants is that he may know that his sins are really cast behind Jehovah's back.

Sometimes this man has no convenience for prayer, but seeking faith will make him pray in a garret, in a hayloft, in a saw pit, from behind a hedge, or even walking the street. Satan may throw a thousand difficulties in the way, but seeking faith will compel a man to knock at mercy's door. Now the faith that you have received does not yet give you peace, it does not put you where there is no condemnation—but yet it is such a faith that if it grows—it will come to that. It has but to be nourished, to be cherished, to be exercised and the little one shall become mighty. Seeking faith shall come to a higher degree of development and you that knocked at mercy's gate shall enter in and find a welcome at Jesus' table.

And I would have you further notice that the seeking faith in this man's case did not simply make him earnest in prayer, but importunate in it. He asked once and the only answer he received was an apparent rebuff. He did not turn away in a sulk and say, "He rebukes me." No. "Sir," says he, "Come down before my child dies." I cannot tell you how he said it, but I have no doubt it was expressed in soul-moving terms, with tears starting from his eyes, with hands that were placed together in the attitude of entreaty. He seemed to say, "I cannot let You go except You come and save my child. Oh, please come! Is there anything I can say that can induce You? Let a father's affection be my best argument. And if my lips be not eloquent, let the tears of my eyes supply the place of the words of my tongue. Come down before my child dies."

And oh, what mighty prayers those are which seeking faith will make a man pray! I have heard the seeker sometimes plead with God with all the power that Jacob ever could have had at Jabbok's brook. I have seen the sinner under distress of soul seem to take hold of the pillars of the gate of mercy and rock them to and fro as though he would sooner pull them up from their deep foundations than go away without effecting an entrance. I have seen him pull and tug and strive and fight and wrestle, rather than not enter the kingdom of Heaven, for he knew that the kingdom of Heaven suffered violence and the violent would take it by force.

No wonder that you have not any peace, if you have been bringing before God your cold prayers. Heat them red-hot in the furnace of desire, or think not they will ever burn their way upwards to Heaven. You that merely say in the chill form of orthodoxy, "God be merciful to me a sinner," will never find mercy. It is the man that cries in the burning anguish of heart-felt emotion—"God be merciful to me a sinner—save me or I perish"—that gains his suit. It is he who concentrates his soul in every word and flings the violence of his being into every sentence, that wins his way through the gates of Heaven. Seeking faith, when once it is given, can make a man do this. Doubtless there are some here who have got as far as that, already. I thought I saw the tears starting from many an eye just now brushed away very hastily, but I could see it as an index that some said in their souls, "Yes, I know the meaning of that, and I trust God has brought me thus far."

One word I must say here with regard to the weakness of this seeking faith. It can do much, but it makes many mistakes. The fault of seeking faith is that it knows too little, for you will observe that this poor man said, "Sir, come down, come down." Well, but he need not come down. The Lord can work the miracle without coming down. But our poor friend thought the Master could not save his son unless He came and looked at him and put His hand upon him and knelt down perhaps, upon him, as Elijah did. "Oh, come down" says he. So is it with you. You have been dictating to God how He shall save you. You want him to send you some terrible convictions, and then, you think, you could believe. Or else you want to have a dream or a vision, or to hear a voice speaking to you, saying, "Son, your sins are forgiven you."

That is your fault, you see. Your seeking faith is strong enough to make you pray, but it is not strong enough to cast out of the mind your own

silly fancies. You are wanting to see signs and wonders, or else you will not believe. O Nobleman, if Jesus chooses to speak the word and your son is healed, will not that suit you as well as His coming down? "Oh," says he, "I never thought of that!" And so, poor Sinner, if Jesus chooses to give you peace this morning in this hall, will not that suit you as well as being a month under the whip of the Law? If, as you pass out of these doors, you are enabled simply to trust in Christ and so find peace, will not that be as good a salvation as though you should have to go through fire and through water and all your sins should be made to ride over your head?

Here, then, is the weakness of your faith. Though there is much excellence in it because it makes you pray, there is some fault in it because it makes you imprudently prescribe to the Almighty how He shall bless you—makes you in effect to impugn His sovereignty and leads you ignorantly to dictate to Him in what form the promised blessing shall come.

We will now pass on to the second stage of faith. The Master stretched out His hand and said, "Go your way, your son lives." Do you see the face of that nobleman? Those furrows that were there seem smoothed in a moment, all gone. Those eyes are full of tears, but they are of another sort now—they are tears of joy. He claps his hands, retires silently, his heart ready to burst with gratitude, his whole soul full of confidence. "Why are you so happy, Sir?" "Why my child is cured," says he. "No, but you have not seen him cured." "But my Lord said he was and I believe Him."

"But it may be that when you get home you will find your faith to be a delusion and your child a corpse." "No," says he, "I believe in that Man. Once I believed Him and sought Him—now I believe Him and have found Him." "But you have no evidence whatever that your child is healed." "No," says he, "I do not want any. The naked word of that Divine Prophet is enough for me. He spoke it and I know it is true. He told me to go my way. My son lives. I go my way and I am quite at peace and at ease."

Now mark, when your faith gets to a second stage in which you shall be able to take Christ at His word, then it is you shall begin to know the happiness of believing and then it is your faith saves your soul. Take Christ at His word, poor Sinner. "He that believes on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved." "But," says one, "I *feel* no evidence." Believe it none the less for that. "But," says another, "I do not *feel* enjoyment in my heart." Believe it, be your heart ever so gloomy—that enjoyment shall come afterwards. That is an heroic faith which believes Christ in the teeth of a thousand contradictions.

When the Lord gives you that faith, you can say, "I consult not with flesh and blood. He who said to me, 'Believe and be saved,' gave me grace to believe and I therefore am confident that I am saved. When I once cast my soul, sink or swim, upon the love and blood and power of Christ, though conscience gives no witness to my soul, though doubts distress me and fears plague me, yet it is mine to honor my Master by believing His Word, though it be contradictory to sense, though reason rebel against it and present feelings dare to give it the lie."

Oh, it is an honorable thing when a man has a follower and that follower believes that man implicitly. The man propounds an opinion which is in contradiction to the received opinion of the universe. He stands up

and addresses it to the people and they hiss and hoot and scorn him. But that man has one disciple, who says, "I believe my Master. What he has said I believe is true." There is something noble to the man who receives such homage as that. He seems to say, "Now I am master of one heart at least," and when you, in the teeth of everything that is conflicting, stand to Christ and believe His words, you do Him greater homage than Cherubim and Seraphim before the Throne. Dare to believe. Trust Christ, I say and you are saved.

In this stage of faith it is that a man begins to enjoy quietness and peace of mind. I am not quite certain as to the number of miles between Cana and Capernaum, but several excellent expositors say it is fifteen, some twenty. I suppose the miles may have altered in their length lately. It need not, however, have taken this good man long to get home to his son. It was at the seventh hour that the Master said, "Your son lives." It is evident from this text, that he did not meet his servants till the next day, because they say, "Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him."

What do you conclude from that? Why I draw this inference—the nobleman was so sure that his child was alive and well, that he was in no violent hurry to return. He did not go home immediately, as though he must be in time to get another doctor, if Christ had not succeeded. But he went his way leisurely and calmly, confident in the truth of what Jesus had said to him. Well says an old father of the Church, "He that believes shall not make haste." In this case it was true. The man took his time. He was, it may be, twelve hours or more before he reached his home—though probably it was but fifteen miles for him to travel.

He who takes the naked word of Christ to be the basis of his hope, stands on a Rock while all other ground is sinking sand. My Brothers and Sisters, some of you have got as far as this. You are now taking Christ at His word. It shall not be long before you will get to the third and best stage of faith. But if it should be ever so long, still stand here—still believe your Lord and Master—still trust Him. If He does not take you into His banqueting house, still trust Him. No, if He locks you up in the castle, or in the dungeon, still trust Him. Say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him." Should He let the arrows of affliction stick fast in your flesh, still trust Him. Should He break you to pieces with His right hand still trust Him. And by-and-by your righteousness shall come forth as the light, your glory as a lamp that burns.

We must now hurry on to the third and best stage of faith. The servants meet the nobleman—his son is healed. He arrives at home, clasps his child and sees him perfectly restored. And now, says the narrative—"Himself believed and his whole house." And yet you will have noticed that in the fiftieth verse, it says that *he* believed. "The man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him." Now some expositors have been greatly puzzled. For they did not know when this man did believe. Good Calvin says and his remarks are always weighty and always excellent—(I do not hesitate to say that Calvin is the grandest expositor that ever yet thought to make plain the Word of God. In his commentary I have often found him cutting his own institutes to pieces, not attempting to give a passage a Calvinistic meaning, but always trying to interpret God's Word as he finds

it)—Calvin says this man had in the first place, only a faith which relied for one thing upon Christ. He believed the word Christ had spoken.

Afterwards he had a faith which took Christ into his soul, to become His disciple and trust Him as the Messiah. I think I am not wrong in using this as an illustration of faith in its highest state. He found his son healed at the very hour when Jesus said he should be. “And now,” he says, “I believe.” That is to say, he believed with full assurance of faith. His mind was so rid of all its doubts, he believed in Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ of God—He was a Prophet sent from God—and doubts and misgivings no longer occupied his soul. Ah, I know many poor creatures who want to get up to this state, but they want to get there all at first. They are like a man who wants to get up a ladder without going up the lowest rounds. “Oh,” they say, “if I had the full assurance of faith, then I should believe I am a child of God.” No, no, believe. Trust in Christ’s naked word. And then you shall come afterwards to feel in your soul the witness of the Spirit that you are born of God.

Assurance is a flower—you must plant the bulb first, the naked, perhaps unseemly bulb of faith—plant it in the grain and you shall have the flower by-and-by. The shriveled seed of a little faith springs upwards and then you have the ripe corn in the ear of full assurance of faith. But here I want you to notice that when this man came to full assurance of faith, it is said his house believed, too. There is a text often quoted and I do not think I have heard it quoted rightly yet. By the way, there are some people who know no more of authors than what they hear quoted and some who know no more of the Bible than what they have heard quoted, too.

Now, there is that passage, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved”—what have the last three words done that they should be cut off?—“And your house.” Those three words seem to me to be as precious as the first. “Believe and you shall be saved, and your house.” Does the father’s faith save the family? Yes! No!—Yes it does. In some ways. Namely, that the father’s faith makes him pray for his family and God hears his prayer and the family is saved. No, the father’s faith cannot be a substitute for the faith of the children, they must believe, too. In both senses of the word, I say “Yes, or No.” When a man has believed, there is hope that his children will be saved. No, there is a promise. And the father ought not to rest satisfied until he sees all his children saved. If he does, he has not believed right yet.

There are many men who only believe for themselves. I like, if I get a promise, to believe it as broad as it is. Why should not my faith be as broad as the promise? Now, thus it stands, “Believe and you shall be saved and your house”! I have a claim on God for my little ones. When I go before God in prayer, I can plead, “Lord, I believe, and You have said I shall be saved and my house. You have saved me, but You have not fulfilled Your promise till You have saved my house, too.” I know it is sometimes thought that we who believe that the Baptism of infants is heresy—(and not a single text of Scripture gives it so much as an inferential support)—neglect our children. But could there have been a greater slander?

Why, instead thereof, we think we are doing our children the greatest service that we can possibly do them—teaching them that they are not

members of Christ's Church, that they are not made Christians in the day that they are christened, that they must be born again—and that that new birth must be in them a thing which they can consciously realize. Not a thing *we* can do for them in their babyhood, while they are yet in their long clothes, by sprinkling a handful of water in their faces. We think they are far more likely to be converted than those who are brought up in the delusive notion taught them in that expression of the catechism—a most wicked, blasphemous and false expression—"In my Baptism wherein I was made a member of Christ, a child of God, an inheritor of the kingdom of Heaven."

The Pope of Rome never uttered a sentence more unholy than that—never said a syllable more contradictory to the whole tenor of God's Word. Children are not saved by Baptism, nor grown-up people either. "He that *believes* shall be saved. And he that *believes* and is baptized shall be saved"—but the Baptism *precedes not the belief*. Nor does it co-act or co-work in our salvation—for salvation is a work of grace—laid hold of by faith and faith, alone. Baptized or unbaptized, if you believe not, you are lost. But unbaptized, if you *believe* you are saved.

II. And now we come to the second department of our subject, the THREE DISEASES TO WHICH FAITH IS VERY SUBJECT and these three diseases break out in different stages.

First with regard to seeking faith. The power of seeking faith lies in its driving a man to prayer. And here is the disease. For we are very likely, when we are seeking to begin, to suspend prayerfulness. How often does the devil whisper in a man's ear, "Do not pray, it is of no use. You know you will be shut out of Heaven!" Or, when the man thinks he has got an answer to prayer, then Satan says, "You need not pray any more, you have got what you asked for." Or, if after a month of crying he has received no blessing, then Satan whispers, "Fool that you are to tarry at Mercy's gate! Get gone! Get gone! That gate is up and barred fast and you will never be heard."

O my Friends! If you are subject to this disease while seeking Christ, I bid you cry against it and labor against it. Never cease to pray. A man can never sink in the river of wrath so long as he can cry. So long as you can cry to God for mercy, mercy shall never withdraw itself from you. Oh, let not Satan push you back from the closet door, but push in, whether he will or not. Give up prayer and you seal your own damnation. Renounce secret supplication and you renounce Christ and Heaven. Continue in prayer and though the blessing tarry, it must come. In God's own time it must appear to you.

The disease which is most likely to fall upon those in the second stage—namely, those who are trusting implicitly on Christ—is the disease of wanting to see signs and wonders, or else they will not believe. In the early stage of my ministry, in the midst of a rural population, I used to meet continually with persons who thought they were Christians, because, as they imagined, they had seen signs and wonders. Most ridiculous stories have been told me by earnest and sincere people as reasons why they thought they were saved.

I have heard a narrative something like this—"I believe my sins are put away." Why? "Well, Sir, I was down in the back garden and I saw a great cloud and I thought, now God can make that cloud go away if He pleases and it did go away. And I thought the cloud and my sins were gone, too, and I have not had a doubt since then." I have thought, well, you have good reason to doubt, for that is totally absurd. Were I to tell you the whims and fancies that some people get into their heads, you might smile and that might not be to your profit.

Certain it is that men patch up any idle story, any strange fancy, in order to make them think that they may then trust Christ. Oh, my dear Friends, if you have no better reason to believe you are in Christ than a dream or a vision, it is time you began again. I grant you there have been some who have been alarmed, convicted and perhaps converted by strange freaks of their imagination. But if you rely on these as being pledges from God—if you look on these as being evidences that you are saved—I tell you that you will be resting on a dream, a delusion. You may as well seek to build a castle in the air, or a house upon the sands.

No, he who believes Christ, believes Christ because He says it and because here it is written in the Word—he does not believe it because he dreamed it. Or because he heard a voice that might probably be a black-bird singing, or because he thought he saw an angel in the sky, which was just as likely to be mist of a peculiar shape, as anything else. No, we must have done with this desire to see signs and wonders. If they come, be thankful—if they come not, trust simply in the Word which says, "All manner of sin shall be forgiven unto men."

I do not wish to say this to hurt any tender conscience, which conscience may perhaps have found some little comfort in such singular wonders. I only say this honestly, lest any of you should be deceived—I do solemnly warn you to place no reliance whatever on anything you think you have seen, or dreamed, or heard. This volume is the sure word of testimony, unto which you do well if you take heed, as unto a light which shines in a dark place. Trust in the Lord—wait patiently for Him. Cast all your confidence where He put all your sins, namely, upon Christ Jesus alone—and you shall be saved, with or without any of these signs and wonders.

I am afraid some Christians in London have fallen into the same error of wanting to see signs and wonders. They have been meeting together in special Prayer Meetings to seek for a revival. And because people have not dropped down in a fainting fit and have not screamed and made a noise, perhaps they have thought the revival has not come. Oh that we had but eyes to see God's gifts in the way God chooses to give them! We do not want the revival of the North of Ireland—we want the revival in its *goodness*—but not in that particular shape.

If the Lord sends it in another, we shall be all the more glad to be without these exceptional works in the flesh. Where the Spirit works in the soul, we are always glad to see true conversion and if He chooses to work in the body, too, in London, we shall be glad to see it. If men's hearts are renewed, what matter is it they do not scream out? If their consciences are quickened, what matters it though they do not fall into a fit? If they do

but find Christ, who is to regret that they are not, for five or six weeks, motionless and senseless? Take it without the signs and wonders. For my part I have no craving for them. Let me see God's work done in God's own way—a true and thorough revival, but the signs and wonders we can readily dispense with—for they are certainly not demanded by the faithful and they will only be the laughing-stock of the faithless.

Having thus spoken of these two diseases, I will only just mention the other. There is a third, then, which lies in the way of our attaining the highest degree of faith, namely, full assurance and that is, want of observation. The nobleman in our text made careful enquiries about the day and the hour when his son was healed. It was by that he obtained his assurance. But we do not observe God's hand as much as we should. Our good Puritan forefathers, when it rained, used to say that God had unstopped the bottles of Heaven. When it rains nowadays, we think the clouds have become condensed. If they had a field of hay out, they used to plead of the Lord that he would bid the sun shine. We, perhaps, are wiser than we think. We consider it hardly worth while to pray about such things, thinking they will come in the course of nature.

They believed that God was in every storm, no, in every cloud of dust. They used to speak of a present God in everything. But we speak of such things as laws of nature, as if laws were nothing, except there was someone to carry them out and some secret power to set the whole machine in motion. We do not get our assurance because we do not observe enough. If you were to watch providential goodness each day—if you noticed the answers to your prayers—if you would just put down somewhere in the book of your remembrance God's continued mercies towards you, I do think you would become like this father who was led to full assurance of faith, because he noticed that the very hour when Jesus spoke, was the very hour when the healing came. Be watchful, Christian. He that looks for providences will never lack a providence to look at.

Take heed, then, of these three diseases—ceasing from prayer—waiting to see signs and wonders—and neglect of observing the manifest hand of God.

III. And now I come to my third and last head, upon which solemnly, though briefly, there are **THREE QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED TO YOU ABOUT YOUR FAITH.**

First, then, you say, "I have faith." Be it so. There is many a man who says he has gold that has it not. There are many that think themselves rich and increased in goods that are naked and poor and miserable. I say unto you, therefore, in the first place, does your faith make you pray? Not the praying of the man who prates like a parrot the prayers he has learned. But do you cry the cry of a living child? Do you tell God your wants and your desires? And do you seek His face and ask His mercy?

Man, if you invest without prayer, you are a Christless soul—your faith is a delusion and your confidence which results from it, is a dream that will destroy you. Wake up out of your death-like slumber. For as long as you are dumb in prayer, God cannot answer you. You shall not live to God if you do not live in the closet. He that is never on his knees on earth shall

never stand upon his feet in Heaven. He that never wrestles with the angel here below, shall never be admitted into Heaven by that angel above.

I know I speak to some today that are prayerless ones. You have plenty of time for your counting-house, but you have none for your closet. Family prayer you have never had. But I will not talk to you about that. Private prayer you have neglected. Do you not sometimes rise in the morning so near the time when you must keep your appointments, that—you do kneel it is true, but where is the prayer? And as to any extra occasions of supplication, why, you never indulge yourselves in them. Prayer with you is a sort of luxury too dear to indulge in often.

Ah, but he who has true faith in his heart is praying all day long. I do not mean that he is on his knees. But often when he is bargaining, when he is in his shop, or in his counting-house, his heart finds a little space, a vacuum for a moment—and up it leaps into the bosom of its God and it is down again, refreshed to go about its business and meet the face of man. Oh, those ejaculatory prayers—not merely filling the censer in the morning with incense, but that casting in of little bits of cinnamon and frankincense all day long, so as always to keep it fresh—that is the way to live and that is the life of a true genuine Believer! If your faith does not make you pray, have nothing to do with it—get rid of it—and God help you to begin again.

But you say, “I have faith.” I will ask you a second question. Does that faith make you obedient? Jesus said to the nobleman, “Go your way,” and he went without a word, however much he might have wished to stay and listen to the Master, he obeyed. Does your faith make you obedient? In these days we have specimens of Christians of the most sorry, sorry kind—men that have not common honesty. I have heard it observed by tradesmen that they know many men that have not the fear of God before their eyes, that are most just and upright men in their dealings. And on the other hand, they know some professing Christians who are not positively dishonest, but they can back and hedge a little.

They are not horses that will not go, but every now and then they jib. They do not seem to keep up to the time if they have a bill to pay. They are not regular, they are not exact. In fact sometimes—and who shall hide what is true?—you catch Christians doing dirty actions and professors of religion defiling themselves with acts which merely worldly men would scorn. Now, Sirs, I bear my testimony this morning as God’s minister, too honest to alter a word to please any man that lives—you are no Christian if you can act in business beneath the dignity of an honest man. If God has not made you honest, He has not saved your soul. Rest assured that if you can go on disobedient to the moral laws of God—if your life is inconsistent and lascivious—if your conversation is mixed up with things which even a worldling might reject, the love of God is not in you.

I do not plead for perfection, but I do plead for honesty. And if your religion has not made you careful and prayerful in common life—if you are not in fact made a new creature in Christ Jesus—your faith is but an empty name, as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. I will ask you one more question about your faith and I have done. You say, “I have faith.” Has your faith led you to bless your household? Good Rowland Hill once

said, in his own quaint way, that when a man became a Christian, his dog and his cat ought to be the better for it. I think it was Mr. Jay who always would say that a man, when he became a Christian, was better in every relation. He was a better husband, a better master, a better father than he was before. Or else his religion was not genuine.

Now, have you ever thought, my dear Christian Brothers and Sisters, about blessing your household? Do I hear one saying, "I keep my religion to myself"? Do not be very anxious about its ever being stolen, then. You need not put it under lock and key. There is not enough to tempt the devil, himself, to come and take it from you. A man who can keep his godliness to himself has a small proportion of it. I am afraid it will be no credit to himself and no blessing to other people. But you do sometimes, strange to say, meet with fathers that do not seem as if they interested themselves in their children's salvation any more than they do about poor children in the back slums of St. Giles's.

They would like to see the boy put out well and they would like to see the girl married comfortably. But as to their being converted, it does not seem to trouble their head. It is true the father occupies his seat in a house of worship and sits down with a community of Christians. And he hopes his children may turn out well. They have the benefit of his hope—certainly a very large legacy—he will, no doubt, when he dies, leave them his best wishes and may they grow rich upon them! But he never seems to have made it a matter of anxiety of soul as to whether they shall be saved or not.

Out upon such a religion as that! Cast it on the dunghill. Hurl it to the dogs. Let it be buried like Koniah, with the burial of an ass. Cast it without the camp, like an unclean thing. It is not the religion of God. He that cares not for his own household is worse than a heathen and a publican.

Never be content, my Brethren in Christ, till all your children are saved. Lay the promise before your God. The promise is unto you and unto your children. The Greek word does not refer to infants, but to children, grandchildren and any descendants you may have, whether grown up or not. Do not cease to plead, till not only your children but your great grandchildren, if you have such, are saved. I stand here today a proof that God is not untrue to His promise. I can cast my eye back through four or five generations and see that God has been pleased to hear the prayers of our grandfather's grandfather, who used to supplicate with God that his children might live before him to the last generation and God has never deserted the house, but has been pleased to bring first one and then another to fear and love His name.

So be it with you—and in asking this you are not asking more than God is bound to give you. He cannot refuse unless He runs back from His promise. He cannot refuse to give you both your own and your children's souls as an answer to the prayer of your faith. "Ah," says one, "but you do not know what children mine are." No, my dear Friend, but I know that if you are a Christian, they are children that God has promised to bless. "O but they are such unruly ones, they break my heart." Then pray God to break their hearts and they will not break your hearts any more. "But they will bring my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave." Pray God, then,

that He may bring their eyes with sorrow to prayer and to supplication and to the Cross and then they will not bring you to the grave.

“But,” you say, “my children have such hard hearts.” Look at your own. You think they cannot be saved—look at yourselves—He that saved you can save them. Go to Him in prayer and say, “Lord, I will not let you go except you bless me.” And if your child be at the point of death and, as you think, at the point of damnation on account of sin, still plead like the nobleman, “Lord, come down before my child perishes, and save him for Your mercy’s sake.” And oh, You that dwells in the highest heavens, You will never refuse Your people. Be it far from us to dream that You will forget Your promise. In the name of all Your people we put our hand upon Your Word most solemnly and hold You to Your Covenant. You have said Your mercy is unto the children’s children of them that fear You and that keep Your Commandments. You have said the promise is unto us and unto our children. Lord, You will not run back from Your own Covenant! We challenge Your Word by holy faith this morning—“Do as You have said.”

TO THE READERS OF THE NEW PARK STREET PULPIT, MY DEAR BRETHREN,

Incessant labor has so completely wearied me that I am compelled to retire for a few weeks from active service. The great Master bade His disciples to “go into the desert and rest awhile,” and I feel that I should be acting in opposition to the warnings of Providence in my mental and physical frame if I did not seek repose. During my absence I shall continue to address you through the evening sermons, which are richer and more full of doctrinal truth than those of the morning. If the sermons addressed to the mixed assemblies of Exeter Hall have been in any measure profitable to you, I am full well assured that the evening sermons to the Church of God will not fail, under the Divine blessing, to edify you far more.

I shall hope to write a few lines to you, which will be appended to the weekly sermon, that the links of our communion may not be broken and that I may have the opportunity of begging your daily prayers. The Lord bless you and preserve you until the day of His appearing.

I am, yours in Jesus,

C. H. SPURGEON

Clapharn, Monday, June 4th, 1860.

Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

JESUS AT BETHESDA—OR, WAITING CHANGED FOR BELIEVING NO. 744

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 7, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE AGRICULTURAL HALL, ISLINGTON.

“After this there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market, a pool which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool and troubled the water: whoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatever disease he had. And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty-and-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, He said unto him, Will you be made whole? The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steps down before me. Jesus said unto him, Rise, take up your bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the Sabbath.”
John 5:1-9.

THE scene of this miracle was Bethesda, a pool, according to the Evangelist, adjoining the sheep market, or near the sheep gate—the place through which, I suppose, the cattle consumed by the inhabitants of Jerusalem would be driven—and the pool where, perhaps, the sheep intended for sale to the offerers in the temple were washed. So common was sickness in the days of the Savior that the infirmities of men intruded upon the place which had been allotted to cattle! And the place where sheep had been washed became the spot where sick folk congregated in great multitudes, longing for a cure. We do not hear that anyone remonstrated at the intrusion, or that public opinion was shocked. The needs of mankind must override all considerations of taste. A hospital must have preference over a sheep market.

This day you have another case in point. If the physical infirmities of Jerusalem intruded into the sheep market, I shall ask no excuse if, on these Sundays, the spiritual sickness of London should demand that this spacious place, which has up to now been given up to the lowing of cattle and to the bleating of sheep, should be consecrated to the preaching of the Gospel—to the manifestation of the healing virtue of Christ Jesus among the spiritually sick!

This day there is, by the sheep market, a pool, and impotent folk are here in exceeding great multitudes. We might never have heard of Bethesda if an august visitor had not condescended to honor it with His

Presence—Jesus, the Son of God, walked in the five porches by the pool. It was the place where we might expect to meet Him, for where should the Great Physician be found if not in the place where the sick are gathered? Here was work for Jesus' healing hand and restoring word. It was but natural that the Son of Man, who "came to seek and to save that which was lost," should make His way to the laver-house by the side of the pool. That gracious visit is Bethesda's glory.

This has lifted up the name of this pool out of the common rank of the springs and waters of the earth! O that King Jesus might come into *this* place this morning! This would be the glory of this Hall for which it should be famous in eternity! If Jesus would be here to heal, the remarkable size of the congregation would cease to be a wonder! The renown of Jesus and His saving love would eclipse all else, as the sun puts out the stars. My Brethren, Jesus *will* be here, for there are those who know Him and have power with Him, who have been asking for His Presence. The Lord's favored people, by prevailing cries and tears, have won from Him His consent to be in our midst this day, and He is walking amid this throng as ready to heal and as mighty to save as in the days of His flesh!

"Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," is an assurance which comforts the preacher's heart this morning! A *present* Savior—present in the power of the Holy Spirit—shall make this day to be remembered by many who shall be made whole. I ask the earnest attention of all, and I entreat of Believers their fervent assisting prayers while I first bid you observe the sick man. Secondly, direct your attentive eye to the Great Physician. And, thirdly, make an application of the whole narrative to the present case.

I. In order to observe THE PATIENT, I shall ask you to go with me to the pool with the five porches, around which the sick are lying. Walk tenderly among the groups of lame and blind! No, do not close your eyes. It will do you good to see the sorrowful sight—to mark what *sin* has done and to what sorrows our father Adam has made us heirs. Why are they all here? They are here because sometimes the waters bubble up with a healing virtue. Whether visibly stirred by an angel or not it is not necessary for us to discuss. But it was generally believed that an angel descended and touched the water—this rumor attracted the sick from all quarters.

As soon as the stir was seen in the waters the whole mass probably leaped into the pool—those who could not leap themselves were pushed in by their attendants. Alas, how small the result! Many were disappointed. Only *one* was rewarded for the leap! Whoever first stepped in was healed, but *only* the first. For the poor and meager chance of winning this cure, the sick folk lingered in Bethesda's arches year after year. The impotent man in the narrative had most likely spent the better part of his 38 years in waiting at this famous pool, buoyed up by the slender hope that he might one day be first of the throng.

On the Sunday mentioned in the text, the angel had not come to him, but something better had come, for Jesus Christ, the angel's Master was there! Note concerning this man that he was fully aware of his sickness. He did not dispute the failure of his health—he was an impotent man—he felt it and he admitted it. He was not like some present this morning who

are lost by nature, but who do not know it, or will not confess it. He was conscious that he needed heavenly help, and his waiting at the pool showed it.

Are there not many in this assembly who are equally convinced on this point? You have for a long time felt that you are a sinner and have known that unless Divine Grace shall save you, you can never be saved. You are no atheist, no denier of the Gospel—on the contrary, you firmly believe the Bible and heartily wish that you had a saving part in Christ Jesus—but for the present you have advanced no further than to feel that you are sick, to desire to be healed, and to admit that the cure must come from above. So far, so good, but it is not good to stop here. The impotent man, thus desiring to be healed, waited by the pool expecting some sign and wonder. He hoped that an angel would suddenly burst open the golden gates and touch the waters which were now calm and stagnant, and that he then might be healed.

This, too, my dear Hearers, is the thought of many of those who feel their sins and who desire salvation. They accept that unscriptural and dangerous advice given to them by a certain class of ministers—they wait at the pool of Bethesda—they persevere in the formal use of *means* and *ordinances*, and continue in unbelief, expecting some great thing. They abide in a continued refusal to obey the Gospel and yet expect that all of a sudden they will experience some strange emotions, feelings, or remarkable impressions! They hope to see a vision, or hear a supernatural voice, or be alarmed with deliriums of horror.

Now, dear Friends, we shall not deny that a few persons have been saved by very singular interpositions of God's hand in a manner altogether out of the ordinary modes of Divine procedure. We should be very foolish if we were, for instance, to dispute the truth of such a conversion as that of Colonel Gardiner, who, the very night when he made an appointment to commit sin, was arrested and converted by a vision of Christ upon the Cross, which, at any rate, he thought he saw, and by hearing or imagining that he heard the voice of the Savior tenderly pleading with him. It were idle to dispute that such cases have occurred, do occur, and may occur again.

I must, however, beg unconverted people not to look for such interpositions in their own cases. When the Lord bids you believe in Jesus, what right have you to demand *signs* and *wonders* instead? Jesus Himself is the greatest of all wonders! My dear Hearer, for you to wait for remarkable experiences is as futile as was the waiting of the multitude who lingered at Bethesda waiting for the long-expected angel, when He who could heal them stood already in their midst, neglected and despised by them!

What a piteous spectacle, to see them gazing into the clouds when the Physician who could heal them was present! But they offered Him no petitions and sought no mercy at His hands. In dealing with the method of waiting to see or to feel some great thing, we remark that it is *not* the way which God has bid His servants preach. I challenge the whole world to find any Gospel of God in which an unconverted man is told to abide in *unbelief*! Where is the sinner told to wait upon God in the use of *ordi-*

nances so that he may be saved? The Gospel of our salvation is this—“Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.”

When our Lord gave His commission to His disciples, He said, “Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.” And what was that Gospel? Tell them to wait in their unbelief in the use of means and ordinances till they see some great thing? Tell them to be diligent in prayer and read the Word of God, until they *feel* better? Not an atom of it! Thus says the Lord, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned.” This was the Gospel and the only Gospel which Jesus Christ ever bade His ministers preach! They who say, “Wait for feelings! Wait for impressions! Wait for wonders!” preach another Gospel which is not another!

The lifting up of Christ on the Cross is the saving work of the Gospel ministry, and in the Cross of Jesus lies the hope of men! “Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth,” is God’s Gospel. “Wait at the pool,” is man’s Gospel, and has destroyed its thousands. This un-gospel-like gospel of waiting is immensely popular. I should not wonder if well near half of you are satisfied with it. O my Hearers, you do not refuse to fill the seats in our places of worship! You are seldom absent when the doors are open! And there you sit in confirmed unbelief—waiting for windows to be made in Heaven—and neglecting the Gospel of your salvation! The great command of God, “Believe and live,” has no response from you but a deaf ear and a stony heart while you quiet your consciences with outward religious observances!

If God had said, “Sit in those seats and wait,” I would be bold to urge it upon you with tears. But God has *not* said so! He has said, “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him.” He has not said, “Wait,” but He Has said, “Seek you the Lord while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near.” “Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.” I find Jesus saying nothing to sinners about waiting, but very much about coming. “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.” “If any man thirsts, let him come unto Me and drink.” “The Spirit and the bride say, come. And let him that hears say, Come. And let him that is thirsty come. And whoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

Why is this “signs and wonders” way so popular? It is because it administers to the conscience. When the minister preaches with power and the hearer’s heart is touched, the devil says, “Wait for a more convenient season.” Thus the arch enemy pours his deadly drug into the soul and the sinner, instead of trusting in Jesus on the spot, or falling on bended knees, with tearful eyes crying for mercy, flatters himself because he is in the use of the means. Which use of means is well enough as far as it goes, but which is bad as bad can be when it comes into the *place* of Christ Crucified! A child ought to hear its parent’s command, but what if the child puts hearing into the place of obeying? God forbid that I should glory in your listening to the Gospel if you are *hearers* only—my glory is in the Cross—and unless you look to the Cross, it were better for you that you had never been born!

I ask the candid attention of everyone who has thus been waiting while I mention one or two points. My dear Friend, is not this waiting a very hopeless business, after all? Out of those who waited at Bethesda, how very few were ever healed? He who stepped down first into the pool was cured, but all the rest came up from the pool just as they went in. Ah, my Hearers, I tremble for some of you—you Chapel-goers and Church-goers, who have for years been waiting—how few of you get saved! Thousands of you die in your sins, waiting in wicked unbelief. A few are snatched like brands from the burning, but the most of those who are hardened waiters, wait, and wait till they die in their sins. I solemnly warn you that, pleasing to the flesh as waiting in unbelief may be, it is not one which any reasonable man would long persevere in!

For, my Friend, are not you in your own person an instance of its hopelessness? You have been waiting for years! You can scarcely remember when you first went to a place of worship. Your mother carried you there in her arms, and you have been nurtured under the shadow of the sanctuary like the swallows that build their nests under God's altars—and what has your unbelieving waiting done for you? Has it made you a Christian? No! You are still without God, without Christ, without hope! I shall put it to you in God's name—what right have you to expect that if you wait another thirty years you will be at all different from what you are now? Are not the probabilities most strong that at 60 you will be as graceless as you are at thirty?

Let me say it—and I dare say it without egotism—some of you have listened to the Gospel preached to you in no mincing manner. My dear Hearers, I have been as plain with you as I know how to be! I have never shunned to declare the whole counsel of God, nor even to pick out an individual case and deal with it closely. Short of actually mentioning people's names, I have hardly stopped. I have sought to commend the Gospel to the conscience of every man as in the sight of God. Remember the warnings you had in Exeter Hall—some of you remember how you broke down in the Surrey Gardens! [See first six volumes (*The New Park Street Pulpit*)]

Remember the invitations which have already come to you in this very Hall! And if all these have failed, what more is to be done in the way of hearing and waiting? Many of you have listened to other preachers, equally earnest, equally tender, perhaps more so. Now, if all these have had no effect upon you—if waiting at the pool has done nothing for you—is it not a forlorn and helpless mode of procedure? Is it not time that something *better* were tried than merely waiting for the troubling of the water? Is it not time that you remembered that Jesus Christ is ready to save you NOW, and that if you now trust in Him, you shall this day have everlasting life?

There lies our poor friend, still waiting at the water's edge. I do not blame him for waiting, for Jesus had not been there before and it was right for him to seize even the most slender chance of a cure. But it was sad that Jesus should have been so slighted. There He went, threading His way among the blind, and the halt, and the lame, and looking benignly upon them all, but none looking up to Him! Now, in other places,

soon as Jesus made His appearance they brought the sick in their beds and laid them at His feet and as He went along He healed them all, scattering mercies with both His hands!

A blindness had come over these people at the pool. There they were, and there was Christ who could heal them, but not a single one of them sought Him! Their eyes were fixed on the *water*—expecting it to be troubled! They were so taken up with their own chosen way that the *true way* was neglected. No mercies were distributed, for none were sought. Ah, my Friends, my sorrowful question is—shall it be so this morning? The living Christ is still among us in the energy of His eternal Spirit! Will you be looking to your good works? Will you be trusting to your Church attendance and your Chapel-goings? Will you rely upon expected emotions, impressions, and fits of terror—and let Christ, who is able to save to the uttermost—have no glimpse of faith from any eye, no prayer of desire from any heart? If it shall be so, it is heart-breaking to think of it!

Men, with an Almighty Physician in their house, dying while they are amused with a hopeless quackery of their own inventing! O poor Souls, shall Bethesda be repeated here this morning, and Jesus Christ, the present Savior, be again neglected? If a king should give to one of his subjects a ring, and say to him, “When you are in distress or disgrace, simply send me that ring and I will do all for you that is needful”—if that man should willfully refuse to send it, but purchase presents, or go about to do some singular feats of valor in order to win his monarch’s favor, you would say, “What a fool he is! Here is a simple way, but he will not avail himself of it! He wastes his wits in inventing new devices and toils away his life in following out plans that must end in disappointment.” Is not this the case with all those who refuse to trust Christ? The Lord has assured them that if they trust Jesus they shall be saved—but they go about after ten thousand imaginings, and let their God, their Savior, go!

Meanwhile the sick man, so often disappointed, was growing into deep despair. Moreover he was becoming old, for 38 years is a long time out of a man’s life. He felt that he should soon die. The brittle thread was nearly snapped, and so as the days and nights wearily wore on, though he waits, it became heavy work to wait. My Friend, is not this your case? Life is wearing away with you. Are there not gray hairs here and there? You have waited all this while in vain, and I warn you that you have *sinfully* waited. You have seen others saved. Your child is saved, your wife is converted, but you are not. You are waiting, and will wait, I fear, till the tune of, “Earth to earth, dust to dust, ashes to ashes,” and the mold shall rattle on your coffin lid, and your soul shall be in Hell!

Do not, I pray you, play with time any longer. Say not, “There is time enough,” for the wise man knows that time enough is little enough. Be not like the foolish drunkard who, staggering home one night, saw his candle lit for him. “Two candles!” he said, for his drunkenness made him see double, “I will blow out one,” and as he blew it out, in a moment he was in the dark. Many a man sees double through the drunkenness of sin—he thinks that he has one life to sow his wild oats in—and then the last part of life in which to turn to God. And, like a fool, he blows out the only candle that he has, and in the dark he will have to lie down forever. Hasten,

Traveler! You have but one sun, and when that sets, you will never reach your home. God help you to make haste now!

II. Let us look at THE PHYSICIAN Himself. As we have already seen, our Lord, on this occasion walked, forgotten and neglected, through that throng of impotent folk, no one crying, “Son of David, have mercy upon me!” No struggling woman seeking to touch the hem of His garment that she might be made whole! All were desirous of being healed, but, either no one knew or no one trusted Him. What a strange, soul-sickening sight it was, for Jesus was quite able and willing to heal and to do it all without fee or reward! And yet none sought Him.

Is this scene to be repeated this morning? Jesus Christ is able to save you, my Hearers. There is no heart so hard that He cannot soften it. There is no man among you so lost that Jesus cannot save him. Blessed be my dear Master, no case ever did defeat Him! His mighty power reaches beyond the uttermost of all the depths of human sin and folly. If there is a harlot here, Christ can cleanse her! If there is a drunkard or a thief here, the blood of Jesus can make him white as snow! If you have any desire towards Him, you have not gone beyond the reach of His pierced hands! If you are not saved, it is certainly not for want of power in the Savior!

Moreover, your poverty is no hindrance, for my Master asks nothing from you—the poorer the wretch, the more welcome to Christ! My Master is no covetous priest who demands pay for what He does—He forgives us freely—He wants none of your merits, nothing whatever from you! Come as you are to Him, for He is willing to receive you as you are. But here is my sorrow and complaint—this blessed Lord Jesus, though present to heal—receives no attention from the most of men! They are looking another way, and have no eyes for Him. Yet Jesus was not angry. I do not find that He upbraided one of those who lay in the porches, or that He even thought a hard thought of them. I am sure that He pitied them, and said in His heart, “Alas, poor Souls, that they should not know when mercy is so near!”

My Master is not wrathful with you who forget Him and neglect Him, but He pities you from His heart. I am but His poor servant, but I pity from my inmost heart those of you who live without Christ. I would gladly weep for you who are trying other ways of salvation, for they will all end in disappointment. And if continued in, will prove to be your eternal destruction! Observe very carefully what the Savior did. Looking around among the whole company, He made an *election*. He had a right to make what choice He pleased, and He exercised that sovereign prerogative! The Lord is not bound to give His mercy to everyone, or to anyone! He has freely proclaimed it to you all—but as you reject it He has now a double right to bless His chosen ones by making them willing in the day of His power.

The Savior selected that man out of the great multitude, we know not why, but certainly for a reason founded in Divine Grace. If we might venture to give a reason for His choice it may be that He selected him because his was the worst case, and he had waited the longest of all. This man’s case was in everybody’s mouth. They said, “This man has been there 38 years.” Our Lord acted according to His own eternal purpose, doing as He pleased with His own. He fixed the eyes of His electing love upon that one

man, and, going up to him, He gazed upon him. He knew all his history. He knew that he had been a long time in that case and therefore He pitied him much. He thought of those dreary months and years of painful disappointment which the impotent man had suffered, and the tears were in the Master's eyes. He looked and looked again at that man, and His heart yearned towards him.

Now, I know not whom Christ intends to save this morning by His effectual Grace. I am bound to give the *general* call, it is all that I can do! I know not where the Lord will give the *effectual* call which alone can make the Word saving. I should not wonder if He should call some of you who have been waiting long. I will bless His name if He does. I should not marvel if electing love should pitch upon the chief of sinners this day! If Jesus should look on some of you who never looked on Him, His look shall make *you* look, and His pity shall make *you* have pity upon yourselves, and His Irresistible Grace shall make you come to Him that you may be saved!

Jesus performed an act of Sovereign distinguishing Grace. I pray you do not kick at this doctrine! If you do, I cannot help it, for it is true. I have preached the Gospel to every one of you as freely as man can do it, and surely you who reject it ought not to quarrel with God for bestowing on others that which you do not care to receive! If you desire His mercy, He will not deny it to you. If you seek Him He will be found of you. But if you will not seek mercy, rail not at the Lord if He bestows it upon others! Jesus, having looked upon this man with a special eye of regard, said to Him, "Will you be made whole?" I have already hinted that this was not said because Christ wanted information, but because He wished to arouse the man's attention.

On account of its being a Sunday, the man was not thinking of being cured, for to the Jew it seemed a most unlikely thing that cures should be worked on a Sunday. Jesus, therefore, brought his thoughts back to the matter in hand, for, mark you, the work of Divine Grace is a work upon a *conscious mind*, not upon senseless matter. Though Puseyites pretend to regenerate unconscious children by sprinkling their faces with water, Jesus never attempted such a thing—Jesus saves men who have the use of their senses—and His salvation is a work upon a quickened intellect and awakened affections. Jesus brought back the wandering mind with the question, "Will you be made whole?" "Indeed," the man might have said, "indeed, I desire it above all things—I long for it—I pant for it."

Now, my dear Hearer, I will ask the same question of you. "Will you be made whole? Do you desire to be saved? Do you know what being saved is?" "Oh," you say, "it is escaping from Hell." No, no, no! That is the *result* of being saved, but being saved is a different thing. Do you want to be saved from the power of sin? Do you desire to be saved from being covetous, worldly-minded, bad-tempered, unjust, ungodly, domineering, drunken, or profane? Are you willing to give up the sin that is dearest to you? "No," says one, "I cannot honestly say I desire all that." Then you are not the man I am seeking this morning!

But is there one here who says, "Yes, I long to be rid of sin, root and branch. I desire, by God's Grace, this very day to become a Christian and to be saved from sin." Well, then, as you are already in a state of thought-

fulness, let us go a step further and observe what the Savior did. He gave the word of command, saying, "Rise! Take up your bed and walk." The power by which the man arose was not in *himself*, but in Jesus! It was not the mere sound of the words which made him rise—it was the Divine power which went with it. I believe that Jesus still speaks through His ministers. I trust that He speaks through me at this moment, when in His name I say to you who have been waiting at the pool, wait no longer, but this moment believe in Jesus Christ! Trust Him now!

I know that my words will not make you do it, but if the Holy Spirit works through the words, you will believe. Trust Christ now, poor Sinner! Believe that He is able to save you. Believe it now! Rely upon Him to save you this moment. Repose upon Him now! If you are enabled to believe, the power will come from Him, not from you, and your salvation will be effected, not by the sound of the word, but by the secret power of the Holy Spirit which goes with that word. I pray you observe that although nothing is said about *faith* in the text, yet the man must have had faith. Suppose you had been unable to move hand or foot for 38 years, and someone said at your bedside, "Rise"? You would not think of trying to rise, you would know it to be impossible!

You must have faith in the person who uttered the word, or else you would not make the attempt. I think I see the poor man—there he is, a heap, a writhing bundle of tortured nerves and powerless muscles—yet Jesus says, "Rise!" and up he rises in a moment! "Take up your bed," says the Master, and the bed is carried! *Here* was the man's faith! The man was a Jew and he knew that, according to the Pharisees, it would be a very wicked thing for him to roll up his mattress and carry it on Sunday. But because Jesus told him, he asked no questions, but doubled up his couch and walked. He did what he was told to do because he believed in Him who spoke. Have you such faith in Jesus, poor Sinner? Do you believe that Christ can save you? If you do, then I say to you in His name, trust Him! Trust Him now! If you trust Jesus, you shall be saved this morning—saved on the spot, and saved forever!

Observe, beloved Friends, that the cure which Christ worked was perfect. The man could carry His bed! The restoration was proved to a demonstration! The cure was manifest! All could see it! Moreover, the cure was *immediate*. He was not told to take a lump of figs and put it on the sore and wait. He was not carried home by his friends and laid up for a month or two, and gradually nursed into vital energy. Oh, no! He was cured then and there! Half our professing Christian imagine that regeneration cannot take place in a moment, and, therefore, they say to poor sinners, "Go and lie at Bethesda's pool. Wait in the use of ordinances. Humble yourself. Seek for deeper repentance."

Beloved, away with such teaching! The Cross! The Cross! The Cross! THERE hangs a sinner's hope! You must not rely on what you can *do*, nor on what *angels* can do, nor on *visions* and *dreams*, nor on *feelings* and strange emotions, and horrible deliriums! You must rest in the blood of my Master and my God, once slain for sinners! There is life in a *look* at the Crucified One, and there is life nowhere else! I come to the same point,

then, upon the second head as the first. Thus says the Lord, “Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth.”

III. Thirdly, we have to APPLY THE INSTANCE IN THE TEXT TO THE PRESENT OCCASION. I hope, Believers, your hearts are going up in prayer this morning. What a scene is before us! If someone had told us that this mass of people would have gathered to listen to the Gospel, are there not hundreds who would have doubted it? Mark this, we have had nothing novel to attract this multitude—nothing by way of gorgeous ceremony—there is not even the swell of the organ! I declined its pealing notes lest we should seem to depend in the slightest degree from a thread even to a shoe lace, upon anything but the preaching of the Gospel!

The preaching of the Cross is enough to *draw* the people, and enough to *save* the people, and if we take to anything else we lose our power and shear away the locks which make us strong. The application of the text, this morning, is just this—Why should we not, on this very spot, have instantaneous cures of sick souls? Why should there not be scores, hundreds, thousands, who shall this morning hear the gracious words, “Arise, take up your bed and walk”? I believe it is possible! I hope it will be done!

Let me talk with you who doubt this matter. You still think that you must *wait*—you have had a sufficient spell of waiting, and you are getting tolerably weary—but still you stick to the old plan. Hopeless as it is, you still catch at it as drowning men do at straws. But I want to show you that this is all wrong. Regeneration is an instantaneous work, and Justification an instantaneous gift. Man fell in a moment. When Eve plucked the fruit, and Adam ate it, it did not require six months to bring them into a state of condemnation. It did not require several years of continued sin to cast them out of Paradise. Their eyes were opened by the forbidden fruit. They saw that they were naked and they hid themselves from God. Surely, surely, Christ is not to be longer about His work than the *devil* was about his! Shall the devil destroy us in a moment and Jesus be unable to save us in a moment?

Ah, glory be to God, He has power to deliver far more than any which Satan uses for man’s destruction. Look at the Biblical illustrations of what salvation is. I will only mention three. Noah built an ark—that was a type of salvation. Now, when was Noah saved? Christ has built the ark for us. We have nothing to do with building it. But when was Noah saved? Does anyone say, “He was safe after he had been in the ark a month and had arranged all the things and looked out on the deluge and felt his danger.” No! The moment Noah went through the door, and the Lord shut him in, Noah was safe. When he had been in the ark a *second* he was as secure as when he had been there a month.

Take the case of the Passover. When were the Jews safe from the destroying angel who went through the land of Egypt? Were they safe *after* the blood which was sprinkled on the door had been looked upon and considered for a week or two? Oh, no, Beloved! The moment the blood was sprinkled, the house was secured. And the moment a sinner believes and trusts in the crucified Son of God he is pardoned at once—he receives salvation in full through Christ’s blood. One more instance, the bronze serpent. When the bronze serpent was lifted up, what were the wounded to

do? Were they told to wait till the bronze serpent was pushed into their faces, or until the venom of the serpent showed certain symptoms in their flesh?

No, they were commanded to look. They did look. Were they healed in six months time? I read not so, but as soon as their eyes met the serpent of brass, the cure was worked! And as soon as your eyes meets Christ, poor Trembler, you are saved! Though yesterday you were deep in your cups, and up to your neck in sin, yet if this morning you look to my once slain but now exalted Master, you shall find eternal life! Again take Biblical instances. Did the dying thief wait at the pool of the ordinances? You know how soon his believing prayer was heard, and Jesus said, “*Today* you shall be with Me in Paradise.” The three thousand at Pentecost, did they wait for some great thing? No, they believed, and were baptized!

Look at the jailer of Philippi. It was the dead of the night, the prison was shaken, and the jailer was alarmed, and said, “Sir, what must I do to be saved?” Did Paul say, “Well, you must use the means and look for a blessing upon the ordinances”? No! He said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and your house,” and that very night he baptized him. Paul did not take the time about it that some think so exceedingly necessary. He believed as I do, that there is life in a *look* at Jesus. He bade men look, and looking they lived! Possibly you will see this still more clearly if I remind you that the work of salvation is all done. There is nothing for a sinner to do in order to be saved—it is all done for him.

You need washing. The bath does not need filling. “There is a fountain filled with blood.” You need clothing. You have not to make the garment, the robe is ready. The garment of Christ’s righteousness is woven from the top throughout—all that is needed is to have it put on. If some work remained for you to do it might be a lengthened process, but all the *doing* is accomplished by Christ. Salvation is not of works, but of Grace, and to accept what Christ presents you is not a work of time. Once more, let me say to you that regeneration itself cannot be a work of a long time, because, even where it seems to be most gradual, when looked at closely, it turns out in its essence to be the work of a moment.

There is a dead man. Now, if that man is raised from the dead there must be an instant in which he was dead, and another instant in which he was alive! The actual quickening must be the work of a moment. I grant you that at the first the life may be very feeble, but there must be a time when it begins. There must be a line—we cannot always see it ourselves, but God must see it—there must be a line between life and death. A man cannot be somewhere between dead and alive. He either is alive or he is dead. And so you are either dead in sin or alive unto God, and quickening cannot involve a long period of time.

Finally, my Hearers, for God to say, “I forgive you,” takes not a century nor a year. The judge pronounces the sentence, and the criminal is acquitted. If God shall say to you this morning, “I absolve you,” you are absolved, and you may go in peace. I must bear faithful witness as to my own case. I never found mercy by waiting. I never obtained a gleam of hope by depending upon ordinances. I found salvation by *believing*. I

heard a simple minister of the Gospel say, “Look and live! Look to Jesus! He bleeds in the garden, He dies on the tree! Trust Him! Trust to what He suffered instead of you. And if you trust Him, you shall be saved.”

The Lord knows I had heard that Gospel many times before, but I had not obeyed it. It came, however, with power to my soul, and I did look, and the moment I looked to Christ, I lost my burden. “But,” says one, “how do you know?” Did you ever carry a burden yourself? “Oh, yes,” you say. Did you know when it was off? How did *you* know? “Oh,” you say, “I felt so different. I knew when my burden was on, and, consequently, I knew when it was off.” It was so in my case, too. I only wish some of you felt the burden of sin as I felt it when I was waiting at the pool of Bethesda. I wonder that such waiting had not landed me in Hell! But, when I heard the word, “Look!” I looked, and my burden was gone! I wondered where it had gone—I have never seen it since, and I never shall see it again! It went into the Master’s tomb, and it lies forever buried there.

God has said it, “I have blotted out like a cloud your iniquities, and like a thick cloud your sins.” Oh, come, you needy, come to my Master! You that have been disappointed with rites and ceremonies, and feelings, and impressions, and all the hopes of the flesh—come at my Master’s command, and look up to Him! He is not here in the flesh, for He has risen. But He has risen to plead for sinners, and, “He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them.” Oh, if I could know how to preach the Gospel so that you would feel it, I would go to any school to learn! The Lord knows I would willingly consent to lose these eyes to get greater power in my ministry. Yes, and to lose arms, legs, and all my members!

I would be willing to die if I could but be honored by the Holy Spirit to win this mass of souls to God! I implore you, my Brothers and Sisters, you who have power in prayer, pray the Lord to bring sinners to Christ! Let me say, solemnly, to you who have heard the Word of God this day, I have told you the plan of salvation plainly. If you do not accept it, I am clear of your blood, I shake my garments of the blood of your souls. If you come not to my Lord and Master, I must bear swift witness against you at the Day of Judgment!

I have told you the way—I cannot tell you it more simply—I beseech you to follow it! I entreat you to look to Jesus! But if you refuse it, at any rate, when you shall rise from the dead and stand before the Great White Throne, do me the justice to say that I did entreat and persuade you to escape, I did impress upon you to flee from the wrath to come! The Lord save each one of you, and His shall be the praise ever more. Amen.

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IMPOTENCE AND OMNIPOTENCE

NO. 2269

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY AUGUST 14, 1892.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 16, 1890.**

“And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he had been in that case a long time, He said to him, Will you be made whole? The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool; but while I am coming, another steps down before me. Jesus said to him, Rise, take up your bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed and walked.”
John 5:5-9.

THIS man had been lying, with many others, round the pool, hoping that it would be stirred by the angel, and that he might be the first put into the water and so might be healed. There he waited long, and waited in vain. Why did he wait? Because Jesus was not there. Where Jesus is not, you must wait! If it is only an angel and a pool, you must wait—and *one* may get a blessing—and many may get no blessing. But when Jesus came, there was no waiting. He walked in among the crowd of sick folk, spied out this man, bade him to take up his mattress and walk home—and he was healed at once.

Now, I commend this man for waiting. I admire him for his patience and his perseverance. But I beg you not to make his case your own. He waited, for Jesus was not there. You may not wait, you *must* not wait—as I have told you—for Jesus is here! There was necessity for *him* to wait. As I have told you, there was an angel and a pool, and nothing more. But where Christ is, there should be no waiting. Any soul that looks to Christ tonight shall be saved, even though he looks from the ends of the earth! You may look now—no, you are *commanded* to do so! “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” “Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.” There, in that pew, or in yonder aisles, if you turn your eyes by faith to Jesus, the Living One on the Throne of the Highest, you shall obtain immediate cure! Waiting is all very well at the Pool of Bethesda, but waiting at the “Pool of Ordinances,” as I have heard some say, is not according to the Scriptures! I read nothing about waiting there! But I do read this—“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.”

However, for the help of some who have waited till they are weary, who have persevered in the use of the means till they are becoming desponding

and disappointed, let us look at the case of the impotent man at Bethesda.

I. We notice about it, first, that THE SAVIOR KNEW THE CASE.

I only mention that in order to say that the Savior knows *your* case. *Jesus saw him lying there.* There were a great many objects for the Savior's eye to rest upon, but He fixed His gaze upon this man, long bedridden, 38 years impotent. Even so, Jesus knows all about *your* case. He sees you lying just where you are, tonight—impotent, without hope, without light, without faith. He sees *you!* I need you to feel this to be true. He singles you out amidst this throng, wherever you sit, and His eyes are scanning you from head to foot. No, He looks *within* as well as *without*, and reads all that is in your *heart!*

Concerning the man at the pool, *Jesus knew that he had been in that case a long time.* He knows the years that you have been waiting. You remember being carried to the House of God by your mother. You recollect, as a boy, listening to sermons that seemed to startle you—and you went home to your little bedroom and cried to God for mercy—but you forgot your impressions. They were like the morning mist that vanishes in the rising sun! You came to London. You grew up to be a man, but you became careless about Divine things—you shook off all your early impressions. Still, you went to hear the Word of God preached and, oftentimes, you half hoped that you might get a blessing. You heard the Word, but faith was not mixed with what you heard, so you missed the blessing. Yet you always had a wish that it should come to you. You never could despise godly people, or the things of Christ. You could not get them for yourself—at least, you *thought* you could not—but you always had some lingering wish that you were numbered with the people of God.

Now, the Lord Jesus knows all about that and the many years in which you have been waiting as a hearer, only, and not a doer of the Word—impressed at times, but doing violence to your better feelings and going back to a careless life. My Lord knows all about you! *I cannot pick you out in this congregation, but remember, while I am preaching tonight, miracles will be worked—processes which will change the very nature of men are going on within this house, for Christ is being preached and His Gospel is being set forth! And this is not done, with prayerful earnestness, in vain! God will bless it! He is going to bless somebody tonight! Who that somebody may be, or how many hundred somebodies there will be, I cannot guess—but He will bless His own Word—and why should He not bless you?* He sees just who you are and where you are—and *what* you are.

In addition to this, *our Lord knew all this poor man's disappointments.* Many times, when he had striven to be the first to the water's edge and thought that he would be able to take the happy plunge, someone else went in before him and his hopes were dashed! Another came up out of the water healed and then, with a very heavy sigh, he fell back upon his bed and felt that it might be a long time before the angel stirred the water, again, and even then he might be disappointed again! He remembered the many times when he had lost all hope and he lay there almost in despair. Now I think I hear someone here tonight saying, "My brother found the

Lord. My friend who came here with me, found the Lord. I have lived to see my mother die in sure and certain hope of Glory. I have friends who have come to Christ, but I am still living without Him. When there are special services, I hope that I might have been specially blessed. I have been to Prayer Meetings, I have read my Bible in secret and I have sometimes hoped—it was but a little hope, but still I hoped—“Maybe, one of these days, I may be healed.” Yes, dear Friend, and my Lord knows all about that, and He sympathizes in all the grief you feel tonight—and He hears those unspoken wishes of yours—and He knows your longing that you may be healed!

II. Now, secondly, THE SAVIOR AWAKENED THE MAN’S DESIRES. He said to him, “Will you be made whole?” There he lay. I am not going to explain that lying at the pool, but just apply it to you who are here in a similar condition.

Beware of forgetting why you are here. Beware of coming to the House of God and not knowing why you come! I have said that, years ago, you went to places of worship in the hope of finding salvation. Well, you have kept coming and you have not found it—do you still look for it? Have you not fallen into the habit of sitting and listening to sermons, prayers and so on, without feeling that you came for anything special for yourself? You come and go, merely that you may attend a place of worship. That is all. The Savior would not let the impotent man lie there satisfied because he was by the pool. No, no. He said to him, “Why are you here? Have you not some desire? Do you want to be made whole?” My dear Hearer, I wish that you were able to say, “Yes,” to that question! Have you come here tonight that your sin may be forgiven, that your soul may be renewed by Divine Grace, that you may meet Christ? If so, I want to keep you to that point and not let you come and take a sitting here, and come, and come, and come, and be just like a door on its hinges out there, which turns in and turns out again, and is not a bit better for it! Oh, do not get into mere religious habits! Ritualistic habits they will be to you, simple as the ritual will be. You come and go, and you are satisfied. This will never do! Christ awakens your desire as He asks, “Will you be made whole?”

Also, *avoid a despairing indifference.* I remember two brothers and a sister who heard me preach for a considerable time. They were in great distress of soul, but, at the same time, they had a notion that they could not believe in Christ, and that they must wait—I hardly know what for—but they did wait till they grew quite old. I did not know better people *morally*, or better hearers so far as interest in what they heard was concerned—but they never seemed to get any farther. At last they got into this state—they seemed to feel as though, if it was to be, it would be—and if it was not to be, it would not be, and that all they could do was just sit still and be quiet and patient.

Patient under the apprehension of being *lost forever*? Why, I do not expect a man in the condemned cell to be happy and patient when he hears them putting up his gallows! He must be concerned! He must be uneasy. I did my best to make these friends uneasy, but I fear that my efforts were attended with very small results. The Savior said to this man, “Will you be

made whole? You seem to be in such a state of indifference that you do not care whether you are made whole or not." No worse condition than that can be found—it is so hard to deal with! God save you from sullen indifference in which you leave yourself to drift to destruction at the will of some unknown fate!

I pray you to *remember that it is yours to will*, for Christ said to this man, "Will you be made whole? You cannot make yourself whole, but you can will and wish to be made whole." God's Holy Spirit has given to many of you to will and to do according to His good pleasure. You will never be saved against your will! God drags nobody to Heaven by the ears! There must be in you a willing mind consenting to the work of His Sovereign Grace! And if it is there, I want you to exercise it, tonight, as Christ wished this man to exercise it—"Will you be made whole? Have you any wish that way, any desire or longing for healing?" I want to stir this fire and make it burn. And if there is only a spark of desire, I would breathe upon it and pray the Holy Spirit to breathe upon it to make it into a great flame! Paul said, "To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not." I believe that there are some here who have the will to be saved. God be thanked for that!

"Will you be made whole?" I think that the Savior put this question for another reason, which I will turn into an exhortation. *Forego all prescribing as to how you are to be saved.* The question is not, "Will you be put into that pool?" but, "Will you be made whole?" Have you come to this, that you are willing to be saved in God's way, in Christ's way? One says, "I need to have a dream." Dear Soul, do not want dreams—they are only dreams! Another says, "I need to see a vision." My dear Friend, there is nothing in the plan of salvation about seeing visions. "I need to hear a voice," says one. Well, hear my voice, then, and may God the Holy Spirit make you hear the voice of His Word through me! "But I need"—oh, yes, you need, you know not what you need like many a silly child that has its fads, fancies, whims and wishes!

Oh, that all were willing to be saved by the simple plan of believe and live! If this is God's way, who are you that He should make a new way for *you*? When I had put the way of salvation before a friend, some time ago, she turned to me and said, "Oh, Sir, do pray for me!" "No," I said, "I will *not* pray for you." "Oh, but," she said, "how can you say that?" I replied, "I set before you Christ Crucified and I beg you to believe in Him. If you will not believe in Him, you will be lost! And I shall not pray God to make a different way of salvation for you. You deserve to be lost if you will not believe in Christ." I put it to her and, when she afterwards said, "Oh, I see it now! I do look to Christ and trust Him," I said, "*Now* I will pray for you! Now we can pray together and sing together, if necessary."

But, dear Friends, do not set up your own notion about how you ought to be converted. Can you find any two people who were converted in the same way? God does not make converts as men make steel pens, a gross in a box, all alike. No, no, but in each case there is a *living man* created—and every living man, every living animal, every living plant—is somewhat different from every other of its kind, and you must not look for uniformity

in the work of regeneration. “Will you be made whole?” Come, do you desire the pardon of sin? Do you long for a new heart and a right spirit? If so, leave off disputing as to *how* you are to get them—and do what Christ tells you to do!

“Will you be made whole?” It is as if the Savior said, “*Be more than ever in earnest, now.* I know that you will to be made whole. Well, now, will it more tonight than you have ever willed it before.” Let the will which you have been exercised—put it forth! You are in earnest to be saved—be in more earnest tonight! You desire to find Christ? Well, desire to find Christ more tonight than ever you did in your life! You have come to an important crisis of your life. You may be at the point of death! Who knows? How many have been suddenly struck down of late! If you would be made whole, I would that you might be made whole *tonight!* I pray that you may feel something pressing you, something that makes you end your long delay, something that makes you feel, “I have no more time to waste! I cannot afford to loiter. I must be saved tonight! I must hear the distant ticking of God’s great clock that stands in the Hall of Grace and always says, ‘*Now! Now! Now! Now! Now!*’ and never utters any other sound.” Oh, may the Lord make it to be so, by His own Free Grace!

Thus, you see, the Savior awakened the desires of the man at the pool. First, He knew his case, and next, He awakened his desires.

III. Now, thirdly, THE SAVIOR HEARD THE MAN’S COMPLAINT. This is what he said, “Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steps down before me.”

Some of these people had kind friends who took turns at watching day and night—and the moment that the water was stirred—they took up their patient and plunged him in! This man had lost all his friends—thirty-eight years of illness had worn them all out—and he said, “I have no man to put me into the pool; how can I get into the water?” And there are many in situation who need help. While I have been at Mentone, I have had the joy of leading a number of friends to Christ. When I had to leave them and come back to London, one and another of them said to me, “What can we do without you, Sir? We shall have nobody to lead us in the right way, now. We will have no one to instruct us, no one to meet our objections, nobody to solve our doubts, nobody to whom we can tell the anxieties of our hearts.”

No doubt some of you would talk in the same fashion and I must admit that *the lack of a helper is serious.* It is a great deprivation to have no man to help you in these things. Sometimes, if a friend will come up after the sermon and just say a kind word, it will do more good than the sermon, itself! Many a poor troubled one who has been a long time in prison, might have been released sooner if only some kind friend had reminded the Brother of a Divine promise which, like a key, would have opened the prison door. I agree with you that there is a great help in having an earnest Christian friend to lift you over a difficulty; to bear you down to the water’s edge to which you cannot go by yourself, and to put you into the pool. It is a great loss, certainly, if you have no such friend, and I am very sorry for you if you do not.

You live in a village where there is nobody to speak to you about spiritual matters, or you attend a ministry that does not feed you. You have nobody to comfort you. There are not many, after all, who can really help sinners in coming to Christ. Some who try to do so are a great deal too wise and others are too hard-hearted. It needs a special training in the School of Grace if anyone is to learn to sympathize with others so as to be able to really help them. I can suppose that one here is saying, "I have no mother to speak to. I have no Christian friend in the family. I have no one to whom I can go for help—and that is why I stick fast where I am."

Well, a helper is very valuable, but I want to say that *a helper may not be so valuable as you think*. I have known some who have had plenty of Christian helpers while they were seeking the Lord, but none of them were really able to help them. If you trust the *earthly* helpers and think them essential, God will not bless their efforts, and they will be of no use to you! I am afraid that many a seeker has had to say, even to good and earnest Christians, what Job said to his friends, "Miserable comforters are you all!" After all, how can a *man* help you much in your *soul's* affairs? No man can give you faith, or give you pardon. No man can give you spiritual life, or even spiritual light! Though you have no man to help you, remember that you can make too much of men and you can trust too much in Christian helpers. I beg you remember that.

I am afraid that there are some professors who have been helped a little too much. They heard a sermon and were really impressed by it, and somebody was foolish enough to say to them, "That is conversion." It was never conversion at all! The friend further said, "Now, come forward and make a profession." So they came forward and made a profession of what they never had. A friend said, "Now, come to such a meeting and come and join the Church. Come on!" And they were led, and led, and led, never having any real internal life, or spiritual energy given them from on high. They are just like children in baby walkers who are unable to walk alone. God save you from a religion that depends upon other people! There are some who have a kind of lean-to religion, resting on somebody else, and when the support is taken away, what becomes of the lean-to? The good old lady who helped you for so many years dies—where is your religion then? The minister used to keep you going—you were like a whipping-top—and he like the whip that kept you spinning. When he is gone, where are you? I entreat you, do not have a religion of that kind! Though a helper is very useful, remember that under certain conditions, even a Christian helper may be a hindrance.

Now, my dear Hearer, this is the point I have come to—you have to deal with Jesus tonight and, *dealing with Jesus, you need "no man."* You have not to deal with pools and angels! You have to deal with the Lord Jesus, Himself. Suppose that there is no man to help you—do you need a man when *Jesus* is here? The man was needed to put you into the pool, but he is not needed to introduce you to Christ! You may speak to Christ, yourself! You may confess your sins, yourself. You need no priest—you need a Mediator between your soul and God—but you do not need a mediator between your soul and Jesus! You may come to Him where you are and as

you are. Come to Him now! Tell Him your case! Plead with Him for mercy. He does not need my help. He does not need the help of the Archbishop of Canterbury! He does not need the help of *anybody*—He alone can meet your case! Just put your case into His hands and then, if you have no man to be your helper, you need not lie down and fret about it, for He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him!

Now this is all very plain talk, but we need plain talk nowadays. I feel as if I have not preached on Sunday unless I have tried to bring men to Christ. There are many high and sublime doctrines that I would like to speak of, and many deep and rapturous experiences that I would like to describe—yet I feel that I must often leave these things and keep to the much more commonplace, but much more useful matter of persuading men, in Christ's stead—that they look away from man, away from ordinances, away from self and deal with Jesus, Himself, distinctly and directly, for there is no need of man and, certainly, there is no need of delay!

IV. This is my closing point. THE SAVIOR MET THE MAN'S CASE ENTIRELY.

This impotent man has no man to help him. Christ can help him without any man. This man cannot move except with great pain. He has to crawl to the water's edge, but he has no need to crawl there—he need not move an inch! *The power to heal that man was in Christ who stood there*—commissioned of God to save sinners and to help the helpless! Please remember that the power that saves—all of it—is not in the saved man, but in the Christ who saves! I take leave to contradict those who say that salvation is an evolution! All that ever can be evolved out of the sinful heart of man is sin—and nothing else! Salvation is the free gift of God, by Jesus Christ, and the work of it is supernatural. It is done by the Lord, Himself, and He has power to do it, however weak, no, however dead in sin, the sinner may be! As a living child of God, I can say tonight, that—

***“On a life I did not live,
On a death I did not die,
I stake my whole eternity!”***

You who would be saved must do the same—you must look right out of self to Him whom God has exalted to be a Prince and a Savior to the sons of men! The Christ met that man's case, for He was able to do anything for him that he required. He meets your case, too, my dear Hearer, for He can do anything for you that is needed. Between here and Heaven's gate there shall never be anything required which He cannot give, or any help needed which He is not prepared to render—for He has all power in Heaven and in earth!

Next, *the Lord can do more for you than you ask of Him*. This poor man never asked anything of Christ, except by his looks, and by his lying there at the pool. If you feel, tonight, as if you cannot pray. If you have needs that you cannot describe. If there is something needed and you do not know what it is, Christ can give it to you! You shall know what it is that you need when you get it, but, perhaps now, in His mercy, He does not let you know all your needs. But here is the point—He “is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.” May He do it in you to-

night! Take comfort from the cure of the impotent man! Cherish hope and say, "Why should He not heal *me*?"

Now, the way in which Christ worked was very amazing. *He worked by a command.* It is not a way that you and I would have selected—nor a way of which some nominal Christians approve. He said to this man, "Rise." He could not rise. "Take up your bed." He could not take up his bed! He had been 38 years unable to get *off* his bed! "Take up your bed, and walk." Walk? He could not walk! I have heard some objectors say, "That preacher says to people, 'Believe.' They cannot believe. He bids them, 'Repent.' They cannot repent." Ah, well, our Lord is our example and He said to this man who could not rise, and could not take up his bed, and could not walk, "Rise, take up your bed and walk." This was His way of exercising His Divine Power! And that is the way in which Christ saves men today!

He gives us faith enough to say, "You dry bones, hear the Word of the Lord!" They cannot hear. "Thus says the Lord, You dry bones live!" They cannot live—but they *do* hear, and they *do* live—and while we are acting by faith, delivering a command which looks, upon the surface of it, to be absurd and unreasonable, the work of Christ is done by that command! Did He not say of old, in the darkness, "Let there be light"? To what spoke the Lord that Word of power? To darkness and to nothingness! "And there was light." Now He speaks to the sinner and He says, "Believe and live." And the sinner believes and lives!

God wants those of His messengers who have faith to give His command, to let the sinner know that he has not the strength to obey, that he is morally lost and ruined, and yet to say, in the name of the eternal God, "Thus says the Lord, Rise, take up your bed, and walk." Believe, repent, be converted and be baptized, everyone of you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ! This is the way in which Christ's power goes forth to the sons of men! He said to the man with the withered hand, "Stretch forth your hand," and he did so! And He says to the dead, "Come forth," and they come forth! His commandings are attended with enablings—and where His commands are faithfully preached, His power goes with them—and men are saved!

I close with observation. *In obedience, power was given.* The man did not stop and wrangle with Christ and say, "Rise? What do You mean? You look like a friend, but do You come here to make sport of me? Rise? Thirty-eight years have I been lying here, and You say, 'Rise'? Do You think that there has ever been a minute in those 38 years in which I would not have gladly risen if I could have done so? And yet You say, 'Rise,' and You say 'Take up your bed. Shoulder the rug on which you lie.' How can I do it? It is 38 years since I could lift a pound weight and You bid me shoulder this mat on which I lie! Do You make me a theme of jest? And walk? You say, 'Walk.' Walk? Hear me, you sick ones around me, He tells me to walk! I can scarcely lift a finger, yet He bids me walk!" Thus he might have argued the matter out and it would have been a very logical piece of argument—and the Savior would have stood convicted of having spoken empty words.

Instead of speaking thus, no sooner did Christ say to him, "Rise," than he willed, by God's Grace, to rise! And as he willed to rise, he moved to rise and rise, he did, to his own astonishment! He rose and, stooping down, rolled up his mattress, all the while filled with wonder, every part of his body singing as he rolled it up and put it on his shoulder with speed! To his surprise he found that the joints of his feet and legs could move! And he walked right away with his mattress on his shoulder—and the miracle was complete. Stop, man, stop! Come here! Now, had you the strength to do this of yourself? "No, not I. I lay here 38 years. I had no strength till that word, 'Rise,' came to me." "But did you do it?" "Oh, yes, you can see that I did it! I rose. I folded up the mattress and I walked away!"

"But you were under some kind of compulsion that made you move your legs and your hands, were you not?" "Oh, no! I did it freely, cheerfully, gladly! Compel me to do it? My dear Sir, I clap my hands for joy to think that I *could* do it! I do not want to go back to that old mat and lie there again—not I!" "What did you do?" "Well, I scarcely know what I did. I believed Him and I did what He told me, and a strange mysterious power came over me—that is the whole story." "Now explain it. Tell these people all about it." "Oh, no," says the man, "I know that it is so, but I cannot explain it. But one thing I know, whereas I was a cripple, now I can walk! Whereas I was impotent, now I can carry my bed! Whereas I was lying there, now I can stand upright."

I cannot explain salvation to you, tonight, or how it takes place. But I remember when I sat in the pew as despairing a sinner as ever lived. I heard the preacher say, "Look unto Christ, and live." He seemed to say to me, "Look! Look! Look! Look!" and I looked—and I lived! That moment the burden of my sin was gone! I was crippled with unbelief no longer! I went home a sinner saved by Grace, to live to praise the Lord, and—

***"Ever since by faith I saw the stream
His flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die."***

I am convinced that I am going to have ever so many, tonight, who will obey the Gospel command, "Believe and live. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." Oh, do it! Do it now! And unto God be glory, and to yourself be peace and happiness forever! Amen and Amen!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON JOHN 5:1-23.

Verse 1. *After this there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.* For He had respect to the Law. As long as the Law lasted, Christ observed it. Oh, that we were as careful to obey the rules of the Gospel as our Lord was to observe the ritual of the Law! Moreover, He went to Jerusalem because He had an opportunity of addressing great numbers of people there. While I have been resting at Mentone, I have been very glad to be of service to a few friends who were either seeking the

Savior, or needing some guidance in their spiritual life. But I cannot tell you how happy I am to be once more in the Tabernacle, preaching to the great congregation! Fisherman like to cast their nets where there are plenty of fish—and fishers of men delight to be where there are many men who may be enclosed in the Gospel net! “After this there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.”

2. *Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue, Bethesda, having five porches.* This pool of Bethesda was rightly called “the house of mercy.” But it might have just as truly been named, “the house of misery,” for its “five porches” were the abode of many who were in misery and who needed mercy.

3. *In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk.* Invalid persons, diseased and scarcely able to move.

3. *Of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water.* What a sight for the Great Physician to look upon! The whole world must have been, to Him, like one huge hospital full of “impotent folk, blind, halt, withered.” Wherever He went, He was surrounded by the sick, sad and suffering—those who were afflicted physically, mentally and spiritually. But there was a special reason for the gathering together of so many sufferers at the pool of Bethesda.

4. *For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whoever then, first, after the troubling of the water, stepped in, was made whole of whatever disease he had.* It was the last remnant of miracle. Such things were common enough in Judea in her better days, but now the times of the Prophets had ceased and the day of miracles was almost over. But here, at Bethesda, were a few relics and remnants of the good old days! Only one was cured—he that stepped into the pool, first, after the angel had troubled the water. It was but a scanty power that was left to the troubled water, but it was quite enough, if only one in a thousand was healed, to bring a crowd of people to wait around the pool! If only one person in a year were saved, I should not wonder if you thronged the place to hear the Gospel that saved him! But *your* privilege is much greater! Here, all who come, if they will hear and believe, shall find healing! It is not only the first, but even unto the last who shall step into the pool, that shall be healed!

5. *And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years.* That was a great portion of the man’s life. If he was a full-grown man when he was attacked with the infirmity, he had now become old and gray. What a long time to be afflicted—38 years! Have we not with us at this time some who have been afflicted with the soul-sickness of sin *more* than 38 years?

6. *When Jesus saw him lie.* The Great Physician fixed His eyes on him, for his was an extraordinary case. Probably he was known and talked of as the man who had been paralyzed 38 years. Note that it does not say, “When the man saw Jesus,” but, “when Jesus saw him.” He did not know Jesus. Possibly he had not even heard of His healing power and compassionate love. He was not seeking Jesus—Jesus was seeking him! It was so with many of us and, therefore, we sing—

***“Jesus sought me when a stranger,
Wandering from the fold of God.
He, to rescue me from danger,
Interposed His precious blood.”***

When Jesus saw the impotent man—

6. *And knew that he had been now a long time in that case, and a long time in that place, too—*

6. *He said unto him, Will you be made whole?* That must have seemed a strange question! What was he there for, if not to be made whole? But I will show you, by-and-by, that there was wisdom in the question of Jesus. It was no idle curiosity that moved Him to enquire of the man whether he was willing to be made whole.

7. *The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming.* Shuffling along, as best I may, to the water's edge—

7. *Another steps down before me.* Then, of course, the curative miracle is worked, and the curative power of the water is gone until another season when the angel troubles it again.

8, 9. *Jesus said to him, Rise, take up your bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed and walked: and on the same day was the Sabbath.* This is our Sabbath. Oh, that we might have the same miracle worked here, tonight, upon many spiritually impotent folk!

10, 11. *The Jews, therefore, said unto him that was cured. It is the Sabbath Day: it is not lawful for you to carry your bed. He answered them. And he did answer them, too!* It was a crushing answer—

11. *He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up your bed, and walk.* That was his warrant. None but God could have made him whole. God can set aside any of His Laws, if He pleases! At any rate, whatever He commands must be right.

12. *Then they asked him, What Man is that which said unto you, Take up your bed, and walk?* They asked, “What Man” had given this command. Why, if it had been a mere *man* who had said it, the impotent man could not either have taken up his bed or have walked!

13. *And he that was healed knew not who it was: for Jesus had conveyed Himself away, a multitude being in that place.* He never sought notoriety, but avoided popular demonstrations in His favor. The man who had been healed had exercised faith in Jesus, but he knew very little about Him. A certain something in the air and manner of Christ had won his faith, but he did not know His name, or who He was. How small may be your knowledge, and yet you may be saved by true faith!

14. *Afterward Jesus found him in the Temple, and said unto him, Behold, you are made whole; sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto you.* Probably, this man's illness had been caused by sin. Christ bids him, therefore, keep clear of sin lest a worse calamity should come upon him.

15. *The man departed, and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him whole.* Full of joy, full of delight, he must tell out the name of

Him who had cured him, as grateful patients like to sound the praises of their physician when he has been the means of healing them!

16. *And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath Day.* This was a mere pretense, an idle excuse for their enmity. They not only hated Christ, but they must besmear Him with their calumnies, and make Him out to be an evil-doer although He was Goodness, itself.

17. *But Jesus answered them, My Father works hitherto, and I work.* The whole work of Nature is continued on Sabbath Days as well as other days. Stars shine through the Sabbath night and the sun rises and sets on the Lord's-Day as on all the days of the week! God's work continues. "My Father works," says Christ, "and I work." "My work is My Father's work, and that goes on whatever the day may be."

18. *Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill Him, because He had not only broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.* They did not understand Him to preach Unitarianism—they understood Him to proclaim His own true and proper Godhead—and He never contradicted them—for He was and is God!

19. *Answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do: for what things soever He does, these also does the Son, likewise.* Christ's work runs parallel with that of the Father. The Father and the Son always work in perfect harmony with one Another.

20-22. *For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He, Himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel. For as the Father raises up the dead, and quickens them; even so the Son quickens whom He will. For the Father judges no man, but has committed all judgment unto the Son.* The Son, as well as the Father, is the Quickener of the dead! The Son is also the Judge of all men!

23. *That all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honors not the Son, honors not the Father which has sent Him.* As the universal Judge, the Lord Jesus is to be honored by all men, "even as they honor the Father." Whatever others may do, or not do, we will honor the Father, we will honor the Son and we will honor the Holy Spirit—Three in One and One in Three—the one God of Israel, forever and ever.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—552, 556, 557.

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A SINGULAR BUT NEEDFUL QUESTION NO. 955

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 16, 1870,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Will you be made whole?”
John 5:6.*

JESUS spoke to the impotent man who had been afflicted for thirty-eight years, and enquired of him, “Will you be made whole?” It seems a very strange question to ask. Who would not be made whole? Would the poor man have been lying at the pool if he had not been anxious for healing? Must there not have been in the very look of his face, as he gazed upon the Savior, an answer to that question, superseding all necessity of saying it? Yet as our Lord spoke no superfluous words, it may be that He perceived that the paralysis of the man's body had, to a very painful degree, benumbed his mind and brought on a paralysis of his will.

He had hoped till his heart was sick. He had waited till despondency had dried up his spirits. And now it had almost come to this, that he scarcely cared whether he was made whole or not. The bow had been bent so long that all its elasticity was destroyed. He had hungered till appetite, itself, was gone. He was now listless, with an indifference made up of sullen repining at his disappointments and blank hopelessness for the future. The Savior touched a chord which needed to vibrate when He enquired as to his will. He aroused, by that question, a dormant faculty whose vigorous exercise, it may be, was one of the first essentials to a cure. “Will you be made whole?” was the enquiry of a profound investigation, the scientific probe of a great Physician, the resurrection from the grave of a great master power of manhood.

Now, in the matter of preaching the Gospel today, it may seem almost an impertinent question for me to put to each one of you gathered here who as yet are not saved, “Will you be made whole?” “Surely,” you will reply, “everyone desires salvation.” Believe me, I am not quite so certain as you are of the truth of that statement. “But our being here,” says one, “our having been here so long, and our attentive listening to the Gospel go to prove that we are willing enough to be made whole if we could but discover where health is to be found, and what is that balm of Gilead of which so much is said.”

And yet I should not wonder if there are many here who through having waited so long are beginning to be paralyzed in their once earnest desires. And others, who having been here so long and never having been very anxious, at last have come to occupy these pews as a mere matter of custom—they have no hearty will towards the wholeness of soul which the Good Physician is always prepared to give to those who seek His help. I am persuaded that instead of the question being an unnecessary one, it is in every congregation one of the first to be pressed upon the hearer's attention.

To get a truthful answer to this enquiry from the inmost soul of every hearer is my object now, believing that it will be a very healthful thing to you—even if you are honestly compelled to give a negative answer. It will at least expose the condition of the heart to itself, and that may be helpful towards something better. As God may help me, I shall labor to press upon you very earnestly this question this morning, O unsaved Man or Woman, “Will you be made whole?”

I. This question is necessary to be put, in the first place, because IT IS A QUESTION NOT ALWAYS UNDERSTOOD. It is not the same as this question, “Will you be saved from going to Hell?” Everyone answers, “Yes,” to that. “Will you be saved so as to go to Heaven?” At once, without deliberation, everyone says, “Yes.” For the harps of gold, for the songs of blessedness, for the eternity of immortality—we have all a heart and a strong desire—but that, you see, is not the question.

Heaven and its joys come out of what is proposed in our question, as a result, as a consequence—but that is not the matter in hand just now. We are not now saying to the thief, “Will you have your imprisonment remitted?” We are putting it to him in another shape—“Are you willing to be made an honest man?” We are not now saying to the murderer, “Are you anxious to escape the gallows?” We know his reply. The question we are putting to him is, “Will you be made righteous, upright, kind, forgiving, so as to give up all this evil of yours?”

It is not, “Are you willing to sit at the festival of mercy, and eat and drink as those do who are in health?” But, “Are you, yourself, willing to be made spiritually healthful, to pass through those Divine processes by which the foul disease of sin may be cast out, and the healthiness of sanctified manhood may be restored to you?”

To help you to know what that question means, let me remind you that there never were but two men who were whole, perfectly whole. And those may be called the two Adams—the first and the Second Adam. These both showed us in their own persons what a man would be if he were whole. The first Adam in the garden—we should all be willing to be in Paradise with him! We should all be delighted to walk beneath those never-withering boughs, and gather ever-luscious fruits, without toil, without suffering, without disease, without death.

We all should be glad enough to welcome the return of the primeval gladness of Eden, but that is not the question. It is, should we be willing to be made mentally and morally what Adam was before his sin brought disease into manhood? And what was Adam? Why, he was a man who knew his God, knew many things beside, but mainly and chiefly knew his God. His delight was to walk with God, to commune with Him, to speak with Him as a man speaks with his friend—until he fell he was one whose will was submitted to the will of his Creator, anxious and desirous not to violate that will, but in all things to do what his Lord should bid him.

He was placed in the garden to till the ground, to keep and dress the garden, and he did all that with joy. He was a whole, a sound man. His whole enjoyment consisted in his God. It was his one object as a living creature to do the will of Him that made him. He knew nothing of rioting and drunkenness. For him there were no lascivious songs or wanton

deeds. The flash of debauchery and the glitter of profligacy were far from him. He was pure, upright, chaste, obedient. How would you like to be made like he, Sinner—you who are doing your own will—you who have sought out many inventions? You who find happiness in this sin and the other filthiness, would you be willing to come back and find your happiness in your God, and from now on serve Him, and none beside?

Ah, perhaps you say, blindly, “Yes,” and it is possible you know not what you say. If the truth were more clearly before you, you would obstinately refuse to be made whole. Life would, under such an aspect, seem to you tame, joyless, slavish. Without the fire of lust, the excitement of drink, the laughter of folly, and the pomp of pride, what would existence be to many? To them our ideal of sound manhood is but another name for bondage and misery.

Take the other instance of a Man who was whole. It was Jesus, the Second Adam. Dwelling here among the sons of men, not in a Paradise, but in the midst of obloquy, temptation, and suffering, yet was He a whole, sound Man. Sickesses He took upon Himself, as to His body—and our sins were reckoned to Him as our Substitute. But in Him was no sin. The prince of this world searched Him through and through, but could find no unsoundness in Him. The perfection of our Savior’s manhood consisted in this—that He was “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.”

He was holy, that is, in its root, the same thing as “whole.” He was a complete, perfect, uninjured, untainted Man. He was whole towards His God. It was His meat and drink to do the will of God that sent Him. Jesus as Man was man as God would have man—perfectly conformed to His right position. He was as He came from the Maker’s hand, without blot, without loss, without excrescence of evil, and without the absence of any good thing. He was whole and holy. Therefore he was harmless, never inflicting ill on others in word or deed.

He was undefiled, never affected by the influences that surrounded Him so as to become false to His God or unkind to man. He was undefiled, though blasphemy passed through or by His ear, yet it never polluted His heart. Though He saw the lust and wickedness of man carried to its climax, yet He Himself shook off the viper into the fire and remained without spot, and blameless. He was also separate from sinners, not drawing around Him a Pharisaic cordon, and saying, “Stand by, for I am holier than you,” but eating with them and yet separate from them.

And never more separate than when His benignant hand touched them, and when He entered most deeply into sympathy with them in their sorrows. He was separate by His own mental elevation, moral superiority, and spiritual grandeur. Now, would you wish to be like Jesus?

There is a question. Probably if you were, it would involve in you much of His experience. You would be laughed at, you would be scoffed. You, too, would be persecuted, and unless Providence restrained your foe, you also might be brought to death. But taking Christ for All and All—would you be willing to be made like He—to have torn away from yourself much real evil which you now admire, and to have implanted in you much real

good, which perhaps at this moment you do not appreciate? Would you be willing now to be made whole?

I can imagine that you say, "I want to be like Jesus, I anxiously desire it," and yet permit me gently and affectionately to whisper in your ear that if you knew what I meant, if you knew what Jesus was, I am not so sure that your will would very vehemently incline that way. I am afraid that many a struggle, and many a rebellion would arise in your heart if the process were being carried on towards making you whole as Jesus Christ was whole.

Still further, to illustrate the meaning of the question, "Will you be made whole?" let me remind you that when a man is whole, complete, and what a man should be, there are certain evil propensities which are expelled, and certain moral qualities which he is sure to possess. For instance, if a man is made whole before God he is made honest before men. No man can be said to be whole while he is still guilty of injustice in his trading, in his thinking, in his conversation, or in his actions towards his neighbors.

Sinner, you have been in the habit of perpetrating in your business much that would not stand the tests of God's all-searching eye. You often say in your trading things that are not true. You excuse them by the assertion that others do the same. I am not here to listen to your excuse, but I am about to ask you earnestly, "Will you be made whole?" Are you desirous to be made from this time a thoroughly, strictly, punctiliously honest man? No more lying puffs! No more exaggerations! No more over-reaching, and taking of advantage! Come now, what do you think of this state of things?

Why, there are some who could not carry on their business at this rate—"the trade is rotten, and if you do not fall into its practices you cannot make a living! The district is low and beggarly, and none can thrive in it but cheats. We should have to shut up the shop if we were perfectly honest." "Why," cries one, "I should be eaten up alive in this age of competition. I cannot believe that we are to be so excessively conscientious." I see how it is, you do not want to be made whole.

He who is quite whole becomes in all respects a sober man. "Not that which goes into the mouth defiles a man. But that which comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man." And, "the kingdom of God stands not in meats or drinks," yet still both in meat and drink men do frequently sin, and especially in the sin of drunkenness. Now I suppose there is no drunkard but what at least, when he is sober, anxiously desires to be saved. But Drunkard, understand the question, it is not this—would you go to Heaven? But this—would you give up your drunkenness, and no longer delight yourself in those cups of excess? Now what do you say?

Would you, from this moment, have done with all this rioting and wantonness, and cast them all away? Perhaps in the morning some would say, "Yes," when the eyes are red, and the woe of excess is on them. But how about the eventide when the merry company surrounds the man, and the wine sparkles in the cup? Would he, then, be made whole, and renounce that which ruins his body and his soul? Ah, no. Many say, "Yes, I would be made whole," but they do not mean it. They are like the dog that

returns to its vomit, and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire.

To be made whole involves in a man the production of universal truthfulness. Now, there are persons who cannot stand to speak the truth. To them two must always be twenty. To their eyesight the faults of any neighbor are crimes, and the virtues of any, except their special favorites, are always tinged with vice. Naturally they have a malicious judgment towards others. They are envious of anything that is honorable in their fellow man. Now, what do you say, Sir? Are you willing to be made whole and from this hour to speak nothing but the truth towards God and towards man? I am afraid many a tongue that is glib now would have little to say if it said nothing but truth. And many a man might, and would, if he were honest enough to say it, refuse the benediction of being made perfectly truthful.

So in the matter of forgiveness. A man who is made whole can forgive even to seventy times seven. When you cannot forgive an injury, it is because your soul is sick. When a wrong is resented strongly, you are ill for the moment. When it is resisted constantly, you have a chronic disease upon you. Some persons are so far from wishing to know how to forgive that they would almost pray that they might live and die to gratify the passion of revenge. They would follow the man who has done them an injury through this world and the other, too, and be damned with him if they might have the satisfaction of seeing him amidst the flames.

Sweet is revenge to many men, and it is useless for a man to say, "I would be made whole," while he still cultivates malice, and bears ill-will towards his fellow man. I might thus pass over one after another of the virtues and the vices, and show that my text is not quite such a simple question, after all, as some people think. There are some men who are afflicted with a miserly, grasping disposition. If they were whole they would be generous, they would be kind to the poor, they would be ready to give of their substance to the Lord's work.

But would they be made whole if it were left to their choice this morning? Ah, no. They think generosity to be weakness and charity sheer folly. "What is the good of having money and giving it away?" they say. "What can be the good of getting it but to hold it?" And, "He is the wise man who can hold it fastest and part with as little of it as may be." The man does not want to be made whole, Sir. He counts his paralyzed hand and ossified heart to be the marks of health. He reckons himself to be the only mentally healthy man about, though his narrow-mindedness and soul-starvation are visible to all.

He is a very skeleton and an anatomy of sickness. And yet he believes himself to be the paragon of health. Those who admire their failings have evidently no wish to be free from them. "What a beautiful cataract I have in my eye," says one. "What a precious carbuncle decorates my limb," says another. "What a delightful bend this is in my leg," says a third. "What a comely hump adorns my back," says another. Men do not speak thus concerning their bodily diseases, or we should think them mad. But they often glory in their shame, and rejoice in their iniquities. Whenever you meet with a man who has a fault which he mentally elevates into a

virtue, you have a man who would not wish to be made whole, and who would scorn the physician's visit if he waited at his door. And such persons are common in every street.

Let me also remark, if a man is made whole there are not only moral virtues which will abound in him, but spiritual Graces. For a man who is whole is sound in spirit as well as in outward character. What then, would happen to a man if he were made whole in his spirit? I reply, first, You see that Pharisee there, he is thanking God that he is quite as good as he should be, and a great deal better than most people. Now, if that man is ever made whole, he will say, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

But if I were to ask him whether he would like to change places with the publican, he would reply, "Why should I? He is a degraded and debased wretch. The language which he uses is very appropriate for him, I am glad he uses it. It would be very degrading to me to make the same confession as he does, and I do not intend doing it." The man does not want to be made whole—he thinks he is whole already. He that is made whole becomes a self-renouncing man. Paul was whole when he said, "Not having my own righteousness, which is of the Law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

When he counted his own righteousness to be but dung, that he might win Christ and be found in Him, he was a whole man. Sickly men think their own righteousness good enough, and wrap themselves in it, and stick a little sham jewelry of ceremony and outward form on it, and then conclude that they are right enough for Heaven. They are in such a fever of pride that they rave about their fancied goodness, while real goodness they call cant and hypocrisy.

He that is whole spiritually is a man of habitual prayer. He is accustomed to feel constant gratitude, and so to exhibit continual praise. He is a man of abiding consecration—whatever he does he does it unto God, seeking God's glory in it. His mind is fixed upon things unseen and eternal. His heart is not enslaved by the things that are seen, for he knows that they are vanity.

Now, if we were to appeal to many, and they fully knew what we meant by it, and say, "Would you be made whole? Would you from this hour become a prayerful man, a praiseful man, a holy man, a God-serving man?" I believe that the majority, even of our congregations, if they spoke honestly, would say, "No. We do not want to be made whole. We would like to go to Heaven, but we do not want this. We desire to escape from Hell, but we do not wish to practice all this Puritan precision which you call holiness.

"No. We would enjoy ourselves with sinners first, and go to Heaven with the saints last. The poison is too sweet to give up, but we, too, will have the antidote by-and-by. We would gladly breakfast with the devil, and sup with Christ. We are in no hurry to be made pure, our tastes for the present lead us in another direction."

II. So, having explained the question, I shall, as strength holds out, go on to notice in the second place, that THIS QUESTION IS CAPABLE OF A GREAT MANY REPLIES, and therefore it is the more necessary that it should be asked and answered.

1. First, there are some here whose only reply to this question may be called no answer at all, that is to say, they do not want to hear or consider anything of the sort. "Will you be made whole?" "Well, yes, no—we do not quite know what to say. We do not want to be bothered about it. We are young people. There is plenty of time for us to think of these things. We are business people, we have something else to do besides worrying our minds with religion. We are wealthy persons, we really must not be expected to look at these things, as poor and coarse-minded persons are required to do."

Or, "We are sickly, and really, our attendance to our health takes up too much time to allow us to be troubled with theological difficulties." Anything, I see, to put away the one thing necessary from your thoughts. The poor soul is most precious, and yet least esteemed. Oh, how some of you trifle with your souls! How you play with your immortal interests! I did so once myself. If tears of blood could express my regret for having so done, I would gladly weep them. For the loss of time which comes through a long carelessness with regard to our soul's interests is something very solemn—a loss of time which even mercy cannot restore to us—which even the Grace of God cannot give back.

I would, young people, that these things were on your minds. Oh, how earnestly I would that these questions were seen by you to be important! Yes, pressingly important—overwhelmingly important to you—so that you could not shake off religious enquiry, nor keep away from your spirit the loving pressure of the Holy Spirit who would arouse you. Would to God that you were made wise enough to desire the noble development of spiritual life, and the destruction of everything detrimental to your best welfare.

Be considerate, I pray you, concerning the first and chief question. Do not give it the go around. Your dying hour may be much nearer than you think. The tomorrow in which you hope to consider these things may never arrive. I would put it to you again—if anything is deferred let it be something that may safely wait. If anything is postponed let it not be an *eternal* thing, a *spiritual* thing, but, "seek you first the kingdom of God and His righteousness."

Now, there are some persons who have had a great deal of religious concern and have not shaken it off, and yet their answer to this question, "Will you be made whole?" is not a very earnest one. Years ago they were aroused. When they heard a sermon they used to treasure up every word. Their prayers were importunate, and their desires were eager, but they have not obeyed the command which says, "Believe in Christ and live."

They have become habituated to unbelieving misery, to a continuance beneath the burden of sin which they will persist in carrying while there is a dear Savior waiting to relieve them of the burden. And now at this time their answer to the question is neither one thing nor the other. They groan out feebly, "I wish I did wish. I would that I did will. But oh I my heart is hard —

***'If anything is felt it is only pain
To find I cannot feel.'***

I will to will, but scarcely dare say I will."

See to what a state you have brought yourself, and may God help you now to make a desperate effort with that will of yours—may His quickening Spirit bless this affectionate word to your heart, and may you say, “Ah, yes, out of my deep despair, out of the pit wherein there is no water, I do yet cry to You, my God! Out of the belly of Hell do I desire deliverance. I will, I will, I would be saved! O give me Grace that I may be made whole.” May none of you continue to be numbered with those who virtually give no answer to the question.

2. And, secondly, there are too many who give very evasive replies to the question. To them I must speak. Will you be made whole? My dear Hearers, I am anxious to put this question to every unconverted one, but I anticipate that from several I shall get no distinct reply. I shall hear one say, “How am I to know whether I am God’s elect or not?” Beloved, that is not the question. That question cannot be answered at this stage of the proceedings—it shall be answered by-and-by.

Meanwhile, why do you need to bring up *that* subject, except to blind your eyes to the solemn enquiry which the text would raise? Will you, or will you not, be made whole? Come, Man, do not shirk the question! Come to it, and face it like a man! Are you willing to be reconciled to God, and to be obedient to Him, or not? Say yes or no, and speak out. If you wish to be God’s foe, and to love sin and unrighteousness, say so! Be honest with yourself, and see yourself in the true light? But if, indeed, you would be purified from sin and be made holy, say so—it will be no great thing, after all, to say nothing, at any rate, to boast of. It is but a will, and that is nothing in which to glory.

“Well,” says another, “I have not the power to cease from sin.” Again I say that is not the question. There must evermore be drawn a distinction between the will and the power. God will give the power, rest assured, in proportion as He gives the will. It is because our will is not there that the power is not there. When a feeble will comes, a feeble power comes. But when the will becomes intense then the power becomes intense, too. They rise and fall together. But that is not the query. I do not say, “What can you *do*?” but “What would you *be*?” Would you be holy? Are you earnestly, honestly anxious to be, this day, set free from the power of sin? There is the question, and I do pray you, for your soul’s sake, look into your heart and answer this enquiry as in the sight of God.

“But I have been so guilty in the past,” says one, “my former sins alarm me.” Again, though I am glad you have a sense of your sin, I would remind you that this is not the question. It is not how sick you are, but are you willing to be made whole? I know you are a sinner, and a much worse one than you think yourself to be. However black your sin is to your own eyes, it is ten times more black to God’s eyes, and you are an utterly condemned and lost sinner by nature.

But the question, now, is, “Will you be made whole?” It is not, “Will you have the past forgiven, and be delivered from the penalty of it?” Of course you would! But would you be set free from the lusts that have been your delight, from the sins that have been your darlings? Would you be delivered from the desires of your flesh and of your mind, the things that your

heart hungers after? Would you be made as the saints are, as God is—holy, set free from sin? Is that the yearning of your spirit, or is it not?

3. Now, I shall pass on to observe that there are a great many persons who practically say, “No,” to this. They do not evade it, but they honestly say, “No.” No, I must retract that word. I question whether they *honestly* say, “No,” they virtually say, “No,” by their actions. “I would be made whole,” says one, and yet when Divine service is over he goes back to his sin. A man says he would be cured of his disease, and yet he indulges again in that which gave the disease—is he untruthful or insane?

The eating of a certain meat may be the cause of disease—the doctor tells the patient so. He says he desires to be healed, and yet he falls back, at once, upon the very dish that caused his sickness. He is a liar, is he not? And he that says he would be made whole, and yet dallies with his old sin—does he not lie to himself, and his God? When a man would be made whole he frequents the places where healing is given. Yet there are some who very seldom go up to the House of God. They go, perhaps, but once on the Sunday.

They now and then hear the Gospel, or attend places because they are called places of worship—but the Gospel is not preached, the conscience is never harrowed, the demands of God’s Law and the promises of God’s Gospel are never fully insisted on. Yet are they quite content with having gone there, and think they have done well. They are like a man who, being sick, does not go to the physician who understands the case, but calls in at any quack’s shop where there is a profession made of curing, though never one was cured. Such a person does not desire to be made whole. He would not act so if he did.

How many, again, hear the Gospel but do not hear it attentively! A telegram on the Exchange—they read it with both their eyes—will there be a rise or fall of stocks? An article from which they may judge of the general current of trade—how they devour it with their minds, they suck in the meaning, and then go and practice what they have gathered from it.

A sermon heard, and lo, the minister is judged as to how he preached it—as if a man reading a telegram should say the capital letter was not well inked on the press, or the dot on the “I” had dropped off the letter. Or as if a man reading an article of business should simply criticize the style of the article, instead of seeking to get at its meaning, and act upon its advice. Oh, how men will hear and think it to be the height of perfection to say they liked or disapproved of the sermon! As if the God-sent preacher cared one whit whether you did or did not like his sermon—his business being not to please your tastes—but to save your souls! Not to win your approbation, but to win your hearts for Jesus, and bring you to be reconciled to God.

Liking is hardly to be thought of in the question—seldom enough is a patient enamored of a surgeon’s scalpel. The surgeon who conscientiously removes the proud flesh, or prevents a wound from healing too rapidly, cannot expect admiration for his use of the knife while the sufferer yet feels it. Nor does the preacher, when faithfully declaring the Truth of God, expect men to commend him with their tastes. If their consciences commend him it is enough.

Ah, my Hearers, you give us listless hearing, critical hearing, anything but practical hearing, and all this goes to prove that, after all, though you crowd our houses of prayer, you do not want to be made whole! Too many take up the Gospel as a man of reading may take up a surgery book to amuse himself with a smattering of the art, but not to find out what will touch his own case, or remove his own sickness.

So you do with this Bible—you read it as a sacred volume, but not as bearing upon your own best interests. How little you know of deep, earnest, heart-longing to find Jesus! To be reconciled to God, and to be delivered from the wrath to come! There are men who both by their non-hearing and their hearing, say, “We do not want to be made whole.”

Many there are, again, who do not desire to be made whole because being made whole would involve their losing their present position in society. They do not want to part with their ungodly gains or wicked companions. Religion would involve them in some degree of persecution. They would not like to be sneered at as a Methodist or Presbyterian. They could not afford to go to Heaven if the road were a little rough. They would prefer to go to Hell so long as the road which leads there is smooth and pleasant.

They count it better to be lost with the approbation of fools than to be saved with the derision of the wicked. They think it inconvenient to be gracious, irksome to be pious, disreputable to be devout, foolish to be too exact. They would gladly have the crown without the fight, the reward without the service. They would enjoy the sweets of soul health, but not lose the advantages of associating with the leprous and defiled. Alas, poor fools!

4. Thank God, there are some who can say, “Yes, yes, I would be made whole.” And of their case I am going to speak now.

III. WHEREVER AN HONEST, AFFIRMATIVE ANSWER IS GIVEN TO THIS QUESTION, WE MAY CONCLUDE THAT THERE IS A WORK OF GRACE COMMENCED IN THE SOUL. If any one of my hearers can earnestly say, “Yes, my great longing is to be set free from sin,” my dear Friend, I am thrice happy to be privileged to speak to you this morning!

If you say, “It is not fear of punishment, *sin* is punishment enough for me. If I could be in Heaven and yet be a sinner such as I am, it would be no Heaven to me. I want to be clear from every fault both of thought, and word, and deed, and if I could be perfect I should be perfectly happy, even if I were sick and poor.” Well, if the Lord has made you long after holiness, there is in your heart already the embryo of Divine Grace, the seed of everlasting life. Before long you shall rejoice that you are born again, and are passed from death unto life.

“Oh,” you say, “I wish I could see that, I wish I could feel it!” I do not believe that any utterly graceless person ever could have hearty, earnest, intense longings after holiness for its own sake. Now if you would get the joy and peace that is to come out of this fact, I have to say to you very much what Jesus said to the poor man at Bethesda—he said, “Take up your bed, and walk.” So now, this morning, hear the Words of the Lord—trust right now, at once, in the finished work of Jesus Christ, who as a Substitute was punished for your guilt.

Rely on Him, and you shall be a joyous as well as a saved soul. "Have I the power to believe in Christ?" says one. I answer, "Yes, you have the power. I would not say to every man, 'You have the power to exercise faith,' for the lack of will is the death of moral power. But if you are willing you have the right, you have the privilege, you have the power, to believe that Jesus died for you—that God, who has made you to long after holiness—has prepared holiness for you—and the instrument by which He will work it in you now is your faith.

The same Spirit who in you works to will, is in you working to do of His own good pleasure. "Look, then, to Christ and be saved." I pray that some of you may come to perfect peace this morning, by looking to Christ. "I want holiness," you say. Yes, and it may seem a strange thing, but true is it, that while you look after holiness *in yourself* you will never have it, but if you look *away* from yourself *to Christ*, then holiness will come unto you. Even now, that very desire of yours has come to you from Him. It is the beginning of the new birth in your soul. Look, I pray you, away, right away, even from your best desires—to Christ on the Cross—and this day shall be the day of your salvation.

It may seem a very little thing to have a desire, but yet such a desire as I have described is no little thing. It is more than human nature ever produced of itself, and only God the Eternal Spirit can implant it. I am persuaded that a living, saving faith always goes with it, and sooner or later comes to the surface, and brings joy and peace!

IV. But now, lastly, WHERE THIS QUESTION IS ANSWERED IN THE NEGATIVE, I must remind you, IT INVOLVES MOST FEARFUL SIN. I could wish I had not to preach on this last point, but I must, painful as it is. There are some here, there are many elsewhere, who are *not willing* to be made whole. You, my unconverted Brethren, are thus *unwilling*. Face that, now, I pray you, as you will have to face it soon.

It is just this. You prefer *yourself* to God. You prefer to please yourself before pleasing Him. You prefer sin to holiness. Look at it closely and fairly. Sin is your own choice, your own present deliberate choice. You are now making it, and have often made it, and will, I fear, continue to make it, if God's Grace does not prevent it. Look it in the face, for soon, on a dying bed, you will see the whole matter in the light of eternity. You will then discover that you preferred the pleasures of this life to Heaven.

You preferred the gaities and amusements, and self-righteousnesses, and prides, and self-wills of a few fleeting years to the Glory and the bliss of perfectly obeying Christ, and being in His Presence forever. Oh, when you come to die, and certainly when you live in another state, you will curse yourself for having made such a choice as this! When you lie dying unsaved, it will come to you thus, "I am not here an unsaved man unwillingly—I would not be made whole—I willed not to be a Believer, I willed to be impenitent. I heard the Gospel, I had it put before me, but I deliberately willed to put it behind me and to remain what I am. I find now I am dying unforgiven and unholy, and that of choice."

Remember, no spiritually unsound man can enter Heaven. He must be made whole, or be shut out of Glory. We cannot stand in the most holy place until we are made perfect. Then you, O unhealed soul, remaining as

you are, will never stand in God's Presence—and you choose, you deliberately choose never to be admitted to the courts of Paradise! Furthermore, and oh, how this will strike you in a short time (how short I know not, nor do you)—there being no entrance into Heaven for you, you having elected not to enter Heaven—there will remain but one other thing, namely, for you to be driven from His Presence into the eternal burnings of His wrath!

This will surely be one of the stings of Hell, that you perish of your own accord. How will you cry, "I chose this, I chose this! Fool that I was, I willed this!" For what is Hell? It is sin full-blown. Sin is evil in the conception, Hell is sin in its development. What thoughts will be yours in Hell? "I chose that which has involved me in a misery from which there never can be any escape. In a death out of which there can be no deliverance. I must die to God, to holiness, to happiness, and exist forever in that everlasting death, that eternal punishment, and all because I would have it so, and as the result of my own free will."

Do look that in the face, I pray you. It seems to me to be the most dreadful element about the whole of the lost sinner's case. If I could, when cast into Hell, say, "I am here because of God's decree, and for no other reason," I could find something with which to harden my spirit to endure the misery of my lost condition. But if I shall be compelled in Hell to feel that my ruin is of *myself* altogether and only, and that I perish for my own sin—my personal rejection of Christ—then is Hell, Hell indeed. These flames, are they of my own kindling? This prison house, is it my own building? That door so fast as never to open, is it my own barring? Then the last relic of consolation is taken away from my soul forever.

But, my dear Hearer, I hope you say, "I do desire to be made whole." Then let me again remind you that the place to find the fulfillment of that desire is at the foot of the Cross. Stand there and hope in the great Redeemer for there is some life in you already, the dying Savior will increase it! Stand at the foot of the Cross where falls the precious drops of blood—view the flowing of His soul-redeeming blood, and hope, no, BELIEVE that He shed that blood for you, and you are saved! Go your way, you who would be made whole, for Jesus says, "I will, be you clean."

Adapted from *The C.H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

THE HOSPITAL OF WAITERS VISITED WITH THE GOSPEL NO. 1211

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

***“Jesus said unto him, Rise, take up your bed, and walk.”
John 5:8.***

IT was the Sabbath! Where would Jesus spend that day and how? He would not spend it, we are quite sure, in any unhallowed manner or in any trifling sort. What would He do? He would do good, for it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath. Where would He do good? He knew that there was one sight in Jerusalem which was particularly painful—the sight of a number of poor persons, blind, lame and crippled, who were lying round a pool of water, waiting for a blessing which seldom came. He thought He would go and do good there, for there good was most needed. Would to God that all Christ’s servants felt that the most urgent necessity has the greatest claim upon them—that where there is the most need, there they ought to exercise the most kindness—and that no way of spending the Sabbath could be better than that of bearing the Gospel of Salvation to those who are most in need of it.

But it was a feast day as well. It was a great festival of the Jews and Jesus had come up to Jerusalem to keep the feast. Where will He feast? Has someone asked Him to his house? There were Mary and Martha and Lazarus down at Bethany. Would they ask Him? Sometimes even Pharisees and Publicans would open their houses and make a banquet for Him. Where would He go? Was it a singular choice for Him to say to Himself, “My feast shall be kept among the blind and the crippled and the lame”? No, it was not singular, for He had said to one who had invited Him to his house, “When you make a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: and you shall be blessed; for they cannot recompense you: for you shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.”

What He urged others to do, He would be sure to do Himself. It was just like He to say, “I shall spend My feast in an hospital. I will use this day, sacred both to joy and rest, by going where the sick lie thickly clustered together, for to Me to be merciful is to be glad—to bless men is to find rest for My heart.” Christ never feasts more joyfully than when He is doing good to others. And the greater the act of His liberality—the higher the deed of power which is worked by His love—the more is His blessed Nature filled with rest and joy. See you, then, the Savior going down to the pool of Bethesda, determining that in the spot where sorrow and disease reigned supreme, He would exercise His mercy and overcome evil.

I shall ask you to go with me, and with the Savior, down to *Bethesda’s pool*. I shall call it THE HOSPITAL OF WAITERS. While we are there we

shall notice that *Jesus Christ fixes His eyes upon the most helpless person among that waiting company*. And then, thirdly, we shall have to note with joy *how our Lord dealt with the man after a Gospel fashion*.

I. First of all, I said we would go down to the POOL OF BETHESDA with its five porches, which I have called the hospital of the waiters—for all those people who were there were doing one thing—they were waiting. They were waiting for the moving of the waters. There was nothing else they could do. They were lying sick, with anxious eyes gazing upon the little pool, hoping to see it bubble up—to see a widening circle coming upon its placid surface—waiting to plunge in immediately, for whoever plunged in first would receive a miracle—one and no more.

Said I not truly that it was an hospital of waiters? Too easily may we find a large company of waiters now-a-days. I wish it were not so, but great numbers are *always* waiting. I think I know enough to fill all the five porches. Some are waiting for *a more convenient season* and they have a notion, perhaps, that this more convenient season will come to them on a sick bed. Possibly, they even think, upon a *dying* bed. It is a great mistake! They have heard the Gospel and they believe it to be free though they have not accepted it. They go to a place of worship, continually, and they say to themselves, “We hope that one of these days we shall be able to lay hold of Christ, and shall be healed of the disease of sin, but not now.”

How many years have you been waiting, some of you, for the convenient season—five, six, eight, ten, twenty? I know some who have been waiting 20 or more years! I remember speaking to them about their souls and they said, then, that they did not intend to neglect the matter. They were waiting and the time had not quite come. They did not exactly explain what stood in the way, but it was a something that was to be gone in a few months—maybe even weeks. But it has not gone and they are still waiting! And I fear that they will wait until the Judgment Day will come and find them unsaved! They always reckon upon a good *tomorrow*, but tomorrow is a day which you will not find in the almanac—it is found nowhere but in the fool’s calendar.

The wise man lives *today*. What his hand finds to do, he does at once with all his might. Today is God’s time and whenever we are saved it will be our time. But, alas, many lie waiting till their joints stiffen, their eyes fail, their ears are heavy and their hearts more and more insensible. O you simple ones, will it be so, forever? Will you wait till you are cast into Hell? On a second porch, a crowd of waiters are waiting *for dreams and visions*. You, perhaps, think these are very few, but they are not so few as you imagine. And they have a notion that perhaps one of these nights they will have such a vivid dream of judgment that they will wake up alarmed—or such a bright vision of Heaven that they will wake up fascinated by it!

They have been reading in somebody’s biography that he saw something in the air, or heard a voice, or had a text of Scripture “laid home to him” (as it is called). They are waiting, I say, till the same signs and won-

ders shall happen to them. I bear them witness that they are very anxious to have this thing happen. But their mistake is that they want it, or expect it to happen at all, and lie there by the Pool of Bethesda waiting, and waiting, and waiting, as though they cannot believe *God*, but they can believe in a *dream*—they cannot confide in the teaching of Holy Scripture, but they can believe in a voice which they imagine to be sounding in their ears, though it might be the chirp of a bird, or might be nothing at all.

They could trust their imagination, but they cannot trust the Word of God as it is written in the Inspired Volume! They want something over and above the sure Word of Testimony. The witness of God is not enough for them. They demand the witness of fancy, or the witness of feeling—and they are waiting on the porch by the pool till that comes. What is this but an insulting unbelief? Is not the Lord to be believed until a sign or a wonder shall corroborate His Testimony? Such waiting provokes the Most High!

A third porch full of people will be found waiting for *a sort of compulsion*. They have heard that those who come to Christ are drawn by the Spirit of God. They believe the Doctrines of Grace and I am glad they do, for they are true. But they misconstrue those doctrines. They suppose the Spirit of God makes men do this or that altogether against their wills, by exercising force. Their notion seems to be that men are taken to Heaven by their ears, or dragged by force and, because we speak of cords of love and bands of a man, they pick out the imagery and mistranslate it.

Now, believe me, the Spirit of God *never* acts by the human heart as you and I might act by a box of which we have lost the key. He does not wrench it and break it open. According to the laws of our nature, He acts with men as men. He draws with cords, but they are cords of love—with bands, but they are bands of a man. It is by enlightening the judgment that He influences the will. He leads us to see things in a different light by the instruction which He gives us and by that clearer light He influences the understanding and the heart. The things we love, we see to be evil, and we hate them. And the things we once hated, we see to be good, and we choose them.

These persons fancy that they will be made to repent whether they will or not—made to believe in Jesus Christ whether they will or not! But it is not so that the Holy Spirit acts. Let me warn you of the great sin and of putting the Holy Spirit into contrast or rivalry with Jesus Christ. Now, the Gospel is, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” But for you to say, “I am waiting for the Holy Spirit,” is to set up Jesus in a kind of opposition with the Holy Spirit—whereas the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit agree in One—no, *They are One*, and the testimony of Jesus is the testimony of the Holy Spirit! And when the Holy Spirit works in men, He works with the things of Christ, not with any new things. He takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto us.

If a man rejects the Gospel which says, “Believe and live,” he rejects the Holy Spirit who will not bring any other Gospel, but leaves him shut up to believe in Jesus or to die in his sins. You must have Christ, or perish! And

if you refuse to obey His Gospel Word, neither will God the Father nor God the Spirit interpose to deliver you. Jesus Christ has the Spirit to bear witness of Him and when He comes, He convinces men of sin because they believe not on Christ! And then He leads them, not to trust in some work over and above the work of Jesus, but to rest simply and alone on the Atonement which Christ has furnished. Woe to those who linger anywhere short of this!

A fourth porch is attractive to many people, especially at this peculiar time. They are waiting *for a revival*. We have heard glad tidings, in which we rejoice, of great revivals in different parts of England, Scotland and Ireland. And there are some who say, "Oh, if a revival would come here, I would be converted." Or it runs thus, "If the two honored servants of God were to come here and hold services, then, surely, we would be converted." They look to *men* and *excitements*. I thank God for every genuine revival and, whenever He works, I rejoice in it. But for any man to suppose that the Gospel command is suspended for a time until a revival comes, is to suppose a lie!

The Gospel says, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you." So said Peter on the day of Pentecost. Or, in other words, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." The Gospel call is, "Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." It does not say, "Wait, wait, wait till times of refreshing! Wait till a revival." I am inclined to think that even if a revival *should* come, persons who are now making it an excuse for delay would be in a very unlikely state to get a blessing from it. Or if they thought they got a blessing it would, in all probability, be a mistake, for they could be depending upon *men*, or upon fleshly excitement, and not looking away to Jesus Christ, who is as able to save them now as He will be in a revival! And He is just as able to save them by my voice, now, or by no voice at all, as He would be by any other man, however useful he may have been. I fear there are many waiting on that porch.

Many are waiting on the porch of *expected impressions*. They want an impression and they wish the minister to preach a very alarming sermon. They want him to be very warm-hearted and earnest, as he ought to be, but they want him to fix *them*—to shoot the arrow into *their* flesh, that they may be pierced in the heart—for this they are waiting! They come here every Sunday. They have been touched a great deal and rendered very uneasy. They have felt as if they could hardly sit through the sermon, but they have managed to do it—and they have managed to wait—and wait. When shall I reach you? In what way am I to preach?

Surely, if I knew in what way I could bring you to Jesus, it would be my delight to follow it! But I cannot preach any other Gospel than the one I preach! And I cannot do it more plainly. Neither do I think I can do it more earnestly, for I desire the salvation of sinners with my whole soul. Many may preach it better, but none more from the heart. If you are looking for me to do something more, you will look in vain, for I have nothing better to bring. I have pointed you to a Savior's flowing wounds and bid you look to Him and live. If you will not accept His salvation, then I have no other

hope to set before you. If you will not trust my Lord, not even an angel from Heaven, if he should come, could give you any other hope. If men will not hear the Gospel which I have preached, neither could they be converted though one rose from the dead.

Thus I have shown you five porches of waiters. I will tell you why I am sure they are wrong in waiting. I will set before you their theory. Those people were waiting because an angel would come and stir the water—and whoever stepped in first would get healed. That was their idea. They were not looking to Jesus, any of them! Had they not heard that Jesus was healing the sick? Had they never heard of the woman who came behind Him in the crowd and touched His garment and had the issue of blood stopped? Had they never heard of a nobleman's son who was on the point of dying, and was made to live? Had they never heard of all this? I do not know, but certain it is they never tried to get to Jesus, nor did they cry to Him.

They trusted wholly to the *pool* and the angel, and the stirring of the water. Ah, I think had they been wise, they would have said, "This is uncertain and only happens now and then. But Jesus says, 'Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out,' and He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him. Had we not better crawl as best we can to those dear feet and look up into His face and say, 'You, Son of David, have mercy upon us'?" And so there is the theory—the opposition theory to the Gospel! I want to smash it to pieces, if God the Holy Spirit will help me—the waiting theory, the theory of looking for something, but not looking to Christ and to Him alone!

These people attached great importance to *the place*. They stayed at the pool of Bethesda. There was the place. If ever they got any good, they would get it there. And so I find waiters often attach great importance to the place of worship—they expect to find salvation only there. Do you not know that Jesus can save your souls tomorrow morning in the tankard, quite as well as next Sunday in the Tabernacle? Do you not know that Jesus is just as much a Savior on a Saturday as on a Sunday? Do you not know that when you are walking in the streets, in Cheapside or in the Borough, if you breathe a prayer to Him, He is just as mighty to save you as He would be if you were on your knees, or at home, or sitting here and listening to the Gospel?

He is wherever there is a heart that needs Him! Wherever there is an eye that desires to look to Him with the glance of faith, there is Jesus! There are no pools of Bethesda now—no places set apart to monopolize the dispensation of Divine Mercy—

***"Where ever we seek Him, He is found,
And every place is hallowed ground."***

Oh, get to *Him*, then, in these pews, for this is a place where He is! And if you were lying on your sick beds, I would tell you He was there! And if you were at a carpenter's bench driving the plane, or out in the fields driving the plow, I would have nothing more to say to you but this, "The Word is near you, even in your mouth and in your heart, that if you shall confess

with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved.” This theory that we are to wait at the pool of ordinances is antichrist’s Gospel! Christ’s Gospel is, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.”

Then they say that they are to wait for *signs and wonders*. Those who waited at Bethesda waited for an angel. I do not know whether they ever did see an angel, or whether the water was stirred mysteriously by an invisible wing. But they waited for an angel—a mystery. People like a mystery, but the craving is evil, for albeit that the Gospel is, in one respect, the mystery of godliness, yet as far as you sinners are concerned, it is the plainest thing in all the world! It is this, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” He has God set forth to be a Propitiation for sin. The blood of Jesus is a substitutionary offering to God’s Justice, instead of our death. And whoever trusts Christ to stand instead of him and so accepts Christ to be his Substitute, is a saved man!

Priests try to make a mystery out of everything, now-a-days, and this is that word which is written upon the forehead of the whore of Babylon, according to the Book of Revelation—“Mystery, Mother of Harlots!” Her mass is a mystery and her ceremonies are all mysteries! The Latin tongue is used to make the service a mystery! The priest, himself, is a mystery! Baptism is a mystery. Now, in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the essential Truth of God is as plain as a pikestaff. Legible only by the light they give, stand the soul-quickenings words—“Believe and live.” A man who is almost an idiot may understand this! Trust Christ! Accept Christ to be your Substitute before God and you are saved on the spot—saved in an instant! But no, they wait for a mystery! They pine for a mystery. They even suppose that the Holy Spirit, Himself, is to come upon them to confuse the Gospel, whereas, what He does is to make the Gospel yet more plain to us! And when He comes, He tears the mystery away, removes the scales from our eyes, and makes us see that it is a simple matter to receive Jesus and become the sons of God!

Again, these waiters who attach so much importance to place and are waiting for mysteries, appear to be waiting, also, for an *influence which is intermittent*. It was only at a certain season that the angel stirred the pool. So they seem to fancy that there are certain times and seasons when Christ is willing to receive sinners—and occasional intervals when they may hope to find salvation. Whereas the mercy of my God is not like the pool of Bethesda, stirred now and then! It is a well of water always springing up and whoever believes in Jesus, whether it is 16 minutes to eight, or whether it is eight o’clock, shall find that Christ is ready to receive sinners.

“All things are ready, come unto the supper,” is one of the Gospel proclamations. Ready, and ready *now*, not sometimes, but at all times—not now and then, not occasionally, on Sundays and high days and revival days, but—“Today, if you will hear His voice.” “Today is the accepted time; today is the day of salvation.” Therefore, because these people think that there is a certain intermittent influence, they believe that all they have to

do is to wait for it in a very singular way. Oh, if I were to be hanged tomorrow morning and I knew that an application had been made for pardon, I would wait for the result—but how do you think I would wait? Suppose I had no hope of Heaven and knew I would be hanged tomorrow, but I had a bare hope that perhaps a pardon might come, I would wait for it—but how would I wait?

Would I go to sleep tonight? Would I make a feast and make myself drunk with the drunken? Oh no, my life, my life, my *life* is in jeopardy! I cannot trifle! How do sailors on the wreck wait for the lifeboat? Are they idle, do you think? No, they are straining their eyes with looking and bursting themselves with their signals of distress, imploring help! Do they go to sleep on the wreck and say, “If we are to be saved we shall be saved. Let us go to sleep”? No, they are waiting, but if there should come a rocket to the ship with a rope, they would be ready to lay hold of it in a minute and wait no more! It is a lie, nine times out of ten, when men say they are waiting for Christ, because they have not that awful anxiety, that dolorous uneasiness of mind which goes with true waiting. It is only a make-believe waiting, a mere excuse. Whatever sort of waiting it is, it is clean opposite to the Gospel which never says a word about waiting, but which commands men to believe and live!

Besides, these people are waiting for an influence supposed to be *very limited*. Only one person was healed at a time at Bethesda, and he was the first who plunged in. And so when the waiters hear of anyone being saved they think that he was in more favorable circumstances than themselves, that he was placed in a better position for obtaining salvation. They seem to be in the rear of the ranks and unable to get to this wonderful pool of theirs. It is all a mistake! Jesus Christ is as near to one seeker as another! If a man has been moral, the Gospel says to him, “believe.” If a man has been immoral, the Gospel cries to him, “believe.” If a man is a king, the Gospel commands him to “believe.” If he is a beggar, it bids him, also, “believe.” If a man is full of self-righteousness, the Gospel points him to Christ and tells him to give up his righteousness. And if a man is full of vice and rotten with sin, it points him to Christ and bids him give up his sin and look to Jesus!

The footing upon which the Gospel addresses sinners is the same at all times. It has neither less nor more to say to the child of the harlot than to the child of the Christian matron. It presents the same pardon to the great sinner and the little sinner, (if such there is), and comes with the same rich blessing to the chief of sinners as it does to the children of godly parents. Do not get false notions in your head. The same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him. Like faith obtains a like blessing. There is a limit, for, “the Lord knows them that are His,” but in the preaching of the Gospel we are not bound by the decree which is secret, but by our marching orders, “Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature; he that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” He who bade me preach to every creature did not bid me exempt *one soul* from my message!

Thus I have tried to show why so many wait and I will add but one thing more on this point. Some of these people who are waiting put a good deal of reliance *on other people* even as this poor man said, "I have no one to put me in the pool." I have letters every week from persons in distress of mind who ask me to pray for them, which I very cheerfully do. But as a general rule, I say to them, "My dear Friends, I beseech you do not try to quiet your mind by asking me to pray for you. That is not your hope. 'Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved,' whether prayed for or not." I try to get them away from all reliance in anybody's *prayers* and to look to Jesus alone.

O, do not say, "I will ask my friends to pray for me, and then be easy." You may say it if you like, but do not rest in that, I pray you! Remember Jesus Christ is to be looked to—not the best people's prayers! If you look to Jesus you shall have immediate salvation. But if the whole Church of God were to go down on its knees at once and stay there for the next 50 years praying for you, you would be damned to a certainty if you did not believe in Jesus! If you pray for yourself and look alone to Jesus, you shall most assuredly be saved! Is not this enough about that dreary hospital full of waiters?

II. Now a few minutes on the second head. Jesus Christ has entered the hospital and He looks about Him. And He picks out THE MOST HELPLESS MAN IN THE WHOLE WORLD. I was pleased to notice on the bill of the services at the theatres a line which says, "The poorest people are the most welcome." That is a *Gospel* sentence. Even thus is it with Christ. He always loves to give His mercy to those who need it most. There lay that man and he did not think of Christ, but Christ stood and looked at him. He did not know Jesus Christ, but Jesus Christ knew him and He knew that he had been a long time in that condition.

He knew that he had been sick 38 years! He knew all that—and He knew before the man told him—that he had often been disappointed and, indeed, that poor wretch *had* been. He had often tried, as well as his paralyzed body would enable him, to get into the water. But somebody, even some blind man who had managed to get nearer the edge and had the use of his limbs, plunged in first and came up with his eyes open—while this poor nervous creature could not get into the water at any time. He had seen a great many others cured and that had made the disease more painful to him. But it had not encouraged him, but rather made him the more sad. He was the most irresolute, soft kind of a man that you ever met with.

Read the story of the man whose eyes were opened by Christ, who said, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." There is a fine hard-headed fellow! He might have been a Scotchman! But *this* man was all irresolution, shiftless, weak in mind. You know some such people—perhaps you have such in your family. You cannot help them. If you set them up in business they are sure to fail. Whatever they do, it never succeeds. They are a poor, weak, childish sort of people who need to be put in a basket and carried on somebody else's back all through the world. There

are people of this sort as to religion—and this man was a type of them. He sorely longed to be healed but he did not hardly say *that*, for when Jesus said to him, “Will you be made whole?” he did not say “O Lord, I desire it with all my heart,” but he went on with a rambling story, saying, “I have no man to put me into the water,” and so on.

When our Lord did heal him, it you notice, he did not ask Christ His name, and, when he found that out afterwards, he went like a stupid to the Pharisees and told them directly who his Benefactor was, and so got the Lord into trouble. There are still people about of this kind. They scarcely know their own mind. They know they need to be saved, but they hardly say as much as that. They are rightly impressed, but they get impressed the other way almost as easily. They are irresolute and unstable.

Now, my Lord and Master picked out this very man to be the subject of His healing energy. To God belong wonders of Grace! Did Jesus not say, Himself, “I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, because You have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight”? “God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confuse the wise. And God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, has God chosen, yes, and things which are not, to bring to nothing things that are.” This poor, hapless, helpless paralyzed man—almost as paralyzed in his brains as he was in his body—was pitied by our gracious Lord!

Now who is the most helpless man in this place? Who is the most helpless woman in this place? I know you are saying, some of you, “I am afraid that is myself.” I have good news for you! You are just the sort my Lord loves to begin with! Do not be offended at the description but be willing to take it home to yourself. Very probably, looking back upon your past life, you are compelled to say, “Well, that is really what I *have* been. I have plenty of wits about me in my business. I am sharp enough there. But when it comes to religion I fear I am just that kind of fool. I have no resolution. I have no fixed determination. I am always being pulled by the ear by a temptation, or drawn the wrong way by evil companions.”

Now, my poor Friend, lie down before Jesus Christ in all your helplessness, in all your stupidity—and pray the Lord to look upon you. A Brother once said to me, “My dear Sir, I wish you would never speak to anybody but *sensible* sinners.” I said, “Well, I am very glad to preach to sensible sinners when they come to hear me, but so many stupid sinners come along with them that I am bound to preach to them, as well.” And I do. I put the Gospel to those that feel themselves to be insensible and stupid in everything—and who write themselves down among the fools. Jesus has come to seek and save poor lost, ruined, dead sinners, and I pray Him to look on *you* at this time!

III. Now, the third point is HOW JESUS CHRIST DEALT WITH HIM. If Jesus Christ had belonged to a certain class of ministers, He would have said, “Right, my Man, you are lying at the pool of ordinances and there you had better lie.” He did not belong to that persuasion and, therefore,

He did not say anything of the sort! Neither did He say, as some Brethren do, “My dear Friend, you should pray.” Very proper advice in some respects, you know, but Jesus did not give it—He knew better. He did not say, “Now, you must begin to pray and wait before the Lord.” That is a very good thing to say to some people, but it is not the Gospel for *sinner*s. Jesus Christ did not say to His disciples, “Go you into all the world, and tell people to pray.” No. “Preach the Gospel to every creature; he that believes and is baptized shall be saved.”

Well, what *did* Jesus Christ do to him? *He gave him a command.* “Rise, take up your bed, and walk.” The words sounded like three thunderclaps. “But he cannot! But he cannot! He is paralyzed, good Sir! He is paralyzed!” Yes, but the Gospel is a *command*, for we read of some who *disobey* the Gospel. Now, a man cannot disobey what is not a command! He cannot be disobedient unless, first of all, there is a command. Jesus Christ brought the Gospel blessing of healing to him as a *command*. “Rise,” He said, “take up your bed, and walk.” It was *a command which implied faith*, because the man could not rise and could not take up his bed—and could not walk of himself. But if he believed in Jesus Christ, he could rise and could take up his bed—and could walk! So it was really a command to exercise faith in Jesus and to prove it by practical works.

“But the man could not do it.” That has nothing to do with it! The power is not in the *sinner*, but in the *command*! He could not rise, but Jesus Christ could make him do so. And when I, or any other minister of the Lord Jesus, in the power of the Holy Spirit, address you, chosen Sinner, and say to you, “Trust Jesus Christ,” we do not do so because we believe there is any strength in *you*, any more than there was in the paralyzed man, but because we speak in the name of Jesus of Nazareth who has sent us to say to you, “Rise up and walk.” I trust my Lord to send His power with the Gospel! I know right well that I have no power of my *own*, but He that sent me will bless His own message as He pleases. If you are to get salvation, you will get it by believing in Jesus and rising, at once, out of the state in which you now are! By His power, through the simple act of believing in Him, you will be made whole!

The man believed in Jesus. That was all he did. Soft simpleton as he was. Irresolute, and all that, he had enough sense, and God gave him Grace enough to simply believe in Jesus. He resolved that he would try his legs and to his surprise—oh, how astonished he must have been—those poor legs worked! He stood and found he could stoop and, rolling up his mattress, he took it up and walked away with it. What joy went through his frame! You have been ill, but the Lord has restored you and you have got up and found yourself able to walk! Was it not a delight to you? I know the sensation well. What must it be to be paralyzed 38 years? And then to be able to stoop and roll up a bed, and put it on your back, and walk away! It must have been a delight to feel new life leaping through his nerves and sinews and veins.

Now, if a sinner says, “Well, I never did try it before, but by the Grace of God I will trust my soul in the hands of Jesus—

***“I do believe, I will believe,
That Jesus died for me,
And on the Cross He shed His blood
For sin, to set me free,”***

Sinner, you will rise up and walk directly. You will be surprised, yourself, to find the mighty change which God is working in you by His blessed Spirit through that simple act of faith! And you will go down those Tabernacle steps hardly knowing where you are, singing for joy because the Lord has taken you out of the hospital of waiters and put you among the Believers! Has He not said, “Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert”?

Jesus Christ treated this man in a Gospel way, for the way in which faith came into that man is very remarkable. The man did not know Jesus Christ—why was it he believed in Him? Why, it was this—he did not know who He was, but he knew He was somebody very wonderful! There was a look about Him, a majestic gleam about those eyes, a wonderful force in the tone of that voice, a power in the lifting up of that finger which was very different from what the man had ever seen before. He knew not who He was and did not know His name—yet somehow confidence was born in his soul! How much more, then, may faith come to you who know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God? You know that He died and made a full Atonement for sin. You know that He has risen from the dead and that He sits on the right hand of God, even the Father—that all power is given unto Him in Heaven and in earth, and that—“He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them.”

Do not say, “I will *try* and get faith.” That is not the way. If I want to believe a statement, how do I go to work? Why, I hear it and faith comes by *hearing*. If I have any doubt about it, I hear it again and ask to have it repeated to me more fully and, when I have heard it again, conviction flashes upon me. So Jesus, in the Gospel, says, “Incline your ear, and come unto Me: hear and your soul shall live; and I will make an Everlasting Covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.” “Hear Me. Believe Me”—this is, in brief, the Gospel which Jesus preaches to men’s hearts.

Now God gives His witness concerning Christ that He is His Son, for out of Heaven He spoke and said, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” Will you not believe Him? The Spirit, the water and the blood are always bearing witness, and these three agree in one. Believe Jesus Christ! The evidence is strong, yield up your soul to it and you shall find joy, peace and eternal life! The man’s belief in Jesus, actively proved by his rising, settled the matter! A very different case is that from lying and waiting. Why, I should think this man, if he had wits enough, would go back and say to others lying and waiting, “What? Still lying and waiting? Why, I was lying and waiting for 38 years and I got, by lying and waiting, *nothing!* Neither will you!”

Simple as he was, he would have said, “I will tell you what is better than lying and waiting. There is a Man among us, even Jesus Christ, the

Son of God, and if we trust Him, He will heal us, for He heals all manner of diseases. If you cannot go to Him, send a messenger to Him, for He healed a nobleman's son many miles away. Only believe Him and virtue will go out of Him, for it is not possible that any should trust Him and not be healed." I think I should like to have been that man, simpleton as I might have been, to have gone to tell those poor souls who were lying and waiting, the difference between lying and waiting and immediately believing!

I would put it in the simplest way I could, for I was, myself, waiting when I was a child. I heard much preaching that led me to wait—and I think I should have kept on waiting had I not heard that poor Primitive Methodist Brother cry, "Look, young man, look now!" I did look, then and there, and I found salvation on the spot—and I have never lost it. I have nothing else to say to you, but, "There is life in a look at the Crucified One," and every man that looks shall have it *here, now and at once*. O, that many would look!

Do you understand it? Christ bore the wrath of God instead of those who trust Him! Jesus Christ took the sins of all who trust Him and was punished in the place of every Believer, so that God will not punish a Believer because He has punished Christ for him! Christ died for the man who believes in Him, so that it would be injustice on the part of God to punish that man, for how shall He punish twice for the same offense? Faith is the seal and evidence that you were redeemed 1,900 years ago upon the bloody tree of Calvary! And you are justified and who shall lay anything to your charge?

"It is God that justifies you: who is he that condemns you? It is Christ that died; yes, rather, that is risen again." This is the Gospel of your salvation! "Oh, but I do not feel." Did I say anything about *feeling*? You shall have feeling after you have faith. "But I am not right." I do not care what you are or are not! Jesus says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believes in Me has everlasting life." "Oh, but—" Away with your "buts." Here is the Gospel—"Whoever will, let him come and take of the Water of Life freely. The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come.'" And what both the Spirit and the bride of Christ say, surely I may say and *do* say! And may God bless the saying of it! And may you accept it, you waiting ones! May you look, believe and live, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 4:46; 5:1-16.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—538, 505, 516.**

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SABBATH-WORK

NO. 2568

**A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 1, 1898.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 18, 1883.**

***“And on the same day was the Sabbath.”
John 5:9.***

OUR Divine Master healed men every day of the week. From the first day even to the close of the seventh day, He went about doing good and healing all manner of diseases. The healing virtue did not flow from Him occasionally, but perpetually. It was not like that famous pool which was only now and then touched with the angel's wing and so made salutary to the sick folk lying around—but whoever stepped into the pool of Christ's mercy found healing at any hour of the day or night!

Still, it is worthy of notice that the Lord Jesus frequently made the Sabbath to be a high day of Grace and blessing. There was, I suppose, something about that day that led Him more especially to display His great power, or, perhaps, He felt bound to meet the superstition of the Pharisees, and He met it by a flood-tide of mercy upon that day to the sons of men. I have read to you the records of six notable miracles which were worked by our Lord on the Sabbath. [See EXPOSITION at end of sermon.] I need not read them, again, but I will just remind you that those miracles comprised the casting from a devil in the synagogue, the healing of a man whose hand was withered, the lifting up of a woman who had been bound by infirmity for 18 years, the instantaneous cure of the dread disease of dropsy, the recovering of a man who had been afflicted with palsy for 38 years so that he could not stir and the opening of the eyes of one who was born blind—six notable miracles to render the Sabbath most famous as a day of the display of Christ's power!

The Sabbath was a day of rest and Christ did not break His rest by His miracles, for He was God, so it was rest to Him to do good. You remember how, when He spoke to the woman of Samaria at the well of Sychar, He told His disciples that it was His meat and drink to be dealing out mercy to her. He was refreshed by what, to others, might have been wearisome and, assuredly, whenever the Lord Jesus worked a deed of mercy, it was rest to His heart. And, moreover, it was giving rest to others. To those who had been afflicted so long, what rest His miracles brought! To that poor daughter of Abraham who had been bound 18 years—what rest it was, once more, to straighten herself and to stand upright, and to glorify God for the marvelous miracle that had been

worked! And the man who had been bedridden for 38 years—what a time of merciful rest that Sabbath was for him! To take up his bed and walk was to be made truly to rest! Not for all that long period had he enjoyed such rest as he did on that memorable Sabbath when Christ healed him!

So, then, viewing the Lord Jesus Christ as Divine, I say that He committed no breach of the rest of God. He first enjoyed it, Himself, by working the miracle, and then He spread the influence of that rest upon those who were helped by Him. Viewing Him, also, in His condescending capacity as the God-Man, in the form of the Servant of men, He did not break the day of rest, for His healing was a form of holy ministry. He was preaching sermons while He was healing the sick—and the best sort of sermons, too—sermons that must strike and be remembered, for men could see them with their eyes as well as hear them with their ears! His cures are acted discourses. Whenever we try to interpret any of the miracles, I am sure you feel that we do not put the Truth of God into them, but that the Truth of God is already there! There is much precious teaching in every miracle that He worked.

The ruler of the synagogue might just as well have confessed that he broke the Sabbath when he read a chapter of the Scriptures as have said that Christ broke the Sabbath by healing anyone. They were really both doing the same thing, only the mere official was doing it in a much poorer and more perfunctory manner. Christ was grandly teaching while He was healing the sick, for what is the Sabbath? Is it not a day set apart for the Glory of God, for the reverencing of His most holy name? And, my Brothers and Sisters, what could bring God more Glory than for the Lord Jesus Christ to be working these miracles which caused men to glorify Him? She who had been bound for 18 years—the first thing she did when she stood upright was to glorify God! And others in the synagogue, of nobler spirit than Pharisees and lawyers, when they saw what God was doing by Him whom they thought to be a Prophet, glorified God. Although Jesus, in a measure, worked, He was all the while doing Sabbath-work—the very service for which the day was set apart, that God might be honored among the sons of men. Fools and slow of heart—no, *foul of heart*, were they, to bring the charge of breaking the Sabbath against our blessed Master for what He did.

I am going, very briefly, to refer to these cures of Christ in the fond hope that He will transfer from the seventh to the first day of the week the Glory which He put upon His ancient Sabbath. I need not say in the “hope” that He will do it, as though it were a new thing, for He has done it all through the Christian era! I suppose that there have been more souls born to God on the last day of the week than on all the other days of the week. Certainly, this day, on which Christ rose from the grave, has been the time of the resurrection of ten thousands times ten thousands—and when we have met together, on this first day of the week, to sing hymns and to pray in the name of Jesus—and to talk of His great love and of all that came of it, He has been especially present with us, and He has worked wondrous miracles of mercy many and many a time. May He do so among us now!

I. First, then, concerning Christ's Sabbath cures, I make this observation—THESE CURES MEET MANY CASES—and we may expect that Christ, who worked such cures in the past, will continue to meet similar cases of need to-day.

The first was *a man under Satanic influence*. Christ spoke the Word and the devil came out of him. There may be such persons here. I have known many children of God in that sad condition. Ah, poor creatures! They have been assailed with blasphemous thoughts which they have hated and loathed, and yet the thoughts would come. They could not stop them. And if it so happens to God's people, much more will it happen to those who, as yet, have never fled to Christ! I believe that there are some men who are transported in wickedness far beyond themselves and who both say and do things which would not have entered into their hearts, bad as they are, if it were not for Satan taking possession of them and bearing them beyond themselves. Just as I am sure that the Spirit of God often works in gracious men things which would not come, even of their renewed nature, carrying them from themselves by a holy ecstasy and a divine enthusiasm, so does Satan, on the other hand, work in ungodly men beyond themselves, bearing them into a kind of frenzy and fanaticism of iniquity. Well, if I am addressing any such—if it is a lucid interval with some poor wretch—if the drunk is sober to-night—if the man who plunges into vice is here—yes, even if the devilish spirit is still within him, I am glad that he is here, for my Master can rebuke that spirit and cast it from the man to never return! He will need more done to him than that, but that will be a grand beginning. Oh, that, in His infinite mercy, Jesus, the enthroned King, would manifest His Divinity by casting out the spirit of darkness from the stronghold which He has made for Himself in the hearts of men! That case, then, was met by Christ on the Sabbath.

The next case was that of a *man conscious of a very grievous inability*. He had an arm which hung helplessly by his side. He could not earn bread for his children. He could do nothing to help himself. His arm was withered—it was not merely dislocated, so that he could not lift it, but it had gradually dried up. The sinews had shrunk, the flesh had gone, the arm had become a mummified useless object. There are spiritual incapacities in all unregenerate men, but there are some incapacities of which they are conscious. "I cannot pray," says one, "oh, that I could!" "I cannot believe," says another, "would God that I could!" "I cannot do this, and I cannot do that." Dear Friend, whatever your inability may be, the Lord Jesus Christ is able to give you, even now, that power of which you lament the absence. He can say, "Stretch out your withered hand" and if you are but obedient to His gracious command, you shall stretch it out! You shall pray. You shall believe. You shall at once quit the sin that now holds you spellbound. Oh, blessed be His name, though the power to do these things is not in *you*, it is in Him! All that is needed to meet the sinner's case is in Christ, for all power is given unto Him in Heaven and in earth. Look up, then, you with the withered hands, for Christ is still present and able to heal, now, just as of old.

The third case was that of *a woman who had been afflicted, I suppose, by spinal disease, till she was bent double*. She could not lift herself up. It was something more than a mere stoop—it was evidently a very painful doubling of herself up so that her face looked rather to the earth than, as it should look, towards Heaven. Poor creature! Eighteen years she had suffered from this grievous bend, but the Lord Jesus lifted her up and made her straight in one single minute! There may be, here, some very desponding and even despairing soul, but the Lord can lift up that soul. Last Thursday morning I preached over in the City Temple and I had my wages for preaching as soon as the sermon was done, for when I came from the pulpit there met me a brother minister, and he said, “Sir, I cannot tell you now, but I will write tomorrow—my wife is set at liberty!” He wrote to tell me how she had been in despair and what sorrow she had had, and what a grief it had been to him. But while I preached upon, “Cast not away your confidence, which has great recompense of reward,” she was brought from bondage. Oh, how I praised and blessed God and thought that I would like to preach day and night if I might but be the channel of such blessing again and again! It was the Master who made that poor crooked woman straight and if there is another here who is like she is, He can work a similar miracle for that poor soul! I know that many of you belong to the Despondency family. Miss Much-Afraid, down there, you think there is nobody so bad as you, so lost as you are. But my Lord and Master can lay His hand upon you and you shall be straightened at once! Oh, what a blessed thought this is—Jesus worked this miracle on the Sabbath! Oh, that He would work others like it on this Sabbath!

The fourth case was that of *the man with the dropsy*, an inward complaint which would soon have ended his life if Christ had not cured him. Last Wednesday I saw a dear man of God who was afflicted with dropsy and I bade him farewell. He said that, in the night, when he slept a little, the water seemed to rise almost to his heart, and he knew that he must soon die. And when I called just now, I found that he was gone. I may be addressing someone who has an inward fatal complaint—I do not mean bodily, but spiritually—and you feel that it must soon be all over with you and that you must perish forever. But, dear Friend, you need not perish—if you come within range of my Master’s hand, you shall live, for He is able to pluck men from the jaws of destruction! As it is said of this man, that He took him and healed him and bade him go his way, so can He do with you. God grant that He may!

The next case was that of *a man paralyzed*. I believe that the man, after being so afflicted for 38 years, had become paralyzed in his mind as well as in his body. He was a poor feeble creature who said to Christ, “Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool.” So the Lord Jesus Christ said to him, “Will you be made whole?”—as if He would see whether the paralysis had penetrated even into his will—and when the man said that he had hardly any hope about it, but only described his sad case, the Master said at once, “Rise, take up your bed, and walk.” And the man did so. Now, if you have been long a trembling

seeker, not so much in earnest as you ought to have been, and have now come to be spiritually paralyzed so that you do not seem to have any energy left, yet still my Lord can give you energy and speak the healing words so that you shall rise and take up your bed and walk!

The last case was that of *the man who was born blind*. I know that he is represented here. Plenty of you were born blind. No, more—there is not one of you who was not born *spiritually* blind—and, “since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind.” Perhaps it was not heard till that day, but on that blessed Sabbath, Christ opened that blind man’s eyes! Oh, that He would take away the scales of prejudice that are blinding so many tonight! Oh, that He would remove the natural opposition to the Gospel which blinds so many eyes and hearts—and give men to see tonight! He can do it. Oh, that He may! I think that I have proved my assertion that these Sabbath cures meet many cases. They certainly meet the cases of many who are here. Christ is still, “able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them.”

II. I shall only be able to say a little upon my second point which is that **THESE CURES REPRESENT VARIOUS PROCESSES OF GRACE**. The way in which Christ healed, then, shows how He heals now.

The first man He *healed with a word*. That word was not spoken to the man, but to *the devil in the man*. The devil in the man made a disturbance in the congregation. He cried, “Let me alone.” Christ said, “Hold your peace and come from him.” And I believe that the Lord Jesus Christ still deals with the devil in that way. He never gives him a word more than is necessary. Oh, that He would say, “Come from him,” to some drunk who is here, and who has the drink devil in him, or to some swearer or some other great sinner who is here! That man under Satanic influence was healed by a word and Christ can do the same thing with a word now!

The man with a withered hand was *healed by a personal word*. The Lord Jesus Christ said to him, “Rise up and stand forth in the midst.” That he could do, for he had not withered feet and there he stood. It is a grand thing when the Gospel message picks a man out from his fellows and he feels that the preacher is speaking specially to him. Have you ever felt that? It is one of the ways in which Christ saves men. I am preaching to the whole congregation, but Christ is not—He is preaching to you, my Friend—if He means to bless you and you feel as if you were stood out to be shot at. After Christ had given the man a personal pointed word, He said to him, “Stretch forth your hand.” It was done at once at the word of command and now He says to you, poor guilty Sinner, “Believe! Believe in Me and you shall be saved.” Oh, that Christ might speak that word of command straight into your soul, for, as the Lord lives, if you believe in Him, you shall not perish, but you shall have everlasting life! In this man’s case it was a personal word that worked the healing he needed.

In the next case, there was *a touch as well as a word*. The woman was in the crowd in the synagogue, bent double, and, perhaps, could not even see the Christ. But He said to her, “Woman, you are loosed from

your infirmity,” and He laid His hands on her—and with that word and that touch she was loosed in a minute! She was called upon to do nothing except to believe that it was all done—and so she lifted herself up. The Lord Jesus Christ gave her the strength to rise and she did rise! There are many conversions like that. All of a sudden a man finds that all has been done for him—Christ has saved him, he is forgiven and so he rises and stands upright. Now, poor woman over yonder, do that! Believe that Christ has loved you and given Himself for you. Oh, may His Spirit enable you to do so! Now you are upright, are you not? You feel as if you could stand up and shout, “Hallelujah! The Lord has done it! He has broken my bonds and set His child at liberty.” It was a word and a touch in that poor woman’s case.

In the next case—that of the man afflicted with the dropsy—there was *healing without a word*. I do not think that there was even a word spoken to him. Christ saw the man swollen as He stood before him and it is written, “He took him, and healed him, and let him go.” And I have known the Lord save some souls without any spoken word. His own secret power has done it all. The man has been sitting at his work, or walking about and, suddenly—he knew not how—he felt his heart become soft, his spirit inclined to his Savior, he looked to Him and was lightened and his face was not ashamed.

In the case of the paralytic, there was not only a word, *there were two words*. The first was an enquiring word, meant to arouse him. “Will you be made whole?” This was spoken to wake him up and make him think and hope. And then came the commanding word, “Take up your bed and walk.” The Lord sometimes brings men into a state of spiritual health by two words instead of one. For a little while, He seems to ask them whether they really will be saved, whether they have any wish to be saved—and when earnest desires after salvation are excited, then comes the Gospel precept, “Believe and live”—and they do believe and live!

In the last case—that of the blind man—*Christ used means as well as words*, but the means were very poor ones, as we think. He spat and made clay of the spittle—and then put the clay on the man’s eyes. “More likely to blind him,” you say, “than to give him sight.” And I have known a sermon, of which I have thought when I went home, “I wish I had never gone into the pulpit.” I have been ready to cry my eyes out about it. The Lord could not bless it—so I thought—but He did. It was from His own mouth, after all! Though I was but the clay, He put that clay on the man’s eyes—even my poor rough statement of the Truth of God which seemed as if it would blind the man from seeing Him, but it did not—it opened his eyes. The Lord can use very strange means—and He does. I have known Him use means in men’s conversion which I thought He could not use. And it makes one speak with bated breath about some people who seem to use very odd means to bring men to Christ. If the Lord brings them, the end may not justify the means, but, at the same time, it makes us very aware of what we say, lest we fight against God. If the Lord chooses to spit, let Him spit. And if He chooses to use clay and that seems a very strange thing to put on blind eyes, it is better than the

best ointment if Christ ordains it! So let Him do things after His own fashion, for He always does them right.

Now, which shall be the way in which He will heal you? Well, it will not matter, dear Friend, what means are used—so long as your cure is effected, God shall have the glory of it!

III. I want you to notice now, in the third place, very briefly, indeed, that **THESE CURES ON THE SABBATH WERE WORKED BOTH IN AND OUT OF THE SYNAGOGUE.**

The first was *the man who was misbehaving himself in the synagogue.* I do not say to any, “Come, and misbehave yourselves in the House of God,” but I do say, “Come anyway you can to the place where prayer is known to be made.” I would rather that a man should come to ridicule the Gospel than not come to hear it at all! Here is a man, with the devil in him, disturbing the worship in the synagogue by crying out to Jesus, “Let me alone.” Yet it was a blessing for him to be there and a great blessing for him that the devil was not quiet that morning! The devil is very crafty, but he is often a great fool and he made a huge mistake when he took to bawling out that Sabbath. Whenever I hear a man swear, I always pray for him and, I have sometimes thought, when I have heard an oath, it has been a warning bell ringing to let me know that it was time for me to pray. It is a horrible thing that men should blaspheme, curse and swear, but I believe that there would be less of these evils if all Christians prayed whenever they heard an oath, for the devil would see that it would not pay him, for, fool though he is, he has some sense left. At all events, this man was in the synagogue making a disturbance.

The next person was the man with a withered hand. He could not do any work and, beside that, it seems that *he had some love for the House of God and there Christ picked him out and blessed him.* The woman who was bent double was also there. I like the idea of her going to the synagogue. No doubt it was a trouble for her to walk and she was a very pitiable object—yet she loved the place. I believe she was a gracious woman, for it was said of her as it is not said of others, “she glorified God” when she was made straight. Never mind what your infirmity is, dear Friends, be sure to come to the House of God. There was a dear Sister who used to sit on my left hand, here, and who did not hear a word I said, for she was deaf. But she always came because, she said, she thought it was a good example to those who were round about her to come and sit here. Besides, she said, somebody told her what hymn we were singing and she could join in that. And so, to the day of her death, she was still here. Yes, we love the place where God deigns to meet with His people and we hope to get a blessing there, somehow or other, as this poor woman did.

But the other three people healed in these Sabbath miracles were not in the synagogue. *The man with the dropsy was cured after synagogue hours.* The Lord Jesus Christ had gone to eat bread with a certain Pharisee and it was then that He saw this poor man. O dear Friends, may the Lord bless you after the service is over, if He does not bless you while the service is going on! May He bless you at your meal! You who love the Lord, pray Him to bless men and women when they are sitting at their

supper, tonight, after the sermon is over, and they have gone home and have not, perhaps, felt the power of the Word. God can bless them even there, as this poor dropsied man received his cure when the Sabbath services were over and he had gone to his evening meal!

The next case, I think, was *early in the morning, before the service*. Whether it was or not, does not matter, for it was the case of a man who could not go to the synagogue. He had the palsy, he could not even step into the healing bath, so I know that he could not go to the synagogue—yet the Lord came and healed him. Pray, dear Friends, for the sick folk at home and, when you are, yourselves, ill, do not think that you are shut out from Christ because you are shut out from the public means of Grace! The Lord can come and bless you wherever you are! Oh, what a Savior my Master is! If you cannot come to His House, He can come to your house! If you cannot go to the synagogue, He can come and make a temple of your little chamber and save you there!

As for the blind man, he was not in the synagogue, but he used to go, for we read that they cast him from the synagogue, so he must have been formerly in it. But on that occasion he was not there. *I wonder whether the reason was because he was too poor*. His neighbors asked, “Is not this he that sat and begged?” Perhaps he did not like to go because he had not fit clothes to go in. I always think it is a very sad thing that people should make that excuse. I do not care what clothes you come in—the only clothes that are unfit to wear are those that you have not paid for! Let our clothes be ever so poor, or ever so mean, do not stay away from the House of God on that account, but come and listen to the Gospel. But if it really is the case that you cannot come, what a mercy it is that God can bless the poor who do not come to His House—for He can go to them.

Perhaps He means somebody who is here tonight—some dear child of His—to call in, on the road home, to see some poor person who has not come because he says that he has not fit clothes. Knock at his door and say, “Our minister was saying, this evening, that some people did not come to God’s House because they thought they had not fit clothes, and his words brought you to my mind. He said that God could bless them at home. I thought that, perhaps, the Lord might bless you through me. Let me tell you about Jesus Christ for a few minutes. I won’t tire you. Then let me pray with you before I go.” Why, who knows? Perhaps, this very night, you may be a messenger of mercy to some poor creature of that kind.

IV. Now I close with what might have been the whole of my sermon, for there is enough in this last division to preach from for a month. It is a very singular thing that all these Sabbath cures were cures of PERSONS WHO DID NOT ASK TO BE HEALED. They were all instances of free, Sovereign Grace giving blessing to those who did not crave it.

The first one did not ask for it, but *entreated Christ to leave him alone*, yet he was healed. The next, the man with the withered hand, I suppose *did not even think of it* till Christ said, “Stand forth.” And then he stood forth and his hand was restored. The next, the poor woman who had

been bent double for 18 years, I should think that she *did not hope for such a thing*. Certainly, she did not say a word about it, but, to her astonishment, mercy burst upon her with these words, "Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity." What a surprise it was to her, as the Grace of God often is when it dispels man's despair! The dropsied man *did not ask for healing*, but Christ took him and healed him, and sent him on his way. As for the paralytic man, *he had not nerve enough left to ask*. Christ had to ask him, "Will you be made whole?" And then the blind man, he also, perhaps, *had never dreamed of such a thing*, for he expressed his own astonishment—"Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind." They did not ask for the blessing, yet they received it.

Well, what is the inference from all that I have been saying? Why, that you who ask for the blessing shall receive it, for if Christ goes to those who do *not* ask, you who have been asking—asking for days and perhaps for months, may well pluck up courage and expect His mercy—and you shall have it. Why, if a man in the street gives alms to a poor beggar who did not ask anything of him, the boy at the crossing will be touching his hat to him, I am sure, and following him all across the road, for he is sure of getting something! He says, "He gave to that fellow who did not ask. Surely he will give to me if I do ask" Oh, believe that it must be so with you if you ask of the Lord Jesus Christ! Surely you seekers shall be finders.

The next inference I draw is this. What a mercy that we are able, sometimes, to bring into the House of God some who have never asked God to bless them. Have you brought in any tonight? If you have not, you know that you ought to do it, for it is the duty of Christians to be constantly bringing in outsiders where God gives a blessing. Some of you have brought others. Well, then, if the Lord Jesus Christ spontaneously blessed those people who seemed to be there by accident, much more will He bless those whom you have brought to His House and for whom you are now praying that He would bless them. Do not say, "It is of no use to bring in such-and-such, he is not at all seriously inclined." That is the very person to bring in! Those who are seriously inclined will come of themselves—you are to bring those who do not have any desire to come! It is grand work to be plowing virgin soil that has never been broken up before. It is a great mercy to speak into an ear that has not been stopped up with Gospel wax, an ear that listens to the Gospel as a thing that is fresh and new, and which comes with startling novelty to the soul. Bring in people of that sort! Remember that we do not trust in *their* will—our trust is in the will of God! We do not trust in *their* power—our trust is in the power of Almighty Grace! We do not trust in their coming here to seek Christ—our trust is in the fact that "the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost!"

As for you who have never trusted the Savior, all you have to do is to cast yourselves, with all your weight of sin, upon the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and I solemnly charge you to take heed that you do not neglect it. Beware lest while you are thinking about it, the moments

should steal away and hope should steal away with the moments. Some of you have come here a good many Sabbath nights hoping to lay hold on Christ—leave your hoping and lay hold on Jesus! May the blessed Spirit now bid you stretch out that withered hand and grasp eternal life! It is within reach of everyone who desires to have it—it may be yours, now, if you trust Him who brings it to you. But do not, I pray you, continue longer in unbelief. If you do, I think I know what will happen to you. You will begin to say, “There is no hope for me.” And then you will leave off coming to hear the Gospel and then what is likely to become of you?

As I look at some of my hearers, I might well settle my countenance, as Elisha did when he looked on Hazael. He could not bear to think of all that the man would do—and when the man himself heard the prophecy, he said, “Is your servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?” Yes, he was dog enough to do even that! A Friend was speaking to me of an unhappy man whose life has been one of licentiousness and crime—and who has gone away from his country—he used to sit by his wife’s side in this house and he said that he would one day turn over a new leaf. But then he did not yield himself to Christ. So, when he did turn over a new leaf, it was a blacker one than he had ever turned over, before, and, unless you repent, some of you will do the same as that man did. God bless and save you, dear Friends, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 4:33-36; 6:6-11; 13:10-17; 14:1-6;
JOHN 5:1-9; 9:1-14.

We are going to read the Inspired records of several of our Savior’s Sabbath cures, for they are very instructive.

Luke 4:33-36. *And in the synagogue there was a man which had a spirit of an unclean devil, and cried out with a loud voice, saying, Let us alone! What have we to do with You, You of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know You, who You are: the Holy One of God. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold your peace and come from him. And when the devil had thrown him in the midst, he came from him, and hurt him not. And they were all amazed, and spoke among themselves, saying, What a word is this! For with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits, and they come out.* This was a very remarkable cure worked by the Lord Jesus Christ on the Sabbath. Now let us turn to another, which is recorded in the sixth chapter of this same Gospel.

Luke 6:6-10. *And it came to pass also on another Sabbath, that He entered into the synagogue and taught: and there was a man whose right hand was withered. And the scribes and Pharisees watched Him, whether He would heal on the Sabbath; that they might find an accusation against Him. But He knew their thoughts, and said to the man which had the withered hand, Rise up, and stand forth in the midst. And he arose and stood forth. Then said Jesus unto them, I will ask you one thing. Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good, or to do evil? To save life, or to destroy it? And looking round about upon them all.—* I think I see that piercing

glance which read their very hearts, and condemned the wickedness it saw there—"Looking round about upon them all"—

10, 11. *He said unto the man, Stretch forth your hand. And he did so and his hand was restored whole as the other. And they were filled with madness and communed one, with another, what they might do to Jesus.* This was a second miracle worked by our Lord on the Sabbath and it, also, was a very notable one. Follow on in the same Gospel until you come to the 13th Chapter, at the 10th verse.

Luke 13:10-17. *And He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself. And when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him, and said unto her, Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity. And He laid His hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them, therefore, come and be healed, but not on the Sabbath. The Lord then answered him, and said, You hypocrite, does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath? And when He had said these things, all His adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him.* His adversaries might well be ashamed and the people might well rejoice at such a display of His power and mercy! But the point I want you to notice is that the poor woman was set at liberty by the Lord Jesus on the Sabbath. There is another Sabbath miracle recorded in the next chapter.

Luke 14:1-6. *And it came to pass, as He went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the Sabbath, that they watched Him. And, behold, there was a certain man before Him which had the dropsy. And Jesus answering spoke unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath? And they held their peace. And He took him, and healed him, and let him go; and answered them, saying, Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the Sabbath? And they could not answer Him again to these things.* Christ's question was unanswerable unless they wished to condemn themselves. Now I want you to kindly turn to the next Evangelist, in whose Gospel you will find the record of the fifth miracle which our Savior worked on the Sabbath.

John 5:1-9. *After this there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market, a pool which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whoever, then, after the troubling of the water, first stepped in, was made whole of whatever disease he had. And a certain man was there which had an infirmity thirty and*

eight years. When Jesus saw him and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, He said unto him, Will you be made whole? The impotent man answered Him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steps down before me. Jesus said unto him, Rise, take up your bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the Sabbath. I hope to speak on these miracles in my discourse, so only briefly refer to them now, but this Sabbath afforded another memorable instance of our Lord's healing power. In the ninth chapter of John's Gospel you have the remarkable story of the man born blind.

John 9:1-3. *And as Jesus passed by, He saw a man which was blind from his birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither has this man sinned, nor his parents. That is to say, their sin was not the cause of his blindness.*

3-14. *But that the works of God should be made manifest in him. I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day: the night comes, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the Light of the world. When He had thus spoken, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said unto him, Go, wash in the Pool of Siloam, (which is, by interpretation, Sent). He went his way, therefore, and washed, and came seeing. The neighbors, therefore, and they which before had seen him that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged? Some said, This is he: others said, he is like he: but he said, I am he. Therefore said they unto him, How were your eyes opened? He answered and said, A man that is called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight. Then said they unto him, Where is he? He said, I know not. They brought him to the Pharisees that before was blind. And it was the Sabbath when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. This gracious act of Christ was made another occasion of complaint on the part of the Pharisees—and it is the sixth instance in which we are very specially and definitely informed that our Lord Jesus Christ worked miracles of healing on the Sabbath. Oh, that He would do similar works in our midst even now in a spiritual sense, if not literally!*

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY
TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

THE WORK OF GRACE THE WARRANT FOR OBEDIENCE NO. 1479

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 15, 1879,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

(On behalf of the Mansion House Fund for the Hospitals of London).

*“He that made me whole, the same said unto me,
Take up your bed and walk.”*

John 5:11.

JUST a few observations upon the narrative itself. It was a feast day and Jesus Christ came up to Jerusalem to find opportunities for doing good among the crowds of His countrymen. I see all the city glad; I hear the voice of rejoicing in every house as they hold high festival and eat the fat and drink the sweet. But where does Jesus keep the feast? How does He spend *His* holiday? He walks among the poor, whom He loves so well. Behold Him in the hospital! There was one notable Bethesda or house of mercy in Jerusalem—it was a poor provision for the city's abounding sickness, but such as it was, it was greatly prized. There was a pool which every now and then was stirred by an angel's wing and worked an occasional cure. Around it charitable persons had built five porches and there, on the cold stone steps, a number of blind and crippled and withered folk were lying, each one upon his own wretched pallet, waiting for the moving of the waters.

There were the weary children of pain, fainting, while others were feasting. They were racked with pain amid general rejoicing. They were sighing amid universal singing! Our Lord was at home amid this mercy, for here was room for His tender heart and powerful hands. He feasted His soul by doing good. Let us learn this lesson, dear Friends, that in the times of our brightest joys we should remember the sorrowful and find a still higher joy in doing them good. It well becomes us in proportion as a day is glad-some to ourselves, to make it so to the sick and poor around us. Let us keep the feast by sending portions to those for whom nothing is prepared, for, otherwise, the famishing may bring a curse upon our feasting.

When we are prospered in business, let us set aside a portion for the poor. When we are full of health and strength, let us remember those to whom these privileges are denied and aid those who minister to them. Blessed shall they be who, like the Lord Jesus, visit the sick and care for them. Coming into the hospital, our Lord noticed a certain man whose case was a very sad one. There were many painful cases there, but He singled out this man and it would seem that the reason for His choice was that the poor creature was in the worst plight of all. If misery has a claim on pity, then the greater the sufferer the more is mercy attracted towards him. This poor victim of rheumatism or paralysis had been bound 38 years by his infirmity!

Let us hope there was no worse case on all Bethesda's porches! Thirty-eight years is more than half the appointed period of human life! One year of pain or paralysis has a weary length of torture about it, but think of thirty-eight! We may well pity the man who endures the pangs of rheumatism even for an hour—but how shall we sufficiently pity him who has not been free from it for hard on 40 years? Even if the case were not one of pain, but of paralysis, the inability to work and the consequent poverty of so many years were, by no means, a small evil. Our Lord, then, selects the worst case to be dealt with by His curing hands as a type of what He often does in the kingdom of Grace—and as a lesson of prudence to us—instructing us to give our first aid to those who are first in point of need.

The man whom Jesus healed was by no means an attractive character. Our Savior said to him, when he was healed, "Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto you," from which it is not an improbable inference that his first infirmity had come upon him by deed of vice or course of excess. In some way or other he had been guilty of that which brought upon his body the suffering which he was enduring. Now, it is considered generally to be a point beyond all dispute that we should help the worthy but should refuse the worthless—that when a man brings a calamity upon himself by wrong doing—we are justified in letting him suffer that he may reap what he has sown.

This cold Pharisaic idea is very congenial to minds which are bent upon saving their coins! It springs up in many hearts, or rather in places where hearts *ought to be*, and it is generally regarded as if it were a rule of prudence which it would be sinful to dispute—an infallible and universal axiom. Now, I venture to say that our Savior never taught us to confine our alms to the deserving! He would never have bestowed the grand alms of Grace on any one of *us* if He had carried out *that* rule! And if you and I had received no more at the hands of God than we *deserved*, we should not have been in this house of prayer! We cannot afford to cramp our charity into a sort of petty justice and sour our almsgiving into a miniature law court. When a man is suffering let us pity him, however the suffering has come.

When a man had been in misery so long as 38 years, it was time that his infirmity should be more considered than his iniquity and that his present sorrow should be thought upon more than his former folly. So Jesus thought and, therefore, He came to the sinner, not with reproach, but with restoration! He saw his *disease* rather than his *depravity* and gave him pity instead of punishment. Our God is kind to the unthankful and to the evil—be you, therefore, merciful as your Father, also, is merciful. Remember how our Lord said, "Pray for them that despitefully use you, that you may be the children of your Father which is in Heaven; for He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust."

Let us imitate Him in this and wherever there is pain and sorrow let it be our joy to relieve it. In addition to the supposition that this man had, at some time, been grossly guilty, it seems pretty clear from the text that he was a poor, shiftless, discouraged, inanimate, stupid sort of person. He had never managed to get into the pool, though others had done so who were as infirm as himself. He had never been able to win a friend or se-

cure a helper, though from the extreme length of his infirmity one would have thought that at some period or another he might have found a man to place him in the pool when the angel gave it the mystic stir.

The Savior's asking him, "Do you want to be made whole?" leads us to think that he had fallen into such a listless, despairing, heart-sick condition that though he was daily at the edge of the pool as a matter of habit, he had not only ceased to hope, but had almost ceased to wish! Our Lord touched the chord which was most likely to respond, namely, his will and desire to be made whole—but the response was a very feeble one. His answer shows what a poor creature he was, for there is not a beam of hope in it, or even of desire—it is a wail, a hopeless dirge, a grievous complaint—"I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool and while I am coming, another steps down before me."

But the utter imbecility and lack of brains of the poor creature is most seen in the fact that like a simpleton he went to Christ's enemies and told them that it was Jesus that had made him whole! I am sure there was no malice in his thus informing our Lord's enemies, for if there had been, he would have said, "It was Jesus who bade me take up my bed," whereas he worded it thus, "It was Jesus which had made him whole." I hardly dare, however, to hope, as some do, that there was much gratitude about this testimony, though, doubtless, the poor soul was grateful. I conceive that his long endurance of pain, acting upon a weak mind, had brought him to an almost imbecile state of mind, so that he spoke without thought.

Our Lord did not, therefore, require much of him. He did not even ask for a distinct acknowledgement of faith from him, but only for that small measure of it which might be implied in his answering the question, "Do you want to be made whole?" This poor man evinced none of the shrewdness of the man born blind who answered the Pharisees so keenly—he was of quite another type and could do no more than state his own case to Jesus. Thank God, even *that* was enough for our Lord to work with! The Lord Jesus saves people of all sorts. He has among His disciples men of quick and ready wit who can baffle their opponents, but quite as often—

***"He takes the fool and makes him know
The wonders of His dying love:
To bring aspiring wisdom low,
And all its pride reprove."***

So here He chose this poor simpleton of a creature and worked a great marvel upon him, to the exceeding praise of His condescending Grace. Note well that this man's mind, though there was not much of it, was all engrossed and filled up with the fact that he had been made whole. Jesus, to him, was, "He that made me whole." Of the person of Jesus he knew next to nothing, for he had only seen Him for an instant and then he didn't know that it was Jesus. His one idea of Jesus was, "He that made me whole."

Now, beloved Brothers and Sisters, this was natural in his case and it will be equally natural in our own. Even when the saved ones are more intelligent and of larger mind than this poor paralytic, they must still chiefly think of the Son of God as their Savior—as He that made them whole. If I do not know much about the Lord, yet I do know that He has saved me! I was burdened with guilt and full of woes and could not rest day nor night

until He gave me peace. If I cannot tell anything much concerning the glory of His Person, His attributes, His relationships, His offices, or His work, yet I can say, “one thing I know, whereas I was blinded by error, now I see! Whereas I was paralyzed by sin, I am now able to stand upright and walk in His ways.”

This poor soul knew the Lord *experimentally* and that is the best way of knowing Him. Actual contact with Him yields a surer knowledge and a truer knowledge than all the reading in the world. In the kingdom of Christ wonderful facts transpire, such as conversion and finding peace with God—and happy are they to whom these facts are personal experiences! When men are turned from the error of their ways and when their heart finds rest and peace in Christ, great deeds are done by the Lord Jesus. And if you are acquainted with these two things, even though you should be ignorant of a great deal else, be not afraid of exaggerating their importance, but set your mind on them and call Jesus by that name—“He that made me whole.”

Think of Him under that aspect and you will have a very valuable and influential idea of Him. You shall see greater things than these, but for the present let these happy and sure facts be much upon your mind, even as his being made whole was upon this man’s mind. As for the quibbling Pharisees, you observe that they took no notice of the glorious fact of the man’s cure—they willfully ignored what Christ had done and they fell full swoop upon that little insignificant circumstance that it had been done on the Sabbath! And then they spent all their thoughts and emotions upon that side issue. They say nothing of the man’s being restored, but they rage because he carried his bed on the Sabbath!

It is much the same with the men of the world in this day. They habitually ignore the fact of conversion. If they do not deny it, they look upon it as being a trifle—a matter not worth caring about. Though they see the harlot made chaste, the thief made honest, the profane made devout, the despairing made joyful and other moral and spiritual changes of the utmost practical value, they forget all this and they attack some peculiar point of doctrine, or mode of speech, or diversity of manner and raise a storm concerning these!

Is it because the facts, themselves, if fairly looked at, would establish what they do not care to believe? The fact that Christianity is doing marvels in the world, such as nothing else ever did, they persistently forget. But that fact is just what you and I must as persistently remember! We must dwell upon what Christ has, by His Holy Spirit, worked within our nature by renewing us in the spirit of our minds. And we must make this work of Grace a fountain of argument which shall establish our faith and justify our conduct. This poor man did so! He did not know much else, but that he had been made whole he did know—and from that fact he justified himself in what he had done.

“He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up your bed and walk.” This is the Truth of God which I want to enlarge upon this morning—first, by saying that the work of Christ furnishes us with *a justification for our obedience to His commands*—“He that made me whole, the same said unto me”—that is our complete justification for what we do! In the second place, the work of Jesus Christ throws upon us *an obligation to*

do what He bids us—if He that made me whole says to me, “Take up your bed and walk,” I am bound to do it and I ought to feel the obligation of His goodness pressing upon me. And, in the third place, it is not only a justification and an obligation, but the deed of Grace becomes a *constraint to obedience*—He that said unto me, “rise,” and so made me whole, by that same word of power made me take up my bed and walk!

The power which saves us also moves us to obey our Savior. Not with our own might do we fulfill the will of our Lord, but with power which the Healer gives us in the same hour. You see the drift, therefore, of our discourse. May the Holy Spirit lead us into the power of this Truth, for I am persuaded that a sense of the Lord’s work within us is a great force and should be excited and applied to the highest ends.

I. First, then, this is our JUSTIFICATION for what we do when we obey Christ. This poor man could not defend the action of taking up his bed and walking, for his enemies were learned in the Law and he was not. You and I could defend it very easily, for it seems to us a very proper thing to do under the circumstances. The weight of his bed was not much more than that of an ordinary great coat, it was a simple rug or mat upon which he was lying—there really was no violation of God’s Law of the Sabbath and, therefore, there was nothing to excuse.

But the Rabbis laid down rules of which I will give you but one specimen—“It is unlawful to carry a handkerchief loose in the pocket”—but if you pin it to your pocket or tie it round your waist as a belt, you may carry it anywhere because it becomes a part of your dress. To my unsophisticated mind it would have seemed that the pin increased the ponderous burden and so there was the weight of the pin more than was necessary! This was quite a weighty business according to Rabbinical estimates. The most of the Rabbinical regulations with regard to the Sabbath were absolutely ludicrous, but this poor man was not in a position to say so or even to *think* so, for, like the rest of his countrymen, he stood in awe of the scribes and doctors.

These learned Pharisees and priests were too much revered for this poor creature to answer them in their own manner, so he did what you and I must always do when we are at all puzzled—he hid behind the Lord Jesus and pleaded, “He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up your bed.” That was quite enough for him and he quoted it as if he felt that it ought to be enough for those who questioned him. Truly it ought to have been so! I may not be able to find in my own knowledge and ability an authority equal to the authority of learned unbelievers, but my personal experience of the power of Grace will stand me in as good a stead as this man’s cure was to him. He argued that there must be in the man who made him whole enough authority to match the greatest possible rabbi that ever lived!

Even his poor feeble mind could grasp that and, surely, you and I may do the same—we can defend ourselves behind the breastwork of our Savior’s gracious work—and the consequent authority which belongs to Him. There are certain *ordinances* to which a Christian man is bound to attend, about which the world raises a storm of questions. The world does not take notice that this man was once a drunk and has, through Divine Grace, become sober and so has become a good father, a good husband

and a good citizen. It lets that miracle pass by unheeded—but if he is going to be *baptized*, they at once object to the ordinance!

Or if he is going to join a Christian Church they straightway jeer at him as a Presbyterian, or a Methodist—as if it matters what sort of name they give him—so long as he is a better man than themselves, is redeemed from sin, taught to be upright, chaste and pure in the sight of God. The work of Grace counts for nothing with them, but just the peculiarity of sect, or the peculiarity of religious rite is made a world of. Blind creatures to despise the medicine which heals because of the bottle which contains it, or the label by which it is named! However, our answer is, “He that made us whole,” the same gave us a command and by that command we will abide. We seek no justification but this—that He who worked a miracle of Grace upon us bade us do it.

What if I am about to be baptized as a Believer? The same that said, “Believe,” said, “Be baptized.” He who gave me salvation, the same said, “He that believes and is baptized, shall be saved.” Over against all objections we set the Divine authority of Jesus Christ! He by whose blood we are cleansed and by whose Spirit we are renewed is Lord and Lawgiver to us! His precept is our sufficient guarantee. If we go to the Communion Table and revilers say, “What is the use of eating a piece of bread and drinking a drop of wine? Why think so solemnly of so small a matter?” We reply, He that made us whole, the same said, “Do this in remembrance of Me.” We renounce what He has not ordained, but we cling to His statutes.

If He had commanded a rite still more trivial, or a ceremony still more open to objection in the eyes of carnal man, we would make no further apology than this—He who has created us anew, given us a hope of Heaven and led us to seek after perfect holiness—He has bid us do it. This is our final reply and although we could find other justifications, they would be superfluous. This stands for our defense—the Savior commands it! The same apology applies to all *the doctrines of the Gospel*. I say again, ungodly men will not admit, or if they admit it they ignore it, that the Gospel works a marvelous change in men’s hearts. If they need proof, we can find them instances by the hundreds and by the thousands of the reclaiming, elevating and purifying power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

The Gospel is daily working spiritual miracles, but this they forget—and they go on to find fault with its peculiar doctrines. Justification by faith they frequently quarrel with. “Well now,” they say, “that is a shocking doctrine! If you teach men that they are to be saved by faith, alone, and not by their works, of course they will lead loose lives! If you continually declare that salvation is of Grace, alone, and not of *merit*, the inevitable result will be that men will sin that Grace may abound.” We find a complete answer to this calumny in the fact that Believers in justification by faith and in the Doctrines of Grace are among the best and purest of men—and in fact these Truths work holiness!

But we do not care to argue thus. We prefer to remind our adversaries that He who has caused us to be regenerate men, Himself taught us that whoever believes in Him shall be saved and expressly declared that he that believes in Him has everlasting life. By the mouth of His servant, Paul, He has said that by Grace are men saved through faith and that not of themselves, it is the gift of God! He has also told us that by the works of

the Law shall no flesh be justified and He has bid us declare that “the just shall live by faith.” He who is daily, by His Gospel, turning men from sin to holiness has given this for the sum total of the Gospel we are to preach—“Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth.”

If this Gospel does not make men better and change their evil natures, you may question it if you like, and we do not wonder that you should—but while it continues its purifying work we shall not blush or stammer when we declare the doctrines which are its essence and life! Our regeneration proves to us our Lord’s authority and upon that we are prepared to base our creed. To us the best of evidence is His work within us and in that evidence we place implicit faith. The same applies to all *the precepts* which the Christian is called upon to obey. For instance, if he is true to his colors, he keeps himself aloof from all the sinful pleasures, practices and policies of the world in which others take delight and, consequently, the ungodly world says that he is peculiar, precise and self-opinionated.

This is the answer for all Christians—“He that made us whole, the same said to us. ‘You are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Come you out from among them and be you separate, touch not the unclean thing and I will receive you.’” If you follow the precepts of the Lord Jesus Christ you may meet all charges of peculiarity by urging the supremacy of the Savior whose power has made you a new creature! Where His Word is, there is a power to which we bow at once! It is not ours to question our Savior, but to obey Him! We are cleansed by His blood! We are redeemed by His death! We live by His life and, therefore, are not ashamed to take up His Cross and follow Him. This apology ought to suffice even those who oppose us, for if they felt as grateful as we do, they would also obey. They ought, at any rate, to say, “We cannot blame these men for doing as Jesus bids them because He has done so much for them.”

Surely the poor man who had been paralyzed 38 years could not be blamed for obeying the command of One who, in a moment, restored him to health and strength! If he became His servant for life, who would censure him? Who would say that he too tamely submitted? Should not such a Benefactor exert a boundless influence over him? What could be more natural and proper?

Now, you unconverted people must excuse us, if we, in obedience to our Lord Jesus, do many things which, to you, seem very peculiar, for though we would not needlessly offend, we cannot please *you* at the risk of displeasing our *Lord*. We do not owe so much to you as we owe to Him! We do not owe so much to the whole world as we owe to the Lord Jesus! In fact, truth to tell, we do not feel that we owe *anything* to the world! The time past suffices us to have worked the will of the Gentiles, for when we are asked the question, “What fruit had you, then, in those things whereof you are now ashamed?” We have to confess that we had *no* fruit, except the sour grapes which set our teeth on edge. Like the shipmen who put out to sea against Paul’s advice, our only gain has been loss and damage!

In serving the world, we found the labor wearisome and the wages death. But as for our Lord Jesus, we owe Him everything and so you must excuse us if we try to follow Him in everything. It seems to us that this is an excuse which you ought to accept from us as covering the whole

ground—but if you refuse it we are not at all dismayed, for it quite suffices us, yes, more than suffices us—it makes us glory in what we do! Does Jesus command? Then it is ours to obey! Objectors may say, concerning one of His ordinances, it is unsuitable to the climate, it is indecent, it is needless, it is I do not know what—all this is no concern of ours—if Jesus bade us do it, His command stands for us in the place of reasoning! He who made us whole, gives us sufficient excuse for obedience in that very fact.

“Oh, but it is contrary to what the fathers teach and to what the Church teaches.” We care not the snap of our finger for all the fathers and all the churches under Heaven if they go contrary to what our Lord teaches—for *they* did not make us whole and we are not under obligation to them as we are to Him! The authority of Jesus is supreme because it is from His lips that we received the Word which healed the sickness of our sin. This satisfies our conscience, now, and it will do so amid the solemnities of death! How can we make a mistake if we follow the Words of Jesus in all things? My Brethren, we can plead His precepts as our guarantee at the Last Great Day before the Judge of the quick and the dead! What better plea can we have than this, “You did make us whole and You did bid us do this”?

Such a justification of our conduct will make our death pillow soft and our resurrection bright with joy! Instead of admitting that this is not an ample justification, let us go further, still, in the strength of it! If the world has accounted us vile for obeying our Lord, let us be still viler! And, inasmuch as He that made us whole said, “Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature,” let us endeavor to spread abroad everywhere the savor of His name, consecrating ourselves body, soul and spirit to the extension of His Kingdom! He who made *us* whole will yet make the world whole by His own wondrous power! Have we not abundantly shown that our Lord’s command is a solid justification of our conduct?

II. And now, secondly, the cure brought forth AN OBLIGATION—“He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up your bed, and walk.” The argument takes this form—first, if He made me whole, He is Divine, or He could not do this miracle. Or, to say the least, He must be divinely authorized—and if He is Divine, or divinely authorized, I am bound to obey the orders which He issues. Is not that a plain argument which even the poor, simple mind of the paralytic man was able to grasp and wield?

Let us try and feel the force of that argument ourselves. Jesus who has saved us is our *God*—shall we not obey Him? Since He is clothed with Divine power and majesty, shall we not scrupulously endeavor to know His will and zealously endeavor to carry it out in every point as His Spirit shall enable us? In addition to the Divine Character which the miracle proved and displayed, there was the goodness which shone in the deed of power and touched the poor man’s heart. His argument was—“I must do what my great Deliverer bids me. How can you think otherwise? Did He not make me whole? Would you have me, whom He has thus graciously restored, refuse to fulfill His desire? Must I not take up my bed the moment He gives me strength to do it?”

“How can I do otherwise? Is this to be the recompense I pay to my good Physician—to refuse to do what He asks of me? Do you not see that I am under an obligation which it would be shameful to deny? He restored these limbs and I am bound to do with them what He orders me do with them. He says, ‘walk,’ and since these once withered feet have been restored, shall I not walk? He bids me roll up my bed and since I could not have used my hands till just now, His Word gave them life—shall I not use them to roll up my bed at His bidding? These poor shoulders of mine were bent with weakness, but He has made me stand upright! And since He now bids me carry my bed, shall I not throw the rug on my shoulders and bear the easy load which He lays upon me?”

There was no answering such reasoning. Whatever might have been the claim of Jesus upon others, He clearly had an indisputable right to the loyal obedience of one whom He had made perfectly whole! Follow me briefly in this, Brothers and Sisters. If you have been saved by the Grace of God, your salvation has put you under obligation to do what Jesus bids you. Are you redeemed? Then you are not your own—you are bought with a price! Have you been, in consequence of what the Lord has done for you, rescued from Satanic slavery and adopted into the Divine family? Then it clearly follows that because you are sons and daughters, you should be obedient to the Law of the household—for is not this a first element of sonship—that you should reverence the great Father of the family?

The Lord has been pleased to put away your sin. You are forgiven—but does not pardon demand amendment? Shall we go back to the old sins from which we have been cleansed? Shall we live in the iniquities from which we have been washed by the blood of our Lord Jesus? That were horrible to think of! It would be nothing less than devilish for a man to say, “I have been forgiven and, therefore, I will sin again.” There is no remission where there is no repentance! The *guilt* of sin remains on that man in whom the *love* of sin still remains. Let us practically feel the force of this and follow after purity and righteousness!

Brothers and Sisters upon whom Christ has worked His great work, you have experienced the love of God and, therefore, if God has so loved you, you are bound to love Him in return! If God has so loved you, you must also love your brother. Do not love of God and love of man spring up as a sure consequence of the love of God shed abroad in the heart? Does not everyone see the necessity which calls for the one love to follow the other? And love is the mother of obedience—thus everything connected with our Lord lays us under obligation to obey Him! There is not a single *blessing* of the Covenant but what necessarily entails its corresponding *duty*—and here I scarcely like to say *duty*—for these blessings of the Covenant make duty to be our *privilege* and holiness to be our *delight*!

Therefore, redeemed from sin, we would live no longer in sin! Therefore, made heirs of Heaven, we endeavor to lead the heavenly life so that even while we are below, our conversation may be in Heaven from where we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Brethren, He that made you whole has commanded this and that to be done by you! I counsel you to keep the King’s Commandments. As Mary said to the waiters at the wedding at Cana, so I say to you—“Whatever He says unto you, do it.” Does

He bid you pray, then pray without ceasing! Does He bid you watch as well as pray? Then guard every act, thought and word!

Does He bid you love your Brethren? Then love them with a pure heart! Does He bid you serve them and humble yourself for His sake? Then do so and become the servant of all! Has He said, "Be you holy, for I am holy"? Then aim at this by His Holy Spirit! Has He said, "Be you perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect"? Then strive after perfection, for He that made you whole has a right to direct your ways and it will be both your safety and your happiness to submit yourselves to His commands!

III. Enough, however, upon that. We now call your attention, in the third place, to the text under the sense of CONSTRAINT—"He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up your bed and walk." He made him whole by saying, "Rise, take up your bed." The carrying of the bed was part and parcel of the *cure*. The first part of the healing word was "rise," but the second was, "take up your bed." Now, it was not an ordinary word which Jesus spoke to that man—a mere word of advice, warning, or command—it was a word full of *power* like that which created light out of darkness. When the Lord said to the poor man, "Rise," he rose.

A thrill went through him—those stagnant blood vessels felt the life-blood stir and flow—those dormant nerves were awakened to sensations of health! Those withered sinews and muscles braced themselves for energetic action, for Omnipotence had visited the impotent man and restored him. Oh it must have been a wondrous joy to the long enervated, nerveless, powerless frame, to be capable of healthy motion—to be equal to bearing a happy burden! The joyful man rolled up his bed, threw it on his back and marched abroad with the best of them! The bed-carrying was part of the cure and *proof* of the cure.

The paralytic had not been called upon to deliberate as to whether he should rise or not, but Jesus said, "Rise," and he stood upright! The same word said, "Take up your bed." The bed was up at once and, according, to the last word, "walk," the man walked with delight! It was all done by the power of the one thrilling sentence which tarried not to be questioned, but accomplished the end for which the Lord had sent it. Not unwillingly did the restored man carry his bed, yet he did it of constraint, for the same power which made him whole made him obedient. Before the Divine energy had touched him, he seemed scarcely to have any will at all. The Lord had to hunt to find a will in him, saying, "Do you want to be made whole?"

But now he cheerfully wills obedience to his Benefactor and in the force of the command, he carried out the Lord's behest. I say that his taking up his bed and walking was done by Christ's enabling and done by Christ's constraining—and I pray that you may know by experience what this means. What I want you to feel is this—"I cannot help obeying Christ, for by His Holy Spirit He has spoken me into a life which will never die and never be vanquished! He has spoken a Word in me which has a continuous force over me and thrills me through and through constantly. I can no more help seeking to obey Christ than this man could help carrying his bed when the Lord, by a Word of power, had bid him do so."

Brothers and Sisters, look at this and be instructed and warned. Do you feel reluctant, this morning, to enter upon your Lord's service because

of conscious weakness? Has the devil tempted you to draw back from obedience because of your unfitness? Do you hesitate? Do you tremble? Surely you need to draw near to the Lord, again, and hear His voice anew! Take your Bibles and let Him speak to you, again, out of the Word and may the same thrill which awoke you out of your death-sleep wake you out of your present lethargy! There is need that the Living Word of God should come home to your inmost soul with that same miraculous power which dwelt in it at first. "Lord, quicken me," is David's prayer, but it suits me every day and I think most of God's people would do well to use it daily.

"Lord, speak life unto me now as You did at first. Speak power, speak spiritual force into me." "The love of Christ constrains us," says the Apostle. This constraint is what we need to feel more and more. We need Divine Life perpetually to bear us forward to acts of obedience! We do not need to destroy willinghood, but we would have it quickened into entire subservience to the will of the Lord! Like Noah's ark on dry land, the will keeps its place by its own dead weight—O for a flood of Grace to move, to lift, to bear it up—to carry it away by a mighty current! We would be borne before the love of Christ as a tiny piece of wood is drifted by the Gulf stream, or as one of the specks which dance in the sunbeam would be carried by a rushing wind.

As the impulse which began with Jesus found the poor man passive because utterly unable to be otherwise and then impelled him on to active movements as with a rush of power, so may it always be with us throughout life. May we forever yield to the Divine impulse! To be passive in the Lord's hands is a good desire, but to be what I would call *actively passive*, to be cheerfully submissive, willing to give up our will—this is a higher spiritual mood! We must live and yet not we, but Christ in us! We must act and yet we must say, He that made me whole bade me do this holy deed and I do it because His power moves me to do it! If I have done well, I lay the honor at His feet. If I hope to do well in the future, it is because I hope for strength from Him to do well, believing that He will work in me by that same power which converted me at the first! Beloved, endeavor to abide under this influence. May the Holy Spirit bring you there!

My last word is a practical lesson. The Church of God on earth at this present time anxiously desires to spread her influence over the world. For Christ's sake we wish to have the Truths of God we preach acknowledged and the precepts which we deliver obeyed. But mark, no Church will ever have power over the masses of this or any other land except in proportion as she does them good. The day has long since passed in which any Church may hope to prevail on the plea of history. "Look at what we *were*," is a vain appeal—men only care for what we *are*.

The sect which glorifies itself with the faded laurels of past centuries and is content to be inactive today is very near to its inglorious end. In the race of usefulness, men nowadays care less about the pedigree of the horse and more about the rate at which it can run. The history of a congregation or a sect is of small account compared with the practical good which it is doing. Now, if any Church under Heaven can show that it is making men honest, temperate, pure, moral, holy—that it is seeking out the ignorant and instructing them, that it is seeking out the fallen and re-

claiming them, that, in fact, it is turning moral wastes into gardens and taking the weeds and briars of the wilderness and transforming them into precious fruit-bearing trees—then the world will be ready to hear its claims and consider them.

If a Church cannot prove its usefulness, the source of its moral strength will have gone and, indeed, something worse than this will have happened, for its spiritual strength will have gone, too! A barren church is manifestly without the fruitful Spirit of God. Brothers and Sisters, you may, if you will, dignify your minister by the name of bishop. You may give to your deacons and elders grand official titles. You may call your place of worship a cathedral. You may worship, if you will, with all the grandeur of pompous ceremonies and the adornments of music and incense and the like—but you shall have only the semblance of power over human minds unless you have something more than these!

If you have a Church, no matter by what name it is called, that is devout, that is holy, that is living unto God, that does good in its neighborhood, that, by the lives of its members, spreads holiness and righteousness—in a word, if you have a Church that is really making the world whole in the name of Jesus—you shall, in the long run, find that even the most carnal and thoughtless will say, “The Church which is doing this good is worthy of respect. Therefore let us hear what it has to say.” Living usefulness will not screen us from persecution, but it will save us from contempt! A holy Church goes with authority to the world in the name of Jesus Christ, its Lord, and *this* force, the Holy Spirit uses to bring human hearts into subjection to the Truth of God!

Oh, that the Church of God would believe in Jesus’ power to heal sick souls! Remember that this man who was sick for 38 years, had been ill longer than Christ had lived on earth! He had been afflicted seven years before Christ was born! And even so this poor *world* has been long afflicted. Years before the Pentecost, or the birth of the present visible Church, the poor sinful world lay at the pool and could not move. We must not be hopeless about it, for the Lord will yet cast sin out of it. Let us go, in Jesus Christ’s name, and proclaim the everlasting Gospel and say, “Rise, take up your bed and walk,” and it shall be done and God shall be glorified and we shall be blessed!

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 5:1-23.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—909, 331, 787.**

SPURGEON’S TESTIMONIAL—The Sermons and Speeches delivered in commemoration of the 25th year of his Pastorate. Passmore and Alabaster. At our express desire the publishers have issued this handsome volume for a shilling. It is a choice memorial of a rare event and every one of our friends should preserve a copy. It will soon be out of print and unobtainable. [And so it is!—EOD]

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“VERILY, VERILY”

NO. 1642

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 29, 1882,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that hears My Word, and believes on Him that sent Me, has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation but is passed from death unto life.”
John 5:24.***

***“Verily, Verily, I say unto you, he that believes on Me has everlasting life.”
John 6:47.***

THE words “Verily, verily,” as they were solemnly used by our Divine Lord, indicate an utterance of special importance. If Jesus says, “Verily, verily,” there is something coming to which we should attend with all our hearts! The subject which He thus introduces is our possession of eternal life and our being delivered from condemnation by faith in Himself. Can any theme be more important? Many questions may be asked, but they can all afford to wait till we get the answer to that first enquiry, “What must I do to be saved?” What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world of knowledge and knows not the way of life? If he wins a world in this life, what will that matter to him if he misses life everlasting?

It is very considerate on our Lord’s part to call us with such great solemnity to think about our souls and eternal life. Let us attend to His appeal. Come here, dear Hearer, and bend over the words which Jesus commends to you with a double emphasis, saying, “Verily, verily.” Our Lord used this, “Verily, verily,” to denote a clear and certain Revelation. There must be an end to all doubt when Jesus says, “Verily, verily.” His ordinary word is true, for nothing but the Truth of God can come from Him who is “The Truth.” But when He uses His strongest exhortation, “Verily, verily,” then we must regard the statement with special reverence if we are, indeed, His loyal subjects.

When Jesus says, “Verily, verily,” we see two armies of truth gathered around His royal standard. His declaration is to be accepted as the indisputable, immutable, infallible Truth of God. Do you not agree to this? Carefully notice where this certainty lies—it rests solely upon the Word of Jesus—“I say unto you.” In the matter of our salvation, carnal reason never arrives at certainty. Mere argument can never bring a troubled heart to a sure anchorage. The certainty which Christ sets before us rests upon His own solemn assertion. Instead of proof, the Incarnate Son of God gives us—“Verily, verily, I say unto you.” If you are His disciples, and would enjoy the benefits of His salvation, you must accept your Lord’s statement

without question. Doubts and reason must lie down at His feet and it must be enough that Jesus says it.

The ipse dixit of a mere man is not enough, but those of us who adore the Lord Jesus as the Son of God desire no better assurance than the Word of His lips! Here is our ultimate ground of faith, our main argument with mankind, our final answer to Satan and the eternal quietus of every misgiving—Jesus says it! We shall never arrive at certainty as to everlasting life except by a conviction that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is Infallible in everything that He says. I had rather have one word from Jesus than volumes of human reason, however conclusive they may appear! Our judgment has often deceived us—even our senses play us false and our emotions are no more to be depended on than the winds and waves—but here is a rocky foundation, firm as the pillars of Heaven! “Verily, verily, I say unto you.”

It is clear that the teaching of this present verse must be accepted by all Christians. They must either believe it or reject their Lord, for He does, as it were, stake His own Character for Truth upon this utterance by prefacing it with, “I say unto you.” Jesus does not leave the way of life a moot point, but decides it with all authority, states it in plain terms and sets it forth, formally, in a declaration for which He will be forever responsible. If you reject this teaching, you must reject the Teacher, Himself! Nothing of authority remains to Jesus if you take liberty to question this point, for He does not put it as a matter of report, or inference, but as a Truth of God to be accepted on His own authority—“Verily, verily, I say unto you.”

I have heard some who call themselves Christians talk about the Doctrine of Salvation through faith in Christ as if it were a mere theory of what they are pleased to call the Evangelical School—but is it so? Is it not our Lord’s own teaching? Our opponents have full liberty to canvass the peculiar tenets of a party—and the more they do so the better—but this teaching is not ours! It is the teaching of Him whom these critics call Master and Lord! Is this their reverence for the Son of God? Do they challenge Him to His face and question that which He asserts with a double verily and certifies by the dignity of His Person and the veracity of His Character?

I am equally at issue with those who admit the Doctrine of Justification by Faith and then add that it is to be guardedly stated and cautiously presented! Does Jesus teach dangerous doctrine? This Truth of God is constantly assailed by the carnally wise, but is that a reason for mistrusting it when Jesus puts it forward in such a form? Understand clearly that if you reject the doctrine of life through *believing*, you reject the authority of Jesus! It is useless to talk about being a Christian if you are not prepared to believe what Jesus Christ asserts, for one of the first requisites for a true disciple is faith in his Master!

What kind of follower can he be who takes liberty to question when his Master stands erect in all the dignity of His glorious perfection and cries, “Verily, verily, I say unto you”? Are any of you such hypocrites as to call yourselves Christians and give Christ the lie? Dare you treat Him as if He

were one of yourselves, to be disputed with and criticized at pleasure? This is not reverence, but rejection! I might justly call it blasphemy! Note well the verse which precedes the text—“That all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honors not the Son honors not the Father which has sent Him.”

On the heels of that claim comes this assertion of everlasting life through hearing His Word and believing on Him that sent Him—as much as to say, “Believe what I am now about to say, even as if the Father spoke, for implicit faith is due to Me. If you would honor Me, believe in Me. But if you refuse what I say, you do Me the greatest dishonor.” Jesus regards this point as being so vital that He pledges His own Character for veracity as a guarantee for the doctrine! He does as good as say, “If you would honor Me, believe this Truth of God which I now declare upon My own authority.”

I feel, this morning, great restfulness of heart as to what I have to say. I shall not speak at haphazard upon a matter of opinion, speculation, or probability—nor shall I beg your consent and agreement as a matter of favor! I stand fair and square before you and I *demand* the assent of all who profess and call themselves Christians upon a point which Jesus has set at rest forever by the solemn declaration, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believes in Me has everlasting life.” Such as are prepared to reject the authority of the Lord Jesus may do so. To them I have no message this morning. But to all such as acknowledge His Messiahship and Deity, I present the doctrine of the text as worthy of all acceptance.

May the Holy Spirit help me to set it out with clearness and enable you to receive it into your inmost souls. Our Savior is speaking of a great blessing and our first head is the person to whom this blessing comes—“He that hears My Word and believes on Him that sent Me has everlasting life.” We shall speak, secondly, upon the blessing itself—“He has everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation but is passed from death unto life.” And thirdly, and this will be the point I shall lay most stress upon—the singular assurance with which it is stated, the wonderful firmness and distinctness with which it is asserted by the Master—and backed up with, “Verily, verily, I say unto you.”

I. First, then, THE PERSON TO WHOM THIS BLESSING COMES. Read the passage and you notice, first, that the privileged individual is a hearer who is also a Believer. “He that *hears* My Word, and *believes* on Him that sent Me, has everlasting life.” It does not appear, from our text, that everlasting life is communicated by drops of water, or in any other ceremonial manner—the command is, “Hear, and your soul shall live.” Men are not expected to believe that which they have never heard. They are not to take the articles of the church rolled up, as it were, into a pill, silver-coated, and to swallow them, be they what they may, without instruction.

We are to act towards saving Truth as we do in reference to other information—we are to hear it with attention— and so receive it. Those who find everlasting life, first *hear* of Jesus, His mission, His Person, His work, His sufferings, His offices, His power and the blessings He has come to

communicate. Listening to all this, they are grateful for being permitted to hear things which kings and prophets desired to hear but heard not! Do not expect that you can be saved if you shut your ears to the Gospel! Do not reckon that the same blessing will come to you if you carelessly walk the streets on the Sabbath as might come to you if you were diligent in listening to the Word of the Redeemer! Hear what the Lord says and let your whole heart yield itself to the Truths of God!

But these people, while they are hearers to begin with, do not stop there—they become Believers. They believe that Jesus is the appointed Savior and they accept Him as such for themselves. They believe that His blood cleanses men from sin and, therefore, they trust in His blood to cleanse them and are cleansed by it. Since His righteousness justifies, they are glad to accept that righteousness and to be justified. Theirs is not a dreamy, inactive hearing—when they know the Truth, they practice what they know! They not only know that the brazen serpent will heal, but they look to it and are healed. I am talking to some of the best hearers in the world, and yet I fear that many of you come short because you are only hearers and not *doers* of that Word of God which says, “Believe and live.”

Note again, these favored persons are Believers who remain hearers in the fullest sense. These persons believe in God who has sent the Lord Jesus into the world and, consequently, they believe that what Jesus says must be true. And then they hear His voice with a discerning, *spiritual* ear. Our Lord uses the word, “hear,” in a special sense when He says, “My sheep hear My voice.” They hear their Shepherd, but they know not the voice of strangers. “Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound. They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Your Countenance.” Believers are taught of the Lord to perceive the difference between Truth and error, between the teachings of mere legalists and the voice of the Gospel of Grace! Of others it is said, “their ears are dull of hearing,” but upon these, a miracle of Grace has been worked so that they hear the voice of the Son of God!

Dear Friend, is this your case? Is the name of Jesus sweet to you? Is a promise pronounced by His voice most comforting to your soul? Then be of good cheer, for you have everlasting life and come not under condemnation! You are resting upon the faithful promise of the Father, brought to you by the Word of His own Son! And because of this, you are quickened and justified! Jesus declares it is so. Do not doubt Him, lest you do despite to that blessed, “Verily, verily,” with which He prefaces the Word of God.

The quickened ones are described in our second text as Believers in the Lord Jesus. “He that believes in Me has everlasting life.” They have a personal faith in a personal Savior. They believe that God must punish sin; that God *has* punished sin in the Person of Jesus and that He has, therefore, set forth His Son, Jesus Christ, to be a Propitiation for sin, that “whoever believes in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life.” This they believe and on this they lean the full weight of their souls! Jesus

says, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” And they come to Him for rest and receive rest. This is the main point in the character of those who have everlasting life—they are not here said to *do* anything, or *achieve* anything—but they *believe* in Jesus, the Christ!

The saved are also described as believers in Jesus because of the witness of the Father. “He that hears My Word, and believes on Him that sent Me.” Why do I believe that Jesus Christ is my Savior? Because the Father has sent Him and borne witness to Him. I am sure that He can save me, for He is divinely commissioned, divinely furnished and the pleasure of the Lord must prosper in His hands. I believe today that He who came to the waters of Jordan to be baptized was the Son of God, for the Father said, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

I believe that He who went up to the mountain and was transfigured in the presence of His three disciples was the Son of God, for once again, the Father said in an audible voice, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear you Him.” I believe that Jesus Christ can save me, for when He prayed, a voice was heard from Heaven bearing witness that He was heard of the Father. The people that stood by knew not the meaning, but said that it thundered—yet there were some that heard that voice and knew it to be the witness of the Lord! Those who have everlasting life believe in Jesus as the Christ of God because the Father has given witness to Him in many ways—by an audible voice, by miracles, by the gift of the Holy Spirit and by constantly fulfilling, in the ministry of Christ’s Word, the promises which He made unto us in connection therewith. This *faith* in God our Father and in our Lord Jesus Christ saves the soul!

But notice that our Lord has spoken these words of every such Believer—“He that hears My Word, and believes on Him that sent Me, has everlasting life.” Whatever else he may have or may not have, this is the vital point. “But, Lord, he is full of fault and imperfection.” There is no exception made on that grounds, for, “by Him all that believe are justified from all things.” “But the believing man makes many mistakes in points of theology.” Nothing is said in the text as to errors upon other points, but the text positively says, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that hears My Word, and believes on Him that sent Me, has everlasting life.” If there is genuine faith in Jesus, there will be a sincere desire to understand all His teachings and a readiness to believe them. But as for ignorance and mistakes, they are covered with all our other sins by the great Atonement which is received by *faith*!

“But, Lord, he is, himself, afraid that he has not attained to everlasting life. He trembles lest he should be found lacking when put into the balances.” No exception is made on account of timidity and diffidence! If *any* man believes in Christ Jesus, the statement is made absolutely of him and of everyone like he, that he “has everlasting life.” Old or young, rich or poor, learned or illiterate, talented or obscure, there is no difference! All Believers have everlasting life! But, mark you, there is no statement made

as to the salvation of any other sort of person! Nothing is said about the baptized person who is *not* a Believer.

He has been made a member of Christ, an heir of God and an inheritor of the kingdom of Heaven in Baptism, according to the Prayer Book—but is it true? Our text says nothing about the baptized, confirmed and sacramental unbeliever having everlasting life! There is not a word that says it from Genesis to Revelation! Other books may say what they will, but this Book of God makes no account of any man who is devoid of faith. Did you tell me that such a one has been a professor of religion for many years and his outward life has been most commendable? So far, so good! But that is not all. Indeed, it is beside the mark as to the teaching now before us, for the text says absolutely nothing about outward morality and correctness of conduct!

These things are sure to be found where faith is found, but alone and by themselves, they answer not to the qualification laid down by our Lord. If a man believe not on Christ there is no cheering word for him, be he what he may. No one is left without eternal life that believes in Jesus—and no *unbeliever* is blessed with that life. What says the Scriptures? “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life: and he that believes not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides on him.” We now know the persons to whom the blessings of salvation have come. I hope that many of us are numbered with them.

II. Very briefly let us notice THE BLESSINGS WHICH BELONG TO BELIEVING. First, our Lord asserts that the Believer “has everlasting life.” He was condemned to die and reckoned as a dead man, but he is now acquitted and his life is granted him. He was spiritually dead, but the fact that he believes in Jesus is sufficient evidence that he has received spiritual life. John tells us in his Epistle, “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that you may know that you have eternal life.”

This spiritual life is not a thing of *time* only—it is expressly called “everlasting.” Those who in these days make out that “everlasting” does not mean unending, will, I dare say, squeeze the life-blood out of our text. But the most of us take the word to mean what it says and to signify life which will never end. If I have received life in Jesus Christ, I have received a life which will endure as long as the Everlasting Covenant, as long as everlasting love, as long as the Everlasting God! According to a certain theology, a man may have life in Christ one day and lose it the next—how, then, is it *everlasting* life? If a man has lost his life, that life could not have been everlasting—that is clear. That which comes to an end could not have been everlasting.

But we teach with the authority of Christ that the man that believes on Christ has, at this moment, within him a life that can never expire! The man may die after the flesh, but he can never die after the Spirit. There is for him no second death possible, unless the Bible expression is a mere trifling with language. The Believer has within him a life which is derived from Christ Himself—“I in them”—and this life depends upon the life of

Christ, even as He has put it, “Because I live, you shall live also.” The Believer has this everlasting life *now*, for it is not said, “shall have,” but, “*has* everlasting life.” What a gift this is! To be born in the image of God! To be a partaker of His Nature! To be placed beyond all reach of the second death! Glory be to God for this!

Notice, next, that the Believer is in a condition of non-condemnation. He “shall not come into condemnation.” The translation would be more accurate if it were put, “and comes not into judgment”—that is to say, as soon as a man has believed in Christ he receives the benefit of Christ’s Substitution and is no longer under judgment, much less condemnation. In Christ, the Believer has been judged, condemned and punished and is, therefore, clear of the Law and all its penalties. If we have, by our Surety, answered all the demands of Justice, what has the Law to do with us? How can it bring us into judgment? How can it cause us to know condemnation? But will not the righteous be present in the judgment of the Last Day? Undoubtedly we shall all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ—but the judgment of that day will not be a judgment to us in the dreadful sense of the term.

When a man is perfectly clear and called into court on purpose to be publicly *acquitted*, it is no *judgment* to him! “The Lord shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that He may judge His people.” And this is our joy, that our God shall come and shall not keep silent.” It will be no penalty, but a great delight, to stand before the great King and hear Him say, “Come, you blessed of My Father, enter the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”

Our text has another sentence of privilege—he “has passed from death unto life.” Notice where judgment is. Look, here is death! Yonder is life and resurrection! Judgment, as it were, stands between the two. We have passed from death to life and so we have passed by the judgment! There is a doctrinal error which cannot be too much condemned, that the resurrection is already past—but there is a blessed spiritual Truth of God that cannot be too firmly grasped—that Believers are already the children of the resurrection by having received quickening as to their spirits. In regeneration lies the essence and major portion of resurrection! We have already passed from the kingdom of Death into the kingdom of Life and so have passed by the judgment, since Jesus was judged for us, condemned for us and made to die in our place.

Abraham was called a Hebrew, or passer-over, and we, too, are Hebrews, having passed from one kingdom to another, being delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son! Christ, our Passover, is sacrificed for us and through Him we live. If Christ has suffered in our place, we cannot suffer for sin! Justice demands that we go free. What a miracle of mercy is this, that everyone that has believed in Jesus has left death behind him, never to return to it! He has entered the realm of life, never to be banished from it! And he has, on the road, passed under the rod of judgment and the sword of condemnation so that neither of these can further afflict him in time or in eternity!

Did I hear someone object, “You make too much of so small a matter as believing. You make out that simply by trusting in Jesus Christ there is a difference made between one man and another of a most extraordinary kind—and that it is made at once”? Yes, I do say that! Exactly that and, as far as I am concerned, I do not care how much you quarrel with it, I shall not tone down the statement—“He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned.” I hear you mutter, “I think you are very uncharitable.” Say so if you please. I shall prove my charitableness by bearing it.

But look! Here is a person standing right in the middle of a railway track and I say to him, “My dear Fellow, if you do not come off that track, you will be smashed to atoms within the next five minutes, for an express train is thundering along the line.” He laughs and answers, “Do you mean to say that my shifting the position of my body a couple of feet will make all that difference? Do you tell me that if I move, I shall be safe, and that if I stand here I shall be cut to pieces?” “Yes, I do say it and say it with tears, begging you to believe me and get off the track.” “Then,” he says, “you are very uncharitable.” “Yes,” I reply, “and you are very insane!” What more can I say? It is never uncharitable to speak the truth for the good of the person concerned. A small matter may suffice to shape the destiny of an immortal soul!

In those evil times, when there were slaves across the Atlantic, a lady went down to one of our ships, accompanied by her Negro servant. The lady remarked to the captain that if she were to go to England and take this black woman with her, she would become free as soon as she landed. The captain replied, “Madam, she is free already. The moment she came on board a British vessel she was free.” When the Negro woman knew this, do you think she went on shore with her mistress? By no means! She chose to keep her liberty. But what made her rise from a slave to a free woman? Why, only a few inches of separation from the shore!

I do not know how far the ship was from land—the distance may have been very little—still it made all the difference in the world! She was free on board and a slave on land. How slight the change of place, but how great the difference involved. Marvel not that faith involves such great things! I heard a grumbler say, “We do not need this doctrine. What we need is morality and honesty.” Just so. You remind me of a poor little child. His father planted bulbs to come up in the spring and make the garden gay with golden flowers. But the boy said, “We don’t need bulbs; we need crocus cups and daffodils.” The child forgot that flowers never grow without roots. You, too, good Sir, forget that holy lives cannot grow without a cause—and faith is the root of virtue!

Flowers stuck into the ground without roots are babes’ follies. And good works without faith are childish vanities. We preach faith in order that good works may *follow*—and they *do* follow—and are the fruits of that eternal life which men receive by faith. Are you not willing to get the flowers through the roots? Go, silly children, and grow wiser!

III. I close with my last head, which is THE ASSURANCE WITH WHICH THIS DOCTRINE IS STATED in my text. It was that which attracted me to it. First, the doctrine of this text is certified to us by the terms in which our Lord utters it. I have already told you this, but I mean to go over it again. Our Lord Jesus, whose name is Faithful and True, here pledges His honor as God, His veracity as Man, upon the certainty of this doctrine. He says, “Verily, verily.” These two words sound to me like great guns leveled against unbelief! Like the two brazen pillars called Joachim and Boaz, these two verities stand in the porch of Mercy’s temple and show us where there is establishment and strength in the Word of the Son of Man!

Our Lord then adds, “I say unto you.” Then it must be so, or else the Lord speaks in error—and none think that for a moment, for He is Wisdom itself! Is He not the only wise God, our Savior? Do you dream that these words may mean less than they say? That were to charge the Lord with insincerity, mocking poor souls with great words and small meanings! No, you would count it profane to imagine such a thing! “He that believes in Me has everlasting life” must, then, mean what it says. Christ knows what is everlasting life and who has it, for there is no eye like His that can discern life, wherever it may be, and discriminate between the false and the true. Others might be mistaken and deceived, but Christ knows what is the true life, being, Himself, the living and true God.

Jesus also knows whether we shall be judged and condemned or not, for He is, Himself, the Judge. The Father has committed all judgment unto the Son and if your Judge, Himself, says that we shall never come into condemnation, we can have no cause for fear. Who is he that condemns? Christ that died, who, sitting at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us? Impossible! Our Lord Jesus also knows the future—it is before Him as if it were present. He foresees everything that can possibly happen and so if He testifies of you Believer, “he shall never come into condemnation,” then depend upon it, the fact is sure! If a Prophet speaks, you believe him—shall you not much more believe the Son of God? The Believer has everlasting life—it is true—it is most surely true!

The question may be raised, Why does our Lord like to put it so very, very positively? Did I hear any of you grumbling in your hearts, just now, at my going over the same ground? I did it on purpose because it is with such great difficulty that you can get men to accept this humbling Truth of God. Human nature revolts against it. As for the unconverted, even when they begin to feel their need of a Savior they cannot think it true that by believing in Jesus Christ they will pass from death to life! Salvation must be by faith that it may be of Grace—and it must be of Grace or not at all! But proud souls will not have it so. A man must be driven to self-despair before he will agree to be saved by faith in Christ.

You who deal much with souls know how they try to escape their own mercy and avoid the loving kindness of the Lord. Even you that have believed and are saved are not half as sure as you ought to be. Are there not times with you when you say, “I do not feel as I wish and, therefore, I am not saved”? What argument is there in that? Can your *feelings* make

Christ a liar? Remember, the evidence of yours being saved as a Believer lies wholly in that, “I say unto you.” Perhaps you are not sure that you have everlasting life and yet you *are* sure that you are a Believer in Jesus. How is this? This is questioning Christ’s veracity! His strongest affirmation is, “Verily, verily.” Is He not to be believed on this? You, as His dear disciple, lover and friend, would be very indignant if anyone cast a suspicion upon His truthfulness—why will you do it yourself? Accept the truth heartily! Never doubt it, but let it stand as a fact most sure and steadfast that your faith has saved you!

It is, then, if you are a Believer, absolutely certain that you shall never be condemned, but have passed from death unto life—the Lord puts it so positively that we may be right positive about it. Why are you not, as a Believer, absolutely certain of yours possession of eternal life? The Master, who knew our unbelief, has put the matter so straight and plain that nobody can get over it without rejecting His Word. It is certain that he that believes in Him has everlasting life—certain, then, that we are saved if we are Believers. We must not be afraid to believe this with great confidence and to rejoice because of it! Someone says, “Ah, but it might be presumption.” Presumption to believe that Jesus speaks the Truth? I will tell you what is presumption—to question anything that our Lord has said! Is He your Master and Lord? If He is not, say so! But if He is, will you venture to sit upon the throne and judge the sayings of yours own Lord and say, “This may be true and that may be false”?

Another objector cries, “But I think a person may be too certain.” A person may be a great deal too certain if the argument is based upon inference. But if a statement is based upon the personal testimony of the Lord Jesus, we cannot be too certain of it! Circumstantial evidence is often very powerful and, to some minds, irresistible. Yet the inference drawn from it may be false. But your witness of a person who cannot err is worth all the circumstantial evidence in the world! Jesus Christ cannot be suspected of falsehood or error either in His Divine Character or in His perfect Human Character and, therefore, the basis of our confidence cannot be shaken. Our rest must be found entirely in that grand Word of God, “I say unto you.” The weight of yours doubt, if you have any, must fall upon His personal Character and there, also, the stress of yours faith must be fixed.

If Jesus speak the Truth of God, then the Believer has everlasting life. If the Believer questions whether he has life or not, he questions the veracity of Christ. We are bound by our discipleship to be at rest. Happiness becomes a duty and peace a matter of obligation. Happy are the men who are under bonds to be joyful! We are partakers of eternal life! We come not into condemnation! What delight, what peace flows through our spirits if it is, indeed so, that we have commenced the same life which is to be developed in eternal glory! Then what gratitude ought to fill us and how that gratitude should urge us to holiness and to perfect obedience to Him who has given us this inestimable blessing!

Come, let us not play with these things, but act as it behooves us to *act*, seeing that these things are, indeed, so. If they were mere myths or dreams, we might treat them carelessly. But accepting them as true, let us feel the force of their truth and let us rejoice this day in Him who has called us with so high a calling! One thing I want you to notice, and that is that our Lord does not desire us to keep this doctrine in the background. This doctrine that, “whoever believes in Him has everlasting life,” is not only for our own private comfort—it is to be proclaimed upon our housetops!

Those Jews in Christ’s day were a company of cross-grained fault-finders who picked holes in Him about everything and nothing. Very harpies were they—full of spite at His excellence. They had just been finding fault with His healing a man on the Sabbath and He had answered them out straight without reserve. And when He had their ear, He told them a Truth of God which would cut them to the quick. It was not a wanton casting of pearls before swine and yet they were not worthy to hear so Divine a Truth!

Jesus tells it to them that we may tell it to all. Never let us conceal what Jesus thus unveiled. There stands the precious Master and He says, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, you quarrelsome Jews whose groveling minds cannot comprehend Me, that he that believes in Me has everlasting life. Your hands even now are near the ground seeking for stones to hurl at Me, but I say it to you as a thing I mean you to know, even if you gnash your teeth over it, that he that believes in Me has everlasting life.” Oh, my Brothers and Sisters, let that be our answer to the present critical age! Let us turn the bulls-eye of our lantern full in its face! Let us cry again and again, “Believe in Jesus and live!”

They will reply to you with philosophical deduction and learned quibble—and they will dig all sorts of pits for you, hoping to entrap you. Never mind their pits, or their quibbles, or their deductions! Just go on telling out the Truth of God that, “whoever believes in Jesus has everlasting life.” But why tell it to these Jews that were so angry with Him? Perhaps some of them would be converted by it! Tell it to all men with this view, for the Gospel often begets faith in violent opposers. But if they were not converted, they would be left without excuse and this is something. Whatever may come of it, this Truth of God is meant to be written across the brow of Heaven! It is to be published throughout all nations, that all may know it!

One of our ministers, years ago, traveling by coach, asked an erroneous preacher who was on the same coach this question—“How is a sinner justified in the sight of God?” This gentleman replied, “Ah, I know you! If I were to let you know my views, you would put them in your sermon and spread them all over England.” “Ah,” cried our friend, “you are ashamed of yours notions, are you? Well, I will give you the answer and I will be very glad if you will put it in all your lectures and publish it all the world over—man is justified in the sight of God by faith in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ.” Our doctrine is not special truth for the elite

and initiated to be dubiously taught in a back room among a handful of students! It is the everlasting Gospel and we wish to have it proclaimed in markets and streets—before learned Brahmins and ignorant Hottentots! We would have it told out in the back slums of London and preached before lords and ladies and royalty itself! It does not matter where—salvation by faith is never out of place. This is a doctrine never to be covered up, nor veiled, nor qualified. “He that believes in Him has everlasting life!” Out with it and hesitate not!

It is a pretty thing which is told of the father of Mr. Newman Hall and the author of, “The Sinner’s Friend,” that his common seal that he always delighted to use was a crown with an anchor fixed into it, with just these words, “Other refuge have I none.” Well, if you do not use that seal; if you do not write the words over the door of your house, yet take care that you bear their meaning in your hearts! Have my text written in your hearts by the Spirit of God so that you are sure and certain of it beyond all doubt! And also do so glory over it that you never hesitate on any occasion to confess that you are saved by faith in Christ Jesus!

Dear Hearers, do you really know this Truth of God in your own souls? Have you believed in Jesus, or have you not? Are any of you trying to establish a righteousness of your own? Are you laboring as in the very fire to get peace where you will never find it? Oh, come away from your ceremonies and your sacraments! Come away from your feelings! Come away, even, from your prayers and your almsgiving! Come away from everything upon which you rely and believe in Jesus, the appointed Savior! Come away, even, from your own faith, for you must not rely upon it! Come and trust only in Jesus, who, being very God of very God, made Himself of no reputation and took upon Himself the form of a Servant and in that Servant form bled, even, to the death in the sinner’s place, that whoever will trust Him may be justified in the sight of God!

Rest there, one and all of you. Oh may God help you at this very moment to do so and then we will meet in Heaven, all of us! If there is no exception to the believing, there shall be no exception in the salvation, for, “He that believes in Him has everlasting life.”

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THE SOUL'S AWAKENING

NO. 3389

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 15, 1914.

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

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live.”
John 5:25.

I suppose that when a pearl-fisher is at the bottom of the sea and has gathered his bag full of oysters, he will sometimes see other oysters lying about which he would be very very glad to take up if he could. And I can imagine that when he has been safely taken into his boat and has put away what he gathered the first time, he will be rather anxious to descend again somewhere near that same spot to bring up those which he left behind. This, at least, is much like my own case. While reading the Chapter and preparing the sermon for this morning, I thought there were so many pearls in the text I could not say much about this particular verse so I felt inclined to return to the same spot at once to see if we might not fetch up some fresh gems!

Those of you who were present this morning will remember that we saw in the Chapter a three-fold gradation of life-giving in the Person of Christ. As here and there in the Old Testament dispensation, God had raised up some persons from the dead, so Christ, also, in the days of His flesh, had quickened whom He would—persons naturally dead He had restored to natural life. This is the first and, indeed, a very wonderful prerogative of live-giving for Christ to exercise to be able to raise Lazarus from the grave or to raise the young daughter of the ruler or to restore to the widow her departed son. The second form of life-giving is that described in the verse before us. He was constantly giving through His voice spiritual life to those who were spiritually dead. The third kind of life-giving we spoke of is that of the universal resurrection when all that are in the grave shall hear the voice of the Son of God and shall rise to judgment. It is to the second that we propose to direct our attention this evening—a form of life-giving which is going on now—not a matter of the past as was the raising of a few in Christ's day. Not a matter of the future as the coming resurrection is, but a matter of the present—not so apparent to the eye and to the ear as either of those mysteries, in so much that it is to a great extent invisible except to the man who is a participator in it, but just as real, just as miraculous and, in many senses, even more marvelous and Divine! Christ is constantly raising the spiritually dead and giving them life. Oh that we may be enabled by God's Spirit to open

up this Truth of God to your understanding and may it be applied to your hearts! Our first endeavor shall be to describe—

I. WHAT IT IS TO BE SPIRITUALLY DEAD.

“The hour is coming,” says the Savior, “and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God and they that hear shall live.” What is it to be spiritually dead? You all know what it is for the body to be physically dead. The soul has departed and has left the body incapable, insensible, unable to preserve itself. The soul was like salt to it—that being gone, it soon becomes putrid and obnoxious. Poor dead body! A most terrible and humiliating spectacle to see—especially to look upon it after it has been lying for a while in the grave. We have, most of us, heard what it is to be morally dead. It does not happen, I hope, to very many, but there are some who seem to be dead to all moral feeling of right and wrong between their fellow men—that is what I mean just now by morality. They have been so inured to theft, uncleanness, drunkenness and, some few even to murder, that when they have been arrested, convicted, imprisoned—nothing seemed to move them to repentance! Even the dread of the last terrible penalty of the law has not sufficed to bring from some of them any kind of emotion. Those who have been most earnest to arouse their conscience have felt the most painful conviction that their moral faculties were totally defunct. They have become callous, seared as with a hot iron. It is an awful spectacle to see a man morally dead—blind to reason, deaf to warning, numb to shame—thus morally dead. His passions raging without control, he becomes like some wild wolf of whom all the district is afraid! Like a raging lion going about in quest of prey whom every man dreads to encounter and whom some think it only right to slay. May none of us ever fall into such infamy! Alas, it might be! Step by step, little by little, men have become outcasts from society and found their lodging in the very lairs of corruption though they were born in better circumstances and trained with brighter prospects! May God grant we may never come to it ourselves!

But to be spiritually dead—what is that? It is something like these two, but I think it is somewhat different. I must describe spiritual death not in its essence, for that I cannot do, but in its outward signs. *Now observe a spiritually dead man.* He is not dead in any other respect. He walks abroad and sees the fields full of abundant harvests. At night-fall he looks up to the skies and marks the glorious scenery of night. By day he climbs the mountains, beholds the valleys beneath in all their smiling beauty and gazes upward at the golden sun above. God is to be seen in all these—God manifestly the Creator, Preserver and Benefactor of mankind—but this man does not perceive Him. He sees no God. Perhaps he can stand like Byron under the shadow of Mont Blanc and write himself, “*Atheos,*” without God where God is everywhere! Where God is in every breath of air, where God is in every flower beneath his feet, he sees not the footprints of the Almighty! He believes not in His secret Presence. Is the Great Eternal First Cause defunct, then, or is there no God? No, Sirs,

the man's perception of God is all gone and that is all that is gone! His power to realize spiritual things has failed or else his ears would hear the voice of God in the sounding tops of the pines! His eyes would see the name of God written in golden letters in the midnight sky! His every sense would perceive God and his inmost soul drink deep of God—but he is dead and, therefore, he cannot! Watch that man in the common events of Providence. Many mercies have come to his store—there are happy children climbing his knee, his wife is in strong health and full of happiness—they have no need to look from where the next meal shall come. The stream of mercy flows hard by their door and this has been continued many years! They have long enjoyed uninterrupted prosperity! Now, all this comes from God, and health and strength are peculiarly His gifts. The power to get and the power to enjoy our earthly goods must both proceed from Him. But this man never sees God in it at all! He sometimes talks of luck and thinks himself a fortunate fellow. Luck, chance and fortune—these seem to be his deity! Though the hand of God, wide open and full of bounty, is so spread out that one might think a bat or an owl might see it, yet this man perceives it not! The man is dead to the perception of spiritual things that the great Master-Spirit, Himself, is not perceived when He comes near loaded with favors!

As it is in Nature and as it is with the gifts of Providence, so especially it is in anything like outward religion. The man attends a place of worship—it may be he repeats his creed, joins in a form of prayer, or possibly he drops in where simpler worship is adopted and what does he do? He sings as others sing! He bows his head as others do in prayer. He listens as others do to the preaching of the Word, but it is a heavy dull monotonous service to him! He wishes it were over. He sees nothing in it. If he had his way and custom did not bind him at all, he would never he found wasting his time in such unprofitable proceedings as he thinks them to be! He is like the mouse in Church that thinks the Bibles and Prayer Books dry nibbling! He would rather be in the common ale-house, or at home reading novels, or walking out in the fields, or anywhere than in the place of worship! Yet others sitting by his side have found the most profound pleasure in those sacred engagements which have only brought weariness to him! Unlike him, they have been carried as on eagles' wings up to Heaven! Their souls have been filled with joy and peace and they have said as they have retired, "Surely God was in this place and it was good to be here." Why is this? The things ministered and the man who ministered them were the same. Ah, the one was dead while the others lived! How shall the dead derive comfort? How shall the dead be charmed? How shall the dead be fed and instructed? God was in the sermon but the carnally-minded man, being dead, perceived Him not!

Nor, my dear Friends, is this spiritual death merely a failure to recognize the Being of God—it is equally seen in reference to the moral obligations it involves. Man, by nature, is dead to the right and to the true, to

the commandments of the Lord which enlighten the eyes and to the testimony of the Lord which makes wise the simple. He is probably alive to his obligations to his fellow men because he has a clear understanding of their obligations to him. He generally keeps himself within the bounds of law and decency, but his greater obligations to his Creator—these cross not his mind—yet it is the very essence of rectitude and truth that He who made all things should be served by those He made and that He who sustains life in all His creatures should have honor from those creatures who owe their continued existence to Him! Why does the ungodly man not think of this? How is it he can live for 30 or 40 years sustained by God and yet never give to God the service of his heart—scarcely thinking about his God at all? How is it? Why, because the man is dead to spiritual obligations! It must be so or else he would lament that he had not met those obligations and begin to repent that he had transgressed the bounds that his Maker set. The man is dead, Sirs—dead!

Further *the natural man is dead to eternal things*. How quick-eared he is to the things of time—how swift to perceive their value and in what haste to grasp them if he can! But ah, the eternal realities which God has revealed in Scripture the man neither cares to hear about them nor, hearing them, do they excite any desires within his spirit! Alas, my Hearers, we have sometimes had to warn you of the judgment to come. We have had to take down the shrill-sounding trumpet and blow an alarm! We have had to tell you that there is a dreadful Hell into which the wicked, dying impenitent, must be cast! How is it that men are not stirred by a theme so truthful and so dreadful? Because they are dead! They would be awake enough if they were afraid that their house should be on fire and that they, themselves, might be burned with the natural element! Yet the spiritual danger far more to be apprehended arouses them not—because they are dead to it. At other times it has been our delight to speak of Heaven, to picture the pearly-gated city with all its azure brightness, with its bejeweled foundations and to talk of its inhabitants, all blessed forever, who walk in the light of their glorious King! And surely it were enough to make the cold marble heart glow with warmth! But no, the thing moved not men. Some little joy of earth would whet their appetite far more quickly! It is because to the spiritual Heaven revealed in Scripture men are altogether dead and care not for it! Oh Sirs, 'tis sad, 'tis sad, 'tis very sad that to the fleeting shadows we should be wide awake but to that substantial Truth of God we should be sound asleep—that after the poor gewgaws and child's bubbles of this mortal state, we should be all agog—but as to the solid joys and lasting pleasures of an eternal world, we show no desire! This again is a mark of spiritual death!

I must hurry on to mark a few more indications of this spiritual death. Prayer is one of the most blessed engagements and occupations of men while they are out of Heaven—to ask of the All-Bountiful One the mercies which they need. But there are some here tonight who never pray—who never really ask of God what they require. They take the attitude of sup-

plicants, perhaps as a matter of habit, but there they are like kneeling corpses! They do not pray—they are dead to prayer. Open this Book, this holy Bible, before them. There was never such another—no angel ever gazed upon a page more rich with glory than this! This Book it is that opens to us immortality and gives us the news of eternal love! Set the natural man down before it. It is to him a mere history or a dry book of dogmatic matters! He sees nothing in it that can charm him, nothing that can interest his spirit. The man is dead, Sir! To the sightless eyeballs, the brightest jewels flash back no radiance. He is dead! Yes, to Christ, Himself, the man is dead for when He is preached—Christ, the Father's Son, the virgin's Child, the condescending Savior, the ascending Conqueror, the exalted King crowned with Glory—why the people of God delight to hear of Him! To them the savor of Jesus' name is like ointment poured forth! But exhibit this Savior to the natural man and he perceives nothing! How could he? He is dead—dead in trespasses and sins! All the outward phenomena that you will discern in the best natural man indicate that whatever kind of light there may be in him, the Light of God that deals with God, with the spirit-world, the world to come, is not there! He is unconscious of these! He has no fellowship with them. He is dead and a prey to corruption! When we have paused a minute we shall endeavor to describe—

II. THE WORD WHICH JESUS BRINGS TO THE DEAD.

“The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God.” Our Lord Jesus Christ is, in Scripture, especially in the Gospel of John, called, “the Word.” Here His voice is spoken of but what is a voice apart from the person that utters it? What is the Word which Jesus speaks by which dead men are quickened? Is not Jesus Christ, Himself, the Word of God to man? The distinct articulate manifestation of Deity is Jesus Christ! Now, let me show you this. Jesus Christ came, once upon a time, from Heaven. He condescended to become a Baby, to be nursed in a manger, to hang on a woman's breast. He was God! What did that say—that Child, that Baby—Human, yet Divine? Why, it said this, “God has pity upon man and has not left him. He is about to establish an intimate relationship between Himself, the great and the glorious, and man, the weak and the pitiable—a union not at first between God and fully developed man, but between God and the Baby, as if it should be said the weakest and feeblest of all that bear the name of manhood may take comfort, for God has come down and taken a Baby's form into union with Himself!” That meant pity! It meant mercy! It meant fellowship and it meant hope to the race of man! To this end Jesus passed a life in the midst of all our sorrows, infirmities and took upon Himself our sickness!

And what did that mean? Why it meant *compassion*. A beautiful word, that—compassion—a united passion, a fellow-feeling, a kindred suffering! It seemed to say, “God is not indifferent to your woes. Oh, sons of

men! You have fallen through your sins, but God pities you! God feels for you! He is no flinty-hearted Jupiter who sits serenely on his throne amidst the pains and agonies and eternal death of his creatures! No, but He has come down to you! He has taken upon Himself, Manhood, that He may suffer with man and let man see that He has not left him, but that He feels for him! And after He had lived a life of holiness which was, indeed, comparatively but a small part of His work, our Lord Jesus Christ *gave Himself up to die!* Into the Garden He went and there the wrath of God was laid upon Him till that precious cluster was so crushed in the awful press of the Divine Wrath that great red drops of bloody sweat were distilled from every pore like the red juice from the cluster! He went to Pilate's Hall, to Herod's tribunal, to be mocked and scourged and spat upon and, at last, in extreme agony He offered up His life on the accursed tree! What did He say to us then? He said this—"God is just. I come down to you poor mortal men and, taking upon Myself your nature and taking also your sins as your Substitute, I have to suffer." Christ Jesus' suffering is a loud word from God to this effect, "I pity you men, but your sins I must punish. I cannot pass them by. If they are laid upon My Son, I must prostrate My Son beneath their load. I cannot wink at sin though it is laid upon the perfect Substitute, for even there I must hunt it to the death! It is an accursed thing and must not be tolerated. I must stamp it out of My universe."

This is God's Word. He says, "Justice as well as compassion. Pity but pity consistent with severity." Moreover Jesus rose again from the dead and now He ever lives at the right hand of God and His Holy Spirit has come and animates, at this time, the preaching of the Word with Divine energy! Christ now declares to us God's Word after this fashion, "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God. Whoever will trust in the Incarnate Son of God and fully rely upon the merits of His wondrous suffering shall be saved. God wills not the death of the sinner, but had rather that he should turn unto Him and live! And everyone that will turn unto the living God and trust His Son to make propitiation, shall be saved from the damning power of sin and have everlasting life." Christ, the Living One, is God's Word to us that we shall be delivered from the wrath to come if we trust in Him, even as He, Himself, was delivered when He rose again from the dead and ascended into Glory!

My dear Friends, the Gospel which I preach again, tonight, is that which I have always preached and always will preach until I have a fear lest I should preach till you are almost nauseated with the repetition! Yet if it were so, I could not help it, for no other name do I dare to preach, nor is there any other foundation that I dare to lay and bid you build on it but this! Jesus Christ, the Son of God has come! Here on earth He lived and died and suffered for the sake of mankind. God is a God of Love, but He is also a God of Justice. There is a way in which He can be just and yet tender to you. If you trust His dear Son, your sins shall not destroy you! Christ's sufferings shall stand instead of yours and you

shall live! If you will now accept Christ. If you now will lean fully on Jesus. If you now will fling away both your love of sin and your love of your own righteousness and come and rest where God would have you rest, God shall be reconciled to you and you shall be His child and you shall live forever and ever! I must now close with third point—

III. THE MODE BY WHICH THIS WORD IS APPLIED.

“The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear.” I have told you what they will hear. They will hear the Word of God! But who will speak it? Who is it that alone can speak it to purpose? Why—“When the dead shall hear *the voice of the Son of God*, they that hear shall live.” Whenever any dead soul lives, it is through the Word, but it is not through the voice of the preacher. That is but an instrument and nothing more! The real voice that makes dead souls live is the voice of Christ Jesus! What, is it so? Does He actually speak to every soul that is saved? He does! I do not mean in fancy as though you heard voices in the air, but I mean that this Word which I have just now preached to you must come home to your heart and your conscience and be applied by the Holy Spirit so that you prove its power and feel its energy. Through the Holy Spirit, it is that the voice of Christ is heard in the soul! But while I speak to you thus, some will say, “What, then, can we do with sinners as we have not the voice that can raise them?” Why you can pluck your Master by the skirt and say to Him, “Good Lord, speak the Word! Speak the Word!” When I come into this pulpit, the prayer that rises to my heart always—I hope I can always say without guile—is this, “Lord be here to speak, Yourself, through me.” I am persuaded that though I preach to dead sinners ten thousand years, never will one be saved by my voice. Why, then, do I preach to sinners knowing them to be dead? Because I am simply the instrument of Christ and He speaks through His voice with His own Spirit, which is as His voice, and the dead do hear and they are made to live—not without the instrumentality, not through the instrumentality, alone, but by the voice of Jesus Christ! I ask you, then, dear Brothers and Sisters who are alive to God, to pray that Jesus would speak while the preacher speaks. Be lifting up your hearts and silently crying—

***“Oh, let the dead now hear Your voice!
Bid, Lord Your banished ones rejoice!
Their beauty this their glorious dress
Jesus the Lord our righteousness!”***

What encouragement there is in this for you, my Brothers and Sisters! However feeble you may be in yourselves, yet if it is the voice of Christ you have to rely upon, what power there is in that! You may go to your class and say, “I cannot teach these troublesome boys and these inattentive girls! How can I hope to see them saved?” Ah but your Master can speak through you and He can do what you cannot! Though it is true that old Adam is too strong for young Melancthon, he is not too strong for the mighty Savior whose voice does not merely speak to the living, but

to the dead—and all who hear that voice shall live! Bend your ear, then, and bow down your heart! Attend to the voice of Christ seeing that thereby, alone, the dormant faculties can be quickened and a lively interest excited!

Yet while Christ speaks to the dead, *power is communicated to them that they may have it and use it, call it their own and exercise it.* “The dead shall hear,” and do notice, “*They that hear shall live.*” You must not imagine that man is passive in the matter. What does it say, “Draw us,” and we will be drawn? No, but, “Draw us *and we will run after You.*” There comes an activity. I have heard some speak of faith and repentance as the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Most truly so they are, but why speak of these gifts as though the sinner had nothing to do to repent and to believe? Always remember that it is *you* who must repent and believe. The Holy Spirit will not repent for you! What would He repent about? He never did wrong. And the Holy Spirit will not believe for you. What would He believe for? He is God, Himself! The fact is that the Apostle has expressed it exactly when he says, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that works in you to will and to do of His own good pleasure.” Christ gives the voice but the man hears. There is something done—there is a something to be received. It is no great act to hear a sound when it is made. It is no great act to receive mercy when it is presented. Yet the hearing is a miracle, for the dead hear! And the receiving by faith is a miracle, for none do this but those to whom it is given—yet it is done by man. Faith and repentance are gifts of God—the voice that saves is the voice of Christ but the point of personal salvation is reached when the man actively hears and receives the Truth of God!

I pray you, then, my dear Hearers, if you would be saved, be diligent in hearing the Gospel! I would urge you to frequent those places of worship most where there is most of Christ preached. Do not seek after eloquence, oratory, gaudy periods or grotesque observations that might amuse you. You have something else to do on the Lord's Day besides being amused and having your ears tickled! There is a soul in you that will either be saved or lost—and this day is given you peculiarly that you may listen to the Gospel which saves you! Hunt out the Gospel in your locality! Follow it wherever you may hear it preached. I entreat you to hear it, but do not think that the mere hearing it with your outward ears will be enough! Alas, such a hearing may involve responsibility and bring you no blessing. I pray you ask the Lord as you go up to the House of Prayer to open your inward ears to quicken you from your spiritual death and give you to derive profit. I do believe, my dear Friends, that few will miss a blessing who hear a Gospel minister anxiously desiring to get a blessing. In these waters, men shall catch what they fish for! And if you seek earnestly after God's blessing, you shall find it! Thirst for it! Pant for it! Long for it! You already have the beginning of it, for to desire Grace is an evidence that you have Grace in a measure! And to earnestly seek Christ is

already to have something from Christ—a foretaste of the feast they enjoy who find Him!

Ah, my dear Friends, we keep on preaching and you keep on coming and going, Sunday after Sunday, but how is it with you? Are you saved or not? A man opens a shop for the sale of medicines and I will suppose them to have great medicinal virtue. There is a plague in the district and he asks himself, “Are these drugs, after all, what they profess to be?” If men keep on dying, he will, as an honest man, begin to get anxious and to enquire. And if he meets with persons who are talking of other things, he will say, “Nonsense! Put them aside a bit. I want to ask you about something of more importance. Are these drugs of mine true shots with which to do battle with the plague? Are these the weapons with which to chase away this horrible disease and avert the threat? Is the plague increasing in your street or is it dying out?” Oh I want to push these questions home to you tonight! I know I preach the Word of Christ. I am sure I have told you the Gospel of His salvation. The voice of Christ I cannot imitate nor would I if I could. ‘Tis His to use His own voice. His tongue and His tongue, only, is like a two-edged sword which can cut and cure, kill and heal at the same time! How is it with you? Are you saved? Are you awakened? Are you seeking? Are you finding? Or are you, after all, just hearing and hearing and hearing again and again to no purpose? Ah, I would to God that I were not the preacher to such as you and that you were not my hearers, for I cannot bear that I should be adding to your condemnation! That I should be hardening you—for so it must be—hardening your hearts with the very Truth of God that ought to soften them! I pray the Master bring you into a different state and give you to lay hold on these things, for if they are not true, it is time I had done preaching them! But if they are true, it is time you had received them! If they are not true, it is time that these services were given over, for they are awful farces! But if this Book is true and Christ’s Gospel is true, it is time that you did not make farces of them but that you turned unto God with full purpose of heart!

The Lord save you for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
EPHESIANS 2; MATTHEW 11:1-6.**

Verse 1. *And you has He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins.* What a great change, then, has taken place in the people of God! It is described as being similar to the resurrection of the dead. And do you suppose that this took place without a man’s knowing it? Do you think that we are wrong in stating a wide difference between the quickened ones and the dead? I think not. In fact, those addresses made to congregations in which there is no distinction made between the living and the dead in Zion are deceptive. And prayers that are meant to suit congrega-

tions of mingled character—where some are dead in sin and others alive unto God—are, on the very face of them, an attempt at an impossibility! As great as is the distinction between the dead in their graves and living men that walk the streets, so great is the difference between the regenerate and unregenerate! Do you think that in reading this verse, dear Friends, you could apply it to yourself, “and you, and you, and you, has He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins”?

2. *Wherein in time past you walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience.* Those who are not saved have a life of evil. They are dead towards God, but they are alive towards Satan. An unregenerate man's heart is Satan's workshop in which he forges divers devices of evil—the spirit that works in the children of disobedience!

3. *Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath even as others.* No difference by nature between the brightest saint in the Church of God and the blackest sinner of the camp of Satan—all fallen, all desperately depraved at our very original! What wonders of Grace are those who are saved! Let them taken care that they never fail in praising that Grace of God!

4-7. *But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, has quickened us together with Christ (by Grace you are saved). And has raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His Grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.* God's great objective is to display His Grace—to let all the universe know what a gracious God He is—therefore did He pitch upon us who were dead in sin even as others! Therefore does He quicken us and, therefore, having quickened us, does He go on to raise us up from one point to another until He makes us sit with Christ upon His Throne! Oh Beloved, if all the ages are to learn the Grace of God from His dealings towards us, let us learn it and let us talk much of it and exult much in it! Who is a gracious God like unto our God?

8. *For by Grace are you saved.* Not by your own merits! Not by priestcraft! Not by your own free will. “By Grace are you saved.” This is the great summary of the Gospel! Let this Doctrine be preached and we shall soon see the errors of Rome fly before it! “By Grace are you saved.”

8. *Through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.* Neither the faith nor the salvation are of ourselves. They are both the gifts of Divine Love—both worked in us by the Divine Spirit. It is the gift of God!

9, 10. *Not of works lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship.* No good man can boast of his works because those works are the work of God. Without Him, we could not perform good works! So that even when we possess them, we are His workmanship. Shall the vessel on the wheel exalt itself as if it made itself? No, the potter must have the credit for all the skill of the making of the vessel. And if, therefore, there

shall be in our character marks and lines of Grace and Truth—unto God be the glory for them, for we are His workmanship!

10-12. *Created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God has before ordained that we should walk in them. Therefore remember that you, being in time past, Gentiles in the flesh who are called Uncircumcision by those who are called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands. That at the time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise having no hope and without God in the world.* This is where our fathers were. This is where we are by nature! We have not got even as far as the Jew who had a Covenant according to the flesh to plead and had received the sign of it while yet a child! But we—we were altogether foreigners and aliens from the Most High!

13. *But now in Christ Jesus you who sometimes were far off are made near by the blood of Christ.* Oh, rejoice in this! You far-off ones made near, lift up your hearts in thankfulness for what the Lord Jesus has done for you by His blood—made near by the blood of Christ!

14. *For He is our peace who has made both one and has broken down the middle wall of partition between us.* Christ is peace between Jew and Gentile—peace between both of them and their God. I have heard of a poor bricklayer who when at work on a scaffold, fell from a great height and was taken up and was dying. They sent for a minister of the Gospel who began addressing him in such terms as this, “My dear man, you are evidently near to die and therefore I exhort you to make your peace with God.” He knew but very little of it compared with what the poor bricklayer knew, for opening his eyes, he said, “Make my peace with God, Sir? That I could not do, but I thank God it was made for me in the Everlasting Covenant of Grace in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ 1,800 years ago! I have no peace to make!” It is peace already made! And we have but to accept it, for He is our peace who has made both one and broken down the middle wall of partition between us!

15, 16. *Having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in Himself of two, one new man so making peace. And that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the Cross having slain the enmity thereby.* No enmity now should exist between Jew and Gentile. None does exist between the Believer and his God. The enmity is dead forever, for Christ has died.

17, 18. *And came and preached peace to you which were afar of and to them that were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.* In this verse you have the whole Trinity and all the Trinity in unity are necessary for prayer. “Through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.”

19. *Now therefore you are no more strangers and foreigners but fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God.* How blessedly Grace annihilates all national distinction! Cowper spoke of nations which, like

kindred drops, would have melted into one if they had not been divided by a range of mountains or intersected by a narrower faith. But in the Gospel of Grace we do melt into one! Whoever loves the Lord is a co-patriot with all who love Him! Distinctions of nationality sweetly sink when we come to know the Savior. We are fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God!

MATTHEW 11:1-6.

Verses 1-5. *And it came to pass when Jesus had made an end of commanding His twelve disciples, He departed thence to teach and preach in their cities. Now when John had heard in the prison, the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples. And they said unto Him, Are You He that should come or do we look for another? Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and show John again those things which you do hear and see: The blind receive their sight and the lame walk. The lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear. The dead are raised up and the poor have the Gospel preached to them.* These were Christ's seals and proofs—John needed not to seek others. These were the very works of which prophecy had said would be the marks of the Messiah! If, then these marks were found in Him, He left John and his disciples to draw the inference that He was, indeed, the One who was to come! Christ is always best known by His works and, especially in His people, He is seen in their lives. There are two great precepts for the conquest of the world for Christ—the first is preach the Gospel—but the second is live the Gospel and if we do not live the Gospel, we shall not succeed in preaching the Gospel! In fact, those members of our churches who do not *live* the Gospel, undo through all the week what the preacher of the Gospel endeavors to do on the Lord's Day! It is a fine thing to preach with your mouth, but the best thing in the world is to preach with your feet and with your hands—in your walk and in your work! And if you are enabled to do this, the people will be able to say very little against the preaching of the Gospel when they see the result of it in those who accept it! God grant that we may be all preachers in some way or another!

6. *And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.*

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***“Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice and shall come forth—they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”
John 5:28, 29.***

THE doctrine of the Resurrection of the dead is peculiarly a Christian belief. With natural reason, assisted by some little light lingering in tradition, or borrowed from the Jews, a few philosophers spelled out the immortality of the *soul*. But that the *body* should rise again—that there should be another life for this corporeal frame—was a hope which is brought to light by the Revelation of Christ Jesus. Men could not have imagined so great a wonder, and they prove their powerlessness to have invented it by the fact that still, as at Athens, when they hear of it for the first time, they fall to mocking. “Can these dry bones live?” is still the unbeliever’s sneer!

The doctrine of the Resurrection is a lamp kindled by the hands which once were pierced. It is, indeed, in some respects, the keystone of the Christian arch. It is linked in our holy faith with the Person of Jesus Christ and is one of the brightest gems in His crown. What if I call it the signet on His finger, the seal by which He has proven to a demonstration that He has the King’s authority and has come forth from God? The doctrine of Resurrection ought to be preached much more commonly than it is as vital to the Gospel. Listen to the Apostle Paul as he describes the Gospel which he preached, and by which true Believers were saved—“I delivered unto you,” says he, “first of all that which I received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures. And that He was buried and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.”

From the Resurrection of Christ he argues that of all the dead and insists upon it, that if Christ is not risen, both their faith and his preaching were vain. The doctrine of the Resurrection in the early Church was the main battle-ax and weapon of war of the preacher. Wherever the first missionaries went they made this prominent—that there would be a judgment and that the dead should rise again to be judged by the Man Christ Jesus, according to their Gospel. If we would honor Christ Jesus the Risen One, we must give prominence to this Truth of God. Moreover, the doctrine is continually blessed of God to arouse the minds of men. When we fancy that our actions are confined to this present life, we are careless of them. But when we discover that they are far-reaching, and that they cast influences for good or evil across an eternal destiny, then we regard them more seriously.

What trumpet call can be more startling? What arousing voice can be more awakening than this news to the careless sinner that there is a life hereafter? That men must stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ to be judged for the things done in their bodies whether they were good or evil? Such doctrine I shall try to preach this morning for just such ends—for the honoring of Christ and for the awakening of the careless. God send us good speed and abundance of the desired results. We shall first *expound the text* and then, secondly, *endeavor to learn its lessons*.

I. First we shall EXPOUND THE TEXT. No exposition will be more instructive than a verbal one. We will take each word and weigh its meaning. Observe then, first, in the text there is a forbidding to marvel. “*Marvel not at this.*” Our Savior had been speaking of two forms of life-giving which belonged to Himself as the Son of Man. The first was the power to raise the dead from their graves to a renewed natural life. He proved this on one or two occasions in His lifetime, at the gates of Nain, in the chamber of the daughter of Jairus and again at the tomb of the almost rotting Lazarus.

Jesus had power when He was on earth and has power still, if so He should will it, to speak to those who have departed and bid them return again to this mortal state and reassume the joys and sorrows and duties of life. “As the Father raises up the dead and quickens them; even so the Son quickens whom He wills.” After our Lord had dwelt upon that form of His life-giving prerogative, He passed on to a second display of it and testified that the time was then present when His voice was heard to the quickening of the spiritually dead. The spiritually dead—the men who are dead to holiness and dead to faith—dead to God and dead to Divine Grace.

The spiritually dead are the men that lie enshrouded in the grave clothes of evil habits, rotting in the coffins of their depravity. They are deep down in the graves of their transgressions. These men, when Jesus speaks in the Gospel, are made to live! A spiritual life is given to them. Their dead souls are raised out of their long and horrible sleep and they are enlivened with the life of God. Now, both of these forms of quickening are worthy to be marveled at. The resurrection of the natural man to natural life is a great wonder—who would not go a thousand miles to see such a thing performed? The raising up of the dead spirit to spiritual life, this is a *greater* wonder by far! But albeit that these are wonders and things which it is legitimate to wonder at by way of admiration, yet there is a marveling of mistrustful unbelief which is insulting to the Lord and is, therefore, forbidden.

Our gentle Master, as if to overwhelm the gainsayers who were astonished at His claims, addressed them to this effect: “You need not marvel at these two claims of Mine. I claim another power of quickening which will much more amaze you. There will happen before long an event which to you, at any rate, will be more marvelous, still, than anything which you have seen Me do, or which I claim to perform. There will come a time when all the dead that are in their graves, multitudes upon multitudes in

the valleys of death, shall all at once, at My voice, start up to life and stand before My Judgment Throne.”

To you, dear Brothers and Sisters in the faith, the quickening of the dead is not so great a marvel as the saving of dead souls. And, indeed, the raising of a corpse from the grave is by no means so great a marvel as the raising up of a dead soul from the sleep of sin. For in the raising up of a dead body there is no opposition to the fiat of Omnipotence. God speaks and it is done. But in the saving of a dead *soul*, the elements of death within are potent and these resist the life-giving power of Divine Grace so that regeneration is a *victory* as well as a creation—a complicated miracle—a glorious display both of Grace and power. Nevertheless, to the few and to all who are still ruled by the carnal mind, to the mere outward eye, the resurrection of the body seems a greater marvel for several reasons.

Comparatively few in our Savior’s day were quickened spiritually, but the resurrection shall consist of the quickening of all the dead bodies of men that have ever existed! Great marvel, this, if you consider the hosts of the sons of Adam who have fattened the soil and glutted the worms and yet shall everyone of them rise again! Souls were quickened in our Savior’s day as in ours, one by one—here one and there one. Long years roll on. The whole history of manhood interposes before the regeneration of all the elect is accomplished—but the resurrection of the dead will take place at once! At the sound of the archangel’s trumpet the righteous will rise to their glory! And after them the ungodly will rise to their shame. The resurrection will not be a gradual uprising, a slow development—for all at once the myriads shall swarm on land and sea!

Conceive, then, what a marvel this must be to a mere natural mind! A graveyard suddenly enlivened into an assembly! A battlefield, where tens of thousands had fallen, suddenly disgorging all its slain! The suddenness of it would amaze and startle the most carnal mind and make the miracle appear great beyond comparison. Moreover, my Brethren, the resurrection of the dead is a thing that such men as the Jews could appreciate, because it had to do with materialism, had to do with *bodies*. There was something to be seen, to be touched, to be handled—something which the unspiritual call a matter of fact. To you and to me the spiritual resurrection, if we are spiritual, is the greater marvel, but to them the resurrection seemed to be the more wonderful because they could comprehend it and form some notion of it in their unspiritual minds.

So the Savior tells them that if the two former things made them wonder and made them doubt, what would this doctrine do—that *all* the dead should be raised again in a *moment* by the voice of Christ? Beloved, let us humbly learn one lesson from this. We are, ourselves, by nature very like the Jews. We wonder mistrustfully. We unbelievably wonder when we see or hear of fresh displays of the greatness of our Lord Jesus Christ. So narrow are our hearts that we cannot receive His Glory in its fullness. Ah, we love Him and we trust Him and we believe Him to be the fairest and the greatest and the best and the mightiest, but if we had a fuller view of what He can do the probabilities are that our amazement would be mingled with no small portion of doubt.

As yet we have but slender ideas of our Lord's Glory and power. We hold the doctrine of His Deity. We are orthodox enough, but we have not thoroughly realized the fact that He is Lord God Almighty. Does not it sometimes seem to you to be impossible that such-and-such a grievously ungodly man could be converted? But why impossible with Him who can raise the dead? Does it not seem impossible that you could ever be supported through your present trouble? But how impossible with Him who shall make the dry bones live and cause the sepulcher to disgorge? It appears improbable at times that your corruptions should ever be cleansed away and that you should be perfect and without spot. But why so? He who is able to present, before His Throne, tens of thousands of bodies which have long slept in the sepulcher and molded into dust—what can He not accomplish within His people?

O doubt no more and let not even the greatest wonders of His love, His Grace, His power or His Glory cause you to marvel unbelievably, but rather say as each new prodigy of His Divine power rises before you, "I expected this of such a One as He is. I gathered that He could achieve this, for I understood that He was able to subdue all things to Himself. I knew that He fashioned the world and built the heavens and guided the stars and that by Him all things consist. I am not, therefore, astounded though I behold the greatest marvels of His power." The first words of the text, then, urge us to faith and rebuke all unbelieving amazement.

To the second sentence I now call your attention. The coming hour. "The *hour is coming*," says Christ. I suppose He calls it an hour to intimate how very near it is in His esteem, since we do not begin to look at the exact hour of an event when it is extremely remote. An event which will not occur for hundreds of years is at first looked for and noted by the year. And only when we are reasonably near it do men talk of the day of the month—and we are coming very near it when we look for the precise *hour*. Christ intimates to us, that whether we think so or not, in God's thought the day of Resurrection is very near. And though it may be a thousand years off even now, yet still, to God, it is but one day and He would have us endeavor to think God's thought about it, not reckon any time to be long, since if it is time at all it must be short and will be so regarded by us when it is past and the day has arrived.

This is practical wisdom—to bring close up to us that which is inevitable and to act towards it as though it were but tomorrow morning when the trumpet should sound and we should be judged. "The hour is coming," says the Savior. He here teaches us the *certainty* of that judgment. There are some events which may or may not be. Emperors may live or die, their sons may ascend their throne, or their throne may be broken into dust and scattered to the winds of Heaven. Dynasties may stand or they may wither like autumn leaves. The greatest events which we supposed to be inevitable may never occur. Another wheel, which has not yet been seen by us in the great machinery of Providence, may make events revolve in quite another fashion from what our puny wisdom would foretell. But the hour of Resurrection is certain, whatever else may be contingent or doubtful.

The hour comes. It assuredly comes. In the Divine decree this is the day for which all other days were made. And if it were possible that any determination of the Almighty could be changed, yet this never shall be—for “He has appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He has ordained. Therefore He has given assurance unto all men, in that He has raised Him from the dead.” “The hour comes.” Reflect, my Brethren, that most solemn hour comes every moment. Every second brings it nearer. While you have been sitting still in this House, you have been borne onwards towards that great event! As the pendulum of yonder clock continues unceasingly to beat like the heart of time. As morning dawn gives place to evening shade and the seasons follow in constant cycle, we are drifted along the river of time nearer to the ocean of eternity! Borne as on the wings of some mighty angel who never pauses in his matchless flight, we are carried onward in our journey towards the judgment bar of God!

My Brethren, by that same flight are you also *hurried* on. Look to the Resurrection, then, as a thing that always comes, silently drawing nearer and nearer hour by hour. Such contemplations will be of the utmost service to you. Our Lord’s Words read as if the one hour of which He spoke completely drove into the shade all other events—as if the hour, the one hour, the last hour, THE hour *par excellence*, the master hour, the royal hour—was of all hours the only hour that was coming that was worth mentioning as being inevitable and important! Like Aaron’s rod, the judgment hour swallows up every other hour!

We hear of hours that have been big with the fate of nations. Hours in which the welfare of millions trembled in the balances. Hours in which for peace or war the die must be cast. Hours that have been called crises of history—and we are apt to think that frequently periods such as this occur in the world’s history. But here is the culminating crisis of all! Here is the iron hour of severity, the golden hour of truth, the clear sapphire hour of manifestations! In that august hour there shall be proclamation made of the impartial decisions of the Lord Christ with regard to all the souls and bodies of men. Oh, what an hour is this which comes on apace!

My dear Brothers and Sisters, now and then I covet the tongue of the eloquent and now I do so that I might on such a theme as this fire your imaginations and inflame your hearts! But let me pray you assist me now for a moment and since this hour comes, try to think it very very near. Suppose it should come, now, while we are here assembled. Suppose that even now the dead should rise—that in an instant this assembly should be melted into the infinitely greater one and that no eye should be fixed upon the forgotten preacher—but all fixed upon the great descending Judge, sitting in majesty upon His Great White Throne! I pray you think yourselves as though the curtain were lifted at this moment. Anticipate the sentence which will come forth to you from the Throne of Righteousness! Consider as though at this precise moment it were pronounced upon you! Oh now, I pray you examine yourselves as though the testing days were here, for such an examination will be to your souls’ benefit if

you are saved. And it may be to your souls' warning if you are unconverted.

But we must pass on. "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves." Notice this very carefully, "*all that are in the graves*," by which term is meant not only all whose bodies are actually in the grave at this time, but all who were ever buried even though they may have been disinterred and their bones may have mingled with the elements, been scattered by the winds, dissolved in the waves, or merged into vegetable forms. All who have lived and died shall certainly rise again. All! Compute, then, the numberless number! Count, now, the countless! How many lived before the deluge? It has been believed, and I think accurately, that the inhabitants of this world were more numerous at the time of the deluge than they probably are now. Owing to the enormous length of human life, men's numbers were not so terribly thinned by death as they are now.

Think, if you will, from the times of the deluge onward, of all Adam's progeny. From Tarshish to Sahara men covered the lands. Nineveh, Babylon, Chaldea, Persia, Greece, Rome were vast empires of men. The Parthians, Scythians and Tartar hordes, who shall reckon up? As for those northern swarms of Goths and Huns and Vandals—these were continually streaming as from a teeming hive in the middle ages and Frank and Saxon and Celt multiplied in their measure. Yet these nations were but types of a numerous band of nations even more multitudinous! Think of Ethiopia and the whole continent of Africa! Remember India and Japan and the land of the setting sun—in all lands great tribes of men have come and have gone to rest in their sepulchers. What millions upon millions must lie buried in China and Burma! What innumerable hosts are slumbering in the land of the pyramids and the mummy pits! Everyone, both great and small, embalmed of old in Egypt—who shall compute the number?

Hear you, then and believe—out of all who have ever lived of woman born, not *one* shall be left in the tomb! All, all shall rise! I may well say as the Psalmist did of another matter, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me. It is high, I cannot attain unto it." How has God marked all these bodies? How has He tracked the form of each corporeal frame? How shall Jesus Christ be able to raise all these? I know not, but He shall do it, for so He declares and so has God purposed. "All that are in the graves shall hear His voice." All the righteous, all the wicked, all that were engulfed in the sea, all that slumber on the top of earth—all the great ones, all the multitudes of the sons of toil, all the wise and all the foolish, all the beloved and all the despised—there shall not be one single individual omitted!

My dear Friend, it may be best for you to look at the question in a more personal light—*you* will not be forgotten—your separated spirit shall have its appointed place and that body which once contained it shall have its watcher to guard it till, by the power of God, it shall be restored to your spirit, again, at the sounding of the last trumpet. You, my Hearer, shall rise again! As surely as you sit here this morning, you shall stand before the once crucified Son of Man! It is not possible that you should be forgot-

ten. You shall not be permitted to rot away into annihilation, to be left in the darkness of obscurity. You must, you shall rise, each and every one without a solitary exception. It is a wondrous Truth of God and yet we may not marvel at it so as to doubt it, though we may marvel at it and admire the Lord who shall bring it to pass.

Pass on. "All that are in the graves *shall hear His voice.*" Hear! Why, the ear has gone! A thousand years ago a man was buried, and his ear—there is not the slightest relic of it left—all has vanished! Shall *that* ear ever hear? Yes, for He that made it hear at the first worked as great a wonder, then, as when He shall make it hear a second time! It needed a God to make the hearing ear of the newborn babe. It shall need no more to renew the hearing ear the second time. Yes, the ear so long lost in silence shall hear! And what shall be the sound that shall startle that newly awakened and fresh fashioned ear? It shall be the voice of the Son of God! The voice of Jesus Christ, Himself! Is it not amazing that that same voice of Jesus is now sounding in this very place and has been, thousands of times, and there are men who have ears, who have yet never heard that voice?

Yet when that voice shall speak to men who have no ears, they shall hear it and rise to life! How deaf must those be who are more deaf than the dead! What is their guilt who have ears to hear, yet hear not! And when the voice of Christ sounds through the building again and again in the preaching of the Gospel, they are no more moved by it than the slates which cover them from the rain. How dead, I say, must they be who are not moved by the Word of God which arouses even the dead in their graves who have lain in it these thousand years?! Ah, my Brethren, while this teaches us the dullness of human nature and how depraved the heart is, it also reminds you who are careless that there is no escape for you! If you will not hear the voice of Jesus now, you *must* hear it then! You may thrust your fingers into your ears today, but there will be no doing that in the day of the last trumpet—you must hear, then!

O that you would hear now! You must hear the summons to *judgment!* God grant that you may hear the summons to *mercy* and become obedient to it and live. "All that are in the graves *shall hear His voice.*" Whoever they may have been, they shall become subject to the power of His Omnipotent command and appear before His sovereign Judgment Seat. Note the next words, "and *shall come forth.*" That is to say, of course, that their bodies shall come out of the grave, out of the earth, or the water, or the air, or wherever else those bodies may be. But I think there is more than that intended by the words, "shall come forth." It seems to imply manifestation, as though all along men were here and in their graves hidden and concealed. But as the voice of God in the thunder discovers the forests and makes the hinds to calve, so the voice of God in Resurrection shall discover the secrets of men and make them bring forth their truest self into the light, to be revealed to all.

The hypocrite, masked villain as he is, is not discovered now, but when the voice of Christ sounds, he shall come forth in a sense that will be horrible to him! He will be deprived of all the ornaments of his masquerade, the mask of his profession torn away. He shall stand before men and an-

gels with the leprosy upon his brow, an object of universal derision, abhorred of God and despised of men. Ah, dear Hearers, are you ready to come forth even now? Would you be willing to have your hearts read out? Would you wear them on your sleeve for all to see? Is not there much about you that would not bear the light of the sun? How much more will it not bear the light of Him whose eyes are as a flame of fire, seeing all and testing all by trial which cannot err? Your coming forth on that day will be not only a reappearance from amidst the shade of the sepulcher, but coming forth into the light of Heaven's truth which shall reveal you in meridian clearness.

And then the text goes on to say that they shall come forth as *they that have done good* and *they that have done evil*. From which we must gather the next Truth of God that death makes no change in man's character and that after death we must not expect improvements to occur. He that is holy is holy, still, and he that is filthy is filthy, still. They were, when they were put into the grave, men who had done good—they rise as men who have done good. Or they were, when they were interred, men who had done evil—they rise as those that have done evil. Expect, therefore, no place for repentance after this life, no opportunities for reformation, no further proclamations of mercy, or doors of hope. It is now or never with you, remember that.

Note, again, that *only two characters rise*, for, indeed, there are only two characters who ever lived! And, therefore, two to bury and two to rise again—those who had done good—and those who had done evil. Where were those of mingled character, whose conduct was neither good nor evil, or both? There were none such. You say, do not the good do evil? May not some who are evil still do good? I answer, he that does good is a man who, having believed in Jesus Christ and received the new life, does good in his new nature and with his newborn spirit with all the intensity of his heart. As for his sins and infirmities, these, being washed away by the precious blood of Jesus, are not mentioned in the day of account and he rises up as a man who has done good, his good remembered, but the evil washed away.

As for the evil, of whom it is asserted that they may do good, we answer, so they may do good in the judgment of their fellow men and as towards their fellow mortals, but good towards God cannot proceed from an evil heart. If the fountain is defiled, every stream must be polluted, also. "Good" is a word that may be measured according to those who use it. The evil man's good is good to you, his child, his wife, his friend—but he has no care for God, no reverence, no esteem for the great Lawgiver. Therefore, that which may be good to you may be ill to God, because done for no right motive, even perhaps done with a wrong motive so that the man is dishonoring God while he is helping his friend. God shall judge men by their works, but there shall be but two characters, the good and the evil. And this makes it solemn work for each man to know where he will be and what has been the general tenor of his life—and what is a true verdict upon the whole of it.

O Sirs, there are some of you who, with all your excellences and moralities, have never done good as God measures good, for you have never thought of God to honor Him! You have never even confessed that you have dishonored Him. In fact, you have remained proudly indifferent to God's judgment of you as a sinner and you have set yourself up as being all you should be! How shall it be possible, while you disbelieve your God, that you could do anything that can please Him? Your whole life is evil in God's sight—only evil. And as for you who fear His name, or trust you do—take heed unto your actions, I pray you—seeing that there are only those that have done good and those that have done evil! Make it clear to your conscience, make it clear to the judgment of those who watch you (though this is of less importance) and make it clear before God that your works are good—that your heart is right because your outward conduct is conformed unto the Law of God.

I shall not keep you much longer in the exposition, except to notice that the mode of judging is remarkable. Those who search the Scriptures know that the mode of judging at the Last Day will be entirely according to *works*. Will men be saved, then, for their works? No, by no means! Salvation is, in every case, the work and gift of Divine Grace. But the Judgment will be guided by our works. It is correct, for those to be judged, that they should all be tried by the same rule. Now, no rule can be common to saints and sinners, except the rule of their moral *conduct*—and by this rule shall all men be judged. If God finds not in you, my Friend, any holiness of life whatever, neither will He accept you.

“What,” says one, “of the dying thief, then?” There was the righteousness of *faith* in him, and it produced all the holy acts which circumstances allowed. The very moment he believed in Christ, he avowed Christ and spoke for Christ and that one act stood as evidence of his being a friend of God, while all his sins were washed away! May God grant you Grace so to confess your sins, and believe in Jesus—that all your transgression may be forgiven you. There must be some evidence of your faith. Before the assembled host of men there shall be no evidence given of your faith fetched from your inward feelings. The evidence shall be found in your outward actions.

It will still be, “I was hungry and you gave Me meat: I was thirsty and you gave Me drink: I was a stranger and you took Me in: naked and you clothed Me: I was sick and you visited Me: I was in prison and you came unto Me.” Take heed, then, as to practical godliness and abhor all preaching which would make sanctity of life to be a secondary thing. We are justified by faith, but not by a dead faith! The faith which justifies is that which produces holiness and, “without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” See, then, the two classes into which men are divided and the stern rule by which God shall judge them. And so judge yourselves that you are not condemned with the wicked.

The different dooms of the two classes are mentioned in the text. One shall rise to *the resurrection of life*. This does not mean mere existence—they shall *both* exist, both exist *forever*—but “life” means, when properly understood, happiness, power, activity, privilege, capacity. In fact, it is a

term so comprehensive that I should need no small time to expound all it means. There is a death in life which the ungodly shall have, but ours shall be a life in life—a true life—not merely existence, but existence in energy, existence in honor, existence in peace, existence in blessedness, existence in perfection. This is the resurrection unto life.

As for the ungodly, there is a resurrection to damnation, by which their bodies and souls shall come manifestly under the condemnation of God. To use our Savior's word, they shall be *damned*. Oh, what a resurrection! And yet we cannot escape from it if we neglect the great salvation! If we could lay us down and sleep and never wake again, oh, what a blessing it were for an ungodly man! If that grave could be the last of him, and like a dog he should never start again from slumber, what a blessing! But it is a blessing that is not yours and never can be. Your souls must live and your body must live. O fear Him, I pray you, "who is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell." Yes, I say unto you, "fear Him."

II. Our time is almost spent, but I must occupy the remaining minutes in DRAWING LESSONS FROM THE TEXT. The first is the lesson of *adoring reverence*. If it is so, that all the dead shall rise at the voice of Christ, let us worship Him! What a Savior was He who bled upon the Cross! How gloriously is He who was despised and rejected, now exalted! O Brothers and Sisters, if we could even get but to see the hem of this Truth of God, that He shall raise all the dead out of their graves—if we did but begin to perceive its grandeur of meaning, I think we should fall at the Savior's feet as John did when he said, "I fell at His feet as dead."

Oh, what amazing power is Yours, my Lord and Master! What homage must be due to You! All hail, Immanuel! You have the keys of Death and of Hell. My soul loves and adores You, You ever great enthroned Prince, the Wonderful, the Counselor, King of kings and Lord of lords! The next lesson is *consolation* for our wounded spirits concerning our departed friends. We never mourn with regard to the souls of the righteous, they are forever with the Lord. The only mourning that we permit among Christians concerns the body, which is blighted like a withered flower. When we read at funerals that famous chapter in the Epistle to the Corinthians, we find in it no comfort concerning the immortal spirit, for it is not required. But we find much consolation with regard to that which is "sown in dishonor," but shall be "raised in Glory."

Your dead men shall live! That decaying dust shall live again! Weep not as though you had cast your treasure into the sea, where you could never find it again. You have only laid it by in a casket, from where you shall receive it again brighter than before. You shall look again with your own eyes into those *eyes* which have spoken love to you so often, which are now closed in sepulchral darkness. Your child shall see you again! You shall know your child—the same form shall rise. Your departed friend shall come back to you and having loved his Lord as you do, you shall rejoice with him in the land where they die no more! It is but a short parting—it will be an eternal meeting. Forever with the Lord, we shall also be forever with each other. Let us comfort one another, then, with these words.

The last lesson is that of *self-examination*. If we are to rise, some to rewards and some to punishments, what shall be my position? "What shall be my position?" let each conscience ask. How do you feel, my Hearers, in the prospect of rising again? Does the thought give you any gleam of joy? Does it not create a measure of alarm? If your heart trembles at the tidings, how will you bear it when the real *fact* is before you and not merely the *thought*? What has your life been? If by that life you shall be judged, what has it been? What has been its prevailing principle up till now? Have you believed God? Do you live by faith upon the Son of God? I know you are imperfect, but are you struggling after holiness? Do you desire to honor God? This shall rule the judgment of your life—what was its end and aim, and bent and object?

Imperfection there has been, but has there been sincerity? Has grace, Divine Grace, that washes sinners in the blood of Christ, proved itself to be in you by alienating you from the sins you loved and leading you to the duties that you once neglected? Need I press these questions? I know they are irksome to those who cannot answer them with comfort. Yes, I must even again press them upon you! I beseech you, this morning, put yourselves into the crucible of self-examination, for from the refiner's fire you shall not, at the last, be able to escape! Ah, if I can say, "Yes, my God, with 10,000 sins, yet since the day in which Your Grace found me, I have sought to honor You," oh, happy, happy thought to know in that dread hour that the blood has cleansed me and the righteousness of Christ has wrapped me and that I am safe!

But if I am compelled to say, "No, up to this moment I have not regarded God. My actions have had no respect to Him. A sense of His majesty has never constrained me to perform a single act and never withheld me from one solitary sin." Oh, then you are judged already! I pray you, tremble and flee to Him who can purge you from all iniquity and yet present you faultless before His Father's Presence with exceedingly great joy!

I will ask you another question—if you do not feel happy at the thought of yourself, are you quite peaceful concerning the raising of all others? Are you prepared to meet before God those whom you have sinned with among men? It is a question worthy of the sinner's thought—of what must be the terrors of men and women who will have to meet the companions of their sins! Was not this at the bottom of Dives wishing Lazarus to be sent back to the world to warn his five brothers lest they should come into the place of torment? Was not he afraid to see them there because their re-creations would increase his misery? It will be an horrible thing for a man who has been a debauched villain to rise again and confront his victims whom his lusts dragged down to Hell! How will he quail as he hears them lay their damnation at his door and curse him for his lasciviousness!

"Oh, she is buried long ago," you say and you go gaily on in your mirth. But she will see you and like a serpent's eyes shall be her eyes as they shall flash vengeance on you in the light of eternity, counting you to have been the devil that destroyed her! Let any man here who has sinned against his fellow, tremble! Let anyone here who has sent another down to

Hell, repent lest he, too, perish! O Man, your sin is not dead and buried and the sinner whom you joined hands with in iniquity shall rise to witness against you! The crime, the guilt, the punishment and the guilty one shall alike live again and you shall live forever in remorse to rue the day in which you thus transgressed.

Another question, if it will be terrible to many to see the dead rise again, how will they endure to see Him, the Judge, Himself, the Savior? Of all men that ever lived, He is the one that you have need to be the most afraid of, because it is He whom this day you ought most to love, but whom you forget. How many times from this pulpit have I pleaded with you to yield yourselves to Jesus Christ? And how frequently have you given Him a flat denial? It may be some of you have not quite done *that*, but you have postponed your decision and said, "When I have a more convenient season I will send for you." When He comes, how will you answer Him? Man, how will you answer Him? How will you excuse yourselves? You would not have Him as a Savior, but you must have Him as your Judge, to pronounce your sentence! You despised His Grace, but you cannot escape His wrath. If you will but look to Jesus *now*, you shall find salvation in that glance! But in refusing to do so you heap up for yourself wrath when that terrible but inevitable glance shall be yours, of which the Prophet says, "All the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him." O spurn Him not, then! Despise not the Crucified! I pray you trample not upon His blood, but come to Him, so that when you see Him on His Throne you may not be afraid!

Beloved, I might have continued to ask more questions, but I shall close with these two. One of the best ways by which to learn what will be our portion in the future is to enquire what is our portion in the present. Have you life *now*? I mean *spiritual* life—the life that grieves for sin, the life that trusts a Savior? If so, you shall certainly have the resurrection to life. On the other hand, have you condemnation now? For he that believes not is condemned already! Are you an unbeliever? Then you are condemned *now*. You shall suffer the resurrection of damnation! How can it be otherwise? Seek, then, that you may possess the life of God, now, by faith and you shall have it forever in fruition. Escape from condemnation, now, and you shall escape from damnation hereafter! God bless you all with the abundance of His salvation, for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 5:1-29.

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UNWILLINGNESS TO COME TO CHRIST NO. 1324

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, NOV. 2, 1876,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“And you will not come to Me, that you might have life.”
John 5:40.***

OUR Lord was addressing Himself to the unbelieving Jews. He told them that they had received abundant evidence of His being the Sent One of God, but yet they had rejected Him, and He solemnly charged this home upon their consciences. If you read the passage at home you will see that in the 36th verse He reminded them that He had received the witness of John, and all men believed John to be a Prophet. He had come as the herald of Christ, the promised Elijah, and he had borne witness, saying, “Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world.” Yet this clear testimony they had despised and trod under foot.

Next, our Lord claimed that His miracles and lifework were a sufficient witness to His Messiahship. “The works which the Father has given Me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me.” There is, perhaps, no better evidence of the truth of our Savior’s mission than His Character, life and miracles. The truths which He revealed, the perfections which He displayed and the wonders which He worked all went to show that He was, indeed, anointed of God and sent to be the Savior of men.

Further, our Lord informs them that there was more testimony, still, though in that evidence many of them had not shared. He says, “The Father Himself, which has sent Me, has borne witness of Me.” Three times out of the excellent Glory the Father had said, “This is My beloved Son, hear you Him.” This was good evidence, whether they had heard it or not, and though He tells them that they had neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His shape, yet others had heard that Voice and seen the descent of the Spirit like a dove—and their testimony ought to have had weight with them.

To you, dear Friends, assembled here tonight, this is a very important piece of evidence. We rejoice as we hear that God has actually spoken by *audible* sounds out of Heaven and borne testimony to His Son that He is the Christ! Then our Lord goes on to say that there was yet another evidence in which the Jews had not shared—the unbelieving ones—and that is, the *internal* evidence which, to those who have it, is the very best in all the world!

Internal evidence—the evidence of a renewed heart, the evidence of joy and peace, the evidence of conscious pardon, the evidence of sanctification—this is the most convincing of all evidence to those who possess it! It is clear as the sun in the heavens, but they had not shared in it and, therefore, felt it not. “You have not His Word abiding in you; for whom He has sent, Him you believe not.” And then the Master reminds them that

there was yet a fifth mode of evidence which demonstrated Him to be the Christ, and that was the Scriptures, of which He says, (if I may read the text in the indicative and I think it must be so read)—“You search the Scriptures; for in them you think you have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me.”

Therefore, if we will now forget the unbelieving Jews and only think of unbelieving *Gentiles*, there are to us, tonight, evidences concerning the Lord Jesus of the most convincing character. There are John’s witness, the witness of the miracles, the witness of the voice of the Father out of Heaven, the inner witness which many of our friends and kindred tell us of, and then the witness of the Holy Spirit in sacred Scripture. All these show that Jesus of Nazareth is the promised Redeemer of man, that He is the appointed Mediator of the Covenant of Grace and that through Him there is immediate salvation for all who will believe on Him.

The worst point about the whole conduct of the Jews was that, with all this witness in His favor, which they could not overturn, they would not come to Him that they might have eternal life! At this moment there are many such unbelievers upon the face of the earth and, what is more to the point, I fear that at this hour, in this congregation, there are some who will not come to Jesus that they may have life. There are persons in this great assembly, consisting, as it does, of individuals who have enough thought about religion to come out on a weeknight to hear a sermon about it, who, nevertheless, will not come to Christ!

Some of these persons are often here, familiar with these courts and familiar with this voice—perhaps so familiar that they have grown accustomed to it and it has but little power with them. And yet, though they will come to *us*, they will not come to Christ! However, it is to them that I shall speak tonight and I ask God’s people to pray that while I am speaking, the Spirit of God may apply the Word to the heart and to the conscience. I speak in great weakness and bodily pain and, therefore, I hope to be aided and assisted by a double portion of the Divine strength, and, if it is so, God’s Glory will come of it.

Now, we shall notice, first of all, *the great plan of salvation*. Let us look at it—it is coming to Christ that we might have life. Secondly, I shall look and ask you to look at *your position towards it*—“You will not come to Me that you might have life.” Then, thirdly, I shall dwell, for a few minutes, upon what will certainly be *the result of such conduct as this*. And, fourthly, before we have done, let us hope for *a change in your state of mind*, so that before you sleep tonight it shall cease to be true of you that you will not come—and a joyful fact that you *have* come and found eternal life!

Your immediate conversion to the Lord Jesus Christ shall be the great object of our discourse and of the prayers which will go with it from the Lord’s people here assembled.

I. First, then, the text very briefly sets forth THE PLAN OF SALVATION. Christ speaks of it thus, “Come to Me that you might have life.” The way to be saved is to come to Christ! Christ is a Person, a living Person, full of power to save! He has not placed His salvation in sacraments, or books, or priests, but He has kept it in Himself, and if you want to have it, you must

come to Him! He is still the one Source and Fountain of eternal mercy. There is no getting it by going round about Him, or only going near Him—you must come *to Him*, actually to *Him*, and there must be a personal contact established between the Lord Jesus and your spirit.

Of course it cannot be a *natural* contact, for His body is in the heavens and we are here. It must be a *spiritual* contact, by which your mind, heart, thoughts shall come to Christ, and faith, like a hand, shall touch Him spiritually, grasp Him by believing upon Him and receive life and Grace from His Divine power. Just as when the woman of old touched His garment's hem, the virtue went out of Him to her and she was healed, so now, though He is yonder, faith's long hand can touch His Divine and human Person, by confiding, trusting and resting in Him. And so, virtue will flow from Him into our soul and our mind shall be healed of whatever disease it has.

Think, then, at this very moment, of Jesus Christ, who was once nailed to the Cross and died as the Sacrifice for sin. Think of Him as sitting, now, at the right hand of God, even the Father, clothed with infinite majesty and might. And if you are enabled, now, to repose your heart upon Him, to believe that He is able to save you and, by an act of faith, to commit your soul into His keeping that He may save it, you have done what He bids you do—you have come to Him and He will not cast you out—the blessings of His salvation shall be yours! This is the coming which He sets before you—the drawing near of the mind, the heart, the soul to Jesus, so as to trust in Him—to trust in Him at once for all that your soul needs.

The text, when it says, “Come to Me that you might have life,” implies that we are to come to Jesus Christ for everything, for *life* includes all that is absolutely necessary for salvation, yes, salvation itself! It is the lowest stage of Grace, and yet the term comprehends the very highest condition of the soul, even when it enters into Glory and enjoys life at the right hand of God. O Sinner, by nature you are dead in sin! You must be made alive or you cannot dwell with God, for He is not the God of the dead but of the living! To be quickened, you must come into contact with Him who is “the Life,” even Jesus. And if you come to Him, you have begun to live! You are also condemned to die on account of your breaches of the Law. You are condemned already, for you have sinned against the most high God. If you come to Christ, the Mediator, the sentence against you shall be removed. You shall live, for, “there is, therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.”

As soon as the soul comes to Christ, it receives pardon and justification. These two remove from us the guilt which brought us under condemnation and put upon us a righteousness which entitles us to stand before the most high God without fear, for, “who is He that condemns? It is Christ that died.” Coming to Christ gives us actual spiritual life and gives us, also, *judicial* life, so that we need not fear the axe of Justice. Those cannot be condemned who are accepted in the Beloved and all are thus accepted who have come to Christ!

I will read you two verses, as they certainly may be translated without the slightest violation of the original language. The text runs thus—“You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and

they are they which testify of Me; but you will not *come to Me* that you might have life”—as if to show you that there are many persons who seek life and even think that they have it, and yet have not found it because they stop short of Christ. They search the Scriptures, but they will not come to Jesus.

Is it not, therefore, a good thing to search the Scriptures? Yes, that it is, and the more you search them the better. But it is not *the thing*—it is not the saving work. You may be Bible readers and yet perish! But this can never happen if you come to Jesus by faith. I may put the same Truth of God in another shape. You pray. Some of you pray earnestly, but yet you will not come to Christ that you might have life! Is it not a good thing to pray? Yes, indeed, a blessed thing to pray, but still it is not *the thing*—it is not the subject of the great saving *command*. The Gospel precept is not, “Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that searches the Scriptures and prays shall be saved.”

No, but the Gospel runs thus—“He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” There stands the healing touch—the act which brings us life—faith in the heart and confession with the mouth! To these the promise is made, and of those who neglect these our Lord says, “You will not come to Me, that you might have life.” Now, observe that this way of coming to Christ, which is indicated in the text, *is the only way*. There is other preaching, but there is only one true ministry, and the true ministry bears witness concerning Christ.

There are other supposed ways of salvation, but they shall be accursed that preach them! And woe unto them in the Last Great Day who have deluded men’s souls with their “other gospels,” for, “other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid—Jesus Christ the Righteous.” “Believe and live” is the one unchanging oracle and He that has regard to it, shall find eternal life! But take heed that you despise not him that speaks this wondrous word from Heaven, “for there is no other name given under Heaven among men whereby you must be saved.” Come to Christ! Come to the anointed Savior! Come to the Son of God! Come to Him who is both God and Man! Come to the Mediator! Come to the Redeemer! Come to the Great Substitute for sinners!

Come and trust Him and you shall live! I have no other message for you. Do not reject it, for if you do you must perish without hope. And this way, as it is the only one, blessed be God, is *a sure way and an open way*. Sure, for none ever tried it and failed. There lives not on earth, there lives not in Hell—one soul that trusted in Christ and yet was not saved—

**“There is life in a look at the Crucified One.
There is life at this moment for you.”**

Life in every instance. There has never yet been one that did confide, alone, in Jesus, that found faith to be useless, for faith is a living thing and works by love. It purifies the soul and saves the man through Jesus Christ. And it is an open way as well as a sure one—open to you tonight, dear Friend.

“Say not in your heart, who shall ascend into Heaven to bring Christ down? Or who shall descend into the deep to bring Him up again from the dead? The Word is near you, on your lips and in your heart.” If you will, with your heart believe in the Lord Jesus, and with your mouth make con-

fession of Him, you shall be saved, even you! The latter days have fallen upon us! The shades of the evening of the world and the damps of its autumn are all around us! But still there sounds forth the cry, "Whoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely." Still is the Fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness—

***"Dear dying Lamb, Your precious blood
Shall never lose its power,
Till all the ransomed Church of God
Is saved to sin no more."***

Thus have I put, as plainly as I can, the plan of salvation. That is it and that is all of it—it is to come to Christ! If I talked much longer I might darken, but I could scarcely make clearer, the simplicity of the Gospel of Jesus. It is to come to Christ, to trust Him, to obey Him, to yield yourself to Him, to love Him! So, to come to Him is to come to Him on earth and be with Him forever and ever in Heaven!

II. Now, secondly, and very solemnly, I want to speak to you unconverted ones, who have heard the Gospel a long time, about YOUR POSITION IN REFERENCE TO THIS PLAN OF SALVATION. "You will not come to Me that you might have life." That describes your position and I earnestly beseech you to look it in the face. I would have you get by yourself and say to yourself aloud and deliberately, "*I will not* come to Him, that I might have life." But you reply, "That would be an awful thing to say!" I know it would be, but it is a more awful thing, to my mind, not to dare to say it and yet practically to be doing it! Are you ashamed to *say* it and yet *not* ashamed to do it? I know there is a curious feeling about some men that if the preacher openly rebukes a vice which they practice they find fault with him for even speaking of it. They say that he ought not to allude to such vile things, yet they live in these very sins from day to day!

This is the hypocrisy and cant of sinners and it is detestable! And so men will live in unbelief, but if you ask them to say decidedly, "I do not believe," or to assert openly, "I will not come to Christ that I may have life," they think we must be as wicked as they are to ask them to say such a thing! Now, what you dare do, you will surely dare say, or else you are a coward and a liar to your soul! If it is a right thing to *do*, it must be right thing to *say*. I do not ask you to go and proclaim it to others—to infect them with your disease—but I ask you to say it *to yourself*. I ask you to label yourself what you are and let it be distinctly understood by your own soul what you mean and where your position is.

I pray you act honestly and openly with your own heart. It surely cannot be wise to cheat yourself. You will not come to Jesus that you might have life—we know this to be true of many of you because you have not come. If you say it is not true that you will not come, then I reply, "How is it that you have not come?" If you have come, how readily do I withdraw the charge! With what joy and happiness do I bless the Lord that you have been led to His dear Son! But, if you have not come, dear Friend—and you know, yourself, whether you have or not—then I cannot retract a syllable of the accusation, but I repeat the charge—you will not come to Him that you might have life.

I know that you would rather put it another way and you would say softly, "I cannot come." But this is clattering language! Do you know what, "cannot," in such a case means in Scripture? It means the same thing as, "will not." If you have the will, you have the power, for, wherever there is the will, God has it and He does not give the will without giving the power! Though sometimes we have to cry out that, "to will is present with us," but, "how to perform that which we would, we find not," yet that lasts not long. When the Lord gives the will, He soon gives the way. His Grace does not divide the two gifts—the power comes with the will.

And if you have the will tonight you have the power. That you cannot is true, but it is only true because you *will* not—your will is the seat of the weakness. I may say of a man that he cannot be chaste. Why? Because he will not be chaste! That is the *only* reason! I may say of another man that he cannot speak the truth. What do I mean by that? I mean that he is such a liar that he *will* not speak the truth. He could if he would, but there is the point—he will not. Our weakness to do good lies in the fact that our will, itself, is opposed to the right. "You *will not* come that you might have life" is the true English of that excuse of yours, that you cannot! If you would, you could. It is because you *will not* that you cannot!

But one of you will say, "It is not that I will not, but that I *dare* not come to Jesus." Ah, my dear Friend, but if you say, "I dare not," I have to ask you on what grounds you support that remarkable fear. Dare not be saved? Dare not come to the Son of God whose very Person is Love? Dare not do what God commands you? "This is His commandment, that you believe on Jesus Christ whom He has sent." Turn that, "dare not," round the other way—it were much better used so—"I dare not *refuse* to come! I dare not tarry any longer! I dare not disbelieve! I dare not distrust! I dare not keep my sin and let my Savior go." That is the true kind of, "dare not," but the other is an idle excuse. How idle it must be for a man to say, "I dare not obey my God and trust in His Son," I leave your own consciences to judge.

The truth is, "You will not come to Christ, that you might have life." Let me hold you, now, and ask you to think for a few minutes of what you are doing. Think of *the life* which you are spurning! There is no life for you anywhere but in Christ—and if you will not come to Him you will never have life! That is to say, you will not have that without which this poor existence of yours is only a lingering death. The Grace which enables you to overcome sin, the joy which enables us to master trouble, the light which helps us to look into Divine mysteries, the inward spiritual principle given in regeneration, by which we have fellowship with God and with His Son Jesus Christ—these are main ingredients in the life which you need.

O my dear Friend, life—the life of God in the soul—is to me the one thing necessary, the one thing without which all the world were not worth having! It were better to be poor and hungry and naked than to be without this inner life. It is true life in this world to live by faith upon the Son of God—and that you are missing and despising! This is the life which made your mother what she was. You remember her holy living and you cannot forget her triumphant dying! The life which makes men holy, happy, safe

and blessed is, "Christ in you, the hope of glory," and this it is that you need. Will you reject it? O be not so foolish!

Remember that this life which you spurn is Eternal Life! It is the life with which you are to live in another world, the life which shall qualify you to dwell with cherubim and seraphim and join their songs, the life which will enable you to stand before the Throne of God and cast your crown at His feet in ecstasy of grateful joy! It is this that you do not care to have, for you will not come to Christ that you might have life. Do not continue to spurn the best of God's gift! Let me tell you, the day will come when you will wring your hands in anguish to think that you despised that life. It may be that it will be so in the throes of death, but it is certain that it will be so amid the terrors of Judgment, when there shall open wide before you the gates of Hell, and before you shall blaze the lake that burns with fire and brimstone which is the second death.

They who are not born twice will have to die twice! And he that has not life through faith in Jesus must die the second death and endure its pangs forever and forever. See, then, the life you spurn, dear Friend, and ask yourself whether this is wise. Next, think—and I wish I could speak to you as I would—think of the Person whom you reject. "You will not come to ME," says Christ. I have been thinking of this all day—how it is that any man can be so base as not to come to my Lord Jesus Christ. Look at Him! Let me portray Him to you as He completed your redemption. He hangs upon His Cross—His face is all stained with the bruises and the spit of the rough soldiers. And down it trickles the red drops that have been started from His temples by the crown of thorns.

His eyes are red with weeping and with watching, and His visage is more marred than that of any man. You can see all His bones. His body is emaciated and worn with anguish. His hands—the cruel nails have dragged and torn till you see the wide gaping wounds from which the blood flows. His feet are the same—they are both fountains of blood. And then His side! Behold His side—from which gushed blood and water from the deep wound made by the spear. It is He who thus redeemed mankind! The Lord of Glory hangs there! The only-begotten Son of the Highest, the Prince of the kings of the earth has given Himself up to bleed and to die a felon's death for you!

And what is your attitude towards Him? You turn your backs upon Him! Is it nothing to you? "Is it nothing to you that Jesus should die?" Do you mean that it is nothing to you that Jesus should bleed to redeem men? Do you mean to refuse a share in that redemption? Do you utterly reject the bloody ransom price He paid upon the Cross? If it is so, then put it down in plain English—put it down in black and white and sign your name to it—"I refuse Christ's blood." To write it down is the very best thing you can do if it is, indeed, so! Because, perhaps, when you have read the dreadful lines, your conscience may be lashed into something like life and you may begin to look at Him whom you have pierced, and mourn because of Him. Think about this, you that will not come to Him that you might have life.

But, lo, I see Him yet again! He is in Heaven now. Quite another picture may we set before you. There He is at the right hand of God, even the Fa-

ther, clothed with a snow-white garment down to His feet, and girt about with a golden sash, distributing crowns and thrones! He is worshipped by ten thousand times ten thousand blood-washed spirits and angels in all their ranks! Now you can be sure of this, that He it is to whom you will not come! From His Glory as well as from His shame you turn away! It is well for Me that I do not feel, just now, about it as I did before I entered this pulpit, for if I did I could only stand here and burst into tears, and could not dare to say what I am uttering now.

This is so unkind to Jesus! So ungenerous to Jesus! I cannot bear it! It is at the price of your *souls* that you reject Him! Will you sooner be damned than have Him? Do you mean that? What strange hate is this, that to show your hatred of Jesus you will destroy yourselves? O foolish Sinners! Foolish Sinners! What mad freak of sin is this, that you will bear your sins and dare the death they bring sooner than have Christ to be your Savior? Yet it is so, so long as it is true that you will not come to Him that you might have life.

Now, think, again, what it is you are doing. What is *this which you refuse to do*? What is the action you refuse? You refuse *to come to Him*. If it were to come to Sinai, where the trumpet waxes exceedingly loud and long, and where the flaming lightning flashes forth amidst tremendous thunder, I could understand your reluctance. But the deed you refuse to do is to come to Calvary, to come to Jesus where nothing sounds but love and mercy! You will not *come to Him*. That means, with some of you, that you will not even *think* about Christ. He may die, but you cannot trouble to think His redemption is over. He may rise and thus may justify His people, but you have something else to think about.

And that something else, with some of you, is earning your daily bread. With others of you it is only how you may pass the hours and go from one amusement to another. Salvation is worth Christ dying for, but not worth your thinking about! Alas, how the mass of people in London think of *anything* except Christ and their souls! The papers ring with some fresh thing and the news is on everybody's tongue. But my Lord's death for sinners—oh, it is a bore, is it not? It is a weariness to hear about it and, "sermons are very dull," they say. It is because men's hearts are dead that sermons are dull! Jesus is not endured because men will not come to Him and live!

O blessed Spirit, turn their hard hearts and stubborn wills, and turn them now! While some will condescend to think a little, yet they utterly refuse to come to the point and believe. Now, surely, the very least thing that the Lord Jesus Christ can claim of us is that we believe Him! When has He ever been false? What is there about His Character that is untrue? It is due to truth to render to it our confidence and our trust—and when we know that this faith, this believing Him, this trusting Him, which is His due, is, nevertheless, simple as it is, the highest and most saving act of the mind—it is strange that we should still refuse to believe!

What Jesus claims is that we so believe Him as to obey Him. Now, if He were a tyrant, we might very well be reluctant to obey. But He is so gracious, His yoke is so easy and His burden is so light that it is foolish as well as wicked to not obey! All His followers tell us that there never was such a Master and that they wish they could altogether obey His every will

and wish, for obedience to Him is bliss to them—and yet you refuse to yield obedience to such a Master? Is this wise or right? He asks your love—the love of your heart. What a heart that must be which cannot and will not love Him! How foul, how vile, how dead, how black, how stony is the heart that cannot love Him who gave His heart's blood to redeem us! O Soul, Soul, Soul, if you perish, it is not because the Gospel was hard and exacting and its terms severe, or because the saving act was impossible to you and out of your reach—you perish because you will not come to Him that you might have life!

I desire you, still, to keep your eyes fixed on that fact, my Friend, that you are acting as if you had said, "I will not come to Christ that I might have life." *Think of why you will not come.* Can you give me some good reason why you will not come? Perhaps you answer that you hope to find salvation somewhere else. These Jews fancied so. They thought that they would find it in the Scriptures. "In them you think you have eternal life." Hence a personal Christ was rejected, that they might go on searching into the original text, counting the letters and disputing over knotty points. They were, however, mistaken—the Bible cannot save!

Perhaps you feel that you can get more good by trying to understand doctrine than by coming to Christ. You will be bitterly mistaken. However excellent the Scriptures are, if you put Scripture in the place of Christ, you have made a choice and you have set your choice in opposition to God's choice, which is this—"that you believe on Him whom He has sent." It is not on "*it*"—that you are to believe, but on "*Him* whom He has sent." That is the great saving point, the Person, the very Person of the Lord Jesus Christ! O Beloved, I wish you could see this—that Jesus Christ gathers up in His Person all the teaching of Scripture—that in His blessed Person is all the efficacy of His redemptive work for men and that what is to be done is *to come to Him*.

When you do not believe in Jesus, you refuse to honor the Son of God. And He has said, "He that refuses Me, refuses Him that sent Me." You refuse God when you refuse His Christ! Possibly, dear Friend, the reason why you will not come is that you indulge some secret sin which you cannot give up. O that secret sin! That secret sin! That worm at the root of the soul! I know not what it is, my Friend, but God knows and you know. Is it your pride? Can you not stoop to be saved by mercy, through the Grace of God? Or is it a fleshly lust from which you cannot separate yourself? Is it dear to you as your right hand? Off with it, Man! "It is better for you to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire."

Is sin holding you back from Christ, from life, from Heaven? Dear as this Barabbas may be, do not prefer him to your Lord! Away with the sin, it is a viper! Away with it, or else God will say, "Away with *you*." I fear, in some cases, that the chain which holds men back from Christ is sheer frivolity. It is so with a great many young people—and there are some old people who are quite as trifling—they have gray hair on the outside of their heads, but none within. Their minds are none the riper for being old. They are silly, frivolous, superficial, trifling with everything, never serious upon any theme—and above all others they need to be sharply rebuked.

Ah, Sirs, if you must play, I wish you would play with something cheaper than the blood of Christ! If you must trifle, trifle with something that will cost you less than your souls! It seems a dreadful thing for a man to stake his whole estate on the running of a horse, as some have done. But it is less foolish than to stake your endless destiny upon the possibility of your living another week, or another day! Yet you are doing this—you know you are! May God awaken you, dear Friend! May He speedily awaken you from such folly as this.

Now, I want you, dear Hearer, to come back to the point and look at the fact that you will not come to Christ. You will do anything else, but you will not come to Christ. You will come out to our special meetings, but why do you come? What do you come to these meetings for if you do not need Christ? And you will pray from mere habit—you would not like to go to sleep without praying after a fashion—but what do you pray for if you will not have the best gift which God can give you, even Jesus Christ? What is there worth praying for if you refuse Christ? Yes, you will search the Scriptures, but, in the name of reason, for what?

Why do men go into the harvest fields if they need no grain? Why do they dig in the mines if they do not need to find metals? The Scriptures (with all reverence of them do we speak) are but the mine—Christ is the treasure! They are the fields, but He is the harvest! Take Christ out of the Bible and what is it? He is the sum and the substance of it all! And when you search the Scriptures you should search them that you may find *Him*, or else you misuse and abuse them. But why this strange reluctance? “Oh, I need to feel,” says one. Yes, I know. You would like to feel deep convictions. You would like *anything* rather than to come to Christ. “But,” says one, “I must have time to think.” I know—you want to be saved by your thinking—anything is more desirable to you than coming to Christ.

Come to Christ just as you are, just as you are *now*, while now His Spirit pleads with you! Ah, you will not do this, some of you will not and, therefore, I must leave you. Let us pass on to the third point very briefly.

III. Let us consider thoughtfully WHAT WILL BE THE RESULT OF THIS. I will put myself in your place, now, and speak for you. “I will not come to Christ that I might have life.” When I have said that, what does it involve? It means that any good feelings which I may have had through hearing the preaching of the Gospel, or through listening to the addresses of earnest Christian men, are as the morning cloud and as the early dew. They are all to end in nothing and to pass away. They cannot do me any good.

I have heard sermons in vain. I have read the Scriptures in vain. I have attended Prayer Meetings in vain. If I will not come to Christ all these things are in vain. But what next? Why, then, I may expect that the feelings I now have (for I am conscious of some measure of holy desire) will pass away. I shall grow harder and harder, and harder in heart, and more indifferent, and more callous as time rolls on. And what will happen to me, then? Why, this—I never shall come to Christ at all! I suppose that some of you, though you will not come now, think you will come to Jesus one day. Oh, if it were told you, to a dead certainty, that you never would

come, you would stand aghast. "Ah, me!" you would say, "Must I, then, be lost forever? Shall I never come to Christ?"

My dear Friend, it looks very likely that you never will be saved. If you are to come to Jesus, why not now? *Why not now?* Every day adds to the chances, if I may use such an expression, adds to the deadly "odds" against you, that you will never come to Christ! Ah, it is a prediction which might be terribly accurate if we were to say that some of you who have oftentimes been awakened and yet have gone to sleep again, will sleep forever and will never lift up your eyes till you awake in the flames of Hell! Ah, God, in Your mercy, prevent this! But this is the last result of all. If I will not come to Christ that I might have life, then I must die eternally and be driven forever from the Presence of God and from the glory of His power!

And, O my Soul, what will that be? What will that be? Ask those who know what it is. Ask Dives while he begs Abraham to send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water to cool his tongue! Ask those whose perpetual reply is weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth! But I will not pause to give you their answers—it would be too dreadful! Look at your future! If you will not come to Jesus that you might have life, you shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides in you!

IV. And now, last of all, LET US HOPE THAT THERE WILL BE CHANGE, and a change tonight! I felt, while I was speaking, that some of you were saying, "No, I dare not say that I will not come." Well, then, there is only one other word to say—"I will come." O that you would say, "I will come," and then carry out the resolve at once! "He is worthy of my trust. I will trust Him. He is worthy of my obedience. If He will help me, I will obey Him. He is worthy of my love. By His rich Grace I will love Him—I will, I will." Thank God, dear Friend, if you have said that, though it has been with trembling lips, for you may come. He bids you. His own words are, "Come to Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

You may come. His Church invites you and His Spirit invites you, for, "the Spirit and the Bride say, Come." We who have, ourselves, come, would all invite you, for it is written, "Let him that hears, say, Come. And whoever will, let him take of the Water of Life freely." Do you feel a softness of soul coming over you? Does something whisper, "Now is mercy's hour"? Then, I beseech you, quench not the Spirit, and tarry no longer! No, tarry not even to leave that pew and find your little chamber and fall on your knees, but *here and now* yield yourself to Him! It will be the best moment you have ever lived—the beginning of days to you! As the night when Israel came out of Egypt shall this night be to your spirit if you yield yourself—

***"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On Christ's kind arms I fall.
He is my strength and righteousness—
My Jesus, and my all."***

What He bids you do is two-fold, believe and be baptized. "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." First, with the *heart*, man believes, and next with his mouth he makes confession of Jesus. Baptism is the way to make confession according to Christ's own rule, to which I charge

you to be obedient—and may He accept you and bless you this night, for His name's sake. We shall sing this one verse, and I ask nobody to sing it who does not mean it—

***“Tis done—the great transaction's done!
I am my Lord's, and He is mine!
He drew me, and I followed on,
Charmed to confess the voice Divine.”***

Now, for once do not stand up, but sit still and sing it just as you are—those who can sing it. As for the rest of you, the Lord have mercy upon you. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 5:24-27.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—486, 515.**

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FREE WILL—A SLAVE

NO. 52

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, DECEMBER 2, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.**

***“And you will not come unto Me, that you might have life.”
John 5:40***

THIS is one of the great guns of the Arminians, mounted upon the top of their walls and often discharged with terrible noise against the poor Christians called Calvinists! I intend to spike the gun this morning, or, rather, to turn it on the enemy—for it was never theirs. It was never cast at their foundry at all, but was intended to teach the *very opposite doctrine* to that which they assert. Usually, when the text is taken, the divisions are—first, that man has a will. Secondly, that he is entirely free. Thirdly, that men must make themselves willing to come to Christ, otherwise they will not be saved. Now, we shall have no such divisions! But we will endeavor to take a more calm look at the text and not because there happens to be the words, “will,” or, “will not,” in it, conclude that it teaches the doctrine of free will. It has already been proved beyond all controversy that free will is nonsense! Freedom cannot belong to will any more than ponderability can belong to electricity. They are altogether different things. Free agency we may believe in, but free will is simply ridiculous. The will is well-known by all to be directed by the understanding, to be moved by motives, to be guided by other parts of the soul and to be a secondary thing. Philosophy and religion both discard at once the very thought of free will! And I will go as far as Martin Luther, in that strong assertion of his, where he says, “If any man does ascribe anything of salvation, even the very least, to the free will of man, he knows nothing of Divine Grace and he has not learnt Jesus Christ aright.” It may seem a harsh sentiment, but he who in his soul believes that man does of his own free will turn to God, cannot have been taught of God—for that is one of the first principles taught us when God begins with us—that we have neither will nor power—but that He gives both—that He is “Alpha and Omega” in the salvation of men.

Our four points, this morning, shall be, first, *that every man is dead*, because it says, “you will not come unto Me that you might have life.” Secondly, *that there is life in Jesus Christ*—“You will not come unto Me that you might have life.” Thirdly, *that there is life in Christ Jesus for everyone who comes for it*—“You will not come unto Me that you might have life,” implying that all who go will have life. And fourthly, the gist of the text lies here, *that no man by nature ever will come to Christ*, for the text says, “You will *not* come unto Me that you might have life.” So far from

asserting that men of their own wills ever do such a thing, it boldly and flatly denies it and says, “You WILL NOT come unto Me that you might have life.” Why, Beloved, I am almost ready to exclaim, “Have all that believe in free will no knowledge, that they dare to run in the teeth of Inspiration? Have all those that deny the Doctrine of Grace no sense? Have they so departed from God that they wrest this to prove free will—whereas the text says, “you WILL NOT come unto Me that you might have life.”

I. First, then, our text implies THAT MEN, BY NATURE, ARE DEAD. No being needs to go after life if he has life in himself. The text speaks very strongly when it says, “you will not come unto Me, that you might have life,” though it says it not in words, yet it does in effect affirm that men need a life more than they have, themselves. My Hearers, we are all dead unless we have been begotten unto a lively hope. First, we are all of us, by nature, *legally* dead—“In the day that you eat, thereof, you shall die the death,” said God to Adam. And though Adam did not die in that moment, naturally, he died *legally*. That is to say, death was recorded against him! As soon as, at the Old Bailey, the judge puts on the black cap and pronounces the sentence, the man is reckoned to be dead at law. Though perhaps a month may intervene before he is brought on the scaffold to endure the sentence of the law, yet the law looks upon him as a dead man. It is impossible for him to transact anything. He cannot inherit, he cannot bequeath. He is nothing—he is a dead man. The country considers him not as being alive at all. There is an election—he is not asked for his vote because he is considered as dead. He is shut up in his condemned cell and he is dead. Ah, and you ungodly sinners who have never had life in Christ, you are alive this morning, by reprieve, but do you know that you are legally dead? God considers you as such, that in the day when your father, Adam, touched the fruit and when you, yourselves, sinned, God, the Eternal Judge, put on the black cap and condemned you! You talk mightily of your own standing and goodness and morality—where is it? Scripture says you are, “condemned already.” You are not to wait to be condemned at the Judgment Day—that will be the execution of the sentence—“you are condemned already.” In the moment you sinned, your names were all written in the black book of Justice. Everyone was then sentenced by God to death for his sins—unless he found a Substitute in the Person of Christ. What would you think if you were to go into the Old Bailey and see the condemned culprit sitting in his cell, laughing and merry? You would say, “The man is a fool, for he is condemned and is to be executed, yet how merry he is.” Ah, and how foolish is the worldly man, who, while sentence is recorded against him, lives in merriment and mirth! Do you think the sentence of God is of no effect? Do you think that your sin, which is written with an iron pen on the rocks, forever, has no horrors in it? God has said you are condemned already! If you would but feel this, it would mingle bitters in your sweet cups of joy. Your dances would be stopped, your laughter quenched in

sighing if you would remember that you are already condemned! We ought all to weep, if we lay this to our souls—that by nature we have no life in God’s sight. We are actually, positively condemned—death is recorded against us—and we are considered in ourselves right now, in God’s sight, as much dead as if we were actually cast into Hell! We are condemned here by sin—we do not yet suffer the penalty of it—but it is written against us and we are legally dead. Nor can we find life unless we find legal life in the Person of Christ, of which I will say more, by-and-by.

But, besides being legally dead, we are also *spiritually dead*. For not only did the sentence pass in the book but it passed in the heart—it entered the conscience! It operated on the soul, on the judgment, on the imagination and on everything. “In the day you eat, thereof, you shall surely die,” was not only fulfilled by the *recorded* sentence, but by something which took place in Adam. Just as in a certain moment, when this body shall die, the blood stops, the pulse ceases, the breath no longer comes from the lungs, so in the day that Adam ate that fruit, his soul died. His imagination lost its mighty power to climb into celestial things and see Heaven! His will lost its power to always choose that which is good. His judgment lost all ability to judge between right and wrong decidedly and infallibly. Though something was retained in conscience, his memory became tainted—liable to hold evil things and let righteous things glide away. Every power of his ceased as to its moral vitality. Goodness was the vitality of his powers—that departed! Virtue, holiness, integrity—these were the life of man—but when these departed, man became dead! And now, every man, as far as *spiritual* things are concerned, is “dead in trespasses and sins” spiritually. Nor is the soul less dead in a carnal man, than the body is when committed to the grave. It is actually and positively dead—not by a metaphor, for Paul speaks not in metaphor when he affirms, “You has He quickened, who *were dead* in trespasses and sins.” But my Hearers, I would again wish I could preach to your hearts concerning this subject! It was bad enough when I described death as having been recorded. But now I speak of it as having actually taken place in your hearts. You are not what you once were! You are not what you were in Adam, not what you were created! Man was made pure and holy. You are not the perfect creatures of which some boast. You are altogether fallen! You have gone out of the way, you have become corrupt and filthy! Oh, listen not to the siren song of those who tell you of your moral dignity and your mighty elevation in matters of salvation! You are not perfect—that great word, “ruin,” is written on your heart! And death is stamped upon your spirit. Do not conceive, O moral man, that you will be able to stand before God in your morality, for you are nothing but a carcass embalmed in legality, a corpse arrayed in some fine robes, but still corrupt in God’s sight! And think not, O you possessor of natural religion, that you may, by your own might and power, make yourself acceptable to God!

Why, Man, you are DEAD! And you may array the dead as gloriously as you please, but still it would be a solemn mockery. There lies Queen Cleopatra—put the crown upon her head, deck her in royal robes, let her sit in state. But what a cold chill runs through you when you pass by her! She is fair, now, even in her death—but how horrible it is to stand by the side, even, of a dead queen, celebrated for her majestic beauty! So you may be glorious in your beauty—fair, amiable and lovely. You may put the crown of honesty upon your head and wear about you all the garments of uprightness—but unless God has quickened you—O Man—unless the Spirit has had dealings with your soul, you are in God's sight as obnoxious as the chilly corpse is to yourself! You would not choose to live with a corpse sitting at your table. Nor does God love that you should be in His sight. He is angry with you every day, for you are in sin—you are in death. Oh, believe this! Take it to your soul and appropriate it, for it is most true that you are dead, spiritually as well as legally!

The third kind of death is the consummation of the other two. It is *eternal death*. It is the execution of the legal sentence. It is the consummation of the spiritual death. Eternal death is the death of the soul—it takes place after the body has been laid in the grave, after the soul has departed from it! If legal death is terrible, it is because of its consequences. And if spiritual death is dreadful, it is because of that which shall succeed it. The two deaths of which we have spoken are the roots—and that death which is to come is the flower thereof! Oh, had I words that I might, this morning, attempt to depict to you what eternal death is! The soul has come before its Maker, the book has been opened, the sentence has been uttered. “Depart you cursed” has shaken the universe and made the very spheres dim with the frown of the Creator! The soul has departed to the depths where it is to dwell with others in eternal death. Oh, how horrible is its position! Its bed is a bed of flame! The sights it sees are murdering ones that frighten its spirit, the sounds it hears are shrieks, wails, moans and groans! All that its body knows is the infliction of miserable pain! It has the possession of unutterable woe, of unmitigated misery. The soul looks up. Hope is extinct—it is gone. It looks downward in dread and fear. Remorse has possessed its soul. It looks on the right hand—and the adamant walls of fate keep it within its limits of torture. It looks on the left—and there the rampart of blazing fire forbids the sealing ladder of even a dreamy speculation of escape! It looks within and seeks for consolation there, but a gnawing worm has entered into the soul. It looks about it—it has no friends to aid, no comforters, but tormentors in abundance. It knows nothing of hope of deliverance. It has heard the everlasting key of destiny turning in its awful wards and it has seen God take that key and hurl it down into the depth of eternity never to be found again! It hopes not. It knows no escape. It guesses not of deliverance. It pants for death, but death is too much its foe to be there! It longs that non-existence would swallow it up, but this eternal death is worse than annihilation! It pants for extermination as

the laborer for his Sabbath. It longs that it might be swallowed up in nothingness just as would the galley slave long for freedom, but it comes not. It is eternally dead! When eternity shall have rolled round multitudes of its everlasting cycles, it shall still be dead. Forever knows no end. Eternity cannot be spelled except in eternity! Still the soul sees written over its head, “you are damned forever.” It hears howls that are to be perpetual. It sees flames which are unquenchable. It knows pains that are unmitigated. It hears a sentence that rolls not like the thunder of earth which soon is hushed—but onward, onward, onward, shaking the echoes of eternity—making thousands of years shake again with the horrid thunder of its dreadful sound—“Depart! Depart! Depart you cursed!” This is the eternal death.

II. Secondly, IN CHRIST JESUS THERE IS LIFE, for He says, “You will not come unto Me that *you may have life.*” There is no life in God the Father for a sinner! There is no life in God the Spirit for a sinner apart from Jesus. The life of a sinner is in Christ. If you take the Father away, though He loves His elect and decrees that they shall live, yet life is only in His Son. If you take God the Spirit away from Jesus Christ, though it is the Spirit who gives us spiritual life, yet it is life in Christ, life in the Son. We dare not and cannot apply in the first place either to God the Father, or to God the Holy Spirit for spiritual life! The first thing we are led to do when God brings us out of Egypt is to eat the Passover—the very first thing. The first means whereby we get life is by feeding upon the flesh and blood of the Son of God—living in Him, trusting on Him, believing in His Grace and power. Our second thought was—there is life in Christ. We will show you there are three kinds of life in Christ, as there are three kinds of death.

First there is *legal life* in Christ. Just as every man by nature, considered in Adam, had a sentence of condemnation passed on him in the moment of Adam’s sin and more especially in the moment of his own first transgression, so I, if I am a Believer and you, if you trust in Christ, have had a legal sentence of acquittal passed on us through what Jesus Christ has done. O condemned Sinner, you may be sitting, this morning, condemned like the prisoner in Newgate! But before this day has passed away, you may be as clear from guilt as the angels above! There is such a thing as legal life in Christ and, blessed be God, some of us enjoy it! We know our sins are pardoned because Christ suffered punishment for them! We know that we can never be punished, ourselves, for Christ suffered in our place. The Passover is slain for us! The lintel and doorpost have been sprinkled and the destroying angel can never touch us. For us there is no Hell, although it blazes with terrible flames! Let Tophet be prepared of old, let its pile be wood and much smoke—we can never go there—Christ died for us, in our place! What if there are racks of horrid torture? What if there is a sentence producing most horrible reverberations of thundering sounds? Neither rack, nor dungeon, nor thunder are for us! In Christ Jesus we are now delivered. “There is, therefore, NOW,

no condemnation unto us who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

Sinner, are you legally condemned this morning? Do you feel that? Then let me tell you that faith in Christ will give you a knowledge of your legal acquittal! Beloved, it is no fancy that we are condemned for our sins—it is a reality! So, it is no fancy we are acquitted, *it is a reality!* A man about to be hanged, if he received a full pardon, would feel it a great reality. He would say, “I have a full pardon, I cannot be touched now.” That is just how I feel—

**“Now freed from sin I walk at large
The Savior’s blood’s my full discharge!
At His dear feet content I lay,
A sinner saved and homage pay.”**

Brothers and Sisters, we have gained legal life in Christ and such legal life that we cannot lose it! The sentence has gone against us once—now we are pardoned! It is written, THERE IS, NOW, NO CONDEMNATION and that, *now*, will do as well for me in 50 years as it does now. Whatever time we live, it will still be written, “There is, therefore, *now*, no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.”

Then, secondly, there is *spiritual life* in Christ Jesus. As the man is spiritually dead, God has spiritual life for him—for there is not a need which is not supplied by Jesus. There is not an emptiness in the heart which Christ cannot fill. There is not a ruin which He cannot fix! There is not a desert which he cannot make to blossom as the rose. O you dead Sinners! You spiritually dead, there is life in Christ Jesus, for we have seen—yes—these eyes have seen—*the dead live again!* We have known the man whose soul was utterly corrupt, by the power of God seek after righteousness. We have known the man whose views were carnal, whose lusts were mighty, whose passions were strong—suddenly, by irresistible might from Heaven—consecrate himself to Christ and become a child of Jesus! We know that there is life in Christ Jesus, of a spiritual order. Yes, more—we, ourselves, in our own persons, have felt that there is spiritual life. Well can we remember when we sat in the House of Prayer, as dead as the very seat on which we sat! We had listened for a long, long while to the sound of the Gospel, but no effect followed, when suddenly, as if our ears had been opened by the fingers of some mighty angel, a sound entered into our heart. We thought we heard Jesus saying, “He that has ears to hear, let him hear.” An irresistible hand put itself on our heart and crushed a prayer out of it. We never, before, had a prayer like that. We cried, “O God! Have mercy upon me a sinner.” Some of us, for months, felt a hand pressing us as if we had been grasped in a vice and our souls bled drops of anguish. That misery was a sign of coming life! Persons, when they are being drowned, do not feel the pain so much as while they are being restored. Oh, we remember those pains, those groans, that living strife which our soul had when it came to Christ! Ah, we can remember the giving of our spiritual life as easily as could a man

his restoration from the grave. We can suppose Lazarus to have remembered his resurrection, though not all the circumstances of it. So we, although we have forgotten a great deal, do remember our giving ourselves to Christ. We can say to every sinner, however dead, there is life in Christ Jesus! Though you may be rotten and corrupt in your grave, He who has raised Lazarus, has raised us—and He can say, even to you, “Lazarus! Come forth!”

In the third place, there is *eternal life* in Christ Jesus—and, oh, if eternal death is terrible, eternal life is blessed, for He has said, “Where I am, there shall My people be.” “Father, I will that they also, whom You have given unto Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory.” “I give unto My sheep eternal life and they shall never perish.” Now, any Arminian that would preach from that text must buy a pair of rubber lips, for I am sure he would need to stretch his mouth amazingly! He would never be able to speak the whole truth without winding about in a most mysterious manner! Eternal life—not a life which they may lose, but *eternal* life! If I lost life in Adam, I gained it in Christ. If I *lost* myself forever, I *find* myself forever in Jesus Christ. Eternal life! Oh blessed thought! Our eyes will sparkle with joy and our souls burn with ecstasy in the thought that we have eternal life. Be quenched you stars! Let God put His finger on you—but my soul will live in bliss and joy. Put out your eyes O sun—but my eyes shall “see the king in His beauty” when your eyes shall no more make the green earth laugh! And moon, be you turned into blood—but my blood shall never be turned to nothingness! This spirit shall exist when you have ceased to be! And you, great world! You may all subside, just as a moment’s foam subsides upon the wave that bears it—but I shall have ETERNAL LIFE! O time! You may see giant mountains dead and hidden in their graves. You may see the stars like figs, too ripe, falling from the tree. But you shall never, never see my spirit dead!

III. This brings us to the third point—that ETERNAL LIFE IS GIVEN TO ALL WHO COME FOR IT. There never was a man who came to Christ for eternal life, for legal life, for spiritual life, who had not already received it, in some sense, and it was manifested to him that he had received it soon after he came. Let us take one or two texts—“He is able to save to the uttermost them that *come* unto Him.” Every man who comes to Christ will find that Christ is able to save him—not able to save him a little—to deliver him from a little sin, to keep him from a little trial, to carry him a little way and then drop him—but able to save him to the uttermost extent of his sin, unto the uttermost length of his trials, the uttermost depths of his sorrows—unto the uttermost duration of his existence! Christ says to everyone who comes to Him, “Come, poor Sinner, you need not ask whether I have power to save. I will not ask you how far you have gone into sin. I am able to save you to the uttermost.” And there is no one on earth who can go beyond God’s “uttermost”!

Now another text—“Him that *comes* to Me, (mark the promises are nearly always to the *coming* ones), I will in no wise cast out.” Every man that comes, shall find the door of Christ’s house opened—and the door of His heart, too! Every man that comes—I say it in the broadest sense—shall find that Christ has mercy for him! The greatest absurdity in the world is to need to have a wider Gospel than that recorded in Scripture. I preach that every man that believes shall be saved—that every man who comes shall find mercy. People ask me, “But suppose a man should come who was not chosen, would he be saved?” You suppose nonsense and I am not going to give you an answer! If a man is not chosen, he will never come. When he does come, it is a sure proof that he was chosen! Says one, “Suppose anyone should go to Christ who had not been called of the Spirit.” Stop, my Brother—that is a supposition you have no right to make, for such a thing cannot happen! You only say it to entangle me and you will not do that just yet. I say every man who comes to Christ shall be saved. I can say that as a Calvinist, or as a hyper-Calvinist as plainly as you can say it. I have no narrower Gospel than you have—only my Gospel is on a solid foundation, whereas yours is built upon nothing but sand and rottenness. “Every man that comes shall be saved, for no man comes to Me except the Father draws him.” “But,” says one, “suppose all the world should come, would Christ receive them?” Certainly, if all came, but they won’t all come. I tell you, *all that come*—yes, if they were as bad as devils, Christ would receive them! If they had all sin and filthiness running into their hearts as into a common sewer for the whole world, Christ would receive them! Another says, “I want to know about the rest of the people. May I go out and tell them Jesus Christ died for every one of you? May I say—there is righteousness for every one of you, there is life for every one of you”? No. You may not. You may say there is life for every man that comes. But if you say there is life for one of those who do not believe, you utter a dangerous lie. If you tell them that Jesus Christ was punished for their sins and yet they will be lost, you tell a willful lie! To think that God could punish Christ and then punish them—wonder at your daring to have the impudence to say so!

A good man was once preaching that there were harps and crowns in Heaven for all his congregation. But then he wound up in a most solemn manner—“My dear Friends, there are many for whom these things are prepared who will not get there.” In fact, he made such a pitiful tale, as indeed he might do. But I tell you who he ought to have wept—he ought to have wept for the angels of Heaven and all the saints—because that would spoil Heaven thoroughly. You know when you meet at Christmas, if you have lost your brother, David, and his seat is empty, you say—“Well, we always enjoyed Christmas but there is a drawback to it now—poor David is dead and buried.” Think of the angels saying—“Ah, this is a beautiful Heaven, but we don’t like to see all those crowns up there with cobwebs on them. We cannot endure that uninhabited street—we cannot behold yon empty thrones.” And then, poor Souls, they might begin talk-

ing to one another and say, “we are none of us safe here, for the promise was—‘I give unto My sheep eternal life,’ and there is a lot of them in Hell that God gave eternal life to. There is a number that Christ shed His blood for burning in the pit of Hell and if they may be sent there, so may we! If we cannot trust one promise we cannot another.” So Heaven would lose its foundation and fall. Away with your nonsensical Gospel! God gives us a safe and solid one, built on Covenant doings and Covenant relationships, on eternal purposes and sure fulfillments!

IV. This brings us to the fourth point, **THAT BY NATURE NO MAN WILL COME TO CHRIST**, for the text says, “You will not come unto Me, that you might have life.” I assert, on Scripture authority from my text, that you will not come unto Christ, that you might have life. I tell you, I might preach to you forever, I might borrow the eloquence of Demosthenes or of Cicero, but you will not come unto Christ! I might beg of you on my knees, with tears in my eyes and show you the horrors of Hell and the joys of Heaven, the sufficiency of Christ and your own lost condition—but you would, none of you, come unto Christ of yourselves unless the Spirit that rested on Christ should draw you! It is true of all men in their natural condition that they *will not* come to Christ. I think, though, I hear another of these babblers asking a question—“But could they not come if they liked?” My Friend, I will reply to you another time. That is not the question this morning! I am talking about whether they *will*, not whether they *can*. You will notice, whenever you talk about free will, the poor Arminian, in two seconds, begins to talk about power—and he mixes up two subjects that should be kept apart! We will not take two subjects at once! We decline fighting two at the same time, if you please. Another day we will preach from this text—“No man *can* come except the Father draws him.” But it is only the will we are talking of now. And it is certain that men *will not come* to Christ, that they might have life. We might prove this from many texts of Scripture, but we will take one parable. You remember the parable where a certain king had a feast for his son and bade a great number to come? The oxen and fatlings were killed and he sent his messengers bidding many to the supper. Did they go the feast? Ah, no. But they all, with one accord, began to make excuses. One said he had married a wife and, therefore, he could not come, whereas he might have brought her with him. Another had bought a yoke of oxen and went to prove them. But the feast was at night—and he could not prove his oxen in the dark! Another had bought a piece of land and wanted to see it, but I should not think he went to see it with a lantern. So they all made excuses and would not come. Well the king was determined to have the feast. So he said, “Go into the highways and hedges and invite them”—stop! Not *invite*—“**COMPEL** them to come in.” For even the ragged fellow sinning in the hedges would never have come unless they were compelled. Take another parable. A certain man had a vineyard. At the appointed season he sent one of his servants for his rent. What did they do to him? They beat that servant. He sent another and

they stoned him. He sent another and they killed him! He, at last, said, "I will send them my son, they will reverence him." But what did they do? They said, "This is the heir, let us kill him and cast him out of the vineyard." So they did. It is the same with all men by nature. The Son of God came, yet men rejected Him. "You will not come unto Me, that you might have life." It would take too much time to mention any more Scripture proofs.

We will, however, refer to the great Doctrine of the Fall. Anyone who believes that man's will is entirely free and that he can be saved by it, does not believe the Fall. As I sometimes tell you, few preachers of religion believe the Doctrine of the Fall thoroughly, or else they think that when Adam fell down he broke his little finger and did not break his neck and ruin his race. Why, Beloved, the Fall broke man up entirely! It did not leave one power unimpaired. They were all shattered, debased and tarnished like some mighty temple. The pillars might be there, the shaft and the column and the plaster might be there, but they were all broken, though some of them retain much of their form and position. The conscience of man sometimes retains much of its tenderness—still it has fallen. The will, too, is not exempt. What, though it is, "the Lord Mayor of Mansoul," as Bunyan calls it—the Lord Mayor goes wrong! The Lord Will-be-Will was continually doing wrong! Your fallen nature was put out of order. Your will, among other things, has clean gone astray from God! But I tell you what will be the best proof of that. It is the great fact that you never did meet a Christian in your life who ever said he came to Christ without Christ coming to him! You have heard a great many Arminian sermons, I dare say, but you never heard an Arminian prayer—for the saints in prayer appear as one in word and deed and mind. An Arminian on his knees would pray desperately like a Calvinist. He cannot pray about free will—there is no room for it. Fancy him praying, "*Lord, I thank You I am not like those poor presumptuous Calvinists. Lord, I was born with a glorious free will. I was born with power by which I can turn to You of myself. I have improved my Grace. If everybody had done the same with their Grace that I have, they might all have been saved. Lord, I know You do not make us willing if we are not willing, ourselves. You give Grace to everybody. Some do not improve it, but I do. There are many who will go to Hell as much bought with the blood of Christ as I was. They had as much of the Holy Spirit given to them. They had as good a charge and were as much blessed as I am. It was not Your Grace that made us to differ—I know it did a great deal, still I turned the point. I made use of what was given me and others did not—that is the difference between me and them.*" That is a prayer for the devil, for nobody else would offer such a prayer as that!

Ah, when they are preaching and talking very slowly, there may be wrong doctrine. But when they come to pray, the true thing slips out—they cannot help it! If a man talks very slowly, he may speak in a fine manner. But when he comes to talk fast, the old brogue of his country,

where he was born, slips out. I ask you again, did you ever meet a Christian who said, “I came to Christ without the power of the Spirit?” If you ever did meet such a man, you need have no hesitation in saying, “My dear Sir, I quite believe it—and I believe you went away, again, without the power of the Spirit. I believe you know nothing about the matter and are in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity.” Do I hear one Christian saying, “I sought Jesus before He sought me. I went to the Spirit and the Spirit did not come to me”? No, Beloved. We are obliged, each one of us to put our hands to our hearts and say—

**“Grace taught my soul to pray
And made my eyes overflow.
’Twas Grace that kept me to this day
And will not let me go.”**

Is there one here—a solitary one—man or woman, young or old—who can say, “I sought God before He sought me?” No! Even you who are a little Arminian, will sing—

**“O yes! I do love Jesus—
Because He first loved me”**

Then, one more question. Do we not find, even after we have come to Christ, our soul is not free, but is kept by Christ? Do we not find times, even now, when to will is not present with us? There is a law in our members, warring against the law of our minds. Now, if those who are spiritually alive feel that their will is contrary to God, what shall we say of the man who is “dead in trespasses and sins”? It would be a marvelous absurdity to put the two on the same level! And it would be still more absurd to put the dead before the living! No. The text is true. Experience has branded it into our hearts, “You will not come unto Me, that you might have life.”

Now, we must tell you the reasons why men will not come to Christ. The first is because no man by nature thinks he needs Christ. By nature, man conceives that he does not need Christ. He thinks that he has a robe of righteousness of his own—that he is well-dressed—that he is not naked. He thinks that he needs not Christ’s blood to wash him, that he is not black or crimson and needs no Grace to purify him! No man knows his need until God shows it to him—and until the Holy Spirit reveals the necessity of pardon—no man will seek pardon. I may preach Christ forever, but unless you feel you need Christ you will never come to Him. A doctor may have a good shop, but nobody will buy his medicines until he feels he needs them.

The next reason is because men do not like Christ’s way of saving them. One says, “I do not like it because He makes me holy. I cannot drink or swear if He saves me.” Another says, “It requires me to be so precise and Puritanical—and I like a little more license.” Another does not like it because it is so humbling. He does not like it because the “gate of Heaven” is not quite high enough for his head and he does not like stooping. That is the chief reason you will not come to Christ, because you cannot get to Him with your heads straight up in the air. Christ

makes you stoop when you come! Another does not like it to be Grace from first to last. “Oh,” he says, “If I might have a little honor.” But when he hears it is all Christ, or no Christ, a whole Christ or no Christ, he says, “I shall not come,” and turns on his heels and away he goes! Ah, proud Sinners, you *will not* come to Christ. Ah, ignorant Sinners, you *will not* come to Christ because you know nothing of Him! And that is the third reason.

Men do not know His worth, for if they did, they would come to Him. Why did not sailors go to America before Columbus went? Because they did not believe there was an America! Columbus had faith, therefore he went. He who has faith in Christ, goes to Him. But you don't know Jesus. Many of you never saw His beautiful face. You never saw how applicable His blood is to a sinner, how great is His Atonement—and how all-sufficient are His merits—therefore, “You will not come unto Him.”

And oh, my Hearers, my last thought is a solemn one. I have preached that you will not come. But some will ask, “Is it their sin that they do not come?” It is so. You will not come because your will is a sinful will! Some think that we “sew pillows to all armholes” when we preach this Doctrine, but we don't. We do not set this down as being part of man's original nature, but as belonging to his *fallen* nature! It is SIN that has brought you into this condition, that you will not come! If you had not fallen, you would come to Christ the moment He was preached to you. But you do not come because of your sinfulness and crime. People excuse themselves because they have bad hearts. That is the most flimsy excuse in the world! Do not robbery and thieving come from a bad heart? Suppose a thief should say to a judge, “I could not help it, I have a bad heart.” What would the judge say? “You rascal! Why, if your *heart* is bad, I'll make the sentence heavier, for you are a villain, indeed—your excuse is nothing.” The Almighty shall “laugh at them and shall have them in derision.” We do not preach this Doctrine to excuse you, but to humble you! The possession of a bad nature is my fault as well as my terrible calamity. It is a sin that will always be charged on men. When they will not come to Christ, it is sin that keeps them away! He who does not preach that, I fear is not faithful to God and his conscience. Go home, then, with this thought, “I am by nature so perverse that I will not come to Christ—and that wicked perversity of my nature is my sin. I deserve to be sent to Hell for it.” And if the thought does not humble you, the Spirit using it, no other can. This morning I have not preached human nature up, but I have preached it down! God humble us all! Amen.

Adapted from *The C.H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

WHY MEN CANNOT BELIEVE IN CHRIST

NO. 1245

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

***“How can you believe, which receive honor one of another,
and seek not the honor that comes from God only?”
John 5:44.***

OUR Savior was addressing Himself to Pharisees who would not receive Him, and who, no doubt, pleaded that they *could* not believe on Him. They had just seen a very notable miracle worked by Him—a man who had been sick many years had been suddenly restored and that by a word. That miracle, being of the same nature as the wonderful works of the great Father, a miracle of tenderness and Omnipotence, ought to have convinced them that Christ was the Son of God. They saw the miracle, however, and instead of drawing the proper inference, they began to quibble at the Master because He had performed it upon the Sabbath Day. The teaching of our Lord’s wonderful work of mercy and power was lost upon them. They could not, they *would* not see the finger of God in the miracle.

Before this miracle had occurred, John the Baptist had come—the Elijah who was foretold to herald the Messiah. These Pharisees had felt a partial belief in John and the popular voice compelled them to stifle any unbelief concerning him which may have lingered in their hearts. They dared not say that his ministry was altogether of man, and consequently they were posed by the Savior’s question, “The ministry of John, was it from Heaven or of men?” They could not answer the question because if they denied his mission, the people would cry out against them. But, on the other hand, if they confessed that John came from Heaven, our Lord’s reply would have been, “Why, then, did you not believe him and accept his testimony concerning Me?”

They had, therefore, in addition to the miracle which Jesus worked, the testimony of John the Baptist, but still *they could not* believe. In addition to this, these men were exceedingly well acquainted with the Scriptures. The scribes made it their business to transcribe the Old Testament. They learned chapters and books by heart. Many of them were so well acquainted with the letter of Scripture that they could tell you which was the middle verse in each book! They have left us Masoretic notes which tell us what is the middle verse of the Bible, and the middle letter of the Bible and like trifles. They were very curious and careful concerning all the little jots and tittles of the sacred manuscripts.

Now, those books speak plainly of Christ. It is marvelous that men conversant with Old Testament Scripture could see Jesus Christ and observe His doings and not discover that He was the Messiah of whom Moses in

the Law and the Prophets did write. What witness can be plainer than that of Isaiah? Here was testimony upon testimony and yet, in the teeth of it all, the Christ was rejected! There are still persons of this kind in the world. They believe the Scriptures to be the Word of God, though they do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ! They accept the Gospel narrative. They have no doubt, whatever, that Jesus, the Son of God, did live a life of perfection on earth and died as a substitutionary Sacrifice. They also believe that He has risen from the dead and is gone into Glory and has all power to save.

They believe that the Gospel message is true and yet they do not believe on the Lord Jesus—I mean that they do not so believe in Him in spirit and in truth as to believe unto salvation. They stop short with the knowledge of the outward facts. They do not come with their hearts and rest upon Him as their whole salvation. And if you ask them why not, they will not say that they will not, and shall not, but that they *cannot*. They plead a need of *ability* and they endeavor, as well as they can, to screen themselves behind that lack of ability. It is a monstrous thing, beyond all things monstrous, that a man should plead that he is under a necessity to call his God a liar!

It is an amazing thing that a man should actually urge as an apology for remaining at enmity to God that he *cannot* believe Him! That is to say, he actually pleads the great sin of calling God a liar as an excuse for his rebellion! What is that but to insult the Majesty of Heaven with an excuse which is, in itself, the highest insolence? To say I cannot believe a man is to malign his character. And to say that I cannot believe God is to do Him the highest conceivable dishonor. To what a pitch has the human heart gone in extravagance of presumptuous daring, when it boldly tells God that it cannot believe His testimony concerning His Son?

And though He says, “Believe in My Son and you are saved,” man dares to answer Him thus, “We cannot believe in Your Son,” as if the Christ of God were a liar, too, and He who died for us and gave the best pledge of His love, was not to be trusted. Alas for our race! Has it, indeed, come to this, that it is a hard thing to rely upon One who cannot deceive us, and difficult to place our dependence upon One who is able to save to the uttermost? Now, I want to deal as gently as I dare with those of you who have pleaded inability. It is very likely true that you cannot believe—let us try to find out the reason for it.

The difficulty does not lie in the Truth of God to be believed, for it is neither absurd nor incredible. Neither does it lie in any need of mental faculty in yourself by which you might believe. In your case, the difficulty is not a *mental* one, for you already believe in the Inspiration of the Word of God, and in the mission of Christ and so on. Your difficulty, and I shall be faithful with you and try to put my finger upon it, just as Christ was faithful with these people and pointed out their moral difficulty—“How can you believe, which receive honor one of another?” May the Holy Spirit put power into my words.

First, let us speak of *the hindrance which was in the way of these Pharisees*. And then, secondly, let us make some guesses at *the hindrances in the way of some of you who cannot believe*.

I. First, THE HINDRANCE IN THE WAY OF THE PHARISEES. It may be in the way of some here and, therefore, let us note it carefully. They received honor one of another. Now, *the mere fact of receiving honor, even if that honor is rightly rendered, may make faith in Christ a difficulty*. A man gets to feel that he is something when others honor him and this is dangerous, for a man never believes in Jesus till he knows himself to be nothing. If others praise us. If they dwell upon our good points. If they pay respect to our rank. If they notice our abilities and talents, we are very apt to think that there should be some special way to Heaven for us—some platform tickets to let us in by a back door a little apart from the common crowd of sinners because we are so respected.

And when the Gospel says, “You must be saved as a sinner or not at all. You must give up all claims of merit and all reliance upon what you can do, or else you never can be saved,” then, in all probability the mere fact of our having received honor from other people will render it the more difficult for us to believe a doctrine which gives no honor to *men*, but stains the pride of all glory and casts human excellency into the dust. *It is still more perilous if, receiving honor, we come to expect it*, as these people did. They expected their countrymen to pay them homage. Were they not called by their brethren, “great,” and “distinguished,” and “learned”? Were they not styled “doctor” and, “rabbi,” and the like? They came to think that the people ought to honor and esteem them! And thus they went a step deeper into the perilous floods, for *when a man gets to feel that he ought to be honored, he is in extreme danger*.

I have known some who have been worthy of much honor and have received it without being in any degree elevated. With a proper modesty they have shunned the fame which followed them and blushed when it has overtaken them. But it is not given to all men to bear the serious trial of honor. Too many men, receiving honor, come to *expect* honor—and he who expects honor is not in that condition of heart which renders it easy to fall down on his knees at the Throne of Divine Mercy and cry, “God be merciful to me, a sinner.”

Now, some of you may be very much esteemed in your families—I am very glad you are. But, perhaps without your knowing it, there is growing up the feeling that you *ought to be* esteemed. Now, dear Friend, take care lest that should fester into a dangerous pride which will be your ruin! You know the simple story, (I dare say you have heard it told), of the slave owner who was under conviction and who had a servant under impressions, too. But poor Sam found Christ and peace long before his master did, at which the master expressed his wonder. The slave replied, “Do you see, Massa, when de angel comes along with a white robe, he says to Massa, ‘Here is a new robe for you.’ Massa looks at his coat, a little worn and a few holes, but still pretty fine. ‘Ah,’ says Massa, ‘it will patch up

and do a little longer,' so Massa does not get de new robe. De angel comes to Sam and says, 'Sam, new robe for you.' Sam says, 'Ah, I am all rags—I am all rags! Thank you,' and I put on de new robe at once, Massa."

Now, there is just that fear lest your very amiable character and the respect it brings you should lead you to be all the longer in accepting the Righteousness of Jesus Christ. That, perhaps, is where your difficulty may be found at the present time. And if so, dear Friend, humble yourself under the mighty hand of God and you shall be exalted in due time, "for God resists the proud, but He gives Grace to the humble." Remember, you may not be at all offensively proud to other people and yet there may be much pride in your *heart* in the sight of God—and this may be hindering you from believing the simple, precious Gospel which is meant for the guilty and the lost and the ruined, and which, dear Friends, is really meant for *you* if you did but know your own condition.

In the case of the Pharisees, however, there was something more than that. They not only received honor and expected honor, but *this honor was quite undeserved*. These men won respect by a false character. Oh, they were wonderfully good men and marvelously religious! They had two pennyworth of halfpence to give away and they sounded a trumpet in the street, and everybody said, "What a generous man that Rabbi Ben Simeon is! He has been giving money away at the corner of the street." When they paid their tithes they were very particular to send the servant down into the garden to cut exactly a tenth-part of the mint, the anise and the cum-in. True, it was not worth two pence, it would not have made up a pound sterling in a hundred years—but it was intended to let everybody see their thorough-going principles.

Everybody said, "Rabbi Ben Simeon is so very exact in the payment of his tithes. He is such a very holy man! He actually begged the collector to give him change for half a farthing so as to be quite correct, and not have even a sprig of mint on his conscience. He is very holy! Look at the border of his garment—other people wear theirs about an inch wide, but his is six inches at least! His tailor says that he is one of the godliest men he ever knew and spends a deal in trimmings. He is very holy and observes all the fasts—you can tell that by his sad countenance. He fasts twice in the week! Whoever heard of such self-denial? It is true he has a famous appetite on the other five days, but yet he is a very holy man."

They extolled one another for this ostentatious religiousness—this wonderful piety! But if you could have seen the Pharisee in private you would have discovered that he really did not deserve a word of praise, for there, behind the door, what is that he is eating? Our Lord tells you—it is a widow's substance. "You devour widows' houses, and for a show make long prayers." He has been washing his hands because he has been to market, and they need it, for an orphan's plunder defiles them. He carefully washes before he eats bread, but though he has made clean the outside of the cup and the platter, his inner part is full of filthiness.

Albeit that he was strict as to ceremonies, he taught men to set aside the Commandments of God and follow, instead, the commandments of men. The fellow, instead of deserving to be praised, ought to have been hooted off the stage for his hypocrisy! Now, be sure of this, if a man has a fine character, but does not deserve it—if he allows that piece of dishonesty to go on, I do not wonder that he cannot believe in Jesus Christ! How could he? A man so false through and through—how could he believe the Truth of God? If a man has lived in the dark all his life, do you wonder that the light makes his eyes ache and that, therefore, he hates it? If a man has been incrustated in filth from his birth and thrived in it, there is no wonder that he judges purity to be quite a superfluity. Believe in Jesus Christ? O, Man, while you are acting so vile a part, there is no wonder that you cannot believe in the honest, truthful Savior!

Now, is there anybody here who wears before the eyes of men a fair character and yet, in secret, is anything but what he ought to be? O Sir, if you cannot believe in Jesus, I can very well comprehend your difficulty! But, O, may God make you sincere—may He turn you into that honest and good ground on which the Seed will grow, for it never will grow in a hypocrite's heart, let us preach to him as long as we may! These people who received honor had a further difficulty, namely, that *always receiving this undeserved honor, they deceived themselves into believing that they deserved it*. A man who deludes other people, by degrees comes to delude himself—the deluder first makes dupes of others and then becomes a dupe to himself!

I should not wonder but what the Pope really believes that he is “infallible,” and that he ought to be saluted as, “His Holiness.” It must have taken him a good time to arrive at that eminence of self-deception, but he has got there, I dare say, by now, and every one who kisses his toe confirms him in his insane idea! When everybody else believes a falsehood concerning you, you come, at last, to believe it yourself, or at least to think that it may be so. These Pharisees, being continually called “the learned rabbi,” “the holy scribe,” “the devout and pious doctor,” “the sanctified teacher,” almost believed the flattering compliments! They used very grand phrases in those days and doctors of divinity were very common, almost as common as they are now. And the crowd of doctors and rabbis helped to keep each other in countenance by repeating one another's fine names till they believed they meant something.

Dear Friends, it is very difficult to receive honor, to expect it and yet to keep your eyesight, for men's eyes gradually grow dull through the smoke of the incense which is burned before them. And when their eyes become dim with self-conceit, it will not be at all unusual if they say, “We cannot believe in Jesus Christ.” Their own great selves conceal the Cross and make them unable to believe the Truth of God! Once more, the praise of men generally *turns the receivers of it into great cowards*. How could they believe in Jesus? Why, the people would leave off terming them, “the

learned rabbi,” and “the celestial doctor,” and their brethren would put them out of the synagogue! How could they believe and lose their status?

Why, the people would say, “Has rabbi So-and-So become a disciple of the carpenter’s son? Has he put aside his wisdom and become a child, that he may be instructed by the Nazarene?” Why, the whole Sanhedrim would hiss out indignation against the learned man, the pious man, the devout man with his phylactery and the broad border on his garment, if he were to follow with publicans and harlots at the heels of the rejected Messiah! They were afraid! They were afraid! That same spirit which makes us love the *praises* of men makes us dread the *threats* of men. You cannot be pleased with the adulation of mankind without becoming fearful of their censure. It is a perilous thing to taste of human honor—if it makes you sick, it is the best thing it can do for you. If you despise it utterly, it is the only way of bearing it without being injured by it, for I say again, delight in the praises of others saps the foundations of a man’s manhood—delight in the praise of men takes a man off from following after the Glory of God and makes him afraid of following the Truth if it costs him ridicule.

Now, I am afraid that there are many here who cannot believe in Jesus Christ *because they are afraid*. Yes, there is a commercial traveler over there! If he were to become a Christian, why, the next time he went into the commercial room it would be known and there would be many odd remarks and no end of chaffing! You, Mr. Commercial, cannot follow Christ, can you? It is plain that you cannot believe and the reason is plain, too—you are a great coward! There is a working man over there and he knows that it is right to be a believer in Jesus Christ, but he cannot believe. And the reason is that he could not stand those coarse remarks which he would be sure to get in the shop tomorrow morning! He has not spirit enough to bear with ridicule! He is the slave of others and trembles at their laughter! I would sooner lie in my grave than be so mean a thing.

Some are afraid of their brothers, others are afraid of the companions that they spend their evenings with. They have been, until this time, the first to lead the laugh at the evening carnival. If they were to be converted they would lose their little empire and no longer be a favorite. They could not stand contempt! Oh, the fear of man, the fear of man! What cowards it makes of intelligent beings! It is not conscience that makes cowards of us one-half so much as the *need* of conscience—if we had more conscience we should have less fear of men—and would brave their scowls, and scorn their scorn, and bid defiance to their threats. But, O, how many live on the breath of their fellow men! To be approved—to be applauded—that is their Heaven!

But to be despised, to be sneered at, to be called a fool, to have some nickname applied to them—O, no—they would sooner go to Hell than bear that! I say that they are fools with an emphasis if that is the case! And if they will use their wits for a moment I think they will see it so, for surely to be lost to please fools is to be a fool yourself! Please your friends as far

as it is right, but never go to such an expense as the ruin of your souls to keep up friendship with sinners. That man is no friend of mine who would leave me ruin my soul! I have known *friends* come to a man and suck all his estate out of him, lead him into speculations and schemes that serve their turn and desert him when they have ruined him! Do you call such men, *friends*?

We do not, when we speak honestly, call them such, and shall I call him a friend who leads me into sinful amusements, who seeks my favor by teaching me how to indulge my passions and courts my praise while ruining my soul? He is my decided enemy! He cannot be my friend at all! Flee from all of his class, young man, if you cannot convert him. Do not be such a coward as to be afraid of anybody! Stand straight up as God made you, and say, "No, He never made me to be afraid of man, or woman, either. He has made me a man and the very least thing I can do is to pray Him to make me manly enough to buy the Truth of God and sell it not, and take up my Cross and follow Christ, come what may of it." Thus much upon the point as it concerned the Pharisees and some here.

II. Now, secondly, I am going to make some guesses as to OTHER HINDRANCES and you must all help me. You who cannot believe must help me by trying to find out how far I am describing your cases. It is, no doubt, true that some are unable to believe in Christ because they have a *very high opinion of themselves*. They have never done anything amiss, at least, not much, and they have got very good hearts at bottom. And if there has been anything awry they mean to mend and set it all right. They have no doubt that they will fare as well as most people. They will just do their best and God Almighty is very merciful and, no doubt, they will, by some means, get on the right side of the Judge at last.

Ah, dear Friend, you must be purged of this perilous stuff, or you cannot be saved! Your self-satisfaction is founded upon falsehood! Your heart is not so good as you think it, nor your conduct so commendable as you suppose. You have *not* done your best. If you will examine your past life, your conscience will find out many instances in which you did not do your best. And you cannot—mark that word—despite the apparent strength of that resolve of yours—you *cannot* conquer sin. I must say to you as Joshua to the children of Israel, "You cannot serve the Lord." You are going to fight a stout enemy and the spear you carry in your hand is but a reed which will snap in battle's perilous hour.

You think that you shall chase out the Canaanites, but they have chariots of iron and you cannot drive them out. I wish you would give up thinking that you can, for as long as you are strong and good and meritorious you will never be saved! Confess that you have failed! Confess that you are weakness, itself! Lay hold on the Divine strength! Leave yourself in the hands of Jesus! Yield to His Holy Spirit and sin will be conquered! Unless you do this, the real reason why you cannot believe in Christ is because you believe in *yourself*, and that is a very sorry reason for unbelief.

The lie of self-conceit prevents your seeing the great Truth of Christ's ability to save.

In many cases there is *a strong aversion to confession of sin and to an approach to God*, and that is the reason why men cannot believe. When they are told, "Whoever believes in the Lord Jesus has everlasting life," they answer, "I wish I could believe, but I cannot." Now, let me ask one who speaks in that fashion. Did you ever go to God with tears and say, "Lord, I have sinned"? Did you ever acknowledge your transgressions to the Lord and, acknowledging them, did you then say, "God be merciful to me a sinner"? No, you have not done that and you cannot bring your mind to it. You do not like to make a clean breast of it. Now, he that confesses his sin shall find mercy, but none else. David said, "When I kept silence my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long."

Moreover, if you do not confess your sin to the Lord, I do not see how you can believe in Christ, because Christ has come to *pardon* sin, and if you will not confess that you have transgressed, how can you believe in His power to pardon? How can you rightly value forgiveness when you are not awake to the fact that you have offended? The Lord Jesus has come to cleanse you by virtue of His blood. But if you do not need cleansing, or will not acknowledge that you do, I can well understand you when you say, "I cannot believe in Him." It is your hardness of heart! It is your hatred of God! It is your esteem of yourself that hinders!

Many, also, are unable to believe in Jesus Christ because they are *too lazy*. They are slothfully thoughtless and careless. A great many young people and some older ones, too, do not like thinking—it is too much trouble. If you think, some of you women, it is about how that ribbon will suit your complexion. And some of you men, if you think at all, it is only about how you shall get an extra five pound note by your speculations. Thinking is a kind of work which the mass of the present race abhor! They will no more think than butterflies will make honey. They flit from flower to flower, but gather nothing. I know that this is true of multitudes in this country and I confess it was true of myself before the Lord, in mercy, met with me.

I did not want to think about sin, death, Heaven and Hell. I did not mind hearing a sermon, because that was the proper thing, and one could soon shake off any uneasy impression produced by it. To spend an hour quite alone, to look into another world, to face death, judgment and eternity—that is very dreary work to you whose main consideration is to kill time and keep yourselves amused. Now, my dear Friend, if you are a trifler, indifferent, careless, frivolous, superficial, giddy, forever giggling, not even serious enough to laugh—if life is all surface work with you—I can very well understand why you cannot believe in Jesus Christ. You do not seem to have mind enough, or sense enough, for you degrade yourself into a semi-idiotic state by your frivolity. May God awaken you!

This life was given us for something better than to be sported away. It is not all a game of badminton, or skipping-rope. This life is given you to

be followed by another—and that other will be molded by this. What you are *here* you will be forever. He that is filthy, here, will be filthy. And he that is holy, here, will be holy. Mind what you do! The hours you try to get rid of, when you speak of, “killing time,” will accuse you before God as their murderer and bear blood-red evidence upon their hands against you. Wake up from such laziness, I charge you, lest you wake up when it will be too late! Already such sluggishness has kept you from believing—it will soon sleep you into Hell.

There are some, again, who cannot believe in Jesus Christ because they are very, *very fond of what they call pleasure*. Now, every man is desirous of happiness and is not to be condemned for being so. The human mind was constituted to enjoy pleasure, but it was never created that it might be content with the vanities which nowadays are falsely called pleasures. It makes one blush for the age in which we live when we think of the trifles, light as air, in which our neighbors take delight. Sinful pleasures are a great bar to faith and must be renounced. That evil companion who has charmed you with questionable jests must be given up. Do you say that you cannot quit him? Then I see why you cannot believe in Jesus!

That house of unclean amusement which leads to vice—unbelievers know that they must forsake it if they believe in Christ—and they cannot believe because they love the place of temptation. They hesitate. They deliberate. They say that they cannot believe in Jesus, but if they would speak the truth, they mean they cannot give up sweet sin! Sin is such a dainty that they need to roll it under their tongue and relish it once more. They prefer their pleasure to their Savior! Let me also say there are some who are unable to believe in Jesus Christ *for reasons which I hardly care to utter publicly*, and yet I must do it. I have sometimes had sorrowful proof of the reason why some men have lived in unbelief of Christ.

After death I have heard what it would have been a shame to whisper in the ear of an unsuspecting wife. The man was a respectable merchant in the City. He went into the “best society,” but he was keeping a mistress and living in fornication all the while! He said he could not believe in Christ! Do you wonder? How could he? I speak plainly, because these things are very common among your respectable merchants and they need to be told plainly of their sins. Do not come whining to me about “I can’t believe in Jesus Christ.” Of course you cannot while you live in filthy lusts!

Some cannot believe, but why is it? Why, about once a fortnight, or perhaps once a month, the bottle gets the upper hand of them! They cannot believe, no, and there is another thing they cannot do, *they cannot walk straight!* They cannot believe, but they could if they would fling that brandy bottle out of the window—the vile drink stands between them and Christ. To show us that they cannot believe, they hunt up some of Tom Paine’s blasphemies. And when they get “half seas over” they blubber out their religious difficulties and want us to believe that they are troubled about them! They are only acting a part—they are not honest infidels—

they only use skepticism to quiet their consciences, for they know very well that drunkenness is their real master. There are plenty of very respectable people who never have to pay “five shillings and costs,” and yet do not go to bed sober as a rule. I mean women as well as men. These, also, cannot believe.

Have I not told some of you why you cannot believe? I will not mince matters with you. You know that what I say is true. I cannot go into all the sins which separate between men and Christ, but there are some who live for *gain* and, therefore, cannot believe. They *must* make money! Their first aim and their last is to make money—and they are making money—but they are making money in a way they would not like to have known. “There are tricks in all trades,” they say, as if they would smudge everybody else with their black brush to make themselves seem clean!

Now, I do not believe that *every* tradesman practices dishonesty. I believe there are many who would scorn a trick even if they could win millions thereby. And therefore it is not fair to blacken our neighbors to excuse ourselves. There *are* men about who seek gain and will stick at any lie if they can make a profit. They are making “great sacrifices” always—of their customers, I suspect, mainly. They misrepresent their goods and puff them with barefaced lies—the world is full of this rotten trading. Are any of you engaged in such trading? Dare you go to God and say, “Lord, help me to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ,” and then take down your shutters and cheat people? Why, the Lord will never help you to do anything of the sort! You must give up knavery and puffery, for you cannot serve God and Mammon, and God will never help you to do so.

There is no promise in the Bible that God will allow a man to remain dishonest and yet be saved. You need to be saved *from* your dishonesty, to be saved *from* your drunkenness, to be saved *from* your injustice! And unless you are saved from these you can by no means enter the kingdom of Heaven. May God grant us Grace to shake these vipers into the fire, for, O, my Hearers, though I have spoken sternly, just now, even as John the Baptist might have done, I, also, am a man and would plead with you tenderly. What sin can be worth indulging at the expense of your *soul*? Young soldier, over yonder, is there any sin which prevents your being a Christian in your regiment? Can any sin repay you for losing your soul? Young woman, over there, tempted by pleasure, can any gaiety be worth losing Heaven? Whether young or old, I ask you, “What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?” I have spoken roughly to you in love—love to your souls. If the whole host of pleasurable sins could be put together and gold piled upon them high as the moon, the whole mass would not repay a man for being cast into the fires of Hell! Do not run such risks, I pray you. May great Grace enable you to cast your sins away and take Christ at once.

There is one other thing I will mention, which I am persuaded prevents a great many from believing in Christ, and it is this—they complain that they cannot believe that God will forgive such sinners as they are—and

they try to make out that it is *impossible* that their iniquities should be pardoned. I have, on several occasions, discovered that the *true* reason has been that *they have not forgiven other people*. Now, let us not deceive you. You must forgive everyone his trespasses against you, or your Father in Heaven will never forgive you. An unforgiving man is an unforgiven man. Let us say that again—An unforgiving man is an unforgiven man! If you take your brother by the throat and say, “Pay me what you owe,” you cannot wonder that the great King should be angry and refuse to hear *you* when you pray unto Him!

It is a very dreadful thing when this kind of spirit springs up between relatives, but it does do so. We have known parents who cannot forgive children. And we have known brothers who cannot forgive brothers, so that two of the same family will not speak to each other by the year together. I hope they are not so daring as to come to the Communion Table in such a temper as that, because they have no right there, certainly! It is not possible for us to be at peace with God if we will not be at peace with one another. May I not have put my finger upon the cause of unbelief in some now present? I know I have!

And now to sum up all in a word. If these are the reasons why you cannot believe in Jesus Christ, are they not reasons which aggravate your sin? You dare not plead any one of them before God. They are reasons which will fail you when you come to die. Remember, they will all be made known at the Day of Judgment. Every secret sinner here will have to stand forth to be seen as I stand publicly before you now. Yes, and much more so! Every man will be visible to the eyes of the assembled universe—and all his actions will be read out in the face of the sun—and more, his *motives* will be published, too. Who—who among you but must feel some dread of the Great Day of Assize? If you are not covered by the Righteousness of Christ, how will you endure the revelation of that day?

There will be no secrets then! A trumpet voice shall proclaim aloud every hidden thing and the lightning flash of the Divine eye shall discover the deeds of darkness. O, Soul, if you have any of these reasons for not believing, what shall I say to you? Put away such unreasonable reasons! God has given His Son to bleed and die for sinners—all He bids sinners do is to come and trust His Son—and if they will but trust His Son they are saved! Their transgressions are forgiven the moment they believe in Jesus! They receive a new life and begin a new career. “But,” you say, “how am I to know that it is so?” God says it is so! Is not that enough? There are hundreds of us here who have tried and proved the Truth of the promise—

**“Oh, believe the message true—
God to us His Son has given.”**

Rest on Him and you shall have the blessings which He came to give to the guilty and the lost!

I feel as if I cannot utter what I feel, or feel as I ought to feel, when I look round upon this congregation and remember that there are many here who are refusing Jesus Christ—and that some of them, in a very

short time, will be where they will have no more space for believing unto life, but will be shut out forever from all hope! I cannot bear the thought that one among you should then say, "I went to hear the preacher at the Tabernacle one Sunday evening and he preached to us about the reasons why we could not believe. But he was so very smooth-tongued and velvet-mouthed that he did not deal with our consciences fairly and honestly."

No, Sirs! You will not dare to say that! You will not dare to say that! I have spoken plainly to you! What, then, will you say? You will have to admit, "I was plainly warned, but I persisted in not believing in Jesus Christ. I said I could not, but the reason was that I *would* not. I harbored evils in my heart and I refused to get rid of them. And so I could not believe in Christ. I chose my own destruction and now that I have accomplished it, I have no one to blame but myself. Over the roof of that dreadful prison in which I am shut in forever, I continually read these words, 'You knew your duty, but you did it not. You heard of Jesus, but you rejected Him, and your blood is on your own head.'"

God grant it may not be so, but instead thereof, may many of you come to believe in Jesus now! And then we will meet in Heaven and praise redeeming Grace. Hoping that free Grace will make it so, we will sing one of Mr. Sankey's joyful hymns—"Ring the Bells of Heaven"—

***"Ring the bells of Heaven! There is joy today,
For a soul returning from the wild!
Look! The Father meets him out upon the way,
Welcoming His weary wandering child.
Glory! Glory! How the angels sing,
Glory! Glory! How the loud harps ring!
'Tis the ransomed army, like a mighty sea,
Pealing forth the anthem of the free."***

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 5.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—387, 572, 541.**

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WHY MEN DO NOT BELIEVE

NO. 3463

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 17, 1915.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 11, 1868.**

*“How can you believe, who receive honor one of another”
John 5:46.*

THE Pharisees in our Lord's day were very fond of high-sounding titles. They had their diplomas, like our modern doctors of divinity, and they took good care to pride themselves upon them. Some were called “Rab,” others, “Rabbi,” others, “Rabbini.” They had their various degrees of respect—degrees which signified the respect due to them, and the attainments to which they had reached. In fact, they would not listen to a teacher unless he came with the title of, “Rab,” or, “Rabbi,” or, “Rabbini.” He must be one who had about him a great air of self-importance. He must be a witness of himself and that very abundantly, too, or else the confraternity of the Scribes and Pharisees turned away from him.

Now our Lord asked no testimonials from anybody. He stood up and spoke very simply, but very earnestly, the Truth of God and He did not quote, as these old Rabbis did, authors far gone back, one upon another, and make glosses upon them. He took the authority derived from God and constantly said, “Verily this is the case,” and, “Verily I say unto you that this other is the case.” And when these mighty Scribes and Pharisees turned upon their heels and would not receive Him, He replied to them, “It was not at all likely that you would. You gentlemen are so given to complimentary phrases and to grandiloquent titles, that there was no likelihood that you would listen to a Man who came with Truth on His lips, and still further, in His heart.” Perhaps there could be nothing more clear than that the position which the Scribes and Pharisees occupied was most dangerous. They were prejudiced. They considered that they had the key of knowledge. They already knew by far, too much to be taught anything more and, consequently, while publicans and harlots heard Christ and rejoiced to listen to Him, out of all those who were continually caviling and finding fault, how few ever won the blessing!

Now this is an illustration of a general rule upon which I wish to speak tonight. The moral character has a great effect upon the faith. These men, through being proud, stilted and fond of titles, were unable to believe in Christ—but there are other faults more common than these which effectually prevent men from becoming the disciples of our blessed Master. Of some of these I intend to speak this evening. And when I have

done so, I shall have a few words to address to the individuals here who cannot believe in Christ because there is a something within their hearts that very effectually prevents their coming to the faith of God's elect. First, then, it is very clear that—

I. IT IS NOT BECAUSE A TRUTH IS PLAIN THAT, THEREFORE, ALL MEN SEE IT.

There are some men in such a condition of mind, of such a blinding sort, that even if the Truth of God could be still more plain, it would be the most unlikely thing in all the world that they would receive it! We will suppose for a moment that teetotalism is based upon the surest Truth of God and cannot, for a moment, be disputed. Some earnest Brother is endeavoring to convince a man. He belabors him with the most potent arguments—he brings before him the most astonishing facts and some of those wonderful “statistics” which the more we look at, the less we believe! And after bringing all these to bear upon the man, he is still unmoved. You are surprised, but somebody whispers in your ear, “He owns a gin palace,” and now you are not surprised at all! It would be a very unlikely thing that he should be convinced of the propriety of total abstinence while he, himself, gets his gain by selling the pernicious evils! But take another case of the same sort. A young gentleman, in conversation with a bishop, was endeavoring to show his lordship the unscriptural character of the Episcopal body as now held in the Church of England. His lordship was observed to smile and when he was asked the reason, he replied, “Why, I wonder at the courage of this young gentleman that he should imagine he could ever convince me out of 3,000 a year!” And, indeed, it was not very likely that he would be converted from the errors of Episcopacy, if these are errors, any more than our friend of the gin palace was likely to be converted to anti-alcoholic principles! There is a something in both instances about the position of the men which renders them, probably, impervious to the Truth of God! These two illustrations just bring that point before your mind's eye.

Now there are some men who do not believe in Jesus. They have godly parents. They have lived to see others who have believed and though, perhaps, they have never been quite able to cast away the recollections of their early days, yet for all that, they are almost and would be quite infidels if it were not for a slender thread which is still held in the hands of God. Now the question comes to us—Why are not these people Believers? Under so many good influences, why are they not decidedly Believers in Christ? The answer may be found by the light of the Truth which I have brought to your minds. There may be a something about their characters which renders it impossible for them to be Believers in Christ, no, which even reflects credit upon the Gospel of Jesus, that they should not be able to believe it, for if, being as they are, they could receive it, it might prove that Gospel to be a thing devoid of the power of God!

Let me just mention some of the things which effectually prevent men from believing in Christ, and one is a self-righteous idea of one's self. Ex-

ceedingly common, this! The man thinks that he is not as other men are and though he does not say so, he is rather proud of himself. Though he is so humble as not to say it, yet at the bottom of his heart he is convinced that nobody is worthy of greater respect than he is! He has been scrupulously honest and has brought up his family, to the best of his knowledge, in the ways of integrity. He is a good fellow, generous to the poor and if he should have a fault or two, yet who has not his faults? As for himself, if the world were picked, he would at least take his place somewhere near the first! Now you cannot expect *that* man to believe the Gospel, for that Gospel tells him that he is fallen, that his sins have been so many that God has condemned him forever, that he must escape from that condemnation or, if not, he must sink forever into misery and that for him there is no salvation except upon the footing of pure Grace apart from merit! The Gospel denies that he has any merit. It pulls off from him all those finely woven raiments of his, in which he boasted himself, and makes him stand naked before the bar of God—and the man does not like that. “No,” he says, “I will not be treated so! The Gospel gives me so ill a character that I will take my chances and not believe the Gospel, but still hope to be saved by my own natural goodness.”

Well, dear Hearer, if this is your case, I should not advise you to run the risk, for if you are to look at yourself, you will find many omissions and, above all, this glaring omission—that you have not loved the God who made you and you have not served Him! He supplies you with life, but you do not reverence Him. If it had not been for His will, you had long ago been among the dust that sleeps in the grave, or among the lost that howl in the Pit and yet, despite His longsuffering goodness, you have not thanked Him, but gracelessly gone up and down the world with no more thought of your Maker than the brute that dies and so comes to its end! I do pray you look at yourself in the light of God’s Law, that spiritual Law which judges your thoughts and which comes home to your imaginations. What if your outward life is pure, yet can you stand such a test as that? You know you cannot! Believe not, then, yourself to be rich and increased, for you are poor, you are penniless in the Presence of God. Oh, that you could feel this! Then would you come to Jesus and put your trust in Him, but, alas, this self-righteousness of yours is that which holds you back from Christ. How can you believe while you take honor to yourselves and flatter yourselves? You must be humbled! You must be brought low, or else faith in Christ can never reside in your bosom.

A second remark may come closer home to others, and I do desire to come very close home to you. There are men who never will believe in Jesus because their very idea of religion is a mistake. You ask them what their religion is and, if they spoke very plainly, they would say that they like good music, excellent music, and they like the best of architecture, and they like floral decorations, and they like millinery, and some of them like images on altars, and I know not what other devout and admi-

rable things besides! They take religion to be simply the indulgence of their tastes, the pleasing of the eyes, the gratification of the senses and, if they can sit while the pealing organ pours forth floods of music and they are charmed thereby, they call that adoration! True, as excellent music might be heard at the theater or the opera, but that would be an abomination! The ears are tickled with the same sounds, precisely the same, and yet in the one case it is sin, and in the other case it is holiness! I confess I cannot quite see the difference—I can perceive none whatever! The gratification of the senses, of the ears and the eyes cannot be devotion! It is for the *heart* to draw near to God! It is to learn that God is a Spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. It is to learn that the broken heart is the best sacrifice, that the tears stealing down the cheek is that which is received by the great Father who is in Heaven. That to come humbly and confess our sins, to come with lowly reverence and trust in the great Lamb of God is acceptable worship, not the mere chanting or singing of the lips, or the bending of the knees, or the joining in a liturgical service—but for the inner man to bow itself before the unseen God—the vital part of our nature to come into contact with Him who lives and who hears prayer! Now, you cannot expect a man who has imbibed his notions of religion from a thing that is theatrical and full of show, to accept the simple teaching of Jesus Christ. How can they believe while they are duped by these gewgaws? How can they believe in Jesus while they are taken up with these mere externals, these fancies, these sweet perfumes and sounds which can never be acceptable to the great God who is in Heaven? There is something greater, something deeper about salvation than this!

There are not many here who will come under that head, but they will come under another. There are many who cannot believe in Jesus because—now let them themselves estimate the force of this—they cannot believe in Jesus *because they have a besetting sin that they cannot give up!* There is the bottom of most men's doubt! They would not doubt if they did not sin. If they could have their sins and be Believers, they would be Believers fast enough, but there is that company that must be given up, that company which, instead of sanctifying the soul, depraves it. There are those amusements which are not merely recreations which might invigorate the jaded mind, but which are, in truth, a sort of debauchery which turns aside the mind from its true force and vigor. Oh, how many things there are in this great London that we know nothing of, and which it were better not to know, which are the secret source of the doubts and skepticism that come up on the surface of society! It were a very curious thing to follow these men home, to follow those home, I say, who say they doubt this and doubt that! Yes, when you see them drunk, you do not wonder that they doubt a sober Gospel—it were a pity but what they did. When you see them cheat, you do not wonder that they doubt an honest Gospel—it were a great pity that they should believe it! When you hear them swear, you do not wonder that they doubt a sacred

Gospel! Why, to keep up any appearance of consistency, not to say, sanity, they must doubt it! There is a kind of honesty about this professed doubt which I like, for it is better for a man to doubt those things which contradict his life than that he should be such a damnable hypocrite as to pretend to believe in them—better than that he should stand to them in theory, and yet deny them in his life!

But to return to the subject, there lies the secret spring that makes up the non-belief in Jesus in many hearts. It is because they feel that His service is too hard, and exacts too much, too great a self-denial, too much of coming out from the world, and so they cannot believe in Him. And yet Jesus asks us to give up nothing that is really for our good. Jesus, I say, takes away from us no pleasure that is a true pleasure, no enjoyment that exalts the mind or that makes a man truly blessed. 'Tis true He takes away that poisoned cup. Who would permit you to drink it who had a care for you? 'Tis true He takes away from you that dagger of sin, that poisoned viper that is only nestling in your bosom to destroy you! Who that loved you would let you have these dangerous things about you? Jesus Christ asks us only for such self-denial as shall promote our everlasting welfare. Ah, men and women, you will find your sins won't pay you when you come to die—and I suppose you intend to do that. I hope you think not that you shall live forever! Then that little drink will seem sour enough when you come to leave it for the last time. Then the giddy merriment of this world will seem foolishness enough when the curtain begins to be drawn and you look from side to side on the river of death into an eternity that is dark, unlit by a single star of hope! You know that you will not perish like brutes. You know, for God has put a trembling conscience within you, that you will start upon a voyage that is never to end! Oh, Sirs, how is it that you thus wreck your vessels for a little joy, and for a paltry pleasure give up the welfare of your souls forever?

There are some men, too, who are kept from believing in Jesus Christ *because they are lovers of gain*. How could they believe in Jesus when their whole life is spent in money-grabbing? Mammon, "the least erect of spirits," says Milton, but he is the god of London! Does not Mammon rule and reign abundantly, and do not men fall down and say their prayers to him?" All hail, thrice glorious Mammon! Fill our pockets full and help us to blow out our bubble-companies and cheat the public!" Are not these the prayers offered by many? Yes, and among you in sober trade, how many spend their whole lives in getting and scraping for themselves alone—no consideration for the Church of Christ, or for the poor and needy, but only for themselves? Now when Christ comes and says, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon Earth, where moth and rust corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal," you do not wonder that

they do not like that. “No,” they say, “it is contrary to social economics!” When He tells them that this world will pass away, and the fashion of it, and bids them seek another and a better portion, where things endure without end, they will not have it. This world is quite enough for them and they are gone from Christ. How can they believe in Him if they live for gain?

So, too, there are some others who never can believe in Jesus *because they are so downright cowardly that it would be very difficult for them to believe in anything which involves the slightest oppositions*. Yes, many a man and many a woman has been influenced by that mean thought, “I would be laughed at. I would be ridiculed if I became a real Believer in Jesus Christ. Why, how could I meet my old companions? What would they say to me if they heard that I had become a saint? How could I stand the sneers of the commercial room? How could I run the gauntlet down that long workshop where all the benches are?” “How,” says the young woman, “could I have it known in that book-folding room that I have been baptized?” And among your upper circles it is just the same. How men are afraid of one another, afraid of poor worms, afraid of poor sinners like themselves who shall wither before the face of the terrible Judge of all the earth! Oh, that men should be so afraid of men, and not afraid of God, that they will consent to be His enemies and lose His good opinion! The good opinion of a drunk or of an arrant fool is thought to be of more weight to them than the good opinion of their God! Sirs, I scarcely like to talk to you on this subject because it is not manly for you to be ashamed of your convictions. If you do love Christ, say so, and if the world hisses, what does it matter to you, as long as you get Christ’s smile? Are we the sons of those brave old sires who at Edgehill met sword with sword and feared not? What have we to do to cringe before the world’s frown, or to court its smile? God grant it may be otherwise, and may you rise into the full stature of spiritual manhood and be not ashamed to follow Jesus through good report and through ill-report.

Now I might enlarge, but I shall not. You clearly see that there are many moral faults which keep men back from believing in Jesus. Now for—

II. A FEW PLAIN, EARNEST WORDS WITH THOSE OF YOU WHO HAVE NOT BELIEVED.

There have been many arguments which have been used at different times to bring over the skeptical to the faith. I will just tell you what has often strengthened my own mind, so that, my dear Friends, if God inclines you to overcome the moral difficulty, you may not have a mental difficulty. In the first place, *the Doctrine that we are called upon to believe* is, that having sinned we are condemned, but that God, full of mercy, had pity upon us and that His Son, God Himself, came down on earth to suffer what was due on account of our sins. In order that the Justice of God might not even *seem* to be robbed of its due, Jesus, God’s only-begotten Son—

***“Bore that we might never bear
His Father’s righteous ire.”***

Now I have turned that over, and it looks to me as if it must be true because I cannot conceive where else it came from but from the realm of facts. A God condescending to bleed and die for His own enemies out of respect to Justice, and moved by love—where in all heathen mythology is there anything like it? Where have the most refined of men ever hit upon anything that at all approaches to it? Their gods are usually lustful and the highest honors of their gods are crimsoned with blood. But if this is not true, it ought to be, for it is the grandest conception that ever flashed upon the human mind! The superlatively Just, the superlatively Great must suffer sooner than that His creature should suffer, and sooner than that the laws of His Kingdom should for a moment be dishonored? I do not know how it is, but I never need arguments about it, myself. It seems to me so plainly a Divine thing, so standing out of all conceptions of poetry, so distinctly rising out of all the realms of philosophy that it must be true!

Then, again, another thing which often helps me is this—*ever since I have trusted in the Son of God to save me, I have been conscious of a very remarkable change that has passed over my entire nature.* Now I desire to speak very soberly and I claim to be believed. I have as good a claim to be believed as any other man. I do not wish to distort the truth, but now this I know, I look up to the starlit sky at night and I think, “The God who made this great universe and orders it all, I really love. I would not do a thing contrary to His will if it were not for my poor infirmities. I would do and I would wish to be whatever that great invisible God would wish me to do and to be. I feel I would.” Now I know there was a time when I did not think about Him at all, or if I did, I never could say, “I am reconciled to Him. I am one with Him. His will is my will and I desire to do whatever He bids me do.” Now I know that that same thing that has made me love God has made me desire to be truthful, to be honest, to be kind, to be generous—and when I have not done right, I feel a pricking within my heart that I did not feel once, so that I do know that there is set up in me a wonderful standard which was not there before. Now a thing that makes me love God and makes me live and feel so, cannot be a lie! If so, it is a very wonderful kind of lie which produces holiness and goodness. And indeed, my Brothers and Sisters, if you would try this for yourself, you would get the same evidence—it would produce in you the same change. There would be your old nature, and you would have to grapple with it, to your own shame and sorrow, but still there would be a new nature with better desires and feelings—and with this new nature within me I am convinced, for myself at any rate—that this thing is true.

Moreover, knowing a great many of those who have believed in Jesus, I am obliged to say of them that they are all imperfect—I wish they were not. I wish they were what God Himself is for purity, and gentleness, and love—but for all that, if I had to pick the people I should like to live with,

I would choose them. And with all their faults, I am persuaded that you would sooner have the world full of them than you would of any other sort. If you were going down a dark lane tonight, and you did not know what sort of people were going along it, I would be bound to say it would be a wonderful consolation to you to be told that they were Believers in Christ—you would feel pretty safe, and though there are professors, rotten professors who are a very stench both to the Church and to the world—it is but natural that there should be hypocrites. There never was a good thing in the world but what people did make shams of it. When people say, “They are all hypocrites,” I say, “Then I suppose all our sovereigns are bad ones.” Why, if there were no good sovereigns, people would not make bad ones, for it is the good ones that pass off the bad ones! And if there were not some real, genuine children of God, people would not pretend to be so—it would not pay! It is because the world, after all, knows that faith in God makes men happier and nobler, that men make pretense of having what they have not! Now when I see the effects of the Gospel upon God’s people, making them patient under pain, joyful in the hour of trouble, making them pray to God and receive answers as indisputable facts, I am able to receive Jehovah’s Word and believe the Gospel of Jesus as sent from God.

Now a word with regard to you, dear Friend, who are still a doubter. We are driven to believe two things about you and about everybody like you, namely, that you will never come to know Christ unless the Holy Spirit deals with you, for all the arguments in the world do not convince the human heart unless the Spirit of all Grace shall come and change the nature! And we believe another thing of you, that you must first give up that belief in yourself before you are ever likely to believe in Jesus. How simple it all seems! God has punished Jesus, His dear Son, instead of those who trust Him. Those who trust Him are forgiven. That trust, that sense of forgiveness operates upon the mind, leads the mind to gratitude, influences it to love. The man loves God, chooses what he once rejected, and runs now in the ways of God which were once tedious to him. There is the whole theory of salvation and the experimentally acting out of it. It does seem to me hard that you turn from it. If it were a Gospel full of superstitions, like Roman Catholic teachings—if we asked you to believe in certain miracles that were so strange, so weird that you could not conceive them to be true, I could well excuse your unbelief! But when it is simply to trust the Incarnate God who did hang on Calvary and bleed for sinners, a thing which looks so true, and which to tens of thousands has been proved to be true in their lives and in their hearts—oh, I would that you would doubt no longer, but close in with Christ and find safety in Him! These reflections will do to close with, namely, that—

III. IF WE DO NOT BELIEVE IN JESUS, OUR NON-BELIEF WILL NOT CHANGE THE FACTS.

If a man says, “I am no sinner,” he remains a sinner. If he says, “I do not believe that God will punish sin,” the punishment will be just as

sure. If he says, "There is no hereafter," the future will not end for him. If he shall doubt as to the punishment of the wicked, his skepticism shall not mitigate God's wrath. The facts remain. Oh, think not, when you have blotted out your own recollection, that you have blotted out God's determination! There it stands.

And then think again—*those facts are coming nearer every hour*. We shall soon be into another year. How these years do fly! How the multitudes of men fly, too! They were dying last year when the snowflakes fell upon their tombs. They died while the sweet flowers were blossoming from the sod as though to remind us of resurrection. They fell when the mower's scythe laid the grass in the net—and they are dying now—dying fast while the sere leaves are descending and heaping up their sepulchers. How is it that we presume that we shall not die? Persons well a week ago are gone, and our own hearts are merely like muffled drums which beat sad funeral marches to the tomb, and here are still the facts—the fact of sin and a tortured conscience! The fact of punishment and no forgiveness! The fact of eternity and no hope! The fact of Hell and no escape! Oh, you who have doubted, if you push these off by your doubting, let alone annihilating them, there might be some excuse for you—but they come! They come like some huge express train thundering down the line, and there are you, like children playing on the tracks, and you tell us that your games are full of merriment and there is time enough, and you will think about it! Or you do not believe the express is coming, though there it is with its great red eyes and its great mouth of fire, and it comes rushing on and crushing everything that shall be in its pathway! Fly, in God's name, Man! This may be the last hour you may have in which to fly! Think not that you can postpone it, or that you can stop it. Over you with a crash will the Divine vengeance come! He shall tear you in pieces and there shall be none to deliver you. But this is not yet! And meanwhile be wise and escape! Lay hold on eternal life. Trust Jesus and the Infinite Mercy of God shall blot out the past and secure the future and you shall be saved in Christ Jesus with an everlasting salvation!

I talk thus somewhat strongly because I feel strongly, and I often puzzle myself with this question—why do I feel concerned about some of your souls when you are not concerned about them at all? Why, you came and heard me tonight, and it only seems like a little kind of music. Well, it may be sport to you, but it is none to me! I have to answer for this, and if I speak not so that you understand, and speak not earnestly, I know I shall have to account to my Master! I would not be some that occupy the pulpit for all the worlds that God ever made if they were threaded on one string! To get a sermon and read it coldly, to read out statements which do not concern your hearers and deliver them as if it did not matter whether they were true or not—to be an iceberg in the midst of an assembly—how will God call us to account if such is our way of ministry! But I beseech you, men and women, if you have not believed

in Christ, to remember that that is the only door of safety according to God's own Revelation. "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, Jesus Christ, the Righteous." To deny Him, to neglect Him, is to perish! To trust Him, to accept Him, is to be saved! May God's blessed Spirit move you to trust Him this very night, and as there will be on earth, so will there be joy in Heaven, and God's shall be the Glory world without end! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 3:1-21.**

We can scarcely find a Chapter in which the Gospel lies so compact and so plainly stated.

1. *There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.* Christ's door is open at all hours. You may come to Christ by day. You may come to Christ by night. There is never a time when Christ is not home. He that seeks finds, and, to him that knocks, it shall be opened. "The same came to Jesus by night." Perhaps he was timid. It is just as likely that he was prudent and did not wish to commit himself till he had seen what it was that Jesus taught. Perhaps, too, he was busy and had no time except at night. Better come at night than not come at all! "The same came to Jesus by night."

2. *The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto Him, Rabbi, we know that You are a Teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that You do, except God be with Him.* The miracles were accepted as a proof of Christ's mission, and if they do not seem to be such a proof to us at this distance, they were a most marvelous and necessary proof at the first. Perhaps they have ceased because that first work being done, the testimony can now stand upon its own strength, and men reading it may judge it to be of God if they will. But to Nicodemus it was quite clear that Christ could not have worked His miracles, except God were with Him.

3. *Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man is born-again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.* Here is a greater miracle than I have worked in the outside world. Here is a spiritual miracle. This is what you must receive as well as others. You cannot even understand My Kingdom, and know what it means—you cannot see it, except you are born-again.

4. *Nicodemus said unto Him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?* Thus do men interpret Christ's figures literally, and this has been the basis of much mischief and false doctrines. When He is using metaphors to make the thing plain, they straightway use the metaphor rather as a cloak to hide the meaning than as a glass through which to see it! This is the reason why the false *doctrine of transubstantiation* has come up. Because our Savior said, "This is My body," men have not been able to under-

stand that He meant, “This *represents* my body. This is a figure.” Truly “the letter kills.” It is the inner spirit that gives life.

5. *Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.* He cannot be Christ’s professed disciple unless he receives the Spirit and unless he is baptized—if the water here relates to Baptism at all, which we *judge it does not*. He must be renewed, washed and purified. That must be the water—and he must have the Holy Spirit dwelling in him, or else, as he cannot see, so he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.

6. *That which is born of the flesh is flesh: and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.* A man may have the best parents that ever lived, but all that is born of the flesh is flesh, at the very best. Your father may be a saint and your mother a saint, but you are born in sin, for that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and unless you are born of the Spirit, you cannot understand or see spiritual things—and you cannot enter into the *spiritual* Kingdom, for you have no spiritual capacity. “The carnal mind discerns not the things that are of God, for they are spiritual, and must be spiritually discerned.” Therefore we must be born-again so as to receive that Spirit by which spiritual things are discerned and entered into.

7, 8. *Marvel not that I said unto you, You must be born-again The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell from where it comes, and where it goes; so is everyone that is born of the Spirit.* There are mysteries in Nature. There are mysteries in Grace. Every new-born soul is a mystery. He cannot explain himself. He can scarcely understand himself.

9, 10. *Nicodemus answered, and said unto Him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto him, Are you a master of Israel, and know not these things?* These simple things—these elementary principles—these rudiments of the school book of Believers.

11. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, We speak what We know, and testify what We have seen: and you receive not Our witness.* This was an additional hint to Nicodemus of the unbelief that still lingered in him. “You receive not Our witness.”

12. *If I have told you earthly things—*Things that have to do with men while here below.

12. *And you believe not, how shall you believe if I tell you of heavenly things?* If I lift the veil and talk to you about still greater mysteries, if you do not believe about regeneration, where will you be if I begin to talk of My Godhead and of all the inner secrets?

13. *And no man has ascended up to Heaven, but He that came down from Heaven, even the Son of Man which is in Heaven.* A riddle, doubtless, to Nicodemus, which in later days he understood.

14, 15. *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: That whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.* Oh, that blessed, “whoever”! Hear it, you

sons of men, and tell it to your neighbors—“That whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.”

16-18. *For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world: but that the world through Him might be saved. He that believes on Him is not condemned—he may be very faulty. His conscience may accuse him, but he is not condemned.*

18. *But he that believes not is condemned already.* Hear that! “Condemned already”—not in a state of probation. Never was there a greater mistake than to say that men are in a state of probation! That probation has passed long ago. They have been proved in the world and if they are unbelievers, they are condemned already. “Condemned already.”

18-19. *Because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation—the head and front of it.*

19, 20. *That Light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than Light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone that does evil hates the Light, neither comes to the Light, lest his deeds should be re-proved.* This is the secret of infidelity. This is the reason of all opposition to Christ. It is love of sin! Trace it home to its den and lair, and you shall find that it is love of sin that breeds hatred of Christ. Men do not see because they do not want to see. They do not want to see too much lest they should be uneasy in their present state of life. So they kick against Christ and try to put out the Light of His Gospel, lest they be reprov'd by it.

21. *But he that does truth comes to the Light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are worked in God.* God give us the heart that seeks His Light, and sooner or later we shall find it. We shall find it in Christ!

—Adapted from the *C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

JESUS KNEW WHAT HE WOULD DO

NO. 1605

**DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 23, 1881,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“This He said to test him: for He Himself knew what He would do.”
John 6:6.*

OBSERVE, dear Friends, how careful the Holy Spirit is that we should not make a mistake about our Lord Jesus Christ. He knew that men are liable to think too little of the ever-blessed Son of God and that some, who call themselves Christians, nevertheless deny Christ's Deity and are always ready to forge an argument against the true and real Deity of the Savior out of anything which appears to limit His power or knowledge. Here is an instance of the care of the Spirit to prevent our falling into an erroneous conclusion. Our Lord consults with Philip, asking this poor disciple, “Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?” Some might, therefore, have inferred that Jesus did not know what to do and felt embarrassed. From this they would argue that Jesus cannot be Almighty God, for, surely, embarrassment is inconsistent with Omnipotence! Why should Jesus consult with Philip, if He knows all things?

Now, the Holy Spirit would have us beware of falling into low thoughts of our great Redeemer and Lord—and especially of ever being so mistaken as to think that He is not God. Therefore He plainly tells us, “this He said to test Philip, for He Himself knew what He would do.” Jesus was not asking information or taking counsel with Philip because He felt any doubt about His line of procedure or needed help from His disciple. He did not want Philip to multiply bread, but He desired to multiply Philip's faith. Take heed, therefore, dear Friends, that you never think little of the Savior, or impute any of His acts to motives that would lessen His Glory.

Learn here, too, that we, being very apt to make mistakes concerning Christ, need daily that the Spirit of God should interpret Christ to us. Jesus simply asks the question of Philip, “Where shall we buy bread?” and we are at once in danger of drawing a wrong inference and, therefore, the Holy Spirit tells us more about Christ that we may escape from that danger. By giving us more insight into our Lord's motives, He prevents our misjudging His actions. We must have the Spirit of God with us, or we shall not know Christ, Himself. The only way to see the sun is by its own light—and the only way to see Jesus is by His own Spirit. Did He not, Himself, say, “He shall receive of Mine and shall show it unto you”?

No man can call Jesus, “Lord,” but by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit must come to each man, personally, and reveal the Son of God to him and in him. Therefore, do not let us take up the Bible and imagine that we shall, at once, understand it as we do another book, but let us breathe the prayer that the Great Author of its letter would, Himself, give us Grace to enter into its spirit so as to know its meaning and feel its power. Even

with the Infallible Word before you, you will miss your way and fall into grievous error unless you are taught of God. The mercy is that it is written, "All your children shall be taught of the Lord." and again, "We have an unction from the Holy One and know all things." There is no knowing *anything* except by that unction and by that Divine teaching. What dependent creatures we are, since we make mistakes even about Jesus Christ, Himself, unless the Spirit of God is pleased to instruct us concerning Him! Lead us always, O Light of God!

Another thing we learn from the text before we plunge into it is that our Divine Lord always has a reason for everything that He does. Even the reason of His asking a question may be found out or, if we cannot discover it, we may still be quite sure that there is a worthy reason. That reason, in Philip's case, certainly was not because of any need of wisdom in Himself, but there *was* a reason—"This He said to *test* him." Now, if there is a reason for all that Jesus asks, much more is there a reason for all that He does. We cannot tell the reason of Divine Election—why this man is chosen or that—but there *is* a reason, since God never acts unreasonably, though His reasons are not always revealed and might not be understood by us if they were.

Sovereignty is absolute, but it is never absurd. There is always a justifiable cause for all that God does in the Kingdom of Grace, though that cause is not the merit of the person whom He favors, for there is no merit. In the matter of your present trial and trouble, dear Friend, you have been trying to figure out the design of the Almighty, but without success. Don't you know that His ways are past finding out? In all probability this side of eternity, you may never discover God's purpose in your present trial, but that He *has* a purpose is certain and that purpose is a wise and kind one. It is such as you, yourself, would delight in if you were capable of understanding it. If you could have a mind like that of God, you would act as God does even in this matter which troubles you!

At present your thoughts are far below those of God and, therefore, you err when you try to measure His ways. If you have a quarrel with your heavenly Father about a bereavement or a sickness—end it at once with humble shame. There, child, if it ever comes to a question as to which is right—a poor, ignorant, inexperienced youth, or a great, good, wise Father—there cannot be a moment's deliberation! The Father's will must be better for the child than its own will. Be in subjection to the Father of Spirits and live. Believe in your Lord and be quiet—Jesus knows what He is doing and why He is doing it. For the loss of your health there is a reason. For those pains of your body, for that depression of spirit, for that lack of success in business, even for the permission of the cruel tongue of slander to inflict its wounds upon you there is a reason! And possibly that reason may lie in the words of our text, "This He did to test him."

You must be tested. God does not give faith, or love, or hope, or any Grace without meaning to prove it. If a man builds a railway bridge, it is that engines may go over it, that so its carrying power may be tested. If a man makes a road, it is that there may be traffic over it, every rod of it will be proven by wheels and hoofs. If he only makes a needle, it must be

tested by the work it can do. When the pillars that now support these galleries were cast, they were made with the object of supporting a great weight and these 20 years they have bravely endured the pressure—it would have been an idle thing to have set them up and placed no weight upon them!

So when God made you, my Brother, to be strong in the Lord, He meant to test every ounce of your strength, for that which God makes has a purpose and He will test it to see that it is equal to its design. I do not think that a single grain of faith will be kept out of the fire—all the golden ore must go into the crucible to be tested. You have heard of the Birmingham proving houses for the barrels of guns? Now, the great Maker of Believers tests all whom He makes in His factory of Grace with heavy charges of affliction—and only those that can bear the test shall receive His mark. When no other explanation of a Providence can be found, you may always fall back upon the belief that this He said and this He did to test you.

Let us at once come to the text, which seems to me to have much comfort in it. May the Holy Spirit lead us into it. First, here is a question for Philip—“Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?”—a question with a purpose. But, secondly, there is no question with the Master, for He, Himself, knows what He will do. And, thirdly, if we enter into the spirit of the Master, there will be an end of questions with us, for we shall be perfectly satisfied that He knows what He is going to do.

I. First, then, HERE IS A QUESTION FOR PHILIP, as there have been many questions for us. Jesus put this question to Philip with the motive of testing him in several points. He would thus try his faith. As one has well said, “He wanted not food of Philip, but *faith*.” The Master enquires, “Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?” What will Philip say? If Philip has strong faith, he will answer, “Great Master, there is no need to *buy* bread. You are greater than Moses and under Moses the people were fed with manna in the wilderness. You have but to speak the word and bread shall be rained around the host and they shall be filled.” If Philip had possessed great faith, he might have replied, “You are greater than Elisha and he took a few loaves and ears of corn and fed the sons of the Prophets. O wonder-working Lord, You can do the same!”

If Philip had displayed still greater faith, he might have said, “Lord, I do not know where bread is to be bought, but it is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone.’ Your can refresh these people without visible bread. You can satisfy their hunger and fill them to the fullest and yet they need not eat a single mouthful, for it is written, ‘By every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God shall man live.’ Speak the word and they will be at once refreshed.” This question, therefore, was put to test Philip’s *faith*. It did test it and proved it to be very little, for he began calculating his penny-worths—One, two, three, four.” No, I will not count 200, but that is what Philip did. He began counting pennies instead of looking to Omnipotence!

Did *you* ever do the same, dear Friend, when you have been tested? Did you get reckoning up and counting coppers instead of looking to the eternal God and trusting in Him? I fear that few of us can plead exemption

from this failure, since even Moses once fell into unbelieving calculations. “And Moses said, The people among whom I am are six hundred thousand footmen; and You have said, I will give them flesh, that they may eat a whole month. Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them, to suffice them? Or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them to suffice them?” Remember God’s answer to His anxious servant? “And the Lord said unto Moses, Is the Lord’s hand waxed short? You shall see now whether My Word shall come to pass unto you or not.”

Even so shall *we* see the faithfulness of God! But if we are unbelieving, we may have to see it in a way which will painfully bring home to us our sin in having distrusted our Lord! The question was meant, no doubt, also, to test Philip’s love and he could endure that test better than he could stand the other, for he loved Jesus even though he was slow of heart to *believe*. In many true hearts there is more quiet love than active faith. I am sorry that there should be little faith, but thankful that there should be more love. The Savior seemed to say, “Philip, I want these people fed. Will you come to My help in it? Where shall we buy bread? I am going to associate you with Me, Philip. Come, now, how shall we do the work?”

Philip loves his Master and, therefore, he is quite ready to consider the matter and to give at least the benefit of his arithmetic. He says, “Lord, two hundred pennyworth is not sufficient.” His Master did not ask him what would not be sufficient, but what would be! But Philip begins calculating the negative question, which question, I am afraid that you and I have, also, often calculated. Even to give each one in the crowd a little could not be done under two hundred pence—is it not clear that our resources are inadequate? That is always a depressing and unpractical question to go into. Poor Philip counts up what would *not* be sufficient for all and leaves the All-Sufficient Lord out of the reckoning! Still, even in that calculation he showed his love for his Master.

If he had not been full of love and esteem for Jesus, he would have said, “My Lord, it is idle to go into that. We are a poor company. We have a trifle of money given us every now and then and I do not quite know what is left. Perhaps Judas does. But I am persuaded that there is not enough in the bag to feed these multitudes, even if there were bakers’ shops in the neighborhood at which we could buy loaves.” But Philip did not answer thus. No. He had too much reverence and too much love for Jesus for that—he failed in his faith—but he did not fail in his love. It will be well for us to love our Lord so much that we never speak of His gracious plans as being visionary, nor judge them to be impossible. Jesus never proposes Quixotic schemes and we must never allow the idea to cross our minds—even the conquest of the *world* to truth and righteousness is not to be looked upon as a dream, but to be practically considered!

The question also tried Phillip’s sympathy. Jesus, by this query, moved Philip’s heart to care about the *people*. The other disciples said, “Send the multitude away that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food.” Jesus, perhaps, noticing a little more tenderness in Philip than in the others, said to Philip, “Where shall we buy bread?” It was putting

great honor upon Philip to associate him with Himself, but perhaps He saw in him a sympathetic soul and Christ loves to work with sympathetic agents. One thing I notice—God seldom uses a man greatly who has a hard heart, or a cold heart. Only warmth within ourselves can create warmth in others. A man must love people, or he cannot save them. A minister must have an intense desire that his congregation should be saved and must get into sympathy with Jesus upon that subject or else Jesus will not make use of him.

So our Lord sought to stir up Philip's sympathy. "Come, Philip. What shall you and I do? Where shall we buy bread to give them to eat?" I do not think Philip failed altogether there. He had not such sympathy with his Master as he ought to have had, but he had a measure of it. I trust that our God has given to us, also, some communion with His dear Son in His love to the souls of men and so this question comes to test *us*. Let us not be lacking in either faith, or love, or sympathy. God grant that we may abound in all these through the effectual working of His Holy Spirit—then shall we be fitted to be workers together with Him.

But why was that question put to Philip? Why is a special question put to some of you, or a peculiar trial sent to one of you? It was sent to test him, it is said. But why test *Philip*? Well, I think the Savior spoke to Philip because Philip was of Bethsaida. They were near Bethsaida and so Jesus said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread?" Every man should think most of the place where he lives. I want Jesus to say to some of you, "What shall we do for London?"—because many of you are Londoners—possibly born within the sound of Bow Bells, or within the postal district. You belong to the four millions of this great province—no, this great *nation* of a city and it is a solemn responsibility to be a citizen of the greatest city in the world!

If the Lord does lay London on anybody's hearts, He would naturally lay it upon the hearts of those who live in it, just as He said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread?" If He associates anybody with Himself in the evangelization of a village or town, it will naturally be a person either born there, or living there. I know that the old proverb declares that the cobbler's wife goes barefoot and sometimes a man will care for people thousands of miles away and not look to his own house or to his own neighborhood. But it should not be so, for it is to Philip, the man from Bethsaida, that the message comes about the people when they are near Bethsaida—"Where shall we buy bread?" It is said to test him! And to you, Brother Londoner, questions about this great city are sent to test *you*.

It is also probable that it was Philip's department to attend to the providing for the little company of 12 and their Leader. Judas was the treasurer and, unless we are much mistaken, Philip was the butler. It was Philip's business to see that they had bread and his part to make some little provision when the band of disciples went into desert places. Even so, there are Brothers and Sisters here present whose official business it is to care for the souls of men. Among these are ministers, missionaries, Sunday school teachers, deacons, elders, district visitors, Bible-women and the like. If the Lord does not say to others, "What shall we do for London?"

He says it to us! The question is sent to test us to see whether we are fit for our office, or whether we have taken upon ourselves a position for which we are not qualified because we have no heart for it.

Christ asks us, especially, but I think He also asks all those whom He has made priests and kings unto God, "Where shall we buy bread? How shall we feed this great city?" The question comes to test us because it is upon us that this burden ought to be laid. And perhaps it came to Philip because he was not quite so forward in the school of Divine Grace as some were. Philip did not make a very wise remark when he said, "Show us the Father, and it suffices us," for our Lord answered, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet have you not known Me, Philip?" He was evidently slow in learning. I do not think that Philip was the most stupid of the 12, but I am sure that he was not the most intelligent. James and John and Peter were the first three—Andrew and Thomas followed close behind—and probably Philip was close after them. Perhaps Philip was number six. I do not know, but certainly the Savior selected him as not the lowest in the class, yet not the highest, and He said to him, "Where shall we buy bread?"

Those people in the middle position very much need testing for their own satisfaction. The lowest kind of Christians are so feeble that they can hardly bear testing. Poor souls, they need *encouraging* rather than testing and, therefore, the greatest problems are not often pressed upon them. On the other hand, the highest kind of Christians do not so much need testing, for they make their calling and election sure. The middle sort most need testing and they make up, I am afraid, the great bulk of the rank and file of the army of God. There are many who may be described as half-instructed, half-enlightened—and to these the Lord puts the question—"Where shall we buy bread?" This He says that He may test them.

Note well that the question which the Savior put to Philip to test him answered its purpose. It *did* test him. How it tested him I have shown you already. It answered its purpose because it revealed his inability. "Where shall we buy bread?" Philip gives up. He has made a calculation of what would not suffice, even, to give every man a little refreshment and that is all his contribution to the work—he has not even a loaf or a fish which he can produce to make a start with. Philip is beaten. What is more, his faith, being tested, is beaten, too. "Oh, good Master," he seems to say, "the people cannot be fed by *us*. We cannot buy bread—we—not even *You* and I. You are the Lord and You can do great things, but my faith is not strong enough to believe that we could buy bread enough for all these thousands of people." So the question answered its purpose. It tested Philip's faith and his faith was proven to be very weak, very wavering, very short-handed.

Is it a good thing to find that out? Yes, Brothers and Sisters, it is good to know our spiritual poverty. Many of us have a heap of faith, we think—but if the Lord were to test it, He would not need to put it in the fire to melt it—He has only to put it on the fire and the most of it would evaporate! Under ordinary trial much faith disappears like morning dew when the sun looks upon it. What a deal of faith a man has when he is healthy!

Just turn on the screws and let him suffer—see how much of that faith will vanish! How many men have faith if they have an excellent income regularly paid! But when they have to ask, “Where will the next meal come from?” have they faith? Alas, they grow anxious and cumbered! It is a wholesome thing to be made to see what weaklings we are, for when we find much of our faith to be unreal, it drives us to seek for more true faith and we cry, “Lord, increase our faith!”

Philip was drawn *into* his Master and it is a grand thing to be driven right out of ourselves into our Lord so as to feel, “Lord, I cannot do it. But I long to see how You will perform Your purpose. I cannot even believe in You as I ought to believe, unless You give me faith so that even for more faith I must come to You! Quite empty-handed I must come and borrow everything.” Then it is that we become full and strong! You will see Philip breaking the bread, directly, and feeding the multitudes just because Christ has emptied Philip’s hands! Until He has emptied *our* hands He cannot fill them, lest it should be supposed that we shared in the supplying. “This He said to test him,” to make him see his own weakness, for then he would be filled with the Master’s strength!

This question did good, for it was meant not only to test Philip, but to test the other disciples, and so they came together and they had a little talk upon the subject, At any rate, here is a committee of two, Philip and Andrew. Philip says, “Two hundred pennyworth is not sufficient,” and Andrew says, “Well no, it is not. But there is a lad here with five barley loaves and two small fishes.” I like this brotherly consultation of willing minds—and to see how they differ in their ideas. Philip is willing to begin if he has a grand start. He must see at least 200 pennyworth of bread in hand and then he is ready to entertain the idea. Andrew, on the other hand, is willing to commence with a small capital—a few loaves and fishes will enable him to start, but he remarks, “What are they among so many?”

When saints converse together, they help each other and, perhaps, what one does not discover another may. Philip was counting the impossible pence and could not see the possible loaves. But Andrew could see what Philip overlooked. He spied out the lad with that basket packed full of loaves and fishes. It was not much—Andrew had not faith enough to see food for the thousands in that little basket—but still, he saw what he saw and he told the Master of it. Thus they made a commencement by mutual consultation. Perhaps if we were to consult we might make a start, too. When a question eats into men’s hearts like this—“What shall we do for London?” When it leads Christian people to come together and talk about it and when one sighs out, “Why, it will take many thousands to build chapels, find Ministers and maintain Missionaries,” there is something hopeful in the calculation!

All right, Philip, I am glad you have had your say and shown the difficulty of the task. And then I like Andrew to get up and say, “It is a very difficult task, but still, we must do what we can do, and as we have these five loaves and two small fishes we must at least put these before the Lord and leave it with Him as to what is to be done.” All this is better than shirking the question altogether and leaving the crowd to starve. Philip

had his faculties exercised. Christ tried his arithmetic! He tried his eyesight! He tried his mind and spirit! And this prepared him to go and serve at the Master's banquet which followed. A man never does a thing well till he has thought about it. And if Philip had not thought about how to feed the multitudes, he would not have been a fit man to be employed in it.

It prepared him, also, to adore his Master after the feast, for Philip would say, when the meal was over, "The Master asked me how it was to be done, but I could not tell Him and now, though I have had a share in doing it, He must and shall have all the Glory. He multiplied the fishes and increased the loaves. My poor faith can take no Glory to itself. He did it. He did it all!" Perhaps some question comes to you, my Brother, about the Lord's work—"How can it be done? How can England be evangelized? How can the masses be reached? How can the world be made to hear the Gospel?" Whatever the question is which is put to you, it is a question sent on purpose to do you good and benefit your soul and to lead you to magnify the Lord all the more when the miracle of Grace is done!

II. Now I come to the second part of the subject and that is that THERE WAS NO QUESTION WITH JESUS. The question was with *Philip*, but Christ had no question. "This He said to test him: for He Himself knew what He would do." Let us take these words and pull them to pieces a minute. "He knew." He *always* knows. "Ah," says one, "I am sure I do not know what I shall do." No, dear Friend, and yet you have been taking advice, have you not? That is a splendid way of confusing yourself! I hear you cry in bewilderment, "I do not know! I have been to everybody and I do not know what I shall do!" That is a chronic state with us when we puzzle our own poor brains—but Jesus knew what He would do. This is sweet comfort—Jesus knows.

He always knows all about it. He knew how many people there were. He knew how much bread it would take. He knew how many fish He would need and how He meant to feed the crowd and send them all away refreshed. He knew all before it happened. Tried Brother, Jesus knows all about your case and how He is going to bring you through. Do not think that you can inform Him as to anything. "Your heavenly Father knows what you have need of before you ask Him." Prayer is not meant for the *Lord's* information. The question is not put to you that you may instruct Him, but that He may instruct you! He made the heavens and the earth without you. With whom took He counsel? Who instructed Him? And He will bring you through this present trial of yours without needing to add your poor wisdom to His infinite knowledge!

He knows. Jesus knew what He would do. He meant to do something. He was quite ready to do it and He knew what He was going to do. We embarrass ourselves by saying, "Something must be done, but I do not know who is to do it." The Savior knew that something must be done and He knew that He was going to do it Himself. He was not in a hurry, He never is—"He never is before His time, He never is too late." Our blessed Master has glorious leisure because He is always punctual. Late people are in a hurry, but He, being never late, never hurries. He does everything calmly and serenely because He foresees what He will do. Jesus knows,

dear Friend, concerning you, not only what *you* will do, but what He will do! That is the point and He means to do some great thing for you and to help you.

He means, also, to bring this city and this nation to His feet. He means that every knee shall bow to Him and that the whole earth shall be filled with His Glory. He knows what He means to do. He knew, moreover, how He meant to do it. He knew precisely the way and method which He intended to use. He perceived long before Andrew told Him that there was a lad somewhere in the crowd with five barley cakes. When the lad set out that morning, I cannot make out what made him bring five barley loaves and fishes into that crowd except the Master had whispered in his heart, "Young lad, take with you a good lunch. Put those barley cakes into the basket and do not forget the fishes. You do not know how long you may be away from home."

Nature bade him provide for contingencies, but then Nature is God's voice when He chooses to make it so. He was a hungry, growing lad with a fine appetite and he meant to be well provided for, but had he ever thought in his mind that these strangely providential cakes would multiply so as to feed that mass of people? Where is the man that is to be the universal provider? Where is the chief of the commissariat? It is that youth and that is the whole of his storehouse! He is carrying a magazine of food on his back—in that basket. The Savior knew that. And He knows exactly, dear Friend, where your help is to come from in your hour of trouble. You do not know, but He does. He knows where the ministers are to come that will stir up this city of London and He knows in what style and manner they shall come and how they shall get at the masses.

When everybody else is defeated and nonplussed, He is fully prepared. He knew that those loaves and fishes would be fetched out, in due time, to be the basis of a banquet. He knew that He would bless them, break them, multiply them and give them to the disciples—and the disciples to the multitude. Everything was arranged in His mind and as much fixed as the rising of the sun. Once more, He did it as one who knew what He was going to do. How does a man act when he knows what he is going to do? Well, he generally proceeds in the most natural way! He knows that he is going to do it, so he just goes and does it. Can you conceive that a miracle was ever performed in a more natural style?

If this had been a Roman Catholic miracle, they would have thrown the loaves up in the air and they would have come down mysteriously transformed and multiplied a million times! All popish miracles, if you observe, have a great deal of the theatrical and glitter about them. They are totally distinct from the miracles of Christ. He does this miracle in the most natural way in the world, because it is virtually the same miracle which Christ works every year. We take a certain quantity of wheat and put it into the ground and, in the long run, the end of it is that it is multiplied into loaves of bread. Certain fishes are in the sea and they increase into great shoals. The sown wheat passes through the same operation in the ground in the same hands—in *God's* hands—and it comes out loaves of bread!

And that is precisely what came of our Lord's action! He took a little into His own blessed hands and broke it and it kept on multiplying in His hands, and in the hands of His disciples, till they were all filled! He knew what He was going to do and so He did it *naturally* and did it *orderly*. It is not so when a man does not know what he is to provide for. We have a large meeting and there is provision made for tea—and three times as many come as you have provided for. What a hurry! What a scurry! What a running to and fro! Jesus never conducts His matters in that way. He knew what He was going to do and, therefore, He bade the men sit down on the grass—and they sat down like so many children. Mark tells us that they sat down in rows by fifties and by hundreds—they were arranged as if each one had been specially set before his plate and found his name engraved upon it!

Moreover, there was much grass in the place so that the hall was carpeted in a way that no firm in London could have done! The feast was conducted as orderly as if there had been notice given seven days beforehand and a contractor had supplied the provisions. Nothing could have been done in a better way and all because Jesus knew what He would do! Moreover, He did it very joyfully. He took bread and *blessed* it. He went about it with great pleasure. I should have liked to have seen His face as He looked on these poor famishing people being fed. Like a good host, He cheered them with His smile while He blessed them with the food! And then He did it so plentifully, for He knew what He would do. He did not come half-provided, or stint them so that every man should have “a little.”

No, He knew what He would do and He measured their appetites exactly, a difficult thing when you have a number of hungry people to feed. He provided all that they needed and afterwards there was provision left for the head waiters, so that each one should have a basketful for himself—for they took up of the fragments, 12 basketfuls, one for each of the head waiters. Our Lord Jesus Christ, in the matter of bringing in His own elect, is going about it, I am quite certain, knowing what He is going to do. And when you and I see the end of the great festival of mercy we shall say, “Blessed be the Lord! We were in a great worry. We were in sore trouble, but our Lord has done it easily and thoroughly. There has been no muddle, no crowding, no passing over of anybody! Blessed be His name! He has not done it by chance or through fortunate circumstances, but He knew what He would do and He has planned it all through from the beginning to the end in such a way that principalities and powers in Heaven shall sing forever of the Grace and love and wisdom and power and prudence wherein He has abounded towards His people.”

Oh, but if we could see the end as well as the beginning we would begin, even now, to exalt the name of Jesus our Savior who foreknows all His work and never deviates from His plan!

III. I conclude by saying that because there is no question with Christ, though He puts questions to US, THERE OUGHT TO BE NO QUESTION OF A DOUBTFUL CHARACTER ANY LONGER TO US. Let me mention three questions and I have done. The first question that troubles a great many people is, “How shall I bear my present burden? How shall I endure

this suffering? How shall I make a living?” That question is sent to you to test you, but remember that there is no question, with Christ, as to how you will get through, for, “as your day so shall your strength be,” and He will keep His saints even to the end. Therefore let there be no question with you, for Jesus Himself knows what He will do!

You came here, tonight, very distressed and you said, “I wish I might get a word to tell me what I should do.” You will not get half a word as to what you shall do, but you shall hear a word of a different sort. Jesus knows what HE will do and what He will do is infinitely better than anything *you* can do. Your strength, my Friend, is to sit still. Roll your burden upon the Lord! Do the little you can do and leave the rest with your heavenly Father. This is the answer from the Urim and the Thummim. For you—Jesus knows what He will do! There is that other question, which I have already asked—“What is to be done with this great city?”

I had the great privilege of being able to preach, yesterday afternoon, [Wednesday evening, June 22, 1881] in one of our eastern suburbs. Setting out from my own house early in the morning, I went on riding, riding, upon one railway and another till I think I must have been journeying for fully two hours and a half before I had passed from one end of London to another! What a city of magnificent distances! It seems as if there was not a green tree which the builders will not cut down, nor a grassy meadow which they will not turn into ugly streets. “Replenish the earth,” indeed! It is replenished. The dead earth is buried away beneath the abodes of living men!

As for creatures of our race, what myriads there are of them! And, then, as you go along with a Christian friend, he says, “There is a chapel needed here.” Or, “There is a little chapel here, but not one person in 50 goes to a place of worship.” Then you arrive at another suburban place and your guide will say, “Here are people anxious for the Gospel, but there is nobody to take it to them.” I went along yesterday sorely burdened and questioning in my heart, “What shall we do?” I kept thinking, “You had better not ask yourself that question, for you cannot do much towards answering it and it will only worry you.” And yet it came back to me, “How shall we buy bread for this multitude?”

My Lord and Master would say, “YOU.” In my heart I wanted Him to leave *me* out, but He would not. He never would have said, “How shall I buy bread?” because He knows that. But He put it to *me* and I felt that I was a hindrance for making it a question at all, for He only makes it a question to me for my sake. O that we had men and money to send out ministers and to build places for them to preach in! We have preachers ready in the College, but I have no means for building places of worship! Surely many of you must have been burdened with the hugeness of this city! But, dear, dear, this is like one drop of rain in a great shower compared with the whole world that lies in the Wicked One. How is this world to be enlightened?

It is no question with Jesus and, therefore, it should never be an unbelieving question with us. “Can these dry bones live?” Let us answer, “Lord, You know.” There will we leave it. He is able to do exceedingly abundantly

above what we ask, or even think—and we may depend upon it that if He has sworn by Himself that every knee shall bow and every tongue confess to Him, it shall be so and He shall have the Glory! One other question should be mentioned. It is this. Has the Lord put into the heart of any unconverted person the question—“What must I do to be saved?” And is that question perplexing any of you? I am glad it is so, but I hope you will turn to the right place for an answer. I hope you are enquiring—“Lord, what would You have me do?”

Do you know why that question is put to you? It is to test you and to humble you. It is meant to make you feel the impossibility of salvation by your own works so that you may submit yourself to the righteousness of God and be saved by faith in Christ Jesus! Remember that there is no question with Christ about how you are to be saved. In fact, that question was settled—when shall I say? Settled when He died? No, settled *long* before that—it was decided in the Everlasting Covenant before the day-star knew its place, or planets ran their round! God had then regarded His son as the Lamb of God, slain before the foundation of the world and to this day the word still stands—“Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world.”

Look unto Him and be saved! There is no question about the possibility of your salvation, or about Christ’s ability to save you. The question in your heart, “What must I do to be saved?” is put there to test you, but Jesus Himself knows what He will do. What a blessed word is that! He knows how He will pardon, comfort, regenerate, instruct and lead you! He knows how He will keep you to the end by His unchanging Grace! He knows how He will preserve you and sanctify you and use you and glorify His own name by you! He knows how He will take you up to Heaven and set you upon His Throne and make all the angels wonder and adore, as they see what He will do! God bless what He will do. God bless you for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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THE LAD'S LOAVES IN THE LORD'S HANDS

NO. 2216

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, AUGUST 9, 1891,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Jesus took the loaves.”
John 6:11.

Look, there are the people! Five thousand of them, as hungry as hunters, and they all need to have food given to them, for they cannot, any of them, travel to buy it! And here is the provision! Five thin wafers—and those of barley, more fit for horses than for men—and two little anchovies, by way of a relish! Five thousand people and five little biscuits to feed them! The disproportion is enormous—if each one should have only the tiniest crumb, there would not be enough! In like manner, there are millions of people in London and only a handful of whole-hearted Christians earnestly desiring to see the city converted to Christ. There are more than a thousand millions of men in this round world and oh, so few missionaries breaking the Bread of Life to them! Almost as few for the millions, as were these five barley cakes for those five thousand!

The problem is a very difficult one. The contrast between the supply and the demand would have struck us much more vividly if we had been there, in that crowd at Bethsaida, than it does sitting here, nearly 1,900 years later, and merely hearing about it. But the Lord Jesus was equal to the emergency! None of the people went away without sharing in His bounty—they were all filled. Our blessed Master, now that He has ascended into the heavens, has *more* rather than less power! He is not baffled because of our need, but can even *now* use paltry means to accomplish His own glorious purposes. Therefore let no man's heart fail him. Do not despair of the evangelization of London, nor think it hopeless that the Gospel should be preached in all nations for a testimony unto them. Have faith in God, who is in Christ Jesus! Have faith in the compassion of the Great Mediator—He will not desert the people in their spiritual needs any more than He failed that hungry throng in their temporal need, long ago.

We will now look at these biscuits and sardines, which seem to be truly an insufficient stock-in-trade to begin with—a very small capital, indeed, on which to conduct the business of feeding 5,000 persons. I shall say of these loaves and fishes, first, that *they had a previous history* before being mentioned in our text. Secondly, when we get to our text, we shall find these little things *in a very grand position*—“Jesus took the loaves” and, therefore, thirdly, *they will have an after-history* which is well worthy of

being noted. When things get into Christ's hands, they are in the very focus of miracles!

I. We will begin by saying that THESE LOAVES AND FISHES HAD A PREVIOUS HISTORY. Andrew said to Jesus, "There is a lad here, which has five barley loaves, and two small fishes."

Notice, first, then, *the Providence of God in bringing the lad there*. We do not know his name. We are not told anything concerning his parentage. Was he a little peddler who thought that he could make some money by selling a few loaves and fishes and had he nearly sold out? Or was he a boy that the Apostles had employed to carry this slender provision for the use of Jesus and His friends? We do not know much about him, but he was the right boy in the right place that day! Be his name what it might, it did not matter—he had the barley loaves and fishes upon which the people were to be fed! Christ never is in need but He has somebody at hand to supply that need. Have faith in the Providence of God! What made the boy bring the loaves and fishes, I do not know. Boys often do unaccountable things, but bring the loaves and fishes he did. And God, who understands the ideas and motives of lads and takes account, even, of barley loaves and fishes, had appointed that boy to be there!

Again I say, believe in the Providence of God! Mr. Stanley tells us that when he came out of that long journey of his through the forest, I think after 160 days of walking in darkness, and found himself at last where he could see the sun, he felt that there was a special Providence of God that had taken care of him. I am very glad that Mr. Stanley felt that it was the hand of God that had brought him out of the noisome shade, but I do not need to go to Africa to learn that we are beset behind and before by His goodness. Many of us have felt a special Providence of God in our own homes—we have met with His hands in connection with our own children. Yes, every day we are surrounded by tokens of His care. "Whoever is wise and will observe these things, even *they* shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord." "I am sure God took care of me," said one, "for as I was going along a certain street, I slipped on a piece of orange peel and had what might have been a serious fall—yet I was not hurt in the least." To which his friend replied, "I am sure God has taken care of me, for I have walked along that street hundreds of times and have never slipped on a piece of orange peel, or on anything else." Full often God draws near to us in common life—

***"He comes to us all unaware,
And makes us own His loving care."***

Let us also believe in His Providence with regard to the Church of Christ—He will never desert His people—He will find men when He needs them. Thus it has always been in the history of the saints and thus it shall always be! Before the Reformation there were many learned men who knew something of Christ's Gospel, but they said that it was a pity to make noise and so they communed with one another and with Christ very quietly. What was needed was some rough bull-headed fellow who would blurt the Gospel out and upset the old state of things. Where could he be

found? There was a monk named Luther who, while he was reading his Bible, suddenly stumbled on the doctrine of Justification by Faith—he was the man! Yet when he went to a dear Brother in the Lord and told him how he felt, his friend said to him, “Go back to your cell and pray and commune with God, and hold your tongue.”

But then, you see, he had a tongue that he could not hold and that nobody else could, either! And he began to speak with it, the Truth of God that had made a new man of him! The God that made Luther knew what He was doing when He made him! He put within Luther a great burning fire that could not be restrained! And it burst forth and set the nations on a blaze. Never despair about Providence! There sits, tonight, somewhere in a chimney corner in the country, a man that will turn the current of unbelief and win back the churches to the old Gospel! God did never yet come to a point of distress as to His Truth but that suddenly one came forward—a David with a sling and a stone, or a Samson with a jawbone, or a Shamgar with an ox-goad—who put to rout the adversaries of the Lord! “There is a lad here.” The *Providence of God* had sent him.

Next, *this lad with his loaves was brought into notice*. When they were searching for all the provisions in the company, this obscure boy who never would have been heard of otherwise, was brought to the front because he had his little basket of biscuits. Andrew found him and he came and said to Jesus, “There is a lad here, which has five barley loaves, and two small fishes.” So, rest assured, that if you have the Bread of Life about you and you are willing to serve God, you need not be afraid that obscurity will ever prevent your doing it. “Nobody knows me,” says one. Well, it is not a very desirable thing that anybody *should* know you—those of us who are known to everybody would be very glad if we were not—there is no very great comfort in it. He that can work away for his Master, with nobody to see him but his Master, is the happiest of men. “I have only 100 people to preach to,” said a country pastor to me. And I replied, “If you give a good account of those 100, you have quite enough to do.” If all you have is very little—just that pennyworth of loaves and fishes—use that properly and you will do your Master service! And in due time, when God wants you, He knows where to find you!

You need not put an advertisement in the paper—He knows the street you live on and the number on the door. You need not go and push yourself to the front—the Lord will bring you to the front when He wants you and I hope that you do not want to get there if He does not want you. Depend upon it, should you push forward when you are *not* required, He will put you back again! Oh, for Grace to work on unobserved, to have your one talent, your five loaves and two fishes and only to be noticed when the hour suggests the need, and the need makes a loud call for you! We have thus seen, first of all, the loaves and fishes in the desert, quite unnoticed, but put there by Providence—and we now behold them by that same Providence, thrust into prominence.

When brought into notice, the loaves and fishes did not fare very well—they *were judged insufficient for the purpose*, for Andrew said, “What are

they among so many?" The boy's candle seemed to be quite snuffed out! So small a stock—what could be the use of that? Now, I dare say, that some of you have had Satan saying to you, "What is the use of your trying to do anything?" To you, dear mother, with a family of children, he has whispered, "You cannot serve God." He knows very well that, by sustaining Grace, you *can*, and he is afraid of how well you can serve God if you bring up those dear children in His fear. He says to the religious book salesman over yonder, "You have not much ability; what can *you* do?" Ah, dear Friend, he is afraid of what you can do and if you will only do what you *can* do, God will, by-and-by, help you to do what now you *cannot* do! But the devil is afraid of even the little that you can do now and many a child of God seems to side with Satan in despising the day of small things! "What are they among so many?" So few, so poor, so devoid of talent—what can any of us hope to do? Disdained, even by the disciples, it is small wonder if we are held in contempt by the world! The things that God will honor, man must first despise! You run the gauntlet of the derision of men and afterwards you come out to be used of God.

Though seemingly inadequate to feed the multitude, these loaves and fishes would have been quite enough for the *boy's* supper, yet *he appears to have been quite willing to part with them*. The disciples would not have taken them from him by force—the Master would not have allowed it—the lad willingly gave them up to be the commencement of the great feast. Somebody might have said, "John, you know that you will soon be able to eat those five cakes and those two little fishes. Keep them—get away into a corner—every man for himself." Is it not a good rule, "Take care of number one"? Yes, but the boy whom God uses will not be selfish! Am I speaking to some young Christian to whom Satan says, "Make money, first, and serve God, by-and-by. Stick to business and get on! Then, after that, you can act like a Christian and give some money away," and so on?

Let such a one remember the barley loaves and the fishes. If that lad had really wisely studied his own interests, instead of merely yielding with a generous impulse to the demand of Christ, he would have done exactly what he did, for if he had kept the loaves, he would have eaten them and that would have been the end of it. But now that he brings them to Christ, all those thousands of people are fed and he gets as much, himself, as he would have had if he had eaten his own stock. And then, in addition, he gets a share out of the 12 baskets full of fragments that remain. Anything that you take away from self and give to Christ is well invested—it will often bring in ten thousand per cent! The Lord knows how to give such a reward to an unselfish man, that he will feel that he that saves his life loses it, but he that is willing, even, to lose his life—and the bread that sustains it—is the man who, after all, gets truly saved!

This, then, is the history of these loaves. They were sent there, through God's Providence, by a lad who was sought out and brought into notice. His stock-in-trade was despised, but he was willing to give it, whether it was despised or not. He would yield it to his Lord. Now, do you see what I am driving at? I want to get a hold of some of the lads and some young

men and young women—I will not trouble about your age, you shall be lads if you are under *seventy*! I want to get hold of you who think that you have very little ability, and say to you, “Come, and bring it to Jesus.” We need you! Times are hard. The people are famishing. Though nobody seems to need you, yet make bold to come out and who knows but that, like Queen Esther, you may have come to the Kingdom of God for such a time as this? God may have brought you where you are to make use of you for the converting of thousands! But you must first be converted yourself! Christ will not use you unless you are, first, His own. You must yield yourself up to Him and be saved by His precious blood and then, after that, come and yield up to Him all the little talent that you may have, and pray Him to make as much use of you as He did of the lad with the five barley cakes.

II. But now I want to show you that THESE BARLEY CAKES GOT INTO A GRAND POSITION. The text says, “Jesus took the loaves.” He took them into His own hands! From the trembling hands of the boy, or from his little basket, they were transferred to the blessed hands which one day would bear the nail-prints! This may teach us several lessons.

First, *they were now associated with Jesus Christ*. Henceforth those loaves do not so much suggest the thought of the lad's sacrifice as of the Savior's power. Is it not a wonderful thing that Christ, the living God, should associate Himself with our feebleness, with our need of talent, with our ignorance, with our little faith? And yet He does so. If we are not associated with Him, we can do nothing. But when we come into living contact with Him, we can do all things! Those barley loaves in Christ's hands become pregnant with food for all the throng! Out of His hands they are nothing but barley cakes, but in His hands, associated with Him, they are in contact with Omnipotence! Have you that love the Lord Jesus Christ thought of *this*, of bringing all that you possess to Him, that it may be associated with Him?

There is that brain of yours—it can be associated with the teachings of His Spirit. There is that heart of yours—it can be warmed with the love of God. There is that tongue of yours—it can be touched with the live coal from off the altar. There is that manhood of yours—it can be perfectly consecrated by association with Christ. Hear the tender command of the Lord, “Bring them here to Me,” and your whole life will be transformed! I do not say that every man of common ability can rise to high ability by being associated with Christ through faith, but I do say this—that his ordinary ability, in association with Christ, will become sufficient for the occasion to which God, in Providence, has called Him. I know that you have been praying and saying, “I have not this, and I cannot do that.” Stay not to number your deficiencies—bring what you have and let all that you are, body, soul, and spirit—be associated with Christ. Although He will not bestow upon you new faculties, the faculties you have will have new power, for they will come into a new condition towards Him and what may *not* be hoped for by association with such wisdom and might?

But, further, *they were transferred to Christ*. A moment ago, they belonged to this lad, but now they belong to Christ. "Jesus took the loaves." He has taken possession of them—they are His property. Oh, Christian people, do you mean what you say when you declare that you have given yourselves to Christ? If you have made a full transfer, therein will lie great power for usefulness. But do not people often say, "If I might make some reserve"? "What is the meaning, then, of this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?" What about that odd thousand that you put in the funds the other day? What about the money saved up for a new bonnet? You sometimes sing—

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

Ah, well, when you have *really* yielded all, you may sing that again! But I am afraid that there are but few who can truly sing it. Oh, that we had more real putting of the loaves into Christ's hands! The time that you have not used for self, but given to Christ! The knowledge that you have not stored, as in a reservoir, but given to Christ! The ability that you have not wielded for the world, but yielded to Christ—your influence and position, your money and home, all put into Christ's hands and reckoned to be not your own, but to be His—this is the way in which London's needs will be met and the world's hunger will be satisfied! But we are staggered, at the very outset, by the lack of this complete dedication of *everything* to Christ.

What is better, still, as these loaves were given to Jesus, *so they were accepted by Jesus*. They were not only dedicated, they were also consecrated! Jesus took the five barley loaves. Jesus took the two little fishes and, in doing so, He seemed to say, "These will do for Me." As the Revised Version has it, "Jesus *therefore* took the loaves." Was there any reason why He should? Yes, because they were brought to Him! They were willingly presented to Him! There was a need for them and He could work with them—"therefore"—He took the loaves. Children of God, if Christ has ever made use of you, you have often stood and wondered why the Lord could accept you. But there was a, "therefore," in it. He saw that you were willing to win souls—He saw the souls needed winning and He used you—even you! Am I not now speaking to some who might be of great service if they yielded themselves to Christ, and Christ accepted them, and they became accepted in the Beloved? Only five barley cakes, but Jesus accepted them! Only two small fishes, brought by a little lad, but the great Christ accepted them and they became His own! Let us join one now in Heaven who on earth brought her all, and pray—

***"Oh, use me, Lord, use even me!
Just as You will, and when, and where.
Until Your blessed face I see,
Your rest, Your joy, Your glory share."***

But, what is better still, *these loaves and fishes were blessed by Christ* as He lifted up His eyes and gave thanks to the Father for them. Think of it! For five little cakes and two sprats, Christ gave thanks to the Father!

Apparently a meager cause for praise, but Jesus knew what He could make of them and, therefore, gave thanks for what they would presently accomplish. "God loves us," says Augustine, "for what we are becoming." Christ gave thanks for these trifles because He saw into what they would grow! Do you not think that, having thanked the Father, He also thanked the boy? And in later years these words of gratitude would be ample recompense for such a tiny deed! Like the woman who cast in the two mites to the treasury, he gave his all, and doubtless was commended for the gift.

Though high in Glory, today, Christ is still grateful when such offerings are made to Him. He still thanks His Father when, with timid trembling hands, we offer to Him our best, our all, however small! His heart is still gladdened when we bring Him our scanty store that it may be touched by His dear hands and blessed by His gracious lips! He loves us, not for what we are, but for what He will yet make us! He blesses our offerings, not for their worth, but because His power will yet make them worthy of His praise! May the Lord thus bless every talent that you have! May He bless your memory. May He bless your understanding. May He bless your voices. May He bless your hearts. May He bless your heads. May He bless you all and forevermore! When He puts a blessing into the little gift and into the little Grace that we have, good work begins and goes on to perfection.

And when the loaves had been blessed, the next thing was, *they were increased by Christ*. Peter takes one, begins to break it, and as he breaks it, he has always as much in his hands as he started with! "Here, take a bit of fish, Friend," he says. He gives a whole fish to that man—he has a whole fish left! So he gives it to another, and another, and another, and goes on scattering the bread and scattering the fish everywhere, as quickly as he can! And when he is finished, he has his hands just as full of fish and as full of bread as ever! If you serve God, you will never run dry! He who gives you something to say one Sunday will give you something to say another Sunday! These 37 years and more, I have ministered to this same Church and congregation, and every time that I have preached, I have said all that I knew. Some very learned Brothers are like the great wine vats of Heidelberg—they can hold so much wine that there is enough to swim in—but they put in a tap somewhere up at the *top*, so you never get much out. Mine is a very small barrel, indeed, but the tap is down as low as it can be—and you can get more liquid out of a small tub, if you empty it, than you can out of a big vat if you are only permitted to draw a little from the top.

This boy gave all his loaves and all his fish—not much, truly—but Christ multiplied it. Be like he—give your all! Do not think of reserving some for another occasion. If you are a preacher, do not think of what you will preach about the next time—think of what you are going to preach about *now*. It is always quite enough to get one sermon at a time—you need not have a reserve, because if you get a lot piled away somewhere, there will be a stale odor about them! Even the manna that came down from Heaven bred worms and stank—so will your best sermons, even if

the message is God-given. And if it does not come down from Heaven, but from your own brain, it will go bad still more quickly! Tell the people about Christ! Lead them to Jesus and do not trouble about what you will say next time, but wait till next time comes—and it shall be given you in the same hour what you shall speak.

But, mark once more—when Jesus took the loaves, it was not only to multiply, but also to dispose of them. *They were distributed by Christ.* He did not believe in multiplication unless it was attended by division. Christ's additions mean subtraction—and Christ's subtractions mean additions. He gives that we may give away. He multiplied as soon as ever the disciples began to distribute—and when the distribution ended, the multiplication ended. Oh, for Grace to go on distributing! If you have received the Truth from Christ, proclaim it! God will whisper it in your ear and tell it *in*—but if you stop the telling *out*, if you cease the endeavor to bless others—it may be that God will no more bless you, nor grant you, again, the communion of His face.

Putting all this together, if we all would bring our loaves and fishes to the Lord Jesus Christ, He would take them and make them wholly His own. Then, when He should have blessed them, He would multiply them and He would bid us distribute them—and we could yet meet the needs of London and the needs of the whole world even to the last man! A Christ who could feed 5,000 can feed five millions! There is no limit! When once you get a miracle, you may as well have a great one. Whenever I find the critics paring down miracles, it always seems to me to be very poor work, for if it is a miracle, it is a miracle—and if you are in for a penny, you may as well be in for a pound! If you can believe that Christ can feed fifty, then you can believe that He can feed five hundred, five thousand, five millions, five hundred millions, if so it pleases Him!

Thus have I tried to stir up God's people to believe in the Lord and consecrate themselves to Him. But some of you are saying, "He is not preaching to *me*." No, I am not preaching *to* you, but I am preaching *for* you, for if God's people begin to be awakened, they will soon look after *you*. You will have somebody asking you about your soul before you get out of the Tabernacle! And during the week, if you meet some of them, they will be troubling you, rousing up your conscience and making you feel what an awful thing it is to be an enemy to God and to live without Christ! I hope that it will be so. Oh, you that do not love my Lord, what will become of you? Paul said that you would be Anathema Maranatha—cursed at His coming! I pray you, do not rest easy while that may be your portion! You are the people that we want to feed, you are the people whom we want to bless! Oh, that God, in His mercy, would but bless you! *We* do not ask to have the honor of it. We would be willing to have it quite unknown who it was that brought you to the Savior, so long as you did but come to Him. May the Lord in mercy bring you!

III. But now, thirdly, and to conclude, THESE LOAVES AND FISHES HAD A LATER HISTORY. They got into Christ's hands. What was the result?

First, *a great deal of misery was removed by the lad's basket of barley cakes*. Those poor people were famished. They had been with Christ all day and had had nothing to eat. And had they been dispersed as they were, tired and hungry, many of them would have fainted by the way—perhaps some would even have died. Oh, what would we give if we might but alleviate the misery of this world! I remember the Earl of Shaftesbury saying, “I should like to live longer. I cannot bear to go out of the world while there is so much misery in it.” And you know how that dear saint of God laid himself out to look after the poor, the helpless and the needy all his days! Perhaps I speak to some who never woke up yet to the idea that if they were to bring their little all to Christ, He could make use of it in alleviating the misery of many a wounded conscience and that awful misery which will come upon men if they die unforgiven—and stand before the judgment bar of God without a Savior.

Yes, young man, God can make you the spiritual father of many! As I look back upon my own history, little did I dream, when first I opened my mouth for Christ, in a very humble way, that I should have the honor of bringing thousands to Jesus. Blessed, blessed be His name! He has the Glory of it. But I cannot help thinking that there must be some other lad here, such a one as I was, whom He may call by His Grace to do service for Him. When I had a letter sent to me by the deacons of the church at New Park Street, to come up to London to preach, I sent it back by the next post, telling them that they had made a mistake, that I was a lad of 19 years of age, happy among a very poor and lowly people in Cambridge-shire who loved me, and that I did not imagine that they could mean that I was to preach in London! But they returned it to me and said that they knew all about it, and I must come. Ah, what a story it has been since then, of the goodness and loving kindness of the Lord!

Now, perhaps, these words come to some Brother who has never yet laid hold of the idea that God can use him. You must not think that God picks out all the very choice and particularly fine persons. It is not so in the Bible—some of those who He took were very rough people. Even the first Apostles were mostly fishermen. Paul was an educated man, but he was like a lot out of the catalog—one bow out of due time—the rest of them were not so. But God used them and it still pleases God, by the base things and things that are not, to bring to nothing the things that are! I do not want you to think highly of yourself—your cakes are only five and they are barley—and poor barley at that. And your fish are very small and there are only two of them. I do not want you to think much of them, but think much of Christ! And believe that whoever you may be, if He thought it worth His while to buy you with His blood, and is willing to make some use of you, it is surely worth your while to come and bring yourself and all that you have to Him who is thus graciously ready to accept you! Put everything into His hands and let it be said of you, tonight, “And Jesus took the loaves.” It is a part of the history of the loaves that they relieved a great mass of misery.

And next, *Jesus was glorified*, for the people said, "He is a Prophet!" The miracle of the loaves carried them back to the wilderness and to the miracle of the manna. They remembered that Moses had said, "The Lord your God will raise up unto you a Prophet from the midst of you, of your Brethren, like unto me." For this Deliverer they longed and as the bread increased, so grew their wonder, until in the swelling cakes they saw the finger of God and said, "This is, of a truth, that Prophet that should come into the world." That little lad became, by his loaves and fishes, the revealer of Christ to all the multitude! And who can tell, if you give your loaves to Christ, whether thousands may not recognize Him as the Savior because of it? Christ is still known in the breaking of bread.

But the people went further with reference to Christ, after they had been fed by the loaves and fishes—they concluded that He was a Prophet and they began whispering among themselves—"Let us make Him a king." Now, in a better sense than the text implies, I would to God that you and I, though humbly and feebly, might serve Christ till people said, "Christ is a Prophet. Let us make Him a King!" This sermon I offer my Master, if He will be pleased to accept it, though it is but a barley cake. And I pray that by it some may take Jesus Christ to be their King. Oh, that He had a throne in the hearts of many whom He shall feed at this time with the Bread of Heaven! Brothers and Sisters, I know that you wish to glorify Christ! Here is the way. Bring your loaves and fishes to Christ that He may use them in His Divine commissariat—and then He shall be magnified in the eyes of all the people!

When the feast was finished, *there were fragments to be gathered*. This is a part of the history of the loaves—they were not lost. They were eaten, but they were there—people were filled with them, but yet there was more of them left than when the feast began! Each disciple had a basketful to carry back to his Master's feet. Give yourself to Christ and when you have used yourself for His Glory, you will be more able to serve Him than you are now! You shall find your little stock grow as you spend it! Remember Bunyan's picture of the man who had a roll of cloth. He unrolled it and he cut off so much for the poor. Then he unrolled it and cut off some more—and the more he cut it, the longer it grew! Upon which Bunyan remarks—

***"There was a man, and some did count him mad!
The more he gave away, the more he had."***

It is certainly so with talent and ability and with Divine Grace in the heart. The more you use it, the more there is of it. It is often so with gold and silver—the store of the liberal man increases, while the miser grows poor. We have an old proverb, which is as true as it is suggestive—"Drawn wells have the sweetest waters." So, if you keep continually drawing on your mind, your thoughts will get sweeter. And if you continue to draw on His strength, your strength will get to be more mighty through God! The more you do, the more you may do, by the Grace of the Ever-Blessed One!

Last of all, it came to pass that *these loaves had a record made about them*. There is many a loaf that has gone to a king's table and yet never been chronicled, but this boy's five cakes and two little fishes have got

into the Bible—and if you look, you will find the barley cakes in Matthew; you will find the barley cakes in Mark; you will find the barley cakes in Luke! And you will find the barley cakes where we have found our text, in John. To make quite sure that we should never forget how much God can do with little things, this story is told four times over—and it is the only one of Christ's miracles which has such an abundant record!

And now, as a practical issue, let us put it to the test. You young people who have lately joined the Church—do not be long before you try to do something for Christ! You that have, for a long time, been trusting Christ and have never yet begun to work, awaken yourselves to attempt some service for His sake! Aged friends and sick friends can still find something to do! Perhaps, at the last, it will be found that the persons whom we might have excused on account of illness, or weakness, or poverty, are the people who have done the most! That, at least, is my observation. I find that if there is a really good work done, it is usually done by an invalid, or by somebody who might very properly have said, "I pray you, have me excused." How is it that so many able-bodied and gifted Christians seem to be so slow in the Master's service? If there is a political meeting, something about Liberals and Conservatives, how earnest you are! You are all there, every bit of you, over your politics, which are not worth a penny a year!

But when it comes to souls being saved, many of you are mute as fish! You go all the year round without caring even for the spiritual welfare of a little child! One of our friends gave a good answer to a Brother who said to him, "I have been a member of a Church, now, for 40 years. I am a father in Israel." He asked him, "How many children have you? How many have you brought to Christ?" "Well," the man said, "I do not know that I ever brought anybody to Christ." Upon which our friend retorted, "Call yourself a father in Israel and yet you have no children?! I think you had better wait until you have *earned* the title." So do I. It would be better that we had no professors of that sort, but that all our members, even were they much fewer, should be men and women constantly bringing forth fruit unto God in the conversion of others! The Lord set you all to work with this objective!

I am almost done, but again I cannot help reminding those who are not Christ's, that while I have not directly preached to them, I have tried, by a side wind, to be preaching to them all the time! Either you are the Lord's, or you are not. If you are Christ's servant, take a sheet of paper and write down, "Lord, I bring my loaves and fishes to You." And if you are not Christ's, confess the awful truth to yourself and face it. I wish that you would make a record of it in black and white, putting down both name and date, "*I am not Christ's.*" Take a good look at it! Try and grasp what it means, to withhold yourself from Him who loves you and waits to save you. Then ask yourself why you are not His. I remember a woman, not long ago, who said that at her work it came across her mind, "I am not saved." She was sweeping the room and when she finished that, she said to herself, "I have to cook dinner, but I am not saved."

She went into the kitchen and had her fire all ready, and her food—but all the while she was putting things in the pot she kept saying to herself, “I am not saved.” And so it was when she was busy all the afternoon and when her husband came home, she could not help blurting it out to him, “Oh, Husband, I am not saved!” But he was—and, by God’s Grace, he pointed her to Christ! They knelt together, and oh, how he prayed with her! She found that which she so earnestly sought and it was not very many days before she could say, “Oh, Husband, by His Grace I am saved!” May that be the case with you! The Lord bless every one of you, wherever you may be! We shall all meet in the Day of Judgment. May you and I meet there without fear, to sing of the Sovereign Grace of God, which saved us from the wrath to come and helped us while we were here to bring our little, and put it into Christ’s hands! The Lord be with you! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 6.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—504, 497, 888.**

MR. SPURGEON UPDATE:

Another week has gone and still MR. SPURGEON remains in very much the same condition as was reported last week. The “abatement in certain serious symptoms,” then mentioned, has continued, and this has been a cause for devout thanksgiving. But so far as the actual malady is concerned, there has been little or no real progress towards recovery. The message to all who love MR. SPURGEON and desire his complete restoration, is, “Pray! Always pray!” Is not this also an opportunity of giving a wider circulation to the sermons, that while the preacher’s voice is, for a while, necessarily silent, he may continue to speak through the printed page, to an ever-increasing congregation? This sermon, like the lad’s loaves, has been given to the Lord—let the Master’s disciples distribute it among the multitude.

[That message was written in 1891—I write to you in the year 2006, begging you to print this sermon and give it to as many people as you possibly can—saved or unsaved—and in so doing, glorify God! And who knows what His Holy Spirit may do with it?—EOD]

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NIGHT—AND JESUS NOT THERE!

NO. 2945

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 20, 1905.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL 29, 1875.

“And it was now dark, and Jesus had not come to them.”
John 6:17.

CHRIST’S disciples, when they joined Him, had some very happy times with Him—and they had just had a very grand day in feeding the multitude. I wish I had been there to help in the feeding of 5,000 men. Everyone who had a share in that service was highly honored and those who were not there might well regret their absence on such an eventful day! But notice fair days have foul eventides and the Christ manifested during the day may become a Christ hidden during the night. Close on the heels of the intense excitement of great success comes the relapse into darkness of spirit and absence of joy. The very same men who had been rejoicing with unspeakable joy in the Divine power of their Master, are now left to endure that which is a very sad experience for anyone to have—everything dark—and Jesus not there!

I am going to talk about the condition of the men described in our text. “It was now dark, and Jesus had not come to them.” And, first, I shall speak about *the affliction of His absence*. Secondly, about *some considerations which may cheer us under it*. And then, thirdly, I shall take a *very different and far more terrible view of this condition* and apply it to quite another class of persons.

I. First, then, “It was now dark, and Jesus had not come to them.” This suggests to us THE AFFLICTION OF HIS ABSENCE.

It was a great affliction for these disciples to have Christ away from them at all. Whenever He was away, they were as sheep without a shepherd and as soldiers without a leader, but for Him to be away when they were at sea—when they were at sea in the dark—when they were at sea in a storm—all this made it much worse for them, for, although we always need Jesus, yet we more peculiarly recognize the value of His Presence when we can derive no comfort from anything else.

Christ’s absence was, in itself, an affliction to His disciples and, in proportion as we love Him, we shall acknowledge it to be an affliction to have Him absent from us. Those who never knew the sweetness of the society of Christ do not feel any sorrow that He is absent from them. A person who had never tasted pure water, but has always had to drink some foul draught, would not sigh for the cooling spring because he had never known its sweetness. There is no poverty in the world so dire as the poverty of those who have been rich—and there are none who can

know the value of the Savior, in His absence, but those who have enjoyed His preciousness by dwelling in His Presence! If your love to Jesus Christ is chilled, you will not miss Him much. Prince Emmanuel went away from Mansoul and when He was gone, the townspeople did not miss Him. But had they been enjoying continual fellowship with Him and He had departed from them only for a little while, they would have begun to sigh and cry in the bitterness of their souls—and would not have been content till they had Him back again—and would have been ready to die if He did not come back to them at once! To those who intensely love Him, it is, in itself, an affliction to be without the Savior! And it is an affliction in proportion as they love Him.

These men were put to many inconveniences by Christ's absence. To be without the Savior made the darkness seem all the darker. Had He been there, they might have sung—if the lines had then been written—

***“Mid darkest shades, if He appears,
My dawning is begun!”***

If Christ is in the boat with us, I do not know that it matters much whether the sun is shining or not, for, if the sun shall shine, we shall see HIM, and delight to see Him by the light of the sun. But if it is dark, we will see Christ by His own light and rejoice to see, in that *brighter light*, what we might not have recognized had the sunlight still shone upon us! You all know what it is to be in the dark and you know that material darkness is not comfortable. I remember being in a third-class railway carriage with a large number of other people travelling a long journey at night. Somebody struck a match and lit a candle. That became the most cheerful part of the carriage and our eyes could not help turning in that direction, for we did not like the darkness. Nobody does. There is also a kind of mental darkness in which you are disturbed, perplexed, worried troubled—not, perhaps, about anything tangible—you could not write down your troubles. It may even be that you really don't have any, but you feel troubled and dismayed. Other people say that you are nervous and they blame you and say, “You ought not to give way in this manner.” That is what they think. But when a person gets into your present condition, that is the unkindest thing that anyone can possibly say—and the least likely to do any good to the poor troubled soul! I do not mind a trouble which I can see and understand. Manfully would I shoulder it in my Master's strength. But when the spirit, itself, is in the dark, one imagines a thousand evil things! Even good things, themselves, seem to be evil and what should be to your encouragement becomes often a source of discouragement! Have any of you ever been in that condition? If you have, and if Jesus has not come to you, then, I am sure that you have felt it very difficult and you have greatly needed His Presence.

There are a great many of you who appear to have a large stock of faith, but it is only because you are in very good health and your business is prospering. If you happened to get a disordered liver, or your business should fail, I would not be surprised if nine parts out of ten of your wonderful faith would evaporate! I have noticed that certain brethren who talk about being perfect are generally persons of robust constitution with a very comfortable income and not much to do except

to go about to conferences and conventions—and talk about themselves. But the tried people of God do not often ride upon those high horses. They have to cry out very frequently! They have many anxieties and cares which, although they cast them upon the Lord, make them realize that they are not yet pure spirits, but are still in the body. Let a man have a bad headache for about half an hour and let him see whether he does not feel himself to be mortal and to still have something sinful about him!

Another part of the affliction of the disciples when “it was now dark, and Jesus had not come to them,” was that *their toil became very wearisome*. They were rowing and they had rowed their boat several furlongs from the shore and it was wearisome work in Christ’s absence. When He was with them and favored them with a cheering glance, and spoke comforting messages to them, I can well imagine how merrily that boat went along—how they tugged the oar as the Venetian gondolier tugs his to the sound of song, and how the vessel would glide over the waves! But now they had to toil by themselves and there was no sweet word from Jesus, no gracious promise from His lips, no loving glance from His dark eyes which were to them “like the fish pools in Heshbon, by the gate of Beth-Rabbim.” Now that their Lord was absent, it was all tugging and straining till muscle and sinew were weary. It is just so with our Christian service—if Christ is with us, it is glorious work to teach in the Sunday school or to preach in the congregation! And going from house to house is light work to the visitor, for he is conscious of the Presence of his Master. But if the Lord’s Presence is withdrawn, you feel that you must do these things from a sense of duty. You will do them and you will nerve yourself up to persevere with the task, but it is hard, trying work.

Not only did the darkness seem to get darker and the toil become more wearisome, but *the way grew rougher*, for we are told that “the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew.” When our Lord Jesus Christ is with us, rough roads grow smooth, but when He is absent, smooth roads grow rough. It is marvelous how a man who lives in the light of Christ’s Countenance makes light of losses and crosses. He takes them as a matter of course, or, better still, he accepts them as *gifts* from God and believes that they will be overruled for good—and so he keeps on singing as he passes over the rough road. But if Jesus Christ is absent, a comparatively easy lot appears to be a heavy one and where we should have seen a thousand mercies, we only have an eye to observe our discomforts. It is trying traveling when the waves are rough and it is dark—and Jesus is not there.

Worst of all, when Jesus is away, *all perils become more terrible*. Many a boat has perished on the Galilean Lake, beneath those waters which sometimes gleam so placidly as though they tempted the boat to float upon their surface. And many a man has found a watery grave in that land-locked sea when it has worked tempestuously beneath the gusts from the surrounding hills. If Jesus had been with His disciples on that stormy night. If He had been awake to speak to and cheer them, they would have rejoiced to see the boat go up and down, from the trough of

the wave to the billow's crown, like some great sea bird in its play! They would have felt a sort of hilarity of spirit at being in such a brisk gale when the Lord High Admiral of all the seas was in command of their boat! But now that He was away from them, they feared that the vessel would go down. They thought they would never survive that storm, they would drift onto a rock and not one of them would again reach the shore! The perils are, indeed, great when it is dark and Jesus is not there!

You will say, dear Friends, that I am describing a very sad condition of things. Well, it is no fancied one to me, at any rate, and I think it is no unusual thing for those whom Jesus loves to be put into such a condition. There are many saints of whom we read in the Word who were precious in the sight of the Lord, but, among them all, where do you find one who was not tried? "O man greatly beloved," was said to Daniel and, therefore, it might have been added, "O man greatly tried and passed through stern processes to prove whether you really are what you seem to be." Whatever God keeps away from His servants, I do not think He ever keeps away the rod from them! He had one Son without sin, but He never had one son without chastisement. If there are many of God's children who have not yet had any trials, I would not recommend them to pray for it—that would be very wrong. The Lord's children need not ask to be whipped, but I would advise them to reckon that somewhere between here and Heaven they will have to realize the truth of that saying of the Apostle, "If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chastens not?"

There I leave this first point—the affliction of Christ's absence.

II. Now, secondly, I am going to mention SOME CONSIDERATIONS WHICH MAY CHEER US WHEN IN THIS CONDITION.

The first consideration I would mention is this. Dear Friend, *perhaps it may not really be as you think it is*. You say that Christ is absent from you, but, possibly He is not. Perhaps you have not really lost His Presence. "Oh, but I am not as happy as I once was!" I do not know that Christ's company in the soul necessarily makes that soul consciously happy continually. I know that Jesus was very near to Peter when a look from Him made the sinful disciple go out and weep bitterly. I think that the Presence of Christ may sometimes tend to breed in us a certain holy sorrow which, though not so sweet, is yet as precious as holy joy itself. Perhaps, dear Friend, you are not just now in a right state of body or in a right mental condition to get joy and happiness from the Presence of Christ. At any rate, if He were not there, your spirit would have sunk much lower than it does now. Sad as you are, you would have been much sadder if it had not been for the sacred influence of His more than magnetic Presence which is really staying your soul. You might have fallen into despair, but you have not come to that condition yet and it is because His left hand is under your head so that, although you sink, you do not sink lower. You might have been utterly overwhelmed if it had not been for the Divine supports which have been given to keep you where you are!

I will tell you a secret from my own experience. I have had times in which I have blamed myself and grieved before God and if anyone had asked me, "What is your soul's condition?" I would have said, "Bad." Yet, in a month or two's time, I have longed to have that very condition over again, for I have said to myself, "I am happy now, but I wish I could grieve over sin as I did then. I think I have strong faith now, but I wish I had the same tender consciousness of the least touch and taint of sin that I had in what I regarded as my dark days." We are very bad judges of our own spiritual experiences. We often undervalue what God esteems and set great store by that which God does not prize. So it may be that Christ is really with you, dear Friend, although you are writing such bitter things against yourself and mourning His absence.

If He is, indeed, absent, there is one thing to comfort you, namely, that *you have not driven Him away by your sins*. That is to say if you are in the same condition as those disciples were in the vessel. Their Master had bid them go, and they had gone at His command. He had left them—they had not left Him, so they had not to blame themselves because He was not there when the darkness came on.

If you are conscious that you have been living in some known sin, go and bitterly repent of it before God. If you have grieved the Spirit of God and driven Him away from you, listen to the voice which says, "Return, you backsliding children." But that is not the subject upon which I am now speaking. I am addressing these who think they have lost the Presence of Christ, these whose conscious joy has departed, who, nevertheless, are not aware that there has been anything in them which would separate them from their God. You, dear Friends, may derive comfort from this fact. Say, "Well, as the Lord has sent us to sea and left us, we are where He put us. And as this is His Sovereign appointment, even if it is the post of trial, so let it be. We will kiss the rod and even in the dark we will believe that all is well! And just as a child, when it is put to bed without a candle, must not cry, but must go to sleep, so we will not weep, but bow submissively to whatever our Lord ordains."

Further, if Jesus Christ is not in the boat with His disciples, although it is dark, they have this thought to comfort them—that He still loves them. He is not there, but He loves them, so His heart is with them. They seem to be alone, but their names are written on His heart just as they used to be. Yes, Beloved, our condition before God does not depend upon our conscious enjoyment. Do you believe that we are children of God today because we are happy, and that we may be children of the devil tomorrow because we may then be desponding? Oh, no!—

***"If ever it should come to pass
That sheep of Christ should fall away,
My fickle, feeble soul, alas,
Would fall a thousand times a day!"***

But the mercy is that even though we believe not, He is faithful! We change, but He changes not! And when His servants are in a storm or under a cloud, the love of Jesus Christ for them is just the same as when they rejoiced in the full sunlight of conscious enjoyment of His Presence.

Recollect, also, that *although you cannot see Jesus and He is not with you, He knows where you are*. You cannot see Him, but He can see you. “What a terrible blast came down from the hills just now!” The Lord knows all about it and how it made the ship rock and reel, and stagger like a drunken man. “That wave seemed to come right over us and to wet us to the skin.” Yes, but Christ knew every drop that was in it and just where each drop would fall. “But see how every timber in the vessel starts—it must surely go to pieces soon.” But Christ knows all about the starting of the timbers and the straining of the masts. He is not ignorant of the condition of any of His children. And if He has put them in a position of trial, He Himself watches over them with tender and sympathetic eyes and knows exactly their perils and their needs.

And, more than that, our blessed Lord not only knows where we are and all about our circumstances—and loves us and feels for us—but *He can come to us*. “How can He come to us? We are many furlongs out at sea.” Yes, but He can come to you. “But there is no other boat near and if there were, how could it live in such a storm as this? Would you have us believe that He will come riding upon the wings of the wind or walking upon the waves? It cannot be!” Yet it was, you know, for Jesus did come to them. And if you say, in the time of your distress, that the Lord Jesus cannot come to you, I must tell you that you know not what you are saying! His people never can be in a place where He cannot get to them!

And what is more—let this comfort you—*He will come to you for He did come to His disciples*. He came walking on the water and so reached them—and He will come to you, also. Though He may tarry a little while, for the trial of your faith, He will come to you before long. If you believe in Christ even when it is dark with you, the clear shining will come to you before long—

**“When your eye of faith is dim,
Still trust in Jesus, sink or swim”—**

and in due time Christ must come to you. He cannot finally forsake one of His people and when He comes, He will say, “For a small moment have I forsaken you, but with great mercies will I gather you. In a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on you, says the Lord your Redeemer.” So be of good cheer, for Jesus Christ will come to you even when it is all dark around you!

And here is another word of cheer for you, namely *that when He does come, it will be in a way that will give you a higher sense of His Glory than you ever had before*. You have seen Him on the land, but you have never yet seen Him on the water! Well, you could not see Him walking on the water unless you were on the water, yourself—and you could not see Jesus Christ calming the storm unless there was a storm to be quieted! And if the wind did not blow, you could not tell whether He could control it. Trial is absolutely necessary in order to reveal to us some of the attributes of our gracious God! We cannot, ordinarily, see the stars in the daytime, but if we go down a mine or a well, we can. And often in the deep mines or wells of trouble, as we go down, down, down, we see the brightness of our Lord Jesus Christ as we never saw it before! You know that there is a certain kind of ink with which you may write but no one

will perceive that there is any writing on the paper until it is held near a fire—the heat of the fire makes the writing legible. There are many precious promises that are written with this invisible ink and, until you hold them to the fire of affliction or trial, you will never read them and understand them. You must be brought into this trial! You must be in the dark, or Jesus will not come to you with such a splendid display of His marvelous power and love as He gave to His disciples on that stormy sea! But, look—over the tops of those rolling billows He comes—the Man, the Christ, the God—swift to help and deliver you in your hour of greatest peril! Oh, it is worthwhile to miss His Presence for a while—and to be in darkness for a time—if we may afterwards see Him in a still nobler Character and understand more of His mighty power to save!

It is very possible that when your Lord comes back to you, *His return will be to you the end of a great many troubles, toils and difficulties*. I do not understand how it was, but when our Lord came walking on the water and entered the little vessel, “immediately the ship was at the land where they went.” There was some sudden lift, or darting forward of the vessel and immediately it was at the shore! Have you ever noticed how when you have had a time of great spiritual darkness and, perhaps, of great labor and trial, and you have worried yourself because you could not see the Lord’s hand in it all and could not trace the Lord’s love overruling it, Jesus Christ has at last come to you and there has been an immediate end to your spiritual trouble—and what has been possibly more remarkable, there has been an end to all the rest of your trials? Perhaps, for months afterwards, you have not had any spiritual darkness, or stormy winds or contrary waves! There was a great calm after all your trials, just as, when the children of Israel had been so oppressed in Egypt and were about to be delivered from the hand of Pharaoh, the Lord said, “Against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue.”

I have had those seasons of wonderful calm when not a dog has moved his tongue against me, although I have had all the dogs of Hell at my heels a little while before! There have been no troubles from above, around, or beneath—not a devil has dared to tempt me and nothing external has afflicted me—all seemed to come exactly as I would have it and all in a moment! Perhaps it would not be safe for us to get to land so quickly without having first been in the dark a little while. We cannot bear sudden prosperity. Great success is one of the worst perils of mankind. Many a man has been elevated until his brain has grown dizzy and he has fallen to his destruction. He who is to be made to stand securely on a high place has need to be put through sharp affliction. More men are destroyed by prosperity and success than by affliction and apparent failure.

These are some of the considerations which may cheer those of God’s people who, for a time, walk in darkness and see no Light of God. May God bless these words to any mourning saint who may hear or read them!

III. But now, in concluding my discourse, I am going to make a very different use of the text. There are some of you—I am glad to see you here and I pray the Lord to bless the message which I am about to give you—there are some of you who do not know the Lord Jesus Christ and who are not trusting in Him. Your condition may be described in those amazing words of the Apostle Paul, (to me they are very amazing), “*without Christ.*” That is one of the saddest things that can be said of anybody—“without Christ.” Possibly you say that you do not see any sadness in your present condition. You enjoy yourself very much. You are young, in good health, the world is bright and life seems to be one continual dance to you. It is true that Jesus has not come to you, but you do not need Him and you think that you can do very well without Him. But one of these days it will be very dark all around you—and it is a very terrible thing for a man when it is dark and Jesus does not come to him!

I have seen such people. I saw some of them during the recent financial panic—they were men of considerable business and they were making money, but everything around them seemed to be shaking. Many firms were failing and presently the news came that there was a failure in a certain house which would involve them in its ruin. All was gone in a moment and there was nothing to be done but to call their creditors together and tell them the truth. In such a time as that, a man who has a large family depending upon him and who occupied a high position in society may have to come down to almost absolute poverty. I do not know what some men whom I saw then, did, for they had not any Christ to go and talk to—they had not the Well-Beloved into whose ear they could whisper the sad tale of their troubles. I know that some of them were glad to get anybody to listen to what they had to say, and it was a sorry story. Well now, some of you have been prospering in worldly matters. God has blessed you with temporal goods, but reverses may come to you and what will you do, then, without Christ?

But there is something worse than that! It may be that your worldly business may continue to prosper, but there may come to you a mental trouble. It does come to you sometimes, does it not? You have been out to a very merry party, but when you come home you feel dreadfully flat. Do you not occasionally get into that state? Perhaps I am addressing someone who used to be very interested in the theater. He has been again, lately, but somehow or other the plays are not so interesting as they used to be, or else he has changed his attitude towards them. The fact is that the man has not the tastes and desires that he once had. If he goes where he used to go, he does not any longer find the mirth and merriment that he used to find there—the laughter seems to him to be folly and madness—he cannot enjoy it. Well now, if you have lost your taste for this world, it is a sorry thing for you if you have not acquired a taste for another and a better world! If your old friend has gone from you, it is a sad thing if the new best Friend does not come to you! I pity those of you who once thought yourselves so very good and whose self-righteousness is all gone, but who have nothing better in the place of it—

it is very dark and Jesus has not come to you. I pity you who were once so self-contained and dogmatic, but who now begin to tremble and to be afraid because Jesus does not come to you it is night with you—mental night—and it is night in your circumstances, yet Jesus has not come to you. What I would bid you do is just look through the thick darkness, for on the crest of the wave, the crucified Savior is standing! And if you will but look to Him with the eye of faith, He will come into your vessel and deliver you. He will sanctify your trouble, clear away the affliction from your mind and give you peace and rest!

Remember, also, that in a very short time all of you will die. Will you picture yourself lying upon the bed of sickness? I cannot describe the room, for I have not seen it, but I can well imagine you propped up with pillows, for you can scarcely get your breath. And the physician has told your wife that in a few hours it will be all over. And you have been very gently told—at least, you have spelt it out for yourself—that they have given you up and that the sweat that they are wiping from your brow is really the death-sweat. It is very dark. There, bid “good-bye” to your wife and children, for you must leave them. Look out of the window and see what you can of the surroundings of the old homestead, for you are going to leave it and you have no home to dwell in forever. It is very dark. Money cannot help you now. The honors you have gained cannot help you now. And the fondness of affection, which would help you if it could, cannot help you now. It is very dark, but, worst of all, Jesus has not come to you—

**“Jesus can make a dying bed
Feel soft as downy pillows”—**

but if He does not come to you then, man, what will you do? What will you do? What will you do? To die in the dark is terrible! To live in the dark is more than I would choose, but what must it be to *die* in the dark and not to have Jesus with you? May God deliver you! But if you will not have Christ as your Savior in life, how can you expect to have Him in death? Fly to Him now, lest tomorrow you should see the picture which I have sketched, executed to the very life—and you the subject of it!

But if it is dreadful to die without the Savior, what will it be to wake up in the unseen world without Him? And, at the last, what will it be when the great trumpet sounds, to have no Savior to welcome you, but, instead thereof, to see Him far away, seated upon that Great White Throne as your Judge? What will it be to have no Jesus coming to help you when the earth is rocking and reeling and the Heavens are on fire, and the books are opened, and the Judge is dividing, to the right and to the left, the sheep and the goats? And, all the while, He has not darted one glance of love at you, or opened His lips to say one friendly word to you? Think what will be your despair when, at last, it comes your turn to hear the terrible words, “Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.”—

**“You sinners, seek His Grace,
Whose wrath you cannot bear!
Fly to the shelter of His Cross
And find salvation there.”**

Look to Him and live! God help you to look now! And then, when it is dark, Jesus will come to you—no, better still, He will live with you forever and ever!

God bless you all, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 6:14-40.**

Verses 14, 15. *Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that Prophet who should come into the world. When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take Him by force, to make Him a king, He departed again into a mountain, Himself alone.* Our Lord Jesus had just worked the miracle of feeding the five thousand men with five loaves and two small fishes, so He was very popular at that time. The people even wanted to come and take Him by force and make Him a king, but He escaped from them, for He knew the value of that popularity! What was it but a puff of wind? Probably many of the very people who tried then to crown Him were among the crowds in Jerusalem who cried, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" And, nowadays there may be a great deal of anxiety to hear the Gospel, yet very little result may follow from it. A crowded House of Prayer is certainly a very hopeful sight, yet it may end in disappointment to those who are looking for souls to be won for the Savior.

16-26. *And when evening was now come, His disciples went down unto the sea, and entered into a boat, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was now dark, and Jesus had not come to them. And the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew. So when they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and drawing near unto the boat and they were afraid. But He said unto them, It is I; be not afraid. Then they willingly received Him into the ship: and immediately the ship was at the land where they went. The day following, when the people which stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was no other boat there, save that one which His disciples were entered, and that Jesus went not with His disciples into the boat, but that His disciples were gone away alone, (howbeit there came other boats from Tiberius near unto the place where they did eat bread, after the Lord had given thanks). When the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, neither His disciples, they also took boats, and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus. And when they had found Him on the other side of the sea, they said unto Him, Rabbi, when did You come here? Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, You seek Me not because you saw the miracles, but because you did eat of the loaves, and were filled.* How faithful and truthful the Master was! There was in Him nothing of the political concealment of His knowledge and the endeavor to please everybody which we see in so many! He speaks the truth whether it offends or pleases His hearers—and so should His servants. "You seek Me," He said, "not because you saw the miracles, but because you did eat of the loaves, and were filled."

27. *Labor not for the meat which perishes, but for that meat which endures unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you, for Him has God the Father sealed.* He rebuked their excessive ardor in seeking meat for their bodies and urged them rather to seek food for their souls. But did you ever notice what an extraordinary piece of advice our Savior gave to these people? It is one of His paradoxes. He bade them not to labor for the very thing which they could not get without laboring, and to labor for that which they never could get by laboring. “Labor not for the meat which perishes”—yet how else can we have it? “But for that meat which endures unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you.” It is a free gift and not the reward of labor, yet Christ told them to labor for it! Did He not mean just this—“Let not your greatest efforts be expended upon the things of time and sense, but let them go out after eternal and spiritual blessings”?

28. *Then said they unto Him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?* “What is the noblest work that we can do? What is that work which will please God most?”

29. *Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that you believe on Him whom He has sent.* The grandest work that any man can do is to believe on the Savior whom God has sent. There are some who despise faith, but Christ was not of that number. He honored it exceedingly when He said, in effect, “This is the Godlike work, the work which is nearest to God’s heart, ‘that you believe on Him whom He has sent.’” Dear Friend, are you struggling after that which is high and noble? Would you do the best day’s work that was ever done in any mortal life? Then run not to this or that invention of your own, but be content to believe on Him whom God has sent! This is the first, the highest, the noblest work—the work which gives to God the greatest pleasure!

30. *They said therefore unto Him, What sign show You then, that we may see, and believe You? What do You work?* What strange questions for them to ask when He had amazed them with His wonderful works!

31. *Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from Heaven to eat.* They talked about “bread” again—how they persist in coming back to that! You know the questions that men of the world are always asking, “What shall we eat, what shall we drink, and with what shall we be clothed?” This is the world’s wretched trinity!

32. *Then Jesus said to them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from Heaven; but My Father gives you the true bread from Heaven.* Moses did not give Israel the manna, God gave it. And it did not come from Heaven, that is, from the celestial sphere, in the sense in which Christ, the true Bread, came from Heaven.

33. *For the Bread of God is He which comes down from Heaven, and gives life unto the world.* The Bread of God is Jesus Christ, Himself! The man who would feed so as to satisfy his spiritual nature, and live thereby, must feed upon Jesus Christ, Himself.

34. *Then said they unto Him, Lord, give us this bread.* They did not understand the meaning of their own prayer. Sometimes, in our services,

when people are very quickly convicted of sin and fall to praying all of a sudden, a wise conductor ought to enquire carefully whether it is not a mistaken prayer. I do not doubt that many of the cries and many of the professions made in enquiry-rooms are mistaken ones, after all, and that we put down as the results of our work much of which we shall have cause to be ashamed when it comes to the time of testing.

35. *And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that comes to Me shall never hunger and he that believes in Me shall never thirst.* Hear this, poor starving people! The needs of your soul can all be met by Jesus Christ! If you have Him, the hunger of your spirit shall be appeased and the thirst of your heart shall be quenched.

36. *But I said unto you that you have seen Me, and believe not.* How the Savior brings the truth home to these people and He might do the same to some of you. You pray, "Give us this bread" and He replies, "I have given it to you, yet you have not eaten it. You have seen Me, you have heard Me, you know Me and yet you do not believe on Me." If Christ were to appear in this building at this moment, might He not say to many of you, "You have heard of Me from your childhood and you know all you need to know about Me, yet you have not believed in Me"? Would God it were not so with so many of you!

37-40. *All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me and him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from Heaven not to do My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me. And this is the Father's will which has sent Me, that of all which He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it again at the last day. And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son, and believes on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.* This is the glorious Gospel of the blessed God—that everyone who looks to Christ with eyes of faith has everlasting life, and though his body may die, yet even for that there is everlasting life, for Christ will raise him up again at the last day. Oh, that you would all believe on Jesus Christ and so find that eternal life!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—778, 1028, 700.

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

SEEKING FOR JESUS

NO. 947

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 21, 1870,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Seeking for Jesus.”
John 6:24.

THE persons who are here described as seeking for Jesus were looking after Him from a very mean and selfish motive—not because of the gracious words which He spoke, nor to render Him thanks for benefits received at His hands—but merely because they had eaten of the loaves and fishes, and hoped to do so again. From such sordid motives let us flee. May we all shun with detestation the very idea of making a profession of religion for the sake of worldly advantage. It is detestable to the last degree. Those who seek Jesus Christ with the groveling desire to make a gain of godliness are hypocrites of the meanest order.

Like Judas they will follow the Lord while they can steal from the bag, and like that “son of perdition,” they will sell Him when the thirty pieces of silver are the reward of treachery. Let them know that such gain will involve their souls’ eternal loss.

I shall apply the words before us to those who really and spiritually seek Jesus, seek Him as Jesus—the Savior who saves His people from their sins. Last Sunday morning I tried to speak concerning maturity in Grace, giving the advanced Believer a word. And as we are bound to give a portion of meat in due season to all classes, I will now deal with those who are but babes in Grace, if indeed they are babes at all. I shall speak to those who *cannot* say, “We have found Him,” but who are earnestly “seeking for Jesus.”

I. First, let us notice THE CHARACTER OF THE STATE described as “seeking for Jesus.” In it there is a mingling of good and evil. We see in it much of light, but too much of darkness. It is neither day nor night, a dim twilight, hopeful but overclouded. I may call it “not light, but darkness visible.” It is one of those miry places, a marsh, not altogether sea, and certainly not land. Like the brackish water of the river’s mouth, not altogether salt, but assuredly not sweet.

“Seeking for Jesus” has a large amount of hopefulness in it. It is as the almond tree in blossom, though as yet there is no fruit. The seeker at any rate is not indifferent now. He is not a careless sluggard, demanding yet more sleep and folding of the hands. He is not a defiant rebel, daring the wrath of God with blasphemous audacity. He is no longer a denier of Revelation. He would not be seeking for Jesus unless he had some kind of faith—at any rate, a theoretical faith—in a Savior, and in his need of Him.

Now it is a very encouraging sign when we see men aroused and willing to hear. When we can bring men to *think*, we are very grateful, for thoughtfulness lies on the road to conviction of sin, and conviction is on the way to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. I am glad, my dear Friend, that you are now no longer deaf to the appeals of God’s Word. It is well that your ears are open, and though as yet what you hear is far from bringing

you any comfort, rest assured it is a great blessing to you to hear the Truth of God, even when it condemns you. I rejoice to see you under concern and I hope that something may come of it.

Your face is now turned in the right direction, now that you are “seeking for Jesus.” When you sought sinful pleasure you were facing the pit of Hell—now your face is heavenward. I am glad that Jesus is the Object of your search, for depend upon it, nothing else is worth seeking for—salvation from sin and Hell should be the first object of your soul’s desire. For an alarmed and awakened sinner to seek rest in *ceremonies* will be a search for bread among ashes. To labor for salvation by your own righteousness will be looking for substance among dreams.

Your seeking after Jesus shows that you are on the right tack, and though as yet you have not reached the haven, the helm is set in the right direction, and I am grateful to God for it and encouraged concerning you. I regard your present state as the little cloud which foretells the coming rain. But, alas, I may be disappointed, and the early cloud may melt into nothingness! Hope tells a flattering tale, but she may be deceived. What a pleasing sight it is to see a man who has formerly been prayerless casting himself upon his knees in secret!

How gratifying to see the unread Bible brought out from the dust and carefully studied! Methinks an angel must look on with holy interest when he sees the fresh tear fall in the solitary chamber, and the unaccustomed suppliant bow before his God. Glad are those blessed spirits when they hear the seeker say, “O God, I will seek You until I find You. I will cry unto You till I receive an answer of peace.”

Intelligence of such a vow would make a Church rejoice in hope—trusting that the time for newborn children of God to be found in her midst was fully come. A heart that turns itself to Christ if haply it may find Him, is evidently in a hopeful condition. Yet in the state of “seeking for Jesus” there is much that is doubtful, for, my Brethren, the seeker after Christ remains disobedient to the great command of the Gospel. If he were obedient to the great Gospel precept, he would at once cease to be a seeker, and become a happy *finder*.

What is the command of the Gospel? “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” Properly speaking, Christ is not an object for *seeking*, He is not far from any of us—like the brazen serpent uplifted by Moses, He is not so much to be looked *for* as looked *at*. We have neither to clamber to Heaven to find Him in the loftiness of His Deity, to bring Him down—nor dive into the chambers of Hades to bring Him up again from the dead.

Thus says the Lord, “The Word is near you, even in your mouth, and in your heart: that is, the Word of faith, which we preach. That if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved.” Jesus is Immanuel, God with us. A prayer will reach Him, a wish will find Him, a groan will pierce His heart—do but confide in Him and He is yours.

The first command of the Gospel to guilty sinners is not to pray, to search the Scriptures, to attend upon sermons—all these are natural duties—and woe unto the man who neglects any of them. But the command, the special command of the Gospel is, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ!” Now, the seeking sinner is disobedient to the command. He is going about

here and there seeking, but he declines *trusting*. He is eagerly looking abroad for that which is at home.

He is seeking for peace afar off when it is near him. He looks east and west to behold a wonder, while the Wonderful, the Savior, stands at his right hand ready to forgive. The way of salvation for me as a sinner is simply this, that I, being a sinner, do now put my trust in Christ Jesus the Substitute for sinners. God has set forth His crucified Son as the accepted Propitiation for sin—the way of salvation is that I accept Him for what God has set Him forth—namely, as the Atonement for my sin, in which I place my sole reliance.

Seeing He is God, seeing He took upon Himself the nature of man, seeing that as Mediator He suffered in the place of as many as trust in Him, I trust Him, and I obtain thereby the blessed result of His sufferings—I am, in fact, thereby saved. Now, it is some good thing certainly to be a seeker, but it is also an ill thing if I follow my seeking and refuse God's way of salvation.

Hear what the Apostle John says—"He that believes not God has made Him a liar because he believes not the record that God gave of His Son." This is no small sin to be guilty of, and it entails no small punishment, for "he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

Suppose that I have been told of a remedy for my disease. Well, it is very good that I desire to be cured of my deadly malady, it is so far hopeful that I have sent for a physician. But after being informed that there is the one specific remedy for my disease, and that it alone will certainly heal me—if I were still to continue seeking a remedy, or to say I am seeking this one *true* remedy—I shall remain sick, and ultimately die. I shall never be healed unless I take that which is prescribed—to seek it is not enough, I must actually take it.

In seeking, then, there is some good, but oh, how much of evil! Here are gleams and flashes of light, but oh, how dense is the darkness! Here is a little smoke in the flax, but I dare scarcely call it a spark. O Seeker for Jesus, think of this, for while I would not discourage you, yet would I encourage you to end your seeking by becoming a Believer. Look not at salvation's cup, but *drink* of it. Stand not by the fountain's brim, but *wash* in it and be clean. O may the Holy Spirit lead you to cease your search for goodly pearls, for the Pearl of Great Price is before you! Jesus is not to be discovered as a secret—He stands before you openly. Behold His hands and His feet! Mark well His torn side, and as you look, TRUST—and from now on He is all your own!

Hear, dear Friend, your true position. It is the case of a soldier on the battlefield, wounded, bleeding, life oozing away from him. He is perishing, but he is sufficiently sensible to know it and to call for help. The surgeon is on the field within hearing, the sufferer pleads for relief with many cries and entreaties. So far, so good. But I pray you remember that crying and weeping will not of themselves heal the sick man—the surgeon must actually come and bind up his wounds. And if he refuses to receive him, he may cry as he wills, but he will bleed to death.

So remember that your prayers and seeking, of themselves, cannot save you—*Jesus* must come to you, and it is madness on your part to refuse Him by your unbelief. To give another similitude—you are today like the

manslayer of old, you have done the murderous deed, vengeance is armed against you. Judgment, swift as lightning pursues you. You are not now slumbering in foolish security, or presumptuously defying the avenger, but happily you are so aroused that you are running towards the City of Refuge.

I delight to mark your earnest running, but run as you may, you are not safe until you are within the city gate. The most vigorous running will not save you if it does not end within the walls of refuge. To enter that open gate, to dwell within that sheltering wall, to enjoy the privilege of sanctuary—this is safety. All else is but hope of escape, and not deliverance itself. To pray, to hear, to desire, to *seek*—all this is the roadway and the running, but Christ Himself must be laid hold upon by *faith*—or we are not saved.

Run, Man, but oh, take care that you run in God's way—by faith in Jesus—and not by trusting in your resolves and feelings! You must have Christ to be yours by personal faith, or you must die eternally. Let me give yet another picture. You are like one who has been asleep in a burning house. At last you are awakened. The cries of those who would gladly save you have broken your deadly slumber. You start up in horror. I think I see you now at the upper window, with the flames drawing near to you. You clearly perceive your danger, you passionately clamor for aid. All your energies are aroused.

So far, so good. But, Man, all this will not rescue you—you must get on the fire escape which is now uplifted to the window. Are you unwilling to take the one and only way of escape? It is close to you. It is suitable, it is efficient! Why seek another? There it is, and precisely what you need. Your present alarm will only be the prelude of your despair if you put from you the way of escape. I put these figures before you that you may see that while you are only *seeking* for Jesus, your best friends dare not altogether hope for you, but are led to tremble, too.

We wonder which way the scale will turn—your future quivers in the balances. As anxious eyes watch a laboring boat making with difficulty for port, and in imminent danger of the rocks, so we watch you. We see you like Lot and his family, ready to leave the City of Destruction, but you have not yet reached the mountain, and our heart asks concerning you, “Will he linger in the plain? Will he look back? Or will he altogether be delivered?”

If you remain as you are, there is no hope for you. All the supposed good which is now in you is vanity itself if it leaves you short of Christ. Remember well this verse, and I will pass on—

***“Why those fears, poor seeking sinner?
Why those anxious, gloomy fears?
Sighs and sorrows cannot save you,
Healing dwells not in your tears;
It is BELIEVING
Which the soul to Christ endears.”***

II. The second part of our discourse shall deal with THE PERPLEXITIES OF THIS STATE. “Seeking for Jesus” is a state of heart in which the poor soul is usually very much put to it—“tumbled up and down in his thoughts,” as John Bunyan would say. For first, seekers are very often much perplexed as the result of their ignorance of the way of salvation. Too often, awakened souls, though they may have heard the Gospel, do

not in their hearts understand it. Many enquirers do not know what faith is.

I am persuaded millions of our fellow countrymen do not know what believing in Jesus means. Though every Sunday they are told, yet they do not catch the thought, for the Spirit of God has not illuminated their minds. To believe in Jesus, as we say again, and again, and again, is simply to trust in Jesus—to take God at His Word—to take Christ for what God says He is, namely, the Atonement, the satisfaction for sin, the Savior of sinners.

But poor, troubled consciences think faith is a deep mystery, and they go about like blind men groping for the wall. They wander like travelers in a dense fog, not knowing which way leads to their homes—hoping, but hoping against hope, by reason of ignorance. Many, though desirous to be saved, do not understand the work of Christ, or know what Atonement is. Though the doctrine of Substitution, which is the very marrow of the Gospel, is to Believers so very plain, yet many seekers have not learned it.

That Jesus bore the sin of His people—that “the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” That He was made sin for us. That Justice received its due at His hands. This precious fact many penitent sinners have not grasped. They still think there is so much *repentance* to do, so much *feeling* to endure, so much *praying* to go through, so much *mystery* to be experienced. But the plain, simple precept, “Believe and live,” trust and be accepted, hide under the shadow of the Cross and be safe—this, through ignorance, they do not understand—and this involves them in trouble upon trouble, till their way is hedged up with thorns.

At such times, too, to increase their perplexity, they are usually distracted with fear. Persons in a panic act generally in the worst conceivable manner for their own safety, and an awakened sinner is in much the same condition. A terrible sound is in his ears—he hears the rumbling of the everlasting tempest—he sees the gathering storm. He knows not what to do, nor where to flee. His sins, which once appeared such trifles, now rise before him like mountains of blackness. The wrath of God, which once he defied, makes him exceedingly fear and quake.

He sees the dark record of his transgressions and anticipates the hour when all his sins shall be read before the assembled universe, and the sentence of wrath shall go forth against him. To where shall he flee? He scarcely knows how or where to fly. A spirit distracted with dread is never a wise spirit, and often is goaded on to madness. Pressed out of measure with forebodings of heart and threats of conscience, many a man refusing to believe in Jesus has laid violent hands upon himself.

Do you wonder, then, that souls under a sense of sin and fear of wrath, are far from being calm and collected, but rather are like mariners in a storm who “reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man”? How soon would their bewilderment end in sweet repose if they would obey the Divine mandate and accept the great salvation! During these struggles for life the mind is usually harassed with a thousand questions. The newly-awakened mind is very apt to lose itself in the many spiritual problems which lie before it. The man cared nothing for these matters before, but now he has even a morbid craving after knowledge!

He seems as if he could not learn too much or too fast. How many an enquirer, instead of turning to the Cross, worries himself with intricacies

of doctrine, vexed points which belong to metaphysics rather than to divinity! They are fascinated by the “things hard to be understood,” and forget the Truths of God which a wayfaring man, though a fool, may readily comprehend. How many ask themselves, “Are we elect?” when their enquiry should be, “How can a man be cleansed from iniquity?”

In truth, they must learn Latin and Greek before they know their letters, and must fathom the doctrine of election before they will believe in the redemption of Jesus. They would come to the Father before they have come to the Son, and learn their predestination before their pardon. That which has perplexed the wisest of men, namely, how to reconcile Divine ordination with the free agency of man, they attempt to grapple with while they are in danger of the unquenchable fire.

They philosophize at Hell’s mouth, and debate in the jaws of perdition. You may show them how absurd it is, as absurd as a drowning man to wish to quibble about hydraulics, and refuse to lay hold on the friendly rope until he understands some mystery in hydrostatics. Or, as if a person sorely sick refused all surgery until he understood anatomy, and comprehended the secret influences of drugs upon the many parts of the body. Yet some enquirers will abide in this folly. I do not wonder at it, when I remember how foolish man is by nature.

Men who have left the whole spiritual realms untrod are very apt, when they see it open up suddenly before their eyes, to aspire in their hearts’ pride to stand upon its loftiest peaks, to climb its Himalayas, to swim its Bosphorus, to fathom its Atlantic, and from this cause they forget its green pastures and still waters. I would have every convicted sinner here listen to my words this morning. Friend, you have to do with the plain Truth of the Gospel—namely, this, “Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners”—sinners such as you are, and faith links you to that Savior.

When you have learned that lesson, then you shall discover that God has chosen you from the beginning, that He has ordained you unto eternal life. But as yet you can not solve that matter. Leave that glorious doctrine till first your soul is saved by faith in Jesus Christ. It is plain, however, that this appetite for strong meat takes off the babe from the unadulterated milk of the Word. These questions help to confuse, trouble, worry, and distract the seeker for Jesus.

At this hour, too, to make confusion more confounded, Satan is quite sure to assail the soul with his diabolical insinuations and suggestions, with strong temptations and despairing thoughts. No king will willingly lose his subjects, and Satan, when he sees his captives about to turn runaways, sets extra guards around them. He will set others on to tempt them, or he will come himself personally and inject into the soul the most horrible thoughts, the most blasphemous suggestions, and the most despairing forebodings that can be conceived of.

Having felt this, I speak tenderly to such as may now be exercised with them. Marvel not at them, neither be dismayed. If you can, by the Holy Spirit’s help, resist Satan—he will flee from you. If you can assail him with, “it is written,” he will leave you. But be not astonished if now, for awhile, the fiery darts fly thick as hail. He has his military from which he can vomit ten thousand shots at once upon a poor lost soul, and make it feel as though it were broken in pieces all asunder with horror and dismay.

You will triumph over him yet if you believe—the Lord will bruise Satan under your feet shortly. Be of good courage! Though you fall, you shall rise again! Faith will lift you up in the power of Jesus. I marvel not that when that dog of Hell howls in your ears, your spirit is sorely put to it for comfort. It may be, also, that when the soul is seeking for Jesus, it is at the same time much grieved to find it cannot even now cease from sin. “My old sins,” says the heart, “I would be rid of them, but how can I hope for forgiveness, for I have sinned this very day? I went to my chamber, and I bowed my knee, and said, ‘God be merciful to me, a sinner!’

“And I came down stairs resolved to be watchful, but something vexed me, and I spoke unadvisedly. How can I think God will have mercy on me?” Or says another, “I was seeking the Savior this morning. But I went out to my business, and I met with worldly company, and I forgot my Lord—I am afraid I mingled with them so closely as to participate in their sinful mirth, and now how can the Lord have any pity upon such a hypocritical seeker as I have been?” As if that poor heart expected to be perfect before it had even found pardon! As if a patient expected to be perfectly well before he had followed the advice of his physician!

My dear Hearer, if you were able to cease from all sin for a single day, I am sure you would be out of place on earth, for Heaven is the place for perfect people, and not this sinful earth. If a fountain sent forth nothing but pure water for one whole day, we might conclude that it was completely purified. The bearing of good fruit for one season would prove the tree to be good. If your heart abstained from sin of itself throughout one day, it might for another, and so on forever, and where would be the need of a Savior?

What? Do you not know that Christ came to save you from your *new* sins as well as from your *old* transgressions? Is His arm too short to reach your daily needs? His blood of too little power to wash away your fresh pollutions? Have you still some hope of bettering yourself? Have done with this trifling! Confess yourself a helpless sinner, shaped in iniquity, conceived in sin, depraved in heart, and, therefore, needing the never-ceasing mercy of the Lord your God. Come, wash now in the fountain filled with blood, and if sin returns, ask Jesus to wash your feet again.

Make Jesus your sole reliance. Cry to Him, “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean! Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.” Nothing else can end your perplexities. You cannot untie the Gordian knot of your difficulties! Cut it, then, by leaving all to Jesus. You cannot overcome your sins except by the blood of the Lamb. You cannot be what you should be, nor what you would be, except by taking Jesus to be your All in All. Here is a song for you—

***“At last I own it cannot be
That I should fit myself for You.
Here, then, to You I all resign;
Yours is the work, and only Yours.
What shall I say Your Grace to move?
I give up every plea beside,
Lord I am sin, but You are love—
Lord, I am lost—but You have died!”***

III. And now, in the third place, let me warn you of THE DANGERS OF THE STATE of “seeking for Jesus.” I have already told you that there is much of hopefulness, but there is much of peril in your condition. Dear

Seeker, what a sad thing it is that you should be wasting so much time, and losing so much comfort, by this long-continued seeking, when it might all end so happily even now at this present hour. Had you believed in Jesus at the very first, you had had light at once.

How often would He have gathered you, as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, but you would not! If you will trust Him now, the day star shall shine in your heart. You are like Hopeful and Christian in Giant Despair's Castle. They lamented and bemoaned their common sorrow and planned many unavailable methods of escape. But at last Christian, as one half amazed, broke out into this passionate speech—"What a fool," said he, "am I to lie in this stinking dungeon, when I may as well walk at liberty! I have a key in my bosom called Promise, that will, I am persuaded, open any lock in Doubting Castle." Then said Hopeful, "That's good news, good Brother, pluck it out of your bosom, and try."

My awakened Hearer, this is your condition. You have in your bosom, and you have in God's Word that which will unlock every door in your prison. Up, Man, and try it now! Can you not believe that Jesus is the Christ, and that God has sent Jesus to bear your sin? Can you not trust in Him? If you can, you are free—your sins are forgiven you—you are saved!

You have, perhaps, heard the incident of a dove, pursued by a hawk, which flew into the bosom of a man who was walking in the fields. And you remember that it was safely protected by him whom it had trusted. The dove would not of itself have flown there, but under the terror of the hawk it sought a shelter. You have been afraid of Jesus, you have thought He would not receive you. But now that Hell pursues you, be venture-some, and fly to Him! Say as our hymn puts it—

***"I can but perish if I go
I am resolved to try.
For if I stay away, I know
I must forever die."***

If Christ stood with a drawn sword in His hand, you had better run on the point of His sword than perish without Him. O come to Him, driven by desperation itself, if by nothing else—come into His bosom! You shall have peace at once. But all the while you remain seeking, I know not in what distracted manner you are wasting time, you are missing comfort, you are losing opportunities of happiness. Cease your seeking, for there is the Man whom you seek. He stands revealed before you. Reach here your finger and put it into the print of the nails. Or if that is too bold, touch but the hem of His garment, and you shall be made whole!

Another evil is not only the losing present peace and comfort, but the danger of being driven to despair. I do not doubt that some persons who were once sincere but unrenewed seekers, have now given up all thought of seeking Christ, because they continued to seek when He was near them, to look *for* Him instead of looking *to* Him. And they have waited so long in prayer and Bible reading, and so on, that now they utterly despair, and give all up as hopeless.

It is no wonder. If you will try to do a thing in a wrong way, you cannot hope to succeed. If a man will not plow and sow, neither shall he reap. If you will not believe, neither shall you be established. A person may be very industrious, indeed, in what he does, but if he follows a method

which never can produce the result he desires, he must not be surprised when he is disappointed. You are a seeker, and I am glad you are. But if you will not put your trust in Jesus, and lay your burden down at the Cross where He offered the great Sacrifice, it is no marvel if you continue to seek in vain.

It will be a great sorrow, but it will not be a great wonder, if you become at last despairing, and are shut up in the iron cage. O Man, O Woman, break away from this! May God's Holy Spirit come to your rescue now! Give up your own ideas of how to get peace—take God's method of salvation—and lay hold on eternal life by trusting in the slain Savior.

Another danger is that in some cases seeking at length dies out in indifference. Having sought after a fashion by prayer, and failing to find peace at once, temptations to go back to the world's pleasure attack the soul, and too often it becomes, from now on, impervious to exhortations and expostulations. The unbroken, unrenewed heart grows sullen, and declares, "I tried, but I did not succeed. I may as well have what pleasure I can have, for spiritual joys are denied me. If the world to come cannot be mine, I will have this world and take my fill of it."

I pray you may never be driven to that, but my fear is that if you tarry long in this border land, seeking but yet halting between two opinions, undecided and unbelieving—at last you *will* relapse into your former state of spiritual slumber—and your last end will be worse than the first.

Another danger is lest you should take up with something short of Jesus Christ. I have known persons who have been content to remain seekers all their days. They have felt comforted by the thought that they are seekers. Now, such comfort is daubing with untempered mortar. A man out of employment has been walking up and down the London streets to find something to do. His family is in need, and he must find a situation. He is quite right to seek, but he will not be satisfied with seeking, he wants to *find*.

Tramping the street will not feed his children. He is not contented with having called at many shops. He will not rest till he finds what he is after—and he would be very foolish if he did. So to be a seeker after Christ, walking up and down the streets, as it were, will not fill your hungry soul. You must get Christ Himself. If any unemployed father of a family were to say, "Well, I walk about so many days in the week, and so many hours in the day, and I am quite satisfied, though I do not find anything to do," you would think him a great simpleton. And so with you.

It is a good sign when there is an appetite. But a mere appetite does not satisfy a man—he must eat the food provided. Your seeking Christ will not save you, except it leads you in very deed to believe in Jesus. It is an ill sign when a man says, "Well, I am doing my best. I am always at a place of worship, I am a Bible reader, I practice prayer at home, I do my best." My dear Friend, if you settle down in that idea, you are self-righteous, and are off the road altogether. Besides, you are lying to your own heart, for after all you are at enmity with God, and the sign of that enmity is this—that you refuse to believe on His dear Son.

If you were reconciled to God you would love Jesus Christ, and trust in Him. I see what it is—you have resolved, after all, to be your *own savior*. You still think that there is something in outward religion to produce salvation. I solemnly assure you that if you stand out against believing in

Christ, if you will not fly to those dear wounds of His, if you will not hide beneath the shelter of the Atonement, you will go to Hell as well from a place of worship as from the haunts of sin, and will perish as certainly with a Bible read as with a Bible burned—

**“None but Jesus, none but Jesus,
Can do helpless sinners good.”**

“Oh, but,” you say, “I feel my sins so much!” Yes, but if you trust in your *feelings* you will perish in them as much as though you wallowed in your sins. O Soul, resolve with Toplady —

**“He that suffered in my place,
Shall my Physician be
I will not be comforted
Till Jesus comforts me.”**

Never hope to be saved except by God’s way of salvation. O that the Holy Spirit would enable you in your heart to say, “Now I come to You, O Jesus! Guilty as I am, I lift my eye to You, and this is my prayer—‘Help me for Your mercy’s sake. Have pity upon me and cleanse me in Your blood, for I put all my trust in You.’” Resolve, O Seeker, to have no refuge of lies—no Savior but the Lamb of God.

I will confess to you, dear Seeker, that often and often I am myself personally driven to do what I trust you may be led to do today. I look back upon my past life, and while I have much to thank God for, much in which to see His Spirit’s hand, yet when I feel my responsibilities and my shortcomings, my heart sinks within me. When I think of my transgressions, better known to myself than to anyone else, and remember, too, that they are not known even to me as they are to God, I feel all hope swept away and my soul left in utter despair.

But by His Grace I come anew to the Cross and think of Who it was that died there, and why He died, and what designs of infinite mercy are answered by His death. It is so sweet to look up to the Crucified One again, and say, “I have nothing but You, my Lord, no confidence but You. If You are not accepted as my Substitute I must perish. If God’s appointed Savior is not enough I have no other, but I know You *are* the Father’s Well-Beloved, and I am accepted in You. You are all I want, and all I have.”

How I desire, with intense longing, that you may do the same. It would be a blessed day for you, and for me a joyful occasion. The Jews in the present chapter asked our Savior, “What shall we do that we may work the works of God?” and He said, “This is the work of God, that you believe on Him whom He has sent.” The *greatest* of all works, the most Godlike work, is to leave off self-righteous seeking, and trust in Jesus.

IV. Now I will conclude by delivering one or two DIRECTIONS TO THOSE WHO ARE “SEEKING FOR JESUS.” Very brief shall these be. The first direction is—give attention, dear Friend, to the Object of faith. The only way by which you can be saved is by faith. Take that to be settled. Now if a man says, “I cannot believe such a thing”—what then? What is his wisest course?

Suppose you find a difficulty in believing a report—what do you do? Why, you consider the probabilities of it. Suppose it had been rumored that the Emperor Napoleon had shot himself. Shall I believe the report? I will ask from where the rumor comes, what intelligence corroborates it,

upon what authority it is stated—and soon, by that means—I arrive at a conclusion whether it is probably true, or is a mere idle tale.

Now if you earnestly desire to believe, faith is the gift of God, and a work of the Spirit, but God works according to the laws of mind, and faith in Christ will most readily come to you in conformity with those laws. “Faith comes by hearing,” why by hearing? Why, because by hearing I learn the Truth concerning Christ, and what I hear commends itself to my judgment and understanding, and so I come to believe.

Faith comes to us by reading, which is another form of hearing. Read what the Scripture has to say about the Messiah and His work and you will be helped to believe God’s Testimony, by knowing what it is and on what authority it comes to you. Let your hearing and your reading be accompanied with meditation—like the Virgin Mary—ponder these things in your heart. “Incline your ear,” says the Spirit, “and come unto Me. Hear, and your soul shall live.”

Now, that inclining of the ear means a devout and diligent attention to the Good News, and a weighing of it in your inmost heart. Now look at it—you have sinned—and God must punish sin. These two facts are clear enough to your conscience. Is it not a marvelous system that God should be pleased to put away sin through an Atonement, by laying the sin upon Another, and punishing it in the Person of His Son?

Do you know of any other system that would meet the case so well, that would be so suitable to you? I believe that the authenticity of Scripture is better proved by the very existence of this doctrine than by anything else—for no human mind could ever have contrived or conceived of a way so just to God—and yet so infinitely gracious. I feel sure it is true, I am certain of it.

Then I find it promised over and over again by God Himself, that if I trust Christ I shall have the benefit of all His work. I therefore believe the thing is reasonable, it is proclaimed by Divine authority. I have God’s promise for it, I know that the Almighty One cannot lie. I cheerfully accept what He provides for me, and I am saved. My dear Hearer, if you find it hard to believe, shut yourself up this afternoon in your room, and come not out again till you have pictured to your mind’s eye the everlasting God unveiling Himself of His ineffable splendors, and taking upon Himself the nature of Man.

Behold that glorious One nailed to Calvary’s tree, forsaken of God, crying out in anguish, and dying without a friend—and all to make an Atonement to the Law of God! As you are fixing your eyes upon this, and bowing in humble prayer, faith will come to you. The Holy Spirit will overshadow you and beget it in your soul—faith will drop in your soul like the dew from Heaven! You will wonder to find the hardness of your heart all gone, and your unbelief all departed, and you will say, “Lord, I believe! Help You my unbelief.”

Another direction, however, is—take care, my dear Friend, to clear away as far as possible everything that would hinder your believing. Now you may depend upon it that going into sin hinders believing. You cannot continue in willful sin and yet become a Believer. Sin cherished in the heart is an effectual hindrance. A man cannot be tied to a post and yet run away at the same time. If you bind yourself to your sin, you cannot escape.

Withdraw at once from evil company—it is a very deadly mischief to young seekers. You hear an impressive sermon, but then you go away talking with idle gossips and you fall into frivolous chit-chat on the Sunday afternoon. You cannot expect your soul to grow in the right direction under such influences. Get on your knees, get alone, get to your God, get to Jesus Christ. This it is that will roll away the stone which blocks the door.

And, once again, do remember that till you have believed, your danger is of the most imminent kind. You are not in danger of something future only—you are in peril even now, for the wrath of God abides on you. You are not like a city which is to be attacked by troops yet at a distance—the Judge is even at the door. You are actually besieged. The foes have encompassed you round about. They lift the scaling ladders, they will soon scale the walls.

Beware, O Sinner, beware! Your present state is terrible! Your future state will be hopeless. Today is the accepted time. Now or never it is with some of you—now escape for your lives—now seek, but seek in the right way, by BELIEVING in Him who is the Savior of the sons of men.

How I have longed, this morning, for a tongue like the pen of a ready writer! How I have opened my mouth and panted to speak these things in passionate earnest, for I hunger for your salvation! Speak from my soul I do, but I cannot preach as I would, else would I saturate this sermon with my tears. O that the Master might bless even my weakness of speech to carry home the Truth of God to your hearts and consciences! I do not like to let one of you go unless you have thought over these things, and have given your hearts to Jesus.

I shall probably never address many of you again, certainly not all of you. You have come across the sea and you are going to the ends of the earth, some of you. I speak in God's name. O now, before you have gone from under the sound of the Word, now let the believing look be given—"Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." It is the cry of the crucified Savior! Turn not away from that dear voice so full of anguish! Hide not your eyes from that brow still marked with the crown of thorns!

Despise not those nailed hands and feet, but yield to Him as again He cries in agony of love, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." O Lord, turn them! And they shall be turned. Amen.

Adapted from *The C.H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

A PLAIN ANSWER TO AN IMPORTANT ENQUIRY NO. 1521

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

***“Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God,
that you believe on Him whom He has sent.”
John 6:29.***

NOTICE the connection or you will miss the meaning of the words, for, at first sight it looks as if our Savior taught us that it is the work of God for us to believe on Him. Now, that would be quite true and it is very plainly taught in other parts of Scripture that faith is the work of God, but that is not the teaching in this particular instance, as will be very plain if you look at the context. First, our Savior said to the people, “See how you labor after the bread of your bodies. You have been running all round the coast to find Me in order that I might feed you again with loaves and fishes. Now,” He says, “let your labor run after something better. Labor not for the meat that perishes, but for that which endures to life eternal.”

He gently rebukes them, “Do not spend all your strength in seeking after temporal good, but think about your immortal natures. Satisfy the hunger of your spirits, the better part of you.” They immediately answered, “You tell us to labor after the bread that does not perish. What shall we do that we might work the work of God and so obtain it?” Our translation fails to let us see that they used precisely the same words as the Savior had done. He said, “labor,” and they said, “What shall we do that we may labor this labor of God? What is it?” They took Him at His word and they put a question in accordance. When men begin to be awakened about spiritual things, they naturally cry, “What must we do to be saved? What must we do that we may work the work of God?”

It is a faulty question—it is a question very much shaped by their ignorance and error. They suppose that there are *works* to be done, and merit to be earned by doing and obeying a law. And so they put it in that shape—“What shall we do? What shall we work that we may work the work of God?” The Savior did not chide them for the shape of the question. It was not the time to expect accuracy, but He gave them such Truth as they could understand and He replied, “You want to know what work you must do that shall be ‘the work of God,’ or a work pleasing to God? This, then, is ‘the work of God,’ the work most pleasing to God of all the works that can be done by men, that you believe on Him whom He has sent.”

The teaching here is not that faith is worked in us by God, which I have already said is a great Truth of God, but it is this—that if men desire to work, the first and chief of all work is that they believe on Jesus Christ whom God has sent! Does any man object to faith being called the work of

man? If he does, I ask him why he objects. It is true that faith is the *gift* of God, but this does not change, for a moment, the other Truth of God that faith is the work of man—for it is and must be the act of man. No one in his senses can deny that! Will you venture to say that man does not believe? Then I venture to tell you that he who does not personally believe in Jesus is a lost man! And if there is such a thing as a faith which is not a man's own act and deed it will not save him.

The man must, himself, believe or perish! This is the plain doctrine of Scripture. Repentance is worked in us by the Holy Spirit, but we must, ourselves, repent or we shall never be saved. Faith is worked in us by the Holy Spirit, but the Holy Spirit does not believe, or repent—these are a *man's* own acts! With our hearts we believe unto righteousness. If we do not believe, then we are not partakers of the promise which is given to those who do believe! Faith is, therefore, the work of man and it is the *chief* of works, the work most pleasing to God, the most godlike work, or, as the text puts it, “This is the work of God, that you believe on Him whom He has sent.”

To open up this one thought I pray for help from on high—it is just this—that faith is the most pleasing of all the works that man can do. It is here called, “the work,” but not strictly and properly, for it can never be ranged with the works of the Law, from which it essentially differs. But the Savior took up the word which they used and spoke to their ignorance that He might instruct them.

I. Regarding it as a work, faith is most pleasing to God, for, first, **IT IS THE COMPREHENSIVE SUMMARY OF ALL TRUE WORK.** There lies within the loins of faith every possible form of holiness. As a forest may lie asleep within an acorn, so within the bounds of faith, little though it is, every virtue lies hidden. It may be microscopic in form, but it is certainly there and only needs development. Repentance dwells in faith, for he that believes in Jesus Christ unto salvation knows that he is a sinner and he must have some hatred of sin, or else he would not have taken Christ to deliver him from his sin.

Love to God is there, for, most assuredly, when I trust a man—completely trust him—it would be impossible for me to do so unless I felt some leaning of my spirit towards him. The complete trusting of the soul to Christ, which is faith, has had in it no small measure of love to Christ. If I had before me a list of all the Graces of the Spirit of God and I were to take them up one by one and then analyze faith, I should find some measure of all these good works of the Spirit hidden away in the simple act of believing in Jesus Christ. I know what some of you have said—“Is that all that I am to do in order to be saved? Am I simply and only to believe in Christ, that is, trust myself with Him?”

Yes, that is all and it is so small an act that the most uneducated heart can perform it! But yet, within it there are inconceivable mysteries of goodness! Just as sometimes inside a walnut shell I have seen packed away with careful art all sorts of gems and jewels, “with my lady's gloves to wear,” so within this little walnut shell of, “believe and live,” there will be found by any careful eye all the Graces of the Spirit of God. What is

more, all the Graces come out of faith in due time, for faith sums up the whole of a Christian's life!

Now, my Brothers and Sisters, I challenge you to read the 11th chapter of Hebrews and see if you can think of anything noble, brave, glorious which has not its counterpart in that chapter. But remember, it is a description of the heroism—not of this virtue or of that, but of *faith*. In the long list, beginning with Abel and going down to the last, faith worked all. From faith comes the power that stops the mouths of lions, quenches the violence of flames! Out of weakness men become strong. It is faith that tramples on temptation. It is faith that overcomes the world. It is faith that attains to holiness. Within the compass of that little babe whom you hold in your hand, a slender weight that you can scarcely feel, there are all the elements of yonder man of six feet who leads the van in the royal host and so the true Christian man in the perfection of the stature of Christ is all within the babe in Grace who cries, "Lord, I believe. Help You my unbelief."

I can well understand why our Savior should say, "If you wish to work the work of God, you must believe in Jesus Christ whom He has sent," for in that act lies all the virtues and out of that act will grow all the virtues in due time.

II. But now, secondly, this simple matter of trusting Jesus Christ which is called FAITH, IS, IN ITSELF, MOST PLEASING TO GOD. First, it is the creature acknowledging its God. While a man says, "I do not care about my soul," he lives in atheism, disowning God, living as if there were no God. When a man says, "I need no saving," that is contradicting God's testimony wherein He declares that we are all gone out of the way and have altogether become abominable. When a man says, "I may be wrong, but I can get right by myself. My own good deeds will save me," he is setting himself up in independence of his God. In fact, he is making himself his own god and so, practically, setting up another god.

But when the man cries, "I have sinned," there is an acknowledgment that the Law is good and holy and just! When he then adds, "I have so sinned that I deserve punishment and I submit myself to it," there is a recognition of the court of Heaven and an admission of the righteousness of its sentences! The rebellious heart submits itself to the authority of God! When he further says, "But I have heard, great God, that You have given Your Son to bleed and die for sinners and that He is able to save to the uttermost them that trust Him and I do trust Him," the submission of the man to God is complete. Before, he said, "I do not believe it. It does not stand to reason"—that is proud Reason still a rebel. Or he said, "It may or may not be so, but I do not see the peculiar beauty of an atoning Sacrifice." There, again, is the proud heart kicking against God.

But the man comes into his right place when he believes. When he believes in Jesus Christ and accepts mercy through the great Sacrifice, God is well-pleased because His poor erring creature has come into its right place and God sees in the act of faith the restitution of rectitude. Again, God is pleased with faith because it accepts God's way of reconciliation. God has given Christ that He might reconcile us to Himself by Him. When

a man says, "I take Christ to be my Savior," he accepts God's way of reconciliation and then God must be reconciled, for He has promised to be so. As He longs to be reconciled and wills not that any should perish, but that they should come to repentance, so does He rejoice when they are willing to make peace with Him in His own appointed way. It shows a submission to His wisdom, a confidence in His love, a yielding to His Divine will and that is what He seeks after. All this, I say, is included in faith and makes it well pleasing to God.

Perhaps the most acceptable element in faith to the eyes of God is the fact that it puts honor upon Jesus Christ, for He dearly loves His Son. We cannot tell how deep is the love of the Father towards His only begotten Son. That which dishonors Jesus must be very obnoxious to the Father and your self-confidence, my Friend, is a dishonor to the merit and salvation of Christ and God abhors it! But when you fling that all away and have no hope but in the great Atonement which He has made, then, I say, because your faith honors Jesus, therefore God delights in it and He will honor your faith. It is not possible that He should cast a soul away that clings to the great High Priest. Oh, if you look to Jesus, you shall never lose your sight! If your heart clings to Jesus, that heart of yours shall never lose its life! If your soul joys in Jesus, that soul of yours shall never lose its joy!

The fact is, that faith puts us into a right relationship with God, for what is the right relationship of a creature to his God but that of dependence? Is it not most suitable that since God made us and He has all power and all strength, we should depend upon Him for our being, as well as for our well-being? See how He hangs the world upon nothing! This round globe never starts nor falters, but is steadily upheld in its mighty march by the unseen hand of God! Yonder stars, mighty worlds though they are, have no power to keep themselves in their places but the power of God which established them. All things hang upon Him and the only position for a created being is that of entire dependence—what is that but faith?

I believe that there is faith in Heaven. Do not tell me there is no faith there. I believe it to be the *essence* of Heaven that the glorified exercise unquestioning faith and never feel a doubt. It will be the joy of every spirit before the Throne of God to depend every moment for its immortality and bliss upon God and to be quite confident that He will never fail it. Some sorts of faith will be turned to sight—but if faith is confidence in God, I bless God I shall have a great deal more of it in Heaven than I can have here! A perfect child must have a perfect faith in a perfect Father. Because faith brings the creature back to conscious dependence, God is well-pleased with it.

Faith restores us by putting us into a place of childlike rest. If a son has fallen into the hands of a malicious individual who has whispered into his ear that his father hates him—that he is doing all he possibly can to ruin him—at first the youth will not believe the accusation, but perhaps, after a while, he begins to think it is true. From that time forward every action that his father makes will be interpreted the wrong way—and if there is anything in the father's life which is more kind than usual, it is

highly probable that this poor misled boy will see a deeper subtlety of malice in it than in his father's ordinary actions! The lad will break his father's commands and vex and anger him. What is the first thing to be done to set that youth right?

You may make him dread his father and then he will behave properly in his outward actions, but he will only be waiting his time to break loose. Suppose it to be possible to make him believe in his father and to be assured that his father loved him and had, all along, been the kindest man on earth? Why he would run into his father's arms! He will be willing enough to obey a parent whom he trusts—it will be his delight to do so! You have won his confidence and everything is right now. This is what faith does to us. The devil and our own corrupt nature say, "God is unkind, for He has made an awful Hell," and so on. Faith interposes and cries, "He has put away His wrath. He has made full atonement for sin. He is willing to receive us."

Then faith says, "Trust Him. Trust Him implicitly." And when the soul has done that, then faith testifies, "He has loved you with an everlasting love. Jesus died for you and He has provided a Heaven for you." Let this be known and felt and what a change takes place! Oh, then you hate your sin! Oh, then you are ready to say, "How could I play the fool against One so kind, so good, so right?" Under this impulse you will serve Him and live for Him! That simple matter of believing Him has done it all! It is the hinge on which character turns. Hard thoughts of God lead to acts of rebellion, but a childlike confidence in Infinite Love softens the heart and sanctifies it and makes the man a true child towards the great Father.

Do you wonder, then, that there is much in faith, in itself, which is pleasing to God? And if you ask what great works you are to do to please God, we shall not tell you to build a row of almshouses, or endow an orphanage, or give your body to be burned—believe in Jesus Christ and you have done more than all these things put together!

III. And now a third reason why faith is so great a thing is this—**FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST IS THE TEST OF WORKING FOR GOD**, for all the works that ever were, without faith in Jesus Christ, are not works for God at all. Let me explain and prove my point. Suppose that a person should say, "But I mean to live for the great God and work for Him." Without faith the spirit of work is wrong. My Friend, suppose you said to me, "I will live for you and spend my life in your service, but I am not going to believe what you say"? There would be a point of disagreement between us which would render it impossible for you to be of any service to me, or for anything that you did to be of any *value* to me. You call me a liar to begin with and then say you *serve* me?

Many of you that have heard the Gospel may, perhaps, think that you are serving God, though you have never believed in Christ. But, I tell you, your best actions are nothing but whitewashed sins! All that you do must be destitute of real excellence because you begin by making God a liar! It is a hard word, you say. I cannot help it—it is the word of John, the most gentle spirit among all Biblical characters. John says, "He that believes not has made God a liar because he has not believed on the Son of God."

If you begin by calling God a liar, I do not care much what you do after that. I would a great deal rather you should be moral than immoral and sober than drunk, but, after all, you will be lost in either case if you persevere in calling God a liar!

All your holiness will be a sham if you will not believe in Jesus. The test of true work for God is this—"That you believe on Jesus Christ whom He has sent." Without faith the motive of work fails. "But," cries another person, "I believe I have deserved well of God! I have kept myself pretty right and I have performed many good deeds." What have you done them for? "I have been working for my salvation," says one. In other words, you have been working for *yourself*. Pay yourself, then! Self is first and last—your works are selfishness from top to bottom! You have been trying to be good to get to Heaven by it. It is a mean, beggarly life that begins and ends with self! Your Maker, whom you were bound to love with all your heart, you have not loved at all except that you have meanly pretended to love Him in order to save yourself!

You had a kind of cupboard love to Him, such as an ass or an ox might have to a corn bin, or a stall, but no real affection. How can you perform a virtuous act while self is your tyrant lord? When you have once believed in Jesus Christ *then* you are saved and from that day on you live to glorify the name of the Lord—you live to work out that which He has worked in you—to will and to do of His own good pleasure. But until you are saved by faith, self is necessarily your first thought. No man is capable of virtue as long as *self* is his objective and every man must make self his objective till he is saved! When he is saved, he rises into a nobler atmosphere altogether and then his works are acceptable to God. Do you not see that you have to get out of self-righteousness and to be saved by believing in Christ before you can begin to do anything that will be really working for God? Up to that point it will be all working for *yourself* and that is a poor, poor thing which cannot please the most high God.

Beloved Friends, living by faith in Jesus Christ is the evidence of your sincerity in any work that you do for God, for can there be any real working for God while your own pride is uppermost? God tells you that your best works are imperfect and will not save you and He hangs His own dear Son upon the Cross to save you because you are a sinner. You turn your back to the Cross—you say, "My own merits are good enough," and then you talk about serving God after that? Can He accept anything at your hands after you have rejected His Son and insulted Him? You have touched the Lord in the most tender point when you have taken your own detestable righteousness which is just a heap of infected rags—a mass of abominable filth in the sight of God—and have preferred it to the blood and righteousness of His only Son!

After such an atrocious crime as this, how dare you talk about doing service to God! It is impossible, Sir! There is a lie in the bottom of your heart. Get rid of it! How can you serve the Lord while your pride thus angers Him? He tells you that you must bow before His Son and trust in Him and you reply, "No, I must *feel* something or *do* something." That is as much as saying, "I will be saved in my own way." You talk about serv-

ing God after that evil, “I will,” of yours has been defying Him? Suppose that one of your family will not do what you tell him? He defies you to your face. He says he will have his own way and then he goes into the garden and he plucks you a flower—and he expects that the gift will please you.

What? Brought in a rebellious hand? While he is in a willful state and boiling over with bad temper? Does he think to please you by such a trifle? You say, “No, my child, that cannot be. You must first bow before your father and acknowledge that you have done wrong.” He may pout his lips and say he will never obey you and then ask to kiss you. Will he have his kiss? Assuredly not till first of all he will submit! That is just the condition of many a seeker after God. He has a wicked pride in his heart and a rebellious will and if he will believe in Jesus it will be a proof that his pride and rebellion are given up. But if he will not yield and trust, neither can he expect that God will save him!

IV. I would say, in the fourth place, that faith in God is a most blessed and acceptable thing because IT IS THE SEAL OF ALL OTHER BLESSINGS. Notice that faith in God is the seal—first, of our election. Read the 37th verse, “All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me.” Now, if you come to Christ, dear Friend, you are one that His Father gave Him! You are one of His elect! Oh, what a blessing this is. The doctrine of Election is full of rich comfort to all who are interested in it and election, itself, is the greatest of all favors. “But how am I to know that I am one of God’s elect?” By this testimony, “All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me.” Every elect soul that reaches adult age is brought to believe in Jesus Christ and as sure as ever you are brought to believe in Jesus Christ, you may be absolutely certain that you are predestinated to eternal life!

In the next place, faith seals our effectual calling. If you look a little farther down you will see, “No man can come unto Me except the Father which has sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.” These are the express words of Christ and they show that every man that comes to Christ must have been drawn by the Father. That is to say, that effectual calling has exerted its Divine power upon him. No man need say, “Am I drawn of the Father?” after he is once sure that he has faith in Jesus Christ, for you never could have believed in Jesus Christ unless this had been given you from Heaven. The 44th verse is as plain as possible, “No man can come to Me except the Father which has sent Me draws him.” You have come to him and, therefore, the Father must have drawn you.

The next thing that faith assures us of is final perseverance. Read the 47th verse—“He that believes on Me has *everlasting* life.” You need not raise the question, “Have I received everlasting life?” Raise this question, first, “Have I believed in Jesus Christ?” If so, you have everlasting life. Not a life, mark you, that will last you up to the end of the quarter when you take a new ticket—nor a life that will preserve you to old age and then leave you to temptation and death. No, “He that believes on Him has *everlasting* life” And it is not *everlasting* life if it does not last *forever*. Herein he that believes has the guarantee of final perseverance.

Did not Jesus say, “I give unto them eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hands”? Are we not told of him that believes in Christ that there shall be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life? Or, as Christ puts it in this very chapter, “He shall never hunger and he shall never thirst.” He has drunk a draught of eternal life in Christ Jesus and he shall never thirst again! This is a great deal for faith to bring to us, but it is not all, for two or three times over we are told here that whoever believes in Christ shall be raised up again at the last day—so that faith secures resurrection! Read the 39th verse and then the 49th verse—“This is the will of Him that sent Me, that everyone which sees the Son and believes on Him may have everlasting life and I will raise him up at the last day.”

How do I know that I shall have a blessed resurrection? How can I be certain that though the worms devour this body, yet when Christ shall stand in the latter day upon the earth, in my flesh I shall see God? I may be quite sure of it because I believe in Jesus Christ whom He has sent! Beloved, faith is the seal at the bottom of the title deed which secures all things for time and eternity to the man that has it! If you are a Believer, all the wheels of Providence revolve for you! If you are a Believer, every angel spreads his wings for you! If you are a Believer, life is yours and the death which seems to close it is only the appointed janitor to open the door of another and a brighter chamber! If you believe, God Himself is yours and Christ, His Son, is yours! If you believe, Heaven, with its eternity and infinity of joy which your eye has not seen, nor your heart conceived of, is yours!

Nothing shall be kept back from the man that believes his God and trusts his Redeemer! Oh that the Lord would give faith to you all! “Alas,” you say, “I do not *feel* right.” Never mind your *feelings*, trust in Christ! “Oh, but I am such a sinner.” Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. “Alas, but I have tried before.” Away with all your trying before! Have done with trying and accept the finished work! Trust Jesus *now*! “Do you mean that if I now trust myself with Christ, I shall be saved while sitting in the pew?” I mean even so! Be you whoever you may be, this night look to Jesus and be saved! If you will have done with *yourself* and will trust your soul in the hands of Jesus who has sworn to save those that rest themselves upon Him, you are saved!

Oh, that those who have heard this Gospel many times would now, for the first time, really understand it and say, “Is this, after all, the greatest of all works—that I believe in Jesus Christ whom He has sent? Lord, I believe—help You my unbelief and save me now.” O God, help many to breathe the prayer of faith at this moment, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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SOUL-SATISFYING BREAD

NO. 1112

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 18, 1873,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that comes to Me shall never hunger; and he that believes on Me shall never thirst.”
John 6:35.***

OUR Savior used expressions concerning Himself which might be turned to another meaning than He intended. He did not guard His words by saying, “I am *like* bread, and faith is like eating and drinking,” but He said, “I *am* the bread of life,” and, “except a man eat My flesh and drink My blood there is no life in him.” He did this not only because from His own sincerity of heart it was not in Him to be forever fencing around all His speeches, but also with a set purpose, because His speech was so plain that if any man misunderstood Him it would be the result of his own perversity of mind and not the effect of any obscurity in the Lord’s language. Thus by fixing a low and sensual meaning upon elevated spiritual language the men of His time would be discovered to be none of the Lord’s chosen—and the thoughts of many hearts would be revealed.

While He was preaching, His words were like a refiner’s fire, bringing out the pure metal, but separating it from the dross and making that dross to appear the worthless thing which it really was. It would clearly appear that men hated the light when they perverted the clearest expressions of the Lord of Light into foolishness or mystery. Our Lord’s mission was not so much to save all whom He addressed as to save out of them as many as His Father gave Him. And He used His mode of speaking as a test—those who were His understood Him. Those who were not His and were not taught of the Father, viciously put a *literal* meaning upon His *spiritual* words and so missed His Divine teaching. To this day the memorable expressions of our Lord in this chapter remain a stumbling block to some, while they are full of glorious instruction to others!

We see the world every day parting more and more definitely into two camps—the camp of the chosen of God, to whom is made known the mystery of the kingdom, the babes in Grace who read the simple teaching of the Gospel and rejoice in it—and on the other side the carnal host who hear the Word, but look no deeper than its outward letter, to whom it becomes a “savor of death unto death,” because they pervert the Lord’s spiritual Word to a carnal meaning and straightway heap unto themselves abounding ceremonies and pierce themselves through with deadly errors. I scarcely think that the prominence of Sacramentarianism nowadays is to

be altogether regretted—it is only a more clear and manifest severing of the precious from the vile.

There is a division as marked as between death and life, and as deep as Hell, between the spiritual Church which believes in Jesus and the carnal Church which believes in sacraments—between the regenerate who look to Christ upon the Cross—and the twice dead who believe in a piece of bread and pay reverence to a wine cup. The Savior spoke in symbols, that the proud might hear in vain—that hearing they might not hear and seeing they might not perceive—executing upon that self-conceited generation which rejected Him the judicial sentence of the Lord, for their hearts were waxen gross, their ears were dull of hearing and their eyes had they closed.

But now, speaking to those to whom the Lord has given to understand His meaning, let me say our Savior uses very simple figures. Think of His calling Himself bread! How condescending, that the most common article upon the table should be the fullest type of Christ! Think of His calling our faith an eating and a drinking of Himself! Nothing could be more instructive! At the same time nothing could better set forth His gentleness and humility of spirit that He does not object to speak thus of our receiving Him. God be thanked for the simplicity of the Gospel! The longer I live the more I bless God that we have not received a classical Gospel, or a mathematical Gospel, or a metaphysical Gospel! It is not a Gospel confined to scholars and men of genius, but a poor man's Gospel, a plowman's Gospel—and that is the kind of Gospel which we can live upon and die upon.

It is to us not the luxury of refinement, but the staple food of life. We need no fine words when the heart is heavy, neither do we need deep problems when we are lying upon the verge of eternity, weak in body and tempted in mind. At such times we magnify the blessed simplicity of the Gospel! Jesus in the flesh made manifest becomes our soul's bread. Jesus bleeding on the Cross, a Substitute for sinners, is our soul's drink. This is the Gospel for babes—and strong men need no more.

Again, it strikes me as being very noteworthy, and especially very worthy of thanks, that our Savior has taken metaphors of a very common character so that if our hearts are but right we cannot go anywhere but what we are reminded of Him. At our tables we are very apt to forget the best things. The indulgence of the appetite is not very promotive of spirituality, yet we cannot sit down to table but what the piece of bread speaks to us and says, "Poor Soul, you need even *bread* to be given you. You are so needy that your bread must be the gift of heavenly charity. Jesus has come down from Heaven to keep you from absolute starvation. He has come down to be bread and water to you." As you take up that loaf and think of the processes through which it has passed before it has become bread, it preaches a thousand sermons to you!

The sowing of Jesus as a grain of wheat in the earth. His grinding between the millstones of Divine wrath. His passing through the fiery oven. We see the sufferings of Jesus in every crumb we put into our mouths. Why, the Lord has hung the heavens with His name and made them tell of His love! Yon sun proclaims the Sun of Righteousness and every star speaks of the Star of Bethlehem. You cannot walk your garden, or go into the streets, or open a door, or put on your clothes without being reminded of the Lord Jesus!

I remember once visiting a poor Christian in the hospital who had often attended my ministry, and he said, "Why, Sir, you have given us so many illustrations, that as I lie in bed everything I see, or hear, or read of, brings to mind something in your sermons." How much more true is this of our Great Teacher! We are glad that He has hung up the Gospel everywhere till every dewdrop reflects Him and every wind whispers His name. Day and Night talk to each other of Him and the hours commune concerning things to come.

With this as a preface, let us come to our subject. Our text in a very simple way tells us, first, that Jesus Christ is to be received. That reception is here described—"I am the bread of life: he that comes to Me shall never hunger; and he that believes on Me shall never thirst." The second doctrine of the text is that when Jesus Christ is received, he is superlatively satisfying to the soul—"Shall never hunger"—"Shall never thirst."

I. THE LORD JESUS CHRIST IS TO BE RECEIVED BY EACH ONE OF US PERSONALLY FOR HIMSELF. An unappropriated Christ is no Christ to any man. Bread which is not eaten will not stop our hunger. The water in the cup may sparkle like purest crystal, but it cannot slake thirst unless we drink it. To get a personal hold of the Savior is the main thing and the question is how is this to be done. How is Jesus Christ to become a Savior to *me*? You will observe that in this chapter and, indeed, everywhere else, the mode of obtaining an interest in Christ is never mixed up with the idea of fitness, merit, preparation, or worth.

The text says, "He that comes to Me." It says nothing of preparation before coming, nor of any meritorious actions. It is a simple coming, as a beggar for alms, or a child for its father's help. The other description is, "He that believes on Me." There is nothing there of merit. In fact, faith stands in direct opposition to meritorious working. And if we read of eating Christ and drinking Christ, the act is entirely a *receptive* one, nothing given forth, but everything *received*, reminding us of that memorable passage, "To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believed on His name." It is all a matter of *receiving*, not of bringing to Christ! We come to Him empty-handed. We believe in Him without any deserving of our own and in that way, and in that way only, Jesus Christ becomes our Savior.

Let us dwell on these expressions for a few minutes. The first is, that we come to Him. "He that comes unto Me shall never hunger." I suppose

this represents the first act of faith by which men enter into spiritual life—we are alienated from Christ, but after hearing the Gospel we are, by the Holy Spirit, led to think of Him, to consider Him, to study Him and to judge that He is the Savior whom we need. Our alienation from Him is turned into desire for Him and we come to Him beseeching Him to be our Savior. *We come to Him.* It is a motion of the *heart* towards Him, not a motion of the feet, for many came to Jesus in body and yet never came to Him in truth. They were close to Him in the crowd, but they never touched Him so that virtue came out of Him. The coming here meant is performed by desire, prayer, assent, consent, trust, obedience. It means that I hear what Christ is and learn what God says He is—that He is God and that He is Man—that He came into the world to take the sins of men upon Himself and to be punished in their place.

I hear all this and assent to it. I believe in Jesus and I say, “If He died for all those who trust Him, I will trust Him. If He has offered so great a Sacrifice upon the tree for guilty men, I will rely upon that Sacrifice and make it the basis of my hope.” *That* is coming to Jesus Christ! The term is very simple, yet it is not so very easily explained to others because of its being so simple. If you are taught of the Father you will know full well what it is, but if not I fear that the most plain words will not make you understand. Perhaps I may illustrate coming to Jesus by an incident connected with the hymn which we sang just now.

I think I have read somewhere that Mr. Wesley was one morning dressing. His window looked out towards the sea and there was a heavy wind blowing. The waves were very boisterous and the rain was falling heavily. Just then a little bird, overtaken by the tempest, flew in at the open window and nestled in his bosom. Of course he cherished it there, and then bade it go on its way when the storm was over. Impressed by the interesting occurrence, he sat down and wrote the verse—

***“Jesus, lover of my soul,
Let me to your bosom fly
While the raging billows roll,
While the tempest still is high.
Hide me, O my Savior, hide me
Till the storm of life is past.”***

Imitate that poor little bird if you would have Christ—fly away from the wrath of God, fly away from your own convictions of sin, fly away from your dark forebodings of judgment to come—right into the bosom of Jesus which is warm with love to sinners—

***“Come, guilty souls, and flee away
Like doves to Jesus’ wounds;
This is the accepted Gospel day
Wherein free Grace abounds.”***

The second description given us of the way in which Christ becomes ours is by *believing* on Him. Here, again, I have to explain a word which needs no explanation except one flash of light from the Holy Spirit. And I question whether any other light was ever sufficient to make it clear. And

that not because of any real obscurity, but because of the willful blindness of unrenewed nature. To believe on Christ means to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the Savior of men. But it includes far more than that. You may be very orthodox in your notions about Christ. In fact, you may believe what the Bible states about Him and yet you may not have saving faith in Him. "He that believes on Me." What if I put the word "trusts" instead? "He that trusts in Me." Or he who leans all his weight on Me, who, knowing such and such things to be true, acts as if they were true and shows the reality of his belief by the simplicity of his reliance.

Knowing that Christ came to save sinners, the Believer says, "Then I depend upon Him to save *me*." Knowing that Jesus was the Substitute for human guilt, he says, "He is the Substitute for *my* guilt. If He came and took sin upon Himself, then I trust Him and therefore know that He took my sin, that He bore, that I might never bear, His Father's righteous ire." And is Christ really a man's Savior the moment he believes? Yes, the moment he believes! But suppose his former life has been scandalous? It is forgiven him for Christ's name sake. But suppose that the moment before he so trusted Christ there was no good thing in him whatever?

Jesus Christ died for the ungodly and He is "able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him." But suppose he should be imperfect afterwards? It is no supposition, he will be! But, "the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleanses us from all sin." A very blessed text assures us that, "There is a fountain opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness." It is not a fountain merely for common sinners, but for those who are God's people and yet sin. They still find cleansing where they found it at the first. "If any man sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the Righteous." Faith is an act of reliance upon Christ's great Sacrifice and wherever the Holy Spirit works it in men it makes Christ to be theirs—so that they shall never hunger and shall never thirst.

But I pass on to the third way in which we are said to receive Christ. It is not in the text in so many words, but we must consider it, because, though not there literally, it is there spiritually. It is eating and drinking. We are to eat Christ and to drink Christ. Oh, it is monstrous, it is monstrous that out of bedlam there should live men who should dream that Jesus taught us literally to eat His flesh and to drink His blood! I am more and more astounded at this 19th century. I have heard it praised for its enlightenment and progress till I am sick to death of the 19th century and am right glad that it is nearing its close. I hope the 20th century will be something better. Surely no period of time has been more given to superstition!

Even the age of witchcraft bids fair to be outdone by the age of Ritualists. Here you have idiots in high places—absolute, stark, staring idiots—who preach to men that they are to turn cannibals in order to be saved.

Surely such an act, if it could be perpetrated, must rather be the nearest way to be damned! What greater crime could there be than for men literally to eat the flesh of their own Savior? I cannot speak too strongly against so extraordinary, so monstrous a perversion of the teaching of our Lord. What He meant by our eating His flesh and blood is just this—we believingly receive Him into our *hearts* and our *minds* feed upon Him. We hear of Jesus Christ as the Son of God and as the Substitute for sinners—we believe it and so receive the Truth of God as men receive bread into the mouth.

Now, in eating we first put the food into our mouths. As a whole it goes into the mouth and even thus, as a whole, Christ Jesus is received into our belief and trust. The food being in the mouth, we proceed to chew it. It is broken up, it is dissolved. Our taste finds out its secret essence and flavor—and even in this way the believing mind thinks of Jesus, contemplates Him, meditates upon Him and discovers His preciousness. We see far more of our Lord after conversion than we did at first. We have believed in Him knowing but little of Him. But by-and-by we comprehend with all the saints what are the heights and depths and know the love of Christ which passes knowledge. Jesus becomes more comforting, and more delightful as we comprehend more clearly who and what He is. Our faith, which we placed implicitly upon Him, now sees a thousand reasons for a yet fuller confidence and so is strengthened.

For instance, the ordinary Believer believes in Jesus Christ because He is a Divine Savior. But the instructed Believer sees in Jesus Christ fitness, fullness, variety of offices, glory of Character, completeness of work, Immutability and a thousand other things which endear Him. In this way the Truth concerning the Lord is, as it were, masticated and enjoyed. But the process of eating goes further—the food descends into the inward parts to be digested—and there is a further breaking up and dissolving of it. So the great Truths of Incarnation and Sacrifice are made to dwell in the memory, to lie upon the heart, to rest in the affections till their essence, comfort and force are fully drawn forth. Oh, it is unbelievably refreshing to let these grand Truths of God dwell in us richly, to be inwardly digested!

Have you ever chewed the cud with the Truths of the Gospel, turning them over, and over, and over again as delicious morsels for your spiritual taste? Can you say with David, “How precious, also, are Your thoughts unto me, O God”? If so you know what spiritual eating is. When that is done the food is next assimilated and taken into the substance of the body. It passes from the digesting organs to those which assimilate it. Each portion of the body draws forth, in its turn, proper nutriment from the food and so the whole man is built up. It is just so with the great Truths, that Christ became Man and died in man’s place—these are inwardly received by us till our whole nature draws from them a satisfying and strengthening influence. By a sort of mystic sympathy the Truth of

God is being fitted to the mind and the mind requiring just such Truth, our whole nature drinks in Christ, and His Person and work become our mind's joy, delight, strength, and life. As a man thinks in his heart so he is, and therefore our thoughts of Jesus, and faith in Him, build us up into Him in all things.

Now, as a man who has feasted well and is no more hungry, rises from the table satisfied, so we feel that in Jesus our entire nature has all that it needs. Christ is All and we are filled in Him, complete in Him. This is to receive Christ. Beloved, if you want to have Christ altogether your own, you must receive Him by this process. Merely to trust Him gives you Christ as food in your mouth. To contemplate, to meditate, to commune with Him is to understand Him, even as food is digested and is ours. Further prayer and fellowship and meditation assimilate Christ so that He becomes part and parcel of our very selves. Christ lives in us and we in Him! We ought not to forget, as we are dwelling upon this, that the two points about Jesus Christ which He says are to us meat and drink, are His flesh and his blood.

We understand by His flesh, His Humanity—our soul feeds upon the literal, real, historical fact that “God was in Christ.” That, “the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us”—and men beheld His Glory, the Glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth. My soul's main comfort today is not a doctrine. I get a great deal of comfort out of many doctrines, but the bottom comfort of my soul is not a doctrine but a *fact*. And it is this fact—that He who made the heavens and the earth, and without whom was not anything made that was made, was born of the Virgin Mary at Bethlehem and for 30 years and more did actually, not in fiction or romance, but in very deed, dwell as a Man among men! That fact is my soul's food!

The historical fact that Christ Jesus was flesh and blood, bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh, a Man like ourselves—this, I say, is nourishment to our spirits, and believing it we feel a joy unutterable, for we know that He who sits upon the Throne of God is a Man. Jesus was made “a little lower than the angels,” but now, in the Person of Christ, He is crowned with glory and honor! We now know that God cannot hate manhood, because Christ is a Man. Christ has reconciled God to manhood because He represented manhood and the thoughts of God towards man are, for Christ's sake, thoughts of love and not of evil!

The other point in which Jesus is food to our mind is His blood. This most clearly refers to His sufferings and to His vicarious death. Bread and wine are put upon the communion table as separate symbols—not bread and wine mixed together—that would destroy the teaching. The wine is distinct from the bread, because when the blood is separated from the flesh there is before you the sure evidence of death. Now the true drink of a thirsty sinner is the *fact* that Christ died in his place. I will repeat what I said—my great hope as a sinner does not lie in a doctrine and my consola-

tion as a trembling criminal before the bar of God is not founded in any opinion or doctrinal statement—but in a FACT.

He who is very God of very God did hang upon a Cross of wood, upon the little mount of Calvary just outside the gates of Jerusalem, and there in unutterable agonies beneath the wrath of God made expiation for the sins of all who believe in Him! There is my hope! There is yours, my Brothers and Sisters. Yes, there is all our hope. Very well, then, do you not see that the way to obtain the benefits of the Lord Jesus Christ is to believe in His being God and Man, to believe in His dying as the God-Man, and to rest upon this, and to contemplate this, and to turn to it again and again and again, so that, having marked and learned, you may also inwardly digest those unspeakably glorious mysteries of Incarnation and of Sacrifice?

I have set the Gospel before you now, for if any man among you will do this, Christ is yours! Here is Christ to be had for nothing! Christ to be had simply by trusting Him, by coming to Him! As the vessel obtains its fullness by its emptiness being placed under the flowing stream. As the beggar's needs are relieved by putting out his empty hand to accept an alms, so you are to obtain Christ by coming to Him as empty sinners. He is given to you for nothing—freely given to you of God—and whoever will, may have Him! And if you have Him not, it is not because He has rejected you, for He has never rejected one that has come to Him, but because you have rejected Him. Dear fellow Sinners, may God the Holy Spirit grant you Grace to receive Jesus and to be saved by Him!

II. The second part of our subject is this. WHERE JESUS IS RECEIVED HE IS SUPREMELY SATISFYING. He is supremely satisfying, mark you, to our highest and deepest needs, not to mere fancies and whims. Christ compares the needs of men to hungering and thirsting. Now hungering is no sham. Those who have ever felt it know what a real need it indicates and what bitter pangs it brings. Thirst, also, is not a sentimental matter, it is a trial, indeed. What pain can be worse beneath the skies than thirst?

Now Jesus has come to meet the deep, real, pressing, vital needs and pains of your nature. Your fear of Hell, your terror of death, your sense of sin—all these Jesus has come to meet and all these He does meet in the case of all who come to Him—as everyone who has tried Him will bear witness. Jesus Christ meets the hungering of conscience. Every man with an awakened conscience feels that God must punish him for sin, but as soon as he perceives that the Son of God was punished instead of him, his conscience is perfectly appeased and will never hunger again. Until men know the Truth of the Substitution of Jesus you may preach to them what you will and they may go through all the sacraments, and they may suffer many bodily mortifications—but their conscience will still hunger.

My God, whom I offended, became a Man and for my sake He suffered what I ought to have suffered. Therefore my conscience rests gratefully contented with so divinely gracious a way of satisfying justice. Men, when

once awakened, have a hunger of fear. They look forward to the future and they scarcely know why, but they feel a dread of something indefinable and full of terror. And especially if they are near to die, horror takes hold upon them, for they know not what is yet to come—but when they find that Jesus Christ, who is God, became Man and died for men, that whoever trusts Him might be saved—then fear expires and love takes its place. The dove in the cleft of the rock feels no more rude alarms. Terror cannot live beneath the Cross, for there hope reigns supreme. Nor shall fear ever return, for the work of Jesus is finished and, therefore, no hiding place for fear is left.

The heart, also, has its hunger, for almost unknown to itself it cries, “O that someone loved me and that I could love someone whose love would fill my nature to the brim.” Men’s hearts are gluttons after love. Yes, like death and the grave they are insatiable. They hunt here and there, but are bitterly disappointed, for earth holds not an object worthy of all the love of a human heart. But when they hear that Jesus Christ loved them before the world was, and died for them, their roving affections find rest. Like as Ruth found rest in the house of a husband, do we come to peace in Jesus. The love of Jesus casts out all hankering for other loves and fills the soul! He becomes the Bridegroom of our heart, our best Beloved, and we bid the meaner things depart.

In the love of the Father and the Son we dwell in sweet content, hungering and thirsting no more. If the ocean of Divine Love cannot fill us, what can? What more can a man need or wish for?—

***“My God, I am Yours.
What a comfort Divine,
What a blessing to know
That my Savior is mine!
In the Heavenly Lamb
Thrice happy I am,
And my heart it does dance
At the sound of His name.”***

The heart’s hunger is removed eternally by Jesus. Then there are vast desires in us all and when we are quickened those desires expand and enlarge. Man feels that he is not in his element and is not what he was intended to be. He is like a bird in the shell, he feels a life within him too great to be forever confined within such narrow bounds. Do you not, dear Friends, feel great longings? Does not your soul seethe with high ambitions? Our immortal nature frets beneath the burden of mortality! Its spiritual nature is weary of the chains of materialism.

That hungering will never be hushed into content till we receive Christ, but when we have Him we learn that we are the sons of God, heirs of God, joint heirs with Christ and that it does not yet appear what we shall be, but when He shall appear we shall be like He is, for we shall see Him as He is. This opens up before us a splendid future of unfading glory and unbounded bliss—and we feel that we need no more. Since we are Christ’s

and Christ is God's, all things are ours and our hunger is forever over. The only contented man in the whole world is he who has believed in Jesus and he is contented just because he has obtained all that his nature needs—

***“Let others stretch their arms like seas,
And grasp in all the shore,
Grant me the blessings of Your Grace,
And I desire no more.”***

Because I could not desire more than all and Christ is All in All.

My Beloved, this perfect satisfying of our nature is to be found nowhere else but in Christ. Some have tried to be satisfied with themselves and their own doings. They have despised the bread of Heaven, for they dreamed that they could live without bread—they would be self-contained men—they would make themselves happy with themselves. But it is a wretched failure. The poor Bushmen, when they have nothing to eat, tie a girdle around them and call it the hunger belt. And when they have gone a few days they pull it tighter and tighter still, in order to enable them to bear hunger—so any man who has to live upon himself will have to draw the hunger belt very tight, indeed. A soul cannot be persuaded by philosophy to content itself without its necessary food. Eloquence may try all its charms to that end, but it will be in vain.

Who can convince a hungry man that he needs not eat? Some have gone to Moses for bread and, mark you, the two greatest bread-givers in the world are Moses and Christ. Moses fed the tribes in the wilderness for 40 years and Jesus feeds His people always. But Moses' bread never satisfies. Those who eat it, before long call it light bread. And if they have been satisfied with it for a time, yet there is the mournful reflection that their fathers did eat it and are dead. There is no life in the bread of the Law. But he who gets Christ has a bread of which he shall eat forever and ever, and shall never die. I am told that there is country—I think it is Patagonia—where men in times of need eat clay in great lumps. They fill themselves with it, so as to deaden their hunger. I know that many people in England do the same.

There is a kind of yellow clay which is much cried up for staying spiritual hunger—heavy stuff it is, but many have a vast appetite for it. They prefer it to the choicest dainties. When a man fills his heart with it, it presses him down to the very earth and prevents his rising into life. Some have tried to stay their hunger by the narcotics of skepticism and have dosed themselves into lethargy. Others have endeavored to get ease through the drugs of fatalism. Many stave off hunger by indifference, like the bears in winter which are not hungry because they are asleep. Such persons come to the House of God asleep. They would not like to be aroused, for if they were to do so they would wake up to an awful hunger. I wish they could be awakened, for that hunger which they dread would drive them to a soul-satisfying Savior. But, depend upon it, the only way

to meet hunger is to eat bread, and the only way to meet your soul's need is to get Christ in whom there is enough and to spare, but nowhere else.

I shall close by saying that all Believers bear witness that Jesus Christ is satisfying bread to them. When do you get most satisfied on a Sunday, Beloved? I do not know whom you may happen to hear, but what Sundays are the best to you? When your minister rides the high horse and gives you a splendid oration, and you say, "Dear me, it is wonderful"—have you ever felt satisfied to think it over on Monday? Have you ever felt satisfied with sermons composed of politics and morality, or very nice essays which would suit the Saturday Review if they were a little more caustic? Do you enjoy such meat? I will tell you when I enjoy a Sunday most—when I preach Christ most—or when I can sit and hear a humble village preacher exalt the Lord Jesus.

It does not matter if the grammar is poor, so long as Jesus is there! What some call platitudes are dainties to me if they glorify my Lord Jesus Christ. Anything about Him is satisfying to a renewed spirit—cannot you bear witness to that? When I have preached up Jesus Christ—and I think I generally do so, for the fact is, I do not know anything but Him, and I am determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him Crucified. Then, I say, I know you go away and say, "After all, that is what we need—Christ Crucified, Christ the sinner's substitutionary Sacrifice, no sham Christ, no mere talk about Christ as an example, but His flesh and blood, a dying, bleeding, suffering Christ—that is what we need." Now I have the witness of every Christian here to that! You are never satisfied with anything but that—are you? No matter how cleverly the doctrine might be analyzed, or however orthodox it might be, you cannot be content with it—you must have the Person of Christ, the flesh and the blood of Christ—or else you are not content.

And, Beloved, those who have once eaten and drunk Christ never seek additional ground of trust beyond Christ. They never say, "I am resting upon Christ, but still I should like to be able to depend a little on my Baptism." I never heard a Christian talk in that fashion in my life! I never heard a man say, "I rest in the blood of Jesus, but still, I wish that I could have a bishop's hands put upon my head so as to give me a confirmation of my faith." I never heard that in my life and I do not expect I ever shall! We are perfectly satisfied without priests, and without sacraments! Jesus Christ is the one sole Foundation upon which we build!

Again, I have never found those who rest in Christ needing to shift their confidence. Those who need something new every Sunday are those who know not the Savior. Truly, if you have not the bread from Heaven, you may well cry out for all manner of dishes, for each one will soon spoil. But if you have the bread of Heaven, you need Christ on the first of January and every day till the last of December. I have never heard a Christian assert that Christ did not satisfy them in the days of sickness or in the hour

of death. I came to you this morning fresh from the sick bed of a venerable Christian man, close upon his 80th year, and I said to him, "Now, dear Sir, here are three or four young people around your bed. We are going forth on our pilgrimage relying on Christ, believing that He is faithful and true. You have gone a great deal further than we have. Will you, therefore, kindly correct us if we are under a mistake? Have you found that the Lord has not fulfilled His Word? Have you found that He has not been true?"

It was a blessed sight to see the man of God and hear him say, "Not one good thing has failed of all that the Lord God has promised." And then he added, "I will sing of mercy, for it has been mercy, all mercy, all the way through." "Do you feel any fear about departure?" I said to him. "Oh! dear, no," he said. "I am willing to wait, or willing to go. But I am full of the expectation of beholding Him who loved me and gave Himself for me." Ah, the bridge of Grace will bear your weight, Brothers and Sisters! Thousands of big sinners have gone across that bridge, yes, tens of thousands have gone over it! I can hear their tramping, now, as they traverse the great arches of the bridge of Salvation.

They come by the thousands, by the myriads! Ever since the day when Christ first entered into His Glory, they come, and yet never a stone has sprung in that mighty bridge. Some have been the chief of sinners and some have come at the very last of their days, but the arch has never yielded beneath their weight! I will go with them trusting to the same support! It will bear me over as it has borne them! They who have eaten Christ and drunk Christ shall not hunger or thirst in their last hour, trying as it will be.

Saints have died saying, "Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for You are with me. Your rod and Your staff they comfort me. You prepare a table for me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil. My cup runs over." God grant us Grace to live upon Christ evermore. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 6:26-63.

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

HIGH DOCTRINE AND BROAD DOCTRINE NO. 1762

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON, AT EXETER HALL.

“All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and him that comes to Me I will by no means cast out.”
John 6:37.

THESE two sentences have been looked upon as representing two sides of Christian doctrine. They enable us to see it from two standpoints—the Godward and the manward. The first sentence contains what some call high doctrine. If by “high” they mean “glorious towards God,” I fully agree with them, for it is a grand, God-honoring Truth which our Lord Jesus declares in these words—“*All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me.*” Some have styled this side of the Truth of God Calvinistic, but while it is true that Calvin taught it, so, also, did Augustine, Paul and our Lord, Himself, whose Words are these. However, I will not quarrel with those who see in this sentence a statement of the great Truth of God of predestinating Grace.

The second sentence sets forth blessed, encouraging, evangelical doctrine and is, in effect, a promise and an invitation—“*Him that comes to Me I will by no means cast out.*” This is a statement without limitation of any kind. It has been thought to leave the free Grace of God open to the free will of man, so that whoever pleases may come and may be sure that he will not be refused. We have no permission to pare down either sentence, nor is there the slightest need to do so. The first sentence appears to me to say that God has chosen a people and has given these people to Christ—and these people *must* and *shall* come to Christ—and shall be saved. The second Truth of God declares that every man who comes to Christ shall be saved, since he shall not be cast out—and that implies that he shall be received and accepted. These are two great Truths of God—let us carry them both with us and they will balance each other.

I was once asked to reconcile these two statements and I answered, “No, I never reconcile friends.” These two passages never fell out—they are perfectly agreed! It is folly to imagine a difference and then set about removing it! It is like making a man of straw and then going out to fight with it. The grand declaration of the purpose of God that He will save His own is quite consistent with the widest declaration that whoever will come to Christ shall be saved! The pity is that it should ever be thought to be a difficulty in the two Truths, or that, supposing there is a difficulty, we should have thought it our duty to remove it.

Believe me, my dear Hearers, the business of removing religious difficulties is the least remunerative labor under Heaven. The truest way is to accept the difficulty, wherever you find it in God’s Word, and to exercise your faith upon it. It is unreasonable to suppose that faith is to be exempted from trials—all the other Divine Graces are exercised—and why should not faith be put to the test? I often feel a joy within my spirit in having to believe what I cannot understand! And sometimes, when I have to say to myself, “How can it be?” I find a joy in replying that it is so written and, therefore, it must be so. In spite of all reasoning stands the ut-

terance of God—our Father speaks and doubts are silenced—His Spirit writes and we believe! I feel great pleasure in gliding down the river of Revelation upon a voyage of discovery and, hour by hour, obtaining fresh knowledge of Divine Truths.

But when I come to an end of progress and see my way blocked up by a sublimely awful difficulty, I find equal pleasure in casting anchor under the lee of the obstacle and waiting till the Pilot tells me what to do next. When we cannot go *through* a Truth of God, we may be led over it, or around it and what does that matter? Our highest benefit comes not of answering riddles, but of obeying commands by the power of love! Suppose we can see no further into the subject—what then? Shall we be troubled about that? Must there not be an end of human knowledge *some-where*? May we not be perfectly satisfied for God to appoint the boundary of understanding? Let us not, therefore, run our heads against difficulties of our own invention—and certainly not against those which God has seen fit to leave for us.

Take, then, these two Truths of God, and know that they are equally precious portions of one harmonious whole! Let us not quibble over them, or indulge a foolish favoritism for one and a prejudice against the other, but let us receive both with a candid, large-hearted love of the Truth of God such as children of God should exhibit. We are not called upon to explain, but to accept! Let us *believe* if we cannot reconcile! Here are two jewels—let us wear them both. As surely as this Book is true, God has a people whom He has chosen and whom Christ has redeemed from among men! And these must and shall, by Sovereign Grace, be brought, in due time, to repentance and faith, for not one of them shall ever perish.

But yet is it equally true that whoever among the sons of men shall come and put his trust in Christ shall receive eternal life. “Whoever will, let him take the Water of Life freely.”—

**“None are excluded but those
Who do themselves exclude.
Welcome the learned and polite,
The ignorant and rude.”**

The two Truths of my text are by no means inconsistent with each other—they are perfectly agreed. Happy is the man who can believe them both, whether he sees their agreement or does not see it. I was cruising, one day, in the western Highlands. It had been a splendid day and the glorious scenery had made our journey like an excursion to Fairy Land. But it came to an end, for darkness and night asserted their primeval sovereignty. Right ahead was a vast headland of the isle of Arran. How it frowned against the evening sky! The mighty rock seemed to overhang the sea. Just at its base was a little bay and into this we steamed and there we lay at anchorage all night, safe from every wind that might happen to be seeking out its prey. In that calm loch we seemed to lie in the mountain’s lap while its broad shoulders screened us from the wind.

Now, the first part of my text, “All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me,” rises like a huge headland high into the heavens. Who shall scale its height? Upon some it seems to frown darkly. But here at the bottom lies the placid, glassy lake of Infinite Love and Mercy—“Him that comes to Me I will by no means cast out.” Steam into it and be safe under the shadow of the great rock! You will be the better for the mountain-truth as

your boat snugly reposes within the glittering waters at its foot—while you may thank God that the text is not all mountain to repel you—you will be grateful that there is enough of it to secure you.

First, I shall bid you view that goodly mountain and then we shall sail into that pleasant loch.

I. Consider, then, with reverential joy **THE ETERNAL PURPOSE.** Our Lord Jesus Christ, when He found that the mass of the people rejected Him, turned round upon them and said, “You believe not, because you are not of My sheep.” He knew in His own heart that even if *they* refused Him, *all* would not do so—a number would assuredly believe on Him. Therefore He boldly said, “All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me.” He threw this grand fact in the teeth of His fierce revilers! It was His own comfort and their rebuke.

Now, I do not want to throw it at anybody tonight! On the contrary, I desire to use it as a beckoning finger to any troubled heart that longs to come to Jesus and be saved. I saw the other day, round a gentleman’s park, a very strong and lofty palisade—and to recomplete the exclusive apparatus, a superabundant number of tenter-hooks were nailed upon the top of the fence and a liberal quantity half-way up. I somewhat jokingly observed upon the kindness of the proprietor, in placing so many nails for the boys to climb up by—and so many more for them to hold on by when once they were up. “Why,” said my companion, “those tenter-hooks would tear fingers and clothes to pieces! They are no help to climbers.” “No,” I replied, “No more help to climbers than the remarks which your minister made upon the Sovereignty of God could be considered to be no help to seekers of the Lord Jesus.”

The good man set forth the truth in the most awkward and pernicious manner possible; not making, thereof, steps for earnest climbers, but tenter-hooks for unwelcome intruders. I never yet saw such a crowd desirous of salvation that there was the slightest call for fences and tenter-hooks to keep them out—but I do see so many tremblers needing encouragement—and so many doubters needing instruction that I delight to turn every Word, promise and doctrine of the Lord into sweet invitations to all around me to come and welcome to the great heart of the Crucified! I am not afraid that too many will come—my fears are all in the opposite direction! Oh, that I could hope that all my present hearers would come to Jesus at once!

First, notice carefully, that if all that the Father gives to Christ shall come to Him, *then some people shall most surely come to Christ*—and why should not *you* be among them? This seems to me to be a sweet suggestion for the help of despondency when she is at her worst—some must come to Christ, why should not I come? When the devil says to you, “You cannot come to Christ,” and you, yourself, feel as if you could not come. When sin hampers you, when doubt drags you down, when you cannot do what you want to do—still it is decreed and determined that *some* people must come—then why not you? By Divine decree they shall come! Why should not you be among them? Does not that help you? If God blesses it, you will no longer sit on the borders of despair!

Suppose there is a plague in the city, but there are some people predestinated to be healed? I would be glad to know of that fact! I would be almost glad of it if it was sure that I was *not* one of the favored ones, for I re-

joyce in the good of others—but I would be still more glad to press to the physician with this assurance upon my mind—some must be healed, why should not I? There is a famine in the land. I hear that it is revealed by a sure prophet that a certain number never shall die of famine. Then why should not I outlive the dreadful days and be among them? Why not? I hear one say, “Suppose I am *not* one of God’s elect?” To Him I answer, “Suppose you are?” Better still, suppose that you leave off supposing altogether and just go to Jesus Christ and see!

To go to Him is your wisdom—your immediate business, as laid down in His Word—therefore, delay not! Instead of shutting myself *out*, as some do, because it is written, “All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me”—I shut myself *in* and say—“Then I will be among them.” Why should I not? Oh, Lord, if You have ordained that some shall come, then I see that to them no difficulties can be insuperable and I will, therefore, come to You, myself, and in Your name enter in where every coming one is welcome!

In the next place, I find that *those that come to Christ, according to this text, come because of the Father and the Son*. Read it. “All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me.” That is, they come to Jesus. Why is it that they are made to come? Because the Father has given them to Christ! Why is it that they shall come? Is it because there is some good thing in them? No, there is *nothing* said upon that point either one way or the other. Is it because they have strong wills and firm determinations and, therefore, come? The Scripture is equally silent upon that point, except that it says elsewhere that the New Birth is *not* of the will of man! The reason that is given why they shall come to Jesus is because something was done *for* them by the Father and by the Son. Why, then, should I not come?

Suppose I am weak? Suppose I am sinful? Suppose I am seven times more sinful than anybody else? Yet, since this “shall come” depends not on the character of those to whom the promise is made, but upon a certain something done for them by the Father and the Son, why should I not be among those for whom the Father and the Son have done this certain thing? And why should I not, therefore, be made to come to Jesus? There never was a soul that really wanted to come to Jesus but what it could come and did come! There never was a pining, longing sinner that was long kept away from Christ! When he wanted Christ, Christ wanted him a hundred times as much!

If you have the least desire or the faintest longing after the Lord Jesus Christ, then the cords of love are about you and His mighty hands are drawing home those cords! Yield to the sweet pressure and you shall come, not because of what you *are*, or what you have ever been, but because of what the Father is doing and because of what the Son is doing! It is written, “No man can come to Me except the Father which has sent Me draws him.” And when He is drawing, you can come. The Father is drawing you since you are longing to come and are anxious to find a Savior! Now, do not turn this Truth of God about so as to set it edgeways and make a *chevaux de frise* of it to keep yourself from getting to Christ. The doctrine of the Divine Purpose is not a thorn hedge to keep you off from the Tree of Life—on the contrary, you are bound to regard it as an open door! “Some must come. Why not I? Those that come do so because of

something done for them by the Father and of the Son—why should not that have been done for me? Why should I not draw near to God?”

Notice, thirdly, that *these people are, all of them, saved because they come to Christ*. Observe the words—“All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me.” They are not saved in any other way than by *coming to Christ*. Here are certain people that are different from others, for the Father has *given* them to Christ. Yes, but it does not matter how different they are from others—they have to be saved in the same way as other people. There is no way of salvation specially prepared for these peculiar people—they must still follow the King’s highway. The one common way of salvation is by coming to Christ—and all that the Father has given to Christ must come in by this gate! This is the one door that God has opened—there is no other—there shall never be any other!

Come! Pluck up heart, my dear Friend—you that are bowing your head like a bulrush—the best saint in Heaven found his way there by a simple trust in Jesus Christ! Why cannot you get there in the same way? Many sinners of the deepest dye have been saved through Jesus Christ—and why should not *you* be saved in the same way? Ask Peter, and James, and John, and Paul and all the rest of them, whether they entered into Heaven by a private bridge thrown across for them, alone—and they will tell you that they were saved by the one Redeemer! As no Scripture is of private interpretation, so be sure that there is no private and secret Savior for a few favored persons!

Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. God’s elect can only be saved by coming to Christ. Jesus says, “All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me,” for they cannot be saved any other way! Coming to Christ is the one essential thing. “Oh,” says one, “I sometimes wish that I knew whether I was one of God’s elect.” Why should you wish to know anything out of its turn, when you can learn every Truth that you need by studying other Truths which lead up to it? You *come* to Christ and you will know that you were *given* to Christ—for none come to Him but those who are His—and by their *coming* to Him they give the best evidence of their *election*.

You know what the Brother in Cornwall said to Malachi, who was rather a stout Calvinist? He said, “Now, Malachi, I owe you £2. Before I discharge the debt I need you to tell me whether I am predestinated to pay you.” Malachi opened wide his hand and said, “Put the £2 there and I will tell you directly.” Like most sensible folk, he preferred to prophesy *after* the event—and there are many advantages in keeping to that method! It is evidently the natural order of things for uninspired folk. Whether the Father gave me to Christ or not, I cannot discover till I know whether I have come to Christ! When I know that I have truly come to Christ with all my heart, then I am *certain* that I was *given* to Christ and I find no difficulty in so believing! Yes, my heart is glad to think that I am saved in the same way as others are saved!

Yet, once again, *from this text it is most clear that if I come to Christ, the Father gave me to Christ*. If I, whoever I may be, do but simply trust Jesus—for that is the coming, here, meant—then I am one whom the Father gave to His Son. If, just as I am, I cast myself upon His blood and righteousness and become His disciple, sworn to follow Him, hoping, by His help, to tread in His footsteps—then I may know that, long before the day-

star knew its place, or planets ran their round, the Eternal Father had looked upon me with eyes of everlasting love—and that He still accepts me and will never cast me away! Is it not so? “All that the Father gives Me shall come to me” and, if I have come, then the Father has given me to Christ! The great question is answered; the eternal mystery is unveiled and my spirit may rejoice in God, my Savior, and in all the precious things of that Everlasting Covenant which is ordered in all things and sure!

So much about that huge, overhanging mass of rock! Of that I am going to say no more. Only under its lee I have anchored long ago and at that anchorage I mean, still, to remain. Since I have come to Jesus, I know that I belong to Him by the Great Father’s gift—and I am right well assured that the purpose of God shall be fulfilled in me—and that He will assuredly bring me, with all the rest of His elect, to His Kingdom and Glory, where we shall see His face forever! This may be called old-fashioned doctrine—I care not what it is called—it is my *life* and I dare rest my soul’s weight upon it for time and for eternity!

II. Now we enter into smooth water—the mystery is opened, let us partake of the joy of it. We have, in the second place, to speak to you for a little time on THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL—“Him that comes to Me I will by no means cast out.” You may forget my first head if you like, especially if you are troubled by it, but I earnestly beseech you remember the second. “Him that comes to Me I will by no means cast out.” This is one of the most generous Gospel texts that I remember to have met with between the covers of this Book. Generous, first, as to *the character to whom the promise is made*. “Him that comes to Me”—that is the character. The man may have been guilty of an atrocious sin, too black to mention, but if he comes to Christ, he shall not be cast out!

To that atrocious sin he may have added many others, till the condemning list is full and long—but if he comes to Christ, he shall not be cast out. He may have hardened his neck against the remonstrances of prudence and the entreaties of mercy. He may have sinned deeply and willfully—but if he comes to Christ, he shall not be cast out! He may have made himself as black as night—as black as Hell—but if he shall come to Christ, the Lord will not cast him out! I cannot tell what kind of persons may have come into this Hall tonight—but if burglars, murderers and dynamite-men were here, I would still bid them come to Christ, for He will not cast them out!

I suppose that the most of you are tolerably decent as to moral character and to you I say, if you come to Christ, He will not cast you out. Children of godly parents, hearers of the Word of God, He will not cast you out! You who lack only one thing, but that the one thing necessary, He will not cast you out! Backsliders! Are there some such here who have almost forgotten the way to God’s sanctuary—for whom the Sabbath bell proclaims no Sabbath now? Come to Jesus and He will not cast you out! Oh, you Londoners, you have grown weary of God’s House and of God’s Day—millions of you, but if with all your irreligion you are here tonight, this Truth of God holds good for you, also—if you trust in Jesus, He will not cast you out!

If, amidst this company, there should be some whose characters we had better not describe and who already shrink into themselves at the very idea of being picked out and mentioned by name—yet if such persons

come to Jesus, He will gladly receive them! Be your character what it may, you who are wrapped in mystery—you shall not be cast out! I wish that I could convince those who are troubled about a life of grievous sin, for to the life-long transgressor the text is still true! My Lord proclaims an act of oblivion concerning all the past. It shall be as though it had never been! Through Jesus Christ, if you will but believe in Him, the whole past shall be rolled up and put away as though it had never known an existence—and you, yourself, shall be born again!

When Naaman came up from washing in the Jordan we read that, “His flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child and he was clean.” And so it shall be with you. The old man took the fair-haired child upon his knee and ran his fingers through its locks, and said, “Young child, God keep you from the sin into which I have plunged. My old life is full of evil. It is now almost over and I am past hope. Would God I were a child again!” Lo, the Angel of Mercy whispers to anyone in that condition, “You may be a child again!” The man a hundred years of age may yet be made a child! And he that is a gray-beard in infamy may yet become a babe in innocence through the cleansing power of the water and the blood which flowed from the side of Jesus!

Go and write it across the brow of night! Write it in new stars if you can—“Him that comes to Me I will by no means cast out.” Then hang it up over the midday heavens and let the sun cast all his beams upon it, till it seems written in the splendor of God—“Him that comes to Me I will by no means cast out.” The character who will be received is not mentioned, lest in mentioning one sinner, another should seem to be excluded. No limit is set to the extent of sin—any “him” in all the world—any blaspheming, devilish “him” that comes to Christ shall be welcomed! I use strong words that I may open wide the gate of mercy. Any “him” that comes to Christ—though he come from slum or taproom, betting ring or gambling hall, prison or brothel—Jesus will by no means cast out!

Further, this text is a very generous one because *it gives no limit to the coming*. The only limit to the *way* of coming is that they come to Christ. I have known some come to Christ *running* to Him—a willing, speedy, earnest pace. You read of that in the Gospels. They were so glad to hear of a Savior that they flew to Him at once! Many young children and young people do this and they are blessed in the deed. Come along with you, you lively and tender spirits! He will not cast you out if you leap and rush to Him! If you run all of a sudden to Him tonight—if you make a dash for Christ—He will not cast you out. Alas, a great many, when they come to Christ, advance very limpingly. They are burdened with a huge load of sin and fettered with doubts and fears—and so they make slow progress. They do not look to Jesus and live all at once. They keep looking here and looking there, instead of looking to *Him*. They are a long while in coming, for they are afraid, ignorant and dull.

Never mind, Brothers and Sisters. The snail got into the Ark! And if you come to Christ, He will not cast you out though your pace is sadly sluggish. Some look to Christ as soon as they hear of Him, with clear, bright eyes like those of Rachel. Oh, such a look! They seem to drink in Christ and His salvation all at once with those bright eyes. But I have met with many whose look is like that of Leah, who had *tender* eyes—they look through the mists of their doubt and the showers of their tears—and they

do not half see Christ as they should. Yes, but that half-clouded look will save them! *Any* looking will save you if it is looking *to Christ*—and any coming, if it is coming *to Christ*, will save you!

Coming to sacraments may condemn you! Coming to priests will ruin you! But coming to Christ will save you! If your simple faith takes hold of Christ's salvation, there is life in that grip. If your thoughts think of Him, if your heart embraces Him, if your soul trusts Him, however weakly and imperfectly you do it, He will not cast you out! Oh, this is glorious truth to my mind—is it not so to yours? So long as we but come to Him, our Savior will not cast us away! I feel glad to be preaching this Gospel in Exeter Hall—are you not glad to hear it? If you are not, you are a sorry lot.

Thirdly, *there is no limit, here, as to time*. “Him that comes to Me I will by no means cast out” is a glorious, free utterance, compassing every age. There may be some little children here—indeed, I am glad to see boys and girls mingling with the congregation. Listen to me, my children! I am always glad to see you and we preachers make a great mistake if we do not preach to you. Oh, dear John and Jane, Mary and Thomas—I wish you would come to Christ while you are yet young—and put your trust in Him and become young Christians. There is no reason why you should not! You are old enough to die; and you are old enough to sin; and you are old enough to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ! Why should you not do so at once?

When I was just about 15 years of age I was helped by God's Spirit to cast myself upon Christ. And have I ever regretted that I came to Jesus so soon? No! I wish that I could have come 15 years before and that I had known Christ as soon as I learned to know my mother! Some of you have heard about Jesus from your infancy. His name was part of the music with which your mother sang you to sleep. Oh, that you may know Jesus by faith as well as by hearing! Do not think that you have to wait till you are grown up before you may come to Jesus. We have baptized quite a number of boys and girls of 10, 11 and twelve. I spoke the other day with a little boy nine years of age and I tell you that he knew more about Christ than many gray-headed men do—and he loved Jesus most heartily!

As the sweet child talked to me about what Christ had done for him, he brought tears into my eyes, to see how happily and brightly he could speak of what he had felt in his own soul, of the Savior's power to bless. You young children are like rosebuds and you know everybody likes a rosebud better than a full-blown rose. My Lord Jesus will gladly receive you as rosebuds! Offer yourselves to Him, for He will not cast you away! I am sure He never will. If any here are in the opposite extremity of life, I would remind them that, “him that comes to Me I will by no means cast out” applies to the aged as well as to the young!

I heard it said by a minister—a very earnest man—that if persons were not converted before they were 45, he hardly believed that they would ever be converted afterwards. And he gave it as a note of his observation that he had not seen any persons converted after forty-five. I wished that I had been in his pulpit. I should not have questioned his statements, but I would have overlaid them with others of another character. Surely this Brother had been living in some minute hamlet or other, or else he had never preached the Gospel, in its fullness, to every creature! Perhaps he did not believe in the conversion of the aged and, consequently, no aged

persons were converted by his means. I have seen as many people converted of one age as another—that is to say, in proportion to the number of them—for there are not so many people in the world over 50 as there are under 50 and, consequently, a large proportion of those persons who make up our congregations are young.

We have in our regular gatherings a fair number of all ages. And as to the additions to the Church, I have noticed that there is about the same proportion of very young children as of very old men and women. We have baptized, upon profession of faith, men and women over 80 years of age, about whose conversion we had as firm a conviction as we had about the conversions of the little ones—neither more nor less. Who shall dare say that there is an age after which God's Grace does not work? I challenge anyone to bring a text which looks that way! Furthermore, I challenge the truth of any observations which arrive at such a result. My own preaching has been such that young and old in equal proportions have attended it and in equal proportions they have been saved. However old you may be, my Master bids me say to you, "him that comes to Me I will by no means cast out."

Come along, come along, dear old Friend, though you cannot come without your cane! Come along, though your eyes are failing—come in your spectacles! Though you cannot do much for my Master, He can do everything for you! Though you have only a little time to live on earth, you will have all eternity in Heaven through which you can praise Him! I am sure you will be one of the most eager at that work. I think you will be like an old woman of my acquaintance. When I spoke to her about her conversion at an advanced age, she said, "Sir, if the Lord Jesus Christ ever does save such a poor old sinner as I am, He shall never hear the last of it." That is just why I want Him to save you—for then He will never hear the last of it! You will praise Him forever and forever for what He has done for you! Will you not?

Oh, my dear Hearers, come to Jesus! Come in the morning when the dew is on your branch, for He will not cast you out. Come in the heat of noon, when the drought of care parches you—and He will not cast you out. Come when the shadows have grown long and the darkness of the night is gathering about you, for He will not cast you out! The door is not shut, for the gate of Mercy closes not, so long as the gate of Life is open! Oh, fly to Christ and find mercy, now!

Once again, dear Friends, I want you to notice in my text *the blessed certainty of this salvation*. "Him that comes to Me I will by no means cast out." Two or three negatives in the Greek language make a negation stronger, though they would have no such effect in the English tongue. It is a very strong negative here. "Him that comes to Me I will *not not* cast out," or, "I will *never never* cast out." As much as to say—On no account, or for no reason, or on no pretence, or from no motive whatever will I ever, in time or in eternity, cast out the soul that comes to Me. That is how it stands—a declaration of absolute certainty from which there can be no escaping! What a blessed thing it is to get your foot on certainties!

Certain preachers, who are much cried up nowadays, are very uncertain preachers, for they do not, themselves, know what they will be propounding tomorrow! They make their creed as they go along and a very poor one it is when they make it. I believe in something sure and certain,

namely, in Infallible Scripture and that which the Lord has written therein, never to be altered while the world stands. My text is certain as the Truth of Christ Jesus and if we have ever seen that beautiful face of His, we could not distrust *Him*! Can your imagination picture, for a minute, the ever-blessed face of the Son of God? Could you look into that face and suspect Him of a lie? And when He says, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believes in Me has everlasting life,” the saying must be true! If you believe in Him, you have everlasting life!

When He says, “him that comes to Me I will never never cast out,” the declaration must be true. He never, never, can cast you out, whoever you may be, however long you may live, or whatever else may happen—if you but come to Him! There are plenty of reasons, apparently, why He *should* cast you out, but He has knocked them all on the head by saying, “I will by no means cast out!” That is, “In no way, and under no pretext, will I ever cast out a soul that comes to Me.” Now, if Christ does not cast us out, then He receives us—and if He receives us, we are received into the heart of God! We are received into eternal life and, by-and-by, we shall be received into everlasting blessedness! Oh, the joy of my text, in that it is so certain!

So I shall close here, dear Friends, with just a word or two of further encouragement by noticing *the personality of my text*, for in this, a part of the liberality consists. Do you observe that the first part of the text began with, “All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me”? Yes, but when Christ began to deal with sinners with broken hearts, He dropped the, “all,” and every form of general statement, and He came to the personal singular pronoun —“*him* that comes to Me I will by no means cast out.” Now, herein He meant to say to everyone in this Hall, “If *you* come to Me, I will not cast *you* out.” It is not, “If you *and another* come,” for, if so, it would be put in the plural—“If *you* come.” But it is, “*him* that comes.” You *alone*! Your servant alone! Your child alone! But specially *yourself* alone—if *YOU* come to the Lord Jesus, He will not cast you out!

You cannot doubt this. Come, then, my dear Hearers, believe your Savior! I am not talking, tonight, to persons who doubt the veracity of the Son of God. I am not talking to persons who think Christ a liar. You know that He would receive *you* if you would come. Then, why do you not come? But you mean to come, do you, by-and-by? Then why not *now*? What is it that holds you back? How dare you delay! Will you be alive next week? How can you be sure of a day, or an hour? When money is to be given away, I do not find that persons generally delay to receive it, and say, “I should rather have it next year.” No, they say, “A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.”

Oh, to have Christ in the hand and to get Him now! And why not *now*? Is it because you really do not understand what it is to receive Him, or to believe in Him? It is, indeed, the simplest thing in the world—and that is the only reason why it is so difficult! It is so exceedingly simple that men cannot believe that it can be as we put it. Indeed, it is so! Faith is simply to *trust* Christ! And trusting Christ brings with it the new life and salvation from sin. I sometimes put it in Watt’s way —

**“A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On Christ’s kind arms I fall.”**

But after I had once been preaching, a young man said to me, "Sir, I cannot *fall*." "Oh dear," I said, "then I do not know how to talk; for I meant not a thing you could *do*, but the cessation of all your efforts! Just falling, or if you will see it better, just tumbling down—because you cannot stand upright." Because I cannot save myself, I fall into Christ's arms. Ceasing to hold to anything of my own, I just drop upon Him. "Still," you say, "there must be *something* more than that."

There is *nothing* more than that! If you believe that Jesus is the Christ, you are born of God. "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believes not shall be damned." "He that with his heart believes, and with his mouth makes confession of Him, shall be saved." "Oh, but I must—I must—I must *do something* mysterious, or *feel* something which at present is far beyond me." Thus you call God a liar and put away from you eternal life! Have you never read the story of the good ship that had been a long time at sea and the captain had lost his reckoning? He drifted up the mouth of the great Amazon River and, after he had been sailing for a long time up the river without knowing that he was in a river at all, they ran short of water.

When another vessel was seen, they signaled her, and when they got near enough for speaking they cried, "Water! We are dying for water!" They were greatly surprised when the answer came back, "Dip it up! Dip it up! You are in a river. It is all around you." They had nothing to do but to fling a bucket overboard and have as much water as they liked! And here are poor souls crying out, "Lord, what must I do to be saved?" when the great work is done and all that remains for them is to receive the free gift of eternal life! What must *you* do? You have done enough for one lifetime, for you have undone yourself by your doing! That is not the question! It is, "Lord, what have *You* done?" And the answer is, "It is finished! I have done it all. Only come and trust Me."

Sinner, you are in a river of Grace and mercy! Over with the bucket, man! And drink to the full, for you will never exhaust the stream of Grace. A river is free to every dog that runs along the bank—every cow that stands by the river may drink to the full! So is the mercy of God free to every sinner, be he who he may, that does but come to Jesus! That river runs near to you tonight! Stoop down, you thirsty ones, and drink and live! But you say, "I must *feel* different from what I do now." You need not come with your bad feelings. "Oh, I have not yet a broken heart," says one. Come to Christ and He will break your heart. "But I do not feel my need as I ought." Come to Christ and He will help you to feel your need. "Oh, but I am nobody!" You are the very person that Christ delights in, for to you He will be everybody!

Do you see that beautiful tree in the orchard loaded with fruit? It is a pear tree. From top to bottom it is covered with fruit. I think I never saw such a sight—every branch is bowing down. Some boughs are ready to break with the luscious burden. As I listen to the creaking boughs, I can hear the tree speak. What does it say? It says, "Baskets, baskets, baskets! Bring baskets!" Now, then, who has a basket? "I have one," cries yonder friend, "but it is of no use, for there is nothing in it." Bring it here, man! That is the very kind of basket the tree needs! A person over there says, "Oh, I have a basket—a splendid basket. It is just the thing. It is full from top to bottom."

You may keep *your* basket to yourself. It is of no use to my loaded tree. Where is there an *empty* basket? Who has an empty basket? Come along with you! Come and pick from the tree as long as you like. Bring all your baskets. Bring thousands and thousands of baskets, all empty, and fill them all! Do you notice as we fill the baskets that the fruit begins to multiply? There is more when we have filled the baskets than there was at first, for this inexhaustible tree produces more and more fruit, as fast as we pluck from it. What is wanted by the Lord Jesus is an empty soul to receive out of the fullness which God has treasured up in Him!

God bless every one of you, for His name's sake. Amen.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON

DEAR FRIENDS—It is with very sincere regret that I find myself obliged to prolong my absence. I have been exceedingly full of pain and have been very much a prisoner to my room, or I should have returned upon the appointed day. The deacons judged it better for me to remain till I could recover and certainly there is a far better hope for a man here in the sunshine than in a London fog. I rejoice to say that I already feel much better. Though I cannot quite maintain the erect figure which is becoming an upright man, yet the pains of lumbago are less acute than they were. I am full of confidence that I shall soon be well, in answer to your prayers. My heart is at home. I long to be preaching Christ and winning souls. May *your* work be blessed while I am silenced. Innumerable are the forms of your holy activity—may the Holy Spirit fill them all with His power. I send my love to all who are in Christ Jesus. As for those who are not in Him—what shall I say? No blessing can come to the soul which refuses the Lord Jesus. May there be none such among us. Wishing you a glorious Sabbath, I am your willing but suffering Pastor.

C. H. SPURGEON

Mentone, France
January 17, 1884

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ALL COMERS TO CHRIST WELCOMED

NO. 2349

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY,
FEBRUARY 25, 1894.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 17, 1889.

"Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out."
John 6:37.

EOD CHRIST will not die in vain. His Father gave Him a certain number to be the reward of His soul travail and He will have every one of them, as He said, "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me." Almighty Grace shall sweetly constrain them all to come. My father recently gave me some letters which I wrote to him when I began to preach. They are almost boyish epistles, but, in reading through them, again, I noticed in one of them this expression, "How I long to see thousands of men saved, but my great comfort is that some will be saved, must be saved, shall be saved, for it is written, 'All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me.'"

The question for each of you to ask is, "Do I belong in that number?" I am going to preach with the view of helping you to find out whether you belong to that, "all," whom the Father gave to Christ—the "all" who shall come to Him. We can use the second part of the verse to help us to understand the first. "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out," will explain our Savior's previous Words, "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me."

I shall have no time for any further preface. I must at once get to my subject and try to put everything in a condensed form. Kindly give heed to the word, think about it, pray over it—and may God the Holy Spirit apply it to all your hearts!

I. First, notice in the text THE NECESSITY OF CHARACTER—"Him that comes to Me." If you want to be saved, you must *come to Christ*. There is no other way of salvation under Heaven but coming to Christ. Go wherever else you will, you will be disappointed and lost—it is only by coming to Him that you can by any possibility have eternal life!

What is it to come to Christ? Well, *it implies leaving all other confidences*. To come to anybody is to leave everybody else. To come to Christ is to leave *everything* else—to leave every other hope, every other trust. Are you trusting to your own works? Are you trusting to a priest? Are you trusting to the merits of the Virgin Mary, or the saints and angels in Heaven? Are you trusting to anything but the Lord Jesus Christ? If so, leave it, and have done with it! Come away from every other reliance and

trust to Christ Crucified, for this is the *only* way of salvation, as Peter said to the rulers and elders of Israel, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”—

**“To Jesus bleeding on the tree,
Turn you your eye, your heart,”**

and come to Him at once and your soul shall live forever!

To come to Jesus means, in brief, *trusting Him*. He is a Savior—that is His business—come to Him and trust Him to save *you*. If you could save yourself, you would not need a Savior, and now that Christ has set up to be a Savior, let Him do the business. He will. Come and lay all your needs at His feet and trust Him. Resolve that, if lost, you will be lost trusting alone in Jesus, and that can never be! Tie up all your hopes into one bundle and put that bundle upon Christ. Let Him be all your salvation, all your desire and you will be surely saved!

I have sometimes tried to explain to you what the life of faith is like. It is very much like a man walking on a tight rope. The Believer is told that he shall not fall, He trusts in God that he shall not, but every now and then he says, “What a way it is down there if I did fall!” I have often had this experience. I have gone up an invisible staircase—I could not see the next step, but when I put my foot down on it, I found that it was solid granite. I could not see the next step and it seemed as if I should plunge into an abyss. Yet have I gone on upward, steadily, one step at a time, never able to see farther into absolute darkness, as it seemed, and yet always with a light just where the light was needed.

When I used to hold a candle for my father, in the evening, when he was sawing wood out in the yard, he used to say, “Boy, hold the candle where I am sawing, don’t look over there.” And I have often thought to myself, when I wanted to see something in the middle of next week, or next year, that the Lord seemed to say to me, “Hold your candle on the piece of work which you have to do *today*—and if you can see that, be satisfied, for that is all the light you need just now.” Suppose that you could see into next week? It would be a great mercy if you lost your sight a while, for a far-seeing gaze into care and trouble is no gain! “Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof”—as sufficient unto the day will be the *good* thereof.

But the Lord does train His people for the skies by testing their faith in the matter of His daily care of them. Often a man’s reliance upon God for the supply of his earthly needs proves that he has trusted the Lord for the weightier affairs relating to his soul’s salvation. Do not draw a line between the temporal and the spiritual and say, “God will go just so far—and I must not take such and such a thing to Him in prayer.” I remember hearing of a certain good man, of whom one said, “Why, he is a very curious man—he prayed about a key the other day!” Why not pray about a key? Why not pray about a pin? Sometimes it may be as important to pray about a pin as to pray about a kingdom! Little things are often the linchpins of great events. Take care that you bring *everything* to God in faith

and prayer. "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."

I have turned aside from my subject for a minute, but let us now think, again, of this matter of coming to Christ. To come to Jesus not only implies leaving all other confidences and trusting Christ, it also means *following Him*. If you trust Him, you must *obey* Him. If you leave your soul in His hands, you must take Him to be your Master, and your Lord, as well as your Savior. Christ has come to save you *from* sin, not *in* sin. He will, therefore, help you to leave your sin, whatever it is. He will give you the victory over it! He will make you holy. He will help you to do whatever you should do in the sight of God. He is able to save unto the uttermost them who come unto God by Him—but you must *come to Him if you would be saved by Him*.

To put together all I have said—you must quit every other hope; you must take Jesus to be your sole confidence—and then you must be obedient to His command and take Him to be your Master and Lord. Will you do that? If not, I have nothing to say to you except this—He that believes *not* in Him will perish without hope! If you will not have God's remedy for your soul malady, the only remedy that there is, there remains for you nothing but blackness and dismal darkness forever and ever for you!

II. But, now, secondly, while there is this necessity of character, notice, also, THE UNIVERSALITY OF PERSONS—"Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out."

Granted that he comes to Christ, that is all that is needed. Does someone say, "Sir, *I am a very obscure person*. Nobody knows me. My name was never in the papers and never will be. I am a nobody"? Well, if Mr. Nobody comes to Christ, He will not cast him out! Come along, you unknown person, you anonymous individual, you that everybody but Christ forgets! If even *you* come to Jesus, He will not cast you out.

Another says, "*I am so very odd*." Do not say much about that, for I am odd, too. But, dear Friends, however odd we are, though we may be thought very eccentric and some may even consider us a little touched in the head, yet, nevertheless, for all that, Jesus says, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." Come along with you, Mr. Oddman! You shall not be lost for lack of brains, nor even for having too many—though that is not a very common misfortune! If you will but come to Christ, though you have no talent, though you are but poor and will never make much headway in the world, Jesus says, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out."

"Ah," says a third friend, "I do not mind about being obscure, or being eccentric, but it is *the greatness of my sin* that keeps me back from Christ." Let us read the text again—"Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." If he had been guilty of seven murders and all the whoredoms and adulteries that ever defiled mortal man! If impossible sins could be charged against him—yet *if he came to Christ*, mark you, if he came to Christ—the promise of Jesus would be fulfilled even in his case, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out."

“But,” says another, “*I am completely worn out. I am good for nothing.* I have spent all my days and years in sin. I have come to the very end of the chapter, I am not worth anybody’s having.” Come along with you, you derelict of life! Jesus says, “Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out.” You have to walk with two sticks, do you? Never mind, come to Jesus! You are so feeble that you wonder that you are alive at your advanced age? My Lord will receive you if you are a hundred years of age—there have been many cases in which persons have been brought to Christ even *after* that age! There are some very remarkable instances of that fact on record. Christ says, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” If he were as old as Methuselah, if he did but come to Christ, he would not be cast out!

“Alas,” says one, “I am in a worse case than even that aged friend, for beside being old, *I have resisted the Spirit of God!* I have been many years troubled in my conscience, but I have tried to cover it all up. I have stifled every godly thought.” Yes, yes, and it is a very sad thing, too. But for all that, if you come to Christ, if you can even make a dash for salvation and come to Jesus, He cannot cast you out!

Perhaps One friend says, “*I am afraid that I have committed the unpardonable sin.*” If you come to Christ, you have not, I know—for him that comes to Him, Jesus will in no wise cast out! He cannot, therefore, you have not committed the unpardonable sin. Come along with you, man, and if you are blacker than all the rest of the sinners in the world, so much the more glorious shall be the Grace of God when it shall have proved its power by washing you whiter than snow in the precious blood of Jesus!

“Ah,” says one, “you do not know me, Sir.” No, dear Friend, I do not. But, perhaps, one of these days I may have that pleasure. “It will not be any pleasure to you, Sir, for *I am an apostate.* I used to be a professor of religion, but I have given it all up, and I have gone back to the world, willfully and wickedly doing all manner of evil things.” Ah, well, if you can but come to Christ, though there were seven apostasies piled, one upon another, still His promise stands true, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” Whatever the past, or whatever the present, backslider, return to Christ, for He stands to His solemn promise, and there are no exceptions mentioned in my text—“Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.”

“Well, Sir,” cries another, “I should like to come to Christ, but *I do not feel fit to come.*” Then, come all *unfit*, just as you are! Jesus says, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” If I were awakened in the middle of the night by a cry of, “Fire!” and I saw that someone was at the window with a ladder, I do not think that I would stay in bed, and say, “I have not my black necktie on,” or, “I have not my best waistcoat on.” I would not speak in that way at all! I would be out of the window as quickly as ever I could, and down the ladder! Why do you talk about your fitness, fitness, fitness? I have heard of a cavalier, who lost his life because he stopped to curl his hair when Cromwell’s soldiers were after him.

Some of you may laugh at the man's foolishness, but that is all that your talk about fitness is! What is all your fitness but the curling of your hair when you are in imminent danger of losing your soul? Your fitness is *nothing* to Christ. Remember what we sang at the beginning of the service—

***“Let not conscience make you linger,
Nor of fitness fondly dream!
All the fitness He requires
Is to feel your need of him!
This He gives you
‘Tis the Spirit's rising beam!”***

Come to Christ just as you are—foul, vile, careless, godless, Christless! Come now, even now, for Jesus said, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.”

Is there not a glorious width about my text? “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” What, “him,” is this? It is, “him that comes!” What, “him that comes”? Any “him that comes” in all the world! If he comes to Christ, he shall not be cast out! A red man, or a black man, or a white man, or a yellow man, or a copper-colored man—whatever he is, if he comes to Jesus, he shall in no wise be cast out!

When you mean to put a thing broadly, it is always best to state it and leave it. Do not go into details! The Savior does not. Some years ago there was a man, a kind, loving husband, who wished to leave to his wife all his property. Whatever he had, he intended her to have it all, as she ought. So he put down in his will, “I leave to my beloved wife, Elizabeth, all that I have.” That was all right. Then he went on to describe in detail what he was leaving her, and he wrote, “All my freehold and personal estate.” The most of his property happened to be *leasehold*, so the wife did not get it because her husband gave a detailed description! It was in the *detail* that the property slipped away from the good woman.

Now, there is no detail at all here—“Him that comes.” That means that every man, woman and child beneath the broad heavens, who will but come and trust in Christ, shall in no wise be cast out! I thank God that there is no allusion to any particular character, in order especially to say, “People of that character shall be received,” for then the characters left out might be supposed to be excluded. But the text clearly means that every soul that comes to Christ shall be received by Him!

III. The flight of time hurries me on! I therefore beg you to listen earnestly while I speak to you, in the third place, about THE UNMISTAKEABLENESS OF THE PROMISE—“Him that comes to Me I will in no wise”—that is, for no reason, under no circumstances, at no time, under no conditions whatever—“I will in no wise cast out.” And which means, being interpreted, “I will receive him, I will save him, I will bless him.”

Then if you, my dear Friend, come to Christ, *how could the Lord cast you out?* How could He do it in consistency with His truthfulness? Imagine my Lord Jesus making this declaration and giving it to us as an inspired Scripture, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out,” and yet casting out somebody, even that unknown somebody up in the corner! Why, it would be a lie! It would be a gross lie! I pray you, blaspheme not my Lord,

the truthful Christ, by supposing that He could be guilty of such conduct as that! He could do as He liked about whom He would receive until He made the promise—but after He had pledged His word, He bound Himself by the veracity of His Nature to keep it and, as long as Christ is the truthful Christ, He must receive every soul that comes to Him.

But let me also ask you, suppose that you came to Jesus and He cast you out, *with what hands could He do it?* “With His own hands,” you answer. What? Christ coming forward to cast out a sinner who has come to Him? I ask again, with what hands could He do it? Would He do it with those pierced hands that still bear the marks of the nails? The Crucified rejecting a sinner? Ah, no, He has no hand with which to do such a cruel work as that, for He has given both His hands to be nailed to the tree for guilty men! He has neither hand, nor foot, nor heart with which to reject sinners, for all these have been pierced in His death for them! Therefore He *cannot* cast them out if they come to Him.

Let me ask you another question, *What profit would it be to Christ if He did cast you out?* If my dear Lord, with the crown of thorns, the pierced side and the wounded hands, were to cast you away, what glory would it bring to Him? If He cast you into Hell, you who have come to Him, what happiness would that bring to Him? If He were to cast you away, you who have sought His face, you who trust His love and His blood, by what conceivable method could that ever render Him the happier or the greater? It cannot be!

What would such a supposition involve? Imagine for a moment that Jesus did cast away one who came to Him. If it were ascertained that one soul came to Christ and yet He had cast him away, what would happen? Why, there are thousands of us who would never preach again! For one, I would have done with the business. If my Lord can cast away a sinner who comes to Him, I cannot, with a clear conscience, go and preach from His Words, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” Moreover, I should feel that if He failed in one promise, He might fail in others! I could not go and preach a possible but doubtful Gospel! I must have, “shalls,” and, “wills,” from the eternal Throne of God—but if it is not so, our preaching is in vain—and your faith is also in vain.

See what would follow if one soul came to Christ and Christ cast him out. All the saints would lose their confidence in Him. If a man breaks his promise once, it is of no use for him to say, “Well, I am *generally* truthful.” You have caught him false to his word, once, and you will not trust Him again, will you? No! And if our dear Lord, whose every Word is Truth, could break one of His promises only once, He would not be trusted by His people any more—and His Church would lose the faith that is her very life.

Ah, me, and then they would hear of it up in Heaven. And one soul that came to Christ, and was cast away, would stop the music of the harps of Heaven, would dim the luster of the Glory Land, and take away its joy, for it would be whispered among the glorified, “Jesus has broken His promise! He cast away a praying, believing soul! He may break His promise to

us—He may drive us out of Heaven!” When they began to praise Him, this one act of His would make a lump come in their throats and they would be unable to sing. They would be thinking of that poor soul that trusted Him and was cast away—how could they sing, “Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood,” if they had to add—“But He did not wash all that came to Him, though He promised that He would”?

I do not even like to talk of all that the supposition would involve! It is something so dreadful to me, for they would hear of it in Hell—and they would tell it to one another and an awful glee would take possession of the fiendish hearts of the devil and all his companions! And they would say, “The Christ is not true to His Word! The boasted Savior rejected one who came to Him. He used to receive even harlots—He even let one wash His feet with her tears! And publicans and sinners came and gathered about Him and He spoke to them in tones of love. But here is one—well, he was too vile for the Savior to bless! He was too far gone, Jesus could not restore him! Christ could not cleanse him. He could save little sinners, but not great ones! He could save sinners eighteen hundred years ago. Oh, He made a fine show of *them*, but His power is now exhausted! He cannot save a sinner now!” Oh, in the halls of Hell, what jests and ridicule would be poured upon that dear name and, I had almost said, *justly*, if Christ cast out one who came to Him! But, Beloved, that can never be! It is as sure as God’s oath, as certain as Jehovah’s Being that he who comes to Christ shall in no wise be cast out! I gladly bear my own witness before this assembled throng that—

**“I came to Jesus as I was
Weary and worn, and sad.
I found in Him a resting place,
And He has made me glad.”**

Come, each one of you, and prove the text to be true in your own experience, for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
Psalm 89:1-37; John 6:22-40.**

Psalm 89. *Maschil of Ethan the Ezrahite.* That is to say, an instructive Psalm, written by or for one Ethan, one of the great singers of David’s day. He sings of the Covenant, the Covenant with David, ordered in all things and sure. There is no higher theme for song than the Covenant of God’s Grace. One marvels that it has not more often been sung by those who are the gifted children of poesy.

Verse 1. *I will sing of the mercies of the LORD forever.* Another subject might wear out, but this glorious topic will never be exhausted! Here is a theme which we can sing of in eternity as well as in time. Let others choose what subject they may, “I will sing of the mercies of Jehovah forever.”

1. *With my mouth will I make known Your faithfulness to all generations.* God’s faithfulness is the mercy of His mercy! It is the center point of His

goodness that His goodness endures forever. We are not only to sing, we are to teach. The Psalmist says, "With my mouth will I make known Your faithfulness to all generations." In telling his own experience, narrating what he had observed, as well as what he had proved of God's faithfulness to His promise and His Covenant, he would do this so that following generations should know about it. We are the schoolmasters of the ages to come—I mean, saints who have experienced the mercy and the faithfulness of God. We ought to make known Jehovah's faithfulness to all generations that are yet to come.

2. *For I have said, Mercy shall be built up forever.* What a building—Mercy! God's mercy is to be built up forever.

2. *Your faithfulness shall You establish in the very heavens.* Like the great arch you see in the firmament on high, unbuttressed and unpilared, yet it stands fast. So shall God's faithfulness be built up, settled and established in the very heavens. And now God speaks—

3. *I have made a Covenant with My chosen, I have sworn unto David My servant.* Well might the Psalmist say, in the second verse, "I have said," when God in the third verse says, "I have sworn." It is ours to say, but it is God's to say with such tremendous solemnity that doubt cannot be tolerated! "I have made a Covenant with My chosen," King David, who is, however, but the type of his greater Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the heir of the dynasty of David. With Him is this Covenant made forever.

4. *Your seed will I establish forever, and build up your throne to all generations. Selah.* Whatever may happen in the world, David's Seed is always reigning. Whatever kings may lose their crowns, King Jesus will never lose the many crowns that are on His head! God has sworn it—"Your seed will I establish forever, and build up your throne to all generations." Then comes the word, "Selah." Rest. Meditate. And truly, here is enough to rest and meditate upon for many a day, if we went no farther into the Psalm!

5. *And the heavens shall praise Your wonder, O LORD: Your faithfulness, also, in the congregation of the saints.* The Psalmist meant to praise God at such a rate that the sun, moon and stars should hear his song, while angels and the host redeemed by blood should learn to praise God better than ever. "Your faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints"—one saint begins to sing of God's faithfulness and the others take it up—for God is not faithful to one, only, but to all His people. This is a subject which, when once started, will produce an echo in every Believer's heart.

6, 7. *For who in the Heaven can be compared unto the LORD? Who among the lions of the mighty can be likened unto the LORD? God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints.* The holiest are always the most reverent. There is no fear of God in the assembly of the sinners, but, "He is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints."

7. *And to be had in reverence of all them that are about Him.* The nearer they came to Him, the more is their awe of Him! The greater their love, the deeper is their humility. God will not have those about Him who are flip-

pant and irreverent! He is “to be had in reverence of all them that are about Him.”

8. *O LORD God of Hosts, who is a strong LORD like unto You? Or to Your faithfulness round about You?* Note how the Psalmist harps upon that one string—“faithfulness.” Ah, dear Friends, there are times when this is the sweetest note in the whole scale! “Your faithfulness”—we have a God who never forgets His promises, but keeps them to the moment—a God who never changes! We have a God who never turns away from His Word. “Your faithfulness.” Oh, what a blessed virtue is this in God! Let us praise Him for it forever. “Your faithfulness round about You”—as if the Lord never went outside the ring of faithfulness, never did anything that broke His promises, or that made any of His children to doubt. And it is even so!

9. *You rule the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof rise, You still them.* Are you now in a storm, my Brother? My Sister, are you now tempest-tossed? Listen to this Word of God and remember the Lord High Admiral of the fleet on the Lake of Galilee and how, after He had been asleep for awhile, He arose and rebuked the winds and the waves! “You rule the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof rise, You still them.”

10. *You have broken Rahab in pieces, as one that is slain; You have scattered Your enemies with Your strong arm.* Rahab was Egypt. The word means, “strong,” “mighty,” “proud”—all of which were the characteristics of Egypt—which God broke in pieces at the Red Sea. Pharaoh was the greatest of monarchs at the time, but, oh, how soon he had to yield when God’s right arm was bared for war!

11. *The heavens are Yours, the earth also is Yours: as for the world and the fullness thereof, You have founded them.* Sometimes we are tempted to think that the earth cannot be God’s—all over the globe *man* is the master. He claims everything. If men could map out the heavens, we would have owners for every single twinkling star and, if they could have their way, we would have to buy our light by measure, and our sunshine by weight. But, “the earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof.” And the heavens are also His.

12. *The north and the south You have created them: Tabor and Hermon. East and West, as well as North and South—*

12. *Shall rejoice in Your name.* There is not a place where God is not to be found! All the points of the compass are compassed by God. You cannot go where the Lord’s love reigns not, nor where Providence will not follow you.

13-15. *You have a mighty arm: strong is Your hand, and high is Your right hand. Justice and judgment are the habitation of Your Throne: mercy and truth shall go before Your face. Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound.* There are some who hear it and yet are not blessed. Blessed are they who “know” it, know its peculiar accent, know its inward power, know its Omnipotence, know its unchangeableness, know it by having tried it and proved it and rested in it! “Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound.”

15. *They shall walk, O LORD, in the light of Your Countenance.* It is all the light they need. Let God but smile, it makes their day! If every candle were blown out, yet the favor of God would make life bright enough for them.

16. *In Your name shall they rejoice all the day: and in Your righteousness shall they be exalted.* Even in God's righteousness! Until we know the Lord, we are afraid of His righteousness, but when we come to know Him, His righteousness, which once frowned upon us, becomes our Heaven! "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love." God is not unrighteous to cast away a soul that puts its trust in Christ. God is one with His people. When we rejoice all the day in His name, we are exalted in His righteousness.

17-19. *For You are the glory of their strength: and in Your favor our horn shall be exalted. For the LORD is our defense; and the Holy One of Israel is our King. Then You spoke in Vision to Your holy one, and said, I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people.* This is David first, but it is Christ high above David. One of ourselves, the carpenter's Son, yet has God made Him to be the Head over all things for His Church—"I have exalted one chosen out of the people."

20, 21. *I have found David, My servant, with My holy oil have I anointed him: with whom My hand shall be established: My arm, also, shall strengthen him.* The full power of God is with Christ. That same arm that bears up the earth's huge pillars and spreads the heavens abroad, is engaged on behalf of the cause and Kingdom of the Son of David.

22. *The enemy shall not exact upon Him; nor the son of wickedness afflict Him.* He had enough of that when He was upon the earth, but it is all over now. He has gone into His Glory and the enemy cannot touch Him.

23. *And I will beat down His foes before His face and plague them that hate Him.* This is the portion of all haters of Christ. God will, somehow or other, in the order of His Providence, bring the evil home to them. If they will not have God's Son, they shall not have His mercy—they shall, sooner or later, be beaten down before His face.

24, 25. *But My faithfulness and My mercy shall be with Him: and in My name shall His horn be exalted. I will set His hand also in the sea, and His right hand in the rivers.* He shall reign "from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth." We may go on to fight for Him, for His triumph is sure!

26, 27. *He shall cry unto Me, You are My Father, My God, and the rock of my salvation. Also I will make Him My first-born, higher than the kings of the earth.* So He is! First-born among men, first-born of kings, His Throne is loftier than the most imperial power on the earth. Blessed be His name! Let us adore Him tonight and here, in the midst of His people, let us crown Him Lord of All!

28-36. *My mercy will I keep for him forevermore, and My Covenant shall stand fast with him. His seed also will I make to endure forever, and his throne as the days of Heaven. If his children forsake My Law, and walk not in My judgments; if they break My statutes, and keep not My Command-*

ments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless My loving kindness will I not utterly take from them, nor suffer My faithfulness to fail. My Covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of My lips. Once have I sworn by My holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before Me. The Son of David is still King in the midst of the true Israel. Still Jesus reigns and on and on, forever and forever, great David's greater Son shall be King of Kings, and Lord of Lords!

37. *It shall be established forever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in Heaven. Selah.* Now let us read a passage from the New Testament showing how the Lord Jesus dealt with the crowds that came to Him.

John 6:22-26. *The day following, when the people which stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was no other boat there, save that one whereunto His disciples were entered, and that Jesus went not with His disciples into the boat, but that His disciples were gone away alone; (howbeit there came other boats from Tiberius near unto the place where they did eat bread, after that the Lord had given thanks) when the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there neither His disciples, they also took shipping and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus. And when they had found Him on the other side of the sea, they said unto Him, Rabbi, when did You come here? Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, You seek Me not because you saw the miracles, but because you did eat of the loaves, and were filled.* Mixed motives bring multitudes together. How true our Master was! How outspoken! He never tried to win a disciple by holding back the truth—and often He spoke very plainly, indeed, as on this occasion—“You seek Me not because you saw the miracles, but because you did eat of the loaves, and were filled.”

27. *Labor not for the meat which perishes, but for that meat which endures unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you: for Him has God the Father sealed.* He seemed to say to them, “Do not come to Me for bread and fish. I have given you that. Come for something better. Come to Me for spiritual food—food for your souls—food for eternity!” It is with that objective that we should go to the House of God—not to listen to this preacher or that—but to hear the Word of God, that we may live thereby.

28. *Then said they unto Him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?* “What are the best works that we can do? What are the most acceptable?” I wonder what they expected Christ to say? I am sure they did not look for the answer that they received.

29. *Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that you believe on Him whom He has sent.* The greatest, the best, the most acceptable work in all the world is that you come and trust Christ! This saves you—nothing else will do so. “This is the work of God, that you believe on Him whom He has sent.”

30, 31. *They said therefore unto Him, What sign do You show, then, that we may see and believe You? What do You work? Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from Heaven to*

eat. See how they came round to the old subject, again—bread to eat? The Lord Jesus Christ may point them to something higher and better, but their carnal minds always return to that congenial topic—something to eat. Their stomach was lord of their heart!

32. *Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from Heaven; but My Father gives you the true Bread from Heaven. “That which will really feed you and feed you for all eternity.” Moses could not give the people that bread—only the Father can give “the true Bread from Heaven.”*

33. *For the Bread of God is He which comes down from Heaven and gives life unto the world. “The Bread of God is He.” What a strange expression, yet what a true one! The Bread of Heaven is Christ, Himself! You must come and take Him to yourself and trust Him for your salvation—and in that way feed upon Him, or you can never have the heavenly Bread which both gives life and sustains life.*

34-39. *Then said they unto Him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. And Jesus said unto them, I am the Bread of life. He that comes to Me shall never hunger; and He that believes on Me shall never thirst. But I said unto you, That you also have seen Me and believe not. All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from Heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me. And this is the Father’s will which has sent Me, that of all which He has given Me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. See how the salvation of Christ reaches right to the end of all things? You and I may die, but though we lie a while in the grave, the salvation of Christ will preserve us, to raise us up, again, at the Last Day! There shall not be a bone nor a piece of a bone, of a true Believer, left in the enemies’ land. All Israel and all that belongs to Israel shall come out of this Egypt, through the blood of the Lamb—not a hoof shall be left behind.*

40. *And this is the will of Him that sent Me that everyone which sees the Son, and believes on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the Last Day. May all of us see the Son and believe on Him, that we may have everlasting life, and that He may raise us up at the Last Day, for His dear name’s sake! Amen.*

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—492, 538, 658.

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THE BIG GATES WIDE OPEN

NO. 2954

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 1905.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 6, 1875.

*“All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me; and
him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.”
John 6:37.*

A COUNTRY gentleman is expecting a number of persons to come and dine with him. He has a little side swing-gate at the entrance to the park through which people generally come, but, on the day when he expects company, he says to one of his men, “John, be sure that you set the big gates wide open, for we are expecting several people to come in.” And that is the order which I have received from my Master—He is expecting company! The evangelistic services in the South of London will, I trust, bring large numbers of people to feast with my Lord at His banqueting table and I believe it is His will that I should set the big gates wide open so that some sinners who might be passing by, would take that act as an invitation to them to come in! I feel sure that they will come in, for God is going to bring them in! He is about to stretch forth His almighty arm and to compel them to come in, that His House may be filled! So my objective in this discourse is to proclaim the fullness and freeness of the Grace of God—in the hope that some may be led to come to Christ and so to obtain eternal life!

But, first, our text sets before us a rather knotty point, yet it reveals to us an excellent way of untying the knot. This is the knotty point. It would seem from the text that the Father has given some souls to Christ and not only from this text, but also from a great many other passages of Scripture it is clear that God has a people whom He has chosen unto eternal life—and that Christ has redeemed a people from among men. It is no use trying to shut your eyes to this Truth of God, as some do, for it is there. And unless we really wish to twist the plain meaning of words and to make something out of Scripture which Scripture does not naturally teach, we shall never be able to escape from the Doctrine of Divine Predestination—the Doctrine that God has foreordained certain people unto eternal life!

Now, if you like you can make any number of difficulties out of that Truth of God. If you wish to do so, here is a whole forest before you and you can easily find wood enough to make a gallows to hang yourself! It is true that if you wish to wrest the Scriptures to your own destruction, you will have to use very bad reasoning in order to do it—but it will be no

worse reasoning than many other people have used before you. It is true that *everything* is predestinated and that *everything* that happens is ordered according to the unfailing purpose and will of God—yet you will go to bed tonight and get up tomorrow morning and go about your business, never thinking of that predestination, but, acting like people of common sense, guided by the ordinary rules of sound judgment. That is to say, you will do that in ordinary matters, but there are some of you who will not act in the same sensible way in *spiritual* things—you will twist this Doctrine around and look at it in all manner of strange ways till you are dizzy with gazing at it and trying to make some excuse out of it for not coming to Jesus Christ!

My text, however, cuts the ground from under your feet, if you seek to act thus, for it tells you this, which is all you need to know, that all who are God's chosen ones may be known by this mark—that *they come to Christ*. Just as He said, "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me." So that those who come to Christ are *God's chosen people* and those who live and die without coming to Christ are not God's people. If you come to Christ and trust in Him, you are one of those whom the Father gave to His Son. If you refuse to come to Christ—it matters not what excuse you may make—your blood will be upon your own head. You will perish if you do not come to Christ! And if you do not come to Him, it will be because you were not one of His sheep and neither did the Father give you to Christ. Rowland Hill, when he was asked to preach only to the elect, said that he would do so if somebody would chalk them on the back. That cannot be done. But God does, in process of time, mark them all—not on the back, but on the heart! He that believes on the Son has everlasting life and his faith proves that he was chosen of God to that life! But he that believes not on the Son, if he persists in that unbelief, will assuredly perish, for there shall be no deviation from this Divine declaration, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned." That is the matter with which we have to deal. May God help us, like prudent men, to deal with it earnestly!

I. Leaving that knotty point altogether, I notice in our gloriously free and open text, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out," that there is A NECESSARY ACT and that is, that we come to Christ.

Before we go any further, let me ask, "How many of us have come to Christ?" I believe that by far the larger proportion of those now present have done so and I am grateful that I am able to believe that. If any of you who have thought of coming to the Lord's Table have never come to Christ, I implore you not to come to the Communion until you are truly converted. None have any right to the sacred emblems but those who have already enjoyed true communion with Christ by believing in Him! If you have not come to Christ, you must not act as if you had done so, for that would not benefit you and it would insult the Lord and bring great guilt upon your own conscience. No, Brothers and Sisters, we must come to Jesus Christ—that is our one business if we would be saved—to come

to Christ is not only the main point in it, but it is the top, bottom, middle and whole of it!

“What is it to come to Christ?” asks someone. Here I feel a solemn trembling come over me, for too often in trying to explain what faith is, and what coming to Christ is, we darken counsel “by words without knowledge” and God forbid that I should do that! Look at the words which Christ used, “Him, that comes to Me.” He speaks of an action, a movement, but not of an action or movement of the body, for there were many who came to Christ in a physical sense, but they were not saved by such a coming as that. *This coming is an action, or movement, or turning of the mind.* You know readily enough what it is for the mind to come to such-and-such a point. But observe that the pith of the matter lies here, “Him that comes to Me.” Saving faith is a coming to Christ—to the Person of Christ—it is not merely to believe that Christ is God, though you must believe that if you would be saved. It is not merely to believe that Christ is a Sacrifice for sin, though you must believe that, too. It is not merely to believe that Christ lived, and died, and rose again for our salvation, though those three blessed facts must be believed. But it is to COME TO HIM. If you had seen Him when He uttered these words, perhaps you would have understood them better, for there He stood, the “Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief”—the very Person of whom John the Baptist had said, “Behold the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world.”

Jesus Christ says, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” Everybody knows what it is for the mind to trust in a Doctrine, but you will perish if you trust only to Doctrine! The true way of salvation is trusting to the living Person of Jesus Christ who is the God-appointed Savior. Perhaps some of you know what it is to trust to Baptism, Confirmation, “sacrament”—but you will perish if you trust only to them. You must come, not to them, to sprinkling or immersion, or the “mass” or to the Communion—but to HIM, to the Christ who, upon the accursed Cross, has made expiation for all who trust in Him! You must come, by faith, to that Cross and accept Him as your Substitute. He has gone up into Heaven, but He is pleading there for sinners—and you must dart the eyes of your mind upwards to Him in such a way that you will trust in Him who has risen from the dead and gone up into Glory. That is coming to Christ—the mind resting in His Person and in His atoning Sacrifice.

It is clear, too, that when we come to a certain thing, we come from something else, so that coming to Christ implies that you leave something behind. And he who would be saved must leave behind the sins he formerly loved. He must come to the Holy Savior to be made holy. He must come to sit at Jesus’ feet to learn His commands and to be willing to obey them. Jesus Christ will not save any man who abides *in his sins*—He came to save His people *from their sins*. The salvation of Jesus Christ is a salvation not merely from the guilt and the penalty of sin, but from the sin, itself—from the foulness and degradation of it. If we would come to Christ, we must come away from sin. Repentance must

make us turn from sin, and faith must make us turn to Christ—and we must also come away from self-righteousness if we are to come to Christ. It is very difficult for some people to part with their self-righteousness. They have looked in the mirror till they are in love with themselves and they cannot bear to be separated from their beloved self. They feel so good, so proper, so respectable, so excellent, so amiable, so lovely and so dear to themselves that they would gladly hang their self-righteousness about their neck and embrace it as long as they can! But, Sirs, you must come away from it! You must learn to look at it as a loathsome thing—and such it would appear to you if you could see it in the light in which God sees it! And you must give up every trust except trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. This, then, is coming to Him—coming away from your sinful self and your righteous self—and putting your trust alone in the one great Surety and Substitute for sinners!

When we come to a person in the full sense of the word, come, we also stay with that person. If I walk past a man in the street, I have certainly come to him in a sense. But I have also gone beyond him and so I have also gone from him. But *when a soul really comes to Christ, that soul stays with Christ and rests in Him*. Does it not need anything else? No. Surely it needs some more holiness? No. Does it not need a fuller pardon? No. Does it not need additional support? No. Does it not need some addition to its robe of righteousness? No. Does it not need another washing? No, for the Apostle says to those who have come to Christ, “You are complete in Him.” Having come to Him, you stay with Him and rest in Him. The saved soul does not take temporary lodgings with Christ, but abides in Him!

Now, dear Friends, I cannot put this question personally to everyone of you, but you can, each one, put it to yourselves, “Have *you* come to Jesus Christ?” That is to say, is He your only confidence, or have you any other hope? Are you trusting in Jesus Christ alone? If so, you have come to Him and the promise in the text is yours—“Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.”

II. This brings us to the next point which is A NEEDLESS FEAR BANISHED.

There are some persons who say that they would gladly come to Christ but they fear that if they did come to Him, He would reject them. Ask them why and one of them says, “*I am too old to come to Christ.*” Will you kindly read the text, my venerable Friend? “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” Now, if Christ cast out anyone who came to Him because he was too old, the text would not be true! There is nothing written between the lines—you may look as long as you like, but you will not find there anything like this, “Him that comes to Me up to 75 years of age, I will in no wise cast out.” Christ says nothing of the kind! If you were a 100 years old—if you were two hundred—it would make no difference to Him! He would still say, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.”

Perhaps another says, "*I am too young to come to Christ.*" Possibly there are some children here who have had the thought in their minds, "We are too young to come to Christ." But that cannot be, for He said, "They that seek Me early shall find Me." And He also said, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not." You cannot possibly be too young to come to Christ, for He says, "Him that comes to Me"—and He intends that the youngest one who comes should be included—"I will in no wise cast out."

Many persons, however, see no difficulty as far as they are concerned, but they suppose that there is some difficulty because of their position. "May I come?" one asks, "*I am so very poor.*" The poorer you are, the more welcome you are to come! There is not a syllable here about property. Christ simply says, "Him that comes to Me." It does not matter though you come in rags, or though you come in the workhouse suit—whatever your outward appearance may be is of no consequence to our blessed Lord! Though you are as poor as poverty, itself, if anybody has any preference, I think that you will be all the more welcome to Jesus Christ because of that very poverty, for of old it was especially mentioned that the poor had the Gospel preached to them! And God has often chosen the poor of this world and made them, by His Grace, rich in faith. Come along with you, my poor Brothers and Sisters!

"Oh!" says another, "but it is not poverty that is the difficulty with me, it is *my lack of education.*" Well, my Friend, I am very sorry for you if you cannot read or write. That is a misfortune for you in many ways, but it has nothing to do with your salvation! I should think that there were very few of the early Christians who could read or write. Certainly, those who put up the inscriptions over the tombs in the Catacombs made all sorts of mistakes in spelling and grammar—and I suppose that they were as well educated as the most of the Christians who were buried there. What has the Gospel of Christ to do with education? You do not need a degree from a university—you do not need to be a master of arts, or bachelor of arts, in order to find Christ! Knowledge sometimes misleads in spiritual things. I would not commend ignorance, but certainly it is a fact that the shepherds of Bethlehem, when they wanted to see the newborn King, went straight to Him, but the wise men from the East went a long way round before they came to Him. Augustine used to say, "While Pharisees and philosophers are fumbling to find the latch of God's door, the poor and illiterate have entered into the Kingdom of Heaven." If you did but believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and did but rest yourself wholly upon Him, even if you were half an idiot, Christ would not cast you out! Yes, if there were only a faint glimmer of intelligence within your soul, yet if there were enough to catch the flame of faith, you would be saved—so let not that matter keep any of you back!

"Ah," says another, "I should not be kept back by such a thing as *that*, but *it is my past character that is my hindrance.*" Well, dear Friend, I will not enquire into your past character, but will take it for granted that it has been as bad as it could be. Yet, even then, what does Christ say in

our text? Does He say anything about character? No, He simply says, “Him that comes to Me.” And if the person who comes to Him should have committed every crime of which it is possible for humanity to be guilty, my text would not allow even *him* to be excluded! I do bless my Lord and Master that He did not put any exclusions or exceptions here. Neither thief, nor drunk, nor harlot, nor adulterer, nor even murderer is shut out here! “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” So it stands and so it shall remain. If he will but come to Christ, he cannot be cast out on account of his sins! But his sins, which are many, shall all be forgiven him—he shall be pressed to the heart of everlasting Love and the kiss of pardon shall be imprinted upon his cheek!

I fancy that I hear someone else say, “I have not been guilty of any of those gross sins. I have almost wished—though perhaps it is a wicked wish—that I had been, for then I think I could feel more than I do now. Through the gracious arrangements of Providence I have been kept from gross outward sin and *I cannot feel what I want to feel of repentance.*” No, dear Friend, but the Lord does not ask you to repent of sins that you have not committed. Just look at what you have done and do not wish that your sin was any greater than it is, for that would, indeed, be a wrong thing. “I do look at what I have done,” says one, “yet I cannot repent.” And do you expect to repent before you come to Christ? Is that your idea of the Gospel plan? The Gospel, as I understand it, is—to quote Joseph Hart’s well known lines—

**“True belief and true repentance,
Every Grace that brings us nigh,
Without money,
Come to Jesus Christ and buy.”**

I also remember that Peter said to the high priest concerning Christ, “Him has God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give (mark that term, *to give*) repentance.” It is not for you to bring repentance to Him, but to come to Him for it! Some of you have been looking to the Law to make you conscious of your sin. Do you not know that—

**“Law and terrors do but harden
All the while they work alone”?**

But if you will come to Jesus and trust in Him, then—

**“A sense of blood-bought pardon
Will dissolve the heart of stone.”**

You are to trust Jesus for a new heart, for repentance, for a tender conscience—if you cannot come to Him *with* them, come to Him *for* them. O you broken-hearted, come to Christ but do not plead your broken hearts! And you who want to have your hearts broken, come to Christ to break them! He is able, with the mighty hammer of His Gospel Grace, to break the heart of stone!

“Ah,” says another, “I believe I *have* come to Christ. I know that I do wish to have Him as my only trust, but *I have not the experience that I have read about in others.* I have read of some people being dreadfully cut up, distressed and alarmed under a sessions of sin, but I have not been

like that.” Whoever said that you should be? Listen again to the text, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” Does Christ say anything about experience, law-work and all that sort of thing? Blessed be God, though men may set up those barriers around the Cross of Christ, the Lord has not set them up! If you come to Him, if you are trusting in Him, *whatever* your experience may be or *may not be*, He will not—He *cannot* cast you out! There are certain preachers whom I have heard who seem to me to be wonderfully busy trying to shut sinners out of the Kingdom of God! They are terribly afraid that more people should get saved than ought to be. They look upon Heaven as a sort of close borough into which a certain number of £10 householders may be admitted, but nobody else! They are dreadfully afraid lest there should be found in the Heavenly fold one that is not the Lord Jesus Christ’s sheep. Such a fear as that never yet penetrated my heart—I bless His name that I have an ardent longing that many may come to Jesus—and I think that kind of spirit ought to be in all Christians, for Christ’s words suggest it, “Him that comes to me”—not one special sort of “him” or any other sort, but any “him” who comes, whoever he may be—“I will in no wise cast out.”

“Ah,” says another, “but *I have such a little faith.*” Bless God that you have even a little! Have I not often told you that if you have only starlight, you should bless God for it and He will give you moonlight? And if you have moonlight and bless God for it, He will give you daylight? Be thankful for any genuine faith that you possess! Does Christ say, “Him that comes to Me with a great faith”? No, Brothers and Sisters, if you come to Christ with only a grain of faith in your heart, the text must shut you in—it cannot shut you out! Do but come to Christ. Do but trust in Him and, however feeble your faith, if it is but sincere faith in Jesus, you are saved by Him, for He is all your salvation and all your desire! It is not the strength of your faith that saves you, but the strength of Him upon whom you rely! Christ is able to save you if you come to Him—be your faith weak or be it strong.

“But,” I think I hear another say, “*I am afraid I am not one of the elect.*” I have already answered that objection. If you believe in Jesus Christ, you *are* one of the elect! Beyond all doubt, if you come to Him, He cannot shut you out because of some secret reason, for He has said, “I will in no wise” that is, for no reason and in no way, and never—“cast you out.” Therefore, there cannot be any secret reason in that unopened book of destiny for your being shut out. If you do but come to Christ, He must receive you, or He will have broken His Word—and that He can never do!

“But,” says another, “*if I come to Christ, I should never hold on to Him.*” That is very likely, but suppose He held you on, what then? “Ah, but I should not have the strength to persevere.” But suppose that nobody on earth or in Hell can separate you from Him, for, “He keeps the feet of His saints,” what then? Suppose when you come to Him, He says to you, “I give unto you eternal life and you shall never perish, neither shall any pluck you out of My hands”? Why, Soul, as you have not to take the first

step in salvation of yourself without Christ, so you have not to take the second, or the third, or the fourth, or any other step! You must rest only in Him for the whole of the way between here and Heaven! I believe that if you and I were to get as far as the very doorstep of Heaven—if we were to get our fingers on the latch of the gate—we would never get in if the Grace of God did not take us the last inch of the way! But then, the Grace of God *will* do this. Trust in Jesus, for—

***“His honor is engaged to save
The meanest of His sheep—
All that His Heavenly Father gave,
His hands securely keep.
Not death, nor Hell, shall ever remove
His favorites from His breast—
In the dear bosom of His love
They must forever rest.”***

So, any “him” in all the world and any “her,” also, if they do but come to Christ shall not be cast out!

III. We have seen, in the text, first, a necessary act. And next, a needless fear banished. Now we are to see A MOST REASONABLE CONFIDENCE SUGGESTED.

I hope that there are many here who desire to be saved. If so, let them remember what the Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” I trust that you all understand that the whole process of salvation, so far as *you* are concerned, is for you to give up every reliance except reliance upon the Lord Jesus Christ and His finished work. It has often been said that there are but two steps to Heaven—and that those two are but one—*out of self and into Christ*. If you are, at this moment, holding on to any other confidence, I pray you to let go of it and drop into the arms of Jesus! And know—for God has said it—that the instant you believe in Jesus, you are saved! At that instant there is conferred upon you a share in the Divine Life which will never die out. At the same moment there is taken from you the whole mass of your sin so that it cannot condemn you and will never return upon you. There is also imputed to you a perfect righteousness which shall never be taken from you—and in this spotless robe you may boldly stand even at the last Great Judgment Day!

Can we not all come, just now, and trust Jesus Christ? I mean not only you who have never trusted Christ before, but I would gladly hope that all of us who have believed in Jesus Christ would begin trusting in Him again. I wonder how many times I have had to begin my spiritual life over again at the foot of the Cross? I am always doing it and I am never so happy, so safe, or, I believe, so holy, as when I stand just as I did at first—at the foot of the Cross and look up, and say to my dear Lord and Savior—

***“Nothing in my hands I bring—
Simply to Your Cross I cling.”***

If any Brother or Sister thinks that he has become perfect, he can appear in that character better than I can, for I cannot go to God in that fashion. The moment I think I am getting on in “the higher life,” if I go back to the

Cross, my “higher life” all vanishes! In fact I have no “higher life.” I have nothing but what Christ gives me—I am a wretched, miserable beggar dependent upon Him for everything! And I am never so right before Him as when I feel that it is so and just look to Him as I did when I first came to Him and put my trust in Him. Some brethren have a dreadful tumble because they have been building up their pretty little fancied experiences something like what I have seen on the top of a mountain. Certain people always want to see a little further than anyone else can, so they build a little wooden platform and stand on that. It is, no doubt, very delightful to stand up there and feel that you are so many feet higher than anybody else. But that platform gets rotten, in time, and all of a sudden it breaks—and all on it come down with it and they are very apt to say that the mountain itself is crumbling! Nonsense, the mountain is all right, but you tried to get above the mountain! If you had kept down where you ought to have been—on the granite rock—you would not have tumbled. I charge every child of God to strive after perfect holiness with all his might, but never to think that he has gotten any further than this—“Jesus Christ is All-in-All to me and I am nothing at all apart from Him. On Him do I hang and in Him alone do I trust.”

The comfortable assurance of the text is this, “*If Jesus Christ will not cast me out, He will take me in.*” He must do either the one or the other, there is no middle course. I never read of anybody but those He blesses and those He curses—those to whom He is a savor of life and those to whom He is a savor of death. Then, as I just said, if He will not cast me out, I know what He will do—He will take me in, He will wash me, He will cleanse me, He will clothe me, He will feed me, He will reveal Himself to me, He will make me His brother and His friend, He will keep me in life, keep me in death and bring me to be with Him where He is, that I may behold His Glory!

Now, who will begin with Jesus, or begin again with Jesus? By His Grace, I will! Savior, I have no confidence but in Your precious blood. I have preached Your Gospel for many a year and, by so doing, have been the means of bringing many sinners to You—but this I count less than nothing as the groundwork of my hope of eternal life—for that I rest on You, and on You alone!

Now, Sinners, come along, and may the Holy Spirit graciously lead you to do as we are now doing. And then, as you go your way, each one of you can say, “He will never cast me out, for I have come to Him.” Trust Jesus, I implore you. He is worthy of your trust, for He is the Son of God and He has died to put away the guilt of all who trust Him! I wish someone would say, “I have tried to save myself, but I cannot do it. I will trust Him to do it and I believe that He can, and that He will.” Ah, my Friend, you will never be disappointed if you make such a blessed resolve as that! May God, by His Grace, enable you to do it—and to Him shall be praise forever and ever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

ISAIAH 55.

Verse 1. *Ho, everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters, and he that has no money; come you, buy, and eat; yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.* The description of Gospel blessings grows sweeter as it advances. “Waters” first. “Wine and milk” next—and still all “without money and without price.”

2. *Why do you spend money for that which is not bread? And your labor for that which satisfies not? Hearken diligently unto Me, and eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.* All your largest desires you long for, you will find in Christ! You shall have not only necessities, but delicacies, delights that shall satisfy you to the fullest! You shall not be able to conceive of anything that shall be more rich and full than the Grace of God.

3. *Incline your ear and come unto Me.* This is the gate by which salvation enters into man—Ear Gate, by hearing and believing—“Incline your ear,” bend it forward as if you would catch every word “and come unto Me.”

3. *Hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an Everlasting Covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.* Only think of a Covenant made with needy sinners, thirsty sinners. God shaking hands with guilty men in the Person of Jesus Christ. It is a sure Covenant, too. Not made up of “ifs” and, “buts” and, “perhapses”—but a Covenant sealed with blood and signed by Him who gives an oath with it that He will never turn from it, that you may have “strong consolation.”

4. *Behold, I have given Him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.* He who is our greater David comes to us to bear witness of the Immutable Love of God and to be to us our Captain and our King. Happy are the souls that accept this David to be their Leader. You remember how David, in the cave Adullam, gathered to himself “everyone that was in distress, and everyone that was in debt, and everyone that was discontented, and he became a captain over them.” Even so, the great Antitype, David’s Son and David’s Lord is now willing to gather to Himself those who are spiritually bankrupt, discontented and weary with the world! And God says, “I have given Him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.”

5. *Behold, You shall call a nation that You know not, and nations that knew You not shall run unto You because of the LORD Your God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for He has glorified You.* What joy this gives to you who love Him! Jehovah has glorified His Son and given to Him the power to call to Himself a people that He knew not in a saving sense, and He shall so call nations that knew Him not that they shall run to Him. We do not preach the Gospel, dear Brothers, at haphazard—we are sure of results. If we speak in faith, in the name of Christ men must be saved! They must run to Christ. It is not left to their option—there is a Divine hand that secretly touches the springs of the will of men so that when Christ calls them, they run to Him! Oh, that He would just now call

them, even those that are furthest off, that they may run to Him and that He may be glorified!

6. *Seek you the LORD while He may be found.* In these happy Gospel times when Christ is set forth on purpose that “He may be found.”

6. *Call you upon Him while He is near.* And He is very near when the Gospel is preached with holy unction, when Christians are praying, when hearts are breaking for the conversion of sinners and when His Spirit is working in their hearts that they may repent of sin!

7. *Let the wicked forsake his way.* It is a bad way. It is a downward way. It is a way that will end in destruction! Do not follow it any longer—“Let the wicked forsake his way.”

7. *And the unrighteous man his thoughts.* “Thoughts!” says one, “we shall not be hanged for our thoughts.” Oh, but you may be *damned* for your thoughts! No man has really forsaken the way of wickedness until he hates the very thought of wickedness! If your thoughts run after evil, your tongues will soon utter evil and your hands will soon do evil.

7. *And let him return.* He is like one who has wandered from his father’s house—“let him return.” He is like the dove that flew away from Noah’s ark and was ready to faint—“let him return.”

7. *Unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.* What a blessed word, “abundantly,” is here! Abundant pardon to cover abundant sin! Abundant provocation, abundant rejection of His Word!

8. *For*—Says God, as if He would not leave the Prophet to speak any longer on His behalf, He Himself appears upon the scene and speaks! “For”—

8. *My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, says the LORD.* No doubt He refers here to the pardon of sin. Our thoughts are narrow. We find it hard to forgive great offenses, to forgive many offenses, to forgive many offenders, to continue completely to forgive—all this is very difficult to men.

9. *For as the Heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.* Think of the biggest thought you ever had concerning God’s forgiveness of sins. Try again. Let your thoughts rise still higher—you cannot have reached the utmost height, “for as the Heavens are higher than the earth,” so are His thoughts and ways higher than yours!

10, 11. *For as the rain comes down, and the snow from Heaven, and returns not there, but waters the earth, and makes it bring forth and bud, and gives seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall My word be that goes forth out of My mouth: it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.* If you believe this great promise, you shall have the full benefit of it. Let this gracious rain drop on you and it must refresh you! Let these blessed snowflakes come down on you, and they shall melt into your bosom and remain there to bless you forever! They shall not go back to God with their mission unfulfilled. As for us who preach that Word, or

teach it in the Sunday school, we may have a full assurance that we shall not labor in vain nor spend our strength for nothing. No, no, the raindrops go not on an errand that can fail and the snowflakes that fall to the earth accomplish the end for which they are sent! Much more shall the purpose of God's Word be accomplished! Behold, it drops like the gentle rain! The messages of mercy fly like snowflakes from the lips of the Lord, Himself, and they shall not fall in vain, blessed be His holy name!

12. *For you shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.* There shall seem to be joy everywhere when there is joy in your heart. When you receive Christ, you have put everything around you into its true position. The whole Creation is a vast organ and man puts his tiny fingers on the keys and evokes thunders of harmony to the praise of God! When the heart is filled with joy and peace, mountains and hills break forth before us into singing and all the trees of the field clap their hands!

13. *Instead of the thorn.* Which is everywhere today, pricking our feet and maiming our hand—"Instead of the thorn"—

13. *Shall come up the fir tree.* There is the thorn? I see it upon the bleeding brows of Christ! He has taken it away and worn it as a crown!

13. *And instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to Jehovah for a name.* It shall make men know what He is like, what gracious power He has, what goodness dwells in Him! "It shall be to Jehovah for a name."

13. *For an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.* That sign is exhibited today in the eyes of men. An evil and adulterous generation called for a sign and this is the sign that God has given—His converting Grace in His Church. Instead of miracles, we have the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of sinners and if any will not believe when this sign is sent to them, neither would they believe though one rose from the dead! It stands as "an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off."

**HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—181, 978
AND FROM "SACRED SONGS AND SOLOS"—73, 20.**

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**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 9, 1906.**

***DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 19, 1876.***

***“Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out.”
John 6:37.***

[This Sermon is the 3000th that has been published in regular weekly succession since No. 1, “The Immutability of God,” was issued in January, 1856. The Lord’s-Day morning Sermons, with many of those preached in the evening, were published during Mr. Spurgeon’s lifetime. The rest of the evening Sermons are now being issued and there are still sufficient unpublished manuscripts to last for some years. The whole of the 3000 Sermons are kept in stock, and any quantity of any of them can be obtained of the publishers, Messrs. Passmore a Alabaster, Paternoster Buildings, London, EC. No. 3000 has been especially selected in harmony with Mr. Spurgeon’s custom of issuing, on such memorable occasions, a striking and simple Sermon that might be even more widely distributed than the ordinary issues. Those previously published have been as follows: Volume 17, NUMBER ONE THOUSAND—OR, “BREAD ENOUGH AND TO SPARE”; Volume 25, NUMBER 1500—OR, “LIFTING UP THE BRONZE SERPENT”; Volume 33, NUMBER 2000—OR, “HEALING BY THE STRIPES OF JESUS”; Volume 43, NUMBER 2500—OR, “ENTRANCE AND EXCLUSION.” The publishers are always pleased to quote special terms for quantities, and to send post free to all applicants their Textual Index of over 2900 Sermons, and a full List of C. H. Spurgeon’s books at reduced prices. It is almost needless to say that in the whole history of religious literature, there has never before been such an event as the issue of 3000 of one Preacher’s Sermons in weekly numbers for nearly 52 years! It is a remarkable fact that more than 750 of these Sermons have been published since Dr. Spurgeon was “called Home” on January 31, 1892. Will all believing readers pray for the Lord’s blessing upon the whole of the 3000 Sermons now issued?] [Thought you might enjoy this quote of the publishers—EOD]

WHILE I was trying to prepare a sermon for this evening, someone called at my door—I daresay the friend is here tonight, (I hope so)—and left this little note—“I entreat you to pray, especially this evening, for a most unhappy case—for one who is in great agony of mind, that God, in His Infinite Mercy, would send one ray of light into the dark soul. Please ask all the converted ones in your congregation to pray for me, that Grace may be restored to a most unhappy soul.” Well, I am sure that all Christians here will earnestly pray that the light may break into the thick

darkness and that the troubled spirit may find rest, but, after all, there is a very strong temptation to a heart in trouble to rest in the prayers of others rather than to go immediately to Christ for relief. Yet all the prayers in the world cannot, by themselves, help a man who is in despair. The light can never come into that dungeon except through one window—and that is a window through which the tearful eyes may always look—the window of everlasting love as revealed in the atoning Sacrifice of Jesus Christ!

I thought that the text which I have selected might, by the blessing of the Spirit of God, be made the means of comfort, not only to that person who wrote to me, but to many others who may be seeking the Savior. There was also another circumstance which led me to select this text. A gentleman who pressed my hand very earnestly one day, said to me, “Do you remember preaching at the sawmills in the Old Kent Road?” I replied, “Yes.” “I also remember it,” he said, “indeed, I can never forget it. You preached from this text, ‘There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defiles.’ My comfort was that towards the close of the sermon, you said, ‘I have preached upon this terrible no wise. Now, before I have done, I will preach upon a blessed no wise,’ and then you began to talk to us about that text, ‘Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out,’ and that message yielded me comfort which I have never lost.”

Well, medicine that has worked so well in one case may, perhaps, be just as efficacious in another. And if the Holy Spirit blessed the text when it was only brought in at the end of a sermon, perhaps He will bless it even more, now that we set it in the very forefront of our discourse. No, we know that He will, for we have asked His blessing upon it and, therefore, we *expect* the blessing to come. Dear Friend in trouble of soul, I hope it will come to you!

I. I am going to make five brief observations upon this passage, “Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out.” The first observation is that **OUR TEXT IS FROM THE LIPS OF JESUS HIMSELF.**

And because Christ Himself said it, we dare not doubt that *it is absolutely true*. Imagine that you see Him standing here just now—that same Jesus who fed the multitude and loved the souls of men even unto death. And then imagine that you hear these words from His lips which are like lilies dropping sweet-smelling myrrh. Oh, with what wondrous accents would He say, “Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out!” I can but feebly repeat what He must have uttered in the purest heavenly tones, yet I still pray you to remember that it is Jesus who still speaks to you, from His Word, even from Heaven! Do not dare to doubt this, or to question the truth of what He said. It was true before He died, but now that He has sealed His testimony with His most precious blood and proved His love to sinners by laying down His life for them, oh, do not

doubt the truth of His utterance, but confide fully in Him who thus speaks to you from Heaven!

The message, “Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out,” must be true, for it fell from the lips of Jesus! And next, it is eminently consistent with His Character. You cannot conceive of Him as casting out a soul that came to Him! The scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman taken in the very act of adultery, yet He did not condemn her, but said to her, “Go, and sin no more.”—

**“His heart is made of tenderness;
His heart melts with love.”**

He was sometimes angry, but it was with self-sufficient Pharisees and self-righteous hypocrites who flaunted their lies before His face—but He wept over the doomed city of Jerusalem. He had a gentle word for the woman in the city who was a sinner, and tender compassion for the little ones that were brought to Him. To those who would have driven them away, He said, “Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not; for of such is the Kingdom of God.” Look up into His face and then look upon His hands and His feet which still bear the scars of His passion and ask yourselves, “Is it consistent with the Character of Christ—with the heart of Christ—with the Person of Christ—with the great objective for which He came to this earth—for Him to cast out any soul that comes to Him?” No, the words of our text must be true, for Jesus uttered them and His whole life tallies with them!

Remember, too, *that when Jesus spoke these words, He spoke as One who knew everything.* If you and I make a promise, or a statement concerning our future mode of procedure, we may not be aware of the position in which we may one day be placed—and it may become impossible for us to keep the promise. Or the course of action which we thought we would surely follow may become too difficult for us. But our Lord Jesus Christ knew all things—all things about Himself and all things about sinners—and when He said, “Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out,” He included all possible contingencies with regard to Himself—if there can be any contingencies with Him—and all possible contingencies that have to do with those who come to Him. “He knew what was in man,” and He also knew what was in His own heart and, therefore, when He spoke, He spoke deliberately and accurately—and with full knowledge of all the surroundings and circumstances of those who would come to Him!

Let me also remind you, Brothers and Sisters, *that this message has been true up to now.* What Jesus said to these Jews has stood fast for more than 18 Centuries. There is not a sinner, now living, who can bear testimony that he has come to Christ and that Christ has cast him out. There is not a soul in Hell that, with all the fully-developed sin of that dreadful place, dares, even in blasphemy, to say, “I came to Jesus and

He cast me out.” Nor shall there ever live in the universe one soul, however guilty and defiled, that shall be able to truthfully say, “I came to Him, but He shut up His heart of compassion against me and cast me out.”

Well, if it is so—that Jesus spoke this message and, therefore, it is true. If it is just, like He and exactly according to His whole method of procedure, then let us believe it and let us plead it! If you want to come to Him, but have the haunting fear that He may, perhaps, cast you out, oh, lay hold upon Him and say to Him, “Lord, You have said, ‘Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out.’” Remind Him of His own words! Plead His promise and you will never find Him run back from it, or revoke the word which has gone forth out of His lips! In your direst despair, when it seems as if He frowned upon you—when you call unto Him and yet receive no answer—when, as He spoke to the Syrophenician woman, He seems to give you harsh words instead of gracious promises—lay hold upon Him, grasp the hem of His garment and say to Him, “I will not let You go, for You have said, ‘Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out.’ Lo, I come to You! I know You cannot lie—give me a welcome, or else I shall die. I know You cannot be false to Your word and here, if I perish, I will perish pleading the precious promise on which my soul would gladly stay herself!”

II. The next observation is this—THESE WORDS WERE SPOKEN IN THE SINGULAR. “*Him* that comes to Me.”

This is all the more remarkable because the first part of the verse is in the plural—“*All* that the Father gives Me shall come to Me.” And, naturally and grammatically, the second clause should run, “and those that come to Me I will in no wise cast out.” But it is not so worded. There is a change from the plural to the singular and Jesus says, “*Him* that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out.” And, I think, with admirable reason, for the Lord is always wise even in the choice of numbers and there is a motive for this change.

It may be this—here is *personality recognized*. You have been one of a crowd before, but you are all alone now. You used to think of a sort of national Christianity and say, “Yes, we are all Christians because we are Englishmen.” But you know better than that now. You used to reckon that you might consider yourself a Christian because your father and mother were godly people—you belonged to a Christian family. But you know better than that now. You know that the mere hereditary faith which comes to men by natural birth is of no spiritual value, for “that which is born of the flesh is flesh.” “You must be born-again.” You feel one by yourself—to use an old metaphor, you are like the wounded stag which retires into the glades of the forest to bleed and die alone. I daresay, when you now hear a sermon, if it is full of threats, you think that it is all meant for you. You have begun to read the Bible and to look

for texts that may speak to you. And though, as yet, you have not lighted on a promise that seems like a lone star to shine especially for you, yet you are looking for such a promise and you hope that you will find it. At any rate, you are now cut loose from everything and everybody else—you feel yourself to be a separate individual that is to be judged, before long, before the bar of God and, you fear to be cast away forever beneath His wrath. Think now—Jesus puts this message in the singular—“Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out,” and you, also, are in the singular! Does not this message just suit your personality?

It is very possible that there is also in you a *singularity suspected*. You think that there never was anybody exactly like you. If you were like others, you would have hope, but there are certain points about your sin, certain aspects of your character and certain doubts and fears with which you are assailed which set you apart as a lot out of all catalogs. You feel that you are quite alone—you are the odd man or the odd woman. You cannot think that even the most general promises can relate to you. You consider that the act of indemnity exempts you from its operations—even if it does not exempt anybody else, it exempts you. It is for this very reason that Jesus Christ puts the matter as He does. He speaks to you odd people, to you solitary people, to you singularities, to you odds and ends of the universe and He says, “Him that comes to Me”—though such a man as he has never lived before—though he is the one exception to all rules, yet, “Him that comes to me”—any “him” in all the world “that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out.” What a blessed thing it is that thus, by using the singular number, Christ seems to meet our suspicions of being singular and calls the singular ones, the odd ones, to come to Him!

And here, too, perhaps, there may be a kind of *desertion supposed*. You think you could come to Christ if the friends of your youth were with you. You could come if a beloved teacher or a godly parent could pray with you. But, possibly, you have sinned yourself out of society—your transgressions have made you to be like the leper whom they put outside the camp and they will not allow you to come in among the tribes of Israel lest you should pollute the rest. Well, poor leper, you that are set apart—you that feel yourself to be given up even by those who once had some sort of hope concerning you—you for whom good people scarcely venture to pray because you seem to have committed the sin which is unto death—you have staggered their faith and disappointed all their hopes yet here still stands the text and it is addressed to you, deserted and alone as you are! If nobody will help you, and nobody will pray for you—if your tears of repentance must fall in secret—if everyone who hears about you thinks you are only a hypocrite, trying to whine yourself into favor—yet, still come to Christ all alone, for He has said, “Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out!”

Perhaps this message is put in the singular for one more reason—*emptiness confessed*. Some people, when they come to Christ, bring with them a great deal that is not worth bringing. That is a false coming. But there are others who are so destitute that they feel that if they do come to Christ, they will have to come alone because they have nothing to bring to Him. Yet Christ does not say, “If you come to Me with good feelings. If you come repenting. If you come with this, or that, or another Christian excellence, I will in no wise cast you out.” No! If you come to Christ as naked as you were when you were born and as naked as you will have to be when you go back to the earth—if you come with nothing whatever—as long as you come—Christ puts the word in the singular that it may mean you, and only you—bringing with you nothing but that which is your own, namely, your sin and your misery, your emptiness, your needs, your inability, your spiritual death and everything else which now crushes you well-near to despair—if you come, you, you, you, you, whoever you may be—if you come to Him, He will in no wise cast you out! Thus have we tried to say something which God may bless to the comfort of the singular ones.

III. Notice, next, that THE TEXT DESCRIBES THE PERSON COMING TO CHRIST WITH VERY WONDERFUL SIMPLICITY. “*Him that comes to Me.*” John Bunyan truly says, “That means any ‘Him’ in all the world.” And I venture to say that it means anyone in all the world who does but come to Christ. In Christ’s day there were some who came to Him doubtingly, like that man who said, “Lord, I believe; help You my unbelief,” yet He did not cast them out! There were some who came to Jesus limping, for they were lame. There were some who came to Him with very great difficulty, for they were paralyzed in part of their bodies—but they did come to Him and He did not cast them out. And there were some who came blindly. They could not see who He was, nor what He was, but, nevertheless, they came to Him and He did not cast them out because they were blind. There were some who had to be carried to Him, yet, since it was with their own consent that they were carried, as long as they did but come, He did not cast them out! One man, you remember, came to Him through the ceiling—his friends had to take away the covering of the house to let him down into the Presence of Jesus. Well, if you get to Jesus over hedge or ditch, over the wall, or through the ceiling, or down the chimney—if you do but come to Him, it matters not how you come as long as you do but come!

IV. My fourth observation shall be this—THE TEXT CONTAINS AN ABSOLUTE NEGATIVE. “*Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out.*”

Indeed, it is more than one negative, for it might be rendered “I will not, *not* cast out,” or, “I will never, never cast out.” In our language, one negative cancels another, but in the Greek language, negatives

strengthen one another. Indeed, we sometimes use similar expressions and do so very properly in order to make our meaning clear and forcible, as when we sing—

***“The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose,
He will not, He will not depart to his foes.
That soul, though all Hell should endeavor to shake,
He will never, no never, no never forsake!”***

The difficulty which many feel is this—*perhaps they are not elect*—and if they are not, then, even though they come to Jesus, He must cast them out. Now, that is supposing what never did occur, because no non-elect soul ever came to Jesus! But I need not go into that matter, for my text suffices without any explanation. Read the first part of the verse—“All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me.” There Christ is speaking about election and with that subject distinctly before His eyes, not forgetting the Predestination of God and His eternal will and Purpose, Jesus, knowing what He was saying, said, “Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out.” So, Predestination and Election cannot be inconsistent with the Truth of God in this text and, though you may sometimes fear that your ship will split on that rock, it really is not a rock in the harbor’s mouth when Christ is the harbor! If you come to Him, you need not trouble about the secret decrees and purposes of God. There are such decrees and purposes, but they cannot, any one of them, be contrary to the Truth which Christ so explicitly declares here, “Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out.” In the prophecy of Isaiah, the Lord says, “I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek you Me in vain.” I have often blessed the Lord for that text—it does not tell us what God has said, but it tells us what He has *not* said, and that is, that He said not unto the seed of Jacob, “Seek you Me in vain.” He never tantalizes us! He never bids us seek Him with the reserve in His own mind that we shall not find Him. So, speaking broadly, yet truthfully, Christ says, “Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out.” There is no secret purpose of God, nothing written in the great book of human destiny, nothing in the mysteries of eternity which can ever make this declaration of Christ untrue to you, or anyone else! “Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out.”

“I am not troubled about that matter,” says one. “My difficulty is of a more practical kind. I can leave the mysteries, but there is something that I cannot leave, and that is my past sin.” Well, Friend, when the Lord Jesus said, “Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out,” He looked right down the centuries to the end of time. He did not say, “Him that comes to me *today*, I will in no wise cast out.” The declaration, “Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out,” is as true at this moment as it was when the words first fell from Christ’s lips. He knew then, for He knew all things, what a sinner you would be and you were in His mind

then, for that mind of His is Infinite and Divine! And He knew that there would be such a man, or such a woman, as you are—and that you would sin just as you have done. Yet, taking all that into consideration, He said, “Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out.”

I do not know what your special sin may have been. Perhaps it would be wrong for me to try to guess, but this I do know, if you come to Christ, “though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” It may be that you have to mourn over long years of aggravated transgression—sins against light and sins against knowledge. I cannot read your life story and I do not want to read it—it is sufficient for me that Jesus said, “Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out.” If you came to Him and He cast you out because of these long years of sin, His declaration would not be true. If you had lived as long as Methuselah. If you had sinned as grossly as Manasseh. If you had lived a life of dishonesty and unchastity, yet, if you really came to Him, He could not, being a true Christ, cast you away! If all the sins that men have ever committed could be laid to the charge of one poor sinner, yet if that sinner came to Christ, He could not cast Him away! The phrase, “in no wise,” has such a wonderful sweep that it comprehends the grossest of crimes and the most heinous transgressions.

“Ah,” says another, “it is not my past sins which trouble me so much as *my present hardness of heart*. My heart is like the nether millstone. My eyes never weep for sin. No, I can even think of sin almost without alarm.” So, dear Friend, you judge yourself, but probably your judgment is a great mistake. Yet, even were it true, remember that Christ has not said, “Him that comes to Me, I will only cast out because his heart is hard,” or, “because he refuses to weep.” He has not put in any exception! He met your case when He said, “Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise—not even for that reason—cast out.” If your heart is like iron, where will it ever be softened except in the furnace of His Love?

“Oh,” says another, “I have been thinking of my sins and I have tried to repent.” Yes, but you must remember that—

**“Law and terrors do but harden
All the while they work alone.
‘Tis a sense of blood-bought pardon
That dissolves the heart of stone.”**

When a soul comes to Christ, *then* it gets repentance, it gets tenderness of heart, it gets all that it really needs! And all attempts to get these things *before* you come to Christ are like trying to get the effect before you get the cause—to get the fruit before you get the root! O Soul, however old your condition may be, come to Christ, for He can cure you! A good deal of preaching has been addressed to persons of a certain character, and sinners who listen to that character-preaching, keep asking, “Is that our character?” In this way, their eyes are fixed upon

themselves and their own characters, instead of upon Christ! That is a gospel which will do them no good. But Christ's Gospel turns a man's eyes away from his own character. It says to him, "Admit, once and for all, that your character is incorrigibly bad and that you deserve to be sent to the lowest Hell. But, that being the case, the Gospel still says to you, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.'" Some gospels might help a man if he could get a certain distance on the way to Heaven, but the good Samaritan came just where the poor wounded traveler was—and Jesus Christ comes to sinners just where they are, and just *as they are*—hard-hearted, callous, thoughtless, careless, yet often conscious of all this and, strange to say, lamenting that they cannot lament, and crying, "I would feel if I could! I feel that it is a pain to think I cannot feel. I am sad to think I am not sad, and weary to think I am not weary." Well, then, Jesus says, "Just as you now are, come unto Me. Leave your care, just as it is, in My hands, and I will undertake it for you."

Did I hear somebody say, "*Oh, but I am so ignorant!*"? Well, my dear Friend, so are all of us! The only difference between a very wise man and a very great fool is that the wise man knows that he is a fool, and the other does not. When all the knowledge of our wisest men is put together, it makes but a very small book compared with the vast volume that contains what they do *not* know. Why, the most highly-educated man, now living, has only just gone to an A. B. C. school as yet, and as for those very learned divines—the D. D.s and the LL. D.s, and those doctors who think they know so much that they know better than the Bible—well, after all, their knowledge, as compared with what is yet to be known, is only the information of an ant or a magpie—nothing more! We are all fools together and what a mercy it is that the Lord Jesus Christ does not require a lot of knowledge of us! It is to know Him that suffices us. To know yourself as a sinner and Christ as your Savior is all the knowledge you really need in order to find eternal life. Never let your ignorance stand in your way, for Christ virtually puts the matter thus, "Him that comes to Me—though He cannot read a letter in the Bible, and hardly knows that twice two are four—if he does but come to Me, I will in no wise cast him out."

"Ah, yes," says another, "*but I am so poor!*" Well, that is the very last thing that you should ever mention as a hindrance to your coming to Christ, for His Gospel is especially preached to the poor. One of the proofs that He gave of His Messiahship was this, "the poor have the Gospel preached to them." And, oftentimes, He has "chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith," to be the "heirs of the Kingdom which He has promised to them that love Him." So that you cannot truly say that you are too poor to come to Christ.

“Ah,” says another, “but *I am so tried and troubled.*” Suppose you are? You do not imagine that the Lord Jesus Christ said, “Him that comes to me, I will not cast out unless he is tried and troubled,” do you? Why, poor Soul, if there is one who could *not* be left out, it is just the one who is most troubled! What is it that moves the heart of Jesus towards us? Nothing but His pity and love. And the more trouble you have, the more cause there is for His pity to display itself upon you. Instead of keeping back from Christ because you have so many troubles, come to Him to find comfort under them!

“Everybody has been so unkind to me,” says one. “My heart is broken.” Well, the Savior, who uttered our text, could truly say, “Reproach has broken My heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none.” So He understands all about you and He will bind up your broken heart! “Ah, but I am so despised, and slandered, and misrepresented.” So was He. They called Him “a gluttonous man, and a winebibber.” He is exactly the Savior you need. “Ah, but I have lost my husband and all my friends are dead and gone. I hardly know where to find my daily bread.” Christ said, “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head.” He can sympathize with you in the deep affliction of your poverty, so go to Him! You should go, above all others—you who have not a comfortable home, before whom the whole earth seems a desert—you who seem to have been turned out of Paradise and there is nothing before you but the land which brings forth thorns and thistles—it is in your ears that I would especially repeat the ancient promise, “The Seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent.” You shall overcome all your enemies if you but come to Jesus Christ!

It is a sweet thing to think that the text is so comprehensive—“Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out.” Have you ever read Mr. John Bunyan’s “*Come and Welcome*”? He very wonderfully expounds this text and, if I remember rightly, he makes the sinner say, “But I am so great a sinner.” “I will in no wise cast you out.” “But I have sinned against knowledge.” “I will in no wise cast you out.” “But I have been a thief.” “I will in no wise cast you out.” “I have been a fornicator and adulterer.” “I will in no wise cast you out.” “But I have been a murderer.” “I will in no wise cast you out.” “But I cannot believe as I would.” “I will in no wise cast you out.” And he keeps on, page after page, supposing all things that he can well think of—but I will not keep on so long—I will just say this—Suppose what you like and though it is a fact, yet, still my text covers it—“Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out!”

V. My last observation is this, OUR TEXT PLEDGES OUR LORD’S PERSONAL ACTION. “Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out.”

He does not say anything here about what His servants will do. Some of them look with disapproval at big sinners. They have been known to do so before now and some of them are still a little like that elder brother who said, "As soon as this, your son, was come, which has devoured your living with harlots, you have killed for him the fatted calf." But Christ says to the prodigal, "I will not cast you out. Your brother may be unwilling to receive you, but I will welcome you."

Now, if the Lord Jesus Christ does not cast us out, it really does not matter who else wants to do so. So long as the Master of the feast does not reject us, we may keep our place at the table! It is a very suggestive thing that my text is in the very chapter which records the great feast when thousands sat down upon the grass and were fed by Christ. I daresay they were some very strange characters there that day. None of them were too good, but I expect that among that crowd of loafers around the Savior—for loafers many of them were, for they had followed for the sake of the loaves and that is just the meaning of the word, "loafer"—there were some fine gentlemen from Jerusalem who said, "Well, if that is the Messiah, He has a pretty following, indeed!" On another occasion they called Him "a friend of publicans and sinners." And they said, "This Man receives sinners, and eats with them." He never denied it, He rather gloried in it! He said that He was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel and that "they that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." He loved to have them about Him—loafers and vagabonds as they were. I do not read that He said to Philip, and Peter, and Andrew, "Now, look. We are going to give a feast, but it must be on the principle of the Charity Organization Society and we must not give anything to people who are undeserving." It is true that God gives to the unthankful and the unbelieving, but modern charity says, "That is wicked!" Well, I daresay there is a good deal to be said for that view of the matter, but Jesus Christ did not believe in that view. There were many undeserving people there and He fed them all! Christ did not feed any man there because he was good, but because he was hungry. He saw that they were tired and faint, so he multiplied the loaves and the fishes, and fed them till they were satisfied.

And today, Jesus Christ does not give His mercy to any man because he deserves it, or because there are any good qualities in the man that may merit the display of His Grace—He saves people because He loves to save the unworthy—and He would not have them perish. "As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live." That is His only reason and, blessed be His name that it is His only reason for saving sinners, because you and I, who are among the most unworthy persons who have ever lived, may come and sit at the feet of His Grace and know that He has pledged

His personal honor and His own private Character for it that him that comes to Him, He will not cast out! If HE does not cast us out, who can? As He says, “I will in no wise cast you out,” rest assured that all His servants and all His enemies, even if they wanted to cast us out, would be quite unable to accomplish the task!

When Jesus says, “I will not cast out Him that comes to Me,” He means that He will let him stay with Him. If you get into Christ’s family by simply trusting Him, you shall always be in His family. If you get into my Lord’s house by simply trusting Him, you shall always be in His house! He will not cast you out, but He will receive you, pardon you, cleanse you, bless you. You shall have the power, the right, the authority to become a son of God—and you shall have the nature of a son, you shall receive the Spirit of adoption whereby you shall be able to cry, “Abba, Father.” You shall have the blessings of a son—you shall be provided for, educated and trained for the skies. You shall not be denied any blessing or favor which is given to God’s family. If you do but come to Christ, His Grace shall be free to you, His House shall be free for you, His city and His Kingdom shall cost you nothing, His heart shall be free for you and, by-and-by, His Heaven shall be free for you, for where He is, there shall you be also—and as He sits at His Father’s right hand, so shall you sit down with Him upon His Throne!

I have known the time when if I had heard such a sermon as this, I think I would have leaped for joy to think that there was such mercy to be had by me! I would not have needed any fine speaking, or any display of oratory. I would only have needed to be assured that Jesus would receive me and I would at once have come to Him! And this I know—every truly hungry soul here will come and feed on this Truth of God tonight, and every thirsty soul will come and drink! But if there are any here who think they are good enough—if there are any who fancy that they have not sinned against God and so do not feel that they are in any great danger, or have any great needs—well, it will be according to the old rule, the full will loathe the loaded table, but to the hungry man even bitter things will be sweet!

I can only give you the Gospel invitation and leave it with the Lord to incline you to accept it. May you be led to come to Jesus by a spiritual act of faith this very hour!

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

THE LAST MESSAGE FOR THE YEAR NO. 3230

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 29, 1910.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, DECEMBER 28, 1873.

“All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me; and him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.

John 6:37.

[Mr. Spurgeon preached many Sermons upon this verse. Among those already published are #1762, Volume 30—HIGH DOCTRINE AND BROAD DOCTRINE; #2349, Volume 40—ALL COMERS TO CHRIST WELCOMED; #2954, Volume 51—THE BIG GATES WIDE OPEN and #3000, Volume 52—NUMBER 3000—OR, COME AND WELCOME—Read/download all these sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

WE have come to the last Sabbath evening and the last public Sabbath service of another year. With some of us it may be our last Sabbath on earth and our last public Sabbath service in this life. It becomes us, then, to fix our thoughts upon solemn and weighty themes—those which are of the utmost importance to us—and those which most closely concern our eternal destiny. I pray that the Holy Spirit may cause the deepest possible seriousness to rest upon this whole assembly and that He may very specially guide me to speak as I ought upon the familiar but most weighty words that I trust He has moved me to select once again for your very earnest consideration tonight.

I have preached many times upon this text but, on this occasion, I am going to speak briefly upon three topics that it suggests to me. The first is that *there is only one way of salvation*—“All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me.” “Him that comes to Me.” This topic will teach us *the exclusiveness of Divine Grace*. Secondly, *this way will be used by some*—“All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me.” This teaches us *the Omnipotence of Divine Grace*. Thirdly, all who come by this way shall be saved—“him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” *This teaches us the fullness and freeness of Divine Grace*.

I. First, then, we learn from our text THE EXCLUSIVENESS OF DIVINE GRACE—THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY OF SALVATION “All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me.” “Him that comes to Me.”

To come to Jesus is the one and only way of salvation. If there could have been any other way, this one would never have been opened. It is not conceivable that God would have given His only-begotten and well-beloved Son to die upon the Cross of Calvary in order to save sinners if there had been any other way of saving them that would have been as consistent with the principles of Infallible Justice. If men could have entered into everlasting life without passing along the path stained and consecrated by the blood of Jesus, surely that blood would never have

been “shed for many for the remission of sins.” The very fact that this new and living way has been opened proves that there is no other, for God would never have provided it unless it had been absolutely necessary. That this is the only way of salvation is again and again emphasized in Scripture with a sacred intolerance which none ought to mistake! Writing to the Corinthians, under the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul says, “Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” And to Timothy, his own son in the faith, he writes, “There is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus.” And the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, who had a more loving heart than ever beat in any merely human being’s breast, most solemnly said, in almost His last words on earth, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned.”

So there is no other way of salvation and sinners are most faithfully warned that however pleasant and attractive any other ways may appear to be, the end of those ways is death and “everlasting destruction from the Presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.” When Jesus said, “I am the Way,” He clearly intended to exclude all other ways, so beware lest you perish in any one of them! Be not like the foolish and wicked people of Jeremiah’s day to whom the Lord said, “Stand you in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is *the good way* and walk therein, and you shall find rest for your souls.” But, alas, they said, “We will not walk therein.” Be you not like unto them!

But what is this exclusive way of salvation? In our text it is twice described as coming to Christ. But what is meant by that expression? It does not mean any mere locomotion, any moving of the body from one place to another. There were many who came to Christ in that sense while He was upon the earth—they thronged around Him and pressed upon Him—but the mere proximity of their bodies to Christ did not bring salvation to them, for many of them turned away and walked no more with Him when His heart-searching teaching was too faithful for them. Well, then, what does coming to Christ readily mean?

Coming to Christ means, first, *turning away from all confidence in ourselves or in others and trusting alone in Jesus*. In order to come to a certain person, you must turn away from another person who is in a different direction, so if you want to be saved, you must come right away from trusting in yourselves—you must cease to have any confidence in anything that you have ever done, or ever hope to do—you must not place any reliance upon the alms you have bestowed upon the poor, the prayers you have presented to God, the services you have attended, or anything of your own! You must utterly abhor all hope of salvation from yourself, even as Paul did when, after recounting the things in which he had formerly trusted, he wrote, “But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yes, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness,

which is of the Law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.”

If you are resolved to come to Christ, you must also give up all trust in others as a means of salvation. If you have up to now been placing any reliance upon your godly ancestry, your Christian father and mother, or if you have been depending upon your close connection with good people. If you have trusted to a man who calls himself a priest. If you have put any dependence upon what he can do towards your salvation—I pray you to cast away all such confidence, and dependence, for if you do not, you cannot come to Christ! If you have been relying upon any rite, or ceremony, or “sacrament” relating to water or bread and wine, any “priestly” performance, or posture, or ritual, or anything apart from the Lord Jesus Christ, I implore you to abandon all those soul-destroying delusions, for no one of them nor all of them combined will help you into the one and only way of salvation!

For, observe, that the text speaks—and it is the Lord Jesus Christ who speaks through the text—of coming to a Person—“All that the Father gives ME shall come to ME; and him that comes to ME I will no wise cast out.” Note how personal the text is both concerning the one coming and the One to whom he is to come—“*Him* that comes to ME.” That is the long and the short of the whole matter—its Alpha and Omega, its beginning and its end—there must be a personal coming to the personal Christ! It will not suffice for you to come to Christ’s Doctrine—you must, of course, believe what He taught—but believing His teaching will not save you unless you come to HIM. It will not be enough merely to come to Christ’s precepts and to try to practice them—an utterly impossible task for you to perform in your own unaided strength! You must first come to Christ and then, trusting in Him for salvation, His gracious Spirit will take of the things of Christ and show them to you, and teach and enable you to walk in His ways and to obey His precepts.

Does someone ask, “Who and what is He to whom I am to come?” Listen. The Eternal Son of the Eternal Father—He who has made the heavens and the earth and all things that are, whose almighty Word fashioned this round globe and sent it spinning on its wondrous course around the sun—the Creator and Lord of all the angelic host before whom cherubim and seraphim bow down in reverent adoration—this great King of kings and Lord of lords, in His amazing love and wondrous condescension, “made Himself of no reputation and took upon Him the form of a Servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a Man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross.” It is to Him that you are to come! You are to believe in Him as the Incarnate God, equally and just as truly Son of Man and Son of God! And then, (and this is the *crux* of your faith, your faith in the Cross—that “Cross” in which Paul gloried—not a cross of wood, or stone, or ivory before which people idolatrously prostrate themselves—but the Doctrine of the Cross, which is today as great an “offence” as it was in Paul’s day), you must believe that God laid upon His Incarnate and Immaculate Son, the sins of all His people whom He

had given to Him from all eternity! And you must believe that He even took pleasure in bruising Him because of the wondrous results that were to follow and flow from His atoning Sacrifice on the Cross! Do you think I am speaking too strongly? Remember the words of the inspired Prophet Isaiah—"All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way, and the Lord has laid on Him (made to meet on Him) the iniquity of us all...It pleased the Lord to bruise Him. He has put Him to grief: when You shall make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand." If you, my Brother or Sister, rely upon this great expiatory Sacrifice and believe that when Christ died upon the Cross, He died as your Substitute and Representative, you are saved! You have entered the one and only way of salvation!

But be assured of this, if you reject the Incarnate God. If you will not trust in Him. If you will not come to Him that you may have life, there is no other way of salvation and there will never be any other! Never forget that this same Jesus, who was taken up into Heaven, shall so come again in like manner as He went up into Heaven—and "when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe," there will be others to whom His Second Advent will bring nothing but dismay and terror, for then, "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and they that know not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the Presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power." It will be utterly in vain for you to cry, then, to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sits on the Throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of His wrath is come and who shall be able to stand?"

II. Now, secondly, we learn from our text THE OMNIPOTENCE OF DIVINE GRACE—SOME WILL USE THIS ONE AND ONLY WAY OF SALVATION. "All that the Father gives Me *shall come to Me.*"

So first, *there are some who were given to Christ.* We believe that it is clearly revealed in the Scriptures that long before this earth was created, the Lord looked forward upon the race of human beings that He intended to live upon it, and that out of them He chose unto Himself a people whom He gave to His Son to be the reward of the suffering He would endure on their behalf. Peter wrote to the elect strangers, "You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people that you should show forth the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." And Paul wrote to Timothy, "The foundation of God stands sure, having this seal, The Lord knows them that are His." We do not know them, but He knows everyone of them and He counts them as His own peculiar treasure! "They shall be Mine, says the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels." These people have been given to Christ by His Father. Again and again, in that great intercessory prayer of His, He spoke of this Truth of God! In fact, the prayer begins with an emphatic declaration of it—"Father, the hour is come; glorify

Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You; as You have given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.”

In our text *Christ says that these people shall come to Him*. “All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me.” There is no question about whether they will come, or will not come—Christ says that they “shall come” to Him. “But,” asks someone, “will God force them to come to Christ against their will?” Oh, no—He has a gracious way of making them willing in the day of His power. By His Spirit’s Divine teaching, He will instruct them, illuminate them, persuade them, compel them so that everyone of those who were given to Christ will come to Him. “But they are blind,” says another. The Lord says, “I will bring the blind by a way that they know not.” “But they are very obstinate.” The Lord says, “I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness and speak comfortably unto her.” “But they are dead.” Yes, that is true, but the Lord quickens those who are dead in trespasses and sins. Without violating our wills and leaving us to still act as free agents responsible for our own actions, He makes us willing to yield ourselves up to Christ—body, soul and spirit—to be forever His!

Why does Christ tell us this? I think He does it partly to comfort His ministers. Oh, it is heart-breaking work to keep on preaching Christ to sinners who will not come to Him, holding up Christ before eyes that see no beauty in Him, praising Him to ears that are not charmed with the music of His name! So our Master says to us, “My servants, you shall not labor in vain, nor spend your strength for nothing. ‘All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me.’ If all those who were first invited to the great Gospel feast make excuses for not coming, others will accept My invitation and the feast shall be fully furnished with guests. If scribes and Pharisees still reject Me, publicans and harlots will be only too glad to come to Me and I will cast out none who come. So still go on, My servants, publishing the glad tidings of salvation, for all that My Father gave Me must and shall come to Me.”

I think Christ also speaks thus as a rebuff to those who seem to imagine that Christ’s work will be a failure if *they* do not come to Him! You know how many talk, nowadays, about the Gospel being old-fashioned, worn out and not adapted to this enlightened age! Oh, yes, Sir, I know what you think and how you talk! But are you foolish enough to suppose that Christ’s great Sacrifice on Calvary will prove to have been offered in vain just because *you* refuse to trust to it? Oh no, “He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied.” Here is a poor silly fly drowning in a glass of water. He might as well imagine that his dying struggles would convulse all the empires of the earth as an atheist might think that he can demolish the whole system of Christianity by the nonsensical whimsies that he harbors in his stupid brain! I tell you, Man, that you cannot frustrate the eternal purposes of God, or rob His Son of a single grain of His Glory! What if you will not come to Christ? He never expected that you would come, so He will not be surprised or disappointed! But if you will not come to Him, others will. If you will not enlist in the army of

the Cross and join the innumerable hosts that rally round His blood-stained banner, others will, and the great Son of David will never lack brave soldiers who will do and dare for Him more than even David's mighty men did for their royal leader! Voltaire said that he lived in the twilight of Christianity, but if so, it was the twilight of the morning, not of the evening! Julian the apostate vowed that he would put down the Nazarene, but his dying cry was, "O Galilean, You have conquered!" Yes, and so He always will—and they who oppose and reject Him will find that the stone which the builders refused will become the cornerstone in the great Temple of His Church—and also a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense to those who reject Him! Woe be unto those upon whom that Stone shall fall, for it will grind them to powder!

I think that Jesus also intended these words, "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me," to be a cause for jubilation in the hearts of His people. We often feel very sad concerning the times in which we live and there is more than enough to make us sigh and cry because of the abominations and iniquities in the world and, alas, because of the many evils in the professing church! But those who love the Lord and seek to serve Him are not left without many consolations and compensations. The purposes of God shall all be fulfilled! There shall not be one soul the less in Heaven notwithstanding all that Romanism, Ritualism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Mohammedanism and every other *ism* may do! Christ shall not be robbed of the reward of His soul-travail by anything that infidelity can do! Satan may rage and roar, and all his legions may come up from the bottomless Pit and league themselves with wicked men to overthrow the Church of God, but founded upon the Rock, "the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it." The kings and rulers of the earth may take counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed, but "He that sits in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision." And when the history of this poor little planet is finished, it shall be found that Christ was speaking nothing but the truth when He said, "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me."

III. Now I come to the last and perhaps the sweetest part of the whole discourse, which is to be concerning THE FULLNESS AND FREENESS OF DIVINE GRACE—ALL WHO COME BY THIS ONE WAY SHALL BE SAVED! "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out.

This means that *everyone who comes to Christ shall certainly be saved*, for, if Christ will not cast him out, nobody else can do so! As soon as ever he comes to Christ, he is accepted (not repelled) by Christ! And being accepted by Christ, he is saved with an everlasting salvation—and there is no power on earth or in Hell that can ever make him into an unsaved man after Christ has saved him!

"But," says someone, "suppose he comes to Christ and then finds that he is not one of those who were given to Christ by His Father?" You must not suppose what never can be true, for there never was a sinner yet who came to Christ who was not *first given to Christ!* All who come to Christ are Divinely drawn to Him and no one is drawn to Him without having been from all eternity given to Him—so there is nothing in our friend's

supposition that ought to be a stumbling block in the way of any seeking sinner here! I am quite certain that God has an elect people, for He tells me so in His Word. And I am equally certain that everyone who comes to Christ shall be saved, for that also is His own declaration in the Scriptures! When people ask me how I reconcile these two Truths of God, I usually say that there is no need to reconcile them, for they have never yet quarreled with one another! Both are true and both relate to the same persons, for those who come to Christ are those who were from eternity given to Christ by His Father!

Jesus Christ still says to us, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." "But, Lord," objects someone, "this man's life has been an outrageously bad one! Will You accept *him* if he comes to You?" "Oh, yes! 'Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.'" "But, Lord, he has been an habitual drunk and he has also been a great blasphemer." Well, suppose you were obliged to add that he has been an adulterer, a liar, a thief, a perjurer, or even a murderer? Jesus Christ would still say, "'Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.'" Whatever his past character may have been, if he truly repents of his sin and trusts in My atoning blood to cleanse him from all his guilt, his sins and iniquities shall be remembered against him no more, forever." If I had the biggest, blackest sinner in the whole world here, I would say to him or to her, "My dear Friend, if you will here and now trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, the one and only Savior of sinners, I can assure you, on the authority of God, Himself, that 'though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though your sins are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.' And that your sins, which are many, are all forgiven! And then, like the woman in the city who was a notorious public sinner, you will love Christ much because you have been forgiven much."

"Ah," says some poor sinner here, "but I do not feel that I have repented enough. I do not feel that my heart is tender enough. I do not feel that I have wept enough over my many offenses." Stop a moment, Friend. If you have your Bible open, or if not, listen while I read the text again—"All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me; and him that comes to me I will in no wise cast out." Is there anything in Christ's words about how much you are to *feel*? Is there anything at all about your *feelings*? Not a word! Not even a syllable! If you but come to Christ, which means if you but trust Him, if you rely upon His finished work, if you truthfully say, as we often sing—

***"I do believe, I will believe,
That Jesus died for me!
That on the Cross He shed His blood
From sin to set me free"—***

then that glorious "Gospel in miniature"—as Martin Luther called it, applies to you as well as to every other sinner who believes in Jesus—"God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that *whoever believes in Him* should not perish, but have everlasting life." There is nothing in that verse about feelings—everything depends upon *faith*! And then when you have believed in Jesus, right feelings will be given to you

by God's good Spirit. Gratitude, love, joy, hope, peace, courage, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, temperance and every other "fruit of the Spirit" will spring from the blessed root-Grace of faith in Jesus! And so you shall have yet further confirmation of the fact that you are saved for the Lord's own test is, "By their fruits you shall know them."

Possibly there is someone here, on this last Sabbath night of another year, who is saying to himself, "I hardly know why I came into this building tonight, for I have been everything that I ought not to have been—and nothing that I ought to have been." But, Friend, do you desire to begin a new life even before the new year dawns on you? Are you willing to leave your sins? Do you long to be a holy man? In a word, is it the one wish of your heart that you may be *saved*? Then I refer you, also, to my text and remind you that the Lord Jesus Christ said, "him that comes to me I will in no wise cast out." There is nothing there to shut out the most irreligious man if he will but come to Christ! You say that you are an odd man—well, I have often said and others have said that I am an odd man—a lot that cannot be put in any catalog! You are self-condemned and so was I before I came to Christ. You feel that you are, as George Whitefield used to say, one of the devil's castaways—so bad that even Satan, himself, would not claim you! Why, you and I ought to shake hands, for that is just how I felt when that poor local preacher pointed to me and said, "Look, young man, look! Jesus Christ says to you, "Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." I did look, and was saved by the same Gospel I preach to you! And as this is the last Sabbath night in another year, and as it may be the last Gospel invitation you will ever have the opportunity of hearing, I repeat to you the very last invitations recorded in the Word of God, "The Spirit and the bride say, Come, and let him that hears say, Come. And let him that is thirsty come. And *whoever will*, let him take the water of life freely." This agrees with John 3:16 which I have already quoted to you, and it also agrees with Christ's words in our text, "Him that comes to Me." John Bunyan said that meant any "him" in all the world—"I will in no wise cast out"—that is, for no reason, for no conceivable motive, for no possible cause will Christ cast out one who comes to Him by faith! "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out" is a grand old Anglo-Saxon expression that sweeps round the man who comes to Christ and guards him like a sword of fire protecting him from every possibility of being cast out by Christ!

What do you say, My Hearers, to all this? I have pleaded with some of you hundreds of times and now, in this, my last Sabbath message for the year, I ask you once again—Will you come to Christ? *When* will you come? Tomorrow? That means never, for tomorrow never comes. By-and-by? That means that you do not intend to come to Christ at all! The text is in the present tense, "him that *comes* to me," for, "*now* is the accepted time. Behold, *now* is the day of salvation." Trust in Jesus now, Sinner! Trust your soul to Him as you trust your money to your banker and your body to your doctor! "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and *you* shall be saved." Oh, that the Holy Spirit may enable you to say, at this moment,

“This is a sinner’s salvation and, as I am a sinner, it exactly suits my case! I accept it, My Lord, praising and blessing You that I, a poor, foul, lost, condemned sinner coming to You, am saved—saved now and saved forever! Glory be unto Your holy name! Amen!”

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 11:1-26.**

1. *And it came to pass, that as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, one of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.* It seemed to this disciple as if he did not know how to pray after he had heard Christ pray. The prayer of Jesus was so infinitely above anything that he had ever reached that he said, “Lord, teach us to pray.” And as if he felt that he needed a precedent for asking such hallowed instruction, he said, “Teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.” We must all feel that if we are to pray aright, we must be taught of God, by his Holy Spirit. We are full of infirmities and if there is any time when our infirmities are felt most, it is when we engage in prayer, but “the Spirit also helps our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought.” Let us, then, breathe this prayer to our great Teacher, “Lord, teach us to pray.”

2. *And He said to them, When you pray, say, Our Father which are in Heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, as in Heaven, so in earth.* When we come to God in prayer, we are apt to think first of our own necessities, but if we came aright, in the spirit of sonship, truly saying, “Our Father who are in Heaven,” we should begin our prayer like this, “Hallowed be Your name.’ May all men honor, reverence, and adore Your holy name. ‘Your kingdom come.’ We are not satisfied that You should be anything less than King! Our heart’s desire is, ‘Reign, gracious God over us and over all men.’ ‘Your will be done, as in Heaven, so in earth.’ ‘Your will be done,’ rather than ours.” Now comes a prayer for ourselves—

3. *Give us day by day our daily bread.* “Give us, O Lord, what we really need—not that which would be a luxury, but that which is a necessity. ‘Give us,’ according as we shall need it day by day, what we shall then actually need—‘our daily bread.’” We are not warranted in asking much more than this in temporal matters. They are all comprehended in this petition as far as they are necessary, but God has not given us *carte blanche* to ask for wealth, or honor, or any such dangerous things. There is no harm in asking for bread—and He will give us that.

4. *And forgive us our sins.* We also need to pray this prayer. I do not think that our Savior ever anticipated a time when His disciples on earth would not need to pray, “Forgive us our sins.”

4. *For we also forgive everyone that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation.* “Lord, do not try us and test us more than is absolutely necessary, for we are so apt to fall! ‘Lead us not into temptation,’ but if we must be tempted”—

4. *Deliver us from evil.* “If some good end is to be answered by our being thus tested, then let it be so, but, O Lord, ‘deliver us from evil,’ and especially from the Evil One—do not allow us to fall into his hands in the hour of temptation.”

5, 6. *And He said to them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.* This man was in a sad plight—his friend was faint and hungry and he was willing enough to entertain him, but he had “nothing to set before him.” So he acts very wisely—he goes to a friend, and asks him to lend him three loaves.

7. *And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you.* If the man outside keeps on knocking. If he will not go away without the bread he wants for his friend, what will happen?

8. *I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give to him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needs.* See the power of importunate prayer? And you, Beloved, can have all that you really need for yourselves or others if you will only ask for it in the right way. If, summoning every faculty of your being, you resolve to plead, and plead, and plead yet again and again, and never take, “No,” for an answer, your heart’s desire shall be granted!

9. *And I say unto you, ask, and it shall be given you.* But if asking does not seem to prevail with God—

9. *Seek, and you shall find.* And if, for a while, you do not find, come closer in—

9. *Knock, and it shall be opened unto you.* There are different methods of praying and each one has its special adaptation to the state in which you may be—so use that method to which the Holy Spirit guides you—so use all methods until you prevail.

10, 11. *For everyone that asks receives, and he that seeks finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone?* There were many stones in those days that were in appearance wonderfully like the bread which they used in the East, but would any father mock his son by giving him one of those stones to break his teeth, instead of bread that he could eat? Never!

11-13. *Or if he asks for a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that asks Him?* [See Sermon #959, Volume 16—RIGHT REPLIES TO RIGHT REQUESTS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] If you have the Holy Spirit, you virtually have all good gifts, for the Spirit is the earnest of God’s Love, the pledge of joys to come! And He brings with Him all things that are necessary and good for you!

14. *And He was casting out a devil, and it was dumb.* So that this poor man could not obey the Savior’s teaching. He could not pray, for he was under the influence of a dumb devil. How many of that sort there are still

in the world! They cannot speak with God, they have never learned to pray, for they are possessed by a dumb devil!

14. *And it came to pass, when the devil was gone out, the dumb spoke; and the people wondered.* When the devil is driven out of men by Christ, they soon begin to pray. The little sentence, “Behold, he prays,” was the indication of a new birth in Saul of Tarsus. The Lord grant that some here who have been possessed by a dumb spirit, may be graciously led to pray! Remember, dear Friend, that God will hear your prayer the first time you call upon Him—and there is a text which says, “Before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.”

15. *But some of them said, He casts out devils through Beelzebub, the chief of the devils.* They could not have uttered a fouler lie than this! And if people thus slandered the Lord Jesus Christ, we need not be surprised if they speak ill of us!

16. *And others, tempting Him, sought of Him a sign from Heaven.* Yet they had a very striking one in the dumb devil being cast out of the man! What clearer sign than that could they have?

17, 18. *But He, knowing their thoughts, said to them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house divided against a house fails. If Satan also is divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? Because you say that I cast out devils through Beelzebub.* If Satan cast out Satan, his kingdom would soon come to an end! Note how calmly the Savior met these mockers and quibblers. There is no trace of anger in His words—they said the worst thing they could say about Him and His work and yet, in the coolest manner possible, He closes their mouths in the silence of shame. God grant us Grace to be calm and strong even when we are most furiously assailed! It is when we are in a hurry and fret that we grow weak.

19-23. *And if I, by Beelzebub, cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore shall they be your judges. But if I, with the finger of God, cast out devils, no doubt the Kingdom of God is come upon you. When a strong man armed keeps his palace, his goods are in peace: but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he takes from him all his armor wherein he trusted, and divides his spoils. He that is not with Me is against Me: and he that gathers not with Me, scatters.* Christ had made no compact with the powers of darkness! He was not casting the demons out with the devil’s aid—it was absurd to think that He was! He was fighting them and casting them out by His own Divine, Omnipotent energy. Now comes a very striking parable—

24. *When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man—*Satan does, sometimes, go out of men entirely of his own accord without being turned out. He goes out for a walk, meaning to go back again. Many a man has left off being a drunk, or left off being lascivious—for a time—“when the unclean spirit is gone out of a man”—

24. *He walks through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he says, I will return unto my house—*You see that he still calls it *his* house. He has gone out for a walk, but he has taken the keys of his house with him. Some people sign the pledge and give up being drunks for a time,

but if the devil is still their master, he has only gone away for a while, and he will come back again before long. If he goes out of his own accord, he will come back when he pleases—"I will return unto my house"—

24, 26. *From where I came out. And when he comes, he finds it swept and garnished.* The man has become quite a decent sort of fellow! He has given up his bad ways and is a respectable member of society. The house is swept and garnished, but it is the devil's house all the same!

26. *Then goes he, and takes to him even other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first.* [See Sermon #613, Volume 11—"THE STRONG ONE DRIVEN OUT BY A STRONGER ONE"—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] There are, alas, many who have only a sham conversion, a conversion which lasts but a very little while. The devil was not cast out of them, but he went out of his own accord. But where Christ has come—the One who is far stronger than the devil—to cast him out of his house, the devil will never be allowed to come back again, Christ will take care of that! Having won the victory and taken the house, he will keep it by force of arms. But beware, I pray you, of a "conversion" without Christ! Beware of a "reformation" in which the devil, himself, is a co-worker with you, for it will come to something worse in the end! Let me read the verse again—"Then goes he, and takes to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in, and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first." He becomes a worse man than ever because once he promised to be better, but only promised it in his own strength, which was utter weakness!

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

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

END OF VOLUME 56

THE CERTAINTY AND FREENESS OF DIVINE GRACE NO. 599

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 13, 1864,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me; and him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.”
John 6:37.*

LET it be forevermore remembered that the words of Jesus Christ are full of Truth and Grace. And that in each of these two sentences, whether we perceive the fact or not, there is the surest Truth and the freest Grace. There will be some who from the peculiarity of their minds, will prize most the first sentence. They will say, as they read these words, “All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me”—why, here is high doctrine! Here is the security of the Covenant, the purpose of God effectually carried out! Here is the Truth of God which we love and the Grace in which we glory.”

Other Brethren, overlooking the first sentence lest it should raise questions too hard to be answered, will rather grasp at the second sentence, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” “Why,” they say, “here is universality of description! Here is a freeness of invitation! Here is a gracious overflow of liberality—this is good free Gospel, indeed!” And they will therefore fall to proclaiming the second sentence to the neglect of the first.

But, Brothers and Sisters, let us not sin by setting one Scripture against another, or attempting to divide the living child of Revelation. It is one and it is alike glorious in all its parts. You who love to hear the Gospel preached to sinners do not be afraid of the doctrines of Sovereign Grace! And you who love Sovereign Grace but cannot well hear doctrine too high for your taste, do not be afraid of the free invitations of the Gospel and the wide door which Jesus opens for needy sinners in many passages of Scripture!

Let us receive all Truth and let us be willing to learn every lesson which the Lord has written, remembering that if we cannot as yet reconcile Truths of God, there is the promise—“What I do you know not now; but you shall know hereafter.” If we could know everything, we would be gods! Being mortals, some things must be unknown to us. Let us know our ignorance and despair of becoming infallible and thus we shall be in the path to true wisdom! But, if we boast of our wisdom, we shall be on the high road to great folly.

Let us consider the text carefully. And as it divides into two branches, let us view them one by one. Here we have Grace and Truth triumphant in specialty. And, secondly, we have Grace and Truth triumphant in liberality. May God help us to handle these so that much instruction may flow from them.

**I. In the first sentence, we have GRACE TRIUMPHANT IN SPECIALTY—
“All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me.”**

I would bring out the meaning of this passage by a few observations.

1. You perceive here that the Lord Jesus leads us up to the original position of all things—for since a people were given to Him by the Father, it is clear that they must first have been in the Father's hands. All men, then, are naturally, from the beginning, in the hands of the Father. And so it should be, for He has fashioned them all and made them for His pleasure. God, absolutely considered, created all things and His kingdom rules over all. Having a right to make laws, to issue rewards, or to threaten with punishments at His own pleasure, Jehovah sits upon His Throne, judging rightly. The elect were specially in the hands of the Father for He had chosen them.

The choice is ever described as being with the Father—"I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, because You have hid these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Your sight." They belong to the Father, then, as Creator, as Governor and as the source and fountain of election. How often do Believers forget the part which the Father has in their salvation. And yet He is the basis and prompter of it all. Remember, Beloved, that He who first of all chose you was no other than our Father who is in Heaven. And though our Lord Jesus Christ undertook your cause, yet it was because the Father, first of all, out of His great love, gave you to His Son. Forget not the Father's Grace and cease not to sing of His love—

***"'Twas with an everlasting love
That God His own elect embraced
Before He made the worlds above,
Or earth on her huge columns placed.
Long before the sun's refulgent ray
Primeval shades of darkness drove,
They on His sacred bosom lay,
Loved with an everlasting love."***

2. The Savior then proceeds to inform us of a great transaction. He says that the Father gave His people to the Son and put them into the hands of Christ—the God-man Mediator. As Jesus is God, these people always were His own. But as Mediator, He received them from the hands of the Father. Here was the Father's condescension in noticing us at all and in bestowing us upon the Son—here was the Son's infinite mercy and compassion, in accepting such poor souls as we are at the Father's hands and counting us to be His precious jewels, His peculiar portion. The persons referred to as being given by the Father are not *all* men, although, it is true that the Father has delivered all things into Jesus' hands and He has power over all flesh.

We must always interpret one passage of Scripture by another. And the thirty-ninth verse of this chapter very clearly interprets the thirty-seventh—"And this is the Father's will which has sent Me, that of all which He has given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." The given ones, it is clear, are by appointment delivered from being lost and appointed to a glorious resurrection which is not true of any but the chosen. In the tenth chapter we find the same explained thus in the twenty-seventh verse—"My sheep hear My voice and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life. And they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hands. My Fa-

ther, which gave them to Me, is greater than all. And no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hands."

And if this should not explain the matter sufficiently, we have it again in our Lord's prayer in the seventeenth chapter, sixth verse—"I have manifested Your name unto the men which You gave me out of the world: Yours they were and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word." So you see that the persons given were His own sheep. They are brought to know the voice of the Good Shepherd and to follow Him. They are in His hands and there they are safely kept beyond all fear of harm. Jesus manifests the Father's name unto them and they learn to keep the Father's word.

This does not respect any gift of all men which the Father has made to the Son—though in a certain sense all men have been given to Christ in order that they may be the unconscious instruments of His Glory, though not saved by His redemption. They are, even as His enemies, compelled to do His pleasure, though they shall never be lifted up to the adoption of children, nor to the dignity of being Brethren of the Lord.

We see, then, that there was a certain period when the eternal God gave into the hands of the Mediator a multitude which no man can number, whom He had chosen from among men to be His choice and peculiar treasure. The text speaks in the present tense. But then the thirty-eighth verse speaks in the past tense. And the passages we have been reading to you all have it in the past—therefore understand that the gift of the elect to Christ was performed in the *past*—before the skies were stretched abroad or the mountains lifted their heads to the clouds God had given a people to Christ.

But the deed may well be said to be performed in the present, since with God there is no time and what He did yesterday, He does today, and will do forever. Moreover, in a certain sense Christ does receive from His Father's hand His people in time as well as in eternity—the Father giving by effectual calling in time, the very people whom once He gave in secret Covenant in eternity. We are, by the words of our text, admitted into one of the secrets of the Divine council chamber and rejoice as we perceive that the chosen ones belonging to the Father were transferred by Him into the hands of the Mediator.

3. Further proceeding, Jesus assures us that this transaction in eternity involves a certain change in time. "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me." They may be living in sin and they may continue so to do twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, seventy years—but before their time shall come to die, they shall be brought to Christ! To come to Christ signifies to turn from sin and to trust Christ. Coming to Christ is a leaving of all false confidences, a renouncing of all love of sin and a looking to Jesus as the solitary pillar of our confidence and hope.

Now every soul whom God the Father gave to Jesus must do this and this is the token by which the secretly chosen are known—they openly choose Christ because the Father has secretly chosen them. You can never know your election by any other means. That you are not one of His sheep will be proved by your continuance in unbelief. But if humbly and hopefully you come to Jesus and make Him all your salvation and your

desire, let no doctrine of election alarm or keep you back—you are one of His, for this is the seal which He sets upon His sheep. In due time they hear His voice, are led by Him into the green pastures of Grace, follow Him through life and are brought by Him at last to the hilltops of Glory!—

***“There is a period known to God,
When all His sheep, redeemed by blood,
Shall leave the hateful ways of sin,
Turn to the fold and enter in.
At peace with Hell, with God at war,
In sin’s dark maze they wander far,
Indulge their lusts and still go on
As far from God as sheep can run.
But see how Heaven’s indulgent care
Attends their wanderings here and there
Still hard at heel wherever they stray,
With pricking thorns to hedge their way.
Glory to God, they never shall rove
Beyond the limits of His love.
Fenced with Jehovah’s shalls and wills,
Firm as the everlasting hills
The appointed time rolls on apace,
Not to propose, but call by Grace,
To change the heart, renew the will,
And turn the feet to Zion’s hill.”***

4. Observe, yet further, that in the words of our text, Jesus hints at a power possessed by Him to constrain the wanderers to return. He says, “All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me.” Oh, the power and majesty which rest in the words “shall come.” He does not say *they* have power to come. He does not say they *may* come if they *will*, but they “shall come.” There is no, “if,” no “but,” no “perhaps,” no condition whatsoever! It is put down as an unconditional and absolute purpose of God and will of Christ that all whom the Father gave to Him shall come. “Well,” says one, “but does Christ force any man to be saved?” I answer “No,” in the sense in which the question is asked. No man was ever taken to Heaven by the ears or dragged there by the hair of his head! But, at the same time, the Lord Jesus does, by His messengers, His Word, and His Spirit, sweetly and graciously compel men to come in that they may eat of His marriage-supper.

And this He does, mark you, not by any violation of the free will or free agency of man! God never treats man as though he were a brute. He does not drag him with cart ropes—He treats men as men. And when He binds them with cords, they are the cords of love and the bands of a man. I may exercise power over another’s will and yet that other man’s will may be perfectly free because the constraint is exercised in a manner accordant with the laws of the human mind. If I show a man that a certain line of action is much for his advantage, he feels bound to follow it, but he is perfectly free in so doing. If man’s will were subdued or chained by some physical process—if man’s heart should, for instance, be taken from him and be turned round by a manual operation—that would be altogether inconsistent with human freedom, or indeed, with human nature.

And yet I think some few people imagine that we mean this when we talk of constraining influence and Divine Grace! We mean nothing of the

kind! We mean that Jehovah Jesus knows how, by irresistible arguments addressed to the understanding—by mighty reasons appealing to the affections and by the mysterious influence of His Holy Spirit operating upon all the powers and passions of the soul—to subdue the whole man, that whereas it was once rebellious it becomes obedient! Whereas it stood stoutly against the Most High, it throws down the weapons of its rebellion and cries, “I yield! I yield! Subdued by Sovereign love and by the enlightenment which You have bestowed upon me, I yield myself to Your will!”

The weapons are not carnal, but mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strongholds. They are the invincible artillery of the love of Christ and the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God! Of this teaching no Arminian should complain when he remembers the strong expressions used in Wesley’s hymns! Let me quote an instance—

**“O my God, what must I do?
You alone the way can show.
You can save me in this hour,
I have neither will nor power!
God, if over all You are
Greater than my sinful heart,
All Your power on me be shown,
Take away the heart of stone.
Take away my darling sin,
Make me willing to be clean.
Make me willing to receive
All Your goodness waits to give!
Force me, Lord, with all to part,
Tear these idols from my heart!
Now Your love almighty show,
Make even me a creature new.
Jesus, mighty to renew,
Work in me to will and do.
Turn my nature’s rapid tide,
Stem the torrent of my pride!
Stop the whirlwind of my will,
Speak and bid the sun stand still.
Now Your love almighty show,
Make even me a creature new.
Arm of God, Your strength put on,
Bow the heavens and come down!
All my unbelief overthrow,
Lay the aspiring mountain low!
Conquer Your worst foe in me,
Get Yourself the victory!
Save the vilest of the race,
Force me to be saved by Grace.”**

There is an influence put forth by the Holy Spirit which makes men willing in the day of God’s power. And every soul that is numbered in the Covenant of Grace shall. Let the devil do his worst and let the human will do its utmost and let temptations strain themselves to the last degree of intensity—they shall, I say, in obedience to Divine decree, be brought to the foot of the Cross, to cry, “What must I do to be saved?”

5. And to conclude our remarks upon this first sentence, the Savior declares that there is no exception to this rule of Grace. He says, “All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me.” Not some of them, but all! Not all

but one or two, but every one! Each one in particular and the whole collectively. It will be found when the archangel's trumpet shall ring through earth and Heaven, that every soul whom God ordained to eternal life has attained that eternal life to God's praise and honor! And when the census shall be read of all the children of the living God, not one of the blood-bought and blood-washed shall be absent—they shall all come to Christ in Heaven as they all come to Christ on earth.

Now, albeit that some stumble at this doctrine, here is the greatest possible comfort to the *preacher* of the Word. Day after day we proclaim our Master's Truth and yet to a great extent we have to cry—"Who has believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" So many are stony-hearted. So many resist the invitations of the Gospel. So many turn a deaf ear to the warnings of almighty mercy—what then? Have we sown in vain? Have we labored for nothing? No, verily, in no way! The purpose of God is certainly fulfilled in every jot and tittle and the Master's will is definitely and in every point accomplished!

Therefore we labor with no broken heart and we preach with no coward spirit in this matter. You, O proud and haughty sinners, may resist Him. But if you will not come, others shall—you are bid to come to the wedding. And if you will not come, the highways and the hedges shall find Him guests. His table shall not be empty. Think not that the blood of Christ shall be shed in vain! You may count it an unholy thing, but there are myriads who shall be washed in it and who shall rejoice in its power to cleanse. You may put from you the kingdom of Heaven and count yourselves unworthy of it—if it is a "savor of death unto death" to you—yet it shall be a "savor of life unto life" to others!

The great plans of Sovereign mercy shall not be thwarted by the enmity of man! Jehovah shall yet in the end get the victory. All ages shall crown His head with fresh honors when they see how, despite all the enmity of the human heart—its treachery and its hardness—that His purpose did stand and He did all His pleasure and displayed the bounty of His Grace as He would, according to the good pleasure of His own will.

You will see, then, that this first sentence, if we understand it at all, involves, first, the doctrine of election—there are some whom the Father gave to Christ. It involves, next, the doctrine of effectual calling—those who are given must and shall come—however stoutly they may set themselves against it, they shall be brought out of darkness into God's marvelous light, And it also teaches us, and here I leave the first sentence, the indispensable necessity of *faith*—for even those who are given to Christ are not saved except they *come* to Jesus. Even they must come, for there is no other way to Heaven but by the Door, Christ Jesus.

I must not expect, whoever I may be, that I shall be saved by my morality! I must not reckon to enter Heaven by my integrity or my generosity! All that the Father gives to our Redeemer must *come* to Him. Therefore none can come to Heaven except they come to *Christ*. And it becomes indispensably requisite for princes and for peasants, for sages and for savages, for the polite and for the uneducated, for the most virtuous and the most vile to come just as they are and accept the mercy of God which is freely presented to them in the Person of Christ Jesus. And, mark, by this

shall those be known whom God has chosen—that they do willingly and joyfully accept Christ Jesus and come to Him with simple and unfeigned faith, resting upon Him as all their salvation and all their desire!

Some of you do not like this doctrine. Well, I cannot help that. I find it in the Scriptures and I preach it. There is the text—to me it means nothing if it does not mean what I have now stated. It is as plain and expressive as the Saxon language employed in it could possibly make it. Do not kick at the doctrine because you do not like it! If it is taught in Scripture, like it or not like it, receive it. Perhaps however, it does some people good to grow angry over a doctrine for they would never think of it at all if they did not! And while this doctrine, like an arrow in a wound, rankles and frets them, it nevertheless is the means of making them consider spiritual things and so they are brought to Jesus.

I believe this is one of the virtues of this doctrine—that it excites people's prejudices and they grow vexed. But since they cannot get rid of it, it follows them—they dream of it, they argue about it—and at last there is a joint in the harness through which the good Word of the Gospel cuts its way and they come to receive Christ in the fullness and plenitude of His mercy.

II. In the second sentence we have GRACE TRIUMPHANT IN ITS LIBERALITY—"Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out."

1. Please observe the liberality of the character—it is "him that comes"—there is no description given whatever, except, "him that comes." It means the rich man, the poor man, the great man, the obscure man, the moral man, the debauchee, those who have sunken into the worst of crimes and those who have mounted to the best of virtues. Those who are next akin to devils and those who seem, by the correctness of their lives to be somewhat like angels are all included—"him, him"! "Him that comes!" "What him?" says John Bunyan. "Why," says he, answering his own question, "any him in all the world that comes to Christ shall be in no wise cast out."

"Him that comes." To come, as I have explained before, is to leave something and to go to something. There is motion. We leave all other grounds of trust and we take Christ to be our solitary hope. We come to His blood to be washed, to His righteousness to be cleansed, to His wounds to be healed, to His life for life eternal and to His death for the death of our sins. We come to Jesus for everything! And the promise is that any man who comes, whoever he may be, shall find that he is not cast out. "But suppose," says one, "that the poor condemned wretch should come who has committed a foul and cruel murder?" Well, if he comes, he shall not be cast out!

If in addition to murder, or without murder, he should have been guilty of uncleanness impossible to describe—suppose he to have wallowed in it year after year and to have brought himself to such a state that he is scarcely fit to be touched with a pair of tongs! Suppose he to be such an outcast that he is only fit to be swept into some back corner in Hell. Well, what then? If he comes to Christ, he shall not be cast out! I like to put it in such a light that he who deems himself to have gone furthest into sin

may yet see that this text sets a door wide open whereby he may come for mercy!

It says, “him that comes,” and this shuts out no comer. John Newton was a blasphemer of so gross a kind that even the sailors in the vessel in a storm said that they should never get to port with such a sinner as John Newton on board! But he came to Christ and was not cast out! He lived to preach the Word of God! John Bunyan was so foul a blasphemer that even a woman of the street, who passed him by and heard him swear, said that he was enough to corrupt the whole parish. And he was astonished that a woman of so bad a character should so rebuke him!

John Bunyan came to Jesus and he was not cast out! He lived to have the honor of suffering for his Master and to be the winner of multitudes of souls. Saul of Tarsus had stained himself with the blood of saints! He was a very wolf after Christ’s sheep! He was not satisfied with worrying them in his own land, so he obtained power to persecute them in Damascus. But when he fell upon his face and cried for mercy he was not cast out! Manasseh was blood-red with the murder of God’s Prophets. It is said that he cut the Prophet Isaiah in two with a saw. And yet, when out of the low dungeon he cried for mercy, he was not cast out!

So that any kind of “him,” though he may have been a persecutor even unto blood—though he may have been exceedingly mad against God till he could not speak without blasphemies against the name of Christ—though he hated everything which is good and despised everything held precious by believing men and women—yet if he comes to Christ, he shall not be cast out! Every man, woman and child in this Tabernacle this morning is included in such a word as this, if he comes to Christ! That is the point—if you come to Christ, no matter what your past character may have been, nor yet what your present feelings may be, “him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” I thank God for so generous a liberality as that!

2. Then the next point of liberality is in the coming. Please notice it. “Him that comes to Me.” Here is no adjective to qualify it—here is no adverb to set out the manner. It is, “him that comes to Me.” That is the point, “to Me.” We must come to Jesus as crucified and bearing our sin. We must come to Christ as pleading before the Throne of God and see the acceptance of our prayers there. It is not coming to Baptism! It is not coming to the Lord’s Supper! It is not coming to the Church. It is not coming to worship—it is coming to Christ! “Him that comes to Me.”

Take heed that you do not come elsewhere—for if you rest short of anything but Christ—you rest short of the promise. But, O Soul, if you build on nothing less than Jesus’ blood and righteousness. If you touch the hem of His garment. If you look out of self entirely to Him—then rest assured of this—there is no other qualification to your coming but that you come to HIM!

Some come to Christ at once. The very first time they hear the Gospel, they lay hold of it and are saved. They are not cast out. Some are months in coming—they go from strength to strength in this matter and their faith is a thing of long growth. Well, they shall not be cast out! Some come running! Some come walking! Some come creeping on all fours! Some

have to get others to carry them, as that man did who was borne of four! But so long as they do but come, He does not cast them out! Some feel as if all their bones were broken and they can only writhe into His Presence, as it were, wriggle themselves to the Mercy Seat all full of aches, pains, woes, doubts, fears, whispers, distrusts, bad habits and sins. But if they do but come, they shall not be cast out!

One man comes with a long prayer. Another comes with nothing but two words. One comes with many tears. Another could not shed a tear if it would save his soul, but he groans. Another can scarcely groan, but his heart feels as if it would burst. One has intense conviction, another has very little of it. One is shaken over Hell's mouth, another is attracted by the beauties of the Savior. One has to be thundered at as from the top of Sinai, another is but beckoned and His willing heart runs to Calvary. But, however you come, Sinner, He will not cast you out if you come to Him—that is the point!

Do not waste time questioning what your experience is, or raising the point of how you came or when you came—for here it stands, “him that comes to Me”—not him that comes in this way, or that way, but, “him that comes to Me”! Oh, the liberality of this precious verse! It shuts me in, it does not shut you out poor Sinner—“him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.”

3. Observe the liberality of the *time*. “Him that comes.” It does not say when. He may be seventy—if he comes he is not cast out! He may be but seven—and, thank God there have been many boys and girls who have come even at that age—but He will not cast them out! Your candle may be little more than a snuff, but He will not quench it. Or it may be but newly lit—He will accept either. The full-blown rose or the flower in the bud shall alike be received by His gracious hand!

Some came to Jesus when He was on earth—He did not cast them out. A long file of sinners saved by Grace has been streaming up from the Cross to the Throne ever since then and not one of them has ever been rejected! We have fallen upon 1864, and the year is almost spent, yet, think not that we have come to the dregs of Christ's mercy! Do not imagine that, because time grows old, Christ's love grows decrepit! Ah, no! He will not cast us out in 1864 any more than He did the thief who looked to Him upon the Cross and found mercy that day! What a blessed thing it is that there is no limit as to time!

I was remarking to myself the other day that the most of the conversions which occur in our place of worship are among new people—persons who come in once or twice and perhaps before they have heard a dozen sermons God blesses them. While those who have been hearing us for seven or eight years are not converted in anything like the same proportion. It is a very sad reflection, but still I couple with it this thought—“Well, if they have not come yet, still it is not too late. If they have been invited to come for seven, eight, nine, ten, twenty years—and oh, there are some of you who have heard the Gospel ever since you were children—yet it does not say that you shall be shut out because you come so late, but, “him that comes”!

You may have turned a deaf ear until you are now growing gray. You may have despised Christ times without number—He waited to be gracious—with outstretched arms He bade His minister woo you to come to Him, but you would not come! But still, if now, by Grace, you are led to come, He will not cast you out! At the last moment of life, if you come, He will not cast you out. And now this morning—God make it an auspicious hour to you—come and try Him this hour, it is just twenty minutes past noon, but you will find if you come that He will not cast you out, for the gates of the City of Mercy are never shut!

4. Further, notice that there is no limit as to the duration of the promise. I mean, He does not merely say, “I will not cast you out when you have come,” but, “I will NEVER cast you out.” The original reads, “I will not, not cast you out,” or, “I will never, never cast you out.” The text means that Christ will not at first reject a Believer. And that as He will not do it at first, so He will not to the last. If I come to Christ today, He will accept me. And He accepts me in that act forever—He will never cast me out!

Suppose the Believer sins after coming? “If any man sin we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” Suppose that Believers backslide? “I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for My anger is turned away from him.” But Believers may fall under temptation. “God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able. But will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it.” But the Believer may fall into sin as David did! Yes, but He will “Purge them with hyssop and they shall be clean. He will wash them and they shall be whiter than snow,”

From all their iniquities will He cleanse them—

***“Once in Christ, in Christ forever,
Nothing from His love can sever,”***

and that doctrine this text teaches most expressly—“him that comes to Me I will never, never cast out.” He will never suffer one who has once been grasped in His hands to be wrested from them! No member of Christ’s body can ever be cut off, or else Christ would be mutilated. No sheep of His flock shall ever be torn by the lion—He will rend the lion and, as David did, He will take the lamb out of the jaws of the lion and out of the paws of the bear. “I give unto My sheep,” says He, “eternal life. And they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hands.”

What do you say to this, Sinner? Is not this a precious mercy—that if you come to Christ you do not come to One who will treat you well a month or two and then send you packing about your business, but will receive you and make you His child and you shall abide forever, no longer receiving the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the spirit of adoption whereby you shall cry, Abba, Father? Oh, the Grace of this passage! Would I had an angel’s tongue to set it forth!

5. Still we have not exhausted it. Something of the liberality of this passage is to be found in its certainty. “Him that comes to me I will in no wise cast out.” It is not a hope as to whether Christ will accept you—it is a CERTAINTY! Oh, if there were only half a shadow of a hope that the Lord Jesus would have mercy upon such a poor worm as I am, would I not go into His Presence hoping against hope? If it were a case of sink or swim,

yet, since I could lose nothing by trusting Him, I would gladly do it, as the hymn puts it—

***“I can but perish if I go!
I am resolved to try!
For if I stay away,
I know I must forever die.”***

But, dear Friends, we must not put it in that way, or at least, only for the sake of bringing out a thought—for there is no “but” about it—you cannot perish if you go! O, try at once and you will find that him that comes in no wise can be cast out! We sometimes sing—

***“Venture on Him, venture wholly,
Let no other trust intrude,”***

but there is no venture in the case—it is an absolute certainty. Merchants will often speculate at a high figure. But there is no speculation here. We drink the medicine which the physician gives us in the hope that it may cure—but this will cure—here is water that will quench your thirst! Here is a balm that will heal your wounds—“him that comes” He will receive—“He will in no wise cast out.”

What a hammer that word “no wise” is with which to smash your fears to pieces. “Perhaps,” says one, “He will reject me because I do not repent enough”—“in no wise.” “Perhaps He will reject me because I have been so long coming”—“in no wise.” “But He will reject *me* because I do not pray aright”—“in no wise.” You cannot mention any shape or form of a fear which this does not slay upon the spot—“I will in no wise cast out.” I say again, I wish I had an angel’s tongue to put the liberality of this before you. The devil, I know, will be suggesting twenty reasons why you should not come—let this one reason why you should come be enough to answer all of his—that Jesus says, “I will in no wise cast out him that comes.”

6. I must conclude by observing that there is great liberality in the text, if you notice its personality. Reading over this verse carefully I observed that in the first sentence, where everything was special, Jesus used a large word and He said, “All that the Father gives Me shall come.” But in the second sentence, which is general, He uses a little word, a word which can mean only one and He says “*him*.” There is a personality here—“him that comes.” It does not say *they* that come, but “him that comes.” Why? Why, because sinners want personal comfort! They need something that will suit their case. Do you see, Sinner, He does not take men in the lump, but He picks you out as if you were the only sinner in the world! He says to *you*, “him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out”!

Had he put it in the plural, you might say, “Ah, but He did not think of *me*.” But now He has put it so that it just fits your case. This is no medicine in the bottle of which *many* may drink, but here is a glass set for *you*! It is not a cordial which may be passed round the table, but it is put at *your* place! Drink and be satisfied—“him that comes.” Lord, does “him” mean *me*?” Yes, it means you, if you will come. Come now! Put your trust in Jesus. What do you say? I hope the Spirit is speaking to you in these words of mine! And if He speaks to you as I speak to you, then shall it be well with you. Sinner, come!

There is a dying Savior! He died in the place of sinners. In the place of what sinners? Why, of *all* sinners who trust Him. Will you trust Him? Is it

a hard thing to trust God to save you? To trust God who became man and so proved His love to you? To trust Him? “Why,” says one, “that is simple enough,” but that is all the plan of salvation. When I am preaching from such a text as this I feel as if I have no scope for metaphors and figures and illustrations—I do not need any—because this saving Truth of God must always be proclaimed as plainly as possible! And then if souls are saved by it, it is not the excellency of words, but the Truth itself which shall get the honor.

Now, do you see it, Soul? If you do, I am content—if you trust Christ to save you, you shall not be cast out! You have come to Him! Your coming to Him proves that the Father gave you to Him! You are saved! You are one of His chosen! You shall never be cast out! Your Heaven is secure! You shall sit at the right hand of God and sing the new song, as surely as they do now, who, white-robed, are hymning the Redeemer’s praise! This is not an affair of months and weeks, is it? It does not need a moment—to look, is the work of an *instant*. But the moment that faith is exercised, perfect pardon is given! There is no sin in God’s book against a soul that trusts Christ and there never can be—

***“There’s pardon for transgressions past,
It matters not how black their cast!
And, O my Soul, with wonder view,
For sins to come, here’s pardon too.”***

What? Are there none who will accept this? Are there none here who say, “I will trust my soul in Jesus’ hands”? What? Will you build on your own righteousness? Ah, Fools! To pile up the sand which the next tide must sweep away! What? Do you despise the mercy of my God? Will you turn away from the bleeding wounds of His own dear Son? What? Is forgiveness not worth your having? Is God’s free mercy a thing to be scoffed at? O Heavens, hear and be astonished! O Earth, hear and be amazed! God sends the Gospel unto men, but they refuse it! That Gospel says unto them, “Come now and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

But though God calls, they refuse and will have none of His Words! May His mighty Spirit come and make a difference in some of you and bring you now to the foot of the Savior’s Cross to look up! Do nothing else but look up! And looking there you shall never perish, but have eternal life! May the Master bless these words, feeble of themselves and only mighty because of the Truth they convey, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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THE FATHER'S WILL

NO. 1117

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

***“And this is the Father’s will which has sent Me, that of all which He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that everyone which sees the Son, and believes on Him, may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.”
John 6:39, 40.***

SUCH is our impertinent curiosity that we would gladly peer between the folded leaves of the Divine purposes. The eager thirst of man to discover secrets, to solve mysteries, to draw aside the folded curtains and to ascertain that which is past finding out, tempts him full often to the wildest conjecture and the most adventurous speculation. How many would rush to any part of the earth were it possible to light upon a spot from which they could reconnoiter the times and the seasons to get a sight of the future? To know that which God conceals seems to be one of the depraved desires of the human heart. This presumptuous enquiry is both foolish and sinful. What have you to do, O man, with God’s councils? To obey Him is your work, not to attempt to know what He does not please to reveal.

But let us understand that the Gospel is an extract from the will of God and such an extract that it contains the very essence thereof. Certainly there is nothing in the will of God contrary to the Gospel. Among the unrevealed things there cannot be anything in conflict with the revealed things. None of the secrets can possibly contradict those Truths of God which He has seen fit to unfold. O then, you that want to know the will of God, here is something of it for you closely to observe and diligently to study! If you want to read that will, here it is given to you in two forms—
“This is the Father’s will, (the will of Him which has sent Jesus, His only-begotten Son, to be our Savior), that of all which He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.”

And here is that same will, again, opened up before you, if you have but hearts to receive it—
“This is the will of Him that sent Me, that everyone which sees the Son, and believes on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.” The will of God is our salvation. It was from the will of God that the very thought of salvation first arose. Had we

been left to our own wills, we should have been willing to wander further and further from God. No man originated the idea of restoration for our race—God Himself willed it and it is from the purpose of His Grace that all our hopes begin—and the will which originated salvation shaped and formed it. It was God's will that ordained salvation by faith, salvation through an atoning Sacrifice, salvation by the way of the new birth, salvation by the way of perseverance up to perfection.

God cast in His own mold the way and modus of salvation and it has been His will that has shaped it. Like a vessel revolving upon the wheel before Him, His fingers have made the form and fashion of it. According to His own will He begat us that we might be a kind of first fruits of His creatures. It is His will that has brought those of us who are saved into the knowledge of the Truth, by which will, also, we are sanctified and upon which will we rely as the motive force which shall bear us onward throughout the entire of our lives. It will bear us over the regions of death and bear us into the land of the perfect where we shall see the face of God without sin.

Now, it is about this will of God that we are going to speak, taking the two phrases as setting forth the Divine side of salvation and the human side of salvation. You know, beloved Friends, that the general custom is, with the various denominations of Christians, to take up one part of the Bible and preach that part. And then it is the duty of all divines on that side of the question not to preach anything but that. Or if they find a text that looks in rather a different direction, these gentlemen are expected to twist it round to suit their creed—it being supposed that only one set of truths can possibly be worth defending. It never having entered into the heads of some people that there can be two apparently irreconcilable Truths which, nevertheless, are equally valuable.

Think not that I come here to defend the human side of salvation at the expense of the Divine! Nor am I desirous to magnify the Divine side of it at the expense of the human. Rather would I beseech you to look at the two texts which are together before us and to be prepared to receive both sets of Truths as Truths of God. I think it a very dangerous thing to say that the Truth lies between the two extremes. It does not—the Truth lies *in* the two, in the comprehension of both—not in taking a part from this and a part from that. Not in toning down one and modulating the other, as is too much the custom of today, but in believing and giving full expression to *everything* that God reveals whether we can reconcile the things or not.

We must open our hearts as children open their understandings to their father's teaching, feeling that if the Gospel were such that we could make it into a complete system, we might be quite sure it was not God's Gospel. For any system that comes from God must be too grand for the

human brain to grasp at one effort—and any path that He takes must extend too far beyond the line of our vision for us to make a nice little map of it and mark it out in squares. This world, you know, we can readily enough map. Go and get charts and you shall find that men of understanding have indicated almost every rock in the sea, almost every hamlet on the land. But they cannot map out the heavens in that way, for albeit that you can buy the celestial atlas, yet as you are well enough aware, there is not one in 10,000 of the stars that can possibly be put there.

When they are resolved by the telescope they become altogether innumerable and so far exceed all count that it is impossible for us to reckon them up in order and say that is the name of this, and this is the name of that. We must leave them—they are beyond us. There are deeps into which we cannot peer. Even the strongest glass cannot show us much more than a mere corner of the starry worlds. Thus, too, is it with the doctrines of the Gospel—they are too bright for our weak eyes, too sublime for our finite minds to scan except at a humble distance. Be it ours to take all we can of their solemn import, to believe them heartily, accept them gratefully and then fall down before the Lord and pour out our very souls in worshipping Him.

I. Well, now we come to our two texts. The first is the DIVINE SIDE OF THE WORK OF SALVATION. It needs to come first—such is its dignity. “This is the Father’s will which has sent Me, that of all which He has given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.” Mark attentively the announcement, how Sovereign its character—“This is the Father’s will.” Majestic words—“This is the Father’s will.” No, “if.” No, “but.” No asking and requesting of men. No bending the knee to their choice or caprice. No asking them if they will please to have it so. But—“This is the Father’s will.”

That is the will which is altogether absolute and independent, revolving on its own axis, the will that called creation out of nothing, the will which cannot be thwarted, for it is Omnipotent. This is the will which none may stand against, for it proceeds ever on its eternal course. It is a fixed will, for God is not fickle as we are. He does not will this today and that tomorrow. “I am God,” He says, “and change not.” He is “the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of a turning”—a fixed, irresistible will, standing the same from everlasting to everlasting—not subject to change.

Would you have it change for the better? How could that be? Can God be better? Would you have it change for the worse? Would God be God if He could be worse than He is? How can it be that perfection can change? It must ever remain perfection—a change were to bring in imperfection

into that which is complete. To God's eternal mind there is no past, there is no future—

***“He fills His own eternal now,
And sees her ages past.”***

Looking as He does, from Heaven, He takes in at one glance all those periods of time which we are accustomed to call ages and cycles. They are all as the twinkling of an eye to Him, for “a thousand years in His sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.” Let me, then, again read these words. They concern the salvation of His people. “This is the Father's will.”

I say again, how grand they are! “This is the Father's will.” O God, I trembled at Your will until I read those lines! I knew not what Your will might be and since I knew it must be accomplished I cowered down at Your feet in terror until I read that *mercy* is the Father's will, that *love* is the Father's will, that *salvation* is the Father's will—and then my heart flew into Your bosom with ecstasy and joy to think that Your Omnipotent, unchangeable will should be such goodwill! So full of benevolence, so full of love!

Following the current of this testimony, we are introduced to the obedient Servant of that will. “This is the Father's will, which has sent Me.” Read the 38th verse—“For I came down from Heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me.” Christ, then, is the obedient Servant of His Father's will. But why does He say, “not to do My own will”? The meaning, I doubt not, as Dr. Owen well interprets it, is first or primarily in reply to the malicious charge of the Jews, “that He was not intent to accomplish or bring about any private purposes of His own, distinct or different from those of His Father.” But more than this, “the will of God, which Christ came to fulfill, is sometimes taken for the commandment which He received from the Father.”

So He says in the 40th Psalm, “I delight to do Your will, O My God: yes, Your Law is within My heart.” As though He should proclaim, “all that You require at My hand as Mediator I am ready to perform.” Was it not to this end that He did verily “take on Him the form of a Servant”? And for the same cause did not the Father expressly call Him His Servant, as you read in the 42nd chapter of Isaiah—“Behold My Servant, whom I uphold, My Elect, in whom My soul delights; I have put My Spirit upon Him: He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles”? Thus is He the Servant of the Father in the accomplishment of that work for which the Spirit was put upon Him.

Moreover, “will of God” may be taken for His purpose, His decree, His good pleasure to fulfill, which Christ came into the world. It is thus, little by little, that the full sense of the words breaks on our minds. Now, as I

turn that over in my mind, “not to do My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me,” I am prone to reflect, “It is for me to lay down my will at God’s feet.” Well, it is but fit and right for all of us to do so. For every one of us to say, “I came not to do my own will,” seems natural and proper. But Christ, Beloved—His will is perfect! His will is as complete as the will of God, Himself! It is, in fact, coincident, *must* be coincident, with the will of God. But He speaks as God-Man—Mediator—and He puts it so that He may be to us the pattern of complete resignation and perfect obedience.

“I, even I, who have no difference with God, who *am* God, who wills as God wills, yet I came not to do My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me.” Why do you think it was necessary that He should say that? It was necessary, as I have already said, as an *example* to us, but further necessary that every one of us may know that Christ is no amateur Savior come into the world to save without a commission and without authority. He has come here willingly enough, but still, the reason of His coming is His Father’s will. When Christ forgives a sinner it is His Father’s will! When Christ receives a rebel to His bosom, it is His Father’s will!

He does not save us clandestinely or in any manner inconsiderate of or contrary to the Divine purposes, nor yet in some such way as though by the tenderness of a Friend He would rescue us from the sternness of a Judge. No, no, in no wise—for all that Jesus does is the *Father’s* will, as He would say of us—“I say not that I will pray to the Father for you, for the Father Himself loves you.” The will which Christ is doing is the Father’s will! All that He is engaged to bring about is according to the will of the Father. Let us bless His name for that.

Well now, it would appear that God, in His Divine will, was pleased to give to Jesus, His obedient Servant, a number of men out of mankind who were to be His. Is not that the plain meaning of the passage, “This is the will of Him that sent Me, that of all which He has given Me I should lose nothing”? The Father gave to the Son, then, a number. I believe it is a number that no man can number—a number far beyond the bounds of our thought. But He did give a certain number whom He, Himself, had chosen from before the foundation of the world—and these became the property of the Lord Jesus Christ.

They were put under a different government, being placed under the mediatorial sway of the Son of God. They became disciples—not by their own natural inclination, but by His gracious calling. They became Christ’s flock. He their Shepherd. They were to become Christ’s body. He was to be the Head. In due time they were to be Christ’s bride. He was to be the Husband. They were to be Christ’s Brethren and they were to be conformed to Him that He might be the first-born among many Brethren. Now this is a great transaction full of sublimity—let us not forget it or slight it.

There was a day before all days when there was no day but the Ancient of Days. And then the Ancient of Days, in His eternal wisdom transferred a number of men whom He had chosen into the hands of Jesus Christ. It is of no use quibbling at it! It is true! It was so and it is so, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it. God's eternal and electing purpose severed from the mass of mankind a people who were to belong to Jesus. Let us say "Amen" to the record.

The next thing we learn here is that all these persons Jesus Christ undertook to keep. It was the Father's will that of all who were given to Christ He should lose—what?—"lose nothing." This is a very remarkable expression! It does not say He should lose *none*—that is true—but lose nothing, "nothing." The Lord Jesus Christ, therefore, has taken all those who were given of the Father to Him, into His custody. He is the Surety, He is responsible for them and He keeps them. In what way does He keep them? Seeing they were lost, He redeemed them. Seeing they were far from Him, He fetches them back BY His Grace, by the power of His Spirit. Seeing that they are still prone to wander He restores their souls. Seeing that they are imperfect He sanctifies them and He continues the work of sanctification. And He will make them, one day, to be without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.

But the text says He will, "lose *nothing*," by which He means that while He will certainly not lose one that His Father gave Him, He will not lose any *part* of one of them. For look at that child of God who died a few months ago. We laid him in the grave with many tears, and we believe his spirit is taken up to the right hand of God. But where is his body? Ah, we should not like to exhume it—it would be a terrible spectacle if we should take it out of that coffin, or open the lid and look at all that mass of putridity! Surely this is *part* of one of Christ's people that has been lost! Ah, but it is not His Father's will that Christ should lose *anything* of what was given Him—and therefore He adds, "I will raise *it* up at the last day."

When the trumpet sounds, the dead shall come forth from their graves and there shall not be left in the grave a bone, nor a piece of a bone, of one of the Lord's redeemed—they shall come again from the land of the enemy—and leave nothing behind them. When Israel came out of Egypt the great Master did not bring some of the people out and leave some behind. Oh, no! Neither did He bring all the people and leave their property behind. Did not Moses say to Pharaoh, "There shall not a hoof be left behind"? Not a solitary lamb of all the flocks—there shall not one be left behind. And so out of the entire company that God the Father has given into the custody of Jesus, there shall not only not be one soul lost, but no *part* of any one of them—neither of their body, of their soul, nor of their spirit. Death shall yield up its captives, they shall be completely free—

***“Then all the chosen race
Shall meet around the Throne,
To bless the conduct of His Grace
And make His glories known.”***

That is the Divine side of salvation, and that is the Truth of God which this first part of our text teaches. Do I hear somebody say, “I think that doctrine is dangerous”? My dear Sir, who is it dangerous to but fools? If God has taught it there can be no danger in it! At the same time there never was a Truth of God which foolish persons could not distort and turn into mischief. Ropes are good things, but many people have hung themselves with them. And there is many a grand doctrine which men wrest to their own destruction. We cannot be shaping the Truth of God down to consult the folly and sin of man. The question is, is it in the Bible? If it is there, let none of us ever say it is dangerous.

“Well, but,” you say, “is it not all about *secret* things?” Is it so? Then you need not be at all alarmed at our talking about it, for none of us can divulge anything which is secret—therefore you need not be under any concern that we shall do it. If it is secret, then so far as it is secret we cannot intermeddle with it. But we do say this—whatever of it has been revealed is for us and for our children—and we are not ashamed to speak of what God was not ashamed to declare. Moreover, we have proved it to be a good, comfortable, solid, soul-sustaining, sanctifying doctrine, for if there is anything in this world that can put force, life, energy into a man—it is the belief that God has chosen him unto eternal life—has put into him an unconquerable nature which is engaged to bring him safely to the right hand of the most High!

Why, the gratitude of a man that believes this becomes the master power of his life!—

***“Loved of my God, for Him again
With love intense I burn.
Chosen of Him before time began
I choose Him in return.”***

Slaves are whipped to the battle, but the free man goes cheerfully to fight for the cause dear to his heart. The man that only lives a good life because he is afraid of being damned is a mere hireling in the House of God. But the man who knows that he is God's child and never will be anything else—that God loves him and *must* love him—says now, out of no desire of reward and no fears of punishment, being saved, forever saved, “I love my Lord with all my heart and soul and strength, and I will render to Him the obedience of a child which is infinitely superior to the obedience of a slave.” I question the possibility of virtue to a man who cannot say—“I am saved.” He that does good works in order to his being saved, or in order to

keep himself from the peril of being lost, acts from a selfish motive and believes in *himself* rather than his God.

But he, on the other hand, who feels that he is bought with a price and is delivered, is saved, is a child of God, can say, "Now I have not myself to consider but my God. Now will I live for Him. Now will I spend and be spent, that I may glorify His name." The Lord grant to us to be brought into that condition in which we can understand and enjoy this doctrine and may we then, by our lives, prove our gratitude for the great benefits we have received of Him.

II. Now I am going to take the HUMAN SIDE, and I think I hear somebody say—"Though I liked the first part, I know I shall not like the second." Dear Hearer, what right have you to quibble at anything that is true? Somebody on the other hand may say, "I do not believe in this first part, perhaps I may in the second." My dear Friend, I wish you would give up that notion of picking and choosing parts of God's Word that are agreeable to your taste, but rather take the whole, from the beginning of it to the end of it, so you shall find pleasure and profit all the way through.

Truly, Brothers and Sisters, it is shocking to think of the theoretical difficulties that people make for themselves by a kind of smart criticism that seems clever but lacks common sense! In this very chapter, at the 27th verse, you read—"Labor not for the meat which perishes, but for that meat which endures unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you." The fact is, you get here two paradoxes in one sentence. You are told *not* to labor for that meat which no man can procure without labor, and you are told *to* labor for that bread which no man can procure *by* labor, because it is a free gift.

Nevertheless, the thing needs no explanation. It is clear as daylight to every discerning heart. Here, then, is the human side of salvation—"This is the will of Him that sent Me, that everyone which sees the Son, and believes on Him, may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day." Observe, there is no lowering of the tone. The same august words strike us on the threshold of each announcement. "This is the will of Him that sent Me." The freest proclamations of the Gospel that can ever be given are as much Divine as are the plainest declarations of distinguishing Grace. Listen, then, with equal attention to this second part, for this has the same imprimatur, the same Divine stamp upon it—"This is the will of Him that sent Me."

Notice again that there is the same obedient Servant engaged on this occasion as before. Whether you look at the Divine side or the human side of salvation, the most conspicuous object is still Christ Jesus. If God looks down on men it is through His Anointed, or if men look up to God, it is through God's Christ whom He has sent. The points of difference we will

therefore dwell upon. In this second verse the persons described as partakers of the benefit of salvation are thus described—"Everyone which sees the Son, and believes on Him." What are we to understand by these words—"Everyone which sees the Son"? We cannot see the Son now with our natural organs of sight, for Jesus has gone up to Heaven. With these optics we cannot scan His features or perceive His Presence.

But when we read of Him in the Evangelists, and when we hear of Him from the mouths of His servants, we do, in effect, see Him evidently set forth before us. The eyes of our *understanding* discern Him. The sense of *faith* recognizes Him. Now if by that sight, that knowledge, that information, we are led to believe on Him, then we have everlasting life. Whoever he may be—"Everyone," it says—"Everyone which sees the Son, and believes on Him," comes in for the same privilege. This includes the man with great faith, but it equally includes the babe with little faith. This includes the man of reputable character, but it equally includes the man whose character has been, up till now, disreputable. "Everyone that believes on Him."

Does it mean that if I believe on Him I have eternal life? Yes, whoever you are. You may listen to it in the dark, I do not want to look at you to discriminate between one individual and another. The assertion is wide enough for all of you. Are you a black man, or a white man? Are you a yellow man, or a brown man? It matters not. Are you rich, or are you poor, one in the higher ranks, or one obscure and despised? It matters not. Whoever you may be, every child of man that is born of woman that sees the Son, and believes on Him, shall have eternal life. Are there no exceptions? None whatever! Can it not be supposed that some characters may be excluded? None are excluded, therefore, but those who exclude themselves. The learned and polite, the ignorant and rude—"everyone which sees the Son, and believes on Him, may have everlasting life." That is to say, to go over the same matter yet again, every man, woman, child—every one of the human race that trusts his soul with the Son of God has everlasting life.

"Well, but," says one, "suppose I should not have been given by God the Father to the Son?" You have no right to suppose that. If you believe in Jesus Christ you have everlasting life. I could explain, I think, a little to you, at least I have a way of explaining it to myself, how these two meet. I do not care to explain it. I do not think it is necessary at all, for it is so. There never was a soul that believed in Jesus, yet, but God the Father had given that soul to Christ. There never was a soul that trusted the Savior but it turned out that, after all, that soul had been ordained to do so from before the foundation of the world! We will not attempt to answer objections. There is the Truth of God, the plain, naked Truth of God! This is

the will of Him that sent the Savior into the world, that everyone that sees the Son, and believes on Him, should at once have eternal life. O what a splendid Gospel that is!

Now, when I go out to preach I have not to say, "I am going to preach to God's elect"—not at all—"Everyone which sees the Son, and believes on Him, may have everlasting life!" Nor have I to say to myself, "Now I shall pick out certain characters that I think must be a delineation of God's chosen." I have no right to make any picking or choosing. There is the Gospel—"Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." And this, again, is the Gospel—"That everyone which sees the Son, and believes on Him, may have everlasting life." There let it stand, then. We will not clip its wings but we will rejoice in its simple Truth!

Now it appears that these persons who believe in Jesus, whoever they may be, are already in a present state of safety, for as soon as they believe on Him they have everlasting life. They are made alive unto God. They receive a spiritual life which they never had before. The Holy Spirit comes into them and quickens them. Whereas they were up to then dead in trespasses and sins, the Holy Spirit makes them alive unto God by Jesus Christ. And this is true of everyone that sees the Son and believes on Him. This life which is thus given is a life that cannot die, for it is everlasting. Everlasting life is freely and sovereignly bestowed, so that every Believer has in him a vital principle which cannot be destroyed any more than God Himself can. For as God's life is everlasting life, so the life of every Believer is called "everlasting life."

O see the blessedness of this, "that everyone which sees the Son, and believes on Him, may have everlasting life." We do not seem to want to preach upon that. I like to roll it over under my tongue. I should like everybody here that is perplexing himself about the doctrines of the Gospel and saying, "Perhaps I am shut out from the mercy of God," to go home repeating these words. Therefore I will repeat them again—"that everyone which sees the Son, and believes on Him, may have everlasting life." And since notwithstanding this gift of everlasting life the bodies of Believers die, Jesus Christ has added here that it is the will of the Father that He should "raise him up at the last day." It seems, then, Beloved, that no Believer shall be lost and nothing of a Believer, for if his body must be put into the ground—corruption, earth and worms shall but refine his flesh till at the sound of the last trumpet he shall put it on afresh!

"I will raise him up at the last day." Then it seems that if I am a Believer in Jesus I may conclude that God the Father gave me to Christ to save me and that Christ will save me and keep me until He, Himself, shall descend from Heaven with a shout and call His own redeemed out of the

graves. Thus the two truths are reconciled—may they be reconciled in our experience as well as in our faith!

Now then, to close, let me say to any troubled person here present—beloved Friend, never fear that there is anything in the secret purposes of God which can contradict the open promises of God! Never dream, if you are a Believer, that there can be any dark decree that shuts you out from the benefits of Grace. Decrees or no decrees, “this is the will of Him that sent Me, that everyone which sees the Son, and believes on Him, may have everlasting life.” Lay hold, therefore, on Christ with all your heart, poor Sinner! Ask not to know whether your name is in the Book of Life. Come just as you are, by God's own invitation, and lay hold on Jesus Christ!

The woman in the crowd could not tell whether it was written in the book of the decrees that she should be healed, but she came behind the Savior and touched the hem of His garment and was made whole. The dying thief did not stop to enquire, “Was I chosen of God before time began?” But he said, “Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.” Now you, in like manner, act upon your present crisis and fit your prayer to the present opportunity. The doctrine of decrees never operates upon a man's *ordinary* life. What hungry man would stop, or hesitate and say, “I cannot tell whether it is the purpose of God that I should eat”? But when the provision is spread out before him he eats.

Would the weary man vex his soul with misgivings and say, “I need to know whether it is the purpose of God I should sleep?” No, but he acts like a sensible creature and goes to his bed at the time of rest, grateful for the interval of deep repose that can renew his strength and freshen his vital powers. Now you go and do likewise. Do not rebel at the purposes, or deny them, but act upon the precepts and rejoice in them! They are the guide for you. Rely upon the promises! That is the way for you to realize them. And inasmuch as the clear promise rings out from the Eternal Throne, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out,” go and see if He will cast you out.

Come, you vile Sinner, you foul Sinner, you devilish Sinner—come you who are stained with every sin—come and see if Christ will reject you! And remember that the text that should encourage you stands hard by that which may embarrass you—close to it—where Jesus says, “All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me; and him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from Heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me.” I do pray that those words may encourage many souls to come!

And once more, fear not that if you believe, your believing will end in failure. If you believe in Jesus Christ, the text says, “It is the Father's will”

that you should “have eternal life” and be “raised up at the last day.” The question sometimes comes to one’s mind—“After I have believed in Jesus and placed all my hope in Him, may I not, after all, perish? Is there not something expected of me in which I may fail? If I rest upon Him as a rock, yet still, are there not some other props and buttresses needed, and if I shall not supply them shall I be safe at last?” Well, I frankly confess if there is anything needed as the ground of a sinner’s hope beyond the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, I, who preach to you, must certainly perish, for I can sing the hymn we sang this morning with all my heart—

**“Other refuge have I none,
Hangs my helpless soul on You.
Leave, oh leave me not alone,
Still support and comfort me.”**

We desire to abound in good works. We desire to destroy every vice and forsake all falsehood and all evil. But we cannot *depend* on these things! We cannot mix them up with the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ! Our one hope lies here, that Jesus died, and God has said it, “He that believes on Him has eternal life, and shall be raised up at the last day.” Now, suppose, after all, you should believe on Him and find, at last, that you are not saved! Beloved, the supposition cannot be entertained for a moment, for it is written, “It is the Father’s will.” Is that will to be thwarted? It is written that He has sent Christ—has Christ come in vain? God must be false to all His promises, belie His oath, degrade His Son before He can suffer a soul that sees the Son and believes on Him to perish!

You are all safe enough if you are resting there. Do not let a doubt disturb you. Go your way full of peace and consolation, and the Lord be with you! But, oh, if you have never believed in Jesus, may your spirits never know any rest till you do! May you never be content till you flee to Him and rest on Him! The Lord grant it, for His dear name’s sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 6:22.

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HUMAN INABILITY

NO. 182

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MARCH 7, 1858,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“No man can come to Me, except the Father which has sent Me draw him.”
John 6:44.***

“COMING to Christ” is a very common phrase in Holy Scripture. It is used to express those acts of the soul wherein leaving at once our self-righteousness and our sins, we fly unto the Lord Jesus Christ and receive His righteousness to be our covering and His blood to be our atonement. Coming to Christ, then, embraces in it repentance, self-negation and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It sums within itself all those things which are the necessary attendants of these great states of heart, such as the belief of the truth, earnestness of prayer to God, the submission of the soul to the precepts of God’s Gospel and all those things which accompany the dawn of salvation in the soul.

Coming to Christ is just the one essential thing for a sinner’s salvation. He that comes not to Christ, do what he may, or think what he may, is yet in “the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity.” Coming to Christ is the very first effect of regeneration. No sooner is the soul quickened than it at once discovers its lost estate, is horrified thereat, looks out for a refuge and believing Christ to be a suitable one, flies to Him and reposes in Him.

Where there is not this coming to Christ, it is certain that there is as yet no quickening—where there is no quickening, the soul is dead in trespasses and sins—and being dead it cannot enter into the kingdom of Heaven. We have before us now an announcement very startling, some say very obnoxious. Coming to Christ, though described by some people as being the very easiest thing in all the world, is in our text declared to be a thing utterly and entirely impossible to any man, unless the Father shall draw him to Christ.

It shall be our business, then, to enlarge upon this declaration. We doubt not that it will always be offensive to carnal nature, but nevertheless, the offending of human nature is sometimes the first step towards bringing it to bow itself before God. And if this is the effect of a painful process, we can forget the pain and rejoice in the glorious consequences.

I shall endeavor this morning, first of all, to notice man’s *inability*, wherein it consists. Secondly, *the Father’s drawings*—what these are and

how they are exerted upon the soul. And then I shall conclude by noticing *a sweet consolation* which may be derived from this seemingly barren and terrible text.

I. First, then, MAN'S INABILITY. The text says, "No man can come to Me, except the Father which has sent Me draw him." Wherein does this inability lie?

First, it does not lie in any *physical* defect. If in coming to Christ, moving the body or walking with the feet should be of any assistance, certainly man has all physical power to come to Christ in that sense. I remember to have heard a very foolish Antinomian declare that he did not believe any man had the power to walk to the house of God unless the Father drew him. Now the man was plainly foolish, because he must have seen that as long as a man was alive and had legs, it was as easy for him to walk to the house of God as to the house of Satan.

If coming to Christ includes the utterance of a prayer, man has no physical defect in that respect. If he is not dumb, he can say a prayer as easily as he can utter blasphemy. It is as easy for a man to sing one of the songs of Zion as to sing a profane and libidinous song. There is no lack of physical power in coming to Christ that can be wanted with regard to the bodily strength man most assuredly has. And any part of salvation which consists in that is totally and entirely in the power of man without any assistance from the Spirit of God.

Nor, again, does this inability lie in any *mental* lack. I can believe this Bible to be true just as easily as I can believe any other book to be true. So far as believing on Christ is an act of the mind, I am just as able to believe on Christ as I am able to believe on anybody else. Let his statement be but true, it is idle to tell me I cannot believe it. I can believe the statement that Christ makes as well as I can believe the statement of any other person. There is no deficiency of faculty in the mind—it is as capable of appreciating as a mere mental act the guilt of sin, as it is of appreciating the guilt of assassination. It is just as possible for me to exercise the mental idea of seeking God, as it is to exercise the thought of ambition.

I have all the mental strength and power that can possibly be needed, so far as mental power is needed in salvation at all. No, there is not any man so ignorant that he can plead a lack of intellect as an excuse for rejecting the Gospel. The defect, then, does not lie either in the body, or, what we are bound to call, speaking theologically, the mind. It is not any lack or deficiency there, although it is the vitiation of the mind, the corruption or the ruin of it, which, after all, is the very essence of man's inability.

Permit me to show you wherein this inability of man really does lie. It lies deep *in his nature*. Through the Fall and through our own sin, the na-

ture of man has become so debased, depraved and corrupt, that it is impossible for him to come to Christ without the assistance of God the Holy Spirit. Now, in trying to exhibit how the nature of man thus renders him unable to come to Christ, you must allow me just to take this figure. You see a sheep—how willingly it feeds upon the herbage! You never knew a sheep to seek after carrion, it could not live on lion's food.

Now bring me a wolf and you ask me whether a wolf cannot eat grass, whether it cannot be just as docile and as domesticated as the sheep. I answer, no, because its nature is contrary to it. You say, "Well, it has ears and legs. Can it not hear the shepherd's voice and follow him wherever he leads it?" I answer, certainly. There is no physical cause why it cannot do so, but its nature forbids it—and therefore I say it *cannot* do so. Can it not be tamed? Cannot its ferocity be removed?

Probably it may so far be subdued that it may become apparently tame, but there will always be a marked distinction between it and the sheep, because there is a distinction in nature. Now, the reason why man cannot come to Christ is not because he cannot come, so far as his body or his mere power of mind is concerned. Man *cannot* come to Christ because his nature is so corrupt that he has neither the will nor the power to come to Christ unless drawn by the Spirit.

But let me give you a better illustration. You see a mother with her babe in her arms. You put a knife into her hand and tell her to stab that babe in the heart. She replies and very truthfully, "I cannot." Now, so far as her bodily power is concerned, she can, if she pleases. There is the knife and there is the child. The child cannot resist and she has quite sufficient strength in her hand immediately to stab it. But she is quite correct when she says she cannot do it. As a mere act of the mind, it is quite possible she might think of such a thing as killing the child and yet she says she cannot think of such a thing. And she does not say falsely, for her nature as a mother forbids her doing a thing from which her soul revolts.

Simply because she is that child's parent she feels she cannot kill it. It is even so with a sinner. Coming to Christ is so obnoxious to human nature that although, so far as physical and mental forces are concerned, (and these have but a very narrow sphere in salvation), men could come if they would—it is strictly correct to say that they cannot and will not unless the Father who has sent Christ does draw them. Let us enter a little more deeply into the subject and try to show you wherein this inability of man consists, in its more minute particulars.

1. First it lies in the *obstinacy of the human will*. "Oh," says the Arminian, "men may be saved if they will." We reply, "My dear Sir, we all believe that. But it is just the *if they will* that is the difficulty. We assert

that no man will come to Christ unless he is drawn. No, we do not assert it, but Christ Himself declares it—‘*You will not come unto Me that you might have life.*’ And as long as that ‘*you will not come*’ stands on record in Holy Scripture, Christ shall not be brought to believe in any doctrine of the freedom of the human will.”

It is strange how people, when talking about free will, talk of things which they do not at all understand. “Now” says one, “I believe men can be saved if they will.” My dear Sir, that is not the question at all. The question is, are men ever found naturally willing to submit to the humbling terms of the Gospel of Christ? We declare, upon Scriptural authority, that the human will is so desperately set on mischief, so depraved and so inclined to everything that is evil—so disinclined to everything that is good—that without the powerful, supernatural, irresistible influence of the Holy Spirit, no human will will ever be constrained towards Christ.

You reply that men sometimes are willing, without the help of the Holy Spirit. I answer—did you ever meet with any person who was? Scores and hundreds, no, thousands of Christians have I conversed with, of different opinions, young and old—but it has never been my lot to meet with one who could affirm that he came to Christ of himself without being drawn. The universal confession of all true Believers is this—“I know that unless Jesus Christ had sought me when a stranger wandering from the fold of God, I would to this very hour have been wandering far from Him—at a distance from Him—and loving that distance well.” With common consent, all Believers affirm the truth that men will not come to Christ till the Father who has sent Christ does draw them.

2. Again, not only is the will obstinate, but the *understanding is darkened*. Of that we have abundant Scriptural proof. I am not now making mere assertions, but stating doctrines authoritatively taught in the Holy Scriptures and known in the conscience of every Christian man—that the understanding of man is so dark that he cannot by any means understand the things of God until his understanding has been opened. Man is by nature blind within. The Cross of Christ, so laden with glories and glittering with attractions, never attracts him, because he is blind and cannot see its beauties. Talk to him of the wonders of the creation. Show to him the many-colored arch that spans the sky. Let him behold the glories of a landscape—he is well able to see all these things.

But talk to him of the wonders of the Covenant of Grace, speak to him of the security of the Believer in Christ, tell him of the beauties of the Person of the Redeemer, he is quite deaf to all your description. You are as one that plays a goodly tune, it is true. But he regards not, he is deaf, he has no comprehension. Or, to return to the verse which we so specially marked in our reading, “The natural man receives not the things of the

Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned,” and inasmuch as he is a *natural* man, it is not in his power to discern the things of God. “Well,” says one, “I think I have arrived at a very tolerable judgment in matters of theology. I think I understand almost every point.”

True, that you may do in the *letter* of it. But in the *spirit* of it, in the true reception thereof into the soul and in the actual understanding of it, it is impossible for you to have attained—unless you have been drawn by the Spirit. For as long as that Scripture stands true—that carnal men cannot receive spiritual things—it must be true that you have not received them, unless you have been renewed and made a spiritual man in Christ Jesus. The will, then and the understanding, are two great doors, both blocked up against our coming to Christ. And until these are opened by the sweet influences of the Divine Spirit, they must be forever closed to anything like coming to Christ.

3. Again, *the affections*, which constitute a very great part of man, are depraved. Man, as he is, before he receives the grace of God, loves anything and everything above spiritual things. If you want proof of this, look around you. There needs no monument to the depravity of the human affections. Cast your eyes everywhere—there is not a street, nor a house, no, nor a heart, which does not bear upon it sad evidence of this dreadful truth. Why is it that men are not found on the Sabbath-Day universally flocking to the house of God? Why are we not more constantly found reading our Bibles? How is it that prayer is a duty almost universally neglected? Why is it that Christ Jesus is so little loved? Why are even His professed followers so cold in their affections to Him?

From where arise these things? Assuredly, dear Brethren, we can trace them to no other source than this—the corruption and vitiation of the affections. We love that which we ought to hate and we hate that which we ought to love. It is but human nature, fallen human nature—that man should love this present life better than the life to come. It is but the effect of the Fall that man should love sin better than righteousness and the ways of this world better than the ways of God. And again, we repeat it—until these affections are renewed and turned into a fresh channel by the gracious drawings of the Father, it is not possible for any man to love the Lord Jesus Christ.

4. Yet once more—*conscience*, too, has been overpowered by the Fall. I believe there is no more egregious mistake made by divines than when they tell people that conscience is the vicegerent of God within the soul and that it is one of those powers which retains its ancient dignity and stands erect amidst the fall of its compeers. My Brethren, when man fell

in the garden, manhood fell entirely. There was not one single pillar in the temple of manhood that stood erect. It is true, conscience was not *destroyed*. The pillar was not shattered. It fell, and it fell in one piece, and here it lies alone—the mightiest remnant of God’s once perfect work in man.

But that conscience is fallen, I am sure. Look at men. Who among them is the possessor of a “good conscience toward God,” but the regenerated man? Do you imagine that if men’s consciences always spoke loudly and clearly to them, they would live in the daily commission of acts which are as opposed to the right as darkness to light? No, Beloved—conscience can tell me that I am a sinner, but conscience cannot make me *feel* that I am one. Conscience may tell me that such-and-such a thing is wrong, but how wrong it is, conscience itself does not know.

Did any man’s conscience, unenlightened by the Spirit, ever tell him that his sins deserved damnation? Or if conscience did do that, did it ever lead any man to feel an abhorrence of sin as sin? In fact, did conscience ever bring a man to such a self-renunciation that he did totally abhor himself and all his works and come to Christ? No, conscience, although it is not dead, is ruined. Its power is impaired, it has not that clearness of eye and that strength of hand and that thunder of voice which it had before the Fall. It has ceased, to a great degree, to exert its supremacy in the town of Mansoul. Then, Beloved, it becomes necessary for this very reason, because conscience is depraved, that the Holy Spirit should step in to show us our need of a Savior and draw us to the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Still,” says one, “as far as you have so far gone, it appears to me that you consider that the reason why men do not come to Christ is that they *will* not, rather than they *cannot*.” True, most true. I believe the greatest reason of man’s inability is the obstinacy of his will. That once overcome, I think the great stone is rolled away from the sepulcher and the hardest part of the battle is already won. But allow me to go a little further. My text does not say, “No man *will* come,” but it says, “No man *can* come.” Now, many interpreters believe that the *can* here is but a strong expression conveying no more meaning than the word *will*. I feel assured that this is not correct.

There is in man not only unwillingness to be saved, but there is a spiritual powerlessness to come to Christ. And this I will prove to every Christian at any rate. Beloved, I speak to you who have already been quickened by Divine Grace. Does not your experience teach you that there are times when you have a will to serve God and yet have not the power? Have you not sometimes been obliged to say that you have wished to believe but you have had to pray, “Lord, help my unbelief”? Because, although willing

enough to receive God's Testimony, your own carnal nature was too strong for you and you felt you needed supernatural help.

Are you able to go into your room at any hour you choose and to fall upon your knees and say, "Now, it is my will that I should be very earnest in prayer and that I should draw near unto God"? I ask, do you find your power equal to your will? You could say, even at the bar of God Himself, that you are sure you are not mistaken in your willingness. You are willing to be wrapped up in devotion. It is your will that your soul should not wander from a pure contemplation of the Lord Jesus Christ, but you find that you cannot do that, even when you are willing, without the help of the Spirit.

Now, if the quickened child of God finds a spiritual inability, how much more the sinner who is dead in trespasses and sin? If even the advanced Christian, after thirty or forty years, finds himself sometimes willing and yet powerless—if such is his experience—does it not seem more than likely that the poor sinner who has not yet believed should find a need of strength as well as a want of will?

But, again, there is another argument. If the sinner has strength to come to Christ, I should like to know how we are to understand those continual descriptions of the sinner's state which we meet with in God's Holy Word? Now, a sinner is said to be *dead* in trespasses and sins. Will you affirm that death implies nothing more than the absence of a will? Surely a corpse is quite as *unable* as *unwilling*. Or again, do not all men see that there is a distinction between will and *power*? Might not that corpse be sufficiently quickened to get a will and yet be so powerless that it could not lift as much as its hand or foot? Have we ever seen cases in which persons have been just sufficiently re-animated to give evidence of life—and have yet been so near death that they could not have performed the slightest action?

Is there not a clear difference between the giving of the will and the giving of power? It is quite certain, however, that where the will is given, the power will follow. Make a man willing and he shall be made powerful, for when God gives the will, He does not tantalize man by giving him to wish for that which he is unable to do. Nevertheless He makes such a division between the will and the power, that it shall be seen that both things are quite distinct gifts of the Lord God.

Then I must ask one more question. If that were all that were needed to make a man willing, do you not at once degrade the Holy Spirit? Are we not in the habit of giving all the glory of salvation wrought in us to God the Spirit? But now, if all that God the Spirit does for me is to make me *willing* to do these things for myself, am I not in a great measure a sharer

with the Holy Spirit in the glory? And may I not boldly stand up and say, "It is true the Spirit gave me the will to do it, but still I did it myself and therein will I glory. For if I did these things myself without assistance from on high, I will not cast my crown at His feet. It is my own crown, I earned it and I will keep it."

Inasmuch as the Holy Spirit is evermore in Scripture set forth as the Person who works in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure, we hold it to be a legitimate inference that He must do something more for us than the mere making of us *willing*. Therefore there must be another thing besides want of will in a sinner—there must be absolute and actual want of *power*.

Now, before I leave this statement, let me address myself to you for a moment. I am often charged with preaching doctrines that may do a great deal of hurt. Well, I shall not deny the charge, for I am not careful to answer in this matter. I have my witnesses here present to prove that the things which I have preached have done a great deal of hurt, but they have not done hurt either to morality or to God's Church. The hurt has been on the side of Satan. There are not ones or twos but many hundreds who this morning rejoice that they have been brought near to God. From having been profane Sabbath-breakers, drunkards, or worldly persons, they have been brought to know and love the Lord Jesus Christ. And if this is any hurt, may God of His infinite mercy send us a thousand times as much.

But further, what Truth is there in the world which will not hurt a man who chooses to make hurt of it? You who preach general redemption are very fond of proclaiming the great truth of God's mercy to the last moment. But how dare you preach that? Many people make hurt of it by putting off the day of grace and thinking that the last hour may do as well as the first. Why, if we ever preached anything which man could misuse, and abuse, we must hold our tongues forever. Still says one, "Well then, if I cannot save myself, and cannot come to Christ, I must sit still and do nothing."

If men do say so, on their own heads shall be their doom. We have very plainly told you that there are many things you can do. To be found continually in the house of God is in *your* power. To study the Word of God with diligence is in *your* power. To renounce your outward sin, to forsake the vices in which you indulge, to make your life honest, sober, and righteous is in your power. For this you need no help from the Holy Spirit. All this you can do yourself. But to come to Christ *truly* is not in your power until you are renewed by the Holy Spirit. But mark you, your want of power is no excuse, seeing that you have no desire to come and are living

in willful rebellion against God. Your want of power lies mainly in the obstinacy of *your* nature.

Suppose a liar says that it is not in his power to speak the truth, that he has been a liar so long that he cannot leave it off. Is that an excuse for him? Suppose a man who has long indulged in lust should tell you that he finds his lusts have so girt about him like a great iron net that he cannot get rid of them. Would you take that as an excuse? Truly it is none at all. If a drunkard has become so foully a drunkard that he finds it impossible to pass a public bar without stepping in, do you therefore excuse him? No, because his inability to reform lies in his *nature*—which he has no desire to restrain or conquer.

The thing that is done and the thing that causes the thing that is done—being both from the root of sin—are two evils which cannot excuse each other. It is because you have learned to do evil that you cannot now learn to do well, and instead, therefore, of letting you sit down to excuse yourselves—let me put a thunderbolt beneath the seat of your sloth—that you may be startled by it and aroused.

Remember, that to sit still is to be damned to all eternity. Oh, that God the Holy Spirit might make use of this truth in a very different manner! Before I have done I trust I shall be enabled to show you how it is that this truth, which apparently condemns men and shuts them out, is, after all, the great truth which has been blessed to the conversion of men.

II. Our second point is THE FATHER'S DRAWINGS. "No man can come to Me except the Father which has sent Me draw him." How, then, does the Father draw men? Arminian divines generally say that God draws men by the preaching of the Gospel. Very true. The preaching of the Gospel is the instrument of drawing men, but there must be something more than this. Let me ask to whom did Christ address these words? Why, to the people of Capernaum, where he had often preached, where he had uttered mournfully and plaintively the woes of the Law and the invitations of the Gospel. In that city He had done many mighty works and worked many miracles!

In fact, such teaching and such miraculous attestation had He given to them, that He declared that Tyre and Sidon would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes if they had been blessed with such privileges. Now if the preaching of Christ Himself did not avail to the enabling these men to come to Christ, it cannot be possible that all that was intended by the drawing of the Father was simply preaching. No, Brethren, you must note again, He does not say no man can come except the *minister* draw him, but except the *Father* draw him.

Now there is such a thing as being drawn by the Gospel and drawn by the minister without being drawn by God. Clearly it is a *Divine* drawing that is meant, a drawing by the Most High God—the First Person of the most glorious Trinity sending out the Third Person, the Holy Spirit, to induce men to come to Christ. Another person turns round and says with a sneer, “Then do you think that Christ drags men to Himself, seeing that they are unwilling!” I remember meeting once with a man who said to me, “Sir, you preach that Christ takes people by the hair of their heads and drags them to Himself.” I asked him whether he could refer to the date of the sermon wherein I preached that extraordinary doctrine, for if he could, I should be very much obliged. However, he could not.

But said I, while Christ does not drag people to Himself by the hair of their heads, I believe that He draws them by the *heart* quite as powerfully as your caricature would suggest. Mark that in the Father’s drawing there is no compulsion whatever. Christ never compelled any man to come to Him against his will. If a man is unwilling to be saved, Christ does not save him against his will. How, then, does the Holy Spirit draw him? Why, by *making him willing*. It is true He does not use “moral persuasion.” He knows a nearer method of reaching the heart. He goes to the secret fountain of the heart and he knows how, by some mysterious operation, to turn the will in an opposite direction, so that, as Ralph Erskine paradoxically puts it, the man is saved “*with full consent against his will*,” that is, against his *old* will he is saved.

But he is saved with full consent for he is made willing in the day of God’s power. Do not imagine that any man will go to Heaven kicking and struggling all the way against the hand that draws him. Do not conceive that any man will be plunged in the bath of a Savior’s blood while he is striving to run away from the Savior. Oh, no! It is quite true that first of all man is unwilling to be saved. When the Holy Spirit has put His influence into the heart, the text is fulfilled—“draw me and I will run after You.” We follow on while He draws us, glad to obey the voice which once we had despised. But the gist of the matter lies in the *turning* of the will.

How that is done no flesh knows. It is one of those mysteries that is clearly perceived as a fact, but the cause of which no tongue can tell and no heart can guess. The apparent way, however, in which the Holy Spirit operates, we can tell you. The first thing the Holy Spirit does when He comes into a man’s heart is this—He finds him with a very good opinion of himself. And there is nothing which prevents a man coming to Christ like a good opinion of himself. “Why,” says man, “I don’t want to come to Christ. I have as good a righteousness as anybody can desire. I feel I can walk into Heaven on my own rights.”

The Holy Spirit lays bare his heart—lets him see the loathsome cancer that is there eating away his life—uncovers to him all the blackness and defilement of that sink of Hell, the human heart. Then the man stands aghast, “I never thought I was like this. Oh, those sins I thought were little, have swelled out to an immense stature. What I thought was a mole-hill has grown into a mountain. It was but the hyssop on the wall before, but now it has become a cedar of Lebanon.” “Oh,” says the man within himself, “I will try and reform. I will do good deeds enough to wash these black deeds out.”

Then comes the Holy Spirit and shows him that he cannot do this, takes away all his fancied power and strength, so that the man falls down on his knees in agony and cries, “Oh, once I thought I could save myself by my good works, but now I find that—

***“Could my tears forever flow,
Could my zeal no respite know,
All for sin could not atone,
You must save and You alone.”***

Then the heart thinks and the man is ready to despair. And says he, “I never can be saved. Nothing can save me.” Then, comes the Holy Spirit and shows the sinner the Cross of Christ, gives him eyes anointed with heavenly eye-salve and says, “Look to yonder Cross. That Man died to save sinners. You feel that you are a sinner. He died to save you.” And He enables the heart to believe and to come to Christ. And when it comes to Christ, by this sweet drawing of the Spirit, it finds “a peace with God which passes all understanding, which keeps his heart and mind through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Now, you will plainly perceive that all this may be done without any compulsion. Man is as much drawn willingly, as if he were not drawn at all. And he comes to Christ with full consent, with as full a consent as if no secret influence had ever been exercised in his heart. But that influence *must* be exercised, or else there never has been and there never will be any man who either can or will come to the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. And, now, we gather up our ends and conclude by trying to make a practical application of the doctrine. And we trust a comfortable one. “Well,” says one “if what this man preaches is true, what is to become of my religion? For do you know I have been a long while trying and I do not like to hear you say a man cannot save himself. I believe he can and I mean to persevere. But if I am to believe what you say, I must give it all up and begin again.” My dear Friends, it will be a very happy thing if you do. Do not think that I shall be at all alarmed if you do so.

Remember, what you are doing is building your house upon the sand and it is but an act of charity if I can shake it a little for you. Let me as-

sure you, in God's name, if your religion has no better foundation than your own strength, it will not stand at the bar of God. Nothing will last to eternity but that which came from eternity. Unless the everlasting God has done a good work in your heart, all you may have done must be unraveled at the last day of account. It is all in vain for you to be a Church-goer or Chapel-goer, a good keeper of the Sabbath, an observer of your prayers. It is all in vain for you to be honest to your neighbors and reputable in your conversation. If you hope to be saved by these things, it is all in vain for you to trust in them.

Go on—be as honest as you like. Keep the Sabbath perpetually, be as holy as you can. I would not dissuade you from these things. God forbid. Grow in them, but oh, do not *trust* in them. For if you rely upon these things you will find they will fail you when most you need them. And if there is anything else that you have found yourself able to do unassisted by Divine Grace, the sooner you can get rid of the hope that has been engendered by it, the better for you—for it is a foul delusion to rely upon anything that flesh can do.

A spiritual Heaven must be inhabited by spiritual men and preparation for it must be worked by the Spirit of God. "Well," cries another, "I have been sitting under a ministry where I have been told that I could, at my own option, repent and believe and the consequence is that I have been putting it off from day to day. I thought I could come one day as well as another. That I had only to say, 'Lord, have mercy upon me,' and believe, and then I should be saved. Now you have taken all this hope away for me, Sir. I feel amazement and horror taking hold upon me." Again, I say, "My dear Friend, I am very glad of it. This was the effect which I hoped to produce, by God's grace. I pray that you may feel this a great deal more. When you have no hope of saving yourself, I shall have hope that God has begun to save you.

As soon as you say, "Oh, I cannot come to Christ. Lord, draw me, help me," I shall rejoice over you. He who has got a will, though he has not power, has grace begun in his heart and God will not leave him until the work is finished. But, careless Sinner, learn that your salvation now hangs in God's hand. Oh, remember you are entirely in the hand of God. You have sinned against Him and if He wills to damn you, damned you are. You can not resist His will nor thwart His purpose. You have deserved His wrath and if He chooses to pour the full shower of that wrath upon your head, you can do nothing to reverse it.

If, on the other hand, He chooses to save you, He is able to save you to the very uttermost. But you lie as much in His hand as the summer's moth beneath your own finger. He is the God whom you are grieving every day. Does it not make you tremble to think that your eternal destiny now

hangs upon the will of Him whom you have angered and incensed? Does not this make your knees knock together and your blood curdle? If it does so I rejoice, inasmuch as this may be the first effect of the Spirit's drawing in your soul. Oh, tremble to think that the God whom you have angered is the God upon whom your salvation or your condemnation entirely depends. Tremble and "kiss the Son lest He be angry and you perish from the way while His wrath is kindled but a little."

Now, the comfortable reflection is this—some of you this morning are conscious that you are coming to Christ. Have you not begun to weep the penitential tear? Did not your closet witness your prayerful preparation for the hearing of the Word of God? And during the service this morning, has not your heart said within you, "Lord, save me, or I perish, for save myself I cannot"? And could you not now stand up in your seat and sing—

***"Oh, Sovereign Grace my heart subdue;
I would be led in triumph, too,
A willing captive of my Lord,
To sing the triumph of His Word"?***

And have I not myself heard you say in your heart—"Jesus, Jesus, my whole trust is in You. I know that no righteousness of my own can save me, but only You. O Christ—sink or swim, I cast myself on You"? Oh, my Brothers and Sisters, you are drawn by the Father, for you could not have come unless He had drawn you. Sweet thought! And if He has drawn you, do you know what is the delightful inference? Let me repeat just one text, and may that comfort you—"The Lord has appeared of old unto me, saying, I have loved you with an everlasting love—therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you."

Yes, my poor weeping Brothers and Sisters, inasmuch as you are now coming to Christ, God has drawn you. And inasmuch as He has drawn you, it is a proof that He has loved you from before the foundation of the world. Let your heart leap within you, you are one of His! Your name was written on the Savior's hands when they were nailed to the accursed tree. Your name glitters on the breastplate of the great High Priest today. And it was there before the daystar knew its place, or planets ran their round. Rejoice in the Lord, you that have come to Christ, and shout for joy all you that have been drawn of the Father. For this is your proof—your solemn testimony—that you from among men have been chosen in eternal election and that you shall be kept by the power of God, through faith, unto the salvation which is ready to be revealed!

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THE DRAWINGS OF DIVINE LOVE

NO. 2386

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY,
NOVEMBER 11, 1894.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 26, 1888.

“No man can come to Me, except the Father who sent Me draws him and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the Prophets, ‘And they shall all be taught by God.’ Therefore, everyone who has heard, and has learned of the Father, comes unto Me.”
John 6:44, 45.

THERE is something here which troubles many seeking souls. They hear the Gospel preached in this manner, “Look and live,” or, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” This comforts them and they say to themselves, “This is a way in which we can run. We delight to be told of salvation by faith in Christ.” By-and-by, they hear a discourse upon our Savior’s Words, “You must be born again,” or they listen to descriptions of the inward experience of a child of God. They are taught that there must be a brokenness of heart before there can be a true binding up. There must be a stripping before there can be a clothing. There must be death before there can be resurrection and then they say to themselves, “This, we fear, is true. But how different it is from the message we heard the other day! Are there two things equally true—salvation by simple faith in Christ—and yet the necessity of a new heart and a right spirit?”

They *are* equally true, and they ought to be preached with equal clearness, and equal earnestness! But I would say to every seeker, “You will find it very injurious to get worrying yourself with such difficulties as these. As a rule, you had better leave those questions for another day.” Suppose that you were puzzled concerning specific gravity, the weight of a body in water? if you were a drowning man, I would recommend you to waive the consideration of such a subject till you were safely on shore! It is hardly the time, I think, to enter into difficult disquisitions while you are in grave peril. And, in like manner, you may leave many theological questions until, by faith in Christ, you are saved. Then, going into His school, you may ask Him to teach you these other more advanced lessons.

Now, for your help, I desire to say that these two doctrines of Salvation by Faith and the Inward Drawing of the Spirit of God are equally true and, unless they are proclaimed in due proportion, mischief may come from the preaching of either the one, or the other. I think that when the preacher only says, “Believe, believe, believe, believe, believe, believe,” mischief may come of that imperfect declaration, for it is a one-sided form of the Truth of God, and other important Truths of God may be for-

gotten, and men may get into a superficial habit of imagining that they believe when they hardly know what it is that they believe—and their faith is not the living faith of God’s elect which works by love, purifies the soul and sanctifies the life!

On the other hand, I am quite sure that you may preach the need of inward experience and preach it very thoroughly and continually. But if this other matter of faith is left out, you may preach some of your hearers into despair, many of them into indifference and others of them into a kind of self-righteousness of feelings! I have met with persons who were certainly trusting in their *feelings* and who went so far as to condemn others because they had not endured the same amount of misery and passed through the same conviction of sin, or indulged in the same agony of despair. Truths of God are preached, we shall not stop to reconcile them—there is no need to do so, especially if they reconcile themselves to you while we preach! If the two doctrines are preached, they will act as a balance, the one to the other, and while men hear our Savior say, “He that believes on Me has everlasting life,” they will not misunderstand what He says if they also hear as the deep bass note of that musical scale the equally Divine utterance, “You must be born again.”

The text gives us good help upon this subject. I do not believe that there are any practical difficulties in the matter at all. I say, *practical* difficulties, for there *are philosophical* difficulties. Is there any subject about which there are *not* philosophical difficulties? Can you not, if you think of anything—be it the most commonplace fact in natural history, very soon surround it with a cloud of obscurity which nobody can remove? A fool can set a stool where a wise man will tumble over it and you can soon raise a difficulty if you want to. Here is one. There is a bullock in the meadow and there is also a sheep in the same pasture. They will both eat grass and on the bullock that grass will turn to hair, and on the sheep it will turn to wool. How come? Can you tell me? No, and I do not want to know. It may be a very interesting point for discussion, but, *practically* there is no difficulty about it. Those who tan the leather, or those who dye the wool are not hindered in the least degree in their handicraft by the philosophical difficulty I have mentioned! So, there are philosophical difficulties about this matter of simple faith and salvation by it, and of the Spirit’s work and the necessity for it, but, *practically*, there is no difficulty at all, for the man who believes in Christ Jesus *is* born again! And every man who is born again *believes* in the Lord Jesus Christ! The two things come together, live together and are perfected together!

However, for the help of some sincere seekers after Christ who may be in perplexity, I will speak about this matter that troubles them. Let me read the text again—“No man can come to Me, except the Father who sent Me draws him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the Prophets, ‘And they shall all be taught by God.’ Therefore, everyone who has heard, and has learned of the Father, comes unto Me.”

I. Our first observation upon this text is that THE ALL-IMPORTANT MATTER OF FAITH IS A VERY SIMPLE BUSINESS. Twice is it mentioned here, and the only definition of it that is given is *coming to Christ*—“No man can come to Me.” And, again, in the 45th verse, “Comes unto Me.”

Faith in Christ is simply and truly described as coming to Him. It is not an acrobatic feat—it is simply a coming to Christ. It is not an exercise of profound mental faculties—it is coming to Christ. A child comes to his mother. A blind man comes to his home. Even an animal comes to his master. Coming is a very simple action, indeed. It seems to have only two things about it. One is, to come *away* from something, and the other is, to come *to* something.

In coming to Christ Jesus as our Savior, we first come away from all other trusts. We leave all other confidences right behind us and come away from them altogether. My own works? I must come away from all trust in them, to Christ! My own feelings? I must come away from all reliance upon them, to Christ! Ceremonies, forms, rites, yes, even such as God has given, I must come away from all confidence in them and I must come to Jesus, quitting and leaving them all! You cannot come to Jesus and yet hold on to your old trusts. You cannot come to Jesus and yet cling to your old sins. You must come away from *righteous* self as well as from *sinful* self. To go *to* a place, I must go *from* a place. If you would come to Christ, you must bid, “good-bye,” to your old sins and say, “farewell,” to your old confidences. Are you ready to sue for a divorce between your soul and sin, between your soul and self-confidence? That is the first essential thing in coming to Christ—*leaving all other trusts*.

Then the other part of coming is drawing near to Christ to obtain everything we need. When we truly come to Christ, we draw near to Him. We do not any longer neglect Him, we do not look away from Him—on the contrary, we begin to think much of Him, our hopes center in Him and, having thought of Him, and so having come *mentally* to Him, we trust in Him. We come to Him for what He is. Is He a Savior? We come to Him that He may save us! Does He wash away sin? We come to Him that He may wash away our sin! Does He heal spiritual diseases? We come to Him that He may heal us of our diseases! You know what is meant by coming to such and such a physician. You must, in that same sense, come to Jesus Christ, the Divine Physician, for sin-sick souls.

This expression, coming to Christ, is so simple that I do not know how to make it any plainer. I am afraid that if I were to try to explain it, I might be like Thomas Scott when he wrote his notes to Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*. Going round his parish, he found a woman who had *The Pilgrim’s Progress* with his notes. “My good woman,” he asked, “do you understand *The Pilgrim’s Progress*?” “Yes, Scott, I understand *The Pilgrim’s Progress* very well and I hope that, one day, I may be able to understand your explanation of it.” I will not attempt to explain any further what coming to Christ is, lest I should not succeed any better than Mr. Scott did! It ought to be clear to everybody that coming *from* something, and coming *to* something, or someone, constitute the act of coming. Quit, then, both sin and self by determined resolve, and come to Jesus—rest in Him, take Him to be everything to you—and then believe that you have everlasting life, according to His declaration, “He that believes on Me has everlasting life.”

Yet our Savior does, in close connection with this text, give us another illustration of what faith is. Faith is coming to Christ. It is also *eating or*

receiving Christ. A man has a piece of bread in his hand. He does not know where the wheat grew, nor in what mill it was ground, nor in what oven the bread was baked, but he knows that it is bread and that he is hungry. Nature, especially living nature, abhors a vacuum, so the man determines to fill the vacuum within with that piece of bread! What does he do, but eat it? You do not have to teach children how to eat. I said to a little boy this afternoon, "Why don't you put your bread and butter in your ear?" Of course, he knew better than to act like that, so all he did was to laugh at me! And you never yet met with a child who took to putting the bread and butter in his ear—he puts it in his mouth and eats it. So, there really is, if you would but use it, sense enough within you to understand what faith in Christ is. If you were not so ready to confound and confuse yourself, my dear Friend, you might know what faith is!

You tell me that it puzzles you. I think that it is *you* that puzzles yourself, not faith that puzzles you. When you get bread, you put it into your mouth, you eat it and let it go down into yourself. You may not know much about the processes that are going on within you and you need not want to know. If you do not understand anything about them, the bread will feed you just as well. Now, in that way take the Lord Jesus Christ into you, *spiritually*, and feed upon Him. Say from your heart, "Lord, I live upon You. I believe You to be God. I believe that You did take our nature. I trust You as the Incarnate God. I believe that You did suffer in the place of guilty men. I believe that You have put away the sin of all those who trust You, and put it away forever so that they can never be condemned. I trust You to be my Savior, altogether and solely my Savior." If you really do that, you are saved.

"How do I know it?" says one. Because Christ says it—is not that enough? "He that believes on Me has everlasting life." "But I have not felt any strange sensations! I have had no wonderful dreams." What? Are you asking for such signs as those? Is not Christ's Word, "He that believes on Me has everlasting life," enough for you? Lord, I believe on You. Therefore, I have everlasting life. Your Word is enough for me!

That is my first point, faith is a very simple matter.

II. But, secondly, TO THIS FAITH MEN ARE GREATLY DISINCLINED. He who knew most about men says of them, "No man can come to Me, except the Father who sent Me draws him."

Men are grievously disinclined to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Their unwillingness is so great that it amounts to an inability of this sort, that, as there are none so deaf as those that will not hear, and none so blind as those that will not see, so there are none so unable as those who are unwilling! And the Savior thus puts it, "No man can come to Me, except the Father who sent me draws him."

But why are men so unwilling to believe in the Lord Jesus? In Christ's lifetime on earth, their unwillingness arose partly because He was of such lowly origin. They said, "We know Joseph, and Mary, and the brethren of Jesus. How can we believe in Him as the Messiah?" He was so poor, so obscure, He came of a family that was not notable in Israel as far as they knew. Besides, He came out of Nazareth and they asked, "Can

any good thing come out of Nazareth?” He was a Galilean and they could not look up to one who came from that despised region.

In addition to that, all His teaching was opposed to their proud notions. If He had come as an earthly king, to overthrow the Roman power, they might have believed in Him, but, as He was, they regarded Him as a root out of a dry ground. They could see nothing illustrious about the Man of Sorrows, so they would not believe in Him. And numbers of people, to this day, do not receive Christ because faith in Him is not fashionable. True godliness is not held in high repute in the upper circles of society. O simpletons, to lose your souls for the sake of a little worldly grandeur! God save us all from such insanity as that!

The more common reason why men are not saved by faith in Christ is because they do not see any *need* of a Savior. I know you very well, my dear Mr. Good-Enough, and my dear Friend, Mr. Too-Good! You do not believe that you need saving—you think that you have as much as you ought to have of everything that is good, and even some to give away! Oh, yes, you hope to enter Heaven with all sails up. What will you do when you get there? The redeemed ones are all singing that they have washed their robes and made them white *in the blood of the Lamb*. But you will have to go up in a corner, by yourself, and hold your tongue, because you had not anything that needed to be washed and you were, yourself, perfectly clean! You would not be happy in Heaven, for the very Glory of that blissful place is the Lamb of God and His precious blood is the theme of continual thanksgiving! I pray God to bring you out of your miserable delusion, for it is no better than that. You are not the good man that you think you are—you are stained with sin from head to foot—and unless you are washed in the Divinely-provided bath, even in the atoning blood of Jesus, you will perish in your sin!

But many do not come to Christ and trust Him because they will not receive the doctrine of Substitution. Christ's *dying in the sinners' place*, the Just for the unjust, to bring them to God, they will not have—they kick at it! I assure you that you will never have rest and peace till you accept that blessed soul-saving doctrine, for other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, even Jesus Christ the Righteous, and there is no Jesus Christ to trust in except the glorious Substitute who bore our sins in His own body on the tree! Oh, that men would not be so foolish as to reject God's plan of salvation by the vicarious Atonement once offered on Calvary!

Many also refuse the Savior because they are occupied with other things. They cannot come to Christ because their farm, their merchandise, their newly-married wife, or something or other, keeps them back. Oh, how long some of you have been waiting—some of you who have attended the Tabernacle, too, all the time! If anybody had said, 20 years ago, that you would be sitting in your pew an unconverted man, tonight, you were not willing to have believed it! You will probably be sitting in that pew, an unconverted man, in 20 *more* years' time, I fear—you will either be saved, or you will have gone the way of all flesh! Oh, that the day would come when there shall be no more hesitation, no more post-

ponement, but when you would, from your heart, say, "I must have Christ. I will trust Him!" Say even now what we have often sung—

**"I do believe, I will believe,
That Jesus died for me!
That on the Cross He shed His blood,
From sin to set me free."**

There are many more who do not exercise simple faith in Christ because they do not like the consequences of it. "Why," says one, "if I become a Believer in Christ, I shall have to give up my old ways." You will. "If I become a follower of the Lamb, I cannot go where I now go." Quite right! I am glad you see that. I hope that you are not such a hypocrite as to imagine that you can trust Christ to put away your past sin and then go on living in sin as you have done. That will never do! Christ has opened a hospital for the sick, but it is that He may *heal* them! He receives sinners, but not that they may *remain* sinners—it is that He may make *saints* of them and deliver them from sin! You will never come to Christ as long as you are in love with sin. And you are so much in love with sin that you never will come at all except Omnipotent Grace shall draw you! And so says our Lord Jesus Christ, "No man can come to Me, except the Father who sent Me draws him."

There are many others who cannot trust in Christ and cannot come to Him because they wish for certain feelings or emotions. You want to experience amazing changes that you may know that God is at work in your soul, do you? Well, I do not wonder at that desire, but please notice what is said in the 46th verse, "Not that any man has seen the Father." The work of God in the heart is not *seen* by the soul until, first of all, the soul sees Jesus Christ! You must not think that you can deal with an absolute God. Apart from Christ, *you cannot approach God*, and God operating upon your heart, without faith in Christ, will not be the ground of any comfort to you. Whatever God may be doing in you, or may *not* be doing in you, is not the thing that you are to look to as the foundation of your hope! Your trust is to be in *Christ's work on the Cross*, and in nothing else! You shall see plenty of evidences, miracles and signs, by-and-by, but, to begin with, the Gospel for you is, "Believe, believe, believe." "I could believe if ____." Oh, yes! I see, the ground of your confidence is that, "if," not God's Word. "Oh, Sir, but I could trust God's Word if I - ____." Ah, that is the same thing, over again!

You see, it is not God's Word that you trust—it is that rotten, "if," to which you cling! Now, away with it, away with it, I pray you! Either call God a liar, or else believe Him. It must be one of the two! But do not pretend that you would believe Him under certain conditions that you would like to impose. If a man said to me that he would believe me under certain conditions, I would understand at once that he did not really believe me at all. That, in fact, he could not believe *me*, but he would believe somebody else, and perhaps trust me under cover of that other person. That would not be faith in me at all and, I pray you, deal not with the Lord in such a fashion!

So, you see, dear Friends, my text plainly teaches us that men are greatly disinclined to come to Jesus.

III. Therefore, THE OPERATIONS OF GOD ON THE SOUL ALL RUN IN THE WAY OF LEADING MEN TO COME TO JESUS. That is clear if you read the text, “No man can come to Me, except the Father who sent Me draws him.”

You see, first, *the Father inclines us to come to Christ*. “It is written in the Prophets, ‘And they shall all be taught by God.’” What are they taught? “Therefore, everyone who has heard, and has learned of the Father, comes unto Me.” It is clear that the drift of the Divine operations in the heart of man is towards Christ. The Lord draws us, but all His drawings are towards Christ. If you think that you have experienced the work of the Holy Spirit in your heart, and yet it does not draw you towards Christ, you have made a mistake. The Spirit always draws away from self and away from sin, to Jesus Christ, alone! If you are drawn that way, it is the Lord who draws you, for all His drawings are in that direction.

Then, next, the drift of all God’s teachings is this way. Whatever the Spirit of God teaches a man, the end and objective of that teaching is to get him away from self and draw him to Christ. All the teachings of affliction are intended to make us sick of self and fond of Christ. All the true teachings of the Christian ministry aim at putting down self and exalting Christ!

All the drawings and all the teachings, then, that come from God, are towards Christ. By this test you may try everything that professes to be a Divine operation. If any man says, “I am the subject of the work of the Spirit of God,” and he does not exalt Christ, tell him that he is not the subject of the Spirit’s work at all. If he comes to you with some fine idea about himself, making out that he is some great one, say to yourself, “It is no part of the work of the Spirit to set up any *man* as a great one. His work is to take of the things of Christ and show them to us.” The Holy Spirit addicts Himself to the glorifying of Christ, so He withers our false hopes and gives us true hopes! He does this in order that Christ may be lifted up and that we may be drawn to Him.

I believe that this is the test of all kinds of preaching. Does a man come with a Divine message to my soul? I will try him by this test. Does he lift up Christ? Does he draw me to trust in Christ? Does he draw me to love Christ? Does he draw me to be like Christ? Well and good! I will hear some more of what that man says, but if, Sunday after Sunday, I have to say, “They have taken away my Lord and I know not where they have laid Him,” I say, “Good-bye, Sir, other people may listen to you, but you are not the man that I want to hear.” I must have Christ, Christ, Christ, Christ, Christ first, last, Alpha, Omega, beginning, middle, end and all through, or else I cannot believe that the teaching is of God, for the Father draws to Christ and teaches concerning Christ.

Further, *He makes us to hear and to learn that we may come to Christ*. Come, then, my dear Hearers! I think that I have now brought you a little into the Light of God. You say that you must be the subject of a Divine operation. Are you looking to Christ? Then you have had that Divine operation performed upon you, for it makes you look to Christ, alone! “Is believing an easy thing?” asks one. It is the easiest thing in the world! It is as easy as coming, or as eating. “Well, but why is it so difficult for *me*?”

Probably it is difficult because it is so easy. I believe that faith is a hard thing to many because it is *not* a hard thing. It is just like Naaman's washing in the Jordan—if the Prophet had bid him do some great thing, some difficult thing, he would have done it. But when he said nothing but, "Wash, and be clean," Naaman felt that he was too great to go to the River Jordan and too clean to go and wash. He is a nobleman and a gentleman—is he to go and wash like any pig?

Yes, he is, and only so can he be cleansed, for his leprosy makes him as foul as any swine could be and he must, therefore, wash if he would be clean! You, though you are the queen of morality, must trust in Christ just as a harlot must trust in Christ! And you, young man, though you are, in all things, noble and excellent, you must come and believe in Christ just as a thief must do, or else you can never come where that dying thief, is, who passed with Christ into Paradise! There is but *one* door—will you bow your head and enter? There is only *one* way of salvation—will you run along it? If not, if you will put *your goodness* before Christ, it shall become as bad as a crime or infamy, itself! God grant that the operations of the Holy Spirit may lead you up to simple faith in Jesus!

IV. So, then, I finish with this fourth point. IF WE HAVE COME TO JESUS, WE NEED NOT QUESTION OUR SAFETY. Christ says, "He that believes on Me has *everlasting life*." He who has come to Jesus is saved! You need not question your safety, for you could not have come to Christ without *having been drawn to Him*. "No man can come to Me, except the Father who sent Me *draws* him." You could not have come if you had not been drawn! Well, then, if you have come, you have been drawn, and if the Father has drawn you, you have come the right way! It all lies in a nutshell. If I have come to Jesus and have put my trust in Him—my nature is, in itself, so averse to this way of salvation that, if I have really and from my heart accepted it—there must have been upon my heart an operation *from God* to bring me into this condition! That operation could not have been badly performed, for God never works amiss or ineffectually. I am, therefore, in the very fact of being brought to Christ, assured that God has been at work with me!

"Oh!" I have sometimes heard poor souls say, "I came to Christ, but I am afraid that I have come the wrong way." You cannot come the wrong way. "Oh, but I heard of one who came to Christ so quickly!" Yes, and I have heard of one who came to Him very slowly. But as he came, it did not so much matter *how* he came! When the whole world was drowned, a pair of greyhounds found shelter in the ark. I do not suppose they started very early. But there was a pair of snails that went in with them—I wonder how soon they started? They certainly must have started a long while before the ark door was opened or the ark prepared. Come along, then, you poor crawling snails, come along! If some of you have the greyhound's speed, come along, bound and leap to Christ—the quicker the better! But if you are a man of slow action, remember that the snails in the ark were not drowned. Though they were slow in coming in, there they were, as safely preserved as the rest of the living creatures that were with Noah. "Well" says one, "I feel as if I could only creep to

Christ with broken legs and an aching back.” Then creep to Christ, only come to Him! Come anyway—leaping or limping. If you shall come, He has said, “Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out,” and that includes any coming in all the world if it is but a coming to Him. If you trust Him, you are saved! That Truth of God ought, I think, to give some consolation to any who are troubled about their faith and about the inner life of the soul.

Yet again, remember that all teaching that is absolutely necessary to salvation concerns Christ. “Therefore, everyone who has heard, and has learned of the Father, comes unto Me.” If there were any right teachings that would lead you beyond Christ—I do not know any, but if there were such—you can do without them. The only teachings that you need are those that lead you to Christ. Let this comfort anyone who says, “I understand no theology. I am only a beginner in the study of the Word. I could not even explain the plan of salvation to another person, but I am trusting in Christ.” Well, rest satisfied with that glorious fact!

To close, the best sentence in the whole text, to my mind, is that with which the 44TH verse finishes, “I will raise him up at the last day.” Is not that glorious? The Savior does not merely say that he that believes is drawn to Him by the Father and that he is now saved, but He says, “I will raise him up at the last day.” It is as good as saying, “I will take that man’s case into My own hands.” He does not mention all the intervening circumstance, but He finishes up with the last victory, “I will raise him up at the last day.” “This man is a sinner, Lord.” “I will forgive him.” “He has a black heart.” “I will change it.” “He will be very fickle.” “I will keep him.” “He will be much tempted.” “I will pray for him.” “He will have many afflictions.” “I will sustain him.” “But Lord, he will die.” “I will be with him.” “But he will be buried, Lord, and laid among the worms, dust to dust.” “I will raise him up at the last day.”

It is as good as saying, “I will go through with the business for the whole of the man,” for if He takes care of the poor body, and raises it up, depend upon it that He will take care of the *soul* that shall be forever with Him! If this rag of a robe that I wear is yet so dear to Him that He will not leave it in the grave, then the man within the robe will be all right! Christ will take care of him, depend upon that! He who will preserve the casket will not lose the jewel. “I will raise him up at the last day.”

The Lord bring every one of you to trust in this mighty Savior, for His great name’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: *John 6:41-71.*

We shall read, tonight, part of that blessed sixth chapter of John’s Gospel, beginning at the 41ST verse.

Verses 41, 42. *The Jews then murmured at Him because He said, I am the bread which came down from Heaven. And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it then that He says, I came down from Heaven? Familiarity breeds con-*

tempt. Because the Jews knew Jesus and His kindred after the flesh, therefore they would not believe that He came down from Heaven. Let us beware of foolish prejudices and let us not judge after the flesh. Why should Jesus not have come down from Heaven even though these men knew His reputed father and mother?

43. *Jesus, therefore, answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves.* It was a murmuring that was scarcely audible, but Jesus heard it and He checked it. The Lord cannot take any delight in murmuring. “Murmur not among yourselves.”

44. *No man can come to Me, except the Father who sent Me draws him: and I will raise him up at the last day.* You did not expect the Savior to say just that, did you? He always speaks the Truth of God, even though He has to lay the axe at the root of the tree of self-confidence. He does not seem to be encouraging His hearers, but rather to be repelling them. He was trying to show them the state in which they really were. They had not been drawn to Himself. They were alienated from Him and they would continue to be at a distance from Him unless God should interpose and draw them to Him.

45. *It is written in the Prophets, ‘And they shall be all taught by God.’ Therefore, everyone who has heard, and has learned of the Father, comes unto Me.* This was as much as to say, “The Father has never taught you. You have learned nothing from Him, or you would come to Me. And in your rejection of Me, you prove that you are strangers to the Grace of God.”

46. *Not that any man has seen the Father, save He which is of God, He has seen the Father.* Christ is “of God” in a very peculiar sense. He is not God’s creature, but God’s Son. He is of the very essence of God and, therefore, He knows what God is as we never can know.

47. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believes on Me has everlasting life.* This is a grand saying! Can you not catch the Truth of God it reveals? Whatever deficiencies there may be in you, if *you* believe on *Christ*, you have everlasting life—not a life which you can lose, or which will die out, but *everlasting* life! And we are not among those who clip the wings of that great word, “everlasting.” We take this verse to mean just what it says—that is, if you believe on Christ, you have within you a life which will last forever and ever!

48-50. *I am the bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from Heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die.* Christ is the Bread for the soul, the Bread of immortality, the Bread which will fit a man for Heaven and sustain him till he arrives there. Oh, that we may all eat of this Bread of Life, and so live forever!

51-54. *I am the living bread which came down from Heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this Man give us His flesh to eat? Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh, and drinks My blood has eternal life; and I*

will raise him up at the last day. How necessary it is to have a *spiritual* understanding of the Scriptures! These metaphors have a sort of cannibal meaning about them to a man who goes no further than the letter. But the *spiritual* man knows that the soul feeds upon the doctrine of Christ's Incarnation and drinks in the truth of Christ's Atonement. This is feeding, this is drinking—this is being nourished upon Christ's flesh and Christ's blood!

55. *For My flesh is meat, indeed, and My blood is drink, indeed.* Meat and wine are, after all, only shadows—they feed the shadow-life of the flesh. Christ and His precious blood are the great *realities*—they nourish the true life of the spirit. Blessed are they who know what it is in spirit to feed upon these spiritual things!

56-58. *He that eats My flesh, and drinks My blood, dwells in Me, and I in him. As the living Father has sent Me, and I live by the Father: so he that eats Me, even he shall live by Me. This is that bread which came down from Heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: He that eats of this bread shall live forever.* The Savior goes over the same ground several times. There is a variety in His utterances, but in essence, the *meaning* is the same. He wants to get it into our minds that we are to live upon Him—that He, not self, He, not works, He, not our feelings—is the real food of the soul, by which that soul acquires and retains immortal life.

59, 60. *These things said He in the synagogue, as He taught in Capernaum. Many therefore of His disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it?* Preachers must not be astonished if they stagger their hearers when they proclaim the Truth of God! They must not retract what they have said, nor tone it down because so-and-so is offended by it! Truth is hard, especially to hard hearts. Every great Truth is hard to a beginner in the school of Christ—but it is, none the less, to be taught, for that which is difficult, today, may become delightful, tomorrow, or whenever we are better educated in the things of God!

61, 62. *When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples murmured at it, He said unto them, Does this offend you? What and if you shall see the Son of Man ascend up where He was before?* He that is offended at any Gospel Truth may expect to be still more offended, for there are higher and deeper doctrines than Jesus had then uttered. If you stagger under the elementary lessons, what will you do when you get into the grammar school of Divinity, and begin to learn the loftier lessons of the Truths of God? Oh, for a faith that never staggers when Christ speaks, and that believes whatever He reveals!

63. *It is the Spirit that quickens; the flesh profits nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.* Do not look at them as dead words! Regard them as full of life and understand them in their living spiritual sense.

64. *But there are some of you that believe not.* Some of Christ's own disciples, some who had kept Him company—believed not! This was a very sad statement for Jesus to be obliged to make, but it must be made

today about many professed Christians—“There are some of you that believe not.”

64. *For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray Him.* He is not deceived by hypocrites. If we have crept into the Church unworthily, He knows all about us. He knows us better than we know ourselves! Oh, that we might be very careful, watchful, jealous! May we abhor hypocrisy of every sort! It is impossible to continue in it without being detected, but if it were possible, we ought not to practice it, but with such an eye as that which is in the Head of the Church, even Christ, we cannot deceive—therefore, let us not attempt it.

65, 66. *And He said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto Me, except it were given unto him of My Father. From that time many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him.* It often happens, in the ministry of a faithful preacher, that he has to say unpleasant things. And there are some who withdraw because of his preaching of the Truth of God. Should he break his heart when they do so? Certainly not! They did the same with his Master. They acted the same with the Apostle Paul. It will be so to the end of the chapter and, indeed, it is part of our work to separate between the precious and the vile. Truth is like the fan which drives away the chaff and leaves the wheat the more pure. Yet it is sad to read that many of the disciples of Christ went back and walked no more with Him because they could not endure the faithful Words He spoke to them.

67, 68. *Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will you, also, go away? Then Simon Peter—Who was always to the front, ever ready to speak, “Simon Peter”—*

68-70. *Answered Him, Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that you are that Christ, the Son of the living God. Jesus answered them, have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?* Our Lord often surprises us by the way in which He speaks. He does not say what we would have expected to hear from Him, but He says something that is very startling and even discouraging! It is the way of our Master, because He sees further than we do—and He often replies, not to the question as it lies in the words addressed to Him—but to a belief in the heart at the back of the words. He did so here. Peter may have thought that “the twelve” were all steadfast and sincere, so Christ says to him, “Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?”

71. *He spoke of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray Him, being one of the twelve.*

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—552, 448, 502.

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CHOICE TEACHING FOR THE CHOSEN NO. 2606

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 22, 1899.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 21, 1883.

***“It is written in the Prophets, ‘And they shall be all taught of God.’ Every man, therefore, that has heard and has learned of the Father, comes unto Me.”
John 6:45.***

I SUPPOSE that you never noticed any great literary excellence in Bradshaw's Railway Guide. “No,” you say, “one writing would be very much out of place in such a book as that—it is meant to be a plain direction to travelers. When we consult it, we do not wish to be entertained, we want to be guided as to the best and quickest route to our desired destination.” Well, that is the sort of sermon I am going to try to preach—one which, I trust, shall be a guide to Heaven to some who hear it, or who may afterwards read it—I long, above all things, that through my words many may find rest and peace in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Notice, dear Friends, what our Savior was aiming at in this discourse. The Jews had been murmuring at Him. Certain followers of the scribes and Pharisees, who always opposed Him, had been whispering among themselves and finding fault with Him. Our Lord did not condescend to come down to their level and parley with them. They pretended that their difficulty was that He was well known among them, that He was the son of Joseph, the carpenter, and that they knew His mother and His brothers and sisters. Our Lord does not appear directly to answer them, but He takes quite a different tack. He says, “Murmur not among yourselves about this matter. Do not imagine for a moment that I am disappointed because you do not believe in Me, and do not suppose that your unbelief will at all frustrate My Father's purpose or surprise Him. You may reject Me if you are determined to do so, but your folly and sin will make no difference to anybody except yourselves. On your own head shall be the guilt of your own blood. I knew that you would not believe in Me. I quite expected that you would not receive Me, for, ‘No man can come to Me, except the Father which has sent Me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.’” And, Beloved, in a similar manner, when we are pleading with you that you should believe in Christ, we must weep over you as Jesus wept over Jerusalem! And we may say, as Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, “We were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherishes her children,” but when you come to this terrible decision—that you reject Christ

and will not have Him reign over you, then we fall back upon the eternal purposes of God—and we tell you that you have not received either the electing love of God or the effectual working of the Holy Spirit. And you are left to perish in your sins!

To the ungodly and the unspiritual this may sound like rather harsh language, but should not men be treated with some measure of harshness if they spurn the Christ who is set before them and, in their unbelief, wickedly reject Him? True love is all the more loving because it is outspoken and sometimes seems even severe. There is a spurious sort of love current, nowadays, which consists in saying, “Ah, yes, you are all right and I am all right! You say, ‘No,’ and I say, ‘Yes,’ but, no doubt, we are both equally correct. You are black and I am white—or I am black and you are white—but, in these days, black is white, and white is no color at all! Let us make things smooth and pleasant all round. You praise me and I will praise you! It does not really matter what you believe, or what you think—we shall all get right at last.” That kind of talk, or the preaching which comes practically to the same point, is infernal cruelty to immortal souls! I dare not use a milder term to describe it. It may be cried up as charity, but there is no charity in it! It is a shameful selfishness which, for the sake of ease and popular favor, cries, “Peace, peace,” when there is no peace, and seduces men to their own destruction—playing merry tunes to them when, all the while, they are dancing down to death and to Hell!

Our Lord Jesus Christ was not a preacher of that order. When men refused Him, He flashed the red light of the Truth of God in their faces and made them know that if they rejected Him, they rejected their only hope of mercy—and if they turned against His Grace, it was because they did not know its power and were not under its influence. He taught these people, who murmured at Him, that they never would believe in Him unless the Father taught them. He plainly declared that the Father would teach all His own and that if those who were listening to Him did not come to Him, it would prove that the Father had not taught them, that they were not God’s chosen and, therefore, they would perish in their carnal and guilty ignorance of Him!

Now coming to the text, I shall ask you to notice, first, *the promise of the Father’s teaching of His own people*. “It is written in the Prophets, ‘And they shall be all taught of God.’” Then, secondly, we shall examine the teaching itself. “They shall be all taught of God.” And, thirdly, we shall consider *the grand result of the teaching*. “Every man, therefore, that has heard, and has learned of the Father, comes unto Me.”

I. To begin, then, there is in the text, THE PROMISE OF THE FATHER’S TEACHING OF HIS OWN PEOPLE.

Christ says, concerning this promise, “It is written in the Prophets.” I greatly admire that sentence because if there was ever anyone in this world who might have spoken on His *own* authority, without quoting Scripture, it was our Lord Jesus Christ! “In Him dwells all the fullness of

the Godhead bodily” and, therefore, all His sayings are the utterances of Omnipotence and He often, when upon the earth, made use of that great double Amen, “Verily, verily, I say unto you.” Yet this Divine Teacher, who spoke as never man spoke, continually quoted from the Old Testament and supported His own teachings by quotations from “the Law and the Prophets,” and the Psalmists and other Inspired writers. In this case, addressing Himself to the Jews, He says, “It is written in the Prophets.” The tendency, nowadays, even among preachers, is to depreciate and dishonor Holy Scripture. I am often saddened as I find how many are quibbling at one part or another of the Sacred Word. To my heart, there is nothing more authoritative or more conclusive than this little sentence, “It is written.” If God’s message to men is written, that is enough for me—and my great concern shall be to find out what that message is! Every man must have Infallibility somewhere. Some find it in the Pope, but I frankly confess that I have never seen the slightest sign of it there! Some find it in what they call, “the church.” I am sure I do not know in which church to look for it, for all of them seem to me to be very, very fallible. I find Infallibility only in the Inspired Word of God! Here is a harbor where I can drop down my anchor feeling certain that it will hold. Here is a place where I can find sure footing and, by the Grace of God, from this confidence I shall never be moved. “It is written in the Prophets,” is quite enough for me! I trust, Beloved, that it is also sufficient for all of you.

That we may learn the lesson that our Lord intended to teach, let us look at the Words which He quoted. He said, “It is written in the Prophets.” And, truly, the passage or its equivalent may be found in more places than I shall be able to refer to, now, but will you kindly look, first, at the 54th Chapter of Isaiah, at the 13th verse? Ah, I see the eyes of you Bible-lovers flash and I think I hear you say, “Fifty-fourth of Isaiah? Why, of course, that follows just after the 53rd of Isaiah!” Precisely so and, that 53rd of Isaiah, as you well know, is *all about Christ’s Substitutionary Sacrifice*. There we have the full-length portrait of the bleeding Substitute—“But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.” Many of you know by heart that blessed chapter, so full of the doctrine of God laying upon Christ the sin of His people, and of Christ bearing all their iniquities that they might be forever free. Well, immediately after that great central Truth of the Christian faith, comes this 54th Chapter—“Sing, O barren, you that did not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, you that did not travail with child,” There is no better place for any to sing than at the foot of the Cross, gazing by faith upon the crucified Savior! O Earth, with all your barrenness! O heart of steel, with all your hardness! “Break forth into singing,” for there is heavenly joy and there is the promise of Heaven, itself, in the death of Him who lived, and loved, and died for us!

Further on in the 54th Chapter comes this 13th verse, from which our Savior quoted, “And all your children shall be taught of the Lord; and

great shall be the peace of your children.” This is *a promise to the Lord’s own people*. The teaching of Scripture is that Christ died for His chosen. “Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it.” God’s promise, “All your children shall be taught of the Lord,” is made to His own Church and to all who are the children of that Church, namely, all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life! All God’s chosen, all whose names are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life, all whom Christ has redeemed by His blood, shall be, each according to his measure, in due time taught of the Lord.

That is the meaning of the promise as we get it in Isaiah’s prophecy. First, it follows the Doctrine of Substitution and, next, it is made to God’s chosen people.

Now will you turn over a few pages in your Bible, and read what is written in the 31st Chapter of the prophecy of Jeremiah, beginning at the 31st verse? “Behold, the days come, says the Lord, that I will make a new Covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the Covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which My Covenant they broke, although I was an husband unto them, says the Lord: but this shall be the Covenant that I will make with the house of Israel. After those days, says the Lord, I will put My Law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, says the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

So, you see, *this promise is joined with other blessings of the New Covenant*. Notice that when our Savior quoted the prophecy, He commenced with the word, “and.” Now, as a general rule, when you make a quotation, you do not begin with, “and.” That is a copulative conjunction which joins one sentence to another, yet our Lord begins with an, “and,” as if to hint that there was a great deal going before it of which He could not speak fully, just then. There is “an Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure,” which God has made with Christ Jesus, His Son, on our behalf. And all who were represented by Christ became, by virtue of their union with Him, partakers in all the blessings of that Covenant. Our side of it has been fulfilled by Christ, our Representative. He has done the Father’s will perfectly and He has been able to say, concerning the part entrusted to Him, “It is finished.” The side of the Covenant which has yet to be fulfilled is God the Father’s portion—and that runs thus, “I will, and they shall”—“I will be their God, and they shall be My people. I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me. I will instruct them so that they shall not need to have anyone to say to them, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them.” What a wonderful promise this is! It is

perfectly unconditional and freely made by the Father concerning all His chosen!

As it stands in these two prophecies, as our Savior quotes it, *it is a promise made to each individual of the chosen seed*. “They shall be all taught of God.” Then there shall not be one true child of God who shall not be taken into the Lord’s school and be taught and trained by the Divine Father! Perhaps someone asks the very important question, “Do I belong to that blessed number?” Let me reply by making another enquiry, Have *you* been truly taught of the Lord? If so, you belong to the chosen company. If you have not been taught of the Lord, I cannot tell whether you are His or not. None of us can climb to Heaven and unroll the eternal parchments, to tell whose name is written there. And until there is some open and overt evidence of your being the Lord’s, I cannot declare that you are. But by this test shall you know—if you have been taught of the Lord, you are one of His children, you are in the Covenant of Grace, and you shall have your full share of every good thing which the Lord has there laid up for His own.

That, then, is the promise of the Father’s teaching.

II. Now, in the second place, let us briefly examine THE TEACHING ITSELF. “They shall be all taught of God.”

I want you to notice, first, that *this teaching is practically the same thing as God’s drawing*. Let me read the previous verse. “No man can come to Me, except the Father which has sent Me draw him. And they shall be all taught of God.” The way in which God draws men to Christ is not merely by persuasion, but by *instruction*. The Father does not draw us to Christ by a force which is contrary to our nature and will—we are not sticks and stones—and He does not treat us as if we were. We are rational, responsible, free agents and He deals with us as such, never snapping even the finest strings in the instrument of human nature, so far as it is human nature. So, when He draws men, He draws them by *teaching* them!

I will show you how the Lord does this. He first teaches the poor soul what a great sinner he is—and that makes him look for a great Savior. He teaches that poor sinner the impossibility of his being saved by his own works—and that makes him look for the works of somebody else. He teaches that poor sinner that He has authorized Christ to stand in his place and, by His life and death, to meet all the Law’s demands on that sinner’s behalf—and the poor sinner says, “Why, that is exactly what I need!” So, while the Lord teaches him, He is really drawing him and, in like manner, there ought to be a great deal of teaching in all our attempts to draw men to Christ—I mean, in our efforts to *be the instruments* of drawing them. If I stand here and simply shout, “Believe, Believe, Believe,” I cannot expect that any good and lasting result will come of my shouting. I must tell people what they are to believe! I may try to persuade men to do this and to do that—and there may be great force in the persuasion, but, unless they understand the reason for my pleading, lit-

tle will come of it. God's way of working should be our way of working and He draws men by teaching them! Observe that very carefully.

Now notice what kind of teaching is here promised. *It is Divine teaching.* "All your children shall be taught of the Lord." "They shall be all taught of God." There is no teaching but that which will ever save the soul. My dear Hearer, you may listen to the best preacher who ever lived, but unless God shall apply the Truth of God to your heart, you will not receive it. You may study the best books on theology as long as you like, but unless God the Holy Spirit shall give you the keys of this treasure house, you will never get at its precious things and secure them as your own. Means are to be used—as I will show you in a minute or two—but you must not *trust* in the means—you must not even rely on the best study that you can give to the Word of God, itself, as the sure means of your knowing the Truth. Over and above all that, you need the instruction and illumination of the Holy Spirit! "He shall teach you all things." But unless you have His teaching, you cannot and you will not know the Truth of God. I would like, if I could, to unlearn everything concerning the things of God that I have taught myself. I desire with all my heart that all I know may be what I have learned of the Spirit of God and, dear Soul, if ever you are to come to Christ, you will have to unlearn a great deal that you have been teaching yourself, for nothing will be of any real worth to you in the matter of your eternal salvation but what the Holy Spirit, Himself, shall write on your heart and teach you. So, the promise of the text concerns Divine teaching.

Yet notice, also, that it is *teaching through the usual means.* "Every man, therefore, that has heard, and has learned of the Father, comes unto Me." "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Though my hearing will not save me, yet, ordinarily, it is the channel by which God's Spirit works to the saving of the soul. Though my reading of the Scripture will not, of itself, save me, yet it is the usual way by which God enlightens the understanding through the Holy Spirit. Never neglect the means of Grace, I pray you, but, at the same time, never get into the condition that some are in who feel quite happy so long as they have been to a place of worship on Sunday, who return home and go to bed, just as if they had done all their duty for the day and had no need of anything further. They are like men who go to market, but do not buy anything. Or like persons who go into a field, but do not work in it. They are quite satisfied with having been to the market or the field. It must not be so with you, dear Hearers. If you want to find Christ—if you want to go to Heaven when you die—never be satisfied with mere hearing of the Word, but pray God the Holy Spirit that through the hearing you may be taught of the Lord.

The most blessed thing about this Divine teaching is that *it is effectual teaching.* If you are taught by the ablest divine, you may yet learn nothing. But if you are taught of God, you will really know what you learn. If He teaches you what your sin really is, you will know it—perhaps even to

despair. If He teaches you the meaning of His Law, you will know it as you lie at the foot of Sinai trembling. And if He teaches you the fullness of Christ, you will know that, and you will rejoice that He is just such a Christ as you need! Men are sure to learn whatever God teaches them by His Holy Spirit. There shall not be one who shall pass through His school and yet remain a fool. Though they were all fools when they entered it, yet, before they leave it, they shall be so instructed as to the way of holiness that they shall not err therein. My heart continues praying even while I am preaching, "Lord, teach me," and then it adds, "and, Lord, teach these people, too. Come and be their Instructor, for what can they know except that which You teach them?"

III. So I shall conclude with this last point—THE GRAND RESULT OF THIS TEACHING. We have read the promise of the teaching. We have thought over what kind of teaching it is. Now let us enquire—What is the result of it? "Every man, therefore, that has heard and has learned of the Father, comes unto Me."

Some men say that they have been taught of God and then they go on to prove that what they know is of their own inventing. Our Lord's test concerning His disciples is, "By their fruits you shall know them." And this is the fruit—every man who has heard the Word, and who has been taught of the Father, comes to Christ! Therefore, if any man preaches that which does not lead you to Christ, do not listen to it, for evidently he has not been taught of God. And, if you find in any book, teaching which makes you think less of Christ than you did before, burn the book! It will do you no good, and it may do you a great deal of mischief. All sound teaching leads to Christ, for if, when the Father, Himself, is the Teacher, the consummation of our scholarship is that we come to Christ. Surely, when we poor creatures are the teachers, we must be even more bound to begin and end with Christ Crucified. You were asking me, just now, whether you had been taught of the Father. You wanted to know whether you were one of His children. Well, here is the test—have you come to Christ? If so, you have been taught of God!

Coming to Christ is a very simple thing. It is the easiest thing in all the world, yet no man ever performed it until God the Father instructed him and taught him that sacred art. To wash in Jordan was a very simple thing, yet at first proud Naaman would not do it—he turned away in a rage! To believe in Jesus is a very simple thing—little children have believed in Him, persons who have scarcely been intellectually above an idiot have, nevertheless, been able to believe in Jesus! And yet, with all its simplicity, men never exercise it until they have been taught of the Father. I suppose it is because faith is so easy that they despise it. Naaman's servants said to him, "If the Prophet had bid you do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much rather, then, when he says to you, Wash, and be clean?" And it is only when the Divine Spirit humbles the heart and makes the man feel that he must stoop to anything so long as he may but be saved, that, at last, he goes down to

wash in Jordan according to the saying of the man of God, or to believe in Jesus Christ according to the command of the Gospel.

You are taught of the Lord, my dear Hearer, if you believe in Jesus Christ, that is, *if you come and trust Him*. And, if you do not trust Christ, you may be a Doctor of Divinity, but you have never been taught of the Lord. He is not to you “very God of very God,” your sole and only Savior. If you do not trust Christ, you are a stranger to the Divine Light of God—that assuredly must be the case. You cannot be right in the rest unless you are trusting in Him. But, if you are truly believing in Him, then you are taught of the Lord. It is very wonderful how God brings His people to this point of trusting Jesus. I heard a little story which might have fitted very well into my morning sermon [Sermon #1745, Volume 29—*Abijah—Or Some Good Thing Towards the Lord*—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>] but it was told to me after I had finished my discourse, so I will repeat it to you now. In a London court there was a little girl who had been to Sunday school and who had found Christ as her Savior. She heard that there was a poor woman lying very ill and all alone, up two flight of stairs, so the child went up to the room and pushed the door open. She did not show herself, but said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” A nurse came in the afternoon, to attend to the poor creature, and she fetched in a city missionary to see the woman, for she talked so strangely, the nurse thought. When the good man came in, the woman said, “I am so happy, I am believing in the Lord Jesus Christ and I am saved! An angel came to the door and I heard him speak, and he said, ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved,’ and I did believe on Him, and I am saved!”

It was not an angel at all, it was that little girl! But it did not matter in the least who said it, for it was just as true whether an angel or a child spoke the words. I long that God should lead you, my dear Friend, to feel, “It does not matter how the Gospel comes to me, for if it is true, I believe it and I accept the Christ whom it makes known to me.” Some of you probably think that if an angel were to come flying through the Tabernacle and were to alight just against your seat and say to you, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved,” you would believe at once. But it would not make any difference in your believing, would it? It is the same message as I, who am, indeed, in the Scriptural sense, one of the angels or the Churches, put before you. You do not mind who brings the letter that is full of good news! I never trouble to send out to enquire the color of the postman’s hair if he brings me a letter—I take it and read its contents—and you need not stop to ask whether the message comes to you by an angel, or a babe, or a minister, or whoever it is! “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved”! And, if you do believe on Him, then I know that the Father taught you, I am persuaded that you are one of God’s elect and I can turn and say to you, “Yes, though I have not read the secret roll of the redeemed, if you believe in Christ, your name is there,” for there never was a soul yet that came to Christ except

the Father drew him. And the Father never drew one by mistake and He never will! This is the blessed consummation of all God's teaching—that the taught ones come to Christ!

But notice, before I close, that the Lord says, "Every man, therefore, that has heard and has learned of the Father, comes unto Me." He does not merely come once, but *he keeps on coming*. Do not make any mistake about faith in Christ, as if it were one single act and then were done with. The faith that saves the soul is an all-the-day faith and an everyday faith. If you believe in Christ, your faith must be of the kind that believes today, tomorrow and forever. If you say, "I believe that I believed in Christ 20 years ago and, therefore, I am saved," I do not believe anything of the kind! Unless you *still* believe, you never truly believed in Christ Jesus, for the faith that God works in the soul is a continual faith! It has its ups and downs and, sometimes, like the moon, it is eclipsed, but it comes out of the darkness, again, and shines as brightly as ever! And, further, if you did ever really believe in Christ, you believe in Him now. "To whom coming," says the Apostle—not, "having once come to Christ, we now run from Him." But, "to whom coming," always coming, always trusting, always believing!

And why is this? Because we are always being taught of the Father! I trusted Christ when I knew comparatively little of God's Word. And I confess that I still know but very little of its boundless height, depth, length and breadth, but I believe that as I grow to know more and more, I shall trust more. If that is not the result of your knowledge, it is not the knowledge that the Holy Spirit gives you! It is the knowledge that puffs up. If it were the Holy Spirit's teaching, you would rely more and more upon Christ and rest more entirely on Him. I pray for you, my dearly-beloved fellow Church members, that you and I may be taught of God till we grow less and less, and come to be nothing at all in our own esteem—till we vanish away into Christ and Christ becomes more than our necessary food, our life, our joy, our All-in-All!

Everyone who is taught of the Father, in proportion as he is so taught, comes nearer and nearer to Christ until *he comes perfectly to Christ in the Glory yet to be revealed*. O blessed Master, we are still coming to You. We are, everyday, coming nearer to You. Your Spirit is making us more like You and making us long more for You! Your Father is creating in us more and more of a hungering and thirsting after You. Though we are very lame and do sadly limp, yet still we are coming to You. We can only feebly fly, yet still we are flying towards You and we expect that when You shall appear, and sit upon the Great White Throne, You will recognize that we are coming to You and You, Yourself will say to us, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." We are coming, Lord, to You! Come to us! Yes, come quickly, even so, come, Lord Jesus! Amen and Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

JOHN 6:25-51.

These people had crossed the Sea of Galilee and gone to Capernaum, “seeking for Jesus.” It seemed a very hopeful sign that they should be willing to make such efforts to find Christ, but see how the Lord Jesus, Himself, regarded it.

Verses 25, 26. *And when they had found Him on the other side of the sea, they said unto Him, Rabbi, when did You come here? Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, You seek Me, not because you saw the miracles, but because you did eat of the loaves, and were filled.* What very plain talk this is! Our Lord does not try to gain popularity by the concealment of truth, but He tells these people to their faces, “You are only following Me because of what you get out of Me.” “Oh,” some worldly-wise man would have said, “that is a very imprudent speech—it will drive the people away.” Just so and Christ seemed to say, on more than one occasion, “If people will be driven away by the Truth of God, let them be driven away.” John the Baptist had declared that Christ had His fan in His hand and that He would thoroughly purge His floor. And if that floor is to be purged, there must be a driving away of the chaff! Our Lord’s example should teach us to speak in His name nothing less and nothing more than the Truth of God in all love and kindness. After thus pointing out the true motive which made the people seek Him, our Savior uttered a very singular paradox.

27. *Labor not for the meat which perishes, but for that meat which endures unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you: for Him has God the Father sealed.* Is it not strange that Christ says, “Labor not for the very thing which you cannot get without laboring for it”? And then He says, “Labor for that which you cannot get by laboring for it”? He virtually tells us that it is so, by adding the words, “which the Son of Man shall give unto you,” plainly proving that it does not come as the result of human labor, but as the *free gift of the Son of God*. He that is wise will discover the meaning of the paradox, but he that is blind will stumble over the letter of it and not discern the spiritual interpretation.

28. *Then said they unto Him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?* “We want to do the best works, the noblest works, the most acceptable works in all the world! Tell us what we should do in order to perform a God-like work.”

29. *Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God.* “The highest and best work which you can accomplish is”—

29. *That you believe on Him whom He has sent.* Faith is the noblest of the Graces! It is the very essence of true worship! It contains within itself the germs of all excellence—and the man who believes in Christ has done that which is more pleasing to God than anything else in all the world!

30, 31. *They said, therefore, unto Him, What sign do You show, then, that we may see, and believe You? What do You do? Our fathers ate manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from Heaven to*

eat. Do you see the drift of their talk? They are still looking for the loaves and fishes and, therefore, whatever Christ may say, they turn the discourse round that way. If they can get from Christ something to eat, they will believe in Him—what groveling, earth-bound creatures they were!

32, 33. *Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from Heaven; but My Father gives you the free Bread from Heaven. For the Bread of God is He which comes down from Heaven, and gives life unto the world.* “The best and noblest bread—the bread which has Deity in it—the bread which can feed your souls, and sustain you with everlasting life, ‘the Bread of God’ is He which comes down from Heaven and gives life unto the world.”

34. *Then said they unto Him, Lord, give us this bread.* They said this not knowing what they said, and not understanding what He meant. Bread for the body was all that they wanted. Their cry was, “Give us bread, and we are content.” They had no spiritual appetite for Christ, “the Bread of God.”

35, 36. *And Jesus said unto them, I am the Bread of Life. He that comes to Me shall never hunger; and He that believes on Me shall never thirst. But I said to you, that you have seen Me, and believe not.* These were the very people whom He had fed on the other side of the sea—yet they were craving for more. That kind of bread cannot stay their hunger for long. They had not received Him as their Savior, otherwise they would have been well content with Him and would have asked for nothing more.

37-39. *All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me; and Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from Heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me. And this is the Father’s will which has sent Me, that of all which He has given Me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.* Christ will not lose one whom the Father gave Him, no nor any part of one. He will not lose the body of any of His people any more than He will lose the soul of any.

40. *And this is the will of Him that Me, that everyone which sees the Son, and believes on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise Him up at the last day.* Christ will never have finished His work upon Believers till He has raised their bodies from the grave and glorified them like His own resurrection body. He will never cease from the work which He has commenced on any of His people till He has laid the top stone in the glorious perfections of Heaven! And this Truth of God is the joy of our hearts even now.

41. *The Jews then murmured at Him, because He said, I am the Bread which came down from Heaven.* They muttered, murmured, whispered, growled among themselves at this saying of Christ.

42. *And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it, then, that He says, I came down from Heaven?* This is just the way with men—they judge by outward appearances and if the Gospel comes to them as a thing beloved of poor men, if it is preached without much eloquence, if the service is without the at-

tractions of sweet music or of gaudy attire—straightway they say there can be nothing in it! O blind bats, when God veils Himself in human flesh, can it be otherwise?

43. *Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves. “I never thought you would believe in Me. I never imagined that I should win your confidence.”*

44. *No man can come to Me, except the Father which has sent Me draw him. “You are not drawn unto Me, therefore it is clear that you are not the subjects of Divine Grace. You think you are judging Me, but in so doing you are really judging and condemning yourselves.” Whenever men sit in judgment on the Gospel, they soon let us know what kind of spirit possesses them. It is not Christ who is on trial—it is they, themselves—and when they rail at Him, they do but prove that the Grace of the Father has never drawn them to Him. “No man can come to Me, except the Father which has sent Me draw him.”*

44-46. *And I will raise Him up at the last day. It is written in the Prophets, “And they shall be all taught of God.” Every man, therefore, that has heard and has learned of the Father, comes unto Me. Not that any man has seen the Father, save he which is of God, He has seen the Father. “Do not suppose that even when you are taught of God, you will know the Father as I know Him, or see Him as I have seen Him.” That Divine glance at Deity is not for us.*

47. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believes on Me has everlasting life. This was how our Lord spoke straight to the faces of those who had derided Him and said, “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?” With the strongest Words which He was in the habit of using, He says, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believes on Me has everlasting life.”*

48-51. *I am that Bread of life. Your fathers ate manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from Heaven, that a man may eat, thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from Heaven: if any man eats of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.*

HYMNS FROM OUR OWN HYMN BOOK—369, 459, 235.

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

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY
TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

FEEDING ON THE BREAD OF LIFE NO. 2706

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 23, 1900.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 6, 1881.

*“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believes on Me has everlasting life. I am that bread of life.”
John 6:47, 48.*

OBSERVE carefully the order in which our Lord puts the two blessings He mentions—first, life through believing on Him, and then food to sustain that life. First, “he that believes on Me has everlasting life,” and next to that, “I am that bread of life.” Life comes first and food follows afterwards. It is impossible for a dead man to feed, or to be fed—only the living can eat and drink. I once went into the monastery of the Capuchins at Rome and there I saw certain of the departed brotherhood dressed in their regular habits, although they had been dead, some of them a hundred years, some fifty, and one gentleman, I think, had scarcely been dead more than a year or so. But there they sat, with their breviaries in their hands, just as if they had been alive! Yet I did not see any preparations for feeding them. It would have been as ridiculous to attempt to feed them as it was to keep them there at all!

Now, when we preach the Gospel, unless you have spiritual life, you cannot feed upon it. And if you were to come to the Communion Table, unless you were truly alive unto God, you might eat the bread and drink the wine, but with real spiritual food, the body of Christ, and the blood of Christ, you could have nothing to do. We do not give food to people in order to make them live. That would be a useless experiment, but, *because* they are alive, they take food in order to sustain and nourish the life which is already in them. Always remember, dear Friends, that the best spiritual food in the world is useless to those who are spiritually dead. And one very essential part of the Gospel is that Truth of God which our Savior so plainly taught, “You must be born again.” All attempts at feeding the soul are of no use until the new birth has been experienced! Even that precious, priceless bread of life cannot be assimilated unless the soul has been quickened by the Spirit of God. Judge, then, my Hearers, whether you are alive unto God, or not. Before you can rightly know the Truth, before you are qualified to learn its mysteries, pray that you may be made to live by faith in Jesus Christ—for before food comes life.

But, next, after life there must be food, for, just as surely as there will be no use for the food without the life, so will there be no continuance of

the life without the food. Men have played great pranks with themselves and have even experimented upon the possibility of living for 40 days without food—an experiment which I, for one, have no kind of wish to imitate! Neither would I recommend any of my hearers to attempt it, for the probability is that if one man should manage to survive his 40 days' fast, there will be 40 other men, who try to do the same, who will be in another world long before the end of that time! God meant us to eat if we wish to live. When He made men and women, He made the fruits of the earth on which they should feed. And afterwards He gave them the flesh of beasts that they might feed thereon, but they must be fed if they are to continue to exist.

So is it with the soul—but the soul must be fed on *spiritual* meat. Souls cannot eat what bodies can eat. But, still, they must eat. All the qualities in a spiritual man, which are gracious, need food. Faith needs the Truth of God to believe. Love needs a revelation of love to keep it burning. Hope needs to be reminded of the things to be expected in the future, so that it may continue to hope. And every Grace within a spiritual man is clamorous for spiritual food that it may feed upon. If there are any of you who profess to be spiritual men and women, and yet you say that you can live without reading the Bible, without attending the House of Prayer, without any outward means of Grace, all I can say is that I do not want to try your system of living, for I should be starved by it, even if you are not! And I would not recommend any Christian to try to see how long his spirit can live without spiritual food. No, our Lord's order is, first, life—then food. And this implies that where there is life, there must be food. Those two things are very simple, yet many persons live as if they did not know them.

Next, if you look at the text, you will see that there is everlastingness in the life. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believes on Me has everlasting life." Yet there is need of food all the same. The everlastingness of the life does not change the fact of its need of spiritual food, for here the two things are put side by side—"He that believes on Me has everlasting life. I am that bread of life." The life of the Believer is everlasting, yet it needs food to sustain it. Does any of you say, "God has saved me, the Holy Spirit has quickened me, and I shall never perish. Therefore I need not feed upon the Word, I need not be watchful, I need not be careful"? My dear Friend, you err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the analogy of faith. It is quite certain that those whom Christ has quickened by His Spirit shall never die, but it is just as certain that they would die if they did not feed upon Christ and sustain their life by that means! The two things are not contrary, the one to the other. I charge you, Beloved, to be as vigilant in the keeping of yourselves as if you were really your own keepers! Be as earnest that you slip not with your feet as if there were no promise that God would keep the feet of His saints. Be as diligent in prayer and holy living as if everything depended upon yourself. Yet forget not to fall back upon the grand Truth of God that, after all, your safety does not depend upon yourself, but it rests in the hands of Him who has

undertaken to keep you from falling and to preserve you even to the end. Your new life is everlasting, yet you must feed it!

Now think for a minute or two of the converse of that Truth. Because your new life must feed—which is clear from the text, where Christ says, “I am that bread of life”—do not, therefore, infer that your life is not everlasting. All the precepts of the Word of God which admonish us to persevere are consistent with the fact that the saints *shall* persevere. All the exhortations to feed on spiritual food are quite consistent with the blessed fact that you *shall* so feed and that, so feeding, your souls shall live forever. Has not a man two eyes? Surely it is that he may see the whole of a truth and not merely one side of it. I believe that some people fall into great mischief because they shut one eye and will never open it—and if anybody tries to point out the other side of the Truth of God, they cry, “Oh, he is not sound!” But, my dear Friend, for my part, I am always quite satisfied when I have the Scriptures at the back of my teaching. I do not care even the snap of a finger for what you may call unsound, or what anybody else may call unsound, so long as it is in accordance with the Word of God! And you may depend upon this fact, that paradoxes are not strange things in Scripture, but are rather the rule than the exception.

Very often, those things which appear to contradict each other are only two sides of the same Truth of God, and he who would get at the Truth, itself, must look at them both, and follow them both. If you are Christ’s sheep, you shall never perish, neither shall any pluck you out of His hands—yet it is to you that such a warning as this is addressed—“Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.” And it is to you that the injunction is given, “Labor not for the meat which perishes, but for that meat which endures unto everlasting life.” And while laboring for it, bless God that you already have it, seeing that you have Christ in your possession, and He says, “I am that ‘bread of life.’”

Notice, Brothers and Sisters, how Jesus Christ, our Divine Lord and Master, is everything to His people. Our life, that is Christ—“He that believes on Me has everlasting life.” Our food for that life—that also is Christ—“I am that bread of life.” I have come even to love my own necessities, for they seem to be like pedestals whereon the image of Christ may stand! If I did not need Christ, how could He be my life? If I did not need food to sustain that life, how could He be the bread of life to me? The greater my necessities, the deeper is my sense of His fullness! The more I become dependent upon Him for everything, the more I see of His all-sufficiency. You know that if there were no great hollows and deep places on the face of the earth, there would be no room for the seas and oceans. And if there were no deep places in our soul’s need, where could be the fullness, the manifested fullness, of the Lord Jesus Christ? Rejoice, then, my Brothers and Sisters, that Christ made you alive from the dead! And then raise another song of thanksgiving because He keeps you alive. Bless His name for grafting you into the vine. And then bless Him for every drop of sap as it comes flowing out of Him—the Stem into you—the

branch. Christ is ALL! Christ is ALL! Christ is ALL and to His name be praise forever and ever!

Perhaps someone asks, "How do we feed on Jesus Christ?" And there are some who say that we feed upon Christ in what is called, "the sacrament." I do not like that word, "sacrament," as applied to the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. Regardless, there is no mention in Scripture of such a thing as a "sacrament." It is an old heathenish word, applying to the oath which a soldier swore to be faithful to his commander. I like neither swearing nor sacraments, and I do not like either one of them any more than the other, for both of them are contrary to the Word of God! Out of that word, "sacrament," a great mass of mischief has grown up—it is a bed of rottenness out of which all sorts of evil fungi have sprung. Let us keep clear of that, once and for all!

Some men tell us, however, that in what they call, "the sacrament of holy communion," the communicants feed upon Christ. Listen. My text was spoken by Christ before the Lord's Supper had been instituted—a long while before He broke the bread and poured out the wine as a memorial of His death, He had uttered these remarkable words—"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, you have no life in you." But there was spiritual life in the Apostles, even then, was there not? Yet they had never eaten of what is called the "sacrament," for it was not instituted at that time! As there was true life in them, they must have eaten of Christ—and there being no Lord's Supper then instituted, it is clear that there is a way of eating of Christ's flesh and drinking of His blood, altogether apart from the communion!

Now, having said so much by way of correcting a common error, I want you just as clearly to understand that the Lord's Supper, as afterwards instituted, was manifestly intended by Christ to be a *picture*, setting forth by outward and visible signs, the way of feeding upon Him. It is not actually feeding upon Christ, for that took place before there was any Lord's Supper, but it is an admirable picture *of that feeding upon Christ* and to all time it remains one of the choicest methods—one method only, mark you—one of the choicest methods by which spiritually-quickened souls are helped to feed upon Christ. We often feed upon Christ while hearing sermons. We feed upon Christ as we read good books. We feed upon Christ in the public prayers of the sanctuary, and in the secret communion in our own chamber. If we are as we should be, we are *always* feeding upon Christ! And part of the meaning of that petition, "Give us this day our daily bread," is, "Give us this day to feed upon Christ." Though we come to no Communion Table, much less approach an altar of sacrifice, we are spiritually and really fed upon Christ in other ways. Still, I say again that this communion service is a very choice way of feeding upon Christ. And I want to try to show you, by this picture, how it is that souls feed spiritually upon our Lord Jesus Christ.

Baptism is a picture of how souls receive spiritual life. The Lord's Supper is a picture of how that new life is sustained. Both ordinances are only pictures, symbols, emblems—nothing more! Our immersion, by

its symbolic representation of death, burial and rising again out of the water, sets forth how we live by dying to all but Christ, and rise again to live in Christ in newness of life. That is the beginning of the new life. And then comes the Lord's Supper as a picture of how the soul feeds upon the body and blood of Christ. Baptism is the door of the house and the Lord's Supper is a meal in the inner chamber for those who have been raised from the dead and quickened into life in Christ Jesus. Do not imagine—I do not suppose that I have a single hearer who thinks so—but do not imagine that there is any magic in Baptism, by which water makes men, women, or children, into children of God, heirs of Christ, and inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven! And do not suppose that there is any magic about the bread and wine—wafers and wine and water I think some use—but do not think for a moment that there is any magic in them! They are merely pictures setting forth important Truths of God, for souls cannot eat bread and souls cannot drink “the fruit of the vine.” What are these emblems and symbols here for? Only as helps to thought, reminders of certain great facts, memorials of wondrous deeds which are brought to our recollection, so that our memories—and through them our souls—may feed upon these great Truths of God!

Now, after this unusually lengthy preface, which seemed to be necessary to the full understanding of our subject, I want to point out to you the picture, which the Lord's Supper sets before us, of our feeding upon the bread of life.

I. And, first, WE FEED NOT WITHOUT A BLESSING. In coming to the Communion Table, the first thing we do is to give thanks—to ask a blessing—the blessing of God upon the sacred feast. Now, Soul, if you are really alive unto God by Jesus Christ, you cannot feed upon Christ without the Divine blessing. As you could not, at the first, come to Christ without the Father's blessing, so you cannot even now feed upon Christ without the Holy Spirit's Divine assistance. If I were to sit down and say, “I am going to feed upon Christ,” and opened at the very sweetest chapter in the whole Bible, I might read it through and yet not be feeding upon Christ at all. If I were to say, “I will get to my knees, and in my chamber I will enter into fellowship with Christ, and spiritually eat His flesh, and drink His blood,” I might stay on my knees till they ached, but, apart from the blessing of God, I should get no good out of the action. So, first, when we come to this Communion Table, we ask God to bless what we are about to do, for, unless He shall draw us, we shall not be able to run after Him. Unless He shall open our mouth, we shall not be fed with the bread of Heaven. I charge you, therefore, O beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, whose hearts are longing for communion with the Well-Beloved, ask your Heavenly Father, by the effectual working of His blessed Spirit, to visit you with power, and life, and blessing! When you open the Bible, let it be with this prayer upon your lip—“Quicken me, O Lord, according unto Your Word!” When you draw near to God in private devotion, let it be in complete dependence upon the Spirit of God. When you listen to sermons, when you come to the Communion Table, let it

always be with a glance to Heaven for the blessing of the Lord to rest upon it all, for all is nothing unless God shall bless it to you.

II. Secondly, WE FEED ON JESUS WHO DIED FOR US. The Blessing is asked. Now what follows at the Communion? Why, next, bread is taken, and broken. That bread is the emblem of the body of Christ. But what is that wine cup? It is the emblem of the blood of Christ. So, you see, we have flesh there without blood, and blood there, as it were, drained out of the flesh. What do the two emblems together make up? Why, *death*. If we were to dip the bread in the wine, it would be no proper observance of the Lord's Supper—but these two emblems are separate, the one from the other—because they are intended to symbolize to us the death of Christ. Now, Brothers and Sisters, the food of your faith is to be found in the death of the Lord Jesus for you and, oh, what blessed food it is! Some of us know what it is to be bowed down in despondency almost to despair and I, for one, bear my testimony that under such circumstances, nothing revives me like a sight of my Master on the accursed tree! Unless He died for me, I, for one, am eternally lost. I can see no merits of my own which I dare present to God, for I am a mass of sin, and I should be a mass of misery, were it not for those dear wounds of His, and that bloody sweat, that Cross and passion!

Think much of this great central Truth of the Atonement, for it is the food of your soul. The bread and the wine cannot spiritually feed you—all they can do is to help you to remember the sufferings and death of Jesus and, by remembering them, to show forth His death till He comes. It is in this way that your faith is nourished, your hope is nourished, your love is nourished, your whole soul is nourished in every gracious and holy way! Read the life of Christ as recorded by the four Evangelists, but feed most on the death of Christ. Study the example of Christ, yet that is not your food—let your food be His body broken for your sake, His blood poured out in grievous agony, even unto death, as Atonement for your sin. The Lord's Supper is a very beautiful and impressive method of instruction to us because, as there we have to feed upon emblems which set forth a cruel death, so our souls must feed, by contemplation, upon the real death of Christ, and all good things within us must be sustained by faith in that death!

III. Now we will go a step further—WE FEED UPON CHRIST BY RECEIVING HIM SPIRITUALLY INTO US. We have looked at what is on the table. The next thing, in order to celebrate the Lord's Supper, is that we must eat, and we must drink. It would be no observance of the Supper if I were to break the bread and leave it on the table, or if the wine in the cup should stand there simply to be looked at. No, the bread must be eaten, the wine must be drunk. Learn, therefore, that if your soul is to be fed, you must take Christ into you—you must not merely think of Him as belonging to somebody else, but as your own Savior, whose death was in your place, who loved you and gave Himself for you. Make bold, by faith, to cry, as Thomas did, not only, "Lord and God," but, "My Lord, and my God." Say, "In this blood, which He shed, I wash away my sin. This body

of His, which He gave to death, He gave up for me. And in His sufferings my heart confides because these sufferings were endured for me.”

It is palpable to everyone that there is no feeding of the body by just rubbing a loaf of bread outside of it. You have to break up the loaf and get it into yourself. And there is no feeding the spirit by merely believing the doctrines of the Word and knowing the facts of the Gospel—you must accept Him who is the very essence of the doctrines. You must receive Him to whom all the facts relate. You must, indeed, by faith take Jesus Christ into yourself! O Beloved, this is the way to feed on Christ! Your new life will be vigorous enough and strong enough when this is the case with you.

IV. Further, WE FEED UPON CHRIST BY DELIBERATE THOUGHT. I remind you that in the eating and the drinking at the Lord’s Supper, there is much deliberation to be manifested. It is not a helter-skelter rush, and a hurried feeding. There are two signs, two symbols, both of which very wonderfully represent Christ’s suffering. I have often sketched for you the process by which we get our bread—it is very significant and instructive. The wheat is taken, and cast into the ground and buried. It is subject to frost and snow, and all manner of ills. It springs up. It grows. It ripens. Then comes the sickle and it is cut down. Being cut down, it is carried away upon the loaded wagon and thrown upon the threshing floor. Then it is beaten with the flail till each grain of wheat is separated from the straw. Then the wheat is taken and put into the mill, and in the mill it is ground to fine flour. Nor have its pangs and tortures ended. It is made into dough and kneaded. And then it must go into the oven to be baked. Through all sorts of painful processes it must go till it finishes up with being broken to pieces and with being ground between the teeth of the eater. In this way it becomes a most significant symbol of the sufferings of Christ. His life is, all through, a story of grief—“Surely He has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows,” and you and I are to think over that history of Christ with due deliberation and care as we ponder the symbolism of the broken bread.

Then comes the cup. Here, the grape has been crushed in the wine-press till its ruddiest juice has been poured forth, its very heart’s blood being shed beneath the extreme pressure. This is another picture of Christ’s suffering—of His suffering even unto death. So the one picture has two panels and many subdivisions, as if the Lord would say to us, “If you want to feed your soul upon Christ, you must think a great deal about Him. You must not merely say, by faith, ‘Yes, Christ is my Savior.’ That is well, so far as it goes. That Truth will give you life, but you must see who He was, and what He was, and what He did, and why He did it, and what He is doing now, and what He has yet to do. And so, by taking it in detail, you will feed your soul very wonderfully.” Look at many half-starved Christians. Why you can see each rib, you may tell each bone in their spiritual anatomy. They have scarcely enough life to be able to sing in a whisper—

***“Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought,***

***Do I love the Lord, or no?
Am I His, or am I not?"***

Now, if they thought more of Christ—if they broke up the Truth about Him more than they do—if they looked more into His passion—if they studied His wondrous Person—if they relied upon His promises—if they rested in His work more in detail by contemplation, they would grow to be spiritual giants—they would be “strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.”

Is there not much instructive teaching, then, in this Supper, as far as we have gone? But, I want you, dear Friends, to notice that *every* point about the Lord’s Supper is full of gracious spiritual meaning.

V. Next, WE FEED UPON CHRIST BY RECEIVING THE COVENANT. When the Lord Jesus Christ passed the cup to His disciples, He said to them, “This cup is the new testament (that is, Covenant,) in My blood, which is shed for you.” Listen to the word, “Covenant, Covenant.” Brothers and Sisters, are you very hungry? Do your souls want the richest food that God Himself can give you? I will tell you of a cupboard where there is locked up bread such as they never ate in the wilderness! It is better even than the manna. Take your Bible and go through its many chambers, and up and down the corridors of its wondrous teaching, and you will see, over one coffer that stands there, this word, in golden letters, “Covenant.” That is the place where God specially meets with His people. “He has given meat unto them that fear Him: He will ever be mindful of His Covenant.” The man who can fully understand the word, “Covenant,” is a theologian! That is the key of all theology—the Covenant of Works by which we fell, and the Covenant of Grace by which we stand—Christ fulfilling the Covenant for us as our Surety and Representative, fulfilling it by the shedding of His blood, which is typified by the cup, and so leaving for us a Covenant wholly fulfilled on our side, which is Christ’s side, and only to be fulfilled now by God! And what God has to fulfill is this promise of the Covenant—“A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you shall keep My judgments, and do them...And you shall be My people, and I will be your God.”

Ah, Brothers and Sisters! This is what we call “a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.” Some of our fellow Christians have very poor spiritual digestion—they cannot feed upon this sort of food. When they try to partake of it, they fancy that it is too rich for them, so they say, “It cannot be good food for souls.” Yes, but there are some of us who, by reason of age and use, have had our senses exercised, and we have now grown old enough to digest the strong meat of the Gospel, and we are glad to get our teeth into it whenever we can! I like to go down to the Covenant storehouse and to lay hold of these blessed things! And I urge you, Brothers and Sisters, to do the same. If you really want to feed your soul, take care that you try to understand the Covenant, for the Lord Jesus

gives you a hint that the richest wine is found there by saying, as He was passing the cup, "This cup is the New Covenant in My blood."

VI. Yet again, WE FEED UPON CHRIST AS WE SIT AROUND HIS TABLE. To my mind there is something very beautiful and suggestive in the right posture for the observance of the Lord's Supper. What is that? Coming up here and kneeling as if there was something to worship? That is a relic of old Romanism that ought to be done away with by all Protestants! What is the proper way to observe this ordinance? Why, just sitting around the table on which the emblems are spread. Look at that remarkable picture of Leonardo de Vinci—a picture which I have seen hanging up in a Romish church, as you may see it in many Romish churches. It represents Christ and all His disciples sitting at a table, and that is the right posture for us. How did they at first eat it? They reclined—they lay along, in the easiest possible posture that they could take, sustaining themselves upon the left arm, and so feeding, one with his head on his neighbor's bosom. Now, translating the Oriental into the Western fashion, the nearest approach to that is to sit as much at your ease as you can—and the spiritual meaning of that posture is this—You are saved men and women. The life of God is in you, therefore, rest. "We who have believed do enter into rest." And whenever you want to feed on Christ, do not feed on Him in a hurry. Do not fidget. Do not worry. Do not stand with your loins girt, and with your staff in your hand, as the Israelites were to eat the Passover in Egypt. You are out of Egypt—you are past the wilderness, for we who have believed in Christ have entered Canaan—and are at rest.

VII. Once more, WE FEED UPON CHRIST AS WE SIT TOGETHER TO OBSERVE THIS ORDINANCE. A very blessed way of feeding upon Christ is pictured by our sitting together around this Communion Table. One person could not celebrate the Lord's Supper, for a primary part of it is fellowship with others. "We being many are one bread, and one body." If you want to feed rightly on Christ, do not keep to yourself, and do not try to keep Christ to yourself. No, Brother, Christ Jesus is not Head over only you! He is the Head of the whole body, which is His Church. I believe that, sometimes, when you cannot pray alone, you would be helped if you would associate others with you in your supplications. There is a way of feeding upon Christ by getting others to come in and feed too. Mind that and let your communion with Jesus, while it should be alone full often, not be always alone, but lay hold upon your Savior, and take Him to your mother's house, and to the chamber of her that bore you, and there will He show you His great love. He may come to Peter or Magdalene alone, but He most of all delights, on the first day of the week, to stand in the midst of His assembled ones, and to say not merely to any one of them, but to them all, "Peace be unto you." Live in holy love with all who love Christ so shall you be helped to feed upon Him, remembering that we are made to sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus our Lord.

VIII. The last point is this—WE FEED NOT UPON CHRIST WITHOUT PRAISE. When we come to the close of the Lord's Supper, we always do

what our Lord Jesus did. After supper, they sang a hymn. So the right way to close the celebration of the Supper is to sing a Psalm of praise. And, dear Friends, whenever you want to commune with Christ, take care that you praise as well as pray. Mingle thanksgiving with your supplications, for Jesus loves to hear the praises of His people. I am afraid we lose a great deal of communion with Christ because we do not give Him more praise. I heard a Brother say, the other day—and, oh, how greatly did I enjoy his conversation when he said it!—“There are some times, when I am alone with God, when I cannot pray. I do not feel as if, just then, I needed anything of Him. Then,” he said, “I always sing, or in some way or other praise God. And I find communion with God in praise to be as profitable to my soul as communion with Him in prayer. And, oftentimes, before my praise is done, my prayer begins to spring up like a living well.” Try that plan, Brothers and Sisters, for it may help you still more blessedly to feed upon Jesus Christ.

I wish that all my congregation knew the sweetness of feeding upon Christ. Every man feeds on something or other. You see one man getting his Sunday newspaper—how he will feed on that! Another goes to frivolous amusements, and he feeds on them. Another man feeds upon his business, and upon the thought of his many cares! But all that is poor food—it is only ashes and husks. If you did but possess true spiritual life, you would know the deep necessity there is of feeding upon Christ. But you do not possess that life, you say. No, then do you know what will become of the dead? What will become of the dead? And after death comes corruption. The old Jews, in the times of the kings, took the corrupting bodies of the dead out into the valley of Hinnom—and there they kindled great fires, that the corrupting corpses might be burnt. And something like that, only far worse, will be the lot of everyone who is not quickened of the Spirit of God and made to live with Christ! You will go to the place “where their worm dies not.” That is the place of corruption—“and the fire is not quenched.” that is Tophet’s flame. God save you from it! But there is no salvation from it except for those who have life through believing in Jesus—“He that believes on the Son has everlasting life: and He that believes not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides on Him.” God save you, dear Friends, from that awful doom, for His dear Son’s sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—282, 295, 942.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: JOHN 6:41-65.

Verse 41. *The Jews then murmured at Him.* That is, at the Christ.

41, 42. *Because He said, I am the bread which came down from Heaven. And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it then that He says, I came down from Heaven?* They did know His mother, but they made a mistake, which may have seemed a very slight one to them, when they said that they

knew His father. Yet that is how nearly all great errors spring—from some slight and apparently trivial addition to the Truth of God. They did know Mary, but they did not know that Jehovah was the Father of the Christ.

43, 44. *Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves. No man can come to Me, except the Father which has sent Me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.* Note the unflinching boldness of Christ! He did not say to these people, “Well, you have some cause for murmuring and I will explain the matter to you.” On the contrary, He faced them with the Doctrine of Sovereign Grace, and told them that He did not expect them to understand Him, for they could not do so except the Father, who had sent Him, should draw their hearts towards Him!

45. *It is written in the Prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that has heard, and has learned of the Father, comes unto Me.* So, in fact, He said to them, “You have not been taught of God. The Father has never drawn you, otherwise you would have received Me.” So does the brave Champion thrust the naked sword of the Truth of God into their very souls!

46, 47. *Not that any man has seen the Father, save He which is of God, He has seen the Father. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believes on Me has everlasting life.* Let me read those precious words again, catch at them, you timid and trembling ones—“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believes on Me has”—*now*, in present possession—“everlasting life.”

48, 49. *I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead.* He does not say, “Our fathers.” He comes out, as it were, as much from the Jews as from the Gentile ungodly world, and He says, “Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead.”

50, 51. *This is the bread which comes down from Heaven, that a man may eat, and not die. I am the living bread.* Bread that contains life within itself and is, therefore, most potent to sustain a life like itself—“I am the living bread.”

51, 52. *Which came down from Heaven: if any man eat of this bread, He shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. The Jews therefore strived among themselves, saying, How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?* I wonder if they perceived that this declaration of Christ involved His death, for He did not speak of giving them His living body, but His “flesh.” There are some who find their main comfort in the Incarnation of Christ and, certainly, that is a very comforting Truth of God. But, without the *death of Christ*, it affords no nourishment for the soul. Atonement, Atonement—there is the kernel of the whole matter! Christ must die and then He can give us His flesh to eat!

53, 54. *Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoso eats My flesh, and drinks My blood, has eternal life; and I will raise Him up at the last day.* His soul shall live. His spirit shall

never die. And though his body shall die, the force of the eternal life within the man shall quicken even his mortal body into an immortality like that of his spirit.

55-60. *For My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He that eats My flesh, and drinks My blood, dwells in Me, and I in Him. As the living Father has sent Me, and I live by the Father, so he that eats Me, even he shall live by Me. This is that bread which came down from Heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eats of this bread shall live forever. These things said He in the synagogue, as He taught in Capernaum. Many, therefore, of His disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can bear it? And a hard saying it really is until we are instructed by the Spirit of God to understand it! The Roman Catholic has made it into a gross and carnal saying, teaching men that they really, actually and corporeally, eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ, which is horrible blasphemy, and nothing less! But they who are taught of God see the inward meaning of the Truth peeping up from behind the letter, and know what it is to receive into their hearts, though not into their bodies—into their thoughts, though not into their mouths—the very body and blood of Christ.*

61-63. *When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples murmured at it, He said unto them, Does this offend you? What and if you shall see the Son of Man ascend up where He was before? It is the Spirit that quickens. The Spirit in us gives spiritual meaning to the Word, and life to us also—"It is the Spirit that quickens;"—*

63. *The flesh profits nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. They are not carnal. They are not gross. They have in them an inner sense which is full of life and spirit.*

64, 65. *But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray Him. And He said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto Me, except it were given unto Him of My Father. "No man"—no, not even an Apostle—not the one who ate bread with Christ and was His familiar friend—not even he could come without being drawn by God. And Judas did not come to Christ. In the sense in which our Lord used the word, Judas never really came to Him, but perished in his sin. The Father must draw us with Divine cords, or else to the Son we shall never come.*

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY
TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

THE BEST BREAD

NO. 1940

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 16, 1887.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 28, 1886.**

***"I am that bread of life."
John 6:48.***

You will observe that our Lord here speaks concerning Himself. He speaks not merely of His Words, nor of His offices, nor of His work, but of Himself. "I am that bread of life." And herein He teaches us all to fix our eyes mainly upon His blessed Person and to think of Him first and foremost. He is the center and soul of all. There is a tendency about us all to get away from Jesus and to look rather to the streams than to the Fountainhead. Why are we more taken up with bits of glass that sparkle in the light than with the Sun, Himself? That Tree of Life in the midst of the Paradise of God—we forget to eat of that and we wander to the borders of the garden to pluck the fruit of the forbidden Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. I wish that our ministry—that mine, especially—might be tied and tethered to the Cross! I would have no other subject to set before you but Jesus, only. Moses and Elijah are well enough in their places, but when they disappear and Jesus is the better seen, we are gainers by their loss! If I might dig for copper, silver and gold, I should think it no deprivation to be obliged to find only gold. It is no loss to lose all but Jesus! You may wander from Dan to Beersheba and you may not sin, for it is all holy ground between the two places—but he is wisest who does not ramble even there, but keeps to Calvary—and is content to speak only of Jesus crucified.

"God forbid," said one who was a great and a wise man—"God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Paul would have considered it a terrible calamity if he had become fascinated, or even influenced by the speculations of the cultured men of His period! He felt that the atoning Sacrifice deserved all His admiration and He had none to spare for anything else.

You know how he fell among certain wise people who were fond of philosophical disquisitions and to them he said, "I determined not to know anything *among you* save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." He did not endeavor to please his audience by agreeing with them, but the further they went in one direction, the further he went in the other—the more surely to counteract their error. Because they were so broad, he would narrow himself to the one theme of the Cross. In these times, when the world has run mad upon its idols of human thought, it may be wise to be more strict

than ever and to stand steadfast in Paul's determination—"I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified."

It was *Himself*, my Brothers and Sisters, that our Lord set before His hearers as the Bread of Life! He did not mention anything of doctrine, or of precept, or of ordinance, but Himself. He says "I am that bread of life." Of Him, therefore, let us think.

It is of the utmost importance to those of you who have spiritual life that you should feed upon the Lord Jesus. It is well to know everything that is revealed, for every Word of God is good and has its uses—and all Scripture is profitable—but the daily household bread, the substantial meat on which we must be nourished if we would grow strong for God and holiness, is Christ Himself! "I am that bread of life." We do not get bread anywhere else save in Jesus our Lord. We may find certain minor things apart from Him—flavoring, ornaments and furniture of the table we may get from some other hands—but the bread, the real solid meat, the essence of the festival—is Christ Himself! So let us begin with Him in our discourse and continue with Him till we close our meditation.

But now, when I have to preach upon a subject like this, I find it necessary to begin a little way from the text. "I am that bread of life." Bread, Brothers and Sisters—bread is for living men and women, but bread is of no use in the tomb. Bread—shall we bring it to a sepulcher? Shall we roll away the stone? Shall we draw out the bodies swathed in linen? Shall we set them upright in ghastly posture and shall we put bread upon the table before them? To what purpose would it be? It would be a ghastly mockery! If you leave the bread there and visit again that loathsome banqueting chamber in a year's time, the bread will remain untouched—for until there is life, there is no use for bread. And so, at the opening of my discourse, some of you might say, "Bread is intended for living persons. It is for men and women who are quickened. How can we feed upon Christ, for we are dead in trespasses and sins?" You speak most truly, but yet I have a marvel to relate which meets the case. Listen! That would be a strange kind of bread, would it not, which, being put into a dead man's mouth, would make him *live*? Yet such is the Bread that came down from Heaven, whereof if a man eats, he shall live forever!

The Lord Jesus Christ is living Bread. Bread such as we get from the baker is, in itself, dead. And if you put it to dead lips, there are two dead things together and nothing can come of the contact. But our Lord Jesus Christ is living Bread and, when He touches the dead lips of an unregenerate sinner, life comes into them! He brings life even to those who are dead in sin. He says, "Young man, arise," and he sits up upon the bier. He takes a little girl by her hand and says, "Tabitha cumi"—Maid, arise—and she sits up in her bed! He calls to Lazarus, who by this time stinks, and He says, "Lazarus, come forth" and he comes forth, wearing his grave clothes! He has shuffled down from the niche in the cave and he has made his way out of the dampness of the cold sepulcher. Oh, what a wonderful Christ this is, who is not only Bread for the living, but life for the dead! Pray, you who can pray, that He would come here, just now, and be life to those who are in the darkness of the Valley of the Shadow of Death, that

they may live! When they live, then how gladsome will my text be to them, for life needs bread whereby it may be sustained!

The first thing that we need, if we have life, is something for that life to feed upon. And here comes in the text—"I am that bread of life." Your newly-discovered necessities Jesus can meet! Your newly-begotten needs Jesus can supply! Your hunger and your thirst can all be met, not by 50 things, but by *one* thing, by Jesus Christ Himself, in whom there dwells in fullness all that the spiritual life can possibly require!

I. With that to start with, I now make the first observation upon the text itself, which is this—JESUS CHRIST EXACTLY MEETS ALL THE NEEDS OF THE NEW LIFE. When a man is born again to God and gets a new life, he has new needs, new desires, new pains, new longings. He enters upon a novel condition, full of new needs and cravings—and the Lord Jesus Christ exactly meets the new case. As the key fits the wards of the lock, so does Christ fit the new heart and the right spirit. He knows how to touch the secrets of our soul and supply our most mysterious needs.

According to the text, *the Lord Jesus Christ is the ideal Bread*—the ideal supply of man's soul-hunger. Grateful Israelites truthfully judged that there never was such bread in all the world as that which fell in the wilderness in the form of manna. It was very wonderful bread, was it not? Men did eat angels' food and found it good for them. They went out in the morning and they gathered manna—and they found it most marvelous food to sustain them. It was the ideal food for persons traveling through the great and terrible wilderness. There are different theories of what we ought to eat. One person tells us that if anybody suffers from rheumatism, he must eat so many pounds of meat in a day. Other doctors have vehemently said, "You must not *touch* meat. It will heat you if you do. You must keep to a strictly vegetable diet."

I believe that these learned persons know one as much as the other about it and probably the whole of them put together know so little that a very small round *nothing* might encompass all their certain knowledge as to health and disease. But there is one thing we do know, that the bread which the Israelites ate in the wilderness, the manna, was the best sort of food. It was God's own invention and He who created man best knew what nutriment his life would require. It was not aerated bread, but it was *celestial* bread which had never been soured with earthly leaven, but had dropped immediately from the sky—the best food that men could eat if they would be healthy, active and able to endure a hard and toilsome life.

Well now, what that manna was to their bodies—the ideal food of man, which had nothing injurious in it—that our Lord Jesus is to the soul! In Him is life for men and no disease or death. In the manna there was no adulteration, *it was a perfectly pure food*. Such food is the Lord Jesus Christ to the spiritual life. He is the Bread that came down from Heaven, He is the true Bread. If our souls live upon Christ and nothing else but Christ, He will breed no disease within the heart. He will not distort the judgement. He will not inflame the imagination. He will not excite the passions. He would be a perfect man who lived on nothing but this perfect Bread. Brothers and Sisters, if you aspire after holiness of the highest type and order, remember that a man is made by that which he feeds

upon, and for the best manhood you need the best food. As certain silkworms have their silk colored by the leaves on which they feed, so if we were to feed on Christ and nothing else but Christ, we would become pure, holy, lowly, meek, gentle, humble—in a word, we would be perfect even as He is! What wonderful food this must be! O my Brethren, if you have ever tried the flesh and blood of Jesus as your souls' diet, you will know that I am not speaking vain words! There is no such sustenance for faith, love, patience, joy, as living daily upon Jesus, our Savior. You who have never tasted of this heavenly Bread had better listen to the Words of God, "O taste and see that the Lord is good!"

The Lord Jesus Christ is not only the ideal bread, but *He is, in Himself, a sufficient bread*. That manna which the Israelites ate in the wilderness was all that they really needed. They began lusting and they cried after flesh, and they sighed for the leeks and the garlic, and the onions which had charmed their degenerate palates when they dwelt among the Egyptians. Wretched was their taste! They must have been of a coarse mold to grow weary of the food of angels and sigh for something more rank, more tasty, more heavy. Something injurious they wanted—yet had they but been wise and right they would have known that within the manna there was everything that was sufficient and suitable for them—for the God that made man made the manna and He knew exactly what man needed. Out of the ovens of Heaven He sent man bread, fresh and hot, each morning, that he might eat to the full and yet never be surfeited, nor filled with evil humors! They called the manna, "light bread," but what should the food be for those who were always on the march but light and easy to digest? Our Lord Jesus is simple in doctrine, but what else do we wish for, even we who are wayfaring men and all too apt to err?

My Brothers and Sisters, if we do but get hold of Jesus Christ and feed on Him, He is sufficient for us—sufficient for gigantic labors, sufficient for anguish, for grief, for sorrow—sufficient for the weakest of the babes for He is the unadulterated milk—sufficient for the full-grown men among us, for He is the strong meat of the Kingdom of God. His flesh is meat, indeed! For your spiritual manhood there is bone, gristle, muscle, brain, everything that you need, in Christ. If you feed on Him, He will build you up, not in one direction only, but in all ways, for you are complete in Him—thoroughly furnished unto all necessities. Christ Jesus meets all the needs of all His people with a Divine sufficiency.

And then, there is in Christ what there is in manna—a *sweetness all its own*. I cannot tell you exactly how the manna tasted. Some of them said that it tasted like wafers made with honey. The Jewish notion is that it tasted according to every man's own taste, so that if he preferred this flavor or that, the manna had that flavor to him, and thus it was to each one a personal and peculiar delicacy. This I know—that there is a sweetness about my Lord which is precisely that which delights *me*. I cannot communicate it to you, for you must, each one, taste for himself. I believe that our Lord has a flavor to me different from that which He could have to you because our circumstances and desires somewhat differ. Though there is in the great Church of God a sweet community of delight in the Lord, yet each Believer has his own special delight. All Israel could claim all Canaan

and yet every Israelite had a little plot of land that was his own—and so all Believers can claim all Christ and yet each Believer has a special portion which is altogether his own. Oh, the sweetness that there is in the Bread that came down from Heaven!

Do you not know it? I trust you do and, if so, you do not need me to say more. If you love Jesus, you wish for nothing new. Modern gospels are forthcoming on all sides. You have heard about them, I dare say, but the preachers of them cannot have the delight in preaching their new gospels that I have in preaching the old one. “Oh,” I say to myself, “they may preach better than I can. They may be a world more clever. But they have not such a Subject to preach of as I have.” When I get to preaching up Christ and His precious blood, eternal love and Covenant securities, there I beat them all! With such a theme I can compete with the most renowned of the world’s orators! When I speak on these themes, my lips drop pearls and diamonds! Brothers and Sisters, when we declare unto you the Lord Jesus, we sail upon a sea of sweetness! The novelties of “modern thought” are a Dead Sea, but our Gospel is an ocean of Living Water! He that has Christ to preach has such a subject that angels might envy him and cry one, to the other, “Let us go down below and tell mankind of Jesus and His love.” Brethren, to me the pulpit is a *throne* and when I am in full swing, with the Lord Jesus Christ as my Subject, I would not change places with the seraphim! It is a celestial joy to tell our fellow men of such a Savior as Jesus, for all sorts of joys are wrapped up in His thrice-blessed name! When Jesus said, “I am that bread of life,” He meant, “I am that choice Bread, that satisfying Bread, that delicious Bread, the likes of which was never found elsewhere.”

Furthermore, it was bread *suitable for the wilderness*. When they were in the wilderness, it was much better for the tribes to eat what they called, “light bread,” than for them to be filled with the meat that they had in Egypt, or even the old corn which they enjoyed when they came into Canaan. Manna was suitable food for the climate and for their condition—and the Lord knew it. So the most suitable meat for us in this vale of tears is Christ Jesus. I believe that there is no meat like it in Heaven! And for this world, with its work and its weeping, with its toils and its troubles, its cares and its changes, its wars and its woes, its fears and its frets—there is nothing so suitable as the Lord Jesus—

**“Jesus, joy of loving hearts!
You Fount of life!
You Light of men!
From the best bliss that earth imparts
We turn, unfilled, to You again.
We taste You, O living Bread,
And long to feast upon You still!
We drink of You, the Fountainhead,
And thirst our souls from You to fill.”**

Jesus is all the Bread that you need while you are on your way to Heaven and God!

What I have to say on this point further is—Try it, dear Friends! I would be very practical on this point and say earnestly, *taste and test*. If you

wish to know this Bread that came down from Heaven and how satisfying, how suitable, how sweet it is—try it.

Let me hand you out a portion of it. The Lord Jesus, the everlasting Son of God, is also Man—man, like ourselves. “In all our affliction He was afflicted.” He Himself bore our infirmities and He is, at this moment, “a Brother born for adversity.” Is not this a loaf of nourishing bread for a soul to feed on? I am a man—tried, troubled, burdened—and so is my Redeemer! So is He who sits upon the Throne of God! I have to bow in prayer and agonize in supplication—so did He! I have to endure slander and rebuke—so did He—“He endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself.” Brothers, Sisters, you cannot be in any plight wherein He has never been! You cannot suffer any want so severe, but He also suffered the same! Even if you have not a home, or a lodging, or a bed for the night—“The Son of Man had not where to lay His head.” He is a partaker with us of the bitter cup of affliction. Now, is not this choice nourishment?—

***“Why should I complain of need or distress,
Temptation or pain? He told me no less.
The heirs of salvation, I know from His Word,
Through much tribulation must follow their Lord.
How bitter that cup no heart can conceive,
Which He drank quite up, that sinners might live!
His way was much rougher and darker than mine;
Did Christ, my Lord, suffer, and shall I repine?”***

The sympathy of Jesus, our Brother, is living Bread for sorrowing men.

Now for another slice from the same loaf. He died. He bowed His head and gave up the ghost. It was for sin and sinners that He died. “He Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree.” “The chastisement of our peace was upon Him.” He has put away our sin by making full atonement to Divine Justice. Sin has ceased to be so far as those are concerned who believe in Him, for He was punished in our place and so ended our debt! God will not punish those for whom Christ was punished! He cannot exact the same debt twice, first of the Surety, and then of the sinner. That cannot be! Substitutionary Sacrifice is the finest of the wheat! A real Atonement is the most satisfactory food for the soul! I know it is so without a doubt.

Poor Sinner, if you can eat this Bread, you will not be hungry any more! Feeding upon the glorious doctrine of the Vicarious Sacrifice of Christ you will find that His flesh is meat, indeed, and His blood is drink, indeed!

I might continue thus to set forth my Lord as Bread for you in His Resurrection, in His glorious Ascension, in His session at the right hand of God, even the Father, where He makes intercession for transgressors and in the Glory of His Second Advent, but time would fail me. I might cut a slice from this loaf and speak to you upon our communion with Him, upon our acceptance in the Beloved, upon the Glory which He wears as our Representative, and wears for us, but I will not—it is enough for me to introduce the text and let Jesus say for Himself, “I am that bread of life.” Certainly there never was such a fruitful and satisfying subject as this of Jesus, our Lord! Oh, that all ministers were convinced of this! Why leave this Bread of Heaven for the unsatisfying husks afforded by other topics?

Very well. That is the first Truth of God we are to remember, namely, that Jesus Christ fully meets all the needs of the new life.

II. But, secondly, IN ORDER THAT JESUS MAY MEET ALL OUR SOUL'S NEEDS WE MUST RECEIVE HIM. Bread cannot possibly sustain the body unless it is eaten. You know, dear Friends, you might be hungry tonight and hear about bread and then be doomed to wait till tomorrow evening without having any of it to eat—that would be a tantalizing business, would it not? I might then preach again and tell you about bread and you might go without all through Saturday—and come here on Sunday and hear two more sermons about bread and yet, all the while, have none of it to eat. It would be trying work. None would like it unless it were those people who are attempting to fast for 40 days and are likely to die in the process! What good would it do you to keep on hearing of the bread and never eat of it? I cannot see any result. Unless it tended to increase your hunger, I do not know what would come of the wisest discourse on bread if you did not eat. Suppose that you should go to a baker's window and stand there for an hour and stare at the bread? I do not think that the sight would fill you much. No, you must *eat*, or else there might be tons of bread within reach and yet you would die of famine! You might be buried in a grave or bread and it would be of no use to you. Even manna would not nourish you unless you ate it. You must receive food into yourself, or it is not food to you. The Savior Himself, if you do not receive Him by faith, will be no Savior to you. Mark that.

Here is a Brother who never eats bread but instead of eating, he studies the theory of nutrition. He is ready to discuss with anyone the whole system of digestion and assimilation. He has a theory that bread should always be baked in a certain way and he feels bound to discuss and discuss and discuss till all is moldy! My dear Friend, you may discuss if you like, but I want to eat! And I think that if you intend to live and not to drop down dead in your discussion, you had better eat a bit yourself—and not put discussion into the place of eating. Some of you have been hearing the Gospel for years and you have never fed upon Christ! But you have a great liking for religious controversy. Why, perhaps, this very afternoon you have been discussing this, “ism,” and that, “ism.” Why all this chopping of logic? Why do you not eat, Friend? Why do you not eat?

What is the use of talking about bread when your fainting body pines for a substantial meal? You are at this time ready to fight anybody about the shape that the portions of bread ought to take when they are cut up for a feast. No, no, I am not going to accept your challenge! I am hungry and need food—and to me the form of it does not matter much. Bread is nothing to anybody till he eats it—and even our Lord Jesus is nothing to any man until he believes in Him—until he receives Him, until he takes Him into himself! That is the one thing that is needed—and the Lord Jesus Christ silently hints as much when He says, “I am that bread of life.” When He calls Himself, Bread, He does in effect say, “Partake of Me. Eat Me. Feed upon Me.”

Here comes in the enquiry—How do we receive Christ into us as we take bread into our bodies?

First, by *believing everything that is revealed about Him*. The Father's witness and the Holy Spirit's witness and His own witness concerning Himself—we have all these in God's most holy Word! Take the Book and read it. Augustine, after years of tossing to and fro, found peace with God by hearing a little child say, "Take, and read." I suppose that the child was singing to itself and hardly knew what it was saying as it repeated to itself the two words—"Tolle, lege; tolle, lege; tolle, lege." "Take up and read." That voice struck the ear of the perplexed thinker as though it were the voice of God and he took the Scripture and read the Scripture—and no sooner had he read it than he found Christ! I would entreat each one of you to do this, in order that you may find rest for your soul. Believe what is revealed in Holy Scripture! You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life, and they are they which testify of Christ; but you will do well if you go to Christ, Himself, and find life. To believe in Him, think of Him! As the look of faith which saves is *to* Jesus, so is it *from* Jesus. By looking we learn to look. As we know of Him, we believe in Him. Believe what is spoken about Christ and so feed on Him.

Then, next, *trust Him for yourself*. That is *the* point—the hinge of the whole business! He is a Savior. I believe *that*, but I go further and resolve—He shall be *my* Savior. May I say that? Yes, for I am permitted to do so, inasmuch as He says, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." Scripture says that He is exalted on high to give repentance unto Israel and remission of sins. Therefore, I look to Him to give me repentance and remission of sins. I trust to Him in that respect and He is mine! He has said, "It is finished." The Atonement is finished and I believe that it is finished for me. A prominent point about the offering under the old Law was that the person who came with the sacrifice laid *his* hands on it and said, "This is mine." You must do the same with Jesus. Lay your hands on Him and say, "This is mine. This sacrificial death is for me." "Oh, but," says one, "suppose He is not mine? What if I were to take Him to myself without warrant?" Suppose such a thing for one moment, yet He would be yours! If I were hungry and I ate a bit of bread, and after I had eaten it somebody said, "It is not yours," I would reply, "Perhaps not, but how will you take it from me? It has nourished me and refreshed me. It is mine and none can deprive me of it."

That is the point, you see! If you take Christ Jesus into yourself, the devil himself may say you had no right to Him, but he cannot take away that which you have eaten. Jesus Himself will not quarrel with you, nor blame you for taking Him, for He has said, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." You may summon a poor man before the magistrate and say, "He is a thief, for he stole bread from my counter." You may put him in prison for the theft, though I hope you would not if hunger drove him to the act—but you cannot get your bread away from him if he has eaten it. So, if you come to Christ and take Him into yourself, He is yours and you shall live by Him! Jesus says, "He that eats Me, even he shall live by Me." Nor death, nor Hell, nor time, nor eternity can take Jesus away when once you have Him within you! "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Swallow, then, the Divine Truth of God! Let it go down quickly, for fear anybody should come before it has fully entered into your soul.

Once there, it is yours! They say that possession is nine points of the law and I should think in the case of eating that it is the whole 10 points, or any other number of points, for there is no getting repossession of that which a man has actually eaten! Get Christ, and Christ is yours—yours by a kind of possession which will never be disputed before the courts of Heaven!

This, then, is to feed upon Christ—to *believe* that which is revealed about Him—and then to appropriate Him to yourself by personal faith.

Furthermore, to feed upon Christ means to meditate much upon Him—to think much of Him. Brothers and Sisters, there are many sweet doctrines in the Bible which I delight to make my own by reading, marking, learning and inwardly digesting them. They are parts of the great circle of Truth which is revealed of God. But I find that I am never so comforted, strengthened and sustained as by deliberately considering Jesus Christ's precious death and atoning Sacrifice. His Sacrifice is the center of the circle, the focus of the light. There is a charm, a divine fascination, about His wounds.

O sacred head, once wounded! O, dear eyes, so red with weeping! O cheeks, all stained with spit! I could forever gaze, admire and adore! There is no beauty in all the world like that which is seen in the countenance, "more marred than that of any man." This one vision is enough for all eyes for all time! There is no sustenance to the heart like the sustenance that comes of His flesh and His blood given up in anguish and in death to work out our redemption! Beloved, this is the Bread of Heaven. "Take, eat," He says, "this is My body which is broken for you." What food is this! What life ought that to be which is nourished by such Bread!

But time flies so quickly that I cannot dwell upon these points as they deserve to be dwelt upon. Oh, live near the Cross! Build your house on Calvary! Frequent Gethsemane! Listen to the groans of your pleading Lord! Be much with a dying Christ. Be much with a risen Christ. Be much with a reigning Christ. Be much in anticipation of a coming Christ. For the more you are with Him, the more will your soul be filled with satisfaction and influenced to sanctification. He shall satisfy your soul as with marrow and with fatness—and your mouth shall praise Him with joyful lips—for He can say, and none other, "I am that bread of life." Receive Him, then, and you shall find it so!

III. Now thirdly—and this shall be but a word or two—notice this solemn fact—NOT TO FEED UPON CHRIST IS THE SURE MARK OF DEATH. Terrible fact. The Lord Jesus Christ has said it—"Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you." A great preacher, but he does not feed on Christ? He has no life in him! A forward professor, but he does not feed on Christ? He has no life in him! A very knowing theologian and a clever controversialist—but he does not feed upon the Incarnate God? There is no life in him! A daring speculator in modern thought but he does not care, he says, for the blood of Christ—he even sneers at the mention of it! He has no life in him! Hard words? Hard words! Hard words, if they are true, are better than soft words if they are false!

But this is the sure test—"What do you think of Christ?" If He is not bread to your souls, you have no life in you! If anybody were to say to me, "I have a man at home who stands in my hall and has stood there for years, but he has never eaten a mouthful of bread all the time, nor cost me a penny for food," I should say to myself, "Oh, yes, that is a *bronze* man, I know, or a plaster cast of a man! He has no life in him, I am sure, for if he had life in him, he would have needed bread." If we could live without eating, it would be a cheap method of existence, but I have never discovered the secret and I do not mean to make experiments! If you are trying it and have succeeded in it so far that you can live without Christ, the Bread of Life, I fear your life is not that of God's people, for they all hunger and thirst, by His Grace, after Jesus, the Bread of Heaven! O my dear Hearer, once a professor, once a Church member, if you have given up Christ and you get on well without Him, you have no life in you! The dead can do without bread, but the living cannot! Jesus tells us, "I am that bread of life," and if you are doing without Him, you are doing without the Bread of Life—and the reason is that you are without life itself!

IV. Next, and the fourth head shall be with equal brevity—THOSE WHO FEED UPON CHRIST ARE SUPREMELY BLESSED. They shall never hunger! They shall hunger after more of Jesus, but not after anything else besides Jesus. I was greatly pleased, some time ago, to hear a gentleman who had tried to preach another doctrine, say that a certain neighborhood which he spoke of was so impregnated with what was called, "the Gospel," that he could not succeed with his speculations. He said that if men once drank this Gospel doctrine it made them so bigoted in their love for it that the most clever person could not get them out of it. I thought to myself, "This witness is true." An enemy declared it and it was, therefore, all the more striking! The most subtle deceivers may try as long as they please, but when we have once fed upon Christ, they cannot get us away from Him! They tempt us to leave Him. They offer us all manner of novelties, but in vain—"Try our thought! Try our science! Try our purgatory! Try our larger hope!" But we hear the pails rattle and we hear the swine clamoring—and we are not anxious to taste the mixture, or unite in the festival! We are not so selfish as to steal this new slop from those whom it delights. Let those have it who can feed on it, but as for ourselves, we mean to feed on the Bread of Heaven! The Gospel is to us such satisfying bread that all the rest is chaff—

***"Should all the forms that men devise
Assault my soul with treacherous art,
I'd call them vanity and lies,
And bind the Gospel to my heart.***

Every true child of God is so far a bigot that he prefers the bread of His Father's house to the husks of the far country! He cannot give up the Gospel and he *will not*, for it satisfies his whole being. What more does he need? Why should he make a change?

Moreover, he has in Christ food that he can never exhaust. He may feed and feed and yet he shall never find that he lacks for meat. I have many an old book in my library in which there have been bookworms and I have sometimes amused myself with tracing a worm. I do not know how he gets

to the volume originally, but being there, he eats his way into it. He bores a hole in a direct line and sometimes I find that he dies before he gets half-way through the book. Now and then a worm has eaten his way right through from one wooden cover to another—yes, and also through the cover! This was a most successful bookworm! Few of us can eat our way quite so far. I am one of the bookworms that have not yet got half-way into my Bible, but I am eating my way as fast as I can! This one thing I have proven to myself beyond all question—I shall never, never exhaust this precious Book—much less shall I exhaust the wondrous Person of my Divinely-blessed Lord! He is that Bread which came down from Heaven! He is utterly inexhaustible!

Brothers and Sisters, feeding upon Jesus we have an *immortal* blessedness—we shall never die! If we have fed on Christ, we shall fall asleep, but it will be in Jesus. Some whom we love have lately fallen asleep—they will awake with Him in the morning. But we shall never die. We shall only pass into a higher stage of life, for that food on which we feed shall be in us the pledge of an immortality equal to the immortality of the Christ who has become our Bread.

V. I had much more to say to you, but the time has gone. All that I will say further is this. If any of you desire to have Christ, you may depend upon it that you may have Him because bread is meant to be eaten—JESUS IS PROVIDED TO BE RECEIVED. What is the use of bread if it is never eaten? If you go to the Orphanage, you will see a large batch of bread kept there upon the shelves. It must not be eaten the first day, you know—it would go too fast and would not be very wholesome for the youngsters. It must get rather staler by being kept a little while. Now suppose that I were to go down there and say to the baker, “Lock that door. I want to keep that bread. I am going away to Mentone and I shall take the key with me, that I may save that bread.” Suppose I were to do so and come back in a couple of months’ time? Should I say to myself, “I have saved that batch of bread”? I am afraid that it would turn out to be very bad economy! Let us go and look at the loaves which we have kept from use! Come away at once! The sight is not pleasant. Decay and corruption have fallen upon what we have hoarded. It would be a poor matter for the bread. Why, it is the very end of bread, the object of bread, the portion of bread, to be eaten! It is honored in being eaten! It would be degraded by being left to grow stale and moldy!

Now the Lord Jesus Christ is never so famous a Christ as when sinners come and feed upon Him. This precious Bread must be eaten, or it has not answered its design. What say you to a doctor who has no patients? What say you to a Savior who never saves anybody? The honor of a physician lies in the persons that he heals and the honor of a Savior lies in the persons that He saves. Christ has become the Bread of Heaven on purpose for you to have Him, and for me to have Him! He came into the world to save sinners—and if He does not save sinners He has come for nothing! It is His business to save sinners. Now if a man sets up in business and never does any business, his undertaking is a failure. “Poor man!” you say, “he has made a great mistake.”

I know a Brother here who wanted to take a certain shop in a wide street, but his wiser friends said, “Do not take that shop for a baker’s. It is not in a good eating locality. You must open a shop in one of the streets where there are plenty of poor people who will buy the bread every morning. Make it good and cheap and it will not stay long on the shelves.” I noticed in the newspaper that a certain pub was “in a good drinking locality.” I am sorry that there are such localities. But, assuredly, a good eating locality must be the very place for vending bread. I think that this Tabernacle stands in a good eating locality. Many are here, now, who are hungry after Christ and it is a blessed fact that they may have Him and feed upon Him without stint!

And what is the price? The price? The difficulty with all other traders is to get you up to their price—but my difficulty is to get you *down* to mine—for the Bread of Heaven is *without price*. Even if you offer a farthing, I cannot take your bid. You may have all for nothing and have it at once—but not a penny can be accepted from you! The Gospel provides a full Christ for empty sinners—pardon on earth and bliss in Heaven—and all for nothing! Take it as a free gift and it is yours. What would you pay? What *could* you pay? Did Israel pay for the manna? It would have been an insult to God to imagine it! Go your way and bless the name of the Lord, for this is the Gospel—“He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.”

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 6:24-58..49
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—386, 151, 488.**

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON

DEAR FRIENDS—The severe weather of England has breathed upon this happier region and chilled the air day after day. This will render it all the easier to return without experiencing too great a change. My dear friends at the Tabernacle have sent me many a kind telegraphic message and the last which I sent to them in return shall be my word for this week to my Sermon Readers—

***“And I am sure that when I come unto you, I shall come
in the fullness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ.
Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.”***

Romans 15:29, 33.

I ask for the prayers of each reader, that these verses may be true to the fullest to me and to all my flock.

Yours in Christ Jesus, Mentone, January 8, 1887.

C. H. SPURGEON

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

TRULY EATING THE FLESH OF JESUS

NO. 1288

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 9, 1876,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is meat, indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He that eats My flesh, and drinks My blood, dwells in Me, and I in him.”
John 6:53-56.

OUR Lord Jesus did *not*, in this passage, allude to the Lord's Supper, as some, desiring to maintain their sacramental superstitions, have dared to affirm! I will not dwell upon the argument that there was no Lord's Supper at the time to allude to, though there is certainly some force in it, but I will rather remind you that with such an interpretation this passage would not be true. It must be confessed, even by the most ardent advocate of the sacramental meaning, that the expressions used by our Lord are *not* universally and, without exception, true if used in that sense, for it is not true that those who have never eaten the Lord's Supper have no life in them, since it is confessed on all hands that hundreds and thousands of children dying in childhood are, undoubtedly saved, and yet they have never eaten the flesh of Christ nor drank His blood, if the Lord's Supper is here meant.

There have also been many others in bygone times who, by their conduct, proved that the life of God was in their souls, and yet they were not able to eat bread at the sacramental table, because of sickness, banishment, imprisonment and other causes. Surely there are some others, though I would not excuse them, who have neglected to come to that blessed commemorative ordinance, and yet, nevertheless, for all that, they are truly children of God. Would the highest of high churchmen send every Quaker, however holy and devout, down to the bottomless pit? If this should refer to the Lord's Supper, then it is certain that the dying thief could not have entered Heaven, for he never sat down at the communion table, but was converted on the Cross—and without either Baptism or the Lord's Supper—went straight away with his Master into Paradise!

It can never be proved, indeed, is utterly false that *no one* has eternal life if he has not received the bread and wine of the communion table. But on the other hand, it is certainly *equally* untrue that whoever eats Christ's flesh has eternal life, if by that is meant everyone who partakes of the Eucharist, for there are unworthy receivers, not here and there, but to be found by the hundreds. Alas, there are apostates who leave the Lord's Table for the table of devils and who profane the holy name they once pro-

fessed to love! There are also many who have received the sacramental bread and wine and yet live in sin—who increase their sin by daring to come to the table and who, alas, we fear, will die in their sins as many others have done.

Unregenerate persons are very apt to make much of the sacrament and nothing of Christ. They think a great deal of the bread and wine of the (so-called) “altar,” but they have never known what it is to eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ. These eat and drink unworthily—carnally eating bread, but not *spiritually* eating the Redeemer’s flesh—to them the ordinance is a curse rather than a blessing. Our Lord did not refer to the feast of His supper, for the language will not bear such an interpretation. It is evident that the Jews misunderstood the Savior and thought that He referred to the *literal* eating of His flesh. It is no wonder that they strove among themselves over such a saying, for, understood literally, it is horrible and revolting to the last degree!

But far greater is the wonder that there are millions of people who accept so monstrous an error as actual truth and believe in *literally* feeding upon the body of the Lord Jesus! This is probably the highest point of profane absurdity to which superstition has yet reached—to believe that such an act of cannibalism as could be implied in the literal eating of the flesh of Christ could convey Grace to the person guilty of such a horror! While we wonder that the Jews so misunderstood the Savior, we wonder a thousand times more that there should remain upon the face of the earth men in their senses not yet committed to a lunatic asylum who endeavor to defend such a dreadful error from Holy Scripture and, instead of being staggered, as the Jews were, by so fearful a statement, actually consider it to be a vital doctrine of their faith—that they are *literally* to eat the flesh of Christ and to drink His blood!

Brothers and Sisters, if it were possible that our Lord required us to believe such a dogma, it would certainly need the most stupendous effort of credulity on the part of a reasonable man—and the laying aside of all the decencies of nature. In fact, it would appear to be necessary, before you could be a Christian, that you should altogether divest yourself of your reason and your humanity! It were a Gospel certainly more fitted for savages and madmen than for persons in the possession of their senses and in the least degree removed from absolute barbarism! I greatly question whether the creed of the king of Dahomey contains a more unnatural doctrine.

We are not required, however, to believe anything so impossible, so degrading, so blasphemous, so horrifying to all the decencies of life! No man ever did eat the flesh of Christ or drink His blood in a *literal* and corporeal sense. A deed so beastlike, no, so *devilish*, was never yet perpetrated, or could be. No, Brethren, the Jews were under an error—they made the mistake of taking *literally* what Christ meant *spiritually*. Judicially blinded as the result of unbelief, they stumbled at noonday as in the night and refused to see what was plainly set forth. The veil was on their *hearts*. Ah, how prone is man to pervert the Words of the Lord!

I believe that if Christ had meant this word *literally*, they would have spirited it away, but such is the perversity of the human mind, that when He intended it spiritually then straightway they interpreted it in a grossly carnal manner. Let us not fall into their error, but may Divine Grace lead us to see that our Lord's Words are spirit and life. Let us not be held in bondage by the letter which kills, but follow the spirit which quickens. The spiritual meaning is clear enough to spiritual men, for to them belong spiritual discernment. But as for the unregenerate, these things are spoken unto them in parables, that seeing they might not see, and perceiving they might not understand.

Our first head will be, *what is meant, then, by eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Christ?* And our second point of enquiry shall be, *what are the virtues of this act?*

I. First, then, WHAT IS MEANT BY EATING THE FLESH AND DRINKING THE BLOOD OF CHRIST? It is a very beautiful and simple metaphor, when understood to refer *spiritually* to the Person of our Lord. The act of eating and drinking is transferred from the body to the soul and the soul is represented as feeding—feeding upon Jesus as the Bread of Life. Eating is the taking into yourself of something which exists externally, which you receive into yourself and which becomes a part of yourself and helps to build you up and sustain you. That something supplies a great need of your nature and when you receive it, it nourishes your life. That is the essence of the metaphor and it well describes the act and the result of faith.

To eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ, first, *we must believe in the reality of Christ*—we must not regard Him as a myth, an imaginary personage, an invention of genius, or a conception of the Oriental mind, but we must believe that such a Person actually and in very deed lived and still lives. We must believe that He was God and yet condescended to be Incarnate on earth and here lived, died, was buried and rose again. “Except a man eat My *flesh* and drink My *blood*.” It is a mode of expressing the actual existence and true materialism of our Lord's body and the sureness and truthfulness of His existence in human nature. You cannot be saved unless you believe in an historical Christ, a real Person—

**“A Man there was, a real Man,
Who once on Calvary died,
And streams of blood and water ran
Down from His wounded side.”**

That same actual Person has, in His own proper Personality, ascended to the skies. He is now sitting at the right hand of the Father and is ordained to descend, before long, to be the Judge of the quick and the dead. We should not use the terms, *flesh and blood*, unless we meant to indicate an actual Person—such language could not describe the creation of a dream, a phantom, or a symbol. Before all things, if you would be saved, you must believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as having been really manifested in human nature among the sons of men. “The Word was made flesh and tabernacled among us,” and the Apostles declare that they beheld His Glory, the Glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth.

We must believe not only in the reality of the Savior, but in *the reality of His Incarnation*, acknowledging that while He was Divine, He was Human, also, that He did not assume human nature in *outward* appearance, as certain heretics have said, but that Jesus came in the flesh and, as such, was heard, seen, touched and handled. He was, in an actual body, really nailed to a tree, was really laid in the grave. Thomas did, in real deed, put his finger into the print of the nails and thrust his hand into His side. We must also believe that He did assuredly and in very deed rise again from the dead and that in His own real body, He ascended into Heaven. There must be no doubts about these foundational facts. If we would feed upon Christ He must be real to us, for a man does not eat and drink shadows and fancies.

We must also truly believe in *the death* of the Incarnate Son of God. The mention of His flesh as *eaten*, apart from His blood which is drunk, indicates death. The blood is in the flesh while there is life. His death is more than hinted at in the 51st verse of John 6, where our Lord says, "And the bread that I will give him is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." Brothers and Sisters, we must believe in our Lord's death as it accomplishes the expiation of sin, for so faith feeds on His body as given for the life of the world.

There are some who profess to believe in Christ's life and they hold Him forth as a great *example* who will save us from selfishness and other evils if we follow Him. Such is not the teaching of the text—the blessing of eternal life is not promised for following Christ's *example*, but for eating and drinking His flesh and blood, or, in other words, taking Christ *into* oneself! And the promise is not made for receiving His example or His doctrine, but His *Person*, His flesh, His blood—His flesh and blood as *separated* and, therefore, Himself as *dead* for us and made a Sacrifice for us. Just as in the peace-offerings the offerer sat down and feasted with the priest upon the victim which he had presented, so Jesus Christ, our Passover, is sacrificed for us and we are to feed upon Him as the Lamb of God, receiving Him in His sacrificial and propitiatory Character, into our souls.

It is vain for us to hope for salvation apart from this! The Father sets Him forth as a propitiation through faith in His blood. If we refuse Him in this Character, Christ has become of no use to us. Christ the Exemplar cannot save you if you reject Him as the Christ who bowed His head to death, even the death of the Cross, suffering in His people's place. Christ as a King cannot save you unless you believe in Christ as a Victim. This is absolutely necessary to saving faith—unless you eat His flesh and drink His blood, that is, accept Him in His real Personality, offered as a Sacrifice for sin, you have no life in you!

This is what is to be *believed*. But in order to eat, a man not only believes that there is bread before him and accepts that bread as being proper food for his body, but the next thing he does is to *appropriate* it. This is a great part of the act of feeding upon Christ. As a man, in eating, takes the morsels to himself and says, "This is bread which I believe nourishes the body and it shall now nourish *me*, I take it to be *my* bread," so must we do with Christ. Dear Brothers and Sisters, we must say, "Jesus

Christ is set forth as a propitiation for sin, I accept Him as the Propitiation for *my* sin. God gives Him to be the foundation upon which sinners' hopes are to be built. I take Him to be the Foundation of *my* hopes. He has opened a fountain for sin and for uncleanness. I come to Him and desire to wash away *my* sin and my uncleanness in the fountain of His blood."

You cannot eat, you know, unless you make the food your own. In fact, nothing is more especially a man's own than what he has eaten—his possession of it cannot be denied, nor can it be taken away from him. So you must take Christ to be as much your own as the bread you eat or the water you drink—He must, beyond question, be yours personally and inwardly. Looking up to Him upon the Cross, you have to say, "Savior of sinners, those who trust in You are redeemed. I also trust You as my Savior and I am, therefore, assuredly redeemed by Your most precious blood." Eating lies, in part, in appropriating food and so, unless you appropriate the flesh and blood of Christ to be your own personal hope and confidence, you cannot be saved.

I have laid stress upon a *personal* appropriation, for each man eats for himself, not for anyone else. You cannot eat for anybody but yourself. And so, in taking Christ, you take Him for yourself. Faith is your own act and deed—nobody can believe for you, nor can you savingly believe for another. I say it with reverence—the Holy Spirit, Himself, cannot believe *for* us, although He can, and does, lead us *to* believe. And, indeed, if the Divine Spirit *did* believe for us, we should not obtain the promise, since it is not made to *proxy faith*, but solely and alone to *personal* believing. We are not passive in believing—we must be active and perform the personal act of appropriating the Lord Jesus to be our soul's meat and drink.

This believing in Jesus and appropriating Him go far to explain what is meant by eating His flesh and drinking His blood. Eating and drinking also consist principally in *receiving*. What a man eats and drinks, he appropriates to himself, and that not by laying it on one side in a treasury or casket, but by receiving it into himself. You appropriate money and you put it in your pocket—you may lose it. You secure a piece of land and you put your hedge about it, but that hedge may be broken down. But when you receive, by eating and drinking, you have placed the good things where you will never be robbed of them! You have received them in the truest and surest sense, for you have real possession and enjoyment *in* your own person.

Now, to say, "Christ is mine," is a blessed thing. But to *really* take Christ *into* you by the act of faith is the vitality and the pleasure of faith! In eating and drinking, a man is not a producer, but a *consumer*—he is not a doer or a giver, for he simply takes in. If a queen should eat, if an empress should eat, she would become as completely a receiver as the pauper in the workhouse. Eating is an act of *reception* in every case. So it is with faith—you have not to *do*, to *be*, or to *feel*, but only to *receive*! The saving point is not a something which comes forth of you, but the *reception* of a something imparted *to* you. Faith is an act which the poorest sinner, the vilest sinner, the weakest sinner, the most condemned sinner

may perform because it is not an act requiring power on *his* part, nor the going forth of anything *from* him, but simply the *receiving* into himself!

An empty vessel can receive and receive all the better because it is empty. Oh Soul, are you willing to *receive* Jesus Christ as the free gift of Divine mercy? Do you, this day, say, "I have so received Him"? Well then, you have eaten His flesh and drunk His blood! If you have *received* the Incarnate God in your soul, so that you now trust in Him and in Him alone, then you have eaten His flesh and drunk His blood!

The process of eating involves another matter which I can hardly call part of it, but yet it is indissolubly connected with it, namely, that of *assimilation*. What is received, in eating, descends into the inward parts and is there digested and taken up into the body. Even so, faith takes up and absorbs into the man the heavenly Bread, Christ Crucified. "The Word preached," we read in one place, "did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." Now, in the original, there is the idea of food taken into the body, but never getting mixed with the gastric juices and, consequently, remaining undigested, unassimilated, unprofitable and even injurious. Faith is to the soul what the gastric juices are to the body—as soon as Christ is received into the man, faith begins to act upon Him—to extract nutriment from His Person, work and offices. And so Christ becomes taken up into the understanding and the heart, builds up the entire system of manhood and becomes part and parcel of the renewed man.

Just as bread, when it is eaten, becomes dissolved and absorbed and afterwards is turned into blood and flows through all the veins and goes to make up the body, even so is Christ the soul. He becomes our life and enters mysteriously into vital union with us. As the piece of bread which we ate yesterday could not, now, be taken away from us, because it is a part of ourselves, even so does Jesus become one with us. You ate the bread yesterday and whereabouts it is now no philosopher can tell. Part of it may have gone to form brain and other portions to make bone, sinew and muscle. But its substance is taken up into *your* substance, so that the bread dwells in you now and you in it, since it makes up your bodily house.

This is to feed upon Jesus Christ—to take Him in so that your *life* is hid with Him, till you grow to be like He—till your very life *is* Christ and the great fact that Jesus lived and died becomes the mightiest Truth of God under Heaven to your mind—swaying your whole soul, subduing it to itself and then elevating it to the highest degree. "For the love of Christ constrains us; because we thus judge that if One died for all, then were all dead: and that He died for all, that they which live should not, from now on, live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again." Even as flowers drink in the sunlight till they are tinted with rainbow hues, so do we receive the Lord Jesus till we become comely with His comeliness and He lives, again, in us! This it is to eat His flesh and drink His blood.

But now I will make a series of remarks, somewhat out of order, with the view of setting forth this mysterious eating and drinking in a clearer

manner. Observe that *Christ is as necessary to the soul as bread is to the body*. Meat and drink are absolutely requisite—and so you must have Christ, or you cannot live in the true sense of that word. Take away food from the body, it must die—deny Christ to a man and he is dead while he lives! There is in us a natural desire after meat and drink, an appetite which springs out of our necessity and reminds us of it—we must labor to feel just such an appetite after Christ! Your wisdom lies in your knowing that you must have Jesus to be your personal Savior and in acknowledging that you will perish if you do not receive Him! And it is well with you when this knowledge makes you crave and pine and pant for Him. Hunger after Him! Thirst after Him! Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after Him, for He *will fill them*.

Meat and drink do really satisfy. When a man gets bread and water, having eaten enough, he has what his nature requires. The need is real and so is the supply. When you get Christ, your heart will obtain exactly what it needs. You do not, yourself, fully know what the needs of your soul are, but rest assured that known or unknown, your necessities will all be supplied in the Person of Jesus Christ. And if you accept Him, as surely as meat and drink stop hunger and thirst, so surely will He satisfy the cravings of your soul. Dream no longer of any satisfaction apart from Him and ask for nothing beyond or beside Him. Christ is All and more than all! He is meat and drink, too. Be content with Him and with nothing short of Him. Hunger after Him more and more, but never leave Him to spend your money for that which is not bread and your labor for that which satisfies not.

Beloved, *a hungry man never gets rid of his hunger by talking about feeding, but by actually eating*. Therefore do not so much *talk* about Christ as actually *receive* Him. Look not on supplies of food and say, “Yes, these will satisfy me—oh, that I had them,” but eat at once. The Lord beckons you to the banquet, not to look on, but to sit down and feast! Sit down at once! Ask not for a second invitation, but sit down and feed on what is freely presented to you in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. You need Him to be formed in you the hope of Heaven—but this can never be unless you receive Him into your inmost soul.

In healthy eating there is a pleasure. No healthy person needs to be flogged to make him eat, for the palate is conscious of pleasure while we are feeding—and truly, in feeding upon Jesus there is a delicious sweetness pervading the whole soul. Right royal are His dainties! Nothing can more delight immortal banqueters than Jesus delights Believers! He satiates the soul. A thousand heavens are tasted in the Savior’s body and blood. If ever you lose your relish for Christ, rest assured that you are out of health. There can be no surer sign of a sad state of heart than not to delight in the Lord Jesus Christ. But when He is very sweet to your taste. When even a word about Him, like a drop from the honeycomb, falls sweetly upon your tongue—then there is not much the matter with you—your heart is sound at the core. Even though you should feel faint, it is a faintness of Nature, and not a failure of Grace! And if you feel sick, if it is

sickness after Him whom your soul loves, it is a disease which it were well to die of!

Eating times as to our bodies come several times a day—so take care that you partake of the flesh and blood of Jesus often and often. Do not be satisfied with yesterday's receiving of Jesus, but receive Him again today. Do not live upon old fellowships and experiences, but go to Jesus *hourly* and be not content till He fills you again and again with His love. I wish that we could become spiritually like certain animals that I know of which stand in the stall and eat all day long and half through the night, too. Here I would gladly possess the appetite of the horse-leech and never feel that I must pause! Happy is that Christian who can eat abundantly of heavenly meat, as the spouse bids him, and never cease eating while Christ is near, but feed on and on till far into the night—and then awake with the dawn to feed on the Bread of Heaven!

It is well to have set times for eating. People are not likely to flourish who pick up their food just as they can and have no regular meals. It is well to have settled times when you can sit down to the table and take your food properly. Assuredly, it is wise to have appointed periods for communing with Christ, for meditating upon Him, for considering His work and for receiving His Grace. You know with children it is, "little and often," and so with us, let it be line upon line, and precept upon precept, here a little and there a little. A bit between regular meals often comes very sweet to a laboring man and so, though you have special seasons for getting alone with Christ, do not deny yourself a snatch by the way. Get a wafer made with honey between meals, and lay it on your tongue to sweeten your mouth—a choice thought, a Scripture text, or a precious promise about Jesus.

I am sure there is one thing I can say about this feeding upon Christ that *never was a man guilty of gluttony in feeding upon Christ's flesh and blood.* The more you eat of Christ, the more you will be able to eat of Him. We readily weary of any other food, but never of this heavenly bread! We are often in an ill condition in reference to our Lord because we have not had enough of Him, but we can never have too much. When we receive Him to the full, we still find that He enlarges our capacity and we are all the more able to enjoy His preciousness.

Observe that the text tells us that the Believer is to eat His flesh and drink His blood, for observe that Christ is meat and drink, too, He is All in All, and All in One. A man must not only eat Christ, but he must drink Christ—that is to say, he must not receive Christ one way, only, but all ways, and not a *part* of Christ, but *all* of Christ—not merely Christ's flesh as Incarnate, but Christ's blood as the slaughtered Sacrifice and bleeding Lamb. You must have a whole Christ and not a divided Christ! You have not truly received Christ if you have only said I select this and that virtue in Him. You must open the door and let a full Christ come in to take possession of your soul.

You must receive not merely His work, offices, Graces, but Himself, His whole self. Those receive no Grace at all who reject the blood of Christ, for that has special mention. Oh, what hard stings I have heard said, even of

late, about those that preach the blood of Christ! Let them say on if they will, it is at their peril! But as for me, my Brothers and Sisters, I hope I shall deserve their censures more and more and preach the blood of Christ yet more abundantly, for there it *nothing* that can give satisfaction to the soul and quench that fierce, strong thirst which is aroused within our nature, but the blood of Jesus as of a Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world!

Beloved, it is one sweet thought that *the flesh and blood of Christ is food suitable for all conditions*. This suits babes in Grace and is equally suitable for old men. This suits sick Christians—they cannot have a daintier morsel—and this suits Christians in the full vigor of their strength. This is meat for morning and meat for night and meat for midday! This is meat to live by and meat to die by—yes, he that eats it shall never see death! This is meat for feast days and this is meat for days when we mourn and sorrow. This is meat for the wilderness and meat for the royal gardens—meat, I was about to say, for Heaven itself—for what better food shall our souls find, even there, than His flesh and blood? And remember all the Lord's people are free to eat it—yes, and every soul that hungers for it is welcome! No one needs to ask whether he may have it. It is set forth to be food for all believing souls, whatever their previous character may have been. Come and welcome, come and welcome, hungering, thirsting souls! Come eat His flesh and drink His blood!

Thus have I tried to set forth, in broken accents, what it is to eat His flesh and drink His blood. It is to take a whole Christ into you by trusting yourself entirely to Him as a man trusts his life to the bread he eats and the water he drinks. How do you know bread will feed you? How do you know water will sustain you? Well, you know by *experience*—you have tried them—you have found that bread and water are good for you. Why do you not take plaster of Paris? Why do you not drink vitriol? You know better!

You know you can trust bread to build you up and water to refresh you and, even so, you do not take in priestcraft and false doctrines, but the blessed Person and work of Jesus Christ in His life and in His sacrificial death. You take these in, for you feel that you can feed upon them—these are the dainty provisions that your soul loves!

II. Now let us briefly consider WHAT ARE THE VIRTUES OF THIS EATING AND DRINKING OF CHRIST. Turn, now, to your Bibles, and in the 53rd verse you find that this act is essential. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, you have no life in you.” It is *essential*, for if you have no life in you, you have nothing that is good. “No life in you.”

You know the modern theory that there are germs of life in all men which only need developing. Universal Fatherhood spies some good in all of us and what he has to do is to educate it and bring it out. This is the philosophical notion, but it is not Christ's way of putting it! He says, “Except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you.” No, not an atom of true life! There is no life to be educated. The sinner is dead and in him there is no good thing whatever. If ever

there is to be any good thing it will have to come *into* him—it must be an importation—and it can never come into him except in connection with his eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Christ!

But suppose a man has many convictions of sin? He begins to see the evil of sin and he dreads the wrath to come. This is hopeful, but I solemnly remind any of you who are in this state, that unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man you have no life. Until you have believed in Christ, you have no life. Until you have washed in His precious blood, you are still dead in sin. Oh, do not be satisfied because you *feel* some legal convictions! Do not sit down in thankfulness because you are somewhat disturbed in mind! You never must be satisfied until you have received Christ! You have NO LIFE in you till you have received Christ!

But perhaps you have attended upon ceremonies. You may have been baptized and taken the sacrament. Yes, but if you have never eaten Christ, taken Him *into* you, you have no life in you! You are dead while you live! Now, here is a proof in our text that life does not mean, *existence*, as people now talk, who, when they read that, “the sinner dies,” say that means that he goes out of existence. Ungodly men have an existence in them, but that is a very different thing, indeed, from *eternal* life—and you must never confuse existence with life or death, with non-existence—they are very many leagues apart from one another!

The unconverted man, not having Christ, has no life in him at all. You members of the Church, have you life in you—*real* life? You have *not* if you have not eaten the flesh of Christ! You may have been many years, professors, but did you ever eat Christ and drink Christ? If not, you have NO life in you! You may be excellent moral people. Your characters may be patterns to others. There may be everything that is beautiful about you. But if Christ is not in your heart, you are the child of Nature, finely dressed, but *dead*. You are not the living child of Grace—you are the statue beautifully chiseled, but, like the cold marble, there is no life in you! Nothing but Christ can be life to the soul and the highest excellencies to which human nature can reach apart from Him fall short of salvation. You MUST have Jesus, or death abides in you and you abide in death!

That is the first virtue of feeding upon Christ, it is absolutely essential. Now, secondly, it is *vital*. Read the next verse—“Whoever eats My flesh, and drinks My blood, has eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.” That is to say, he has been quickened by receiving *into* himself a *whole* Christ—he is, therefore, alive! Though he may be, sometimes, led to doubt it by his state of heart, yet if he has really received Christ, he has been quickened from the dead and is alive! And what is more, he *always shall be* alive, for he “has *eternal* life.” Now, a life that can possibly die out is evidently not *eternal* life and the life which the Arminian gets as the result of his faith, according to his own statement, is *not* eternal life because it may come to an end.

Good soul, I know if he has *really* believed in Jesus, he will sweetly find out his mistake and his life will go on living under temptation and trial, for it shall be in him, “a well of water springing up unto everlasting life.” It shall be, “a living and incorruptible seed which lives and abides forever.”

Oh, let us believe the precious doctrine of the Final Perseverance of the Saints! “He that eats My flesh and drinks My blood *HAS* eternal life.” He has it now! It is a life that shall last as long as God, Himself—eternal as Jehovah’s Throne!

And then, as to the body, that will die, will it not? Yes, but such is the power of the life which Christ puts into us, that the body, itself, shall rise again! We have our Lord’s pledge for it—“I will raise him up at the last day.” As yet the body is dead because of sin, though the spirit is life because of righteousness—but there is a redemption coming for this poor frame—and for this material world in which we dwell. When Christ shall come, then the creation shall be delivered from the bondage under which it was placed and our material bodies, with the rest of creation, shall be emancipated! The bodies of the saints will be delivered from all imperfection, corruption and defilement! We shall live, again, in the glorious image of Christ and the Lord shall fulfill His gracious Word, “I am the resurrection and the life; he that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.” This eating and drinking of Christ, then, is vital.

In the third place it is *substantial*, “for My flesh is *meat, indeed*, and My blood is *drink, indeed*.” This is opposed to the unsubstantial character of symbols. The Jewish feasting was a mere shadow, “But,” says Jesus, “My flesh is *meat, indeed*.” This is also said in contradistinction from carnal food. Carnal food, being eaten, only builds the body and then disappears, but it cannot touch the *soul*. But feeding upon Christ, the soul is fed and fed unto life eternal, so that Jesus claims to be, “*meat indeed*.”

Do you ever attend a ministry where the preacher preaches anything and everything but Christ? Do you get fed? Well, if you are of a windy sort, you may get blown up with the east wind as wild asses are when they snuff it up. But I know, if you are a child of God, it does not matter who preaches, or how poor his language—if he preaches Christ you always feel as if you were fed—your soul is satisfied with marrow and fatness when Christ is the subject! There is no such meat for the soul as Christ—and the sweetest refreshment is from the weakest parts of Christ—for God’s strength is perfect in His weakness!

You say to me “What do you mean?” Well, our Lord in the text says, “My *flesh* is meat, indeed,” not, “my Godhead.” “My *blood* is drink indeed,” not My Resurrection and Ascension. Not, “My Second Advent,” but My *weakness* as a Man, My death as a Man, My sufferings, My griefs, My groans—*these* are the best food for Believers. Do you not find it so? O I rejoice to hear of Christ as coming a second time, but there are times when that doctrine does not yield me an atom of comfort! The brightest stars that charm the day for a poor benighted pilgrim are those which burn around the Cross! Strange that we should turn to that spot where sorrow culminated to find our purest comfort, but it is so—“My flesh is meat, indeed”—Christ in His weakness! “My blood is drink, indeed”—Christ pouring out His soul unto death! This is the truest and best food of the heart!

Now, Brethren, if you want to grow in Grace, feed on Christ! If you would become strong in the Lord, feed on Christ! If you want a something that will build you up in all parts permanently and well, feed on Christ,

for other things are meat and drink, but His flesh is *meat, indeed*, and His blood is *drink, indeed!* Substantial fare is this! And, lastly, another virtue of this feeding is that *it produces union*. Notice the next verse—“He that eats My flesh, and drinks My blood, dwells in Me, and I in him.” How wonderful is that word—“dwells in Me.” You get, by taking Christ into you as a whole Christ, to live in Christ and Christ in you!

There is this difference between the two privileges—to live in Christ is the peace of Justification. You believe in Him, you trust yourself with Him, you feel that you died with Him and that you rose with Him—that you have gone to Heaven with Him—and, therefore, you are accepted in Him and so you live in Him! For *Him* to live in *you* is another thing, namely, the peace of Sanctification, for when you have fed on Jesus, He enters into you and abides in you, living, again, in you. He speaks through your lips, loves with your heart, looks through your eyes, works with your hands and witnesses among the sons of men by your tongue—He lives in you! Oh, wondrous union! Blessed union!

The next verse makes it more wonderful, still, for it says “As the living Father has sent Me, and I live by the Father: so he that eats Me, even he shall live by Me.” Three living things—the living Father, the living Son and, then, the living Believer. There is the Father with life in Himself as God. Then there is the Son as Mediator, God-Man, deriving life from the Father. And then the Believer, taking the life which came from God through Jesus Christ. O blessed union is this, not merely with *Jesus*, but through Jesus with the *Father!* So that Christ says, “I live, and because I live, you shall live also.” He lives by the Father and we live by Him—and all this because we receive Him and feed upon Him!

Oh, my Brothers and Sisters, I charge you, open your mouth wide after Christ and take Him into your very self! Give Him a lodging in your heart, yes, let Him dwell forever in the best pavilion of your nature, in the rarest place of your soul! Hunger after Him! Feed on Him everyday and when you have done so, and He dwells in you and you in Him, then tell others about Him and spread His dear name abroad, that hungry, perishing sinners may know that there is corn in Egypt and bread to be had in Jesus! And may many come and eat and drink of Him as you have done. I charge you, Brothers and Sisters, remember this, and the Lord bless you, for His name’s sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 6:26-65.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—410, 819, 613.**

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THE MEAT AND DRINK OF THE NEW NATURE NO. 1460

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

***“For My flesh is meat, indeed, and My blood is drink, indeed.”
John 6:55.***

WE know that the Savior spoke of spiritual, not carnal things, and He spoke of Himself not as being in any sense meat for our bodies—that could not be—but as being food for our *souls*. This statement is very plain to us, but those who heard it at the first, found it very difficult to understand. Nor need we wonder, for men of the schools who play with letters, words and phrases, frequently meet with difficulties where none exist. The Jews of our Lord’s day had fallen into the foolish habit of taking words to pieces and dwelling upon the syllables and letters until they seemed to have lost all power of getting at the plain meaning which ordinary language was intended to convey. They blinded their own eyes with the pretense of superior wisdom; made puzzles and riddles out of plain words; raised a lot of dust and sat down in it blinded to the end.

Our God has taught us more and given us to understand more clearly, for His Holy Spirit has given us back the childlike spirit so that we are willing to see the natural sense which words were meant to reveal. Now we see great force and clear expressiveness in that very language which seemed, before, to conceal the Savior’s meaning. It was a veil to the Jews and they saw not—it is an instructive parable to us, which, instead of hiding the Truth of God, shadows it out to us and softens the light for our weak eyes. We see, I fear, even now but dimly, for our spiritual sight is scarcely clear as yet, but we see, blessed be God for that, and we see Jesus and something of His loving meaning. We do more than see—we enjoy and, therefore, know to the life what it is to feed upon His flesh, which is meat, indeed, and to drink His blood, which is drink, indeed.

We cannot attempt to explain the deep mysteries of our text, but rather, as the swallow touches the brook with his wing and is away again, we will glance at these crystal waters of this sacred Truth of God and then up and away! The text teaches us, first, *what Christ must be to us*. We shall consider, secondly, *what is bound up in this*. And, thirdly, *what reflections naturally arise out of it*.

I. WHAT CHRIST MUST BE TO US. The answer from the text is, He must be our meat and drink. He must be everything to us—the one thing necessary, the indispensable, necessary all-sufficient supply. He must be the source of strength, the support of life and we must *feel* Him to be so. He must, to come back to the figure, be meat and drink to us. Our Lord, in speaking to the Jews, was doubtless thinking of the Paschal Lamb and of the time when Israel came out of Egypt—when they not only had the

blood of the lamb sprinkled upon their houses for their security, but the lamb, itself, within them as their sustenance.

They sat down to feed upon it before they enjoyed the fullness of redemption by passing out of Egypt from under the bondage of Pharaoh. They did not understand that symbol and they little knew what our great Lord and Master meant when He employed it to set forth Himself and said, "My flesh is meat, indeed, and My blood is drink, indeed." Our Lord Jesus Christ must be to us, then, our *spiritual* meat and drink. What do we mean by that? First, that *the doctrine of God Incarnate must be the food of our souls*. Brothers and Sisters, we have no doubt as to the true and proper Deity of our Lord Jesus. We have long since passed out of the region of controversy about *that*, for He has been God to us in the work of salvation and in the new creation which we have experienced through His power.

We have, moreover, no doubt about His humanity, but we do not usually dwell enough upon it. We are bound to adore His Deity, but we must not forget that He is as truly Man as if He were *not* God, and as much a Brother to us as if He were *not* the Son of the Highest. Jesus is assuredly Man. Now feed on this. The man Christ Jesus heads up a new race—as the first Adam headed up the race of old and was our federal head to stand or fall for us, and we were to stand or fall in him—so is there now a new Head who brings us up from the ruin of the first Adam's fall and puts us into a new position before the living God. There is a Man who has redeemed us! There is a Man who has made all the men in Him well-pleasing to God. There is a Man who represents manhood in perfection in the Glory above. There is a Man in whom all Believers are—even as we read that Levi was in the loins of Abraham when Melchisidec met him!

We are in Christ and we now stand before the eternal Throne in that blessed representative Man. Feed on this doctrine! Jesus is a real Man, though clothed with all power He is God and yet He is the mirror of tenderness! He rules all things and yet is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. You must believe this and you must receive it—and you must rest upon it—otherwise you have no life in you. Some try to turn this fact into a myth, but, indeed, it is no parable or figure of speech, for the Christ who spoke these words was there before them—one whom they had often seen eat and drink! He spoke of Himself with His own lips and was not a phantom or apparition, but a solid existence of flesh and blood. So, then, it is upon the historical Christ, whose existence is a matter of fact, that my soul must feed as I believe Him to be both Human and Divine.

But this is not all—*the food to be fed upon is not merely God Incarnate, but Christ suffering*. Notice that He puts it, "My flesh is meat, indeed, and My blood is drink indeed"—when the flesh and the blood are mentioned separately, death is implied. The two being divided and being named together in one connection are the token and emblem of our Savior's vicarious Sacrifice. We also, (I am speaking of the Brothers and Sisters worshipping here), have long ago passed beyond the region of controversy as to the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ our Lord. If it is not so, then is our preaching vain and our hope is also vain and we are yet in our

sins. We have no hope of eternal life save that which begins, centers and ends in the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ! “This Man, when He had offered one Sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God”—that is our sole hope.

He has made expiation for sin—

**“He bore, that we might never bear,
His Father’s righteous ire.”**

We are now to build up our souls by feeding upon the suffering, the crucified, the dead, the buried Christ, as having stood as our Representative and as having endured death in our place. You cannot obtain comfort apart from this if you have felt the weight of sin! And you cannot continue happy apart from this great historical fact if you are conscious of sin. Fly, my Hearers, into the wounds of Jesus and, like doves, you shall find shelter in that Rock! And with eager wings you may glide over the waste of human thought without finding a rest for the soles of your weary feet till you light upon the Truth of God of the great Substitution.

“The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us,” is the first bell of Heaven’s marriage peal—and the second has an equally sweet note of its own—“Christ died for our sins.” Ring them both often! Listen to them as they sound forth, “God *with* us, Christ *for* us.” Incarnation, Substitution—was there ever better meat and drink for a hungry soul? This surely satisfies the desire of the most hungry spirit—“The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” I have, as it were, in those few words set out the viands of the feast.

But now I would have you note that our Lord must be to us meat and drink—and *meat is not intended to look at, but to feed on*. I heard the other day that in a certain Socinian place of worship they have gone the length of setting the bread and wine on the table for the people to look at, but they suppose that it is quite unnecessary that they should actually eat and drink. It is fittingly done of them—that is consistent with their creed. They have no Christ to feed upon! There is nothing in their belief which could feed the soul of a mouse, if a mouse had a soul! Why should they attempt to feed the people in figure when really they have no Incarnate God or atoning Savior? If it is, indeed, true that in one of their places of worship they have exhibited the bread and wine instead of handing it out to be eaten, it is remarkably typical of their bloodless, lifeless gospel! Their Christ who is no Deity! Their Jesus who is no Sacrifice for sin!

How can the soul find food there? But we must beware lest we, ourselves, should ever rest content with merely glancing at Christ and not partaking of Him. What is to be done with food, with meat and drink? It is to be received! Food on the table does not nourish! It must be taken into the hand. The cup on the board will never cheer—it must be lifted—it must be appropriated. I know that many of you have, by a humble but brave faith, appropriated Christ as He is set before you in the Gospel. He has bid you come and eat and you have come pressed by a sore famine that was in your soul. You have come and you have said, “He is mine,” and you have taken Him to yourselves by simple childlike confidence in Him. You have done well—continue to do the same.

“As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk you in Him.” Go on receiving Him. “To whom coming,” says the Apostle, “as unto a living stone.” Regard Him not as one to whom you have come by one act and have done with Him, but as one to whom you come continually! “Of His fullness have all we received and Grace for Grace,” but we are going on receiving by continuing to believe in Him! Hold on to this. Having begun in the spirit, do not hope to be perfected by the flesh! Do not think that you are to be fed, afterwards, on something other than Christ, but go on receiving, appropriating and taking home the great Truths concerning your Lord. Here, my Brethren, is the *life* of your faith.

But even appropriating is not enough to constitute *feeding*. After taking the morsel, it is put into the mouth and received inwardly—the draught of wine is poured into the throat and it disappears. Receive the Truth of God not only as a matter of creed, but drink it in as the ox sucks in the water when he stands up to his knees in the pool. Take Christ into your very soul—into your *heart’s* belief as well as into your mind’s belief! Mental beliefs shift and change, but the inward soul’s belief never alters. I reckon that we know nothing rightly till we have absorbed it and made it part and parcel of ourselves. The vital Truths with regard to our Lord Jesus must go down into the inward parts of the soul, as the food descends into the secret parts of the belly to feed the entire man.

And you know what becomes of the food. It is taken up by the Nature, itself, and becomes transmuted into it. After its digestion, it passes through various processes and ultimately becomes the life-blood out of which is built up nerve, muscle, sinew, bone, flesh, heart. Everything comes of it. Now, you must so believe in Jesus that no longer is it a matter of question with you whether you will retain Him or not, for if you have inwardly received Him, you cannot lose Him forever. Oh that blessed “*Quis separabit?*”—“Who shall separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?” It is difficult to deprive a person of that which he has received mentally, for facts learned in childhood are remembered even to old age.

No one could compel another to forget, but yet without such compulsion the memory might relax its hold through lapse of years—the mind might part with that which it has received, but no known power could take away from a man that which he has eaten and assimilated! A person may very readily pick my pocket of my wallet, but what I ate yesterday he cannot steal! That is mine—it is joined to myself and has built me up. I do not know what portion of my flesh comes of my morning meal, or of my mid-day repast, but there it is and there it must be. It has entered into me and never can be taken away from me. So when the soul takes in Christ’s Truth with that simple childlike faith which is the mouth, the Truth goes into the soul and is thought over, trusted in, delighted in and becomes so part and parcel of the inner consciousness and of the new nature of the man that it would be utterly impossible to tear away that Truth from him!

Pound a true Christian in a mortar and every single atom would say, “I belong to Christ.” Grind him finer than the smallest dust of the threshing floor and every minute particle would still say, “Christ is in me.” For so it

is that the Christ has entered the man, permeated his nature, become his very life and now it is, "I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me." Now is the text fulfilled in us, "For you are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall you also appear with Him in Glory." "Abide in Me," said our Lord and He gave His own promise to be with us forever. That is the result of eating Christ and to this we must come!

Beloved, I have thus explained the matter as well as I can, but as old Rollock says, "The only way to understand feeding upon Christ is to feed upon Christ." This is a practical, personal, experimental business. In learning certain acts you must, yourself, become a practical scholar, the master cannot teach by merely setting the copy—the scholar must imitate it line by line with his own hand—and so here I can teach little by words only, you must practice what is spoken. Now feed on the Lord Jesus! Let each one of you do it. I know what some will do—they will not feed on Christ, but they will pick over the heavenly bread like dainty folks who have no stomach for their meat. This bit of Christ they would have, but the other does not suit their taste—Justification by Faith they would have, but not Sanctification—they do not like *that*.

It is a whole Christ you and I must have—a whole Christ as to every part of His teaching, Character, work and offices. We must receive Him into ourselves without division, rejoicing to take Him just as He is. Especially must we receive the spirit of Christ, for, "if any man have not the spirit of Christ he is none of his." We must partake in the loving spirit, the self-denying spirit, the generous spirit which lives not within itself, but goes forth in forgiveness of injuries and in seeking to benefit all mankind. We must have Jesus in us, delighting to take in the whole of Him, for He says farther on in this very chapter, "He that eats *Me*"—that is even more comprehensive than His, "flesh and His blood"—"He that eats *Me*, even he shall live by *Me*." The entire Christ must be taken into the soul to build up the inner man.

II. Now, secondly, WHAT IS BOUND UP IN THIS EATING OF HIS FLESH AND DRINKING OF HIS BLOOD? Here we will take you back to the context. And notice, first, that there is, for this eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Christ, such an essential necessity that *he who has not so eaten and drank has no spiritual life at all*. It is a strong word, "Except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, *you have no life in you*." He does not mean that they have no *natural* life—He is speaking about *spiritual* things.

Some that are as foolish as Judaizers in the matter of sticking to the letter tell us that this means *existence* and that no man's eternal existence is certain except that of a Believer in Christ. That dogma is not taught here, certainly. Our Lord is not speaking of existence—He is speaking of a far higher thing than existence, namely, *life*. Have you ever learned the difference between death and non-existence and between life and existence? If you have not, you are babes in understanding and you will often be blundering and losing your way in the midst of texts of Scripture. A man may exist in everlasting death, as, alas, all who die unbelievers must

do. But blessed is he who lives! Blessed is he who shall live forever! Let me repeat the word, “lives”—I did not say “exists.”

What a glorious thing is life! Yet, if I had to explain to you what life is, I might find it far easier by some action of my own to show that I lived than to tell you exactly what life is. He, however, who eats Christ has life. He who has not done so has not life. Do you understand this—that unless you have received Christ by faith into your souls you have no life? You can work, you can walk, you can speak—you have all sorts of *natural* life—but you have not the life everlasting of which Jesus speaks! The life of God is not in you! You are dead and what a frightful condition that is—and to what greater horror does it lead! For wherever there is death, the dead thing will go a stage farther on. And what is that stage? Corruption!

Only leave a corpse alone long enough and it must corrupt. Flesh corrupts necessarily. Already there are some signs of corruption about every ungodly man—outward sin and especially the *inward* sin of rejecting Christ are grievous corruptions. Your worm has begun to devour, even the worm that never dies. Then will be reached another stage, for corruption must be cast into the fire. For utter rottenness, the end must be burning! O Sinner, your fire has begun to burn—the fire that will never be quenched—for sin is the kindling of Hell! It is an awful thing to abide in death and yet he that believes not on Christ is condemned already, because he has not believed on the Son of God! It is enough to make you spring from your seats, O you that are unbelievers, to think that you are not waiting to be tried—you are condemned already!

This is not a state of probation, as I often hear it said. Your probation is past! You are condemned already because you have not believed on the Son of God—and death is *now* upon you. The sentence has already begun to take effect and it will go on to the consummation of corruption till, at last, the Lord shall say, “Bury My dead out of My sight,” and you must be driven from the Presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power. There is no life in you unless you have received Christ! Will you think of this, you thinkers? Only think of your being dead! Will you think of this, you ceremonialists to whom the outward Baptism and the outward Lord’s Supper and the church attendance and the chapel going are everything? Unless you have fed on Christ there is no life in you!

Then comes, in the next place, the further Truth of God, namely, that *all who have received Jesus Christ as their meat and drink have eternal life*. “Whoso eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life.” I do not know how our Brethren who doubt the final perseverance of the saints manage to escape from the plain teaching of the text. There are always ways of getting over everything—you can drive a coach and six, they say, through any form of human language. But it does seem to me that if I have *eternal* life I must *eternally* live and cannot possibly die! if I have *eternal* life—if words mean anything—I am an *eternally* saved man! If I have received Jesus Christ into my soul, I have the life in me which will no more die than the life of God, for God’s own life is *eternal* life and if I have received such life as His, how can I perish?

I shall not be slain by sin—the life in me cannot sin because it is born of God! The life in me will throw off the darts of temptation if it is eternal life. There remains nothing for it but to shake off the death which often surrounds it by reason of the old man and to mount up like a bird set free from its cage, singing because of its escape, singing in the joy of life and winging its happy way upward to the Throne of God! Rejoice then, dear Friends, that if you have received Christ, you have eternal life in actual possession at this moment! “Sometimes I don’t feel it,” you say. Do not try to live by feeling! It is the most uncertain thing in the world. You might as well try to live by the barometer. Feeling goes up and down, up and down and changes more often than the moon. It is hard, uncomfortable living. Live by *faith*, for it is written, “the just shall live by faith.” Your life is a life of *trust*. Keep to it.

“Ah, but I see so much about me that grieves me.” Thank God it grieves you! If you see sin and it does *not* grieve you, it is a token of death! But if it grieves you, there is life in you, notwithstanding all the death that surrounds it. You may have seen a spark in the midst of a heap of autumn leaves which are all damp and will not burn, but only smolder and smoke. And yet that spark continues to live and the very smoke from the heap proves it is so. There is One who will not quench the smoking flax but will fan it till it rises to a flame, and then it will devour the leaves which covered it and dry up the dampness which sought to destroy it!

Furthermore, if you believe in Jesus and have received Him, you have gathered a life in which Christ gives us the *victory*, even through His name—life which will rise and rise and rise and conquer all sin. The Believer’s inner life must come to absolute perfection and tread every sin beneath its feet. Very different is this from the doctrine that a man who is a child of God may sin as he pleases and yet be saved! That doctrine is of the devil! But this is quite another doctrine and ministers to *holiness*. The quickened man will not willingly and habitually sin, for His Seed remains in him and he cannot sin because he is born of God. The tone and tenor and bearing of his life will be towards holiness and not towards sin—and the Lord who is able to keep him from falling will preserve him to His eternal kingdom and glory and He that has begun a good work in him will perfect it unto the day of Christ.

Our Lord, having thus given us the negative and the positive in our text, tells us that His flesh and blood, or Himself, received into the soul are most efficient nourishment—in it is *satisfaction*. “My flesh is meat *indeed*.” The Greek word is “truly,” or, some say, “true meat.” Now that which we eat for the body is not true meat. As George Herbert says, “When you are at your meat, eat a bit and then say, ‘Earth to earth I commit.’” It is a deadly business. It is burying earth in earth and that living grave of earth will be, itself, buried in earth, by-and-by. The eating of material meat is the poor building up of a fabric that must ultimately crumble into nothingness. The meat we eat has all the elements of dissolution about it before we receive it and it only feeds for a short time and, therefore, it is *not* meat, *indeed*.

In the matter of mental food, how much there is which is not bread and can never satisfy the mind. There is nothing in the world that can fill a soul to the fullest, but Jesus. Perhaps I address some thinker who has been trying to satisfy his soul by sniffing up the east wind of speculative philosophy. Ah, well, if you swallow a dose of Kant, or Hegel, Schleiermacher, or any one of those gentlemen—if you do not feel as if you had been eating bubbles and bladders, your mental constitution and mine greatly differ! There is nothing in them but gas, or less substantial vapor. Why, a man may take down their books—a whole dozen of them—and devour their contents and then say, “What is it? Is it not much ado about nothing? These thoughts are dreams, vacuums, airy nothings!” All the philosophies that ever were invented could not satisfy a *soul*!

The worst of it is that many do not want to be satisfied. “*We*,” they say, “would sooner be *seekers* after truth than *finders* of it.” They somewhat differ from men of practical common sense who, ordinarily, would rather have money than earn it and would rather eat their dinners than hunt for them. Still, that is their way and, if they like it, I suppose they must have it. Every creature after its own order! But if you want to be fed, dear Friends, depend upon it, *nothing* will feed you but Christ! There was a man of great appetite who lived many years ago and he began to feast ravenously. He was such a drinker that I may say of him that he drank up Jordan at a draught and he was such an eater, that, if you heard the story of what was brought to his table, you would be like the Queen of Sheba, utterly astonished, and say that the half was not told you!

His name was Solomon and he fed his soul with all the arts and sciences and with all the poetries and luxuries of the age. Nor did he refrain from laughter and wantonness. There was not a cup he did not drain, nor a dainty from any land, nor a fruit from any tree of which he did not eat. Yet when he rose up from that abundant banquet, all he had to say was, “Vanity of vanities; all is vanity!” I have seen a poor soul feed on Christ in a very humble cottage, upon a bed in a little room where she has lain alone almost all day and all night long, year after year, with many aches and pains and scarcely able to lift her hand to her head—with little but dry bread and a cup of water—and yet I have seen in that bedridden woman’s pain-worn face a fullness of satisfaction! I have known her speak like one that had not a wish ungratified, nor a grief worth mentioning. I have beheld her when, in her sufferings she could scarcely speak, and yet her every word was essential poetry when she spoke of *Him*, her best Beloved, who had filled her soul even to overflowing!

There is no food *indeed*, no drink *indeed*, for soul and spirit, but that which you find in the Incarnate God and in the Sacrifice of Christ! O you hungry, come here and eat that which is good and let your soul delight itself in fatness! O you thirsty, come here, for behold the waters are flowing freely and the wines on the lees are ready for you in Christ Jesus! That is what is bound up in feeding upon Jesus! There is satisfaction in Him!

And then there is bound up with it one other matter, namely, *in-dwelling*. I go over the same ground again. The Lord Jesus says, “He that eats My flesh and drinks My blood, dwells in Me and I in him.” When you

have eaten bread, it dwells in you and you in it—it goes into you and it is in you—it becomes part of yourself and you live by it and in its strength. It is a part of the fabric in which you dwell. Even so, he that believes in Christ lives in Christ. He does not merely go *to* Christ, but he enters *into* Christ. I delight to remember that I am not merely under the shadow of my Lord, but, as David in the caverns of Engedi, so does my soul hide herself right away in Jesus. We dwell *in* Him and are at home!

Moreover, He enters into us by our feeding upon Him so that He becomes our life, the spring of our being, the object of our desire, the motive force of our service! We are woven together—Christ warp and ourselves woof—woven together in a living loom and so conjoined that it were hard to tell where *He* ends who has no end and where we begin who are lost in Him! We are less than the least of all saints and yet members of *His* body who is Lord of All! We must leave the mystery remarking that if we have fed on Christ for ourselves, we have proof of what good meat it is we have fed on and we shall always pray, “Lord, evermore give us this bread.”

III. I need your attention for a few minutes while, in the third place, we consider WHAT REFLECTIONS ARISE OUT OF THIS TRUTH. I will simply throw them out for you to turn over for yourselves. They occurred to me when I was hearing a Brother preach upon a kindred subject. They took hold of my soul! May they prove useful to you. And the first was this. If I have a life that feeds on Christ, *what a wonderful life it must be*. My bodily life is wonderful, yet it only feeds on the fruits of the earth. My mental life is a marvel, but I know that I can build it up with literature and thought. Above all these I have a life which cannot feed on anything but the flesh and blood of the Son of God! What a life that must be!

What a wonderful being a man is when God is in him! I almost reverence the meanest saint when I think of this, for he bears about with him not a Kohinoor, but a gem of *life*, compared with which the queenly diamond pales into a glittering vanity! O Love Divine, do *You* tabernacle in the sons of men? I have been speaking of mysteries, but I ask you to explain which is the greater mystery, the Incarnation of God in Christ or the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in Believers? They are two wondrous stoops of Deity which can only be likened to each other, being each one without parallel. The spiritual life given to the regenerate must be a life of inconceivable excellence and heavenliness since it can only feed on Christ Himself.

The next thought is, if we have the life that feeds on such meat as this, *how strong it must be*. They say of such-and-such men that they may well be strong, seeing what good food they have. Yes, but see what food *we* have—how strong we must be! Do we know our own strength? I do not mean our natural strength, for that is weakness, but I mean the strength which lies in the new Nature when it has fed on Christ! O Brothers and Sisters, we are strong to do! We are strong to be! We are strong to suffer! And to take an easy illustration of this—the one that occurs to me first—look at how the saints have suffered. Take down “Foxye’s Book of Martyrs.” Read of Marcus Arethusia, stung to death by wasps without a sigh!

Think of Blandina tossed on the horns of bulls, exposed in a red-hot iron chair and yet never flinching! Give up Christ? They never dreamed of such a thing! Think of Lawrence on the gridiron and other innumerable heroes who were made strong because Christ was in them! Yes, and turn to humble men and women over yonder in Smithfield who could clap their hands while every finger burned like a candle and could shout, "None but Christ! None but Christ!" Why, they fed on the flesh and blood of Christ and that made them mighty! They were tortured on the rack like Anne Askew and yet they scorned to yield. Brave woman! The priests and the friars could not vanquish her! Neither could all the Bishop Bonners in the world burn Christ out of poor Tomkins!

When Bonner held the poor man's finger over the candle and said, "How will you like that in every single limb of your body?" Tomkins smiled at the bishop and said that he forgave him the cruelty that he was doing him. Christ in a man makes him a partaker of Divine strength. Do you not think, my Brothers and Sisters, that as you are not called to suffer, you ought to lay out your strength in the line of doing, giving, self-denial and serving Christ by holy living? Certainly you should *try* to do so and your strength will be found equal to it! You do not know how strong you are, but Paul shall tell you—"I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me." Well may you do all things if you have fed on Him who is All and in all!

Then a third reflection crossed my mind. If we have a life that feeds on this, *how immortal it must be*. We have a text to prove that and we have given it to you already—"He that believes on Him has everlasting life." When a man has nothing but bad food, you do not wonder that he dies. It is little marvel that they died by millions in India and China, considering how little nourishment they had during the famine. But if you and I eat Christ, eat the Incarnate God and drink His blood, how can we die? What? Kill a man that has even a *particle* of Christ in him? The devil cannot do it—he knows his Master! And what does Christ say? "I give unto My sheep eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand."

Oh, blessed Truth of God! We live, not only because our life is itself eternal, but because it feeds on eternal meat! We keep on receiving Christ day by day, for we live upon Him. Eating is not a work that we finished 25 years ago, but we continue to feed upon Jesus and, therefore, we live. Feeding upon Christ does not mean being converted and then saying, "I am safe and have no more need to care." Ah, no! It means beginning to receive Him in conversion and continuing to feed upon Him forevermore! And they who do this may be sure that their life is immortal! The next thought that struck me was this—if we feed on such meat as this, *how that life must develop*. I do not quite see in myself and, I may say that I do not see in some Believers, the full result I should like to see from such food.

Has this man been eating such Divine food? Let us hear him. He cries, "My leanness, my leanness, woe unto me!" He is doing Christ's work spasmodically, feebly, sleepily. He does it without joy and is soon weary.

Is this all he is going to do? Is this all he is going to be? Oh no, Brothers and Sisters, "It does not yet appear what we shall be." We shall grow! We shall grow! When I hear a man talk about being perfect in the flesh, I hope for the best and trust that he is not willfully lying. At any rate, I do not believe him! I would like to see his perfection rather than to hear *him* talk about it! I have generally found that when a cart needs a bell, it is a dust cart. I never knew the people of the Bank of England ring a bell when they were going through the streets with bullion and I do not think it is likely that a man who has much Grace will boast of it!

Yet I do believe that we can be developed into something very wonderful. A man may grow in Grace and in the knowledge of the Lord till his conversation is in Heaven and he becomes wholly consecrated to the Lord—hating sin and living like Enoch who walked with God. There have been such men and there *are* such men and women still among us whose lives glitter with the light of God—why should not we be like they are? They are stars in God's firmament and they shine in the Glory of the Most High! The Lord grant us that feeding on the Divine meat we may develop till the image of Jesus is perfected in us!

And, lastly, he who is thus fed, dear Friends, *what company he must keep!* "He that eats My flesh and drinks My blood, dwells in Me," says Christ, "and I in him." What heavenly company is this! He goes home at night to his poor family, perhaps, and there is nothing great about his house that you can see—but if your eyes are opened you will see that it is a king's palace—and if you are one of the Lord's and can step inside, you will see that he has "come to the general assembly and Church of the firstborn whose names are written in Heaven and unto God the Judge of All, and unto the spirits of just men made perfect," because he that has Christ in him has Heaven around him!

All good things are attracted by Christ in man. Put down a little honey and see how wasps and flies and bees come all around it! What is the sweetest honey in the universe? It is Christ—and if you have Christ in you, His name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love Him and they will come where He is. I will tell you—Christ is never without God and he that has Christ has the company of the Father! And Christ is never without the Spirit of God, for the Spirit of God is upon Him and he that has Christ is never without the Spirit! What Divine society is this! Our Lord Jesus is never unattended by a retinue of sublime intelligences and so if Christ is in you, He will give His angels charge over you to keep you in all your ways! They shall bear you up in their hands lest you dash your foot against a stone.

O Prince of the blood royal of Heaven! O Peer of God's own kingdom, you are more nearly related to the King of kings than the peers of the realm can be to the Queen, for are you not married to the Prince Imperial? Is He not coming to receive you to Himself, that where He is, you may be, also? If you are feeding on Him, your union with Him is complete! If He is your food; if He is your raiment; if He is your dwelling place; if He is your All in All, I think I may compare you to that angel of whom Milton sang, even Uriel, who dwelt in the center of the sun! It is there we live—in the

very substance and essence of all things and all things move around us like satellites around a central globe, for we are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a peculiar people inasmuch as we have fed on Christ—and Christ dwells in us and we in Him!

I have not said anything to the unconverted and yet I have meant it *all* for them. When you spread a dainty feast, you practically invite the family to come and dine. It is the very best way of enticing them. If they are hungry, the meats on the table will make their mouths water and they will long to partake. Oh, my Hearers, whoever you may be, if your mouths water after Christ, come and have Him for He is free to every soul that hungers and thirsts after Him! The Lord give Him to you at once, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 6:41-71.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—260, 820, 761.**

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON:

BELOVED FRIENDS, By the time that this note is printed, the Special Services at the Tabernacle will be drawing to a close and it will be meet to harrow in the seed with renewed supplication. Shall so much effort be in vain? It cannot be and yet everything depends upon the mighty working of the Spirit of God and, therefore, we must seek His face if we would see large results! I suggest that every sermon reader should spend a special time in prayer, next Lord's Day, in pleading for the revival of Evangelical religion.

The Times pronounced the funeral oration of the Evangelical party, but it is not dead, even, within the Established Church and certainly not among Dissenters! Let us, however, pray that it may exhibit more vigorous life. There is need of such supplication, but it must be presented in faith and with holy importunity. So let it be.

For myself, one word only. I am recovering and rest is restoring mind and heart. Pray for me.

Yours to serve always,

C. H. SPURGEON, Mentone, February 20, 1879.

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THE SOUL'S FOOD AND DRINK NO. 3192

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 7, 1910.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 5, 1873.

*"For My flesh is food, indeed, and My blood is drink, indeed.
John 6:55.*

IT was our Lord Jesus Christ who uttered these words and some of those who heard Him misunderstood His meaning, for they asked, "How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?" This is not altogether surprising, for there are still millions of persons upon the earth who will persist in understanding *literally* what our Lord intended to be understood *spiritually*. To us who know the meaning of Christ's words, it seems monstrous that anyone could have supposed that Jesus meant men to eat His real, literal flesh and to drink His actual blood! I must confess that, to me, it seems an instance both of the utter depravity of human nature and of the absolute insanity to which sin has driven mankind—that there are still so many persons existing in what we call this enlightened age who actually believe that we can eat the flesh of Christ and drink His blood! This is a cannibal notion which only needs to be mentioned to be denounced. Instead of having anything sacred about it, such teaching is utterly detestable—it is inconceivably idiotic and blasphemous! Idiocy and blasphemy seem to be blended together in it in about equal proportions. It is strange that such blessed words from such blessed lips should have been so shamefully misunderstood and misrepresented.

Beloved Friends, as many of you as have been taught of God, know the spiritual meaning of these words. You know that the Doctrine of the Incarnation of Christ is food to your soul and you know that the great Truth of the substitutory Sacrifice of Christ which is expressed by His blood, is the most nourishing cordial to your heart. You know that, in this sense, Christ's words are full of deep spiritual teaching—"My flesh is food, indeed, and My blood is drink, indeed." That word, "indeed," seems to contrast this spiritual nourishment with all ordinary food and drink. The best of literal food only feeds the body for a time, for that body ultimately decays. It is not in the power of food to repair the waste that is continually going on, that the physical system shall forever abide firm and strong. This food is food, but it is not "food, indeed." There are also various kinds of drink that refresh and invigorate the body—and by means of these we are enabled to continue from day to day—but where is the water, where is the crystal fountain that can give immortality? Where is the juice expressed from any fruit that grows beneath the sky that can rid the body of all disease and pain and cause it to *live on without end*? You all know, then, among all the many kinds of literal food and drink, there is not any food that is worthy to be called food, indeed, nor any drink that is worthy to be called drink, indeed.

That word, "indeed," also implies the contrast between this spiritual nourishment and all mere mental food and drink. Our soul needs food—and the proper food for it is truth, wisdom, knowledge. Solomon said, "That the soul is without knowledge, it is not good." No disciple of Christ who has the spirit of his Master, is opposed to the spread of wisdom. The "children of light" wish to have every kind of light disseminated as widely as possible. "Everyone that does evil hates the light," but he that does good loves the light and says, "The more light there is, the better." But there is no mental food save that of which I am about to speak which is food, indeed, and drink, indeed! Paul truly says, "Knowledge puffs up," and so it does if it is not kept under proper control. When a man has fed on the most profound knowledge, the spirit produced by such food has often been a proud and arrogant one which has led him to rebel against the Infinite Wisdom of God, and set up his own opinion in opposition to the Truths of God revealed in the Scriptures. What earthly knowledge is there that can afford suitable food to our entire manhood? Suppose I could compass the whole range of science—if I could thread the spheres as on a string, if I could bore the rocks and read the whole of their ancient history, if there were no secret of science left unrevealed to me—yet, if I had an aching heart, all my knowledge would

not satisfy my soul or give me rest. In fact, the very acquisition of knowledge has often led to an increase of care. Solomon said, "Much study is a weariness of the flesh," and many have found it to be so. It certainly is not food, indeed, or drink, indeed. Poets have drunk at the Castilian Fountain and their verses have astonished whole nations, yet they have gone to their graves unsatisfied and despairing. Mathematicians, with wondrous minds, have mapped out the heavens, studied the stars, laid down the laws that govern the planets and traced the pathways of comets for thousands of years, yet their verdict has been the same as Solomon's, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity."

But I have to speak to you concerning knowledge which is satisfying, concerning truth which does content the spirit and, in doing so, I must draw a clear, hard and fast line. No one knows the flavor or effect of food and drink who has not tasted them. It is no use for me to speak to anyone about food which he has never seen, or handled, or tasted. If he is to appreciate my testimony concerning it, he must have partaken of it. Or if my testimony is concerning a certain drink, he must at least have sipped of it. Otherwise, let me speak as earnestly as I may, he will be unable to comprehend what I am saying. Now, my Lord Jesus is food, indeed, but the *soul* must feed upon Him if it is to know how He nourishes it! He is drink, indeed, but unless this drink enters into the soul, it will be a stranger to the spiritual power which Jesus always imparts when He is received into the heart by faith! If you have really received Christ Jesus the Lord. If He is "in you the hope of glory," then He is the food of your soul and you can, from your own experience, confirm His declaration, "My flesh is food, indeed, and my blood is drink, indeed."

I. While I am speaking, let us, each one, try to feed spiritually upon the two great Doctrines to which the words, "flesh," and "blood," may be taken to refer, namely, the Incarnation of the Son of God and His death as His people's Substitute. And first, let me say that THESE DOCTRINES ARE MOST COMFORTING FOOD TO THE SOUL.

Where will you find any other Doctrines so comforting as these? I, a sinner, have broken God's righteous Law and so offended Him that I am driven from His Presence and am shut off from all true joy and peace. But, *in order to redeem man, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Himself, became Man.* "The Word was made flesh." Why it makes the joy-bells ring in my heart as I tell you again the old familiar story! The angels, when they were sent to tell men that unto them was born a Savior, proclaimed with joyous sounds the glad message that God had come down to earth. What joyful news it is for you, O men and women, that God has taken humanity into union with the Deity, that the Infinite became an Infant, that He who made the heavens and the earth was wrapped in swaddling clothes just as you and your own babes have been! Surely, now that God has thus become one with us, there must be peace on earth and good will toward men! He cannot be unwilling to bless those who have that human nature which He has, Himself, assumed! Even as I talk of this great Truth of God, I feel in my heart a joy that comforts me—and so Christ's flesh is food, indeed, to my soul! And when I think that, in that flesh, Jesus lived here on earth for over 30 years and knew all the weakness, temptation and suffering to which that flesh is liable—when I think how He proved Himself to be bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh—then I understand how He sympathizes with the weak, tempted and suffering sons of men! And this makes the sad heart glad and so, again, Christ's flesh is food, indeed! Then, Beloved, when you think that He at whose belt hang the keys of Hell and of Death, once toiled and suffered and, at last died, just as you have to toil and suffer and die—and when you remember that from the heights of Glory, Jesus looks down both as the Son of God and the Son of Mary, does not this feed you with true soul-comforting food?

Remember, also, that *whatever Jesus did as Man, He did as the great Representative Man*, who has all the while been acting on behalf of His people. Adam was a representative man, but I get no food for my soul from him. He took my bread away, he took my life away, for "in Adam all died." But when Christ came here as the Representative of His people, what did He do? He kept the Law of God perfectly and His obedience was reckoned as the obedience of all who were in Him! As Adam's sin was imputed to all who were in him as their federal head, so Christ's obedience was imputed to all who were in Him as their federal Head. The condemnation of our Surety and Substitute was our condemnation, too. And when He was taken away and put to death, we were crucified in Him. And when He was laid in the grave, we were buried with Him and, blessed be God, when He rose from the dead, we rose with Him and we were justified by His Resurrection! He could never have come out of the prison of the grave if He had not paid all His people's debts. And when He was set free, they were set free! His Resurrection was the guarantee of their resurrection. Is there not most comforting food for your soul in this great Truth? Is not Christ's flesh food, indeed, when you look at it as the representative body of your Substitute and Surety?

Best of all, Christ, has gone back to Glory as the Representative of His people. He did not take His soul, alone, when He ascended to His Father, leaving His body in the tomb, but that very flesh which was pierced by the nails, that very flesh through which the soldier's spear went to His heart, He carried right up to the Throne of God and, in so doing, He carried us who are in Him up there and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Him! What joy it gives us to remember that—

*“There sits in our flesh,
Upon a Throne of light
One of a human mother born
In perfect Godhead bright!”*

II. Changing the direction of our thought, yet still keeping to the same main track, let us turn to the second clause of the text. “My blood is drink, indeed.” That is to say, CHRIST’S REDEEMING SACRIFICE IS MOST SOUL-SATISFYING. It is not merely soul-comforting, but soul-satisfying!

We have stated the case hundreds of times in this place, but must state it yet again. Man had sinned and God was willing to forgive. But the inflexible law of the universe is that sin must entail punishment—and it is so good and righteous a law that to alter it would be ruinous! Therefore punishment for sin there must be—but Jesus endured the punishment due to all His people! In order that He might be able to do so, He took upon Him our flesh, and that flesh was made to bleed even unto death in the accomplishment of that purpose. We believe in the real, *literal substitution* of Christ in the place of all whom He had covenanted to save, and as many as believe in Him may know assuredly that their sins were transferred from them and laid upon Him! Then, when their sins were laid upon Christ—

“Jehovah bade His sword awake”—

against the Sin-Bearer and He smote Christ instead of His people—and His flowing blood brings peace and pardon to them as He dies, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring them to God! I cannot help saying that this Doctrine fills my soul with an indescribable contentment! I am satisfied to the fullest when this Truth enters my heart and so, Christ’s blood is drink, indeed, to me!

For see, Beloved, God’s justice is satisfied. How could it be otherwise when God, Himself, makes the Atonement? When Jesus Christ, the Son of God, made Himself liable for His people’s guilt, what a complete vindication of the justice of God was there! More than that, the great Covenant of Grace was ratified by the blood of Christ’s atoning Sacrifice. No testament is valid as long as the testator lives, but Jesus has died and, therefore, every legacy of His love is made sure to all those to whom He has willed it. The Covenant made with Adam fell through because Adam could not keep it. But the Covenant made with the Second Adam, the Lord from Heaven, stands fast as the everlasting hills, for Christ has kept it in every particular, offering to God complete obedience, both active and passive, in His life of holiness and in His death of agony! O then, my Soul, God is satisfied, your sin is pardoned, Covenant blessings are secured to you—so is not Christ’s blood drink, indeed, to you? As we think that the Son of God became the Son of Mary in order that He might die for us, that He might take our place, and die in our place, what can we need more to chase away our fears, to fulfill our hopes and to confirm our faith? If any of you need more than that, it is not possible for us to present it to you, or even to imagine it! What the Son of God said was finished has been finished and, therein our souls may rest, and rest forever!

III. But, beloved Friends, we not only need spiritual food to comfort and to satisfy our souls, we also need SPIRITUAL FOOD TO STRENGTHEN OUR SOULS. And here, again, Christ’s flesh is food, indeed, and His blood is drink, indeed!

How strong are they who live upon the Truth of an Incarnate God, and of that Incarnate God dying in the place of His people! What strength it gives to *faith*! I have seen weak faith and I have seen strong faith, but I have generally found weak faith associated with dependence upon feelings, but I have never known strong faith existing anywhere except in connection with Emmanuel, God With Us, living and dying in our place! I have seen poor humble men and women who knew little more than that they were lost through sin and that Christ had come to save them, yet they have lived and died strong in faith, giving glory to God—for their faith had been nourished upon this food, indeed, and drink, indeed, of the Incarnation and substitutionary Sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Son of Mary!

And fervent *love* is produced by the same spiritual food and drink. If Christ is to you merely some historic person who once appeared upon the earth and is now gone forever, your love for Him will be very faint if it exists at all! But if

He is your own personal Savior, your ever-present Friend, your living Brother, bone of your bone and flesh of your flesh, your Surety and Substitute who bore your sins in His own body on the tree, then your love goes out to Him in a vehement flame! I do not wonder that Mary Magdalene was among the holy women who were last at the Cross and first at the tomb, for Christ had done so much for her that she loved Him much. And in proportion as *you* realize what His Incarnation and His death have done for you, your love will feed upon that food, indeed, and drink, indeed, until it shall become stronger even than death itself!

This spiritual food and drink will also make us strong for *service*. There was a man—you will all recognize his portrait by the bare outline—who was at first a great enemy of Christ, but who, after his conversion, lived upon the food of which I have been speaking. And you know what an untiring servant of Christ he became. He went from city to city preaching the Word. He was stoned and left for dead, but he rose to his feet and went on preaching! His very dreams were full of service for his Master, for in a night vision, there stood by him a man of Macedonia who said to him, “Come over into Macedonia and help us.” And immediately he obeyed the Spirit’s call. The Lord blessed the Word, but His servant was arrested, beaten and thrust into prison—yet he and his companion made the prison cell ring with their joyful songs of praise unto their God! This man preached the Word throughout a great part of the then known world. We read of him at Damascus, Jerusalem, Ephesus, Athens, Corinth, Rome and it is probable that he even came as far as these islands of the West. And wherever he went, he preached Jesus Christ and Him crucified—and all the while he was sustained by the food, indeed, and drink, indeed, of the Incarnation and the atoning Sacrifice of the Son of God! If I had the time, I might tell you of other great workers for the Lord Jesus Christ whose lives were crowded with holy service—all of whom derived their strength from this same food, indeed, and drink, indeed, of which I have been speaking.

But, Beloved, if you need further proof that the flesh of Christ is food, indeed, and His blood is drink, indeed, let me remind you of the many who have been made strong for suffering through this spiritual nourishment. You are all more or less familiar with the amazing story of the persecution of the early Christians and of their heroic endurance even unto death. What was it that sustained them but this food, indeed, and drink, indeed? Then, all along the ages, and in almost all lands, there have been brave men and women, and even boys and girls, who counted not their lives dear unto them, but gladly gave them up rather than deny their Lord and Savior. *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs* has preserved the record of many notable instances that I need not now repeat, but you will do well to keep the stories in mind, and to teach them to your children, that they, also, may learn what suffering can be endured by those who have had such food for their souls as our text describes! No doubt there were many brave utterances like that historic saying of Latimer, “Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man! We shall this day light such a candle, by God’s Grace, in England, as I trust shall never be put out.” Surely these men had food to eat of which the poor puny professors of these days seem not to have tasted! They were made strong for suffering through partaking of this food, indeed, and drink, indeed, whereof if a man eats and drinks abundantly, he shall be fitted to perform such exploits as were worked by the heroes of faith of whom Paul wrote in his Epistle to the Hebrews.

O Sirs, if you want to be strong to live, or work, or suffer for Jesus, you must feed upon Jesus! It is only in the strength of this food and this drink that one can, in these days, live an honest and upright life. It is only in the force derived from this food and this drink that anyone can bear a bold and faithful testimony for Jesus. And, mark you, it is only by feeding upon such food and such drink as this that one will be able to face death with a brave countenance and look forward to the unseen world with eyes undimmed! Yes, I have seen weak women with the hectic flush of consumption on their cheeks, and with the unnatural brightness which that disease imparts to the eyes—and I have heard them talk of dying as calmly as if they were speaking of going out for a day’s excursion! I have even heard them singing as though their death day had been their wedding day, so glad were they at the prospect of soon being where the day breaks and the shadows flee away forever! Joan of Arc was never such a heroine as these women have been, for they have vanquished even death, itself, and waved the banner of the Cross all through the Valley of Death-Shade. It was this food, indeed, and this drink, indeed, that helped them thus to die—no, that *prevented them from dying*—for to them death was but a translation from a world of mortals to a world of immortal spirits around the Throne of God on high!

IV. I want now to say something that cannot often be said in a great promiscuous congregation, lest it should be misunderstood. But it is a fact that certain kinds of food and drink produce EXHILARATION in those who partake of them, so that men become joyous and excited after they have been sitting long at a festival. There is often much evil in the

excitement which results from these earthly feasts, but there is one kind of food and drink which gives an exhilaration which is not only harmless, but is truly blessed! And that is the food, indeed, and drink, indeed, of which I have been speaking to you. Have you experienced that exhilaration, my Brother? Do you know what this holy excitement is, my Sister? Have you, beloved Friends, ever thought of Christ dying on the Cross for you until you felt that you must sing for very joy of heart? Have you ever realized that your sins were washed right away in the Red Sea of your Savior's blood and that there was not even one of them left to oppress you? Then you must have felt that Dr. Watt was not in the least exaggerating when he wrote those lines that we have often sung—

*“Yes, we will praise You, dearest Lord,
Our souls are all on flame!
Hosanna round the spacious earth,
To Your adored name.
Angels, assist our mighty joys,
Strike all your harps of gold!
But when you raise your highest notes,
His love can ne'er be told.”*

Yes, I am quite sure that you have felt so glad that you have wanted all the angels to assist your mighty joys! When you have realized all that Christ's Incarnation and death have meant for you. When you have in a measure comprehended the transcendent Grace that made Him stoop so low as to become near of kin to you, your heart must surely have danced at the sound of His name! I feel persuaded that there must have been times in this Tabernacle when you were so joyful that you could hardly remain in your seats. When you have almost wished that, like David, you might see the Ark of the Lord come along and that you might dance before the Lord even as David did! You know that there is no other joy that is even for a moment worthy to be compared with the joy which comes to us through Jesus Christ! And the man who has once had a sip from that well wants to lie down beside it and drink it dry! He knows he can never do that, but he wishes that his soul could be so enlarged that he could take in all the love of his Incarnate God—the wondrous heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths of that love which must forever surpass our knowledge! O you who want to find the highest joy that can be found on earth, here it is! Jesus' wounds are the Fountains where heavenly bliss is distilled! In Emmanuel, God With Us, born at Bethlehem and dying on Calvary—in His Incarnation and His atoning Sacrifice—you will find that food, indeed, and drink, indeed, which shall give the loftiest spiritual exhilaration to all who feed upon them!

V. Now I close my discourse by reminding you that **WHOEVER EATS THIS SPIRITUAL FOOD SHALL LIVE FOREVER.**

Just before our Lord uttered the words of our text, He had said to the Jews, “Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from Heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from Heaven: if any man eats of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is My flesh which I will give for the life of the world.” If you had lived with the children of Israel in the wilderness—and you had eaten manna as they did—you would have died as they did. If you come to the Communion Table, and merely eat bread, “not discerning the Lord's body,” you will die. Or if you go to a so-called “priest” and he gives you a “consecrated” wafer, and you eat it, you will die. But whoever spiritually feeds upon Jesus—whoever feeds his soul upon the great central Truth that God in human flesh was made the Substitute for all who believe in Him—he shall never die! His body may pass through the change that we call, death, but his spirit shall live forever and, in due time, his body and soul shall be reunited and his complete manhood shall be “forever with the Lord.”

O Sinners, unless you feed upon Christ, there is nothing but eternal death before you! But if you receive Him into your soul even as you receive food into your body, you shall never die and the bliss of Heaven shall be your everlasting portion! I have preached to you in very simple language, but there is in my theme a mystery that excels all the wisdom of the sages. Let me try to put it before you once more before I close. It is a fact that the Word, who was God, and who made Heaven and earth, and without whom was not anything made that was made—it is a fact that this Word was made flesh and dwelt among men! In other words, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, did come into this world, was here born of a virgin, here lived and labored as a Man, and here died for those who believe in Him, “for God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life...he that believes on

Him is not condemned: but he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God.” After Jesus had died in the place of all who believe in Him, and after He had risen from the grave as the sure sign that His redeeming work had been accomplished, and that His people were forever free, He returned to His Father's right hand in Glory. And there He sits as the Representative of all His chosen until the appointed time for Him to come again to this earth, “to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe.” “Be it known unto you, therefore, brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by Him all that believe are justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the Law of Moses.”

There is the Gospel as Paul preached it! May the Spirit of God enable you to receive it by faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and the Son of Mary—and so you will find that His flesh will become to you food, indeed, and His blood drink, indeed. God grant it, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 6:22-59.

Verses 22-24. *The day following, when the people who stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was no other boat there, except that one which His disciples had entered, and that Jesus went not with His disciples into the boat, but that the disciples were gone away alone—however other boats from Tiberias came near the place where they ate bread after the Lord had given thanks—when the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, neither the disciples, they also got into boats and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus.* [See Sermon #947, Volume 16—SEEKING FOR JESUS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Everything looked very favorable, did it not? These people put themselves to considerable trouble in order to get where the Savior was—they were not satisfied to be away from Him—they were “seeking for Jesus.”

25, 26. *And when they had found Him on the other side of the sea, they said unto Him, Rabbi, when did You come here? Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, You seek Me not because you saw the miracles but because you ate of the loaves, and were filled.* He did not gratify their curiosity by telling them how or when He came there, for that was no concern of theirs. Neither is it the business of Christ's preachers to spin ingenious theories about the Gospel, or to tell pretty tales to amuse their hearers. Their business is to deal faithfully with men's hearts and consciences as their Master did when He said to these people, “You seek Me not because you saw the miracles.” They said that at first, no doubt. Christ's miracles dazzled them so they sought Him in order to see more miracles worked by Him. This was not the highest motive for seeking the Savior, but they had found a still lower one—they were now following Him because they “ate of the loaves and were filled.” Yet the Master did not repel them and thus He teaches us that it is better to follow Him from the lowest motive than not to follow Him at all. Perhaps some of us have been too severe upon certain people. We have said that they come to our place of worship out of mere curiosity. What if they do? It is well that they come at all, so let us not cut even the spider's web that links a man in any sense with Christ—that web may grow into a thread, that thread into a cord, that cord into a cable and there may yet be an unbreakable union between that man and Christ! That which begins in an inferior way may lead to something higher and better. Still, it is wise to let people know that they are not deceiving Christ, even though they deceive themselves as to their motive in seeking Him. So He said to them—

27. *Labor not for the food which perishes, but for that food which endures unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you: for Him has God the Father sealed.* They labored hard in order to get the bread that perishes, so Christ bade them devote their energies to a better objective. This is a very extraordinary verse if we regard the letter of it and not the spirit. Christ told these people not to labor for that which they could only get by labor—“Labor not for the food which perishes.” Yet few men get their daily bread or meat without laboring for it. And then Christ told them to labor for that which nobody ever does get by laboring—“Labor for that food which endures unto everlasting life.” This is an instance of how the mere letter of the Word kills. We must take the spirit of it—and then we understand that what the Savior meant was this—“Do not be spending all your energies to get that which will melt away when you get it, but spend your time and strength in seeking after that which will last through all time and be yours to all eternity.”

28. *Then said they unto Him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?* They wanted to do the greatest of all works for, by, “the works of God,” they evidently meant the most important, the most sublime, the greatest of all works. “What shall we do in order to work such works as these?”

29. *Jesus answered and said to them, This is the work of God, that you believe on Him whom He has sent.* This is an amazing statement which is just as true, now, as when Christ uttered it in Capernaum! The greatest and best work that any of you can do is to believe on Jesus Christ! Though, in another sense, this is not a *work* at all—but ceasing from your own works and resting in the finished work of Jesus Christ. But if any man would do that which is most acceptable to the thrice-holy God, let him believe on Jesus Christ whom God has sent!

30. *They said therefore unto Him, what sign will You show us, then, that we may see and believe You? What work will You do?* This was a shameful question to put to Christ when they had so recently been miraculously fed by Him and so had received the best sign of His Divine Power in the multiplication of the loaves and fishes!

31-34. *Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, he gave them bread from Heaven to eat. Then Jesus said to them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from Heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from Heaven. For the bread of God is He who comes down from Heaven and gives life unto the world. Then they said unto Him, Lord, give us this bread always.* This would have been a good prayer if they had understood the meaning of the Savior's words but, as it was, it was a blind prayer. They did not know what Jesus meant when He spoke of the bread of God which come down from Heaven. They were thinking about the bread that perishes—the bread for the body—so they prayed blindly when they said, “Lord, give us this bread always.” Do you not think that many a prayer which children are taught in their childhood—and which men and women continue to pray for years—may be as blind a prayer as this one was? They know not what they ask and so the question very naturally arises as to whether it is a prayer at all!

35. *And Jesus said to them, I am the Bread of Life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger and he who believes on Me shall never thirst.* [See Sermon #1112, Volume 19—SOUL-SATISFYING BREAD—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] “I will take away his need by removing his hunger. I will take away his pain by removing his thirst.”

36. *But I said to you that you have seen Me, and yet do not believe.* See, then, how little there was of advantage in the mere sight of Christ. Many seem to think that it must have been much easier for people to believe in Christ if they had actually seen Him, but it was not so. There were multitudes that saw Him and saw His miracles—and even ate the bread which came from His wonder-working hands—yet they believed not. Faith does not come in that way, for it does not come by sight, but sight comes by faith! Seeing is not believing, but believing is often seeing—it opens the eyes so that they are able to see what before was hidden from them.

37. *All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me.* God's own elect shall surely come to Christ. They shall all believe in Him and be saved by Him.

37. *And him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.* [See Sermons #1762, Volume 30—HIGH DOCTRINE AND BROAD DOCTRINE; #2349, Volume 40—ALL COMERS TO CHRIST WELCOMED; #2954, Volume 51—THE BIG GATES WIDE OPEN and #3000, Volume 52—NO. 3000—OR, COME AND WELCOME—Read/download all these sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] “Whoever he is that comes, I will never reject him. Whoever he may be that accepts Me and believes in Me, he is Mine and I will never cast him away from Me.”

38-44. *For I came down from Heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me. And this is the Father's will which has sent Me, that of all who He has given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son, and believes on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day. The Jews then murmured at Him, because He said, I am the bread which came down from Heaven. And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it, then, that He says, I came down from Heaven? Jesus therefore answered and said to them, murmur not among yourselves. No man can come to Me, except the Father which has sent Me draws him.* [See Sermons #182, Volume 4—HUMAN INABILITY; #2386, Volume 40—THE DRAWINGS OF DIVINE LOVE—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] “I did not expect that you would receive Me. I did not imagine that you would believe Me. You have not yet been drawn to Me by the Father, so I knew that you would not come to Me.” But he who is drawn by the Father will come to Christ. And Christ tells us what will be his future lot—

44-46. *And I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the Prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man, therefore, that has heard, and has learned of the Father, comes unto Me. Not that any man has seen the Father, except He who is from God, He has seen the Father.* He corrects the notion into which they might have fallen that they could ever see the Father as He had seen Him. Into that vision none of us can ever enter, for there is a peculiar Divine relationship between Jesus and the Father which we cannot know.

47. *Verily, verily, I say unto you*—Jesus uttered this great Truth of God with very special emphasis. “Verily, verily, I say unto you”—

47. *He that believes on Me has everlasting life.* [See Sermons #1642, Volume 28—“VERILY, VERILY” and #2706, Volume 46—FEEDING ON THE BREAD OF LIFE—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] That text is worthy to be printed in letters of gold, but even then the letters would be far inferior to the message itself! If it is written on all your hearts by the Holy Spirit, you will not need any other sermon than this Divine text—“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believes on Me has everlasting life.”

48-51. *I am the Bread of Life. Your Fathers did eat manna in the wilderness and are dead. This is the bread which came down from Heaven that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from Heaven: if any man eats of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.* Here we have the Doctrine of the great atoning Sacrifice by which sin is put away, and that is not merely Christ Incarnate, but Christ yielding up His life, dying in the place of guilty sinners. That is the food, whereof, if any man eats he shall live forever.

52. *The Jews therefore quarreled among themselves, saying, How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?* These Jews were still stumbling at the letter of Christ's words—still in their blind carnality misunderstanding Christ.

53-56. *Then Jesus said to them, verily, verily, I say unto you, Except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood, has eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food, indeed, and My blood is drink, indeed. He that eats My flesh, and drinks My blood dwells in Me, and I in him.* [See Sermon #1288, Volume 12—TRULY EATING THE FLESH OF JESUS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Do not any of you interpret this teaching of Christ as the Jews did, after a carnal fashion, and fancy that we literally eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ when we come to the Communion Table. The Lord's Supper was not instituted at the time that our Savior spoke these words and He was speaking of quite another matter—the spiritual reception of Christ—the real and true feeding by faith with our spirit upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

57-59. *As the living Father has sent Me, and I live by the Father: so he that eats Me, even he shall live by Me. This is that bread which came down from Heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eats of this bread shall live forever. These things said He in the synagogue, as He taught it in Capernaum.*

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

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

MEAT INDEED, AND DRINK INDEED NO. 3424

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 1914.

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

*“For My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed.”
John 6:55.*

THE crowd had followed Jesus for the loaves and fishes. He gently upbraids them for being guided by so carnal an appetite and impelled by so coarse a motive to follow Him. Then He tells them that there is a spiritual meat which is far better—a spiritual drink far richer than those things which nourish the body and gratify the animal tastes. After which, speaking of Himself *spiritually*, He says, “My flesh is meat indeed”—real meat, such as supports the soul, and, “My blood is drink indeed”—real drink, the best, the truest beverage, such as invigorates the spirit for immortality!

Why, you may ask, on the outset, does our Lord speak of His flesh and blood as separated? I tried to explain that some time ago when we gathered around this Table. There must be, in the Lord’s Supper, bread and wine—but bread *separated* from the wine—as our Lord speaks of His flesh as separate from His blood, and this was to indicate that it is as a dying Savior that He is most precious to us. The blood separated from the flesh indicates death. It is to the death of Jesus that the Believer first turns His eyes and it is when considering the living, reigning Christ as having once been slain that our richest comfort comes to us. So it is not an unnecessary multiplication of words, or a vain repetition of the same idea, when our Lord says to us, “My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.” He thereby denotes Himself as the *dying* Christ.

Taking the words as they stand, our first point will be that—

I. THE FLESH OF CHRIST IS MEAT INDEED—SPIRITUAL MEAT.

The likeness is emphatic—it is “meat indeed.” It is like meat *because meat, or food, sustains the body.* The body could not be kept in vigor ordinarily or without a miracle, except by the use of food. We pine, we languish, we sicken, we die without bread! So the soul without Jesus, supposing it to be alive, must soon sicken, pine, be famished and decay. You, O Believer, with all your strength would be weak as water at this moment if Jesus were not now your present support! All your past experience would go for nothing if you had not now a present Christ to stay your hopes upon. It would be only a matter of time with you—you would before long sink into the corruption of an open apostasy. Like a man shut up in a dungeon and deprived of food who drags out for a few days, a most painful existence and, at the last, expires and becomes carrion, so must it be with you. Unless Jesus Christ is your daily meat, you

would go back to the carnal elements of the world and become corrupt and depraved as others are! Christ is the only true sustenance of the quickened soul. But, mark you, let a man eat what meat he may, it does not always so sustain him but that he is not sometimes weak and stretched upon the bed of languishing. It cannot so sustain him but that before long he must be carried to his grave. But if your souls learn to feed on Jesus, they shall enjoy the blessed immunity promised to the inhabitants of Zion—they shall not say, “I am sick”—they shall never die! They shall feed on this immortal bread such as angels eat. You shall be carried up to the seats of the immortals to dwell forever with the Christ upon whom you have fed, coming to Him first to appease your hunger—and believing on Him continuously to sustain your life!

Meat not only provides substance, but it *assists growth*. The child cannot develop into an adult if he is denied his daily food. He must certainly die in infancy or in childhood if he is without the nutriment which is requisite to the building up of his bodily frame. Now, Brothers and Sisters, we are babes in Grace, many of us. We have been brought to Jesus’ feet, and as such, we are of those who make up His Kingdom, but we need to grow into spiritual manhood. We are not content with little faith, dim hope and a spark of love. We need to attain unto perfection in spiritual things—I mean to be perfectly developed men and women strong in the fullness of spiritual energy—and this can only be by Christ. Only can you grow as you increase in the knowledge of Him and in subjection to the influences of His indwelling Spirit. As food makes our bodies grow, so Christ is food to our souls—He is “meat indeed”—for He makes us grow after a Divine sort. Let a man feed upon what meat he may, he shall not come unto absolute perfection. But let him feed on Jesus and he shall! Through the Grace of God in Christ Jesus we shall yet come to the fullness of the stature of men in Christ. Up there they are all men in Christ. Before the Throne of God they are all perfect and without fault—and this because they have fed upon this sacred meat which makes them grow until they come unto the perfect image of Him they feed upon!

Meat does not only sustain and cause growth, *but it makes up for the daily waste of the body*. Some people forget that every exertion of the body wears it away as truly as the machine spends its fuel and wastes itself. As even an engine of iron needs repair, so does this body of ours, and the meat we feed upon goes to repair the daily waste to which bone, and muscle, and nerve are all subjected. Beloved, Jesus Christ, in this sense, is meat. “He restores my soul.” He makes up for the waste of temptation, for the wear and tear of care, for the fret of trouble, for the fume and flurry of manifold anxieties—for everything that would waste a man away. My soul once again renews her strength like the eagle when she sips from the brook that flows from the foot of the Cross. Oh, Believer, you will soon degenerate—this world of sin will soon make you backslide and lose every good thing you have unless you go continually to Christ and feed on Him! But feeding on Him, the world shall not hurt you, temptations shall not wound you, your trials shall not overwhelm you, for you shall find His flesh to be meat indeed! The best meat that

man's body can receive will not always repair the waste. After a certain period of life, the body must decay, and the most nutritious diet cannot prevent the hair, the teeth, the eyes, the legs, the arms—the entire man—from discovering that the hour of prime has passed and that the time of decay has arrived! Bend must the man and lean upon his staff, and eat or drink what he will, according to the strictest diet and regimen of the physician, yet still the time of waste has come. They who look out of the windows shall be darkened. The teeth shall fail because they are few, and the pillars of the house shall tremble. But, Beloved, His flesh is “meat indeed,” because they that feed upon Him shall still bring forth fruit in old age! They shall be fat and flourishing, to show that the Lord is upright. Their last days shall be their best days and, instead of declining, they shall gather strength with the multiplying years till the very moment when heart and flesh shall fail, and then shall be the instant when the strength of their souls and their portion forever shall be most fully revealed to them!

Moreover, *meat is a great remover of pain and disease*. Without meat, or without food of some kind, a man's inward constitution becomes full of gnawing and anguish. Bitter are the grips of hunger. Perhaps no pain can be more severe, when a man is long exposed to it, than hunger, with the exception of thirst. No doubt, lack is the root of multitudes of the diseases of the poor. Generous diet often does more for the sick than the best medical prescriptions. It is certainly so with Believers in Christ. His flesh is meat indeed in this respect. The pains of conviction, the throbs of a guilty conscience—all are stopped when a man gets Christ! If a man is spiritually sick with worldliness, with doubt, with pride, with envy—with anything that is the common sickness of the child of God—let him get but a hearty feast upon the flesh of Jesus, and the disease will fly away! Christ puts such vigor into the spiritual system of His own people when they feed on Him, that it drives out diseases as strong men cast them off by the very force of constitution! Blessed and happy is he who eats this flesh, for it is in this sense, meat indeed!

Once more, meat is used constantly by us *for the development of strength*. The man ill-fed cannot lift the weights that another can who has a more generous diet upon his table. Lowness of food brings littleness of strength. Now Jesus Christ is the only food that can make His people strong for service. Feed on Him and you shall run and not be weary! You shall walk and not faint. It is meat indeed because it gives us strength that is all but boundless. It clothes a mortal man with the might of God. It makes the feeblest Christian in the Church, when he has fed upon Christ, to be as a giant to suffer or to do!

I cannot enlarge upon all these points, though there is enough in any one of them for a sermon, but, dear child of God, seek after Christ and be not satisfied until daily you are fed and nourished upon Him.

The word, “*indeed*,” gives the sentence an air of strong protest. We must take this into consideration. Why does He say that His flesh is meat indeed? *It is in opposition to mere animal and corporeal food* which is meat, but not meat indeed. You think that bread is solid. So it is, speak-

ing one way—but what does it support? It supports the body, and the body, you say, is substantial. So indeed it is to the eye and to the touch—but what is the body? All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof as the flower of the field; the grass withers and the flower thereof fades away; surely the people are grass. This body is so little a while, here, and so soon dissolved, that I may safely call it but a shadow! And the food that feeds the shadow is but a shade. And what is the soul within us? Why, that, you say, is unreal. Truly so, Sirs, to smell, to sight, to touch—but not to real thought! The real thing about a man is his inward self, which you cannot see—his secret, impalpable, unseen, immortal self that never dies! Time's tooth does not touch it, nor does the scythe of Death cut it down. The soul is the real thing—not the body—and, Sirs, the food which feeds the soul is the real food, after all, and though the men of the world turn on their heels and say, "Ah, no, the bread and cheese that we put into our mouths—*that* is the real thing—give us plenty of that!" Sirs, 'tis the shadow, but the Truths of God you give your souls to feed upon—that it is which in God's sight, in the sight of wise men and in your sight, if you have any spiritual discernment—is meat indeed!

It is meat indeed *in contrast with the typical meats of the Old Testament*. There was the Paschal Supper—surely that was a glorious feast when, by it, the people went their way out of Egypt rejoicing. Yes, but 'twas only a deliverance from a common temporal slavery. They that eat the Paschal Lamb are delivered from the bondage of death and Hell, for His flesh is meat indeed! In the wilderness they ate the manna. Yes, but every day it seemed to tell them its own unsubstantial character, from the fact that if they kept it till the next morning it bred worms and stank. But our Lord Jesus Christ is food that never corrupts! Feed on Him, lay Him up in your hearts and you shall find no corruption there, nor shall you die. In the old Tabernacle and the Temple there were the loaves of showbread and these were meat for the priest. Ah, but the showbread was nothing but a type—and to the priest, however devoutly he might receive it, the showbread, in itself, was no food for his real self, but only for his corporeal frame. And I may say the same of the bread which we have upon the table here, tonight! There is nothing in it—it is a mere emblem and a sign. But Christ's flesh is meat indeed! When I have sometimes seen this text put over the table commonly used for what is called the "Sacrament," I have trembled lest people should be led into the grievous and unnatural error of Transubstantiation. When our Lord said, "My flesh is meat indeed," He could not mean that bread on the table, for the Lord's Supper was not then instituted! In this particular text, at any rate, there can be no allusion of any kind to what is called, "the Mass," by some, or by others called, "the Sacrament," because these things were not brought forward by our Lord until within a few hours of His death—and He is now speaking months before that time! Beloved, the bread is bread, and nothing but bread, and so far as it points you, like a signpost, to the real flesh of Christ, so far so good. If you stop there, I can only say of it that bread is meat, but the flesh of Christ is meat *indeed*.

When our Lord says, “My flesh is meat *indeed*,” He clearly distinguishes it from *every other kind of soul food*. There are many sorts of soul food. Some men feed their souls on their own works. “Oh,” they say, “we have prayed. We have fasted! We have given to the poor. We have been upright, we have been righteous”—and their soul feeds on that, though it is all wind! But if they trusted in Christ, it would be meat indeed. Some feed on ceremonies. They have been baptized, christened, confirmed and I know not what besides. Fine confectionery this, but it is all wind! Christ received into the soul and trusted in for salvation, is meat indeed! Some have grown up with false doctrines, or with true ones exaggerated, and these bring them to a very fine development of self-conceit and bigotry—but they make no solid food for the man’s mind. But oh, Beloved, when a man can say, “My hope is in the Crucified alone—I look to Him every day, my meditations are on Him, my reading is much about Him, my prayers are sent to Heaven all through Him, my praises are for Him, He is my soul’s great joy, comfort, strength, and help”—then he has got the meat indeed! He will be a strong man to overcome his sin! He will be a holy man, a happy man, a heavenly man and, by-and-by, he shall be caught up to dwell where Jesus is, on whom he has fed.

I hope I have made this clear. It is thinking upon Jesus, trusting in Jesus that is the eating Jesus, Himself, being the food. Those who trust in Him and rest in Him have got the best of soul meat. They have got meat indeed!

II. CHRIST’S BLOOD IS DRINK INDEED.

Like drink to the body, the blood of Jesus, that is to say, the merits of His atoning Sacrifice *sustains*. The body is not to be built up without some liquid—the system needs it. The soul is not to be sustained without considering and resting on the substitutionary suffering of Jesus. That Jesus died in my place and suffered for my sin is to stimulate my hope, my comfort, my joy—in a word, my whole soul—just as drink invigorates the physical system.

Drink *refreshes* the body. The traveler is faint. It is a hot, burning day. That cool brook—how different the man looks when he bathes his face in it and drinks a sweet, cooling draught. And so the blood of Jesus refreshes the man who trusts in it. If I trust that Jesus was punished for me and I am clear that Jesus died for me, how my soul seems to have got a new life! How it revives! Though he were dead, yet should he live who could believe in this. He who could trust in the precious blood, though despair held him in a fainting fit so that he could not stir hand or foot, yet if this precious Doctrine of a Savior dying for him were believed by him, his heart and his spirit must revive at once!

Drink also *cleanses the body*. I do not mean washing, but that the reception of the water into the system flushes all the various departments of the frame and, no doubt, the liquid always has upon the human body a healthy influence. Unless it is taken, however it may be, intemperately. It is, to a great extent, made the life-fluid of the system. Now, whenever you get Jesus Christ into the soul, how it seems to set the veins right even if the blood is wrong! How it flushes out all impurities from the spi-

ritual system—and the more you really come to rest upon a bleeding Christ, the more sure you are to get rid of your sins—I mean your reigning sins, your besetting sins, for we can overcome them only through the blood of the Lamb. Christ's blood is thus drink indeed!

Drink also *cheers the man*. How many a faint heart has been cheered when the cooling draught has been brought! The fainting one has opened her eyes and smiled. And, oh, how the thoughts of a dying Christ revives the fainting soul and make the spirit sing that once was ready to moan and cry, "I am forgotten! I am forsaken. I am lost!"

Notice the word, "*indeed*," how it comes in again—"My blood is drink indeed," *in opposition to all carnal drink*, for as I said about the food—that it is but a shadow to support a shadow, so it is with the drink—it is but a shade to support a shade. Christ's blood supports the spirit—therefore, it is drink indeed.

How superior *to all typical drinks*! There was the water which flowed from the Rock when it was struck. There were the various drinks with the meat offerings, but Jesus Christ is the fullness of which these were but the shadows!

Christ says, "My blood is drink indeed," as though utterly *ignoring all other soul drinks*. Some men drink until they are drenched with earthly pleasure. Others drink until they are inflated with their own self-righteousness. The Devil has his cups and he knows how to fill them to the brim and make them sparkle and fascinate the eyes. But let men's souls drink of these draughts till they come to the dregs, they shall never be satisfied! And in the world to come their misery shall be greater if they have had any satisfaction here. But oh, if your soul can get to the precious blood of Christ and rest there, and you can rejoice that Jesus died for you, you may drink but you shall never be inebriated! You may drink, but you shall never know satiety! You may drink and you shall have a satisfaction which nothing can destroy, which time or habit cannot cause to pall on your palate and of which eternity shall be but a blessed prolongation! Drink, thirsty soul, drink at the Fountain of the Savior's blood and you shall thirst no more, but cry, "I have enough! I have found in Jesus' atoning blood all that my soul can want!" Put these two things together. It appears, according to the text, that—

III. OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST IS BOTH MEAT AND DRINK TOGETHER,

So I would have you notice *the suitability of Jesus Christ to man's needs*. Man needs meat and drink. Jesus is what man needs! You need pardon—you have it in Christ. You need life—eternal life—you have it in Christ! You need peace, comfort, happiness—you have it all in Christ. No key ever fitted a lock as well as Christ fits a sinner. You are empty—Christ is full! You cannot have a need that He cannot supply. There never was and there never will be, a soul that was past the power of Jesus. Oh, what a suitable Savior He is to me! That I can say, for if Jesus Christ had been sent into this world for me, only, He could not have suited me better than He does! And if He had been sent for you, only, poor trembling Sinner, He could not have fitted you better than He will! Why, when

I think of Jesus, He seems to be all mine, and I am sure I cannot afford to do without a bit of Him. I need Him altogether and He just exactly fills my soul up to the brim—and you shall find it true, also! He will be your meat and your drink and if you get Him, you will say—

***“All my capacious powers could wish,
In You do richly meet.
Nor to my eyes is light so dear,
Nor friendship half so sweet.”***

If Jesus Christ is thus meat and drink together, what *fullness* there is in Him! He is not only one thing, and not only the other, but He is both! A man with meat would die, let him have as much as he pleased of it, if there were nothing to drink. A man with drink would die if there were nothing solid for him to eat. Jesus does not give us part salvation, but He gives us all of it! You shall find in Jesus Christ everything that will be needed between Hell and Heaven. All the way, from the gates of Hell to the pearly gates of Paradise, every need of every pilgrim is met in Him. Ten thousand time ten thousand as His people are, yet all of them receive all that they need from Him, for, “It has pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell.” “All fullness”—mark the word. “Fullness” is a big word but “all fullness” is bigger, and all fullness dwells in Him—that is, it is remaining in Him, always fullness and always remaining all fullness—that is the greatest word of all. He is both meat and drink, He is all that we need!

Consider, too, that if Christ is both meat and drink, *what need we have of Him*—because there is no need in the world, I suppose, that is greater than the need of food—of meat and drink. You hear the cry of, “Fire!” in the street and it startles you. But those who have ever heard the cry of, “Bread!” in a bread riot, say that the cry of, “Fire!” is nothing to it. There is something so sharp, so awful, so determined, so ferocious, so like the yell of wild beasts, about men and women that scream for bread, that it is the most awful thing that is ever heard. And, “Drink!” What a word that must be for a number of poor wretches shut up, as they were, in the Black Hole of Calcutta, raving through those little windows at the guard outside for drink and stretching out their hands and beseeching them to turn their carbines upon them and shoot them, rather than let them die there a lingering death of suffocation and of thirst! How, when a little water was passed in, they fought and struggled for it, if so be a man might but get a drop, or suck a handkerchief that had been dipped into it, and linger on a little longer. Now, nobody can have a greater need than an actual need of bread and water, but that is what you need, my dear Friends. You need Christ! Your soul needs this very bread and water. Think not that you are rich and increased in goods if you have not got Christ, for in truth you are naked, and poor, and miserable! If you do not trust Him, love Him, serve Him, your poor soul has not even a drop to drink! What can it do but die? And oh, what must be its wretchedness when your soul shall ask for a drop of water to cool its tongue, tormented in that flame? While others are feasting, you shall have the gnashing of your hungry teeth to be your endless portion. God

grant you may not be so cruel to your souls as to starve them by going without Christ.

Yes, and if Christ is meat and drink, *what need there is of a real reception of Him*. If you get meat and drink, you cannot make any use of them unless you eat and drink them. Take meat to a hungry man—hold it out on your finger and ask him, “Don’t you feel better?” “No,” he says. “Look at it, Man; look at it!” “No, I feel more hungry.” “But cut it! Here is the knife.” “Oh,” he says, “what is the use of that? You mock me! I need to get it between my teeth! I need to get it worked into my system, or else it is of no use to me.” Hearer, of what service is it to you that you come and listen, Sunday after Sunday, some of you, but never decide to trust Christ and take Him into your soul? Why, you do but hear me, as it were, pour out the water, and you do not drink! You see it sparkle as I speak of it, but you do not receive it. What is the good of it to you? Oh, you will perish, some of you—you will perish with the bread within your reach—with the clean brook of Eternal Life flowing at your feet! Oh, why this folly? It is not so in other things. Men are not satisfied with seeing gold—they want to take it home and put it in their pockets! And how is it that they are content with hearing about Christ—with talking about Christ—but never asking for real faith, and for vital union with the Lord Jesus Christ? See to this, I pray you—and see to it soon—or death will see to you!

Moreover, Beloved, if Jesus Christ be both meat and drink—Beloved in the Lord, I speak to you now—*what reason there is for giving thanks!* I said, in the reading, that a man is very unmannerly, very beastlike, who sits down to his meat and his drink without thanks. Well, then my Soul, whenever you come to feed on Christ—whenever you think on Him—and that should be always, always give thanks! The true spirit of a Christian is perpetual thankfulness. I like the remark of a dear friend who is present now, who, when the November fogs began, said to me on a Sunday morning, “I tell all my family to be more cheerful than ever, now the dreary weather has come, so as to shake off all these things that are around by keeping up cheerfulness within.” Now, you are always feeding on Christ, and so every time you feed, you ought to give thanks! Therefore, as you are always feeding on Christ, “rejoice in the Lord always, and again, I say, rejoice.” They used to call this Supper in the ancient Church, as we sometimes do now, “the Eucharist”—the giving of thanks. Well, let the life of the Christian be a constant Eucharist, and as he feeds on Jesus always, let it always be with this tribute of praise, “Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable Gift.”

Yes, and if Jesus Christ is meat and drink, then *here is a reason why you Christians should be very earnest to tell of Him to others—to hand Him out*. Oh, if we had this house full of bread, tonight, and there were a famine all over London—in the East End, the West End, and the North, and the South—and men were dropping down dead in the streets, and they were crowding outside there, out at the Elephant and Castle and down Newington Causeway, I know what I would say if the bread belonged to me—“Brothers and Sisters, come and help me out of the win-

dows with it! Let them come in at every door! Let them crowd at every window and let them have something to eat!” And if they were thirsty, and we had the mains laid on here, and there was no water to be had anywhere else, oh, I am sure there is not a little child here that would not be glad to take his little tin can and hand out a draught of water to the thirsty people! Well, you then, with little abilities, who love Christ—tell about Him to others! He is meat and drink to the famished, thirsty ones! If He were merely a dainty, I could not press it, but as He is a very necessity to the dying sons of men, tell them about Him! And if they despise Him, well, then, you have done your part. But if they perish without your telling them of Christ, their blood may lie at your door! Oh, think, while you are going home tonight, walking down the streets, whether there is any house you pass where there is a man living who can charge you with having neglected him! Do not let it be so any longer, but seek that, as Christ’s flesh is meat indeed and His blood is drink indeed, you may hand out Jesus Christ to the famishing crowds that they may be satisfied! The Lord bless you richly, for His name’s sake.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 6:41-66.**

Verses 41-44. *The Jews then murmured at Him because He said, I am the bread which came down from Heaven. And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it then that He says, I came down from Heaven? Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves. No man can come to Me except He who has sent Me, draw him. And I will raise him up at the last day.* Christ never retracted a Truth of God or diminished its force because it was rejected, but He rather seemed to say, “You refused this Truth. I knew you would. You need not murmur: you are none of Mine. If you had been, the Father would have drawn you. You will not come. So you are set against the Truth of God that you cannot see it. So blind are your eyes that you do not behold it. No man can come to Me, except the Father, who has sent Me, draws him.”

45. *It is written in the Prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man, therefore, who has heard, and has learned of the Father, comes unto Me.* Beware, dear Friends, of any learning of Christ except by Divine teaching, for what we learn merely from the lips of our fellow men will never be vitally learned or really understood. We must be all taught of God—and so we shall be if, indeed, we are among these whom the Father draws towards Christ. All His teachings draw that way, and when they are taught into the inner man—not so much to the mind as to the soul and heart—then do we know the Truth, indeed!

46, 47. *Not that any man has seen the Father save he which is of God, he has seen the Father. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believes on Me has everlasting life.* One of the richest passages surely of all holy Scripture! It is all marrow and fatness, but here you seem to have the quintessence! We have eternal life if we are Believers—not shall have it,

but have it now! We have a life which is eternal. It is idle to talk of our losing it, because it would not be eternal if we did! We have a life within us which can by no possibility ever die, but must live on forever. "He that believes on Me, though he has many tremblings—though he may be the subject of many infirmities—yet he that believes on Me has everlasting life." O my Soul, exult in that glorious Truth of God! You have everlasting life as surely as you have faith in Christ!

48. *I am that bread of life.* The food on which that everlasting life lives—living bread for living souls. O Brothers and Sisters, the dead letter is of no use to us! All the truth in the world, unless it be quickening, cannot feed our quickened natures. It is Incarnate Truth, even Christ, that we must feed upon! "I am that bread of life."

49, 50 *Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from Heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die.* For that manna of theirs was corruptible. We read that it bred worms and stank, and though it was an angels' food for a time, yet it was but temporary. It only fed a temporary life and, like that life, it passed away. But Jesus Christ is incorruptible, and they that live on Him live on incorruptible food which nourishes the incorruptible seed which lives and abides forever!

51, 52. *I am the living bread which came down from Heaven: if any man eats of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. The Jews, therefore, argued among themselves, saying, How can this Man give us his flesh to eat?* They misunderstood the Master. They tarried in the letter, and did not reach to the spirit—the meaning—and that letter killed them, for "the letter kills: the spirit gives life." The inward meaning is that on which the soul feeds. And so the unhappy Humanist believes that he can literally eat the flesh of Christ, which, if it were true, were monstrous and could be of no service to him! Of what value is one flesh more than another flesh, if it is to be considered carnally? He loses the inner meaning. Blessed are they who are drawn of the Father and taught of the Lord—who spy out what is, after all, so little concealed beneath the thin veil of the metaphor.

53. *Then Jesus said unto them.* What? Do you think He explained it? No, He did not explain to these Jews. They were given up to judicial blindness. They had so long refused to see, that now they must not see, for on them was come the curse that, seeing they should not see, and hearing they should not perceive. Oh, how terrible this is when this falls on a man! And I think I know some upon whom it must have fallen. They have indulged the philosophical vein, always spiritualizing and cutting out the soul of Truth, and they are given up to spiritualizing as many of the great German philosophers evidently have been, who cannot now receive a plain statement, however simple are the words, but from their natural habit of continually twisting and tearing to pieces, they do so with everything! And a man may be an unbeliever so long that it will never be given to him to be a Believer again! God grant we may never make scales for our own eyes, and so plug up the soul's mental vision with the

miry clay of sin, that henceforth, even though the eternal Christ flashes the Divine Truth into our eyes, we shall only be dazzled by it into a greater darkness! So it was with these men. Jesus did not explain to them. He just repeated the Truth more emphatically and made it more offensive to them than before. May a preacher sometimes be offensive in his preaching? He must be! He must sometimes feel that such a truth will only move men's wrath if he preaches it. Nevertheless, we are not to put the Truth of God to the verdict of a jury—neither is Truth to be submitted to what is called, the “inner consciousness” of a set of sinners whose consciousness is all defiled! As well make a company of highwaymen a jury about theft as make unconverted men to be a jury about what is the Truth of God! It cannot be. Christ does not condescend to that. He tells them the Truth more fully and more offensively than before.

53. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood.* Which He had not said before, and was more startling still!

53-57. *You have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh, and drinks My blood, has eternal life: and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He that eats My flesh, and drinks My blood, dwells in Me, and I in him. As the living Father has sent Me, and I live by the Father: so he that eats Me, even he shall live by Me.* You see here three living persons—the living Father, the living Son and the living Believer—and truly, these three live one life which comes from the Father by the Son into us, and we are made partakers of the Divine Nature, according to the Apostle's wondrous language, “having escaped the corruption which is in the world through lust.” This is a great mystery which only he understands who feels it within himself.

58-60. *This is that bread which came down from Heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eats of this bread shall live forever. These things said He in the synagogue, as He taught in Capernaum. Many, therefore, of His disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying: who can understand it?* It was not merely the blinded Jews, but even His disciples who did not understand. Now, Brothers and Sisters, the test of a true disciple of Christ is that he is willing to believe what he does not understand! If you will only follow Christ's Words as far as you can comprehend them, the spirit of discipleship is not in you. You are the disciple of your own understanding! Christ is not Master, but your judgment is. But he that submits himself to the Words of Christ, often finds it profitable not to understand. Say you so? How is that? It is profitable to feel that we have come to the end of our own understanding. I have no doubt that a wise father's talk is good to his children, even though the child does not as yet understand him. He will lay it up in his memory. He will understand, one of these days, but the child—the true child's heart—says, “I believe you, Father, though you do puzzle me. You have given me a paradox which I cannot grasp, but I believe you: you are true.” We say that of Christ and may we have even more of that spirit of a little child, without which we cannot receive the Kingdom of God! The other spirit is very rife in the world—the spirit that

makes man, virtually, his own teacher. And, truly, I wonder not at it because there was originally so much of submission of the judgment to the dictum of the Catholic Church, or the dictum of the Pope, which is degrading! But to submit to Jesus and to His teaching—that is ennobling! May we have the same sacredly blind faith with regard to Christ which some have had to human authority, believing everything He speaks! But some of these disciples did not.

61-62. *When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples murmured at it, He said unto them, Does this offend you? What and if you shall see the Son of Man ascend up where He was before? What will you say then?*

63. *It is the spirit that quickens; the flesh profits nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. “You are not to take them as if they were flesh, and understand them carnally. They do but embody My words—do but embody a living soul of meaning, which it will be for you to receive if you are, indeed, quickened. And then it will quicken you, and you will understand Me, and live in Me.”*

64. *But there are some of you that believe not. And if they do not believe, then they miss the whole soul of the thing!*

64, 65. *For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray Him. And He said, Therefore said I unto you that no man can come unto Me, except it were given unto him of My Father. No, not even though he were an Apostle—though he came so near to Christ as to pray to Him and hear His secret and most private communications, and to see His singular and special miracles—yet he would not understand, except the Father gave it as a special act of Grace.*

66. *From that time many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him. Did He need them? I think not. He desired not to have around Him a mass of chaff, but the pure winnowed corn. Consequently He used His own Word as the winnowing fan. And I believe, Brothers and Sisters, that wherever Christ is faithfully preached, preaching is the best form of Church discipline. Somehow or other, carnal minds get weary of it, and they go away—and those that have not a longing and a love for the Truth of God drop off of themselves—so they walk no more with Him.*

—Adapted from the *C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

SPIRITUAL RELIGION

NO. 2677

**A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 3, 1900.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON A THURSDAY EVENING, EARLY IN THE YEAR 1858.**

***“It is the spirit that quickens; the flesh profits nothing.”
John 6:63.***

To a casual reader, it looks as if the meaning of this passage lay upon the very surface, but he who has studied the chapter carefully has discovered that it is a sentence replete with many difficulties as to the exact interpretation of it. I shall not, however, waste your time by entering into any critical discussion of it, but shall only try to give you simply what I believe to be the mind of the Spirit, as uttered by the lips of Jesus in this passage. And after I have done that, I shall then revert to what I shall call the meaning which any person would give to it who is not a diligent and careful student of Scripture. That meaning being true, although not the special Truth of God taught in this passage, I shall briefly enlarge upon it.

“It is the spirit that quickens; the flesh profits nothing.” I suppose there is not a man in the world who could form any intelligent idea of what a spirit is. It is very easy for persons to define a spirit by saying what it is not, but I question whether there is, or ever could be, any man who could form any idea of what it is. We sometimes talk about *seeing* a spirit—ignorant persons in ages gone by—and some living now in benighted villages talk about seeing spirits by night. They must know that such talk is a contradiction. Matter can be seen, but a spirit, if it clothed itself in any light substance, could not even then be seen—it would only be the *substance* that would be visible! The spirit itself is a thing which can neither be tasted, handled, seen, nor discerned in any way whatever by our senses, for if it could thus be perceived, there would then be proof positive that it was *not a spirit at all*, but that it belonged to the material realm. We divide all things into matter and spirit. And whatever can be recognized by the senses in any way, is matter, depend on it. A spirit is itself a thing too subtle to be either seen or in any other way perceived by the senses, so I repeat what I said just now, that I suppose there is no man living, and that there never will be any man in this mortal state who

will be able to accurately define a spirit so as to say what it is, though he may be able to say what it is not.

Now, there is a region where there are spirits dwelling without any bodies being connected with them. It is certain that, in the world to come, in that state which now intervenes between the death of the saints and the day of the resurrection, they are dwelling before the Throne of God in a disembodied state—pure spirits, without any corporeal form whatever. It is quite certain that the saints before the Throne have no semblance of bodily shape whatever. They are pure spirits—beings whose substance we cannot imagine—purely immaterial, as they are also immaculate. But, on earth, you can find no such thing as a pure spirit. We are all spirits in bodies and, somehow, from the fact that wherever we find souls and spirits, they are always found in bodies, we are very apt to confuse bodies and spirits together. But let us always understand that bodies and spirits are distinct things and though it has pleased God, in this world, never to make a spirit without making a house for it to dwell in, called the body, yet the body is not the spirit. “It is the spirit that quickens; the flesh profits nothing.”

You will easily perceive the truth of this passage if you will recollect that, in man’s body, no one can tell where the life is situated. In vain the surgeon lays the body on the table and dissects it—he will find life neither in the brain nor in the heart. He may cut the body in pieces as he pleases, but he will not find anything that he can lay hold upon, tangible and real, and say, “That is life.” He can see all the effects and evidences of life. He can watch the various parts of the body moving. He can behold all the appearances of life which are caused by a supernatural something, but he cannot *see life*. That is altogether beyond his skill and, after all his searching, he must lay down his scalpel and say at once, “There now, the task is all over. There is a spirit that quickens this body, but in my search after life, this flesh profits me nothing. I might as well search for a soul within a stone, or within one of the pillars that support this house, as search for a soul within mere flesh and blood if I look for something which I can see, which I can lay hold of, or which, by either taste, sight, smelling, or any other sense, I can distinguish and can designate as being a spirit.”

So, Brothers and Sisters, this illustration just brings me to the Truth of God that is taught in our text. We are here assembled, at this moment, spirits, souls. Here we are, also, bodies, but these bodies are not ourselves—they are the houses in which we live. I question whether there is any man who can define what he, himself, is. The most that any man can say is, “I am. I know I have an existence, but what kind of thing my spirit is, I do not know, I cannot tell. I have no knowledge of what it is. I feel it. I know it moves my body. I feel its outward manifestations. I am certain

of my existence. But what I am, I know not. God alone can say.” “I AM THAT I AM,” is comprehensible only to God Himself. Man is a being incomprehensible to himself and though the Lord may allow him to say, “By the Grace of God I am what I am,” he cannot tell what he really is—he cannot fully comprehend his own existence!

Understand, then, that, as in our being there is a mystery in our flesh, so religion, the true religion of the blessed God, in order to be made like unto us and to be a something suitable to us, must be a religion of *spirit*. But, because we also have a body, it must have a body in which to clothe itself. I want, if I can, to make this plain to you. And if you do not understand it now, I hope you will before I have done. We are spirits in bodies. Well, then, in order to meet our cases, the great work of God in us must be a spiritual thing! But in order that I may be able to talk about it to you and that you may be able to hear it with your ears, that spiritual thing must be encased in a body. Or else, if it were a purely spiritual thing, I could not explain it to you any more than I could explain to you about a spirit, if there were no body in which a spirit could be found, and no body in which I could be able to live to talk about it.

I want to show you this Truth very clearly, because there are some persons who are so busy about that which concerns merely the body of religion that they altogether forget that religion has also a spirit. I believe that what our Lord Jesus meant in this passage was, “The mere embodiment of religion profits nothing; it is the spirit that quickens.” Just as, to use my figure over again, in order to perform an act the mere flesh and blood and arms and legs profit nothing, it is the spirit that quickens all the bones and makes the nerves act as they ought to do and the sinews work as they should. And so religion has its outward form, it has its ceremonies, it has its external and visible developments—its body—but the mere outward body of religion is of no use whatever unless the inward and invisible spirit quickens it.

I. To begin, then, I WILL FIRST SHOW YOU THIS TRUTH AS OUR SAVIOR, I THINK, MEANT IT WHEN HE FIRST OF ALL STATED IT.

There were some people, in our Savior’s day, who admired Christ merely as a Man. And they thought there was some marvelous efficacy in His flesh and blood. To them He said, using almost the very words of our text, “Even My flesh will profit you nothing; it is the spirit that quickens.” I must state this Truth of God very cautiously, yet very plainly. When our Savior was upon this earth, there were some, I repeat, who admired His Person. You remember how our Savior rebuked the woman who said to Him, “Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts which nursed You”? He would not have people simply admire His flesh and think so much of His mere Humanity, so He said to her, “More than that, blessed are they who hear the Word of God and keep it.”

There were some other people who wanted to take the Lord Jesus and make Him a king, but, in effect, He said to them, "My flesh, even if you exalt it to a throne, will profit you nothing. I did not come here that you might bow down and venerate My mere flesh—that you might think the mere admiration of My mortal frame is vital religion. It is the spirit, the Gospel that I came to preach, that will benefit you. It is not these outward appearances. It is My thoughts, Words and acts which are to bless you." Hear what the Savior says in the next sentence, "It is not your admiration of My flesh that is of any use to you, for My flesh profits nothing; it is the spirit that quickens; and if you want to know what is the spirit of My Incarnation, I tell you that the Words that I speak to you, they are spirit, and they are life. It is not your venerating My flesh and blood, it is your reception of My doctrines that will be the heart and soul of the religion that I desire you to possess."

Our Savior was, however, led to make these remarks from the fact that the ignorant Jews, when Jesus talked about eating His flesh and drinking His blood, really thought that He meant that they were to turn cannibals and eat Him up. You may well smile at so ridiculous an idea, yet you know that the idea is still prevalent in the Church of Rome. The Romish priest solemnly assures us that the people who eat the bread and drink the wine, or the stuff *he calls bread and wine*, do actually act the part of cannibals and eat the body of Christ and drink His blood. You say to him, "You mean, my dear Sir, that they do it in a figure, spiritually." "No," he says, "I do not. I mean to say that after I have pronounced certain words over that bread, it becomes Christ's flesh. And after I have said a certain prayer over that wine, it becomes His actual blood." "Well," we reply to him, "it is very singular, and you certainly cannot expect us to believe you while God allows our heads to be occupied by brains! But even if we do believe you, my dear Sir, we refer you to this passage which says, 'It is the Spirit that quickens; the flesh profits nothing.' You tell the people that they do actually and really receive the body and blood of Christ. Suppose they do—it is no earthly use to them! And even if they could carnally bite the flesh with their teeth and drink the blood down their throats, it would be of no more use to them than the eating of the flesh and blood of any other man. It could be of no service whatever to them, for Christ Himself denounces the error of transubstantiation and declares that even His flesh profits nothing! It is only the spirit, the spiritual receiving of that flesh and blood, that can be of any use whatever."

While I am referring to this point, allow me to say just a few more words upon it, for Popery prevails in this day, and the doctrine that the bread and wine are turned into the body and blood of Christ is the bulwark of Popery. Dr. Carson, of Coleraine, son of Dr. Carson the eminent Baptist, has challenged Dr. Cahill in a remarkable way. He has chal-

lenged Dr. Cahill to prove that he can turn the bread and wine used in the sacrament into Christ's body and blood. He offers to give Dr. Cahill a hundred pounds if he will let him make a wafer for him and, if Dr. Cahill will then put it on his own tongue and swallow it in Mr. Carson's presence, "if the Doctor is not dead in an hour," says Dr. Carson, "I'll give him a hundred pounds." "No," says someone, "that is not fair." "Oh, but if he can turn it into the body and blood of Christ, it cannot hurt him, whatever it may contain." "But would you make it of poison, then?" "Yes, the deadliest I could find." "Would you give him poison?" "I would not give it to him—he would swallow it himself—he would do it of his own voluntary choice." Of course Dr. Cahill will not submit to that test! He knows that he cannot turn the wafer and the wine into the body and blood of Christ—if he could, Dr. Carson says it would not hurt him, for the body and blood of Christ would poison no one.

But some wise Romanist says, "That is not a fair test. Dr. Cahill does not pretend to turn *poison* into the body and blood of Christ—it is only pure bread and wine that can thus be manipulated." "Very well," says Dr. Carson, "I'll try him another way. I will let him choose a youth from seven or eight Catholic boys. He shall take a quart of wine and turn this wine, in his own peculiar way, into the blood of Christ. The boy shall drink the quart of wine and if he is not drunk in six hours, I will pay the hundred pounds." "Now," says Dr. Carson, "if that liquid is really the blood of Christ, it will not make him drunk! He might drink a barrel of it and it would not make him intoxicated." But Dr. Cahill dares not accept such a trial as that, for it would very soon be found that the so-called "consecrated" wine would make the boy intoxicated as quickly as any other wine would! Therefore it cannot be turned, even by the great Doctor, himself, into the blood of Christ. [We assume Dr. Cahill is a priest.]

The fact is, the lie is so foolish, the delusion is so absurd, that any child of a reasonable age would as soon think of believing the cock and bull story which we used to read in our childish days, about what the bull said, and what the cock said, to be actual truth, as to imagine it to be a literal fact that any priest, or any man in the world, could ever turn bread and wine into flesh and blood! But even if they could, hear again the words of our text—"It is the spirit that quickens; the flesh profits nothing." So, then, after all, the Roman Catholic "sacrament," if it is actually a cannibal's feast upon the body and blood of Christ, is of no earthly use! But that Divinely-appointed ordinance wherein we do spiritually receive the flesh and blood of Jesus and, *in a spiritual way hold communion with Him*, is that alone which quickens!

This brings me to the Truth of God that I want you, dear Friends, especially to understand. As Christ Jesus in His flesh was the embodiment of His own doctrine, and yet not His flesh, but the spirit of His doctrine

quicken souls, so the outward forms and ceremonies which Christ has made to be the body to contain the spirit of His Truth, are of no earthly use at all unless the *Spirit of God* is in them!

Take, for instance, the ordinance of Believers' Baptism—there are the pool and the water. That pool and that water are, so to speak, the flesh and blood of dedication. The right observance of that holy ordinance signifies that we do solemnly devote ourselves to the Lord Jesus. Suppose, however, our hearts are in a wrong condition, or that we are not converted persons—suppose there is no influence of the Spirit resting upon us during the act of Baptism? Then the act of Baptism is like the flesh apart from the spirit—it is a dead thing, it profits nothing because it is without the soul. We come, the next Sabbath, to the Lord's Table—there is the bread broken by God's servant. There is the wine reverently handed round by the deacons of the Church and it is sipped by the communicants. But, mark you, however devoutly the whole service is performed, unless the Spirit of the living God breathes through the Divine ordinance, "the flesh"—that is, the mere embodiment of communion—will profit you nothing! You might sit at a thousand communion tables and you might be baptized in a myriad pools—but all this would not avail one jot or tittle for your salvation unless you had the Spirit of God to quicken you!

No, to go further, it is not these two outward ordinances only that need the Spirit in them—it is so in everything else. You have sometimes read, dear Friends, of some eminent Christians who grew to have much fellowship with Christ by prayer. Perhaps you imbibed the idea that if you were to go home and spend as many hours in your closet as they did, you would get as much profit by it—but not thinking about the Holy Spirit, you simply devote yourself to private prayer as you might to any manual exercise—with a hope of profiting by the exercise. I tell you, you might be on your knees till your knees were worn bare and you might be in your closet till the steam of your devotion ran down the walls, but unless the Spirit of the Lord was in that closet with you, the mere fleshly exercise of praying would no more avail and profit you than if you had been chanting songs to the moon, or standing in the street to sell your goods!

Another hears that a certain person has been very much blessed by reading a text of Scripture. "Oh," he says, "has that text been blessed to such an one? Then I'll go and read the same passage." You think that if you do the same as he does, you will be equally blessed and you are marvelously surprised that when you read the passage, it does you no good. It made his spirit leap for joy. It filled his soul with the wine of the Kingdom of God, but to you it is like a dry well, or an empty bottle. Why is this? The mere letter, in which the promise is revealed, profits you

nothing—it is the spirit of the promise, it is the life of the Holy Spirit running through the veins of the promise that alone can profit you! You hear that another man meditates on God’s Law day and night and becomes like a tree planted by the rivers of water. You say, “I will take care that, every morning, I will read a chapter out of the Scriptures and that, every night, I will read *two* chapters.” There are certain people who think that if they read a good passage out of the Bible, they have done a great deal. In that kind of spirit, they might just as well read a portion out of Hudibras, for they just read it straight through, without thinking or understanding it.

Many of our ministers think that in the public service they must read a certain quantity of Scriptures and they take, perhaps, three long chapters out of Ezekiel—and not a soul in the congregation knows the meaning of what they are reading! If they were to read a Dutch sermon in an English chapel, it would do the hearers just about as much good, for no one understands what they read. Instead of reading, as Ezra did, and expounding the meaning to the people, they must go on over hedge and ditch—one continual steeple-chase! Instead of stopping to crack the shells and give the kernels of Truth to the people, they read right on, without attempting to give any explanation of the passage. To such persons, we would simply say, “Your Bible reading is but the flesh, it is of no use to you, ‘it is the spirit that quickens.’ The mere flesh, the outward fashion and form of Bible reading will not profit anybody. One sentence of the Bible prayed over and bedewed with the Spirit, and made alive, though it is only a short sentence of six words, will profit you more than a hundred chapters without the Spirit, because they are ‘flesh’—dead! But the one verse with the Spirit is the thing that quickens.”

I do not know whether I have as yet brought out the full meaning of the text, but I want to let everyone understand that it is not the mere outward embodiment of our religion that saves the soul and that profits us—it is the inner spirit of the thing that does us good. Mark, I would not find fault with any of these forms, any more than I would find fault with our bodies because they are not spirits. Our bodies are good things for our spirits to live in and the forms of religion are good things for the spirit of religion to live in—but the form *without the spirit*, though it is the most decorous, and apparently the most devout that can be presented to God, can be of no use for our soul’s eternal profit and ultimate salvation. “It is the spirit that quickens; the flesh profits nothing.”

Now, my dear Friend, Mr. So-and-So, if you will just take out your pencil and cast up your accounts for all the years of your life, the sum of them all will come to very little if what I say is true. “I think,” you say, “I am a tolerably good sort of man. I have a few faults, but just look at what I have done! I have been to Chapel twice every Sunday almost since I was

a boy—I don't know that I missed once, except when I was ill—that has been very good of me, and no mistake. I always read the Bible every morning. I always have family prayer—that is very good of me. Another item to be reckoned to my account—I say my prayers when I go to bed at night, and when I get up in the morning. I very frequently go to Prayer Meetings. I don't think anyone can reasonably find fault with me. Really, I think I do everything to make me a truly religious man.”

Ah, and did you put at the end of it, “Lord, I thank You that I am not as other men are—unjust, extortioners,” and so on, or even like that poor fellow, a Sabbath-breaker, whom you saw going the opposite way as you were coming to your usual place of worship? It is a pity you didn't finish it up in that fashion—but if you did not in words, you finished it up so in your heart! I pray God to show you that all these beautiful things of yours are good for nothing! There are your Chapel-goings—all flesh! There are your Bible readings—all flesh! There are your family prayers—all flesh! There are your good works and excellences—all flesh! You have never received the Spirit of the living God—you dare not say that you have. Well, then, all these things will profit you nothing whatever.

“It is the spirit that quickens,” you know, my dear Sir—and let me speak very pointedly—you know that you never enter into the spirit of the things of which you have been speaking. Though you go to your church or chapel regularly, yet you know that you might very often just as well be at home, for when the worshippers sing, you do not sing with all your heart—and when the minister preaches, it is seldom there is much that touches you, unless it is what you call “a good intellectual discourse,” which happens to please you—and you believe it just because it agrees with your views. You know that, into the inward soul, marrow and heart of devotion, you have never yet learned to penetrate. Your devotion is like a certain ox which was slain as a sacrifice in the time of siege in Rome, and was said to forecast evil because, when the sorcerer slew it, he declared that he could not find a heart anywhere. He looked through all the entrails, but no heart could he discover and, therefore, the Romans declared that their city must be destroyed. It was an omen of ill fortune, they said, when the sacrifice had no heart in it.

It is just the same with you. You have done all these things and there has been as much reality in what you have done as there was devotion in the poor fool's windmill, when he tied a prayer to it and put it up in the garden—every time it blew round, he counted that as one more prayer. There was as much heart in your prayer as there was in his windmill—that is to say, none at all! Go on no longer with this useless round of performances, I implore you. I would not have you give up the performances, but seek the spirit that can make them true and acceptable in God's

sight. Stop awhile and ask God to give you that inward spirit that quickens, for that is what is needed—"the flesh profits nothing."

But I must also speak to you who are the children of God, and I must ask you—How often do you forget this all-important Truth of God? I know it is not likely that I would leave my chamber any morning without prayer. But, oh, Brothers and Sisters, I have often left it without having the spirit of prayer! I should not like to pass a day without reading the Scriptures, but I am afraid it is very often the mere "flesh" of formal reading and not the spirit breathing in the Word. And how often is our conscience satisfied with the mere form without the spirit? Now, if we were what we ought to be, we would never be content with the form unless we could also see the spirit in it.

Mother, would you be content to have at home a child who was dead? Suppose someone should say to you, "Why, this child is just as good a child as ever it was! Look at it! It has not lost a leg, or an arm, or any part of its body!" "Ah, but," you would say, "it is dead." "Oh," says one, "there is no great difference. It looks as beautiful, now, as ever it did." "Ah," says the poor mother, "but there is a vast deal of difference between what it was when it was alive, and what it is now it is dead." Just transfer that idea to your poor dead prayers, your poor dead Bible readings, your poor dead sacraments, your poor dead goings to chapel and all that! Ah, how many of our sacrifices are just poor dead things when we bring them to the Lord! They have died in the night and then we come and offer them before God! How frequently do we satisfy our conscience with having "the flesh"—the embodiment of the sacrifice—and yet, all the while, we forget the spirit! But let us remember that God only looks for the life. He does not trouble about the body and we ought, in all we do for him, to take care, first of all, that the spirit is there and then we may rest quite sure that the flesh and blood of the devotion will take care of themselves.

II. This, I believe, is the true meaning of the passage. But the common rendering of it, if anyone reads it without noticing the context, would be, "Why, that means, 'It is the Spirit that quickens.' That is to say, 'IT IS THE HOLY SPIRIT THAT QUICKENS; THE FLESH PROFITS NOTHING.'"

Our friend will excuse me when I say that it cannot mean that. You notice that the "s" in the word, "spirit," in the text has not a capital letter. If it meant the Holy Spirit, it would be so marked, to separate it from the spirit to which I have just referred—the inward spirit, the *life* of a thing. This word, "spirit," here does not mean the Holy Spirit. Still, almost every ordinary reader would make that mistake and say, "It is the Holy Spirit that quickens; the flesh profits nothing." Well, it is a mistake that will not do him any hurt, because if it does not say so here, it does say so somewhere else! And if it is not true in this one particular text, it is true all over the Bible! And it is true in a Christian's experience, so that a man

may make a great many worse mistakes than that. Well, then, let us for once make that mistake, and then let us get the Truth of God out of it—“It is the Holy Spirit that quickens; the flesh profits nothing”—

**“Can anything beneath a power Divine
The stubborn will subdue?
‘Tis Yours, Eternal Spirit, Yours
To form the heart anew.
‘Tis Yours the passions to recall,
And upwards bid them rise
And make the scales of error fall
From Reason’s darkened eyes.
To chase the shades of death away,
And bid the sinner live—
A beam of Heaven, a vital ray—
‘Tis Yours alone to give.”**

How often have I thought, when I have been preaching, “There is a young woman in the gallery and down there in that area is a young man—how interested they look during the sermon!” I have met with them, I have admired their characters. They have had an amiable carriage and deportment. There has been much in them that everybody would tell others to imitate and emulate. I have said, “Ah, I shall soon have them added to the Church—there is so much that is good about them, it will be such an easy transition for them—they are so moral and so excellent, surely it will be very easy for them to take a step into the Kingdom of Heaven.” I don’t say that I have said so much as that in words to my heart, but that has been about what I have thought. Well, there has been a very different sort of fellow, a strange looking object, certainly, who came running into the Chapel one Thursday evening, towards the end of the service. He was not even washed, nor in any way prepared for Divine worship—he only came to hear something that would make him laugh, as he thought. I did not expect to have him converted, but the next time I sat to see enquirers, in he came—cleaned and brushed up—but I recognized him, for all that, and I said to him, “Didn’t you come into the Chapel, one Thursday night, after you had been hammering and tinkering away somewhere? I thought you looked a strange customer, certainly.” “Yes,” he said, “and the Lord met with me that night!”

Now, I sat many and many a time to see enquirers, but I did not see the young man or the young woman come. Why was this? The Lord meant to teach His servant that “the flesh profits nothing.” That man seemed to me far from God, but that young man and that young woman seemed very near. But the Lord said to me, “I will let you learn that all their morality and all their goodness did not put them near the Kingdom of Heaven, or help towards their salvation. I could save one as well as the other, and if I chose to show My Sovereignty, I might even let publicans

and harlots enter the Kingdom of Heaven before those who, becoming proud of their morality, would not stoop before Me.”

Have you not, sometimes, met with a person of such a peculiar character that you have said, “Is it not a pity someone cannot talk with that man?” I often have notes of this sort. A father writes to me, “I wish you could get hold of my son. He is a very interesting young man. If you were to put the Truth before him to suit his turn of mind, he would be sure to lay hold of it, for if you knew how he was mentally constituted, you would say at once there was a peculiar adaptation in his mind for the reception of the Gospel.” Well, I have been told that a dozen times, but I never found it true even once! “The flesh profits nothing.” No peculiar adaptation of mind is any more susceptible of Gospel influences than another. Dead sinners are all dead and all dead alike! Some may be black and some may be white—some may be well washed and dressed, and some may have all the mire and filth of sensuality about them—but they are all dead! And when converting Grace comes to deal with them, it finds as much for its exercise in the one case as in the other. It finds as much to help it in the one heart as in the other—that is to say, it finds *nothing to help it at all*. It brings all that is helpful within itself—it kindles its own fire with its own torch! It blows the fire with its own breath and asks for nothing in the sinner, be he who he may!

Then, again, we have sometimes said, “If such-and-such a man were converted, dear me, what a shining Christian he would make! He is a man of brilliant talents, of great intellectual power and of extensive fortune. Oh, if he were but converted, what a jubilee it would be to the Church of God! How much he would do for Christ!” Well, do you know, I have always found out that these fine people who, when they were converted, were to be something extraordinary—if they have been converted and we have got them—have not turned out to be quite so great after all! I knew a minister once, who, with great joy and gladness, baptized a man. It was on a New-Year’s Day and I remember with what self-congratulation he said, “The Lord has sent me one of the best New-Year’s gifts I ever had.” And he looked upon that man and said, “Ah, this is a Brother! He is a great gain to the Church. He is a man of such active spirit, of such an excellent turn of mind and he is everything that could be desired.” Well, I have just happened to live long enough to see that man tear the church apart and drive the minister out of his pulpit! And he is still alive—a thorn in the side of that church and a huge prickly bramble that they would be glad enough to eradicate—but they have not the power to do that. No, the Lord will show us that “the flesh profits nothing.” “You may have him,” says the Lord, “if he is such a fine fellow, take him. You will find he will not be much good to you, after all. I will let

you know that ‘the flesh profits nothing.’ ‘It is the Spirit alone that quickens.’”

On the other hand, we have seen some come whose “flesh” could not help them. They were the poor, the mean, the illiterate, the despised—and we have seen the Grace of God blaze up in their hearts to an intense degree of fervor! And we have seen them stand confident and strong, notwithstanding the nothingness of the flesh. And then we have said, “Verily, O God, it is marvelous how, when the flesh is weak, Your Grace is strong.” And we have heard an answer from “the excellent glow,” which said, “Ah, the flesh profits nothing; it is the Spirit that quickens.”

Now, I do not believe that there is any form of our flesh, nor any act of our flesh, nor anything that our flesh can do, or attempt to do, or think of, or suggest, that can in any way assist in the great spiritual work of our salvation. It is the Spirit alone that quickens, and you will find, till you die, that “the flesh profits nothing,” and profits no one except the devil. It often profits him, but in God’s ways. And in God’s holy Gospel, you will always find the flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh. You will have to feel this Truth, that the flesh at its best estate profits nothing. “It is the Spirit that quickens.”

Now, my Brothers and Sisters, in conclusion, I will ask you this question—Have you received the influences of the Holy Spirit? And have those influences led you to worship God, who is a Spirit, “in spirit and in truth?” For, if not, though some may put you in the cradle of ceremonies and rock you to sleep, I will not be one of them! Although men may tell you you are right enough because you are outwardly so religious, because you are no Sabbath-breaker, no swearer, no drunkard, I warn you that unless you are born again from above, you cannot see the Kingdom of God! And when drunks, harlots and all manner of ungodly persons shall be driven from the Presence of God, you, also, shall share their fate, for you are dead in trespasses and sins, even as they are! If you would ever enter Heaven, you must be quickened by the Holy Spirit. No more shall I say, but earnestly entreat the Spirit of the blessed God to impress upon your hearts this solemn thought and lead you to renounce the works of the flesh—and put your trust in Him “who is the Savior of all men, especially of those that believe.” May the Lord’s mercy rest upon you all, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY
TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

A BLOW FOR PUSEYISM

NO. 653

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 8, 1865,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“It is the spirit that quickens. The flesh profits nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life.”
John 6:63.***

OUR Lord had plainly told His hearers that He was the Bread of Life. And that except they ate His flesh and drank His blood there was no life in them. His hearers understood this in a *sensual* manner and they very naturally put the question, “How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?” Now the Savior had never intended to be understood in a carnal manner. It was far enough from His design to inculcate the carnal eating of His body and therefore He at once told them that His words were not understood.

And He delivered Himself of a great general principle, as truly applicable to our day as to His own. In effect He taught them just this—“It is not the eating My flesh in a carnal way, even if you could do it, which would be of any service to you. For that would be only feeding the flesh, which profits nothing. A spiritual feeding can alone quicken and bless you. It is this which you cannot understand. And therefore you hear My words as if they were as dead and fleshly as yourselves, whereas My teaching bears no gross and sensuous meaning, for the words which I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.”

If I am not mistaken, this verse contains a great principle which needs, in these days, to be proclaimed on the housetops. It is the medicine which would cure the diseases of this present time if men were divinely led to receive it. The text is very deep—like all the teaching of our Savior recorded by John, the words are extremely simple—but the mystery is most profound. May the Holy Spirit lead us all not only to comprehend its teaching, but to feel its power.

What is meant by “the flesh” here? The word “flesh” in Scripture has eleven or twelve different modifications of its one abiding meaning. In this passage it means that which is outward and sensuous and appeals to the eye, or the ear, or to other powers of man’s bodily nature. There was much of this in the Jewish faith—but whenever the worshippers rested in it and did not reach to its *spiritual* teaching—it profited them nothing. Paul uses

the same term when, speaking to the Judaizing Galatians, he asks them, "Having begun in the Spirit, are you now made perfect by the flesh?"

Which we understand to mean, having begun by God's Holy Spirit with a spiritual love to God, a spiritual faith in Jesus and a spiritual life within, do you mean, now, to be made perfect by external ordinances, resting and abiding in them as though they had a power to bless? External ceremonial religion is well and aptly set forth here as "flesh." What is the meaning of the term "spirit" here? If the Holy Spirit had been intended, in the judgment of our translators, they would have placed a capital S. It cannot, however, refer to the Holy Spirit because the explanatory key sentence is this—"The words which I speak unto you, they are spirit."

Now, as we all know, *words* cannot be the Holy Spirit. The word "spirit" stands here in contrast with the term "flesh." Flesh is *external* religion, the carnal part of it—that which the eye sees and the ear hears. Spirit is the *inward* part of religion—that which the *soul* understands, receives, believes and feeds upon. It is this—this spiritual element in religion which quickens it and makes it a living thing—while the mere external, the flesh, except as the Spirit quickens it, profits nothing.

This spiritual religion is consistent with the spiritual nature which God the Holy Spirit gives to us. And as Christ's teachings are themselves living and spiritual, they are the proper food of spiritual men. The Jews commonly thought that religion lay in ceremonial observances—in eating certain meats or abstinence from them—in washings of the hands before eating. In various baptisms, in going up to the temple to pray, and such like outward performances. Jesus tells them to their faces that this flesh religion profits nothing—it is dead, unquickened and unquickening!

What, then, is the life of godliness? What is the vitality and essence of acceptable worship? His answer, virtually, is, "It is not your outward observances, but your inward emotions, desires, beliefs and adoration which are living worship." Then He adds, in effect, "My words are not concerning outward observances, but are of a spiritual character. I come not to you with 'touch not, taste not, handle not,' or with 'wash, vow, stand, sit, kneel'—My words deal with inner life and spirit and are addressed to your spiritual natures. The words which I speak unto you are spirit and life."

I. Our first point will be THE UNPROFITABLE FLESH—the external observances of religion are, in themselves, utterly unprofitable. To begin with the greatest monstrosity of this kind in the present day—the *real* and *corporeal* Presence of the Lord Jesus Christ in what is superstitiously called the Blessed Sacrament! I would scarcely mention this if it were a doctrine merely of the Church of Rome. But when I read the newspapers and other productions of the High Church party, I find that transubstantiation with all its fullness of absurdity is extensively preached and believed in the Church of England!

And there are hundreds of clergy who speak of the Lord's Table as an "altar" and of the Supper as the celebration of a "sacrifice," while the *symbols* are spoken of as though they were to be revered even as the Lord Himself! It is laid down as a *doctrine*, that every time the bread is broken by these priests, the very *body* of Jesus Christ is actually received by the persons participating! That this is monstrously absurd, I think every intelligent person knows! But it has been said that the more absurd it is, the more room there is for faith! And now some have even been thankful for having its absurdity proven, "For," they have argued, "it will be the more meritorious for us to believe it."

To such persons we would briefly say, if Jesus Christ's body is really received into your mouth, broken with your teeth and made to enter into your stomach, then, in the first place, you are guilty of a gross act of cannibalism and nothing better, inasmuch as you eat human flesh! And, in the next place, you cannot derive any virtue from it, for Jesus Christ tells you at once, "It is the *Spirit* that quickens. The flesh profits nothing."

If you did actually eat the very body of Christ it would affect your digestive and secretive organs and through them your flesh, just as other bread, or, if you like it better, other flesh would do! And how could this affect your heart and soul? Does Divine Grace operate through the stomach, and save us through our bowels? Prove this and you will make converts of us!

But do not men receive the body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper? Yes, *spiritual* men do, in a real and *spiritual* sense, but not in a carnal sort—not so as to crush it with their teeth, or taste it with their palate, or digest it by the gastric juices! They receive the Lord Jesus, as Incarnate and Crucified, into their spirits, as they *believe* in Him, love Him, and are comforted by thoughts of Him. "But how is that a real reception of Him?" cries one! Alas, this question reveals at once the world's thoughts! You think the carnal, alone, real, and that the spiritual is unreal. If you can touch and taste you think it real—but if you can only meditate and love—you dream it to be unreal.

How impossible it is for the carnal mind to enter into spiritual things! Yet, hearken once again—I receive the body and blood of Christ when my soul believes in His Incarnation. When my heart relies upon the merit of His death. When the bread and wine so refresh my memory that thoughts of Jesus Christ and His agonies melt me to penitence, cheer me to confidence and purify me from sin. It is not my *body* which receives Jesus, but my *spirit*! I believe in Him, casting myself alone upon Him. Trusting Him, I feel joy and peace, love and zeal, hatred of sin and love of holiness—and so as to my spiritual nature I am fed upon Him.

My spiritual nature feeds upon truth, love, Divine Grace, promise, pardon, covenant, atonement, acceptance—all of which I find, and much

more—in the Person of the Lord Jesus. Up to the extent in which my spirit has communion with the Lord Jesus, the ordinance of breaking of bread is living and acceptable because the spiritual element quickens it. But to the extent in which I merely receive the bread and wine and my spirit is not exercised about Jesus Christ—to that extent it profits me nothing—it is a mere external ceremony and nothing more. The bread is only bread, the wine is merely wine, the eating is simply eating bread and no more. The whole outward ceremony is what it seems to be and not a jot more! But the unseen fellowship of hearts with Jesus—this is the quickening element and this, alone.

The same principle applies in the case of Baptism. According to God's Word, Romans 6:4 and Colossians 2:12, Baptism sets forth our union with Jesus in His death, burial and resurrection. Is there anything in the *water* in which the person is immersed? Nothing whatever! Is there conveyed, *by* the water, or *in* the water, any spiritual gift or Grace? Not in any way except so far as this—if the water reminds the *spiritual* nature in the man of the death of Christ. Then his spirit enjoys communion with Christ in His death. If the water forcibly portrays to him the Savior's burial so that his spirit feels itself to be buried to the world. If rising out of the water reminds the man of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, so that he, in *spirit*, rises from a dead world into a newness of life, *then* there is life in the Baptism. The Holy Spirit quickens it—but the mere water—the carnal part of the ordinance, in itself profits nothing!

The putting away of the filth of the flesh is nothing, but the answer of a good conscience toward God is the vitality of Baptism. It is only vital up to the extent in which the spirit exercises itself. This speaks strongly against the Baptism of infants. We do not enter on this subject from love of controversy, but the question is fairly involved in the subject. If the baptized person, infant or adult, enters in *spirit* into the meaning and teaching of Baptism, he is truly baptized. But, inasmuch as in our firm conviction a babe does not enter in spirit into the subject at all, it has only received the unprofitable Baptism of the flesh, since the Spirit which quickens was absent.

Whether you are infants or adults, if your renewed spirit enters into the form, it quickens the form and makes it live. But if you come to it without spiritual life and without exercising spiritual emotions, the water, the fleshly part of the ordinance, profits you nothing. It is only so far as your spirit has fellowship with Jesus Christ in it—both in the act and in meditation upon it afterwards—that Baptism becomes of the slightest possible profit to you. We put the two ordinances together and say to you—you will find in these just as much as your spirit shall get from them and not an atom more! Only so far as the *symbol* aids thought and emotion can it be of service. The outward does not profit a little, it profits *nothing* whatever.

Take next the doctrine of the Apostolic succession. There are certain persons still out of Bedlam who say of all ministers but those of their own sect, no matter how much the Lord may have honored them in the conversion of sinners and the edification of saints, they are *intruders* and not true ministers of Jesus Christ! *Their* clerics are the legitimate successors of the Apostles and they only. For the moment we will allow the historical question—we will suppose that up to Judas, or some other Apostle, they can trace a line through Popes of Rome, or Archbishops of Canterbury. We will suppose that a little stream comes trickling down to them through the dunghill of the dark ages, having its original rise in the Apostolic era.

Well, what now? Hear this Word of God—“The flesh profits nothing.” The mere fleshly connection between bishop and bishop established by successive laying on of hands and anointing is utterly valueless! The great question is concerning the *spiritual* succession! Do we see in you the same spirit that was in the Apostles? Open your mouths and let us hear the same simple, unadorned Gospel which the Apostles proclaimed! Let us hear you say with Paul, “You observe days and months, and times and years. I am afraid of you lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain.” Let us hear from your lips the Doctrines of Grace and faithful warnings against looking for salvation by our own works!

Let us perceive that you are free from the beggarly elements of ceremonialism, and are not to be judged in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath (Col. 2:16). Is there as little pomp about *you* as about the tentmaker of old? From where do these silk chasubles, albs of fine linen, stoles of watered silk, maniples, capes and garments covered with gold and silver and embroidery come? The Apostolic fishermen surely did not fish for souls in such fine raiment!

Show us Apostolic simplicity, faith and truthfulness! We care not a fig either way for your fleshly succession! We demand that you prove your *spiritual* one! It was a tolerably impudent thing for a bishop once to say, in reference to John Williams and other missionaries in the South Sea Islands, “They act as pioneers. They prepare the way for a more regular force. The missionary in due time is followed by the Churchman who erects the converts into an orderly edifice, having for its foundation the lively stones of an Apostolic priesthood, qualified to offer the oblation of a spiritual sacrifice.”

Now, my Lord Bishop, you shall, yourself, decide which is the more Apostolic—yourself at home at ease, in enjoyment and luxury—or John Williams, traveling from island to island with his life in his hand. He is casting down idols by the power of the Gospel and transforming savages into Christian men! You live in state and he dies a martyr! You boast and he toils! You talk of your own priesthood and he of Jesus Christ! You are filled with zeal for a *sect* and he with love for souls—surely if wit remains

beneath your miter, you, yourself, can judge which of the two is the more Apostolic!

If the Apostle Paul, himself, came to find out his successor, where would he look for him—in the missionary doing Apostolic work—or in the bishop talking about what he will do after the other has laid the foundation and stained it with his blood? When we see the Divine calling of our honored pastors denied and hear the impudent claims of a tribe of hireling priests, we can only cry, “To what an extent pretense may run!” Let them boast the fleshly succession, but let us seek *spiritual* union with the Apostle’s Lord.

The Puseyites of our Savior’s day said, “We have Abraham for our father,” just as these say, “We are the successors of the Apostles.” And we meet our modern Pharisees with the same rebuke with which the Baptist met their ancient types, “They which are of faith, these are children of Abraham,” and successors of the Apostles, too! Let us remain content with spiritually following Jesus and doing His work. And let the sons of the bondwoman boast a worthless fleshly succession if they will—“It is the spirit that quickens. The flesh profits nothing.”

These things more concern other people than ourselves, therefore let us come a little nearer home. Much is said nowadays about an ornate form of worship. The excellency of melodious music is much extolled. The swell of the organ, it is said, begets a hallowed frame of mind. But how far is the effect sensuous and how far spiritual? Is it not to be feared that an anthem in a service is often no more a spiritual exercise than a glee at a concert? Music has charms and he who cannot feel them is to be pitied.

But, acceptable heart worship is quite another thing—no arrangement of notes and chords can ever do the work of God the Holy Spirit. Unless music can aid in making sinners *penitent*—in leading souls to Jesus Christ, or uplifting saints in holy joy to the Throne of God—we must hold that in vital godliness, it profits nothing. Architecture, with its arched roofs and noble pillars and dim religious light is supposed to impart a reverence and awe which befit the solemn engagements of Sunday and draw the mind towards the invisible God. Well, if combinations of stone can sanctify the spirit of man, it is a pity that the Gospel did not prescribe architecture as the remedy for the ruin of the Fall! If gorgeous buildings make men love God and long-drawn aisles renovate men’s spiritual nature, build, all you builders, both day and night!

If bricks and mortar can lead us to Heaven, alas, for the confusion which stopped the works at Babel! If there is such a connection between spires and spiritual things as to make human hearts beat in unison with the will of God, then build high and loftily and lavish your gold and silver! But if all that you produce is sensuous and nothing more, then turn to *living* stones and seek to build up a *spiritual* house with spiritual means!

We are told, nowadays, that the pompous array of ministering priests, the beauty of symbolism, the painting of windows, the smoke of incense and so on, tend to draw people into the place of worship and that when there, they aid in elevating their minds. What does Scripture say about it all? This thing was tried among the Jews and Christ's remark when He comes to sum up the long trial is, "It is the spirit that quickens. The flesh profits nothing." The real inward spirit of man is not blessed by sounds which charm the ear but appeal not to the understanding. Nor by colors which delight the eye but gladden not the affections of man!

To gratify taste is well enough for the carnal, but it profits nothing in the sight of God. It may be as well to be artistic as to be plain, but it is of no matter either way if tested by the Word—in the balances of the sanctuary these matters are lighter than vanity. We must make precisely the same remark concerning eloquence. Here we deal more closely with our own Brethren, who, in this thing look to the flesh as others do. Many persons have come to think that oratorical ability is essential in the minister.

It is not enough, some think, to preach the Truth with the Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven—we must also preach it in the wisdom of words with excellency of speech! The trappings of oratory and the drapery of eloquence are thought to be profitable. Ah, dear Friends, one half of the emotions excited in our places of worship are of no more value than those excited at the theater. The mere ring of words is no more than a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. "The flesh profits nothing."

So far as the Truth of God itself moves our inmost souls, preaching is of real service. But if that which you hear only commends itself to you because of the sweet voice that speaks it—or the telling tones in which it is delivered—your hearing is a carnal exercise and profits you nothing! It is only when your spirit grasp the truths. When your heart embraces Christ. When your soul beholds God by the eye of faith that you derive benefit! We may bring this principle to bear on the revivals over which we have watched with much hope but with more anxiety. In many revivals there has been too much aim at getting up an excitement—a carnal enthusiasm.

Excited persons pray one after the other. Excited persons speak and the stamp and motion of the hand and the tear trickling from the eye—all these are supposed to be of great service. I grant you that excitement may sometimes be used by God to stir the spirit of man, but unless, my dear Hearers, your religion is based on something *more* than animal excitement, it is based upon a lie! Your spirit must come to know its ruin before God, and be humbled. Your spirit must come to take hold of Jesus Christ and believe in Him. Your spirit must undergo the Divine change which only God the Holy Spirit can work—or else that excitement shall be noth-

ing more than the blowing up of a bubble which shall burst and leave not a trace behind.

Take care of any religion which merely tickles your fancy, excites your passions, or stirs your blood! True Grace penetrates the very core of our nature. It changes the heart, subdues the will, renews the passions and makes us new creatures in Christ Jesus! To come yet closer to ourselves, in the matter of prayer and the ordinances of God's House, I am afraid we too often forget this great rule—that it is the spirit that quickens and that the flesh profits nothing. We pray, I suppose, as a matter of habit—every morning and evening. But how often we spend our few minutes and we rise from our knees satisfied.

And if anybody should ask, "Have you been praying?" We would say, "Yes," but it has been the *flesh* prayer, the dead form without the life of the heart. In reality there has been no prayer at all! It has been the flesh, which profits nothing. It is only that prayer in which the spirit talks with God that is real prayer! The carnal man is quite satisfied if he can get through a certain string of expressions, but the spiritual man is not content with this. Luther used to complain very much of distractions in prayer and some said they could not understand it. "No," Luther might have said, "I dare say you cannot, for, being unspiritual, you do not understand spiritual difficulties."

Bernard complained much of the wandering of his thoughts in prayer and when someone said he thought Bernard must be a very great sinner to let his thoughts wander so, Bernard said, "I will give you a trial. I will give you a horse if you can say the Lord's Prayer and think of nothing else." So the man began, "Our Father which are in Heaven," when he stopped short and turning round, said, "But you must give me the bridle to get him home with." So hard is it to keep the mind upon the object of devotion!

While the sinner's words are going up to God he thinks that he is praying, but he has not prayed at all unless his heart has talked with God. Why, Brethren, some of the best prayers that have ever been prayed had not a single word to express them with. They were heart prayers and went up to Heaven in all their naked unclothed glory, like disembodied spirits and God accepted them. Many a prayer that has had the choicest words to garnish it has been nothing but a dead prayer wrapped up in ceremonies and only fit to be cast into the grave forever.

So with public worship. You would feel unhappy if you had spent the whole Sunday without going to a place of worship—but you are quite at ease if you come here and leave your hearts at home. When we are singing, you sing with us. And when we are praying, you cover your eyes, too. And when we are preaching, some of you think of what I am talking about and some do not. But when you get through the appointed hour, you feel

quite easy—but oh, remember that the mere carnal act of being here profits nothing.

Oh, dear Friends, shake off the idea that going up to a place of worship, or opening a Bible, or reading family prayer, or kneeling down, can, as mere acts, save your souls! I do not speak against them as to their profit in some respects, but as to *salvation* and the real vital work, which is acceptable before God, the mere *form* profits nothing! It is only as your *spirit* prays, as your *spirit* seeks, as your *spirit* worships, as your *spirit* listens to God's Word, that there is any quickening power in it whatever!

Once more. There are certain persons who take considerable delight in having seen, as they think, visions and other manifestations of Christ with their eyes—and having heard certain texts mysteriously spoken in their ears. Now I am not going to deny that you may have seen these visions and heard these sounds. I do not think you did, but whether you did or not is no matter—they profit you nothing. That which merely comes to this eye is nothing—it must come to the *soul's* eye of faith. That which comes to this ear is nothing unless it gets into the heart's ear—unless your *soul* hears it.

If I were to see all the devils in Hell I should not think myself damned because of that. And if you have seen all the angels in Heaven you must not think you are saved because of that! It is not what a man sees with his eyes, or hears with his ears—it is what the spirit receives which saves the soul. “God is a Spirit and they that worship Him must worship him in *spirit* and in truth, for the Father seeks such to worship Him.”

II. The text mentions the QUICKENING SPIRIT. That which puts life into our religion is its being received and acted out by a spiritual nature. For, first of all, it is the spiritual nature which quickens the man. The man who has not received, by the work of God, the Holy Spirit, a spiritual nature, is described by Paul as being dead in trespasses and sins. The Spirit finds men carnal and breathes into them a new and better nature, and then they become what they never were before, quickened, *spiritual* men.

This spirit of theirs is a quickening spirit, for it quickens all the ordinances. A carnal man is baptized—but it is the fleshly Baptism which profits nothing. A spiritual man comes to Baptism, and he is baptized and he quickens the Baptism—it becomes a real living Baptism to him, for he has fellowship with Jesus Christ in it. A carnal man comes to the Lord's Supper and he eats and drinks, what? “Damnation unto himself, not discerning the Lord's body.” A spiritual man comes there and he eats and drinks and what, then? Why it becomes a living ordinance to him—the bread sets forth to him the body of Christ and the wine sets forth the blood—and in spirit he feeds upon his incarnate Savior.

The possession of a spiritual nature and the exercise of that spiritual nature in the ordinances quickens them. So it is with prayer. The mere act of speaking one form of words is of no more profit than the repeating of any other. The Lord's Prayer, said backwards, is quite as acceptable to God as the Lord's Prayer said forwards unless the spirit enters into it. You might as well repeat the multiplication table as repeat the collect of the day as far as God is concerned, unless your *spirit* prays.

But when the spirit is engaged in repentance, in faith, in joy, in love—then the prayer is quickened. So with all the actions of man's life. If I give bread to the hungry, if I visit the sick, if I subscribe towards a good object—that is all nothing unless my heart is in the deed. But if I feed the poor because I love Jesus. If I seek to glorify God in my deeds of charity and holiness, they become living actions. Apart from all that they profit nothing to me before God. The spiritual part of my nature must quicken my whole life and make it real life, or else it will be a dead carnal existence before the Lord.

The spiritual nature has for its Author the Divine Father. The sixty-fifth verse of the chapter in which our text is found tells us that no man can come unto Christ except it is given him of the Father. To be spiritual is a gift of God the Father. He has begotten us again into a lively hope by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. The new life is the actual operation of the Holy Spirit—no man becomes spiritual except the Holy Spirit enters into him. Deity comes into contact with humanity and quickens the spiritual man. The mark by which this spirituality is discovered is *faith*. "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God."

Every man who rests upon Christ for salvation has the proof of his being spiritual. Modes of speech, or dress, or worship are not the marks of the *spiritual*—only simple, spiritual faith in the Lord Jesus is. True religion has always been spiritual, but mere professors have ever been content with the outward form alone. Among the Jews, when symbols were abundant, the mass either stuck fast in the types and could get no farther, or else they went clean away to idolatry. In these latter times the Lord has taken away almost all that is ceremonial in our religion. Two simple forms, alone, remain.

And now there is another grand trial to see whether men can live in a spiritual religion and that trial has come to prove just this—that none can do so but those who are born of God. The most of mankind cannot get on with a religion in which there is nothing to *see*, nothing to please the *ear*, or to gratify their *taste*. It is only the *spiritual* man who is so overwhelmed with the glories of God that he does not need the glories of man! He is so overcome with the splendor of Christ that he does not want the splendor of the masses! He is so taken up with the magnificence of the great High Priest that he does not care for gorgeously appareled priests!

Blessed is that man who sees, though his eyes are blind! Who hears, though his ears are deaf! Who tastes, though his appetite fails! Who lives, though his heart and flesh fail—blessed is he who sees Him who is invisible and has revealed unto him what eye has not seen and what ear has not heard! This will not suit many of you. A religion of thinking and believing is too hard for you. Repenting, believing, trusting—these things men will not do. They will kneel down any quantity of times! They will even, if told by a priest, lick the floor with their tongues—or they will walk with peas in their shoes, or whip their backs—but when it comes to believing, hoping, trusting, fearing and so on, men are so little inclined to mental operations, especially under the dictation of a higher authority, that they will not have anything to do with them.

What?” they say, “a religion in which there is nothing for me to see! What? An unseen altar?” Yes, an unseen altar. “Am I not to see the sacrifice?” No. “Never to see it? Then I do not understand it. What? A God, but no symbols! No crucifixes! No crosses! What? No holy wafer, no sacred place, nothing sacred?” No, nothing visible to be revered, nothing whatever but the unseen God. “What? Not even my place of worship, is not *that* to be holy?” No, if you are a Christian, all places must alike be sacred to you. “Neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem shall men worship the Father, but those that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.”

You must be *yourself* a temple and God must dwell in you! You must be *yourself* a priest and everywhere you must offer spiritual sacrifice. “The spirit quickens, but the flesh profits nothing.”

III. The Savior tells us in the closing sentence THAT HIS WORDS ARE SPIRIT AND LIFE. Beloved, never was there a more true sentence spoken! Listen to other teachers and you get precepts concerning washing, eating, bowing, etc., which are fleshly. But hear Jesus and His words—they all aim at the heart. Listen to the Puseyite and hear his word—“You should take care to attend Matins and early celebrations in our holy and beautiful Church! You should decorate the altar, get a surpliced choir, have processions and put on the holy garments.”

Now you see at once that these are not *spiritual* things—these are not life. Ritual performances are very pretty spectacles for silly young ladies and sillier men to gaze upon—but there is no shadow of spirit or life in them. The High Church ritual does not look like a Divine thing—on the contrary—if I stand among the throng and gaze at all its prettiness, it looks amazingly like a nursery game, or a stage play!

Lack of taste, you say. Not so, I reply. My eyes admire your glittering colors and the splendor of your services is taking to me, as a man. I enjoy the swell of your organ and I can even put up with the smell of your incense (if you buy it good), but my spirit does not care for these fooleries—

it turns away sickened and cries, “There is nothing here for me. There is no more nourishment for the spirit in all this than there is food for man in a swine’s trough!” The words of Jesus Christ are throughout *unceremonial* and *unformal*—they are spirit and they are life—and we turn to them with all the greater zeal after having seen enough of your childish things!”

On my Lord’s words I fix my hope in the battle now waging with ceremonialism and I wish that all ministers of Christ would scorn to use any other weapons. I know the talk is that we ought to vie with the false churches in the beauty of our services—but this is a temptation of the devil! If the simple preaching of the Cross will not attract the people, let them go away. Let the Lord’s servants renounce the sword and shield of Saul and go forth with the Gospel sling and stone! Our weapons are the Words of Jesus—these are spirit and these are life. Architecture, apparel, music, liturgies—these are neither spirit nor life. Let those rest on them who will—we can do without them, by God’s help. Our sires, in the Puritan age, fought and won the battles of Christ without these things. In later days Whitfield stirred his age with nothing but the Word of God. Rowlands and Christmas Evans roused the men of Wales with no attraction but the Cross.

My dear Brethren in Christ, ministers of the Gospel who are now present—let me beseech you—stand to the Gospel! Set your backs against the tendency of the times to depart from the simplicity of Jesus Christ! If men will not come to hear us because we preach the Gospel, draw them by no other attraction! I rejoice in the vast crowd so constantly assembled here because my enemies, themselves, are witnesses that there is nothing in me to which the honor can be ascribed! An uplifted Savior still draws all men to Him!

Dear Friends, pray that the great and blessed Spirit, who first gives *spiritual* life, may continue to feed and nourish and perfect that life in you until you shall come to that Heaven where ALL is spiritual! Where they need no candles, nor light of the sun. Where no temple is found, because the Lord God and the Lamb are the temple! Where spiritual life shall be developed into its purest form! Where, in *spiritual* bodies, you shall see the spiritual God and reign before His Throne, world without end. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 6:26.

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*“But there are some of you that believe not.”
John 6:64.*

ARE there really? Yes. He that searches the hearts says so. Then it is high time for us to enquire, “What is it to believe in Christ? What is it to believe to the saving of the soul?” It is not merely to consider the Gospel to be true. It is not simply to endorse the Doctrine that Christ is God. Those who hold a sound creed may be destitute of precious faith and those who are able to defend the Divinity of Christ with admirable scholarship may, nevertheless, be without God in the world. To believe in Christ includes much more than a religious profession. It is so to believe the Gospel as to forsake all other beliefs for the possession of its blessed hope! It is to imbibe the spirit of the Word of God while you accept the letter of its pure teaching! Or, in other words, it is to come to Jesus and to prove, in your own souls, His power to save.

Just as the faith of Abraham led him to leave his kindred and his father's house under the guardian care of Jehovah, so saving faith leads a man to leave his self-sufficiency with all the carnal pursuits and ambitions that encircled, like a farmstead, his natural and primitive home and to go forth, led by Jesus Christ, not knowing where he goes. Just as faith led the harlot Rahab to anticipate the doom of Jericho—to hang the scarlet line in her window and then to rest securely in her house though the town walls upon which it was built, were shaking—so, by faith, the sinner comes to the blood of sprinkling, hangs the promise of Redemption in the window of his soul and though he feels himself to be, naturally, no better than others, yet he rests secure because that scarlet line is there and he is safe! Or, to use another figure, just as the Hebrew householder slew the lamb, dipped the bunch of hyssop in its blood, sprinkled it upon the lintel and the two side posts of his house and then calmly ate the Passover supper, though he knew that the destroying angel was flying through the land of Egypt and though, perhaps, he could even hear the shrieks of the dying and the wailing of the bereaved—yet he remained quietly in his house knowing that though he might be the guiltiest of men, the blood secured his safety according to the promise of God!

To believe in Jesus, then, is to trust our soul's salvation to what Jesus has done for us, to prove what He is doing in us and to rely entirely upon His promise to save us even to the end. It is to drop from the giddy elevation where we stand on the rotten timbers of self-righteousness and to fall into the Omnipotent arms of Him who stands ready to receive us. It is to tear off the rags of our own spinning that we may be clothed with the righteousness which is from Heaven. Faith is the reverse of sight! It is to believe that we are saved when sin tells us that we are lost. It is to believe that Christ has cleansed us when we still feel defilement within. It is to believe that we shall see His face in Glory when clouds and darkness enshroud our path and doubts and fears distress our heart. This is the faith which saves the soul!

We are not saved by faith, itself, as a meritorious work. There is no merit in believing in God and even if there were, it could not save us, since salvation by merit has been once and for all solemnly excluded. Nor does faith save us as an efficient cause. Faith is the channel of salvation, not the fountain and source of it. Hence faith, though it saves, never boasts. He that boasts has not faith and he that has faith can say, "God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." When the poor man who was bitten by the fiery serpent looked to the bronze serpent upon the pole, it was his eyes that saved him—yet it was not the merit of looking, nor was it his eyes that were the efficient cause of his cure—all the glory of it was to be given to God who had ordained that the bronze serpent would be the means of healing to all who looked to it. So, faith is the eye with which we look to Christ, yet it has neither merit nor efficacy in itself—all the merit and efficacy lie in the precious blood of Him to whom we look.

Again, faith is an empty hand. Yes, it is the filthy hand of the leprous sinner and Christ puts His mercy into that black hand. Is there any merit in the hand? God forbid! Is there any efficiency to save in the hand? Oh, no, my Brothers and Sisters—the hand which *gives* must have the glory, not the hand which takes! He who bestows the blessing must have the honor of it, not the faith by which we receive the blessing from Him. Now, having thus spoken upon what faith is, and having tried to show you its peculiar position in the work of salvation, I am solemnly reminded, by our text, that "there are some of you that believe not." The context shows that these words were spoken by Christ to His disciples. They were gathered around Him and He was addressing them. Some of them had murmured because what He said to them was too "hard" for them to receive and the Lord Jesus, being able to read their hearts, could say to them, "There are some of you that believe not." And the Inspired Evangelist adds, "For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who would not believe, and who would betray Him."

I am going to speak first about *those whose unbelief is secret*. And *secondly, about those who are known to us to be unbelievers*.

I. First, THERE ARE SOME WHOSE UNBELIEF IS SECRET—it is known only to Christ.

If you had looked upon those disciples of Christ, you would have judged that they had received the gift of eternal life. You would have said, "God forbid that I should condemn any of those men who have come out from an ungodly generation and have professed to be followers of the Prophet of Nazareth!" Although it would be wrong for us to judge our fellow creatures, Jesus judged His disciples and judged them rightly, for He can penetrate even to the heart. He can discern the secret thoughts, intents and motives of all men. And the day is coming when He will finally judge the whole race of mankind. His eyes even now pierce through the hypocrite's disguise, but His hands shall tear it away when He shall say to those who cry to Him, "Lord! Lord!"—"Verily I say unto you, I never knew you; depart from Me, you workers of iniquity." We know not the hollowness of their pretense, but Christ knows all about it. And if the Holy Spirit shall help us, we may be enabled to show it to them. Oh, that it may be so, even now, that they may stand with their souls revealed, and their consciences convicted—and that they may now seek faith—seeing that they have it not!

What reason for alarm and for heart-searching there is here, for it is to be feared that *even in the ministry there are some who have not faith!* Yes, Brothers, there have been in all ages men who have worn the robes of God's ambassadors, but who have not been at peace with Him. It is a solemn and dreadful fact that there have been men who have broken the bread at the Lord's Table and who have been leaders in God's Israel, yet who, notwithstanding that, have had neither part nor lot in the matter! Brothers in the ministry and young men who occasionally go out to preach the Word and who are hoping, by-and-by, to have a settled pastorate, let us ask ourselves this question—Is it not possible that we, although preachers of the Word, may yet be without faith? Are we seeking to teach others what we have not ourselves learned? Are we only like scaffolds, used in the building of Christ's Church, yet not part of the spiritual structure, or like Noah's laborers who helped to build the ark, yet were drowned by the great deluge? Are we like Elijah's ravens which brought him bread and meat from Ahab's table, yet remained unclean birds of evil omen? Let us seriously question ourselves, for God has sometimes done good works by bad men—yet this has not saved the men—even as it was with Judas who worked miracles as the other Apostles did, preached as they did, yet who, nevertheless, was "a son of perdition" who went to "his own place" among the lost!

Further, is it not possible that *there are some in the other offices of the church who have not faith?* Men and Brothers, let me speak to you who are the fathers in Israel. Though but young, myself, yet, as God's servant delivering His message, I speak to you with authority. Is it not possible that you may serve tables, as deacons of the Church, and yet that you may be an intruder at Christ's Table? You may be an elder and an overseer of others and yet have to say, "They made me the keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard I have not kept." It is solemn work to be made a watcher over the souls of men! But what must be our position if, after watching over others, our own soul should still be in the gall of bit-

terness and the bonds of iniquity? “I speak as unto wise men; judge you what I say”—office-bearing and the choice of the Church cannot guarantee your salvation!

And as this is true of some ministers and of some Church officers, *it may be true of others who are engaged in various works of piety*. I thank God that we have here many Sabbath school teachers, tract distributors, street preachers—in fact, I hope that there are very few persons in this Church who are *not* regularly engaged in doing good in one way or other. If there are among them any who do not believe, I am happy to say that I do not know them. Yet is it possible, dear Friend, that you are teaching a Sunday school class although you need to become as a little child before you can enter the Kingdom of Heaven? May you not be distributing messages of mercy to others, in the streets, or from door to door and yet be, yourself, in need of that mercy? If that is your sad case, you are like a man with a leprous hand dealing out medicine to the sick! Take care, Christian workers, that in this day of activity, when there is so much to do, you do not neglect the personal act of faith which unites your soul to Christ. See to this vital and all-important matter. Make the outside of the cup and platter clean, as far as you can, but see that the inside is not full of hypocrisy. However active you are in the Lord’s service, I pray that your exclusive self-examination may be as earnest as your expansive zeal! May you be as much concerned to be saved as to proclaim salvation to others!

Now I speak to the Church members in general. I thank God that He is adding to this Church every day. Sometimes I hear a whisper from one side that those of us whose business it is to examine candidates for Church fellowship are too severe in our judgment of them. And, on the other side, there are some who say that we are not searching enough! Brothers and Sisters, it is enough for me and my fellow laborers in Christ, when we can say with singleness of spirit—and not with eye-service, as men-pleasers—“We have sought to serve God in this matter. I do verily believe that for the most part, what we have bound on earth has been bound in Heaven—and what we have loosed on earth has been loosed in Heaven. At any rate, if we have erred in any case it has been neither by favor nor by prejudice, but we have sought, after lifting up our hearts to Heaven, to give a righteous judgment in every instance. Yet, with all the care that may be exercised, there is not, beneath Heaven, a single church that is perfect!

Some of you are members of this Church and some are members of other churches, yet it is almost certain that there are some of you who believe not. I do not profess to be able to separate the tares from the wheat, but Jesus can do it—He knows those among you who have no faith! You may talk about faith and yet not really have it yourselves. You may have a great gift in prayer and yet not have faith. You may be an acceptable preacher and yet not have faith. You may walk uprightly before your fellow men and yet not have faith. You may be a generous subscriber to every holy work and yet not have faith. How nearly a man may be a Christian and yet be lost! The counterfeit may be made to look so like the

genuine that men may look at it again, and again, and again and yet may pronounce the real to be counterfeit and the false to be genuine! The Lord grant that if there are, in this congregation, any who have a name to live and yet are dead, they may be awakened to a sense of their true condition before God before it is too late—and that Christ may give them life!

Brothers and Sisters, I do not know that at the present moment if I have any doubt of my own personal interest in Christ. Yet I do know that it is a very solemn thing to be so sure and that it is a damnable thing to be presumptuous concerning such a matter. There will be times, with all of us, when it will do us good to sit down and seriously ask, “Are these things so, or are they not?” Let us dig down to the very foundations of our faith and see what it is upon which we are building for eternity! There will be times when all our past experience will be blown to shreds, like the sail of the mariner in a great gale. There will be times when our strongest evidence will snap like a mast broken by the fury of the storm. There will be times when all our comforts and joys will go like hencoops washed overboard from a laboring ship. Oh, what a blessed thing it is, at such a time as that, to cast our great bower anchor into the sea and to calmly sing—

***“In every high and stormy gale
My Anchor holds within the veil.”***

When anyone can say—

***“His oath, His covenant and His blood,
Support me in the sinking flood”—***

he may feel that he is everlastingly secure and that Jesus is, indeed, his Savior! May the Holy Spirit enable you to judge—for we cannot—whether you have this saving faith or not!

II. Now, in the second place, I am to speak about THOSE WHO ARE KNOWN TO US AS UNBELIEVERS.

First, there is a very pleasing class of persons here who say, “*We have no faith, but we are very anxious to have it.*” I bless God for you, dear Friends, and I wish that we had thousands like you! You feel your need of Christ, you long to be saved, you hate sin, you hate self-righteousness—yet you have no faith. There are certain questions that each of you often puts to us. First, “May I believe in Christ?” I answer—Of course you may, because Christ bids you do so and what He bids you do, you may do. “But am I fit to believe in Him?” No fitness is required. “But am I the person who may believe in Jesus?” There is no special person indicated, for the Gospel runs on this wise and it is to be preached to every creature under Heaven, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” As to the question whether you may believe in Jesus, whoever you are, I say—Yes, certainly—come and welcome, for Christ has said, “Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” Your next question probably is, “Can I believe?” I do not know, but I should think that you can. I will put a few questions to you—Can you believe that Christ is God? “Yes.” Can you believe anything that God says? “Yes.” You can believe, then, for Christ said it and Christ is God—that He came to seek and to save that which is lost, and you know that you are lost. God says, through His servant, the Apostle Paul, “that Christ Jesus came into the

world to save sinners.” And you know that you are a sinner, therefore He came into the world to save you! Surely you can believe that! I know many persons who say that they cannot believe, when in truth they can, yet they do not know that they can! How is it, then, that there are still so many who believe not?

The chief reason is because they *will not believe*—they are too proud—they love their own righteousness too much, they think themselves too wise to submit to the righteousness of Christ. But you ask, “Can *I* believe in Jesus?” I say rather—Can *you*? I ask you the question! You who are as evil as Hell—can you believe that Christ can save you? “Yes, Sir,” you say, “I can believe that.” Can you believe that He is willing to save you—good and gracious Christ that He is—hanging on the Cross and bidding you trust Him? “Oh, Sir!” you say, “I cannot help believing that.” Well, then, you have proved that you can believe, for you have done it already! I used to think that believing in Christ was some mysterious thing and I could not make out what it was—but when I heard that it was just this—“Look unto Me, and be you saved,” I found that the only reason why it was so hard was that it was so easy! If it had been a more difficult matter, then my proud spirit would have tried to accomplish it! But being so easy, my proud spirit would not do it.

You remember why Naaman could not wash in the Jordan as the Prophet bade him? It was because he would not—his proud spirit would not let him. “I thought,” he said—that was where the mischief lay, for what right had he to think? “I thought he will surely come out to me and stand, and call on the name of the Lord, his God, and strike his hand over the place and recover the leper. Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them and be clean?” That is why he could not wash in the Jordan, because he would not, but persisted in asking questions, needing to be wiser than God.

O tried Heart, you may believe and I think I may say that you can believe! God is true—you know that—and it cannot be hard to believe when you know that. Christ is able to save—you know He is—so it cannot be difficult to believe in Him. Christ is willing to save—you know He is—then is it hard for you to believe in Him? So I say that you can believe. May God bless you and make you willing to believe, for, if He makes you willing, He will be sure to show you that you are able to believe!

The next class without faith is not one over which we can rejoice so much as over those who are anxious to have faith—I mean *the despairing ones*. There are some souls that feel their sin to be very heavy. They have the Gospel faithfully preached to them, but they are so proud that they will have it that Christ is not willing to save them, so they will not go to Him. There is such a thing as proud humility—when a person feels a sort of self-conception of being base. “No,” he says, “I cannot take the medicine. I am too sick.” Now that man is as much a suicide, spiritually, as though he took poison, or stabbed himself to death! God says that He is able to save you, but you say that He is not. You are lying in the very teeth of His promise and charging Him to be a liar! The Apostle Paul,

writing under the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit, says that Christ is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by Him—yet you, in effect, say, “No, He is not.” Why, you are imitating Satan—setting up your wisdom in the place of God’s—instead of accepting God’s Word as true!

I know that when I first heard that Christ could save such a sinner as I was, I thought the news was too good to be true, but the Holy Spirit led me to trust in Him and then I proved that it was true. If you are a poor miserable beggar and some good man here should say to you, “Come home with me and I will give you a good situation. No, more, I will take you into my home and you shall be my son and heir.” You would say, “Well, I can hardly believe it, but I will go and see if it is true.” I hope you will say to God, who has promised you far more than that, “Lord, I am as evil a sinner as there is out of Hell, but if You will, You can make me clean. Lord, do it! I give myself to You.” And if, poor despairing Soul, you can say, “It is God with whom I have to deal and He can do anything. It is a dying Savior with whom I have to deal and He must be willing to forgive. It is the risen Redeemer of whom I have to think—He can speak peace to my soul and He will do it!” If you can thus trust yourself with Him, you will honor God and you will be saved!

But there is still a larger class in perhaps greater danger. I mean, *the careless and thoughtless*. How many of you have come in here out of a curiosity which may never bring you here again? For you, death is a dream, Heaven a fiction and Hell a bugbear. You know that the Word of God is true, yet you never trouble yourself about its warnings and threats. You say, “Let us eat and drink, and enjoy ourselves,” but as for your immortal soul, you have left that to take care of itself as the ostrich leaves its eggs in the wilderness. Permit me, for a minute or two, to show you that I care for your soul even if you do not care for it yourself. You who are indifferent to your spiritual welfare, remember that you belong to the most hopeless class under Heaven! The profane are frequently converted, but the indifferent not so often. I have noticed that those who get into the habit of going first to one place of worship, and then to another, are very rarely saved—yet that is not because they oppose the Truth of God. No, if they would do that, there might be some hope concerning them! When you are at home, take up a flint and an India rubber ball of the same size. Then take a hammer and strike both of them with it. Every time you smite the ball, you make an impression upon it, but it quickly returns to its original shape. When you hit the flint with the hammer, you may produce no impression for a time, but, by-and-by, after one of your blows, it is shivered to atoms. Many of you are like that India rubber ball. Under the preaching of the Gospel, you are interested, moved, affected—but the impression is never very deep and you soon return to your original form—you are shallow with regard to heavenly things. We cannot get at your conscience, we cannot reach your heart—would God that we could!

I pray you to remember, however, that there is a time coming when Death will preach far more effectually to you than I can! I recollect a

narrative of a young woman, a fair and lovely lady, whose mother was very proud of her. She had introduced her into all the fashionable circles of the city. Her dresses were always becoming, but also expensive and even extravagant. She lived only to go to one party and another, and to one amusement and another. Her mother had not observed—for mothers do not like to notice such things—that there had been a great paleness on her daughter's cheeks. A rapid decline set in and, at last, to the mother's terror and the daughter's dismay, the doctor thought it his duty to say that it was impossible that she could live many weeks. Neither mother nor daughter had ever cared for ministers. Religion would have stood in the way of their chosen pursuits, so they avoided it—but now the minister was sent for. He was an earnest, faithful servant of Christ, so, instead of striving to bolster her up with false hopes, he began to talk of death, judgment, eternity and the wrath of God. The young woman deeply felt the force and the truth of his words—and said to her mother, "I cannot think what you have been doing with me. You have led me to believe that these fine dresses and those parties and amusements were all I had to live for! Why did you not tell me I must die? Why did you not bid me prepare for eternity? O my Mother, would that you had told me that I must soon leave this world and enter the eternal state!" She begged them to bring out her last fineries and she said, "Mother, I feel it is too late now, for I shall die, but hang those things up and look at them, and never bring up another child as you have brought me up! And as for yourself, I charge you to think how soon you, too, must die."

So I say to all careless ones here—Think of the grave to which you must go sooner or later. Think of your last hours and of the only true preparation for them. While it is true of you now that you have no faith, may it not be true very long—but may you even now seek and find faith in the Lord Jesus Christ! For, remember that *not* to believe in Christ is to be already exposed to the wrath of God! *Not* to believe in Christ is to be without salvation and already under condemnation! There are many who do not know what it is to have a present salvation, but I bless God that there are also many who do know what a present salvation is! Do you know what it is? Not long ago I was asked this question, "Is it possible for a man to be saved *now*?" "Possible? Possible? If it is not possible for him to be saved now, it is not possible for him to be saved at all! But the Apostle Paul assures us that "now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." And no man should give sleep to his eyes, nor slumber to his eyelids until he feels and knows that this present salvation is really his!

Oh, what peace it gives to know that you are now forgiven, now blessed, now saved! Oh, how sweet it is to be able to say that God is my Father, that I am His child and that He will keep me in perfect safety and bring me to be forever where He is! Oh, the delights of this present salvation! It is better than a king's throne—it is better than a prince's riches. Present salvation—it is Heaven on earth! It is the antepast of the peace of immortality! Heaven on earth can only be known by those who are saved and who know that they are saved. May that be your case and mine, Be-

loved! Christ's own words are, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned." May God bless us all with the true belief which is eternal life to all who possess it, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 12:1-32.**

The teaching of our Lord in this chapter has very much to do with Christianity in connection with this present life, its cares and troubles. God has nowhere promised us exemption from affliction and trial. Indeed, it has been said, with much truth, that the Old Testament promise was one of prosperity, but that the New Testament promise is one of tribulation. You may rest assured that if it had been best for us to be taken directly to Heaven when we were converted, the Lord would have done it! But as He has not done so, there are wise reasons why He keeps His people here for a while. The gold must go through the fire before it has its place in the king's crown—and the wheat must be exposed to the winnowing fan before it can be taken into the heavenly garner.

Verse 1. *In the meantime, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trampled one another, He began to say unto His disciples first of all, Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.* Hypocrisy, however, of a kind that was calculated to spread like leaven. If you know that a man is a hypocrite, you do not feel inclined to imitate him. But the Pharisees were such well-made hypocrites—such excellent counterfeits—that many people were tempted to imitate them! Our Lord teaches us, however, that it is no use being a hypocrite.

2. *For there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known.* For many a day, the hypocrite's true character may not be discovered but there is a day coming that will reveal all secrets—and woe unto the man whose sin is laid bare in that day!

3. *Therefore whatever you have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which you have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops.* It would be well if we all lived in such a fashion that we would not be ashamed to have everything we did placarded in the sky. I have heard of one who said that he would like to have a window in his heart so that everybody might see what was going on. I think that if I had such a window in my heart, I would like to have shutters—and I question whether any man would really wish to have his heart open to the gaze of all mankind! But at least let our lives be such that we should not be ashamed for the Universal Eye to be fixed upon them. If you are ashamed to have any one of your actions known, be ashamed to do it! If you would be ashamed to hear again what you were about to say, do not say it! Check your tongue. Be cautious and careful. Live always as one who realizes God's Omniscience. While one of the ancient orators was speaking on one occasion, all his hearers went away with the exception of Plato—but he continued to speak as eloquently as

ever, for he said that Plato was a sufficient audience for any man. So, if there are none but the eyes of God looking upon you, be just as careful as if you were in the street surrounded by your fellow creatures. No, be more careful because you are in the Presence of your Creator!

4, 5. *And I say unto you My Friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom you shall fear: Fear Him who after He has killed has power to cast into Hell; yes, I say unto you, Fear Him.* And how wise and brave we shall be if we fear God! It is well put in that Psalm which we sometimes sing—

***“Fear Him, you saints, and you will then
Have nothing else to fear.”***

This great filial fear will chase out all the little, mean, cowardly fears, for he who, in the Scriptural sense, fears God, can never be a coward in dealing with men.

6, 7. *Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: you are of more value than many sparrows.* God does not forget the sparrows, but He regards you with far greater interest and care, for He counts the very hairs of your head. He not only knows that there is such a person, but He knows the minutest details of your life and being. It is always a great comfort to remember that our Heavenly Father knows us. A dying man who had been for many years a Believer had a minister at his bedside who asked him, “Don’t you know Jesus?” “Yes, Sir,” he replied, “I do, but the ground of my comfort is that He knows me.” And surely there is a great force in that Truth of God! Your Heavenly Father knows you so completely that He has counted the hairs of your head! “Fear not therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.”

8, 9. *Also I say unto you, Whoever shall confess Me before men, him shall the Son of Man also confess before the angels of God: but he that denies Me before men shall be denied before the angels of God.* What courage this ought to give us! In company where the very name of Christ is kicked about like a football—where everything is respected except true religion—it is not always an easy thing to come forward and say, “I, also, am His disciple.” But if you will do this, you have Christ’s pledge that He will acknowledge you before the angels of God. If you do not do so, but practically deny Him by a shameful silence, you may reasonably expect that He, also, will deny you before the angels.

10. *And whoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemes against the Holy Spirit it shall not be forgiven.* This is one of the very difficult texts of Holy Scripture. We are told, in 1 John 5:16 that “there is a sin unto death,” and I would have you very cautious of ever daring to trifle with the Spirit of God since sin against Him is guarded with such special warnings! The flaming sword of Divine Vengeance seems to hang before the very name of the Holy Spirit, so, whatever you do, never trample upon His royal dignity, or blaspheme Him in heart or by lips.

11. *And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers.* That is to say, the persecutors—“when they bring you there, to be tried for your lives, as many have been in past ages and some still are.”

11, 12. *Take you no thought how or what thing you shall answer, or what you shall say: for the Holy Spirit shall teach you in the same hour what you ought to say.* I have often been amazed and delighted with the remarkable answers which were given to bishops and priests by poor humble men and women who were on trial for their lives. Perhaps you remember that Anne Askew was asked, in order to entangle her in her speech, “What would become of a mouse if it ate the bread of the holy sacrament?” She said that was too deep a question for a poor woman like her to answer and she begged the learned bishop on the bench to tell her what would become of the mouse—to which his lordship answered that it would be damned! Now, what reply could be given to that but the one Anne Askew gave, “Alack, poor mouse!”? I do not know that anything better could have been said! And on other occasions there have been answers which have been deeply theological. And there have been some which have been wisely evasive and also some full of weight. And others full of Grace and the Truth of God, for the Holy Spirit has helped His saints, in time of persecution, to answer well those who have accused them.

13-17. *And one of the company said unto Him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divides the inheritance with me. And He said unto him, Man, who made Me a judge or a divider over you? And He said unto them, Take heed, beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consists not in the abundance of things which he possesses. And He spoke a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? There were empty cupboards in the houses of the poor and there were hungry children to be fed—so this man need not have lacked room where he could bestow his fruits!*

18-20. *And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have much goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, You fool! Which was the last thing he thought—he imagined that he was a very wise man! “But God said unto him, You fool!”*

20, 21. *This night your soul shall be required of you: then whose shall those things be, which you have provided? So is he that lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.* Here our Savior shows us the frail nature of the tenure upon which we hold all earthly goods and how it is not worthwhile to make these the chief things of our life, for, while they may leave us, we are quite sure, by-and-by, to have to leave them!

22. *And He said unto His disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought.* No undue, anxious thought, for such is the meaning of the word used here. “Take no thought.”

22-30. *For your life, what you shall eat; neither for the body, what you shall put on. The life is more than food, and the body is more than raiment. Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn, and God feeds them: how much more are you better than the fowls? And which of you by worrying can add to his stature one cubit? If you then are not able to do that thing which is the least, why are you anxious for the rest? Consider the lilies, how they grow: they toil not, they spin not, and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothes the grass, which is today in the field, and tomorrow is cast into the oven; how much more will He clothe you, O you of little faith? And seek not what you shall eat, or what you shall drink, neither be you of a doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knows that you have need of these things. So that, with the knowledge of His guarantees to you that you shall always have enough, why do you need to be care-worn and anxious? I have often looked at birds in a cage and thought of the happiness and carelessness of heart which they seem to exhibit. And yet, if you were to forget to give them water, or if you were to fail to give them seed, how soon they would die! Perhaps the little creature has not enough to last it more than one day, but it goes on singing its tune and leaves all anxiety about tomorrow to those whose business it is to care for it. You would be ashamed to let your bird starve—and will your Heavenly Father let you, who are not His birds, but His children, starve? Oh, no! “Your Father knows that you have need of these things.”*

31, 32. *But rather seek you the Kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the Kingdom. He does not give you all that you would like to have, but He is going “to give you the Kingdom.” He gives the lesser gifts to others, but He is saving up the Kingdom for you! Luther once said, “All the empires of the earth are only so much meal for God’s swine—but the treasure is for His children. They may have less meal, but they shall have the Eternal Kingdom.” Oh, how blessed are we if, by faith, we know that this is true concerning us! “It is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the Kingdom”!*

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

A HOME QUESTION AND A RIGHT ANSWER

NO. 1646

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 5, 1882,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“From that time many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will you, also, go away? Then Simon Peter answered Him, Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”
John 6:66-69.

BROTHERS AND SISTERS, we believe that the righteous shall hold on his way and he that has clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger. We also believe that he that believes in Christ “has everlasting life” and, consequently, must live forever. The living water which Christ gives a man shall be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life. Our Lord has said of His sheep that they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of His hands. Yet we know that if any man draws back, the Lord will have no pleasure in him, and we are sure that, “without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” Therefore we very heartily sing the verse in one of our hymns—

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

We consider that it would be an abusing of this Grace if we were to grow careless, presumptuous, high-minded and imagine that for ourselves, personally, it would not be possible to become apostates, or even to turn aside a little from the right way. We believe the Truth of God of the Final Perseverance of the Saints concerning the true people of God, but the question comes to our heart, Are we such? Is there in us the incorruptible Seed which lives and abides forever? And how are we to know that we are such but by this very perseverance which, while it is an effect of Grace, is also one of the most certain tokens of it, for there is not the true Grace of God in the heart where there is no perseverance in Grace even unto the end.

“He that endures to the end shall be saved.” But what if we should only have the transient gleams of temporary illumination and should relapse into a thick Egyptian night? Here is cause enough for holy fear! Come, then, Brothers and Sisters, trusting in the Immutable Grace and love and power of God, let each man, nevertheless, examine himself and let this be a time of heart-searching. Say not this is out of place when we are just gathering around the table of the Lord, for is it not written, “Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread”? Let us get ready to come to the festival of our Lord's Supper by putting our Lord's question, each

one to His own heart, and trying to answer it by the help of God's own Spirit.

First, the reason for the question—Why did Christ ask of the twelve, “Will you, also, go away?” Then, secondly, the question itself. And, thirdly, the answer which Peter most fitly gave to it, which, I doubt not, he gave in the name and on the behalf of all his Brothers. The same reply we would also give tonight— “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

I. First, then, WHY DID THE SAVIOR ASK THE TWELVE THIS QUESTION? He would not have caused them needless pain. He had a wise reason for trying them with such an enquiry. It was, first, because it was a season of defection. “From that time many went back and walked no more with Him.” You will find, I think, that in all Churches there are times of flocking in, when many fly to the Church like doves to their windows. But happy is that Church which never has a time of flying *out*, when numbers who have been tested, fail, and are no more to be found. Churches have summers, like our gardens, and then all things are full. But then come their winters and, alas, what emptying is seen!

Have we not all seen the flood when the tide has come up far upon the beach? And have we not all marked the ebb when every wave has seemed to fall short of that which preceded it? Such ebbs and floods there are in the history of the Kingdom of Christ. One day, “The kingdom of God suffers violence and every man presses into it.” At another time men seem to be ashamed of the Christian faith and they wander off into a thousand delusions—and the Church is diminished and brought low by heresy, by worldliness, by lukewarmness and by all sorts of evils.

Often may the chronicle run thus—“Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled.” It is right, then, at times when those that did run well are hindered, that the Master should say to those who, for a while, remain steadfast, “Will you, also, go away?” Ah, dear Friends, some of you are very steadfast now while this Church flourishes—how would you be if the pastor were dead, or his name in ill-repute? How would you be if the attendance on the means of Grace grew slack? How would you be if there was a decline in all the work of the Church? Have you backbone enough in you to be faithful if all others were faithless? Is there the real grit about you? Could you dare to be Daniels and, “dare to stand alone”? Can you fight a losing battle? Can you stand in the gap and be the last of a few heroic men who will defend the pass against all comers?

Alas, what numbers swim with the tide! How few can swim against the current! How readily are men seized with panic and run for it with might and main if they see others hastening from the battle. How few can hold the bridge like Horatius in the brave days of old! Well may the Savior ask the question of us tonight, for we are as frail and fickle as others! Well may He ask it now, for worse times than these may be drawing near—“Will you, also, go away?” It was a time, too, of defection among disciples. I call your attention to the use of that word here. “From that time many of His *disciples* went back.” Disciples? Yes, not merely camp-followers! Not

the mob that hung upon His skirts for the sake of the loaves and fishes, but some of His *disciples* went back—those of nobler spirit, who had listened to His words and, for a while had professed to call Him, “Master and Lord”

Even some of these deserted the standard. Their name remains—they are called “disciples,” still, though they have gone back! And this sets forth the grievous guilt of such men and women as enter into the Church and then, after a while, turn aside to false doctrine or to sin. They depart with their Prince’s uniform upon their backs and carry the livery of Christ into the service of Satan! The stamp of a disciple is upon each of them, still, though they are renegades and perverts! They will be judged as having been what they professed to be—and heavy will be their sentence as apostates. We read of “Simon, the leper.” He is called, “the leper” after He had been healed. Here, on the other hand, are some who bear their good name even after their villainy has been discovered—and this helps to make their treachery the more glaring.

Just as the name, “harlot,” stuck to Rahab after she had become an honest woman and a Believer, so does a good name stick to one after it has ceased to be true—and it remains as a reminder of their fearful folly. Go and live down Turncoat Lane. Hide yourself away as much as you can, but whenever you come into the street, if they do not say it to your face, the neighbors will whisper behind your back, “There goes one who was a disciple. There is one who professed to be a follower of Christ, but he has turned his back upon his Lord.” The memory of your profession will stick to you through life! It will stick to you throughout eternity! If you are a wolf in sheep’s clothing, some flecks of the wool will hang about you long after you have dragged the fleece over your head. Damnable apostate shall be your brand, even when you are cast away from the face of God forever! Oh, that none of us might ever earn such a title, by being reckoned among the disciples that went back and walked no more with Jesus! Yet, when disciples fall away, it is time to ask other disciples, “Will you, also, go away?”

The defection in this case was on account of *doctrine*. Our Savior had done nothing that could vex His followers; He had not even spoken sharply to His disciples. Far from it. He had simply preached the glorious Truth of God that He is the Food of the new-born life. But this they did not understand and so they would listen no further and would not stay to ask an explanation. They went back at once, as if horrified at what they heard. The Truth was too hard for them; it was not to be borne with. “It is a hard saying. Who can bear it?” A true disciple sits at the feet of his Master and believes what he is told even when he cannot quite comprehend the meaning, or see the reasons for what his Master utters. But these men had not the essential spirit of a disciple and, consequently, when their Instructor began to unfold the innermost parts of the roll of Truth, they would not listen to His reading of it.

They would believe as far as they could understand, but when they could not comprehend, they turned on their heels and left the school of the Great Teacher. Besides, the Lord Jesus Christ had taught the doctrine

of the Sovereignty of God and of the need of the Spirit of God, that men should be led to Him, “for Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray Him. And He said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto Me, except it were given unto Him of my Father.” Here our Lord uttered a bit of the old-fashioned doctrine of Free Grace, such as people nowadays do not like. They call it, “Calvinism,” and put it aside among the old exploded tenets which this enlightened age knows nothing of!

What right they have to ascribe to the Genevan reformer a doctrine old as the hills I do not know! But our Lord Jesus never hesitated to fling that Truth of God into the face of His enemies! He told them, “You believe not, because you are not of My sheep, as I said unto you.” No man can come to Me, except the Father which has sent Me draw Him.” Here He tells them plainly that they could not come unto Him unless the Father gave them the Grace to come! This humbling doctrine they could not receive and so they went aside. Now, when the Truth of God, itself, becomes a stumbling block—when the Gospel, itself, which ought to draw men to Heaven becomes the reason why they go back—it is time for us to suspect ourselves and to—

**“Think we hear the Savior say,
Will you forsake Me too?”**

“Will not you, also, be staggered? Will not some Truth stumble you? Will not some mystery of the Kingdom of Heaven make you, also, to be scandalized?” Blessed is the man that is not offended in Christ! Happy is he who lays aside his own wisdom to be taught of the Lord!

Further, it is worthy of notice that this question was put because many were not only going away from Christ, but they were going *back*. Read the words. They, “went back and walked no more with Him.” They did not go off to the right or to the left, making some slight departure from the straight road, but they turned deliberately around and went back, reversing their course and retracing their steps. Of course, in consequence of this, they were very soon what they used to be! The reclaimed drunk went back to his cups—the cups were soon full, again, and he was soon wallowing in drink, like a sow in the mire. The man who had lived a lascivious life and, for a time, had cast it off to put on the garb of morality, went back. And you saw him once again in the house of the strange woman. “The dog has returned to his vomit.”

The reformed liar was again false. The thief was again pilfering. The swearer was again profane. They went back, like Pliable, who quit the Pilgrim Road and returned to the City of Destruction. Now, it is really a dreadful thing, when men have seen the folly of their lives and have come out of it, for them to go back to their former habits. Well said the Prophet, “Let them not turn, again, to folly.” But, alas, these burned children ran to the fire, again! The silly moths made another dash at the candle! They were well-nigh escaped, but they plunged, again, into the flood of iniquity! What is to become of them? Is not this the fear—that their last end shall be terrible because of the violence done to conscience and to the Word of the Lord?

The evil spirit went out of them and took his walks abroad. But soon he went back, again, and found the house empty, swept and garnished! He, therefore, takes unto himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself and the last end of that man will be worse than the first! I should not have believed it, though a man had declared it to me, that such a one could go back, for he seemed so sick of sin, so wearied with its bondage! I could imagine that he might step aside under a strong temptation, but to go *back*—how can that be? Why, this is the man who was converted from drunkenness and delivered temperance lectures! Is he a drunk, again? This is the man that had clean escaped from his former filthiness and warned others! Is he wallowing in lust, again? What fools!

What a multitude of fools in one is such a man! If his course was wise, why did he leave it? And if it were wise to leave it, why has he gone back to it? If it is right to go back to it, why did he not always continue in it? For this unmitigated folly, his blood will be upon his own head! But when we see rational men act thus, even men of whom we hoped better things, we need not be surprised that we, also, are put to a stand with the personal question, “Will you, also, go away?” In the case before us, the defection from Christ was open defection, for we read, “They went back, and walked no more with Him.” They once walked with Jesus in the public streets, but now they will have no more to do with Christ.

When Jesus preached—these constant hearers—where were they? When He worked a miracle—these admiring lookers-on—where were they? They had ministered to Him of their substance—no more supplies come from them. They had often asked Him to explain the Word when He had spoken in public—they desire no more secret interviews. They had asked Him, also, to teach them how to pray. But they no longer care to be found upon their knees. They are not hypocrites enough to keep step with Him when their hearts are not with Him. They are, at least, decent enough to walk no more with Him, now that they have gone back to their sins!

Alas, we know some that used to walk with Christ who, at this time, walk no more with His people, for their hearts have gone away from Christ. The Sabbath is ignored. The House of God is forsaken. The Bible is put away; prayer is a thing neglected and, perhaps, despised! They walk no more with Christ, for they prefer a broader or a smoother road. If anybody mentions to them what they used to be, they slink away and seem to say, “Never mention it again! We wish it to be ignored.” I remember a household where the sons and daughters all professed to be converted to Christ, but some of the young people were fond of amusements that were not consistent with the profession of religion and, when they were found in such engagements, what did they do? Why, they blushed a little, but, by-and-by, they boldly declared that they had never been converted—that they were forced into it by persuasion and hurried on by excitement to do that which their better sense led them to regret!

Their excuse was as false as their former profession! They knew that they acted of their own accord and that they willingly professed Christ. Alas, just as willingly, when they came in the way of temptation, they forsook Him! Ah, Apostate, it is all very well to say that you were persuaded

and all that—but you know that you did deliberately confess your faith, or you would never have been baptized by us! You did deliberately seek membership with the Church of God, or you would not have been received! And on yourself must be the responsibility of it! If you have gone back from Christ, you must bear the shame in time and eternity!

But when any do thus openly sever themselves from the companionship of the Crucified One, well may the question pass from heart to heart, “Will you, also, go away?” Thus have I introduced the question by giving the reason for it.

II. Now, THE QUESTION ITSELF. The Master pressed it upon the disciples—“Will you, also, go away?” He might well press the question, for one of them would certainly do so. He said, “I have chosen you twelve!” Not many—just twelve. “I have chosen you.” A very prudent Chooser—much better able to judge than any of His ministers. “I have chosen you twelve and one of you is a devil.” Are our pastors and elders likely to make a better selection? Is it likely that the percentage of deceit is less among us than in the Apostolic college?

I would not like to say—it would be wrong to say—that one out of every 12 of Church members is a Judas. What right have I to say it? But if I were called upon to depose that I am certain that they are *not*, I dare not make so bold an assertion! I fear that the average of mankind in any place would, in all probability, be much the same as in our Lord’s day—and possibly there may be a worse state of things in London than in Judea and Galilee. Still, if we conceive our case to be improved, yet a measure of danger exists. Is it true in the case of only *one* member of this Church that he will betray Christ? If it is, then let the question begin at the pulpit and go round to the youngest member, “Lord, is it I?”—a question suitable for this Table, for at this Table of fellowship it was asked by every one of the 12, “Lord, is it I?”

Certainly, some among us—some one among us—will deny or sell his Master. God grant it be not I! Let each one breathe that prayer! Besides, the Master knew that all of them might do so. All of them might go away from Him—apart from His Grace, indeed, all of them would! There stood Peter, this very Peter who gave such a bold answer to the question—and the Master knew that there was enough in Peter to have made him as faithless as Judas if it had not been for His upholding Grace! Ah, Brothers and Sisters, when we see others fall, today, let us say, “It may be my case tomorrow!” Is there not the same heart, the same nature, the same tendency to sin? Have we not the same weakness? Are we not exposed to the same temptations?

Is there not the same devil craftily searching out our infirmities, that he may work upon them? Are we not all in danger? I fear that he is especially in jeopardy who will say, tonight, “I am a man of experience. I am out of harm’s way.” If there is a Brother among us who says, “These warnings are not meant for me,” he is probably the man who will disgrace that holy name by which he is named. If there is a deacon, an elder, a gray-headed Christian man, a venerable, believing woman, who shall be saying, “I have nothing to fear from temptation. I have passed out of the realm of caution

and watchfulness,” I stand in doubt of such! Confident Friend, I fear that *you* are the man! This carnal confidence, this proud presumption as to yourself should be a caution to you, for these things are the smoke which denote a smoldering fire!

“Let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.” The Master put the question because He knew that it ought to come home to every heart among the twelve. Moreover, He put the question to them because if *they* turned aside it would be especially sad. I do not read that Jesus said anything about those that had already gone back. He alludes to them by the use of the word, “also,” but He does not seem to have ran after them to beg them to return. He knew what they were and knew that they were best apart from Him. When the chaff was blown away, it was only the fulfillment of John the Baptist’s words, “His fan is in His hand and He shall thoroughly purge His floor,” so He suffered the chaff to go to its own place. But when the Master looked at the 12, then He said with holy care and anxiety, “Will you? Will you, also, go away?” As much as to say, “If you go away, who have been with Me from the beginning, who have been chosen by me to be eyewitnesses of My life. If you that have been near My inmost heart and shared My trials and My joys—if you go away it will be sin, indeed.”

Friends, if any of us turn aside, what excuse shall be made for us? I say deliberately that if I go away from my Master I can expect nothing but the hottest wrath of God forever! Unhappy, unhappy wretch, to have preached to such multitudes, if I deny my Lord! Condemned out of my own mouth a thousand times over! I shall be a mark for all the arrows of vengeance. And what shall I say of my Brothers behind me, the deacons and elders of this Church? If they go away from Christ and forsake Him after their brave professions, who shall apologize for them? Many here are marked men and women! Your experience of Christ has been long, sweet, deep, remarkable—and you have spoken of it to others with much confidence and delight. If you go away, you will deserve to be hung up like Haman, on the gallows, fifty cubits high—an exhibition of direct treachery and a monument of the awful wrath of God against such as trample on the blood of Christ!

You will be sinners above all the sinners of yours time! Oh, may it never be, for if one of the 12 shall do it, it will be the greatest sin of all! It will grieve the heart of the Master! It will open the mouths of blasphemers. It will afflict the saints. It will disgrace the apostates and bring down upon them infinite condemnation! And yet, do you know, when others are turning aside, the question has to be asked, for apostasy is very contagious. We are called sheep and it is of the nature of sheep that if one goes right, the next will follow. But if they meet with a gap in the hedge and one leaps through it, they will all follow the same road! When backsliding and apostasy become fashionable, you may ask, even the 12, “Will you, also, go away?”

As I have seen, in my short experience, minister after minister turning aside to novelties of doctrine and especially into the deep pit of “modern thought”—into which the abhorred of the Lord fall—I have thought of one

and of another, "Will you, also, go away?" As men that I have spoken with, prayed with and trusted in have, one by one, apostatized from the faith of God's elect, I have been staggered and astounded! Surely this fashionable sin has a fascinating influence over many minds and would delude, if it were possible, the very elect! How few stand to the landmarks in this age of wandering! How few are found approved in the day of trial! The question is one that must of necessity be pressed home, "Will you, also, go away?"

And, to conclude this part of our subject, our Savior, I think, asks the question because He wishes His following to be always perfectly voluntary. We sometimes speak of "the sweet compulsions of Grace." But let it be always understood that this is by way of metaphor and figure, for none can truly walk with Jesus unwillingly. The lack of will would be fatal! There is an influence which the Grace of God exerts upon the will, by which the unrenewed will is led captive, and yet as soon as it is renewed, will it becomes emphatically free. It ceases to be a will if it has no determining power—the Grace of God gives it that power to a high degree.

Those who truly follow Christ do not follow Him because they are forced to do so. Grace has no slaves. It rules a Kingdom to which the Son has given true liberty! Christians are not dragged after Christ. They yield most sweetly to the charms of His love, to the force of the Truths of God which He teaches and the love which He manifests. They gladly serve their Lord and Master. Jesus seems to say, "If you do not serve Me so, you may go." Will you go? Christ does not need anybody to profess to be a Christian who does not wish to be a Christian. He does not need one to come to this Table because he thinks it to be a Light of God or a custom, by which he is bound! He wants you to come because you delight to do so.

He does not desire any minister to preach the Gospel because he is paid for it, or because he would lose face among godly people if he did not. He needs no slaves to grace His Throne. The very charm of obedience is that it is rendered cheerfully. The very bliss of Christ's service is that we voluntarily, with all our heart and soul, take up his Cross and follow Him. I am not denying the compulsions of Grace. I am only saying that they are perfectly consistent with the absolute freedom of the gracious will! God treats men as men and not as heaps of brick and mortar. His Grace displays itself in converting and changing them as men that *have* wills—not as logs of wood which Solomon may cut and plane in the mountains without their consent.

No, no! If you will to go, go! But if your will is to cling to Him, then will He give you Grace to follow Him, even to the end. I do not know whether I impress my congregation with a sense of the importance of the Truths of God I am trying to press home, but I feel them myself. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, it is a very easy thing to gather a crowd of people—the difficulty is to hold together, year after year, those that profess to be converted! There is a constant winnowing going on in all Churches and this drives away the light and chaffy ones. There is a fan at work upon this floor! Some stay, year after year, and yet turn out to be of no account. The Lord goes on sifting, but certain of the chaff do not blow off at first because, perhaps, the wheat is lying on top of it—there is a good wife or holy mother or a

godly husband that keeps the doubtful ones right. When these are taken away, the next blast of the winnowing fan sweeps that bit of chaff away.

Oh, be not as the chaff, which is covered up and so hidden among the wheat! Turn not aside, I pray you! The Lord keep you. I shall reckon it to be a privilege to bury you rather than have to erase your name from our Church roll for conduct inconsistent with your profession! May you gather around my corpse, when God pleases to let me go Home, and may you say, "He lived an honorable life and died faithful to His Lord." Yes, let that gathering be before another Sabbath dawns, if God so wills, rather than that I should live to dishonor the precious Truths of God which I have preached, and turn aside from the Master whom I profess to love!

What I say to myself I think I hear each one of you say to himself or herself, "Better far that we die than that we deny our Lord."

III. I shall close with my third head and consider THE ANSWER WHICH QUICK-VOICED PETER GAVE—the answer which I hope we are prepared to give to our Divine Leader, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that you are the Christ, the Son of the living God." It is threefold. "Lord, to whom shall we go?" This is the first answer. Observe that Peter does not appear to think it possible, or think it less than abominable, for a man to go back—for the natural answer to Peter's question, "To whom shall we go?" is, "Go back?" No, but Peter does not tolerate the idea of going back.

I ask you, my beloved Brother in Christ, can you tolerate it? Can you? Can you? I might address myself to a Brother who was once among the profane and the drunken, who is now among the most earnest of us. And I might ask him— Brother, would you go back? I am sure that the thought of the rack would be more pleasant than the idea of returning to his old haunts! I might address myself to another who was fond of every form of gaiety, spending his money for that which was not bread, and his labor for that which did not satisfy him—he will be found among us tonight, happiest among the happy in the service of his Master, and I enquire of him— Brother, will you go back? Would you like to enjoy all your gay life again? It would be death to you.

Suppose that any of us who know the joy of being Christ's could have it proposed to us to go back—suppose we were not immoral, but were everything that could be desired in our outward conduct—would we like to go back to that dead morality which had no life of faith nor light of hope about it? No! No! When Christian in the Pilgrim's Progress thought about going back, he remembered that he had no armor for his back. He had a breastplate. He was covered from head to foot by his shield—but there was nothing to protect his back and, therefore, if he retreated, the adversary could split him with a javelin in a moment! So he thought that, bad as it was to go forward, it would be worse to go backward and, therefore, he bravely cut a path for himself straight onward for Glory!

Look at that fact whenever you are tempted! Do not endure the idea of turning tail in the day of battle! May retreat be impossible to you. God make it impossible by His Grace! But then to whom should we go? I was ruminating in my mind the other day—

***“Could I so false, so faithless prove
To quit Your service and Your love,
Where, Lord, could I, Your Presence shun,
Or from Your dreadful Glory run?”***

Where could I retire if I would avoid my lifework and cease witnessing for Jesus? If I were on board ship and a storm came, the sailors would say, “He is the Jonah.” I know they would! If I forsook my God and His cause, the lowest and meanest would point at me as a turncoat. If I were to cross the western continent and hide away in the back settlements, it is 10 to one that if I went into the most remote log cabin, somebody would spy me out, and say, “Why, you are the man whose sermons I read in our newspapers. Why are you here?”

In the loneliest spots on earth, where men speak the English tongue, my own sermons would serve as a hue and cry, if not as a writ of arrest. I should be sure to hear the question, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” and how could I answer? Where could I go? No hiding place remains for me! I must serve God forever. So is it with you in a degree, dear Friends. You cannot get away from Jesus. You that are disciples have committed yourselves to Christ. There is nowhere for you to go. Suppose you *were* to try infidelity. You know too much. You have felt too much. Unbelief would not ease you, whatever it may do with others. Be a free-thinker? Well, you are made of the wrong stuff for *that*—your conscience would trouble you. Suppose you became a Romanist? Would forms and ceremonies content you? No! Of all the people in the world that cannot be Romanists, commend me to Baptists!

A few *have* joined the church of Rome—so few that I never knew but one. You cannot convert these dreadful Anabaptists! They are too positive and too much accustomed to prefer their own judgment to the directions of a ghostly father in Rome! My Brothers and Sisters, I do not know where you could go if you leave Jesus and the Truth of God. You can go down to the bottomless pit, if you will, but you will have no rest there, for the lost ones will cry, “Have you come here? Why, you were at the Lord’s Table, were you not? You are the people that used to give away tracts. Did we not hear you preach at the corner of the streets?” It will be an uneasy thing for you to be lost, I tell you, Sirs, 10 times worse than for others, for the hiss of those who never professed religion will follow you throughout eternity—and their words will burn like coals of juniper when they cry, “Hypocrite! Apostate! You knew the Truth and did it not!”

There is nowhere else for us to go. If we are weary of our Master, we cannot get another—where can we find another so good as He is? Shall we go back, or shall we get right with Him? Let us go at once and tell Him how foolish we have been. Let us beg Him to keep us in His House. “Dismiss me not from Your service, Lord.” I am not worthy, even, to unloose the laces of Your shoes, but let me be Your servant, for whom else can I serve? How else can I live? What other joy remains for me but to do something for Your blessed name?

But then Peter gave a second answer. He said to our Lord, “You have the words of eternal life,” as much as to say, “We cannot go away from You, good Master, when we think of eternity.” Oh, eternity! Eternity! Those

who, for a little wealth, or to escape a foolish laugh, shall turn aside from Christ—what will they do in eternity? Those who, to be thought respectable, or to be considered clever, shall renounce the simple Gospel of Christ—what will they do in eternity? Christ, alone, can give eternal life, or life for eternity! Apart from Him we are cast out as dead. The unbelievers shall be banished forever from the Presence of God and the Glory of His power, for, “God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.” Brothers and Sisters, we believe that there is salvation in Christ and nowhere else. How can we leave Him, then?

We know and are sure that His Word has already put the immortal life into us, for we feel it pulsing within our being! We sometimes see glimmerings of the eternal day into which the Light of God we have is sure to develop—and we are certain that the Lord has given us eternal life by His Word. How, then, can we forsake Him? Bind us, Savior—bind us to Yourself! Come, brand us with the Cross! Let us bear in our body Your mark! Some of us wear the watermark upon our whole body. Our seal of the Covenant is not on some one portion of our frame, but we have been immersed into Your name and from head to foot we are Yours. We cannot undo the fact that we were buried with You by Baptism unto death. Yours by that outward sign, but yet much more Yours by the inward Grace which You have given, by which You have made us dead to the world, dead to self and quickened us unto eternal life in Yourself.

There are two ties, then, to hold us. The one is that we have nowhere else to go. And the second is that we have no life apart from Christ. The third holdfast is this—“We believe and are sure that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood has not revealed it unto you.” Have you learned, dear Brothers and Sisters, that Christ is truly the Messiah, the Son of the Father? Do you believe it? And, more than that, do you both believe and know that Christ is also the Son of the Highest? How can we leave Him? Has God sent Him and shall we forsake Him? Is He God and shall we desert Him? No, good Master, at Your feet we fall and to those feet we cling! We humbly resolve, by Your good Spirit’s power to abide in You. Savior, we will be Yours forever!

You may speak this very boldly if you speak it in the confidence of Grace, for, Brothers and Sisters, “Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?” What torments the saints have endured from their persecutors and how ineffectual have been the assaults of their foes to separate them from Christ! If we are really one with Christ, Satan can no more tear us away from Jesus than he could tear away Paul or John! These saints had no more power of their own than we have—they derived everything from Christ—and we do the same. Think of how the martyrs have been scourged and even flayed alive—and yet have cried out—“None but Christ!” They have been tied to the tails of horses and dragged to death, but never a thought of apostatizing has occurred to them.

In those early days men, women and children crowded the tribunals till the judges grew weary of their bloody task. The persecutors devised all

kinds of tortures, such as I scarcely dare mention, but the saints of God triumphed over all their torments! Fierce was the duel between the infernal cruelty of Roman paganism and the splendor of God within the souls of faithful men and women! Look even later down at our own Marian persecutions—when Smithfield was all aglow with the death of the saints—how gloriously Believers defeated their adversaries!

We read of a holy woman, bearing a child in prison, crying out in labor and her tormentors exultingly demanded, “If you cannot bear these pangs, how will you bear to be burnt alive in a few days’ time?” She replied, “You see in me, who am a woman, the feebleness of nature. But wait till the day comes and you shall see in me, who am a member of the body of Christ, the strength of Grace, for I shall never start or cry when I am burning for Christ!” And they took note that she never flinched, or winced, or cried, or stirred, but quick to the death she burned in her confession of her Lord! Oh, it was amazing! It was amazing! Christ laughed at His mightiest enemies, but His Spirit rested upon His poor, feeble saints and strengthened them so that they were more than conquerors!

Think of Ann Askew, whom I often quote—our own Ann Askew—sitting up after they had racked her till every bone was dragged from its fellow and still defending the faith against the Romish shavelings! O that we had the same Grace! We *shall* have it when the trial comes, for “the Lord of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.” If Jesus is, indeed, the Anointed of the Lord, He will anoint us in the hour of need! And because we believe and are sure that it is even so, we are bold to say in His strength, “No, Lord, we will never leave You! Though all men shall forsake You, yet we will not.” By Your faithfulness, O Lord, keep us faithful! Amen.

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A MOURNFUL DEFECTION NO. 2914

A SERMON
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ON A LORD'S-DAY EVENING, IN THE YEAR 1877.

*“Will you also go away?”
John 6:67.*

No mischief that ever befalls our Christian communities is more lamentable than that which comes from the defection of the members. The heaviest sorrow that can wring a pastor's heart is such as comes from the betrayal of his most familiar friend. The direst calamity the Church can dread is not such as will arise from the assault of enemies outside, but from false brethren and traitors within the camp. My eminent predecessor, Benjamin Keach, though arrested, brought before the magistrates, imprisoned, pilloried and otherwise made to suffer by the Government of the times for the Gospel doctrines that he preached and published, found it easier to brook the rough usage of open foes than to bear the griefs of wounded love, or sustain the shock of outraged confidence. I should not think his experience was very exceptional. Other saints would have preferred the rotten eggs of the villagers to the rooted animosities of slanderers. Troy could never be taken by the assaults of the Greeks outside her walls. Only when, by trickery, the enemy had been admitted within the citadel was that brave city compelled to yield. The devil himself was not such a subtle foe to Christ as was Judas, when, after the Supper, Satan entered into him. Judas was a friend of Jesus. Jesus addressed him as such. And Judas said, “Hail, Master,” and kissed Him. But Judas it was who betrayed Him! That is a picture which may well appall you—that is a peril which may well admonish you.

In all our churches, among the many who enlist, there are some who desert. They continue awhile and then they go back to the world. The radical reason why they retire is an obvious incongruity. “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us.” The unconverted adherents in our fellowship are no loss to the church when they depart. They are not a real deficit, any more than the scattering of the chaff from the threshing floor is a detriment to the wheat. Christ keeps the winnowing fan always going. His own preaching constantly sifted His hearers. Some were blown away because they were but chaff. They did not really believe. By the ministry of the Gospel, by the order of Providence, by all the arrange-

ments of Divine Government, the precious are separated from the vile, the dross is purged away from the silver so that the Good Seed and the pure metal may remain and be preserved. The process is always painful. It causes great searching of heart among those who abide faithful—and occasions deep anxiety to gentle spirits of tender, sympathetic mold.

I trust, dear Friends, that you will not think I harbor any ungenerous suspicions of your fidelity because my text contains as pointed and so personal an appeal to your conscience. There is more of pathos than of passion in the question as our Lord puts it—“You will not go away, will you?” He addressed the favored twelve. I put it to myself. I put it to those who are the officers of the Church. I put it to every member without exception—Will you also go away? But should there be one to whom it is peculiarly applicable, I do not desire to flinch from putting the question most personally to that one—“What? Are *you* going? Do *you* mean to turn back? Do *you* mean to go away?”

I. Let us approach the enquiry sideways. “Will you *also* go away?” “Also” means “as well as other people.” WHY DO OTHERS GO? If they have any good reason, perhaps we may see cause to follow their example. Look narrowly, then, at the various causes or excuses for defection. Why do they renounce the religious profession they once espoused? The fundamental reason is lack of Grace, a lack of true faith, an absence of vital godliness. It is, however, the outward reasons which expose the inward apostasy of the heart from Christ of which I am anxious to treat.

Some there are in these days, as there were in our Lord’s own day, who depart from Christ because *they cannot bear His Doctrine*. Our Lord had more explicitly than on any former occasion declared the necessity of the soul’s feeding upon Himself. They probably misunderstood His language, but they certainly took offense at His statements. Hence there were those who said, “This is an hard saying; who can bear it?” So they walked no more with Him.

There are many points and particulars in which the Gospel is offensive to human nature and revolting to the pride of the creature. It was not intended to please man. How can we attribute such a purpose to God? Why should He devise a goal to suit the whims of our poor fallen human nature? He intended to save men, but He never intended to gratify their depraved tastes. Rather does He lay the axe to the root of the tree and cut down human pride. When God’s servants are led to set forth some humbling Doctrine, there are those who say, “We will never assent to that.” They kick against any Truth of God which clashes with their prejudices. What do you say, Brothers and Sisters, to the claims of the Gospel on your allegiance? Should you discover that God’s Word rebukes your favorite pleasure, or contradicts your cherished convictions, will you forthwith take the huff and go away? No, but if your hearts are right with Christ, you will be prepared to welcome all His teaching and yield obedience to all His precepts. Only prove it to be Christ’s teaching and the right-minded professor is ready to receive it. That which is transparent on the face of Scripture he will cordially accept, as he says, “To the Law and to

the Testimony: if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them.” As far that which is merely inferred and argued from the general drift of Scripture, the true heart will not be hasty to reject, but patient to investigate, like the Bereans who “were more noble than the Jews of Thessalonica, in that they searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so.”

Oh, that the Word of Christ may dwell in us richly! God forbid that any of us should ever turn aside, being offended because of Him, His blessed Son, His holy example, or His sacred teaching! May we be always ready to believe what He says and prompt to do what He commands! Remember, Brothers, that the Gospel commission has three parts to which the minister has to attend. We are to first go and preach the Gospel. “*Go you, and disciple all nations.*” The second part is, “*baptizing them.*” And the third part is, “*teaching them to observe all things whatever I have commanded you.*” As willing disciples of Jesus, let us press forward, paying attention to His voice, following in His footsteps, and counting His revealed will as our supreme law. Far be it from us to go back from Him because we are offended at His Doctrine!

Others there are who desert *for the sake of gain*. Many have been entangled in that snare. Mr. By-Ends originally went on pilgrimage because he thought it would pay. There was a silver mine on the road and he purposed to survey it and see whether silver might not be obtained there as well as at the golden city beyond. He came, if I remember rightly, of a family that got its living by the waterman’s business, looking one way and pulling another. He was apparently striving for religion, though all the while he had his eye on the world. He was for holding with the hare and running with the hounds! So, when he came to a point where he must part with one or the other, he considered which would, upon the whole, be the more profitable and gave up that which appeared to involve loss and self-sacrifice—and kept to that which would, as he called it, “help him in the main chance,” and assist him to get on in the present life. Sincerely do I trust there is no one among us but who despises Mr. By-Ends and all of his class! If you would make money—and there need be nothing sinful in that—do let it be made honestly. Never let riches be pursued under the pretense of religion! Sell your wares and find a market for your merchandise, but do not sell Christ, nor barter a heavenly birthright for a worthless bribe! Put what goods you please into your shop window, but do not put a canting, hypocritical expression on your face, or “wear a holy look,” with a view of turning godliness into gain.

Some leave Christ, and go away, *terrified by persecution*. Nowadays, it is supposed that there is no such thing, but that is a mistake, for though martyrs are not burned at Smithfield and the Lollards’ Tower is a place for show (a memorial of times long ago), yet the harassment, the cruelty and the oppression are far enough from being obsolete! Godless husbands play the part of petty tyrants and will not permit their wives the enjoyment of religion, but make their lives bitter with a galling bondage! Employers full often wreak malice on servants whose piety towards God

is their sole cause of offense. Worse still, there are working men who consider themselves intelligent who cannot allow their fellow workman liberty to go to a place of worship without sneers and jeers and cruel mocking! In many cases the mirth of the workshop is never louder than when it is turned against a believer in Christ! They count it rare fun to hunt a man who cares for the salvation of his soul. They call themselves, "Englishmen," but certainly they are no credit to their country! Look at the base-born, ill-bred cowards—yonder is an atheist—he is raving about his rights because the magistrate will not believe him on his oath! He claims liberty of conscience to be a heathen, but denies his comrade's right to be a Christian! Look at that little party of British workmen—they belong to the Sabbath Desecration Society. They are petitioning Parliament to open museums and theatres on Sundays and at the same time they are hounding to death a poor fellow who prefers going to Chapel! They air their own self-respect by the words they utter, while they betray their self-abasement by the scorn they vent on those who presume to sing a hymn. They hail the drunkard as a chum and rout the sober man as a fiend! I wonder that there is not more honorable feeling, more good faith and true fellowship among our skilled workmen than to permit one man being made the butt of a whole community!

God give you Grace to bear such persecutions as these! If they cut you to the quick, may you learn to bear them with equanimity and even to rejoice that you are counted worthy to suffer for the Savior's sake! Some of us have had to "run the gauntlet" for many years. What we have said has been constantly misrepresented. What we have endeavored to do has been misjudged and our motives have been misunderstood. Yet here we are, as happy as anybody out of Heaven! We have not been injured by any or all the calumnies that have been heaped upon us. Our foes would have crushed us, but, blessed be God, He cheered us often when we were cast down. The Lord give you, in like manner, strength of mind and courage of heart to bear the trial manfully! Then you will care no more for the laughter and the sneers of men than you do for the noise of those migratory birds high overhead which you hear on an autumn evening as they are making their weary journey to a distant clime. Take heart, Brothers and Sisters! Fear God and face your accusers. True courage grows strong on opposition. Never think of deserting the army of Christ! Least of all should you play the coward because of the insolence of some ill-mannered bully. Let not your faith be vanquished by such scoffing. Alas, that so many a cowardly spirit has gone away for the sake of carnal ease—and deserted Christ—when he has become the drunkard's jest and the derision of fools!

There are some people who forsake true religion *out of sheer* lightheartedness. I know not how to account for some men's defections. If you take up the list of shipwrecks, you will notice some that have gone down through collisions and others through striking upon rocks, but sometimes you read of a vessel, "Foundered at sea." How it happened, no, one knows—the owner himself cannot explain it! There are some professors

who, concerning faith, have made shipwreck under such apparently easy circumstances—so free from trial, so exempt from temptation, that we have not seen anything to awaken anxiety on their behalf—yet all of a sudden they have foundered. We are startled and amazed. I remember one who fell into a gross sin, of whom a Brother unwisely said, “If that man is not a Christian, I am not.” His prayers had certainly been sweet. Many a time they had melted me down before the Throne of Grace and yet the life of God could not have been in his soul, for he lived and died in flagrant vice and was impenitent to the last! Such cases I can only attribute to a sort of lightheartedness which can be charmed with a sermon or a play—take a pew at the Chapel or a box at the opera with equal nonchalance and eagerly follow the excitement of the hour, “everything by turns and nothing long.” “Unstable as water, they shall not excel.”

On the spur of the moment, they profess Christianity, though they do not espouse it. And then, without troubling themselves to renounce it, they drop off into infidelity. They are soft and malleable enough to be hammered into any shape. Made of wax, they can be molded by any hand that is strong enough to grip them. The Lord have mercy upon any of you who may happen to be of that type! You spring up soon and suddenly you wither. Hardly is the seed sown before the sprout appears! What a wonderful harvest you promise! But, ah, no sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat than, because there is no depth of soil, the green shoot withers away. Pray God that you may be plowed deep, that the iron pan of rock underneath may be broken right up, that you may have plenty of subsoil and root-hold, that the verdure you produce may be permanent. Lack of principles is deadly, but the lack is far too common. Never cease to pray that you may be rooted and grounded, established and built up in Christ so that when the floods come and the winds blow, you may not fall with a great destruction—as that house fell which was built upon the sand!

But, oh, what multitudes are tempted aside from following Christ and His Church *by evil companions!* They do not avoid the society of the wicked and as a man is known by the company he keeps, we soon discover the direction in which they are drawn. The more intimately we know them, the more readily we perceive their propensities. Have a care, then, with whom you associate. Never confide in those persons of whose principles you have good cause to stand in doubt. Above all, let me admonish you young people not to be “unequally yoked together.” Marriage without the fear of God is a fearful mistake. Those ill-assorted unions between Believers and unbelievers rob our churches of more members than any other popular delinquency that I know of! Seldom—I might almost say *never*—do I meet with a woman professing godliness who becomes joined in wedlock to a man of the world but what she goes away. She ceases to follow Jesus and we hear no more of her. Absorbed in the pursuits, the pains and the pleasures of the life that now is, she is sucked under the stream and drawn into the vortex. In the romance of her courtship, she glibly said, “I shall win him,” but, in the reality of their

conjugal bonds, he could coolly say, "I have won you." Probably the stronger nature wins the day. In this case, however, a precept of the Gospel is violated and the penalty of disobedience is incurred. It is much easier for the one who professes religion to give up the faith, after laying down the Cross, than for another who has no religion to take up the Cross and follow the Savior in whom he has never yet believed! I counsel you, young man or woman, who contemplate a marriage on the basis of capricious attraction, without reference to the sanctity of the relationship before God, to communicate your intention to your minister and renounce your membership in the Church before you say your vows! Voluntarily give up all profession of religion! Do not wait to be excommunicated! Do not sneak away without giving an account of yourself. You had better count the cost and pay the price of your own presumption. Should your unwarranted but sanguine hopes succeed and your earnest endeavors to gain the conversion of your helpmeet be successful, that would be an uncovenanted mercy! If God chose to give it to you, it would not even *then* excuse you for tempting Him by your waywardness, or provoking Him to jealousy by your willfulness! There is an express command, "Be you not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." I appeal to every Christian man or woman who has been converted since marriage—Do you not find it exceedingly difficult to keep up your courage when one pulls one way and one another? And does it not cut you to the quick to think that your union is but temporary—that however dear you may be to each other now, you will be parted at the Judgment Seat of Christ—parted to meet no more? The Lord make us careful about our associates, about those among whom we stand, by whom we sit, with whom we walk!

And oh, how many leave Christ *for the sake of sensual enjoyments!* I will not enlarge upon this. Certain, however, is it that the pleasures of sin for a season fascinate their minds till they sacrifice their souls at the shrine of sordid vanity. For a merry dance, a wanton amusement, or a transient joy that would not bear reflection, they have renounced the pleasures that never pall, the immortal hopes that never fail and turned their backs upon that blessed Savior who gives and feeds the taste for unspeakable joy, for joy full of glory!

In our pastoral oversight of such a huge Church as this, we have painful evidence that *considerable numbers gradually grow cold.* The elders' reports on the absentees reiterate the vain excuses for non-attendance. One has so many children. The distance is too great for another. When they joined the Church, their family was just as large and the distance was just the same! But the household cares become more irksome when the concern for religion begins to flag—and the fatigue of travelling increases when their zeal for the House of God falters. The elders fear they are growing cold. No actual transgression can we detect, but there is a gradual declension over which we grieve. I dread that cold-heartedness—it steals so insensibly yet so surely over the entire frame. I do not say that it is worse than open sin. It cannot be. Yet it is more insidious. A

flagrant delinquency would startle one as a fit does a patient, but a slow process of backsliding may steal like paralysis over a person without awakening suspicion. Like the sleep which comes over men in the frozen regions—if they yield to it they will never wake again. You must be awakened or else this inactivity will surely end in death! “Gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knows not.” Is it so with any of you, dear Friends? Are you going aside by slow degrees? He that loses his substance little by little presently becomes a bankrupt—and painful is the discovery when the end is precipitated! How miserable must a spiritual bankruptcy be to him who wastes by degrees his heavenly estate, if he ever had any! No words can describe it. God preserve us from such a catastrophe!

Some have turned aside who allege so *through change of circumstances*. They were with us when their means of livelihood were competent, if not affluent. From reverses in business they have sunk in their social position. Hence they do not like to come into fellowship with us as they were known to do. Now, from my inmost soul I can say if any of our members become poor, I, for one, do not think one atom the less of them, or hold them in less esteem, however impoverished they may become! Do not tell me that you have no fit clothes to come in, for any clothes that you have paid for are creditable. If you have not paid for them, I cannot make excuses for you. Be honest. Silk or fustian need not shame you, but for fineness or fashion I should certainly blame you! I am always glad to see Brothers and Sisters sitting here, as I sometimes do, in their smock-frocks. One good friend is rather conspicuous in that line. The wholesome whiteness of his rural garb is rather attractive. If he has paid for it, he is a far more respectable man than anyone that has run into debt for a suit of broadcloth that he cannot pay for! And I rejoice to think that I am not merely expressing my own feeling, but that which is shared by the whole community! We all delight to see our poor Brothers and Sisters. If there are any of you suffering from a sensitiveness of your own, or a suspicion of our reflections, the sooner you get rid of such foolish pride the happier you will be! You want to be thought respectable? Don't you know that a man is respectable for his *character*, not for the money he has in his pocket?

Others forsake Christ *when they become rich and increased in goods*. They did not scorn the little conventicle when they were plain plodding people, but since fortune has smiled on them and they have moved their residence from a terrace to a mansion—and they have taken to keep a carriage—they feel bound to move in another circle. To their parish church, or to some Ritualistic church in their neighborhood, they go once on the Sunday. They patronize the place by their presence. They show themselves among the *elite* of that locality! They bow, and bend, and face about to the East as though they had been born to the manner! They are too respectable to go into the little Baptist Chapel. They receive visitors in the afternoon, dine late and dissipate Sabbatic hours in the frivolous pretence of showing off their gentility. Well, I think their departure is not to

be lamented. When gone, they are certainly no loss to anybody. We sigh for them as we would for Judas or Demas. They have fallen foul of what they thought their good fortune, but of what has proved to be their ruin! Those who have true principles, when they rise in the world, see more reason why they should use their wealth and their influence in aiding a good cause. Principle would prevail over policy to the end of their lives if in their hearts they believed the Truth of God as it is in Jesus. It were no dishonor to a prince to go and sit down side by side with a pauper, were they both true followers of Jesus Christ!

In old times, when our grandfathers sought refuge in caves and dens of the earth, they met the high and the low, the bond and the free. Or when, in earlier ages, the Christians gathered in the catacombs, men out of Caesar's household—now a chief, then a senator, then a prince of the blood—came and sat down in those caverns, lighted with the dim candle, to listen while some unshod but Heaven-taught man declared the Gospel of Jesus with the power of the Holy Spirit! That they were illiterate, I am quite sure, for, on looking over the monuments that are found in the catacombs, it is rare to find one inscription that is thoroughly well spelt. Though it is evident enough that the early Christians were an uneducated company of men, yet those that were great and noble, learned and polished, did not disdain to join with them—nor will they in any age if the Light of Heaven shines and the love of God burns in their hearts!

Unsound doctrine induces many to apostatize. There is always plenty of that about. Deceivers will beguile the weak. Some have been turned aside by modern doubt—and positive infidelity has its partisans. They begin cautiously by reading works with a view to answer scientific or intellectual skepticism. They read a little more and dive a little deeper into the turbid stream because they feel well able to stand against the insidious influence! They go on till at last they are staggered. They do not repair to them who could help them out, but they continue to flounder on till, at last, they have lost their footing and he that said he was a Believer has ended in stark atheism—discrediting even the evidence of the existence of God! Oh, that those who are well taught would be content with Gospel teaching! Why should you be so unwise as to go through pools of foul teaching merely because you think it easy to cleanse yourself of its pollution? Such trifling is dangerous! When you begin to read a book and find it pernicious, put it aside. Someone may upbraid you for not reading it all through, but why should you?

If I have a roast on my table of which the smell and the taste at once convince me that it is putrid and unwholesome, should I show discretion by eating the whole of it before giving my judgment that it is not fit for food? One mouthful is quite enough—and one sentence of some books ought to suffice for a sensible man to reject the whole mass! Let those who can relish such meat feed on it, but I have a taste for better food. Keep to the study of the Word of God. If it is your duty to expose those evils, encounter them bravely with prayer to God to help you. But if not,

as a humble Believer in Jesus, what business have you to taste and test such noxious fare when it is exposed in the market?

Can you doubt that there are some who turn aside from Christ and His people *through sheer laziness*. They have nothing whatever to do—and what must a Christian be who has no part in the service of Christ? Nothing to do for Jesus? A drone in the hive! I do not wonder that you go away. My wonder is that the bees do not drive you out. On the other hand, I fear others have gone aside *through having been too busy*—they have been so occupied that they have neglected to feed their own souls. I am always pleased to see our dear Brothers and Sisters diligent in the service of Christ. I am glad to miss many of you on the Lord's-Day evening when I know how well you are engaged. I could spare a few more of you if you were intent upon teaching the young, or exhorting those who are out of the way. But I earnestly admonish you never to be negligent of your own souls while you are vigilant for the souls of others! If you do not get nourished with the Bread of Life yourselves, you cannot grow in Grace! This caution, I am fully persuaded, is not uncalled for. There are some who get so absorbed in Christian work that they never listen to the Word. They hardly ever read. They only talk. This is sorry work. If you do not take in, you cannot give out. If your own soul is starved, you cannot be strong for the Lord's service. Get at least one good spiritual meal in the day. Then spend all the strength you have for God and rely on Him for frequent renewals. Keep up the fire within and add fresh fuel to give a more fervent heat. See to it that you are not losing communion with Christ while you think you are getting conversions to Christ. That is a peril you good people must not play with! It is far too serious. But I will not continue in this strain. It is painful to me, if not to you.

II. Now I want briefly to answer a second enquiry—WHAT BECOMES OF THOSE WHO TURN ASIDE?

Well, if they are God's children, I will tell you what becomes of them, for I have seen it scores of times. Though they go aside, *they are not happy*. They cannot rest, for they are miserable even when they try to be cheerful. After a while they begin to remember their first Husband, for it was better with them, then, than now. They return, but there are scores and scores who, to say nothing of the shame they have to carry with them to their grave, are never afterwards the men they were before. They have to take a second place among their comrades. And even should Sovereign Grace so wonderfully bless their painful experience that they are fully restored, they can never mention the past without bitter regret. Their by-path is serving others' as a beacon—they will say to young people, "Never do as we have done! Nothing but mischief comes of it."

In the vast majority of cases, however, they are not the Lord's people. So this is what comes of it. *Those who prove traitors to a profession they once made are the hardest people in the world to impress*. Doubtless some of you, when you lived in the country, used to always be punctual at your usual place of worship. But since you have come to London, where your absence from any sanctuary is unnoticed, you rarely enter the

courts of the Lord's House, nor would you have been here tonight but for some special inducement—some country cousin or some particular friend having brought you. Though unknown to me, God scans your path. Well, here you are, and yet it may be too little profit. You have had counsels and cautions in such profusion that it is like pouring oil down a slab of marble to admonish you. May God of His Omnipotent Mercy break your stone heart or there will be no hope for you! Such people frequently lose all conscience. They can go a great deal further in talking against religion than anybody else! They will sometimes venture to say they know so much about it that they could expose it. Their boasts and their threats are alike useless, but as boys whistle while they walk through the churchyard to keep their courage up, so do their vain talk and their senseless stories betray their stifled fear! They speak contemptuously of God while they justify themselves in a course for which their own conscience upbraids them. They go back—alas, some of them, to prove themselves the most abandoned sinners in the world! There could not have been a Judas to betray Christ had he not been first distinguished as a disciple who ventured to kiss his Master. You must pick from among the Apostles to find an apostate! As the ringleaders in riotous transgression, when converted, often make the best revivalist preachers, so those that seem to be the most loyal subjects of Christ, when they become renegades, prove to be the bitterest foes and the blackest sinners!

Painful reminiscences rush over one's mind. Standing here, now, in the midst of a great Church, I call to mind things that have harrowed up my soul. God grant I may not see the likes of them again! They go away! Ah, me! *Full many of them go away to die in blank despair.* Did you ever read the life of Francis Spira? If you want to sleep tonight, do not take up that memoir. Did you ever read the life of John Child, a Baptist minister of about 200 years ago? Mr. Keach gives it in one of his works. He was a man who knew the Truth of God and, to a great extent, had felt its power, but he went aside from it and before he came to die, his expressions were too terrible to listen to. The remorse and despair of his spirit chafed everyone away. At last he laid violent hands upon himself.

For any man to eat bread at the Lord's Table, to drink of the cup of blessing, to mingle with the saints, join in their prayers and their hymns, professing to be a disciple of Christ—and then to go back and walk no more with Him—is to venture on a course of no ordinary danger! When his conscience is again awakened, how he wishes that he had never been born! Could he annihilate his anguish-smitten soul to terminate his existence might be accounted wise. But that is impossible. The relief he seeks he cannot find when he takes the dreadful leap from suffering here, to an aggravated form of misery hereafter—ten thousand times worse to endure! He seals his doom and makes his own damnation sure as he raises against himself a murdering hand!

Do I address anyone here who is bereft of every ray of hope and shivering on the brink of despair? To him I say—While there is life, there is

hope! Jesus Christ can forgive you! Return to Him! He can wash you in His blood. He can make you clean, though your sin is as scarlet. But, oh, do not trifle, make no delay! Tarry no longer in your present condition else maybe you will fill up the measure of your iniquities before you are aware and you may taste, even in this world, some beginning of the wrath to come! If not rescued as a trophy of Grace right speedily, you may become a monument of God's wrath—a beacon to deter others from daring to turn aside! I speak solemnly. I cannot help it. So intensely do I feel the terror of that woe and so confident am I that some of you are making light of it, that I would go down on my knees and entreat you with tears to repent of what you are doing. You have got on the inclined place and you are going down, down, down! Your feet are even now on the slippery places from which multitudes have been cast down into destruction! How they are brought into desolation as in a moment! The Lord make haste to deliver you! May He stretch out His hand and rescue you! I can only call out to you. You seem to have got where I cannot reach you. Do not venture a footstep further on that dangerous road! Look to Jesus, look to Jesus! He can redeem your life from the Pit by His Sovereign Grace—but He alone can do it! Then, as a wandering sheep brought back to the fold, you shall adore His name.

III. My third enquiry is—WHY SHOULD WE NOT GO AWAY AS THEY HAVE?

Were we left to ourselves, I cannot tell you any reason why we should not go as they have. Nor, indeed, could I tell you why the best man here should not be the worst before tomorrow morning if the Grace of God left him. John Bradford, you know, as he saw the poor criminals taken away to Tyburn to be executed, used to say, "There goes John Bradford but for the Grace of God." And everyone of us might say the same. To abide with Christ, however, is our only security and we trust we shall never depart from Him. But how can we make sure of this? The great thing is *to have a real foundation on Christ to begin with*—genuine faith, vital godliness. The foundation is the first matter to be attended to in building a house. With a bad foundation, there cannot be a substantial house. You require a firm bottom, a sound groundwork before you proceed to the superstructure. Do pray God that if your religion is a sham, you may find it out now. Unless your hearts are deeply plowed with genuine repentance and unless you are thoroughly rooted and grounded in the faith, you may have some cause to suspect the reality of your conversion and the verity of the Holy Spirit's operation in you. May the Lord work in you a good beginning and then you may rely upon it, He will carry it on to the day of Jesus Christ!

Then remember, dear Brothers and Sisters, if you would be preserved from falling, *you must be schooled in humility and keep very low before the Lord*. When you are half-an-inch above the ground, you are that half-inch too high! Your safety is to be *nothing*. Trust Christ, but do not trust yourself. Rely on the Spirit of God, but do not rely on anything that is in yourself—no, not on a Grace you have received, or on a gift you possess.

Those do not slide who walk humbly with God. They are always safe whose entire dependence is upon the dear Redeemer. Be jealous of your obedience. Be circumspect. Be careful. Take heed to yourselves—your walk and conversation cannot be too cautious. Many are lost through being too remiss, but none through being too scrupulous. The statutes of the Lord are so right that you cannot neglect them without diverging from the path of rectitude. Watch and pray. God help you to watch, or else you will get drowsy. Never neglect prayer. That is at the root of every defection. Retrogression commonly begins at the closet. To restrain prayer is to deaden the very pulse of life. “Watch unto prayer.”

And, dear Friends, *shun the company which has led other people astray*. Parley not with those whose jokes are profane. Stay right away from them. It is not for you to be seen standing, much less to be found sitting down with men of loose manners and lewd talk. They can do you no good, but the evil they can bring upon you would not be easy to estimate! You may have heard the story—but it is so good it bears repeating—of the lady who advertised for a coachman and was waited upon by three candidates for the situation. She put to the first one this question—“I want a really good coachman to drive my pair of horses and, therefore, I ask you how near you can drive to danger and yet be safe?” “Well,” he said, “I could drive very near, indeed! I could go within a foot of a precipice without fear of any accident so long as I held the reins.” She dismissed him with the remark that he would not do. To the next one who came she put the same question. “How near could you drive to danger?” Being determined to get the job, he said, “I could drive within a hair’s breadth and yet skillfully avoid any mishap.” “You will not do,” she said. When the third one came in, his mind was cast in another mold, so on the question being put to him, “How near could you drive to danger?” he said, “Madam, I never tried. It has always been a rule with me to drive as far from danger as I possibly can.” The lady hired him at once! In like manner I believe that the man who is careful to run no risks and to refrain from all equivocal conduct, having the fear of God in his heart, is most to be relied upon! If you are really built upon the Rock of Ages, you may meet the question without dismay, “Will you also go away?” and you can reply without presumption, “No, Lord, I cannot and I will not leave You, for to whom should I go? You have the words of eternal life.” So be it. “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly. And I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He that calls you, who also will do it.” Amen.

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

ABSCONDING AND APOSTASY

NO. 3556

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 22, 1917**

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON

***“Will you also go away?”
John 6:67.***

No mischief that ever befalls our Christian communities is more lamentable than that which comes from the defection of the members. The heaviest sorrow that can wring a pastor's heart is such as comes from the treachery of his most familiar friend. The direst calamity the Church can dread is not such as will arise from the assault of enemies outside, but from false Brothers and Sisters within the camp. My eminent predecessor, Benjamin Keach, though arrested, brought before the magistrates, imprisoned, pilloried and otherwise made to suffer by the Government of the times for the Gospel Doctrines that he preached and published, found it easier to brook the rough usage of open foes than to bear the griefs of wounded love, or sustain the shock of outraged confidence. I should not think his experience was very exceptional. Other saints would have preferred the rotten eggs of the villagers to the rooted animosities of slanderers! Troy could never be taken by the assaults of the Greeks outside her walls. Only when, by stratagem, the enemy had been admitted within the citadel, was that brave city compelled to yield. The devil, himself, is not such a subtle foe to the Church as Judas, when, after the supper, Satan entered into him. Judas was a friend of Jesus. Jesus addressed him as such. And Judas said, "Hail, Master," and kissed Him. And it was Judas who betrayed Him! That is a picture which may well appall you—that is a peril which may well admonish you! In all our churches, among the many who enlist, there are some who desert. They continue awhile, and then they go back to the world. The radical reason why they retract is an obvious disagreement. "They went out from us because they were not of us, for if they had been of us, doubtless they would have continued with us." The unconverted adherents to our fellowship are no loss to the Church when they depart. They are not a real loss, any more than the scattering of the chaff from the threshing floor is a detriment to the wheat. Christ keeps the winnowing fan always going. His own preaching constantly sifted His hearers. Some were blown away because they were chaff. They did not really believe. By the ministry of the Gospel, by the order of Providence, by all the arrangements of Divine

Government, the precious are separated from the vile, the dross is purged away from the silver that the good seed and the pure metal may remain and be preserved! The process is always painful. It causes great searching of heart among those who abide faithful—and occasions deep anxiety to gentle spirits of tender, sympathetic mold.

I trust, dear Friends, that you will not think I harbor any ungenerous suspicions of your fidelity because my text contains so pointed and so personal an appeal to your conscience. There is more of pathos than of pardon in the question as our Lord put it, “Will you also go away?” He addressed the favored twelve. I put it to myself. I put it to those who are the officers of the Church. I put it to every member without exception—Will you also go away? But should there be one to whom it is peculiarly applicable, I do not desire to flinch from putting the question most personally to that one, “What? Are you going? Do you mean to turn back? Do you mean to go away?”

Let us approach the enquiry sideways. Will you *also* go away? “Also” means as well as other people. Why do others go? If they have any good reason, perhaps we may see cause to follow their example. Look narrowly, then, at the various causes or excuses for defection. Why do they renounce the religious profession they once espoused? The fundamental reason is lack of Grace, a lack of true faith, an absence of vital godliness. It is, however, the outward reasons which expose the inward apostasy of the heart from Christ of which I am anxious to treat.

I. WHY SOME LEAVE CHRIST

Some there are in these days, as there were in our Lord’s own day, who depart from Christ because *they cannot bear His Doctrine*. Our Lord had more explicitly than on any former occasion declared the necessity of the soul’s feeding upon Himself. They probably misunderstood His language, but they certainly took offense at His statement. Hence there were those who said, “This is a hard saying; who can hear it?” So they walked no more with Him.

There are many points and particulars in which the Gospel is offensive to human nature and revolting to the pride of the creature. It was not intended to please man. How can we attribute such a purpose to God? Why should He devise a Gospel to suit the whims of our poor fallen human nature? He intended to save men, but He never intended to gratify their depraved tastes. Rather does He lay the axe to the root of the tree and cut down human pride. When God’s servants are led to set forth some humbling Doctrine, there are those who say, “Ah, I will not assent to that!” They kick against any Truth of God which wounds their prejudices! What say you, Brothers and Sisters, to the claims of the Gospel on your allegiance? Should you discover that God’s Word rebukes your favorite pleasure, or contradicts your cherished convictions, will you forthwith take offense and go away? No, but if your hearts are right with Christ,

you will be prepared to welcome all His teaching and yield obedience to all His precepts. Only prove it to be Christ's teaching and the right-minded professor is ready to receive it. That which is transparent on the face of Scripture, he will cordially accept, as he says, "To the Law and to the testimony! If they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." As for that which is merely inferred and argued from the general drift of Scripture, the true heart will not be hasty to reject, but patient to investigate, like the Bereans, who, "were more noble than the Jews of Thessalonica, because they searched the Scriptures to see whether these things were so." Oh, that the word of Christ may dwell in us richly! God forbid that any of us should ever turn aside offended because of Him—His blessed Person, His holy example, or His sacred teaching! May we be always ready to believe what He says and prompt to do what He commands!

Remember, Brothers and Sisters, that the Gospel commission has three parts to which the minister has to attend. We are first, to go and preach the Gospel. "*Go you, and disciple all nations.*" The second thing is "baptizing them." And the third thing is "teaching them to observe all things whatever I have commanded you." As willing disciples of Jesus, let us press forward, listening to His voice, following in His footsteps and accounting His revealed will as our supreme law! Far be it from us to go back, to repine, or to desert Him, then, because we are offended at His Doctrines!

Others there are who desert the Savior for *the sake of gain*. Many have been entangled in that snare. Mr. By-Ends originally went on pilgrimage because he thought it would pay. There was a silver mine on the road and he purposed to survey that and see whether silver might not be obtained, as well as the Golden City beyond! He came, if I remember rightly, of a family that got its living by the waterman's business—looking one way and pulling another. He was apparently striving for religion, though he had his eyes all the while on the world! He was for holding with the hare, and running with the hounds. So when he came to a point where he must part with one or the other, he considered upon which the whole would be most profitable—and he gave up that which appeared to involve loss and self-sacrifice—and kept to that which would, as he called it, help him in the "main chance," and assist him to get on in the present life. Sincerely do I trust there is no one among us but what despises Mr. By-Ends and all of his class! If you would make money—and there need be nothing sinful in that—do let it be made honestly! Never let riches be pursued under the pretence of religion! Sell your wares and find a market for your merchandise, but do not sell Christ, nor barter a heavenly birthright for a worthless bribe. Put what goods you please into your shop window, but do not put a canting, hypocritical expression on your

face, or “wear a holy look,” with a view of turning godliness into gain! God save us from that arrant villainy! May it never have a footing in our midst!—

**“Neither man nor angel can discern
Hypocrisy, the only evil that walks
Invisible, except to God alone.”**

Does any man join a church for the sake of the respectability it implies, or for the standing it may give him, or for the credit he may get? He will soon find that it does not answer his purpose. Then away he will go! But the graver probability is that he will be thrust out with shame!

Some leave Christ and go away *terrified by persecution*. Nowadays it is supposed that there is no such thing. But that is a mistake, for though martyrs are not burned at Smithfield, and the Lollards’ Tower is now a place for show (a memorial of times long ago), the harass, the cruelty and the oppression are far enough from being obsolete! Godless husbands play the part of petty tyrants and will not permit their wives the enjoyment of religion, but make their lives bitter with a galling bondage. Employers full often wreak malice on servants whose piety towards God is their sole cause of offense. Worse still, there are working men who consider themselves intelligent who cannot allow their fellow workman liberty to go to a place of worship without sneers, jeers, and cruel mocking! In many cases the mirth of the workshop is never louder than when it is turned against a Believer in Christ. They count it rare fun to hunt a man who cares for the salvation of His soul. They call themselves, “Englishmen,” but certainly they are no credit to their country! Look at the base-born, ill-bred cowards! Yonder is an atheist! He is raving about his rights because the magistrate will not believe him on his oath—he claims liberty of conscience to be a heathen, but denies his comrade’s right to be a Christian! Look at that little party of British workmen—they belong to the Sabbath Desecration Society. They are petitioning Parliament to open museums and theaters on Sundays, and at the same time they are hounding to death a poor fellow who prefers going to Chapel. They air their own self-respect by the oaths they utter, while they betray their self-abasement by the scorn they vent on those who presume to sing a hymn! They hail the drunk as a chum and scorn the sober man as a fiend! I wonder that there is not more honorable feeling, more good faith and true fellowship among our skilled workmen than to allow of one man being made the butt of a whole community! God give you Grace to bear such persecutions as these! If they cut us to the quick, may we learn to bear them with equanimity, and even to rejoice that we are counted worthy to suffer for the Savior’s sake!

Some of us have had to run the gauntlet for many years. What we have said has been constantly misrepresented. What we have endeavored to do has been misjudged and our motives have been misunderstood. Yet

here we are, as happy as anybody out of Heaven! We have not been injured by any or all the calumnies that have been heaped upon us. Our foes would have crushed us but, blessed be God, He cheered us often when we were cast down. The Lord give you, in like manner, strength of mind and courage of heart to bear the trial manfully! Then you will care no more for the laughter and the sneers of men than you do for the noise of those migratory birds high overhead which you hear on an autumn evening as they are making their weary journey to a distant clime! Take heart, Brothers and Sisters! Fear God and face your accusers. True courage grows strong on opposition. Never think of deserting the army of Christ! Least of all should you play the coward because the insolence of some ill-mannered bully. Let not your faith be vanquished by such scoffing. Alas, that so many a cowardly spirit has gone away for the sake of carnal ease—and deserted Christ when His dear name had become the drunk's jest and the derision of fools!

And there are people who forsake true religion *out of sheer levity*. I know not how to account for some men's defections. If you take up the list of wrecks, you will notice some that have gone down through collisions, and others through striking rocks—but sometimes you meet with a vessel "foundered at sea." How it happened, no one knows. The owner, himself, cannot understand it. It was a calm day and there was a cloudless sky when the vessel sank. There are some professors who, concerning faith, have made shipwreck under such apparently easy circumstances, so free from trial, so exempt from temptation, that we have not seen anything to awaken anxiety on their behalf, yet all of a sudden they have foundered! We are startled and amazed. I remember one that fell into a gross sin, of whom a Brother unwisely said, "If that man is not a Christian, I am not." His prayers had certainly been sweet. Many a time they have melted me down before the Throne of Grace and yet the life of God could not have been in his soul, for he lived and died in flagrant vice—and was impenitent to the last! Such cases I can only attribute to a sort of levity which can be charmed with a sermon or a play. They can take a pew at the Chapel or a box at the opera with equal nonchalance and eagerly follow the excitement of the hour, "everything by turns, and nothing long." "Unstable as water, they shall not excel." At the spur of a moment they profess Christianity, they do not espouse it—and then, without troubling themselves to renounce it—they drop off into infidelity. They are soft and malleable enough to be hammered into any shape. Made of wax, they can be molded by any hand that is strong enough to grip them! The Lord have mercy upon any of you who may happen to be of that species! You spring up soon, and suddenly you wither! Hardly is the seed sown before the sprout appears. What a wonderful harvest you promise! But ah, no sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat than,

because there is no earth, the good seed withers away! Pray God that you may be plowed deep, that the iron pan of rock underneath may be broken right up, that you may have plenty of subsoil and root—that the verdure you produce may be permanent! Want of principle is deadly, but the lack is far too common. Never cease to pray that you may be rooted and grounded, established and built up in Christ, so that when the floods come and the winds blow, you may not fall with a great destruction, as that house fell which was built upon the sand!

And, oh, how many leave Christ for *the sake of sensual enjoyments*! I will not enlarge upon this. Certain, however, it is that the pleasures of sin for a season fascinate their minds till they sacrifice their souls at the shrine of sordid vanity! For a merry dance, a wanton amusement, or a transient joy that would not bear reflection, they have renounced the pleasures that never pall, the immortal hopes that never fail—and turned their backs upon that blessed Savior who gives and feeds the tastes for unspeakable joys, for joys full of glory! In our pastoral oversight of a Church like this, we have painful evidence that a considerable number gradually grow cold. The Elders' reports of the absentees reiterate the vain excuses for nonattendance. One has so many children. The distance is too great for another. When they joined the Church their family was just as large, and the distance was just the same! But the household cares become more irksome when the concern for religion begins to flag—and the fatigue of travelling increases when their zeal for the House of God falters. The Elders fear they are growing cold. No actual transgression can we detect, but there is a gradual declension over which we grieve. I dread that cold-heartedness! It steals so insensibly, yet so surely over the entire frame. I do not say that it is worse than open sin. It cannot be. Yet it is more insidious. A flagrant delinquency would startle one as a fit does a patient, but a slow process of backsliding may steal like paralysis over a person without awakening suspicion. Like the sleep which comes over men in the frozen regions, if they yield to it, they will never wake again! You must be awakened, or else this supineness will surely end in death! "Gray hairs were upon him here and there, and he knew it not." Is it so with any of you, dear Friends? Are you going aside by slow degrees? He who loses his substance little by little presently becomes a bankrupt, and painful is the discovery when the end comes! How miserable must a spiritual bankruptcy be to him who wastes by degrees his heavenly estate, if he ever had any! No words can describe it. God preserve us from such a catastrophe!

Some have turned aside, who allege that they did so *through change of circumstances*. They were with us when their means of livelihood were competent, if not affluent. From reverses in business, they have sunk in their social position. Hence they do not like to come into fellowship with us as they were known to do. Now from my inmost soul I can say if there

are any persons that grew poor, I, for one, do not think one atom the less of them, or hold them in less esteem, however impoverished they may have become! Do not tell me that you have no clothes fit to come in, for any clothes that you have paid for are creditable. If you have not paid for them, I cannot make excuses for you. Be honest. Wool or fustian need not shame you, but for fineness or fashion I should certainly blame you! I am always glad to see Brothers and Sisters sitting here, as I sometimes do, in their smock frocks. One good friend is rather conspicuous in that line. The wholesome whiteness of his rural garb is rather attractive. If he has paid for it, he is a far more respectable man than anyone that has run into debt for a suit of broadcloth that he cannot pay for! And I rejoice to think that I am not merely expressing my own feeling, but that which is shared by the whole community! We all delight to see our poor Brothers and Sisters. If there are any of you suffering from a sensitiveness of your own, or a suspicion of our reflections, the sooner you get rid of such foolish pride, the happier you will be! You are jealous of being thought respectable? Don't you know that a man is respectable for his *character*—not for the money he has got in his pocket?

Others forsake Christ because they have become rich and increased in goods. They did not scorn the little conventicle when they were plain, plodding people—but since fortune has smiled on them and they have moved their residence from a terrace to a mansion, and they have taken to keep a carriage—they feel bound to move in another circle! To the parish church, or to some ritualistic church in their neighborhood, they go once on the Sunday. They patronize the place by their presence—they show themselves among the elite of that locality. They bow and bend, and face about to the east, as though they had been to the manner born. They are too respectable to go into the little Baptist Chapel. They receive visitors in the afternoon, dine late, and dissipate Sabbath hours in the frivolous presence of showing off their gentility! Well, I think their departure is not to be lamented. When gone they are certainly no loss to anybody. We sigh for them as we would for Judas or Demas! They have fallen foul of what they thought their good fortune but of what has proved to be their ruin! Those who have true principles, when they rise in the world, see more reason why they should spend their wealth and their influence in aiding a good cause. Principle would prevail over policy to the end, if in their hearts they believed the Truth of God as it is in Jesus! It were no dishonor to a prince to go and sit down side by side with a pauper, were they both true followers of Jesus Christ! In old times, when our sires met in caves and dens of the earth, they met the liege and the lowly, the bond and free. Or when, in even earlier ages, the Christians gathered in the catacombs, men out of Caesar's household, now a chief, then a senator, soon a prince of the blood, came and sat down in those caves,

lighted up with the dim candle, to listen while some unshod but Heaven-taught man declared the Gospel of Jesus with the power of the Holy Spirit! That they were illiterate, I am quite sure, for on looking over the monuments that are found in the catacombs, it is rare to find one inscription that is thoroughly well spelt. Though it is evident enough that the early Christians were an illiterate company of men, yet those that were great and noble did not disdain to join with them, nor will they if the light of Heaven shines and the love of God burns in their hearts!

Unsound Doctrine occasions many to apostatize. There is always plenty of that about. Deceivers will beguile the weak and some have been led aside by modern doubt—and modest infidelity has its partisans. They begin cautiously by reading works with a view to answer scientific or intellectual skepticism. They read a little more and dive a little deeper into the turbid stream, because they feel well able to stand against the insidious influence. They go on till, at last, they are staggered. They do not go to those who could help their scruples, but they continue to flounder on till at last they have lost their footing—and he that said he was a Believer has ended in stark atheism, doubting even the existence of a God! Oh, that those who are well taught would be content with their teaching! Why meddle with heresies? What can they do but pollute your minds? Were I to get black, I imagine that I could wash away all the soils, but I would be sorry to black myself for the sake of washing! Why should you be so unwise as to go through pools of foul teaching merely because you think it easy to cleanse yourself of its pollution? Such trifling is dangerous! When you begin to read a book and find it pernicious, put it aside. Someone may upbraid you for not reading it all through, but why should you? If I have a roast on my table of which the smell and the taste at once convince me that it is putrid and unwholesome, should I show my discretion by *fairly* eating it all before giving my judgment that it is not fit for food? One mouthful is quite enough! And one sentence of some books ought to be quite enough for a sensible man to reject the whole mass! Let those who can relish such meat have it, but I have a taste for better food. If it is your duty to expose these evils, encounter them bravely, with prayer to God to help you. But if not, as a humble Believer in Jesus, what business have you to taste and test such noxious fare when it is exposed in the market? Keep to the study of the Word of God!

I will not continue in this strain. It is painful to me, if not to you. I will condense into a few sentences my answer to the second enquiry—

II. WHAT BECOMES OF THEM?

Those who go aside—what becomes of them? Well, if they are God's children, I will tell you what becomes of them, for I have seen it scores of times. Though they go aside, *they are not happy*. They cannot rest, for they are miserable even when they try to be cheerful. After a while they begin to remember their first Husband, for then it was better with them

than now. They return, but there are scores and scores, to say nothing of the shame which they have to carry with them to their grave, who are never the men they were before! They have to take a second place among their comrades. And even should Sovereign Grace so wonderfully bless their painful experience that they are fully restored, they can never mention the past without bitter regret. Their by-path serving for others' beacon, they will say to young people, "Never do as I have done. Nothing good, all mischief, comes of it." In the vast majority of cases, however, they are not the Lord's people. So this is what comes of it. Those who prove traitors to a profession they once made are the hardest people in the world to impress. Doubtless some of you, when you lived in the country, used always to be punctual at your usual places of worship, but since you have come to London, where your absence from any sanctuary is unnoticed, you rarely enter the courts of the Lord's House—nor would you have been here tonight but for some special inducement—some country cousin or some particular friend having brought you. Though unknown to me, God scans your path. Well, here you are, and yet it may be to little profit. You have had counsels and cautions in such profusion that it is like pouring oil down a slab of marble to admonish you. May God in His Omnipotent Mercy break your stubborn heart, or there will be no hope for you! Such people frequently lose all conscience. They can go a deal further in talking against religion than anybody else. They will sometimes venture to say they know so much about it that they could expose it. Their boasts and their threats are alike unmeaning—but as boys whistle while they walk through the churchyard to keep their courage up, so do their vain talk and their senseless stories betray their stifled fear. They speak contemptuously of God while they justify themselves in a course of which their own conscience upbraids them! They go back—alas, some of them to prove themselves the most abandoned sinners in the world! The raw material out of which the devil constructs the deadliest fabric is that which was presumed to be the most saintly substance.

There could not have been a Judas to betray Christ had he not first been distinguished as an Apostle, who ventured to kiss his Master. You must pick him from among the Apostles to make an apostate. As the ringleaders of riotous transgression, when converted, often make the best revivalist preachers, so those who seem to be the most loyal subjects of Christ, when they become renegades, prove to be the bitterest foes and the blackest sinners! Painful reminiscences rush over one's mind. Standing here now in the midst of a great Church, I call to mind things that have harrowed up my soul. God grant I may not see the likes of them again! They go away! Ah, me, full many of them go away to die in blank despair. Did you ever read the life of Francis Spira? If you want to sleep

tonight, do not take up that memoir! Did you ever read the life of John Child, a Baptist minister of about 200 years ago? Mr. Keach gives it in one of his works. He was a man who knew the Truth of God and, to a great extent, had felt its power. But he went aside from it and before he came to die, his expressions were too terrible to listen to. The remorse and despair of his spirit chased everyone away. At last he laid violent hands upon himself. For a man, after having once looked Christ in the face and kissed Him, to betray Him and crucify Him afresh, to hang himself is not to be wondered at! To eat at the Lord's Table, to drink of that cup of blessing, to mingle with the saints, join in their prayers and their hymns, professing to be a disciple of Christ and then to go back and walk no more with Him, is to venture on a course of no ordinary danger! The swing of the pendulum, if it has been lifted high and let go, is so much the greater on the other side. I marvel not that any man should be precipitated into flagrant sin who willfully renounces his vows of consecration to Jesus!

And oh, when his eyes are opened and his conscience is awakened, how he wishes that he had never been born! Could he terminate his existence and annihilate his anguish-smitten soul, then the direst act of desperation by which he could end a life he could not mend, might be accounted wise. But no, that is impossible! The relief he seeks, he cannot find when he takes the dreadful leap from suffering here to an aggravated form of misery hereafter, ten thousand times worse to endure! He seals his doom and makes his own damnation sure, as he raises against himself a murdering hand. Do I address anyone here bereft of every ray of hope and shivering on the brink of cold despair? Hold now, I would cry in your ears— do yourself no harm! You can do yourself no good! Think not to cure your woes by committing another crime—

***“It were madness thus to shun the living light,
And plunge your guilty soul in endless night.”***

While there is life there is hope! Jesus Christ can forgive you. Return to Him. He can wash you in His blood. He can make you clean, though your sin is as scarlet. But, oh, do not trifle, make no delay! Tarry no longer in your present condition, otherwise maybe you will fill up the measure of your iniquities before you are aware, and you may taste, even in this world, some beginning of the wrath to come! If not rescued as a trophy of Grace right speedily, you may become a monument of God's wrath—a beacon to deter others from daring to turn aside! I speak solemnly, but I cannot help it. So intensely do I feel the terror of that woe, and so confident am I that some of you are making light of it, that I would go down on my knees and entreat you with tears to remind you what you are doing. You are on a steep plane and you are going down, down, down! Your feet are even now on the slippery places from which multitudes have been cast down into destruction! How are they brought

into desolation as in a moment! The Lord make haste to deliver you! May He stretch out His hand and receive you! I can only call out to you. You seem to have got where I cannot reach you. Do not venture a footstep further on that dangerous road. Look to Jesus, look to Jesus! He can redeem your life from the pit of Hell by His Sovereign Grace, but He alone! Then as a wandering sheep, brought back to the fold, you shall adore His name!

Our third point is this—

III. WHY SHOULD WE NOT GO AWAY AS THEY HAVE GONE?

Were we left to ourselves, I cannot tell you any reason why we should not go as they have gone. Nor, indeed, could I tell you why the best man here would not be the worst before tomorrow morning, if the Grace of God left him. John Bradford, you know, as he saw the poor criminals taken away to Tyburn to be executed, used to say, “There goes John Bradford, but for the Grace of God.” Verily each one of us might say the same! To abide with Christ, however, is our only security—and we trust we shall never depart from Him. But how can we make sure of this? The great thing is to have a real foundation in Christ to begin with—genuine faith, vital godliness. The foundation is the first matter to be attended to in building a house. With a bad foundation there cannot be a substantial house. You require a firm bottom, a sound groundwork, before you proceed to the superstructure. Do pray God that if your religion is a sham, you may find it out now! Unless your hearts are deeply plowed with genuine repentance, and unless you are thoroughly rooted and grounded in the faith, you may have some cause to suspect the reality of your conversion and the verity of the Holy Spirit’s operation in you. May the Lord work in you a good beginning, and then you may rely upon it, He will carry it on to the day of Jesus Christ!

Then remember, dear Brothers and Sisters, if you would be preserved from falling, you must be schooled in humility and keep very low before the Lord. When you are half an inch above the ground, you are that half-inch too high. Your place is to be nothing! Trust Christ, but do not trust yourself. Rely on the Spirit of God, but do not rely on anything that is in yourself—no, not on a Grace you have received, or on a gift you possess! Those do not slide who walk humbly with God. They are always safe whose entire dependence is upon God. Be jealous of your obedience! Be circumspect! Be careful! Take heed to yourselves—your walk and conversation cannot be too cautious. Many are lost through being too remiss, but none through being too scrupulous. The statutes of the Lord are so right that you cannot neglect them without diverging from the path of rectitude. Watch and pray! God help you to watch, or else you will get drowsy. Never neglect prayer. That is at the root of every defection. Re-

troggression commonly begins at the closet. To restrain prayer is to deaden the very pulse of life! “Watch unto prayer.”

And I beseech you, dear Friends, do shun that company which has led other people astray. Parley not with those whose jokes are profane. Keep right away from them. It is not for you to be seen standing, much less to be found sitting down with men of loose manners and lewd converse! They can do you no good, but the evil they can bring upon you, it would not be easy to estimate. You may have heard the story—but it is so good it will bear repeating—of the lady who advertised for a coachman, and was waited upon by three candidates for the situation. She put to the first one, this question, “I want a really good coachman to drive my pair of horses and, therefore, I ask you how near you can drive to danger and yet be safe?” “Well,” he said, “I could drive very near, indeed! I could go within a foot of a precipice without fear of any accident so long as I had the reins.” She dismissed him with the remark that he would not do. To the next one who came, she put the same question. “How near could you drive to danger?” Being determined to get the position, he said, “I could drive within a hair’s breadth, and yet skillfully avoid any mishap.” “You will not do,” she said. When the third one came in, his mind was cast in another mold, so when the question was put to him, “How near could you drive to danger?” he said, “Madam, I never tried. It has always been a rule with me to drive as far off from danger as I possibly can.” The lady engaged him at once!

In like manner, I believe that the man who is careful to run no risks and to refrain from all equivocal conduct, having the fear of God in his heart, is most to be relied upon. If you are really built upon the Rock of Ages, you may meet the question without dismay, “Will you also go away?” and you can reply without presumption, “No, Lord, I cannot, and I will not go, for to whom should I go? You have the words of eternal life.” And may the very God of Peace wholly sanctify you! And I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He that calls you, who also will do it! Amen.

—Adapted from the *C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

CLINGING TO CHRIST

NO. 3210

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 11, 1910.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 12, 1863.**

***“Then Jesus said unto the twelve, Will you also go away? Then Simon Peter answered Him, Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.”
John 6:67, 68.***

[See Sermons #2914, Volume 50—A MOURNFUL DEFECTION and #1646, Volume 28—
A HOME QUESTION AND A RIGHT ANSWER—
Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

I. WITHOUT any preface, we will proceed at once to consider the first division of our subject, which is that **THE PREACHING OF THE DOCTRINES OF TRUTH IS OFTEN THE MEANS OF SEPARATING THE PRECIOUS FROM THE VILE.**

In the case before us, we see that the preaching of the Lord Jesus Christ acted like a great winnowing machine. His nominal disciples were like a heap of wheat and chaff all mingled together on the threshing floor. His words were like a mighty wind passing through the whole mass, separating the chaff from the wheat and driving it away—leaving only the good corn lying all around Him. This leads me to say that apart from afflictions, temptations and persecutions, the preaching of the Gospel is, in itself, a means of dividing the true followers of Christ from those who are only His disciples in name and, wherever there is a faithful, Christ-like ministry, you will find many going away from it for the very same reasons that those nominal disciples went away from Christ. “From that time many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him.”

Some went away from Christ *because His doctrine was too mysterious.* They heard His wondrous words only with their outward ears and, judging them in the letter and not comprehending the spirit of them, they said, “This is a hard saying; who can hear it?” They misunderstood and misrepresented what intelligent Sunday school children nowadays easily comprehend! And as they did not know what the Savior really meant, they argued that this was a reason why they should not listen to Him any longer. We must, therefore, not be surprised if when we are speaking to our congregations upon the deep things of God, there are some who do not comprehend the spiritual meaning of what we are saying, and who, instead of patiently waiting until they can understand it, or coming to us

for an explanation of their difficulties, turn away from us, crying, “We will hear no more of these mysteries! We cannot at once understand them and, therefore, we will not take the trouble to learn what the preacher intends to teach us by them.”

Others went away from Christ *because His teaching was too spiritual for them*. He said to them, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, you have no life in you.” They gave only a carnal interpretation to Christ’s words and altogether missed their spiritual meaning. If He had talked to them as the Pharisees did, they would have understood Him and enjoyed His message. If Christ had spoken to them about phylacteries, making broad the borders of their garments, the tithing of mint and anise and cummin, fasting two or three days in a week and washing their hands before they ate bread, they would have comprehended such talk as that and would have exceedingly liked it! And there are still many, even in England, who would listen gladly to the praise of mere outward rites and ceremonies and who would find intense satisfaction in millinery, wax candles, crosses and anything that is externally ornamental or attractive—but they have no love for that which is spiritual! Our Lord’s teaching was too spiritual for those nominal followers of His. He did not give them husks such as swine might relish, but He gave them the very kernels of the Truth of God and, therefore, they turned away from Him. He gave them not chaff, but the very finest of the wheat—but they, being unrenewed by Divine Grace and, therefore, having no appetite for such food, “went back, and walked no more with Him.” And every ministry that is truly spiritual will drive away some who come for a while under its influence, for there are still many to be found who will say, “If the preacher would confine himself to moral duties, or even to Scripture *histories*, we would not mind listening to him. But when he talks about feeding upon Christ, and about communion with Jesus, and about the spiritual separated life, these are things of which we know nothing and of which we do not wish to know anything.” And so they go their way.

Others there were, no doubt, who were offended with Christ *because what He said glorified Himself*. He contrasted Himself with the manna that their fathers ate in the wilderness and of which they naturally thought very highly, for man then “ate angels’ food.” But Jesus said, “Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead...I am the Living Bread which came down from Heaven: if any man eat of this Bread, he shall live forever.” He proclaimed Himself the Son of Man who came down from Heaven and who would go back to Heaven—and this offended them—and there are still many to whom the glorifying of Christ is obnoxious. If the Doctrine that is preached glorifies the Creator and abases the creature, there are some of our hearers who at once get angry! They cannot endure the extolling of our glorious Lord and Master. Our

praise of Him makes discord in their ears. If we would prate about the dignity of human nature. If we would extol that poor foolish creature, the son of Adam, they would be pleased enough! But to put all crowns upon Jesus Christ's head, to ascribe all honor and glory to Him and to Him alone—to preach up nothing but a full Christ for empty sinners—there are many who will be annoyed by such preaching as this and straightway they will turn back and walk no more with us.

Chiefly, however, Christ's nominal disciples left Him because His preaching was too personal for them. He proclaimed what was in their hearts and, therefore, He spoke to them with the utmost directness. And this plainness of speech offended them, so they turned away from Him. How many sermons have been preached before people and how few have been preached *at* them! Yet the sermons that are preached *before* us are good for nothing, but the sermons that are preached *at* us are the only ones that are likely to be blessed to us! We have known some hearers who have winced considerably when the preaching has been plain and personal. The description of their case has been so graphic and the cap fitted them so well that, rather than wear it, they have taken themselves to a preacher with a smoother tongue, who—

“To soothe the unholy throng”—

has laid aside the boldness of speech which it is both his privilege and his duty to exercise! There are some of our hearers who suspect that somebody has told the minister all about them—but what has happened is that God has guided the preacher unconsciously to picture them so accurately that they cannot help recognizing their own portrait! One says, “I do not like the preacher because he tells me so much about my sins.” Another, who is a drunk, says, “I do not like him because, after listening to him, I cannot enjoy my cups as I did before.” Another, who is the slave of some other form of sin, says, “I do not like him because he lays the axe to the very root of the tree of my sin. His blows come too closely home to please me.” There are others who are not honest enough to confess that it is so with them, also, but though they may not admit it, this is really the fact—they do not like the Truth of God because the Truth of God does not like them!

We have in all our congregations a certain number of hearers who make great professions for a time, but afterwards go back and leave us. The reason very often being that the preaching has sifted them out from the wheat and proved that they are only chaff. I know that some of you feel very uncomfortable when I am preaching the Doctrine of Election or any of the other great Doctrines of Sovereign Grace. I am very sorry for any of you who cannot appreciate those glorious Truths of God in which my soul delights itself to the fullest—and I would earnestly and solemnly urge you to examine yourselves to see whether you have ever had Divine

Grace in your hearts at all if you do not love to hear the Doctrines of Grace preached! There are others, though not many in this congregation, who are not pleased when I begin preaching concerning human responsibility and the duty of sinners to repent and believe the Gospel. They do not like to hear me proclaim that part of the Truth of God, though they revel in Divine Sovereignty, Predestination, Election and such great Truths! So it comes to pass that there is, occasionally, a small stream of hearers trickling away towards Antinomianism, and another stream flowing in the opposite direction towards legalism! I hope that at least in the case of some of them, though they leave us, they do not, at the same time, leave Christ! A man may turn away from sound Doctrine and yet may not have left a personal Savior. Though he may have rejected some part of the Truth of God, he may still have his finger upon the hem of Christ's garment, and so may remain in contact with Him. But I am greatly afraid that there are some who leave us, who go away to Hell! Some who, when they forsake the Lord's House, also forsake the Lord of the house. Some who, when they leave the congregation of the saints, also leave the King of saints and turn aside unto crooked ways.

II. Well now, suppose that they do leave Christ when they leave us? That suggests a second topic of consideration in our text, which is that **WHEN SOME PEOPLE GO AWAY, WE MUST NOT BE SURPRISED, NOR UNDULY ALARMED.**

You notice that in the narrative there is no mention of any remark by Christ concerning those who had turned back, nor any expression of a desire for their return. He could read their hearts and knew the motives that had caused them to reject His teaching and cease to be even nominally His followers, so He turned to His 12 Apostles and put to them the pathetic question which we will presently examine—"Will you also go away?" This silence of our Savior concerning those who were driven away from Him by His preaching of the Truth of God suggests that they were not plants of His Father's right-hand planting, but only weeds that had to be pulled up by the roots and thrown away!

Among Christ's nominal disciples, there were *some who followed Him for the loaves and fishes*. They enjoyed His discourses, especially those that finished up with the feeding of the multitude! They were greatly gratified by being in His society, especially when they shared in the distribution that was made to the poor out of the bag that Judas carried as treasurer to the company. They always profited under Christ's ministry, but if they did not profit in spirituals, they took good care to profit in temporals! These were the people who went away from Christ when He set before them the spiritual meat and drink which had no attraction for them. "No," they said, "we did not bargain for that kind of fare. Let those have it who like it. As for us, we need something more substantial than that" and, therefore, from that time they "went back, and walked no more with

Him.” There are a few people of this sort in most congregations even now. They always have an eye to anything material that can be gained by mingling with the disciples of Christ. But as soon as there are no more loaves and fishes to be had, no more doles or grants or gifts—away they go—and we see them no more in our midst! Now, when such people as these take offense at the Truth of God and leave us, we really need not regret their going except for their own sakes. While they remain with us, there is always a faint hope that some higher motive may cause them to stay and that the nominal follower of Christ may become one of His true disciples. But, apart from that view of the case, we cannot greatly mourn when He, whose fan is in His hand, drives away the chaff which has been all too long reckoned as wheat!

Then, among the apparent disciples of Christ, were *some who followed Him because they were charmed by His oratory*. Even the officers who were sent by the chief priests and Pharisees to arrest Christ returned without Him and gave as their excuse for not taking Him, “Never man spoke like this Man.” He was, indeed, unrivalled in His eloquence. His parables were so interesting that they won the attention of the multitude—“the common people heard Him gladly.” There is a great power of attraction in real natural oratory—and in our Lord’s case there was a Divine Power far beyond anything to which the loftiest human eloquence has ever attained. So there were many who said, “We never heard such a preacher as this before. Wherever He preaches, there is sure to be a crowd. The multitudes throng around Him and press upon Him! Let us also go and hear Him.” As they listened to Him, their ears were charmed, but their hearts were not changed and, by-and-by, they “went back, and walked no more with Him.” We also have had nominal adherents of this sort. We are always glad to see all who come to hear the Word, but if they unite with the disciples of Christ simply because of some excellence of speech which they admire in the preacher and are not, themselves, truly converted, the sooner such dross is scrummed from the surface of the molten gold, the better will it be for the gold!

Others, no doubt, followed Christ for a time *because they liked anything new, curious and singular*. Here was a strange preacher who had not even a house to live in. The foxes had holes and the birds of the air had nests, but He had nowhere to lay His head. He was also a preacher who said and did unusual things. He saw some lilies growing and He said, “Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.” He pointed to some ravens flying overhead, and said, “Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them: how much more are you better than the fowls?” He was a preacher who used simple language, so that even child-

ren could comprehend it! Yet, at the same time, He talked so wondrously that the people were astonished at His Doctrine, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." Yet, when the novelty of His teaching had worn off, they "went back, and walked no more with Him." There are some people of this sort still living—they go to hear every fresh preacher who attracts a crowd and they may be sufficiently fascinated to gain admission to the church. But they vanish as soon as there is a new attraction! And any church that has had them on its roll need not sorrow greatly when the chaff is winnowed from the wheat.

So I might go on describing those who go away from us even as Christ's nominal followers went away from Him, but I will just say to any minister here who has lost any of his hearers through his faithful preaching of the Truth, "Do not fret, my dear Brother, on their account, and do not abate a single jot or tittle of anything that you believe to be the Truth of God." I would not alter my preaching in order to retain any individual, however eminent or influential he might be. Others may fish for him if they like, but I shall not. My business is to declare my Master's message exactly as He has revealed it to me in His Word and by His Spirit! I am responsible to Him for the faithful discharge of the duties to which He has called me—and when I have, in His name, fully and fearlessly proclaimed all the Truth that He has taught me, I am not to be blamed if some refuse to receive the Word, and so it becomes a savor of death unto death to them. It was so with the preaching of our Lord Himself, for there were many who "went back, and walked no more with Him," when He uttered Truths of God which were unpalatable to them.

III. Now I come to the very important matter upon which I want to especially speak to you, as it particularly concerns you who are now present. Some have gone out from us because they were not of us, for if they had really been of us they would doubtless have continued with us. And this fact suggests the need of putting to you THE SOLEMN QUESTION WHICH OUR LORD PUT TO HIS DISCIPLES—"Will you also go away?"

Every word in this question is important. Let us first consider the little pronoun, "you." "Will *you* also go away?" "You, the 12 who have been with Me from the beginning. You who have been with Me in my tribulation and have shared My reproach. You who were, some of you with Me on the Mount of Transfiguration and in the room where the little maid was bid to rise—will *you* go away from Me? To you," Christ seemed to say, "I have expounded the parables as I never explained them to the mixed multitude. To you I have unlocked the mysteries of the Kingdom of God. To you My heart has been opened as it has been to no one else—I have not kept back from you anything that was good for you to know—you are My chosen ones, My favorites, My much-loved ones. To deliver you from peril, I walked upon the stormy waves. To preserve you in the

time of temptation, I spent whole nights in prayer. Upon you I have poured a plenitude of blessings—will you go away from Me after all this?” Now Christ seems to me to put this solemn, personal question to you, my dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ! Will you go away from Him after all that He has done for you? You believe that you have been called by His Grace, for you have enjoyed the sweetness of His love and you have been admitted into close personal fellowship with Him. The secret of the Lord is with you who fear Him. He has delivered you in six troubles, and in seven no evil has touched you. You bear your willing witness that He is a gracious Lord and Master, and that He has been a precious Christ to you! Indeed, you say that He is your All-in-All and that words fail you to tell all that you think of Him! Then *can* you, *will* you go away from Him after all this? I think I know what your answer must be, but I will not speak of that just now.

Now put the emphasis upon the first word in the question—“*Will* you also go away?” Matthew Henry says that our Lord left the disciples to make the choice whether they would go or stay—and then he observes that, “Christ will detain none with Him against their wills. His soldiers are volunteers, not pressed men.” Christ also says to us who profess to be His disciples, “*Will* you go away from Me?” Remember this, beloved Friends, although the Spirit of God keeps us following Christ, yet He never does this against our wills. He makes us willing in the day of His power, but still, it is quite true that Christ has no unwilling followers. If you are willing to leave Him. If your will would permit you to be a deserter from the army of Christ, you have already deserted! So I put the question to you as though the whole matter rested with you, “Will you go away from your Lord and Master? Do you really wish to leave your Savior? Do you, in your heart, say, “I will never again endure suffering and reproach for His name’s sake. I will never again put my trust in Him who died upon the Cross. I will go back to the world and be content with the world’s joys and pleasures”? Will you thus go away from Christ and walk no more with Him?

Then take the next word in the question: “Will you *also* go away?” There is often a disposition in us to do what others do. Young man, you know that your father, who once professed to be a follower of Christ, afterwards apostatized. Will you, also, go back because he turned traitor to Christ? When some great monarch among the trees of the forest feels the woodman’s axe and quivers and, at last, falls with a tremendous crash, many a shrub and plant that grew securely near it are crushed to death by its fall. And so, sometimes, when some great professor falls and goes down to destruction, there are many young Believers, growing, as it were, under his shadow, who are in imminent peril of being dragged down with him! Now, my young Friends, you have heard that So-and-So and So-

and—So have turned back, like Pliable, to the City of Destruction—“will you also go away?” Will the tide also sweep you away, or will you, by the Grace of God, swim against it? There it goes, broad and deep! Upon its surface is the foam of pleasure, but in its depths is the damnation of Hell—will you also float adown it as multitudes of others are doing, or will you stem the current—

**“Strong in the strength which God supplies
Through His eternal Son”?**

We must, all of us know some of these reprobates who once were numbered among the people of God. There is one who used to partake of the Communion Cup at the Lord’s Table, but now he is drinking of the cup of devils at the bar of the gin palace—“will you also go away” as he has gone? There is another who used to go up to the House of Prayer and his voice was often heard at the Prayer Meetings. But the greed of gold sized him and now he is a sordid money-grabber and he would grind an orphan’s bones if they would make him bread! “Will you also go away” as he has gone? Saddest of all, there is one who used to preach the Gospel and many were charmed by his brilliant oratory. But now he is blaspheming God with his fellow infidels! “Will you also go away” as he has gone? Young men and women, and old ones, too, you see what the apostates have become! You see what has happened to some who apparently did run well, but who never really started in the right course—or they would have continued in it till they reached the goal. You see how some who left the harbor with a fair wind and all sails set have made shipwreck of faith because they never knew the Grace of God in truth—are you willing to be like they? “Will you also go away?” I know I shall not be alone in giving the answer that John Newton puts into his well-known hymn—

**“When any turn from Zion’s way
(Alas, what numbers do)!
I think I hear my Savior say,
‘Will you forsake Me too?’
Ah, Lord, with such a heart as mine,
Unless You hold me fast
I feel I will! I shall decline,
And prove like they at last.
What anguish has that question stirred,
If I will also go?
Yet, Lord, relying on Your Word,
I humbly answer, ‘No.’”**

IV. Now, as briefly as we can, let us consider PETER’S REPLY TO OUR LORD’S QUESTION, and I hope that many a heart here will make that reply its own. It was a grand answer! There is a magnificence about it which I cannot expect to bring out to the fullest—“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.”

“*Lord, to whom shall we go?*” When I was meditating upon this subject yesterday, I turned that question over and over again in my mind and I asked myself, “Where could I go if I were to forsake my Lord?” Earth has no place where I could hide my guilty head if I, after preaching the Gospel to others, should desert the Cross of Christ! Not even across the ocean could I find a harbor of refuge or a hermit’s cave where I could secure seclusion if I tried to run away from my Lord. I would be hounded and denounced everywhere by those who know my name, even if they do not know me, as one who has preached the Gospel to tens of thousands. And I should be pointed at by the finger of scorn and all who have desired my fall would gloat over it—and think me only fit to be a football for Satan and his hosts to kick. I can indeed adopt John Newton’s lines and say with him to my dear Lord and Savior—

**“To whom or where could I go
If I should turn from You?”**

That is how I personally feel with regard to Peter’s reply to our Lord’s question. Will each one of you put the matter before yourself from your own standpoint as I have put it from mine? Let me take the case of any avowed follower of Christ here. Where could you go to find comfort if you should forsake your Lord? Suppose you turn from Christ—*perhaps you might try to find peace and comfort in ceremonies*. Can you imagine yourself sitting or kneeling in a Popish place of worship? Can you think of yourself as trying to get comfort by watching those boys in white swinging the smoking censers, or those men in blue and purple and scarlet and fine linen bowing before their images and chanting in a language that you probably do not understand? Can you imagine yourself deriving comfort from those wax candles, those crucifixes or that little wafer-god of which the idolaters think so much? Could you get comfort out of the gorgeous architecture, the dim religious light, the pealing organ and all the paraphernalia inseparably associated with the Romish ritual? If you should ever spend a few minutes in one of those places, I think you would say, “Well, whatever becomes of me, I could not come here! I know too much to ever put any trust in such childish ceremonies and superstitious observances. I cannot *imagine* my soul ever being satisfied with such husks as these.”

Next, *let us suppose that you go to Moses and try to be saved by the Law*. As you have given up Christ, you try whether you cannot find comfort in your own good works. You become eminently religious, devout, charitable, moral and upright. You try, from morning till night, to live a perfect life. You are wanting to see if you can, by any means, build a road to Heaven for yourself, or construct a ladder out of your own good works by which you can reach God’s Presence in Glory. Now, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, what do you think of such a scheme as this? “Oh, Sir!”

says one friend, “I once tried to go round by Mount Sinai, but there were such lightning and thunder—and the mountain was so full of terror to me that I dare not go that way again! Whatever else I might do, I could not go back again to the beggarly elements of the old Law! I did once think that I could be saved by my own good works, but I found that I had launched my boat upon such a stormy sea that I was glad to get back to land again—and I shall never again venture out upon those perilous waters.” I expect this friend says just what many more of you feel—that you could no more go back to Moses, and seek to be saved by the Law—than you could hope to be saved by Popish rites and ceremonies!

We will suppose, next, that you try to live an utterly careless life. Let us imagine, if we can, that you give up all thoughts of religion, that you do not attend any place of worship, that you abandon your present habit of prayer, Bible reading and so on, and that you just settle down to attend to your earthly business and have no care about the business of the world to come! Can you manage to do that? There are many, all around us, who are constantly acting thus—and some of them are quite used to it by this time, for they have never cared for anything but the things of time and sense. But I am quite sure there is no true child of God who could live such a life as that! If some of you were to stay away from the House of God for a month, you know that you would be utterly miserable! You could not help thinking about Divine things—they would force themselves upon you, for you have a conscience which is neither dead nor seared. It is like that Mr. Conscience, of whom John Bunyan says in his *Holy War*—“The old gentleman, too, the Recorder, who was so before Diabolus took Mansoul—he also began to talk aloud. And his words were now to the town of Mansoul as if they were great claps of thunder.” It is so with you, and that enlightened and awakened conscience of yours would make you, of all men, most miserable if you tried to live a careless, godless life! Why, you know that even when you are dull and heavy with regard to spiritual things, you are most unhappy, and you cry out in your agony—

**“Dear Lord, and shall we always live
At this poor dying rate?”**

Well, if you cannot endure that state of things even in a small degree, it is quite certain that you could not endure it altogether! So, if you think of leaving your Lord, it is evident that you could not live in utter carelessness.

Suppose that you turn aside to the pleasures of the world. Suppose you take a ticket tomorrow evening for the theater and go there? The moment you had taken your seat, you would say to yourself, “I wish I had never come in this place.” And as soon as the performance began, you would be so nervous and unhappy that at every creaking noise, or the slamming of a door, you would fear that the building was about to tumble

down upon you! Such amusements as these are not for us who profess to be followers of the Crucified! Let others do as they please—we do not interfere with their liberty. We believe that husks are the proper food for swine, but we have no desire to share the feast with them! And we leave the world's pleasures to the men of the world who have their portion in this life. If we have really received a new life, and been made partakers of the Divine Nature, it would be no use for us to seek satisfaction in the world's pleasures—we would be obliged to cry out, "Vanity of vanities! All is vanity!"

Now just once more, *suppose we leave Christ and turn to the lower and grosser forms of vice*. Why, the mere suggestion seems to make our blood run cold and then to make us blush with shame at the very thought of such degradation! Some of us tremble every time we hear a profane oath or a blasphemous or obscene expression—and we would rather be tied up and whipped with a cat-o'-nine-tails, than live among those who are continually cursing God! And as for doing it, ourselves, we would rather that our tongue should cleave to the roof of our mouth, or that we should be dumb for the rest of our lives! If one has ever known the woe, sorrow and redness of eyes of the drunk—and been saved from such sin and wretchedness by Sovereign Grace—how can he or she ever go back to their cups again? If one has been the companion of a harlot and has tasted the bitterness of life (or rather, death) in the house of the strange woman—and yet has been delivered by Almighty Grace—how can you ever again wallow in such filth? The very thought of such a thing makes us shudder and it is well that it does! God has made all sin to be full of vinegar and gall to a Christian! And there is nothing sweet to him, the wide world over, but that which appertains to Christ! No, my Brothers and Sisters, we cannot go back to the world and to sin! We must cling to Christ, for there is nowhere else for us to go if we should ever leave Him. Respectable carelessness refuses us and disreputable sin rejects us after we are once united to Christ! Even the world could not endure us when once we have lost our taste for its follies and its sins. We cannot go back, we have burnt our boats and destroyed our bridges—the only course left to us is to follow our glorious Leader wherever He goes before us here and then to follow Him forever in that blest state where it shall be impossible for us to go away from Him!

My time has almost gone, but I must remind you of the last words of Peter's reply to his Lord—"*You have the words of eternal life.*" I hope that you, also, dear Brothers and Sisters, feel that you cannot turn back from Christ because He has saved you by His Grace. What He has done for us must bind us forever to Him! He has loved us with an everlasting love. He has given Himself for us on Calvary's Cross. He has given us His Spirit and Word—a new heart and a right spirit has He put within us—we *can-*

not and we *will not* desert Him after all this! Besides, He is our hope for the eternity of bliss that we expect to share with Him. All our hopes of life beyond the grave center in Him. Apart from Him, there would be nothing for us but the blackness of darkness forever! So it is impossible for us to turn away from Him. No, we must cling to Him whatever happens, for there is nothing or no one that can ever take His place—

***“None among the sons of men,
None among the heavenly train,
Can with Jesus Christ compare,
None so sweet, and none so fair!”***

I wish that some who have never yet been followers of the Lord Jesus Christ would become His disciples right now. But remember that if you enlist beneath His banner, it is for life. The Captain of our salvation has not six-months’ soldiers—He grants no discharge from His army till the fight is fought, the victory won and the crown is bestowed upon those who have been faithful even unto death! Those are the conditions of His service. Will you accept them and enlist in His army tonight? There is nothing for you to pay, but everything for you to receive! Open your empty hand, bring your empty heart and receive Christ—and so shall you be enlisted into His service! And more than that, you shall become members of the great family of the redeemed, for “as many as received Him, to them He gave power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.” Believe on Him now and you, too, shall become the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus! And then if He says to you, when others turn back and walk no more with Him, “Will *you* also go away?” you will answer, as Peter did, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.” The Lord bless you, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

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

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

“I WILL,” YET, “NOT AS I WILL” NO. 2376

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S DAY,
SEPTEMBER 2, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, JULY 1, 1883.**

**“Father, I will.”
John 7:24.**

**“Not as I will.”
Matthew 16:39.**

We have, here, two prayers uttered by the same Person, yet there is the greatest possible contrast between them. How different men are at different times! Yet Jesus was always essentially the same—“the same yesterday, and today, and forever.” Still, His mood and state of mind varied from time to time. He seemed calmly happy when He prayed with His disciples and said, “Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My Glory, which You have given Me.” But He was in an agony when, in Gethsemane, having withdrawn from His disciples and fallen on His face, He prayed, saying, “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless not as I will, but as You will.” It is the same Man and an unchangeable Man, too, as to His *essence*, who uttered both prayers, yet see how different were His frames of mind and how different the prayers He offered! Brother, you may be the same man and quite as good a man when you are groaning before God as when you are singing before Him. There may be more Grace, even, in the submissive, “Not as I will,” than in the triumphant, “Father, I will.” Do not judge yourselves to have changed in your standing before God because you have undergone an alteration as to your *feelings*. If your Master prayed so differently at different times, you, who have not the fullness of Grace that He had, must not wonder if you have a great variety of inward experiences.

Notice, also, that it was not only the same Person, but that He used these two expressions almost at the same time. I do not know how many minutes—I had better say minutes rather than hours—intervened between the Last Supper, the wonderful high-priestly prayer and the agonizing cries of Gethsemane. I suppose that it was only a short walk from Jerusalem to the olive garden and that it would not occupy long to traverse the distance. At one end of the walk Jesus prays, “Father, I will,” and at the other end of it, He says, “Not as I will.” In like manner, we may undergo great changes and have to alter the tone of our prayers in just a few minutes. You prayed, just now, with holy confidence. You took firm hold of the Covenant Angel and, with wrestling Jacob, you said, “I will not let You go, except You bless me.” And yet it may be equally becoming

on your part, within an hour, to lie in the very dust and, in agony, cry unto the Lord, "Pardon my prayers, forgive me that I was too bold, and hear me, now, as I cry to You and say, 'Not as I will, but as You will.'"—

***"If but my fainting heart is blessed
With Your sweet Spirit for its guest,
My God, to You I leave the rest—
'Your will be done!'"***

Never be ashamed because you have to mend your prayers! Be careful not to make a mistake if you can help it, but, if you make one, do not be ashamed to confess it and to correct it as far as you can. One of our frequent mistakes is that we wonder that we make mistakes. Whenever a man says, "I should never have thought that I could have done such a foolish thing as that," it shows that he does not really know himself, for had he known himself, he would rather have wondered that he did not do *worse*, and he would have marveled that he acted as wisely as he did. Only the Grace of God can teach us how to run our prayers down the scale from the high note of, "Father, hear me, for You have said, 'Ask what you will,'" right down to the deep, deep bass of, "Father, not as I will, but as You will."

I must further remark that these two prayers were equally characteristic of Christ. I think that I should know my Lord by His voice in either of them. Who but the eternal Son of God may dare to say, "Father, I will"? There speaks Incarnate Deity! That is the sublime utterance of the well-beloved Son. And yet, who could say as He said it, "If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless not as I will, but as You will." Perhaps you have uttered those words, dear Friend, but in your case they were not concerning such a cup of woe as Christ emptied! There were but a few drops of gall in your cup. His was *all* bitterness, from the froth to the dregs—all bitterness—and such bitterness as, thank God, you and I can never taste! That cup He has drained to the dregs and we shall not have to drink one drop from it. And it was of that cup that He said—and I detect the voice of the Son of God, the Son of Man, in that brief utterance—"Not as I will, but as You will."

My two texts make up a strange piece of music. Blessed are the lips that know how to express the confidence that rises to the height as far as we can go with Christ—and descends, even, to the deeps as far as we can go with Him in full submission to the will of God! Does anybody say that he cannot understand the contrast between these two prayers? Dear Friend, it is to be explained thus. There was a difference of *position* in the Suppliant on these two occasions. The first prayer, "Father, I will," is the prayer of our great High Priest with all His heavenly garments on—the blue, and purple, and fine twined linen, and the pomegranates, and the golden bells, and the breastplate with the 12 precious stones bearing the names of His chosen people. It is our great High Priest, in the Glory of His majestic office and power, who says to God, "Father, I will."

The second Suppliant is not so much the Priest as the Victim. Our Lord is there seen bound to the altar, about to feel the sacrificial knife, about to be consumed with the sacrificial fire, and you hear Him as

though it were a lamb bleating, and the utterance is, “Not as I will, but as You will.” The first petition is the language of *Christ in power* pleading for us. The second is the utterance of *Christ made sin for us*, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. That is the difference of position that explains the contrast in the prayers.

Let me tell you, also, that there is a difference in the subject of His supplication which is full of instruction. In the first prayer, where our Lord says so majestically, “Father, I will,” He is pleading for His people. He is praying for what He knows to be the Father’s will. He is officiating, there, before God as the very mouthpiece of God, and speaking of something about which He is perfectly clear and certain. When you are praying for God’s people, you may pray very boldly. When you are pleading for God’s cause, you may speak very positively. When you know you are asking what is definitely promised in the Scriptures as part of the Covenant ordered in all things and sure, you may ask without hesitation, as our Lord did.

But, in the second case, Jesus was praying for Himself—“If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me.” He was praying about a matter, concerning which He did not, as Man, know the Father’s will, for He says, “If it is possible.” There is an, “if,” in it—“If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me.” Whenever you go upstairs in an agony of distress and begin to pray about yourself, and about a possible escape from suffering, always say, under such circumstances, “Nevertheless not as I will, but as You will.” It may be given you, sometimes, to pray very boldly even in such a case as that, but, if it is not given you, take care that you do not presume. I may pray for healing for my body, but not with such confidence as I pray for the prosperity of Zion and the Glory of God. That which has to do with myself I may ask as a child of God asks of his Father, but I must ask *submissively*, leaving the decision *wholly* in His hands, feeling that, because it is for myself, rather than for Him, I must say, “Nevertheless not as I will, but as You will.”

I think that there is a plain lesson, here, for Christians to take heed that, while they are very confident on one subject for which they pray, they are equally submissive on another, for there is a heavenly blending in the Christian character, as there was in Christ’s Character, a firm confidence and yet an absolute yielding to the will of God—let that will be what it may—

**“Lord, my times are in Your hands.
All my sanguine hopes have planned
To Your wisdom I resign,
And would make Your purpose mine.”**

Now all this while, you may say that I have only been going round the text. Very well. But, sometimes, there is a good deal of instruction to be picked up around a text. The manna fell round about the camp of Israel. Perhaps there is some manna round about this text. May the Lord help every one of us to gather his portion!

I want you now, for a few minutes, to view this great Suppliant in the two moods in which He prayed, “Father, I will” and, “Not as I will,” and

then to combine the two. We will, first, view *Jesus in the power of His intercession*. Next, we will talk of *Jesus in the power of His submission*. And in the third place, we will try to *combine the two prayers*, “I will,” yet, “Not as I will.”

I. First, let us view Jesus IN THE POWER OF HIS INTERCESSION, saying, “Father, I will.”

Where did He derive that power? Who enabled Him thus to speak with God and say, “Father, I will?” First, *Jesus prayed in the power of His Sonship*. Sons may say to a father what strangers may not dare to say and such a Son as Jesus was so near to His Father’s heart, He was One who could say, “The Father has not left Me alone; for I always do those things that please Him.” He was One of whom the Father had said, “This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” Well might He have power with God so as to be able to say, “Father, I will.”

Next, He derived this power from *the Father’s eternal love to Him*. Did you notice how, in the very verse from which our text is taken, Jesus says to His Father, “You loved Me before the foundation of the world”? We cannot conceive what the love of the Father is to Christ Jesus His Son! Remember, they are one in *Essence*. God is one—Father, Son and Holy Spirit and, as the Incarnate God, Christ is unspeakably dear to the Father’s heart. There is nothing about Him of which the Father disapproves. There is nothing lacking in Him which the Father would desire to see there. He is God’s ideal of Himself—“In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” Well may One who is the subject of His Father’s eternal love be able to say, “Father, I will.”

But *our Lord Jesus also based this prayer upon His finished work*. I grant you that He had not yet actually died, but in the certain prospect of His doing so, He had said to His Father, “I have glorified You on the earth: I have finished the work which You gave Me to do.” Now, He has actually finished it, He has been able, in the fullest sense, to say, “It is finished,” and He has gone up to take His place in Glory at His Father’s side. You remember the argument with which Paul begins his Epistle to the Hebrews—“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in times past unto the fathers by the Prophets, has in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His Glory, and the express image of His Person and, upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had, by Himself, purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; being made so much better than the angels, as He has, by inheritance, obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said He at any time, You are My Son, this day have I begotten You? And again, I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son?”

When the Father looks at Christ, He sees in Him Atonement accomplished, satisfaction presented, sin annihilated, the elect redeemed, the Covenant ratified, the everlasting purpose settled on eternal foundations! O Beloved, since Christ has magnified God’s Law and made it honor-

able—and since He has poured out His soul unto death—He may well possess the power to say, “Father, I will.”

Remember, too, that *Jesus still possesses this power* and possesses it for you and for me. O my dear Hearers, you may well go to Christ and accept Him as your Mediator and Intercessor, since all this power to say, “Father, I will,” is laid up in Him on purpose for poor believing sinners who come and take Him to be their Savior! You say that you cannot pray. Well, He can—ask Him to plead for you! And I thank God that, sometimes, when we do *not* ask Him to plead for us, He does it all the same, as He did for Peter, when Satan had desired to have him, but Christ had prayed for him. Peter did not know his danger, but the Savior did, and He pleaded for him at once. What a blessing it is to think of Christ, clothed with Divine authority and power, using it all for us! Well does Toplady sing—

***“With cries and tears He offered up
His humble suit below!
But with authority He asks,
Enthroned in Glory now
For all that come to God by Him.
Salvation He demands,
Points to their names upon His breast
And spreads His wounded hands.
His Covenant and Sacrifice
Give sanction to His claim—
‘Father, I will that all My saints
Be with Me where I am.’”***

Further, that power of Christ will land every Believer in Heaven. Notice how Christ turns all His pleading with God that way. He says, “Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My Glory.” The devil says that we shall never get to Heaven, but we remember that declaration of Moses, “Your enemies shall be found liars unto you,” and the arch-enemy will be found to be the arch-liar, for the Lord’s Prayer will be heard and, as He pleads that those whom the Father gave Him should be brought up to be with Him where He is, you may depend upon it that they will all arrive safely in Heaven! And you, if you are among those who are given to Christ—and you may know that by your faith in Him—shall be among that blessed company!

I shall have finished with this first point when I have said this—*that power which Christ had, may, in a measure, be gained by all His people*. I dare not say and I would not say that any of us will ever be able to utter our Savior’s words, “Father, I will.” But I *do* say this—if you abide in Christ and His words abide in you—you may attain to such power in prayer that you shall ask what you will and it shall be done unto you. This is not a promise to all of you—no, not even to all of you who are God’s people—but only to those of you who live wholly unto God and serve Him with all your *heart*. You can, by habitual communion with God, attain to such power with the Most High that men shall say of you what they used to say of Luther, “There goes a man who can ask what he likes of God and have it.” You may attain to that glorious altitude! Oh, I

would that every one of us would seek to reach this height of power and blessing! It is not the feeble Christian. It is not the worldly Christian who has just enough Grace to make him miserable—the man who has only about enough Grace to keep him from being absolutely immoral! That is *not* the man or woman who will prevail with God. You paddlers in Christianity who scarcely wet your toes—you who never go in beyond your ankles, or your knees—God will never give you this privilege unless you go in for it! Get where the waters are deep enough to swim and plunge in! Be perfectly consecrated to God! Yield your whole lives to His Glory without reserve! Then may you obtain something of your Master’s power in prayer when He said, “Father, I will.”

II. Now I ask you kindly to accompany me, in the second place, to notice JESUS IN THE POWER OF HIS SUBMISSION. Our second text is all submission—“Not as I will.”

This utterance, “Not as I will,” proved that *the shrinking of Christ’s Nature from that dreadful cup were all overcome*. I do not believe that Christ was afraid to die. Do you believe that? Oh, no—many of His servants have laughed at death! I am sure that He was not afraid to die. What was it, then, that made that cup so awfully terrible? Jesus was to be made *sin* for us. He was to come under the *curse* for us! He was to feel the Father’s wrath on account of human guilt and His whole Nature, not only His flesh, but His whole *Being* shrank from that fearful ordeal! It was not actual defilement that was to come upon Him, but it looked like it and, as Man, He could not tell what that cup of wrath must contain—

**“Immanuel, sunk with dreadful woe,
Unfelt, unknown to all below—
Except the Son of God—
In agonizing pangs of soul
Drinks deep of wormwood’s bitterest bowl,
And sweats great drops of blood.”**

After dwelling in the love of God from all eternity, He was, in a few hours, to bear the punishment of man’s sin, yet He must bear it and, therefore, He said, “Not as I will, but as You will.” Do you wonder that He prayed, “If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me”? Is Christ to be blamed for this shrinking of Nature? My dear Friends, if it had been a pleasure to Him and He had had no shrinking, where would have been His holy *courage*? If it had not been a horrible and dreadful thing to Him, where would have been His *submission*, where would have been the *virtue* that made Atonement of it? If it had been a thing that He could not, or must not, shrink from, where would have been the pain, the wormwood, and the gall of it? The cup must be, in the nature of things, something from which He that bears it must shrink, or else it could not have been sufficient for the redemption of His people and the vindication of the broken Law of God! It was necessary, then, that Christ should, by such a prayer as this, prove that He had overcome all the shrinking of His Nature.

“Not as I will,” is also an evidence of *Christ’s complete submission to the will of His Father*. “He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter and, as a

sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opens not His mouth.” There is no resistance, no struggling. He gives Himself up completely. “There,” He seems to say to the Lord, “do what You will with Me; I yield Myself absolutely to Your will.” There was on Christ’s part no reserve, no wish, even, to make any reserve. I go further, and say that Jesus willed as God willed—and even prayed that the will of God, from which His Human Nature, at first, shrank, might be fulfilled. “Nevertheless not as I will, but as You will.”

O Brothers and Sisters—for you both need this Grace—pray God to help you to learn how to *copy your Lord in total submission!* Have you submitted to the Lord’s will? Are you submitting now? Are not some of you like bullocks unaccustomed to the yoke? There is a text, you know, in the 131st Psalm, “My soul is even as a weaned child.” I have sometimes thought that, for some of the Lord’s children, the passage would have to be read, “My soul is even as a *weaning* child,” and there are many of God’s people who are very long in the weaning! You cannot get satisfaction, quiet and content, can you? Can you give yourself up entirely to God, that He may do whatever He likes with you?

Have you some fear of a tumor, or a cancer? Is there before you the prospect of a painful and dangerous operation? Is business going badly with you, so that you will probably lose everything? Is a dear child sickening? Is the mother likely to be taken away? Will you have to lose your position and reputation if you are faithful to the Lord? Will you be exposed to cruel slanders? Will you probably be cast out of your employment if you do what is right? Come now, whatever you dread or expect, can you give yourself up wholly to God and say, “It is the Lord, let Him do what seem good to Him”? Your Lord and Master did—He said, “Not as I will.” Oh, that He might teach you this Divine art of absolute resignation to the purpose and ordinance of God till you, also, would be able to say, “Not as I will”! Thus you will sing—

**“I bow to Your will,
O God, and all Your ways adore!
And every day I live I’ll seek
To please You more and more!”**

III. I have finished my discourse when I have just twisted these two sayings together a little. So, thirdly, let us COMBINE THE TWO PRAYERS—“I will,” yet, “Not as I will.”

First, let me say, *Number One will help you very much to Number Two.* If you learn to pray *with* Christ, with the holy boldness that almost says, “Father, I will,” you are the man who will know how to say, “Not as I will.” Is it not strange that it should be so? It looks like a contradiction, but I am sure that it is not so. The man who can have his will with God is the very man who does *not want his own way with God.* He who may have what he likes is the man who wishes to have what God likes!

You remember the good old woman who lay near to death, and one said to her, “Do you not expect to die soon?” She answered, “I do not know whether I shall live or die and, what is more, I have no concern which way it is.” Then the friend asked, “But if you had your choice

whether you should live or die, which would you choose?” She replied, “I would rather that the Lord’s will should be done.” “But suppose the Lord’s will were to leave it entirely to you to choose whichever you liked?” “Then,” she said, “I would kneel down and pray the Lord to choose for me.” And I think that is the best way to live—not to have *any* choice at all, but to ask the Lord to choose for you! You can always have your way, you know, when your way is God’s way. The sure way to carry out self-will is when self-will is nothing else but God’s will! Oh, that the Lord would teach us this mighty power with Him in prayer! It will not be given without much close fellowship with Him. Then, when we know that we can have what we will of Him, we shall be in the right state to say, “Not as I will.”

The next remark that I would make is, that *Number Two is necessary for Number One*. That is to say, until you can say, “Not as I will,” you never will be able to say, “Father, I will.” I believe that one reason why people cannot prevail in prayer is because they will not yield to God. And they cannot expect God to yield to them. God does this and that with you, and you quarrel with Him. And then you go upstairs and begin to pray—get down on your knees and make your peace with Him, first—for if you must not come to the altar till you have become reconciled unto your brother, how can you come to the Throne of Grace till you have given up your quarrel with God?

But some people are never at peace with God. I have heard of a good friend who lost a child and he was wearing mourning clothes several years afterwards. And he was always fretting about the dear child, till a Quaker said to him, “What? Have you not forgiven God yet?” And there *are* some people who have not yet forgiven God for taking their loved ones. They ought always to have blessed Him, for He never takes away any but those whom He lent to us, and we should bless His name as much for taking them, again, as for lending them to us. Dear Friends, *you must submit to the will of God or else you cannot have power with Him in prayer.*

“Well,” you say, “you will not let me have my own way at all.” Certainly, *I will not let you have your own way!* But when you say, “There, Lord, I have no quarrel with You. Do what You will with me,” then *He* will say, “Rise, My child, ask what you will, and I will give it to you; open your mouth wide and I will fill it.”

Notice, also, dear Friends, that *Jesus will help us to have Number One and Number Two*. He gives Himself over to us to teach us the power of prevailing prayer, but He also gives Himself over to teach us the art of blessed *submission in prayer*—and it is His will that these two should not be separated. “Father, I will,” is Christ’s word on our behalf. And, “Not as I will,” is equally Christ’s word on our behalf. When you cannot pray either of these prayers as you would, fall back upon Christ’s prayer and claim it as your own.

Lastly, I think that *true sonship will embody both Number One and Number Two*. It is the true child of God who knows that he is his Father’s

child, who says, "Father, I will." He is often very bold where another would be presumptuous. Oh, I have heard full often of somebody's prayers—I will not say who the somebody is—he seems so familiar with God in his prayer. Oh, yes, I know! You love those very stately prayers in which the bounds are set about the mountaintop and no man may dare to come near! You make the Throne of Grace to be like Sinai was of old, of which the Lord said, "Whoever touches the mount shall be surely put to death: there shall not an hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether it is beast or man, it shall not live."

"Oh, but," you say, "so-and-so is so familiar at the Mercy Seat!" Yes, I know, and you think that is a pity, do you not? Perhaps you are acquainted with a judge. Look at him on the bench wearing his wig and robe of office! But you will not dare to speak to him, there, unless you address him as, "My Lord," and behave very respectfully to him. By-and-by he goes home—and he has a little boy there, Master Johnny. Why, the child has seized hold of his father's whiskers! There he is, up on his father's back! "Why, Johnny, you are disrespectful!" "Oh, but he is my father!" says the boy, and his father says, "Yes, Johnny, that I am; and I do not want you to say, 'My Lord,' and talk to me as they do in the court." So, there are certain liberties which God's children may take with Him which He counts no liberties at all, but He loves to be treated so by them. He will let each one of them say, "Father, I will," because they are His children!

Then, mark you, you are not God's child unless you can also say, "Father, not as I will." The true child bends before His father's will. "Yes," he says, "I would like so-and-so." His father forbids it. "Then I do not want it and I will not touch it." Or he says, "I do not like to take that medicine, but my Father says I am to take it," and he takes the cup and he drinks the whole of its contents. The true child says, "Not as I will," although, after his measure, he also says, "Father, I will."

I have only been talking to you who are the Lord's people. I hope you have learned something from this subject. I know you have if the Lord has taught you to pray after the fashion of these two prayers, as you humbly, yet believingly may, copying your Lord.

But oh, what shall I say to those of you who are not the Lord's people? If you do not know how to pray at all, may the Lord teach you! If you do not yet know your needs, may the Lord instruct you! And let me tell you that if ever there shall come a time when you feel your need of a Savior, the Lord Jesus will be willing to receive you! If ever you should yearn after Him, you can be sure that He is also yearning after you. Even now—

"Kindled His relentings are,"

and if you will but breathe the penitent's prayer, "God be merciful to me, a sinner," and turn your eye Christ-ward, and Cross-ward, there is salvation for you even now! God grant that you may have it, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

John 17:15-26; Matthew 26:36-46.

We will read, this evening, a portion of two prayers offered by our Divine Lord and Master on that night in which He was betrayed. The first is that memorable intercessory prayer of His recorded in the 17th Chapter of the Gospel according to John.

John 17:15. *I pray not that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the Evil One.* Christ did not pray that His disciples should be taken out of the world. It is very seldom that we ought to present such a petition. If that had been a proper prayer for us to offer, it would have been authorized by the Master. There are times when, in great pain of body, or in deep depression of spirit, the Believer, like Elijah under the juniper tree, requests for himself that he may die. If you ever do pray such a prayer, utter it very softly, for the Master does not authorize it and that is a matter that must be left to the Lord of Life and Death. Jesus says here, “I pray not that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the Evil One.” Sin is the real evil of the world—the danger of our being entangled in worldly customs, or dropping into the evil ways of an ungodly generation. Christ prays that we may be kept from the evil that is in the world and we, also, may and must pray that the Lord will keep us from the evil by which we are surrounded—and especially from the Evil One who seeks our destruction.

16. *They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.* “They are of another race—they are swayed by other motives, they have another life—they have another destiny, “They are not of the world.” Is that true of you, dear Hearer? We are reading out of God’s Book, remember. This is the description of *Christ’s people*—does it describe *you*? “They are not of the world.” They are not worldly, they are other-worldly. Their thoughts and hearts are set upon the *world to come*.”

17. *Sanctify them through Your Truth: Your Word is Truth.* What? Do they need to be sanctified? They are not of the world and are kept from the evil in the world—do they need to be sanctified? Yes, we shall always need sanctifying until we reach our heavenly Home where sin cannot enter. Every day we need the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit to lead us unto holiness! “Sanctify them through Your Truth: Your Word is Truth.” It is only the Truth of God that can beget holiness. False doctrine is never the medium of sanctification. You can tell which are false doctrines and which are the true by our Lord’s own test—“By their fruits you shall know them.” The same men who reject the old-fashioned doctrines also rebel against the old-fashioned style of living! Loose living generally goes with loose doctrine. There never was an age in which the Doctrines of Grace were despised, but, sooner or later, licentiousness prevailed. On the other hand, when we had Puritan teaching, we had also pure and holy living. This prayer is still needed for all Christ’s disciples—“Sanctify them through Your Truth: Your Word is Truth.”

18. *As you have sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.* This is the original Missionary Society and the model for all others. Christ sent, commissioned, of the Father, and every saint commissioned of Christ. Are you carrying out your mission, O you people of God? How dare you call yourselves by that name if you have no mission to anybody! If you are living here only for yourself, how can you belong to Christ who never lived a moment for Himself, but always lived wholly for others?

19. *And for their sakes I sanctify Myself.* "I set Myself apart, as One who is consecrated, dedicated, devoted to a grand design."

19. *That they, also, might be sanctified through the Truth.* This is our Lord's prayer for His disciples. In the ninth verse we read, "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which You have given Me; for they are Yours." Now our Lord Jesus prays for those who are to be His people. I wonder whether there are any of them here tonight?

20. *Neither pray I for these, alone, but for them, also, which shall believe in Me through their word.* There is a great company of people who are not, at present, Believers, but who shall yet believe on Christ through the testimony of those who are already Believers on Him. O God, call out many such through our word!

21. *That they all may be one.* This is Christ's prayer for all those who shall believe on Him, that they may be converted and brought into the one Church, together, with those who are already there—"that they all may be one."

21. *As You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they, also, may be one in Us: that the world may believe that You have sent Me.* Christ would have all His people joined in communion with Himself and with His Father. And when that is the case, then will men know that Christ came into the world for a definite purpose—"that the world may believe that You have sent Me."

22-23. *And the glory which you gave Me, I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are One: I in them, and You in Me, that they may be made perfect in one.* Christ is the Incarnation of God, and the Church should be the incarnation of Christ. Oh, when shall this great prayer be answered?

23-26. *And that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them, as You have loved Me. Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My Glory, which You have given Me: for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world has not known You: but I have known You, and these have known that You have sent Me. And I have declared unto them Your name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith You have loved Me may be in them, and I in them.* A very short time after our Divine Lord offered this intercessory supplication, He prayed a very different prayer, in a strangely-altered style. You will find it in the Gospel according to Matthew, chapter twenty-six. Remember that there was a very short interval between the utterance of the majestic prayer I have

been reading and the presentation of the cries and tears of which we are now to read.

Matthew 26:36-40. *Then came Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and said unto the disciples, Sit you here, while I go and pray yonder. And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then said He unto them, My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death: tarry you here, and watch with Me. And He went a little farther, and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless not as I will, but as You will. And He came unto the disciples and found them asleep, and said unto Peter, What, could you not watch with Me one hour? He felt the need of human sympathy in that awful hour. Yet He trod the winepress alone.*

41. *Watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation: the spirit, indeed, is willing, but the flesh is weak.* Admire the tenderness of Jesus in making this apology for His disciples. What He said about them was true, but it is not everybody who would have uttered that gentle truth at such a trying time. Dear Friends, make excuses for one another whenever you can! Never make them for *yourselves*, but often make them for others, and especially when some treat you as you think very untenderly, be the more tender towards them.

42-44. *He went away, again, the second time, and prayed, saying, O My Father, if this cup may not pass away from Me, except I drink it, Your will be done. And He came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy. And He left them, and went away, again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.* You cannot use much variety of language when your heart is very heavy. You will usually dwell upon just a few words at such a time. Do not blame yourself for doing so—it is natural, and it is right. Even your Lord, the Master of language, “prayed the third time, saying the same words.”

45, 46. *Then came He to His disciples, and said unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that does betray Me.* May the Master never have to say this concerning any of us, for His dear name’s sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—262, 701.

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THE PREACHER'S LAST SERMON FOR THE SEASON NO. 1875

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 29, 1885,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying,
If any man thirsts, let him come unto Me and drink.”
John 7:37.*

THE officers were after our Lord and He knew it. He could spy them out in the crowd, but He was not, therefore, in the least bit afraid, or disconcerted. He reminds me of that minister who, when he was about to preach, was stopped by a soldier, who held a pistol to his head and threatened that if he spoke, he would kill him. “Soldier,” he said, “do your duty and I shall do mine.” And he went on with his preaching. The Savior, without saying as much in words, said so by His actions. If they were sent to take Him, let them take Him—as for Himself, the time was come to speak boldly and, therefore, He stood and cried, saying, “If any man thirsts, let him come unto Me, and drink.”

You see, it was the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles. From the middle of that festival the Lord had been present and had openly taught the people. They had seen Him in the midst of the throng, lifting up His hands and proclaiming holy doctrine. But the feast was over, the boughs were cleared away and the tents in which they had dwelt, for a time, were taken down. It was the eighth day, which was spent as a Sabbath, but the Savior did not cease to preach because the festival was almost over. Till the last day He continued to instruct, invite and entreat. How this reminds us of His constant patience! It is but one instance, out of very many, of the Savior's tenacity of loving kindness. Though the Jews had often refused Him, He is still pleading with them. He has come to His own and they have not received Him, but He waits to be gracious! He tarries in unwearyed mercy. He endures “even to this last” and so, on “that great day of the feast,” He has still a note of admonition and a word of invitation for them.

Oh, the patience of God to some here present! You have long heard the Gospel and although you have never given it due attention, still does the good Savior strive with you and press you to be considerate of your own best interests. Jesus urges you to live, persuades you to be saved! There are times when it would not be becoming to the honor of a king to press his favors upon those who have distinctly despised and refused them, but it is always the amazing Glory of our Lord Jesus Christ that He continues to entreat even when we continue to resist! Even to our own last hour does the Lord of Mercy sweetly cry, “If any man thirsts, let him come unto

Me and drink." Repent, dear Hearer, of all your long delays, and come to Jesus this day, for He still invites you, saying evermore, "Whoever will, let Him take the water of life freely."

Furthermore, our Lord did not only preach the Gospel till the last day of the feast, but because it *was* the last day, He manifested an increased ardor in so doing and, whereas His custom was to sit and teach the people who gathered in a ring around Him, on this closing day He now sought a prominent place, probably just outside the Temple, or in one of its outer courts, and there He *stood*, conspicuous before them all, in the attitude of one who has risen from his ease and has come to meet those whom he invites. He assumed a position more active, more pleading, more earnest than that of a seated teacher. Behold, He stands and pleads! That pleading is in tones both pathetic and loud—He "cries," "If any man thirsts, let Him come unto Me and drink!"

It is the last time that He will look into some of their faces. They are leaving Jerusalem where they have kept the feast. They will get back to their farms and to their merchandise and if He does not strike the iron while He has it on the anvil, He may never have another stroke at it. If at this time an invitation is not pressed upon them, they will forget the teaching they have heard—they will probably never hear any more—and they will die in their sins. I think I see the Master's face beaming with holy affection and His eyes streaming with tears as He pleads as for His life with the throng which is so soon to melt away! It is now or never with Him and with them! He must once more free Himself of the blood of them all and, therefore, on that "last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, "If any man thirsts, let him come unto Me and drink."

I think it is noteworthy that when the Master had gathered up all the forces of His soul and His whole spirit was moved with intense anxiety for the good of men, *then* He especially preached the Gospel of salvation. I do not know that He had, before, so publicly declared Himself as the great Fountain and Source of salvation. He had taught this Truth of God to the woman at the well of Samaria with special plainness. And He had spoken of it to different little companies with great distinctness, but now, almost for the first time, on this last day He brings it all out before the multitude and cries, "If any man thirsts, let him come unto Me and drink." Now is the invitation given most freely! Now is the cry sounded forth most loudly! O you that are perishing, O you that are lost, O you that need salvation, here is the place where you can find it—"Come unto Me and drink!" It seems to me that the Lord Jesus was driving only at this one thing—the getting of men to come to Himself. At another time He would teach them deeper doctrine, or Truth of a wider range, for His ministry dealt with many things for edification and holiness. But now, on this last day, He seems to put other matters to the side and His one objective is to win thirsty souls to come to Him and drink.

I have deep fellowship in that spirit this morning. I remember that I shall not have another morning's discourse with you for some time and, perhaps, I may never have another. I go from you for a season and my voice will be silent among you. Therefore I said within my heart that I would preach this morning upon the one subject of coming to Christ—and

upon nothing else. If you make mistakes about a thousand things, it will be very sad that you should do so—but not near as sad as if you fell into an error upon this matter. If, perhaps, you should not know this or that, it may be greatly to your detriment, but *nothing* compared with not knowing the Lord Jesus! My Brothers and Sisters, if you really come to Jesus and relieve the thirst of your souls by drinking of that Living Water which He so freely gives, the main thing will be right, the chief thing will be secured! We will hope that all the rest will come right, by-and-by, but just now we will only look to that vital point. O you that thirst, come unto Christ and drink! And if you do so, our morning's work will be fraught with untold blessedness to you! In my absence this shall be my solace, that my last words won your souls for Jesus!

I would further call your attention to this fact, that while the Lord, on that last day, displayed an extraordinary ardor for men's souls and preached the Gospel more fully than ever, He especially drove at this point, that they should come to *Him*. He spoke more pointedly, clearly and exclusively of Himself than ever for, just in proportion as He preached the Gospel, it was of necessity that He became a witness to Himself, since there is no other Gospel than that which is wrapped up in His own proper Person and work! The more Gospel, the more Christ, and the more Christ, the more Gospel! So, when our Lord says, "If any man thirsts," there *is* water to be had. He can do no other than say, "Let him come unto Me and drink." If that word must come forth from our Lord's own lips, how abundantly it ought to come from ours! Jesus stands up to be, Himself, a center, not alone for a congregation of people who hear Him, but for a crowd of thirsty folk who are to drink of Him! Jesus is the central Sun of salvation and from Him the true Light of God radiates on all sides. All who will turn their eyes to look unto Him shall behold the Light of Life.

Beloved Hearers, I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God as God has made it known to me, yet I feel, this morning, that I would gladly let all other Truths sink for the while if I might but so preach my Lord Jesus that every unconverted person here might see Him and look to Him with the glance of faith! I desire, also, that every converted person may again look to Jesus and continue steadily to look until the glance of faith on earth shall melt into the vision of happiness in Heaven. What a morning this would be if we all hastened to Jesus and drank from Him as from the sparkling fountain of Grace! Why should we not? "Jesus stood and cried," and His most ardent passion led Him to cry concerning Himself that men should come to Him and find in Him the supply for all their spiritual need! The more we love our fellow men, the more we, too, shall tell them of Jesus and of Jesus, only!

This text I shall try to handle on this last Sabbath among you. May the Spirit of God handle it so as to make it useful to you, one and all!

I. Notice, in the text, THE ENQUIRY FOR THE THIRSTY. Jesus stands amidst that mass of people from every land—the mingled tribes, scattered far and wide—who came up to Jerusalem to keep the feast, and He cries among them, "If any man thirsts." Evidently, He is seeking out needy, restless, longing hearts.

Observe that He starts with *a very wide enquiry*—He seeks for *any* man and, consequently, for *every* man that thirsts. So does the Gospel at this hour come with a generous and wide appeal. Have you any desire after God? Have you any will to be rid of your sin? Have you any anxiety to escape from the wrath to come? Have you any weariness after Jesus and the rest which only He can give? Do you desire to be made pure? Is there a heart in you which sighs after better things? Do you long after a higher, holier and more heavenly life? Well, whoever you may be, Jesus says, “Come unto me and drink.” There gathered that day about the Temple, not only men of Judea and Galilee, but Parthians, Medes, Elamites and the dwellers in Mesopotamia. In fact, all sorts of people, even as on the day of Pentecost, came up to keep the feast and, without making any exception, whatever, in His generous invitation, our good Master stood and cried, “If any man thirsts, let him come unto Me and drink.” Beneath the arch of Heaven that same call sounds out to every thirsty soul of every clime! Wherever the sound of my voice is heard, this morning, and wherever the printed sermon will be read, a sincere invitation comes, without exception, to every soul that longs and thirsts after God, pardon, mercy, eternal life and Heaven—“If any man thirsts, let him come unto Me and drink.” Do not turn away from this honest invitation to eternal life!

Yet there wails through our text an undertone of grief by which *it is anxiously narrowed down*. Wide as the invitation is, yet that, “If,” spoken in tenderly solemn tones of apprehension reminds us that many are called, but few are chosen. “*If any man thirsts*”—as if He had said, “The mass of you do not thirst—do any of you thirst? The multitudes do not thirst—only one here and there is doing so.” Our Lord’s glance sweeps over the throng. He reads their indifference and spiritual death and, in plaintive accents, expresses His fear that none, at least very few, are thirsting! Alas, the truly thirsty are as few as flowers in winter! Self-contentment possesses the minds of many and world-contentment steals over others. They are in a desert! No drop of dew falls about them and the water bottle that they carry has long since been dry! They are mocked by a mirage and they put aside their thirst with the fond idea that when they want to, they can drink to the full!

An evil spirit has made them mad and they acknowledge not the thirst which devours them. You may tell them of sin and its danger, but they do not desire to confess it—their conscience is asleep. You talk of Hell and all its terrors, but either they do not believe you or else they are so callous that they will risk an eternity of woe for the sake of a poor transient pleasure! You speak of Christ and pardon bought with blood, but what is that to them? They go their way after the trifles of time and sense—the great realities of eternity do not trouble them. “If any man thirsts.” Alas, a spiritually thirsty soul is a choice rarity! Where shall I find him? With what joy will I salute him! He is the man who will gladly receive the tidings of Jesus and His love!

The mass of the people are bereft of spiritual feeling—they neither hunger nor thirst after righteousness—they have given themselves up to enjoy the brutish lives of oxen, or of dogs. They live as if the whole of their existence were to be spent amid the shadows of this poor, benighted world

and as if there would never dawn upon our immortal natures an *everlasting* day! Such brutish men have no expectation of a Resurrection, no fear of a Judgement to come, no hope of Heaven and no dread of Hell. Well does the weeping Savior put it, "If any man thirsts."

The invitation is, in itself, wide, and is only focused by the deep sorrow of the Preacher. If any man thirsts, he is bid to come to Jesus. If you, O man, have stolen in here this morning, discontented with the pleasures of the world, you are bid to come to Jesus for rest and satisfaction! If you are rich and increased in goods and yet are quite unable to enjoy your riches because your heart cannot be satisfied with the world, you are he to whom this invitation comes! If you are heavy with the burden of sin—if you would give your eyes to be rid of it. If you are despairing and ready to die because your struggles after better things have all been failures—you are he whom the Lord Jesus invites! With loving tenderness He puts it to all of you who need everything, but have no joy of anything, "If any man thirsts, let him come unto Me and drink." O man, if you have any sort of spiritual desire, any kind of longing after that which is good and gracious, come at once to Jesus, and Jesus will joyfully receive you!

The call is painfully clear. "If any man thirsts." The thirsty know what thirst is—it is a self-explaining pain. A man knows whether he thirsts or not. Nobody need take a minute to answer the question, "Do I thirst?" because, as to natural thirst, it is a pain or need which is readily discerned. If, my Hearer, you are really thirsty, you know you are thirsty. Are you dissatisfied with yourself? Are you grieved on account of sin? Are you anxious to be right with God? Are you pining to find your Savior? You are the man and there is no question about it! Hear His voice while He graciously says, "Come unto Me and drink."

Be it remembered that *this call is being continually repeated.* At this moment, though I speak it, my Master is with me and is using me as His mouth. Jesus Himself says it, and not I—"If any man thirsts, let him come unto Me and drink." Jesus is not standing outside the Temple at Jerusalem, for He is gone from us as to His bodily Presence, but from yonder lofty place at the right hand of God He still speaks and He cries, "If any man thirsts, let him come unto Me and drink." Jesus is still accessible. You may come to Him at this hour! A prayer will bring you to Him! A *sigh* will find and reach Him and if, beneath the arch of Heaven, in hall or cottage, in palace or prison, in the forest or on the sea, there is a man that thirsts, let him but come unto Jesus by faith and he shall have all his needs supplied. It is a blessed invitation, standing good at this hour to you, O Friend! Yes, it will hold good even to a man's dying day and this may be to you that very day! Jesus has not ceased to invite, nor will He cease to receive all that come to Him.

Do you ask me again, "What is this thirst?" Thirst is nothing actual, or substantive—it is a *lack*, a need crying out of its emptiness. It is the absence of a necessity. Sinner, you need not look for any good thing in yourself—the thirst which is sought for is the absence of all good things. Thirst is a painful need. Have you not needs? Thirst is an emptiness, a vacuum—it is the miss of that which is essential to life. Have you not such a void? Thirst is conscious need, conscious to a painful degree—have you

not this? This sense of need is your thirst. The need naturally begets a pain. When our system needs drink, a merciful Providence creates a pang so that we are driven to take notice that a requisite of life must be immediately supplied. Thirst rings the alarm and the mind and body set to work to supply the urgent demand. It were a dreadful thing if the system needed water and yet did not thirst, for we might be fatally injured before we knew that any harm was happening to us. The pain of thirst is a salutary warning that something very important is needed.

Now, Soul, if you are suffering from fear or despondency—if your heart is heavy and you have disquietude of spirit—if you have a longing, a sighing, a pining after something better and holier, then you are thirsty. If you have this thirst in any measure or degree, you are bid to come to Christ and drink. If you have not as yet a burning thirst, nor a fever, but if you have *any* sort of thirst, you may come and drink. If you do, in any measure, long for mercy and renewal, you are included in this invitation, “If any man thirsts, let him come unto Me and drink.” Do not look within yourself to find any good thing. Is thirst a good thing? No, thirst is an evil thing to be removed! And if you see in yourself only evil things to be removed, you have all that Jesus sets forth in this text as the description of those whom He permits to come to Himself. He says so much and no more—“If any man thirsts, let him come unto Me and drink.”

I wonder whether I have found out the thirsty person this morning? Are you sitting upstairs in the top gallery? Or are you among the thicker company below? Where are you? Find yourself out now! Turn your eyes inward—look not to your neighbor, but say within your own soul, “Yes, I thirst. Perhaps not as I should, but still I do desire. I am uneasy, I have an unrest, there is an absence of good in me. Oh, that my thirst were satisfied this morning!” Friend, you are my man! Before we go further, let me salute you and say, “Man, my Brother,” or, “Woman, my Sister, the Lord Jesus says unto you, ‘Come unto Me and drink.’” Thus much upon the enquiry after the thirsty ones.

II. Here is, secondly, THE ONE DIRECTION FOR THE RELIEF OF ALL SUCH THIRSTY ONES—“Let him come unto Me and drink.” There is one direction and that one direction points solely to one Source. All who would have their thirst relieved must come to one Fountain, to one Jesus. Observe, that *Christ, who gives the water which quenches spiritual thirst, directs us to come to Himself.* Do notice this. “Let him come unto Me and drink.” Do you ask, “What creed am I to believe, what doctrines am I to receive?” We will tell you of this, by-and-by, but just now He that is set before you this morning is a Person—the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. At the time when He spoke this text, He had not been crucified, nor dead, nor buried, nor raised from the dead, but the text was spoken with a foresight of all this, as you will see by reading two verses further on, where we are told that what Christ said took for granted His death and Resurrection. “The Holy Spirit was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.”

In this verse our Lord speaks as if He had been dead, had risen and had been glorified. So then, O Soul, if your thirst is to be relieved, you must come to Jesus, the Son of God, who became the Son of Man! You

must come to the One who lived, who took human sin upon Himself and died for it, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God! You must come to the One who, being dead, was taken down from the Cross and laid in the grave where He slept a little while and then arose from among the dead into newness of life! You must come to the One, who, after 40 days, ascended on high, leading captivity captive!

At this hour He sits at the right hand of God, all power being given unto Him in Heaven and in earth. In His Glory He is, this day, able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him. You must come to Him who has finished His redeeming work and lives always to make intercession for us. And if you will come to Him, He will give you the full supply of all the great needs of your nature. O, my Hearer, whatever your spiritual desire is, Jesus will grant it! Whatever, in fact, your soul requires between this place and Glory, He will give it to you. But you must come to Him for it and to Him, alone! You must come distinctly *to Him* and not to ceremonies, or sacraments, or priests, or churches, or assemblies, or creeds, or services, or doings, or feelings! You are not to eat or drink of the house, or of the servants—but the Master Himself gives you Himself to be your Bread from Heaven. Your salvation lies in that Divine Person whom, by faith, I see at this moment, clothed in the splendor of Heaven, yet still wearing the marks of His passion! He looks like a lamb that has been slain! He presents a perpetually complete Atonement and continually reconciles sinners to God. There lies your hope, and there alone! In that Person, I say, and in that Person, only, is there salvation!

All that a sinner needs is to be found in abundance in Jesus. The Lord Jesus invites all who feel their thirst, to come to Him and partake, feeling no diffidence as to His ability to meet all their cases. “If any man thirsts, let him come unto Me and drink.” Though your thirst is like that of a panting ox upon a sultry summer’s day who puts down his mouth to the brook and drinks as though he would leave it dry—you may come and feel no trembling as to the sufficiency of the Living Waters. Yes, you may come in your dozens, your scores, your hundreds, your thousands, your millions and your hundreds of millions! There shall never be a time when the Lord Jesus shall bid the thirsty stay away because the current of His Grace is exhausted! He said, “If any man thirsts, let him come unto Me and drink,” without stint or measure—there is nothing to limit the draught or question the supply! In Jesus there is such a fullness that it never will be exhausted. Sin may be exhausted, the race may be numbered, time may be finished and need may be ended, but mercy endures forever!

There is, in Christ Jesus, a varied supply. The thirst of the soul is not like the thirst of the body, which is readily quenched by any one liquid, for the thirst of the soul is for many things. Whatever many things the soul thirsts for, Jesus will supply them all! Our wonderful variety of needs is met by His wonderful variety of excellences. Here is a soul that needs peace—“this Man shall be the peace.” “I am unhinged. I am almost driven to distraction. I am sorely troubled so that I cannot sleep.” You shall have rest by coming to Jesus—“He gives His beloved sleep.” “But I am so guilty! I have sinned past all pardon. I blush to think how grievously I have tres-

passed." You can have pardon for all your sins, though they are as glaring as scarlet and though for number they are as many as the sands of the sea. In Jesus the penitent finds perfect pardon for all his offenses. Do you believe this? It is certainly so. God will cast all your transgressions into the depths of the sea if you believe in the Lord Jesus!

How happy is the man who, by faith in Jesus, knows that the Lord has fully and freely forgiven Him! "But I need purity," cries a third. "I am troubled with horrible thoughts. I have a strong passionate nature which draws me into wrong desires. I have been a drunk. I have been unchaste. I have been given to the use of foul language and these things are a source of continued defilement." Oh, my Friend, you can get rid of all this if you desire to do so, by coming to Jesus! He will give you a new heart and a right spirit! He will totally change your nature, so that this evil shall never more have dominion over you! "But where sin abounded, Grace shall much more abound." Do you hear this? All purity is in Christ for you. "But I," says one, "desire to make progress. I hope I am right and I want to be more right. I want to make advances in the Divine life so as to honor God and bless my fellow men." Come, then, to the Lord Jesus, and drink, for He gives life and gives it more abundantly!

"But I need," says a Christian, "power in prayer and power to convince and convert my fellow men." Come, then, to Jesus, for it is concerning this, also, He says, "If any man thirsts, let him come unto Me and drink." He will make you strong upon your knees and mighty in holy service if you will but surrender your will to Him. "But I need perseverance," cries another, "I can scarcely hold on my way; I am hard put to it; I faint even though I resolve to pursue." Come to Him, then, for persevering Grace. "He will keep the feet of His saints." Find your strength to stand and your ability to endure in Him alone! If any man thirsts for anything that is really desirable, let Him come to Jesus, in whom all right desires are provided for. All for sinners and all for saints will be found in Jesus our Lord, who is All in All!

Still remember that *it is to Jesus, only, that you must come*—and you must bring nothing of your own with you. All you are bid to do lies in these two things—*come* and *drink*. Christ is accessible and you may *come* to Him. He does not stand with a gulf between Him and you, mockingly crying, "Come." No, He comes where *you are* today, in all your misery and sin, and He sweetly whispers, "Come." Arise, then, for He calls you! He shortens the way for you, no, He is *Himself* the Way. He comes to you and He says, "Come to me," not because there is now a vast distance to traverse, but because there is only a step and He would have you take it at once. Do but trust Him and you have come to Him! This coming is not so much an *exercise* of power, as the *resignation* of power. Submit yourself to Jesus. Yield to Him. Be willing that He should be everything to you and you have truly come to Him!

Then you are told to *drink*. That is not a difficult action. Any fool can drink! In fact, many are great fools because they drink too much of poisonous liquors. Drinking is peculiarly the commonplace act of sinners. "Drink!" Surely you can do that! You have only to be as a sponge that sucks up all that comes near it. To drink is the act of a baby, a sick man,

a wounded deer, or even a little chick. Put your mouth down and suck up that which flows to you in the river of Christ's Love. See how a newborn babe drinks from its mother's breast—be you as that weak babe and take in Christ according to your capacity. He bids you receive Him—why hesitate? You are not to *bring anything* to Jesus, but to *take everything* from Him, as the thirsty ground opens its mouth and drinks in the showers, many as they may be. Open wide your soul and drink in Christ, as the great northern whirlpool sucks in the sea! Pull up the sluices and let streams of Mercy flow through you in glorious torrents! It is all He bids you do. It is, in fact, to do nothing but to *receive* your God. If any man thirsts, let Him receive Christ! This, then, is the one direction for the relief of the burning thirst of all sin-sick souls.

III. Consider, in the third place, THE PERMISSION HERE GIVEN FOR THEIR PARTICIPATION. I have told you where the water is, but the question comes, "May I drink of it?" If you are thirsty, drink. No limit is placed in our text. "Whoever will, let him take the Water of Life freely." *There is no limit as to what you have formerly done.* "Oh, but I have been so guilty, so hardened! I have uttered bitter words. I have even spoken against God and His Christ. I have denied the Deity of our Lord! I have gone aside into all manner of crooked ways!" Whatever you have done, if you have, now, *any* longing after God and your Savior, come freely, just as you are, for He bids you come and drink. "But I dare not say what I have done, Sir." You need not say it to *me*—it were better you did not. Confess it to God, alone, and though you are black as seven midnights and foul as seven Hells, you may come to Jesus, just as you are, and receive from Him complete absolution. "If any man thirsts, let him come unto Me and drink."

Neither is there any limit put as to where you have gone before. I remember one who wanted to purchase a certain article and he called upon one of the chief merchants and asked his price. When this was given him, he went his way to half-a-dozen other traders and tried to buy at a cheaper rate. He did not succeed, but, on the contrary, he found that the first had quoted the lowest price. When he walked a second time into that shop, his advances were not welcomed. "No," said the merchant, "I shall not serve you—you have been all round the town and if you could have got it a farthing cheaper, you would not have been here. I don't care for such customers." It is not thus with our Lord Jesus! He makes and keeps a free trade in Grace. If you have gone to Moses, if you have gone to Rome, if you have gone to a priest or father confessor—yes, if you have gone to the devil—yet still you may come to Christ! Do not fear a refusal! He still says, "If any man thirsts" though he has been to all the wells on earth and found them dry, still, this Well is full and he is permitted to drink at it. "Let him come unto Me and drink."

There is no limit because of any kind of need. "Oh," says one, "I am deficient in tenderness. I am deficient in patience!" Whatever you are deficient in, so much the greater is your thirst, and the Lord meets that thirst in all respects. If any man lacks *anything*, the Lord will supply that lack. If any man is conscious that he has a great and grievous lack of that which is most essential, as when one has need of water which is essential to life, let him come to Christ and drink! "Surely," says one, "I cannot be in-

tended, for I am in peculiar circumstances. I am very old." Come and drink, if you have any thirst though you are as old as Methuselah! "But I am so poor." The poorer you are, the more welcome you are! Come you, in your smock frock, and drink! "But I cannot read." Never mind! The text does not say, "Read," but "Drink." At the polling booths many are met who cannot read, but none who cannot drink! I have known some that could not read a letter who could drink a churnful—drinking is an ability which is very widely distributed! The power to *receive* is scarcely a power and yet it is the only power needed for salvation! Come along and take what Christ freely gives you. "Alas, I am so different from others!" Does the text say that any are shut out because they are different from others? No! Jesus stood and cried, "If any man thirsts, let him come unto Me and drink"

Sorrowfully I notice that some are ingeniously trying to lock the door against themselves with the very key that was meant to open it. "Alas," one cries, "I am *afraid I do not thirst!*" Tell me, then, what is the matter with you? "Sir, I have not such a sense of need as I ought to have." That is to say, you are sensible that you are more needy than you think you are! If you are conscious that you are not fully aware of all your needs, then I urge you to come to Jesus, just as you are, for if ever there was a thirsty soul, you are one! You even need a sense of need—and this proves that you are horribly in need! You are the most needy among the needy and should be among the first to come!

"I am afraid I do not thirst." Tell me, would you come if you *did* thirst? "That I would." Then come at once and none will cast you out because when you come, it will be clear that you must have thirsted, for no one ever comes to Jesus who does not thirst. I am reasoning with you in a roundabout way, as you do with me. "But I want to thirst more." Then come and drink and you shall thirst more—that is to say, you shall know more of your need of Christ than you do now, for they that find Christ, value Christ more than those who, as yet, have never found Him! Come if you thirst and come if you think you do not thirst, but wish you did thirst, for that *wish* to thirst is the very thirst you wish for! The sense that you have no proper sense of need is the very best sense that can be! Your need of a power to feel your need is your greatest need! Consciousness of your own unconsciousness is the truest consciousness! Your groaning because you cannot groan is the deepest groaning that ever is groaned!

Therefore, come along with you! Keep not back through shame or fear, for Jesus will give you a hearty welcome and supply everything you can possibly require. The more unfit you feel yourself to be, the more are you invited to come—your very unfitness is your fitness for coming to Jesus! It is not what you have that God asks for, but He invites you to bring before Him what *you have not*, that He may meet your pressing needs and give you all things to enjoy. He takes advantage of your poverty in a blessed manner. You know how *men* do with one another—if they find a man utterly reduced, they grind him down still more. Now, the Lord takes advantage of your poverty to *lift you up!* The less there is in you that is good, the more you need a Savior and the more readily does that Savior present Himself to you! If you are starved to the last extremity and if there is not a drop of oil in the cruse, nor a handful of meal in the barrel, only look to

Christ and He will spread your table with food convenient for you! Only confess your emptiness and all His fullness is at your disposal.

There is one thing I should like you to think of, and that is, when Christ says, "Come unto Me and drink," *nobody else can say you cannot*, for surely, the Lord Jesus is master of Himself and His guarantees run in His own Kingdom! If He says "come unto Me," who is to keep you away? If you were master of a large estate and said to a poor man, "Walk round it, go where you please"—and if your bailiff should meet this person and warn him off as a trespasser, would you not expect the poor man to say, "Your master gave me permission and I will not be driven off by you"? So, if the devil, or conscience, or anything else, says to you, "You must not hope in Divine Mercy, nor in any other way lay hold of Christ," you may boldly reply, "Your Master said I might! Jesus, Himself, said, 'If any man thirsts, let Him come unto Me and drink!' I thirsted, I came and I received—and I will never give up what I have received, for I have Christ's permission to have it, and keep it, I will."

Oh, how I wish these words of encouragement would meet the cases of many before me! I thought I would have a full house this morning and if it had been fine weather we would have been densely crowded. But when I saw it raining so very heavily I fancied we would have comparatively few and, perhaps, it would be better to change the topic. But I said, "Never mind, I will preach the same sermon to the few as to the many," because I remembered the morning when I found the Savior, myself. It was as wet and miserable a morning as the present one and, moreover, the ground was covered with a deep snow. Sleet was falling fast and the wind was blowing bitterly. I had intended to go to another place of worship half a mile further on, but I could not reach it through stress of weather, otherwise I would not have turned into the little Primitive Chapel. I do not suppose there were more than 20 people present that morning, but it did not matter. That poor man's morning's work was satisfactory, for the Lord blessed a youth who has since then preached to many thousands.

Among a few the best success may yet be gained. Perhaps, this morning, I am to catch some souls who will be useful to multitudes of others. Yonder young man who has come here, he hardly knows why, is to be decided for Jesus! He would not have been here if it had not been so wet. He is the very man the Lord has need of and when he is converted, he shall be used for the Lord's Glory! At any rate, from this pulpit rings out the blessed invitation with trumpet voice, "If any man thirsts, let him come unto Me and drink."

IV. We close with THE ENTREATY FOR THEIR COMING. Jesus pleads with them to come. "Jesus stood and cried." I cannot picture the enthusiasm of His soul, the passion of His heart as He spoke that morning. "If any man thirsts, let him come unto Me and drink." The tones of that pleading voice were both striking and wooing, forcible and tender. When, on that last occasion, He addressed the people, He poured out His whole soul pleading with them that they would come to Him, then and there! Dear Hearts, when I think of Christ entreating us to come, I am astonished that we should need such pleading and that He should give it! Surely the shoe should be on the other foot! Ought we not to entreat Him

to *let us come*? Should we not fall on our knees and plead for *permission* to receive the Savior? Instead of that, we are cold and callous and it is He that is eager for us to come. He loves us better than we love ourselves! When a man has charity to give away, does he entreat people to come and accept it? No, but they come and knock at his door and beg him to give it to them.

How strange is this, that you should be unwilling and Christ anxious! That you should be backward and Christ forward! That Jesus should cry, "Come," and you should sit still and decline His calls! Should you not come when Jesus, Himself, invites and even entreats? Is it not baseness? Is it not gross hardness of heart if we do not receive Him who speaks from Heaven and cries, "If any man thirsts, let him come unto Me and drink"? You have not come before—that was wrong—but the times of your ignorance God winked at and bids you come *now*. Oh, that His sweet Spirit would accompany my words, so that you might feel your hearts melting towards the Savior and might say, "Yes, we will come, we will trust Jesus, we will receive His Grace!"

O my Brothers and Sisters, if this is your hearty consent to Infinite Love, then your sorrow is ended, your danger is over, your joy is begun! The Lord grant it, for His dear Son's sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 7.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—906, 492, 500.**

NOTE FROM MR. SPURGEON:

LEAVING home in great weakness, I beg the loving sympathy of my friends towards my orphan family of 500 children. Generous donations at this season would be greatly valued by me. Direct them to C. H. SPURGEON, Westwood, Beulah Hill, Upper Norwood.

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THE INDWELLING AND OUTFLOWING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT NO. 1662

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 28, 1882,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“He that believes on Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spoke He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive: for the Holy Spirit was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified).”
John 7:38, 39.*

*“Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you.”
John 16:7.*

IT is essential, dear Friends, that we should worship the living and true God. It will be ill for us if it can be said, “You worship you know not what.” “You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve.” The heathens err from this command by multiplying gods and making this and that image to be the object of their adoration. Their excess runs to gross superstition and idolatry. I fear that sometimes we who, “profess and call ourselves Christians,” err in exactly the *opposite* direction. Instead of worshipping more than God, I fear we worship less than God. This appears when we forget to pay due adoration to the Holy Spirit of God. The true God is *triune*—Father Son, and Holy Spirit—and though there is but one God, yet that one God has manifested Himself to us in the *trinity* of His sacred Persons.

If, then, I worship the Father and the Son, but forget or neglect to adore the Holy Spirit, I worship less than God. While the poor heathen, in his ignorance, goes far beyond and transgresses, I must take care lest I fall short and fail, also. What a grievous thing it will be if we do not pay that loving homage and reverence to the Holy Spirit which is so justly His due. May it not be the fact that we enjoy less of His power and see less of His working in the world because the Church of God has not been sufficiently mindful of Him? It is a blessed thing to preach the work of Jesus Christ, but it is an evil thing to omit the work of the Holy Spirit—for the work of the Lord Jesus, itself, is no blessing to that man who does not know the work of the Holy Spirit!

There is the ransom price, but it is only through the Spirit that we *know* the redemption! There is the precious blood, but it is as though the fountain had never been filled unless the Spirit of God leads us with repenting faith to wash therein! The bandage is soft and the ointment is effectual, but the wound will never be healed till the Holy Spirit shall apply that which the great Physician has provided. Let us not, therefore, be found neglectful of the work of the Divine Spirit, lest we incur guilt and in-

flict upon ourselves serious damage. You that are Believers have the most forcible reasons to hold the Holy Spirit in the highest esteem, for what are you now without Him? What were you and what would you still have been if it had not been for His gracious work upon you?

He quickened you, otherwise you had not been in the living family of God today. He gave you understanding that you might know the Truth of God, otherwise would you have been as ignorant as the carnal world is at this hour! It was He that awakened your conscience, convincing you of sin! It was He that gave you abhorrence of sin and led you to repent—it was He that taught you to *believe* and made you see that glorious Person who is to be believed, even Jesus, the Son of God! The Spirit has worked in you your faith, love, hope and every other Grace of God! There is not a jewel upon the neck of your soul which He did not place there—

***“For every virtue we possess,
And every victory won,
And every thought of holiness,
Are His and His alone.”***

What have we learned, if we have learned aright, except by the teaching of the Holy Spirit? What can we say either in prayer to God or in teaching to men that shall be acceptable unless we receive the unction of the Holy One of Israel? Brothers and Sisters, who is it that has comforted us in our distresses; directed us in our perplexities; strengthened us in our weaknesses and helped our infirmities in ten thousand ways? Is it not the Comforter whom the Father has sent in Jesus’ name? Can I speak too highly of the riches of His Grace toward us? Can I too much extol the love of the Spirit? I know I cannot and you that know what He has worked in you delight to hear Him highly spoken of and His work and offices set forth! We are bound by a thousand ties to seek His honor who has worked in us our salvation! Let us never grieve Him by our ingratitude, but let us endeavor to extol Him.

For my part, it shall be the labor of this morning to impress upon you the necessity for His work and the superlative value of it. Beloved Brothers and Sisters, notwithstanding all that the Spirit of God has already done in us, it is very possible that we have missed a large part of the blessing which He is willing to give, for He is able to “do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.” We have already come to Jesus and we have drunk of the life-giving stream—our thirst is quenched and we are made to live in Him. Is this all? Now that we are living in Him and rejoicing to do so, have we come to the end of the matter?

Assuredly not! We have reached as far as that first exhortation of the Master, “If any man thirsts, let him come unto Me and drink.” But do you think that the generality of the Church of God have ever advanced to the next—“He that believes on Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water”? I think I am not going beyond the grievous truth if I say that only here and there will you find men and women who have believed up to that point. Their thirst is quenched, as I have said, and they live—and because Jesus lives they shall live also—but health and vigor they have not! They have life, but they have not life more abundantly. They have little life with which to act upon others—they have

no energy welling up and overflowing to go streaming out of them like rivers!

They have not thought it possible, perhaps, or thinking it possible, they have not imagined it possible to themselves. Or believing it possible to themselves they have not aspired to it, but they have stopped short of the fullest blessing. Their wading in to the sacred river has contented them and they know nothing of “waters to swim in.” Like the Israelites of old, they are slow to possess all the land of promise, but rather sit down when the war has hardly begun! Brothers and Sisters, let us go in to get of God all that God will give us! Let us set our heart upon this, that we mean to have, by God’s help, all that the infinite goodness of God is ready to bestow! Let us not be satisfied with the sip that saves, but let us go on to the Baptism which buries the flesh and raises us in the likeness of the risen Lord—even that Baptism into the Holy Spirit and into fire which makes us spiritual and sets us all on flame with zeal for the Glory of God and eagerness for usefulness by which that Glory may be increased among the sons of men!

Thus I introduce you to my texts and by their guidance we will enter upon the further consideration of the operations of the Holy Spirit, especially of those to which we would aspire.

I. We will commence with the remark that THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT IS INTIMATELY CONNECTED WITH THE WORK OF CHRIST. It is a great pity when persons preach the Holy Spirit’s work so as to obscure the work of Christ. I have known some do that, for they have held up before the sinner’s eyes the inward experience of Believers, instead of lifting up, first and foremost, the crucified Savior to whom we must look and live! The Gospel is not, “Behold the Spirit of God,” but, “Behold the Lamb of God.” It is an equal pity when Christ is so preached that the Holy Spirit is ignored—as if faith in Jesus prevented the necessity of the new birth—and imputed righteousness rendered imparted righteousness needless.

Have I not often reminded you that in the third chapter of John, where Jesus taught Nicodemus the doctrine, “Except a man is born again of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of Heaven,” we also read those blessed words, “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life”? The necessity for regeneration by the Spirit is put very clearly, there, and so is the free promise that those who trust in Jesus shall be saved. This is what we ought to do—we must take care to let *both* these Truths of God stand out most distinctly with equal prominence!

They are intertwined with each other and are necessary each to each—what God has joined together let no man put asunder. They are so joined together that, first of all, the Holy Spirit was not given until Jesus had been glorified. Carefully note our first text—it is a very striking one—“This spoke He of the Spirit which they that believe on Him should receive: for the Holy Spirit was not yet.” The word, “given,” is not in the original—it is inserted by the translators to help explain the sense and they were, per-

haps, wise in making such an addition, but the words are more forcible by themselves.

How strong the statement, "For the Holy Spirit was not yet." Of course, we, none of us, dream that the Holy Spirit was not yet *existing*, for He is eternal and self-existent, being most truly God. But He was not yet in fellowship with man to the full extent in which He now is since Jesus Christ is glorified. The near and dear communion of God with man which is expressed by the indwelling of the Spirit could not take place till the redeeming work was done and the Redeemer was exalted! As far as men and the fullness of the blessing were concerned, indicated by the outflowing rivers of living water, the Spirit of God was not yet.

"Oh," you say," but was not the Spirit of God in the Church in the wilderness and with the saints of God in all former ages?" I answer, Certainly, but not in the manner in which the Spirit of God now resides in the Church of Jesus Christ. You read of the Prophets and of one and another gracious man, that the Spirit of God came upon them, seized them, moved them, spoke by them—but He did not *dwell in them*. His operations upon men were a coming and a going—they were carried away by the Spirit of God and came under His power—but the Spirit of God did not rest upon them or abide in them.

Occasionally the sacred endowment of the Spirit of God came upon them, but they knew not "the communion of the Holy Spirit." As a French pastor very sweetly puts it, "He appeared unto men. He did not incarnate Himself in man. His action was intermittent—He went and came like the dove which Noah sent forth from the ark and which went to and fro, finding no rest—while in the new dispensation He dwells, He abides in the heart, as the dove, His emblem, which John the Baptist saw descending and alighting upon the head of Jesus. Affianced of the soul, the Spirit went off to see His betrothed, but was not yet one with her. The marriage was not consummated until Pentecost, *after* the glorification of Jesus Christ."

You know how our Lord puts it, "He dwells with you and shall be in you." That indwelling is another thing from being with us. The Holy Spirit was with the Apostles in the days when Jesus was with them, but He was not in them in the sense in which He filled them at and after the Day of Pentecost. The operations of the Spirit of God before our Lord's Ascension were not according to the full measure of the Gospel. But now the Spirit of God has been poured upon us from on high! Now He has descended and now He abides in the midst of the Church. And now we enter into Him and are baptized into the Holy Spirit, while He enters into us and makes our bodies to be His temples. Jesus said, "I will send you another Comforter which shall abide with you forever"—not coming and going—but remaining in the midst of the Church!

This shows how intimately the gift of the Holy Spirit is connected with our Lord Jesus Christ, inasmuch as in the fullest sense of His indwelling, the Holy Spirit could not be with us until Christ had been glorified. It has been well observed that our Lord sent out 70 evangelists to preach the Gospel, even as He had before sent out the 12—and no doubt they preached with great zeal and produced much stir—but the Holy Spirit

never took the trouble to preserve one of their sermons, or even the *notes* of one! I have not the slightest doubt that they were very crude and incomplete, showing more of human zeal than of Divine unction and, therefore, they are forgotten! But no sooner had the Holy Spirit fallen, than Peter's first sermon is *recorded*—and from then on we have frequent notes of the utterances of Apostles, deacons and evangelists! There was an abiding fullness and an overflowing of blessing out of the souls of the saints, after the Lord was glorified, which was not existing among men before that time!

Observe, too, that the Holy Spirit was given after the ascent of our Divine Lord into His Glory, partly to make that ascent the more renowned. When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive and gave gifts to men. These gifts were men, in whom the Holy Spirit dwelt, who preached the Gospel unto the nations. The shedding of the Holy Spirit upon the assembled disciples on that memorable day was the glorification of the risen Christ upon the earth! I know not in what way the Father could have made the Glory of Heaven so effectually to flow from the heights of the New Jerusalem and to come streaming down among the sons of men as by giving that chief of all Gifts, the gift of the Holy Spirit when the Lord had risen and gone into His Glory!

With emphasis, may I say of the Spirit at Pentecost that He glorified Christ by descending at such a time. What grander celebration could there have been? Heaven rang with Hosannas and earth echoed the joy! The descending Spirit is the noblest testimony among men to the Glory of the ascended Redeemer! Was not the Spirit of God also sent at that time as an evidence of our Divine Master's acceptance? Did not the Father thus say to the Church, "My Son has finished the work and has fully entered into His Glory. Therefore I give you the Holy Spirit"? If you would know what a harvest is to come of the sowing of the bloody sweat and of the death wounds, see the first fruits! Behold how the Holy Spirit is given, Himself, to be the first fruits, the earnest of the Glory which shall yet be revealed in us! I need no better attestation from God of the finished work of Jesus than this blazing, flaming seal of tongues of fire upon the heads of the disciples! He must have done His work, or such a gift as this would not have come from it.

Moreover, if you desire to see how the work of the Spirit comes to us in connection with the work of Christ, recollect that it is the Spirit's work to bear witness of Jesus Christ. He does not take of a thousand different matters and show them to us, but He shall take, "of Mine," says Christ, "and He shall show them unto you." The Spirit of God is engaged in a service in which the Lord Jesus Christ is the beginning and the end. He comes to men that they may come to Jesus. Hence He comes to convince us of sin that He may reveal the great Sacrifice of sin—He comes to convince us of righteousness that we may see the Righteousness of Christ—and of judgment that we may be prepared to meet Him when He shall come to judge the quick and dead.

Do not think that the Spirit of God has come or ever will come among us to teach us a new Gospel, or something other than is written in the Scriptures. Men come to me with their stories and fancies and tell me that

they were revealed to them by the Holy Spirit. I abhor their blasphemous impertinence and refuse to listen to them for a minute! They tell me this and that absurdity—and then father it upon the Spirit of Wisdom! It is enough to try our patience to hear their foolish ravings, but to find the Holy Spirit charged with them is more than we can bear! We have tests and judgments by which to know whether they who claim to speak by the Holy Spirit do so or not—for the testimony of the Spirit is always most honorable to our Lord Jesus Christ—and does not concern itself with the trifles of time and the follies of the flesh.

It is by the Gospel of Jesus Christ that the Spirit of God works in the hearts of men. “Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God”—the Holy Spirit uses the hearing of the Word of God for the conviction, conversion, consolation and sanctification of men. His usual and ordinary method of operation is to fasten upon the mind the things of God and to put life and force into the consideration of them. He revives in men’s memories things that have long been forgotten and He frequently makes these the means of affecting the heart and conscience. The men can hardly remember hearing these Truths of God, but still, they were heard by them at some time or other! Saving Truths are such matters as are contained in their substance in the Word of God and lie within the range of the teaching, or the Person, or work, or offices of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is the Spirit’s *one* business here below to reveal Christ to us and in us—and to that work He steadily adheres.

Moreover, the Holy Spirit’s work is to conform us to the likeness of Jesus Christ. He is not working us to this or that human ideal, but He is working us into the likeness of Christ that He may be the First-Born among many brethren. Jesus Christ is that standard and model to which the Spirit of God, by His sanctifying processes, is bringing us till Christ is formed in us the hope of Glory. It is for the Glory of Jesus that the Spirit of God always works. He works not for the Glory of a Church or of a community—He works not for the honor of a man or for the distinction of a sect—His one great objective is to glorify Christ! “He shall glorify Me,” is our Savior’s declaration, and when He takes of the things of Christ and shows them to us, we are led more and more to reverence and love and to adore our blessed Lord Jesus Christ.

I will not detain you longer with this. You will see how the works of Jesus and of the Spirit are joined together indissolubly, so that we may neither set the work of Jesus before the work of the Spirit nor the work of the Spirit before the work of Jesus. But we are glad to joy in both and to make much of them. As we delight in the Father’s love and the Grace of our Lord Jesus, so do we equally rejoice in the communion of the Holy Spirit and, therefore, these Three agree in One.

II. We will now advance another step and here we shall need our second text. THE OPERATIONS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT ARE OF INCOMPARABLE VALUE. They are of such incomparable value that the very best things we can think of are not thought to be so precious as these are. Our Lord Himself says, “It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you.” Beloved Friends, the Presence of Jesus Christ was of inestimable value to His disciples and yet it

was not such an advantage to His servants as the indwelling of the Holy Spirit! Is not this a wonderful statement? Well might our Lord preface it by saying, "Now I tell you the truth," as if He felt that they would find it a hard saying, for a hard saying it is!

Consider for a moment what Christ was to His disciples while He was here—and then see what must be the value of the Spirit's operations when it is expedient that they should lose all that blessing in order to receive the Spirit of God! Our Lord Jesus Christ was to them their Teacher. They had learned everything from His lips. He was their Leader—they had never to ask what to do—they had only to follow in His footsteps. He was their Defender—whenever the Pharisees or Sadducees assailed them, He was like a brazen wall to them! He was their Comforter—in all times of grief they resorted to Him and His dear sympathetic heart poured out floods of comfort at once. What if I were to say that the Lord Jesus Christ was *everything* to them, their All in All? What a father is to his children, yes, what a mother is to her suckling, that was Jesus Christ to His disciples! And yet the Spirit of God's abiding in the Church is better, even, than all this!

Now take another thought. What would you think if Jesus Christ were to come among us now, as in the days of His flesh? I mean not as He *will* come, but as He appeared at His first advent. What joy it would give you! Oh, the delights, the heavenly joys, to hear that Jesus Christ of Nazareth was on earth, again, a Man among men! Should we not clap our hands for joy? Our one question would be, "Master, where do You dwell?" for we should all long to live just where He lived. We could then sympathize with the Negroes when they flocked into Washington in large numbers to take up their residence there. Why, do you think, did they come to live in that city? Because Massa Abraham Lincoln, who had set them free, lived there! And they thought it would be glorious to live as near as possible to their great friend!

If Jesus lived anywhere, it would not matter where! If it were in the desert or on the bleakest of mountains, there would be a rush to the place! How would the spot be crowded! What rents they would pay for the worst of tenements if Jesus was but in the neighborhood! But don't you see the difficulty? We could not *all* get near Him in any literal or corporeal fashion. Now that the Church is multiplied into millions of Believers, some of the Lord's followers would never be able to see Him—and the most could only hope to speak with Him now and then! In the days of His flesh the 12 might see Him every day and so might the little company of disciples—but the case is altered, now that multitudes are trusting in His name.

If our Lord were at this time living in the United States, we should be much grieved to have an ocean between us and our Leader—all the companies that could be formed would not be able to run enough boats to carry us over. If the Master personally came here to this little island, it would not hold all the vast company of the faithful who would flock to it. It is much better to have the Holy Spirit, because He is dwelling with us and *in* us! The difficulties of the bodily Presence are too great and so, though we would be thankful, like the Apostles, if we had known Christ after the flesh, yet we do not marvel that they expressed little sorrow when they said that after the flesh they knew Him no more. The Comforter had

filled the void caused by His absence and made them rejoice because the Lord had gone unto His Father!

Are we not apt to think that if our Lord Jesus were here it would give unspeakable strength to the Church? Would not the enemy be convinced if they saw Him? No, they would not! If they heard not Moses and the Prophets, neither would they be converted though one rose from the dead! Jesus rose, but they did not, therefore, believe. If our Lord had lingered here all this while, His Presence would not have converted unbelievers, for nothing can do that but the power of the Holy Spirit! “But,” you say, “surely it would thrill the Church with enthusiasm. Fancy the Lord Himself standing on this platform this morning in the same garb as when He was upon earth. Oh, what rapturous worship! What burning zeal! What enthusiasm! We should go home in such a state of excitement as we never were in before!”

Yes, it is even so, but then the Lord is not going to carry on His Kingdom by the force of mere mental excitement—not even by such enthusiasm as would follow the sight of His Person. The work of the Holy Spirit is a truer work, a deeper work, a surer work and will more effectually achieve the purposes of God than even would the enthusiasm to which we should be stirred by the bodily Presence of our well-beloved Savior. The work is to be *spiritual* and, therefore, the *visible* Presence has departed. It is better that it should be so. We must walk by faith and by faith alone! How could we do this if we could see the Lord with these mortal eyes? This is the dispensation of the unseen Spirit, in which we render Glory to God by trusting in His Word and relying upon the unseen energy.

Now, faith works and faith triumphs though the world sees not the foundation upon which faith is built, for the Spirit who works in us cannot be discerned by carnal minds. The world sees Him not, neither knows Him. Thus, you see that the operations of the Holy Spirit must be inestimably precious. There is no calculating their value, since it is expedient that we lose the bodily Presence of Christ rather than remain without the indwelling of the Spirit of God.

III. Now go back to my first text, again, and follow me in the third head. Those operations of the Spirit of God, of which I am afraid some Christians are almost ignorant, are of wondrous power. The text says, “He that believes on Me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” THESE OPERATIONS ARE OF MARVELOUS POWER. Brothers and Sisters, do you understand my text? Do rivers of living water flow out of you?

Notice, first, that this is to be an inward work—the rivers of living water are to flow out of the midst of the man. The words, are, according to our version, “Out of his belly”—that is, from his heart and soul. The rivers do not flow out of his mouth—the promised power is not *oratory*. We have had plenty of words, floods of words—but this is *heart* work. The source of the rivers is found in the *inner* life. It is an inward work at its fountain-head. It is not a work of talent and ability, show, glitter and glare—it is altogether an *inward* work. The life-flood is to come out of the man’s inmost self—out of the heart and essential being of the man. Homage is shown too generally to outward form and external observance, though these soon lose their interest and power. But when the Spirit of God rests within a

man, it exercises a home rule within him and he gives great attention to what an old divine was known to call, "the home department." Alas, many neglect the realm within which is the chief province under our care. O my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, if you would be useful, begin with yourself! It is out of your very soul that a blessing must come. It cannot come out of you if it is not *in* you! And it cannot be in you unless God the Holy Spirit places it there.

Next, it is life-giving work. Out of the heart of the man, out of the center of his life, are to flow rivers of living water. That is to say, he is instrumentally to communicate to others the Divine life. When he speaks; when he prays; when he acts, he shall so speak and pray and act that there shall be going out of him an emanation which is full of the life of Grace and godliness. He shall be a light by which others shall see! His life shall be the means of kindling life in other men's bosoms. "Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." Note the plenitude of it. The figure would have been a surprising one if it had said, "Out of him shall flow a river of living water." But it is not so—it says *rivers*.

Have you ever stood by the side of a very abundant spring? We have some such not far from London. You see the water bubbling up from many little mouths. Observe the sand dancing as the water forces its way from the bottom and there, just across the road, a mill is turned by the stream which has just been created by the spring! And when the water-wheel is turned, you see a veritable river flowing forward to supply Father Thames. Yet this is only one river! What would you think if you saw a spring yielding such supplies that a river flowed from it to the north and a river to the south, a river to the east and a river to the west? This is the figure before us—rivers of living water flowing out of the living man in all directions!

"Ah," you say, "I have not reached to *that*." A point is gained when you know, confess and deplore your failure. If you say, "I have all things and abound," I am afraid you will never reach the fullness of the blessing. But if you know something of your failure, the Lord will lead you further. It may be that the Spirit of Life which comes forth for you is but a trickling brooklet, or even a few tiny drops. Then be sure to confess it and you will be on the way to a fuller blessing! What a Word of God is this! Rivers of living water!! Oh that all professing Christians were such fountains! See how spontaneous it is—"Out of his belly shall flow." No *pumping* is required! Nothing is said about machinery and hydraulics! The man does not need exciting and stirring up, but, just as he is, influence of the best kind quietly flows out of him!

Did you ever hear a great hubbub in the morning, a great outcry, a sounding of trumpets and drums? And did you ever ask, "What is it?" Did a voice reply, "The sun is about to rise and he is making this noise that all may be aware of it"? No, he shines, but he has nothing to say about it! Even so, the genuine Christian just goes about flooding the world with blessings and, so far from claiming attention for himself, it may be that he is unconscious of what he is effecting! God so blesses him that his leaf does not wither and whatever he does is prospering, for he is like a tree planted by the rivers of water that bring forth its fruit in its season—his

verdure and fruit are the natural outcome of his vigorous life. Oh, the blessed spontaneity of the work of Grace when a man gets into the fullness of it, for then he seems to eat and drink and sleep eternal life! And he spreads a savor of salvation all round! And this is to be perpetual—not like intermittent springs which burst forth and flow in torrents and then cease—but it is to be an everyday gushing out!

In summer and winter, by day and by night, wherever the man is, he shall be a blessing. As he breathes, he shall breathe benedictions! As he thinks, his mind shall be devising generous things. And when he acts, his acts shall be as though the hand of God were working by the hand of man! I hope I hear many sighs rising up in the place! I hope I hear friends saying, “Oh that I could get to that.” I want you to attain the fullness of the favor! I pray that we may all get it because Jesus Christ is glorified! Therefore the Holy Spirit is given in this fashion, given more largely to those in the kingdom of Heaven than to all those holy men before the Lord’s ascent to His Glory.

God gives no stinted blessing to celebrate the triumph of His Son! God gives not the Spirit by measure unto Him. On such an occasion Heaven’s grandest liberality was displayed. Christ is glorified in Heaven above and God would have Him glorified in the Church below by vouchsafing a Baptism of the Holy Spirit to each of us. So I close by this, which I hope will be a very comforting and inspiring reflection.

IV. THESE OPERATIONS OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD ARE EASILY TO BE OBTAINED BY THE LORD’S CHILDREN. Did you say you had not received them? They are to be had! They are to be had at once! First, they are to be had by believing in Jesus. “This spoke He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive.” Do you not see that it is *faith* which gives us the first drink and causes us to live? And this second, more abundant blessing of being, ourselves, made fountains from which rivers flow, comes in the same way! Believe in Christ, for the blessing is to be obtained not by the works of the Law, nor by so much fasting, striving, or effort—but by *belief* in the Lord Jesus!

With Him is the residue of the Spirit. He is prepared to give this to you, yes, to every one of you who believe on His name. He will not, of course, make all of you preachers—for who, then, would be hearers? If all were preachers, the other works of the Church would be neglected. But He will give you this favor—that out of you there shall stream a Divine influence all round you to bless your children, to bless your servants, to bless the workmen in the house where you are employed and to bless the street you live! In proportion as God gives you opportunity, these rivers of living water will flow in this channel and in that—and they will be pouring forth from you at all times—if you believe in Jesus for the full blessing and can, by faith, receive it.

But there is another thing to be done as well, and that is to pray. And here I want to remind you of those blessed Words of the Master, “Everyone that asks receives; and he that seeks finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask for a fish, will he, for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you,

then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" You see, there is a distinct promise to the children of God that their heavenly Father will give them the Holy Spirit if they ask for His power—and that promise is made to be exceedingly strong by the instances joined to it. If there is a promise that God can break (which there is not), this is not the promise, for God has put it in the most forcible and binding way.

I know not how to show you its wonderful force! Did you ever hear of a man who, when his child asked for bread, gave him a stone? Go to the worst part of London and will you find a man of that kind? You shall, if you like, get among pirates and murderers, and when a little child cries, "Father, give me a bit of bread and meat," does the most wicked father fill his own little one's mouth with stones? Yet the Lord seems to say that this is what He would be doing if He were to deny us the Holy Spirit when we ask Him for His necessary working—He would be like one that gave his children stones instead of bread! Do you think the Lord will ever bring Himself down to that? He says, "How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?"

He makes it a stronger case than that of an ordinary parent! The Lord *must* give us the Spirit when we ask Him, for He has, herein, bound Himself by no ordinary pledge. He has used a simile which would bring dishonor on His name and that of the very grossest kind, if He did not give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him! Oh, then, let us ask Him at once with all our hearts! Am I not so happy as to have in this audience some who will immediately ask? I pray that some who have never received the Holy Spirit at all may now be led, while I am speaking, to pray, "Blessed Spirit, visit me! Lead me to Jesus." But especially those of you that are the children of God—to you is this promise especially made! Ask God to make you all that the Spirit of God can make you—not only a satisfied Believer who has drunk for himself—but a useful Believer who overflows the neighborhood with blessing!

I see here a number of friends from the country who have come to spend their holiday in London. What a blessing it would be if they went back to their respective Churches overflowing! There are numbers of Churches that need flooding! They are dry as a barn floor and little dew falls on them. Oh that they might be flooded! What a wonderful thing a flood is! Go down to the river; look over the bridge and see the barges and other crafts lying in the mud. All the king's horses and all the king's men cannot tug them out to sea! There they lie, dead and motionless as the mud, itself! What shall we do with them? What machinery can move them? Have we a great engineer among us who will devise a scheme for lifting these vessels and bearing them down to the river's mouth? No, it cannot be done! Wait till the tide comes in! What a change! Each vessel walks the water like a thing of life! What a difference between the low tide and the high tide! You cannot stir the boats when the water is gone, but when the tide is at the full, see how readily they move—a little child may push them with his hand!

Oh, for a flood of Divine Grace! May the Lord send to all our Churches a great springtide! Then the indolent will be active enough and those who were half dead will be full of energy. I know that in this particular dock several vessels are lying that I should like to float, but I cannot stir them. They neither work for God nor come out to the Prayer Meetings! They do not give of their substance to spread the Gospel. If the flood would come, you would see what they are capable of—they would be active, fervent, generous, abounding in every good word and work! So may it be! So may it be! May springs begin to flow in all our Churches and may all of you who hear me this day get your share of the streams!

Oh that the Lord may now fill you and then send you home bearing a flood of Grace with you! It sounds odd to speak of a man's carrying home a flood within him and yet I hope it will be so—and that out of you shall flow rivers of living water! So may God grant it for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 21, 1880.

*“So there was a division among the people because of Him.”
John 7:43.*

IT seems, then, that even when Christ was the Preacher, there was a division among the hearers, so we must not be surprised if the same result follows from *our* preaching. No doubt strife has sometimes been caused by a preacher's harshness of expression, or unwise utterances. He may have spoken unadvisedly, or provokingly, but if he did not, all would not be pleased, for even when Jesus spoke as never man spoke, all His hearers were not pleased. We truly say, “Many men, many minds” and, therefore, even when Christ spoke, “there was a division among the people because of Him.”

Nor was the division to be traced to the subject upon which Jesus was speaking at that time. There are some deep, mysterious subjects which seem calculated to stir up controversy, and you might say, “Whoever shall speak upon such a topic, even if the wise Solomon were to speak, he must create a division in any audience, if that should be his theme.” But, in this case, with Christ for a Speaker, the subject was Himself. It was concerning Him that the *schisma*—the schism occurred. There was a schism among the people, not concerning predestination or free will—not concerning forms of church government—not concerning the modes of observing the ordinances, but, “*because of Him.*”

So, then, we may not expect unanimity among mankind, whoever shall be the speaker, or whatever may be the subject of address. And I am not quite sure that this is a result that is altogether to be regretted. I have heard of a whole parish in which there were no religious bickering because there was no religion! There were no religious strifes because nobody had anything worth striving for! And that is not a state of things over which I can rejoice. I dread the peace of the sepulcher far more than the battles of life. Life naturally makes a stir—it seems inevitable that it should do so—and it is better that men should think, even though they think amiss, than that they should not think at all! I am not aware that the cattle in the fields have any diversity of judgment—it is no cause for wonder that there should be agreement where mind is absent. But it seems all but inevitable that where there *is* mind, where there is *thought*, where weighty subjects are considered and discussed, there should be

differences of opinion. And it is better that there should be those differences than that there should be the apathy, the indifference, the smell of death!

And yet, my Brothers and Sisters, I am sorry that there should be any division among the people about the Lord Jesus Christ, because if there is a point in which all mankind ought to have been agreed, it is concerning Him who came to save men—the Unselfish One who laid aside His robes of Glory that He might take upon Himself our nature, our suffering and our sin, so that He might redeem us from all our iniquities. There ought to have been only one opinion upon this subject—“This is the Son of God! Let us adore Him. This is the Christ of God! Let us trust Him. This is our God! We have waited for Him—let us rejoice and be glad in Him.” But it was not so—“There was a division among the people because of Him.” And, to this day, the greatest division in the world is “*because of Him.*”

I. I ask you to notice, first, that THERE WAS A DIVISION AMONG NON-BELIEVERS CONCERNING CHRIST. A large proportion of those who listened to Christ did not accept Him as their Savior and, although they all agreed upon *that* point, there was a division among them concerning Him.

First, *there were some who rejected His claims altogether*, and who even said, “He deceives the people.” They went so far as to wish to lay violent hands upon Him and, more than once we read that they took up stones to stone Him. And we know that they did, at last, compass His death. In like manner, even to this day, there are some who utterly reject the claims of Jesus Christ. They seem as if they could not say anything too bitter and cruel concerning Him. They will not have Him to reign over them—in downright, terrible earnest, they reject Him!

But all unbelievers are not so extreme in their opposition to Christ. We noticed, in reading the chapter, *that there are some who admit a portion of Christ’s claims*. Some said, “He is a good Man.” Many said, “Of a truth, this is the Prophet”—the promised Messiah. They would not shut their eyes—they were too candid to do so—to the goodness of His personal Character and to a certain grandeur about Him which betokened that He was a Prophet sent from God. They went as far as that, but they would go no further. And there are many in the present day who act in the same fashion.

There was a third class of persons who went still further. *They admitted Christ’s claims, but neglected to follow out the legitimate consequences of them*. They said, “When Christ comes, will He do more miracles than these, which this Man has done?” Others said, “This is the Christ.” They were quite certain that He was the Messiah and yet, when they had said that, they coolly went their way and took no more notice of Him. They had made a truthful statement, but it did not in the least affect their conduct! Though they believed Jesus to be anointed of God, they did not enroll themselves beneath His banner, or become obedient to His commands, or ask to be instructed in His doctrine. And, alas, we have a good many persons of that sort still in our midst! I suppose that most of the

unconverted people here are persons of that character. You do not deny the Scriptures—you believe in them. You do not doubt the Deity of Christ—you believe it. You do not question His Atonement—you believe it. Some of you would not like to hear anything contrary to the doctrine which has been taught to you concerning Him. If anyone were to preach error, you would at once say, "This is not the Gospel, but another gospel, and we will not listen to it." Yet you have never accepted Christ to be your very own Savior! You have never committed yourselves to His dear keeping. You have orthodox heads, but heterodox hearts!

It is still true, as it was in our Lord's day, that there is a division among the people because of Him. And I ask you, who love the Savior, as you look upon those who do not love Him, to make a distinction between the one and the other of them. As for those who utterly reject Him, pray for them. Do not expect them to love you if they do not love your Lord. And when they speak harshly concerning you, do not be astonished, for Jesus said to His disciples, "The servant is not greater than his master. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept My saying, they will keep yours also." Do not get angry with them because they do not receive the Savior, but pray for them, pity them and love them with a love that will not give them up. Remember that the greatest force in the world is love—it is invincible. You can love a man to Christ, but you cannot bully him into salvation. I never heard of a soul that was scolded to the Savior, but I have known many drawn to Him by love. So love them, dear Friends—keep on loving them more and more until they shall be brought to feel that the love of God shed abroad in your heart has also reached their hearts.

As for those who are prepared to go part of the way with Christ, aid them all you can. If they have not all the Light of God you wish them to have, be thankful that they have any, and tell them that no man who acts honestly up to the light he has, will be left in the dark. If a man has a dozen errors beclouding the truth which he sincerely believes, if he is only a true man, he will come out right. I have often conversed with persons who have been as wrong as wrong can be, but they did not mean to be wrong. They had an earnest desire to know the Truth of God if they could find it, and they had an earnest wish to live that Truth, too. I am always hopeful about such persons. You remember that our Lord Jesus said, concerning His Father, "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it is of God, or whether I speak of Myself." It is the same now—if anyone is desirous to act according to the mind of God, the Light of God will come to him sooner or later, and he shall discover the true Doctrine of Christ. Try and help him discover it. Quietly, lovingly, point him to the Son of God, and rest not content till he finds his Savior.

As for those who believe everything about Christ, but yet do not savingly rely upon Christ, Himself, O my Friends, what shall we say concerning these people? We have brought them to the Water of Life, but we cannot make them drink! We put the Bread of Life before them, but we cannot make them eat it! It behooves us to weep in secret concerning our fellow seat holders and those who come here constantly, or who go to

other places of worship where Christ is preached, and who say of what they hear, "It is all true," yet they do not receive it in their hearts. O my Hearer, out of your own mouth you will be condemned at the last because you will not be able to say, "I did not know the way of salvation," for you do know it! You will not be able to say, "I did not accept the Bible as true," for you *know* it is true, and yet you do not take the practical step that ought to follow as the result of that knowledge! May the Lord, in His infinite mercy, lead you to take it this very hour! If you do not take it, you will be convicted—self-convicted at the bar of God! I must not spend more time, however, on this part of the subject—but you can all see that there was a division among the unbelievers concerning Christ.

II. But now, secondly, THERE WAS ALSO A DIVISION OF BELIEVERS FROM NON-BELIEVERS.

There were some who did really and savingly take Christ to be theirs and, "there was a division among the people" on that account, and what a division that always is! How deep it is! How wide it is! Between the poorest saint and the brightest moralist, there is a great gulf. We may not be able to perceive it in the outward character, but there is as deep a gulf as there is between the feeblest form of life and death—a gulf which only Omnipotent Grace can cause any man to pass over. The radical difference between the true Believer and the unbeliever lies in their relation to Christ. That is the point of divergence—"There was a division among the people because of Him."

For, first, *to the unbeliever, Christ is nothing.* But to the Believer, Christ is everything. To the unbeliever, a mere opinion about Christ is everything. To the true Believer, the saving knowledge of Christ has covered up all mere opinions concerning Him. He knows Christ, and lives in Him, and Christ also lives in him.

Look at the difference between the Believer and the unbeliever *in the matter of trusting Christ.* The unbeliever trusts in himself, or in his own works, or in his priest if he is a Romanist or Ritualist. But the true Christian trusts in Christ wholly and alone. There is one thing concerning myself about which I am perfectly sure. When I pass myself through many forms of self-examination, I tremble as I do it, lest I should deceive myself. But about this one matter I know that I am not deceived—I have not the shadow of a shade of a ghost of a confidence as to my ultimate salvation except in Jesus Christ alone! And one reason why I dare not have any confidence except in Him is that I do not know anything I ever did, or ever thought, or ever was in which I could confide—so I am driven to trust in Him, and in Him alone. I lie at the foot of His Cross because I cannot stand upright. I must do that, for, like Luther, I can do no other. If I search myself and my whole life over and over again, I cannot see anything but what I call a filthy rag, and I fling it all away—good works and bad works—so far as mine are concerned, are not worth the trouble of sorting out. So I tie them all up in one bundle and pitch them overboard, and just cling to the ever-blessed lifebuoy of the merits of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior. That is what a Believer does—he trusts

Christ, and the unbeliever does not—and that difference between them makes a division among the people.

The same difference is apparent in the matter of love to Christ. The true Believer loves his Lord. He is no fiction to us—no mere historic personage about whom we read, but of whom we think little or nothing. We love Him! The very sound of His name has music in it to us. Some seek their pleasure in the world, but the Christian does not. If he is obliged to go into the world, he is glad to get out of it as quickly as possible. While he is with worldlings, he says, “There is nothing here to suit me.” But let him have his Master’s company for half an hour alone, no matter where, and he says, “This is to me a foretaste of the bliss of Heaven!” Rest assured, dear Friends, that where your pleasure is, there your heart is. If you find your pleasure in the world, your heart is in the world and you are to be reckoned among the worldly. But if Christ is your joy, your pleasure, your delight, your very Heaven—then there is a difference between you and worldlings.

Further, those who know Christ and trust Him, and love Him, *differ in character from worldlings*, for those who truly know Christ seek to be like He. They take Him to be their copy, and try to imitate every line, each down-stroke and up-stroke. But he who knows not Christ takes any model that he pleases and aims not at copying the excellence of Jesus, and thus, again, there is “a division among the people because of Him.”

This division is also shown *in the gradual development of different characters*. You may be at a railway station—an important junction, it may be—there are two lines of rails that run parallel to each other. There is a point, a little distance off, where they begin to diverge, one going to the East, and the other to the West. They will be many miles apart before long, but, at first, how slight is the division! So is it with those who begin life side by side. Two young men may be very much alike and for years you may scarcely see any difference between them. But, after a while, the ungodly man develops in his ways, and the lover of Christ develops in his. You see them when they have reached middle life. You see them, perhaps, on their dying bed—what a vast distance they are from one another! What a difference there is between them with respect to Christ! One knows Him as his Savior and All-in-All. The other knows nothing of Him. One rejoices in Him—the other despises Him. One is triumphing in the thought that he will wake up in his Lord’s likeness. The other lies down to die moaning that he is “without hope.” In such cases, there is truly a difference among the people because of Christ!

But what a difference there will be among the people *in their eternal destiny!* By-and-by they will awake, and arise! The Judgment Seat will be occupied and Christ, the Judge, will sit upon His Throne. He is the Man upon whom wicked men once spat, but His Countenance shall be bright as the sun in that day! He is the Man whom they scourged—but then He will sway the scepter of universal Sovereignty and the unnumbered myriads of our race will all stand before Him! What an assembly that will be when before Him are gathered all nations! They will crowd the land and throng the very mountain tops—and stand upon the ocean as upon a sea

of glass. What a multitude! But there will be one thing that will divide them, and that will be “a division among the people because of Him.”

Do you hear the songs and shouts of the ransomed? Louder than ten thousand thunders! Do you hear them? They are clapping their hands! They are shouting, “Welcome, welcome, Son of God!” The archangel’s trumpet seems to them, as they wake up from the dead, to be the morning summons that calls them up from beds of dust and silent clay to joy and eternal peace! And every note, as it peals out, is one to which they can sing, and they chant in harmony with it the great anthem, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.”

But what other sounds do I hear amidst those thunders of applause, and that mighty chorus of the redeemed? Listen! Sharp and shrill, there come up cries that pierce the very firmament—terrible sounds that even the glad music of that grand morning hymn cannot wholly drown. I can hear it, though the archangel’s trumpet waxes exceedingly loud and long, for myriads of lost souls have risen from the tomb, and they are wailing, wailing, wailing, “because of Him” whom they rejected! And above all other sounds there comes up the awful cry to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sits on the Throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?”

There will, indeed, be a division among the people because of Him in that tremendous day! On which side of the King will you be, then, my dear Hearer? I pray you to answer that question in the quietude of your chamber this very night. Where will you be when Christ shall make the final division between all the vast masses of the human race? “And He shall separate them, one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats.” Will you be driven to the left hand, among the goats, with the King’s curse thundering in your ears? Or will you be gathered with those upon His right hand, and join with them in singing the hymns of angels and of men redeemed, to whom Christ will say, “Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world”?

III. I cannot give more time to that solemn theme, for I must close my discourse with a brief reference to one other topic which arises out of the text. We have considered the division among the unbelievers “because of Him,” and the division between Believers and unbelievers. Now, in the last place, I want to show you that, WHEN FAITH COMES, UNITY IS PRODUCED.

Is there any division among Believers because of Christ? Is there “a division among the people”—the people of the Lord—because of Him? No, Beloved. Christ is the cause of the greatest division, but He is also the medium of the greatest union. No force in the world splits as does Christ’s battle-axe. He Himself said, “I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household.” And it is amazing how families have been divided,

and how communities and even nations have been divided by the coming of Christ! Those who loved and served Him would follow Him at all costs, and those who would not have Him rejected Him with the utmost fury! There are some people in this world who are like the chip in the porridge—there is no flavor in them, they are of little or no account—but my Master, the Lord Jesus Christ, is not one of that sort! You must either love Him or hate Him! You must give a verdict for Him or against Him! You cannot be indifferent. He Himself puts the matter thus—“He that is not with Me is against Me; and he that gathers not with Me scatters abroad.” You are, at this moment, either Christ’s friend or His foe. You cannot be neutral. Yet, while Christ is the great cause of division, it is also true that He is the great means of union. There is nothing that welds men together as the love of Christ does—it is the most potent force in the universe for gathering together those who are scattered abroad, and making them truly one. In Christ, nationalities are blended. Think of the division between the Jew and the Gentile—what can make them one, but Christ? He breaks down the middle wall of partition, and unites them. Look at Peter, that stiff, unbending Jew. He never ate of an unclean animal and he never means to do so. He is on the top of the house, praying at noonday, and is very hungry. He hears the command, “Rise, Peter. Kill and eat.” And there is let down before him a great sheet full of all manner of strange creatures! But Peter has never touched anything of the kind. He does not like such fare, but, by-and-by, he learns the meaning of the vision. There were certain Gentiles on the way to him and he was to go with them, and to preach Christ to all who were assembled in the house of Cornelius. And he must eat and drink with the uncircumcised! And, taught of the Spirit, Peter does it, and Paul does it. Never, I pray you, speak disrespectfully of a Jew. The greatest man who ever lived was a Jew! Christ our Lord was, Himself, of the house of David, of the tribe of Judah, of the seed of Abraham. Glory be to God, the Jews shall be brought in with the Gentiles, but they are the old original branches of the good olive tree, and they shall be grafted in again. It is unbelief that has caused them to be cast out—but I am sure that every man who truly loves Christ, feels that to him there now is neither Jew nor Gentile—that feud is ended once and for all, for all Believers are one in Christ.

So, too, wherever Christ comes, there are no foreigners. Paul wrote to the Ephesians, “Now, therefore, you are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.” Tell me that a man is a Christian—I do not care to what nationality he belongs—he may be a Dutchman, he may come from Zululand, he may be an Afghan, he may be a Hindu—it does not matter what he is, as long as he loves Christ. What more do I need than that? He is my Brother, whatever is the color of his skin. He is near akin to me if he is akin to Christ—and all genuine Christians feel that it is so. May there be more and more of this fellow feeling among Believers, for Christ Jesus our Lord has no division among His people as to blacks and whites, race and caste—that is ended once and for all.

And, truly, wherever Christ is known in His saving power, there is a wonderful uniting force among all genuine Christians. Look at Pentecost—"All that believed were together, and had all things common." They loved each other so much that if one was poor, his rich Brothers and Sisters helped him. They felt as if they were all fused into one body by the intense heat of love to Christ! And there are many, many, many similar cases now, (I speak what I know,) in which Believers have received help and succor which they never would have had if it had not been for the name and love of Christ. Many of you here know that there is much true Christian love in the world—and you could speak of it if it were the time to do so—but these things are not to be blazed abroad.

In Christ, *personal peculiarities cease to divide*. We love each other—let us love one another more and more, "for love is of God and everyone that loves is born of God, and knows God." Did you ever notice how true Christian workers love each other? When there is little doing for Christ, a man tries to get all the fish he can into his own net. He says, "We must get the people inside our Chapel—try and make Baptists of them, or Wesleyans." But if ever the Spirit of God comes with mighty power, they begin to beckon to their neighbors, who are in the other ship, to come and help them because their boat will not hold all the fish! And they forget all their little differences in the one grand point of unity, for all are agreed about Christ!

Notice what happens in a real, earnest Prayer Meeting. Christians do not agree about everything. Perhaps we never shall. Possibly it is well that we never should, or else we might make a great big church and have a pope over it, and do nobody knows how much harm! We are sometimes best apart. Some people love one another all the better because they do not all live in the same house. Sometimes it is a cause of disagreement when two or three sets of husbands and wives, who are related to each other, come to live under the same roof. But you get together a number of people who love Christ and set them praying. What was that Brother who prayed just now? He was a Wesleyan. How do you know that? Why, because he prayed a Calvinistic prayer! Who was that last Brother that prayed? He was a Strict Baptist. How do you know that? Why, because he prayed a prayer that was full of generosity and Christian love! Here is another—who is he? He is an Independent, I should say. How do I know that? Why, because his prayer was so full of dependence on Christ, and trust in Him. We can sometimes even fight with one another for what we believe to be the Truth of God and rebuke each other to the face if we think there is an error—but when it comes to Christ and His dear Cross, give me your hand, Brother! You are washed in the blood, and so am I. You are resting in Christ, and so am I. You have put all your hope in Jesus and that is where all my hope is, and, therefore, we are one! Yes, there is no real division among the true people of God because of Christ.

Let us try, moreover, to make the world see that it is so by everyone endeavoring to magnify Jesus more than his neighbor does. Let there be no strife except to see who can deny himself most for Jesus, who can labor most for Jesus, who can lift the Grace of Jesus higher than others!

And, oh, *what unity there will be in Heaven*, where Christ will be the center of the redeemed, where all shall sing of Him and where all shall equally behold Him! All of us who believe in Jesus will be with Him where He is, and so we shall behold His Glory, the Glory which His Father gave Him. Certain brethren think that they will have a place all to themselves. Well, they have not been very amiable down here and, therefore I should not be sorry if they were going to have a place to themselves! But, at the same time, I pray the Lord to have mercy upon them and to enable them to give up all idea of having a place for themselves, and all thought of having anything different from the rest of the Lord's family, for I believe that there will be no division among the people of God because of Christ, or concerning the Glory that Christ will give them. But they shall all forevermore behold Him and forevermore call Him theirs, and rejoice in Him world without end. I am quite satisfied to share the lot of the poorest of His people. And if there is a saint in Heaven who has to sit by the door, I will sit with him forever. And if I shall have a right—as I am sure I shall not—to a higher and a better place than he has, I will ask my Master to let me sit among the lowliest of His servants, and I am sure that you, Brothers and Sisters, will add, “And so say all of us!” Let others say what they like, I feel certain that there will be no division among the people of God in Heaven because of Christ—to whom be praise forever and ever! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 7:14-53.**

Verse 14. *Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple and taught.* He was no coward, so He boldly showed Himself in the midst of the throng in the temple.

15. *And the Jews marveled, saying, How knows this Man letters, having never learned.* Or, “How knows He the Scriptures? How has He come to be an instructed Man, having never learned of the Rabbis? He has never passed through our schools of learning, so what can He know?”

16. *Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not Mine, but His that sent Me.* “I am not the inventor of what I say. I am but a messenger, delivering the message of Him that sent Me.”

17. *If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it is of God, or whether I speak of Myself.* Any man who is seeking after that which is right, and laboring to do that which is right, is a good judge of the Truth of God. A practical life of godliness makes a man a far better critic as to what Truth is than all the learning of the schools can do.

18. *He that speaks of himself seeks his own glory: but He that seeks His glory that sent Him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in Him.* If you ever hear a man speaking about the priesthood, meaning himself and his brethren, and about the Church, again meaning himself and his brethren—and about the sacraments, meaning certain performances by himself and his brethren—you may know at once that God did

not send him! But he who speaks to the Glory of God, and does not say, "Behold me," but, "Behold the Lamb of God," he it is whom God has sent!

19. *Did not Moses give you the Law, and yet none of you keeps the Law? Why go you about to kill Me?* "Did not Moses say, 'You shall not kill'? Then you do not keep his Law, though you profess such reverence for him, for, if you did, you would not go about to kill Me."

20, 21. *The people answered and said, You have a devil: who goes about to kill You? Jesus answered and said unto them, I have done one work, and you all marvel.* "I did it on the Sabbath and you are all stumbling at that."

22, 23. *Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers) and you on the Sabbath circumcise a man. If a man on the Sabbath receive circumcision, that the Law of Moses should not be broken; are you angry at Me because I have made a man every whit whole on the Sabbath?* Surely, there was never a more triumphant answer than that!

24, 25. *Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment. Then said some of them of Jerusalem, Is not this He whom they seek to kill?* Perhaps some of the same people who had asked Christ, "Who goes about to kill You?" now enquired, "Is not this He, whom they seek to kill?"

26, 27. *But, lo, He speaks boldly, and they say nothing unto Him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ? However, we know where this Man is from, but when the Christ comes, no man knows where He comes from.* They had a notion—perhaps derived from that passage in Isaiah, "who shall declare His generation?"—that the birth of Christ would be hidden in mystery. At any rate, there was some cloudy idea floating about that it would be concealed.

28. *Then cried Jesus in the temple as He taught, saying, You both know Me, and you know from where I come.* "And yet you do not know Me."

28-30. *And I am not come of Myself, but He that sent Me is true, whom you know not. But I know Him: for I am from Him, and He has sent Me. Then they sought to take Him: but no man laid hands on Him because His hour was not yet come.* Something seemed to hold them back. Enraged as they were against Him, a mysterious and mighty awe was upon them so that they dared not touch Him.

31-33. *And many of the people believed on Him, and said, When Christ comes, will He do more miracles than these which this Man has done? The Pharisees heard that the people murmured such things concerning Him; and the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take Him. Then said Jesus unto them—As they came to take Him—perhaps to the very officers sent by the Pharisees, Jesus said—*

33. *Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto Him that sent Me.* "You may well let me alone now, for it will only be a little while and then I shall be delivered into your hands, and you will no more be troubled with Me."

34, 35. *You shall seek Me, and shall not find Me: and where I am, there you cannot come. Then said the Jews among themselves, Where will He*

go, that we shall not find Him? Will He go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles? That was always their fear. "Is He going to the Greeks? Will He be a teacher to them? Will He try to introduce them into the mysteries of our faith?"

36, 37. *What manner of saying is this that He said, You shall seek Me, and shall not find Me: and where I am, there you cannot come? In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried—I think I see Him standing up in the midst of the great throng. That congregation would soon be scattered, never to come together again, so He stood up in the most prominent place He could find, and, notwithstanding all their anger, and their desire to kill Him, He cried—*

37, 38. *Saying, If any man thirsts, let Him come unto Me, and drink. He that believes on Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his belly— Or, "out of the very midst of him"*

38. *Shall flow rivers of living water.* What a glorious Gospel sermon that was! It comes to us down through the ages, and is as true, now, as when Jesus spoke it! Ho, thirsty ones, come to Him, and drink! And He will slake your thirst, and create in you a well of living water which shall bubble up forever and ever.

39, 40. *(But this spoke He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive: for the Holy Spirit was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified). Many of the people, therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet.* The Prophet about whom Moses spoke.

41. *Others said, This is the Christ. The Messiah.*

41, 42. *But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee? Has not the Scripture said, That Christ comes of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was? This was blessed testimony even out of the mouth of Christ's enemies! They objected against Christ what was, indeed, the fact, for He did come of the seed of David, and from the town of Bethlehem. He was born there and though they called Him the Nazarene—and He refused not the title—though over His head Pilate wrote, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews," yet is He the Son of David and His birthplace was at Bethlehem, though some of them knew it not.*

43, 44. *So there was a division among the people because of Him. And some of them would have taken Him; but no man laid hands on Him. He was immortal till His work was done! The hour for His death had not yet struck and He must live on till the appointed time.*

45, 46. *Then came the officers to the chief priests and Pharisees; and they said unto them, Why have you not brought Him? The officers answered, Never man spoke like this Man.* The charm of His eloquence, the dignity of His Person, His awe-inspiring demeanor and a singular something—they knew not what—that Divinity that hedges about such a King as He was—restrained their hands. They said, "Never man spoke like this Man."

47. *Then answered them the Pharisees, Are you also deceived? "You sheriffs' officers are generally hard-hearted enough—are you, also, deceived?"*

48. *Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on Him?* This was as much as to say, “If we have not believed on Him—we who are the great dons of the nation—the rulers and the Pharisees—why, then, there cannot be anything in His claims! Just as some people seem to think that unless there is a lord in a Society, unless there is an honorable somebody or other in the chair, there is nothing in it.

49. *But this people who knows not the law are cursed.* They regarded the poor, common people as ignorant and accursed, whereas they, probably, knew as much about the Law and the real spirit of it as these learned teachers did.

50. *Nicodemus said unto them, (he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them).* Being a member of the council—

51. *Does our Law judge any man before it hears him and knows what he does?* He only asked a question, that was all, and, timid Christian, if you are placed where you cannot say much for Christ—if you have too great a fear upon you to vindicate your Master at any considerable length—yet say what you can! And, perhaps, the simple asking of a question may suffice to defend Him. Nicodemus did but rise and ask, “Does our Law judge any man before it hears him, and knows what he does?”

52. *They answered and said unto him, Are you also of Galilee? Search, and look: for out of Galilee arises no Prophet.* Which was a lie, for prophets had come out of Galilee. Still, they denied it and they were indignant at having such a question put to them by Nicodemus.

53. *And every man went unto his own house.* It was like a bombshell exploding in the midst of them! And often, a few brave words dropped into the midst of an assembly of bad men will explode among them and scatter them here and there. Nicodemus had accomplished what, perhaps, he thought he would never do. He was, indeed, like his name, on that occasion—one of the conquering people—for “every man went unto his own house.” Nicodemus had scattered them all by his startling question. May each of us witness as bravely for Christ as we have opportunity!

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—427, 804, 388.

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

THE UNRIVALLED ELOQUENCE OF JESUS NO. 951

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 18, 1870,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*"The officers answered, Never man spoke like this Man."
John 7:46.*

THE chief priests and Pharisees sent officers to lay hold upon the Savior lest His preaching should altogether overthrow their power. While the constables who had mingled with the throng were waiting for an opportunity of arresting the Lord Jesus, they themselves were arrested by His earnest eloquence. They could not take Him, for He had fairly taken them, and when they came back without a prisoner, they gave their reason for not having captured Him in these memorable words, "Never man spoke like this Man."

Two or three remarks as a preface to our discourse. It is a sure sign of a falling Church when its leaders call in the aid of the secular arm. The rule of the Scribes and Pharisees must have been weakness, itself, when it needed to wield the truncheon of the civil magistrate as its only sufficient argument against its antagonist. That Church which has been supported by bayonets, is in all probability, not far off its demise. Any Church which long collects its tithes and its offerings by the hand of the police, and by legal process and restraint, is also, depend upon it, none too strong.

The Church which is unable to maintain itself by spiritual power is dying, if not dead. Whenever we think of calling in an arm of flesh to defend the faith, we may very seriously question whether we have not made a mistake, and whether that which can be supported by the sword must not greatly differ from the Savior's kingdom, of which He said, "My kingdom is not of this world, else would My servants fight."

The more a man leans on a big staff the more sure are you that he is feeble. In proportion as Churches rely on Acts of Parliament, human prestige, and legal authority—in that very degree they show their weakness. Call in the sheriff's officer, and you have virtually called in the gravedigger! In this respect it is peculiarly true, "All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." A Church is buried by the State, and not supported, when it draws its sustenance from forced tithes and legalized exactions.

Observe, next, that in the end the spiritual power will always baffle the temporal. The officers are fully armed and quite able to complete the arrest of the Preacher. He has no weapons with which to oppose them. He stands unarmed amid the throng—probably none of His disciples would lift a finger to defend Him—or if they did, He would bid them put up their sword into its sheath. And yet the officers cannot seize the non-resistant Preacher. What stays their hands? It has come to a combat between body and mind, and mind prevails.

The eloquent tongue is matched against the two-edged sword, and it has won the day. No fears or qualms of conscience hampered the constables and yet they could not lay their hands on Him. They were chained to

the spot where they stood—spellbound by the mystic power of His speech. His very tones fascinated them! The discourse which He poured forth so fluently held them fast as His willing captives. It has always been so—the spiritual has conquered the physical. Though at first it seemed an unequal conflict, yet in the long run the elder has served the younger.

The club of Cain may lay Abel level with the dust, but it does not silence him—from the ground the blood of Abel continues still to cry. Martyrs may be consigned to prison, and dragged from prison to the stake—so that to all appearance a full end is made of the good men—but “even in their ashes live their wonted fires.” At the stake they find a platform with a boundless auditory, and from the grave their teaching cries with louder voice than from the pulpit.

Like seeds sown in the earth they spring up and multiply themselves. Others arise to bear the same witness, and if need be to seal it in the same fashion. As Pharaoh’s mighty hosts could not combat with the hail and the lightning which plagued the fields of Zoan, and as all their chivalry could not put to flight the darkness that might be felt, even so when God sends His Truth with power upon a land, battleaxe and buckler are vain in the opposers’ hands. Our appointed weapons of attack are not carnal, neither can they be withstood by shield or armor. Our bowstrings cannot be broken, or the edge of our sword blunted. Let but the Lord furnish His ministers, as he did at Pentecost, with wondrous Words instead of shields, and spears, and swords—and these weapons of the holy war will prove themselves to be irresistible.

Fight on, O Preacher! Tell forth the story of the Cross! Defy opposition and laugh persecution to scorn, for, like your Master, you shall, as His servant, ascend above all your enemies, lead your captivity captive, and scatter good gifts among the sons of men! Note again that God can get testimonies to the majesty of His Son from the most unlikely places. I do not know who these constables may have been, or from what class of men they were drawn, but generally the civil authorities do not employ the most refined and intellectual persons to act as officers.

They do not require much tenderness of spirit for such work—a rough hand, a keen eye and a bold spirit are the principal requisites for a constable. The priests and Pharisees would naturally select for the seizing of the great Teacher those who were least likely to be affected by His teaching. And yet these men—doubtless men of brutal habits, men ready enough to do their masters’ bidding—showed within themselves sufficient mental capacity to feel the power of the matchless oratory of Jesus Christ.

Those who were sent as enemies came back to rehearse His praises, and so to vex His adversaries. Truly the Lord can make the stones to cry out of a wall, and the beam out of the timber to answer it if He wills. He can transform the ready instruments of opposition into the willing advocates of His righteous cause. Not only as in the case of Saul of Tarsus can He direct a high character into the right path, but He can uplift the groveling and put a testimony into *their* mouths. He makes the wrath of men to praise Him.

He compels His adversaries to do Him homage. Keep good heart, then, O you soldiers of the Cross! Let no thought of discouragement ever flit across your spirits. Greater is He that is for us than all they that are against us. He can and will glorify His Son Jesus. Even the devils shall

acknowledge His almighty power. His Word has gone forth and His Oath has confirmed it—"Surely as I live, says the Lord, all flesh shall see the salvation of God." God will glorify Himself even by the tongues of His enemies! In this hope let us set up our banners.

The text introduces to our notice the eloquence of our Lord Jesus Christ and upon that topic we shall try to speak. May the Holy Spirit enable us. We shall note first the peculiar qualities of it, which amply justified the praise of the constables. Secondly, personal recollections of it, treasured up by ourselves. And, thirdly, prophetic anticipations of the time when our souls shall hear His voice yet more distinctly, and shall say again, "Never man spoke like this Man."

I. Let us note the PECULIAR QUALITIES of our Lord's eloquence. As among kings He is the King of kings. As among priests He is the great High Priest. As among Prophets He is the Messiah. And so is He the Prince of preachers, the Apostle of our profession. They who are most excellent as preachers are those who are most like He. But even those who by being most like He have become eminent, they are still far short of His excellence. "His lips," says the spouse, "are like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh." He is a Prophet mighty in word and deed.

To form a right conception of our Lord's ministry it is necessary to note the whole of it, and we may do so without departing from the text. For though the officers did not hear all that Jesus said, I have no doubt that the qualities which shone in His entire ministry were, many of them, apparent in the discourse which He delivered on that particular occasion. Follow me, therefore, as I note the leading qualities of His unrivalled eloquence.

The most casual reader of Christ's discourses would observe that their style is singularly clear and easy to understand. And yet their matter is by no means trivial or superficial. Did ever man speak like this Man, Christ Jesus, for simplicity? Little children gathered around Him, for much of what He said was interesting, even to them. If there was ever a difficult word in any of Christ's discourses, it is because it must be there owing to the faultiness of human language. But there is never a hard word inserted for its own sake, where an easier word could have been employed.

You never find Him, for the sake of display, speeding upon the wings of rhetoric. He never gives forth dark sayings that His hearers may discover that His learning is vast and His thinking profound. He is profound, and in that respect, "never man spoke like this Man." He unveils the mysteries of God. He brings to light the treasures of darkness of the ages past which Prophets and kings desired to see, but into which they could not pry.

There is, in His teaching, a depth so vast that the greatest human intellect cannot fathom it. And all the while He speaks like the "holy child Jesus"—in short sentences, with plain words. He speaks in parables with many illustrations of the most homely kind—about eggs, and fish, and candles, and bushels, and sweeping houses, and losing pieces of money, and finding sheep. He never paraded the stale and mildewed metaphors of your mere rhetoricians—"rippling rills, verdant meads, star-bespangled heavens," and I know not what besides.

The hackneyed properties of theatrical orations are not for Him—His speech abounds in the true and most natural of images, and is ever constructed not to display Himself, but to make clear the Truth which He was

sent to reveal. "Never man spoke like this Man!" The common people with their common sense heard Him gladly, for even if they could not always grasp the full compass of His teaching, yet upon the surface of His plain speech there glittered lumps of golden ore well worthy to be treasured up.

For this quality our Savior, then, remains unrivalled, easily understood, yet profound. His speech had this also about it—He spoke with unusual authority. He was a master dogmatist. It was not, "it may be so," or, "it can be proven," or, "it is highly probable." No, it was, "Verily, verily, I say unto you." And yet, side by side with this was an extraordinary degree of humility. The Master spoke dogmatically, but never with proud self-sufficiency, after the manner of the children of conceit. He never pestered you with assumptions of superiority, and claims to official dignity.

He borrowed no assistance from a priestly robe, or from an imposing title. Meek He was as Moses, but like Moses He spoke the Words of the Lord with absolute authority. Lowly and gentle of heart, never extolling Himself, nor bearing witness of Himself, for then, as He says, His witness would not be true. He was nevertheless the unhesitating minister of righteousness, speaking with power, because the Lord's Spirit had anointed Him.

Coming out of the ivory palaces, fresh from the bosom of His Father—having looked into the unseen and heard the infallible oracle—He spoke not with bated breath, with hesitancy and debate as the scribes and lawyers. He spoke not with arguments and reasonings as the priests and Pharisees, creating perplexity and pouring darkness upon human minds. "Verily, verily, I say unto you," were His favorite Words. He spoke that He did know, and testified what He had seen, and demanded to be accepted as sent forth from the Father.

He did not debate, but declare. His sermons were not guesses, but testimonies. Yet He never magnifies Himself, He lets His works and His Father bear witness of Him. He asserts Truth from His own positive knowledge, and because He has a commission from the Father to do so—but never as mere dogmatists do with an extolling of their own selves, as though they were to be glorified and not the God who sent the Truth and the Spirit by whom it is applied.

Further, in our Lord's preaching there was a wonderful combination of faithfulness with tenderness. He was, indeed, the Prince of faithful preachers. Not even Nathan, when He stood before King David, and said, "You are the man," could be more true to human conscience than Christ was. How those cutting words of His must have told, like rifle bullets when they were first hurled against the respectability of the age, "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" "Woe unto you, lawyers," and so forth.

There was no mincing matters, no winking at wickedness because it happened to be associated with greatness, no excusing sin because it put on the sanctimoniousness of religion. He neither fawned on the great, nor pandered to the populace. Jesus reprov'd all classes to their faces concerning their sins. It never occurred to Him to seek to please men. He looked to the doing of His Father's business, and since that business often involved the laying of righteousness to the line, of judgment to the plummet, He spared not to do it.

Perhaps no preacher ever used more terrible words with regard to the fate of the ungodly than our Lord has done. You shall ransack even me-

dieval records to find more fearfully suggestive descriptions of the torments of Hell. Those awful sentences which fell from the lips of the Friend of Sinners prove that He was too much their Friend to flatter them. Too much their Friend to let them perish without a full warning of their doom. And yet, though He thundered like His own chosen Boanerges, what a Barnabas the Savior was!

What a Son of Consolation! How gentle were His Words! He did not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. For the woman taken in adultery He had no word of curse. For the mothers of Jerusalem bringing their babes He had not a syllable of reprehension. Kind, gentle, tender, loving—the speech which at one time sounded as the voice of Jehovah which breaks the cedars of Lebanon, and makes the hinds to calve—was at other seasons modulated to music, softened to a whisper, and used to cheer the disconsolate and bind up broken hearts. “Never man spoke like this Man,” so faithful and yet so tenderly affectionate, so mindful of the least good which He could see in man, and yet so determined to smite hypocrisy wherever His holy eyes could discover it.

You will observe in the Savior’s preaching a remarkable mingling of zeal with prudence. He is full of ardor, the zeal of God’s House has eaten Him up. He never preached a cold, dull sermon in all His life. He was a pillar of light and fire. When He spoke, His Words burned their way into men’s minds by reason of the Sacred enthusiasm with which He delivered them! And yet His fervor never degenerated into wildfire like the zeal of ignorant and over-balanced minds. We know some whose zeal, if tempered with knowledge, might be of use to the Church—but being altogether without knowledge—it is dangerous both to themselves and to their cause.

Fanaticism may spring out of a real desire for God’s Glory. There is, however, no need that earnestness should degenerate into rant. It never did so in the Savior’s case. His zeal was red hot, but His prudence was calm and cool. He was not afraid of the Herodians, but yet how quietly did He answer them in that trap concerning tribute-money! They would never forget the penny and the question, “Whose image and superscription is this?” He was ready to meet the Sadducees at any time, but He was on His guard, so that they could not entangle Him in His speech. He was quite sure to escape their nets, and take them in their own craftiness.

If a question is asked, which for the moment He does not care to answer, He knows how to ask them another question which they, also, cannot answer—and send them about their business covered with shame. It is a grand thing when a man can be warm and wise—when he can carry about him an unexcitable temperament, and yet the force which excites others—unmoved himself, the man of prudence becomes the power by which others are moved. Such was the Savior.

But I must not let that sentence of mine pass unchallenged—in the higher sense He was always more moved than the people—but I mean as to temper and spirit He was not readily disturbed. He was self-possessed, prudent, wise, and yet when He spoke He flashed, and burned, and blazed with a sacred vehemence which showed that His whole soul was on fire with love to the souls of men. Zeal and prudence in remarkable proportions met in Jesus, and, “Never man spoke like this Man.”

So, too, everyone who has read our Lord’s discourses and marked His character will have perceived that love was among the leading characteris-

tics of His style as a Preacher. He was full of tenderness, brimming with sympathy, overflowing with affection. That weeping over Jerusalem, whose children He would have gathered, was but one instance of what happened many a time in His life. His heart sympathized with sorrow whenever His eyes beheld it. He could not bear that the people should be like sheep without a shepherd, and He worked many deeds of kindness, and said many words of instruction, because He loved them.

But our Savior's speech was never affected and canting. He used no stale honey, there was nothing of that—I do not know the word to use—that insincere sweetness, which in some people is disgustingly perceptible. He was far removed from the effeminacy which, in too many cases, passes for Christian love. I loathe in my very soul the talk of those who call everybody, “dear” this, or “dear” that, endearing those whom, perhaps, they never knew, and to whom they would not give a sixpence if they wanted it. I hate this sugar of lead, this spiritual billing and cooing.

Where there is the least of the meat of true charity, we find most of the parsley or the fennel which are used for garnishing. The bottle is empty and so they label it to make it pass for full. No, give me a man, give me a man! Let me hear outspoken speech, not effeminate canting, whining, and pretended ecstasies of affection. In nine cases out of ten the biggest bigot in the world is the man who preaches up liberality—and the man who can hate you worst is he who addresses you in softest phrases.

No, let a man love me, but let it be with the love of a man. Let no man cast aside that which is masculine, forcible, and dignified under the notion that he is making himself better by becoming soft and babyish. It was never so with the Savior. He condemned this or that evil in no measured terms. There was in Him no apologizing, no guarding of expressions, no fawning, no using of soft words. They who are shaken with the wind and affect flattering phrases stand in kings' palaces. But He, the people's Preacher, One chosen out of the people, dwelt among the many, a Man among men.

He was manly all through. Love in Him abounded, love unsurpassed, but also manliness of the noble sort. Far above the petty arts of professional orators, and the shallow arguments of thinkers, His teaching dealt out Truth with courageous fidelity and generous affection. He held His own position, but trampled on none. He committed Himself to no man, but He was willing to bless every man. His love was no imitation, but a solid ingot of the gold of Ophir. No one else in this matter has so exactly struck the balance, and therefore, “Never man spoke like this Man.”

One memorable Characteristic of our Lord's preaching was His remarkable commingling of the excellences which are found separately in His servants. You know, perhaps, a preacher who is admirable when he addresses the mind. He can explain and expound very logically and clearly—and you feel that you have been instructed whenever you have sat under him. But the light, though clear, is cold like moonlight—and when you retire, you feel that you *know* more—but yet are none the better for what you know.

It were well if those who can enlighten the head so well would remember that man has also a heart. On the other hand we know others whose whole ministry is addressed to the passions and the emotions. During a sermon you shed any quantity of tears, you pass through a furnace of

sensation—but as to what is left which is calculated permanently to benefit you—it is difficult to discover. When the sermon is over, the shower and the sunshine have both departed, the fair rainbow has disappeared from sight, and what remains? It were well if those who always talk to the heart remembered that men have heads as well.

Now the Savior was a Preacher whose head was in His heart, and whose heart was in His head. He never addressed the emotions except by motives which commended themselves to the reason. Nor did He instruct the mind without at the same time influencing the heart and conscience. Our Savior's power as a speaker was comprehensive. He aroused the conscience—who more than He? With but a single sentence He convicted those who came to tempt Him, so that beginning with the eldest, and ending with the youngest, they all went out ashamed.

But He was not a mere render open of wounds—a cutter and a killer. He was equally great in the art of holy consolation. With intonations of matchless music He could say, "Go your way. Your sins, which are many, are forgiven you." He knew how to console a weeping friend as well as to confront a boisterous enemy. His superiority was felt by all sorts of men. His artillery struck at all ranges—His mind was equal to all emergencies. It was for good, like the sword of the cherubim at the gates of Eden for evil. It turned every way to keep the gates of Life open for those who would gladly enter there.

My Brethren, I have entered upon a theme which is boundless. I merely touch some of the outer skirts of my Master's robes. As for Himself, if you would know how He spoke you must *hear* Him. One of the ancients was likely to say that he could have wished to have seen Rome in all its splendor, to have been with Paul in all his labors, and to have heard Christ when preaching. Surely it were worth worlds but once to have caught the round of that serene, soul-stirring voice—to have beheld for once the glance of those matchless eyes as they looked through the heart—and that heavenly Countenance as it glowed with love!

His eloquence had, however, this, for its main aspect—that it concerned the greatest truths that were ever made manifest to man. He brought light and immortality to light. He cleared up what had been doubtful. He resolved that which had been mysterious. He declared that which is gracious, that which saves the soul and glorifies God. No preacher was ever laden with so Divine a message as Christ. We who bring the same glad tidings bring the news as second hand, and but in part. He came forth from the Father's bosom with the whole Truth, and, therefore, "Never man spoke like this Man."

II. Secondly, let us try to awaken in the saints Some PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS of the Savior's eloquence. Lend me your memories, you people of God. Do you remember when you first heard Him speak? We shall not talk of words which cleave the air, but of those spirit-words which thrill the heart and move the soul. Follow me, then, and recall to fondest memory His Words of pity, of which I may truly say, "Never man spoke to me like this Man."

It was in the dim dawning of my spiritual life, before it was yet light, before the sun had fully risen. I felt my sin, I grieved beneath its weight. I despaired, I was ready to perish. And then He came to me. Well do I remember accents which then I scarcely could understand, which neverthe-

less cheered my spirit. They sounded like these, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out."

Soft and sweet were the tones, and tremulous with fond anxiety. They came as from One who had bled and died. Do you remember when you also heard them? I do not mean when you heard them from the pulpit, from the minister—but in your heart—from Gethsemane, the Cross, and the Throne. It was sweet to know that Jesus pitied you. You were not saved, and you were afraid that you never might be, for the sea worked and was tempestuous, but He said, "It is I, be not afraid." You began to perceive that there was mercy if you could get it—that one tender heart felt for you—one strong arm was ready to help you. You could no longer lament, "No man cares for my soul," for you perceived that there was a Savior, and a great one. Those were sweet sounds that now and then were heard above the tumultuous deep which called unto deep at the noise of God's waterspouts. None else ever spoke as He did.

Do you remember how in those days you heard His voice with words of persuasion? You had often heard Gospel invitations as the call of *man*, but then they came to you as the voice of *God* heard in the silence of your heart, saying, "Turn you, turn you, why will you die, O house of Israel?" "Come now, and let us reason together: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Do you remember how they followed one another, each word suiting your particular condition and having still accumulated power over your mind?

Did not Jesus often seem to say to you, "Yield now, poor Sinner, cast away your weapons of rebellion. Destroy not your own soul! Look unto Me and be saved. For I have loved you and made atonement for your sins"? Those were marvelous pleadings which at last won your heart by force of love. You had much ado to resist those persuasions, and you did resist them for awhile. And like the spouse in the Canticle, you permitted the lover of your soul to wait outside your door, and say, "Open to Me, My head is wet with dew, and My locks with the drops of the night." Yet you found it hard to resist Him, for the persuasions of His love were mighty upon you as He drew you with cords of love, with bands of a Man, until you could hold out no longer.

Beloved, you surely call to mind when the words of persuasion were by-and-by followed with words of power! "Never man spoke like this Man," when He said to my darkened soul, "let there be light." Well do I remember that admonition, "Arise, shine, for your light is come. Awake, you that sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light." Do you remember when He passed by and saw you in your blood, and said to you, "Live," and cast the skirts of covenant love over you, and washed you, and made you clean, and laid you in His bosom, and made you His forever? "Never man spoke like this Man."

Do you remember when He made all your darkness and sorrow to pass away as in a moment by saying to you, "I am your salvation"? Have you forgotten that word of pardon? I can never forget it—even if I outlive Methuselah, it must still remain green in my memory! The words came with power when I looked to the Cross, and heard the absolving words, "Your sins are forgiven you." "Never man spoke like this Man."

No priest can give an awakened conscience rest, nor any other, except the great High Priest, Jesus, Melchisedec, the sinner's Pardoner. No words of hope, nor thoughts of consolation can ever breed such peace within the spirit as the blood of Jesus brings when it speaks within the heart far better things than that of Abel. It reconciles us unto our God and so gives perfect peace.

Since the time when first we heard His pardoning voice, we, many a time, have heard Him speaking with right royal words, and we have said, "Never man spoke like this Man." How sweet it has been to sit in the assembly of the saints when the Gospel has been, indeed, His Word to our souls! Oh, the marrow and the fatness, the feast of fat things, of fat things full of marrow which we have fed upon when the King has sat at the table! When our Beloved speaks His Word of promise, how has it revived our drooping spirit! It came as dew upon the tender herb. It touched our lips as a coal from off the altar. It gave us healing, consolation, joy.

Beloved, cannot you look back to many instances when you had no food for your soul but the promise—when your soul knew no music but the word of His love? Blest Master, speak to me thus evermore—

***"Each moment draw from earth away
My heart, that lowly waits Your call.
Speak to my inmost soul, and say,
'I am your Love, your God, your All!'
To feel Your power, to hear Your voice,
To taste Your love, is all my choice."***

And when you have enjoyed His Presence in your solitude, have had communion with Him, and He has revealed His ancient, His unchanging, His never-ending, His boundless love to you—have you not prized His Words far above the choicest joys of earth?

When you have confessed your sins with penitent sorrow and He has given back the word of full remission. When you have revealed your sorrow and received the assurance of His tender sympathy. When you have laid bare your weakness and received the word that strengthens—have you not been ready to challenge all Heaven to compare with Him—and exclaimed, "Never man spoke like this Man"? To those who are unbelievers, and to those professors who live at a distance from Christ, this will sound like mere fancy, but believe me, it is not so. If there is anything real beneath the skies, it is the communion which Christ has with His people by His Spirit.

"Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Christ." We hear His voice, though not with these ears, and we so hear it as to *know* it, as sheep discern their shepherd's voice. And a stranger we will not follow, for we know not the voice of strangers. Our ears being opened by the Spirit, we at this hour can say, "I sleep, but my heart wakes. It is the voice of my Beloved, my soul melts while He speaks."

Now, my dear Friends, there are some words of our Savior spoken long ago, which, since we have known Him have been so quickened by His Presence that we number them from now on among personal recollections. That word, "I have loved you with an everlasting love." It is true it is written in the Bible, an old, old saying—but I can say and so can many of you, that it has been a *new* saying to me. We have by faith been enabled to hear it as spoken to us, and the Spirit of the blessed God has so brought it home to our hearts that it is as if Christ had never said it be-

fore, but had spoken it to us personally. Yes, "I have loved you with an everlasting love."

There are many here who have heard Him say, "I have chosen you and not cast you away." The Spirit of God has made many an ancient saying a speech from the living Jesus to us. Those words of His when He said, "Lo, I come: in the volume of the Book it is written of Me, I delight to do Your will, O My God"—our faith has stood at Bethlehem's manger and we have seen the Body prepared for Him, and Himself putting on the form of a servant. His coming to seek and to save that which was lost has become a personal coming to us, and we have rejoiced in it exceedingly.

Has not the voice which came of old from the sea when He said, "It is I, be not afraid," been a voice to you? And the voice from Jerusalem, "How often would I have gathered you"—has it never bewailed the perishing ones around you? The voice from Bethany, "I am the resurrection and the life"—has it never been heard at the burial of your brother? The voice from the table when He washed His disciples' feet—and bade them wash one another's feet—has it not excited you to humble service of the Brethren?

Have we not again and again heard the cry of Gethsemane, "Not as I will, but as You will"? I cannot convince myself that I did not actually hear the Redeemer say that. At any rate, I have rejoiced when in the spirit of resignation the echo of it has been heard in my own spirit. Do I not this very day hear Him saying, though long ago He spoke it, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do"? His intercession for my guilty soul. What is it but the continuance of that gentle prayer? And for certain that last concluding sentence, "It is finished," "Consummatum est"—my ears may not have heard it, but my soul hears it now and rejoices to repeat the words!

Who shall lay anything to my charge since Christ has consummated my deliverance from death, Hell, sin, and brought in a perfect righteousness for me? Yes, these old sayings of Christ heard years ago we have heard in spirit, and our witness is after hearing them all, "Never man spoke like this Man." None can be compared with Him at their best. His ministers cannot rival Him—they do but echo His speech.

III. I shall close by mentioning certain PROPHETIC ANTICIPATIONS which lodge in our souls with regard to that eloquence in the future. Brethren, you have heard the voice of Jesus, but are you expecting to still hear it? As long as ever you live you are to speak for Jesus—but your hope for His kingdom does not lie in *your* speech but in *His* voice. He can speak to the heart, He can make the Truth which you only utter to the *ear* penetrate to the *mind* and *heart*. We expect that our exalted Lord will speak before long with louder voice than before.

The Gospel chariot lags awhile. As yet He goes not forth conquering and to conquer, but He will yet gird His sword upon His thigh and His voice shall be heard marshalling His hosts for the battle. Let but Christ give the word, and the company of them that shall publish it shall be exceedingly great. Let Him send forth the Word of His might from Zion, and thousands shall be born in a day. Yes, nations shall be born at once!

The elect of God, today apparently but few, shall come out from their hiding places, and Christ shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. Despite the melancholy belief of some that the world will come to an end with a defeated God and with only a few saved, I nevertheless am cer-

tain that Scripture warrants brighter hopes. One day “the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.” “The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together,” this we know, for God has said it. In all things Christ shall have the pre-eminence, and therefore in the matter of souls saved He will have the pre-eminence over Satan and the souls who are lost.

O for an hour of that voice of the Lord which is full of majesty, that voice which breaks the cedars of Lebanon, and makes them to skip like a calf—Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn! When shall the voice of the Lord shake the wilderness of Kadesh and discover the forests? It shall yet be heard, and in His temple shall everyone speak of His Glory. For the Lord sits upon the flood, yes, the Lord sits King forever. Have hope, then. Let your anticipations be of brighter times, for He will speak—He that shakes both Heaven and earth when He wills it. And when He speaks, you will say, “Never man spoke like this Man.”

We expect personally for ourselves, if Jesus comes not before we depart, to hear Him speak sweetly to us in the hour of death. Talk of it solemnly and softly, for put it in whatever light you may, it is dread work to die. But when we lie a dying, and the sounds of earth are shut out from the lone chamber, and the voice of affection is drowned in mournful sobs, then Jesus will come and make our bed, and speak as never man spoke, saying “Fear not, I am with you. Be not dismayed, I am your God. When you pass through the rivers I will be with you, the floods shall not overflow you.” Dying Christians, by the songs which they have lifted up, and by the joy which has sparkled from their eyes have proven that the voice of Jesus is such that, “Never man spoke like this Man.”

O Beloved, what will that voice be to our disembodied spirits when our souls shall leave this clay and fly through tracks unknown to see the Savior? I know not with what words of welcome He may address us then. He may reserve His choicest utterances for the day of His appearing, but He will not take us into His bosom without a love word, nor receive us into our quiet resting places without a cordial commendation. What must it be to see His face, to hear His voice in Heaven? Then shall we know that, “Never man spoke like this Man.”

And then when the time ordained of old is fulfilled, when the day comes that the dead shall hear the voice of God, when the Resurrection and the Life shall speak with trumpet tones, and the righteous shall be raised from their graves—oh, then it will be seen, as they all obey the quickening word—that “Never man spoke like this Man.” He who speaks the resurrection word is man as well as God. “As by man came death, by Man came also the resurrection from the dead.” And then, when you and I shall be at His right hand. When the body and soul reunited shall receive the final award, and He shall say in inimitable tones, “Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the world,” we shall not need to say, “Never man spoke like this Man.”

When we, with Him, shall enter into the everlasting rest, when He shall deliver up the mediatorial kingdom to God, even the Father, and God shall be All in All, we, in the retrospect of all He said on earth and said in Heaven—we in the constant hearing of His voice who shall wear His priesthood perpetually, looking still like a lamb that has been slain—we shall then bear fullest witness that, “Never man spoke like this Man.”

Mark well, my Hearers, that in such confession every soul of you will have to unite. You may live enemies to Christ, and you may die strangers to Him, but that, "Never man spoke like this Man," you shall be made to feel. If today you will not acknowledge that His mercy to you is unbounded, that His condescension in inviting you to come to Him today is worthy of loving admiration. If you will not yield, but shut your ears to the invitation of His mercy when He says, "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest," yet at the last, an unwilling assent to our text will be wrung from you.

When He shall say, "Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire in Hell, prepared for the devil and his angels," the thunder of that word shall so torment you, the terror of His speech shall so shake you, and utterly dissolve you, that you shall feel, wondering all the while that it was a Man who could speak thus, that, "Never man spoke like this Man." You have sometimes upbraided the preacher for speaking too severely—you will then know that he was not severe enough.

You have sometimes marveled that the minister should give such fearful descriptions of the wrath to come—you thought he went too far. But when the pit opens wide her mouth and the devouring flames leap up to devour you at the word of the once crucified Savior, then you will say, for terror and for wrath, for overwhelming horror—"Never man spoke like this Man." The lips that said "Come, you weary," shall say, "Depart, you cursed," in tones which none but such lips could give forth.

Love once made angry turns to *wrath*, intense and terrible. Oil is soft, but how fiercely it burns! Beware, lest His anger is kindled against you, for it will burn even to the lowest Hell. The Lamb of God is as a lion to those who reject His love. Provoke Him no longer. May the Holy Spirit bow you to repentance. God grant that in a far happier sense than this last, you may learn to say, "Never man spoke like this Man." But one way or other every soul here, and every soul of woman born, shall acknowledge that, "Never man spoke like this Man." To God I commend you. Farewell.

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A VIVID CONTRAST

NO. 3003

A SERMON
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“And every man went unto his own house.”
John 7:53.

“Jesus went unto the Mount of Olives.”
John 8:1.

THESE verses furnish a striking illustration of the unwise way in which, in certain cases, the Bible has been divided into chapters. The meaning of many portions of Scripture would be much more manifest if Gospels, Epistles and even Prophecies were left in their undivided state. The two sentences which I have selected for my text ought never to have been separated—and we may rightly say of them, “What God has joined together, let no man put asunder.” So we will consider them together as they should be considered—“Every man went unto his own house. Jesus went unto the Mount of Olives.”

I. Here we have, in the first place, A FACT FOR OUR EARNEST CONSIDERATION. Let us turn it over in our mind under the Holy Spirit’s gracious guidance. While Christ’s friends and enemies had, everyone of them, a house to go to, He must go spend the night in the open air watching and praying on the Mount of Olives.

Observe, first, *His extreme poverty*. Among them all—friends or foes—there was not one without a house excepting Himself. No, more, among some of the meanest of His creatures, there was not one without a shelter. Foxes, though they were but worthy to be exterminated, had holes in which they could hide. And the birds of the air, though many ruthlessly sought to destroy them, had nests wherein they could rest—but the Son of Man had not where to lay His head. Possibly, in all Judaea, there was only that one houseless man! Certainly there was no other who was so voluntarily houseless as Himself. He had brought Himself down from the glories of His Father’s court, from the majesty of reigning with His Father in Heaven to become dependent upon the bounty of His own disciples for His daily bread—and He had no house that He could call His own, no home to which He could retire when His day’s work was done. Believers, admire His amazing condescension in that, “though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you,

through His poverty, might be rich.” If any of you are poor in this world, be comforted, for you are not poorer than your Master was! Remember that every true Christian is the image of Christ but the godly poor man is the *express* image of Christ! He has one quality beyond those which other Christians have, that is, his poverty, which makes him even more like his Master than they are. He who was born in a stable and cradled in a manger. He who wore the homely garb of the peasantry of Palestine, the garment which was without seam, woven from the top throughout. He who made fishermen His chosen companions, was the poor man’s Christ, poorer than the poorest of you and able, therefore, to sympathize with you in all the pangs and griefs which penury may bring upon you! And you great ones of the earth, despise not the unlettered and the poor, for “has not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith,” to be “heirs of the Kingdom which He has promised to them that love Him”? And has He not “exalted One chosen out of the people,” even His only-begotten and well-beloved Son, to sit with Him on the Throne of His Glory?

Further, when “every man went unto his own house,” Christ had no house to go to! And this denotes not only His extreme poverty, but *the forgetfulness and unkindness of His friends*. Each of us is apt to say, “Had I been there, He would not have spent that night amid the cold dews of the Mount of Olives. He would have had the best accommodation my house could have afforded. I would always have had a chamber prepared for the Lord’s Prophet, like that of the Shunammite woman, with ‘a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick,’ and I would have entertained this Prince of Prophets with the greatest joy!” So you think, but had you lived in Christ’s day, John might still have written, “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.” And the Prophet’s lamentation might again have become true, “He was despised, and we esteemed Him not”—even we, His own people, His blood-bought people, His beloved—“esteemed Him not.”

Surely, never was such a friend used so terribly as the Lord Jesus Christ was used even by His friends and followers! His head must have been wet with the dew of Heaven and His locks with the drops of the night, yet no one gave Him shelter. Yet we must not blame His disciples for their neglect of their Master unless we are also willing to blame ourselves. He has often stood at our door and knocked! Perhaps He is knocking now, but we, in some form or other, refuse to give Him a lodging in our hearts and willingly keep in His place some darling sin. And so the Savior still has to stand outside, for He will not come into our hearts to dwell in peace with sin. He must remain outside until we expel the intruder, or call upon Him to do so.

Observe, too, in the fact of Christ having no home to go to, *the loneliness of His spirit*. If He had asked one of His friends to entertain Him, probably none would have refused His request. Had not His mother

Mary still a home? What had become of His reputed father, Joseph the carpenter? Were not His brothers with Him? Would not one of them entertain Him? There was James, who is called the Lord's brother—could not he find Him a shelter? Peter had a wife, for we read of his wife's mother lying sick of a fever and being cured by Christ—had he no place to which he could invite his Lord? The loving John had a home, for he took the mother of Jesus, after the Crucifixion, to his own home. Then there were the women who followed Jesus and ministered to Him of their substance. And Martha, and Mary, and Lazarus—would not they give Christ a shelter? Oh, yes, they would gladly have done so, but He was, just then, in the midst of trials—He was beset by the Pharisees. They were tempting Him on all sides and He needed something better than the companionship of men! He needed a place where He could rest, but there is not one disciple upon whose bosom He could lean His head. John may lean his head upon Christ's bosom, but Christ cannot lean His head upon John's bosom, so the Savior must go away by Himself to the Mount of Olives for He has a lonely spirit and no human being can fully enter into His grief and woes.

We sometime see a Christian minister of high spirit living in a country village. He is the only educated man in the place. There is no one to whom he can talk upon many themes that are interesting to him and his spirit often feels very lonely. His people seem to have nothing to think of but their farm, their milking, their plowing and their sowings. He cannot get them above all these things and there he stands with, perhaps, not a single companion with whom he can discuss his doubts and questions—and thoughts about Divine things. It is lonely to be a missionary engaged in Christian work in a heathen land—his loneliness may be even greater than that of such a man as I have been describing. But the Savior's loneliness was still greater! There was not one man upon the earth with whom He could talk at all times. Even in His hours of keenest conflict, Christ knew that His chosen followers would leave Him alone—all would forsake Him and flee. It is true that even then, He could say, "Yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me," but apart from His Father's Presence, His whole life may be compressed into those two sentences—"I have trodden the winepress alone. And of the people there was none with Me." So, that night they could all go to their own houses, but God must go to the Mount of Olives, for He must be a lonely Man.

Thus, there are three things which are brought out by the text—Christ's extreme poverty, the unkindness of His friends and the loneliness of His spirit.

But there is another reason for His action—the *fond resolution of His heart*. Why does He go to the Mount of Olives and not somewhere else? He knew that it was near that saved retreat that He was to sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground, so He resolved to

familiarize Himself with the neighborhood which was to be the scene of His terrible conflict with Satan. Do you not think that if Wellington had known beforehand that the fate of nations would be decided on the field of Waterloo, he would have gone to see it, if it had been possible? I believe the great warrior would have gone to look at it and study it to observe the best positions for attack and defense. And the Savior went, with solemn interest, to look at the place where He was to stand foot to foot with the great enemy of souls! If you and I had to bear some terrible suffering, it is very likely, (for the flesh is so weak), that we would try to forget all about it—but it was not so with the Savior! He kept the fact of His atoning Sacrifice constantly before His own mind and spoke of it to others again and again. So intense was His love to His people that He seemed eagerly to anticipate the time when He would suffer even unto death for their sakes. Remember His remarkable saying, “I have a baptism to be baptized with: and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!” What? Was His death upon the Cross to be, in any sense, a relief to Him? Yes, it was even so. And He was “straitened” till it was accomplished. Oh, what wondrous love was that which impelled the Savior onward to Gethsemane—the olive press where He was to be pressed and crushed between the millstones of Jehovah’s wrath in order that He might suffer the penalty due to our transgressions!

I am not going to thresh these thoughts out for you—I merely suggest them as themes for your devout meditation—and I think that there is abundant reason for such meditation in those seven words, “Jesus went unto the Mount of Olives.”

II. Now I want to take the text in another way. The second thing which it presents to us is A VIVID CONTRAST FOR SELF-EXAMINATION.

What a true description this first verse is of our own usual conduct! “Every man went unto his own house.” We go, each one of us, to our own house *for ease*. That is right enough up to a certain point, but do we not often seek our own ease when we should be engaged in the service of our Lord? Christ goes to the mountain to pray, but we go to our beds to sleep, or to our tables to feast, to our friends to while away an hour in empty talk, or to our amusements to kill the time which hangs so heavily upon our hands. I doubt not that the greatest saint among us has some cause to reproach himself for having wasted time and disobeyed that solemn Apostolic injunction, “See, then, that you walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time because the days are evil.” I can, in imagination, see the Savior lifting up His hands in an agony of spirit on the mountain at midnight, while His disciples are all sleeping comfortably in their beds. As we think of our Savior thus agonizing in prayer for His people, can we not find more time for prayer than the most of us usually do? Might it not be profitable to ourselves to mortify the body a little more that we might have a greater advantage in spirit? I am

afraid we would have to present a very poor record if we gave a true account of the time we spend in prayer—yet we have no excuse to offer for being slow in this holy duty. It is not a bondage, a slavery—it is the highest privilege of the Believer’s soul to be engaged in prayer to our Heavenly Father—yet we often prefer the disastrous ease of wasting our time instead of drawing near to God in prayer!

I heard someone say to a woman who had been converted, but whose husband kept a public house, “There is one room in your house which will keep all the other rooms there from injuring your spiritual life—that is the room where you retire for private prayer. If that room is kept right, the rest will do you little harm.” Christian, imitate your Lord who often retired for prayer to the Mount of Olives, and it shall be well with your soul. At a certain missionary station in Africa, one of the Brothers was accustomed to go for private prayer to a little clump of trees and, to get there, he had to cross some long grass. He had gone so often that he had made a clear trail to the spot where he went to pray. Others had done the same and there were several trails across the grass. After a while, this professor began to grow lax in many ways. He could not enjoy the ministry as he used to do. His dealings in trade were not so exact as once they were. An elder Brother pointed out to him the cause of the change that had come over him. He took him aside to his trail and showed him that the grass was growing up—that it was not trodden down as it formerly had been—and then he said, “Brother, *there* is the cause of all the mischief—the grass is growing on the trail where you used to go for private prayer.” If you and I, dear Friends, had to go to some place like that for prayer, I fear that the grass would not always be well trodden down and that we should often have cause to cry, “O Lord, give us the true spirit of prayer!” Like the people of whom the text speaks, we go to our houses for ease, but Christ goes to the mountain to pray in lonely solitude. We still have need to say to Him—

***“Cold mountains, and the midnight air
Witnessed the fervor of Your prayer!
The desert Your temptation knew
Your conflict and Your victory, too.
Be You my Pattern—make me bear
More of Your gracious Image here
Then God the Judge shall own my name
Among the followers of the Lamb.”***

For what else do we go to our houses? We go there, very often, *to take counsel*. On the occasion mentioned here, Christ’s enemies went home to talk together about how they might try to entrap Him. And we sometimes go to our homes to consult with flesh and blood about matters that concern us. We say to one friend, “What do you think I had better do?” And to another, “This is my condition—what do you advise in such a case as mine?” In this way, poor, erring, human judgments are made to

be our chart and our companions, our captain and our pilot! “Jesus went unto the Mount of Olives” and took His case to His Father in prayer. He consulted not with flesh and blood, but with the Eternal, whose wisdom can make no mistake and whose love can never err. Beloved, may we not be blameworthy in having gone here and there, wasting our breath on our friends and fellow sinners, instead of going to the great High Priest, who wears the Urim and Thummim, and who would have told us what we ought to do? The lines of Cowper are still true—

**“Have you no words? Ah to think again!
Words flow apace when you complain.
And fill your fellow creature’s ears
With the sad tale of all your cares.
Were half the breath thus vainly spent,
To Heaven in supplication sent,
Your cheerful song would oftener be,
‘Hear what the Lord has done for me!’”**

Again, we go to our houses, very properly, for *the enjoyment of sympathy*. We feel that if it is to be found anywhere, we shall find tender sympathy there and that if the whole outside world should misunderstand and misrepresent us, we shall be understood and not misrepresented at home. Whoever may slander us away from our home, no one will falsely accuse us there—all hearts there will beat in sympathy with us—so we go to our own homes. But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. I say this not to blame you or myself for seeking sympathy here, for Christ, Himself, did the same. On that memorable night in Gethsemane when He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood, He said to His disciples, “Could you not watch with Me one hour?” He seemed to feel the need of sympathy in that dread hour, but He had to learn, as we also must learn, that there is a point where human sympathy cannot avail us. We must say, as Jesus did, “O My Father,” for only in *His* heart can true sympathy be found. Yet this I may say, without any harshness, that while we prize the sympathy of beloved friends, let us not forget to go to God in prayer. Let us tell the sad tale of all our griefs into His ear and pour out the story of all our sorrows into His heart. He has a bottle for our tears and a book for our complaints. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the grief (as well as the death) of all His people. He counts the number of their wounds as well as the number of the stars. So, while we may seek sympathy from our friends at home, let us not forget to go to the Mercy Seat, that we may also secure the sympathy and help of the best Friend we have!

We go home, also, *for rest and refreshment*. We are toil-worn—it is not more ease that we need, but real repose. We go to our beds, not because of idleness, but that we may be ready for tomorrow’s labor. There are times when the strongest men must turn aside from their toil and rest for a little while—and it is right for us to go to our homes for this purpose.

Yet Jesus went to the Mount of Olives when every man went to his own home—and this suggests to us that we are not to be so concerned for the health of the body as to neglect the requirements of the soul. We must cry with David, “Renew a right spirit within me,” and go to our God in prayer in the hope that we may be quickened in His way. Prayer to God is a even better refreshment than sleep, just as the soul is better than the body. A certain amount of sleep is necessary for the body, but prayer is just as necessary for the soul. The bed will give rest to the tired limbs, but the Mercy Seat will give refreshment to the powers and passions of the spirit. Let us get strength for service, power for endurance and might for conflict by going to the Mount of Olives with the Savior and watching and praying with Him.

I think that I have said enough upon this point of contrast. To my mind there is a very suggestive line of thought in these two sentences—“Every man went unto his own house. Jesus went unto the Mount of Olives.”

III. Just for a minute or so, dear Friends, I want to remind you that we also have here A COMPARISON FOR OUR INSTRUCTION.

Perhaps I shall startle and surprise you when I say that Jesus Christ did exactly what His disciples and the other people did. They went to their own houses and He went to His own house. They went home and He went home. They sought ease, and He sought ease. They sought counsel and He sought counsel. They sought sympathy and He sought sympathy. They sought refreshment and He sought refreshment. The Mount of Olives was, to all intents and purposes, Christ’s home. It was there that He met with His Father. It was there that the Man, Christ Jesus, met with kindred spirits in the Father and the Holy Spirit. It was there that He cast off the cares of the day and unburdened Himself as a weary son does in his parent’s presence. It was there that He told the tale of all the traps which had been laid to trap Him in speech, of all the ways that His enemies had tried to catch Him. It was there that He cried to Heaven for wisdom and it was there that, made strong by fresh contact with His Father, He girt on His golden armor to go forth once more fully protected from all the arrows of the Evil One. Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, that season of prayer upon the Mount of Olives was to Jesus what our going to our houses and to our loved ones is to us. We grieve that His body was wet with the dews of the night, yet we would gladly have some of those same drops upon our body if we could have communion with Him in spirit. We have sympathy with the members of His physical frame because they were tried by the cold of the mountains, and the loneliness of His night vigil, but we wish that our souls could be braced with something like the same vigor which He received upon the Mount of Olives, or in the Garden of Gethsemane. Yes, the cold mountain

was His home. There He *had* a place where He could lay His head, and rest, though only in a spiritual sense.

IV. There is just one other point for me to mention and then I will close. We have here A TYPE FOR OUR EDIFICATION.

We hope to go to our houses after this service, but Jesus is still, in a certain sense, on the Mount of Olives interceding for us. I suppose there are some people in their houses who are *plotting and scheming against the cause of God*. The Jesuit is seeking to spread his nets so that he may, with his many allurements, entice the unwary and extend the evil influence of the harlot of Babylon. The persecutor is planning with the view of tripping up a saint here and overthrowing another yonder. The devil is suggesting, in the minds of atheists and infidels, crafty arguments against the Inspiration of the Scriptures, new difficulties to startle youthful Believers, fresh blasphemies concerning the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. If we could have the roofs taken off the houses in London, tonight, or if we could look into the many evil hearts in this modern Babylon, how many might we see taking counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed! Very many will be going to their houses tonight to plot, plan and imagine all sorts of evil! But, supposing they do, shall we sit down and be afraid? Shall we give way to despair? No! Verily there is still hope and more than hope for the true Church of Christ, for Jesus has gone to the Mount of Olives on high! There He stands, at the right hand of the Father, pleading the cause of His Church. Knowing her difficulties, foreseeing her perils, reading all that is in the hearts of her enemies and her own, He stretches out His hands, points to His wounds and, for Zion's sake, He will not hold His peace! For Jerusalem's sake He will not rest until her righteousness shall go forth as brightness and the salvation of His people shall be as a lamp that burns! There, Church of God, is your star of hope! The interceding Savior is our unfailing protection, our strong bulwarks and our munitions of war! Fear not, O Zion, for, while the Savior pleads, He that sits in the heavens does laugh at His enemies—the Lord has them in derision—

***“Before the Throne of God above
I have a strong, a perfect plea,
A great High Priest, whose name is Love,
Who always lives and pleads for me!
My name is engraved on His hands,
My name is written on His heart—
I know that, while in Heaven He stands
No tongue can bid me thence depart.
One with Himself I cannot die,
My soul is purchased by His blood.
My life is hid with Christ on high
With Christ, my Savior and my God!”***

But some will, I hope, go home in quite another mood. I trust that *some will go home to mourn over sin*. I hope that out of this company which I am now addressing, there are some who are going home to pray. As you, by your bedside, pour out your supplications to “Our Father who are in Heaven,” do not forget that Jesus went to the Mount of Olives to pray—and remember that He is still praying for His people before His Father’s face. Sinner, there will be two pleading for you while you are praying for yourself! As you plead with Christ, Christ pleads for you. When you put your case into His hands, every groan of yours is sprinkled with His precious blood and every penitent tear of yours is made acceptable to God through the merit of Christ’s Sacrifice. Be not discouraged if your words will not come, if there are within you groans which cannot be uttered, or if you are half choked with emotion, so that you cannot speak out what you really feel within, for there is One who can speak for you as never man spoke! And if you cannot plead for yourself, He can plead for you according to that gracious assurance, “If any man sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous.” Just as Jesus went to the Mount of Olives to pray for His people, He has now gone up to Heaven to continue pleading for them and also to make intercession for the transgressors.

It is very likely that *many will go to their houses simply to sleep*, as most of those probably did in our Savior’s day. Many professing Christians come to God’s House to sleep and then go home to sleep. They walk about sleeping, sleeping with their eyes open, spiritually sleeping while they are wide awake about mere secular matters. But it is a comfort to know that while professors sleep and lambs sleep, Jesus still goes, spiritually, to the Mount of Olives. The only hope for the slumbering Church is the wakeful Savior! Even if the earthly watchmen sleep, the best of all Watchmen keeps guard over the vineyard which He has planted. He says, “I the Lord do keep it. I will water it every moment. Lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.” “The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him.”

It may be that *some of you will go home to be tempted*. It is a sad thing to go from the House of God to meet with temptation, yet that happens to many of you. You come in here on Sabbath days or weeknights and try to get spiritual food for your soul and then, perhaps, the first word that you hear as you cross the threshold of your home is an oath. What a comfort it is that Jesus goes to the Mount of Olives to plead for you and that He knows, beforehand, the exact temptation which you will have to meet, even as He said to Simon Peter, “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith fails not.” Be satisfied, O Believer, that Christ will never put His gold into the furnace without Himself sitting at the mouth

of it to watch the whole purifying process! He never takes His eyes off the precious ingot as long as it is in the furnace—and only when He sees His own image reflected in the pure metal does He take it out of the fire! You can be sure of this, though the devil may come out against you and assail you in fashion which shall utterly stagger you, God has not forgotten you! Jesus has gone up on high and He is pleading for you that in this, your time of utmost weakness and need, the Grace of God shall be sufficient for you and make a way of escape for you out of all your troubles and temptations!

I might enlarge upon this fruitful theme, but I will not do so. And so I close by expressing the hope that some of us intend, from this day forth, to serve God better than we have ever done. I know that there are some members of this Church who feel stirred up to do more than they have ever yet done for Christ and, after all, the most of our members do not do much for Him. There are some in the Church who have no share in all that is done for Christ. It is not the many, but the few, who really do the work. If all the members of this Church felt such love for Christ as some do, and were all as ardently devoted to His cause as some are, I know not what we might not do for Christ, nor how rapidly His Kingdom might be extended by us! If any of us go to our homes solemnly praying that we may, from this day forth, be completely consecrated to the Lord, to serve Him with a perfect heart, we may rest assured that Jesus is praying a similar petition before His Father's face! He is praying that His people may be holy! That they may be happy! That they may love Him with their whole heart and bring forth much fruit to the praise and glory of His holy name! So, when you truly desire to serve God, Christ hears you and His prayer and your prayer agree well together!

Let us, therefore, go to our houses remembering that thought of Jesus retiring in secret to pray for His people—and before we close our eyes, let us go again to the Mercy Seat where Christ has often met with us. And as we close this service, let us for a few moments go in spirit to the Mount of Olives in prayer.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 7:30-63; 8:1.**

John 7:30, 31. *Then they sought to take Him: but no man laid hands on Him, because His hour was not yet come. And many of the people believed on Him, and said, When Christ comes, will He do more miracles than these which this Man has done? Well might they ask that question, for Jesus had worked such marvelous miracles that they could not imagine anything greater! Surely this must be the Christ or if He were not, when the Christ did come, could He and would He do any greater miracles than this Man had done?*

32. *The Pharisees heard that the people murmured such things concerning Him.* Whispered these things, afraid to speak out boldly because of the Pharisees and, therefore, they quietly said it among themselves and, after all, there is no fire more to be dreaded than a smoldering fire.

32, 33. *And the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take Him. Then said Jesus unto them, Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto Him that sent Me.* That was a blessed way for Christ to describe His return to the heavenly world—"I go unto Him that sent Me." Possibly He said this to the very men who were sent to take Him.

34. *You shall seek Me, and shall not find Me: and where I am, there you cannot come.* No officers can arrest Him now that He has gone up into His Father's Glory. There is no fear of any of them being there to catch Him in His speech, or to drag Him before the ecclesiastical and secular judges, as they did when He was here.

35, 36. *Then said the Jews among themselves, "Where will He go, that we shall not find Him? Will He go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles and teach the Gentiles? What manner of saying is this that He said, You shall seek Me and shall not find Me: and where I am, there you cannot come?"* They appear to have had some intimation of that glorious love of Christ which was not to be confined within the bounds of the Jewish nation, yet they could not or would not understand His words.

37. *In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried.* Shouted, spoke with all His might! And He stood, although He usually sat to deliver His messages. But now, as if His whole being was awakened to its utmost energy, on account of the last day of the gathering having come, when perhaps the people would go home and He would be unable thus to speak with them again, "Jesus stood and cried."

37. *Saying, "If any man thirsts, let him come unto Me, and drink. O blessed invitation! How sweet it should be to every thirsty soul! "If any man"—prince or pauper! "Any man"—moral or utterly debauched! "If any man thirsts, let him come unto Me"—not to ordinances, nor to human priests, "let Him come unto Me, and drink," as much as He will "without money, and without price."*

38. *He that believes on Me, as the Scripture has said, out of His belly shall flow rivers of living water.* He will not only drink enough to satisfy his own thirst, but he will, himself, become a fountain—streams of Grace shall be communicated to his fellow men through him.

39. *(But this spoke He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive: for the Holy Spirit was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified).* He was not given then, but later. On the day of Pentecost He was given—and He has never been withdrawn!

40-43. *Many of the people, therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet. Others said, This is the Christ. But*

some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee? Has not the Scripture said that Christ comes of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was? So there was a division among the people because of Him. It is still true that Christ is a cause of division, as He, Himself, foretold that He would be.

44. *And some of them would have taken Him but no man laid hands on Him. In the 30th verse of this chapter, and in the 20th verse of the next Chapter, we are told why they did not take Him—"His hour was not yet come." And, like their Lord, saints are immortal till their work is done!*

45-48. *Then came the officers to the chief priest and Pharisees; and they said unto them, Why have you not brought Him? The officers answered, Never man spoke like this Man. Then answered them the Pharisees, Are you also deceived? Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on Him? They professed to be the spiritual leaders of the nation and expected all to follow them.*

49-51. *But the people who know not the Law are cursed. Nicodemus said unto them, (he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them), Does our Law judge any man before it hears him and knows what he does? Nicodemus asked a simple question, but they could not answer it without convicting themselves of disobeying that very Law of God of which they pretended to be the exponents.*

52, 53. *They answered and said unto him, Are you also of Galilee? Search, and look: for out of Galilee arises no Prophet. And every man went unto his own house.*

John 8:1. *Jesus went unto the Mount of Olives.*

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
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THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

NO. 3534

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 19, 1916.

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

“Then spoke Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.”
John 8:12.

OUR Lord did not speak in this way at the beginning of His ministry. He did not thus bear witness to Himself, saying, “I am the light of the world.” But it was befitting on this occasion, when the people before Him had already received sufficient evidence from other quarters. John the Baptist, whom all men counted for a Prophet, had testified that Christ was the true Light of God which lights every man that comes into the world. The witness of John they rejected—startling, if not conclusive, as it must have been—considering the esteem in which his oracular voice was held. Moreover, Jesus, Himself, had worked conviction in their hearts by His teaching. Had they not listened to His famous Sermon on the Mount? Could they not feel the authority with which He spoke? Did they not confess to the impressions He produced on them? The weight and the wisdom of His discourse manifested a power that could melt their thoughts into the very mold of His ministry. Nor was it merely His teaching, transparent though that was, but the signs He showed and the miracles He worked with the majesty of His voice and the virtue of His touch proclaimed that He was the Light of the world! Thus the infirmities of the creature called forth His Divine compassion. With radiant eyes of pity He looked on the wretched and gave them quick relief—He shone on their sadness like the Sun of Righteousness, with healing in His beams. They hailed His visit in every town and village as the Healer of all who were diseased. Might not the quick sense of every unprejudiced spectator detect in Him the Messiah and welcome His advent to the worlds? At length, as though aggrieved by their unbelief, He speaks loudly and proclaims plainly, “I am the light of the world.” Such high ground does He take before His adversaries. Well might He say it to their teeth. Hardly an hour before He had flashed that Light into their eyes and blinded them with its brilliance! They had stood before Him, with the unhappy woman whom they sought to make the instrument of entangling Him, and soon they had sneaked out of His Presence conscience-stricken, when He said,

“He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone at her.” One ray of His Omniscience had lighted up the secret chambers of their memory and exposed, at least to themselves, the righteous Law they had broken, and the crimes they had to answer for. He who could thus convince *them*, is able to convince the world of sin! He who lit up the deepest recesses of the heart is the Light of the world! So Jesus here boldly and openly avowed the truth concerning Himself when He said, “I am the light of the world.”

Let our meditation now be directed to our Lord Jesus Christ as the Light of the world—the true Light—the guiding Light—and the universal Light!

I. JESUS IS THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

That Jesus is the Light—the Light of the world—is to be seen in all parts of His blessed history. Look at Him in His cradle. Shines there a star above the house wherein the young Child sleeps? Brighter far than yonder star is He, who lies cradled in the manger! He has come, the predictions of whose Advent had illumined centuries of darkness! As a Baby, devout men hail Him, “A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of His people Israel.” To the eye of faith, what radiance emanates from the newborn Baby! Look, for the like was never looked on before! There God is veiled in human flesh. Behold the mystery of the Incarnation! God is manifest in our nature! He dwells among us. The Light is clear and dazzling.

Well might the angels have, sung, “Glory to God in the highest; on earth peace, goodwill towards men.” Sweet Baby! You have pierced the thick darkness of earth’s sorrow! You have enlightened her scenes of sadness, infusing joy into her gloom! Your coming revealed the love of God, His sweet compassion and His tender pity towards the guilty sons of men. With growing years, while His increasing wisdom kept pace with His increasing stature, He shone, exhibiting a Child’s delight in the two tables of the Law. His first concern being to do His heavenly Father’s business and His constant habit being to submit Himself and to honor His earthly parent. Not rashly or recklessly did He begin to teach. His Baptism throws a wonderful light upon consecration to God—and the dire temptations that quickly followed, in all of which He foiled the tempter—have thrown a brilliant light on the pathway of Christian ministers! As a Preacher, He was luminous. He expounded the spirituality of the Law of God. Light penetrated the precept through and through as He made the very essence of purity apparent! His Light cleared the Law of the mists and fogs that the Rabbinical writers had gathered around it. He shed Light, too, upon the Covenant of Grace. He promulgated the Gospel of peace among the sons of men. He told of God the Father, willing to receive His prodigal children back again into His bosom. His parables threw wondrous Light upon the dispensation of the Kingdom of Heaven. His counsels and His cautions brought the final destinies of the righ-

teous and the wicked into full view. Eternity dawned on His hearers while He spoke. His own life exhibited the power of love, the value of sympathy and the virtue of forgiving injuries. His death gave yet more palpable evidence of unfaltering submission to the will of God—and unflinching self-sacrifice for the welfare of men!

Oh, Beloved, the Light of Christ comes out brightest upon the Cross! Someone called it the Lighthouse of this world's sea. So it is. This is the Lighthouse that throws its beams across the dark waters of human guilt and misery, warns men of the rocks, and guides them to the haven. A Savior! God in human flesh! He whom the Seers predicted—"A king shall reign in righteousness," appears as the Divine symbol represented Him—"a Lamb slain." Behold Him shedding His precious blood to atone for the sins of men! Never did such Light shine on the Law and the Prophets! Never did such Light gleam on the faith and hope of pure hearts! Never did such Light irradiate the repentance and conversion by which sinners are retrieved! Behold the Sun as He comes forth from His chamber and rejoices to finish His course! He before whose eyes Jesus Christ has been evidently set forth crucified, has seen a Light which outshines all earthly splendor! The sin and the sorrow, the shame and the sentence, all vanish when we see the Redeemer die for us! And if from the gloom of His death so much comfort can be extracted, what shall we say when He rose again from the dead? His dark sepulcher reflects Glory now that He has arisen from the dead! The shroud, the mattock, and the grave are shorn of their terrors—

***"No more a morgue, to fence
The relics of lost innocence,
A vault of ruin and decay—
The imprisoning stone is rolled away."***

Into the sepulcher you can peer now that Christ has broken down the door and torn away the veil. Through it you can look. For those that follow Christ, it is a passage into everlasting life! He has brought life and immortality to light. Since He has risen from the tomb and left the dead, the Light of God, clear and transparent, shines on the exodus of the soul from earth! On, onward still, track His path as in His ascension He goes flaming up the skies! There, there is a road of Light that shows us the way to God! He enters Heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father. There, as our Representative, He sheds the Light of comfort down upon us. There He waits—and while He waits—He wills that where He is, there should His people be! Oh, happy thought, today, my Brothers and Sisters! Among the sons of men, Christ is still the Light. He has sent the Holy Spirit to be His Representative here on earth. He testifies of Christ. The Divine Paraclete occupies the place of our departed Teacher. The Church, inspired by the blessed Spirit, with ten thousand tongues, proclaims the Gospel of salvation. "You are the light of the world," said Jesus. In His

people, Christ still shines forth with even a brighter light than in the days of His earthly sojourn! He has ten thousand reflectors, instead of twelve. Ten thousand times ten thousand tongues proclaim His Gospel and ten thousand times ten thousand hearts burn and blaze with the Light of the Divine Word! Christ is the Light of the world! From His cradle to His Throne, and onward till He comes in full splendor at the Second Advent, the Lamb is the Light of God that illuminates this dark earth! "Then spoke Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world."

II. JESUS IS THE TRUE LIGHT.

There are other lights. Before His Coming there had been some typical light. Do you not remember that a golden lamp stood in the Holy Place, with its seven branches? It was an admirable piece of sacred furniture, and highly instructive—but Jesus seems to put it away. In fact, it had been already put away. He had come to put an end to its meaning by fulfilling its intent. "This was not the Light of God—it was only the *type* of the Light. "I am the true light," He says. Even that light which flamed across the desert way when Moses led the host of God through the wilderness was but a typical light. The veritable Pillar of Cloud and Fire is Jesus, who leads the whole host of God's elect through this weary wilderness to the Canaan of the blessed!

Jesus Christ was the true Light *in opposition to the smoking flax of tradition*. Listen to those Rabbis! They think themselves the light of the world! Their sophism is an endless strife of words—their research is not worth your study—their knowledge is not worth the knowing! They can tell you exactly which is the middle verse of the Bible and which is the middle letter of the middle word! They discussed their paradoxes till they became addle-headed! They refined on their subtleties till doctrine dwindled down into doubt, simple Truth was degraded into silly twaddle, their translations of Scripture were a travesty and their commentaries an outrage upon commonsense! But Christ, the true, the heavenly Light of God, extinguishes all your earthly luminaries! The Jewish Rabbi, the Greek philosopher, the ecclesiastical father, and the modern theological thinker are meteors that dissolve into mist! They make void the Word of God through their traditions or their conjectures. Flee away from the nebulous forms and noxious fumes of their old traditions and new discoveries! Believe what Jesus said, His Apostles taught, and what you have had revealed to you in His own pure Word! Christ is the true Light of God!

In opposition to the glare of priestcraft, with which so many in all ages have been enamored, Christ is the Light of the world! There is some reason to suppose that this declaration of our Lord bore allusion to a custom observed among the Jews at that time in connection with the Feast of Tabernacles. Maimonides says that on the previous evening two enormous candelabra—golden lamps—of a vast size were set up in the court of the women in the open air, and that these flamed with such a

brilliant light that they appeared to illuminate the whole city of Jerusalem. And the women came with a torchlight procession and stood around these flaming candelabra, and there executed a sort of sacred dance and solemn pageant. This was done, not on the authority of Moses, but on the authority of *tradition*—to keep the people in mind of the cloudy and fiery pillar of the wilderness! The Feast of Tabernacles, you know, was designed as a memorial of the 40 years that the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness, dwelling in tents. But this particular rite was of their own invention—a supplementary observance intended to remind the people of the fiery pillar that illumined the camp in those days of yore. Now it is supposed, not, I think, without good reason, that it was on the morning after this celebration that Jesus stood in the court. The lamps were gone out, but the golden columns that the night before had flamed, still remained in their places—the remnant of a spectacle—the lamps minus the light. Just then the sun was rising in its own peerless splendor. The scene they beheld gave force to the sentence He uttered. The contrast between the lamps which the priests had lit—a fit emblem of superstition—were all going out, perhaps with a noxious smell, while the mighty orb of day was rising when Jesus said, “I am the light of the world; He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness.” Whether the scene and the circumstances were as has been so well imagined, or not, the truth is fitly illustrated by the similitude. When every lamp that ever man has kindled, and fed with the oil of superstition, shall have died out, as they must expire, our Lord Jesus Christ shall, like the morning sun, make glad the sons of men! Away you go, you bright meteors of the night, around which the children of superstition execute their maddened dance of implicit belief! Away you go! Already you begin to go out! I see how you all flicker, even now. The day comes on apace in which the blast of God’s eternal Spirit shall blow you out in everlasting night. But Jesus shines! He is the true Light of God and will shine on forever! “I live in the twilight of Christianity,” said Voltaire, and he unwittingly spoke a truth. He thought that it was the twilight of the evening, but it was the twilight of the *morning*, for Jesus still shines brighter and brighter—the true Light of God before which the lamps of superstition and priestcraft must pale their ineffectual fires! This is what the Savior meant—He was the true Light.

Very different, too, is the Light of Christ *from the sparks which are to be seen all the world over*. Every now and then a scientific gentleman picks up a flint arrowhead and he strikes a wonderful light with it. And he that has his tinder-box ready and a brimstone match may soon think he has got the true light—till another philosopher comes and, with the lid of the aforesaid tinderbox, puts out that light! This is the cardinal virtue of philosophers—they extinguish one another! Their fine spun theories do not often survive the fleeting generation that admires them! A fresh race

starts fresh theories of unbelief, which live their day, like ephemera, and then expire. Not so the Light of Christ! It burns on and beams forever! We have friends who have been dazed by the light of “public opinion”—a very bright light is that. And we have known some decent scholars who have been enraptured with “the light of the 19th Century”—a wonderful luminary, indeed, but slightly darkened by the follies, frauds and crimes which every day’s newspaper reveals! We have had the light of knowledge which lauded Aristotle, and made the heathen author supply a textbook for Christian colleges! We have heard more than enough of the light of the Church in which we can discern nothing but colors and conceits, borrowed from the medieval darkness of Christendom. But we have the trustworthy and the true when we hear Him exclaim, “I am the light.” Where else shall light be found? Where shall the bewildered sons of men find a reliable guide? In the teaching of the Person, the Life, the Death, the Sacrifice of the Christ of Nazareth, we have the Light of God self-evidential, palpable by its own brilliance! Guiding Light is here, alike, clearly visible. This to follow is not fallacious. “I am the light of the world; He that follows Me shall not walk in darkness.” Thus, then, is He a Light that is to be followed! Do any of you want to enjoy the light that streams from Christ? Be assured you cannot realize it by reading about it—you must follow it! If a man could travel so fast as always to follow the sun, of course he would always be in the light. If the day should ever come when the speed of the railway shall be equal to the speed of the world’s motion, then a man may so live as to never lose the light. Now he that follows Christ shall never walk in darkness! To follow Him means to commit yourselves to Him, to believe Him and yield yourselves up—obediently doing what He bids—and implicitly accepting what He says. You must have no other Master. Say not, “I will be taught by Calvin,” or, “by Luther,” or, “by Wesley,” or, “by someone else.” Jesus Christ, only, must be your Light! His Word, by the testimony of His Spirit, must be your sole authority!

III. JESUS IS THE GUIDING LIGHT FOR THE SOUL. For the soul that pants after God. Do you say, with Philip, “show us the Father, and it suffices us”? Jesus says, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no man comes unto the Father but by Me.” Christ is the guiding light through the multitude of authors. If you want to thread your way among them, let the early Fathers, the sturdy Reformers, the rigid Puritans and the modern Evangelists be your companions, if it so please you. But let Him be your Guide and His counsel your stay till you reach the gates of Glory. Amidst the conflict of opinions, His sure Word will prove your safe chart! He is the guiding Light through sickness and suffering—trust Him, and He will make your bed in your sickness—He will bring lasting benefits out of your most lamentable afflictions. He is the guiding Light through death’s

dark vale. In those gloomy shades you need fear no ill if you keep close to Him—

***“Sun of my Soul, You Savior dear,
It is not night if You are near.”***

Christ has said, “He that follows Me shall not walk in darkness”—so the terror of night flies at His Presence! The atoning blood shall speak peace to you. Ignorance shall vanish before the brightness He manifests. Christ shall teach you. Despair shall dissolve before the sweet beams of hope. Even doubt, with all the indecision that comes of it, melts at the sound of His animating voice, “This is the way; walk you in it.” Thrice happy the man who commits himself to Jesus! He shall always have the Light of God and shall never walk in darkness!

IV. JESUS IS THE UNIVERSAL LIGHT.

He says, “I am the light of the world.” He does not merely say, “I am the light of the Jews,” or, “I am the light of the Gentiles.” He is both. He is the Light of all mankind! There is no clear light in which any man can discern God, or rightly understand himself, perceive the bitterness of sin, or apprehend the destiny and the doom of Heaven and Hell, but what flows through Jesus Christ! I do not doubt that among the various religious professions spread over the world—in many of which Christianity is much debased—there are devout persons who enjoy a share of communion with God and a sense of pardoned sin, though the tone of their thoughts, like the tongue of their utterances, widely differs from our own—but it is all through one common Lord, our Savior, Jesus Christ, they find acceptance! When I get hold of a book that teaches erroneous things, yet if there is a savor of Jesus Christ in it, I censure the faults without condemning the author. Never let my strong criticisms be mistaken for anathemas. I sometimes perceive that the man who wrote it has evidently found salvation because he has laid hold of our Lord Jesus Christ. He that follows Him is on the right tack. Though he may err in a thousand minor considerations, by following Christ in the main thing, he is safe. Learn of Him and obey Him in all things—then shall you be blessed, yourself, and useful to others! Happy the man who has seen this Light and walks in this Light of Christ, for “this is the light that lights every man that comes into the world!” There is a little Light in Mohammedanism. Indeed, considering the age in which Mohammed lived, he had a great deal of Light—the religion of the Koran is immeasurably superior to the religions of the age in which the prophet flourished. He even taught the Unity of the Godhead most clearly. Yet the light in the Koran is borrowed from the Old and New Testament. It is borrowed light. The intelligence is pilfered. The light of the Parsee, the light of Zoroaster, the light of Confucius came originally from the sacred books of the Jews. From one source they must have all come, for all light comes from the great Father of Lights. Wherever you alight upon any truth in strange

places about man's state and condition, or about God and the way to safety, you may rest assured that the light, if tracked to its dawn, would lead you up to Jesus Christ—for all the true Light comes from Him.

Christ is the Light of the world, destined to shed His beams over the whole earth. The day comes when all mankind will see this Light. How often I have been told of late that the world is all going to rack and ruin, and that all that we ought to do is to try and man a lifeboat and save a few strugglers, hastening ourselves to leave the wreck before she breaks up! Well now, I am not so desponding as that. I am of opinion that, by God's good Grace, we shall tug the old vessel off the rocks, and that the kingdoms of this world will become the Kingdoms of our God and of His Christ, for the Lord has sworn that all flesh shall see the salvation of God! I cannot believe that this dispensation will be wound up as a tremendous failure, that the Gospel zealously preached everywhere shall result in only a few being saved, and that the whole economy shall go out in darkness as the snuff of a candle is extinguished. No, I look for better things! They who dwell in the wilderness shall bow before Him and His enemies shall lick the dust. The isles shall bring Him tribute. Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts, yes, all kings shall fall down before Him. I cannot help believing that the Gospel is yet to be triumphant. I look for the coming of Christ. Let Him come when He may, our hearts will leap for joy to greet Him! But for this dispensation to end without success would almost seem to me like thwarting the purposes of God. It is not His way in the world. He has deliberately entered into battle with Satan, choosing poor feeble instruments like ourselves to confound the forces confronted against Him! And if He should withdraw His troops from the field, or come, Himself, to the front and take up the fight single-handed which His chosen legions could not conduct, it would look as if He had not wisely foreseen the engagement, or had needed to alter His plans to compass His ends! His Spirit can inspire inveterate feebleness with irresistible force. He can use means without miracles, or He can work wonders without wantonness. His first act foretold auspiciously. The twelve Apostles, like a little compact square of grenadiers to fight against the foe, is no ill omen! It surely does not mean that the battle shall not end till the enemy has turned his back and fled! Moreover, He keeps on sending fresh battalions. He raises up new traps and, every now and then, when the battle seems to waver, He recruits the ranks and sends out new enlistments, strengthening the ranks that are thinned and harassing the enemy with His reserves. Courage, my Brothers and Sisters! There shall be revival after revival! There shall be reformation after reformation, shock of battle after shock of battle, and the dread artillery of God's great Gospel shall be fired off against the hosts of Hell! The gods of the heathen shall fall. Antichrist shall be overthrown! Babylon shall sink, like a millstone, in the flood. The crescent of Mohamed must wane into eternal

darkness! Israel shall behold her King, and the fullness of the Gentiles shall be gathered at His feet. So let our faith excite our courage, our courage stimulate our patience and our patience give zest to the full assurance of hope while we worship our Lord Jesus Christ as the Light of the world!

Thus have I carried out my design of amplifying on the four points that I propounded to you at the outset. Let me wind up with a personal question—Since Christ is the Light of the world, I would ask—

V. HOW ARE WE ACTING TOWARDS HIM?

Do any of us *shun the Light*? I know some men slight the privileges they ought to prize. They do not want to know Him whose going forth is as the light of the morning when the sun rises. They never read the Bible, or search into the history, the prophecy and the promises. They do not like an earnest ministry. They have a sort of happy-go-lucky style of religion—they take in whatever anybody else tells them—they attend their place of worship as a matter of habit, and observe all the proprieties of fashion. But as to doing right or seeking the Light of God, they seldom or never give it a thought! They do not count it desirable. Too much of the Light of God could expose much that would not bear inspection. Dear Friend, if you are afraid of the Light of God, be suspicious of yourself, for it is deceit that dreads detection! Who are the people who like darkness rather than light? If it were put to a meeting of the inhabitants of London, who would vote for putting out the gas at night? Well, I guarantee you, every burglar would! Every murderer would—and there are certain libertines who would rather like it. Every man that does evil hates the light! I do not mean to compare you with those gentlemen. Still, the saying is very comprehensive, “He that does evil hates the light, neither comes to the light lest his deeds should be reproved.” Of course, when some men sneer, we can appreciate their sensitiveness. The Doctrine of Christ does not suit the dissolute. Lax living never does lead up to an admiration of pure piety. What a price the profligate have to pay for their pleasures! Are you, my Friend, conscious of anything you need to conceal? Look closely at it. Recollect that you will have to look at it in that Great Day when the secrets of all hearts will be exposed. When Jesus comes “to judge the world with righteousness and His people with equity,” from the light of justice, from the heat of judgment, nothing whatever shall be hid! Be wise, therefore, to repent now of the evil, lest calamity reach you when there is none to commiserate.

Do I see a curl of the lip, a shrug of the shoulder, a cynical expression of the countenance, as someone asks, “Are we really, then, to regard the Christ you speak of, the Atonement you preach, the resurrection you are so confident about, as the Light of the present age, the Light of other ages—in fact, the Light of the world?” You put it well, my Friend, and you look well as you ask the question. It occurs to me that I might meet you

in altered circumstances, when your tone would be altered likewise. Flesh is frail. Your eyes will not be always full of luster. Your spirits will not be always blithe and gay. Your health will not be always strong and vigorous. Not yet have you felt your need of the Light of God which has irradiated past ages, can enlighten this age and will shine with undiminished Glory in the everlasting age! Proud man, are you a philosopher or a politician? Are you a man of science, or a mere pretender? Know this, that in darkness you did enter this world—years passed before you dreamed that life had a purpose and in darkness, still denser—you must make your exit, if, pleased with a fancy or enamored of a fallacy, you fail to see the Light that makes time and eternity resplendent! When we preach the Gospel purely and simply, we seem to be challenging the question on the part of some of you. To what purpose? The Light of God we propound, you do not need! How can I answer you? No arguments of mine will avail while you are blind to the perils you must meet with in traversing those unknown paths and untried experiences that lie before you! And as to the objections that any of you raise, let the man that takes objection to God's counsel and spurns His kindness, answer for the rashness he will have to rue!

Petty scruples! Paltry excuses! They betray your insincerity! It is absurd to trifle when the outlook might well make you tremble to plead for yourselves. You will not put your cause in the hands of the Counselor. Hence the gloom that comes of your doubts! Hence the wretchedness of a sinner's reflections on the Grace of his Redeemer! Do you quibble at the Light of God? Do you know the reason why? Well, I think it is for very much the same reason that made the Brahmin break the microscope. He thought it wicked to destroy life of any kind. He would not eat meat, or feed upon flesh, fish, or fowl, for anybody who destroyed life would destroy his own soul. "Well," said a missionary, "but you must do violence to your own conscience every time you drink, for the water you swallow teems with animalcule—living, moving creatures." Then he showed him a drop of water magnified by a microscope. The evidence was clear, but instead of yielding to conviction, the Brahmin was enraged at the instrument which worked the discovery, so he broke the microscope! In like manner, men despise and attempt to disprove the Gospel because it reveals Truths of God that are unwelcome. It explodes their traditions! It disparages their opinions, it debases their cherished tastes and so it destroys their peace of mind! It will not let them live comfortably in sin. The love of sin and superstition, a zeal for your clan and your craft, animate your opposition to malevolence and madness! I think I hear somebody say, "I wish I could see it." Well, dear Friend, I wish I could credit your candor. The Light of God that streams from Christ is visible, but not to eyes that are shut! Not to hearts that are hardened! Not to consciences that are seared! "Open your eyes—it is all you have to do." Look, Sinner—

look and live! All around you is the Light of everlasting Love. Do but open those poor eyes of yours that unbelief has kept closed so long! O Lord, open the sinner's eyes that he may now see! The Light of God is all around you, Brother! The Light is all around you, Sister! Others see it and rejoice. Only let your eyes be opened, and you shall hail the glorious orb which makes manifest all that is obscure and awful to your present apprehension!

Have you seen the Light? Is there one who says? "Well, thank God, I have seen that Light"? Then, dear Brother, dear Sister, be grateful and give thanks! We are, none of us, as thankful as we ought to be for the Light that shines in the face of Jesus Christ. There was a custom on the Alps in the olden time, which, I fear, has dropped into disuse. Someone was appointed to stand upon the topmost Alp with a great cow horn, and as soon as he beheld the rising of the sun, with a loud blast he gave notice. From peak to peak of the Alps might then be heard, in those good old days, a Psalm of praise! Oh, you happy souls that have beheld the rising of the Sun of Righteousness, tell it forth with trumpet tongue! Well may a thousand voices take up His praise! Blessed be the name of Jesus! Forever be His name adored! Magnify His Grace for the Light that shines, for the goodness it diffuses—for the joy, the abounding joy, it awakens on every side!

And now, Brothers and Sisters, let gratitude and benevolence prompt your zeal *to spread the Light*, to reflect it all around, near and far! I am very anxious that all the members of this Church should endeavor to disseminate the Light of the knowledge of Christ which has shone in their own hearts. I pray you, Brothers and Sisters, do not get cold, formal, or indifferent. The Truth of God you have believed through Grace is a precious trust committed to your charge. You have been a praying people, and you are still so—blessed be God's name. Do not forsake the Prayer Meetings—frequent them regularly and conspire together to make them still more full of life and energy. I have been known to say with honest gratitude that most, if not all, the members in fellowship with us were actually engaged in some work for Jesus. Is it so now? Are you all interested and occupied in telling and teaching the good news and the great lessons of the Gospel? We have no notion of leaving to pastors the whole work of the Christian ministry in which every faithful disciple should take earnest part. One man, alone, perhaps, may preach to such a throng as this, but if we are to have preaching everywhere, you must all preach by word and deed to circulate the heavenly wisdom in every sphere of earthly resort!

Oh, my Sisters and my Brothers, the best of all preaching, because the most simple and unostentatious, is to be found in the ordinary communion you hold with your fellow creatures when, with a good conversation, you avail yourselves of all the occurrences and opportunities of daily life!

In your families the sweetness of your temper, the gentleness of your manners and the purity of your actions should bear witness that you have been with Jesus and learned of Him. The integrity of your business habits should speak for the sanctity of your morals and commend the school in which you have been trained. Your character must be clear, or the utterance of your lips will be despised. Then an outspoken testimony will take hold of men's hearts. Tell your children, your brothers, your sisters, and your intimate friends the way to Jesus! Tell the strangers who sit by your side, if you can, something of your own sweet experience of the Light of God that there is in Jesus! God has recently taken away some of our best workers, as you know. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, make up for the loss of one of the best of men, long known as a deacon and Elder in our midst, who is now laid aside—his health departed, his strength prostrate. Oh, Sisters, try to make up by double energy for the loss of that good Sister who was a mother among you all! Oh, let us all see to it that there are no gaps in the ranks of Christ's army which are not quickly filled up with fresh recruits! If there should happen to be a vacancy, and the man has fallen who stood next to me, I will try, by God's strength, to fight with both hands at this time till some other shall step up to take his place. Since Christ is our Light and He has ordained us to be lights in the world, let us shine to the utmost of our capacity until the Master shall take us to dwell with Him in the Light of God forever! Amen.

—Adapted from the *C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

THE CHRISTIAN'S MOTTO

NO. 1165

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 22, 1874,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***"I always do those things that please Him."
John 8:29.***

OUR Lord Jesus stood alone as the Advocate of right and truth in the days when He dwelt among men. It is true He had a few followers, but they were so slow to learn and so weak in action that they rather *increased* His difficulties than rendered Him assistance. He was a solitary Champion in the midst of armies of foes. Those foes were powerful, cunning, cruel and exceedingly active, yet He was calm, unmoved and faced them without fear. He was never put to the blush by them and never turned His back in retreat. Our Lord was victorious all through the campaign of His ministry. I may say of Him that He went forth conquering and to conquer—and on the Cross He gained His crowning victory!

Since you, also, will meet with enemies, would you learn to be as calm as He? Since difficulties must beset your pathway, would you possess the same strength as He? Would you, in fact, live as He lived, and, finishing your course, would you enter into His joy? Then study well the records of His sublime career and you will see that the secret of His power was the Presence of His God—"He that sent Me is with Me." And the secret of His comfort was fellowship with Jehovah—"He has not left Me alone." If you would know how you can enjoy the Presence and fellowship of the Lord—and all the power and comfort which come thereby, the Savior tells you the secret in the following words—"For I always do those things that please Him."

If we would have God with us, we must be agreed with Him. "Shall two walk together unless they are agreed?" Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, "He that has My commandments and keeps them, he it is that loves Me, and he that loves Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him and will manifest Myself to him" (John 14:21). To do the things which please God is the way to secure His Presence and consequent power and happiness. I shall, at this time, endeavor to set forth the Savior before you all under two aspects—as *the Mediator*, in which office we delight to trust Him, and as the *Model*, in which Character we endeavor to imitate Him. May the Holy Spirit so illuminate our minds that under both aspects our souls may be greatly blessed as we gaze upon our Lord.

I. First, then, as THE MEDIATOR. He says of Himself, as God-Man, the appointed Redeemer, the sent Son of God, "I always do those things that please Him." This was and is true of our Lord every way. Of His Incarnation we read those memorable words—"Lo, I come: in the volume of the Book it is written of Me, I delight to do Your will, O My God: yes, Your Law is within My heart." In the same Psalm He describes Himself as a servant

whose ears had been opened or bored that He might be a servant forever. And in another place He says, "He wakens morning by morning; He wakens My ear to hear as the learned." The Son of God was willing to come to earth to do His Father's will and His birth at Bethlehem was one of the points in which He pleased the Father.

He was also doing the things which pleased the Father during His obscure life as the carpenter's Son. We know but little of it, and it is vain, by pencil or tongue, to attempt to paint what Scripture has left beneath the veil of silence. But we know this much of it, that He was about "His Father's business" and that "He grew in favor with God and man." He was the "holy Child Jesus," and therefore must have done the things which pleased God. At the end of His retirement, when He came forth at 30 years of age, the Father set the seal upon the past as well as bore witness to the present when He spoke with an *audible* voice from the excellent Glory, and said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

His subjection to His earthly parents and His reverent silence till the hour was come to speak were things which pleased the Father. When He entered upon His public and active service He began well, for He commenced, by an act of which He said, "Thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness." It was at His Baptism that the Father expressed His pleasure in Him and the Spirit descended upon Him. His Baptism was an emblem and a type of the perfect obedience which He intended to render—it set forth His immersion into depths of suffering, His sinking in death and burial, His rising again from the tomb—and His ascension into Heaven for us. Doubtless, all these are to be seen by the *spiritual* eye in the symbolic rite practiced in Jordan's waves. Blessed are they who follow the Lamb where ever He goes!

Immediately after this our Lord was led by the Spirit into the wilderness where He was tempted of the devil. His going there and His threefold victory over the Tempter were well-pleasing to God. Did not Jehovah send His angels to minister to Him? And what was this but a token that He had pleased God by defeating the arch-enemy? Throughout His life our Lord was always acceptable to God and fulfilled in very deed that ancient Word of the Prophet Isaiah, in his 42nd chapter, at the 21st verse, in which he spoke and said, "The Lord is well-pleased for His righteousness' sake; He will magnify the Law and make it honorable."

He magnified the *ceremonial* Law by coming under it and observing it until the time when it passed away. He magnified the *moral* Law, for He obeyed every precept—both of the first and of the second table—and could say to all His accusers, "Which of you convicts Me of sin?" He was perfect in all His ways! There is not one action upon which a question can be raised by any candid observer as to the exactness of its justice and its full conformity to the perfect law of right and love. He always did the things which pleased God and He had God's attestation of this—for though the splendor of His Godhead was veiled when He dwelt here, yet gleams of it burst forth here and there—as if the Father would let men know that the lowly Mediator was still great with God.

See Him on Tabor where He was transfigured and you see how the Father loved Him! It was the Man Christ Jesus who there talked with Moses

and Elijah, while Peter, James and John were eyewitnesses of His majesty—of which Peter has written—“For He received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from Heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount.” It is clear, then, that the Glory of our Lord was looked upon by the Apostles as a token of the Father’s love to Him. Listen, also, to that Voice which answered Him out of Heaven when He prayed, “Father, glorify Your name. Then came there a Voice from Heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.”

The miracles, also, proved His acceptableness with God, for they were not only evidences of His own power, but tokens of His Father’s good pleasure. And therefore, Peter, in his famous sermon spoke in this fashion, “Jesus of Nazareth, a Man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as you yourselves also know.” Everywhere the Father gave forth signs that He had not left Him alone, but was with Him, because He did His will. As a servant, for our sakes, He pleased not Himself, but suffered the zeal of His Father’s house to eat Him up. From the first day in which He spoke to John at the Jordan, to the day in which He was taken up into His Glory, He always did the things that pleased God.

His death, which was His own voluntary act, was the most pleasing of all, if there could be degrees where all was perfect. He was, indeed, all-pleasing to the Father when rising up from supper He said, “Let us go hence,” and He went without a murmur to be “obedient to death, even the death of the Cross.” That bloody sweat in Gethsemane, when He conquered Nature’s fears and took the cup of trembling, saying, “Not as I will, but as You will”—was not that the doing of the things which pleased God? Do you not remember that notable saying of the Prophet, “It pleased the Father to bruise Him”? There was a Divine satisfaction given to the Father in the willing, the submissive, the believing, the triumphant pangs of Jesus!

On Calvary He was pressed with grief beyond measure, yet He did not fail to bear all the pleasure of the Lord in silent submission—a submission which must have greatly pleased the Lord. On the Cross He was tried as gold in the furnace, but no dross was found in Him. On the accursed tree the stress of the world’s sin lay on Him and yet He did not wish to depart from the enterprise which He had undertaken till He had been obedient to the Father and accomplished all His will, even to the endurance of death itself! He always did the things which pleased God.

Having already made the text encompass parts of our Lord’s work which were subsequent to the time when He uttered it, I shall push on yet further, for I have facts beneath my feet and I would remind you that our Lord still always does those things that please God. It pleased God that He should ascend and sit at His right hand. It pleased God that there He should be our forerunner, preparing our heavenly mansions for us. He is accepted, we know, for we, also, are “accepted in the Beloved.” It is the Father’s good pleasure to give us the kingdom and therefore it is His pleasure that our Divine Representative should take the kingdom on our be-

half. The intercession of Jesus, also, is always sweet with God. The Father always hears Him—and hears us, also, when we plead His name.

And when He shall, “so come in like manner as He went up to Heaven.” When He shall, “take to Himself His great power and reign,” and when on the clouds of Heaven He shall appear to judge the quick and dead, He will still always do the things which please God. Yes, let me say it joyfully, the saving works of Jesus are lovely in the Father’s eyes! Whenever our Lord Jesus says to a sinner, “I absolve you,” it pleases God. Whenever the Savior calls a wanderer to Himself and draws Him to holiness by the attractions of His love, it pleases God. What else is meant by the passage, “The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied”?

It is the pleasure of God that sinners should find a complete Savior in Jesus. The Father has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but had rather that he should turn unto Him and live, but there is joy in the heart of God Himself over sinners that repent. Sheep brought back to the fold are rejoiced over by Him of whom we sing, “We are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand.” Prodigals leaving their riotous living are pressed to the Father’s bosom and cause pleasure to the soul of the benign Deity. Oh, returning Sinners, you have not to ask Christ to appease the Father, for the Father, Himself, loves you and your salvation gives Him joy!

As for the benefit which Christ bestows upon saints, the matchless blessings which He has received as “gifts for men,” and scatters among His people—these all please the Father. It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell, and it pleases Him when of His fullness we receive Grace for Grace. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, if you are rich in Divine Grace, you are not rich with gifts which the Father grudges! And if you shall ask for more, it is your Father’s good pleasure that you should have them! Receive them freely, for He freely gives! Delight yourself in them, for the Father delights to see you partaking of His Son’s abundance! Be of good courage, Sinners, when you come with empty hands. And be of good courage, you impoverished Saints, when you come with hungry mouths, for Jesus Christ, in giving freely, will only do what pleases the Father!

I feel greatly comforted by this text when I think that whatever Christ has done and is doing pleases God. The Gospel, which is the sum and substance of the doings of Jesus, is always acceptable with God. It is a sweet savor unto God in every place. It delights the Father that Jesus Christ should be preached. I have often thought, when I have been extolling my Lord and Master, “Well, if not a soul in the place yields itself to Jesus, nevertheless, thanks be unto God who always causes us triumph in every place, for we are unto God a sweet savor, as well in them that perish as in them that are saved!” If Christ is preached, a sweet oblation is presented—sweeter than the incense of Araby—and it delights the Most High more than costly frankincense. As of old He smelled a “sweet savor of rest” when Noah brought the victim and laid it on the altar, so when Christ is lifted up, God takes pleasure in Him, and delights when men glorify His Son.

Thus I have spoken very feebly about our Lord Jesus as the Mediator. No man nor angel can fitly set Him forth—He is too fair, too perfect for description. Earth cannot show His rival nor Heaven His equal! He is good and only good! All glory to His name! He has glorified the Father and He can say to the fullest, “I always do those things that please Him.”

II. Now, Brothers and Sisters, we have stern work to do. We have not merely to look, but we have to be *transformed* as we look. We are now to behold our Lord as THE MODEL and to copy His example. Truly we shall need the Spirit of God to hold our hand or we shall never write according to such a Copy as He has set us. It is the business of every Christian to be able to say, “I always do those things which please Him.” Come, Believers, and lovingly muse upon our Lord Jesus as our Model!

Here at the outset let me remind you that this will imply that we, ourselves, are rendered pleasing to God. Remember that as long as a man, himself, is obnoxious to God, everything he does is also obnoxious. From a sinner comes nothing but sin—an evil tree brings forth evil fruit—a foul fountain pours forth polluted waters. It is vain, therefore, to think, any one of you, that you can do anything that is pleasing to God till, first of all, you, yourselves, are reconciled unto Him. The way of reconciliation is only by Jesus Christ. When your persons are pleasing, your works will be pleasing. But until you are personally acceptable to God through Jesus Christ everything that you do is displeasing—and even those things which you *think* to be virtues are only, as Augustine called them—“splendid sins,” mere glittering dross, lacking the essential purity and preciousness of the pure gold of love.

Paul says, “They that are in the flesh cannot please God.” And again He says, “Without faith it is impossible to please Him”—impossible—whatever is thought, attempted, or done by you! Even acts of *religion* are only pretentious forms of sin until the nature is renewed, the heart changed, and the man, himself, washed in the blood of Christ and covered with His righteousness. Therefore, I shall have to speak entirely and only to those who have been, by the redemption and righteousness of Christ, made pleasing to God. And I hope that they, having obtained the major blessing of personal acceptance, will press forward for the further blessing of sanctification, that they may always do the things which please their gracious God.

In pleasing God there is implied an avoiding of all things which would displease Him. We cannot say we, “always do the things which please Him” unless we earnestly renounce the follies which vex His Holy Spirit. Now, you know what the works of the flesh are, and those, as defiled garments, are to be put off that we may go in unto the wedding in the new garment. Like leaven they are to be swept out of the house that we may keep the paschal feast. We must put off and lay aside all pride, whether it is the pride of talent, the pride of self-righteousness, the pride of wealth, the pride of dress, the pride of rank, or the pride of spiritual attainments—for even a haughty *word* is detestable with God. Among the things which the Lord hates we find prominently mentioned a proud look. If a proud *look* is His abomination, what must pride, itself, be?

It is written, "The Lord resists the proud." This implies that their views and designs are contrary to His own and He sets Himself to oppose them. He carries on continual war with Pharaohs and Senacherib. The moment He sees a man great in his own esteem He resolves to bring him down, as He did the boastful monarch of Babylon. He lifts up those that are bowed down, but He casts down the mighty from their seats. If we are proud, we cannot do that which pleases God. In fact, we cannot please Him at all. Sloth is another vice which the Lord abhors. He calls the idle servant in the parable, "You wicked and slothful servant." "He that knows his master's will and does it not, the same shall be beaten with many stripes." "He that knows to do good and does it not, to him it is sin."

God is not pleased with those who are idle, wasters of their talents and their time, even though they may plead that they are gentle folks and have no need to labor. An idle nobleman is as much to be blamed as an idle farmer. Christians, if you always do the things that please God, you must be diligent servants—He takes no delight in sluggards and those who are lovers of ease. God is not pleased with unwatchfulness, careless walking, indifference to His commands, or neglect of cleansing the heart. Those virgins who were not thoughtful, forgot to take oil in their vessels with their lamps, and, in consequence, their lamps went out and they could not enter the marriage feast with the bride. Beloved, you must walk carefully, earnestly, zealously with God, or you cannot please Him. He is a Jealous God and we must jealously watch even our *thoughts*, or we shall soon offend Him.

Neither is He pleased with anger, which is not only, as far as we are concerned, a temporary insanity, but as God judges it, it is murder! He that is of a quick and hasty spirit. He that bears ill will against another. He that seeks revenge is not acceptable with God. To a God of Love, malice is abominable! He would have us do good as He does and spread happiness all around as He does. Cross, crabbed, morose natures do not please the Lord! Unkind husbands, fractious wives, rebellious children and domineering parents are far from pleasing Him. God cannot smile upon oppression, craftiness, greed, or the grinding of the poor. Neither is "covetousness, which is idolatry," pleasing with God. He that is covetous, angers the great Giver of all good, whose liberal soul cannot endure churls and misers.

The same is true of all worldliness. The lust of the eyes. The lust of the flesh. The pride of life—these are things which God condemns. In them He has no pleasure whatever. O you Believers, I pray you purge yourselves of all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit! And as for the deeds of darkness, have no fellowship with them, but rather reprove them! Come out from among them, be you separate, touch not the unclean thing and then you will please your heavenly Father. God is equally displeased with unbelief. Doubts of His power, His love, His faithfulness. Trembling lest He should not keep His promise, lest, after all, His Word should fail—this is not pleasing in His sight!

Neither is it pleasing to Him that good men should be cumbered with much serving and should complain of the labor of His service—He would not have His servants think Him a hard Master. Brothers and Sisters, He

would have us serve Him with joyfulness! Free from care because we cast our care upon Him! Free from fear because we wholly confide in Him. Above all, He would have us free from murmuring—"Neither murmur you as they also murmured, who were destroyed of the Destroyer." His dear Son was free from everything of this kind. And as He was, so are you, also, in this world—therefore closely copy Him and lay aside all these evil things by the help of His Holy Spirit.

Here is the place to say that it should be our intent and earnest design to please the Lord. We shall not do this by accident—we must give our whole souls to the work and labor mightily. No arrow reaches this target if the bow is drawn at a venture—the heart must aim with earnest intent and vehement desire. May the Holy Spirit work in us to will after this fashion—and then in due time we shall be sure that He will work in us, also, to do of His good pleasure. We will continue the same strain but touch another key. Remark attentively that the text does not deal with negatives, though it implies them. Christ did not say, "I do *not* the things which *displease* Him," but He said, "I *always* do those things that please Him."

The sentence is positive and practical, relating to actual deeds and not to negatives. We must copy our Master in all the practical virtues—and what a Model He is! What a pattern He has set before us! Brethren, what was the most conspicuous thing in the life of Christ? I cannot tell you—*everything* is so conspicuously admirable! There is a harmony, a blending of every virtue in the life of Christ so that you can scarcely put your finger upon one thing and say, "This was superior to the rest." But if there *is* some excellent things more marked than others, one of them is prayerfulness! How continually do we read, "as He was praying," or, "as He was praying in a certain place," or, "every man went to his own home, and Jesus went to the Mount of Olives."

We are told that He spent whole nights in prayer upon the mountain side—He was always in communion with God. For God to speak out of Heaven to Him was not a strange thing, for Christ was always speaking up into Heaven to His God. Be you such! It cannot please the great Father for His child not to speak to Him by the hour together, and to be indifferent to Him—to give Him no word, either of request or of thanksgiving. Alas, I fear some professors seldom speak with their heavenly Father in spirit and in truth! If we fail here, we certainly fail in one of the things which please Him. Next in Christ's life, one of the more prominent qualities was His love—His love to God. We ought to love God with all our hearts and spend and be spent for His Glory. It must be our meat and drink to do the will of Him that sent us, and to finish His work if we are to do the things which please Him.

But our great Exemplar also showed the warmest love to *men*. How He pitied the fallen! With what tenderness He spoke to sinners! How gently did He warn! How sweetly did He woo! Brethren, we must be gentle, too. That which is hard and domineering savors more of the princes of the Gentiles than of the lowly Lamb—we must put it away. Like our Master and Lord, we must wash the disciples' feet and bear one another's burdens. Gently, kindly, tenderly, we must labor for the good of all and not consider ourselves. This is to do the things which please God. If we would

follow Christ, we must practice self-denial, for He “pleased not Himself.” It should be said of us as of Him, “He saved others, Himself He cannot save.”

Did you ever, in anything, find Christ making provision for Himself? Can you discern a speck of selfishness in His Nature? There is a crown before Him, but He will not have it—yet He longs to see *us* crowned! What does He care about being made a king? His joy is that the Lord reigns! He felt it better to obey His Father than to sit on a Throne. Oh that we might catch His spirit! The life of Christ is peculiar, too, from its separateness from sinners. He was *with* sinners—He ate and drank with them. He went to their marriage feasts and sat at their banquets—but He was as distinct from them as the sun from the ash-heap upon which it shines. He was outside the camp in *Spirit*, even when He was *in* it in Person. He bore reproach all His life and last of all bore it up to Calvary. We, too, must be different from other men—not conformed to this world—but transformed by the renewing of our minds.

It is folly to be singular except when to be singular is to be right—and then we must be bravely singular for Christ's sake. And in the lonely path of holy nonconformity we shall find Jesus more near than ever we knew Him to be in the whole course of our lives! I cannot enlarge here. The picture is so beautiful that merely to dwell upon a touch or two of the pencil is to give you no idea of the matchless perfection of the work. Be as He was! Copy Him as disciples should copy their Master! Furthermore, my dear Brothers and Sisters, if you want to know what things please God, let me refer you to one or two passages of Scripture. David says in the 69th Psalm, the 30th verse, “I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify Him with thanksgiving. This, also, shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock that has horns and hoofs.”

The Apostle says in Hebrews 13:16, “But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.” Let us, then, constantly praise God! Let us have hymns in store for moments when we can sing and thoughts in store for moments when the tongue must be silent—but when the heart may yet sing aloud unto the Most High. Bless the Lord, for whoever offers praise glorifies Him. A thankful spirit is always pleasing to God. Therefore cultivate it and shake off, as you would shake off a viper from your hand, the spirit of murmuring against the Most High! Yonder thankful, humble, poor woman may please God better than the most talented minister who is evermore complaining of the dispensations of God.

John tells us in his first Epistle, third chapter and 22nd verse, that we are to “do those things that are pleasing in His sight,” and he adds, “This is His commandment, that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another.” Faith, therefore, is one of the pleasing Graces. We read of Enoch that, “before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please Him.” Love to the Brethren is another of the Graces which please God. He would have us love His people, care for the poor, relieve those that are sick and cheer those who are cast down. Brethren, if you would please the Lord, put aside all petty jealousies and labor to prevent disunion, for bro-

therly love is one of the most pleasing sights which the Father of mercies sees. It is as the dew of Hermon, as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion, for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.

Read, furthermore, in Colossians the first chapter, from the 10th verse, a long list of excellences. "That you might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God, strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness; giving thanks unto the Father, which has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." So you see, you sufferers, your resignation to the Divine will, your patience under a smarting rod—these are all well-pleasing to God! And these and all the other Graces of the Spirit are the things, which, through Jesus Christ, are pleasing in His sight.

Now, note particularly this, that these things must be actually done. "I DO," says Christ, "those things which are pleasing." It will not suffice to *talk* about them, nor to even *pray* about them—they must be done. Do not merely feel charmed with a virtue, and fascinated with a duty—but go and actually carry it out. Let not the purpose be strangled in its birth, but let it be born into actual being. There is a word in the text which is a hard one to put in practice—"always,"—"I always do those things that please Him." It will not suffice to say, "I do the things that please God when I go out to worship." I hope you do, but the Christian must aim to say, "I *always* do."

At home, Husband, there must be such a discharge of your relationship, that as a husband and as a father you please God. My good Sister, it must be as a wife and a mother that you please God. In all those relationships, at all times, you must act as in His sight. True religion is perhaps better tested at the fireside than anywhere else. What a man is at home, that he is, and though he is a saint abroad, if he is a devil at *home*—you may depend upon it that the last is his real character! At the same time, we must not think that our religion ends at home. I do not suppose we shall, but if we do we are mistaken—we must *always* do the things that please the Lord.

There must not be, at any moment about our Christian career, anything we should not like God to see, for He *does* see. Neither must we be where we would not like Christ to find us. Neither must we even *think* as we would not have Jesus know that we think. This is a high standard, but our Lord Jesus Christ sets it before us, and it is not for us to alter the pattern which He has given—"I always do," He says—"the things that please Him." Are there not many things, dear Friends, which you have done in former times which you will not do again now you have been reminded of your failings? There are many things which certain Christian people leave undone, which they will attend to at once if they realize the full meaning of this text—"I always do the things that please Him." *Always!*

I have known some persons take a holiday from Christ's service sometimes. They say, "Once a year, surely, one may indulge." What would you do if you might be indulged? Because whatever you would do if you had

your own way is the best test of your heart. If holiness is slavery, then depend upon it, you are the slave of sin! When I have heard of Christian men attending doubtful amusements as an occasional treat, I have seen at once which way their hearts went—they evidently loved the pleasures of sense better than spiritual joys. Where either a man's pleasure or treasure is, there his *heart* is—and whatever gives you the most pleasure is really your god. To be flattered is the greatest delight of many—their god is themselves. "To make money is my greatest delight," says one. Then the golden calf is your god. Whatever is your greatest joy and treasure, that is your heaven and your God—and if you do not find the greatest pleasure in the things of God, then you do not know what the new life means—and neither will you ever know the pleasures which are at God's right hand!

Dear Brothers and Sisters, I beseech all of you to notice that by always doing the things which please God, the Holy Spirit enabling us to do so, we shall enjoy and retain the Presence of the Father. "He that sent Me is with Me, He has not left Me alone, for I always do those things which please Him." Do you complain that you do not enjoy fellowship with God? Do you tell me that the joys of religion have not been yours for many a day? Do you come with long faces and complain that you find the way to Heaven very rough? God has a controversy with your souls—there is some hidden evil within—or some evil habit which does not please Him.

Is not that hint of mine enough for you without my pressing it? Does not your tender conscience say, "I will examine myself. I will ask God to search me, and I will solemnly promise to Him—

***'The dearest idol I have known,
Whate'er that idol be
Shall now be dashed from off its throne
That I may come to Thee.'***

Let no pleasurable sin become an image of jealousy to provoke the Lord our God! As you love the Lord, and I know you do—as you would not grieve your crucified Master, ask Him to search you and see if there is any evil way in you and deliver you from it—that you may always do the things which are pleasing in His sight. Furthermore, by so doing, we shall not only have communion with God, but we shall be girded with His strength. "He that sent Me is with Me."

What is the reason why some workers for God do not succeed? They cannot succeed—it is not possible—for they are in an evil case. Here is a man trying to build a wall with a broken arm. He makes slow progress, for he can hardly lift a brick into its place. Here is another man trying to run a race while he is lame in his feet—he will be far behind when the winner passes the goal. Here is a man trying to leap whose every muscle is weak—he would be more at home in an infirmary. Personal *spiritual health* is essential to vigorous, successful, Christian effort! And that health depends upon our living near to God. If we do that which is pleasing in God's sight the Lord will be with us in our work—but only if we strive to always do what pleases Him.

Suppose a minister to have been living through the week a careless, prayerless life—he may preach his best, but as he is not a vessel fit for the Master's use—he may not reckon upon being used by the Lord. If the

Sunday school teacher goes to her class after indulging in light conversation or in an angry temper—is there any wonder that souls are not converted by her teaching? If the city missionary does not find souls blessed in his district, need he wonder, when upon looking within he sees a cold heart—and upon looking without he sees a negligent life? A mother wonders that her children are not saved and yet it would be a far greater wonder if they were, when her general conduct and spirit are taken into consideration!

A father has been astonished that his boys have not turned out Christians, while everyone except himself can see that it would have been a thousand miracles if they had become religious, for their father's religion is of that sour, melancholy, rigid, frigid, unlovely type that you could not suppose anybody could like unless they had a partiality for sour grapes and bitter aloes. We must get rid of the things that displease God if we are to be useful! And when that is done, *then* shall we be able to say, "He that sent Me is with Me; the Father has not left Me alone."

Now I close, and closing I ask you—is this too high a Model for you? Would you prefer an example which would let you abide content in a measure of sin? I hear many say, "I love Christ," but their love does not make them imitate the Lord! I fear that they do not know Him and if they did, they would not love Him, but would think Him a deal too precise and self-denying. There is such a thing as loving a Christ of our imagination—not the Christ of the New Testament whose Character is absolute perfection. Do you love the *holy* Jesus? If you do, then I am sure you do not think His Character too elevated, or His example too pure. No, you say, "Lord, I love this holy living, I only wish I could, in all things, copy it. Oh, for more holiness! Grant it to me!"

Do you think it is impossible to act as Jesus did? Then I must ask you another question—Do you think the Holy Spirit has not yet come, or do you conceive that the Holy Spirit is deficient in power—so that He can only lead men up to a certain point and must, there, necessarily cease working? Do you not believe that all things are possible with Him? Do you not believe that all things are possible to Him that believe? I grant you that men do not live as my text requires and that the most of professors do not even *try* to do so—but the fault is in themselves—not in the Holy Spirit! He is able to do exceeding abundantly above what we ask or even think!

Somebody asked me the other day whether I thought Christians could be quite perfect, and, I have no doubt, expected a long pompous speech from me! But I cut him short, for my secret thought was, "Well, you are a fine fellow to be asking such a question, for there is no danger of *your* coming anywhere near that condition." That question from most men is about as consistent as if a beggar should come to my door for bread and then request to see me. I go to the door, and he says, "Sir, I have a very difficult question to put to you—do you think every man in England might make his fortune and be worth a million of money?" What a question for a man in rags to agitate! Surely he might put off that inquiry till he is worth two pence, himself, and can pay for his night's lodging. I say to him, "My good fellow, you are not at all in danger of becoming too rich, and have no

need to raise questions about millions. Get out of your rags and make yourself commonly decent before you puzzle your head over that.”

It is too early for most professors to be discussing the higher life and entire sanctification. They are like babies taking the measure of giants. I am sick of seeing a set of beggarly professors whose poverty of Divine Grace is manifest to everybody but themselves, shaking their heads at those good Brothers who preach up a high standard of Grace. They need be under no alarm about growing too devout, too prayerful, or too holy! They may go a long way before they will be mistaken for perfect! I do not believe in a great deal which our modern perfectionists say about themselves—and I should think a deal more of them if they thought less of themselves—but at the same time I labor under no dread as to any of them becoming too good. Nor dare I set up a lower object of sanctified aspiration than that which Jesus has set before us in the command, “Be you perfect, even as your Father in Heaven is perfect.”

Have you failed to do as the text says? Then grieve over it! Do you wish to do as Jesus did? Then He will help you, for He works mightily with us. Commit yourself unto His teaching. Give yourself up to the purifying power of His Spirit, and He will bear you up to heights of Divine Grace and glories of character which you have never thought you could reach—but which, when you reach them, will not puff you up—for you will feel constrained to cry, “Not unto us, not unto us, but unto Your name give praise!”

If we have done all, we are unprofitable servants—we have only done that which it was our *duty* to have done—and therefore unto Grace shall be the praise through the precious blood of Christ, forever and ever. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*Luke 14*.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—460, 259, 815.**

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

BELIEVING ON JESUS—AND ITS COUNTERFEITS NO. 2191

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 22, 1891,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“As He spoke these words, many believed on Him. Then said Jesus to those Jews which had believed Him, If you continue in My Word, then are you My disciples, indeed; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”
John 8:30-32.***

Our Lord, on this occasion, was surrounded by quibblers. We must not be astonished if the like should happen to us when declaring the Gospel. Our Lord went on preaching, all the same, and He did not conceal objectionable Truth because of opposition—say, rather, that He set it forth with greater boldness and decision when surrounded by His enemies! The more they opposed, the more He testified.

The Lord Jesus also told the contradicting sinners that the day would come when quibblers would be convicted. Observe how He put it—“When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then shall you know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself.” Quibblers may have a fine time of it just now, but they will, one day, be convicted either to their conversion or their confusion! Let us hope that many will see the Truth before they die—early enough to seek and find a Savior. But many in our Lord's day who discovered it after His uplifting on the Cross and His uplifting from the grave, came by their knowledge sadly late, for in the meantime they had crucified the Lord of Glory. Ah, how much of sin comes out of delayed faith! A far greater number of these Jews were convicted in their minds altogether too late, for when they were driven to feel, by the attendant circumstances of His Crucifixion and Resurrection, that He really was the Son of God, they still persevered in rebellion and sank into obstinate rejection of His claims. On such His blood rested to their eternal condemnation. Quibblers, you may riot for a little season, but your time is short! The hour will come when you shall behold and wonder—and perish. I pray that there may come an end to your unbelief by your being convicted in this life and led to repentance. But if it is not so, you will certainly be ashamed and confounded in the day when the Lord shall come in His Glory and you shall, in vain, beseech the mountains to fall upon you and hide you from His face!

Quibblers ought to be convinced even now—the Savior implies this when He adds, “He that sent Me is with Me: the Father has not left Me alone; for I always do those things that please Him.” The Character of Je-

sus should have convinced the Jews of His mission. His evident obedience to God and the equally evident witness of God to Him, would have led them to see His Messiahship if they had not been blinded by prejudice and pride. Any candid man at the present day, studying the life of Christ and observing His unique Character, should be convinced that He is the Son of God—and should come to believe in Him.

But, Beloved, though the Savior was thus surrounded with objectors and had so much to endure from their ignorance and their malice, yet His controversies with them were not without hopeful effects, for our text informs us, “As He spoke these words, many believed on Him.” Albeit we may be surrounded with general and virulent opposition, yet there will be fruit from the preaching of the Truth of God. The Word of the Lord shall not return unto Him void—it shall prosper in the thing whereto God has sent it. We may hope that not only a few, but *many* will accept the sacred testimony, since we see that, even in the midst of an exceedingly hot dispute, it happened that, “As He spoke these words, many believed on Him.”

I. These Believers were not all of one kind and upon that fact I shall enlarge in this beginning of my sermon. Let that stand as our first observation upon the text—OUR LORD HAD DIFFERENT KINDS OF BELIEVERS AROUND HIM. There were evidently two sorts of Believers who may be set forth to you by the differing expressions used in the Revised Version. We read in verse thirty, “Many believed on Him.” And then in the 31st verse we read of “those Jews which had believed Him.” Mark the distinction between, “believed on Him” and, “*had* believed Him.” It is a singular expression, also, “Those Jews which had believed Him.” They were still Jews as to their traditional belief and connection—Jews first of all—whatever they might be in connection with their Judaism. The omission of the word, “on,” or, “in,” is a happy one, because it is exactly accurate, and it helps to bring out an important distinction while it also accounts for what seems so strange, that those who had believed Him should, almost immediately after, charge Him with being a Samaritan and having a devil, and should even take up stones to stone Him! There were two sorts of Believers and on these I will speak a while.

The first, “*believed on Him.*” These are the right kind. What is it to believe on Christ? It means not only to accept what He says as true and to believe that He is the Messiah and the Son of God, but trustfully to rest in Him. To believe on Him is to take Him as the ground of our hope, as our Savior, upon whom we depend for salvation. When we believe *in* Him or *on* Him, we accept Him as God sets Him forth—and we make use of Him by trusting on Him to do for us what God has appointed Him to do. This trusting on Jesus is saving faith! “As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.” “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life.” To believe Him may be a very different thing from believing *on* Him. Such belief may fall far short of saving faith. To believe on Him means heartily to give yourself up to Him and to follow Him as the Way, the Truth and the Life to you. Rejecting all rival confidences, the heart leans all its weight on Jesus and

leaves all its burdens with Him. Believing in Him, we repose all our concerns, for time and for eternity, in His hands.

To believe on Him is also to believe implicitly. We believe all that He may yet say. We accept not only what He says which we can fully understand, but that which as yet is dark to us. We so believe in Him that we go with Him in all His teachings, be they what they may. We not only go as far as He has revealed Himself to us, but we are prepared to go as much farther as He pleases. What He says is the Truth of God to us, on the sole evidence that He says it! We believe in Jesus, not because we judge that what He says can be endorsed by our understanding (though that is, indeed, the case), but because *He says it!* Our Lord's Word is reason enough for us. The *ipse dixit* of the Son of God suffices us, even if all men deny His assertions. He has said it and He is the Truth of God, itself. We believe on Him—Son of God and Son of Man, living, dying, risen again, ascended into the heavens—we trust Him. He is our Infallible Prophet and our Omniscient Teacher. We rest ourselves wholly on Him! That is saving faith. Oh, that it may be said of this congregation, "Many believed on Him"!

But there is another kind of faith which was produced by the Savior's testimony. It had much of hope in it and yet it never came to anything. There is a *temporary* faith which believes Jesus, in a sense, and after its own way of understanding Him, or rather of *misunderstanding* Him. This faith believes *about* Him; believes that He was undoubtedly sent of God; that He was a great Prophet; that what He says is, to a high degree, reasonable and right and so forth. This faith believes what He has just now said, but it is not prepared to believe on Him so as to accept everything that He may say at another time. This faith believes everything that commands itself to its own judgement—it does not, in fact, believe in Jesus, but believes in *itself*—and in Him only so far as He agrees with its own opinions. This faith is not prepared to obey Christ and accept Him as its Master and Lord. This was the kind of faith these Jews possessed—it was a faith which was so crowded up with a mass of favorite prejudices that before long it was smothered by them! They might accept Jesus as the Messiah, but then He must be the kind of Messiah they had always pictured in their own minds—a leader who would defeat the Romans, who would deliver Palestine from the foreign yoke, rebuild the Temple and glorify the Jewish race. They half hoped that He might turn out to be a great leader for their own purposes, but they did not believe in Him as He revealed Himself as the Light of the world, as the Son of God and as One with the Father.

A great deal of disbelief and misbelief is current at the present day. We are encouraged by certain persons to include in our churches all that have *any* sort of belief and, indeed, the line is to be more inclusive, still, for those who have *no belief* at all are to find an open door! The Church of Christ is to be a menagerie of creatures of every kind. I fear if they come into this Noah's ark, wild beasts, they will also go out wild beasts. Only those who enter by the door of regeneration and spiritual faith will, in very deed, be within the Kingdom of the Lord! If they have received Christ, we may receive them into His Church, but not else. It is true, the people of

temporary faith will creep into the visible Church, but they do so on their own responsibility.

Nor need we think that some strange thing has happened to us as a Church when the baser sort are found among us, for one such entered into that college of Apostles—a man who, doubtless, believed the words of Jesus, and thought Him to be the Messiah. I mean Judas, who, with a traitor's hand, sold his Master. His intellect had been convinced, but his heart had never been renewed. He even dared to use his profession of religion and the position which it brought him, as a means of unhallowed gain. Another notable believer of this sort was Simon Magus, who believed because he saw the signs and wonders worked by the Apostles. But as he, also, sought to make gain of godliness, he remained in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity—and never became “a disciple, indeed.” There is a greater one than all these, even the devils. We read that “the devils believe and tremble.” They hold the faith and feel something of the power of it, for they tremble which is more than modern critics do! Devils know that Jesus is the Christ of God, for they have, upon occasion, confessed it, and have borne witness to the Gospel in the open streets, crying after the preachers of the Word. And yet, with all their knowledge, and with much of a *sort* of faith, and with an apprehension which leads to trembling, they still remain devils and make no advance towards God.

Ah, my Hearers! Beware of that faith which is a mere intellectual movement, which does not control the heart and the life. To come to faith through a cold argument and to feel no spiritual life is but a poor business. You need a faith that leads you to an entire reliance upon the Person of Jesus, to the giving up of everything to Him, to the reception of Him as your Savior and King, your All in All. You have not believed unto eternal life unless you have so believed on Him that you make Him the foundation and cornerstone of your hope! You must believe in Him as taking away sin! God has set Him forth to be the Propitiation for sin and you *must* believe on Him in that capacity!

This will suffice upon our first head—and this very naturally leads us to the second remark.

II. OUR LORD TAKES NOTICE EVEN OF THE LOWEST SORT OF FAITH. When He saw that these people believed Him in a measure and were willing to accept His testimony so far as they comprehended it, *He looked upon them hopefully* and spoke to them. Out of a weak and imperfect faith, something better may arise. Saving faith, in its secret beginnings, may be contained in this common and doubtful faith. It is written, “When the Son of Man comes, shall He find faith on the earth?” Certainly *He* can find it if anyone can! He has a very quick eye for faith. He deals with little faith as we used to do with a spark in the tinder, in the days of our boyhood. When we had struck a spark and it fell into the tinder—though it was a very tiny one—we watched it eagerly, we blew upon it softly and we were zealous to increase it, so that we might kindle our match thereby. When our Lord Jesus sees a tiny spark of faith in a man's heart, though it is quite insufficient, of itself, for salvation, yet He regards it with hope and watches over it, if, haply, this little faith may grow to

something more. It is the way of our compassionate Lord not to quench the smoking flax, nor break the bruised reed. If any of you have only a little faith, now, and that marred by ignorance and prejudice, it may be like a connecting thread between you and Jesus—and the thread may thicken to a cable. Your partial and feeble faith as yet only takes hold upon a part of the Revelation of God, but I am glad that it takes hold on anything which is from above! I would not roughly break that single holdfast which now links you to the Truth of God—and yet I would not have you *trust to it* as though it would stand the stress of tempest. Oh, that your faith may be increased till you trustfully commit yourself to Jesus and believe in Him unto eternal life!

Our Lord addressed Himself especially to these questionable Believers. He turned from His assured disciples to look after those who were more in danger. Their character was a curious combination—full of peril—“Jews who believed Him.” You that are familiar with the New Testament Scriptures will think the phrase more suggestive than it, at first sight, appears. It reminds me of those of you who believe the Gospel and still remain worldly, impenitent, prayerless. You fear the Lord and serve other gods! You are not infidels in name, but you are atheists in life! To you there is urgent need that I speak. The Master turned round and spoke to those who were Believers and yet not Believers—holding with Jesus—and yet really opposed to Him. Oh, you that halt between two opinions, my Lord looks on you with a pitying hopefulness and He speaks especially to you at this time! May you have Divine Grace to hear and obey His Word!

It is clear that *He encourages them, but He does not flatter them.* He says, “if.” A great, “if,” hovered over them like a threatening cloud. Wisely does our Lord commence His word to them with, “if.” “*If you continue in My Word, then are you My disciples, indeed.*” Continuance is the sure test of the genuine Believer. Our Lord does not say, “Go your way, you are not My disciples.” He, in effect, says, “I stand in doubt of you. The proof of your discipleship will be your persevering in your faith.” If we say that we believe in Jesus, we must prove it by abiding in believing and by still further believing! The Word of Jesus must be the object of our faith—into that Word we must enter—and in that Word we must continue. Beginning to believe is *nothing* unless we continue to believe!

Our Lord showed His interest in the weaker sort of Believers by helping them on in the safe way, *urging them to continue in His Word.* “You believe,” He seems to say, “continue to believe! Believe more. Believe all that I say. You have entered into My Word—dive deeper into it and abide in it. Let My Word surround you—dwell in it—continue in it.” Good advice this! And it is the advice I would give in my Master’s name to any here who are feeling after Christ and His Gospel. As far as you have already come in faith, keep fast hold and seek for more! You are on the right track in believing Jesus—a track which will lead to the King’s Highway if fairly followed. Any kind of faith is better than that deadly doubt which is cried up so much nowadays! By faith comes salvation, but by doubt comes the opposite! Your feeble and imperfect believing has in it much of hopefulness, but it must be *continued*, or we shall be disappointed. Your home and ref-

uge must be the Word of the Lord Jesus and in that refuge you must abide!

Believe what Jesus says in His New Testament of Love. Whatever you find that He reveals by Himself or by His Apostles, receive it without question! Hold fast His Word and let it hold you fast. First, believe Him, believe Him to be true, believe Him to be sent of God for your salvation—and then put yourself into His hands. When you have committed yourself to Him, continue to do so. Do not run away from your faith because of ridicule. Mind that you so believe in Jesus as to practice what He commands—you cannot continue in His Word unless you learn to obey it. The text of faith is obedience. What He bids you, do it. Let your life be affected by the Truth He teaches. Let your whole mind, thought, desire, speech, bearing and conversation be colored and savored by your full faith in Jesus! Enter into His Word as a man into a stream and live there as a fish in the water!

“Continue in My word.” Get into Christ’s Word as a sinking sailor would get into a lifeboat and, once there, keep inside the boat—do not throw yourself out into the stormy waves through despair—but continue in the place of hope. This is Christ’s gracious counsel to those in whom there seems to be some hopeful sign.

My Hearers, we never preach the saving power of temporary, unpractical, unsanctifying faith! If a man says, “I believe in Christ and, therefore, I shall be saved, his faith will have to be tested by his life. If, sometime after, he has no faith in Christ, that faith which he claimed to have is proven to be good for nothing! The faith of God’s elect is an abiding faith! It is precious faith and, like precious metal, it survives the fire! “Now abides faith, hope, charity, these three.” Thus true faith is classed among the *abiding* things—it is undying, unquenchable. If you truly believe in Jesus, it is for life! Saving faith is a life-long act. It is the relinquishment of all trust in self, once and for all, and the trusting in Jesus forever. He is and always shall be our only confidence. That is the faith which saves.

But the temporary faith which comes and goes, is worth nothing. The shout of, “I believe it,” too often ends when the excitement is over. To sing, “I do believe, I will believe,” is well enough—but unless that believing appertains to daily life and changes the inner nature—and abides even till death—it has not saved the man. The measure of faith of which we have been speaking may turn out to be the beginning of saving faith, but it may, on the other hand, turn out to be a mere deception soon to be dispelled—a morning cloud which disappears—an early dew exhaled by the sun.

I think I have said enough upon my second point. Let it encourage you, that our Lord takes notice, even of the lowest kind of faith. But let it also warn you, when you see that He receives it with an, “if,” and goes on carefully to exhort and warn, lest the hopeful thing should die and its promise should be unfulfilled.

III. But, next, OUR LORD SETS BEFORE THESE PEOPLE INDUCEMENTS TO CONTINUE IN HIS WORD. “Jesus therefore said to those Jews which had believed Him, If you abide in My Word, then are you truly My disciples, indeed; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make

you free.” Observe three inducements, each one of them great—and when placed together exceedingly attractive.

The first was *certified discipleship*—“Then are you My disciples, indeed.” That is to say, if they persevered in obeying His Word, they would be disciples, not in name only, but in truth. It is a small thing to be called Christians, but it is a great matter to truly be Christians. Further, they would not be merely superficial learners, but deeply taught and inwardly instructed disciples of Jesus. They would really and truly know what Jesus taught and would receive it into their inmost souls—they would be not untrained beginners in the school of Christ, but pupils of the sixth form, “disciples, indeed.”

Dear Friends, it is a great thing to be no longer a probationer, but a disciple, indeed! There is more in the expression than I can readily set forth in words. A certain person says he is a disciple of Christ, but you would never know it if he did not tell you! You might live with him for years without hearing an expression or remarking an action which is distinctly Christian—this is NOT to be a disciple, indeed! Another man loves his Lord and treasures His Words. He puts his discipleship of Christ before everything—and you cannot live with him a single day without perceiving a savor of Christ in his words and action. You say of him, “That man is, indeed, a Christian!” In such a case, religion is not exhibited by way of pride, as with the Pharisees of old, but it is seen because it is there and *must* shine forth. Faith throbs in the man’s pulse! It looks out from his eyes. It tunes his voice and lights up his countenance! It rules his house and controls his business. The man *lives* for Jesus and if it were necessary, he would *die* for Him. How we prize a thoroughbred Believer! Your mongrel is a poor animal. Blessed is he who makes his Master’s service his pleasure! His Lord’s Law is his delight! His Savior’s Glory the absorbing occupation of his time. He is a disciple, indeed!

To be a disciple, indeed, creates within the mind a blissful assurance. Some are always asking themselves, “Am I truly a disciple?” It is not amazing that they ask the question, for it is a great question. But he that continues in Christ’s Word in loving obedience soon ceases to ask that question—he has the witness in himself, or, better still, as some read it, he has the witness in Christ. He knows that he is Christ’s disciple, for he continually follows his Master. He not only believes, but he *knows* that he believes! He has continued in the Word so long that he has no doubt about his being in it. How can he doubt, when he is, from hour to hour, feeding on the Word in which he lives like a mite feasting upon the cheese in which he dwells? He is a disciple, indeed, for his deeds are those of a disciple. Oh, you that believe my Master at times and up to a certain point, you must go on to believe Him more constantly, more thoroughly, more absolutely! May you cheerfully stake your souls upon your Lord’s veracity! O my Friend, if you would find Jesus to be your Savior, surrender yourself to His wisdom, yield your whole being to His power! So shall you become a disciple, indeed, and be able to claim all the love, care, comfort and honor which such a Lord puts on His faithful disciples! May you bring forth much fruit—so shall you be His disciples—and to you shall be the

double portion which belongs to those who follow the Lamb wherever He goes.

The next blessing which our Lord set before Believers was that of *sacred knowledge*. Observe, “You shall know the truth”—not *a* truth, but *the* truth—the saving, purifying, glorifying Truth of God! Keep on believing and Jesus will teach you that great Truth which is above all other truth—essential, quickening, cleansing, Divine! You shall *know* the Truth of God! You may be charged with dogmatism, but you will not flinch from the assurance that you *know* the Truth! You no longer guess at Truth, nor hit on a sliding scale of probabilities, but you *know* it assuredly! You will grow familiar with it! The Truth of God will be to you a well-known friend! You will discriminate so as to know the Truth when you see it and detect it, at once, from the deceptive falsehood. You will know the Truth and you will not be led away by the flattering voice of error. You will have the touchstone with you and will not be deceived by base metals. You will so know the Truth of God as to be influenced by it, actuated by it, filled by it, strengthened by it, comforted by it and, by its power, you will, yourself, be made true! Surely this is a good reason for abiding in Christ’s Words!

The third benefit was *spiritual liberty*—“The truth shall make you free.” Our Savior further on explains that He means free from sin. He that lives in sin is the slave of sin. Sincere belief in the Word of Christ leads to emancipation from the tyrannical power of the evil which dwells in our members and from the dominating power of the sin which rules in the customs of the world. “The truth shall make you free.” You shall be free from your own prejudices, prides and lusts. You shall be free from the fear of man. If you have sunk so low as almost to ask of the great ones permission to breathe, you shall break that irksome fetter! The Truth of God known within your spirit shall make a free man of you! Up to now you have been the bondsman of self. You have enquired, “What will this thing profit me?” And thus the desire of self-aggrandizement has ruled everything! But when Jesus is your Lord, you shall be free from this sordid motive! “The truth shall make you free.” This is a noble saying! Oh, the liberty that comes into the soul through believing on Jesus, who is the Truth! It makes life to be life, indeed, when this freedom is enjoyed! In laying hold on the Truth of God as it is in Jesus, the soul lays hold on the charter of her liberties and she enters on her citizenship in Heaven!

Dear Brothers and Sisters, I hope many here enjoy these three privileges. Disciples, indeed, you believe anything that is taught to you in God’s Word, be it what it may. The Truth of God has so entered into you that you now know it and are sure. And this believed-Truth has made you so free that you defy the fetters which men would cast around you! Your Lord has caused you to believe in Him and you have now found the element wherein your soul may abide in life, light and liberty. Thus our Lord dealt with those in whom He saw some hopeful signs—He set choice blessings before them to induce them to proceed further.

IV. But now, fourthly, OUR LORD THUS TESTED THEM BY THE MOST EFFECTUAL MEANS. The test was very sharp in its action and sudden in its results. He said to them, “You shall know the truth, and the truth shall

make you free.” And what follows? “They answered Him”—answered Him rather than believed Him! How did they answer? Did they say, “Yes, Lord, we believe. Teach us Your Truth and make us free”? No, no. They cried, “We are Abraham’s seed and were never in bondage to any man—why do You say, You shall be made free”? These supposed Believers stumbled at the Lord’s Word—*stumbled at a privilege*. Jesus said, “The truth shall make you free,” and that offended them! To make *freedom* a stumbling block is folly! On another occasion our Lord spoke to His disciples concerning eating His flesh and drinking His blood. And then we read, “From that time many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him.” The privilege of feeding upon His Sacrifice, which binds many of us to Him with bands of love, drove others away from Him with cords of hate! Sad fact this!

But it is so in many ways. I believe that God chose His people from before the foundation of the world, I rejoice in the glorious Doctrine of Election! But a great many refuse to believe because of this heavenly privilege. The privileges of the Gospel are the stumbling blocks of legalists! It is too large a Gospel for narrow souls, for, it is too glorious a Gospel for groveling intellects. Men refuse the gift of God because it is so excellent. If we would cut it down till there was nothing left but a more cheese-paring of Grace, I suppose they would accept it. But the very Glory of the Gospel which should fascinate and attract them, repels and disheartens them!

The reason why these Jews became so angry with our Lord was that *He touched their pride*. “Make us free, indeed!” they cried. “We always were free! We were never slaves. We enjoy the largest rights through our father Abraham. We have never come under the dominion of any false prophet or idol god. Make us free, indeed! How can You say this?” Thus the wild thinker claims that he is free and needs no liberty from Christ. The sinner who is in bondage to his passions says that he leads a free and easy life and scorns the idea of being set at liberty, as if he were a slave! The more a slave a man is to his own conceit or his own lusts, the more he talks about his freedom! We would not know that he was free if he did not call himself so. Unbelief calls itself, “Honest doubt,” and not without cause, for we would not have known it to be honest if it had not labeled itself so. When a man puts up in his shop window, “No cheating practiced here,” I should trade next door. “He protests too much.” Your free love, free thought, free life and so forth, are the empty mockery of freedom! Oh, that men knew their state—and then freedom would be prized! For lack of self-knowledge, the blessings of the Gospel prove an offense when they should have hearty welcome.

The prejudices of the Jews which believed Him were wounded. Oh, how often do we find men who will hear the Gospel just so far, and no farther! They have not believed *on* the Lord Jesus Christ. They have not entered into His Word so as to be prepared to believe all that He teaches and, consequently, when some doctrine is heard which grates upon their feelings, or jars on their judgments, or conflicts with their original conceptions, straightway they grow angry with their Savior! After all, it would seem, from the criticisms which you offer, that you know better than the Son of

God! Your judgment would seem to be clearer than His, for you sit in judgment upon His Word! What is Christ to you? Why, He comes before you like the prisoner who stood before Pilate. You question Him, as the Roman Governor did when he asked, “What is truth?” You believe what you choose to believe and disbelieve what you choose to disbelieve! In such a case, who is the greater, the disciple or his Master? Surely you presume too much when you act as judge of Him who is to be the Judge of all the earth!

You are no disciple of His! You can never know the Truth and the Truth can never make you free, indeed! No blessing can come to you since you put yourself out of its way. You may talk about believing, but you have not believed, and you cannot be saved by Jesus until you yield your judgment to His Infallibility, your heart to His Rule, your every faculty to His Grace. Welcome Him as undisputed Lord of your bosom and crown Him Lord of All within your soul—such loyal faith He claims and this He must have—or you will fall short of His salvation.

These people soon showed their true character, for very soon afterwards they said, “Now we know that you have a devil”—and they took up stones to cast at Him! Oh, that we may be delivered from having a faith which will end in open rejection of the Lord!

V. I close with a fifth point—OUR LORD DESERVES OF US THE HIGHEST FORM OF FAITH—yes, the highest degree of faith which is possible! Would you mind looking in your Bibles into the next chapter, which fitly follows the present one? It contains the story of the man blind from his birth, to whom the Savior gave sight. Let me read a description of the kind of faith which I desire for you all. “Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when He had found him, He said to him, Do you believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him? And Jesus said to him, You have both seen Him and it is He that talks with you. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped Him.” That is the faith which saves—the faith which learns of Jesus from Jesus—hears and believes, and takes Jesus to be its God! The faith which bows at the feet of Jesus and worships Him as Divine is the faith which saves!

Men will not do this till their eyes have been opened. While they say, “We see,” their sin remains and their blindness, too. Only he who can say, “One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see,” will worship Jesus with all his heart. The gracious Lord has come and touched my sightless eyes and given me heavenly sight and, therefore, I trust Him! I, that could see nothing at all, have seen *Him!* I, that had no idea of what light was, for I was born blind, I have seen the light through Him and I both believe and adore! Oh, for a *worshipping* faith—faith on its knees in the Presence of the Son of God! Faith beholding Jesus with the eyes which He has opened!

“Alas,” says one, “I wish I had that faith.” Listen, then, that you may find it. Faith comes by *hearing*. When I meet with converted persons, I like them to tell me what text was blessed to them, for then my mind runs on that text. I have sometimes asked a convert, “What part of the sermon was

it that God blessed to you? Because I would like to repeat that passage more than once or twice. I would like to “tell it o’er and o’er again.” Perhaps the Lord would bless it to another, and another. Think, then, what part of our Lord’s sermon was it that brought faith to those many who believed on Him? I think it was the 28th and 29th verses.

In verse 28 the Lord spoke of His death and all that went with it, and all that came out of it—“When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then shall you know that I am He.” How did they lift Him up? They lifted Him up on the Cross—it alludes to His Crucifixion. But they did not know that in *another sense* they lifted Him up—it was through His death that there was a possibility of His Resurrection! And when He rose again and ascended up on high, the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the Church—and He entered into Heaven to make intercession for us—and all this was emphatically a lifting up!

The Cross and its surroundings remain, to this day, the great arguments for our holy faith. The things that should lead men to believe on Jesus Christ are found at His Cross. He was the Son of God, but He died the death of the Cross for love of men. Being dead and buried, His Father raised Him from the dead and thus gave evidence of His mission and of His acceptance with God. There is no question about His Resurrection—it is proved beyond all doubt that Jesus rose again from the dead on the third day. His disciples saw Him for the space of 40 days and ate and drank with Him—and then they beheld Him go up into Heaven till a cloud received Him out of their sight. They waited at Jerusalem and the Holy Spirit came upon them in cloven tongues, the Divine testimony to His ascended power! By the preaching of His Word in the power of the Holy Spirit, the nations were made to hear concerning Jesus, the Savior, and bowed before His Cross.

Now, the more you think of this unique occurrence—this fact which could not have been a piece of imagination, this fact which was attested by honest men, who bled and died for it—the more you think of this, I say, the more you will feel faith stealing over your spirit! Christ on the Cross is thought to be hard to believe in, but it is not so, for the more you know of a Crucified Christ, the more easy will faith become! Christ raised to the Crown by His Cross is the great breeder of faith! Christ rising from the dead is a marvel, yet it is the keystone of the arch of faith. Believe it! Christ gone into Glory—the Son of God bearing His Manhood into the highest place of supreme sovereignty and pleading there for guilty men—think much of this Truth of God and you will find faith come to you, for “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” Especially is faith begotten and nourished by that part of God’s Word which treats of the Cross and the Crown—the double lifting up of Jesus!

Also, once more, and I have done—you will find faith much helped by looking to the life of Jesus set forth in the Gospels. Read the verse, “He that sent Me is with Me: the Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him.” What a perfect life is that of Jesus! Could it have been invented? He who could have sketched it from his imagination must, himself, have been perfect. But, then, no perfect man could have

been guilty of a forgery. Jesus was obedient to the Father in all things and yet He put no force upon Himself in so doing—it was natural to Him to be holy. It was His meat and His drink to do the will of Him that sent Him, and to finish His work. And the God of Heaven, by His miracles, was with Him and bore witness to Him.

There is no superfluous miracle recorded in the Gospels—they are all necessary evidence, such as was called for in that court wherein the Perfection, the Messiahship, the Deity of our Lord were tried. If you read His whole life through till you come to His death, and even study that death in which the Father hid His face from Him as to the enjoyment of His smile, you can see that God was always with His Son Jesus, working out His Divine purposes by Him and bearing witness to Him. God is in accord with Jesus, that is clear. He is with Him even now! Nobody can doubt that there are such things as conversions, for they are common phenomena in every living Church of God. And conversions are God's testimony to the Word of Jesus and the proofs that the Father and the Holy Spirit are working with the Son.

Think of this, and then yield to the Son of God, since God bears witness of Him to you! Come along with you, you that have had other notions. Come and take Jesus to be your Light and Life! You that have had other confidences, leave them all and believe on Him, for He is worthy of your utmost confidence. You that have been hesitating, believe in Jesus once and for all! You that have been procrastinating, come this very day and listen to that voice which shall at once set you free! Oh, that you would now trust Jesus, my Lord and my God! May the good Spirit help you, now, to believe on the Crucified One and may this be another of those occasions concerning which it shall be written in the Book of Record, "Many believed on Him"! God grant it, for our Lord Jesus' sake! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*John 8:12-59*.
HYMNS FROM OUR "OWN HYMN-BOOK"—427, 565, 564.**

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CHARACTERISTICS OF CHRIST'S DISCIPLES NO. 2650

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, NOVEMBER 26, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 16, 1882.

*“If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother,
wife and children, brothers and sisters,
yes, and his own life, also, he cannot be My disciple.”
Luke 14:26.*

*“Then said Jesus to those Jews who believed Him, If you
continue in My word, you are My disciples indeed.”
John 8:31.*

*“By this all will know that you are My disciples,
if you have love for one another.”
John 13:35.*

*“By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit;
so you will be My disciples.”
John 15:8.*

This morning, [Sermon #1669, Volume 28—*Teaching for the Outer and Inner Circles*—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>] I preached upon one of the privileges of the disciples of Christ—“When they were alone, He expounded all things to His disciples.” They formed the inner circle and they had the privilege of hearing the expositions and explanations which our Lord gave only to His disciples. As I was speaking, I think the question must have arisen in the hearts of many of my hearers, “What is a disciple of Christ?” and also the further enquiry, “Am I one of His disciples?” It is very important for us who are preachers to know what a disciple is, for we are bidden to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. What is involved in the making of a disciple? We cannot fully answer that question until we know what a disciple is!

In order to help you, dear Friends, to ascertain whether you are truly disciples of Christ, I am going to call your attention to four texts in which the Lord Jesus mentions some of the things which are essential to true discipleship—and without which a man cannot be His disciple. I pray the Holy Spirit to make those who are disciples to rejoice in their discipleship and to count it the highest honor of their lives to have the Son of God for their Teacher and Leader. And I also pray that those who fear that they are not His disciples may be brought to Him even while I am speaking. May they, by His Grace, resolve that they, also, will be His disciples, and

may the Divine Spirit conduct them into the School of Christ, that they may sit at His feet and receive His Word from this time forth!

I. The first mark of discipleship to which I am going to call your attention is mentioned in the Gospel according to Luke, the 14th Chapter, and the 26th verse. "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life, also, he cannot be My disciple" These words prove that the first requisite of a disciple of Christ is WHOLEHEARTEDNESS.

The meaning of this passage is that Christ's disciple must so love his Lord that, in comparison with the love he bears to Christ, all other love shall burn but dimly and be scarcely worthy of even being named! This verse has puzzled a great many people because they have supposed that Christ really wished them to hate their father, mother, wife and so on. The slightest possible thought ought to have convinced them that He could *never* have wished them to do anything of the kind! If you take Christ's Words without seeking to find their meaning, you can make mischief out of them, for, sometimes, He speaks very boldly—I might almost have said, with the utmost reverence, very *boldly*—in order to make His point clear. He speaks in a manner which, in others, would be foolishness. He goes beyond what He means us to understand literally, because He knows that this is the only way in which He can bring His teaching home to some minds. There was really no reason why anybody should have made such a mistake and understood these words just as they stand in our version. It is not possible for a man to be a disciple of Christ if he hates *anybody*, for the religion of Christ is a religion of love—and hatred must be expelled from the bosom of those who receive it. It is utterly inconceivable that anybody who hated his father could be a disciple of Christ—that would be a violation of the First Commandment with promise, which bids us honor our father and mother. Certainly Jesus never taught anything contrary to the Commandments of His Father! He who hated his own mother would be a monster—not a disciple of the meek and lowly Jesus who cared for His mother amid His agony on the Cross. Does not nature, itself, teach us that our love should certainly flow out to those who were the authors of our being and who so kindly cared for us when we were unable to take care of ourselves? I am not afraid that any of you, dear Friends, will err in that respect and then fancy that you have the warrant of Christ for hating your father and mother!

Then, should not a man love his wife? Yes, that he should, for the Apostle says, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church." I have heard of one who was said to love his wife too much, but I did not believe it, because the model for a husband's love is, "even as Christ also loved the church," and who could go beyond *that*? A man may be excessively submissive or devoted which, in some cases, may have been carried to such excess as to become folly and idolatry, but from this evil I hope that we have escaped. But a man could *not* be a disciple of Christ if he *literally* hated his wife. He would be unworthy of the society even of the moral, much more of the society of the gracious, if he so

acted. Neither can we imagine Christ bidding anybody hate his own children. Nature itself dictates that we should love them and we do—we cannot help it, nor do we wish to help it. We should be traitors to Christ if we tried to expel an affection which He, Himself, has implanted within us. No man can hate his children and yet be a Christian! It would be a clear proof that he had nothing of Christianity about him, just as the Apostle says, of another matter, “if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he has denied the faith and is worse than an infidel.” So, we are not to hate our children—nor are we to hate our brothers and sisters. It is only in a comparative sense and not *literally*, that the term can possibly be used. And to make this very clear, Christ said that we are to *hate our own life*. The next step to that would be suicide and the Savior could never have meant any of His followers to commit that terrible sin! What He did mean was that He is to have the first place in our hearts and all who are dear to us are to be second. Yes, and we ourselves are to be second, too, and are to be prepared to break every earthly tie rather than the tie which binds us to Christ Jesus our Lord.

The teaching of the text is that *Christ is to be loved more than all our relations*. It may be that we shall never have to endure the test of choosing between Christ and our loved ones, but some have had to do that. You have, perhaps, heard the story of the martyr who was going out to be burned for Christ. And as his enemies had failed to move him from his steadfastness, they made one more attempt to do so as the good man was on his way to the stake. They brought out his wife and his 11 children to meet him and they were all weeping and kneeling down before him, begging him to recant. His wife pleaded, “My Husband, be not so willful! Do not go to the stake,” and each of the children had been taught to lay hold of the father and to say to him, “Father, live for my sake,” “and for mine, Father.” This was a trial which the good man had not expected and as he stood there, surrounded by his loved ones, he said, “God knows how dearly I love you all, and how gladly, for your sakes, I would do anything that I may do, with a clear conscience, to make you happy. But, compared with Christ and His Gospel, which I love with all my heart and soul, I must give you all up and treat you as if I had no love for you. I must go and yield up my body to be burned for the Truth of Christ. Therefore, do not weep and break my heart.” It was grandly done on his part and you can probably get a better idea of the meaning of my text from that incident than I could possibly convey to you by any words that I might use.

Well, dear Friends, though your faith may never be subjected to that supreme test, a matter of life or death, yet you may have to be tested to see whether you love Christ more than you love your relatives. There was a certain godly bishop who had a brother who came and asked him to ordain him and to give him a living, for his trade did not prosper as he wished. The good bishop loved his brother and he would have done anything that was right to help him. But he said, “My dear Brother, you are not called of God to undertake such work, so I cannot ordain you, or give

you a living. I will gladly give you money to help you in your business, but I cannot make use of my position in the church to put you into a place for which you are not qualified. Had you been a fit and proper person for this holy service, I would have been delighted to carry out your wish. But as you are not, I cannot use my influence on your behalf in this way." I wish that every bishop would act in the same way—they have not always done so. Yet there was the crucial point in which the good man felt that he must rather regard the welfare of the church than the benefit of his relative and he must treat him just as though he had been a stranger. That is how we should deal with anyone who comes to us for a similar purpose—if he is a suitable person, let him be encouraged to enter upon the work for which he is qualified. But if he is not, let him go back to his forge, or to his plow, or to his awl, or to his plane, or let him engage in some business in which he will be earning a livelihood and doing no mischief to his fellow men, as he would do if he were put to work for which he is not fitted.

Have not some of you, dear Friends, met with cases in which the same difficulty has arisen? You must either do a wrong to Christ and to His people, or else you must appear to be hard and unkind towards some relative or friend. Well, you cannot be Christ's disciple if you hesitate a minute about what course you shall adopt! Brothers, sisters, wife, children, father, mother must never be allowed for a moment to be put in competition with Christ! I remember one who, when quite a youth, felt that he must be baptized on profession of his faith in Christ, but those who were nearest and dearest to him did not agree with him upon that matter. He had not one relative who thought as he did concerning it. He laid his case before them and, being so young, he asked that he might have permission to carry out his conscientious convictions, but, at the same time, he said, "If the permission does not come, I shall obey My Lord's command, for, in this case, I acknowledge no father or mother, but simply do as my Savior bids me." In matters of religion, Christ alone is our Leader—and our conscience can never obey any supremacy but that of our Lord Jesus Christ. This decision is to be announced very gently, without any bitterness of spirit, with much humility—and prayer for wisdom and guidance—but there must be no question about your action! You are to put your foot down, and say, "In everything which concerns Christ and my soul, I call no man, 'father,' upon earth, but, at all costs, I must follow my Lord wherever He leads me." I think you can now see the drift of the Savior's Words. The rule for you who are His disciples must be—Christ first and everybody else as far down as you like. Everybody treated with kindness and due consideration, but *nobody* permitted to usurp the Throne of the great King. So, in the first place, we must love Christ more than all our relatives.

And, next, *we must love Christ more than life*. You know that there have been many who have not loved their lives as much as they have loved their Lord, for they have freely yielded them up for the sake of Him who laid down His life for them. Christians, in past ages, have known what was involved in being faithful to Christ. You may have read that let-

ter which Pliny wrote, concerning the early Christians, in which he said that he knew not what to do with them, for they were men of good character, but they had this one peculiarity that they must in everything follow Christ. They actually came with calm confidence, even to the Roman judgment seat, well knowing that if they were convicted of being Christians, they would be put to death—and they seemed as if they were eager to die—so anxious were they to put their love to Christ before any thought of freedom from pain or escape from death! What the torments were, to which they were put, under their many persecutors, I scarcely dare to tell you. Think of one of them forced to sit in a red-hot iron chair. And of others dragged at the heels of wild horses, or tossed to and fro by bulls, or torn in pieces by savage beasts. Everything that could add ignominy and pain to death was invented in those times—but did the martyrs flinch or turn back? No. They stood fast for Christ's sake and threw their lives away as if they were worth nothing at all, rather than be found traitors to Jesus Christ their Lord and Savior!

We are to be prepared to do the same as they did, if necessary. Only, in our case, probably it will never come to that point in this country where, thank God, we have so much civil and religious liberty. Yet, often, a similar test may be applied to us in a modified way. There may be, for instance, some loss of business through doing what we know to be right! There are some persons who have been in the habit of carrying on their trade on the Sabbath—but when they have become Christ's disciples, they have shut up their shop on that day, and people have said to them, "You will be ruined, you will never earn a living. You know, we must live." I have often heard that last little sentence, but I do not believe it. I do not see any necessity for us to live. There is a necessity for us to be true to Christ, but not for us to continue to live! It is a great deal better that we should die than that we should do a wrong thing. And we should be prepared at any time to say, "If necessary, we will let our trade go and we will be poor. But we will keep a clear conscience." And he who has that little bird in his bosom will never lack for music! And though he has scarcely a penny in his pocket, yet if he wears the flower called heart-sense in his buttonhole, he need never envy the richest man in the world!

It may happen to you, in your business, that there will be an opportunity of getting money by being thieves in a respectable kind of way—there are plenty of such thieves about. But if you are a Christian, you will say, "No, money gained by dishonesty will carry a curse with it. I cannot touch it any more than I would handle blood-money. If it comes by any wrong method, I must leave it alone, for pelf and wealth shall not come to me if they cannot come honestly. I must and will serve the Lord Jesus Christ first and foremost."

Sometimes you know that for Christ's sake, our Brothers and Sisters go as missionaries to India or China, and some go to the Congo or to other stations in Africa where it is almost certain that, in a short time, they will be cut down by the fever. But how brave it is on their part! How truly a disciple of Christ is such a man or such a woman, who, knowing all that may be expected, nevertheless says, "My Lord calls me to serve

Him in Africa. And if He sends me to a mangrove swamp and to a fever, I will as readily go there for Him as if He summoned me to sit upon a throne.”

To sum up the teaching of this first text, it means that *Christ is to be loved more than anything*. If this were the choice set before us—the whole world, or Christ—thank God there are many of us who would not wait a minute for the decision! And if this were the choice—shame in the eyes of men, or else the far greater shame of deserting the Savior, oh, I hope we would not hesitate even for an instant! “No,” says the Christian, “Christ is my All-in-All. If I have all things, I will try to find Him in them and if I have nothing, I will find all things in Him.” So the meaning of this text is that Christ must have wholehearted servants and if you come to Him to be His disciples, you must bring your whole being with you. Christ will never be King over a divided manhood. There was a time when this island was a heptarch and seven little kings ruled over it. But now we have but one sovereign and in this united realm we never shall have but one supreme ruler. So should it be in man’s heart. The devil is quite willing to share the kingdom with Christ. “Oh,” he says, “let Christ reign and let *me* reign, too! We shall make an excellent pair to rule over men.” But Christ will not have it so. If we are to be His subjects, He will rule over us from the crown of our head to the soles of our feet, and He will not permit Satan to have a single stronghold within us that he can call his own. Out you must go, you vile usurper, for He has come who is King of Kings and Lord of Lords! The crown sits upon His brow, nor will He allow a rival even for an hour! Come, then, Beloved, what do you say? Are you wholehearted for Christ? If not, you are not His disciples. Listen while I read our first text again, and as I do, you read into it the true and full meaning of the words and feel their force. “If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, and brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life, also, he cannot be My disciple.”

II. The second requisite for being a disciple of Christ is found in the 8th Chapter of the Gospel according to John, at the 31st verse—“Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, If you continue in My word, you are My disciples indeed.” So CONTINUANCE is the next trait in the character of a true disciple of Christ.

There are a great many persons who, like those Jews, profess to believe in Jesus Christ for a time. When opposition and persecution came, they deserted Him and so proved that they were not really His disciples. I do not know much about the merits of the question, which is often discussed in the papers, with regard to enlistment for a short or a long term of service in the Queen’s army, but I know that my Lord and Master will not accept any of you unless you enter His army for life—no, more—for all eternity! In Christ’s true Church there is no profession of faith merely for a time. Once you have made it, you have made it *forever*. The very way of confessing Christ, which is by Baptism, signifies this, for the man who is rightly immersed into the name of the Sacred Trinity is first buried and then he rises again—and that burial, having once taken place, can never be cancelled—whatever happens, it is an accomplished fact.

Then, again, the act of immersion can never cease to be a fact. Marks made in the flesh may be removed, but when the watermark has been put upon the whole body, it can never be removed. He who has been buried with Christ may have been a hypocrite and a deceiver, but, notwithstanding his hypocrisy and deception, he has passed through the outward form of the ordinance and he can never clear himself from the responsibility of it. It will be to his everlasting disgrace if he is a baptized reprobate! At the Day of Judgment it shall be conclusive evidence of his guilt that he either tried to deceive himself, or deceived God's people and made a mockery of the ordinances of Christ. But in the case of a true believer in Christ, continuance in the right road proves him to be a Christian.

First, we are to *continue believing Christ's words*. Whatever new doctrinal errors may spring up, we are to take no notice of them, but just continue in the faith of Christ. Then shall we be His disciples indeed! In these evil days, some new heresy appears nearly every week. There are some people who seem to spend all their time in inventing lies and these, joined to the old errors that are continually being vamped up, puzzle those who are not well established in the faith so that they scarcely know what is orthodox doctrine and what is heterodox. But he who keeps close to his Master, sits at His feet and learns of Him—when he is taught of the Spirit—and holds fast what he has received. Mr. Whitefield used to say that in his day there were some persons for whom it was impossible to make a creed. He said, "You might as well try to make a suit of clothes for the moon, for they change as frequently as she does." And we have many people of the same sort in our day! They are "everything by starts, and nothing long." But that is not a characteristic of Christian discipleship! A man is not Christ's disciple if he is "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine," allowing anybody to put an oar into his boat and turn and twist him wherever the intruder pleases. No, the Master's message to His followers is, "If you continue in My word, you are My disciples indeed."

But we must *also continue in obedience*. It is the part of a true disciple of Christ to do his Lord's will in the teeth of every temptation that may assail him. You will not be obedient to Him very long without being pulled by the coat, first this way, and then that. But the true disciple of Christ says, "If all the kingdoms of this world were to be given me on condition that I would fall down and worship the god of this world, I would not, for an instant, *think* of doing so, for I am enlisted in the army of the Cross. I serve the Lord Christ and Him alone."

And we are also to continue in Christ's word *when we are in affliction*. There are, alas, some who, if God seems to treat them roughly, grow mightily offended with Him. A dear child is taken away from their family circle and they say that they will never forgive God. They have trouble upon trouble and straightway they complain that God behaves evilly to them—and they are ready to turn back at the first crossroad that they come to in their pilgrimage. But this will not do for those who would be "disciples indeed." We must hold on, come fair or come foul, and this

must be our motto, one that I have often quoted to you and one that I love to think of myself—"Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." We have committed ourselves to Him as unto a faithful Creator. We have lifted our hand in token of our allegiance to Him, and we cannot go back!

Dear Friends who have just lately been converted to Christ, let me exhort you to be steadfast and immovable! You cannot be Christ's disciples unless you are firm and decided. A Christian soldier who had to sleep in a tent with some ungodly comrades, knelt down at night to pray and every time he did so, he was assailed by all sorts of missiles. He consulted the chaplain as to what he had better do and that time-serving individual said he thought, perhaps, it was not necessary for the soldier to kneel down publicly before he retired to rest. The soldier tried the cowardly plan for one night, but he was very unhappy and his conscience was troubled about it. He had failed to bear testimony for Christ, so, the next night, he knelt down as he had done before and it pleased God that, by degrees, the opposition ceased and, more than that, the influence of his brave example and the words he spoke at different times, brought *all the other men in the tent* to kneel down, too, before they went to rest! Whether they were all converted or not, I cannot tell, but, at any rate, there was at least the form of prayer in that way. When the soldier saw the chaplain, again, and told him what had happened, the chaplain commended him, and then the soldier asked him, "Don't you think it is better for us always to keep our colors flying?"

That is a good watchword for you, Beloved—Always keep your colors flying! There are some professors who say, "We can carry our flag wrapped up in a waterproof case and when there is a favorable opportunity, we can let it fly in the breeze." No, no! It is best to keep your colors always flying. There may be danger and difficulty through flying the flag, but a hundred times worse danger comes from rolling it up and putting it away out of sight. Never be ashamed of what there is no reason to be ashamed of! If any man is ashamed of being a Christian, surely Christ has cause to be ashamed of him! Let it not be so with you, dear Friend, but rather let each one say—

***"Ashamed of Jesus? That dear Friend
On whom my hopes of Heaven depend?
No! When I blush, be this my shame—
That I no more revere His name."***

But, as to blushing when I acknowledge that I am His servant, may never such a crimson token of shame come onto my cheek! So stand fast in the faith, Beloved, for thus shall you prove that you are, indeed, Christ's disciples.

III. I must now pass on to a third mark of a genuine disciple of Christ, that is, BROTHERLY LOVE. Kindly look at the 13th Chapter of John's Gospel, and the 35th verse—"By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

This is to be a mark of discipleship which all men can see. Whenever there is genuine love among Christian people, everybody knows at once that they are Christ's disciples. Good men and bad men—the most ignorant and the most foolish men cannot help seeing that love is, as it were,

a sign hung out as a mark of the business done within. That disciple whom Jesus loved, wrote, "Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God; and everyone that loves is born of God, and knows God. He that loves not knows not God, for God is love."

Now, Brothers and Sisters, how are we to love our brethren so as to let all men know that we are Christ's disciples? One ready way is *by considering their needs and doing the best that we can to help them out of their difficulties*. If we say to the cold and the hungry, "Be you warmed and be you filled," and yet do nothing practically to help them, how dwells the love of God in us? What kind of Christianity is that which is liberal only in *words*? Dear Friends, there are many poor people among us who are struggling to get a livelihood and, alas, there are many others who cannot find any employment at all. And it is incumbent upon any who are being prospered by God to help their poor brothers as far as they can. Very often a man can truly help his fellow, even though he has no money to spare. I read a pretty story of a Cornish miner who was getting rather old and the captain of the mine said, "John, I think that I can put you into an easier berth than the one you now hold. You will get more money and you will have to be an overseer of others rather than to do much yourself. I know that I can confide in you, so I will put you into that place next month." The miner said, in reply, "Captain, do you know our brother Tregony?" "Yes," answered the captain. "You know that he is older than I am," said the miner. "He cannot do a day's work, now, and I am afraid that he will have to give up altogether. I wish you would let him have that berth because, though I am getting old, I think that I can keep on for another year or two. So let old Tregony have the overseer's position."

The captain did so and that is true Christian love when a man is willing to make a sacrifice because he feels that he is not quite as much in need as another. I remember saying to a poor widow who came one morning to the Orphanage with her child, "There is another woman outside. You have been talking to her, have you not, while you were waiting to come in?" "Yes, Sir," she answered. I said, "She has nine children and we can only take one. How many have you?" "Three," replied the woman. "Well, now," I asked, "which of those three shall we take?" "Oh, Sir!" she said, "there is not a minute needed to deliberate about it! You take one of that other poor woman's children. I will try to do the best I can, though it is a hard pinch for me, but that woman has a heavier burden to carry than I have, poor thing." I was pleased to see such a spirit of self-sacrifice and I am always glad when Christian people feel that kind of sympathy and love for one another. How often might rough roads be made more smooth if all acted like that! This is just what we must be constantly doing, for we cannot be Christ's disciples unless we have love for one another.

Beside that, we can show our love to our brethren *by bearing their faults*. It is a grand thing to be able to put up with a good deal. There are some people who seem to think that they have come into the world that other people may put up with them—and they certainly do play their

part, for they give other people plenty to put up with! And if anybody should in the least resent it, they say, "So-and-So is out of temper with me." I was going to say that an angel might be out of temper with some people, but I do not suppose that he would. Still, I wish that these people would remember the provocations they often give as well as the sharp retorts they sometimes get. "Oh," says one, "I do not believe that there is any love among Christians." Brother, you are measuring *our* corn with *your* bushel! You see that you have not any love in your heart, for, if you had, there would be some love in your eyes and you would perceive some, also, in others. But when it is clean gone out of your own soul, you suppose it must also have departed from others.

Of course, you do not admit that it has gone out of you and you imagine that you see outside of you what is really inside, so, when you say that there is no love anywhere, it is because you are looking at yourself in the mirror, that is all. But we who love the Lord can, I trust, bear with one another. I sometimes try to think which is the greater wonder—that you, dear Friends, have put up with me so long, or that I have put up with you! There are some of you who are the best people in the whole world and there are others of you who are not the best, but rather the reverse, and some of you do cause us trouble sometimes. Well, may God give all of us great patience and may we believe in one another! That is half the battle in all the difficulties that arise among Christians—that we should not impute wrong motives to our fellows, and not be ready to bring accusations against one another—but just believe that each of our fellow members is a child of God and if there is something which he has done, and which looks wrong, say, "It must have been misrepresented or misreported. I am sure it must—he cannot have done such a thing. I will stand up for him. He is my Brother-in-Christ, so I will defend him."

There is one other point in which some of you may exercise love for one another and that is, *in rejoicing in each other's happiness*. This is a point which is far too often forgotten. You know the tendency among men—here is a man who is rising in the world, so there are many who say, "Ah, humph!" They do not say anything more, but they shrug their shoulders and they look full of unutterable things. Or there is a Brother who has done well in the Church and he is referred to in terms of approbation. Then at once somebody begins to try to pull him down and says, "Ah, yes! I could have done what he has done." Then why did you not do it? "Oh, but he had such great advantages!" Yes, perhaps he had, and you also have had opportunities of doing something or other, but you have not made the best use of them. Now, instead of being jealous of our Brother's success, ought we not rather to be rejoicing in one another? If a man is poor, let him rejoice that everybody is not as poor as he is! If he is troubled about his worldly circumstances and he meets with a Brother who has no cause for such sorrow, let him say, "I am glad he is better off than I am. I do not want him to have anything to worry him as my troubles perplex me. I praise God for his prosperity, I bless the Lord for his happiness." Then when we see an especially gracious and gifted man coming into the Church and serving God, let us welcome him heartily

and say to one another, "Here is a true comrade for us and we are glad that God has sent us such a man to help us in His work."

I wish that we were all of the mind of that noble Spartan who wished to be a magistrate, but another man opposed him and received twice as many votes as he did. What did the Spartan say? "I am grateful that the country has better men than myself and I am glad to see that it knows where to find them when it needs them." So, dear Friends, be glad when God provides better men than you are to do His work. Let the preacher rejoice when another preacher excels him. That is the point to which we must all bring ourselves. Let the Sunday school teacher praise the Lord when she finds another teacher who altogether eclipses her. What a blessed thing it is for the Bible class teacher who has a large company around him, to find another Brother raised up who gets a better class than his has ever been! Bless God when it is so, dear Friends. This is one of those points that is often difficult, but it ought to be easy—and it *would be easy* if we had love for one another! And if we have not such love, we are not Christ's disciples.

IV. I must close now with just a few remarks about the last characteristic of a disciple of Christ. It is mentioned in the 15th Chapter of John's Gospel, at the 8th verse—"By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples." So the last mark of a disciple is that of FRUIT-BEARING.

What is bearing fruit in this sense? Well, first, it is *doing service for Christ*. He said to His disciples, "He that abides in Me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit: for without Me you can do nothing," plainly implying that the fruit which is to come from abiding *in* Him will be seen by our doing something *for* Him. Christian men and women, the Lord Jesus Christ does not want to have any followers who never foil or fight for Him! He does not wish to have with Him shepherds who never feed His flock—merely nominal Christians who never do anything for Him. Does this touch any of you? Some of you come in here, Sunday after Sunday, and you sit and enjoy my ministry, but you do not help in the Sunday school, you do not distribute tracts, you do not preach, you do not do anything! How can you be Christ's disciples? I suppose you are like some officers of whom I have read, who draw large salaries because they are such distinguished ornaments to the service. It is a great honor to have these people in the army, though they never saw a sword drawn except on review days. So, no doubt, it is a very fine thing to have a number of Church members who are simply ornamental persons—they swell our numbers when they are counted with us and people say, "They are so very respectable that they help to make us all respectable."

Well, now, to tell you the truth, we do not care an atom about your respectability! We think that the most respectable person in the world—that is, the person who most deserves *to be respected*—is the one who is *doing something*! He who does nothing deserves to be starved, even as the Apostle Paul said, "This we commanded you, that if any will not work, neither shall he eat," which is much the same thing as letting him

starve. Let us try to be fruit-bearing disciples by doing all that we can for Christ, because, if we do not bear fruit, we cannot be His disciples.

Next, *fruit-bearing will be proved by our prayers*. Notice the words of our Lord—"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you shall ask what you will and it shall be done unto you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit." Prayer, then, is a blessed fruit of Divine Grace—prayer for others, prayer for Christ's Church, the prayer that brings down unnumbered blessings from above. Many a sick, bed-ridden saint who cannot speak and who can scarcely lift her hands, can lie there and do great things in prayer! Joan of Arc was not half so mighty as that poor invalid! She is the King's true warrior! While she lies there apparently helpless, she is commanding the legions of Heaven by her invincible petitions! See, then, dear Friends, that you bear much fruit in earnest, prevailing prayer!

Another method of fruit-bearing is by a holy character. O Beloved, I implore you to be holy men and women! Seek after close conformity to the likeness of Christ. Nothing does more good for a Church than for its members to live the Gospel in all their concerns at home and abroad.

But I think that we shall not bear fruit as we should unless we *endeavor to bring converts to Jesus*. Dear mistress, seek to win the soul of your little maid! Good master, employing so many hands, get them together, sometimes, and talk to them about your Savior—and pray that He may be *their* Savior, too. Can you do it? There ought not to be one barren member of this Church. Everyone ought to be able to feel that when he comes before God at the last, he shall be able to say, "Here am I and the children You have given me." For this let us live! For this let us labor! If we do not, we cannot be Christ's disciples.

I remember one who never did anything for Christ and when somebody spoke to him about his lack of fruit-bearing, he said that he bore *inside* fruit. I never heard that idea before, so I turned it over in my mind and, the next time I met him, I said to him, "Are you still bearing inside fruit?" He answered, "Yes." "Well," I said, "we shall never get at it till you are cut down." Fruit is evidently intended to be an *outside* thing that is borne for the benefit of others! So, in this respect, Brothers and Sisters, see to it that you are fruitful by rendering all possible service to our Lord and Master.

The real application of my four texts is this—Are you, dear Friends, Christ's disciples? Let that question be passed around and let these four marks help us to judge ourselves—are we distinguished from those who are not Christ's disciples by our wholeheartedness, continuance, brotherly love and fruit-bearing? May all these things be in us and abound. And if we have none of them, may we apply to Christ for them! Lie at His feet. Confess your sin and then look up, believe in Him and live forevermore! The Lord bless you, dear Friends, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY
TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

THE GREAT LIBERATOR

NO. 565

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 17, 1864,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“If the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free, indeed.”
John 8:36.***

BLESSED is that word “free,” and blessed is he who spends himself to make men so. You did well to crowd your streets and to welcome with your joyous acclamations the man who has broken the yoke from off the neck of the oppressed. Many sons of Italy have done valiantly, but he excels them all and deserves the love of all the good and brave. Political slavery is an intolerable evil. To live, to think, to act, to speak at the permission of another! Better have no life at all! To depend for my existence upon a despot’s will is death itself. Craven spirits may wear the dog collar which their master puts upon them and fawn at his feet for the bones of his table, but men who are worthy of the name had rather feed the vultures on the battlefield.

The burden of civil bondage is too heavy for bold spirits to bear with patience and therefore they fret and murmur beneath it. This murmuring the tyrant loves not and therefore he throws the sufferers into his dungeons and bids them wear out their days in captivity. Blessed is he who hurls down the despot, bursts the doors of his dungeons and gives true men their rights. We have never felt, and therefore we know not the bitterness of bondage. Our emancipators have gone to the world of spirits, bequeathing us an heirloom of liberty for which we should love their names and reverence their God.

If they could have lived on till now, how we should honor them! But as they are gone, we do well to applaud our illustrious guest as if we saw in him the spirit of all our glorious liberators worthily enshrined. Political liberty allows scope for so much of all that is good and ennobling and its opposite involves so much that is debasing, that the mightiest nation destitute of it is poor, indeed, and the poorest of all people, if they are but free, are truly rich. But, my Brethren, men may have political liberty to the very fullest extent and yet be slaves, for there is such a thing as *religious* bondage. He who cringes before a priest—he who dreads his anathema, or who creeps at his feet to receive his blessing—is an abject slave!

He may call himself a free man, but his soul is in vile bondage if superstition makes him wear the chain. To be afraid of the mutterings of a man like myself—to bow before a piece of wood or a yard of painted canvas—to reverence a morsel of bread or a rotten bone—this is mental slavery, indeed! They call the Negro a slave in the Southern Confederacy, but men who prostrate their reason before the throne of superstition are slaves through and through. To yield obedience to our Lord, to offer prayer to God Most High is perfect freedom! But to confess my heart out to a mortal

with a shaven crown—to trust my family secrets and my wife’s character to the commands of a man who may be all the while wallowing in debauchery is worse than the worst form of serfdom.

I would sooner serve the most cruel Sultan who ever crushed humanity beneath his iron heel than bow before the Pope or any other priest of man’s making. The tyranny of priest-craft is the worst of ills. You may cut through the bonds of despots with a sword, but the sword of the Lord Himself is needed here. The Truth of God must file these fetters and the Holy Spirit must open these dungeons! You may escape from prison, but superstition hangs round a man and with its deadly influence keeps him ever in its dark and gloomy cell.

Skepticism, which proposes to snap the chains of superstition only supplants a blind belief with an unhallowed credulity and leaves the victim as oppressed as ever. Jesus the Son, alone, can make men truly free! Happy are they whom He has delivered from superstition. Blessed are our eyes that this day we see the light of Gospel liberty and are no longer immured in Popish darkness! Let us remember our privileges and bless God with a loud voice that the darkness is past and the true Light shines—since the name of Jesus, the preaching of His Word, and the power of His Truth have, in this respect, in a high degree—made our nation free!

Yet a man may be delivered from the bond of superstition and be still a serf, for he who is not ruled by a priest may still be controlled by the devil or by his own lusts which are much the same. Our carnal desires and inclinations are domineering lords enough, as those know who follow out their commands. A man may say, “I feel not supernatural terrors. I know no superstitious horrors,” and then, folding his arms, he may boast that he is free. But he may all the while be a slave to his own evil heart. He may be grinding at the mill of avarice, rotting in the reeking dungeon of sensuality, dragged along by the chains of maddened anger, or borne down by the yoke of fashionable custom.

He is the free man who is master of himself through the Grace of God. He who serves his own passions is the slave of the worst of despots. Talk to me not of dark dungeons beneath the sea level! Speak not to me of pits in which men have been entombed and forgotten! Tell me not of heavy chains, nor even of racks and the consuming fire. The slave of sin and Satan, sooner or later, knows greater horrors than these—his doom is more terrible because it is *eternal*—and his slavery more hopeless because it is one into which he willingly commits himself.

Perhaps there are those present who claim liberty for themselves and say that they are able to control their passions and have never given away to impure desires. Yes, a man may get as far as that in a modified sense and yet not be free. Perhaps I address those who, knowing the right, have struggled for it against the wrong. You have reformed yourselves from follies into which you had fallen. You have, by diligence, brought the flesh somewhat under control in its outward manifestations of sin, and now your life is moral, your conduct is respectable, your reputation high. Still, for all that it may be that you are conscious that you are not free.

Your old sins haunt you, your former corruptions perplex you. You have not found peace for you have not obtained *forgiveness*. You have buried your sins beneath the earth for years, but conscience has given them a resurrection and the ghosts of your past transgressions haunt you. You can scarcely sleep at night because of the recollection of the wrath of God which you deserve. And by day there is a gall put into your sweetest draughts because you know that you have sinned against Heaven and that Heaven must visit with vengeance your transgression. You have not yet come to the full liberty of the children of God, as you will do if you cast yourselves into the hands of Jesus who looses the captives.

“If the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free, indeed”—free as the mere political liberator cannot make you—free as he cannot make you who merely delivers you from superstition! Free as reformation cannot make you. Free as God alone can make you by His free Spirit. “If the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free, indeed.”

Now this morning may the Lord give His servant help from on high while I try to talk with you. To those who feel today their slavery, my message may be profitable. Our first point is that to those who are the bond slaves of Satan, liberty is possible. The text would not mock us with a dream—it says, “If the Son therefore shall make you free.” All who are slaves shall not be set free, but there is the possibility of liberty implied in the text. Blessed “if.” It is like the prison window through the stony wall—it lets in enough sunshine for us to read the word, “hope.” “If the Son therefore shall make you free.”

Secondly, there is a false freedom. You see that in the text—“You shall be free, indeed.” There were some who professed to be free, but were not so. The Greek is, “You shall be free really,” for there are some who are free only in the name and in the shadow of freedom, but who are not free as to the substance. Then thirdly, real freedom must come to us from the Son, that glorious Son of God, who, being free and giving Himself to us, gives us freedom. And then we shall close by putting a few personal questions as to whether the Son has made us free, or whether we still remain slaves.

I. First then, dear Friends, our text rings a sweet silver bell of hope in the ear of those who are imprisoned by their sin. FREEDOM IS POSSIBLE—the word “if” implies it. The Son of God can make the prisoner free. No matter who you are, nor what you are, nor how many years you may have remained the slaves of Satan—the Son, the glorious Liberator—can make you free. “He is able also to save them to the uttermost, who come unto God by Him.”

Perhaps that which weighs upon you most heavily is a sense of your past guilt. “I have offended God—I have offended often, willfully, atrociously, with many aggravations. On such-and-such a day I offended Him in the foulest manner and with deliberation. On other days I have run greedily in a course of vice. Nothing has restrained me from disobedience and nothing has impelled me to the service of God. All that His Word says against me I deserve. And every threat which His Book utters is justly due to me and may well be fulfilled. Is there a possibility that I can escape from guilt? Can so foul a sinner as I am be made clean? I know that the

leopard cannot lose its spots, nor the Ethiopian change his skin by his own efforts. Is there a Divine power which can take away my spots and change my nature?"

Sinner, there is! No sin which you have committed need shut you out of Heaven. However damnable your iniquities may have been, there is forgiveness with God that He may be feared. You may have gone to the very verge of perdition, but the arm of God's Grace is long enough to reach you. You may sit today with your tongue padlocked with blasphemy, your hands fast bound by acts of atrocious violence, your heart fettered with corruption, your feet chained fast to the Satanic blocks of unbelief—your whole self locked up in the bondage of corruption—but there is One so mighty to save that He can set even you, free! "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men."

"The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." In the matter of guilt, then, there is the possibility of freedom. "But can I be freed from the punishment of sin?" says another. "God is just: He must punish sin. It is not possible that the Judge of all the earth should allow such a rebel as I am to escape. Shall I go Scot free? Shall I have the same reward with the perfectly righteous? After years of unbelief am I still to be treated as though I had always been a willing and loving child? This is not just—I must be punished."

Sinner, there is no need that you should be cast into Hell. No, you shall not be, if your trust is placed in the blood shed on Calvary. There is an imperative need that sin should be punished, but there is no need that it should be punished in *your* person. The stern laws of Justice demand that sin should meet with satisfaction, but there is no Law which demands that it should receive satisfaction from *you*, for if you believe, Christ has given satisfaction for you. If you trust Jesus Christ to save you, be assured that Christ was punished in your place, and suffered the whole of Divine wrath, so that there is no fear of your being cast into Hell.

If you believe, you cannot be punished, for there is no charge against you—your sins having been laid on Christ. And there can be no punishment exacted from you, for Christ has already discharged the whole. God's justice cannot demand two executions for the same offense. O, let not the flames of Hell alarm you, Sinner! Let not Satan provoke you to despair by thoughts of the worm that never dies and of the fire that never can be quenched. You need not go there—there is a possibility of deliverance for you. And though your heart says, "Never, never, shall I escape," trust not your heart! God is greater than your heart and knows all things.

Believe His testimony and fly to the great Deliverer for liberty! Freedom, then, from punishment is possible through Christ. I think I hear one say, "Ah, but if I were saved from past sin and from all the punishment of it, yet still I should submit to the power of sin again. I have a wolf within my heart hungering after sin which will not be satisfied, though it is glutted with evil. The insatiable horseleech of my lust ever cries, 'Give, give!' Can I be delivered from it? I have been bound with many resolutions, but sin, like Samson, has snapped them as though they were but green twigs. I have been shut up in many professions, as though I was now, once and

for all, a prisoner to morality. But I have taken up posts and bars and every other restraint which kept me in and I have gone back to my old uncleanness. Can I, can I be saved from all these propensities, and all this inbred corruption?"

My dear Friend, there is a hope for you that you may be. If you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, that same blood by which sin is *pardoned* enables man to *overcome* sin. They in Heaven washed their robes and made them white in His blood. But they have another note in their song—they overcame through the blood of the Lamb. Not only were they delivered from guilt, but from the *power of sin*. I do not tell you that in this life Christ Himself will make you perfectly free from indwelling sin—there will always be some corruption left in you to struggle with—some Canaanite still in the land to exercise your faith and to teach you the value of a Savior. But the neck of sin shall be under your foot—God shall lead captive the great Adonibezek of your lust and you shall cut off his thumbs so that he cannot handle weapons of war.

If the enemy cannot be destroyed, at least his head shall be broken and he shall never have reigning power over you—you shall be free from sin, to live no longer in it. Oh, that blessed word "if"! How it sparkles! It may seem but a little star—may it herald the dawning of the Sun of Righteousness within you—"If the Son therefore shall make you free."

"Oh," says one, "that is a great 'if,' indeed. It cannot be! My guilt pardoned, my punishment remitted, and my nature changed? How can it be?" Dear Friend, it *may* be, and I trust it *will* be this morning, for this "if" comforts the preacher with a hope of success in delivering the Word. And may it give some hope to the hearers, that perhaps you may be made free yourselves. But I think I hear another exclaim, "Sir, I am in bondage through fear of death. Go where I may, enjoying no assurance of acceptance in Christ, I am afraid to die. I know that I must one of these days close these eyes in the slumbers of the grave, but oh, it is a dread thought to me that I must stand before my God and pass the solemn test. I cannot look into the sepulcher without feeling that it is a cold, damp place. I cannot think of eternity without remembering the terrors which cluster round it to a sinner, 'where their worm dies not and where their fire is not quenched.'"

Ah, but my dear Friend, if the Son makes you free, He will deliver you from the fear of death. When sin is pardoned then the Law is satisfied and when the Law is satisfied then death becomes a *friend*. The strength of sin is the Law—the Law is fulfilled—the strength of sin is broken. The sting of death is sin—sin is pardoned—death has a sting no longer. If you believe in Christ you shall never die in that sense in which you dread death. You shall fall asleep but you shall never die. That death of which you think is not the Christian's portion—it belongs to the *ungodly*. In it you shall have no share, if you trust the Savior. Borne on angels' wings to Heaven—up from calamity, imperfection, temptation and trial shall you mount—flitting with the wings of a dove far above the clouds of sorrow! Leaving this dusky globe behind you, you shall enter into the splendors of immortality. You shall not die, but wake out of this dying world into a life of Glory!

Come, Soul! If you trust in Christ, this “if” shall be no if, but a *certainty* today—the Son shall make you free, indeed. I do not think I can bring out the full value of this liberty by merely speaking of the evils which we are delivered from. You know, Brethren, freedom consists not only in a negative but in a positive—we are not only free *from*, but we are free *to*. We hear of persons receiving the freedom of a city. This implies that certain privileges are bestowed. Now, “if the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free, indeed,” in the sense of privilege—you shall be free to call yourself God’s child. You shall be free to say, “Abba, Father,” without rebuke. You shall be free to claim the protection of that Father’s House and the provision of His bounty. You shall be free to come to His knees with all your trials and tell Him all your griefs.

You shall be free to plead His promises and to receive the fulfillment of them, too. You shall be free to sit at His table, not as a servant is permitted sometimes to sit down when the feast is over to eat the leftovers, but you shall sit there as a well-beloved son, to eat the fatted calf while your Father with you, eats, drinks and is merry. You shall be free to enter into the Church on earth, the mother of us all. Free to all her ordinances. Free to share in all those gifts which Christ has given to his spouse. And when you die, you shall be free to enter into the rest which remains for the people of God. Free to partake of the New Jerusalem which is above. Free to use her harps of gold and to her streets of joy. Free to feast in her great banquet which lasts forever. Free access to the heart of God, to the throne of Christ and to the blessedness of eternity!

Oh, how good it is to think that there is a possibility of a freedom to such privileges as these and a possibility of it to the vilest of the vile! For some who were grossly guilty, some who had gone far astray have nevertheless enjoyed the fullness of the blessing of the Gospel of Peace. Look at Paul! No man enters more into the mystery of the Gospel than he. He had freedom to do so—he could comprehend with all saints what are the heights and depths, and know the love of Christ which passes knowledge and yet it is he, it is he who once foamed out threats, who sucked the blood of the saints! It is he who dyed his hands up to the very elbows in murderous gore. It is he who hated Christ! It is he who was a persecutor and injurious and yet is he free from evil and he is free to all the privileges of the chosen of God!

And why not you? And why not *you*? Woman, tottering and trembling, why should not, why should not the Son make you free? Man, tossed about with many doubts, why should not the great Liberator appear to you? Can there be a reason why not? You have not read the rolls of predestination and discovered that your name has been left out. It has not been revealed that for you there is no Atonement, but it is revealed to you that whoever believes on Him is not condemned. And this is the testimony which comes to you—O that you would receive it!—“He that believes on the Lord Jesus Christ has everlasting life.” O that you would be bold and trust Christ this morning and the “if” which is in our text shall become a blessed certainty to you! So then there is a possibility for freedom. We will pause awhile and then warn you against false freedom.

II. BEWARE OF FALSE LIBERTY. Every good thing is imitated by Satan who is the master of counterfeits and therefore, liberty—a word fit to be used in Heaven and almost too good for fallen earth—has been used for the very basest of purposes and men have misnamed the devil’s offspring by this angelic title. We have in spiritual matters things called liberty which are not liberty. There is Antinomian liberty—God deliver us from that! A man says, “I am not under the Law of God, therefore I will live as I like.” A most blessed Truth of God followed by a most atrocious inference.

The Christian is *not* under the Law, but under Grace—that is a very precious fact—it is much better to serve God because we *love* Him, than because we are *afraid* of His wrath. To be under the Law is to give God the service of a slave who fears the lash. But to be under Grace is to serve God out of pure love to Him. Oh, to be a child and to give the obedience of a child and not the homage of a serf! But the Antinomian says, “I am not under the Law, therefore will I live and fulfill my own lusts and pleasures.”

Paul says of those who argue thus, their damnation is just. We have had the pain of knowing some who have said, “I am God’s elect—Christ shed His blood for me—I shall never perish!” And then they have gone to the ale-house, they have sung the drunkard’s song and have even used the drunkard’s oath. What is this, dear Friends, but a strong delusion to believe a lie? They who can do this must surely have been some time in Satan’s oven, to be baked so hard. Why, these must have had their consciences taken out of them! Are they not turned to something worse than brutes? The dog does not say, “My master feeds me and he will not destroy me, but is fond of me, therefore will I snarl at him or rend him”?

Even the ass does not say, “My master gives me fodder, therefore will I dash my heels into his face.” The ox knows its owner and the ass his master’s crib, but these men only know God to provoke Him and they profess that His love to them gives them a liberty to rebel against His will! God deliver you from any such freedom as this! Be not legalists, but love the Law of God and in it make your delight. Abhor all idea of being saved *by* good works, but O, be as *full of* good works as if you were to be saved by them!

Walk in holiness as if your own walking would make you enter into Heaven and then rest on Christ, knowing that nothing of your own can ever open the gate of the Celestial City. Eschew and abhor anything like Antinomianism. Do not be afraid of high doctrine. Men sometimes mislabel good sound Calvinism as Antinomianism. Do not be afraid of that—do not be alarmed at the ugly word Antinomianism if it does not exist! But the thing itself—flee from it as from a serpent! Shake off the venomous beast into the fire as Paul did the viper which he found among the firewood. When you are gathering up the doctrines of Grace to cheer and comfort you, this deadly viper gets into the midst and when the fire begins to burn, he comes out of the heat and fastens upon you. Shake him off into the fire of Divine Love and there let the monster be consumed!

My Brethren, if we are loved of God with an everlasting love and are no more under the Law but free from its curse, let us serve God with all our heart’s gratitude to Him. Let us say, “I am Your servant. I am Your servant and the son of Your handmaid—You have loosed my bonds.” Let the

loosing of our bonds be an argument for service. Then again, Beloved, there is another kind of freedom of which we must all be aware—it is a notional professional freedom. “Free? Yes, certainly we are. We are the people of God,” say some. Not that they have ever passed from death unto life. Not that vital godliness is a matter they understand.

No. “We always went to Church, or Chapel. We have never stopped going in our lives. We are the most regular of religious people and we were baptized, and we go to the sacrament and what is there that we do not do? Who convicts us of any sin? If we are not going to the Celestial City, who can be? Surely, surely, we enjoy much of the things of God! We sit in God’s House and we feel a pleasure when we listen to the Truth of God. Sacred song bears us on high as well as other men. We sit as God’s people sit and we hear as God’s people hear—surely we are free!”

Ah, but dear Friends, a man may *think* himself free and still be a slave. You know there are many in this world who dream themselves to be what they are not. And you have a faculty of dreaming in the same manner. Christ must have come to you and shown you your slavery and broken your heart on account of it, or else you are *not* free. And you must have looked to the wounds of Jesus as the only gates of your escape and have seen in His hands the only power which could snap your fetters or else, though you have professed and re-professed, you are as much slaves of Satan as though you were in the Pit itself!

Beware, I pray you, of hereditary religion! A man cannot hand down his godliness as he does his goods. And I cannot receive Grace as I may receive lands, or gold, or silver. “You must be born again.” There must be the going up out of Egypt, the leaving the flesh pots and the brick kilns, and advancing through the Red Sea of Atonement into the wilderness and afterwards into the promised rest. Have you passed from death unto life? If not, beware of having a mere notional, professional liberty!

There are many, too, who have the liberty of natural self-righteousness and of the power of the flesh. They have fanciful, unfounded hopes of Heaven. They have never wronged anybody. They have never done any mischief in the world. They are amiable. They are generous to the poor. They are this, they are that, they are the other! Therefore they feel themselves to be free. They never feel their own inability. They can always pray alike and always sing alike. They have no changes. They are not emptied from vessel to vessel. Their confidence never wavers. They believe themselves all right and abide in their confidence.

They do not stop to examine—their delusion is too strong and their comfort is much too precious for them to wish to mar it by looking to its foundation—so they go on, on, on—sound asleep till one of these days, falling over the awful precipice of ruin, they will wake up where waking will be too late! We know there are some such. They are in God’s House, but they are not God’s sons! You remember the case of Ishmael. It is to that which our Lord seems to allude here. Ishmael was a son of Abraham according to the flesh, but he never was free. His mother being a bondwoman, he was a slave.

He might call himself Abraham's son if he could, but being only after the flesh he was still a slave, for it was not in the power of Abraham, in the power of the flesh, to beget anything but bondage. And Ishmael at his best was still the son of the bondwoman. Yet you see he sits at the table, he eats and drinks just as merrily as the child of the promise. No, in some things he is stronger than Isaac—he has the advantage of age and I dare say plumes himself on being heir. "Ah," says he, "I am the elder one of the family." At last he mocked Isaac—when the boys were at their sports he was violent towards his younger brother, even as many Pharisees are very cruel to true Believers.

What came of it? Why, "the servant abides not in the house forever, but the son abides forever," and so the day came in which Sarah said, "Cast out the bondwoman and her son," and away went Ishmael. He might cling to his father and say, "I am your son." "You must go, Sir, you are a slave. You were born after the flesh and therefore you take from your mother your state and condition and not from your father. Your mother was a bond slave and so are you and you must go. The privileges of the children's house are not for you. You must go into the wilderness. You cannot abide here." But Isaac, though feeble and tempted and tried and vexed, is never sent out of his father's house—never—he abides forever.

This is the position of many. They are very good people in their way. They do their best, but what is their best? It is the offspring of the flesh. And that which is born of the flesh is flesh, Consequently their best endeavors only make them slaves in the house, not sons. Only he who is born by faith according to the promise is the free Isaac and abides in the house. The day will come when God will ask every member of the Christian Church and all who profess religion, "Are you children by faith in the promise or not?" And if you are only children according to the flesh He will send you back again into the wilderness—to eternal ruin you must go unless the Spirit of God has given you the spirit of freedom.

There was a custom, observed among the Greeks and Romans that when a man died, if he left slaves, they went as a heritage to the elder son and if the elder son said, "Some of these are my own Brethren, though they are slaves, I therefore pronounced them free," they would be free. Emancipation was not always allowed in either Greek or Roman states—a man might not always set a slave free without giving a good reason. But it was always held to be a valid reason if the son, coming into a heritage of slaves, chose to set them free. No question was asked if the son made them free. The law did not step in.

So, dear Friends, if the Son shall make us free, we shall be free, indeed. If Jesus Christ, the great Heir according to the promise, the great Mediator whom God has created Heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds—if He shall say to us who are as Ishmael, "I make you free," then are we free, indeed! And neither Law, Justice, Heaven or Hell can bring any argument against us why we should not be free. But do beware of all imaginary freedoms and shun them as you would poison! And God give you Divine Grace to enjoy the glorious liberty of the children of God!

III. TRUE FREEDOM COMES TO US THROUGH HIM WHO IS, IN THE HIGHEST SENSE, "THE SON." No man gets free except as he comes to Christ and takes Him to be his All in All. You may rivet on your fetters by going to the Law, to your own good works, to your willings and your praying and your doings, but you will never be free until you come to Christ. Mark you, Man, if you will come to Christ you shall be free this moment from every sort of bondage. But if you will go here and there, and try this and that and the other, you shall find all your trying will end in disappointment and you shall lie down in sorrow and in shame—for none but Jesus—none but Jesus—can make us free, indeed.

Real liberty comes from Him only. Let us think awhile of this real liberty. Remember it is a liberty righteously bestowed. Christ has a right to make men free. If I should set a slave free who belongs to his master, he might run for a time—but since I had not the power to give him a legal emancipation—he would be dragged back again. But the Son, who is heir of *all things*, has a right to make him free whom He wills to make free. The Law is on Christ's side. Christ has such power in Heaven and earth committed to Him that if He says to the sinner, "You are free," free he is before high Heaven.

Before God's great bar you can plead the word of Jesus and you shall be delivered! Think, too, how dearly this freedom was purchased. Christ speaks it by His power, but He still *bought* it by His blood. He makes you free, Sinner, but it is by His own bonds. You go free because He bore your burden for you. See Him bear His agony—"Crushed beneath the millstone of the Law till all His head, His hair, His garments were bloody." See Him yonder, dragged to Pilate's hall, bound, whipped like a common felon, scourged like a murderer and dragged away by hellhounds through the streets. Look at Him fastened by those cruel fetters which went through His flesh to the accursed wood. See Him yielding up His liberty to the dungeon of death.

There the Mighty One sleeps in Joseph of Arimathea's tomb. Dearly did He purchase with His own bondage the liberty which He so freely gives. But, though dearly purchased, let us take up that keynote—He freely *gives* it! Jesus asks *nothing* of us as a preparation for this liberty. He finds us sitting in sackcloth and ashes and bids us put on the beautiful array of freedom. He discovers us in a darkness which may be felt, sitting in the valley of the shadow of death and He brings the true Light in His hand and turns our midnight into blazing noon and all *without* our help, *without* our merit, and at *first* without our will.

Christ saves sinners just as they are! Christ died not for the righteous, but for the ungodly! His message is Grace, pure Grace, undiluted by a single condition or requisition which God might make of man. Just as you are, trust your soul with Christ and though there is in you no speck of anything that is good, He will save you and give you perfect liberty. Dearly has He bought it, but freely does He give it—even the faith by which we receive is the gift of God. It is a liberty which may be instantaneously received. The captive goes first through one door and then another and per-

haps a hundred keys must grate in the wards of the lock before he feels the cool fresh air gladdening his brow.

But it is not so with the man who believes! The moment you believe, you are free! You may have been chained at a thousand points, but the instant you believe in Christ you are unfettered and free as the bird of the air. Not more free is the eagle which mounts to his rocky nest and afterwards outsoars the clouds—even he, the bird of God—is not more unfettered than the soul which Christ has delivered! Cut are the cords and in an instant you are clear of all and upward you mount to God! You may have come in here a slave and you may go out free!

God's Grace can, in a moment, give you the condition of freedom and the nature of it. He can make you say, "Abba, Father," with your whole heart, though up to this day you may have been of your father the devil, and his works you have done. In an instant is it worked! We are told in tropical lands that the sun seems to leap up from under the horizon and the dead of night is suddenly turned into the luster of day—so on a sudden does God's Grace often dawn upon the darkness of sinful hearts. You have seen, perhaps, at times after showers of rain have fallen upon the earth, how land which seemed all dry and barren was suddenly covered with green grass, with here and there a lily full in bloom. And so a heart which has been like a desert, when once the shower of Jesus' Grace falls on it, blossoms like the garden of the Lord and yields sweet perfume.

And that in a moment! You who have given yourselves up in despair—you who have written your own condemnation! You who have made a league with death and a covenant with Hell and said, "There is no hope, therefore will we go after our iniquities," I charge you, hear me, when I declare that my Lord and Master, who has broken my chains and set *me* free, can break yours, too—and that with one blow! Mark, that if this is done, it is done *forever*. When Christ sets free, no chains can bind again. Let the Master say to me, "Captive, I have delivered you," and it is done!

Come on, come on, you Fiends of the Pit! Mightier is He who is for us than all they who are against us. Come on, come on, temptations of the world—but if the Lord is on our side, whom shall we fear? If He is our defense, who shall be our destruction? Come on, come on, you foul corruptions, come on you machinations and temptations of my own deceitful heart—but He who has begun the good work in me will carry it on and perfect it to the end.

Gather, gather, gather all your hosts together, you who are the foes of God and the enemies of man, and come at once with concentrated fury and with hellish might against my spirit—but if God acquits—who is he that condemns? Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord? The black stream of death shall never wash out the mark of Christian liberty! That skeleton monarch bears no yoke which he can put upon a Believer's neck. We will shout victory when we are breast-deep amidst the last billows and grapple with the king upon the pale horse—we will throw the rider and win the victory in the last struggle, according as it is written, "Thanks be unto God which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Sparta and Greece refused to wear the yoke of Persia and broke the proud king's pomp. But we are free in a nobler sense! We refuse the yoke of Satan and will overcome his power as Christ overcame it in the days gone by. Let those who will, bend and crouch at the foot of the world's monarch! But as for those whom God has made free, they claim to think, to believe, to act, and to *be* as their Divine instinct commands them and the Spirit of God enables them—"Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." "If the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free, indeed."

IV. And now we put round the QUESTION, are we free, then, this morning? Are we free? I will not answer it for *you*, nor need I just now answer for myself, but I would beseech you to make a searching enquiry into it. If you are free, then remember that you have changed your lodging place, for the slave and the son sleep not in the same room of the house. The things which satisfied you when a slave will not satisfy you NOW.

You wear a garment which a slave may never wear and you feel an instinct within which the slave can never feel. There is an Abba, Father, cry in you which was not there once. Is it so? Is it so? If you are free you lie not as you used to do. You go not to the slave's work—you have not now to toil and sweat to earn the wages of sin which is death. But now, as a son serves his father, you do a son's work and you expect to receive a son's reward—for the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord!

One thing I know, if you are free then you are thinking about setting others free. And if you have no zeal for the emancipation of other men you are a slave yourself. If you are free you hate all sorts of chains, all sorts of sin and you will never willingly put on the fetters again. You live each day crying unto Him who made you free at first, to hold you up that you fall not into the snare. If you are free, this is not the world for you! This is the land of slaves. This is the world of bondage. If you are free, your heart has gone to Heaven, the land of the free. If you are free today, your spirit is longing for the time when you shall see the great Liberator face to face!

If you are free, you will bide your time until He calls you. But when He says, "Friend, come up here," you will fearlessly mount to the upper spheres—and death and sin shall be no hindrance to your advent to His Glory! I would we were all free! But if we are not, the next best thing I would is that those of us who are not free would fret under the fetter—for when the fetters are felt, they shall be broken! When the iron enters into the soul it shall be snapped. When you long for liberty you shall have it! When you seek for it as for hidden treasure and pant for it as the stag for the water brook, God will not deny you! "Seek and you shall find. Knock and it shall be opened. Ask and it shall be given you."

God lead you to seek and knock and ask *now*, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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PLACE FOR THE WORD

NO. 2584

INTENDED
FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, AUGUST 21, 1898.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 8, 1883.

“My Word has no place in you.”
John 8:37.

This was very plain speaking on the part of the Lord Jesus Christ. He could not only read the thoughts of these Jews, but He could also tell the source of them. He not only knew their feelings towards Himself, even before they expressed them, but He also knew why they had such feelings. Our Lord is not here, now, in bodily Presence, but He is here by His Spirit. He knows those who have received His Word, and He looks with gracious approval upon them. If you have given it entrance into your heart, thank Him for it and take care that you retain it—and that you permit it to influence your whole life. Let His Word be in you as salt to preserve you and as light first shining into you—and then, streaming from you—let it make your life a blessing to all those who are around you! My Master is glad as He looks upon everyone here who has received His Word. Precious is that coffer which holds the priceless treasure of the Word of Christ. Your body is precious to Him, your soul is precious to Him when He can see that sacred deposit of His own Word abiding within you!

But there are some here, I fear—no, in all honesty I must say that there are some here in whom the Word of God is not to be found. To them Christ says, “My Word has no place in you.” Jesus knows your condition, my dear Hearer, if that is your case. He knows how often you have heard that Word and He knows what struggles it has cost you to keep that Word from entering your heart! He knows with what determination you have refused to receive that Truth of God which has come from God to you. I would like, if I could, to talk very simply and in a very friendly and homely manner to every person here who has not received God's Word. And I would wish to speak so that I should not be understood to be preaching to this great mass of people so much as to be talking to individuals, one by one, lovingly anxious that any here who have not Christ's Word in them may not go out of this building until it has a place in their hearts.

I. I will begin by asking this question—WHAT PLACE OUGHT THE WORD OF GOD HAVE IN MEN'S HEARTS? Jesus said to these Jews, “My

Word has no place in you.” What place ought the Word of God have in our hearts?

First, it ought to have an *inside place*. Many persons will give it an outside place. “The Word of God,” says one—“yes, of course I have it in my house. The Word of God—if you come home with me, you will find that I have a splendid copy of the Bible in my best room, well bound and capitably illustrated!” Another says, “I have a Bible in almost every room of my house. I think there is one in every room, I like to see it there.” Yes, that is very proper and right, but still, the place for God’s Word is not an outside place, but an inside place! It is infinitely better to have it hidden in your heart than it is to have many copies of it laid among the furniture of your house. It may be that your having the Word of God so plentifully at home may *increase* your damnation rather than lead to your salvation! You had the Lamp of Life, but you made a dark lantern of it—you shut in the light and never used it for any practical purpose. My dear Hearers, you who pay an outward reverence to that Word and say that it is undoubtedly Inspired, and praise and extol it—if, at the same time, believing it to be true, you do not yield yourself up to its power, may God have mercy upon you and lead you to repent of your sin! The proper place for the Word is inside, in your heart—have you got it hidden there?

Next, it ought to have *a place of high honor*. God’s Word in a man ought to be in the best part of that man, not merely in the store room of his memory, but in the drawing room of his enjoyments, in the parlor where it will talk with him. If the human mind is compared to a palace, the proper place for Christ’s Word is on the throne! All the writings of men put together cannot equal in value one single chapter of the Bible! Their words, at best, are but gold-leaf. But God’s Word is bullion! Here you have pearls that are altogether priceless, such as can never be found elsewhere. If the Word of Christ dwells in you, let it dwell in you richly—let it be honored and revered beyond all the words of men—however excellent those words may be.

Give the Word of Christ an inside place and a place of honor.

Next, give it *a place of trust*. Let it cover you as the hen covers her chickens with her wings. Let it surround you as the ramparts surround the city and protect it from the invader. Give yourself up to God’s Truth as one trusts himself in a lifeboat, hoping to be safely landed. Have no confidence but in the Word of the Master. If you stand partly on God’s Word and partly on man’s word, you will have one foot on a rock and the other foot upon quicksand—and that one foot upon the quicksand will be your ruin! “Trust you in the Lord forever,” for His Word is faithful, true and steadfast. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but His Word shall never pass away! Give, then, to that Word, all your confidence! Repose upon it for it is Infallible and unchangeable.

Further, if the Word of God is in you, give it *a place of rule*. Let it be the master of your thoughts, ruling your understanding—the master of your affections, curbing your passions and exciting holy desires in you. Let it be the master of your words. Let all sinful and even all *idle* words

be banished from your lips! Let your speech be seasoned with the salt of Revelation. Let the Word of the Lord be the master of your action. “Whatever He says to you, do it.” If Christ forbids you to do anything, let it be avoided with all the energy of your spirit. Put the Scripture, the Inspired Word—put Christ, the Incarnate Word, Himself, upon the throne of your whole being and surrender yourself to Him, without attempting to make any terms or conditions!

The Word of God ought also to have in *us a place of love*. “O how love I Your Law,” said David. God’s Word is never truly known till it is loved. “I hate vain thoughts, but Your Law do I love,” said David. He esteemed it more than gold, yes, than much fine gold. In religion, to love is to know—I wish it were always true that to know is to love. When we love the Word and it saturates our whole being so that we cannot relinquish it, but take an intense delight in it, and have a fervent affection for every part of it—then it is that we put the Word of God into the place it ought to occupy—not in the attic of the brain, but in the parlor of the heart, and there let it take up its permanent abode!

That last remark suggests that the Word of Christ ought to have *a permanent place* in us—it ought never to be forgotten. We should not be followers of Christ, today, and followers of somebody else, tomorrow. No! Let the Word that Christ has spoken have an eternal effect upon our immortal nature and a perpetual abiding place within our heart. God grant that it may be so intertwined with the very warp and woof of our being that it would be impossible to take it from us without destroying our very selves! May our life prove that the Living Word is within us, quickening us and causing us to live with the life of God!

Now, dear Friends, it is for a special reason that I have insisted upon this point, that the Word of God should have its rightful place in us. I am no Prophet, nor the son of a Prophet, yet I perceive that there is coming upon the world a time of most unusual trial. I believe that within the next few years we shall hear of all sorts of fanaticism and folly such as you have hardly imagined. There will probably arise false christs and false prophets of every kind—and you will be bid to believe in this, and to follow that, and to obey the other. I charge you, by the living God, have no master but Christ and have no book but the Bible to be your Infallible Guide! Now, soldiers, the watchword for today is, “Stand fast.” You who are but babes must grow, or else you will be swept off your feet in the cyclones of excitement that have already begun! Be no longer children, leaping over the hedge to seek for every nest that silly birds may build. Keep to the King’s Highway and follow Christ! And he that comes to you, though he seems a saint, transparent as crystal and bright as the sun, turn from him if he speaks to you any other thing than this Word of Christ, this permanent, perpetual Word which cannot be shaped or changed! Stand on this solid Rock and when the hurly-burly is over and when brains shall cease to swim, you will have cause to rejoice in your steadfastness! There are swift currents, now, that strain every ship and compel the mariner to put on all steam even to hold his own against

them—and blessed shall he be who is not carried away by them. Blessed shall be the brave sentinel of Christ who stood still in his watchtower though the morning was long in coming, and who watched through the dreary night with steadfast expectation that it would come—and with this resolve that whether it did come or did not come—he would stand where His Master put him!

As for me, I care not what men invent, or what they deny—the Truth which I have learned from the Scriptures, by the teaching of the Holy Spirit—is the Truth of God by which I shall stand so long as there is breath in my body! And with Luther I say I can do no other. To this I must stand! Let those who will do otherwise, follow after novelties till they weary of them.

This much have I spoken concerning the place which God's Word ought to have in every man's heart.

II. Now give me your heart, Friend. Let me have a good grip of it while I try to answer a second question—WHY HAS THAT WORD NO PLACE IN MANY HEARTS?

“Oh!” says one, “*I am so very busy that I cannot admit it.*” My dear Friend, I hope you will alter that answer. I heard, some time ago, of one who, when anyone spoke to him about religion, always used to reply, “You see, I am so very busy that I cannot attend to it.” It happened, one morning, that he saw in the paper that a fellow-tradesman had suddenly died and, as he read the paragraph, he said to his wife, “I don't know how old So-and-So found time to die! I have such a deal to do that I could not afford time to die.” He staggered as he went out of the room and fell across the threshold dead within five minutes after having uttered that wicked speech! I have no doubt that the same thing has happened elsewhere. You may fancy that you are too busy to think of the affairs of your soul, yet you may be taken away, all of a sudden, from the midst of your occupations and then what will those gains benefit you? It may be printed in *The Illustrated London News* that you died worth so many thousands of pounds, but will it not be a great lie? When a rich man dies, what is he worth? He has, perhaps, a lead coffin, or the undertaker may use more expensive wood than for a poor man. Granted there might be a greater display at the funeral and, very often, there is more squabbling with his family over what he has left!

I have often thought that the poor man's funeral has much more sorrow in it, much more that could be desired and spoken of with pleasure than the funeral of the man who seeks to be immensely rich. You know what happens when poor Hedge dies. His wife weeps, for he was the mainstay of the household, the bread-winner of the family. The poor woman wonders how he is to be buried. Well, there is his daughter, Mary—she is a domestic and she gets about 15 pounds a year for wages. She has not much to spare, but she makes up her mind that her father shall not be buried by the parish, so she finds a little of the money that is needed. There is the eldest son. He has eight children of his own and he has only the wages of an agricultural laborer—but he pinches so that he

may subscribe his sovereign towards the expense. They all feel what they give—they are made to feel it—and they all sincerely mourn and lament. And though there is not a sixpence to divide between them, yet with what honor and with what love they lay their father in the silent tomb!

On the other hand, you know how it often is with rich people—the best part of the funeral is when the will is read. And I have more than once heard some such remark as this—“That man was very much like a hog—no good to anybody while he lived, but he will make some fine sides of bacon when he is cut up.” Is it worth while for a man to fling his soul away merely that he may get so much together that he cannot use, and which will very likely be misused by those who inherit it? I say that “the game is not worth the candle.” My dear Friend, if this is the game you have been playing, give it up at once, and say, “I must have time. I will have time, come what may, to seek the salvation of my soul, for above all else I want to make sure of life eternal.” You will not again say that you are too busy to receive Christ’s Word, will you?

Another says, “You ask me why the Word of Christ is not abiding in me? I think it is because—.” No, you would not like to say it, so I will say it for you—it is *because there is no particular novelty about it*. You like a brand-new gospel, do you not? Well, there are plenty of people, nowadays, who supply that worthless article. We get a new sect about every month and some new-fashioned gospel invented almost every week! Away they go after something fresh. First, North, then, South. Then, East, then, West. “Hurrah! We have found the very thing! Sound the timbrels, beat the drums, blow the trumpets!” Just so, but “the Kingdom of God comes not with observation.” Remember what was written concerning Christ hundreds of years before He came to earth? “He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench: He shall bring forth judgment unto truth.” If the gospel that men teach is new, it is not true, for there is nothing that can be new and true! The Truth of God is old as the everlasting hills. Therefore, dear Friends, be not touched with that Athenian madness of always seeking after some new thing! Did you ever hear of new gold? To all intents and purposes, all gold that is worth having is old. Men can make what they call pearls, sapphires and diamonds—but they are paste gems and utterly valueless. It is just the same with the doctrines made by men—they are not according to the eternal Word of God and, therefore, they are not worth a penny a cart-load! Do not be so foolish as to reject Christ’s Word because it is ancient—that is the very reason why you should receive it and retain it in your memory and in your heart.

Shall I suggest that there are some who do not receive Christ’s Word *because they are listening to man’s word*? If you know anybody who is equal to my Master, hear him! If you know anybody who is superior to Christ, hear him! As for me, He is the one and the only Teacher of the Truth of God and at His feet I reverently and humbly sit. All other teachers whom I have ever heard of, or met with, so far as they speak as He

does, are worthy of attention. But whenever their teaching differs from His, on that point they are worthy of no regard whatever! Did you say that such-and-such a thing is believed by you because you found it in Calvin's *Institutes*? I am a Calvinist and a lover of that grand man's memory and doctrine—but I believe nothing merely *because Calvin taught it*—but because I have found his teaching in the Word of God. “Oh, but the Prayer Book says such-and-such!” It may do so, but, I pray you, believe nothing because it is there unless it can also be found in Holy Scripture! “But such-and-such things were in the Minutes of Mr. Wesley's Conference.” If they are according to Scripture, let them stand! But if they are not, who was Mr. Wesley that we should receive his teaching? “Oh, but the archbishops have said it!” And what are all the archbishops piled together from the days of the first archbishop until now, wherein they have differed from the Word of God? No, my Friend, do not fill your brain with other people's teaching—if you would be right, turn all else out and come and say—“The Word of Christ for me! The Word of Christ for me!” If I have any influence over you and if you are ever inclined to believe a thing simply because I say it, I charge you, throw away such superstition and test all that I say by the Word of God. The real weight of truth consists not in what one man says, or in what another man says—the weight, the power, the substance lies in what Christ has said—that, and that alone, is the Truth of God.

I think I hear another say, “I have not received Christ's Word for *it seems to me to be too spiritual, too holy.*” We can never deny that it is holy and spiritual, but, my Friend, think that matter over and withdraw those words you just uttered. Can anything be too spiritual to come from God, or too holy to bring us back to God? Let those characteristics of the Word of God charm you to Christ and not drive you away from Him!

“Oh, but,” someone says, “if I were to believe Christ's Word, *it would be very cold comfort to me*, and it would rob me of many of my present enjoyments.” Yes, if those enjoyments would rob you of your soul, but not else. There is no pleasure denied to me, as a Christian, except such pleasure as would be no pleasure to me as a Christian! The moment a man's mind takes in Christ's Word and is saturated with Christ's Spirit, he finds a pleasure only in that which is good—while that which is deluding, that which is degrading, that which is depraving, becomes a misery to him. Can anyone find comfort in Christ's Word? Ask the sick who can lie on their beds and sing! Is there comfort in Christ's Word? Ask the aged who, tottering on their staff in the midst of many infirmities, are taught a holy patience! Ask the dying who, as they gasp out their life, yet shout of victory, their faces beaming with the light of the Glory which is opening up before them! If you want real joy, find it in Christ's Word, and no longer say that it has no place in you!

Let me give you a very special squeeze of the hand and whisper in your ear that I am afraid the reason why God's Word has no place in your heart is that *you are not very much in earnest*. You are only like a butterfly—you have not come to real living yet—you are sporting, playing,

trifling. Oh, that you might soon find life in earnest and think in earnest about eternity! Then, but not till then, will you seek to lay hold on Christ.

May I also whisper to you very softly and ask, "Is not the reason why you have not received Christ's Word *because you have some favorite sin?* I have known men who could not be Christians and they argued very plausibly about the matter, but the real hindrance was that they had another house besides their own. I have known some men who could not believe in Jesus Christ for one very sufficient reason—namely, that they believed too much in the bottle. You know that a man cannot be a Believer in the Savior when he is devotedly attached to the god Bacchus! And I have known some to get very much enraged against the Truth of God and the one who preached it when the reason has been that their mode of conducting business did not square with the Gospel. Their yard measure was short of 36 inches—and when they began to count up to a hundred, it was very difficult for them to get beyond eighty-five! A "dozen" did not mean twelve, and a gross—well, I do not know how grossly short their "gross" fell.

There are all sorts of tricks of trade and a man who practices them says, "Well, you know, I am not strait-laced." No, Sir, nobody ever thought that you were. "Oh, but I am not going to be one of your precise people!" No, I know you are not. We really would not malign you so much as to suppose that you were going to be precise, like the Puritans, for instance. You, also, are among those who like a broad theology. Yes, I know, you sometimes are unable to get home at night because the pavement is so narrow. I understand you perfectly well. It is for this reason that many do not receive Christ's Word—because there is some pet sin of their own that they do not like to have interfered with and, therefore, Christ and His Word are shut out of their heart.

Shall I tell you one thing more? Very possibly you do not receive Christ's Word *because you need to be made a new man before you will do so.* The carnal man receives not the things that are of God. There is a hard slab of rock in your heart and when the good Seed falls upon it, the birds soon take it away. What you need, Friends, is to have that rock broken up, dissolved, changed into pliable earth. Can I do that for you? I was going to say, I wish I could, but I cannot. Only the Eternal Spirit, who can quicken the dead, can renew you in the spirit of your mind. Cry unto God that this great miracle may be worked—you will never receive the Word until it is. This is the message for you, "You must be born again." *Must*, mark you. It is not *may*—"you *must*—you *must* be born again," for until you are born again, this living and incorruptible Seed of the Word of God will never get into your hearts. May the Holy Spirit speedily work the miracle of regeneration in your spirit!

III. I have finished when I have tried to answer very briefly my third question—IF YOU HAVE NOT THE WORD OF CHRIST IN YOU, WHAT WILL COME OF IT?

Something came to the Jews because they rejected Christ's Word. They sought to kill Christ because His Word had no place in them. I hope

that will not happen to you, Friends, but I have witnessed it in others. I have seen the child of godly parents quench conscience and resist the Spirit. I have seen many a young man, full of fair promises, but refusing to be decided for Christ and, all of a sudden, I have found him a skeptic, seen him grow into an infidel and seen him develop into a blasphemer. I have known him to become a most violent antagonist to the Gospel. "Is your servant a dog," says one, "that he should do this thing?" No, it may be that you are not a dog, but there is enough of the dog spirit in you to do it. If you are dog enough to turn away from Christ, you will yet be dog enough to howl at His heels. Beware of resisting the Spirit of God and trifling with conscience, for there is nothing worse! A man may play on the edge of a precipice and he may do it safely for many a day, but one of these days he will make a fatal slip. Mind what you are doing, I pray you! Never let it be said of you, as Christ said to these Jews, "You seek to kill Me because My Word has no place in you."

Or, if that shall not be the case with you, I will tell you what may happen. Christ may cease speaking to you. "I shall not leave off going to Chapel," says one. No, perhaps not, but the Gospel may no longer have any voice to you. Possibly it has already less power over you than it once had—you used to shiver in your shoes when you heard the Truth of God! You have gone out of this place trembling under the Word—but you do not do so now. I hope it is not because I do not preach as earnestly as I did, but if I do preach as earnestly and as faithfully as ever, then what is happening to you? Why, you are getting deaf ears and a callous, hardened heart—and these are the commencement of that most awful of all conditions into which men slide when God says to His messengers, "Go and tell this people, Hear you, indeed, but understand not; and see you, indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed." It is a terrible thing when even the Gospel becomes the savor of death unto death to those who would not permit it to be the savor of life unto life to them! Before Christ packs up His wares and goes His way because you would not have His goods, ask Him to let you buy them of Him. His terms will not hurt you—He sells His precious things "without money and without price." Urgently require at His hands that before He turns His back on you, you may yield to Him and be saved!

And, remember, once more, that if the Word of God has no place in us, *it will exist somewhere*. Down came the Word of God to a man, the other night, and it knocked very hard at his heart, but the door was shut. The Word knocked again, and again, and again. Still the door was shut and the Word went back to Him who sent it and it stayed there. How many times have you heard the Gospel, my Friend? Could you count up the number of faithful sermons that have been preached in your hearing? Do you know how many earnest entreaties from friends have been addressed to you in vain? You shut them out, but they all went back and there they are—at the Throne of God! And when you come there, at last, and your

trial takes place, you will be surprised to find all those messages and messengers present at the last grand assize to bear witness against you! Oh, let it not be so, I pray you! Will you not believe in Jesus Christ even now? Will you not turn to Him and live this very hour? Will you not leave your sins and trust the Savior? Will you not go to Him and, with a broken heart, confess that you need Him? He may be found of those who seek Him! Then, will you not seek Him now? If not, remember this scene—these crowded galleries, this area, these thousands of eyes—I call upon all to witness against you, in that day, that this night I preached Christ to you and bade you live—and if you will not, if you prefer moral and eternal suicide—I call this building, every beam and every stone in it, and every person here to witness that I have told you of the way of salvation, and implored you to run in it! They shall be swift witnesses against you to condemn you if you will not repent! Turn you, turn you, why will you die? Trust the Savior! Trust Him, now, and live forever! God grant that it may be so, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 8:28-59.**

Verse 28. *Then said Jesus unto them.*—That is, to the Jews who were questioning and opposing Him.

28. *When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then shall you know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father has taught Me, I speak these things.* Blessed be God, there were many, after the crucifixion of Christ, who did believe in Him! Yet, alas, in others, the blindness of heart continued and they would not see the Messiah in Him who was crucified. We, who believe in the uplifted Savior, can see the Father in the Son and, to us, faith has become a most blessed thing—and we know that He does nothing of Himself and, that as the Father has taught Him, so He speaks.

29. *And He that sent Me is with Me.* I commend that short sentence to all my Master's servants, for there is great comfort in it. Your Lord could say this and so can you if you are truly employed in His service—"He that sent me is with me."

29. *The Father has not left Me alone.* There is another precious motto for you. Jesus could truly say, "The Father has not left Me alone" and, as He did not leave His only-begotten and well-beloved Son, so He will not leave *any* of His children.

29. *For I do always those things that please Him.* Let us labor earnestly to be able to say that! If there is anything which would not please God, let us have nothing to do with it. If it would not please God, it ought not to please us. Blessed shall that servant of the Lord be who can sincerely say, "I do always those things that please Him."

30-32. *As He spoke these words, many believed on Him. Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, If you continue in My word, then are you My disciples indeed; and you shall know the truth, and the truth*

shall make you free. There is such a thing as a temporary faith—beware of it, I beseech you. Men appear to believe in Christ for a little while, like that Seed which was sown upon the rock, which speedily sprang up and, just as quickly, withered away. God-given faith is not temporary, but permanent. “If you continue in My Word, then are you My disciples indeed.” God gives us the faith which is able to endure the fire of persecution and which continues steadfast even when exposed to the evil example of an ungodly world. “He that endures to the end shall be saved.” But temporary faith brings only delusion and ends in destruction.

33, 34. *They answered Him, We are Abraham’s seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how say You, You shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whoever commits sin is the servant of sin.* Depend upon it, acts of sin breed habits of sin, and habits are like the chains which slaves wear. How many there are who are bound to their lusts with many shackles and fetters! Once they seemed to enjoy the sin and to hold it in subjection, but now it has bound them and they cannot escape from it.

35, 36. *And the servant abides not in the house forever: but the Son abides always. If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, you shall be free indeed.* If He sets you free from sin, you will never go back to its slavery! There is no emancipation like that which Jesus brings, for it is eternal! When He snaps the fetter, He sets the Believer free forever.

37, 38. *I know that you are Abraham’s seed; but you seek to kill Me because My word has no place in you. I speak that which I have seen with My Father: and you do that which you have seen with your father.* It is a common characteristic of children to tell what they see. What they witness at home, they are sure to tell abroad. If you are a child of God, you will act and speak like your Father does. And if you are a child of the devil, you will act and speak like he. Our parentage may be discovered by our acts and our words—“I speak that which I have seen with My Father: and you do that which you have seen with your father.”

39. *They answered and said unto Him, Abraham is our father. Jesus said unto them, If you were Abraham’s children, you would do the works of Abraham.* “That is, if you were the true spiritual children of faithful Abraham, you would act as he did.”

40-42. *But now you seek to kill Me, a Man that has told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham. You do the deeds of your father. Then said they to Him, We are not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God. Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, you would love Me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of Myself, but He sent Me.* If any man has a right idea of God and really loves God, if he will study the Character of Christ, he will see that Christ is the very image of God in human flesh—and he will fall in love with Christ. That result is inevitable! Men form wrong ideas of God and then, when they read the life of Christ, they see no likeness between the Christ and their conception of God—nor is there any! But if they would take their idea of God from God’s own Word, then they would see that in the

Person of the Man of Nazareth, the Divine Character truly shines out, though it is toned down so as to meet the human eyes without the excessive glare that would blind them. But it is the same Light of Light, the same Love of Love, the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, “for in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” He is the express Image of God and he who truly knows God will know that Christ is also God, for Father and Son are One.

43-47. *Why do you not understand My speech? Even because you cannot hear My word. You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth, you believe Me not. Which of you convicts Me of sin! And if I say the truth, why do you not believe Me? He that is of God hears God’s Words: you therefore hear them not, because you are not of God.* What a wonderful Character was the Character of Christ! We get a strange light cast upon it as we read this dialog in which He endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself. My Brothers and Sisters, in Christ there is all the tenderness of a woman, but do not think that He is effeminate, far from it! What masculine force, what vigor, what power there is in Him! There are some people who, if we speak plainly against error, tell us that we are uncharitable and that we have not the spirit of Christ. Is it so? Did there ever fall from any lips more burning words than those which we find here, when He is brought into conflict with His foes? The fact is, He is meek and lowly, but He is most courageous! He is genial and kind, but He is honest and true! He speaks with suavity and gentleness, but, at the same time, there is great force about every expression that He uses. He does not mince matters when He is dealing with sin! There is no velvet on His lips—He utters no honeyed phrases. Naked Truths of God flash like a scimitar from its scabbard when He has to deal with those who oppose it! “Because I tell you the truth, you believe Me not. Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do you not believe Me? He that is of God hears God’s Words: you, therefore, hear them not, because you are not of God.”

48. *Then answered the Jews, and said unto Him, Say we not well that You are a Samaritan, and have a devil?* You know this form of answer. It is an old trick, when there is no case—abuse the plaintiff! So, when there is no answer to what Christ has said, call Him a Samaritan and say that He has a devil.

49-51. *Jesus answered, I have not a devil; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me. And I seek not My own glory: there is One that seeks and judges. Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keeps My saying, he shall never see death.* What glorious Gospel brilliance Christ suddenly flashes upon these men! He promises even to *them* that if they will keep His saying, they shall live forever, they shall be partakers of an eternal, unquenchable life! It might have seemed to us to be like casting pearls

before swine to proclaim that great Truth of God to such hearers—but our Master’s infinite wisdom does not permit us to think so.

52-56. *Then said the Jews unto Him, Now we know that You have a devil. Abraham is dead, and the Prophets; and You say, If a man keeps My saying, he shall never taste of death. Are You greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? And the Prophets are dead: whom do You make Yourself out to be? Jesus answered, If I honor Myself, My honor is nothing: it is My Father that honors Me; of whom you say, that He is your God: yet you have not known Him, but I know Him: and if I should say, I know Him not, I should be a liar like you: but I know Him, and keep His saying. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day: and He saw it, and was glad. He will not answer their questions, for they do not ask that they may learn. They ask that they may quibble. So He multiplies His riddles. He lets the light blind them yet more! Now He speaks, not so much of the undying life of Believers, as of His own eternal Existence, long before the Prophets and Abraham of whom they had spoken.*

57, 58. *Then said the Jews unto Him, You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I Am. Before there was any Abraham, there was this glorious Christ of ours existing as the Eternal I AM, in all the infinity of His Glory! Now comes a thoroughly characteristic Jewish answer.*

59. *Then took they up stones to cast at Him: but Jesus hid Himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them and so passed by. They believed that He claimed to be God, as He certainly did, and, therefore, they tried to stone Him. And there is no foothold for those who say that Christ was a very good Man, but only a Man. If He was not the Son of God, He was not a good Man, for no good man would have left upon his followers, and upon his foes, too, the impression that he claimed to be God if he were not! And no good man could have claimed to be God if he were not really so. Rank Jesus Christ either among the grossest of impostors, or else as the Son of God—one or the other! There is no halt-ing-piece between the two. Blessed be Your name, O Son of Mary, You are also the Son of the Highest and, as such, we worship and adore You!*

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”— 166, 434, 478.

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY
TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

UNIVERSAL FATHERHOOD—A LIE!

NO. 2560

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 13, 1898.

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

*“I speak that which I have seen with My Father: and you do
that which you have seen with your father.”*
John 8:38.

THESE were the words of Christ to those who beset Him round about with angry eyes and cruel tongues. Our Lord declared that He had been with His Father before He spoke with those wicked Jews. And, indeed, He had been, for He was with the Father before the worlds were formed. He saw all that the Father did and He helped in doing it—“Without Him was not anything made that was made.” He was the Father’s eternal delight. The relationship of father and son among man implies that one exists before the other, but it is not so implied in the relationship of the eternal Father and Son. We know not how to explain this great mystery, for the terms Father and Son are only the nearest approximation that can be given to our poor understandings of the relationship which exists between them. Yet is the Father eternal and the Son eternal—the Son co-equal and co-eternal with the Father. Our Lord had an existence before He was born of Mary—He had an everlasting existence. His goings forth were from of old, even from eternity. Though He is unto us the Child born and the Son given, yet He is equally, “the Everlasting Father,” who was and is and ever shall be One with the eternal God.

We learn, from what Christ said, that He knows all the Father’s mind. He understands the very essence of the Godhead. He is acquainted with the purposes that are kept secret from men and angels. As God, He knows what none of us can know till the day shall declare it and there is nothing in the Father’s heart that is hidden from Him. As the Son of Man, He knew not all things, for He grew up as a child and *increased* in knowledge. And He said, “Of that day and that hour knows no man, no, not the angels which are in Heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.” But as Divine, He is acquainted with all the Father’s heart, mind, will, desire, purpose and plan. The very heart of God is read by His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who dwells in it and is One with Him.

We ought to be very grateful that the Son of God has come into the world and told us all that we need to know concerning the Father. “I speak,” He says, “that which I have seen with My Father.” First He saw it

all with such an eye as no one else has—and then He came here and spoke of it all, or as much of it as it was possible and wise for man to receive. Let us rejoice in the preaching of Christ, because He testified what He had seen. What He said was no theory, no guess-work—He revealed facts and that which He has told us concerning God is stamped with the solemn seal of Infallible Truth, for Christ cannot err or make mistakes. He has told us what He has seen and testified what He has known. Oh, for Divine Grace to receive His witness! He that does receive it shall live forever—He that rejects it shall die the death that never dies!

Then, at the back of this follows another very consolatory thought—that if Christ's teaching is, indeed, the revelation of what He has seen with the Father, then we are quite certain, since God is never inconsistent with Himself, that there is nothing in the secret purpose and design of God which is contrary to the Gospel which Christ has revealed. When I read, therefore, "Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely," I need not fear lest any doctrine of election or predestination will be in conflict with that invitation! If I hear Christ say, "He that believes on Me has everlasting life," I may be quite sure that it is so. There is nothing in the sealed Book of the Divine Decrees that is contrary to the open Book of Divine Revelation. There is no passage in the mysterious roll of destiny that, rightly understood, can conflict in any degree with any part of the Volume which the Spirit of God has given us. This ought to make us very glad. I may sit down and pore over the tremendous mysteries of fixed fate, foreknowledge, predestination and the like until I confuse my mind and make my spirit heavy with a thousand gloomy thoughts about things I cannot understand—but what a mercy it is to say, "He has said, 'He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.' "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." It cannot be that God is keeping back in His mind something that is contrary to what He has spoken—"God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: has He said, and shall He not do it? Or has He spoken and shall He not make it good?" I rejoice to know that neither has Christ seen wrongly, nor is there anything which He has seen which would conflict with what He has said to us!

I want you, dear Friends, to look at the text and to notice two or three things that come out, as it were, incidentally. The first is that *the doctrine of the universal fatherhood of God is a lie*. That is clear enough from this passage, "I speak that which I have seen with My Father: and you do that which you have seen with *your* father." Then, there are two fathers, and there are two sets of children—there is a Father whom Christ calls, "My Father." And there is another father whom He calls, in speaking to the Jews who hated Him, "your father." The prayer beginning, "Our Father, which are in Heaven," was never meant to be used by everybody. In the mouth of the ungodly, it is altogether out of place, for God is *not* their Father. "You must be born again" before you can be the children of God. The Scripture statement is clear and distinct—"As many as received Him,

to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.” We are constantly spoken of as being begotten again, regenerated and adopted by God—all of which is a farce and a nullity if men are by creation and by their first natural birth, the children of God. It is not so! “We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the Wicked One.” “Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God”—and the distinction is set forth between “us” who have received this “manner of love” and the multitude who are still the seed of the Wicked One. This truth needs to be proclaimed very forcibly and the axe must be laid to the root of that deadly upas tree of universal fatherhood, for all manner of mischief will result if unconverted men are led to believe that they are already the sons of God. They are not so until they have been Divinely translated out of the kingdom of Satan into the Kingdom of God’s dear Son.

Another fact that is incidentally taught us here is that *there is a devil*. A great many of the devil’s servants are so disrespectful to their lord that they even deny his existence and Satan, himself, is so self-denying in this respect that he denies his own existence and sets other people to do the same. Men squeezed the Lord’s prayer very hard when they made it read, “Deliver us from evil,” for it is pretty clear that it ought to be, “Deliver us from the Evil One.” There is a distinct enunciation of a great master-power of evil, a dread personality, “the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others,” until Grace brought us out from that terrible state! They who have started on the road to Heaven know that there is a devil, for they have had many an evil thought that came not from themselves or from their fellow men—strange, dark, mysterious thoughts which have rushed upon them from the infernal regions and nowhere else!

And those who have stood foot to foot with Apollyon, as Christian did, know full well that he is neither a myth nor a dream, but an awful and powerful adversary from whom may God deliver us from day to day! Even His errand boys, his imps, are terrible enough, for Paul was hard put to it when he was vexed by a messenger of Satan who buffeted him. But as for Satan, himself, when he comes to fight with a soul, woe to that man unless he has the almighty power of God to enable him to bear up in the day of battle! Our Lord Jesus Christ here speaks of Satan as being just as real as the Father is—“I speak that which I have seen with My Father: and you do that which you have seen with your father.” Then He says, in the 44th verse, “You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do.” I quite expect, one of these days, to meet a man who will tell me that I have neither eyes, nor ears, nor head, nor body, nor soul, nor anything else! Sometimes I have said to myself, “Surely, the course of doubting can go no further! Men have reached the uttermost absurdity of unbelief.” But, Brothers and Sisters, we know, to our joy,

that there is a Father in Heaven—the God and Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and, sometimes, we also know to our terror that there is another father of another family, against whom we fight in full assurance of victory, rejoicing that “the God of peace shall bruise Satan under our feet shortly.”

Still, those are not the main Truths of God I want to bring out of the text. Let them be laid by to be thought upon, but think, now, of this Truth—that nature is the root of character. That is the doctrine taught in this *text—that conduct is the result of nature*, for Christ says, “I speak that which I have seen with My Father.” And to His enemies He says, “You do that which you have seen with your father.” A child talks according to his nature. Has he good training at home? Does he live with godly parents? Hear him prattle and you will soon find out where he came from. Listen to another child who has lived in very different circumstances—one who has been brought up amid evil of every kind. As you hear *him* talk, you learn from what kind of family he came. It is the real nature of a person which produces the conversation and the conduct. It is not good actions that make a good man—it is the good man who does the good actions. It is not the sweet apples that make the tree sweet, but it is the sweetness of the sap, the excellence of the tree, which produces the good apples. So, you see, there is a great deal more to be done than to alter your talk and your actions! Our very *nature* has to be changed! That is the Truth of God I want to bring out before I close my discourse.

I. Note, first, that OUR BLESSED LORD PROVED HIS OWN PARENTAGE BY WHAT HE SAID. “I speak that which I have seen with My Father.”

Though I cannot put my thoughts into words as I would like, it seems so beautiful to me that our Lord Jesus Christ should be called the Holy Child Jesus and that all His life-teaching should be, as it were, a child telling what He has seen at home. You have sometimes heard a pretty little guileless child telling out all that it has seen while with its father and mother—disclosing even the innermost secrets of the family with naiveté and sweetness. And you have, perhaps, laughed heartily as you have seen how everything has been laid bare by that little talker’s tongue. Now transfer that idea, on a sublime scale, to Christ. He comes, as the Holy Child Jesus, not to tell us of the grandeur of God, but as though He condescends to take upon Himself our child-nature in its immaturity. He tells us, as a child, what He has seen with the Father! It is such a blessed way of letting us know the secrets of God’s heart for the Only-Begotten, the Well-Beloved, to come and tell us, who are made by Grace the younger members of the family, all that He has seen with the Father.

When we listen to Christ, we say at once that *He speaks to us words of love*. “Never man spoke like this Man.” He was Tenderness, itself. He spoke so winsomely and His words were so full of affection that, “the common people heard Him gladly.” Yes, and even the publicans and sinners drew near to Him to hear Him! The first words of hope they ever heard fell from His dear lips. The teachers of the Law were chilly and

cold, and they froze up every thought of joy in the poor sinner's soul, but the words of Christ were warm with brotherly affection, for He spoke of what He had seen with the Father! What had He seen with the Father but love—love unutterable, love illimitable, love that endures forever, for “God is Love”!

Yet did Christ also speak *words of justice*. God is not so much Love that any true attribute which ought to be found in a perfect Character is absent and, therefore, God is Just. True Christianity is never dubious about the justice of God. The Lord abhors sin, He cannot endure it. He “will by no means clear the guilty.” The tone of the chapter I have read to you [see Exposition at end of sermon] seems severe and so it should be when spoken to hypocrites like those scribes and Pharisees. Do you expect God to treat them with anything but severity? When our Lord Jesus Christ declares that the wicked shall be cast into Hell, “where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched.” When He says, “these shall go away into everlasting punishment,” you see the sternness of Divine Justice! Turn back to the Old Testament and see whether this is not the Jehovah who was the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob—the righteous God who burned up Sodom and Gomorrah and destroyed Pharaoh and his hosts in the Red Sea. I confess that I have been as ready to tremble at the words of Jesus as at the tempest, fire and smoke of Sinai's burning hill, for Love, when it speaks terrible things, makes them more awful because of love! Nothing causes the darkness of the tempest to stand out so terribly as that one bright flash of lightning that makes it afterwards seem darker than before. And when, in the gentle words of Christ, we see the gleam of God's wondrous love, we feel confounded before the terror of many of His warnings because He speaks that which He has seen with His Father—He keeps back nothing. He proclaims the God of Love, but He proclaims that God who shall come and shall not keep silent and who shall judge the nations in righteousness—and smite the wicked with a rod of iron!

Yet notice always about our blessed Master this trait in the character of His speech, that He always speaks *words of Truth*. To Christ's sermons there need never be appended any list of *errata*. He has neither left anything out, nor left anything in by mistake. Nearly 19 centuries have tried and tested the teachings of Jesus and perhaps this century, with all its unbelief, does the Character of Christ more honor than any century that has gone before it! And certainly the influence of Christ is felt, today, in places of which people little dream. I heard one say that when our soldiers, in the fight in Egypt, stopped to put water to the lips of the thirsty enemies whom a century ago our troops would have slain at once, it was because the Christ was shadowing them! They felt His influence, though possibly most of them were not Christians at all. Everywhere the Christ is putting down barbarism in some form or other and helping to amend the character of men—they are girded by Him though they have not known Him! He has never had to alter or to revise His teaching, though our explanation of the teaching has had to be corrected. There have been

prophets and teachers, not sent of God, who, to establish a system of doctrine, or a sect or denomination, have had to keep back or to exaggerate something or other, but it was not so with Christ—He spoke the Truth of God, the whole Truth and nothing but the Truth of God, for He had been with the Father, and as a child He told out what He had seen in the Father's House.

Thus I might keep on bringing out various points about our Lord's teaching, but I will only mention one other. And that is, *the supreme holiness of the words of Christ*. Jesus Christ, with all His gentleness and love, never tolerates sin. That narrative in this chapter, in which He said to the adulteress, "Neither do I condemn you," has never made any other woman commit adultery and it has never helped a single conscience to find delight in unhallowed lust. No, the brightness of that glorious tenderness is as the shining of a crystal! It is so pure in its tenderness that while it is gentle with the sinner—and may we always be so—yet it is all the more severe with the sin from its very gentleness! Christ never helps us to be selfish, or to excuse ourselves, or to be hypocritical, covering up our sin with a cloak of godliness. No, but His teaching is pure, transparent righteousness from beginning to end. And we feel as if we could bow down before Him and worship Him with the same adoration with which the cherubim and seraphim salute the Father and say to Christ, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God and Savior, our very hearts do worship You!" The teaching of Jesus is thus holy because He speaks the things which He has seen with His Father.

II. Now I go to my second head which is that, like their Lord, CHRIST'S PEOPLE SHOULD ALSO DISPLAY THEIR PARENTAGE. They should speak what they have seen with their father and brothers and sisters. You and I are not the children of God if it is not so with us. We begin to suspect the parentage of any who have no resemblance to their reputed parents—no family trait or feature whatever! And certainly in spiritual things, he who is in no respect like Christ, may begin to suspect that he is not a true-born child of God, but merely bears the name, and has not come by supernatural descent from the Most High.

Notice, first, that *children of God have, in a measure, the Nature of their Father*. We are not full-grown yet, some of us are very tiny babes, and it is not always easy to detect the Father's likeness in His infants. That likeness comes out as the child grows and as the man appears. We are struck, sometimes, with the similarity between father and son, though we could scarcely trace it while the boy was but little. It is so with us in relation to our Heavenly Father. In regeneration, the Nature of God is imparted to us—not, of course, that high and incommunicable Essence of the Godhead which belongs to God, alone—but the Character and disposition of God become ours. Did not the Apostle Peter write, "Simon Peter, a servant and an Apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ: Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, according as His Divine power

has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and Godliness, through the knowledge of Him that has called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these you might *be partakers of the Divine Nature*, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust”?

The Spirit of God, in regeneration, creates in man a third principle which, I believe, was not there before. He is only body and soul until this miracle is worked, but then he becomes body, soul and spirit—he rises into a higher sphere and enters into another world into which he could not have come before. “The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” “The first man, Adam, was made a living soul” and we are made in his likeness. “The last Adam was made a quickening Spirit”—and when we, by being born again, receive His likeness, we then participate in that quickening and rise into the Nature and Image of God! There is a “living and incorruptible seed which lives and abides forever” and which becomes our life in that day when, by the power of the Spirit of the eternal God, we are “begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” This is a deep mystery and blessed are they who need not merely talk of it, because every day they know its power! Now, where there is the Nature of God, there will be a likeness to God, and you and I must have a measure of likeness to our great Father, or else it cannot be right for us to say that we are born of Him.

Next, the children of God, when they are in a right state of heart, live with their Father. If you send your children away to school and they never come home to see you, they may grow up with very little of your characteristics, for they are apt to be impressed by those with whom they live. Those who are born of God live with God. Moses said, “Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations.” And the Apostle John wrote, “Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.” It is our delight to go to our Father and to speak with Him. We dwell in God, even as Christ said to His disciples, “Abide in Me, and I in you.” You cannot live with a man without growing more or less like he is and, certainly, no child of God can live with God and contemplate the Person and Character of Christ so as to abide in Him without becoming changed into His image, “from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

Children have a natural gift of imitation, so God’s *children imitate their Father*. Paul’s words, in Ephesians 5:1, should read, “Be you imitators of God, as dear children.” It is very curious to see how children will imitate their parents. Was there ever a preacher whose boy did not stand on a chair and try to preach? Was there ever a man who laid bricks, or used a saw, who has not caught his children doing the same sort of thing? Was there ever a girl who did not seem to know what she would come to in being a nurse of little children and, therefore, naturally took to nursing a doll? It is the habit of children to imitate—they cannot help it. Well now, if we are the children of God and if we dwell with God, the instinct of imi-

tation will certainly manifest itself and we shall try to be doing, in our small way, those deeds of kindness and love, those acts of righteousness and holiness which God is doing! And it will be said of us in our measure, “You do that which you have seen with your father.”

Then, in addition, God’s *children tell what they hear*. There is, in a child, the instinct is always to tell what it hears. I am afraid that I have not lost that instinct, myself, though I am no longer a child. I never like to be entrusted with anybody’s secrets and I generally give people notice that if they want them published abroad, they have only to communicate them to me. It stops me from being bothered with a lot of things that will be sure to get known without my telling them! Children cannot keep a secret! It is no use to tell them to do so. If there is any family secret at all, the children must not only be put to bed at night, but they must be kept in bed all day, for, “little pitchers have large ears,” and they also have a great gift of running over! Children tell just the very thing that you do not want them to say—and say it just at the very time when you would rather they not have it said! So, the children of God must tell what they have seen of their Father. As soon as ever they have heard of the great Father’s love, something makes them want to run outside and find somebody to whom they can say, “Did you ever hear this wonderful story?” Perhaps that “somebody” has no sympathy with them, but he is bound to hear what they have to say—and then off they go to someone else to ask whether he ever heard this good news. Though they may be ridiculed and laughed at, yet these dear children of God will keep telling the blessed tale. The more a man has learned of Christ, the more, I believe, he will want to tell the endless and unreliable story of what he has seen with the Father!

I have known some professedly Christian people who hardly like to be spoken to about the things of God, but it ought not to be so. Let the dear children talk about their Lord as much as ever they like—at the street corners, if they please, or at the dinner table. Anywhere and everywhere, a good word for God ought never to be out of season. Surely, there is no place where a word about the precious Savior will be out of order! What if we do, sometimes, cast pearls before swine? We have so many of them that we can afford to let the wretched creatures munch one or two—and if they turn and tear us, we can endure even this in the hope that, afterwards, they may be sorry for it and God may tear and renew their hearts! Therefore, do not be bashful, you who know the Lord, but say with emphasis, “I must speak that which I have seen with my Father.”

III. Now I have to finish on the gloomy side of the subject, namely, that THE DEVIL’S FAMILY PARTAKE OF THE DEVIL’S NATURE and they are sure to speak that which they have seen with their father, too.

For instance, there are some who are very spiteful and speak with *enmity, especially of Christian people*. They cannot stand them—they have never a good word for them. They denounce their motives if they cannot find fault with their actions. I do not wonder that they do, because their father did a long while ago. One of his names is, “the accuser of the

brethren,” and it was said to him of old, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed.” There is always that enmity and we expect to see it, so we are not surprised. But we are grieved for any of you who, by your speech, betray your hatred of the people of God and so reveal the fact that you are children of Satan. One said, “I would like to kill all Christians. I hate them! I cannot endure them, especially if they are very earnest. I would have such fellows hung.” Did not one say, the other day, of a certain minister, that he wished he had been killed in the accident? Yes, he did, and that is the feeling that some have toward those who are true Christians. What said the Jews concerning Paul? “Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live.” That is the way the devil’s children still talk, for they hear it at home with their father. Did Satan ever have a good word for our Father? No. Then he will never have a good word for His children. When, sometimes, he has spoken a true word, he has tried, with fiendish malice, to undermine the cause of Christ by praising it. But you remember how Paul and Silas would not let the devil praise them—they stopped his mouth directly. The highest compliment the devil can pay to virtue, is to hate it. It is the unconscious homage that evil must pay to goodness to loathe it, even as Satan loathes all that is good and right.

Beside this, *the devil’s children frequently speak untruths*. There are some who lie in trade and some who lie in jest—they call them, “white lies.” If this is the case with anybody here, do not deceive yourself, my Friend. You know who was a liar from the beginning and the father of lies—and they who cannot or will not speak the Truth of God are the children of that ancient liar—and they will have to go home to their father one of these days. They are not the children of God, for God’s children abhor a lie! When their word is once given, they will stand to it even to their own hurt. If you are not true, you have not been with the great Father of Truth and you must have learned falsehood from the great father of lies.

There are some, too, who are *wickedly proud*—proud of their person, proud of the rags they wear, proud of their abilities, proud of their station, proud of their ancestors, proud of I know not what—too haughty, almost, to come near a commonplace person. Yes, they learned that of their father, for Lucifer is the very prince of pride! “By that sin fell the angels.” And in that sin live those who are like the fallen angels. I beseech you, fling away all pride! May God help you soon to be rid of it altogether!

Then there is another trait which is common enough in many persons and that is, *self-will*. They are not going to be ruled and governed and tied to their mother’s apron strings. They will have their own way. If they suffer for it, they will do as they like and be their own master. Yes, and they learned that from their father, for that is the way he talked of old. “Better,” he said, “to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven,” according to Milton, and Milton has but put into words the spirit of that fallen one. He

is rebellious, he cannot endure authority, he will not yield to God—the word, “obey,” is one which he cannot stand. Oh, let those who are living in disobedience to God, in utter carelessness, as lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, self-seekers who never give a thought to what they owe to their Creator and their Lord—let them understand that all this betrays whose children they are and where they were brought up! Does anybody get angry at my speech and say, “I will hear no more of it”? That is like your father, too! And do you gnash your teeth and bite your tongues? That is like your father, too—“You do that which you have seen with your father.”

What shall be the conclusion of my discourse? Why, my drear Friends, that it is of very little use for you to try and change your outward character, your language and so forth, first. What you need is for your *nature* to be changed. When the fountain is made sweet, the streams will be sweet, but, until the source is sweetened, that which comes out of it will still be impure. “You must be born again.” Do you ask, “How can that be?” Well, there is a very amazing connection between being born again and believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. Read the third chapter of John’s Gospel and note how our Lord not only said to Nicodemus, “You must be born again,” but He also said, “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.” Believe in Christ and you are born again! That act of faith is an indication that the new birth has taken place. The moment that God gives you the Grace to trust yourself with Christ, He has also renewed your nature! That act of trusting in Christ is like the first snowdrop that tells us that spring is near. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you are a new person in Christ. Then live with your Father and go out and tell all what you have seen with your Father, and God bless you, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C.H. SPURGEON: JOHN 8:12-39

Verses 12, 13. *Then spoke Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: He that follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. The Pharisees—*These wasps were always stinging Him! When He drove them away once, they quickly returned to attack Him again, “The Pharisees—

13-15. *Therefore said unto Him, You bear record of Yourself; Your record is not true. Jesus answered and said unto them; Though I bear record of Myself, yet My record is true: for I know from where I came, and where I go; but you cannot tell from where I come, and where I go. You judge after the flesh; I judge no man. He did not come for that purpose the first time. He will come, a second time, to judge all mankind.*

16. *And yet if I judge, My judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent Me.* You see, Brothers and Sisters, how our Lord Jesus claimed to be God, for He put Himself here in such a connection with

God as would be quite inconsistent for any mere man. This is what Paul meant when He said that Christ “thought it not robbery to be equal with God,” He thought it not a prize to be grasped, for it was already His.

17, 18. *It is also written in your Law that the testimony of two men is true. I am One that bear witness of Myself, and the Father that sent Me bears witness of Me.* He did that by the miracles which Christ worked and they proved that He was, indeed, sent of God.

19. *Then said they unto Him, Where is Your Father? Jesus answered, You neither know Me, nor My Father: if you had known Me, you should have known My Father also.* They thought they knew His reputed father, Joseph. They thought they also knew all about Christ, the carpenter’s Son, but there is more in Christ than carnal eyes can ever see. There is more in Christ than the most enlightened understanding, if it is but *natural* understanding, can ever perceive. These blind bats, the Pharisees, neither knew Christ nor the Father. If they had known Him, they would have known the Father, for Christ is “the brightness of His Glory and the express Image of His Person.”

20. *These words spoke Jesus in the treasury, as He taught in the Temple: and no man laid hands on Him; for His hour was not yet come.* Like our Lord, every child of God is immortal till his work is done. This ought to divest us of every kind of fear. The enemy cannot lay hands upon a Christian until his Lord wills it—and when his hour has come, then it behooves not the child of God to resist the Father’s will.

21. *Then said Jesus again unto them, I go My way and you shall seek Me, and shall die in your sins: where I go, you cannot come.* Oh, what a terrible sentence is that! I pray that the Lord may never say that to any of us, “Where I go, you cannot come.” That would be the death-knell of all our hopes and would make our life one long banishment. Blessed be His name! We who have sought Him and have found Him, by His Grace, know that. We shall not die in our sins and where He has gone, we shall also go!

22, 23. *Then said the Jews, Will He kill Himself? because He says, Where I go, you cannot come. And He said unto them, You are from beneath; I am from above.* You are of a groveling nature. Your thoughts rise out of the abyss where every evil dwells.

23, 24. *You are of this world; I am not of this world. I said therefore, of you, that you shall die in your sins: for if you believe not that I am He, you shall die in your sins.* If you have no faith in Christ as the Son of God, “you shall die in your sins.” What an awful thing it will be to die in your sins! What ceremonies for your eternal burial! What a robe of fire in which to lie down for your long sleep and then to find no sleep because of it! “You shall die in your sins.” I would like this short, stern sentence to ring in the ears of every unbeliever. These are not my words, but Christ’s own Words—the Words of the most loving and tender Savior—“If you believe not that I am He, you shall die in your sins.”

25-29. *Then said they unto Him, Who are You? And Jesus said unto them, Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning. I have many*

things to say and to judge of you: but He that sent Me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of Him. They understood not that He spoke to them of the Father. Then said Jesus unto them, When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then shall you know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father has taught Me, I speak these things. And He that sent Me is with Me. This made Christ's life so calm, so deeply joyous amid all its sorrow—"He that sent Me is with Me." Servant of God, can you say the same? If so, it is your joy, your confidence, your strength! God grant that we may, each one of us, realize that blessed Presence of our Lord!

29. *The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him.* Christ could truly say that. Oh, that it might be true of us, too!

30, 31. *As He spoke these words, many believed on Him, Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, If you continue in My Word, then are you My disciples indeed.* "If you became My disciples because of what I said, will you believe what I shall yet say? Are you prepared to take in still further revelations and to receive whatever I shall teach you? If so, 'then are you My disciples indeed'"

32. *And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.* Some who heard this message of our Lord caught at it—they were always on the watch for anything to quibble at and contradict and, therefore—

33, 34. *They answered Him, We are Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how say You, You shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whoever commits sin is the servant of sin.* Or, "the slave of sin." There is the test of your position—if you do the devil's dirty work, you are his servant. If you delight in sin then you can hear your fetters clank if the ears of your conscience are but open—"Whoever commits sin is the servant of sin."

35-37. *And the servant abides not in the house forever: but the Son abides always. If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, you shall be free, indeed. I know that you are Abraham's seed.* "I know what a boast you make of that."

37-39. *But you seek to kill Me because My Word has no place in you. I speak that which I have seen with My Father: and you do that which you have seen with your father. They answered and said unto Him, Abraham is our father.* Jesus had admitted that, as a matter of temporal descent, but He denied it as a matter of real fact.

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY
TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

LOVE TO JESUS THE GREAT TEST

NO. 1257

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 3, 1875,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

***“Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, you would love Me:
for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither
came I of Myself, but He sent Me.”
John 8:42.***

THE order of salvation is, first, we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and we obtain a change of heart as His gift, and then that renewed heart loves the Lord Jesus in whom it has believed. *Faith* leads the train of Divine Graces, not love. It would not be preaching the Gospel to say to men, “Love Christ.” Love to Jesus is an after growth. To preach the Gospel is to cry, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” The faith which saves is not, however, a mere credence of facts in which men feel no interest. It is a hearty trustfulness in Jesus for blessings of which we feel the need and it is, in every case, an operative faith—a faith which *works*—and works by love. If you have, indeed, believed in the Lord Jesus Christ to the saving of your soul, then you are a child of God, for, “to as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God.”

If you are a son of God, you love your Father. And it is a rule that “he that loves Him that begat loves Him, also, that is begotten of Him.” So that true faith is the evidence of our sonship and sonship with God is attended with love—which love to the Father leads to the love of His Son, Jesus Christ. By this, then, shall you judge your faith this day, whether it is the faith of God’s elect or not. If it is a cold assent of the understanding, it will not save you. But if it is a warm allegiance of the heart, then it is, indeed, the faith which is of the operation of the Spirit of God.

I intend, this morning, to speak about our love to Christ. it may help you if I give you the outline, first, of what I have to say. *Love to Christ is, in itself, essential.* Secondly, *love to Christ is the test of sonship*, as the text informs us. And therefore, thirdly, *love to Christ is a test which it is important for us to apply to ourselves at this time.*

I. LOVE TO CHRIST IS, IN ITSELF, ESSENTIAL. There are some Graces in which a man may be deficient and though he may be the worse for that deficiency, still he may be a Christian. But love to Jesus is an *essential* Grace, a Grace of the heart, lying near the vitals of piety, so that the lack of it is fatal. You must love Jesus Christ if you are, indeed, alive unto God. Now observe, first, that *the absence of love to Christ is the loss of one of the greatest of spiritual pleasures.* We ought to pity, as well as to blame the man who does not love Jesus Christ. Alas, poor soul, into what a state has he fallen that he should not be able to love Him who is “altogether lovely,” nor to admire Him who is the “Chief among ten thousand”?

I met, not long ago, with a lady who had lost her taste and smell—a somewhat singular affliction. The fairest rose in the world cannot salute her nostrils with its pleasant perfume. The most dainty flavor that ever delighted men’s palate has no charms for her. She is dead to those pleasures and I could not but sympathize with her in her loss. Yet, after all, this loss of pleasurable sensation is a trifle—it will only last for a few years—and when this brief life is over she will possess every desirable faculty.

But what a terrible thing to be unable to perceive the fragrance of the name of Jesus, which is as ointment poured forth! What sorrow is yours if you are unable to taste the sweet flavor of the bread of Heaven, or the richness of that wine on the lees well refined which makes the saints of God so glad! I had rather be blind, deaf and dumb and lose my taste and smell, than not love Christ! To be unable to appreciate HIM is the worst of disabilities, the most serious of calamities. It is not the loss of a single spiritual faculty, but it proves the death of the soul! It evidences the absence of all that can make existence worth the having, for he that has not the Son has not life—and the wrath of God abides on him.

The absence of the love of Christ in the soul, again, is *a sign of very grievous degradation*. It is the mark of the animal that it cannot enter into intellectual pursuits. You may put before it the most delightful of studies, but the swine can never realize mental pleasure. It would be its degradation that it cannot, if, indeed, it had been originally intended for such pursuits. Man was made for the highest and most elevated enjoyment, the enjoyment of the Presence of God and the admiration of His infinite perfections. And when he loses this power to appreciate, admire and love his God, he sinks from his high calling to a level with the brutes.

If an angel could be lowered into a dog and yet could worship God and love Christ, he would scarcely have fallen at all, compared with the fatal descent of a *man* who is plunged into such a stupor of evil that he cannot perceive the loveliness of the Lord Jesus Christ! We greatly pity those poor creatures of our own race who are unable to reason, but what shall we think of those who cannot love, or rather cannot love where love should center? To the poor idiot you may read the most charming lines of Milton, but he cannot rise to a sense of sublimity. You may afterwards pour into his ears the pleasing sweetnesses of Wordsworth, or the fascinating allegories of Bunyan, but he smiles at you vacantly and you perceive that his imbecile mind is incapable of comprehension.

Sad it is that a human being should come down to this—and yet, not to love the Lord Jesus reveals a moral and spiritual imbecility far worse than mere mental incapacity—because it is willful and involves a crime of the heart! Generally the non-appreciation of goodness is attended with an appetite for evil and, therefore, the ill is doubled. It was a great degradation for the king of Babylon when he left the diet of the royal table to roam the fields with the cattle and to eat grass like the oxen. It was not merely that his madness drove him from man, but it herded him with brutes! It not only took away his relish for bread but gave him a taste for grass!

It was a strange madness which drove a king to graze with beasts, but not more strange than that which makes men feed upon the ashes of this world's sinful pleasures and turn aside from that which is truly bread. Oh, it is a worse insanity than that which is secluded within the walls of yonder Bedlam, this madness which can discover beauty in the painted face of the Jezebel of sin and is not charmed by the comeliness of Him whose brightness is the light of Heaven! Yet, O you saints of God, remember you were such not long ago! "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." "We hid, as it were, our faces from Him. He was despised, and we esteemed Him not." Our foolish heart was darkened and we saw not Jesus, the Sun of Righteousness. Blessed be the Grace which has given us power to appreciate our Savior! May it increase more and more!

Let us pity, as well as blame, those who now are given over to the fast closing of their eyes that they cannot see my Lord, and the shutting of their ears that they cannot hear the music of His voice, and the deadening of their hearts that they cannot perceive the charms of His love. Alas for the degradation which is manifested in inability to love Jesus!—

***"That Holy One,
Who came to earth for thee—
O basest thing beneath the sun,
That He, by any mortal one,
Forgotten ever should be."***

To be without love to Christ is a clear proof that the whole of our manhood is out of order. It would be impossible for us to be indifferent to the excellencies of Jesus if we were as God created us. And inasmuch as we do not love Him till Grace renews us, this proves how altogether diseased human nature has become. The understanding, were it well balanced, would judge that Christ is over all and before all and give to Him the pre-eminence in everything. But, being biased and thrown out of gear, the judgement puts Christ in the lowest place and pays its homage to the world, the flesh, or the devil, rather than to the King of kings!

The mind must be altogether debased and robbed of all nobility not to love One whose self-denying benevolence commands the admiring gratitude of all renewed spirits! Did our Lord descend from Heaven to earth to save His enemies? Being found on earth in fashion as a Man, did He endure every insult and every misery with the sole objective of blessing others? And did He, at last, endure pangs never to be described—and all for the sake of worthless man? Then not to love such a mirror of generous affection is to be mean in spirit and base at heart! Gratitude is no very stupendous virtue, but it is necessary to deliver us from being guilty of the meanest of all the vices, for *ingratitude* may justly be so described! Man despising Christ who died for man is a sight enough to make an angel mourn! Yes, seraphs might weep with wonder that a creature once so fair as man should have become so foul at heart!

God forgive the mind that can be so unjust, so perverted, so bewitched and besotted as to treat Jesus with indifference! Man's affections as well as his mind must have become terribly polluted, or he would at once love

Jesus. If the heart were what it should be, it would love the good, the right, the true, the beautiful. Nothing is more good, right, true, or beautiful than Jesus Christ, the Incarnate God, and that the heart does not instinctively love Him as soon as ever it perceives Him, is clear proof that it is poisoned at its fountain. It is given unto its idols and therefore it will not love the true God. If you needed, at this time, to prove man's fallen state, you might do so by a thousand arguments, but only one would be needed.

There, perhaps, was never a more powerful demonstration than that of the first chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Romans, which we dare not read in public. It is a chapter which contains the most terrible of indictments against our manhood—and every word of it true. But, Sirs, I take it that all the unnatural lusts into which men have fallen, though they are deeds which crimson the cheek of modesty, do not so thoroughly prove human nature to be corrupt as man's not loving Christ! A certain Divine on one occasion, wishing to display his rhetoric and bring down upon himself the admiration of his hearers, exclaimed, "O Virtue, you are so fair and beautiful that if you should descend upon earth, all men would love you."

How greatly he erred! For Virtue *did* descend on earth, clothed in the most attractive form, the form of pure benevolence! And yet men received her not. Virtue came in the Person of our Lord Jesus, not dressed in the armor of Justice, but in the silken robes of Salvation, bedecked with charity and tenderness. But men refused her a habitation, denied her the common courtesies of life and, at last, condemned her to die! When man crucified Jesus, he did, as much as in him lay, destroy all goodness, truth and holiness. Then did he spit his worst venom upon everything that is lovely and of good repute, for he selected the most lovely and honored of all Beings to murder by his malice. Not to love Jesus Christ is, whatever your outward character may be, dear Friend, to angels and to all intelligent and purified spirits who are fit to judge, the most terrible symptom of your subjugation to a malignant spiritual disease which tyrannizes all your powers and causes you to be the opponent of your best Friend!

Not to love Jesus Christ is a sure token that we have no part nor lot in His salvation, for the first effect of receiving His salvation is to love Him. You remember our Lord's parable of the two debtors. The one owed 500 pence and the other fifty. They were both freely forgiven their debts because they had nothing to pay. And the question asked, concerning them, was, "Which of them will love him most?" Now mark, the question was not, "Which of them will love their generous benefactor?" for it is taken *for granted* and who will deny it, that whether forgiven 50 pence or 500, they must love him who forgave them! It is inevitable that if you have been forgiven your sin, you should love Jesus Christ! And if you do not love Him, rest assured that in His precious blood you have no portion—and His righteousness does not cover you. Solemn reflection! This excellent Grace of love is absolutely essential!

Without love to Christ it is clear that you are not saved, for *you lack the mainspring of the spiritual life*. We are often accused, when telling men to

believe and live, that we throw a holy life and virtuous conversation into the shade. If our objectors were candid they would inquire whether their accusation is true, and as the result of that inquiry they would acquit us. Either ignorance, misunderstanding or malevolence must have occasioned the utterly groundless charge, for we have explained, times without number, that when we say, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved," we do *not* mean that the belief of an abstract proposition will save men from Hell! We mean that *trust* in Jesus will *change the heart* and so save the life *from sin*. By salvation we mean salvation *from sin*, salvation *from* the old selfish life, salvation *unto* holy living! This is the salvation that we preach—salvation from evil—and this, we say, is the *result* of believing in the Lord Jesus Christ.

If these things are so, it is evident that the man who does not love Christ is not saved in this sense, for love to Christ is through the Holy Spirit made to be the mainspring and central force by which a holy life is created and sustained. "The love of Christ constrains us." This is the grand power which keeps us back from evil and impels us toward holiness. In proportion as you love Jesus you will be holy! And in proportion as your love to Jesus becomes weak, the power of sin grows strong! And if there is *no* love to Jesus at all, then there are in you none of the elements which make up the Christian character—

***"Knowledge, alas! 'tis all in vain,
And all in vain our fear;
Our stubborn sins will fight and reign
If love is absent there."***

Not to love Christ is a thing so dreadful that those who *do* love Him can hardly tell you how they tremble at the bare notion of being in such a condition! Death in the most horrible form would be preferable! Many a time have we sung, and I, for one, have felt it at my heart's core—

***"A very wretch, Lord, I should prove,
Had I no love to Thee.
Rather than not my Savior love,
Oh, may I cease to be."***

It were much better never to have been born than not to love the Savior! It were better to go to annihilation, if such could be the case, than exist a moment without love to the Blessed One! Sometimes the saints of God have grown so warm concerning what is due to Jesus, their Lord, and have felt such a horror at the sin of not loving Him, that they have pronounced a curse, in God's name, upon those who love not Christ. Perhaps the most terrible words in sacred Scripture are these—"If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be ANATHEMA MARANATHA"—cursed when the Lord shall come. It is the major excommunication of the Church! It is the most solemn word of denunciation that could have fallen from Apostolic pen—and yet Paul felt that he must write it—even that Paul who could not speak of the enemies of Christ's Cross without tears.

My dear Hearer, though you are the most moral person in the world and though you are the most orthodox professor in the Church, yet if you love not the Lord Jesus Christ, "Anathema Maranatha" must be sounded

in your ears, for it is proclaimed in the Word of God against you! Who would wish to live without the love of Jesus in his soul? It is the most hideous of all conditions, for it despoils our life on earth of its highest beauty and renders Heaven impossible! Until He gives you love to Christ, God Himself cannot give you Heaven! You may take my words in their broadest sense, for I mean them just as they stand. I say until God, Himself *makes* you love Christ, He cannot give you heavenly happiness, for the very essence of Heaven lies in the love of that which is good and true—and the essence of all goodness and truth are in Jesus Christ!

Could you be carried to the place called Heaven without love to Christ you would be utterly out of your element! The nearer Presence of Christ into which you would be brought would cause you terror instead of happiness! And the delight which you would see upon the faces of ten thousand times ten thousand who love Him would only provoke you to a direr enmity and a bitterer despair! Oh, my Friend, you cannot know happiness till you know Christ! Till your heart beats with love to Him, the true life can never be yours! You are in darkness and death even now, without love to Christ, and so you must live. It is inevitable that it should be so. So I leave the first very weighty point, praying God, the Holy Spirit, to press it upon the hearts of all who have no affection for the Savior. It is essential that you should love Him.

II. LOVE TO CHRIST IS THE TEST OF SONSHIP. Certain modern teachers have asserted that God is the Father of all mankind—and the doctrine of Universal Fatherhood is, I am told, exceedingly prevalent in certain quarters. That God is the *Creator* of all men and that in *this* sense men are the offspring of God, is undoubtedly true. But that unregenerate men are the sons of God is as undoubtedly false! How that flesh-pleasing doctrine can be supported, I do not know, for certainly my text gives it no assistance whatever, but rather strikes it a deadly blow.

“If God were your Father, you would love Me.” Consequently God is *not* the Father of those who do not love Christ! What do these teachers make out of the privilege of adoption? Why are men adopted, if children by nature? How is it that it is a special promise, “I will be a Father unto you and you shall be My sons and daughters”? What need of a promise of that which they have already? “To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to as many as *believed* on His name.” What does that mean if everybody *already* is a child of God? How do they interpret that God has begotten His people, again, by the resurrection of Christ unto a lively hope? Were we sons already? How were we heirs of wrath even as others if all men are in the family of God?

They make use of an expression which bears two renderings to set up a theory which is destructive of the Gospel! I leave those to defend that statement who care to do so. I believe it to be altogether untenable if we keep to the Word of God. The Fatherhood of God is to a *special* people, chosen from before the foundation of the world and adopted and regenerated in due time, through His Grace. It appears from the text that love to Christ is the *only* Infallible test of our sonship towards God. Those to

whom Christ spoke were, by nature and descent, if any in the world were, the children of God. If any men who did not love Christ *could* be the children of God they were the Jews who stood before Him, then, for they were of the seed of Abraham, whom God had chosen. They had been brought up from their very childhood in the observance of ceremonies which God had ordained and they bore in their flesh the mark of the Covenant.

They were, moreover, the only people under Heaven that worshipped one God. The Romans, the Greeks and all others were idolaters! These Jews were worshippers of the one unseen Jehovah and very tenacious they were about it, for after the Babylonian captivity, nothing could make a Jew worship an idol! Whatever faults they might have, they certainly were not wanderers from the unity of the Godhead. *That* they held and held most firmly. And, moreover, these people were, no doubt, made to suffer a good deal of abuse and reproach for worshipping the one, only and invisible God. They were despised by their Roman masters. And the polite Greeks, with their poetic mythology, sneered at their strange worship which they considered to be mere atheism, since they saw no image set up.

The Jew, therefore, stood out grandly as being, if any unregenerate man could be so, a son of God! And yet, as they did not love the Christ, they had not God for their father! Our Master tells them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me." And so He puts down all pretensions arising from their pedigree, from their circumcision, from their rites and ceremonies, from their broad phylacteries and bordered garments and everything else! LOVE TO CHRIST is the great test of sonship to God! My dear Hearer, if you do not love Christ, you are no child of God, for if you were, you would love what your Father loves! Your nature, descended from God, would run in the same channel—and since He loves Christ supremely and above all things—so would you love Jesus Christ with all your heart beyond all the world!

If you were a child of God, you would love Jesus, for you would see God *in* Jesus. He says, "Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me," and inasmuch as you are a child of God, you would know your Father and perceive Him in the Son, in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. He is the express image of His Person and the brightness of His Father's glory. And as the child loves his father, so would you love the Godhead in Jesus Christ! It would be impossible for you to do otherwise! No, not only the Godhead, but even the Humanity of our Lord would win your love, for God loves holiness in man and especially in the Man, Christ Jesus, and so must we.

All the qualities of His Human Nature were brilliant with His Divine holiness and, therefore, will be sure to command your love if you love the Father. Every man loves that which is like himself. If you were born of God, you would love God. And Jesus Christ is God and, therefore, you would love Him. If you were born of God, you would be holy and true and loving and tender—and Jesus is all that—and so you would love Him. It is curious how language sometimes teaches morals. You know we have the

word, "like." We are said to like a thing. But the word has another meaning—we may be like *to* a thing.

Now a man always likes that which he is like and if you are like God, you love God, to whom you are like. And being like Christ, you like Christ, to whom you are like, for like loves like, or let me say, like likes its like. There must be love to Christ in the soul if you are like to Christ, which you are if you are a child of God. If you are a child of God you must love Christ, because of His essential Divinity. For notice in the text, "I proceeded forth and came from God." I do not understand that expression—nobody does. You have heard of Dr. Dollinger and a number of learned men meeting to lay down dogmatic declarations upon the double procession of the Holy Spirit.

What a foolish task! They were engaged in defining a subject which they could not possibly understand—ants met to measure the sun! Mosquitoes debating upon eternity! We cannot enter into the springs of the sea, nor can we enter into the essence of Deity, or the relationships of the blessed Persons of the Trinity, the one to the other! And no man ever undertakes to do so but what he goes wrong, misled by his own presumption! If any man were to undertake to look the sun in the face by the day together he would soon become blind—the light is so excessive and mortal eyes are so dim—that blindness must follow.

Jesus Christ is the Son of God by what we are accustomed to call eternal filiation, or what the text calls *proceeding from Him* and, therefore, because of that, being Divine and proceeding from the Divine Father in some mysterious sense, He is, Himself to be devoutly adored. And if we are the children of God we must love the Lord Jesus. The text adds that we shall also love Him because of His mission. "I came from God; neither came I of Myself, but He sent Me." If we love God we must love that which comes from God. I know when I left the village where I was first pastor and where I had loved the people much and they had loved me, I used to say if I saw even a dog which came from that parish I should be glad to see him, for I felt a love to everything and everybody coming from that spot.

It matters not how small the trifle—a little flower or a piece of leaf from the garden—you prize it, for it came from someone you revere. Ah, that little shoe of your dear babe now in Heaven! Or a little piece of the handwriting of your dear mother, now with God! How dear they are! How much more should we love Christ because He came from God! And comes, not as a mere relic or memorial, but as His living, loving Voice! If a child were far away, in India, and he had not heard from home for some time, and he at last received a letter, how sweet it would be! It comes from Father. How pleased he is to get it.

But suppose a messenger should come and say, "I came *from* your father"? Why, he would feel at once the deepest interest in him! Would you shut your door against your father's messenger? No, but you would say, "Come in, though it is the middle of the night, I shall always have an ear for you." Shall we not, thus, welcome Jesus? And then, remember, while Jesus came as our Father's Messenger, what a message He brought—

pardon for sin, restoration from the Fall, acceptance in the Beloved and eternal life and Glory! Oh, when He comes *from* the Father, comes *for* the Father and comes with a message meant to lead us *to* the Father, we, who are the children of God must love Him for all these reasons! It is not possible that you can be a child of God and not love the Christ whom the Father has anointed, the Messiah whom the Father has sent, the Jesus whom the Father has made to be the Savior, the Immanuel, the God With Us, the Father's Self revealed in fullness of Grace and Truth!

That He came not of Himself is another reason for love. When a man lives only to serve himself, our love begins to dry up for lack of secret springs. But when we perceive that Jesus Christ did not come of Himself, but was *sent* of the Father—that His aims and objectives were not for Himself in any degree, but entirely for the Father and for us—our heart must go out towards Him!

III. I might thus continue, but there is no need for it, to show you that you must love Jesus. And so I close with the APPLICATION. Lend me your ears and hearts a few minutes. If it is so, that love to Christ is essential and is the main test of sonship, come, Brothers and Sisters, do we love Him or not? Now, put the question all round. I know some will say, "Love Him? Yes, that I do." Yes, but I will still ask you, for my Lord asked Peter three times, you know, "Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?" And I do not suppose you are better than Peter, so I must repeat the question, though you may answer it as quickly as he did, for it will not hurt you to answer aright three times—but it would hurt to answer falsely once. So let us put the question home—Do you love Jesus? If I love Him, then I trust Him and lean on Him with all my weight. "Ah, I do that. Blessed be His name, I know I do." Can you not speak with assurance as to that point? Tell me, then, have you any other hope besides that which springs from His dear Cross and wounded side? If you have, you do not love Him. But if your trust rests wholly and alone on Him, there are the beginnings of love in you! The root of the matter is there.

If you love Him, you will keep His Word. That is the next point. He says, "If any man love Me, he will keep My Word," that is to say, he will reverence what Jesus said and endeavor to learn from His teaching. You will believe what He says and desire to know its meaning. Now, are you quite sure that you pay reverence to the Words of Christ? How about your neglected Bible? How about the parts of Scripture which you have never wished to understand because you were afraid it was a little different from the articles of your Church or the creed of your family? That does not look like reverence to Christ's Word!

My dear Friend, let me put the question very pointedly. Do you want to know what Christ taught? Are you willing to believe all He reveals? Do you ask the Holy Spirit to lead you into the things of Christ? For remember, he who breaks one of the least of our Lord's Commandments and teaches men so, the same shall be least in the kingdom of Heaven and would you wish to be that? Another test of love to Christ is this, "If you love Me, keep My commandments." It is not merely hearing His Word, for that the man

did who built his house upon the sand. But the Lord said, "He that hears My Word and does it, is like a man that built his house on a rock." "*Does it.*" "*Does it!*" Do you obey Christ? If you do not, you do not love Him!

If the commands of Jesus are treated by you as matters of no importance, then your heart is not with Him. The child is to love his father, but the command by which his love is to be tested is, "Children, obey your parents in all things." So with Jesus! If you love Him, you will obey Him. Now search your hearts and look at your lives—are there not some points which might make you question? At any rate, I think there are many matters that should make us pray, "Lord, You know all things and, therefore, You know all my sins and all my failures. But still you know that I love you! Deliver me from sin and let me not grieve You any more."

Now, apply that text to your heart in another form. If you love Christ you will *imitate* Him. It is the nature of love to be imitative. The sincerest form of admiration is imitation. If you love Jesus, you will labor to be like He. I am sure you will. Are you trying to be Christ-like? You perceive in yourself many things that are not in Christ—do you long to get rid of those things? And you see in Jesus Christ many excellencies which you have not yet reached. Are you pressing towards them? Then I know you love Him—but if there is no imitation there is no love.

Love to Christ may also be judged of by love to His people. He who loves Jesus is sure to love all others whose hearts burn with the same flame. How is it with you? "Well," you say, "I love *some* of the Brethren." Yes, and so do the publicans and sinners love *some* of them. Certain of God's people are so very sweet in their tempers and excellent in their natural dispositions that I should think the most wicked person in the world must love them! But the test is to love them for Jesus' sake, even though you cannot help seeing their mistakes and faults.

"I love the saints," says one. "At least, I love all of *my* denomination." That, also, is very easy, for the Sadducees loved the Sadducees and the Pharisees loved the Pharisees. But the thing is to love God's *people*, though you fear that they are in error upon certain points—and though you cannot agree with them in some of their views—and think they dishonor God by certain failures. The Christian loves all who are in Christ, not because of their *soundness* in the faith, but because of their union to Jesus. Come, then, do you love the Lord's people because they are His? "We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the Brethren."

And, dear Friend, you may judge, again, whether you love Christ by this—do you sympathize with His objectives? Whenever we love another, we begin to love the things which he loves. Christ desires to see this world brought to His feet. Do you wish to see Him King over the nations? He desires to gather out to Himself a chosen people. Are you seeking to bring in His wanderers? He delights to save the sons of men. Do you wish to see them saved? Do your thoughts, wishes and desires run in a groove with those of Jesus? If so, you love Him.

Again, do you serve His cause? That love which never leads to action is poor love. Is it love at all? The affection which can be content without doing anything for the beloved object is so base a thing that it were a shame to degrade that golden name of love by applying it to such a miserable counterfeit! Love Jesus? And yet you have never taught a little child His name? Love Jesus? And you are an orator and yet you never stand up to proclaim His Gospel? Love Jesus? And your gold lies cankering and your silver is tarnished—and you give none of these to His work? Love Jesus? And it never costs you a night's unrest, or an hour's distress of mind because His kingdom does not come? I thank God I do not understand your love and hope I never may! May God give you a better love than this—may He give you the love which works and shows itself in *deeds*.

If you love Jesus, you desire to be with Him and you are very glad of every opportunity of having special fellowship with Him. I know if you love Him you will not be happy to live a day without Him. You will feel ill at ease if He is gone but for an hour. If you love Jesus, oh, how you pant for the time when you will see Him face to face! If you love Him, there are seasons when you become sick of love after Him! When you feel as if to die were a fleabite or a nothing if you might but behold His face! How often, when you have been to the House of God and heard a sermon that has carried you near to Jesus, you have been ready to say, like Simeon, "Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace according to Your word, for my eyes have seen Your salvation"? When you have had to go back into the world again, you have almost felt unhappy to think you were bound to linger in this far-off country and you could only feel satisfied by saying, "Sun of my soul abide with me, for this world is dark and dreary without You."

I pass the question round again. Is there anyone here who dares not say, "I love the Savior"? Then, my dear Friend, I beseech you to look that matter in the face, for if you do not love Christ heartily and sincerely, then you are none of His! And you are none of God's—you are a child of Satan! "Well," says one, "it would not yield me any comfort to know that." No, and I do not want you to find any comfort, for comfort, now, would be deadly to you. A good physician does not always look to the immediate ease of his patient—he has his eyes on the cure. I want you to be uncomfortable till Jesus comforts you. I want you to be ashamed of not loving Christ until you become unhappy about it.

I beg you to stand at the foot of Calvary's Cross and look up and see Jesus bleeding and dying, and then say, "He has done all this, and yet I do not love Him." I wish you would go into the Garden of Gethsemane and see the bloody drops of sweat fall upon the frozen ground, and hear His cries and groans for sinners, and then say, "and yet I do not love Him." I beg you to look at Him taken down from the Cross and laid in the tomb with the image of death stamped on His glorious face—a death which He endured out of pure love to His enemies—and then I would have you see if you are vile enough to say, "And yet I do not love Him." I beg you in spirit to follow Him in His Resurrection and to see Him as He breathes peace over His disciples and then see if you dare say, "I do not love Him." I

would wish you to see Him, by faith, rising as He ascends into Glory and a cloud receives Him, and then I would like you to put your hands to your brow and feel as if your heart must burst while you say, "Yet I do not love Him."

I would have you see Him sitting on His Throne in all His Glory, adored by myriads of the blessed, with every harp string in Heaven thrilling out His praise as He sits at the right hand of the Father, and the Father takes delight in Him. Amid that splendor I would wish you to stand and begin to smite upon your breast, and say, "And yet, alas, this hard heart does not love Him." How I wish you would get to your chamber and pour your soul out in a flood of tears, to think that, by-and-by, He will come to judge the world in righteousness and to be admired of them that believe, and you, unless you are renewed in heart, will have to stand among that mighty throng that shall surround His Great White Throne and weep and wail and wish you never had been born, while the dire thought will flash through your mind, "I do not love Him. He is come to judge me and I am far off from Him, unsaved, uncleaned in His blood."

I entreat you to think of it *now*, that you may not have to realize it later. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, O you unloving heart, and you shall be saved from your unloving spirit and taught to esteem Him whom to love is the best evidence of eternal life!—

***"O love beyond all mortal thought!
Unquenchable by flood or sea!
Love that through death to man has brought
The life of immortality!
You do enkindle Heaven's own fire
In hearts all dead to high desire.
Let love for love our souls inflame,
The perfect love that fails never;
And sweet hosannas to your name
Through Heaven's vast dome go up forever."***

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 8:21-59.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—423, 807, 377.**

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NOMINAL CHRISTIANS—REAL INFIDELS

NO. 492

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 1, 1863,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“If I say the truth, why do you not believe Me?”
John 8:46.*

As we meet this evening to commune at the Table of the Lord, it will then be necessary for me to seek the edification of God’s people. I therefore think it best to occupy our time this morning with an exhortation to those that are out of the way. May the Holy Spirit make our words like arrows from the bow of a mighty man. May He graciously direct them to the chosen hearts which He has ordained to bless, and may this hallowed hour be a time of salvation to many among you. Whatever may be lacking in the human instrument, I trust there will be no absence of true affection and solemn earnestness. And O, may the Holy Spirit use those infirmities under which I labor this morning to magnify His own strength!

You know, dear Friends, there has been a great deal of talk lately about the Infidelity, which like a whirlwind, shakes the Establishment. We felt a very stiff breeze caused by certain, “Essays and Reviews,” and before that could blow over, a perfect hurricane from the African shore astonished many, and alarmed a few. Everybody agrees to censure the inconsistency of a man who wears a miter and quarrels with Moses, professes to be a minister of the Church and undermines her foundations. Too much importance has been attached to the poor attempts of the Arithmetical Unbeliever and what was in reality nothing more than a storm in a teacup has been exaggerated until all the sea of Christendom is tossed with tempest.

To my mind, there is a terrible enemy abroad far more worthy of our steel than the recreant prelate and his Zulu teachers. Spare your voices, O Watchmen of Zion, for a mightier enemy—and reserve your swords for a sterner adversary of our Israel. Secret unbelief, as the mother and foster parent of all open infidelity, requires to be watched and wept over. Let us mourn over the professed unbelief of the age. But there is an unbelief more gross than this, more dishonest, more inconsistent, more widely spread, and more deceptive in its character! It is an infidelity so impalpable that we cannot readily arrest it, and drag it into the court of conscience!

It is so unreasonable that argument is out of place in contending with it. This “pestilence which walks in darkness,” broods frightfully over our congregations, and smothers beneath its death-bearing wings not a few of you, whose souls I would win for Christ. Into the battle with this destroyer of souls I enter this day. Oh, may my Lord and Master give me power to strike home. Solemnly I protest against that dishonest, inconsistent infidelity of which some of you are the victims. You tell me that you believe

the Bible to be inspired of God. No suspicions as to its Divine authority linger in your mind. You have faith in the Gospel which we preach, that it is genuine, true, and sound.

But here lies your inconsistency or dishonesty—you say it is true—but you do not believe it! You admit that it came from God, but practically you reject it! You will not deny that it is worthy of all acceptance—it must be so if it came from God. You admit it deals with all-important matters—and yet you practically say it is not worthy of your attention, since many of you are still in disobedience to the voice of love, neglecting the great salvation.

Before charging home upon your consciences, my Hearers, I feel impelled to remark that many professors of religion deserve the rebuke of the text, for they say they believe the Bible, but they do not act in accordance with it. We have been boasting, in the language of Chillingworth, that the Bible, and the Bible alone, is the religion of Protestants—but the boast requires a little examination. Do we not tolerate many things among Protestants which can never be vindicated from Scripture?

You tell me that the Bible is your religion, and yet bring your infants for Baptism! You sprinkle their brows, or sign their foreheads with a cross. And where do you find your warrant for thus profaning an ordinance which sets forth the burial of Believers with their Lord? Tradition may lend a forced and lame support to baby sprinkling, but to the Bible it is a novelty unknown. Moreover I ask you where comes confirmation? Will anyone be bold enough to assert that there is anything in God's Word like it?

Yes, and more—where do you find a State Establishment? Verily, not in the New Testament, since our Lord has said, “My kingdom is not of this world,” and this unworldly Gospel is a standing protest against the spiritual fornication which State religion involves. Everywhere, in all sects, I see inventions of men arrogating the place of the Commandments of God. Let us sweep our temples, and return unto the Word of the Lord. Say not that you believe the Book, when you act as though it were not true—when you advocate practices, and set up rites and ceremonies unknown to Apostolic times, and Scriptural records.

Brethren, again I say it, our Churches require to be brought face to face with the infallible Word. By this test try them all—they say the thing is true—will they believe it? Will they practice it? Will they abide by the standard? High professors, the love of this world is enmity against God! You profess to love God, but you are as worldly, as fond of fashion and its frivolities, as pleased with pomp and its fooleries, as hungry for honor and its pretensions, as you can be. And yet you say this Book is true!

Verily, by your acts you prove that you believe it not. I might draw up today a dreadful bill of indictment against the visible Church of this age. I might prove to a demonstration that it is not delivered from this present evil world, according to the will of God, even the Father. And that it teaches for doctrines the commandments of *men*—so that it deserves to be met with the unanswerable question and faithful rebuke of our Lord Jesus—“If I say the truth, why do you not believe Me?”

Although fidelity to my Lord required these few remarks, which are not meant as an angry discovery of a Brother's faults, but as the faithful wounds of a friend, I turn to the matter which has most to do with you, the people of my charge. Having shown you the many giants' heads which might be smitten by this smooth stone, taken out of the brook, I shall now take aim at your *hearts*, O you who believe not on my Lord!

I. Unbelievers in Christ, MY TEXT SETS FORTH VERY PITHILY AND PERTINENTLY YOUR INCONSISTENCY.

"If I say the truth, why do you not believe Me?" If you boldly meet me by saying, "I am not converted, for I do not believe in the mission of Christ," your position is a consistent, though a terrible one. If you tell me you have suspicions about the inspiration of Scripture, and therefore you do not believe in Christ, your position is certainly dangerous, if it is not despicable. But when you tell me that you believe Jesus Christ was sent from Heaven, and that His Gospel is the revelation of God to man—and you are still at this day unconverted—your position, besides its tremendous responsibility and danger, is extraordinarily inconsistent, so inconsistent that an honest man should blush to remain in it for an hour.

Were you rightly to weigh the matter you would say, "I will not, I will not be thus a liar unto my soul any longer. I will not contradict myself, but I will be consistent, and since the thing is true, I will believe it."

Remember, first of all, that *Jesus Christ has revealed to you your need*. He has told you in express words that you need regeneration. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Enlarging upon the doctrine, He adds—"Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of Heaven." He has laid the new birth before you as an imperative necessity. You admit that this is true. Your admission that this Book came from God is clearly an assent to this teaching. Why, then, is it that you who have never passed from death unto life?

Why do you remain contented without that Divine change, and are satisfied with moral reformation or outward respectability, while the Book assures you that these will never do? The Great Master assures you that *you must be converted*. Hear His express words—"Except you are converted and become as little children, you shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of Heaven." This you allow to be correct, for it is in the Book which you agree to reverence. Oh, Sinner, how then, can you be at ease in an unconverted state? How is it that you can remain so careless, when Heaven is barred against you because you are not converted?

You cannot delude yourself with the thought that perhaps all will be well with you, when Christ assures you it cannot be well with you except you experience His converting Grace. Has He not told you, too, in many a passage of prophetic and Apostolic Scripture, that *you must return unto the God from whom you have wandered*, and leave your sins, and give your heart to Him? What meant that gracious parable concerning the prodigal? Did it not set you forth, you who have spent your living with harlots, and are brought to the degradations of sin? Did He not teach you that your only hope lies in quick return to your offended, but loving Fa-

ther in Heaven? “I will arise and go to my Father”—is not this fit language for you?

The citizens of this country—what can they do for you? They send you into their fields to feed swine, but you cannot fill your belly with the husks which the swine eat. Does not Jesus, in that loving parable, say affectionately to you, “Return unto your God”? Oh, if this is true, and you say it is, then believe it—and sure I am your heart will yearn towards your Father’s house, and you will run towards your home at once. Is it not true that we must abhor that which is evil and turn with full purpose of heart unto the Lord? “True,” you answer, “certainly it is.” Why then, I reply, do you not believe it, and act upon the belief?

Dear Friends, if any physician, well-known and honored, should meet you today on your way home, and if he should most affectionately and solemnly inform you that you bear about in your person a dreadful disease. Methinks if you should profess to believe his warning, and yet you should seek no remedy for it, but remain totally unaffected by the dreadful assurance, it might well be asked of you, “How can you say it is true, for you evidently do not believe it?”

O my Hearers, as though Christ spoke to you by me, so I ask you this question—How can you, as candid persons, how can you as honest men, admit this Book to be true, when it tells you that your whole head is sick, and your whole heart faint? When it warns you that, dying as you now are, without a work of Divine Grace in you, you are lost to all eternity—how can you, I say, admit these things to be true, and yet prove by your apathy and carelessness that you do not believe them? May God press that enquiry home upon you!

Our Lord Jesus Christ came not only to reveal your need, but also to *set forth His claims*. The claims of Jesus of Nazareth are briefly stated by Peter, “Repent and be converted, everyone of you, that your sins may be blotted out when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.” He demands *repentance*—that is, a change of mind—the changing of your mind with reference to sin, caring no more for its pleasures, despising it and turning away from it. A change of mind with regard to holiness—seeking your happiness in it. A change of mind with regard to Christ Himself, so that you shall no longer look upon Him as without form or comeliness, but as a most precious Savior, such as you need.

Sinner, Christ *demand*s of you that you should take your ornaments of self-righteousness from you, and wrap yourself in the sackcloth of humiliation, and cast the ashes of penitence upon your head, and cry, “Unclean! Unclean! Unclean!” Moreover, He requires *faith* of you. “Repent and believe the Gospel.” “This is the commandment, that you believe on Jesus Christ whom God has sent.” The Jews said, “What shall we do that we may do the work of God?” Christ said, “This is the work of God, that you believe on Jesus Christ whom He has sent.” He demands that faith which will accept Him to be the *sole* cleanser from sin, and to be the *sole* possessor, as He is the *sole* redeemer, of the heart.

Friend, you believe that no less a Person than the Son of God thus bids you look unto Him and be saved. You believe that the Son of God was

nailed to the Cross, and that out of love to you He demands that you forsake the sin which will destroy you. And He demands you believe in His blood which will cleanse you. Does Jesus thus speak? Are these demands the hard inventions of a tyrannical priesthood, or the mild and tender claims of love? Is it a mere man who bids you believe and live, or is it the Redeemer, “in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily,” who commands you to believe and be baptized?

If the claim to faith is true and just, why do you not accede to it? Why harden your hearts? Why stand out against incarnate love, pleading and persuading you? Oh, strange inconsistency, to know the Savior’s Truth, but not to believe Him! Oh, shameful dishonesty, to grant the validity of His claim, but to be careless concerning the discharge of it! To grant the justness of the requirement, and refuse to accede to it with your hearts is to write yourselves down as deceitful and unrighteous. “If I say the truth, why do you not believe Me?”

Further, *Christ came to provide the remedy for your soul.* Christ did not preach an impossible Gospel—one out of the reach of sinners. He provided a real, ready, and available salvation. No, Beloved, He came to preach glad tidings of great joy to men, a Gospel worthy of all acceptance, in which even the vilest have a share. And this is it—that God wills not the death of the sinner, but had rather that he should turn unto Him and live. That, in order that mercy and justice might both meet, Christ, God’s own dear Son, was sacrificed on Calvary for the ungodly. The Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. And that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.

This is the Gospel—a Gospel to be preached to every creature, from the cold snows of Lapland to the balmy plains of the torrid zone—a Gospel to be published among every people wherever sinners are found—that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, even the very chief, and that an act of faith in Him saves the soul. A simple trusting in Him and the soul is delivered from all sin. My Friends, you profess that this is true. O my Hearers, very few among you doubt that this Gospel is Divine.

The most of you who sit in these seats Sunday after Sunday, never raise any difficulties of that sort. You say, “Our minister has preached the Gospel to us.” But oh, if this is true, why do you not believe it? If there is a remedy, a sure one, a God-appointed one, why do you not receive it? O Sirs, this damnable inconsistency of yours will ruin your souls, unless you repent of it. Deny it altogether, and I can understand your position, though I weep over it. But say that it is true, and yet reject it, and your folly is so glaring that it shall be a theme for laughter in Hell, when fiends shall be your companions and the eternal burnings your perpetual abode.

How can it be? You are hanging over the jaws of Hell, the flames flash into your face! A strong hand that can save you is stretched out. You refuse its grasp and will refuse it, still, unless it lays hold on you by force. Perishing! The very medicine offered you which will cure you, and you will not receive it although you know its healing virtue! You do not believe it. There is infidelity in your heart, and before you condemn open unbeliev-

ers, search your own hearts, for how are you better than they? May not your sins be less excusable and your state less hopeful than theirs?

Dear Friends. Our blessed Lord came *also to reveal the freeness of His Grace*. Oh, what freeness was there in the Gospel when Christ preached it! No cold theology His lips. Words did not hang like icicles there, but out of His mouth there flowed rivers of living water. What can be freer than this—“Come unto Me all you that labor and are heavy-laden and I will give you rest”? Or what more wide than this—“If any man thirst let him come unto Me and drink”? Or what more gracious than this, by the lips of His servant John—“Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely”? Oh, I need not repeat these invitations! I shall rather remind you that you admit them to be true, hearty, Divine invitations.

Why then, oh, why do you not believe them? You say, “Yes, it is freely presented. I have not a doubt about that.” Then why do you stand shivering and refusing to lay hold on eternal life? Soul, if this Gospel were hedged with thorns or guarded with bayonets I would recommend you to fling yourself upon their very points to reach it. But when the door is opened, and when Christ Himself, dressed in bleeding love, woos you to come—how shall I make an excuse for you when you can say it is true and yet you do not believe it? May God give you wisdom and teach you reason—right reason.

Furthermore, Jesus Christ in His preaching gave a very clear description of *the danger of unregenerate souls*. Hear how He puts it—“Where their worm dies not and their fire is not quenched.” Mark how He speaks of the unprofitable servant—“Cast him into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Observe how He describes the goats on the left hand, these are the thundering accents of the Judge of All—“Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.”

No preacher was ever so awfully explicit upon future punishment as Jesus of Nazareth. No human ministry ever gave such graphic and harrowing descriptions of Hell as Christ has given. You say you believe the words of Jesus—you do not suspect a loving Savior of exaggeration, do you? Oh, my Hearers, I ask you now, in the name of God—if it is true, why do you not believe it? You do not believe it—that is clear enough. Would you sit quietly in your seat this morning, young man, if you really believed that within one instant you may be in Hell?

Old Man! Old in years, and old in sin—would you be as quiet in your soul today as you are if you knew and believed that there is but a step between you and the flames? Oh, all of you who can make merry while yet you have no hope in Jesus, could it be so with you if you really believed in the wrath of God which abides on you? So near the lake of fire and yet so full of levity! Death and damnation at your doors, and yet jesting and unconcerned! My soul is full of horror at your madness! My heart is ready to burst with anguish at the ruin which will so soon overtake you! What shall I say unto you? How shall I reason with you?—Surely if the thunders of an angry God do not arouse you, you will sleep yourselves into the lowest *Hell*.

Brethren, let me add, *Christ has brought to light the hope of immortality, eternal life and Heaven.* What glowing pictures does the Word of God give of the state of the blessed in the land of the hereafter! What music streams from angels' harps! What joy irradiates every celestial brow! What hallowed blessedness floats along the river of the Water of Life in the midst of every street of the new Jerusalem! You admire the poetry of the Book of God and marvel at its matchless painting of scenes beyond the flood. You believe that Jesus has revealed that which eye had not seen and ear had not heard. Then why do you not believe it?

If you believed it you would seek after it, you would strive to enter in at the strait gate. You would labor for the meat which perishes not. The Spirit of God would lead you to prize the world to come. You would tread this present fleeting world beneath your feet, and be looking for, and hastening unto the glories which are yet to be revealed in those who love the Lord. The sum of all this is the weighty enquiry of our Lord Jesus. "If I say the truth why do you not believe Me?" If Christ is no liar, if His Word is no fiction, how can you remain as you now are—ungodly, unthinking, unconverted men and women? May the Holy Spirit constrain you to give heed to this searching question.

II. YOU OFFER SOME DEFENSE OF YOUR INCONSISTENCY, BUT I ANSWER THAT YOUR APOLOGIES DO NOT MEET THE CASE.

I hear one say, "Sir, I do not feel myself entitled to come to Christ. The Revelation of God is true, *but I do not believe in Christ because I do not feel any need that I should.*" I answer that this is no excuse—this is rather a proof of guilt. You do not believe that which Christ has told you concerning yourself. The Word of God informs you in many places that your case is an awful and a lamentable one. If you believed this, you would never have to complain that you did not feel it. In matters relating to the body, we feel first, and then believe.

My hand smarts, and therefore I believe that it has been wounded. But in things relating to the soul, you believe first, and feel afterwards. A woman cannot feel grief on account of the loss of her child till she believes she has lost it. A young man cannot feel joy at the inheritance of a large estate till he believes he has inherited it. But it is impossible for a loving mother to believe that her child is lost, and not to weep, or for an ambitious young man to believe himself suddenly made rich and not to rejoice. Now, if you really believed your heart to be as deceitful as the Bible says it is. If you really believed sin to be as dreadful a thing as God regards it to be, you would necessarily feel repentance and conviction.

Alas, it is only when the Spirit of God gives you a real belief in *these* things that you repent in earnest. The real root of your hardness of heart lies in your not believing what you admit to be true. You say the Bible is true, but you say what you do not mean. Oh, I would that this inconsistency would strike you! You say it is true, but you cannot believe it, or you would be at once aroused to anxious conviction.

But you make a second apology. "*But, Sir, I do not see how faith can save me.*" Here, again, there is no excuse, because the basis of your doubt, after all, is this—you do not believe what Scripture reveals. If you

Speak honestly, you really mean to say, “The testimony of the Bible concerning salvation through faith is not true.” Let me affectionately remove this stumbling block, if it is ignorance and not willful unbelief. You say you cannot see how faith can save you. Do you not know that faith, in itself, does not save?

Faith saves by reason of that which it lays hold of. Christ stood in the place of every man living that ever did or will believe on Him. He took the sins of those persons and was punished for them. And those who trust Him receive the effect of what He suffered. To say that faith could save would be an unreasonable thing—but that the *Object* of faith, the Divine suffering Savior can save—is no unreasonable doctrine. Now, if you do really believe what Scripture tells you concerning this, you cannot again raise this objection, that you do not see how faith can save.

But you say you prefer works. But Scripture tells you, times without number, that by the works of the law there shall no flesh be justified. And it adds that all your righteousnesses are but as filthy rags. So all hope in that quarter is destroyed. You admit that Scripture is true, and yet you want to be saved by your works! This is to say that black is white! This is to make God a liar, and yet, to make you bow, and compliment Him as the God of Truth at the same time. Sinner, if you believe the Bible, it is as clear as noonday that he that believes on Him is not condemned, and that he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed on the Son of God.

Perhaps you meet me by saying, *that you have long thought that the good things promised in the Gospel, simply and only to faith, are too good to be true.* That, conscious of being a lost sinner, and a very wretched offender, you have not the presumption to believe that if you were to trust Christ this very morning, all your sins would be forgiven. Well Friend, come now, you talk like a humble man, but it is very likely you are very proud. Let me get ahold of you by the button. What does all this mean, my dear Friend, but just this—that you think very meanly *of God*? I do not believe you think so meanly of yourself as you think you do.

You think meanly *of God*! You think that He has but little mercy, at least not so much mercy as you need, and so you limit the Holy One of Israel. But I shall meet you on the ground of my text. You allow that this Book is true—very well—has not the Lord declared, both by instances, and by express words of promise, that though your sins are as scarlet they shall be as wool? And though they are red like crimson they shall be whiter than snow? However aggravated guilt may be, it can damn no man that believes in Christ. I pray you read the Gospel aright. You cannot then make the greatness of its Grace a ground of doubt. The thing is great, but it is not too great for God. As high as the heavens are above the earth so high are His ways above your ways, and His thoughts above your thoughts.

But do I hear you answer *that you are not quite sure that the promise is made to you.* Sinner, I must not lose patience with you, but I would you would lose patience with yourself, for this is trifling. You say the Bible is true. Sir, if you say it is true, you know that the very object for which it

was sent *to you* was that it might save you. What is said in the twentieth chapter of the Gospel by John?—"These are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, and that believing you might have life through His name."

God did not send this Book to you, I am sure, to play with you. He sent it that you might be saved. But how can you say the invitations do not include you? "Whosoever will." Does that shut you out? The Gospel not sent to *you*? Why, does it not say, "Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel *to every creature*?" Are you not a creature? Can you escape there? Soul, you know that, inasmuch as the Gospel is to be preached to every creature, and inasmuch as you are condemned already for not believing on the Son of God, therefore the Gospel must have been sent to *you*.

You say you do not feel your need and you are not prepared. No preparation was ever asked. "This He *gives* you—it is His Spirit's rising beam." You say you do not *feel* this, and you do not *feel* that. He never asked you to *feel* anything as a preparation for Him. All this is the gift of His Divine Grace. You know we preach here every Sunday to you a Gospel which meets you as you are, not as quickened sinners, but as sinners! Not as convicted sinners, but as sinners—naked, poor and helpless. You know we speak the Truth of God. Why do you not believe us when we tell you that to you, even to you, is the Word of this Gospel sent—for him that comes to Christ He will in no wise cast out?

Ah, *you will think about this, but the time has not yet come*. I answer, again, that you do not believe the Bible to be true. If you believed, as the Bible describes, that life is short, and death is certain, and eternity is near, and there is a dreadful Hell into which you will be plunged, and a bright and glorious Heaven which you will lose, you would cry out, "Lord, save me, or I perish!" As when the hand of the angel hastened Lot from the burning city, so would a full conviction of these things hasten you to the Cross for shelter.

Ah, I repeat what I commenced with, I would care but little for open infidelity if this secret unbelief could be killed. You know why men are infidels openly? It is because they want to find an excuse for their inward infidelity. When men with some few grains of honesty, and a little pride mingled with it, begin to reason with themselves, they argue thus—"Now I love my sins too well to give them up. The Bible is true, but it demands of me repentance, faith, and other things not at all palatable. If I say the old Book is true and do not heed it, I shall be inconsistent.

"I will at least show I have one virtue—I will be consistent. I will deny the authority of the Scriptures, and then, though conscience may prick me, yet before men I shall earn a reputation for daring consistency, my actions and my words agreeing." Well, Sir, I like you not for this, but I must say this, that we have seen some of the greatest unbelievers converted to God in this House of Prayer, while others remain unblest. We have seen many baptized into Christ who once did not believe His Deity and who doubted the inspiration of Scripture!

But all the while there are some of you who say the Word is true, but do not believe it, and I am almost ready to give you up. You are like some

persons we visit on their sick beds. They say, “Yes, Sir,” “Yes, Sir,” to all we say, and they die and are damned with, “Yes, Sir,” on their tongue, but with “No, Sir” in their heart! This is what you are doing. You say, “Yes, Sir,” “Yes, Sir,” “Yes, Sir,” but you do not repent, you do not believe. You *live*, and I fear some of you will *die*, without God.

III. Again, I would aim at your consciences from another quarter. Friend, Friend, be not offended with me while I tell you now a piece of solemn Truth. In the forty-fifth verse Jesus gives the reason why some did not believe on Him. It is a most unreasonable reason. It is this—“Because I tell you the truth you believe Me not.” Why, that should be the very reason why they should believe Him!

Now, I fear some of you do not believe the Truth of God, *simply because it is the Truth of God*. Some of you, my Hearers, hate the Truth of God. You say, “That is too severe. It is not true.” I would not be untrue even with a good design, for I do not think we should tell a lie even to save a soul. But it is true, solemnly true. Now I will tell one part of the Truth as it is taught in Scripture—“Whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap.” Well now, that teaches that if you continue to sow sin you will have to reap the result of it, and unless, through Divine Grace you are led to give up your right-eye sins and to cut off your right-arm lusts, you will perish.

Now this is a Truth of God which you hate. That man who comes here on Sundays and often has pangs of conscience, but is a drunkard still, a secret drunkard still—*he* hates this Truth. Where shall I find that other man who listens to the Word, yes, and often with tears, but he has his midnight crime when he thinks no man sees him, and even now, when I press harshly upon his vice, he likes it not. You that are here this morning listening to me, and this afternoon will be busy with your shops on God’s own day, beware!

And you, too, that so trade in business that you no more dare to show your books than you dare to look at the flames of Hell—you hate the Truth of God. I am sure you do. You abhor the doctrine that all this must be given up! You prove you do not like it, because you do not practice it. Some of you will even say—“Ah, the preacher is Puritanical—he is too severe—he cuts too close.” No! Here it is, you believe it not *because it is the Truth of God*.

The Pharisees, my Friends, hated God’s truth *deliberately*. I think I hear one of you say, “I do not do *that*. I may hate the Truth in the sense you have explained, in rejecting it, and going on in my sins, but I do not do it deliberately.” Ah, but how long does it take to make an action deliberate? I have preached to some of you nine years now—nine years! And you are still what you were! Is not that deliberate? Some of you have heard the Gospel forty years, and you are unregenerate still—and hate the Truth of God—and prove you do by living in sin! Is not that deliberate?

And you, young Man, the other Sunday you were so impressed that you felt as if you must yield to God that very day. You stood on those steps under those pillars, and you said to your soul—“To be or not to be, that is the question. A companion met you and asked you—asked you before the

impression had died away, to go with him to the haunt of sin. And you stood and poised it in the balance thus—which shall it be?

And you did deliberately choose your own damnation when you chose sin. Take care, lest God shall say, “You have chosen your own delusions, and I will give you up unto them and that forever.” I lay this charge with all the boldness of a Nathan at the door of some of you, that you have chosen deliberately to despise the Truth of God.

But the Pharisees, you will tell me, *scoffed at it*. Yes, and I lay that, too, at the door of some of you. There may be here the regular scoffer, who mocks at everything sacred. With him I have little to do this morning. He shall measure out his iniquities and receive vengeance for them. But you who sit here Sunday after Sunday and hear appeals which you reject—have Christ preached to you and will not look at Him—have His sufferings set forth as we try to paint Him, dipping the pencil in His own blood and yet He is nothing to you—do you not despise Him?

I do not know any contempt that is more sorrowful to the man that is smitten by it than the contempt of utter silence. Do we not say, “We pass you by in silent contempt?” Thus you treat my Lord! We have another expression—we say of some people that they are beneath our contempt, and some of you have not enough esteem for my Master to treat Him with open contempt. You think religion such a trifle, that it is not worth your sneering at it. You so despise it, that you think it is not worth your despising. Oh, is it so? Is it so? Then are you of your father, the devil, and you do his works! May God bring you out of that black family and translate you into the kingdom of His own dear Son.

IV. Having spoken feebly, but yet desiring the Master to make what I have said mighty, I close by asking these questions:

If these things are true, why do you not believe them? Is there anything to hinder you? Is the doctrine unreasonable? You say the Bible is true. Now the Bible contains many things which are harder to believe than that Jesus Christ died for the ungodly. If you can believe that Jonah was in the whale’s belly. If you can believe all the marvelous miracles of Scripture, you cannot say that the doctrine of the Cross is unreasonable. To believe that Christ stood as a Substitute, and that through His substitution God can pardon sin, is no tax upon faith.

Nor can you tell me that the precept is intolerable. “His yoke is easy and His burden is light.” It is your *sin* that is intolerable, not the *precept*. He only bids you give up that which will ruin you. He only asks you to do that which will make you happy. But there is one answer you will give. You will tell me you cannot believe. *How do you know you cannot?* “Well,” says one, “I cannot believe without the Spirit of God.” That is true, but are you sure the Spirit of God is not with you? Let me ask you whether you can now trust Jesus Christ. This is what I am about to experiment upon.

Jesus Christ, who took the sin of men, declares that whoever will trust Him to save them shall be saved. Now Christ is God, He is a mighty Savior. He has suffered as Man, therefore He has all that is necessary for the office. Do you think you can now trust Christ to save you? I think I hear one say, “Yes, I could trust such a Savior as that.” Then you can do it, you

see, and inasmuch as you can do it, the Spirit of God is with you. Do not expect to see the Spirit of God! He is a great mystery. You cannot know His operations except by their effects.

Faith is the *effect* of His secret operation. If you can now believe in Christ, then doubtless the Spirit of God is with you, and I doubt not the Spirit of God is often with you when you know it not. If you can now believe, He is with you. Do I hear one say, “Well, I have often thought I could trust Christ, but I thought if *I* could do it then it was not the work of the Spirit of God, but the work of the creature.” No, verily, Beloved, there is no such thing as a simple trust in Christ that comes of the creature. It is always the work of the Spirit of God—and if you can trust in Christ you need not question about the Spirit. The Spirit of God must be in you, or else your trust in Christ would never have been there.

Only if now the thing seems right and reasonable to you, cast yourself on Jesus, and you are saved! I might multiply words, but I might not, perhaps, increase the force of the text, and therefore let me entreat you who stand to the Scriptures as being true, and yet deny their veracity by remaining unregenerate—let me entreat you to decide one way or the other. Do be consistent. “How long halt you between two opinions?” Say the Book is false, and then we shall know what you are, and where you stand, and you yourselves will, probably, begin to be alarmed at your position. Say the Book is false, and then you will be openly numbered with the disciples and slaves of Hell. And it may be your conscience will then begin to work.

But, oh, if you are not prepared to take that side, if Baal is not God, and you will not serve him, then if God is God—and that is the only other conclusion—*serve Him*. I bring you to that awful place where the two roads meet—the right, the left—to Heaven, to Hell—to righteousness, to sin—to God, to fiends! There you stand. I am glad to have made you stand there. If it is a thing that needs consideration, consider. Put your hand to your brow, now, and turn this matter over. And I do trust that through the word which we have spoken to you, the Spirit of God will work on your conscience and on your heart and you will say, “For God! For Christ! For holiness! For everlasting life!”

But mark you, I had sooner you would say, “For the devil. For sin. For Hell,” than say nothing. For if you say nothing, you will go on and be as careless and as indifferent as ever. But if you make this last choice deliberately, it may be that then God will alarm your conscience and stir your soul, so that you may see your danger and may fly to Jesus.

May He bless you, now, and guide your heart into the way of Truth. And to His name be glory forever. Amen.

Adapted from *The C.H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

THE MAN WHO SHALL NEVER SEE DEATH

NO. 2169

[This sermon was preached, in great sorrow, after the sudden death of the senior deacon of the Tabernacle Church, Mr. WILLIAM OLNEY. He had been more than 50 years a member and for many years our right-hand man. His zeal in service was only rivaled by his patience in suffering. Love was his prominent characteristic. He was graciously impetuous and yet persistently constant. While he was a very ready speaker, he was not a mere talker, but was as liberal with his gifts and as abundant in his prayers as he was frequent in his exhortations. Never Pastor had an abler or more earnest helper. His son right worthily sustains the honor of the house, but scarcely could any dozen workers fill up the gap which the father's death has caused in the departments of Prayer Meetings, foreign missions, home evangelization and orphanage. Help, Lord, for a great man has fallen in our Israel!—C. H. S.]

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 19, 1890,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep My saying, he shall never see death. Then said the Jews unto Him, Now we know that You have a devil. Abraham is dead, and the Prophets, and You say, If a man keep My saying, he shall never taste of death. Are You greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? and the Prophets are dead: whom make You Yourself?”
John 8:51-53.

IN the previous part of this chapter we hear the Jews, with malicious voices, assailing our blessed Lord with this bitter question, “Say we not well that You are a Samaritan, and have a devil?” How very quietly the Savior answered them! He did answer them because He judged it necessary to do so, but He did so with great patience and with sound argument—“I have not a devil; but I honor My Father.” Clear proof, this! No man can be said to have a devil who honors God, for the evil spirit from the beginning has been the enemy of all that glorifies the Father! Paul, who had not read this passage—for the Gospel of John was not written then—was nevertheless so filled with his Master's spirit that he answered after a like manner when Festus said, “Paul, you are beside yourself; much learning does make you mad.” He calmly replied, “I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness.”

This was a fine copy of our Savior's gentle and forcible reply—“I have not a devil; but I honor My Father.” Brethren, whenever you are falsely accused and an evil name is hurled at you, if you must reply, “give a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.” Be not heated and

hurried, for if so, you will lose strength and will be apt to err. Let your Lord be your model. The false charge was the occasion of our Lord's uttering a great Truth of God. On they rush, furious in their rage, but He flashes in their faces the light of Truth. To put down error, lift up Truth! Thus their deadly saying was met by a living saying—"Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keeps My saying, he shall never see death."

Nothing so baffles the adversaries of the faith as to utter with unshaken confidence the Truth of God. The Truth which Jesus stated was full of promise and if they willfully rejected His promise, it became worse to them than a threat. Christ's rejected promises curdle into woes. If these men, when He said to them, "If a man keeps My saying, he shall never see death," yet went on reviling Him, then their consciences, when afterwards awakened, would say to them, "He that believes not shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." If the Believer shall never see death, then the *unbeliever* shall never see *life*. Thus the Gospel itself becomes "a savor of death unto death" to those who refuse it and the very word which proclaims eternal life threatens eternal death to the willfully unbelieving.

I pray that, this morning, we may be put into a gracious frame of mind and may be so helped to keep Christ's saying, that we may inherit this wondrous promise—"If a man keeps My saying, he shall never see death." May the Holy Spirit specially aid me while I first speak upon *the gracious character*—the man who keeps Christ's saying. Secondly, I would dwell upon *the glorious deliverance*—"He shall never see death." Thirdly, taking the two later verses of my text, I would honor *the great Quickener*, for evidently, according to the Jews, our Lord was making much of Himself by what He said. And in truth, the fact that the Believer shall never see death does greatly magnify the Lord Jesus. May He be glorified in our mourning hearts while we think of our departed friend as one who shall never see death!

I. First, consider THE GRACIOUS CHARACTER—"If a man keeps My saying, he shall never see death." Observe, *that the one conspicuous characteristic of the man who shall never behold death is that he keeps Christ's saying or word.* He may have other characteristics, but they are comparatively unimportant in this respect. He may be of a timorous nature; he may often be in distress; but if he keeps Christ's saying he shall never see death. He may have been a great sinner in his early life but, being converted and led to keep Christ's saying, he shall never see death! He may be a strong-minded man who keeps a firm grip of eternal realities and therefore becomes supremely useful—but none the more for that is this promise true to him. The reason for his safety is the same as in the case of the weak and timorous—he keeps Christ's saying and therefore he shall never see death. Divest yourselves, therefore, of all enquiries about other matters and only make inquisition in your own heart upon this one point—do you keep Christ's saying? If you do this, you shall never see death.

Who is this man who keeps Christ's saying? Obviously, *he is a man that has close dealing with Christ*. He hears what He says. He notes what He says. He clings to what He says. We meet with persons nowadays who talk about faith in God, but they do not know the Lord Jesus Christ as the great Sacrifice and Reconciler. But without a Mediator there is no coming to God. Jesus says, "No man comes unto the Father, but by Me." His witness is true. Brothers and Sisters, we glorify Christ as God Himself. Truly, the unity of the Godhead is never doubted among us. And while "there is one God," there is also "one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus." Forever remember that Christ Jesus as God-Man, Mediator, is essential to all our communion with the Father. You cannot trust God, nor love God, nor serve God aright unless you willingly consent to His appointed way of reconciliation, redemption, justification and access which is only through the precious blood of Jesus Christ.

In Christ we draw near unto God. Attempt not to approach unto Jehovah, who is a consuming fire, except through the Incarnate God. Tell me, my Hearer, is your faith fixed upon Him whom God has set forth to be the Propitiation for sin? Do you come to God in God's own way? He will not receive you in any other! If you reject the way of salvation through the blood of the Lamb, you cannot be keeping the saying of Christ, for He says, "He that has seen Me has seen the Father"—and He says this of none else.

These people, next, making the Lord Jesus their All in All, revered His word and therefore kept it—they respected, observed, trusted and obeyed it. By keeping His saying is meant, first, that *they accept His doctrine*. Whatever He has laid down as Truth is Truth to them. My Hearer, is it so with you? With *some* their great source of belief is their *own thought*. They judge the Divine Revelation, itself, and claim the right, not only to interpret it, but to correct and expand it. In the fullness of self-confidence, they make themselves the judges of God's Word. They believe a Doctrine because the light of the present age confirms it or invents it. Their foundation is in man's own thought. In their opinion, parts of Scripture are exceedingly faulty and need tinkering with scientific hammers.

The light of the Holy Spirit is to them a mere glowworm as compared with the light of the present advanced age. But he that is to share the promise now before us is one who believes the Savior's Word because it is His Word. He takes the sayings of Christ and His Inspired Apostles as being true, because so spoken. To him the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit is the warrant of faith. This is a very important matter—the foundation of our faith is even more important than the superstructure. Unless you ground your faith upon the fact that the Lord has spoken, your faith lacks that worshipful reverence which God requires. Even if you are correct in your beliefs, you are not correct in your spirit unless your faith is grounded on the authority of God's own Word.

We are to be disciples, not critics. We have done with quibbling, for we have come to believing. In this our departed deacon stood on firm ground. By him every teaching of the Word was accepted with a lively, child-like faith—and though tempted by the school of doubt—he was not in the least affected by its reasonings. To him the Gospel was dear as life itself. As *he* did, so must we believe Christ's doctrines.

Next, the gracious man *trusts Christ's promises*. This is a crucial point. Without trust in Jesus we have no spiritual life. Say, my Hearer, do you rely upon the saying of the Lord Jesus, "He that believes in Me has everlasting life"? Do you believe in the promise of pardon to the man that confesses and forsakes his sin—pardon through the precious blood of the great Sacrifice? Are the promises of Christ certainties to you, certainties hallmarked with His sacred, "Verily, verily, I say unto you"? Can you hang your soul upon the sure nail of the Lord's sayings? Some of us rest our eternal destiny solely upon the truthfulness of Christ. When we take all His promises together, what a fullness of confidence they create in us!—

***"How firm a foundation, you saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in His excellent Word!"***

Furthermore, the gracious man *obeys His precepts*. No man can be said to keep Christ's sayings unless he follows them practically in his life. He is not only teacher, but Lord to us. A true keeper of the Word cultivates that spirit of love which is the very essence of Christ's moral teaching. He endeavors to be meek and merciful. He aims at purity of heart and peaceableness of spirit. He follows after holiness even at the cost of persecution. Whatever he finds that his Lord has ordained, he cheerfully performs. He does not kick at the Lord's commands as involving too much self-denial and separation from the world. He is willing to enter in by the strait gate and to follow the narrow way because his Lord commands him. That faith which does not lead to obedience is a dead faith and a false faith. That faith which does not cause us to forsake sin is no better than the faith of devils, even if it is so good—

***"Faith must obey her Father's will,
As well as trust His Grace:
A pardoning God is jealous still
For His own holiness."***

So now you see who the man is that keeps Christ's sayings. That man receives, through the Word of God, a new and everlasting life, for the Word of God is a "living and incorruptible seed, which lives and abides forever." Wherever the seed of the Word drops into a soil which accepts it, it takes root, abides and grows. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." It is by Christ's sayings, or by Christ's Word, that life is implanted in the soul—by that same Word the heavenly life is fed, increased, developed and at length perfected. The power and energy of the Holy Spirit which work through the Word are used as the beginning, the

sustaining and the perfecting of the inner life. The life of Grace on earth is the blossom of which the life of Glory is the fruit.

It is the same life all along, from regeneration to resurrection. The life which comes into the soul of the Believer, when he begins to keep Christ's sayings, is the same life which he will enjoy before the Eternal Throne in the realms of the blessed. We may know what keeping Christ's sayings is from the fact that He Himself has set us the example. Note well the 55th verse, where Jesus says concerning the Father—"Yet you have not known Him; but I know Him: and if I should say, I know Him not, I shall be a liar like unto you: but *I know Him, and keep His saying.*" We are to keep our Lord's saying, even as He kept His Father's saying!

He lived upon the Father's Word and therefore refused Satan's temptation to turn stones into bread. His Father's Word was in Him so that He always did the things which pleased the Father. When He spoke, He spoke not His own Words, but the Words of Him that sent Him. He lived that the Divine Word might be executed—even on the Cross He was careful that the Scripture might be fulfilled. He said, "He that is of God hears God's Words" and this was so truly the case with Him that He said, "My ears have You opened." The Word was everything to Him and He rejoiced over His Apostles because He could say of them, "They have kept Your Word." He, whose Word you are to keep shows you how to keep it! Live towards Him as He lived towards the Father and then you shall receive the promise He has made: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep My saying, He shall never see death."

If love is the fulfilling of the Lord's saying, our dearly-beloved but now departed friend kept the saying of Christ—for in that matter many Believers have done virtuously, but he excelled them all. He has not looked on death.

II. Now we turn to the delightful part of our subject, namely, THE GLORIOUS DELIVERANCE which our Lord here promises—"He shall never see death." Our Lord did not mean that he shall never die, for He Himself died and His followers, in long procession, have descended to the grave. Some Brethren are cheered by the belief that they shall live until the Lord comes and therefore they shall not sleep, but shall only be changed. The hope of our Lord's appearing is a very blessed one, come when He may. But I do not think that to be alive at His coming is any great object of desire. Is there any great preference in being changed beyond that of dying? Do we not read that, "We which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep"?

This is a great Truth of God. Throughout eternity, if I die, I shall be able to say I had actual fellowship with Christ in the article of death and in descent into the grave, which those happy saints who will survive can never know. It is no matter of doctrine, but yet, if one might have a choice in the matter, it might be gain to die—

***"The graves of all His saints He blessed,
And softened every bed:***

***Where should the dying members rest,
But with the dying Head?"***

How dear will Christ be to us when, in the ages to come, we shall think of His death and shall be able to say, "We, too, have died and risen again"! You that are alive and remain will certainly not have a preference over us, who, like our Lord, shall taste of death. I am only speaking, now, of a matter of no great moment, which, as Believers, we may use as a pleasant subject of discourse among ourselves. We grieve not that our Brother has fallen asleep before the Lord's glorious appearing, for we are sure that he will be no loser thereby.

Our Lord has said, "If a man keep My saying, he shall never see death," and this does not relate to the few who will remain at His Second Advent, but to the entire company of those who have kept His saying, even though they pass into the grave. What does this promise mean? It means this, in the first place—*our face is turned away from death*. Here am I, a poor sinner, convicted of sin and awakened to a fear of wrath. What is there before my face? What am I compelled to gaze upon? The Greek is not fully interpreted by the word "see"—it is a more intense word. According to Westcott, the sight here mentioned is that of "a long, steady, exhaustive vision, whereby we become slowly acquainted with the nature of the object to which it is directed."

The awakened sinner is made to look at eternal *death* which is the threatened punishment of sin. He stands gazing upon the result of sin with terror and dismay. Oh, the wrath to come! The death that never dies! While unforgiven, I cannot help gazing upon it and foreseeing it as my doom. When the Gospel of the Lord Jesus comes to my soul and I keep His saying by faith, I am turned completely round. My *back* is upon death and my face is towards eternal life! Death is removed, life is received and more life is promised. What do I see within, around and before me? Why, life, and only life—life in Christ Jesus! "He is our life." In my future course on earth, what do I see? Final falling from Grace? By no means, for Jesus says, "I give unto My sheep *eternal life*." What do I see far away in the eternities? Unending life! "He that believes in Me has everlasting life."

Now I begin to realize the meaning of that text, "I am the Resurrection: he that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." And again, "I am the Life: he that lives and believes in Me shall never die." The man who has received the saying of the Lord Jesus has passed from death unto life and shall *never* come into condemnation! Consequently he shall never gaze on death. All that lies before the Believer is life, life more abundantly, life to the fullest, life eternal! What has become of our death? Our Lord endured it. He died for us. "He His own Self bore our sins in His own body on the tree." In His death as our Representative we died. There is no death penalty left for the Believer, for not the least charge can be brought against those for whom Christ has died. Hence we sing—

***"Complete atonement You have made,
And to the utmost farthing paid***

***Whatever your people owed:
Nor can His wrath on me take place,
If sheltered in Your righteousness,
And sprinkled with Your blood.***

Shall *we* die for whom Christ died in the purpose of God? Can our departure out of the world be sent as a punishment when our Lord Jesus has so vindicated justice that no punishment is required? When I behold my Lord die upon the Cross, I see that for me death itself is dead.

Then comes in another sense of the expression. "He that keeps My saying shall never see death," means that *his spiritual death is gone, never to return*. Before the man knows Christ, he abides in death and wherever he looks he sees nothing but death. Poor souls! *You* know what I am talking about, you that are now under concern of soul, for you try to pray and find death in your prayers, You try to believe, but seem dead as to faith. Alas, you ungodly ones! Although you know it not, death is everywhere within you. You are "dead in trespasses and sins." Your sins are to you what grave-clothes are to a corpse! They seem your natural investiture—they cling to you—they bind you. Little do you know what corruption is coming upon you, so that God Himself will say of you, "Bury the dead out of My sight."

As soon as ever the Gospel saying of the Lord Jesus comes to a man with power, what is the effect? He is dead no longer—he begins to see life! It may be that at first it is a painful life—a life of deep regrets for the past and dark fears for the future. It may be a life of hungering and thirsting; a life of pining and panting; a life that needs something—it scarcely knows what—but it cannot live without it. This man sees life and the more he keeps his Savior's Word, the more he rejoices in Christ Jesus, the more he rests on His promise, the more he loves Him, the more he *serves* Him, the more will his new life drive death out of sight! Life now abounds and holds sway and the old death hides away in holes and corners.

Though oftentimes the Believer has to mourn over the old death which struggles to return, yet he does not gaze upon that death of sin as once he did. He cannot endure it. He takes no pleasure in the contemplation of it, but cries to God for deliverance from it. Grace frees us from the reign of death as well as from the penalty of death—and in neither of these senses shall the keeper of Christ's saying ever look upon death. "But," cries one, "will not a Christian man die?" I answer, not necessarily, for some will remain at the coming of our Lord—and these will not die. Therefore there is no legal necessity that any should die since the obligation would then rest alike on all. But good men die. The tokens of death are seen in mournful array upon my pulpit.

Yet our dear Brother did not die as the penalty of his sin. He was forgiven and it is not according to God's Grace or justice to punish those whom He has forgiven. O my Hearers, if you do not believe in the Lord Jesus, death will be a penal infliction to you! But death is changed in its nature in the case of a Believer in Jesus. Our death is a falling asleep, not a

going to execution! It is a departure out of the world unto the Father, not a being driven away in wrath. We quit the militant host of earth for the triumphant armies of Heaven by the gate of death—that which was a cavern leading to blackness and darkness forever has, by the Resurrection of our Lord, been made into an open tunnel which serves as a passage into eternal Glory! As a penal infliction upon Believers, death was abolished by our Lord and now it has become a stairway from the Grace-life below to the Glory-life above.

“If a man keep My saying, he shall never gaze on death,” may further mean, *he shall not live under the influence of it*. He shall not be perpetually thinking of death and dreading its approach and that which follows after it. I must admit that some Christians are in bondage through fear of death—but that is because they do not keep their Master’s saying as they ought to. The effect of His saying upon us is frequently such that instead of being afraid to die, we come to *long* to depart! In such a case we should realize the verses of Watts, who tells us that could we see the saints above we should long to join them—

**“How we should scorn these robes of flesh,
These fetters and this load!
And long for evening to undress,
That we may rest in God.
We should almost forsake our clay
Before the summons come
And pray and wish our souls away
To their eternal Home.”**

I have to check some dear Brethren when they say to me, “Let me die the death of the righteous.” No, do not talk as Balaam did, but rather say, “Let me live, that I may glorify God and help my sorrowing Brethren in the Lord’s work.” I pray you, do not hasten to be gone—and yet this impatience proves that death has lost its terrors for us. We do not see death looming before us as a coming tempest—we do not gaze upon it as a fascinating horror which makes our faces pale and casts a lurid glare on all around us. We see not the darkness, for we walk in the light! We fear not the rumbling of the chariot, for we know who rides to us therein! *We shall never see that which is the reality and essence of death*, namely, the wrath of God in the second death. We have no cause to fear condemnation, for “it is God that justifies.” That final separation from God, which is the real death of human nature, can never come to us. “Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?” That ruin and misery which the word, “death,” describes, when used in relation to the soul, will never befall us, for we shall never perish, neither shall any pluck us out of Christ’s hands!

When the Believer dies, he does not gaze on death. He walks through the valley of the shadow of death, but he fears no evil and sees none to fear. A shadow was cast across my road, but I passed through it and scarcely perceived that it was there. Why was that? Because I had my eye

fixed upon a strong light beyond—and I did not notice the shadows which otherwise would have distressed me. Believers are so rejoiced by the Presence of their Lord and Master that they do not observe that they are dying. They rest so sweetly in the embrace of Jesus that they hear not the voice of wailing. When they pass from one world into another, it is something like going from England to Scotland—it is all one kingdom and one sun shines in both lands!

Often travelers by railway ask, “When do we pass from England into Scotland?” There is no jerk in the movement of the train. There is no marking of the boundary—you glide from one into the other and scarcely know where the boundary lies. The eternal life that is in the Believer glides along from Grace to Glory without a break. We grow steadily on from the blade to the ear, and from the ear to the full corn—but no black belt divides the stages of growth from one another. We shall know when we arrive, but the passage may be so rapid that we shall not see it. From earth to Heaven may seem the greatest of journeys, but it is ended in the twinkling of an eye!—

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

He shall never gaze on death—he shall pass it by with no more than a glance. He shall go through Jordan as though it were dry land and scarcely know that he has passed a river at all! Like Peter, the departing shall scarcely be sure that they have passed through the iron gate which shall open of its own accord—they shall only know that they are free. Of each one of them it may be said, as of Peter, “He knew not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision.” Fear not death, for Jesus says, “He that keeps My saying shall never see death.”

Follow the soul when it enters upon the other world—the body is left behind and the man is a disembodied spirit—but he does not see death. All the life he needs he has within his soul by being one with Jesus. Meanwhile, he is expecting that at the trump of the Resurrection his body will be reunited with his soul, having been made to be the dwelling and the instrument of his perfected spirit. While he is absent from the body, he is so present with the Lord that he does not look on death. But the Judgment Day has come, the Great White Throne is set, the multitudes appear before the Judge! What about the keeper of Christ’s saying? Is he not afraid?

It is the day of days, the day of wrath! He knows that he shall never see death and therefore he is in no confusion. For him there is no, “Depart, you cursed.” He can never come under the eternal sentence. Look! Hell opens wide her tremendous mouth. The pit which of old was dug for the wicked yawns and receives them! Down sink the ungodly multitude, a very cataract of souls. “The wicked shall be turned into Hell and all the nations that forget God.” In that terrific hour, will not his foot slip? No! He

shall stand in the judgment and shall never see death. But the world is on a blaze! All things are being dissolved and the elements are melting with fervent heat! The stars are falling like the leaves of autumn and the sun is black as sackcloth of hair. Is he not now alarmed?

Ah, no! He shall never see death. His eyes are fixed on life and he himself is full of it. He abides in life! He spends that life in praising God. He shall never gaze on death, for Jesus says, "Because I live, you shall live also." O blessed eyes, that shall never look on death! O happy mind, that has been made confident in Jesus Christ of an *immortality* for which there is no hazard! Our dear Brother was the embodiment of life in the service of the Lord. Last Sabbath he sat in this seat behind me and responded in his very soul to the Word of the Lord. Last Monday was spent all day in the service of God and this Church, in the most hearty manner. Though a great sufferer, his spirit carried him over his bodily weakness and he constantly exhibited an amazing zeal for God and the souls of men.

To the last the old ruling passion was strong in him—he would speak for his Lord. He was so struck down that he did not know that he was dying. He found himself in Heaven before he was aware and I dare say he said to himself, "I thought I was going to the Tabernacle, but here I am in the Temple of my God! For many a year I took my seat among my Brethren below, or went about serving my Lord among His people and now I have a mansion above! And now I behold His face! But I will now see what there is to do." Yes, he will serve God day and night in His Temple, just as he did here, for he was never tired of work for Jesus. He was always at it, and always full of life. He never beheld death while he was with us, for he overflowed with life!

And when physical death came, he did not gaze upon it but simply bowed his head and found himself before the Throne. What a glorious word is this! Alas for you who are ungodly! You are made to *look* on death. It haunts you now! What will it be in the hour of your death? "What will you do in the swelling of the Jordan?" Nothing remains for you but the wages of sin, which is death. The ruin and misery of your souls will be your endless portion. You will be shut in with the finally destroyed, ruined and wretched ones forever! This is a dreadful looking for of judgment. It ought to startle you. But as for the Believer, surely the bitterness of death is past. We have nothing more to do with death as a penalty or a terror any more than we have to do with spiritual death as the choke-damp of the heart and the mother of corruption.

III. This brings me to the third point—THE GREAT QUICKENER. Those Jews—what a passion they were in! How unscrupulous their talk! They could not even quote Christ's words correctly. They said, "You say, If a man keep My saying, he shall never *taste* of death." He did not say so. He said, "Shall never *see* death." We may be said to taste of death as our Master did, for it is written that "He tasted death for every man." And yet in another sense we shall never taste the wormwood and gall of death, for

to us it is “swallowed up in victory.” Its drop of gall is lost in the bowl of victory.

However, the Lord Jesus did not say that we shall never taste of death—neither did He mean that we shall not die, in the common sense of the word. He was using, to the Jews, words in that religious sense in which their own Prophets used them. The ancient Scriptures so used the word, death, and these Jews knew their meaning right well. Death did not always mean the separation of the soul from the body, for the Lord’s declaration to Adam was, “In the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die.” Assuredly, Adam and Eve died in the sense intended, but they were not annihilated, nor were their souls separated from their bodies for they still remained to labor on earth. “The soul that sins it shall die,” relates to a death which consists of degradation, misery, inability, ruin.

Death does not mean annihilation, but something very different. Overthrow and ruin are the death of a soul, just as perfection and joy are its life forever. The separation of the soul *from God* is the death penalty—and that is death, indeed. The Jews refused to understand our Lord, yet they clearly saw that what Jesus claimed tended to glorify Him above Abraham and the Prophets. Hidden away in their abusive words we find a sense which is instructive. It is not the greatness or the goodness of a Believer that secures his eternal life—it is *his being linked by faith to the Lord Jesus Christ*, who is greater than Abraham and the Prophets! The man keeps Christ’s saying and that becomes a bond between him and Christ—and he is one with Christ.

Because of their Lord, the saints live and the living of the saints by Him brings to Him glory and honor. His life is seen in every one of His people—like mirrors, they reflect His Divine life. He has life in Himself and that life He imparts to His chosen. As the old creation displays the Glory of the Father, so the new creation reveals the Glory of the Son. Believers find their highest life in Christ Jesus their Lord—and every particle of it glorifies Him. It is also to our Lord’s Glory that we live by His Word. He does not sustain us by the machinery of Providence, but by His Word. As the world stood out into being because God spoke, so do we live and continue to live because of Christ’s Word. That which He taught, being received into our hearts, becomes the origin and the nourishment of our eternal life. It is greatly glorifying to Christ that, by His Word, all spiritual life in the countless myriads of Believers is begotten and sustained. It is clear that the Lord Jesus is far greater than Abraham and all the Prophets. Their word could not make men live, nor even live themselves. But the saying of Jesus makes all live who receive it. By keeping it they live—yes, live forever! Glory be to the name of Him who quickens whom He wills!

A sweet inference flows from all this and with that I conclude. *The glory of Christ depends upon the not seeing of death by all who keep His saying.* If you and I keep His saying and we see death, then Jesus is not true. If you, believing in Jesus, gaze on death, it will be proven that either He had

not the power or the will to make His promise good. If the Lord fails in any *one* case, He has lost the honor of His faithfulness. O you trembling, anxious souls, lay hold on this—

***“His honor is engaged to save
The meanest of His sheep.”***

If the saint of God, who has won thousands for Jesus, should, after all, perish, what a failure of Covenant engagements there would be! But that failure would be just as great if one of the least of all those who keep our Lord’s Word should be suffered to perish. Such a loss of honor to our All-Glorious Lord is not to be imagined! Therefore if one of you who are the least in your Father’s house do really trust in Him—though you are encumbered with infirmities and imperfections—He must keep you from beholding death!

His Truth, His power, His immutability, His love are all involved in His faithfulness to His promise to each Believer. I want you to take this home with you and be comforted. Yes, and if I have some foul transgressor here this morning—the grossest sinner that ever lived—if you will come to Christ, lay hold upon His gracious saying—keep it and be obedient to it—you shall never see death! There is not a soul in Hell that can ever say, “I have kept Christ’s saying and I have seen death, for here I am.” There never will be such an one, or Christ’s Glory would be tarnished throughout eternity!

Keep His saying and He will keep you from seeing death! How eagerly did my departed friend long for the conversion of those who came to the Tabernacle! He was never satisfied while any were unblessed. He had great longings. He loved revivals and missions. Tidings of souls saved stirred his inmost soul. Oh, that his prayers, while he was with us, may be answered now that he is gone from us! He not only lived among us, but he lived in our hearts! He needs no praise from me—his praise is in all the Church. He will require no monument—all your hearts are his memorials. Never can I forget my beloved fellow worker either in time or in eternity!

Beloved, the real William Olney has not seen death, although with many tears we must lay him in the grave next Wednesday. Pray much for me—my loss is not to be measured. Pray much for his dear family, whose loss cannot be repaired. Amen.

***PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Revelation 7.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—875, 877, 872.***

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SEEING CHRIST'S DAY NO. 2652

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 10, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 23, 1882.

*“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day: and he saw it, and was glad.”
John 8:56.*

THESE Jews had claimed to be of the seed of Abraham and the Lord Jesus Christ admitted their claim as far as it was a valid one. It is always best, in argument, to concede as much as you can fairly grant to your opponent. Sometimes we take a few steps backward in order to get a firmer footing, that we may leap forward with greater sureness. In the case of these Jews, since they said Abraham was their father, the Lord Jesus admitted that they were his seed according to the flesh and therefore He said, “Your father Abraham.”

Very much might be spoken in honor and commendation of Abraham. He was a princely man, well worthy to be called “the father of the faithful,” for, though all Believers have a certain beauty about them because of their faith, yet Abraham stands head and shoulders above the rest of them—at least, above those who lived before the Incarnation of Christ. Much, therefore, might be said in his favor, but there is no word of commendation which could possibly exceed this utterance of Jesus, our Lord, to the quibbling Jews in Jerusalem, “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day: and he saw it, and was glad.” Let this stand as the very crown jewel among all the gems that make up Abraham’s crown, that he saw the day of Christ through the mist of 2,000 years or thereabouts, and so saw it that his heart was gladdened at the sight! There may be many good things that might be truly said of you, dear Friends, but the best thing that ever can be said of you is, “They saw Christ’s day, and were glad.” Whatever else you do not see, if you see this, all is well with you! Blessed, indeed, are your eyes if you can, by faith, behold the Lamb slain for sinners and so behold Him as to be saved by His death. I do not think that anything better than this could be said of Abraham and nothing better will be said of any of you than this testimony from the lips of Christ, Himself, “He saw My day, and was glad.”

Yet we must learn, from our text, a sad lesson before we go fully into its teaching concerning Abraham. It reminds us that however good a man may be, personally, he cannot possibly ensure that his descendants will be like he was. It was to the carping, unbelieving Jews that our Lord said, “Your father Abraham.” What a contrast there was between the princely father and those who boasted that they were his children! There they stood, howling like so many wolves around the Lamb of God, all ea-

ger to devour Him! Their fingers were itching to pick up stones with which they might put to death the Lord of Life and Glory, yet they were the descendants of Abraham! The children of "the friend of God" were seeking to slay God's only-begotten and well-beloved Son! And, a little later, those who were descended lineally from the loins of the great Patriarch gathered in the street about Pilate's palace and cried, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!"—that, "Him," being the Son of the Highest who was One with the ever-blessed Father and Spirit, and who had come to earth upon an errand of mercy and love. Yet the men who were the first and loudest to clamor for His death were those who said, "Abraham is our father."

It is almost enough to make some good men come out of their graves to see what their children or their grandchildren are doing. It is a sad thing that Divine Grace seems to quit some families. It never does run in the blood—that cannot be, for all God's children are born, "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." And of God alone. Yet is it a very blessed fact that, often, if Grace does not run in the blood, it runs side by side with it, and godly fathers joyfully live to see their children treading in their footsteps. In some families, they have this highest of all honors—that they are a household of saints. Generation after generation, this is the testimony concerning them, that they are a company of people whom God has blessed. But, alas, it is not always so and as it was not so with Abraham's seed in Christ's day, as the Jews had, to a very large extent, apostatized so far that they even sought to slay the Christ of God!

You and I must not be staggered when we see the same thing occurring in other families, the heads of which were renowned for Grace. With holy diligence we should seek to bring up our children in the fear of the Lord so that if they do wander, it may not be through our fault, for if we have to blame our guilty neglect, or our evil example for their going astray, it will, indeed, be sad for us. But if we are satisfied, in the sight of God, that we have done all that we could to bring them to Jesus, then, if they should dishonor our name, yet at least there will not be this wormwood mingled with the gall that we helped them to tread the downward road. O Brothers and Sisters, with all your hearts cry mightily unto God that your household, to as many generations as yet shall come, shall never lack a man to stand before the Lord God of Israel, and to be a faithful witness for Him and for His Truth in the midst of the wicked and perverse people by whom they may be surrounded!

This Truth of God is manifest on the very surface of our text—Abraham was a great saint, a mighty saint, a clear-eyed saint whose gaze pierced through those 20 centuries and beheld his Lord! Yet, after the flesh, he was the father of a bleary-eyed generation that could not see the Eternal Light, even when it flashed directly upon their eyes! I think there is nothing that is more full of warning than this to those of you who are descended from godly parents. I charge you, before the living God, put no confidence in your descent. "You must be born again." Even if you are the best of all who have ever been born of woman, "*you must be born again.*" Wisely did Job speak when he said, "who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." No mother can bring into this world a per-

fect being, for the whole human race is fallen—we are the degenerate children of a father who, himself, was unfaithful to the allegiance which he owed to his God. The stain from that first sin of Adam is upon us all, so let us not say, “We are Abraham’s seed.” Let us not talk about being descended from a line of saints, but rather, let us take to ourselves what Christ said to the Jews on another occasion, “Except you repent, you shall all likewise perish.” However gracious our genealogy may be, unless our family tree begins in Christ and we, ourselves, are personally grafted into Him, we shall die in our sins and perish forever. God help us, who have been so highly privileged as to be born of godly parents, to lay that Truth of God to heart and to seek the Lord *now*, that we, also, may be numbered among those who are saved!

With these observations by way of preface, let us now come directly to the text. And we shall notice, first, *in what respects Abraham saw Christ's day*. Secondly, *the effect it had upon him*. That will lead us, in the third place, *to think of the respects in which we, also, may see Christ's day*, and to notice, in closing, *the effect which such a sight will have upon us*. If we see His day, we shall also rejoice and be glad.

I. First, then, let us enquire, IN WHAT RESPECTS DID ABRAHAM SEE CHRIST'S DAY?

I understand the term, “Christ’s day,” to mean, first, His day of humiliation here upon earth. Christ had a certain “day” when He lived here in this world. What if I were to call His whole natural life on earth one long Lord’s-Day? Had the Jews known the things which would have made for their peace, our Lord’s sojourn here would have been to that nation one long Sabbath! Had they understood the rest which Christ brings to believing, obedient souls, it would have been the true Jubilee to them! But there is another “day” yet to come, which, in the highest sense, our Lord will call, “My day.” Know you not that He is to come a second time, without a sin-offering unto salvation? This was foretold by the angels who said to His disciples, after His Ascension, “This same Jesus, who is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go into Heaven.” Arrayed in the vesture of His Humanity—for He still wears it at the right hand of the Father—He will come again, but not as He came the first time—

***“The Lord shall come! A dreadful form
With rainbow wreath and robes of storm!
On cherub wings and wings of wind,
Appointed Judge of all mankind!”***

He shall come to gloriously reign on earth among His ancients! He shall come to gather to Himself His own, those that have made a covenant with Him by sacrifice. He shall come to set the sheep on His right hand and the goats on the left—and to make a severance between them that fear the Lord and them that fear Him not. This will be His Second Day, the great day of His appearing, the day for which all other days were made, after which there shall be no day that can be ended with a night, but the Ancient of Days shall reign forever and ever, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords! This is also His day and, without drawing fine distinctions, I have no doubt that Abraham saw Christ’s day in this double sense—

and that he knew Him both as the Lamb slain, and as the King who is to reign forever and ever!

How did he see Christ's day? I answer, first, by a *far-seeing, clear-sighted faith*. I do not know what Revelation, which is not recorded, God may have made to Abraham—whether he had, in night visions, as Daniel did, beheld the King sitting upon His Throne. But, whatever he did know, he turned to practical use by *believing* it. He believed that the Lord would come in the fullness of time. He believed that there would be a Seed of the woman that would bruise the serpent's head according to the promise at the gates of Paradise. He believed, most assuredly, that a Man would come who would give rest unto His flock, that Man being his own Seed, in connection with whom God had expressly said that He would bless Abraham, and make him a blessing. "Your seed shall possess the gate of his enemies and in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because you have obeyed My voice." So Abraham's faith often realized what it saw. We have no record of the subject of his morning meditations when he rose early that he might spend some time alone with the Lord before the world became dim with smoke, or the business or ordinary occupation of the day had commenced. At such seasons I have no doubt that Abraham was in his chosen place of prayer, waiting and watching—looking into the far-distant future and seeing with glad-denied heart that day of the Lord which now has come—and that other day of the Lord which is yet to arrive. He believed it and therefore he saw it!

Brothers and Sisters, there is no seeing unless there is believing! I have heard that seeing is believing, but it is not—it is the very opposite! Seeing and believing do not run this way—to see first and then to believe. They run the other way—believe and then see! And that is just what Abraham did. He believed God and then he saw Christ's day afar off and was glad. See as much as you like after you have believed, but remember our Lord's words to Thomas, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed"—that is, those who did not need to see first, but believed first, and then their eyes were so opened that they saw the salvation of God.

When once you get faith, there are many windows through which that faith can look. And no doubt Abraham saw Christ's day *through the windows of special promises*. There were not so many made to him as we have now with our larger Revelation in the entire Bible, but, still, there were sufficient promises to be used by his faith and especially that one which I quoted to you just now, "In your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." That promise, alone, was enough to make him know that God would, in due time, give him a Seed through whom all the nations of the earth would be blessed. If you want to see Christ, dear Friends, borrow the telescope of promise. Faith is very fond of that optic glass and it is amazing what she can see when she puts it to her eye. Ten thousand blessings, not seen by our natural vision, become visible to the eye of faith when we look at them through the medium of the promises of God.

Next, Abraham saw Christ with the eye of faith *in the types that came before him*. There were at least two very remarkable ones, or I might call them three. The first was Melchizedek. I cannot help believing that when Abraham met Melchizedek, the Priest of the most high God, first King of Righteousness and then King of Peace—and when he gave Him tithes of all and received His blessing—he recognized in Melchizedek One who was greater than himself. Neither can I help believing that after he had partaken of the bread and wine which Melchizedek brought to him, and had gone back to his own quiet oratory once more, he must—or at least he may have had some clear intimation, to his own mind, that this was one of the grandest types of that Seed which was to bless all nations of the earth! And, Beloved, have not we seen Jesus as our Melchizedek? When we have been battling with the kings. When we have come back weary from the conflict, has not Jesus met us and refreshed us with His bread and wine? Has He not blessed us and have we not then adored Him and felt that we must say to Him, concerning all that we have, “Take not merely a tithe, but take it all”? Blessed are the men and women who, with eyes of Abraham, have spied out Christ beneath the robes of Melchizedek! And I cannot help thinking that if we, the children, can do so, he, the father of the faithful, must have also done it! Paul could clearly see Christ in Melchizedek—and surely Abraham, also, must have seen Christ in Him!

But especially did Abraham see Christ's day in the type that was given him in Isaac—I cannot help thinking that when Isaac was born, not after the flesh, but according to the promise—for the seed according to the flesh was sent about his business, and his mother with him. And when Abraham made a great feast at the weaning of that child whose very name was laughter—and the promise of whose birth had made the venerable Patriarch, close upon his 100th year, fall down upon his face and laugh at the very thought. And whenever, afterwards, he looked upon that son of joy, given to him, not by the strength of nature, but by the visitation of God—I say he saw, there, a picture of Him who is not born to us after the energy of manhood, but by the power of the Holy Spirit, and who has come among us to bless and cheer us till our very heart laughs again as we think of Jesus, the Son of the promise. He is our true Isaac! Now is our mouth filled with laughter and our tongue is full of praises as we think of Him.

But chiefly, Abraham saw Christ in type and figure on that memorable day when he took Isaac up to the top of Mount Moriah and, at the command of God, unsheathed his knife to slay his son! Abraham must then have seen the Everlasting Father about to act in the same fashion towards His only-begotten Son. He saw, in Isaac, the victim bound and laid upon the altar and then, in the ram caught in the thicket, he saw the very symbol of the Lamb of God, who, in the fullness of time, would be offered upon the altar of Calvary for our sakes, that He might die as our Substitute and Representative. There could never have been, I think, a more plain parallel than in this case—and in all these types Abraham saw Jesus Christ's day, and was glad.

Once more, Abraham did actually see Christ's day, not by faith only, but in the disembodied state, after he was dead and buried. There he slept, with Sarah, in the cave of Machpelah, but his spirit was neither dead nor buried—it was in the place of souls separated from their bodies and it is remarkable that, in the account of the death of Lazarus, our Lord says that he was taken to Abraham's bosom, as if the Patriarch had given a name to that very world in which the gracious dwell when they quit this house of clay. From that place of bliss, he looked down upon all the wondrous Life that began at Bethlehem and closed at Calvary. He was seeing Christ's day even while Jesus was speaking to these Jews, and from the celestial seats he must have gazed with wonder that God should thus assume the nature of man!

II. That is enough concerning Abraham, except that we have to dwell, in the second place, for just a minute or two, upon THE EFFECT OF THIS VISION UPON ABRAHAM.

It made him glad. He rejoiced at the very thought of seeing Christ's day. It is a very strong word which is used here for rejoicing—"he leaped forward"—that would be the correct expression. At the thought of seeing Christ's day and when he did see it, he was glad. It is a curious thing that the second word should be a softer one than the other. There is no idea of leaping or jumping about the second, but in the first, there is. Master Trapp renders it, "His good old heart danced *levaltos* within him, as children use to dance about a bonfire—with an exuberance of joy"—at the very thought that Jesus Christ would come in the flesh and that he would see Him. But when he did see Him, that kind of rejoicing seemed to subside and he appeared to rise into a calm state of intense gladness.

You know that when Christ first makes us glad in Him, we do not know how to contain ourselves. But afterwards our capacity increases and we are able to hold more. There may be far less excitement, but there is more real joy after all. You remember how it is put in Isaiah 40:31—"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles." That is, when they are young and light. "They shall run, and not be weary"—that is, when they are getting a little stronger they do not take to flying. They know better, so they are content to run. But what comes next? "They shall walk, and not faint." The pace gradually gets less—from flying to running and from running to walking. Is that a growth? Certainly! It is always better to walk than to run.

Some young folk, when they are first converted, are very eager to fly. Fly away, Brothers, while you can, and you who can run, run as fast as you are able! But, mark you, it is the steady pace that does not kill, which enables us to live down death itself! I do not read that Enoch flew with God, or ran with God, but he, "walked with God." And he kept that pace up for 300 years! And he could have kept it up even longer. Let a man fly while he may. Let him run when he can, but walking is the best pace, after all. So, from our text we learn that Abraham rejoiced and leaped forward to see Christ's day. And when he saw it, he sobered down, and was glad. And that is the best condition in which the spirit can remain. I cannot help thinking that it was this inward joy—this intense but

calm gladness—that made Abraham such a noble man throughout all his life.

Isaac is a very little man compared with his father Abraham. Where there is a high mountain, there generally is a low valley, so it was with Abraham and Isaac, and, as to Jacob, though he was a great man in some respects and especially great at driving bargains, yet, somehow, he had nothing of the nobility of Abraham who walked along in the dignity of a true prince among men. What a grand reply Abraham gave to the king of Sodom who had said to him, "Give me the persons, and take the goods to yourself." Though all the spoil was his by the laws of war, yet he answered, "I have lifted up my hands unto the Lord, the most high God, the possessor of Heaven and earth, that I will not take from a thread even to a shoe-latchet, and that I will not take anything that is yours, lest you should say, I have made Abram rich."

No, no, Abraham was too great a man to stoop at the foot of the king of Sodom, even to take what was his by right. He had fought for him and brought him back the spoil—and he handed it over to him without any exception but that which had been eaten by the young men, or taken by the others who had gone with him—his neighbors and friends who had a right to their share, although Abraham refused to take his portion of the plunder.

The Patriarch had many troubles but before his history is closed, it was recorded that "the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things." He had believed God in all things and God had blessed him in all things! His was a happy, calm, noble, dignified life almost throughout the whole of it. Oh, that you and I might drink in deep draughts of Abraham's faith and that our eyes might see Christ's day even more clearly than Abraham saw it—that we might have rejoicing and gladness like his! Nothing can so surely bring this joy to our souls as faith like that which he possessed.

III. So much for Abraham. Now we come to ourselves and enquire, IN WHAT RESPECTS DO WE SEE CHRIST'S DAY?

We stand, as it were, on a narrow neck of land between two seas of glory. Look back—there is Christ's day of mercy—salvation, reconciliation, death, conflict, victory. Now look forward and see, by faith, that sight which the Apostle describes, "For the Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God"—in splendor such as never was seen before and which shall make the sun, itself, to be ashamed because of the greater glory of Christ—the Sun of Righteousness!

Now let us ask ourselves, *have we really seen Christ in His first day?* Search your hearts, dear Friends, and see. Have you looked to Christ as living and working out a robe of spotless righteousness? And then, as dying, that He might dye that robe crimson and make it fit for His chosen princes to wear? Have you seen Jesus on the Cross bearing your sins? This is a sight that is indeed worth living for! Heaven itself cannot match that sight and there is nothing that can excel it! When we are in sin's densest darkness, that sight brings more light than the rising sun. And when we are cast out, like the dry bones of the Valley of Vision, it is this sight that makes us live again and stand upon our feet, a part of the ex-

ceeding great army of God! Say, dear Friend, have you looked to Christ by faith? Are you looking to Him? Are you seeing His first day *every day*?

And then, *have you learned to look forward to His second coming?* It is not a subject for curiosity, as some make it. It is not a subject for speculation, as others make it. But it is a subject for reverent expectation! I know not when He will come, but I know that He will come. He may come at any moment and the sooner the better for me, for let Him come when He may, He will be welcome. And if I am dead before He comes, I shall see His day all the same, "for I know that my Redeemer lives and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me." Fix your eyes upon the coming King, for it will make you strong! You are not fighting for a vanquished leader! He has won the victory and He will come back to wear the crown before long. There is no question about who is to win the great fight—Christ has already won it and He shall come back to divide the spoil with the strong. God has given it to Him and He shall have it!

Listen to the trumpets that proclaim His appearing! Your faith may almost hear them sound, "Lo, He comes! Lo, He comes!" It is getting towards midnight in the history of the world. Both the wise and the foolish virgins are all too apt to go to sleep, but the cry may be heard even now by the ears of faith—and it will awaken us into supreme energy of action for our Lord, "Behold the Bridegroom comes; go you out to meet Him!" How little there is of that going out to meet Him! Let us have something of it tonight as we go out, in imagination and in faith, to meet Him who comes quickly. What countless trumpets shall then sound to wake the sleeping dead! Glory, glory, glory, to Him that once was despised and rejected of men! Welcome, welcome, Son of God! All Your saints delight in You! Come quickly, come quickly! Make no tarrying, O our God!

IV. Now, lastly, we are to consider THE EFFECT OF THESE SIGHTS UPON US. If we really see them, they will do for us what they did for Abraham—they will make us glad—

***"Are you weary? Are you languid?
Are you sorely distressed?"***

Come, then, get a sight of the weary and languid One who died for you upon the Cross! There is no gladness so easy to obtain as this. Is it not strange that when the mourner's heart is heavy, we never hear that he looks to the place where the star of Bethlehem burns, though there is joy there. But he looks where human woe culminated in the death of the Well-Beloved. To the Cross the mourner turns his eyes, for there is no light that can come into the darkened heart except from the pierced side and broken heart of Him whom we call Master and Lord. Do you want true joy? Then learn that joy was born where Christ died and that joy lives because Jesus lives—it flourishes because He is risen! Keep your eyes on Him and they shall know no tears save those which shall bless both eyes and hearts.

Then, when you have found joy through looking on Christ's first coming, look forward to His second coming and get joy out of it, also. I cannot speak fully of that glorious event tonight, but, certainly, it is a well of

joy. If you have seen Christ in His shame, it is a fountain of delight to expect to see Him in His honor and glory. You are nobody now—the world knows you not, for it knew Him not—but when He shall appear, then will be the time of *your* manifestation also. “Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.” Now it is often heart-ache and headache, weariness and toilsome pilgrimage, but when He comes, it will be the marriage feast and all the merriment of which human hearts are capable! Oh, what a thrill of joy will go through this poor groaning world when He comes! Creation is in bondage and continually groans and, “we groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.” But when He comes, creation itself shall shake off its heavy weights and shall get rid of its night dreams. Swathed in mist today, our poor planet scarcely gives forth a ray of light, but then, with all mists removed, when Jesus comes, surely she shall shine more brightly than the morning star!

And if every Believer is to be as the sun, what will this world be, filled with Believers, each one shining like the sun in its strength? Oh, clap your hands, Beloved, clap your hands, for He comes who is your Lord and Savior! “Let the heavens rejoice and let the earth be glad! Let the sea roar and the fullness thereof. Let the fields be joyful and all that is therein: then shall all the trees of the forests rejoice before the Lord: for He comes, for He comes to judge the earth: He shall judge the world with righteousness and the people with His Truth.”

Children of the morning, the morning comes! What a day yours shall be, then, when your sun shall go down no more forever, for your Lord's coming shall be as a morning without clouds! Blessed and happy are they who, by faith, can see it! They can say good-bye to sin and good-bye to sorrow! They can say to all discouragements, to all baffling, to all defeats, “Farewell, for He comes, our Champion who will lead us forward to the everlasting victory, in whose name we set up our banners and in whose name, even now, our spirit rejoices with exceeding gladness that shall never end!”

God give to each of you a portion in these glorious things, by a simple faith in Jesus, for His name's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 8:31-59.**

Verse 31. *Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, If you continue in My word, you are My disciples indeed.* For there were many, in Christ's day, coming to Him for a while and then going away from Him—professing to believe and then stumbling when Christ proclaimed some Doctrine of God which struck them as being strange and hard to receive. Our Lord Jesus tells them that constancy is necessary to true discipleship. It is of no use to start running in the race unless we continue in the course till the prize is won. We are not true pilgrims to Heaven merely because we cross the threshold of our door—we must keep on, and on, and on till we reach the golden streets of the New Jerusalem!

32. *And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.* That is the result of being a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. With Christ, who is the Truth of God, to be our Teacher, and the Holy Spirit to bless His Words, we come to know the Truth—and the operation of the Truth upon the heart is to deliver us from the bondage of sin and of error.

33. *They answered Him, We are Abraham's seed and were never in bondage to any man: how can You say, You shall be made free?* What a lie this was! They were at *that very time* in bondage to the Romans! They had been subdued and conquered and, a little while after, they, themselves, confessed that they had no king but Caesar. Men are not very selective about telling lies when they wish to resist Christ—they will do anything rather than believe on Him.

34. *Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whoever commits sin is the servant of sin.* The man who habitually lives in sin is not a free man, for he is still a slave to sin. If he finds pleasure and delight in disobeying God, he has no right to talk about being a free man. His chains are rattling on his wrists—what can he know about freedom?

35. *And the servant abides not in the house forever; but the son abides always.* A servant may be dismissed from the household, but a son may not. If we were only servants of God, we might fall from Grace and perish. But if we are the sons of God, we never shall. If we ever did, in truth, call God, "Father," we shall always be able to use that blessed title, for the relationship of fatherhood is not a temporary one and cannot come to an end.

36. *If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, you shall be free, indeed.* If you have the freedom of sonship, you are free, indeed. There are none so free in our Father's house as His children!

37-39. *I know that you are Abraham's seed, but you seek to kill Me because My word has no place in you. I speak that which I have seen with My Father: and you do that which you have seen with your father. They answered and said unto Him, Abraham is our father. Jesus said unto them, If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham.* The real descendants of "the father of the faithful" are, themselves, faithful—that is, Believers. The father of Believers has Believers for his children. "If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham." Our Lord had admitted that these Jews were Abraham's seed according to the flesh, but He proved that they were not Abraham's Seed in the high and spiritual sense, since they were not like he whom they claimed for a father.

40, 41. *But now you seek to kill Me, a Man that has told you the truth, which I have heard of God. Abraham did not do this. You do the deeds of your father.* He had not told them who that father was, but as it is a standing rule that men do the deeds of their father, the genuineness of the descent which they claimed could be tested by their likeness to their father.

41, 42. *Then said they to Him, We are not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God. Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, you would love Me.* Any man who is born of God must love Jesus Christ. The

purity of His motives, the loveliness of His Character, the charms of His Person would all be sure to win the heart of a man who was truly born of God.

42, 43. *For I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of Myself, but He sent Me. Why do you not understand My speech? Even because you cannot hear My word.* “You are dull of comprehension. You are hardened in heart. You are proud in spirit. You are just the opposite of everything that is good and, therefore, you cannot hear My word,” said Christ. “And this is proof positive that you do not love God and that you are not the children of God.”

44. *You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do.* Remember from whose lips these words fell, even from the lips of the gentle Jesus! Honest speech is the surest token of a loving heart, but, nowadays, if a man preaches the Truth of God plainly and faithfully, men say that he is hard and unkind. But if a man glosses over the Truth of God and alters it according to his own idea of what will please men, then they say, “He is a kindly-disposed and large-hearted man.” I would be disposed to doubt whether he has any heart at all, if he will sooner see sinners damned than offend them by proclaiming the Truth! I thank God that some of us care little about offending those who offend God! If men will not yield themselves to the Lord, we want not their friendship, but we will strive to make them uneasy in their rebellion—and if they resolve to be lost, we will at least be clear of their blood.

44. *He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own, for he is a liar, and the father of it.* Falsehood is his natural element. When Satan deceives, he only acts according to his nature which is blackened through and through with lies.

45, 46. *And because I tell you the truth, you believe Me not. Which of you convicts Me of sin?* What a grand challenge! None of us can speak like that except in a very modified sense—but Christ, standing before His enemies, who gnashed their teeth at Him and would have given their eyes to be able to fix some fault upon Him—boldly says to them, “Which of you convicts Me of sin?”

46-51. *And if I say the truth, why do you not believe Me? He that is of God hears God's words: you, therefore, hear them not, because you are not of God. Then answered the Jews, and said unto Him, Say we not well that you are a Samaritan, and have a devil? Jesus answered, I have not a devil; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me. And I seek not My own glory: there is One who seeks and judges. Verily, verily, I say unto you, If anyone keeps My sayings, he shall never see death.* This statement quite staggered them! Yet it is true. To Believers—

“It is not death to die,”

they simply pass out of this world into a larger and yet more glorious life! They descend not to death, but they rise to immortality!

52, 53. *Then said the Jews to Him, Now we know that You have a devil. Abraham is dead and the Prophets; and You say, If anyone keeps My sayings, he shall never taste of death. Are You greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? And the Prophets are dead. Who do You make*

Yourself out to be? “Who do You make Yourself out to be? Someone greater than Abraham and the Prophets?”

54-56. *Jesus answered, If I honor Myself, My honor is nothing: it is My Father that honors Me; of whom you say, that He is our God: yet you have not known Him; but I know Him: and if I should say, I know Him not, I shall be a liar like you: but I know Him and keep His saying. Your father Abraham—“As you call him.”*

56, 57. *Rejoiced to see My day: and he saw it and was glad. Then said the Jews unto Him, you are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?* They allowed a wide margin in speaking of our Savior's age, for He was only 33 years old. It may be true that the sorrows of His life had so marred His Countenance that He looked more like a man of 50 than one of thirty-three. I cannot tell, nor do I know whether that is what they meant. But it is amazing that they should have said to Him, “You are not yet 50 years old.”

58. *Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I AM.* They had asked Him, “Who do You make Yourself out to be?” And now they have His answer! “Before Abraham was, I AM,” said Christ. It is the very name by which God revealed Himself to Moses at the burning bush, “I AM.” Yet Jesus takes this title to Himself! “Before Abraham was”—not, “I was.” Notice that. But, “I AM,” as if His life was one continued present existence, as indeed it is, for with God there is no past or future, but all things are ever-present to His infinite mind! When Jesus said, “Before Abraham was, I AM,” He claimed the Godhead—He declared that He was certainly God, self-existent from all eternity!

59. *Then took they up stones to cast at Him.* They counted Him a blasphemer and so He was if He was not all He claimed to be. I have heard of some who reverence Christ, but do not believe Him to be God—but how can that be? He evidently made Himself out to be God and this was the great charge the Jews brought against Him. For this, indeed, they put Him to death, because He made Himself equal with God. If He were *not* equal with God—if He were not *really* God—He led men to *think* that He was. And if this were false, it was a great sin not consistent with the holy Character of Christ. If He was not God, He was the grossest impostor who ever visited this world! But He *is* God and nothing less! Yet because He claimed this, the Jews took up stones to cast at Him.

59. *But Jesus hid Himself, and went out of the Temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.* Glory be to His holy name forever and ever!

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

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY
TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

GOD'S WORKS MADE MANIFEST

NO. 2309

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 21, 1893.
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“Jesus answered, Neither has this man sinned, nor his parents”
(that he was born blind): “but that the works of God
should be made manifest in him.”
John 9:3.

NEVER attribute any special sorrow endured by men to some special sin. There is a tendency to consider that those on whom the tower in Siloam fell must have been sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem. And if any have met with a very sudden death, we are apt to suppose that they must have been exceedingly guilty—but it is not so. Very godly men have been burned to death in a train. I remember one who came to that terrible end. Many holy men have been drowned on board ship when they have been going about their Master's errands. Some of the most gracious men that I ever met have dropped dead without a moment's warning. You cannot judge of a man's state before God by that which happens to him in the order of Providence. And it is very unkind, ungenerous and almost inhuman, to sit down, like the friends of Job, and suppose that because Job is greatly afflicted, he must, therefore, be greatly sinful. It is not so. All afflictions are not chastisements for sin—there are some afflictions that have quite another end and objective. They are sent to refine, sent as a holy discipline, sent as sacred excavators to make more room in the heart for Christ and His love. Indeed, you know that it is written, “As many as I tenderly love, I rebuke and chasten.” “Whom the Lord loves, He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.”

It was, therefore, in the last degree, absurd to suppose that if a man was born blind, it was a punishment for the sin of his parents, or a punishment sent beforehand for some sin which he might commit, by-and-by. Our Savior bids us look quite another way and regard infirmities and physical evils as sent to be a space wherein God may display His power and His Grace. It was very specially so in this particular instance and I am going to push the fact, further, and say that even sin, itself, existing as it does everywhere, existing especially in some, may afford what we call, “elbow room,” for the Grace of God and may, indeed, become a platform upon which the wonderful power, patience and sovereignty of Divine Grace may be displayed.

That will be the subject that we shall talk about, tonight, how God takes opportunity from the sorrows and the sins of men to make manifest His own works to His own Glory. As this man was born blind, in order that, through his blindness, the power of God might be seen in giving him

sight, so I think there are many in whom the power of God may very readily be seen and the works of God be very clearly made manifest.

I. So, first, let us enquire what works these are. **WHAT WORKS OF GOD ARE SEEN IN THE SALVATION OF MEN?**

There is a man over yonder who is all out of order. There is nothing right about him. He is a man upside down. His heart loves that which will ruin it and does not love that which would bless it. His understanding is darkened. He puts bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. His will has become very domineering and has usurped power which it never ought to possess. If you will study him well, you will not make much of him. He is all out of gear, like a piece of machinery in which the wheels do not operate correctly. To describe him briefly by one word, I should say that he is in a state of chaos, everything is in confusion and disorder, tossed up and down. "Well," says one, "that is my case. I am like that tonight."

Now, the first work of God that we read of in the Bible is the work of *creation*—"In the beginning God created the Heaven and the earth." When the fullness of time was come for the fitting up of the world, which event we generally call, creation, although it was really the arrangement of that which had been created, then the Lord came forth and the Spirit of God, with outspread wings, brooded over chaos and brought order out of confusion. Oh, that the Spirit of the Lord would, tonight, come and brood over that man's confused and confounded mind where everything is tossed about in wild disorder! He cannot tell why he was born, nor for what objective he is living. He seems to have no purpose in life, he is tossed to and fro like a log in the ocean. His passions fly from vanity to vanity and you cannot put him in order. His mother tried it, but he scorned to be tied to her apron strings. Many friends have tried it since then, but he has now taken the bit into his mouth and has run away—he refuses to obey the reins. O God, if You will come, tonight, and make him a new creature in Christ Jesus, Your creating work will be made manifest in him! If You will mold, and model, and form, and fashion him until he shall be a vessel fit for Your use, then will the work of God begin to be manifested in him. Oh, that it might be so! There are some of us here who can bear witness that God is a great Creator, for He has made all things new within us and transformed what before was chaos into a world of beauty and delight wherein He delights to dwell.

After the world was created, God's next work was that of *making light*. The earth was created, but it was swathed in darkness. "Darkness was upon the face of the deep." No sun, no moon, no stars had yet appeared. No light had yet fallen upon the earth—perhaps by reason of dense vapors which shut out the light. God did nothing but say, "Let there be light; and there was light."

Well now, tonight there has come in here one who is not only without form and void, and dreadfully tossed about, but one who is, himself, dark and in the dark. He needs the Light of God, but he has none. He does not know the way of life. He does not see a ray of hope that he ever will find the way. He seems shut up in gloomy, thick, Egyptian night and, perhaps, worst of all, he does not know his true condition—he calls darkness light, and prides himself that he can see, when really he can see nothing at all! Lord, speak the Word, and say, "Let there be light," and the man will see

the light, and see it at once! I am quite sure that, whether I can speak with power, or not, *God* can speak with power and, standing here, it is to my heart a sweet solace that He can, at this moment, find out the most darkened sinner in the building, sitting or standing anywhere about, and the Light of God can penetrate into his soul in less time than it takes me to say the words! And to his own surprise the darkness shall be light about him and the Egyptian night shall be turned into the midday of infinite love and mercy! Pray God that it may be so, Brothers and Sisters! Lift up a silent prayer to Heaven, for this light-giving! This illumination is a special work of God and there are many who are now in the dark, in whom it is possible for this work of God to be manifested.

After these two works of God are done, after we have had creation and light-bringing, still there is death and there is need of the Divine work of *resurrection*. What is the use of a form beautifully fashioned if it is dead? And what is the use of light shining with all its brilliance upon a corpse? Yet in this House of Prayer there are, tonight, some who are dead in trespasses and sins. They do not feel the weight of sin, yet to a *living* man it is an intolerable burden. They are not wounded by the two-edged sword of the Lord, though a *living* man is soon cut and gashed by it. They do not even hear the joyous notes of Free Grace and dying love though they ring out like a peal of silver bells! These dead sinners do not appreciate their sweet music. *It is the work of God to make men live*. There will come a day, and perhaps sooner than we think, when all the myriads of bodies that lie in our cemeteries and churchyards will rise up from the grave to live again! That will be a manifestation of Divine Power, but it will not be a greater manifestation of Divine Power than when a dead heart, a dead conscience, a dead will is made to live with a Divine life! Oh, that God would work that mighty miracle of mercy tonight! Pray that it may be so, beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ. The dead will not pray for this resurrection—therefore let us pray for it for them! And if there is a man who does pray for it, one who cries, “Lord, make me live!” that is a proof that already there is a thrill of life shooting through him, or he would not have that living desire!

Brethren, I might thus continue working upon the line of the story of the creation and the arranging of the world in due order, but I will not—you can do that for yourselves. I want, next, to speak to you about the Divine work of *cleansing*. There is, tonight, in this place of worship, a man who is black with filth. He has done everything that he could do in order to rebel against God. Perhaps he is like Mr. John Newton who describes himself somewhat thus—he says, “I was, in many respects, like the Apostle Paul. I was a blasphemer, a persecutor and injurious, but there was one point in which I went beyond the Apostle Paul, for he did it ignorantly, but I sinned against light and knowledge.” Do I speak to any here who, in sinning, have transgressed very grossly because they have done what they *knew* was wrong and have persevered in doing it against the checks of conscience and against the warnings of a better longing, which they have never yet been able to kill?

I am amazed, sometimes, when I have had to talk with those whose lives have certainly gone almost to the very extremity of iniquity, but who, nevertheless, all the time have had a certain inward check that would

never let them go just that little piece further which would have put them beyond hope. There was always a *something* that they still revered, even when they pretended to disbelieve everything and to blaspheme everything! There was some influence for good still operating upon them, as though God had a line and a hook in the jaws of leviathan—and though he ran out so far into the great deep of sin that you could not tell where he had gone, yet he had to come back, again, after all. God still does wonders of mercy and Grace!

Now, suppose, tonight, that that black sinner, with all his years of sin, should be forgiven outright? Suppose that, tonight, the whole of those 50 or 60 years of sin should vanish once and for all? Suppose that God should forgive, better still, that God should *forget*? Suppose that, with one tremendous fling of His Omnipotent arm, He should take the whole mass of that sinner's sin and cast it into the depths of the sea? What a wonder of Grace that would be! That is what God will do for everyone who trusts in Jesus! If you will come and cast yourself at His dear feet, and look up to Jesus, Crucified, bleeding in your place, and believe those words of the Prophet Isaiah, "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all," or the words of the Apostle Peter, "Who, His own Self, bore our sins in His own body on the tree." If you trust Jesus, the great Sin-Bearer, He will make you whiter than snow! And in your case the works of God shall be manifested, for none but the Almighty God can make scarlet sinners white—and He can do it in a moment. Lord, do it now!

Suppose that another thing should happen, that a man here, or a woman who is desperately set on mischief, should, tonight, be turned in an entirely opposite direction? That would be manifestly a Divine work of *changing the whole current of life*! I have never seen Niagara Falls and I do not suppose that I ever shall, but there are some here who have seen it. Down comes the mighty flood with a tremendous crash, forever leaping down from on high! Would you not believe Him to be God who should, in a moment, make that waterfall leap *upward* instead of downward and, as impetuously seek the heights as now it leaps into the depths? Well, the Lord can do that with some big Niagara Fall of a sinner here this very evening! You are determined, tonight, to go into evil company and to commit a filthy sin. You are determined, tomorrow, to grasp the drunkard's cup and not be satisfied until you have turned yourself into something below a beast! You are determined to pursue that evil business of yours, that getting money by gambling, or something worse. Yes, but if my Lord comes forth, tonight, determined to save you, He will make you sing to another tune!

"Oh, but I could never be a Methodist!" says one. I do not know what you will yet be. "Oh!" says another, "you would never make a convert of *me*." I did not say that *I* could—but the *Lord* can make you what you think you never will be! There are some here, who, if they could have seen themselves 10 years ago, sitting here, and enjoying the Word, would have said, "No, no, Charlie, that is not you! I am sure, my boy." And, "No, Mary, that is not you, my girl! You will never be *there*, there is no fear of that." But you are here, you see, and what Free Grace has done for some of us, it can do for others. Lord, do it according to that mighty power which You did work in Christ when You did raise Him from the dead! Work in the

same fashion in the ungodly, tonight, and turn them from the error of their ways to run as impetuously *after* You as *now* they run *from* You!

I have only one more matter to mention under this head. I think that God's works are sometimes manifested in men by *giving them great joy*. There is a person here, tonight, convicted of sin. Mr. Conscience has come up against him. You know Mr. Conscience—he keeps a cat-o'-nine-tails. When he is allowed to get to work and he gets tight hold of a sinner who has long kept him under hatches, he says, "Now it is my turn!" And he lets you know it, believe me! Let a man once get conscience, with a cat-o'-nine-tails, laying it on, and he will never forget it! Every stroke seems to tear off a thongful of his quivering flesh. Look how the nine plows make deep furrows every time they fall!

"You speak," says one, "like a man who knows it." Know it? I knew it for years while but a *child*! And neither night nor day could I escape from the falling of those terrible thongs! Oh, how conscience scourged me and I could find no rest anywhere till, once upon a time, I heard the Divine voice that said, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all you ends of the earth." And conscience put away his cat-o'-nine-tails and my wounds were bathed in heavenly balsam! And they ceased to smart and I was glad! Oh, how my heart cried, "Hallelujah!" as I saw Jesus on the Cross! Then I understood that God had executed the full vengeance due to my sin upon His Well-Beloved who had kindly bared His shoulders to the lash and undertaken to bear the punishment of *my* sin. Then did my heart leap with joy!

You notice that I am always preaching that Doctrine of Substitution. I cannot help it, because it is the only Truth of God that brought me comfort. I should never have gotten out of the Dungeon of Despair if it had not been for that grand Truth of Substitution! I hope that no young lady is going to ask me to write in her album this week. That request is made to me, I do not know how many days in the week, and I always write this verse in all the albums—

***"Ever since by faith I saw the stream
Your flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die."***

If you once know the power of that blessed theme, then you will see that it is a work of God to sweep away our ashes and to give us the oil of joy—to take from us our robes of mourning and to clothe us with garments of beauty—to put a new song into our mouths and to establish our goings. May you all have this blessed work of God worked in you, to the praise of the glory of His Grace!

II. Now, my second head is this, HOW ARE THESE WORKS MADE SPECIALLY MANIFEST IN SOME MEN?

I will take this blind man and just run over his life. First, *he was totally blind*. There was no sham about his blindness. He could not see a ray of light—he was totally blind—he knew nothing about light. Is there anybody here who is totally blind in a *spiritual* sense? You cannot see anything, my poor Friend. You have not one good desire—you have not had, even, a good *thought*! Ah, you do not know what kind of people we have in this London, but we do meet with people who, for years, seem never to have

had a good thought ever cross their minds. And if someone else were to speak to them about anything that is good, or even decent, he would be talking double Dutch to them! They do not understand it. We have multitudes of that kind in our slums, yes, and in the West End they are just as bad.

Now, when the Lord, in His infinite mercy, comes to these people who are totally blind and He makes them see, there is room for His mighty power to work there, for everybody says, "What a wonderful thing that such a person as that should be converted!" I remember well a man with whom I have often prayed in very sweet fellowship. He was a strange fish when I first knew him, though he was a very good man afterwards. He was as eccentric a being as I ever met—and I am sufficiently eccentric myself—but he was a dead worldling. His Sundays—well, he did not know any difference between Sunday and Monday except that he could not be in the beer shop for quite so long on Sundays. He said, "I had been out one Sunday morning to buy a pair of ducks and I put one in each pocket of my coat. As I went along, and saw the people going into a place of worship, I thought that I would see what it was like, I had heard that it was a decent looking place inside."

He went in. The Lord met with him—and that day those ducks did not get cooked—they had to wait till Monday! But he was, himself, caught and captured for Christ that day. A total change took place in him and he became a fervent Christian at once, whereas before he had been totally without any kind of religious thought, either of fear or of hope! Here was a case in which the works of God were specially made manifest! That man has gone to Heaven, now. Well do I remember him and how I praised God for his conversion!

But the man mentioned in our text was *born blind*. Now, there are many like that, indeed—all people are born blind. It is original sin, from which we all suffer. Sin is a taint of the blood. We are born blind. There are some who, in a very peculiar way, are bred and born in a family utterly destitute of religion. They are brought up to despise it, or else brought up in the midst of superstition and taught to say a useless prayer to a crucifix of wood or stone. Can these people, who are so brought up, find Christ? Yes, by His Grace, they do find Christ, or rather, Christ finds them! And they hear the Gospel and it commends itself to their minds straight away. I suppose that nobody was ever more superstitious than Martin Luther was. I have seen that staircase in Rome, up which Martin Luther went on his knees. It is said to be the staircase which our Lord came down from the palace of Pilate. I have seen the people go up and down on their knees. Just think of Luther doing it—and there came to him, as he was going up the stairs on his knees, those words, "The just shall live by faith," and he rose up at once—and he did not go on his knees any farther! Oh, that God would appear in that way to some of you!

Next, this blind man was *cured by special means*. That was another manifestation of God's works. The Savior spat, stooped down and with His finger worked that spittle into the dust until He had made clay. Then taking it up, He began to put it over the man's eyes. I believe that God is greatly glorified by the salvation of people through the simple preaching of the Gospel, the very simplest means that can be used. Often men say,

when souls are saved in this place, as they are continually, "Well, I cannot see anything remarkable in the preacher." No, and if you were to look a great deal longer, you would see less than you see now, for there is not anything whatever in *him*—but there is a great deal in the Gospel! O Brothers and Sisters, if some preachers would only preach the Gospel, they would soon see how very superior it is to all their fine essays! "But they prepare their sermons so well." Oh, yes, I know, but did you ever hear of the man who used to prepare the potatoes before he planted them in his garden? He always boiled them—they never grew, for he had prepared all the life out of them! Now, many a boiled sermon is brought out to the people, but it never grows. It is elaborated and prepared so much that nothing will ever come out of it. The Lord loves to bless living words spoken in simple language out of an earnest heart. The man who speaks thus does not get the glory—the glory goes to God—and thus there is room for the works of God to be manifested!

This blind man was also a specially fit sphere for God to manifest His works in because *he was known as a public beggar*. They used to lead him up in the morning, I suppose, to the gate of the Temple, and there he took his place and sat down. He was a man with a ready tongue, I should guess, so that he often used to exchange chaff with those that went by, and they remembered what kind of a man he was. He was always very sarcastic, I suspect, and when they spoke to him, and gave him nothing, he knew how to give them something! That blind beggar was a well-known character in Jerusalem, as well known as the blind beggar of Bethnal Green—so the Savior selected him because he was so well known—and opened his eyes.

So you have come here, tonight, my Friend, have you? You are well known, but I will not point you out. I do not like doing that kind of thing. There came in here, not long ago, a soldier who had been a professor of religion, but he had been a dreadful apostate and had gone back. But he wanted to hear the Gospel again. Just over yonder, where there are two pillars, he wisely chose a place where I could not see him. But it so happened on that Sunday night, and he is the witness of it—I well remember saying, "Well, Will, you have to come back, you know. You have got to come back. And the sooner, the better." And Will did come back! And he sent word to me to say that Will had come back with a broken heart to find his Lord. I did not know that his name was Will, I am sure, and I did not know why he had hidden himself behind the pillars, there, but God did, and He adapted the Word of God to the person, and so he fetched Will back again!

If there is any Will, or Tom, or Jack, or Mary, or if there are any others here who have wandered far from God, O Sovereign Grace, bring them back, whether they are soldiers or civilians, that they may seek and find the Savior even now! This Will was well known and his restoration to Christ will, I trust, manifest the works of God in him because he was so well known. Oh, that the Lord would hear that prayer of my friend, this morning, and convert the Prince of Wales! We all said, "Amen," to that petition! We want the Lord to bring into His Church some of those who are best known, whether they are princes or whether they are beggars, that the works of God may be manifest in them!

When this man was converted, instead of being a public beggar, he became a public confessor. I like that answer of his, "Whether He is a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." There is many a man who can say, "Well, I do not know much about theology, but I know that I was a drunk and I know that I am not a drunk, now. I know that I used to beat my wife and now, God bless her, she knows how I love her! Then I could have gone into all manner of sinful company, but now, thank God, His saints are my choice companions! Once I could have gloried in my own righteousness, but now I count it dross and dung, that I may win Christ and be found in Him. There is a great change in me—nobody can deny that fact—and I praise God's name for it."

The Lord send out a great company of men who are not ashamed of Jesus Christ! We need many men and women who will come straight out from the world and say, "Christ for me, for He has so touched my heart, that I am for Him! And if no one else will confess Him, I must do so, for He is my best Friend, my Lord, my Savior, my All!" In such cases, the works of God are made manifest.

III. Now I have done when I have just said three or four things by way of hints upon this last point, How MAY GOD'S WORKS BE MANIFEST IN US?

Some of you are very poor. Others are very lame or very sickly. You are consumptive, asthmatic, full of aches, pains and complaints. Now, then, perhaps all this suffering is permitted that the work of God may be manifest *in your afflictions* by your holy patience, your submission to the Divine will, your persevering holiness amid all your poverty and trials. All this is sent that God's Grace may be seen in you. Will you look at your afflictions in that light and believe that they are not sent as a punishment, but as a platform upon which God may stand and display His Free Grace in you? Bear well all the Lord's will, for your trials are sent for this purpose, that God's works may be manifest in you.

The same is true of *your infirmities*. We are, none of us, perfect, but we may also have physical infirmities. Now believe, if you are sent to preach the Gospel, or to teach children, or in any way to advance the Kingdom of God, that you would not be any better fitted for your work if you had all the eloquence of a Cicero and all the learning of a Newton! You, as you are, can serve the Lord and can fill a certain place, better, with all your drawbacks, than you could without those drawbacks. A sensible Christian will make use of his infirmities for God's Glory. There is a strange story that they tell of St. Bernard, a tradition which is believed, by some people, but which I look at as an allegory rather than as a matter of fact. He was going over the Alps towards Rome upon some business. The devil knew that the saint was about to do something that would greatly injure his kingdom, so he came and broke one of the wheels of the saint's carriage. Whereat Bernard called out to him, and said, "You think to stop me in this way, do you, Satan? Now you shall suffer for it yourself!" So he took him and twisted him round, and made a wheel of him—and fastened him to the carriage—and then went driving on,

Now, the meaning of that allegory is that, when infirmities threaten to injure your usefulness, you are to use those infirmities in God's service.

Turn the devil, himself, into a wheel and go ahead all the better because of the hindrance that he tried to cause. Why, it might be an *advantage*, sometimes, to be compelled by stammering to lay emphasis on a word! And if ever I did feel myself, now and then, stuck in a hole by that process, I would take care to be stuck somewhere near the Cross. Many a man has had the power to attract people by the very singularity which looked as if it must impair his usefulness. All our infirmities, whatever they are, are just opportunities for God to display His gracious work in us.

So it will be with all the *oppositions that we meet with*. If we serve the Lord, we shall be sure to meet with difficulties and oppositions—but they are only more opportunities for the works of God to be seen in us.

By-and-by, we shall come to die and, in our deaths, God's work may be manifest. I wonder by what death we shall glorify God? Was not that a beautiful expression of John's, when the Savior spoke of Peter? He told Peter how he would die, but John does not put it so. He says, "By what death he should *glorify God*." Perhaps it will be by a long, pining sickness. Some will be gradually dissolved by consumption. Well, you will glorify God by it! Those pale cheeks and that thin hand, through which the light will shine, will preach many a sermon on that sick bed. Or perhaps you will glorify God in some other fashion. You may have to die with bitter pangs of pain, but then, if the Lord cheers you and makes you patient, you will glorify God by that kind of death. You will look death calmly in the face, and not fret, and not be afraid. You will have to die somehow, unless the Lord, Himself, shall come and, blessed be His name, He will take you Home in a way that will somehow or other bring glory to His name, however it may be! So let us begin to rejoice in it even now.

May God bless these words of mine and may many, here, be eternal monuments of the boundless, Sovereign Grace of God! And unto Him be Glory forever and ever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON. JOHN 9:1-38.

Verse 1. *And as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from his birth.* The man could not see Jesus, but sight came to the man from Jesus. If there are any here who cannot look to Christ as yet, our prayer is that He may look on them as He looked on this blind man.

2. *And His disciples asked Him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?* Beloved, if you had Christ with you, you could occupy your time better than in asking such questions as this! And I think that when we go to Holy Scripture, we can do better than pry into things of small practical importance, or even into great mysteries. However, in this case, since the disciples were liable to fall into grave error, our Lord gave them instruction upon the matter that perplexed them.

3. *Jesus answered, Neither has this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.* In other words, this man is not blind as the result of sin in himself, or in his parents. He is blind in order that God may have a platform for the display of His gracious power in healing him!

4, 5. *I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day: the night comes, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the Light of the world.* Our Savior felt that He was commissioned as a Servant of His Father, sent here to do a certain work, and He must be doing it. It is well for God's servants to feel a holy compulsion—it does not take away from them the freedom of their action and their delight in the service of God—but exercises a powerful influence over a man when he feels, “Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel.” Or when, like the Lord Jesus, he says, “I must work the works of Him that sent me.” Did the Well-Beloved, the Prince of Heaven, come under compulsion? Did He put Himself under that, “must,” which is for the King? Then you and I may well put ourselves under holy bondage for the Lord. There, do not hinder me! Do not tell me that I am too feeble in health—“I must work the works of Him that sent me.”

6, 7. *When He had thus spoken, He spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle, and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent). He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing.* Our Lord often works miracles without means and, sometimes, with means which appear to be quite inappropriate. It would seem to be more easy to *blind* a man with clay than to open his eyes with it! And there are some who assert that the Gospel plainly spoken would lead men into sin, but it does not. It is “the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes.” If you go to work in the name of God. If you put the clay on the sinner's eyes and bid him go and wash, you will see what will happen.

8-11. *The neighbors therefore, and they which before had seen him that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged? Some said, This is he: others said, he is like he. But he said, I am he. Therefore said they unto him, How were your eyes opened? He answered and said, A Man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed my eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight.* Does he not tell his story well? If he had not been a blind man whose eyes had just been opened, he would have exaggerated somewhere or other. I never heard a man tell a tale with absolute correctness—it is not the way of people—they are sure to put in some little item by way of garnishing, for there is a bump of romance in most men's heads. But this shrewd, strictly honest man tells the story briefly and leaves out no important particular.

12-15. *Then said they unto him, Where is He? He said, I know not. They brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind. And it was the Sabbath day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes. Then again the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. He said unto them, He put clay upon my eyes, and I washed, and do see.* That was short and sweet—and when you have to deal with Pharisees, do not give them much—they are not worth it and they are sure to misuse it! When he spoke to the common people, he enlarged and gave them details, but now that he comes to talk to these pragmatic professors, he cuts it down to as few words as possible.

16. *Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This Man is not of God, because He keeps not the Sabbath day. Others said, How can a Man that is a*

sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them. Yes, and there is always a division among the enemies of Christ—they cannot agree among themselves. If they could always lay their heads together and agree, they might have greater power, but the Edomites draw their swords against the children of Ammon, and they are sure to slay one another in the long run. There were also some among these Pharisees who had a conscience, men like Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathaea, and they asked, “How can a Man that is a sinner do such miracles?”

17. *They said unto the blind man again, What say you of Him, that He has opened your eyes? He said, He is a Prophet.* He must be a Prophet. He could not have worked such a miracle as that if He had been a common man—“He said, He is a Prophet.”

18. *But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and received his sight, until they called the parents of him that had received his sight.* You see, John gives to the Pharisees the name which they arrogated to themselves—“we are Jews.” But they were not true Jews. They called themselves Jews and so John speaks of them as “the Jews.” It often happens that a certain clique or party will run away with a name which does not belong to them any more than it does to a great many who differ from them very widely. These Pharisees pretended that they would not believe the miracle. It was manifest before their eyes, but yet they would not believe it until they called his parents.

19-21. *And they asked them, saying, Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see? His parents answered them and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind: but by what means he now sees, we know not; or who has opened his eyes, we know not: he is of age; ask him: he shall speak for himself.* This was very shrewd on their part, but I think that I must add that it was very cowardly to throw all the testimony on their son. There are some parents who, if their children do right, if they follow Christ, seem to leave them to take care of themselves.

22. *These words spoke his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that He was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue.* Excommunicated—and they could not bear to be cut off from the respectable society which they had before enjoyed.

23, 24. *Therefore said his parents, He is of age; ask him. Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: we know that this Man is a sinner.* Does it not sound pretty from their Pharisaic lips? Arch-hypocrites pretending to teach a man who knew much better than themselves! “We know that this Man is a sinner.” You did not know it, but we know it and as we know it, and we are doctors, you must believe it.

25. *He answered and said, Whether He is a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.* He could not be beaten out of that! You cannot argue a man out of an experience of this kind and, if the Lord Jesus Christ has ever opened your eyes, dear Friend, nobody can make you doubt that blessed fact!

26, 27. *Then said they to him again, What did He to you? How opened He your eyes? He answered them, I have told you already, and you did not*

hear: why would you hear it again? Will you also be His disciples? He threw a little sarcasm into that last question. The man was a very remarkable person—a simple-hearted, honest man—but quite able to hold his own in any company.

28. *Then they reviled him.* It is a bad case, so abuse the plaintiff. There is nothing to be said for our side, so let us abuse the man who has had his eyes opened!

28-30. *And said, You are His disciple; but we are Moses' disciples. We know that God spoke unto Moses: as for this Fellow, we know not from where He is. The man answered and said unto them, Why herein is a marvelous thing, that you know not from where He is, and yet He has opened my eyes.* Does not that manifestation of miraculous power show where He must have come from? Could He have come from anywhere but from God?

31-33. *Now we know that God hears not sinners: but if any man is a worshipper of God, and does His will, him He hears. Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, He could do nothing.* Well argued! The case is proven, indeed.

34. *They answered and said unto him, You were altogether born in sins, and do you teach, us?* Cannot you hear them say it? “A blind beggar, who has just begun to see, ‘Do you teach us?’—D.D.’s, men who are learned in the Law—‘Do you teach us?’” Well, Brethren, if a man has only one eye, he may teach those who have not any, for the old proverb says, “In the realm of the blind, the man with one eye is king.” Yet there is another proverb on this subject and that is, “In the realm of the blind, the man with one eye gets hanged.” That was likely to be the case here—the blind Pharisees could not bear the man who could see! He knew too much for them.

34-36. *And they cast him out. Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when He had found him, He said unto him, Do you believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him.* He needed instruction. Christ may have done much for a man, but he may not, as yet, fully know the Lord. There may be some here, tonight, upon whom Christ has worked a great deal, and yet you do not know Him as you will know Him—“Do you believe on the Son of God?”

37, 38. *And Jesus said unto him, You have both seen Him, and it is He that talks with you. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped Him.* That is the way with a genuine Believer—he *worships* Christ! Why? Because he believes Him to be God! It would be idolatry to worship Christ if He were only man! And Christ would have been an impostor if He had allowed this man to worship Him if he had not been God! But he was God and we, believing Him to be God, worship Christ as very God of very God, to whom be praise forever and ever! Amen.

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THE BLIND MAN'S EYES OPENED—OR PRACTICAL CHRISTIANITY NO. 1754

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 12, 1883,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL.

*“Jesus answered, Neither has this man sinned, nor his parents:
but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. I must
work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day: the night
comes, when no man can work.”*

John 9:3, 4.

OBSERVE, dear Friends, how little disconcerted our Lord Jesus Christ was by the most violent opposition of His enemies. The Jews took up stones to stone Him and He hid Himself from them. But almost the moment after, when He had passed, perhaps, through a single court and was sufficiently out of range to be unobserved by them, He stood still and fixed His eyes upon a blind beggar who had been sitting near the Temple gate. I am afraid that the most of us would have had no heart to help even the most needy while we were escaping from a shower of stones! And if we *had* attempted the work, moved by supreme compassion, we would have gone about it blunderingly, in a great hurry and certainly would not have talked calmly and wisely, as the Savior did when He answered His disciples' question and went on to talk with them.

One of the things worthy to be noticed in our Lord's Character is His wonderful quiet spirit, especially His marvelous calmness in the presence of those who misjudged, insulted and slandered Him. He is reviled often, but never ruffled. He is often in deaths but always full of life. No doubt He felt keenly all the contradictions of sinners against Himself, for in a passage in the Psalms which refers to the Messiah, we read, “Reproach has broken My heart,” yet the Lord Jesus did not permit His feelings to overcome Him—He was quiet and self-possessed, acting with a profound disregard of the calumnies and assaults of His bitter enemies.

One reason, I take it, for His being so self-contained was that He was never elated by the praise of men. Take my word for it, for I know, that if you ever allow yourself to be pleased by those who speak well of you, to that extent you will be capable of being *grieved* by those who speak ill of you! But if you have learned (and it is a hard lesson for the most of us) that you are not the servant of *men*, but of God and that, therefore, you will not live upon the breath of men's nostrils if they praise you—and you will not die if they denounce you—then you will be strong and show that you have come to the stature of a man in Christ Jesus. If the great Master's head had been turned by the hosannas of the multitude, then His heart would have sunk within Him when they cried, “Crucify Him, crucify Him!” But He was neither lifted up nor cast down by men—He committed Himself unto no man because He knew what was in man!

The innermost reason for this quiet of heart was His unbroken communion with the Father. Jesus dwelt apart, for He lived with God—the Son of Man who came down from Heaven still dwelt in Heaven, serenely patient because He was raised above earthly things in the holy contemplations of His perfect mind. Because His heart was with His Father, the Father made Him strong to bear anything that might come from men. Oh, that we all could wear this armor of the Light of God, the celestial panoply of communion with the High Eternal One! Then we would not be afraid of evil tidings, or of evil occurrences, for our hearts would be fixed on the sure Rock of Jehovah's unchanging love!

There was, perhaps, another reason for our Savior's wonderful composure when He was attacked with stones, namely, that His heart was so set upon His work that He could not be turned away from it whatever the unbelieving Jews might do. The ruling passion bore Him on through danger and suffering—and made Him calmly defy all opposition. He had come into the world to bless men and He must bless men. The Jews might oppose Him for this reason and for that, but they could not turn the current of His soul from the riverbed of mercy along which it rushed like a torrent. He must do good to the suffering and the poor! He could not help it—His face was set like flint towards His lifework!

It had become His meat and His drink to do the will of Him that sent Him and so, when they took up stones, although He withdrew Himself a little, yet as He only wished to preserve His life to do good, He returned to His lifework without a moment's delay! Stones cannot drive Him from His gracious pursuits. As we have seen a parent bird, chased away, for a moment, from its nest, return to it the instant the intruder has withdrawn, so do we see our Lord come back to His holy work almost before He is out of the sight of His would-be murderers!

Yonder sits a blind man and Jesus is at once at his side to heal him. They will overtake You, O Christ! They will seek to slay You! There are more stones in their cruel hands! Your haters hurl their missiles fiercely and they will be upon You in a moment! What cares He for that? No coward spirit can make Him overlook an occasion for glorifying the Father! That blind man must be attended to and at all hazards. He stops to deal with Him in love. If you and I become completely taken up with zeal for God and with the desire to win souls, then nothing will daunt us. We shall bear anything and not seem to have anything to bear! We shall hear slander as though we heard it not and endure hardship as though there were none to endure.

As an arrow from a bow shot by an strong archer, defies the opposing wind and speeds forward to the white of the target, so shall we fly forward towards the great objective of our compassionate ambition. Happy is that man whom God has launched like a thunderbolt from His hand—who must go on and fulfill his destiny—happy that it is his vocation to bring sinners to the Savior's feet! O Blessed Spirit, lift us up to dwell in God and so to sympathize with His fatherly compassion that we may heed neither stones, nor sneers, nor slanders, but become absorbed in our self-denying service for Jesus' sake!

Let that stand for an introduction. The Savior in His worst and lowest estate, when near to death, thinks of nothing but the good of men! When cruel eyes are spying Him out that they may slay Him, He has an eye for the poor blind. There is no stone in His heart towards the sorrowful even when stones are flying past His ears!

I. So I introduce you, tonight, to the first topic of the present discourse, which is THE WORKER. I give that as a well-earned title to the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Worker, the Chief Worker and the Example to all workers. He came into the world, He says, to do the will of Him that sent Him and to finish His work. On this occasion, when He is pursued by His enemies, He is still a worker—a wonder-worker with the blind man. There are many in this world who ignore sorrow, who pass by grief, who are deaf to lamentation and blind to distress.

The easiest thing that I know of to do with this wicked, wretched city of London is not to know much about it. They say that half the world knows not how the other half lives! Surely if it did, it would not live so carelessly as it does, or be quite as cruel as it is. There are sights in this metropolis that might melt a heart of steel and make a Nabal generous! But it is an easy way of escaping from the exercise of benevolence to shut your eyes and see nothing of the abject misery which is groveling at your feet. "Where ignorance is bliss it is folly to be wise"—so said some easygoing ignoramus of old! If beggars are importunate, then passersby must be deaf. If sinners are profane, it is a simple matter to stop your ears and hurry on.

If this blind man must necessarily sit and beg at the gate of the Temple, then those who frequent the Temple must just slip by as if they were as blind as he. Crowds pass by and take no notice of him. Is not that the way with the multitude today? If you are in trouble—if you are suffering heart-break—do they not ignore you and go their way to their farm and to their merchandise, though you lie down and starve? Dives finds it convenient to remain ignorant of the sores of Lazarus. It is not so with Jesus! He has a quick eye to see the blind beggar if He sees nothing else. If He is not enraptured with the massive stones and the beautiful architecture of the temple, yet He fixes His eyes upon a sightless mendicant at the Temple gate. He is all eyes, all ears, all heart, all hands where misery is present. My Master is made of tenderness! He melts with love. O true souls who love Him, copy Him in this, and always let your hearts be touched with a fellow being—feeling for the suffering and the sinning!

There are others who, though they see misery, do not diminish it by warm sympathy, but increase it by their cold logical conclusions. "Poverty," they say—"Yes. Well—that, of course, is brought on by drunkenness and by laziness and by all sorts of vice." I do not say that it is *not* so in every case, but I *do* say that the observation will not help a poor man to become either better or happier! Such a hard remark will rather exasperate the hardened than assist the struggling. "Sickness," say some—"Oh, no doubt, a great deal of sickness is caused by wicked habits, neglect of sanitary laws, and so on." This may be sadly true, but it grates on a sufferer's ears—a very kind and pleasing doctrine to teach in the wards of

our hospitals! I would recommend you not to teach it till you are ill, yourself, and then, perhaps, the doctrine may not seem quite so instructive.

Even Christ's disciples, when they saw this blind man, thought that there must be something particularly wicked about his father and mother, or something especially vicious about the man, himself, which God foresaw and, on account of which, He punished him with blindness! The disciples were of the same spirit as Job's three comforters, who, when they saw the Patriarch on a dunghill, bereft of all his children, robbed of all his property and scraping himself because he was covered with sores, said, "Of course he must be a hypocrite. He must have done something very dreadful, or he would not be so grievously afflicted." The world will still stick to its unfounded belief that if the Tower of Siloam falls upon any men, they must be sinners above all sinners upon the face of the earth!

A cruel doctrine, a vile doctrine, fit for savages, but not to be mentioned by Christians who know that whom the Lord loves He chastens! Yet I do see a good deal of this cruel notion about. And if men are in trouble, I hear it muttered, "Well, of course they brought it on themselves." Is this your way of cheering them? Cheap moral observations steeped in vinegar make a poor dish for an invalid! Such censures are a sorry way of helping a lame dog over a stile—no, it is putting up another stile for him so that he cannot get over it at all! Now I mark this of my Lord—that it is written of Him that He "gives to all men liberally, and upbraids not." When He fed those thousands in the wilderness, it would have been most just if He had said to them, "Why did you all come out into the wilderness and not bring provisions with you? What have you to do out here without something to eat? You are unthrifty and deserve to starve!" No, no! He never said a word of the sort, but He fed them, fed them all and sent them home filled!

You and I are not sent into the world to thunder out commandments from the top of Sinai—we are come unto Mount Zion! We are not to go on circuit as if we were judge and hangman rolled into one, to meet all the sorrow and misery in the world with bitter words of censure and condemnation. If we do so, how different we are from that blessed Master of ours who says not a word by way of rebuke to those who seek Him, but simply feeds the hungry and heals all those who have need of healing! It is easy to criticize. It is easy to upbraid. But ours should be the higher and nobler task of blessing and saving!

I notice, yet again, that there are certain others who, if they are not indifferent to sorrow and do not pitch upon some cruel theory of condemnation, nevertheless speculate a good deal where speculation can be of no practical service. When we get together, there are many questions which we like to raise and dispute upon which are of no practical value whatever. There is the question of the origin of evil. *That* is a fine subject for those who like to chop logic by the week without making enough chips to light a fire for cold hands to warm! Such was the subject proposed to the Savior—foreseen guilt, or hereditary taint—"Who did sin, this man, or his parents?" How far is it right that the sin of parents should, as it often does, fall upon the children?

I could propose to you a great many topics equally profound and curious, but what would be the use? Yet there are many in the world who are

fond of these topics, spinning cobwebs, blowing bubbles, making theories, breaking them, and making more! I wonder whether the world was ever blessed to the extent of a bad farthing by all the theories of all the learned men that have ever lived? May they not all be put down under the head of vain jangling? I would rather create an ounce of help than a ton of theory! It is beautiful to me to see how the Master breaks up the fine speculation which the disciples are setting forth. He says somewhat shortly, "Neither has this man sinned, nor his parents." And then He spits on the ground, makes clay and opens the blind man's eyes! *This* was work, the other was mere worry.

"Father," said a boy, "the cows are in the corn. How did they get in?" "Boy," said the father, "never mind how they got in, let us hurry up and get them out!" There is common sense about that practical proceeding. Here are these people sunken in vice and steeped in poverty. Postpone the inquiries as to how they got into this condition! What is the origin of moral evil? How is it transmitted from parent to child? Answer those questions after the Day of Judgment, when you will have more light! But just now, the great thing is to see how you and I can get evil out of the world and how we can lift up the fallen and restore those who have gone astray!

Never let us imitate the man in the fable who saw a boy drowning and then and there lectured him upon the imprudence of swimming out in the deep water. No, no! Let us land the boy on the bank, dry him and dress him—and then tell him not to go there again, lest a worse thing happen to him! I say that the Master was no speculator—He was no spinner of theories; He was no mere doctrinalist—but He went to work and healed those that had need of healing. Now, in this, He is the great Example for us all in this year of Grace. Come, what have we ever done to bless our fellow men? Many of us are followers of Christ and, oh, how happy we ought to be that we are! What have we ever done worthy of our high calling?

"Sir, I heard a lecture the other night," says one, "upon the evils of intemperance." Is that all you did? Has any action come of that brilliant oration and of your careful attention to it? Did you straightway try to remove this intemperance by your example? "Well, I shall think of that, Sir, one of these days." Meanwhile what is to become of these intemperate ones? Will not their blood lie at your door? "I heard the other day," says one, "a very forcible and interesting lecture upon political economy. I feel that it is a very weighty science and can explain much of the poverty you mention." Perhaps so—but political economy in itself is about as hard as brass! It has no heart, or conscience—neither can it make allowance for such things.

The political economist is a man of iron who would be rusted by a tear and, therefore, never tolerates the mood of compassion. His science is a rock which will wreck a navy and remain unmoved by the cries of drowning men and women! It is as the moon of the desert which withers all it blows upon. It seems to dry up men's souls when they get to be masters of it, or rather are mastered *by* it. It is a science of stubborn facts which would not be facts if we were not so brutish. Political economy or no political economy, I come back to my point—What have you done for others? Let us think of *that* and if any of us have been dreaming, day after day,

what we would do “if”—let us see what we can do *now* and, like the Savior, get to work!

Yet that is not the point which I am driving at. It is this. If Jesus is such a worker and no theorizer, then what a hope there is, tonight, for some of us who need His care! Have we fallen? Are we poor? Have we brought ourselves into sorrow and misery? Do not let us look to men or to ourselves for the answers! Men will let us starve and then they will hold a coroner's inquest over our body to find why we dared to die and so necessitated the paying for a grave and a coffin! They will be sure to make an inquiry after it is all over with us! But if we come to Jesus Christ, He will make no inquiry at all, but receive us and give rest unto our souls. That is a blessed text, “He gives to all men liberally, and upbraids not.”

When the prodigal son came home to his father, according to all propriety, as people would do, nowadays, the father should have said to his son, “Well, you have come home and I am glad to see you, but what a state you are in! How did you get into this condition? Why, you have scarcely a clean rag on your back! How is it you have become so poor? And you are lean and hungry—how did this come about? Where have you been? What have you done? What company have you kept? Where were you a week ago? What were you doing the day before yesterday at seven o'clock?”

His father never asked him a single question, but pressed him to his bosom, and knew all about it by instinct! He came as he was and his father received him as he was. The father seemed, with a kiss, to say, “My boy, by-gones are by-gones. You were dead but you are alive. You were lost but you are found and I inquire no further.” That is just how Jesus Christ is willing to receive penitent sinners tonight! Is there a streetwalker here? Come, poor woman, as you are, to your dear Lord and Master who will cleanse you of your grievous sin. “All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven.”

Is there one here who has transgressed against the rules of society and is pointed at as especially sinful? Yet, come, and welcome to the Lord Jesus of whom it is written, “This Man receives sinners, and eats with them.” The physician never thinks it scorn to go among the sick and Christ never felt it shame that He looks after the guilty and the lost! No, write this about Him—“The Savior of sinners, even of the very chief.” He counts this His glory! He will work for you, not chide you! He will not treat you with a dose of theories and with a host of bitter rebukes, but He will receive you just as you are into the wounds of His side and hide you there from the wrath of God! Oh, blessed Gospel that I have to preach to you! May the Holy Spirit lead you to embrace it!

So much concerning the Worker.

II. Now, the second thing is THE WORKROOM. Every worker needs a place to work. Every artist must have a studio. Did Christ have a studio? Yes, He came to do very wonderful works—the works of Him that sent Him—but what a strange, strange place the Lord found to do His work! And yet I do not know that He could have found any other. He resolved to work the works of God and He selected the fittest place for doing so. One of the works of God is creation. If Jesus is to perform this work among *men*, He must find out where something is missing which He can supply

by a creating act. Here are two eyes without the proper light-receiving apparatus—here there is room for Jesus to *create* eyes and sight! He could not have created eyes in my head or in yours had we been present, for eyes are already there, and more eyes would be unsuitable for us.

In the blind beggar of the Temple there was room for Jesus to produce that which was lacking in the curious mechanism of the eyes—the blind eyes were, therefore, His workshop. If there were eyeballs, they were completely sightless and had been from the man's birth—and this gave the occasion for Jehovah Jesus to say, "Let there be light!" If that man's eyes had been like yours and mine—clear and bright and full of light—there would have been no space for our Lord's Divine operation. But since he was still in the darkness which had been about him from his birth, his eyes afforded space in which the power of the Almighty might be manifested by a work so wonderful that since the world began it had never been heard that anyone had opened the eyes of a man who was born blind!

The man was blind for this reason—"That the works of God should be made manifest in him." Oh, and that is a blessed thought if you will think about it! Apply it to yourself. If there is anything lacking in *you*, there is room for Christ to work in you! If you are naturally perfect and there is no fault in you, then there is no room for the Savior to do anything for you, for He will not gild refined gold, nor lay enamel on the lily! But if you suffer from some great deficiency, some awful lack that makes your soul sit in darkness—your necessity is Christ's opportunity—your need of Grace supplies His need of objects for His pity! Here is room for the Savior to come and display His pity towards you and you may be sure He will soon be with you. Even so, come Lord Jesus!

Then, again, it was not only this man's deficiency of sight, but it was this man's *ignorance* which required Almighty aid. It is a work of God not only to create, but also to illuminate! The same power which calls into existence also calls into light, whether that light is natural or spiritual. It is a Divine work to enlighten and regenerate the heart. This man was as dark in mind as he was in body—what a grand thing to enlighten him in a double sense! He did not know the Son of God, therefore he did not believe in Him, but asked in wonder, "Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him?" Jesus Christ came to work in this man the *knowledge* of God, the *life* of God—in a word, SALVATION—and because the man was destitute of these things, there was room in him for the Savior's skill and power!

Friend, is that your case? Are you unconverted? Then there is space in you for the Redeemer to work by converting Grace! Are you unregenerate? Then there is space in you for the Spirit of God to work regeneration! All these spiritual deficiencies of yours—your ignorance and your darkness—shall be turned, by Infinite Love, into opportunities for Grace. If you were not lost, you could not be saved! If you were not guilty, you could not be pardoned. If you were not sinful, you could not be cleansed! But all your sin and sorrow, by a strange mystery of love, is a sort of qualification of yourself for Christ to come and save you!

"That is putting it," says one, "in a new light to me." Accept that new light and be comforted, for it is *Gospel* Light and intended to cheer the de-

spairing! You have said, "There is nothing in me"—therefore it is clear that there is room for Christ to be your All in All. You see there cannot be two all in alls—there can be but one—and as you do not pretend to the title, Jesus will wear it! All the space that you occupy in your own esteem takes so much away from the glory of the Lord Jesus. But if you are *nothing*, then the whole house is left for the Savior! He will come and fill up all your inward vacuum with His own dear Self and be glorious in your eyes forever! Pray to be nothing!

I may venture to say, tonight, that all affliction may be regarded in the same manner as affording opportunity for the mercy work of God. Whenever you see a man in sorrow and trouble, the way to look at it is not to blame him and inquire how he came there, but to say, "Here is an opening for God's almighty love! Here is an occasion for the display of the Grace and goodness of the Lord!" This man, being blind, gave the Lord Jesus opportunity for the good work of giving him his sight and that work was so great a wonder that all around were obliged to acknowledge it and admire it! The neighbors began to inquire about it. The Pharisees had to hold a conclave over it and though nearly 19 centuries have slipped away, here are *we* at this hour meditating upon it!

That man's opened eyes are enlightening our eyes at this hour! The Bible would not have been complete without this touching and teaching narrative—if this man had not been born blind and if Christ had not opened his eyes, all generations would have had less Light of God! We ought to be glad that this man was so grievously afflicted, for thereby we are graciously instructed! If he had not been sightless, we had not seen the great sight of blindness at birth chased away by Him who is the Light of men! So I think I may say to all afflicted ones here tonight—Do not kick at your afflictions. Do not be excessively troubled by them, or utterly cast down by them, but hopefully regard them as openings for mercy, gates for Grace, roadways for love! The valley of Achor shall be to you a door of hope!

That mighty Worker of whom I have been speaking will find a workshop in your affliction and therein He will fashion monuments of His Grace. Glory in your infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon you! Rejoice that as your tribulations abound, so, also, shall your consolations abound by Christ Jesus. Ask Him to make all things work together for your good and for His Glory and so it shall be! I leave the thought of the workshop when I have added that I do believe that sin, itself, has somewhat of the same aspect as affliction, for it makes room for the mercy of God. I hardly dare say what Augustine said, when speaking of the Fall and of the sin of Adam, and looking to all the splendor of Grace that followed after it. He said, "Beata culpa"—happy fault—as if he thought that sin had furnished such opportunities for the unveiling of the Grace of God and so displayed the Character of Christ, that He even dared to call it a happy fault!

I will not venture upon such an expression. I scarcely dare do more than repeat what that great master in Israel once said. But I do say that I cannot imagine an occasion for glorifying God equal to the fact that man has sinned, since God has given Christ to die for sinners. How could that

unspeakable Gift have been bestowed if there had been no sinners? The Cross is a constellation of Divine Glory brighter than creation itself!—

**“For in the Grace that rescued man,
His noblest form of Glory shines;
Here on the Cross ‘tis fairest writ
In precious blood and crimson lines.”**

How could we have known the heart of God? How could we have understood the mercy of God? If it had not been for our sin and misery, how could such forbearance and love have been displayed? Come, then, guilty ones, take heart and look for Grace! As a physician needs the sick that he may exert his healing power, so does the Lord of Mercy need *you* that He may show what Grace He can bestow!

If I were a physician and desired a practice, I Would not inquire for the healthiest parish in England, but for a position where the sick would fill my surgery. If all I sought was to do good to my fellow men, I should desire to be in Egypt or some other land visited by cholera, or plague, where I could save human life. The Lord Jesus Christ, looking over this throng tonight, seeks not those who are good, or think themselves so, but for the guilty who *know* their sinnership and bemoan it! If there is a sinner here, leprous and defiled. If there is a soul here sick from head to foot with the incurable disease of sin, the Lord Christ, the mighty Worker, looks on him, for in him He finds a laboratory in which He may work the works of Him that sent Him!

III. Please bear with me, now, as I pass on, in the third place, briefly to notice THE WORK BELL. You hear early in the morning a bell which awakens the workers from their beds. See how they troop into the streets, swarming like bees hastening to or from the hive. You see them going forth to labor, for the bell is ringing! There was a work bell for Christ and He heard it. Then He said, “I must work. I must work. I must work.” What made Him say that? Why, the sight of that blind man! He no sooner saw him than He said, “I must work.” The man had not asked anything, nor uttered a sound, but those sightless orbs spoke eloquently to the heart of the Lord Jesus and rang aloud the summons which Jesus heard and obeyed, for He, Himself said, “I must work.”

And why must He work? Why, He had come all the way from Heaven to do so! He had come from His Father's Throne to be a Man to bless men and He would not cause His long descent to go for nothing! He must work—why else was He here where work was to be done? Besides, there were impulses in His heart which we need not stop, now, to explain, which forced Him to work. His mind, His soul, His heart, were all full of a Force which produced perpetual activity. Sometimes He selected a route when He was traveling because, “He must go through Samaria.” Sometimes He went after men because, He said, “Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring.” There was a sort of instinct in Christ to save men and that instinct craved gratification and could not be denied. “I must work,” He said.

The sight of those blind eyes made Him say “I must work.” And He thought of that poor man—how for 20 years and more he had lived in utter darkness—how he had not been able to enjoy the beauties of Nature,

or look his loved ones in the face, or earn his daily bread. And He pitied the sorrows of the man in a life-long darkness. Moreover, as He recollected how that man's soul had also been shut up like a prisoner in a dungeon by reason of gross ignorance, He said, "I must work, I must work." You see they are after Him with stones, but He stops, for He says "I must work. They may stone Me if they will, but I must work. I hear the summons and I must work."

Now learn this lesson, all you followers of Christ. Whenever you see suffering, I hope you will each one feel, "I must work. I must help." Whenever you witness poverty, whenever you behold vice, say to yourself, "I must work. I must work." If you are worthy of the Christ whom you call Leader, let all the necessities of men impel you, compel you, constrain you to be blessing them. Let the world which lies in the Wicked One awaken you! Let the cries of men of Macedonia awaken you as they say, "Come over and help us!" Men are dying, dying in the dark. The cemetery is filling and Hell is filling, too! Men are dying without hope and are passing into the eternal night. "I must work."

They cry—"Master, spare Yourself! Incessant labor will wear You down and bring You to Your grave." But look! Look! Look! Perdition swallows crowds! They go down, alive, into the Pit! Listen to their doleful cries! Lost souls are being shut out from God! "I must work." Oh, that I could lay my hands—or, far better—that my Master would lay His pierced hands on every true Christian here and press them upon him until he cried out, "I cannot sit here! I must be at work as soon as this service is done! I must not only hear and give, and pray, but I must also work!"

Well, that is a grand lesson, but I do not mean it to be the chief one, for I am looking out for those who long to *find* mercy and salvation! What a blessing it is for you, dear Friend, if you desire to be saved, that Christ must save! There is an impulse upon Him that He must save! I know you say, "I cannot pray. I cannot feel as I wish to do." Never mind about that—the matter is in abler hands. You see, this man did not say a word—the sight of Him was enough to move the heart of the Lord Jesus! As soon as Jesus had seen him, He said, "I must work." Have you ever seen a man in London who has no particular oratory skills and yet succeeds in obtaining alms on a large scale? I have seen him! He dresses like a laborer. He wears a tattered smock frock and he sits down in a corner where many pass by.

His squatting place is a little out of the rush of traffic, but near enough to secure attention from many passengers. He displays a spade much the worse for the use made of it by *somebody else*, and on it is written, "I am starving!" He looks gaunt and hungry. He is exceedingly well made up and is as pale as chalk can make him! Oh, the quantity of halfpence that go into his old hat! How people pity him! He does not sing a mournful ditty. He does not speak a word and yet many are moved by the fact that he *looks* as if it were true that he *is* starving!

Now, my Hearer, you need not be false in what you do if you set out your misery and sin before the Lord. Tonight, when you get home, kneel at your bedside and say, "Lord Jesus, I cannot pray, but here I am. I am perishing and I put myself within sight of You. Instead of hearing my

pleas, look at my sins. Instead of demanding arguments, look at my wickedness. Instead of oratory, which I have none, Lord, remember that I shall soon be in Hell if You do not save me.”

I tell you, the bell will ring and the Great Worker will feel that the time has come for Him to labor! He will say in the words of my text, “I must work,” and in *you* the works of God shall be made manifest! *You* shall be the workshop of Christ!

IV. One more head and that is THE WORKDAY. Our Divine Master said, “I must work the works of Him that sent me, while it is day: the night comes, when no man can work.” Now, listen. This is not meant about Christ, the risen Savior, but this refers to the Lord Jesus Christ as He was Man here on earth. There was a certain day in which He could bless men and when that day was over He would be gone—there would be no Jesus Christ on earth to open blind men's eyes, or to heal the sick—He would be gone from among men and be no more approachable as the healer of bodily disease. Our Lord, as a Man here on earth, had a day. It was only a day—a short period, and not very long—He could not make it longer, for it was settled by the great Lord.

The day of His Sacrifice was appointed. He, Himself, once said, “My hour is not yet come.” But that hour *did* come. Our Lord occupied 30 years in getting ready for His lifework and then in three years His warfare was accomplished. How much He crowded into those three years! Centuries of service could not equal the labor of that brief period. Brothers, some of us have had 30 years of work, but we have done very little, I am afraid. And what if we have only three years more? Let us feel the impulses of the coming eternity! Within a little while I shall no more look into the faces of the throng—they will remember me but as a name—therefore I will preach as best I can while my powers remain and my life is prolonged.

Within a little while, my Brother, you will not be able to go from door to door winning souls—the street will miss you and your tracts—the District will miss you and your regular visits. Do your work well, for your sun will soon set. These words of mine may be more prophetic to some present than we dream. I may be speaking to some who are nearing their last hour and shall soon render in their account. Up Brothers! Up Sisters! Say, “We must work, for the night comes in which no man can work.” Life cannot be made longer if we wish to make it so—predestination will not lengthen out the thread when the hour has come to cut it off! Life will be short at the very longest and O, how short with those who die young! If you and I shall omit any part of our lifework, we can never make up the omission. I speak with solemn reverence of our Divine Master, but, if He had *not* healed that blind man in the days in which He lived on earth, He would have missed a part of the business upon which the Father sent Him.

I do not mean that as God, out of Heaven, He might not have given the poor beggar sight, but that makes the case the more stern in its bearing upon us since we have no such future to expect—if we do not serve men *now*, it will be out of our power to bless them from the skies. This narrative could never have appeared in the life of the Son of Man had He forgot-

ten to be gracious to the blind man! His period of sojourn here below was the time for our Lord to work—if He had come back from Heaven to heal the man, that would have been done in a Second Advent and not in the first! And if He omits anything from His first errand, below, it cannot be put in again.

When you and I have written a letter we add a postscript. When we have made a book we can write an appendix or insert something that we have left out. But to this life of yours and mine there can be no postscript! We must do our work now, or never and, if we do not do it *now*, even now, while our opportunity serves us to perform our service to our God, we can *never* do it! If you omitted anything yesterday, you cannot alter the fact of imperfect service on that day. If you are more zealous, now, it will be the work of today—but yesterday will still remain as incomplete as you left it. We must, therefore, be on the alert to do the work of Him that sent us while it is called today.

To this conclusion I come and here draw to a close—if our Lord Jesus Christ was so diligent to bless men when He was here, I feel certain that He is not less diligent to hear and heal them, now, in that *spiritual* sense in which He still works upon men. Oh, that I knew how to lead you to seek my Lord and Master! For if you seek Him, He will be found of you as surely as you seek Him! Christ has not lost the heart of His compassion! He is not cold in heart or slack in hand. Go to Him at once! I spoke, just now, to some of the chief of sinners, and I say to them again—Go to Jesus!

Let me speak to some of you who are *not* the chief of sinners—you that have been hearers of the Gospel and have only failed because you do not believe in Jesus. Go to Him at once! You are backward, but He is not. He must still work, and still work while the Gospel Day lasts, for that Gospel Day will soon close. He is waiting and watching for you. Oh, come to Him—come even now! “I do not know what it is to come,” says one. Well, to come to Christ is simply to trust Him. You are guilty—trust Him to pardon you. “If I do that,” says one, “may I then live as I did before?” No, that you cannot, for if a ship needed to be brought into harbor and they took a pilot on board, he would say to the captain, “Captain, if you trust me, I will get you into harbor all right. There, let that sail be taken down.”

But they do not reef it. “Come,” he says, “attend to the tiller and steer as I bid you.” But they refuse. “Well,” says the pilot, “you said you trusted me.” “Yes,” says the captain, “and you said that if we trusted you, you would get us into port, but we have not got into port at all.” “No,” says the pilot, “you do not trust me, for if you trusted me you would do as I tell you.”

A true trust is obedient to the Lord's commands and these forbid sin. If you trust Jesus, you must leave your sins and take up your cross and follow Him. Such trust shall surely have its reward—you shall be saved now and saved forever! God bless you, dear Friends, for Christ's sake.

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WORK

NO. 756

**DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 21, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE SURREY CHAPEL, BLACKFRIARS ROAD.**

***“I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day:
the night comes, when no man can work.”
John 9:4.***

You observe that a very speculative question had been put to our Lord, and His answer to that very speculative question is, “I must work.” His disciples wished to know something about the mysterious fact that some persons are born in an unhappy condition—blind, or deaf, or dumb—on what account they were sent into the world under such disadvantageous circumstances. Would you not, yourselves, like to know? Do you not wish that the Savior had expounded all that mystery?

There are so many points of controversy connected with that question that He could scarcely have had a more suggestive topic. Surely He might have enlightened us far more than Socrates or Plato. Why did He not, at once, with such a noble opportunity, plunge into the labyrinth of metaphysics, or begin to expound predestination and open up the points in it which agree or disagree with free agency? Here was a noble opportunity for interpreting all the marvels of Divine Sovereignty and natural suffering!

Why did He not at once open all this up to the people? No, but with a very short answer He turns to them and says, “I must work. You may think. You may talk. You may argue, but I must work. You may give yourselves up, if you know no better, to the inferior occupation of jangling about words, but I must work. Nobler calls I have to obey than those which come to your carnal ears.”

We gather, then, that the Savior has a greater respect for work than He has for speculation! That when He comes into the world He will go to all the mighty thinkers, and the gentlemen who are constantly producing new ideas, and wonderful points of subtlety, and put them into the scale as so much rubbish! But when He finds a single *worker*—a poor widow who has given her two mites, a poor saint who has spoken for Christ and been the means of the conversion of a soul—He will take up these works which were done for Him as precious grains of costly gold!

We may say of the field of enterprise and work for Christ, as of the land of Havilah, “The gold of that land is good,” and Christ thinks it to be so. He estimates the work of faith and labor of love done for Him as of great price.

I. I shall ask your attention to the text, taking and keeping close to the very words of it. And the thing we observe first, is, A NECESSITY TO LABOR—“I must work.” With Christ it was not, “I may if I will.” Nor, “I can if I like.” It was not the mere possibility and the mere potentiality of work, but an imperious necessity—“I must.” He could not help Himself. If I may

use such words concerning One who is no less Divine than He was human, He was under restraint. He was bound. He was compelled.

The cords, which bound Him, however, were the cords of His Deity. They were the cords of love which bound Him who is Love. "I must work." It was because He loved the sons of men so well that He could not sit still and see them perish. He could not come down from Heaven and stand here robed in our mortal flesh and be an impassive, careless, loitering spectator of so much evil, so much misery. His heart beat high with desire. He thirsted to be doing good, and His greatest and grandest act, His sacrifice of Himself, was a baptism with which He had to be baptized, and He was straitened until it was accomplished.

His great soul within Him felt as if it could not be easy. It was like the troubled sea that cannot rest. Each of His thoughts was like a mighty wave that could not be still. His whole soul was like a volcano when it begins to swell with lava, and needs to vent. He must let His soul run out in hot consecration and devotion to the cause of those whom He came to save. "I must," He says, "I must work." Not only was it the love within which made the compulsion, but it was also the sorrow without which compelled Him.

That blind man had touched the secret chord that set the Savior's soul at work. If that blind man had not been there, or, rather, if it had been possible for the Savior to forget the cases of misery which existed around Him, then He might, perhaps, have been quiet. But because always before His soul He saw the multitudes perishing as sheep without a shepherd. Because, far more vividly than you and I have ever done, He realized the *value* of a soul and the *horror* of a soul being lost, He felt as though He could not be still. "I must work," He said.

Fancy yourselves, my Brothers and Sisters, standing on the beach when a ship is being broken on the rocks. If there were anything that you could do towards the rescue of the mariners, would you not feel within yourselves, "I must work"? Why, it is said that, sometimes, when the crowd sees a vessel going to pieces, and hear the cries of the drowning men, they seem as if they were all seized with madness, because, not being able to give vent to their kindness and brotherly feeling towards the perishing ones by any practical activity, they know not what to do, and are ready to sacrifice their own lives if they might but do something to save others.

Men feel that they must work in the presence of so dreadful a need. And Christ saw this world of ours quivering over the pit. He saw it floating, as it were, in an atmosphere of fire, and He wished to quench those flames and make the world rejoice, and therefore He must work to that end. He could not, He could not possibly rest and be quiet. He knew not how to take His ease even at night—

***"Cold mountains and the midnight air
Witnessed the fervor of His prayer."***

And when He was faint and weary, and needed to eat, He would not eat because the zeal of God's House had eaten Him up, and it was His meat and His drink to do the will of Him that sent Him. The love within and the need without acted towards one common end and formed an intense necessity so that the Savior must work.

Moreover, you must remember that He had come into this world with an aim which was not to be achieved *without* work, but which was a passion with Him, and therefore He must work because He desired to achieve His end—the salvation of the many whom the Father had given to Him. The gathering together in one those that were scattered abroad. The finding of the lost sheep. The restoration of the fallen—He must accomplish these objects. Eternal purposes must be fulfilled. His own surety engagements must be honored. He had loved His own which were in the world, and He loved them so that He could not leave the world until all His work should be completely done and He should be able to say, “It is finished.”

So, hopefully looking forward to the recompense of the reward, anticipating the glory of bringing men from the thralldom of their sins and conducting them into the tower of salvation, He longed and panted to work. The soldier who is desirous of promotion scorns peace and longs for war, that he may have an opportunity of ascending in the ranks. The young man who wants to carve out a position is not satisfied to vegetate in a country village—he wants work—wants it because he knows that work is the way of rising in the world. It is right enough, if a man has a just ambition, that he should seek the means by which that ambition may be attained.

Our Savior’s ambition was to be crowned with the gems of the souls which He had saved, to be the great Friend of man, the great Redeemer of mankind, and consequently He must work. He must be men’s Savior—He cannot be their Savior without working and, therefore, the passion within, the need without, and the great and all-absorbing aim which drew Him onward, furnished three cords which bound Him, like a sacrifice, to the horns of the altar. “I must work.”

Now, Brethren, without enlarging upon a theme so tempting, let us ask whether you and I feel the same compulsion—for if we are as Christ was in the world, if we are worthy to be called His followers at all, we must be compelled with His compulsion—we must be weighted with His load. Do we feel as if we **MUST** work? Oh, there are so many professors who feel that they must *feed!* No, they must *be fed!* They do not even get so far into activity as to desire to feed, but they must be fed as with a spoon—and they desire to have certain precious Gospel Truths broken down and dissolved into pap for them—and put into their mouths while they lie in bed, almost too idle to digest the food after they have received it!

There are some other Christians who feel as if they must always find fault with other people’s work, as if it were a passion with them to criticize and judge. Many besides are there who must be excused from working—they will do anything to get out of any task—they count it no small thing if they can escape giving to any charitable or Christian object, or if they can avoid exposing their own precious selves to any kind of sorrow or toil in the service of the Lord Jesus.

I trust we are not of such a craven spirit as this. If we are, then let us leave off bearing the name of the Gospel. As one said, “Either be a stoic, or give up being called a stoic.” So I would either be a Christian, or else give up being called a Christian. This is not to be a Christian—to shun work for Christ. I do trust, however, that we have felt this compulsion—“I must work.” Why must I work? That I may be saved? Oh, no! God forbid! I am

saved if I *am* a Christian—saved, not through my own works, but through *Christ's* works.

I have heard the Gospel which tells me that there is life for a look at the Crucified One. I have looked to Christ, and I am saved. Then why must I work? Why, because I am saved! If He bought me with His blood, I must spend myself for Him who bought me. If He sought me by His Spirit, I must give myself to Him who sought me. If He has taught me by His Grace, I must tell others what I have learned from Him. The motive which constrains to Christian activity is not so base and selfish a one as that of obtaining Heaven by it!

Why, even a Romanist (a masterly Romanist however—strange anomaly that so sweet a song should come from so foul a cage of unclean birds!) could sing—

***“My God, I love You not because
I hope for Heaven thereby,
Nor yet because who love you not
Must burn eternally.
“You, O my Savior, You did me
Upon the Cross embrace;
For me did bear the nails and spear,
And manifold disgrace.”***

Our love is *caused* by Christ. His love to us makes us feel that we must work for Him. When we were little children, a kind friend made us very happy one day, and yet a second and a third time did that same friend make our little hearts leap for joy. And when we went to bed we said, before we fell asleep, “I wish we could do something for Mrs. So-and-So. I wish I could give Mrs. So-and-So something.”

Perhaps we had no money, but the next morning we got a few flowers out of the garden, and we set off so pleased to take our little posy to our kind friend, and we said, “Please accept this little present, for you have been so kind to me.” We felt as if we could not help it, and we were only afraid lest our little present should not be received. And we felt that if we could have done 10, 20 or 50 times as much, we should have thought it all too little! It was our *happiness* to do what we did, and to wish to do more.

The same spirit prompts us to wish to do something for the Lord Jesus. Oh, will He accept anything from me? Will He let me try to increase His glory? Will He suffer me to feed His lambs, or to be a shepherd to His sheep, or to look after three or four girls in a Sunday school, or to watch over one child as for Him, or to give a tract away, or to subscribe of my substance to any of His interests? Oh, then, how good it is of Him to let me! How I wish I could do more! O that I had a thousand hands to work for Him! A thousand hearts and a thousand tongues, that I might spend all for Him!

I hope you do feel, Brethren, that the love of Christ which is in you makes you say, “I must work.” Then, if you live in this neighborhood, and most of us, I suppose, do live this side of the water, can you go through the courts and streets—can you go into the darker parts of the neighborhood—those close about here which you know, without feeling, “I must work”? I wish, sometimes, that some of you people, some of you who have got on tolerably well in the world, and who live a little farther out in the country where the air gets a little purer—I wish you could be made to

sniff, sometimes, the air in which poverty always lives in this city of ours—and I think you would feel, then, as if you *must* work.

Our city missionaries must sometimes feel marvelously enthusiastic, I should think, from the sights which they see and the sounds which they hear. They must feel as if they must work, for men are dying, Hell is filling, the Gospel is not taken to the people and the people do not come to the Gospel, and the multitude go their way as though there were no Christ, and no Heaven, and would to God I could have said, no Hell after they died! But there is their portion, and they live here as if they were preparing themselves for inheriting it! May we, then, understand, by God's Grace, the first part of the text, "I must work."

II. Now, secondly, let us notice that here is A SPECIALITY OF WORK—"I must work the works of Him that sent Me." There are plenty of people who say, "I must work," but there are very few who say, "I must work the works of Him that sent me." Oh, the work, the brain-work and head-work that is done in London to get rich! It is very proper, of course. If a man wants to get on in the world, he must work. It is very well. I would not say to any young man, "Be idle."

If you want to prosper in anything, throw your whole soul into it, and work as hard as you can. Many, many people feel the compulsion of working to get on, or working to support a family. Very proper, indeed! But I need not exhort you to do it, for I dare say, as honest and moral men, you will feel that compulsion without any exhortation from *me*!

Some work in order to get fame. Well, that is not so bad a thing in its way. But I need not speak about it, for those who choose that path will fall into it without my advice. But here is the point, "I must work the works of Him that sent Me." Christ came into this world neither to be a King among kings, nor to be famous among the famed. He came but to be a Servant of servants, and to fulfill the will of God. "Lo, I come: in the volume of the Book it is written of Me, I delight to do Your will, O My God." He came to do it, and, having come, He did it.

Observe the character of the work which Christ performed. It was not a work of His own devising. It was not a work which He had set to Himself of His own will. It was a work which had been *ordained of old* and settled by His Father. "I came not to do My will, but the will of Him that sent Me." Observe, too, that Christ made no picking nor choosing about this work. He says, "I must work the works." Not some of them, but *all* of them, whether they should be works of drudgery or works of honor, bearing reproach *for* the Truth, or bearing testimony *to* the Truth.

He did them whether they were works of suffering Himself or works of relief to those that suffered. Whether they were works of silent secret groaning, or works of ministry in which He rejoiced in spirit. Whether they were works of prayer on the mountainside, or works of preaching on the mountain's brow. Christ had given Himself up unreservedly to do for God whatever the Father should bid Him do. And all these works were works of mercy, works of soul-saving, disinterested work, works not selfish or egotistical. He saved others—Himself He could not save.

They were not works by which He increased His own treasure—He *distributed* to the needy—not works by which He lifted Himself up—He condescended to men of low estate. They were not works by which He earned honor among men for He gave His back to the smiters—the

reproaches of them that fell upon Him. His works were works of pure philanthropy to men, and of entire consecration to God. I wonder whether you and I, as Christians, have ever fully and thoroughly realized a compulsion to do such works as these? "I must work the works of Him that sent Me."

O my Brethren, it is so easy to work our own works, even in spiritual things, but it is so difficult to be brought to this—"I must work the works of Him that sent me." Understand me, there are 10,000 actions good in themselves which it might not be right for me to choose as my avocation in life. I know a great many persons who think it is their business to *preach* but who had much better make it their business to *hear* for a little while longer. We know some who think it is their business to take the headship of a class, but who might be amazingly useful by giving away some tracts, or by taking a seat in a class themselves for a little while.

The fact is that we are not to pick and choose the path of Christian service which we are to walk in, but we are to do the work of Him that sent us. And our object should be, as there is so much work to be done, to find out what part of the work the Master would have us do. Our prayer should be, "Show me what You would have me do"—have me do in *particular*—not what is generally right, but what is particularly right for me to do. My servant might, perhaps, think it a very proper thing for her to arrange my papers for me in my study, but I should feel but a very slender amount of gratitude to her.

If, however, she will have a cup of coffee ready for me early in the morning, when I have to go out to a distant country town to preach, I shall be much more likely to appreciate her services. So, some friends think, "How I could get on if I were in such-and-such a position! If I were made a deacon! If I were elevated to such a post." Go your way, and work as your Master would have you. You will do better where He puts you than you will where you put yourself.

You are no servant, indeed, at all, when *you* pick and choose your service, for the very spirit, the very essence of service consists in saying, "Not *my* will, but *Yours* be done. I wait for orders from the Throne. Teach me what You would have me do." On this point, however, there is, perhaps, less need of insisting than there is of insisting upon the other. We must feel ourselves impelled to some form or other of spiritual effort which shall be disinterested, for the good of others, and I ask you Christian men and women, Do you all feel this?

Oh, what wonders were done by two or three hundred persons after our Lord went up to Heaven! Why, they were enough for the evangelization of a world! Here is this great city of London of ours, with its three million and more of inhabitants—I know not how many Christian souls there may be in it, but there must be many thousands, and yet up to this day we have been insufficient for the evangelization of this city! Instead of our meeting its demands, it is a simple matter of statistics that 10 years ago London was better provided for, than with all our efforts, it is now! And is this to be endured? If there were a necessity for this, we might with weeping bow down to the grim necessity! But as there is none, as it is with *ourselves* that the fault must be, as it still remains with us, let us ask, What is the cause of the mischief?

It is this—that all Christians have not learned yet the Truth of God that each Christian is personally to do the work of Him that sent him. We are not to depute our ministers to do it, nor to think that we can discharge the service of God by proxy! Each man and woman, personally, must give himself and herself to the service of Christ, feeling, each one, that he or she can read this text for himself—“I, I, I, must work the works of Him that sent me! I must do it if nobody else does! I must—I feel a compulsion! I must in some form or other give myself to those works which are peculiarly the works of God, who sends His people into this wicked world on purpose that they may do them.”

May I say here, by way of illustration, to prove to you that progress is not impossible if we were but willing to make the effort, that probably there is no religious movement in England which is so formidable, which has advanced so rapidly, as that movement of Ritualism, which we sometimes call Puseyism! It is advancing wonderfully, and it is advancing in two quarters—two quarters which ought to shame us forever, because they are the two most inaccessible quarters. That is to say, you shall find rampant Puseyism laying hold upon the upper classes, getting into the drawing rooms which we thought could not be entered! It is storming what we thought to be impregnable citadels of rank and lofty respectability, and finding its victims and its votaries there, and finding them in such a style, and getting them into its grip so wholly and completely that the substance of the rich is given far more thoroughly to their *false* faith than our substance among us is given to our *true* faith.

Then, the greatest advance of this system has been made among the poorest of the poor, those people who, it is said, will not come to hear the Gospel. Oh, but that is a *lie*, for they *will* come to hear the Gospel if the Gospel is but preached so that they can understand it! But it is to the scandal of many Christian Churches that these poor people will not go to them, and yet these very same people are affected by this Puseyism! Yes, and get converted to it, too, and go down upon their knees as earnest worshippers, and are thorough believers in the whole thing!

Now, how is this done? Well, I will tell you. It is in this way—the priests who believe in this thing do honestly believe in it! They believe it to be the Truth of God, and they hold it with a grip that is not relaxed, and they are not ashamed to suffer reproach for it but come out boldly in their own colors. Not hiding, and playing, and shuffling, as some others have done—ashamed to confess what they have done—but they have come out boldly. And let me say, all honor to them for the honorable courage they have displayed in their dishonorable work!

I like to give the devil his due, and if you see courage even in a foe, you can but let it be called courage. I like, I must say I *revere* the courage of those who will stand up for Rome in the teeth of a prevalent Protestantism, as well as the courage of the Protestant who stands up *against* Rome in the midst of a prevalent Romanism. Now, if they have done all this, and they have done it very much through the real earnestness of the priests, have we not some such courage and earnestness as that among *our* ministers? I hope that if the ministers have failed here, each one will begin to correct himself and that we shall become as earnest and as bold in our cause as ever they can be in theirs.

But the next thing is this—they make all their members and all their admirers earnest missionaries. You shall find them spreading their little tracts, dropping their books, saying a word to those young men in the shop, talking a little to that young lady in the drawing room. You shall find them everywhere sending round their Sisters of Mercy. A minister I know went into the house of one of his members and said, “There is a Sister of Mercy going round near here. Does she call at this house?” “Oh, yes,” was the answer, “certainly. She goes into every room in the house.”

“Well,” he said, “but I did not know that *I* dared to go into every room. Does the Sister of Mercy really go into every room here in the house?” “Oh, yes, Sir, and into every room in the street.” “Well, how is that?” “Oh, I don’t know, Sir, but she gets in somehow or other.” And why should not *we* get in somehow or other? What they can do, why cannot we do? Shall they do after their fashion what we dare not do and cannot do? Oh, it is a fine thing that the soldiers of the Pope should be braver than the soldiers of the Cross. Shall it be so?

Oh, God forbid! May the old spirit, and the old valor, and the old enthusiasm come back to the Christian Church and there is enough yet to save London! There is enough yet for us to send back the tide of Popery! There is enough yet to vindicate the Gospel, and to show that it is yet a thing of power, mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds! Only we must come to this—that our work, our activity—must drive itself into the special channel of doing the work of Him that has sent us, and doing it at once.

III. Thirdly, as there is a necessity for work, and a specialty of effort, so there is A LIMITATION OF TIME: “I must work the work of Him that sent Me while it is day.” This limitation of time sounds very weightily to *my* ears, coming, as it does, from the lips of Christ. Jesus Christ, the Immortal, the Ever-living, yet says, “I, I must work while it is day!” My Brethren, if anyone could have postponed work, it was our eternal Lord! See Him. He is in Heaven, but He is still working!

There are a thousand ways in which He can serve His Church. We believe not in the intercession of the *saints*—they cannot work for us in that land of rest after they quit this world of labor—but we do believe in the intercession of the saints’ *Master*. He can pray for us still. The Head of the Church is always active, and yet He said, “I must work while it is day!” Then, see with what force it comes to you and to me, for we can do nothing more with our hands when once the turf has covered our head! All, as to work, is over then, so heed it as an omen. That word is full of portent which you hear—“while it is day.”

How long will it be “day” with us? Some days are very short. These wintry days are soon over. My young Sister, my young Brother, your day may be very brief—work while you have it. Is there a sign of consumption? Work, then! Do not make that an excuse for idleness, but an argument for labor. Work while it is day. Or, if there is no such sign, remember that still your sun may go down before it reaches its noon.

O young Man, wait not till your powers are ripe and your opportunities are large, but say, “I must work the works of Him that sent me while it is day.” You may never live to be one and twenty. Oh, be a soul-winner before you are a man! Dear Sister, seek to be a mother in Israel, a matron

for Jesus Christ while yet you are but a girl. Seek to win souls for Jesus while you, yourselves, are but lambs in Jesus' fold. "While it is day."

Some of you are getting gray and your day cannot be very much longer. Eventide has come and the shadows are drawn out. Now you must not make the infirmities of old age an excuse for being altogether out of harness. The Master asks not from you what you cannot render, but such strength as you still have, give to Him "while it is day," feeling that you must work the works of Him that sent you. "While it is day. While it is day." If I had a prophet's eye, and could pick out the persons here for whom the bell will toll during the next month, how this text might suit them! "While it is day!"

Dear Mother, if you had only another thirty days—another month to live, and you knew it—how you would pray for your children during that month! How you would talk to those dear boys about their souls, though you have never taken them aside and spoken to them before! Dear Sunday school Teachers, if you knew that you should only go to school one, or two, or three, or four more Sundays, how solemnly would you now begin to talk with those children in your class! And yet, remember, this is the way in which we ought to live and work always.

You know Baxter's words—

***"I preach as tho' I ne'er might preach again,
And as a dying man to dying men."***

Let us do the same. Then, supposing you should live 10, 20, or 30 years longer, yet how brief those years are! And when they are gone, they seem but as yesterday! So let me even ring the bell myself. Let me sound the text like a knell in your ear, "While it is day! While it is day! While it is day!" And, having thus reminded you of your own mortality, let me give the text another sound, as I bid you remember that the "day" may soon be passed—not to you—but to the objects of your care. Let me, if you would loiter, remind you that there are two lives here to be insured—another life as well as your own. "While it is day."

You cannot speak—you will not have an opportunity of speaking to some people in London tomorrow—for they will die tonight. It is impossible that you should have an opportunity of speaking to 2,000 of them next week, for they will die this week. The bills of mortality will demand the insatiable hunger of death will call for them. They must go. Oh, work, then, "While it is day" with them! And with some it is "day" only for a very short time, even though they may live long. For, with some men, their "day" is only the one occasion when they go to a place of worship! The one occasion when there is sickness in the house, and the missionary enters. The one occasion when a Christian comes across their path and has a fair opportunity of speaking to them of Christ.

Many of our friends here in London have not a day of mercy, in a certain sense. They do not hear the Gospel. It does not come across their track. A bishop once said that it would have been well for some people in London if they had been born in Calcutta, for if they had been born in Calcutta, Christian earnestness might have found them out. But living as they do, in some of the back slums of London, none care for their souls at all. Ah, then, since their day may be so brief and yours is so brief, too, let each gird up his loins tonight, and say, "I must work the works of Him that sent me while it is day."

You came over Blackfriars Bridge tonight—you may drop down dead on it as you go back! You have come from your house tonight, and you have left at home a dear friend to whom you wish to speak about his soul. Do it tonight, for he may die in the night. I think I read it in the life of Dr. Chalmers, that on one occasion he spent an evening with a number of friends and there was present a Highland chieftain, a very interesting character. They spent the evening in telling anecdotes of their lives, and repeating extracts from many entertaining works of voyages and travels—spent the evening, as we should think, very properly, indeed.

And after having very much enjoyed themselves, they went to bed. At midnight, the whole family were startled from their sleep, for the Highland chieftain was in the pangs and agonies of death. He went up to his chamber in sound health, but died in the night. The impression upon Chalmers' mind was this: "Had I known that he would have so died, would not the evening have been differently spent? Then ought it not to have been spent in a very different manner by men all of whom might have died?" He felt as if the blood of that man's soul, in some measure, fell upon him. The occurrence itself was a lasting blessing to him. May it be so to us in the hearing of the story, and from this time forth may we work with all our might "while it is day."

IV. We close tonight with the last words of the text: "The night comes when no man can work." Here is the REMEMBRANCER OF OUR MORTALITY. "The night comes." You cannot put it off. As sure as night comes in its due season to the earth, so death comes to you. There are no arts nor maneuvers by which night can be deferred or prevented, nor by which death can be postponed or altogether adjourned. "The night comes," however much we may dread it, or however much we may long for it. It comes with stealthy tread, surely, and in its appointed time. "The night comes."

The night comes for the pastor who has labored for his flock. For the evangelist who has preached with earnestness. For the Sunday school teacher who has loved her charge. For the missionary who has worked for souls. "The night comes." The night comes for the sitters in the pews. For the father, the mother, the daughter, the husband, the wife. "The night comes." Dear Hearer, shall you need to be reminded that the night comes for *you*?

Will you take it home to yourself, or will you, nursing man's hapless delusion, "think all men mortal but yourself?" The night comes when the eyes shall be closed, when the limbs shall grow cold and stiff, when the pulse shall be feeble, and at last shall stop its beating. "The night comes." Solomon thought this out for all mankind: "No man has power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither has he power in the day of death: and there is no discharge in that war."

To the Christian worker it is sometimes a dreary thought. I have plans in action for the cause of God, upon some of which I have just newly entered, and I sometimes think I should like to live to see them in greater maturity. Perhaps I may, but I daily feel as if I should not. Constantly it haunts me—I may commence these things, but if I do not do all I can do today, I may never have a tomorrow. And, therefore, I say again what I have said a thousand times in my own soul—that I will do all I can now. As for the years that are to come, they must shift for themselves. It is no

use, when starting plans, to look forward to what they may grow into in years to come, and then to write down as our work what may spring out of our work.

No, we must do immediately and at once all that has to be done. God can afford to wait with His work, but we cannot afford to delay with ours. We must work now, "while it is day, for the night comes when no man can work." The coming of the night, though always comfortable to the Christian when he recollects that he shall see his Master, is yet sometimes a very heavy thought to us who are engaged in many works for Christ and who would like to live to see some of those works prospering. How dreary the conclusion! "When no man can work."

Mother, you cannot bend over your children and teach them the way of life when you have departed. If you would have them taught in the things of God, your voice, at least, will never teach them, *then*, of the love of Jesus. Missionary, if that district of yours is unattended, and souls are lost, you at least can never make up for the damage you have done, for the mischief which you have caused. Your memory and your love are past. You are gone. The place that knew you once knows you no more. Among the deeds of the living you can take no share.

If you lifted, by your example, the floodgates of sin, you cannot return to let them down again, or to stem the current. If you missed opportunities of serving Jesus here, you cannot come back again to retrieve them. If one were a warrior, and had lost a battle, one might pant for another day to dawn for another conflict yet to retrieve the campaign. But when you lose the battle of *life*, you shall never have it to fight again. The tradesman may have gone bankrupt once, but he trusts that, with more careful dealing, he may yet achieve success.

But bankruptcy in our spiritual service is bankruptcy forever, and we have no chance of retrieving our loss! It is a night in which no man can work. The myriads before the Throne of God can do no service *here*. The poverty of London they cannot alleviate. Its shame and sin they cannot remove. They can praise God, but they cannot help *man*. They can sing unto Him that loved them and washed them, but they cannot preach *of* Him, nor proclaim to those who need to be washed at the Fountain that is filled with His blood. It were almost to be desired that they *could*, for surely they would do the work so much better than we can do it!

But the Master has decreed otherwise. They must fight no more! They must stand and look on at the battle. They must delve the field no longer. They shall eat the fruit, but they cannot till the soil. The work is left to those who are still here. Let us have no regrets because they cannot join in it, but rather let us thank God that He reserves to *us* all the honor as well as all the labor. Let us plunge into the work *now*! As the British soldiers in battle, when few, were told by their king that he hoped there was not one man there who desired that they should be more, for, said he, "the fewer the men, the greater each man's share of the honor," so let us not desire that we should have helpers from the skies.

With the might of God upon us. With the open Word still full of precious promises. With the Mercy Seat still rich in blessing. With the Holy Spirit, the irresistible Deity, still dwelling in us. With the precious name of Jesus which makes Hell tremble, still to cheer us, let us go forth feeling that we "must work while it is day for the night comes when no

man can work.” Let us go forth determined that we will work while the day lasts—and hearing the chariot wheels of eternity behind us—we will speed on with all our might and main.

But all that I have been saying applies but very little to some of you, for you have never given yourselves to God. You are still servants of Satan, and you cannot serve God. O poor Souls, do you know why it is that we want Christian people to be earnest? Why, it is in order that *you* may be saved! We should not have much need of all this stirring up of Christians if it were not for *you*. You are without God. You are without Christ. You are on your way to everlasting ruin, some of you! And some of you, too, who have heard the Gospel for many years, know as much about it as I do, though you know nothing about its power within your own souls.

Is it not strange that while we are so much in earnest about *you*, you are not in earnest about yourselves? If there were a woman’s child out there in the street, and a dozen women tried to catch it up before it was run over by a cab, you would think it was a very singular thing if the mother stood by calm and cool, unexcited, or, as it were, uninterested about it! And yet here is your *soul*, and there are full as many people in this venerable Chapel tonight who feel anxious about you, and wish they could save you. Yet *you* do not care about your own soul!

Well, now, if you should be lost forever, it will be no wonder, will it? You do not value yourself at all. You throw yourself away. Who shall be blamed for this? O dear Hearers, shall this be one of the thorns in your pillow forever? “I took no thought about my soul. I set no value upon it, but I carelessly cast it away”? Shall this keen remorse keep up the flames unquenchable that shall forever torture your conscience: “I would not think of everlasting things. I played the fool, and danced my way into Hell. I trifled where God was earnest. I was careless where ministers wept. I was frivolous where Christ bled”?

Oh, I beseech you, consider your ways, and remember that whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved! Believe in Him! Trust Him! That is the way of salvation. Rest upon Him! And the Lord grant that when you have so done, being saved, you may feel the impulse of my text and say, “I, too, must join with the band of workers saved by Christ! I, too, must say as Christ said, ‘I must work the works of Him that sent Me while it is day, for the night comes, when no man can work.’”

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THE SPUR

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**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 31, 1870,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***"I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day:
the night comes, when no man can work."
John 9:4.***

IF this ninth chapter of John is intended to be a continuation of the history contained in the eighth, as we think it is, it brings before us a very extraordinary fact. You will observe in the eighth chapter that our Lord was about to be stoned by the Jews. He therefore withdrew Himself from the circle of His infuriated foes, and passed through the crowd, not, I think, in a hurried manner, but in a calm and dignified way—as one not at all disconcerted, but wholly self-possessed. His disciples, who had seen His danger, gathered round Him while He quietly retreated. The group wended their way with firm footsteps till they reached the outside of the Temple.

At the gate there sat a man well-known to have been blind from his birth. Our Savior was so little flurried by the danger which had threatened Him that He paused and fixed His eyes upon the poor beggar, attentively surveying him. He stayed His onward progress to work the miracle of this man's healing. If it is so that the two chapters make up but one narrative, and I think it is, though we are not absolutely sure, then we have before us a most memorable instance of the marvelous calmness of our Savior while under danger.

When the Jews took up stones to stone Him, He did not needlessly expose His life, but after He had withdrawn a very little space from the immediate danger He was struck by the sight of human misery and stood still awhile in all calmness of heart to do a deed of mercy. Oh, the Divine majesty of benevolence! How brave it makes a man! How it leads him to forget himself and despise danger, and become so calm that He can coolly perform the work which is given him to do!

I think I see our Savior thus considerate for others, and unmindful of Himself. May I add that there is a lesson here to us not only for imitation but for consolation! If He, while flying from His enemies, still stops to bless the blind, how much more will He bless us who seek His face now that He is exalted on High? Now that He is clothed with Divine power and Glory at the right hand of the Father? There is nothing to hurry Him now, He is exposed to no danger now. Send up your prayers, breathe out your desires, and He will reply, "According to your faith, so be it unto you."

Reading this cure of the blind man, one is struck, again, with the difference between the disciples and the Master. The disciples looked at this man, blind from his birth, as a great enigma, a strange phenomenon. And they began, like philosophers, to suggest theories as to how it was consistent with Divine Justice that a man should be born blind. They saw that

there must be a connection between sin and suffering—but they could not trace the connection here. So they were all speculating upon the wonderful problem before them, which they knew not how to solve.

This suggestively reminds us of theorists upon another difficulty which never has been explained yet, namely, the origin of evil. They wanted to sail upon the boundless deep, and were anxious that their Master should pilot them. He had other and better work to do. Our Lord gave them an answer, but it was a short and curt one. He Himself was not looking at the blind man from *their* point of view. He was not considering how the man came to be blind, but how his eyes could be opened. He was not so much meditating upon the various metaphysical and moral difficulties which might arise out of the case, but upon what would be the best method to remove from the man his suffering, and deliver him from his piteous plight.

A lesson to us, that instead of enquiring how sin came into the world, we should ask how can we get it *out* of the world. And instead of worrying our minds about how this Providence is consistent with Justice, and how that event can tally with benevolence, we should see how both can be turned to practical account. The Judge of all the earth can take care of Himself. He is not in any such difficulties that He needs any advice of ours. Only presumptuous unbelief ever dares suppose the Lord to be perplexed. It will be much better for us to do the work of Him that sent us than to be judging Divine Providence, or our fellow men. It is ours not to speculate but to perform acts of mercy and love according to the tenor of the Gospel. Let us, then, be less inquisitive and more practical—less for cracking doctrinal nuts—and more for bringing forth the Bread of Life to the starving multitudes.

Once again, as a prefatory remark, our Lord tells us the right way of looking at sorrow and at sin. It was a dreadful thing to see a man shut out from the light of the sun from his very birth. But our Savior took a very encouraging view of it—His view of it was nothing at all desponding, nothing that could suggest complaining. It was most encouraging and stimulating. He explained the man's blindness thus—"Neither has this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him."

The man's calamity was God's opportunity. His distress was an occasion for displaying Divine goodness, wisdom, and power. I see sin everywhere—in myself, in others, in this great city, in the nations of the earth—and very conspicuously sin and suffering in this thrice accursed war. But what shall I say of it? Sit down and wring my hands in utter despair? If so, I shall be incapable of service. No, if I would do good, as Jesus did, I must take His bravely hopeful view of things, and so keep my heart whole, and my loins girt ready for work.

The Master's view of it is that all this mischief furnishes, through the infinite benevolence of God, a platform for the display of Divine Love. I remember in the life of Dr. Lyman Beecher, he tells us of a young convert who, after finding peace with God, was heard by him to say, "I rejoice that I was a lost sinner." Strange matter to be glad about, you will say, for of all things it is most to be deplored. But here was her reason—"Because

God's infinite Grace, and mercy, and wisdom, and all His attributes are glorified in me as they never could have been had I not been a sinner and had I not been lost."

Is not that the best light in which to see the saddest things? Sin, somehow or other, desperate evil as it is, will be overruled to display God's goodness. Just as the goldsmith sets a foil around a sparkling diamond, even so the Lord has allowed moral and physical evil to come into this world to cause His infinite wisdom, Grace, power, and all His other attributes to be the better seen by the whole intelligent universe. Let us look at it in this light, and the next time we see suffering we shall say, "Here is our opportunity of showing what the love of God can do for these sufferers."

The next time we witness abounding sin let us say, "Here is an opportunity for a great achievement of mercy." I suppose great engineers have been very glad of Niagara, that they might span it. Very glad of the Mont Cenis that they might bore it. Very glad of the Suez Isthmus that they might cut a canal through it—glad that there were difficulties that there might be room for engineering skill.

Were there no sin there had been no Savior. If no death, no Resurrection. If no Fall, no new Covenant. If no rebellious race, no Incarnation, no Calvary, no Ascension, no second advent. That is a grand way of looking at evil, and marvelously stimulating. Though we do not know, and perhaps shall never know the deepest reason why an infinitely gracious God permitted sin and suffering to enter the universe, yet we may at least encourage this practical thought—God will be glorified in the overcoming of evil and its consequences. Therefore let us gird up our loins in God's name for our part of the conflict.

Thus much by way of preface. Now I shall invite you, this morning, and may God assist you while I invite, to consider first of all, the Master Worker. And, secondly, ourselves as workers under Him.

I. The text is a portrait Of THE GREAT MASTER WORKER. We will read it again—"I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day: the night comes, when no man can work." And first observe, this Master Worker takes His own share in the work—"I must work"—*I*, Jesus, the Son of Man, for two or three years working here on earth in public ministry, *I*, I must work.

There is a sense in which all Gospel work is Christ's. As the atoning Sacrifice, He treads the winepress alone. As the great Head of the Church, all that is done is to be ascribed to Him. But only in the sense in which He used these words—speaking of His human nature, speaking of Himself as living among the sons of men—there was a portion of the work of relieving this world's woe, and scattering Gospel Truth among men that He must do, and nobody else could do. "I must work."

"I must preach, and pray, and heal, even I, the Christ of God." In salvation, Jesus stands alone. In life-giving He has no human co-worker. But in light-giving, which He refers to in the fifth verse—"As long as I am in the world, I am the Light of the world"—in light-giving He has many companions. Though anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows in

this respect, yet is it true that all His saints are the light of the world, even as Jesus Christ, while in the world was the world's light.

There were some to be cured by Him who could not be cured by Peter, or James, or John. Some to have the Good News brought to them who must not receive it from any lips but His own. Our Lord, when He became the Servant of servants, took His share in the common labors of the elect brotherhood. How this ought to encourage us! It is enough for the general if he stands in the place of observation and directs the battle. We do not usually expect that the commander shall take a personal share in the work of the conflict.

But with Jesus it is not so! He fought in the ranks as a common soldier. While as God-Man, Mediator, He rules and governs all the economy of Grace, yet as partaker of our flesh and blood He once bore the burden and heat of the day. As the great Architect and Master Builder He supervises all. Yet there is a portion of His spiritual temple which He condescended to build with His own hands. Jesus Christ has seen actual service, and actually resisted unto blood, amid the dust and turmoil of the strife.

This made Alexander's soldiers valiant, it is said, because if they were wearied by long marches Alexander did not ride, but marched side by side with them. And if a river had to be crossed in the teeth of opposition, foremost amidst all the risk was Alexander himself. Let this be our encouragement—Jesus Christ has taken a *personal* share in the evangelization of the world. He has taken not only His own part as Head, and Prophet, and High Priest, and Apostle, in which He stands alone, but He has taken His part among the common builders in the erection of the New Jerusalem. "I must work the work of Him that sent Me."

Note, next, that our Lord laid great stress upon the gracious work which was laid upon Him. "I must work the work of Him that sent Me" "Whatever else is not done I must do that. The work allotted me of God, I must, as His servant, faithfully do. The Jews may be close at My heels, their stones may be ready to fall upon Me, but I must fulfill My lifework. I must open blind eyes, and spread the light around me. I can forget to eat bread, I can forget to find for Myself a shelter from the dews that fall so heavily at night, but this work I must do."

Beyond all things the Redeemer felt a constraint upon Him to do His Father's will. "Know you not that I must be about My Father's business?" "The zeal of Your house has eaten Me up." Everything in life yielded in the Savior's case to His master passion. There were some works our Savior would not do. When one asked Him to speak to his brother to divide the inheritance, though that might have been a useful thing, yet Christ did not feel a call to it, and he said, "Who made Me a judge and a divider over you?"

But when it came to the work of giving light, that He *must* do. This was the specialty of His life. To this He bent all His strength. He was like an arrow shot from a bow, speeding not towards two targets, but with undivided force hurrying towards one single end. The unity of His purpose was never for a moment broken—no second object ever eclipsed the first. Certain works of Grace, works of benevolence, works of light-giving, works of

healing, works of saving—these He must do. He must do them, His own part of them He must perform.

He rightly describes this work as the “work of God.” Note that. If ever there lived a man who as man might have taken a part of the honor of the work to himself, it was the Lord Jesus. And yet over and over again He says, “The Father that dwells in Me, He does the works.” As Man He is particularly careful to set us the example of acknowledging constantly that if any work is done by us it is the work of God *through* us. And so, though He says, “I must work,” notice the next words, “the works of Him that sent Me.” They are still my Father’s works when most they are mine. Though I must work them, yet shall they still be ascribed to Him, and He shall derive honor from them. My Brethren, if I do not say much about this in respect to Christ, it is because it seems so much more easy to apply this to us than to Him, and if so easily applied, let it be humbly and practically remembered by us today. My Brother, if you shall win a soul by your work, it is God’s work. If you shall instruct the ignorant, you do it, but it is God that does it by you if it is rightly done.

Learn to acknowledge the hand of God, and yet do not draw back your own. Learn to put out your own hand, and yet to feel that it is powerless unless God makes bare His arm. Combine in your thoughts the need of the all-working God and the duty of your own exertion. Do not make the work of God an excuse for your idleness, neither let your earnest activity ever tempt you to forget that power belongs unto Him. The Savior is a model to us in putting this just in the right form. It is God’s work to open the blind eye. If the eye has been sealed in darkness from birth no man can open it, God must do it. But yet the clay and the spittle must be used, and Siloam’s pool must be resorted to, or the light will never enter the sightless eyes.

So in Grace, it is God’s to illuminate the understanding by His Spirit. It is His to move the affections, His to influence the will, His to convert the entire nature. It is His to sanctify, and His to save. Yet you, O Believer, are to work this miracle—the Truths of God you shall spread will illuminate the intellect. The arguments you shall use will influence the affections. The reasons you shall give will move the will, the precious Gospel you shall teach will purify the heart. But it is God who does it—God indwelling in the Gospel.

See you to this, for only as you see these two Truths of God will you go to your work aright. I must work personally, and this holy work must be my special business, but I must do it in a right spirit, humbly feeling all the while that it is God’s work in and through me. Our Lord, in this portrait of Himself, as the Master Worker, is clearly seen as owning His true position. He says, “I must work the work of Him that sent Me.” He had not come forth from the Father on His own account. He was not here as a principal, but as a subordinate, as an ambassador sent by His King. His own witness was, “I can of My own self do nothing: as I hear I judge: and My judgment is just because I seek not My own will, but the will of the Father which has sent Me.”

He often reminded His hearers in His preaching that He was speaking in His Father’s name, and not in His own name. As, for instance, when He

said, "The words that I speak unto you I speak not of Myself." He took upon Himself the form of a servant. "The Spirit of the Lord," says He, "is upon Me. For He has anointed Me." God gave Him a commission and gave Him the Grace to carry out that commission—and He was not ashamed to confess His condition of service to the Father.

Though in His Divine Nature, God over all, blessed forever, whose praises ten thousand times ten thousand harpers are rejoiced to sound upon that glassy sea, yet as the Mediator He stooped to be *sent*—sent a commissioned Agent from God, a Servant to do Jehovah's bidding. Because He was such, it behooved Him, as a Servant, to be faithful to Him that sent Him. And Jesus felt this as a part of the Divine constraint, which impelled Him to say, "I must work." "I am a sent Man. I have to give an account to Him that sent Me."

O Brothers and Sisters, I wish we all felt this! For as the Father sent Christ, even so has Christ sent us—and we are acting under Divine authority as Divine representatives, and must, if we would give our account with joy, be faithful to the communion with which God has honored us by putting us in trust with the Gospel of Christ. No man shall serve God aright if he thinks he stands upon an independent footing. It is recognizing your true position that will help to drive you onward in incessant diligence in the cause of your God.

But, dwelling very briefly on each of these points, I must remind you that our Lord did not regard Himself merely as an official, but He threw a hearty earnestness into the work He undertook. I see indomitable zeal glowing like a subdued flame in the very center of the live coal of the text. "I must work the work of Him that sent Me." Not, "I will," "I intend," "I ought," but "*I must.*" Though sent, yet the commission was so congenial to His Nature that He worked with all the alacrity of a volunteer.

He was commissioned, but His own will was His main compulsion. Not of constraint, but willingly the Lord Jesus became a Savior. He could not help it. It was within His very Nature a sacred necessity that He must be doing good. Was He not God, and is not God the fountain of benevolence? Does not Deity, perpetually like the sun, send forth beams to gladden His creatures? Jesus Christ, the God Incarnate, by irresistible instinct must be found bestowing good. Besides, He was so tender, so compassionate, that He must be blessing those that sorrowed.

He felt for that blind man. If the blind man lamented his darkness, yet not more than the Savior lamented it for the poor sufferer's sake. The eyes which Christ fixed on that man were eyes brimming with tears of pity. He felt the miseries of humanity. He was not flinty-hearted, but tender, and full of compassion towards all suffering sons of men. Our Savior, therefore, was self-impelled to His gracious labors. His love propelled Him. He must do the work that He was sent to work.

It is a right thing when a man's business and inclinations run together. You put your son apprentice to a trade which is not congenial to his tastes and he will never make much of it. But when his duty and his own desires run in the same channel, then surely he is likely to prosper. So with Jesus—sent of God, but not an unwilling ambassador—coming as

cheerfully and joyously as if there had been no impetus but His own voluntary wish. He cries in gracious enthusiasm, "I must, I must."

No man does a really good and great work till he feels he *must*. No man preaches well but he who *must* preach. The man sent of God must come under irresistible pressure, even like the Apostle of old, who said, "Though I preach the Gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me, yes, woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel." Or like the eloquent Eliphaz in the book of Job, who spoke last but best—and only spoke at all because he felt like a vessel wanting vent.

Our Savior became so grand a Worker because within His spirit desire kindled and burned and flamed till His Nature was all aglow. He was like a volcano in full action which must pour forth its fiery flood, though in His case the lava was not that which destroys, but that which blesses and makes rich!

Once again, another point in the Savior as a Worker—He clearly saw that there was a fitting time to work, and that this time would have its end. In a certain sense Christ always works. For Zion's sake He does not rest, and for Jerusalem's sake He does not hold His peace in His intercessions before the Eternal Throne. But, my Brethren, as a Man, preaching, and healing, and relieving the sick on earth, Jesus had His day, as every other man, and that day ended at the set time. He used a common Eastern Proverb which says that men can only work by day, and when the day is over it is too late to work.

And He meant that. He Himself had an earthly lifetime in which to labor, and when that was over He would no more perform the kind of labor He was then doing. He called His lifetime a day. To show us that He was impressed with the shortness of it. We, too, often reckon life as a matter of years, and we even think of the years as though they were of extreme length, though every year seems to spin round more swiftly than before. And men who are growing gray will tell you that life seems to them to travel at a much faster rate than in their younger days.

To a child a year appears a lengthened period. To a man even ten years is but a short space of time. To God the Eternal a thousand years are but as one day. Our Lord here sets us an example of estimating our time at a high rate on account of its brevity. It is but a day you have at the longest. That day, how short! Young man, is it your morning? Are you just converted? Is the dew of penitence still trembling upon the green blade? Have you just seen the first radiance which streams from the eyelids of the morning? Have you heard the joyous singing of birds?

Up with you, Man! And serve your God with the love of your espousals! Serve Him with all your heart! Or have you known your Lord now so long that it is noon with you, and the burden and heat of the day are on you? Use all diligence, make good speed, for your sun will soon decline. And have you long been a Christian? Then the shadows lengthen, and your sun is almost down. Quick with you, Man, let both your hands be used! Strain every nerve, put every sinew to the stretch. Do all at all times, and in all places, what your ingenuity can devise, or your zeal can suggest to you, for the night comes wherein no man can work.

I love to think of the Master with these furious Jews behind Him, yet stopping because He must do the work of healing! Because His day was still not ended. He cannot die, He feels, till His day is over. His time is not yet come, and if it were, He would close His life by doing one more act of mercy. And so He stops to bless the wretched, and afterwards passes on His way. Be you swift to do good at all times. "Be you steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord."

Knowing that the time is short, redeem the time, because the days are evil. Press much into little by continuous diligence. Glorify your God greatly while the short taper of your life burns on, and God accept you as He accepted His Son. Thus much upon Christ, the Master Worker.

II. Now I shall want your earnestness while I try to speak of OURSELVES AS WORKERS UNDER HIM. Here I must go over much the same ground, for first I must call to your remembrance that on us there rests personal obligation. Singular, distinct, personal obligation. "I must work." "I," "I must work the works of Him that sent me." We are in danger nowadays of losing ourselves in societies and associations. We had need labor to maintain the personality of our consecration to Christ Jesus.

The old histories are very rich in records of deeds of personal daring. We cannot expect modern warfare to exhibit much of the same because the fighting is done so much by masses and so much by machinery. Even thus, nowadays, I am afraid our mode of doing Christian work is getting to be so mechanical, so much en masse, that there is barely room in ordinary cases for personal deeds of daring and singular acts of valor.

Yet, mark you, the success of the Church will lie in this last—it is in each man's feeling, "I have something to do for Christ which an angel could not do for me, that the strength of a Church must lie under God. God has committed to me a certain work which, if it is not done by me, will never be done. A certain number of souls will enter Heaven through my agency. They will never enter there in any other way. God has given His Son power over all flesh to give eternal life to as many as He has given Him, and Christ has given me power over some part of the flesh. By my instrumentality they will get eternal life, and by no other agency. I have a work to do, and I must do it."

Dear Brothers and Sisters, our Church will be grandly equipped for service when you all have this impression, when there is no casting the work on the minister, nor on the more gifted Brethren, nor leaving all to be done by distinguished sisters. But when each one feels, "I have my work, and to my work I will dedicate my whole strength to do it in my Master's name."

Now observe, secondly, the personal obligation in the text compels us to just such work as Christ did. I explained to you what it was. We are not called meritoriously to save souls, for alone He is the Savior, but we are called to enlighten the sons of men. That is to say, sin is not known to be sin by many. Our teaching and example must make sin to appear sin to them. The way of salvation by the substitutionary Sacrifice of Christ is quite unknown to a large part of mankind. It is ours simply and incessantly to be telling out that soul-saving story. This work must be done whatever we leave undone.

Some men are spending their time in making money, that is the main object of their lives. They would be as usefully employed probably if they spent all their lives in collecting pins or cherrystones. Whether a man lives to accumulate gold coins or brass nails, his life will be equally groveling and end in the same disappointment. Money-making, fame-making, and power-getting are mere pieces of play, mere sports and games for children.

The work of Him that sent us is a far nobler thing. It is permanent gain if I gain a soul. It is lasting treasure if I win the Lord's approval. I am forever richer if I give a man one better thought of God, if I bring to a darkened soul the light from Heaven, or lead one erring heart to peace. If one spirit hastening downward to Hell is by my means directed to a blissful Heaven, I have done some work worth doing.

And such work, Brethren, we must do, whatever else we leave undone. Let us make all else in this world subservient to this which is our life work. We have our callings, we ought to have them—the man who will not work, neither let him eat. But our earthly calling is not our lifework. We have a high calling of God in Christ Jesus, and this must have the pre-eminence. Poor or rich, healthy or sick, honored or disgraced, we must glorify God. This is a necessity. All else *may* be, this *must* be.

We resolve, sternly resolve, and desperately determine that we will not throw away our lives on trifling objects, but by us God's work must and shall be done. Each man will do his own share, God helping him. May the ever blessed Holy Spirit give us power and Grace to turn our resolves into acts. Let us not forget the Truth which I declared to you before, namely, that it is God's work which we are called upon to do. Let us look to the text again. "I must work the work of Him that sent Me."

I can discover no greater motive for earnestness in all the world than this—that the work I have to do is God's work. There is Samson—the strength which lies in Samson is not his own—it is God's strength. Is that, therefore, a cause why Samson should lie still and be idle? No, but it is a mighty sound of a trumpet to stir the blood of the hero to fight for the people of God. If the strength of Samson is not the mere force of sinew and muscle, but force given him of the Almighty One, then up with you, Samson, and smite the Philistines! Slay again your thousands!

What? Dare you sleep with God's Spirit upon you? Up, man! To sleep if you were but a common Israelite were treason to your country, but when God is in you and with you, how can you be idle? No, put forth your strength and rout your foes! When Paul was in Corinth, and God worked special miracles by his hands, so that handkerchiefs which were taken from his body healed the sick, was that a reason why Paul should withdraw himself to some quiet retreat and do nothing?

To my mind there appears to be no more potent argument why Paul should go from house to house and lay his hands on all around, and heal the sick. So with you—you have the power to work miracles, my Brother. The telling out of the Gospel, accompanied by the spirit of God, works moral and spiritual miracles. Because you can work these miracles, should you say, "God will do His own work"? No, Man, but right and left, at all times and in all places, go and tell out the soul-saving story, and God speed you! Because God works by you, therefore work!

A small vessel, lying idle in dock, without a freight, is a loss to its owner. But a great steamship, of many hundred horsepower, cannot be suffered to remain unemployed. The greater the power at command, the more urgently are we bound to use it. The indwelling power of God is put forth in reply to faith and prayer—shall we not labor to obtain it? The fact that the Church's work is God's work rather than hers is no cause why she should indulge in sloth. If she had only her own strength, she might waste it with less of crime. But having God's strength about her, she dares not loiter.

God's message to her this morning is, "Awake, awake! Put on your strength, O Zion. Put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city." Would God that this message might come to every heart so that all of us would arise, because God is in our midst.

Brethren, notice in the text our obligation resulting from our position. We are all sent as Jesus was if we are Believers in Christ. Let us feel our obligation pressing upon us. What would you think of an angel who was sent from the Throne of God to bear a message and who lingered on the way or refused to go? It was midnight, and the message came to Gabriel and his fellow songsters, "Go and sing over the plains of Bethlehem, where shepherds keep their flocks. Here is your sonnet, 'Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will towards men.'"

Could you conceive that they halted, that they wished to decline the task? Impossible with such music, and with such a commission given from such a Lord! They sped joyously on their way. Your mission is not less honorable than that of the angels. You are sent to speak of good things which bring peace and good will to men, and glory to God. Will you loiter? Can you any longer be dumb? No, as the Lord Jesus sends you, go forth, I pray you, go at once, and with joy tell out the story of His love.

I could conceive an angel being almost tempted to linger, if sent to execute vengeance, and to deluge fields with blood for the iniquity of nations. I dare not think that he would hesitate even then, for these holy spirits do the Lord's bidding most unquestioningly. But if the mission is of mercy, the loving spirit of an angel would leap for joy and be quickened by the sweetness of the errand as well as by the commission of his Lord. We, too, sent of God, if sent on hard service, are bound to go. But if sent on so sweet a service as the proclaiming of the Gospel, how can we tarry?

What? To tell the poor criminal shut up in the dungeon of despair that there is liberty! To tell the condemned that there is pardon! To tell the dying that there is life in a look at the crucified One—do you find this hard? Do you call this toil? Should it not be the sweetest feature of your life that you have such blessed work as this to do?

If tonight, when the day is over, when you are in your chamber alone, you should suddenly behold a vision of angels who should speak to you in celestial accents and nominate you to holy service in the Church, you would surely feel impressed by such a visit. But Jesus Christ Himself has come to you, has bought you with His blood, and has set you apart by His redemption. You have confessed His coming to you, for you have been baptized into His death, and declared yourself to be His. And are you less

impressed by Christ's coming than you would have been by an angel's visit?

Stir yourself up, my Brother! The hand of the Crucified has touched you, and He has said, "Go in this your might." The eyes that wept over Jerusalem have looked into your eyes and they have said with all their ancient tenderness, "My servant, go and snatch dying sinners like brands from the burning by publishing My Gospel." Will you be disobedient to the heavenly vision, and despise Him that speaks to you from His Cross on earth and from His Throne in Heaven? Blood-washed as you are, blood-bought as you are, give yourself up more fully than ever you have done to the delightful service which your Redeemer allots you. Bestir yourself and say, "I, even I, must work the work of Him that sent me while it is day."

You little know what good you may do, my Brethren, if you always feel the burden of the Lord as you ought to do. I was led to think of that fact from a letter which I have here, which did my heart good as I read it. I daresay the dear friend who wrote it is present—he will not mind my reading an extract. He had fallen into very great sin, and though often attending at this Tabernacle, and being frequently stirred in heart, his conversion was not brought about till one day riding by railway to a certain town.

He says, "I entered into a compartment in which were three of the students of the Tabernacle College. Although I did not know them at first, the subject of temperance was introduced by myself. I found two of them were total abstainers, and one was not. We had a nice friendly chat and one of the abstainers asked me if I enjoyed the pardon of my sins and peace with God. I told him I regularly attended the Tabernacle, but I could not give up all my sins. He then told me how, in his own case, he had found it very desirable to be much in prayer and communion with God, and how he was thus kept from many besetting sins.

"I concluded my business in the town, and was returning homeward. I was rather dull, as I had no money with me to pay for my ride home, and consequently had to walk all the way. I heard song-singing at a little Chapel. I entered, and was invited to a seat. It was H_____ Baptist Chapel. It turned out that these three students with whom I had come in the train some few hours before were there, and it was an occasion of deep concern to many, as one of the students, who was their pastor, was taking his farewell of his flock that evening, and many were in tears, himself also.

"I asked one of the students to pray for me. He did so, and I tried to lift up my whole heart to God, and, as it were, leave all my sins outside. But I found them a ponderous weight. At last I believed in Jesus and exercised a simple faith such as I never knew before. I became quite contrite and humiliated. I found the Lord there. He is sweet to my soul. God has, for Christ's sake, forgiven me all my sins. I am happy now. I shall ever pray for the students at the Pastors' College, and never, I hope, begrudge my mite for the support of the same. God be praised for the students!"

See you thus that a casual word about Christ and the soul will have its reward. I heard once of a clergyman who used to go hunting and when he was reproved by his bishop, he replied that he never went hunting when he was on duty. But he was asked, "When is a clergyman off-duty?" And

so with the Christian, when is he off duty? He ought to be always about his Father's business, ready for anything and everything that may glorify God. He feels that he is not sent on Sunday only, but sent always, not called now and then to do good, but sent throughout his whole life to work for Christ.

But I must finish. The greatest obligations seem to me, to lie upon each one of us to be serving Christ, because of the desperate case of our ungodly neighbors. Many of them are dying without Christ, and we know what their end must be—an end that has no end—a misery that has no bounds. Oh, the woe which sin causes on earth! But what is that to the never-ending misery of the world to come!

Our time in which to serve the Lord on earth is very short. If we would glorify God as dwellers on earth, we must do it now. We shall soon, ourselves, be committed to the grave, or they whom we would gladly bless may go there before us. Let us, then, bestir ourselves! I felt much weight on my mind yesterday, from the consideration that we, as a nation, are enjoying peace, an unspeakable blessing—the value of which none of us can rightly estimate. Now, if we do not make, as a Christian Church, the most earnest endeavors to spread abroad the Gospel in these times of peace, before long this nation may also be plunged in war. War is the most unmitigated of curses, and among its other mischiefs, it turns the mind of the people away from all religious thoughts.

Now while we have peace, and God spares this land the horrors of war, ought not the Church of God to be intensely eager to use her opportunities? The night comes. I know not how dark that night may be. The political atmosphere seems heavily charged with evil elements. The result of the present conflict between France and Prussia may not be what some would hope, for it may again crush Europe beneath a despot's heel. Now, while we have liberty—a liberty which our sires bought at the stake, and sealed with their blood, let us use it. While it is day let us work the works of Him that sent us. And let each man take for his motto the succeeding verse to my text, "As long as I am in the world I am the light of the world."

Take heed that your light be not darkness. Take heed you conceal it not. If it is light, take heed that you despise it not, for if it is ever so little a light, it is what God has given you, and as much as you will be able to give God a joyful account of. If you have any light, though it is but a spark, it is for the *world* you have it. For the sons of men it is lent you. Use it, use it now, and God help you.

O that our light as a Church would shine upon this congregation! How I desire to see all my congregation saved! Let Believers be more in prayer, more in service, more in holiness, and God will send us His abundant blessing, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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THE BLIND BEGGAR OF THE TEMPLE AND HIS WONDERFUL CURE NO. 1977

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 14, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. When He had thus spoken, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said unto him, Go, wash in the Pool of Siloam (which is by interpretation, Sent). He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing.”
John 9:5, 6, 7.*

OUR Savior had been dealing with the Jews and the Pharisees who had bitterly opposed and even taken up stones to cast at Him. He felt much more at home when He could fix His eyes upon poor necessitous beings and bless them with healing and salvation. It is the lot of some of us to be often in controversy with the carnal professors of the present day—and it is a great relief to us to get away from them and their stones—and find out individual sinners and preach to them, in the name of God, the Gospel which spiritually opens the eyes of the blind!

At the gate of the Temple sat a blind beggar who must have been a notable character, for he was possessed of remarkable shrewdness and mother wit. From having long been there, he must have been well known to all who regularly frequented the Temple and to the wider circle of those who came from far to the great yearly gatherings. This man could not see Jesus, but, what was better, Jesus *could* see him. We read in the opening of the chapter—“As Jesus passed by, He saw a man which was blind from his birth.” Many other blind men there were in Israel, but Jesus saw this man with a special eye. I think I see the Savior standing still and looking at him, taking stock of him, listening to his quaint speeches, noting what kind of man he is and exhibiting special interest in him.

This morning there is one in the Tabernacle who cannot see Jesus, for he has no spiritual eyes, but I am convinced that my Master is now looking at him, searching him from head to foot and reading him with discerning eyes. He is considering what He will make of him, by-and-by, for He has the great and gracious intent that He will take this sinner, who is spiritually like the blind beggar, and enlighten him and give him to behold His Glory! I suppose that the blind beggar of the Temple hardly valued sight, for he had been blind from his birth. Those who have seen must greatly miss the light of day, but those who have never possessed sight at all can hardly have an idea of what that sense must be and, therefore, it cannot be so great a deprivation to them.

The person I am searching for at this time has no idea of the joy of true religion for he has no sense of spiritual life and light. He has never seen as yet and, therefore, he does not know his own misery in being blind. He has been blind from birth and, in all probability, he is content to be so, for he does not know the delight which waits upon Heaven-illuminated eyes! Spiritual things to him are an unknown region, of which he has no conception. He is here, at this time, yet he is not looking for salvation, nor desiring it. But Jesus knows the value of sight! He knows the glories which heavenly light would bring home to the mind and He will not be narrowed in His action by human ignorance, but will dispense His bounty according to His own mind which is large as the boundless sea!

This beggar did not pray for sight. At least it is not recorded that he did so. He was a beggar—it was his trade to beg. But among all his petitions, he did not ask for sight. Yet Jesus gave him sight! Know you not that glorious declaration of Free Grace, “I am found of them that sought me not”? Is it not a wonderful thing that Jesus often comes to those who sought Him not? He comes all of a sudden to them in the Sovereignty of His infinite compassion and, before they have begun to pray for the blessing, He has bestowed it upon them! His free love precedes their desires for it! When they wake up to a consciousness of the value of salvation, they find themselves in possession of it—and so their first prayers are mingled with praises! I am persuaded that there are some before me now who are like the man born blind—they do not know what they need. They are not yet aware of the value of the blessing and, consequently, they have not sought it. But today they are going to receive it!

There was this circumstance in favor of the blind beggar, that he was in the way where Jesus was likely to go, for he was at the Temple gate. My Friend, you, too, are on hopeful ground at this time, for you are found in the place where my Lord has often been and where He is very likely to come again! We have prayed Him into this House hundreds of times and we have done so this morning! He has been glorified in this Tabernacle and His friends have so welcomed Him that here He delights to come! Oh that as Jesus passes by, He may stand still and look on you with eyes of infinite mercy!

What was our Lord doing? Truth to tell, He was under a Divine compulsion. He said, “I must work the works of Him that sent Me.” He was looking out for material to work upon—material in which the works of God should be made manifest. Here was the very man, prepared for Christ as clay is prepared for the modeler. Let him receive his sight and all Jerusalem would see the work of the Lord! And even dwellers in far-off lands would hear of it! This blind beggar was the very person the Savior was looking for. My Master walks up and down these aisles and He finds a great many who can see, or who think they can. These He passes by, for, “the whole need not a physician.” But as He goes along He comes, at last, to a poor dark creature, hopelessly, helplessly blind from his birth—and He stops and says, “This is the man. There is room for a miracle here.” It is even so, O Lord! In those empty sockets, or in those withered eyeballs, there is space for healing power to exhibit itself! In that hard heart and stubborn will there is room for renewing Grace! The necessities of the sin-

ner are the opportunities of the Savior and you, poor, guilty, lost and ruined sinner—you are the raw material for Christ's Grace to work upon! You are the very man His forgiving love is looking for!

You who cannot see spiritual things, you who scarcely know what heavenly sight can mean and hardly have a desire to know. You are the very person in whom there is elbow room for Omnipotent Grace—space and scope for the matchless skill of our Savior's love! My Lord stops and looks at you. "This will do," He says. "This is the kind of man I want. Here I can work out My mission and life-purpose. I am the Light of the world and with this darkness I will deal, removing it at once." O Lord Jesus, You are in the highest Heaven now and yet You hear Your servants' prayers from this poor earth! Come into this tabernacle and repeat the wonders of Your love! We do not ask You to open the natural eyes of the blind, but we ask You to give *spiritual* sight to the inly blind, understanding to the erring and salvation to the lost! Prove Yourself to be the Son of the Highest by saying, "Let there be light." These poor blind ones do not pray to You, but *we* ask Grace for them! And surely Your own heart prompts You to answer us! Come at this hour and bless them, to the praise of the glory of Your Grace!

This case of the blind beggar is eminently instructive and, therefore, let us get at it at once in the hope that while we are considering the model case, we may see it repeated in spiritual form in our midst. Holy Spirit, bless our discourse to that end!

I. First, in this man's healing and in the salvation of every chosen soul, we shall see THE GREAT HEALER CONSPICUOUS. If anyone among us shall ever be saved, the Savior will be made great thereby. If we are pardoned, we shall not be honored by the forgiveness, but the royal hand which signed and sealed the pardon shall be greatly extolled. If our eyes are opened, we shall not be made famous for sight, but He that opened our eyes will be made illustrious by the cure. It was thus in this case—and rightly so.

To begin with, in this man's mind, as soon as ever he received sight, "*a Man that was named Jesus*" came to the forefront. Jesus was to him the most important Person in existence! All that he knew of Him, at first, was that He was a Man that was named Jesus. And under that Character Jesus filled the whole horizon of his vision. He was more to him than those learned Pharisees, or than all his neighbors put together! Jesus was exceeding great, for He had opened his eyes. By-and-by, fixing his mind upon that figure, he saw more in it and he declared, "He is a Prophet." He boldly said this when he was running great risks by doing so. To their faces, he told the carping Pharisees, "He is a Prophet." A little further on he came to this, that he believed Him to be the Son of God and worshipped Him.

Now, my dear Friend, if you are saved by Jesus, your star must set, but the star of Jesus must rise and increase in brilliance till it becomes no more a star, but a sun, making your day and flooding your whole soul with light! If we are saved, Christ Jesus must and will have the glory of it. None on earth or in Heaven can rival Jesus in the esteem of souls brought from darkness to light—He is everybody to them. Do you dislike this? Do

you need a share of the spoils, a fragment of the glory? Go your way and be blind, for your condition can never be altered while you refuse to honor the Savior. He that opens a man's eyes deserves grateful praises forevermore.

After this man had received sight, *his testimony was all of Jesus*. It was Jesus that spat, it was Jesus that made the clay, it was Jesus that anointed his eyes. So will it be in your mind with the Gospel of your salvation—it will be “Jesus only.” It is Jesus who became the Surety of the Covenant, Jesus who became the atoning Sacrifice. Jesus is the Priest, the Interposer, the Mediator, the Redeemer! We know Jesus as Alpha and Jesus as Omega. He is the First and He is the Last. In your salvation there will be no mistake about it and no mixture in it—you will have nothing to say about man, or man's merit, or man's will—but on the head which once was wounded with the thorns, you will put all your crowns. Jesus did it, did it all and He must be praised!

It is to be noted that *the authority of Jesus issued the saving command*. “Go, wash.” These were not the words of Peter, or James, or John, but the words of Jesus and, therefore, the man obeyed them. The Gospel message, “Believe and live,” is not obeyed till you perceive that it is proclaimed by the supreme authority of King Jesus, the Savior. O Sirs, He that bids you believe is that same Lord who can and will give you healing through your obedience to His command. *Trust* because He bids you! The warrant of the Gospel is the authority of Christ. *Obey* His command and you have obtained His salvation! The success of the Gospel command is produced by Him that spoke it. It is effectual because it comes forth from His mouth. “Where the word of a king is, there is power” and the Gospel is the Word of the great King and, therefore, those who listen to it find it to be the power of God unto salvation!

This man, when he had received sight, attributed it most distinctly and undividedly to Jesus. He said expressly, “He has opened my eyes.” Whenever he delivered his testimony, whether to his neighbors or to the Pharisees, there was no uncertain sound about it—he had been enlightened by Jesus—and by Jesus alone. And to Him he gave all the glory—and he was right in doing so!

Come, then, lend me your ears. Oh, you who would find light this morning, give me your thoughts at this moment! Endeavor to realize that Jesus Christ is a living and acting Person. He is not dead! He has risen long ago. Being alive and exalted to the highest heavens, He is clothed with infinite power and majesty and is mighty to save. In a spiritual way, He is still among us, working according to His gracious Nature. To us He is not an absent Christ, nor a sleeping Christ, but He is still doing what He did when He was on earth—only He now works in the spiritual, whereas once He worked in the physical world. He is now present to save, present to open the eyes of the spiritually blind, present to bless you to whom I speak!

Understand that He is looking upon you at this moment. Standing in front of you, His shadow is now falling upon you. He is considering your case. Are you praying? He is listening. Has it scarcely got so far as a prayer? Is it but a desire? He is reading that desire. As it passes like a

shadow across the camera of your soul, He is thinking of you. At this moment He is able to say the Word that shall take the film from your eyes and let in the everlasting Light of Grace. Do you believe this? If so, then cry to Him—"Lord, grant me to receive my sight." He will hear you! Perhaps while I am speaking He will send the Light of God. To your intense delight you shall find yourself in a new world. Escaping from darkness, you shall enter into His marvelous Light!

Realize, further, that the great change that you need in order to salvation is beyond all mortal power. You cannot effect it yourself, nor can all "the help of men and angels joined" effect it for you. It is even beyond your own conception. As a carnal man, you do not know what spiritual things are and you cannot fashion an idea of them. A dead man cannot know what life is. Truly, if he could live again, he would have some knowledge of life derived from his former life, but as to you, it would be all novel and strange, for you have never lived unto God. You cannot conceive what heavenly sight is, for you were born blind. May the Lord do a new thing in you at this moment and bring you into a new Heaven and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness!

Remember that you must have this miracle worked upon you. If the blind man had remained blind, he might have continued a tolerably happy beggar. He seems to have had very considerable mental resources and he might have made his way in the world as well as others of the begging confraternity. But you cannot be happy or safe unless the Lord Jesus opens your eyes. There remains for you nothing but the blackness of darkness, forever, unless light from Heaven visits you. You must have Christ or die! Here is the blessedness of it, that at this moment He is still in the midst of us, able to save to the uttermost and willing, now, to repeat the miracles of His mercy to those who will trust in Him to do so. I think I can almost hear the prayer struggling in your bosom. Silent and unclothed in words, it sits on your lips. Let it speak! Say, "Lord, open my eyes this day." He will do it! Blessed be His name! He has come on purpose to open the eyes of the blind!

II. Having spoken upon the great Healer, as He stands conspicuous in the miracle, I would now conduct your thoughts, in the second place, to THE SPECIAL MEANS OBSERVABLE in the miracle. Jesus could have healed this man without means, or He could have healed Him by other means, but He chose to work the cure in a manner which to all ages will remain a grand sermon, an instructive parable of Grace. He spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle—and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay. This is a picture of the Gospel.

It meets with many modern criticisms. In the first place, the mode of cure *seems very eccentric*. Spat and made clay with the spittle and the dust! Very amazing! Very odd! Thus odd and singular is the Gospel in the judgment of the worldly-wise. "Why," says one, "it seems such a strange thing that we are to be saved by believing." Men think it so odd that 50 other ways are straightway invented! Though the new methods are, not one of them, worth describing, yet everybody seems to think that the old-fashioned way of, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ" might have been

greatly improved upon. The way of justification by faith is peculiarly open to criticism and is about the last that this wise world would have selected!

Yet, eccentric as it may seem for Christ to heal with spittle and dust, it was the best and wisest way for His purpose. Suppose, instead, He had put His hands into His pocket and had taken out a gold or ivory box—and out of this box He had taken a little crystal bottle? Suppose He had taken out the stopper and then had poured a drop on each of those blind eyes—and they had been opened? What would have been the result? Everybody would have said, “what a wonderful medicine! I wonder what it was! How was it compounded? Who wrote the prescription? Perhaps He found the charm in the writings of Solomon and so He learned to distil the matchless drops.” Thus you see the attention would have been fixed on the *means* used—and the cure would have been ascribed to the medicine rather than to God! Our Savior used no such rare oils or choice spirits, but simply spat and made clay of the spittle, for He knew that nobody would say, “The spittle did it,” or, “It was the clay that did it.”

No, if our Lord seems to be eccentric in the choice of means, yet is He eminently prudent. The Gospel of our Lord Jesus—and there is but *one*—is the wisdom of God, however singular it may seem in the judgment of the worldly wise! It may be thought strange, but it is the sum of all wisdom and those who try it, find it to be so. It would be impossible to improve upon it. Its adaptation to man’s case is marvelous—its suitability to its design is matchless! It blesses man while it gives all glory to God. No one makes the Gospel a rival to Christ, but in every case, by the Gospel, the power which blesses men is manifested as the power of God!

In the next place, the means may appear to some, *offensive to the taste*. Oh, I think I see some of the fine gentry! How they turn up their noses as they read, “He spat!” “He spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle!” It turns the stomachs of those delicate ones! So is it with the Gospel. The Agags who go delicately do not like it. How the men of “culture” sneer at the Gospel for which our fathers died! Hear how they decry the ever-blessed Word of our salvation. They say that it is only fit for old women and idiots—and such fossils of the past ages as the preacher who is now addressing you! We are all fools except these men of progress and our Gospel is disgusting to them. Yes, but stop a minute and disgust may cease. In the miracle before us, the means made use of was spit—but from whose mouth? It was the mouth of Jesus, which is most sweet! No fragrant perfume made of the rarest spices can ever equal the spit of that Divine mouth of His!

And clay? What if it is clay? Clay made by the spittle of the mouth of the Son of God is more precious than “the terrible crystal,” or the rarest powders of the merchant! Thus is it with my Master’s Gospel—it is offensive to those who are proud of themselves. It is offensive to carnal reason, to the idiotic self-complacency of those who, considering themselves to be wise, have become otherwise. But to you that believe, He is precious! How precious? No tongue can tell—

***“What if we trace the globe around,
And search from Britain to Japan?
There shall be no religion found
So just to God, so safe for man.”***

The Gospel is still to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness. But unto us who are saved, it is “Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.”

It is further objected that the Lord healed this man in such a *common-place way!* To spit and make clay of the spittle, why, anybody could do that! Why not have used an imposing ceremony? Why not practice an eclectic method? If it had been one of the doctors of the age, he would have made a great performance of it. His prescription would have been a treat for learned men. Did you ever read Culpepper’s, “Herbal”? I hope you have never taken any of the medicine which that learned herbalist prescribes. In one mess, you will find a dozen articles, each one of them monstrous, and in many a prescription you will find a score or more of herbs most curiously compounded. Such were the prescriptions of still earlier times. If they did no good, they did at least bewilder the patient! And now, today, what is the new Gospel that is proposed to us? It is the Gospel of “culture.” Culture! This, of course, is the monopoly of our superiors. It is only to be enjoyed by very refined persons who have been to college and who carry inside of them a whole university—library and all!

The Gospel, which is made to be plain enough for wayfaring men, is, for that reason, despised. That Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners is too commonplace a teaching. That He bore our sins in His own body on the tree is rejected as an outrageous dogma, unfit for this intelligent age! Oh yes, we know the men and their contemptuous leer. Yet commonplace as our Lord’s medicine was, it was unique. All the philosophers of Greece and all the wise and rich men of Rome could not have compounded another dram of this healing application! Only the Christ possessed that matchless spit—only His fingers could make that special clay. Even thus, if the Gospel should seem commonplace, it is to be remembered that there is not another like it!

Tell me, you that are wise, can you find anything that will bear comparison with it? Christ in the sinner’s place—made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him—can you match this? Jesus redeeming His people from the slavery of sin. You may call it a mercantile Atonement, if you please, and grow black in the face in your rage at the substitutionary Sacrifice, but you cannot equal it! The more abundant your ridicule of the Gospel, the more shall we cling to it, and the better shall we love it! For the very spittle of Christ’s mouth is dearer to us than the deepest thoughts of your most profound philosophers!

I think I hear another objector say that the remedy was *quite inadequate*. Clay made out of spittle would be positively inert and could exercise no healing power upon blind eyes. Just so, we are prepared to hear all this. The clay alone has no efficacy, but when Jesus uses it, it will answer His purpose. The man, after he had washed the clay into the pool, came seeing. The Gospel may appear as if it could not renew the heart and save from evil. To believe in the Lord Jesus Christ seems an unlikely means of producing holiness. Men ask, “What can evangelical preaching do to put down sin?” We point to those who were once dead in sin, who are made alive by faith—and thus we prove the efficacy of the Gospel by facts. “Oh,” they say, “can faith transform the *character*? Can belief sub-

due the will? Can trust conduct the mind to a high and elevated life?" It does so! And though in theory it appears inadequate, yet as a matter of *fact*, it has made men into new creatures and has turned sinners into saints!

Another wise gentleman judges that clay upon the eyes would even be *injurious*. "To stick clay over a man's eyes would not make him see—it would add another impediment to the light." So have I even heard it said that to preach salvation by faith is against good morals and may even encourage men in evil! Blind bats as they are, can they not see that the case is the very reverse? How frequently by the Gospel are harlots made chaste, thieves made honest, drunks made sober? By this very Gospel of faith which they say is against good morals the best of morals are produced! Why, in the *next* breath they denounce Believers as Puritans, too precise and religious by half! Nothing creates so many good works as that Gospel which tells us that salvation is not of works, but of the Grace of God!

Another objector declares that our Lord's way of cure was *opposed to the Law of God*. Here is this "Man named Jesus" actually making clay or brick-earth on the Sabbath! Was not this a shocking infringement of the Law of God? It is insinuated that our Gospel of faith in Jesus makes men think lightly of the Law. We preach against the idea of merit and we say that good works cannot save men and, therefore, we are charged with lowering the dignity of the Law! This is not true, for our Gospel establishes the Law and fosters true obedience. When the Savior said, "Go, wash," and the blind man went and washed, the Lord Jesus had taught him obedience, even the best kind of it—namely, the obedience of *faith*. Even so, though we are apparently in conflict with the Law when we declare that by the works of the Law shall no flesh living be justified, yet we establish the Law—for faith brings with it the principle and mainspring of obedience. To trust God is the very essence of obedience. He that believes in Jesus has taken the first step in the great lesson of obeying God in all things. To see how Jesus suffered the Law's penalty and how He honored the Law for us, is to see that which makes the Law most glorious in our esteem.

So, I would say in leaving this point—Do not quibble at the Gospel. We sometimes tell servants that it is never wise to quarrel with their bread and butter. I would earnestly say to every anxious spirit—Do not quarrel with the Gospel of salvation. If you are in a right state of mind as to your condition, I am sure you will not. When I found the Lord, I was driven into such a corner that whatever salvation might have been, I would have had it on God's terms without a question! If you are the man that I am looking for. If you need to receive spiritual sight, you will make no conditions with Jesus! You will not ask for a perfumed ointment for your eyes, but you will gladly accept an anointing with clay from your Savior's hands. Whatever the Lord prescribes as the way of salvation, you will joyfully accept. In that cheerful acceptance lies a great part of the salvation, itself, for your will is now at one with God.

Let us pray the Holy Spirit to reveal to our hearts the Gospel and to make us love it, receive it and prove its power!

III. I would now lead you a step further. THE PLAIN COMMAND IS MOST NOTEWORTHY. Our Lord said to His patient, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam.” The man could not see, but he could hear. Salvation comes to us, not by sight of ceremonies, but by hearing the Word of God! The ears are the best friends the sinner has remaining to him. It is by Ear-Gate that the Prince Immanuel comes riding into Mansoul in triumph. “Hear, and your soul shall live.”

The command was *exceedingly specific*—“Go, wash in the pool of Siloam.” So is the Gospel *exceedingly specific*—“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” It is not—Do this or that work, but believe! It is not—Believe in a priest, or in *any* human being, but in Jesus. If this man had said, “I will wash in Jordan, for it was there that Naaman lost his leprosy,” his washing would have been useless. It was a little, insignificant affair, that pool of Siloam, whose waters flowed softly—why must he go *there*? He did not ask for reasons, but he at once obeyed and, in obeying, he found the blessing. My Hearer, you have to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved! There are not 20 things to be done, but only this one. The very longest form of the Gospel runs thus—“He that believes and is baptized shall be saved”—the faith is to be openly confessed by *obedience* to the Lord’s prescribed Baptism. But the *first* matter is the faith. “He that believes on Him has everlasting life.” This is very specific! You can make no mistake in the matter.

It was also *intensely simple*. “Go, wash in the pool.” Go to the pool and wash the clay into it. Any boy can wash his eyes. The task was simplicity itself. So is the Gospel as plain as a pikestaff! You have not to perform 20 genuflections or standing up and sitting down—each one peculiar—nor have you to go to school to learn a dozen languages, each one more difficult than the other! No, the saving deed is one and simple—“Believe and live.” Trust, trust Christ! Rely upon Him, rest in Him. Accept His work upon the Cross as the atonement for your sin, His righteousness as your acceptance before God, His Person as the delight of your soul!

But the command was also *distinctly personal*. “Go, wash.” He might not send a neighbor or a friend. His parents could not go for him. It would have been idle for him to have said, “I will pray about it.” No, *he* must go and wash in the pool himself. So, too, the sinner must, himself, believe in Jesus. Hear me, dear Friend! Only your own faith will answer the purpose—your own eyes need opening and, therefore, you must *yourself* go and wash in the pool in obedience to Jesus. You must personally believe unto eternal life. You get into the notion, some of you, that you may sit still and hope that God will save you. I have no authority to encourage you in such a rebellious inactivity! Jesus bids you go and wash! How dare you sit still? When the father comes to receive his prodigal child, he finds him on the road. He was yet a great way off when his father saw him, but his face was turned in the right direction and he was making the best of his way to the father’s house. Our Father says to you, “Awake, you that sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light.” Up with you, Man! Up with you! The pool of Siloam will not come to you—you must go to it! The waters will not leap out of their bed and wash your eyes, but you

must stoop to them and wash in the pool until the clay is gone and you see. It is a very personal direction—mind that you treat it so.

It was a direction which *involved obedience to Christ*. Why must I go there and wash there? Because He tells you. If you want Jesus to save you, you must do as He bids you. You must take Jesus to be your Lord if you take Him to be your Savior. Dear Heart, yield to Jesus Christ this morning! Never servant had such a Master! You may well bow down and kiss those dear feet which were nailed to the Cross for you. Yield yourselves to the rule of Jesus at once. The act of faith is the more acceptable because it is the heart's obedience to Jesus. Submit to Him by faith, I beseech you.

The command was for the time present. Jesus did not say, "Go, wash in the pool tomorrow, or in a month's time." If the beggar had been blind inwardly as well as outwardly, he might have said, "My blindness brings me money. I will make a little more as a blind beggar and then I will have my eyes opened." He valued sight too much to delay. Had he delayed, he would have remained blind till Doomsday! If any of you think it would be inconvenient to be converted at once, I have no hope for you. I can preach to you no salvation but a present one! He who will not be saved today, will not be likely to be saved at all. Go, blind beggar, go and be blind forever unless you will have sight *today*. It may be "now or never" with you. Today is the day of salvation! Tomorrow is but the devil's net. You will be hopelessly lost if you continue to delay!

The command in the blind man's case was very noteworthy—"Go, wash." And so is the *spiritual* command which is its parallel—"Believe in the Lord Jesus." O Souls, hear the Word of God which bids you trust the Savior. He cries, "Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." Oh, may God help you to do so at this very instant! Will you not? Blessed Spirit, lead them to do so, for Jesus' sake!

IV. I come, in the close of the discourse, to invite you to see THE DELIGHTFUL RESULT CERTIFIED. I think I see this man, attended by his neighbors, going to Siloam. They had seen Jesus place the clay upon the man's eyes and they had heard Him say, "Go to Siloam." They volunteer to go and act as guides to the blind. Curiosity inspires them. He reaches the pool. He goes down the steps. He is close to the water. He stoops his head. He washes his eyes. What will come of it? The clay is gone, but what else has happened? Suddenly the man lifts up his face and cries, "I see! I see!" What a shout went up from them all. "What a wonder! What a marvel! Hosanna! Blessed be God!" The man cries, "It is true, I have washed and I can see!"

This man could see at once. He washed and his blindness was gone! Eternal life is received in a moment. It does not take the tick of a clock to justify a sinner. O Soul, the moment you believe, you have passed from death to life! Quick as a flash of lightning the effectual change is worked, the eternal life enters and casts out death. Oh, that the Lord would work salvation now! This man could see at once. We read of another blind man, that he first saw men as trees walking and only after a time saw every man clearly. But this man saw clearly at once! Oh that you who hear me this day would believe and live at once!

This man knew that he could see. He had no question about that, for he said, "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." Possibly some of you have been decent people all your lives and yet you do not know whether you are saved or not. This is poor religion. Cold comfort! Saved and not know it? Surely it must be as lean a salvation as that man's breakfast when he did not know whether he had eaten it or not. The salvation which comes of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is conscious salvation. Your eyes shall be so opened that you shall no longer question whether you can see. He could see and he knew that he could see. Oh, that you would believe in Jesus, and know that you have believed and are saved! Oh, that you might get into a new world and enter upon a new state of things altogether! May that which was totally unknown to you before be made known to you at this hour by Almighty Grace!

And *other people perceived that he could see.* They could not understand it. Some said, "This is he," but others would only say, "It is like he." A man with opened eyes is very different from the same man when he is blind. If we were to take any friend we know who has no eyes and suddenly eyes were to be placed in his countenance, we should probably find his expression so altered that we should hardly think him the same person and, therefore, the cautious neighbors only said, "He is like he." Yet they were all of them sure he could see! None of the Pharisees said to him, "Are you sure you can see?" Those twinkling eyes of his, so full of fun and wit—and sarcasm—were proofs most plain that he could see. Ah, your friends at home will know that you are converted if it is really so! They will hardly need telling—they will find it out. The very way you eat your dinner will show it. It will! You eat it with gratitude and seek a blessing on it!

The way you will go to bed will show it. I remember a poor man who was converted, but he was dreadfully afraid of his wife—not the only man in the world that is in that fear—and therefore he was fearful that she would ridicule him if he knelt to pray. He crept upstairs in his stockings that he might not be heard, but might have a few minutes' prayer before she knew he was there. His scheme broke down. His wife soon found him out. Genuine conversion is no more to be hidden than a candle in a dark room! You cannot hide a cough. If a man has a cough, he must cough—and if a man has Grace in his heart, he will show Grace in his *life*. Why should we wish to hide it? Oh, may the Lord give you such an eye-opening this day that friends and relatives shall know that your eyes have been opened!

Observe that the restored one *never lost his sight again.* This man did not become blind again. Christ's cures are not temporary. I have heard of many cases of late of people who have been exceedingly happy because they fancied that they were perfectly restored. The cure lasted a week and then they were as bad as ever. Fancy can do great things for a season—but Christ's cures last forever. Never an eye that Christ opened ever went blind again! We believe in being born again, but not in becoming unborn. I know that whatever the Lord does shall be forever. O my Friends, I have nothing to preach but eternal salvation! Come to Christ and He will work in you an effectual cure. Trust Him wholly, for in Him there is everlasting life!

This man, when he received sight, *was willing to lose everything in consequence*. The Jews cast him out of the synagogue, but when Jesus found him, the man did not fret about the Jews. I think I can see his face when Jesus found him—how happy he was as he worshipped his Benefactor! “Poor soul, poor soul, you have been cast out of the synagogue!” “Oh,” he says, “don’t pity me. They may cast me out of 50 synagogues now that Christ has found me! What care I for synagogues now that I have found the Messiah? When I was in the synagogue I was a blind man and now I am out of the synagogue, but I have my sight!” When you become a Christian the world will hate you and revile you, but what of that? Some will have no more to do with you. This may be the best turn they can do you!

We had a lady of title in our membership once—and a very gracious Sister she was. I had some little fear about her at first, lest the great ones should draw her away from the Truth of God. Soon after her Baptism, she remarked that a certain noble family had given her the cold shoulder—and others who were very intimate had ceased to call. She took it as a matter of course and only remarked that it made her own course all the more easy, for she had not, now, the pain of hearing their ungodly conversation, nor even the responsibility of severing the connection! The world has done its best for the child of God when it has cast him out! Its excommunications are better than its communications! The outside of the world’s house is the safest side of it for us. That we love the Brethren and that the world hates us are two good evidences of Grace for which a man may be grateful. “Let us go forth unto Christ outside the camp, bearing His reproach.”

What a wonderful thing the Lord Jesus had done for this man and what a wonderful thing He is prepared to do for all who trust Him! It had been a work of creation. The man’s eyes were no eyes, Jesus created sight in them! To heal a limb is one thing, but to make an eye, or to enable that which was only the mere *fashion* of an eye to become an organ of perception is a greater thing by far. To save a soul is a work of creation. We are created anew in Christ Jesus. It was also a work of resurrection. Those eyes had been dead and now the Lord Jesus raised them from the dead!

The Lord God Almighty can work creation at this moment. He can produce resurrection this day! And why should He not? This day we commemorate both of these Divine works. This first day of the week was the beginning of the creation of God. It is also the day in which our Lord rose from the dead, as the first fruits of them that slept. This Lord’s Day commemorates the beginning of creation and of resurrection. Let us pray the Almighty Lord to manifest among us the works of God this day! O Lord, regenerate, illuminate, pardon and save those who are here present—and thus glorify Your Son! Amen and amen!

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 9.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—916, 502, 505.**

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SPEAK FOR YOURSELF—A CHALLENGE!

NO. 1393

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, DECEMBER 9, 1877,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“He is of age; ask him: he shall speak for himself.”
John 9:21.***

THOSE of you, dear Friends, who were present this morning, will remember that our subject was “Jesus Christ Himself.” [No. 1888, Vol. 23. “Jesus Christ Himself.”] We dwelt upon His blessed Person. Our faith is fixed on Him, our affections are drawn to Him, our hopes all bend toward Him. Though everything He said or did is precious, yet Jesus Himself stands first in our judgment. To know Him, to believe Him, to love Him is the very *essence* of our Christianity. Tonight we change our theme. There is an “himself” in our text this evening—an “himself,” ‘tis true of a much humbler order. How do we each stand for himself?

Our individuality and the personal responsibilities which fall upon ourselves in reference to Christ must not be lost sight of. If, for instance, a spiritual miracle has been worked upon us and we are obliged to confess. No, if we are *delighted* to confess that He has opened our eyes—then we are bound, especially those of us who are of ripe understanding, who may be said to be of full age—we are bound to bear our own personal testimony for Him. The allegation and the appeal may alike apply to each one of us, “He is of age; ask him: he shall speak for himself.” Jesus Christ Himself bore our sins, as we heard this morning. He gave Himself for us. He served us, not by proxy, but by personal consecration.

He served us, not by alms doled out pitifully, but by His *life* surrendered as a Sacrifice to God cheerfully. If He has thus commended His love to us, what less can we do in return than bear our own brave, bold, personal testimony for Him? What a parallel there is between this man's case and our own. He had suffered from a grievous, personal evil. He was born blind! So we were born in sin—sin had cast its blindness over our faculties from our very birth! We shall never forget the midnight of our nature. We could not see even the beauties of Christ Himself, though resplendent as the sun at noonday, so blind were we!

This man was personally delivered from his ailment and so have we been delivered, I trust. I know many here who can say that whereas they were blind, now they see! You have received, as the blind man did, a personal blessing, being endowed with sight. The blemish that blighted your life has been healed! It is not that somebody sees for you and tells you what he sees, but you see for yourself. It is not merely imputed to you that you see because you have been told what somebody else saw. No, you have no proxy in the matter, no sponsor in the business. You yourself are conscious that a work of Divine Grace has been worked upon you, whereas you were blind now you see—and you know it!

The blind man was cured through personal obedience to Christ's command. He heard a special call addressed to him—"Go, wash in the pool." He went and came back seeing! And many here present have heard the voice which says, "Believe and live," and it has come to you, not as a general exhortation, but as a special direction. You have believed and you live! You have washed and you have come back seeing! Well now, all this is personal, therefore your Lord and Master has a right to expect a personal testimony from you of His power to save! You are of age. When any ask you, I trust you will speak for yourself. Speak up and speak out for your Master without hesitancy or fear!

I. THERE ARE TIMES WHEN SAVED MEN ARE POSITIVELY COMPELLED TO SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES. They must of necessity bear their personal witness. What else can they do when friends desert them? Father and mother were quite willing to acknowledge this young man—that he was their son—quite willing to bear their witness that he was born blind. But they would not go any farther. They could have gone farther if they liked, but they were afraid of that sentence of excommunication which the Jews had already agreed upon—that if any man confessed that Jesus was the Christ he should be put out of the synagogue.

So, feeling very little compunction in declining to take any responsibility themselves, for they had great and probably well-founded confidence in their son's power to take care of himself, they did, as it were, abandon him. They threw upon him the stress and burden of giving a plain answer which would have incurred such disgrace. They backed out of it. They had no wish whatever to become the subjects of persecution because their blind son had been blessed with sight. The young man who had been blind must, therefore, do battle, himself, for the good Lord who had bestowed so great a benefit on him. "Ask him," said his parents, "he will speak for himself."

There are times with many young people when their parents, if they do not frown upon their religion, at least turn the cold shoulder to them and show no sympathy with their faith or their feelings. Some of us are rejoiced when our sons are converted. We are not ashamed to stand by them and to defend them and to protect them whatever may come of it. But there are fathers and mothers who have no liking for the things of God and so their children, if they are converted, have a hard time of it. I have known even some who profess to be disciples of Christ hold back very suspiciously and leave others to champion the Master's cause when it has come to a hard push.

In a conversation you expected to hear that old gentleman speak up bravely for the truth of the Gospel but he did not. You knew he was a member of a Christian Church, yet he very cautiously held his tongue for a long time and then quietly said something about not casting pearls before swine. Probably he had not any pearls, or possibly *he* was a swine himself. How else could you account for such awful cowardice? But some have known in youthful ardor what it is to be compelled to come out so defiantly as to risk the charge of presumption because everybody else seemed to be deserting the doctrine! It is their duty to defend!

It is lamentable how many seem afraid of being compromised. “Ask him; ask him; he will speak for himself,” is their puny pretext while they prudently retire behind the bushes out of rifle range, never coming forward unless, perhaps, you should win the victory—when they would most likely come up to share the spoils. Whenever a man is placed in such a condition that he finds himself deserted in the battle for Christ by those who ought to be at his back, then let him disdain retreat and say right gallantly, “I am of age: I will speak for myself. In the name of God I will bear my witness.” Christian men, however reserved and backward their natural disposition may be, are compelled to speak out when they are very much pressed.

These Pharisees took this man and questioned him rather closely. They put questions to him by way of examination and cross-examination. “What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?” And so on. He does not appear to have been disturbed or disconcerted by the questions. He acquitted himself grandly. Self-contained, quiet, shrewd, immovable—his mind was made up and with a thorough mastery of the situation he was ready for them. He did not hesitate. Well now, I trust if ever you and I are brought to book and questions are put to us, even though it is with intent to entangle us, we shall never be “ashamed to acknowledge our Lord or to defend His cause.” Surely we might expect to be struck dumb if we were ever ashamed to speak of Christ when we are commanded to do it!

If it comes to a challenge, “On whose side am I?” shall I ever hesitate to say, “I am with Immanuel, the crucified Savior”? If ever they get us into a corner and say, “You, also, were with Jesus of Nazareth,” oh may God give us Grace to be prompt and not think twice—“Of course I was, and of course I am still! He is my Friend, my Savior, my All in All—and by His Grace I will never blush to acknowledge His name!” Christians must come out and bear, each man for himself, a clear and distinct testimony. When others revile and slander our Lord Jesus Christ, it becomes imperative of us to commend and extol Him.

They said to this man, “Give God the praise. We know that this Man is a sinner.” Then he spoke right gratefully with a heart bubbling up with thankfulness. “He has opened my eyes! One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.” But when they went the length of saying, “As for this Fellow, we know not from where He is,” he spoke up still more heroically. He turned upon his assailants and shamed them with their marvelous ignorance, “that you know not from where He is.” And he fought for his Master so cuttingly that they were compelled to throw away the weapons of debate and take up stones of abuse with which to stone him! Oh, if they speak ill of Christ, shall we be quiet? Does the oath make our blood chill and shall we never have a word of rebuke for the blasphemer?

Shall we hear the cause of Christ denounced in society and for fear of feeble man refrain our tongue or smooth the matter over? No, let us throw the gauntlet down for Christ and say at once, “I cannot and I will not refrain myself. Now the very stones might speak. When my dear Friend—my best of friends—is thus abused, I must and will proclaim the honors of His name.” I think Christian people in this country do not take half the liberty

they might. If we speak a word of religion or open our Bibles in a railway carriage or anything of that kind, they say, “cants!” They may play cards, I suppose, in a public conveyance with impunity. They may make night hideous with their howls. They may utter all sorts of profanities and sing lascivious songs at their sweet will, but we are cants if we take our turn!

In the name of everything that is free we will have our turn! And every now and then I like to sing, to their annoyance, one of the songs of Zion, for they sing the songs of Babylon loud enough to annoy us. Let us tell them that while we live in a land of liberty and rejoice that Christ has made us free, we shall no more be ashamed of His testimonies than they are ashamed of their iniquities! When they begin to sin in private and blush to utter a lewd word, then maybe the time—no, and not even then—for us to keep our religion to ourselves. Thus you see there are times when men—quiet, reserved men—must speak! They will be traitors if they do not!

I do not think this blind man was at all talkative. The brevity of his replies seems to indicate that he was a cautious speaker, but they drove him to it. He was like the stag at bay. He must fight, however gently disposed. And I think there is scarcely a Christian man or woman that has been able to go all the way to Heaven and yet quietly hide himself and run from bush to bush, creeping into Glory. Christianity and cowardice? What a contradiction in terms! I think there must have been times when you have felt inclined to say to yourself, “Well now, cost what it may. I may become an outcast in society—I may be ridiculed by the rough and I may lose respect among the polite—but for Jesus Christ and for His Truth I must bear witness.” Then has it come true of you, “He is of age; ask him: he shall speak for himself.”

II. We pass on to another remark. IT IS ALWAYS WELL TO BE PREPARED TO SPEAK FOR YOURSELF. This man was evidently ready to do so. When his parents said, “Ask him: he shall speak for himself,” I think there was a little twinkle in the father’s eye as he spoke—meaning to say, “You will catch a Tartar. He can speak for himself. We have known him a good many years while he has been blind and he has always had a pretty sharp reply for anybody that thought him a fool! If you imagine, now, that you will get much out of him by way of food for your mirth or fun, you are mightily mistaken. He will be more likely to spoil you than you to spoil him.”

And as they handed him over to the inquisitors, though they were unkind, I suppose they did not feel that he was a tender chicken that needed much of their care. They seemed to say, “He is of age, he has come to years of maturity; ask him. Only ask him. He will speak for himself, we guarantee you.” And so, indeed, he did! Now I want to have a band of Christian people here much of that sort—who, when asked anything about their holy faith can so answer that they are not likely to be often the butts of ridicule and scorn because they shall prove more than a match for their adversaries! But how, you will ask, are we to be prepared to speak for ourselves?

On the outset it is well to cultivate a general habit of open-heartedness and boldness. We have no need to intrude and push ourselves into people's way and so become a nuisance and a bore to them. Far from it! Let us walk through the world as those who have nothing to conceal, conscious of the integrity of our own motives and the rightness of our heart before God. We need not to wear armor and sleep in it like the knights of old, knowing rather that the Truth of God unarmed is the best apparel. Let us show that we have nothing to cloak or cover, nothing to disguise or hide—that the Gospel has worked in us such an honesty and frankness of spirit that nothing can make us blush, no foe can cause us fear.

Let us tell what we believe as true because we can vouch for its truthfulness. Let us choke those who laugh at these things, not so much by our combat as by our *character*. Let us prove to them that we have a solid reason for our simple protest—that we have actually received the Divine Grace in which we earnestly believe! Our words will have weight when they see that the fruit of our piety accords with the flower of our profession. There is great power in this manner of answering the adversary. Take heed however, when you speak, to be sure of your ground.

This man was. "Whether He is a sinner or not," he said, "I know not." So he offered no opinion on a subject of which he could not be positive. But where he had hard facts on his side there was nothing vague in his statement—"One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." This is an argument which the most astute fool would find it difficult to answer! As the blind man looked them full in the face it was enough to bewilder them! And there are some of you in whom such a change of character has been worked that you could truthfully say, "I know I am not the man I used to be. My manner of life from my youth is well known to many, if they would testify. But now God, by the Gospel of His Son, has opened my eyes, renewed my heart, cleansed my leprosy and set my feet in the way of peace."

Even those who scoff at the Gospel are, in the cases of many of us, unable to deny the remarkable and beneficial change it has worked! There is a moral uprightness, here, about which we need be very rigid. Put your foot down and say, "No, you cannot misjudge this. You may philosophize, if you like, but the old-fashioned simple Gospel of the children changed me and made me love that which before I hated, and hate that which before I loved. That is a thing you cannot deny. One thing I know." And it is well, like this man, to have the facts ready to recite. "A man named Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and sent me to the pool to wash. And I washed and I came seeing."

Let them have the plan of salvation, as you first perceived it, very succinctly and plainly put before them. It is often the very best answer you can give to those who question in order to carp and discuss with a view to disparage. Let them have it with the gush you had it at the time. As the Lord has dealt with your soul, so tell them what He has done for you! He must be a hard-hearted man who can sneer at the simple statement of your own conversion. The change it has worked in you will be a fact which he cannot argue with. Though he should think you deluded and call you

an enthusiast, there is nothing so difficult for him to grapple with as your candor and confidence. “He opened my eyes.” There is the point! “He opened my eyes! And if He opened my eyes, then He was of God. God must have been in such a matter as that, for I was born blind.”

With meekness and fear give a reason for the hope that is in you to all those who oppose you! Christians should at all times, also, be as this man was—quite ready to bear abuse. “You were altogether born in sin.” I do not suppose the blind man cared one atom what they had to assert or to insinuate on that score. Their scorn could not deprive him of his sight! He merely shook his head and said, “I can see. I can see. I was blind, but now I see. Pharisees may abuse me, but I can see. They may tell me I am this, that and the other, but I can see. My eyes are open!” So, child of God, you may often say to yourself, “I may be ridiculed. I may be ridiculed as Presbyterian, or Methodist, or Baptist, or Schismatic, or whatever they like—it does not matter—I am saved! I am a changed man. The Grace of God has renewed me! Let them call me what they like.”

Some people are very sensitive of satire. They shrink from and seem upset at a jest and what men call, “chaff,” grates upon them. What a baby a man is who cannot brave a fool’s laugh! Stand upright, young man, and when you go back to that drapery establishment show a bold front. You that go to work at some of the big factories and have been quizzed and bantered because of your religion, gather up your courage and say, “Here I am, five feet ten high, or six feet, or whatever else it may be, and shall I be ashamed to be laughed at for Christ?” Pooh! You are not worth the boots you stand upright in if you are put down by their play. I have no doubt many a soldier in the barracks finds it hard to keep up his spirits when comrades taunt him with scoff and scorn in their rough way. But after all, dear Friends, should not common manliness nerve us with fortitude?

When we have got hold of a thing that we believe to be right, we should be greenhorns to let it go for fear of a giddy prank or a paltry grimace. Let them laugh! They will be tired of teasing us when they find out that our temper triumphs over their senseless tricks. Let them find merriment if they can, poor simpletons. I sometimes feel more inclined to smile than to be sad over the jokes that are coined at my expense. Their playful sallies may relieve some of the pitiful sorrows that light unawares on their lonely hours. Melancholy holds carnival in this mad world. Ghosts and goblins haunt the merriest brain! What if for once, now and then, they get a living object for their sport, and I, myself, become the butt of their buffoonery—there is no fear that it will *harm* me—the only danger is that it will hurt them. Be of that mind, dear Friends, and do not care for any of their silliness.

This man born blind whose eyes were opened was prepared to meet the Pharisees and speak up for himself because he felt intense gratitude to Him who had bestowed on him the priceless gift of sight. You see all through the narrative that though he did not know much about Jesus, he felt consciously that He was his true Friend and he stuck to Him through thick and thin. Now, you and I may not know much about our Lord—not one tenth of what we hope to know—but He has opened our eyes! He has

forgiven our sins! He has saved our souls! And, by His Grace, we will stick to Him, come what may.

If your gratitude to Him is always at its full heat, I am not afraid but whenever you are taunted, whenever, at any time, you are put to the test, you will be faithful to your Friend and able to say with a sound conscience—

***“I’m not ashamed to own my Lord,
Or to defend His cause
Maintain the honor of His Word,
The glory of His Cross.”***

III. EVERY SAVED MAN AND WOMAN SHOULD WILLINGLY SPEAK FOR HIMSELF ABOUT CHRIST. I have said that you will be driven to it. I have also bid you to be prepared for it when you are driven to it. But now I have to urge that you ought *willingly* to do it. Are we not all debtors to Christ if, indeed, He has saved us? How can we acknowledge that debt if we are ashamed of Him? His testimony is—“He that believes and is baptized, shall be saved.” Does the Baptism save us? No, verily, but he that believes is bound to be baptized that he may thus confess His Lord! Baptism is the answer of a good conscience towards God. It is the disciple’s grateful response to his Master’s gracious call. You know how it is put—“He that with his heart believes, and with his mouth makes confession of Him, shall be saved.”

I may not lawfully forbear to confess if I inwardly believe. Why should I? If I owe so much to Him shall I—*can* I—think of not confessing Him? I am sure if there were a commandment issued that we were not to acknowledge our Lord, that we were to tell no man, that we must hide the secret from kinsfolk, friends and neighbors—to me it would be most distressing. But He does bid us acknowledge Him and bear our testimony to Him. We hail the command! We account it most seemly and fitting—and we cheerfully obey it. Is it not so? How ought we each, willingly, to speak up for Christ because we, each one of us, know most about what He has done for us! No one here knows all that He has done for me. I think I hear you say, “’Tis true, but then you do not know what He did for us.”

No, no—we are over head and ears debtors to Him. Oh, what mercy He has shown to some of us! If the world could know our state before conversion it might almost make our hair stand upon end to read the story of our lives. How the Grace of God has changed us! O what a change! What a change! Should ravens become doves and lions become lambs, your preentious scholars might expound or mystify the phenomenon in a word or two of Greek terminology. But this conversion comes across us every day! And scientific men are silent, while scoffers meet it only to make mouths at it. The change is infinitely greater than when dry bones are raised and clothed with flesh! When stones begin to melt and run into streams, it is *nothing* in point of marvel to the regeneration we have experienced!

We must talk about it! We know more about it than others and we are bound to be the honest narrators of the wondrous narrative. The more individual testimonies are borne to Christ, the more weight there is in the accumulated force of the great aggregate! If I, in the mass, bear witness for Christ in the name of you all, saying, “The Lord has done great things

for us whereof we are glad,” I hope there is some honor to Christ and some influence to take effect. But if 10, 20, 30, 50 were to rise one after the other and say, “The Lord has done great things for me,” and each one were to tell his own tale, how much more conviction would be worked!

I have heard of a lawyer in the United States who attended a testimonial meeting among his neighbors. He was a skeptic, if not a thorough unbeliever, when he entered the place. He sat with his pencil and paper and took notes of the statements of his neighbors. When he, afterwards, reviewed the evidence, he said to himself, “Now, if I had these 12 or 13 persons in the witness box on my side, I should feel quite sure of carrying my case. I live among them. They are not the most learned people I ever met with, but they are very honest, trustworthy people. They are plain spoken and though each one has told his tale, they all come to the same point and all bear witness to one fact—that there is such a thing as the Grace of God—and that it does change the heart. Well,” he said, “I am bound to believe it after all this testimony.”

And he did believe, by God’s Grace, and he became a Christian! Of this I am certain—that if Christian people were more often to tell their testimony to the power of Jesus Christ in their hearts, the cumulated witness would tell on many a thoughtless mind and multitudes would come to believe in Jesus! The Holy Spirit delights to acknowledge and bless such true stories as you can tell! Do I hear one and another of you say, “They can do without my story”? No, my Friend, I would answer we cannot dispense with your evidence because the diversities of their experience are as numerous as the individuals converted, although there is unity in the operation of the Holy Spirit.

Our Lord opened the eyes of many blind men. He unstopped the ears of many deaf people. He loosed the tongues of many that were dumb and we cannot count how many lepers He cleansed. But each patient could tell you his own symptoms and the minute particulars of his own healing. Your story, too, has its special interest while it contributes to the general narrative. At least you would be sorry if it were not so. “The Lord shall count, when He writes up the people, that this man was born there.” I know you would like your name to be mentioned, then, and I think it would be worth your while, now, to mention the mercies you have received in just the manner you received them.

To speak for myself, I believe that God, in converting me, manifested a way of His own that exactly suited my need. My case was so like yours as to produce sympathy, but so *unlike* yours as to provoke special gratitude—and thus it was, doubtless, with each one of you. Your career, your character, your circumstances differed in each instance. As a great master seldom paints the same picture twice, so the Master Artist, God, seldom, (I think never), works precisely the same in any two hearts. There is a difference and in that difference there is an illustration of the manifold wisdom of God. Therefore we need your story. Besides, your testimony may touch the heart of somebody like yourself.

Little Mary over yonder says, “Well, I am nobody, only a nurse-maid. The Lord Jesus Christ has cleansed me and made me His. ‘Tis true, but

you can do without *my* tale.” No, Mary, we cannot. Perhaps your testimony will exactly suit another little lass like yourself. A little maid waited on Naaman’s wife. Who but she could have told her mistress that there was healing for Naaman or that he could go to a Prophet in Israel and be made whole? Tell your story gently and quietly and at proper times, but let it be known. “Oh,” says the old man, “but I am so feeble. You could dispense with my saying anything.” No, father William, we cannot. You are just the man whose few words have full weight. You meet, every now and then, with choice opportunities of leading souls to the Savior.

“I am too old to think about these things,” says one. But you might tell how the Lord has dealt with you in your old age and maybe it will strike home. Why, you working men, if you were all to speak up for Christ, as I know many of you do, what an effect would be produced! What an influence you would have on others like you! Of course, when they hear us preach, they say, “Oh well, you know, he is a parson. He says it professionally. It is his business to say it.” But when *you* tell of what the Lord has done for you, it becomes *the* talk—it is repeated over and over again! I know what Tom says when he gets home. He says to his wife Mary, “What do you think of that Jack that I have been working with?”

“Why, he has been talking to me about his soul and he says his sin is forgiven him. And he seems such a happy man. You know that he used to drink and swear the same as I do, but oh, he is a wonderfully different man now! And I should say, from what I see, there must be something in it. Well, he asked me home, the other night, and his place is so different from ours.” “There, you hold your tongue,” Mary will answer up pretty sharply! “If you brought your wages home to me regularly every week, I could lay them out for you better.” “Ah,” says he, “and that is what I have been thinking. It is just because he is a religious man that he brings his wages home, and I think there is something real about his conversion, do you know?”

“He does not drink as I do. He does not mix up with all manner of larks and follies. I should not have thought so much of it had the parson spoke to me. But now I really do think there is something good and genuine in the Grace of God he talks about. You and I had better go next Sunday evening to the Tabernacle, or somewhere else, and hear about it for ourselves.” Ah, there are many, many souls brought to Christ in that way! We *cannot* do without your testimony then, Jack, because your conversation is suitable to your own class. And you, Your Ladyship, you say, “I love the Lord, but I do not think I possibly could say anything in my circle and walk of life.” Couldn’t you? Ah, but I am sure you will easily surmount this little difficulty if you attain a little more growth in Divine Grace!

We had one among us whose rank entitled her to move in an upper sphere of “society,” but her choice enabled her to prefer the humble companionship of the Church. Her silvery locks, some of you well remember. She has left us now. She has gone home to Glory. Among the aristocracy her lot was cast. Yet with gentle, quiet, bland simplicity she introduced the Gospel wherever she went. Many and many have come to these pews to listen to your minister, who had never been here but for her calm,

beautiful, unobtrusive, holy life—and the nerve with which, anywhere, at any time, she could say—“Yes, I am a Christian. What is more, I am a Nonconformist. And what you will think worse, I am a Baptist. And what you will think worst of all, I am a member of the Tabernacle.” She never blushed to acknowledge our blessed Redeemer’s name, nor to acknowledge and befriend the lowliest of His disciples. Her faith you do well to follow! In whatever circle we move, let us strive to become centers of influence.

Thus have I tried to show you, dear Friends, that each one has a witness to bear—a privilege to be prized no less than a duty to be discharged—because a gift you have received qualifies you for a service you are asked to render. Suppose that the soldier, when he marched to battle were to say, “I need not load my gun. I need not fire in the day of battle, seeing that on the right and on the left there are good marksmen picking off the enemy.” Yes, but when you are in full musketry fire your bullet has got its billet and the billet for your bullet is not the billet for any other bullet! Therefore let it go, let it go! We must all fire, Brothers and Sisters! Not some, but *all* must fire and our charge must be this, “One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see. Therefore do I bear witness to my Lord. Let who will, deny it, He has opened my eyes.”

IV. Lastly, AS EVERY CHRISTIAN, BEING OF AGE, HAS TO SPEAK FOR HIMSELF, WE MEAN TO DO IT. WE MEAN TO DO IT. For my own part, I mean to do so. That which I believe to be true I have spoken to you from my youth up. I have offended a good many at times. I shall offend a good many more, I hope, because that is not a matter I have ever taken into consideration. Is this true? Is it a necessary truth? Is it essential that it be spoken plainly and published widely? Away it goes like a hand grenade flung into the midst of the crowd! May every minister of Christ—and I trust the rightness of the thing will be more and more recognized—take courage to speak for his Master! Speak out, never with bated breath, but in the name of Him that sent him—in the name of God—with a courage that befits his commission!

A trembling lip and a coward countenance in a minister show him to be unworthy of the office which he pretends to sustain. We must set our faces like a flint and bear testimony to the Truth of God—to the whole Truth of God—and nothing but the Truth as far as God shall teach it to us. And will not you, my fellow members, and you Christian people here of all sorts—will you not, also, take up this resolution—“We are of age and we mean to speak for ourselves”? You cannot all preach. I hope you will not all try. What a world of tumult and disorder we should have if every man and woman felt a call to preach! We would have a Church all mouth and then there would be a vacuum somewhere. There would be no hearers left if everybody turned preacher!

No, it is not to seek precedence in public assemblies, but to exert influence in *private* society that you are called! By a good conversation, with a speech seasoned with salt, at home among friends, kinsfolk, or companions—to the dozen or to one—make known what love has done, what Grace has done, what Christ has done! Make it known! Make it known

among your servants, among your children, among your trades people—wherever you go, make it known—make it known! Wear your regimentals wherever you go! I do not like to see a Christian soldier ashamed to show the scarlet. Oh, no, put it on! It is an honor to serve His Majesty. If there is anything in Christianity that you are ashamed of, get out of it!

Do not pretend to believe if you are afraid of betraying your profession—but if you receive the Gospel and believe it as the Revelation of God—never blush to admit it, but be brave to avow it at all times and in all places. “Well,” says one, “I am so retiring.” I know you are, Brother. Come, then, drop a little of your modesty and distinguish yourself a little more for your manliness. Have I not, sometimes, told you of the soldier who was retiring in the day of battle, but they shot him for a coward? It will not do to be retiring when duty shall urge, or where danger shall summon you to the front. I have heard of a man with the face of a lion and the heart of a deer. Beware of a too retiring disposition. Disreputable things are sometimes disguised in polite words and so diffidence may be dastardly and caution may be cowardly.

Be valiant for your Lord and Master! Play not the traitor’s part by your silence as you would scorn to do it by your speech—

**“Ashamed of Jesus?! That dear Friend
On whom my hopes of Heaven depend!
No! When I blush, be this my shame,
That I no more revere His name.”**

Break the ice, then, and speak to somebody about this blessed message before you go to rest. Will you resolve to do so? Take care that you defer not till your heart grows cool and the words you purpose freeze on your lips. No, but do it and the thing will grow upon you. Presently you will greet the opportunity as much as you now shrink from the necessity. It will bless your life. I think it is Horatius Bonar who says—

**“He lives long who lives well!
All else is being flung away.
He lives longest who can tell
Of true things truly done each day.
Be what you seem. Live your creed.
Hold up to earth the torch divine!
Be what you pray to be made.
Let the great Master’s steps be yours.
Fill up each hour with what will last.
Buy up the moments as they go.
The life above, when this is past,
Is the ripe fruit of life below.
Waste not your being! Give to Him
Who freely gave it, freely give.
Else is that being but a dream,
‘Tis but to be and not to live.”**

Dear Friends, some of you who are Believers in Christ have never yet confessed Him! I hope that you will resolve from this night to declare yourselves His disciples and become His faithful followers. You are of age. “Yes,” says one, “I am of rather full age, for I am over fifty.” Others of you are older than that and though you are Believers in Christ you have never confessed Him! It will not do, Brothers and Sisters. It will not do. It will

not do to die with. It does not do to think of now. When He comes, happy shall they be that were not ashamed of Him! But when He comes in His Glory with all His holy angels—trembling shall take hold on those that thought and said they loved Him but never dared to bear reproach for His name's sake or to suffer shame for the Gospel! I hope these reflections will make you very uneasy, and constrain you to say, "Please God, I will join a Christian Church before this week is over." If you are a Believer in Christ, I charge you not to trifle with the voice of conscience, but to pay your vows to the Most High!

Alas! Alas! There are some that cannot speak for Christ in any way whatever, because they do not know Him! He never opened your eyes. Never try to talk of matters you do not understand, nor pretend to bear witness to mercies you have not experienced. Remember the Christ we preach is not only the Christ of history who was crucified, dead and buried, but He is a living Christ at this moment, still among us by His Spirit—changing our natures, turning and guiding the current of our thoughts and lives, purifying our wishes and motives, teaching us to love each other, admonishing us to be pure, entreating us to be gentle, giving us a heart to aspire after those things that are above instead of groveling among those things that are below!

Now, if you have never met this Christ, you cannot bear witness to His power. But He is to be found! Trust in Him! He is Divine—He is the Son of God! His blood is the blood of the great Sacrifice of which Moses spoke and of which all the Prophets bore witness. He is the last great Sacrifice of God. Come and trust Him. And when you trust Him, that trust shall be like the woman's touching of the hem of His garment. No sooner had she touched Him than she was made whole, for virtue went out of Him. That virtue still goes out of His sacred Person whenever the simple touch of faith brings the sinner into contact with the Savior! May the Lord lead you to believe in Jesus and when you have believed through Divine Grace, come forward and confess His name! So shall you be numbered with His saints now and in Glory everlasting!

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SIMPLE BUT SOUND

NO. 2955

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 1905.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
IN THE YEAR 1863.**

***“One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.”
John 9:25.***

DID it ever strike you how wonderfully calm and collected our Lord must have been at this time? He had been preaching in the Temple, talking to a multitude of Jews. They grew furious with Him—a number of stones which were used in repairing the temple were lying about on the floor and they took up those stones to cast at Him. He, by some means, forced a passage and escaped out of the midst of them—and when He came to the gate of the Temple with His disciples—who seem to have followed Him in the lane which He was able to make through the throng of His foes—He saw this blind man and, as if there had been no bloodthirsty foes at His heels, He stopped! He stopped as calmly as if an attentive audience had been waiting upon His lips—to look at the blind man. The disciples stopped, too, but they paused to ask questions.

How like ourselves! We are always ready to talk. How unlike the Master! He was always ready to *act*. The disciples wanted to know how the man came to be blind, but the Master meant to deliver the man from his blindness. We are very apt to be entering into speculative theories about the origin of sin or the cause of certain strange Providences, but Christ is always for seeking out, not the cause, but the *remedy*—not the reason of the disease, but the way by which the disease can be cured! The blind man is brought to Him. Christ asks him no questions, but, spitting upon the dust, He stoops down and works the dust into mortar. And when He has done this, taking it up in His hands, He applies it to what Bishop Hall calls the eye-holes of the man (for there were no eyes there), and plasters them up so that the spectators look on and see a man with clay upon his eyes. “Go,” said Christ “to the pool of Siloam and wash.” Some kind friends led the man who was only too glad to go! Unlike Naaman, who made an objection to wash in Jordan and be clean, the blind man was glad enough to avail himself of the Divine remedy. He went. He washed the clay from his eyes and he received his sight—a blessing he had never known before! With what rapture he gazed upon the trees! With what delight he lifted up his face to the blue sky! With what pleasure he beheld the costly, stately fabric of the Temple and, I think, afterwards, with what interest and pleasure he would look into the face of Jesus—the Man who had given him his sight!

It is not my objective to expound this miracle, tonight, but well it sets forth, in sacred emblem, the state of human nature. Man is blind. Father Adam put out our eyes. We cannot see spiritual things. We have not the spiritual optic—that has gone—gone forever. We are born without it—born blind! Christ comes into this world and His Gospel is despicable in men's esteem even as spittle—the thought of it disgusts most men. Gentility turns on its heel and says it will have nothing to do with it. And pomp and glory all say that it is a contemptible and base thing! Christ puts the Gospel on the blind eyes—a Gospel which, like clay, seems as if it would make men more blind than before—but it is through “the foolishness of preaching” that Christ saves them that believe! The Holy Spirit is like Siloam's pool. We go to Him, or rather He comes to us—the convictions of sin produced by the Gospel are washed away by the cleansing influences of the Divine Comforter and, behold—we who were once so blind that we could see no beauty in Divine things and no excellence in the crown jewels of God, begin to see things in a clear and Heavenly light—and rejoice exceedingly before the Lord!

The man no sooner sees than he is brought before adversaries and our text is a part of his testimony in defense of the “Prophet” who had worked the miracle upon him, whom, not as yet did he understand to be the Messiah.

“One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.” Although the parables would furnish us an admirable topic, we prefer to keep to this verse and linger upon the various reflections it suggests.

I. We have before us, in these words, AN UNANSWERABLE ARGUMENT.

Every now and then you and I are called into a little debate. Persons do not take things for granted in this age and it is quite as well that they should not. There have been ages in which any impostor could lead the public by the nose. Men would believe anything and any crazy maniac, man or woman, who might stand up and pretend to be the Messiah, would be sure to have some followers! I think this age, with all its faults, is not so credulous as that which has gone by. There is a great deal of questioning. You know that there is some questioning where there should not be any. Men who stand high in official positions and who ought long ago to have had their faith established, or to have renounced their position, have ventured to question the very things they have sworn to defend! There is questioning everywhere, but to my mind it seems, Brothers and Sisters, that we need not be afraid. If the Gospel of God is true, it can stand any quantity of questioning. I am more afraid of the deadness and lethargy of the public mind about religion than any sort of enquiry or controversy about it. As silver tried in the furnace is purified seven times, so is the Word of God—and the more it is put into the furnace, the more it will be purified—and the more beautifully the pure ore of Revelation will glitter in the sight of the faithful! Never be afraid of a debate. Never go into it unless you are well armed and if you do go into it, mind that you take with you the weapon I am giving you tonight. Though you may be unarmed in every other respect, if you know how to

wield this, you may, through Grace, come off more than a conqueror! The argument which this man used was this, "Whereas I was blind, now I see."

It is forcible because it is a *personal argument*. I heard a person, the other day, use a similar argument. I had been laughing at a certain system of medicine—and really, it seems to me pardonable to laugh at all the systems, for I believe they are all almost equally as good or bad as the others. The person in question said, "Well, I can't laugh at it." "Why?" I asked. "Because," he said, "it cured me." Of course I had no further answer. If this person had really been cured by such-and-such a remedy, it was to him an unanswerable argument! And to me, could he produce many other cases, it would be one that I would not wish to answer. The fact is, the personality of the thing gives it power. People tell us that in the pulpit, the minister should always say, "We," as editors do in writing. We would lose all our power if we did! The minister of God is to use the first person singular and constantly to say, "I bear eyewitness for God that, in my case, such-and-such a thing has been true." I will not blush nor stammer to say, "I bear my personal witness to the truth of Christ's Gospel in my own case." Lifted up from sin, delivered from bondage, from doubt, from fear, from despair, from an intolerable agony—lifted up to unspeakable joys and into the service of my God—I bear my own testimony and I believe, Christians, that your force in the world will be mightily increased if you constantly make your witness for Christ a personal one!

I daresay my neighbor over there can tell what Divine Grace has done for him. Yes, but to me, to my own soul, what Grace has done for me will be more of an establishment to me for my faith than what Christ has done for him! And if I stand up and talk of what God's Grace has done for this or that Brother, it may do very well. But if I can say, "I myself have proved it," here is an argument which drives in the nail—yes, and clinches it, too! I believe, Christians, if you would prevail when you have to argue, you must do so by bearing a personal testimony to the value of religion in your own case, for that which you despise, you can never persuade others to value. "I believed, therefore have I spoken," said the Psalmist. Luther was a man of strong faith and, therefore, he kindled faith in others. That man will never move the world who lets the world move him, but the man who stands firm and says, "I *know*, I *know*, I *know* such-and-such a thing because it is burnt in my own inner consciousness"—such a man's very appearance becomes an argument to convince others!

Moreover, this man's argument was *an appeal to men's senses* and hardly anything can be supposed more forcible than that. "I was blind," he said, "you saw that I was. Some of you noticed me at the gate of the Temple. I *was* blind, now I see! You can all see that I can look at you—you perceive at once that I have eyes, or else I could not see you in the way I do." He appealed to their senses. The argument which our holy religion needs at the present moment is a new appeal to the senses of

men. You will ask me, "What is that?" The holy living of Christians! The change which the Gospel works in men must be the Gospel's best argument against all opposers! When the Gospel was first preached in the Island of Jamaica, some of the planters objected grievously to it. They thought it an evil thing to teach the Negroes, but a missionary said, "What has been the effect of your Negro servant, Jack, hearing the Gospel?" And the planter said, "Well, he was constantly drunk before, but he is now sober. I could not trust him, he was a great thief—but he is now honest. He swore like a trooper before, but now I hear nothing objectionable come from his mouth." "Well," said the missionary, "then I ask you if a Gospel that has made such a change as that in the man must not be of God and whether you ought not rather to put your influence into its scale than to work against it?" When we can bring forward the harlot who has been made chaste. When we can also show the drunk who has been made sober, or, better still, when we can bring the careless, thoughtless man who has been made sedate and steady—the man who cared not for God, nor Christ who has been made to worship God with his whole heart and has put his confidence in Jesus—we think we have, then, presented to the world an argument which they will not soon answer!

If our religion does no more in the world than any other, well then, despise it! Or if men can receive the Gospel of Christ and yet live as they did before and be none the better for it, then tell us at once so that we may be undeceived, for our Gospel is not needed. But we bring forward proofs to you! I hope, my Brothers and Sisters, there are scores and hundreds here who are yourselves the proofs of what the living Gospel can do! Many and many a story could I tell of a man who was a fiend in human shape, a man who, when he came home from work, made it an hour of peril—for his wife and children fled to hide from him! And now that man—see him when he goes home—how he is welcomed by his wife, how the children run down to meet him! You shall now hear him sing more loudly than ever he cursed before! And he who was once a ringleader in the army of Satan has now become a ringleader in the army of Christ! I shall not say where he is sitting tonight. I should need many fingers if I had to point out all such who are here. The Lord's is the Glory of it. That is the argument, "Whereas I was blind, now I see." Do we not know of some who when they came to make their profession before the Church, said, "If anyone had told me, three months ago, that I should be here, I would have knocked him down! If any man had said I would make a profession of faith in Jesus, I would have called him all the names in the world. I, become a canting Methodist? Not I!" But Grace has changed the man—his whole life is now different. Those who hate the change cannot help observing it. They hate religion, they say, but if religion does such things as these, the more of it the better!

Now we need, dear Friends, in the dark lanes and alleys of London—yes and in our great wide streets, too, where there are large shops and places of businesses—we need to give the groveling world this argument against which there is no disputing, that, whereas there were some men

blind, now they see! Whereas they were sinful, now they are virtuous! Whereas they despised God, now they fear Him! We believe this is the best answer for an infidel age. What a deal of writing there has been lately about and against Dr. Colenso! You need not think of reading the replies to his books, for most of them would be the best means of sending people to sleep that have ever been invented! And, after all, they don't answer the man—most of them leave the objections untouched, for there is a speciousness in the objection which is not very easily got over. I think we would be doing much better if, instead of running after this heathenish bishop, we would be running after poor sinners! If, instead of writing books of argument and entering into discussions, we keep on, each in our own sphere, endeavoring to convert souls, imploring the Spirit of God to come down upon us and make us spiritual fathers in Israel, then we may say to the devil, "Well, Sir, you have stolen a bishop. You have taken away a clergyman or so. You have robbed us of a leader or two. But, by the help of God we have razed your territories, we have stolen away whole bands—here they are, tens of thousands of men and women who have been reclaimed from the paths of vice, rescued from the destroyer and made servants of the Lord!" These are your best arguments. There are no arguments like them—living personal witnesses of what Divine Grace can do!

II. We will now change our view of the subject. Our text presents us with A SATISFACTORY PIECE OF KNOWLEDGE—"One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see."

An affectation of knowledge is not uncommon. The desire for knowledge is almost universal—the attainment of it, however, is rare. But if a man shall attain the knowledge of Christ, he may take a high degree in the Gospel, a satisfactory degree, a degree which shall land him safe into Heaven! Put the palm branch in his hand and the eternal song in his mouth—which is more than any worldly degrees will ever do. "One *thing* I know." The skeptic will sometimes overwhelm you with his knowledge. You simple minds that have read but little, and whose business occupations take up so much of your time that you probably never will be very profound students, are often in danger of being attacked by men who can use long words, who profess to have read very great books and to be very learned in sciences—the names of which you have scarcely ever heard. Meet them, but be sure you meet them with a knowledge that is better than theirs! Don't attempt to meet them on their own ground—meet them with this knowledge. "Well," you can say, "I know that you understand more than I do. I am only a poor unlettered Christian, but I have a something in here that answers all your arguments, whatever they may be. I do not know what geology says. I may not understand all about history. I may not comprehend all the strange things that are daily coming to light, but one thing I know—it is a matter of absolute consciousness to me—that I, who was once blind, have been made to see." Then just state the difference that the Gospel made in you. Say that once, when you looked at the Bible, it was a dull, dry book. That when

you thought of prayer, it was a dreary piece of work. Say that now the Bible seems to you a honeycomb full of honey and that prayer is your vital breath! Say that once you tried to get away from God and could see no excellence in the Divine Character, but that now you are striving and struggling to get nearer to God. Say that once you despised the Cross of Christ and thought it a vain thing for you to flee to—but that now you love it and would sacrifice your all for it! And this undoubted change in your own consciousness, this supernatural work in your own innermost spirit shall stand you in the stead of all the arguments that can be drawn from all the sciences! Your one thing shall overthrow their thousand things if you can say, “Whereas I was blind, now I see.”

Says one, “I don’t know how that can be.” Let me suppose that someone has just discovered galvanism [electric shock] and I have had a galvanic shock. Now, 20 people come and say, “There is no such thing as galvanism. We do not believe in it for a moment.” And there is one gentleman who proves by Latin that there cannot be such a thing as galvanism. And another proves it mathematically to demonstration. And 20 others prove it in their different ways. I would say, “Well, I cannot answer you in Latin, I cannot overthrow you in logic, I cannot contradict that syllogism of yours, but one thing I know—I have had a shock of it—that I *do* know.” And I take it that my personal consciousness of having experienced a galvanic shock will be a better answer than all their learned sayings. And so, if you have ever felt the Spirit of God come into contact with you, (and that is something quite as much within the reach of our consciousness as even the shock of electricity and galvanism), and if you can say of that, “One thing I know, which cannot be beaten out of me, which cannot be hammered out of my own consciousness, that whereas I was blind, now I see”—if you can say that, it will be a quite sufficient reply to all that the skeptic may bring against you!

How often, dear Brothers and Sisters, are you assailed, not only by the skeptic, but by our very profound doctrinal brethren? I know some very great doctrinal friends, who, because our experience may not tally with theirs, will sit down and say, “Ah, you don’t know the power of vital godliness.” And they will write very severe things against us and say that we don’t know the great secret, and don’t understand the inner life. You never need trouble yourself about these braggarts—let them talk on till they are finished. But if you do want to answer them, do it humbly by saying, “Well, you may be right and I may be mistaken, but yet I think I can say, ‘One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.’” And I have known them to sometimes go to the length of saying if we don’t hold all their points of Doctrine and go the whole *18 ounces* to the pound, as they do—if we are content with 16 and keep to God’s weights and God’s measures—“Ah, those people cannot be truly converted Christians, they are not so high in Doctrine as we are.” Well, we can answer them with this, “One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.”

And you young Christians sometimes meet with older Believers, very good people, too, and very wise, and they will put you into their sieves. Some of our Brothers and Sisters always carry a sieve with them and if

they meet a young Brother, they will try to sift him and they will often do it very unkindly—ask him knotty questions. I always compare this to a man's trying a newborn child's health by putting nuts into his mouth—and if he cannot crack them, he will say, "He is not healthy." Well, I have known very difficult questions asked about such things as sublapsarianism, or supralapsarianism, or about the exact difference between justification and sanctification, or something of that sort. Now, I advise you to get all that sort of knowledge you can but, putting all of it together, it is not nearly equal in value to this small bit of knowledge, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see."

I have studied many and many an old Puritan book and tried to enrich my mind with the far-sought lore of the writers of them, but I tell you there are times when I would give up everything I have ever learned, by nights and days of study, if I could but say for a certainty, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." And even now, though I have no doubt about my own acceptance in Christ and my having been brought to see, yet, compared with this piece of knowledge, I count all the excellency of human knowledge—yes, and all the rest of Divine knowledge, too—to be but dross and dung, for this is the one thing necessary, the one soul-saving piece of knowledge, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see."

My dear Hearer, do you see a beauty in Christ? Do you see a loveliness in the Gospel? Do you perceive an excellence in God, your Father? Can you read your title clear to mansions in the skies? You could not do this once. Once you were a stranger to these things—your soul was dark as the darkest night without a star, without a ray of knowledge or of comfort—but now you see seek after more knowledge but, if you still cannot attain it, and if you tremble because you cannot grow as you would, remember this is enough to know for all practical purposes, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see."

III. We will again change our view of the subject. This is a MODEL CONFESSION OF FAITH.

This blind man did not do as some of you would have done. When he found his eyes, he did not use them to go and hunt out a quiet corner so that he might hide himself in it—he came out boldly before his neighbors and then before Christ's enemies, and said, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." Why, there are some of you who, I hope, have Grace in your heart, but you have not courage to confess it! You have not put on your regimentals. I suppose you call yourselves members of the Church militant, but you are not dressed in the true scarlet—you do not come forward and wear the Master's badge and openly fight under His banner. I think it is very unkind of you and very dishonoring to your Master. There are not many who speak for Him and it is a shame that you should hold your tongue. If He has given you eyes, I am sure you ought to give Him your tongue! If He has taught you to see things in a new light, I am sure you ought not to be unwilling to confess Him before men! After so much kindness in the past, it is cruel

ingratitude to be ashamed to confess Him. You do not know how much you would comfort the minister—converts are our sheaves and you who are not added to the Church, do, as it were, rob us of our reward! No doubt you will be gathered into God's garner, but then we do not know anything about that—we want to see you gathered into God's garner *here!* We want to hear you boldly say, "Whereas I was blind, now I see."

Besides, you cannot tell how much good you might do to others. Your example would move your neighbors. Your confession would be valuable to saints and might be a help to sinners. Your taking the decisive step might lead others to take it. Your example might be just the last grain cast into the scale and might lead others to decide for the Lord. I am ashamed of you, who were once blind, yet now see, but do not like to say so! I pray you lay the matter to heart and, before long come out and say, "Yes, I cannot withhold it any longer. Whereas I was once blind, now I see!"

"Well," says one, "I have often thought of joining the church, but I can't be perfect." Now this man did not say, "I was once imperfect and now I am perfect." Oh, no! If you were perfect, we could not receive you into church fellowship because we are all, ourselves, imperfect—and we would fall out with you if we took you in. We don't want those perfect gentlemen—let them go to Heaven—that is the place for perfect ones, not here!

"Well," says someone else, "I have not grown in religion as I should like. I am afraid I am not as saintly as I would desire to be." Well, Brother, strive after a high degree of holiness, but remember that a high degree of holiness is not necessary to a profession of your faith! You are to make a profession as soon as you have any holiness—the high degree of it is to come afterwards.

"Ah," says another, "but I could not say much." Nobody asked you to say much. If you can say, "Whereas I was blind, now I see," that is all we want! If you can but let us know that there is a change in you, that you are a new man, that you see things in a different light, that what was once your joy is now your sorrow, and what was once a sorrow to you is now your joy—if you can say, "All things have become new." If you can say, "I feel a new life heaving within my bosom—there is a new light shining in my eyes. I go to God's House now in a different spirit. I read the Bible and engage in private prayer after quite a different fashion. And I hope my life is different, I hope my language is not what it used to be. I try to curb my temper. I endeavor to provide things honest in the sight of all men. My nature is different. I could no more live in sin as I once did than a fish could live on dry land, or a man could live in the depths of the sea"—this is what we want of you.

Suppose now a person getting up in the church meeting, (and there are scores and hundreds here who attend church meetings), and saying, "Brethren, I come to unite with you. I know the Greek Testament. I have also read a good deal in Latin. I understand the Vulgate. I can now, if you please, give you the 1st chapter of Mark in Greek, or the 2nd chapter of Exodus in Hebrew, if you like. I have also, from my youth up, given

myself to the study of the natural and applied sciences. I think I am master of rhetoric and I am able to reason logically.” Suppose he then went on to say what he knew about business, what a skillful tradesman he had been and, after going through that should say, “I have a great deal of theological knowledge. I have read the Fathers, I have studied Augustine, I could talk about all the ponderous tomes that were written in the ancient times, I am acquainted with all the writers on the Reformation and I have studied the Puritans through and through. I know the points of difference between the great Reformed teachers and I know the distinction between Zwingli and Calvin”? I am sure, dear Friends, if a man were to say all that, before I put it to the vote whether he should be admitted to church membership, I would say, “This dear brother has not any idea of what he came here for. He came here to make a confession that he was a living man in Christ Jesus and he has been only trying to prove to us that he is a *learned* man. That is not what we want.” And I would begin to put to him some pointed questions—something like this, “Did you ever feel yourself a sinner? Did you ever feel that Christ was a precious Savior and are you putting your trust in Him?”

And some of you would say, “Why, that’s just what he asked poor Mary, the servant girl, when she was in the meeting five minutes ago!” All that learned lumber is good enough in its place. I do not depreciate it. I wish you were all scholars. I love to see you great servants in the Master’s cause, but the whole of that put together is not worth a straw compared with this, “One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.” And this is all we ask of you—we only ask you, if you wish to join the church, to be able to confess that you are a changed character, that you are a new man, that you are willing to be obedient to Christ and to His ordinances. And then we are only too glad to receive you into our midst. Come out, come out, I pray you! You who are hiding among the trees of the forest, come forth! Whoever is on the Lord’s side, let him come forth! It is a day of blasphemy and rebuke. He that is not with Christ is against Him, and he that gathers not with Him scatters abroad. Come forth, come forth, you that have any spark of love for God, or else this shall be your doom, “Curse you Meroz, curse you bitterly the inhabitants thereof, because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.”

IV. And now, to conclude, my text may be used in another way, for it sets before us A VERY CLEAR AND MANIFEST DISTINCTION.

You cannot, everyone of you, say, “One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.” My Hearers, solemnly, as in the sight of God, I speak to you. Lend me your ears and may these few words of the Truth of God sink into your hearts! Are there not some of you who cannot even say, “I was blind”? You do not know your own blindness. You have the conceit to imagine that you are as good as most people and that if you have same faults, yet certainly you are not irretrievably lost! You have no idea that you are depraved, utterly depraved, saturated through and

through and rotten at the core. If I were to describe you in Scriptural language and say, "You are the man," you would be shocked at men for giving you so bad a character! You are amiable, your outward carriage has always been decorous, you have been generous and benevolent and, therefore, you think there is no need for you to be born-again—no necessity for you to repent of sin! You think that the Gospel is very suitable for those who have gone into foul, open sin, but you are too *good*, rather than too bad! O my Hearers, you are stone-blind and the proof that you are so is this—you do not know your blindness! A man who is born blind does not know what it is to lose sight! The bright beams of the sun never made his heart glad and, therefore, he does not know his misery! And such is your state. You do not understand what it is that you have lost. What it is that you need. I pray God to do for you what you cannot do for yourselves—make you feel now, once and for all, that you are blind! There is hope for the man who knows his blindness—there is some light in the man who says he is all darkness—there is some good thing in the man who says he is all foul. If you can say—

"Vile and full of sin I am"—

God has begun a good work in you! You know that when the leper was afflicted with leprosy from head to foot, the priest looked at him and if there was a single spot where there was *no leprosy*, he was unclean, but the moment the leprosy covered him everywhere, then he was made clean—and so you, if you know your sin so as to feel you utterly ruined, lost estate, God has begun a good work in you—and He will put away your sin and save your soul. Alas, there are many who do not know that they are blind.

And yet I know, to my sorrow, there are many of you who *do* know that you are blind, but *you don't yet see*. I hope you may—I hope you may. To know your blindness is well, but it is not enough. It would be a dreadful thing for you to go from an awakened conscience on earth to a tormenting conscience in Hell. There have been some who have begun to find out that they are lost here and then have discovered that they are lost hereafter as well. I pray you, do not tarry long in this state! If God has convinced you of sin, I pray you do not linger! I prayed tonight that the Lord would save us, and He is now waiting. The way of salvation—oh, how many times I have preached this! And how many times more will it be necessary to tell you over and over again the same thing? The way of salvation is simply this—trust Christ and you are saved! Just as you are, rely upon Him and you are saved. With no other dependence, with no other shadow of a hope, Sinner, venture on Him. Venture wholly, venture now! I hear the wheels of the Judge's chariot behind you. He comes! He comes! He comes! Flee, Sinner, flee! I see God's bow in His awful hand and He has drawn the arrow to its very head. Flee, sinner! Flee while yet the wounds of Christ stand open! Hide yourself there as in the cleft of the Rock of Ages. You have not a lease of your life, you cannot tell that you shall ever see another Sabbath to spend in pleasure! No more warnings may ever ring in your ears. Perhaps you will never have even another week-day to spend in drunkenness and blasphemy. Sinner, turn! God

puts this alternative before some of you tonight—turn or burn! “Turn you, turn you from your evil ways, for why will you die?” One of the two it must be—die or turn! Believe in Christ or perish with a great destruction. “He that being often reproved hardens his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.” And you who are awakened and convicted tonight, I pray you to trust Christ and live!

The whole matter is very simple, “Whereas I was blind, now I see.” Do you, tonight, see that Christ can save you? Do you believe that He will save you if you will trust Him? Then trust Him and you are saved! The moment you believe, you are saved, whether you feel the comfort of it or not—yes, and the thought arising from the full belief that you are saved will yield you the comfort which you will never find elsewhere! Have I trust in Christ, O my Soul? You know, O Lord, I have! You know I have—

**“Other refuge have I none,
Hangs my helpless soul on You.”**

It is written, “He that believes on Him is not condemned.” Then I am not condemned. Perhaps I feel at this present moment no joy, but then the thought that I am not condemned will make me feel joy, by-and-by. Yet I must not build on my joy, I must not build on my feelings, but simply on this—that God has said, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” I, believing in Christ am saved. And that is true of you, also—you in the aisle over yonder. You by that door there, and you behind me here. It is true of every man, woman, or child in this place who has now come to put trust in Christ! It is true of the man in the smock frock who did not intend to come here tonight, but who, seeing the people, strolled in and who has been saying in his heart, “I will believe. I will trust Christ.” Well, then, you are saved, your sin is blotted out, your iniquity is forgiven, you are a child of God, the Lord accepts you—if you have really trusted Christ—you are an heir of Heaven! Go and sin no more! Go and rejoice in pardoning love. And God bless you, for Jesus sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MARK 10:46-52; JOHN 9:1-7.**

We have several records of blind men being cured by the Lord Jesus Christ. One of them is in Mark 10:46-52.

Mark 10:46. *And they came to Jericho: and as He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great number of people.* For now His march to the battle was like a triumphal march, which was, by-and-by, to be attended with the waving of palms and the shout of Hosannas—“as He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great number of people.”

46, 47. *Blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the highway side begging. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth.* That is all that the crowd called Him—“Jesus of Nazareth.”

47. *He began to cry out, and say, Jesus, You son of David, have mercy on me!* He had advanced much further than the mass of the people. To him it was not “Jesus of Nazareth,” but it was “Jesus, You Son of David.”

49-50. *And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, You son of David, have mercy on me! And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they called the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; He calls you. And he, casting away his garment, rose and came to Jesus. Blind as he was, he found his way to the Savior—I suppose the ears directed by the voice helped him to do so.*

51. *And Jesus answered and said unto him, What will you, that I should do unto you? The blind man said unto Him, Lord, that I might receive my sight.* His request was plainly put, but it was most respectfully and even adoringly addressed to Christ.

52. *And Jesus said unto him, Go your way; your faith has made you whole.* You will find that it is often the Savior's way to thus give the credit of His own work to the patient's faith. "Your faith," He says, "has made you whole." Whereas, you and I, if we do a good thing, are very anxious that nobody else should take the credit for it. We are very willing to have all the honor put upon ourselves, but Jesus does not say, "I have made you whole," though that was true enough, but, "Your faith has made you whole." And why is it, do you think, that Christ takes the crown off His own head to put it on the head of Faith? Why? Because He loves Faith and because Faith is quite certain not to wear that crown, but to lay it at His feet! Of all the Graces, Faith is the surest to deny herself and ascribe all to Him in whom she trusts.

52. *And immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus in the way.* Another of these records is in John 9:1-7.

John 9:1-7. *And as Jesus passed by, He saw a man which was blind from his birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither has this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day: the night comes when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the Light of the world. When He had thus spoken, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent). He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing.* I will not say anything now about this miracle, as it will form the subject of my sermon. [The exposition was *before* the sermon.]

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

A THREEFOLD SLOGAN

NO. 3536

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 1916.

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

“One thing is necessary.”
Luke 10:44.

“One thing I know.”
John 9:25.

“One thing I do.”
Philippians 3:13.

[The original title of this sermon was A THREEFOLD MOTTO.]

I HAVE “one thing” in view—“one thing” on which I want to rivet your attention. Forbear with me if I detain you a few minutes before announcing a text. It has been said that a man of one book is terrible in the force of his convictions. He has studied it so well, digested it so thoroughly and understands it so profoundly, that it is perilous to encounter him in controversy. No man becomes eminent in any pursuit unless he gives himself up to it with all the powers and passions of his nature—body and soul. Michelangelo had never been so great a painter if his love of art had not become so enthusiastic that he frequently did not take off his garments to sleep by the week together—nor had Handel ever been such a great musician if his ardor for celestial sounds had not led him to use the keys of his harpsichord till, by constant fingering, they became the shape of spoons. A man must have one pursuit and consecrate all his powers to one purpose if he would excel or rise to eminence among his fellows.

When streams of water divide themselves into innumerable streams, they usually create a swamp which proves dangerous to the inhabitants of the neighborhood. Could all those streams be dammed up into one channel, and made to flow in one direction, they might resolve themselves into a navigable river, bearing commerce to the ocean and enriching the people who dwelt upon its banks. To obtain one thing, one comprehensive blessing from Heaven, has been the objective of many a saintly prayer, like that of David, “Unite my heart to fear Your name.” The advice of Paul was, “Set not your affection upon things on earth,” not, “your affections,” as it is often misquoted. The Apostle would have all the affections tied up into one affection—and that one concentrated affection not set upon earthly things—but upon things above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God! The concurrence of all our powers and capacities with one single impulse, to obtain one objective and to produce one result, is one great aim of the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

The “one thing” concerning which I am now about to talk very seriously to you will require three texts to elucidate it. There are three pithy passages of Holy Scripture which I shall endeavor to press home on your heart and conscience.

I. ONE THING NECESSARY.

Our first text is to be found in the Gospel according to Luke 10:44, “One thing is necessary.” This one thing, according to this passage, is *faith in Christ Jesus*, the sitting down at the Master’s feet, the drinking in of His Word. If I may expand for a minute the “one thing,” without seeming to make 20 things of that which is but one, I will refer it to the possession of a new life. This life is given to us when, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we are created anew in Christ Jesus. And it develops itself in a simple confidence in Jesus, in a hearty obedience to Jesus, in a desire to be like Jesus and in a constant yearning to be near to Jesus. “One thing is necessary”—that one thing is *salvation*—worked in us by the Holy Spirit, through faith which is in Jesus Christ our Lord. The new heart, the right spirit, a filial fear of God, love to Jesus—this is the “one thing necessary.” How I trust you all know how to distinguish things essential from things convenient, and that you are more concerned about necessary things than about things merely attractive, or, at most, but an accessory to your welfare! The little child may admire the field which is covered with red and blue flowers. The farmer cares nothing for these flowers—he delights in the wheat that is ripening for the sickle. So our childish minds are often fascinated with the flaunting flowers of fortune and fashion—craving after wealth, fame and worldly distinction—but our better reason, if it is allowed to speak, will prefer the necessary things, the things which we must have, or else must perish. We may do without earthly goods, for thousands have been happy in life and triumphant in death without any of the luxury which riches can purchase. The heart’s love of his fellow creatures has been fairly won by many a humble man who never courted popular applause. The patience of the poor has often counted for fine gold, while the pride of the affluent has passed for nothing but foul dross. Even lack of health, Heaven’s priceless blessing to mortals here below, has not hindered some precious sufferers from serving their generation, glorifying God in a martyrdom of pain and bequeathing treasures of piety to a grateful posterity. Ten thousand things are convenient. Thousands of things are desirable. Hundreds of things are to be sought for, but there is one thing, only *one thing*, the one thing we have described to you, of which our Savior speaks as the “one thing necessary.”

And, oh, how necessary it is! Necessary for your children—they are growing up about you and much joy they give you—for you can see in them many budding excellences. To your partial eyes they give promise of goodness, if not of greatness! They will be the comfort of your declining

years. You have carefully watched their education. Not a whit of their moral habits have you failed to overlook. To give them a fair start in the world has been your fond desire till their portion is the fruit of your providence. From perils you would protect them. Lest they should have to rough it, perhaps, as much as their father before them, you would pilot them through the straits. Good! But, dear parents, do remember that “one thing is necessary” for your children, that they may commence life, continue in life and close life honorably. It is well that they should be educated. It is well that morality should be instilled into them, but this is not enough! Alas, we have seen many leave the purest parental influences to plunge into the foulest sins! Their education has become but a tool for iniquity, and the money with which they might have helped themselves to competence has been squandered away in vice. “One thing is necessary” for that bright-eyed boy! Oh, if you can take him to the Savior, and if the blessing of the Good Shepherd shall alight upon him and renew him while yet a child, the best will have been done for him—yes, his one chief need supplied! And if that dear girl, before she comes to womanhood, shall have been led to that blessed Savior who rejects none that come to Him, she will have received all she shall need for time and for eternity! Quicken your prayers, then, dear parents. Think of your children, to seek their welfare more intelligently. Be more importunate in intercession on their behalf! Truly, this is the one thing necessary for them.

One thing, too, is necessary for that young man just leaving home to go out as an apprentice and learn his trade. That is a trying time for an untried hand. The heart may well flutter as one, young and inexperienced, reflects that he is now about to sail, not on a coasting voyage, but to put fairly out to sea. Before long it will be seen whether those fair professions had the Truths of God as a foundation. He will get to London—many of you have passed through this ordeal! The Metropolis, what a maze it seemed to you at first, and with what amazement you surveyed it! What with propensities within your breast, and profuse attractions outside—temptation held you spell-bound! What could not be done in the village—what you dared not *think* of in the little market town, seems easy to be done unobserved in the great city! Hundreds of fingers point you to the haunts of pleasure, the home of vice, the path to Hell! Ah, mother and father, you present the Bible as your parting gift. You write the youth’s name on the flyleaf. You offer your prayers and you shed your tears for him. Steals there not over you the conviction that the one thing he needs you cannot pack in his trunk, nor can you send it up to him by a post office order? The one thing necessary is that Christ should be formed in his heart the hope of glory! With that he would begin life well. A sword of the true Jerusalem metal, that will not break in the heat of the conflict, will be serviceable all his journey through. Do I address

some young man who has not forgotten his mother's kind remarks when he left home? Let me just echo them, and say to him, One thing you lack! Oh, seek it, seek it now! Before going out of this house, seek till, through Grace, you obtain this one thing necessary which shall bear you safely to the skies!

But "one thing is necessary," not merely for those youngsters at home, or for those about to go abroad in the world. One thing is necessary *for the business man*. "Ah," he says, "I need a great many things." But what, I ask, is the one thing? You speak of "the necessary." You call ready cash "*the indispensable*." "Give me this," says the man of the world, "and I don't care about anything else! Recommend your religion to whom you please, but let me have solid gold and silver, and I will be well content." Ah, Sirs, you delude yourselves with phantoms! You fondly dream that wealth in your hands would count for more than it has ever done for your fellows. You must have seen some men make large fortunes whom you knew to be very miserable. They have retired from business to get a little rest, and yet they could find no rest in their retirement! You must have known others who, the more they got, the more they have wanted, for they have swallowed a horseleech, and it has cried, "Give, give!" Of course, you never suspected that the money did the mischief, or that the precious metal poisoned the heart. But are you in quest of happiness? It lies not in investments, whether in government bonds or mortgages, or stocks or debentures, or gold or silver. These properties are profitable. They can be used to promote happiness. As accessories to our welfare, they may often prove to be blessings, but if accredited with intrinsic worth they will eat as does a canker! Money circulated is a medium of public benefit, while money hoarded is a means of private discomfort! A man is but a muckraker who is forever seeking to scrape everything to himself. A miser is bound to be miserable. Before high Heaven, he is an object to make the angels weep! One thing is necessary for you merchants, brokers and warehousemen to keep you from sinking under your anxieties and losses, or to preserve you from becoming sordid and selfish through your successes and lest your greed should increase with your gains! One thing is necessary that your life may be a true life, or else, when it comes to its end, all that can be said of you will amount to this, "He died worth so much." Must that be your only memorial? When you depart from this world, the poor and needy will not miss you. Widow and orphans will not grieve for you! The Church militant will not mourn! The bright spirits above will not be waiting to greet you. The grand climax of your career—a will! A testament sworn under a very large sum! What shall it profit any man what fortune he may have amassed, if he loses his soul?

Do you think that riches possessed in this world will procure any respect in the nether regions? I have heard that in the old Fleet Prison, the

thief who was put into jail for stealing ten thousand pounds thought himself a gentleman in comparison with those common fellows who were put in for some paltry debt of 20 or 25 pounds! There are no such distinctions in Hell! You who can boast your talents of gold and talents of silver, if cast away, shall be as complete wrecks as those who never had copper or silver, but lived and died in privation and poverty! You need one thing, and if you get this one thing, your wealth shall prove a blessing—otherwise it will be a curse! With this one thing your sufficiency for the day guaranteed to you by promise shall make you as one of Heaven's favorites, fed by the hand of God, always needy, but never neglected. You aged folk—there are some such here—shall I have to remind any of you that one thing is necessary—yes, most necessary to you? Death has already put his bony palm upon your head and frozen your hair to the whiteness of that winter in which all your strength must fail, and all your beauty fade. Oh, if *you* have no Savior! You will soon have to quit these transitory scenes. The young may die, but the old *must*. To die without a Savior will be dreary and dreadful! Then, after death, the judgment! Brave old man, how will your courage stand that outlook, if you have none to plead your cause? Oh, aged woman, you will soon be in the scales—very soon must your character be weighed. If it is said of you, "Tekel, she is weighed in the balances and found wanting," there will be no opportunity to get right or adjust your relations to God or to your fellow creatures. Your lamp will have gone out. There will be no chance of rekindling it! If lost, forever lost—forever in the dark—forever cast away! Little enough will it avail you, then, that you have nourished and brought up children. It will not suffice you, then, that you paid your debts honestly. Vain the plea that you attended a place of worship and were always respected in the neighborhood! ONE THING is necessary! Lacking that, you will turn out to have been a fool! Notwithstanding many opportunities and repeated invitations, you have rejected the one thing—the one only thing—what an irreparable mistake! Oh, how you will weep as one disappointed! How you will gnash your teeth as do those who upbraid themselves! You will mourn forever, and your self-reproach shall know no end!

I wish I could move you, as I desire, to feel as I feel, myself—that this one thing is necessary to every unconverted person here present. Some of you have already got this one choice thing that is so necessary. Hold it fast! Never let it go! Grace gave it to you—Divine Grace will keep it for you—Grace will hold you true to it. Never be ashamed of it. Prize it beyond all cost! But as for you who have it not—I think I hear your funeral knell pealing in my ears, and as you speed away, your spirits made to fly for very fear, right into the arms of Justice, I think I hear your bitter cry, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended and we are not saved!" I would gladly pluck you by the skirts, if I could, and say to you, "Why

not seek the one thing necessary without more ado? Get it now! It will not in any way hurt you. It will make you happy, here, and blessed hereafter." It is as necessary for this life as for the next, as necessary for the exchange as for the sick chamber, as necessary for the street and for the shop as for the dying bed and for the Day of Judgment. One thing—one thing is necessary! And now allow me to stop before taking you a stage further. Allow me, as it were, to change horses. I must take another text—

II. ONE THING KNOWN.

It is in the Gospel according to John, the 9th Chapter, and the 25th verse, and these are the words, "One thing I know."

The man who was born blind, whose eyes were opened at the pool of Siloam, said, "One thing I know." This simple statement I want to turn into a pointed question. Among the many things, dear Friends, that you are acquainted with, do you know the one thing that this poor man knew, "Whereas I was blind, now I see"? Here is a wealth of self-knowledge in this single avowal. Little enough, I daresay, he knew about other people, but he knew a great deal about himself! He was well aware that he once was blind—and he was quite positive that he now could see. Oh, can you say it with sincerity, "I know that I was once blind—I could see no beauty in Christ, though I thought I saw great beauties in the world. Then I could not love God. I did not hate sin. I had no repentance, nor had I any faith. I was blind, but now—oh, blessed change—now I see my sin and weep over it! Now I see a Savior, and I trust Him! Now I see His beauties and I admire Him! Now I see His service and I delight to spend my strength in it! One thing I know." What a marvelous experience of a marvelous change this implies! Nor can its importance be overrated. There is no going to Heaven unless you undergo a change which shall make you entirely new and make all things entirely new to you. A young convert once said, "I do not know what is happening—either the world is changed, or else I am, for nothing seems to me to be the same as once it was." Ah, this old Bible, what a dry Book it used to be, but, oh, how it abounds in marrow and fatness now! Prayer—what a tedious duty, once, but what a delightful exercise now! The going up to God's House on the Sabbath—used it not to be a weariness of the flesh? How much better to be in the fields! Yet now, how delightful we feel, to assemble with the Lord's saints! With what pleasure we hail the festal morn! All things are altered. Behold, all things are become new! What we once hated, we love, and what we loved, we hate! Is it so, dear Hearer—is it so with you?

Do not, I pray you, be content with mere reformation. Were you before a drunk, and are you now a teetotaler? Good—very good! Yet, good as it is, it will not save your soul! Dishonest and knavish you once were, but truthful and trustworthy you may now be—yet rely not upon it for salvation! In former days, unchaste—by stern resolve you may have given up

the favorite lust—but even that will not save you! Those who never fell into your foul sloughs need the change, too. “You must be born-again.” You must have an entire renewal—a radical change! It is not cutting off the limbs of a tree, nor shifting it to another place, that will convert a bramble into a vine. The sap must be changed. The heart must be renewed. The inner man must be made completely new. Is it so with you? Why, I think if some of us were to meet our old selves walking down the street, we would hardly know ourselves! ‘Tis true, old self has taken good care to knock at our door pretty often since. Of all the knocks we hear, not even excepting that of the devil, there is none we dread so much! The knock of the old man when he says, “Let me in with my corruptions and lusts, and let me reign and have my own way.” No, old man, you were once ourselves, but go your way, for we have put off the old man with his deeds, and put on the new man—we cannot know you, for one thing we know now that we knew not before—whereas we were blind, now we see!

Need I linger any longer upon this point? Let it suffice if I leave it as a kind of awakening question upon the heart and conscience. There are not 20 things, but there is ONE THING you have to enquire about. Do you know for sure this one thing—that you are not now what you used to be? Do you know that Jesus has made the difference? That Jesus has opened the eyes that were once without sight? That you now see Jesus, and seeing, you love Him? Our third subject is—

III. ONE THING DONE.

The text is in the 3rd Chapter of the Epistle to the Philippians, at the 13th verse. There the Apostle Paul says, “One thing I do.”

Pray observe that I did not introduce “*doing*” first. That would not be appropriate. We do not begin with *doing*. The one thing necessary is not doing. Coming to Christ and trusting Him, must take the lead. Not until after you have got the one thing necessary, and know that you have got it, and are conscious that, whereas you were blind, now you see, can you be fit to take the next step—“one thing I do.” And what is that one thing? “Forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” It seems, then, that the Apostle gave his whole mind up to the glorifying of God by his spiritual life. He was never content with what he was. If he had a little faith, he sought for more. If he had a little hope, he aimed to obtain more. If he had some degree of virtue, he coveted more. Oh, Christians, never be satisfied with being merely saved! Up with you! Away! Off! Go onward to the high mountains, to the clearer light, to the brighter joy! If saved and brought, like the shipwrecked mariner, to shore—is that enough? Yes, for the moment it is enough to guarantee the purest satisfaction and the warmest congratulations. But the mariner must seek a livelihood as long as he lives. He must put forth his energies. Whatever avocations open up before him, he

must vigorously seek such favors of fortune as may possibly be within his reach. Just so, let it be with you. Saved from the deep which threatened to swallow you up, rejoice that you are preserved from death, but resolve that the life vouchsafed to you shall be active, earnest, vigorous, fruitful in every good deed and work! Be diligent as your traders are! See how they wake their servants up in the morning, how they scold them if they are not diligent. This man must be hurried to one place, and that man to another. How sharp they speak! How quickly they move about! They will do their business and they spare no pains to increase it. Oh, that we were half as diligent in the service of God! Here we are driveling away our time. We do not put out all our talents, augment our faith, or enlarge our coast. Why are we so indolent in going to that great giver of every good and perfect gift for fresh supplies? Why do we not wait upon Him to be enriched? Would to God that we were as diligent in spiritual as we are in temporal things! Oh, that we were burning with a holy covetousness for the best gifts God can bestow and the choicest blessings saints can receive!

Paul was anxious to do more good, to get more good, to be more good. He sought to win souls. He needed to make Christ's name known. An ardent passion inflamed him! A high enthusiasm inspired him. Tent-making, it is true, was his trade, but tent-making did not monopolize quite all his heart, and soul, and strength! Does your secular vocation absorb all your thoughts? Though Paul was proud of his industry, and could say conscientiously, "My own hands have ministered to my necessities," yet preaching was the one thing he pursued as his life-work. He was a workman, just as many of you are—but where were his tools? They were ready to hand when he needed them. And did they, do you think, ever creep up into his heart? I believe never. "For us to live," said he, "is Christ." That was as true, I will guarantee you, when he was tent-making, or picking up sticks on the island of Malta, as when he was talking heavenly wisdom to the worldly-wise, addressing the Athenians on Mars' Hill or when he discoursed touching the resurrection of the dead to the Jews, or when he expounded the way of justification to the Gentiles! He was a man of one idea, and that one idea had entirely possessed him! In the old pictures they put a halo around the head of the saints. But, in fact, that halo encircles their hearts and penetrates every member of their bodies. The halo of disinterested consecration to Christ should not be about their brows, alone, to adorn their portraits, for it encompassed their entire being, their spirit, soul and body! It environed them, their whole being. "This one thing I do," was the slogan of early saints. Let it be your slogan!

Beloved, I address you as the saints of this generation. My earnest desire is that you should not come behind in Grace or in gifts. When the Believers of all ages muster, and are marshaled, may you be found

among the faithful and true. If not among the first or second class of worthies in the army of the Son of David, yet good soldiers of Jesus Christ! Our God is a loving Father. He likes to praise His people. To this end do be clear about the one thing you need, the one thing you know, and the one thing you do! So will you stand well in that day. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 9.**

Verses 1-3. *And as Jesus passed by He saw a man who was blind from his birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither has this man sinned, nor his parents, but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.* We are not to look upon such afflictions as any indication of special sin on the part either of the person or the parent. Of course, sin lies at the root of all our suffering as a great generic fact, but not so that we may attribute such an affliction to any one sin. The disciples, you see, dear Friends, are thinking about difficult problems. Their Master is thinking about how, practically, to meet the difficulty, and to this day there are a large number of Christians, professors and even ministers who occupy their time about questions which really are to no profit. If they could be answered, nobody would be the holier or the better! What does it matter to us what is the origin of evil? Far more important to turn the evil out than it is to find out how it came in! Very frequently, you know, after there is a terrible calamity or accident, we have an inquiry as to how it was done, and then we think the thing is all attended to. It would have been better, perhaps, to have an inquiry, before it was done, as to how it could be prevented. Our Lord has that wisdom—that practicalness. He begins to deal with the evil rather than to raise questions about it. Yes, and He sees in that evil a good coming out of it! He says that this man was blind, that the works of God might be made manifest in him.

4-7. *I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day: the night comes, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. When He had thus spoken, He spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle, and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay. And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent). He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing.* Our Lord used instrumentality. It did not appear, however, to be very likely to achieve His purpose. The clay seemed more likely to blind than to give sight, yet if the Lord chooses to use the poor and weak instruments that seem nothing better than dust and spittle, He has the glory of the grand result! If He takes the humble ministry of His servants and uses it in the pulpit, or in the Sunday school, or anywhere else, He

has all the more Glory and is the less likely to be robbed of it because He uses such unlikely means.

8, 9. *The neighbors therefore, and they who before had seen him that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged? Some said, This is he—We are sure of it.*

9. *Others said, He is like he—They were cautious bodies.*

9. *But he said, I am he. He knew there was no mistaking his witness!*

10, 11. *Therefore said they unto him, How were your eyes opened? He answered and said, A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed my eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight.* Very straightforward, very concise, very accurate—and when we make answer about our conversion, it is always well to take this for a copy—not too many flourishes, no coloring. He even leaves out about the spittle, but he gives it all as he can recollect it. So when you are talking about the Lord's love to you and His way of converting you, it is quite sufficiently remarkable, without any touch of rouge. Let it be given just as it is.

12. *Then said they unto him, Where is He? He said I do not know.* Enough for him to know what he did know—that his eyes were opened and how it was done! So sometimes I have known persons come upon the new convert with a question which has rather baffled him, and he has been troubled because he could not answer it. Do not let it trouble you! You are not expected to know everything. The very best and most honest thing is to say, "I do not know"

13-14. *They brought to the Pharisees him that before was blind. And it was the Sabbath Day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes.* So you may be sure that the Pharisees would be down upon Him for that, because, according to the Rabbis, the making of the clay to put upon this man's eyes would be a kind of brick-making—and they would bring Him in guilty of brick-making directly! So did these men pervert things and make men guilty where no offense had been committed whatever.

15. *Then again the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. He said unto them, He put clay upon my eyes, and I washed, and do see.* He is shorter with them. Some tales grow in telling. His gets shorter. Besides, he has to deal with captious people—and then the least said, the sooner mended—and this shrewd man thought so.

16, 17. *Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This Man is not of God, because He keeps not the Sabbath. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them. They said unto the blind man, again, What say you of Him, that He has opened your eyes? He said, He is a Prophet.* He could see that.

18-24. *But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and received his sight, until they called the parents of him that had received his sight. And they asked them, saying, Is this your son, who you*

say was born blind? How, then, does he now see? His parents answered them and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind. But by what means he now sees, we know not; he is of age; ask him. He shall speak for himself. These words spoke his parents because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already that if any man did confess that he was the Christ, he would be put out of the synagogue. Therefore said his parents, He is of age; ask him. Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: we know that this Man is a sinner. How piously these Pharisees can talk—and generally in the name of God, all sorts of mischief begins. When men are persecuting the Son of God, yet still they take the name of God upon their lips. Did they not burn the martyrs to the glory of God? Oh, yes, and so did these men thus slander Christ by saying, “We know that this Man is a sinner,” and yet they spoke about giving God praise!

25. *He—Our shrewd friend of the opened eyes.*

25-27. *Answered and said, Whether He is a sinner or not, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see. Then said they to him again, What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes? He answered them, I have told you already, and you did not hear: therefore would you hear it again? Will you also be His disciples? The man is sharp, acute, cutting.*

28, 29. *Then they reviled him and said, You are His disciple; but we are Moses’ disciples. We know that God spoke unto Moses: as for this Fellow, we know not from where He comes. The word, “fellow,” is supplied by the translators. There is no such word there because they did not know a word bad enough with which to express their scorn.*

30-33. *The man answered and said unto them, Why herein is a marvelous thing, that you know not from where He comes and yet He has opened my eyes. Now we know that God hears not sinners: but if any man is a worshipper of God, and does His will, him He hears. Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this Man were not of God, He could do nothing. He proves! He administrates! The thing is as clear as possible, and yet they refuse to see it.*

34. *They answered and said unto him, You were altogether born in sins. It is the old rule, “Abuse the plaintiff.” Nothing could be said. Now abuse the man! He has answered you and his arguments are too difficult for you. Now throw hard words at him. “You were altogether born in sins.”*

34. *And do you teach us? Wonderful, that, “us.” “Do you teach us?” Folly, ignorance and pride go together. This man, in the simplest and most unaffected manner, had told his tale and urged his argument—and now they abuse him and exalt themselves. “Do you teach us?” No, great Pharisees, he does not teach you, for you will not learn!*

34. *And they cast him out.* That is the last argument. Out with him! Now we have defeated him.

35. *Jesus heard that they had cast him out: and when He had found him.* What a blessed thing to be cast out, if Christ finds us! Many and many have been put out of the synagogue and treated with contempt, but then outside Jerusalem they found their Lord, for there He died outside the camp, and His people need not be ashamed to go after Him bearing His reproach. “When He had found him.”

35-38. *He said unto him, Do you believe in the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is He, Lord, that I might believe in Him? And Jesus said unto him, You have both seen Him, and it is He who is talking with you. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped Him.* He does not appear to have been a Unitarian, therefore, and if those persons had their eyes opened, they would do the same. “He said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped Him.”

39. *And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind.* Christ is the turner of the tables. Did not the virgin mother sing, “He has put down the mighty from their seats, and He has exalted them of low degree. He has filled the hungry with good things, but the rich He has sent away empty”? So He always does.

40. *Jesus said unto them, If you were blind—*Really could not see.

41. *You would have no sin.* If you really did not know better, were totally and altogether without knowledge—then you would have no sin compared with what you now have.

41. *But now you say, We see; therefore your sin remains.* You acknowledge that you have sinned with your eyes open and, therefore, your sin is all the greater.

—Adapted from the *C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

TRUE AND NOT TRUE

NO. 2950

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 24, 1905.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MAY 23, 1875.

“Now we know that God hears not sinners.”
John 9:31.

I HAVE taken my text out of its context for a certain purpose. Part of the purpose will be answered immediately if I say how wrong it is to take any passage of Scripture away from that which comes before it, and that which follows after it—for you may, if you are so inclined, prove anything you like from the Bible if you wrench a line from its context and hold it up by itself. You can, indeed, act in the same way with any other book. You may take an expression from any human being's writings, as some people do from these Divine writings, and make the author say what he never meant. That is how many treat the Word of God. For instance, a man may say that he can prove from Scripture that God has forsaken and forgotten His people. By turning to *Isaiah 49:14*, we find that Zion, in an unbelieving fainting fit said, “The Lord has forsaken me, and my Lord has forgotten me.” It was not true, but was one of the lies of unbelief. If you take from their context the words in Psalm 14:1, “There is no God,” you will have the opposite of what David wrote, “The fool has said in his heart, There is no God.” If you pick out a sentence from the New Testament, without the context, you may say that Scripture declares that our Lord Jesus Christ was a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber because His enemies falsely said so. And you may declare that it is your duty to worship the devil, because Matthew records that he said to Christ, “Fall down and worship me.” You see at once the absurdity and wickedness of wresting the Scriptures in that fashion.

Now take the words that I have chosen for my text, “We know that God hears not sinners.” Who said that? A man who was born blind, to whom Christ had given sight! And who believed it? A set of still blinder Pharisees! He was arguing with them and he wished to convince them, so he used an argument which was especially suitable to *them*. It was their Pharisaic belief that God would not hear sinners. “Very well,” he said, “but God has heard Christ and, therefore, according to your own belief, Jesus Christ, who has opened my eyes, cannot be a sinner.” It was a capital *argumentum ad hominen*, as we say—an argument to the men themselves. But we are not going to accept everything that this man said. We are not bound to do so, for he did not speak under any sort of Inspiration. The Evangelist was Inspired to record what the man said, but we would be very foolish if we believed all that he said, shrewd as he proved himself to be.

Is it true that “God hears not sinners”? *It is true and it is not true.* It is true, most true as this man meant it, but it is utterly false in the sense in which some persons have understood it. So I am going to speak, first, upon *how it is true that God hears not sinners.* And, secondly, upon *how it is not true.*

I. First, then, IT IS TRUE THAT GOD HEARS NOT SINNERS IN THE SENSE IN WHICH THIS MAN USED THE EXPRESSION, namely, that *if Christ had been an impostor, it is not possible to conceive that God would have listened to His prayer* and given Him the power to open the blind man’s eyes—for that would have been, for God, the Just and the True—to set His seal to a lie, and that cannot be. The man was quite accurate in arguing, “If this Jesus of Nazareth is a deceiver, how is it that” (as the man supposed) “He has asked God to open the eyes of one born blind, and God has done it, thereby as good as saying that this Deceiver was true?” It is not supposable that the Most High could have done anything of the kind! It can never be believed that God will listen to the prayers of men who ask Him to support their lies and assist them in the propagation of that which is contrary to His own Kingdom. That was the primary sense in which, I have no doubt, the man meant his statement—and in that sense it is true. God will back up the right and the true, and stand by the Christ whom He, Himself, has sent—but He will not support imposture and falsehood!

In another sense it is true that “God hears not sinners,” that is to say, *He will hear none of us*—no sinner among us, (and who among us is not a sinner?) *in and of ourselves.* If heard, it must be through the interposition of the Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, for up to the immediate Presence of the thrice-holy God the guilty sinner cannot come by himself. The fire of the Divine Holiness would burst forth and utterly destroy the presumptuous rebel who might attempt such an intrusion! But Jesus meets us just where we are—we give our prayers into His hands and He perfumes them and cleanses us with His own most precious blood—and then He presents both ourselves and our prayers before His Father’s face. God could not hear those prayers of ours, neither could He have respect unto us or to our offering, apart from the mediation of Christ! He must—to use the language of one of our hymn-writers—“look through Jesus’ wounds” on us and then, *but not till then*—can He regard us favorably. As a matter of absolute justice, irrespective of the Mediator, God could not and would not hear any prayer from any sinful being in the universe!

Our text is also quite true if we read it as meaning that *God hears not wicked prayers.* Perhaps someone asks, “What are wicked prayers?” There are many sorts, but I will only mention one or two kinds. Those are wicked prayers which men offer formally—I mean such as we often hear when solemn sounds are evidently uttered by thoughtless tongues—when men bow their heads in the posture of devotion, but their hearts are gadding abroad after vanity—when they bend the knee, morning and night, and repeat a *form*, but there is no heart in it. All that is an insult and a mockery to the Most High. What would we think if somebody presented a petition to us and asked us to listen to it, yet did not mean

it, but merely mocked us with empty sounds? Unless your heart is in your prayer, it is a wicked one, and God will not answer it! He must hear it, but it will be only in indignation and He will say to you, "What have I done that you should thus provoke Me to My face and bring to Me mere empty shells when the kernel of the heart is altogether absent?"

That is also a wicked prayer which a man offers simply because it is the custom to offer it and there is something to be gained by it. All attendance upon religious ordinances, for the sake of thereby getting pecuniary profit or social position, must be abominable in the sight of God—yet there are many who have a keen eye for the loaves and fishes that Christ or His Apostles have to distribute—and they say a prayer for what they can get. And they would swear an oath for twice as much, or perhaps for half as much, equally satisfied whichever they might do as long as the wages were pretty sure and liberal! It is detestable that religion should ever be a hobbyhorse for gain or for position. We know that God hears not such prayers as those. Sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal must be more musical in the ears than the mere chattering of formalists, or the pretended prayers of those who hope to gain thereby. He hears not prayers in which men sin as they pray and insult Him when they appear to be devout.

It is quite certain, as you will see from various passages of Scripture which I will presently quote to you, that God does not and will not hear the prayers of those who continue in their sins even while they pray. There are thousands of persons who would very much like to go to Heaven and they are dreadfully afraid of going to Hell—but then if they do go to Heaven, they would like to take their sins with them—at least most of the way. They would cut their acquaintance just a few yards before the brink of the River of Death, but they feel that they must keep those sweet sins of theirs! And yet they hope to go to Heaven! If this is what any of you are doing, be you sure of this, that God will not hear your prayers! He will hear your supplications if you repent of and forsake your sins—but if you come before Him arm in arm with your sinful lusts, He will drive you from His Presence! A man prays for forgiveness, yet continues to drink to excess—can God answer a prayer of that kind? It cannot be! He will never pander to our base passions by allowing us to indulge in sin and yet to hope for mercy. I believe that there are many persons who do pray, after a fashion, for Divine Grace, Christ and Heaven—they have never yet obtained an answer and they never will as long as they continue to dally with their beloved sins! These must be given up! Even if they are like their right arms, they must be cut off, or like their right eyes, they must be plucked out, for it is utterly impossible to keep sin and yet go to Heaven! In this sense, "God hears not sinners."

Do you wish to be saved from sin? Do you pray to be saved from intemperance, from dishonesty, from lying, from unchastity? Do you ask to be saved from everything that makes you unlike your God? Then He will hear such prayers as those, but to pray for pardon, yet continue to rebel—to pray for forgiveness, yet still go on to provoke Him—such a prayer as that must be a stench in the nostrils of the Most High! You will

find, in Isaiah's first chapter, 15th verse, that the Lord says, "When you make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood." There is a similar passage in Jeremiah 14:12, where the Lord says concerning the people who would not turn from their evil ways, "When they fast, I will not hear their cry; and when they offer burnt offering and an oblation, I will not accept them: but I will consume them by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence." "Thus have they loved to wander, they have not refrained their feet, therefore the Lord does not accept them; He will now remember their iniquity and visit their sins."

Another true meaning may be attached to this passage, "God hears not sinners," that is to say, *God does not hear hypocrites*. Job knew this and so did his friends. It hardly needs a Revelation of God to make us know that is true! If a man tries to play fast and loose with God—if he pretends to be the Lord's servant and, all the while he is the servant of sin—God will not grant the request that is made by his double tongue. Listen to these words of Job—"What is the hope of the hypocrite, though he has gained, when God takes away his soul? Will God hear his cry when trouble comes upon him? Will he delight himself in the Almighty? Will he always call upon God?" No. Hypocrites will not always call upon God and God will not always hear them when they do call upon Him! I may truly say that He will *never* hear them, for He abhors the sacrifice that is presented to Him without the devout heart of the offerer.

We have further proof that our text has much truth in it if we think of *another class of sinners that God will not hear, namely, the unforgiving*. When we pray, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us," we expressly ask that God will not forgive us till we have forgiven our fellow men. You may kneel till your knees grow to be part of the very floor—you may weep till you make your bed to swim—but no answer of peace shall ever come from God to you as long as you retain one black malicious thought against your fellow man, however much he may have offended you! Perhaps this explains why some of you who have been awakened of late, have not been able to find peace with God. If it is so with you, my Friend, you must first take your hands from the throat of your brother who owes you that little debt and then may you hope that God will allow you to find mercy at His hands concerning your far greater debt to Him! Bring not your sacrifice unto the Lord, pollute not His altar with it—no—dishonor not the floor of God's House by treading upon it while you cherish an unforgiving spirit! Go to your brother and say to him, "I freely forgive you for the wrong you have done me. Let this quarrel be ended, for I cannot meet my God till I can first meet you, for, "He that loves not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?"

I may here remark, by the way, that *God will not hear even His own people when they are living in known sin*. You must have noticed that remarkable declaration in Psalm 66:18—"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." Have you not found it so, my Brothers and Sisters who have been favored with the Presence of God? When you have backslidden, when you have grieved the Spirit of God, have not your prayers returned empty to you? You used to ask and receive! When you

kept up constant, familiar communion with the Most High, you had but to express your desire and it was granted to you. But you grew cold, worldly, careless—and now, when you pray, it is like speaking into a bronze cauldron—your words reverberate, they resound in your own ears! But they do not reach the ears of God. You go to the Mercy Seat and groan, but you bring your requests away with you. They are not supplied and so, groaning, and groaning, and groaning yet again, prayer has become a toilsome task with you, for no answer follows your supplication! Ask the Lord to cleanse your heart, my Brother, then your power in prayer will come back to you. If you walk contrary to God, He will walk contrary to you—and your power in prayer will fail you when you in any way give place to sin. I do not think that the blind man who had been cured by Christ meant that, but it is true, and it is necessary that I should mention it.

There is another class of sinners whom God will not hear. In Proverbs 28:9 we read, “He that turns away his ear from hearing the Law, even his prayer shall be abomination.” That is to say, *if a man will not hear God, God will not hear him*. You have a Bible, but you will not read it. Then, when you pray, you must not expect God to give you audience. You will not attend the means of Grace when you might do so. If anybody tries to explain the Gospel to you, you tell him to hold his tongue, for you are determined not to know anything about the way to Heaven. Well then, Friend, you may say what you like about praying, but while God’s Gospel is treated by you with such disrespect as this, you cannot expect that God will grant your requests. Shut your ear to God and He will shut His ears to you! But incline your ear and come to Him and, sinner as you are, your soul shall live, for God will hear you!

Further, *God will not hear those who continue to harden their hearts against Him*. There are some people who have often been impressed—and they have had great difficulty in throwing off those impressions. The battering-ram of the Gospel has been hammering at the doors of some of your hearts and it has given such tremendous blows that you have thought that the door must be wrenched from its hinges, and the posts must be torn from their sockets! But you have managed to strengthen your inside defenses and to keep up the barrier. Soul, let me solemnly warn you that you may do that once too often—you may put one bolt too many on that door and, one of these days the Lord will turn away from you and say—“Because I have called and you refused. I have stretched out My hands and no man regarded; but you have set at nothing all My counsel, and would none of My reproof, I also will laugh at your calamity. I will mock when your fear comes.” The Lord will not always strive with men! He waits long in matchless patience, but He will not always wait—the day shall come when the refusers shall cry, “Lord, Lord, open unto us,” but He will say, “Depart from Me! I never knew you.” And they will hear the fatal sentence, “Too late! Too late! You cannot enter now.” We know that God hears not sinners when once they depart out of this life. Once driven by death beyond the verge of mercy, once shut up in Hell,

this man's words will be most emphatically true concerning them, "We know that God hears not sinners."

II. Having thus shown you that there are some senses in which this declaration is true, I am going onto the other side of the question and shall show you that THERE ARE SENSES IN WHICH THIS TEXT IS NOT TRUE, but the very reverse of true.

First, it is not true that God hears not those who have been, and still are, in a measure, sinful because, my Brothers and Sisters, *if He did not hear sinners, He would not hear any human being*, for, "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Solomon truly said, "There is no man that sins not." And David wrote, under the Inspiration of the Spirit, "There is none that does good, no, not one." We have all erred and gone astray from the right road. And when we approach God in prayer, we must feel this and confess it. It is not true, therefore, that the Lord does not hear those who have sinned—those who still call themselves sinners though they are saved by Sovereign Grace. Look at the long line of His people and note how He has heard their prayers. Many beside David have said, "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles." Even after His people have gone astray from Him, He has heard them when they have repented and returned unto Him. The 51st Psalm is a sinner's prayer, is it not? Yet how graciously the Lord listened to it and restored His penitent servant to His favor! If I thought that God did not hear sinners, that is to say, those who have any sin—then would it be of no use for me to open my lips in prayer, or to lift my eyes to Heaven! But, blessed be His name, not only has He heard some of us, sinners though we are, but He has washed us from our sins, clothed us with the righteousness of Christ and we are "accepted in the Beloved!" And now when we plead with Him, we prevail! We delight ourselves in Him and He gives us the desire of our heart. We still dare not say that we are not sinners, for though we strive after perfection and shall never be satisfied with anything short of it—and believe that we shall assuredly have it through Jesus Christ our Lord—yet we have not at present obtained it. We labor after it, not as though we had attained it, or were already perfect, for we still confess that there is iniquity about our holy things, unholiness in our holiness, unbelief in our faith and something to be repented of in our repentance. Yet the Lord graciously hears us, blessed be His name, so that it is not absolutely true that God hears not sinners.

Neither is it true that God does not sometimes hear and answer the prayers of unregenerate men. I am going to speak upon a subject as to which there may be a difference of opinion, but I cannot help that—I am merely relating what I regard as facts. While I was but a child and knew not the Lord in a saving sense, I was taught by my parents that God heard prayer and I distinctly remember, as a boy, offering a prayer upon a very unimportant matter. If I were to tell you what it was, it would make you smile, but to me, as a child, it was a very great matter and I prayed to God many times about it. I know that I was not then born-again, neither had I true faith in the Lord Jesus Christ—but I did devoutly believe that God would hear me, in that matter, and I asked

Him again and again—and He gave me my desire. The result upon my mind was wonderfully beneficial, for it confirmed my belief in the existence of God and helped to arm me against any doubts of the infidel kind that might afterwards assail me, for the first and what was to me a very remarkable answer to my prayers, always anchored me fast!

On one occasion, in my early ministry, I mentioned this circumstance when I was addressing some Sunday school children in a chapel where the Brethren were of the “very sound” sort—they believed in Calvinistic Doctrine, not as I do, reckoning sixteen ounces to the pound, but allowing eighteen or nineteen ounces—and these extra ounces were not good for the people to feed upon! While I was speaking to the children, upstairs in the gallery were some of these divines and this remark of mine quite shocked them. They considered me to be as bad as Andrew Fuller, and to them he was, doctrinally, about the most horrible person that could be! So, outside the Chapel gate, I was assailed with questions about God hearing the prayers of unregenerate people. I was very young at the time and was rather bothered by those old fellows, but I found a very valiant defender. A poor woman, wearing a red cloak, pushed her way into the throng and addressed the old men thus, “Fools, and slow of heart to believe what the Holy Spirit has written in the Word.” I looked in astonishment at her, wondering what she was going to say. “Did you never read,” she said, “that God feeds the young ravens which cry? Are they regenerate? Do they pray spiritual prayers? Is it not the most natural prayer in the world that comes from a hungry young raven? And if God hears them and satisfies their desires, do you not think that He will hear a man who is made in His own image, even though he is unregenerate?” The woman won the day for me and I went away rejoicing!

I know that God hears the sincere and earnest prayers even of unregenerate persons concerning common things. I read, yesterday, a story of Mr. Samuel Medley, of whose hymns we have many in our hymn books, especially that one about God’s loving-kindness. Mr. Medley, in his younger days, was an officer on board one of his majesty’s men-of-war. There was a very sharp fight in which a number of French vessels were destroyed and young Medley was busy taking the minutes upon the quarter deck. One of the officers, passing by the place where he was sitting, said, “Mr. Medley, you are wounded.” He had not perceived it, but the blood was streaming down his leg and he had to be taken down to the hospital. After the surgeon had examined him, he said to him, “You will have to lose your leg. I am afraid you cannot live unless amputation takes place.” Now Mr. Medley had a godly mother and father, and other gracious people in his family, but he was a godless, Christless sinner—as wild as he could be. Yet he turned his face to the wall of his little bedroom and sought the Lord to spare him that leg. When the doctor came to him the next morning, he said, “I never saw such a case as this before. There has been more healing done in the last twelve hours than I ever knew to take place in a leg in my life! I think you will not need to have it off, after all.” That remarkable answer to prayer made a deep

impression on young Medley's heart and I believe that biographies will show that, in many cases, God has heard the prayers of unregenerate persons because He meant to eventually save them—and hearing their prayers led them to believe in Him and helped them to exercise that real spiritual faith which brought salvation to their souls.

Let me say, however, that *God sometimes hears the prayers of intensely wicked men out of no love to them.* You remember how He heard the cry of the children of Israel when they said, "Who shall give us flesh to eat?" The Lord sent them quails in great abundance but, "while the flesh was yet between their teeth before it was chewed, the wrath of the Lord was kindled against the people, and the Lord smote the people with a very great plague." Again and again, the Lord granted the requests of Pharaoh, cruel Pharaoh, hard-hearted, proud Pharaoh who was afterwards destroyed in the Red Sea! Jehovah removed one plague after another from him, thus giving him (oh, dreadful thought!) an opportunity to exhibit the hardness of his heart and to increase it by sinning against the answered prayer! I beseech any man or woman here who, though not yet converted, has asked God for something and has received an answer to that petition, not to abuse that answer! I pray you to follow it up! It may be that there are designs of matchless love in store for you and that loving you with an amazing love, even while you are dead in sin, God has given you a token that it is even so! But if, after having presented your request to the Lord and had it granted, you continue to be His enemy and even grow worse, it may be that the next communication from God to you will be the fatal sentence out of the lips of Infinite Justice, "You did pray to Me, but you never sought anything but temporal things. And now, since you have rejected Me and have not sought the treasures of My Grace, and have sinned against light and knowledge, I will depart from you and leave you to that final hardness of heart which will irrevocably seal your doom."

Finally—and here I want to throw the whole force of my message—*it is not true that God will not hear sinners when they pray to Him for mercy, confessing their sins and believing in Jesus Christ His Son.* I have known three or four persons, quite recently, who have been perplexed with this idea. They have said, "It is no use for us to pray, for God hears not sinners." My dear Friend, how can you, in the teeth of God's Word, believe that statement, understanding it in the sense you give to it? For, if it were so, we would be under the Law, not under the Gospel! And then it would be necessary for us to be righteous before we could ask God for anything—that is the teaching of Sinai, not of Calvary! It is the glory of the Gospel that God *does* hear sinners and that He does grant their requests! For you to say that He will not hear a sinner when he confesses his sin and forsakes it—and cries to Him for mercy—is to contradict the Gospel! Remember the Gospel of Jesus Christ is not sent to the righteous, but to sinners! It is not meant for the good, but for the bad—for those who are unrighteous, ungodly—in fact, "sinners."

Look, for instance, at Manasseh who, "made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and to do worse than the heathen." The Lord rebuked him, yet he would not listen. But when he was carried

away to Babylon, in his affliction, "He sought the Lord, his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto Him: and He was entreated of him and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom." Look also at the dying thief upon the cross and let not the thought that God hears not sinners ever enter into your heads! There was a sinner dying as a malefactor, yet he said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom." And Jesus said to him, "Today shall you be with Me in Paradise." Never say that God hears not sinners! Have you not read the parable of the publican who "would not lift up so much as his eyes unto Heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner"? God did hear him, but He did not hear the Pharisee who thanked God that he was not as other men were!

Do you say that God hears not sinners? Read again the familiar story of the prodigal son. Here he comes, fresh from the swine-trough, filthy without and within, ragged, disgraced. But he has scarcely had time to say, "Father, I have sinned," before he is heard even more fully than he has prayed and the kiss of acceptance is on his lips and the best robe has covered him! It is a lie, concocted in the bottomless Pit, to say that "God hears not sinners." If they do but cry, "O God, forgive us for Jesus' sake," He *must* hear them—it would be contrary to His Nature to turn away from them! Why, Sirs, to deny this is to fly in the face of all the invitations and promises of the Word of God! Take this one, for instance, "Seek you the Lord while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." What does that mean but that God invites sinners to pray to Him and bids them come to Him, plainly implying that He will not reject them? Then there is that gracious invitation, "Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Does that mean that God will not hear sinners? Why, my Lord Jesus came into the world on purpose to hear sinners—He came here to seek and to save sinners!

Last Friday night I was speaking at Moody and Sankey's meeting at Bow Road Hall and I used an illustration which I will use now. I said that if somebody were to ring my doorbell at one or two o'clock in the morning, and I put my head out the window and asked, "What do you want?" and the answer came, "My wife is very ill, and I have come to ask you to take her case into your hands," I would say, "Bless you, good man! I am not a doctor. Why have you come to me?" The man would not be welcome at all, for it is not my business to prescribe for the sick! But there is another house, not very far from mine, where there is a red lamp over the door—for there is a doctor living there. If the man will ring the bell at *that* house and say what he wants, he will be welcome and the doctor will say, "I will be there directly, for it is my business to try to heal the sick."

Now, my Lord Jesus Christ has, as it were, a red lamp over His door. He is the Physician for sin-sick souls! It is His business to cure them. A doctor who never had any patients would be a poor doctor, would he not? And Jesus Christ (I say this with the utmost reverence), could not be a great Savior if there were no great sinners! And He could not be a great Savior if there were not a great many sinners to be saved! Anybody who is not a sinner cannot help Christ in this business. A man who is not ill would have to say to a doctor, "I do not need your skill, for there is nothing the matter with me." But the man who is ill is the one the doctor wants—and the more ill he is, the more does he add to the fame of the physician if a cure is worked upon him. As for you who think yourselves very good people, Christ does not want you! You do not want Him and He does not want you. But you sinful people, you who know that you are sinners, you who, when I read my text, said, "Ah, that is a death-blow to all our hopes," you are the very people whom Jesus Christ wants! He came into the world to save sinners—just the sort of people that you are! So let the news be published over the whole earth that whoever believes on Him is not condemned! He has shed His precious blood for those who are condemned through sin, that the condemnation might pass away from them through their believing on Him!

It is gloriously true that God hears sinners, all sinners who come unto Him through Jesus Christ, His Son! Let the blind man say what he likes, we have tried it, and proved it for ourselves—and I hope that hundreds of you will prove, at this very moment, that He *does* hear sinners because He has heard *you*!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:*
LUKE 24:49-53; ACTS 1:1-12.

Luke 24:49. *And, behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you: but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.* The promise of the Father was, as you know, the gift of the Holy Spirit. By this gift, our Lord's rising again into Glory was celebrated. The Holy Spirit was the Heavenly largess of the great King by which He did honor to the return of His Son to His ancient Throne. The Apostles and the other disciples were to wait for this gift. They might have to wait for some days, but it is better to wait for Divine equipment than to go out to holy service in our own strength! All that you do will have to be undone unless it is done in the power of the Holy Spirit. "But tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high." Has that command ever struck some people who profess to be serving the Lord? Are there not men who preach whom God never sent to preach? The best advice we could give them would be, "Tarry." Are there not some who teach and some who take office in the church whom God has never endued with gifts or Graces for such work? Powerless workers stand in the way of true workers—they block up the path of those whom God sends to serve Him.

50. *And He led them out as far as to Bethany.* The ruling passion was strong in the hour of His departure. Well did He know that place,

Bethany—the place of love where He had received a welcome such as He had experienced nowhere else on earth—where lived Mary, Martha and Lazarus—there did He bid “Good-bye” to His disciples!

50. *And He lifted up His hands and blessed them.* He never had lifted up His hands to strike them, or to invoke curses upon them. Those hands were filled with blessings and the last thing that was seen of Jesus by human eyes was His hands uplifted in the act of blessing!

51, 52. *And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them and carried up into Heaven. And they worshipped Him.* Then they were not Unitarians—“They worshipped Him”—and there were angels present at the time who would have been sure to have rebuked them if it had been a wrong thing for them to worship Him. Indeed, they themselves, both as Jews and as Christians, would have felt in their inmost soul that they could not worship anyone but God—and Christ is God—so they did well to worship Him.

52. *And returned to Jerusalem with great joy.* Back to the place of His murder—back to the place where they were likely to be murdered themselves.

53. *And were continually in the Temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.* So bold were they that the very central spot for the worship of Jehovah we made the place where Christ’s Divine Sovereignty was proclaimed!

Acts 1:1-3. *The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach until the day in which He was taken up, after He, through the Holy Spirit, had given commandments unto the Apostles whom He had chosen: to whom also He showed Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.* The Resurrection of Christ, as we have often said, is the best attested of all historical facts. There is not half as much reason to be sure that Napoleon Bonaparte was ever taken to St. Helena as to believe that Jesus Christ was raised up from the dead by the Glory of the Father. If the Resurrection of Christ is not credible, there remains nothing credible in history! I go further than that, and say that the news of yesterday, which you read in this morning’s paper, you had no right to believe if you do not believe in Christ’s Resurrection, for the evidence in its favor is not half as strong as the evidence concerning the Resurrection of Christ from the dead. Remember that this feat was attested by men who could not be deceived concerning it and who sealed with their blood, as well as with their unfaltering testimony, their solemn belief that they had touched Him, that they had spoken to Him, that they had listened to Him, that they had eaten with Him and had seen Him eat of a broiled fish and of a honeycomb after He rose from the grave. We know that Christ has risen from the dead! That is one of the great cornerstones of the Christian faith. Fall back on that in every time of doubt and your fears will speedily disappear.

4-6. *And being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the*

Father, which, said He, you have heard of Me. For John truly baptized with water; but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence. When they therefore were come together, they asked of Him, saying, LORD, will You at this time restore again the Kingdom to Israel? They had not got rid of their old ideas concerning a kingdom visible among men! They still clung to the idea of a temporal kingdom for Israel. There was a Kingdom already established by Christ, but in the sense in which they understood the word, they were sadly in error.

7-8. *And He said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father has put in His own power. But you shall receive power after the Holy Spirit is come upon you; and you shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. As indeed they were, for they went everywhere testifying to what they had seen and heard—and very many were the conversions that followed. We need the same power to rest upon us, now, that rested upon them when the Holy Spirit came upon them!*

9-10. *And when He had spoken these things, while they beheld, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward Heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel. Luke wrote before concerning the two men in shining garments who said to the women at the sepulcher, “Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen.” These two men in white apparel now ask an equally appropriate question—“Why do you stand gazing up into Heaven?”*

11-12. *Which also said, You men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into Heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go into Heaven. Then they returned unto Jerusalem from the mountain called Olivet which is from Jerusalem a Sabbath day’s journey.*

*[This Exposition belongs to last week’s Sermon [#2949, Volume 51—OUR LORD’S POSTURE IN ASCENSION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] but there was no space available for its insertion there, and no Exposition appears to have been given before the preceding discourse.]

HYMNS FROM “OUR HYMN BOOK”—313, 319.

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

THE HEALING OF ONE BORN BLIND NO. 1065

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 11 1872,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened
the eyes of one that was born blind.”
John 9:32.*

THAT was quite true—there was no instance recorded in Scripture or in profane history at the time when this man spoke, of any person who was born blind having obtained his sight. I believe it was in the year 1728 that the celebrated Dr. Cheselden, of St. Thomas's Hospital, for the first time in the world's history achieved the marvel of giving sight to a man who had been blind from his youth up. And since then the operation of couching the eyes has been several times successfully performed upon persons who were born blind.

This man was, however, quite correct in the statement that then, and in his day, neither by skillful surgery nor even by miracle had birth-blindness been healed. There was no doubt this man was a great student in the matter of blindness—it touched so nearly his own consciousness since he himself dwelt beneath its perpetual shadow. He was the one man in the city who understood the subject thoroughly. But, alas, by all his researches he found no ground for hope. Having learned the whole history of blindness and its cure, this man had come to the assured conviction that none ever had been healed who were in his plight—a mournful conclusion, indeed, for him.

Our Lord Jesus did for him what never had been done before for any man. This pleasing fact seems to me to be full of consolation to any persons here present who labor under the idea that theirs is a most peculiar and hopeless case. It probably is not so solitary and special a case as you think, but even if we grant your supposition, there is no room for despair since Jesus delights to open up new paths of Grace. Our Lord is inventive in love! He devises new modes of mercy! It is His joy to find out and relieve those whose miserable condition has baffled all other help. His mercy is not bound by precedents. He preserves a freshness and originality of love.

If you can find no instance in which a person like yourself has ever been saved you should not, therefore, conclude that you must necessarily be lost. Rather, you should believe in Him who does great wonders, yes, and marvels unsearchable in the way of Divine Grace! He does as He wills, and His will is *love*. Have hope that inasmuch as He sees in you a singular sinner, He will make of you a singular trophy of His power to pardon and to bless. It was so with this man's eyes—if never eyes that had been born blind were opened before, Jesus Christ would do it—and the greater would be the glory brought to His name by the miracle.

Jesus does not need showing the way—He loves to strike out paths for Himself and the greater the room for His mercy the better He likes the road. I purpose this morning gathering instruction from the particular expression which the healed man here used. May the Holy Spirit make the meditation truly profitable to us. And, first, I shall ask you to observe the peculiarity of his case—he was a man *born* blind. Then, secondly, the specialties of his cure shall occupy a little of our attention. And, thirdly, we shall make a few remarks upon the singular condition of the healed man from the moment that his eyes were opened.

I. First, then, THE PECULIARITY OF HIS CASE. It was not an instance of need of *light*—that might both speedily and easily have been remedied. There was light enough all around him, but the poor creature had no eyes. Now, there are millions of persons in the world who have little or no light. Darkness covers the earth and gross darkness the people. It is the Church's business to spread light on all sides and for this work she is well qualified. We ought not to suffer any person to perish for lack of knowing the Gospel. We cannot give men *eyes*, but we can give them light. God has placed among us His golden candlesticks and expressly said, "You are the lights of the world."

Now, I believe that there are some persons who have eyes who, nevertheless, see but little for need of light. They are children of God but they walk in darkness and see no light. God has given to them the spiritual faculty of sight, but as yet they are down in the mines, in the region of night and death shade. They are imprisoned in Doubting Castle where only a few feeble rays struggle into their dungeon. They walk like men in a mist, seeing and yet not seeing. They hear doctrines preached which are not the pure Truth of God, the winnowed corn of the Covenant and, while their eyes are blinded with chaff and dust, they themselves are bewildered and lost in a maze.

Too many in this murky light weave for themselves theories of doubt and fear which increase the gloom. Their tears defile the windows of their soul. They are like men who hang up blinds and shutters to keep out the sun. They cannot see, though Grace has given them eyes. May it be yours and mine by explanation and example, by teaching with the language of the lips and the louder language of our lives, to scatter light on all sides—that those who dwell in spiritual midnight may rejoice, because for them light has sprung up!

Again, this was not the case of a man blinded by accident. Here, again, the help of man might be of much service. Persons who have been struck with blindness have again recovered. Notably is this recorded in Bible history when Elijah struck a whole army with blindness, but afterwards prayed to God for them and they received their sight at once. There is much that we can do in cases where the blindness is rather to be traceable to circumstances than to Nature. For instance, everywhere in the world there is a degree of blindness caused by prejudice. Men judge the Truth before they hear it! They form opinions about the Gospel not having studied the Gospel itself!

Put the New Testament into their hands, entreat them to be candid and to investigate it with their best judgments and to seek guidance from the Holy Spirit, and I believe many would see their error and amend. There are some true spirits whose mental perceptions are blinded by prejudice who would be helped very graciously to see the Truth if we would tenderly and wisely put it before them. The prejudices of education sway many in this country. We are to the backbone a very conservative people, tenacious of established error and suspicious of any long neglected truth. Our countrymen are not soon moved to receive the most obvious truth unless it has been in vogue for ages.

Perhaps it is better that we should be so than that we should be whirled about with every wind of doctrine and should run after every novelty, as some other nations do. But for this cause the Gospel has in this country to combat a mass of prejudice. "Such were my fathers, such ought I to be." "Such our family has always been, therefore such will I be and such shall my children be." No matter how sure may be the Truth of God that is brought before some men's minds, they will not even give it a *hearing* because old men, good men and men in authority have decided otherwise. Such persons assume that they are right by inheritance and orthodox by ancestry—they cannot *learn* anything—they have reached the fullness of wisdom and there they mean to stop.

The Church of God should try to remove all prejudices from human eyes from whatever sources they may come. Such ophthalmia we may be able to cure—and it is within our province to attempt it. Like Ananias, we may remove the scales from the eyes of some blinded Paul. When God has given eyes we may wash the dust out of them. Mingle with your fellow men. Tell them what the faith is that has saved you, let them see the good works which the Grace of God produces in you—and as the Gospel at first removed from men's eyes the scales of Judaism, of the Greek philosophy and of the Roman pride—so doubtless in this land and in this age it will make short work of the prejudices which some are doing their best to foster.

But this was not the case of a man who was blind by accident and consequently not a type of an understanding darkened by prejudice. The man was blind from his birth! His was the blindness of Nature and, therefore, it baffled all surgical skill. And, concerning the blindness caused by human depravity, the blindness that comes with us at our birth and continues with us till the Grace of God causes us to be born-again, I may say that since the beginning of the world it has not been heard that any man has opened the eyes of one whose spiritual blindness was born with him and is a part of his Nature!

If it is something from without that blinds me, I may recover. But if it is something from within which shuts out the light, who is he that can restore my vision? If from the beginning of my existence I am full of folly—if it is a part of my nature to be without understanding—how dense is my darkness! How hopeless is the fancy that it can ever be removed except by a Divine hand! Let us think and say what we will, we are, every one of us, by nature born blind to spiritual things! We are not capable of perceiving

God, not capable of perceiving the Gospel of His dear Son, not capable of understanding the way of salvation by faith in such a practical way as to be saved by it. We have eyes but we see not! We have understandings but those understandings are perverted—they are like balances put out of gear, or a compass which forgets the pole. We judge, but we judge unrighteously. By nature we put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! We put darkness for light, and light for darkness—and this is inbred in our nature, worked into our very constitution. You cannot get it out of man because it is a part of the man—it is his Nature.

If you ask me why it is that man's understanding is so dark, I reply, because his whole nature is disordered by sin—his other faculties, having been perverted, act upon his understanding and prevent its acting in a proper manner. There is a confederacy of evil within which deceives the judgment and leads it into captivity to evil affections. For instance, our carnal heart *loves* sin—the set of our unrenewed soul is towards evil. We were conceived in sin and shaped in iniquity and we as naturally go after evil as the swine seeks out filth. Sin has a fascination for us! We are taken by it like birds with a lure, or fishes with a bait.

Even those of us who have been renewed have to watch against sin because our nature so readily inclines to it. With much diligence and great labor we climb the ways of virtue, but the paths of sin are easy to the feet—is not that because our fallen nature inclines in that direction? You have only to relax your energy and to loose your soul from its anchor-hold and it drifts at once downwards towards iniquity, for so the current of Nature runs. It needs much power to send us upward, but we go downward as readily as a stone falls to the ground! You know it is so! Man is not as God made him—his affections are corrupt.

Now it is certain that the affections very often sway the judgment. The balances are held unfairly because the heart bribes the head. Even when we fancy that we are very candid we have insensible leanings. Our affections, like Eve's, seduce the Adam of our understanding and the forbidden fruit is judged to be good for food. The smoke of the love of sin blinds our mental eyes. Our desire is often father to our conclusion—we think we are judging fairly but we are really pandering to our baser nature. We think this thing to be better because we like it better! We will not condemn a fault too severely because we have a leaning that way ourselves! Neither will we commend an excellence, because it might cost our flesh too dearly to be able to reach it—or the not reaching it might strike too severe a blow upon our conscience. Ah, while our natural love of sin covers the mind's eye with cataracts and even destroys its optic nerve, we need not wonder that the blindness is beyond removal by any human surgery!

Moreover, our natural pride and self-reliance revolt against the Gospel. We are, every one of us, very important individuals. Even if we sweep a street-crossing we have a dignity of self which must not be insulted. A beggar's rags may cover as much pride as an alderman's gown. Self-importance is not restricted to any one position or grade of life. In the pride of our nature we are all accounted by ourselves to be both great and good, and that which would in any way lowers us we repudiate as unrea-

sonable and absurd. We cannot see it and are angry that others should! He who makes us suspect our own nothingness asks us to believe a doctrine hard to be understood. Pride will not and cannot understand the doctrines of the Cross because they ring her death-knell.

In consequence of our natural self-sufficiency we all aspire to enter Heaven by efforts and merits of our own. We may deny human merit as a doctrine but flesh and blood everywhere lusts after it. We need to save ourselves by *feelings* if we cannot by *works* and to this we cling as for dear life. Then the Gospel comes with its sharp axe and says, "Down with this tree! Your grapes are gall. Your apples are poison. Your very *prayers* need to be repented of! Your tears need to be wept over, your holiest thoughts are unholy! You must be born-again and you must be saved through the merits of Another, by the free, undeserved favor of God." Then straightway all our manliness, dignity and excellence stand up in indignation and we resolve never to accept salvation on such terms! That refusal assumes the shape of a need of power to understand the Gospel. We do not and cannot understand the Gospel because our notions of *ourselves* stand in the way! We start with wrong ideas of self and so the whole business is confusion and we ourselves are blinded.

Again, Beloved, one reason why our understanding does not and cannot see spiritual things is because we judge spiritual things by our senses. Imagine a person who should take a foot rule as his standard of everything which exists in Nature and conceive that this man with his foot rule in his pocket becomes an astronomer. He looks through the telescope and he observes the fixed stars. He is told when he takes out his foot rule that it is quite out of place in connection with the heavens—he must give up his feet and inches and calculate by millions of miles.

He is indignant. He will not be deluded by such enthusiasm. He is a man of common sense and a foot rule is a thing which he can see and handle—why, millions of miles are mere matters of *faith*, no one has ever traveled them—and he does not believe in them! The man effectually closes his own eyes! His understanding cannot develop within such limits. Thus we measure God's corn with our own bushel. We cannot be brought to believe that, "as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are His ways higher than our ways, and His thoughts than our thoughts." If we find it hard to forgive, we dream that it is the same with God.

Every spiritual Truth of God is acted upon in the same way. We propose to measure the ocean of Divine love in thimbles and the sublime Truths of Revelation we estimate by drops of the bucket. We shall never be able to reach the thoughts and things of God while we persist in judging after the sight of the eyes, according to the measure of an earth-bound, carnal mind. Our understanding also has become unshipped and out of gear from the fact that we are at a distance from God and that, consequently, we do not believe in Him. If we lived near to God and habitually recognized that in Him we live and move and have our being, we should accept everything that He spoke as being true because He spoke it. And our understanding would be clarified at once by its contact with Truth and God.

But now we think of God as a remote person—we have no love to Him by nature nor any care about Him. It would be the best news some sinners could hear if there were information given that God was dead! They would rejoice above all things at the thought that there was no God. The fool always says, “no God,” in his heart, even when he does not dare say it with his tongue. We all by nature would be glad to be rid of God—it is only when the Spirit of God comes and brings us near to God and gives us faith in our heavenly Father that we joy and rejoice in Him—and are able to understand His will.

Thus, you see, our entire nature, fallen as it is, operates to the blindness of our eyes and therefore the opening of the eye of the human understanding towards Divine things remains an impossibility to any power short of the Divine. I believe there are some Brothers whose notion is that you can open a sinner’s blind eye by rhetoric. As well hope to sing a stone into sensibility! They dream that you must enchant man with splendid periods and then the scales will fall from his eyes. The climax is a marvelous engine and the preposition is more wonderful still! If these will not convince men, what will? To finish a discourse with a blaze of fireworks—will not that enlighten?

Alas, we know well enough that sinners have been dazzled a thousand times by all the pyrotechnics of oratory and yet have remained as spiritually blind as ever they were! A notion has been held by some that you must *argue* the Truth of God into men’s minds. They say that if you can put the doctrines of the Gospel before them in a clear, logical, demonstrative form they must give way. But, truly, no man’s eyes are opened by syllogisms. Reason alone gives no man power to see the light of Heaven. The clearest statements and the most simple expositions are equally in vain without Divine Grace!

I bear witness that I have tried to make the Truth of God “as plain as a pike-staff,” as our proverb is, but my hearers have not seen it for all that! The best declaration of Truth will not, of itself, remove birth-blindness and enable men to look unto Jesus. Nor do I believe that even the most earnest Gospel appeals, nor the most vehement testimonies to its Truth will convince men’s understanding. All these things have their place and find their use but they have no power in and of themselves to *savingly* enlighten the understanding. I bring my blind friend to this elevated spot and I bid him look upon yonder landscape. “See how the silver river threads its way amid the emerald fields. See how yonder trees make up a shadowy wood—how wisely yonder garden, near at hand, is cultivated to perfection—and how nobly yonder lordly castle rises on yon knoll of matchless beauty.”

Look! He shakes his head—he has no admiration for the scene. I borrow poetical expressions, but still he joins not in my delight. I try plain words and tell him, “There is the garden and there is the castle, and there are the woods and there is the river—do you see them?” “No,” he cannot see *one* of them and does not know what they are like. What ails the man? Have not I described the landscape well? Have I been faulty in my explanations? Have I not given him my own testimony that I have walked those

glades and sailed along that stream? He shakes his head—my words are lost. His eyes, alone, are to blame.

Let us come to this conviction about sinners, for, if not, we shall hammer away and do nothing! Let us be assured that there is something the matter *within* the sinner himself which *we* cannot cure. Let us do what we will with him and yet we cannot get him saved unless it is cured. Let us *believe* this, because it will drive us away from ourselves and it will lead us to our God. It will drive us to the Strong for strength and teach us to seek for power beyond our own. And then it is that God will bless us, because then we shall be sure to give all the glory to His name!

But I must leave the case—it is the case of a deep-seated blindness of Nature which cannot be touched by human skill.

II. Now, secondly, we shall dwell a little upon THE SPECIALITIES OF THE CURE—not exactly of this man's cure, but of the cure of many whom we have seen—and the first is, it is usually accomplished by the most simple means. The man's eyes were opened with a little clay put into them and then washed out at the pool of Siloam. God blesses very slender things to the conversion of souls. It is very humbling, sometimes, to a preacher who thinks, "Well, I did preach a pretty fair sermon that time," to find God does not care a pin about him or his sermon and that a stray remark he made in the street which he hardly thought was of any value whatever was what God has blessed!

That man, when he thought he succeeded best, had done nothing! And when he thought he had succeeded worst—then God blessed him. Many a soul has had his eyes opened by an instrumentality which never dreamed of being so useful and, indeed, the whole way of salvation is, in itself, extremely simple, so as to be well compared to the clay and spit which the Savior used. I do not find many souls converted by bodies of divinity! We have received a great many into the Church but never received one who became converted by a profound theological discussion.

We very seldom hear of any great number of conversions under very eloquent preachers—very seldom indeed! We appreciate eloquence and have not a word to say against it by itself—but evidently it has no power spiritually to enlighten the understanding and neither does it please God to use the excellency of words for conversion. When Paul laid aside human wisdom and said he would not use the excellency of speech, he only laid aside what would not have been of much service to him. When David put off Saul's armor and took the sling and the stone, he slew the giant—and giants are not to be conquered today any more than they were then, by champions arrayed in Saul's armor. We must keep to the simple things, to the plain Gospel plainly preached. The clay and the spit were not an artistic combination—taste was not charmed by them, or culture gratified—yet by these and a wash in Siloam eyes were opened! Even thus it pleases God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe!

But, secondly, in every case it is a Divine work. In this case it was evidently the Lord Jesus who opened the man's eyes, literally, and it is always His work by the Holy Spirit *spiritually*. He gives a man to know spiritual things and to embrace them by faith. No eye is ever opened to see Je-

sus except by Jesus. The Spirit of God works all our good things in us. Do not let us get away from this belief on any account. The exigencies of some men's doctrinal systems require them to ascribe some measure of power to the *sinner*—but we know that he is *dead* in sin and altogether without strength. Beloved, alter your system of divinity but do not disavow the Truth of God which is now before us, for it stands confirmed by our own daily experience as well as revealed in the Word of God. It is the Spirit that quickens and enlightens. Blindness of soul yields only to that voice which of old said, "Let there be light."

Next, this opening of the eyes is often instantaneous and when the eye is opened it frequently sees just as perfectly as if it had always been seeing. I saw, a few hours ago, what I verily believe was the opening of the eyes of one seeking soul. Two enquiring ones came to me in the vestry. They had been hearing the Gospel here for only a short season but had been impressed by it. They expressed their regret that they were about to remove far away but they added their gratitude that they had been here at all. I was cheered by their kind thanks but felt anxious that a more effectual work should be worked in them, and therefore I asked them, "Have you in very deed believed in the Lord Jesus Christ? Are you saved?"

One of them replied, "I have been trying hard to believe." "No," I said, "that will not do. Did you ever tell your father that you tried to believe *him*?" They admitted that such language would have been an insult. I then set the Gospel very plainly before them in as simple language as I could, but one of them said, "I cannot realize it, I cannot realize that I am saved." Then I went on to say, "God bears testimony to His Son, that whoever trusts in His Son is saved. Will you make Him a liar now, or will you believe His Word?"

While I thus spoke, one of them started as if astonished and she startled us all as she cried, "Oh, Sir, I see it all, I am saved! O do bless Jesus for me, for showing me this and saving me, I see it all." The esteemed sister who had brought me these young friends knelt down with them while with all our hearts we blessed and magnified the Lord. One of the two sisters however, could not see the Gospel as the other had done, though I feel sure she will. Did it not seem strange that both hearing the same words, one should come out into clear light and the other should have to wait in the gloom? The change which comes over the heart when the understanding grasps the Gospel is often reflected in the face and shines there like the light of Heaven!

Such newly-enlightened souls often exclaim, "Why Sir, it is so plain! How is it I have not seen it before now? I understand all I have read in the Bible now, though I cared not for it before. It has all come in a minute and now I see what I never perceived before." I simply give one instance because it is one among thousands which one has seen—in which the eyes have opened instantly. I can only compare the enlightened sinner to a person who has been shut up in a dark prison and has never seen the light and suddenly his liberator opens a window and the prisoner is staggered and amazed at what he sees when he looks abroad on hill and flood.

To the Believer, Heaven-given sight is so superlative a gift and what is revealed to him so amazes him that he scarcely knows where he is! Very frequently, when Christ opens the eyes it is done in a moment and done completely in that moment, though in other instances it is a more gradual light—men are at first seen as trees walking—and then by degrees film after film is taken from the spiritual eye. Now you must not wonder if light comes so suddenly that it should be quite a new sensation to the man and therefore should surprise him. Do you remember the first breath of spiritual life you ever drew? I think I remember it still.

Do you remember the first sight you ever had of Christ? Oh, you must recollect it! There is fixed in the memories of some of us the first time we saw the sea and the first time we gazed upon the Alps, but these were nothing! We felt they were still but pieces of this old world and we had only seen a little more of what we had seen before. But conversion opens up a new world! It teaches us to peer into the invisible and to see the things not seen of mortal eyes. When we receive new eyes, we see a thousand things which utterly astound and at the same time delight us. Do you wonder if young converts get excited? I neither wonder nor blame—I wish we had a little more excitement in our gatherings for worship.

Who hears now-a-days the cry, “What must I do to be saved?” Or who hears a soul saying, “I have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and the Prophets did write”? Let us give plenty of liberty to the work of the Spirit of God and believe that when He comes men will not always act after the sober rules of decorum but will break through them and even be suspected of being drunk because they speak as men in their ordinary minds are not likely to do! It is a strange and marvelous thing to men when the Spirit of God opens their eyes and we must not wonder if they scarcely know what they say and forget where they are!

One thing is certain that when the eyes are open it is a very clear thing to the man himself. Others may doubt whether his eyes are opened but he knows they are—about that he has no question. “One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see.” When the Lord in His infinite mercy visits a spirit that has been long shut up in the dark, the change becomes so great that he does not need to enquire, “Am I changed or not?” but he himself is assured of it by his own consciousness. Once give the man the eyes to see and he possesses a faculty that is capable of abundant use. The man who could see the Pharisees, could, by-and-by, see Jesus. He who has his eyes opened can not only see the trees and fields around him, but he can behold the heavens and the glorious sun!

And once give a man spiritual light, he has at once capacity for seeing Divine mysteries. He shall see the world to come and the glories yet to be revealed. Those newly-created eyes are those which shall see the King in His beauty and the land that is very far off. He has the faculty for seeing everything which shall be beheld in the day of the revelation of our God and Savior Jesus Christ! Oh, what a marvelous work is this! May everyone of us know it personally! I put the question, Do we know it? Have we thus had our eyes opened?

III. I must close with a third point, which is this—THE CONDITION OF THE HEALED MAN. When his eyes were opened, first he had strong impressions in favor of the Glorious One who had healed him. He did not know who He was, but he knew He must be something very good. He thought He must be a Prophet and when he came to know Him better he felt that He was *God* and he fell down and worshipped Him. No man has had his eyes opened without feeling intense love to Jesus—yes, and I will add without believing in His Deity—without worshipping Him as the Son of God!

We do not want to be uncharitable, but we have a little common sense left. We never can see how a man can be a Christian who does not believe in Christ! Or how a man can be said to believe in Christ who only believes in the smallest part of Him—receives His Humanity—but rejects His Godhead. There must be a real faith in the Son of God and he is blind and dark, still, who does not fall down like the man in this story and worship the living God—beholding the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ—and blessing God that he has found both a Prince and a Savior in the Person of the Lord Jesus who has laid down His life for His people.

Oh, I am sure if your eyes are opened, you love Jesus this morning! You feel your heart leap at the very thought of Him! Your whole soul goes after Him! You feel, if He has opened your eyes, those eyes belong to Him and your whole self, too! This man, therefore, became from that moment a confessor of Christ! They questioned him and he did not speak bashfully and conceal his convictions, but he answered the questions at once. Stephen was the first martyr, but this man was the first *confessor*, assuredly, and before the Pharisees he put it out plainly and straight to their faces, in simple language.

And so, Beloved, if the Lord has opened our eyes we shall not hesitate to say so. He has done it, blessed be His name! Our tongue might well be smitten with eternal silence if we were to hesitate to declare what Jesus has done for us. I charge you who have received Grace from Christ Jesus to become confessors of the faith, to acknowledge Christ as you ought to do! Be baptized and united with His people and then, in whatever company you are, however others may speak for Him, or against Him, take your stand and say, “He has opened my eyes, and I bless His name.”

Now this man becomes an advocate for Christ as well as a confessor, and an able advocate, too, for the facts, which were his arguments, baffled his adversaries. They said this and that, but he replied, “Whether it is so or no it is not for me to say, but God has heard this Man, therefore this Man is not a sinner as you say He is. He has opened my eyes, therefore I know where He must have come from. He must have come from God.”

We have been arguing for a long time against infidelity with arguments which have never achieved anything. I believe that skeptics glean their blunted shafts and shoot them at the shield of Truth again. I fear that the Christian pulpit has been the great instructor in infidelity, for we have taught our people arguments which they never would have known if we had not repeated them under the notion of replying to them. But, Beloved, you will never meet infidelity except with *facts*. Say what it is God has

done for you and *prove* it by your godly lives. Against the holy lives of Christians, unbelief has no power! Stand in serried phalanx, each man with his sword of holy living, covered in the power of the Holy Spirit, and the assaults of your foes, however desperate their malice, will utterly fail! God grant us, like this man, to learn the art of arguing for Christ by personal testimony!

Well, then, it came to pass that this man with his eyes opened was driven out of the synagogue. Speckled birds are always hunted away by their fellow birds. One of the worst things that can happen to a man, as far as this world is concerned, is to know too much. If you will barely keep abreast with the times you may be tolerated. But if you get a little ahead of the age you must expect ill-treatment. Be blind among blind men—it is the very dictate of prudence if you would save your skin. It is a very unsafe thing to have your eyes opened among blind men. For they will not believe in your assertions and you will be very dogmatic—and as they cannot see, you have no common ground for argument—and you will fall at once to quarrelling.

And if the blind men shall be in the majority, the probabilities are you will have to go out of door or window and make yourself company elsewhere. When God opens a man's eyes to see spiritual things, straightway others say, "What is this fellow talking about? We do not see what he sees." And if the fellow is very simple he turns round to these blind men and says, "I will explain to you now." Dear Friend, you will lose your pains for they cannot see! If a man is born blind, you need not talk to him about scarlet and mauve and magenta—he cannot understand you—he does not know anything at all about it. Go on, for it is no use reasoning with him! The only thing you can do with him is to take him where he can get his eyes opened. To argue with him is utterly useless—he has not the faculty.

If you knew a person to be devoid of taste you would not quarrel with him because he said sugar tasted like salt—he neither knows what "sweet" means nor what "salt" means—but only uses words without understanding them. And a man who is without Grace in his heart does not and cannot know anything about religion. He catches up the phrases but he knows as much about the Truth of God itself as a botanist knows about botany who has never seen a flower, or as a deaf man knows of music. Do not try to reason with such people—believe that they are incapable of learning from you by reasoning—and go to God's Holy Spirit, with this cry, "Lord, open their eyes! Lord, open their eyes!" Be very patient with them for you cannot expect blind men to see and must not be very angry with them if they do not.

But be very prayerful for them and bring the Gospel to them in the power of the Holy Spirit. And then who knows but their eyes may be opened? But wonder not if they say you are a "fanatic," an "enthusiast," a "Methodist," "Presbyterian," "cant," "hypocrite"—those are the kind of words which the spiritually blind fling at those who can see. You say you have a faculty which they have not—they, therefore, deny the faculty because they would not like to admit that you have the best of them—and they put you out of the synagogue.

But notice, when this man was put out, Jesus Christ found him. It was a blessed loss for him, then, to lose the Pharisees and find his Savior! O Brothers and Sisters, what a mercy it is when the world casts us out! I remember an estimable lady of title, who is now in Heaven, who, when she was united with this Church was forsaken by all those persons of rank who had formerly associated with her. And I said to her, and she joined in the sentiment, "What a mercy you are rid of them. They might have been a snare to you. Now (I said) you will have no further trouble from them." "Yes," and she added, "For Christ's sake I could be content to be accounted as the off-scouring of all things." The society of the world never was any benefit to us and it never will be! Trying to be very respectable and to mingle in elevated society, and all that, is a snare to many Christians. Prize men for their *real* worth and not for their gilt! Believe those to be the greatest men who are the *holiest* men, and those to be the best company who keep company with Christ.

It is a great blessing to the Church when it is persecuted. For the matter of that we might be glad to have back the days of Diocletian again. The Church is never purer on the whole—never more devout—and never increases more rapidly than when she enjoys the bad opinion of society! But when we begin to be thought very excellent people and our Church is honored, esteemed, and respected—corruption sets in—we get away from Christ and prove again that the friendship of this world is enmity with God.

The Lord grant that we may have our eyes so opened that our testimony may bring upon us the charge of singularity, and, then, if put away from the company of those who cannot see the Lord, may we live all the closer to Him and this shall be a great gain to us. The Lord bless you, Beloved, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

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THE QUESTION OF QUESTIONS

NO. 2141

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 4, 1890,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

INTENDED FOR READING
ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 20, 1890.

*“Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when He had found him,
He said unto him, Do you believe on the Son of God?”
John 9:35.*

THE eyes of the Lord Jesus are always on His chosen and He knows every circumstance which occurs to them. “Jesus heard that they had cast him out.” Our Lord had done too much for this man to forget him. Where Divine Grace has worked a great work its memory lingers. As it is written, “You will have a desire to the work of your hands.” In this let us take comfort—if anything has happened to grieve us—Jesus has heard of it and will act accordingly. Our Lord sought for the outcast one. Unasked, He had opened his eyes. Unsought, He looks after him in his hour of trouble. He was not easy to find but our Lord is great at searching out His lost sheep and He persevered until He found him. If we, at any time, should seem cast off from Christ as well as cast out by proud religionists, He will find us when we cannot find Him. Blessed be His name!

Our Lord's objective was to do this man real service—he had been cast out of the synagogue and he, therefore, needed comfort—and it would be a grand thing so to comfort him as to lead him onward and upward in the Divine life! Our Lord's way of comforting was to ask a question which would lead to heart-searching and suggest spiritual advance. It is not the way that you and I might take, but His ways are not our ways, neither are His thoughts our thoughts. Wisdom is justified of her methods. It is the best thing, when a man is in soul trouble, to make him look to his own condition before God and specially to his faith—for when he finds that he is right on the main point—this assurance will be to him a wellspring of comfort.

We are sure that our Lord took the very best means to bring this man to well-grounded confidence when He said to him, “Do you believe on the Son of God?” He helped him, by this question, to make a considerable advance in faith, for although the poor man had believed in Jesus up to the measure of his knowledge, his knowledge had been slender. But now he was to learn that the opener of his eyes was the Son of God! This is such faith as the Person of our Lord deserves, but such as many have never rendered to Him and for lack of this they miss the great power of His Grace.

The man was excommunicated and was then placed under the ban of the Jewish Church—but trust in the Son of God would quickly remove

from him any alarm which he might feel on that account. He that enjoys the favor of the Son of God will not tremble at the frown of the Sanhedrim! Oh, that the Lord would comfort many this morning while I press upon each one of you this one personal question, "Do you believe on the Son of God?" To young and old, to rich and poor I shall direct this solemn enquiry.

It is not a perplexing question upon an abstruse point, but a simple and urgent enquiry relating to everybody here present. It is not a problem profound and intricate—a question of free will or predestination, of post-millennial or premillennial advents—it is a practical question—pressing and present and one that concerns every man in his everyday life at this very moment. I wish each one of you to think that I now put my hand on your shoulder and look you in the face and say earnestly, "Do you believe on the Son of God?" This is not a question out of which angry controversy can possibly arise, for it has to do with yourself and yourself only!

Whatever discussion there may be will be confined within your own bosom. It concerns yourself, only, and it is put in the singular, "Do *you* believe on the Son of God?" It was put by Jesus Himself to this man—consider, then, that Jesus puts it to you, also this morning, even to you, apart even from your spouse or friend.

I. I shall begin pressing home the question, by the help of the Holy Spirit, by making the remark that **THE QUESTION NEEDS TO BE RAISED.** It must not be taken for granted that you believe on the Son of God. "Oh, yes, I am a Christian," says one. "I was born in a Christian country. I was taken to Church while a babe and was duly christened and I now repeat the creed. Surely this is sufficient proof of my faith!" Or possibly you say, "My mother took me to the Meeting House before I could walk and ever since I have never quit the ways of old-fashioned Nonconformity."

All this may be so, but it is not to the point. "Do you believe on the Son of God?" This is a *spiritual* and vital question which cannot be thus set aside. You reply, "My moral character has always been correct. In business I have always discharged my liabilities and I have always been ready to help every charitable institution." I am glad to hear all this. Still, it does not touch the matter now in hand—this query goes deeper than outward *conduct*. Hear it again—"Do you believe on the Son of God?"

Numbers of moral, amiable, generous and even religious people have not believed on the Son of God. Excuse me, I cannot let you slip through in the crowd. I must lay hold upon you with a holy vehemence that even forgets courtesy for the moment and I must say to the best of you, "Do you believe on the Son of God?" Though this man had been scrupulously obedient, yet our Lord asked the question! It may be I speak to some who say, "I have been at all times obedient to the duties of religion. Whatever I have found to be commanded of God in His Word I have carefully carried out."

Was it not so, also, with this man born blind? The Savior put clay upon his eyes and told him to go to the pool of Siloam and wash off the clay—the man did exactly as he was told. He did not go to another pool, but to the pool of Siloam. And he did not attempt to get the clay from his eyes by

any other process than that of washing. He was very obedient to Christ, yet the Lord said to him, "Do you believe on the Son of God?" No outward observances, however carefully carried out, will obviate the need of the enquiry, "Do you believe on the Son of God?"

I am afraid some of you have not been very careful in fulfilling outward ordinances and for this you are blameworthy—but if you had been scrupulously exact—no outward observances, however carefully followed out, can exempt you from the question, "Do you believe on the Son of God?" This man, in addition, *had passed through a very remarkable experience*. He could say, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." He could never forget those long nights while a child, a youth and a man. All those years no ray of light had ever gladdened him—to him night and day were much the same. He had sat in deep poverty all through that dreary darkness and learned no art but that of begging.

As the cooling water touched his eyes and washed away the clay, the sunlight streamed in upon the midnight and he saw! He had undergone all that change and yet the Savior said to him, "Do you believe on the Son of God?" So, my dear Hearer, you may be a very altered man and yet you may not be a believer on the Son of God! You, my dear Sister, may be a very different woman from what you used to be—and when you tell your experience it may be very remarkable and well worthy of being recorded in a book—and yet this question must be pressed upon you!

Whatever your experience may be, do not forget self-examination. Say not, "I never need question myself—such experience as I have had settles my position. I am not so childish as to look within or have a doubt about my faith. So remarkable a case as mine may not be suspected." Talk not so—for if our Lord, who knew the change this man had undergone, yet said to him, "Do you believe on the Son of God?" I also must take liberty to press home, upon the most remarkable person here, the same personal enquiry—"Do you believe on the Son of God?"

This man, in addition to his reception of bodily sight, *had exercised a degree of faith in the Lord Jesus*. If you follow the chapter through you will see that he had some sort of faith in Christ while he was blind, or he would not have gone to Siloam to wash away the clay. And when he saw, he did not doubt that Jesus had really made him whole—and he avowed the fact. He also said, "He is a Prophet." He went further still, for he said, "If this Man were not of God, He could do nothing." He had believed as far as his light helped him to believe so that the germs of faith were in him. Yet our Lord Jesus Christ pressed him with the enquiry, "Do you believe on the Son of God?"

Beloved Friends, you, too, may never have been troubled with skepticism. It may be you have not even examined the grounds of your faith because you have never been tempted to suspect them. You have taken in the Gospel from your youth as clearly true and so you have believed it without being much perplexed. I am thankful that you have done so. Still, do you believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God? Is Jesus *God* to you? Do you trust Him as able to do *anything* and *everything* for you? Is He to you "able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him"? If not,

may the Lord help you to take this higher step, for short of this you have not received the true Christ of God!

It is of very small use to say, "Oh, yes, I believe in Christ, the noblest of examples. I believe in Christ, the most instructive of Prophets." Do you believe in Him also *as the Sacrifice*, as the Priest, the Savior, the Salvation? And gathering all up in one, do you believe in Him *as the Son of God*? Do you believe in the Son of God, as revealed in Holy Scripture? Furthermore, this man *had spoken out bravely for Christ*, as you saw in the chapter which we read just now. "He spoke out like a Trojan," said one. Say, rather, "like a Spartan." He was cute, shrewd, sharp, and unanswerable.

The learned doctors were nowhere in comparison with the blind beggar whose eyes had been opened! He stood up for the Man who had given him sight and allowed no charge to lie against Him. His statements were short but full and his answers were, themselves, unanswerable. Who would have thought that a blind beggar could have fashioned such a logical argument as he did? Yet to this bold confessor the Savior had to say, "Do you believe on the Son of God?"

Ah, my Friend! As a preacher you may be able to declare the Gospel very clearly to others and you may enforce it with powerful arguments—but, "Do you believe on the Son of God?" Even in your case the question must be plied. Some of you may remember that story which is told in one of Krummacher's books. I half forget it myself, but it was somewhat on this wise. The preacher had delivered himself of a solemn discourse and was waited upon, on the following Monday, by one of his hearers, who said, "Sir, if what you said last Sunday was true, what will become of *us*?"

Now, if he had said, "What will become of *me*?" the preacher would have explained still further to him the Gospel in the usual way. As it was, he parried the word, "us." But his visitor almost unconsciously, said, "Alas, dear Sir! If these things are so, what shall we do?" The Lord used that plural pronoun to the awakening of the preacher who had not been converted though he thought he had been! Oh, that we who speak for God may also hear the Lord speak to us! I know the good preacher and love him right well, who, when he was himself preaching, as he had done for years, was saved through the personal application of his own sermon.

He is a minister of the Church of England but he did not know the Lord. While he was preaching the Lord applied to his heart with power a Gospel Truth which so affected him that he spoke with the accent of conviction which is natural to the renewed man. At last a Methodist, who was in the church, shouted out, "The parson's converted! Hallelujah!" and all the people broke out with cries of praise. The preacher himself joined in the universal joy and they sang together, "Praise God, from whom all blessings flow!"

Oh, what a mercy it is when the waiter at the Lord's feast is himself fed! Should not those who are to bear the healing balm to the sick be themselves healed? I have not been ashamed to speak in my Lord's name, nor have I blushed to defend His cause before His enemies. Yet I would remember that I may have done all this and yet I may not know the King to whom I have been a herald. O Friends, how terrible it would be to have

cast out devils in His name and yet to be unknown of Him! Therefore, we press the question, “Do you believe on the Son of God?”

This man had gone further, still, for *he had suffered for Christ*. He had been put out of the synagogue for bearing witness to the power of Jesus—but none the less for this he had to hear the question—“Do you believe?” Yes, you, dear Friend, may have been laughed at by your relatives for your religiousness. You may have had to quit a good situation because of your determination to be honest, temperate and pure. You may at the present moment stand under the ban of some cold-hearted Church because you have been more earnest than was desired. But as much as I appreciate your fidelity, you must excuse me if I buttonhole you in the Lord’s name and say, as Christ did to this man, “Do you believe on the Son of God?”

It is one thing to play the hero before our fellowmen and another to be true in the secret chamber of our own soul. You are bold in your confession but do you really believe in the Lord Jesus? Can that bold confession be supported by your *life*? I hope you are not a Defender of the Faith after the manner of Henry the Eighth who wore the title but was by no means worthy of it! Come, my eloquent Friend, do you live as you talk? Do you feel, yourself, as you would make me feel? “Do you believe on the Son of God?” You will see, dear Friends, from the run of my talk, that I am not for letting *anybody here* escape the personal question.

My venerable Friend who has been an officer of this Church longer than anybody else will not refuse to ask himself this question. My beloved Sister in Christ who has conducted a Bible class for years and that other who has been so useful in the schools—neither of these will refuse to answer this searching word, “Do you believe on the Son of God?” I must dare to make enquiry of yonder minister. My father in Christ whose shoe lace I am not worthy to unloose—I must even ask of you, as I do ask of myself, “Do you, for yourself, in very deed, believe on the Son of God?” This question must thus be raised and raised for everybody because many people nowadays do *not* believe on the Son of God.

There are many about who would be mightily offended if we denied their right to the name of Christian, who, nevertheless, know not “the Son of God.” These folks admire a man who will concoct a sermon to show that they may be Christians and not believe on Jesus as God. I shall preach no such sermon until I lose my reason—but I shall press upon this unbelieving age this vital question—“Do you believe on the Son of God?” Man, if you do not so believe, your faith falls short of that which Christ would have you possess and you had need take heed lest it fall short of landing you in Heaven.

With a Savior less than Divine you have a religion less than saving. How is it with you? Will you believe on the Son of God, alone, or run with the vain multitude who see nothing in Him but a man? I think every man here will say, “You need not apologize, dear Sir, for asking the question, for it is one we have to ask ourselves.” Indeed, I know it is so. Who is there that lives after so pure a sort that he never has to try this issue? We have heard persons cry out against the hymn—

“Tis a point I long to know

Oft it causes anxious thought:

Do I love the Lord or no?

Am I His, or am I not?"

But if a man never has an anxious thought about his state, I should have a great many anxious thoughts about him! One of our poets has well said—

***"He that never doubted of his state
He may, perhaps, he may too late."***

There are so many things about us all which we need to mourn over and these set us asking the questions, "Is my faith the faith which works by love and purifies the soul? Do I truly believe on the Son of God?" At times we rejoice in an absolute certainty as to our faith in Christ and the Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. But at other seasons we are exercised with great searchings of heart and no question causes us greater anguish than this—"Do I believe on the Son of God?" It will be woe to us if, after all our profession, experience and effort we should, after all, have no more than the name of faith and the notion of faith—but be found devoid of the life of it in our souls. Yes, the enquiry of our text is a question which ought to be raised.

II. But, secondly, THE QUESTION CAN BE ANSWERED. I am sure it can be answered, or our Lord would not have asked it, for He was never so unpractical as to go about the world asking men questions about themselves which it was not possible to answer. "Do you believe on the Son of God?" is an inquiry to which you can give the answer if you will—"Yes," or, "No." I beg to press you to practical action upon it.

It were, indeed, a most unhappy thing if this question could not be answered. Suppose we were condemned to live in a state of perpetual doubt as to our being believers in the Lord Jesus? This would involve an awakened man in a condition of constant anxiety. If I am not sure whether I am in the favor of God or not, I am in a condition of decided sorrow. I remember hearing a Christian minister say one day in company that no man could be sure that he was saved. Then I wondered what he had to preach that was worth preaching—for if we cannot know that we are saved, then we cannot be sure that we are at peace with God—and this is to be in jeopardy every hour!

There can be no peace to the mind of the awakened man if he does not know that he is saved. It is like one at sea who is half afraid that his ship is out of the track and may soon strike upon rock or quicksand, but is not quite sure whether it is so or not. The captain should take no rest till he has taken his bearings and found out his position in reference to the dangers of the sea and the hope of reaching the desired haven. To leave his position a moot point would be to continue in fear and to court danger. To leave your faith in question is to imperil a vital point. He must be sadly seared in conscience who can leave this hinge of the soul's condition unexamined.

There is a possibility of knowing to a certainty that you believe on the Son of God. Did I say there is a *possibility* of it? *Thousands have attained to this certainty.* You can know that you believe on the Son of God as

surely as you know that there is a Queen of England or as surely as you know that you, yourself, exist—and this without falling into fanaticism or presumption! Many among us are so habituated to faith in the Lord Jesus that we could no more question the existence of faith in our own hearts than we could dispute the fact that our hearts beat! Such assured persons shirk no examination—for them the more examination the better—for their hope has firm and deep foundations. They can give a reason for the hope that is in them.

As sure as mathematical certainty is the confidence of the Believer in the Lord Jesus—for we know whom we have believed—and we are persuaded that He is able to keep that which we have committed to Him. There are Believers in our Lord Jesus who have gone on for the space of 30 years without a doubt of their faith in Him because that faith has been in daily, happy exercise upon Him. You can answer the question, “Do you believe?” because you are at this moment believing—distinctly and intensely believing. Those who abide in the Light of God’s Countenance and feel the Holy Spirit within them, bearing witness with their spirits, are in no doubt as to their possession of faith!

If we feel a burning love to God, a growing hatred of sin, a struggle against the evil which is in the world and somewhat of the likeness to Christ, we may safely infer that these *fruits* of faith come from the *root* of faith. By the work of the Holy Spirit upon life and heart we know and are sure that we have believed in Jesus as the Son of God. I hope I speak to many this morning who are enjoying assurance and know that they have passed from death unto life. *It is with some a matter of consciousness.* How do I know that I live, breathe, stand, walk? I cannot explain to you the mode by which I arrive at certainty on this matter, but I am quite sure that I do live and breathe, and so on. Indeed, the power to question the fact implies it!

So a Believer may be sure that he believes that Jesus is the Son of God—and while he may not be able to give logical proof—yet he may be, none the less, conscious in his own soul that it is so. And he is correct in his assurance, for even the very power to be anxious after Divine Grace is an evidence of Divine Grace. If there is any question about whether you have been a Believer or not for the last 20 years, do not fight that question—begin at once to believe, the Lord helping you! Turn your eyes to the Cross and trust yourself wholly with Christ from this good hour, and then you will believe, and the act will shine out its own proof! Say from your heart—

**“Just as I am—without one plea
But that Your blood was shed for me
And that You bid me come to You—
O Lamb of God, I come!”**

Thus coming you will know that you *have* come and by continuing to come you will grow *assured* that you have come! Let not the past be the main enquiry, but settle the immediate present. May the Holy Spirit cause the sacred fire to burn and then you will feel the flame before long. To say, “I do now believe on the Son of God,” is the best way of answering the

question about your condition. If you want further help to solve the question, *there are marks and evidences of true faith* by which you can readily test yourself. Do you enquire, “Do I believe on the Son of God?” Then answer this—Is Christ precious to you? “For unto you who believe He is precious.” If you love and prize Him as the most precious thing on earth or in Heaven, you could not have this appreciation of Him if you were not a true Believer.

Tell me again, have you undergone the change called the new birth? Have you passed through a process which could be described as being brought out of darkness into marvelous light? If so, your new birth is a sure evidence of faith, for these things go together. Faith is a proof of regeneration and regeneration is also a proof that you have faith in the Son of God. Again, are you obedient to Christ? For faith works by love and purifies the soul. Is it so with you? Has sin become bitter? Do you loathe it? Has holiness become sweet? Do you follow after it? I do not ask whether you are *perfect*—but is the whole current of your soul towards *being perfect*?

Can you say that if you could live entirely without sin it would be the greatest delight you could have? That absolute perfection would be Heaven to you? Ah, then it shows which way your mind goes! It shows that there is a change of Nature for no unrenewed heart pines after perfect holiness! Your heart is bending towards Christ’s perfect rule and sovereignty and I am sure that you have believed that He is the Son of God. You are resting upon Him with a true and living faith if you take up His Cross heartily and follow Him.

Again, do you love God? Do you love His people? “We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the Brethren.” Do you love His Word? Do you delight in His worship? Do you bow in patience before His rod so that you take up the bitter cup and say, “Your will be done”? These things prove that you have faith in Jesus. Look well to them. But supposing, after using all enquiries and tests, you still say, “Sir, this is a grave question and requires great care. I have not settled it yet”? Then follow this man in *his* method. When he was asked, “Do you believe on the Son of God?” he turned to the Lord and replied with another question to the Lord Jesus.

We may resort to Jesus for aid. He who had once been blind eagerly asked, “Who is He, Lord, that I may believe on Him?” Turn, then, O Enquirer, in the moment of your distress and cry, “Lord Jesus, I beseech You teach me to know You better, that I may have more faith in You.” Go to Jesus for faith in Jesus! Moreover, *there are certain great Truths upon which faith feeds* and, to be sure that you have faith you had better think of these Truths of God. May the Lord be pleased especially to reveal Himself to you so that you may know Him and thus may believe on Him! O Soul, you will not long be in any doubt if you perceive those glorious things which concern your Lord! Know *who* He is and *what* He is, and what He has done and this will enable you to believe in Him as the Son of God.

As men were accustomed, when hardly pressed before the courts to say, "I appeal unto Caesar," so do you appeal unto Christ Himself and rest assured that in Him you will find deliverance! If your faith is hidden from yourself it is not hidden from Him—and if you cannot call it forth by thoughts of the work of Grace within, turn your mind towards your Savior and Covenant Head in Heaven—and faith will open itself as the cups of the flowers open to the sun. The question can be answered.

III. Thirdly, THE QUESTION SHOULD BE ANSWERED AND SHOULD BE ANSWERED AT ONCE. If I could, I would concentrate all *your* thoughts upon this one investigation which to each man so vitally concerns himself—"Do you believe on the Son of God?" Answer this from your own soul. I am no father confessor—be father confessors to yourselves. Let each man give his verdict at the bar of his conscience. Answer, also, as in the Presence of Christ for, like the man in the narrative, you are in His Presence now.

Answer for yourself before the heart-searching, heart-trying God. Answer it to men, also, for this your Savior deserves of you. Be not ashamed to say outright, "I do believe on the Son of God." This fact must not be hidden away in a corner. Remember how our Lord in Holy Scripture always puts open confession side by side with faith as a part of the plan of salvation? You will never find anywhere in the Word of God—"He that believes and takes the Lord's Supper shall be saved"—but you do find it written, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Why does *baptism* take such a prominent place? Partly because it is the ordained form of *open confession* of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The passage is parallel with that other, "He that with his heart believes and with his mouth makes confession of Him, shall be saved." What less can Christ expect than an outspoken faith if there is any faith at all? Will you bring to Him who redeemed you a cowardly faith? To Him that intercedes for you a dumb faith? To Him that opened your eyes a faith which dares not look your fellow men in the face? No! No! Speak! And speak out and let the world know that He who died on Calvary is to you, if not to anybody else, the Son of God! The question ought to be answered—answered before men—and answered at once. Do not delay, but make haste to keep your Lord's command.

The question ought to be answered at once because *it is of first importance*. If you do not believe on the Son of God, where are you? You are not alive unto God, "For the just shall live by faith." You cannot stand, for it is written, "You stand by faith." You cannot work for God, for it is faith that works by love. Where is your justification if you have no faith? "We are justified by faith." Where is your sanctification? Does not the Lord say, "Sanctified by faith that is in Me"? Where is your salvation without faith? "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." You cannot *be* or *do* anything acceptable without faith for, "without faith it is impossible to please God."

You are in an evil case and will soon be in a worse one unless you can say—"I believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and I trust Him as my All in All." He that does not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ is under present

condemnation for, “He that believes not is condemned already.” *Condemned already*—and therefore this question must be answered immediately—unless you are content to abide under wrath and content to live unreconciled to God! While sitting here you are in danger of the wrath to come. Can you be at ease? Remember, you are losing time while you are in ignorance as to your faith. If you are not believing in Jesus you are spending your days in death and in alienation from God.

If it is a question whether you *have* believed on the Son of God, it is no question that you are losing comfort and happiness. If you go up and down this troubled world without a knowledge of your own salvation—without an assurance of your acceptance with God—you are losing power to honor the name of the Lord by a joyful conversation. You are in an inconsistent position and in an inconvenient one. If you really have not believed in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, you are resting short of eternal life!

Meanwhile, you come up to the Lord’s house and unite avowedly in worshipping Him while you deny Him the first essential of true worship—namely, your faith in Him! Ah, dear Friend, if you have not believed that Jesus is the Son of God, the hope that you will ever do so grows fainter every day. The longer a man lingers in any state, the more likely it is that he will continue there. When men have long been accustomed to do evil the Prophet cries over them, “Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots?” It is an awful thing to have heard the Gospel so long in vain. If even the appeals of Calvary are lost on you, what remains? Gospel-hardened sinners are hardened, indeed. Some of you have been unbelievers in the Lord Jesus Christ for 50 years and, I fear, will die in unbelief—and what then?

The portion of unbelievers is terrible. “If you believe not that I am He, you shall die in your sins.” Horrendous words! “*Die in your sins.*” That is what will, in all probability, happen to many of you—no, it will surely happen unless you believe on the Son of God! Come, therefore, to this question at once. Do not delay for an hour. If the answer is unsatisfactory, the case can be altered if attended to at once. He that has not as yet believed on the Son of God may yet do so. Still is time afforded you—do not despise the respite of mercy. Upon you shines the light of another Sunday—long-suffering is not yet exhausted. The Gospel is still preached in your ears—the day of hope is not over!

The Bible is still open before you and the gate of Mercy is open, also, for all who will enter by faith. Therefore I pray you to now believe on the Son of God! You may not live to see another Lord’s-Day—therefore snatch the present opportunity. Soon will the tidings come to us about you, as they have so often come about others, “He is dead,” or, “She has gone.” Since eternity can be molded by today, I pray you, awaken yourselves! Look to your faith in Jesus, for if that is right, all is well—but if that is found wanting, all is wanting.

IV. So I close with my fourth point which is this—THE QUESTION MAY BE OF THE UTMOST IMPORTANCE TO US IF WE ANSWER IT. “Do you believe on the Son of God?” Suppose that the question has to be answered in the negative. If you are compelled to sigh and say, “No, no!” then be it

so and look the truth in the face. It will tend to awaken you from your carelessness if you know where you are.

One came to join the Christian Church the other day who said, "While I was at my work in the parlor, this thought suddenly came to me, 'You are an unsaved woman.' I could not shake it off. I went down to my cooking in the kitchen but it followed me. From the fire and from the water I seemed to hear the accusation, 'You are an unsaved woman.' When I went in to my meals I could scarcely eat my bread because of this choking thought. It haunted me, 'You are an unsaved woman!'" It was not long before that unsaved woman sought the Lord and became a saved woman by faith in Christ Jesus!

Oh, that I might put this idea into some minds this morning! You are an unsaved man! You do not believe on the Son of God and therefore you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity! I would like to make the seat you sit upon grow hard and the very house to grow uncomfortable, so that you should vow, "Please, God, I can but stagger home. I will seek my bedside and cry for mercy." I wish you were under even greater urgency and would entreat the Lord for mercy at once, on the spot! You would do so, I think, if you fairly answered this question and felt that the reply must be, "No."

But, supposing you are able to say, "Yes"—this question will have done great service—for it will have brought you great peace. As long as you leave this matter in doubt you will be tossed about. But when it is decided, you will enter into rest. Peace, like a river, shall flow into your soul when you can say—

***"I do believe, I will believe,
That Jesus died for me;
That on the Cross He shed His blood,
From sin to set me free."***

Know that He is yours and you will rejoice in Him! You cannot obtain settled peace till you settle this question. This done, you will try to do something for Jesus to show your gratitude for His salvation. Until I know that I am saved I shall have no heart for holy work. A wise man stops at home and looks after his own concerns when he feels that they are in peril—but when they are all safe he can look to the interests of his neighbors.

When I know I am saved and that there is nothing more for me to do in that matter, for Christ has finished it all, then I enquire what I can do for Him who has done so much for me! Where is the child or the man I can talk to about my Savior? I will go and hunt up lost ones and tell them of a present salvation. Perhaps I have never dared to speak to my wife or to my children about eternal life—but now that I possess it and *know* that I do—because I believe on the Son of God I will begin to instruct others in this good doctrine. Yes, diligence grows out of assurance.

And what a help assurance will be in the time of trouble! You have a great affliction coming on, but if you can say, "I know that I believe in Jesus Christ the Son of God," you will face it with quietness. Is it a surgical operation? You will lie still and yield yourself up to the surgeon's knife, come life or death—and you will do it easily. Is it a cruel persecution

which you have to face tomorrow? You will not be afraid—but, believing in Jesus—you will take up His Cross. Are you growing old and thinking of the time when you must die? It will not matter—for you know that you will only be going Home since you believe on the Son of God!

He never lets a soul believe on Him in vain. He never casts away a poor heart that trusts Him. What strength your faith will give you! You will be a hero whereas you might have been a coward. Now that you know and are sure that you believe on the Son of God, you will fear no evil. This, I think, will fire you with holy zeal and praise. You have been saying, “I do not know how it is that I am so dull and stupid! I go to the house of God and I do not feel the power of the Word—I am afraid I am not a Christian.” Just so. As long as you have that chilling fear upon you, you will not be sensitive to the cheering truth—but when you know that you believe on the Son of God and are sure of your salvation—your heart will beat to another tune and the music of the upper spheres will take possession of your bosom. I should not wonder if you should sing, as Toplady does—

***“Yes, I to the end shall endure
As sure as the earnest is given;
More happy, but not more secure,
The glorified spirits in Heaven.”***

You will begin to taste heavenly happiness when you have a sense of heavenly certainty. Being thus moved with gratitude and filled with joy, the result will be a great concern for others who have not believed on the Son of God. You will look upon unbelievers with sorrow and alarm. They are very wealthy, perhaps—but you will despise their gold because it blinds their eyes. They are very clever, perhaps—but you will not worship their abilities because the eternal light is hid from their eyes. You will say to yourself, “They may have all their wealth and all their cleverness, but I have the Son of God!” In having Christ, you have more than Alexander possessed when he had won the world! He could conquer the earth, but he could not win Heaven, for he knew nothing of believing on the Son of God!

In this respect you have done more than an angel could do—for an angel has no lost soul to trust with the Son of God—no sin to wash away in the Savior’s blood. But you have trusted Him and you have been washed in His blood—and you are clean. Go home and sing, my Brothers and Sisters! Go home and tell it out among your fellows that Jesus is the Son of God and abundantly able to save! Go home and weep some poor sinner to Jesus! Go home and never rest until you can say to God—“Here am I, and the souls that You have given me. We are believing on the Son of God.” Peace be with you! Amen.

***PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 9.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—906, 550, 549.***

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AN ALL-IMPORTANT QUESTION NO. 3008

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 4, 1906.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 13, 1867.

“Do you believe in the Son of God?”
John 9:35.

THE man to whom our Savior addressed this question had been born blind, but he had been the subject of one of the Master's mightiest miracles and was rejoicing in the possession of his newly-found sight! Our Lord is not accustomed to doing things by halves, so, having given to this poor man natural sight, He intended to also give him *spiritual* sight. Having delivered him from the misery of living in this world in darkness, He would also deliver him from the dense darkness that brooded within his soul. “Blessed be the name of the Lord, we are never straitened in Him, but only in ourselves; and when we receive not, it is either because we ask not, or because we ask amiss.” Our Lord had given to this man His left hand full of minor mercies and now He finds him out with His right hand full of yet richer treasures—giving to him exceeding abundantly above what he had asked or even thought!

In order to effect this man's salvation, our Lord asked him a question upon a most vital point—“Do you believe in the Son of God?” That question I will try to press home upon all my Hearers, asking you, dear Friends, high and low, rich and poor, old and young, learned and ignorant to listen to the question, to give it an honest and earnest consideration and to endeavor, as in the sight of God, to answer it from your inmost heart.

I. In the first place, the question of the text, “Do you believe in the Son of God?” IS A MOST NECESSARY QUESTION.

I believe it *is a question which ought to be asked from the pulpit far more often than it is*. I have been frequently pained, in reading sermons and on the rare occasions when I have had the opportunity of *hearing* sermons, to note that they have been addressed to the whole congregation just as though all were Christians. It is too much the custom for ministers to address the whole assembly as “Brothers and Sisters” and to speak to a mixed multitude of men and women as if they all had a part and lot in spiritual things. It seems that if anywhere, certainly in the pulpit, there should be a wise and constant use of discrimination. The preacher should make his hearers clearly understand that there are some who fear God and some who fear Him not—some who are still dead in trespasses and sins—and others who are alive unto God through the quickening power of the Holy Spirit. It would

be a very wicked thing for me to delude you with the notion that you are all saved, for I cannot help fearing that some of you are not yet saved. The outward lives of some here are quite sufficient evidence that they have never been sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Indeed, I feel sure that I am addressing some who would not venture to even *claim* that they are Christians! They are too honest to do that, for they know that they are strangers to the saving power of the Grace of God! And how dare these lips of mine call those the children of God who are, at present, the children of wrath, even as others? How can my tongue pronounce that to the gold which I know is but dross? How can I speak to those of you who are living and, I fear will die without a Savior, as though you had an equal interest in the precious blood of Jesus with those who believe in Him?

Further, *the Sunday school teacher must never take this matter for granted with his scholars any more than the preacher must take it for granted with his hearers.* Even when the dear children appear to be favorable to the reception of the Truth of God, to be impressed by the story of the Cross and to have a sort of childish love to Jesus, I think it is still well for us to ask this question over and over again, with tearful earnestness, “dear child, do you believe in the Son of God? for, if not, all that pretty talk of yours and all those hopeful feelings of yours will bring you no solid, lasting good! Unless you believe in Jesus, you are outside the bounds of the Kingdom of Grace.”

The people who need to have this question most plainly put to them are, probably, *those who have had godly parents and who have been brought up under religious influences.* It is an untold blessing to have had godly parents. It is an unspeakable mercy to have been in the habit of attending a place of worship from our childhood, but there are dangers connected with even these blessings. It is not bigotry, it is not a lack of Christian charity, it is not censoriousness when we say that there are tens of thousands of people who have attended the services of the Church of England from their childhood and who believe that in their baptism they were made members of Christ, the children of God and inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven! And that since the bishop’s hands were laid upon them in their confirmation, there is no need to ask them whether they believe in the Son of God. Do they not say, in their Creed, “I believe in God the Father...and in Jesus Christ, His Son”? To ask such people whether they believe in the Son of God must surely be a piece of impertinence! Yet I venture to say that there are no people in the whole world who need more to be asked that question than they do. And while it is especially so in the Church of England because the Prayer Book helps Episcopalians to imagine that they are Christians when they are not, it is very much the same among Dissenters!

Many of you were taken to a place of worship in your mother’s arms and, therefore, unless you have been privileged to sit under a very honest and faithful ministry, you may be led to conceive that you are the children of God through your godly ancestry—and to imagine that the Grace of God runs in your blood and that you are a Christian because

your father was a Christian. And that you ought to join a Christian church because your ancestors, for many generations, have belonged to that church. Beware of a mere ancestral religion which may be of no more value than the ancestral religion of the Chinese! Do not suppose that you are personally right in the sight of God because you have had a godly mother and father, or godly grandparents? Christ's message to all who have not been regenerated by the Holy Spirit is, "You must be born-again." True religion is *personal*—it is a thing which concerns each man himself! In the Prayer Book there is same nonsense about a sponsor promising, in a child's name, that he shall "renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same and the carnal desires of the flesh." Why, the sponsor cannot promise to do all that for *himself*, much less can he promise it for the child! No, you must yourselves come to God through Christ, personally make confession to Him of your own sins, seek pardon for your own selves, look with your own eyes to Christ upon the Cross and find salvation in Him for yourselves. All teaching that is contrary to this is nothing but deception—the invention of priestcraft or of the devil! And may God graciously enable you to escape from its snares!

It also strikes me that *this question ought to be frequently asked of all religious professors and especially of all ministers of the Gospel*. It is a terribly easy matter to be a minister of the Gospel and a vile hypocrite at the same time. My Brothers in the ministry, I feel this to be only too true, and I often regret that I am not able to sit in one of those pews yonder, to listen to some faithful Brother minister who would help me to see myself as I really am in the sight of God—and cause me to tremble before Him, lest I should be either self-deceived or a deceiver of others! It is our misfortune that if we begin to preach without being truly converted, there is little likelihood that we shall ever be converted! This thought makes the pulpit to become a place where our shoes may well be, metaphorically, taken off our feet—a place of trembling, alarm and anxiety—for who is to preach to the preacher if he is, himself, unregenerate? Who shall press upon him the question, "Do *you* believe in the Son of God?" Oh, then what solemn heart-searching, what strict self-examinations the preacher should have! How he should lay bare his breast before the all-searching eyes of God, implore the inspection of the Infallible, ask to be weighed in the balances of the sanctuary which cannot err, and seek to be judged by Almighty Wisdom lest, as Paul said, after having preached to others, he himself should be a castaway!

And it is very much the same, I am persuaded, *with the deacons and elders of the church*. Ah, my Brothers, it is a high privilege to be officers of a Christian Church! And for many of you I have long thanked God every time I have bowed my knees before Him. Yet I must remind you that even you may be deceived, for some like you have been deceived. As I look back, with trembling, over the years of my pastorate in London, I cannot help recalling some who did run well, yet something or someone hindered them so that they obeyed not the Truth of God. As they turned

back, may not any one of you, my Brothers, do the same? May not I also go and do likewise? Nothing but the Grace of God will prevent such a calamity!

I do not know how to talk with you as I want to do concerning this sad condition of soul. My heart would, if it could, get rid of my tongue and then it would speak to you something like this—Did not some of you, at one time, the moment you awoke in the morning, begin communing with God? Were there not red-letter days, when, from morning light to evening shade, you were in fellowship with the Most High? You had your burdens, but you always carried them to Jesus! And you had your joys, but you always shared them with Him. You lived for Him! Your heart was warm towards Him. You walked with Him in constant communion, but now, can you *really* live without even *thinking* of Him? Can you be happy without thinking of your God? Have you a better house than you used to have, and more money, more friends, more of this world's good things—and do you now forget your God and go the whole day without any communication between your soul and Him? Ah, then, you have, indeed, gone down in the world, not up! You are getting poorer and poorer. God help you! If you had come to me and told me that you had lost everything, but that you loved Jesus more, I would have sympathized with you because of your trouble, but I would have congratulated you upon your Grace. But now that you have got on so well in the world that you do not love your Lord as you once did, I can only pity you because of your dreadful prosperity and mourn over the fearful loss which you have experienced.

And as for *you who have been members of this church year after year*, you who have been baptized into the name of the ever-blessed Trinity, you who have often gathered around your Master's Communion Table, permit me to shake you out of the slumbers of your fancied security! If you have taken it for granted that all must be well with you because you are a member of a Christian Church, I do beseech you to make diligent search, lest you should be mistaken. I am no advocate of doubts and fears, as you all well know—on the contrary, I delight to extol the blessings of a full assurance of faith—yet, at the same time, I am well aware that it is hardly possible to have too much holy anxiety and sacred suspicion lest we should not be right with God! I do solemnly beseech you, by the living God—everyone of you old professors, you venerable fathers in our Israel—to again put this question of questions to your own heart and conscience, “Do you believe in the Son of God?” Have you a real, vital faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, or is it only a mere notion or name, a mere sham to which you are trusting? God grant that we may all answer the question, and answer it honestly, as in His sight, for it is a most necessary question for every one of us to answer!

II. Secondly, and but briefly, I want to remind you that the question of the text is A REMARKABLY PLAIN QUESTION. “Do you believe in the Son of God?”

Some people delight to see difficulties even where there are none. They revel in reading the Bible through spectacles of various colors. When you

and I read our Bibles, there are certain passages which seem perfectly plain to us—we can understand them without any difficulty. But, when these sectarians read the Bible, they find out such novelties, such astounding marvels, such wonderful things that are to happen in the future, that I can only say that if their interpretation of the Bible is the correct one, it is a strange sort of Bible for God to have given to ordinary Christians like ourselves, for we might have read the Bible through 50 times, yet never have found out such mysterious doctrines and practices as the people profess to have discovered there! May God graciously preserve all of you from falling into the snares that are set by these inventors of novelties and absurdities! They are always hunting after some new thing, like the Athenians of old, and they lead many away from the simple Truths of the Gospel.

But the question in our text is not a difficult or obscure one. It is, as our proverb says, “as plain as a pike-staff”—“Do you believe in the Son of God?” Perhaps you would like me to explain to you the Doctrine of Election! Well, I may do that another day. Possibly you would like to hear about the Second Advent and that, also, I may tell you, as far as I can, in due time, but just now the question is concerning your soul’s most vital interests. How do you stand in relation to God—and especially in relation to Jesus Christ whom He has sent to be the Propitiation for the sins of all who believe in Him? This question is short, simple, plain, pointed—“Do you believe in the Son of God?” That is to say, is Jesus Christ, who was born of the Virgin Mary, acknowledged by you to be the Son of God? You know that He died in the place of sinners and that His sacrifice atoned for the sins of all who trust in Him, so that God can be just, and yet the justifier of all who believe in His Son. So again I ask, “Do you believe in the Son of God?” When we were singing, a little while ago—

“Jesus our Lord is crucified”—

did you feel that the crucified Christ was your Lord and Savior? Did you rest your soul, for time and eternity, upon that blessed Substitute for sinners, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, expiring upon the accursed tree? If so, it is well with your soul! But if not—if your answer to the question of the text is in the negative, it amounts to this—“I will not accept the Propitiation which God has set forth—the only Savior whom God has provided, shall not save me. I will not come unto Him that I may have life. I will force my way to Heaven by my own works or merits, or else I will go down to Hell neglecting His great salvation.” That is the real meaning of your negative answer! And I ask you, as an honest man, to do one thing if that is your answer—say it to yourself in so many words or, better still, write it down and sign it with your name. If you mean to serve Baal, say so! If you mean not to have Christ as your Savior, say so! Sit down and write out the reasons why you reject Christ—put them in black and white, that you may see them and weigh them—as every right-minded man should do when he takes such an extraordinary course. If you think that Christ is not worth having for a Savior, say in your own handwriting, “I will not have Him. I will not trust Him. I will not be saved by Him.” If you do that, there will be something *done*, sad as it will be.

But, at any rate, answer the question of the text, for it is so plain and simple that it deserves a perfectly plain and straightforward answer.

III. Now, in the third place, and again with great brevity, I want to show you that THIS IS A VERY PERSONAL QUESTION “Do you believe in the Son of God?”

You, young man, have been giving away tracts this afternoon. That is a very proper occupation, but do you believe in the Son of God? You, young woman, have been teaching a class in the Sunday school. That is well done on your part, I hope, but, “Do you believe in the Son of God?” You, my Brother, have been preaching the Gospel, this morning, according to your ability. So far, so good, but, “Do you believe in the Son of God?” Some of us sat, this morning, at the close of the public service, around our Master’s Communion Table, where we broke bread in His name, as is our custom on the first day of the week, but, my fellow communicant, “Do you believe in the Son of God?” Wife, you have nothing to do with your husband in this matter and, husband, you and your wife must be set apart in this instance. For the moment, forget that dear child of yours! Hold him on your knee if you will, but apply not the question to him just now, but answer for yourself, “Do you believe in the Son of God?” That is to say, has your heart really felt the weight of your own sin and have you come to Jesus Christ and given that life-look at the Crucified One which brings instantaneous pardon to all who believingly look? “Do you believe in the Son of God?”

Even our own prayers may come to be idols and hindrances to us. We may think that the way of salvation is to pray, which it certainly is not, for the way of salvation is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and to believe on Him at once! Unbelieving prayers will leave us as they find us—they cannot yield us any comfort. As it is with the prayers of others, so is it with our own—unless faith in Jesus Christ is mingled with them, they can never be a sweet savor unto God, and they can never bring a blessing to our own souls. What you have to do, dear Friend, broken-hearted and cast down, is to look away from yourself and all your fellow men, to Him whom God has set forth to be a Propitiation for sin. Looking to Him brings life to the soul and the testimony concerning all the saints is this, “They looked unto Him and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed.” However feeble may be your eyesight, and however dark may be your surroundings—

“There is life for a look at the Crucified One”—

and whoever looks unto Him shall live! Those who were bitten by the serpents in the wilderness were in various stages of poisoning. Some of them, no doubt, had their eyes well-near closed shut by the swellings that arose through the bites of the serpents. But, however feeble was the look they gave—if it was only through the corner of the eye—if they did but catch a glimpse of the serpent of brass that Moses set upon the pole, as God commanded him, they lived at once! And if, in your case, sin seems to prevent the full exercise of faith and your consciousness of guilt hinders your belief in Jesus Christ, yet say to Him, “Lord, I believe; help You my unbelief.” Touch at least the hem of His garment and you shall

find that it is not the measure of your faith, but the measurelessness of His Grace that will bring you the blessing you need! Though your faith is weak, His Grace is strong! Though you can scarcely believe in Him, all things are possible unto Him and He can cause even your weak faith to be the means of bringing salvation to you!

Ah, my dear Hearers, plainly as I am speaking to you—and the gaudiness of oratory would be out of place here—how hard it is to get you to do what I urge you to do! I would gladly go down these stairs and talk to you one by one, but I might fail even with such an expedient as that—and there are far too many of you for me to come to each one! Yet I remember how holy Richard Baxter pleaded with his people, “I would gladly come and kneel down before you, one by one, and say to you, ‘Why will you reject the Savior? Why will you die? Why will you cast away your souls?’” If I cannot do that literally, my spirit shall do it. My Hearer, I ask you, each one, “Do you believe in the Son of God? This is the question which must be put personally to you for you must die alone and you must rise in your own body, and you must be judged alone—and if you will not believe in the Son of God, you must be condemned alone—you must personally be cast into Hell! There can be no sponsor for you in the flames of Hell, no substitute for you to bear your everlasting woe in your place. You yourself will be cast into Hell if you remain an unbeliever and, therefore, again I ask you, “Do you believe in the Son of God?”

Thus I have shown you that the question of the text is a necessary, plain, personal question.

IV. Now, fourthly, I have to tell you that THIS QUESTION IS FUNDAMENTAL. “Do you believe in the Son of God?”

This question goes right down to the very foundations of our faith—the fundamentals, as we most properly call them. I do not think that we are right in asking for answers to very abstruse questions from young people. An aged Christian may be asked many questions concerning his experience—the depth of his sense of inward sin, the height of his enjoyment of fellowship with Christ. These are proper points to be brought before those “who are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” It would be very improper to put questions upon these points to a babe in Grace, but it would not be improper to put to a babe in Grace the question now before us. I venture to come to any man who professes to be a Christian—and whether he is illiterate or not—to put to him this question, “Do you believe in the Son of God?”

I wish that some of you would put this fundamental question to yourselves, instead of trusting to the nonsense and absurdity in which you sometimes put your trust. Why, to this very day, there are some people who believe that they are Christians because, as they looked out of the window, they thought to themselves, “If the Lord is gracious to us, we hope the sun will shine upon us.” The sun did shine upon them and, therefore, they think that God must be gracious to them! What fools they must be to talk like that! Others have said that as they were at their

work, or in their bed, they thought they heard a voice. Suppose you did, what then? If all the voices in the world were heard by you, I would not give a penny for your religion if you do not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ! Another says, "I had such-and-such a text impressed upon my mind." If it had been impressed upon your heart by the Holy Spirit, it would have been a different matter. There is a superstitious way of misusing the Bible, of which even Mr. Wesley was guilty when he put a pin into the Scriptures to find out what he ought to do in a certain emergency! I believe that was as wicked as if he had shuffled a pack of cards for the same purpose. God does not guide us in any such way as that. Neither is there any importance to be attached to what you dream, or what you heard, or what you saw—the one fundamental question is, "Do you believe in the Son of God?" If you do, and yet you never dreamed a dream in all your life, thank God that you have slept so well and that you have not been troubled with indigestion, which is a great cause of dreams and visions of the night. If you have never heard mysterious voices, thank God that you have a well-regulated imagination and a well-balanced mind. If you have never had a text that seemed to speak to you like a mysterious incantation, thank God that when you reverently read the Scripture, it speaks to you as the voice of God, and not as the voice of some witch of Endor, or as the voice of some old Delphic oracle speaking to a superstitious ear! My Brother, if you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, all is well with you, so far as your salvation is concerned. You may ask yourself, "Am, I growing in Grace? Am I making such advances as I ought, in the Divine life?" These questions are right and proper and deserve to be duly pondered by you, but if you believe on the Son of God, you have the root of the matter in you! You have the Tree of Life planted in your soul and you shall assuredly find a place in the Paradise of God. So, ask no further question upon this point, for this is the fundamental question—"Do you believe in the Son of God?"

V. Now just for a few moments, let me remind you of what you know so well, namely, that, THIS QUESTION IS ALL-IMPORTANT.

"Have you made your will?" somebody asks, and that is a very important question to one who has anything to leave. I think that people ought to see to that matter and there are 50 other questions that might be asked, all of which would have their relative importance, but this is the weightiest question of all—"Do you believe in the Son of God?" How can I put that question, with due solemnity, to each person in this congregation? Do you not know, Man, that life and death, Heaven and Hell and bliss or unutterable woe depend upon your answer to that short, simple question? If you believe on Jesus, there are robes of whiteness and tearless eyes for you! But if you believe not, there are for you—

***"Flames that no abatement know
Though briny tears forever flow!"***

If you can truly say, as you look, by faith, to the precious blood of Jesus, "I am washed in that crimson flood and I am clean every whit"—if it is, indeed, so, then all things are yours, whether things present or things to

come, life or death, time or eternity—all are yours, for you are Christ's and Christ is God's. All is well with you now, and all shall be well with you forever and ever! But, oh, if you have to shake your head and sorrowfully say, "No, I never was cleansed by Christ's blood. I never accepted Him as my Savior." Do you know what your portion must be? Come, Man, do not close your eyes, like the silly ostrich, and then think to escape the hunter because you do not look upon him! Come Man, come look at the portion that awaits you! Do you start at sight of it? Can you see your dying bed surrounded with gloom and darkness? Are you afraid of that? That is a fair sight compared with what I have yet to show you!

There, move away that bed, and let the next scene appear. Do you see that? What? Dare you not look at it? It is your naked spirit shivering before the face of God while He pronounces its doom! Does that frighten you? I have to show you a more terrible picture by far than that! It is the earth on a blaze—the mountains are reeling to and fro, like drunken men! The stars, like withered fig leaves, are falling from the sky! The sun is becoming black as a sackcloth of hair and all the while you are crying to the hills to cover you and to the rocks to give you shelter, for the great Day of God's Wrath has come and you are unable to endure it! Can you not gaze upon that picture? It is what you will come to if you remain unsaved. But if you are afraid of the picture, why are you not afraid of the dreadful reality, for I have not yet shown you the worst of your doom? I scarcely dare to lift the curtain which hides that dreadful prison of the lost, "where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched," where the wrath to come, like a mighty ocean, never ceasing in its fiery flow, beats over the guilty forever and ever! Where the fierce tornado of the Divine Wrath blows upon the lost forever and ever, leaving them never a resting place, nor a moment's cessation from their awful agony!

My poor words, which may seem to some, terrible in their intensity, are feeble compared with the weighty words of the Lord Jesus as recorded in the Gospels and, therefore, as a man who cares for you, and who would gladly have you care for your own immortal souls, I do implore you, each one, to ask yourself this question, "Do you believe in the Son of God?" If you must honestly answer, "No," then I ask you, Will you not believe in Jesus now? Oh, that the Holy Spirit would graciously enable you, this very hour, to trust wholly to that glorious finished work which, on the Cross, my Master has concluded once and for all, and the merit of which, even in Heaven, He delights to bestow upon all the sons and daughters of men who will believe on Him!

VI. I feel persuaded, further, that, this is A QUESTION WHICH CAN BE ANSWERED AND WHICH OUGHT TO BE ANSWERED. "Do you believe in the Son of God?"

I did not put into "Our Own Hymn Book" the hymn which begins—

***"Tis a point I long to know
Oft it causes anxious thought—
Do I love the Lord or no?
Am I His, or am I not?"***

I deliberated a good deal about it and I left it out, not because I doubt whether a Christian may sing it, not because I have not sung it myself, but because I am not quite clear that I ought to ask any congregation to sing it, for I hope that most of those in any ordinary congregation will not be in such a state of mind as that. It is a suitable hymn for one to sing sometimes in private, when one cannot sing anything better—but it would scarcely suit a company of true Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ! A man may be and I think sometimes *will be* in doubt as to whether he really believes in Jesus, but chronic doubt is a sin that is not to be tolerated! Constant questioning as to whether you are saved, or not, is an unhealthy state for any of you to be in. You *can* tell and you *ought* to tell whether you believe in Christ, or whether you do not believe in Him. Faith is, in one sense, the gift of God, but, in another sense, it is a mental act for which we are responsible. God gives us faith, but He does not believe for us. He does not give us faith as we give our children bread, but He, by the gracious operation of His Holy Spirit, makes us willing in the day of His power—and then we *will* to believe in Jesus and we do believe in Him. Well, then, this being the case, I should think that you can, each one, tell whether you have ever believed in God's Son as readily as you can tell whether you have ever trembled at God's Word. One mental act must surely be as much under the cognizance of your inner consciousness as another mental act is.

Besides, you can judge whether you have faith by seeing whether you have its fruits. If you have believed on the Son of God, you have a care about spiritual things which you never had while you were an unbeliever. You are living in a world that is new to you—in the spiritual realm where God rules by His Spirit—and you are no longer confined to that which you can see with your eyes and touch with your fingers. You now see, and hear, and feel, and know a thousand things of which you were formerly utterly unaware. If you have truly trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are “a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” You love what once you hated and you hate what once you loved. You have altogether new tastes—you would not now find pleasure where once you reveled in it! And the weariness which you formerly felt in the services of God's House is now all gone and you find the Sabbath to be a delight, and the company of God's people to be a foretaste of Heaven! Are you, dear Friends at this moment desirous to be obedient to all the Lord's Commandments? Obedience to God is a flower that never grew on nature's dunghill! It grows only where the Spirit of God has tilled the soil and planted the root from which it springs. Surely you know whether you believe in Christ or not! At any rate, go not to your bed this night till you know the truth about your case. Fall not asleep with even the *possibility* that you may awake in Hell! Rest not, Man, till you are forever safe! Sleep not till you know that God is your Friend and that Christ is your Savior, lest, in the watches of the night, the hair of your head should stand on end with horror as you are awakened to find that your last hour has come and you are not prepared to stand before your Judge!—

***“How will your heart endure
The terrors of that day
When earth and Heaven, before your face
Astonished shrink away?”***

VII. Now I must come to the conclusion of my discourse and I do so by saying that THIS QUESTION DEMANDS AN IMMEDIATE REPLY—“Do you believe in the Son of God?”

Possibly, one of you says, “Well, Sir, I will give you my answer when I have a more convenient season.” No, you will not, for you will probably forget all about it unless you give the answer now. Oh, what a lot of hammering and beating the iron of the human heart will stand! I am sure that if the iron that comes out of the heart of the earth were half as difficult to soften and to cast into molds as the nature of man is, the ironworker would give up his task as hopeless. Oh, how many times I have tried to preach the Gospel to some of you—not without tears and not without headaches and heartaches, too—not without earnest pleadings in secret with God—not without thinking and planning how I could set the old Truth of God in a new light and by what means I might enlighten your understandings, or interest your imagination and capture your heart! But, alas, thus far, with some of you, the hunter has lost his prey and the fisherman has waited in vain for his fish—and he is bitterly disappointed at his failure! When will the day come when we shall capture you for Christ? What weapon of the Truth of God will pierce you who are like leviathan in his pride? When shall we draw you ashore to life, peace, holiness and happiness?

The great mischief with many of you is that you always talk about what you will do *tomorrow*! Yet there are newly-dug graves every day and the gravediggers hide the bodies of your fellows beneath the sod of the cemetery. It is true that, thus far, you have been spared, but are you, therefore, foolish enough to dream that you are immortal? Do you think that there is no tree growing out of which your coffin is to be made? Ah, Sirs, some of you will never see another year! This is not a matter of guesswork with me! I know that it is the truth that a certain proportion out of every thousand persons now living must die this year. Everybody knows that and here we have some six or seven thousand persons gathered together! [Remember, this was preached on a Sunday evening!] Well, then, there must be so many of us who must go to the grave within the next 12 months. You know that you are not immortal! You know that you must die sooner or later and some of you know that if you were to die now, you would die without hope, for you have not believed in Jesus and you would be eternally lost! I do beseech you, if you have any wits left, to use them now and to be startled as I put to you that ancient question, “Why will you die?” Where is the sense of it! Where is the reason for being damned? Do anything that is reasonable, Man, and who can blame you? If you have a good excuse for doing a certain thing, if it pays you well to do it, if it is the right thing to do for your country even though it does not pay you—go and do it! Cassius did a noble deed when he rode into the chasm in the Forum and so filled it up, for he did good

to Rome. But what good will your damnation do to you or anybody else? What good will it do even to the lost in Hell? Even they might wish to keep you out of that dread place of torment as the rich man wished to warn his brothers, for they would get no good through your ruin.

What possible good can ever come to you if you are lost? It will be all hurt, and no good! All loss, and no gain! All wretchedness, and no joy! All darkness, and no light! All Hell, and no Heaven—forever and ever! In the name of the living God, I beseech you! In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, I implore you to trust Christ and live! He who stopped the storm on the Galilean Lake and saved the all-but-shipwrecked crew of the little ship can stop the waters of wrath that threaten to beat upon your boat and save you even now! He who said to the dying thief, “Today shall you be with Me in Paradise,” can do as much for you! His precious blood still pleads for mercy! His Almighty Power is still engaged on mercy’s side. O my Master, enable these poor souls to trust in You! Father, call the prodigal home! Welcome him now! Give him the kiss of forgiveness now! Clothe him with the best robe now! Spirit of the living God, descend and do what we cannot do—turn hearts of stone to flesh—and to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit shall be the praise forever and ever! Amen.

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

A QUESTION FOR YOU

NO. 3132

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 1909.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 9, 1874.

“Do you believe on the Son of God?”
John 9:35.

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon this question are as follows—Sermons #1088, Volume 18—THE ESSENCE OF SIMPLICITY; #2141, Volume 36—THE QUESTION OF QUESTIONS; #2667, Volume 46—A PRESSED MAN YIELDING TO CHRIST and #3008, Volume 52—AN ALL-IMPORTANT QUESTION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

THIS blind man, whose eyes Christ had opened, was a very shrewd fellow and wonderfully straightforward and determined. What he did know could not be beaten out of him, neither could he be led to draw unfair inferences from what he knew. He would hold to what he clearly saw to be the fact. He believed Jesus to be a Prophet sent of God and he stuck to his belief whatever the Pharisees might say. Now I believe that is the kind of man to learn more of. The man who knows something and yet trifles with it, is not likely to be further instructed of God. Nothing is more displeasing to Him than trifling with what you have already learned, tampering with your conscience, not following the guidance of the Light of God which you have already received. But to him that has, and that uses aright what he has, more shall be given—and he shall have abundance. The honest and good ground was the sort of soil in which Jesus loved to sow the Good Seed of the Kingdom, so He thought it was worth His while to search for this man whom the Pharisees had excommunicated, that He might still further instruct him in Divine Truth. O dear Hearers, as far as ever you have received the Light, act up to it and praise God for the Light that He has given you! If you value the moonlight, He will give you sunlight before long. But be upright, straight, honest and sincere before the Lord, for He looks with hopefulness to the true and the upright, for these are the people whom He is most likely to bless.

I. Our Savior, having found this man, put to him the question in my text, “Do you believe on the Son of God?” This question I am going to consider with you as the Holy Spirit shall help us. And first, I see here AN EXAMPLE OF WISE PERSONAL ENQUIRY.

Our Lord Jesus Christ spoke to this man personally because He meant to do him good. He did not invite him to listen to a sermon, though that also might have done him good, but He got him alone and put to him this pointed, personal question, “Do you believe on the Son of God?” Christian people, this method which Christ, Himself, used, you ought to employ more than you do! Talk to people personally and pointedly. Push

them up in a corner from which they cannot easily escape. Whenever a sermon is preached, it is the preacher's duty to apply it to his hearers, but it is quite as much the duty of his Christian hearers to apply it to each unconverted person present by asking, "Do you believe on the Son of God?" Get hold of a man and do not let him go until you have put to him this personal question! Sunday school teachers should do this to each child in their classes—perhaps their work just needs that finishing stroke to make it effective. Parents, especially, should do this with every boy and girl in their family. It should be close personal work with each one. Teaching may be general but it should always be followed by a personal catechizing of those who have been taught.

Our Savior put this question to the man when they were alone. He did not ask him this while there were dozens of people around them. It might have been very awkward for the man if He had done so. But, getting him by himself, Christ said to him, "Do you believe on the Son of God?" You, also, dear Friends, will find this to be a very useful way of working for Christ because it will often bring men to a crisis. They are, possibly, halting between two opinions. Perhaps in their own minds they have a sort of notion that they do believe in Jesus, and yet they really do not. So, when they are pointedly requested to say whether they do or do not believe in Him, it helps them to understand their true position and very frequently it drives them out of a wrong position into a right one! In the case of the man whose eyes Christ had opened, the question, "Do you believe on the Son of God?" led to the discovery of a very serious flaw in his condition. He was spiritually ignorant—he did not know the Savior even though He was standing close beside him and talking to him! He said, "Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him?" That lamentable ignorance on his part might not have been discovered by him if the question had not been so pointedly and plainly put to him—"Do you believe on the Son of God?" That question led to the removal of his ignorance, brought him into clearer Light and ended in his saying, "Lord, I believe," and in his falling down to worship the Savior of whose Deity he had just before been ignorant!

May I, then, without enlarging upon this point, earnestly urge upon my Christian Brothers and Sisters the wisdom of often using this method of pushing the individual sinner up into a corner and saying to him, "Do you believe?" When we are publicly instructing people, we are very often like persons who are building a great bonfire. We bring barrels, wood, coals and I know not what else, and keep on heaping up the pile, yet there is no bonfire! What we need is a match to set light to the pile and, very often, that pointed, personal question, "Do you believe?" pressed right home upon the individual hearer is just like the lighted match thrust in among the combustible materials—and so the instruction already given becomes profitable and effective! Have you ever used this method, dear Friends? I believe that in many cases parents go on with family prayer and instructing their children in Divine things, yet their boy is not a decided Christian because his father does not take him into the study, or into the little quiet parlor and put his arms round his neck,

and pray for him, and say to him, "My dear boy, have you really given yourself to Jesus Christ?" And when a mother does that, oh, how many boys and girls have been brought to Jesus by those earnest personal enquiries from a mother whose tearful eyes give still greater force to her loving entreaties! I think that most Sunday school teachers will tell you that when they have persistently charged home the Truth—of course, all other points being attended to as well—when they have persistently charged home the Truth upon the individual conscience, they have seen greater immediate results than they have had from their more general teaching.

I pray God to make us ministers more personal in our preaching. I have sometimes felt, when I have heard a sermon, as if the people whom that sermon concerned must have lived on the moon or on the planet Saturn, but that they certainly did not live down here on this earth! The congregation was addressed as though we were all very good respectable people—but if the preacher had told us what we really were, somebody would have been sure to exclaim, "I can't hear such a preacher as that! He is so shockingly personal!" But to be personal, in the sense of being faithful to each one of our hearers, is a mark of excellence in a Christian minister. And instead of being condemned for being thus personal, we should be commended for being what we were intended to be! We were sent by God to be personal and to deliver personal messages, as Nathan did to David when he said to him, "You are the man." I wish it were possible for us, in a wise and prudent manner, to be more closely personal than we ever have been—and so to imitate our Savior's example of wise personal enquiry when He said to this man, "Do you believe on the Son of God?"

II. Now, secondly, anyone who is thoughtful can perceive, in our Savior's question, AN INDICATION OF THE VITAL POINT OF CHARACTER.

Jesus Christ said to this man, "Do you believe on the Son of God?" *He had been aggrieved by the conduct of the Pharisees.* They would not believe him. They had been prejudiced against him and they had put him out of the synagogue—so Jesus Christ seemed to say to him, "Yes, I see how wrongly they have acted towards you and I see how truthful and courageous you have been, but the Pharisees do not believe on Me and that is the reason of their prejudice against Me—but do *you believe on Me?*" It is quite possible for you not to take part with skeptics and opposers of the Gospel and yet, after all, you may not be, yourself, a Believer in Christ. So I put the question again to each one of you, "Do you believe on the Son of God?" I want this question to come home to you good, amiable, excellent people who never did oppose Jesus Christ in your whole lives and who do not intend to do so—and who are very vexed that there should be any Pharisees who do such things! Still, do you really believe in Jesus Christ yourselves? That is the vital point. It is not enough to be a non-opposer—you must personally be an adherent of the Lord Jesus Christ, for He said—"He that is not with Me is against Me; and he that gathers not with Me, scatters abroad."

This man had also been suffering for Jesus Christ's sake. He had been browbeaten and abused by the Pharisees, and now he had been put out

of the synagogue! But Jesus seems to say to him, "Yes, it is well that you should suffer for the Truth's sake, and for believing that I am a Prophet—but that is not enough. 'Do you believe on the Son of God?'" Some of you, perhaps, will persist in attending a place of worship, though you have to suffer a great deal at home because of it. And you continue to read the Bible and other religious books though you get laughed at for doing it. And you come regularly to the Prayer Meetings and the week-night services though there are many who consider you foolish for doing so. All that is well, but it is not enough! You might even give your body to be burnt for Christ's sake, but if you have not faith in Him, you would not thereby be saved. This is *the* point, "Do you believe on the Son of God?"

This man could have replied to Christ's question, "I believe that You are a Prophet." But Jesus would still have said to him, "Do you believe on *the Son of God?*" To believe that Jesus is a good Man and a great Prophet, and that He was sent of God is not enough! Saving faith lays hold upon both Christ's Humanity and His Deity. We must believe in Him as the Son of Mary and the Son of God, truly Son of Man, yet just as truly Son of God. There must be genuine faith in the Deity of the Savior, or I do not see anything in the Word of God which gives even a glimmer of hope to the soul! So I press home the question upon each one here, "Do you believe on the Son of God?" "Well," says someone, "I believe the Bible. I am not an opponent of Christ and I have even suffered for Christ's sake." So far, so good! But, "Do you believe on the Son of God?" Have you given up all other ground of hope and committed your soul's eternal interests to that atoning Sacrifice which alone can reconcile you to God and enable God to look upon you with favor? If you have, it is well. But if you have not, it is far from well with your soul!

This man might have said, "I have had my eyes opened. I was blind, but now I see." Yet Christ, who had opened his eyes, said to him, "Do you believe on the Son of God?" Perhaps someone here says, "I have given up drinking." I am glad to hear it, as glad as I am to hear that this blind man's eyes were opened! "Well," says another, "I am very different from what I was 12 months ago. Through attending the means of Grace, I have become, I trust, respectable. Whereas before I was disreputable and given over to every evil thing." I am glad of it! I say again, as glad as when I read that this blind man's eyes were opened. But, my dear Friend, that is not the main point. "Do you believe on the Son of God?" Morality is excellent as far as it goes, but without *holiness* no man shall see the Lord—and holiness far exceeds mere morality. Holiness can only be produced by a real change of heart and that real change of heart can only come through the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit which manifests itself through faith in Jesus Christ. Moral changes are commendable and we would be the last to say a word against them! But just as silver is not gold, so morality is not holiness, and the message we still have to deliver is this, "You must be born-again." So we press the question of the text home upon the conscience of everyone here because it concerns the vital point of faith in Christ. I am convinced that this question, "Do you believe on the Son of God?" is the most important question that a man can

ever have to answer! This is vitally and overwhelmingly important. "I am a Churchman," says one. "I am a Nonconformist," says another. "I am a Calvinist," says one. "I am an Arminian," says another. Well now, I am not going to ask you anything about your belief on any of these points, though I know what I think is the right view concerning all of them. But I can tell you that you may go to Heaven or you may go to Hell either as a Churchman or as a Nonconformist, as a Calvinist or as an Arminian—but if you believe on Jesus Christ, you shall never perish, neither shall any pluck you out of His hands! It is believing on Him that is the all-important point, so I still urge each one of you to answer the question, "Do you believe on the Son of God?"

III. Thirdly, the text seems to me to give A HINT AS TO THE REASONABLENESS OF BELIEVING IN JESUS CHRIST.

Our Savior seems to say to this man, not in words, but in reality, "You have had your eyes opened. A great deal has been done for you. Now, do you believe on the Son of God? It is a natural inference, from the opening of the eyes of a man who has been born blind, that the One who has opened them is Divine—have you perceived that great Truth of God? Do you see it now?" "Why," I think I hear you all say, "He ought to see it! There ought certainly to be, in such a miracle as that, enough to convince him. He has been in darkness all his life, and now he has had his eyes opened, so that He who opened his eyes must be the Son of God." Very well, but what about yourselves? You say that you believe the Bible—then how is it that you do not believe on the Son of God? You say that the testimony of God in Scripture is true. Then why do you not believe it? Why do you not trust your soul to Him who you know is able to save you? You know what faith is—then why do you not exercise it? You know that the things which you are bid to believe are true. Then how is it that you do not believe these things? Some of you have heard the Gospel preached many hundreds of times. A hundred and more times every year I have tried to batter away at the doors of your hearts! And sometimes you have been a great deal impressed by the Truth that you have heard. You have gone home and prayed over the sermon, or you have sat here and wept under it. You have said truly that God has come very near to you—then how is it that you have not believed in Him? You have, perhaps, seen your daughter saved. Your wife, also, you know to be a Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. You have seen your sister brought to Jesus. You remember what wonders of Grace God worked for your old father and how triumphantly your dear mother went home to Heaven! You believe that all this is true—then you are no atheist, no skeptic. You believe that Jesus Christ can save you and you also believe that He will save you if you trust Him. What reason can there be, then, why you do not trust Him?

I sometimes hear a person say, "I cannot believe." Cannot believe the Truth of God? Do not tell me such a lie as that! A thing is true—then who dares to say that he cannot believe it? When you say that you cannot believe, it is a shamefully mean way of saying that you *will not* believe. God is true and all that God says is true—and it seems to me that being true,

God ought to be believed and all that God says ought to be believed! If a man says to me, when I state a thing positively to him, "That is not true," I am not angry with him because it is clear to me that he does not know me and he may think that I can lie and I have no right to expect him to believe me until he knows me! But when he knows me and has become my friend and has found out my true character, if he then says to me, "I do not believe you," I feel hurt. But when a man says concerning what God, Himself, declares, "I do not believe it," that is to charge God with lying and is such a great sin that God justly says, "He that believes not is condemned already"—as he rightly deserves to be—"because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

It is very sad to think that men will not believe the very God who made them! A friend who is here from Edinburgh told me, this afternoon, a pretty story which I wish I could tell you in Scotch, but it was somewhat to this effect. A Christian, walking down Princes Street, Edinburgh, one night saw a sight that attracted his attention. An old man and an old woman were evidently looking for somebody, so he asked them for whom they were looking. They said they were looking for their poor girl who was out upon the streets, leading a life of shame. He waited to see what would happen. By-and-by, they found her. And her father took hold of her with both his hands and said to her, "Lassie, will you no come home to your own father and mother?" She would not go home with them, but went away to her sin. Well now, it seems to me that God appears thus to lay hold of sinners and say to them, "Will you not come Home to Me in Heaven? Will you not come to My Son, Jesus Christ, who died to save just such sinners as you? Will you not yield to that gracious Spirit who loves to bring sinners to Jesus?" Christ seems to me to put it so to this man, "Your eyes have been opened—do you not believe on the Son of God?" And He bids me remind you that you have had warnings, entreaties, invitations, privileges—you have seen the hand of God stretched out on your behalf—then will you not believe on His Son? Surely you are unreasonable if you do not!

IV. But I must pass on. The text seems to me to give, in the fourth place, A SUGGESTION AS TO THE BEST GROUND FOR COMFORT TO A MAN WHO IS IN TROUBLE.

Look at the man whose eyes Christ had opened. The Pharisees had cast him out of the synagogue and the consequence of his excommunication would be that nobody would employ him. "Oh, you are the man who was put out of the synagogue, are you not?" "Yes." "Well then, I can give you no work." He goes to an old friend and asks for lodging, but the friend says, "I am sorry, but I cannot allow you to tarry in my house. You have been put out of the synagogue and if I harbor you in my house, I also shall be excommunicated. You are now cut off from Israel, so I cannot have anything to do with you." So this poor outcast man, as he stands there, is full of trouble. Jesus Christ comes to him and, in order to comfort him, He says, "Do you believe on the Son of God"—as much as to say, "If you do, never mind the rest."

Jesus did not ask him to comfort himself with the thought that he had done the right thing and had been straightforward about it—and if they had put him out, he could bear it—for he *had* done the right thing. There is some comfort in that thought, but if we had no comfort except what we could get out of what we ourselves had done, it would be a miserable comfort indeed! Jesus did not say to this man, “Well, you are not like those prejudiced Pharisees who have put you out of the synagogue.” There are some people who can always get comfort out of the badness of other people. They say, “Well, we are glad we are not like old So-and-So.” Jesus did not wish him to get comfort in that way and He did not say to him, “Well, poor Man, they have put you out of the synagogue, but they cannot hang you, and they cannot stone you—they have done as much as they can do to injure you.” There are some people who say, “Well, they have done all they can, now—they cannot do anything more to me.” And they seem to be turned into Timons—men-haters—who hate their species and seem to get comfort for themselves by defying all mankind beside. That is not the way to get comfort!

If you have been treated badly. If you are the odd one in the family. If everybody tries to take advantage of you. If you have been slandered. If your mistress is harsh and unkind. If your master is tyrannical. If your fellow clerks make you the butt of their jests—do not try to get comfort from any of the sources I have indicated—though a great many do so! But answer this question, “Do you believe on the Son of God?” If you do, then you are saved and you may well rejoice in that fact! Believer, you are one with Christ—rejoice in that! Your affliction is borne by Christ as well as by yourself—rejoice in that! And rejoice also that as Christ is with you in your suffering, you will be with Him in His glory! Even now He has fellowship with you in your low estate—so rejoice in that! You have to go home tonight to those who mock at your religion, those who have no sympathy with you, whose every word is a taunt and whose every look is a sneer. Then when you get home, sit down quietly by yourself and say, “My name is written in Heaven, for I believe on the Son of God. And though the world knows me not, I remember that it knew Him not. It is enough for me to share the lot that was my Lord’s, for the disciple is not above his Master, nor the servant above his Lord. Believing in Jesus, I can bear and forbear and wait until the Glory is revealed, for Jesus will never fail me, nor forsake me.”

If there are any of you in great trouble, I would like to remind you of this fact, that *faith in Jesus is the best cure for every care, the best balm for every wound*. Get away to Jesus—at the foot of His Cross is the best place for mourners. All our other sorrows die when Jesus’ sorrows are revealed. Faith in Christ is what you need beyond everything else!

V. The last point is this. When our Savior asked the man whose eyes He had opened, “Do you believe on the Son of God? it was AN INCITEMENT TO THE MAN TO CONFESS HIS LORD.

Jesus seemed to say to him, “Do not hide that great Truth—do not keep that precious treasure to yourself.” Immediately the man said, “Lord, I believe,” and then, next, he practically proved that he meant

what he said by falling down and worshipping the Lord. My dear fellow Christians, there may be some of you who have lately been converted to Christ, but you have kept the good news to yourself. Now, believe me, if it is genuine faith in Christ, you cannot conceal it! A man may put fire into the middle of a stack of hay and tell it not to shine, lest somebody should try to put it out. But it is not in the nature of fire to hide itself, so you will soon see that blaze. It is said that fire and a cough and love cannot be hidden. And certainly that is true of the holiest sort of love—love to Jesus. It is sure to reveal itself somehow or other!

I knew a man who thought he would go to Heaven alone and never tell anybody that he was a Christian. But he lived in a village where there was a Prayer Meeting and he stole in once, and he liked it so much that he went again and sat in a quiet corner where he thought nobody would see him. But the Brother who was conducting the meeting said, “Will that friend in the corner be kind enough to engage in prayer?” He shook his head—he was like a snail in his shell and he did not mean to come out in that public fashion. But when he got outside, he thought to himself, “I am afraid I have almost denied the Lord Jesus by refusing to pray when I might have done so. However,” he thought, “if I am asked again, (I hope I shall not be), I think I will just pray, but I shall not say much.” He was asked another time, but again he was very timid and he did not pray. So, after the service, the leader said to him, “I am glad to see you here, dear Friend, though you do not pray with us. Do you like to be here?” He answered, “Oh, yes, I enjoy it very much.” “Then,” said the other, “I trust you know something about the Lord.” And almost before he realized what he was doing, he had told all his secret out. He could not help it! And what is there, after all, that we should need to hide? If I really love my Savior and anybody says to me, “You also are one of His disciples,” I ought gladly to answer, “Yes, yes, yes! And if He is not ashamed to acknowledge me as His disciple, I cannot be ashamed to acknowledge Him as my Master! Oh, that I may never put Him to shame! And, certainly, to confess Him as my Savior shall never make me ashamed.”

Why is it that some of you who believe in Jesus, are so backward in confessing your faith in Him? Do not profess to believe if you do not, but if you do believe in Jesus, I ask again, why are you so backward in confessing your faith? Jesus Christ said to His disciples, “Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.” And then He told them what Gospel to preach, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” You see the two parts of it. “Ah,” you say, “you Baptists make a great deal of Baptism.” We Baptists do not make any more of Baptism than the Lord Jesus Christ has done! But I was not talking about Baptists, I was talking about the words of the Lord Jesus Christ as they are recorded in the New Testament. He says, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” Is not that plain? Someone asks, “Can we not be saved without being baptized?” “I am not going to answer such a question as that! My business is to bid you listen to what Jesus Christ says, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” Give good heed to what Christ says, and

raise no questions concerning it. For my part, I am going to run no risks and, therefore, I take the whole passage just as it stands! My Master alone knows the relative importance of the two parts of the message, but I am bound to deliver His message just as I have received it. Suppose I send a servant to my front door with a message and the person to whom it is sent says to her, "Your master did not mean all that," she would naturally say, "I have nothing to do with what my master *means*—I have only to tell you what he *said*." So say I concerning what my Master said—and what He said was—"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." And He has also said, "Whoever, therefore, shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in Heaven. But whoever shall deny Me before men, (which is here the same thing as not confessing Him), Him will I also deny, (or, not confess), before my Father which is in Heaven." Come along then, you who have been hiding yourselves! Come forth and confess that Jesus Christ is yours!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: JOHN 9.

Verse 1. *And as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from his birth.* Therefore the man could not see Jesus, but the more important matter was that Christ could see the blind man! And you, dear Heart, may not yet have learned to look on Christ, but He can look on you in your blindness—and a look from Him will speedily work a wondrous change in you!

2. *And His disciples asked Him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?* Many of Christ's disciples are still occupied in asking questions that serve no practical purpose, like this one, "Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?"

3. *Jesus answered, Neither has this man sinned, nor his parents.* That is to say, sin on their part was not the cause of his blindness.

3. *But that the works of God should be made manifest in him.* [See Sermon #2309, Volume 39—GOD'S WORKS MADE MANIFEST—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Human nature is a platform for the manifestation of Divine work. The more in need you are, dear Friend, the more room there is for God's mercy to operate upon you.

4-7. *I must work the works of Him that sent Me while it is day: the night comes, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the Light of the world. When He had thus spoken, He spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said to him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent). He went his way, therefore, and washed, and came seeing.* [See Sermon #1977, Volume 33—THE BLIND BEGGAR OF THE TEMPLE AND HIS WONDERFUL CURE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Christ used very simple means to cure this man's blindness, very unlikely means, apparently, to produce the desired effect. It might have seemed, indeed, that the man would have been more in the dark than

ever when his eyes were plastered over with clay, yet the Lord chose to work in that way. And so, when the poor preacher feels as if he was nothing and nobody, and that his method may rather hinder his Master's work than help Him, yet still his Lord can work through his weakness and get to Himself glory notwithstanding His servant's infirmities!

8, 9. *The neighbors, therefore, and they who before had seen him that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged? Some said, This is he: others said, he is like he: but he said, I am he.* "There is no question about my identity, I am the same man whom you have seen sitting and begging, and I now come before you with my sight fully restored."

10, 11. *Therefore said they unto him, How were your eyes opened? He answered and said, a man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed my eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight.* It was only a short story, but it was very sweet to him, and he told it with no excess of detail, but with all its salient points. He was a sharp, shrewd man of few words, but those few words were weighty. Friend, when you tell the story of Christ and His love to you, do not embellish it with flowers of speech. There is enough in what Christ has done to make it shine without any fine words of yours. The beauty of Christ's work is such that it is most adorned when unadorned.

12. *Then said they unto Him, Where is He? He said, I know not.* There are a good many things concerning Christ which you may not know, but if you know that He has opened your eyes, you may be well content with the knowledge of that until He shall be pleased to reveal more about Himself to you.

13. *They brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind.* I am sure that this was a very distressing sight to them, for there was nothing that ever grieved their hearts more than for Christ's power to be displayed! They did not want to see the blind man whose eyes Christ had opened. If the miracle brought Christ any glory, it brought them just as much misery!

14, 15. *And it was the Sabbath day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes. Then again the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight.* That seemed to be the principal question with them—they always wanted to know the manner in which Christ's cures were worked.

15. *He said unto them, He put clay upon my eyes, and I washed, and do see.* That is shorter than his previous account of the miracle. When Pharisees ask a carping question, the shorter the answer, the better—it is a pity to cast pearls before swine.

16, 17. *Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This Man is not of God because He keeps not the Sabbath day. Others said, How can a Man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them. They said unto the blind man again, What say you of Him, that He has opened your eyes! He said, He is a Prophet.* He was a brave man, who dared to say what he believed whether he offended or pleased! He did not know much, but what he did know he did know, and he was quite certain

about it. There are some men whose breadth of knowledge is as remarkable as its shallowness! It is like water upon the meadows when a river overflows its banks, and covers a wide area, but there is scarcely an inch of depth. Give us the narrower river that is deep and that can bear onwards to the ocean a noble fleet, rather than the wide expanse of useless, shallow water!

18-21. *But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and received his sight, until they called the parents of him that had received his sight. And they asked them, saying, Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see? His parents answered them and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind: but by what means he now sees, we know not; or who has opened his eyes, we know not: he is of age; ask him: he shall speak for himself.* [See Sermon #1393, Volume 24—SPEAK FOR YOURSELF—A CHALLENGE!—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] They were timid, but they were also shrewd enough to let their son speak for himself, as he was quite able to do.

22-24. *These words spoke his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had already agreed that if any man did confess that He was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue. Therefore said his parents, he is of age, ask him. Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: we know that this Man is a sinner. They thought they could get over him by giving him a little of what they called good advice—“Praise God, but be quiet concerning this Man; depend upon it, He is a sinner.”*

25-28. *He answered and said, Whether He is a sinner or not, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see. Then said they to him again, What did He to you? How opened He your eyes? He answered them, I have told you already, and you did not hear: therefore would you hear it again? Will you also be His disciple? Then they reviled him. Of course, that is the usual way with those who are in the wrong. Abuse the plaintiff when you cannot answer his case! “Then they reviled him.”*

28-30. *And said, You are His disciple but we are Moses’ disciples. We know that God spoke unto Moses: as for this Fellow, we know not from where He came. The man answered and said unto them, Why herein is a marvelous thing, that you know not from where He came, and yet He has opened my eyes. Where could He have come from but from God? Who could have worked such a miracle unless He had been sent from God?*

31-33. *Now we know that God hears not sinners: but if any man is a worshipper of God, and does His will, him He hears. Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this Man were not of God, He could do nothing. That was very forcibly spoken. Oh, that all of us whose eyes Christ has opened, would speak for Him as bravely as this man did! Our cure has been quite as clear and quite as notable as His was, so let us not be ashamed to testify for Him before gainsayers and opposers!*

34. *They answered and said unto him, You were altogether born in sins, and do you teach us? “Such learned men as we are, with such culture and such penetration as we have, ‘do you teach us?’”*

34. *And they cast him out.* It was a great mercy for him that they did excommunicate him! One of the greatest blessings that could come to him was that of being cast out of the synagogue, and being cast out of the society of such men as those Pharisees were!

35. *Jesus heard that they had cast him out.* Jesus knew all that had happened to this man, but someone probably related the story to Him. And our Lord knows all about each one of us and He knows whether anyone here is suffering for His sake or for the Truth’s sake. Jesus knew that they had cast him out.

35. *And when He had found him.* For He always finds those whom the world or false professors have cast out.

35, 36. *He said unto him, Do you believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him? He was a sensible man and he had the sense to perceive that knowledge rightly used leads to faith. He desired to know in order that he might believe. And if you ever say that you cannot believe, but are anxious to do so, then make enquiry as to what is to be believed—examine the evidence concerning it and so faith will come to you by the operation of God’s good Spirit.*

37-40. *And Jesus said unto him, You have both seen Him, and it is He that talks with you. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped Him. And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind. And some of the Pharisees which were with Him heard these words, and said unto Him, Are we blind also? “Are we blind?” It seemed impossible to them that it could be so! Jesus answered them with scathing words.*

41. *Jesus said unto them, If you were blind, you would have no sin: but now you say, We see. Therefore your sin remains.* “If what you have done had been done in utter ignorance, you would have been comparatively guiltless. But you have sinned against light and knowledge, with a most determined antipathy to the Grace of God and, therefore, your sin remains in all its scarlet hue to condemn you.”

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

THE ESSENCE OF SIMPLICITY

NO. 1088

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 29, 1872,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when He had found him, He said unto him, Do you believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him?”
John 9:35, 36.***

THIS text is from the story of the blind man to whom Jesus had given sight. His narrative of the cure provoked the anger of the Jews and their rulers. And, as the man could not be convinced by them that one who had opened his eyes could also be a bad man, they cast him out of their assembly—and by that act signified to him that he would be, or already was, cast out of the Jewish Church—set aside from the Synagogue and made the victim of the greater excommunication. This was one of the most fearful calamities that could befall a Jew and I do not doubt but what the man considered it to be so.

Now, it is not at all likely that any person here is feeling the same trouble, but many may be suffering from something similar. It may be that you have excommunicated *yourselves*. Within the court of your own bosom, conscience has held a solemn court and pronounced upon you a sentence which continually rings in your ears. You scarcely dare mingle with those who assemble in the house of God for you feel yourselves unworthy to be among them. Up till lately you were upon the best of terms with yourselves and reckoned that all was right with God. You hoped that you stood on as good a footing, at any rate, as other men and perhaps were somewhat better than many around you.

But now a process of enlightenment has come over your mind—practices have been seen to be seriously evil which before were regarded as trifles and sin itself has worn another aspect than any which it bore in former times. Does such a person stand here this morning? Then let me assure him that his state of mind is well known to me, for I knew its horrors by the space of many months together. I, too, felt that I was cut off from the congregation of the hopeful and must not hope for mercy from God. I dared not lift so much as my eyes towards Heaven, but complained to the Lord as Jonah did—“I am shut out of Your sight.”

Therefore with brotherly sympathy I speak to any man who reckons himself a castaway, shut out from the house of the Lord. The man in the narrative, most happily for him, at the time when the sentence began to cast its gloom over him, was met by the Lord Jesus Christ who at once proceeded to afford him the necessary cordial. Christ has come as the consolation of Israel and where He finds that men are burdened in spirit

He commences His gracious work. But, observe, He brings but *one* cordial and prescribes but *one* way by which its efficacy can be realized. He spoke to the oppressed man concerning the Son of God and personal faith in Him—for this is the master consolation for broken hearts—this is the surest and best means of bringing joy to souls which sit in the dungeons of despondency.

Our Lord began by saying to the cast-out one, “Do you believe on the Son of God?” Now, if any here present are in the state which I have thus hurriedly sketched, feeling themselves guilty before God with spirits ill at ease, with hearts alarmed at coming and deserved judgment—I come in Christ’s name to them this morning with words of comfort! But they will be no other than those which Jesus uttered of old. I have nothing to speak to you by way of comfort but concerning the Son of God and concerning Him only, by demanding that you believe on Him, for only as you receive Him by faith will He be to you a relief from sorrow. He that believes on the Lord Jesus shall not be ashamed—but without faith you are without salvation!

We shall this morning labor to bring you all to the point in hand. There shall be between the doctrine of the Gospel and your soul this morning, O you who are not yet a Believer, a direct encounter. You shall come up this morning and face the Gospel whether you spurn it or accept it. You shall know, if the plainest words can tell it to you, that if you believe in Christ Jesus you shall be saved. And it shall be put to you whether you will do this or not and you shall either believe on the Son of God or incur anew the sin of putting from you the only name given under Heaven among men whereby you can be saved!

I say you shall be brought to this if words can bring you to it—and then I must leave the work of your deciding in the hands of God the Holy Spirit. I entreat you who love the Lord and have prevalence in prayer to aid me with your supplications. Pray that the result of bringing the sinner face to face with the Gospel may be that he may decide to believe in Jesus! Pray that faith may be given him! Pray that the Son of God may become the object of his soul’s confidence and that in no case the hearer may be left to continue in unbelief and to reject the Son of God!

You have seen at the mouth of the coal pits how the full wagons, as they run down the incline draw the empty ones up to the pit’s mouth that they also may be filled—I would to God that you who have Grace may exert the power God has given you with Himself—and so by prevalent intercession you may draw others to the Savior. While we are preaching you be praying and God will work by us both!

Look upon the unsaved around you with an eye of pity—then look to Christ, your exalted Savior, with the eyes of faith and say to Him—“Jesus, You who have redeemed myriads by Your blood, now work by Your eternal Spirit and redeem also by power. Let the Spirit that rested on Your own ministry, the Spirit that was with Your servants at Pentecost, the Spirit that has converted us also to your Truth, work mightily among the con-

gregation this morning, that all these may be led to obey You. When your Cross is lifted high, let it bring life to the dead throughout the camp and be to the awakened a lighthouse of safety and to the despairing a pillar of hope.”

I. The run of our discourse this morning being solemnly practical, we shall, in the most distinct manner, lay down and define THE MATTER IN HAND. With you, my anxious Friend, the greatest and weightiest business that can concern you is that you find salvation. You have it not at present, your conscience tells you that—and though you are well aware that you must obtain it or be forever lost—you have as yet but small prospect of ever finding it. You have sinned and punishment awaits you and neither can you escape!

The point above all points with you is that you be saved. And if you are really awakened you desire to be saved from sin as well as from its punishment. You would not only escape from the consequences of doing wrong, but from the propensity to *do* wrong—from the constant power and defilement of past sin—and from the tendency to sin again. You desire, also, to be forgiven and by forgiveness to be set clear from the anger of a justly offended God. And you desire to be rendered acceptable to the Most High—and if you are in your right mind you desire that all this should be done really and truly—not in pretence or fiction, but in deed and in truth.

God forbid that you should ever be content with the name of being saved—with an external and professional salvation of outward rites and ceremonies—while your heart remains unpurified and your nature uncleaned! In some other departments we may be deceived and not be very great losers, but in *soul* matters we must make all things sure. For if we are deceived *there*, it is all over with us, indeed. Let me be cheated with base metal instead of gold if you will, but not with falsehoods in the place of the saving Truth of God, or deceptive notions in lieu of gracious operations. Let me be deceived as to the food I eat and find every morsel of it adulterated, if so it must be—but not in the eternal life-bread, which my soul craves after. Be true to my soul, if all else is a lie!

Do you, my Hearer, desire salvation from the power and guilt of sin? And do you desire it to be thorough and real? Do you not also long for it *now*? If God has at all quickened you, you long to be saved at once! You tremble at the idea of delay. Sin is bitter to you now; it is a present plague. The matter before us now is *present* salvation, *personal* salvation to be realized for yourself. If there is such a thing as looking up to the smiling face of a reconciled Father in Heaven, you desire to enjoy it now! If it is possible for the load of sin to be rolled from off a mortal's shoulders forever, you desire to be rid of that burden at this instant! If there is, indeed, a fountain in which, if a man is washed, every stain shall disappear, you long to plunge beneath its cleansing flood at once and be made whiter than the driven snow.

If your soul is so far awakened I bless God, indeed, for there is nothing beneath the sun—and, indeed, there is nothing above it—that can rival in

importance your soul's salvation. Now the matter which I must press upon you is this. If you are ever to be saved, God has declared that salvation must come to you as a gift of His Grace, as an act of His free favor and can only be received by you through your believing in His Son. As Christ consoled the man in the temple by saying to him, "Do you believe on the Son of God?" so today there is no consolation, much less *salvation* for you except through believing in God's own Son.

A hundred times have you heard the story of God's only begotten Son who is the lover of men's souls. But we must tell it to you yet again. God will not save men on the ground of their merits. Indeed, if they have any merits they do not require saving. If God owes you anything, produce the account and you shall have it! If there are obligations on God's part towards you, say what they are and if they can be proved to exist God will never give you less than you can justly claim. Alas, my Friend, if you are lodged where you deserve to be, where will it be but in the pit of Hell? It were well for you, then, to have done with all claims and demands! God will only save you as a *guilty* person who deserves to be destroyed, but whom He saves because He chooses to save you—because He resolves to manifest in you the abundance of His mercy.

"By Grace are you saved," is the immutable purpose of Heaven! And it is further decreed that this Grace shall be received by men through the channel of *faith*, and by that channel only! God will save only those who trust in His Son. Jesus Christ the Lord came into this world and took upon Himself our Nature, as we taught you last Sunday, [**THE HEXAPLA OF MYSTERY**, Sermon #1087] and being found in fashion as a Man, He took the transgressor's place. The sins of His people were numbered upon Him, imputed to Him, charged to His account and He suffered for them as if they had been His own sins. He was scourged, tormented, crucified and slain—the stripes He bore were the chastisements due to human sin—and the death He endured was the death threatened to transgressors.

And now, whoever will trust in Jesus shall participate in the result of all the Redeemer's substitutionary agonies and the case shall stand thus—the sufferings of Christ shall be instead of the Believers' suffering and the merits of Christ shall be instead of the obedience which man ought to have rendered. Faith in Jesus makes us righteous through the righteousness of another—it causes us to be accepted in the Beloved, perfect in Christ Jesus! As by the first Adam we fell, so by the second Adam we rise again.

Now the way to partake in the benefits of the death of the Lord Jesus is simply by believing in Him. Here let it be understood that *believing* in Jesus is not a mysterious and complex action. It does not require a week to explain what faith is. Faith believes what God has revealed concerning Christ and it therefore trusts in Christ as the Divinely-appointed Savior. I believe that Jesus was God's Son. I believe that God sent Him into the world to save sinners. I believe that to do so He became a Substitute to

justice for all those who trust Him and, as I trust Him, I know that He was *my* Substitute and that I am clear before God.

Since Jesus died for me, God's justice cannot put me to eternal death for whom Jesus, my Substitute has died. God's Truth cannot demand a second time the debt which has already been fully paid on my behalf. The rationale of the whole thing is as plain as possible and whoever in this world, old or young, Jew or Gentile, literate or illiterate, rich or poor, debauched or moral will trust in Jesus shall be saved—he is saved the moment he does so! But whoever of women born *refuses* to trust in Jesus—he is condemned already because he has not believed on the Son of God. Let a man's character be what it may, if in that character there is no faith, he is a lost soul! But on the other hand, let that character have been what it may, if now he comes to the Cross and believes in Jesus, he begins from that moment a new life—God will give to him all the Graces and excellencies of character which will adorn his faith and his faith shall save him!

Trusting in Jesus, believing in Jesus—that is the matter. I need to bring my hammer down upon this anvil at every stroke. And if the Lord will be pleased to place before me some heart that He has melted in the furnace of conviction, the strokes will count if the Eternal God will lay to His almighty arm and strike with Divine energy. If any soul is but brought to faith in Jesus, the work is done! To believe in the Son of God is the point, and nothing else.

II. This being the matter in hand, we will make an advance, in the second place, to notice that there is A QUESTION IN OUR TEXT WHICH INVOLVES THE WHOLE BASIS OF FAITH. The man said to Jesus, “Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him?” This man all through the narrative proves himself to be a very shrewd fellow. I do not know that holy Scripture gives us an instance of a more commonsense man than this man whose eyes were opened. And so, when he is told that he must believe in the Son of God, he comes to the point at once and says, “Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him?” as if that was all he wanted to know—“Who is He?”—and then the faith would surely come.

When a soul is seeking faith, this question is the main point. The hinge of the whole matter lies there. This man did not say, “Lord, who am I that I should believe?”—not at all. That would have been wide of the point. If I read a story in the newspapers about the truthfulness of which there is a question, I do not begin asking what my *own* character is, as though that had anything to do with it! But I ask who the authority for the story may be. I do not look within, but I look to the person claiming belief. The story is true or not, whatever *I* may be. My character does not concern the truth or falsehood of the statement. I must enquire into the statement itself. So this man did not make any remarks about what he might have been or might still be, but he hung the issue on this nail—“Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him?”

So now, dear Hearer, all the arguments for your faith lie within the compass of that question, “Who is He, Lord, that I should believe on

Him?” You need not say, “Who am I that I should believe? I have lived a life that has been defiled with sin. I have gone from one transgression to another. I have resisted conscience. I have stood out against the Gospel. I have defiled myself by sins against light and knowledge.” It matters not. There you stand with all your defilement taken for granted and God says to you, “Whoever believes on the Lord Jesus Christ has everlasting life.” That is the saving matter—that, and nothing more nor less!

Will you believe in the Lord Jesus or not? What you are is nothing to the point. If God’s witness is true, it is true whether you are black or white, whether you are a big sinner or a little sinner! And if it is false it will not be any the truer whether you are good or bad, worthy or unworthy! If Jesus is able to save He ought to be trusted. And if He is not able, none ought to rely upon Him—the whole question turns on that. Neither raise any quibbles as to your present condition. You say, “But I at this moment feel myself so hard of heart! I cannot weep as some can. Repentance is hid from my eyes. Prayer is heavy, groaning work with me. Even while I am listening to the Gospel this morning my attention is not riveted as it ought to be upon the Truth of God which I know to be vital! I am destitute of every good point. I am empty of everything that can recommend me to mercy.”

I answer, so what? Suppose I tell a man that the sum of 10,000 pounds has been left him in a will—is it anything to the point if he shows me his raps, his empty cupboard and his wretched bed? Does *his* poverty make *me* a liar? Why does the man introduce such extraneous matter into the good news? Either it is true or it is not! His condition has nothing to do with the truth or falsehood of my declaration. If the man were wrapped in scarlet and fine linen, that would not make my statement any truer. And if the dogs lick him as they did Lazarus, that does not give him a right to deny my truthfulness when I tell him a fact.

So, O Sinner, your condition has nothing to do with the question whether Jesus is to be trusted or not. “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Will you believe in Him? Will you trust the Lord Jesus? If you desire to trust Him the subject for enquiry is, “Is He worth trusting?” But it is a question far away from the point to say, “I am this,” or, “I am that.” Is not this so? I appeal to your own common sense! “But still, as to the future,” says one. “I might go back to my old sins. I cannot trust *myself*—I have made some reformations before and they have been but poor ventures—my ship has gone out to sea and foundered in the first gale. I cannot expect with such temptations as will await me, that I shall bear up and enter Heaven.”

Now, what has the question of believing in Jesus to do with your good resolutions or your miserable failures? Whoever trusts Christ shall be saved. If you are lost trusting Him in the future, God’s Word will not be true. The question is, Can you trust Christ? And that turns on that other, “Is He worthy to be trusted?” No other question can be admitted for a sin-

gle moment. The case is something like that of a man in yonder sea. His ship is wrecked—she is breaking to pieces—her decks have been swept. He barely retains his hold on a floating spar. Look! The lifeboat comes up close to his side and is ready to take him on board.

Now, if there is a question in that man's mind about getting into that lifeboat in order to be saved, the only rational one that I can conceive is, "Will the boat carry me to shore? Is she seaworthy? Will she outlive the breakers? Can she reach the land safely?" You cannot conceive the poor fellow's saying, "I quiver too much with chills to be rescued by that boat," or, "The sea has washed the last rag from off my back, the boat will not suit me," or, "Another time I may be wrecked on the coast of Africa and there may be a lifeboat." No, no! Man alive, there is the boat! Is she seaworthy? That is the question! If so, get into her! If Christ is not worth trusting, do not trust Him but if He is worthy of all confidence, then have done with idle questions and cast yourself upon Him.

"If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son. He that believes on the Son of God has the witness in himself: he that believes not God has made Him a liar because he believes not the record that God gave of His Son. And this is the record, that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that has the Son has life and he that has not the Son of God has not life" (1 John 5:9-12).

Still, we will keep to this point—Jesus is worth trusting, worthy of the sinner's unwavering faith. He is worth trusting, O Sinner, because first of all He on whom you are bid to rely this day by the command of the Gospel is God Himself! You have offended God and it is God who came into the world to save sinners. Against Christ your sins were launched as arrows from a bow, but He against whom those bolts were shot has come in the fullness of His power and the infinity of His mercy to save them that believe. Can you not trust yourself in almighty hands—almighty to save? Is anything impossible with God?

An angel could not save you, but surely God Himself can! How can you limit the Holy one of Israel? How can you set bounds to boundless love, or limits to limitless Grace? If Jesus were man and not God, unbelief would have good excuse! But if the Savior is Divine, where can distrust find a cloak for itself? I feel this morning as if I could not help believing in Christ now that I know Him to be Divine. Faith has grown to be a necessary act of my mind. Save me? Who shall persuade me that He cannot? Come forth, you devils with your arguments, and plead with me, and you cannot inject a doubt into my soul while I know Him to be God! He can shake the heavens when He pleases and make the earth to tremble! He bears up the universe upon His shoulders—cannot He save my poor soul? Yes, that He can. "Who is He that I might believe on Him?" He is Divine and therefore I believe.

But next, the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom the sinner is bid to trust, is commissioned by God to save. He came into the world as a Savior, not

alone on His own account, but as Messiah sent of God. He has the full concurrence of the sacred Trinity. It is the will of the Father; it is the will of the Holy Spirit as well as the will of the Son that whoever believes in Jesus will be saved. He was anointed of the Lord for His peculiar work. Now, I feel as if this were a special ground for trust in Him. If Christ were an amateur Savior who had taken up the trade of saving on His own account, there might be a question. But if God has divinely commissioned Him to save, O Soul, why can you doubt any more? Warranted of God, authorized of the Eternal—O Heart, rest in Him!

Then, mark, the Lord Jesus Christ has actually done all that is necessary for Him to do for the salvation of all who trust Him. Years ago, before Jesus Christ came into the world, if I had been sent to preach the Gospel, I must have cried “Jesus will take upon Him the sins of Believers and lay down His life for His Church!” But now I have a more encouraging message—Jesus *has* carried His people’s sins away forever! He *has* suffered on their behalf all that was required to make an end of their transgressions. Whatever was *demand*ed by the justice of God as a recompense for the injured honor of the Law He *has* rendered! The equivalent for all the sufferings of all the elect in Hell forever, Christ has suffered to the utmost—everything that was necessary that God might be just and yet the Justifier of him that believes, Christ has endured! The cup of vengeance is not full and *to be* drained—it is empty and turned bottom upwards—Jesus has drank it dry!

The labors necessary for our redemption, superlatively greater than the labors of Hercules, have all been accomplished! Christ has gone into the grave, has gone out of the grave and gone up to His Glory. He has entered Heaven because His work is done—and now He sits down at the right hand of the Father in the posture of rest and honor because He has perfected forever all those who put their trust in Him! Now, Soul, how can you refuse to believe in Jesus? To me the argument seems impossible to be resisted. If it is so, that Christ has died, the Just for the unjust and that all who trust Him shall be saved, I will also trust Him and I shall find peace through His blood.

Moreover, Soul, the point, we trust God’s Grace is bringing you to is this—Jesus *deserves* to be trusted and trust Him we will. He is full of power to save for He is now upon the Throne of God and all power is given Him in Heaven and in earth. He is full of power to save, we know, because He is saving souls every day. Some of us are the living witnesses that He can forgive sin, for we are pardoned, accepted and renewed in heart! And the only way in which we obtained those gifts was this—we trusted Him—we did nothing else but trust Him!

If any soul here that believes in Jesus should perish, I must perish with him. I sail in that boat and if it sinks I have no other to flee to. I avow before you all that I have no other confidence. I have not so much as the shred of a reliance in any sacrament I have undergone or enjoyed, in any sermon I have ever preached, in any prayer I have ever prayed, in any

communion with God I have ever known. My hope dies in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ! And I shake off into the fire as though it were a viper, as a deadly thing only fit to be burned, all pretence of relying on anything I may be, or can be, or ever shall be, or do. “None but Jesus”—this is the settled pillar upon which we must build! It will bear us up, but nothing else can.

Now, since by the authority of Infallible Scripture we know that Jesus has this power, why is it that souls seeking rest do not obey the command and rest themselves freely upon Him? This is the climax of human depravity—that it rejects the witness of God, Himself, and chooses to perish in unbelief! Moreover, remember, also, that Jesus Christ this morning is by no means unwilling to save sinners, but on the contrary He delights to do it! You have never to drag mercy out of Christ as money from a miser—it flows freely from Him like the stream from the fountain, or the sunlight from the sun. If He can be happier, He is made happier by giving His mercy to the undeserving. When a poor wretch who only deserves Hell comes to Him and He says, “I have blotted out your sins,” it is joy to Christ’s heart to do it.

When a poor blasphemer bows his knee and says, “Lord, be merciful to me a sinner,” it makes Christ’s heart glad to say, “Your blasphemies are forgiven. I suffered for them on the Cross.” When a poor little child, by her bedside, cries, “Gentle Jesus, teach a little child to pray and forgive the sins which I have done,” the Savior loves to say, “Suffer these little children to come to Me, for this, also, is a part of My recompense for the wounds I endured in My hands, My feet and My side.” When any of you come to Him and confess your transgressions and trust yourselves in His hands, it will be a new Heaven to Him—it will put new stars into His ever bright and lustrous crown! It will make Him see of the travail of His soul and give Him satisfaction!

Have we not here, also, arguments to prove that Jesus is worthy to be trusted?

III. This leads us in the third place to say by all these answers to the question—“Who is He?” EVERY SINNER IN THIS TABERNACLE IS SHUT UP THIS MORNING TO THE ALTERNATIVE OF FAITH OR UNBELIEF. You are shut up either to trust in Christ, in whom God commands you to trust, or to refuse to trust Him. I am not sent to preach to *some* of you this morning, but to everyone who has ears to hear. I have never learned to preach a restricted Gospel to a part of a congregation—the commission received by every true minister of Christ is, “Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature: he that believes and is baptized shall be saved; he that believes not shall be damned.”

As you are all creatures, the Gospel is hereby preached to all of you—sensible or insensible, spiritually dead or spiritually alive, so long as you are able to hear the Gospel, one message comes to you all out of the excellent glory—“Whoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely.” “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” But I know

what will be your course of action unless the Spirit of God prevents it. Many of you will try to decline the alternative between believing and not believing which I have put so nakedly before you. You will not like to say, "I will not trust Christ," and yet you will not trust in Him!

What, then, will you do? Why, you will ring the changes on the old bells, "But I am such a sinner. I am so unworthy!" I have already shown that the plea is not relevant and ought not to be thrust into the business. The question is one and indivisible—"Will you believe on the Son of God?" Why, then, do you raise another question about yourself which has nothing to do with it? Yet I will take you on your own grounds and answer you. Granted that you are a special and abominable sinner—then of all men in the world you are the man who should trust Christ, because it is written, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

You have been a drunk, a fornicator, an adulterer, a thief—in fact—a devil of a man. Well, then, you have been a sinner—that is all it comes to and Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. Therefore, instead of being shut out by your character, you are shut *in* by it. You are the sort of man that Christ came to save! You cannot run away and say, "He did not come to save me because I am not a sinner." You dare not do that! Very likely you will turn round upon me and say, "My reason for unbelief is that I do not *feel* as I should."

I again say the plea ought never to be urged. Because I feel a pain in my foot this morning, is that a reason why I should not trust in an honest man or believe a statement which comes to me upon good authority? I will, however, urge objections on behalf of the slaves. No black man came forward to say that the Blacks were unworthy and undeserving—neither did the slaves propose that a part of the money should be paid by themselves. O no, it is not in human nature to request others to encumber their free gifts in that fashion!

Yet here we are so false to all that is reasonable that we need to encumber Sovereign Grace! When God says, "I will blot out your transgressions now and save you once and for all—only trust My dear Son"—it is strange, 'tis passing strange, 'tis madness at its consummation that men should invent objections and plead for a Gospel with conditions and hard terms! Now, what will men do if driven out of this? I have often seen the sinner in the next place turn to downright falsehood and say, "It is too late," though he knows right well it never can be too late, for the Gospel says, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved."

It does not say, if he believes when he is 25 years of age, or 35, or 55, or 105, but it stands the same for all ages! It is never too late to believe a Truth of God and that is the point—"Will you believe on the Son of God?" Then the sinner will say that he feels within himself that there is no hope and so, because he happens to believe a lie, he will make out that God's Truth also is a lie and refuse to believe that which God solemnly declares, namely, that there is salvation in Jesus Christ! But I cannot stay to men-

tion all these falsehoods, nor, indeed, to run into all the subterfuges of men who seek to escape from their own mercies.

I saw in Pompeii, on a shop door, the motto, “*Eme et Habe bis*”—“Buy and you shall have”—and I could not but think that if I were walking the streets of the New Jerusalem, I should have seen a very different device, “Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” Now if there could be a shop opened in London in which all the goods were to be had without money and without price, would you quarrel with the shopkeeper and petition for an Act of Parliament to shut his shop up and say it was wicked because you would rather go on the old terms and pay for all you have? Of course not!

Yet why is it you stand out against free Grace’s golden motto, “Trust in Christ and you shall have.” Here is instantaneous pardon, *perfect* pardon, *everlasting* pardon, sonship through Christ, safety on earth, glory in Heaven and all for nothing, all for nothing—the free gift of a gracious God to undeserving sinners who trust in Jesus! Never angel had a more gracious, more God-like message of mercy than I have! How I wish I could glow with a seraph’s zeal and cry with a cherub’s voice while proclaiming it! Would God that men would leave their foolish reasonings and believe in Jesus Christ!

IV. Lastly, on this alternative, this day may hang EVERLASTING THINGS TO MANY OF YOU. I remember well, for the anniversary of the season has almost come round, when I was placed in a similar condition to many now present, when I knew myself to be ruined and undone and heard, for the first time truly to understand it, that word, “Look unto Me, and be you saved, all you ends of the earth.”

I know how it stood that morning. I was like Naaman by the Jordan’s brink. There flowed the flood. The old nature said, “Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them and be clean?” Human nature said, “I need to *feel* something: I need to have John Bunyan’s experience. I need to have my mother’s experience. I need to feel a broken heart. I need to groan more bitterly. I need to be kept awake so many more nights and all that sort of thing.”

Suppose I had resisted still? If God’s Grace had not come in and made all that wicked pride of mine give way, I might have been at this hour I know not where, if still living among men. I might have been in Hell, gnawing my tongue to think I should ever have heard a plain Gospel sermon and should have put far from me the Gospel when it was proclaimed—and all because I would not believe what is indisputably true—and would not trust in Him whom no one ever trusted in vain.

This morning I know there are some here in my past condition, in whom the good Spirit will say, “Wash and be clean,” and the soul will sigh, “It seems too good to be true.” But the good Spirit will reply, “Are not My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts?” Unbelief will say, “Your sins are many.” But the good Spirit will answer,

“Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” Then the heart will suggest, “But I have rebelled against You, O God, so long.” And the sweet Spirit of God will whisper, “I have blotted out your sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud your iniquities: Return unto Me, for I am married unto you, says the Lord.”

And I do trust that now, at this very moment, many a heart will say, “I will, then, simply rest my soul’s salvation upon Christ the Son of God who is the only Savior of the lost—I will never from this day on hope to be a self-saved man, nor look to anything but to Him who on the bloody tree endured the wrath of God on the behalf of as many as believe on Him.” Soul, if you do so trust Jesus, as surely as you live you are saved! Go in peace. Not only do I speak these words this morning from these poor lips of clay, but He who was nailed on the tree, whom all Heaven adores, speaks this morning through me—and He says to one, “Daughter, be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven you.” And to another, my Master says, “Son, your sins are forgiven you: take up your bed and walk.”

O forgiven ones, I charge you do it! And as you got out of this house this morning, saved, and full of joy, tell others about it! Never leave off telling about it and live to love Him who has saved you! I saw the other day a picture by Rubens, in which he has painted Mary Magdalene kissing the feet of Christ while still they are gushing with founts of blood on the Cross. It was a strange picture, but I felt if I had been there I would have kissed them, too, though they had been crimson with His gore.

O blessed feet! O blessed Savior! O blessed Father who gave His Son to be so blessed a Savior! O blessed Spirit of the blessed God that led our wicked, proud hearts into obedience and trust in Jesus! Yes, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has begotten us unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. The Lord bless you. Amen.

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

END OF VOLUME 18

O Spirit of God, use these sermons to bring many to a saving knowledge of my Master, Jesus Christ!

A PRESSED MAN YIELDING TO CHRIST NO. 2667

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 25, 1900.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 12, 1882.**

***“Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when He had found him, He said unto him, Do you believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him? And Jesus said unto him, You have both seen Him, and it is He that talks with you. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped Him.”
John 9:35-38.***

LAST Sabbath morning [Sermon #1683, Volume 28—*The Great Cross-Bearer and His Followers*—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>], I spoke to you concerning one who was forced into the King's service. That was Simon, the Cyrenian, who was compelled to bear Christ's Cross. He was not a volunteer, but a pressed man, yet, I think that after he had been forced to bear the Cross, he willingly carried it and I hope that he, afterwards, became a faithful follower of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, strange to say, here is another pressed man, for I do not think that this man, whose eyes had been opened by Christ, had thought of becoming a Believer in the Son of God until the Lord Jesus found him. Before he had reached that point—indeed, before he knew that the Prophet who had opened his eyes was the Son of God—the Pharisees had cast him out of the synagogue so that he was compelled to bear the cross for Christ although he did not, then, fully know Christ and certainly had not believed upon the Son of God. Yet, in his case, also, it appears that he cheerfully took up the cross which had been, at the first, forcibly laid upon him.

It may happen that there are some persons here who are in a similar position—some who have been ridiculed for being Christians even before they are Christians! Some who have been mocked merely because they go to a place of worship, though as yet they have not yielded themselves to Christ. Well, if that is the case with any, seeing that the cross is laid upon their shoulders, I trust that they will not throw it off, but that they will bravely bear it for Christ and freely suffer what, up till now, has seemed to them to be a piece of injustice, for they have been treated as if they were believers in Christ, when really they are not yet on the Lord's side.

This man, then, bearing Christ's Cross in a certain way, was cast out of the synagogue. And then Christ found him and blessed him. Observe,

dear Friend, where Christ began with him, for it will show us where and how the blessing usually enters. The door by which the richest of Heaven's favors must come to us is indicated by our Lord going to that door and opening it. He said to the man, "Do you believe on the Son of God." So that *faith* in the Son of God is the gate of benediction. Faith is that window of agate and gate of carbuncle by which the Divine Light of Jesus' love comes streaming into the soul. This is the way by which God's mercy enters the heart of man and, therefore, the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, begins there. And in all our dealings with the unconverted, it will be wise for us, also, to begin there. That is the place where the decisive battle will have to be fought, for, upon the believing or the not believing on the Son of God, the eternal destiny of each individual will turn! "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life: and he that believes not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides on him."

That wrath abides even now upon him if the life of God is not in him. Let us hammer away at that all-important point of faith in Christ. This is the Thermopylae [narrow pass] of Christian experience. If this pass can be stormed and carried, we can capture the citadel of men's hearts. But if unbelief continues to guard that narrow passage to eternal life and to hold it against the Gospel and its invitations, exhortations, promises and threats, then nothing whatever can be done! So, in this enquiry of our Lord, we have most instructive teaching. His objective, no doubt, was to bless this man by working in him saving faith and, therefore, He said to him, "Do you believe on the Son of God?"

I think our text will help us, first, to speak of *true faith—how it is known*. Secondly, *true faith—how it progresses*. And thirdly, *true faith—how we can promote it*.

I. First, I want to speak concerning TRUE FAITH—the faith that saves—HOW IT IS KNOWN.

First, it is *absolutely essential that it should be faith in the Son of God*. Our blessed Lord knew that this man believed in Him as a Prophet—so might He not have been content with that? No, because to believe in Christ merely as a Prophet is not *saving* faith. It may be a step towards salvation and it may lead up to it, but the faith that is absolutely necessary is that belief in Him as the Son of God. And he who does not believe in the Deity of Christ has not a Savior who can save him! The work of saving a soul is a Divine operation and no one but a Divine Being can accomplish it. It is He who sits upon the Throne of God who says, "Behold, I make all things new!" There cannot be anyone except the Creator who can create—and the Creator must, in every case, be God. To save a soul, there must be a work performed which is analogous to the Resurrection. But, in order to raise the dead, there must be the Presence and Power of God. It is one of those operations which it is not conceivable can be performed by an angel or by any created being. The Highest alone can accomplish it—has He not said of Himself, "I kill and I make alive"? The power of life and death must rest with God alone. Hence, then, the work of salvation needs a Power nothing less than Divine. He who believes in

Christ as a mere man has not believed in a Person who can give him salvation—and Christ cannot accomplish the stupendous task if He is only man, for the Savior must be God!

There is no true and logical standpoint, in reference to the Deity of Christ, except one of two things. Either our Lord was the Son of God, equal with the Father, or else He was an impostor, for He most distinctly claimed that He was the Son of God. In the chapter preceding our text, at the 54th verse, we read that Jesus said to the Jews, “If I honor Myself, My honor is nothing: it is My Father who honors Me; of whom you say, that He is your God.” Then they took up stones to cast at Him because He said that He was the Son of God! And, in this case of the blind man whom He had healed, He took pains to find him that He might communicate to him in private the fact that He was, Himself, the Son of God. He never withdrew His claim to the Deity! If He had only said to the Jews, “No, I am not the Son of God. You are mistaken in supposing that I said I was. The expressions I used are not intended to convey that idea,” then they would not have crucified Him. This was the chief point of their quarrel with Him and I must again say that either He was God, or He willfully misled the people by using words which made them think that He was God.

His words have led millions of Christians, from those days until now, to worship Him as God. And they were perfectly justified, by His utterances, in doing so. And if He meant anything less than that, then He was a deceiver. But He did mean that He was God and it is our joy and glory to rest in Him as being, alike, the Son of Mary and the Son of Jehovah, Himself—“Light of Light, very God of very God”—co-equal and co-eternal with the Father. And here we feel that we can rest for our soul’s salvation! We can lean with our whole weight on One who is, indeed, “mighty to save. Seeing that all power is His and that He is equal with God, He can and He will save all those who put their trust in Him!” Do not any of you, I beseech you, be content with any faith less than that! If you have any sort of faith which does not recognize Christ as God, do with it as the man did with the bank note, when he found that it was bad—he laid it down and ran away from it, for fear anybody should suspect him of being its owner. Put away every kind of confidence that is short of faith in the Son of God and abhor it, for it is a damnable delusion! And may the Lord bring you fully into this blessed state of salvation through believing on the Son of God!

A second point about saving faith is that *it rests upon a knowledge of Him*. This man said to Jesus, “Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him?” He was not one whose notion of faith was that he need not *know* what he believed. The Church of Rome seems to inculcate some kind of implicit faith (or credulity) which can exist apart from knowledge—but how can I believe that which I do not know? Paul puts it thus, “Faith comes by hearing.” You must first *hear and know what it is you are to believe before you can believe it*. Otherwise your faith is vain, like that of the man of whom I have sometimes spoken, who said, “I believe what the church believes.” “But what does the church believe?” It believes what I

believe.” “Then what do you and the church believe?” “Why, we both believe the same thing.”

That is not the kind of believing that can save the soul! It is through the knowledge of Christ that we are saved. To *know* Christ is sometimes said to be analogous to believing in Christ. You must know what it is that you have to believe! A faith that does not know is no faith at all. Read through the Epistles of John and mark with your pencil every time the word, “*know*,” is used. The Apostle makes that word, “*know*,” come in again and again, for a man must know that which he is to believe and hence this man says to Christ, “Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him?”

For my part, I could never be content without unquestioning certainty as to my soul’s salvation. Do you think that is more than a man ought to wish for? Are any of you at ease while you are afraid that you have a mortal disease working within you? Oh, no! You want to know, from a qualified physician, the truth about your case. And if it were whispered in your ear, at this moment, that your house was being broken into or was on fire, would you sit still and not trouble yourself as to whether the report were true or not? Would you not want to go at once and see for yourself? If you knew that you bought an estate, some time ago, but you have since heard that the title to it is a very uncertain one, in fact, in all probability, you will lose all you have paid for it, would you not say, “I ought to have taken care to be certain about the title. And I would not have bought the estate if I had not felt that the deeds relating to it were all right.” Well, then, if you desire certainty about your bodily health, about the safety of your house and about the validity of your title-deeds, can you afford to go without certainty as to your soul’s affairs? No, you cannot. Therefore, rest not till you have it. If you have various questions about your spiritual condition, boldly face those questions and answer them. Never let any questions about your eternal welfare be such that you dare not face them and do not wish to search out the answers to them. Pry to the very bottom of them and, better still, ask the Lord to search you, and know your heart, to try you, and know your thoughts, and to lead you in the way everlasting. And be not content till you can truthfully say, “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him.”

This man, of whom I am speaking, knew that Christ had opened his eyes and, therefore, He must be at *least* a Prophet. He also knew, further, that whatever that Prophet told him must be true, for the Man who had opened his eyes must have been sent by God—and God does not work miracles by liars. He said to himself, “This Man is undoubtedly a faithful person, or God would not employ Him in such a wonderful work as that of opening the eyes of a man who was born blind.” And then he stood perfectly prepared to receive whatever might be spoken by this Prophet of whom he knew something, though he did not know enough to understand what was meant by the Savior when He asked, “Do you believe on the Son of God”? He, therefore, sat as an enquirer at the Savior’s

feet, waiting for something to be told him which should enable him to believe!

You, dear Friend, may not be in exactly the same condition that this man was, but, still, your case may be, in many respects, a parallel one. You say, perhaps, "I wish, above all things in the world, that I could believe in Christ." Do you intend to sit down and try to *make yourself* believe in Him? That would be a very unwise thing because faith is not worked in the soul in that fashion! Suppose it was rumored, at the present moment, that there had been another massacre in Alexandria, and that our troops had been driven out of the city? How would you decide whether the report was to be believed or not? Would you sit down in your pew and say, "I will try to make myself believe it"? Well, you might come, by a process of reasoning, to some sort of conclusion as to whether it was or was not a likely thing, but the mere sensible plan would be to enquire what foundation there was for the report. And if, on going to the War Office, you were informed by someone in authority, "Yes, there has been a very great disaster," well, then, knowing the facts of the case, you could believe. The enquiry at headquarters would be the way to ascertain the truth of the report, and just so is it in connection with believing in Christ. If I am to believe in Him, I ask, with this man, "Who is He?" and until I know who He is, it is idle for me to talk about forcing myself to believe in Him!

Now listen, He in whom you are asked to believe for salvation is, first, of all, Himself God! Then, in Infinite mercy, He came and took upon Himself our nature and dwelt among men. He voluntarily came—being God—but He was also sent of God, appointed and authorized to be God's Ambassador to man. He was, in addition to being sent of God, anointed of God, for the Spirit of God rested upon Him without measure, qualifying Him for His work. The life He led here on earth was unique—there was never another like it—and the imagination of man cannot write the history of another man that shall be at all comparable to the life of Christ! It stands apart in a lone, simple majesty, utterly inimitable, absolutely perfect. Then He died and by that death He forever put away the sin of His people. He took upon Himself the sin which He had never committed. He was numbered with the transgressors and He suffered as if men's transgressions had been His own. He died, "the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God."

And God has accepted those sufferings as a propitiation for all who believe in Him. And now, this is the witness of God concerning Him, that He has raised Him from the dead, and taken Him up to His Throne and made Him to sit there, at His Father's right hand, where, at this moment, He is making intercession for all who come to God by Him. And now, our prayers are accepted through Him—and the infinite blessings which are His, He distributes among us! And He is shortly coming again with sound of trumpet, and attended by myriads of saints and angels. As He ascended from Olivet, in like manner He will also descend to earth again. King of Kings and Lord of Lords shall He be in that day—"And before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them, one from an-

other, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats.” He is God! He still lives! It is the living, reigning Christ whom we preach to you! He lives in Glory and He also lives here by the Presence of His Holy Spirit who is with us and who is to abide with us evermore. And it is upon Him as God Incarnate, as Savior—crucified, risen, and gone into Glory—that you are asked to place your soul’s confidence!

If you would learn this Truth of God more fully, read the four Gospels and the Epistles, and ask the Spirit, who inspired the writers of them, to explain and apply them to you. That is the way to obtain faith! Many a man has been reading in the Bible the story of the Cross, and so he has believed in Jesus. Many another has heard about the Savior, and so has been led to believe in Him. It is the simplest thing in the world to believe upon trustworthy evidence and when we get the evidence of Christ’s life and death manifesting the glory of His Person, the graciousness of His Character and the efficacy of His atoning blood, then are we led to believe in Him! True faith is based upon knowledge of Christ, as it was in this man’s case. Take care, dear Friends, that you always remember that simple but important Truth of God.

And, further, *true faith always expresses itself to the Lord*. This man, when he had believed in Jesus, said, “*Lord, I believe.*” True faith ought also to express itself to men, as Paul puts it, in writing to the Romans, “For with the heart man believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” Or, as the Master Himself puts it, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” Therefore, the confession before men ought not to be neglected in any case, yet I fear, and hope, that there are some pilgrims who steal into Heaven, scarcely known by men to be Christians—at least, not acknowledged as such by open profession. I do not recommend dodging behind the hedges and getting to Heaven along back roads—that is a bad plan—but still, I trust some have managed it, though with much trouble and loss to themselves. But, in every case, everyone who has believed has made the confession of that faith to the Master Himself. He has said to Jesus, as this man did, “*Lord, I believe,*” even though he has added, with another man, “*Help You my unbelief.*” He has said to Jesus, with Thomas, “*My Lord and my God.*” There has been a personal acknowledgment, as we sometimes sing it—

***“My faith looks up to You,
You Lamb of Calvary,
Savior Divine.”***

It is a very vital point about true faith, that it thus recognizes its obligation to speak to *Him* and to acknowledge itself to Him. How sweetly does faith, sometimes, come up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved and acknowledging to Him that she is His and He is hers! She cannot help making this confession—she would be untrue to herself and to her Lord if she did not do so.

In one respect, we are better off than this man was, for we have many Divine promises to help us to believe in Christ. Have you ever noticed, dear Friends, how much we live upon the promises of our fellow men? In buying a small article at a shop, you pay your twopence for it across the

counter, but, the larger the business transaction gets to be, the less there is of metallic currency in connection with it—then you often pay each other in promises. The most common form of a promise is a bank note—and it is worth while to observe how much a bank note is made after the model of God’s promises. How does the wording of this bank note run? It is headed, “Bank of England.” And it begins, “I promise.” You take this note readily enough instead of five golden sovereigns, because you read on it, “I promise to pay the bearer,” and God’s promise is payable to “the bearer.” Whoever has the promise in his possession, whoever has faith enough to lay hold of God’s promise, may read it in this way—“I promise to pay the bearer.”

I remember when I first snatched at one of God’s precious promises. I could hardly hope that I had any right to it, for I felt myself so utterly unworthy, but I snatched it up and ran with it to the Bank of Faith! And as soon as I presented it, I received its full value. God always honors His own promises. Here is one: “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” Go to Him with that gracious message and it shall be fulfilled to you, whoever you are! The note says, “I promise to pay the bearer.” If a janitor takes that note to the Bank of England, he will get the money for it—I mean a janitor in *character* as well as by *trade*, for the declaration on it is, “I promise to pay the bearer.”

What does it now say on the bank note “I promise to pay the bearer on demand.” That is how all God’s promises run—“on demand.” It is worthy of note that in the olden times, when the Lord had made many promises to His people, He added, “I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them,” as though the fulfillment of the promise was delayed until it was asked for! No doubt many of God’s great and precious promises are not realized by you and me because they are not presented to the Lord as we should take a note to the bank to get it cashed. We do not enquire of God as much as we ought. You hear of enquirers going to see the minister—that may be a good thing, but the best sort of enquirers are those I heard before I came up here to preach tonight—when some good earnest souls met down in the lecture hall to enquire of God for a blessing, and to ask Him to help His servant to speak the Word with power.

Now, coming back to this bank note, I daresay you would not mind having a pile of paper of this kind reaching from the floor to the ceiling—then you would say to yourself, “Now I am a rich man.” But you have not a single farthing there, you have only a *promise* “to pay the bearer on demand the sum of five pounds.” “Ah,” you say, “but that promise is good all the world over.” Whose promise is it? Well, it is signed by the chief cashier, but he only signs it, “for the Governor and Company of the Bank of England.” *That* is where the value of the promise lies! And it is our comfort to know that we have a noble name written below all God’s promises, for the Lord Jesus Christ has signed them all in God’s behalf—for the great Governor of Heaven and earth, who has no need of any “company” to be joined with Him, for His sole resources are fully equal to the fulfillment of every promise that He has ever issued!

Now, if we treat men's promises with respect, and pass them from hand to hand as if they were genuine gold, and we constantly do so, shall we not treat God's promises with something more than respect and trust them with implicit confidence? Will any man have the impudence to say, "I have faith in a note signed by the chief cashier of the Bank of England, but cannot trust a promise that is certified by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself?" Shall I consider that bank note to be as good as the money it represents and yet, when I hold in my hand, God's Word, signed, sealed and ratified by the sprinkling of the very blood of His dear Son, shall I dare to say, "I find it hard to believe in that Word"? If I talk so, I shall grieve the people of God and, what is far worse, shall grieve the Lord Himself!

II. Now I turn to the second part of our subject, which is, TRUE FAITH, HOW IT PROGRESSES.

Very often it has a very small beginning. Saving faith does not always come all of a sudden. Some men are saved, as Saul of Tarsus was—they are struck down in the midst of their sins and converted in remarkable and unusual manner. But with many others there is, first, a faint twilight. Then, by-and-by, a little more and, at last, the sun has fully risen upon them. Perhaps you cannot tell when it did actually rise, but you know that it has risen, for there is the light and the brightness of its shining!

In the case of the man of whom I am speaking, *faith began with a preparedness to believe*. His eyes had been opened and he was, thereby, made ready to believe anything that Jesus might tell him. And there is many a man who, looking back upon God's goodness to himself and God's goodness to his father and mother, and God's goodness to gracious people in general—and thinking of the holy and lovely Character of Christ—has, in that way, been prepared to believe when the Truth of God was clearly set before him!

This man went a step further on the right road, for *he desired to believe*. He said, "Who is He, Lord," not, "that I might know about Him, and talk about Him"—but, "that I might believe on Him?" He had a desire to possess true faith! And there are many like he, who desire to believe, but who have not exercised faith in Christ. This is very amazing, but it is true. Of all things in the world, to believe in Christ is one of the most simple, yet that is the reason why many find it so difficult. If it were difficult, it would seem easy to them, but, being easy, it appears difficult. Some of you, dear Friends, when I try to describe how we come to trust in Christ, will twist and turn what I say, even if I make it "as plain as a pikestaff." You think, "Oh, he must mean something very different from what he says!" You really cannot get this idea into your heads—that you have only to depend on Christ, to trust Him and then you are saved, for "he that believes on the Son has everlasting life."

Whenever we use a metaphor, or figure, or illustration to try to explain the simplicity of faith, straightway somebody finds a difficulty even in that. When I have been trying to catch a sinner, I find that he has as many hiding places as there are days in the year. I have stopped up one

after another, and I have said to him, “No, salvation only comes through believing.” “Yes, Sir, I know, but”—and down he runs into another hole! When I have dug him out of that, and fancied I will surely catch him, he says, “Oh, yes, we are to trust the Savior, but”—and again he is off. Somehow, men seem very ingenious in trying to find out reasons why they should not be saved! And all their foolish ingenuity seems to be employed in attempting to escape from this blessed Divine simplicity—“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” May God the Holy Spirit lead them to believe in Him! He must lead them, for no man can see Christ until his eyes are Divinely opened. We may put the Truth as plainly as we can, and preach it so that we think we cannot be misunderstood, but men *will* misunderstand us, even those who desire to believe in Christ, until the Holy Spirit works effectually in them!

This man went still further on the right road, for he not only desired to believe, but *he made enquiry in order that he might believe*. I put it to you very simply, just now, with regard to making enquiries concerning a certain piece of news. Well, this man did the same. He said to the Master, “Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him?” If sinners would only make enquiries about the Savior, they would soon trust in Him. You will find, as a rule, that the people who rail at the New Testament, have never read it. If they would but read it, their foolishness might soon come to an end and be followed by a blessed faith in Christ. But, instead of doing so, they read what some objection-manufacturer has said about the Bible, instead of going to the Book, itself, and seeing what it really teaches. If I were very thirsty, I do not think that I would abstain from going to a well because somebody told me that it contained bad water—but I would go and see, and taste for myself. And when a soul gets very thirsty, if it is wise, it goes to the Word for itself. I advise you to do that, dear Friends. “O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man who trusts in Him.”

When this man had made his enquiry and received Christ’s answer, *he soon became decided*. He said, “Lord, I believe.” I like that simple, clear acknowledgement of faith. So often, when we are conversing with an enquirer, he says, “Yes, Sir. I hope I believe.” Oh, dear, is that all you can say? “Well, I trust I believe”—and so faith is surrounded by fog—“I hope I believe. I trust I believe.” Man, don’t you know whether you believe or not? You may know it! One thing I know, you have no business to go to sleep till you know, once and for all, for, if you are not a Believer, you are an unbeliever! There is no middle state between the two. And if you are an unbeliever, you are “condemned already,” because you have not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God! This matter of believing ought never to be left in doubt at all, but it should be definitely settled, so that you can say with this man, “Lord, I believe.”

Then, further, *he acted as a Believer*, for, “he worshipped Him.” This proves how his faith had grown. I should like to ask you, who are the people of God, when you are happiest. I think you will agree with what I am going to say, but if you do not, it will still be just as true to me. My happiest moments are when I am worshipping God, really adoring the

Lord Jesus Christ, and having fellowship with the ever-blessed Spirit. In that worship, I forget the cares of the Church and everything else. And, to me, it is the nearest approach to what it will be in Heaven, where, day without night, they offer perpetual adoration unto Him that sits upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb. Therefore, what a memorable moment it was for this man when he worshipped Christ!

Now, if Christ was not God, that man was an idolater, a man-worshipper. And you and I, instead of being regarded as very excellent people, by those who call themselves, "Unitarian Brethren," should be condemned as idolaters! If Christ was not God, we are not Christians! We are deceived dupes, we are idolaters as bad as the heathen whom we now pity. It is making a man into a god if Christ is not God. But, blessed be His holy name, He *is* God, and we feel that it is the supreme delight of our being to worship Him! We cannot veil our face with our wings, for we have none, but we do veil them with His own robe of righteousness whenever we approach Him. We cannot cover our feet with our wings, as the angels do, but we do take His blood and His righteousness both as a covering for our feet, and as wings with which we fly up to Him. And though as yet we have no crowns to cast at His dear feet, yet, if we have any honor, any good repute, any Grace, anything that is comely, anything that is honest, we lay it all at His feet and cry, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Your name give glory, for Your mercy and for Your truth's sake."

III. Now I come to the third point, which is this, TRUE FAITH—HOW TO PROMOTE IT.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters, there are many of you who are constantly looking out for souls and trying to bring them to Christ. You have, here, an example of what you may do in endeavoring to lead them to exercise faith in Jesus.

First, if you have any choice as to those to whom you go, *seek out the oppressed*. You are to go, as far as you can, "into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." But if you may specially look for some more than others, seek out the sick, the sad, the weary, the poor, the broken-down ones and especially such as have been put out of the synagogue. When our missionaries have gone among the Brahmins in India, they have had a few converts, but the most blessing has been given among the poor people who have no high caste of which they are proud. When the Gospel was taken to them, they gladly received it! The Gospel worker will be wise if, instead of shunning those whom even nominally religious people put away, he looks after them, first. They are likely soil for the good Seed of the Kingdom to grow in and bring forth fruit. Our Lord Jesus Christ, at Sychar, did not go to some goodly matron who was an ornament to her sex. You know where He found the woman who became His disciple and missionary, and you know what kind of woman she was and, to this day, He delights to go about, as Whitefield used to say, "sweeping up the devil's castaways." Those whom nobody else wants and nobody else will have—our blessed Lord and Master delights to receive. Therefore, look after those out-of-the-way sinners!

I like that expression, those out-of-the-way Sinners, because our Lord Jesus Christ is the High Priest “who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way.” Out-of-the-way sinners are the sort He came to save, therefore, look out for them, you who would follow the example of the great Soul-Winner.

Then, next, when you come to close quarters with them, *ask them questions*, as Christ did. He said to this man, “Do you believe on the Son of God.” Put the enquiry pointedly and personally. Here am I, up in the pulpit, firing the Gospel gun, and the shot flies where God directs it. But you, downstairs, who love the Lord, can, as it were, hold a pistol close to the sinner’s head! Take them separately, one by one, and make them “stand and deliver.” Put the question as our Lord did, “Do you believe?” “See, Friend,” you can say, “the minister has been preaching about faith. ‘Do you believe?’” This is what nine people out of ten need—somebody to come and make a personal application of the Truth of God to them. They are like soldiers out upon the battlefield. They lie there, wounded, bleeding, dying. Close by, there is all that is needed to bind up their wounds and plenty of it! Then, why do they lie there in agony? They need personal attention and it is your business, as an army surgeon, to go and put on the splint and bind up the wounds. Oh, that we had multitudes who would do this, and that all God’s people were constantly looking out for opportunities of making a personal application of the Truth to those who hear it! “Do you believe?” said the Lord Jesus to this man, and by that question He held him fast. That is the way to win souls—begin with a personal question!

Then, *be ready to answer enquiries*. This is what our Lord Himself did when He revealed Himself to this man. Tell them all you know and if you cannot tell them all they need to know, try to bring them to somebody more advanced in spiritual things than you, yourself, are, so that, with prayer, patience and wise instruction, *he* may lead them to Christ.

Next, *pray to the Lord Jesus Christ to reveal Himself to them*, for that is the way faith comes. We cannot speak of Christ as He should be spoken of, but when He reveals Himself, then the sinners see Him. All the portraits of a beauty never touch the heart like one glance from her eyes—and all the portraits of Christ that were ever painted by His most admiring disciples, never make such an impression on the heart of man as when once He says, as He said to this man, “You have both seen Him, and it is He that talks with you.” None but Christ Himself can preach Christ to the fullest. He must reveal Himself, or the Spirit must reveal Him, or else men do not see Him.

Finally, *glorify Christ by your own personal testimony*. Remember that wondrous intercessory prayer of our Lord, in which He said, “Neither pray I for these, alone, but for them, also, which shall believe on Me through their word.” It was so kind, yet just like He, not to say, “through My Word,” though it *is* His Word that we are to proclaim. But we get it into our hearts and so appropriate it that when we utter it, we speak out of our own heart, and soul, and then it becomes our word, too, and so

sinner believe on Christ through our word. Go on speaking your word, that is, Christ's Word spoken by you, for this is how to win souls for Him!

Now, in closing, I want to begin again, and give you another little sermon altogether, only I shall not be able to preach it to you, but just to give you the heads of it and leave it with you.

The first head is, *when you are believing, mind that you believe in Jesus Himself.* "Do you believe in the Son of God?" or is it somebody else in whom you are believing? Is it merely what others say about Christ that you believe? Is it your own opinion of Christ? Or is it really the Son of God upon whom you are believing? When you are believing, believe in Jesus Himself.

Next, *when you are enquiring, enquire of Jesus Himself.* This is a beautiful thing, to my mind. Here is a man asking Christ about Christ—asking Jesus, "Who is He?" and, all the while, speaking to the very Person about whom he was enquiring! He did not know it was Jesus, yet he had gone to the very Fountainhead! Now, perhaps some of you have made enquiries of Christian people and you have read the Bible, and prayed, and yet you cannot find Jesus. Then go direct to Him, by faith, and say, "Lord, show me Yourself." That is the way to learn of Him. Have I a book of which I cannot make heads or tail as I read it? If I knew where the author lived, I would call on him and say, "Dear Sir, will you kindly tell me what you mean by this expression? I cannot understand it." That is the way to find anything out—go to the fountainhead. So, always go to Christ and, when you are enquiring, enquire of Christ Himself.

Next, *when you are seeking Christ, ask Christ to reveal Himself to you,* for there is nobody who can reveal Christ as Christ can reveal Himself by His blessed Spirit.

And, next, *when you are confessing your faith, confess it to Christ Himself.* Say, as this man did, "Lord, I believe." Say to your minister, or to your mother, or to your friends, "I believe," but take care, above all the rest, that you say, "Lord, I believe."

And, lastly, *when you are worshipping, worship Christ Himself.* "He worshipped HIM" and no one else. Take care that your reverence and adoration are not given, in any degree, to the church, or to any person in it, or to any priest, or minister, or anything created or made. Worship God, and God in Christ Jesus. And the Lord bless you, Beloved, for His name's sake! Amen.

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

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY
TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

SIGHT FOR THOSE WHO SEE NOT NO. 1798

A SERMON DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 14, 1884,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“And Jesus said, For judgment I have come into this world,
that they which see not might see and that
they which see might be made blind.”
John 9:39.*

THE great Day of Judgment is not as yet. God, in infinite long-suffering, waits to be gracious, giving men space wherein to repent and to be reconciled to Him. Jesus has come into the world for judgment, but not for that last and eternally unchangeable judgment which awaits us all. That hour and that advent will arrive—we have the declaration of God’s Word for it. Read in Matthew 25—“When the Son of Man shall come in His glory and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His Glory: and before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them, one from another, as a shepherd divides His sheep from the goats.” There is no question as to this sure fact—even if many more centuries should pass away, the dread assize will be held in due season.

“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness.” He is full of tenderness and long-suffering and, therefore, He tarries, but the vision will come, it will not tarry. Settle this in your minds and live as in the presence of that august tribunal. Though the Day of Judgment is not at this hour, yet our Lord Jesus is now carrying on a form of judgment in the world. “His fan is in His hand and He will thoroughly purge His floor.” He sits as a refiner separating ever and anon his silver from the dross. His Cross has revealed the thoughts of many hearts and His Gospel is everywhere—acting as a discoverer, as a separator and as a test by which men may judge themselves, if they will. It is a very happy circumstance when a man is willing to accept the Lord’s judgment, day by day, permitting the Law of God, itself, to judge him, before the Lawgiver ascends to the tribunal.

Happy are those people toward whom a present judgment is being exercised, of whom Paul says, “But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.” Saints are now judged by a fatherly *discipline*, that they may not be judged, hereafter, by a judicial condemnation. Our Lord’s great design in coming into the world is the salvation of men. “God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world, through Him, might be saved.” But, in order to that salvation, it is necessary that men should know the truth about themselves and should take up a truthful position before God—for God will not endure a lie—and neither will He save men upon

false grounds. He will deal with all His creatures according to His Truth. If He condemns them, it will be because equity requires it. And if He saves them, it will be because He has found a way by which mercy and truth are met together.

So, then, everywhere throughout the world, wherever Christ comes—comes by His Gospel and the consequences of it—a judgment is going on. Men are set before the Judgment Seat of their Savior—they are tested, tried, made manifest and declared. Light no sooner comes into the world than it begins to judge the darkness. Scarcely had it been known to be darkness if the light had not revealed the contrast. Where the Gospel comes, some hearts receive it at once and are judged to be “honest and good ground”—men who are willing to accept the Gospel come to the Light of God that their deeds may be made manifest that they are worked in God. Other hearts at once *hate* the Truth, for they are the children of darkness and, therefore, “they love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil.” You see, then, how without its being the main intention of Christ’s coming into the world, it yet becomes a secondary effect and, so far, an incidental purpose of His coming that His very *appearance* among the sons of men should judge them!

In this glass they see their own countenances and discover their spots. By this plummet line they test their own uprightness and see how far they lean towards evil. Under the sign of the Gospel, the Lord has set up a public weigh-house. Do you not see the great scales?—they are correct to a hair! Come here and test yourselves. Even in this banqueting house of love, Truth marks her own and sets her brand on counterfeits! God has a fire of trial in Zion and a furnace of test in Jerusalem. At this hour I pray that the Gospel may have a dividing effect in this house. Observe with care that *wherever Jesus Christ comes, the most decided effects follow*. “I have come that they which see not might see and that they which see might be made blind.” Neither to the right nor to the wrong is Christ indifferent. Whoever you may be, if you hear the Gospel at any time, it *must* have some effect upon you. It will either be to your soul, “a savor of life unto life,” or else, “a savor of death unto death.” It will be antidote or poison—curing or killing—softening the conscience or searing it. It will either make you see, or else, because you *fancy* that you see, its very brightness will make you blind, like Saul of Tarsus, who cried, “I could not see for the glory of that light.”

You cannot be indifferent to the Gospel if you become a hearer of it. “I have come,” said Christ—that fact none of you can escape—“for judgment I have come” and that judgment must take place in your mind and conscience whether you will it or not! This coming and judgment have a wonderfully marked and decided effect. It is not that of a *little* improvement or of *slight* alteration—it is the turning of things upside down so that, “they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind.” It is a very violent change—from light to darkness or darkness to light! In either case it is an absolute reversal of your condition.

Now, the Gospel will do just that for you! If you live without it, it will make you die. If you feel that you are dead without it, it will make you live. “He has put down the mighty from their seats and exalted them of

low degree. He has filled the hungry with good things and the rich He has sent away empty." Learn, therefore, that there will always be some effect upon the human mind wherever Christ comes—and that this effect will be a very decided one—changing all their conditions as much as if the laws of Nature were reversed! The Lord's approach to a soul will lift it into the Light of God more and more gloriously—or else it will plunge it into deeper darkness, deeper responsibility, deeper guilt and, consequently, deeper woe!

Well may we justify that faithful preacher of the Word who, in the middle of his sermon, suddenly stopped and cried, "Woe is me! What am I doing? I am preaching Christ to you and, while I hope some of you are receiving Him, and so I am leading you toward Heaven, many others of you are rejecting Him—and thus I am increasing your responsibility and your guilt! Thus I am doing evil instead of good to you! Woe is me!" God help His poor servant—I have often felt the sweet preaching of the Gospel to be bitter work. I do not wonder that dark thoughts come over the earnest preacher! I wish his hearers would partake with him in his anxieties. May we unite in deep concern, tonight—I will pray for God's blessing upon every one of you—and you pray earnestly that no word of mine may be unprofitable to you. When preacher and hearer draw the same way, the chariot wheels move to music—and that music is salvation! Come, Spirit of the living God, and make it so!

Now, I want to take you immediately to the text and I shall dwell upon two points of it if there should be time. If not, I shall keep to only one. The first is enough to begin with—CHRIST HAS COME THAT THOSE WHO SEE NOT MAY SEE.

It is a very wonderful thing about the Gospel that it is meant for people who think themselves most unsuited for it and most undeserving of it—it is a sight for those who see not! An anxious friend gave me, the other day, a description of himself which was enough to make a man stand aghast to hear it. With many sighs and tears, he described to me the condition of a man lost by nature and by practice—and unable to help himself in the least degree. When he had completed his story—I let him finish it and touch it up with a few extra strokes of black—I took him by the hand and said, "I am sure that you are one of those whom Christ came into the world to save. You have given me the most accurate description, possible, of one of God's elect when awakened to see his state by nature before the Most Holy God. You are one of those for whom the Gospel was intended."

I spoke boldly, for I felt that I was only stating the Truth of God. Since Jesus Christ came into the world to open men's eyes, I know that He did not come to open the eyes of some of those around me, for they have bright eyes which smile on me, while I am now speaking, and seem to say—"No oculist is needed here!" I cast my eyes all round the place and I see nothing for the great Opener-of-Eyes to do till I pause at yonder pew, for there sits a blind man. There are one or two here, tonight, whose natural eyes have, for many years, been sealed in darkness—and I say of them, if Jesus Christ has come to open anybody's eyes, He has come to open the eyes of the blind! It must be so! Infirmity and disability are necessary preparations for the receipt of the blessing of sight.

Suppose I heard that Jesus had come to make lame men leap like a rabbit? Well, I should look round and say that He did not come for that young girl—she can skip like a gazelle and run like a fawn! He did not come for that young man—I saw him on his bicycle just now, flying over the ground as swiftly as a swallow skims the stream! Neither did the Healer of the Lame come for that strong Brother over there, to whom a quick, long walk is quite a pleasure. But just now there limped down yonder aisle a lame man on his crutches. Did you not hear his heavy movement? Well, if Jesus Christ came to heal lameness, that is the kind of person that He had His eyes upon! When I hear of charity breakfasts being distributed, I never imagine, for a moment, that the select assembly that will be gathered to discuss a meal of porridge and bread will consist of members of the Houses of Lords and Commons, or of the royal family!

I do not suppose that one of those honorable confraternities will be present at a festival with beggars unless they should take a fancy to be lookers-on. If I went to a charity breakfast and saw some of the peerage there with basins and spoons, instead of stars and garters, I would say, “Go away! You are not the people that ought to be here! You have no right at this entertainment. The richer and the more respectable you are, the less right you have to be sitting at a meal that was meant for the poorest of the poor.” Now turn the parable around. If you are blinded in your *spiritual* sight, Christ came to open your eyes! If you are lame so that you cannot run to Him, Christ came that He might restore you! If you are as poor as spiritual poverty can make you. No, poorer than that—as poor as *sin* can make you—and if you are as unable to help yourselves as the dead in the grave, then I remember that great Truth of God, “When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.”

It sounds curious, does it not? But it is so. “Christ died for our sins,” not for our virtues! It is not your efficiencies, but your *deficiencies* which entitle you to the Lord Jesus! It is not your wealth, but your need! It is not what you have, but what you have not! It is not what you can boast of, but what you mourn over, that qualifies you to receive the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ! He came on purpose that those that see not might see. O blind eyes, I have good news for you! O souls that sit in darkness and in the valley of the shadow of death, my feet are beautiful, tonight, for I bring you glad tidings of exceeding joy—light for the blind, gladness for the despairing, Divine Grace for the guilty!

Now I want you to consider the blind man of whom we were reading in the narrative just now as a *sort of model blind man*—the kind of blind man that Jesus Christ delights to look upon—and to whom He rejoices to give sight. This blind man *knew that he was blind*. He never had a doubt about that. He had never seen a ray of light and yet he believed that he was blind—not quite so easy a matter as some of you may think, for I have met with thousands of blind men who laugh at the idea of sight because they have had no experience of it! And they refuse to believe more than they can understand or feel. This sightless beggar had to be told that there was such a thing as sight, but being so told, he believed it and all his later experience went to confirm the unhappy fact. Under a full persuasion that it

was so, he had taken up the proper position for a poor, blind man—he sat by the wayside and begged for alms.

Now, the man whom Christ delights to bless is the man who *knows* his right place and is willing to occupy it. He does not conceal his blindness and talk as if he carried a telescope about with him and communed all night with the stars. Many of you unconverted people are a deal too high—you will have to come down a good many notches before you will be in your true places! You are so excellent, are you not? And so intelligent, and so humble, and so well-meaning and so everything that you ought to be! To you, salvation will never come! The spirit of peace will never dwell in a nest which reeks of pride! In your own false judgment you are within an inch of being perfect, whereas the Lord knows that you are not half that distance from Hell if His justice were to be let loose upon you! You dream fine dreams in your fond conceit of yourselves, fancying that you have kept the Law of God from your youth up and that you are abundantly religious, excellent, admirable—and all that you ought to be! As long as you think thus highly of yourselves, the blessing is hindered and kept away. You are not of the kind that Jesus came to bless.

He said, Himself, “I came not to call the righteous, but *sinner*s to repentance.” Perhaps someone here is saying, “I do not understand it. I cannot get at this Gospel—I scarcely know my own condition. I am unhappy, I know. I am not right, I know, but I cannot describe myself, or see myself aright. As to this faith of which I hear so much and this atoning blood which seems so mighty to cleanse, I seem as if I cannot perceive it or comprehend it. Alas, I am so blind!” You speak the truth, my dear Friend, and therein you are like the blind man in the Gospel! I pray that as Jesus healed *him*, so He will heal *you*—and I pray with strong confidence, too, for my Lord has certain fixed ways—and when He meets with certain cases, He acts after the same method with them. Jesus is not arbitrary, but He has a way of procedure from which He does not deviate, so that, when He meets such a case as yours, He does the same with each instance of it, to the praise and glory of His name! Take up a blind beggar’s position, tonight, and sit down and cry for light and healing and you shall certainly have them.

This blind man not only believed that he was blind and knew it, but *he had a sincere desire to be enlightened*. It was no grief to him that Jesus had come that he might see. It was an intense joy to hear that Jesus had opened the eyes of other blind men and though he may have feared that his case was one quite out of the catalog—for since the world began, it was not heard that any man had opened the eyes of one that was *born* blind—yet he was pleased to find that Jesus Christ had stopped and looked upon him and was placing clay upon his eyes! He felt a gladness and an alacrity about his heart when he was bid to go to Siloam and wash—his whole manhood went with the Savior’s act and deed—he gave himself up to the surgery of the Christ with the full consent of his being.

Now, are you hungering after Christ? Oh, Soul, if you know your need of Him and have a strong desire after Him, the heavenly work is begun! If there is within your spirit a burning longing to be reconciled to God by the death of His Son, your cure is already half-worked! Some of you have writ-

ten me letters, lately, which show the actions of your heart—these are blind movements, enough, but they all grope after light! Poor souls that you are, what hope I have for you! Specially for him who, with broken heart, has begged our prayers these many months and yet has not come out to light and liberty! I am so glad to see the strength, vehemence and agony of your desires. Your unbelief grieves me, but your eagerness charms me. Would God you would trust my Lord Jesus Christ and rest in Him! Still, I am glad to think that you cannot rest without Him. I am glad that you cannot be quiet till He quiets you. No pillow will ever ease your head but my Lord's bosom. No hand but His can ever staunch your bleeding wounds. I am glad that it is so, for such a sinner as you are is well described by Hart—

**“A sinner is a sacred thing;
The Holy Spirit has made Him so.”**

The Spirit of God has set apart the blind soul to be a monument of the Illuminator's skill! He has made the lost soul to be the choice standing place whereon Christ may set His feet and display all the splendor of His love!

This man is, again, a model to every other blind man because he was very obedient. As soon as the Lord said to him, “Go, wash,” he went. There was no question with him about Siloam—he had no Abana or Pharpar which he preferred to that pool. He was fully submissive. He stood still, you know, and let the Master put the clay on his eyes. It did not look like an operation that could do him any good, but he believed that Jesus was a Prophet, and so he waited and let Him do whatever He pleased with him. How glad I am when I can see a poor soul offering a full surrender to Jesus! Some of you heard, last Monday night, about the sweetness of yielding yourselves up to Jesus—how I wish you might now feel it! You will be a great deal more passive than active, in the matter of your conversion. He will give you quickness of foot *after* He has once given you life—but, in the inception of life, the first thing is just to acknowledge your *death* and to be willing to receive life altogether from Him in His own way!

That is a good word in the Prophet, “Oh Lord, you are the Potter and we are the clay.” Now, what can the clay do to help the potter? Nothing! It must only be *pliable*—it must *yield* to his hands. The clay must not be stiff, hard and unwilling to be molded, or it will be set aside. O be submissive to the saving hands! When you are brought into such a state of heart that you are willing to be *anything* or *nothing* so that you may be saved, dear Soul, you are near unto the kingdom! If you can say, “I would give my life to be saved, or if the Lord refuses anything at my hands, I will gladly consent to be *nothing* if He will but save me,” then you are on the doorstep of Grace! I would so completely yield myself up to Christ as to feel what He would have me feel and nothing more—to be what He would have me be—and to do what He would have me do and nothing beyond.

If you are thus submissive, I tell you to take heart of hope! The Spirit of God is at work with you! You are very near to Christ. Believe on Him! Trust in Him and live, for He has come on purpose that they that see not might see! Catch at that sacred purpose of amazing Grace and let your

despair fly away. This is our first remark—this blind man becomes our model.

And now, notice next that *when he sees, this kind of man acknowledges that he does see*. He has been so thoroughly convinced of his blindness that, when he gets his sight, he acknowledges it with glad surprise. To him, the newly-given light is such a gift that he is overjoyed with it, and gladly cries, “Now I see!” Some people do not know whether they are converted or not. I hope that they are saved, but such people are not generally of very much use. We have to spend our time and strength in taking care of them, comforting them and enabling them to rise above sheer despair. But the man that has been totally blind and has *known* it—when he gets sight, he is equally sure that he sees! You cannot make such a man doubt the greatness and truthfulness of the change! He comes out and says, “One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see!” I delight in clear, sharp-cut conversions! I do not condemn those dear friends who come into light by slow degrees. Far, far, far from it! I delight in them, too! But still, for usefulness in testimony and for decision of character, there is nothing like a conversion which is like life from the dead—and like turning from darkness to light—and from the power of Satan unto God!

The old-fashioned convert is the man for me! He knows something and holds fast by what he knows! His is experimental knowledge and you cannot beat it out of him! I like to think of some of you utterly blind people who cannot help yourselves at all, for, when you receive the Light of God, you will know it and you will not hesitate to come out and say so! In your case the poor preacher will not be robbed of his wages, as he often is when he saves a soul by God’s Grace but never hears of it. Neither will the Gospel be deprived of its witnesses, nor the Church be despoiled of her helpers, nor the Lord be robbed of the revenue of Glory which is His due! We expect from you blind folks grand testimonies for Jesus when once the Lord causes you to see!

Again, when the blind man’s eyes were opened, *he began to defend the Man that opened his eyes*. He did it well, too. He said, “Herein is a marvelous thing, that you know not from where He is, and yet He has opened my eyes.” On he went with arguments which confounded scribe and Pharisee! When the Lord takes a big blind sinner, washes him and opens his eyes, then the man will not have Christ spoken against! He will speak up for His Lord and Master—he cannot help it. You will not find him dumb, as some professors are. Why, some of your genteel Christians do not speak for Christ above once every six months—and then it would be better for you to have held your tongues, for you speak so half-heartedly! Here is a man with an open mouth and he speaks right from his heart under the guidance of the Spirit of God. He is not ashamed to acknowledge what the Lord has done for him. We need many recruits of this sort.

The Church at the present day needs men and women who are so thoroughly and certainly converted that when they speak about Christ, they speak positively and with a power which none can deny or resist! I think I hear a poor, darkened, desolate one crying out, “Oh, Sir, if the Lord were to save me, I would not be ashamed to acknowledge it! If He should ever bring me in among His people, I will tell them all about it! I will tell the

very devils in Hell what Sovereign Grace has done for me!” Oh, my poor Brother, you are Christ’s man! *You* are the kind of man He delights to bless! You poor, devil-dragged sinners, who are almost at your wits’ ends and would even take away your own lives if it were not a most horrible sin—you are the very ones upon whom the Lord, in mercy, looks tonight, for He said, Himself, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me because He has anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to heal the broken-hearted; to preach deliverance to the captives and recover sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.”

Only trust yourselves in His dear hands and believe that He can, and that He will save you, and you shall be saved! And then I know that you will acknowledge His name, defend His Truth, glory in His Cross and live to His praise. Those who see not shall be made to see—and then the Lord Jesus shall be the Lord of their hearts, the Master of their lives and the Beloved of their souls!

The best thing about this man was that when his eyes were opened, *he wished to know more*—and when Jesus Christ spoke to him, saying, “Do you believe on the Son of God?” He asked, “Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him?” When He found that the Son of God was the same Divine One who had opened his eyes, then we read that at once he worshipped Him. Notice that at the end of the 38th verse—“And he worshipped Him.” He was no Unitarian! In the man who spoke with him, he saw the Son of God, and he reverently adored Him. If our Lord Jesus had not been God, He would have told the man to rise and He would have torn His garments in horror at the bare idea of receiving Divine worship—instead of which, our Lord instanced this as a proof that the man’s eyes were opened and immediately said that He had come for that very purpose—that those that did not see might see.

Friends, if you have not seen Jesus of Nazareth to be “very God of very God,” you have seen *nothing*! You *cannot* be right in the rest unless you think rightly of *Him*. Until you get to know that Jesus is both Lord and Christ, exalted on high to give repentance and forgiveness of sin, you still need that there should fall from your eyes, as it were, scales—for the eternal Light of God has not come to you. He that once receives the true Light from God will know the Lord Jesus, not as a delegated God, or a glorified man, but as God over all, blessed forever! He will have a God to save him and nobody else, for who could save us but the Almighty? I would not trust the tenth part of my soul with 10,000 Gabriels! And I could not repose it anywhere but in Him that is able to save to the uttermost—even that same God without whom was not anything made that was made.

Thus I have shown you how this model blind man is the very man to whom the Lord Jesus will give sight because the results that follow are glorifying to Christ. Are you such a person? Then be comforted!

But *how is it that such blind men come clearly to see?* The reason is Sovereign Grace, but still there are other reasons. First, there is no conceit in them to hinder Christ. It is not our *littleness* that hinders Christ—it is our *bigness*. It is not our weakness that hinders Christ—it is our strength. It is not our darkness that hinders Christ—it is our supposed

light that holds back His hands. It is easier to save us from our sins than from our righteousnesses! Our self-righteousness is that hideous boa constrictor which seems to coil itself round and round our spirit and to crush out of us all the life that would receive the Gospel of the Grace of God. He that thinks that he knows, will never learn. He that is blind and thinks that he sees, will remain contented in the darkness all his life. Now, dear Friends, if you are in the state that you *know* that you are in the dark—a darkness that may be felt. If it seems to cling to you, so that you cannot get rid of it. If you seem unable, even, to obtain a ray of light, then you are just in the right state to receive the eternal Light from the Lord Jesus Christ!

The next reason is that such people as this always refuse to speculate. They want certainties. When a man feels his own blindness and spiritual death, if you discuss before him the fine new nothings of modern theology, he says, "I do not want them! They are of no consequence to me—there is no comfort in them for a lost soul." A poor thief was converted some little time ago and he was taken to hear a certain preacher who is exceedingly broad in his views. When the reclaimed thief came out, he said to a friend that took him, "If what that man said was true, it would be a fine thing for me, for I could have my full swing and yet get off easy. But I know that it is a lie and, therefore, I do not want to have anything more to do with him or his doctrine. A sinner like I deserves to be damned forever and it is no use for anybody to tell me the contrary! Therefore I need a Christ that can save me from eternal damnation. If this man's Christ only saves men from the little bit of damnation that he has preached, he is no good to me."

That was a very sensible observation. We, also, need a Savior from eternal damnation and we do not care for those little saviors from a little Hell which are nowadays so much cried up. We have a lot of sham sinners about and we have a number of ministers who preach a sham savior, a sham salvation—and the sham sinners like to have it so. But if Christ once deals with you—pulls you down to the last course and digs your foundations up—then you will want a Christ that will begin with you upon no terms but those of Free Grace! And you will want a power that will work the whole miracle of salvation for you from beginning to end! If you are, yourselves, utterly without strength, that makes you reachable by the strength of Grace! When a man gives up his pretty speculations and just sticks to the old teaching from the Divine Word, he wants a great Savior to save him from a great Hell, for he feels himself to be one who has been a great sinner and greatly deserves the infinite wrath of God! If your salvation should be too big for you, that will be a great deal better than getting one that will be too small for you. But, if you think that the salvation of Jesus is too great for you, it shows that you are not the man for whom it is meant. Our fear is that you are one of those that see but will be made blind. If you feel your blindness and cry out to God about it, you are the man for whom the sight-giving Savior died.

Again, people who are thoroughly blind are the kind of people who are glad to lean on God. A man that can see a little does not need to borrow guidance from outside. He says, "No, no! I do not need it." Take a homely illustration from myself—I used to be very backward in using spectacles,

for some time, because I could *almost* see without them, and I did not wish to be an old gentleman too soon. But now that I cannot read my notes at all without wearing spectacles, I put them on without a moment's hesitation—and I do not care whether you think me old or not! So when a man comes to feel thoroughly guilty, he does not mind depending upon God! If you sinners think that you can do a little without God, or can do with just a little help from God, why, then, you will keep away from the Lord Jesus. But when you come to this—"I will perish if Christ is not everything to me"—why, then you will have Him, for He never refused a soul that came to Him in that style!

You may have heard the story of the Negro slave and his master who were both under conviction of sin at the same time. Almost the next evening the slave found joy and peace through believing—but his master was months under conviction. So he said to his slave, one day, "Sam, you know we were both pricked to the heart at that meeting and here are you, rejoicing in Christ, and I am still doubting and despairing. What can be the reason of it?" The slave said, "Why, you see, Massa, Jesus Christ come along and bring a fine robe of glorious righteousness, and say to Sambo, 'Here is a robe for you!' I look at myself and see Sam all rags from head to foot, and I take the robe, and puts it on directly, so glad to have it! Jesus say same thing to Massa, but Massa say, 'My coat is very respectable. I think I can make it last a little longer. Massa patch up the hole in the elbow and mend the skirt a little, and he go on with it. Massa's coat too good. If his coat were all in rags, like Sam's, he would not wait, but he would, this very day, take the glorious robe of righteousness.'"

That is the whole truth of the matter. Some of you are not poor enough to be made rich by Christ! A man said to me the other day, "Sir, I despair of myself." "Give me your hand," I said. "You are on the right road, but I want you to go a little further. I want you to feel that you are too great a fool even to despair of yourself!" When you cry, "I cannot feel my own folly as I should," then I think your folly will be ended. I like to hear a man cry, "I feel unhappy because I cannot feel. I am grieved to think that I cannot grieve. I am in an agony because I cannot get into an agony." You are getting right, my Brother! You are the sort of man that God will bless. Now look away from yourself, agony and all, and just trust in Jesus Christ, who is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him! Admit your blindness and you shall find the Light of God come streaming into your eyes! Because you are content and willing to lean wholly upon God, the Lord will guide you into peace and joy. What a mercy it is when we are brought to our last resort and are compelled to hide in Jesus because we have no other shelter!—

***" 'Tis perfect poverty alone
That sets the soul at large.
While we can call one mite our own,
We get no full discharge.
But let our debts be what they may,
However great or small,
As soon as we have nought to pay,
Our Lord forgives us all."***

Once more, our Lord Jesus Christ delights to work in those who are thoroughly blind in order to give them sight—it is high pleasure—His royal recreation! I know that a true man is never so glad as when he has helped those who need help. The plague and worry of this London life, to some of us, is that so many apply to us for help who ought never to be helped at all except by the policeman and the jailer. They cringe, fawn and make up lying stories. And when we say, “We will call upon you to see if it is true,” they ask in mighty indignation, “Do you think I am a liar? Don’t you believe what I say?” I have had to answer, “No, I do not believe a word of it, or you would gladly give your address that we might enquire into your statements.” They do not want to be enquired into—that is their horror—for it spoils their game. They want to get money without work and they thirst for an opportunity to get drunk at other people’s expense! A true man does not like to work among cants and cheats of this kind—it makes him sick and angry. Yet many a man has been well pleased to go down to the worst place in “horrible London” and to do good to those who are really poor and helpless. One does not like giving to impostors, but where there is real need, the generous heart is pleased to afford aid.

Now, you poor Soul. You are no imposter. Yours is real need. You can say, “A poor beggar? Ah, that I am! Does the Lord want to enquire about *me*? Search me, O Lord! Try me and know my heart. I know that You will see no righteousness in me. There is nothing in me upon which I can depend. I am, indeed, a helpless miserable wretch unless Your infinite mercy comes to me.” Jesus Christ rejoices to work among such as you are! He likes blessing the truly needy! What a joy there is in that great heart of His when He can save souls on the borders of Hell—when He can stretch out His hand and snatch them like brands from the fire! He knows that you will love Him as much as that woman did who had much forgiven and, therefore, stood and washed His feet with her tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head! He takes delight in you that cannot take any delight in yourselves. To you that are dried up and barren, He will bring living water! He will open rivers in high places for the thirsty ones and fountains in the midst of the desert for them that faint.

I have felt a wonderful satisfaction in feeding a poor half-starved dog that had no master and nothing to eat. How he has looked up with pleasure in my face when he has been fed to the full! Depend upon it, the Lord Jesus Christ will take delight in feeding a poor hungry sinner. You feel like a poor dog, do you not? Then Jesus cares for you! He does not care about kings and princes and those great people whose grandeur dazzles beholders, but He cares about poor sinners! If you are nothing, Christ loves you and He will be everything to you. If you will but come to Him, just as you are, with no plea of any kind except your urgent need and your dread of the wrath of God, you may come and be sure of a welcome!

One said to me this week, “I am afraid to come to God, for I believe that I am only driven to Him by the mean motive of fear.” “Ah,” I replied, “it was the devil who told you that because in the 11th of Hebrews, among the first of the great heroes of faith we read that Noah, being moved with fear, built an ark for the saving of his house.” Fear is *not* a mean motive—it is a very proper motive for a guilty man to feel! Where else can such poor sin-

ners as we are begin, except with selfish fear? Do not judge yourself about that! The prodigal went home because he was hungry, yet his father did not refuse him admittance. As to its being mean to fear, it would be meaner, still, to defy your God! You ought not to say, "It is too mean a motive." Why, what but a mean motive can be expected from such a mean wretch as you are?

A boy has been rebelling against his father and he has left his home in high passion, swearing that he will never go back. His father sends him a letter, and says, "Return. Everything is forgiven—only confess your fault and I will restore you to the family and treat you as lovingly as ever." The boy reads this letter and he says, "It is very kind of my father; I think I will go home." But a wicked companion says, "Then you are going to eat humble pie. It will be very mean of you after all you have said about fighting this matter through. Are you going to knuckle under to your father?" Why, it is the very devil tempting the boy, is it not? And so it was the devil who whispered to my friend that it would be mean to turn to the Lord through fear. Fear is a *blessed* thing—"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom"—even slavish fear of God is a great deal better thing than presumption!

Oh, you poor blind one, look to Christ and live! I was about to say, "You dead ones, come!" And I *do* say it, for God says it—"Awake, you that sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light." "What is the use of talking thus to dead people?" asks one. My dear Friends, I do not suppose that it would be of any use for *you* to do so, because, you see, you were never sent on such an errand! But *I* am as much sent to preach to the dry bones, tonight, as Ezekiel was when he stood in the valley and said, "You dry bones, hear the Word of the Lord." In the name of the eternal God, I say, "You guilty sinners, fly to Christ, and live!" Come along with you, you who are the very worst in your own esteem—you who are all but in Hell! The Lord says, "Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God, and there is none else." He will not cast you away, but He will receive you now! God grant that you may come, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 9.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—257, 602, 603.**

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PERSONAL AND EFFECTUAL CALLING NO. 2359

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, MAY 6, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 26, 1888.**

***"He calls His own sheep by name, and leads them out."
John 10:3.***

IF YOU were near an Eastern village, you would probably see a large square, walled about with stones rolled roughly one upon another. You would also see a gate and, perhaps, more than one entrance into this enclosure. The square is empty through the day, for the flocks have gone into the neighboring pastures. But, towards evening, at certain seasons of the year, all the shepherds bring their flocks to these enclosures and there they are shut in for the night all together. One man has but a few sheep and another man has only a few sheep, while the more wealthy owner has larger flocks, but all are enclosed in what I will call the parish fold.

Now the morning comes. The sun is up early and so is the shepherd. The porter is at the door and he recognizes the various shepherders as they come down to the sheepfold to fetch their flocks. One shepherd comes and he takes away his little company. Another shepherd arrives and he leads away a larger number. In each case, the shepherd has no trouble in separating his own sheep from the rest in the fold. You and I would think it well near impossible—and we certainly would never be able to divide those differing flocks—but the shepherd does it easily as soon as ever he comes to the door of the fold. There are certain of his sheep that love him much. They are accustomed to keep very near his hand and often get the sweetest bits of grass, and they leap up at the very sound of his footsteps! They recognize his person and they come straightway to the gate and are ready, at once, to go out to the pastures with him.

Some others, I am afraid the larger part of the flocks, are not quite so eager, but the shepherd speaks and they recognize his voice—and when he proceeds to *name* the sheep, one by one, for this the Eastern shepherd literally does, and when he begins to call them out by name, you can see the fleecy creatures recognizing the tones of his voice and responding to his call as readily as dogs with us know their master's voice and their own names! The sheep, thus called, push their way from among the different flocks and they come out and follow their shepherd, who leads them to the pastures that he has provided or discovered for them.

Now, that is exactly what the Good Shepherd does with His sheep. He comes to the door of the fold. Here we are, to-night, like so many sheep in the enclosure. I cannot tell who among you may be Christ's sheep, or who may not be His. My voice has no power to separate you from your companions unless Christ shall use my voice and make it the echo of His own. I may speak as long as I will, apart from that Great Shepherd of the sheep, but I can make no distinction between His chosen ones and the rest of mankind. But if the Lord, Himself, shall come and call, His chosen shall detect the gracious voice. And when, one by one, He calls them to Himself by what theologians term "effectual calling"—(and it is a good expression, for it *is* effectual calling), then the sheep hear His voice and they rise up at once and follow Him, for they know His voice, and He leads them out.

I am going to speak upon this text, viewing it from three points.

I. The first point is that JESUS, THE GOOD SHEPHERD, OFTEN COMES INTO CONTACT WITH HIS SHEEP.

He has bought them, He has paid the full price of their redemption. He has laid down His life for His sheep, so that they are effectually ransomed. He has gone up to Heaven to plead for them and to present before His Father the memorials of His death. Yet He is still with them, according to His Word, "Lo, I am with you always." He has not left His sheep here, below, simply to the care of undershepherds, much less are they in charge of hirelings. He has His under-shepherds, but He is with them and He still comes to His flock. He still calls His sheep by name. He still leads them out. Let us think of the various ways in which the Good Shepherd still comes into contact with His sheep.

He came into contact with us, first, *in our conversion*. He had come to us, before, by the many pleadings of His Spirit and the many entreaties of His love in the days of our youth, and in years gone by, but we did not, then, know His voice. Our ears were not open, then, and we did not hear His call. He went after us into the wilderness, He sought us on the mountain steeps, but it was, for a time, a weary seeking and little came of it. Then, on a day never to be forgotten, He came with His effectual Grace! I say He came. Mother had come, teacher had come, pastor had come, books had come, sermons had come, but, last of all, He, Himself, came! Do you remember His coming? I can never forget the spot where He first met with me! The tones of His voice when, at last, He won my heart, are ringing as clearly in my ears, tonight, as though they were the marriage bells of yesterday! I can never forget how that call sounded, "Look! Look! Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth!" Then I knew His voice and responded to it, through His own rich Grace, and I was His and He was mine! It needed that He should do the wooing for Himself and should unveil His own dear face—and then my heart was won and my spirit yielded itself entirely to Him! You remember how it happened to you, also, do you not? Think of it with joy and gratitude.

Since then, the Lord Jesus has often come to us *in guidance*. Many of us can say that He has guided us through all the pathway of life and, at

certain times, and at difficult turns of the road, He has come to us with such consoling counsel, and with such abounding compassion that we have blessed Him, and said, “He is truly near to me. How hallowed is this place! It is none other than the House of God and the very gate of Heaven.” There are some few saints who could not tell you when Christ is *not* with them because He is *always* with them—they never lose His company. I wish that I could be one of their number, yet, I might almost claim that position, for it is a joy to me to be able to say that, habitually, I do realize the Presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. I have said more to Him than to any other man. I have spent more time with Him than with any other that I have ever heard of—and my heart more joyously goes out to Him than to anyone beneath the sun!

You have, perhaps, seen the rooks on the plowed land—all day going from field to field—following the man with the plow. Where do they live? Where are their nests? Wait till near the going down of the sun and you shall see. Now they all mount with many a caw and with hoarse converse with each other, and after they have hurried to and fro a while, away they go where those old trees that stand around the ancient baronial hall supply them with their house and home! Now, such is Christ to some of us. We are necessarily abroad through the day, looking after this or that work which needs attention, but the moment we are at liberty, we know where our nest is! It is with the hearts of many of us as it is with the needle in the mariner’s compass. Do you see it? It is pointing to the pole. If you will, you may put your finger on that needle and turn it round. It points East now—yes, you turn it round till it points South. But take your finger off, it is back at once to its true pole! So is it with our hearts. Our hearts are with Him on His Throne, always magnetized and polarized for Christ, and we shall never rest until we get back to Him! He is in our first thoughts in the morning and our last meditations at night! We can truly say—

***“I think of You, my God, by night,
And talk of You by day.
Your love my treasure and delight
Your Truth my strength sustain.
The day is dark, the night is long,
Humblest with thoughts of Thee,
And dull to me the sweetest song,
Unless its theme You be.”***

And, Beloved, you know how near the Lord is in the way of *sympathy*. It is no exaggeration where we read, “In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His Presence saved them.” You have sometimes been in sharp sickness and have had “cruel pains,” as men call them. Or you have, perhaps, known the sharper pangs of poverty, or possibly, though I hope it is not so, some of you know what it is to be deserted by your friends in the hour of your greatest need, and have to stand alone amid the pitiless blasts when none seem willing to afford you shelter. Oh, but we never fully know Christ till such a time as that! We never realize the sweetness of His sympathetic companionship till He stands by us

and we can say with Paul, “At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me and strengthened me.” Yes, He may be a long way from the healthy and the strong sheep, but the Good Shepherd is always near the sickly and the weak! And when the heart is breaking, Christ always comes. He knew what heart-break meant, and desertion, and agony, and bloody sweat, so He can sympathize with us in our sorrows—and there is no hand so soft as that which was nailed to the Cross! Jesus is quick as a mother to feel all the sufferings of His people.

I may also add that our Lord is always with us *in intercession*. This Divine foresight takes the practical shape of pleading for us about troubles that are *yet to come*. You see Peter. Satan had desired to have him, that he might sift him as wheat. And Satan had not, then, gone any farther than *desire*. His malice is very quick, but still, at that time, he had only *desired* to have Peter. Yet, when the devil had that desire, Christ had gone a long way beyond him—“But I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not.” So quickly does the careful love of Christ outstrip all our necessities, that even the dark wings of the arch-enemy cannot fly so fast as the interceding love of our Arch-Friend, our chief Helper, our Best-Beloved! He is always with you, watching to see not only what you need, but what you *will* need—not only noting what are your dangers, but what are *to be* your dangers in the future! Before Satan has plucked the arrow from his quiver, and long before he has fitted it to the bow, Christ has already prepared that shield of interceding love that shall guard you from his attacks! O sheep of Christ, can there be happier news for you than that the Good Shepherd is always with you? He has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” Vineyard of the Lord, hear this, and make a song of it—“I, the Lord, do keep it. I will water it every moment lest any hurt it. I will keep it night and day.” Here is a song for the vineyard of red wine—let all the saints sing it in their hearts tonight!

So much, then, upon that first point, that Jesus often comes into contact with His sheep.

II. Secondly, this also is clear from the text, that Jesus CALLS HIS SHEEP BY NAME—“He calls His own sheep by name.” You Thomas, you Mary, and Martha, and Lazarus, and you Matthew, the publican, yes, and you, Mary of Magdala—He calls you all by name! What does this imply?

The first thing that it means is, *intimate knowledge*. Beloved Friends, I used to have such a trustworthy memory that I not only knew the nearly 6,000 members of this Church by face, which I am still able to do, but I knew them all by *name*—and it was a rare thing for me to ever forget or make a mistake, save when certain ladies changed their names and I had not been made aware of it, but even then I soon rectified the error. But now, sometimes, I find myself unable to remember all your names—perhaps it is because I do not see you often. Our Lord knows all the myriads of His redeemed by name. There is no failure of memory with Him and He *always* sees them! His eye and His heart are towards each one of

His people both night and day—"He calls His own sheep by name." I do not wish so much to preach upon this passage as I want you to put it into your mouth, or rather, to *taste* it with your spiritual palate, so as to get the flavor and sweetness of it. "I know My sheep," says the Good Shepherd! He knows not only who they are, but *what* they are, and *where* they are! "He calls His own sheep by name." This implies His intimate knowledge of them.

Does it not signify, next, that if He calls us by our name, He is in the habit of speaking to us with *exceeding plainness*? He can so speak to us that we shall know what He means. His Word is dark and mysterious to outsiders, but when He makes us to be His sheep, He speaks very plainly, calling us by name. It is only when persons are on very familiar terms with one another that they address each other by their Christian name. We are, all of us, Mr. Somebody, or the Reverend Mr. Somebody, or Dr. Somebody, or Squire Somebody—but when we are at home, we are, none of us, esquires! We are Richard, or Mary. Mother never thinks of calling us, "Mr." and Father does not say, "Miss," but they call us by our name! So the Lord Jesus Christ calls us by name to show how plainly He speaks with us and also to let us see what gracious familiarity there is between the Head and the members of His mystical body, between the Bridegroom and His spouse, between the Well-beloved and His Church which is so dear to His heart!

"He calls His own sheep by name." I think this also means *intense personality*. When anything is directed to you by name, it comes to you as your own with great definiteness. There is a story recorded of Mr. Rowland Hill which I have not seen printed in a book until just lately. It bears on its very face the tokens of truth, for it is just what he would be likely to do. He was accustomed, at family prayer, to pray for his servants by name, asking for such a blessing for Sarah, and such for Jane, and such for John, if his man-servant was present. There was a new cook engaged—her name was one which, in those days, was more common than it is now—it was, "Biddy." So, at prayer time, Mr. Hill prayed that God would bless Sarah, and the others, one by one, and would the Lord be pleased to save Biddy and give her a new heart and a right spirit!

After prayer was over and the servants had gone away, there was a gentle knock at the study door and the good minister said, "Come in, what is it?" "Please, Mr. Hill, I am very glad to be in your service and I hope I shall find it a comfortable place, but would you kindly not mention my name in prayer? I have not been accustomed to it and I do not think I could bear it." "All right, Biddy," he said. "I try never to do anything that is displeasing. I am sorry you should be annoyed and I must not mention your name in prayer again." She went to her work and the next time of family prayer Mr. Hill prayed in the following manner. After having pleaded for blessings in general, He said, "Now, Lord, be pleased to bless Sarah, and convert her, and lead her in Your way." And so he mentioned the rest of them and then he added, "Lord, I may not ask You to bless Biddy because she earnestly requests that she may not be men-

tioned to You in prayer.” The prayer was over and there was, again, a knock at the door. “Come in,” said Mr. Hill. It was that cook, again. “Please, Mr. Hill,” she said, “I didn’t want you to pray like that. I didn’t want to be left out in prayer, Sir. Please, you may mention my name if you like.” “Just so, Biddy,” he said, “I will do it and God will bless you, I do not doubt.”

Well now, there is a good deal in that way of personally mentioning people in prayer, because they then feel that you are praying for them—and when the Lord Jesus Christ calls His own sheep by name, they distinctly recognize that He speaks to them! Have not some of you known what it is to be spoken to, from this pulpit, by the Lord Jesus Christ, quite as distinctly as if I had mentioned your name and address? You know you have! This is the way in which some of you were first brought to Christ. It was not merely to sinners, but to *you* as a sinner! It was not merely to all men, but to *you* as distinctly singled out, that the Gospel of Jesus Christ came with power! To show the personality of His Gospel, He calls men by name.

This call also teaches us the *wonderful suitability* of Christ’s Words to our needs. There will often be, in a text of Scripture, the very message that is needed by a poor wearied spirit. How often, too, will the Lord prepare the mind of a hearer till the preacher’s words shall be as suitable as if he had been told all about the unknown person! Friends sometimes write to me and say, “We are going to bring a friend of such and such a sort to the Tabernacle.” They let me know in the hope that I may make my message suitable. Do not let me know whom you bring! I do not want to know because I cannot suit my sermon to your friend. Bring your friend, with your own hearty and earnest prayer, but without my knowing anything about it! God will speak through His servant what He wishes to have said—and it will come with greater force and power than any thoughtful love can suggest. Oh, may God speak to some of you tonight! May you be called out by your name and feel in your heart, “Jesus calls me, and I will go to Him at once, and put my trust in Him”!

III. Now I am going to close with this third remark, THAT THIS CALL BY NAME COMES AT SPECIAL TIMES. I will mention four special seasons when the Lord’s personal call is heard.

First, it comes at *conversion*. I have, perhaps, already said enough about that. There is a call to sinners by name—the Gospel preached in general is all very well, but it is the Gospel preached in *particular* that saves men. If you have come in here, tonight, just to hear as one of a crowd, you will probably get nothing by coming. But when you sit here, saying, “Lord, speak to me! Lord help me to apply every word to my own case! Help me to lay hold of every promise that is quoted!”—that is the way to gain the blessing! They say that the times are improving and that business is looking up, but when I meet with a friend who is in a certain trade, he says, “Business is not looking up *my* way. I do not find that I have any more customers than I used to have, or that I can get the slightest increase of profit on my goods.” Just so, Friends, you do not

profit by the general blessing, do you? You need a *particular* blessing to come to your own soul, for, in this respect, as it is with temporal things, so it is with eternal things—we need the blessing for ourselves.

Now, in business we have to check this kind of selfishness, but in spiritual things we may excite it, for we need men to “covet earnestly the best gifts.” One good old man said, “The Lord’s people are a covetous people.” “Oh!” said one, “they ought to get rid of all covetousness.” “Yes,” he answered, “except that *spiritual covetousness* to which we are exhorted by Paul, when he says, ‘Covet earnestly the best gifts.’” That is quite true! We should covet earnestly the best things, even heavenly things. Seek these things for yourselves and rest not satisfied until you have them! May the Lord by conversion call you by name, that you may have the first of these best gifts!

I have known Him, in the second place, call some by name to *fresh service*. Did He not say, “Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them”? Sometimes there is a Sunday School teacher needed. There sits a young man in this place, tonight, who ought to be in the Sunday school. I shall not call him by name. Perhaps he would be offended if I did so, but I hope that the Lord will call him. There sits a Christian woman, here, who should be engaged in the school, or who ought to take a tract district. Possibly there is a Christian woman here, of years and knowledge, who ought to be teaching a Bible class, or conducting a mothers’ meeting. Perhaps I speak to some large-hearted man, with considerable ability, who spends all his time on his business and does no work for Christ. He ought to have a Mission Hall and support it, himself—he has money enough and he has talent enough. Some of you have never had an idea of what you yet can do for the Lord—and the only way to find it out is to try to do something for the Savior! There are too many “retiring” people among us who are so retiring as to get to be lazy! Come out of your hiding place, my dear Friend! No, I will not mention your name, though I know some of this sort—and I have their names almost on my tongue, but I will not mention them. But I do pray the Master to mention your names so that you may consecrate your substance, your time, your ability, to the work of the Lord somewhere in this great perishing London, or somewhere in this great nation where so many perish for lack of knowledge! “He calls His own sheep by name, and leads them out” into wider spheres, into larger enterprises, into fuller consecration to His service! May He now do that with many of you, my Brothers and Sisters!

Sometimes the Lord calls His saints by name and leads them out into *higher attainments* in the Divine Life. Come, you who have been always halting, doubting, fearing—it need not be so with you! The Lord invites your *faith* to full assurance, your *love* to enthusiasm, your *prayer* to wrestling, your *desire* to expectation and your present *imperfect service* for Him to the complete dedication of yourself—body, soul and spirit—to His cause! We have not yet attained all we may reach, dear Friends. There is a something yet beyond and to this the Master calls us. “But I

cannot rise to it," says one. "With man, it is impossible, but with God all things are possible." You may be strong, useful, joyful—you need not always be weak, careless and sorrowful! Oh, that there might come into your soul, by the breath of the Divine Spirit, an increase of spiritual life till you shall have it more abundantly and shall bless and praise the name of the Lord!

But, lastly, there will soon come another call to some of us—and we would be very, very slow to shrink from it. I mean the call *Home to Heaven*. I know not to whom it may come this week, or next, but stand you all ready for it. It will come by the messenger appointed by Him who loves you and who longs to have you where He is, that you may behold His Glory! Perhaps the summons may come to you as it came to Christiana, with this token—"an arrow sharpened with love, let easily into her heart." She knew what the token meant and she welcomed her Lord's call! It will come in different ways. One aged Christian, who was dying of cancer, met another who was greatly suffering from another painful disease. "Well, well, my Brother," she said, "we must all have something to die of, you know, or we should live here forever. Do not let us quarrel with the messenger the Lord sends." He will send the proper messenger in His own good time and in the right way.

Rowland Hill, whom I have already quoted, was sometimes very odd in his expressions. He went, when he was very old, to see a godly woman at Everton who was nearly ninety, and he told her that when she got Home, he hoped she would mention him up there, for he had almost begun to think that they had forgotten him—he had grown so old that he would be glad to be going Home to his dear Lord and to see those blessed Johns—John, the beloved disciple and John Bunyan, and some other Johns that he mentioned. It was not long before he went home, too, and he almost overtook her before she could deliver his message! Well, whether we live to be as old as he, or die in middle life, or in the early days of our conversion, it does not matter. The Lord will send the messenger and the messenger will know us—and we shall hear the voice that says, "Arise and come away." I would have you standing with your wings outstretched, as the cherubim abode over the Mercy Seat, with their wings outspread, as if ready to die at the Divine bidding!

Are you afraid? Afraid of going Home, dear child? Are you so fond of boarding school that you have no desire for the holidays? Are you afraid, dear Heart, afraid of the wedding day, and of the Bridegroom, and of the everlasting joy? Soldier, are you afraid of the victory and the crown? No, no! Instead of fearing, let us begin to anticipate the bliss of being "forever with the Lord." God help us to joy and rejoice, wearing, today, by faith, the chaplet which we shall soon wear in reality, striking even now the harp strings with the joyous fingers which, before long, shall sweep the chords throughout eternity, as we sing, "Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah, unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, to Him be Glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."

We will close our service by singing this verse—

***“Forever with the Lord! Amen!
So let it be!
Life from the dead is in that word,
‘Tis immortality!”***

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
*John 10:1-31.***

Verse 1. *Verily, verily, I say unto you.* When our Divine Lord and Master was about to speak with deep solemnity, He usually commenced His discourse by repeating the word, “verily”—“Verily verily, I say unto you.” The authority of Christ is the basis of our religion. He does not quote from others, but He says, “Verily, verily, *I say unto you.*” Jesus is Incarnate Wisdom, He is God, Himself, and what He says is Infallibly true and is to be accepted without question.

1. *He that enters not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.* Those who professed to be the shepherds of the sheep, but did not come according to previous Revelation by the way of the Old Testament types and prophecies, were nothing better than thieves and robbers. They could have no design in palming themselves off upon the people except to steal from them and to do them harm.

2, 3. *But he that enters in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter opens.* John the Baptist was, so to speak, the porter who recognized the Christ and opened the door to Him. John said, concerning Jesus, when the Spirit abode upon Him, “I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.”

3. *And the sheep hear his voice.* His chosen ones, those whom the Father had given Him, the peculiar people—“the sheep”—at once recognized the Presence of the Shepherd when they heard His voice.

3, 4. *And he calls his own sheep by name, and leads them out. And when he puts forth his own sheep, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him.* “He goes before them.” There is never an act prescribed by Christ for His followers but He first performs it, Himself—“He goes before them.” Other professed leaders drove the flock before them. The Jewish teachers laid heavy burdens upon men and grievous to be borne, which they, themselves, did not touch with one of their fingers. It is the distinguishing mark of the Good Shepherd that, “when He puts forth His own sheep, He goes before them.” You are not bidden to do, as a servant, what the Master would not do. Even if it is the menial occupation of washing the saints’ feet, He, Himself has done it—you are to lay down your life for the Brethren, for Jesus, Himself, has done that—“He goes before them, and the sheep follow him.”

4. *For they know His voice.* There is an instinct, a God-given instinct, in the elect of God, by which they know Christ’s voice. When once the Spirit of God has changed their natures, they have an open ear for the Words of Jesus—“the sheep follow Him: for they know His voice.”

5. *And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.* Others will follow the stranger, but the sheep will not do so. We read of some, that they were full of such deceivableness that they would, if it were possible, deceive the very elect, but there is an, “if it were possible.” The Lord’s true sheep cannot, will not long be deceived—“they know not the voice of strangers...”

6. *This parable spoke Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which He spoke unto them.* We need not only to listen to Christ’s Words, but we need an interpreter to explain them to us. Jesus is needed to make His people understand His own teaching. He—

**“Is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain.”**

7. *Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you.* Still, you see, Jesus speaks with the same authority! He is an intense dogmatist. He leans not upon the arguments of human reason, nor upon the precedents of former teachers. Again He said just this, “Verily, verily, I say unto you”—

7. *I am the Door of the sheep.* Is He both Shepherd and Door? Yes, and many other figures meet in Him—all creation cannot set Him forth completely. We may multiply all the types and symbols and analogies of Nature, and yet not fully picture our Lord Jesus Christ. Dr. Watts truly wrote—

**“Nature, to make His beauties known,
Must mingle colors not her own.”**

We must know the Creator as well as the created if we would set forth Christ to the fullest.

8. *All that ever came before Me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them.* Some people did hear them—one pretended messiah and another led different companies of deluded followers after them, “but the sheep did not hear them.” The Prophetess Anna, the holy waiting Simeon, the guileless Nathanael—these did not hear them—their ears had not yet caught the mystic tone which belongs only to the true Shepherd’s voice—“The sheep did not hear them.”

9. *I am the Door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.* Is Christ the Door of salvation to you? Some teach that Baptism is the door. Others talk of a thousand things as being doors of salvation, but it is Christ, alone, who is the Door, and you must enter into salvation by simple trustful faith in Him. What does a sheep do in order to enter the fold? Does it perform any tricks? No, it simply goes in by the doorway. Poor wandering sheep, do the same, for Jesus says, “By Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture.”

10. *The thief comes not but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.* You who have eternal life may have more of it! You may be spiritually stronger, more vigorous, more clear of eye, more happy of heart, more active in service. Life is a blessing, but *abundant life* is a greater

blessing! We need not merely to breathe, to live, as I saw one about an hour ago. He had life, but too little life even to speak—we need to have much life, that we may enjoy it, and may use it for the glory of God! Christ has come that we might have life more abundantly—may we all make use of His coming to that end!

11-13. *I am the Good Shepherd: the Good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the Shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep, and flees: and the wolf catches them, and scatters the sheep. The hireling flees because he is an hireling, and cares not for the sheep.* How many there are of whom we have reason to fear that they must be hirelings because, when they see false doctrine and error abroad, they do not oppose it! They are willing to put up with *anything* for the sake of peace and quiet. They flee as soon as they see the wolf, but he most copies his Master who will not flee on any terms. Certainly he will not flee when wolves are about, for is he not set for the defense of the sheep, that he may chase the wolf away, even though he gets to himself many a scratch and many a wound? Our Master never fled from the wolves. He might have done so—our Good Shepherd might have gone back to Heaven and escaped Gethsemane, the gruel scourges and the wounds upon the tree—but that was not His course of action. The sheep were His own and, therefore, it was a joy to Him to interpose Himself between them and the destroyer, and He did so.

14-16. *I am the Good Shepherd and know My sheep, and am known of Mine. As the Father knows Me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down My life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold. Not yet brought in, still wandering away on the barren hills. Them also I must bring.* “I must,” says Jesus, and, as men say, “must is for the king.” There is a Divine necessity laid upon Christ our Savior! He must save the people, the sheep whom His Father gave Him—“them also I must bring.” Oh, wondrous love that holds even the Omnipotent Savior in bonds and puts Him under the sacred constraint of this mighty, “must”—“them also I must bring.”

16. *And they shall hear My voice.* How like a king, Jesus talks! It is the Royal Shepherd who says, “They shall hear My voice.” But suppose they will not hear it? “They shall hear My voice.” But suppose they stop their ears against the Gospel. “They shall hear My voice,” and Christ’s, “shall,” is always backed by Omnipotence!

16-18. *And there shall be one fold, and one Shepherd. Therefore does My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again. No man takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This Commandment have I received of My Father.* Herein lay much of the effect of the death of Christ, that it was voluntary, that He had power to lay down His life, the right to lay it down and the right to take it again. When any ordinary man dies, he only pays “the debt of nature.” If he were even to die for his friend, he would simply pay a little earlier that debt which he must ultimately pay!

But the Christ was Immortal and He needed not to die except that He had put Himself under Covenant bonds to suffer for His sheep.

19-26. *There was a division, therefore, again among the Jews for these sayings. And many of them said, He has a devil, and is mad, why do you listen to Him? Others said, These are not the words of Him that has a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind? And it was at Jerusalem, the feast of the dedication, and it was winter. And Jesus walked in the Temple in Solomon's porch. Then came the Jews round about Him and said unto Him, How long will You make us to doubt? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly. Jesus answered them, I told you, and you believed not: the works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me. But you believe not because you are not of My sheep, as I said unto you.* This was a brave utterance of our Lord. Those who are Christ's chosen and redeemed people, in due time come to believe in Him, but He does not say to the Jews, "You are not My sheep because you do not believe." He tells them the same Truth of God in another way, "Your not believing is a proof that you are not My sheep."

27-31. *My sheep hear My voice and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them to Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are One. Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him.* These are the ultimate arguments of unbelief—stones! There is no sense in stones, no reason in violence, yet ungodly men, when they have nothing else to use, throw stones at the Teacher of the Truth of God! Is this generous? Is this wise? If you do not believe the testimony, at least leave the Testifier alone! Yet it is not in the nature of men to do so. Their stones are always ready when they are unable to answer the Christ. "Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him." They had done it previously when He said unto them, "Before Abraham was, I Am." But as He escaped their malice, then, so did He at this time.

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THE DOOR

NO. 2752

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, NOVEMBER 10, 1901.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 15, 1879.

*"I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved,
and will go in and out, and find pasture."
John 10:9.*

How very condescendingly the Lord Jesus Christ sets Himself forth! The noblest figures of speech are not too lofty to describe His merits. If we could speak with the tongues of poets and of angels, we could not adequately represent His loveliness and though the writers of the Scriptures, Inspired by the Holy Spirit, have used language which exceeds all other in majesty and beauty, even *they* are not able to tell all the excellence of the Glory of Christ Jesus our Lord.

Yet, beloved Friends, when He speaks of Himself, He is pleased to use no lofty imagery, no far-fetched metaphors—He talks of Himself one day as water, and another day as bread—and here He deigns to call Himself a door. The illustration is exceedingly simple! Who is there that will not understand it? He means that as by passing through a door we enter into a house, so by passing through Christ Jesus, by faith, we enter into eternal life, enter into the true Church and ultimately shall enter into Heaven!

"I am the door." This metaphor is not only simple, but it is wonderfully commonplace. The dealers in profundities will not like this expression. The gentlemen who must have something new—something very striking—will hardly admire this kind of talk but then, our Lord does not court their admiration. His objective is not to win the applause of the wise and the poetical, but to win the souls of the poor and the needy, to bring them to eternal life—so He uses what many call a child's figure, a commonplace figure, "I am the door."

He has selected this emblem, I should think, partly that it may often come before our notice. You will not go out of this place without seeing a door! You will not get into your own house without seeing a door and when you are inside, you will not get into your parlor without seeing a door. And when you go up to bed, you must pass through a door. When you rise, tomorrow morning, and start to go out to work, you will have to open a door—probably two doors—and when you reach your work, there

is pretty sure to be another door to be entered. Doors meet your gaze almost everywhere, so our Lord Jesus Christ seems to say to you, "I will meet you wherever you are. Anywhere and everywhere, I will speak with you and plead with you. I will make the door of every room in your house and the door of every cupboard, too, preach a little sermon to you, as you shall be reminded by it that 'I am the door.'" I am sure our Lord Jesus Christ does not want His ministers to deliver magnificent orations, spread-eagle sermons, with long and elaborate sentences in them. He wants them to just come and talk as He talked, in all simplicity, so that the very poorest and most illiterate of their hearers may understand their meaning, embrace the Truths of God they proclaim and find everlasting life in Him of whom they speak. So I shall try to do at this time, keeping the style of my discourse congruous with the text.

We will begin by noticing first, the *door*. Secondly, *the users of it*. "By Me if any man enters in." And, thirdly, the *privileges of each of these users*. "He shall be saved, and will go in and out, and find pasture."

I. First, then, concerning THE DOOR.

"I am the door," says Jesus, and the first thought that strikes us is, *the necessity of it*. Here is the house of mercy and, inside, there is washing for the filthy, healing for the sick, food for the hungry, clothing for the naked. But suppose there had been no door to the house—what use would it have been to us? Suppose there had been only windows, through which we could look in and see the provision prepared there? And suppose that we could hear the songs of those who were permitted to partake of it, but there was no door by which we could enter in? All the mercy of God would have only been a tantalizing of our hunger in such a case as that. The house of mercy, without a door, would have been a house of misery to us! Look at this picture, if your eyes can perceive it—the city that lies foursquare, that mighty city, whose pinnacles tower on high so loftily that the height is as great as the breadth, and the breadth is the same as the length. Her very foundations are of precious stones and her twelve 12 gates are priceless pearls! Can your eyes gaze, even for a moment, on that brilliance that outshines the sun? And can you hear the sound of harpers harping with their harps within that city whose streets are of pure gold?

But suppose there was no door there and that our spirits had to go flying with awful beating of weary wing, round, and round, and round that solid wall, but never finding a gate where we could enter? What hope would there be for a soul shut out from the city of the perfect, the home of the blessed, because there was no door of entrance? Yet there would not have been any door if it had not been for Christ! Our sins had, as it were, walled up God and shut Him in—and walled us up and shut us out! There would have been for us no going in to God, nor any coming out from God to us, had it not been for Christ, the Mediator through whom we draw near to God because, in Him, God has drawn near to us! See, then, the necessity for this door and, blessed be His holy name, see

how Christ meets this necessity. We needed a door by which we can get to God—and Jesus says, “I am the door.”

Next, observe *the singularity of it*. “I am *the* door.” Is there no other entrance, then, into the Divine Mercy? Is there no other entrance into the true Church? Is there no other entrance into the eternal blessedness of Heaven except by Him? No, there is no other, for He says, “I am *the* door. If anyone enters by Me, he shall be saved.” But suppose a man will not enter by this door—may he not climb up some other way? If he should attempt to do so, he would be a thief and a robber—and God would know how to deal with him! He may think himself a bold and cunning man, and a man to be praised, for he has tried to enter into eternal life and glory by a way of his own, but God calls him a thief and a robber, and out he must go to the prison where such evildoers abound!

No, there is only one door. You may search the whole realm of Nature and you shall never discover another. Not by self-sufficiency, nor self-righteousness, nor priests, nor rites and ceremonies—not by anything of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man, can you obtain admission there—

**“Could our zeal no respite know,
Could our tears forever flow”—**

“there is no other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” Believe in Jesus! Put your trust in Him and you are saved! But, unless you come to Him in that way, there is only one sentence for you—“He that believes not shall be damned.” There is no hope of salvation by any other means. Our Lord Jesus Christ has Himself said, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believes not shall be damned.” So that there is singularity in the way by which God has supplied our necessity and, therefore, Christ said, “I am *the* door.”

But, to my mind, the chief point in my text is *personality*. If we come to the Lord Jesus and say to Him, “O Lord, You can teach us how to get to Heaven; will You be pleased to tell us how we can enter the house of mercy, and the Church of God, and the Kingdom of Glory at the last?” He answers, “I am the way. I am the door.” What do You mean, great Master? Tell us, what is the door? “I am the door.” But, surely, Lord, You mean that by copying and imitating You, we shall enter in, right? He shakes His head and says, “Not so. I am the door.” But surely, You mean that by attending to certain rites which You have ordained, we shall enter, right? My Brothers and Sisters, He did not say that! He simply said, “I am the door.” “But does not Christ mean that by being orthodox and believing certain doctrines which He has taught us, and which are identified with Himself, we shall thereby enter into life and be saved?” He does not say that! He says, “I am the door.” “But is not *Baptism* the door?” No, for He says, “I am the door.” “But is not the *Lord’s Supper* the door?” No, for He says, “I am the door.” “But, surely, holy living must be the way into the Kingdom of Heaven!” No, it is not, for Jesus says, “I am the door.” Jesus Himself, personally, is the way into His Kingdom. There is no door

into His sheepfold except Himself—His own Person. So we must just come and believe in Him, and trust in Him, for He is the door!

Would not some of the so-called “priests” lock us out of the fold if they had the keys? Thank God they have neither the key nor the charge of the door, for whoever believes in Jesus, to whatever church he belongs outwardly, or if he belongs to no visible church at all, if he does but come to God by Christ, he is saved, for Christ is the door—and nothing else is the way of entrance—neither this opinion, nor that external doing, nor such-and-such works, nor such-and-such feelings, but Christ Himself, and Christ alone. The incarnate God—our substitutionary Sacrifice who rose again from the dead for our justification, who ascended up to the Majesty on high, whose, prevalent plea is always being presented on His people’s behalf and who is coming back again, by-and-by—He it is who is the door—and only by Him can we enter the true Church on earth, and the “Church of the first-born, which are written in Heaven.”

Notice, dear Friends, in the fourth place, over this door the word *suitability*. Jesus says, “I am the door.” You know that every door has two sides to it and so has Christ. Our side of this door is His Humanity. Oh, how freely and how gladly we may come to Christ! I think that if any of us had seen Christ when He was here on earth, we would have felt no desire to get away from Him, but we would have been delighted to draw near to Him. If, in this place, just now, a little child could see Jesus Christ as He was in the days of His flesh, I am sure that the boy or girl would soon have his or her hand in Jesus Christ’s hand, for He was so sweet and loving, and tender, that the children gladly ran to Him. So that is our side of the door—Christ’s gentle Manhood. But what is God’s side of the door? It is the full splendor of Christ’s Godhead, “for in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” So, our side of the door is Christ’s gentle loving Manhood, but what is God’s side of the door? It is the full splendor of Christ’s Godhead and we can only come to the Father through Him whose name is Emmanuel, “God With Us.”

And what do I see over that door but His own sprinkled blood, so that we may be quite sure of being accepted with God, for has not the Lord said to us, as He did to Israel in Egypt, “when I see the blood, I will pass over you”? Therefore, the door is Christ Jesus, so let me put the Truth very plainly and say that if any of you wish to be saved, it must be by coming to God through Christ Jesus! You cannot be saved in any other fashion or way. But you will certainly be saved if you come to God by Christ Jesus. He is the door and He is an open door and a door available for you if you will but enter in by Him! May His blessed Spirit sweetly incline you to do so! Then all the rich promises of this text shall be yours—you shall be saved, and you shall go in and out and find pasture.

II. Now, in the second place, I am to speak of THE USERS OF THIS DOOR. “By Me if any man enters in.”

What is the main purpose of a door? It is *to give admission to the house*. There are some persons who stand and look at the door or per-

haps praise it, saying, "What a fine door that is!" Yet they do not go in through it. And I have known people who liked to hear Christ extolled, yet they did not yield themselves to Him. They said, "That was a rich Gospel sermon," but they did not trust the Christ who was preached! They looked at the door—that was all.

There are others who occasionally knock at the door. They tell me that they have often prayed to God, but that they have never been heard. Well, it is wise to knock at this door, but is not enough to knock, for the text does not say, "By Me if any man knocks, he will be saved," but, "by Me if any man enters in, he will be saved."

I have known some persons who have sat down on the step of this door—some of you have been sitting there a long time. You have been hearing the Gospel and you have listened to it with some degree of attention. So far, so good. But if you do nothing more, you are simply sitting down on the doorstep. Doors were not made for us to sit on the doorstep. Little children frequently do that at your houses, do they not? You often wish they did not, yet there they will sit and play. But that is not the purpose for which the door was intended. A door is made for us to pass through it, not for us to sit down in front of it. If a man stands and admires your door, or if he knocks at your door and yet still sits on your doorstep, he is not making the right use of the door. According to our text, the proper way to use a door is to enter in by it—and that is the right way to use Christ—to enter in by Him!

There are some who do not do that, but they very jealously guard the door. They stand like sentinels outside the door. They are true Protestants and their blood is on fire at the very thought of the Pope. They like to read books that bully everybody who does not agree with them. Only let a heretic come near—they are orthodox enough to knock him down, directly. They are protecting the door, but they do not go through it. I have marveled to find some men downright bigots in defense of the Gospel which they have never received themselves! They would not allow anybody to say a word against it on any account whatever. They are righteously indignant at error, yet they have never been saved by the Truth! I would not like to be a hungry man set to guard a loaf of bread, to have to walk up and down like a soldier with bayonet fixed, and all the while to be dying of starvation, my bones sticking out through my skin, yet never eating a crumb. Taking care that no Zulu ever came near the bread, shooting anybody who approached it, but never getting a morsel to eat myself! There are numbers of people who are doing just that—they are simply sentinels at the door, remaining outside all the while. But the proper use of the door of salvation is to enter in by it, so our Lord Jesus says in our text.

Note, particularly, *the description given of those who use the door.* "By Me if *any man enters in.*" Christ does not say, "By Me if any king or prince should enter in." No, thank God, He says, "If any man enters in"—any man from the slums, any man from the abode of poverty or vice—"He

will be saved.” Christ does not say, “If any highly intelligent person is able to understand the plan of salvation, He will be saved.” It is not difficult to understand, for it is only like going through a door—and everybody knows how to do that. You coal-heavers, who have strayed in here, and you squires from the country who have your pockets well lined, and you poor people who have your pockets empty. You who have good characters and you who would do better if you were to lose your present characters, for they are no good to you, my text is so broad in its comprehension that it shuts none of you out! “By Me if any man enters in he will be saved.”

I want to call your special attention to this point, for, evidently, this entering in is irrespective of character because a man can go through a door whether he is the biggest thief that lives, or the most honest man in the world! He does not need to be a good fellow to go through a door. And when Christ says, “any man,” He means the sinner who deserves the deepest Hell. It means me. It means you, my Friends, who are in the same condition as I was in when I came to Jesus! “By Me if any man enters in, he will be saved.” Perhaps someone says, “Do you mean to tell me that men are to go to Heaven without being holy?” I tell you no such thing! But I say that they are to come to Christ without being holy. They trust in Christ and then He makes them fit to go to Heaven, but, at their first coming to Him, there is no fitness required. You are to come just as you are—downright bad, through and through—just pass through this door!

Going through a door is a very simple action. It may be performed by an idiot, or by a baby who can but just toddle. That is faith—passing from this side of Christ to the other side—passing from where I am, in myself, to be reconciled with God by trusting in Jesus Christ. Passing through a door is not a long operation. It can be done in the twinkling of an eye, and so can a man be saved in the twinkling of an eye. Passing through a door is not a difficult operation if the door is open—and coming to Christ is not a difficult operation. I will tell you when it is difficult—when a man has an enormous load of what he calls, “good works,” upon his back! I have seen people in that condition. They could not get through the door at all! They had such a mountain of good works that they could not get through the doorway! A wagonload of hay was nothing to the load they carried—they could not pass through the strait gate. The man who gets to Christ most quickly is the one who is utterly stripped of everything of his own.

Some people cannot get through this door because they carry their heads too high. I believe that he who is bowed down to the dust, on his hands and knees, is the man who gets in most easily. He who is nothing, he who is nobody, he who is undeserving, ill-deserving, Hell-deserving, he who has no hope apart from Christ is the man who most quickly finds hope in Christ! Righteous self is very hard to get rid of, and that is the great difficulty of passing through this door.

You see, then, that character is not set down as a fitness for Christ. Neither is feeling to be set down as a preparation for coming to Christ. Christ needs nothing to prepare a sinner for Him. That poor man who was wounded and left half-dead on the road to Jericho would have been in a still worse plight if the Samaritan had said to him, "Now, my good man, I am willing to help you, but you are hardly fit to be helped. I am afraid you do not feel your wounds sufficiently. I am afraid you are not sensible enough of the bruises you have received. I am afraid that at the present moment you are scarcely awakened to your danger. You seem to me to be half stupefied by that crack you had on your head, so I must leave you, I am afraid, until you are able to feel a little more and to be better prepared for me to help you." He did nothing of the sort, but he just brought out his oil and wine and he tore his coat, took a piece of rag to bind up the wounds and lifted the poor fellow up and set him on his own beast and took him to the inn.

Now our Lord Jesus Christ is far better than that good Samaritan, but He acts on the same principle. He comes to the sinner just where he is and He does not need him to feel this or feel that, or be this or be that, or do this or do that—just to trust Him, to rest in Him and in Him alone, and He will pour in the oil and the wine, and heal the sin-sick soul! Feeling or no feeling, if you will pass through that door, you shall be saved! If you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are not condemned and, therefore, you are saved!

So now I leave that point, only praying the Lord to make it very plain to all who have heard it. It may seem, to some of you, to be the plainest thing in the world, for you have heard it so often, but I tell you, Beloved, that the poor trembling sinner needs to hear this over and over and over again, for although it is put in the plainest Saxon that can be discovered, he will not understand it till the Holy Spirit opens his understanding. They still think there is something to do, like that old German Lutheran woman who said, "I do not understand this. My minister asked me a hundred questions before he thought I was converted and, as for me. I was groaning and crying for many years before I dared believe in Jesus Christ." That is just the way with many—they will do anything except trust Jesus then and there! Yet the Gospel—the true simple Gospel is, "Christ is all. Trust Him and be saved." He is Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End. "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all," therefore, trust Him, trust Him, trust Him, trust Him and, then and there, salvation is yours! "I am the door. If anyone enters by Me"—that is all he has to do—"he will be saved."

III. Now, very briefly, I want to speak of THE PRIVILEGES OF THOSE WHO USE THIS DOOR ARIGHT.

The first privilege of the right users of it is *salvation*. Those who have entered in by Christ, the Door, are saved. He says, "By Me if any man enters in, he shall be saved"—saved from the guilt of sin, saved also from the power of sin. He shall be saved from being what he has been in the

past. He shall be so saved as to enter into holiness, and so saved as to enter into Heaven. What a grand salvation that is!

“Oh,” says one, “I could believe in Christ if I felt that I was saved.” Never put the cart before the horse! That is reversing the proper order of things! Trust in Christ and *then* you are saved. Go through the door of which I have been speaking to you. “Oh, but I wish I felt that I was saved.” Go through the door, Man, for our Lord Jesus says, “By Me if any man enters in, he will be saved.” There is no text that says, “If any man shall wait outside the door, he will be saved.” There is no encouragement given to people to say, “We will sit and wait till the angel troubles the pool.” The command of Christ is, “Rise, take up your bed, and walk.” The message of the Gospel is, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” A Gospel that tells sinners to wait is not the Gospel that our Lord Jesus Christ blesses. His word is, “Behold, now is the accepted time. Behold, now is the day of salvation.” “By Me if any man enters in, he will be saved.”

And what follows this salvation? The next privilege is liberty—“He shall go in and out.” We do not come to Christ to be shut up in a prison—we shall go in and out. There is no such liberty as you who believe in Jesus have—liberty to go to your bed at night and to feel that it does not matter whether you wake up here or not! Liberty to go out into the world and feel that losses and crosses cannot happen to you without your Father’s permission and that you will have Grace to bear them! Liberty to go wherever you please on the errands of God, always protected by His almighty power! Do not imagine that walking with God, as Enoch did, means a narrow and confined life. He only has true largeness of heart who has God dwelling in his heart.

Then notice the further privilege that is included in this liberty—that is, *liberty of access*. “He shall go in.” He who goes through the door—that is, believes in Christ—shall go in to God in prayer to pour out his heart before the Lord. He shall go in to the Church to have fellowship with all the saints. He shall go in to that secret of the Lord which is with them that fear Him and, one day, he shall go into the innermost Heaven, into that blessed circle where God reveals His love in the highest degree. “He shall go in.”

And he shall have *liberty of egress*, as well as liberty of access, for, after he has been with God in private, he shall go out and—

“Tell to sinners round

What a dear Savior he has found.”

He shall go out to bear his cross with joy and to lift up his Captain’s banner with confidence. He shall go out farther and farther afield, learning more of the things of Christ, discovering more and more how great are the estates of God which cannot be enclosed within a fence, but which exceed all space and can only be compared with eternity and infinity!

Then there is added the privilege of *nourishment*—“and shall find pasture.” Whatever his heart needs to live upon, to fill it, to sustain it, to comfort it, to make it grow, to develop it, to perfect it, he shall find it all in Christ Jesus his Lord and Savior! When a soul comes to Christ and receives life, it does not receive a life that will ever die, for Jesus, who is our Life, is also the Bread of Life and we live upon Him, and feed upon Him, and so our life endures until, in its full expansion, we enter into our eternal inheritance before the Throne of God!

These, then, are the privileges of those who enter in by Christ the Door—salvation, liberty, access, egress and nourishment for the soul. Who will have all these things by entering the door? Sometimes, when I have preached the Gospel with all my might, I go home and think to myself, “Oh, I am grieved for those people who will not lay hold upon Christ! I could cry my heart out over them.” But, at other times, I feel that I must take God’s side of the matter and say, “Well, if they will not have salvation—if His Son has been torn from His own bosom and put to death to save men, and yet they despise Him—if God writes His message of love in letters of blood, the blood of His own well-beloved Son, and still men refuse to accept it—then their blood be upon their own head!” If Jehovah stoops right down from Heaven and says, “Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool”—if He goes out of His way, as it were, to plead with sinners, by His mighty love and by the precious blood of Christ, His Son, I sometimes think that if they will not come to Him then, I am more inclined to blame them than to pity them! If they will not see what God sets before them and they are then struck blind, who can blame the justice of God? Surely, they deserve the deepest Hell who refuse and reject the Christ of God!

Suppose that a man was standing at your door and that he said he was starving—and that you pointed to the door and bade him enter? But he says, “Yes, I see the door.” “Well, then, enter it and you shall have food.” “No,” he says, “I am very hungry, but I am afraid I do not feel my hunger enough to entitle me to go in.” You say, “My dear Fellow, enter in.” “But—but—but—I—I—I—” he keeps on saying and you reply, “My dear Fellow, do you see the door?” “Yes,” he says. “Well, then, enter in!” He says that he is ready to faint, that he feels so sick, he needs medicine. You answer, “Everything is inside that door and the only condition is, ‘Enter in.’” “Oh, dear,” he cries, “I am worse than I thought I was! I am covered all over with a foul disease. I dare not go in.” Still you say to him, “Enter in. Everything is ready, come along with you—do not wait outside any longer.” “But I cannot climb over the top of the roof.” “I did not ask you to do so! I said, ‘Come in by the door.’” “But I cannot dig through the cellar and come up that way.” “I did not ask you to do anything of the kind! Come in by the door.”

Is not that what the Apostle meant in the chapter we read? [Exposition at end of sermon.] “Say not in yours heart, Who shall ascend into Heaven? (That is, to bring Christ down from above) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (That is, to bring up Christ again from the dead). But what does it say? The Word is near you, even in your mouth, and in your heart: that is, the Word of faith which we preach, that if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in yours heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved.”

“But I thought—I thought”—the man still says, “that to get such great mercy as to be fed, and to be clothed, and to be healed—I thought that there would be something for me, to do, some performance for me to go through.” You say to him, “My dear Man, I have told you over and over and over again that everything depends upon your just entering in by that door. Will you do it?” He comes right up to the door. He looks through the doorway, it is wide enough for him to pass through, and there is all that he needs just on the other side of the door. He says, “I am almost persuaded to enter, I am very near the Kingdom.” “But,” you exclaim, “my dear Fellow, you will perish, near as you are, if you do not take one step more, over the threshold, into the house! Receive what is provided and all will be well with you! But if you will not enter, you must perish.”

I think I hear somebody say, “Then, I will do it! I will trust Christ, whether I may or may not.” You are a saved man if you only did it while I was speaking the word, for there was never a soul that said, “Christ shall be All-in-All to me,” but Christ really was All-in-All to that soul! May the Holy Spirit bring many of you to that blessed decision! And God shall be glorified, and you shall share His joy forever and ever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: ROMANS 10.

Verse 1. *Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved.* No curse falls from his lips, though they had persecuted him without mercy, hunted him from city to city and gnashed their teeth at the very mention of his name. Yet Paul has no desire for them but their salvation! He utters no malediction against them, but the prayer goes up from his very heart, “that they might be saved.” Let that be your worst wish for any living man. Whatever he may do to you, let this be your heart's desire and prayer for him—that he may be saved!

2, 3. *For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.* There are many, in these days, also, who are exactly in this condition. They are very zealous. They are full of piety of a certain kind, but it is with the view of setting up a righteousness of their own. Oh, that God would save them from this false

way! For there is no acceptable righteousness but the righteousness which is of God in Christ Jesus—and the more intensely they labor after the false righteousness, the more bitter will be their disappointment at the last. Man can only be truly righteous in God's way—he will never be so in his own.

4. *For Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone that believes.* He has put the Law away so far as His own people are concerned and, by that act, He has removed the possibility of self-righteousness, since we are no longer under the Law. Though there can come no condemnation to us by it, there certainly can come no righteousness by it. Even Christ's own people can never have any righteousness which comes by the Law—they must look to Christ and find in Him alone all that can be demanded by the Law, "for Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone that believes."

5. *For Moses.* The Holy Spirit wisely directed the Apostle to quote from Moses, for he was the lawgiver and was looked upon by the Jews as the great representative of the Law of God.

5-8. *Describes the righteousness which is of the Law, That the man which does those things shall live by them. But the righteousness which is of faith speaks on this wise, Say not in your heart, Who shall ascend into Heaven? (That is, to bring Christ down from above) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (That is, to bring up Christ again from the dead). But what did it say? The Word is near you. Not up yonder, nor down there, neither in the heights nor in the abyss. "The Word is near you."*

8-10. *Even in your mouth, and in your heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. For with the heart man believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.* To trust the risen Savior, to put your soul into His hands and then to confess your faith by publicly declaring that you are on His side—these are the things which He demands of us in order to our salvation—and these He enables us to render. Are there any Believers here who have never confessed Christ? Let them question themselves how far they can be said to be true disciples of Him who demands that where there is faith, confession of it should be made! If you believe in Jesus, look at this Scripture and feel ashamed of yourself if you have been ashamed to acknowledge Him as your Savior, for is not the promise this—that "if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved"?

11. *For the Scripture says, Whoever believes on Him shall not be ashamed.* Shall not be ashamed of having done so, and shall not be ashamed of having missed the blessing which was promised, for he shall surely receive what God says shall follow his faith and confession.

12. *For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek.* In this matter of salvation there is no difference between them.

12. *For the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him. Jews or Gentiles, they must come to Christ and come to Him by the same simple way of trusting Him. And if they do, they shall be saved.*

13-15. *For whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they are sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! See, then, what an honor God has put upon the testimony of His Word! And be not slow, my dear Friends, to tell of His glorious Gospel. The Apostle does not merely mean preaching from the pulpit, but preaching anywhere and anyway—making known the Gospel by any means! It is in that way that hearing comes and from hearing comes faith and from faith comes salvation. Who, then, would not tell out the glad news which God uses to the salvation of immortal souls?*

16-18. *But they have not all obeyed the Gospel. For Isaiah said, Lord, who has believed our report? So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. But I say, Have they not heard? Is that the reason why many do not believe—because they have not heard the Gospel? Well, it is not the reason in the case of anybody here present, for I suppose all of you have heard the Gospel—probably have often heard it!*

18, 19. *Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth and their words unto the end of the world. But I say, Did not Israel know? Ah, that they did! The Gospel was sounded in their ears in a hundred ways, yet they rejected it.*

19-21. *First Moses said, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you. But Isaiah is very bold and said, I was found of them that sought Me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after Me. But to Israel he said, All day long I have stretched forth My hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people. God grant that we may not be like they were! Amen.*

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—550, 538, 552.

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

THE ONLY DOOR

NO. 3287

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 1912.

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

***“I am the door: if anyone enters by Me, he shall be saved,
and shall go in and out, and find pasture.”***
John 10:9.

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon upon the same text is #2752, Volume 47—THE DOOR—
read/download the entire sermon free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

The Word of God tells us that in the midst of the great mass of men there are to be found a special people—a people who were chosen of God out of the common race before the stars began to shine—a people who were dear to God’s heart before the foundation of the world, a people who were redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus beyond and above the rest of mankind, a people who are the special property of Christ, the flock of His pasture, the sheep of His hand, a people over whom Providence watches, shaping their course amid the tangled maze of life—a people who are to be produced at the last, every one of them faultless before the Eternal Throne and fitted for the exalted destiny which, in the ages to come, He shall reveal! All through Scripture you read about this particular and special people. Sometimes they are called “a seed,” at other times “a garden,” at other times “a treasure,” and sometimes, as in the Chapter we have read, “a flock.” The common name in the New Testament for them is “the Church”—“the Church of God which He has purchased with His own blood.” “Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word.”

Now, the all-important question is how can we obtain admission into this Church? Where is this community to be found? Who are the members of it? What is the way to become a partaker of the privileges which belong to it? Jesus Christ here tells us two things—First, *How to enter the Church*. The way is through Himself as the door. Secondly, *What are the benefits we shall receive through being members of Christ’s Church*—we shall be saved and shall go in and out and find pasture.

I. HOW A MAN CAN BECOME A MEMBER OF THAT CHURCH WHICH IS ELECTED, REDEEMED AND WILL BE SAVED, IS SIMPLY AND BRIEFLY SOLVED BY OUR LORD’S FIRST ASSERTION.

Christ tells us that *the only way to enter the Church is through Himself*. He is the door, the only door. There is no other mode of admission into His Church but through Himself. Let it be understood, then, once and for

all, that *we cannot get into the Church of Christ through Baptism*. There are tens of thousands, yes, there have been millions who have been baptized after a fashion, that is to say, they have been sprinkled—and thousands have been immersed—who never were admitted into the Church of Christ! In consideration of the ordinance as it was administered to them, with, or more commonly, *without* their consent, they were recognized by some persons as being Christians. But let me tell you that unless they came to Christ by true faith, they are nothing better than baptized Pagans! They are still just sprinkled heathen! Why, you might hold a man in an everlasting shower, but you could not, thereby, make him “a member of Christ.” Or you might drag him through the Atlantic Ocean and if he survived the immersion, yet he still would not be one jot the better! The door is not baptism, but Christ! If you believe in Christ, you are a member of His Church. If your trust is stayed upon Christ, who is God’s great way of salvation, you have evidence that you were chosen of Him from before the foundation of the world—and that faith of yours entitles you to all the privileges which Christ has promised in His Word to Believers!

If Christ is the door, then it follows that *men do not get into the Church by birthright*. The Society of Friends has been one of the most useful communities in the world and it has maintained a good testimony upon most important points for many years. But it seems to me that the great evil in it—that which has done them the most mischief—is the admission of birthright membership. Do they not receive in their fellowship the children of their members as though they were necessarily proper persons to be received into the visible Church? My Brothers and Sisters, it is a great privilege to have Christian parents. It may prove a very great advantage if you use it rightly. But it involves a great responsibility, and if you use it wrongly, instead of being a blessing to you, it may be a fearful curse! Though you may be one of a long line of saints, “Except a man is born-again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.” The most pious example, the most godly training cannot ensure conversion—and without conversion, depend upon it—you cannot be Christ’s. “Except you are converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.” Through our not practicing infant baptism, we do not so readily fall into this error as some denominations—still, it is necessary to say even here that you have no right to Gospel privileges because of your mothers and fathers. You *must* yourselves be born-again! You have no right to the Covenant of Grace, nor to the blessings or promises thereof, except as by your own personal and individual faith you come to Christ! It is not your father nor your mother who can be the door into Christ’s Church for you, but Christ Himself. “I,” He said, “I am the door.” If you are in Christ, you are in His Church. If you have laid hold on Him, you are a member of that secret and invisible community of His elect and His redeemed—but it is not by Baptism, nor by birthright that you can ever be so!

Moreover, as Christ is the door, it is evident that *a man does not come to be a member of the Church of Christ by making a profession of being so.* He may prove himself to be a detestable hypocrite, but he cannot prove himself to be a genuine Christian by mere profession! Men do not get rich in this world by a lavish expenditure, or by a profession of being wealthy. They must hold the title deeds of their estate and have the cash in the strong box, or else they are poor in spite of all their pretensions! And you cannot become a Christian by coming forward and asking to be admitted into the Church, declaring that you believe and avowing that you repent. No, verily, but you must truly repent, or you shall perish! You must truly believe, or you shall have no part or lot in this matter! The mere saying, "Yes, yes, I am willing to profess this, I am willing to say that," no more makes you a Christian than it would make cotton to be silk to call it so, or make mud to be gold by labeling it with that title! Beware of a false profession, for it is doubly hazardous. The man who has no Grace is in danger, but the man who makes a profession of having it when he has none, is in double danger, for he is the least likely to be awakened and he is certain, unless Sovereign Grace prevents, to make his profession a pillow for his wicked and slumbering head till he sleeps himself into Hell!

Further, and this may, perhaps, touch the point more closely—*a man does not get to be one of the Lord's people, or to be one of Christ's sheep, by being admitted into any visible church.* He ought not to try to get into any visible church until he is in the *true* Church! He has no right to join the external organization until he has first got into the secret conclave by a living faith in Christ. If he leaves the door alone, and climbs over the wall and comes into the outward church without being a Believer in Christ—so far from being saved, Christ will say to him, "You are a thief and a robber, for you have climbed up some other way and you came not in by the door." I believe we do rightly to subject the admission of members to the voice of all the Church. I believe we do rightly to examine candidates to see whether they make a creditable profession and whether they know what they are doing. But our examination—oh, 'tis nothing better than skin deep! We cannot search the heart and the best judgment of ever so many Christian men, though honest, and deserving to be treated with great respect, would be a very poor thing to rest upon. If you have not Christ, your church certificates are waste paper and your membership with any people, however pure and Apostolic they may be, is but a name to live while you are dead—for the only way, the sole way of getting into the real, vital, living Church of Christ is by coming to Christ who is Himself the door!

The plain English of this metaphor then, is just this—to *be one of God's people, the essential thing is a simple dependence upon Jesus Christ.* If you have not this—no matter who baptizes you, or who gives you the consecrated bread and wine, or who preaches to you about a hope of salvation for which there is no warrant—you will die in your sins, not-

withstanding all your sacraments unless you come to Christ! No other admittance to Heaven can there be but by a simple dependence upon Him who has bled and died on Calvary's Cross! The preaching of any other system is a mere delusion against which the warning voice went forth or ever the snare was laid to trap the unwary!

Mark you, simple faith, where it is genuine, makes it plain that you do enter by Christ, the door, because such *faith leads to obedience*. How can you suppose that you are a member of His Church if you are not obedient to Christ? It is necessary that the man or woman who trusts Christ should become the servant of Christ. Real faith never kicks at this rule, but rather delights in it. "If you love Me," says Christ, keep My commandments." Unless we keep Christ's commandments out of a principle of love to Him, our religion is vain. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." We may talk as we will about inward experiences and believing, but "by their fruits you shall know them." The Spirit of God is the Spirit of holiness. When Christ comes into the soul, all iniquity must be purged out of the soul. You know how Malachi describes His Advent. He proclaims to us the promise that the Lord whom we seek shall suddenly come to His Temple—that is, seekers shall be finders! Do you know what he adds? "But who may abide the day of His coming? For He is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap." Now, the refiner's fire burns up the dross, and fullers' soap takes out the stains—and so, if Christ is in you, you will pass through a refining that will burn up your outward sin—and you will be subjected to a washing like that of the fullers' soap which will cleanse you from all your iniquities. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked: for whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap." If you live after the flesh, you shall die! But if, through the Grace of Christ, you are living in Him, trusting in Him, always serving Him—service being the evidence of trust and trust being the evidence of your election—you have then come into the Church through the door—and it is well with you!

Now, if it is so, that Christ is the door into the Church, and if we have entered the Church through that door, *it does not matter much to us what the old gentleman at Rome thinks of us*. He may excommunicate us. This he is very fond of doing, for he is a rare hand at cursing, but what does it matter? It matters not one jot, if I am a new creature in Christ Jesus, how much the Pope may rail at me! Besides, there are plenty of revilers nowadays who are saying, "You Non-Conformists are only a pack of heretics! We have the Apostolic succession! We have the sacraments and the priests." Ah, they vaunt themselves as being "Catholic," though their claim is disallowed alike by the Babylon which is here below, and by the Jerusalem which is above! Let them vaunt if they will. As long as we have Christ, they may keep their Apostolic succession and all their other rubbish! Christ is the door and if we have come through Him, it is well with us!

I like that story of the Sandwich Islanders who had been converted through some of our missionaries and the Gospel had been preached to

them for years. At last, two or three gentlemen in long black gowns landed there and the people asked them what they had come for. They said they were come to instruct them in the true faith and to teach them. Well, they said, they should be glad to hear it. If their teaching was true and like the Scriptures, they would listen to them. By-and-by, a little diagram was exhibited to the natives after the similitude of a tree. This tree had many branches. The twigs which were farthest off were the different saints, the Believers, those who do good works. Then the limbs, which were a little larger, were the priests. The bigger branches were bishops, the biggest were the cardinals and, at last, these all joined on to the trunk—which was the Pope—and that went all the way down to the bottom till it came to Peter, who was the root, deriving his authority immediately from Christ. So the natives asked about all these twigs, branches and especially about certain rotten branches that were tumbling off into a fire. What were they? They were Luther, and Calvin, and other heretics who had been cut off from the true tree of the church. “Well,” said one of the islanders, “and pray what is the root of the tree?” Of course that was allowed to be Jesus Christ. So they clapped their hands at once for joy, and said, “Never mind about the branches, and stems, and twigs—we have never heard of them—but we have got the Root, and that will do to grow on.” In like manner, Brothers and Sisters, we can say tonight, if we have Christ, we have got the “root out of a dry ground.” We have got the root of the matter, the basis, the sum, the substance of it—

***“Let others trust what forms they please,
Their hopes we’ll not contest.”***

Let them go about their business and rejoice in their fancies—but Christ is the door! We have Christ! We have entered by the Door! We have believed in Him, we have entered through Him into faith, and into joy, and into peace! We will be content with this—let others clamber up some other way if they please.

Before I leave this point, a question suggests itself—*Have we all entered by the Door?* We are agreed that Christ is the Door, have we entered by the Door? You who are growing old—I always feel much pleasure in seeing gray heads, the type of mellowed years, in the concourse of worshippers—have you all believed in Jesus? You know the Truth—you would not like to hear anything but the simple Gospel preached! But have you laid hold on the Gospel? A man may starve with bread on the table if he does not eat. And he may perish with thirst, though he is up to his neck in water, if he does not drink. Have you trusted Christ? If not, how can you remain in a state of unbelief, for “he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God”? Men and women in middle life, struggling with the cares of business, have *you* trusted in Christ? I know your thoughts are much taken up and necessarily so, with the world. But have you not time to think upon this question or dare you neglect it—“Do you believe on the Son of God?” If not, O man, your life hangs on a thread and that

snapped, your ruin is certain! And, oh, you young people, what a mercy it is to see you willing to come and hear the Word! But have you all heard it with your inward ears? Have you looked to my Master? Oh, it is sweet to come to Christ in the early morning of life, to have a long day of happiness before you! May it be the blessedness of each one of you! It is vain to look at the Door unless you enter. God give you Grace to come in if you have never entered before!

II. Our Lord and Master tells us WHAT ARE THE PRIVILEGES OF ENTERING THROUGH HIM, THE DOOR.

The man who enters by Christ *shall be saved and he shall go in and out, and he shall find pasture.*

He shall be saved. The man who believes in Jesus Christ shall be saved. He is saved and he shall be saved! A man has by accident killed his fellow man. The next of kin to the murdered man will be sure to kill the manslayer out of revenge if he can get at him. Therefore the poor man takes flight as quickly as he can towards the City of Refuge. How his heart beats, how his footsteps bound, how he flies with all his might! There is a signpost with the word, "Refuge," upon it, and on he continues his way. But, presently, while he is running, he turns his head and finds that the avenger of blood is after him. He sees that he is gaining upon him! He feels that he will probably overtake him. Oh, how he picks his steps lest he should trip on a stone! How he skims the ground, swift as a roe! He runs until he can see the city gates. "That is the fair CITY OF REFUGE, he says. But he does not rest then, for a sight of the city will not secure him—so he quickens his speed as if he would outstrip the wind till he shoots through the archway and he is in the broad street of the city! Now he stops. Now he breathes. Now he wipes the hot sweat from his brow. "Now I am safe," he says, "for no avenger of blood dares cross that threshold. He that once escapes here is delivered." So with the sinner when sin pursues him, when he discovers that he has offended God! He hears the furious coursers of Divine Vengeance coming on swiftly behind him and his conscience flies, and his soul speeds towards the Cross. He gets a little hope. He hears of a Savior, but that is not enough. He will never rest, he will never say he is at peace until he has passed the gate of faith and can say, "Now I do believe that Jesus died for me."

He that enters in by the door shall be saved. Noah's ark was built in the olden times to preserve Noah and his family from the great flood. It could not be said that Noah was saved till he had passed through the door—but when he had done that, a Divine hand, quite unseen, shut the door and as Noah heard it fastened and understood that the Lord had shut him in, he felt quite safe. If God shuts us in, the floods from beneath cannot drown us and the rains from above cannot penetrate to injure us. He must be safe whom God shuts in! The moment that a poor sinner trusts in Christ, God shuts the door. There he is and there he shall be till time shall be no more! He is secure. The infernal powers shall

not destroy him and the vengeance of God cannot touch him! He has passed the door and he shall be saved.

I read a story the other day of some Russians crossing wide plains studded over here and there with forests. The villages were ten or a dozen miles from each other, the wolves were out, the horses were rushing forward madly, the travelers could hear the baying of the wolves behind them. And though the horses tore along with all speed, yet the wolves were close behind and they only escaped, as we say, "by the skin of their teeth," managing just to get inside some hut that stood in the road and to shut the door. Then they could hear the wolves leap on the roof, they could hear them dash against the sides of the hut, they could hear them gnawing at the door and howling, and making all sorts of dismal noises—but the travelers were safe because they had entered in by the door and the door was shut! Now, when a man is in Christ, he can hear, as it were, the devils howling like wolves, all fierce and hungry for him. And his own sins, like wolves, are seeking to drag him down to destruction! But he has got in to Christ and He is such a shelter that all the devils in the world, if they were to come at once, could not harm a single beam of that Eternal Refuge! It must stand fast, though earth and Heaven should pass away!

Now, to every man and woman, Christ says that if they have entered in by the door, they shall be saved. Do not have any doubt about it! Do not let anybody raise the question whether you may be or you may not be—you shall be! Oh, clutch at that blessed, "shall." Sir, if you have been a drunk, yet, if you trust in Christ, you shall be saved! You shall not go back to your old drunkenness, but you shall be saved from it if you believe in Him. O Woman, if you have stained your character to the worst, yet if you believe in Christ, none of your old sins shall ruin you, but you shall be saved! Ah, though you are tempted every day of your lives, tempted as none ever were before, yet God is true and cannot lie—if you come through Christ, the Door, you shall be saved! Do you understand what it is to come through the door? It is to depend upon Jesus, to give yourselves to Him, to rest on Him. When you hang up your jugs and mugs on the nail in the cupboard, what keeps them from falling? Nothing but the nail! And if that holds well, nothing can fall that hangs on it. Now, you must trust in Christ as the vessel hangs on the nail—and if you do so, He is fastened as a nail in a sure place—and you cannot and shall not perish! That is the first privilege—"he shall be saved."

He that enters in by the door "*shall go in.*" The man who believes in Christ shall go into rest and peace, for there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. He shall go in to secret knowledge. He shall become a scholar and shall be taught by Christ as his Rabbi. He shall go in unto God with holy boldness in prayer. He shall go in unto that which is within the veil and speak to God from before the Mercy Seat. He shall go in unto the child's place and shall stand as an adopted heir of Heaven.

He shall go in unto close communion with God. He shall speak with his Maker. The Lord shall lift up the light of His Countenance upon him. He shall go in unto the highest attainment in spiritual things. He shall go in to the treasure house of the Covenant and say, "All this is mine!" He shall go in to the store house of the promises and take whatever his soul needs. He shall go in, passing from circle to circle, till he comes to the innermost place where the love of God is most graciously shed abroad!

He that enters in by the door shall be saved, and he shall go in. If you know what this means, go in! Go in further. Go in more constantly. Do not stop where you are, but go in till you have got a little more. If you love Christ, come nearer to Him and nearer, and still nearer! But if you want to get into anything that is Divine, you must get in through Christ. O you who open your Bibles and want to understand a text—the way to get into the meaning of a text is through the Door, Christ! O you who want to get more holiness, come through the Door—the way to holiness is not through Moses, but through Christ! O you who would have closer communion with your heavenly Father, the way to come in is not through your own efforts, but through Christ! You came to Christ at first to get salvation—you must still come to Christ to get sanctification! Never look for another door, for there is but one, and that one door will let you into life, love, peace, knowledge and sanctification—it will let you into Heaven! Christ is the master key of all the rooms in the palace of mercy! And if you get Christ, you shall go in. Nothing shall keep you out of any of the secret chambers. You shall go in, in God's name, through Christ, the Door!

The next privilege is that *he shall go out*. Putting the two together—"he shall go in and out"—they signify liberty. The Christian does not come into the Church as into a prison, but he comes in as a free man, walking in and out of his own house. But what does it mean to go out? I think it means this, Brothers and Sisters. The men that trust in Christ go out to their daily business through Christ, the Door. I wonder how many of you ever thought of this? You know sometimes you get up, put on your clothes and go blundering out to work. And then you find yourselves very weak all day. Well, I do no wonder at it, for you do not go out through Christ, the Door. Suppose you had given yourselves to Christ for the day and though you had time but for a few minutes' prayer, yet you had put it thus, "Lord, I am Yours. Take care of me today. I am going out where there will be many to tempt me and try me. I do not know what may happen, but, Lord, I am going out in Your name and resting in Your strength. If there is anything that I can do for You, I desire to do it. If there is anything to suffer, I wish to suffer it for Your sake, but take care of me, Lord. I will not go out and face my fellow men until I have seen Your face. And I do not want to speak to them until I have spoken to You, nor to hear what they have to say till I have heard what God the Lord will speak." Depend upon it, it is blessed going out when you go thus through

the Door! You will be sure to come home happy when you go out after this sort!

May not this going out also mean to go out to suffering? You and I are sometimes called to bear great bodily pain, or losses, or bereavements. Well now, what a sweet thing it is to go out to suffer these things through the Door, and to be able to say, "Now, my Master, this is a cross, but I will carry it, not in my own strength, but in Yours. Do what You will with me—I shall drink the cup because You appoint it." Whenever you can see Christ's hand in it, it makes the bitter sweet and heavy things soon grow light! Go to your sickbed as you hope to go to your deathbed—through the Door, that is, through Christ!

And when, as sometimes happens, we have to go out, as it were, away from fellowship with Christ, to fight with our inward sins—the right way is to go out to resist them through the Door. If you ever try to fight with sin in your own strength, or on a legal footing, or because you feel that you will be condemned if you do not overcome those sins, you will be as weak as water! The way of victory is through the blood of the Lamb. There is no killing sin except by throwing the blood of Christ upon it. When once the blood of Christ comes into contact with the besetting sin, that sin withers straight away! Go to your spiritual conflicts through the Door.

And so, Beloved, we ought, in all that we do for the Lord, to go out through the Door. It is always sweet preaching for me when I feel that I come forth in the name of my Master—when I do not come to tell you what ideas I have woven out of my own brain, nor to put attractive figures before you, as I would like to do sometimes—but rather, when I come to tell you just what my Lord would have you know, telling it as a message to you from your God and cherishing in my own heart His great love toward perishing sinners. Then, indeed, to minister is joy! You Sunday school teachers will always teach well when you go down to the schoolroom through the Door, that is, having been with Christ, having sought and enjoyed His company. I know, my dear Brothers and Sisters, you who are teaching larger classes, you who are engaged in instructing or exhorting, you who go about any holy work—you always do it well when you have God's smile upon you in the doing of it—and you shall have great success in the doing of it if you always go to it through Christ, the Door—if you serve Christ through Christ, and do it not only *for* Him, but *through* Him and *by* Him! Our own strength is perfect weakness, but the strength which comes through simple dependence upon the ever-living Christ who has said, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world"—this is the strength which wins the conquest! God give you Grace not only to go in, but also to go out through the Door.

The last privilege named in the text is, "*and shall find pasture.*" I suppose this is what you come here for, you who love the Lord—you come here for pasture. It is a great blessing if when we come to hear the Gos-

pel, it becomes real pasture to us. We do know some who say that the troubles of the week become unbearable because they have such barren Sabbaths. Ah, if you are members of a church that is torn with discord, where the ministry abounds in anything but Christ, you will soon begin to cry out and you will value the privilege of hearing Jesus Christ lifted up among you! But who are the people who get the pasture where Jesus Christ is preached? Not all who hear of Him, nor yet all Believers. There are times when you may hear a sermon that is of no use to you—and yet your Brother and Sister by your side may be greatly instructed and comforted thereby. In such a case, I should not wonder if it was because your friend came in to the service through the Door, and you did not.

Do you remember the story of Mr. Erskine and the good lady who went to hear him preach at the Communion? It was such sweet preaching, she thought she had never heard the like. So, after service, she asked who the gentleman was that had preached and, on being told that it was Mr. Ebenezer Erskine, she said, “I will come and hear him again next Sabbath morning.” She went, she listened and she thought to herself, “Well, this is very dry, very heavy preaching.” She was not at all comforted by it! Then like a foolish woman, as I should think she must have been, she went into the vestry, and said, “Oh, Mr. Erskine, I heard you last Sabbath with much pleasure! Sir, I was never so edified and I came again this morning, but I have been dreadfully disappointed.” So the good man said very calmly, “Pray, Madam, when you came to the kirk last Sabbath, what did you come for? She said, “I came to Communion, Sir.” “To have fellowship with Christ, I suppose?” he asked. “Yes, Sir.” “Well you came for it and you had it. And pray, what did you come here this morning for?” She said, “I came to hear you, Sir.” “And you had it, woman,” he said. “You had it and you had not anything else, because you did not come for anything more than that.”

Well now, when people come merely to hear a minister, or for custom's sake, or for form's sake—do they not always get what they come for? If people come to find fault, we always give them plenty of our imperfections to be entertained with, so they need not be disappointed! If others come merely out of custom, they say, “Well, this is my work, I have performed my duty.” Of course it is, but if you had come in through the Door, that is, looking *to* Christ, looking *for* Christ, desiring not to see the preacher, but the Lord—not to get the word of man, but the Word of God as food for your soul, I believe you would have found pasture! Brothers, the sheep need pasture. No other food will suit them. So your soul needs heavenly Truth and if you come to the House of God *through Christ*, you will get it! If you turn to the Bible through Christ, you will find it a rich storehouse! If you come to prayer through the door of Christ, you will find it comforting and so you shall find pasture.

I think the text may mean that he who rests in Christ shall have all his needs supplied. If the text does not mean so, another does, “The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pas-

tures: He leads me beside the still waters.” Some of you are very poor, but if you have trusted in Christ, you may plead this promise, “You have said that I shall find pasture. Your Word declares that no good thing will be withheld from them that walk uprightly. Lord, make this true to me.”

I would to God that some who have never yet entered into the fold might now be drawn to Jesus. Oh, that you would come through the Door into these four choice privileges! You may never have such another opportunity. You may never feel any of the motions of the Spirit of God again. Oh that, without delay, you would just cast your helpless souls into the Savior’s gracious arms, who is able and willing to save, that you might be saved now!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 10:1-18.**

Verses 1, 2. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that enters not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that enters in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.* The true Shepherd cares for the flock. The false ones are thieves and robbers who only care for the flesh or the fleece.

3. *To him the doorkeeper opens and the sheep hear his voice: and he calls his own sheep by name, and leads them out.* [See Sermon #2359, Volume 40—PERSONAL AND EFFECTUAL CALLING—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] John the Baptist was the doorkeeper who opened the door of Christ’s earthly ministry by bearing witness that He was the Son of God.

4, 5. *And when he puts forth his own sheep, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.* Christ is the great Leader of His people and they will never go astray as long as they follow Him. The sheep of Christ recognize their Shepherd’s voice and come at His call. But “strangers” call to them in vain.

6, 7. *This parable spoke Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which He spoke unto them. Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.* No one metaphor can fully describe our glorious Lord, for He is both Shepherd and Door to the sheep, and all else that they need—

**“O my Savior! Shield and Sun,
Shepherd, Brother, Husband, Friend—
Every precious name in one,
I will love You without end!”**

8-10. *All that ever came before Me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief comes not but to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.* [See Sermon #1150, Volume 20—

LIFE MORE ABUNDANT—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] The thief came to take away life, but Christ came to give life—that abundant life which shall last forever and ever! But see what it cost Him to give that life—

11-13. *I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep, and flees: and the wolf catches them, and scatters the sheep. The hireling flees because he is an hireling, and cares not for the sheep.* Just now the contrast was between the Shepherd and the thief, here it is between the Shepherd and the hireling. The hireling cares for himself. The Shepherd cares for the sheep and provides for them and cares for them even at the cost of His life.

14, 15. *I am the good shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of Mine. As the Father knows Me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down My life for the sheep.* [See Sermon #1877, Volume 32—OUR OWN DEAR SHEPHERD—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] There is mutual knowledge between the Shepherd and the sheep, and between the Father and the Son.

16. *And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: they also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice: and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.* [See Sermon #1713, Volume 29—OTHER SHEEP AND ONE FLOCK—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Or, more correctly, “one flock, one Shepherd.” The flock would never be complete without those “other sheep” which the Shepherd says He must bring into the fold, and which He says shall hear His voice. Not one of them will be missing in the day when they pass again under the hand of Him that counts them.

17, 18. *Therefore does My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again. No man takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father.* The voluntariness of Christ’s Sacrifice is its Glory, and well may His Father love Him because of it—and well may we, who are eternally to benefit by His death—also love Him!

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

LIFE MORE ABUNDANT

NO. 1150

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 4, 1874,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“I am come that they might have life, and that they
might have it more abundantly.”
John 10:10.*

“THE thief comes not but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy.” False teachers, whatever their professions, seriously injure and endanger the souls of men and in the end cause their destruction. Their selfish ends can only be answered by the ruin of their dupes. The Lord Jesus, the true Teacher of men, causes injury to none, and brings death to no man's door. His teaching is full of goodness, kindness and love. It works most effectually for human happiness and benefit. Error is deadly. The Truth of God is life-giving. The coming of the old serpent worked our death. The Advent of the woman's Seed has brought us life. We shall omit all preface and ask you to note that, according to the text, Jesus Christ is come, first, *that His people may have life*. And, secondly, *that where life is already given it may be enjoyed more abundantly*.

I. The first Truth is that JESUS CHRIST HAS COME THAT MEN MAY HAVE LIFE. I will not dwell upon the thought that even the prolonged natural life of the sinner is due, in a large measure, to the coming of Christ. That barren tree would not stand so long in the garden of life if it were not that the dresser of the vineyard intercedes and cries, “Spare it yet another year, until I dig about it and fertilize it.” The interposition of the Mediator accounts for the lengthened lives of gross offenders whose crimes tax the long-suffering of Heaven. If the prayers of our great Intercessor should cease for a single hour, the ungodly among mankind would, perhaps, sink down quickly into Hell, as Korah, Dathan and Abiram did when the Lord's anger broke forth upon them.

That, however, is not the drift of the text. Life, in the sense of pardon and deliverance from the death penalty, is a great result of Christ's coming. All men in their natural condition are under sentence of death, for they have sinned, and they must be shortly taken to the place of execution, there to suffer the full penalty of the second death. If any of us are delivered at this time from the sentence of death and have now the promise of the crown of life, we owe the change to the coming of the Redeemer to be a Sacrifice for our sins. Every man among us must go down to the endless death unless, through Him who came to earth and hung upon the tree as the sinner's Substitute, we obtain full remission for all offenses—and the verdict of *life* instead of *death*. There is life in a look at Jesus, but apart from Him, the sons of Adam are under sentence of death.

Moreover, we are all, by nature, “dead in trespasses and sins.” In the day when our first parents broke the Law, they died spiritually, and all of

us died in them. And now, today, apart from Christ, we are all dead to spiritual things, being devoid of that living Spirit which enables us to have communion with God and to understand and enjoy *spiritual* things. All men are by nature without the Spirit which quickens to the highest form of life. Unregenerate men have physical life and mental life, but *spiritual* life they have not—nor will they *ever* have it except as Jesus gives it to them. The Spirit of God goes forth according to the Divine will and implants in us a living and incorruptible seed which is akin to the Divine Nature. He confers on us a new life, by virtue of which we live in the realm of spiritual things, comprehend spiritual teachings, seek spiritual objects and are alive unto God, who is a Spirit.

No one among us has any life of this kind by birth, neither can it be bestowed upon us by ceremonial rites, nor obtained by human merit. The dead cannot rise to life except by miracle—neither can man rise to spiritual life except by the working of the Spirit of God upon him, for it is He, alone, who can quicken us. Christ Jesus has come to call us from the graves of sin. Many have already heard His voice and live. This spiritual life is the same life which will be continued and perfected in Heaven. We shall not, when we rise again from the grave, obtain a life which we do not possess on earth—we must be alive unto God here or take our places among those whose worm dies not and whose fire is not quenched.

There beats within the Believer's heart this day the same life which shall enjoy the fullness of joy in the Divine Presence. If you have only looked to Jesus a few minutes ago, yet there is now in your heart the blessed life. The incorruptible seed is sown in you which lives and abides forever. The heavenly life is within you and this Jesus Christ came to bestow upon us. The Truth that Jesus is the life-giver is clear enough in the text and it leads to the following practical reflection—life for your soul is only to be had in Jesus. If, then, you are, this day, seeking salvation, you are instructed as to the only source of it!

Spiritual life is not the result of working—how can the dead *work* for life? Must they not be quickened, first, and then will they not rather work *from* life than *for* life? Life is a *gift* and its bestowal upon any man must be the act of God. The Gospel preaches life by Jesus Christ. Sinner, see where you must look! You are wholly dependent upon the quickening voice of Him who is the Resurrection and the Life. "This," says one, "is very discouraging to us." It is intended to be! It is kindness to discourage men when they are acting upon wrong principles. As long as you think that your salvation can be effected by your own efforts, or merits, or anything else that can arise out of *yourself*, you are on the wrong track—and it is our *duty* to discourage you.

The way to life lies in the opposite direction. You must look right away from yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ! You must rely upon what He has done and not upon what you can do. And you must have respect not to what you can work in yourself, but to what He can work in you. Remember that God's declaration is that, "Whoever believes in Jesus *has* everlasting life." If, therefore, you are enabled to come and cast yourselves upon the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, you have that eternal

life immediately—which all your prayers, tears, repentance, church-going, chapel-going and sacraments could never bring to you!

Jesus can give it to you freely at this moment, but you cannot work it in yourself. You may imitate it and deceive yourself. You may garnish the corpse and make it seem as though it were alive—and you can galvanize it into a spasmodic motion—but life is a Divine fire and you can not steal the flame, or kindle it for yourself! It belongs to God, alone, to make alive, and therefore I charge you look alone to God in Christ Jesus! Christ has come that we may have life! If we could have obtained life without His coming, why did He need to come? If life could come to sinners apart from the Cross, why nail the Lord of Glory to the shameful tree? Why Your bleeding wounds, Immanuel, if life could come by some other door?

Yet, further, why did the Spirit of God descend at Pentecost, and why does He still abide among men if they can be quickened without Him? If life is to be obtained apart from the Holy Spirit, to what end does He work in the human heart? The bleeding Savior and the indwelling Spirit are convincing proofs that our life is not from ourselves, but from above. Away, then, from yourself, O Trembler! Seek not the living among the dead! Search not in the sepulcher of self for the Divine Life. The life of men is in yonder Savior and whoever believes in Him shall never die!

II. But we intend to spend the most of our time at this time upon the second Truth of God, namely, that JESUS HAS COME THAT THOSE TO WHOM HE HAS GIVEN LIFE MAY HAVE IT MORE ABUNDANTLY. Life is a matter of degrees. Some have life, but it flickers like a dying candle and is indistinct as the fire in the smoking flax. Others are full of life and are bright and vehement, like the fire upon the blacksmith's forge when the bellows are in full blast. Christ has come that His people may have life in all its fullness.

Increase of life may be seen in several ways. It may be seen in healing. A man lies sick upon his bed—he is alive, but he can hardly move a limb—he is helplessly dependent upon those around him. His life is in him, but how little is its power! Now, if that man recovers, rises from his bed and takes his place in the world's battle, it is evident that he has life more abundantly than in his illness! Even thus there are sick Christians of whom we need to say, "Strengthen you the weak hands and confirm the feeble knees." Their *spiritual* constitution is weak, they do but little. When the Lord Jesus restores them, strengthens their faith, brightens their hope and makes them healthy, then they not only have *life*, but they have it yet more abundantly!

Our Lord desires to have us in spiritual health. He has for that end become the Physician of our souls. He heals all our diseases and is the health of our countenance. A person may, however, be in health and yet you may desire he had more life. Yonder little child, for instance, is in perfect health, but as yet it cannot run alone. Put it upon the ground, it totters a little way, and is ready to fall. Those bones must harden, those muscles must gather strength. When the boy becomes a man, he will have life more abundantly than when he was a babe. We grow in Divine Grace, we advance in knowledge, in experience, in confidence and in conformity

to the image of our Lord. From babes in Christ Jesus we advance to young men. And from young men we become fathers in the Church. Jesus would have us grow. This is one of the designs of His coming and thus do we possess life more abundantly.

A person might, however, have both health and growth, and yet enjoy a stunted measure of life. Suppose he is confined as a prisoner in a narrow cell where chains and granite walls perpetually bound his motions—can you call his existence, life? Might it not be accurate to speak of him as dead while he lives and to describe his dungeon as a living tomb? Can that be life which is forbidden pure air which is the poorest man's estate? Denied the sun which shines for all that breathe? He lives, for he consumes that piece of dry bread and empties the pitcher placed daily upon the stone floor, but in the truest sense he is shut out from life, for he is denied liberty. When the poor prisoner once more climbs the hill, crosses the ocean's wave and wanders where he will, he will gratefully know what it is to have life more abundantly.

Now, mark well that if the Son of God shall make you free, you shall be free, indeed, and in that freedom find life sparkling, flashing and overflowing like the streams of a fountain! To be under bondage through fear of death is scarcely life. To be continually fretted with mistrusts and receive the spirit of bondage, again, to fear, genders unto death. But it is truly life to be able to cry, "You have loosed my bonds!" Yet I can suppose a man at liberty and in health who might have still *more* abundant life. He is extremely poor. He may wander where he wills, it is true, but no foot of ground can he call his own. He may live where he chooses, if he can live, but he has scarcely bread for his body, covering for his limbs, or shelter from the night. He is extremely poor.

The poor man works from before the sun proclaims the morning till far into the night to earn a miserable pittance. This toil is exacting to the last degree and his remuneration barely sufficient to provide necessities. He can scarcely keep body and soul together. Is this life? It is almost a sarcasm to name it so! When we have met with persons compelled to sleep upon the bare floor, or who have for many hours been without a morsel to eat, we have said, "These poor creatures exist, but they do not live." This saying is true. And so, sometimes, there are Believers who rather exist than live. They are starving. They do not feed upon the promises. They do not enjoy the rich things which Christ has stored up in the Covenant of Grace. When the Lord Jesus enables them to partake of the "fat things full of marrow," and the wines on the lees well-refined, then they not only have life, but they have it "more abundantly."

I can still suppose a person who is free, in health and in the enjoyment of abundance, who needs more life. He is mean and despised—a pariah and a castaway. He has none to love him or look up to him with respect. He does not even respect himself! He slinks along as if the mark of Cain were upon him. He has forgotten hope and bid farewell to love. You pity such a man every time you think of him. To possess the love and esteem of our fellows is necessary if we would live. When under conviction of sin a man has felt himself to be less than nothing, a sinner unworthy to lift his

eyes to Heaven, a leper fit to be shut up among the unclean, or as a dead man, forgotten and out of mind—then, I tell you by experience—he finds it a mighty addition to his life when the Lord Jesus lifts him up from the dunghill and puts him among princes, even the princes of His people!

Brothers and Sisters, to know that you are no longer a slave, but a son, an heir of Heaven, a joint heir with Jesus Christ for whom the saints are companions and to whom the angels are servitors—this is to have life more abundantly! Is it not? I have thus hastily hinted at some of the points in which increased life reveals itself. I will now set forth the same subject in another way. I would lay before you seven particulars in which Christians should seek after more abundant life. First, let them desire more *stamina*. An embankment is to be thrown up, or a cutting to be dug out. You need laborers. Here are your spades, your picks and your wheelbarrows—only men are required. Look, a number of persons offer themselves for hire. They are very thin, they have singularly bright eyes, sunken cheeks and hollow churchyard coughs—they are a choice company from the Consumptive Hospital!

Will you hire them? Why do you look so dubious? These men have life. “Oh, yes,” you say, “but I wish they had it more abundantly—they cannot do such work as I have to offer them.” We must send these poor men away, they must go to the doctor and be taken care of. Look yonder—another band of rough, stalwart fellows! These men will suit your purpose. Look at their ruddy faces, their broad shoulders, their mighty limbs—hand them the picks and the spades and the barrows and you will see what British workers can do! What is the difference between the two sets of men—these laborers and those consumptives?

Why the difference lies in the presence or absence of stamina in their constitutions! There is a *something*—we cannot exactly say what it is, perhaps the physician himself cannot put his finger upon it—but the one set of men without it are weak, and the others with it are full of force! Our Lord Jesus has come that, in a *spiritual* sense, we may have stamina, may have a well-founded, well-furnished, well-established, confirmed and vigorous life so that we may be capable of arduous service and powerful action! He would have us walk without weariness and run without fainting. He would have us quit ourselves like men and be strong.

Beloved, do you not see how great a difference there is between some Christian men and others? Are not some of them spiritual invalids? They believe, but their favorite prayer is, “Lord, help our unbelief!” They hope, but fear is almost as fully in possession of their hearts. They have love to Christ, but they often sing—

**“Do I love the Lord or not?
Am I His or am I not?”**

They need medicine and nursing. Give them any work to do for the Lord and how soon they grow weary! Discourage them a little and they are in despair! Oh that the Spirit of God would give them life more abundantly! I am afraid that a very large proportion of Christian men in this day are on the sick list. They are in a decline from need of deep-seated principle and sound vitality of godliness, which is what I mean by stamina.

It is sad to see how some professing Christians are led astray by any error which is plausibly put before them. If all Christians were alike, then Popery might easily become the universal religion of the country, for they have no Protestant principle, no grounding in doctrine, no firmness in the faith! They believe, but they know not why or what, and cannot give a reason for the hope which is in them. It is to be feared that they do not profess the Truth of God because others go this way and that, and some eloquent preacher wins their affection and becomes their oracle. They have not the stuff in them of which martyrs are made. They have no grit in their nature, no decision, no tenacity of belief, no firmness of grip!

Consequently, whenever persecuting times come over this land, they will be our weakness. We shall have to look after such puny camp followers and put them in the rear—or the enemy will make sad havoc among them. Those who have life more abundantly are good soldiers of Jesus Christ. They have learned to stand fast in the Truth, and by the blessing of God they are more than a match for the teachers of error, for they know what they know and are able to put to silence the fair speeches of deceivers. They are not carried away with every wind of doctrine, but abide in the Truth of God as they have been taught. They cry, “O God, my heart is fixed!” They are “strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.”

I pray that every member of this Church may be a man of inward stamina—not one of those spiritual babies whom we have to be looking after every day and feeding with spiritual spoon victuals every Sunday—but men who, by the blessing of God, have got something in them which they know the value of, and which they could not give up if all the world should tempt or threaten them! I compared such strong Believers to navigators and I shall not withdraw the comparison, for we need men who can say to the mountains, “Be you removed,” and to the valleys, “Be you exalted.” It is by such agents that the Lord will make straight in the wilderness a highway for His march of mercy.

In a second sense we have life more abundantly by the *enlargement of the sphere of our life*. To some forms of human life the range is very narrow. Wordsworth’s farmer had no great abundance of life, for—

***“The primrose by the river’s brim
A yellow primrose was to him,
And nothing more.”***

To plow and sow, and reap and mow, were his philosophy. The seasons preached no sacred homilies to him. The birds sang, but he would have been as much pleased if they had been silent. The hills were a weariness to climb and the view from their summit he thought nothing of. His soul was inside his smock frock and his corduroys, and never wished to go beyond them.

Nor in the fields, alone, are there such beings. Our streets swarm with men in broadcloth of the same race, to whom “the music of the spheres” means the clink of sovereigns—and whose choice quotations relate to the price of stocks and changes of the market. Over the Exchange we read, “The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof,” but they read it, “This earth is our God and the fullness thereof is our all.” The souls of such

men live like squirrels in cages, and each day their wheel revolves—it is all the world they know. Jesus Christ has come to give His people a wider, broader life than this!

True, there are many men upon whom Christ has never looked, whose life traverses wider areas than those which content the baser sort. Such men map out the stars and fathom the sea—they read the mysterious story of the rocks and of the ages past. They are deep in philosophy and force their way into the secret chambers where the immature principles of things are nestling. They have a life which is bounded only by time and space. But, Beloved, when Jesus comes, He enlarges the sphere of the most capacious mind and makes the greatest intellect to feel that it was but “cabined, cribbed, confined,” until He set it free. Beyond time and space does Jesus lead us! The life which He has given us has been tossed upon the stormy sea of sin and has descended into the deeps of the tremendous ocean of terror.

We have been like Jonah at the bottom of the mountains, where the earth with her bars seemed about us forever. The Grace of our pardoning God has now set us on a rock and given us to behold the paradise of pardon! What a blessed thing it is to be forgiven, to be dear to the Father’s heart and to feel the Father’s kiss! This is a new world to us—to live as they live who live at home with God—to see His smile and feast upon His love! This is a life of no mean dimensions, for we dwell in God and are in fellowship with the Infinite. We are no longer shut up to self, but we hold conversation with the spirits before the Throne of God and commune with all the saints redeemed by blood!

Now we have seen those mysteries which were before hidden from our eyes. The path which the eagle’s eyes have not seen we have gazed upon, and the way which the lion’s whelp has not trod we have traversed! We have entered into the mysteries of the invisible and have stood within the veil! We were as little birds within their shells, but the Lord has broken our prison and His Spirit has led us into all Truth and shown us that which was hid from ages and from generations. In this sense we have life more abundantly.

Thirdly, our life in Christ becomes more abundant as *our powers are brought into exercise*. I suppose all the powers of the man are in the child, but many of them are dormant and will only be exercised when life is more abundant. None of us know what we may be, we are but in our infancy. Christ has come to give us a fuller life than we have yet attained. Look at the Apostles! Before Pentecost they were mere junior scholars, only fit to occupy the lower forms. They were often ambitious and contentious among themselves—but when Jesus had given them the Spirit, what different men they were! Would you believe that the Peter of the Gospels could be the same person as the Peter of the Acts? Yet he was the same man! Pentecost had developed in him new powers.

When I hear him saying, “I know not the Man,” and a few weeks after see him standing up in the midst of the Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, boldly preaching Christ, I ask, What has happened to this man? And the reply is, Christ has given him life more abundantly and he has developed

in himself powers which were concealed before! Beloved, you pray, yes, but if God gives you more life, you will pray as prevalently as Elijah! Even now you seek after holiness, but if you have life more abundantly, you will walk before the Lord in glorious uprightness as Abraham did! I know that you praise the Lord, but if the more abundant life fills you, you will rival the angels in their songs! I repeat what I have already said to you—we do not know what we may become.

Gladly would I fire you with a holy ambition! Pray to Jesus to make you all you can be. Say to Him, “Lord, nurture in me all the Graces, powers and faculties by which I can glorify You. To the fullness of my manhood use me. Send a full stream of life upon me that all my soul may wake up and all that is within me may magnify You. Get all out of me that can possibly come out of such a poor thing as I am. Let Your Spirit work in me to the praise of the glory of Your Grace.” I desire, Brethren, for myself and you, that we may be alive all over, for some professors appear to be more dead than alive! Life has only reached a fraction of their manhood! Life is in their hearts, blessed be God for that—but is only partially in their heads—for they do not study the Gospel nor use their brains to understand its Truths. Life has not touched their silent tongues, nor their idle hands, nor their frost-bitten pockets. Their house is on fire, but it is only at one corner, and the devil is doing his best to put out the flame.

They remind me of a picture I once saw in which the artist had labored to depict Ezekiel’s vision of the dead bodies in course of resurrection. The bones were coming together and flesh gradually clothing them—and he represents one body in which the head is perfectly formed, but the body is a skeleton—while in another place the body is well covered, but the arms and legs remain bare bones. Some Christians, I say, are much in the same state—they are alive only in parts—and in some it must be some very hidden part which is quickened, for little or nothing is to be seen of practical love or zeal. Oh for men who are alive from head to feet! Whose entire existence is full of consecration to Jesus and zeal for the Divine Glory—these have life “more abundantly.”

Fourthly, *an increased degree of energy* is intended in the text. We may have the powers, but may not exercise them, and no doubt many men have great spiritual capacities, but they lie still for lack of intensity of purpose. Now, when is a man most alive? Some are so alive when they are in determined pursuit of a favorite purpose. They have formed a resolution and they mean to carry it out. You can see their whole man pressing forward upon the track, all aroused and full of eagerness. Now, the Lord Jesus has furnished us with a purpose which is sure to stimulate us to energetic life, for “the love of Christ constrains us.”

He has given us a motive and an impulse which we cannot resist and we are in covenant with Him that we will glorify His name so long as we have any being. We are solemnly resolved and earnestly set to seek His honor. This gives an intensity to life which increases its abundance by arousing it all. A man is said to be full of life when he is worked up into excitement and livid with passion. Enthusiasm is life effervescing, life in volcanic eruption. Where there is determined resolve, if you arouse the

man by opposition, you will see his whole life come into action. He was quiet enough before, but you have awakened the lion in him! His life was slumbering at ebb—now it is dashing up at flood.

The man is carried right away! In his look and speech he is all alive. And in his actions he is energetic to the last degree. Our Divine Master has aroused the flame of our life by inspiring us with the glorious passion of love to Himself. This provides us with stimulus and impetus. A heart which is wholly surrendered to the love of Jesus is capable of thoughts and deeds to which colder souls must forever be strangers! Energetic, forceful, triumphant life belongs to souls enamored with the Cross and espoused in ardent love to the heavenly Bridegroom!

Abundance of a kind of life is painfully manifest in insane persons. The demoniac in the Scripture burst the chains with which he was bound, for he had unusual strength when the sudden outburst of his rage was on him. Now, if possession by an evil spirit arouses men to an unusual force of life, how much more shall possession by the Divine Spirit gird a man with extraordinary energy! It is not possible for us to tell how potent for good any man among us may become. As the man who was feeble enough before, when he became possessed with an evil spirit refused to be held in bondage, so the man possessed by the Divine Spirit becomes supernaturally strong and refuses to be the captive of sin or Satan!

Look at Martin Luther! Could you have believed that such a poor monk would shake the Vatican? And yet in his zeal for the Truth of God and hatred of error he did it! Look at other men in other times who have been raised up of God for a special purpose—what abundant life their holy ardor gave them! They were like Samson of old. Go up to Samson, feel his flesh, look at his bones—he is no larger than another man! Though his thighs indicate enormous strength, yet he does not seem so surprisingly superior to others. But wait till the Spirit of God moves him in the camp of Dan, and then woe to the thousands of the Philistines! Look how he piles them heaps upon heaps, while hip and thigh he smites them! See how he takes the pillars of their temple and rocks them to and fro and brings the edifice down upon their heads! The Spirit of God is on the man and He works wondrously! If the Spirit of God shall come upon you, it will make you do greater things than these and achieve loftier victories. Only believe it, and come to Christ, for abundant life is yet to be had.

We will change the line of our thought, and, coming to the fifth point, we will say that abundance of life is often seen in *the overflow of enjoyment*. On a spring morning, when you walk in the field and see the lambs frisking so merrily, you have said, "There is life for you." You see a company of little children, all in excellent health—how they amuse themselves and what pranks they play! You say, "What life there is in those children!" Catch one of the little urchins and see if he does not wriggle out of your arms, and you say, "Why, he is all life." Just so, and therefore his happiness! In youth there is much life and overflow of spirits. When Israel came out of Egypt, she was young Israel, and how merrily did she smite her timbrels and dance before Jehovah!

When Churches are revived, what life there is in them, and then what singing! Never comes a revival of religion without a revival of singing! As soon as Luther's Reformation comes, the Psalms are translated and sung in all languages! And when Whitfield and Wesley are preaching, then Charles Wesley and Toplady must be making hymns for the people to sing, for they must show their joy, a joy born of life! When the Lord gives you, dear Friend, more life, you also will have more joy. You will no more go moping about the house, or be thought melancholy and dull when the Lord gives you life more abundantly!

I should not wonder but what you will get into the habit of singing at work and humming tunes in your walks. I should not wonder if people ask, "What makes So-and-So so happy? What makes his eyes twinkle as with some strange delight? He is poor. He is sick, but how blissful he appears to be!" This will be seen, Brothers and Sisters, when you not only have life, but when you have it more abundantly!

Now, sixthly, this is a somewhat peculiar fact, but I think it should not be omitted. The abundance of life will be seen in *delicacy of feeling*. No doubt there is a very great deal of difference as to the amount of pain which persons suffer under the same operation. There are persons so constituted that you might cut off an arm and they would scarcely feel more than another person would suffer during the drawing of a tooth. There are some, on the other hand, to whom the slightest pain involves a thrill of horror, they are so sensitive. Whether it is an advantage or a disadvantage I cannot tell, but it has certainly been observed by skillful physicians that those persons who have strong mental constitutions—who use their brains a lot and have a fine mental organization—are usually those who suffer most when subjected to pain. There is more life in them of a certain sort, and they are more sensitive for that reason.

Now, when the Lord Jesus Christ gives His people life in its higher forms, they become more capable of pain. The same sin will pain them a hundred times more than it used to do—and they will shrink from it with greater anxiety to avoid it. If you are only just a Christian, you may do wrong and you will be penitent. But if you have much life and you do wrong, ah, then your heart will be wrung with anguish and you will loathe yourself before God! The man full of delicate life will not only suffer more, but he has probably more pleasure—he is sensitive to joys unknown to others—and his whole constitution thrills with a pleasure which another but faintly perceives.

The name of Jesus is inexpressibly sweet to those who have abundant life! It is precious if you only have life, but it is beyond all price to those who have very tender hearts which swell with exuberant life. I have met with some Christians who say they cannot understand Solomon's Song, and I have often wondered at it, myself. That is a test book for sensitive souls—and when men have much of the life of love—that sacred canticle suits their feelings better than any other book in the Bible, because it is a tender book of sacred love and glows like altar coals! Oh, I pray you, have much of the tenderness of the intense life!

Nor is this all I mean by delicacy. I mean this. There is a delicacy of hands which a man may acquire by long practice which renders that wonderful member a great worker of feats. The fingers and palms are all life and can execute manipulations of a most surprising kind. Even so, the hands of educated faith can not only grasp but handle the good Word of Life. When gifted with this faculty, we pry into the mysteries of the heart of Jesus as others cannot! The lips, also, can become sensitive. Laura Bridgman learned to read with her lips, the raised letters—blind persons very generally have a wonderful life in the ends of their fingers which others of us have not yet developed. So the Lord would have His people enjoy a sensitively discerning life which shall reveal to them what they would never have felt and known. Oh, when your soul is blest with holy delicacy! When every part of your nature has become full and brimming over with intense sensitiveness! And, when you have an educated sensitiveness to the Divine mind and will, *then* are you getting where Christ would have you to be!

Once more, this delicacy shows itself in a marvelous apprehensiveness and keenness of perception which had not been there before, The Indian will put his ear to the ground and say, "There is an enemy on the way," while you cannot hear a sound. When he comes to a turn in the forest, "There is the trail," he says, "to the right," though you cannot see that a stick has been moved, or that a single blade of grass has been bent. His faculties are full of life and therefore he has a better ear and a better eye than you. Remember the story of the Siege of Lucknow? When the Highland woman said, "Dinna you hear it?—dinna you hear it?" She could hear the sound of the Highland music when it was far away. I do not doubt she heard it, though others did not—her ear was quicker than theirs.

Jesus would have us quick of understanding in the fear of the Lord so that we shall say, "He is coming—He is coming! I can hear His footsteps!" And the world will say, "You are mad! Let us eat, and drink, and be married and given in marriage." We want to be able to say, "I can hear the Bridegroom's voice," when others will say, "Not so, it is mere imagination." We need eyes which will see the land which is very far off so that the golden gates of our heavenly home shall be visible to us. Thus shall we have life "more abundantly."

The seventh point is this—life, when it is in abundance, becomes *supreme*. Some races of men have physical life, but have it not abundantly. For instance, the Red Indian and the Australian races have life, but after awhile they perish and die from off the face of the earth, while other races of more vigorous life battle with their surroundings and survive. Christians should have such abundant life that their circumstances should not be able to overcome them—such abundant life that in poverty they are rich, in sickness they are in spiritual health, in contempt they are full of triumph—and in death full of glory!

Glorious is that life which defies circumstances! Christ has given to us, Brothers and Sisters, a supreme life, supreme in its tenacity—it cannot be destroyed, none can cut its thread. "Who shall separate us from the love

of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?” Neither things present, nor things to come shall ever avail to do this. We have life so abundantly that it triumphs over all. What I desire for us, beyond everything is to have this life so abundant that it may be supreme over our entire selves. There is death within us and that death struggles with our life. Our life has dashed Death down and holds it beneath its feet—but tremendous is the struggle of Death to rise again and get the mastery.

Brethren, we must hold Death down, we must grip him as with bands of iron and hold him down—and plant the knee of prayer upon his bosom and press him to the earth. We must not suffer sin to have dominion over us, but life more abundant must, through Divine Grace, triumph over inward corruption! There is yet much beyond you, Christian Brethren, but that much is attainable. You are not to sit down and say, “We must be always captives to the flesh, to yield it obedience.” Beloved, you may overcome! God’s Grace being in you, you may overcome!

You shall not, this side of the grave, congratulate yourselves upon *perfection*—such boasting be far from you! But in the strength of God, the life of God which is in you may be increased and *shall* be increased, for Christ has come to increase it, till Death shall be trod down and you shall be more than conquerors through Him that has loved you!

My time has gone, the subject is too large for me. Only this I conclude with—if you need life, you must get it from Christ. If you need more life, you must go to the same place. Do not look to Christ for the beginnings and then somewhere else for the ending! Christ has come that you might have more life. Come to Him by faith. Do not look to ceremonies or outward services or anything else for growth in Grace, apart from Jesus, but fly to Him and He will give it to you—and you shall be rich to all intents of bliss.

God grant that all the members of this Church may have this great blessing for Christ’s sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JOHN 10.
HYMN FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—46 (VERSION II) 798, 818.**

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“WHOSE GOODNESS NEVER FAILS”

NO. 2919

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 19, 1905.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 1, 1876.**

***“I am the Good Shepherd: the Good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep.”
John 10:11.***

THESE words were spoken when our Lord was among His own people. Perhaps as you hear them there comes a whisper in your soul, “I wonder whether that is true now? If the Lord Jesus in His flesh were here at this moment, in the midst of us, and if He said, ‘I am the Good Shepherd,’ we might find it easy to believe it. But He has gone. What assurance have we that it is the same now, when He is no longer among us?” I answer, “Dear Brothers and Sisters, we know it is true because Jesus Christ is ‘the same yesterday, today and forever.’ That in itself were enough, but we have the added assurance that in this place He meant to say it was so, for, if you notice, He was evidently looking to the future when He said, ‘I am,’ seeing that He added, ‘The Good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep,’ when as yet He had not done it. There was an interval between the time when He said these words and the laying down of His life upon the Cross. As He went on further in His discourse and said, ‘Other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also, I must bring, and they shall hear My voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd,’

He was looking to the future you see. He spoke of Himself—I was almost going to say in momentary unconsciousness of His Deity without meaning, perhaps, to speak as God. He says, ‘*I Am*,’ using the very name of Jehovah and speaking of the future as though it were present. It was as if He had said, ‘I am the Good Shepherd and I am going to gather in the wandering people that, as yet, are not of My flock.’ So that, the meaning and force of the ‘*I am*,’ evidently runs right on till He has gathered in all the other sheep that were not, when He spoke the words, included in His fold. Yes, He means you to understand that He is speaking the same words as much to you, Brothers and Sisters, as to Peter and James and John. To you He is saying, ‘I am the Good Shepherd: the Good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep.’”

First, let us look at our great Master’s claim, “I am the Good Shepherd.” Then we shall observe the proof of it. That, though it had not been completed when He uttered these words at the first, is now complete—“He gives His life for the sheep.” When we have talked rapidly on these two points, let us try and chew the cud and see if there is not something to be found here of very practical use to us. On these

Communion nights the time is very short—therefore I must try to speak without many words upon any one point.

I. First, then, I say, let us look at CHRIST’S CLAIM, “I am the Good Shepherd.” He means us to understand three things. It is as if He said, “I am a Shepherd,” and then, “I am a *Good Shepherd*,” and, last of all, “I am *the Good Shepherd*”—that Good Shepherd who is spoken of in the Old Testament.

“I am a Shepherd,” He says first. That is to say, *He stands in the same relationship to His people as a shepherd does to his flock*. He owns His people—every one of them belong to Him. He prizes them because they are His—sets a value upon each of them. He takes care of them, remembering them both night and day. His heart is never off them and because of His inward love there is an outward goodness which He constantly extends to them. He protects them from the wolf. He guards them from a thousand dangers. He sees to the supply of all their needs. He guides them in the right way. He brings them back when they wander. He strengthens them when they are weak. He carries them when they are too feeble to go. He sees that they are a weak flock, a silly flock and a wandering flock—therefore is He their strength, their wisdom, their righteousness, their all. No creature, perhaps, has more diseases than a sheep—except a man. No creature is more dependent upon another and higher creature than a sheep is, for it seems only half itself till it is under the care of man. And none of us, Brothers and Sisters, can be said to be less dependent than the sheep are, for we are not true men till we get near to Christ. We are without life and without strength till we find life and strength in Him. As a sheep would be sure to wander and, wandering, would be very likely to wander into a desert—would be sure not to better itself—would be certain in the end to come to nothing—so is it with us. Without Him who is our Shepherd we would wander farther and farther into misery and sin—and our ruin would be certain. We are more dependent upon Christ than sheep are upon the shepherd. You see, then, why Christ says, “I am a Shepherd.” Towards His own people whom He has redeemed with precious blood He stands in the position of a Proprietor, a Leader and Guide, a Father, a King—all of which may be condensed into this one word—a Shepherd.

But He is not only a Shepherd, He is a *Good Shepherd*, for *what He does He does well*. Never does He neglect His flock. Not one ever perished because He forgot it. Since He never forgets, not one ever perished at all. He is a Good Shepherd because all that ought to be done—all that *can* be done—all that may be wished to be done towards His sheep—He does. Never shepherd so intensely threw His heart into His calling as Christ throws His heart and soul into the sacred calling of the Shepherd of Israel. He gives for His people all that He has, yes, He gives Himself! His power is their defense. He lifts up His hand and says, “I give to My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.” His Wisdom is their guidance. His Love is their perpetual shield. His Infinity is their storehouse. His Omniscience is their protection. Human and Divine are You, O Christ, in Your Person,

but the Human and the Divine are both alike for Your people. You have a thousand of offices, and You exercise them all on the behalf of Your own flock. Oh, Christ is a Good Shepherd, indeed! He is skilled as well as zealous in the art of shepherdry. He knows all the diseases of the flock, for He, Himself, has felt all their griefs and woes. He has studied human nature oh, how long! He knows it by a personal experience and therefore knows it in such a way as it can be known only by Himself. He is a Good Shepherd. Was there ever imagined one that could be compared to Him?

But then He says, “I am *the* Good Shepherd.” Emphasis is to be laid upon the fact that *He is supreme and sufficient for all the needs of His people*. There have been other shepherds appointed by Him that have, in their measure, been good, but He is *the* Shepherd—the Great Shepherd of the sheep. He it is of whom we read that when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in Glory. None of us are *the* shepherd. We have to take our little share of the work beneath His eyes and do it for His sake, though never to our own satisfaction. It will be a joy to us, indeed, if He shall be satisfied with us and say, “Well done.” But all the under shepherds in the world put together are poor things compared with *the* Head Shepherd of the sheep! He is the Good Shepherd of the sheep—preeminently good—good beyond all that are good! The Shepherd of the shepherds, as well as the Shepherd of the sheep. Good because the whole company of the faithful, if they have any good in themselves, received it from Him. “I am *the* Good Shepherd.”

Now that being the meaning of the words, let us see Christ’s claim in this chapter. Observe how He works it out. He says, if you notice the verse that comes before the text, “The thief comes not but to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.” See, then, He is our Good Shepherd *because He gives life to His sheep*. No shepherd can say about his flock what Christ says about His. “I have given all these sheep of Mine the life that they have.” What a Good Shepherd must He be! They were dead—dead as the dry bones of Ezekiel’s vision,” He says, “but I have given them life.” Listen to this, you that are the sheep of His pasture—you have spiritual life, but He gave it to you! Lift up your eyes and bless Him that your heart ever came to know what repentance is, what faith is, what prayer is and what praise is, for now that you live unto God, you see that it was He that quickened you. To your Shepherd you owe everything! We are His people and the sheep of His pasture. It is He that made us, He that new-made us—not we ourselves.

Do you notice how He adds, “I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly”? So, Beloved, if you now feel cold and dead, I ask you not to look to yourself, or to the pasture in which you are at the moment, or to the under shepherd who seeks to care for you, but to Him, the Chief and Choice Shepherd! He gave you life at first and He will give you more of it, that you may have it abundantly. If there is any one of you whose heart is leaping for joy because the love of God is shed abroad within you by the Holy Spirit—Brother, Sister, you

have got all that from Him! Bless Him for it! If, on the other hand, another one is mourning because he feels the life within him to be so feeble—dear Friend, you may have it strengthened by Him who gave it at the first! All the praise and glory must be to your Good Shepherd who is, indeed, good because the very life of His flock is His gift—and their increase in life is worked by His Sovereign Power. Oh, how good You are, dear Lord, Author and Source of our very being!

Our Lord shows us His Good Shepherdry further on when He says, “He that is a hireling and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flock; and the wolf catches them and scatters the sheep. The hireling flees because he is a hireling, and cares not for the sheep.” So see, secondly, the Good Shepherd is good *because He cares for the life which He has, Himself, bestowed*. First He gives it and then He protects it. The wolf is always around about the fold. When we do not hear him howling, yet we know that he is seeking to find an entrance somewhere. When he gets in, it is said that he comes to kill and to destroy—and what can poor sheep do against a wolf if the shepherd is away? And what would you and I do against Satan in the world and in the temptations of the flesh if Christ were away? We would soon fall a prey to the wicked adversary. But our good Master cares for us.

You know that precious promise, “I, the Lord, do keep it; I will water it every moment. Lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day”? Though the simile is changed, the meaning is the same. Our Savior—our blessed Shepherd—by night, though the frost is upon Him, watches His flock. And by day, though the sun lights on Him with its fervent heat, He still watches. His very life seems to be nothing to Him in comparison with the protection of His people. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, what battles our Shepherd has had with the wolf for us! I need not go into the story of our glorious David’s prowess, even for the little lambs of His flock. But He may say truly to His Father, “Your servant slew both the lion and the bear” because they came and “took the lamb out of the flock.” Jesus takes even the feeblest from between the teeth of the foe and will not suffer one to perish because He cares for us! You know the meaning of caring for us, do you not? Well, I do not think that I can explain it except by asking you to think of what it is to care for your children. That is how the Lord Jesus cares for you. As for the children, poor little dears, they cannot take care of themselves—nor can you, though you try hard to do it. And as your little children leave their cares with you and you care for them, you may leave your cares with your Shepherd. It is a very comprehensive thought. Your care springs out of your love and that love makes you think of the welfare of your family. But your care is not all thinking—you are actively engaged for them, too, and before they even know their needs, you supply them. In fact, they hardly know they have any needs because you never leave them unsupplied long enough to let them discover that they need anything. You meet all their needs by caring for them. Even so does Jesus, the Good Shepherd, care for His

people. He gives them life, increases that life, cares for that life and protects it from all harm!

But just read on and you will see still further what a Good Shepherd He is. “I am the Good Shepherd, and know My sheep and am known of Mine. As the Father knows Me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down My life for the sheep.” That is to say, “As much as I and My Father know each other, so do I and My people know each other.” He is the Good Shepherd because He lives among His sheep, He treats them as His children and so cares for them that He actually has communion with them. Sheep understand a good deal of what the shepherd says. There is a shepherd’s language which you and I do not understand, but the sheep do. They know his whistle. They know his frown. They know the motion of his hands. He has a language which he speaks to them. When Jesus Christ says, “I know My sheep,” it means not only that He knows who are His and who are not, but that He knows all about each one. He knows your trouble at this instant, dear Friend—your infirmity, your sin, your sorrow. He knows you a great deal better than you know yourself and He sums you up and understands you much better than the dearest friend you have. He never misunderstands you—He knows you so thoroughly. Oh, it is a wonderful word, that—one of those great deeps into which I drop my plumb line but cannot find the bottom—“I know My sheep.” It means that He owns them. He knows them so that in the Presence of God and of the holy angels, He will say, “Yes, those are My sheep.” What? That one with the torn wool? That one with the lame foot? That one with a split ear? There is not much beauty in any of them. Yet the Shepherd will not be ashamed of even the least. “It is Mine,” He says, “and though it is not beautiful to any besides, it is beautiful to Me, for I bought it with My blood and I have fought the lion on its behalf and, therefore, it is very dear to My soul.” He knows His sheep. A man can scarcely enter into the feeling of a sheep, can he? And yet Jesus Christ, though He is God, makes a stoop of condescension and enters into the feeling of the poorest and the most ignorant—yes, and the most sinful of all His children! Bone of their bone does He become, so intimate is His union with them.

But then He says, “I am known of Mine.” Now we might think that a sheep cannot know much about the shepherd, but they do. They get to love him. Among the eastern flocks there are often sheep that are peculiarly attached to the shepherd. They always follow at his heels—they never seem to care so much for the pasture as they do for him. They are always first and, I may add, generally fattest, for they that keep nearest to him are pretty sure to get the sweetest bits of grass. And so, in the Church of God there are some that keep near the Shepherd and that know Him well. And all His people know something of Him. What a condescension this is—that the Good Shepherd so comes and lives among His people that He not merely knows *them*, but teaches them to know *Him*. Blessed be His name for this! Try whether you cannot drink in the glorious meaning of this deep mystery!

But yet farther—and to close this point—our Lord is a Good Shepherd *because He gathers all His sheep*. Read the 16th verse. “And other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice: and there shall be one fold and one shepherd.” While His eyes were on the Jews, His heart was on the Gentiles, too. He is a Shepherd who is not content with the ninety-nine, but when He counts the flock over and knows there ought to be a hundred, His heart begins to care for the lost one—and He folds the 99 and lets them rest. But, as for Himself, He gets away upon the mountain’s bleak side so that He may find the lost one. Ah, my Lord, You are a Good Shepherd, indeed—a much better Shepherd than any among Your Church—Your workers—are! We often forget the wandering one. We get a church together. Perhaps the building is full and we have too little missionary enterprise to look after the masses that are in ignorance. We see England bathed in the Light of the Gospel, but feel little zeal for sending the Word to the distant heathen lands. It ought not to be! It is not so with Christ, for if He has an elect one, be he where he may, He knows him and His eyes are on him—and He must bring him in!

I wonder whether there is someone here tonight that He must bring in? You did not think when you came in to the Tabernacle that Christ was seeking you, but, perhaps My Lord Jesus has bought you with His precious blood and His Father gave you to Him from before the foundations of the world! And perhaps He brought you here that you may know this and come to Him tonight. Thus says the Lord, “I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn you.” Come, poor Wanderer—come to the Good Shepherd’s feet and lay yourself down all helpless and forlorn! He will put you on His shoulders and carry you back rejoicing! Is He not a Good Shepherd, giving life, sustaining life, defending life, knowing life, teaching life to know Him and going after poor wanderers to bring them to Himself? That is Christ’s claim.

II. Now I can say but very little, in the second place, about CHRIST’S PROOF OF HIS CLAIM, for I have already proved it. “I am the Good Shepherd,” He says. “The Good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep.” Christ has given His life for us many times over. If I read the text without referring it to the one act of His death, it seems to me to be very full of meaning. In Heaven He gave His life for them. He had a life in Heaven, such as we may guess at from a distance, but can never fully understand. He dwelt as God inhabiting the praises of eternity but you know He gave up that life for us. He laid aside—

***“That most Divine array,
And wrapped His godhead in a veil
Of our inferior clay.”***

To leave the harps and hymns of Heaven for the sorrows and sins of earth was giving up His life for His sheep.

When He was here, you know *while He lived on earth He gave His life for the sheep*, for every moment of that life was spent for them. There was a connection between His private life in the carpenter’s shop and their

salvation—an intimate connection. In His public life what did He strain all His powers for, but this—that He might seek and save that which was lost! For His people were those prayers on the cold mountain side at night! For His people those earnest pleas in the midst of the crowd by day! For them the weary journeys! For them the hunger and the thirst! For them the homelessness which forbade Him to have a place where to lay His head! He gave His life up to them as long as He was here.

Then *one dark night did He give His life for His sheep in the sense*, I doubt not, intended here. On that dread night—you know it—that night to be remembered, for it was the night of God’s Passover, the Shepherd went round His flock and the sheep were sleeping, but there came the wolf and the Shepherd knew his snarl. The sheep, all startled at the howls, were scattered—they forsook the Shepherd and fled. That night He had enough to do to meet the wolf. But He stood at the fold to watch the sheep and let them all go in safety. And then He confronted the grim monster who leaped into the fold thirsty for the blood of the sheep, but the Shepherd caught him and then came a desperate struggle between the two. The shepherd did bleed and sweat, did bleed and sweat and bleed again. Great drops of blood fell to the ground, but He held the monster fast and firm. Our Great Shepherd was wounded on His head, on His shoulders, on His hands and feet—and one awful fang tore open His side, but He held the wolf—held Him till He had slain him! Then, dashing down his body to the ground and putting His foot upon him, He shouted, “It is finished!” But in the same moment, the Great Shepherd fell. In slaying our foe He had, Himself, been slain! But scarcely had the Shepherd touched the earth than, as if reanimated, up He sprang again and said, “I lay down My life that I might take it again; therefore does My Father love Me because I lay down My life for the sheep.” You know that story and need not that I tell it again at any length. But, oh, love Him! Love Him! Kiss His wounds! Worship this blessed Shepherd who has conquered your foe and delivered you from the jaw of the lion and from the paw of the bear—and set you forever safely in His fold! “The Good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep.”

He is still giving His life. The life that is in the Man, Christ Jesus, He is always giving for us. It is for us He lives and because He lives, we also live. He lives to plead for us. He lives to represent us in Heaven. He lives to rule Providence for us. He lives to prepare our mansions for us, where we are going. He lives that He may come again and receive us to Himself, that where He is, there we may also be. Truly the Good Shepherd has proved His claim—“He gives His life for the sheep.”

III. Now let us finish by trying to GET SOME JUICE OUT OF THESE THINGS, as I hope that we have done as we have gone along.

First, dear Friends, if the Good Shepherd gives life, *let us try and get life abundantly.* Sometimes I wish I could leave off preaching any sermons and do as I have seen the sergeant do when he is drilling a lot of men. He only says a word, “First position,” and they take up the position! “Second position,” and they take up that position. He has not a lot of

eloquent talk, but he just tells them what to do. Now then, try if you can, to take up your position. More life is to be had. Breathe the prayer, “Good Shepherd, You have given me life—give it to me more abundantly! May I know You more, love You more, trust You more, serve You more and be more like You. Quicken me, O Lord, according to Your word.”

That will do. Go on. Take another position. If He is the Good Shepherd, *let us feel like sheep who have a Good Shepherd*. How do they feel? I do not think I know a sight that is more peaceable and happy than that of flocks at eventide when they have been gathered into a good pasture, or are folded among some prolific root crop. They have eaten as much as they can and they lie down on the grass to rest. No care enters their woolly heads. They have nothing to fret about. They might have if they could worry about the future as some of us do. Will there be turnips enough tomorrow? When there is dry weather, will there be grass enough? There is that butcher—when will he come? If they could understand me, I could suggest no end of cares and doubts and fears to sheep! But it does not enter into their constitution. I wish it did not enter into yours and mine! The shepherd cares for the sheep.

Dear Brother, dear Sister, will Jesus Christ care for you? I have heard of men that have kept sheep and cattle who have let them starve. You do not often hear of such things, for self-interest leads men to cherish their sheep. But I never heard of Christ neglecting any part of His flock. Come, then, let us feel quite quiet in His care. May the Lord help us to be so! Away with your doubts and fears and cares. There, begone, begone, all of it! What is the use of it? It never gave me any pasture. O care and anxiety and fretfulness, you did never feed me, nor strengthen me, nor help me! You have worried me and weakened me, but you have done nothing else. Begone! As for us, Brothers and Sisters, if Christ is our Shepherd, let us begin to say, “I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures: He leads me beside the still water. He restores my soul: He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake. Yes, though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me: Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.” That is a happy religion, is it not? And it is a very important thing that all Christians should be happy. The enjoyments of Believers lie very near their holiness. The joy of the Lord is your strength. Now, Brothers and Sisters, do not begin behaving like dogs, but try and be such sheep as you ought to be with such a Shepherd!

Next, *let us be His own*. Jesus Christ says of the hireling, “whose own the sheep are not, for he leaves the sheep,” and in that He implies that when He tends the sheep, they are His own. Come, then, let us be His own! Brother, Sister, have you ever given yourself up wholly to Christ—altogether to Christ? I am afraid we sing a great many things that are not true. I have heard you say—

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

I leave it to your own conscience whether you get anywhere near that—anywhere near it at all. We say that we belong to Christ and we are not our own, but bought with a price. Do we live as if it were true? Come, let us take up the position of being altogether Christ’s own sheep. If the sheep could speak it would say, “There is not a fragment of wool on my back that belongs to me: there is no part of me that is my own. I belong to my shepherd, and I am glad to have it so.” You belong to Christ as absolutely as that.

The next thought to take up is, *let us try to know more of Him*. He says, “I know My sheep and am known of Mine.” Let us then know Him better. You know how you come to know a man by getting into his company, by hearing his words, by marking his actions, by telling him your secrets and letting him tell you his secrets. Come and know Christ in this fashion. Let your head be on His bosom and your whole self come into communion with His blessed Self. Ask for that Grace tonight while you are around the table. Say, “Good Master, You know me. Let me know You. Oh, let my communion with You be as nearly as possible equal to that which You have with Your Father and Your Father with You, that we may be one together.”

The next and last is, *let us love Him more*. Did you notice how He says in the 17th verse, “Therefore does My Father love Me, because I lay down My life that I might take it again.” Let us make another verse and say, “Therefore do My people love Me because I lay down My life.” Jesus did not say that, but let us make it true. Oh, how we ought to love our dear and ever-blessed Lord! Do you feel love stirring in your bosom? Perhaps you say, “I wish I did feel it more.” I am glad you say that. I think that is often as far as we can get. I do not, I cannot love You, O Lord, as I ought—

**“Yet I love You and adore—
Oh for Grace to love You more!”**

I am persuaded that the man who loves Christ best is just the man who is most discontented with his own love. When a man lives wholly for Christ, he is the very man who still looks for something yet beyond and desires to serve Christ still more. Now, indulge your love tonight! Sit still and meditate on His love—enjoy His love! Say to yourself—

**“I am so glad that Jesus loves me!
Even me!”**

And then add, “I am so glad that I can say that I love Him. He knows all things and He knows that I love Him.” Just let those two seas meet. “Seas,” did I say? I must not say that. Let the little brook of your love to Him flow into the mighty *ocean* of His love to you—and so let them blend and join! I have seen the Thames flowing on in its majestic course toward the sea and every here and there a little hill drops into view for a while, but the meadows stretch between. The mighty river and the brook go side by side, but as they flow on, at last they melt into one. So let my poor soul’s love tonight flow in the same course with the great love of Jesus till at last it melts into His and life becomes, “Not I,” but “Christ in me” and my soul be forever content!

Now I have done, but I hope the Lord Jesus has not done. We are going to hold the Communion service and there are many of you that are going away, and going away rightly, too, because you could not come to the Table of the Lord without being hypocrites. You know that you do not love Jesus and have not trusted in Him. As you go away I pray the Good Shepherd to go after you—and before you reach your houses tonight I pray that He may get such a grip of you with those strong but tender hands of His, that He may never let you go till He brings you, also, into His fold! If not here, yet somewhere else, for I am sure that in this house He has other sheep which are not yet of His fold, whom He must bring that there may be one flock and one Shepherd! May He bring you in tonight, for His mercy’s sake. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 23; ISAIAH 40:9-11; EZEKIEL 34:11-25.**

We shall view Christ in the office of a Shepherd and the first passage we read sets before us faith proving Christ in that office—accepting Him, trusting Him, following Him.

Psalm 23:1-2. *The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures: He leads me beside the still waters. Can you say that for yourself, dear Friend? There is the sweetness of it. The words in themselves are noble, but it is the experimental acquaintance with their meaning which is the real honey of life. If you can use these words and lay the emphasis upon the personal pronoun, you are one of the happiest out of Heaven!*

3-6. *He restores my soul: He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake. Yes, though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death I will fear no evil: for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies: You anoint my head with oil, my cup runs over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.* There is the Believer realizing Christ in that gracious office as the Shepherd of His people. Now let us see how our glorious Shepherd is set forth in prophecy.

Isaiah 40:9-11. *O Zion that brings good tidings, get you up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that brings good tidings, lift up your voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God! Behold the Lord God will come with a strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him: behold His reward is with Him, and His work before Him. He shall feed His flock like a shepherd: He shall gather the lamb with His arms, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.* This office of Christ makes glad the hearts of those who have to preach it! To lift up our voice and to proclaim to others the good tidings is grateful service. It is the joy of the Church that Jesus, the Lord God Almighty, is strong for the defense of His people and, at the same time, tender towards their infirmities. Let us rejoice and be glad in Him!

Now let us hear what our Shepherd says by the mouth of the Prophet Ezekiel. After He has been complaining of the hireling shepherds—the false ones who sought the fleece and not the flock, who did not feed the sheep nor care for them, nor had any tenderness toward them, He goes on to show what He will do for His own.

Ezekiel 34:11,12. *For thus says the Lord God, Behold I, even I, will both search My sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so, will I seek out My sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.* What a glorious promise! Christ’s elect run here and there in the darkness of their ignorance, into sin of every kind but He will find every one of them! There is no jungle so thick but Christ will track His own through it. There are no bogs of sin so dangerous but Christ will traverse them and find every lamb of His flock! And if through your backslidings, O people of God, you have wandered far from Him, yet He perceives you with those eyes which sees in the dark as well as in the light—and He will follow after you and bring you back. Blessed be His name!

13, 15. *And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there they shall lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel. I will feed My flock, and I will cause them to lie down, says the Lord God.* A beautiful image of that peace of mind, that complete repose that perfect contentment, that sweet satisfaction, that Divine fullness which is the work of the Spirit of God in the hearts of Believers when they are gathered to Christ!

16. *I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment.* It is a sweet thing, then, to be one of the needy ones of the flock because you see all the promises run that way. But, if we feel ourselves to be very strong and great, we are in a dangerous state, for then there is no promise for us. The only word concerning us is—“I will destroy the fat and the strong.”

17, 18. *And as for you, O My flock, thus says the Lord God; Behold, I judge between cattle and cattle, between the rams and the he goats. Seems it a small thing unto you to have eaten up the good pasture, but you must tread down with your feet the residue of your pastures? And to have drunk of the deep waters, but you must foul the residue with your feet?* Truly there are some vain-glorious Christians who not only will not receive the Gospel, themselves, but actually find fault with it, insinuate doubts into the minds of others and prevent the simple-minded people of God feeding on the pasture which the Lord provides for them! See one of the evils of being great and strong in your own esteem—you are pretty sure to despise the very pasture which was quite good enough for you

when you were weaker and feebler. That very Truth of Jesus Christ which was marrow and fatness to you when you were hungry, comes to be despised as the manna was by the children of Israel when they called it “light bread.” There is no savor in it that you should desire it. Blessed, blessed hunger that makes the Word of God to be always sweet!

19-25. *And as for My flock, they eat that which you have trodden with your feet and they drink that which you have fouled with your feet. Therefore thus says the Lord God unto them; Behold, I, even I, will judge between the fat cattle and between the lean cattle. Because you have thrust with side and with shoulder, and pushed all the diseased with your horns till you have scattered them abroad; Therefore will I save My flock, and they shall no more be a prey, and I will judge between cattle and cattle. And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even My servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I the LORD will be their God, and My servant David a prince among them; I the LORD have spoken it. And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods.* What perfect assurance for Christ’s flock when, in the very place where the wolf once ranged, they shall be able to lie down and sleep in perfect safety! Happy people, with all their weaknesses, who have Divine Strength to be their protection! O my Soul, seek no other strength than this, but learn the Apostle’s logic and his true Christian philosophy so that, like he, trusting in the Mighty Shepherd, you will be able to say “When I am weak, then am I strong.”

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

OUR OWN DEAR SHEPHERD

NO. 1877

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 3, 1886,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 20, 1885.**

***“I am the good Shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of Mine.
As the Father knows Me, even so know I the Father:
and I lay down My life for the sheep.”
John 10:14, 15.***

As the passage stands in the Authorized Version, it reads like a number of short sentences with scarcely any apparent connection. Even in that form it is precious, for our Lord's pearls are priceless even when they are not threaded together. But when I tell you that in the Greek the word, “and,” is repeated several times and that the translators have had to leave out one of these, “ands,” to make sense of the passage on their line of translation, you will judge that they are none too accurate in this case. To use many, “ands,” is after the manner of John, but there is usually a true and natural connection between his sentences. The, “and,” with him is usually a real golden link and not a mere sound—we need a translation which makes it so. Observe, also, that in our version the word, “sheep,” is put in italics, to show that it is not in the original. There is no need for this alteration if the passage is more closely rendered.

Hear, then, the text in its natural form—“I am the good Shepherd and I know My own, and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me, and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.” This reading I have given you is that of the Revised Version. For that Revised Version I have but little care, as a general rule, holding it to be by no means an improvement upon our common Authorized Version. It is a useful thing to have it for private reference, but I trust it will never be regarded as the standard English translation of the New Testament. The Revised Version of the Old Testament is so excellent that I am half afraid it may carry the Revised New Testament upon its shoulders into general use. I sincerely hope that this may not be the case, for the result would be a decided loss. However, that is not my point.

Returning to our subject, I believe that on *this* occasion, the Revised Version is true to the original. We will, therefore, follow it in this instance and we shall find that it makes most delightful and instructive sense. “I am the good Shepherd and I know My own, and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me, and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.” He who speaks to us in these words is the Lord Jesus Christ!

To our mind every word of Holy Scripture is precious. When God speaks to us by priest or Prophet, or in any way, we are glad to hear. Though when, in the Old Testament, we meet with a passage which begins with, "Thus says the Lord," we feel specially charmed to have the message directly from God's own mouth, yet we make no distinction between this Scripture and that. We accept it *all* as Inspired and we are not given to dispute about different degrees and varying modes of Inspiration and all that. The matter is plain enough if learned unbelievers did not mystify it—"all Scripture is given by Inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim 3:16).

Still, there is to our mind a peculiar sweetness about words which were actually spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself—these are as honey in the comb. You have before you, in this text, not that which comes to you by Prophet, priest, or king, but that which is spoken to you by One who is Prophet, Priest and King all in one, even your Lord Jesus Christ! He opens His mouth and speaks to you. You will open your ears and listen to Him if you are, indeed, His own.

Observe here, also, that we have not only Christ for the Speaker, but we have Christ for the Subject. He speaks and speaks about Himself. It were not seemly for you, or for me, to extol ourselves, but there is nothing more comely in the world than for Christ to commend Himself. He is other than we are, something infinitely above us and is not under rules which apply to us fallible mortals. When He speaks forth His own Glory, we feel that His speech is not vain-glory—no, rather, when *He* praises Himself, we thank Him for so doing and admire the lowly condescension which permits Him to desire and accept honor from such poor hearts as ours! It were pride for us to seek honor of men—it is humility in Him to do so seeing He is so great an One that the esteem of beings so inferior as we are cannot be desired by Him for His own sake, but for ours! Of all our Lord's words, those are the sweetest in which He speaks about Himself. Even *He* cannot find another theme which can excel that of Himself.

My Brothers and Sisters, who can speak of Jesus but Himself? He masters all our eloquence. His perfection exceeds our understanding! The light of His excellence is too bright for us, it blinds our eyes! Our Beloved must be His own mirror. None but Jesus can reveal Jesus! Only He can see Himself and know Himself, and understand Himself and, therefore, none but He can reveal Himself! We are most glad that in His tenderness to us He sets Himself forth by many choice metaphors and instructive emblems by which He would make us know some little of that love which passes knowledge. With His own hands, He fills a golden cup out of the river of His own infinity and hands it to us that we may drink and be refreshed. Take, then, these words as being doubly refreshing because they come directly from the Well-Beloved's own mouth and contain rich Revelations of His own all-glorious Self. I feel that I must read them again—"I am the good Shepherd and I know My own, and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me, and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep."

In this text there are three matters about which I shall speak. First, I see, here, *complete character*. "I am the good Shepherd." He is not a half shepherd, but a shepherd in the fullest possible sense. Secondly, I see *complete knowledge*, "and I know My own and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me, and I know the Father." Thirdly, here is *complete sacrifice*. How precious that sentence winds up the whole, "and I lay down My life for the sheep!" He goes the full length to which sacrifice can go! He lays down His soul in the place of His sheep so the words might not be incorrectly translated. He goes the full length of self-sacrifice for His own.

I. First, then, here is COMPLETE CHARACTER. Whenever the Savior describes Himself by any emblem, that emblem is exalted and expanded and yet it is not able to bear all His meaning. The Lord Jesus fills out every type, figure, and character—and when the vessel is filled, there is an overflow. There is more in Jesus, the Good Shepherd, than you can pack away in a shepherd. He is the Good, the Great, the Chief Shepherd—but He is much more. Emblems to set Him forth may be multiplied as the drops of the morning, but the whole multitude will fail to reflect all His brightness! Creation is too small a frame in which to hang His likeness. Human thought is too contracted, human speech too feeble to set Him forth to the fullest. When all the emblems in earth and Heaven shall have described Him to their utmost, there will remain something not yet described. You may square the circle before you can set forth Christ in the language of mortal men! He is inconceivably above our conceptions, unutterably above our utterances!

But notice that He here sets Himself forth as a *Shepherd*. Dwell on this for a moment! A shepherd is such a man as we employ in England to look after sheep for a few months, till they are large enough to be slaughtered. A shepherd after the Oriental sort, such as Abraham, Jacob, or David, is quite another person.

The Eastern shepherd is generally *the owner* of the flock, or at least the son of their owner, and so their proprietor in prospect. The sheep are his own. English shepherds seldom, or never, own the sheep—they are employed to take care of them—and they have no other interest in them. Our native shepherds are a very excellent set of men as a rule—those I have known have been admirable specimens of intelligent working men—yet they are not at all like the Oriental shepherd, and cannot be, for he is usually the owner of the flock which he tends. He remembers how he came into possession of the flock and when and where each of the present sheep was born. He knows where he has led them and what trials he had in connection with them. And he remembers this with the emphasis that they are his own inheritance.

His wealth consists in them. He very seldom has much of a house and he does not usually own much land. He takes his sheep over a good stretch of country which is open common for all his tribe—but his possessions lie in his flocks. Ask him, "How much are you worth?" He answers, "I own so many sheep." In the Latin tongue the word for money is akin to

the word, “sheep,” because to many of the first Romans, wool was their wealth and their fortunes lay in their flocks. The Lord Jesus is our Shepherd—we are His wealth! If you ask what is His heritage, He tells you of “the riches of the Glory of His inheritance in the saints.” Ask Him what are His jewels and He replies, “*They* shall be Mine in that day.” If you ask Him where His treasures are, He will tell you, “The Lord’s portion is His people. Jacob is the lot of His inheritance.” The Lord Jesus Christ has nothing that He values as He does His own people. For their sakes He gave up all that He had and died naked on the Cross. Not only can He say, “I gave Ethiopia and Seba for you,” but He “loved His Church and gave *Himself* for it.” He regards His Church as being His own body, “the fullness of Him that fills all in all.”

The shepherd, as he owns the flock, is also *the caretaker*. He always takes care of them. One of our Brothers now present is a fireman and, as he lives at the fire station, he is always on duty. I asked him whether he was not off duty during certain hours of every day and he said, “No, I am never off duty.” He is on duty when he goes to bed, he is on duty while he is eating his breakfast, he is on duty if he walks down the street! And any time the bell may ring the alarm, he must be in his place and hasten to the fire. Our Lord Jesus Christ is never off duty. He has constant care of His people day and night. He has declared it—“For Zion’s sake will I not hold My peace and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest.” He can truly say what Jacob did, “In the day the drought consumed Me, and the frost by night.” He says of His flock what He says of His garden, “I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment lest any hurt it. I will keep it night and day.”

I cannot tell you all the care a shepherd has over his flock because his anxieties are of such a various kind. Sheep have about as many complaints as men! You do not know much about them and I am not going to enter into details, for the all-sufficient reason that I do not know much about them, myself, but the shepherd knows, and the shepherd will tell you that he leads an anxious life. He seldom has all the flock well at one time. Some one or other is sure to be ailing and he spies it out and has eye and hand and heart ready for its succor and relief. There are many varieties of complaints and needs—and all these are laid upon the shepherd’s heart. He is both possessor and caretaker of the flock.

Then he has to be *the provider*, too, for there is not a woolly head among them that knows anything about the finding and selecting of pasturage. The season may be very dry, and where there once was grass, there may be nothing but a brown powder. It may be that herbage is only to be found by the side of the rippling brooks, here and there, but the sheep do not know anything about that—the shepherd must know everything for them. The shepherd is the sheep’s providence. Both for time and for eternity, for body and for soul, our Lord Jesus supplies all our need out of His riches in Glory. He is the great Storehouse from which we derive everything! He *has* provided, He *does* provide and He *will* provide!

And each one of us may sing, therefore, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want."

But, dear Friends, we often dream that *we* are the shepherds, or that we, at any rate, have to find some of the pasture. I could not help saying, just now, to our friends at our little Prayer Meeting, "There is a passage in the Psalms which makes the Lord do for us what one would have thought we could have done for ourselves—'He makes me to lie down in green pastures.'" Surely, if a sheep can do nothing else, it can lie down! Yet to lie down is the very hardest thing for God's sheep to do! It is here that the full power of the rest-giving Christ has to come in to make our fretful, worrying, doubtful natures lie down and rest. Our Lord is able to give us perfect peace and He will do so if we will simply trust to His abounding care. It is the shepherd's business to be the provider— let us remember this and be very happy.

Moreover, he has to be the leader. He leads the sheep wherever they have to go. I have often been astonished at the shepherds in the South of France, which is so much like Palestine, to see where they will take their sheep. Once every week I saw the shepherd come down to Mentone and conduct all his flock to the beach. I could see nothing for them but big stones. Folk say that perhaps this is what makes the mutton so hard, but I have no doubt the poor creatures get a little taste of salt, or something which does them good. At any rate, they follow the shepherd and away he goes up the steep hillsides, taking long steps, till he reaches points where the grass is growing on the sides of the hills. He knows the way and the sheep have nothing to do but to follow him wherever he goes. Theirs is not to make the way; theirs is not to choose the path, but theirs is to keep close to his heels!

Do you not see our blessed Shepherd leading your own pilgrimage? Cannot you see Him guiding your way? Do you not say, "Yes, He leads me, and it is my joy to follow"? Lead on, O blessed Lord! Lead on and we will follow the prints of Your feet!

The shepherd in the East has also to be the defender of the flock, for wolves yet prowl in those regions. All sorts of wild beasts attack the flock and he must be to the front. Thus is it with our Shepherd. No wolf can attack us without finding our Lord in arms against him. No lion can roar upon the flock without awakening a greater than David. "He that keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." He is a Shepherd, then, and He completely fills the character—much more completely than I can show you just now.

Notice that the text puts an adjective upon the shepherd, decorating him with a chain of gold. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself says, "I am the *good* Shepherd." "The *good* Shepherd"—that is, He is not a thief that steals and only deals with the sheep as He bears them from the fold to the slaughter. He is not a hireling—He does not do merely what He is paid to do, or commanded to do, but He does everything "*con amore*"—with a willing heart. He throws His soul into it. There is a goodness, a tenderness, a willingness, a powerfulness, a force, an energy in all that Jesus does that

makes Him the best possible Shepherd that can be. He is no hireling! Neither is He an idler! Even shepherds who have had their own flocks have neglected them, as there are farmers who do not well cultivate their own farms, but it is never so with Christ. He is the Good Shepherd—good up to the highest point of goodness, good in all that is tender—good in all that is kind, good in all the directions in which a shepherd can be needed. He is good at fight and good at rule. He is good in watchful oversight and good in prudent leadership. He is most eminently good in every way!

And then notice He puts it, “I am *the* good Shepherd.” That is the point I want to bring out. Of other shepherds we can say, he is a shepherd, but this is *the* Shepherd. All others in the world are shadows of the true Shepherd and Jesus is the Substance of them all. That which we see in the world with these eyes is, after all, not the substance, but the type, the shadow. That which we do *not* see with our eyes, that which only our *faith* perceives, is, after all, the *real thing*. I have seen shepherds, but they were only pictures to me. *The* Shepherd, the real, the true, the best, the most sure example of shepherding is the Christ, Himself—and you and I are the sheep. Those sheep we see on yonder mountainside are just types of ourselves—we are the true sheep and Jesus is the true Shepherd. If an angel were to fly over the earth to find out the real sheep and the real Shepherd, he would say, “The sheep of God’s pasture are men and Jehovah is their Shepherd. He is the true, the real Shepherd of the true and real sheep.” All the possibilities that lie in a shepherd are found in Christ. Every good thing that you can imagine to be, or that should be in a shepherd, you find in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, I want you to notice that, according to the text, the Lord Jesus Christ greatly rejoices in this. He says, “I am the good Shepherd.” He does not confess that fact as if He were ashamed of it, but He repeats it in this chapter so many times that it almost reads like the refrain of a song. “I am the good Shepherd”—He evidently rejoices in it. He rolls it under His tongue as a sweet morsel. Evidently it is to His heart’s content. He does not say, “I am the Son of God, I am the Son of Man, I am the Redeemer”—but this He does say—and He congratulates Himself upon it, “I am the good Shepherd.”

This should encourage you and me to get a full hold of the word. If Jesus is so pleased to be my Shepherd, let me be equally pleased to be His sheep and let me avail myself of all the privileges that are wrapped up in His being my Shepherd and in my being His sheep! I see that it will not worry Him for me to be His sheep. I see that my needs will cause Him no perplexity. I see that He will not be going out of His way to attend to my weakness and trouble. He delights to dwell on the fact, “I am the good Shepherd.” He invites me, as it were, to come and bring my needs and woes to Him, look up to Him and be fed by Him. Therefore I will do it! Does it not make you feel truly happy to hear your own Lord, Himself, say and say it to you out of this precious Book, “I am the good Shepherd”? Do you not reply, “Indeed You are a good Shepherd. You are a good Shepherd to me. My heart lays emphasis upon the word ‘good’ and says of You,

‘there is none good but One, and You are that good One.’ You are the good Shepherd of the sheep”?

So much, then, concerning the complete character.

II. May the Holy Spirit bless the word still more, while I speak in my broken way upon the next point—THE COMPLETE KNOWLEDGE.

The knowledge of Christ towards His sheep and of the sheep towards Him is wonderfully complete. I must read the text again—“I know My own and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me, and I know the Father.”

First, then, consider *Christ’s knowledge of His own and the comparison by which He sets it forth*—“As the Father knows Me.” I cannot conceive a stronger comparison! Do you know how much the Father knows the Son, who is His Glory, His Darling, His alter Ego, His other Self—yes, one God with Him? Do you know how intimate the knowledge of the Father must be of His Son who is His own Wisdom, yes, who is His Himself? The Father and the Son are one Spirit! We cannot imagine how intimate that knowledge is and, yet so intimately, so perfectly, does the great Shepherd know His sheep!

He knows their *number*. He will never lose one. He will count them all, again, on that day when the sheep shall pass, again, under the hand of Him that knows them, and then He will make full account of them. “Of all that You have given Me,” He says, “I have lost none.” He knows the number of those for whom He paid the ransom price.

He knows their persons. He knows the age and character of each of His own. He assures us that the very hairs of our head are all numbered! Christ has not an unknown sheep. It is not possible that He should have overlooked or forgotten *one* of them. He has such an intimate knowledge of all who are redeemed with His most precious blood that He never mistakes one of them for another, nor misjudges one of them. He knows their constitutions—those that are weak and feeble, those that are nervous and frightened, those that are strong, those that have a tendency to presumption, those that are sleepy, those that are brave, those that are sick, sorry, worried, or wounded. He knows those that are hunted by the devil, those that are caught up between the jaws of the lion and shaken till the very life is almost driven out of them. He knows their feelings, fears and frights. He knows the secret ins and outs of each of us better than any one of us knows himself!

He knows our *trials*—the particular trial under which you are now bowed down, my Sister. Our difficulties—that special difficulty which seems to block up your way, my Brother, at this very time. All the ingredients of our life are known to Him. “I know My own, as the Father knows Me.” It is impossible to conceive a more complete knowledge than that which the Father has of His only-begotten Son! And it is equally impossible to conceive a more complete knowledge than that which Jesus Christ has of each of His chosen!

He knows our *sins*. I often feel glad to think that He *always knew* our evil natures and what would come of them. When He chose us, He knew

what we were and what we would be. He did not buy His sheep in the dark. He did not choose us without knowing all the devious ways of our past and future lives—

***“He saw us ruined in the Fall,
Yet loved us notwithstanding all.”***

Herein lies the splendor of His Grace. “Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate.” His election implies foreknowledge of all our ill manners. They say of human love that it is blind, but Christ’s love has many eyes and all its eyes are open—and yet He still loves us!

I need not enlarge upon this. It ought, however, to be very full of comfort to you that you are so known of your Lord, especially as He knows you not merely with the cold, clear knowledge of the intellect, but with the knowledge of love and of affection. He knows you in His heart. You are peculiarly dear to Him. You are approved of Him. You are accepted of Him. He knows you by acquaintance with you, not by hearsay. He knows you by communion with you—He has been with you in sweet fellowship. He has read you as a man reads his book and remembers what he reads. He knows you by sympathy with you. He is a Man like yourself—

***“He knows what sore temptations mean,
For He has felt the same.”***

He knows your weaknesses. He knows the points wherein you suffer most, for—

***“In every pang that rends the heart
The Man of Sorrows had a part.”***

He gained this knowledge in the school of sympathetic suffering. “Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered.” “He was in all points made like unto His brethren.” And by being made like we are, He has come to know us and He knows us in a very practical and tender way. You have a watch and it will not run, or it runs very irregularly and so you give it to one who knows nothing about watches and he says, “I will clean it for you.” He will do it more harm than good! But here is the very person who made the watch. He says, “I put every wheel into its place. I made the whole of it, from beginning to end.” You think to yourself, “I feel the utmost confidence in trusting that man with my watch. He can surely make it right, for he made it.” It often cheers my heart to think that since the Lord made me, He can make me right and keep me so to the end. My Maker is my Redeemer! He that first made me has made me, again, and will make me perfect to His own praise and Glory! That is the first part of this complete knowledge.

The second part of the subject is *our knowledge of the Lord and the fact by which it is illustrated*. “And My own know Me, even as I know the Father.” I think I hear some of you say, “I do not see so much in that. I can see a great deal more in Christ’s knowing us.” Beloved, I see a great deal in our knowing Christ! That He should know me is great condescension, but it must be easy for Him to know me. Being so Divine, with such piercing eyes as His, it is amazingly condescending, as I say, but it is not difficult for Him to know *me*. The marvel is that I should ever know Him! That

such a stupid, blind, deaf, dead soul as mine should ever know Him and should know Him as He knows the Father, is 10,000 miracles in one! Oh, Sirs, this is a wonder so great that I do not think you and I yet understand it to the fullest, or else we would sit down in glad surprise and say—"This proves Him to be the Good Shepherd, indeed, not only that He knows His flock, but that He has taught them so well that they know Him!" With such a flock as Christ has, that He should be able to train His sheep so that they should be able to know Him—and to know Him as He knows the Father—is miraculous!

O Beloved, if this is true of us, that we know our Shepherd, we may clap our hands for very joy! And yet I think it is true even now. At any rate, I know so much of my Lord that nothing gives me so much joy as to hear of Him. Brothers and Sisters, there is no boasting in this personal assertion of mine! It is only the minimum truth! You can say the same, can you not? If anybody were to preach to you the finest sermon that was ever delivered, would it charm you if there were no Christ in it? No! But you will come and hear me talk about Jesus Christ in words as simple as I can find—and you cry, one to another, "It was good to be there."—

***"You dear Redeemer, dying Lamb,
We love to hear of Thee!
No music's like Your charming name,
Nor half so sweet can be."***

Now mark that this is the way in which Jesus knows the Father. Jesus delights in His Father and you delight in Jesus. I know you do, and here the comparison holds good.

Moreover, does not the dear name of Jesus stir your very soul? What is it that makes you feel as if you wish to hasten away, that you might be doing holy service for the Lord? What makes your very heart awake and feel ready to leap out of your body? What but hearing of the glories of Jesus? Play on what string you please and my ear is deaf to it—but when you once begin to tell of Calvary and sing the song of free Grace and dying love, oh, then my soul opens all her ears, drinks in the music and then her blood begins to stir—and she is ready to shout for joy! Do you not even now sing—

***"Oh, for this love let rocks and hills
Their lasting silence break
And all harmonious human tongues
The Savior's praises speak.
Yes, we will praise You, dearest Lord,
Our souls are all on flame,
Hosanna round the spacious earth
To Your adored name"?***

Yes, we know Jesus! We feel the power of our union with Him. We know Him, Brothers and Sisters, so that we are not to be deceived by false shepherds. There is a way, nowadays, of preaching Christ against Christ. It is a new device of the devil to set up Jesus against Jesus—His Kingdom against His Atonement—His precepts against His doctrines. The half Christ, in his example, is put up to frighten souls away from the whole

Christ who saves the souls of men from guilt as well as from sin, from Hell as well as from folly. But they cannot deceive *us* in that way. No, Beloved, we know our Shepherd from all others! We know Him from a statue covered with clothes. We know the living Christ, for we have come into living contact with Him and we cannot be deceived any more than Jesus Christ, Himself, can be deceived about the Father. “My own know Me, even as I know the Father.” We know Him by union with Him and by communion with Him. “We have seen the Lord.” “Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.”

We know Him by love—our soul cleaves to Him even as the heart of Christ cleaves to the Father. We know Him by trusting Him—“He is all my salvation and all my desire.” I remember once feeling many questions as to whether I was a child of God or not. I went into a little chapel and I heard a good man preach. He was a simple working man. I heard him preach and I made my handkerchief damp with my tears as I heard him talk about Christ and the precious blood. When I was preaching the same things to others, I was wondering whether this Truth of God was mine, but while I was hearing, for myself, I knew it *was* mine, for my very soul lived upon it! I went to that good man and thanked him for the sermon. He asked me who I was. When I told him, he turned all manner of colors. “Why,” he said, “Sir, that was your own sermon.” I said, “Yes, I knew it was and it was good of the Lord to feed me with food that I had prepared for others.” I perceived that I had a true taste for what I, myself, knew to be the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Oh, yes, we do love our good Shepherd! We cannot help it!

And we know Him, also, by a deep sympathy with Him, for what Christ desires to do, we also long to do. He loves to save souls and so do we! Would we not save all the people in a whole street if we could? Yes, in a whole city and in the whole world! Nothing makes us so glad as that Jesus Christ is a Savior. “There is news in the paper,” says one. That news is often of small importance to our hearts. I happened to hear that a poor servant girl had heard me preach the Truth of God and found Christ—and I confess I feel more interest in that fact than in all the rise and fall of Whigs or Tories! What does it matter who is in Parliament, so long as souls are saved? That is the main thing. If the Kingdom of Christ grows, all the other kingdoms are of small account. That is the one Kingdom for which we live and for which we would gladly die! As there is a boundless sympathy between the Father and the Son, so is there between Jesus and ourselves.

We know Christ as He knows the Father because we are one with Him. The union between Christ and His people is as real and as mysterious as the union between the Son and the Father.

We have a beautiful picture before us. Can you realize it for a minute? The Lord Jesus here among us—picture Him! He is the Shepherd. Then, around Him are His own people and wherever He goes, they go! He leads them into green pastures and beside still waters. And there is this peculiarity about them—He knows them as He looks upon each of them—and

they, each of them, know Him! There is a deeply intimate and mutual knowledge between them. As surely as He knows them, they know Him. The world knows neither the Shepherd nor the sheep, but they know each other. As surely, as truly and, as deeply as God the Father knows the Son, so does this Shepherd know His sheep! And as God the Son knows His Father, so do these sheep know their Shepherd! Thus in one band, united by mutual union, they travel through the world to Heaven. "I know My own and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me, and I know the Father." Is not that a blessed picture? God help us to figure in it!

III. The last subject is COMPLETE SACRIFICE. The complete sacrifice is thus described, "*I lay down My life for the sheep.*"

These words are repeated in this chapter in different forms some four times. The Savior keeps on saying, "I lay down My life for the sheep." Read the 11th verse—"The good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep." The 15th verse—"I lay down My life for the sheep." The 17th verse—"I lay down My life that I may take it again." The 18th verse—"I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again." It looks as if this was another refrain of our Lord's personal hymn. I call this passage His Pastoral Song. The good Shepherd, with His pipe, sings to Himself and to His flock, and this comes in at the end of each stanza, "I lay down My life for the sheep."

Did it not mean, first, that He was always doing so? All His life He was, as it were, laying it down for them. He was divesting Himself of the garments of life until He came to be fully disrobed on the Cross. All the life He had; all the power He had, He was always laying it out for His sheep. It means that, to begin with.

And then it means that the Sacrifice was actively performed. It was always in the doing as long as He lived, but He did it *actively*. He did not merely die for the sheep, but He laid down His life, which is another thing. Many a man has died for Christ—it was all that he could do. But we cannot lay down our lives, because they are due already as a debt of Nature to God and we are not permitted to die at our own wills. That were suicidal and improper. With the Lord Christ it was totally different. He was, as it were, actively passive. "I lay down My life for the sheep. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father."

I like to think of our Good Shepherd not merely as dying for us, but as *willingly* dying—laying down His life while He had that life—using it for us and, when the time came, putting off that life on our behalf. This has now been actually done. When He spoke these words, it had not been done. At this time it has been done. "I lay down My life for the sheep" may now be read, "I *have laid down* My life for the sheep." For you, Beloved, He has given His hands to the nails and His feet to the cruel iron! For you He has borne the fever and the bloody sweat! For you He has cried "Eloi, Eloi, lame Sabachthani!" For you He has given up the ghost.

And the beauty of it is that He is not ashamed to avow the objective of it. "I lay down My life for the sheep." Whatever Christ did for the world—and I am not one of those who would limit the bearings of the death of

Christ upon the world—yet His peculiar Glory is, “I lay down My life *for the sheep*.”

Great Shepherd, do You mean to say that You have died for such as these? What? For these sheep? Died for *them*? What? Die for sheep, Shepherd? Surely You have other reasons for which to live beside sheep! Have You not other loves, other joys? We know that it would grieve You to see the sheep killed, torn by the wolf, or scattered. But You really have not gone so far in love for them that for the sake of those poor creatures You would lay down your life? “Ah, yes,” He says, “I would, I have!” Carry your wondering thoughts to Christ Jesus. What? What? What? Son of God, infinitely great and inconceivably glorious Jehovah, would You lay Your life down for men and women? They are no more in comparison with You than so many ants and wasps, pitiful and obnoxious creatures! You could make ten thousand millions of them with a word, or crush them out of existence with one blow of Your hand! They are poor things, make the most you can of them. They have hard hearts and wandering wills—and the best of them are no better than they should be! Savior, did you die for such? He looks around and says, “Yes, I did. I did. I laid down My life for the sheep. I am not ashamed of them and I am not ashamed to say that I died for them.”

No, Beloved, He is not ashamed of His dying love! He has told it to His Brethren up yonder and made it known to all the servants in His Father’s house—and this has become the song of that house—“Worthy is the Lamb that was slain!” Shall not we take it up and say, “For You were slain and have redeemed us to God by Your blood”? Whatever men may say about Particular Redemption, Christ is not ashamed of it! He glories that He laid down His life for the sheep. *For the sheep*, mark you! He says not for the *world*. There is a bearing of the death of Christ towards the world, but here He boasts and glories in the specialty of His Sacrifice. “I lay down My life *for the sheep*”—“instead of the sheep,” it might be read.

He glories in *substitution* for His people! He makes it His boast when He speaks of His chosen, that He suffered in their place—that He bore, that they might never bear the wrath of God on account of sin! What He glories in, we also glory in! “God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world!”

O Beloved, what a blessed Christ we have who *loves* us so, who *knows* us so—whom we also know and love! May others be taught to know Him and to love Him! Yes, at this hour may they come and put their trust in Him, as the sheep trust to the shepherd! We ask it for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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OTHER SHEEP AND ONE FLOCK NO. 1713

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 25, 1883,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice and they shall be one fold and one shepherd (or more correctly one flock; one shepherd).”
John 10:16.*

THIS verse is guarded before and behind by two notable statements. Before it we hear the Master say, “I lay down My life for the sheep,” and immediately after it we meet with another grand sentence, “I lay down My life, that I might take it again.” The first statement, “I lay down My life for the sheep” is the sheet anchor of our confidence when storms assail the vessel of the Church. The Lord Jesus has, by His death, proved His love to His people and His determination to save them is made clear by His laying down His life for them. Therefore doubt and fear should be banished and the very name of despair should be unknown among the Israel of God! Now are we sure of the love of the Son of God to His chosen flock, for we have an Infallible proof of it in the laying down of His life for them.

Now, also, are we absolutely certain that Christ's purpose is perpetual—it cannot alter. The Lord Jesus has committed Himself to that purpose beyond recall, for the price is paid and the deed is done by which the purpose is to be effected. Beyond this we are hereby assured beyond a shadow of a doubt that the Divine purpose will be carried out, for it cannot be that Christ should die in vain. We think it a kind of blasphemy to suppose that His blood should be spilt for nothing. Whatever was proposed to be accomplished by the laying down of the life of the Son of God, we feel absolutely certain that it will be fully performed in the teeth of all adversaries, for we are not, now, speaking of *man's* design, but of the purpose of God to which He devoted the heart's blood of His only-begotten Son!

We both patiently hope and quietly wait to see the salvation of God and the performance of all His designs of love, for that death upon the Cross is a cause which will surely produce its effect. Christ did not die at a gamble. The supposition of a Savior disappointed in the results of His bloodshedding is not to be tolerated for a moment! In darkest times that glorious Cross flames with light! No evil event can prevent its efficacy. Still in that sign we conquer! If Jesus has laid down His life for the sheep, then all is well. Rest assured of the Father's love to those sheep! Rest assured of the immutability of the Divine purpose concerning them and rest assured of its ultimate achievement! It must not, *shall* not be that God's own Son shall lay down His life in vain! Though Heaven and earth should pass away, the precious heart's blood of the Son of God shall accomplish the end for which it was so freely poured forth. Jesus says, “I lay down My life for the sheep,” therefore the sheep must live who have been redeemed at

such a price as this and the Shepherd in them shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied!

So far we are cheered by the vanguard which marches in advance of our text. But as if the poor, timid people of God would, nevertheless, at times fancy that the purpose of Christ would not be achieved, behold, in the rear another sentence, "I lay down My life that I might take it again." He that died and so redeemed His people by price, *lives* that He may, Himself, personally see that they are also redeemed by power! If a man dies to achieve a purpose, you feel sure that his very soul must have been in it. But if that man should rise again from the dead and still pursue his purpose, you would see how resolutely he was set on his design. If he rose with greater power, clothed with higher rank and elevated to a more eminent position—and if he still pursued his great objective, you would, then, be more than certain of his never-ending determination to perform his design.

In the risen life of Jesus, assurance is made doubly sure—now are we sure that His design must be carried out, nothing can hinder it! We dare not dream that the Son of God can be disappointed of the objective for which He died and for which He lives again! If Jesus died for a purpose, He will accomplish it. If Jesus *rose* for a purpose, He will accomplish it. If Jesus *lives* forever for a purpose, He will accomplish it. To me this conclusion seems to be past question—and if it is so—it puts the destiny of the sheep beyond all hazard. Did not Paul argue much in the same way when he said, "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life"?

If any of you have been cast down by reason of present difficulties, let these two grand texts sound their silver trumpets in your ears! If you have been looking forth from the windows and the outlook has seemed to be exceedingly dark, take courage, I pray you, from what your Lord has done! His death and Resurrection are prophetic of good things to come! You dare not think that Christ will miss the objective of His death—you dare not think that He will miss the purpose of His glory-life! Why, then, are you cast down? His will shall be done on earth as it is in Heaven, as surely as He came from Heaven to earth and has returned from earth to Heaven! His purpose shall be carried out as surely as He died and lives again!

Is not this the secret reason why, when the Lord appeared to His sorrowing servant John, He said to him, "I am He that lives and was dead and am alive forevermore, amen, and have the keys of death and of Hell"? Is not the dying and then living Shepherd the safety and the glory of the flock? Well, then, comfort one another with these words of your Lord, "I lay down My life for the sheep." "I lay down My life, that I might take it again."

I. There are four things in the text, itself, which deserve your attention, for they are full of consolation to minds troubled by the evil of those perilous times. The first is this—OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST HAD A PEOPLE UNDER THE WORST CIRCUMSTANCES. When He speaks of "other sheep," it is implied that He had certain sheep at the time. And when He says, "other sheep have I which are not of this fold," it is manifest that even then, the Good Shepherd had a fold! The times were grievously dark

and evil, but a few true hearts clustered about the Savior and, by His Divine power, were protected as in a "fold."

It has been supposed that our Lord, here, alludes to the Jews as, "this fold," but the Jews, as such, were never Christ's fold. He could not have meant to call the Jews around Him, His fold, for a little farther on He exclaims, "You believe not because you are not of My sheep, as I said unto you." His fold was that little handful of disciples whom, by His personal ministry, He had gathered, and who stood folded, as it were, about their Good Shepherd. They might be sneered at as a little company, but He says to His enemies who are standing outside the fold foaming with wrath, "Other sheep I have that are not of this little fold: these you cannot see, but I have them, none the less, for that these, I must, in due time, lead, and then there shall be one flock and one Shepherd." See, then, that the Lord Jesus had a people in the worst times!

Doubtless *these* days are exceedingly dangerous and I have certain Brethren round me who never allow me to forget it, for they play well in the minor key and dwell most judiciously upon the necessary topic of the general declension of the Church and the growing depravity of the world! I would not stop them from their faithful warnings, although I can assure them that, with slight variations, I have heard the same tune for years! Many a time have they afflicted me, from my youth up, and it has been good for me. I remember hearing some 30 years ago that we lived in awful times and, as nearly as I can recollect, the times have been awful ever since and I suppose they always will be! The watchmen of the night see everything except the coming of the morning. Our pilots perceive dangers ahead and steer with caution. Perhaps this is as it should be. At any rate, it is better than sleeping in a fool's paradise!

Be this as it may, it is clear that the days of our Lord Jesus Christ were emphatically terrible times. No age can be worse than that age which literally crucified the Son of God, crying, "Away with Him! Away with Him!" Whether the present days are better than those, I will not determine, but they cannot be worse. The day of our Lord's first advent was the culmination and the crisis of the world's career of sin—and yet the Good Shepherd had a fold among men in the midnight of history! There was a sad lack of vital godliness in those days. A few godly ones watched for the coming of the Messiah, but they were very few, such as good old Simeon and Anna. A small remnant sighed and cried for the abounding sin of the nation, but the salt was almost gone. Israel was becoming like Sodom and Gomorrah!

The choice band of mourners in Zion had not quite died out, but their number was so few that a child might write the number down. Speaking generally, when the Savior came to His own, His own received Him not. The mass of professing people in that day was rotten throughout! The life of God was gone—it could not dwell with the Pharisees nor the Sadducees, nor any of the sects of the times, for they were altogether gone out of the way. The Lord looked and there was no man to help or to uphold His righteous cause—those who professed to be its champions had altogether become unprofitable. As for the religious teachers, their mouth had become an open sepulcher and the poison of asps was under their tongues. And yet the Lord had a people in Judea even then!

On earth there was still a fold for sheep whom He had chosen who knew the Shepherd's voice and gathered to His call and followed Him

faithfully. But it was a time when will-worship abounded. Men had given up worshipping God according to the Scriptures. They worshipped according to their own fancies. Then you might hear a trumpet at every corner of the street, for Pharisees were distributing their alms! You could see fathers and mothers neglected, families broken up because the scribes had taught the people that if they said, "Corban," they were free from all obligation to help father or mother. They taught for doctrines, the commandments of *men*—the Commandments of God were laid aside. To wear broad-bordered garments and phylacteries was exalted into a matter of first importance, while to lie and cheat were mere trifles. To eat with unwashed hands was thought to be a crime, but to devour widow's houses was a thing which, to the most self-righteous Pharisee, caused no qualm of conscience. The land was filled with will-worship and that is one great and growing hindrance nowadays! But for all that, Christ had a fold of His own and there were those who knew His voice—and these, following at His heels—were enabled to go in and out and find pasture.

It was a day when there was the most fierce opposition to the real Truths of God. Our Lord Jesus could hardly open His mouth but they took up stones to stone Him! It was said that He had a devil and was mad; that He was a "gluttonous Man and a winebibber, the friend of publicans and sinners." The rage of men against Christ was, then, boiling at its greatest heat, till at last they took Him and nailed Him to the Cross because they could not endure that He should live among them. And yet He had His own in those dreadful times! Even then He had His chosen company for whom He laid down His life, of whom He said to the Father, "Yours they were and You gave them to Me; and they have kept Your Word." To those He spoke, saying, "You are they that have continued with Me in My temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as My Father has appointed unto Me."

Why, Beloved, I gather that though, at this time, there is a sad decline in vital godliness, and though will-worship sweeps over the land with its tumultuous waves; and though opposition to the pure Truth of Christ is more fierce than ever; nevertheless, even at this present time, there is a remnant according to the election of Grace! Even today the answer of God to the complaining Prophet is, "Yet have I left Me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees of which have not bowed unto Baal." Why, my Brothers and Sisters, in confidence you possess your souls!

Now, it is to be noticed that this little company of Christ's people He calls a "fold." Afterwards they were to be a "flock," but while His bodily Presence was with them, they were pre-eminently a "fold." They were few in number, all of one race, mostly in one place and so compact that they could fitly be said to be a fold. One glance of the Shepherd's bodily eyes saw them all. Happily, also, they were so thoroughly distinct from the rest of the world that they were eminently and evidently folded. Our Lord said of them, "You are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." He had shut them in to Himself and shut the world out. Within this blessed seclusion they were perfectly safe, so that their Lord said to the Father, "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name: those that You gave Me, I have kept and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the Scripture might be fulfilled."

Whatever their mistakes and faults, and they were many, yet they did not conform themselves to the generation among which they dwelt—they were kept apart as in a fold while Jesus was with them. In that fold they were protected from all ill weathers, from the wolf and the thief. The Lord's Presence with them was like a wall of fire round about them—they had only to run to Him and He answered all their adversaries and defended them from reproach. Like another David, the Lord Jesus guarded His flock from all the ravenous lions that sought to devour them. True, even in that little fold there were goats, for He, Himself, said, "I have chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil." Even then, they were not absolutely pure, but they were wonderfully so—and they were marvelously separated from the world, preserved from false doctrine and kept from dividing and scattering.

Within that fold they were being strengthened for the future following of their great Shepherd. They were learning a thousand things which would be useful to them when, afterwards, He sent them forth as lambs among wolves, so that they would be "wise as serpents and harmless as doves" because of what they had learned of their Lord. Thus you see that in the worst times the Lord had a Church! I might almost say the *best* Church! May I not call it so? For that Apostolic Church, upon which the Holy Spirit descended, was not a whit behind the Church of any era that succeeded it! It was the choice flock of all the flocks of the ages, even that feeble company of which Jesus said, "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

Yet you see one thing is not able here, that when Jesus had thus shut them all in, He would not allow them to become exclusive and glide into a state of selfish satisfaction. No, He opens wide the door of the sheepfold and cries to them, "Other sheep I have." Thus He checks a tendency so common in the Church to be forgetful of those *outside* the fold and to make one's own personal salvation the sum and substance of religion! I do not think it wrong to sing—

***"We are a garden walled around,
Chosen and made peculiar ground.
A little spot, enclosed by Grace
Out of the world's wide wilderness."***

On the contrary, I judge that the verse is true and sweet, and ought to be sung. But then there are other truths besides this one. To us, also, the Shepherd opens the door of the enclosed garden and says, "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose." The fold is our abode, but it is not our sole sphere of action, for we are to go forth from it into all the world seeking our Brothers and Sisters!

Seeing that our Lord has other sheep which are not of this fold, and these are to be found by Him through His faithful people, let us awaken ourselves to the holy enterprise—

***"O, come, let us go and find them!
In the paths of death they roam.
At the close of the day
It will be sweet to say,
'I have brought some lost one home.'"***

Beloved, I shall leave this point when I have said to you—never despair! The Lord of Hosts is with His people! They may be few and poor, but they

are Christ's and that makes them precious. A common sheepfold is not a thing of glory and beauty—four rough walls compose it and it is but a hovel for sheep—even so, the Church may appear mean and base in men's eyes, but then it is the sheepfold of our Shepherd-King and the sheep belong to the Lord God Almighty! There is a glory about this which angels do not fail to see! Here is human weakness and also Divine power!

We do not, I fear, estimate the strength of the Church aright. I read of three Brothers who had to carry on a college when funds were running short. One of them complained that they had no helpers and could not hope to succeed. But another, who had more faith, said to his Brother, "Do you ask what we can do? Do you say that we are so few? I do not see that we are few, for we are a thousand at the least." "A thousand of us," said the other, "how is that?" "Why," replied the first, "I am a cipher, you are a cipher and our Brother is a cipher—so we have three nothings to begin with. Then I am sure the Lord Jesus is ONE—put Him down before the three ciphers and we have a thousand, directly." Was not this bravely spoken? What power we have when we do but set the great ONE in the front!

You are *nothing*, Brother. You are *nothing*, Sister. I am *nothing*—we are all nothing when we are put together without our Lord! But, oh, if He stands in front of us, then we are thousands! And again, it is true on earth as in Heaven—the chariots of the Lord are 20,000, even thousands of messengers—the Lord is among them as in the Holy Place. Why, my Friends, be not cast down at any time, but say to yourselves—We are not even, now, come to so dark a night as once fell on this world. We are not, at this painful moment, in such a desperate condition as the Church of Christ was in His own day!

And if the Lord is spiritually in the midst of us, we need not fear though the earth is removed and the mountains are carried into the midst of the sea, for there is a city which abides forever, and there is a river, the streams of which shall, forever, make her glad! God is in the midst of her and she shall not be moved! God shall help her and that right early. Why, my fellow Believers, be strong and of good courage!

II. But now, secondly, it is clear, for the text teaches it in so many words, that OUR LORD HAS OTHER SHEEP NOT YET KNOWN TO US. He says, "Other sheep I have." I want you to notice that strong expression, "Other sheep I have"—not, "I *shall* have," but, "I *have* other sheep." Many of these sheep were not even in the thoughts of the Apostles. I do not think it had crossed the mind of Peter, James, or John that their Lord had any sheep in this poor savage island, then scarcely regarded as being within the borders of the earth. I do not suppose the Apostles, at that time, even *dreamed* that their Lord Jesus had sheep in Rome.

No, their most liberal notion was that the Hebrew nation might be converted and the scattered of the seed of Abraham gathered together in one. Our Shepherd-King has greater thoughts than the most large-hearted of His servants. He delights to enlarge the area of our love. "Other sheep have I." You do not know them, but the Shepherd does. Unknown to ministers, unknown to the warmest-hearted Christians, there are many in the world whom Jesus claims for His own through the Covenant of Grace. Who are these? Well, these "other sheep" were, first, His chosen, for He has a people whom He has chosen out of the world and ordained unto eternal life. "You have not chosen Me," He said, "but I have chosen you"—

there is a people upon whom His sovereignty has fixed its loving choice from before the foundation of the world! And of these elect ones, He says, "I have them."

His election of them is the basis of His property in them. These are, also, those whom His Father gave Him, of whom He says in another place, "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me." And again, "Of those whom You have given Me I have lost none." His Father's eternal donation of them seals His title to them! These are the people for whom He peculiarly and especially laid down His life that they might be the redeemed of the Lord. "Christ loved His Church and gave Himself for it." These are they that are redeemed from among men, of whom we read, "You are not your own, you are bought with a price."

The Lord Jesus laid down His life for His sheep—He tells us so, Himself, and none can question His own statement. These are those of whom Jesus says, "I have them." For these He entered into suretyship engagements, even as Jacob undertook the flock of Laban and watched day and night that he should not lose them. And if one had been lost, he would have had to make it good. These sheep represent a people for whom Christ has entered into suretyship engagements with His Father that He will deliver each one of them safely at the last day of account, not one of them being absent when the sheep shall pass, again, under the hand of Him that counts them as they will at the last great day. "Other sheep I have," says Christ. How wonderful that He should say, "I have them," though as yet they were far off by wicked works. What was their state? They were a people without shepherd, without fold, without pasture, lost on the mountains, wandering in the woods, lying down to die, ready to be devoured by the wolf—yet Jesus says, "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold."

They were sheep that had wandered exceedingly far, even into the most shameful iniquity—and yet He says, "I have them." Bad as this world is, today, it must have been far worse in the cruel Roman age as to open vices and unmentionable abominations. And yet these wanderers were the sheep of Christ and, in due time, they were delivered from their sins and fetched away from all the superstition, idolatry and filthiness into which they had wandered! They were Christ's even while they were afar off—He had chosen them, the Father had given them to Him, He had bought them—and He determined to have them. No, He says, "I *have* them"—and He calls them His own even while they are transgressing and running headlong to destruction!

It seems to me that these were as well known to Christ as those that were in His fold. I think I see Him, the Divine Man, standing there confronting His adversaries. And when He has cast His glance upon His foes, I see His eyes going to and fro throughout the whole earth to gaze upon a sight far more pleasant to Him. While He speaks, His eyes flash with joyous fire as they light upon thousands out of every kindred and people and tongue! And as He quotes, to Himself, the words of the 22nd Psalm—"All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before You. For the kingdom is the Lord's and He is the Governor among the nations. A seed shall serve Him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation"—He spies out the myriads that are His and He rejoices before His scornful foes as He sees His growing kingdom which they are powerless to overthrow!

Proud, self-righteous men may blindly refuse the leadership of the Lord's anointed Shepherd, but He shall not be without a flock to be His honor and reward! Did not the Lord, at that time, rejoice in His inmost heart and soliloquize within Himself thus—"Though Israel is not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and My God shall be My strength"? This led Him to say, "Other sheep I have." In this there is great comfort for God's people who love the souls of their fellow men. The Lord has a people in London and He knows them. "I have much people in this city," was said to the Apostle when, as yet, nobody was converted there! "I have them," says Christ though as yet they had not sought Him.

Our Lord Jesus has an elect redeemed people all over the world at this time, though as yet they are not called by Grace. I know not where they are, nor where they are not—but for certain He has them somewhere since it still stands true—"Other sheep I have which are not of this fold." This is a part of our authority for going out to find the lost sheep, for we, Brothers and Sisters, have a right to go anywhere to enquire about our Master's sheep. I have no business to go hunting after other people's sheep. But if they are my Master's sheep, who shall stop me over hill or dale enquiring, "Have you seen my Master's sheep?" If any say, "You intrude in this land," let the answer be, "We are after our Master's sheep which have strayed here! Excuse our pushing further than politeness might allow, but we are in haste to find a lost sheep."

This is your excuse for going into a house where you are not wanted, to try and leave your tracts and speak a word for Christ! Say, "I think my Master has one of His sheep here and I have come after it." You have received a search-warrant from the King of Kings and, therefore, you have a right to enter and search after your Lord's stolen property! If men belonged to the devil, we would not rob the enemy, himself, but they do not belong to him! He neither made them nor bought them and, therefore, we seize them in the King's name whenever we can lay hands on them. I doubt not but what there are some here, this morning, who neither know nor love the Savior as yet, who, nevertheless, belong to the Redeemer—and He will yet bring them to Himself and to His flock. Therefore it is that we preach with confidence!

I do not come into this pulpit hoping that, perhaps, somebody will, of His own free will, return to Christ—that may be so or not—but my hope lies in another quarter. I hope that my Master will lay hold of some of them and say, "You are Mine and you shall be Mine. I claim you for Myself." My hope arises from the freeness of Grace—not from the freedom of the will! A poor haul of fish will any Gospel fisherman make if he takes none but those who are eager to leap into the net! Oh, for an hour of Jesus among this crowd! Oh, for five minutes of the great Shepherd's handiwork! When the good Shepherd overtakes His lost sheep, He has not much to say to it.

According to the parable, He says nothing. But He lays hold of it, lays it on His shoulders and carries it home—and that is what I want the Lord to do, this morning, with some of you whose will is all the other way, whose wishes and desires are all contrary to Him. I want Him to come with sacred violence and mighty love to restore you to your Father and your God! Not that you will be saved against your will, but your consent will be sweetly gained. Oh, that the Lord Jesus would take you in hand and never

let you go again! May He sweetly say to you, "Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn you."

III. Our third head contains in it much delight. Our LORD MUST BRING OR LEAD THOSE OTHER SHEEP. "Them also I must bring"—read it, and it will be more accurate—"them also I must *lead*." Christ must be at the head of these other sheep and they must follow His lead—"them also I must lead, and they shall hear My voice," Those who belong to Christ, secretly, must be openly led to follow Him. First, it is Christ that has to do it, even as He has done it up to now. The text says, "Them also I must bring," and this language implies that those who have already come, He has brought. All that were in the fold, Christ had brought there—and all that are to be in the fold—He must lead there.

All of us who are saved have been saved by the mighty power of God in Christ Jesus. Is it not so? Is there anyone among us that came to Jesus without Jesus first coming to Him? Surely, no! Without exception, we all admit that it was His love that sought us out and brought us to be the sheep of His pasture. Now, as the Lord Jesus has done this for us, He must do it for others, for they will never come unless He fetches them. Here comes in that emphatic, imperious, "must." The proverb is that, "must," is for the king—and the king may say, "must," to all of us. But did you ever hear of a "must" that bound the king, himself, and constrained him?

Kings generally do not care to have it said to them, you "must," but there is a King, the likes of which King there never was nor shall be for glory and for dominion—and yet He is bound by a "must"—the Prince Immanuel says, "Them also I *must* bring." Whenever Jesus says, "must," something comes of it! Who can resist the Omnipotent "must"? Clear out, devils! Clear out, wicked men! Flee, darkness! Die, O death! If Jesus says, "must," we know what is going to happen—difficulties vanish, impossibilities are achieved! Glory, glory, the Lord shall get the victory! Jesus says of His chosen, His redeemed, His espoused, His covenanted ones, "Them also I *must* bring" and, therefore, it must be done!

Furthermore, He tells us how He must do it. He says, "They shall hear My voice." So that our Lord is going to save people, still, by the Gospel! I do not look for any other means of converting men beyond the simple preaching of the Gospel and the opening of men's ears to hear it—"They shall hear My voice." The old methods are to be followed to the end of the chapter. Our standing orders are—"Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." We are not commissioned to do *anything* else but continue to preach the Gospel, the same Gospel which saved us and which was delivered to us at the beginning! We know of no alterations, enlargements, or amendments to the Gospel! We obey and follow one Voice, not many voices. One Gospel of salvation is to be proclaimed everywhere! And no other work is in our commission.

Then it is added, "They shall hear My voice." It is promised that they shall first lend an attentive ear and then that they shall yield a willing heart to the voice of Divine love and follow Jesus where He leads! "What then?" Asks one. "Suppose I speak in Christ's name and they will not hear?" "Do not suppose what cannot be! The Scripture says of the chosen sheep—"they *shall* hear My voice." The rest remain in their blindness, but the redeemed will hear and see! Do not again say, "Suppose they will not!"

You must not suppose *anything* that is contrary to what Jesus promises when He says, "They shall hear My voice." The graceless may stop up their ears if they will—and perish with Christ's voice as a witness against them—but His own redeemed shall hear the heavenly voice and obey it! There is no resisting this Divine necessity! Jesus says—"I must bring them, and they shall hear My voice."

It was with this that Paul turned to the Gentiles and said to the Jews, "Be it known, therefore, unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles and that they will hear it." He had no fear about the reception the Word of God would meet with—neither ought we to entertain any, since Christ has a people who must be led—and shall hear the voice of the Bishop and Shepherd of souls! We have heard it said that, "If Christ must have His people, what is the good of preaching?" What would be the good of preaching if it were *otherwise*? Why, dear Sir, this fact is one great reason why we preach! That which you suppose to be a motive for inaction is the strongest motive for energetic action! Because the Lord has a people that must be saved, we feel an imperious necessity laid upon us to join with Him in bringing this people to Himself. They must come and we must fetch them! Christian Brothers, do you not feel that you must help in compelling them to come to the wedding feast? Is it not laid upon you that you must go after lost souls, that you must speak to them, seeing that you must have a hand in bringing these blood-bought ones to Christ by His Holy Spirit?

And again, are there not some in this place who feel a necessity laid upon them, also, that they must come? Do I not hear some of you saying, "I have stood out a long while, but I must come. I have resisted Divine Grace long enough. And now Christ has laid His hands on me—I must come"? How I wish that a heavenly, "must," a blessed necessity of Omnipotent decree may overshadow you and bear you as a sheep to the fold! Oh that you may now yield yourselves unto God because the love of Christ constrains you! Submit yourselves unto God! Acknowledge the supreme authority of His Grace which shall lead every thought into captivity, that from this day on Christ may reign in your hearts and put every enemy under His feet!

He says, "Him that comes to Me I will in nowise cast out." "I will trust Him," says one. "I feel I must." Just so and that trust is a mark of your election of God, for, "He that believes in Him has everlasting life." "Whom He did predestinate, them He also called." If He is calling you, it is because He did predestinate you—and you may rest quite sure of it—and yield to Him with holy joy and delight! As for me, I feel so happy in preaching the Gospel because I am not fishing with a, "chance," or a, "perhaps," that some may come. The Lord knows them that are His and they *will* come! Every congregation is, in this sense, a picked assembly.

I felt, this morning, when I came here, that there were so many Friends out in the country for the holidays that we should very likely have a thin house. I rejoice that I was altogether wrong in my reckoning, but even then I thought, God has a people that He will bring whom He means to bless. Here they are! And now, while standing here, I know that God's Word "shall not return to Him void, but it shall accomplish that which He pleases, and shall prosper in the thing to which He has sent it."

IV. But now, lastly, OUR LORD GUARANTEES THE UNITY OF HIS CHURCH. "Them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice and there shall be one fold and one shepherd." We hear a great deal about the unity of the Church and notions upon this subject are rather wild. We are to have the Roman and the Greek and the Anglican Church all joined together in one—if they were so, the result would not be worth two-pence—and much evil would come of it! God has, I doubt not, a chosen people among all these three great corporations, but the union of such questionable organizations would be a dire omen of mischief to the world!

The dark ages and a worse Popedom than ever would soon be upon us! The more those three quarrel with each other, the better for truth and righteousness! I should like to see the Anglican Church standing at drawn daggers with the Roman—and coming into a more and more open opposition to its superstitions. I would to God that the national Church would, in all things, be delivered from the Pope of Rome and his Anti-Christian enormities! Truly, this has been carried out as a matter of fact—there never was but one Shepherd of the sheep yet—even Christ Jesus! And there never was but one flock of God yet, and there never will be! There is one spiritual Church of God—there never were two! All the visible Churches, up and down the world contain within themselves parts of the one Church of Jesus Christ, but there were never two bodies of Christ and there cannot be!

There is one Church and there is one Head of the Church! The motto of Christianity is—one flock and one Shepherd. As a matter of experience this is carried out in Believers. I do not care who the man is, if he is a truly spiritually-minded man, he is one with all other spiritually-minded men. Those people in any visible Church who have no Grace are usually the greatest sticklers for every point of difference and every particle of rite and form. Nominal professors are soon at war. Quickened Believers follow after peace! Of course, when a man has nothing else but the outside, he fights for it tooth and nail. But a man who loves the Lord and lives near Him, perceives the inner life in others and has fellowship with them! That inner life is one in all the quickened family and compels them to be one in heart.

Set two Brothers at prayer, the one a Calvinist and the other an Arminian, and they pray alike! Get a real work of the Spirit in a district and see how Baptists and Paedo-Baptists pull together! Tell of your inward experience and speak of the Spirit's work in the soul, and see how we are all moved thereby! Here is a Brother, a member of the Society of Friends, and he likes silent worship. And here is another who enjoys hearty singing! But when they get near to God, they do not quarrel over this, but agree to differ—the one says, "The Lord be with you in your holy silence"—and the other prays that the Lord may accept his brother's Psalm. All who are one with Christ have a certain family feeling, a higher form of clannishness and they cannot shake it off.

I have found myself reading a gracious book which has drawn me near to God. And though I have known that it was written by a man with whose opinions I had little agreement, I have not, therefore, refused to be edified by him in points which are unquestionably revealed. No, but I have blessed the Lord that, within all his blunders, he knew so much of the precious, vital Truth of God and lived so near his Lord! What Protestant

can refuse to love the holy Bernard? Was there ever a more consecrated servant of God or a dearer lover of Christ than he? Yet he was most sorrowfully in bondage to the superstitions of his age and of the Roman Church! Are you not all one with him who sang—

**“Jesus, the very thought of Thee
With sweetness fills my breast
But sweeter, far, Your face to see,
And in Your Presence rest”?**

The external Church is necessary, but it is *not* the one and indivisible Church of Christ. Jesus, as the Life, binds His Church together, and that Life flows through all the regenerate, even as the blood flows through all the veins of the body. Drop the external and look by faith into the *spiritual* realm, and you will see one flock and one Shepherd. The practical lesson is, let us belong to that one flock! How are they known? Answer—they are a *hearing* flock—they *hear* the Lord and follow His lead. Be you one of those who listen to Christ’s voice—and to none besides. Keep to the one Shepherd! How do you know Him? It is Jesus—in His feet and hands are nail-prints—and His side bears the scar. He it is who leads the one only flock!

Follow Jesus and you are right. Follow Him everywhere and you are happy. The best way to promote the unity of the Church is for all the sheep to follow the Shepherd. If they all follow the Shepherd, they will all keep together. Let us go forth and try and do that—and let us long for that happy day when all disputed points shall be settled by all obeying the Lord. Compromises would only mean an agreement to disobey the Lord! Let no man yield a principle under pretense of charity—it is not charity to call any Truth of God a lie! We must follow Jesus fully and we shall come together. First *pure*, then *peaceable*, is the rule.

Oh, when shall the triple banner again float over all—“One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism!”? Oh God, the Holy Spirit, forgive us our errors and bring us to Your Truth! Oh God, the Son, forgive us our need of holiness and renew us in Your own image! Oh God the Father, forgive us our lack of love and melt us into one family! To the one God be glory in the one Church forever and ever! Amen.

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THE FATHER'S LOVE TO HIS DYING SON

NO. 2117

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*"Therefore does My Father love Me, because I lay down My life,
 that I might take it again."
 John 10:17*

OUR Lord Jesus here speaks of Himself in His complex personality as God and Man, the Mediator between God and men. As such, He comes to us first at Bethlehem, "wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger." We behold Him a babe, a child, a man, a worker, a sufferer, a witness for the Truth of God and a victim condemned to die upon the tree. We behold Him dead in the grave and risen again as the Interposer between God and man.

In that capacity we shall think of Him during this discourse. It is the voice of the Man Christ Jesus, the eternal Son of God, which says, "Therefore does My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again." The Father feels boundless love to Him who, for us men, and for our redemption, came down from Heaven and took upon Himself our nature, and being found in fashion as a man, became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. "Therefore God also has highly exalted Him," or, to use His own words, "Therefore does My Father love Me."

At this time we shall not keep strictly to the text but shall introduce other truths related to it. The run of our discourse will be somewhat as follows—First, consider the Father's love to Jesus because of His death and resurrection. Secondly, consider the Father's complacency in us on that account. Then, thirdly, consider our love to Jesus on this account. And, fourthly, consider our consequent fellowship with the Father.

I. First, CONSIDER THE FATHER'S LOVE TO CHRIST JESUS BECAUSE OF HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION. This love was exceedingly sweet to Jesus. Persecuted by men and sometimes depressed in His own spirit, He comforts Himself with this, "Therefore does My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again." To be well-pleasing to the Father was everything with our Lord Jesus Christ. In heaviest toll, in dark slander, in deepest perplexity, if His Father only said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased," Jesus was refreshed with meat which others knew not of.

Beloved, let us be like our Lord Jesus in this—let the love of the Father to us be our comfort, our joy, our strength, our hope, our Heaven. What more can men or angels have than the love of God? Let that love be shed abroad in my heart by the Holy Spirit and even the celestial city cannot afford me a more pure and substantial delight. O my God, Your love is precious beyond all estimate! "Whom have I in Heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside You."

But to come back to our Lord. The Father took the greatest delight in His Son as laying down His life, first, because of the delight of Jesus in His Father's plans. Exceedingly high are the thoughts of God in reference to His dealings with the sinful sons of men. Jehovah could, with a word, make creatures that should be perpetually innocent of sin. He could also make creatures which He foreknew would choose evil ways and depart into rebellion. But a simple act of creation would not produce the character of elect man. A weapon may be struck from the anvil at a blow. But a Damascus blade needs special annealing to produce the temper needed in a champion's sword.

The chosen were to be a race who had eaten the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and so knew good and evil by actual practice—especially knew the result of evil in their own persons—for they would even die spiritually. But they would be restored from death, and Hell, and sin, and would be made haters of transgression, lovers of righteousness. Though left to their own free agency, yet when the work of Divine Grace was complete in them, they would be of a character to which sin would be impossible, since they would so deeply abhor it.

These persons would be raised to the peerage of the Divine kingdom and bear the name and dignity of sons of God, being in very deed Brothers in blood to Him who is One with God. They were to be Brothers of the Son of God by birth, and yet never to be the subjects of pride. It will be infinitely safe for the Lord to entrust us with all the privileges, royalties, and liberties of His own household. For this end it was necessary that the chosen from among men should undergo a marvelous process, much more complex and intricate than that which follows the fiat of power—we must in Jesus *die*—and be made alive again in Him.

Beloved, it was necessary, in order to the completion of the plan of Divine Grace, that God Himself, in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, should take manhood into eternal union with Godhead. The Son agreed to do this and was born of the Virgin. But when He took manhood into union with Himself, He took all that belonged to manhood. Now, sin having attached itself to manhood, the Christ, in becoming Man, took our sin upon Himself, as it is written, "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

He could not be actually guilty—God forbid the thought! But He became legally amenable to the penalty due for our transgression. He was willing even to make this stoop of condescension. When the Divine Plan was proposed to Him, this was His answer—"Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of Me, I delight to do Your will, O My God!" Do you wonder that the Father loved Him, when He saw in Him such sympathetic union with Himself?

It was the Son's highest pleasure to become subservient to the Sacred Plan of glorious Grace, in which, for ages to come, Jehovah would show forth the glory of His nature, the splendor of His eternal purpose. All the plan was acceptable to Jesus. And He was eager to carry it out at His own expense. Though He knew that the work involved His death upon the shameful tree, yet He felt so one with the Father that He cried, "I delight to do Your will. Yes, Your Law is within My heart."

When He actually appeared as a child, He went up to the temple and amazed His human parents with the words, "Know you not that I must be

about My Father's business?" Such a Son as this, so intent upon His Father's plan—is it any wonder that we read, "Therefore does My Father love Me"?

But His Father also loved Him for the constancy and perseverance with which He pursued His lifework, making it His meat and His drink to do the will of Him that sent Him. He underwent many rehearsals of His passion before it actually came. When He said, "Except a corn of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone: but if it dies, it brings forth much fruit"—He was passing through a Baptism of soul-trouble. The shadow of His death fell on Him often, before He actually carried the Cross.

But His face was steadfastly set to go to Jerusalem. The plaudits of the people never made Him turn aside and aspire to be a king. Their denunciations never made Him tremble and seek shelter in obscurity. His was a spirit constant to its high intent. To the last He was firm as a rock. The manhood in Him shuddered at death—it would not have been true manhood if it had not. But, overcoming His natural horror, He took the cup and drank it to its dregs, with, "Not as I will, but as You will."

He did say, "If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me." And He there warranted us in saying that there was no other way of accomplishing the Divine purpose, except by His death. Redemption could not be accomplished except by the Substitute bearing the penalty and dying, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God. The Lord Jesus, from the beginning, knew what it all meant—He often told His disciples what would surely happen to Him.

He did not go to a suffering of which He was not aware. He was not, as one said, like a man who went in among machinery to set it right and was caught in a great wheel which was too strong for Him and so was dragged to death. My Brethren, our Lord knew all about the strength of that great wheel—He foretasted all the woe which the accomplishment of His Father's purpose would cost Him. But He went forward, resolutely laying down His life, that He might take it again. Therefore His Father loved Him, as well He might. Victim by intent! Redeemer by resolve! Be You glorified forever!

Let me put to you a little picture. No doubt our Queen has a strong affection for her sons. She loves them as her children. But if it should so befall that one of the princes was found upon the seacoast in the hour of storm, endeavoring to save men from a wreck. And if the prince, when others stood back, bravely ventured his life to rescue the perishing, would not his royal mother love him for his humanity? If he threw himself into the surf in his eagerness to save. If, foreseeing the consequences, he persevered in giving his own life that he might bring poor perishing men to shore—would not his mother feel that she loved him anew for his heroism? I think so.

Would not any of us love with renewed affection a dear son who had displayed a sacred self-denial for the good of men? Now turn your thought, reverently, to the great Father of spirits, who loves His Son as His Son but yet loves Him especially, because, out of pure, unselfish love, He laid down His life without debate. Marvel not that He said, "Therefore does My Father love Me."

The chief source of this peculiar love was His actual death as the perfecting of His obedience. He had become a servant and He served to the end. In all His life no single disobedience ever occurred—the great Father's will was the rule absolute. Now comes in the last clause of the obedience—He must lay down His life, for so has God appointed. And even unto this last He fails not but willingly yields up the ghost. Jesus went to the garden and the bloody sweat. He went to the high priest's hall and the false accusing—to Pilate's hall and the scourging. He went to Herod and the setting at nothing.

He endured the Cross with its nails, its scorn, its darkness, its fever, its death-agony—He went to it all as a lamb goes willingly to the slaughter. On the way to death He was careful to obey—He would not die until every Scripture had been accomplished. His last words, "I thirst," were spoken that the Scriptures might be fulfilled. He carefully observed the Father's will in all things—in the detail as well as in the gross. And to prove that He obeyed even to the end, He said, "It is finished"—and He bowed His head and gave up the ghost. The Father is infinitely delighted with the perfect obedience of the Son. He is a holy God, and He sees in Jesus, holiness perfected by patience. Therefore He calls Him, "My Elect, in whom My soul delights."

Remember, also, that the death of our Lord Jesus was not only the perfection of obedience but the vindication of God's righteous Law. Some would have a god without law, that he might be love alone. This might suit anarchists and the like. Let them, like the heathen, have a god of their own making. Is it not well spoken by the Psalmist, "They that make them are like unto them"? A lawless man fashions for himself a lawless god. But he who knows that society cannot exist unless there is law and unless law is sanctioned with reward and punishment, delights to see that this is, also, the mind of God.

God has the deepest concern for order and Law. There was no anger in God against men, as men. For while they abode in purity, He communed with them. But the thrice-holy God must hate evil in every form and He must abhor it even in His most favored creatures. If the Lord should forgive sinners without demanding a penalty, He would weaken the foundations of moral government. In his magisterial capacity the Judge of all the earth perceived that He could by no means spare the guilty. It would not have been an act of mercy to the race of men if God had winked at human sin in any case. It would have been in conflict with the fundamental Law of the universe.

Every rank of angels and intelligent beings in all worlds would have been affected—affected mischievously—had it been proved that Jehovah had in any case set aside His own perfect Law and allowed the breach of it to go unpunished. It is not a case of private offense against an individual—it is rebellion against the highest authority. Sin must be punished, therefore. And Jesus came to do honor to the broken Law. He was innocent. But He voluntarily submitted Himself as the Representative for men, to suffer so that God could righteously forgive.

The Law must be magnified and made honorable, and when the Law-maker, Himself, died under the penalty of the Law, then a sufficient vindication was given to the vital principle of moral government. The Law be-

came more illustrious in righteousness by the death of the Lord Jesus Christ than if every guilty son of Adam had been cast into Hell because of his transgressions. Christ's sufferings were unto the Law of God a full justification for the free pardon of guilty men—and as the Father looks at the Son and sees Him lay down His life that He might take it again, He is well content in justice to forgive, and in righteousness to justify, the sinner. Truly said the Lord Jesus, "Therefore does My Father love Me."

Beloved, my heart delights in the thought that He who is a consuming fire against all sin, yet, when He looks on Christ, sees such a vindication given to His Law, that He can justly sheathe His sword and smile on those whom once He was bound to smite.

Once more, I think we may say that the Father loves the Son in His death and resurrection, because He herein manifested His supreme love to men. We may say of our Lord Jesus, "Yes, He loved the people. All His saints are in His hands." The love of Jesus to His chosen is no new thing—no idea that sprang up yesterday, to perish tomorrow. Long ages ago, when the mountains were not brought forth and the ancient hills had not lifted their heads, the saints had a dwelling place in the heart of God. He saw us in the glass of His foreknowledge and loved us according to the predestination of His will.

From of old the Father loved us so as to give us His Son and the Son loved us so as to give His life a ransom for us. And because of this love to one chosen object there was a fresh display of love to each other. I said, in the opening of my discourse, that the Father always loved the Son as God, but in our text we have a love of Him as Man and God in one wondrous Personality, in which are blended the two natures of holy God and perfect Man. The Mediator loved us so that He died for us, a sacrifice unto God, presented by infinite love in our place. And He says, "Therefore does My Father love Me, because I lay down My life."

Only this word more—the resurrection is mentioned as ensuring the result, and as therefore being another opportunity for love to break forth. Jesus says, "I lay down My life, that I might take it again." If that prince, of whom I spoke just now, had leaped from the side of a vessel to save a drowning man, it would have been a grand action. But if he sank never to rise again, his memory would have been enshrined in the grief of the Queen's heart. But he would not have been able to say, "Therefore does my mother love me." Jesus sinks into the dark wave but He rises again. I see Him make the great plunge into the abyss. But He cries, "You will not leave My soul in Hell; neither will You suffer Your Holy One to see corruption."

He lifts His head above the black billows. He strikes out for the shore. He lands in safety with those whom He has rescued. How the Lord must delight in the risen Jesus and in all that follows upon His victory over the grave! Now is death defeated by the death of the Well-Beloved. Now is a new life ensured for dead sinners. Now is the clearance of all the once condemned published both to Hell and Heaven. Say, who is He that has passed the iron gate, descended into the abodes of death and then returned triumphant to the upper air? Who is this, you angel-watchers, at the gates of Glory? Who is this kingly Conqueror? "Lift up your heads, O

you gates. And be you lift up, you everlasting doors. And the King of Glory shall come in.”

The Lord of Hosts, the Lord mighty in battle, has laid down His life and taken it again. He has done it as readily and effectually as once He laid down His garments and shortly girt them about Him again, after He had washed the feet of His disciples. Having redeemed and cleansed us by His blood, He puts on again the human body, which for a while, He had cast aside. Jesus is glorified in all whom He has saved by His death and rising.

But His greatest glory is that the Father loves Him. Sweet are the songs of the saved on earth and blessed are the anthems of the redeemed in Heaven. But to Jesus, the best reward which is possible lies in this word—“Therefore does My Father love Me.” Before me, in this Divine love, I see a great deep, which I may not attempt to explore—I have but brushed the surface as with a swallow’s wing.

II. Secondly, CONSIDER THE FATHER’S COMPLACENCY IN US ON ACCOUNT OF HIS DELIGHT IN HIS SON. Beloved, the Father loves His Son so much that His love overflows its banks and covers all of us whom the Lord Jesus has taken to be His own. The Father’s love is like a great beacon kindled in honor of the Well-Beloved but shedding its radiance far and wide to enlighten those who sit in darkness and in the valley of the shadow of death. Let us contemplate this fact so fraught with blessing to all Believers.

First, as our Lord Jesus is a Man, the Father places His work to man’s account. The Lord had made man in His own image. He had created him a remarkable being of united matter and spirit. But man made a revolt from Him, so that, “it repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth.” When the Lord looks upon our race at this moment, He cannot take satisfaction in creatures who have made themselves so vile. Our nature is prone to evil, and it cannot but be abhorrent unto the thrice-holy Jehovah.

Yet is man not blotted out from the list of beings, for there is one Man, true Man, born of a woman, made under the Law—a partaker of flesh and blood, who is in Himself so well-pleasing to the Lord—that He makes up for all the displeasure felt towards the rest of our race. This Man was so obedient, so self-sacrificing, so pure, so devout, so gentle, so everything that is admirable, that when the Father considers Him, the virtues of that one Man’s life and death endear to Him the race. For His sake He forgets the sins of men and is well-pleased to accept all who are united to Him.

“By the obedience of One shall many be made righteous.” The savor of this one Man’s sacrifice has sweetened all the offerings of His fellows. It was a Man who, for the sake of the Divine Glory, sweat, as it were, great drops of blood and died upon the Cross. And therefore is the Lord well-pleased, even with guilty men for whom Jesus stood as the second Adam, and for whom He has won acceptance before the Throne.

Next, remember that the Lord Jesus has so glorified the Father, that His great achievements are made to redound to our benefit. All the works of God’s hands praise Him. All the deeds of His Providence extol him. But redemption brings Him His highest honors. In the Person of the Redeemer, Jehovah is best made known—

“God, in the Person of His Son,

Has all His mightiest works outdone.

When the Father hears dishonor put upon the Divine name by blasphemers, or false teachers. When He sees the drunkenness and lust, the pride and cruelty of men, He is grieved at His heart—but on the other hand, all the dishonor is covered and put away by the glory of the Character and work of the Man, Christ Jesus.

I cannot utter my own thoughts on this point—much less can I think adequately upon such a theme. It is as if the millions of the redeemed were so many evil lamps all pouring forth darkness, and filling the universe with blackness. And then, on the other side, this one blessed lamp of God stood alone, pouring forth light. And the sacred light was so powerful that it banished all the darkness of the myriad night-makers and created eternal and unclouded day.

I will change the example and say that all of us were as the Dead Sea, full of foul waters, reeking with deadly odors—and the life of Jesus, poured out for us—has turned that lake of death into a pure and sparkling sea of life. The purity of Jesus suffices to purify all the multitudes of the human race who put their trust in Him. God loves His Son because He gets a glory from Him which cancels the dishonor worked by all the sins of men.

Note, again, that as God has great complacency in His Son, it runs over to us, because we are one with Jesus. I say not this of you all. For some of you have nothing to do with Christ at this time. But of as many as believe in Jesus, I may say, “We are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.” The Father’s love to His Son extends to all the members of His Son’s mystical body. What? Though we should be only comparable to the soles of our Lord’s feet, and are still in the mire, yet, if we are in the body, we share with the Head in all its glories.

You know the old proverb, “Love me, love my dog.” And certainly the Lord Jesus Christ might well say, “Love Me, love the least of My people.” The Father, like David, loves every lame Mephibosheth of the household, for the sake of His Jonathan. Brethren, as many of us as are joined unto the Lord by a living faith—we are one with Jesus—we are by eternal union one. When He died, we died. When He rose, we rose. We were condemned and justified in Him. And now that the Father loves Him, we also are beloved in Him. What a blessed thing it is that the Father loves One who has such an intimate relation to us as to be our Representative and Head!

Meditate upon this overflow of the Father’s love to the elect whom He has given to His Son. He so loved the Chief Beloved, that, for His sake, we are accepted. We are perfected and at last will be glorified. This is true of myriads of men—myriads! You speak of great congregations—but all that ever assemble here are a mere handful. Look at the countless congregation redeemed by our Lord’s death—“a multitude, which no man can number, of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues.”

Remember the multitudes who have died in infancy, redeemed by precious blood from all the consequences of the Fall. Consider the multitudes of converts in the latter days, when the glory of the Lord shall be revealed. “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One, shall many be made righteous.” How many, human arithmetic fails to tell.

Now, call to mind the number and the variety of sins which have been committed by the redeemed company. All those sins are washed away by the blood of Christ. The love of God in Christ Jesus sees no iniquity in Jacob, for the atonement has put away all manner of offenses. The love of the Father to Jesus has made us comely in His comeliness, despite the multitude of deformities which were found in us. O sea of love, in which so vast a host of sins was swallowed up! How greatly does the Father love the Son when, for His dear sake, He covers all the myriad causes of displeasure, and makes us precious in His sight!

Then remember that while Jesus has redeemed so many and cleansed them from so many sins, He has done more. For by the Father's love to Him they are made partakers of very many most costly blessings. Could you calculate the wealth of benefits wherewith the Lord daily loads His redeemed? Covenant mercies, who shall weigh them? Yet they all come through the Father's love of Jesus.

Above all, reflect that we have eternal life through our Lord's death. God so loves Jesus that, because of His temporary death, He has given endless life to all the redeemed. Jesus died once, and therefore we live forever. Because the Father's love to Him can never die and He ever lives, we shall live also. His passing sorrow brings us eternal glory. Because of Christ's death, millions and millions of years from now, we shall still be the children of God and shall be with Jesus where He is, beholding the glory which the Father has given Him. Admire the measureless merit of the Lord Jesus!

Meditate with reverence upon the overflowing torrents of the Father's love to His Son! Because of His death He is unspeakably beloved and we are beloved in him. Here it were well to pause. No tongue can ever express this matchless story. We are "accepted in the Beloved." How greatly beloved must He have been to cover such base things as we are with Divine acceptance! Think it over! Think it over! In Heaven you will need no fuller or loftier subject of meditation than the love of the Father to the Only-Begotten, enwrapping in its folds the whole family of love. "Therefore does My Father love Me."

Oh, how He must love Jesus, since for His sake He loves multitudes of sinners and loves them all the way from the door of Hell to the gate of Heaven! By the bliss eternal, by the rivers of pleasure that are at God's right hand, by the glory without bounds, we may form some idea of the love of the Father to Him who laid down His life that He might take it again.

III. In the third place, CONSIDER OUR LOVE TO THE LORD JESUS ON THIS ACCOUNT. Beloved, His death is the great fact for which we love our Lord Jesus. The individual love of each Believer wells up when he can say, "He loved me and gave Himself for me." This, also, is the crowning evidence of God's love to Believers in general, for "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish."

His laying down His life is the central display of His love and the chief cause of our affection. We love Him for the holiness of His Character, for the tenderness of His heart, for the excellence of His teaching. And, indeed, we love Him for everything about His blessed Person and work. But,

if the secret must be told, our hearts were chiefly won when our Beloved put on the crimson vesture and stood before us decked with wounds and pale in death. Then did we sing of Him—"White and ruddy is my Beloved."

Oh, the beauties of our King when He stands beneath the purple canopy of sacrifice! Then is our heart won and held in joyful captivity when we can say, "You were slain and have redeemed us to God by Your blood." That text often thrills my heart wherein we read, "Who His own Self bore our sins in His own body on the tree." Calvary reveals the great fountain of our love. The Cross is the pole whereon is uplifted the banner of love, both His and ours. We love Him because He first loved us and Golgotha is the window through which His love looks.

The connection of our text enhances our Lord's love. It stands connected with the Good Shepherd. It is He that lays down His life. He gives it for the sheep. Will a man die for sheep? Yes, that may be. But could the Son of God die for such base creatures as *we* are? We were, of ourselves, by no means so great a treasure to Christ as a sheep is to a man. And yet He thought far more of us than shepherds do of their flocks. We were, by nature, only as so many foxes, or serpents, or creeping things. But yet the Lord Christ, having set His love upon us, would not rest till He had laid down His life for us. Alas, we were as ungrateful as we were unworthy.

We even opposed the efforts of our Savior. We acted more like goats than sheep, for we butted with our horns against our Shepherd. We were stray sheep and did not return at His call—we did not follow Him but we went farther and farther away. We were lame as to returning. But "when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." We are sheep, too, that still go astray very grievously. Woe is me, that this should be true of me! After having been brought back on His shoulders, after having been pastured by His care, yet still I go astray! We are sheep that were lost.

We are sheep that would lose themselves again, if we could—sheep that make a very poor return to Him that shepherds us. "Is this your kindness to your Friend?" is a question which might often awake sad memories in our hearts. Beloved, let us love our Lord more! Surely, we cannot help it, as we perceive our own vileness and the greatness of His love whereby He laid down His life for us.

And remember that the Lord laid down His life of His own free will and under no constraint whatever. If you or I were to die for other people, we should be only doing a little sooner what we shall be obliged to do one day—for death is the debt of nature which, sooner or later, all must pay. If a man yields his life for another, he only anticipates by a short season the time when he must lose it. But Jesus needed not to die at all, so far as He, Himself, was concerned. "Messiah was cut off, but not for Himself."

What love is this! He wills to die. He says of His life, "No man takes it from Me but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father." Herein is love indeed, free love, deliberate and resolute. I see the bullocks going to the altar of the temple—poor, dumb, driven cattle, they know not that they are to be a sacrifice—they cannot throw into their deaths the merit of devout intent.

Behold our Lord going to the slaughter as a sheep in regard to patience, but not like a sheep for knowledge and purpose—He knew what that slaughter meant and why He must endure it. “Lama Sabachthani!” was in its meaning known to Him before He uttered the cry. He foresaw the death on the Cross—He was made a curse for us, knowing what the curse meant and calmly resolving to bear it. For this deliberation of love He has our inexpressible gratitude and love. Do we not each one love Him? We should love Him, for Jesus laid down His life for each one of His people.

This love in general is a delightful theme. But how tender and touching it becomes when each one sees his own participation in it and cries, “He loved *me* and gave Himself for *me*!” Love delights in *personal* pronouns, “My Beloved is *mine* and I am *His*.” Love is most of all excited and called forth by a personal sense of gracious gifts received. It is a heart-moving song when we can sing, “Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this Grace given.” Remember, that to save one single soul, our Lord would have had to die and yet to save all men in the world He could have done no more.

And if there had been as many worlds of sinners as there are grains of sand upon the seashore, His one death would have been a sufficient vindication of the Law on account of them all. We can imagine no limit to the value of Christ's atoning sacrifice. Its object could not have been attained by anything less than the laying down of His life. He died for His flock and for each one of His sheep in particular—so that we may each one say today, “He loved *me* and gave Himself for *me*.” And each one knows that for himself, with special intent, the Lord Jesus bore the agony and bloody sweat, the Cross and passion. Therefore we must, each one of us, love Him to our heart's utmost capacity.

Indulge yourself with a sight of His love as it hangs bleeding on the tree. It may be, poor Soul, this morning you are bowed down with trouble because of sin and yet you are a child of God—see, then, how Jesus loves! Do what you did at first, when, in your soul's dark hour, you did look to Jesus. Look to His Cross. Look wholly to the slain Jesus. “His blood has made peace—

***And brought us release,
And now the old bondage
Forever must cease.
Who trust in His might
He leads into light—
Nor can any enemy
Break on His right.”***

Blessed, forever blessed, be Your dear name, O Jesus! There is none like it in Heaven, nor in the Heaven of heavens. How shall we praise Him? Our tears of gratitude come to our rescue. If we cannot speak His praises, we will *weep* them.

IV. I shall conclude by saying, CONSIDER WHAT A FELLOWSHIP IS OPENED UP BETWEEN THE SAVED ONES AND THE FATHER. The Father loves the Son and we love Him, also, after our measure. Brethren, we are agreed with the great God with whom once we were at enmity. Since we have seen our Lord lay down His life for us, we love Him. How can we do otherwise? For the same reason the Father loves Him—the very strong-

est love is confirmed when a common object of affection becomes a rivet between the two parties. Two hearts may be one in married love, but their union is intensified when a baby's cry is heard in the house. Seldom are they parted by divorce who have blended their love in watching over a company of little children.

Beloved, when the Father looks on Jesus, He sees One who is altogether lovely to Him, and when we look on Jesus in our poor, half-blind manner, we also are charmed by His beauties. No enmity can remain between a soul and God when love to Jesus becomes the master passion of life. By His Cross, our Lord has slain the enmity. His death has cast a bond around the divided ones and has reconciled us to God. The thrice-glorious Jehovah agrees with the blood-washed Sinner in glorifying His Son.

In the blood of Jesus we are made clean, and therefore we love Him—the Father sees Jesus pouring out His heart's blood to make us clean and He loves Him on that account—thus the two who were apart are agreed in one. From now on we desire to honor Christ and we are grieved if He is not magnified. Whenever you hear a sermon which praises the Lord Jesus, does not your heart dance like David before the ark? But if your Lord is dishonored, do you not feel indignant? Could you not bear *anything* sooner than hear your Lord defamed?

In the congregation, when His atonement has been decried, have you not found yourself on the move? And if you did not move, but kept your seat, did you not bite your lip? You love Him and you cannot permit Him to be thrust into second place. If it were in your power, you would set Him upon a glorious high throne and make every knee bow before Him. That is what the Father is doing and will yet do—thus the Father and you are one towards Jesus.

You have also an intense desire to become like your Lord, have you not? Ever since He bought you with His blood and you knew it, you have longed to be conformed to His image. This, also, is the Father's design, for He desires His Well-Beloved to be the "first-born among many Brethren." He loves our Lord Jesus so much that He has predestinated us to be conformed to His image. There cannot be another Divine Son, but the Father would have many human sons who shall be like the first-born.

If you have ever stood in the middle of a hall of mirrors, you have seen yourself repeated on all sides. Even so shall Heaven be full of lovely reflections of Him who is altogether lovely. For every blood-washed one shall wear the likeness of the Lord from Heaven. The Father can never have too much of His dear Son. He would have Him live in ten thousand times ten thousand beloved ones—and as this, also, would be *your* highest joy, you have in this desire a wonderful bond of union between you and the Father.

I think I hear you say, "Now I perceive that the Father Himself, loved men, for He gave the Son He loved so well to die for them and loved Him for dying on their behalf." This is an instructive discovery. When Abraham called Isaac to go up to Mount Moriah to be offered up as a sacrifice, Isaac could have resisted his father's will. But he did not. They went both of them together to the place of the offering. Abraham loved Isaac when he bound him—yes, he loved him all the more for consenting to be bound.

Not only did Abraham, the father, offer his son, but Isaac, the son, voluntarily surrendered himself. And his father deeply loved him for that self-surrender.

Jesus, the greater Isaac, did actually give up His life in our place, to achieve His Father's purpose, vindicate His Father's Law, and save the people whom His Father had given Him. Therefore does the Father love Him and we love Him—and we love the Father who freely delivered Him up for us all. Thus love completes its circle and God and man are made one by Christ's work, even as they are one in His Person.

If anyone here has, by believing contemplation, found his way through the process described in my sermon, he is no longer an enemy to God, nor even a stranger to the Most High. For the death of Jesus has drawn him near. If you have followed me in this track, not merely with an attentive ear but with a willing heart, you are reconciled to God by the death of His Son. You love Jesus because He died and God loves Him for the same reason. You two have linked hands over the great Sacrifice.

What a joy is this! I feel as if I could find no better conclusion than the glowing verse of William Williams—

***“To You, my God, my Savior,
Praise be forever new.
Let people come to praise You
In numbers like the dew.
Oh, that in every meadow
The grass were harps of gold,
To sing to Him for coming
To ransom hosts untold!”***

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON.

BELOVED FRIENDS—Kind Providence has brought me safely here. And I am resting and endeavoring to gather new stores. Very greatly am I cheered by news from the Tabernacle, of the very remarkable blessing resting upon the special services under Messrs. Fullerton and Smith. The Lord be praised for using these beloved workers! May the members of the Church see to it that the good seed is watered!

Having enjoyed the friendship of many of my readers for more than thirty years, I feel bound to send them my affectionate greetings and to thank them for their long-continued attention to my ministry. I would beg an interest in their daily prayers, for myself and for the work. May the Lord our God arise speedily, for the vindication of His own Truth!

Yours in Christ Jesus,

C. H. SPURGEON.

Mentone, November 28, 1889.

Adapted from *The C.H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

THE SHEEP AND THEIR SHEPHERD

NO. 995

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

*“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.”
John 10:27.*

CHRISTIANS are here compared to sheep. Not a very flattering comparison you may say. But then we do not wish to be flattered, nor would our Lord deem it good to flatter us. While far from flattering, it is, however, eminently consoling, for of all creatures there are not any more compassed about with infirmity than sheep. In this frailty of their nature they are a fit emblem of ourselves—at least, of so many of us as have believed in Jesus and become His disciples. Let others boast how strong they are. Yet if there are strong ones anywhere, certainly we are weak. We have proved our weakness, and day by day we lament it. We do confess our weakness—yet may we not repine at it, for, as Paul said, so we find, when we are weak then are we strong.

Sheep have many needs, yet they are very helpless, and quite unable to provide for themselves. But for the shepherd's care they would soon perish. This, too, is our case. Our spiritual needs are numerous and pressing, yet we cannot supply *any* of them. We are travelers through a wilderness that yields us neither food nor water. Unless our bread drops down from Heaven, and our water flows out of the living Rock, we must die. Our weakness and our need we keenly feel—still we have no cause to murmur since the Lord knows our poor estate—and succors us with the most tender care.

Sheep, too, are silly creatures, and in this respect, likewise, we are very sheepish. We meekly admit it to Him who is ready to guide us. We say, as David said, “O God, You know my foolishness.” And He says to us as He said to David, “I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you shall go.” If Christ were not our Wisdom, we should soon fall a prey to the Destroyer. Every grain of true wisdom that we possess we have derived from Him. Of ourselves we are dull and giddy—folly is bound up in our heart. The more conscious you are, dear Brethren, of your own deficiencies, your lack of stamina, discretion, sagacity, and all the instincts of self-preservation—the more delighted you will be to see that the Lord accepts you under these conditions—and calls you the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand.

He discerns you as you are. He claims you as His own. He foresees all the ills to which you are exposed, yet tends you as His flock. He sets store by every lamb of the fold, and so feeds you according to the integrity of His heart and guides you by the skillfulness of His hands. *“I will feed My flock, and I will cause them to lie down, says the Lord God.”* Oh, what

sweet music there is to us in the name which is given to our Lord Jesus Christ of “the Good Shepherd”! It not only describes the office He holds, but it sets forth the sympathy He feels, the aptness He shows, and the responsibility He bears to promote our well-being.

What if the sheep are weak? The shepherd is strong to guard his flock from the prowling wolf or the roaring lion. If the sheep suffer privation because the soil is barren, yet is the shepherd able to lead them into pasturage suitable for them. If they are foolish, yet he goes before them, cheers them with his voice, and rules them with the rod of his command. There cannot be a flock without a shepherd—neither is there a shepherd, truly, without a flock. The two must go together. They are the fullness of each other.

As the Church is the fullness of Him that fills All in All, so we rejoice to remember that “of His fullness have all we received, and Grace for Grace.” That I am like a sheep is a sorry reflection. But that I have a Shepherd charms away the sorrow and creates a new joy. It even becomes a glad-some thing to be weak, that I may rely on His strength. To be full of needs, that I may draw from His fullness. To be shallow and often at my wit’s end, that I may be always regulated by His wisdom.

Even so does my shame redound to His praise. Not to you, you great and mighty, who lift your heads high, and claim for yourselves honor—not for you is peace, not to you is rest. But unto you, you lowly ones, who delight in the valley of humiliation, and feel yourselves to be taken down in your own esteem—to you it is that the Shepherd becomes dear. And to you will He give to lie down in green pastures beside the still waters. In a very simple way, we shall speak about the Proprietor of the sheep. “*My sheep*,” says Christ. Then we shall have a little to say about the marks of the sheep. After that I propose to talk awhile about the privileges of the sheep. “*I know My sheep*”—they are privileged to be known of Christ. “*My sheep hear My voice*.”

I. Who is the Proprietor of the sheep? They are all Christ’s. “*My sheep hear My voice*.” How came the saints to be Christ’s? They are His, first of all, because He chose them. Before the worlds were made, out of all the rest of mankind He selected them. He knew the race would fall and become unworthy of the faculties with which He endowed them and the inheritance He had assigned them. To Him belonged the sovereign prerogative that He might have mercy on whom He would have mercy. And He, out of His own absolute will, and according to the counsel of His own good pleasure, made choice severally and individually of certain persons—and He said, “These are Mine.”

Their names were written in His book—they became His portion and His heritage. Having chosen them of old so many ages ago, rest assured He will not lose them now. Men prize that which they have long had. If there is a thing that was mine but yesterday, and it is lost today, I might not fret about it. But if I have long possessed it, and called it my patrimony, I would not willingly part with it. Sheep of Christ, you shall be His forever, because you have been His from ever.

They are Christ's sheep, because His Father gave them to Him. They were the gift of the Father to Christ. He often speaks of them in this way, "As many as You have given Me." "You have given them to Me," says He, over and over again. Of old, the Father gave His people to Christ. Separating them from among men, He presented them to Him as a gift, committed them into His hands as a trust, and ordained them for Him as the lot of His inheritance. Thus they become a token of the Father's love to His Only-Begotten Son, a proof of the confidence He reposed in Him and a pledge of the honor that shall be done unto Him.

Now, I suppose we, most of us, know how to value a gift for the donor's sake. If presented to us by one whom we love, we set great store by it. If it has been designed to be a love token, it awakens in our minds many sweet memories. Though the intrinsic worth may be of small account, the associations make it exceedingly precious. We might be content to lose something of far greater value in itself rather than that which is the gift of a friend, the offering of his love. I like the delicate sentiment of the poet, as it is expressed in that pretty verse—

***"I never cast a flower away,
The gift of one who cared for me.
A little flower—a faded flower,
But it was done reluctantly."***

Yet, oh, how weak the words of human passion! But, oh, how strong the expressions of Divine ardor, when Jesus speaks to the Father of, "the men whom You gave Me out of the world"! "Yours they were," He says, "and You gave them to Me. And those that You gave Me I have kept." You sheep of Christ, rest safely. Let not your soul be disturbed with fear. The Father gave you to His Son, and He will not lightly lose what God Himself has given Him. The infernal lions shall not rend the meanest lamb that is a love token from the Father to His best Beloved. While Christ stands defending His own, He will protect them from the lion and the bear that would take the lambs of His flock. He will not suffer the least of them to perish. "*My sheep,*" says Christ.

They are His, furthermore, because in addition to His choice and to the gift, He has *bought* them with a price. They had sold themselves for nothing. But He has redeemed them, not with corruptible things as with silver and gold, but with His precious blood. A man always esteems that to be exceedingly valuable which he procured with risk—with risk of life and limb. David felt he could not drink the water that the brave warriors who broke through the host of the Philistines brought to him from the well at Bethlehem because it seemed to him as though it were the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives.

And so he poured it out before the Lord. It was too precious a draught for him, when men's lives had been hazarded for it. But the Good Shepherd not only hazarded His life, but even laid it down for His sheep. Jacob exceedingly valued one part of his possessions, and he gave it to Joseph—he gave him one portion above his Brethren. Now, you may be sure he would give Joseph that which he thought most precious. But why did he give him that particular portion? Because, he says, "I took it out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow."

Now, our blessed Shepherd esteems His sheep because they cost Him His blood. They cost Him His blood—I may say He took them out of the hand of the Amorite with His sword and with His bow in bloody conflict—where He was Victor, but yet was slain. There is not one sheep of all His flock but what He can see the mark of His blood on him. In the face of every saint the Savior sees, as in a glass, the memorial of His bloody sweat in Gethsemane, and His agonies at Golgotha. “You are not your own, for you are bought with a price.”

That stands as a call to duty, but it is at the same time a consolation, for if He has bought me, He will have me. Bought with such a price, He will not like to lose me, nor suffer any foe to take me out of His hands. Think not that Christ will suffer those to perish for whom He died. To me the very suggestion seems to draw near to the verge of blasphemy. If He has bought me with His blood, I cannot conceive He cares nothing for me, will take no further concern about me, or will suffer my soul to be cast into the pit. If He has suffered in my place, where is justice gone that the Substitute should bear my guilt, and I should bear it, too?

And where is mercy fled, that God should execute twice the punishment for one offense! No, Beloved, those whom He has bought with blood are His, and He will keep them. “*My sheep*,” says Christ. They are His, or in due time they shall become so through His capturing them by sacred power. As well by power are we redeemed as by price, for the blood-bought sheep had gone astray even as others. “All we, like sheep, have gone astray. We have turned everyone to his own way.”

But, my Brethren, the Good Shepherd has brought many of us back with infinite condescension—with boundless mercy He followed us when we went astray. Oh, what blind slaves we were when we sported with death! We did not know then what His love had ordained for us—it never entered our poor, silly heads that there was a crown for us. We did not know that the Father’s love had settled itself on us, or ever the day-star knew its place. We know it now, and it is He that has taught us. For He followed us over mountains of vanity, through bogs and miry places of foul transgression. He tracked our devious footsteps on and on, through youth and manhood, till at last, with mighty Grace, He grasped us in His arms and laid us on His shoulder—and is this day carrying us home to the great fold above—rejoicing as He bears all our weight and finds us in all we need.

Oh, that blessed work of effectual Grace! He has made us His own. He has defeated the enemy—the prey has been taken from the mighty—and the lawful captive has been delivered. “He has broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron asunder,” to set His people free. “O that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men!” “*My SHEEP*,” says Christ, as He stands in the midst of His disciples. “*My Shepherd*,” let us one and all reply! All the sheep of Christ who have been redeemed by His power become His by their own willing and cheerful surrender of themselves to Him.

We would not belong to another if we might. Nor would we wish to belong to ourselves if we could. Nor, I trust, do we want any part of our-

selves to be our own property. Judge whether this is true of you or not. In that day when I surrendered my soul to my Savior, I gave Him my body, my soul, my spirit. I gave Him all I had, and all I shall have for time and for eternity. I gave Him all my talents, my powers, my faculties, my eyes, my ears, my limbs, my emotions, my judgment, my whole manhood, and all that could come of it—whatever fresh capacity or new capability I may be endowed with.

Were I at this good hour to change the note of gladness for one of sadness, it should be to wail out my penitent confession of the times and circumstances in which I have failed to observe the strict and unwavering allegiance I owe to my Lord. So far from regretting, I would gladly renew my vows and make them over again. In this I think every Christian would join—

***“It is done! the great transaction’s done—
I am my Lord’s, and He is mine—
He drew me, and I followed on,
Charmed to confess the voice Divine.
Now rest, my long-divided heart;
Fixed on this blissful center, rest—
With ashes who would grudge to part,
When called on angels’ bread to feast?
High Heaven, that heard the solemn vow,
That vow renewed shall daily hear—
Till in life’s latest hour I bow,
And bless in death a bond so dear.”***

And yet, Brethren, though our hearts may now be all in a glow, lest they should presently grow cold, or the bleak atmosphere of this evil world should chill our devotion, let us never cease to think of the Good Shepherd in that great, good act which most of all showed His love when He laid down His life for the sheep.

You have heard the story told by Francis de Sales. He saw a girl carrying a pail of water on her head, in the midst of which she had placed a piece of wood. On asking her why she did this, she told him it was to prevent the motion of the water, for fear it might be spilt. And so, said he, let us place the Cross of Christ in the midst of our hearts to check the movement of our affections—that they may not be spilt in restless cares or grievous troubles. *“My sheep,”* says Christ, and thus He describes His people. They are Christ’s. His own, a peculiar property. May I hope that this Truth of God will be from now on treasured up in your soul!

It is a common Truth, certainly—but when it is laid home by the Holy Spirit it shines, it beams—not merely as a lamp in a dark chamber, but as the day-star rising in your hearts! Remember this is no more our shame that we are sheep, but it is our *honor* that we are *Christ’s* sheep. To belong to a King carries some measure of distinction. We are the sheep of the imperial pastures. This is our safety—He will not suffer the enemy to destroy His sheep. This is our sanctity—we are separated, the sheep of the pasture of the Lord’s Christ. This is sanctification in one aspect of it—for it is the making of us holy, by setting us apart to be the Lord’s own portion forever. And this is the key to our duty—we are His sheep—then let us live to Him, and consecrate ourselves to Him who loved us and gave Himself

for us. Christ is the Proprietor of the sheep. And they are the property of the good Shepherd.

II. Now, let us commune together awhile upon the marks of the sheep. When there are so many flocks of sheep, it is necessary to mark them. Our Savior marks us. It has been very properly observed that there are two marks on Christ's sheep. One is on their ear, the other is on their foot. These are two marks of Christ's sheep not to be found on any other. But they are to be found on all His own—the mark on the ear—"My sheep *hear My voice.*" The mark on the foot—"I know them, and they *follow Me.*"

Think of this mark on their ear. "My sheep hear My voice." They hear *spiritually*. A great many people in Christ's day heard His voice who did not hear it in the way and with the perception that is here intended. They would not hear. That is to say, they would not hearken or give heed, neither would they obey His call or come unto Him that they might have life. These were not always the worst sort of people—there were some of the best that would not hear Christ, of whom He said, according to the original, as translated by some, "You search the Scriptures. For in them you think you have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me. And you will not come to Me, that you might have life."

They would get as far as curiosity or criticism might allure them. But they would not go any farther—they would not believe in Jesus. Now, the *spiritual* ear listens to God. The opening of it is the work of the Holy Spirit, and this is a mark of Christ's chosen blood-bought people—that they hear not only the hollow sound, but the hidden sense. Not the bare letter, but the spiritual lesson. And that, too, not merely with the outward organ, but with the inward heart. The chief point is that they hear *His* voice.

Oh, if all that heard *my* voice heard Christ's voice, how would I wander down every street in this city to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ! But, alas, the voice of the minister is utterly ineffectual to save a soul, unless the voice of Christ reaches the conscience and rouses its dormant powers. "My sheep hear My voice." The voice of Jesus—His counsel, His commands—clothed with the authority of His own sacred sovereign utterances. When the Gospel comes to you as Christ's Gospel, with demonstration of the Spirit, the invitation is addressed to you by Him. You can look upon it in no other light—so, by God's Grace you must accept and receive it.

When His princely power comes with it—being mighty to save He puts saving power into the Word. Then you hear Christ's voice as a fiat that must be obeyed! As a summons that must be attended to! As a call to which there must be a quick response! O Beloved, do not ever rest satisfied with hearing the voice of the preacher. We are only Christ's speaking trumpets—there is nothing in us—it is only *HIS* speaking *through* us that can do any good. O children of God, some of you do not always listen to Christ's voice in the preaching of His Word.

While we comment on the Word, you make your comments on us. Our style, or our tone, or even our gesture is enough to absorb—I might rather say, to distract—your thoughts. "Why look you so earnestly on us?" I beseech you, give less heed to the livery of the servant and give more care to

the message of the Master. Listen warily, if you please. But judge wisely if you can. See how much pure grain, and how much of Christ there is in the sermon. Use your sieve—put away all the chaff—take only the good wheat. Hear Christ's voice!

Well were it if we could obscure ourselves that we might manifest Him. I could wish so to preach that you could not see even my little finger—might I but so preach that you could get a full view of Jesus only. O that you could hear His voice drowning ours! This is the mark, the peculiar mark of those who are Christ's peculiar people—they hear His voice. Sometimes, truly it sounds in the ministry. Sometimes it thrills forth from that Book of books, which is often grossly neglected. Sometimes it comes in the night watches. His voice may speak to us in the street.

Silent as to vocal utterance, but like familiar tones that sometimes greet us in our dreams, the voice of Christ is distinctly audible to the soul. It will come to you in sweet or in bitter Providences. Yes, there is such a thing as hearing Christ's voice in the rustling of every leaf upon the tree, in the moaning of every wind, in the rippling of every wave. And there are those that have learned to lean on Christ's bosom till they have looked for all the world as though they were a shell that lay in the ocean of Christ's love, listening forever to the sonorous cadence of that deep, unfathomed, all-mysterious main.

The billows of His love never cease to swell. The billowy anthem still peals on with solemn grandeur in the ear of the Christian. O may we hear Christ's voice, each one of us for ourselves! I find that language fails me, and metaphors are weak to describe its potent spell. One point is worth noticing, however. I think our Lord meant here that His sheep, when they hear His voice, know it so well that they can tell it at once from the voice of strangers. The true child of God knows the Gospel from the Law. It is not by learning catechisms, reading theological books, or listening to endless controversies that he finds this out.

There is an instinct of his regenerate nature far more trustworthy than any lessons he has been taught. The voice of Jesus! Why there is no music like it! If you have once heard it, you cannot mistake it for another, or another for it. Some are babes in Grace—others are of full age, and by reason of use have their senses exercised. But one sense is quickly brought out—the sense of *hearing*. It is so easy to tell the joy-bells of the Gospel from the death-knell of the Law. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. "Do, or die," says Moses. "Believe, and live," says Christ—you must know which is which.

Yes. And I think they are equally shrewd and quick to discriminate between the flesh and the Spirit. Let some of the very feeblest of God's people sit down under a fluent ministry, with all the beauties of rhetoric, and let the minister preach up the dignity of human nature and the sufficiency of man's reason to find out the way of righteousness, and you will hear them say—"It is very clever. But there is no food for me in it." Bring, however, the best and most instructed, and most learned Christian man, and set him down under a ministry that is very faulty as to the gift of utterance, and incorrect even in grammar.

But if it is full of Jesus Christ, I know what he will say—"Ah, never mind the man, and never mind the platter on which he brought the meat. It was food to my soul that I fed upon with a hearty relish. It was marrow and fatness, for I could hear Christ's voice in it." I am not going to follow out these tests. But certain it is that the sheep know Christ's voice and can easily distinguish it. I saw hundreds of lambs the other day together, and there were also their mothers. And I am sure if I had had the task of allotting the proper lamb to each, or to any of them, it would have kept me till now to have done it.

But somehow the lambs knew the mothers, and the mothers knew the lambs. And they were all happy enough in each other's company. Every saint here, mixed up as he may be at times with parties and professors of all sorts, knows Christ, and Christ knows him, and he is therefore bound to his owner. That is the mark on the ear. You have seen sometimes in the country two flocks together on the road, and you say—"I wonder how the shepherds will manage to keep them distinct? They will get mixed up." They do not. They go this way and that way. And after a little commingling they separate, for they know their master's voice, "and a stranger will they not follow."

You will go tomorrow, many of you, out into the world, some to the Exchange, others to the market, and others again into the factory—you are all mixed. Yes. But the seeming confusion of your company is temporary, not real and permanent. You will come right again, and you will go to your own home and your own fellowship. And at the last, when we shall have ended our pilgrimage, the one shall wend his way to Heaven, and the other to the abyss of woe. There will be no mistake. You will hear the Master's call and obey. There is a mark on the ear which identifies every saint. Christ's sheep hear His voice *obediently*.

This is an important proof of discipleship. Indeed, it may serve as a reproof to many. Oh, I would that you were more careful about this! "He that hears My commandments, and keeps them," said Jesus, "he it is that loves Me." "He that loves Me not keeps not My sayings." How comes it to pass, then, that there are certain commands of Christ which some Christians will suffer to lie in abeyance? They will say, "The Lord commands this, but it is not essential." Oh, unloving spirit that can think anything unessential that your Bridegroom bids you do! They that love think little things of great moment, especially when they are looked upon as tokens of the strength or the tenderness of one's regard.

It may not be essential, in order to prove the relation in which a wife stands to her husband, that she should study his tastes, consult his wishes, or attend to his comfort. But will she the less strive to please, because love, not fear, constrains her? I think not. And can it be that any of you, my Brethren, would harbor such a thought as your negligence implies? Do you really suppose that after the choice of Christ has been fixed on you, and the love of Christ has been plighted to you, you may now be as remiss or careless as you like?

No, rather might we not expect that a sacred passion, an ardent zeal, a touch of inspiration would stir you up, put you on the alert, make you

wake at the faintest sound of His voice, or keep you listening to do as will? Be it ours, then, to act out with fidelity that verse we have often sung with enthusiasm—

***“In all my Lord’s appointed ways
My journey I’ll pursue.”***

However little the precept may appear in the eyes of others. However insignificant as compared with our salvation, yet—does the Lord command it? Then His sheep hear His voice and they follow Him.

Christ has marked His sheep on their feet as well as their ears. They *follow* Him—they are gently led, not harshly driven. They follow Him as the Captain of their salvation. They trust in the power of His arm to clear the way for them. All their trust on Him is abiding. They lean all their hope on Him. They follow Him as their Teacher. They call no man “Rabbi” under Heaven, but Christ alone. He is the infallible source of their creeds. Neither will they allow their minds to be ruled by conclaves, councils, nor decrees. Has Christ said it? It is enough. If not, it is no more for me than the whistling of the wind.

They follow Christ as their Teacher. And the sheep of Christ follow Him as their Example. They desire to be in this world as He was. It is one of their marks, that to a greater or lesser degree they have a Christ-like spirit. And if they could, they would be altogether like their Lord. They follow Him, too, as their Commander, and Lawgiver, and Prince. “Whatever He says unto you, do it,” was His mother’s wise speech. And it is the children’s wise rule—“Whatever He says unto you, do it.”

Oh, blessed shall they be above many of whom it shall be said, “These are they that have not defiled their garments.” “These are they which follow the Lamb wherever He goes.” Some of His followers are not very scrupulous. They love Him. It is not for us to judge them. Rather we place ourselves among them and share in the censure. But happiest of all the happy are they who see the footprint—the print of that foot that once was pierced with the nail—and put their foot down where He placed it, and then again, in the selfsame mark, follow where He trod, till they climb at last to the Throne.

Keep close to Christ! Take care of His little precepts unto the end. Remember, “Whoever shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of Heaven.” Do not peril being least in the heavenly kingdom though it is better to be that than to be greatest in the kingdom of darkness. O seek to be very near Him, to be a choice sheep in His chosen flock, and to have the mark distinctly upon your foot! I will not stay to apply these truths, but leave each one of you to make such self-searching enquiries as the text suggests. Have I the ear mark? Have I the foot mark? “My sheep hear My voice,” “and they follow Me.” I hope that I am among the number.

III. The last point, with which we now proceed to close, is—THE PRIVILEGE OF CHRIST’S SHEEP. It does not look very large, but if we open it we shall see an amazing degree of blessedness in it. “I know them.” “I know them.” What does it mean? I have not time now to tell you all it means. “*I know them.*” What is the reverse of this but one of the most dreadful things that is reserved for the Day of Judgment? There will be

some who will say, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, and in Your name cast out devils?"

And He shall say, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, *I never knew you*. Depart from Me, you cursed." Now measure the height of that privilege by the depth of this misery. "I never knew you." What a volume of scorn it implies! What a stigma of infamy it conveys! Change the picture. The Redeemer says, "I know them." "I know them." How His eyes flash with kindness! How their cheeks burn with gratitude, as He says, "I know them"! Why, if a man had a friend and acquaintance that he used to know, and some years after he found him a disreputable, abandoned, wicked, guilty criminal, I feel pretty sure he would not say much about having known such a fellow, though he might be driven to confess that he had some years ago a passing acquaintance with him.

But our Lord Jesus Christ, though He knows what poor unworthy ones we are, yet when we shall be brought up before the Lord, before the Great White Throne, He will confess He knew us! He *does* know us—we are old acquaintances of His—and He has known us from before the foundation of the world! "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many Brethren. Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called."

There are riches of Grace in this. But we will consider it in another way. Our Savior knows us, our Shepherd knows us. Beloved, He knows your person and all about you. You, with that sick body, that aching head—He knows you and He knows your soul with all its sensitiveness. That timidity, that anxiety, that constitutional depression—He knows it all! A physician may come to see you and be unable to detect what the disease is that pains or prostrates you, but Christ knows you through and through. All the parts of your nature He understands. "I know them," says He. He can, therefore, prescribe for you.

He knows your sins. Do not let that dismay you, because He has blotted them all out. And He only knows them to forgive them, to cover them with His righteousness. He knows your corruptions. He will help you to overcome them. He will deal with you in Providence and in Grace so that they shall be rooted up. He knows your temptations. Perhaps you are living away from your parents and Christian friends, and you have had an extraordinary temptation, and you wish you could go home and tell your mother. Oh, He knows it, He knows it! He can help you better than your mother can!

You say—"I wish the minister knew the temptation I have passed through." Do not tell it—God knows it. As Daniel did not want Nebuchadnezzar to tell him the nature of his dream, but gave him the dream and the interpretation at the same time, so God can send you comfort. There will be a word as plainly suited to your case as though it were all printed and the preacher had known it all. It must be so. Depend upon it, the Lord knows your temptation, and watches your trials.

Or is it a sick child, or is it a bad matter of business that has lately occurred? Or is it a slander that has wounded your heart? There is not a

pang you feel but God as surely sees it as the weaver sees the shuttle which he throws with his own hand. He knows your trial and He knows the meaning of your groans—He can read the secret desire of your heart, you need not write it nor speak it—He has understood it all. You were saying—“O that my child were converted! O that I grew in Grace!” He knows it—He knows it every whit. There is not a word on your tongue, nor a wish in your heart, but He knows it altogether.

O dear Heart, He knows your sincerity! Perhaps you want to join the Church, and your proposal has been declined because you could not give satisfactory testimony. If you are sincere, He knows it. He knows, moreover, what your anxiety is. You cannot tell another what it is that is bitter to you—the heart knows its own bitterness—He knows it. As His secret is with you, so your secret is with Him. He knows you—He knows what you have been trying to do. That secret gift—that offering dropped so quietly where none could see it—He knows it. And He knows that you love Him.

“Yes,” you are saying in your soul, “if ever I loved You, my Jesus, it is now.” No, you cannot tell Him, nor tell others. But He knows it all. So, now, in closing, let us say that in the text there is mutual knowledge. “I know them, but they also know Me, because they hear My voice, and recognize it.” Here is mutual confession. Christ speaks, else there would be no voice—they hear, else were the voice not useful. “I know them.” That is, His thoughts go towards them. “They follow Me.” That is, their thoughts go towards Him.

He leads the way, else they could not follow. They follow, however, when He leads the way. Being the counterpart of each other, what the one does the other returns through Grace. And what Grace puts into the sheep the Shepherd recognizes, and makes a return to them. Christ and His Church become an echo of each other—His the voice, theirs is but a faint echo of it. Still it is a true echo, and you shall know who are Christ’s by this. Do they echo what Christ says? Oh, how I wish we were all sheep! How my soul longs that we may, many of us who are not of His fold, be brought in. The Lord bring you in, my dear Hearers. The Lord give you His Grace, and make you His own. The Lord comfort you, and make you to follow Him. And if you are His, show it.

These dear Brothers and Sisters here at this time desire to confess Christ in your presence. If they are doing right, and you are not doing as they do, then you are doing wrong. If it is the duty of one, it is the duty of all. And if one Christian may neglect making a profession, all may do so, and then there will be no visible Church whatever, and the visible ordinances must die out. If you know Him, own Him, for He has said—“Whoever, therefore, shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in Heaven. But whoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in Heaven.” God bless you, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

***Letter from Mr. Spurgeon, read at the Tabernacle on Lord’s Day,
June 18, 1871***

MY BELOVED FRIENDS—As soon as the Church had resolved to meet for special prayer for me, I began rapidly to recover. It pleased God to turn the wind at the beginning of this week, and the change in the temperature has worked wonders. We may truthfully say of the Wednesday meeting for prayer, that the Lord fulfilled His Word—“Before they call, I will answer. And while they are yet speaking, I will hear.”

For all this great goodness I pray you to unite with me in sincere and intense gratitude to the Lord our God. I feel bound publicly to express my happiness of heart. This week has furnished me with the liveliest proofs of your true love. I have been deeply touched with the various ways in which the affection of so many of you have sought to find expression. I value this not only for my own sake, though it is very sweet to be the object of such hearty love, but because I see in it the evidence that our union has been cemented by years, and the earnest of future years of united effort, if God spares us. The absence of unity is weakness—its indisputable presence is strength.

On the closing day of my thirty-seventh year, I find myself the pastor of a beloved Flock who have borne the test of twelve Sundays of their minister's absence, and the severer test of more than seventeen years of the same ministry, and are now exhibiting more love to him than ever. I bless God, but I also thank you, and assure you that I never felt happier in the midst of my people than I do now in the prospect of returning to you. I am still weak, but the improvement in strength has been this week very surprising.

I hardly dare speak of the future. But I earnestly hope we shall look each other in the face on the first Sunday of July. The collection today is to enable the London Baptist Association to build a new chapel in the Wandsworth Road. We are to carry out the project so that it will not become us to be slack in our collection. London grows so rapidly that much must be done to keep pace with its spiritual needs. Our Association does something, but ten times more would be little enough.

You will, I am sure, give as God has prospered you. The College, of course, will be less helped. But I must beg to thank you for the continued series of noble contributions which have made each week remarkable. Peace be with you and the Lord's own anointing. May those who speak to you today be filled with the Spirit. May the soft south wind of the Spirit's love be among you, and may you pour forth praise as flowers breathe perfume.

Yours very truly,
C. H. SPURGEON.

Adapted from *The C.H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

THE SECURITY OF BELIEVERS—OR, SHEEP WHO SHALL NEVER PERISH NO. 2120

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 29, 1889,

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 5, 1889.**

*“My sheep hear My voice and I know them and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life. And they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them Me is greater than all. And no man is able to pluck them out of My Father’s hand. I and my Father are one.”
John 10:27-30*

OUR Savior did not hesitate to preach the deeper doctrines of the Gospel to the most miscellaneous assembly. When He began to preach where He was brought up, they all gathered with admiration about Him, until He preached the doctrine of election. And then, straightway, they were so angry that they would have destroyed Him. They could not bear to hear of the widows of Israel passed by and the woman of Sarepta chosen—nor of a heathen leper healed, while the many lepers of their own race were left to die.

Election seems to heat the blood and fire the wrath of many. Not that they care to be chosen of God themselves. But, like the dog in the manger, they would keep other people out of the privilege. Not even to prevent these displays of bad temper did our Lord keep back the discriminating Truths of the Word. Here, when addressing the Jews, he did not hesitate to speak, even to a rude rabble, concerning that glorious doctrine.

He says, “You believe not, because you are not of My sheep, as I said unto you.” He does not lower the standard of the doctrine. But He holds His ground and carries the war into the enemy’s camp. The notion that certain truths are not fit to be preached to a general assembly but are to be kept for the special gathering of the saints, is, I believe, horribly mischievous. Christ has not commanded us to keep a part of our teaching reserved from the common folk and set aside for the priests alone.

He is for openly proclaiming all the Truths of God. “What I tell you in darkness, that speak you in light: and what you hear in the ear, that preach you upon the housetops.” There is no Truth of God that we need be ashamed of and there is no Truth of God that will do any harm. We grant you that every truth can be twisted—but even this would be a less evil than the concealment of it. Whatever the doctrine may be, ungodly men can pervert it according to their own lusts—and if we have to stop preaching a doctrine because of the possibility of perverting it, we shall never preach anything at all, for every truth may be perverted and made to be the mother of infinite mischief.

Our Savior did not teach His disciples to keep certain things for the instructed few who were able to receive them. But He bade us publish all the great Truths of God, since they are necessary for conviction, for conversion, for edification, for sanctification, and for the perfecting of the people of God. Even to His brutish opponents He exhibited but little reserve. He flashed in the faces of His adversaries this grand but humbling Truth, “You believe not, because you are not of My sheep.” Your unbelief is just an evidence that you were not chosen, that you have not been called by the Spirit of God and that you are still in your sins.

The Jews had said to him, “If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.” They professed that they wanted to know more certainly concerning Him. This was a vain pretense, for He had told them all they needed to know and they had not believed Him. Therefore He answered them to a large degree by making them know more about *themselves*. Sometimes the point in which a man is deficient is not as to the Gospel, but as to his own need of it. He may know all of Christ that is needful for his salvation but he may not know enough about himself and his own lost condition.

And therefore he is not in the way in which Christ becomes precious to him, because he is ignorant of his deep and terrible need. So the Savior began to talk to them, not so much about Himself as about His people and what they were to be. “My sheep hear My voice and I know them and they follow Me.”

I pray God, the Holy Spirit, to bless the Word to many, that they may learn more about the work of Christ in their hearts and more about their need of it—and thus may be led to seek Jesus and find Him tonight as their Savior and their Shepherd.

There are two things in my text which will suffice for our meditation. First, here is a description given of the Lord’s people. “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them and they follow Me.” And then, secondly, there is a privilege secured to them, namely, their everlasting, unquestionable safety. “I give unto them eternal life. And they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all. And no man is able to pluck them out of My Father’s hand. I and My Father are One.”

I. First, and all that I can say will be but little, considering the largeness of the subject, let us notice THE DESCRIPTION HERE GIVEN OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD.

They are first described by a specialty of possession—“My sheep.” All men are not sheep, for some are foxes, or ravenous wolves, and others are compared to dogs and lions. All persons who might be called sheep are not Christ’s sheep. All do not belong to His flock. All are not gathered into His fold. There is a distinguishing mark of possession. There may be many sheep, but the Savior speaks of, “My sheep,” those whom He chose of old, those who were given Him of the Father, those who have been bought with His blood, redeemed from among men, and in due time have been ransomed by His power—for He has bought them back from the hand of the enemy and therefore claims them to be His own. “The Lord’s portion is His people.”

Other lords have their portion and Christ takes His portion. His people are the lot of His inheritance. He speaks of “My sheep” as a peculiar heritage, whom, as a Shepherd, He claims for His own. Of these He is the sole Owner. He is not merely their Keeper but their Possessor. We read of the hireling shepherd, “whose own the sheep are not.” But in the case of our Good Shepherd, “He puts forth His own sheep.”

There is a special character about them. They are “My sheep.” They are dependent, timid, trembling, obedient, teachable. They are made sheep by His own Spirit. They have received a nature which is not that of the doggish world, nor that of the swinish multitude, nor that of the wolfish persecutor. But they are men indwelt of the Spirit of God, who are, therefore, clean, gentle, loving, gracious. He calls them “My sheep,” for they have a special relation to Himself—they are like Jesus. Being His sheep, He has become their Guardian as well as their Proprietor and they look up to Him as such. They are sheep to Him and He is a shepherd to them.

We may judge ourselves tonight by considering whether towards Christ we are His sheep. Do we acknowledge ourselves as belonging to Him, spirit, soul, and body? Do we regard ourselves as being, in relation to Him, no wiser, no stronger, than sheep to a shepherd? I know some who are certainly no sheep of Christ’s flock, for they will be led by nobody in Heaven, or on earth. They must have their own sweet way. They are critics of the Bible, not disciples of it. They might be very good dogs but they are very strange sheep. They would make very respectable wolves, for they are great in destructive criticism. But they certainly are not sheep.

And their temper and spirit are such that they would disdain the character, if they understood it. “What? To go where I am led? To lie down where I am bid to lie down? Not to choose my own way? To see nothing and know nothing—to have my eyes in *His* head and my wisdom in *His* mind? To be shepherded by another mind than my own? Is it so? Am I to be nothing but a sheep to the Lord Jesus?” Yes, it is even so. And therefore the modern wise man is indignant and proudly repudiates the character of a sheep.

As for us, we accept all that the name implies. O Brethren, we can play the man before other people, but when we come before our Lord, as the sheep is a mere animal in comparison with its shepherd, we feel ourselves to be less than that. How often have we cried with David, “So foolish was I and ignorant: I was as a beast before You”! O my Lord, in Your presence I sink as low as low can be and You become very high, yes, All in All to me—the Shepherd of my weak, vacillating, trembling spirit! There are special characteristics, then, about these people in the description. I have only time to hint at some of them.

A chief mark of Christ’s people is attention. “My sheep hear.” They can hear, because they have had spiritual ears given them. Once the Shepherd might have spoken all day long and they would not have heard Him. But it is not so now. Even from the Cross our Lord’s plaintive cries were all unheard by them. But now He has given them spiritual capacity and perception and they can hear and they *do* hear what His dying love would make them know and understand. Their Lord has spoken to them.

They have heard His voice and have known it to be His. They still hear it and they distinguish between His voice and other voices. “A stranger will they not follow: for they know not the voice of strangers.”

They now so hear that voice as to hear it in a true way. And joyfully to own it by obeying it. Do you not say, sometimes, to a child that is disobedient, “Did you not hear me speak, Child?” So Christ may say to many who hear with the outward ear but who will not yield obedience, that they have not heard Him. For indeed they have not hearkened with the inner ear. Their ear does not reach down to their heart. And thus, for spiritual purposes, it is no ear at all. It is an awful thing when the ear is a closed-up passage, shut against the voice of the Savior.

You can tell the sheep of Christ by their being marked in the ear. “My sheep hear My voice.” They may not hear a good deal that other people hear. They may even be glad to be deaf to it. There are many calls exceedingly musical to carnal ears, which have no charms for them. They try to be deaf to some voices from which they could gather nothing but temptation. But they hear Christ’s voice. They are all there when He speaks—their soul sits at the door to hear His softest whisper. They *try* to hear—they charge themselves to take heed that they lose no sound from Heaven. They do hear. But they long to hear yet more completely and to be more obedient to that voice which rings through the chambers of their soul.

Oh, what a hearing we have sometimes given to Christ! I have heard Him with my body, my soul, my spirit—at least, I have thought so. But whether in the body, or out of the body, I could not tell. If in the body, every pore has been an ear for my Lord’s sweet voice. As though my blood were tingling from the crown of my head to the sole of my foot, so has my spirit been wholly and entirely affected by the charming tones of the voice of the Well-Beloved, Oh, that He would speak tonight! Can you not hear Him? Beloved, is He not now calling us? Do you not rejoice to hear Him?—

**“No music’s like His charming voice,
Nor half so sweet can be.”**

So, you see, a noteworthy mark of the elect ones lies in their attention to Jesus, their Shepherd. He calls in vain to others. But His sheep hear His voice.

Another mark of the Lord’s people is intimacy. “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them.” “I *know* them.” Yes, the Lord discerns them. He singles them out, for “the Lord knows them that are His.” Sometimes we do not know them. But He says, “I know them.” In cloudy times they do not know themselves. But He says, “I know them.” When a child of God does not know whether he is a child of God or not, his Father knows His own children and the Great Shepherd knows His own sheep.

His is a discernment which never fails. The hypocrite cannot get into the true fold of Christ. He may get into the *visible* fold. But not into the *real spiritual* fold of Christ. For Christ does not know Him and bids Him depart. This is the very seal upon the foundation—“The Lord knows them that are His.” His eyes discern between the righteous and the wicked, be-

tween him that fears God and him that fears Him not—His is a knowledge of quick and certain discernment.

But this might make us tremble if we did not know that the expression, “I know them,” means a knowledge of approbation. “I know them,” says the Shepherd. “I take a delight in them. I know their secret sighs and mourning. I hear their private prayers. I know their praises in the silence of their hearts. I know their consecration and their aspirations after perfect service. I know their longings and their love. I know how they delight in Me.

“I know how they trust My promises. I know how they look to My atoning blood. I know how in their inmost souls they rejoice in My name. I know them and approve their secret thoughts.” O sweet words, understood in that sense! And this is one part of the character of the Lord’s people—that He did foreknow them in His Sovereign Grace—and now He personally knows them by taking a delight in them.

This Divine complacency leads to a very intense observation of them. “He knows the way that I take.” “The Lord knows the way of the righteous.” He has an eye upon them and marks their paths. His ears are open to their cry and He hears their petitions. Though there is all the world for His omniscience to consider, yet He looks upon each one of His sheep as much as if there were only that one person in the universe. Oh, to think of this! “I know them,” sounds like music in this sense. He that knows the stars and knows the infinite multitude of living creatures in the universe, has a special and peculiar knowledge of His own chosen.

“I know them,” says He. And He intends, by that, an intense observation. Now, Beloved, just try a little here, to see whether you come into this number—“I know them.” Does the Lord know you as His own? Has He had personal communion with you and you with Him? Or will He have to say to you at the last, “I never knew you”? Why, some of you have made Him know you! You have gone to Him in such trials and in such troubles and you have cried to Him in such bitterness and anguish, that, if He asks your name, you can say—

***“Once a sinner near despair
Sought Your Mercy Seat by prayer;
Mercy heard and set him free;
Lord, that mercy came to me!”***

When You did help me in great need, when You did pass by my great sin, then did You know me, O my Lord! “Do You ask me who I am? Ah, my Lord! You know my name.” Just as some men know right well the importunate beggar who is often at their door, so does the Lord, for certain, know some of you, for you go every day begging at His gate, and you receive constant alms at His hand. Besides that, you go every day thanking Him for the mercies you receive. He knows your name—the name of one who is drowned in debt to His infinite bounty. He can never forget your groans and cries.

And day by day your praises are a memorial to Him. By His love and pity and compassion, He is sure to remember you. Sooner can a woman forget her sucking child than your God forget you. Well, here are things well worth the noting—attention and intimacy. Are these yours?

But here is one more—actual *obedience*. How does He put it? “I know them and they follow Me.” All the Lord’s sheep are marked in the foot, as well as in the ear. The foot and ear marks must be in every sheep of the Lord’s flock. “They follow Me.” That is to say, they openly avow Him as their Shepherd. Other shepherds come and other sheep go after them. But these sheep know the Lord Jesus and they follow Him. He, alone, is their Leader. They are not ashamed to admit it. They take up their cross and follow the Cross-bearer and they bear His name.

More than that, they practically carry out their open avowal and they follow Him in daily life, copying His example. They not only say, “He is my Leader,” but they follow Him. Christ’s sheep try to follow in the track that the Shepherd marks for them. Christ’s people are never so happy as when they can put down their feet where Christ put His feet down. The very marks that He has left by His bleeding footsteps we would desire to follow all day and every day. Beloved, look carefully to this! Do what Jesus did, according to your measure and power. This is what the people of God try to do. If you do not endeavor to be like Christ, you are not His sheep. For of His sheep it is true, “I know them and they follow Me.”

And this is personally operative upon them. I could not tell you exactly in English words, but the Greek word gives here a kind of personality to the whole company. “My sheep hear My voice,” that is, the whole of the flock of God. “I know them,” that is, again, the whole flock of them, altogether. But, “they follow Me,” is in the *plural* number. It is as though it said, “They, *each one*, follow Me.” We, who are the Lord’s chosen, hear as a mass and the Lord knows the whole Church, for, as a whole, it is redeemed by Christ.

But we individually follow—each one for himself, through Divine Grace. We each one follow Him. “They follow Me.” I like that singular personal pronoun. It is not written, “They follow My Commandments,” though they do. It is not said, “They follow the route that I have mapped for them,” though they do that, too. But, “they follow *Me*,” distinctly. In their individual personality they follow their Lord in His individual personality. They have recognized Him above His words, above His ways and even above His salvation. “They follow Me,” says He.

This is a grand mark of a Christian—not merely a life of morality, a life of integrity, a life of holiness—but a life of all these in connection with Christ. They follow Him, not holiness, nor morality, nor integrity, apart from Christ—they follow their Lord. A good life is good in any man. We cannot speak evil of virtue, even when we find it in the ordinary moralist. But this is not the complete mark of Christ’s sheep. The virtues of Christ’s sheep are in connection with Himself. The Christian is holy and all that, but that is because he follows his perfect Master and keeps close to Him. This is one of the peculiar and unfailing marks of the child of God.

I have run through, very briefly, the descriptions, and I now leave you to meditate upon it when you are alone. This descriptions of the sheep of Christ are worthy of reading, marking and inwardly digesting.

II. But my main object tonight is to show you THE GREAT PRIVILEGE HERE CONFERRED ON THE PEOPLE OF GOD. Christ has secured to them the priceless gift of eternal security in Him. No sheep of Christ shall

ever be lost. None that He has purchased with His blood and made to be His own, shall ever wander away so as to perish at last. This is the doctrine of the verses now before us. At any rate, if I wanted to express that doctrine, I could not find words in which I could set it forth more definitely, or more completely, than is done by the words before me.

The security of the people of God lies, first of all, in the character of the life which they have received. Listen to this—“And I give unto them ETERNAL LIFE.” All the spiritual life which all the sheep in the flock now possess has been given to them by their Shepherd. Never was there another flock of which this could be said. No shepherd but this one can give life to his sheep. But He gave them all the true life that they have.

No, stop—He not only gave them life but He *sustains* that life by a constant gift. Observe, it is not written, “I *gave* unto them eternal life,” but “I *give* unto them eternal life.” They are always living by virtue of the life which He is always giving. They are constantly receiving life from Him, according to that assurance, “Because I live, you shall live also.” What He always gives they must always receive and therefore it cannot cease.

Notice the nature of that life. “I give unto My sheep eternal life.” Now, you all know what “eternal” means—or say, rather, none of you can form an idea of eternity which can grasp all its length of endurance. Only this—you know it has no end and cannot, therefore, close. If anybody said that he had eternal life and lost it, he would be flatly contradicting himself. It could not be eternal, or else he must still have it. If it is *eternal*, it is *eternal* and there is no end to it. And that is an end of further argument about it.

If the life that Christ gives us, when we are born again, can die, it is not “eternal” life, or else words have ceased to have any meaning at all. In its nature, as being the work of the Holy Spirit, and an emanation from God, the life bestowed in regeneration is an undying one. Has not the Holy Spirit described us as “being born again, not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which lives and abides forever”? The life of God imparted by the Holy Spirit *must* live forever. As the gift is continuous, is always being given, and as it is in itself eternal life, it must always exist.

But, principally, I dwell upon the glorious character of the Giver. “I give unto My sheep eternal life.” The life that Christ gives is not that poor, paltry life which lasts the professor for about three weeks and then dwindles down and dies out. Or, say, three months and then the revival is over and the convert is spun out and done for and has to begin again. Such is the religious life which is excited by *men*. But it is not so with the life which comes from God.

I said that the false convert begins again, though *how* he begins again, I know not, because I read in Scripture of people being born again. But I have never read of their being born again, and again, and again, and again. I am told that some of our religionists have had their people converted and born again more times than they can count. And I heard that a woman had been born again twelve times down at a certain meeting.

But he who stated the fact said shrewdly that he feared it was not done well the last time.

No, I do not think it will ever be done well in that way. He that is born again, according to Scripture, has received ETERNAL LIFE. And this is the only life worth receiving. I would not preach my very soul away in order to proclaim such a two penny, trumpery, temporary salvation as that. But to preach the Lord Jesus as giving *eternal life* is worth living for and dying for. I tell you, Sirs, it is this that brought me to Christ. While I was yet young and thinking over matters, I saw young lads that were brought up with me, excellent in character, who left their homes to be apprenticed and after a while the temptations of the world overcame them, and they went astray and had no religion at all.

But when I read that Christ gave His sheep eternal life, I looked at it as a kind of moral life insurance for my soul and I came to Christ and trusted Him to keep me to the end. I shall suffer a grievous disappointment if I ever find out that the life of God in me is not eternal and that the new birth does not assure final perseverance.

I did not go up to the booking office and take a ticket for a quarter of the distance to Heaven. But I took my ticket all the way through. I trust, no, I know, that according to my faith, so will it be unto me. I am very glad to have my through ticket with me and I believe that unless the train of Almighty Grace smashes up—which it never will—I shall get through to the Celestial terminus as surely as ever Divine power can draw me there—for so it is written—“I give unto My sheep eternal life.”

Now, depend upon it, it is what you hold out to people that has much to do with how they behave themselves afterwards. Tell them that if they believe in Christ, they are going to get, not eternal life—but life for a little while—life for as long as they take good care of it, and I fear it will prove to be so. It may do them good to get the poor little change you offer them—but as surely as they are converted to a temporary life, they will die out before long.

You told them that they would. You did not propose any more to them. But when you propose to them this—“Here is everlasting life to be had by believing in Christ. It is not temporary but eternal life”—why, then they grip it as such. They believe in Christ for that and according to their faith it is unto them. And the Lord and Giver of life is glorified in giving to them this great and splendid gift, the gift of all gifts. “I give unto My sheep eternal life.”

I do not know in what other way to preach from this text than the one in which I am preaching from it. Somebody says, “Oh, that is Calvinism!” I do not care what it is. It is Scriptural. I have this inspired Book before me, and I cannot see any meaning in the words before me, if they do not mean that those who have received life from the Lord Jesus have an endless inheritance. I cannot make them mean anything else. “I give unto My sheep eternal life,” must mean that Believers are eternally secure.

“It is dangerous doctrine,” cries one. I have not found it dangerous and I have tried it these many years. I conceive that it would be far more dangerous to tell people that they could be truly converted and yet the work of Divine Grace would end in six months and then they could come

back again and begin again and do so as many times as they liked. The Word of God tells them that if they shall fall away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance. Men may fall and be restored. But if they fall away utterly, there remains no other work which can be done for them. If this everlasting life could die, the Holy Spirit would have done His best and nothing more would remain to be done.

If it were so that this salt which is good should lose its savor, where could it be salted? See what a gulf opens before you. And do not look for a work which will not endure every possible strain. Oh, that you may get this eternal life!

So we take a step farther. The children of God are safe, again, not only because of the life they receive but because of the inner dangers which are averted. Take the next sentence—“And they shall never perish.” They have a tendency to spiritual sickness, but their Shepherd will doctor them so that they shall never perish. They are sheep and have a tendency to wander. But their Shepherd shall keep them so that they shall never perish. Time tries them and they grow old and the novelty of religion wears off. But they shall never perish. Think what you will of them, “they shall never perish,” for so the promise stands.

The first statement, “I give unto them eternal life,” is as broad as can be, but this is broader still—“they shall never perish.” The rule has absolutely no exception. The whole of them shall be preserved. Let them live to be as old as Methuselah, they shall never perish, whatever temptation may assail them. They may be tried and troubled and broken down, so that they may be hardly able to live. But they shall never perish. “Never” is a long day. But it is not longer than Divine Grace will last. Blessed be God, this grand promise stands fast—“They shall never perish.”

Now we must go a step farther. We have no time to urge these arguments at any great length. They are safe, next, by outer injuries being prevented. “Neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.” Many will pluck at them but none shall pluck them away. The devil will give many a horrible pluck and pull, to get them away. But out of the great Shepherd’s hand he shall never take them. Their old companions and the memories of their old sins will come and pluck at them very hard and very cunningly. But the Savior says, “None shall pluck them out of My hand.”

So, first, here is their security—they are in His hands. That is, in His possession and He grasps them, as a man holds a thing in his hand and says, “It is mine.” Neither shall any take them away from being under His protection. Never shall they be plucked away from Christ. When He says this, He pledges His honor to preserve them, for if it could be that one were plucked out of His hand, then would the devils in Hell rejoice and say, “He could not keep them. He said that He would, but He could not. We have managed to pluck this one, or that one, out of the pierced hand of their Redeemer.” But such a horrible exultation shall never be heard throughout the ages of eternity.

“They shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand.” Someone wickedly said, “They may get out of His hand themselves.” But how can this be true, when the first sentence is, “They shall

never perish”? Treat Scripture honestly and candidly and you will admit that the promise, “they shall never perish,” shuts out the idea of perishing by going out of the Lord’s hand by their own act and deed. “They shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand.” Who is to loosen the clasp of that hand which was pierced with the nail for me? My Lord Jesus bought me too dearly ever to let me go. He loves me so well that His whole omnipotence will work with that hand, and unless there is something greater than Godhead, I cannot be plucked away from that dear, fast-holding grip.

Now, to make quite sure about it and to pile on the comfort, the Savior goes on to add the care and power of God Himself. Our Lord says, “My Father, which gave them Me.” The saints of God are safe, because the Father gave them to His Son. He did not give Him a transitory inheritance. He did not bestow on Him a something which He might, after all, lose. Will the Lord Christ lose what His Father gave Him? You know how people say, “Oh, I hope that, if a burglar takes anything from my house, he will not take that cup, which is an heirloom. My father gave it to me.”

If a man had to defend his property, he would be sure to take care of that which was a very special gift, given in his honor, as a memorial of a great work. So is it with our Lord Jesus—He values that which His Father gave Him. I delight in the thought. I picture my blessed Lord looking at each one of His believing people and saying, “My Father gave you to Me.” That poor woman, that struggling young man, that decrepit old lady, that man who is half-starved, but who loves his Lord—Jesus says of each one, “My Father gave this soul to Me.” He cannot lose what His Father gave Him.

He would die again sooner than He would lose them. His death has made their salvation safe beyond all jeopardy. He laid down His life for His sheep. The lion came and leaped into the fold. But the Shepherd met the lion—yes, He received him on His naked breast and held him there. It was a terrible tug. The Shepherd sweat great drops of blood as He held the monster. But He rent him and He hurled him to the earth and said, “It is finished.” And it was finished. He has so saved all His flock until now that we are sure that He will never lose one of those whom His Father committed to His trust. “My Father gave them Me.”

Then He goes on to say that His people are kept by the Father’s power. For He says, “My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all. And no man is able to pluck them out of My Father’s hand.” Beloved, although God gave us to Christ, He did not cease to care for us Himself! Our sweet text last Sunday night I must bring to your memory. I could not fully preach from it, but the text was enough without a sermon—“All Mine are Yours and Yours are Mine. And I am glorified in them.”

We tried to show you how we were none the less the Father’s because we were the Son’s and none the less the Son’s because we belonged to the Father. So here Jesus in effect says. “My Father gave you to Me. Yet He takes care of you none the less, but all the more. Because He is determined that what He gave to Me shall be Mine, the Lord will put forth His wisdom and power to preserve you.”

Let me, by a symbol, illustrate the latter words of the text. There lie the children of God in the hand of Christ. Do you see that fast closed hand? They are safe enough there. Jesus says, “No man shall be able to pluck them out of My hand.” But see the Father? He puts His hand *over* the hand of Jesus! There, now—you are inside *two* hands, “And no man is able to pluck them out of My Father’s hand.”

Oh, the serene security of those who hear the voice of Christ and whom He calls His sheep! A double-handed force keeps them safe against all ill. Pluck away, Satan! You will never pluck them away from the hand of Jesus and the hand of His Father! “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” It is impossible to be done.

And then the Savior finishes all by saying that, while He has spoken of the Father and Himself as two and two as they are as Persons—yet in their Divine Essence they are but One. He says, “I and My Father are One.” And especially One in love to His people. “The Father Himself loves you,” even as He loves His Son. And, while you read the love of Christ in His death, you must read the Father’s love quite as much in that great sacrifice. It is true of our Lord Jesus that—“He loved the Church and gave Himself for it.” But it is equally true of the Father—“God so loved the world, that He gave His Only-Begotten Son.”

They are one in an infinite love to all those who, called according to the Divine purpose, are following Christ and hearing His voice. I fall back with great joy upon this blessed conviction—that He will not suffer those to perish who have received eternal life at His hands. Of course, if you have only taken temporary life—if you only believe in *that*—you will get no more than you believe. Your gift will be measured by your faith. But if you say, “I gave myself up to Christ that He might be Alpha and Omega to me. And I wholly trust myself to Him without reserve, throughout all my life, to save me,” He will do it.

“I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.” “He which has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” “The path of the just is as the shining light, that shines more and more unto the perfect day.”

You are safe in Christ’s hands. Know it, and feel the joy of it. “Oh,” says one, “but if I thought so, I should run into sin!” I am sorry for you—things act very strangely upon you. Nothing binds me to my Lord like a strong belief in His changeless love. “Oh but it would be far safer to tell your hearers that they may be overcome by sin and perish!” I will not tell them what I do not believe. I will not dishonor my Lord by a falsehood. Shall I come home to your house and tell your children that, if they do wrong, you will cut their heads off? Or that, if they disobey you, they will cease to be your children?

If I were to propound that doctrine, your children would grow angry at such a slander upon their father. They would say, “No, we know better than that!” Far rather would I say to them, “My dear children, your father loves you. He will love you without end, therefore do not grieve him.” Under such doctrine true children will say, “We love our ever-loving Father. We will not disobey Him. We will endeavor to walk in His ways.”—

***“It is love that makes our willing feet
In swift obedience move.”***

Our loving Lord will not cast away those to whom He is bound by marriage bonds.

“Well, but suppose we sin.” He will chasten us and restore us. “If I believed that doctrine, I should live as I like,” says one. Then you are not one of His sheep, for His sheep love *holiness* and will not love iniquity. The change worked by the new birth is such that a man will not return to his old ways of sin and folly. This is the doctrine. And how can you make it to be an indulgence to sin? True saints never turn the Grace of God into licentiousness but the very mention of eternal love leads them to careful obedience.

One more thing I must say. Some ministers preach a Gospel with a very wide door to it, but there is nothing to be had when you get within. I am sometimes told that I make my door a little too narrow. It is not true, for I preach the Gospel to every creature under Heaven, with all my might. But if the door is narrow, there is something worth having when you enter by it. Even if the way is narrow, if you once get in, you have got in and you have found eternal life and you shall never perish, neither shall any pluck you out of Christ’s hands.

Sinner, come and have an eternal blessing! It is worth having. Come and have it! If you believe, you shall assuredly be saved. “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved”—saved from sin so as never to go back and live in it again! So saved as to be made holy! Saved as to be preserved in holiness. Holiness shall be the set of the main current of your life, until, made perfectly holy, you shall dwell with God above.

Into His hands let us commit our spirits tonight and we may rest assured that they shall be safe eternally. Amen.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON

DEAR READERS—On this, the final sermon of the year, permit your friend and servant to wish you all, in the highest sense, a happy New Year. There is not space to do more than say from my retreat—I pray you are mindful of me in your prayers.

Yours, at the end of thirty-five volumes, most gratefully,

C. H. SPURGEON

Tabernacle Pulpit

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

END OF VOLUME 35

PERSEVERANCE WITHOUT PRESUMPTION NO. 1056

A SERMON DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 7, 1872,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.”
John 10:28.*

THOSE of you who were present last Thursday evening will remember that I spoke, then, upon the necessity of “holding fast the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end,” [A PERSUASIVE TO STEADFASTNESS, NO. 1042] and I showed you that it is only by continuing in the faith with which we began that we are proven to be partakers of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, let us speak as plainly as we may, we are always liable to be misunderstood. The most eager hearer may easily confuse his thoughts with our words, and so attribute notions to us that spring up spontaneously in his own mind.

Thus I met this week with an earnest anxious enquirer who thought I had meant that though a man should be a Believer in Jesus Christ, yet after all he might perish. I dare say some expressions I used led him to think so. Had he been long a hearer here, he could not have imagined that I could give utterance to such a statement! For all of you who hear me continually know that if there is one doctrine I have preached more than any other, it is the doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints even to the end. What I intended to say, and I do not wonder that he did not quite understand me, was this—the Believer must always be a Believer—having begun in that confidence, he must continue in that confidence.

The alternative would be that he draws back unto perdition, in which case he would perish as an unbeliever—and then the inference would be that the faith he seemed to have was a fiction, that the confidence he seemed to enjoy was a bubble—that he really never did believe to the saving of his soul. This is a fair argument based on the operation of the Spirit of God. It is in no sense a condition dependent on the good behavior of men. The one way by which a soul is saved is by that soul’s abiding in Christ—if it did not abide in Christ, it would be cast forth as a branch and be withered.

But, then, we *know* that they who are grafted into Christ will abide in Christ! We reason in the manner of the Apostle Paul who, when he had spoken of the danger that some were in that, having begun well, they should end badly—after being enlightened and tasting the good Word of God and the powers of the world to come, they should turn aside—he adds, “But Beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.”

The question, however, having been mooted, it occurs to me that it may not be unprofitable if I state briefly—not by way of controversy, but simply

for the sake of instruction—the doctrine of the security of the Believer in Christ, the certainty of the Believer’s perseverance even to the end, and of his entrance into eternal rest. This text at once suggests itself to me—“I give unto My sheep eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand.” The three clauses of this sentence represent to us three gracious securities. Here is a Divine gift—“I *give* unto them eternal life.” Here is a Divine promise, far-reaching and wide—“they shall *never* perish.” And here is a Divine holdfast—“neither shall any pluck them out of My hand.”

I. First, then, observe THE DIVINE GIFT—“I give unto them eternal life.” Eternal life comes to every man who has it as a matter of gift. He did not possess it when he first entered into the world. He was born of the first Adam and born to die. He did not educe it or evolve it from himself by some mysterious processes. It is not a home growth, a product of the soil of humanity—it is a *gift*. Nor is eternal life bestowed as a reward for service done. It could not be—for it is a *prerequisite* to the doing of service!

The term “gift” shuts out all idea of debt. If it is a gift, or of Divine Grace, then it is no more of debt or of reward. Wherever eternal life is implanted in any person’s soul it is the free gift of the Lord Jesus Christ—not deserved but *bestowed* on the unworthy. Therefore we see no reason why it should be revoked from the person who has received it. For, suppose there are certain disqualifications in the man who has participated in the gift, yet they cannot otherwise operate to his prejudice in enjoying the gift than they would have operated to his ever receiving it if they had been taken into account at all.

The thing does not come to him because of any worthiness in him, but comes as a gratuity. There is no reason why it should not continue, since it has come into existence, or why the present tense, as we have it here, should not always be a present fact. “I give”—I continue to give—“to them eternal life,” that cannot be affected by an unworthiness subsequently discovered because God knows the end from the beginning. When He bestowed eternal life upon the man who has it, He knew right well every imperfection and failing that would occur in that man. These demerits, had they been reasons at all, would have been a cause for the *not* giving, rather than for giving and then taking away again.

It is inconsistent with the gifts of God for them ever to be disannulled. We have it laid down as a rule of the kingdom of which there is no violation, that, “the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.” He does not rescind in caprice that which He has conferred of His own good will. It is not according to the royal Nature of the Lord our God to bestow a gift of Grace upon a soul and then afterwards to withdraw it—to lift up a man from his natural degradation and set him among princes by endowing him with eternal life, and then to cast him down from his high estate by depriving him of all the infinite benefits He has conferred.

The very language I am using is contradictory enough of itself to refute the suggestion. To give *eternal* life is to give a life beyond the contingencies of this present mortal existence. “Forever” is stamped on the charter. To take it away is not consistent with the royal bounty of the King of kings, even if it were possible that such a thing could be. “I give unto them

eternal life.” If He gives, then, He gives with the sovereignty and generosity of a king. He gives permanently, on an enduring tenure. He gives so that He will not revoke the grant. He gives and it is theirs—it shall be theirs by Divine charter forever and ever.

We may infer the certain safety of the Believer, not only from the fact that this life is an absolute gift and will not, therefore, be withdrawn, but from the nature of the gift, it being *eternal* life. “I give unto My sheep eternal life.” “Yes, but,” says somebody, “they lose it.” Then they cannot have had *eternal* life. It is a mistake in terms to say that a man has *eternal* life and yet perishes. Can death befall the *immortal*, or change affect the *immutable*, or decay corrode the *imperishable*? How can life be *eternal* if it comes to an end? How can it be possible that one shall have *eternal* life and yet die with sudden shock, or drop as feeble Nature fails of all her functions?

No! *Eternity* is not to be measured by weeks or months or years! When Christ says *eternal*, He means *eternal*, and if I have received the gift of *eternal life*, it is not possible for me to sin so as to lose that spiritual life by any means whatever. “It is eternal life.” We may reasonably expect the Believer to hold on to the end, because the life which God has implanted within him is of that Nature that it must continue to exist, must conquer all difficulties, must ripen, must perfect, must cast out sin from him and must bring him to eternal Glory! When Christ spoke by the well to the Samaritan woman, he said, “Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”

This cannot mean a transient draught that would slake the thirst for an hour or two—it must imply such a partaking as changes a man’s actual constitution and his destiny—and become in him a never-failing wellspring. The life which God implants in Believers by *regeneration* is not like the life which we now possess by *generation*. This mortal life *does* pass away. It is connected with flesh and all flesh is like grass—it withers. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh.” Not so the new life that is born of the Spirit and it is Spirit, and Spirit is not capable of destruction—it shall continue and last on, world without end. The eternal life within every man who has it was begotten in him “not of the will of man, nor of flesh, nor of blood, but of God” Himself.

Thanks be unto the Father, for it is of Him that we are “begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” Tracing this implanted life to its germ, we are said to be “born-again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible by the Word of God which lives and abides forever.” It is a holy seed. It cannot sin, for it is born of God. We are made partakers of the Divine Nature, and the *new life* within us is a Divine life. It is the life of God within the soul of man! We become the twice-born, with a life that can no more die than the life of God Himself, for it is, in fact, a spark from that great central Sun—it is a new well in the soul which draws its supplies from the deep that lies under—from the inexhaustible fountain of the fullness of God! This, then, is a second reason for believing in the security and final perseverance of the Believer.

He has a gift from Christ, and Christ will not withdraw His gift—he has a life which is in itself immortal and *eternal*.

But further, this life within the Believer which is a gift from Christ is always in connection *with* Christ. We live because we are *one* with Christ—as the branch sucks its sap from the vine—so do we continue to derive our life's blood, our life's supplies from Christ Himself. The union between the Believer and Christ is vital and to the fullest degree assuring. For what does our Lord say of it?—"Because I live, you shall live also." It is not a partnership which may be dissolved or a connection which may be severed—it is a necessity that no accident can interfere with! It is a fixed law of being—"because I live, you shall live also."

That the union between Christ and His people is indissoluble appears obvious from the figures which are used to illustrate it. To such an overwhelming extent do they denote that there can be no separation, that we may well say, "Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?" Are we not married to Christ? What metaphor could be more expressive? To estimate its value you must take the Divine account of the relationship. Although weddings are secularized by our Acts of Parliament, and nuptial ties are looked upon as civil contracts, *God* has pronounced man and wife to be one flesh! Yes, in the sight of Heaven, he that is joined to a harlot is one body with her.

In ordinary marriage, divorce is possible, and, alas, too common—but when you come to Scripture, you find it written that He hates putting away. He has said, "I will betroth you unto Me forever, I have betrothed you unto Myself in righteousness and in faithfulness, and you shall know the Lord." The marriage between our souls and Christ can never be dissolved! It were blasphemy to suppose that Christ shall appeal for a divorce, or that there should be a proclamation made that He has put away that spouse whom He chose of old, for whom He has prepared the great wedding feast and for whose eternal bliss He has gone to Glory to prepare a place! No, we cannot imagine such espousals leading to a separation!

Again, are we not members of His body? Shall Christ be dismembered? Shall He, every now and then, lose one limb or another? Can you suppose that Christ is maimed? I scarcely like to think, much less to *express* the thought, of here or there an eye, or a foot, or an ear needed to complete the perfection of His mystic Person. No! It shall not be! Members of the body of Christ shall be so vitally quickened by the heart, and by Himself, the Head, that they shall continue to live because He lives! When a man stands in water, the flood might naturally have power to drown him, but as long as his head remains above water, the stream cannot possibly drown his feet or his hands! And because Christ, the Head, cannot die, cannot be destroyed, all the floods that shall come upon the members of His body shall not—*cannot*—destroy them!

Moreover, the life of the Believer is constantly sustained by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. It is a matter of fact under the Gospel dispensation that not only is the Holy Spirit *with* Believers but He is *in* Believers. He dwells in them! He makes them His temple! The life, as we have shown you, is "sui generis," of its own kind, *immortal*. It is immortal

because united with an undying Christ—but it is also immortal because supported by a Divine Spirit who cannot be overcome. The Holy Spirit has power to meet all the mischief of false and evil spirits that aim at our destruction, and, from day to day adds fresh fuel to the eternal flame of the Believer's life within. Were it not for the Holy Spirit's abiding with us, we might be the subjects of some doubt, but as long as He continues to abide with us forever, we will not fear.

The first consolation that we thus draw from the text is that we are the recipients of a Divine *gift*—"I give unto My sheep eternal life."

II. Now, secondly, we have added to this, A DIVINE PROMISE—"They shall never perish." I am very thankful for this Word because there have been some who have tried to do away with the force of the entire passage—"neither shall any pluck them out of My hand." "No," they have said, "but they may slip between His fingers, and though they cannot be plucked out, yet they may go out on their own accord." But here is a short sentence that puts all such thoughts out of the question—"they shall never perish"—*in* His hands or *out* of His hands, under any supposition whatever—"they shall never perish"!

Observe that there is no restriction here—it includes all time. "They shall never perish." Are they young Believers? Are their passions strong? Are their judgments weak? Have they little knowledge, small experience, and tender faith? May they not die while yet they are lambs and perish while they are so feeble? "They shall never perish." But, in middle life, when men too often lose the freshness of early Grace, when the love of their espousals may, perhaps, have lost its power, may they not get worldly? May they not, somehow or other, then be led aside? "They shall never perish." "They shall *never* perish."

Perish they would, could worldliness destroy them! Perish they would could evil utterly and entirely get the mastery of Grace—but it shall not. "They shall never perish!" But, may they not grow older, and yet not wiser? May they not be surprised by temptation, as so many have been in times when they have become carnally secure, because they thought their experience had made them strong? "They shall never perish"—neither if they are beginners, nor if they have all but finished their course. "They shall *never* perish." It shuts out all time—all reference to time—by taking the whole range of possible periods into the one word, "never." "They shall *never* perish."

No less does the sweep of the sentence include all contingencies. "They shall never perish." What? Not if they are severely tempted? "They shall never perish." Not if they backslide? They shall be restored again. "They shall never perish." But, if they continue in backsliding and die so? Ah, that they shall not do—"They shall *never* perish." You must not suppose that which never can occur. "They shall *never* perish." They shall never get into such a condition that they shall be utterly without Divine Grace—they shall never be in such a state of heart that sin shall have dominion over them—utter and entire dominion.

It may come in. It may seem for a time to get the mastery, but sin shall never have dominion over them that they shall perish before the Lord. "They shall *never* perish." It takes in all the flock. "They shall never

perish”—that is, not one of His sheep. This is not the distinctive privilege of a *few*, but the common mercy of them all! None of them—not one of them—shall ever perish. If you, Believer in Christ, are the most obscure of all the family, you shall never perish. If you have, indeed, received the inner life and true Grace is in your soul, though no one knows your name and no one lends you a helping hand—though, as a solitary pilgrim you should walk the heavenly road all alone, weak and feeble, and trembling all the way—yet you shall never perish! The promise is not to *some*, but to *all* the believing sheep of Christ. “They shall never perish.”

And, Beloved, it may greatly strengthen our faith and sweetly revive our spirits if we consider how this doctrine harmonizes with other doctrines which are most surely believed among us. Christ’s sheep were of old chosen of God unto salvation. But if they perished, the election of God would be frustrated! From the foundation of the world He appointed them that they should bring forth fruit unto holiness, even unto the end, and, if they do not, how can His will be done on earth as it is in Heaven? They were a people set apart unto Himself that they might honor Him by good works. If they failed of this. If they fell from their blest estate. If they did utterly perish, the Father’s counsel would be foiled—and that cannot be!

The purpose of God secures their final perseverance. “They shall never perish.” We may rest assured that they shall be preserved because of the effectual redemption which Christ has worked out for them. We believe, Beloved, in this place, (though the doctrine is very much disparaged nowadays), in an *actual* and *literal* substitutionary Sacrifice. We believe that Jesus died for His people, and—

**“Bore, that they might never bear
The Father’s righteous ire.”**

Now, if He paid their debts, they have no debts to discharge! If He has borne their punishment, they have no penalty to suffer. If He stood in their place, Justice as well as Grace—Justice and Grace together—demand that they should be saved. Jesus Christ has offered for them an Atonement—and, “who is he that condemns?” “It is Christ that died, yes, rather that has risen again.”

“If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.” If He died to bear our guilt, much more, the Atonement being completed, shall we enter into the fullness of rest! If He would not lose us, viewing us as unredeemed, but came and paid the price, much less will He lose us now that He has redeemed us unto God, by His blood, out of every nation and people and kindred and tongue. He laid down His life for His sheep. He loved the Church and gave Himself for it, that He might present it unto Himself a glorious Church—and He will effect the purpose for which He has already ventured so much. He will surely claim and as surely receive at the hand of Justice the salvation of those for whom He was a vicarious Victim.

Furthermore, dear Friends, he that believes in Christ is justified from all things from which he could not be justified by the Law of Moses. Is it according to the manner of man, first to justify, and afterwards to condemn? Certainly not! But if it were, it is not according to the supreme

equity of the Most High God! Has He pronounced a man just? That man is just. When He has declared the man's transgressions forgiven, shall they be again reckoned to him?—again laid to his door? Is it not said that He has put away our sins like a cloud, and will He gather the cloud of yesterday again?

Has He not said He has cast our sins into the depths of the sea? Shall that which Jehovah Himself has consigned to the oblivious ocean be washed up again as though He had only committed it to the shallows? As far as the East is from the West, so far has He removed our transgressions from us! Our East and West are wide enough apart—but what must *God's* East and West be when He looks through infinite space? He has removed those sins so far from us that the swiftest-footed devil could not bring them back again though he had a whole eternity to perform the feat. He has put them away forever!

Yes, hear what is said of the Messiah—"He has finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness." If it is finished, it is finished, and if He has made an end of it, where is it? Where is it? "If it is searched for it shall not be found"—yes, it shall not be, says the Lord. O Beloved, how, then, shall the man that believes in Christ be condemned—condemned for sin that has been pardoned? How shall he be cast into Hell? For what? For offenses that have been borne by the Savior? How shall he be condemned whom God has justified? Give no countenance to the thought! Let no fear nor fancy induce you to lend an ear to the suggestion! The sentence of remission once passed upon a man stands irrevocable. "It is God that justifies; who is he that condemns?"

In the Believer, moreover, there is a work of God begun which He has engaged to complete. It has never been said of God that He began to build and was not able to finish. "We are persuaded that He which has begun a good work in you will carry it on and perfect it to the Day of Christ." It has not been according to Jehovah's habit to leave unfinished His works—why *should* He leave them unfinished? Is there a need of power? Inconceivable! Is there a need of will? We cannot imagine it—for if His will has changed there must be some reason for the change. And if it is so, is God wiser than He was? Has he altered His plan because He has discovered some error in it? If not, if Infinite Wisdom led Him to put His hand to it, Infinite Wisdom will *keep* His hand to the work—

***"The work which Wisdom undertakes,
Eternal Mercy ne'er forsakes."***

O Beloved, the very beginning of the work from God foretells that the work will be fully carried out!

The doctrine of Adoption supplies us with yet another argument for our safety. Every man who is saved, justified, forgiven, is also *adopted* into the family of God. And do you think that God shifts and changes His children who are called by His own name? Do you imagine such a thing credible? Does it sound like a fact? Are you your Father's child today, and somebody else's child tomorrow? Is not the absurdity too obvious to need refutation? No—I know not where could have come so whimsical a thought as that we should be children of God today, and by-and-by

children of the devil—changing, thus, the blessed paternity which God Himself claims as to all His people.

“But, we may play the prodigal,” says one. Yes, I answer, and we may be brought back again after we have gone astray as the prodigal was. Besides, the prodigal was still a *son*—even when at the swine trough, and when he had wasted all his substance in riotous living—he was still beloved of the father. And because he was a son he came back again with weeping and bitterness of spirit, and found peace and pardon. Had he been no son, he might, like others, have spent his living with harlots and there had been no saying, “I will arise and go unto my father.” But Grace operated on his heart—he was quickened mysteriously, and he said—“I must leave this life of poverty and sin and go back to my father’s house.”

And, if God’s child shall go astray, as it is possible, (only God grant you and I never may), yet there is a voice that says, “Return, return you backsliding Israel! I am married unto you, says the Lord.” Adoption is surely a grand proof that the Lord’s people shall be kept and preserved—that there shall be an unbroken family of God in Heaven. He shall not have to lament that His own dear sons and daughters, begotten by His Grace, have utterly perished. Jesus shall say, “Here am I and the children You have given Me.”

III. And, now, the last point is THE DIVINE HOLDFAST—“None shall pluck them out of My hand.” Then all the saints are in Jesus’ hands! They are not only in His heart, but in His hands—just as the high priests wore the names of the 12 tribes on the breastplates, and wore them on the shoulders, too. The power, as well as the affection of Christ shall preserve the people of God. They are in His hands. “All Your saints are in Your hands.” What a blessed place for us to be in—in the hands of Christ—always there!

But does not our Lord intimate as if to forewarn us that a great many attempts would be made to pluck us out of those hands? Satan would do it—our own base lusts would do it—the ungodly would do it. The very air is full of tempters who would, if they could, pluck us away from Christ. We have, therefore, cause for great watchfulness, deep humility, but also for much *thankfulness* that we are placed where the tempters cannot reach us, for the promise assures us that none is able to pluck us out of Christ’s hand! There is not power enough in legions of fallen spirits, if they were marshaled in battle array against one poor weak Christian, to snatch him away from Christ!

Yes, should they besiege him without intermission like a vast herd of lions seeking to devour one lamb, the defense were so much stronger than the invasion that they could not pluck even that one out of Christ’s hands! The Destroyer has never yet celebrated a triumph over the Redeemer! He is not able to hold up a single jewel of the Redeemer’s crown and say, “Aha! Aha! I stole it from Your diadem! You could not keep it!” He has no single sheep there to which he can point and say, “Ah, Shepherd of the sheep, You could not keep them all! The strong were safe enough—they helped themselves, but this poor weakling could not help itself—and You could not help it. Lo! I have borne it away from You! Your flock, which is Your pride, is not complete! You Yourself, as Shepherd, have a spot

upon Your name, for You have lost at least this one that Your Father gave You and whom You have purchased with Your blood!”

It cannot be! It shall not be! The powers of darkness have conspired for this and struggled for this, but they have not yet prevailed, nor shall they! “None shall pluck them out of My hand.” Oh, rest in the hands of Christ, rest quietly—now that you are there you are secure, neither shall any pluck you away. As if He would make assurance doubly sure, and give us a very strong consolation, He added, “My Father which gave them Me is greater than all, and none shall pluck them out of My Father’s hand.” You can interpret the figure. There was Christ’s hand and His people in it, and He shall shut it fast to hold them. But that hand was pierced once, and so to make it doubly sure, the Father clasps it with *His* hand, and so within a double encircling the elect of God are held and embraced!

There is the pierced hand of Jesus and there is the Father’s almighty hand—so there are two hands to protect and defend them. Well may they, now, cheerfully defy all power—terrestrial or infernal—to ever destroy them. They must, they shall forever rest in perfect security beneath the guardian care of the Man Mediator, Christ the Lord, and God the everlasting and ever blessed Father, who also takes them into His sacred keeping! Do I hear anyone object, saying, “Well, but if this is true, then may not a man live as he likes?” Sir, how can you ask that question? What do you mean by it? Do you mean, “May a man live in *sin*?” I have been trying to show that if a man is one of Christ’s sheep, he cannot perish, by which I mean, he cannot *live in sin*—for that *is* to perish!

When I maintain that he *cannot* live in sin as he did, and cease to be a gracious man—do you ask me whether he will not, therefore, sin willfully because he is saved from his sins? You must surely misunderstand me! “But, may not a man fall? Now I have these checks taken from me, I may grow wanton.” What checks? What checks? If I lay it down that a man who is enlisted as a soldier is always a soldier, how can you tell me I have taken away some checks? I see not how that can be! I have rather implied a great many strong incentives to virtue than offered a single pretext for vice. Certainly he is not to lay down his commission because he is enlisted for life in the service of his Lord!

If he ever did lay it down, he never could take it up again. Could these fail away, it were impossible, again, to renew them to repentance. If God’s work did fail, if Christ’s atoning blood did fall short of its aim, there would remain no hope for them. The ground on which the dew that moistens the flowers descends—when it yields nothing but thorns and briars—is given up as worthless. Were a man in some fit of enthusiasm to profess that he believed the Gospel, and then take a fit of liberty and plunge into dissipation, you would all know what to think of his sincerity. When the guilt of sin is removed, the love of sin is purged out of the *heart*—and when the Spirit of holiness is given, the *love* of holiness is infused into the heart. The man who truly believes begins a life of *holiness*, and from that life of holiness he will never utterly depart.

I grant you he may be overtaken in a fault. He may be surprised with a temptation. He may stumble through weakness, or through lack of watchfulness—but he will be led back again into repentance—he shall *not*

be allowed to *perish*. The life that is in him is *immortal*—a holy incorruptible seed—and it will continue to develop in spite of sultry heat or biting frost, blight or mildew, till it blooms in the perfection of life above. Says one, “Ah, Sir, I hold no argument about your doctrine. My fear is for myself—I do not think I should live as I now do if I were not afraid of falling away.” Is not that a suitable fear for the child of the bondwoman—“Unless I do so-and-so I shall be sent into the wilderness with my mother Hagar.” Very likely you will!

But I know this, I am the child of the free woman, that is Sarah, and I know my Father will never send His child into the wilderness. What then? Shall His attachment provoke my alienation? Shall I act shamefully because He appoints me to honor? No, no, but because He loves *me* so, I will love Him in return! I pray Him to forgive my offenses, but I will seek to do all that is possible to show that I realize the greatness of His love, and desire to make some poor return for it as best I can. “Well, but,” says somebody, “are we not admonished with warnings against falling away?” Certainly, and they are the most terrible that language can describe. Undoubtedly the Scripture paints the pilgrim’s path as full of peril. It is not by creature strength that we can hold our own!

Could the precious blood lose its virtue—did the blessed Spirit withdraw His influence—were the timely succor withheld, we have no resources! For all manner of sin there is a remedy—believe in Christ as a Savior—but for apostasy there is no cure. If you trample on the one Sacrifice, no second sacrifice will ever be offered. There is but one new birth. Regeneration is once and once only. “But why these warnings,” you say, “if it cannot happen?” Remember God does not deal with His people as if they were blocks of wood or iron cast and run into a mold. We are *beings* with a will and a judgment, and God deals with us in that way.

Now, if I have poison in my house and it should be necessary for some reason or other that poison should be there, I do not intend that my children should ever have that poison or take it. Suppose me to be Omnipotent and that I have power to prevent their taking it, yet I do not lock it up and put it where they could not possibly get it? I put it where they can get it if they like, and it will kill them if they do get it—but I tell them they must not take it. I describe to them the results that will follow, and I have such a loving power over my children’s hearts—(suppose it to be so)—that they do not disobey me so as to take this poison. Though it is there and devils come into the house and tempt them to take it, yet they will not take it but put it from them. I should thus be making an exhibition to those who looked on, of the love to me that was in my children’s hearts, and also of my power over my children’s hearts, though I did not violate their wills and did not make it impossible for them to destroy themselves.

Now, it is so here. Sin is permitted to be in the world—I do not know why—and God does not render it impossible for a man to go and commit any sin. The man might—he would—unless God’s Grace prevented. But God’s Grace is not mechanical in its action. It is not like a fetter, or a chain. It is not, (as I have heard some say), *dragging* people to Heaven by their ears. No, it is a mighty force—an Omnipotent power—but quite

consistent with free agency. It never operates contrary to the laws of mind, and God is glorified in this—that though His children are thus tempted, they do not run into fatal soul-destroying sin! They do not go into such apostasy from Him as would be final and prove altogether destructive.

They are kept by His gracious power—kept as men—drawn, but with cords of love—bound, but with the bands of a man. Do you object that “good men fall?” Good men do *not* fall so as to *perish*. Good men *do* fall, for they are men! The old nature is in them. But, the truly gracious man with all his sins, repents, still believes, and with broken bones goes back to his Lord and proves himself to be still a child. The sheep may fall into a ditch—it will not roll in the mire as a hog would if it fell there. A sheep, even when it falls into a ditch, proves that it is a sheep, still. There is a difference in the *nature* of it.

When I have seen a child of God fall into sin, I have known that if he were a child of God he would hate himself for it, he would grieve over it, and could not be at peace and ease in it. Do you tell me of a Christian who lived in sin and seemed very happy? Be sure that he was *not* a Christian but a pretender! He who can continue in sin and delight in it is no child of God! He that can go day after day into vice or can tolerate in himself any known sin has a spot which is not the spot of God’s children. He has a mark upon him which never was and never shall be upon a truly quickened child of God! “Be you holy, for I am holy,” is the voice which sounds in the saint’s ear, and if he does not always obey it as he should, this is the complaining of his soul—and it makes him go weeping and lamenting before his God. But still, in the main, it ever shall be the righteous shall hold on his way, and he that has clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger.

I have one word for any here who are unconverted but would desire salvation. Do you know, dear Friends, that one of the great leading thoughts of my young life, the master thought that brought me to the Savior, was belief in the doctrine of final perseverance? Perhaps you wonder how that could be, but so it was. I saw while yet I was a lad many promising boys and lads who made total shipwreck early in their lives by falling into gross vices. I felt in my soul a loathing of the sins which I heard they had committed. I had been kept from them by Divine counsels, by gracious interpositions, by parental teaching and by pious example. Still I feared lest the sins into which these young men had fallen might master me. Such knowledge as I had of the depravity of my own heart led me to distrust myself.

I was convinced that unless I was converted, born-again, and received the new life, I had no safeguard. Whatever good resolutions I might make, the probabilities were they would be good for nothing when temptation assailed me. I might be like those of whom it has been said, “They see the devil’s hook and yet cannot help nibbling at his bait.” But, that I should morally disgrace myself as some had done whom I had known and heard of, was a hazard from the very *thought* of which I shrunk with horror. When I heard and read with wondering eyes that whoever believed in Christ Jesus should be saved, the Truth of God came to my heart with a

welcome I cannot describe to you. The doctrine that He would keep the feet of His saints had a charm, indeed, for me!

I thought, "Then if I go to Jesus and get from Him a new heart and a right spirit, I shall be secured against these temptations into which others have fallen. I shall be preserved by Him." I do not say *that* drove me to Christ—a sense of *sin* did that—but it attracted me to Him. It was one of the beauties of His face that ravished me—that He was a faithful Keeper of all souls that were committed to Him—that He was able and willing to take the young man and make him cleanse his way and keep him even to the end! O young people, there is no life assurance like a believing in Jesus Christ!—

***"Grace shall preserve your following years,
And make your virtues strong."***

I do not preach to you, tonight, a sandy foundation that will give way under your feet, but a Rock to which you may continually retreat—in which you may always dwell secure. I do not present to you a salvation that may fail you under some stress of temptation, but a salvation that is strong, having in it "the sure mercies of David." He that believes and is baptized shall be saved—saved from sinning, from the *guilt* as well as the *punishment* of sin, and brought to Heaven holy and meet for the inheritance of the saints. God grant you to Believers in Christ. Amen, and amen!

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LIFE ETERNAL

NO. 726

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

***“And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish,
neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.”
John 10:28.***

SOME will say that this is a mixed congregation and that such a doctrine as this should not be advanced in the presence of ungodly men and women. This shows how little such objectors read their Bible, for this very text was spoken by the Savior, not to His loving disciples but to His enemies! Read the thirty-first verse of the chapter, and you will see the temper of the congregation to whom Jesus Christ preached upon this subject—“Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him.” So it was an indignant multitude of bigots that had this hurled into their face by the Savior, that although they might reject Him, and because of their willful obstinacy might miss the blessings of Divine Grace, yet those blessings were rich and rare.

He would have them to know that what they lost was inexpressibly precious, and that His message was not to be despised without great damage to their souls. Thus, if there is a mixed multitude here—and I fear the allegation is true, that there are many here who cannot comprehend the preciousness of the things of God—yet, for the same reason which prompted the Savior to preach this doctrine to the wicked in His day, we will do the same now, that they may know what it is they lose by losing Christ! We want them to know what those comfortable things are which they despise, and what are the inestimable treasures which those must miss who seek after the treasures of this world, and let their God, their Savior, go!

We have no time to loiter, and let us, therefore, as the bee sucks honey from the flower, seek after the sweet essence of the text, “I give unto them eternal life.” The connection tells us that the pronoun “them” refers to Christ’s sheep, to certain persons whom He had chosen to be His sheep, and whom He had also called to be such. Lest we should be in the dark as to whom they are, our Savior has kindly put us in possession of the marks by which His sheep may be discovered. We cannot read the secret roll of election, nor can we search the heart, but we can mark the *outward* conduct of men. The verse before the text tells us by what signs we are to know God’s people—“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.”

The marks are the *hearing* of Christ, and then the *following* of Christ, first, by faith in Him, and then by an active obedience to His precepts. “Faith, which works by love” is the mark of Christ’s sheep, and it is of true Believers that He speaks when He says, “I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand.” Would to God that all of us wore the uniform of the elect, namely, active,

sanctifying faith! Oh that we all listened to the Great Shepherd's voice! That we all received the Truths of God which He delivers! And then, resolved by His Grace, that we all followed Him wherever He goes, as the sheep follow the shepherd!

Having thus explained to whom the text belongs, we will now handle it in a threefold manner. The text implies, first, somewhat concerning the past of these people. The text *plainly* states, in the second place, a great deal about the present state of these people. And, thirdly, the text not obscurely hints at something about their future.

I. In the first place, the studious reader will observe that the text implies SOMEWHAT CONCERNING THE PAST HISTORY OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD. It is said, "I give unto them eternal life." There is an implication, therefore, that they had *lost* eternal life. Every one of God's people fell in Adam, and all have fallen also by actual sin. Consequently we came under condemnation, and Christ Jesus has done for us what Her Majesty the Queen has sometimes done for a condemned criminal—He has bought us a free pardon. He has given us life.

When our own desert was eternal destruction from the Presence of the Lord, Jesus Christ stepped in and He said, "You are forgiven. The sentence shall not take place upon *you*. Your offense is blotted out. You are clear." No, I think the text implies that there was something *more* than condemnation—there was *execution!* We were not only condemned to die, we were already spiritually dead. Jesus did not merely spare the life which ought to have been taken, and in that sense gave it to us, but He imparted to us a life which we had not before enjoyed!

It is implied in the text that we were *spiritually* dead. We are not left here to our own surmising, nor even to our own experience, for the Apostle Paul has said, "You has He quickened who were *dead* in trespasses and sins." What? Paul, were we *dead*? Are you not mistaken? Perhaps we were only a little *sick*. We are ready to admit, O Apostle, that we were sick and near to death, but *surely* we had a little vital energy, a little power to assist ourselves! "No," says the Apostle, "you were dead. Dead in trespasses and sins."

The work of salvation is tantamount, not only to the healing of the sick, but to the actual resurrection of a dead man from his grave. All the saints who are now alive unto God were once as dead as others, quite as corrupt and offensive as others, and as much an ill savor in the nostrils of Divine Justice by reason of their sins as even the most corrupt of their fellows. We had altogether gone out of the way. We had altogether become abominable, for "there is none that does good, no not one." When we were all shut up under sin, Jesus Christ came into the region of death and brought life and immortality to us!

Life was forfeited by all the saints. Spiritual life they had none—Jesus the Quickener has made them alive unto God. Is it not also very clearly implied that, so far from having any life, these people could not otherwise have obtained life except by its being given to them? It is a rule well known to all Biblical students that you never meet in God's Word with an unnecessary miracle. A miracle is never worked where the ordinary course of nature would suffice. Now, my Brothers and Sisters, the greatest of all

miracles is the salvation of a soul! If that soul could save itself God would not save it, but would let it do what it could do! And if the spiritually dead could quicken themselves, rest assured, from the analogy of all the Divine transactions, that Jesus Christ would not have come to give them life!

I believe that it would be utterly impossible for any one of us to enter Heaven, let us do what we might, unless Jesus Christ had come from Heaven to show us the way—to remove the bolts and bars for us—and to enable us to tread in the path which leads to Glory and immortality. Lost! Lost! Lost! The race of man was utterly lost—not *partly* lost, not thrown into a condition in which it might be ruined unless it worked hard to save itself—but so lost that but for the interposition of a Divine arm, but for the appearance of God in human flesh, but for the stupendous transaction upon Calvary, and the work of God the Holy Spirit in the heart—not one dead soul ever could come to life!

Eternal life would not be the peculiar work of the Lord Jesus if man had a finger in it, but man's power is excluded and Divine Grace reigns. It is clearly to be seen in the text, by a little thought, that eternal life was not the merit of any one of God's people, for it is said that it is *given* to us. Now a gift is the very opposite of payment. What a man receives as a gift he certainly does not deserve. If it is *given* to us, then it is no more a debt. But if it is a debt then it can no more be a gift. None of us merits eternal life, or ever can merit it. Mere *mortal* life is a gift of Divine mercy. We do not deserve *it*.

And as for the eternal life spoken of in the text, it is a gift too high for the fingers of human merit to hope to reach! If a man should work ever so hard after it, yet upon the footing of the Law it would be impossible for him to obtain it. Man merits nothing but death, and life must be the free gift of God. "The wages of sin is death." That is to say it is earned and procured as matter of debt. "But the gift of God," the Free-Grace gift of God, "is eternal life."

Now this is a very humiliating doctrine, I know, but it is true, and I want you all to feel it. Children of God, I know *you* do. You see the hole of the pit from where you were drawn? Do you see it? Or have you grown proud of late? Those fine feelings and prayers of yours—have you stuck them like feathers in your cap? I pray you remember what you were! *You*, proud? Do not forget the dunghill where you once grew! Remember the filth out of which God took you, and instead of being scarlet with the garments of pride, your cheeks may well be scarlet with a blush! Oh, may God forbid, once and for all, that we should glory, for what have we to glory in? What have we that we have not received?

It is clear, too, from the text, that those who are now righteous would have perished but for Christ. Christ says, "they shall never perish." Promises are never given as superfluities. There is a *necessity*, therefore, for this promise. There was a danger, a solemn danger, that every one of those men who are now saved would have perished eternally. Sin made them heirs of wrath even as others, so Scripture tells us. And justice must have overwhelmed them with the rest if distinguishing Grace had not prevented! Even now it is solemnly true that there is no reason why a truly righteous soul should not perish—except that Christ prevents it.

You are alive, but you would not be *spiritually* alive an hour unless the Holy Spirit continued to pour His vital energy into your soul. You shall be preserved, but, mark you, it is stated as a *promise*, and therefore it is not at all a matter of natural necessity. Apart from Divine Grace you are in fearful danger of apostasy, and probably you have fears about it even now, like the Apostle who feared lest after having preached to others, he himself should be cast away. A very proper fear—a fear which will often come upon sincere souls who feel a holy jealousy of themselves. But we need have no fear when we come to the promise of God, for if we are really in Christ we have a guarantee of security, since Christ's own words are, "They shall never perish."

The promise was certainly given because it was needed. There is a danger of perishing. There are ten thousand risks of perishing. Only Omnipotence itself keeps off the fiery darts of Satan. The blessed Physician gives the antidote, or the poison would soon destroy us. He who swears to bring us safely home protects us from a thousand foes who otherwise would work our ill. "They shall never perish." It is also implied that naturally the people of God have ten thousand enemies who would pluck them out of Christ's hand. They were once in the hand of the enemy. They were once willing bond-slaves of Satan. All this they know, and all this they are willing to acknowledge.

I would to God that some here would feel the truth of that which I have been saying. You self-righteous ones will say, "I am all right. I do my best, I go to a place of worship." Now, Soul, that is right enough in itself, but if you boast of it, it is an evidence that you know neither God nor yourself! When I have heard of some who have boasted that they felt no inbred sin, I have wished that they would read the story of the Pharisee and the Publican. At the Fulton Street Prayer Meeting, a Brother asked for the prayers of Believers because he felt so much the corruption of his own heart, the temptations of Satan, and especially the natural vileness of his own nature.

A Brother stood up on the opposite side of the hall and said he thanked God that was not *his* experience! *He* did not feel any corruption and his heart was not depraved. The other one made no reply, but a friend present read these words: "Two men went up into the temple to pray. The one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank You that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto Heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for everyone that exalts himself shall be abased; and he that humbles himself shall be exalted."

A sense of sin is a blessed sign either of pardon received, or of pardon to come. He that says he has no sin makes God a liar, and the truth is not in him! He who will not confess his sin shall never be absolved! But he who, with a broken and a trembling heart, goes to the foot of the Cross shall find forgiveness there. This much, then, upon the past estate of the heirs of Heaven.

II. And now, to plunge at once into the subject. THE TEXT SHEDS A FLOOD OF LIGHT UPON THE PRESENT STATE OF EVERY BELIEVER. We shall have to give you hints rather than a long exposition, so kindly take the first sentence, which speaks of a gift received. "I give unto them eternal life." This gift is, first of all, *life*. You will make strange confusion of God's Word if you confound life with *existence*, for they are very different things. All men will exist forever, but many will dwell in everlasting death! They will know nothing whatever of *life*.

Life is a distinct thing altogether from existence, and implies in God's Word something of activity and of happiness! In the text before us it includes many things. Note the difference between the stone and the plant. The plant has vegetable life. You know the difference between the animal and the plant. While the plant has vegetable life, yet it is altogether dead in the sense in which we speak of living creatures. It has not the sensations which belong to animal life. Then, again, if we turn to another and higher grade, namely, *mental* life, an animal is dead so far as that is concerned. It cannot enter at all into the mysterious calculations of the mathematician, nor revel in the sublime glories of poetry. The animal has nothing to do with the life of the intellectual mind—as to mental life it is dead.

Now, there is a grade of life which is higher than the mental life—a higher life quite unknown to the philosopher—not put down in Plato, nor spoken of by Aristotle—but understood by the very least of the children of God! It is a phase of life called, "spiritual life." It is a new form of life altogether which does not belong to man naturally, but is given to him by Jesus Christ. The first man, Adam, was made a living soul and all his descendants are made like unto him. The second Adam is made a quickening *spirit*, and until we are made like the second Adam we know nothing of spiritual life.

This body of ours is by nature adapted for a soulish life. The Apostle tells us, in that wonderful chapter in Corinthians, that the body is sown—what? "A natural body." The Greek is, "A soulish body"—"but it is raised"—what? "A *spiritual* body." There is a soulish body, and there is a spiritual body. There is a body adapted to the lower life which belongs to all men, a mere mental existence. And there is to be a body which will belong to all those who have received spiritual life—who shall dwell in that body as the house of their perfected spirit in Heaven.

The life which Jesus Christ gives His people is spiritual life, therefore it is mysterious. "You hear the sound thereof but you cannot tell from where it comes, nor where it goes. So is everyone that is born of the Spirit." You who have mental life cannot explain to the horse or the dog what it is. Neither can we who have spiritual life explain to those who have it not what it is. You can tell them what it does and what its effects are, but what the "spark of heavenly flame" may be, you, yourselves, do not know though you are conscious that it is there! It is spiritual life which Jesus Christ gives His people, but it is more—it is Divine life!

This life is like the life of God, and therefore it is elevating. "We are made," says the Apostle, "partakers of the Divine nature." "Begotten again by God the Father, not," says the Apostle, "with corruptible seed, but with

incorruptible.” We do not become *Divine*, but we receive a nature which enables us to sympathize with Deity, to delight in the topics which engage the Eternal Mind, and to live upon the same principles as the Most Holy God. We love, for God is love. We begin to be holy, for God is thrice holy. We pant after perfection, for He is perfect. We delight in doing good, for God is good. We get into a new atmosphere. We pass out of the old range of the mere mental faculties. Our spiritual faculties make us akin to God.

“Let Us,” said He, “make man in Our own image, after Our own likeness.” That image Adam lost. That image Christ restores and gives to us that life which Adam lost in the day when he sinned, when God said to him, “In the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die.” In that sense he *did* die—the sentence was *not* postponed—he died *spiritually* as soon as he touched the fruit. And this long-lost life Jesus Christ restores to every soul who believes in Him! This life, you will gather from my remarks, is *heavenly* life. It is the same life that expands and develops itself in Heaven. The Christian does not die. What does the Savior say? “He that believes in Me shall never die.”

Does not the mental life die? Yes. Does not the mere bodily life die? Yes, but not the *spiritual* life! It is the same life here which it will be there—only now it is undeveloped and corruption impedes its action. Brothers and Sisters, nothing of us shall go to Heaven as flesh and blood, but only as it is subdued, elevated, changed, and perfected by the influence of the spirit-life! Know you not that “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God? Neither does corruption inherit incorruption.”

Then what is the “I,” the “myself” that shall enter Heaven? Why, if you are in Christ a new creature, then that new creature and nothing but that new creature! The very life which you have lived here in the Tabernacle. The very life that has budded and blossomed in the garden of communion with God. That life which has led you to visit the sick, and clothe the naked, and feed the hungry. That life which has made tears of repentance stream down your cheeks. That life which has caused you to believe in Jesus—this is the life which will go to Heaven! And if you have not this, then you do not possess the life of Heaven and dead souls cannot enter there! Only living men can enter into the land of the living. “As we have borne the image of the earthy, so also shall we bear the image of the heavenly.” Even now the heavenly life heaves and throbs within us!

I think it may also be inferred from all this that the life which Christ gives His people is an *energetic* life. If the spiritual life is poured into a man it raises him above his former state and lifts him out of the range of merely carnal comprehension. He himself is discerned of no man. “For you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.” You cannot expect the world to understand this new life! It is a hidden thing. It will be a mystery to yourselves, a wonder to your own hearts. But oh, how active it will be! It will fight with your sins and will not be satisfied until it has slain them! If you tell me you never have a conflict within, I tell you I cannot understand how you can have the Divine life, for it is sure to come into conflict at once with the old nature, and there will be perpetual strife.

The man becomes a new man at home. His wife and family observe it. He is a different man in business. He is a changed man altogether—

whether you view him in connection with his fellow men or with his God. He is a new creature! He feels that the new and wondrous life which has been planted in him has made him of a different race from the common herd, and he walks among the sons of men feeling that he is an alien and a stranger. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like He, for we shall see Him as He is." I wish there were more time to describe the inward life, but this must suffice to indicate the blessing which Jesus gives to the Believer by the work of the Holy Spirit.

There is a word in the text, which qualifies it: "I give unto them eternal life." "Eternal" means "without end." If Christ puts the life of God into a man, that life cannot be taken away. It cannot die, that were impossible! When I have heard one say that you may be a child of God today but that next week may find you a child of the devil, I have supposed that the word "eternal," according to him, could only have meant five or six days. But according to the dictionary I use, according to the mind of the Spirit, "eternal" means "without end." If, then, a man says, "I had spiritual life once, but I do not possess it now," it is clear that either he is mistaken altogether or he never had it at all!

If Jesus had said, "I give unto them life which shall last for seven years, but which may perhaps be quenched and put out under temptation," I could understand a man saying that he had fallen from Grace. But if it is "eternal life," then it must be "eternal." There is no end to it, it must go on. The mere existence of the soul, we believe, will be never-ending. But it will be no gift to the ungodly that it will be so! It is not for Christ to give us mere immortality of existence, for that will be a fearful curse to some men! Lost souls would be glad enough if they could be rid of their immortal existence, but Christ gives an eternal, a holy life, a happy life, which is infinitely more than existence. Existence may be a curse, but life is a blessing.

This life begins here: "I give unto them." Not, "I *shall* give," but, "I *give*." Not, "I will give it to them when they die," but, "I give it them here, I give unto them eternal life." Now, my Hearer, you have either got eternal life tonight, or you are still in death. If you have not received it you are "dead in trespasses and sins," and your doom will be a terrible one! But if God has given you eternal life, fear not the surrounding hosts of Hell nor the temptations of the world, for the eternal God is your refuge, and underneath you are the everlasting arms! This life is given as a free gift to every one of the Lord's people, and is bestowed by the Lord and by none else.

2. Let us turn now to the second part of the blessing. Here is preservation secured. "They shall never perish." Certain gentlemen who cannot endure the doctrine of final perseverance manage to slip away from the next sentence, "Neither shall any pluck them out of My hand," and suggest, "but they may get out themselves." No, no, no! Because the text says, "They shall never perish." Our present sentence, which we have now in hand, puts aside all suppositions of every kind about the destruction of one of Christ's sheep. "They shall never perish."

Take each word. "They shall never perish." Some of their *notions* may. Some of their comforts may. Some of their experiences may. But THEY

never shall! That which is the essence of the man, his true soul, his inward renewed nature, shall never be destroyed. See, then, Christian, you may be deprived of a thousand things without any violation of the promise. The promise is not that the ship shall not go to the bottom, but that the passengers shall get to the shore. The promise is not that the house shall not be burned—the pledge is that you who are in the house shall escape. “They shall never perish.”

Take another word: “They shall never perish.” They shall go very near it, perhaps. They shall lose their joys and their comforts, but “they shall never perish.” The life in them shall never be starved out, nor beaten out, nor driven out. If you once get leaven into a piece of bread you cannot get it out. You may boil it, you may fry it, you may bake it, you may do what you like with it, but the leaven is in it and you cannot get it out. Get the soul saturated with the Grace of God, and you can never eradicate it. The man himself shall never perish! He may think he shall. The devil may tell him he shall. His comforts may be withdrawn. He may go to his deathbed full of doubts and fears about himself, but he shall never perish!

Now this is either true or it is not. You who think it is not true tell the Lord so. But I believe that it is a most sure and infallible fact, for Jehovah says it. I do not know how it is that they do not perish. It is a wondrous thing. But then it is all a marvel throughout from first to last. Now take the word “never.” We have shown how long the preservation endures—“They shall *never* perish.” “Well, but if they should live to be very aged, and should then fall into sin?” “They shall never perish.” Oh, but perhaps they may be assaulted in quarters where they least expect it, or they may be beleaguered by temptation.” “They shall never perish.”

“Well, but a man may be a child of God and yet go to Hell.” How so, if he can never perish? That “never” includes time and eternity! It includes living and dying! It includes the mountain and the valley, the tempest and the calm—

***“They shall never perish.
In every state secure,
Kept by the eternal Hand.”***

Beneath the wings of the Almighty God, night with its pestilence cannot smite them, and day with its cares cannot destroy them! Youth with its passions shall be safely passed. Middle age with all its whirl of business shall be navigated in safety. Old age with its infirmities shall become the land of Beulah. Death’s gloomy vale shall be lit up with the coming splendor. The actual moment of departure, the last and solemn article, shall be the passing over of a river dry-shod. “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you: when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you, says the Lord.” “They shall never perish.”

There is a way of explaining away everything, I suppose, but I really do not know how the opponents of the perseverance of God’s saints will get over this text. They may do with it as they will, but I shall still believe what I find here, that I shall never perish if I am one of Christ’s people. If I perish, then Christ will not have kept His promise but I know He must abide faithful to His Word. “He is not a man that He should lie, nor the

son of man that He should repent." Every soul that rests on the atoning sacrifice is safe, and safe forever—"they shall never perish."

3. Then comes the third sentence, in which we have a position guaranteed—"in Christ's hand." We have not time to expound it. It is to be in a place of honor—we are the ring He wears on His finger. It is a place of love: "I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands; your walls are continually before Me." It is a place of power—His right hand encloses all His people. It is a place of property—Christ holds His people. "All the saints are in Your hand." It is a place of discretion—we are yielded up to Christ—and Christ wields a discretionary government over us.

It is a place of guidance, a place of protection—as sheep are said to be in the hand of the shepherd, so are we in the hand of Christ. As arrows in the hand of a mighty man, to be used by him. As jewels in the hands of the bride to be her ornament, so are we in the hand of Christ. Now, what says the text? It reminds us that there are some who want to pluck us out of His hand! There are those who, with false doctrine, would deceive, if it were possible, the very elect! There are roaring persecutors who would frighten God's saints, and so make them turn back in the day of battle. There are scheming tempters—the panderers to Hell, the jackals of the lion of the pit—who would gladly drag us to destruction.

Then there are our own hearts that would pluck us out of His hand. You know in the text before us we need not read the word "man," for it is not in the original. The translators have put the word "man" in italics to show that it is not in the Greek, and so we may read it—"Neither shall any pluck them out of My hand." Not only any "man," but any *devil* either. Nothing that is present shall do it, nothing to come—no principality, no power, nothing whatever that is conceivable. "None shall pluck them out of My hand."

It does not merely include men, who are sometimes our worst foes, for the worst that we have are they of our own household, but it also includes fallen spirits. But none shall be able to pluck us out of His hand. By no possibility shall any be able, by any of their schemes, to remove us from being His favorites, His property, His dear sons, His protected children. Oh, what a blessed promise!

Now, do you know, while I have been preaching to you about this, I have been thinking a little about my own history before I knew the Lord. One of the things that made me want to be a Christian was this. I had seen some young lads that I was at school with. They were excellent lads, and some of them had been held up as patterns of imitation to me and to others. I saw them, though only a very few years older than myself, turn out as vain and ungodly as could be, and yet I knew them to have been excellently well disposed as boys, no, to have been very patterns! And this kind of thought used to cross my young brain, "Is there not some means of being preserved from making a shipwreck of my life?"

When I came to read the Bible, it seemed to me to be full of this doctrine: "If you trust Christ, He will save you from all evil. He will keep you in a life of integrity and holiness while here, and He will bring you safe to Heaven at the last." I felt that I could not trust *man*, for I had seen some of the very best wandering far from the Truth of God. If I trusted Christ, it

was not a *chance* as to whether I should get to Heaven, but a *certainty*. And I learned that if I rested all my weight upon Him He would keep me, for I found it written, "The righteous shall hold on His way, and he that has clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger."

I found the Apostle saying, "I am persuaded that He that has begun a good work in you will carry it on," and such-like expressions. "Why," I reasoned, "I have found an insurance office, and a good one, too! I will insure my life in it! I will go to Jesus as I am, for He bids me. I will trust myself with Him." If I had listened to the Arminian theory I should never have been converted, for it never had any charms for me. A Savior who casts away His people, a God who leaves His children to perish were not worthy of my worship! And a salvation which does not save outright is neither worth preaching nor listening to.

When I stand here and say to this assembled mass, Trust my Master, believe Him, and it is no matter of question as to whether you shall be saved, for He has said that, "he that believes and is baptized shall be saved." When I say that, I feel that I have something to say which is worth listening to! My dear Hearer, with a new heart and a right spirit you will be a new man! As you now are, if you were to be pardoned tonight you would be condemned tomorrow, for the tendencies of your nature would lead you astray. But if God shall put a *new nature* into you, your old nature shall not be able to control it.

The new immortal principle shall get the mastery! You shall be kept from sinning! You shall be preserved in holiness, and though you will have to mourn over your imperfection, yet you will feel that you have God's own life in you! Though you will realize that you are not perfect, yet you will wish you were, and this *wishing* to be so will be a *sign* of Divine Grace in your soul! And these wishes and desires will go on waxing stronger and stronger, till, having mastered sin by the power of the Spirit, the day shall come when this body shall be dropped off, and the new life, disencumbered of the vile rags which it was compelled to wear while it was here, shall leap in its disembodied existence into perfection and then shall wait for the trumpet's sound! And the body itself, purified and made fit for the new and higher life, shall be again inhabited, and so both the body and the soul, delivered from all sin, shall be an everlasting testimony to the promise of Christ—for those who rest in Him shall have eternal life—and they shall never perish! Neither shall any pluck them out of His hand!

III. I have anticipated the last point as to THE OUTLOOK OF MY TEXT INTO THE FUTURE. If God has given you eternal life, that comprehends all the *future*. Your spiritual existence will flourish when empires and kingdoms decay. Your life will live on when the heart of this great world shall grow cold, when the pulse of the great sea shall cease to beat, when the eye of the bright sun shall grow dim with age! You possess eternal life!

When, like a moment's foam which melts into the wave that bears it, the whole universe shall have gone and left not a wreck behind, it shall be well with you, for you have eternal life! You have an existence that will run parallel with the existence of the Deity. Eternal life! Oh, what an avenue of glory is opened by those words—Eternal Life! "Because I live," said Christ,

“you shall live also.” As long as there is a Christ there shall be a happy soul, and you shall be that happy soul! As long as there is a God there shall be a beatified existence, and you shall enjoy that existence, for Jesus gives you eternal life.

Spin on, old world, until your axle is worn out. Fly on, Old Father Time, until your hour-glass is broken and you shall cease to be! Come, mighty angel! Plant your feet upon the sea and upon the land and swear by Him that lives that time shall be no more, for even then every Christian shall still live, because Christ gives unto them eternal life! Does not the next sentence also look into the future?—“They shall never perish”? They shall never cease to exist in perpetual blessedness! They shall never cease to be like God in their natures—never! Think about your having been in Heaven a thousand years—can you imagine it? A thousand years’ blessed communion with the Lord Jesus!

A thousand years in His bosom! A thousand years with the sight of Him to ravish your spirit! Well, but you will have just as long to be there as if you had never begun, for you shall never, never perish! When the millennium shall come, or when the judgment shall sit—and when all the great transactions of prophecy shall be fulfilled, these need not distress you, for if you trust Christ you shall never—oh, turn that word over—you shall never, never, never, never, NEVER perish! What an eternity of glory! What unspeakable delight is wrapped up in this promise—“They shall never perish!”

Then, surely, this is another glance into the future—“And none shall pluck them out of My hand.” We shall be in His hand forever! We shall be in His heart forever! We shall be in His very Self forever—one with Him—and none shall pluck us out of His hand! Happy, happy is the man who can lay claim to such a promise as this! Oh, there are some of you to whom I wish this promise belonged! It is very rich, and very full of comfort. I wish it belonged to you. Do you say, “I, too, wish it belonged to me”? Oh, Friend, I am glad to hear you say that!

Do you know, Soul, that there is but one key to open this precious treasure, and that key is the Cross of the Lord Jesus? What saves you? Can you trust Him? When one told me the other day she could not trust Christ, I looked her in the face and said, “What has He done that you should not trust Him? Can you trust *me*?” “Yes,” she said, “I can trust my fellow creatures, but I cannot trust God.” Oh, I thought, what terrible blasphemy! It was honestly spoken, and it was spoken by one who did not perceive the greatness of the offense in it, but I do not know that there is any worse thing that can be said than that—“I cannot trust God!”

Well, Sir, you have made Him a liar, then! That is the practical result of it. For if you believe a man to be honest you can always trust *him*. Can I trust my fellow man and not trust God? Oh, the horror of that thought! There is such an amount of blasphemy in it that I must not quote it again! Not trust Christ? “Well,” says one, “but may we not have a merely *natural* trust and so be deceived?” I do not know of any trust in Christ except a *spiritual* one, nor do I believe in any. If you trust Christ you have not done that of yourself. There was never a soul that trusted Christ unless he was enabled to do it by God the Holy Spirit!

And if you wholly and simply trust Christ you need not ask any questions about *natural* trusting or *spiritual* trusting. If you trust the Lord Jesus wholly you are right. Rest on Him, then. Rest on Him only, wholly, and solely—and if you perish then I do not understand the Gospel, and I cannot comprehend what the Bible means. I will tell you one thing, and then close. If you trust Christ and you perish, then I must perish most certainly, and so must all my Brothers and Sisters here who have believed in Jesus.

It is all over with us if it is all over with you! When there is a storm, one passenger cannot very well go to the bottom if he is in the ship unless the whole of the ship's company go, too. We must go together. We have got into the lifeboat, and if the lifeboat goes down with you, it must go down with all the saints, and all the Apostles, and all the martyrs, too. They went to Heaven resting upon Christ, and if you rest on Christ you will get there also. Oh, Sinner, may you be led today to rest on Jesus and on Jesus only, and then take the text. Do not be afraid of it—"I give unto My sheep eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand."

Adapted from *The C.H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

A CHEERING INCIDENT AT BETHABARA NO. 1924

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 10, 1886,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Therefore they sought again to take Him, but He escaped out of their hands, and went away, again, beyond Jordan into the place where John at first baptized, and there He abode. And many came to Him, and said, John did no miracle: but all things that John spoke of this Man were true. And many believed on Him there.”
John 10:39-42.*

BECAUSE our Savior's reasoning was unanswerable, “therefore the Jews sought again to take Him.” When men are convinced against their wills; when the heart struggles against the head; it usually happens that they turn persecutors. If they cannot answer holy arguments with fair reasoning, they can give hard answers with stones. If you cannot destroy the reasoning, you may, perhaps, destroy the reasoner—and this naturally suggests itself to the heart which is rendered cruel by obstinate unbelief—he who hates Truth of God soon hates its advocate. You must not consider yourself to have been unsuccessful in your proofs when your opponent waxes angry at them. Perhaps it is your *success* which has startled his conscience and rendered it necessary for him to become malicious to retain his obstinacy. Yet it is a very wretched business when a man knows that he is wrong and, therefore, attacks the person who has convinced him.

Do I address any person here who, in the secret of his heart, is well aware that the Christian faith is true and, therefore, derides it in order to be able to resist its influence? Do I speak to any man here who has felt the ground clean gone from under him and, therefore, has flown in the face of the teaching which has unsettled him? Will he not, as a sensible man, quit his unjustifiable position and candidly yield to the force of Truth? It is a degrading thing to be willfully shutting one's eyes to the light and cursing the sun for shining! Oh, that such a person would have Grace! Let me even say—oh, that he would have sense enough to see that this cannot be a safe and right method of procedure! Oh that he would yield himself to those blessed influences which, I trust, will, this morning, operate upon his mind!

When our Savior found that there was nothing to be done with the bigoted Jews, but that all He said and did only provoked more furious oppo-

sition, He escaped out of their hands and went away. He knew when to speak and when to refrain. Divinely guided, He neither fled as a coward, nor rashly pushed on where nothing could be gained. Determined opposition in one quarter is sometimes an intimation to the preacher that he had better labor elsewhere. When the channel is blocked up by rocks, we had better steer in another direction. If we have found no son of peace to welcome us as the messengers of God, it may be time to shake off the dust of our feet against the violent rejecters of the Truth and open our commission in another quarter. If we fail in the first place, we may, in the second, find that the Lord has much people in the city. The Savior left the infuriated Jews of Jerusalem and went to a place of retirement, thus illustrating His own words, "When they persecute you in this city, flee you unto another."

But though our Lord left the obstinate, He never ceased to do good. He did not say, "It is of no further use to preach and plead; I am, therefore, driven away to Bethabara, by the lonely Jordan, and I will warn the people no more." No, rather, as many resorted to Him *there*, He went on with His teaching and, in that place many believed on Him! If, my dear Brother, speaking in Christ's name, you find that you have no place in such-and-such a town, it may be the Spirit's will that you should remove to a people who will receive you. Possibly in a place which promises less, you may gain more. Bethabara may yield converts when Jerusalem only yields persecutors. God has ways of changing the position of His servants for His own Glory and for the building up of His Church. As one has well said, "The flight of Christ from men in one place may cause the flight of souls to Him in another." Though Jesus withdrew from the stones which filled the hands of angry Jews, he went to that place where John had said, "God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham."

I think that this somewhat obscure incident of our Lord's abiding in Bethabara, though seldom preached upon, may be made exceedingly profitable to us. Much prayer has been offered that many may believe on the Lord Jesus this morning in this House of Prayer and it seems suitable, therefore, to discourse upon the words, "Many believed on Him there."

I. The first remark I shall make is that when men believe in Jesus Christ, IT IS VERY PLEASANT TO KNOW THE PLACE where they believed—therefore is it recorded by Inspiration that, "many believed on Him *there*." I do not say it is essential for a man to know the place where he believed in Jesus—it is not at all essential! It is not necessary for a person's life for him to know where he was born, yet I am glad that I know my birthplace and I am happy to remember the humble spot. If anybody were to say to you, "Do you know where you were born?" and you were forced to answer, "No," would you expect him to say, "Then you are not alive"? If he *did* say so, it would be a very bad argument, as you would be able to prove at once by letting him see that you were far from non-existence and so, if you cannot state *where* you were converted, nor *when* you were converted, do not fret about it.

A far more necessary enquiry is—*Are you converted?* Do you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? Are you, indeed, born from above by the Spirit of God? If so, it is by no means essential that you should know the place, or the means, or the hour. Still, it is very interesting to be able to point out the place of our new birth. I am thankful to be able to do so and many others of us are glad that they have an equally vivid memory of the spot whereon they stood when they passed from death unto life. “Yes,” you can say, “I believed on Him *there*.” Happy place! Holy place! Some of us know the spot to a yard where we looked unto Christ and felt our burden of sin loosed from our weary shoulders. Standing in one of the halls of the Orphanage is the very pulpit from which I savingly heard the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though I have no reverence for relics of any sort, yet a flood of grateful memories flows before me as I look upon the platform whereon stood the unknown brother who pointed me to Jesus.

Who he was I shall never know till the Day of Judgement—but the text, “Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth,” was the voice of God to my soul! It is an interesting thing to know where you were converted. May the Tabernacle prove to be the birthplace of a multitude of you, that we may continue to say, “Many believed on Him there.”

What was there particular about the retired place in which our Lord, on this occasion, gathered so many disciples? What was there about the place beyond Jordan where John first baptized?

It was a place *where Divine ordinances had been observed*—“The place where John at first baptized; and many believed on Him there.” Where the Lord is obeyed, we may hope to see him revealed. We are not among those who condemn others for their mistakes about outward ordinances, but yet we do not look upon erroneous practices without sincere regret and apprehension. If the ordinance of Baptism is altered, applied to the wrong subjects, practiced in an unscriptural manner and used for unwarranted purposes, it is a serious error and will be sure, one day or other, to lead to other errors of still greater importance! Disobedience on this point may even now be grieving the Spirit of God and restraining His sacred operations. We must be careful to keep the ordinances as they were delivered unto us. We may not tamper with royal statutes. It is forbidden, even, to batter a penny which bears the king’s face upon it—and it is far worse to alter an ordinance which is stamped with Divine authority!

“Whatever He says unto you, do it,” was the word of the blessed Virgin concerning her Son, and it was a good word, worthy to be spoken in the ear of the entire Christian Church. If a Church labors to keep the ordinances as they were delivered and endeavors to follow in the tracks of Christ’s teaching and example, it may hope to receive the Divine blessing. At any rate, one reason for the withdrawal of the Spirit of God is gone and one reason why the Lord Jesus should bless the work is present. Oh that in this place, where we have baptized many into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we might meet with an abundant blessing! In keeping His Commandments there is great reward. Outward ordinances cannot secure a blessing, but the spirit of obedience which

leads to a careful observance of them according to the Divine Command is a blessed fruit of the Spirit! Where John baptized and Jesus submitted thus to fulfill all righteousness, we find a spot which is suited for a Divine revival.

Secondly, remember, this Bethabara was the place *where faithful preaching concerning Jesus had been heard*. For this John, who baptized, also preached the Gospel of repentance. He laid great stress upon that part of the Gospel which prepares men for the coming Kingdom of God. Where repentance has been thoroughly preached, I believe that many will come to believe in Jesus Christ. Jesus fitly followed John and faith will follow readily where repentance has been thoroughly preached and explained. The plow must lead the way—and then it is good sowing. We must first send in the sharp needle and then the silken thread will be drawn after it. There must be a measure of conviction of sin before there will be a joyful acceptance of the great Sin Offering! John had preached repentance.

“Oh,” you say, “but John was dead.” Yes, but he, being dead, yet speaks! There were the stones of the brook to which John had pointed and the reeds shaken of the wind to which he could never be likened. There was the river Jordan still flowing on, fit emblem of the stream of Grace which washes away the sin of the repentant. The good which men have done lives after them. Herod had cut off John’s head, but he had not silenced John’s voice. From the wilderness there still came the cry, “Repent you: for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.” A hallowed influence lingers about the scenes of faithful labors and I wonder not that our Lord sought retirement where every ripple of the river repeated the Baptist’s testimony. From scenes like these, the Church will be recruited with new disciples.

What fine preaching was that of John! He did no miracle, but all things that he spoke concerning Jesus were true. He spoke of One that was coming after him who was preferred before him, the laces of whose shoes he was not worthy to unloose. He spoke of Him in terms so plain that the Gospel preacher of today, in the full light of the Spirit of God, cannot find better language—“Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world.” No wonder that many believed on Jesus there, where the savor of such a ministry lingered in men’s minds! The population of the country round about had been saturated with such teaching as this and they had not forgotten, although they might not thoroughly have accepted, what the last of the Prophets had declared in their hearing. The true Elijah that was to come had so spoken as to fix his words in men’s memories like well-fastened nails! Brothers, wherever there has been earnest preaching, we may expect that many will believe in the Lord Jesus Christ before long. Let no faithful preacher’s heart be faint within him! Christ is not preached in vain—you have not pointed to the Lamb of God for nothing. Even should you die without seeing it, there will come another after you who will reap a harvest from the Seed which you have sowed. Hidden Truths of

God will break out all of a sudden and it shall be said, "Many believed on Him there."

As for the place wherein we stand, I can solemnly assert that I have, with all my heart, preached to you the Gospel of the Grace of God. If a thousand persons were to believe in Jesus this morning, I would not be in the least surprised, for this I surely can claim, that to the best of my knowledge and ability I have, these many years, preached nothing among you but the Cross of Christ. I, too, have cried, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world." I have endeavored to point out to you Him whose shoe laces I am not worthy to unloose. I have prayed that He might baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. Many saints have joined me in that earnest prayer. If at Bethabara many believed on Him there, we may expect that many will believe on Him here!

The next remark about the place is this—it was a spot *where God had borne witness to His Son Jesus*. Jesus had come to be baptized by John and when He was baptized, He came up straightway out of the water—and the heavens were opened and the Spirit descended upon Him like a dove, while a voice said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The Holy Spirit is known to go where He has gone before—and where the Father has borne witness to Christ, once, we may expect Him to bear witness again! Where Jesus was anointed for his lifework, the spot was hallowed. Where the Divine Voice sounded forth, not through a Prophet, but distinctly out of Heaven, we might look for other displays of God! Where God has spoken, He will speak again!

Has not God spoken to your soul in this Tabernacle? My Brothers and Sisters, has not God often borne witness to His Son in your hearts and consciences in this beloved House of Prayer? Not only has Christ been set forth visibly crucified among you, but the attesting Voice of God's Holy Spirit has been heard within your spirits, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Therefore let us hope that of this house it shall be said again and again, "Many believed on Him there!"

Once more—not only was this a very interesting spot to our Lord Jesus Christ, but Bethabara was also very interesting to the leaders of the little band who accompanied Him—it was the place *where the Lord's first disciples had been won*. They heard John speak and followed Jesus. John and James and Andrew and Peter had been, there, brought to Jesus and certain others also had joined the chosen band. To visit the place of their own spiritual birth would cause a renewal of their vows and act as an encouragement to persevere in winning others. Brothers and Sisters, we feel hopeful that God will bless others in the place where He has blessed us. In the place where Peter and John and Andrew have been found, it is to be hoped that other Peters and Johns and Andrews will be discovered. Where solid stones have been quarried, there remains much more material which may yet be brought forth.

Eternity, alone, shall tell how many souls have been born to God in this House. We have actually registered nearly 11,000 persons who have come forward and confessed their faith, and joined this Church—but these are

only a small part of the whole, for great numbers come here and return to the country and unite with other Churches. My Brethren, if the Lord has found you out in this place, you will cry day and night unto Him that others may be found of Him also. Sit in your pews this morning and say, "Lord, I believed on You in this place; therefore I pray You this day grant that many others may do the same and may it be said—'Many believed on Jesus in the Tabernacle.'"

I suppose it was a lovely quiet spot by the banks of the Jordan with only a little village or hamlet, named Bethany, close by. The word Bethany was altered by Origin into Bethabara, I suppose for distinction's sake. It really was Bethany, and so our Lord had two Bethanys. It was there, in a rural retreat, that many believed on His name. O hills of Piedmont, when the Vaudois preached the Christ amidst your valleys, it may be said of you, "Many believed on Him there!" O mosses and hillsides of Scotland, in the Covenanting times, many believed on Him there! Talk not so exceedingly proud, O you cathedrals or you great tabernacles, for many have believed on Jesus by the side of the highway, out on the village green, or under the spreading oak. Out in the desert of southern France, where men fled for their lives to hear the Gospel, many believed on Jesus!

In what place cannot Jesus triumph? He needs no Solomon's Temple, no, in its porch He finds quibblers, but yonder by the willows of the Jordan He finds a people that believe on Him! Go forth, you heralds of the Cross, and preach the Gospel everywhere beneath the arch of Heaven. At the corners of the street or on the hillside, publish the proclamation of the Great King. Let the trees of the woods sing out and the inhabitants of the rocks sing! In all ears proclaim the Gospel, till, by river, sea and plain it shall be said, "Many believed on Him there." Thus have we seen that it is pleasant to note the place where we first believed in Jesus.

II. Secondly, IT IS VERY INSTRUCTIVE TO NOTE THE TIME when persons are led to faith. Many believed on Him then and there—when He was preaching at the place where John first baptized.

As I have said, some of you do not know when you believed, but you know that you have believed and that knowledge is quite sufficient. Still, it is interesting to know when you believed. Let us see if there were not certain noteworthy circumstances about the season of the conversion of these many. When was it?

First, it was *after a time of very great and obstinate opposition*. The Savior could make nothing of these quibbling Jews. They were so desperately prejudiced against Him that He turned away from them to more hopeful spirits. No sooner does He cross the river than we read that, "many believed on Him there." So great a difference may we find in a few miles and a few hours! Opposition is no sign of defeat, but the contrary. When the devil roars, it is because his kingdom is being shaken, or he is afraid that it will be shaken. It should not depress us when we see a bitter spirit awakened—it should grieve us to see men opposing the Truth of God, but it should not lead us to abstain from spreading it. In the face of intense opposition our eyes should sparkle—

***“With that stern joy which warriors feel
In foemen worthy of their steel.”***

In the name of God expect victory! Now the foe advances to the fight, the Lord has delivered him into our hands. Hear how David puts it—“They compassed me about like bees, they are quenched as the fire of thorns: for in the name of the Lord I will destroy them.” Have but confidence in God and all will be well. Nothing is worse than stagnation. The stolid indifference of a thoughtless age is hard to deal with, but there is some little hope of a people who will resist you. Take courage from the blackening down of the darkness and hope that very soon you will see the dawn of a better day. “Be you steadfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” If today men take up stones to stone the Christ, tomorrow hearts of stone may be turned to flesh and we may hear that, “Many believed on Him there.”

The next point which is worthy of thought is that the time when these believed was *a time of calm, unbroken quietude*. The Savior was abiding at Bethany beyond Jordan and there He found a resting place. I suppose there was a ferry there and, by this means, our Lord crossed to the other side of the Jordan, into a lone spot where He could feel safe from quibblers. Those who came there came with the desire to hear and learn—they resorted to Him and were prepared to hear thoughtfully. Some persons may be converted through those who strive and cry and cause their voice to be heard in the streets, but I do not think the best minds are won in that manner. Conversion of a solid character is effected in a more solid way. Solemn thought and consideration are the healthiest for Gospel preaching.

One of the fathers has a famous sermon upon this text in which he deals with women and speaks of them as having so much more time for retirement and quiet than men. And he thinks that this is one of the reasons why so many of them believe in proportion to men. Men live in the noise of public life and so grow worldly and forget the Lord, but women are more often alone and walk in quieter places and we may, therefore, expect to see more of them turning to God. Certainly an opportunity to think is a great privilege to any man or any woman—and these people at Bethabara, delivered from the noise and clamor of Jerusalem and its priests and sectaries, were able to weigh the claims of Jesus and were led to decide for Him. Give me the riverside, away from the rush of fashion, and I will preach with great hopefulness!

They began to speak of John. Do you wonder? It was the natural topic to discuss upon the spot where John, at first, baptized. “John did no miracle, but all things that he spoke concerning this Man were true”—therefore this Man is the Messiah. This is He of whom John said, “Who coming after me is preferred before me: for He was before me.” I thank my God most heartily for giving us quiet worship. We are not dull and sleepy, but we are not excited and noisy. I am glad to hope that some men are converted to God amid war, earthquakes and pestilence—but I am in-

clined to be suspicious of that kind of conversion, for fear it should die with its cause.

We had an earthquake in Essex, some time ago, and in the little towns everybody went to the place of worship that week. I asked one of the ministers of a certain village in Essex how they were getting on, now that frisky Essex had, once more, settled down. "Oh," he said, "we are as dead as ever. We need an earthquake every week to wake us up." If that had not been true of Essex, I am sure it is true of other places. That which is born with fear dies with fear, but our Savior, in the calm of the hamlet by the river's bank, instilled the Truth of God into thoughtful minds. The Jordan rolled between Him and His adversaries; no disturbance of the peace was to be feared; those who came to Him were sincere enquirers and our Lord, therefore, preached with great success and, "many believed on Him there."

A time of calm thoughtfulness and peace of mind should suggest to us the propriety of setting our house in order towards God and considering the claims of the Lord Jesus. If you are, this day, free from care, free from labor, free from fret, I beseech you calmly judge of your condition as to the world to come of which we speak. Think of the Son of God. See whether He is not worthy of your immediate confidence. Judge whether it is not a day of Grace to your soul wherein it would be wise to believe in Jesus.

This time when many believed was *a time of great desire for hearing*. Let me read it—"Many resorted unto Him and many believed on Him there." You cannot catch fish where there are none. But when the fish come swarming up to the net, we may hope that some will be taken in its meshes. We cheerfully hope that when men dock to hear the Gospel, some will believe it. When I see the vast crowds flooding this place like a sea, I hope it will not all be in vain. When men are as eager to enter the House of Prayer as others are to get into a theater, surely we may hope that God means to bless them! Oh that God would bless the multitudes that contend for standing room in these aisles! To what purpose does He incline them to come here if it is not that they should believe and live? May it be said of this House, not only that many resorted to it, but that they resorted to Jesus—not only that they *heard* of Him, but that they *believed* in Him!

What else shall I say as to this time when many believed in Jesus? I will say nothing else except that it was a time of which nothing else need be said. "Many believed on Him there." Blessed is that age which has no history, but more blessed is that age of which this is the history—"Many believed on Him there." Happiest of days in which many believed in Jesus! Brightest of spots of which it is said, "Many believed on Him *there!*" The most honorable record of any House of Prayer will be this—"Many believed on Him there." I am praying that this may be the case here today. I began the morning with this prayer and my dear Brothers, the deacons and elders, when they came in to pray with me before I ventured on this platform, pleaded for the same thing. Only one note has sounded from the harp of our prayer—it is this—"Oh that many may, this day, believe in the Lord

Jesus Christ! Oh that this second Sabbath of October may be marked, not only by the fall of the leaf, but by the Lord Jesus Christ gathering ripe fruit which shall be the reward of the travail of His soul! Why should it not be so? Why should it not be said today—"Many believed on Him then and there!"

III. We now make a third remark, which is this—IT IS CHEERING TO OBSERVE THE FACT ITSELF. We have noticed the place and the time, but these are of secondary consequence—it is most charming to observe the fact—"Many believed on Him."

This fact was a great refreshment to our dear Savior's heart. I do not say that John tells us so, but I think that from the style of his writing in this passage it looks so. There is an air of quietude about the passage. He writes, "And there He abode." He seemed at home there. He could rest at Bethabara, because many believed on Him there. He must have been wounded when the inhabitants of His Father's city again and again took up stones to stone Him. But He was pleased to see the plain country folk flock to hear Him. When the polished citizens rejected Him; when the wise Jews would not hear Him, the plain rustics of Peraea stood listening with delight to His dear Words and then weighed them with care and expressed, one by one, the conviction that John's witness was, indeed, true, and that in Jesus of Nazareth they saw the Messiah! This was to be an oasis of comfort for our Lord before He traversed the burning desert of His passion and death. Before He was called by His last bitter agony to finish the work which the Father had given Him to do, He was to be refreshed by many true hearts putting their trust in Him.

I observe again that no doubt *it was the fruit of John's words.* The good man's labors were not in vain. Now, at last, the Seed which the faithful John had sown brings forth the blade and the ear! By the river's brink the handful of corn grows and ripens to a harvest. Good work never dies!

It was, however, more directly and clearly *the result of our Lord's own Presence.* They first saw Him and what He did, and what He said and then they compared this with what John had testified, beforehand, and drew the conclusion that all things that John spoke of this Man were true! Brethren, we *must* have Jesus, Himself, here, and I rejoice to believe that He will not refuse to come! Our dear Lord has been known to come to this House on errands of love—there is scarcely a seat in this House which He has not visited—all over the place He has caused the tears of repentance and the songs of faith to flow forth! He is no stranger, by His Spirit, to this House of Prayer! This week He has been here, not only with those who have confessed His name, but with some who last Wednesday were stricken down by conviction and made to cry out in the midst of the congregation, "What must we do to be saved?" In His infinite mercy and boundless condescension Jesus is with us! And from this fact we believe and are sure that power to heal and save will go forth on all sides. By prayer we will hold Him fast—we will not let Him go until He bless many souls!

The fact is very cheering, for you notice concerning the faith produced, that *it was decided*. They did not say that they would *try* to believe, but they believed on Him there! They did not promise to *think* on it, but they believed on Him there! They did not say that they felt impressions, but they believed on Him there! They did not say that they hoped and trusted and so on, but they believed on Him there! That is the consummation for which I pray at this time, that you should not *talk* about faith or feeling, nor resolve and promise, but that you should actually *believe on Him straight away!* Oh that I might see in you a sharp, clear, crisp faith in Jesus Christ—a faith about which there shall be no question! Remember, if you have a certain faith, you have a certain salvation! A doubtful faith will leave a doubt about your security, but those who believe out and out shall have joy and peace through believing!

That belief was prompt. Christ had preached without result for years to some others, but to those who came to this place He spoke only for a short time and they believed on Him there! How I wish that many who have never heard the Gospel before may believe on Jesus this day! I believe that new hearers are often the most hopeful hearers. If you could take a blind man out under the heavens and in a moment remove the scales from his eyes and let him see the stars for the first time, how amazed he would be! It is said that much of the special results of the preaching of Wesley and Whitefield arose out of the fact that the Gospel had become a novelty in England, so that when they preached it, men were struck with amazement at it! I have, therefore, hopes that the preaching, today, of the fact that the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleanses as from all sin—and that there is immediate pardon to be had by simply trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ—will take some of you so by surprise that you will believe at once and it shall be said, "Many believed on Him there." These people did not stop to get home; they did not wait for next week—but then and there, by the river's brink—they looked to Him who is the Lamb of God and believed on His name!

The believing was of the most solid kind because they could give a reason for it. It was not a hasty, ignorant faith, but they argued thus—"This is the Man of whom John spoke: we have seen what He did and what He said and He is exactly the Man that John said He would be. Assuredly He is the Messiah, of whom John spoke." And "They believed on Him there." I would like you to argue the matter out. I would have you know your sin and the way by which it is removed. I desire you to understand the Doctrine of Substitution, to get at the back of the plan of salvation and see the reason why the Lord Jesus is the fit object of our faith. When you do this, you will believe with a grip and a hold to your faith such as an ignorant faith can never supply. Oh that we might see worked here, today, a solid immovable faith which can give a reason for its existence!

This faith is said to have been widespread, for, "many believed on Him there." I dare say many men, women and children—many of all sorts believed on Him there. Oh, the privilege of knowing that Christ is no Savior for the few, but He gave His life a ransom for many! Heaven is not con-

fined in its admissions to a few score, but a number that no man can number shall fill the Glory Land. I do not think we have anybody left in this congregation of that ancient order of close fellows who glory in the fewness of the elect. I hope they are nearly all gone to Heaven out of all the congregations whom once they harassed! These Brothers and Sisters used to think that if one or two converts were brought in each year, a great work was being done. If they heard of an evangelist holding revival services and learned that two or three hundred were added to the Church, they said, "Ah, h'm! These excitements end in rejection. It is all very fine to hear of so many joining the Church. I hope they will all turn out right." This meant, being interpreted, that they did not think they would and that they would be sorry if they did! Now we are not of that mind. We believe in many conversions—we look for them and we have them! That power which converts one can convert a hundred! The same argument which convinces one candid man will convince a thousand candid men. The same Gospel which wins one heart by the Holy Spirit's power can win 10,000 hearts! O great Master, let us see it done today!

"Many believed on him." *This was what He lived for!* This is what He died for, that men might believe in Him. This is what we preach for! This is what you have come here for! God gives you to hear the Gospel that you may believe on Jesus! This is why the Bible was written—"These are written, that you might believe on His name." Your Sundays are given you that you may believe in Christ. Your houses of prayer are built that you may believe in Christ. If you will not believe, our preaching is an unhappy failure for us, an unhappier failure for you. "If you believe not, you shall die in your sins." "If you will not believe, surely you shall not be established." "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved: he that believes not shall be damned." God save us from that, for Christ's sake!

IV. And now I close with the fourth head, which is this—it has been pleasant to know the place, instructive to note the time and cheering to observe the fact—and now IT IS MOST IMPORTANT THAT WE SHOULD HAVE A SECOND EDITION OF IT. It is most important that many should believe on Christ here, in this very place, at this very hour!

For first, this morning many are here. From different motives and from different quarters of the globe you have come *here* at this time. We have so far realized the text that "many resorted unto Him." This is a good beginning—we ought to be very thankful to see it.

Next, *the Lord Jesus Christ is here* by His Spirit. He declares that where two or three are met together in His name, there He is—we have many twos and threes here. He has promised to be with His people to the end of the world when they go forth to preach the Gospel. We have been crying to Him for a blessing, this morning, and He comes to answer our prayers! So far all is hopeful. We have the Lord and the many resorting to Him.

Furthermore, *the witness borne is even more abundant than that which was borne at Bethabara.* John is not here, but then he was not there, for he had been beheaded. His witness was there as his witness is here. Truth is not affected by time—John's witness is as good after 19 centuries

as after three years. We have also the witness of the Prophets who all spoke of Jesus. We have what these people had not—we have the witness of the Apostles who saw Him live and die and rise again and go up into Heaven! We have, moreover, the witness of beloved friends who have been saved by the Lord Jesus and can testify that all that has ever been said in the Savior's honor is true. He is able to save; He is willing to save; He casts out none that come to Him! If you put hundreds of us into the witness box, we shall all utter our solemn testimony that Jesus is a Savior and a great one, willing to deliver you from the wrath to come!

Beside that, you have the testimony of His own Gospel. The Gospel is its own sufficient witness. Somebody wrote a book and wished to present it to old George the Third. Farmer George asked, "What's the book about, Sir?" "Sire, it is an apology for the Bible." "What?" said George, "What? Apology for the Bible? Apology for the Bible? Never heard of such a thing! Don't want your book, Sir! Apology for *the Bible*, indeed!" Quite right, King George! Surely we do not need any apologies for the Gospel—it is its own witness. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." Jesus Christ suffered, bled, and died, bearing human sin in Himself, and whoever believes in Him shall be immediately forgiven, immediately renewed in his heart by the Holy Spirit and made a new creature in Christ! Why, this is evidently a Divine message. "Look and live." Such a Gospel never was invented by *men*, for no man likes it well enough to invent it, nor even to accept it after it is invented till God renews his heart! Let it sound forth that Jesus, mighty to save, invites men to trust Him and, trusting Him, they shall live!

Let us now come to bayonet point. Friend, will you believe in Jesus Christ?—that is the point! You have heard about Him long enough—will you now believe on Him? Wagon loads of sermons have been lost upon you—will you now believe on Him? "I will think about it." I don't ask you to think about it, but to believe on Him. "I shall go home and try what I can do." Do not try to do anything—believe on Jesus, for the Gospel precept is—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." May the sweet Spirit of God come upon you mightily, now, and take you away from all things but the one thing necessary! Oh that you would cast your guilty souls on Jesus and find Him mighty to redeem! Here is a simple verse for you to say in your hearts—

**"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On Christ's kind arms I fall;
He is my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus, and my All."**

If you have said that from your heart, you are a saved man! Go your way rejoicing in His salvation! The Lord bless you! Amen and amen!

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JESUS AND HIS FORERUNNER

NO. 2818

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 15, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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“Therefore they sought again to take Him: but He escaped out of their hands, and went away again beyond the Jordan to the place where John at first baptized, and there He abode. And many resorted unto Him and said, John did no miracle: but all things that John spoke of this Man were true. And many believed on Him there.”
John 10:39-42.

THE unbelieving and infuriated Jews again and again took up stones to cast at our Lord and here they sought to take Him prisoner, but He escaped from them, apparently with the greatest possible ease. He did this on several occasions. When the men of Nazareth would have cast Him down, headlong, from the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, He passed through the midst of them and went His way. He made His escape, over and over again, in the same wonderful manner, thus proving that He was not in the power of any man. He need not, therefore, at the last, have died unless His death had been in accordance with His own will. He might have appealed to His Father and He would have given Him legions of angels for His deliverance. Or He might, as Elijah did, have called for fire from Heaven to destroy those who sought to arrest Him. His Divine power would never have been at any loss in providing means for His own protection. He might, readily enough, have slain those who came to take Him in the garden—and He might even have come down from the Cross, if He had pleased thus to prove what power He possessed.

Yet He did not so act, but voluntarily laid down His life, according to His own words, “I lay down My life, that I might take it again. No man takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father.” Let us, then, bless and praise Him for that wondrous, voluntary, substitutionary death upon the tree! It was for our sins that He suffered. There was no reason for His death except that which was found in our dire necessities and in His own great heart of love. Whenever we think of the sufferings of Christ upon the Cross, let us remember how spontaneous was the Sacrifice by which He redeemed us from sin, death and Hell. Blessed, forever blessed, be the name of this willing Friend of guilty men! And let us, in similar fashion, always be ready to serve Him. Let the willingness of Christ bring forth willingness in us—let us not be as bullocks unaccustomed to the yoke, but cheerfully let us take His

yoke upon us and learn of Him. May the Lord grant us Grace, not merely to be willing, but even to be *eager* for His service, as He was eager to serve us, for He could truly say, “I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it is accomplished!”

Another thought is suggested by our Lord’s action. When He was driven from one place by the unbelief and malice of His adversaries, He did not, therefore, retire altogether from His service. If He could not speak to the people in the streets of Jerusalem, He would find a place of audience in the desert beyond the Jordan, but, somewhere or other, He would be seeking the welfare of men. He went about doing good. They could not stop His mouth, whatever they might do. When they, again and again, in one place, took up stones to stone Him, He saw that His testimony would be useless to them, for it had already only increased their condemnation, so He went off to another place, away from those furious persecutors, that others might listen to the message of mercy which they had despised and rejected. Jesus was always working, always teaching, always blessing and, to this day, He is still diligent in His service on behalf of the sons of men. From the highest Throne of Glory He scatters down mercies and favors with both hands, by day and by night, upon us, His unworthy creatures! As He continues thus to serve us, let us continue to serve Him. And if He is unwearied, let us be unwearied, too. If we can do little or nothing for Him in one place, let us find another spot where we can serve Him, but never let us lay down our charge till we also lay down our lives—never let us cease to work until we cease to live! May this mind be in us which was also in Christ Jesus our Lord!

I. Now to come more closely to the subject of this evening’s meditation, the first thing that I see in the text is A FRUITFUL PLACE OF MINISTRY—“Beyond the Jordan.” Our Savior preached in the place where John at first baptized, “and many believed on Him there.”

It is not every place that is fruitful, for there are some portions of the field, which is the world, that are like the wayside, where the birds of the air come and take away the seed as soon as it is sown. There are other parts where the soil is very shallow—and there the seed springs up only to perish in the heat of the sun. Our Savior had been in many places where He was unsuccessful as a preacher, where He was absolutely rejected of men and His message altogether despised. For when He spoke the Truth of God, they even called it blasphemy and took up stones that they might stone Him as one unfit to live! Christian ministers may have to work in such places, yet they are always glad when they get on the soil that yields a hundred-fold. They are delighted if their Master bids them cast the net where there are great shoals of fish. Our Savior was evidently in such a spot when He was preaching “beyond the Jordan.”

Notice about this place, first, that *it was a place of retreat from persecution*. I do not think that we should ever look upon the most violent opposition to the Gospel as anything to be altogether lamented, for, even in this instance, it is just after the Jews have said that Christ blasphemed and have sought to stone or to seize Him, that He is most successful in His preaching! You may regard it as a very safe rule that when the devil roars, it is because he has been hit pretty hard and that whenever there

is the most rage against the Gospel, it is one evidence of the Gospel's growing power! To go and preach in a town, or village, or hamlet and to be scarcely noticed—to deliver your testimony for Christ and yet to produce no visible effect of any kind—is horrible. But if all the hosts of Hell are stirred up against you and men even begin to act spitefully to the preacher, you may take courage and rest assured that something is being done! Depend upon it, there would not be all that stir and uproar unless the Lord's power had gone with His Word to the hearts and consciences of men. We are not to cease our preaching because of opposition, but we are then to be more earnest and zealous than ever—possibly, in another place, as it was in our Lord's case—but still, our testimony for our Lord is to be given somewhere! After the thunderstorm will often be the very best time for sowing the good seed of the Kingdom. It was so in our Savior's experience for He had, there, a most fruitful season after He had met with the most violent and bitter opposition.

If I am addressing any servant of God who has been passing through a season of fierce persecution, let him be encouraged! Brother, when the night is over, the day will be all the brighter because of the blackness that preceded it. So, be hopeful that after the wearing and wearying time of opposition that you have had, you will come into smoother waters and that God will bless you yet more abundantly.

Perhaps another reason why that place was so fruitful was *because it was a retired spot*. It was "beyond the Jordan." It was away from the noise and strife of Jerusalem. Those who were there had evidently traveled a considerable distance with the desire to hear the Savior. In the streets of Jerusalem, Jesus preached to many who did not want to hear. And we must do the same, for we are to preach the Gospel to every creature. But I think we have the best hope of doing good when people take trouble to come to hear us—when they journey for miles to the place of preaching—when they are removed from their ordinary associations and feel that they can, in quiet, listen to the Word. Chrysostom once preached a sermon upon the last verse of my text, dwelling especially upon the word, "*there*"—"many believed on Him *there*." Very singularly he accounts for the larger numbers of women who are converted, beyond the number of men, from the fact that women are more at home than men are, and have more quiet times for reflection and consideration upon the Word. I lay no stress upon that thought, but it has occurred to me, also, and when I met with it in Chrysostom, I thought that there might be some force about it, for we do need quiet times in which we can think of Divine things.

Some of you men are busy all day long—up early in the morning and then right on till late at night. You are hacking and soaring away about your worldly business and you do not get time to sit down and calmly calculate this problem, "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Let me persuade you to sometimes go into the desert and rest a while. Surely, Heaven is worth a little thought if it is to be gained! It must be worthwhile to secure the necessary time for thought about how we are to escape from Hell and to be delivered from sin. I think that if you—especially on Sabbath afternoons,

between the morning and evening services—I mean, you unconverted people—would set apart an hour or even half an hour to really look into your case, to come to close dealings with yourselves and your God, we would preach in the evening with very great hope of blessing because such hearers would have come to us prepared and anxious to learn the way of salvation. Do you not know that when you go to a place of worship you will generally catch what you fish for? Some of you come because the preacher is thought to be eccentric—you will, possibly, hear something which will confirm you in that idea. But, if you come because you want to hear of Jesus Christ and to find salvation, you will get what you come for! It is the will of the Lord that those who seek shall find. I think there is something very suggestive in the fact that this fruitful place was a quiet spot away from the crowds and bustle of Jerusalem.

And, again, one reason why our Lord was so successful on this occasion when many believed on Him was, no doubt, that *He had a large congregation*. It is first said that “many resorted unto Him.” And then that “many believed on Him.” It is a self-evident fact that you cannot have many converts if you do not have many hearers. Hence, we delight to see the House of Prayer crowded. We are glad that when we cast the net we cast it among multitudes of fish. If a man can preach the Gospel to half a dozen people, he ought to do it with all his might—and if God should give him the souls of that half dozen hearers, it will be an abundant reward for him. But if there are any means by which half a dozen *thousands* of people can be brought to hear the Word, we may hope that the converts will be multiplied in equal proportion if God the Holy Spirit is pleased to bless the Word! At any rate, the greater the number of the preacher’s hearers, the greater is the likelihood of blessing to a large number of people. This puts an end, I think, to the foolish talk about the finest thought of the age being always delivered to an *elite* company of very few special individuals. If you preach with great thoughtfulness, especially after the style of the modern school of thought, you cannot expect that the multitude will come to hear you. Very well, then, let us not preach in that way, for, “the greatest good to the greatest number” should be the motto of every man who loves his race and desires its highest well-being. Let us endeavor to so adapt our style, if we are preachers of the Word, that the multitude will be willing to hear and will be able to understand—for then we may hope that with the blessing of God, many will be converted.

But, once more, our Lord had met with a fruitful place *because it was a place of fragrant memories*. For what was that spot, “beyond the Jordan,” already noted? It was “the place where John at first baptized”—where, in fact, Jesus Himself had been baptized by John! We believe not in the sacredness of places, but, still, where a good man has labored for the Master, there often lingers a holy fragrance which is a means of blessing to others. Many of those people had probably heard John’s testimony of his Lord. And the trees by the river’s edge, and the flowing stream would always remind them of the Baptist, who there urged them to repent of their sins. Now the good man is dead and buried, but the soil which he had plowed is the better prepared for the Master’s seed-sowing.

And the Master knows that He will have all the greater harvest in that place because John has been there before Him. O my Brothers and Sisters, it will be a grand thing for us to have so lived that when we are dead and gone, those who come after us will have all the easier task because of our service for the Savior! You Sunday school teachers are often like John the Baptist—you get the youthful minds ready for the preacher's instruction and you who have, perhaps, been preaching for years without success, may, nevertheless, be John the Baptists to others who will come after you and who may be the means of blessing to those for whom you think you have labored in vain. When I go to some places to preach, I feel that I am sowing upon stony ground, but if the preacher before me has wept over his hearers, and pleaded with them, and prayed for them, I find that they are as ready to drink in the Word as the thirsty soil drinks in the rain when the blessed clouds end the long and terrible drought!

II. Now, secondly, in our text you will see A TESTIMONY TO A DEPARTED MINISTER.

The people said, as they stood where John had preached and baptized, "John did no miracle: but all things that John spoke of this Man were true." Oh, how I hope that you will be able to say this of me when I have gone the way of all flesh! "He did no miracle: but all that he said concerning Christ was true." There are some preachers of whom people will say, when they are gone, "They were not very eloquent. They were not very learned. They were not very refined and they could not do any miracles, but"—oh, that blessed "*but*"!—"but all things that they spoke concerning Christ were true."

Notice the character which the people gave to John, three years, or thereabouts, after he was dead. He was still remembered by them and they bore most satisfactory testimony concerning him. First, *they testified that he spoke concerning Christ*. It was John's business—it was *all* his business here below, to speak concerning Jesus Christ, and he did it so thoroughly that this was the one thing that his hearers recalled after he was gone. He rebuked the Pharisees and Sadducees, but his main work was to testify concerning Him who was to come after him, whose shoe laces he felt that he was not worthy to unloose. Ah, Brothers, there is no ministry that will stand the testing on a sick-bed, or on our death-bed, except that which has been full of testimony to Christ! When there has been a great deal of philosophy and only a homoeopathic dose of Christ in the preaching—just enough of the latter to give it the name of Christian teaching—may God have mercy upon both preacher and hearer! But to preach Christ first, Christ last, Christ midst, Christ *always*—this is what John the Baptist did and this is what all preachers should do. An American gentleman who was here many years ago, came again about 14 or 15 years afterwards and he said to me as he went out, "I see you are still on the old tack." "Yes," I replied, "I intend to be like Casablanca on the burning ship, where his father had told him to stand—and where he meant to remain as long as life should last."

I will preach new doctrine when I find it in the Bible—till then, I will keep to the old! The State of Massachusetts passed a resolution declaring that it would be governed by the laws of God until there was time to

make better ones—and I have passed a resolution that I will preach Christ's Gospel until I have time to find out something better—and that can never be, for it is the only Gospel that can ever meet the needs of the human race! There was no bite from any of the fiery serpents which a look at the bronze serpent could not cure—and this Gospel of God's Grace is the one remedy for all the spiritual diseases to which mankind is heir and, therefore, we will cling to it as long as we live.

John the Baptist spoke concerning Christ and *what he said about Christ was true*. That is the important point, for it is possible for Christ to be preached and yet for the truth about Christ *not* to be preached. His Humanity may be left out, or His Deity may be kept in the background, or there may be lisping and hesitancy with regard to the doctrine of His atoning Sacrifice. And if this is the case, then the ministry will be without power. It used to be said of a certain noted preacher that his doctrine of the Atonement was that Jesus Christ did something or other, which, in some way or other, was connected with our salvation. That cloudy sort of teaching is not preaching Christ in truth! But to declare that He was made a curse for us—that the Lord caused to meet upon Him the iniquity of all who believe in Him. That He, who knew no sin, was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him—to clearly preach the definite Substitution of Christ on our behalf—this is to tell the truth about Christ! And I pray that all of us, whether preachers or teachers, may not only speak about Christ, but also, like John the Baptist, speak the truth about Him.

One other thing about John was that *all he said about Christ was the Truth of God.*” All things that John spoke of this Man were true.” Not merely some things, but “all things.” Any part of Christ is precious, but a whole Christ is what the sinner needs. As far as we know Him, we are bound honestly to make Him known to others. And even if we have to do it with but small ability and if, when we die, we have to regret that we had such slender powers, yet shall it be a sweet thought to us if we know that those we leave behind will be able to say, “All things that he spoke concerning this Man were true.”

There was one thing which the people did not say, and which they had no need to say, because it was self-evident—that is that *John the Baptist had so preached Christ that they could not forget it*. He had been dead some years, yet they remembered what he had preached about while he was with them. They remembered how he preached it, too—that he preached Christ in truth and that all he said about Christ was the Truth—so that, when the Messiah Himself stood before them, the savor of John's ministry was still fresh upon them. Oh, that it might be our lot, and the lot of all God's servants, to make the Gospel arrows stick as well as strike—and to cause men to carry with them, for many a year, the remembrance of the things which we have spoken unto them while we were yet present with them!

III. Now, thirdly, I am going away from the text in order to notice WHAT THE DEPARTED MINISTER'S TESTIMONY REALLY WAS. What did John say concerning Christ?

Well, first of all, *John said that Jesus was the Son of God*. His testimony was, “I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.” John delighted to extol his Lord—he felt that he was not worthy to take the place of the slave who took off his master’s sandals—it was too great an honor for him to be the body-servant of Christ. How sweetly did John speak about Jesus as, “the only-begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father”! Do you all believe that blessed Truth of God of the Sonship of Christ? Do you all believe that the Man of Nazareth was, “very God of very God”? If you do, then trust Him to be your Savior and, doing so, you shall be saved by Him! Let the testimony of John be accepted by you, for it is now borne out by the life of Christ and a thousand proofs besides. Jesus of Nazareth is God in human flesh—trust yourselves with Him and you shall be eternally saved!

John also bore witness to another grand Truth about his Lord and Master, namely, that *He was the Lamb of God*. How plainly he cried to all the people, and afterwards to his own disciples, “Behold the Lamb of God!” Had John the paschal lamb in his mind’s eye? Very likely he had. “This,” he said, “is the Lamb of God, whose blood is to be shed to preserve His people, just as the blood of the paschal lamb, when it was sprinkled upon the lintel and the two side-posts of the houses in Egypt, saved the Israelites when the destroying angel had unsheathed his terrible sword.” O dear Hearers, I would that you would all receive Christ as the great Sin-Offering—the only Preserver and Defender against the destroying angel in the day of God’s wrath!

But did John, do you think, have that passage in the 53rd of Isaiah in his mind, “He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opens not His mouth”? When he said, “Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world,” do you not think that he had in his mind that passage, “The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all”? It is extremely likely that this was the case. This was a choice topic for John to dilate upon—and we would dilate upon it, too, if we had the time. But, as we have only a few minutes left, we cry to you, “Behold the Lamb of God!” That Jesus, who is now reigning in Heaven at His Father’s right hand, suffered in the place of all who will believe in Him. Behold Him! Look unto Him and be you saved. If you trust in Him, you will thereby prove that your sin was laid upon Him—and if so, all that sin of yours has been put away by His Sacrifice of Himself. Why do you not trust Him? May the Holy Spirit bring you to do so, for John’s testimony was true when he said that Jesus was the Lamb of God!

John also bore witness, concerning Christ, as *the Baptizer with the Holy Spirit and with fire*. And this, too, is true. Any of you who have trusted Christ, know into what sacred fire He plunges your spirit, so that it refines and purifies your soul and burns up all the dross. He immerses us into the Holy Spirit, so that we are—

**“Plunged in the Godhead’s deepest sea,
And lost in His immensity.”**

And, once more, *John called Jesus the Bridegroom*. That is one of His sweetest names. John spoke of himself as the Bridegroom’s Friend, or

best man. He was that, but nothing more, so his work was done when the Bridegroom came. O Beloved, the Lord Jesus Christ, by His love to His Church, has proved Himself to be her true Bridegroom! Out of His side was she taken when He fell asleep, even as Eve was taken out of the side of Adam, and to her His love always goes forth, for He says to her, "You are bone of My bone, and flesh of My flesh." For this purpose did He leave His Father, that He might cleave unto His Church, that they two might be one. Truly does Paul write, "Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." This is another grand Truth of God for us to talk about—the union of Christ with His Church—the blessed bonds that bind Him to us, and us to Him, so that we are able to defy the whole universe to "separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

IV. I have thus given you a summary of what John's testimony concerning Jesus was and of which the people said, "All things that John spoke of this Man were true." Now, the last thing I have to speak upon is THE BLESSED RESULT. Our Lord was preaching in a fruitful place. He was following a man who had left a precious memory behind him and that memory was all about Himself. What was the result?

First, *the people standing on that spot, where John had stood, began to consider.* "John said such-and-such about the promised Messiah—this Man exactly answers to the description that John gave. All men acknowledge that John was a Prophet, so what he said concerning Jesus is clearly true and He must, therefore, be the Christ whom God has sent into the world. He must be the Son of God, the Lamb of God, the One who is to baptize us with the Holy Spirit and with fire" and, therefore, after careful consideration, they believed in Him!

Beloved Hearers, have you ever given due consideration to Divine things? It would be worthwhile for you, who are unsaved, not to do any more business until you are saved. You are very "cute" and clever about worldly things, but I tell you solemnly, that you are great fools with regard to your immortal souls. I am certain that if the life of any one of you were, at this moment, in peril from some very dreadful disease, you would not wait long before seeking the best advice concerning it that you could afford. If you were told, while I am preaching, that your house was on fire, you would not stay till I had finished the sermon—you would be off to your home at once, so concerned are you, and rightly so, about your earthly things. Yet your souls are even now abiding under the wrath of God! You dare not say you do not believe that—yet you do not really believe it, or you act in a way which implies that you do not! Suppose your breath were to stop for one minute, where would you be? Where would you be if you had to ask in vain for a drop of water to cool your parched tongue? Every instant life is in jeopardy—let only one of the ten thousand strings of this poor harp but snap—and harp strings often do snap—and the soul must appear before its God—unready, unwashed, unclothed, forever lost! O Beloved, do as these people "beyond the Jor-

dan” did—begin to consider, see whether Christ is not the Son of God, and the Lamb of God—and if He is, believe in Him! Trust Him with your souls and so find eternal salvation!

Further, having considered, *these people did believe on Jesus*. That is to say, they did accept Him as the Lamb of God and the Son of God. They did receive Him as the Bridegroom of their hearts, they did believe that He would baptize them with the Holy Spirit and with fire—and so they were saved. Will not the same result follow this service? Will not some of you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, who is so worthy of confidence—yes, who *demands* that we believe in Him, for this is what He says, “He that believes not shall be damned”? It is said, in our text, “*Many* believed on Him.” I will be thankful if only two or three believe on Jesus Christ, yet I cannot be content unless *many* believe on Him. He is so true that it is a grievous crime to doubt Him! He is so abundantly able to save that it is the greatest folly not to trust Him!

It sometimes puzzles me how God can have such patience with unbelievers. When He has given His only-begotten Son to bleed and die for the guilty, and He says, “This is My well-beloved Son, bleeding and dying for you, only trust Him”—if men say that they will not—what can be conceived more horrible than that? And what clearer proof can there be of the desperate malignity of the human heart that it will not even accept the Son of God, Himself, when He comes dressed in robes of love to save mankind?

I finish with the last word of my text—“Many believed on Him *there*,” that is, on the spot where He then stood and preached. I would to God that many would believe on Jesus Christ in this Tabernacle—*there* in that area, or in *that* aisle, or up in the *galleries*. Alas, many say, “We will go home and think about it.” Do not do that! Believe on Him *there*. I know how apt you are to indulge in idle chat on your way home. I know how, at the supper table, too often the Word which you have heard is driven away by the foolish talk which is unfit for the Sabbath. The devil only wants you to wait, for he knows that he can then come and steal away the good Seed of the Kingdom. But if the Lord should give you the Grace to decide for Him at once—if you were to believe on Jesus *now*—what joy there would be among the angels and the spirits of just men made perfect! They would “ring the bells of Heaven” and rejoice over lost ones found! What peace there would be in your own heart and what thankfulness and delight there would be among the people of God when they heard of it! You Christians, try to have a quiet, earnest talk with the unconverted, if you can, before they get away from this building. It may be that they will be led by you to believe on Jesus here and now. God grant that it may be so, for our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 3:1-12; JOHN 1:15-37; 3:22-36.**

We are going to read three passages relating to John the Baptist’s testimony concerning Christ.

Matthew 3:1-4. *In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent you: for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of by the Prophet Isaiah, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare you the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leather girdle about his loins; and his food was locusts and wild honey.* Everything connected with John the Baptist was in harmony with his message. He was the preacher of repentance, so the place where he preached was most suitable—it was in the wilderness where there was nothing to distract his hearers' attention, as there would have been in crowded cities. His dress was striking and everything about him, even down to the food that he ate, went to show that he was the rough pioneer preacher preparing the way for his Master. John did not teach the fullness of joy and peace—that was left for our Lord Jesus to proclaim—but John came to prepare the way of the Lord by preaching repentance.

5. *Then went out to him, Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan,* There seems to have been, about that time, a widespread anticipation of the coming of the Messiah, so, no sooner did the news come that a Prophet was preaching in the desert, than great multitudes went out to hear him.

6-8. *And were baptized of him in the Jordan, confessing their sins. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth, therefore, fruits meet for repentance.* Did he not speak after the style of the Prophet Elijah? Yet those bold speeches of his were not at all stronger than the evils of the age required. When the self-righteous Pharisees and the skeptical Sadducees, the Ritualists and the “modern thought” men of that day, came to him to be baptized, he welcomed them not, but bade them, “bring forth fruits meet for repentance,” evidences of a change of heart and life.

9. *And think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham for our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones.—*In the bed of Jordan, where he was baptizing—

9. *To raise up children unto Abraham.* John bade them boast not of their descent from Abraham, yet that was the great thing in which they did glory! They despised the Gentiles as so many do outside the true fold. Note how John the Baptist really preaches the Gospel to us indirectly while he is denouncing these people's confidence in their carnal descent. Regeneration is “not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

10. *And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which brings not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire.* Other teachers came, as it were, only to lop and prune the trees, but the time had come for the felling of those that were fruitless. John did this and so did our Lord Jesus Christ, for His preaching dug up the very roots of sin, superstition and evil of every kind.

11, 12. *I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but He that comes after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit, and with fire: whose fan is in His*

hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. Now let us turn to the Gospel according to John where we have another account of the ministry of John the Baptist.

John 1:15. *John bore witness of Him, and cried, saying, This was He of whom I spoke, He that comes after me is preferred before me: for He was before me. He was not before John in the order of human birth, yet He was truly before John, for He had an eternal pre-existence, as He was none other than the uncreated Son of God!*

16-21. *And of His fullness have all we received, and Grace for Grace. For the Law was given by Moses, but Grace and Truth came by Jesus Christ. No man has seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him. And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who are you? And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? Are you Elijah? And he said, I am not. Are you that Prophet? And he answered; No. As they meant, "Are you, literally, the Prophet Elijah risen from the dead?" "John said," "I am not." "Are you that Prophet of whom Moses foretold?" "And he answered, No." John gave short, sharp answers to these cavilers. He was not a man of dainty words and polished periods, especially in dealing with such people as they were.*

22, 23. *Then said they unto him, who are you that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What say you of yourself? He said, I am the voice. Not, "the Word"—Christ is that, but John was "the voice."*

23-37. *Of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the Prophet Isaiah. And they which were sent were of the Pharisees. And they asked him, and said unto him, Why do you baptize, then, if you are not that Christ, nor Elijah, neither that Prophet? John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there stands One among you, whom you know not; He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe laces I am not worthy to unloose. These things were done in Bethabara beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing. The next day John saw Jesus coming unto him, and said, Behold, the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world. This is He of whom I said, After me comes a Man which is preferred before me: for He was before me. And I knew Him not: but that He should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come to baptize with water. And John bore record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from Heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him. And I knew Him not: but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom you shall see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizes with the Holy Spirit. And I saw, and bear record that this is the Son of God. Again the next day John stood with two of his disciples, and looking upon Jesus as He walked by, he said, Behold the Lamb of God! And the two disciples heard Him speak, and they followed Jesus. In the third chapter of the same Gospel, we have yet another testimony by John the Baptist concerning Christ.*

John 3:22-29 *After these things came Jesus and His disciples into the land of Judea, and there He tarried with them, and baptized. And John*

was also baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized. For John was not yet cast into prison. Then there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purification. And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, He that was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you bore witness, behold, the same baptizes, and all men come to Him. John answered and said, A man can receive nothing except it be given him from Heaven. You yourselves bare me witness that I said I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before Him. He that has the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: therefore in this, my joy is fulfilled. "I have introduced the Bridegroom and, henceforth, it will be my part to gradually disappear from the scene."

30. *He must increase, but I must decrease.* As fades the morning star when the sun itself arises, so was it the joy of the herald of Christ to lose himself in the supreme radiance of his Lord's appearing!

31-34. *He that comes from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaks of the earth: He that comes from Heaven is above all. And what He has seen and heard, that He testifies; and no man receives His testimony. He that has received His testimony has set to his seal that God is true. For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God: for God gives not the Spirit by measure unto Him. Did not the Holy Spirit descend and remain upon Him—and that without measure or limit?*

35, 36. *The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand. He who believes on the Son has everlasting life. He has it now and he can never lose it, or else it would not be everlasting. He has a life that must exist forever and ever.*

36. *And he that believes not the Son shall not see life. He shall not even know what spiritual life is! He shall not be able to understand it, or to form any idea of it. While he is an unbeliever, he is blind to spiritual things. What a dreadful sentence that is—"He shall not see life."*—

36. *But the wrath of God abides on him. God is always angry with him because he has rejected God's own Son and refuses the great salvation.*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—331, 381, 550.

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**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 7, 1864,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. And I am glad
for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent you
may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him.”
John 11:14, 15.*

THERE lived in the little village of Bethany a very happy family. There was neither father nor mother in it—the household consisted of the unmarried brother Eleazar, or Lazarus, and his sisters, Martha and Mary, who dwelt together in unity so good and pleasant that there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life forevermore. This affectionate trio were all lovers of the Lord Jesus Christ and were frequently favored with His company. They kept open house whenever the great Teacher came that way. Both for the Master and for the disciples there was always a table, a bed and a candlestick in the prophet’s chamber and sometimes sumptuous feasts were prepared for the whole company.

They were very happy and rejoiced much to think that they could be serviceable to the necessities of one so poor and yet so honored as the Lord Jesus. But, alas, affliction comes everywhere! Virtue may sentinel the door, but grief is not to be excluded from the homestead. “Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward.” If the fuel is a log of sweet-smelling sandal wood, yet the sparks must rise and even so the best of families must feel affliction. Lazarus sickens. It is a mortal sickness beyond the power of physicians. What is the first thought of the sisters but to send for their Friend, Jesus?

They know that one word from His lips will restore their brother—there is no absolute need that He should even risk His safety by a journey to Bethany. He has but to speak the word and their brother shall be made whole. With glowing hopes and moderated anxieties they send a tender message to Jesus—“Lord, behold, he whom you love is sick.” Jesus hears it and sends back the answer which had much comfort in it, but could hardly compensate for His own absence, “This sickness is not unto death, but for the Glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.” There lies poor Lazarus after the message is come. He does not recover—he is a little more cheerful because he hears that his sickness is not unto death, but his pains do not abate.

The clammy death-sweat gathers on his brow. His tongue is dry. He is full of pains and racked with anguish. At last he passes through the iron gate of death and there lies his corpse before the weeping sisters’ eyes. Why was not Jesus there? Why did He not come? Tender-hearted as He

always was, what could have made Him thus unkind? Why tarries He so? Why is He so long in coming? How can His words be true? He said, "This sickness is not unto death," and there lies the good man cold in death and the mourners are gathering for the funeral. Look at Martha! She has been sitting up every night watching her poor brother—no care could have been more constant—no tenderness more excessive.

There is no potion in the range of her activities which she has not compounded. This herb and the other she has gathered and she has administered all sorts of medicinal drinks and nourishing foods. And anxiously she has watched until her eyes are red for want of sleep. Jesus might have spared her all this. Why did He not? He had only to wish it and the flush of health would have returned to the cheek of Lazarus and there would have been no more need of this weary nursing and this killing watchfulness.

What is Jesus doing? Martha was willing to serve Him—will He not serve her? She has always cumbered herself about much—serving for His sake, giving Him not only necessaries but dainties—and will He not give her what is so desirable to her heart, so essential to her happiness—her brother's life? How is it He can send her a promise which He does not seem to keep and tantalize her with hope and cast down her faith? As for Mary, she has been sitting still at her brother's side, listening to his dying words, repeating in his ear the gracious words of Jesus which she had been accustomed to hear when she sat at His feet. As she caught the last accents of her expiring brother, she thought less about the medicine and about the diet than Martha did. She thought more about his spiritual health and about his soul's enjoyment.

She endeavored to stay the sinking spirits of her beloved brother with words like these, "He will come, He may wait, but I know Him, His heart is very kind, He will come at the last. And even if He lets you sleep in death it will be but for a little. He raised the widow's son at the gates of Nain—He will surely raise you whom He loves far more. Have you not heard how He wakened the daughter of Jairus? Brother, He will come and quicken you and we shall have many happy hours yet and we shall have this as a special love token from our Master and our Lord, that He raised you from the dead."

But why, why was she not spared those bitter tears which ran scalding down her cheeks when she saw that her brother was really dead? She could not believe it! She kissed his forehead, and oh, how cold was that marble brow! She lifted up his hand—"He cannot be dead," she said, "for Jesus said this sickness was not unto death." But the hand fell nerveless by her side—her brother was really a corpse and putrefaction soon set in—and then she knew that the beloved clay was not exempt from all the dishonor which decay brings to the human body.

Poor Mary! Jesus loved you, it is said, but this is a strange way of showing His love! Where is He? Miles away He lingers. He knows your brother is sick. Yes, He knows that he is dead and yet He abides still where He is. Oh, sorrowful mystery that the pity of such a tender Savior should sink so far below their plumb line to gauge, or His mercy should

range so high beyond their power to reach! Jesus is talking of the death of His friend. Let us listen to His words—perhaps we may find the key to His actions in the words of His lips.

How surprising! He does not say, “I regret that I have tarried so long.” He does not say, “I ought to have hastened, but even now it is not too late.” Hear and marvel! Wonder of wonders! He says, “I am glad that I was not there.” Glad? The word is out of place! Lazarus, by this time, stinks in his tomb and here is the Savior glad! Martha and Mary are weeping their eyes out for sorrow and yet their Friend, Jesus, is glad? It is strange, it is passing strange! However, we may rest assured that Jesus knows better than we do and our faith may therefore sit still and try to spell out His meaning, where our reason cannot find it at the first glance.

“I am glad,” He says, “for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent you may believe.” Ah, we see it now—Christ is not glad because of *sorrow*, but only on account of the *result* of it. He knew that this temporary trial would help His disciples to a greater faith and He so prizes their growth in faith that He is even glad of the sorrow which occasions it. He does as much say, “I am glad for your sakes that I was not there to prevent the trouble, for now that it is come it will teach you to believe in Me and this shall be much better for you than to have been spared the affliction.” We have plainly before us the principle that our Lord, in His infinite wisdom and superabundant love, sets so high a value upon His people’s faith that He will not screen them from those trials by which faith is strengthened!

Let us try to press the wine of consolation from the cluster of the text. In three cups we will preserve the goodly juice as it flows forth from the winepress of meditation. First of all, Brothers and Sisters, Jesus Christ was glad that the trial had come for the strengthening of the faith of the Apostles. Secondly, for strengthening the faith of the family. And thirdly, for giving faith to others—for you find by the forty-fifth verse that the goblet passed round to sympathizing friends—“Many of the Jews which came to Mary and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on Him”!

I. Jesus Christ designed the death of Lazarus and his after resurrection FOR THE STRENGTHENING OF THE FAITH OF THE APOSTLES. This acted two ways—not only would the trial itself tend to strengthen their faith, but the remarkable deliverance which Christ gave to them out of it would certainly minister to the growth of their confidence in Him.

1. Let us at once observe that the trial itself would certainly tend to *increase* the Apostle’s faith! Faith untried may be true faith, but it is sure to be little faith. I believe in the existence of faith in men who have no trials, but that is as far as I can go. I am persuaded, Brethren, that where there is no trial, faith just draws breath enough to live and that is all. Faith, like the fabled salamander, has fire for its native element. Faith never prospers so well as when all things are against her—tempests are trainers and the lightings are her illuminators. When a calm reigns on the sea, spread the sails as you will, the ship moves not to its harbor—for on a slumbering ocean the keel sleeps, too.

Let the winds come howling forth and let the waters lift up themselves—then, though the vessel may rock and her deck may be washed

with waves and her mast may creak under the pressure of the full and swelling sail—yet it is then that she makes headway towards her desired haven! No flowers wear so lovely a blue as those which grow at the foot of the frozen glacier! No stars are as bright as those which glisten in the polar sky! No water is so sweet as that which springs amid the desert sand. And no faith so precious as that which lives and triumphs in adversity! Thus says the Lord, by the mouth of the Prophet, “I will leave in the midst of you an afflicted and poor people and they shall trust in the name of the Lord.”

Now, why afflicted and poor? Because there is an adaptation in the afflicted and poor among the Lord’s people to *trust* in the Lord. He does not say, “I will leave in the midst of you a prosperous and rich people and they shall trust.” No! These scarcely seem to have such capacity for faith as the afflicted ones have. Rather I will leave in the midst of you an afflicted and poor people and they, by reason of their very affliction and poverty, shall be the more graciously disposed to repose their faith in the Lord. Untried faith is always small in stature. And it is likely to remain dwarfish so long as it is without trials. There is no room in the placid pools of ease for faith to gain leviathan proportions. She must dwell in the stormy sea if she would be one of the chief of the ways of God.

Tried faith brings experience. And every one of you who are men and women of experience must know that experience makes religion become more real to you. You never know either the bitterness of sin or the sweetness of pardon till you have felt both. You never know your own weakness till you have been compelled to go through the rivers and you would never have known God’s strength had you not been supported amid the floods. All the talk about religion which is not based upon an experience of it is mere talk. If we have little experience, we cannot speak so positively as those can whose experience has been more deep and profound.

Once when I was preaching upon the faithfulness of God in time of trial in the earlier days of my ministry, my venerable grandfather was sitting in the pulpit behind me. He suddenly rose up and took my place and coming to the front of the pulpit, said, “My grandson can preach this as a matter of theory, but I can tell you it as a matter of *experience*, for I have done business upon the great waters and have seen the works of the Lord for myself.” There is an accumulation of force in the testimony of one who has personally passed through the things of which others can only speak as though they had seen them in a map or in a picture.

Travelers who write from their easy chairs what they have seen from their bedchambers may invite books to beguile the idle hours of those who stay at home. But he who is about to traverse regions full of danger seeks a guide who has really trod the road. The writer may excel in fluid *words*—the veritable traveler has real and valuable *wisdom*. Faith increases in solidity, assurance, and intensity the more she is exercised with tribulation and the more she has been cast down and lifted up again. Let not this, however, discourage those who are young in faith. You will

have trials enough without your seeking for them! The full portion will be measured out to you in due season.

Meanwhile, if you cannot yet claim the result of long experience, thank God for what Divine Grace you have. Praise Him for that which you have attained. Walk according to that rule and you shall yet have more and more of the blessing of God till your faith shall remove mountains and conquer impossibilities! It may be asked, "What is the method by which trial strengthens faith?" We might answer in various ways. Trial takes away many of the impediments of faith. Carnal security is the worst foe to confidence in God. If I sit down and say, "Soul, take your ease, you have much goods laid up for many years," faith's road is barricaded. But adversity sets the barn on a blaze, and, "the goods laid up for many years," cease to block up the path of faith.

Oh, the blessed axe of sorrow clears a pathway for me to my God by cutting down the thick trees of my earthly comforts! When I say, "My mountain stands firm, I shall never be moved," the visible fortification, rather than the invisible Protector, engages my attention! But when the great earthquake shakes the rocks and the mountain is swallowed up, I fly to the immovable Rock of Ages to build my confidence on high! Worldly ease is a great foe to faith. It loosens the joints of holy valor and snaps the sinews of sacred courage. The balloon never rises until the cords are cut—affliction does this sharp service for believing souls. While the wheat sleeps comfortably in the husk it is useless to man! It must be threshed out of its resting place before its value can be known. Trial plucks the arrow of faith from the repose of the quiver and shoots it against the foe.

Nor is affliction of small service to faith when it exposes the weakness of the creature. This trial would show the Apostles that they must not depend upon the bounty of any one man, for though Lazarus may have entertained them and filled their little bag with food, yet Lazarus dies. And Mary may die. And Martha may die and all friends must die and this would teach them not to look to broken cisterns, but to fly to the ever-flowing Fountain. Oh, dear Friends, we are in much danger of making idols of our mercies! God gives us His temporal favors as refreshments along the way and then straightway we kneel down and cry, "These are your gods, O Israel." It is of the Lord's mercy that these idol-gods are broken in pieces. He blasts the gourds under which we sat in ample shade in order that we may lift up our cry to Him and trust in Him *alone*. The emptiness of the creature is a lesson we are so slow to learn and we must have it whipped into us by the rod of affliction. But learned it must be, or else faith can never attain to eminence.

Furthermore, trial is of special service to faith when it drives her to her God. I make a sad confession, over which I mourn, that when my soul is happy and things prosper, I do not, as a rule, live so near to God as I do in the midst of shame and contempt and casting down of spirit. O my God, how dear You are to my soul in the night when the sun goes down! You bright and morning star, how sweetly do you shine! When the world's bread is sugared and buttered, then we devour it till we grow sick—but when the world changes our diet, fills our month with vinegar and makes

our drink gall and wormwood—*then* we cry for the breasts of our dear God again!

When the world's wells are full of sweet but poisonous water, we pitch our tents at the well's mouth and drink again and again and forget the well of Bethlehem which is inside the gate. But when earth's water becomes bitter like the stream of Marah, then we turn away all sick and faint and cry after the Water of Life, "spring up, O well!" Thus afflictions fetch us to our God as the barking dog drives the wandering sheep to the shepherd's hand. And then trial has a hardening effect upon faith. As the Spartan lads were prepared for fighting by the sharp discipline of their boyish days, so are God's servants trained for war by the afflictions which He sends upon them in the early days of their spiritual life.

We must run with footmen, or we shall never be able to contend with horses! We must be thrown into the water, or we shall never learn to swim. We must hear the whizzing of the bullets, or we shall never become veteran soldiers. The gardener knows that if his flowers were kept always under glass and fostered in a great temperature, when he might put them outside, should there come a cold night they would quickly die. So he does not give them too much heat but exposes them by degrees and gets them used to the cold, that they may stand in the open air.

And thus the only wise God does not put His servants in hothouses and rear them delicately, but He exposes them to trials that they may know how to bear it when it comes. If you want to ruin your son, never let him know a hardship. When he is a child carry him in your arms. When he becomes a youth still dandle him, and when he becomes a man still dry-nurse him and you will succeed in producing an arrant fool! If you want to prevent his being made useful in the world, guard him from every kind of toil. Do not suffer him to struggle. Wipe the sweat from his dainty brow and say, "Dear child, you shall never have another task so arduous." Pity him when he ought to be punished! Supply all his wishes, ward off all disappointments, prevent all troubles and you will surely tutor him to be a reprobate and to break your heart!

But put him where he must work. Expose him to difficulties. Purposely throw him into peril and in this way you shall make him a man! And when he comes to do a man's work and to bear a man's trial, he shall be fit for either. My Master does not daintily cradle His children when they ought to run alone. And when they begin to run He is not always putting out His finger for them to lean upon—He lets them tumble down to the cutting of their knees—because then they will walk more carefully, by-and-by, and learn to stand upright by the strength which faith confers upon them. You see, dear Friends, that Jesus Christ was glad—glad that His disciples were blessed by trouble! Will you think of this, you who are so troubled this morning? Jesus Christ does sympathize with you, but still He does it wisely and He says, "I am glad for your sakes that I was not there."

He is glad that your husband is taken away, that your child is buried. Glad that your business does not prosper. He is glad that you have those aches and pains and that you have so weak a body—to the intent that you

may believe. You would never have possessed the precious faith which now supports you if the trial of your faith had not been like fire. You are a tree that never would have rooted so well if the wind had not rocked you to and fro and made you to take firm hold upon the precious Truths of the Covenant of Grace.

2. But not to tarry here, let us notice that the deliverance which Christ worked by the resurrection of Lazarus was calculated, also, to *strengthen* the faith of the Apostles. At the worst Christ can work—why what a plight were they now in! Here was a case which had come to the very worst. Lazarus is not merely dead—he has been buried! The stone has been rolled to the mouth of the sepulcher. Worse than that, he has become putrid! Here are miracles so many that I must describe the resurrection of Lazarus not as one miracle, but as a mass of wonders. We will not go into detail, but suffice it to say we cannot suppose anything to be a more prodigious exhibition of the Divine strength than the restoration of health and life to a body through which the worms did creep and crawl!

And yet in this very worst case Christ is not brought to a nonplus. Here was a case where human power evidently could do nothing. Now bring the violin and the harp, and let music try its charms. Bring here, physician, your most potent draught! Now, for the true aqua vilae! Now see what you can do. What? Does the elixir fail? The physician turns away disgusted, for the stench may sooner destroy the physician's life than he restore the corpse. Now, seek round the world and ask all men that are—Herod and his men-at-arms, and Caesar on the imperial throne—"Can you do anything here?"

No, Death sits with a ghastly smile laughing at them all. "I have Lazarus," says he, "beyond your reach." Yet Jesus Christ wins the day! Here Divine sympathy became most manifest. Jesus wept when He thought of Lazarus and his weeping sisters. We do not find it often said that He wept. He was "a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief," but those were precious and rare drops which He shed over that dead body. He could do no more when He thought of Jerusalem—He does no less now that He thinks of Lazarus. What an exhibition these disciples had of the Divine power as well as the Divine sympathy, for Christ does but say, "Lazarus, come forth," and Death can hold his captive no longer!

Forth from the morgue he comes, restored to perfect health! Do you not think that all this must tend to strengthen the Apostles' faith? It seems to me to be a part of the best education they could possibly receive for their future ministry. I think I see the Apostles in after time shut up in prison—they are condemned to die, but Peter comforts John by saying, "He can bring us out of prison—do you not remember how he brought Lazarus out of his grave? He can certainly appear for us and set us free." When they went forth to preach to sinners, how would they be strengthened by remembering these cases! Their hearers were debauched, depraved, immoral—the Apostles went into the midst of the worst conditions of human nature and yet they feared not for the result—for they knew that putrid Lazarus revived at Christ's word!

Peter would argue, “Did not Christ restore Lazarus when his body was stinking and decayed? He can certainly bring the most reprobate hearts to the obedience of the Truth of God and raise the vilest of the vile to a new life.” Many of the apostolic Churches were far gone. They had in them unworthy members. But this would not too much buffet the faith of the Apostles, for they would say, “That same Christ who raised up Lazarus can make Sardis and Pergamos and Thyatira yet to be a praise in the earth! And Churches which seem to be corrupt and foul in the nostrils of the Most High may yet be made a brightness and glory and a sweet-selling savor unto Him.”

I am persuaded that very often such a miracle as this would return to them and strengthen them in the times of their suffering and labor—and make them able to bear afflictions and even martyrdom itself, in confidence in Christ. I will not, however, say more, because the thing seems obvious enough. But you must not forget the principle we are trying to bring out—that in the case of the Apostles, Christ considered that for them to have strong faith was worth any cost. No matter what pangs it cost Mary and Martha, or in what grief it might involve Himself or His Apostles, they must bear it because the result was so exceedingly beneficial.

The surgeon handles the knife without tears. Sharp is the cut, but he knows it will cure. The mother puts the draught to the child’s mouth and the child cries and heaves and loathes the bitterness, but the mother says, “Drink it all up, my Child,” because she knows there is life in every drop. So Christ is glad for the Apostles’ sake that He is not there, to the intent that they may believe.

II. Jesus Christ had an eye also to THE GOOD OF THE FAMILY. Mary and Martha had faith but it was not very strong, for they suspected Christ’s love when they said, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother had not died.” There was a sort of whisper—“Why were You not here? Do You love us? Why, then, did You tarry?” They certainly doubted His power. Martha, when she could believe in the resurrection but could not believe in the *present* resurrection for her brother. And when, again, she said, “he has been dead four days,” had faith, but it was very weak. Christ therefore sent the trial to Mary and Martha for their sakes—and was glad to send it—to the intent that they might believe.

Observe, dear Friends, that these were choice favorites of the Lord Jesus Christ. He loves all His elect, but those three were as the darlings of the family, elect out of the elect! They were three special favorites upon whom very distinguishing regard was set and therefore it was that He sent them a special trial. The lapidary, if he takes up a stone and finds that it is not very precious, will not spend much care in cutting it. But when he gets a rare diamond of the first water, then he will be sure to cut and cut and cut again.

When the Lord finds a saint whom He loves—loves much—He may spare other men trials and troubles, but He certainly will not this well-beloved one! The more beloved you are, the more of the rod you shall have. It is an awful thing to be a favorite of Heaven—but it is a thing to be

sought after and to be rejoiced in! But remember, to be of the King's council-chamber is a thing involving such work for faith that flesh and blood might shrink from the painful blessing. The gardener gets a tree and if it is but of a poor sort he will let it grow as it wills and take what fruit comes from it naturally. But if it is of a very rare sort, he likes to have every bough in its proper place, so that it may bear well. And he often takes out his knife and cuts here and cuts there, because, says he, "That is a favorite tree and it is one which bears such fruit that I would have much from it and would leave nothing whatever that would cause it detriment."

You who are God's favorites must not marvel at trials, but rather keep your door wide open for them and when they come in, say, "Hail, messenger of the King! The sound of your Master's feet is behind you. You are welcome here, for your Master sent you." Special trial was attended with a special visit. It may be that Christ would not have come to Bethany if Lazarus had not been dead. But as soon as there is a corpse in the house, there is Christ in the house, too. O Christian, it shall be much for your comfort and for the strengthening of your faith if Christ comes to you in your troubles! I tell you, if you see no smiles on His face in your prosperity, you shall not be without them in your adversity.

The Lord Jesus will go out of His way to see you. You know when a mother is most kind to her child she lets it run about and scarcely notices it when it is well. But when it cries, "My head, my head!"—take it to the mother and tell her it is ill—how tender she is over it! How all the blandishments of love and the caresses of affection are lavished upon the little sick one! It shall be so with you. And in receiving these special visits you shall know yourself to be highly favored above the rest.

This special visit was attended with special fellowship. Jesus wept—wept with them that wept. Ah, you shall have Jesus sitting by the bedside and weeping with you when you are sick. You may be well and strong and have but little fellowship with Christ, but He shall comfort you in your sickness. Though you might walk along the green sward without the Savior, when you come into the midst of the fire, like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, you shall not be without Him then! I witness that there is no fellowship with Christ so near and sweet as that which comes to us when we are in deep trials. Then the Master takes His child, not upon His knee, but to His very heart and bids him lay his head upon His beating bosom. Christ will reveal His secrets to you when the world is against you and trials surround you. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him. And He will show them His Covenant," but they shall never have such discoveries of that secret and that Covenant, as when they most need it—in the darkest and most trying times.

There are, then, special loves, special trials, special visits and special fellowship. And soon you shall have special deliverance. In days to come you will talk about these trials. You will say, "I fretted myself and worried over them, but oh, if I could have seen the end as well as the beginning, I should have said—

'Sweet afflictions! Sweet afflictions!'

Thus to bring my Savior near.’ ”

I tell you, you will sit yet under your own vine and under your own fig tree and talk to poor tried saints and say, “Do not be cast down, for I cried unto the Lord and He heard me and delivered me from all my fears.” Perhaps in Heaven this will help to make a part of your happiness—to remember God’s love to you in your tribulations—

***“There on a green and flowery mount
Our weary souls shall sit,
And with transporting joys recount,
The labors of our feet.”***

Are we not to tell angels and principalities and powers the faithfulness of Christ? We will tell all Heaven that, “His love was strong as death and His jealousy as cruel as the grave. Many waters could not quench His love, neither could the floods drown it.”

What do you say, my Friend, you who are under the smarting rod? Will you murmur any more? Will you repine against it any more? I beseech you to take my text and read it the other way! Say—God help you to say it—“I am glad that my God did not deliver me, because the trial has strengthened my faith. I thank His name that He has done me the great favor to permit me to carry the heavy end of His Cross. I thank my Father that He has not left me unchastened, for ‘Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept Your Word.’ ‘It is good for me that I have been afflicted.’ ” I tell you, this is the shortest way out of your troubles, as well as the most profitable spirit while you are in them. The Lord generally stays the rod when He finds His child receiving it as a favor. When you are *agreed* with God’s rod, then that rod will have no further quarrel with you. When you can look into the Father’s eyes, and say, “Your will be done,” then His afflicting hand has done its work.

III. Now I come to the third point and here may God the Holy Spirit bless the word. This trouble was permitted for GIVING FAITH TO OTHERS. I shall address myself chiefly to those who cannot say they are God’s people but who have some desire towards Christ. It is very likely you have had some great trouble in your life and looking back you wish you had never had it. But my Lord, who knows better than you do, says, “I am glad for your sakes that I did not spare you that trouble, to the intent that you may be led to believe.”

Know assuredly that afflictions often lead men to faith in Christ because they give space for thought. The man was strong, and hale, and hearty, and went on working from day to day and never had a thought about God. “The ox knows his owner and the ass his master’s crib,” but he did not know, he did not care. He left all thoughts of eternity to those who were silly enough to be religious. But for him—what did it matter to him? Death was a long way off, and besides, if it were not, he had not the time to think about it.

By God’s Grace an accident occurred. He had to be upon his bed and at first he fretted and fumed, but it could not be altered and there, in the ward of the hospital, he groaned through many a weary hour at night. What could he think of? Why, then, the man began to think of himself, of his condition before God, of what would be his lot if he should die! When

his life trembled like the even balance and no one could tell which way it would turn, the man was forced to consider. Many a soul has been plowed in the hospital and then has been sown in the sanctuary. Many a man has been first brought to God by the loss of a limb, or by long sickness, or by deep poverty.

Afflictions lead men to faith full often by preventing sin. A young man had resolved to climb a mountain—he had determined against good advice to reach the summit, though one far older than he had warned him of the danger. He had not proceeded far up the mountainside before a thick mist surrounded him. He was alarmed. The mist was so thick he could scarcely see his own hand. He retraced his steps, following the way by which he came and returned sorrowfully to his father's house, telling him that he had been in great peril. His father said he was glad of it—for if he had not met with that peril, he might have advanced a little farther and fallen—never to rise again.

Often trouble puts men out of temptation. They would have gone into bad company, to drunkenness, or lust, but they could not. The appointment was made—ah, the very night was set apart—but the black hand of God's kind angel came. I said a black hand, for so it seemed, and the man could not do what he had wished to do and so his course was checked—and this, in the hand of God—was the means of bringing him to faith. Troubles, again, often bring men to believe in Jesus because they compel them to stand face to face with stern realities. Did you ever lie upon the edge of death for a week? Did you ever lie with your body racked with pain, listening for the physician's whispers and knowing that they amounted to this—that there were ninety-nine chances to one that you could not possibly recover?

Did you ever feel that death was near? Did you ever peer into eternity with anxious eyes? Did you ever picture Hell and think yourself there? Did you ever lie awake and think of Heaven and yourself shut out of it? Ah, it is in such times as these that God's Holy Spirit works great things for the sons of men! For these reasons Christ is glad when they are brought very low, when their soul abhors all manner of meat and they cry unto God in their trouble! He is glad because this is the steppingstone to real and genuine trust in Him and so to eternal life! It is much better to lose an eye or a hand than to lose your soul—better to go to Heaven poor and ragged, than to go to Hell rich—better to melt into Heaven by the process of consumption than it were to go down to Hell with bones filled with marrow and sinews full of strength! Glory be to God for the trials and troubles some of us have had if they have been the means of bringing us to Christ!

Trials tend to make men believe in Christ when they are followed by deliverances. Perhaps some of you have been raised from a sick bed, or you have been helped over a time of temporal distress. Well, have you no gratitude? Do you not love God for His goodness? Does not your heart melt towards the Lord for the kind deeds He has done for you? Have you no song of praise for His name? I have known many who have said, "Now that God has been pleased to raise me up and help me in this way, I will

give Him my heart. What can I do for Him who has done so much for me?" Gratitude, I doubt not, has led many to put their trust in Christ.

Besides, if you sought God and asked for help in time of trouble and He did help you, this will tend to encourage you to pray later. If He helped you then, He will help you now. If He spared your life, why will He not spare your soul? If God has been pleased to lift you up from the grave, why may He not also deliver you from the pit of Hell? I bless God there are many in this Church who were led to seek the Lord through answers to prayer. God was gracious to them in their distress. His mercy listened to their prayer. The blessing came and the result is that they cry unto Him and will cry as long as they live. If once we have prevailed with God and believing in God we have had some deliverance, this, I hope, will be used to make us trust God for everything in the future.

Remember that the one thing needed for eternal life is trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ! I know you will tell me you cannot be perfect. No, I know you cannot. You will say, "I have many sins. I have done much that is wrong." It is true, most true, but he who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ has his sins forgiven. You know the story—Christ came down from Heaven and took His people's sins upon His own shoulders. When God came forth to strike the sinner, Justice said, "Where is he?" and Christ came and stood in the sinner's place and God's sword went through the Savior's heart. Why? That it might never cut nor wound the heart of those for whom Jesus died. Did He die for you? He did if you believe in Him—your faith will be to you the evidence that Christ was Substitute for you and oh, if Christ suffered for you, you cannot suffer!

If God punished Christ He will never punish you! If Jesus Christ paid your debts, you are free! Before God's Throne today, if you believe, you are as clear as the angels in Heaven! You are a saved soul if you are resting upon the Atonement of Christ and you may go your way and sing—

***"Now, freed from sin, I walk at large,
The Savior's blood's my full discharge.
At His dear feet my soul I lay,
A sinner saved and homage pay."***

If this is the result of your affliction, Christ may well say, "I am glad for your sakes that I was not there to stop the trouble, to the intent that you may believe." May God bring you to faith for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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EVEN NOW

NO. 2249

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 27, 1892.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 8, 1891.

“Even now.”
John 11:22

I HOPE that there are a great many persons here who are interested in the souls of those around them. We shall certainly never exercise faith concerning those for whose salvation we have no care. I trust, also, that we are diligent in looking after individuals, especially those who are among our own family and friends. This is what Martha did—her whole care was for her brother. It is often easier to have faith that Christ can save sinners in general, than to believe that He can come into our own home and save some particular member of our household. But, oh, the joy when this comes to pass—when we are able to kneel beside some of our loved ones and rejoice with them in being made alive by the power of the Holy Spirit! We cannot expect to have this privilege, however, unless, like Martha, we send our prayers to Jesus and go to meet Him and tell Him of our need. In the Presence of Christ it seems very natural to trust Him even at the worst extremity. It is when we are at our wits' end that He delights to help us. When our hopes seem to be buried, then it is that God can give a resurrection! When our Isaac is on the altar, then the heavens are opened and the voice of the Eternal is heard. Are you giving way to despair concerning your dear friend? Are you beginning to doubt your Savior and to complain of His delay? Be sure that Jesus will come at the right time, though *He* will be the judge of which is the best time for Him to appear.

Martha had a fine faith. If we all had such an honest belief in Christ as she had, many a man who now lies dead in his sins, would, before long, hear that Voice which would call him forth from his tomb and restore him unto his friends. Martha's faith had to do with a dreadful case. Her brother was dead and had been buried, but her faith still lived and, in spite of all things which went against her, she believed in Christ and looked to Him for help in her extremity. Her faith went to the very edge of the gulf as she said, “But I know, that *even now*, whatever You will ask of God, God will give it to You.”

Still, Martha had not so much faith as she thought she had. But a few hours after she had confessed her confidence in the power of the Lord Je-

sus, or perhaps it was only a few minutes, she stood at the grave of her brother and evidently doubted the wisdom of Him she professed to trust. She objected to the stone being removed and, strong in the admitted facts of the case, she urged her reason and said, "Lord, by this time he stinks." Well, but, Martha, you said, not very long ago, "I know that even now Christ can interpose." Yes, she said it—and she believed it in the way in which most of us believe—but when her faith was sharply tried by a matter of *fact*, she did not appear to have had all the faith she professed! I suspect this also is true of most of us. We often fancy our confidence in Christ is much stronger than it really is.

I think I have told you of my old friend, Will Richardson, who said, when he was 75 years of age, that it was a very curious thing, that all the winter through, he had thought he should like to be a-harvesting, or out in the hay field, because he felt so strong. He imagined that he could do as much as any of the youngsters. "But," he said, "do you know, Mr. Spurgeon, when the summer comes, I do not get through the haymaking; and when the autumn comes, I find I have not sufficient strength for reaping?" So it often is in *spiritual* things! When we are not called upon to bear the trouble, we feel wonderfully strong—but when the trial comes, very much of our boasted faith is gone in smoke! Take heed that you examine well your faith! Let it be true and real, for you will need it all.

However, Christ did not take Martha at her worst, but at her best. When our Lord says, "According to your faith be it unto you," He does not mean "According to your faith in its ebb," but, "According to your faith in its flood." He reads the thermometer at its highest point, not at its lowest—not even using the "mean temperature" of our trust. He gives us credit for our quickest pace, not counting our slowest, nor seeking to discover our average speed in this matter of faith. Christ did for Martha all she could have asked or believed—her brother did rise again and he was restored to her, and to his friends. In your case, too, O you trembling, timorous Believer, the Lord Jesus will take you at your best, and He will do for you great things, seeing that you *desire* to believe greatly and that your prayer is, "Lord, I believe; help You my unbelief!"

The point upon which Martha chiefly rested, when she expressed her faith, was the power of Christ in intercession with His Father. "I know," she said, "that, even now, whatever You will ask of God, God will give it to You." Since the Omnipotence of God could be claimed, she felt no anxiety as to the greatness of the request. "Whatever" was asked could easily be gained, if it were only asked by Him who never was denied! Beloved in the Lord, our Christ is still alive and He is still pleading! Can you believe, even now, that whatever He shall ask of God, God will give it to Him and give it *you* for His dear Son's sake? What an anchorage is the intercession of Christ! "He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them." Here is a grand pillar to rest the weight of our souls upon—"He ever lives to make intercession for them." Surely, we may have great faith in Him who never

wearies, and who never fails! Who lives, indeed, for no other purpose than to plead for those who trust in His dying love and in His living power! “Who is He that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.” Fall back upon the intercessory power of *Christ*, in every time of need, and you will find comfort that will never fail you!

It is a grand thing to have faith for the present, not bemoaning the past, nor dreaming of some future faith which we hope may yet be ours. The present hour is the only time we really possess. The past is gone beyond recall. If it has been filled with faith in God, we can no more live on that faith, now, than we can live, today, on this bread we ate last week. If, on the contrary, the past has been marred by our unbelief, that is no reason why this moment should not witness a grand triumph of trust in the faithful Savior! Let us not excuse our present lack of faith by the thought of some future blessing. No confidence which we may learn to put in Christ, in the days to come, can atone for our present unbelief. If we ever mean to trust Him, why should we not do so *now*, since He is as worthy of our belief, now, as He will ever be, and, since what we miss, now, we miss beyond recall—

***“The present, the present, is all you have
For your sure possessing,
Like the Patriarch’s angel, hold it fast,
Till it gives its blessing.”***

In this verse, “I know, that even now, whatever You will ask of God, God will give it to You,” I want to fix your attention only on the two words, “Even now.” We have just sung—

***“Pass me not, O tender Savior,
Let me love and cling to You.
I am longing for Your favor,
When You come, call for me—Even me.”***

Our hymn was “Even me.” The sermon is to be “Even now.” If you have been singing “Even me” and so applying the truth to your own case, say, also, with an energy of heart that will take no denial, “Even now,” and listen with earnest expectation to that Gospel which is always in the present tense—“While it is said, Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your heart, as in the provocation.” Remember, too, that this is not only the preacher’s word, for the Holy Spirit says, “Today”—“Even now.”

I shall use these words, first, in reference *to those who are concerned about the souls of others*, as Martha was about her dead brother. Believe that Christ can save even now! Then I shall speak *to you who are somewhat concerned about your own souls*. You believe, perhaps, that Christ can save. I want you to be persuaded that He can save *you* even now! That is to say, at this exact hour and minute, going by the clock, while you hear these words—*even now*—Christ can forgive! Even now Christ can save! Even now Christ can bless!

I. First, CAN WE BELIEVE THIS WITH REFERENCE TO OTHERS? If you are in the same position as Martha, I can bring out several points of

likeness which should encourage you to persevere. You, Mother, have prayed for your boy. You, Father, have pleaded for your girl. You, dear Wife, have been much in prayer for your husband. You beloved Teacher, have frequently brought your class before God—and yet there is a bad case pressing upon your mind and your heart is heavy about some dear one whose condition seems hopeless. I want you to believe that now, even *now*, Christ can grant your prayer and save that soul! That now, even now, He can give you such a blessing that the past delay shall be more than recompensed to you.

There is one, for instance, in whom we are deeply interested, and we can say that *the case has cost great sorrow*. So Martha could have said of Lazarus. “Blessed Master,” she might have said, “my brother took the fever”—(for I should think it was a fever that he had)—“and I watched him. I brought cold water from the well and I washed his burning brow. I was by his bedside all night. I never took off my clothes. Nobody knows how my heart was wrung with anguish as I saw the hot beads drops upon his brow, and tried to moisten his parched tongue and lips. I sorrowed as though I was about to die, myself, but in spite of all that, I believe, even now, that You can help me. Even now.” Alas! There are many griefs in the world like this. A mother says, “Nobody knows what I have suffered through that son of mine. I shall die of a broken heart because of his conduct.” “No one can tell,” says the father, “what grief that daughter of mine has caused me. I have sometimes wished that she had never been born.” There have been many, many such stories told me, in which a beloved one has been the cause of untold anguish and agony to gracious, loving hearts. To those so sorely troubled I now speak! Can you believe that *even now* the Living Intercessor is “mighty to save?” It may be that you are, at this moment, trembling on the verge of the blessing you so long have sought. God give you faith to grasp it “even now!”

With other persons we are met with a fresh difficulty. *The case has already disappointed us*. That is how some of you have found it, is it not? “Yes,” you say, “I have prayed long for a dear friend, and I believed, some time ago, that my prayer was heard and that there was a change for the better. Indeed, there was an apparent change, but it came to nothing.” You are just like Martha. She kept saying to herself, “Christ will come. Brother is very ill, but Jesus will come before he dies! I know He will. It cannot be that He will stay away much longer. And when He comes, Lazarus will soon be well.” Day after day, Mary and she sent their messenger to look toward the Jordan, to see if Jesus was coming. But He did not come. It must have been a terrible disappointment to both these sisters—enough to stagger the strongest faith that they had ever had in the sympathy of Christ! But Martha got the better of it and she said, “Even now, though disappointed so bitterly, I believe that You can do whatever You will.” Learn from Martha, my discouraged Brothers and Sisters! You thought that your friend was converted, but he wanted to go back, again. You thought that there was a real work of Grace upon his heart, but it

turned out to be a mere disappointment and disappeared like the mist of the sun. But can you not believe over the head of your disappointment and say, “I believe even now, even now”? Blessed shall your faith be, if it gets so far!

Perhaps further difficulties have met us. We have attempted to help someone and *the case has proved our helplessness*. “Ah, yes,” says one, “that exactly describes me. I never felt so helpless in my life! I have done all that I can do and it amounts to nothing. I have been careful in my example. I have been prayerful in my words. I have been very patient and long-suffering. I have tried to induce my beloved one to go and listen to the Gospel here and there. I have put holy books in his way and, all the while, I have seized opportunities to plead with him—often with tears in my eyes—but I can do nothing! I am dead beat.” Yes, that is just where Martha got to—she had done everything but nothing seemed to be of the least use. None of the medicines she applied seemed to soothe the sufferer. She had gone down to the village—perhaps to the home of Simon the leper, who was a friend of hers, and he possibly advised some new remedies—but nothing seemed to make the least difference. Her brother grew worse and worse, until she saw that, though she had nursed him back to health the last time he had been ill, she was now utterly powerless. Then he died. Yet, even though things had gone as far as that, she had faith in Christ! In like manner, your case is beyond your skill, but can you not believe that, even now, the end of nature will be the beginning of Grace? Can you not even *now* feel that you shall find that word true, “He shall not fail”? Christ never failed, yet, and He never will! When all the doctors give a patient up, the Great Physician can step in and heal! Can you believe, concerning your friend, “even now”?

But perhaps you are in a worse plight. *The case has been given up*. I think I hear one kind, gracious soul, whose hope has been crushed, say, “Well, Sir, that is just what we have come to about my boy. We held a little family meeting and said we must get him to go away to Australia, if we can. If he will only go to America, or somewhere abroad, it will be a relief to have him out of our sight. He keeps coming home intoxicated and gets brought before the magistrates. He is a disgrace to us! He is a shame to the name he bears. We have given him up.” Martha had come to this. She had given her brother up and had actually buried him—yet she believed in the power of Christ! Ah, there are many people that are buried alive! I do not know that such a thing ever happens in the cemetery, but I know it happens in our streets and homes. Many are buried, *morally*, and given up by us before God gives them up. And, somehow, it is often the given-up people that God delights to bless! Can you believe that even now—*even now*—prayer can be heard? That even now the Holy Spirit can change the nature and that even now Christ can save the soul? Do you believe this? I shall rejoice if you can and you, too, shall rejoice before long!

But there is still a lower depth. Here is one who is much concerned about an individual and *the case is loathsome*. “Though we loved him

once,” he says, “his character has now become such that it is pestilential to the family. He leads others astray. We cannot think of what he has done without the very memory of his life spreading a taint over our conscience and over our mind.” There are persons alive in the world who are just masses of living putridity. There may be such here. I would be glad if a word I said could reach them. It is a shocking thing that there are men and women, made in the image of God, with talents and ability, with capacity and conscience, who, nevertheless, seem to live for nothing else but to indulge their licentious passions and to lead others into vices which otherwise they had never known. There must come an awful day of reckoning to such when the Christ of God shall sit upon His Throne and shall weigh before all men the secret doings of libertines, of debauched men and depraved women!

If any of you have such a one related to you, can you believe that even now Christ can raise that one? Yours is just the same sort of case as Martha had. She could have said, “Brother is buried! Worse than that, he stinks.” She did not like to say that of dear Lazarus, her own brother, but she could not help saying it. And there are some men of whom we are compelled to say, no matter how much our love seeks to shield them, that their character stinks. But can you still believe that, even now, there is hope that God can intervene and that Grace can save? Why, my dear Friend, you and I know that it is so! I believe it—we must all believe it! If it comes to a case very near and dear to you and you begin to be a little bit staggered, remember what *you* used to be—not openly so depraved, perhaps, but inwardly, quite the same—and take hope for these foul men and women from the remembrance of what *you* were! “And such were some of you; but you are washed.”

When John Newton used to preach at St. Mary Woolnoth, he always believed in the possibility of the salvation of the worst of his hearers, for he had been, himself, one of the vilest of the vile! When he was very old and they said, “Dear Mr. Newton, you are too old to preach. You had better not go into the pulpit, now,” he said, “What? Shall the old African blasphemer who has been saved by Grace leave off preaching the Gospel while there is a breath in his body? Never!” I think while there is breath in the body of some of us, we must go on telling the Gospel, for, if it saved *us*, it can save the worst of sinners! We are bound to believe that even now, Christ can save even the most horrible and the most vile—

**“His blood can make the foulest clean,
His blood availed for me!”**

Perhaps there is still even a more desperate difficulty with reference to someone whom we would wish to see living for God. *The case is beyond our reach.* “Yes,” that Brother quickly answers, “now you have come to *my* trouble. I do not even know where my boy is! He ran away and we have not heard from him for years. How can I help him?” Why, believe that, “even now,” Christ can speak to him and save him! He can send His Grace where we can send our love. The great difficulty which lies like a stone at

the door of the sepulcher will not prevent Him speaking the life-giving Word! He has all forces at His command and when He says the Word, the stone shall be rolled away and the son that is lost shall be found! Even the dead shall be made alive! Though you cannot reach your son, or your daughter, Christ can meet with them! “The Lord’s hand is not shortened that it cannot save; neither is His ear heavy, that it cannot hear.” Though your prodigal boy or your wandering girl is at the end of the earth, Christ can reach them and save them! “Have faith in God.” “Even now” Christ can aid you—

***“Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees,
And looks to God alone,
Laughs at impossibilities,
And says, ‘It shall be done.’”***

I know there are some Christian people who have drifted into the terribly wicked state of giving up their relatives as hopeless. There was a Brother here, who is now in Heaven—a good, earnest Christian man—whose son had treated him very shockingly, indeed, and the father, justly indignant, felt it right to give his son up. He had often tried to help him, but the young man was so scandalous a scapegrace that I did not wonder that the old man turned him away. But one night, as I was preaching here, I spoke in something like the same way in which I have spoken now, and the next morning the old man’s arm was about his child’s neck. He could not help himself! He felt he must go and find his son out and seek, again, to reclaim him. It seemed to have been the appointed time for that boy’s salvation, for it pleased God that within a few months that son died and he passed away with a good hope, through Grace, that he had been brought to his Savior’s feet by his father’s love! If any of you have a very bad son, go after him, seeking, until, by the Grace of God, you shall find him! And you that have grown hopeless about your relatives, you must try not to give them up. If other people cast them off, you must not, for they are allied to you by the ties of blood. Seek them out! You are the best person in the world to seek them and the most likely to find them, if you can believe that even now, when the worst has come to the worst, “even now,” almighty Grace can step in and save the lost soul.

Oh, that some here may have faith to claim, at this moment, the salvation of their friends! May desire be worked into expectancy and hope become certainty! Like Jacob at Jabbok, may we lay hold of God, saying, “I will not let You go, except You bless me.” To such faith the Lord will give a quick response. He that will not be denied shall not be denied! My Friend, Hudson Taylor, who has done such a wonderful work for China, is an instance of this. Brought up in a godly home, he, as a young man, tried to imitate the lives of his parents. But failing in his own strength to make himself better, he swung to the other extreme and began to entertain skeptical notions. One day, when his mother was from home, a great yearning after her boy possessed her and she went up to her room to plead with God that, “even now,” He would save Him.

If I remember aright, she said that she would not leave the room until she had the assurance that her boy would be brought to Christ. At length her faith triumphed and she rose quite certain that all was well and that, “even now,” her son was saved! What was he doing at that time? Having half an hour to spare, he wandered into his father’s library and aimlessly took down one book after another to find some short and interesting passage to divert his mind. He could not find what he wanted in any of the books, so, seeing a narrative tract, he took it up with the intention of reading the story and putting it down where the sermon part of it began. As he read, he came to the words, “the finished work of Christ,” and almost at the very moment in which his mother, who was miles away, claimed his soul of God, light came into his heart! He saw that it was by the finished work of Christ that he was to be saved. And kneeling in his father’s library, he sought and found the life of God.

Some days afterwards, when his mother returned, he said to her, “I have some news to tell you.” “Oh, I know what it is!” she answered, smiling, “You have given yourself to God.” “Who told you?” he asked in astonishment! “God told me,” she said, and together they praised Him, who, at the same moment, gave faith to the mother and the life to the son—and who has since made him such a blessing to the world! It was the mother’s faith, claiming the blessing, “even now,” that did it! I tell you this remarkable incident that many others may be stirred up to the same immediate and importunate desire for the salvation of their children and relatives. There are some things we must always pray for with submission as to whether it is the will of God to bestow them upon us—but for the salvation of men and women we may ask without fear. God delights to save and to bless; and when the faith is given to us to *expect* an immediate answer to such a prayer, thrice happy we are! Seek such faith even now, I beseech you, “even now.”

II. But, in the second place, I want to speak very earnestly to any here who are concerned about their own souls. Jesus came to save you “even now.” CAN WE BELIEVE THIS FOR OURSELVES? Can you expect the Lord, even while you hear these words, to speak to you the Word of Power and bring you forth from your sleep of sin?

For some of you, *the time is late, very late—yet it is not too late.* You are getting into years, my Friend. I want you to believe that even now Christ can save you. I often notice the number of old people who come to the Tabernacle. I am glad to see the aged saints, but among so many elderly people, no doubt, there are some unsaved sinners whose gray hairs are *not* a crown of glory, but a fool’s cap! But, however old you are, though you are 60, seventy, 80 or even 90 years of age, yet, “even now,” Christ can give you life! Blessed be God for that! But it is not altogether the years that trouble you—it is your sins. As I have already said, if you have gone to the very extremity of sin, you may believe that, after all those years of wandering, the arms of Free Grace are still open to receive you—“even now.” There is an old proverb, “It is never too late to mend.” It is *always*

too late for us to mend *ourselves*, but it is *never* too late for Christ to mend us! Christ can make us new and it is never too late for Him to do it. If you come to Him and trust Him, He will receive you, “even now!”

By the long-suffering of God, *there is a time left to you* in which you may turn to Him. What a thousand mercies it is that, “even now,” is a time of mercy to you—it might have been the moment of your everlasting doom! You have been in accidents—you have been within an inch of the grave many times! You have been ill, seriously ill. You have been well-near given up for dead and here you are, still alive, but still an enemy of God! Plucked by His hand from the fire and flood and, perhaps, from battle. Delivered from fever and cholera—and still ungrateful, still rebelling, still spending the life that Grace has lent you in resisting the love of God! Long years ago you should have believed in Christ, but the text is, “even now.” Do not begin to say, “I believe that God could have saved me years ago”—there is no faith in that. Do not meet my earnest plea by saying, “I believe that God can save me under such-and-such conditions.” Believe that He can save you *now*, up in the top gallery there, just as you are! You came in here careless and thoughtless, yet, even now, He can save you! Away yonder, quite a man of the world, free and easy, destitute of all religious inclinations though you may be, He can save you even now! O God, strike many a man down, as You did Saul of Tarsus, and change their hearts by Your own supreme love, as You can do it, even now, on the very spot where they sit or stand!

But though God waits to be gracious to you, though you have yet time to repent, remember, *it is but a time, therefore seize it*. Your opportunity will not last forever. I believe that even now God can save, but if you reject Christ, there will come a time when salvation will be impossible. On earth, as long as a man desires to be saved, he may be saved—while there is life there is hope. I believe that if a man’s breath were going from his body, if he could *then* look to Christ, he would live. But—

***“There are no acts of pardon passed
In the cold grave, to which we haste!
But darkness, death, and long despair,
Reign in eternal silence there!”***

Do not venture on that last leap without Christ, but even now, before the clock strikes another time, fly to Jesus! Trust Him “even now!”

It is a time of hope. Even now there is still every opportunity and every preparation for the sinner’s salvation. “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” Shall I give you some reasons for believing that “even now” is a time of hope? There are many good arguments which may be brought forward in order to banish the thought of despair.

First, *the Gospel is still preached*. The old-fashioned Gospel is not dead. There are a great many who would like to muzzle the mouths of God’s ministers, but they never will. The old Gospel will live when they are dead and, because it is still preached to *you*, you may believe and live! What is the old Gospel? It is seeing that you are helpless to save yourself, or bring

yourself back to God, Christ came to restore you—that He took those sins of yours, which were enough to sink you to Hell—and bore them on the Cross, that He might bring you to Heaven! If you will but trust Him, even now, He will deliver you from the curse of the Law of God, for it is written, “He that believes on Him is not condemned.” If you will trust Him, even now, He will give you a life of blessedness which will never end, for, again, it is written, “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life.” Because that Gospel is preached, there is hope for you! When there is no hope, there will be no presentation of the Gospel. God must, by an edict, suspend the preaching of the Gospel before He can suspend the fulfillment of the Gospel promise to every soul that believes! Since there is a Gospel, take it! Take it *now*, even now! God help you to do so!

In the second place, I know there is hope now, “even now,” for *the Christ still lives*. He rose from the dead, no more to die, and He is as strong as ever. “I am He that lives and was dead.” He says, “and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen.” These words were spoken to the Apostle John and when he saw Him, he said that, “His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow.” But when the spouse saw Him, she said, “His locks are busy, and black as a raven.” Yet both truly saw! John’s vision of the white hair was to show that Christ is the Ancient of Days, but the view of the spouse was to show His everlasting youth, His unceasing strength and power to save! If there is any difference in Him, Christ is, today, *more* mighty to save than He was when Martha saw Him. He had not, then, completed the work of salvation, but He has perfectly accomplished it now and, therefore, there is hope for everyone who trusts in Him. My Lord has gone up yonder where a prayer will find Him with the keys of death and Hell jingling at His belt, and with the Omnipotence of God in His right hand! If you believe on Him, by His “eternal power and Godhead” He will save you, and save you even *now*, on the spot, before you leave this house!

Moreover, I know that this is a time of hope, in the next place, because *the precious blood still has power*. All salvation is through the blood of the Lamb. Still—

***“There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel’s veins,”***

and still, “even now”—

***“Sinners, plunged beneath the flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.”***

The endless efficacy of the atoning Sacrifice is the reason why you may come and believe in Jesus, “even now!” If that blood had diminished in its force, I should not dare to speak as I do. But I can, “even now,” say with confidence—

***“Dear dying Lamb, Your precious blood
Shall never lose its power,
Till all the ransomed Church of God
Be saved to sin no more.”***

How many have already entered into Glory by the blood of the Lamb! When a man comes to die, nothing else will do for him but this! Our own works are a poor staff for us when we pass through the river. All those who are now in the Land of Light have but one confidence and but one song—they stand upon the merit of Jesus Christ—and they praise the Lamb who was slain, by whose blood they have been cleansed and sanctified! There is no other way of salvation but that! “Even now” that blood has virtue to take away your sin! Christ is a sufficient Savior because His death has unexhausted power. Believe that He can save you “even now.”

Again, I would remind you that “even now” is a time of hope to you because *the Spirit still can renew*. He is yet at work, regenerating and sanctifying. He came down at Pentecost to dwell with His people and has never gone back. He is still in the Church! Sometimes we feel His mighty power more than at other times, but He is always at work. Oh, you that do not know anything about the power of the Holy Spirit, let me tell you that this is the most wonderful phenomenon that can ever be observed! Those of us who have seen and known His mighty energy can bear testimony to it! In my retirement, at Mentone, during the last few weeks, if you had seen me, you would have found me sitting every morning, at half-past nine o’clock, at my little table, with my Bible, just reading a chapter and offering prayer—my family prayer with the little group of 40 to 50 friends, who gathered for that morning act of worship. There they met—and the Spirit of God was manifestly moving among them, converting, cheering, comforting! It was because of no effort of mine—it was simply the Word of God, attended by the Spirit of God, binding us together and binding us all to Christ!

And here, in this House of God, for 37 years I have, in all simplicity, preached this old-fashioned Gospel. I have just kept to that one theme—content to know nothing else among men—and where are they that preached new gospels? They have been like the mist upon the mountain’s brow! They came and they have gone. And so it will always be with those who preach anything but the Word of God, for nothing will abide but the Mountain, itself, the everlasting Truth of the Gospel to which the Holy Spirit bears witness! That same Holy Spirit is able to give you a new heart “even now,” to make you a new creature in Christ Jesus at this moment! Do you believe this?

Once more. I know that “even now” Christ can save you and I pray you to believe it, for *the Father is still waiting to receive returning prodigals*. Still, as of old, the door is open and the best robe hangs in the hall, ready to be put upon the shoulders of the son who comes back from the far country, even though he returns reeking with the odor of the swine trough. How longingly the Father looks along the road to see whether, at last, some of you are turning homeward! Ah, did you but know the joy that awaits those who come, and the feast which would load the welcoming table, you would “even now” say, “I will arise and go to my Father.”

You should have returned long ago, but, blessed be His love, which “even now” waits to clasp you to His heart!

Last of all, *faith is but the work of a moment*. Believe and live! You have nothing to do! You need no preparations! Come as you are, without a single plea, but that He bids you to come! Come now, “even now!” If Christ were far away, the time that is left to some of you might be too short to reach Him. If there were many things which first of all you had to do, your life might close before they were half done! If faith had to grow strong before it received salvation, you might be in the place of eternal despair before your faith had time to be more than a mere mustard seed! But Christ is not far away—He is in our midst—He is by your side! You have nothing to do before you trust Him—He has done it all and, however weak your faith, if it but comes in contact with Christ, it will convey instant blessings to you! “Even now” you may be saved forever, for—

***“The moment a sinner believes,
And trusts in His crucified God,
His pardon at one He receives,
Redemption in full, through His blood.”***

Surely all these are sufficient reasons why, “even now,” is a time of hope to you! May it also be a time of blessing! It shall be so if you will but, at this instant, cast yourself on Christ. He says to you that if you will but believe, you shall see the Glory of God! Martha saw that Glory! You shall see it, too, if you have the same precious faith.

I long that God would give me some souls tonight, on this first occasion when I have met an evening congregation since my return from the sunny South. I desire earnestly that He would set the bells of Heaven ringing because sinners have returned and heirs of Glory have been born into the family of Grace! I stirred you up to pray this morning. Pray mightily that this word, tonight, simple but pointed, may be blessed to many!

Portion of Scripture Read before Sermon—John 11.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—95 (PART II), 607, 612.

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“THOUGH HE WERE DEAD”

NO. 1799

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 14, 1884,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“Martha said unto Him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?”
John 11:24-26

MARTHA is a very accurate type of a class of anxious Believers. They do truly believe, but not with such confidence as to lay aside their care. They do not *distrust* the Lord, or question the Truth of what He says, yet they puzzle their brain about, “How shall this thing be?” And so they miss the major part of the present comfort which the Word of the Lord would minister to their hearts if they received it more simply. How?—and why?—belong unto the Lord! It is His business to arrange matters so as to fulfill His own promises! If we would sit at our Lord’s feet with Mary and consider what He has promised, we would choose a better part than if we ran about with Martha, crying, “How can these things be?”

Martha, you see, in this case, when the Lord Jesus Christ told her that her brother would rise again, replied, “I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.” She was a type, I say, of certain anxious Believers, for she *set a practical boundary to the Savior’s words*. “Of course there will be a resurrection—and then my brother will rise with the rest.” She concluded that the Savior could not mean anything beyond that. The first meaning and the most common meaning that suggests itself to her must be what Jesus means! Is not that the way with many of us? We had a statesman, once, and a good man, too, who loved reform. But whenever he had accomplished a little progress, he considered that *all* was done. We called him, at last, “Finality John,” for he was always coming to an ultimatum and taking for his motto, “Rest and be thankful.”

Into that style, Christian people too frequently drop with regard to the promises of God! We limit the Holy One of Israel as to the meaning of His words. Of course they mean so much, but we cannot allow that they intend more! It were well if the spirit of progress would enter into our faith, so that we felt within our souls that we had never beheld the innermost glory of the Lord’s Words of Grace. We often are amazed that the disciples put such poor meanings upon our Lord’s words, but I fear we are almost as far off as they were from fully comprehending all His gracious teachings! Are we not, still, as little children making little out of great words? Have we grasped, as yet, a tenth of our Lord’s full meaning in many of His

sayings of love? When He is talking of bright and sparkling gems of benediction, we are thinking of common pebbles in the brook of mercy! When He speaks of stars and heavenly crowns, we think of sparks and childish coronals of fading flowers! Oh that we could but have our intellect cleared. Better still, that we could have our understanding expanded, or, best of all, our faith increased so as to reach to the height of our Lord's great arguments of love!

Martha also had another fault in which she was very like ourselves—she *laid the Words of Jesus on the shelf*, as things so trite and sure that they were of small practical importance. "Your brother shall rise again." Now, if she had possessed enough faith, she might truthfully have said, "Lord, I thank You for that word! I expect within a short space to see him sitting at the table with You. I put the best meaning possible upon Your words, for I know that You are always better than I can think You to be and, therefore, I expect to see my beloved Lazarus walk home from the sepulcher before the sun sets."

But no, she lays the Truth aside as a matter past all dispute and says, "I know that my brother shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." A great many precious Truths of God are laid up by us like the old hulks in the Medway, never to see service again, or like aged pensioners at Chelsea, as relics of the past. We say, "Yes, quite true. We fully believe that doctrine." Somehow it is almost as bad to lay up a doctrine in lavender as it is to throw it out of window. When you so believe a Truth of God as to put it to bed and smother it with the bolster of neglect, it is much the same as if you did not believe it at all! An official belief is very much akin to infidelity. Some persons never question a doctrine—that is not their line of temptation—they accept the Gospel as true, but then they never expect to see its promises practically carried out! It is a proper thing to believe, but by no means a prominent, practical factor in actual life. It is true but it is mysterious, misty, mythical, far removed from the realm of practical common sense.

We often do with the promises as a poor old couple did with a precious document which might have cheered their old age had they used it according to its real value. A gentleman, stepping into a poor woman's house, saw framed and glazed upon the wall a French note for a thousand francs. He said to the old folks, "Where did you get this?" They informed him that a poor French soldier had been taken in by them and nursed until he died, and he had given them that little picture when he was dying as a memorial of him. They thought it such a pretty souvenir that they had framed it, and there it was, adorning the cottage wall. They were greatly surprised when they were told that it was worth a sum which would be quite a little fortune for them if they would but turn it into money!

Are we not equally unpractical with far more precious things? Have you not certain of the words of your great Lord framed and glazed in your hearts—and do you not say to yourselves, "They are so sweet and precious," and yet you have never turned them into actual *blessing*—never used them in the hour of need? You have done as Martha did when she took the words, "Your brother shall rise again," and put round about them this handsome frame, "in the resurrection at the last day." Oh that we had

Grace to turn God's bullion of Gospel into *current* coin and use them as our present spending money!

Moreover, Martha made another blunder, and that was *setting the promise in the remote distance*. This is a common folly, this distancing of the promises of the Most High. "In the resurrection at the last day"—no doubt she thought it a very long way off and, therefore, she did not get much comfort out of it. Telescopes are meant to bring objects near to the eye, but I have known people use the mental telescope in the wrong way—they always put the big end of it to their eye—and then the glass sends the object further away! Her brother was to be raised *that very day*—she might so have understood the Savior—but instead of it she looked at His words through the wrong end of the glass and said, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

Brothers and Sisters, do not refuse the present blessing! Death and Heaven, or the Advent and the Glory, are at your doors! A little while and He that will come shall come and will not tarry. Think not that the Lord is slack concerning His promise! Do not say in your heart, "My Lord delays His coming," or dream that His words of love are only for the dim future. In the ages to come, marvels shall be revealed, but even the present hour is bejeweled with loving kindness! *Today* the Lord has rest, peace and joy to give to you! Lose not these treasures by unbelief!

Martha also appears to me to have *made the promise unreal and impersonal*. "Your brother shall rise again"—to have realized that would have been a great comfort to her—but she mixes Lazarus up with all the rest of the dead. "Yes, he will rise in the resurrection at the last day, when thousands of millions shall be rising from their graves—no doubt Lazarus will rise with the rest." That is the way with us. We take the promise and say, "This is true to all the children of God." If so, it is true to us, but we miss *that point*! What a blessing God has bestowed upon the covenanted people! Yes, and you are one of them—but you shake your head as if the word were not for you! It is a fine feast and yet you are hungry! It is a full and flowing stream, but you remain thirsty!

Why is this? Somehow the generality of your apprehension misses the sweetness which comes of personal appropriation. There is such a thing as speaking of the promises in a magnificent style and yet being in deep spiritual poverty—as if a man should boast of the wealth of old England and the vast amount of treasure in the Bank—while he does not possess a penny with which to bless himself! In your case you know it is your own fault that you are poor and miserable, for if you would but exercise an appropriating faith, you might possess a boundless heritage. If you are a child of God, all things are yours and you may help yourself! If you are hungry at this banquet, it is for lack of faith. If you are thirsty by the brink of this river, it is because you do not stoop down and drink! Behold, God is your portion! The Father is your Shepherd, the Son of God is your Food, and the Spirit of God is your Comforter. Rejoice and be glad, and grasp with the firm hand of a personal faith that royal gift which Jesus sets before you in His promises.

I beg you to observe how the Lord Jesus Christ, in great wisdom, dealt with Martha. In the first place, He did not grow angry with her. There is

not a trace of petulance in His speech. He did not say to her, "Martha, I am ashamed of you that you should have such low thoughts of Me." She thought that she was honoring Jesus when she said—"I know, that even now, whatever You will ask of God, God will give You." Her idea of Jesus was that He was a great Prophet who would ask of God and obtain answers to His prayers. She has not grasped the truth of Jesus' own personal power to give and sustain life. But the Savior did not say, "Martha, these are low and groveling ideas of your Lord and Savior." He did not chide her, though she lacked wisdom—wisdom which she ought to have possessed. I do not think God's people learn much by being scolded—it is not the habit of the great Lord to scold His disciples and, therefore, they do not take it well when His servants take upon themselves to rate them.

If ever you meet with one of the Lord's own who falls far short of the true ideal of the Gospel, do not bluster and upbraid. Who taught you what you know? He that has taught you did it of His infinite love and Grace and pity—and He was very tender with you, for you were stupid enough—therefore be tender with others and give them line upon line, even as your Lord was gentle towards you! It ill becomes a servant to lose patience where his Master shows so much. The Lord Jesus, with gentle spirit, proceeded to teach her more of the things concerning Himself. More of Jesus! More of Jesus! That is the sovereign cure for our faults! He revealed Himself to her, that in Him she might behold reasons for a clearer hope and a more substantial faith.

How sweetly fell those words upon her ears—"I am the resurrection and the life"! Not, "I can get resurrection by My prayers," but, "I *am*, Myself, the resurrection." God's people need to know more of what Jesus is, more of the fullness which it has pleased the Father to place in Him. Some of them know quite enough of what they are, themselves, and they will break their hearts if they go on reading much longer in that black-letter book! They need, I say, to rest their eyes upon the Person of their Lord and to spy out all the riches of Grace which lie hidden in Him. Then they will pluck up courage and look forward with surer expectancy! When our Lord said, "I am the resurrection and the life," He indicated to Martha that resurrection and life were not gifts which He must seek, nor even gifts which He must create—but that He, Himself, was the resurrection and the life—these things were wherever He was.

He was the Author, Giver and Maintainer of life, and that life was Himself! He would have her to know that He was, Himself, precisely what she wanted for her brother. She did know a little of the Lord's power, for she said, "If You had been here, my brother had not died," which, being very kindly interpreted, might mean, "Lord, You are the life." "Ah, but," says Jesus, "you must also learn that I am the resurrection! You already admit that if I had been here Lazarus would not have died. I would have you further learn that I, being here, your brother shall live though He has died; and that when I am with My people none of them shall die forever, for I am to them the resurrection and the life." Poor Martha was looking up into the sky for life, or gazing down into the deeps for resurrection—when the Resurrection and the Life stood before her, smiling upon her and cheering her heavy heart! She had thought of what Jesus might have done

if He had been there earlier—now let her know what He is at the present moment!

Thus I have introduced the text to you and I pray God the Holy Spirit to bless these prefatory observations, for if we learn only these first lessons we shall not have been here in vain. Let us construe promises in their largest sense. Let us regard them as real and set them down as facts. Let us look to the Promiser, even to Jesus the Lord, and not so much to the difficulties which surround the accomplishment of the promise! In beginning the Divine Life, let us look to Jesus, and later, running the heavenly race, let us still be looking unto Jesus till we see in Him our All in All! When both eyes look on Jesus, we are in the Light of God! But when we have one eye on Him and one eye on self, all is darkness. Oh, to see Him with all our soul's eyes!

Now, I am going to speak as I am helped of the Spirit, and I shall proceed thus—first, by asking you to *view the text as a stream of comfort to Martha and other bereaved persons*. And, secondly, to *view it as a great deep of comfort to all Believers*.

I. First, I long for you to VIEW THE TEXT AS A STREAM OF COMFORT TO MARTHA AND OTHER BEREAVED PERSONS. Observe, in the beginning, that *the Presence of Jesus Christ means life and resurrection*. It meant that to Lazarus. If Jesus comes to Lazarus, Lazarus must live! Had Martha taken the Savior's words literally—as she should have done—as I have already told you, she would have had immediate comfort from them and the Savior intended her to understand them in that sense. He virtually says, "I am to Lazarus the Power that can make him live again. And I am the Power that can keep him in life. Yes, I am the resurrection and the life."

A statement so understood would have been very comfortable to her. Nothing could have been more so. It would, then and there, have abolished death so far as her brother was concerned. Somebody says, "But I do not see that this is any comfort *to us*, for if Jesus is *here*, yet it is only a *spiritual* presence, and we cannot expect to see our dear mother, or child, or husband raised from the dead thereby." I answer that our Lord Jesus is able, at this moment, to give us back our departed ones, for He is still the resurrection and the life! But let me ask you whether you really wish that Jesus would raise your departed ones from the dead. You say at first, "Of course I do!" But I would ask you to reconsider that decision, for I believe that upon further thought you will say, "No, I could not wish it." Do you really desire to see your glorified husband sent back to this world of care and pain? Would you have your father or mother deprived of the glories which they are now enjoying in order that they might help *you* in the struggles of this mortal life? Would you discrown the saints?

You are not so cruel! That dear child—would you have it back from among the angels, and from the inner Glory, to come here and suffer again? You would not have it so. And to my mind it is a comfort to you, or should be, that it is not within your power to have it so, because you might be tempted, in some selfish moment, to accept the doubtful gift. Lazarus could return and fit into his place again, but scarcely one in 10,000 could do so. There would be serious drawbacks in the return of

those whom we have loved best. Do you cry, "Give me back my father! Give me back my friend"? You know not what you ask! It might be a cause of regret to you as long as they lingered here, for you would, each morning, think to yourself, "Beloved one, I have brought you out of Heaven by my wish. I have robbed you of infinite happiness to gratify myself."

For my own part, I had rather that the Lord Jesus should keep the keys of death than that He should lend them to *me*. It would be too dreadful a privilege to be empowered to rob Heaven of the perfected merely to give pleasure to imperfect ones below. Jesus would raise them, now, if He knew it to be right—I do not wish to take the government from His shoulder. It is more comfortable to me to think that Jesus Christ could give them back to me and would, if it were for His glory and my good! My dear ones that lie asleep could be awakened in an instant if the Master thought it best. But it would not be best and, therefore, even I would hold His sleeve, and say, "Tread softly, Master! Do not awaken them! I shall go to them, but they shall not return to me. It is not my wish they should return—it is better that they should be with You where You are, to behold Your Glory." It does not seem to me, then, dear Friend, that you are one whit behind Martha—and you ought to be comforted while Jesus says to you, "I am even now the resurrection and the life."

Furthermore, here is comfort which we may, each one, safely take, namely, that *when Jesus comes, the dead shall live*. The Revised Version has it, "He that believes on Me, though he dies, yet shall he live." We do not know when our Lord will descend from Heaven, but we do know the message of the angel, "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come in like manner as we have seen Him go into Heaven." The Lord will come! We may not question the certainty of His appearing. When He comes, all His redeemed shall live with Him. The trumpet of the archangel shall startle the happy sleepers and they shall wake to put on their beauteous array—the body transformed and made like Christ's glorious body shall be once more wrapped about them as the vesture of their perfected and emancipated spirits! Then our brother shall rise again and all our dear ones who have fallen asleep in Jesus, the Lord will bring with Him. This is the glorious hope of the Church wherein we see the death of death and the destruction of the grave. Comfort one another with these words!

Then we are also told that *when Jesus comes, living Believers shall not die*. After the coming of Christ there shall be no more death for His people. What does Paul say? "Behold, I show you a mystery. We shall not all die, but we shall all be changed." Did I see a little schoolgirl put up her finger? Did I hear her say, "Please, Sir, you made a mistake." So I did! I made it on purpose. Paul did not say, "We shall not all *die*," for the Lord had already said, "Whoever lives and believes in Me shall never *die*." So Paul would not say that any of us should die, but he used his Master's own term and said, "We shall not all *sleep*, but we shall all be changed." When the Lord comes there will be no more death! We who are alive and remain (as some of us may be—we cannot tell) will undergo a sudden transformation, for flesh and blood, as they are, cannot inherit the Kingdom of God—

and by that transformation our bodies shall be made meet to be "partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."

There shall be no more death, then. Here, then, we have two sacred handkerchiefs with which to wipe the eyes of mourners—when Christ comes, the dead shall live and when Christ comes those that live shall never die! Like Enoch, or Elijah, we shall pass into the Glory state without wading through the black stream—while those who have already forded it shall prove to have been no losers thereby! All this is in connection with *Jesus*. Resurrection with Jesus is resurrection, indeed. Life in Jesus is life, indeed. It endears to us resurrection, glory, eternal life and ultimate perfection when we see them all coming to us in Jesus. He is the golden pot which has this manna, the rod which bears these almonds, the life whereby we live!

But further, I have not yet made you drink deep enough of this stream—I think our Savior meant that *even now His dead are alive*. "He that believes on Me, though He dies, yet shall He live." Those that believe in Jesus Christ appear to die, but yet they live! They are not in the grave, they are forever with the Lord! They are not unconscious—they are with their Lord in Paradise. Death cannot kill a Believer—it can only usher him into a freer form of life! Because Jesus lives, His people live. God is not the God of the dead, but of the living—those who have departed have not perished! We laid the precious body in the cemetery and we set up stones at the head and foot—but we might engrave on them the Lord's words—"She is not dead, but sleeps." True, an unbelieving generation may laugh us to scorn, but we scorn their laughing!

Again, *even now His living do not die*. There is an essential difference between the decease of the godly and the death of the ungodly. Death comes to the ungodly man as a penal infliction, but to the righteous as a summons to His Father's palace! Death comes to the sinner as an execution, to the saint an undressing! Death to the wicked is the King of terrors—death to the saint is the *end* of terrors, the commencement of Glory. To die in the Lord is a Covenant blessing! Death is ours—it is set down in the list of our possessions among the "all things"—and it follows life in the list as if it were an equal favor! No longer is it death to die! The *name* remains, but the thing, itself, is changed. Why, then, are we in bondage through fear of death? Why do we dread the process which gives us *liberty*? I am told that persons who, in the cruel ages, had lain in prison for years, suffered much more in the moment of the knocking off of their fetters than they had endured for months in wearing the hard iron. And yet I suppose that no man languishing in a dungeon would have been unwilling to stretch out his arm or leg, that the heavy chains might be beaten off by the blacksmith! We should all be content to endure that little inconvenience to obtain lasting liberty!

Now, such is death—the knocking off of the fetters—yet the iron may never seem to be so truly iron as when that last liberating blow of Grace is about to fall! Let us not mind the harsh grating of the key as it turns in the lock. If we understand it aright, it will be as music to our ears! Imagine that your last hour is come! The key turns with pain for a moment,

but, lo, the bolt is shot! The iron gate is open! The spirit is free! Glory be unto the Lord forever and ever!

II. I leave the text, now, as a stream of comfort for the bereaved, for I wish you to VIEW IT AS A GREAT DEEP OF COMFORT FOR ALL BELIEVERS. I cannot fathom it any more than I could measure the abyss, but I can invite you to survey it by the help of the Holy Spirit.

I think, first, this text plainly teaches that *the Lord Jesus Christ is the life of His people*. We are dead by nature and you can never produce life out of death—the essential elements are lacking. Should a spark be lingering among the ashes, you may yet fan it to a flame, but from human nature the last spark of heavenly life is gone—and it is vain to seek for life among the dead! The life of every Christian is Christ. He is the beginning of life, being the Resurrection. When He comes to us we live. Regeneration is the result of contact with Christ—we are begotten, again, unto living hope by His resurrection from the dead. The life of the Christian, in its commencement, is in Christ alone—not a fragment of it is from himself—and the *continuance* of that life is equally the same. Jesus is not only the resurrection to begin with, but the life to go on with!

"I have life in myself," says one. I answer—not otherwise than as you are one with Christ—your spiritual life, in every breath it draws, is in Christ. If you are regarded for a moment as separated from Christ, you are cast forth as a branch and are withered. A member severed from the head is dead flesh and no more. In union to Christ is your life. Oh that our hearers would understand this! I see a poor sinner look into himself and look again, and you cry, "I cannot see any life within!" Of course you cannot! You have no life of your own. "Alas," cries a Christian, "I cannot find anything within to feed my soul!" Do you expect to feed upon yourself? Must not Israel look up for the manna? Did one of all the tribes find it in his own bosom? To look to self is to turn to a broken cistern which can hold no water! I tell you, you must learn that Jesus is the resurrection and the life!

Listen to that great, "I"—that infinite EGO! This must cover over and swallow up *your* little *ego*. "I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me." What are you? Less than nothing and vanity! But over all springs up that Divine all-sufficient Personality, "I am the resurrection and the life." Take the first two words together and they seem to me to have a wondrous majesty about them—"I AM!" Here is Self-Existence. Life in Himself! Even as the Mediator, the Lord Jesus tells us that it is given Him to have life in Himself, even as the Father has life in Himself (John 5:26). *I am* fills the yawning mouth of the sepulcher! He that lives and was dead and is alive forevermore, the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, declares, "*I am* the resurrection and the life." If, then, I want to live unto God, I must have Christ—and if I desire to continue to live unto God, I must continue to have Christ! And if I aspire to have that life developed to the utmost fullness of which it is capable, I must find it all in Christ! He has come not only that we may have life, but that we may have it more abundantly.

Anything that is beyond the circle of Christ is death. If I conjure up an experience over which I foolishly dote, which puffs me up as so perfect that I need not come to Christ as a poor empty-handed sinner, I have en-

tered into the realm of death! I have introduced into my soul a damning leaven! Away with it! Away with it! Everything of life is put into this golden casket of Christ Jesus—all else is death. We have not a breath of life anywhere but in Jesus, who always lives to give life. He says, "Because I live, you shall live, also," and this is true. We live not for any other reason—not because of anything *in* us or *connected* with us, but only because of *Jesus*. "For you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."

Now, further, in this great deep to which we would conduct you, *faith* is the only channel by which we can draw our life from Jesus. "I am the resurrection and the life: *He that believes in Me*"—that is it. He does not say, "He that *loves Me*," though love is a bright Grace and very sweet to God. He does not say, "He that *serves Me*," though everyone that believes in Christ *will* endeavor to serve Him. But it is not put so. He does not even say, "He that *imitates Me*," though everyone that believes in Christ *must* and will *imitate* Him. No, it is put, "He that *believes in Me*." Why is that? Why does the Lord so continually make *faith* to be the only link between Himself and the soul? I take it because faith is a gift which arrogates nothing to itself and has no operation apart from Jesus, to whom it unites us.

You want to conduct the electric fluid and, in order to this, you find a metal which will not create any action of its own. If it did so, it would disturb the current which you wish to send along it. If it set up an action of its *own*, how would you know the difference between what came of the metal and what came of the battery? Now, faith is an empty-handed receiver and communicator—it is nothing apart from that upon which it relies and, therefore, it is suitable to be a conductor for Divine Grace. When an auditorium has to be erected for a speaker in which he may be plainly heard, the essential thing is to get rid of all echoes. When you have no echoes, then you have a perfect building—faith makes no noise of its own—it allows the Word of God to speak. Faith cries, "*Non nobis Domine!* Not unto us! Not unto us!" Christ puts His crown on Faith's head, exclaiming, "Your faith has saved you!" But faith hastens to ascribe all the glory of salvation to only Jesus! So you see why the Lord selects faith rather than any other Grace—because it is a self-forgetting thing. It is best adapted to be the tubing through which the Water of Life runs because it will not communicate a flavor of its own, but will just convey the stream purely and simply from Christ to the soul. "He that believes in Me."

Now notice, *to the reception of Christ by faith there is no limit*. "He that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whoever"—I am deeply in love with that word, "whoever." It is a splendid word! A person who kept many animals had some great dogs and some little ones and, in his eagerness to let them enter his house freely, he had two holes cut in the door—one for the big dogs and another for the little dogs. You may well laugh, for the little dogs could surely have come in wherever there was room for the larger ones. This, "whoever," is the great opening, suitable for sinners of every size! "Whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die." Has any man a right to believe in Christ? The Gospel gives every

creature the right to believe in Christ, for we are bid to preach it to every creature, with this *command*, "Hear, and your soul shall live."

Every man has a right to believe in Christ, because he will be damned if he does not—and he *must* have a right to do that which will bring him into condemnation if he does it not! It is written, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned." That makes it clear that I, whoever I may be, as I have a right to endeavor to escape from damnation, have a right to avail myself of the blessed command, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and live." Oh that, "whoever," that hole in the door for the big dog! Do not forget it! Come along with you and put your trust in Christ! If you can only get linked with Christ, you are a living man! If but a finger touches His garment's hem, you are made whole! Only the *touch* of faith—and the virtue flows from Him to you—and He is to you the Resurrection and the Life!

I desire you to notice that *there is no limit to this power*. Before I was ill this last time, and even since, I have had to deal with such a swarm of despairing sinners that if I have not pulled them up they have pulled me down! I have been trying to speak very large words for Christ when I have met with those disconsolate ones. I hear one say, "How far can Christ be life to a sinner? I feel myself to be utterly wrong, I am altogether wrong; there is nothing right about me—though I have eyes I cannot see, though I have ears I do not hear! If I have a hand I cannot use it; if I have a foot I cannot run with it—I seem altogether wrong." Yes, but if you believe in Christ, though you were still *more* wrong—that is to say, though you were *dead*, which is the most wrong state in which a man's body can be—though you were dead, yet shall you live! You look at the spiritual thermometer and you say, "How low will the Grace of God go? Will it descend to summer heat? Will it touch the freezing point? Will it go to zero?" Yes, it will go below the lowest conceivable point—lower than any instrument can indicate—it will go below the zero of *death*. If you believe in Jesus, though you are not only wrong, but *dead*, yet shall you live!

"But," says another, "I feel so weak. I cannot understand. I cannot lay hold of things, I cannot pray. I cannot do anything. All I can do is feebly trust in Jesus." All right! Though you had gone further than that and were so weak as to be dead, yet should you live! Though the weakness had turned to a dire paralysis that left you altogether without strength, yet it is written, "He that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." "Oh, Sir," says one, "I am so unfeeling." Mark you, these generally are the most feeling people in the world. "I am sorry every day because I cannot be sorry for my sin"—that is the way they talk—it is very absurd, but still very real to them. "Oh," cries one, "the earth shook, the sun was darkened, the rocks rent, the very dead came out of their graves at the death of Christ."—

***'Of feeling all things show some sign
But this unfeeling heart of mine.'***

Yet if you believe, unfeeling as you are, you live, for if you were gone further than numbness to *deadness*, yet if you believe in Him you shall live!

But the poor creature fetches a sigh, and cries, "Sir, it is not only that I have no feeling, but I am become objectionable and obnoxious to everybody! I am a weariness to myself and to others. I am sure when I come to

tell you my troubles you must wish me to be at Jericho, or somewhere else far away." Now, I admit that such a thought *has* occurred to us, sometimes, when we have been very busy and some poor soul has grown prosy with rehearsing his seven-times-repeated miseries! But if you were to get still more wearisome. If you were to become so bad that people would as soon see a corpse as see you, yet remember Jesus says, "He that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." Yes, if you went so far as to go in and out among men like an unquiet ghost, so that everybody got out of your way, it would not put you beyond the promise, "He that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

"Oh, Sir, I have no hope; my case is quite hopeless!" Very well. But if you had got beyond *that*, so that you were dead and could not even *know* you had no hope, yet if you believed in Him you should live! "Oh, but I have tried everything and there is nothing more for me to attempt! I have read books. I have spoken to Christians and I am not bettered." No doubt it is quite so—but if you had even passed beyond *that* stage, so that you could not *try* anything more, yet if you believed in Jesus you should live! Oh, the blessed power of faith! No, rather say the *matchless* Power of Him who is the Resurrection and the Life, for though the poor Believer were *dead*, yet shall he live! Glory be to the Lord who works so wonderfully!

To conclude, if you once believe in Christ and come to live, there is this sweet reflection for you, "*Whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.*" Our Arminian friends say that you may be a child of God today and a child of the devil tomorrow. Write out that statement and place, at the bottom of it, the name, "*Arminius,*" and then put the scrap of paper into the fire—it is the best thing you can do with it, for there is no Truth of God in it! Jesus says, "Whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die." Here is a very literal translation—"And everyone who lives and believes on Me, by no means shall die forever." This is from, "The Englishman's Greek New Testament," and nothing can be better. The Believer may pass through the natural change called death, as far as his body is concerned, but as for his *soul*, it cannot die, for it is written, "I give unto My sheep, eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand." "He that believes in Me has everlasting life." "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved."

These are not, "ifs," and, "buts," and faint hopes—they are dead certainties! No, they are *living certainties*, out of the mouth of the living Lord Himself! You get the life of God in your soul and you shall never die! "Do you mean that I may do as I like and live in *sin*?" No! I mean nothing of the sort! What right have you to impute such teaching as that to me? I mean that you shall *not* love sin and live in it, for that is death—but you shall live unto God. Your likes shall be so radically changed that you shall abhor evil all your days and you shall long to be holy as God is holy! And you shall be kept from transgression and shall not go back to wallow in sin. If, in some evil hour, you backslide, yet shall you be restored—and the main current of your life shall be, from the hour of your regeneration—towards God, holiness and Heaven! The angels that rejoiced over you, "when you repented," made no mistake—they shall go on to rejoice

till they welcome you amidst the everlasting songs and Hallelujahs of the blessed at the right hand of God!

Do you believe this? Come, poor Soul, do you believe this? Who are you? That does not matter—you can get into the “whoever.” That ark will hold all God’s Noahs! What have you done? One said to me the other day, “I should like to tell you some of my sins!” I answered quickly, “I would like you would *not*—I have enough of my own without being infected with yours.” What is any man that he should have the filth of another man’s drains poured into his ears? No, no! Confess to *God*, but not to man unless you have wronged him and confession of the wrong is due to him. “Ah,” says one, “you don’t know what I am.” No, and I don’t *want* to know what you are—but if you are so far gone that there seems to be not even a *ghost* of a shade of a *shadow* of a hope anywhere about you—yet if you believe in Jesus you shall live!

Trust the Lord Jesus Christ, for He is worthy to be trusted! Throw yourself upon Him and He will carry you in His bosom! Cast your whole weight upon His Atonement! It will bear the strain! Hang on Him as a vessel hangs on the nail and seeks no other support! Depend upon Christ with all your might just as you now are and, as the Lord lives, *you* shall live! And as Christ reigns, you shall reign over sin! And as Christ comes to Glory, you shall partake of that Glory forever and ever! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 11:1-27.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—414, 839, 327.**

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THE BELIEVER CATECHIZED

NO. 1568

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 21, 1880,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Do you believe this?”
John 11:26.***

THE Savior said to Martha, “I am the resurrection and the life: He that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. DO YOU BELIEVE THIS?” When Believers are sorrowful, they may be assured that a consolation is provided exactly adapted to their cases. For every lock that God has made, He has provided a key. As every blade of grass has its own drop, so every grief has its comfort. I doubt not that for every pain which racks this mortal frame there is a pain reliever among the herbs of the fields and for every disease there is a remedy in God’s wondrous laboratory if we could but find it.

As for us who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, we may rest assured that if we are borne down by excessive sorrow, it is almost always our own fault and arises from a defect in our faith—for if our faith were as strong as it ought to be, we would “take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches and in distresses for Christ’s sake.” We would find that as our tribulations abounded, so would our consolations abound by Christ Jesus. It will be well, therefore, when we are greatly distressed, not so much to look to the apparent cause of the present trouble as at the condition of our own hearts—it will be wise to inquire where our faith is lacking and what it may be which prevents our laying hold upon the comfort provided for the present distress.

It frequently happens that our faith is defective because of slender knowledge. A man cannot believe what he does not know. My dear, tried Friend, there is a promise in the Scriptures which would *exactly* meet your case and, if grasped by faith, it would *immediately* cheer you! But you know nothing of its efficacy because you may never yet have read it, or, having read it, you may never have paused over it and considered its meaning and so you are needlessly distressed because your relief lies close at hand. It may be that as yet you have not learned the whole circle of Gospel doctrines and this, also, deprives you of comfort. You have laid hold upon the vital and saving part of Revelation, but the strengthening and exhilarating part of it you know not.

You have fed on the necessary bread of Christ’s house, but not upon the luscious fruits of His garden! You have been in the field, but you have not walked in the garden to eat His pleasant fruit. Faith cannot believe what it does not know and, therefore, you have missed fat things full of marrow and wines on the lees well-refined which might have been your strength and your joy. We would, all of us, grow in comfort if we grew in Grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and had a more intelligent appreciation of the preciousness of the Truths of God which He has

revealed! Faith may be defective through ignorance and it may also be defective through a lack of appreciation of the Person of Christ. It was so in Martha's case—she did not know enough about her Lord to perceive His power to meet her sorrow.

The Apostle Paul says, in the passage which I just now quoted, "Grow in Grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ," as if the knowledge of Jesus were, indeed, the most important and gracious knowledge which a Believer can obtain and so it is! If we are but half instructed as to our Lord, we shall be but half-comforted. O mourners, you have not rated the Savior highly enough! You have not yet a large enough idea of His love for you and of His design of Infinite Wisdom in permitting you to be afflicted. If the Lord Jesus were better known, our afflictions would be lightened and our hearts would even rejoice in them! If we did but know You, O blessed Christ, then if the same trials remained with us they would lose their gloom beneath Your smile and we would even come to rejoice in them as ministering to our fellowship with You in Your sufferings! Jesus known, sorrow loses its sting—surely even the bitterness of death is past!

It is not to be supposed that every true Believer in Christ is assuredly a *perfect* Believer. Martha truly believed in Jesus, but she did not *perfectly* believe in Him. I do not know how many here have, or *think* they have, *perfect* faith—such good people will get very little from the discourse of this morning—but then, happily, they do not need it! Those of us who have an *imperfect* faith—and I suspect that this would describe most of us—may gather instruction from the Savior's question to Martha, "Do you believe this?" May the Holy Spirit cause it to be so. Let us think we hear His loving lips enquiring of us at this time concerning this Truth and the other—"Do you believe this?"

We desire to believe everything that is true and we wish to receive into our minds every doctrine which the Holy Spirit has revealed, for we would perfect our discipleship and is not this one of its privileges—"When He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He shall guide you into all Truth"? We long to believe everything that is within the range of our spiritual knowledge, so that our faith, taking the entire range of Divine Truth, may be complete for every emergency and mighty in every conflict. Submit, then, to a heart-searching enquiry as to your faith and hear Jesus say, by His Spirit, "Do you believe this?"

I. Our first head will be—DO YOU BELIEVE THIS PARTICULAR DOCTRINE? I will not just now suggest any *one* doctrine above another, but merely advise your putting the question about *every* revealed Truth of God. You who are Believers have faith in the Scriptures in general. You can boldly declare that from the first word of Genesis to the last word of Revelation you believe all that is written in the Inspired volume. Now, the point is to take out of this general mass of things believed, or supposed to be believed, each one separate item and look it over in detail and then say with your heart and conscience, "I believe this."

It is easy to talk in the whole and it is very easy to think that we have a vast amount of faith and yet we may have little or none worth having! We may have put the treasure of the Truths of God into a bag that is full of holes and so may have lost it as fast as we have found it. We may fancy

that we embrace within our arms the whole of revealed Truth and yet, when we come to a quiet examination of our soul, we may find that much is slipping away from us by a process of questions and doubts which we hardly dare acknowledge! Things believed and never used are like a sluggard's farm which lies fallow and is never tilled—we hardly call such ground a *farm* and can we call such belief real faith? Why, some Truths of God taught in the Word are not even known by numbers of professors and we cannot believe what we do not know! It is the same case as that supposed in the Apostle's question, "How shall they believe in Him when they have not heard?" If we do not see the *surface* meaning—which is within our reach—we cannot be said to believe in any real sense.

Martha, when our Savior questioned her, had already expressed her faith in certain great Truths of God. She said, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother had not died." She believed in the Savior's power to heal the sick. She believed that so long as her brother breathed, the power of Christ could have kept him alive. She was convinced that Jesus was the Master of disease and could restore the suffering to health. This was something worthy of her faith, but it was not enough. Our Lord set a further fact before her and asked, "Do you believe *this*?" It is for us to *grow* in knowledge and to exercise faith in proportion as we do so.

Next, Martha believed that though her brother was dead, such was the efficacy of Christ's prayer that He could do something. She does not quite say what, to comfort the bereaved—"I know, that even now, whatever You will ask of God, God will give it You." She had faith in our Lord's prevalence with God in prayer and that to an unlimited degree. She believed in Jesus as a mighty Intercessor, One who had but to speak with the Most High and His request would surely be answered—this is a very commendable measure of faith—I wish that we all had as much! So much faith was something admirable, but it was not enough for her present comfort and, therefore, Jesus puts before her a fact even more honorable to Himself and then adds, "Do you believe *this*?"

Martha also expressed her firm conviction as to the certainty of the general Resurrection—"I know that my brother shall rise again in the Resurrection at the Last Day." She had gathered this, doubtless, from the Old Testament Scriptures and from the general belief among orthodox Hebrews. She may also have learned this master Truth of God from the teaching of the Savior, Himself. She was, in this great fundamental doctrine, a thoroughly sound believer, but she had not yet seen the Resurrection in the *Christian* light and perceived our Lord's connection with it. She had not yet learned enough to afford her comfort under her heavy loss, for it is clear that she derived very little consolation from the fact of a distant and general Resurrection—she needed resurrection and life to come nearer home and to become more a present fact to her.

Our Savior points her to a Truth concerning Himself which would answer that purpose and says to her, "I am the Resurrection and the Life: he that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" Here was a well of comfort from which she had never drunk, because, like Hagar in the wilderness, she had never seen the Divine supply! Christ points her to it and

asks her if she will not drink. I would to God, dear Friends, that all of us who call ourselves Christians would, every now and then, go over the Bible and rehearse the great doctrines, in order, before our minds. We need to stop at each one of them and ask our heart and mind, “Do you believe this?”

Take, for instance, that great and earliest of doctrines, the Election of Grace. “Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son.” “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; according as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.” Pause over these texts and consider their evident meaning and then say to your own hearts, “Do you believe this?”

Some believers in Christ do not attempt to accept this doctrine and even call it horrible! And others speak of it as so mysterious and unpractical that it is not to be preached in public! I would invite such, honestly, to look the doctrine in the face and see whether they believe it or not, for if they do not, they may as well take a pen and cross out of the Word of God all passages which plainly teach it! They would not want to do this and yet they do that which amounts to the same thing! When a man is afraid of a doctrine—or ashamed of it—has grave cause to suspect that he does not believe it!

Take another grand Truth of God—“A man is justified by faith and not by the works of the Law.” “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” “He that believes in Him is not condemned.” The *perfect* pardon of the Believer—the *complete* justifying power of the righteousness of Christ to them that believe is plainly taught in the Bible—“Do you believe this?” If you do, why do you go every day and perpetually call yourself a “miserable sinner,” when you are so no longer, but a blood-washed saint and a happy child of God? Why do you talk about your sin as if it were not forgiven and speak of yourself as if you were still “an heir of wrath, even as others,” whereas you are justified in Christ Jesus and accepted in the Beloved? Look at the Scriptural Truth of God and at your conduct and then say to yourself, “Do you believe this?”

Suppose you turn to the Scriptures and read of the union of Christ to His people, “I in them and You in Me, that they may be made perfect in one.” “I am the vine, you are the branches.” When you thus read, inquire of your heart, “Do you believe this?” Do you believe that all who live unto God are one with Christ? Do you believe this? If so, why are you troubled as to your acceptance with God since you are one with Christ? Why do you think that you shall ultimately perish if you are one with Him? Will Christ lose the members of His body? Shall it be that one after another the limbs of His mystical frame shall rot away and die? Has He not said, “Because I live you shall live also”? “Do you believe this?”

It may be that Brothers and Sisters will say of a certain Truth of God that this is a high doctrine, or a mysterious doctrine which seems almost too good to be true—but all this is wide of the mark. The one question is—Is it *revealed*? “King Agrippa,” said Paul, “Do you believe the Prophets? I know

that you believe.” So would I say to each one of you—if you believe the Prophets and the Apostles, why do you not believe, one by one, those great Truths of God which He has spoken by them? And if you believe them to be *revealed*, how dare you cast a slur upon them as being this, that and the other? I will not ask you to believe *my* statement, nor the statements of theologians and divines, but turn to the Infallible Book, itself, and see what is written there and then ask yourself, “Do you believe this?”

As you meet with such-and-such a statement of Holy Writ, do not cut it down or quibble at it, nor twist it, nor try to see if some eminent commentator has not evaporated the very soul out of it! But believe it just as you find it and if you cannot do so, stop until you can and cry out to God for further Light till you can, without hesitation, answer the Savior’s question and say, with Martha, “Yes, Lord.” How this enquiry, well managed and pressed home, will enlarge the range of faith! How it will strengthen its grasp and hold! How rich would our souls become! Upon what meat would our inward confidence be fed if we would but treasure up each crumb of revealed Truth!

Search the Scriptures and take the teaching of the Word of God in detail, line by line and word by word—and then ask your soul, “Do you believe this?” Ask for an anointing from the Holy One that you may know all things and understand with all saints what are the heights and depths and know the love of Christ which passes knowledge. There will be profit connected with this, our first point, if each one will conscientiously catechize his mind and say, “Do you believe this particular doctrine of the Word?”

II. Our next division shall be briefly handled. DO YOU BELIEVE THIS DISTINCT DOCTRINE? I find, especially among members of certain churches, great cloudiness as to their faith. I would not judge severely, but I notice that those converted persons who come to us from certain quarters, which I will not now name, believe the Gospel, but it is too much after the manner of the collier in the old story. When he was asked, “What do you believe?” He answered, “I believe as the church believes.” He was then questioned, “But what does the church believe?” He replied, “The church believes what I believe.” Being further asked, “And what do you and the church believe?” He answered, “We both believe the same thing.”

There was no getting further with him. Is not this kind of faith common enough at this day? Many who are called Christians have this blind faith and little more. This dotting faith, in you know not what, is more fit for *idiots* than rational beings! Let those delight in it who are of slavish mind, or too idle to think for themselves. As for us, so long as we have eyes we shall not yield to walk blindfolded! We like a man to do his own thinking. Put your garments out to wash, if you please, but your *thinking*, you should do at home. There is no reaching the land of the Truth of God unless you will work your passage by thinking over the teaching of the Lord.

What I tell you, you may believe or not at your pleasure. But I beseech you, do not accept it for any other reason than that in your own judgment it is in accordance with the mind of God as unveiled in Holy Writ. God has given to each man a judgment and a conscience and an understanding—and these, the owner of them is bound to use! The Light of God is not given to all alike and hence the use of guides to such as have not great knowl-

edge. But it can only be seen by a man's own eyes and he cannot look at objects by proxy. By experience some men have learned far more than others and hence they are useful helpers. But still, no man's experience of Grace can stand instead of my own—each one must feel and know the Divine Life in his own soul. As food must be masticated and digested by each man for the sustenance of his own body, so must the Truth of God be read, marked, learned and inwardly digested by each man for the sustenance of his own soul.

The church of Rome says, "Yield an implicit faith to the church"—this is a fine platform for priestcraft and you see through the scheme in a minute! But we say the very reverse and charge you not to believe a single word that any one of us, or *all of us put together*, shall say to you if it is contrary to the Word of God! Read that Word for yourselves and search the Scriptures to see whether these things are so or not, for so did the Bereans of old and they were noble because of it and you shall be noble if you rise to the dignity of your manhood and, by the help of God, use your own sense and understanding and pray for the teaching of His Spirit that you may know what the Truth of God is.

Our Savior puts a certain Truth before good Martha in distinct terms. He left the general haze of the Resurrection in which she believed and said, "I who stand before you am the Resurrection and the Life. Do you believe this?" Do you believe the doctrine put in this clear form and shape? He gave her crisp, sharp, definite teaching and said, "Do you believe this?" He brought before her mental vision not an impalpable, shadowy image and specter of truth, but a solid, substantial statement that He, Himself, was the Resurrection and the Life, raising those who believe in Him from the dead and keeping in life those who, being alive, believe in Him. And then He demanded—"Do you believe this?"

A great many persons see doctrines in a kind of dim, hazy light and in that "darkness visible" they exercise a sort of faith, but they will never get comfort out of the Truth of God in that fashion. We must believe revealed Truth as we see it, in its own clear, well defined and accurate form as Scripture shows it. For instance, the doctrine of the Atonement is robbed of half its delight if indistinctly stated. Thousands of Christians believe in a kind of atonement, a means of reconciliation, a sort of propitiation made by Christ, which, in some way or other brings us to God. But, Beloved, I would have you believe that, "He, His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree." "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Do you believe this?

"He has made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Do you believe this? Read the 53rd chapter of Isaiah, in which you have Substitution set forth most clearly. Yes, read the chapter through and pause over such a verse as the 11th, "He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied: by His knowledge shall My righteous Servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities." And then put it to yourself—Do you believe this? The very life and soul and sweetness of Atonement will be found in the Substitution of the innocent Savior for the guilty sinner in the actual bearing of the penalty of sin, the real payment of the debt—for then I know that I am clear, because He, in

my place, has vindicated Justice, honored the Law and glorified God! Do you believe this?

Dear Friend, ask God to give you Grace that you may believe in what Christ has taught and what the Prophets and the Apostles have spoken exactly as it was meant that you should believe it, not in a haphazard, unreal way, but with your whole heart and soul and mind, accepting God's Word as it stands, in all its clearly cut lines and features. Have a quick and true answer to the question, "Do you believe this distinct and clear Truth of God?" Pray to be able to answer, by His Grace, "Yes, Lord!"

III. We will now go a little further, in the third place, to ask, "DO YOU BELIEVE THIS DIFFICULT TRUTH?" Certain Truths of God are hard to grasp. There are points about them which almost stagger faith till faith rises to her true character and is no longer dwarfed into carnal reasoning! But these difficult things are to be believed. It was not easy for Martha to understand how the Lord Jesus could, Himself, be the Resurrection and the Life and yet her brother was dead. It was not an easy Truth for her to believe, for it is not easy for *us*. How can he that died be alive? How can the Son of Man have such a wonderful power that resurrection and life should be entirely dependent upon Him? How can these things be?

We know the fact, but we do not understand it. It is well for us if we do not need to understand it, but regard it as sufficient for us to believe what is revealed even though, to our reason, it may seem a fathomless deep. Indeed, it was difficult for Martha to believe her Lord to be the Life because it seemed contrary to her experience. "Though he were dead, yet shall he live." She might hope that this was possible in the case of Lazarus, but then the Lord had said, "He that lives and believes in Me shall *never* die." How could that be true? Lazarus lived and believed in Jesus and yet he had died! Her experience seemed to be contrary to Christ's statement and this might have rendered it difficult to believe and, therefore, the Lord asked, "Do you believe this?"

But, my Brothers and Sisters, when we become Christians we cease to consider difficulties of belief, for we take the Scriptures upon Divine authority and submit ourselves implicitly to their teaching. At any rate, I have done so. What their church is to the Romanists, that is what the Bible and the Holy Spirit are to me! This done, no difficulty remains one-half so great as those which I have surmounted! I believed, first of all, that God was in Christ—that He who made the heavens and the earth came down below and took upon Himself human nature, was born at Bethlehem, was cradled in a manger and did suck His nourishment from a woman's breast. After having believed that, I can believe anything! An Incarnate God, once accepted, no difficulty need stagger my faith!

Martha's speech—"I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world"—proved her readiness to believe all else that Jesus might teach. The Incarnation, to begin with—without which believing a man can be no Christian at all—is so profound a mystery that other teachings are simple in its presence! "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh." Once rejoice in the Light of God, which is the very daystar of hope to us—that God has taken

into union with Himself our human nature—and you are ready for all Light! Only let me know that God says anything is true and that is enough for me!

I do not quite join with the poor old woman in her words, but I agree with her spirit, who put her implicit faith in Scripture in the most unguarded way, when someone ridiculed her for believing that the whale swallowed Jonah. “Dear,” she said, “if the Word of God had said that *Jonah swallowed the whale* I would have believed it.” Brothers and Sisters, prostrate yourselves before the utterance of God! Not before man’s dictum or dogma! Not before the utterance of priest, presbyter, pastor, or philosopher! But before God, who cannot err, we prostrate our souls! In Him you must place implicit faith. Let Him say what He wills, we must believe it and that not in one case or 20, but in *all* that He says. “Do you believe this?”—and this?—and this? Whatever it is?

Yes, if it is, indeed, taught in Infallible Scripture by the Holy Spirit of God, we believe it! If your faith does not rise to this mark, evil will happen to it. Our Lord said, one day, to a company of those who were His followers, “Except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. For My flesh is meat, indeed, and My blood is drink, indeed. He that eats My flesh and drinks My blood dwells in Me and I in him.” What followed? Read on. “Many, therefore, of His disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can bear it? From that time many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him.”

They said, “Can this Man give us His flesh to eat?” and they came to the conclusion that it could not be and deserted their Teacher. Do we wish to do this? The Lord Jesus Christ, at the very outset of His ministry, prepares us to believe hard things. He bids us count the cost about this as well as everything else. Although we already believe certain mysteries, there are many more that we do not know of as yet which will, in due course, demand our faith. Did not Jesus say to Nicodemus when Nicodemus had been told of being born again and that had staggered him, “If I have told you earthly things and you believe not, how shall you believe if I tell you of heavenly things?” As if even regeneration, which is really full of heavenliness, were but a commonplace Truth of God compared with what Nicodemus had yet to believe!

If Nicodemus had said, “Good Master, I can go as far as this, but I reserve my judgment and shall venture no further,” then the ruler of the Jews and the Son of God would have parted, for he cannot be Christ’s disciple who will not receive all Christ’s words—let those words be what they may. Do you believe this, then? This difficult Truth of God? I put this very earnestly to some of you because it may be that at this moment you are in trouble from lack of faith in a promise or a doctrine which seems hard to you. You have a promise, “When you pass through the fire you shall not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon you.” Do you believe this, though all things appear to be consumed in the heat of your affliction?

It may be that you are under a peculiar cloud and dense gloom and yet Jesus declares, “I am the Light of the world, he that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the Light of life.” And, again, “Whoever believes Me shall not abide in darkness.” Do you believe this? Can you laugh at impossibility and say it shall be done because God has said it? Do you

not know that things impossible with men are possible with God? Can your faith leap over the head of carnal reason? Can present circumstances and the deductions of your own judgment all be waved aside by the left hand as you say, "Let God be true and every man a liar"? If so, you have the faith which will comfort and bless you! But if not, like Martha, you will be bowed down with sorrow since you have not yet believed the Truth of God which can cheer you.

IV. Fourthly, to pass on—"Do you believe this?" that is, DO YOU BELIEVE THIS TRUTH AS IT STANDS CONNECTED WITH JESUS? I called your attention, just now, to the fact that Martha believed that there would be a resurrection. "Yes," says Christ, "but I *am* the Resurrection. Do you believe this?" Now it is one thing to believe doctrine, but it is another thing to believe that doctrine as it is embodied in the Person of Jesus Christ. "Do you believe this?" There the comfort lies—in believing the Truth of God as you find it in Him who is the Truth of God! Martha was called upon to believe, first, in Christ's personal power. "The dead will rise." "True, Martha, but do you believe that I shall make them rise—that it is through *Me* the dead shall live? Yes, that I am the Life and Resurrection? Do you believe that?"

She was to believe, moreover, in His present power. Mark that. "Even now," says Jesus, "I am the Resurrection and the Life; he that lives and believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live and whoever lives and believes in Me, shall never die." It is one thing to believe that Jesus will have power at the Last Day to raise the dead—but do we believe that He is, even *now*, the Resurrection and the Life? Oh the bliss of believing in the *personal* power of Christ and in the *present* power of Christ! Jesus, the I AM, says, "I am the Resurrection and the Life."

Moreover, Martha was called on to believe in the union of Christ with His people—that they are one with Him, that they are partakers of His life, that if they should come under the power of death they should be delivered out of it and that being out of the power of death they shall never come under it—in Christ the dead shall live, the living shall not die. "Oh," says one, "but I myself do not comprehend this, for I see good people die." Yes, you see what you *think* is death, but they do not truly die—they rise into a higher life. That which is the essence of death never touches Believers—they "depart out of the world unto the Father." They go "to be with Christ, which is far better"—they do not die! Death as a penal sentence, in its innermost meaning, never comes near to those for whom Jesus has borne death upon the Cross! His death, in their place, is the death of Death to them. Do you believe this?

Come now, let us each one ask, Do I really believe that Christ Jesus has all power in Heaven and in earth? Do I worship Him as God over all, blessed forever? Do I believe He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that I ask or even think? And when I come in prayer before God, do I so believe in Christ that I remember His promise, "Whatever you shall ask the Father in My name I will give to you"? Not the Father, but Jesus! Even Christ Himself will give you all things! Have you such a notion and idea of your Lord that you know that He can do all things for you right now and, that in answer to your prayer He can grant you any blessing and save you out of any trouble

and every trouble—do you believe this? If you do not you have no right idea of Christ, for He is Lord of all. “You are the King of Glory, O Christ,” and as such we do believe in You and trust You and find comfort in Your present, personal power!

V. We must now pass on to a fifth head. Do you believe this?—that is to say, DO YOU BELIEVE THIS TRUTH WHICH IS APPLICABLE TO YOUR-SELF NOW? That was the point with Martha and this was the place wherein she fell short. She believed that all would rise. But Jesus virtually says—“Do you believe that I am the Resurrection and the Life, because if it is so, I am able to raise your brother at once—do you believe this?” Now, observe that we sometimes believe great Truths of God and yet we are staggered by lesser Truths because, it may be, the great Truth has no practical bearing upon us just now, while the present Truth, though it is somewhat less in other respects, has a greater practical bearing upon ourselves and our condition.

We doubt the promise most necessary to our comfort! For look, she believes that *all* will rise—well, then, it was a much smaller thing to believe that *one* would rise! She doubts whether Lazarus can rise because he is in the grave, yet she believes that millions upon millions will rise from the ground. Doubtless that was because of the distance of the time and the scene. Some such feeling must have operated on her mind, for the general Resurrection is the greater difficulty. Is it hard to believe that Lazarus can rise who has been dead four days? Well, then, it is a great deal harder to believe that bodies can be quickened which have been dead several hundreds of years! Yet she did believe that the dead would rise at the Resurrection at the Last Day—not only those who were stinking, but those whose bodies had been dissolved by corruption and scattered by the four winds of heaven to the utmost ends of the earth!

She believed the miracle on a grand scale, so she said, but when it came home to *one* person who had only been dead four days she could not believe it! She believed that there should be a general Resurrection of all sorts of people and yet, if that can be believed, it is much easier to expect that a favorite of Christ like Lazarus should rise! Jesus loved Lazarus—surely He will call him from the tomb! I say she professed to believe the larger Truth of God and then she staggered at the lesser because it was applicable to herself. I beg you to see whether you are not often walking in the same path. Yonder is a poor soul who believes that Jesus Christ can wash away all sin. Now, my dear Friend, do you believe that He can wash *your* sins away?

That is the point because all the sins of millions are much greater than yours can be and if Jesus can take away the sins of so many, surely He can take away yours! Do you believe this? Will you come and trust Him for yourself? And you, Christian, you believe, in general, that all things work together for good to those who love God—do you believe that all *your* ills, little and great, are working good for you? Will that toothache of yours work for your good? Do you believe that yesterday’s bad debt will work for good? Do you believe that the death of your child will work for good? You know it must be easier to believe that the events of one day will work for good than to believe that all things in the *world* throughout life will do so and yet it

may be you are staggered at your present trials and you confess your misgivings!

Have you faith in everything but that which would comfort *you*? Have you everything but the special requirement of the hour? How odd! How sad that the carpenter needs to drive a nail and he has all his tools with him except his hammer! What is he to do? What is the good of all his other tools? If you can believe everything except the Truth of God which would cheer you at this present moment, you are depriving yourself of comfort and strength! Believe this present promise given for this very day—the Lord has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” Do you believe this? “Underneath are the everlasting arms.” Do you believe this?

“Your shoes shall be iron and brass, and as your days so shall your strength be.” Do you believe this? God’s Word is as the Tree of Life which yields its fruit every month. What a blessing to take the fruit from the Tree of Life in its month just when it is ripest and full of flavor. He has said, “Delight yourself, also, in the Lord and He will give you the desire of your heart.” Since you delight in Him, He will hear your prayer and give you the light of His Countenance. “Do you believe this?”

VI. The last point shall be this—DO YOU BELIEVE THIS PRACTICAL TRUTH? Martha said that she believed it. But her actions did not prove it. She comprehended the belief in the Lord’s word in her declaration, “Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.” But yet she did not believe so as to *act* on the belief. Coleridge says, “Truths, of all others the most awful and mysterious and at the same time of universal interest, are too often considered as so true that they lose all the power of truth and lie bed-ridden in the dormitory of the soul, side by side with the most despised and exploded errors.”

How true is the remark! Do you not know people who are better than their creed? Why is that? Why, for the very same reason that many people are *worse* than their creed, because their creed is asleep and is not operating upon them—they believe as though they did not believe! This is a poor imitation of faith. There is, at this moment, a house on fire in London. I will suppose that I know the fact and tell you of it and you believe it. But what do you care? Not one of you stirs. Yes, but if you saw the engine hurrying along the street and believed that *your own house* was blazing, I guarantee you, you would bestir yourselves!

Your belief would come a little more home to you as your own concern. So there are certain Truths of God which do not seem to concern us to any high degree, at least for the present. They are true and important, but they operate no more upon us than if they were fictions. Martha says she believes in Jesus as the Resurrection and the Life, yet what is her action? Christ commands the bystanders to take away the stone from the sepulcher and she interposes with her cry, “Lord, by this time he stinks!” She fears the obnoxious consequences of uncovering such a mass of corruption, though He who is the Resurrection and the Life stands at the grave’s mouth! Ah, Martha, where is your faith in Him? Dear heart, she says that she believes in Jesus as the Resurrection and the Life and yet she is afraid that her brother will not rise though the Mighty One stands there to raise him!

Is she not just like you and I? We believe that God hears prayer and, therefore, we pray. But if the Lord desires to surprise us, He has only to answer our requests! I have seen God's children running with vast astonishment to tell their friends, "Here is a wonderful thing! Oh, such a marvelous event has happened to me! I offered a prayer and God has heard me." An amazing thing that God should do as He said He would? They put these things in books as marvels and call the volume, "Remarkable Answers to Prayer." Dear me, is it remarkable that it is cold when it freezes? Do we speak of the remarkable warmth of the sun's beams at midsummer? Is it remarkable that the fires in our houses should warm us when we put our hands to them? Is He a remarkable God because He says He will hear prayer and does? An answer to prayer should be remembered with gratitude and yet it should be regarded as the most natural thing in all the world that our heavenly Father should fulfill His promises to His children.

It is a great wonder that God should promise, but not a wonder that He should perform. It is marvelous that God should promise to hear prayer, but no wonder at all that when He has promised to do so He is as good as His Word. Brothers and Sisters, we are, to a great degree, unpractical in other respects, also, and we may take up many and many a Truth of God that we do not act upon and say to our heart, "Do you believe this?" Might I not step outside the door, this morning, and, putting my hand upon a fainting Believer as he left the house say, "Do you believe your God?" You say, "I am so faint in spirit that I shall utterly fall and perish at the last." But the Lord has said, "He gives power to the faint and to them that have no might, He increases strength." Do you believe this?

I might go to another who is sighing and crying because of his poverty and say to him, "God has said, 'No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.' Do you believe this?" What would the complainer say? How could he reconcile his discomfort and his murmuring with his belief in the comforting promise? My Brothers and Sisters, let us, then, go over these matters with our souls. We call ourselves Believers, but are we? If it is so that one after another we doubt the precious things of God when they come before us in detail, where is our faith? Let us entreat our God to grant us Divine Grace that we may put our finger on this doctrine, on that promise and on the other assurance and say of each one, "Lord, I believe this, and I believe this, and I believe this—for I believe whatever You say in Your Word and I know that it shall be even as You have told me."

God bless you, Beloved, and be always with you for Christ's sake. Amen.

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THE MASTER

NO. 1198

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

***“She called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come,
and calls for you.”
John 11:28.***

I SUPPOSE by Martha’s whispering the word, “The Master,” in Mary’s ear, that it was the common name by which the sisters spoke of our Lord to one another in His absence. Perhaps it was His usual name among all the disciples, for Jesus said, “You call me Master and Lord: and you say well; for so I am.” It often happens that for persons whom we love we have some special title by which we speak of them familiarly when we are in the circle of those who join in our esteem of them. Instead of always using their official titles or their actual names, there is some one name which we have attached to them which calls up happy associations, or reminds us of endearing traits in their character and, therefore, it is very sweet in our mouths.

So I suppose that most of the disciples called Jesus, “The Master,” many of them coupling with it the word, “Lord.” Mary, I should suppose, was peculiarly given to the use of the term—it was *her* name for the Lord. I fancy that she called Him “*my* Master,” only, of course, Martha could not say to her, “*your* Master is come,” for that would have been to cast suspicion on her own loyalty to Jesus and perhaps she did not feel exactly in a frame of mind to say, “*our* Master,” remembering that He was Master of so many more, besides, and half hoping that He might be Master over Death himself. She therefore said, “*The* Master.”

It was an emphatic title, “*The* Master is come.” Very remarkable is it that minds of a kindred spirit to Mary have always loved this title, “The Master,” and more especially that wondrous, sweet, mystic poet and dear lover of His Lord, George Herbert, who, whenever he heard the name of Jesus mentioned, would always say, “*my* Master.” He has given us that quaint poem, called “The Odor,” which begins—

“How sweetly does my Master sound, my Master.”

There must be something exceedingly precious about the title for a Mary and a Herbert thus to be enamored of it above all others. Jesus has many names, all full of music—this must be choice, indeed, to be selected before them all as the title which His best beloved prefer to apply to Him.

There are many among us who are, ourselves, accustomed to speak of the Lord as, The Master and, though there are many other titles, such as “The Well-Beloved,” “The Good Shepherd,” “The Friend,” “The Bridegroom,” “The Redeemer,” and “The Savior,” yet we still cherish a very special affection for this one name which gives forth to us “an oriental fragrance” with which, “all day we perfume our mind.” You are aware that the word might just as well be translated, “The Teacher,” the authoritative teacher, for that is the gist of its meaning. I am glad to pronounce it, Mas-

ter, because usage and sweet association have enshrined the word. And also because we have still among us the custom of calling the Chief Teacher in a School or College, *the Master*, but still, had our version given us, "The Teacher is come," it would have been nearer the mark.

I. I shall speak a few words, first, upon THE DEEP PROPRIETY OF THIS TITLE AS APPLIED TO OUR LORD. He is, indeed, The Master—The Teacher. What if I put the two together and say, The Master-Teacher? He has a peculiar fitness for this office to be a Master-Teacher. To be so, a man must have *a masterly mind*. Certainly all minds are not cast in the same mold and are not possessed with the same vigor, depth, force and quickness of action. Some mental organizations are princely by their very formation—though they may belong to plowboys, the imperial stamp is on them! These minds cannot be smothered by a peasant's smock frock, nor kept down by the load of poverty—master minds are recognized by an innate superiority—and force their way to the front.

I say nothing of the *moral* qualities of Napoleon, but a mind so vast as his could not have been forever hidden away among the soldiers in the ranks. He must become a captain and a conqueror. So, too, a Cromwell or a Washington must rise to be masters among men because the caliber of their minds was masterly. Such men see a thing quickly. They hold it with a comprehensive grasp and they have a way of infusing faith into others about it which, before long, pushes them into a master's position, with the common consent of all around them. You cannot have, for a master-teacher, a man with a little soul. He may insinuate himself into the chair of the teacher, but everyone will see that he is out of place and no one will delight to think of him as his master.

There are many painters, but there have been few Raphaels, or Michelangelos—few who could found schools to perpetuate their names. Many songsters have there been, but few poets have founded schools of tuneful thought in which they have been the beloved choirmasters. Many philosophers have there been, but a Socrates or an Aristotle will not be found every day—for great teachers must have great minds—and these are rare among men. The teacher of all teachers, the master of all the teachers, must be a grand, colossal spirit—head and shoulders above other men! Such a soul Mary saw in her Lord Jesus Christ. And such we see there, also, and we therefore claim, for our Lord, the name of, "The Master."

There we have Divinity itself, with its Omniscience and Immutability, and at the same time a complete, full-orbed Manhood, harmonious in all its qualities—a perfect equilibrium of excellence in which there is no excess and no deficiency. You find in Him a perfect mind and that mind so human as to be intensely manly and sweetly womanly, also. In Jesus there was all the tenderness and sympathy of woman joined with the strength and courage of man. His love was feminine, but not effeminate. His heart was masculine, but not hard and stern. He was *the* complete Man, unfallen Manhood in its perfection! Our Lord was a Man who impressed all who came near Him—they either hated Him intensely or loved Him fervently!

Wherever He was, He was seen to be a Prince among the sons of men! The devil recognized Him and tempted Him beyond all others. He saw in Him a foe worthy of his steel—and took Him into the wilderness to have a duel with Him, hoping to defeat the race by vanquishing its manifest Chief. Even scribes and Pharisees, who despised everyone who made not broad the borders of his garment, could not despise this Man—they could *hate* Him—but their hate was the unconscious reverence which evil is forced to render to superlative goodness and greatness! Jesus could not be ignored and overlooked. He was a force in every place, a power wherever He might be. He is a master, yes, “The Master.” There is a grandeur about His whole human Nature so that He stands out above all other men, like some mighty Alpine peak which overtops the minor hills and casts its shadow all adown the vales.

But to make a master teacher, a man must not only have a master mind, he must have *a master knowledge* of that which he has to teach—and it is best if that is acquired by *experience* rather than by instruction. Such was the case with our Lord Jesus. He came to teach us the science of life and in Him *was* life. He experienced life in all its phases and was tempted in all points like we are, though without sin. The highest were not above Him, the lowest He did not regard as beneath Him, but He condescended to their infirmities and sorrows. There are no dreary glens of melancholy which His feet have not trod, nor lofty peaks of joy which He has not scaled. Wondrous was the joy, as well as the sorrow of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He leads His people through the wilderness and, like Hobab of old, He knows where they should encamp in the wilderness and understands all the way which they must traverse to reach the promised land. He was made “perfect through suffering.” He teaches us no Truth of God as mere theory, but as matter of actual experiment on His own Person. The remedy He gives to us He has tested. If there is bitterness for us, He has quaffed full bowls of it—and if there is sweetness in His cup He gives us of His joy. All things that have to do with this life and godliness—the whole science of salvation from the gates of Hell up to the Throne of God—He understands right well by personal acquaintance. There is not a single chapter of the Book of Revelation which He does not comprehend, nor a solitary page of the book of experience which He does not understand and, therefore, He is fit to teach, having both a master mind and a master knowledge of that which He comes to inculcate.

Moreover, our great Master, while here below, had *a masterly way of teaching*, and this, also, is essential, for it is not every man of vast knowledge and great mind that can *teach* others. Aptness to teach is required. We know some whose utterances never seem to be in the tongue of ordinary men. If they have anything to say, they say it in a jargon of their own which *they* and a few of their disciples probably comprehend, but it is Greek to the common people. Blessed is that teacher who teaches what he understands, himself, in a way which enables others to understand him! I like the style of old Cobbett when he said, “I not only speak so that men can understand me, but so that they *cannot misunderstand me.*”

And such a teacher was Christ to His own disciples. When they sat at His feet He made the Truth of God so clear that wayfaring men, though fools, need not err therein. By homely parables and phrases which caught the ear and won the heart, He brought down celestial Truths to ordinary comprehensions—when the Spirit of God had once cleansed those comprehensions and made them able to receive the Truth. He taught, moreover, not only plainly, but lovingly. So gently did He open up things to His own disciples that it must have been a pleasure to be ignorant in order to require to be taught—and a greater pleasure, still, to learn—to learn in such a way! The way in which He taught was as sweet as the Truth He taught.

Everybody that came into Christ's school felt at home, felt pleased with their Master and confident that if they could learn *anywhere* they must learn at His feet. The Master gave, in connection with His teaching, a measure of the Holy Spirit—not the *full* measure—for that was reserved until He had ascended up on high and the Spirit should baptize the Church. But He gave to each of His people a measure of the Spirit of God, by which Truths were not taught to their ears, only, but to their *hearts*. Ah, my Brothers, we are not such teachers as Christ! For, when we have done our best, we can only reach the ear. We cannot give the Holy Spirit—only He can.

And when the Spirit, this day, comes from Christ and takes of His things and reveals them to us, then we see yet more of our Lord's masterly modes of teaching and learn what a Master Jesus is, who writes His lessons, not on the blackboard, but on the fleshy tablets of the heart! It is Jesus who gives us schoolbooks—no—He is, Himself, the Book! It is He who gives us lessons—yes—is, Himself, the Lesson. He performs before us that which He would have us do, so that when we know Him, we know what He has to teach! And when we imitate Him, we have followed the precepts which He gives. Our Lord's way of embodying His instruction in Himself is a right royal one and none can rival Him in it.

Do not children learn infinitely more by *example* than they do by precept? And this is how our Master teaches us. "Never man spoke like this Man" is a grand Christian proverb, but it might be eclipsed by another—"Never man *acted* like this Man," for this Man's deeds and words tally with each other—the deeds embody and enforce the words, give them life—and help us to understand them. He is a Prophet like unto Moses, because He is mighty both in word and in deed—and so He is of Prophets and teachers, *The Master*. Here a master mind, a master experience and a master mode of teaching! Well is He called, "The Master."

But, dear Friends, there was, over and above this—if I have not reached it in what I have already said—a *master influence* which Jesus, as The Teacher, had over those who came within His range. They did not merely see, but *feel*. They did not only know, but *love*. They did not merely prize the lesson, but they *worshipped* the Teacher. What a Master was this Christ, whose very *Self* became the power by which sin was checked and ultimately cast out! And by which virtue was implanted and the new life commenced, nourished and brought to perfection. To have one to teach you who is very dear to you is to make lessons easy.

No child learns better than from a mother qualified to teach, who knows how to make her lessons sweet by crystallizing them in the sugar of her own affection! Then it is pleasure, as well as duty, to learn! But no mother ever won her child's heart, (and there have been tender and affectionate mothers, too), so thoroughly as Jesus won the heart of Mary! Or, I may say, as Jesus has won your heart and mine, if you feel as my heart feels to my Lord. From Him we need no reasons to prove what He says—His love is the logic which proves everything to us. With Him we hold no debate—what He has done for us has answered every question we could raise. If He tells us what we do not understand, we believe it. We ask if we may *understand* it and if He tells us, "No"—we stay where we are and believe the mystery.

We love Him so that we are as glad *not* to know as *to* know, if such should be His will! We believe His silence to be as eloquent as His speech. And that which He conceals to be as kindly intended as that which He reveals. Because we love Him He exercises such an influence over us that, straightway, we prize His teaching and receive it. The more we know Him and the more His inexpressibly delightful influence dominates our nature, the more completely we yield up imagination, thought, reason, *everything*, to Him! Men may call us fools for it, but we have learned, at Jesus' feet, that "the world by wisdom knew not God" and that unless we are converted and become as little children, we shall in no wise enter the kingdom of Heaven. And therefore we are not upset when the world thinks us childish and credulous.

The world is growing more manly and more foolish—and we are growing more childlike and more wise. We reckon that to grow downward into our Lord Jesus is the surest and truest growth! And when we shall have grown clean down to nothing—and even lower till we are *less* than nothing—then we shall be fully grown in the school of Jesus! And then we shall take a high degree in true learning, knowing the love of Christ which passes knowledge. We may well call Him Master who has a masterly mind, a masterly experience and a masterly way of teaching. And, moreover, wields a masterly influence over His pupils, so that they are forever bound, heart and soul, to Him and count Him to be, Himself, His own highest lesson, as well as the chief of all instructors!

Having proved that our beloved Lord is fairly entitled to the name, let me add that *He is, by office, the sole and only Master of the Church*. There is, in the Christian Church, no authority for a doctrine but Christ's Word. The inspired Book which He has left us, charging us never to diminish a letter or add a syllable, is our imperial code, our authorized creed, our settled standard of belief. I hear a great deal said of sundry, "bodies of divinity," but my own impression is that there never was but *one* Body of Divinity and there never will be but one—and that is Jesus Christ in whom "dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." To the true Church, her Body of Divinity is Christ. Some Churches refer to other standards, but we know no standard of theology but our Master. "I, if I am lifted up," He says, "will draw all men unto Me."

We feel no drawings towards any other master! Jesus Christ is the standard—"Unto Him shall the gathering of the people be." We are not of

those who will go no further than Martin Luther. Blessed be God for Martin Luther! God forbid that we should say a word in depreciation of him. But were we baptized unto Martin Luther? Of course not! Some can never budge an inch beyond John Calvin, whom I reverence, first, of all merely mortal men. But still, John Calvin is not our master but only a more advanced pupil in the school of Christ! He teaches, and, as far as he teaches as Christ taught, he is *authoritative*, but where Calvin goes apart from Jesus, he is no more to be followed than Voltaire, himself!

There are brethren whose one reference for everything is to the utterances of John Wesley. "What would Mr. Wesley have said?" is a weighty question with them. We think it a small matter what he would have said, or what he *did* say for the guidance of Christians, now, so many years after his departure! Far better is it to enquire what *Jesus* says in His Word! One of the grandest of men that ever lived was Wesley, but he is no master of ours. We were not baptized in the name of John Wesley, or John Calvin, or Martin Luther! "One is our Master, even Christ." And now the Parliament of our country is about to set apart a learned judge to decide what is right in a so-called Church of Christ! And he is to say, "*This* garment you may wear, and *that* you shall not; up to here your ritual shall go but no further."

In his person the House of Commons is to be recognized as the creator, lord and master of the Church of England, to whom he will say, "Do this," and she will do it, or "Refrain," and she will stay her hand. She must crouch and bend, and take her meat like any dog from the hand that patronizes her! And her collar, made of what brass or leather Caesar chooses to ordain, shall bear this motto, "His servants you are whom you obey." Why, the poorest minister in the most despised of our Churches, whose poverty is thought to make him contemptible, but whose poverty is his glory if he bears it for Christ's sake, would scorn to have any spiritual act of his Church submitted to the judgment of the State! And he would sooner die than be dictated to in the matter of Divine worship!

What has the Church to do with the State? Our Master and Lord has set up a kingdom which acknowledges no other King but Himself. We cannot bow and will not bow before decrees of Parliament and lords and kings in *spiritual* things. Christ's Church has but one Head and that is Christ! The doctrines which the Church has to teach cannot be tested by a Court of Arches, or a bench of bishops, or a synod of ministers, or a presbytery, or a conference. The Lord Jesus Christ has taught us this and if His teaching is contradicted, the contradiction is treason against His crown! Though the whole Church were assembled and that Church the *true* one, if it should contradict the teaching of Christ, its decrees ought to be no more to a Christian than the whistling of the wind upon the mountain wilds! Christ is Master and none but Christ!

Though an Apostle or an angel from Heaven preach any other doctrine than that of our Lord, let him be accursed! I would God that all Christians stood up for this. Then would—

**"Sects and names and parties fall,
And Jesus Christ be All in All."**

He is the sole Teacher and the sole Legislator. A Church has a right to execute Christ's Laws, but she has no right to *make* a law. The ministers

of Christ are bound to carry out the rules of Christ—and when they do so, what is bound on earth is bound in Heaven. But if they have acted upon any rules other than those of this Book, their laws are only worthy of contempt! Be they what they may, they bind no Christian heart! The yoke Christ put on us shall be our joy to wear! But the yoke which prelates would thrust upon us shall be our glory to trample on! “If the Son make you free, you shall be free, indeed.” “Stand fast, therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free and be not entangled, again, with the yoke of bondage.”

“*The Master.*” That is the name Christ should receive throughout the whole Church and He should be regarded always, and on all occasions, and in reference to all spiritual subjects, as the last Court of Appeal, whose inspired Word is—

**“The judge that ends the strife
Where wit and reason fail.”**

Thus much upon the propriety of the title.

II. But now, secondly, let us consider THE PECULIAR RECOGNITION WHICH MARY GAVE TO CHRIST AS THE MASTER. How did she give that recognition? *She became His pupil*—she sat right reverently at His feet. Beloved, if He is *our* Master, let us do the same! Let us take every Word of Jesus, weigh it, read it, mark it, learn it, feed on it and inwardly digest it. I am afraid we do not read our Bibles as we should, or attach such importance as we ought to every shade of expression which our Master uses.

I would like to see a picture of Mary sitting at the Master’s feet. Great artists have painted the Virgin Mary so often that they might consider a change and sketch *this* Mary looking up with a deep, fixed gaze—drinking all in and treasuring all up—sometimes startled by a new thought and a fresh doctrine and then inquiringly waiting till her face beams with unspeakable delight as new light gladdens her heart. Her attentive discipleship proved how truly Jesus was her Master.

Then, mark, she was not only His disciple, but *she was a disciple of nobody else*. I do not know whether Gamaliel was in fashion, then, but she did not sit at *his* feet. I dare say there was some Rabbi Ben Simon, or other famous doctors of the period—but Mary never spent an hour with them—for every moment she could spare was set apart, joyously spent at the feet of a far dearer Rabbi! I wonder whether she was a little deaf and so sat close to the Teacher for fear of losing a word! Perhaps she feared she might be slow of heart and so she got as near the Preacher as others do who have a little deafness in their ears! Any way, her favorite place was close at His feet. That shows us, since we are always dull of hearing in our souls, that it is good to get very close to Jesus when we are hearing Him and commune while we listen. She did not change from Him to someone else for variety’s sake. No, The Master, *her* Master, *her only* Master, was the Nazarene whom others despised, but whom she called her Lord.

She was a willing scholar, for, “Mary has chosen the good part,” said Jesus. Nobody sent her to sit at Jesus’ feet. Jesus drew her and she could not help coming, but she loved to be there. She was a willing and delighted listener. Never was she so happy as when she had her choice—that choice being always to learn of Him. Children at school always learn well if they *want* to learn. If they are forced to attend school, they learn

but little, comparatively—but when they *want* to go, and when they *love* the teacher—it is quick learning with them and happy is the teacher who has a class that has chosen him to teach them! Mary could well call Him, “The Master,” for she rendered Him her sole attention, her loving and delighted attention.

And, mark you, in choosing Christ for Master, *she perseveringly stuck to Him*. Her choice was not taken away from her and she did not give it up. Martha looked very cross one day. How was she to see to the roast and the other dishes at once? How could she be expected to prepare the table and to look to the fire in the kitchen, too? Why could not Mary come? And she scowled, I do not doubt. But it did not matter. Mary still sat there. Perhaps she did not even notice Martha’s face—I think she did not, for the saints do not notice other countenances when Christ’s beauty is to be seen—there is something so absorbing about Him! He takes you all into Himself and bears you right away, drawing not only *all* men, but all *of* men to Himself, when He does draw. And so she sat there and listened.

Those children will learn who stick to their books, who come not *sometimes* to study, but are *always* learning. So Mary recognized the Lord Jesus Christ’s Master-Teachership by giving to Him that persevering attention which such a Master-Teacher had a right to claim. *She went humbly to Him*, for while she sat at His feet for nearness, she sat there, too, out of deep humiliation of spirit. She felt it her highest honor to be sitting in the lowest place, for lowly was her mind. They shall learn most of Christ who think least of themselves. When a place at His feet seems to be too good for us, or at any rate we are more than content with it, then will His speech distil as the rain and drop as the dew—and we shall be as the tender herbs that drink in sweet refreshment—and our souls shall grow!

Blessed were you, O Mary! And blessed is each one of you, if you can call Christ your Master and prove it as she did! You shall have the good part which shall not be taken away from you.

III. Now I come to my third point, which is this—THE SPECIAL SWEETNESS OF THE NAME TO US. I have shown why it was peculiarly recognized by Mary and now I would show that it has a peculiar sweetness for us, also. “*The Master*,” or, “*My Master*,” or, “*My Teacher*.” I love *that* name in my own soul, because it is *as a Teacher* that *Jesus Christ is my Savior*. The best illustration I can give you is that of one of those poor little boys in the street, an “Arab,” without father and mother, or with parents worse than none. The poor child is covered with filth and rags. He is well-known to the police and has seen the inside of many a jail. But a teacher of a Ragged School has laid hold of him and instructs him—and he is now washed and clothed and happy.

Now, that poor boy does not know the sweetness of, “my father,” or, “my mother.” He does not recognize *anything* in those titles. Perhaps he never knew them, or only knew such a form of them as to disgust him. But with what a zest does he say, “*My teacher!*” These little children say, “My teacher,” with quite as much affection as others speak of their mother! Where there has been a great *moral* change worked by the influence of a teacher, the name, “my teacher,” has great sweetness in it.

Now listen to the parable of the ragged boy and his teacher! I was that ragged child! Truly, I did not *think* myself ragged, for I was foolish enough to think my rags were fine garments and that my filth was my beauty! I knew not what I was. My Teacher saw me. He knew how foul I was and how ragged I was. And He taught me to see myself—and also to believe that He could wash me whiter than snow. Yes, He went further and actually washed me till I was clean before the Lord. My Teacher showed me a wardrobe of snow-white linen garments and clothed me in them. My Teacher has taught me a thousand things and worked innumerable good works upon me! I owe my salvation wholly to my Teacher, my Master, my Lord.

Can you say the same? I know you can if you are, indeed, disciples of Jesus! “My Teacher” means to you, “my Savior,” for He saved you by teaching you your disease and your remedy—teaching you how wrong you were and making you right by His teaching. The word, *Master*, or, *Teacher*, has to us a delightful meaning, for it is by His teaching that we are saved. Let me tell you how, as a preacher, I love that name, “my Master.” I like to feel that what I said to those people on Sunday was not mine. I preached my *Master*—and I preached what my Master told me. Some find fault with the doctrine. I do not mind that, because it was none of mine, it was my Master’s! If I were a servant and went to the front door with a message—and the gentleman to whom I took it did not like the message—I would say, “Do not be vexed with *me*, Sir. I have told you my master’s message to the best of my ability—and I am not responsible for it. It is my master’s word, not mine.”

When there are no souls converted it is dreary work, and one’s heart is heavy, but it is sweet to go and tell your Master. And when souls *are* converted and your heart is glad, it is a happy and a healthy thing to give *all* the glory to your Master. It must be an awkward thing to be an ambassador from the English court in some far-off land where there is no telegraph and where the ambassador has to act on his own responsibility. He must feel it a serious burden. But, blessed be God, between every true minister and his Master there is a telegraphic communication—he need never do anything on his own account. He may imitate the disciples of John, who, when they had taken up the Baptist’s mangled body, went and told Jesus. That is the thing to do!

There are difficulties in all Churches, troubles in all families and cares in all businesses—but it is good to have a Master to whom you can go as a servant, feeling, “He has the responsibility of the whole concern—not I! I have only to do what He bids me.” If we once step *beyond* our Lord’s commands, the responsibility rests on *us*—and our trouble begins! But if we follow our Lord, we cannot go astray. And is not this a sweet name to quote when you are troubled, dear Friends? Perhaps some of you are in trouble now. How it removes fear when you find out that He who *sent* the trouble is the Teacher who teaches you *by* the trouble—the Master who has a right to use what form of teaching He likes! In our schools much is learned from the blackboard. And in Christ’s school much is learned from *affliction*.

You have heard the story often, but I venture to repeat it again, of the gardener who had preserved with great care a very choice rose. One morning when he went into the garden it was gone. He scolded his fellow servants and felt very grieved, till someone said, "I saw the master coming through the garden, this morning, and I believe he took the rose." "Oh, then," said the gardener, "if the master took it, I am content." Have you lost a dear child, or a wife, or a friend? It was HE that took your flower! It belonged to Him. Would you wish to keep what Jesus wants? We are asked to pray, sometimes, for the lives of good people, and I think we may. But I have not always exercised faith while pleading, because it seemed to me that Christ pulled one way and I pulled the other.

I said, "Father, let them be here," and Jesus said, "Father, I will that they be with Me where I am." And one could not pull very hard, then! Only feel that Christ is drawing the other way and you directly give up. You say, "Let the Master have it. The servant cannot oppose the Master." It is the Lord. Let Him do what seems good to Him. I was dumb with silence. I opened not my mouth because You said it. Our Master learned that lesson, Himself, which He teaches us. That is a very striking expression, "Father, I thank You that You have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight." It pleased God to pass by the wise and prudent and, therefore, it pleased Christ that it should be so.

It is well to have our hearts like that poor shepherd to whom a gentleman said, "I wish you a good day." Said he, "I never knew a bad day." "How is that, my Friend?" "The days are such as God chooses to make them and, therefore, they are all good." "Well," said the other, "but some days please you more than others?" "No," he said, "what pleases God pleases me." "Well, but have you not a choice?" asked the other. "Yes, I have a choice, and that is, I choose that God should choose for me." "But have you not a choice whether you would live or die?" "No," he said, "for if I am here Christ will be with me. And if I am in Heaven I shall be with Him." "But suppose you had to choose?" "I would ask God to choose for me," he said. Oh, sweet simplicity which leaves everything with God! This is calling Jesus, Master, to perfection—

***"Pleased with all the Lord provides,
Weaned from all the world besides."***

Once again, dear Friends, it is sweet for us to call Jesus, Master, because in so doing we take a position easy to reach and yet most delightful. To call Him, Bridegroom—what an honor it is to be so near akin to the Son of God! *Friend* is a familiar and honorable title—to call Him, *Master*, however, is often easier and it is quite as sweet—for in His service, if we take no higher place, is pure delight to us! If our hearts are right, to do the Lord's bidding is as much as we can ask for! Though we are sons, now, and not slaves, and therefore our service is of a different character from what it ever was before, yet service is delight. What will Heaven be but perpetual service? Here we labor to enter into rest—there they enter into rest while they labor! Their rest is the perfect obedience of their fully sanctified spirits.

Are you not panting for it? Will it not be one of your greatest joys in Heaven to feel that you are His servant? The glorified ones are called His

servants in Heaven. "His servants shall serve Him and they shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads." Rid us of sin and we should be in Heaven now! Earth would be Heaven to us! I want you, dear Brethren in Christ, to go away rolling this sweet word under your tongue—"My Master." "My Master!" You will never hear better music than that—"My Master!" "My Master!" Go and live as servants should live. Mind you, make Him truly your Master, for He says, "If I am a Master where is My honor?" Speak well of Him, for servants should speak well of a good Master. And no servant ever had so dear a Master as He is.

But there are some of you who cannot say this. I wish you could. Jesus is not your Master. Who is, then? You have a master somewhere, for, "his servants you are whom you obey." Now, if you obey the lusts of the flesh, your master is your flesh and the wages will be corruption—for that is what flesh comes to—corruption, and nothing better! Or your master is the devil, and his wages must be death. Run away from such a master! Mostly, when servants leave their masters they are bound to give notice, but here is a case in which no notice should ever be given. When the prodigal son ran away from feeding the swine, he never stopped to give notice that he was going to leave the pigs. He just took off—and I recommend every sinner to run, by the Grace of God, straight away from his sins.

Stopping to give notice is the ruin of many. They *mean* to be sober, but they must treat their good resolution to another glass or two. They *intend* to think about Divine things, but they must go to the theater once more. They would gladly *serve* Christ, but tomorrow, not tonight. If I had such a master as you have—you who live in sin—I would get up and away at once, by the Grace of God, and say, "I will have *Christ* for my Lord." Look at your evil master. Look at his cunning eyes! Can you not see that he is a flatterer? He means your ruin! He will destroy you as he has already destroyed millions! That horrid leer of sin, that painted face—consider them and abhor them! Serve not a master who, though he gives you fair promises, labors for your destruction! Up and away, you slaves of sin! Eternal Spirit, come and break their chains! Sweet Star of Liberty, guide them to the free country and let them find, in Jesus Christ, their liberty!

My Master rejoices to receive runaways! His door is open to vagrants and vagabonds, to the scum of the earth and the off-scouring of all things—to men that are dissatisfied with themselves—to wretches who have no joy in their lives and are ready to lie down and die! "This Man receives sinners." He is like David who went into Adullam. Every man that was in debt and discontented came to him and he became a captain over them. As Romulus and Remus gathered the first population of new Rome by harboring escaped slaves and robbers, whom they trained into citizens and made to be brave soldiers, so my Master has laid the foundation of the new Jerusalem and He looks for His citizens—yes, the noblest of them, over yonder there, where sin and Satan hold them captive—and He bids us sound out the silver trumpet and tell the slaves of sin that if they flee to Him, He will never give them up to their old master! He will emancipate them, make them citizens of His great city, sharers of His bounties,

partakers in His triumphs and they shall be His in the day when He makes up His jewels!

I remember preaching in this strain, once, and an old sea captain told me after the sermon that he had served under the black flag for 50 years, and by the Grace of God he would tear the old rag down and run up the blood red Cross at the masthead. I recommended him not merely to change his *flag*, but to see that the vessel was repaired. But he wisely replied that repairing would be of no use to such an old water-logged hulk—he had better scuttle the old ship and have a new one. I reckon that is the best thing to do—to be dead, indeed, unto sin, and made alive in Christ Jesus—for you may do what you will with the old wreck of fallen Nature, you will never keep it afloat.

The old man must be crucified with Christ! It must be dead, buried and sunk fifty thousand fathoms deep, never to be heard of again. In the new vessel which Jesus launches in the day of our regeneration, with the blessed flag of atoning blood above us, we will sail to Heaven convoyed by Irresistible Grace, giving God the glory forever and ever! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*John 11*.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—797, 769, 768.**

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“And when she had so said, she went her way, and secretly called Mary, her sister, saying, The Master is come, and calls for you. As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly, and came unto Him. Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met Him. The Jews who were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, She goes unto the grave to weep there. Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying unto Him, Lord, if You had been here, my brother had not died.”
John 11:28-32.

IT seems that Martha had heard of Christ's coming, and Mary had not. Therefore Martha rose up hastily and went to meet the Master, while Mary sat still in the house. From this we gather that genuine Believers may, through some unexplained cause, be at the same time in very different states of mind. Martha may have heard of the Lord and seen the Lord. And Mary, an equally loving heart, not having known of His Presence, may, therefore, have missed the privilege of fellowship with Him. Who shall say that Martha was better than Mary? Who shall censure the one, or approve the other? Now, Beloved, You may be tonight, yourselves, though true Believers in Jesus, in different conditions. I may have a Martha here whose happiness it is to be in rapt fellowship with Christ. You have already gone to Him and told Him of your grief—you may have heard His answer to your story and you may have been able by faith to say—“I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.” And you may be full of peace and full of joy. On the other hand, sitting near you may be a person equally gracious as yourself who can get no farther than the cry, “Oh, that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come even to His seat!” Dear Martha, condemn not Mary. Dear Mary, condemn not yourself! Martha, be ready to speak the word of comfort to Mary. Mary, be ready to receive that word of comfort and, in obedience to it, rise up quickly and, in imitation of your sister, go and cast yourself, as she has already done, at the Savior's feet. I must not say, because I have not all the joy my brother has, that I am no true child of God. Children are equally children in your household, though one is little and the other is full grown, and they are equally dear to you,

though one is sick and the other in good health—though one is quick at his letters and another is but a dull scholar. The love of Christ is not measured out to us according to our conditions or attainments. He loves us irrespective of all these. Jesus loved Martha, and Mary, and Lazarus. He loves all His own and they must not judge Him by what they feel, nor measure His love by a sense of their own lack of love.

Hoping that the Lord will now bless the word to all of us who are His own people, I shall speak of two things—a visit *from* the Master—a visit *to* the master.

I. HERE IS A VISIT FROM THE MASTER.

Martha came and said to Mary, “The Master is come”—or as we might read it truly, “The Master is here and calls for you.” “The Master is come.” “The Master is here.”

Beloved Friends who are just now without the present fellowship with Christ, which you fondly desire, permit me to whisper this in your ear—“The Master is here! The Master is here!” We cannot come round and whisper it secretly as Martha did, but take the message, each one of you, to yourself—“The Master is here.”

He is here, for He is accustomed to be where His Word is preached with sincerity of heart. He is accustomed to be wherever His saints are gathered together in His name. We have His own dear word for this—the best pledge we can have—“Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” We have met in His name, we have met for His worship, we have met to preach His Gospel—and the Master is here! We are sure He is here, for He always keeps His word. He never fails any of His promises!

He is here, for some of us feel His Presence. Had Mary said to Martha, How do you know that the Master is come? she would have answered, “Why I have spoken with Him and He has spoken to me.” Well, there are some among us who can say, “He has spoken to us.” Did we not hear Him speaking when we were singing that hymn just now?—

***“My God, the spring of all my joys,
The life of my delights,
The glory of my brightest days,
The comfort of my nights.”***

Did not we perceive Him to be near some of us, when we were singing—

***“Oh, see how Jesus trusts Himself
Unto our childish love,
As though, by His free ways with us,
Our earnestness to prove”?***

I, for one, did, if none besides! I can bear good witness to you that are languishing for His company—“The Master is here!”

And mark, He is here none the less surely because you have not, as yet, found it out, for a fact does not depend upon our cognizance of it, though our comfort may be materially affected thereby. The Master was at Bethany, though Mary had not heard an inkling of the good tidings. There she sat, her eyes red with weeping, and her whole soul in the grave

with her brother Lazarus. Yet Jesus was there for all that. Make the case your own—though you may have come here troubled with all the week's cares—though while you have been sitting here the thought of something that will happen tomorrow has been depressing you—though some bodily weakness has been holding you down when you would lift up your spirit towards God, yet that does not alter the fact—"the Master is come." The Master is here. Oh, there was Mary sighing, "If only Christ had been here! Oh, if only Christ would come." And there He was! And perhaps you are saying, "Oh, that He were near me!" He is near you right now! You sigh for what you have, and pine for that which is near you! You think not, like Mary Magdalene, that He stands in this garden. You are asking, "Where have you laid Him?" While your joy and comfort seem to you dead, He, whose absence you mourn, stands present before you! Oh, that He would but open those eyes of yours, or rather that He would open your heart, by saying to you, "Mary!" Let Him but speak one word right home to you, personally, and you will answer with gladness, "Rabboni!" The Master is come here, though you as yet have not perceived Him.

That word, "*The Master*," has a sweet ring about it. He is the Master. He that is come is earth's Master. What are your cares? He can relieve them! What are your troubles? He can overcome them and sweep them out of the way! The Master has come. "Cast your burden on the Lord: He will sustain you." He is Hell's Master. Are you beset with fierce temptations and foul insinuations of the arch-fiend? The Master has come! Oh, lift your head, you captive daughter of Zion, for your bands are broken! The Breaker is come up before them. Their king shall pass before them and the Lord on the head of them. He who has come is no menial servant, but the right royal Master, Himself. The Master is come! What does it matter though your heart now seems cold as a stone and your spirit is cast down within you? What if death has set up its adamant throne in your breast? The Master has come and His Presence can thaw the ice, dissolve the rock, bring you all the Graces of the Spirit and all the blessings of Heaven that your soul can possibly require! "The Master is come"—does not that touch your soul and fire your passions? Whose Master is He but your own? And what a Master! No taskmaster, no slave's master, but such a Master that His absolute Sovereignty inspires you with the sweetest confidence, for He binds you with the bonds of love and draws you with the cords of a man. Master, indeed, is He! Yes, Lord and sole Master of your soul's inmost care if you are what you profess to be. The Master whose scepter is the scepter of reed which He carried in His hand when He was made a scorn and scoffing for you! The Master whose crown is the crown of thorns which He wore for your sins when He accomplished your redemption! Your Master! You shall call Him no more Baali, but Ishi shall His name be called! He is only Master in that same sense in which the tender loving husband is the master of the house.

Love makes Him supreme, for He is Master in the art of love and, therefore, Master of our loving hearts. How sweetly does, “My Master,” sound! “My Master.” Why, if nothing else might bestir us to get up and run to meet Him, it should be the sound of that blessed word, “The Master is here: the Master has come.”

But Martha added—and it is a very weighty addition (may the Holy Spirit make application of it to your heart)—“and calls for you.” “But is that true?” asks one, “does He call for *me*?” Dear Brother, dear Sister, I know that if I say He does, I shall not speak without His guarantee, for when He comes into a congregation, He calls for all His own! He speaks, and He says to all whom He loves, “Rise up, my Love, my Fair One, and come away.” I know He does because love always delights in fellowship with the object that is loved! Jesus loved you before the earth was! His delights were with the sons of men from old eternity! He loved you so well that He could not stay in Heaven without you, so He came here to seek you and to save you! And now it gives His heart joy to be near you. He says, “Let Me hear your voice. Let Me see your face, for sweet is your voice and your countenance is comely.” I tell you it is Christ’s Heaven to hear the voices of His people! It is that for which He left Heaven—that He might give them voices with which to praise Him. Do you think He loved you so and will live without you? No, He calls for you!

What is His Word, indeed, all through, but a call to His own Beloved to come to Him? What are Sabbaths but calls in which He says, “Come away! Come away, My Beloved, from the noise and turmoil of the city, and come into the quiet places where My sheep lie down and feed”? What are your troubles but calls to you in which, with somewhat of harshness as it seems to you, but with an inner depth of love, He says, “Away My Beloved, from all earthly delights, to find your All in Me”? What is the Communion of the Lord’s Supper but another call to you, “Come unto Me”? The bread which you shall eat, and the wine which you shall drink—these are for yourself—but the call which is encompassed by them as by symbols, is for each one of you! The Master is here, and calls for you—for each one! “Oh, but” says Mary, “my eyes are bleared with weeping.” He calls for you, you red-eyed mourner! “Yes, but my heart is heavy with a sad affliction.” He calls for you, you burdened sufferer! “Yes, but I have been full of levity all the week and have forgotten Him.” He calls you that He may cleanse you yet again! “Ah, but I have denied Him.” What says He but, “Go, and tell My disciples, and Peter”? He calls for you, that He may forgive you yet again, and may say to you, “Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?” I care not who you are, if you are one of His, the Master is come and calls for you!

“Why,” says one, “no Christian has spoken to me for a long while.” But the Master calls for you! “But I seem so solitary in this great metropolis, and though I know my Master, I do not know any of His people.” Never mind His people! The Master is come, and calls for you. “Yes, but I think

if I am one of His, I must be at the very tail end of the catalog, and the last of all." He calls for you—for *you*. Oh, may that Word now come home and may each one feel, "If He calls for me, there is such condescension in that call, such tender memories of my weakness, such consideration for my distance and my forgetfulness, that I will loiter no longer. Is the Master come? Lo, I am ready for Him! Does the Master call? Lo, my spirit answers, 'Come, Master, my heart's doors are flung wide open! Come and sit on the throne of my heart! Enter in and sup with me and I with You, and make this a gladsome season of intimate fellowship between my soul and her Lord.'" Turning now to our second part, let us talk awhile of—

II. A VISIT TO THE MASTER.

It follows on the first as a fit sequence. We never come to Christ till Christ comes to us. "Draw me—I will run after You." That is the order. It is not, "We will run after You, Lord—draw us." When a soul is saying, as we sung in the hymn just now—

***"If You have drawn a thousand times,
Oh, draw me yet again"***

—then, Beloved, He is drawing us! When we are praying to be drawn, we are being drawn all the while!

In answer to the Lord's visit, you will notice the conduct of Mary. She rose up quickly. She bestirred herself. Oh, let each one of our souls now say, "Has the Lord called for me? Why, then, should I loiter or linger for a single moment? I will get up this very moment. I will say, 'My Lord, I have come to You. You have called me, and here I am.'" Oh, for Grace to shake off the sorrow that makes some hearts sit still! Mary's dear brother was newly laid in the tomb, but she rose up quickly to go and meet her Master. Dear Mother, forget for a few minutes that dear unburied child still in the house. Forget awhile, dear Husband, that sick wife of yours towards whom your heart so naturally flies. Forget, Beloved, just now, all that you have suffered, all that you expect to suffer, all that you have lost or may be losing. The Master is come, and calls for you! Rise up quickly! Let not these things constrain you to inactivity of spirit, but rise up, now, and, by His Grace, come away from them! Mary bestirred herself. She put on her best efforts, that she might not tarry when He called. And then she went, we find, just as she was. She rose up quickly, it is said, and she went. She came unto Him. No sooner said than done! She arose and she came. Well, but should she not have washed her face? Tears add but little beauty to the maiden's visage. And that hair of hers, I doubt not, all disheveled—might she not have arranged that a little, and prepared her dress, and made herself trim for the Lord? Ah, that is a temptation for the mass of us—"I cannot expect to have fellowship at the Table because I have not come prepared." Brothers and Sisters, you ought to have come prepared, but, at the same time, if you have not, rise up quickly and come to the Master as you are! The Master had seen Mary

with tears, before, for He had felt her tears upon His feet. He had seen her with disheveled hair before, for she had wiped His feet with the hairs of her head! If you are out of order, it is not the first time Christ has seen you so. I do not think a mother's love depends upon seeing her child in its Sunday clothes. She has seen it, I guarantee you, in many a trim in which she would not wish anybody else to see it, but she has loved it none the less!

Come, then, you unprepared one! Come to Him who knows just what you are and in what state you are—He will not cast you out—only make brave to believe that when Christ calls, His call is a call to come, however unfit we may be! And oh, how promptly she left all other comforters to come to Christ! There were the Jews that came to comfort her. I dare say they did their best, but she did not stay for the Rabbi to finish his fine discourse, nor for the first scholar of the Sanhedrim to complete that dainty parable by which he hoped to charm her ears and relieve her sorrow! She went straight away to the Master, then and there! So would I have you forget that there are other comforters—forget your joys as well as your griefs—leave all for Him and let your soul be only taken up with that Great Master of yours who calls for you, for all your faculties, for all your emotions, for all your passions, for your entire self! Come right away, by His help, from everything else that would absorb any part of your being. Rise up and draw near to Him!

But it seems, Beloved, that when Mary had reached the Master's feet, she had done all she could, for it is said that she fell at His feet. Ah, you remember she had once *knelt* at His feet when she washed them. She had once *sat* at His feet when she heard His Words. This time she *fell* at His feet. She could neither kneel to do Him service, nor sit to pay Him the reverence of a disciple. She fell all but in a swoon, life gone from her. She fell at His feet. Never mind, if you are at His feet, if you do but fall there! Oh, to die there—it were life itself! Once get to Jesus and you may say, like Joab at the altar when Benaiah said, "Come away, for Solomon has sent me to slay you." "No," said Joab, "but I will die here"—and there at the horns of the altar he died! And if we must die, we will die there at His feet! Fall down at His feet! Beloved, if you do not feel you have strength for Communion tonight, never mind—it does not need any!—

***"Oh, for this no strength have I—
My strength is at His feet to lie."***

Some of us know what it is to be scarcely able to get together two consecutive thoughts—not to be able to master a text or lay hold of a promise—still we would say, "Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him." We could lie down at the feet that were pierced and feel how sweet it is to swoon at the Savior's feet. Only get there! Let your will and heart be good to get at Him now, for the Master is here and calls for you! Come, though in the coming you should utterly fail to get enjoyment, come and fall at His feet!

Do I hear any of you saying, "Ah, but I have a heavy thought pressing at my heart, and if I come to Him, there is not much that I can say in His honor. I feel but little love, and gratitude, and joy. I could not pour out sweet spikenard from the broken box of my heart." Be it so, only pour out what you have! For what did Mary do? She said—and the Master did not chide her, though He might have—"Lord, if You had been here, my brother had not died." Oh, it was half cruel, for she seemed to say, "Why were You not here?" It was unbelieving in part, and yet there is a deal of faith in it—a sweet clinging to Him. Martha had said the same and it shows how often those two sisters had said to one another, "Would God the Master was here." When the brother was very sick and near to death, they were saying to one another, "Oh, if we could get the Master here!" That had been the great thought with them, so they pour it out. Beloved, when you are at Jesus' feet, if you have an unbelieving thought, if you have something that half chides Him, pour out your heart like water before the Lord—

***"Let us be simple with Him then—
Not backward, stiff, and cold,
As though our Bethlehem could be
What Sinai was of old."***

Tell Him the weakness. Tell Him the suspicion. Tell Him all the sin that has been, and all the sin that is haunting you. Tell it all to Him—and at His feet is the place to tell it! You will then be eased of your burden. Beloved, you know how Mary received consolation. It was a great day for her when she got to Christ's feet, and then the Master began to do wondrously, and very soon Lazarus was restored! So now, your first business, my Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, is to get to Jesus! "Oh, but Lazarus is dead." Never mind Lazarus! You get to Jesus and *He* will see to Lazarus! "Oh, but my business fails me." Never mind the business just now! Get to Jesus. "Oh, but there is sickness in my house." Leave the sickness for awhile now. The one thing is to get to Jesus and to His feet! "Oh, but my own heart is not as it should be." Forget your own heart, too, and remember Jesus! He is to you all that you need! He is made of God, unto you, "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption"—come to Him quickly, and you shall have all you need! "Ah," says one, "I cannot bear to think of God, for I do not love Him." "Ah," says another, "but I can bear to think of Him, for though I did not love Him, He loved me." And now you may say, "I cannot bear to think of coming to Jesus, for I do not love Him as I should." Ah, but think of Him, for He loves you! His Grace to you is boundless! Now let yourself be put aside awhile, and remember this "faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus has come into the world to save sinners." Come, then, in the strength of that!

I must close by saying a few words to those here whom I have not addressed. Perhaps there are some here to whom this message has never

come—"The Master is come and calls for you." If it were to reach them tonight, it would be the first time they ever heard it. O dear Heart, I pray it may come to you, that this may be the beginning of days with you! The Master has come. This is certain. From the highest Throne in Glory to the Manger, to the Cross and to the grave, the Master has come! That He calls for you, I think this is also certain. Let me give you a text in which, I think, He calls for you. "Whoever will, let Him come and take of the water of life freely." "Whomever believes on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved." Calls He not for you, too, in this text, "Let the wicked forsake his ways and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him turn unto the Lord, for He will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon"? Calls He not for you in this verse, where He bids all that labor and are heavy-laden come unto Him, that they may rest? Or in that other, "Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord. Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as wool; though they are red like crimson, their shall be as snow"?

He calls for you! Believe Him! It is certainly matchless Grace, but He is God and none is like He. "As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are His thoughts above your thoughts." But does your heart say, "Why, if I thought Jesus called for me, I would come"? Then He does call you! That speech of yours, "I would come," proves it! It is He that makes you feel willing! Do you long for Him? Oh, He is putting His hand in at the door of your heart and making your heart yearn for Him! Does a tear drop on the floor, and do you say, "It cannot be that such an one as I should ever live and be saved, and be Christ's"? Why, your very admiration at His Grace shows that some of His Grace is at work upon you. Trust in Him! Trust in Jesus whether you sink or swim! Trust that that arm can save! Trust that those pierced hands can grasp you! Trust that that Heart that was gashed with a spear can feel for you! Trust yourself wholly to Him! "Go your way, your sins which are many, are forgiven you." If you have trusted Him, you are saved!

Come and cast yourself at Jesus' feet tonight! Is there no young man here to whom this shall be Christ's voice? You say you cannot believe and cannot repent—and cannot do anything? Then fall like dead at Jesus' feet and look up to Him—to Him, alone, and you shall have life! Is there no young woman here burdened in heart, to whom the Savior's feet may become a place of refuge from all her fear? I trust there is. And if I speak to someone far advanced in years, who imagines that he, at least, must be given up by mercy, it is not so! You have but a few days more to live, but the Master calls for you! Rise up quickly! May tonight witness your forsaking of your sins and your clinging to His Cross! And one day you shall see His face in Heaven without a veil between!

The Lord bless you, Beloved, for Christ's sake Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

JOHN 16.

Verse 1. *These things have I spoken unto you, that you should not be offended.* That you should not be scandalized when you are put to suffering on My account—that you should not dread the offense of the Cross and turn aside because of it. How considerate our Master is! It seems as if He might be angry at us if He suspected that we could be offended by anything that He did or suffered, or that we had to suffer for Him—but He knows the weakness of our flesh and, therefore, He speaks with so much elaboration of comfort.

2-4. *They shall put you out of the synagogues: yes, the time comes that whoever kills you will think that he does God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father nor Me. But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, you may remember that I told you of them.* When you meet with rebuke, and slander, and jesting, and jeering against you for Christ's sake, He has told you of them—

***“Temptation or pain—He has told you no less.
The heirs of salvation, you know from His Word
Through much tribulation must follow their Lord.”***

4. *And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you.* While they had His Presence, He was like a wall of fire round about them. They did not need to be protected, then, from dangers which had not come. And the Lord has not told us yet some of the things which He will reveal to us, by-and-by, because the trial has not come. You feel as if you could not die at peace just now. You dread death. You shall have dying Grace in dying moments! Do not be questioning yourself as to whether you have dying Grace *now*. You do not need it *now*. You shall have it when the time comes!

5, 6. *But now I go My way to Him that sent Me. And none of you asks Me, Where are You going? But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow has filled your heart.* It often happens, that if we were to inquire a little more into the sorrow, it would vanish. They did not ask Him why He went away. They fretted because He was going. Now He tells them to whom He was going.

7. *Nevertheless I tell you the truth, it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you.* It is a better thing for us in this world to have the Holy Spirit in us than to have the corporeal Presence of Christ with us. We are better helped by the Holy Spirit than we would have been if Jesus had remained on earth.

8-12. *And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on Me: of righteousness, because I go to My Father, and you see Me no more; of judgment because the prince of this world is judged. I have yet many*

things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now. Partly because their sorrow incapacitated them from hearing anymore; partly because their spiritual infancy did not permit them, as yet, to learn the deeper doctrines which are rather meat for men than milk for babes. O you that are teachers of others, imitate the prudence of Jesus! Do not teach people too much at once. Do not try to make a little child understand all that an advanced and experienced saint knows! Say, as your Master did, "I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now."

13, 14. *Howbeit when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all Truth; for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatever He shall hear, that shall He speak; and He will show you things to come. He shall glorify Me.* Now that is a sure mark of the Holy Spirit! If there is any spirit which does not glorify Christ, it is not the Holy Spirit! It is not the Comforter. If you hear any Doctrine which detracts from the dignity of Christ's Nature, from the glory of Christ's Person, from the perfection and the necessity of Christ's Sacrifice, you may depend upon it that it is not the Doctrine of God. Reject it at once! It may poison you. It cannot build you up. "He shall glorify Me."

14, 15. *For He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you.* The things of the Father are Christ's. We learn them as Christ's. The Spirit brings them to us as Christ's and so Christ is glorified and we are comforted.

16-19. *A little while, and you shall not see Me: and again, a little while, and you shall see Me, because I go to the Father. Then said some of His disciples among themselves, What is this that He says unto us, A little while, and you shall not see Me: and again, a little while, and you shall see Me: and Because I go to the Father? They said therefore, What is this that He says, A little while? We cannot tell what He says. Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask Him—And that is a very sweet thing. Sometimes we are afraid to pray. Sometimes we feel as if we could not bring ourselves to prayer. But it is so sweet. "Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask Him." There is the essence of prayer in the desire to pray! There is really a request which Jesus Christ can read in the heart that longs to make a request and scarcely dares do it.*

19, 20. *And said unto them, Do you inquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and you shall not see Me: and again, a little while, and you shall see Me? Verily, verily, I say unto you, That you shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and you shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.* Not merely shall your sorrow be taken away, but it shall be transformed! As the alchemist thought that he turned baser metal into gold, so in very truth by a heavenly alchemy does Christ turn the sorrow of His people, not in this case only, but in many others, into joy.

21-24. *A Woman when she is in travail, has sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembers no*

more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And you now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man takes from you. And in that day you shall ask Me nothing. Verily, verily I say unto you, Whatever you shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it to you. Up to now you have asked nothing in My name. They had asked so little that it came to nothing, and they had not yet learned the art of using His name in prayer—and a great many Christians have not learned it either! Often they say, and they say very properly, “for Jesus Christ’s sake.” That is good, but there is something better! Suppose a person calls at my door and asks me to relieve him, out of love to some friend of mine. That is very well. But suppose he says, “I come from that friend of yours, and he told me to use his name, and to put whatever you did for me to his account. Why, that is a stronger plea altogether! Happy are they who know how to use the name, the authority, the claims, the rights of Jesus as an argument with which to back their prayers!

24. *Ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full.* You have got some joy, but there is room for more. Brothers and Sisters, has your joy ever been full? Full? Could not you be more joyous? Oh, there have been times with some of us when we could not be more joyous than we were. We have asked, and we have received, and we have been so glad that we hardly knew how to live under the blessed delirium of gladness. We have seemed to be carried away with an intense delight because God has heard our prayers. “That your joy may be full.”

25. *These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs.* In short, parabolic sentences.

25-27. *But the time comes, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall show you plainly of the Father. At that day you shall ask in My name and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: For the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came from God.* That is a very precious Truth of God! While Jesus does pray the Father for us, yet we are not to look upon that as if Christ’s prayer made the Father love us. No! Not only is it not Christ’s prayer that makes the Father love us. It is not even Christ’s *death* that makes the Father love us. Often do we repeat that verse—

**“Twas not to make the Father’s love
Towards His people flame,
That Jesus, from the realms above,
On the kind errand came.
‘Twas not the pangs that He endured,
Nor all the woes He bore,
That God’s eternal love procured,
For God was love before.”**

It is an exposition and display of the Father’s love—and the prayer of Christ, though blessedly useful, does not make the Father love us, or

willing to grant the request. “For the Father Himself loves you.” Notice the blessed condescension of Christ that He should mention His people’s virtues. He says to these men that had been with Him, who really do not seem as if they had loved Him very much, and certainly were not very strong in faith, but were often in such a state of unbelief that He had to say, “Where is your faith?” Yet He says, “The Father Himself loves you because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came from God.”

28-31. *I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father. His disciples said unto Him, Lo, now you speak plainly, and speak no proverb. Now are we sure that You know all things, and need not that any man should ask You: by this we believe that You came forth from God. Jesus answered them, Do you now believe? Are you at this moment full of faith? Do not trust yourselves. Do not begin to glory in the strength of your faith.*

32. *Behold, the hour comes, yes, is now come, that you shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. Oh, you that say you believe tonight, beware lest tomorrow you should be scattered in unbelief and fear! Whatever faith we have is God’s giving, and if it remain with us, it will be because God keeps it there! There is not one among us that has any faith to spare. We do not know but that the very hour is come, even now, that will try us and make us ask whether we have any faith at all.*

33. *These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me you might have peace. In the world you shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer: I have overcome the world. There is a blessed word of good cheer for us, everyone!*

—Adapted from the *C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

BELOVED AND YET AFFLICTED

NO. 1518

PREACHED BEFORE AN AUDIENCE OF INVALID LADIES AT MENTONE,
BY C. H. SPURGEON.

“Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick .”
John 11:3.

THAT disciple whom Jesus loved is not at all backward to record that Jesus loved Lazarus, too. There are no jealousies among those who are chosen by the Well-Beloved. Jesus loved Mary and Martha and Lazarus—it is a happy thing when a whole family lives in the love of Jesus! They were a favored trio and yet, as the serpent came into Paradise, so did sorrow enter their quiet household at Bethany. Lazarus was sick. They all felt that if Jesus were there, disease would flee at His Presence. What, then, should they do but let Him know of their trial? Lazarus was near to death's door and so his tender sisters at once reported the fact to Jesus, saying, “Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick.” Many a time since then has that same message been sent to our Lord, for in full many a case He has chosen His people in the furnace of affliction. Of the Master it is said, “Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses,” and it is, therefore, no extraordinary thing for the members to be in this matter conformed to their Head.

I. Notice, first, A FACT mentioned in the text—“Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick.” The sisters were somewhat astonished that it should be so, for the word, “behold,” implies a measure of surprise. “We love him and would make him well directly. You love him and yet he remains sick. You can heal him with a word! Why, then, is Your loved one sick?” Have not you, dear sick Friend, often wondered how your painful or lingering disease could be consistent with your being chosen and called and made one with Christ? I dare say this has greatly perplexed you and yet in very truth it is by no means strange, but a thing to be expected!

We need not be astonished that the man whom the Lord loves is sick, for he is only a man. The love of Jesus does not separate us from the common necessities and infirmities of human life! Men of God are still men. The Covenant of Grace is not a charter of exemption from consumption, or rheumatism, or asthma. The bodily ills which come upon us because of our flesh will attend us to the tomb, for as Paul says, “we that are in this body do groan.” Those whom the Lord loves are the more likely to be sick since they are under a peculiar discipline. It is written, “Whom the Lord loves He chastens and scourges every son whom He receives.” Affliction of some sort is one of the marks of the true-born child of God and it frequently happens that the trial takes the form of illness. Shall we, therefore, wonder that we have to take our turn in the sick chamber?

If Job and David and Hezekiah must, each one, smart, who are we that we should be astonished because we are in ill health? Nor is it remarkable that we are sick if we reflect upon the great benefit which often flows from

it to ourselves. I do not know what peculiar improvement may have been worked in Lazarus, but many a disciple of Jesus would have been of small use if he had not been afflicted. Strong men are apt to be harsh, imperious and unsympathetic and, therefore, they need to be put into the furnace and melted down. I have known Christian women who would never have been so gentle, tender, wise, experienced and holy if they had not been mellowed by physical pain. There are fruits in God's garden as well as in man's which never ripen till they are bruised. Young women who are apt to be volatile, conceited, or talkative, are often trained to be full of sweetness and light by sickness after sickness, by which they are taught to sit at Jesus' feet. Many have been able to say with the Psalmist, "It is good for me to have been afflicted, that I might learn Your statutes."

For this reason, even such as are highly favored and blessed among women may feel a sword piercing through their hearts. Oftentimes this sickness of the Lord's loved ones is for the good of others. Lazarus was permitted to be sick and to *die*—that by his death and resurrection the Apostles might be benefited. His sickness was "for the glory of God." Throughout these 1,900 years which have succeeded Lazarus' sickness, all Believers have been getting good out of it and this afternoon we are all the better because he languished and died. The Church and the world may derive immense advantage through the sorrows of good men—the careless may be awakened, the doubting may be convinced, the ungodly may be converted, the mourner may be comforted through our testimony in sickness—and if so, would we wish to avoid pain and weakness? Are we not quite willing that our friends should say of us, also, "Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick"?

II. Our text, however, not only records a fact, but mentions A REPORT of that fact—the sisters sent and told Jesus. Let us keep up a constant correspondence with our Lord about everything—

***"Sing a hymn to Jesus, when your heart is faint.
Tell it all to Jesus, comfort or complaint."***

Jesus knows all about us, but it is a great relief to pour out our hearts before Him. When John the Baptist's broken-hearted disciples saw their leader beheaded, "they took up the body and went and told Jesus." They could not have done better! In all trouble send a message to Jesus and do not keep your misery to yourself. In His case there is no need of reserve, there is no fear of His treating you with cold pride, or heartless indifference, or cruel treachery. He is a Confidant who never can betray us—a Friend who never will refuse us. There is this fair hope about telling Jesus—He is sure to support us under it.

If you go to Jesus and ask, "Most gracious Lord, why am I sick? I thought I was useful while in health and now I can do nothing. Why is this?" He may be pleased to show you why, or, if not, He will make you willing to bear His will with patience without knowing why. He can bring His Truth to your mind to cheer you, or strengthen your heart by His Presence, or send you unexpected comforts and give you great joy in your afflictions. "You people, pour out your heart before Him: God is a refuge

for us.” Not in vain did Mary and Martha send to tell Jesus and not in vain do any seek His face. Remember, too, that Jesus may give healing.

It would not be wise to live by a supposed faith and cast off the physician and his medicines any more than to discharge the butcher and the tailor and expect to be fed and clothed by faith! But this would be far better than forgetting the Lord altogether and trusting to man only. Healing for both body and soul must be sought from God! We make use of medicines, but these can do nothing apart from the Lord, “who heals all our diseases.” We may tell Jesus about our aches and pains and gradual declining and hacking coughs. Some persons are afraid to go to God about their health—they pray for the pardon of *sin*, but dare not ask the Lord to remove a headache—and, yet, surely, if the hairs outside our head are all numbered by God, it is not much more of a condescension for Him to relieve throbs and pressures *inside* the head!

Our big things must be very little to the great God and our little things cannot be much less. It is a proof of the greatness of the mind of God that while ruling the heavens and the earth, He is not so absorbed by these great concerns as to be forgetful of the least pain or need of any one of His poor children. We may go to Him about our failing breath, for He first gave us lungs and life. We may tell Him about the eyes which grow dim and the ears which lose hearing, for He made them both! We may mention the swollen knee and the broken finger, the stiff neck and the sprained foot, for He made all these, our members—He redeemed them all and will raise them all from the grave! Go at once and say, “Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick.”

III. Thirdly, let us notice in the case of Lazarus A RESULT which we should not have expected. No doubt when Mary and Martha sent to tell Jesus, they thought to see Lazarus recover as soon as the messenger reached the Master. But they were not gratified. For two days the Lord remained in the same place and, not till He *knew* that Lazarus was dead did He speak of going to Judea. This teaches us that Jesus may be informed of our trouble and yet may act as if He were indifferent to it. We must not expect, in every case, that prayer for recovery will be answered, for if so, nobody would die who had young or child, friend or acquaintance to pray for him.

In our prayers for the lives of beloved children of God we must not forget that there is one prayer which may be crossing ours, for Jesus prays, “Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My Glory.” We pray that they may remain with *us*, but when we recognize that Jesus wants them above, what can we do but admit His larger claim and say, “Not as I will, but as You will”? In our own case, we may pray the Lord to raise us up and yet, though He loves us, He may permit us to grow worse and worse and at last to die. Hezekiah had 15 years added to his life, but we may not gain the reprieve of a single day! Never set such store by the life of anyone dear to you, or even by your own life as to be rebellious against the Lord. If you hold the life of any dear one with too tight a hand, you are making a rod for your own

back—and if you love your own earthly life too well, you are making a thorny pillow for your dying bed.

Children are often idols and in such cases their too ardent lovers are *idolaters*. We might as well make a god of clay and worship it, as the Hindus are said to do, as worship our fellow creatures, for what are they but clay? Shall dust be so dear to us that we quarrel with our God about it? If our Lord leaves us to suffer, let us not repine. He always does that for us which is kindest and best, for He loves us better than we love ourselves! Did I hear you say, “Yes, Jesus allowed Lazarus to die, but He raised him up again”? I answer, He is the resurrection and the life to us, also! Be comforted concerning the departed, “Your Brother shall rise again,” and all of us whose hope is in Jesus shall partake in our Lord’s Resurrection. Not only shall our souls live, but our bodies, too, shall be raised incorruptible! The grave will serve as a refining pot and this vile body shall come forth vile no longer!

Some Christians are greatly cheered by the thought of living till the Lord comes and so escaping death. I confess that I think this no great gain, for so far from having any preference over them that are asleep, those who are alive and remain at His coming will miss one point of fellowship—not dying and rising like their Lord! Beloved, all things are yours and death is expressly mentioned in the list! Therefore do not dread it, but rather, “long for evening to undress, that you may rest with God.”

IV. I will close with A QUESTION—“Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus”—does Jesus, in a special sense, love *you*? Alas, many sick ones have no evidence of any special love of Jesus towards them, for they have never sought His face nor trusted in Him. Jesus might say to them, “I never knew you,” for they have turned their backs upon His blood and His Cross. Answer this question dear Friend, to your own heart, “Do you love Jesus?” If so, you love Him because He first loved you. Are you trusting Him? If so, that faith of yours is the proof that He has loved you from before the foundation of the world, for faith is the token by which He proves His fidelity to His beloved.

If Jesus loves you and you are sick, let all the world see how you glorify God in your sickness! Let friends and nurses see how the beloved of the Lord are cheered and comforted by Him. Let your holy resignation astonish them and set them admiring your Beloved who is so gracious to you that He makes you happy in pain and joyful at the gates of the grave! If your religion is worth anything, it ought to support you now and it will compel unbelievers to see that he whom the Lord loves is in a better case when he is sick than the ungodly when full of health and vigor!

If you do not know that Jesus loves you, you lack the brightest star that can cheer the night of sickness! I hope you will not die as you now are and pass into another world without enjoying the love of Jesus—that would be a terrible calamity, indeed! Seek His face at once and it may be that your present sickness is a part of the way of love by which Jesus would bring you to Himself. Lord, heal all these sick ones in soul and in body. Amen.

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

“JESUS WEPT”

NO. 2091

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 23, 1889,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLES NEWINGTON.**

*“Jesus wept.”
John 11:35.*

A GREAT storm was stirring the mind of Jesus. We find, on looking at the original, that He was indignant and troubled. We have a very literal translation in the margin of the Revised Version. And instead of reading, “He groaned in the spirit and was troubled,” we find it, “He was moved with indignation in the spirit and troubled Himself.” What was this indignation? We cannot think that it was caused by the unbelief of His friends, or even by the pretended sympathy of those malicious Jews who hastened to accuse Him to the Pharisees.

But we look further and deeper for the reason of this heat. He now stood face to face with the last enemy, death. He saw what sin had done in destroying life and even in corrupting the fair handiwork of God in the human body. He marked, also, the share which Satan had in all this and His indignation was aroused. Yes, His whole nature was stirred. Some read it, “He roused Himself,” instead of reading, as we have it in our version, “He was troubled.” Certainly, there would seem to be an active sense in the expression—it was not so much that He was troubled, as that “He troubled Himself.”

The waters of His soul were clear as crystal, and therefore when troubled, they were not muddied. Yet they were all stirred. It could be seen that His holy Nature was in a ferment and an inarticulate expression of distress fell from Him. Between indignation at the powers of evil, grief for the family who had been bereaved by death, sorrow over those who stood by in unbelief and a distressing realization of the effects of sin, the Lord’s heart was evidently in a great storm.

Instead of the thunder of threat and the lightning of a curse, all that was perceptible of the inward tempest was a shower of tears. For “Jesus wept.” A hurricane rushed through His spirit. All the forces of His soul were disturbed. He shuddered at the sight which was about to be set before Him. He was thrilled from head to foot with emotion. Yet the result of the storm was not a word of terror, nor a glance of judgment but simply a blessed shower of tears—“Jesus wept.” If all our righteous indignation displayed itself in tears of pity, we should have fulfilled the text, “Be you angry and sin not.”

“Jesus wept.” I have often felt vexed with the man, whoever he was, who chopped up the New Testament into verses. He seems to have let the hatchet drop indiscriminately here and there. But I forgive him a great

deal of blundering for his wisdom in letting these two words make a verse by themselves—“Jesus wept.” This is a diamond of the first water and it cannot have another gem set with it, for it is unique. Shortest of verses in words but where is there a longer one in sense? Add a word to the verse and it would be out of place. No, let it stand in solitary sublimity and simplicity. You may even put a note of exclamation after it and let it stand in capitals, “JESUS WEPT!”

There is infinitely more in these two words than any sermonizer, or student of the Word, will ever be able to bring out of them, even though he should apply the microscope of the most attentive consideration. “Jesus wept.” Instructive fact—simple but amazing—full of consolation—worthy of our earnest heed. Come, Holy Spirit and help us to discover for ourselves the wealth of meaning contained in these two words!

We read of other men that they wept. Abraham, when he buried Sarah, wept. Jacob had power with the angel, for he wept and prevailed. Of David we are continually reading that he wept. His friend Jonathan and he once wept together and were not unmanned but were the more truly men for weeping. Of Hezekiah we read that he wept sorely and of Josiah that he poured forth tears over the sins of Judah. Jeremiah was a *weeping* Prophet. And I might continue the list, but if I did, it would not be at all remarkable that the sons of a fallen father should weep. With all the sin and sorrow that surrounds our manhood, it is no marvel that it should be said of any man, “He wept.”

The earth brings forth thorns and thistles and the heart brings forth sorrow and sighing. Is there a man or woman here who has not wept? Have we not all, sometimes, felt a sweet relief in tears? Looking round upon this great assembly, I could point to you, one by one, and say, “He wept and he wept. And she wept and she wept.” And none would wonder that such has been the case. The marvel is that the sinless Son of God should, in the days of His flesh, know the meaning of strong crying and tears. The fact worthy to be noticed and recorded is that “Jesus wept.” On that subject we shall meditate this morning. And may the Lord make our thoughts profitable!

First, I would remind you that “Jesus wept,” Because He was truly *man*. Secondly, “Jesus wept,” for He was not ashamed of His human weakness, but allowed Himself to reveal the fact that He was, in this point also, made like unto His Brethren. Thirdly, “Jesus wept,” and therein He is our Instructor. Fourthly, He is our Comforter. And lastly, He is our Example. We can only give a little space to each of these five things.

I. First, “Jesus wept,” for HE IS TRULY MAN. Many facts prove the completeness of our Lord’s taking up of our nature. Not in phantasm, nor in fiction was Jesus a man. But in reality and truth He became one of us. He was born of a woman, wrapped in swaddling bands, fed from the breast. He grew as a child, was obedient to His parents and increased in stature and in wisdom. In manhood He worked, He walked, He wearied. He ate as we do—we find it mentioned that He fasted and that He hungered.

After His resurrection He ate a piece of a broiled fish and of a honeycomb, to show that His body was real. His human nature was sustained, as ours is, by supplying it with food. Though on one occasion, sustained by Divine power, He fasted forty days and forty nights—yet as man He ordinarily needed food. He drank also and gave thanks both for food and drink. We find Him sleeping with His head upon a pillow and resting upon the curb of the well of Sychar. He suffered all the innocent infirmities of our nature. He was hungry and was disappointed when, early in the morning, He came to a fig tree seeking fruit but found none.

He was weary—"Jesus, being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well." That He thirsted we know, for He said to the Samaritan woman, "Give Me to drink." And on the Cross He cried in burning fever, "I thirst!" In all things He was made like His Brethren. "Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses." His humanity was our humanity to the full, although without sin. Sin is not essential to humanity—it is a disease of nature. It is not a feature found in humanity, as though it came from the Creator's hand. The Man of men, in whom all true humanity is found in perfection, is Christ Jesus.

The fact that Jesus wept is a clear proof of this. He wept, for He had human friendships. Friendship is natural to man. Scarcely is He a man who never had a friend to love. Men in going through the world make many acquaintances but out of these they have a few special objects of esteem whom they call friends. If they think to have many friends, they are, probably, misusing the name. All wise and good men have about them choice spirits with whom their communion is more free and in whom their trust is more confident than in all others.

Jesus delighted to find retirement in the quiet home at Bethany. And we read that, "Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus." Alas, my Brethren, every friendship opens a fresh door for grief. For friends are no more immortal than ourselves. "Jesus wept" at the grave of His friend just as you and I have done and must do again. Behold your Lord, like David, weeping for His Jonathan, and see how human He is in His friendships.

"Jesus wept," for He was truly human in His sympathies. He did not merely walk about among us and look like a man but at a thousand points He came into contact with us. Jesus was always in touch with sorrow. Happy are they that are in touch with Him! Our Lord saw Mary and Martha weeping and the Jews that were with her weeping and He caught the contagion of their grief—"Jesus wept." His sympathies were with sorrowing ones and for this reason, among others, He was Himself, "a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief."

He loved first His Father in Heaven, whose glory was His main object. But He loved intensely His chosen and His sympathy with them knew no bounds. "In all their afflictions He was afflicted." Jesus was far more tender towards humanity than any other man has ever been. He was the great Philanthropist. Alas, man is often the most cruel foe of man. None more unkind to man than men. Not the elements in their fury, nor wild

beasts in their rage, nor diseases in their terror, have made such havoc among men as men drunk with the war spirit.

When has there been such cruel hate on the part of the most savage monster towards man as has aged in the hearts of blood-thirsty warriors? To this hate our Lord was a perfect stranger. There was no flint in His heart. He was love and only love. And through His love He descended into the depths of grief with the beloved ones whose lot was sorrowful. And He carried out to the full that sacred precept, “Weep with them that weep.” Jesus was no unsuffering seraph, no cherub incapable of grief, but He was bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. And therefore “Jesus wept.”

He was a man, dear Friends, for He was stirred with human emotion. Every emotion that ever thrilled through your bosom, so far as it is not sinful, has had its like in the bosom of the Lord Jesus Christ. He could be angry—we read in one place that, “He looked round about on them with anger.” He could be pitiful. When was He not so? He could be moved with compassion for a fainting crowd, or with scorn of a crafty ruler. Did He not speak with great indignation of the scribes and Pharisees? Yet, was He not tender as a nurse with a child, when cheering the penitent?

He would not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. Yet He uttered faithful warnings and made terrible exposures of hypocrisy. Our Savior, at the moment described in our text, felt indignation, pity, love, desire and other emotions. He who is all heart of tenderness, was stirred from head to foot. He was troubled and He troubled himself. As when water is shaken in a vial, so was His whole nature shaken with a mighty emotion, as He stood at the grave of Lazarus, confronting death and him that has the power of it.

Our Lord proved Himself a man when it was said that “Jesus wept.” Note, too, that His pure body and His sinless soul were originally constituted as ours are. When His body was formed according to that Scripture, “A body have You prepared Me,” that holy thing had in it the full apparatus of grief—the tear gland was in His eyes. Where there is no sin, one would say there should be no sorrow. But in the formation of that blessed body, all the arrangements for the expression of grief were as fully prepared as in the case of any one of us. His eyes were made to be fountains of tears, even as are ours. He had about His soul, also, all the capacity for mental grief.

As I said before, so I say again, it would seem that there should be no tears where there are no transgressions. And yet the Savior’s heart was made to hold sorrow, even as an amphora was made for wine. Yes, more, His heart was made capacious enough to be a reservoir wherein should be gathered up great floods of grief. See how the sorrow bursts forth in a mighty flood! Mark the record of that flood in these amazing words, “Jesus wept.”

Beloved, have a clear faith in the humanity of Him whom you rightly worship as your Lord and your God. Holding His Divinity without doubt, hold His manhood without mistake. Realize the actual manhood of Jesus in all lights. Three times we read He wept. Doubtless He sorrowed full of-

ten when He was not seen. But thrice He was known to weep. The instance in our text was the weeping of a Friend over the grave of a friend. A little further on, after a day of triumph, our Lord beheld the city and wept over it—that was the weeping of a Prophet concerning judgments which He foresaw.

It is not recorded by any Evangelist, but Paul tells us, in the Epistle to Hebrews, that with strong crying and tears, He made appeal to Him that was able to save Him from death and was heard in that He feared. This third record sets forth the weeping of our Substitute, a sacrificial weeping, a pouring out of Himself as an oblation before God. Treasure up in your mind these three memories, the weeping of the Friend in sympathy with bereavement, the weeping of the Judge lamenting the sentence which He must deliver and the weeping of the Surety as He smarts for us, bearing griefs which were not His own, for sins in which He had no share. Thus thrice was it true that "Jesus wept."

II. Now, let us change the line of our thought a little, while we say, "Jesus wept," that is, HE WAS NOT ASHAMED OF HIS HUMAN WEAKNESS. He could have repressed His tears—many men do so habitually. I do not doubt that there may be great sorrow, very great sorrow, where there is no open expression of it. In fact, most of you must have felt times when grief has struck you such a stunning blow that you could *not* weep, you could not recover yourself sufficiently to shed tears—the heart was all on fire with anguish and the eyes refused the cooling drops.

The Savior could doubtless, if so He had wished, have hidden His grief. But He did not choose to do so, for He was never unnatural. As "the holy Child Jesus," He was free from pride and wore His heart where men could see it.

For, first, remember His talk when He spoke to His disciples. He never concealed His poverty. There is an idea abroad that respectability is maintained by the pretense of riches, whereby real need is hidden. It is thought disreputable to seem to be poor, even when you are so. There may be something in the affectation but our Lord did not countenance such a course. For He said, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests. But the Son of Man has not where to lay His head." Though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor and He was never ashamed to let it be known that He was poor.

So, too, He was "despised and rejected of men," and He did not pretend to be unaware of it. He did not try to make out that He was exceedingly popular and that nobody had a word to say against Him. But He owned that they had called the Master of the house Beelzebub. He knew what they had called Him and He was not ashamed of being made the butt of ridicule and the target of reproach. When they ascribed His miracles to the power of Satan He met the charges with an overwhelming reply. But He was not ashamed that slander had befallen Him as well as poverty.

As for His sufferings and death, how frequently do we find Him talking to His disciples about it, till Peter would have stopped Him if he could!

Our Lord spoke of His being betrayed into the hand of sinners and despitefully entreated and spat upon. He spoke openly of His being “lifted up.” He even dwelt upon the minute items of His coming passion—He had no wish to deny the fate which He knew awaited Him. Why not die and say nothing about it, if so it must be? Not so the Savior. He has become a man and He is not ashamed at that which necessarily follows as a part of His humiliation. Being found in fashion as a man He becomes obedient to all that is required of His manhood and before all observers He takes His place in the ranks. “Jesus wept.”

Jesus wept on this occasion, although it might have been misunderstood and misrepresented. Do you not think that the Jews who stood there would sneeringly say, “See, He weeps! The miracle worker weeps! He calls Himself the Son of God and yet He stands weeping there like any ordinary man!” Here was opportunity for scorn at His manifest weakness and even for blasphemy at the evident token of it. But our Lord did not act upon policy. He allowed His true feelings to be seen. He did not, like the stoic, claim respect for His manhood by holding Himself within Himself and refusing to let men see that He was of like feelings with them. No, “Jesus wept.”

Tears may not be thought manly but they are *natural* to man and Jesus will not be unnatural. The enemies may say what they please, and even blaspheme both Him and His God. But He will not act a part in the hope of silencing them. He acts the truth, only, and weeps as His kind heart suggests. He thinks more of Mary and of Martha and the comfort His sympathy may yield them, than of the sneering language of unbelievers, which may forge an excuse for itself out of the loving weakness of His humanity.

“Jesus wept,” and thereby He revealed His love to Lazarus, so that others saw it and cried, “Behold how He loved him!” This is one proof that our Lord does not hesitate to declare His love to His people. When He sojourned upon earth He was not ashamed to find friends among ordinary mortals. Our glorious Lord, now that He is enthroned, “is not ashamed to call us Brethren.” He is not ashamed to be written down in the same heavenly register as His poor people. His cheeks were bedewed with tears such as those which drop from our eyes, and by those tears all knew what manner of love He had towards His chosen.

Blessed be His name! Many a great man might be willing to befriend a poor man with money but not with tearful love. But here the blessed Master, in the midst of the assembled multitude, owns dead and rotting Lazarus as His friend and seals the covenant of His love with tears. “Jesus wept”—He was not ashamed to own the affliction which sin caused to His holy soul—nor the gash which the sight of death made in His heart. He could not bear to see the grave and its corruption. May we never think of the sin and misery of our race without sorrow!

I confess I can never go through this huge city without feeling unhappy. I never pass from end to end of London without feeling a black and dark cloud, hanging like a pall over my spirit. How my heart breaks for you, O

sinful city of London! Is it not so with you, my Brethren? Think of its slums, its sins, its poverty, its ungodliness, its drunkenness, its vice! These may well go through a man's heart like sharp swords. How Jesus would have wept in London! He could not stand in the front of a lone grave, about to look upon a single corpse, without weeping.

He saw in that one death the representation of what sin has done on so enormous a scale, that it is impossible to compute the devastation. And therefore He wept. What have you not done, O Sin! You have slain all these, O Death! What a field of blood has Satan made this earth! The Savior could not stand unmoved in the presence of the Destroyer, nor approach the gate of death's palace without deep emotion. Of this He was by no means ashamed. And therefore He did not hold back His tears—"Jesus wept."

Brethren, holy emotion is not a weakness to be ashamed of. If at any time, in the midst of the world's wickedness and gaiety, you weep, do not hide those tears! Let the thoughtless see that there is one, at least, who fears God and trembles when the Holy One is provoked.

"Jesus wept," though He was about to work a wonderful miracle. The glory of His Godhead did not make Him ashamed of His manhood. Singular thing, too, that He should weep just before the joy of raising the dead to life. He is God, for He is about to call Lazarus out of the grave. But He is man just as much as ever and therefore He weeps.

Our Lord was as much man when He raised the dead as when He worked in the carpenter's shop at Nazareth. He was not ashamed to own His real manhood while He proved Himself the Resurrection and the Life. This day in the glory of Heaven He wears His scars, to show that, though God, He is not ashamed to be recognized as man. He makes this one of His glorious names—"I am He that lives and was dead. And, behold, I am alive forevermore." Therein He describes His connection with our manhood in life and in death. Beloved, "Jesus wept," to show that He did not disdain the feebleness of that nature which He had taken up, that He might redeem it unto God.

Remember that our Lord Jesus exercised three years of ministry and each year was signalized by a resurrection. He began by raising the little daughter of Jairus, upon whose unmarred countenance death had scarcely set his seal. Then He went on to raise the young man at the gates of Nain, who was being carried out to his burial, dead but not yet corrupt. And now He consummates His Glory by raising this Lazarus, who had been dead four days already. Yet, when He came to this crowning marvel and thus displayed the perfection of His Godhead, He did not disdain to stand before all and weep. Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life, yet "Jesus wept."

III. Thirdly, OUR LORD JESUS IS OUR INSTRUCTOR IN WEEPING. This is the most practical part of our discourse. Be sure that you receive it by the teaching of the Holy Spirit.

Observe why Jesus wept and learn a lesson from it. He wept because this was His method of *prayer* on this occasion. A great miracle was to be worked and great power was needed from on high—as man, the Lord Jesus cries to God with intense earnestness and finds the most fit embodiment for His prayer in weeping. No prayer will ever prevail with God more surely than a liquid petition, which, being distilled from the heart, trickles from the eye and waters the cheek. Then is God won when He hears the voice of your weeping.

The angel at Peniel will slip from your dry hands. But moisten them with tears and you will hold him fast. Before the Lord Jesus puts forth the power which raises Lazarus from the grave, He appeals to God with strong crying and tears. The Father appears for His weeping Son. And you, dear Friends, if you want to win in prayer, must weep in prayer. Let your soul arouse itself to eager desire and trouble itself to anguish, and then you will prevail. “Jesus wept” to teach us how to baptize our prayers unto God in a wave of heart grief.

“Jesus wept” again, because before He would arouse the dead He would be Himself aroused. A word of His could have worked the wonder—yes, His mere volition would have been enough. But for our instruction He did not make it so. There was a kind of evil which went not out but with prayer and fasting and here was a kind of death which would not yield unless the Savior groaned and wept. Without great exertion of the life of Jesus, the death in Lazarus could not be subdued. Therefore the Lord aroused Himself and stirred up all His strength, troubling all His being for the struggle on which He entered.

Learn, therefore, my Brothers and Sisters, that if you think to do any great good in saving sinners, you must not be half-asleep yourself—you must be troubled even to tears. Perhaps the most difficult thing in winning souls is to get ourselves into a fit state. The dead may bury the dead but they cannot *raise* the dead. Until a man’s whole soul is moved, he will not move his fellow. He might, possibly, succeed with those who are willing to be impressed. But the careless will be unmoved by any man who is unmoved himself. Tears storm a passage for warnings. If Christ’s whole Self must be stirred before Lazarus is raised, we must be thrilled before we can win a soul.

The fingers of decay are unwinding the goodly fabric which once was worn by the soul of Lazarus and no voice can effectually command them to pause but one which sounds forth from a bursting heart. That “stinking,” of which Martha spoke, can only be turned into the sweet odors of grateful life by the salt tears of infinite love. It is still more so in our case. We must feel, if others are to feel. Come, my dear Sister, you that are going to the Sunday school class this afternoon, because you must go—you must not go in that spirit. You, my Brothers, who are going to preach or talk to your classes and have as yet only one eye open. This will never do.

Your Lord was all alive and all sensitive and you must be the same. How can you expect to see His power exercised on others if you do not feel His emotion in yourselves? You must be quickened into tenderness as He

was, or you will not receive His life-giving power. When I am weak, then am I strong. “Jesus wept” when He raised dead Lazarus.

Jesus wept in full knowledge of several things which might have prevented His weeping. You have sometimes thought to yourself when weeping at the grave of a dear child, or wife, or husband, that you have been wrong in so doing. But this may not be the case. Our Savior wept, though He knew that Lazarus was safe enough. I do not know what had happened to the soul of Lazarus—where Scripture is silent it is not mine to speak. But, wherever He was, He was perfectly safe. And yet “Jesus wept.”

Moreover, Jesus knew that He was going to raise Lazarus to life—his resurrection was close at hand. And yet “Jesus wept.” Sometimes we are told that if we really believed that our friends would rise again and that they are safe and happy even now, we would not weep. Why not? Jesus did. There cannot be any error in following where Jesus leads the way. Jesus knew, moreover, that the death of Lazarus was for the Glory of God—He had said, “This sickness is not unto death but for the Glory of God.” And yet He wept! Have we not thought, “Surely it must be wicked to weep when you know that the bereavement will glorify God”?

Not so, or else Jesus would not have wept under similar circumstances. Learn instruction—tears which else we might have regarded as contraband have now free admission into the realm of holiness, since “Jesus wept.” Sister, you may weep, for Jesus wept. He wept, with full knowledge of the happiness of Lazarus, with full expectation of his resurrection and with the firm assurance that God was glorified even by his death—we may not, therefore, condemn what Christ allows.

“Jesus wept,” but He did not sin. There was not even a particle of evil in any one of the Redeemer’s tears. Salt there may have been but not fault. Beloved, we can weep without sin. I do not suppose we have ever done so, but it is possible. It is not a sin to weep for those whom God has taken away from us, nor for those who are suffering. I will tell you why there was no sin in Christ’s weeping—it was because He wept in His Father’s presence. When He spoke in His sorrow, the first word was, “Father”—He said, “Father, I thank You.” If you can weep in such a way that all the while you feel God to be your Father and can thank Him and know that you are in His Presence, your weeping is not blameworthy but healthful.

Let such floods flow on, for Jesus wept and said, “Father, I thank You.” Brethren, we sin when we either laugh or weep behind God’s back. Absence from God is the element of sin. When you cannot smile nor weep except by forgetting God and His Law, then are you offending. But if you can get up to your great Father’s bosom and bury your head there, you may sob away without shame. For that which He permits is evidently no offense.

“Jesus wept,” but He never murmured. “Jesus wept,” but He never found fault with God’s dispensations. “Jesus wept” sweetly in submission, not bitterly in rebellion. I think this is good instruction here—may the

Holy Spirit teach it to us! May the Lord write it on every weeper’s heart. You, Hannah, a woman of a sorrowful spirit—did Eli accuse you? Come to Eli’s Master, the great High Priest. For He will not blame you but He will tell you that you may weep, for He also wept.

IV. I must be brief upon my fourth point. “Jesus wept”—IN THIS HE IS OUR COMFORTER.

Let me speak to those who are of heavy heart. “Jesus wept”—herein is our honor. You weep, my Friend, in good company. For Jesus wept. Let no man censure you lest they not only blame you but Jesus also. “Jesus wept”—herein is our sonship vindicated. You say, “Can I be the child of God and yet go weeping?” Was not Jesus the well-beloved Son? And yet He wept. Ah, the question lies another way—“What son is he whom the father chastens not?” What child did God ever have that did not weep? He had *one* Son without sin. But He never had a son without sorrow. He had a Son that never deserved a stroke of the rod and yet against that Son the sword was awakened.

Mourner, you are one of “The Worshipful Company of Weepers,” of whom Jesus is the Worthy Master. He is at the head of the Clan of Mourners—you may well wear the plaid with the black and red crosses upon it, for your Chieftain wore the same. See now the real sympathy of Christ with His people, for herein is comfort. His sympathy lies not alone in words, not even wholly in deeds—it is more tender than these can be. Only His heart could express His tender sympathy and then it was by tears—tears which were brought up like gold from the *heart*, minted in the eyes and then put in circulation as current coin of the merchant, each one bearing the King’s image and superscription.

Jesus is our fellow-sufferer. And this should be our greatest solace. Oh, if we had a High Priest that knew not what it is to suffer as we do, it would be a most unhappy thing for us! If we fled to Him for refuge and found that He had known no grief and consequently could not understand us, it would be killing to a broken heart. I saw a young bird yesterday fly where he thought he saw ready entrance. But, alas for him! There was an invisible barrier. He dashed against the glass and stunned himself and I was sad when I saw him lie dead outside my window.

If in my grief I fled to Jesus and there was about Him a secret inability to sympathize, an incapacity to admit me to His heart—pure as crystal though that barrier might be—I should dash myself against it and die in despair. A Jesus who never wept could never wipe away my tears. That were a grief I could not bear, if He could not have fellowship with me and could not understand my woe.

Beloved, think how bravely our Lord endured—herein is confidence. Tears did not drown the Savior’s hope in God. He lived. He triumphed, notwithstanding all His sorrow. And because He lives, we shall live also. He says, “Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” Though our Hero had to weep in the fight, yet He was not beaten. He came, He wept, He conquered. You and I must not be afraid to imitate Jesus—we share the

tears of His eyes and we shall share the diamonds of His crown. Wear the crown of thorns here and you shall wear the crown of glory hereafter.

Let this comfort you, too, that, though He wept, He weeps no more—herein is Heaven begun below. "Death has no more dominion over Him" in any sense or degree. He has done with weeping. So shall it be with us before long. How I love that promise—"Neither shall there be any more pain"! Heaven is without a temple, for it is all devotion. And so is it without a hospital, for it is all health and love. "The inhabitant shall no more say, I am sick." "Oh, for the *no more weeping!*" It will come to us before long, for it has come to Jesus.

"The Lord God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." We shall soon have no cause for sorrow and no possibility of grief. For as He is, such shall we be. And as He is perfectly blessed, we shall be beatified in Him. "Jesus wept." But His weeping is all over. "Jesus wept." But His sorrow is now a thing of the past and so shall ours be before long.

V. Fifthly and lastly, "Jesus wept"—IN THIS HE IS OUR EXAMPLE. We should weep, for Jesus wept. Jesus wept for others. I know not that He ever wept for Himself. His were sympathetic tears. He embodied that command, "Weep with them that weep." He has a narrow soul who can hold it all within the compass of his ribs. A true soul, a Christly soul, lives in other men's souls and bodies as well as in its own. A perfectly Christly soul finds all the world too narrow for its abode, for it lives and loves. It lives by loving and loves because it lives.

Think of other weepers and have pity upon the children of grief. Today I want to touch your heart strings, and move you to pity the pains and the agonies of the many now lying within the wards of our hospitals and the even greater miseries of those who pine for want of medicine and care because they cannot get into the hospitals but have to wear themselves out in hopeless disease. How must those suffer who have bad nursing and little food and in the winter are pinched with cold! You and I may never suffer as they do but at least let us grieve on their account and stand ready to succor them to the best of our ability.

In another matter our Lord is our example—learn from Him that our indignation against evil will best show itself in compassion for sinners. Ah, my dear Friend! I heard you declaiming tremendously against drunkenness. I am glad to hear you—you cannot say anything too hard or too heavy about that degrading vice. But, I pray you, wind up your denunciation with weeping over the poor drunkard. I heard you speak, my other Friend, on behalf of the League of Purity and you smote the monsters of lasciviousness with all your force. I wish more strength to your arm! But when you have done, sit down and weep that such filthiness should defile men and women, who are your fellow creatures.

Appeal to Parliament, if you wish, for the putting down of vice. But Parliament itself first needs correcting and purifying. A flood of tears before the thrice Holy God will do far more than the largest rolls of petition to our senators. "Jesus wept." And His tears were mighty weapons against sin

and death. You feel indignant at the lazy, idle, loafing vagabonds whose very illness is produced by their own vice—I cannot condemn your virtuous wrath. But if you would in all things imitate Jesus, please note that it is not written that Jesus thundered, but that “Jesus wept.”

Let indignation have pity mixed with it. I like not lightning without rain, nor indignation without tears. I know what you will say about the lack of thrift among the poor, about the absence of sobriety, the want of industry and so forth. Admit all this sorrowfully—chide it tenderly. And then weep. You will do more good to the offenders and more good to yourself and more good to the best of causes, if pity moistens all. You may, if you will, beat the terrible drum and sound the war trumpet. But the noise will rather deafen than soften. The voice of your weeping will be heard deep down in the soul and work more wonders than thunders of denunciation.

Lastly, when you have wept, imitate your Savior—do something! If the chapter before us had finished with “Jesus wept,” it would have been a poor one. Suppose, after they had come to the grave, we had read, “Jesus wept and went about His daily business.” I should have felt small comfort in the passage. If nothing had come of it but tears, it would have been a great failing off from the usual ways of our blessed Lord. Tears? What are they alone? Salt water. A cup of them would be of little worth to anybody.

But, Beloved, “Jesus wept,” and then He commanded, “Roll away the stone.” He cried, “Lazarus, come forth!” When Lazarus struggled out of the tomb, Jesus said, “Loose him and let him go.” Some of you are full of pity for the sick. But I hope we shall not end in mere sentiment. Do not let us say, “We were moved to sympathize with the sick but we gave an awfully bad collection!” I should be ashamed to think of this morning’s meditation if it ended so.

No, no! If you cannot raise the dead, give something towards rolling away the stone which shuts the poor out of the hospital. If you cannot restore them to health, at least do something towards removing their maladies. Loose them from this crowded city and send them into the country to a Convalescent Home. Brethren, we can thus practically prove the truth of our sympathy. Therefore, pass the boxes round!

***Portions Of Scripture Read Before Sermon—
John 11:17-46; Hebrews 2:6-18.***
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—912, 265, 327.

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“OH, HOW HE LOVES!”

NO. 3228

**A SERMON
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**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, JULY 7, 1872.**

***“Then said the Jews, Behold how He loved him!”
John 11:36.***

IT was at the grave of Lazarus that Jesus wept and His grief was so manifest to the onlookers that they said, “Behold how He loved him!” Most of us here, I trust, are not mere onlookers, but we have a share in the special love of Jesus. We see evidences of that love, not in His tears, but in the precious blood that He so freely shed for us—and so we ought to see further into His heart than they did—and to know more of Him than they could in the brief interval in which they had become acquainted with Him. When we think of His love to us, we may well cry, “Behold how He has loved us!”

These Jews expressed their wonder at the love that Jesus had for His friend, Lazarus. They did not keep that wonder to themselves, but they said, “Behold how He loved him!” In these days, we are too apt to repress our emotions. I cannot say that I greatly admire the way in which some enthusiastic folk shout, “Glory!” “Hallelujah!” “Amen,” and so on, in the midst of sermons and prayers. Yet I would sooner have a measure of that enthusiastic noise than have you constantly stifling your natural emotions and checking yourself from giving utterance to your heart’s truer feelings. If we were in a right state of mind and heart, we would often say to one another, “How wondrous has the love of Jesus been to us!” Our conversation with one another as Brothers and Sisters in Chris, would often be upon this blessed subject. We waste far too much of our time upon trifles—it would be well if the love of Jesus so engrossed our thoughts that it engrossed our conversation, too! I fear that many who profess to be Christians go for a whole year, or even longer, without telling to others what they are supposed to have experienced of the love of Jesus. Yet this ought not to be the case. If we were as we should be, one would frequently say to another, “How great is Christ’s love to me, my Brother! Do you also say that it is great to you?” Such talk as that between the saints on earth would help us to anticipate the time when we shall need no other theme for conversation in the land beyond the river!

I am going to remind you of some very simple Truths of God in order to excite the hearts of those of you who are coming to the Communion Table. My objective is to increase your love to the dear Lord and Savior who has loved you so intensely as to die for you. And first, Beloved, let us think of *what the love of Christ has done for us*. Secondly, of *what His love has done to us*. And then, thirdly, I need to say that I am afraid *our*

love to Christ will never cause any wonder except on account of the littleness of it.

I. So first, let us quietly think over WHAT THE LOVE OF CHRIST HAS DONE FOR US.

When did Christ's love begin to work for us? It was long before we were born—long before the world was created! Far, far back *in eternity*, *our Savior gave the first proof of His love to us by espousing our cause.* By His Divine foresight, He looked upon human nature as a palace that had been plundered, broken down and in its ruins He perceived the owl, the bittern, the dragon and all manner of unclean things. Who was there to undertake the great work of restoring that ruined palace? No one but the Word, who was with God, and who was God. "He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor. Therefore His own arm brought salvation unto him, and His righteousness, it sustained him." Before the angels began to sing, or the sun, moon and stars threw their first beams across primeval darkness, Christ espoused the cause of His people and resolved not only to restore to them all the blessings that He foresaw that they would lose, but also to add to them richer favors than could ever have been theirs except through Him. Even from eternity His delights were with the sons of men! And when I think of Him in that far-distant past of which we can form so slight a conception, becoming "the Head over all things to the Church" which then existed only in the mind of God, my very soul cries out in a rapture of delight, "Behold how He loved us!"

Remember, too, that in that eternal secret council, *the Lord Jesus Christ became the Representative and Surety of His chosen people.* There was to be in what was then the far remote future, a Covenant between God and man. But who was there who was both able and willing to sign that Covenant on *man's* behalf and to give a guarantee that men's part of that Covenant should be fulfilled? Then it was that the Son of God, well knowing all that such a Suretyship would involve, undertook to be the Surety for His people to fulfill the Covenant on their behalf, and to meet all its demands which He foresaw that they would be unable to meet! Then the Eternal Father gave into Christ's charge, the souls that He had chosen unto eternal life though ages, of which we can have so faint an idea, were to elapse before those souls were to be created! And the Eternal Son covenanted to redeem all those souls after they had fallen through sin—to keep them by His Grace and to present them "faultless" before the Presence of His Father with exceeding joy! Thus, as Jacob became accountable to Laban for the whole flock committed to his charge, Jesus Christ, "that Great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the "Everlasting Covenant," undertook to redeem and guard the whole flock entrusted to His care, so that when, at the last great muster, they should pass under the hand of Him that counts them, not one of them would be missing and the blessed Shepherd-Son would be able to say to His Father, "Those that You gave Me I have kept, and not one of them is lost." It was in the Everlasting Covenant that our Lord Jesus Christ became our Representative and Surety, and engaged on our behalf to fulfill all His Father's will! And as we think of this great mystery of mercy, sure-

ly all of us who are truly His must exclaim with grateful adoration, "Behold how He loved us!"

I have been speaking of very ancient tidings, but let us now come to matters that we can more clearly comprehend. In the fullness of time, our Lord Jesus Christ left the glories of Heaven and took upon Him our nature. We know so little of what the word, "Heaven," means that we cannot adequately appreciate the tremendous sacrifice that the Son of God must have made in order to become the Son of Mary. The holy angels could understand far better than we can what their Lord and ours gave up when He renounced the royalties of Heaven and all the honor and glory which rightly belonged to Him as the Son of the Highest—and left His Throne and Crown above to be born as the Babe of an earthly mother—yet even to the angels there were mysteries about His Incarnation which they could not fathom. And as they followed the footprints of the Son of Man on His wondrous way from the manger to the Cross and to the tomb, they must often have been in that most suggestive attitude of which Peter wrote, "which things the angels desire to look into." To us, the Incarnation of Christ is one of the greatest marvels in the history of the universe, and we say with Paul, "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness. God was manifest in the flesh." The Omnipotent Creator took the nature of a creature into indissoluble union with His Divine Nature and, marvel of marvels, that creature was man! "He took not on Him the nature of angels, but He took on Him the seed of Abraham." For an angel to become an ant, if that were possible, would be nothing at all in comparison with the condescension of Christ in becoming the Babe of Bethlehem! For, after all, angels and ants are only creatures formed by Christ working as one of the Persons of the ever-blessed Trinity, for John, writing under the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit, expressly says, "All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made." O glorious Bridegroom of our hearts, there never was any other love like Yours! That the Eternal Son of God should leave His Father's side and stoop so low as to become one with His chosen people, so that Paul could truly write, "We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones," is such a wonder of condescending Grace and mercy that we can only exclaim again and again, "Behold how He loved us!"

Then, "being found in fashion as a Man," *He took upon Himself human sickness and suffering*. All our infirmities that were not sinful, Jesus Christ endured—the weary feet, the aching head, and the palpitating heart—"that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the Prophet, saying, "Himself took our infirmities, and bore our sicknesses." This was a wondrous proof of love—that the ever-blessed Son of God, who needed not to suffer, should have been willing to be compassed with infirmity just like any other man is. "We have not a High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

But if you want to see the love of Jesus at the highest point it ever reached, you must, by faith, gaze upon Him when *He took upon Himself the sins of all His people*, as Peter writes, "who His own Self bore our sins

in His own body on the tree. Oh, how could One who was so pure, so absolutely perfect, ever bear so foul a load? Yet He did bear it and the transfer of His people's sin from them to Him was so complete that the Inspired Prophet wrote, “The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all,” and the Inspired Apostle wrote, “He has made Him who knew no sin, to be sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” When a man marries a woman who is deeply in debt, knowing well the burden that he is taking upon himself—even though it is enough to crush him all his life—we may well say, “Behold how he loves her!” That was what Christ did for His Church when He took her into an eternal marriage union with Himself although she had incurred such liabilities as could not have been discharged if she had spent all eternity in Hell! He took all her debts upon Himself and then paid them unto the uttermost farthing. For we must never forget that when Christ bore His people's sins, He also bore the full punishment of them! In fulfillment of the great Eternal Covenant and in prospect of all the glory and blessings that would follow from Christ's atoning Sacrifice, “it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief.” We cannot have the slightest conception of what that bruising and that grief must have been! We do not know what our Lord's physical and mental agonies must have been, yet they were only the shell of His sufferings—His *soul*-agony was the kernel—and it was that which made Him cry, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” Then it was that the precious “corn of wheat” fell into the ground and died. And dying, brought forth “much fruit” of which Heaven and eternity, alone, can tell the full tale! I cannot speak of this wondrous mystery as I would like to do, but you who know even in part what it means must join me in saying, “Behold how He loved us!”

Further than that, *Christ has so completely given Himself to us that all that He has is ours*. He is the glorious Husband and His Church is His bride, the Lamb's wife. And there is nothing that He has which is not also hers even now, and which He will not share with her forever! By a marriage bond which cannot be broken, for He hates putting away, He has espoused her unto Himself in righteousness and truth, and she shall be one with Him throughout eternity! He has gone up to His Father's house to take possession of the many mansions there, not for Himself, but for His people. And His constant prayer is, “Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My Glory, which You have given Me: for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.” Jesus has an ever-flowing fountain of joy in His heart, but He desires that His joy may be in you if you belong to Him—and that your joy may be full! And everything else that He has is yours as much as it is His, so surely you will again join with me in saying, “Behold how He loved us!”

II. Now, secondly, let us consider WHAT CHRIST HAS DONE TO US, for each of His acts of love should cause us to exclaim, “Behold how He loved us!”

Think, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, *how the Lord dealt with us in the days of our unregeneracy*. He called us again and again, but we would not go to Him. And the more lovingly He called us, the more reso-

lutely we hardened our hearts and refused to accept His gracious invitation. With some of us, this refusal lasted for years—and we now wonder why the lord waited for us so long. If a rich man invites a pauper to a feast and the poor man is indifferent to the invitation, or positively refuses to accept it, he gets no second invitation, for man does not press his charity upon the needy. But when we even scoffed at our Lord’s call and made all manner of excuses for not coming to the Gospel banquet, He would not take our, “No,” for an answer, but called, and called—again and again—until at last we could hold out no longer and had to yield to the sweet compulsion of His Grace! Do you not remember, Beloved, how you received pardon, justification, adoption and the indwelling of the Spirit—and how the many “exceeding great and precious promises” were brought to you like the various courses at a royal festival served upon golden dishes adorned with priceless gems? Oh, that blessed, blessed day in which you first came and sat among the guests at the great King’s table! As you look back upon it, your heart glows in grateful remembrance of Christ’s mercy to you—and you cannot help saying, “Behold how He loved us!”

Many days have passed since then, and I ask you, now, to remember *what Christ has done to us since we first trusted in Him*. Has His love for you cooled in the slightest degree? We have, all of us, tried that love by our wandering and waywardness, but we have not quenched it—and its fire still burns just as vehemently as at the first! We have, sometimes, fallen so low that our hearts have been like adamant, incapable of emotion, yet Jesus has loved us all the while and softened our hard hearts as the glorious sun melts the icebergs of the sea! We were like the insensible grass which calls not for the dew, yet the dew of His love gently fell upon us. And though we had not sought it, our hearts were refreshed by it. Our Lord has, indeed, proved how He loved us by the gracious way in which He has borne with our many provocations. And think, too, Beloved, with what gifts He has enriched us, with what comforts He has sustained us, with what Divine energy He has renewed our failing strength and with what blessed guidance He has led and is still leading us! Take your pencil and paper and try to set down in figures or in words your total indebtedness to His love—where will you begin and when you have begun, where will you finish? If you were to record only one out of a million of His love-gifts to you, would the whole world be able to contain the books that might be written concerning them? No! All you can say is, “Behold how He has loved us!”

There have been times—of which I will not say much just now, for some here would not understand what I mean—when we have seemed to stand in the very suburbs of Heaven! Where we could hear the bells pealing forth celestial music from the invisible belfries and our hearts were ravished with the sound of the heavenly harpers harping with their harps and the ten thousand times ten thousand white-robed choristers singing the Song of Moses and of the Lamb. No, more than that—the King Himself has brought us into His banqueting house and His banner over us has been love! He has not only permitted us to sit at His feet, as Mary

did, but He has allowed us to pillow our head on His bosom, as John did, and even condescended to let us put our finger into the print of the nails in our rapturous familiar fellowship with Him who is not ashamed to call us His brethren! I must not continue in this strain—not for lack of matter, but for lack of time in which to speak concerning Him, so I must again say, "Behold *how* He loved us!"

I must, however, mention one more proof of Christ's love, and that is this—*He has made us long for Heaven and given us at least a measure of preparation for it.* We are expecting that one of these days, if the chariot and horses of fire do not stop at our door, our dear Lord and Savior will fulfill to us His promise, "if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there you may be also." To a true Believer in Jesus, the thought of departing from this world and going to be "forever with the Lord," has nothing of gloom associated with it! This earth is the place of our banishment and exile—Heaven is our home! We are like the loving wife who is separated by thousands of miles of sea and land from her dear husband—and we are longing for the great reunion with our Beloved Lord, from whom we shall, *then*, never again be separated! I cannot hope to depict the scene when He shall introduce us to the principalities and powers in heavenly places and bid us sit with Him on His throne, even as He sits with His Father on *His* Throne. Surely, then, the holy angels who have never sinned will unite in exclaiming, "Behold, how He loved them!" It is a most blessed thought to my mind, that we may be up there before the second hand of that clock completes another round! But if not as soon as that, it will not be long before all of us who love the Lord will be with Him where He is—and then the least among us shall know more of His love than the greatest of us can ever know while here below! Meanwhile, we have much of the joy of Heaven even while we are upon this earth, for, as Paul wrote to the Ephesians, "God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, has quickened us together with Christ, (by Grace you are saved), and has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

III. The closing portion of my sermon is to be very practical. Did anybody ever say of anyone of us here, "Behold how He loves Christ"? If someone did say that of *you*, my Brother or Sister, was it true? I think I hear your answer, "Oh, I do love Him! He knows all things and He knows that I love Him." But do you love Him so fervently that strangers or even your more intimate acquaintances would say of your love to Jesus what the Jews said of His love to Lazarus, "Behold how He loved him! "I wish," says one, "I could do so." Then listen for a minute or two while I tell you of **WHAT SOME SAINTS HAVE DONE TO SHOW HOW THEY LOVED THEIR LORD.**

There have been *those who have suffered for Christ's sake.* They have lain in damp dungeons and have refused to accept liberty at the price of treachery to their Lord and His Truths. They have been stretched upon the rack, yet no torture could make them yield up their fidelity to God! If you have read *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, you know how hundreds of brave men, women and children, too, stood at the stake, gloriously calm, and

often triumphantly happy—and were burnt to death for Christ’s sake, while many of those who looked on learned to imitate their noble example. And others who heard their dying testimonies and their expiring songs, (not groans), could not help exclaiming, “Behold how these martyrs love their Master!”

There have been others *who have shown their love to their Lord by untiring and self-sacrificing service*. They have labored for Him—at times under great privations and amid many perils—some as missionaries in foreign lands and others with equal zeal in this country. Their hearts were all aglow with love for their dear Lord and Savior. And they spent their whole time and strength in seeking to win souls for Him, so that those who knew them could not help saying, “Behold how they love their Lord!” Some of us can never hope to wear the ruby crown of martyrdom, yet we may be honored by receiving the richly-jeweled crown from the hand of Christ as He says to each of His true laborers, “Well done, good and faithful servant...enter into the joy of your Lord.”

Then we have known *some saints who showed their love to their Lord by weeping over sinners and praying for their conversion*. There have been gracious men and women who could not sleep at night because of their anxiety about the eternal welfare of their relatives and friends, or even of lost ones who were personally unknown to them—and they have risen from their beds to agonize in prayer for sinners who were either calmly sleeping and not even dreaming of their doom, or else at that very hour were adding to their many previous transgressions! There have been others who could not hear a blasphemous word, as they passed along the street, without feeling a holy indignation at the injury that was being done to their best Friend! And at the same time their eyes filled with tears of pity for the poor blasphemers and their hearts poured out a stream of supplication for those who were thus ignorantly or wantonly sinning against the Most High! They have been like Jeremiah weeping over the lost and like Moses and Paul ready to sacrifice their own souls for the sake of others, until men have been compelled to say, “Behold how these weeping and pleading saints love their Lord and love lost sinners for His sake!”

Others have proven their love to their Lord by the way in which they have given of their substance to His cause. They have not only given a tithe of all they had to the great Melchizedek, but they have counted it a high privilege to lay all that they had upon His altar, counting that their gold was never so golden as when it was all Christ’s and that their lands were never so valuable to them as when they were gladly surrendered to Him! Alas, that there should be so few, even in the Church of Christ, who thus imitate their Lord who freely gave Himself and all He had that He might save His people! Blessed will the Church be when she gets back to the Pentecostal consecration which was the fitting culmination of the Pentecostal blessing—“all who believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.”

Another most admirable way of proving our love to Christ is by being scrupulously careful to please Him in little things as well as in the more important matters. One of the worst signs of this present evil age is that so little is thought of even the great things of Christ—His atoning Sacrifice, His high priestly Character and work, His kingly rule and so on—while the little things of Christ, those that are less by comparison with these, are often utterly despised! There was a time, in Scotland, when men of God signed the Solemn League and Covenant with their blood—how many would do that today? One jewel in Christ's crown, that priceless Koh-I-Noor of the crown rights of the King of kings, was sufficient to call into the battlefield the noblest of Scotland's sons. But today, the very Crown of Christ, itself, is kicked about like a football by some of His professed servants, for they set up their own fallible judgments against His Infallible Revelation and practically say, "We will not have this Man to reign over us!" In this land, in the most glorious days that England has ever seen, our Puritan forefathers were so scrupulous that men called them strait-laced, sour-faced, bigoted and I know not what! But nowadays many of the Truths of God for which they contended and for which many of them resisted even unto blood, are said to be unimportant or of no account whatever! The special Truth of God which distinguishes us as a denomination is regarded by many with supreme contempt! Not long ago a professedly Christian minister said that he did not care a penny about baptism! If he belongs to Christ, he will have to answer to his Master for that saying! But I could not utter such sentence as that without putting my very soul in peril! He who really loves His Lord will not trifle with the least jot or tittle of His Lord's will. Love is one of the most jealous things in the universe. "God is a jealous God," because "God is Love." The wife who truly loves her husband will not harbor even a wanton imagination—her fidelity to him must not be stained even by an unchaste thought—and so must it be with every true lover of the Lord Jesus Christ! God grant that we, beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, may do our Lord's will so scrupulously in great things and little things—and in all things alike—that those who see us in our daily life may be compelled to say, "Behold how these Christians love Jesus Christ, their Lord and Savior!"

But, Beloved, remember that when our love has reached its climax, it can only be like a solitary dewdrop trembling on a leaf compared with the copious showers of love that pour continually from the heart of our dear Lord and Master! Put all our loves together and they will not fill a tiny cup! And there before us flows the fathomless, limitless, shoreless ocean of the love of Jesus Christ! Yet let us have all the love for Him that we can. May the Holy Spirit fill our souls to the brim with love to Jesus for His dear name's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MARK 1:28-45; 2:1-12,**

Mark 1:28. *And immediately His fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee.* "Immediately." That is, as soon as Jesus

had healed the man with an unclean spirit His fame spread like wildfire. The miracle was reported from mouth to mouth till everybody in that region knew of it. It was said that the words and writings of Martin Luther were carried as by the wings of angels, so speedily was everything that he said and wrote made known far and wide. On this occasion, it was so with our Lord’s wondrous deed of mercy and power—“Immediately His fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee.”

29. *And forthwith, when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John.* “Forthwith,” or again, “*immediately.*” Simon and Andrew and James and John were intimately connected—we are told that they were “partners” in their fishing business. James and John, the sons of Zebedee, seem to have been in a good position in life—we read that their father had “hired servants” employed in the boats. So James and John went with Simon and Andrew into their partners’ house when Christ went there after performing that notable miracle in the synagogue.

30. *But Simon’s wife’s mother lay sick of a fever, and soon they told Him of her.* There were at least four of Christ’s followers in the house, yet the mother of the wife of one of them lay sick of a fever. Divine Grace does not prevent suffering in the body—there will still be physical diseases even though in the soul there is spiritual health.

31. *And He came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up. And immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them.* [See Sermon #2980, Volume 52—A LIFT FOR THE PROSTRATE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Jesus was very calm. He was not afraid of catching the fever. See how deliberately and with what solemn, kindly dignity He deals with this sick woman. “He came and took her by the hand.” I think I see Him doing it, “and lifted her up.” He gently raises her and she yields to His tender uplifting hand—and suddenly finds herself cooled of the burning fever and perfectly restored to health and strength! So she rises from her bed and the first thing she does is to minister to them. I am sure that whenever the Lord helps any of His people out of their temporal or spiritual distresses, they feel at once that they must say, “What shall we render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward us?” Her ministering unto them proved that the fever was quite gone—and gone in a way in which it does not ordinarily go, for as you all know, fever usually leaves behind it extreme weakness. It seems to burn up the strength that is in one—and after it is gone, one is not fit even to wait at table for a long while! But Peter’s wife’s mother, the fever having immediately left her, rose and “ministered unto them.” Christ’s cures are always complete! If He saves us from the burning fever, He saves us from the weakness that follows it! And when He deals with soul maladies, His cures are equally complete—there are no aftereffects to the soul as there are in many diseases that afflict the body. When the Great Physician restores the soul, He restores it completely.

32. *And at evening, when the sun did set, they brought unto Him all that were diseased and them that were possessed with devils.* It was the Sabbath and they would not bring out their sick until the Day of Rest was over. The Jewish Sabbath ended at the setting of the sun, so these

people were all watching and waiting until the sun dipped below the horizon and then, straightaway, they brought their suffering ones to Jesus! What a mass of misery filled the streets of Capernaum that memorable night! The whole city was turned into a hospital.

33. *And all the city was gathered together at the door.* It seemed as if everybody had come either to be healed or to witness the healing of others—“All the city was gathered together at the door.” Oh, when shall we see our places of worship thronged in this fashion with the spiritually sick? When will this great city of London begin to turn towards the Lord Jesus Christ? Will any of us live to see all our fellow citizens gathered together around the Savior to be healed by Him of all the wounds that sin has made?

34. *And He healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and allowed not the devils to speak because they knew Him.* They would persist in acknowledging Him—perhaps with the design of injuring His cause, for nothing hurts the cause of Christ more than to have it praised by bad men or evil spirits! I do not know that an outrageous sinner, if he will not repent, can do Christ a better turn than to abuse Him, for then he is speaking after his own natural manner—but when the devil or his servants go into the pulpit and begin to speak in praise of Christ, then is Christ’s cause in an evil case, indeed—so He “allowed not the devils to speak, because they knew Him.” Or, as the margin puts it, even “to say that they knew Him.”

35. *And in the morning, rising up a great while before day.* While it was yet dark, He stole away even from His favored disciples that He might be alone with His Father.

35-37. *He went out and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.* And Simon and they that were with Him followed after Him. And when they had found Him, [See Sermon #1769, Volume 30—BEFORE DAYBREAK WITH CHRIST—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] For He had endeavored to conceal Himself in the loneliest spot that He could find. Possibly, the disciples overheard His groans, His cries, His supplications as He poured out His very soul in prayer to His Father—“when they had found Him”—

37, 38. *They said unto Him, All men seek for You. And He said to them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there, also, for therefore came I forth.* Jesus Christ came forth from God the Father that He might proclaim throughout the land the message of redeeming Grace and dying love!

39, 40. *And He preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils. And there came a leper to Him, beseeching Him, and kneeling down before Him, and saying unto Him, If You will, You can make me clean.* [See Sermon #2008, Volume 34—THE LORD AND THE LEPER—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] It is a pity that he could not go further than to say to Christ. “If You will,” but it is a great mercy that he could go as far as that. So if you, dear Friend, cannot pray a prayer that is full of faith, pray one that has at least some faith in it! If you cannot go as far as some do, go as far as you can! I have often told you to bless God for moonlight, and then He will give you sunlight, but for any-

one to say, "I will not pray at all because I cannot pray as I would like to pray," is a very foolish thing! Say what you can, even as this poor leper said to Jesus, "If You will, You can make me clean."

41. *And Jesus, moved with compassion.* This is a wonderful expression, "moved with compassion." The face of Jesus and His whole Person showed that His very soul was stirred by an intense feeling for this poor leper! Jesus, moved with compassion—

41. *Put forth His hand and touched him, and said unto him, I will. Be you clean.* If you or I were to touch a leper, his uncleanness would at once be communicated to us, but when Christ touches a leper, His cleanliness is communicated to the leper! Oh, how high our blessed Lord stands above us! When we have to deal with certain peculiarly sad cases, we ought to go to the work with much earnest prayer that we ourselves may not be contaminated by contact with gross sinners, but Christ has such virtue in Himself that He can even touch the fevered and the leprous and yet sustain no injury!

42. *And as soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed.* This was another very wonderful miracle. All that dryness of the skin, that peeling, that inward foulness that eats into the bones and pollutes the very current of the blood—all this was quite gone—the Lord Jesus Christ made this foul, unclean leper perfectly clean and whole in a single moment!

43, 44. *And He at once charged him, and forthwith sent him away; and said unto him, See you say nothing to any man: but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing those thing which Moses commanded for a testimony unto them.* That was all he was to do—to go and show himself to the priest so that it might be officially known and certified that he was clean. And he was not to tell anyone else of his cure. He was disobedient to Christ—perhaps you will think that he was very naturally and excusably so—but we must *never* make excuses for doing what Christ tells us not to do! Our duty is not to judge whether such-and-such a course will be profitable or beneficial, but to consider whether such-and-such a course is in accordance with the Word of the Lord! This man ought to have held his tongue, for Christ had told him to do so. I have no doubt that he said within himself, "The more I talk about this miracle, the more good I shall do and the more famous Christ's name will become." But He had no business to think that—his business was to obey Christ's command!

45. *But he went out and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter the city.* There were such crowds that He could not work His miracles of healing. The disobedient man was no doubt moved by gratitude, which seems a very proper motive, yet his disobedience caused Christ serious inconvenience and hindered His work. And I have no doubt that there are many things done in the Church of God today of which many say, "They are very proper and very nice"—yes, but are they *Scriptural*? Did the Master command them? If not, they will cause Him and His Kingdom serious inconvenience and loss at some time or other. We cannot too fully realize

that as Christ’s disciples, we are to obey Him implicitly—and the best proof of our gratitude is to do exactly as Christ bids us. This man blazed abroad the news of his cure so that, “Jesus could no more openly enter into the city—

45. *But was outside in deserted places: and they came to Him from every quarter.* [See Sermon #129, Volume 22—GATHERING TO THE CENTER—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

Mark 2:1, 2. *And again He entered into Capernaum after some days; and it was heard that He was in the house. And straightway many were gathered together, inasmuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so even near the door: and He preached the Word unto them. He could not be hidden—the healed leper had made His name so famous that men crowded to see Him—and He took advantage of their curiosity and, “preached the Word unto them.”*

3-5. *And they came unto Him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four. And when they could not come near unto Him for the crowd, they uncovered the roof where He was and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay. When Jesus saw their faith, He said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, your sins are forgiven you. Those who brought this man to Jesus believed that He could and would heal Him—and Christ delighted to honor their faith and, perhaps, also the faith of the palsied man himself.*

6-9. *But there were certain of the scribes sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, Why does this Man thus speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God only? And immediately when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, He said to them, Why reason you these things in your hearts? Which is easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Your sins are forgiven you? Or to say, Arise and take up your bed and walk? It was just as easy to say either the one or the other.*

10-12. *But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins, (He said to the sick of the palsy), I say unto you, Arise, and take up your bed, and go your way into your house. And immediately he arose, took up the bed and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion!* [See Sermon #1269, Volume 21—THE NEW FASHION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

MIGHT HAVE BEEN, OR MAY BE NO. 1944

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 30, 1887.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“And some of them said, Could not this Man, which opened
the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this
man should not have died?”
John 11:37.***

“*JESUS WEPT.*” It does not mean that He shed a tear or two, but that His tears flowed freely. Such is to be gathered from the original word. He wept copiously and continuously till He became the observed of all observers. He was deeply affected and His tears were the fit expression of His intense emotion. *Love made Him weep*—nothing else ever compelled Him to tears. I do not find that all the pains He endured, even when scourged or when fastened to the cruel Cross, fetched a single tear from Him—but for love’s sake—“Jesus wept.” At first I feel inclined to say, “Behold, how He wept!” And then I check myself and, borrowing my language from the bystanders, I cry, “Behold, how He loved him!” The Jews recognized, even with their unfriendly eyes, that His tears were drawn from Him by love alone! From this Rock of our salvation no rod but that of love could bring forth floods of tears!

So when we have noticed the tears and the power of love which brought forth the tears, let us observe how, being such as we are, *tears are towards us a fit expression of His love.* When you look upon your children with love, your eyes flash joy. When they are in health and strength, your love expresses itself fitly in delight in them. But love in Christ towards us most fitly shows itself in *tears.* When He thinks of what we are and how we have become subject to death—and how sin has brought us under this bondage—since He loves us, He must weep. No, He must *die*, for even His tears cannot suffice to manifest His love! Jesus must pour out His soul, not only unto tears, but unto *death*, that all may see how deeply He loves us!

I should like to begin my sermon with that thought deeply fixed upon our spirits, if we are, indeed, the people of God—that Jesus loves us—loves us unto tears! Inasmuch as He loved Lazarus when Lazarus was dead and in the tomb, let us herein behold how He loved us when we were dead in trespasses and sins. See how He loves us though, perhaps, our spirits may be dull and dead—and how He will love us even when we come to die. “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.” He loves us so that He will love us when we die, even as He loved Lazarus at the grave’s mouth.

Let us turn away from our preface, which we have found in the context, to look at the text itself. While there were some who thought only of the

love of Christ when they beheld His tears, there were others standing by more full of reasoning, who argued, "Could not this Man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?"

Placing my text in various lights, I see, first, *a vain argument*. Secondly *a vile argument*. Thirdly, *a fair argument* and, fourthly, if read in connection with the verses which succeed it, *a full and faithful argument*.

I. But, first, I see in the text A VAIN ARGUMENT. It is an argument about what might have been if such-and-such a thing had been. It is a very common thing to hear people thus talk—"If so-and-so, then so and-so." Such talk is always vain, because *it leads to no practical result*. What was the use of saying, "If Jesus had been here, then Lazarus would not have died," when Lazarus was already dead? The thing is done and cannot be undone—what is the use of asking about what once might have been but now cannot be? Yet have I seen strange sorrows wrung out of these suppositions! Perhaps the most bitter griefs that men know come not from *facts*, but from things which *might have been*, as they imagine. That is to say, they dig wells of supposition and drink the brackish waters of regret!

The sisters of Lazarus did this. Each said, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother had not died." In a more unbelieving way the Jews did it and said, "Could not this Man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?" Yes and so you say, "Now, if I had gone to so-and-so, this would not have happened. And then the other might have happened and a third thing probably would have occurred. And then how different it would have been from what it is now!" You blame yourself for steps which were not only innocent, but wise and right—and now that you see the consequences of them, you begin to imagine that they were not innocent, not wise and not right! And you fret to think that you took such steps.

I have known some go a great deal further than vainly accusing themselves—they have even accused *God*. They say, "Why was moral evil admitted into the world? Why were men and women constituted as they are? Could not God, who is Omnipotent, have so arranged things that there should have been no sin and no sorrow?" What a fine mess we get into when once we begin arguing over those points and conjecturing what might have been under other circumstances! You see, dear Friends, these things will not be and cannot be and, therefore, what is the good of our worrying over what is not and cannot be? I will plow, but if there is no field, excuse me, I shall not plow the sea, or the mist! I will get to work on anything that is practical, but I will not break my heart over fancies!

If it is to be done and it is right to do it, let us go at it at once. But if it cannot now be done, but is only a thing that might have been, let us leave it. You may go to the "might have beens," I have better work to do. This was David's method about his child, as it should be yours about all your sick ones and those that have already departed. David fasts, prays and cries to God as long as his child is alive, but when his child is dead, he washes his face and eats bread because, he says, "Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me." It is done and cannot be undone—what is the use of fretting over it now? Oh, that you

would have Grace to leave this foolish chopping of logic with yourself and Providence—and use your reason for something better! Lazarus is dead—what is the use of saying that he might not have died if Jesus had interposed?

I call this a vain argument, in the next place, because even though we raise the question about what might have been and we push it until we begin to think that it *ought* to have been, still, *unbelief will never get an explanation of it from the Lord*. In the chapter there is no explanation given to the Jews of why Jesus, being able to open the eyes of the blind man and able to keep this person from dying, yet did not keep him from dying. An explanation was given by the Lord to His disciples by His assurance that it was for the glory of God. That explanation you will get. You have received it already. If you are God's child and He has denied you what you think He might as well have given you. If He has permitted you to suffer under a calamity which you think He might have averted, He will give you no other explanation than this which He gives you now without any pressure at all, namely, that it is for His Glory!

If it is for His Glory, is it not for your advantage? What can more advantage a servant than the glory of his master? What can more profit our loving hearts than to see God glorified? If you are not satisfied with that answer, do not expect any other. "Why have I been bereaved of my children?" "Why have I been ill so many years?" "Why did I fail when I hoped to reach wealth?" "Why did I break down in the examination when I might have obtained a degree?" It is an idle piece of business to demand the reasons of unavoidable trials! It is mere dreaming to guess what would have been if such another thing had been. "What you know not now, you shall know hereafter." Let that content you.

Once again, I call this a vain argument because *it cannot benefit you to pry into this thing which the Lord has hidden from you*. You are fostering self-conceit in calling God's Providence to your bar. You are practically sitting upon a throne and making God to be the prisoner at your bar! You are weighing over again what He has already weighed in the scale of wisdom. This will never do! A child-like spirit is infinitely healthier as it is infinitely holier than the spirit of questioning. Brothers and Sisters, we should not even *thirst* to know all the things that are, for if it is the Glory of God to conceal a thing, let it be concealed—and as for the things that might have been—what have we to do with them?

If we begin lifting up these curtains, we cannot tell what we may one day see. I have known persons intrude into this sphere until at last they have stumbled on a horror which they were never intended to see and which, indeed, they never would have seen if their own unhallowed imaginations had not created it for themselves! They were ambitious to alter Providence and change the times and seasons which God had ordained—and at last they fell into such a morbid condition that if they were not positively mad, they might have been happier if they had been—for there is a state of mind, bordering on insanity, which has still a guilt about it and is, therefore, worse than if responsibility had been destroyed.

I shall beg you, therefore, Brethren, to forbear from prying into those secret things which belong only to God. Your profit lies in the direction of

abstaining from such speculations. Do not talk about what might have been, or should have been, interfering with the good which God has given you by pining after what He has denied. Oh, could you know as He knows and then love as He loves, you would act as He acts! Believe in Him and sit still at His feet! Talk no more about what He could have done, or might have done, or what you fancy He should have done, lest evil come of it.

II. Secondly, as I have spoken upon a vain argument, I will now speak of A VILE ARGUMENT, for I believe these Jews intended a piece of evil argument against the Christ of God. They put it thus—"This Man says that He opened the eyes of the blind and all the people think that He did, but if He did so, why did He not prevent His friend, whom He evidently loved, from dying? Either He has a lack of power which will prove that He did *not* open the eyes of the blind, after all, but that it was an imposture, or else, if He has such power and does not use it for His friend, He does not love Him and these tears are a mere pretence! He could have saved this man's life and now He stands here and weeps because he is dead."

Thus the adversary would put the believer in our Lord upon the horns of a dilemma. We are not gored by either horn, for we know a way of escape. Still, you see the drift, and this is often the drift of Satan's arguments. Your brother, your mother, your child, your friend—these are dead. You sent to Jesus. You cried to God. You importuned for the precious life and yet they are dead. Well, then, there must have been a lack of power on the part of God to save life! Perhaps that conversion of yours, in which you have rejoiced and of which you have said, "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see"—perhaps, after all, that was not a work of Divine power, but a delusion! For He that saved your soul could have saved the life of your beloved and, as He did not do so, has He any power at all? And have you ever been the subject of that power?

You see the drift of the specious reasoning—is it not a vile argument? Let us unveil the falsehood of it. Suppose that Jesus is willing to open the eyes of the blind and does open them—is He, therefore, bound to raise this particular dead man? If He does not see fit to do so, does that prove that He has not the power? If He lets Lazarus die, is it proven, therefore, that He could not have saved His life? May there not be some other reason? Does Omnipotence always exert its power? Does it ever exert *all* its power? May there not be some great reason why Christ should open the eyes of the blind and yet should not step in to prevent the death of Lazarus? We can see that there may be many such reasons, but it is easy, when you wish to argue against Christ and the Gospel, to forget a good deal! You can shut your eyes where it is inconvenient to see and then you can rush on blindly like a mad bull!

On the other hand, if they say, "If Christ can prevent Lazarus dying and He does not do so, there is a lack of love in Him!" Is it so? Is that a fair argument? It is not true, as a matter of fact—nor will it be thought to be true by our faith. It may be Infinite Love that wounds, that chastens, that afflicts. There is as much love in the Father when He wields the rod as when He gives the kiss—as much love in the Savior when He permits Lazarus to die as when He raises Lazarus from the grave! Yes, and it is possible that the less pleasing deed may be the more greatly charged with

love! The greatest blessings come to us in the guise of sorrows. I should not wonder if the death of Lazarus was the passing of Lazarus into a higher state of spiritual life than he had ever enjoyed. I doubt not that he was a converted man before his death, but, certainly, that wonderful passing into the region of death-shade, (which I will not picture because the Bible does not picture it), and that coming back, again, must have given him such a vivid consciousness of the power of Christ that the spiritual life that was within him must have become more strong, more clear, more supreme than ever it had been before!

I should have liked to meet that man after he had been raised from the dead by Him who said, "I am the resurrection and the life." I think he could have preached from that text very wonderfully! He would have understood it by an experience unknown to us. I should think that Lazarus rose into the higher life in the very highest degree—and so it was Christ's love to Lazarus that let Lazarus die! And it was altogether a lie that he died because Jesus had a lack of love towards him. It is Christ's love that has let some of you be ill and poor. It is Christ's love that has suffered you to be despised and down-trodden. It is Christ's love that has let you remain in affliction, because the Divine benefit that has come of it is more to your profit than the thing itself could ever be to your loss! So the vile argument may well be driven away, whatever shape it takes in our minds.

There is no justification for our distrust as to what God has done for us in the way of Divine Grace—it has been real and no dream. And there is no justification for any doubt as to what God can do for us and will do for us in the future. He that has helped us so far will help us to the end. He that has done so much for us will withhold no good thing from us, but bestow all that is necessary for this life and godliness—and for the life to come and Glory!

III. We shall now proceed very briefly to notice what is A VERY FAIR ARGUMENT. If you take the text and press the malice out of it, it is true. "Could not this Man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?" Yes, it is true. Jesus Christ, by what He has done, has proved His power to do *anything*. I need not enlarge upon the point, but I will put it before you. There is not a life which He cannot preserve! You may cry to Him about your sick ones. You are permitted to do so. Even if they are given over by the physician, I counsel you to go to Jesus about them, though it is far better to go to Jesus *before* you consult the physician. We often make a mistake about the use of medicines by using medicine *first*. We should first go *to the Lord*, that we may be guided as to what medicine shall be used, what means shall be employed—and trust in God to bless the means made use of for restoration. We may make idols out of physicians as much as the heathen make idols out of blocks of wood.

Medicines are right enough in their place for healing, even as bread is right for nourishment, but as men live not by bread, only, so are they not healed by medicine, only. Before we eat bread, we ask God's blessing on that bread—let us seek a blessing on medicines whenever we use them. We are not healed by the physician, but by *God* who works according to His own will and pleasure! Let us, then, believe that the Christ, who has

done this and that for other sick folk, can do the same for those whom we bring to Him—and let us leave their cases in His hands.

But take the text *spiritually*. I want you to believe that Christ can preserve us spiritually from death. Are we forced by our employments into the society of the ungodly? Does Providence call some of you working men to toil side by side, or even at the same bench, with infidels? The Lord Jesus can cause that you shall not be injured by them. He can give you spiritual health and strength even when you seem to be under the most deadly influences. He that opened your eyes, when you were blind, can keep you alive, now that you can see! Trust in Him for your final perseverance with the same unquestioning faith with which you trusted in Him for the pardon of your sins. I say again, He that opened your eyes, when you were in darkness, can cause that you should not die even though the deadliest influences from the world, the flesh and the devil should be set in operation against you. Because He lives, you shall also live. Fly to Him in the time of your temptation! Cry to Him in the hour of your need and He will help you and deliver you! You shall not die, but live and declare the works of the Lord.

Beloved, what a mercy it is that we can look back upon Christ's having opened the blind man's eyes and see the same thing in ourselves! Here is a blind man whose eyes Christ opened. It is yourself! He was able to give *you* sight and can you not transfer the argument to others? If the Lord Jesus Christ could give you sight, He can give others sight. If He opened your blind eyes, He can open the blind eyes of your children, of your unconverted father, your unsaved brothers, your unsaved sisters. Believe about your friends and cry to God about them! Take the text at once and read it so—"Could not this Man, who opened my blind eyes, open the blind eyes of those about whom my heart is heavy?" Remember that the man who was blind, whose eyes Christ opened, was *born* blind. Christ can deal with original sin and constitutional sin! Some seem to have inherited a nature more wild than common—their heart does not appear to be a heart of flesh, but a heart of stone—yet Jesus, who dealt with this strangely blind man—blind from his birth—can deal with those strange sinners, those sinners of a scarlet hue who develop in their lives more of desperate viciousness than you see in others! Christ can deal with the vilest of the vile! Take them to Him, believe on account of them—and be fully convinced that no case is beyond the power of the living Savior!

For my part, I never can or will despair of the salvation of one of my fellow creatures, now that I am, myself, saved. I know that there were certain traits in my character and certain elements in my disposition which made my conversion to Christ more remarkable than that of the conversion of anybody else—and so I shall have hope concerning the most blasphemous, the most obstinate, the most unbelieving! This glorious Man who, in the days of His flesh, opened the eyes of one born blind—which thing had never been known before—can come and deal with the very chief of sinners! Yes, with sinners that are dead in sin—with sinners that lie rotting in their lusts! He can make them to be saints! This is a fair argument. I am sure it is.

IV. But, now, lastly, they had never thought of THE FULL AND FAITHFUL ARGUMENT from the text. All they said was—"This Man, who has opened the eyes of one born blind, could have prevented Lazarus from dying." That was a fair argument, but it was not a *full* argument. It never occurred to them to go further and enquire, "Now that Lazarus is dead, cannot this Man raise him from the dead?" The first piece of argument did not go far enough to yield any comfort because it only dealt with what might have been and what could not be!

I fear a great deal of our religion is of that kind. But what a mercy it would be if God would give some Christians six-penny-worth of common-sense! Oh, if some people could but believe what I am sure is true—that true religion is sanctified commonsense—that there is about the religion of Jesus Christ that which is just as practical as if our life were to be spent in keeping shop! True, it is spiritual and Divine, celestial and sublime, but it is as accurate as if we were to be nothing but mathematicians calculating and estimating through all our days! There is a mathematical truthfulness about our holy faith as well as a lofty, eagle-winged aspiration! So then, they should have argued thus—"Jesus Christ, who opened this blind man's eyes, has come to a corpse in its grave and He is able to make it live."

Friend, is there laid upon your mind at this time some poor sinner who is dead in trespasses and sins? You cannot get at him. You do not know how to make him feel or think. There does not seem to be a vital spark anywhere about him and you know not how to deal with him. Believe that the Gospel is meant for such a case as this and that the living God, in Jesus Christ, by the Holy Spirit, can meet with this clay-cold dead heart! "Oh, it is worse than that," you say, "it is worse than that! The person I am thinking of is put out of society and is too corrupt to be spoken with." Yes, I know what you mean. Perhaps you speak of a fallen woman. We are always more eager to bury the fallen women than the fallen men. A man, of whom we must say with Martha, "By this time he stinks," may still be tolerated in society. But if it happens to be a woman that sins, they cry, "Bury her out of sight! Roll the stone to the mouth of the tomb! We never speak to her, or mention her!" If you have an anxiety on your soul about a person who is thus shut out from society, I want you to believe that Jesus can bring out the buried and corrupt.

"Oh," you say, "but it is not merely that the person I think of is buried away, but the case is really one which may not be described. He has been dead four days. He has gone so far that his crime is unmentionable." I know the case. Yet you may mention it before the Lord—in His Presence no harm will come of it. I do not read in the Gospel narrative of anybody being distressed by the odor when the sepulcher of Lazarus was opened. When Jesus said, "Take away the stone," He knew that He had Divine disinfectants ready at hand. He knew what He did. When you seek after gross sinners, prudent people say, "Well, if you go after such people as that, your own character will be injured before long." The Lord will prevent any harm coming from it, for He can speak to the most corrupt sinner and say, "Live," and he shall live and then the corruption is no more!

Therefore let us drive out of our minds the notion that *any* sinner is too far gone for Christ to save him! I used to hear in my youth about a “day of Grace,” and about persons having passed that day of Grace. But I do not believe it. As long as you are in this world I am bid to preach to you, for the Gospel message is to be proclaimed to every creature and I dare not draw vain distinctions about a “day of Grace.” If you have a disease about you that will carry you off before the clock strikes 12 tonight, I still bid you believe in the Christ of God and live! If you are so bad in your own esteem that there never lived a worse man or a worse woman out of Hell, yet still believe in Jesus Christ! My Lord loves to save great sinners, even as He delighted to bring from the grave the long-dead Lazarus, that he might be received into the bosom of his family, to be the joy of the house and the glory of Christ!

I have not gone too far. I am sure that I have not. No, I could not go too far. The shoreless, bottomless love of my great Lord—I wish I had the tongues of men and angels to tell of it! You have not sinned beyond His power to save you! He is a great Savior, a mighty Savior! And His precious blood can remove all your death and corruption! When I think of those whom He has saved, I argue, “Could not my Lord Jesus, who opened the eyes of the blind, make these dead sinners live?”

I will tell you something else. If you yourself, tonight, are that dead sinner, I say to you, in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, “Thus says the Lord, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” “I cannot,” says one, “I am dead.” I know that you are, but if the Lord speaks to you, you will live—and *He does speak to you by this voice of mine*. I speak to you in His name! You careless sinner, in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, consider your ways! You dead sinner, in the name of Jesus, live! His Spirit has gone with the word which I have spoken! The thing is done in some who have heard me and will be done in others who will read these words. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, forever and ever! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*John 11*.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—319, 844, 631.**

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COULD HE NOT? AH! BUT HE WOULD NOT NO. 3420

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 20, 1914.

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

***“And some of them said—Could not this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?”
John 11:37.***

HERE was very good reasoning. Jesus Christ had opened the eyes of the blind—could He not, therefore, have healed Lazarus of the disease which proved fatal? Of course He could! He who can avert one evil can avert another. It could have been no more difficult for Christ to have turned aside the fever, or whatever it may have been which afflicted Lazarus, than to have opened the eyes of a man who was born blind. The first was impossible, but that achieved, no difficulties remained. “Impossible” is a word which does not fall into language when you have to deal with Christ and, therefore, when He has once proved, by a miracle, that He is truly the Christ, then it is clear that, ever afterwards, nothing is difficult or impossible for Him.

The same Truth of God, in another shape, holds good, namely, that when Christ has conferred one blessing, He can also confer another. He is not as we are, who, with one gift, have exhausted our stock and who can only bestow good wishes afterwards because we have no more means. But Jesus Christ is just as full of power as if He had never exerted that power. And after a thousand miracles, He is just as willing and as able to bestow further favors! One evil averted is a good argument that another can be—one good received is a good argument that another may be received from the same Divine hand!

Stop a minute, therefore, and encourage your hearts with such reasoning as this. “The Lord that delivered you out of six troubles, can He not also deliver you out of the seventh? The Lord, who has been with you these 40 years in the wilderness, shall He leave you in this 45th or 50th year? He that has brought you thus far and bestowed upon you early tokens of His faithfulness, is it a hard thing for you to believe that He will continue to do the same? You have been preserved out of many dangers—why not out of another? You have been provided in necessities—why not be provided for again? You have been raised up when most are cast down—why not raised up again? You have found a way out of the very depths, when the pains of Hell got hold upon you and the snares of the devil surrounded you—why can there not be a way found for another rescue?” The Lord that has done, can do, and is doing! That He has done

so in the past is a guarantee that He will do so in the present and in the future! He has already made an investment—if I may so speak—of His love and of His Grace and of His faithfulness upon you and He will not lose what He has already spent, but He will carry on the good work to perfection, till He shall bring you to Himself in everlasting Glory! Comfort yourself, then, Christian, with this blessed remembrance of your past experience and rest assured that this Man, who opened your eyes when you were blind, can keep your life from spiritual death! Yes, and were you dead, yet should you live by His strength, for He is able to do exceeding abundantly above what you ask, or even think!

The same encouragement may be suggested to any here who are anxious about their souls. The salvation of anyone ought to be an encouragement to any other. If God has saved one sinner, why not another? If the precious blood of Jesus has made one drunk sober, why not another? And if among the white-robed hosts there are some who had defiled their garments with the foulest stains, why should not I yet be there by the same blood-washing and the same mercy of my gracious God? He that opened the eyes of one blind man can open the eyes of all blind men if so it pleases Him—and He that gives perfect pardon and acceptance to one, can give to another the same, wherever He chooses to bestow them! Let no man despair! There are examples of great sinners saved on purpose to encourage others to trust in Christ. I care not how aggravated your sins may have been, I am quite sure they have been already paralleled in some other cases—in some other cases, too, where salvation has ultimately come! You are not beyond the Divine range. You have not sinned yourself yet into Hell. Mercy yet can reach you! The blood can yet cleanse you! The Divine bosom can yet receive you and even the Heaven of God can yet find room for you, though you are the chief of sinners! This is good argument, we say—this which was used by Jesus. What has been done can be done. If Christ does one form of good, He can do another. If He opens the eyes of the blind man, He can cause that the sick shall not die!

But now, after that encouragement, there comes up a great difficulty. It is certain that if Christ had willed it, Lazarus need not have died. Then Mary need not have sat still in the house weeping. Then Martha need not have said, with sorrow and with a broken heart, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother had not died.” There was no need that Lazarus should suffer all that pain, all that languishing and pass through the gates of the grave—no absolute need for it! Christ could, if He had chosen, have prevented that man from dying and, what is more, if Christ willed it, He could prevent all your troubles and all mine. If He chose, none of His people need ever have so much as a headache, or a pin’s prick of the finger! They need not, one of them, ever be poor, or have any losses or any crosses. They need, none of them, ever be tempted, for He could chain up the devil. They need, none of them die, for He could take them up to Heaven, like Elijah, or translate them, like Enoch. It stands proof positive, if He could open the eyes of the blind, He could, if He would, prevent

any of His people from sickness, from death and from all other ills! It were possible for Christ, if He so willed it, to avert all our sufferings and all our losses from us. *Then why does He not do it?* “Behold how He loved him!” said the Jews, and yet the next thing they said was, “Well, but if He opened the eyes of the blind, could He not, if He had willed it, have prevented this man’s dying?” Yet He did not do it—and Lazarus died.”

Now, I am quite sure, Brothers and Sisters, if you had a dear one at home that was sick, and I came in to see you, and I could, with a word, raise your sick friend, I dare not go out of your room without doing it! You would feel very grieved with me if I did. You would think it very unkind and, moreover, I am sure I could not find it in my heart not to do it. Speak a word? Why, I would speak any number of words, if I could raise your sick ones from being sick, and keep them from dying! You would think me very unkind if I did not, and so these Jews could not comprehend it. They said of Christ that He burst into tears at the thought of Lazarus being dead! They said, as they saw Him in that genuine burst of sacred passion, “Behold how He loved him!” And they could not comprehend it, that with a power which could open the eyes of the blind, and which must be sufficient to prevent the death of Lazarus, yet He did not prevent it, but the loving Christ allowed His friend, Lazarus, to sleep till he was laid four days in the grave and His body began to stink with corruption!

Brothers and Sisters, we are now about to look the question in the face—and what shall we say about it? The first thing we shall say about it is this, that—

I. IT IS NOT ALWAYS RIGHT FOR US TO MAKE ENQUIRIES AS TO THE LOVE AND THE WISDOM OF OUR LORD.

It may seem a very strange thing to us that He does not prevent the afflictions which are so grievous, and that He does not give us some of those mercies which we think would make us so comfortable. But we have no right to ask questions. A servant must not be always asking his master, “Why do you do this?” Or, “Why do you do that?” And the scholar is not expected to understand all the doings of the professor at whose feet he sits. A master-builder would soon discharge the carpenter on the work who should always be saying, “Why should that piece of timber be of that shape,” or, “Why must those stones be placed in such a position?” The architect is supposed to know the plan, not the Irish laborer! It is enough for the architect to know, without every small body on the work understanding everything that is to be done. We are not, therefore, to be always asking questions. There is another spirit that ought to rule us, rather than the spirit of captious criticism. A man goes and takes stones, and he puts some of them into the earth, deep down. Some of them He places higher up, one upon another. Some he daubs with mortar, some he places where they cannot be seen and some he polishes and puts into the corners. Are the stones to say to the builder, “Why do you place me here?” Or, “Why do you place me there?” The potter takes his lumps of clay and puts them on his knees—and one vessel is made to dishonor

and another is made a graceful form to honor—but shall the thing formed say to him who formed it, “Why do you make me thus?” It is not for the thing that is created to begin to question its Creator, for then the Creator might well reply, “Who are you and where were you when I made the Heaven and the earth? When I balanced the clouds and laid the foundations of the earth? Declare now, if you can answer Me!” That wonderful sermon from the mouth of God Himself, at the close of the book of Job rolls like crashes of thunder over our heads and makes us cower down conscious of our insignificance! And when we dare to lift up our heads once more, we find upon our lips words like those which came from the mouth of Job, “I have heard of You by the hearing of ear, but now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes.” For you and for me to think to understand God is as though some tiny insect, whose whole life was comprehended in an hour, should expect to understand the marches of the heavens and to comprehend the revolutions of the spheres! The child by your side, taking up a shell full of water, has no idea of what the sea is, and you, when you look at God’s ways, see no more of God’s ways than that little shell full, as it were, compared with the sea! Stand still and see that He is God! Let Him be exalted in the earth! Yes, let Him be exalted in the heavens! He gives no account of His matters. He does as He wills in the armies of Heaven and among the inhabitants of this lower earth. Ah, Lord, it is better for us to lie passive in Your hands than to be attempting to sit upon Your Throne, holding the balance and judging Your work! What if He does not make me rich, but lets me pine in poverty? What if He does not heal me, but allows me to linger out a life of sorrow? What if He does not bless my undertaking, but He permits heavy trials to overcome me? I will not ask Him why! “I was dumb with silence. I opened not my mouth because You did it”—that is the spirit in which we may look at this question. One thing more I want you to remember, and that is this—

II. THAT WHATEVER GOD MAY DO OR MAY NOT DO WITH US, IT IS ALWAYS THE CHRISTIAN’S WISDOM TO STAND TO THIS—THAT CHRIST IS ALWAYS LOVE.

The Jews said, “Behold how He loved him!” They could see that by His tears, though He let him die. Now, there were good reasons, though the Jews might not see the reasons and, Brothers and Sisters, there are good reasons why God withholds that right hand of His which is so full of bounty and why at other times He does stretch it out—and good reasons why He lifts that left hand of His which is so heavy to smite, and brings it down upon you, the chosen child of His heart! But do not think that Christ can be otherwise than kind? If you have trusted in Him, never believe that He can hate or forget you. Never think that He can suspend His affection towards you. No, never once will He deal with you according to any other rule than that of love—never once! The dispensation may be very dark, but judge not by appearances. Your conscience may be very guilty, but He is greater than your guilt. Your heart may condemn you, yet can He absolve you and His love is not measured by even your con-

sciousness of His Presence. He has forgiven you and He will not visit you in wrath for sin! No, though Satan tells you that repeated strokes must argue an angry God, he is the father of lies from the beginning—believe not that which he suggests! It cannot be possible that God is unkind! The camels are destroyed, the oxen are stolen, the children have perished, the body is covered with sore boils, but, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him,” says the triumphant Patriarch. “Shall we receive good from the hand of the Lord and shall we not receive evil? The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord.” Be then as Job was and as David was when, being about to describe the uneasiness of his mind on account of the affliction of the righteous, and the prosperity of the wicked, he began the Psalm by saying, “Truly God is good to Israel,” as if he started with that and nothing could ever drive him from it! Though the wicked prospered and the righteous were chastened every morning, yet God was good to His own Covenant people in the most supreme and emphatic sense! But now let us come to this question, again, for it still looks difficult. If faith makes no enquiries and resignation shall be content, still—

III. THERE IS DIFFICULTY.

Let us see now. If Christ had prevented Lazarus’s death, *what would have happened?* He might have done, if He had liked, but, in the first place, *Christ would not have been glorified by raising Lazarus from the dead.* If Lazarus does not die, he cannot be raised, and that manifestation of miraculous power could not be evinced. You will let Lazarus die, then—you all agree to that—that Christ may have an opportunity of raising him again. See, then, if you do not have a trouble—and Christ can prevent it if He wills—but if you are not brought into trouble, you cannot have the deliverance, Christ cannot put out His hand of love to save you, if there is nothing to save you from! Oh, then, be quite content to bear trouble, in order that your blessed Lord Jesus may make Himself illustrious as He comes to you in the very nick of time and delivers you out of the depth of your distress!

In the next place, *if Lazarus had not died, Lazarus himself would not have been so honored.* Everybody said afterwards, “That is Lazarus whom Christ raised from the dead.” He was a marked man and I am sure if you were Lazarus, you would say, “Ah, well, it is worthwhile to die to be raised again to have the honor of such a favor.” Now, Beloved, if you are not tried and troubled, you cannot become one of the experienced saints! It cannot be said of you by your Brothers and Sisters, “That man has passed through six troubles and through seven, and yet the Lord’s faithfulness has been proved in them all.” You will miss great pleasure if you miss great affliction! Depend upon it, you will be more a loser by missing trouble than you have ever imagined!

In the next place, *Mary and Martha would not have had such a sweet lesson from Christ.* Their poor eyes were red, I doubt not with their four days’ weeping, and the previous days’ watching and nursing. But then, oh what joy they had when they saw their dear brother restored again!

Such a meeting did make amends for all the grief of parting! And though they had heard the Lord Jesus talk about the resurrection and the life, they heard that dear powerful voice cry, "Lazarus, come forth." Why, it was for their education, their spiritual profit and benefit that the Lord allows Lazarus to die! He might have prevented it, but they were such gainers by the affliction that it proved His love that He did not deny them the benefit of the trial!

Mark, again, if Lazarus had not died, *then those few would not have been converted because they saw Lazarus rise from the dead*—and it is said, "Therefore, many of the Jews believed on Him." Well they might! It was a wonderful sermon to see a dead man come forth bound in his grave clothes! But how could he have thus come forth if he had not died? It was for the benefit of those spectators that the trial was allowed to come. Oh, you do not know, some of you, how many precious souls may have their destiny—speaking after the manner of men—wrapped up in your affliction! There is a necessity, for the good of others, that through your testimony others may believe—that you should be brought into the very depths and made to be sad, that afterwards God may interpose for your rescue!

Yet again, *the result of the resurrection of Lazarus was that our Lord rode in triumph through the streets of Jerusalem.* There seems to me to be a connection between these two things. If you read the next Chapter, you find our Lord taken in triumph through the streets, with palm branches and great shouts. And probably that which moved the multitude to do it, the immediate cause, was this marvelous miracle which Christ had worked. Oh, Beloved, Christ often gets great triumph among the rolls of men from the deep trials of His people, out of which He does rescue them and shall not you and I be well content that He should stand back and hide His face and even seem to be an enemy to us, if, out of all this, His glory shall spring? If He shall get hosannas and shouting, and the waving of palm branches—and if men on earth and angels in Heaven shall do Him extraordinary homage because of the work He works in us—oh, shall we not be content that our choicest joys shall wither and our best comforts for a while shall die?

In the case of Lazarus, you can all see that though he need not have died—in one respect Christ could have kept him alive—yet *it was a great proof of love on Christ's part that Lazarus did die.* Now, I believe that everything else that has happened in the world, if we had light enough to see it, would turn out to be the same. I know it is a difficult question, sometimes, to make out why God permits certain evils. When people say, as the Negro did, "Well, now, God is greater than de devil, why don't He kill de devil?" I am sure I cannot answer the question, but I am very well persuaded that if, on the whole, it would be the best thing to do, to kill the devil, He would do it! And it is, after all, in a most mysterious way, the best thing for His people, and the most glorious thing for Himself, that the devil should be permitted. The Fall—what a mysterious thing that is! It might have been prevented. I cannot hold any limit to the Om-

nipotence of God—if He had willed it, there need not have been a Fall. Then why did He permit it? I reply to that in the same spirit. I do not know, and I do not want to know—but I think I can see such a display of Divine Mercy, and Love and Grace, and every other attribute, in the redemption of our Lord Jesus Christ, that the Fall, terrible thing as it was, seems to be a grand platform on which the Glory of God could be displayed!

When the Lord brought His people out of Egypt, they might have gone right straight to Canaan. Why did He not take them there at once? Why did He make them go round by the Red Sea and come to that difficult place? Why—why did He not, indeed? They would not have had half the fears, nor half the terrors. No, but then remember, there would not have been so many Egyptians drowned. And there would not have been such grand shouts, nor such sweet clashing of Miriam's cymbals, nor such beating of timbrels, nor such dancing of nimble feet. And they would not have said, "Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider, He has cast into the sea!" All the difficulty only led to a greater triumph! God was glorified! His enemies were put to confusion and His people's memories were stored with thoughts of the mighty works of God which might stimulate their faith as long as the world should stand. It is best as it is. God orders all things right, after all, and though He might prevent this, and does not, and He might give us that, and does not, we believe it is all for the best and bow our heads, and wait till the light shines, that we may understand more of the reason why.

Now, Beloved, the point I want to come to is this—depend upon it, that as I have proved in the case of Lazarus, it was the best thing that the worst thing should happen—so it is in your case! You are in trouble tonight. Now, Christ could have prevented it, could have carried you to Heaven on a featherbed if He had chosen. He could have made you ride to Heaven all the way in a chariot that never jolted—on a paved road right straight up to Paradise, without a single rut, or any stones on it—but He chose not to do so. Now—

IV. LET US SEE IF WE CANNOT FIND A REASON.

If we cannot, it will not matter if you believe it is right. Still we will try. The roughness of the road that you are traveling now, *may it not be necessary to wean you from this world?* Oh, but the goods of this world are like bird lime to birds—they stick to our feet and keep us from mounting towards Heaven. "Ah," said one, as he looked abroad on his gardens and house and park, "these are the things that make it hard to die." Yes, and these are the things that make it hard to live near to God! When a man's heart begins to be content with the things of this world. When he finds his satisfaction *here*, he is not inclined to look up to his God. Now, perhaps you are one of that kind that could not bear too much prosperity. Every gardener will tell you that there are some of his flowers that he cannot put in the glare of the sun, for they would never do there. So with you—you grow better in the shade. Your nearness to Heaven and your soul's health require this affliction.

Besides, may it not be that this affliction is sent on purpose to try *your faith because it is weak*? “What?” you say, “Try my faith because it is weak? I thought you would have said *not* try it because it is weak.” Ah, but faith grows by trial. When faith is weak, a too heavy trial would crush it, but a suitable trial is ruled by God for the strengthening of it. You must—you must grow! The Lord would not have His children be stunted and dwarfed—and this trial is sent that you may be made to grow.

Further, you may not only be made to grow in faith this way, but *also in close communion with your God*. I have read lately one old Puritan whose opinion is that we never grow, except in affliction. I could not endorse that, but I am afraid there is a great deal of truth in it, for almost all the sunshiny days we have, we waste, and when God is very gracious to us in temporals, we generally find that these lean cattle of our ingratitude will eat up the fat cattle of God’s mercies! We grow best, depend upon it, when the wind blows us away from our natural havens to the great Port of Peace which is found in communion with God in Christ Jesus! When our soul has nowhere else to fly to for shelter, she flies to Christ. When she sees all her crutches and all her props broken away, and all her foundations made to reel, then she casts her arms about her own dear Lord and there she hangs in rapture and simple child-like love and confidence! And she is brought nearer to God than she ever was by the strength of her trials—and that is always a Divine result, a Divinely valuable result. It is a great mercy, if nothing else should come of it—a great mercy to have troubles if they should have this result!

Brothers and Sisters, if Christ would, He could prevent our having affliction, but He will not prevent them *because He wants to make something of us*. For instance, He wants to make some of us to be comforters to others, but how can you comfort others in trouble when you have never experienced the like? Oh, what poor hands some of us make in trying to comfort some of God’s saints who have been in much deeper water than we have ever sailed on! Why, we find they look upon us as mere boys and wonder how we have the impertinence to bring consolation to them! But when we can say, “I have just experienced the very trial you are now passing through—and the Lord sanctified it and supported me under it.” then the mourner opens wide his ears and the soul receives our comfort as though it were honey dropping from the comb!

My dear Brothers and Sisters, you *will never be qualified to understand and explains some of the promises without trials*. Some of God’s promises cannot be read except by the firelight of affliction. There is a kind of invisible ink that people sometimes use, which does not show till you hold it to the fire—and some of the promises seem to be written in that kind of ink. You do not understand them until you get a trial, but in the trial you find out that God has fitted every word of the consolation to the Providence in which He has placed you. But, indeed, my Brothers and Sisters, when I consider the infinite variety of blessings which come to us drawn by the team of black horses that our Father always keeps for

this purpose. When I consider how God is glorified by the endurance of the saints and by the Divine Graces which they receive in consequence of tribulation. When I consider how their joy will be swollen at the last, when they come to their rest, by the remembrance of their pilgrimage here below, I can but think that it is a fine mark of special mercy that God does not allow His people to go into the fat fields of unbroken prosperity, but into the fields of trial and of trouble—that they may be enriched and that their souls may be established.

Come then, let every murmuring thought be gone! Let every dark suspicion be discarded. Let us kiss the hand that smites us, and look up to our Father's face, even when He chastens us! And in this way we shall soon find the trial turn to joy, the bitter cup will become sweet and resignation will sweeten all!

If these words shall have ministered any consolation to God's suffering ones, my heart shall be glad. I sometimes need such thoughts, myself, and there are times when if I could have them spoken to me by somebody else, they would be to me like the paths of God which drop with fatness. Now there may be some of you—I know you are tried and troubled—to whom this will be just the very word. If so, do not let Satan take it away from you. Do lay hold of it by faith and feed upon it with joy and comfort. Yes. "Comfort you, comfort you, My people, says your God. Speak comfortably unto Jerusalem." So I would that you may be happy and a rejoicing people in the midst of all your troubles.

But, alas, this does not belong to all of you. It is only comfort to those who belong to Christ—some of you do not belong to Him and have never trusted Him. The Lord bring you this very night to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ! Those about to be baptized say to you tonight, "We avow ourselves to be Believers in Jesus! We are buried in water to show that we desire to be dead to all the world and buried in the death of Christ. We rise out of it to show that we desire to live in newness of life by the quickening power of the Resurrection of Christ."

You will have no right to this ordinance until you have trusted the Savior. When you have trusted Him. When you have relied fully upon Him. When He becomes All-in-All to you, then may you take the sign, because the thing signified is yours!

May the Lord bless you, for Jesus' sake.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 119:25-40.**

By the help of God's Holy Spirit, this Psalm may serve for the purposes of self-examination, for we may ask ourselves as we read, "Do I feel that way? Are my prayers like those of this good man? Is my experience like his?" We may often ask ourselves, "Am I as watchful, as careful and as fond of God's Word as he was?" Such questions will do us good.

Verse 25. *My soul cleaves unto the dust: quicken You me according to Your Word.* He does not like to feel the cleaving of his soul to the dust.

There are some that feel it, and they seem content to continue in that condition. But no sooner does David feel it than he cries “Quicken You me.” A sense of sin is of small value unless it leads us to desire to escape out of it. “Quicken You me. I lie as dead as if it were dust to dust. My soul seems cleaving to it, as if it had come to its own, and meant to rest there! But, Lord, give me life. Your Word promises me life. You have ways laid down in Your Word for giving life. Quicken You me according to Your Word.”

26. *I have declared my ways, and You heard me: teach me Your statutes.* I have told you all about myself. Now tell me about Yourself. “Teach me Your statutes.”

27. *Make me to understand the way of Your precepts: so shall I talk of Your wondrous works.* It is a bad thing to talk of what we do not understand. And he who shall preach what he has never experienced is very likely to do so. Yet Beloved, there is no understanding God’s precepts except He shall teach them to us. We are void of understanding. He must enlighten. He must instruct. “Make me to understand the way of Your precepts.” Some are very anxious to understand the doctrines, and some to understand the prophecies. All well and good, but, “Make me to understand the way of Your precepts.” Give me practical godliness. Help me to live to Your praise, “so shall I talk of Your wondrous works.” I will not talk till You have taught me. But when You have taught me, then my subject shall be Your wondrous works. The wondrous work of making me to understand—You shall be something to speak about! And all the wondrous works of Nature, Providence and Grace shall be the subject of my continual conversation.

28. *My soul melts for heaviness*—For the best of men sometimes suffer the sharpest sorrows. Hearts of stone are not likely to be so sensitive as hearts of flesh. “My soul melts for heaviness.”

28. *Strengthen You me according unto Your Word.* He wants strength, but he does not want to obtain it in any way but the way of God’s appointment. “According unto Your Word.” Somewhat like our hymn, which says—

**“He that suffered in my stead,
Shall my physician be.
I will not be comforted
Till Jesus comforts me.”**

“Strengthen You me,” but let it be “according to Your Word.”

29. *Remove from me the way of lying: and grant me Your Law graciously.* Let me not lie. Let me not be tempted to lie. Let me not be pestered with the lies of others. Remove the way of lying far from me and oh, by Your Grace, give me to know the Law. That is a remarkable combination of words. “Grant me Your Law graciously.” Has Law anything to do with Grace? Yes, such a Law as he speaks of—the Law in the heart—the Law in the hand of Christ—the Law written in the life of the Believer—not the law of merit and of Salvation by works, but, “grant me Your Law graciously.”

30. *I have chosen the way of truth: Your judgments have I laid before me.* As a seaman spreads out the chart before him, that he may follow the right channel and not miss his track—as a traveler spreads out his map that he may keep to the right way. “I have chosen the way of truth. Your judgments have I laid before me.”

31. *I have stuck unto Your testimonies.* As if I were glued to them—sealed to them. They said I was very old-fashioned. They said I did not keep pace with the times. They said I was not a man of thought. I did not care about that. “I have stuck unto Your testimonies.”

31. *O LORD, put me not to shame.* And He never will! If we stick to Him, we may be quite sure that we shall come forth out of every difficulty and every opposition triumphantly!. “Put me not to shame.” And although he thus spoke, yet you perceive the activity of his soul.

32. *I will run the way of Your commandments, when You shall enlarge my heart.* Give my heart freedom. Knock off my fetters. Take away my heaviness. Remove from me my ignorance. Give my soul room and she will run, but it will be in the ways of Your commandments.

33. *Teach me, O LORD, the way of Your statutes, and I shall keep them unto the end.* Here is the art of finally persevering. Here is the way of continuing to the end—and the same shall be saved. We must begin with a teachable spirit. He that is not willing to learn, has not begun a right. We ought to disciple all nations, but he who will not learn is not yet disciplined. “Teach me.” But the teaching we must have must come from God. “Teach me, O Lord. I am not content to have the Word secondhand. Be You my schoolmaster. Teach me, O Lord. I shall never learn unless You teach me. You who did make me. You who did give me a new heart. You must write that Law upon my heart, or it will never be written there. Teach me, O Lord. Teach me the way of Your statutes. Teach me practical godliness. So teach it to me that I shall learn it and put it into practice. And if I am taught of You, then I shall keep it unto the end.”

34. *Give me understanding and I shall keep Your Law: yes, I shall observe it with my whole heart.* A want of understanding is a very great lack. There is little wonder that men turn aside from an outward religion which has never taken possession of their thoughts and minds. If they only subscribe to the creed which they have never studied. If they only carry out a life—the mere shell of a life—the inward principles of which they do not know, they will soon turn aside. “Give me understanding and I shall keep Your Law.”

35. *Make me go in the path of Your commandments; for therein do I delight.* “Not only teach me the way, but make me go in it! Take hold of me as a mother does her little child, and teach me how to walk and help me in the walking.” Make me go. It is a feeble word—a most expressive prayer. “Make me go, for therein do I delight.” When a man delights in God’s way, he will be sure to be made to go in it.

36. *Incline my heart unto Your testimonies.* Bend it that way—incline it.

36. *And not to covetousness.* For, naturally, my heart would go after the world and cleave to its riches, its treasures, and begin to covet! But,

Lord, bend it the other way. If you do not love God's testimonies, the tendency will be to become a lover of the world. "Incline my heart unto Your testimonies and not to covetousness."

37. *Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity.* Or, "make my eyes to pass from beholding vanity." I am a runner in the race. Do not let me stop to look at anything, but may my eyes pass by vanity. Let me not be like she in the fable who paused to gather the golden apples in the race—and so lost it and was deceived. If the world's golden apples are thrown in my way, make my eyes to pass from beholding vanity.

37. *And quicken You me in Your way.* More life towards You will deaden me to the world. The more I follow after God, the less shall I care to follow after the world.

38. *Establish Your Word unto Your servant.* Make it fast, firm, sure.

38. *Who is devoted to Your fear.* I am established in You. Establish the Word in me. You have bound me fast to Your altar. Oh, give me the fast blessings and sure mercies of David!

39. *Turn away my reproach which I fear: for Your judgments are good.* I fear lest I bring a reproach upon You, and then upon myself. Oh, suffer me not to do so! I am not afraid of the reproach of the world. I count the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt. But, oh, let them never have to charge me with sin and let me not fall into such pecuniary difficulties or other troubles, that men will be able to make a charge against me out of them. Help me to provide things honest in the sight of all men. "Take away my reproach, which I fear, for Your judgments are good."

40. *Behold, I have longed after Your precepts: quicken me in Your righteousness.*

—Adapted from the C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

THE SPHERE OF INSTRUMENTALITY

NO. 1052

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 26, 1872,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Jesus said, Take away the stone.”
John 11:39.*

*“Jesus said to them, Loose him, and let him go.”
John 11:44.*

THERE lay Lazarus in the grave, dead. His restoration to life was utterly hopeless upon any ordinary principles. Certainly Lazarus could not raise himself! His affectionate sisters could not, with all their weeping, give him a resurrection nor could the disciples call back the departed spirit and reanimate the decaying corpse. If was a hopeless case, for who could revive a dead man who had lain in the grave so long that he had begun to stink?

This is a parallel case with that of every unconverted sinner in the world. He is dead in trespasses and sins—not a little sick or somewhat wounded, or in a swooning fit—but *spiritual* death reigns over him. The sinner never gives life to himself. The thing is inconceivable. There are persons who imagine that the natural will of man sometimes inclines towards good, but, alas, this flattering supposition is far from the fact. Jesus said, “You will not come unto Me, that you might have life.” Neither will they come, now, any more than they did then! Until we see dead men raising themselves, we do not expect to meet with sinners who have spontaneously and without Divine assistance turned themselves towards righteousness.

Neither can relatives or friends regenerate the soul in which they take an interest, nor can the most earnest ministers bestow the quickening spirit. Those whom God has blessed in other instances are yet quite powerless in any fresh case unless the same power shall again be put forth through them. Death is a terrible picture of our natural state, but it is by no means an exaggerated one. The whole world lies before us as a valley of dry bones, according to Ezekiel's vision, and if ever the dry bones are to live, it will not be through an energy innate within themselves nor through a power resident in the most zealous of men, nor through any might which even a Prophet could exert apart from God.

Education cannot develop life out of death. Persuasion cannot excite it. Reasoning cannot infuse it—the Divine arm must be revealed, or the case is past hope. Jesus must come to the tomb of Lazarus and His voice must cry, “Lazarus, come forth,” or else the corpse shall remain inanimate and increase in putrefaction. All that can be done by mortal man may be done, but nothing will be effected unless Jesus, who is the Resurrection and the Life, shall speak the quickening word! In His Omnipotent voice lies the power, but only there.

Now, let this be taken as a plain statement of our belief as to the Lord's work in salvation, and taken without any mitigation or dilution. We believe that in every case, salvation is of the Lord alone and altogether! Regeneration is a supernatural work. Man must be born-again from above—any power short of that from Heaven will be ineffectual. The new creation is as much and entirely the work of God as the old creation—

***“Can anything beneath a power Divine
The stubborn will subdue?
‘Tis Your Eternal Spirit, Yours
To form the heart anew.
To chase the shades of death away,
And bid the sinner live!
A beam of Heaven, a vital ray
‘Tis Yours alone to give.”***

And, having said this, we proceed to bear witness that what can be done by us *ought* to be done, since what can be done by man will not be done by Christ. It is a rule with our Lord never to work needless miracles. Indeed, He only begins the miraculous when the ordinary means can go no further. He follows the ordinary up to its verge, and *then* the extraordinary comes in. If a multitude are to be fed, so long as there are barley loaves and fishes to be had, Jesus will use them. He will multiply them and make them go further than they naturally could, but He will use them as far as they will go. Had there been neither loaf nor fish I do not doubt He would have commenced with an act of *creation*, but as it was, since there were a few loaves and fishes, He does not ignore them, but makes them the basis of a work of multiplication.

What a man can do for himself God will not do for him, and what Christian people can do for sinners they must not expect the Lord to do—they must work themselves according to the ability God has given them up to the point of possibility—and then they may look for Divine interposition. Observe in this instance that there was a stone before the mouth of the cave in which Lazarus was interred. Could not our Lord have removed that stone with a word? Could not He have said, “Be you removed, O stone,” and it would have been done?

Yes, He could have consumed the stone with a glance if He had so minded. But He did not choose to do so, because the bystanders were quite competent to take away the stone. Therefore He said to them, “Take away the stone.” And when Lazarus was raised, when he had come forth from the niche in which his friends had laid him, he was enshrouded with the cerements of the tomb. Rolls of linen were about his body, and a napkin wrapped around his head—and Jesus did not, by Divine power, remove the vestments of the grave.

It would have been, if miracles may be compared, a smaller miracle to loose the living with a word than it was to quicken the dead, but since it could be done without a miracle, it must be done without a miracle. And Jesus said to those who stood by, “Loose him, and let him go.” The analogy teaches us that there are some things which *we* can do for the *unconverted*, and we are bound to do them—and there are certain other things in which we can aid those who are newly converted—and these we should hasten to perform. While we look alone to the life-giving Lord to

quicken the soul, we do not fold our arms in indifference or excuse ourselves from all effort upon the ground of inability—we are on the watch to see where instrumentality is applicable, and ready at all times to be made useful wherever we can be.

We cannot turn the dry bones into living men, but we can prophesy to them, and, blessed be God, we can also prophesy to the four winds and so, by our means, the dead may live! The sphere of *human action* in connection with regeneration is my subject this morning. Help us, O Divine Spirit! First, there are some things which we can do for the unconverted before they are quickened. He said, “Take away the stone.” Secondly, there are some things which we can do for them after they have been quickened. He said, “Loose him, and let him go.”

I. First, then, dear Brethren, THERE ARE SOME THINGS WHICH WE CAN DO FOR THE UNCONVERTED BEFORE THEIR QUICKENING. I am sure, if our hearts are right, all that can be done we are most anxious to do. Jesus Christ is our Model, and observe how He labored in the work of blessing the sons of men! In this case He took a long journey. He wept. He groaned. He was troubled in spirit. He prayed and then He spoke with a loud voice. True picture of what every Christian should be, and especially every Christian minister. We should journey after souls! We should weep over their ruined estate! We should groan for them and be troubled at heart on their account! We should be incessant in our prayers and when God speaks through us to the awaking of the dead, it should not be with unearnest tones, but with a voice tender with love and vehement with zeal.

We are to be imitators of Christ in this. We ought to throw our whole heart into the blessed work which He honors us to do in His name. Brethren, all of us can do for the ungodly what the sisters did for their brother. Mary and Martha called in the Master to minister to their sorrow. Being well-assured when their brother was ill that they had no more sympathizing or able Friend in all the world than the Master whom they loved, they sent a message to Jesus. And though they did not send another afterwards, yet I doubt not they felt that the one sufficed. So you and I ought, in the case of all the unconverted over whom our spirit yearns, to call the Savior to the rescue. Let us send a message to Him about them.

You may word it in some such terms as these—“O Lord, I grieve to tell you that my dear child is still unsaved.” Or thus—“Lord, You know Your servant’s heart breaks because my wife, or my husband, is still unconverted.” Or, you may put it thus—“O Savior, You know that in my Sunday school class the children are not yet brought to You.” Or, I may send it as my message—“My God, You know I have preached to many of these people for many years, and yet they still remain unmoved and abide strangers to You.” We must earnestly intercede with the Lord for souls! Jesus is the Wonder-Worker. He is the Resurrection and the Life, and our wisdom is to lay hold upon *His* strength and beseech Him to reveal His saving might!

In addition to this we must, then, express our confident faith in Jesus, that even now whatever He will ask of God, God will give it to Him. We must believe that He is able to raise the spiritually dead. We must never

allow ourselves to despair of any person, since the matter is in the hands of an Almighty Savior. Though the sinner by this time stinks and has become immoral, as well as unholy, yet it is not too late to ask the Lord Jesus to work. We ought never to say of any person, "It would be vain for us to labor for his conversion, he is so vicious as to be incapable of Divine Grace." We are not thus to forestall man's condemnation, but rather to obey the Master's message and go into all the world with good news for every creature, for the Gospel is without limitation when it declares, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Beloved, have faith in the Lord Jesus! Tell Him how desperate the case is for you, but say to Him, "Lord, it is not impossible with You." Assure Him that while you feel yourself to have no power, you are sure that one single word from Him will accomplish all that your soul desires. Now, every Believer can do this—God helping us we can repair by faith to the Lord Jesus.

But our first text indicates yet more clearly the line of our capacity. Jesus employed others in the rolling away of the stone. You cannot make the dead live, but you can take the stone away from the mouth of their sepulcher. Let us speak of certain stones which we should, with all diligence, remove. The first is the stone of *ignorance*. This heavy weight lies at the mouth of many a spiritual grave at this day. I think we take for granted too high an attainment of knowledge among the people at this present time. I am sure that many sermons are preached to people as though they perfectly understood the plan of salvation, whereas, if the preacher did but know his hearers better, he would discover that even upon the elements of the Gospel of Christ many of them are deplorably ignorant.

In fact, I fear that the elementary truths of Christianity are not preached sufficiently often because too much is taken for granted. It is to be feared that the alphabet of the Gospel is unknown to thousands whose teachers are trying to instruct them in the classics of theology—a waste of effort and a dangerous experiment. Why, in this city of London you shall find persons who frequent Protestant places of worship who yet believe in salvation by their own works and are horrified at justification by faith! You shall discover, if you go among the masses, an indifference to salvation so great as to be appalling, and this originates largely in ignorance. Salvation? Why thousands do not know what you mean by the term, and here, in this century of light and advancement as we boastfully call it, gross darkness covers the minds of a large proportion of our countrymen!

Brethren, the time has not come for you to cease distributing the most plain tracts. The time has not arrived for you to be silent at the street corners even upon the first principles of the faith. You must still proclaim Atonement by the sacrifice of Christ, and the simple doctrine of Justification by Faith. Possibly there may come an age when it will be wise to expatiate mainly upon the deep things of God, but for this present distress we may wisely give our whole strength to telling out the foundation fact—that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. Our sermons must repeat times out of number the story of the Cross.

The hymns most commonly sung should be of the same order as—"Rock of ages, cleft for me." "Jesus, lover of my Soul." "Come, you

sinner, poor and wretched.” and “Just as I am, without one plea.” We have even need of such simple ditties as—“I do believe, I will believe, that Jesus died for me.” For upon that point ignorance and unbelief still cloud the mass of the people among whom we dwell. Let not the people be destroyed for lack of knowledge! Let none go down to Hell because they know not of a Savior. Let me say here that even with those who have heard the Gospel well preached, this ignorance may still remain—as it did in my own case.

I believe if I had known that all I had to do was to look to Christ and I should live. If I had really understood that there was nothing for me to *be*, nor *feel*, nor *do*—but I had only to rest in a finished work and take from God’s mercy that which Christ had completed—I think if I had known that Truth of God, I should have found peace with God much earlier. But I did not understand the Gospel, and therefore remained in distress of mind. Do, then, tell everybody about Jesus! Tell them of the Son of God made flesh! Tell them about Substitution! Speak the word plainly. Tell them—

**“He bore that we might never bear
His Father’s righteous ire.”**

Assure them that whoever believes in Him is not condemned, and that to believe is to *trust*. Open up that word, for even plain and simple words get to be technical and men dream that there is some other meaning in them than that which they ordinarily have. You cannot put the Gospel too plainly, but anyway, put it before them, and then roll away this stone from the mouth of the sepulcher.

Alas, a second stone is often there, namely that of *absolute error*. The mind without knowledge is not good, for if we sow not wheat, weeds will assuredly spring up. Men ignorant of God’s righteousness always go about to establish their own righteousness in some way or other. Thousands think that if they are sober, honest, upright, and so on, they have done all that is required of them. They assume at least a little spice of attendance at Church or Chapel, and just a little addition of religious ceremonies may eke out any deficiencies of their practice. And, certainly, to call in a clergyman or minister when they shall lie dying, and to have prayers said or read to them will complete the structure which they have themselves begun.

Brothers and Sisters, this great stone covers many an Englishman’s grave! Seek to roll it away! Bear your own personal protest against the idea that the Law of God will ever be satisfied by an imperfect obedience. Teach men that God’s commandments are exceedingly broad, that they deal with the thoughts and intents of the *heart* as well as with men’s outward actions. And when they see this, perhaps they will perceive the impossibility of ever keeping the Law of God and they will leave off attempting to work out salvation by an obedience of their own. Show them plainly, lovingly, tenderly—but honestly—that by the works of the Law there shall no flesh be justified, for by the Law is the knowledge of sin.

You know well, my Brethren, that there are attempts made continually to place a huge stone of error over men’s minds in the form of Sacramentarianism. Regeneration, to what do they degrade it? They

make it a *ceremony* in which drops of water effect marvels! Feeding upon Christ, what is that with these men? It is nothing but the eating of bread and drinking of wine. They put ceremonial foolishnesses into the place of *spiritual* truths! They steal the substance, and, as a substitute they do not even give us so fair a shadow as that of the days of Moses! They give a mere smoke—a shade of a shade, rather blinding to the eyes than suggestive to the mind—and yet myriads of our fellow men are quite content with such vanities! They suppose that there is some mystic efficacy in outward rites. Tell them, oh, tell them, that—

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

Declare the need of Divine Grace and the uselessness of outward show. Point out the spirituality of acceptable worship and the childishness of ritualism. You will have done good service if you roll away this huge obstruction.

Very frequently the sepulcher of men’s souls is closed up by the stone of *prejudice*. Men cannot really find anything faulty in Christ Jesus, or in His Gospel, but still they will persist in stumbling at this stumbling stone. They invent reasons for declining the Gospel invitation. They prejudge the Revelation of God and make up their minds that it is unworthy of their acceptance. They shut their eyes and then are obstinate in their assertion that there is no light. For instance, how common is the notion that religion is associated with melancholy? In every sphere of life you will find a number of persons who fight shy of understanding religion because they believe it to be the mother of mental miseries. They quote someone who went insane and took to Biblical speculations—and another who is morose, and yet is a great stickler for devotion.

They infer that religion is the science of making long faces, the art of being gloomy. Therefore men refuse to be soured by “crabbed divinity,” and decline to imitate the morose and melancholy Puritans. An amazing mistake, that, about the Puritans, for there is evidence enough, and more than enough, to show that they were among the most happy of men with a robust joy to which the Cavaliers’ noisy mirth was mere froth. At this present moment if you desired to find a happy people, I would advise you to search in the Church of God for them! It were a strange thing if to have one’s sins forgiven would make one unhappy! It were a very odd thing if being at peace with God caused a man to be wretched! It were a very turning of the world upside down if the possession of a good hope of Heaven should be the source of gloom in the soul!

And it is not so. Brethren, by your continual happiness and manifest cheerfulness, roll away this stone, and especially remove it from the minds of young people. Make them see, in the brightness of your countenance, the practical answer to the common calumny. Convince them that you have an inward joy which they do not understand. Tempt them, as it were, to Christ, by telling them of the sweetness which you experience in Him. Many have the notion, too, that true religion makes a man *unmanly* and *effeminate*. Perhaps certain professors have lent a color to this charge by affectation of manners and absence of common

sense. Certain religionists are always dwelling upon the “must nots” of religion, as if godliness was a set of negatives, a garden enclosed with thorns!

The manufacture of new commandments is a very fascinating occupation for some people. You must not do this, and that, and the other, till one feels like a baby in leading strings. I find ten commandments are more than I can keep without a great deal of Grace, and I do not mean to pay the slightest regard to any beyond. Liberty is the genius of our faith, nor do we mean to barter it away for the esteem of modern Pharisees. They say to us, “You shall not laugh on Sunday. You shall never create a smile in the House of God. You shall walk to public service as though you were going to the whipping post, and you shall take care when you preach that you always make your discourse as dull as it can possibly be.”

We do not reverence these precepts! Anything which is of God we *honor*, but not the sickening decrees of cant. We are men, and not slaves. Our manhood is not annihilated by Grace. We think, and speak, and act for ourselves and are not the serfs of custom and fashion. We speak our minds even when propriety is shocked and respectability is enraged. I would always give to young men this piece of advice—Quit yourselves like men, let nobody have to say that your religion is mamby-pamby, and your conversation affected. Do not be always sugaring every person you speak of as, “Dear this,” and, “Dear that,” for this savors of nauseous hypocrisy! Do not whine or turn up your eyes, or affect to be very devout. Be holy, but not showy—true, but not obtrusive. Be men, be manly, be Christians, be like Christ! He was the very highest type of man! You never see anything stilted or unnatural in Him. He is always Himself, transparent, outspoken, brave, honest, true, and *manly*. Redeem religion from the reproach of stiltedness and so roll away one of the stones from the sepulcher.

Some, we know, have a notion that religion is a mere *sentiment*. They think that it is only about being affected about your dead children and your parents in Heaven—in weeping over death-bed scenes. In fact, it is best seen in excited meetings and their consequent emotions. Religion is judged by worldlings to consist in womanly feeling, to have no truth, no facts, no philosophy at its back. Oh, but it is not so! We can give as good a reason for the hope that is in us as though our religion never brought a tear to our eye and never stirred the emotion of joy within our souls. I venture to say it, that our religion is as much based on facts as astronomy or geology—I mean indisputable historical facts! And I assert that the doctrines of Revelation are Truths of God as certain as the demonstrations of mathematics!

The Gospel reveals certainties and they are worthy of the contemplation of men of the most enlarged minds. Our Gospel is not mere platitude and baby talk—there is a depth in it which no intellect can fathom. Titanic intellects have found their match in the things of God. The genius of Newton and Locke did not complain of need of room in the wondrous Truths of God—to them they were waters to swim in. There is room for all the high culture, and all the thought and all the training that this world shall ever see! Room for it, yes, and at its utmost

it shall only stand upon the shore of the main ocean of Divine Truth and cry, "O the depths of the wisdom of the Lord!" By intelligently setting forth the great matters of the Gospel, let us roll this stone away, for to some it has been a crushing obstruction.

Very commonly among our working classes another stone lies over their graves, namely, the opinion that the Gospel is not for the likes of them. I have frequently heard it expressed by them that it is very proper, indeed, for ladies and gentlemen—persons of money and leisure, to be religious—but it is quite out of the question for a man who has to earn his living and tuck up his shirt sleeves to hard work. "Why," they say, "what have dockyard laborers, cabdrivers, and costermongers to do with religion?"

Now, of all the strange prejudices in existence, this is one of the strangest because from time immemorial it has been the boast of the Gospel that, "the *poor* have the Gospel preached to them." If there is one class of the population to whom the Gospel is gladder tidings than to any other, it is to them that labor and are heavy laden! Why, dear Friends, if you have little in this life, that is the more reason why you should seek the boundless treasures of the life to come! And if you have much trouble and sorrow here, the more reason why you should seek Christ to be the balm of all your wounds and the cordial of your cares! Christianity drew its *Apostles* from the working classes, and from the same source it has gathered numberless martyrs. Though the Lord has had a remnant in the upper ranks, yet it has still been true, that, "not many great men after the flesh, not many mighty are chosen."

The great mass of Christian discipleship has been taken from among the poor and the working men. Besides, Christ is the *people's* Christ. What a grand sentence is that of the Psalm, "I have exalted One chosen out of the people." Jesus is the people's Man by birth, by education, and by sympathy! He was ordained of God to be a Leader and Commander for the people. Jesus Christ is just such a Friend as the people need! Tell the people this—especially you who belong to them and know it! Make your houses preaching places to your fellow workmen, and make your conduct a constant sermon upon the adaptation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to their needs! So much for the stone of prejudice. I must pass on.

Frequently, over the graves of spiritually dead persons, there lies a stone of *solitariness*. They feel as if no man cared for their soul. I have known that happen in this Tabernacle. Persons have come in for months and nobody has spoken to them because they were strangers—and therefore the Gospel did not enter into their hearts because they said, "The Church of God does not care for us—we are unknown and unvalued." Half a word from some kind Christian sitting near them has been the means of melting them down, and the very next sermon they have heard has been in God's hands the means of bringing them to Christ!

In this city a man may lose himself more effectually than he could in the desert of Sahara. You may get away into one of our streets, yes, and work in one of our factories, and nobody will interest himself about you. While happily few pry into their neighbor's affairs, unhappily few have any sympathy for their neighbor's griefs. Hearts may be breaking around

us and we may be as merry as May. Children of God, I charge you in the name of the quickening Savior, never let this stone lie two Sundays together over the grave of a single attendant of this house! Prove to those who sit with you here that you have a loving care for their souls!

Another stone that can be rolled away is that of *degradation*. Some bring themselves into the ditch by their sins. They break the rules of society, they become dangerous, and, at length are treated as outcasts. When a person feels himself outlawed, there is little hope of raising him. Many sink themselves to poverty by their vices and extravagances, and thousands degrade themselves by abominable drunkenness. The Christian Church does well when it rises its utmost power to deliver the drunkard from his besetting sin. Temperance will not suffice *instead* of godliness, but it may put men in the way of Gospel influences. God forbid we should stop short in any reforms, for these will only roll away the stone from the grave, but yet, let no stone remain!

Many a man has first been delivered from the habit of intoxication and then his ears have been opened to listen to the Truth as it is in Jesus. The poor harlot, too, when Christian love has followed her and spoken to her of our Father who is in Heaven who bids the wandering return to Him—how often have her feelings of degradation been overcome and she has fled to Christ for mercy! Brothers and Sisters, none are outcasts to us! If the world says to the fallen, “Get out of here, you are not good enough for us,” let the Church of God open her door and invite the outcasts in! The Church is the true Hospital for incurables, among whom Jesus delights to work! Those whom the world calls lepers and drives away into contempt, it is our glory to restore! Come here, you chief of sinners, for Jesus waits to receive you! Do not tarry, for you, and such as you He came to save! The Pharisees repel you, but this Man receives sinners and eats with them!

We will mention one more stone, and that is *despair*. Some men are not only spiritually dead, but they are buried fathoms deep in despair. They have signed their own death warrants, though the Lord has not yet written them out. You people of God, look out for those who think themselves beyond all hope—and when you meet with them argue the point with them! Tell them that you were once in the same plight as they are and show them what Grace did for you. Point them to the promises of God which are so suitable to their condition. Above all, tell them of the precious Savior who does not quench the smoking flax, and who is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him. You will have done good service if in any case you roll away the stone of despair.

I exhort you, dear fellow laborers in Christ, yourselves saved, to do all that lies in you to take away every one of these hindrances from sinners' souls, and then pray the Lord to speak the quickening Word!

II. But my time goes too swiftly, and therefore I must come to my second point with brevity. AFTER A MAN IS CONVERTED he labors under many disabilities, and Christian love should help him. When lambs are born the shepherd takes care of them. Christ's word is, “Feed My lambs.” When plants are put into the ground they must be watered. It is not enough that the child is born—it needs a mother's care. “Take this

child and nurse it for me, and I will give you your wages,” is God’s word to His people whenever a new convert is born into the Church.

Lazarus is alive, but he is encumbered with grave clothes and it is the business of those who are his friends to loose him and let him go. New converts need loosing for the sake of their own comfort. It was a very uncomfortable thing for Lazarus to be tied up in his winding-sheets—for his own ease they must be taken off. When a man is saved, perhaps he does not grasp all that is involved in salvation. He thinks, “I am a Christian, but I may fall from Grace.” Unwrap that band at once and let him know that the Lord does not cast away His people whom He did foreknow.

The new Christian, I say, thinks that he is pardoned, but that some sin may still remain upon him. Unwind that cerement! Let him know that “the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” Perhaps he fancies, when he feels a strife within him, that he cannot be a child of God. Tear off that bandage and tell him that all the children of God experience an inward strife and feel a battle raging between life and death within their souls! You will find young converts apt to be the victims of doubts and fears—perplexing themselves about this, and fretting themselves about that! And you who are instructed in the faith must lay out yourselves to loose them, and let them go! They need, also, loosing for their own freedom. Lazarus might as well be in the cave as be in bonds. Men may be converted and yet be far from enjoying the full liberty of the children of God.

Perhaps the saved one is fettered by bad habits and he does not *know* that they are bad. Tell him gently, but let him know that these things are not consistent with Christian life. I know at this time some real Christians who are going about with relics of their grave clothes upon them, and they appear very unseemly. Those grave clothes stick to all of us more or less—and I suppose till we enter Heaven the loosing operation will need to be continued! But let us help our Brethren in this by example and by precept. Let us take away from them that which hinders them from the liberty of holiness.

Moreover, Lazarus wanted loosing for the sake of *fellowship*. He could not talk with Mary and Martha yet, for he had a napkin about his head—he could scarcely move or speak. So many of our dear converts do not like to join the Church just yet. They say they are not perfect. Poor souls, if they *were* we should not need them in our churches! Being all imperfect ourselves, they would be out of place if they joined with us! They plead that they are not fit to come, imagining that something of fitness is needed beyond believing in Christ—as if that which Jesus laid down as the Gospel of salvation was not also a sufficient basis for fellowship with saints on earth! Still, the timid hold back and do not like to communicate to others what the Lord has done for them.

Encourage them, *compel* them to come in! Do not let them wander in solitude, but introduce them to the fellowship of the saints. We have known cases in which the liberty was needed to enable them to bear testimony. Lazarus could not even say, “I live and blessed be the name of God,” for the napkin was about his head. He must be loosed that he may tell what God had done! Oh, what amazing testimonies the Church might

have if saints were but encouraged to deliver them! But there are some who carry wet blankets about with them, and the moment a young Christian talks about Christ, because he does not speak exactly according to orthodoxy, they try to silence him. Let it never be so among us! Let us encourage the babes to cry, that by-and-by they may learn to speak! Let us encourage them to prattle, for perhaps before long they shall correctly speak the language of the kingdom.

As for testimony, so for service, help is needed. Paul was converted on the road to Damascus, but he did not know what God meant to do with him—and he was not fit for God to use till Ananias had instructed him. So with Apollos. He was a true Christian, but he needed further teaching—he needed loosing and being let go, and therefore Aquila and Priscilla became the instruments thereof. There was the eunuch on his way to Ethiopia—he needed to learn more about the Scriptures—to have the meaning of the Prophet Isaiah opened up to him and to be baptized on profession of his faith in Christ. Do not suffer any of God's dear living ones to be waiting, bound up and captive, because we are so devoid of brotherly love that we will not do for them the necessary offices of heavenly charity! The Lord help us, Brothers and Sisters, to be earnest about this!

Once more, after Lazarus was unbound, we read that he sat at the table with Jesus—so he needed loosing for the enjoyment of communion with Christ! The trembling convert thinks himself as yet unwarranted to lay hold upon the nearer, dearer, and sweeter joys which surround the Person of Christ. He dreams that these are reserved for old saints, that these wines on the lees well refined are for men who have fought the good fight and almost finished their course. But, indeed, he errs and deprives himself of joy! The songs of Zion are for the early morning as well as for the shades of evening. Go and tell young Christians so! Encourage them to commune with Jesus! Tell them He loves all His people with an equal love and is ready to manifest Himself to them as He does not unto the world. In this respect you will loose them and let them go.

I will not prolong my talk, but finish with two inquiries which I desire to put very plainly. The first is this—Dear Brethren, I have told you what can be done for sinners before conversion. I have told you what can be done for them afterwards. I beg to inquire how many of you are doing either the one or the other? I will not take the writer's inkhorn and make a list of the diligent among you, but I will ask each man's conscience to officiate as a scribe and to put down his name if he is really serving Christ. For, mark you, Beloved, it is idle to *talk* about our *duty*—the thing is to be daily and constantly *doing* it!

Time is gliding away, men are dying, Hell is filling, Christ's name is being dishonored! There are but 12 hours in the day—are we walking while we have the light, and working for God while we have the opportunity? If every one of us will give an honest answer to that question it will do us good, even if we have to confess that we have been sluggards. It may lead to shame, and that to confession—and that to prayer, and that to a renovation of life! If we are, indeed, the Lord's, let us live while we live! Much of professing life nowadays is a thing to be

ashamed of—it is cold, weak, narrow, and timid. I see enthusiasm everywhere, except in the Church! I see stir and push and vigor in business! I see the world girdled that men may send the messages of commerce with lightning speed—while the message of the Gospel lags! I see the mountains bored, I know not next but the sea's deep bed may be tunneled! Earth for earth can do anything, but for Heaven how little will earth perform? May God quicken us that we may be a living, earnest people.

The other inquiry is this, how far is the Lord Jesus working in our families, and among our connections in the matter of raising the spiritually dead? Are your children saved? Are your servants regenerated? Brothers and Sisters, are they saved? Husbands and wives—has God quickened them? Come, let us pass the question round. The angel said to Lot, “have you here any beside?” A very weighty question. Oh, that God may grant that you and I may be like Noah who had all his sons, and his sons' wives, and his own wife in the ark with him! May we never leave off praying till it is so! If there is but one unconverted one in any way linked with us, let us pray day and night till that soul is saved and then let us take up the *neighborhood* in which we dwell, and the streets where we reside!

This great city, this perishing city—God help it, and in mercy visit it! I believe He will if He finds us willing to do the work of rolling away the stone, and equally willing to unloose the bands. God will not send children to us if we cannot nurse them! He will not send lambs to us if we will not shepherd them! God is not so unkind to new-born souls as to send them among a people that do not care for them. He will make us travail in birth before children shall be born to God here, because soul travail is the means by which love is worked in us towards them, and so we are taught to handle them affectionately, cherish them carefully, and bring them up for the Lord.

O Church beloved, over whom Christ rejoices, I charge you serve the Lord Jesus with diligence in this Divine service of doing good to the sons of men. God bless you, Beloved, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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FAITH SEEING GOD'S GLORY

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*“Jesus said unto her, Said I not unto you that if you
would believe, you would see the Glory of God?”
John 11:40.*

IT is not every man whose deed is as good as his word, but of the Son of Man, Christ Jesus, it may be said that whatever His lips have promised, His hands perform. He can, after the fact has transpired, turn to His disciples and say, “Said I not unto you, such-and-such, and is it not even as I said?” Seeking Sinner, Christ has said that you shall have peace if you believe on Him and He will not run back from that word! If you cast yourself upon Him, you shall have peace right now—you shall have happiness evermore, you shall have Heaven at the last—for there is no promise which Christ has made which He is not prepared to keep! There is no blessing which He presents to the hand of our faith which is either unreal, a sham, or a mockery! You shall find that Christ’s gold is not mere tinsel, but true, and that His silver is silver tried in the furnace—good spending money, both for time and for eternity!

I shall hope to use the text tonight—may God, too, use it—first, *with regard to the case of our fellow men*, about whom many of us are much concerned. And then, in the second place, *with regard to our own case*.

Dear Friends, I know that I touch a sympathetic chord in your hearts when I speak—

I. WITH REGARD TO OUR CARE FOR OTHERS’ SOULS.

I bless God that so many of you love your fellow creatures and fellow sinners and earnestly desire to promote their highest interests by bringing them to Christ!

You have tasted and known the sweetness of true religion for yourselves and you are not selfishly satisfied merely to rejoice in this, but long that others, too, may taste and see, as you have done, that the Lord is good! Now, I know that if you are really in earnest about the matter, you will often meet with *cases which will stagger your faith*, will throw you back entirely upon your God and compel you to make your passionate appeal to His Omnipotence. Well, the text addresses itself especially to those who meet with such cases. Poor Martha, when she saw the stone rolled away from the tomb of her dead brother, was shocked with what would meet the eyes and nostrils of her Lord, and so, in deep solicitude and almost alarm she declared, “Lord, by this time he stinks.” The spectacle was too revolting, for he had been dead nearly four days—and in an Oriental climate that signified much that was repulsive. Terrible

havoc would already have been worked on the body and she could not bear, I say, that the Savior should be exposed to such a spectacle! Now, how often do we meet with men and women, young and old persons, whose case is a very terrible one! We do not like to speak of it. It is getting among the putrid things, for "it is a shame even to speak of the things which are done of them in secret." There are some cases which are shocking, terrible, fearful! We may well wish that a stone may cover the cave so that they may not be seen, that they may be left unobserved as cases too vile for the ordinary gazer to look upon. Have you never met with such? I am sure, my dear Friends, if you are City Missionaries, or lovers of City Missionary work, you must meet in this great city with some of the most revolting instances of immorality, debauchery, dishonesty and everything that is dreadful—and you are very apt to think that these are cases in which the Gospel will be out of place and the publishing of the news of pardoning love will be like throwing pearls before swine! The text, however, tells you something which may comfort you concerning such cases.

Perhaps I shall be addressing some tonight who have been laboring of late in connection with cases which appear hopeless to them, not so much from any gross immorality as from a hardness of heart which has come over the people. There may be a mother here tonight who is much concerned about her daughter—that daughter was once here, frequently here, but where she is at this moment the weeping mother does not know, nor does her anxious father—and it is with deep concern and sad hearts that some of us have asked, "Where can she have gone?"

While some thus actually leave the parental home and, we fear, plunge into sin and excess, there are others who cause great anxiety in another way. They do not want to hear the Gospel which once greatly moved them—they have wearied of it—they contrive to stay away from the public worship and now the mother's admonitions have become positively irksome. The girl feels herself too big to yield to a father's counsels and entreaties. Perhaps even worse than this is the case you have been praying for—the case of one who actually denies and flouts the religion of Jesus Christ, who declares it is all a sham, a mere form got up that priests of all sects may get a living by it. Perhaps even blasphemy has taken the place of attention to the Word. You feel, as you think of such an one, who is the object of your love, that you would give up your very heart if you could but have a hope of his ultimate salvation—but he seems to have gone too far. *Now*, you cannot get him to listen to the Word. He is tonight—yes, good woman, your own husband—where is he? He is possibly in the gin palace, or even worse. You fear that at the very moment when you are sitting here, some for whom you have been pleading night and day are plunging deeper and deeper into sin and that when you reach home, the cross you will have to endure will be to hear hard things and bitter against the Savior whom you love, and to see and hear those dear to you thus penetrating further and further into the lairs of wickedness! Now, you see, you have a desperate case before you, and I want, if God shall help me, just to push the text home. Christ says, "Said I not unto

you that if you would believe you should see the Glory of God?" This death, this burial, this "stinking" of Lazarus—to use the expressive word of Martha—all this is only a platform for the Divine Glory to display itself! This horrible sin, this hardness of heart, this rejection of the Word of God—all this is only a stage upon which the Grace of God, in answer to your prayerful faith, shall come and do its wonders!

Let me tell you what you will yet see if your faith is able to lay hold upon Christ. You will see *the conversion of these lost ones* and then you will see the Glory of God, for you will say, "Could God have given His only-begotten Son instead of such sinners as these?" Did it never strike you as strange that there should be two—one, the perfectly holy Christ, the beloved Son of God and, on the other hand, a reeling, cursing, blaspheming drunk—and that God would sooner smite His Son than smite that drunk? That He should even grieve His Son and make Him smart, rather than that that blasphemer should smart? Truly, when the Jews made the choice of a robber rather than Christ, it was a strange choice and only to be understood by their wicked infatuation. But here, such is the power of God's love that when one out of two must suffer, He chooses that the innocent Christ should suffer and that the drunken, blaspheming sinner should go free! Truly "God commends His love towards us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us."

Look at it again. There is this great sinner whom we have been describing—is it not marvelous that Jesus Christ could really give Himself for such an one? He has been in prison, perhaps, two or three times, and he has done everything that is bad, and yet, oh, wonder of wonders—the Lord Jesus Christ gives Himself for him! Now, "scarcely for a righteous man would one die: perhaps for a good man one would even dare to die," but God commends His love towards us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. What? Did Christ shed His blood for thieves, harlots, and drunks? Yes, Sir, as much as for the self-righteous and even more so, for while the self-righteous miss Heaven by reason of their pride and refusal of His salvation, some of these, coming humbly to the Cross, find pardon through the precious blood!

But it is a great wonder—and when a soul of this kind is converted you *do* see the Glory of God! You do not understand the miracle of love it expresses, in that Christ could die for such a mass of spiritual corruption, as some of His creatures have really made themselves to be before they had been helped by Sovereign Grace to trust in Christ. As the Glory of Christ's power was seen in Lazarus coming out of the grave, though He had been four days dead and was corrupt, so the same Glory is seen in the conversion of every great sinner!

What? Does the former swearer pray? Yes, and prays better than half of us and much more earnestly! Oh, what depth of feeling, what groaning that cannot be uttered, comes welling up from his grateful, adoring heart. Does "the woman who was a sinner" love the Savior? Yes, and she washes His feet with her tears and wipes them with the hair of her head, thus doing more for Christ than Simon did, whose guest He was, though

he thought he had done so much. Ah, yes, Grace can make bright saints out of black sinners, can take the very scum and dregs of Satan's dominions and make them into sparkling jewels to glitter in the crown of Divine Grace forever! It is wondrous what the Grace of God can do! My dear Hearer, if you should happen to feel yourself to be degraded by sin, do not give up! Do not think that Christ cannot save you! Do not let Satan tell you tonight that Christ can never save you! Look upon this case of Lazarus—"By this time he stinks, for he has been dead four days," and yet where the worm had been, where corruption had been, life came back at the Savior's word! And so shall it be with you. He can save you. He can save you now! He can save you from the blackest of your sins and make you sing His praises! The Glory of God, then, is seen in the conversion of every sinner, but most conspicuously in the conversion of the chief of sinners!

And this Glory is also seen in the fact that these sinners, when saved, hold on and continue to the end. I have sometimes heard it said of such an one, "Ah, he will never hold out!" I bless God that there have been so many whom God has blessed in this house who have held out year after year! Look over our Church records—see the names of very nearly 3,600 souls associated here in Church fellowship, and in a year how many are excommunicated for their sins? Why, enough to make us grieve, but so few that they make us wonder at the Grace of God which keeps them! Many of them have been brought in while young and they have been exposed to many temptations—some plucked from the depths of sin—and yet they are an honor to the Christian Church of which they are members! And I can speak of them in every company into which I move and say that they honor Christ and prove the power of the Gospel and the reality of conversion! Brothers and Sisters, we see the Glory of God, not only in the regenerating of those who were once great sinners, but even more remarkably displayed when we see that they do not go back to their old sins, but they have become such new creations that it is impossible for them to return to the old evil life and its evil loves and longings! So, then, it appears from the text that if we are praying for our friends, their present condition ought not to stagger us and, however bad their state may be, we should only hear the Savior telling us that He is making herein larger room for the display of His matchless Grace! So we should be encouraged to pray more earnestly for such—rather than even for a moment to give them up as though such case were hopeless!

Now, who is it that sees the Glory of God in the conversion of a soul? When a man has produced some masterpiece of art or other genius, he likes others to see it. Who are they who see great sinners when they are converted? Who are they? We read of one stone upon which were seven eyes. When such a sinner is saved, all eyes are set upon him. Why, *his neighbors see him*. Some of them hate the change, but they cannot help seeing it. When a great sinner is converted, beloved Friends, his wife knows of it, his children know of it, his relatives know of it and it is a matter of wonder to them all! "Oh," they say, "So-and-So has become a Christian." Very likely they say he has become a Methodist, or a

“Spurgeonite,” or some such ugly name. They are sure to call him by the name of the minister whom God has blessed to him. And then they talk of it in the workshop and he gets jeered at for it, but they say, “Ah, what is this? Here is a kind of religion come among us which really has power over people to alter their lives, which takes them out of the old ruts in which they were known to run and puts them on a new highway, and turns their minds in another direction! What is it?” So that friends and relatives see it and enemies see it, too, and, what is still more remarkable, it becomes a theme of *wonder in other worlds!* Devils see it and they do not like it—and they resolve to overthrow the man—but all the devils in Hell cannot destroy a true child of God! You know Toplady’s saying about the Grace of God. He says it is like leaven—if you once get it into the cake you may boil it, you may fry it, you may bake it—but you cannot get it out! And so, once get the Grace of God into a man’s heart and you cannot get it out again! God does what the devil cannot undo when He makes “a new creature in Christ Jesus.” And then the angels see it. We have God’s Word for that, for we are told that they rejoice over one sinner that repents. A poor woman upstairs in an attic found the Savior and her finding the Savior affected three worlds in one moment! It made earth glad. It made Hell howl with indignation and it set Heaven in a blaze of extraordinary joy! Do not the harps of the angels thrill with super-celestial harmonies when they hear of sinners being eternally saved? Do they not lift up a new paean, and yet more exalted praise unto Him who trod the wine-press alone, and of whose victory these souls are the reward?

Yes, earth, Heaven and Hell, all know of it! *We know it* for the text says, “Said I not unto you, that if you would believe, you should see the Glory of God”? It is a very great comfort in one’s labors to see those who are truly converted. Of course, we ought to be able to work on and to believe in success even if we cannot yet see it, but it is a great delight to be privileged to see the sheaves cut and then carry them to the Great Husbandman and say, “That is a sheaf You gave me.” I have heard of Mr. Matthew Wilks, the famous but eccentric preacher, being waited on by some of his very excellent and very proper members to reprove him for some of his quaint sayings. “Well,” said Mr. Wilks, “if you will wait just a little, I will answer you.” Going upstairs, he brought down a long roll which contained the names of those whom God had blessed and saved through his ministry. “Now,” he said, “all these precious souls have been brought to God by these sermons which you feel moved to criticize. By the Grace of God I will preach yet more of them!” And so may every minister say when God gives him success, for it strengthens him in his work! You dear Sunday School teachers who teach in your classes. You who distribute tracts. You who preach in the streets—if God gives you conversions, I am sure you will go on with your work! It will whet your appetites! You will want more! You will never be satisfied, but will press on in your Master’s service!

But now comes in an “if,” and then I will leave this point. “Said I not unto you, *if* you would believe, you should see the Glory of God”? That is the thing! Why is it that we are not more successful? It is because we do not *believe*. I heard a conversation the other day, something like this. A Brother said—and a very excellent Brother, too—“When I go into the pulpit I go hoping that perhaps God will bless the word that I am going to deliver, prayerfully seeking that He would do so, and feeling satisfied that it will be according to His mind and will and believing that if I preach the Word, perhaps it will be blessed.” Another Brother said, “Well, my Brother, I think you are right, but I do not go into the pulpit in that way at all.” “How then?” asked the other. “Why,” was the answer, “I go into the pulpit believing that God is going to save souls tonight, that I am going to be made by Him the instrument of it and I preach believing that while I am preaching, souls must and will be saved—that there is not a chance they *may* be, but they *will* be, that God’s Word will not return unto Him void, but will prosper in the thing whereto He has sent it. I hope I am as humble as if it were a peradventure, but I am all the more earnest, I trust, because I feel certain that now souls will be blessed.” Now, I do believe that God does bless in a very great measure according to what we believe will be the result and that if we can only stand and preach Christ, believing Christ will come to souls and souls will find Him, then the more of such faith that we have, the greater will be the results. Beloved, do we always pray in faith, as we ought? We pray here at every Prayer Meeting that God would save souls—but do we believe that He certainly will hear us? If we do not, we shall lose the blessing. We must believe not only that God is, but that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him, or we shall miss His blessing!

Oh, what a mercy to rise from your knees and say, “I have got it! I asked for souls and God has heard me—and I shall see my desire and be satisfied! I have prayed definitely for conversions, and conversions will be given me.” Brothers and Sisters, in such a Church as this, where God is so manifestly and so marvelously working, we ought to be forever expecting conversions!

You Christian people, as you sit in the pews should be looking out for God to bless your friends, believing that your dear children will manifest the first signs of His gracious saving power. Then should you encourage these seedlings of promise and put the young plants in the hothouse of deep love during the winter of their conviction, so that they may not be withered or blighted, but come to be plants of God’s right hand planting! Expect the blessing! It is coming! It is coming! God is blessing His Church and He intends to bless it yet more. He has opened the windows of Heaven and He is pouring out the blessing so that we have not room enough to receive it! We have not even now room enough to receive the hearers—the day is coming when we shall not have room enough to hold the Church! Only let us pray and work—and God, even our own God, will bless us and bless His other Churches, too—and the ends of the earth shall fear Him! So you see, then, the whole matter is if you can believe. Now, Mother, can you believe about your child? Now, good Woman, can

you believe about your husband? Now, my Brother, can you believe about your wife? May God help you to believe Him! Depend upon it, the struggle is there. It is much harder for you to believe in God than it is for God to convert your wife, much harder for you to trust God about your child than it is for Him to save your child! It is much easier for God to save the harlot, the drunk, the thief, than it is for us to think He will do it! But when we can believe in Him and, believing, boldly pray for it *and expect it*, we shall get it, and he that was repulsive but yesterday shall be fragrant with Divine Grace tomorrow! He that rotted in his tomb but the other day, so far gone that men turned away from him, shall come into the midst of God's Church, be found among the living in Zion and make the Church on earth and the Church in Heaven glad in his society! But now we must have a few minutes in which to use the text for—

II. THE COMFORT AND BLESSING OF THOSE WHO ARE NOT THEMSELVES SAVED.

I do not suppose, dear Friends—speaking to those of you who are awakened and quickened in your consciences—I do not suppose I could give a descriptive character of you which you would think to be too bad. You once thought yourselves very good and excellent, but it is quite a different tale with you now. God the Holy Spirit has met with you and made you see yourselves—and now you are ashamed of yourselves. You feel as if you were dead, as if you had no power, no life.

You feel more, you seem as if you were buried. Satan tells you that there is no hope for such as you are and you feel as if you were like Lazarus, really corrupt in soul, so that you cannot sometimes endure yourselves. You cannot sleep at night—your fears distract you. You are afraid that God will do with you as Abraham did with his dead, that is, bury you out of His sight. I have known many like you and whenever I have met with them, I have been glad, for I have always felt that God was about to bless them when they could never stand, much less, bless themselves! It was just then, when they thought so badly of themselves, that God thought well of them. Now, dear Friends, I say I cannot describe your condition as being worse than you really think it to be, for you really now feel yourselves to be about as bad as a person could ever be. Now, what about you? Why, this—that the badness of your present condition is no barrier whatever to your salvation if you can now, enabled by Divine Grace, trust in the Lord Jesus Christ to save you! I will not enter into your past life, nor into your present state. We will suppose both to be outrageously bad, if you like. You may say that you have no feeling, no sensibility—that you cannot repent and a great many other things. But now, can you believe that Christ can save you? Can you trust Him to do it? If you can, then all there is of hardness in you—even if it were ten times more—could not keep you out of Heaven! “Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” If your heart is hard, pardoning love can melt it! If you have no repentance, Christ is exalted on high to *give* repentance! If your will is stubborn, He can make you willing in the day of His power!

Can you believe this? Have you not heard the story? It was God, Himself, who died on Calvary! It was none other than that same One who made the heavens, who came down on earth and became a Man for the sake of men—and on the bloody tree expired in extreme agonies! He, “very God of very God,” though a Man like you, died that sin might be put away and that sinners might be saved!

Sinner, can you believe this? Can you trust Him? “Yes, I should trust Him,” says one, “but I cannot.” I do not mean what *you* can do, but can you trust *Him* to do? Can you believe? For if you will believe on Him, you shall see the Glory of God. “But I cannot see.” No! No! No! It does not say if you can *see*, but if you *believe*, you *shall* see! Believing comes first, and then the seeing follows! And what is it you are to see? The Glory of God. Now, supposing you were a very good sort of person and had not any sin, it would not be much Glory to God to save you. Why, you would not need saving—you could save yourselves, or there would be nothing from which to be saved! What glory would then be His? But if, on the other hand, you can see nothing to nurture it—then, in your wondrous salvation would the Glory of God be gloriously seen! You, and others, too, would see God saving you in spite of your sin, in the teeth of your soul’s corruption and in defiance of all the powers of evil! Such a sight of God’s Glory will make it impossible for a single note of praise to be given to yourselves, but all the Glory, all the Glory shall be to His rich, all-conquering, Sovereign Grace!

Now, can you believe this? Can you trust Jesus Christ, alone, to utterly save you? Sink or swim, can you throw yourself into the sea of Jesus’ love? Now, can you just give yourself up to Christ to save you, for if you will believe, you shall see the Glory of God. You shall see that Glory in your pardon, in your new creation, in your being sustained under temptation, in your being kept in the hours of life, in the night of death, in your being lifted up at the Day of Judgment to receive an acquittal and in your being presented faultless before His Presence with exceedingly great joy! Mercy, in her dream—if you remember—laughed, and when Christiana asked her why she laughed, she said it was because of what she had dreamed. Now, verily, I have known what it is to laugh in the same way. I have thought of myself as black, defiled, corrupt, unworthy. And then I have thought of myself as one day wearing a crown, of waving a palm branch, of bowing before the eternal Throne of God, having neither spot nor wrinkle, nor any such thing—and, verily, I have seemed to laugh that that should ever be true and my soul has leaped at the very thought that I—yes I, shall tread the streets of gold, passing through the gates of pearl and see *His* face and bow before *Him*—I, who was once filled with sin and corruption, filled to the brim with the vision of God! And, Brothers and Sisters, we will meet there and what a wonder it will be that we should ever get there! Do you not think they will sometimes say to one another in Heaven, “I remember—it is almost enough to make me weep to remember—when I stood in the tavern and made others laugh at a lascivious jest and when I could sing a merry song. Oh, how different from the song that now engages this happy heart and from the music

that comes from these blessed strings!" And do you not think that another will say, "And I remember haunts of wickedness and vice that dare not be mentioned here, but I am washed!" And oh, when they think of that, they will strike up again the grand old song that will always be new—"Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, unto Him be Glory forever and ever." I am of the same mind as the good old soul who said that if Jesus Christ ever took her to Heaven, He would never hear the last of it. And He never will!—

***"I'll praise Him in life, I'll praise Him in death,
I'll praise Him as long as He lends me breath!
And say when the death-dew lies cold on my brow,
If ever I loved You, my Jesus, 'tis now."***

Yes, and up there in Heaven we shall still praise Him! We shall not have time to think of anybody else, nor to think of any but our Lord—

***"Jesus sought me when a stranger
Wandering from the fold of God.
He to rescue me from danger,
Interposed His precious blood."***

"Why, if an angel had come to me 17 years ago and had said to me, "Now, my lad, get up from that bedside"—there was I, about that time, on my knees before God, with many tears, thinking that I should never be saved. I had longed and entreated for mercy from my childhood, without having any comfortable answer. And I considered that I was among the reprobate and was meant to illustrate forever the Justice of God in Hell—if, I say, an angel had come to me at that time and said, "Come, my lad, you will one day preach the Gospel to thousands of sinners, and tell them what a dear Savior you have found"—do you think I would have believed him? "No," I would have said, "that will never be." Why, it is such a change for me to be here talking to you from being there, afraid of the wrath of God, that I do not know how to talk of it! But oh, that is nothing! That is no change at all compared with our being taken away to Heaven! With our being taken up where angels dwell! Above all, where He dwells, that Blessed One whom, though we have not seen, we love and unceasingly adore, to be in His bosom forever, to be kissed with the kisses of His mouth, to be His dear ones, to live in His Father's house where the many mansions are! Oh, the Glory of God! What a sight that will be! And, Sinner, if you will believe, you shall see it! Where did you come from tonight? Where are you going when you leave this service? I hope you will leave a different man, a different woman! If you will believe, you shall see the Glory of God! Oh, may the Holy Spirit constrain you to believe tonight! May this be the time when you shall come empty-handed and take Christ to be your All-in-All! May this be the instant when you shall be done with your self-righteousness, when you will give up trying to save yourself and come and rest where God would have you rest—in the blood of His dear Son! In His death! His Resurrection! In His intercession before the Throne of God!

Oh, come, Sinner! God help you to come! Come! All black and ruined, come! All lost and defiled, come! Though you are as one dead, no, like Lazarus rotting in the tomb of your sins, "Awake, you that sleep, and rise

from the dead, and Christ shall give you light." In the name of Jesus, thus I speak to you and He speaks to you through me. Come forth! Come forth! You corrupting Lazarus, come forth! 'Tis Jesus bids you come! Trust Him! He bids you trust Him and whoever trusts Him shall see the Glory of God forever! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 11:1-26.**

Verse 1. *Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister, Martha.* In God's Book, towns are most remarkable for saints that dwell in them. "The town of Mary and her sister, Martha." A day will come when a city shall be more illustrious for a saint than for a Caesar—be more renowned for deeds of faith than for deeds of battle! It was "the town of Mary and her sister, Martha."

2, 3. *(It was that Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick). Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick.* They did not say anymore. They felt that it was quite enough to tell Him that Lazarus was sick. They left it to the tender heart of Jesus to do whatever seemed good in His sight. Some prayers would be all the better if they were shorter—all the better if they did not so much declare our own will as declare our confidence in the good will of Christ! I like the omissions of Martha's and Mary's prayer.

4. *When Jesus heard that, He said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the Glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.* Our Savior speaks in a different style from us. We would have said that the sickness was unto death, but, ultimately, to the Glory of God. But He who sees the end from the beginning speaks with a grandeur of style which could not be imitated by us! So the Lord speaks of things, not as they seem to be, nor even as they are in the present moment, but as they shall be in the long run—"Not unto death, but that the Son of God might be glorified."

5. *Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister, and Lazarus.* Yet Lazarus died. Jesus loved Lazarus, yet Lazarus was sick. Jesus was not of that cruel sort of people, of whom we have some in these days, who call themselves saints, and who attribute all sickness among God's people to their sin or to their lack of faith. Not He. Here was one that was sick, but Jesus loved him just as much for all that.

6. *When He had heard, therefore, that he was sick, He abode two days, still, in the same place where He was.* Notice the connection. "Jesus loved Martha and her sister, and Lazarus"—and yet when He had heard that Lazarus was sick, "He abode two days, still, in the same place where He was." Sometimes true love may think fit to make us wait. It may be the truest love on God's part to let us lie sick and not to come post-haste to us to make us well. Yes, the truest love may demand that the sickness should turn to death, for out of the death He may bring the greater

Glory. The Lord acts not upon the scale of man, for He sees not as man sees. He sees the end as well as the beginning.

7. *Then after that He said to His disciples, Let us go into Judaea again—*And that because He loved Martha and her sister, and Lazarus! If that love in its wisdom made Him tarry, yet that love in its sincerity at last moved Him to seek the house of grief.

8, 9. *The disciples said to Him, Rabbi, lately the Jews sought to stone You, and are You going there again? Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? Is there not a time in which the sun will not go down—in which it is safe and right for men to work?*

9, 10. *If any man walks in the day, he stumbles not, because he sees the light of this world. But if a man walks in the night, he stumbles because there is no light in him.* There is a singular turn, is there not, in that expression? We expected it to be, "Because he sees not the light of the world," instead of which the Savior says, "Because there is no light in him"—because in spiritual things our light not only comes from above, but it shines *within*—and without that inner light we are sure to stumble.

11. *These things said He: and after that He said unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may awake him out of sleep.* It is the Savior's way to use terms concerning His miracles, which, so far from exaggerating them, even appear to depreciate them. He is about to raise a man from the dead, but He says, "Our friend Lazarus sleeps; but I go that I may awake him out of sleep." I am afraid that our tendency is always to describe our actions in the largest possible terms consistent with truth, perhaps sometimes forgetting those last words. But the Savior describes truthfully what He does, but still in terms which, like His Humanity, seem to veil the Glory. Wonderfully condescending is it of Him to speak thus—

12. *Then said His disciples, Lord, if He sleeps, He shall do well.* It is considered to be a sign of getting better when a patient can sleep.

13-16. *However Jesus spoke of his death: but they thought that He had spoken of taking of rest in sleep. Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes, that I was not there, to the intent you may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him. Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellow disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with Him.* A singular mixture of faith and unbelief! He so believes his Master that he is willing to die with Him. He so doubts Him that, although the Savior had plainly told him that He was immortal till His work was done, yet he is afraid that His Master and all of them will be put to death. Oh, the Lord knows us better than we know ourselves—and the Lord accepts us notwithstanding our infirmities.

17. *Then when Jesus came, He found that he had lain in the grave four days already.* So that he was probably dead as soon as the messengers arrived to tell the Savior that he was ill.

18. *Now Bethany was near unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off.* Just a nice little walk which our Savior had often taken in the evening af-

ter the toils of the day in Jerusalem. He had loved to make Bethany His quiet resting place. "Fifteen furlongs off."

19-20. *And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother. Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met Him: but Mary sat still in the house. Because she had not heard that Jesus was come, or else, no doubt, she would have been there as soon as Martha.*

21. *Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if You had been here, my brother had not died.* They had often said to one another, "Oh, we wish the Lord would come." They had sent for Him. They felt sure that He would come. But, alas, their brother had died before the Master had arrived—and now this thought which was uppermost in their hearts is uppermost in their speech, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother had not died."

22. *But I know that even now, whatever You will ask of God, God will give it to You.* There is faith there, and there is unbelief, too. She believes that Christ can have what He wills of God, but she does not recognize His own personal Godhead—His own power to work resurrection.

23-26. *Jesus said unto her, Your brother shall rise again. Martha said unto Him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the Last Day. Jesus said unto her, I am the Resurrection, and the Life: he that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you Believe this?* She looked upon the Resurrection and the Life as things that were to be in some dim and misty future. "No," says Christ, "I am the Resurrection and the Life. Not only do I get these things by prayer from God, but I *am* these things." And then He goes on to explain it. He says, "I am the Resurrection. He that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. I am the Life. Whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" He has taken her out of the thought of this poor common animal-life into the thought of the spiritual and higher life, which is, indeed, to the soul what the resurrection is to the body! It was well for the Savior thus to teach her higher truth than as yet she knew.

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

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THE PREPARATORY PRAYERS OF CHRIST

NO. 3178

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 30TH, 1909,

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“Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus, also being baptized, and praying, the Heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from Heaven, which said, You are My Beloved Son, in You I am well pleased.”
Luke 3:21, 22.

“And it came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, He called unto Him, His disciples: and of them He chose twelve, whom also He named Apostles.”
Luke 6:12, 13.

“And it came to pass about eight days after these sayings, He took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as He prayed, the fashion of His Countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistening.”
Luke 9:28, 29.

“And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, He was there alone. But the boat was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night, Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.”
Matthew 14:23-25.

“Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead were laid. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I know that You hear Me always: but because of the people here, I said it, that they may believe that You have sent Me.”
John 11:41, 42.

“And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not: and when you are converted, strengthen your brethren.”
Luke 22:31, 32.

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

THERE is one peculiarity about the life of our Lord Jesus Christ which everybody must have noticed who has carefully read the four Gospels, namely, that He was a Man of much prayer. He was mighty as a Preach-

er, for even the officers who were sent to arrest Him said, "Never man spoke like this Man." But He appears to have been even mightier in prayer, if such a thing could be possible! We do not read that His disciples ever asked Him to teach them to *preach*, but we are told that, "as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, one of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, teach us to pray." He had no doubt been praying with such amazing fervor that His disciples realized that He was a master of the holy art of prayer and they, therefore, desired to learn the secret for themselves. The whole life of our Lord Jesus Christ was one of prayer. Though we are often told about His praying, we feel that we scarcely need to be informed of it, for we know that He must have been a Man of prayer. His acts are the acts of a prayerful Man. His words speak to us like the words of One whose heart was constantly lifted up in prayer to His Father. You could not imagine that He would have breathed out such blessings upon men if He had not first breathed in the atmosphere of Heaven! He must have been much in prayer or He could not have been so abundant in service and so gracious in sympathy.

Prayer seems to be like a silver thread running through the whole of our Savior's life and we have the record of His prayers on many special occasions. It struck me that it would be both interesting and instructive for us to notice some of the seasons which Jesus spent in prayer. I have selected a few which occurred either before some great work or some great suffering, so our subject will really be the *preparatory prayers of Christ*—the prayers of Christ as He was approaching something which would put a peculiar stress and strain upon His Manhood, either for service or for suffering. And if the consideration of this subject shall lead all of us to learn the practical lesson of praying at all times—and yet to have special seasons for prayer just before any peculiar trial or unusual service—we shall not have met in vain!

I. The first prayer we are to consider is OUR LORD'S PRAYER IN PREPARATION FOR HIS BAPTISM. It is in Luke 3:21, 22—"Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus, also being baptized, and praying," (it seems to have been a continuous act in which He had been previously occupied), "the Heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from Heaven, which said, You are My Beloved Son, in You I am well pleased."

The Baptism of our Lord was the commencement of His manifestation to the sons of men. He was now about to take upon Himself in full all the works of His Messiahship and, consequently, we find Him very specially engaged in prayer. And, Beloved, it seems to me to be peculiarly appropriate that when any of us have been converted and are about to make a Scriptural profession of our faith—about to take up the soldier's life under the great Captain of our salvation—about to start out as pilgrims to Zion's city—I say that it seems to me to be peculiarly appropriate for us to spend much time in very special prayer! I would be very sorry to think that anyone would venture to come to be baptized, or to be united with a Christian Church without having made that action a matter of much solemn consideration and earnest prayer. But when the decisive step is

about to be taken, our whole being should be very specially concentrated upon our supplication at the Throne of Grace.

Of course we do not believe in any sacramental efficacy attaching to the observance of the ordinance, but we receive a special blessing in the act, itself, because we are moved to pray even more than usual before it takes place and at the time. At all events, I know that it was so in my own case. It was many years ago, but the remembrance of it is very vivid at this moment and it seems to me as though it only happened yesterday! It was in the month of May and I rose very early in the morning so that I might have a long time in private prayer. Then I had to walk about eight miles, from Newmarket to Isleham, where I was to be baptized in the river. I think that the blessing I received that day resulted largely from that season of solitary supplication and my meditation, as I walked along the country roads and lanes, upon my indebtedness to my Savior and my desire to live to His praise and Glory. Dear young people, take care that you start right in your Christian life by being much in prayer! A profession of faith that does not begin with prayer will end in disgrace. If you come to join the Church, but do not pray to God to uphold you in consistency of life, and to make your profession sincere, the probability is that you are already a hypocrite! Or if that is too uncharitable a suggestion, the probability is that if you are converted, the work has been of a very superficial character and not of that deep and earnest kind of which prayer would be the certain index. So again I say to you that if any of you are thinking of making a profession of your faith in Christ, be sure, then, in preparation for it, you devote a special season to drawing near to God in prayer.

As I read the first text, no doubt you noticed that it was while Christ was praying that, “the Heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from Heaven, which said, You are My Beloved Son, in You I am well pleased.” There are three occasions of which we read in Scripture when God bore *audible testimony to Christ*. And on each of these three occasions He was either in the act of prayer or He had been praying but a very short time before. Christ’s prayer is especially mentioned in each instance side by side with the witness of His Father—and if you, beloved Friends, want to have the witness of God either at your Baptism or on any subsequent act of your life—you must obtain it by prayer! The Holy Spirit never sets His seal to a prayerless religion! It has not in it that of which He can approve. It must be truly said of a man, “Behold, he prays,” before the Lord bears such testimony concerning him as He bore concerning Saul of Tarsus, “He is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles.”

So we find that it was while Christ was praying at His Baptism that the Holy Spirit came upon Him, “in a bodily shape like a dove,” to qualify Him for His public service! And it is through prayer that we, also, receive that spiritual enrichment that equips us as co-workers together with God. Without prayer you will remain in a region that is desolate as a desert! But bend your knees in supplication to the Most High and you have reached the land of promise, the country of benediction! “Draw near

to God, and He will draw near to you,” not merely as to His gracious Presence, but as to the powerful and efficacious working of the Holy Spirit! More prayer—more power! The more pleading with God that there is, the more power will there be in pleading with men, for the Holy Spirit will come upon us while we are pleading and so we shall be fitted and qualified to do the work to which we are called of God!

Let us learn, then, from this first instance of our Savior’s preparatory prayer at His Baptism, the necessity of special supplication *on our part in similar circumstances*. If we are making our first public profession of faith in Him, or if we are renewing that profession. If we are moving to another sphere of service, if we are taking office in the Church as deacons or elders, if we are commencing the work of the pastorate. If we are in any way coming out more distinctly before the world as the servants of Christ, let us set apart special seasons for prayer—and so seek a double portion of the Holy Spirit’s blessing to rest upon us!

II. The second instance of the preparatory prayers of Christ which we are to consider is OUR LORD’S PRAYER PREPARATORY TO CHOOSING HIS TWELVE APOSTLES. It is recorded in Luke 6:12, 13—“And it came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. [See Sermon #798, Volume 14—SPECIAL PROTRACTED PRAYER—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] And when it was day, He called unto Him, His disciples: and of them He chose twelve, whom also He named Apostles.”

Our Lord was about to extend His ministry. His one tongue, His one voice might have delivered His personal message throughout Palestine, but He was desirous of having far more done than He could individually accomplish in the brief period of His public ministry upon earth. He would therefore have 12 Apostles and afterwards 70 disciples who would go forth in His name and proclaim the glad tidings of salvation. He was infinitely wiser than the wisest of mere men, so why did He not at once select His 12 Apostles? The men had been with Him from the beginning and He knew their characters and their fitness for the work He was about to entrust to them, so He might have said to Himself, “I will have James, John, Peter and the rest of the twelve, and send them forth to preach that the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand and to exercise the miraculous powers with which I will endow them.” He might have done this if He had not been the Christ of God—but being the Anointed of the Father, He would not take such an important step as that without long continued prayer. So He went alone to His Father, told Him all that He desired to do and pleaded with Him, not in the brief fashion that we call prayer which usually lasts only a few minutes—but His pleading lasted through an entire night!

What our Lord asked for, or how He prayed, we cannot tell, for it is not revealed to us. But I think we shall not be guilty of vain or unwarranted curiosity if we use our imagination for a minute or two. In doing so, with the utmost reverence, I think I hear Christ crying to His Father whom the right men might be selected as the leaders of the Church of God upon the earth. I think I also hear Him pleading that upon these chosen men a Divine influence might rest, that they might be kept in character, honest

in heart and holy in life—and that they might also be preserved in sound Doctrine and not turn aside to error and falsehood. Then I think I hear Him praying that success might attend their preaching. That they might be guided where to go, where the blessing of God would go with them and that they might find many hearts willing to receive their testimony. And that when their personal ministry should end, they might pass on their commission to others so that as long as there should be a harvest to be reaped for the Lord, there should be laborers to reap it—as long as there should be lost sinners in the world, there would also be earnest, consecrated men and women seeking to pluck the brands from the burning. I will not attempt to describe the mighty wrestling of that night of prayer when, in strong cries and tears, Christ poured out His very soul into His Father's ear and heart! But it is clear that He would not dispatch a solitary messenger with the glad tidings of the Gospel unless He was assured that His Father's authority and the Spirit's power would accompany the servants whom He was about to send forth.

What a lesson there is in all this to us! What Infallible Guidance there is here as to how a missionary society should be conducted! Where there is one committee meeting for business, there ought to be 50 for prayer! Whenever we get a missionary society whose main business it is to pray, we shall have a society whose distinguishing characteristic will be that it is the means of saving a multitude of souls! And to you, my dear young Brothers in the College, I feel moved to say that I believe we shall have a far larger blessing than we have already had when the spirit of prayer in the College is greater than it now is, though I rejoice to know that it is very deep and fervent even now! You, Brothers, have never been lacking in prayerfulness. I thank God that I have never had occasion to complain or to grieve on that account, but still, who knows what blessing might follow a night of prayer at the beginning or at any part of the session—or an all-night wrestling in prayer in the privacy of your own bedrooms? Then, when you go out to preach the Gospel on the Sabbath, you will find that the best preparation for preaching is much praying! I have always found that the meaning of a text can be better learned by prayer than in any other way. Of course we must consult lexicons and commentaries to see the literal meaning of the words and their relation to one another—but when we have done all that, we shall still find that our greatest help will come from prayer! Oh, that every Christian enterprise were commenced with prayer, continued with prayer and crowned with prayer! Then might we, also, expect to see it crowned with God's blessing!

So once again I remind you that our Savior's example teaches us that for seasons of special service, we need not only prayers of a brief character, excellent as they are for ordinary occasions, but special protracted wrestling with God like that of Jacob at the Brook Jabbok, so that each one of us can say to the Lord, with holy determination—

***“With You all night I mean to stay,
And wrestle till the break of day.”***

When such sacred persistence in prayer as this becomes common throughout the whole Church of Christ, Satan's long usurpation will be coming to an end and we shall be able to say to our Lord, as the 70 dis-

ciples did when they returned to Him with joy, “Even the devils are subject unto us through Your name!”

III. Now, thirdly, let us consider OUR LORD’S PRAYER PREPARATORY TO HIS TRANSFIGURATION. You will find it in Luke 9:28, 29—“And it came to pass about eight days after these sayings, He took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as He prayed, the fashion of His Countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistening.” You see that it was *as He prayed that He was transfigured*.

Now, Beloved, do you really desire to reach the highest possible attainments of the Christian life? Do you, in your inmost soul, pine and pant after the choicest joys that can be known by human beings this side of Heaven? Do you aspire to rise to full fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ and to be transformed into His image from glory to glory? If so, the way is open to you! It is the way of prayer—only there will you find these priceless blessings! If you fail in prayer, you will assuredly never come to Tabor’s top! There is no hope, dear Friends, of our ever attaining to anything like a transfiguration and being covered with the Light of God so that whether in the body or out of the body we cannot tell, unless we are much in prayer!

I believe that we make more real advance in the Divine Life in an hour of prayer than we do in a month of hearing sermons. I do not mean that we are to neglect the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but I am sure that without the praying, the hearing is of little worth! We must pray. We must plead with God if we are to really grow spiritually. In prayer, very much of our spiritual digestion is done. When we are hearing the Word, we are very much like the cattle when they are cropping the grass—but when we follow our hearing with meditation and prayer, we do, as it were, lie down in the green pastures—and get the rich nutriment for our souls out of the Truth of God. My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, would you shake off the earthliness that still clings to you? Would you get rid of your doubts and your fears? Would you overcome your worldliness? Would you master all your besetting sins? Would you glow and glisten in the brightness and Glory of the holiness of God? Then be much in prayer, as Jesus was! I am sure that it must be so and that, apart from prayer, you will make no advance in the Divine Life—but that in waiting upon God, you shall renew your spiritual strength, you shall mount up with wings as eagles, you shall run and not be weary—you shall walk and not faint!

IV. I must hasten on lest time should fail us before I have finished. And I must put together two of OUR LORD’S PRAYERS PREPARATORY TO GREAT MIRACLES.

The first, which preceded His stilling of the tempest on the Lake of Gennesaret, is recorded in Matthew 14:23-25—“And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, He was there alone. But the boat was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.” He had been pleading with His Father for His disciples and

then, when their ship was tossed by the waves, and driven back by the contrary winds, He came down to them from the lofty place where He had been praying for them, making a pathway for Himself across the turbulent waters that He was about to calm. Before He walked upon those tossing billows, He had prayed to His Father. Before He stilled the storm, He had prevailed with God in prayer.

Am I to do any great work for God? Then I must first be mighty upon my knees! Is there a man here who is to be the means of covering the sky with clouds and bringing the rain of God's blessing on the dry and barren Church which so sorely needs reviving and refreshing? Then he must be prepared for that great work as Elijah was when, on the top of Carmel, "He cast himself down upon the earth and put his face between his knees," and prayed as only he could pray! We shall never see a little cloud like a man's hand, which shall afterwards cover all the sky with blackness, unless first of all we know how to cry mightily unto the Most High! But when we have done that, then shall we see what we desire. Moses would never have been able to control the children of Israel as he did if he had not first been in communion with his God in the desert, and afterwards in the mountain. So if we are to be men of power, we also must be men of prayer!

The other instance to which I want to refer, showing how our Lord prayed before working a mighty miracle, is when He stood by the grave of Lazarus. You will find the account of it in John 11:41, 42—"Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I know that You hear Me always: but because of the people here, I said it, that they may believe that You have sent Me." He did not cry, "Lazarus, come forth," so that the people heard it, and Lazarus heard it, until *first* He had prayed, "My Father, grant that Lazarus may rise from the dead," and had received the assurance that he would do so as soon as he was called by Christ to come forth from the grave.

But, Brothers and Sisters, do you not see that if Christ, who was so strong, needed to pray thus, what need there is for us, who are so weak, to also pray? If He, who was God as well as Man, prayed to His Father before He worked a miracle, how necessary it is for us, who are merely men, to go to the Throne of Grace and plead there with importunate fervency if we are ever to do anything for God! I fear that many of us have been feeble out here in public because we have been feeble out there on the lone mountainside where we ought to have been in fellowship with God. The way to be fitted to work what men will call wonders, is to go to the God of Wonders and implore Him to gird us with His all-sufficient strength so that we may do exploits to His praise and Glory!

V. The next prayer we are to consider is OUR LORD'S PRAYER PREPARATORY TO PETER'S FALL. We have the record of that in Luke 22:31, 32—"And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not: and when you are converted, strengthen your brethren." [See Sermons #2620, Volume 45—CHRIST'S PRAYER FOR PETER; #2034, Volume 34—

PETER'S RESTORATION and #2035, Volume 34—PETER AFTER HIS RESTORATION—Read/download all the sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

There is much that is admirable and instructive in this utterance of our Lord. Satan had not then tempted Peter, yet Christ had already pleaded for the Apostle whose peril He clearly foresaw! Some of us would have thought that we were very prompt if we had prayed for a Brother or Sister who had been tempted and who had yielded to the temptation. But our Lord prayed for Peter *before he was tempted*. As soon as Satan had desired to have him in his sieve, that he might sift him as wheat, our Savior knew the thought that was formed in the diabolic mind—and He at once pleaded for His imperiled servant who did not even know the danger that was threatening him! Christ is always beforehand with us. Before the storm comes, He has provided the harbor of refuge. Before the disease attacks us, He has the remedy ready to cure it. His mercy outruns our misery!

What a lesson we ought to learn from this action of Christ! Whenever we see any friend in peril through temptation, let us not begin to talk about him, but let us at once pray for him! Some persons are very fond of hinting and insinuating about what is going to happen to certain people with whom they are acquainted. I pray you, beloved Friends, not to do it! Do not hint that So-and-So is likely to fall, but pray that he may *not* fall. Do not insinuate anything about him to others, but tell the Lord what your anxiety is concerning him.

“But So-and-So has made a lot of money and he is getting very purse-proud.” Well, even if it is so, do not talk about him to others, but pray God to grant that he may not be allowed to become purse-proud. Do not say that he will be, but pray constantly that he may not be—and do not let anyone but the Lord know that you are praying for him.

“Then there is So-and-So. He is so elated with the success he has had that one can scarcely get to speak to him.” Well then, Brother, pray that he may not be elated. Do not say that you are afraid he is growing proud, for that would imply what you would be if you were in his place! Your fear reveals a secret concerning your own nature, for what you judge that he would be is exactly what you would do in similar circumstances! We always measure other people's corn with our own bushel—we do not borrow their bushel. And we can judge ourselves by our judgment of others. Let us cease these censures and judgments—and let us pray for our Brothers and Sisters. If you fear that a minister is somewhat turning aside from the faith, or if you think that his ministry is not so profitable as it used to be, or if you see any other imperfection in him, do not go and talk about it to people in the street, for they cannot set him right—go and tell his Master about him! Pray for him and ask the Lord to make right whatever is wrong. There is a sermon by old Matthew Wilks about our being Epistles of Christ, written not with ink, and not on tablets of stone, but in fleshy tablets of the heart. And he said that ministers are the pens with which God writes on their hearts' hearts—and that pens need sharpening every now and then—but even when they are sharp, they cannot write without ink! So he said that the best service that the people could render to the preacher was to pray the Lord to give them new pens and dip them in the fresh ink that they might write better than

before! Do so, dear Friends—do not blot the page with your censures and unkind remarks, but help the preacher by pleading for him even as Christ prayed for Peter!

VI. Now I must close with our LORD'S PREPARATORY PRAYER JUST BEFORE HIS DEATH. You will find it in Luke 23:46—"And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit: and having said thus, He gave up the ghost." [See Sermons #2311, Volume 39—OUR LORD'S LAST CRY FROM THE CROSS and #2644, Volume 45—THE LAST WORDS OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

Our Lord Jesus was very specially occupied in prayer as the end of His earthly life drew near. He was about to die as His people's Surety and Substitute. The wrath of God, which was due to them, fell upon Him! Knowing all that was to befall Him, "He set His face steadfastly to go unto Jerusalem" and, in due time, "He endured the Cross, despising the shame." But He did not go to Gethsemane and Golgotha without prayer! Son of God as He was, He would not undergo that terrible ordeal without much supplication. You know how much there is about His praying in the later chapters of John's Gospel. There is especially that great prayer of His for His Church in which He pleaded with amazing fervor for those whom His Father had given Him. Then there was His agonized pleading in Gethsemane when "His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground." We will not say much about that, but we can well imagine that the bloody sweat was the outward and visible expression of the intense agony of His soul which was "exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death."

All that Christ did and suffered was full of prayer, so it was but fitting that His last utterance on earth should be the prayerful surrender of His spirit into the hands of His Father. He had already pleaded for His murderers, "Father, forgive them: for they know not what they do." He had promised to grant the request of the penitent thief, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom." Now nothing remained for Him to do but to say, "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit: and having said thus, He gave up the ghost." His life, which had been a life of prayer, was thus closed with prayer—an example well worthy of His people's imitation!

Perhaps I am addressing someone who is conscious that a serious illness is threatening. Well then, dear Friend, prepare for it by prayer! Are you dreading a painful operation? Nothing will help you to bear it so well as pleading with God concerning it! Prayer will help you mentally as well as physically—you will face the ordeal with far less fear if you have laid your care before the Lord and committed yourself—body, soul and spirit—into His hands. If you are expecting, before long, to reach the end of your mortal life either because of your advanced age, or your weak constitution, or the inroads of the deadly consumption—pray much. You need not fear to be baptized in Jordan's swelling flood if you are constantly being baptized in prayer! Think of your Savior in the Garden and on the Cross—and pray even as He did—"Not my will, but yours be done...Father, into Your hands I commend my spirit."

While I have been speaking to Believers in our Lord Jesus Christ, there may have been some here who are still unconverted—who have imagined that prayer is the way to Heaven—yet it is not! Prayer is a great and precious help on the road, but Christ, alone, is the Way! And the very first step heavenward is to trust ourselves wholly to Him. Faith in Christ is the all-important matter and if you truly believe in Him, you are saved! But the very first thing that *a saved man does is to pray*—and the very last thing that he does before he gets to Heaven is to pray. Well did Montgomery write—

***“Prayer is the contrite sinner’s voice,
Returning from his ways
While angels in their songs rejoice,
And cry, ‘Behold, he prays!’
Prayer is the Christian’s vital breath,
The Christian’s native air!
His watchword at the gates of death
He enters Heaven with prayer!”***

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 18:1-14.**

Verse 1. *And he spoke a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.* [See Sermon #2519, Volume 43—WHEN SHOULD WE PRAY?—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] An old writer says that many of Christ’s parables need a key to unlock them. Here, the key hangs outside the door, for at the very beginning of the parable we are told what Christ meant to teach by it—“that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.” And this is the parable.

2. *Saying, There was in a city a judge who feared not God, neither regarded man.* It is a great pity for any city and for any country where the judges do not fear God—where they feel that they have been put into a high office in which they may do just as they please. There were such judges in the olden times even in this land—God grant that we may not see any more like them!

3. *And there was a widow in that city and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of my adversary.* She had no friend to plead for her. She had nobody to help her and, therefore, when she was robbed of her little patrimony, she went to the court and asked the judge for justice.

4. *And he would not for a while.* He preferred to be unjust. As he could do as he liked, he liked to do as he should not.

4, 5. *But afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.* She seems to have gone to him so often that he grew quite fatigued and pained by her persistence! The Greek words are very expressive, as though she had beaten him in the eyes and so bruised him that he could not endure it any longer. Of course, the poor woman had not done anything of the kind—but the judge thus describes her continual importunity as a wounding of him, as an attacking of him, an assault upon him—for he had, perhaps, a little conscience left. He had, at least, enough honesty to confess that he did not fear God,

nor regard man. There are some of whom that is true, who will not admit it, but this judge admitted it—and though he was but little troubled about it—he said, “that I may not be worried to death by this woman’s continual coming, I will grant her request and avenge her of her adversary.”

6, 7. *And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge says. And shall not God avenge His own elect who cry day and night unto Him, though He bears long with them?* [See Sermon #2836, Volume 6—PRAYERFUL IMPORTUNITY—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] He is no unjust judge! He is One who is perfectly holy, just, true and who appears in a nearer and dearer Character than that of judge, even as the One who chose His people from eternity! “Shall not God avenge His own elect?” Yes, that He will—only let them persevere in prayer and “cry day and night unto Him.”

8. *I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of Man comes, shall He find faith on the earth?* [See Sermon #1963, Volume 33—THE SEARCH FOR FAITH—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] If anybody can find it, He can, for He is the Creator of it! Yet, when He comes, there will be so little of it in proportion to what He deserves, and so little in proportion to the loving kindness of the Lord, that it will seem as if even He could not find it—although if there were only as much faith as a grain of mustard seed He would be the first to spy it out!

9. *And He spoke this parable unto certain who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.* It seems as if these two things went together—as our esteem of ourselves goes up, our esteem of others goes down—the scales seem to work that way.

10. *Two men went up into the Temple to pray.* [See Sermon #2395, Volume 41—THE BLESSINGS OF PUBLIC WORSHIP—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] It was the place that was specially dedicated for prayer. It was the place where God had promised to meet with suppliants. They did well, in those days, to go up into the Temple to pray to God. Though, in *these days*—

***“Wherever we seek Him, He is found,
And every place is hallowed ground.”***

It is sheer superstition which imagines that one place is better for prayer than another! So long as we can be quiet and still, let us pray wherever we may be.

10, 11. *The one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank You that I am not as other men are—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.* It is possible that this was all true. We have no indication that he was a hypocrite—and if what he said was true—there was something in it for which he might well thank God. It was a great mercy not to be an extortioner, nor unjust, nor an adulterer—but what spoilt his expression of thankfulness was that back-handed blow at the other man who was praying in the same Temple—“or even as this publican.” What had the Pharisee to do with him? He had quite enough to occupy his thoughts if he could only see himself as he really was in God’s sight!

12. *I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.* Observe that there is no prayer in all that the Pharisee said. There was a great deal of self-righteousness and self-congratulation, but nothing else. There was certainly no prayer at all in it!

13. *And the publican, standing afar off*—Just on the edge of the crowd, keeping as far away as he could from the Most Holy Place—

13. *Would not lift up so much as his eyes unto Heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.* [See Sermon #1949, Volume 33—A SERMON FOR THE WORST MAN ON EARTH—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] That was *all* prayer—it was a prayer for mercy, it was a prayer in which the suppliant took his right place, for he was, as he said, “a sinner.” He does not describe himself as a penitent sinner, or as a praying sinner, but simply as a sinner. And as a sinner, he goes to God asking for mercy. Our English version does not give the full meaning of the publican’s prayer, it is, “God be propitious to me,” that is, “be gracious to me through the ordained Sacrifice.” And that is one of the points of the prayer that made it so acceptable to God. There is a mention of the Atonement in it. There is a pleading of the sacrificial blood. It was a real prayer and an acceptable prayer—while the Pharisee’s boasting was not a prayer at all.

14. *I tell you, this man*—This publican, sinner as he had been, though he had no broad phylacteries like the Pharisee had, though he may not have washed his hands before he came into the Temple, as, no doubt the Pharisee did—this man, who could not congratulate himself upon his own excellence, “this man”—

14. *Went down to his house justified rather than the other.* He obtained both justification and the peace of mind that comes from it! God smiled upon him and set him at ease concerning his sin. The other man received no justification—he had not sought it and he did not get it. He had a kind of spurious ease of mind when he went into the Temple and he probably carried it away with him! But he certainly was not justified in the sight of God. [See Sermon #2687, Volume 46—TOO GOOD TO BE SAVED!—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

14. *For everyone that exalts himself shall be abased; and he that humbles himself shall be exalted.* God turns things upside down! If we think much of ourselves, He makes us little, and if we make little of ourselves, we shall find that a humble and contrite heart He will not despise! May He teach us so to pray that we may go down to our house justified, as the publican was!

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

UNBINDING LAZARUS

NO. 1776

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 20, 1884,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“And when He had thus spoken, He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth! And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave clothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus said unto them, Loose him, and let him go.”
John 11:43, 44.***

In many things our Lord Jesus stands alone as a worker. No other can unite His voice with the fiat which says, “Lazarus, come forth!” Yet, in certain points of gracious operation, the Master associates His servants with Him, so that when Lazarus has come forth He says *to them*, “loose him, and let him go.” In the raising of the dead, He is alone, and therein majestic and Divine—in the loosing of the bound He is associated with them and still remains majestic—but His more prominent feature is condescension. How exceedingly kind it is of our Lord Jesus to permit His disciples to do some little thing in connection with His great deeds, so that they may be, “workers together with Him.” Our Lord, as frequently as possible, associated His disciples with Himself. Of course, they could not aid Him in presenting an atoning Sacrifice, yet it was their honor that they had said, “Let us go, that we may die with Him,” and that in their love they resolved to go with Him to prison and to death.

Our Lord understood the fickleness of their character, yet He knew that they were sincere in their desire to be associated with Him in all His life story, whatever it might be. Therefore, when He, afterwards, rode into Jerusalem in triumph, He, alone, was saluted with Hosannas—but He sent two of His disciples to bring the donkey on which He rode and they cast their garments upon the colt. And they set Jesus on it and, as He went, they spread their clothes on the way. Thus they contributed to His lowly pomp and shared in the exultation of the royal day. Further on, when He would keep the feast, He expressly dwells upon it that He would keep it with *them*, for He said, “With desire I have desired to eat this Passover *with you* before I suffer.”

He sent Peter and John to prepare that Passover. He directed them to the large furnished upper room and there He bade them make ready. Anything that they could do, they were allowed to do. Their Lord was willing to have led them further, still, but through weakness they stopped short. In the garden He bade them watch with Him on that dreadful night and He sought sympathy from them—

“Backward and forward, thrice He ran,

As if He sought some help from man.

He cried in sorrowful disappointment, "Could you not watch with Me one hour?" Ah, no! They could go to the brink of the abyss with Him, but they could not descend into its deeps! He must tread the winepress alone and of the people there must be none with Him. Yet, as far as they could go, He disdained not their dear society. He allowed them, according to their capacity, to drink of His cup and to be baptized with His baptism. And if their fellowship with Him in His sufferings went no farther, it was not because He warned them back, but because they had not the strength to follow.

According to His own judgment they were intimately associated with Him, for He said to them, "You are they which have continued with Me in My temptations." Beloved, our Jesus Christ *still* delights to associate us with Him as far as our feebleness and folly will permit! In His present work of bringing sinners to Himself, He counts it a part of His reward that we should be laborers together with Him. In His working people He beholds the travail of His soul as well as in the sinners whom they bring to Him. Thus He has a double reward and is as much glorified in the love, pity and zeal of His servants as in the harvest which they reap. As a father smiles to see his little children imitating him and endeavoring to assist him in his work, so is Jesus pleased to see our lowly efforts for His honor.

It is His joy to see the eyes which He has opened weeping with Him over the impenitent and to hear the tongue which He has loosed speaking in prayer and in the preaching of the Gospel—yes, to see *any* of the members which He has restored and healed occupied as members of righteousness in His service! Jesus is glad to save sinners at all, but most of all glad to save them by the means of those already saved. Thus He blesses the prodigal sons and the servants of the household at the same moment! He gives to the lost, salvation and upon His own called and chosen ones, He puts the honor of being used for the most grand purposes under Heaven! It is more honorable to save a soul from death than to rule an empire! Such honor all the saints may have.

The chief subject of this morning's discourse is our association with Christ in gracious labor, but we must on the road consider other themes which lead up to it. First, I would call your attention to a memorable miracle which was worked by our Lord in the burying place at Bethany. Secondly, I would set before you a *singular spectacle*, for in Lazarus we see a living man wearing the wrappings of the dead. Thirdly, we will learn something from a *timely assistance* which the friends around lent to the risen man after the Lord had said, "Loose him, and let him go." And then, by way of conclusion, we will note a *practical hint* which this whole subject gives to those who are willing to hear what Christ, their Lord, will speak to them. Oh, that the Spirit of God may make us quick of understanding to perceive the mind of the Lord—and then diligent of heart to carry out His will! Come, O blessed Spirit, help Your servant at this hour!

I. First, then, this chapter records A MEMORABLE MIRACLE. Perhaps that writer is correct who speaks of the raising of Lazarus as the most remarkable of all our Lord's mighty works. There is no *measuring* miracles,

for they are all displays of the Infinite, but, in some respects, the raising of Lazarus stands at the head of the wonderful series of miracles with which our Lord astonished and instructed the people. Yet I am not in error when I assert that it is a *type* of what the Lord Jesus is constantly doing at this hour in the realm of mind and spirit. Did He raise the *naturally* dead? So does He still raise the *spiritually* dead! Did He bring back a body from corruption? So does He still deliver men from loathsome sins! The life-giving miracle of Grace is as truly astounding as the quickening miracle of power.

As this was, in some respects, a more remarkable resurrection than the raising of Jairus' daughter, or of the young man at the gate of Nain, so there are certain conversions and regenerations which are, to the observing mind, more astonishing than others. I notice the magnificence of this miracle in *the subject of it* because the man had been dead *four days*. To give life to one of whom his own sister said, "Lord, by this time he stinks," was a deed fragrant with Divine Power! Corruption had set in, but He who is the Resurrection and the Life stayed and reversed the process! Probably the sisters had perceived the traces of decay upon the body of their beloved brother before they buried him, for it is more than likely that they delayed the funeral as long as possible under an undefined hope that, perhaps, their Lord would appear upon the scene.

In that warm climate the ravages of decay are extremely rapid and, before many hours, the loving sisters were compelled to admit, as Abraham had done before them, that they must bury their dead out of their sight. It was their full conviction that the terrible devouring of corruption had commenced. What, then, can be done? When a man has newly fallen asleep in death and every vein and artery is in its place—and every separate organ is still perfect—it might seem possible for the life-flood, again, to flow. It somewhat resembles an engine which was but lately in full action and, though it is now motionless, the valves, wheel and bands are still there—only kindle anew the fire and reapply the motive force—and the machinery will speedily begin to work. But when corruption comes, every valve is displaced, every wheel is broken, every band is severed and the very metal, itself, is eaten away. What can be done then?

Surely it were an easier task to make a new man, altogether, out of the earth than to take this poor corrupted corpse which has turned to worms' meat and make it live again! This was the stupendous miracle of Divine Power which our glorious Lord performed upon His friend, Lazarus. Now, there are some men who are symbolized by this case—they are not only devoid of all spiritual life, but corruption has set in—their character has become abominable, their language is putrid, their spirit is loathsome. The pure mind desires to have them put out of sight! They cannot be endured in any decent society. They are so far gone from original righteousness as to be an offense to all and it does not seem *possible* that they should ever be restored to purity, honesty, or hope.

When the Lord, in infinite compassion, comes to deal with them and makes them to live, then the most skeptical are obliged to confess, "This is the finger of God!" What else can it be? Such a profane wretch become a

Believer? Such a blasphemer a man of prayer? Such a proud, conceited talker, receive the kingdom as a little child? Surely God Himself must have worked this marvel! Now is fulfilled the Word of the Lord by Ezekiel—“And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up out of your graves.” We bless our God that He does thus quicken the dry bones whose hope was lost! However far gone a man may be, he cannot be beyond the reach of the Lord’s right arm of mighty mercy! The Lord can change the vilest of the vile into the most holy of the holy! Blessed be His name, we have seen Him do this and, therefore, we have cheering hope for the worst of men!

The next notable point about this miracle is *the manifest human weariness of its worker*. He who had to deal with this dead man was, Himself, a Man. I do not know of any passage of Scripture wherein the Manhood of Christ is more frequently manifested than in this narrative. The Godhead is, of course, eminently conspicuous in the resurrection of Lazarus, but the Lord seemed as if He designedly, at the same time, set His Manhood to the front. The Pharisees said, according to the 47th verse, “What do we? For *this Man* does many miracles.” They are to be blamed for denying His Godhead, but not for dwelling upon His Manhood—for every part of the singular scene before us made it conspicuous! When our Lord had seen Mary’s tears, we read that He groaned in spirit and was troubled. Thus He showed the sorrows and the sympathies of a man. We cannot forget those memorable words, “Jesus wept.” Who but a *man* should weep? Weeping is a *human* specialty. Jesus never seems to be more completely bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh than when He weeps!

Next, our Lord made an enquiry—“Where have you laid him?” He veils His Omniscience—as a Man, He seeks information—where is the body of His dear departed friend? Even as Mary, in later days said about Him, “Tell me where you have laid Him,” so does the Lord Jesus ask for information as a man who knows not. As if to show His Manhood even more fully, when they tell Him where Lazarus is entombed, He goes that way. He needed not to go! He might have spoken a word where He was and the dead would have risen! Could He not as easily have worked at a distance as near at hand? Being Man, “Jesus therefore, again groaning in Himself, comes to the grave.”

When He has reached the spot, He sees a cave whose mouth is closed by a huge stone. And now He seeks human assistance. He cries, “Take away the stone.” Why surely, He who could raise the dead could have rolled away the stone with the same word! Yet, as if needing help from those about Him, the Man, Christ Jesus, reminds us, again, of Mary at His own sepulcher, saying, “Who shall roll away the stone for us?” That done, our Lord lifts up His eyes to Heaven and addresses the Father in mingled prayer and thanksgiving. How like a man is all this! He takes the suppliant’s place! He speaks with God as a man speaks with his friend, but still as a Man! Did not this condescending revelation of the Manhood make the miracle all the more remarkable?

The time came when the flame of the Godhead flashed forth from the unconsumed bush of the Manhood! The voice of Him who wept was heard

in the chambers of death and forth came the soul of Lazarus to live again in the body! “The weakness of God” proved itself to be stronger than death and mightier than the grave! It is a parable of our own case as workers. Sometimes we see the human side of the Gospel and wonder whether it can do many mighty works. When we tell the story, we fear that it will appear to the people as a thrice-told tale. We wonder how it can be that Truth so simple, so homely, so common, should have any special power about it. Yet it is so. Out of the foolishness of preaching the wisdom of God shines forth! The Glory of the eternal God is seen in that Gospel which we preach in much trembling and infirmity. Let us, therefore, glory in our infirmity, because the power of God does all the more evidently rest upon us! Let us not despise our day of small things, nor be dismayed because we are manifestly so feeble. This work is not for *our* honor, but for the Glory of God—and any circumstance which tends to make that Glory more evident is to be rejoiced in!

Let us consider, for a few moments, *the instrumental cause of this resurrection*. Nothing was used by our Lord but His own word of power. Jesus cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come forth!” He simply repeated the dead man’s name and added two commanding words. This was a simple business enough. Dear Friends, a miracle seems all the greater when the means used are apparently feeble and little adapted to the working of so great a result. It is so in the salvation of men! It is marvelous that such poor preaching should convert such great sinners. Many are turned unto the Lord by the simplest, plain, most unadorned preaching of the Gospel. They hear little, but that little is from the lips of Jesus! Many converts find Christ by a single short sentence. The Divine Life is borne into their hearts upon the wings of a brief text.

The preacher had no eloquence. He made no attempt at it, but the Holy Spirit spoke through him with a power which eloquence could not rival! Thus said the Lord, “You dry bones, live,” and they did! I delight to preach my Master’s Gospel in the plainest terms. I would speak still more simply if I could. I would borrow the language of Daniel concerning Belshazzar’s robe of scarlet and his chain of gold—and I would say to Rhetoric—“Let your gifts be to yourself and give your rewards to another.” The power to quicken the dead lies not in the wisdom of *words* but in the Spirit of the living God! The voice is Christ’s voice and the Word is the Word of Him who is the Resurrection and the Life and, therefore, men live by it! Let us rejoice that it is not necessary that you and I should become orators in order that the Lord Jesus should speak by us—let the Spirit of God rest upon us and we shall be endowed with power from on high so that even the spiritually *dead* shall, through us, hear the voice of the Son of God—and they that hear shall *live*!

The result of the Lord’s working must not be passed over, for it is a main element of wonder in this miracle. Lazarus did come forth and that immediately. The thunder of Christ’s voice was attended by the lightning of His Divine Power and, forthwith, life flashed into Lazarus and he came forth. Bound as he was, the power which had enabled him to live, enabled him to shuffle forth from the ledge of rock where he lay—and there he

stood with nothing of death about him but his grave clothes! He left the close air of the sepulcher and returned to know, once more, the things which are done under the sun—and that at once. To me it is one of the great glories of the Gospel that it does not require weeks and months to quicken men and make new creatures of them! Salvation can come to them at once!

The man who stepped into this Tabernacle this morning, steeped in rebellion against his God and, apparently impervious to Divine Truth, may, nevertheless, go down those steps with his sins forgiven and with a new spirit imparted to him—in the strength of which he shall begin to live unto God as he never lived before! Do you speak of a nation being born, at once, as if it were impossible? It is possible with God! The Divine Power can send a flash of life all round the world at any instant to quicken myriads of His chosen! We are dealing, now, with *God*—not with men! Man must have time to prepare his machinery and get it into working order, but it is not so with the Lord. We, on our part, must seek after a preacher and find, for him, a place where the people may be gathered. But when the Lord Jesus works, straightway the deed is done—with or without the preacher—and inside or outside the place of assembly!

If you and I had to feed 5,000, we would need to grind the corn at the mill, bake the bread in the oven—and then we would be a long time in bringing the loaves in baskets! But the Master takes the barley cakes and breaks—and as He breaks—the food is multiplied! Likewise He handles the fish and lo, it seems as if a shoal had been in His hands instead of “a few small fishes.” Behold, the vast multitude receives refreshment from the little stock which has been so abundantly increased! Trust in God, my Brothers! In all your work of love, trust in the unseen Power which lay at the back of the manhood of Christ—and still lies at the back of the simple Gospel which we preach! The everlasting Word of God may seem to be weak and feeble. It may groan and weep and seem as if it could do no more. But it can raise the dead and raise them at once! You can be sure of this.

The effect which this miracle produced upon those who looked on was very remarkable, for many believed in the Lord Jesus. Besides this, the miracle of raising Lazarus was so unquestioned and unquestionable a *fact*, that it brought the Pharisees to a point—they would now make an end of Christ. They had huffed and puffed at His former miracles, but this one had struck such a blow that in their wrath they determined that He should die! No doubt this miracle was the immediate cause of the Crucifixion of Jesus—it marked a point of decision when men must either believe in Christ or become His deadly foes. Oh, Brothers, if the Lord is with us, we shall see *multitudes* believing through Jesus! And if the rage of the enemy becomes, thereby, the more intense, let us not fear it—there will come a last decisive struggle and perhaps it shall be brought on by some amazing display of the Divine Power in the conversion of the chief of sinners! Let us hope so! Let us not be afraid that Armageddon should be fought, for it will end in victory! We shall see greater things than these!

II. Secondly, I beg you to observe A SINGULAR SPECTACLE. A notable miracle was unquestionably worked, but it required a finishing touch. The man was wholly raised, but not wholly freed! Look, here is *a living man in the garments of death!* That napkin and other grave clothes were altogether congruous with death, but they were much out of place when Lazarus began to live again! It is a wretched sight to see a living man wearing his shroud. Yet we have seen, in this Tabernacle, hundreds of times, people quickened by Divine Grace with their grave clothes still on them! Such was their condition that unless you observed carefully, you would think them still dead. And yet within them the lamp of heavenly Life was burning. Some said, "He is dead, look at his garments." But the more spiritual cried, "He is not dead, but these bands must be loosed." It is a singular spectacle—a living man hampered with the garments of death!

Moreover, he was *a moving man bound hand and foot*. How he moved, I do not know. Some of the old writers thought that he glided, as it were, through the air, and that this was part of the miracle. I think he may have been so bound that though he could not freely walk, yet he could shuffle along like a man in a sack. I know that I have seen souls bound and yet moving—moving intensely in one direction—and yet not capable of stirring an inch in another. Have you not seen a man so truly alive that he wept, he mourned, he groaned over sin—but yet he could not believe in Christ—but seemed bound hand and foot as to faith? I have seen him determinedly give up his sin and crush a bad habit under his foot—and yet he could not lay hold on a promise or receive a hope! Lazarus was free enough in one way, for he came out of the tomb, but the blinding napkin was about his head and, even so, it is with many a quickened sinner, for when you try to show him some cheering Truth of God, he cannot see it.

Moreover, here was *a repulsive object, but yet attractive*. Mary and Martha must have been charmed to see their brother, even though wrapped in grave clothes. He startled all the assembly and yet they were drawn to him. A man fresh from the sepulcher robed in a winding-sheet is a sight one would go a long way *not* to see, but such was Lazarus! But a man restored from death—it were worthwhile to travel round the world to look upon—and such was Lazarus! Mary and Martha felt their hearts dancing within them since their dear brother was alive! Notwithstanding the repulsiveness of the spectacle, it must have charmed them beyond anything they had seen except the Lord Himself! So have we come near to a poor sinner—it was enough to frighten anybody to hear his groans and to see his weeping—yet he was so dear to every true heart that we loved to be with him! I have sometimes spoken with broken-hearted sinners and they have pretty nearly broken my heart. And yet, when they have gone out of the room, I have wished to see a thousand more like them! Poor creatures, they fill us with sorrow, and yet flood us with joy!

Moreover, here was a man *strong and yet helpless*. He was strong enough to come forth from his grave and yet he could not take the napkin from off his head, for his hands were bound and he could not go to his house, for his feet were swathed. Unless some kind hand unbound him, he would remain a living mummy! He had sufficient strength to quit the

grave, but he could not loosen his grave clothes. So have we seen strong men, for the Spirit of God has been in them, and has moved them mightily! They have been passionately in earnest—even to agony in one direction—yet the newborn life has been so feeble in other ways that they seemed to be mere babes in swaddling clothes. They have not been able to enjoy the liberty of Christ, nor enter into communion with Christ, nor work for Christ. They have been bound hand and foot so that work and progress have, alike, been beyond them.

This seems a strange sequel to a miracle. The bands of death loosed, but not the bands of linen! Motion given, but no movement of hands or feet! Strength bestowed, but not the power to undress himself! Such anomalies are common in the world of Divine Grace.

III. This brings us to consider A TIMELY ASSISTANCE which you and I are called upon to render. O for wisdom to learn our duty and Grace to do it at once! Let us consider *what are these bands which often bind newly regenerated sinners*. Some of them are blindfolded by the napkin about their head—they are very *ignorant*—sadly devoid of spiritual perception and, therefore the eye of faith is darkened. Yet the eye is there and Christ has opened it. And it is the business of the servant of God to remove the napkin which bandages it, by teaching the Truth of God, explaining it, and clearing up difficulties. This is a simple thing to do, but exceedingly necessary.

Now that they have life, we shall teach them to purpose. Besides that, they are bound hand and foot, so that they are compelled to *inaction*—we must show them how to work for Jesus! Sometimes these bands are those of *sorrow*, for they are in an awful terror about the past—we have to unbind them by showing that the past is blotted out. They are wrapped about by many a yard of *doubt*, mistrust, anguish and remorse. “Loose them, and let them go.” Another hindrance is the band of *fear*. “Oh,” says the poor soul, “I am such a sinner that God must punish me for my sin.” Tell him the grand Doctrine of Substitution! Unwrap this cerement by the assurance that Jesus took our sin and that, “by His stripes we are healed.” It is wonderful what liberty comes by that precious Truth of God when it is well understood!

The penitent soul fears that Jesus will refuse its prayer—assure it that He will in nowise cast out any that come to Him. Let fear be taken from the soul by the promises of Scripture, by our testimony to their truth and by the Spirit bearing witness to the doctrine which we endeavor to impart. Souls are very often bound with the grave clothes of *prejudice*. They used to think such-and-such before conversion and they are very apt to carry their dead thoughts into their new life. Go and tell them that things are not what they seem—that old things have passed away—and behold, all things have become new! The days of their ignorance God winked at, but now they must change their minds about everything and no more judge according to the sight of the eyes and the hearing of the ears.

Some of them are bound with the grave clothes of evil *habit*. It is a noble work to aid a drunk to unwind the accursed bands which prevent his making the slightest progress towards better things. Let us tear off every

band from ourselves, that we may the more readily help *them* to be free! The bonds of evil habits may still remain upon men that have received the Divine Life until those habits are pointed out to them and the evil of them is shown. And so they are helped by precept, prayer and example, to free themselves. Who among us would wish Lazarus to continue wearing his shroud? Who would wish to see a regenerate man falling into evil habits? When the Lord quickens men, the main point of the business is secured—then you and I can come in to loose every bond which would hamper and hinder the free action of the Divine Life.

But why are those bandages left? Why did not the miracle which raised Lazarus, also loosen his grave clothes? I answer because *our Lord Jesus is always economical of miracles*. False wonders are plentiful! True miracles are few and far between. In the Church of Rome, such miracles as they claim, are usually a lavish waste of power. When St. Swithin made it rain for 40 days, that his corpse might not be carried into the Church—it was much ado about very little. When St Denis walked a thousand miles with his head in his hands, one is apt to ask why he could not have journeyed quite as well if he had set it on his neck! And when another saint crossed the sea on a tablecloth, it would appear to have been an improvement if he had borrowed a boat. Rome can afford to be free with her counterfeit coins! The Lord Jesus never works a miracle unless there is an object to be gained which could not be obtained in any other way. When the enemy said, “Command that these stones be made bread,” our Lord refused, for it was not a fit occasion for a miracle. Lazarus cannot be raised out of the grave except by a miracle—but he can be unstripped *without* a miracle and, therefore, human hands must do it.

If there is anything in the Kingdom of God which we can do, ourselves, it is folly to say, “May the Lord do it,” for He will do nothing of the sort! If you *can* do it, you *shall* do it—or if you refuse, the neglect shall be visited upon you. I suppose that those bands were left *that those who came to unwind him would be sure that he was the same man who died*. Some of them may have said, “This is Lazarus, for these are the grave clothes which we wrapped about him. There is no trickery here. This is the same man that was laid out and prepared by us for burial.” “I recollect putting in that stitch,” cries one. “I remember that stain in the linen,” cries another! From coming so near to Lazarus, they would be equally well assured that he was really alive! They perceived his living flesh rising as each ligature was removed—they marked his breathing and the flush which reddened his cheeks.

For some such cause our Lord permits the quickened sinner to remain in a measure of bondage, that we may know that the man is the same person who was really dead in trespasses and sins. He was no sham sinner, for the traces of his sins are still upon him. You can see by what he says that his training was none of the best—the relics of the old nature show what manner of man he used to be. Every now and then the smell of the sepulcher meets your nostrils—the mold of the grave has stained his grave clothes—his was true death and no imitation! So, too, we know that he is alive, for we hear his sighs and cries. And we perceive that his ex-

perience is that of a living child of God. Those desires, that searching of heart and that longing to be soundly right with God—we know what these mean. It is a great help to us in discerning spirits and in being assured of the work of God upon any person, to come into living contact with those imperfections which it is to be our privilege to remove under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Moreover, I still think that the main object was *that these disciples might enter into rare fellowship with Christ*. They could each say, not proudly, but still joyfully, “Our Lord raised Lazarus and I was there and helped to unloose him from his grave clothes.” Perhaps Martha could say in later life, “I took the napkin from my brother’s dear face.” And Mary could add, “I helped to unbind a hand.” It is most sweet to hope that we have done *anything* to cheer, or to teach, or sanctify a soul! Not unto us can be any praise, but unto us there is much comfort concerning this thing. Brothers and Sisters, will you not earn a share in this dear delight? Will you not seek the lost sheep? Will you not sweep the house for the lost money? Will you not, at the very least, help to feast the long-lost son?

This, you see, *gives you an interest in a saved person*. Those who are very observant tell us that those whom we serve may forget us, but those who do us a service are fast bound to us! Many kindnesses you may do for people and they will be altogether ungrateful, but those who have bestowed the benefit do not forget. When the Lord Jesus sets us to help others, it is partly that they may love us for what we have done—but still more that *we* may love *them* because we have rendered them a benefit! Is there any love like the love of a mother to her child? Is it not the strongest affection on earth? Why does a mother love her child? Did the little child ever render a pennyworth of service to the mother? Certainly not! It is the mother that does everything for the child. So then, the Lord binds us to the new converts in love by permitting us to help them. Thus is the Church made all of one piece and woven together from the top throughout by the workmanship of love. O you who are devoid of love, it is evident that you do not labor with pure desire to benefit others, for if you did, you would be filled with affection for them!

Before we leave this point of seasonable assistance, let us ask—*why should we remove these grave clothes?* It is enough reply that the Lord has bid us do so! He commands us to “loose him, and let him go.” He bids us comfort the feeble-minded and support the weak. If He commands it, we need no other reason! I hope, my dear Friends, you will set to work at once, for the King’s business requires haste and we are traitors if we delay. *We* should do this because it is very possible that we helped to bind those grave clothes upon our friend. Some of the people who were at Bethany that day had assisted in the burial of Lazarus and, surely, they should loose Lazarus who helped to bind him. Many a Christian man, before his conversion, has helped to make sinners worse by his example. And possibly, after his conversion, he may, by his indifference and lack of zeal, have aided in binding new converts in the bonds of doubt and sorrow. At any rate, you have said of many a person, “He will never be saved!” Thus you have wrapped him in grave clothes—the Lord never told

you to do *that*—you did it of your own accord and now that He bids you remove those grave clothes, will you not be quick to do it?

I remember when somebody lent a hand to take the grave clothes off me and, therefore, I desire to loose the grave clothes of others. If we cannot repay what we owe to the precise individual who worked us good, we can at least repay it by working for the general benefit of seekers. “There,” said a benevolent man, as he gave help to a poor man, “take that money and when you can pay it back, give it to the next man whom you meet who is in the same plight as yourself. And tell him he is to pay it to another destitute person as soon as he can afford it—and so my money will go traveling on for many a day.” That is how our Lord does it—He sends a Brother to loose my bonds. Then I am helped to set another free and, he releases a third, and so on to the world’s end! God grant that you and I may not be negligent in this heavenly service!

IV. Lastly, A PRACTICAL HINT. If the Lord Jesus Christ employed the disciples in relieving Lazarus of his grave clothes, do you not think He would employ us if we were ready for such work? Yonder is Paul. The Lord Jesus has struck him down, but the lowly Ananias must visit him and baptize him, that he may receive his sight. There is Cornelius. He has been seeking the Lord and the Lord is gracious to him, but he must, first, hear Peter. There is a wealthy Ethiopian riding in his chariot. He is reading the Book of the Prophet Isaiah, but he cannot understand it till Philip comes. Lydia has an opened heart, but only Paul can lead her to the Lord Jesus. Innumerable are the instances of souls blessed by human instrumentality!

But I shall conclude by calling attention to one passage upon which I wish to dwell for a second or two. When the prodigal came home, the father did not say to one of his servants, “Go and meet him.” No, we read, “when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion and ran, and fell on his neck and kissed him.” He did all this himself! The father *personally* forgave him and restored him. But we read further on, “the father *said to his servants*, Bring forth the best robe and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring here the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat, and be merry.” The loving father might have done all this himself, might he not? Oh yes, but then he desired that all the servants in the house should be of one accord with him in the joyful reception of his son.

The great Lord could do everything for a sinner, Himself, but He does not do so because He wishes all of us to be in fellowship with him! Come, fellow servants, bring forth the best robe! I am never happier then when I preach the righteousness of Christ and try to put it upon the sinner. “What?” cries one! “You cannot put it on!” So the parable says—“Bring forth the best robe and *put it on him.*”

I not only bring it out and show it, but *by the Holy Spirit’s help*, I try to put it on the sinner! I hold it up before him, just as you hold up a friend’s great-coat to help him to put it on. You have to guide the poor sinner’s hand into the sleeve and lift it up upon his shoulders or he might never get it on. You are to teach him, comfort him, cheer him and, in fact, help

him to be dressed like one of the family! Then the ring, can we not bring it forth? Surely the *father* should have put the ring upon his son's hand. No, he bids his *servants* do that. He cries to them, "Put a ring on his hand"—introduce him into fellowship, gladden him with the communion of saints! You and I must conduct the new convert into the joys of Christian society and let him know what it is to be married to Christ and joined to His people! We must put honor upon these reclaimed ones and decorate those who once were degraded.

Nor must we fail to put shoes on his feet! He has a long journey to go—he is to be a pilgrim and we must help to shoe him with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace. His feet are new in the Lord's ways—we must show him how to run on the Master's errands. As for the fatted calf, it is ours to feed the restored ones. And as for the music and the dancing, it is ours to make the hearts of penitents glad by rejoicing over them. There is plenty to be done! O my Brothers and Sisters, try and do some of it this morning! Certain among us will be looking after an enquirer as soon as the service is over—and they will try to put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet. I wish that more of you did this, but if you cannot do so within these Tabernacle walls, do it when you get home!

Commence a holy ministry for the converted who are not yet brought into liberty. There are children of God who have not yet a shoe on their feet—there are plenty of shoes in the house, but no servant has put them on! When I come to look, I see some Brethren who have not the ring on their hand. Oh, that I might have the privilege of putting it on! I charge you, Brothers and Sisters, by the blood that bought you, and by the love that holds you, and by the supreme bounty which supplies your need—go forth and do what your Master graciously permits and commands you to do—loose Lazarus! Bring forth the best robe and put it on him! Put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet! And let us all eat and be merry with our Father! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*John 11:1-46*.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—176, 251, 35 (VER I).**

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THE SPIRITUAL RESURRECTION

NO. 2554

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 30, 1898.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 18, 1855.

“And when He thus had spoken, He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave clothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus said unto them, Loose him, and let him go.”
John 11:43, 44.

PERHAPS the legitimate topic of this discourse, after such a text, ought to be the resurrection of the dead. Lazarus had died—he had lain in his grave. At the invitation of his sisters, Jesus Christ came to see them and His visit answered the double purpose of comforting the bereaved and restoring the dead. It would be a blessed and an excellent topic were we, for a little while, to dilate upon the wonders of the resurrection. We shall do so for a few moments and then we shall come to the principal theme of this evening which will rather concern spiritual resurrection from a spiritual death, than that natural resurrection which is to take place upon us all, by-and-by.

The very fact that Lazarus came from his grave, after he had lain there four days and was corrupt, and that he was called from the sepulcher by the mighty voice of Jesus is, to us, a proof that the dead shall rise at the voice of Jesus at the Last Great Day. Every Christian believes that there is to be a resurrection of the dead, but, unfortunately, the great Doctrine of the Resurrection is not, by most of us, made so prominent as it ought to be. In old times, the Resurrection was preached by the Apostles as being the sum and substance of the Gospel. Wherever Paul went, we know that he spoke concerning the Resurrection of the dead—and then, “some mocked.” But now, usually, if we speak concerning the after state of the departed, we generally treat of immortality, not of resurrection. Now, immortality was known to the ancients before the Gospel came. They believed in a kind of immortality, but *resurrection* never entered into the thoughts of the heathen. Many of them believed in the immortality of the soul. Those who had been enlightened by powerful reason, or remnants of ancient tradition, believed that the soul did not die, but lived on in a future state. But immortality is not resurrection! And the immortality of the *soul* is very different from the Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the *body*. We believe that the soul is immortal and shall last forever, but

we believe something more than that. We believe that the body is immortal, too! And that after this body shall have been sown in the grave—in the Lord's good time it shall be raised again and shall either be translated to Heaven, there to enjoy eternal bliss—or else be sent down to Hell to suffer forever and ever.

The Doctrine of the Resurrection of the Dead belongs peculiarly to the Christian dispensation. It was never taught by any rationalists or philosophers. They might hold the transmigration of souls, but the resurrection of the body they did not hold. But we, as Christians, really believe that this body which we now inhabit, though it must die and see corruption, shall be raised from the dust—that, though consumed on the funeral pyre, its ashes, scattered to the winds, shall yet come together again! We believe that do what you will with the body—divide it, scatter it, mingle it—God, by the fiat of His Omnipotence, shall rebuild the fabric to become the habitation of the living soul forever and forever. We dare not in fact, deny this, because we are so expressly taught it in the sacred writings and it has been so fully and satisfactorily proved by the Apostle Paul.

And oh, my Friends, is it not a blessed fact that we shall rise again? I see among my audience some whose garb of woe betokens that they have lost a friend. I see some whose time-worn countenances tell me that they must have buried a mother or a father. Others, I know, have laid beloved infants in the dust. Others have had a precious husband or wife severed from their bosom. I mark among you some whose dress tell me you have been lately widowed, or bereaved of one tenderly beloved. Ah, despair not, you mourners! Here is a fact for you—not only that your soul and the soul of your loved one shall meet in eternity—but that the same body on which you doted shall, if you are Believers, be seen by you in Heaven! The eyes of the tender and pious mother which once dropped tears on you shall behold you in Heaven! And the hands of that pious father, now lying in the grave, that once lay on your head and consecrated you to the Lord shall be grasped by you in Heaven! Not only shall the soul of that infant live forever and ever, but its beautiful body, which is dear to you as the casket which contained the soul of your child, shall live again! It shall not be a fictitious resurrection—it shall not be a new race of ethereal creatures—but actual bodies shall be ours.

And oh, my Brothers and Sisters, if you have been bereft of all your friends—if they have departed in the faith of Jesus, you shall see them again! “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yes, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them.” But yet more blessed are they to be, “for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible,” and we shall see the bodies of those we once loved on earth. Those bodies we once silently gazed upon, as they lay in all the stiffness of death, we shall see quickened and glorified! That mortal shall “put on immortality.” That corruptible shall, “put on incorruption.” It was “sown in weakness” and we wept

when we saw it lowered into the grave—but it shall be “raised in power.” It was “sown a natural body” and though it shall be “raised a spiritual body,” yet it shall be a body to all intents and purposes, as it was before. And we shall recognize it as such—

**“Oh, sacred hope! Oh, blissful hope,
That Jesus’ Grace has given;
The hope, when days and years are past,
We all shall meet in Heaven!”**

Not in a separate existence of merely souls, but souls and bodies, too! And—

**“There, on a green and flowery mount,
Our wearied (bodies as well as) souls shall sit,
And with transporting joys recount
The labors of our feet.”**

Ah, Beloved, does not this make Christianity worth having? Does not this light up the grave with a supernatural splendor—this cheering, this glorious, this overpowering, this more than natural, this superhuman Doctrine of the Resurrection of the Dead? I will not stop to picture the scene—I might tell you of the silent graves and of the churchyards covered with the grass of ages. I might picture to you the battlefields, I might bid you hear the voice of Jesus when, descending with the sound of the trumpet and with an exceedingly great army of angels, He shall say, “Awake, you dead, and come to judgment!” When he cries, “Awake!” eyes that have been glazed for many a year shall open! Bodies that have long been stiffened shall regain their energy and stand upright! Not sheeted ghosts, not phantoms, not visions, but actual beings shall rise! *They*—the same persons who were buried—the real men, the real women. I think I see them bursting the cerements of the grave, pushing open their coffin lids and coming forth. Ah, we shall see them, and each one, for himself, shall rise. There shall rise Lazarus and Martha and Mary—and loved ones that belong to us—whom long we have wept as departed, we shall then rejoice over as having been recovered!

So much by way of preliminary remarks concerning the resurrection from the dead.

Now let us deal with the subject in another manner. The death of Lazarus, his burial in the tomb and his corruption are a figure and picture of the spiritual condition of every soul by nature. The voice of Jesus, crying, “Lazarus, come forth,” is an emblem of the voice of Jesus, by His Spirit, which quickens the soul. And the fact that Lazarus, even when alive, wore his grave clothes for a little while, until they were taken from him, is extremely significant, for if we allegorize upon it, it teaches us that even when a soul is quickened into spiritual life, it still wears some of its grave clothes which are only torn off when Jesus afterwards says, “Loose him, and let him go.” We propose, therefore, to consider these three points. First, *the slumber of death*, in which every soul lies by nature. Secondly, *the voice of life*—“Jesus cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.” And thirdly, the partial bondage which even the living soul

has to endure, which is signified by Lazarus coming forth bound hand and foot and having his face wrapped about with a napkin.

I. First, then, we have here THE SLUMBER OF DEATH in which all of us lie by nature. Come with me now, Christian, to “the rock from where you were hewn,” to “the hole of the pit”—to the miry clay—“from where you were dug.” Come with me to the house of death, for there your soul once lay, “dead in trespasses and sins.” There are some in this world, we know, who utterly deny that the sinner is really dead in sins. I remember, some time ago, hearing a preacher assert that, though the Scriptures said that men were dead, it meant a metaphorical death—that they were not really and actually dead, but only metaphorically so. Now, I always like, when there is a metaphor, to keep to the metaphor. Some of the eminent doctors in Rowland Hill’s day said that there were no such beings as angels, that they were only Oriental metaphors. “Very well,” said Rowland Hill, “then it was a company of Oriental metaphors that sang at the birth of Christ, ‘Glory to God in the highest.’ Angels are Oriental metaphors? Then it was an Oriental metaphor that slew 185,000 of Sennacherib’s army in a single night. Angels are Oriental metaphors? Then it was an Oriental metaphor that appeared to Peter in prison, that knocked off his chains and led him through the streets. Truly,” Mr. Hill said, “these Oriental metaphors are wonderful things!” We will try the same rule here. “You has He metaphorically quickened, who were metaphorically dead in trespasses and sins!” A fine metaphorical Gospel that is! Then again, “To be carnally-minded is metaphorical death! But to be spiritually-minded is metaphorical life and peace!” Such language does not mean anything at all! My Friends, it is all nonsense about metaphorical death! Men are *really* dead in a spiritual sense.

But I must tell you in what this death consists. There are different grades of life—understand that to commence with. There is the life of a plant which a stone does not possess and, therefore, a stone is dead. There is the life of an animal which the plant does not possess and, if you were speaking of animal life, you might describe the plant as to that extent dead. Then, again, there is mental life—and since the animal has no mind, you might say that the animal is mentally dead. Then there is a grade beyond the soul life of a man—a spiritual life. To an ungodly man, there are only two parts—soul and body. To the Christian, there are three—body, soul, and *spirit*. And as a body without a soul would be dead, naturally—so a man without a spirit, a man who has not had a spark struck off from the great orb of Light called God—is spiritually dead. Nevertheless, there are some who assert that men who are ungodly are spiritually alive. Come, sinner, if you think thus, I must argue with you a little while.

First of all, if you are spiritually alive and can do spiritual actions, the first thing I ask you is, *Why do you not do them now?* Some men say that they can repent and believe when they like and they do not believe that, to do this, they need the power of the Spirit. Then, Sir, if you can do it,

and do not do it—if any man deserves to be damned, it is you! And on your own showing, if there is a corner of the Pit hotter than another, you ought to be put there!

The next thing I have to say to you, O Sinner, is this—You say, “I am not dead; I have spiritual life, and can pray, and repent and believe.” Let me ask, *Have you tried to do it?* Do you say, “Yes”? Well, then, I know you will confess, unless you will lie before God, that you have found out your inability! There never was a man yet who strove to pray sincerely before God, but he felt something repressing his devotion. When he has come before God, under an agony of guilt, crying out for mercy, he has felt at times as if he could not pray, as if he could not utter a single word! Have none of you known what it is to be in such a condition that you cannot pray, that you cannot believe, that you cannot repent? When you put your hand on your heart and say, “O God, my heart is hard! I wish it would melt! I cannot break it”? When you would pray, do you not feel that your heart is far away, wandering in the world? The best method of proving a man’s inability is to set him about doing the thing. When the young man said, “All these things have I kept from my youth up,” Jesus, just to try him, said, “Go and sell all that you have.” Ah, Beloved, when God brought us to Himself we wrestled in prayer and pleaded with him—and we were taught, after all, that the power for everything spiritual must come from *God*, for there were certain times and seasons when we could no more have prayed than we could have flown up to Heaven! When we could no more have believed than we could have taken the moon in our hands! We could not grasp a promise. We could not grapple with a single temptation. We felt ourselves to be powerless, lost, dead. Sinner, I tell you, you *are* dead as to all spiritual matters, and dead you always will be, if left to yourself—and you cannot by any means carry yourself to Heaven! The sovereign will and power of God alone must quicken you, or else you can do nothing except sin. Neither righteous acts nor coming to Jesus can you ever do of yourself.

But I think I hear someone say, “*If I cannot do anything, I will sit down where I am and make myself content.*” What? Will you sit down when Hell blazes before you, when the Pit is yawning at your feet, when damnation stares you in the face, when God is angry with you, when your sins are bellowing out to high Heaven for condemnation? Will you sit down? I tell you, you cannot and dare not sit down. Sit down? As well might a man sit on yonder housetop when the flames are blazing around him! As well might he float down the rapids, to be at once dashed to pieces! Ah, if you talk about sitting down, you give me the best proof in all the world that you are “dead in trespasses and sins,” for if you were not dead, you would be beginning to cry out, “O God, quicken me! O God, give me life! I know that I am dead! I feel that I can do nothing, but You have promised to do it all for me. Though I am less than nothing, You have Omnipotence to give me life.” Do you not see, Man, that I am putting you down that Christ may pick you up? Do you not see that I am laying you low, not to

perish, not to be trampled on in the dust, but rather that, like a corn of wheat, you might fall into the ground and die and afterwards be quickened and bring forth fruit? Nothing can bring a man into a state of life so well as a feeling of death! And if I could get my Hearers, one and all, to recognize, acknowledge and feel that they were in a state of spiritual death and utterly powerless, I could then have hope for them—for no man can confess himself to be dead and yet sit down contentedly—he will cry out for Divine Grace and ask God to deliver him from that death.

But there is one thing I have yet to tell you before I leave this point and it is that *the ungodly man is something more than dead*. He is like Lazarus lying in his tomb. You remember those homely words which Martha said to Jesus? They are translated into plain Saxon and, I dare say, the Hebrew is quite as expressive, “Lord, by this time he stinks: for he has been dead four days.” Yes, Brothers and Sisters, and this is the condition of every ungodly man—the is not only dead, but he has become positively corrupt in God’s sight! There are some here, to whom I might point at this moment, who know what I mean when I say they not only groan under a sense of spiritual death, but feel themselves to be a stench in their own nostrils and in God’s also. I ask you, poor convicted sinner, does there live or exist in this world a greater nuisance than yourself? I know you will say, “No, there may be other filthy and abominable things, but I feel myself to be the most loathsome incarnation of filthiness that ever could have existed. I did not always think myself to be so, but I do now. I feel that I am not simply dead and powerless, but I feel offensive to myself, so that I wish I could run away from myself. And I feel offensive, moreover, to God—utterly obnoxious to Him.” Well, then, if that is your feeling, you are brought low enough, for it is just when we begin to corrupt, as the body of Lazarus did, and we, like Martha, are for giving everything up as hopeless, that Jesus Christ calls as He did then, “Lazarus, come forth!”

Now you see what I have made my congregation out to be. Some of you are alive—you have been quickened by God. But as for the rest of you, I am standing in an immense catacomb, tonight, and all around me there are dead persons—in the gallery and down below—men and women who are spiritually dead!

II. But now comes the wonder-working process, THE VOICE OF LIFE. Jesus said, “Lazarus, come forth.”

We commence, then, with this wonder-working process by saying that *the giving of life to Lazarus was instantaneous*. There lay Lazarus in the grave, dead and corrupt. Jesus cried aloud, “Lazarus, come forth.” We do not read that a single moment elapsed between the time when Christ said the words and when Lazarus came out of his grave! It did not take the soul an instant to wing its way into the body of Lazarus, nor did that body need any delay to become alive, again! So, if the Lord speaks to a man and quickens him to spiritual life, it is an instantaneous work. There are some of you standing there, apparently alive, but you feel, you

acknowledge, you confess, that you are dead. Well, if the Lord speaks to you tonight, life will come into you in a moment, in one single instant! The power of Divine Grace is shown in this, that it converts a man instantly and on the spot! It does not take hours to justify—justification is done in a moment! It does not take hours to regenerate—regeneration is done in a second. We are born and we die, naturally, in instants. And so it is with regard to spiritual death and spiritual life—they occupy no period of time, but are done instantly, whenever Jesus speaks! Oh, if my Master would cry tonight, “Lazarus, come forth!” there is not a Lazarus here—although covered with the shroud of drunkenness, bound about with the belt of swearing, or surrounded with a huge stone coffin of evil habits and wickedness—who would not burst that coffin and come forth a living man!

But mark, *it was not the disciples, but Jesus, who said, “Lazarus, come forth.”* How often have I strived to preach you, if possible, into life—but that could not be done. I remember, when I have preached at different times in the country, and sometimes here, that my whole soul has agonized over men—every nerve of my body has been strained and I could have wept my very being out of my eyes and carried my whole frame away in a flood of tears—if I could but win souls. On such occasions, how we preach! As if we had men before us, personally, and were clutching them and begging them to come to Christ! But with all that, I know I never yet made a soul alive, and never shall. And I am perfectly conscious that all the pleadings of all the living ambassadors from God will never induce a sinner to come to Jesus unless Jesus comes to that sinner! Peter might have cried for a long while, “Lazarus, come forth,” before Lazarus would have moved an inch! So might James or John—but when Jesus does it, it is done! Oh, does not this lower the pride of the minister? What is he? He is a poor little trumpet through which God blows, but nothing else! In vain do I scatter seed—it is on God the harvest depends! And all my Brothers in the ministry might preach till they were blind, but they would have no success unless the Spirit attended the quickening Word!

But, poor Soul, though the hearer cannot do it, and although the minister cannot do it, I want to persuade you, if I can, that tonight, *dead as you are, Jesus can speak you to life.* Let me single out a character, for I like to do that. There is a man who says, “I have been living 50 years in sin and tonight I am worse than ever. My old habits bind me hand and foot and I have no hope of being delivered.” Now, if tonight, my Hearer, Jesus says, “Lazarus, come forth,” you will come forth in an instant! “No, but,” you say, “I am corrupt.” Ah, but Christ is mightier than your corruption! Do you say, “I am dead”? No, but Christ is “life.” Do you say, “I am bound hand and foot, and in a dungeon of darkness”? No, but Christ is a Light in darkness and He will disperse the gloom. You say, perhaps, “I do not deserve it,” but Jesus cares nothing for deserving. The dead body of Lazarus deserved nothing! It was putrid and only deserved to

have the stone covering it forever. "Roll away the stone," says Christ, and oh, what odor issued forth! And there may be some from whom Jesus Christ may have rolled away the stone tonight—and they may be standing at their own graves and feeling themselves loathsome and offensive. But still, my Hearer, offensive as you are, Jesus asks no merit of you—He will give you *His* merits. It is only for Him to say, "Come forth," and you will, this night, come forth from your grave—and be made alive in Christ Jesus! Oh, may our God wake many dead souls that may be present and bring them to life by His summons, "Lazarus, come forth."

I think I hear another person saying, "Ah, but I am afraid, Sir, that if I were told to come forth, the devil would not let me—he has been oppressing me so long—he has been trying to keep me down and to make me lie still in my grave! I feel that he is now sitting upon my breast and weighing down all my hopes, and quenching all my love." Ah, but let me tell you Sinner, there is not one in Hell that is so mighty as Christ is in Heaven! The Evil One is in Christ's power and if you will but call upon Him—if He has enabled you only to utter a groan this night—He will cry unto you, "Come forth," and you shall live!

III. Now let us turn for a few moments to the last point and that is, THE PARTIAL BONDAGE.

Even when a soul is called by Divine Grace from death to life, yet it often wears its grave clothes for a long while. Many of my dear friends are afraid they are not converted because they are not like Mr. So-and-So, or Mrs. So-and-So—they have not so much faith and assurance and do not know as much as others—so they are afraid they are not alive. I have a word of comfort for them! The fact that Lazarus came forth in his grave clothes, with a napkin wrapped about his head, teaches us that many of us, though we are alive in Christ, still have our grave clothes on. I believe many Arminians still have their napkin about their head. That is to say, they have not got quite free from trusting in works. They used to, when dead, believe in salvation by works—they do not, now, but they still have some remnants of their grave clothes hanging about them. They have not yet come to believe that salvation is by Sovereign Grace, alone, but will have some works mixed up with it. They fear that, after all, God may cast them out of the Covenant. Oh, if we could but tear their napkin off! We will not quarrel with them, we will not be angry with them—but we think we hear Jesus Christ say to us, "Loose them, and let them go." And we will try all the ways in our power, by preaching, to pull the napkin from their eyes and let them see, "free election known by calling," full salvation, matchless security, discriminating Grace, particular redemption and all those things that make up the great strength of the Gospel of Jesus!

This, however, is not the point I want to dwell on with you, because I think most of you have got that napkin off your eyes. But when *we first obtain spiritual life, how many grave clothes there are hanging about us!* A man who has been a drunk, even though he becomes a living child of

God, will sometimes find his old habits clinging to him. I have known many drunks give up their drunkenness, but when they have been going by a bar, they have thought that, for the life of them, they could not keep from going in. And they have often well-near gone astray and their feet have almost slipped. And the man who has been a swearer will confess that there have been times when the vile words have almost come from his lips—perhaps not quite—I hope not, but there will be enough to show that he has some of his grave clothes still hanging about him. We have known men who have indulged in other kinds of vices and sins and whenever an opportunity has presented itself, there has been the old feeling getting up and saying, “Let me do it, let me do it,” and they have strived to keep it down, but they have hardly been strong enough. The grave clothes have still been about them. Those grave clothes will keep on very tightly until the habit is broken off. I believe there is not a Christian living who has not some shreds of his grave clothes remaining and that until we lie down in the grave, we shall carry them about with us.

Look at poor Paul. Who could have been a more holy man than he? Yet he cried, “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” Let this comfort and cheer the man who has come to Christ, but who is yet striving against his corruption. Perhaps his unbelief says, “If you were a child of God, you would not have these wicked thoughts and inclinations.” But, let me ask, do you hate those thoughts and inclinations? Then tell the devil, next time that he assails you thus, that he lies, for verily, this is not a sign that you are *not* the Lord’s, but rather a sign that you *are* His, for if you were not a child of God, you would not mind these things! But since you are His child, you strive against them.

These wicked grave clothes will show themselves sometimes. We know some who seem as if they could not get rid of their old angry tempers as long as they live. Their grave clothes have been torn in shreds by Divine Grace. They do not quite strap their arms up, but the shreds still hang about them—and our Brothers and Sisters, even though converted, still seem inclined, sometimes, to be hot and fierce. And we meet with instances, now and then, even in the Church, of some Brothers and Sisters who cannot exactly curb themselves—they have some of their grave clothes still about them. Do not think I am speaking to exonerate or excuse you—I am striving to comfort you. You may be spiritually alive with these grave clothes on if you struggle against them and try to get them off. But if you *love* them, they are not your grave clothes, but your living clothes—you are doing the work of your father—and you shall have his wages! If you feel your sins to be grave clothes and are anxious to get rid of them, though you cannot conquer all your sins and corruptions, be not dismayed—trust in Christ! Though the grave clothes yet hang about you, still trust His mercy and His Grace, for, by-and-by, Jesus Christ shall say, “Loose him, and let him go.”

We are loosed, first, from one bad habit, and then from another. All the while I live, I feel that I carry some of my grave clothes about with me—the garment that encumbers me and the sin that most easily besets me. But, by-and-by, (it may only be tomorrow, but it may be many years hence—perhaps some of you will pray for me that it may be many years—but I do not know why we should wish it, but, by-and-by), the time will come and Christ will say, “Loose him, and let him go.” I see one lying on his bed—the eyes glancing upward to Heaven, the pulses faint and few—the breath drawn heavily, the body decaying. What does all this mean? Why, it is the undoing of the wires of the cage and, in a little while, when sickness and pain have done their work, Christ will say, “Loose him, and let him go.” I remember hearing a brother-minister telling me of his pious sister’s death-bed. When she was very near dying, she said, “Sit me up a moment,” and they did. She then said—

***“Oh! that the final word were given,
Loose me, and let me rise to Heaven,
And wrap myself in God.”***

In a moment or two, she fell back. God had said, “Loose her, and let her go.” Oh, how our disembodied spirits will rejoice when God says, “Loose them, and let them go.” We are fettered, now—we shall be emancipated then! Then our spirits shall fly more rapidly than the flashing lightning! Then shall they be wafted along, swifter than the gales of the North or the winds of the South! We shall fly upwards to our God and be free forever from all that now distresses us, for God shall have said, “Loose them, and let them go.”

And now a thought or two, dear Hearers, to finish up with. Before God will say, “Loose him, and let him go,” remember, you must have had life. Now I come to this last solemn enquiry. *How many of us in this place, to-night, have life?* How frequently it is the case that we preach to our people with all our soul and might, and yet nobody takes it home to himself! How often, my Friends, have I preached in vain, from the simple fact that the hearer has listened and there has been no application of it to his own soul! But, oh, I would not let you go, feeble as I am, and unable to say much to you, until I have tried to press this matter home upon your souls! My Hearers, in a little while I, too, must stand before God’s bar. And when I think of it, it is enough to make me tremble! When I call to mind the tens and hundreds of thousands unto whom I have ministered the Word of the Gospel, and think if there should, on the Last Day, be found one person who shall lay his damnation to my charge, how horrible and terrible must be my lot! If, after having preached to others, I should have been unfaithful and should prove a castaway, what an awful thing that would be! In these days, when it is advertised that there is a special sermon to be preached, people rush off to hear a popular preacher, or somebody who happens to be much talked about—but do you know what that man does when he preaches, and what you do when you hear? Are you aware that every time that man stands in the pulpit, if

he is unfaithful, he subjects himself to the wrath of God? Do you not know that if, at last, that man who stands up to preach to the people should have been discovered to have preached false doctrine, his doom must be horrible in the extreme? And do you remember, when you hear, it is not as if you go to see a play, or to listen to a recital? You are listening to a man who professes to speak by God and for God! And to speak for your good and his heart yearns over you. Oh, it is solemn work to preach, and it should be solemn work to hear! For every preaching and every hearing the Lord will call us to account in the Last Great Day when He shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ. What has the preacher talked of tonight?

He has told you, first, that you are all dead. But some of you will go away and laugh at it—but laughing at it will not make you alive. He has told you, in the next place, that Christ can make you alive. But you despise that Christ—but mark, your despising Him will not free you from condemnation at the Last Great Day. He has told you of the bands of death that some of you are bound with, and you are, perhaps, tempted to smile. But mark you this—if you never sorrow over the bands of death, here, you will have to wear clanking fetters forever! Did I speak of fiction when I said that? I speak not of fiction, but a dread reality! There is, somewhere—God knows where it is—a place where the fire of Gehenna shall torture bodies forever and where unutterable misery shall pain souls! And oh, tremble, you heavens, and shake, you hills! O Earth, let your solid ribs of brass shake and let your heart be dissolved! It is a fact—a fearful fact that there is a Hell! I know not where it is—my spirit longs not to visit that dread region! But had it wings, it might fly somewhere and it would find a Hell—not a picture, not a dream, but a positive Hell! And there are souls there, this night, that are biting their bonds of iron and shrieking out under inexpressible torture! And there are some of your friends and relations there, perhaps—some whom you knew in the flesh—the man with whom you drained the wine-cups, the harlot, the adulterer, the thief and such-like persons. There they are, in Hell, at this hour!

Do you believe it? I do not think you do, but do you believe *God's Word*? Or are you hardy infidels and deny it? "It is true," you say. Then are you so mad and irrational as to persevere in the road to there? O Sirs, if there were some tremendous precipice and I saw you hastily approaching it, would I not cry out to you and say, "Stop! Stop! Stop! There is ruin before you"? And may I not tonight plead with you for your life, that you may be led to stop your course of sin? For "the wages of sin is death," while the "gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord," whom you are shunning, avoiding and grieving! Must I not plead with you? Shall you be going to Hell blindfolded and shall not one of your poor fellow creatures pull the bandage from your eyes? Shall he not call to you, without being thought mad, or an enthusiast? Well, if I am mad, in that respect may I always be so! And if that is to be an enthusiast, let

none be sober! But if it is mad and enthusiastic to go to Heaven, how much more so is it to go to Hell? O God, show these poor souls what their portion in the flames must be and tell them—for Your mercy's sake tell them—what salvation by Jesus Christ is!

Do you ask *me* to tell you that before I finish? Do I hear one say, “Men and brethren, what must I do to be saved?” I answer, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” It is written, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned.” If you will trust in Jesus, tonight, you shall be saved! It does not say such-and-such a person that believes, but, “he that believes”—if he has been a drunk, a swearer, or whatever—“he that believes and is baptized”—mark how the two are put together! I dare not part what Christ has joined, nor dare I reverse their proper order—“he that believes and is baptized shall be saved.”

Farewell to you, my Hearers, for this night. I shall never meet some of you again in this world. Before another Sabbath is come, your corpse may have been laid in the grave. Which of us shall it be? On whom the hungry teeth of Death shall feed before another Sabbath shall let its chimes be heard? Oh, if you are the man, or if the preacher is the doomed one, may it be fulfilled—

***“Prepare me, Lord, for Your right hand,
Then come the joyful day!
Come death and some celestial band,
To bear my soul away.”***

But another says, “I will not enter this Chapel again! I will never listen to that man again! I will never again hear his voice.” Good-bye, my Friend. I hope you will hear someone who will be as faithful to you and if you find a man who loves you more, or would suffer more for your sake, go and hear him! And God bless him to your soul! But one says, “I will hear no more of this matter! It is cant. It is nonsense. I will not turn.” Ah, my Hearer, if I see you going to destruction and you know it not, it is none the less destruction because you do not see it! But another says, “This night I will give myself to Jesus, for I know I need life. I lie down, a corpse, and though I cannot move, I know that when He passes by, He will give me life.” Go! God has something for you! Go and fall before Him! You shall have life bestowed upon you—go and accept it! For, wherever there is a “*now*,” it is of God. The Holy Spirit says, “Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.”

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY
TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

THE GREAT MIRACLE WORKER

NO. 2736

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 21, 1901.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 21, 1880.

*“Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said,
What shall we do? For this Man does many miracles.”
John 11: 47.*

I WILL make a preface out of the verse preceding our text—“Some of them”—that is, some of those who saw Lazarus raised from the dead, “went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done. Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What shall we do? For this Man does many miracles.”

Mr. Whitefield once raised a great storm against himself by saying that man, by nature, was little better than half beast and half devil. That was, certainly, a very strong expression, yet I question whether there are not abundant instances of conduct, on the part of men, which would be a disgrace even to beasts—and which would seem more in harmony with the character of the devil—and, in such cases, it would not be inappropriate if we were to say that man is altogether devil! Certainly, in his natural condition, he is altogether under the power of the prince of the air and, being led captive by Satan, he is oftentimes made to do the very worst of deeds. I am led to make this observation because the two verses which I have just read to you reveal some of the meanest conduct that has ever been recorded in human history!

Here we have, first, a band of common informers—men who stood by the grave of Lazarus and heard that he had been dead four days—and who listened to the objection of the prudent Martha to the taking away of the stone because, she said, “by this time he stinks.” These men had seen Lazarus come forth from the tomb at the call of Jesus. They had observed how the onlookers, at Christ’s command, unwound the napkin and the grave clothes. And they had not the shadow of a doubt that a notable miracle had been worked and that a dead man had been raised to life! One would have thought that the last thing anybody would have done would be to steal away from such a sight as that and go and tell the enemies of the great Miracle Worker in such a way as to excite them to yet greater enmity against Him! Many of the spectators on that memorable occasion were so convinced by what they saw that they became Christ’s disciples, and very properly so—but these other people were only

excited to malice and ill-will—and in a mean manner marched off to accuse Jesus to the Pharisees.

Perhaps you say, “Oh, but that happened only once in human history.” Possibly not, but our Savior has never done anything among men but that which is good and kind! His whole life was one of self-denying goodness and His Gospel is a message of mercy, love, peace and truth—and yet there are still many who insinuate all manner of evil against Him and find fault with His followers! No difficult task, alas—not so much out of enmity to the offenders, as enmity to the cause of Christ. O human Nature, you are, indeed, an evil thing when you can act thus meanly!

Nor is this all, for the Pharisees, who were informed of the miracle which had been worked by Christ, present to us another picture of man at his very worst. Here is positively a parliament of hypocrites! They come together as the great Sanhedrim, or supreme council of the nation—the chief priests in their robes and the Pharisees with their phylacteries—the holiest men in all Judea! Ask them and they will assure you that it is so—yet they have met together to oppose a perfectly innocent Man, to say the very least about Him, who has proved, by working a miracle, that He is a great deal more than a man! When they meet together, they say, “This Man does many miracles,” yet they are sitting there, plotting and planning to put Him down. Surely this assembly looks like another form of Pandemonium and, as Milton gives us pictures of all the winged spirits in Hell coming close together into the council with Satan in the midst, I think I see the same thing carried out in Jerusalem! There is the high priest, Caiaphas, in the midst of them—and the Pharisees gather together around him, taking counsel to see if they cannot destroy the Christ!

So, first, there was a band of common informers, and then, a parliament of hypocrites. Next, look at the arguments they use as the reason why Christ is to be put down. Of course it is pretended that their desire for His overthrow is the result of their zeal for the public good. It is still often the case that when a man opposes true religion, he says that he is prompted to do it by zeal for morality, or a burning desire for the good of his country or his race. So it was with these hypocrites in Jerusalem. In effect, they said, “If this Man goes on working miracles, and we do not stop Him, the people will become His disciples. Then the Romans will believe that a new king is being set up over us and they will pounce upon our nation and destroy it! And, therefore, we must put Him down before they do so.” Now this was a transparent lie, for, first, supposing that Christ had converted all the people of Judea, had He ever in His life said a word about making Himself a king?

Did not these Pharisees know that when the people wanted to make Him a king, Jesus had withdrawn Himself from them, in order that nothing like a political tinge might be given to His sacred mission? Did they not also know that the Romans never interfered with religious movements among the nations that they subdued? They were the most tolerant of all conquerors! What mattered it to the Romans what the Jews believed, or did not believe? They left them entirely to themselves, relig-

iously, so that if Christ had induced all the people of the land to become His followers, the Romans would not have interfered in the least degree. But this is, to me, the most transparent part of the lie. If this Man worked miracles, then the people *ought* to believe in Him and they *ought* to become His disciples—and they ought not to be afraid of the Romans! The Romans might be strong, but the Man who could work miracles must be stronger. And if it should ever come to a conflict between Roman legions and the Divine Miracle Worker, there can be no question about which would be victorious! So, you see, this argument of the Pharisees, as to why Christ should be put down, was a self-evident fraud.

Perhaps someone asks, “Do men, at the present time, ever talk like this about the Savior?” I answer—Yes, the majority of the objections to Christianity which lull men’s consciences to sleep, are nothing better than transparent lies. If they would honestly examine the evidence laid before them. If they would give their minds to searching out the Truth, they would soon be brought to believe on Jesus. Do you not remember how two gentlemen, both of whom were skeptics, said to one another, “Let us, as candid men, investigate some part of the Bible and see whether it holds together and bears the mark of Inspiration.” One of them took the subject of Christ’s Resurrection and the other selected the conversion of the Apostle Paul. They both sat down to study the Scripture narratives, not believing them to be true—and the result of their investigation was that they were both converted! And the one has given us a book upon the Life of Paul, and the other has given us a book upon our Lord’s Resurrection. Their own examinations of the Word of God, candidly made, led them to the Savior’s feet. And I believe a similar result would follow, in the case of any skeptics here present, who would take the same course. At any rate, I challenge them to make the trial, and I am not asking of them more than candor requires of every honest man.

There are some people who raise questions even concerning God, Himself. According to their notions, God should be this, or that, and almost anything but what He really is. Jehovah, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. The God and Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The only living and true God, is not at all according to their taste. Some even venture so far as to call His justness, “severity.” They would have “a God all mercy” if they could. Or they pick out some one or other of God’s attributes and they want to have a change made in it. What? Man, is God to be made to suit you, instead of you, yourself, being adapted to God’s will? And is the question to be, not, “How can I be right with my Maker?” but, “How can I make my Maker right with myself?” Is that the blasphemous turn that your thoughts have taken? It is so with some people and, accordingly, they practically become idolaters, for, while they pretend to worship the one living and true God, yet, inasmuch as they attribute to Him a Character which is not His own, they do, in effect, worship a god of their own making!

There are others whose quarrel is with God’s Word, this blessed Book, the Bible. There are certain things in it which they do not approve—and when a man once begins to rail at Scripture, you never know what he will

say! It is impossible to tell on which side he will find what he calls a fault and, probably, that which is the highest excellence of the Word will most offend him. We shall, therefore, put this question to him—Would you have a Bible made according to your mind—a brand new Bible, I suppose, once a week, for your mind changes so often that it would need constantly to be revised in order to be according to your mind? And shall God speak only such things as you would have Him say? Are you to be master of His voice, and lord even of the Inspired Word? That must not be! It is not for us to say what the Bible ought to be, but to find out what the Bible really is, and then meekly to bow before it and accept it as the Revelation of the Most High.

Many persons dispute with God concerning His Providence, both on the larger and on the smaller scale. They think that they could govern nations much better than God can. And when they read history, some of them cannot see God's hand there at all. And others, who do perceive His hand, yet dare to arraign their Maker for His management of the world! As to their own share in the dispensations of Providence, many are utterly discontented. They are not so much in the sunlight as they would like to be—and the rivers that ripple over golden sands do not pass through their inheritance. They are often poor and obscure and, therefore, they quarrel with the arrangements of God's Providence. To anyone of that sort whom I may be addressing, I would say, "Should it be that the Maker of Heaven and earth should do your bidding?" Surely, this is only another form of the opposition of these chief priests and Pharisees to the Christ of God!

I have to mention one more point that arises from the context and that is that the arguments of this parliament of hypocrites led them to a conclusion of blood—"This Man is a worker of miracles, therefore He must die." You know the word, regicide, which describes the killing of a king, a crime that is rightly thought to be a very terrible one. You know what fratricide means, killing a brother—parricide, killing a father. Matricide, killing a mother. But what will you say of a deicide, a God-killer, one who seeks to destroy God if it is possible? There was God in human flesh, moving among men, displaying His Divine Power in working miracles, yet these wicked men said, "This is the heir. Come, let us kill Him, that the inheritance may be ours." Human sin reached its highest point when, at last, it took the innocent, loving Savior and hung Him up upon a cross to die like a common felon. Yet such is the nature of man that he will do anything he can against his God! The case is proven against the capacity of human nature, at any rate, by the passage which we have been considering.

Now I want especially to turn your attention to the latter part of the text—"What shall we do? For this Man does many miracles."

I. In considering these words, I ask you to notice, first, THE STUBBORNNESS OF UNBELIEF.

The natural conclusion from the statement, "This Man does many miracles," should have been—"Then He is the Christ of God! So let us believe in Him. Let us yield ourselves up wholly to Him." But these chief

priests and Pharisees did not come to the natural conclusion—so stubborn was their unbelief that they said—“This Man does many miracles, therefore we will put Him to death if we can.”

So that, first, *they admitted the miracles, yet denied the Miracle Worker*. We have many rising up, nowadays, who do not even admit the miracles! They are consistent if they also deny Him who worked the miracles. But if you acknowledge the miracles, how can you deny the Miracle Worker? I may be addressing some who did not know how much that statement concerned themselves. You believe that Jesus Christ of Nazareth worked many miracles—why, then, do you not believe in Him? You are convinced that He did all these things that are recorded concerning Him in His Word—why, then, do you not trust Him—trust Him to save you and so to work a miracle of mercy in you? You know that He raised to life those who had been dead. Then why do you not ask Him to raise you up from spiritual death and to give you everlasting life? You believe that He opened the eyes of the blind. Then why do you not ask Him to open your eyes? If this Man does such miracles as these, why do you not come to Him and touch the hem of His garment, that virtue may go out of Him to you, as it did to the woman who had the issue of blood?

“Oh,” says one, “I believe all that I find recorded in the Scriptures—I am no skeptic!” I am glad to hear you say so. But, if you really believe it, why do you not act upon it? If you are sick and you know that this medicine will heal you, why do you not take it when it is freely given to you? If there is salvation in Christ, why are you not saved? If there is pardon for sin, why have you not obtained it, especially as it is to be had for nothing, as the free gift of the Grace of God to everyone who trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ? It was, indeed, stubborn unbelief which made the chief priests and Pharisees accept the truth of the miracles, and yet deny the great Miracle Worker!

Further, *they admitted the miracles, yet opposed the Miracle Worker*. Well, now, a man is a fool who acts like that! If a person can work miracles, I certainly will not oppose him, for I cannot tell how far his power may extend. If he can kill, and make alive, I am not going to strive against him! If I fight against anyone, give me an adversary who has only natural power and not supernatural. “Woe unto him that strives with his Maker!” To contend with Omnipotence is as foolish as for wax to fight with flame, or twigs with fire! Possibly I am addressing some who admit that Christ works miracles and yet who refuse to accept His Gospel. You, dear Friends, are living in a state of heart which practically does despite to His precious blood. And I ask you, whoever you are, to consider how fruitless your opposition must be and no longer to be so stubborn in your unbelief as to confess that Christ is able to save, able to destroy, able to do all things—and yet, all the while, you will not yield yourself to Him—and even scoff at religion, and use harsh and cruel words towards those dear ones in your own family who are true followers of the Lord Jesus Christ! Do not, I implore you, continue to be so inconsistent as to believe the miracles and yet to oppose the Miracle Worker!

Yet once more, these chief priests and Pharisees manifested a very stubborn unbelief in another way, for *they admitted the miracles, and yet they were afraid of the Miracle Worker's influence over the people*. We also have some objectors, in the present day, who believe Jesus Christ to be a great Teacher, but they are constantly telling us that to preach up salvation by Grace and justification by faith in Jesus is to endanger morality. Ah, me! I marvel not that the darkness thinks the light is dangerous, yet this complaint is most absurd! If Jesus Christ works miracles, then He is of God, and if He is of God, then the more His influence is extended among the people, the better!

Suppose that the preaching of the Gospel does stir up opposition in some minds? Yet the supremacy of the Truth of God is such that opposition to it need never be feared, for Truth will lay her iron hand on all her adversaries and break them in pieces if they will not submit to her righteous rule! Perhaps some of you imagine that if you could see a miracle worked, you would believe in the Miracle Worker—but there is no certainty that you would do anything of the kind. These Pharisees had, doubtless, seen many of Christ's miracles, or received reports of them from those who knew they were true. They admitted that Christ had worked many miracles, yet they did not believe in Him. As a rule, signs and wonders are not sufficient to make men believe. Such things may, indeed, increase their responsibility, but not affect their conscience and their heart.

Why do any of you want to see miracles worked by Christ? You have His Word, you have the Spirit of God among you and if you reject these, neither would you believe though one rose from the dead! Though the earth should shake and the heavens should pass away like a scroll. Though the sun should be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, yet you would not believe if you will not accept the Christ of God as He is revealed in Holy Scripture! Such is the stubbornness of unbelief.

II. But now, secondly, and briefly, let us notice THE FUTILITY OF ALL OPPOSITION TO CHRIST, for the chief priests and the Pharisees said, as if they realized their own impotence, "What shall we do? For this Man does many miracles."

The whole history of Christ's Church in the world is summed up in the words of our text. After the persecutions to which the early Christians were subjected among the Jews, the Romans tried to destroy Christianity by hunting Christians to the death. Nero smeared them with tar and set them up in his palace gardens to burn at night to provide light for his sports. There was no kind of inhuman cruelty that was not practiced upon the followers of Jesus, yet within about 300 years after the death of Christ upon the Cross, Christianity was the ruling religion of the then known world. The more the persecutors tried to crush it, the more it continued to advance. The more they fought against it, the more it conquered. Christians had patience and Grace enough to endure all manner of trials—and courage enough to continue to bear testimony to the Gospel they believed till, at last, the Truth of God overthrew the gods of the heathens, and the temples of the idols became, in many instances, the

places where Christians met to worship the one living and true God! Well might the adversaries of Christ then have said, "What shall we do? For this Man does many miracles."

Then there came a long time when the light of the Gospel grew fainter and waned under the influence of riches and wealth. The devil probably thought that he would have everything his own way, then, but up there among the mountains of Northern Italy, and in the valleys of Piedmont, and away there towards Lyons, and in divers spots there were godly men and women who had not bowed the knee to Baal! And even when the followers of antichrist thought themselves supreme, they might still have said, "What shall we do? For this Man does many miracles and here, among poor ignorant men and women is the power of the Gospel still kept alive."

The enemies of the faith sought to crush out all who loved it, but God continually sent fresh witnesses to bear testimony to the Truth. Two of these mighty men were Jerome of Prague, and John Huss, who preached the Gospel in Bohemia and then sealed his testimony with his blood. The name, Huss, means, goose, so as he was being burned, he said to his persecutors, "You may roast this goose, but there will come a swan that you will not be able to burn." That prophecy was fulfilled in Martin Luther and, by-and-by, there sprang up many others who held the Truth of God and, in various places, no sooner was the Gospel proclaimed than multitudes responded to its call as though they had lain concealed and were only awaiting the summons to arise! It was as when some chieftain has hidden away his men and then, when he blows his whistle, from every rock there rises up a soldier! Once more was that ancient Scripture true, "The Lord gave the Word: great was the company of those that published it." Calvin, Zwingli Knox, and thousands of others stood up in different lands until the devil and the pope had to say, "What shall we do? For this Man does many miracles."

And since then, whenever there has come a sad, dark time, and the enemy has begun to exult over the faithful, then the light of the Gospel has suddenly broken out again, as it did in the days of Whitefield and Wesley, when the whole land seemed steeped in midnight darkness. Then up rose these earnest men and thousands were brought to the Savior by their preaching—and the Church had a new reformation! And so will it be right on to the end of the age—God will go on converting men by the power of His Truth as applied by His Holy Spirit. Some of them will be such remarkably singular men that their conversion will, indeed, be a miracle of mercy.

Foolish people talk about the last of the Evangelicals and the last of the Puritans, but that is all nonsense! So long as the earth endures, and sun and moon shall shine, the everlasting Gospel shall not lack a man to proclaim it—and if all the ministers who now live should desert the Gospel and all universities should pour out heretics instead of true preachers of the Word—the Lord will raise Him up ministers out of the darkest slums of London, or will find them among the very poorest of the poor, or even among the heathen! But, somehow or other, His Gospel must be

continually spread abroad. What are you doing, O you haters of the Christ of God? What do you accomplish after all your opposition to Him? Remember that ancient verse of the Psalmist—"He that sits in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision." For, still, "this Man does many miracles." and He will continue to do them till He Himself shall come to claim His final victory! Therefore, be of good comfort, all you who tremble because of the evil times in which you live, and believe that God will overcome all the powers of darkness in His own good time!

III. Now, the last and the longest part of my discourse is concerning THE CONCLUSION OF TRUE REASON FROM THE TEXT—"This Man does many miracles." What then? Why, let us believe on Him!

I want everyone of you to give me your most earnest attention. I do not want you to hear for your neighbor, but for yourself. Let each one of us say for himself or herself, "If this Man does many miracles, I will see what sort of miracles He does, in order that, if possible, I may have such a miracle worked upon me." We must always remember that most of the miracles of Christ are symbols and emblems of the spiritual and moral miracles that He works in the world of the heart.

In the Gospel according to John, several miracles are recorded which are not mentioned by any other Evangelist. I want to refer to some of them, and also to others recorded by John, in order that we may learn the spiritual lessons that they teach. The first miracle which Christ worked was the turning of water into wine at the marriage at Cana of Galilee. This is recorded in the second Chapter of John's Gospel. Christ did but speak the word and, "the conscious water saw its God and blushed" itself to wine. Is there any instruction for me in that miracle? Suppose that I am a Christian, that I have been rendered pure and clean, so that I am like water that might be served up at a feast. What then? I should like to be much better than I am, now, if that is possible. I should like to have much more influence over my fellow men, far more power to affect them for their present and eternal welfare. I should like to be more fit for use in Christ's blessed festival of mercy. Can I be? Yes, "for this Man does many miracles."

He can make that which is good to be much better. He can take the gracious and lift them up to a still higher plane of spiritual life. He can make the best Christian to be as much better than he now is as the wine that Christ made was better than the water of which He made it. Come, you devout spirit, you who love Christ, you who know His power to save—and put yourself into His hands, that He may make something more of you than you have ever yet imagined! I earnestly desire to experience this miracle in my own soul just now—and cannot some young man here from this time forth live a nobler life than he has ever lived? God has, by His Grace, made him pure and clear—now may He make him strong and full of holy savor, that he may bless his race as long as he lives! "It will be a great miracle," says one, "if He does that to me." That is true. But, then, "this Man does many miracles." Brother, Sister—He can do as much for you as He did for the water when He turned it into wine!

Now read on in that second Chapter, and you will find that it contains the record of another miracle. That is to say, the driving out of all the buyers and sellers who were in the Temple at Jerusalem. This is not usually called a miracle, but I think it should be reckoned as one that Christ, with a scourge of small cords, should be able to drive out the many men who were sitting there selling doves and changing shekels, for, if they had banded themselves together, they might easily have overcome one person armed only with a little scourge! But the Lord Jesus, by the majesty of His Person, completely overawed them all! He overturned the tables of the money-changers and said to those that sold doves, "Take these things hence; make not My Father's House a house of merchandise."

Is there anything in this miracle that can comfort anybody here? Dear Friend, you who are consecrated to God, you who are God's temple and who rejoice to know that it is so, you desire that your whole being should be the house of God and used only for His Glory, but, somehow or other, evil thoughts have entered into your mind and you cannot get them out. Constitutional temptations, old habits, your daily surroundings—all these are like the money-changers in the Temple or like those that seem not only to sell doves, but to sell dragons and owls. Well, now, you wish you could get rid of these unwelcome invaders. Do you not see what comfort there is for you in our text? "This Man does many miracles." Then ask Him to come and drive out these evil thoughts, these atheistic doubts, these critical sophistries which lead you almost into infidelity, for He can cast them all out!

"Oh," you say, "I have struggled against them for years and I cannot get rid of them! If they were once all banished from me, it would, indeed, be a miracle." Well, "this Man does many miracles," and He can give you such calm and peace of mind, and such certainty of holy faith that your nature shall become like a purged temple, wherein is heard nothing but the song of holy praise and the voice of them that say, from morning until evening, "Blessed be the name of the Lord." Oh, what a miracle that would be! And as "this Man does many miracles," why should He not do this for you?

Now, if you will turn to the fourth Chapter of this Gospel, at the 47th verse, you can read about the next wonder which Christ worked and which John has recorded. That was the raising up to health of the nobleman's child who was at the point of death. Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your son lives," and he found that it was even so. Have any of you children at home unconverted? Are they the subject of your prayerful solicitude? Are you afraid, from what you see of them, that they will not turn out well? Mother, do they distress you? Father, do they cause you sleepless nights and much anxiety? Well, now, do you not see in this miracle much that may comfort you? Apply to Jesus as that nobleman did—tell Him about your child and his soul-sickness, for the Lord Jesus can heal him of his ill temper, and evil disposition, and all that now causes you such sorrow—and you shall yet hear Him say to you, "Your

son lives”—and you shall have most joy in the very child who caused you most grief.

Those characteristics which now seem to be most likely to lead to vicious practices shall, by Divine Grace, be turned into a strength of character which shall enable your son to glorify God even more than others who have not those propensities. I think we ought to have great comfort concerning our children whenever we read of our Lord Jesus Christ healing those who were at the point of death—and raising up those who were already dead. After all that He has done, what is there that Christ cannot do either for ourselves or for our dear ones? If He has done for you all that you need, then ask Him to do for your household all that He has done for you—and from this miracle of the healing of the sick child take comfort to bring every hard case before Him!

Now turn to the fifth Chapter and read the record of the miracle worked by Christ at the pool of Bethesda. There lay a man who had been decrepit for 38 years—and not until Christ came on that Sabbath and bade him take up his bed and walk, was he cured of his malady! I wonder whether anybody here can get comfort out of this miracle? This poor man was alive, but he was very ill. There had been a time in his life when he was well, but it was such a long while ago that he must almost have forgotten it. Thirty-eight years is a long period of sickness and the man must almost have despaired of ever being restored. Am I addressing somebody who was once a professor of religion, a member of a Christian Church? Are you sighing—

***“What peaceful hours I then enjoyed!
How sweet their memory still”?***

It is a long time since you had any such enjoyment as that, yet there is still some life in you, and that makes you look back upon the past with some pleasure, wishing that you could have those happy times over again and once more know yourself to be God’s child. Well, that man’s 38 years’ sickness, out of which he was restored by Christ, should seem to say to you, “Backslider, though you may have fallen very low, and wandered very far, yet, ‘this Man does many miracles,’ and He can bring you back again to all your former joy.” The devil may have concluded that you belong to him. “Ah,” he says, “I shall never trouble about him.” He does not tempt you much, now, for he looks upon you as one who is perfectly safe. He thinks that you will never run away from him! But suppose he should be deceived this very hour? What if this God-Man who does many miracles, should come and call you, by His Grace, and you should leave the sin into which you have fallen and in which you seemed as though you had been imbedded, as though you had stuck fast in a bed of cement—and should so call you that you will be able to come forth, and say, “I will arise, and go to My Father”? Why should it not be so with you? Have faith in Him who does great marvels and trust Him to work a miracle of mercy even for you!

I have not time to do more than just remind you, in passing, that in his sixth Chapter John tells us of the five thousand hungry men, besides women and children, whom Christ fed with the lad’s five barley loaves

and two small fishes. What does that miracle teach us? I think it tells all anxious workers that Jesus Christ is equal to every emergency. Think of the four millions of people in this city and of the very few in it who really are dealing out to them the Bread of Life. Yet, Brothers and Sisters, never despair! Christ can feed five million souls as easily as He can feed five—and though the stock to begin with is only a few barley loaves, and a still smaller quantity of little fishes, yet He can keep on multiplying them until the whole multitude shall be satisfied! The agencies at work are sufficient for the purpose in view—if Christ does but bless them—so have unbounded faith in Him, for, “this Man does many miracles.”

In that sixth Chapter, there is also the story of Christ’s walking on the sea to come to His troubled disciples. “The sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew,” but in the night watch Jesus came, “and immediately the ship was at the land where they went.” What says that miracle to us? Is not this the lesson to be learned from it? Christ’s Church is always safe—she may be “tossed with tempest, and not comforted,” but in the darkest night Christ will come, walking over the waves of her trouble, and He will hush her tumult and give her perfect peace, for “this Man does many miracles.” Everything is safe in His hands, so let us not be afraid, whatever may happen.

Then, if you turn to the ninth Chapter, you can read about the miracle—which John alone records—of the man born blind. He had never seen the light, yet Christ made his eyes to open, to the astonishment of all beholders. Is there not someone who can get comfort out of this miracle? Are you, dear Friends, desirous to see the true Light of God and to find Christ as your Savior? I have met with many persons who have been for years attending a place of worship, anxious to find salvation. Very often their failure has been explained by what they have said to me, “Where I have been in the habit of worshipping, Sir, there was about a quarter of an hour or 20 minutes of something that I never understood. I did not know anything about the way of salvation and could not make heads or tails of what the minister said. But it seemed to be the proper thing to go to a place of worship, so I continued to go there. But, at last, I went to another house of prayer where I heard the simple story of the Cross and my eyes were opened to see my Savior, and now I am rejoicing in Him.” Ah, dear Friend, this Man who opened the eyes of the blind still does many miracles! And if you have been for years wanting to know what you must do to be saved, and are not yet saved, ask Jesus Christ to save you, now! Trust Him to do it and the film shall depart from your eyes as you see that Jesus Christ, your Savior and Redeemer, has undertaken to save all those that put their trust in Him!

The last miracle that I can mention now is the one with which our text is concerned, that is, the raising of Lazarus. Here was a man who was not blind, or sick, or hungry—but dead—*dead*—DEAD! Yet that made no difference to the great Miracle Worker. “This Man does many miracles” and here is the crowning one of all! He can actually raise the dead to life! Is your verdict concerning yourself that you are spiritually dead? *Dead?* DEAD? Do I seem to make those words sound to you like a knell? “Dead!

Dead! DEAD!” And, my Christian Friend, have you been earnestly talking to someone, trying to persuade him to trust in Christ and, after all that you have said, have you had to turn aside and cry, “Alas! He is dead! *Dead! DEAD!*”? Then, what is the good of your talking to him? What is the use of my preaching to him? Can the dead arise through anything we can do? No!

But this is our comfort and our blessed hope—there is One who is the Resurrection and the Life—and if He will but bless the message that He gives us to deliver in His name, however feeble we may be as the repeaters of it, He is not feeble, He still does great miracles! He can raise the dead! He is still “mighty to save.” Ah, yes, if He so wills, He can convert any soul here, however hardened or debased! When I am preaching, I do not think to myself, “I wonder how many souls here will make themselves willing to come to Christ.” My thought is, “They shall be willing in the day of His power.” When His Grace goes forth, the free will of man is not marred as to its freeness, yet it is sweetly controlled and miraculously subdued so that he who, but an hour ago, could curse and swear, now begins to pray and to sing! He, who despised Christ, now adores Him! He, who was an unbeliever, is now a believer in Christ and, therefore, is saved, for, “he that believes on the Son has everlasting life.”

If the Gospel had to wait till men came to it, there would be poor results from it—but it is a dew from the Lord that waits not for men, neither tarries for the sons of men, but it falls when He pleases! Christ waits not till men bare their bosoms to receive His pointed shafts, but He takes His bow, fits the arrow to the string and through mailed armor or steeled breastplate He makes His dart fly Omnipotently strong till it pierces the heart and causes the sinner to fall down slain beneath His matchless might, only to rise to a new life by His glorious Grace!

O strong Son of God, work some of these miracles in this place just now, and out of Heaven may the angels lean over the jeweled battlements to see what Christ is still doing among the sons of men! For verily, verily, I say unto you, “this Man does many miracles!” Amen.

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

CONCENTRATION AND DIFFUSION NO. 3174

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 9, 1909.

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

*“Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment.”
John 12:3.*

YOU will notice, if you read the narrative attentively, that the two sisters and the brother who made up the favored household at Bethany, though all most truly loving Jesus, had each one a different way of showing that love. Even so, true children of God do not always feel moved to serve the Lord Jesus in the same fashion, or to express their love to Him in precisely the same manner.

Martha served. She was the housekeeper and with much diligence made Him a supper. It would have been a sad omission had there been no table spread for so blessed a Guest—and who could prepare it as well as Martha? Sometimes we have heard people speak disparagingly of Martha, but truly they mistake the Lord, who never chided her for serving but for being on one occasion so cumbered by it as to think harshly of her sister. Martha, in this instance did not fall into the fault which her Lord once so gently chided—she did her part quietly and well and, thereby, set forth her attachment to Jesus in the most commendable manner. We have Sisters in the Church whose way of serving Christ is in the household, or by caring for the sick and the poor. Like Dorcas, they make garments for them, or like holy women of old, they minister to the Lord of their substance. Their work is with *temporal* things, but they are none the less approved of their loving Master. Brothers, too, as deacons, may better honor the Lord by serving tables than they could by attempting to edify saints when the gifts suitable for that work are denied them. Each man and woman must labor according to his or her ability and calling.

As for Lazarus, he was “one of them that sat at the table.” We might hastily imagine that by sitting there he did nothing, but, my Brothers and Sisters, the people had come together very much to see Lazarus who had been raised from the dead—and for him to sit there and to show himself—and especially to eat and to drink, was to do the best thing to convince onlookers that he was, indeed, alive! Our blessed Lord, Himself, when He rose from the dead, found it necessary to convince His disciples that He was really alive and in a real body and, therefore, He took a piece of a broiled fish and of a honeycomb and ate before them all. When they saw Him eat, then they were sure that He lived! So, when Lazarus ate at the table, skeptics could not say, “It is merely his corpse, set upright to look like life, or a mere phantom to deceive.” Lazarus eating and drinking

was a testimony for Jesus and I would that we all knew how even to eat and drink to the Glory of God! There are some Christians who cannot do much or say much, but their godly lives, their patient suffering, their quiet holiness are good witnesses to Jesus. I have looked at the lilies and the roses in the garden and I have thought, "You toil not, neither do you spin. You preach not, neither do you sing, and yet you praise my Lord simply *by being beautiful* and by unconsciously shedding abroad the perfume which He gives you." May not some saints be glorifying God most truly though they can do no more than this? Besides, someone of the family was needed to keep the Master company and preside as host at the table—and who could do this but Lazarus, the master of the house? Anywhere else, Lazarus might have been out of place, but to me it appears most seemly that Lazarus should sit at the table—and if he modestly declined to take the head of it and sat with others, he was still bound to be there!

But what shall Mary do? She need not be at the table, Lazarus was there. She is, perhaps, of small use in the kitchen—her abilities are slender in that direction. What shall Mary do? Her heart was very warm and she felt she must do something. She did not ask anybody, however, for her own mind was inventive. She knew that it was a usual custom with honored guests to anoint them with ointment. She perceived that this had not yet been done, or if done, not in the royal style which her love suggested. Perhaps she was very lovely and had been somewhat fond of adorning her person. Her long hair may have been much cherished and she may have been profuse in the use of perfume upon it. The thought strikes her—she will consecrate that hair to Jesus and that pound of fragrant salve which she had stored up for the beautifying of herself shall be spent upon *Him*. It was very costly, but it had not cost a penny too much, now that it could be used upon *Him*. There was a pound of it, but there was none too much for *Him*. It was very sweet, but none too sweet for *Him*. She brings the pound of ointment and pours it upon His feet as He lies reclining at the table—and then begins to wipe His feet with the hairs of her head, consecrating her personal beauty as well as her valued treasure to Him whom she both loved and adored! She had found something to do and that something not the least of the three works of love!

The service of the three members of that elect family made up a complete feast. Martha prepared the supper, Lazarus conversed with their honored guest and Mary anointed the Master's feet. Judge not one another, my Brothers and Sisters! Do, each one, what you feel you can do, and what the Lord expects of you—and look not on another's work with ungenerous eyes. Neither Martha, nor Lazarus, nor Mary complained of each other, but together they made the service complete! All members have not the same office, but each one must lovingly supplement the office of the rest and emulation and jealousy must never enter among us.

We will now forget the others and look alone at Mary. We are struck with the service which she performed for Christ. It was somewhat singular, it was very demonstrative and it proved her love to be of no common kind. Other women besides Martha had made Him a supper. Other hosts

besides Lazarus had sat at the table with Him. But no other had anointed His feet exactly in her fashion, though perhaps some may have come near to it. Mary was inventive, demonstrative, patient, ardent, enthusiastic. What she did was the deed of a soul all on fire—the deed of a woman filled with deep devotion and reverent love. There is an old proverb that “still waters run deep.” Mary had these still waters within her heart—she sat at Jesus’ feet and heard His Words! She was a woman of few words, but of many thoughts. She considered, she pondered and she adored. Mary among women is the counterpart of John among men and, perhaps, at this time she had even outrun the Beloved disciple in quick discernment of the Lord’s true Nature. It seems to me that she had perceived His Godhead and understood more of what He was and what He was about to do than any other of the disciples did. At least I can, on that theory, better understand her deed of love. She devised a homage for Him which she would not have dreamed of presenting to any other than such an One as she perceived the Lord to be. Pondering many things within her soul and remembering what He had done for her, personally—and for her dear brother, Lazarus, whom she loved so well—she determined that a special mark of reverential homage should be paid Him. And she carried out the resolve. Deep thought led to burning love and burning love led to immediate action!

Beloved Friends, the Church of Christ needs a band of men and women full of enthusiasm who will go beyond others in devotion to the Lord Jesus. We need missionaries who will dare to die to carry the Gospel to regions beyond. We need ministers who will defy public opinion and, with flaming zeal, burn a way into men’s hearts. We need men and women who will consecrate all that they have by daring deeds of heroic self-sacrifice. Oh, that all Christians were like this, but we must at least have some! We need a bodyguard of loving champions to rally around the Savior, the bravest of the brave, Immortals and Invincibles, who shall lead the van of the armies of the Lord! Where are we to get them? How are they to be produced? The Holy Spirit’s way to train men and women who shall greatly serve Christ is to lead them to deep thought and quiet contemplation. There they obtain the knowledge and vital principle which are the fuel of true zeal. You cannot leap into high devotion, neither can you be preached into it, nor dream yourself into it, or be electrified into it by revivalism! It must, through the Divine energy of the Holy Spirit, arise out of hard, stern dealing with your soul and near and dear communion with your Savior! You must sit at His feet, or you will never anoint them! He must pour His Divine teaching into you, or you will never pour out a precious ointment upon Him!

This is a rather long introduction, but we will now leave it all and crave your attention for a little time to a short parable which appears to me to grow out of this incident.

Mary took a pound of ointment and poured it all on Christ’s feet—that is *concentration*. When she had poured it all out on Christ’s feet, the whole house was filled with the odor of the ointment—that is *diffusion*. And the surest way to effective diffusion is perfect concentration.

I. Let us speak a little first upon this CONCENTRATION.

You desire, my Friend, to do something before you die which may prove a blessing to your family connections. The desire is good, but do not begin with diffusion—commence with concentration and let Mary be your model. She brought out all her ointment, the whole pound without reserve. Even so, consecrate to the Savior all that you have—every faculty, power, possession and ability! Half the pound of spikenard would not have sufficed. That half pound in reserve would have spoiled the deed. Perhaps we should never have heard of it at all if it had been less complete. Half a heart given to Christ? Tell it not in Gath, whisper it not in the streets of Askelon! Half a life given to Christ? Half your faculties, half your powers given to Christ? It is an unworthy gift! He gave you all and He claims all of you. O dear Soul, if you would fill the house with sweet odor, bring in your whole self and pour out your heart at His feet!

Note that as she brought all, so *she poured it all upon Jesus*. She had no fear of the black looks of Judas, for the act was not meant for Judas—it was all for Jesus. I do not think she gave a thought to Martha, or Lazarus, or to any of them. The whole pound was for Jesus! The highest way of living is to live for Jesus and altogether for Jesus, not caring what this man says or how the other judges, but feeling that as *He* has bought us with His blood and we are His from the crown of our head to the sole of our feet, we, therefore, acknowledge no master but our Redeemer! Brothers and Sisters, do you live for Jesus in that fashion? Do we not perform many actions under the impulse of secondary motives? I like, for my part, sometimes to do an act of which I feel, “I do not consider whether this will benefit my fellow men. I am doing it only for Jesus. What comes of it—whether a soul shall be saved or not is not my main care—I am speaking this good word in His honor and if God accepts it, and it glorifies Jesus, my end is served.” Oh, it is a blessed thing to feel that you are living, not as a servant of man, nor of the Church, nor of a sect, or party, but of Him whose precious blood has bought you!

Concentrate all your faculties upon the Lord, Himself, and then consult not with flesh and blood. Mary did not wait for any advice about the matter. There is Jesus and there are His blessed feet inviting her to anoint them! She will not stop to enquire what Martha thinks, much less what Judas murmurs, but her heart tells her to do it. All her powers of love say to her, “Do it.” And she brings out the costly perfume and pours it all on Him. When the criticism is given about the wasteful deed, she cares not to make an apology—and she needs not to do so. If for the moment the grumbling grated harshly upon her ears, her Master’s look of love and that kind word, “Let her alone; against the day of My burying has she kept this,” are quite enough for her. She did not aim at pleasing Judas and so, if Judas is not pleased, she is not disappointed! She did it for Jesus and Jesus, being pleased, she has gained all that she sought! Ah, Brothers and Sisters, this is what we must try to do—we must not always remain in leading-strings, asking other people what they think about our actions—if we know that a certain course is right, let us follow it and let others think and say what they choose!

This concentration of everything upon Jesus is the only way of worthily serving Him. When we give Him all, we do not give Him a thousandth part of what He deserves! But to give Him half—to give Him a tithe, to

give Him what we can easily spare—is a poor way of expressing our love to Him. Who else deserves a part of your service? If you have been redeemed from death and Hell, who else can claim a portion of your heart? Look at Him in His life of labor. Look at Him on the Cross and look at Him still remembering you before the Throne of God. Does He not engross your affections? Say, does He not throw another cord of love around you and bind you as a sacrifice to the horns of the altar?

I will not linger longer on that point. Enough is as good as a feast. Concentrate, concentrate, concentrate, concentrate all on Jesus!

II. Now, consider what will come of it—namely, DIFFUSION. “The house was filled with the odor of the ointment.”

Mark that the house was not filled with the odor of the ointment through Mary’s seeking. She did not run into every chamber and drop a little on the floor, so that every room might smell of it. She did not care whether the house was perfumed or not—she only wanted to anoint her Lord and, therefore, she poured all the ointment on His feet! The result was that the rooms were perfumed, but that was not her main objective. She did not tell everybody that she had precious ointment in store, but they knew it by her pouring it out. Whenever you hear a man boast that he is holy, remember that good scent needs no proclaiming! The only cart I ever meet with that rings a bell is the dust cart. If jewels and diamonds, or the bullion of the Bank of England are carried through the streets, no bell is rung. “Great cry and little wool” is a proverb which has had a new exposition in this country of late—a wonderful cry about holiness and wonderful little holiness to cry about, but a great deal to be wept over and lamented before the living God! To stand in every room and cry, “Spikenard! Spikenard! Wonderful spikenard!” would have been idle. Pour it on Jesus’ feet and you will not have to say anything about it, for every room will be sweet with the smell thereof! We need, nowadays, dear Friends, to have a little less talk about what men are and much more actual living unto Jesus. The Lord work it in us by His Spirit!

Why was it that Mary’s spikenard perfumed all the house? And how is it that if there is true Grace in a man’s life, it is sure to be felt and recognized without his saying much about it? We reply, *because it is real*. Real religion is always influential. Sham religion has but sham power. You cannot get influence by saying, “I mean to influence So-and-So”—as well hope to stop the sun and moon without Joshua’s miraculous power! The power of religion within yourself will be very much the measure of the power which you exercise over others. Artificial flowers may be made so exactly like the real plants that you can scarcely detect them, but they lack the perfume of our garden favorites—and so also the mere professor has not the fragrance of real Grace and, consequently, no attractive and sweetening influence upon others! But where religion is real, true, heartfelt, deep—where there is strong, all-absorbing love to Christ—the sweet perfume of Divine Grace will give the man influence over his fellow men! I cannot tell you how it is that a man who lives near to God has this influence, but I know he has it. The camphor tree is full of camphor in all parts of it—branch, bark, root and flower are all full of camphor—and the

man who really lives for Jesus is full of gracious influence in all places and times. May you and I be so!

How was it that the rooms became filled with the odor? There is a law of Nature which chemists call *the law of transfusion*. If two gases of an entirely different nature are brought into contact, they commence at once to mix with one another and continue to unite till they are thoroughly intermingled. Thus flavors and odors diffuse themselves in the air. It is so with good and evil in the world. Insensibly, every man is the worse for coming in contact with a vicious example and, consciously or unconsciously, every man is swayed to some degree for good by the presence of a virtuous life. The law of transfusion enters into moral and spiritual matters as well as into the realm of chemistry—and if you walk with God, endeavor to preserve a blameless life and glorify Christ—influence will be yours without your seeking it! How far it will extend, God alone knows. It may reach far beyond what you suppose to be its sphere and may even teach some who are yet unborn who shall hear from others how you lived and how you glorified Christ!

Besides, dear Friends, true piety is a very powerful essence and *possesses great energy*. There are perfumes in Nature like the attar of roses, of which the smallest drop will make a chamber smell for many a day. True holiness is such a mighty, pervading essence that if you possess it, it cannot be hidden—it will make itself known as a sweet savor even as far as Heaven! The life of God is in it and it must operate. In everything that is good, God lies hidden. The Spirit of God dwells in every gracious word, godly thought, holy deed and He is sweetness itself! The name of Jesus is as ointment poured forth—what must His Spirit be? Yet that Spirit is to be found in every true Believer!

I want to close by asking you, dear Friends, how far, as yet, you have concentrated your love upon Christ and thus have influenced those who dwell in your house? I will only ask about your own house. Has your house been filled with the odor of the ointment? You do pray, but have your prayers been so mighty with God that they have brought down a blessing upon your family? You seek to avoid sin, you try to make your conversation pure, gracious, kind, cheerful, loving and Christlike—do you think that some in your house have been blessed thereby? I do not ask, “Have all been converted?” for though all the house was the better for Mary’s ointment, yet Judas remained a traitor! I should not wonder if some in your house may have even disliked you the more for your piety—but still, the Lord frequently blesses godliness and makes it the means of conversion. O Woman, you may gain your husband by your piety! If he will not hear sermons, he will hear that quiet, loving life of yours! O Sister, you may win your brother by your love! He will not read pious books, but those letters of yours, those sweet words of tender rebuke and invitation—he does read them and he feels them, too, though you fear he does not! Father, those boys of yours are not yet what you could wish, but they must feel your godly example. Perhaps when you lie beneath the sod, they will recollect what you used to be. Fill the house with the odor of true religion! Fill the parlor and the drawing room, the bedchamber and the kitchen with hallowed conversation! I say again, not with mere talk and Pharisaic pretense, but with real holy living and true godly

communion! And depend upon it, you are doing for your children and your servants the best thing in your power to do! Give them teaching, give them warning and entreaty, but still, the actual perfuming with godliness must arise from your own holy living—it must be begotten of the ointment poured on Jesus' feet!

Ah, dear Friends, I wish that not only the house in which we may happen to dwell, but the workshop where we labor, the shop where we trade, the place of business where we associate with others might all be perfumed with Divine Grace! Christians are not to glide out of the way of their fellow creatures and shut themselves up in order to be pious any more than a soldier may hope to win the battle by running away! No, mix with your fellow men! If there are offices of trust to discharge, do not leave them to the lowest of the low to discharge them, but be willing to do public service for your country! But so do this that you shall spread abroad in every office the savor of honesty and integrity and make the rogue and the cheat ashamed of themselves. I would to God that every Christian Church were a living protest against all the evil of the times, a gracious disinfectant to stop the abounding corruption. There is an evil smell of sin perpetually reeking towards Heaven—and it needs that you Christians should live Christlike lives in public as well as in private until you fill this country with a healthier savor—and until England shall become a Christian country in *fact*, as well as in name. Would to God that the example of Christians might yet become so potent that all nations might feel its power, that wars might cease, that cruelties of every kind might come to an end and that the sweet savor of Jesus' name, manifested through His people, might perfume the whole world as though God had showered upon it ambrosia, essences and fragrances from the flowers of Heaven to sweeten it against the time when Christ Himself shall come and make it a marriage chamber for His chosen bride! God grant that the perfume of your holiness may reach the stars! That your lives may be so sweet that beyond these fogs and clouds, the sweet aroma of your Divine Grace may rise acceptable to God through Jesus Christ, for we are always a sweet savor unto Him if we live unto the Lord!

I fear, however, that I may be addressing some whose lives are not a sweet perfume at all. Ah, take heed to yourselves! If you are living without God and without Christ—if you are living in any secret sin—take heed to yourselves! You may think that you will be able to conceal the ill savor of your sin, but you will not. How wonderfully does evil tell its own secret! The intolerable odor of many a secret sin has forced its way to notice. Beware you who would cover your sin! Beware, I pray you! For the task is hopeless. Dig, dig, dig, dig deep and in the dead of night cover up the sin, but like the blood of Abel, it cries from the ground! “Be sure your sin will find you out.” If you are living now in sin and yet pretend to be virtuous, remember that if your hypocrisy is never found out in *this* life, it will confront you at the Last Great Day! How terrible will be the resurrection of buried sins to men who know not Christ! They will wake up in the next world and find their sins howling around them like grim wolves—insatiable, fierce and terrible! Any one sin is able to destroy the

soul, but what must it be to be surrounded by thousands, howling with terrible voices and eager to drag you down and tear you in pieces?

It will be so with you, Sirs! It must be so with many of you unless you lay hold, now, upon the great salvation! Jesus Christ can drive away those wolves, can stop the ill savor of your sins! If you will trust Him, if you will yield your hearts to Him, He will deliver you! But if you will not, on your own heads be your blood!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 12:1-43.**

Verse 1. *Then Jesus, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom He raised from the dead.* The days Christ was to spend upon the earth were getting to be very few so He paid another visit to that Bethany home where He was always so welcome—and more so than ever since He had raised Lazarus from the dead!

2, 3. *There they made Him a supper, and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with Him. Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment.* All the members of the re-united family were present—Martha busy as usual with the domestic duties which fell to her share. Lazarus in close attendance upon the Master who had worked so great a miracle upon him and Mary, in her own sweet and gracious way, pouring out the wealth of her affection in honor of the Master.

4-6. *Then said one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which would betray Him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and took what was put therein.* The question of Judas was a most unworthy one, but the motive that prompted the question was still worse. Little did he care for the poor, but if he could have had the proceed from the sale of that very costly ointment of spikenard, he would have made that an opportunity of enriching himself.

7, 8. *Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of My burying has she kept this. For the poor you always have with you: but Me you have not always.* Christ was Himself always caring for the poor, so He would not discourage any effort on their behalf, but just then one of His most devoted disciples desired to render to Him special honor—and He would not let her be rebuked—on the contrary, He pointed out the deep symbolical meaning of her loving action.

9. *Many people of the Jews knew that He was there: and they came not for Jesus' sake, only, but that they might see Lazarus, also, whom He had raised from the dead.* Their curiosity was but natural, for few of them could have seen anyone who had been raised from the dead! It is well when a saved soul, who has been spiritually raised from the dead, becomes a center of attraction together with the Lord who has worked such a miracle of mercy upon him!

10, 11. *But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus, also, to death; because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away and believed on Jesus.* They would have committed a double murder if it had been possible, and would have put to death both Jesus and Lazarus, who was a living witness to the wonder-working power of the Christ whom they would not receive as the promised Messiah. When men hate Christ, they also hate those whom He has blessed—and will go to any lengths in seeking to silence their testimony.

12, 13. *On the next day many people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet Him and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that comes in the name of the Lord.* It is significant that John is the only one of the four Evangelists who mentions the palm fronds that were carried by the people in this triumphal procession in honor of Christ. And it was to John that the vision was given of the “great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues,” who “stood before the Throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands, and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.”

14-16. *And Jesus, when He had found a young donkey, sat thereon; as it is written, Fear not, daughter of Zion: behold, your King comes, sitting on a donkey's colt. These things understood not His disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of Him, and that they had done these things unto Him.* It is strange that Christ's own disciples did not at once remember this plain Prophecy when it was so literally fulfilled, yet, before we condemn them, let us remember how “slow of heart” we also have been “to believe all that the Prophets have spoken.”

17. *The people therefore that were with Him when He called Lazarus out of his grave, and raised him from the dead, bare record.* They could not help testifying in His favor after they had seen Him work such a notable miracle as the raising of Lazarus from the dead!

18, 19. *For this cause the people also met Him, for that they heard that He had done this miracle. The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive you how you prevail nothing? Behold, the world is gone after Him!* When they saw our Lord riding in state through the streets and the people waving palm branches and shouting in His honor, they said, “The world is gone after Him.” That was only very partially true, and for a very short time—but the day will come when the whole world *shall* go after Him! Christ's Divine attractions shall be felt throughout the earth and all the Pharisees then in the world will not be able to prevent the people from going after Him! And—

**“Come what may
To stand in the way
That day the world shall see.”**

20, 21. *And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast: the same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him, saying, Sir, we would like to see Jesus.* They were proselytes who had learned to worship Jehovah. Some-

thing more than mere curiosity must have moved them to want to see Jesus! Having heard of His raising the dead, they had a desire and a very proper desire, to know more of Him, so they asked to be introduced to Him by one who, though not a Greek, had a Greek name, and who might have, therefore, served as a kind of bridge for these Greeks to reach the Savior.

22, 23. *Philip came and told Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip told Jesus. And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified.* Christ's passion and death were getting very near when these Gentiles came to Him and He saw, in that company of Greeks, the vanguard of that great army that shall yet come to Him out of every nation under Heaven. In the prospect of that great ingathering, He looked beyond the impending shame and suffering and spoke even of the hour of His death as the time when He should be glorified!

24. *Verily, verily, I say unto you. Except a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone: but if it dies, it brings forth much fruit.* [See Sermon #3024, Volume 53—CHRIST'S DEATH AND OURS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] This was Christ's way to Glory, and it must be our way to Glory, too. The grain of wheat must fall into the ground and die, or else it cannot bring forth fruit. Just so must it be with you and with me—and in proportion as we learn to die to self, we shall live to the glory of God!

20. *He that loves his life shall lose it.* If you keep yourself to yourself, you will lose yourself.

20. *And he that hates his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.* Brothers and Sisters in Christ, if we are really to glorify Christ on the earth, we must be willing to lose our reputation, our good name, our comfort and, indeed, everything that we have for Christ's sake! This is the only way to truly live. If for your own sake you begin to keep back anything from Christ, that is the way to die. You would then be like the grain of wheat that is laid by and preserved and which, therefore, can never grow or multiply. Surrender yourself! Be willing to be nothing! Be willing to die if only the Truth of God may live! Care nothing about honor and glory for yourself—care only about the honor and glory of your Master! Learn the meaning of the Master's paradox—as you bury yourself, you will multiply yourself. As you are put out of sight, like a grain of wheat that is sown in the ground, you have your only opportunity of growth and increase! Heavily-laden ears of corn shall spring up from the grain which has been buried in the earth.

26-28. *If any man serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall also My servant be. If any man serves Me, him will My father honor. Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify Your name.* [See Sermon #1391, Volume 24—A GOLDEN PRAYER—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] In the 27th verse, our Savior asked Himself the question, "What shall I say?" here He gives His own answer, "Father, glorify Your name." When you know not what to pray for, you can always safely pray, "Father, glorify Your name." As you stand where the crossroads meet and you ask, "Which way shall I choose?" pray, "Father, glorify Your name." This incident seems like a rehearsal of Christ's passion. Here we see that natural fear of death which came across the Sa-

viator's mind because He was so really and truly Man. If His pains had not been real pains, but had been pleasant and congenial to Him, there would have been no self-sacrifice in His suffering. But the fact that they cast upon His spirit the dark shadow of death only proves to us what sharp pains they were—but instead of asking for a way of escape from them, He surrendered Himself to them, gave Himself up as a willing Victim with this prayer upon His lips, "Father, glorify Your name." And now see what happened.

28, 29. *Then came there a voice from Heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again. The people, therefore, that stood by and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spoke to Him.* This was one of the three occasions on which testimony was openly borne to Christ by His Father—first at His Baptism, then at His Transfiguration, and now here at the rehearsal of His great Sacrifice. [In Sermon #909, Volume 16—VOICES FROM THE EXCELLENT GLORY—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>, Mr. Spurgeon speaks of those three testimonies to Christ.] Verily, He is the Son of God, and He is always well-pleasing to God! And God has glorified His name and will continue to glorify it through Jesus Christ His Son! We learn from this narrative that the voice of God is not understood by everybody. Some of those that stood by said that it thundered—and others said that an angel spoke to Him. It is necessary that you should be a child of God if you are to know your Father's voice! Though God is speaking at this moment in the clearest tones, none will recognize His voice, or understand His words, but those who are taught by His Holy Spirit.

30, 31. *Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of Me, but for your sakes. Now is the judgment of this world.* [See Sermon #2338, Volume 39—THE CRISIS OF THIS WORLD—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] *Now shall the ruler of this world be cast out.* See how the eyes of faith reads things differently from the eyes of sense! You and I would have said, "Now is Christ coming to His lowest point. Now is His name to be cast out from among men and His cause to be crushed as the result of His death." But Christ reads the signs of the times very differently. "Now," He said, "in the hour of My shame, suffering and death, is the judgment of this world. Now shall the ruler of this world be cast out." It was only by Christ being apparently conquered that Satan could be really vanquished! And there is often no way of victory for a saint except through defeat. When self is slain, then do we truly live!

32, 33. *And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples unto Me. This He said signifying what death He should die.* [See Sermons #139, Volume 3—CHRIST LIFTED UP; #775, Volume 13—THE GREAT ATTRACTION and #1717, Volume 29—THE MARVELOUS MAGNET—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] The Pharisees said, "The world is gone after Him," but Jesus says, "No, not while I am riding in state through the streets of Jerusalem. But when I am lifted up and hung upon the Cross, then shall it, indeed, be true, 'I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples unto Me.'" The crucified Christ of Calvary is the mighty magnet that is to attract multitudes of trembling, doubting, ruined sinners who by Grace shall be drawn unto Him and find eternal life in Him!

34, 35. *The people answered Him, We have heard out of the Law that Christ abides forever: and how say You, The Son of Man must be lifted up?*

Who is this Son of Man? Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walks in darkness knows not where he goes. What a sad condition to be in—to not know where you are going! Are there not some of you whom I am now addressing who do not know where you are going? Yet if you would but take the trouble to look, you might easily know that as long as you continue in the paths of sin, you are going down to the chambers of death! Oh, that God's Holy Spirit would give you sufficient light to enable you to see where you are going! You surely do not want to take "a leap in the dark." Oh, that you may have the Grace to turn from the downward way and to seek the heavenward road!

36-41. *While you have light, believe in the light, that you may be the children of light. These things spoke Jesus and departed, and did hide Himself from them. But though He had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on Him: that the sayings of Isaiah the Prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke, Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Isaiah said again, He has blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said Isaiah, when he saw His Glory and spoke of Him.* [See Sermons #2413, Volume 41—DESPISED LIGHT WITHDRAWN and #1844, Volume 31—ISRAEL AND BRITAIN—A NOTE OF WARNING—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] You know that wonderful Sixth Chapter of Isaiah's prophecy, and you know how wonderfully he has spoken there of the Glory of Christ. But what a terrible thing it is that even Christ should be driven to blind men's eyes, to take the light away from them because they proved themselves unworthy of it! May that never be the case with any of us, but while we may see, let us see—and may God give us more light!

42, 43. *Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on Him; but because of the Pharisees, they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.* What a shameful thing that was! Yet you will still find that there are many persons who, even though they believe the Truth, dare not proclaim it, but must hide in obscurity until the times grow easier. However, Christ's death fetched out many who had been His disciples in secret. Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus could not stay in the background any longer and, doubtless, the thoughts of many other hearts were then revealed.

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

CHRIST'S DEATH AND OURS

NO. 3024

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 24, 1907.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 14, 1869.**

***“And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone: but if it dies, it brings forth much fruit.”
John 12:23-24.***

CERTAIN Greeks desired to “see Jesus.” They informed Philip of their desire, Philip consulted with Andrew and the two disciples together informed their Master of what seemed to them to be a very important matter. As wise men from the East once came to see Jesus, so now would these Gentiles from the West do the same! Probably Philip and Andrew expected that Christ would display His miraculous power before the eyes of these enquirers, but our Lord, instead of going on from His triumphal procession and the hosannas of the multitude to something outwardly grander, began at once to speak about a glorification far other than either His disciples or these Greeks desired—a glorification which was to follow upon death and burial!

Is it not very noteworthy how our Lord's mind was always dominated by the anticipation of that Baptism of His, that immersion in grief and suffering, that decease which He was to accomplish at Jerusalem? This was the main thought of His whole life and nothing could make Him forget it. In His heaviest moments of trial and in His brightest moments of joy, His heart was equally at the Cross—He was longing to complete His atoning Sacrifice for the salvation of His people. O brave, loving heart of Christ, so firmly fixed in love, so resolute to be pierced for the Beloved—we admire and love You in return!

Surely *we* make too little of our Redeemer's death. I fear that even we, who preach most concerning it, dwell too little upon it. That we who pray, plead it too little. That we who sing, praise our Lord too little for His wondrous death and that we who live upon His Grace, yet think too little of the channel by which it flows to us! Christ's death is *His* Glory and it ought also to be ours. All other topics in Holy Scripture are important and none of them are to be cast into the shade, but the death of the Son of God is the central sun of all these minor luminaries! It is the great Alpha and Omega, the first and the last! It is not only eminent, it is preeminent with us. I could almost wish that we had broken every other string of our soul's harp but that which resounds the music of His Love. Silence, you other voices, and let the voice of His blood be heard in our souls! If we were bound down to this one subject—chained to it and

never allowed to take another, but compelled simply to stand and incessantly cry, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world"—it would be an enlargement, rather than a narrowing of our ministry! Here is a theme fit for seraphs! Yes, "Michael the archangel" might find this subject too vast even for his exalted intellect. While we are musing on this text, no other topic shall intrude. Our mottoes shall be, "All for Jesus," and, "None but Jesus." May the blessed Comforter, whose work it is to glorify Christ and to take of that which belongs to Him and apply it to us, give us the power of Christ's death in our hearts!

The verses on which we are to meditate speak of two things—first, *Christ's view of His death and*, secondly, *Christ's view of the necessity and the results of that death.*

I. First, we are to consider CHRIST'S VIEW OF HIS DEATH. He says, "The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified."

Now, I freely grant that this passage may refer to Christ's glorification in His Resurrection, in His Ascension and in all His triumph beyond the skies, but, from its connection with the allusion to the grain of wheat, which is cast into the ground to die, it is clear that our Lord was mainly thinking of His death and that He spoke of it as being, in a certain sense, the hour of His Glory. Certainly, to spiritual eyes, the Christ of God was never more glorious than when He was nailed to the Cross of Calvary—not even yonder where the lamps of Heaven glow with supernal splendor, where the harps of angels pour forth matchless music and where Christ, Himself, sits upon the Throne of the Highest, "King of kings, and Lord of lords." A Glory never equaled shone around the Conqueror of death and Hell when He bowed His head and said, "It is finished," and gave up the ghost!

Mark well that Christ said that, "the *Son of Man* should be glorified"—not the *Son of God*—for He was speaking here concerning His human nature. This teaches us that *Christ, as Man, was glorified by enduring bravely, patiently and to the end, what no other man has ever borne.* Without a murmur, He willingly endured all the agony and ignominy that were heaped upon Him. He marched boldly through the tremendous deeps of physical, mental and spiritual suffering which the Atonement demanded. It may be that in some of His bodily pangs, our Lord's anguish has been equaled by that endured by some of the martyrs, yet I greatly question whether that has ever been the case. Rather do I believe that His peculiarly sensitive body which had never lost any of its delicacy of tone through indulgence or impurity, and which was originally of the finest mold, seeing that He was "that Holy Thing" which was born of Mary through the overshadowing power of the Highest—for these reasons it appears to me that Christ may have borne physical pains such as, in their intensity, have not been known by any other son of man! But as for His mental and spiritual griefs, they were an unknown abyss—who can measure or conceive what His holy soul endured? Hart's lines, though very strong in expression, do not go beyond the Truth of God even when he says that Christ, in Gethsemane—

***"Bore all Incarnate God could bear,
With strength enough, and none to spare."***

Yet how gloriously He endured it all even to the bitter end! The gold was tried in the furnace, but no dross was discovered. Mightier than Atlas, Christ bore a world of grief upon His shoulders and yet He neither staggered under it, nor cast off the lead. He went to prison and to death—and all through His way of woe, His mighty soul was strong within Him. And He died triumphing over all! He was unconquered and unconquerable unto the last! Crown Him, O you daughters of Jerusalem, as the King of Sufferers, most mighty to suffer and to save! With His garments all red from the winepress, adore Him as having alone sustained the fury of His adversaries!

Remember, too, that Christ won, on the Cross, the glory of being the fully obedient One. “Being found in fashion as a Man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross.” It is a great glory to a servant of God to be, through Divine Grace, sincerely obedient to His Lord. But it would be a greater honor if he could be *perfectly* obedient. Upon our Lord, who had voluntarily taken the place of a Servant for us, the petition of His service casts the highest honor. After having, in all points, kept the Law perfectly by His active obedience, He crowned His life's service by His passive obedience and was glorious, indeed, when He went to “the end of the Law for righteousness.” First-born of many brethren are You, O You glorious Son of Man, made perfect in Your obedience in order that You might be the Captain of our salvation and bring many sons unto Glory!

Further, *Christ was glorified on the Cross by achieving what no one else could have achieved.* How often do we set forth the Truth of God, which is always fresh and delightful to Believers, that Christ Jesus, on the tree, took all the sins of all who believe in Him—took them to Himself, literally, and carried them as though they had been His own—and suffered for those sins upon the Cross, all that ought to have been suffered by us on account of those sins, enduring that which His Father accepted as an equivalent for all the agony which ought to have been endured by us because of those iniquities? We believe, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, in the literal Substitution of Christ for His people. Christ stood in the Sinner's place and suffered what was due to the Sinner—even the curse of God and the wrath of God! And now He has so suffered for sinners that those for whom He died can have no sin laid to their charge so as to involve them in punishment, since it is a maxim of all courts of justice that the law cannot first punish the substitute—and then punish those in whose place he stood. Every honest man admits that a debt, once paid, is settled forever. So, as Christ paid the debt that His people owed to Infinite Justice, it is forever blotted out and our obligations to Divine Justice are obliterated! This is the joy of joys! This is the Doctrine that makes the Gospel to be God's good news to guilty sinners! This is the glorious Truth of God that sets the bells of Heaven ringing with their loudest and their sweetest music—that Christ has made the sin of His people to cease to be! Thus is fulfilled that ancient prophecy, “In those days, and in that time, says the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of

Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve.”

The work of Messiah the Prince is “to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness.” And this work was fully accomplished when “this Man, after He had offered one Sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God.” O Beloved, herein is bliss, indeed, for us if He did really die for us! Your question and mine must be this, “Did Christ die for *me*?” To answer that, I must ask, “Am I trusting in Him?” If I am, then He did die for me and all my sins are gone because He was punished in my place. My demerit was imputed to Him and He died to put it away. And now His merit is reckoned as my merit! A wonderful transfer has been made by means of the death of Christ—He has taken all the consequences of our guilt and borne them all—and ended them forever! So was He not, indeed, glorified in His death? And you, Believer, may sing this sweet song, on earth and in Heaven, too—

***“In my Surety I am free,
His dear hands were pierced for me!
With His spotless vesture on
Holy as the Holy One.
Oh the heights and depths of Grace!
Shining with meridian blaze—
Here the sacred records show
Sinners black, but comely too.”***

But we must not forget that *Christ was glorified in His death, officially, as our great High Priest*. He stood alone in that dark hour as the true High Priest presenting the one perfect Sacrifice unto God. All other high priests had been but types of Christ, the great Anti-type. They had, once a year, though “not without blood,” passed under the embroidered veil which hid the Holy of Holies from other eyes. But in that dread hour of darkness on Calvary, Christ, the true High Priest, offered up Himself as the Propitiatory Sacrifice which alone could put away His people’s sins. And then, through the torn veil, that is to say, His body—His soul passed up into the Presence of God and there His blood still pleads for His people, speaking better things than that of Abel! Begone all you gorgeous ceremonies of Aaron and his sons, like stars that hide their light when the sun itself appears! Christ, the Great High Priest, is the only one that His Church needs! You may banish your many-colored robes. You may put away your precious miters. You may lay aside your bespangled breastplate, for Christ alone wears the robe, the miter and the breastplate of the true High Priest before God! And He stands gloriously accepted through His unique Sacrifice. From now on let it be known, throughout the whole earth, that there is no other sacrificing priest but the living Christ, and there is no other sacrifice but the Sacrifice which He has once and for all offered—and which still avails for all who trust in it! His precious blood—

***“Shall never lose its power,
Till all the ransomed Church of God
Is saved to sin no more.”***

Thus have I shown you that even on the Cross, Christ was glorified. Yet this declaration of His may also refer to that which followed His death. It is indeed so closely linked and intertwined with His passion and Crucifixion that it would be wrong to separate it from them—yet we must never forget that He who died and was put into the grave—also rose again! It was His Glory that by His own almighty power, He arose, “the first-born from the dead.” After forty days He ascended unto the Father and angels welcomed Him as He returned triumphantly to Heaven. Our faith can almost hear the lingering notes of that wonderful song of His angelic escort, “Lift up your heads, O you gates; and be lift up, you everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in.” Glorious was His welcome by the spirits bought with blood who were already before the Throne of God! And truly glorious was He as He sat down at the right hand of the Father. See the Son of Mary exalted to sit at the right hand of the Father! Man like ourselves, yet glorified in Being made to reign there with His Father! He had always been there as God, but now He is there, also, as Man, crowned with glory and honor, and made to have dominion over all the works of God’s hands! The very Man who was once the Baby in Bethlehem and then the Carpenter of Nazareth and afterwards the Murdered One of Calvary, is now so highly exalted that at His name, which is above every name, every knee shall bow, “of things in Heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the Glory of God the Father!”

It strikes me that our Lord also meant, by making this statement in connection with the visit of these Greeks to Him, *to teach us that after His death He would be glorified among all the nations of mankind.* That although in His earthly ministry, He was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, yet, after His death the Gospel should be preached in His name to all nations—and out of all nations a people should be gathered who would praise His name forever and ever! Even at the present time it is no small Glory to Christ, who was nailed to the Cross of Calvary, that His name is revered over a great part of the earth—even by nations whose ancestors were strangers to it—and that His name is the foundation of every true morning prayer and every holy evening song! “His name shall endure forever” and His Gospel shall extend its saving and sanctifying power from realm to realm till He comes again, “in His Glory, and all the holy angels with Him,” to glorify His saints with Himself forever and ever!

I have spoken at this length upon what our Lord said concerning His death as the means of glorifying Him, for I am anxious that we should not think lightly of that of which He thought so highly!

II. The few minutes that remain must be devoted to the second part of the text which concerns THE NECESSITY AND RESULTS OF CHRIST’S DEATH.

Our Lord seems to say that it *was absolutely necessary that He should die*—that even His perfect life would have been of no use to us if He had not died. He says, “Except a corn of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone.” So you see, Brothers and Sisters, that if Christ, after

having come to this earth as He did, had not died, He would, as far as mankind is concerned, have had to abide in Heaven alone. As God, the word, "*alone*," would have had no reference, for the holy angels, as well as His Father and the ever-blessed Spirit would always have been near Him. But if our Lord could have come here and then have gone back to Heaven without dying, it would not have been possible for any other man to ever have gone to Heaven—and Christ would have been the only Man in the whole of that land of joy! It is dreadful even to think of such a thing as that! If that could have happened, where must all the saints of God and all mankind have gone? There is but one other region—the land of darkness and of death, the land of pain, of horror and of unutterable woe. And we must *all* have gone *there* if Christ had not died upon the Cross—not only the thief on the left hand of Christ, but the thief on His right hand, too—not only Judas, but Peter, John and all the Apostles—not only Demas, but Paul, Silas and all the early Christians—not only Ahithophel, but David, also—not only the unrighteous, but the righteous, too—all! *All!* ALL, having sinned, would have been condemned to eternal wrath if Jesus had not died! Ah, but it was not possible for the Son of Man, who was also the Son of God, to be alone in Heaven! He could not be content to be there alone. He left His Father's side in Glory, in order that He might become the Son of Man! And then, after He had once taken our human Nature into union with His Divine Nature, He could not go back to Heaven to live there in solitude, without another man to bear Him company! We cannot conceive of the First-Born without a brotherhood, the Head without a body, the Savior with no saved ones to sing His praises, the Shepherd without sheep, the King without subjects! No, this could not be and, therefore, it was absolutely necessary that Christ should die!

It was a most suggestive and suitable figure which Christ used—that a corn of wheat must be put into the ground and die, or it cannot produce its like. Our language and all languages, when they speak of such lofty themes as life and death, become very much like a skein of silk that is all in a tangle—and we must never talk lightly concerning these supreme Truths of God. I believe that half the disputes about that very important matter of eternal punishment—concerning which some think that the Scriptures favor the view of a limited period to the punishment—arise because those who hold that view do not observe that there is a vast difference between mere existence and life and, an even greater difference between death and annihilation. If a grain of wheat were really to die, it would not bring forth any fruit. When the maltster has passed the corn through the various processes which end with kiln-drying, it is really dead. And if you were to plant it, it would never bring forth fruit. That is a very different kind of death from that which takes place when the seed is cast into the ground—there it dies in quite another sense, that is to say, it rots—the matter of the corn dissolves and furnishes the first soil for the little minute of life to feed upon, for the grain of wheat is not all life, there is a life-germ inside it. The grain of "corn or wheat" must be broken up and be resolved into its primary elements or else it cannot

bring forth fruit. [In *C. H. Spurgeon's Autobiography*, Vol. III, pages 194-6, there are further explanations of this subject, including the definition of death given by Mr. Spurgeon to Mr. Ruskin, who said, "That is the most extraordinary definition of death that I ever heard, but it is true."]

So, our Lord Jesus Christ had to die and to be buried in the grave, as the seed-corn is put into the ground, and there He had to be resolved, as it were, into His primary elements—the soul to be for a while separated from the body, and the Deity from the Humanity. Without this death there could have been no fruit-bearing to spring out of Him. But when He had passed through this experience of death, then there sprang up out of the dead Christ—dead after that fashion—abundant fruit! Nobody can tell you why it is that if a single grain of wheat is put into the ground, it may bring forth a hundredfold. Why should it so multiply itself? That is a great mystery, but it is a solid fact—and it is a blessed mystery of faith that, as Jesus Christ died, all who put their trust in Him are the "much fruit" springing up from His death! It is because He died on the tree that Believers are to live with Him forever. I have not time to go fully into that subject now, but you all know that if Christ had not died, we would all still be under the curse. If Jesus had not died, we would have been condemned at the bar of God. If Jesus had not died, there would have been no way of approach for us to God. We could not, as Believers, have had any existence at all except through His death! And now, through the preaching of His death, and the hearing of the message by the ear of faith through the effectual working of the Holy Spirit, we are made alive unto God and so become "fruit" to the praise of the Savior who died on the Cross of Calvary!

Brothers, if we want to have fruit in our ministry—if we want to see sinners converted—we must preach up Christ's death! As the blacksmith strikes the hot iron upon the anvil, we must keep the hammer of the Gospel at work upon this great foundation Truth of God, "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." It is no talking to men upon other topics in the hope that it will lead to their conversion. The great soul-quickenning agency is, "Jesus Christ and Him crucified." Whoever will come and trust in the God-appointed Substitute for sinners shall be eternally saved, for life comes only through His death! The salvation of sinners is not even by preaching the great and glorious Truth of Christ's Second Advent, nor by preaching about Christ's millennial and eternal Glory, but by incessantly pointing to Christ lifted up upon the Cross! There is the grain of wheat that put into the ground brings forth much fruit—and we must keep to that theme beyond all others! You who try to talk to the unconverted must do this if you wish to see them find real, lasting peace, and enter into true Christian liberty. You must say, with Charles Wesley—

***"His only righteousness I show,
His saving Truth proclaim!
'Tis all my business here below
To cry, 'Behold the Lamb!'"***

I must close, Brothers and Sisters, with this reflection. You and I want to bring forth fruit unto God. We want to save souls. Then we must do

what Christ did, though in another sense. That is to say, *we must fall into the ground and die*. Did you ever see a minister who was such a gentleman that he did not know his people, and never shook hands with them in his life—one who was only anxious to show them what a dignified individual an ordained minister is? Well, such a man as that is like a grain of wheat put into a golden shrine to be admired. But, possibly, you know another man—he may be a city missionary—and he goes right down into the midst of the sin and misery of those whom he seeks to win for Christ, looking at everything from their point of view. And often it is a difficult task for him, yet he will do it. He lays aside everything in which he is their superior, speaks so that they can understand him, and brings the Gospel right down to their level. That man will win souls for the Savior because he is not a grain of wheat laid on a marble shelf, but he is dropped into the ground! And the more that man will spend himself for his Master—work himself to death, break up his constitution—kill himself, as it were, in his Master's service—the more likely is he to bring forth “much fruit” unto God. I do not believe you can do much good without having a great deal taken out of yourselves. And when men are so very particular and careful about themselves and will only serve God if it does not cost them anything, I believe that no earthly good can come of that. The man whom God will greatly bless must be willing, in this sense, to fall into the ground and die!

In persecuting times, the Christian has often had to literally give himself up to die, but, instead of the cause of Christ being injured by his death, he has, in that way, brought forth the “much fruit.” There have been no other such fruitful preachers of the Gospel as those who suffered at the stakes of Smithfield or died upon the rack. If you would be the means of saving others, you must make no reserve for yourself, but imitate your Master, of whom His enemies tauntingly but truly said, “He saved others; Himself He cannot save.” I ask you, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, to resolve, by God's strength, that there is nothing you will not do and nothing you will not give for Him who loved you so well that He gave all He had to save you! Seek, by every means that you can use, to win souls for Christ! The man who must have conversions, or he will die, will have them! The woman who feels that she must bring her class to Christ and will never rest till she does, will bring them to Christ! The Lord help us so to preach Christ and so to live for Christ and, if necessary, so to die for Christ, that we may bring forth fruit unto God—“some a hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.” Amen.

PUBLISHERS' NOTE:

A very considerable portion of this Sermon was revised by Mr. Spurgeon in readiness for publication. The topic—“Christ's Death and Ours”—is peculiarly appropriate to *the 15th anniversary of the beloved preacher's last days upon earth*. [He died January 31, 1892.] But the subject of the next Sermon, which is to be published on *January 31st—the exact anniversary of the date of his Home-going*—is still more suitable.

The text is, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." And the title of the Sermon is to be, "Fifteen Years After!" to remind all readers that although the preacher's voice has not been heard in this world for the past 15 years, yet, like the martyred Abel, "He being dead yet speaks," and, as Dr. Newman Hall truly said, "as he yet speaks, he is not *dead*."

It is also a somewhat remarkable fact that the Sermon to be issued next week was preached on *Thursday evening, February 11th, 1869, exactly 23 years to the very day, before the funeral service at the Tabernacle*, the long procession from Newington to Norwood, and the interment in the cemetery there in the presence of an enormous concourse of sympathizing spectators.

Regular readers of the Sermons will remember that similar coincidences were pointed out at the time of Mr. Spurgeon's Home-going, when, without any human pre-arrangement, the Sermons intended for reading on the four Sabbaths in February, 1892, were as follows—No. 2242, Volume 38—GOD'S WILL ABOUT THE FUTURE; No. 2243, Volume 38—HIS OWN FUNERAL SERMON; No. 2244, Volume 38—MEMBERS OF CHRIST and No. 2245, Volume 38—"LIVING, LOVING, LASTING UNION"—the four discourses concerning the Home-going of Deacon William Olney.

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

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: JOHN 12:12-36.

Verses 12-15. *On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet Him, and cried, Hosanna! Blessed is the King of Israel that comes in the name of the Lord. And Jesus, when He had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written, Fear not, daughter of Zion, behold, your King comes, sitting on an ass's colt.* Even in the little glory of a temporal kind, which was given to the Lord Jesus Christ when He was "here among men" as Mrs. Luke's hymn puts it, His humility and meekness were very manifest, thus fulfilling the prophecy recorded in Zechariah 9:9—"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, your King comes unto you; He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass." Oh, that all His people would always be of such a lowly spirit, not seeking great things for themselves, but condescending to men of low estate, remembering that it was their Master who said to His disciples, "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and you shall find rest unto your souls."

16. *These things understood not His disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of Him, and that they had done these things unto Him.* I wonder whether, when Christ comes back to earth, in the Glory of His Father with the holy

angels, we also shall not understand a great many things which are complete mysteries to us now. Perhaps it will be said of us, then, "These things understood not His disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of Him, and that they had done these things unto Him." That first Glory of His Ascension to Heaven shed a flood of light upon the life of Christ, as doubtless the greater Glory of His Second Advent will shed a yet brighter light upon our understanding of the things of Christ which quite surpass our comprehension now.

17-19. *The people therefore that were with Him when He called Lazarus out of his grave, and raised him from the dead, bare record. For this cause the people also met Him, for that they heard that He had done this miracle. The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive you how we prevail nothing? Behold, the world is gone after Him.* No doubt many of His disciples thought so, too, yet how mistaken were both the friends and the foes of Christ, for you recollect, Brothers and Sisters, that Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem was followed, within less than a week, by a far different scene—when the same crowd that cried, "Hosanna!" shouted, "Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him!" The world that was supposed to have gone after Him, nailed Him to the Cross, so short-lived is human popularity. So short-lived, also, is the admiration of Christ by carnal minds, for they do admire Him after a fashion, they cannot help doing so! There have been written lives of Christ which have been full of admiration of Him, yet equally full of opposition to His Deity. We must not always regard it as an encouraging sign when men praise Christ for very soon, if the root of the matter is not in them and they do not accept Him as their Lord and Master, they will change their note and instead of, "Hosanna!" it will be, "Away with Him, crucify Him!"

20, 21. *And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast: the same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired Him, saying, Sir we would see Jesus.* I do not know why these Greeks went to Philip, who was of Bethsaida of Galilee, unless it was because he had a Greek name. Yet Andrew and Peter also had Greek names. If I went to Paris and wanted to see the President, and knew that there was somebody in the cabinet who had an English name, I would probably say, "Well, either he is an Englishman, or he comes of English parentage, so he may take an interest in me and get me the introduction I want." Perhaps that was the reason why these Greeks came to Philip. I cannot think of any other, but I know that if you want to get to Christ, you will always find some way of doing it—and that the reason why so many people do not get to Him is because they do not want to! You may all come to Jesus Christ if you will. But, alas, until His Grace controls it and changes it, your will inclines you to go still further away from Christ rather than to come to Him.

22. *Philip came and told Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip told Jesus.* Andrew and Philip appear to have been staunch friends and fellow laborers—and it is always well when Christian men can work for Christ

with congenial companions. My poor perplexed Brother, if you cannot get to Jesus Christ by yourself, it will be a good thing for you to say to some Philip, "Sir, I would see Jesus." Perhaps Philip will tell his friend, Andrew, and then Philip and Andrew will go together and tell Jesus, and so you will get to Him! It is a great help in prayer, when you are yourself unable to pray, to get someone whom you know to be a Christian, and who has sympathy with you, to come and pray with you.

23, 24. *And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified. Verily, verily—"Amen, amen."*

24, 25. *I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone: but if it dies, it brings forth much fruit. He that loves His life shall lose it.* Or, as it should be rendered, "He that loves his life loses it." That is not the true way to live—and in his selfish attempt to live to himself, he is losing his life.

25, 26. *And he that hates his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serves Me, let him follow Me.* The best service you can render to Christ is to imitate Him. If you want to do what will please Him—do as He did!

26. *And where I am, there shall also My servant be.* You cannot expect better lodgings than that! So, as Christ had to live here amid sorrow, sin and shame, you must be willing to do the same. But, as Christ was afterwards exalted to indescribable honor, so shall it be with you if you are His true servant!

26. *If any man serves Me, My Father will honor him.* For such is the Father's love to His Son, that He delights to honor all those who become His Son's faithful servants!

27. *Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour.* There was a conflict in the Savior's heart—the weakness of His true Manhood—striving with the strength of His Infinite affection to His people, and also to His Father. We must never forget that "He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." If it had been no pain to Him to die as the Substitute for sinners, there would have been no atoning Sacrifice in His death. And if no dread had overtaken Him at the thought of death, it would have proved that He did not die as we do and, therefore, He would not have been able to take our place as He did. Notice how the Savior speaks of the struggle that was going on in His soul. "What shall I say?" Do you ever have to ask that question when you are trying to pray? If so, do not be astonished, for even your Lord and Master said the same. "What shall I say?"—as if He paused to consider what form His prayer should take—"shall I say, Father save Me from this hour? No, but I will say, For this cause came I unto this hour."

28. *Father, glorify Your name.* That is a grand answer to the Savior's question, "What shall I say?" And when you do not know how to pray, you may always present that petition, "Father, glorify Your name." You have some dear one at home very ill—you would be glad if the precious life might be spared, yet you are not sure whether you may ask for it. Well then, say, "Father, glorify Your name." Possibly you are passing

through a great trial and you would be glad to escape from it—yet you do not know whether it is the Divine will that you should do so. Well then, you may, at any rate, put up this prayer, “Father, glorify Your name. Whatever is most for Your Glory, let that be my will as it is Your will.”

28 *Then came there a voice from Heaven. An audible voice, for those who stood by could hear it—“There came a voice from Heaven.”*

28-30. *Saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again. The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered. Others said, An angel spoke to Him. Jesus answered and said, This Voice came not because of Me, but for your sakes. “You needed to be strengthened as to the Divine Character and authority of My mission. You required to be comforted with the full assurance that I shall, indeed, be glorifying My Father even when I die upon the Cross of Calvary.”*

31. *Now is the judgment of this world.* This is a wonderful sentence—as if, in Christ’s death, the world was judged and condemned! And so it was. Nothing ever so convicted the world of high treason against God as when men said of the Lord Jesus Christ, God’s well-beloved Son, “This is the Heir. Come, let us kill Him, and the inheritance shall be ours.” The shedding of the blood of Christ upon the Cross is the crimson evidence of the deep transgression of human nature! “Now is the judgment of this world.” There is another rendering of this text, retaining the Greek word, “Now is the *crisis* of this world.” [See Sermon No. 2338, Volume 39—*THE CRISIS OF THIS WORLD*—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

31. *Now shall the prince of this world be cast out.* Thank God for that! His throne was shaken to its fall when Christ died on Calvary. All the powers of darkness suffered eternal defeat in the hour that men and devils fancied they had gained the victory.

32, 33. *And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me. This He said, signifying what death He should die.* Yet they did not understand it, even then, clear as it now appears to us that He spoke concerning His lifting up upon the Cross.

34-36. *The people answered Him, We have heard out of the Law that Christ abides forever: and how say You, The Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man? Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walks in darkness knows not where he goes. While you have light, believe in the light, that you may be the children of light. These things spoke Jesus, and departed, and did hide Himself from them.*

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

THE RULE AND REWARD OF SERVING CHRIST NO. 2449

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,
JANUARY 26, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 27, 1889.**

*“If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me, and where I am
there My servant will be also:
if anyone serves Me, him will My Father honor.”
John 12:26.*

THIS verse is all about serving and service. Three times over you get the word, “serve,” or, “servant.” Each clause of our text has in it a part of the verb, “to serve.” You cannot have Christ if you will not serve Him! If you take Christ, you must take Him in all His Characters, not only as Friend, but also as Master. And if you are to become His disciple, you must also become His servant. I hope that no one here kicks against that Truth of God! Surely it is one of our highest delights on earth to serve our Lord and this is to be our blessed employment even in Heaven, itself—“His servants shall serve Him: and they shall see His face.”

This thought also enters into our idea of salvation. To be saved means that we are rescued from the slavery of sin and brought into the delightful liberty of the servants of God. O Master, You are such a glorious Lord that serving You is perfect freedom and sweetest rest! You have told us that it would be so and we have found it so. “Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls.” We do find it so and it is not as though rest were a separate thing from service—the very service, itself, becomes rest to our souls! I know not how some of us would have any rest on earth if we could not employ our daily lives in the service of Christ! And the rest of Heaven is never to be pictured as idleness, but as constantly being permitted the high privilege of serving the Lord.

Learn, then, all of you who would have Christ as your Savior, that you must be willing *to serve Him*. We are not saved *by* service, but we are saved *to* service. When we are once saved, from then on we live in the service of our Lord. If we refuse to be His servants, we are not saved, for we still remain evidently the servants of self and the servants of Satan. Holiness is another name for salvation—to be delivered from the power of self-will, the domination of evil lusts and the tyranny of Satan—this is salvation. Those who would be saved must know that they will have to serve Christ—and those who are saved rejoice that they are serving Him and that thus they are giving evidence of a change of heart and renewal of mind! Come, Beloved, and when the text says, “If anyone serves Me,”

let each of us read his own name, there, and let us say, "Yes, I would serve the Lord Jesus Christ."

If we cannot read our own name there as yet, let us pray God that we may first believe in Jesus unto eternal life and then, receiving that eternal life, may spend the full force and strength of it in His service! I hope that I am addressing a large number of those who are working together with God, who have said concerning their great King as Ittai said to David, "Surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there, also, will your servant be." You have taken up Christ's Cross—it has become a delightful burden to you—and you wish to bear it after Jesus as long as you live. May you be helped in that desire by the consideration of the passage before us!

First, here is *the rule of service*—"If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me." Secondly, here is *the fellowship of service*—"Where I am, there My servant will be also." And thirdly, here is *the reward of service*—"If anyone serves Me, him will my Father honor."

I. First, dear Friends, here is THE RULE OF SERVICE—"If anyone serves Me, let him *follow Me*."

So you are proposing to yourself that you will serve Christ, are you? You are a young man. As yet you have plenty of vigor and strength and you say to yourself, "I will serve Christ in some remarkable way! I will seek to make myself a scholar. I will try to learn the art of oratory and I will, in some way or other, glorify my Lord's name by the splendor of my language." Will you, dear Friend? Is it not better, if you are going to serve Christ, to ask Him what He would like you to do? If you wished to do a kindness for a friend, you certainly would desire to know what would best please that friend, or else your kindness might be mistaken and you might be doing that which would grieve rather than gratify! Now listen. Your Lord and Master does not bid you become either a scholar or an orator in order to serve Him. Both of those things may happen to fall to your lot in that path of duty which He would have you to take, but first of all He says, "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me."

This is what Christ prefers beyond anything else—that His servants should follow Him. If we do that, we shall serve Him in the way which is according to His own choice. I notice that many good friends desire to serve Christ by standing on the top rung of the ladder. You cannot get there at one step, young man! Your better way will be to serve Christ by following Him, by, "doing the next thing," the thing you can do—that little simple business which lies within your capacity which will bring you no special honor, but which, nevertheless, is what your Lord desires of you. In effect, you can hear Him say to you, "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me, not by aiming at great things, but by doing just that piece of work that I put before Him at the time." "Do you seek great things for yourself?" said the Prophet Jeremiah to Baruch, "seek them not." So say I to you.

One friend here, perhaps, blessed with great riches, is saying to himself or herself, "I will lay by in store until I acquire a considerable amount and then build a row of almshouses for the poor. I will give very largely to some new foreign missionary effort, or I will build a House of Prayer in which Christ's name shall be preached." God forbid that I should stop

you in any right design whatever! Still, if you would do what is absolutely certain to please Christ, I would not recommend the selection of any one particular objective, but I would advise you to do just this—follow Him, remembering that He said, “If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me.” You will, by simply going behind your Master, following His footsteps and being truly His disciple, do that which would please Him more than if you could endow His cause with a whole mint of riches. This is what He selects as the choicest proof of your love, the highest testimony of your regard—“If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me.”

What, then, does the Savior mean by bidding us render to Him our best service by *following* Him? I would say, first, I understand by these words that we are to follow Christ by *believing His doctrine*. Our Lord says, practically, “If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me as Teacher. Let him sit at My feet. Let him learn of Me.” Some seem to fancy that they can serve Christ by striking out a new line of thought. My dear Sir, if you do that, you will serve *yourself*, but you will not serve Christ! He has come to be the Teacher of the glorious Gospel of the blessed God and it is only by teaching the Truths which He has made known, and by publishing the message which He has revealed, that you can really be His servant. Suppose you have a man to be your servant at home—say, your gardener. He is a very industrious man, indeed, and works very hard. But when you walk round your garden, you do not see him, and for a very good reason, for he is not there. Where is he? He is at work in your *neighbor’s* garden! Of course you love your neighbor as yourself, so you are pleased to think that your servant is working on behalf of your neighbor.

You smile, do you? I think you say to yourself, “That is a kind of servant that I should not care to keep. If he worked for somebody else all day long, in the time for which I paid him, I would not want him as *my* servant.” Well now, if I, as a Christian minister, become a teacher of philosophy instead of a preacher of the Truths of the Gospel. If I receive into my mind some of the novel views that abound in the present day—which are not the views that are revealed in the Scriptures—then Christ is not my Master and I am not His disciple! I am a follower of somebody else. If you act thus, you are *pretending* to be Christ’s *reformer*—you are attempting to make His teaching better. Impious fool! I dare not use a milder expression! You are acting as Christ’s critic! You are finding fault with the Faultless! You are trying to correct the Infallible! You had better give up such a task as that, for it is not consistent with being His disciple. He requires of you that you should become as a little child, that you may be taught by Him. His own words are, “Except you are converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.”

If you would be a servant of Christ, come to Him as a little child! Sit on the infants’ form to be taught by Him the Gospel A B C. “If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me—follow Me as My disciple, regarding Me as his Teacher to whom he bows his understanding and his entire mind, that I may fashion it according to My own will.” This is the language of our Lord and I would impress it very earnestly upon you all—and especially upon any who are beginning the Christian life. If you are to serve

Christ, put your mind like a tablet of wax under His *stylus*, that He may write on you whatever He pleases! Be you Christ's slate, that He may make His mark on you. Be His sheet of paper on which He may write His living letters of love. You can serve Him in this way in the best possible manner.

But next, I think that the text means, "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me by *obeying My commands*." A fortnight ago, we considered that most instructive text, [Sermon #2317, Volume 39—*Obeying Christ's Orders*—Read/download entire sermon at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>] "Whatever He says unto you, do it." I would bring that text to your notice, again, and ring it like a bell—"Whatever HE says unto you, do it." If you want to truly serve Christ, do not do what you suggest to yourself, but do what He commands you! Remember what Samuel said to Saul, "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." I believe that the profession of consecration to God, when it is accompanied by action that *I suggest to myself*, may be nothing but will-worship—an abomination in the sight of God! But when anyone says to the Lord, "What will You have me do? Show me, my Master, what You would have me do"—when there is a real desire to obey every command of Christ, then is there the true spirit of service and the true spirit of sonship. "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me, running at My call, following at My heels, waiting at My feet to do whatever I desire him to do."

Dear Friends, this makes life a very much simpler thing than some dream it to be. You are not to go and carve a statue out of marble by the exercise of your own genius—if that were the task set before us, the most of us would never accomplish it! But you have just to go and write according to Christ's own example, to copy His letters, the up-strokes and the down-strokes and to write exactly as He has written. The other day, I was asked to sign my name to a deed and when it was handed to me, I said, "Why, I *have* signed my name!" "Yes," said the one who brought it, "you have the very easy task of marking it all over again." Just so, in that case I followed my own writing and you have the easy task of writing after Christ, blacking over, again, the letters that He, Himself, has made, and you cannot do Him better service than this. "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; that is, let him do just what I bid Him to do."

Now, thirdly, I think that by these words our Lord means—and this is the same thing in another shape, "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me by *imitating My example*." It is always safe, dear Friends, to do what Christ would have done under the same circumstances in which you are placed. Of course you cannot imitate Christ in His miraculous work and you are not asked to imitate Him in some of those sorrowful respects in which He suffered that we might not suffer. But the ordinary life of Christ is, in every respect, an example to us. Never do what you could not suppose Christ would have done. If it strikes you that the course of action that is suggested to you would be un-Christly, then it is un-Christian, for the Christian is to be like Christ! The Christian is to be the flower growing out of the Seed, Christ, and there is always a congruity between the flower and the seed out of which it grows. Keep your eyes fixed on your heavenly Model and Pattern, and seek in all things to imitate Christ. If you want to serve Christ, repeat His life as nearly as possi-

ble in your own life. "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me by copying My example."

Once more, I think the Savior means this—"If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me by *clinging to My cause*." Cling to the cause of Christ, dear Friend. Give yourself to that Kingdom for which you are taught to pray and be ready to make any sacrifice, whatever, that you may advance and extend it. Yes, throw your whole self into the holy service of your Lord. Make the name of Christ to be more widely known and the cause of Christ to be further extended among the sons of men. Cling to the cause of Christ and so carry out His own Words, "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me."

Beloved, I believe that every Christian person should follow Christ in the waters of Baptism and, having done that, should join the Church of Christ, not so much to follow the Church, as to follow Christ. We are not to follow men, even the best of men, any farther than they follow Christ. But we must take care that we do boldly stand up as adherents of His cause, so that, if it is asked, "Who is on the Lord's side?" we may put in an appearance, directly, and avow ourselves as His followers. Are you living in a village where there is no congregation of the faithful? Then let it be known that you are on the Lord's side—and do your best to open a place where Christ can be preached. Do you live down some dark part of this city where nobody goes to a place of worship? Such places are, alas, very common in this dreadful London. Then, be sure that you go to the House of God and your very going there will be a form of serving Christ, for others will see that you, at least, take a decided step and join in public worship with the avowed followers of Christ.

If you would really serve Christ, come right out from the world and say, "Let others do as they will. As for me and my house we belong to Christ and we will never hide our colors. We will bind the scarlet thread in the window and we will let all who come by this way understand that here live those who have been redeemed with precious blood and who, therefore, cannot—*dare not* and *will not* conceal the gracious fact!" "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me by taking up My cause and working for it with all his heart."

I hope that I do not need to dwell any longer on this point. You all see that the way in which to serve Christ is not a visionary one. You do not need to run away from your father and mother and leave your home and friends. You do not need to go away to the natives in Africa in order to serve Christ. It is not the getting of some idle speculation in your own brain—and working that out according to your own whims and fancies that constitutes service of Christ! It is simply this—if any man will *serve* Christ, let him *follow* Christ. Let him put his foot down as nearly as he can where Christ put His foot down. Let Him tread in Christ's steps, be moved by His Spirit, actuated by His motives, live with His aim and copy His actions. This is the noblest way in which to serve the Lord.

II. Now secondly, and briefly, let us notice THE FELLOWSHIP OF SERVICE—"If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also." I do not know any other master but Christ who ever said that. There are some places where an earthly master does not want his servant to be—he must have some room to himself and some

engagements which he cannot explain to his servant—and into which his servant must not pry. But the Lord Jesus Christ makes this the glorious privilege of everyone who enters His service that, where He is, there shall His servant be!

And where is He, I pray? He is in Heaven and we cannot go to Him, there, until He calls us Home. But where is He? Where was He when He spoke these words? He was, first, *in the place of consecration*. The Lord Jesus Christ stood before the Father a consecrated Man. All that there was in Him was dedicated to the Glory of God. Now, go and serve Him by following Him, and He will put you into the place of dedication, consecration, sanctification! You desire to be holy? Well, you will never attain to holiness simply by lying in bed—get up and work for Jesus if you are able to do so! And you cannot get holiness merely by studying books—serve your Lord and serve Him especially by following Him! It is in the sacred process of active obedience, or of passive obedience, that we get the consecration which is not to be found, as some think, by merely willing it and talking of it, but which grows out of holy *service*.

As rivers, when they take up sewage, are said to drop it as they flow and purify themselves as they run, so, assuredly, it is with a Believer as he flows on in his Christian course. God blessing him, he drops much of the earthiness which he has taken up in his progress through life and, by the very motion, he seems to purify himself, refining as he runs. I notice that people who have nothing to do but to sit and stare into the black hole of their own nature are generally very sad and not often very virtuous. But they who, knowing how dark and sinful their nature is, trust Jesus for salvation, and then spend their lives in doing the will of the Lord—these are they who are both holy and happy!

But where is Christ?—for He says, “Where I am, there My servant will be also.” He is and always was *in the place of communion with God*. He was always near to His Father. He often spoke with God. He always had the joy of God filling His spirit. And you, perhaps are saying to yourself, “I wish that I had communion with God.” Well, through Jesus Christ it is to be had by serving Him in that particular kind of service which consists in following Him! If you want to walk with God, why, of course, you must *walk!* If you sit down in idleness, you cannot walk with Him—and if you do not keep up a good brisk pace, He will walk on in front of you and leave you behind, for the Lord is no laggard in His walking. Therefore, you see, there must be diligent progress and activity in service in order that we may keep pace with Him and have communion with Him. And if we act thus, here, He has promised that we shall be in the place of communion with our blessed Master.

Further than this, our Lord Jesus Christ was *in the place of confidence*. Whenever Christ went to work, He worked with assurance. He never had a doubt as to His ultimate success. No haphazard work ever came from Christ’s hands. He spoke with certainty and He worked with the full assurance that His labor would not be in vain. If you want to have confidence in your work for Christ, so as to perform it without any doubts and fears, you will have to obtain it by serving Him—and serve Him by following Him. And then, into that hallowed place of confidence where your Master always stood, there shall you also come.

Our Lord stood, too, *in the place of holy calm*. How unruffled He was at all times! His was a life of storms, yet a life of peace. All around Him moved, but He was the Rock of Ages and never moved. Would you not like to be calm as Christ was, to dwell with Him on the serene heights while the tempests roll and thunder far below your feet? Well, then, serve Him by following Him and, as you do so, the promise of the text shall be fulfilled to you, “Where I am, there My servant will be also.”

And oh, blessed be His name! He has actually gone *into the place of conquest and victory in the eternal world!* And you and I shall be there with Him in His own good time. “Where I am, there My servant will be also.” Count it no dishonor to be servants when this high favor is promised you, that where your Master is, there you shall be also! I have sometimes thought that if I could get into Heaven somewhere behind the door, and just sit there, I would be perfectly satisfied. But far more than that is promised to us! Wherever Christ is, there shall we be! If He is on a Throne, we shall be enthroned, too, and, if He is at the Father’s right hand, we shall be at the Father’s right hand, for He has promised, “Where I am, there My servant will be also.” You need not to know much about Heaven—it is where Christ is, and that is Heaven enough for us! If we could once go into the courts above and ask, “Is my Lord Jesus here?” and they should answer, “No, He is not here,” it would be no Heaven to us, would it? We would want to go outside the city walls and cry, “Show me where He is.”

But suppose it possible for us to be in the very lowest room of Heaven, where the glories were veiled, as it were—if such a place could be—and if we could hear one truly say, “There He is,” its glories would not be any longer veiled and we should need no higher Heaven than that! As soon as ever we saw Him, we would say, as our Friend did in prayer, “He is all the Heaven we want to know.” Remember that blessed verse we had in our reading, “Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My Glory”?

This, then, is the great fellowship of holy service—who would not be a servant of Christ?

III. Now, as our time is nearly spent, I must speak but briefly upon THE REWARD OF SERVICE, upon which I have already entrenched —“If anyone serves Me, him will My Father honor.”

It is very sweet to notice how the Lord Jesus brings His Father into His speech. It is as if He said, “When a man joins himself to Me, then he joins himself to My Father, also. It is not only I who will love him and do My best to honor him, but My Father, the great and ever-blessed Lord over all, keeps an eye on that man.” On whom does He look with this gaze of approval? Not on those who have some grand project of serving *themselves*, but on those who serve Christ and who do it by following Him! Come, dear people of God, you are, many of you, very poor, yet I know that many of you are seeking to serve Christ by following Him. Some of God’s dear servants here are not great speakers—they are very quiet, humble Christians—but they are trying to do what Christ would do if He were in their position. If this is your case, dear Friends, you are honoring your Lord and the Father, Himself, looks approvingly upon you!

“If anyone serves Me,” says our Lord, “him will My Father honor.” How will He do it? Well, He will honor him *by letting him know his sonship*. Because Jesus always pleased the Father, the Father bares witness to Him, saying, “This is My beloved Son.” And if you serve Christ by following Him, the Father will often bear witness in your heart and say, “This, also, is My beloved son, in whom I am well pleased.” He will often cause the Spirit of adoption to renew the witness in your heart so that you will cry, “Abba, Father,” and He will acknowledge the kindred. Surely, there is no greater honor than for God to acknowledge you as His son!

Next, He will honor you *by giving you a sense of approval*. You know what that means. I will tell you when it is very sweet. You have been doing something for Christ. You have done it with all your heart and some friend picks holes in it—and someone not quite so much a friend and who, therefore, cannot so sorely wound you—begins to impute wrong motives and to judge you for having come down to the battle because of the pride and the naughtiness of your heart. Well, you lose a friend and you get a double number of enemies round about you. Yet in your heart you feel that you did it only for Christ. Well, then, at such a time it is delightful to have a sense of the approbation of God such as you never had when you had the approbation of men!

Sometimes when even Christian people cry, “Well done, well done,” the Lord says, “That is quite enough praise for him. I shall not give him *My*, ‘Well done.’” But when you get no, “Well done,” from men and, on the contrary, are misunderstood and misrepresented, then the Lord comes and puts His hand upon you and says, “Be strong, fear not, I have accepted your service. I know your motive and I approve your action. Be not afraid of them, but go your way.” Ah, Beloved! Such approval as that is the highest honor we can have here! “If anyone serves Me,” says Christ, “him will My Father honor” with a sense of sonship and with a sense of approbation.

If any man serves Christ there is another kind of honor that often comes to him, and it is not to be despised. If a man will serve Christ by following Him, *the Father will give him honor in the eyes of the blood-bought family*. There are certain of the Lord’s people who do not carry yardsticks with them, but they carry scales and weights. And if they do not measure by quantity, they measure by quality—their approval is worth having. They are often the poorest and most afflicted members of the Church, but, being the most instructed and living the nearest to God, to be had in honor of them is a thing worth having! I believe that if any man will live the life of a Christian, however few his talents, and if his service lies in close obedience and imitation of Christ, the real saints, not the mere professors, especially not the shining worldly ones among them, but real saints will say, “That is the man for us! That is the woman with whom we like to converse.” Thus it comes to pass that those who really serve the Lord by following Him have honor in the estimation of those who sit at meat with them at their Lord’s Table.

And then, at last, when we come to die, or when we stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ, or when we enter upon the eternal state, *what a glorious thing it will be to find the Father ready to honor us forever because we served the Son!* Our reward will not be of debt, but of Divine

Grace—it is Grace that *gave us the service* and Grace that will reward us for our service! No man and no woman shall serve the Lord Jesus Christ here on earth by following Him without finding that the Father has some special honor, some rich and rare reward, to give to such soldiers in due time! This is the fighting day—expect nothing now but bullets, bruises, wounds, scars! But the battle will soon be over and when the war is ended, the King will come and ride up and down the ranks—and in that day you who have been most battered and most wounded in the battle shall find Him pause when He reaches you—and He will fasten on your breast a star that shall be more honor to you than all the Victoria Crosses that have decorated brave men here below! Stars and garters they may have who want them, but blessed are they who shall shine as the stars in the Kingdom of our Father! And this honor is to be had by that Believer who will faithfully serve His Lord—not by any who merely talk about it, or dream of it, or propose to do it—but to those who serve Him by following Him, this honor shall be given.

I have preached all this to God's people, but I have not said anything to you who are not His people. I cannot invite you to His service as you are—how can you serve Him while you are His enemies? I do not invite you unconverted people to work for God. Oh, no! He wants no such servants as you are! He will not have rebels in His host. First bow your knee in submission, lay down the weapons of your rebellion—then fly to Christ for mercy! Trust in Him for forgiveness and then, but not till then, you may come and serve Him, and follow Him, and expect that His Father will honor you as He has promised. God bless you, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—625, 262, 785.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

JOHN 17.

This chapter contains the marvelous prayer of our Great High Priest. May the Holy Spirit apply its teaching to our hearts as we read it!

Verse 1. *These words spoke Jesus, and lifted up His eyes to Heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You.* The great design of Christ, all through His life on earth, was to glorify the Father. He came to save His people, but that was not His first or His chief aim. It was His objective, through the salvation of myriads of the sons of men, to glorify the Father.

2. *As You have given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.* Here we have both the universality and the specialty of the work of Divine Mercy. Christ has power over all flesh—men are in the power of the one Mediator, but there is this special objective ever before Him—“that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.”

3. *And this is life eternal, that they might know You the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent.* This does not mean mere head-knowledge, but to know in the *heart and soul* the one only true God and Jesus Christ who was sent of Him to the sons of men, “this is life eternal.” God without Christ brings not eternal life, and Christ, if He were

not sent of God, would not bring eternal life to us, but knowing God in Christ Jesus is eternal life.

4. *I have glorified You on the earth: I have finished the work which You gave Me to do.* Here our Savior speaks by anticipation. He foresaw that He would pass through His passion, that all the work of His people's redemption would be fully accomplished. And in this, His final prayer on earth to the Father, He could truly say, "I have finished the work which You gave Me to do." May you and I be able to say the same when we depart out of this world! Not boastingly—there was no boasting in our Lord—but truthfully, conscientiously—from the bottom of our heart may each one of us be able to say, "I have finished the work which You gave me to do"!

5. *And now, O Father, glorify You Me with Your own Self with the Glory which I had with You before the world was.* After the finished work, Christ was to have the Glory. O worker for God, seek not glory before your work is done! Expect not honor among men because you have begun the work so earnestly. Plod on until it is finished, then shall the glory come. "Verily I say unto you, they have their reward," said our Lord concerning the scribes and Pharisees who sought the praise of men. But you have not your reward at present—it is yet to come. Wait for it, for it is sure to come.

6. *I have manifested Your name unto the men which You gave Me out of the world: Yours they were, and You gave them to Me; and they have kept Your Word.* How tenderly He speaks about them! He says the best He can of them. They were faulty, feeble folk, but He says, "They have kept Your Word." So they did. Oh, that you and I may do the same, and not be swept away by the drift of the current of unbelief! If we are not perfect. If we fail in some respects, yet may the Muster be able to say of us to God, "They have kept Your Word"!

7. *Now they have known that all things whatever You have given Me are of You.* How the blessed Christ loves to lay aside all honor to Himself even in His own Gospel! He said that the things which He had taught to His disciples were not His own—they were the Father's. The Father always honors the Son and the Son takes care to always honor the Father.

8-10. *For I have given unto them the Words which You gave Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came from You, and they have believed that You did send Me. I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which You have given Me; for they are Yours. And all Mine are Yours and Yours are Mine; and I am glorified in them.* Every true child of God glorifies Christ! And if you cannot say that you are glorifying Christ, you should question whether you really belong to Him. If you are His, it is true of you, "I am glorified in them"—not only *by* them, but *in* them—"their suffering with patience, in their laboring with diligence, in their faith, in their trustfulness in Me, I am glorified in them."

11. *And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world—*We also know that we, too, are in the world. We have good reason to feel it and sometimes to mourn it.

11. *And I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your own name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one, as We are.* When God

keeps us, He keeps us in unity—our divisions are not the result of His work. When we get away from His keeping and get away from His Word, then we are sundered in heart from Him and from one another. But by His keeping He keeps His children one.

12. *While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name: those that You gave Me I have kept, and none of them is lost but the son of perdition; that the Scripture might be fulfilled.* The Scripture was fulfilled in the preservation of His own—and also fulfilled in the destruction of the traitor. God’s Word will always be fulfilled. Oh, that it may be to us a savor of life unto life, that we may be kept by it and not a savor of death unto death, as it was to Judas, who was blinded by the very Light of God that shone upon him! That fierce Light that beat about the King of Kings fell on him and it blinded him eternally. God save us from such an awful doom as that!

13. *And now come I to You.* I can only read you this wonderful chapter, but what must it have been to have *heard* it! I think I see the look on the Savior’s face as He says to His Father, “And now come I to You.” May something like that look be on your faces, my Beloved, when your last moments come! Looking away from your dear ones whom you must leave as Jesus left His disciples, may you, each one, be able to say, “And now come I to You”!

13. *And these things I speak in the world, that they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves.* While He drained the cup of sorrow to the dregs and went forward to all the agonies of the cruel Cross, He wanted His disciples to have His joy fulfilled in them, that they might be filled full with His joy.

14. *I have given them Your Word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.* This does not look like trying to please the world, to adapt our method to the spirit of the age, to come as near to the world as ever we can, to dabble in its politics and join in its schemes! This has, to me, a very different tone in it from all that!

15. *I pray not that You should take them out of the world—*Christ and His people did not go together out of the world all at once. That would have been to leave the world in an utterly forlorn condition without any help whatever! So He says to His Father, “I pray not that You should take them out of the world.”

15-16. *But that You should keep them from the Evil One. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.* You cannot make Christ a worldling. Do what You will with His Character—twist it as you like—you must see that there is something unworldly, otherworldly about Him. So let it always be with His people.

17. *Sanctify them through Your Truth: Your Word is Truth.* Thank God for that—“Your Word is Truth.” Not, “Your Word contains the Truth with a mixture of error.” Or, “Your Word has some Truth in it.” No, but, “Your Word is Truth.” Not only is it true, but it is Truth, the very essential Truth of God!

18, 19. *As You have sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself—*“I separate My-

self to this work, I dedicate, devote, consecrate Myself wholly for their sakes.”

19-20. *That they, also, might be sanctified through the Truth. Neither pray I for these alone—*This little handful of disciples who had been gathered to His name—

20. *But for them, also, which shall believe on Me through their word.* Thank God that He will bless our word as well as His own Word! When our word is based upon His Word—when we do but expound what Christ has given us to say—then men shall believe on Him through our word!

21-23. *That they all may be one; as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they, also, may be one in Us: that the world may believe that You have sent Me. And the Glory which You gave Me, I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are one: I in them, and You in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.* This is a wonderful expression. Does the Father love His people as He loves Christ? Then His love to them must be without beginning, without change, without measure, without end! Oh, it would ravish your heart, it would carry you away to the very Heaven of heavens if you could get the full meaning of this expression, “and have loved them as You have loved Me”!

24. *Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My Glory, which You have given Me: for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.* This is Christ’s last will and testament—“Father, I will.” It is not merely His prayer, but He makes this as one clause in His will, that all whom the Father gave Him should be with Him to behold His Glory. And it will be so, Beloved. He will not lose one of His own. He will never drop from those dear pierced hands any portion of the eternal gift of His Father!

25, 26. *O righteous Father, the world has not known You: but I have known You, and these have known that You have sent Me. And I have declared unto them Your name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith You have loved Me may be in them, and I in them.* Here the doctrine becomes a matter of experience! May we never rest till we get the full experience of it, that the very love which God gives to Christ may be found in our hearts shed abroad by the Holy Spirit! Amen.

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THE CHRISTIAN'S SERVICE AND HONOR NO. 2651

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, DECEMBER 3, 1899.

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

*"If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor."
John 12:26.*

FEW men love service. Man prefers to be his own master, to do as he pleases according to "his own sweet will" and, like the winds, to be under no control whatever. But he who spurns the counsel of God, despises His Law and tramples on His commands, commits an act of suicide to his own liberty! Those who act thus, while they seek to be free, become the truest slaves, for, when they give a loose rein to their lusts, they find them like wild horses dragging them irresistibly along. Passions indulged turn into *habits*—and those habits hold them fast in their iron grip and they cease to be free any longer. He is the freeman who serves God and not the man who scorns the yoke of Jesus. He is the freeman whose shoulders bear the yoke of Christ. But he who refuses to serve Him is a slave. He who will not obey Jesus, obeys a tyrant master called Satan, or worse still, himself, for, after all, the greatest tyrant to a man is his own sinful self! There is no slavery harder to endure than the despotism of evil habits when they have grown strong upon a man and fixed their chains upon his neck. The service of Jesus is perfect liberty—those who wear the collar of Jesus find it to be a royal badge which makes them far more honorable than would the Order of the Garter, or the Bath. There is nothing that can so exalt a man as to make him a servant of Jesus! And the man who bends his neck willingly to serve Him, manifests the greatest wisdom.

What is it to serve Jesus? The text says, "If anyone serve Me, him My Father will honor." Well, we can serve Him *in the faith that we hold, in the sufferings we endure and very much in the acts we perform.*

First, we can serve Him in the faith that we hold. This is true service. I believe certain Doctrines of God because God says they are true—and the only authority I have for their truth is the Word of God. I receive such-and-such Doctrines, not because I can prove them to be compatible with reason—not because my judgment accepts them—but because God says they are true! Now this is one of the best services we can render to God—to submit ourselves to Him in our belief of what He has revealed and ask Him to fix His Truths in our hearts and make us obey them. There are some who have an idea that doctrinal belief is nothing, but I tell you again, one of the highest services we can render to God is to fully believe

in the Doctrines of His Word. So far from doctrinal error being a thing of no moment, it is a great *sin* because the Word of God is plain—and he who does not, by searching, discover the Truth—sins against God in the proportion in which he errs from His Word. But he who manfully proclaims the whole Truth of God and he who heartily receives it, alike, obey God and perform one of the highest services that can be rendered to the Most High!

Secondly, we honor Him, also, *when we suffer for His name's sake*. When, with patience, we bear the fires of persecution. When, with calmness and resignation, we listen to the lies and calumnies that fly abroad. When we continue in well-doing though all manner of evil is said against us on account of our devotion to Jesus, then we serve Him and God is thereby honored and glorified. Our Lord Jesus bids us, in that day, rejoice and leap for joy, for great is our reward in Heaven, for so persecuted they the Prophets who were before us. And, moreover, when our suffering does not spring from our enemies, but when God, Himself, lays us on the bed of affliction, we honor Him when, worn with pain and tossed from side to side, we are calm and patient under the sickness and say—

***“Father, I wait Your daily will—
You shall divide my portion still.
Grant me on earth what seems to You best,
Till death and Heaven reveal the rest.”***

The patient bearing of poverty is a service to God. The calm endurance of pain is honoring the Father—submission to His will in all the proceedings of His Providence is the very essence of devotion.

Thirdly, *we can serve God in the outward acts we perform*. And that is the highest form of service. Indeed, if we do not serve God thus, we do not really serve Him at all. “If anyone serve Me, him My Father will honor,” says Christ. And, in proportion as a Christian man serves God in his outward life and conversation, shall he receive honor of God. There are two or three ways of doing that. Some may serve God by the performance of *ecclesiastical duties*, as they are called. Others, *by the more private duties of religion*. But others, and more frequently, by the acts of daily life. Those who preach the Gospel from love to God and for His Glory, serve Him, and shall be honored in their labor. The deacon who toils for the Church of God is serving Him, and shall be blessed in what he does. The Sunday school teacher serves God. And each of you who have been preaching in the open air, or have, in smaller places of worship, been testifying to the Truth of God and now have come here to take the rest which all tired soldiers need—each of you who have been engaged in humbler work, teaching a little class, or giving away a tract—you have each and all, in some measure, served God!

But if you have not served God in this way, today, you can serve God tomorrow in your shop, or in your family. The servant can honor God even when she sets the things out for the daily meal and when she clears them away. The nurse can serve God when, with tender hands, she binds up the wounds of the distressed and suffering. And the merchant, also, when he makes honesty the law of his dealings and afterwards, with a liberal hand, dispenses some of his goods to feed the poor. Do not think

it is necessary to be a clergyman and wear a gown in order to serve God—you may serve Him behind the counter, at the plow, or driving your horses! Whatever your hand finds to do may be done to the Glory of God! Common actions reveal the essence of true piety. Those things which we call common, God does not think so. When they are done with a right motive and in a right spirit, they become as great, in God's sight, as the sermons of the minister who preaches to the largest audience! And I take it that there will be people before the Throne of God, who, for acts which they have done in private, will be stationed nearer to the Savior than some of those who occupied very high positions in the Church! They went foremost in the day of battle and received great applause from men, yet, God knows that they were not one-half so faithful to their Savior as the poorest cottager, or the meanest peasant who, for the good of souls, and the Glory of God, bent his knees before the Lord in earnest and believing supplication.

I cannot enlarge upon these points. You must think over them when you get home. You may serve God in the belief of His Doctrines, in suffering the dispensations of His Providence and in obeying all His Commandments, not forgetting the Commandment concerning Believers' Baptism. Now I come to the subject of my discourse, in our Savior's declaration—"If anyone serve Me, him My Father will honor," from which I learn that *God will honor him in this world, in the future and intermediate state, at the Day of Judgment and throughout eternity!*

I. GOD THE FATHER WILL, EVEN IN THIS WORLD, HONOR THE MAN WHO SERVES THE SAVIOR!

Some of you look at me with astonishment and are ready to say, "That is not true! God does not, as a rule, honor His servants in this world. It is a notorious fact that those who serve God best receive the most dishonor in this world, that those who are the most valiant for the Truth of God are called upon to endure the largest share of ignominy! Instead of the greatest honor, they have the most of the world's hisses, derision and scorn." Yes, I know that "the friendship of the world is enmity with God" and that if any man will be a friend of God, he will generally be an enemy to this world. But yet, for all that, the servants of Christ *do receive respect and reverence even in this time-state.*

I remark, first, that *Christ's servants receive honor in the Church.* Any man who serves God faithfully will be sure to be honored by the Lord's true servants. Let him preach the Truth fearlessly, fully, earnestly and heartily, and he need not be afraid that he shall not be honored by his Brothers of the Church, for the good will assuredly rally round him and not be backward in showing respect to him. Nor, if he toils in the Sunday school, shall he be without honor. Nor will he lack it, if he is but a humble member of the Church, if he is only seeking to glorify his Lord. Just in proportion as each one serves God will he be honored!

I deny the statement which is made, sometimes, that honor is not given to those members of Churches who do not happen to occupy what is called a "respectable position in society." I believe that if an examination were to be made into the conduct of the affairs of this Church, for

example, it would be proved that the greatest honor is given to those who work most for God. There are, I am sure, some of our members to whom we all look up with respect and reverence, though they are not men of position or wealth. But they have something more and something better—they have the love of God in their hearts and they manifest the effect of that love in their lives—and that makes them most honorable! And putting this Church as the representative of all Christian Churches in this matter, I may say that the poor man, in his efforts to do good, will be honored equally with the rich! No distinction is made by God on account of rank or estate, but each one is honored according as he loves and serves the Savior. If respect is shown to the rich as well as to the poor—and why should the poor be honored and the rich despised?—it is not because of his worldly wealth, but because he is also rich in faith! A rich man's soul is as good as the poor man's, and the poor man's soul is as good as that of the rich—and when the poor man labors for Jesus as well as the rich man, they will alike receive honor!

I believe it is so among us here and trust that it will continue to be so in all time to come. At any rate, as long as this arm can strike a blow against the spirit of social bigotry, it shall be driven from our midst! We do not admit any thought of caste among us and I am constrained to believe that the general practice, in all our Churches, is to reverence men according to their *usefulness*. Do not imagine, then, that you are debarred from any position in the Church, or from any of the honors of your Brethren because you do not happen to be rich. The Church will honor those who serve the Lord and so will God, Himself, for Jesus said, "If anyone serve Me, him My Father will honor."

But, next, *those who serve Christ will also receive honor from the world*. The world itself honors the Christian. You say, "How can that be? I am the subject of the laughs, the jeers and the ridicule from morning to night! I am called 'a canting Methodist,' or something of that sort. And I can't think, therefore, that I am honored by the world! I feel rather that I am dishonored." But you *are* honored, after all, though it may be you do not know it. You are honored in the consciences of those very men who thus speak evil of you. Whatever they may say, in their hearts they reverence you. They may call you evil names, but they know they do not belong to you. They may call you a dog, but they believe you an angel. They may call you black, but they believe you white. Here is a proof of it—if they were to see you fall into sin, they would say directly, "He is one of your members!" Why would they say that? Because they really expect you to be holy and consistent! And it is not till they have proof of the fact that you are not so, that they can deny the respect and honor of their own consciences. An ungodly man is not to be found whose conscience would not force him, inwardly, to do you honor. Even Satan himself was obliged to admit the majesty of holiness, if, as Milton tells us—

***"Abashed the devil stood,
And felt how amazing goodness is."***

Goodness is an amazing thing to a wicked man! He sees you bear with patience what he says against you—it surprises him that you forgive injuries and it vexes his heart—he cannot understand it. There is a power

about Christianity which makes the enemy fall back, and a majesty in righteousness before which he must tremble. You need not concern yourselves about taking care of your own character before the eyes of men, but you must see that it is right before the eyes of God—if you serve Him, He will honor you!

Again, *the most wicked men will honor the Christian when they come to die*. I have known some few hardened wretches who passed out of the world as they had lived—in open rebellion against God and who, to the last, therefore, despised religion. But, generally, I have found that the scoffer changes his tone when death approaches. “Send for someone to visit me,” is his cry then! “For whom shall we send? Shall it be John, the swearer?” “Oh, no, send for John, the praying man. I should like him to pray over me. Or send for the minister.” “But why don't you ask for your old companions? You used to say that they were the jolliest fellows, they were the merriest men you ever met? You know there is no such place as Heaven or Hell, for you often said so when in their company. Many a glass have you drunk with them—why not have another before you die?” Ah, such companions as these will not do for him now! And that fact proves the honor which such a man, at last, puts upon the Christian. His language then is, “Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.” The ungodly scorn their own comrades' society and run to our camp then! They think there is something in religion when they come to die! The voice of the last enemy speaks with a tongue of iron and a sound of thunder—and makes even the most hardened conscience honor the Christian.

Once more, *the Christian man is honored after he is dead*. If you want to be thought well of and spoken of with high honor, you must die. All of us who are alive must be slandered and criticized. But when we have been a while in our graves, it may be that we shall, in our turn, be the masters! Many men are stars to the world now who were but glowworms when they were alive! While playing their part among men, they were run down, scoffed at and spoken of as everything that was bad. But they descended to the grave, a few years passed away and now, looked at from a distance, they bear a very different aspect to the general eye! Looking upon them now is like gazing at the sun—you see their brightness far more than their spots! The world misses the Christian when he is gone. Perhaps one member of a family is godly and the rest are not, and they say, “Oh, we don't care for him, he is too religious for us!” But they will feel a sad gap when he is gone—and one which they will not be able to fill. The neighborhood, too, in which he lived, will miss him because his words of kindness and deeds of mercy will be seen no more. They will say, “Well, after all, he was a good fellow.” How often have I heard that, “Ah, well, he was not so bad, after all. There are not many left so good as he was.” You don't know why this change has been worked in people's minds, but so it often is. Death embalms the poorest Believer and lays him in the sepulcher of the kings! He who was but a common Christian becomes a brilliant light when God hangs him up, like a lamp with a silver chain, to glitter from the skies!

II. GOD WILL HONOR HIM IN THE INTERMEDIATE STATE.

When a Christian dies, his soul at once ascends to Heaven. Not so his body—that continues in the grave until the Resurrection morning and, sometimes, we are anxious to know what will be our lot while our souls are separated from our bodies. Let me say then, for a certainty, according to God's Word, that before our bodies rise, we shall be in Paradise, for Jesus said to the penitent thief, "Today shall you be with Me in Paradise." There is no "purgatory" into which souls are dragged in order to be prepared and made fit for Heaven! But although they go at once to the Heaven of God, and rest in His Presence, it is not the full consummation of their bliss. They will not be satisfied till they wake up in the likeness of Christ—when body and soul will be reunited.

What are the honors which the pure spirit will receive when, freed from this tabernacle of clay, it comes before its God? The Almighty will then say, "I see My son," or, "I behold My daughter. Your spirit I loved with an everlasting love. Your name I wrote in the Covenant of Election. I sent My Son to die for you. I called you by My Grace. I led you through all the desert. I fed you by My hand. I guided you through dangers and snares into the right way and I will keep you forever. Thrice-honored servant, you have done well—enter and take your place among the spirits of the redeemed." Angels, too, are ready to attend upon the saints. A saint in Heaven will receive all the service which an angel can perform. If the archangel Michael, himself, could do the meanest service for a child of God, he would consider himself thrice honored! "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" We cannot tell what glory the saints have, even now, while their bodies are yet in the house of death and under the cold slab. Yet we know that their souls are more glorious than the angels—and more honored than the cherubim that sing incessantly before the Throne of Jehovah!

III. If any man serves the Lord Jesus Christ, HE SHALL BE HONORED IN THE GREAT DAY OF JUDGMENT.

That day is approaching. I will not attempt to describe the scene which shall be witnessed when the heavens and the earth shall flee away—and when the quick and the dead, the righteous and the ungodly shall stand before God. In the Day of Judgment, God will honor His servants from the mouths of the wicked, from the mouths of devils, from the lips of angels and from His own lips!

At the Day of Judgment, *God will honor the righteous before even the wicked themselves.* You proud monarchs, who put to death the servant of God, sending him in a fiery chariot to Heaven, how confounded will you be when the lowly martyr, on whom you wreaked your vengeance, shall stand before you and say, "Tyrant, I suffered for the Truth's sake at your hands." And what shall the lordly cardinal say, then, and the wicked priest who put to death, when they had the power, the men who would not forsake the Truth of God and do violence to their consciences, even though fire and torture had to be endured in consequence of their loyalty to their Savior? And how will the ungodly look the righteous in

the face? How will the hardened sinner feel when he has to confront that man of God whom he stretched upon the rack? How will *he* tremble who was the unjust judge who signed his death warrant? The Christian will then be able to point out his persecutors and the entire universe will regard them with disdain. "That is the man," he will say, "who stretched me on the rack! That is the man who cast me into prison! Yon wretched men chained me to the stake and that man brought forth the fire and firewood which consumed me."

But how honored is the martyr now! He is arrayed in robes more glorious, though not more white, than others can wear—garments more studded with jewels, though not more the workmanship of the Savior—and on his head is a crown heavy with brilliance! While the monarch who persecuted him and all who aided him shall be cowed into silence and shrink away in despair, calling upon the mountains and the hills to cover them, how will the Prophets be honored? I think I see Jeremiah standing before those kings who laughed at his predictions and with his fellow heroes exclaiming, in triumph, "O king, was not my prophecy fulfilled? Is not Babylon cast down? Is not Nineveh become as a heap? Where is Petra, the city of Edom? Where are the houses of Baal and the temples of the gods? Are they not fallen, fallen, fallen, even as I prophesied?" How great will be the triumphs of those grand old Prophets when they stand before those who scoffed at and ridiculed them—who then shall be obliged to confess that not one of their words has failed, but that every threat that came from the mouth of God has been fulfilled!

And I think there will also be great honor put upon the ministers of the Gospel, the men whom God has, Himself, chosen. The men who, by a sacred impulse within their souls, were forced to speak—not the man-made minister, made so by the imposition of the hands of the bishop, or of the presbyters—who shall then be confronted with those who despised their message. Unto such will Jehovah say, in the presence of the men whom He chose to proclaim His Gospel, "Inasmuch as you scoffed at the words of these, My servants, you did it unto Me. It would have been better for you that a millstone had been hanged about your neck and that you had been cast into the midst of the sea! Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire."

And every member of Christ's Church shall receive honor in that day. I am sometimes doubtful whether the sins of the elect will be read out before the world, but, if so, I am certain it will not be for the purpose of casting upon them any reproach, but only to make the judgment an impartial one. But of this I *am* sure, *that their righteous acts will be proclaimed*. This man was called a liar and he shall be proved to be truthful. Another was styled a hypocrite, but it shall be found that he was perfectly sincere and his false accusers shall be confounded. The biographies of the saints, written with the pen of God, shall be read out from the lips of the Eternal, that the universe may confer honor upon them! And, wicked men, whatever you have done in darkness, shall be declared in the light! Your midnight sins shall be exposed before the sun. Your most private acts shall be exhibited to the gaze of the entire universe and

all your petty acts of cheating and fraud shall be read out to the world so that men and angels shall hear! And while you are dishonored, the righteous shall be honored, even from *your lips*. They shall be honored by words that shall be forced from you in that day, when God shall make His people stand forth clear as the sun, fair as the moon and terrible as an army with banners!

Again, *the saints shall be honored even from the devil himself*. Do you not know that the saints are to judge the world? Nor are they to judge only men, for the great foe of God and man, Satan, himself, shall lift his brazen front, scarred with thunder, and receive his final sentence and begin his Hell anew! I think I hear God asking His saints, "Will you ratify the sentence that I have pronounced upon Satan?" I hear one loud, "Amen!" proceed from the entire host of the redeemed and I, for one, will say, "Amen," with all the voice I have, in favor of his condemnation! Full often have I fought with him and sometimes he has seemed as if about to triumph over me. And hurling his fiery darts, he has cried, "Now I will make a full end of you." But again and again have I been able to return to the attack and to exclaim, "Rejoice not against me, O my enemy! When I fall, I shall rise!" And soon he has been once more put to flight.

And I believe, in that Last Great Day, the Lord will allow His saints to put their feet upon the neck of this Agag and I think I see the feeblest saint—Little-Faith himself—putting his foot upon the neck of the devil. And I know that if I may but once get my foot upon him, he shall not receive a heartier crush from anyone than he shall receive from me! I owe him no thanks, I can assure you. Full often has he cast me down, but, *then*, I will tread upon him—that will be a day of triumph, indeed, when the old dragon shall be laid prostrate, to be assaulted by every child of God, and to be the scoff and jeer of the universe! And thus—

***"The weakest saint shall win the day,
Though death and Hell obstruct the way!"***

So the saints shall be honored by the wicked and even by the old serpent himself. But *angels, also, will mention your names in their songs*. Angels are the poets of Heaven and do you think that the heroes of earth shall have their praise sung in this world and that your deeds will not be sung in Glory? In the battle odes of the angels, there are names more celebrated than Alexander, or Hannibal, or Napoleon, and songs more melodious and seraphic than were uttered in honor of the battlefields of Blenheim and Waterloo! No praise shall be so great as that which angels shall give to the saints, except that which they ascribe to the Savior!

The Church of Christ shall be honored then. Many a time has she had to sit as an outcast amid the ruins of the Temple, with locks broken and tears trickling down her cheeks, enduring the disdain of the world. With the voice of lamentation, we have heard her cry, "My Lord is gone," and we have seen her tear her garments in grief and woe. But the heart of the Church is still true to her Lord, whom, seeing not, she loves and, at times, notwithstanding her desolation, she is the possessor of unspeakable joy and full of glory! As the proud ones of the earth pass her by, they call her hypocrite and laugh at her pretensions to be the Bride of King Jesus, saying, "Her Husband has cast her off and will not acknowledge

her! Is she not a despised woman?" Thus the poor Church sits and exclaims, "Behold, and see if there are any sorrow like unto my sorrow." But, in due time comes the Day of Judgment! Jesus steps from His Throne and, like Ahasuerus of old, stretches out the scepter and says, "My queen, my spouse, touch this emblem of mercy and live." Leading her up the steps of His high Throne, He places her beside Him and shows her to the assembled universe as the Bride, the Lamb's Wife. Then he will take the crown of universal sovereignty and will place it upon His own head, none other being worthy of the honor, while another regal diadem shall be placed by Him on the head of His elect Queen. Then, turning to the Church, He will say, "I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you." Her mourning shall then be turned into singing and she shall be clothed with the garments of praise—instead of the spirit of heaviness—while all her enemies shall be covered with confusion of face and be ashamed.

IV. Lastly, GOD WILL HONOR THE RIGHTEOUS THROUGHOUT ETERNITY.

The honors of the godly are not fleeting things—not the gewgaws of an hour that shall pass away. Last Thursday, when I was at Windsor Castle, I saw a man who was painting up the escutcheon of the last new-made knight, to be added to a long series of similar emblems which had their places in the hall. I said to him, "Are the escutcheons of all the knights here?" And I think he replied that they could be traced back to the very origin of the order. I thought to myself, "A fine honor this, to have conferred upon one a few stripes and stars, representations of rampant lions, beasts, tigers with two heads and such like! Wonderfully glorious these things make a man, to be sure!" A little paint can make it all, and the painter's brush can erase it! Yet there are men who will face death upon the battlefield to be thus honored, or to have their image cut in stone and placed upon a pedestal for men to gaze at! Wonderful glory is it not for a man to die for? It is such an honor, I imagine, as very few of us would care for, for this sort of glory will pass away.

But the honor which the Christian shall receive will never fade! When a million years shall have elapsed, it shall be as fresh as ever, for Christ's promise shall always stand, "If anyone serve Me, him My Father will honor." Christian, the hour of your honor is coming, when your name shall be pronounced by the great Judge and Arbiter of all, and you shall be acknowledged by Him as one among the followers of the Lamb! You shall receive more enduring honors than the men of this world can bestow! You may not receive the reward of an earthly coronet, but you shall be a priest and a king unto God, and shall reign with Christ forever and ever! Blush not, Christian, to look the whole world in the face, for in God's sight you are a king! Walk, therefore, with humility before God, and wait patiently till the Master shall remove you to your kingdom—there you shall be clothed with glory and become the possessor of everything which the heart can wish—honor, wealth, happiness, dignity and unspeakable joy shall be yours, and that forever. "If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor."

Now, what shall I say, in conclusion, to those who do not serve God? Well, I have but little to say to you tonight. I have often found that when preaching on these subjects, I have said little to sinners. God has said a great deal more to them than I have, for all that has been spoken respecting the bliss of the righteous has set them wishing it were their lot! It is not infrequently the case that sermons which seem to be more especially adapted to comfort saints, prove especially powerful to the conversion of sinners because they have been led to say to themselves, "All these promises are not intended for us." Let me ask you, then, my Brother and my Sister, if this is the case at present with you—when will you appropriate these things to yourself? I have told you that the righteous shall be honored. Now, what were the righteous more than you are? You are ungodly, but the righteous would have continued the same had not Divine Grace interposed and made them new creatures in Christ Jesus. You are a great sinner, but such were some of us. Whatever may have been the form of your iniquity, there are those now among the family of God who were as bad as yourselves.

I will ask you a question. Can you find, anywhere in the Bible, the declaration that you cannot be saved? Is it anywhere stated that it is possible for the man who comes to Jesus Christ to be lost? If you find that, then you may despair, but till then, you need never do so. But perhaps you say, "I know not how to come to Christ aright." I will tell you—*coming to Christ at all is coming aright*, for He has said, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." It matters not whether a man comes running, limping, or creeping—so long as he gets to Christ, he has come the right way! You must not say, "I am too bad to be saved." That, in the hymn we sang just now, we are taught that nothing so much grieves the heart of Jesus—

***"As that unkind, injurious thought
That He's unwilling to forgive."***

I do think, poor Sinner, He would forgive you anything sooner than this wicked unbelief! If Christ were once more upon this earth and could suffer again in the flesh as He did 1,800 years ago, I believe that you might spit upon Him, buffet Him, and crucify Him again, and yet not see a single frown upon His face. But when you stand up and say, "I do not believe that Christ has love enough to forgive *me*. I do not think He is willing to pardon *my* sins." I see the heart of the blessed Lord almost broken by such cruel words! "What? Poor Sinner," Christ might well exclaim, "have I not love enough to remove your guilt when I purchased you with My blood? Look at My hands and My feet and see the wounds which were inflicted for you." I think I see Him looking you in the face and saying, in words of the utmost tenderness and compassion, "Poor Soul, speak not so, nothing grieves My heart like that—not to be trusted by one I love is the most harrowing thing I can experience. I could almost as soon drink some drops of the cup of bitterness which I tasted in the Garden, as to hear you say that I cannot forgive you. I *can*, I WILL, I DO! This very hour I say unto you, 'I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake!'" Remember that, Sinner—not for your sake, not to glorify you, but to honor Jesus Christ—"and will not remember

your sins.” Take heart, therefore, poor Soul! If you will go to Him, there is Grace for you, and you shall be saved.

But know, you Pharisees, that He came not to call the righteous! Sinners, only, Jesus came to save!

And now, saints of God, let me urge you to despise the scorn and the contempt of men. Think of the glories you shall soon inherit and the honors that your soul and body shall receive at the Judgment Day. By filling our minds with thoughts of the glories of Heaven, the Word of God, the blessings that are eternal and full of glory, the love of Jesus and the mercies of Jehovah, we shall be graciously strengthened and enabled to conquer in the fight and keep the road to Heaven. In the strength of the Lord we cry, “*Nil desperandum!*” We still believe that Christ is our Shield, and Christ our Sun, and doubt not that we shall hear it said at the last, “Well done, good and faithful servant, enter you into the joy of your Lord.”

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: JOHN 15:9-27.

This chapter contains some of the choicest of the utterances of the Lord Jesus to His disciples. On His way from the upper room in Jerusalem, where He had instituted the Supper, to the Garden of Gethsemane, where He was about to be betrayed, He spoke these wondrous words of cheer and counsel. He had been speaking to His followers concerning fruit-bearing. Now He turns to another subject.

Verse 9. *As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you: continue in My love.* Oh, what love for Christ's disciples to continue in—a love which finds no parallel except the love of the Father to His well-beloved Son! A love, therefore, without beginning, without end, without measure, without limit, without change! Oh, to be fully possessed by this love! I will read this verse again. It is such a sweet silver bell that we cannot hear it ring too often. “As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you: continue you in My love.” That is, live in it, abide in it, make it your home and your continual dwelling place.

10. *If you keep My commandments, you shall abide in My love.* Obedience will enable you to live in this love as the fish live in the sea. You shall always enjoy it if, by Grace, you are enabled always to be obedient to your Lord's commands.

10-12. *Even as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love. These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. This is My commandment, That you love one another, as I have loved you.* Oh, you who profess to be the disciples of Christ, take heed to this new commandment which He has given and do not violate it! Let your very nature be love. Let your very spirit be love and then let your whole life be transmuted into the pure gold of love!

13, 14. *Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. You are My friend if you do whatever I command you.* Obedience to Christ's commands leads us into the banqueting house of

friendship. We never understand how friendly Christ is to us, nor do we become His familiar companions until we are obedient to Him.

15. *Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knows not what his lord does.* Things that he is told to do are not explained to him. It is enough for him to obey the orders that are given to him by his master.

15. *But I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you.* Christ has told all to His own chosen ones. There are no secrets which we would keep from Him, or which He keeps from us. Oh, what hallowed communion! This blessed result comes of obedience to our Lord. May God enable us to enjoy it richly!

16. *You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatever you shall ask of the Father in My name He may give it to you.* God's servants are all ordained. I sometimes hear remarks which remind me that there still lingers among us the superstition about ordained ministers. There is no ordination of a minister except the descent of the Spirit of God upon him, and the choice of the Church which calls him to his special sphere of work. All the saints are partakers of the Divine Ordination—they are all ordained to minister before the Lord. "I have chosen you and ordained you." For what purpose? "That you should go and bring forth fruit." Oh, that we may prove the reality of our ordination to this blessed work by bringing forth fruit—fruit that shall remain!

17-27. *These things I command you, that you love one another. If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own: but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the words that I said to you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept My sayings, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for My name's sake, because they know not Him that sent Me. If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin. He that hates Me hates My Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now they have both seen and hated both Me and My Father. But this came to pass that the Word might be fulfilled that is written in their Law, They hated Me without a cause. But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth, which proceeds from the Father, He shall testify of Me, and you also shall bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning.*

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

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY
TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

PRECEPTS AND PROMISES

NO. 2874

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 10, 1904.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 13, 1876.

“If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall also My servant be: if anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.”
John 12:26.

I HAVE already said, in expounding the chapter from which my text is taken, that the sight of these Greeks who desired to see Jesus seems to have very greatly affected our Savior's mind. [See Exposition at end of sermon.] He had not had much to do with Gentiles, for, as far as His personal ministry upon the earth was concerned, He was not sent to the Gentiles, but only “to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” But now He sees, in those enquiring Greeks, the advance guard of that mighty host of Gentiles who, for these 1,800 years and more, have continued to seek Him out and to call Him their Leader, Friend and Savior! The thought of this great result of His life's work naturally led Him to also think of the Cross from which that result would spring. “These are the redeemed,” He seemed to say to Himself, “then it is time for Me to think of the Redemption which I have yet to present on their behalf. These are the first fruits of My great harvest. Then I must see to the sowing of the Seed and I must set my mind steadfastly to think of that sowing, for unless the grain of wheat is cast into the ground, and die, it abides alone.” So He began to feel the throes of desire for that Baptism wherewith He was to be baptized, for the joy that was set before Him was, just then, clearer than usual—the joy of winning souls and, especially, the joy of winning Gentile nations unto God and, therefore, His mind fixed itself more than ever upon the plan by which His people's redemption was to be achieved. Hence, I think, arose the words to which I called your attention while we were reading the chapter.

The sight of these Greeks also led the Savior to feel that He must again explain the conditions upon which He could receive disciples. There have been religious teachers who have been content to gather followers through falsehood or error. They have never properly explained what allegiance to them meant, or they have caught men by craft and guile. Our Lord Jesus Christ never did that. He said to any who proposed to follow Him, “Have you counted the cost?” He bade them not to begin to build their house if they were not able to finish it, nor to commence a warfare in which they could not reasonably expect victory. It seemed, sometimes,

to be rather repelling men, than attracting them, to say to would-be disciples, “If you will follow Me, do this and do that”—perhaps some very trying ordeal—yet that was the Savior’s usual habit. So, now, lest these Greeks should say that they would become His disciples without knowing what discipleship involved, He said to them, “I, Myself, will have to die in order that I may produce others like Myself, and you, if you become My disciples, will have to follow Me in this respect as well as in all other things. You will have to deny yourselves and to undergo self-sacrifice, for, otherwise, if you will not do this, it is no use for you to pretend to be My servants, for My servants you cannot be. If any man would serve Me, He must follow Me.” It was the coming of these Greeks to Christ which led to the utterance of these words—and that incident, in a measure, explains them. Now may the Spirit of God impress the Savior’s words upon your hearts as I try to speak to you about them!

Our text is divided into three sentences. The first is *a sentence of precept*—“If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me.” *The second is a sentence of precept and promise*, for, to this day, no scholar can tell whether it ought to be rendered, “Where I am, there *let* My servant be,” or, “Where I am, there *shall* also My servant be.” Either may be a correct interpretation of the original and, therefore, I take it in both senses as a sentence of precept and promise. Then the third is *a sentence of pure promise*—“If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.”

I. First, then, we have A SENTENCE OF PRECEPT. “If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me.”

The Greek term used here might be translated, “If anyone will become a deacon—do a deacon’s work, be My minister, My servant and wait upon Me—then let him follow Me.” By which is intended, first, that, *if you become Christ’s servant, you must obey Him*. This does not seem to occur to many professing Christians. They say they are Christians and, therefore, Christ’s servants—yet they dare to sit in judgment upon Him and upon His precepts! They are a law unto themselves—they obey this precept because they like it and they disobey that other precept because they do not like it! They call Him Master and Lord, but He is not really their Master and Lord, for they do not obey Him. Paul rightly says, “To whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants you are to whom you obey.” But if you simply take the name of Christ upon you and call yourself His servant, yet do not obey Him, but follow your own whim, or your own hereditary prejudice, or the custom of some erroneous church—you are no servant of Christ. If you really are a servant of Christ, your first duty is to obey Him.

In the Church of Christ, He is the only Legislator. Not all the bishops and clergy, nor the whole Church, if it could be summoned in one solemn conclave, could pass an ordinance that would have even the slightest force upon a Christian’s conscience if it were contrary to the teachings of Christ, Himself! There is but one Head of the Church—one spiritual Rabbi and Infallible Teacher—and that is the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, and we are to understand, when we enter His Church and enlist under His banner, that we are to serve Him, and Him alone! We may

serve others, as far as they are commissioned by Him, and as far as what they say is in harmony with His teaching, but no farther, for, "One is your Master, even Christ, and all you are brethren." Did you understand that, young Man, when you became a Christian? Did you understand that, my Sister, when you professed to be a follower of Christ? I am afraid some professing Christians did not.

I bless God that this was one of the things which I learned when I first trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as my Savior. I felt, "Now I am going to be Christ's disciple, through His Grace, and I am going to do, as far as the Holy Spirit will help me, everything that I believe He commands me to do." I turned to the New Testament and read it for myself. I did not enquire of this teacher or that, but said to myself, "What does Jesus say? I will find out what He has revealed as His will concerning me." This way of acting gives a man independence of mind towards his fellow men and, at the same time, humble yet firm confidence in what he does in the sight of God. When he knows that he has submitted himself to the teaching of Christ and that he would not knowingly hold anything that Christ would not endorse, and would not willingly, either himself learn, or impart to others anything that Jesus Christ does not teach, it gives him a firm footing in the things of God.

Christian men and women, do you stand thus firmly? You know that many of you do not. You have another book, besides the Bible, which is your guide. The Bible alone is not the religion of many professing Christians. It is to some, but there are many who have another book to which they bow with almost equal reverence—and courts of law have to decide as to the shape of this garment or the other, or whether they shall turn their noses to the East or to the West, for they cannot do anything without calling in lawyers and judges! Yet God knows the Bible alone is quite enough. And if we did but follow its guidance, it would lead us rightly enough. I call you back, Christian men and women, to your allegiance to God's Holy Word! You owe none to any book except the one that He has given—and you are to regard no teaching but the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ and that which comes to you upon His sole authority. In this respect, He says to you, "If anyone serves Me, let Him follow Me"—that is, by obedience to His commands.

The next teaching of the text is this. If any man serves Christ, *his service will be most like his Lord's when he does, as nearly as he can, what Christ did.* He is your Master, but He is also your Exemplar. Suppose that you say to Him, "Blessed Lord Jesus, I am willing to obey You, but what is Your Law?" He replies, "I am My own Law. Imitate Me. Follow Me." If you want to obey Jesus instead of merely keeping the Law written upon stones, you can see the Law written out in His life—

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

If you would obey Christ and so serve Him, be like He, for the sum and substance of His teaching is, "Follow Me." Watch, then, His every footstep, and ask for Grace to put your foot down where He put His. Whatev-

er you see to be His temper under any circumstances, cultivate that temper when you are in similar circumstances. If you want to know what you should do at any special time, think what He would have done if He had been in your place, for what He would have done is what you should do. And if you know that any course that you are pursuing would not have been pursued by Christ and would not have been according to His mind, do not follow it any longer. If it is not in harmony with Christ's life, it is not the way for you to walk. If it is not that which you would have done if Christ stood by you and looked at you with His tender but piercing eyes of everlasting love—if it is not what you would have done in His immediate Presence, do not do it, for it is clearly not what you ought to do. You are His servant, so you are to obey Him and, in order to obey Him, you are to imitate Him.

I must, however, warn you, dear Friends, that if you do this—and you must if you mean to be His faithful follower, for this is the only way of being Christ's servant, indeed and of a truth—this following of Christ will bring you into very much the same condition as that in which your Lord was, that is, you will become a marked man! In the midst of the company that you frequent, you will be a speckled bird! You will not need to adopt any different mode of dress, for Jesus did not. He wore the common garb of the country and dressed just like any other man of His class. He affected no singularity in meat, or drink, or language, but He was singular, essentially, because the greatest singularity under Heaven is *holiness*. If you will just do the right and be the right before God, men will soon find you out—and you will first become the subject of their observation—by-and-by, of their reproach—perhaps, also, of persecution. But, whatever the consequences are, this is what you have to do. Hear what your Lord says—“If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me.”

“But, Lord, You had to go outside the camp.” “Then follow Me there.” “But, Lord, You had to endure the Cross.” “And he who would be My disciple must take up his cross daily and come and follow Me.” You cannot be Christ's servant if you are not willing to follow Him, cross and all! What do you crave? A crown? Then it must be a crown of thorns if you are to be like He!! Do you want to be lifted up? So you shall, but it will be upon a cross! In following Christ, you must be prepared to suffer persecution, loss and, if necessary, even death itself! Will you have Christ as your Lord and Master on these terms? If not, you cannot have Him at all! He does not want, as His followers, cowards who will sneak away from Him as soon as the first shot in the battle is fired. He does not want another Judas who will sell Him for the price of a slave. He wants true-hearted men who are determined, out of love to His glorious Character, and devotion to His Divine mission, that they will follow Him because they desire to serve Him.

Our Lord would also have us understand that if we mean to be His servants, we must follow Him even to the extent of being put into the ground to die—that is, self-sacrifice, self-abnegation and even self-annihilation. Our Lord Jesus Christ is at His best when He makes Himself of no reputation. I do not know any time when Christ seems so glo-

rious as when He lays aside all His Glory and takes upon Himself all our shame. So, Brothers and Sisters, if you would follow Christ, you are not to bargain to be honored. On the contrary, you are to commence to strip off from yourself the garments of honor. You are not to bargain for ease, but are to put on the harness of a warrior who will get but little rest and who must constantly be on the watch. You are not to stipulate for this indulgence or that. What indulgence had your Lord? He had not where to lay His head! His life was spent amidst poverty and hardship! He kept nothing back from the sons of men—He emptied Himself that we might be filled.

There was not a grain of self-seeking in Him. He saved others—Himself He could not save. Oh, that we had even a few Christians who were like their Master in this respect! Few are there, in these evil days, who seem willing to sacrifice all for Christ's sake. The brave Covenanters could give up house, home and everything—and die for King Jesus on Scotland's bleak mountains. But we, in these easier times, are content to make money, as other people do—to live in ease and luxury, as other people do—to contribute our cheese-parings and our candle-ends to the cause of Christ and to think that we have done a great deal if we have done even as much as that! But where is the self-sacrifice? Where is the burying of one's self in the ground to die, like a grain of wheat? Where is the wish—the willingness—to lose reputation, to sever friendships, to sacrifice respect, to endure hardness so that we may be true to our conscience, faithful to our Lord Jesus Christ? May the Lord soon raise up among us more men and women of noble principle who will count God, and Christ, and truth, and eternity to be worth living for—and worth dying for—and who will count all things else but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord!

I will leave that first sentence of my text when I have made one more observation upon it. Perhaps somebody says, "I want to serve Christ and I am willing to make some self-denial for His sake. I have been thinking about saving my money and building a church or a chapel." Possibly another friend says, "I want to serve Christ, so I should like to give a painted window in His honor." Yes, but Christ Himself says to you, "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me." The very best way of serving Christ is to do just what Christ was accustomed to do, as far as that is possible to you. This is a very blessed text for a poor man, for a sick man, for an illiterate man—in fact, for every man who really wants to serve Christ. If I want to serve Christ, what have I to do? To *follow Him*. If I am very ill, how am I to follow Him? Why, by bearing the affliction as patiently as He would have borne it! If I am very poor, how am I to follow Him? Why, by trusting in God, as He did! Suppose that I am very much maligned and slandered, what am I to do? I am to try to bear it as meekly as He would have borne it! You can accomplish a great deal, in that way, if you really try to do it. You nursery maids and you other servants who have to work hard to earn your daily bread—and you boys and girls, who are still at school—there is something that you can be, or do, or suffer by which you

may prove your love to Christ—and that something is the best way in which you can follow Him.

It is sometimes the case that a person says, “I want to serve Christ, so I shall go into a nunnery, or into a monastery.” Now, let me just ask this question—Did our Lord Jesus Christ ever act like that? He said, “If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me.” Can you imagine Christ shutting Himself up in a monastery? What? The great battle of the ages to be fought and the Captain of our salvation concealing Himself and so setting us an example of how to be cowardly? You know He did not do that! So fight it out, man, even as He did, and do not go sneaking away and hiding yourself under the pretence of so serving the Lord Jesus Christ! That is sheer selfishness—there is a far better course than that for you to take! Give yourself up wholly to Jesus and do as Jesus would have done if He had been in your place, for so you will serve Him in the best possible fashion.

II. Now I turn to the second clause of my text which seems to me to be both A PRECEPT AND A PROMISE.

First, read it as *a precept*—“Where I am, there *let* My servant be.” Wherever Jesus was and is, there you are to be if you are really His servant. In His relationship to God, how did Jesus stand? Well, He was whole-hearted in His consecration—be you likewise. He began His public life by being baptized in Jordan, saying to John, “Thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness.” If you are really His servant—you act in the same way. He came out into the midst of mankind to bear witness for God’s Truth and He kept on bearing that witness. And He was content to be found in His place, as the faithful Witness, when the time came for Him to seal His testimony with His blood. Be you a witness-bearer for Him, whatever that witness bearing may cost you—

**“Cold mountains and the midnight air
Witnessed the fervor of His prayer”—**

so let midnight witness the fervor of your prayer, too. The attitude of Jesus towards God is shown by His saying in the Garden of Gethsemane, “Not as I will, but as You will.” Servant of Christ, be you also found in the same attitude—bow before the Lord in the spirit of resignation to His holy will even though it should bring the death-sweat to your brow! Whatever it involves, mind that you say to God, “Your will be done.” Wherever you see the Lord Jesus Christ in His relationship towards God—with the one exception of His substitutionary Sacrifice for sinners, in which you cannot follow Him—in everything else, if you would really serve Him, follow Him! Where the Master is, there let His servant be.

Then, next, what was Christ’s position with regard to men? He was in the midst of them and in all His relationships He was always the example of what His servants should be. As a child, He was subject to His parents. Godly children, that is what Christ would have you, also, to be. As a child, He grew in the knowledge and understanding of the Word, and in favor with God and with men. So seek, dear young people, to be always making progress in the Divine Life and to be growing up, as Christ did, well-pleasing unto God. When He had reached maturity, what was His attitude towards men? Why, He was the Lover of men! He was seldom

angry with them, but often bearing their reproach. He was never selfish, but always ignoring Himself and living entirely for others. Someone has called Him “the great Philanthropist.” I hardly like such a title for Him, for He rises far above all ordinary philanthropy—yet is it true that no one else ever loved men as He loved them and no one else ever made such sacrifices for them. Be you like Jesus in this respect, also, and wherever you see His footprint, seek to set your feet there.

Wherever there was a battle to be fought for truth and right, Christ was always to the front. And wherever there was reproach to be borne for God’s sake, Christ was ready to bear it. The Pharisees could not silence Him, the Herodians could not make Him seek His escape. He was ready for every emergency that arose. Did God want a Witness? There was Christ. Did man need a Teacher? There was Christ. Were men sick? He was their Physician. Were they hungry? He was their Provider. Were His disciples liable to sink in a storm? He walked on the waters and rescued the frightened men. He was always giving Himself to the service of men and, Beloved, wherever your Master was in relation to men, there should you be. If you can conceive of a place where Christ would not go—do not go there. If you know of any company where Christ would not be found, do not be found there. But if you know of a place where Christ *would* go, there you also can go with safety, for it is your business to be where your Master would have been if He had been in your place—and never to be where your Master would not have gone!

We have thus looked at this sentence as a precept. Now let us regard it as a *promise*—“Where I am, there shall also My servant be.” This is a very blessed promise. I do not recollect one that has more sweetness in it to my heart. We expect, Brothers and Sisters—unless Christ shall speedily come—we expect to die. When we fall asleep in Jesus, we shall be carried to the grave, even as Jesus was. We shall be in good company! It is, to my mind, a beautiful thought that when our Lord rose from the dead, He took off the grave clothes and left them in His sepulcher. And He unwound the napkin that was about His head and laid it by itself. So the grave is not an empty tenement without furniture. Christ has left the linen in which He slept to wrap His followers in—and He has put the napkin by itself for those who are left behind to wipe their eyes with. We rightly sing, with good Dr. Watts—

***“The graves of all His saints He blessed,
And softened every bed—
Where should the dying members rest,
But with the dying Head?”***

Where will our spirits be when we have left the body behind? We do not know much about the unseen world, but we are content with what Richard Baxter sings—

***“My knowledge of that life is small,
The eye of faith is dim,
But ‘tis enough that Christ knows all,
And I shall be with Him.”***

Our Savior’s words are certainly true, “Where I am, there shall also My servant be.” Some people are anxious to know more concerning the con-

dition of the redeemed between death and the Resurrection, but, my dear Brothers and Sisters, I am satisfied to know that I shall be with Jesus where He is! I feel like the little child who had been a long while away from its mother and who was told that it should soon go home to her. That was all the child wanted, to be in mother's bosom—and all I want is to be with Jesus. This He has promised us and this is our comfort, "Where I am, there shall also My servant be." As soon as ever we fall asleep in Him, absent from the body, we are present with the Lord!

What about the Resurrection? Well, Jesus rose and so, in due time, our bodies shall also rise. These very bodies of ours—for Christ has redeemed not a part of our manhood, but the whole of it—and these bodies of ours are the temple of the Holy Spirit—they shall rise again and in our flesh we shall see God. And so shall we be "forever with the Lord."

But what is Heaven, Brothers and Sisters, and what will eternal Glory be? Although eye has not seen, nor has ear heard, nor heart of man conceived what God has prepared for them that love Him, He has revealed it unto us by His Spirit, at least, in part. But it is enough for us to know that we shall be with Jesus, where He is—that we may behold His Glory. It is wonderful what new discoveries are constantly being made. Many books have come out, lately, filled with what I believe to be nothing but rubbish, but, for my part, I do not care about where I am going to be in the millennium or afterwards, for I know that I shall be with my Lord—and I want nothing else. I do not stipulate for a golden harp, or a place by the sea of glass. I do not ask, even, to be among the angels. I am quite content with my Lord's promise, "Where I am, there shall also My servant be." My Lord and I shall fare alike and it will do for me if it will do for Him! Are you not of the same mind, Beloved, and is not this all you wish to know about the future—that you shall be with Him, where He is, and behold His Glory?

III. Now, thirdly, we have A SENTENCE WHICH IS ALTOGETHER A PROMISE—"If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor."

Brothers and Sisters, if you serve Christ in the way I have feebly tried to describe, that is, by an out-and-out consecration of yourself to Him and to His service, you will not get much honor among men. You know what many want, at the present day, in a minister. He must have no principles at all, or, if he has any, he must keep them to himself and never say anything about them. Above all, he must be perfectly neutral and never say a word against any error. Do you not know that it is uncharitable to attack what others believe? Preach always what everybody would like you to preach. If you see anything wrong, put the telescope up to your blind eye, as Nelson did—then you will find all the brethren will praise you because you praise them! Pat them on the back and they will pat you on the back! And you will get through the world very smoothly. I know that path and I know how many friends we might have if we would but follow it—wriggle in and out and be anything and everything, or nothing—just to suit the tastes of others! Brothers and Sisters, if you believe anything to be true and stick to it, some will call you sectarian and others will be offended with you, but, mark this, if you do not get any

praise from men for clinging to the right, you will have an easy conscience! I would sooner have all the demons in Hell enraged against me and all the dogs on earth howling at me, than feel that I had kept back anything I believed to be true!

If we do what our conscience tells us is right. If we serve Christ outright and follow Him fully, *God will honor us by setting His seal upon our work.* If you preach Christ and not the fancies of men, God will give you souls, make you useful and help you to build up His people. That is the honor which you will receive. Faithfulness will not be without its reward. "In due season, you shall reap, if you faint not."

Then, by-and-by, it will come to pass that even those who censured you as too strict, too punctilious and, perhaps, litigious, will come round to see that you are truthful and right. And, so, *God will give you honor in their sight.* It is wonderful how even bad men are compelled to honor consistency and uprightness. They may hate it, but they respect it. Whereas if you do not fully follow Christ and do not act as His servants should, God will not honor you, neither will men do so long, for they will find you out and then they will drive you from them in derision.

The best honor that comes from God will come to His people, by-and-by. I have been thinking over those words, "If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor," and I feel that I cannot preach from them at all. What would some people think if the Queen were to honor them? But what is *that* compared with our Father, who is in Heaven, honoring us? I do not know whether you can conceive what it means. I cannot. God makes His creature love Him, but for Him to honor that creature—to put honor upon him—is something so amazing that I am lost in contemplation of it! Yet He will do it. If you faithfully serve Jesus Christ on earth, God will bid the angels make way for you in Heaven. While you live here, they will be your servants and when you ascend to Heaven, you shall have a place nearer to the Eternal Throne than even they have. And then, in the presence of all the holy angels, God will do you honor and your spirit shall be known among them as one that God loves. "What shall be done unto the man whom the king delights to honor?" was the question asked of old, but I put another question, "What shall be done unto the man whom the eternal God, the Creator, the Possessor of Heaven and earth, delights to honor?" Do you aspire to that honor? Are you ambitious to share it? Then you have only to do this—serve Christ faithfully, follow Christ fully.

Some of you cannot do this—you who are not renewed in heart and life. I might as well urge the dead to dance as bid you attempt this, for you cannot do it. You must believe in Jesus! You must be born again and receive the new life. But, oh, you who have believed in Him, remember that this is your road to honor—willingness to be dishonored, willingness to be counted as the mud in the street for Christ's sake and for His Truth's sake! Then let this be your strong resolution that come what may, Christ's life shall be your rule—Christ's Word shall be your marching orders and whether you have to die a martyr's death, or not—to Him who loved you and bought you with His blood, you consecrate yourself entirely, henceforth and forever!

May God raise up many who will feel the power of these words! If we only get a few of such men who will follow the Lord fully, happy will be the churches to which they belong, blessed will be the age in which they live, highly privileged will be the land in which they dwell—for such men are God's heroes! These are the soldiers who will stand firm in the day of battle and who will help to save our country from ever becoming Roman Catholic again! May we have many such men and many such women in every age till Jesus comes, and glory dawns! May this be your happy lot, my dear Brothers and Sisters, for Christ's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 12:20-41.**

Our Lord had raised Lazarus from the dead and this miracle had excited great attention in Jerusalem. In consequence of this, the people had led Him in triumph through the streets, and everywhere there was great excitement. Everybody was speaking of the wonderful miracle which He had worked.

Verses 20, 21. *And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast: the same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus.* There is no doubt that these men were Gentiles—probably proselytes. They had come up to worship at the feast and their curiosity had been excited and their interest had been awakened by what they had seen and heard about Jesus. There appears to have been at least some measure of reverence for Him in their minds. Hence they addressed one of His disciples, whose purely Greek name may lead us to suppose that he had some Greek relatives. They said to Philip, “Sir, we would see Jesus.”

22, 23. *Philip came and told Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip told Jesus. And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified.* They did not expect Him to say that! Surely, the coming of a few Greeks to see Him was not very much in the way of glorification! But, to Him, the coming of these Greeks was a sort of prophecy of the myriads of other Gentiles who would, by-and-by, come to His feet and, therefore, He looked forward to that death which would be the means of their salvation. Christ came into the world to preach the Gospel, but He came on a greater errand than that, namely, to provide a Gospel that could be preached—and He knew that the time was approaching when He must provide that Gospel by dying upon the Cross. See how He proceeds—

24. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone: but if it dies, it brings forth much fruit.* The preservation of the grain is the prevention of its increase, but the putting of it into the ground, the losing of it, the burial of it is the very means of its multiplication. So our Lord Jesus Christ must not care for Himself and He did not. He surrendered Himself to all the ignominy of the death of the Cross. He died and was buried in the heart of the earth but He sprang up again from the grave and, ever since then myriads have come

to Him through His death, even as these Greeks came to Him in His life. Now, as it was with Christ, so is it to be with us—at least, in our measure.

25. *He that loves his life shall lose it; and he that hates his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.* His love is ruinous to his true life, but to destroy self-love, to make a sacrifice of ourselves, is the truest way to really preserve ourselves.

26, 27. *If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall also My servant be: if anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor. Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father save Me from this hour? But for this came I unto this hour.* This seems to be a sort of rehearsal of the dread scene soon to be enacted in Gethsemane. At the sight of these Greeks, our Savior seems to have been led especially to think, as we have already said, of that death by which they and multitudes like they, were to be redeemed. Thinking of it, He enters so fully into it, by a sort of foretaste, that He feels something of the same shiver and throes of anguish which came upon Him in Gethsemane. He seems to say here, “Father, save Me from this hour,” just as He said there, “If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me.” Yet He says here, “But for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify Your name”—just as He afterwards said in the garden, “Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.”

28, 29. *Father, glorify Your name. Then came there a voice from Heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again. The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said an angel spoke to Him.* This was the third time that that mysterious Voice had been heard—first, at His Baptism. The second time on the Mount of Transfiguration. And now a few days before He died upon the Cross. The voice of God had been heard on a much earlier occasion—at Sinai—and then it was attended with thunder, as it was here. Those who had not ears to understand the voice of God only perceived the loudness of its thunder peals. But there were others, like John, who understood what the Lord said—“I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.”

30, 31. *Jesus answered and said, This Voice came not because of Me but for your sakes. Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.* The old Roman empire seemed to stand as fast as the eternal hills, but God had come to judge the whole state of affairs as it was then in the world and, inasmuch as Christ the pure and perfect Son of God was condemned to die, that action condemned the society of that period! Yes, the whole of the ungodly world, in taking its part in crucifying Christ, bore evidence against itself and pronounced sentence upon itself as being guilty of the death of the Christ of God. “Now shall the prince of this world be cast out.” The overthrow of the usurper began from that time—and that overthrow of the devil is still going on—and, blessed be God, it will reach its completion one of these days and we shall yet rejoice in a new Heaven and a new earth on which the trail of the serpent shall never be traced!

32. *And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.* Christ on the Cross draws all men up to Himself. I have heard this text

quoted as if it referred to Christ being extolled in preaching. Well, it is true that when Christ is lifted up in the ministry, there is an attractive power—but that is not the first meaning of the text. Let us read on.

33. *This He said, signifying what death He should die.* He alluded to His Crucifixion which is the great attractive center of mankind.

34-36. *The people answered Him, We have heard out of the Law that Christ abides forever: and how can You say, The Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man? Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walks in darkness knows not where he goes. While you have light, believe in the light, that you may be the children of light.* It is always well to use the Light of God that we already have. If any man will use the Light he already has, God will be sure to give him more. That is a good saying of an old Puritan, “If you have starlight, thank God for it and He will give you moonlight. And when you have moonlight, give thanks to God for it and He will give you sunlight.” And so it shall be. Nothing is worse than sinning against the Light of Good. If it is only the light of conscience, even if you know it is not perfect, yet, nevertheless, never sin against it, for, if you do, you will quench it, and to quench the Light you have, is the way to effectually prevent your having any more. “While you have light, believe in the light, that you may be the children of light.”

36-41. *These things spoke Jesus, and departed, and did hide Himself from them. But though He had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on Him: that the saying of Isaiah the Prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke, Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Isaiah said again, He has blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said Isaiah, when he saw His Glory, and spoke of Him.* There is such a thing as judicial blindness. If men can see and yet will not see, God is at last so provoked by their wickedness that He takes away the Light of God altogether and removes from them the very faculty of sight. It is not surprising that it should be so, for it was so with the generation in which Christ lived. They had so long rejected the true Prophet—so long refused to listen to the voice of God, that, at last, He abandoned them to their own ways—and nothing worse can happen to a man than to be abandoned of God! If God casts you off, you are lost indeed.

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

CHRIST'S SERVANT— HIS DUTY AND REWARD

NO. 463

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 3, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“If any man serve Me, let him follow Me. And where I am, there shall also
My servant be: if any man serve Me, him will My Father honor.”
John 12:26.***

How many persons are of the religion of the Greeks who are mentioned in this chapter! They would see Jesus, but they would not *serve* Him. Impelled by curiosity they would know somewhat of this matter. They would investigate the claims of Christ to the Messiahship, and they would consider the special truths by which He professes to illuminate the world—but beyond this they would not venture. They give their minds to criticize. They are not indifferent to the Gospel, but they regard it with the same interest as that with which a naturalist would look upon a newly discovered insect, or a geologist would study a section of the earth's crust.

But as to personally feeling the hallowed influence of the Truth of God, they know not what it means. Many of these Greeks proceed much further. They feel an admiration for the character and teaching of Jesus, and they express that admiration in honest, warm praise. But see how hollow is their appreciation—they applaud the Person whom they scorn to obey. They admire teachings which they will not practice. They listen to the Divine Word, but they are hearers only, and not doers of the Truth of God.

Probably there are numbers in this assembly to whom the Christian religion has always been a subject of respectful interest. They have never blasphemed the name of Christ. They have not doubted the inspiration of Scripture. No, they have studied God's Word. They have given a degree of attention to its doctrines, and they intend yet more fully to examine its revelations. How pleasant and hopeful are such marks of interest—but how far are many of these enquirers from true discipleship—for their unhumiliated hearts are not obedient to the dictates of the Gospel. The Cross is to them too heavy a load to carry. They have not made up their minds to wear “Christ's yoke.” They had rather see His holiness, and see His disciples imitate Him than themselves take up the cross daily and follow Him.

My Hearers, allow me to remind you very solemnly that a speculative religion which has curiosity as its impulse, a search after knowledge as its rule, and self-esteem as its root, can never save the soul. It is not for you to criticize, but to *repent*. It is not for you to judge but to *believe*. It is not for you to admire, but to *obey*. It is not for you to praise and applaud, but cheerfully to bow your necks to *imitate* and *follow* Christ. Nothing short of a religion which subjects us to personal service of Christ, which gives us a new heart, and a right spirit, and compels us to feel that we are not our own but bought with a price—nothing short of this will ever give lasting

peace of mind, or bring us to the place where we shall see the face of God with delight.

Many proudly dream that to serve Christ would be dishonorable, and that they would demean themselves by becoming humble followers of the Lamb. Let me remind them that those whose opinions we esteem did not think that. Even a heathen could say, "To serve God is to reign." We know that most noble of men, Moses, before the coming of John the Baptist—the greatest that had ever been born of woman—Moses, the king in Jeshurun, and the leader of God's hosts, has as his highest title—"Moses, the servant of God."

And even our Lord and Master, whose shoe latchet we are not worthy to unloose, took upon Himself the form of a *servant*, and though He were a Son, yet learned obedience by the things that He suffered. Since the days of our Redeemer, the greatest in the Church of Christ have been the servants of all, and those who have attained to the highest dignities and honors which it is in the power of Christ's Church to confer, have been those who joyfully stooped to the most menial occupations. They were willing to be less than the least, and became the greatest of all.

Let us imitate Him who was "King of kings," and yet a "Servant of servants." Let us follow Him who is girt about the paps with a golden girdle, and wraps the light about Him as a garment—and yet He unrobed Himself—and took a towel, like a servant, that He might wash His disciples' feet. The motto of the Prince of Wales is "*Ich dien*"—"I serve." It should be the motto of every prince of the royal blood of Heaven. Let every Christian write this now upon his crest—"I serve," and, from this day forth, wherever he is, let him not seek lordship. Let him leave that to the Gentiles, and to a carnal world, but let him seek ministry and service, being willing to *do* anything or to *be* anything by which he may profit the body of Christ, which is the Church.

We will now endeavor, as the Blessed Spirit shall aid us, to expound His three-fold teaching. You will mark, first of all, *plain directions for a very honorable office*—"If any man serve Me, let him follow Me." In the second place, *most generous stipulations from a noble Master*—"Where I am, there shall also My servant be." And thirdly, *most glorious rewards for imperfect services*—"If any man serve Me, him will My Father honor."

I. We have here PLAIN DIRECTIONS FOR A VERY HONORABLE OFFICE. "If any man serve Me, let him follow Me." A golden precept, written on a tablet of ivory.

I speak the sentiments of the majority of those present when I say, *we would all of us like to minister to Christ*. We feel that if He were here now, there would be nothing which we would not do for Him. The word used in our text three times might very properly be translated thus—"If any man would act the part of a deacon towards Me, let him follow Me. And where I am there shall also My deacon be. And he that acts as a deacon towards Me shall be honored of My Father." The word "deacon" in the original Greek means nothing but a servant, and every deacon should be the cheerful, laborious and faithful servant of the Church.

Now, what was the part of a deacon in the early Church? It was service to the people of God of all sorts and kinds. Who among us would blush to be the deacons of Christ, His body servants, His attendants? Would we not wait upon Him? We would be His servants to the very fullest extent. I

think we should consider ourselves ennobled for life if we might cast our garments in the way, that He might be saved from a muddy place in the road. Would we not feed Him? There should be such a feast in our house as never was before! We would submit to hunger ourselves, if we might but supply His wants.

And I think if the twelve poor fishermen were with Him, we would not shut one of them out, but ask them all home. We ourselves would leave our houses and stand in the street all night to let them have rest. For we feel that, if the Blessed One were here, it were so high an honor to contribute in any degree to His comfort, or to show in any way our respect for Him, that nothing would be too hard—nothing impossible for us to perform. Permit me to say, however, that very much of this is mere sentiment. In fact, we do not know ourselves. And, in the case of many here present, if Christ were here in the same guise in which He came the first time, they would not receive Him, but the reverse.

Their doors would be shut in His face and, perhaps, they might even join in the bloodthirsty cry of, "Let Him be crucified!" All this talk of generosity and homage to be offered to Jesus, is to a great extent, mere sentiment—mere talk—and we would do no such thing when it came to the practical push. For, mark me, if we really would do these things, we can do them *now*. If it is true that we would minister to Christ, and be servants and deacons towards Him, it is in our power to do so now as much as if He were on earth. And, inasmuch as we live in the neglect of this duty, we must not delude ourselves into the notion that if such-and-such a thing should happen, we should act differently from what we do now.

This sentimentalism about entertaining Christ has at the bottom of it the idea that we should be *honoring ourselves* by it. Now this is not the spirit that gives a worthy friendship towards Christ. He that loves Christ really serves *Him*, not to be honored *by* Him, but to give Him honor. We, indeed, would gladly receive the Lord into our guest chamber, because men would say of us—"He entertained the Lord of Glory! He was honored with His company!" But, oh, if, instead, men would say—"Yonder fool disgraced himself by harboring the mendicant impostor. He entertained the man whom we call Beelzebub," I think there are many who now talk so well of Christ who would decline the privilege of entertaining Jesus if all the world were against Him.

But, dear Friends, I say again, if any of you would serve Christ, it is *now* in your power, for the directions given are meant for all time, and may be carried out *today*. It seems from my text that to follow Christ, or to imitate Him, is really to serve Him. I think we can plainly see this. "Oh," says one, I should like to *do* something to prove that I really would *obey my Lord*. I profess to be His servant and I would show that I am not a servant in name, only, but that whatever my Master says to me, that I will do." Well, the opportunity is before you today—imitate Christ and then prove your obedience. This command may be summed up in this—"Be like I am."

If you would know what He would have you do, see what He did Himself. His own life is your Law, written in living characters. No better proof can you give that you are not a lip server, but a real disciple than by diligently and scrupulously copying Christ even to the least jot and tittle. "Oh," says another, "I would joyfully *assist Him in His wants*. I would

supply Him with bread. I would give Him the cup of cold water to drink. I would not let Him say again, 'The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head.' I would never let Him want."

Imitate Him, then, and you can do it, for what did He do but distribute of his substance to the poor? Did He not care for the wants of all men? Is it not written of Him, "He went about doing good"? If you would supply *His* wants, behold Him in His poor saints. If you would feed *Him*, feed the mouths of His hungry children. If you would clothe *Him*, clothe the backs of His naked ones. If you would succor *Him*, relieve the poor, the widow, and the fatherless—and those that have no helper. Imitate Him in the generousness of His life—care for the wants of men. Follow Him in this, and you will have served Him in supplying *His* wants—

***"Lord, You have Brethren here below,
Flesh of Your flesh through Grace.
Teach us to see You in your saints,
Your sorrows in their face.
In them You may be clothed and fed,
And visited and cheered—
And in their accents of distress
My Savior's voice is heard.
Your face, with reverence and with love,
We in Your poor would see!
O let us rather beg our bread
Than keep it back from You."***

"But," says another, "I would *do* something to cheer Him. I think if He were here I would endeavor to smooth a few of the furrows from His marred brow. I would labor to make the heart of the Man of Sorrows rejoice in some measure, and be glad in some degree. I would lay down my life to give Him peace who is my soul's peace and rest." You can do it. You can do it. If you would serve Him thus, and cheer His heart, *follow Him*. This is the solace of His sorrow, the reward of His labors—the obedience of His children to His commands. This is the spoil which He divides with the mighty. This is the prey which He takes from the strong—that all His saints should be like He is in all righteousness and true holiness.

This is the travail of His soul which He sees and is satisfied—when you are conformed to His image and show forth His character among the sons of men. Oh, if you are Christ-like, you have done more to make Christ happy than all the songs of the angels. If men shall say of you, "That man has been with Jesus and has learned of Him," you have given Jesus better music than cherubim and seraphim can yield.

"Yes," I hear another say, "but *I would honor Him*. If He were here I would climb the trees and strew the branches in His way. How would I gladly run before Him and cry, "Hosanna! Hosanna! Hosanna! Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord!" Would you thus serve Him, by honoring Him, and extolling His name? You can do it. Follow Him. Live as He lived. Act as He acted, and you have honored Him more completely than by strewing palm branches or throwing your clothes in the road. For when is Christ most honored? When His saints are most sanctified. When is His name the most esteemed? When the sons of God walk the most carefully, the most prayerfully, and the most closely with their God. You *can* today serve Christ if you will today humbly take His plain directions, exactly imitate His Example, and closely follow in His steps.

Beloved Friends, I think we have made it clear enough that there is a possibility of serving Christ, of deacon zing towards Christ by the imitation of His Character. Now I quoted the Greek word “deacon zing” because it was the means, when I was looking into the verse, of giving me an illustration of this subject. You remember that on the first Sunday of last month we had in our midst, the venerable Mar Yohanan, a presbyter of the Nestorian Church at Oroomiah. And with him was a deacon whose name was Mar Isaak. These two men had performed an almost incredible journey.

They had walked the entire distance from the borders of Persia—over the mountains of Armenia and Circassia—across the steppes of Russia. And from Russia right through Prussia, Germany and Holland, till at last they arrived in London. Now, I could not help but notice how the deacon, the servant, carefully attended in all things to the venerable presbyter whom we saw among us. How he marked his every look that he might not for a moment appear to neglect his reverend leader. Probably on that day when Yohanan the presbyter, first thought of this journey, he addressed Isaak thus—“Isaak, are you a true servant?” “Yes,” says he, “ever since the Church made me deacon I have loved you as my own soul, and I would gladly do anything for your comfort.”

“Then,” says he, “If you would serve me, *follow me.*” “But must I leave my children and my household?” “Verily,” says the presbyter; “it must even be so, for I, also, shall leave behind me my wife and children, and go forth on a long and weary journey—many a hundred miles, to Britain, where there are many who love our Lord, and who may help the persecuted saints in this region.” Now came the pinch, and Isaak, if he would serve the presbyter, must follow him. He does not decline the service. When he accepted the office of the deacon, he resolved to really be the servant of the Church and her minister. And he is now ready to undertake the journey with his presbyter.

I think I see them sallying forth. They journey among the Kurds, a savage people always thirsting for the Christians' blood—with more than Mohammedan hatred of Christ. Perhaps Isaak is faint-hearted and would like to turn back. “If any man would serve me, let him follow me,” says the hoary presbyter, as he strikes his staff upon the ground and advances fearless of the foe. They pass one danger and encounter another. A mountain is in their way lifting its snowy crest even to the sky. The gray-bearded preacher goes first, and he cries, “Isaak, if you would serve me, follow me.” And on they go, climbing from crag to crag, along the unfrequented path where scarce the wild goat has found a footing.

Soon they travel through the valley and across the barren, snowy, pathless wilderness, the presbyter saying continually, “Brother, if you would deaconize towards me, follow me, for now it is that it shall be proved to the world that you are a true servant of the Church and are willing to follow the presbyter to the world's end.” He did follow him right faithfully, and they reached their journey's end together. Now, this is just what Jesus Christ says to us. We are all His deacons, His servants. We all became engaged, in the day when we gave ourselves to Him, that we would take up our cross and follow Him. And He points today to some high mountain, saying, “If you would serve Me, follow Me.”

He does not ask you to *lead*. He Himself has gone before. He calls you to no labor which He has not Himself already accomplished. Oh, can you say in your heart today—

***“Through floods and flames if Jesus leads,
I’ll follow where He goes.
‘Hinder me not,’ shall be my cry,
Though earth and Hell oppose”?***

This is true service, the best that can be rendered, to follow where He leads the way, let the way be never so rough or arduous, to persevere to the end, even though the end be a martyr's death.

Come, Brethren, and especially those who are beginners, and have but lately enlisted in Christ's cause—let me mark you out Christ's way, and then—if you would serve Him, follow Him. I know the proud flesh wants to serve Christ by striking out new paths. Proud man has a desire to preach new doctrines, to set up a new Church—to be an original thinker, to judge and consider—do anything but *obey*. This is not service to Christ. He that would serve Christ must follow Him. He must be content to tread only in the old footsteps and go only where Christ has led the way. It is not for you and me to be originals. We must be humble *copies* of Christ.

There must be nothing about our religion of our own inventing. It is for us to lay thought, and judgment, and opinion at the feet of Christ—and do what *HE* bids us—simply because He gives the command. Look, then, disciples, at your Lord. I think I see the Savior—oh, that you would follow Him today! I think I see Him coming. It is His first public entry in the world. And where does He go? It is the beginning of His manifest ministry among men. He is about to show you what should be the beginning of yours.

He goes to Jordan. There stands the Baptist, and the willing crowds are baptized with the Baptism of repentance. As John stands there, lo, the Son of Man Himself appears. And John says, “I have need to be baptized of You and come You to me?” But our Master, whom if we would serve, we must follow, says, “Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness.” He descends into the stream. He is buried beneath the water. And as he comes up from that immersion, the Heaven is opened and the Spirit descends upon Him like a dove.

If you would serve Him, follow Him. “But...but...but!” Alas, my Brothers and Sisters, this is not a fitting word for a disciple—you forget your service when you begin to question. If you would serve Him, follow Him. Your business as a servant is not to object, but to obey. Imagine that you ask your servant to fill a bath with water. “But...” You say, “I must have it filled.” But she questions again, and again, and again, and at last flatly refuses to do more than sprinkle it with a few drops. Do you call her a servant any longer? Methinks no.

So there are some of you who see most clearly that your Master was baptized at the commencement of His public life, and yet you will be raising questions where there is no room for questions. You will neglect a duty which is as plain in Scripture as the very Deity of Christ. You will turn aside from a Baptism which is as plainly taught in express words as even the doctrine of justification by faith—you do not take up your service as you should.

“But, it is not essential,” you say. Is that a *servant's* business? “But what good will it do?” Is this a question for a *servant*? “If any man will serve Me”—Christ does not say—“Let him question Me. Let him be asking Me why I command him to do such a thing.” No, no! He says, “Let him follow Me.” “But I dread the publicity, I fear the ordinance.” It is your proud flesh that fears it—subdue it under your feet and take up your cross, for there are far heavier crosses than this to carry. Thus your Master puts it—“If any man will serve Me, let him follow Me.”

He now comes from Jordan and the Spirit leads Him into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. You, too, must be tempted. Do not think when you are tempted that, therefore, you are out of Christ. No—if you would be His servant, you must follow Him, and must be tempted, too. You must be assailed in many points. The arrows must fly from above and from beneath. You must be tried on all hands and in all ways. Run not from the conflict, for if any man would serve Christ, he must follow Him through the hottest temptations as well as through the brightest joys.

Now the Master comes forth boldly and begins to preach and teach and labor. If you would serve Him, follow Him! Labor for Him. In some way or other teach His Gospel. If you cannot teach it to the thousands, teach it to the tens. If you cannot converse with multitudes, converse with one at the well, as Christ did at Sychar. If you would be His servant, let His life, written in large letters, be *your* life. And let your life be the miniature, the condensation of the life of Christ. —“If any man would serve Me, let him follow Me.”

You see the Master bears bold witness before His adversaries. He beards the Pharisee to His face. He upbraids the hypocrites who oppose Him. Follow Him, if you would serve Him. Let there not be a single foe before whose face you would fear His cause to plead. Speak up for His name. Let no blush suffuse your cheeks. Speak His name before kings, nor yield to sinful shame. But see, the Master comes into the black cloud of reproach—they say He has a devil, and is mad. Follow Him there. Now, you servants of God, now is the trying hour. Now follow Him. Be rejected and despised, and hooted at with Him and sing as you go through it all—

***“If on my face, for Your dear name,
Shame and reproach shall be,
I'll hail reproach and welcome shame,
If You'll remember me.”***

Look, He comes to die. If you would serve Him, follow Him. Be ready to be brought before the judgment seat for His name. Be ready to yield your life up at His command, and if the martyr days should ever return, give your blood as freely as you would give water from the well. Or if they come not, spend that blood, and the life it gives them, devoting every hour of every day, and every moment of every hour, to His cause, whose you are, and whom you do profess to serve. No new fashions, no new views and opinions—the imitation of Christ is the only mode of service, and the Master lays it down before each of you. Ask your consciences whether you have ever really served Him—“If any man would serve Me, let him follow Me.”

Walk in the way of Christ, it is the King's highway. I pass the question round these galleries, and this vast area—Are you serving Christ? “Well, I subscribe to a charity.” Are you serving Christ? “I intend to build a row of

almshouses.” My dear Brothers and Sisters, you may do all this and yet not be serving Christ, for your Master tells you that to serve Him is to *follow* Him. Have you followed Him? Have you believed in Him? Is He All in All to you, and do you now make His life the guiding star of your life? And do you desire to be, and are you, as far as is possible to man—made like He in all things—that you may be obedient unto His will? God help us that desiring to *serve* Immanuel, we may do it by *following* Him!

II. We must come to our second point—**GENEROUS STIPULATIONS FROM A NOBLE MASTER.** “Where I am, there shall also My servant be.” Whoever heard of such conditions as these from an ordinary master? The master is in the drawing room, the servant is in the kitchen. The master is in the parlor, the servant is in the workshop. The master sits at the table with his friends, the servant girds himself to wait on them. What, I say, what generous stipulations does the master make—“Where I am, there shall also My servant be”!

Well now, to return to the illustration we used before—“Where I am, there shall also my deacon be”—still using old Yohanan and Isaak as your pattern, you will remember that wherever the old presbyter went, there was Isaak at his side. I dare say many a night they slept under the broad shadow of a tree, and where Yohanan was, there the deacon was, too. Were they entertained by generous friends? They shared the same couch. At times they sat around the genial fire, but they sat together. Other times they shivered in the winter's cold—but they shivered side by side. Their lot during the long journey was the same. And when they arrived here they sat with us at the same table. We spoke to them as to those who were intimate friends, and I know that throughout the whole of their voyage, where the presbyter was, there the deacon was, also.

Do you not see that this was the rule which Christ carried out all His life? He went to a wedding—is it not written, the disciples of Jesus were there? Jesus once rejoiced in spirit over the elect ones, the babes and sucklings to whom God had revealed Himself—yes, but His disciples shared the joy, because Satan fell like lightning from Heaven—and even the devils were subject to them. The Master often went to the house of Lazarus. And Martha and Mary made a great feast—but the disciples were always there. Sometimes they went to a Pharisee's house—a very respectable gentleman—and if Christ had been an ordinary man he might have said, “I cannot take those poor fishermen with Me. It will lower My character if they see what rag tags follow at My heels.” But no, where He was, there His servants were.

And you know, Beloved, one time He rode in triumph through the streets of Jerusalem. But He did not say to His disciples, “Now you had better keep out of the way. This is a day in which I am to be honored, and I think you will rather spoil the pageantry if they see you in your fishermen's dress walking with Me.” No—where He was, there were His servants, also. And when the multitudes cried, “Hosanna,” and welcomed the Master, the welcome was shared by the disciples. Then there came His last great feast. “With desire,” said He, have I desired to eat this Passover with you—it was “*with you*”—He could not enjoy that last supper except with them. “Where I am, there shall also My servant be.” Share and share alike. Their lot, My lot. My portion, their portion forever.

Mark, Beloved, if the Lord thus shared His comforts among His disciples, He expected them to share His discomforts. He was in a ship in a great storm, and the disciples must be with Him, though they are sorely afraid. He goes to Gethsemane. He sweats, as it were, great drops of blood. His disciples must be with Him there, even though they cannot bear it, and are asleep. And though in His last passion they could not be with Him, for He must tread the winepress alone, yet, mark you, His disciples were with Him afterwards, for if He were brought before kings, so were they. If He stood falsely accused, so, in after years, did they. If He died upon the Cross a martyr, so did they!

And so, for three hundred years, where Christ was *in death*, there His Church was, too, for the gibbet and the cross and the stake and the block, and the bloody axe had stern work to do with Christ's Church, that it might be fulfilled—"Where I am, there shall also My servant be."

Beloved, this stands true to you and me this morning. Where Christ was we must be. "The disciple is not above his Master, nor the servant above his Lord." Blessed be His name, He is gone to Heaven, now, and where He is, there shall His servants be, in the same Heaven in His Father's house. Yes, He has mounted to His Throne, and where He is, there shall His servants be. "To Him that overcomes will I give to sit on My Throne, even as I have overcome and have sat down upon My Father's Throne." He is in the joy of His Father. And where He is, there must His servants be.

We also must be partakers of His joy that His joy may be full. Lo, He comes! The trumpet sounds! Jesus comes! The second advent draws near. But when He comes, all His saints shall come with Him. My God shall come, and all His saints with Him. He reigns—kings and princes, your scepters are not your own. He comes to take them from your hands and your crowns from your heads—Jesus comes to "reign from pole to pole with illimitable sway." And we shall reign with Him, for, "Where I am, there also shall My servant be."

I think you understand, then, that the conditions of the service are these—fare ill or fare well—we are to have joint stock with Christ. We are to take Him for better or for worse, in shame and in honor, in reproach and in esteem, in riches and in poverty, in life and in death, in time and in eternity. "Where I am, there shall also My servant be." I love my Master's conditions! He is a noble Master! Shall I ever blush to go where He goes? God forbid, for if I do, I may be afraid lest at the last He should ignore me and should not permit me to be where He is.

I have heard an old story, somewhat amusing, which will illustrate this point, and then I shall leave it. I have heard that a noted Methodist preacher, who commenced his ministry very early in life, suffered not a little at first because of his humble origin and unpromising exterior. Being sent on the circuit to a certain house on a Saturday night, to be in readiness for preaching on the Sunday, the good woman, who did not like the look of him, sent him round to the kitchen. There was a manservant who served them at odd times, and also worked in the coal mine, or at the forge, who was surprised to see the minister in the kitchen with him when he came from labor.

John, rough as he was, welcomed the despised preacher, and tried to cheer his heart. The minister shared John's meal of porridge, John's bed

in the cockloft and John's humble breakfast. He walked to the House of God with John in the morning. Now, the preacher was a notable man, though then unknown, and he had not long opened his mouth before the congregation perceived that there was something in him, and the good hostess, who had so badly entertained him, began to feel a little uneasy. When the sermon was over there were many invitations for the minister to come visit, and the hostess, fearful of losing her now honored guest, begged him to walk home with her.

To her surprise, he said, "I supped with John, I slept with John, I breakfasted with John. I walked here with John, and I'll walk home with John." So when dinner came he was, of course, entreated to come into the chief room, for many friends wished to dine with this young minister, who was so much admired and esteemed. But no, he would dine in the kitchen. He had supped with John, he had breakfasted with John, and he would dine with John. They begged him to come into the parlor and at last he consented on the condition that John should sit at the same table. "For," he said, very properly, "John was with me in my humiliation, and I will not sit down to dine unless he is with me in my exaltation."

So on he went till the Monday morning, sleeping at night with John, and persevering in the same rule—"I supped with John, I slept with John, I breakfasted with John, I walked with John, I'll walk home with John, and I'll dine with John, for John was with me at the beginning and he shall be with me to the end."

Brethren, this story may be turned to account thus: Our Master came into this world once, and they sent Him into the servants' place. They sent Him where the poor and despised ones were, and said, "Live with them. The manger and the cottage are good enough for You." He lived with poverty and supped with toil. Now the name of Christ is honored, and kings and cardinals, popes and bishops, say, "Master, come and dine with us." Yes, the proud emperor and philosopher would have Him sup with them. But still He says—"No, I was with the poor and afflicted when I was on earth, and I will be with them to the end. And when the great feast is made in Heaven, the humble shall sit with Me and the poor and despised who were not ashamed of Me, of them will I not be ashamed when I come in the glory of My Father and all My holy angels with Me."

III. We have, thirdly, A GLORIOUS REWARD FOR IMPERFECT SERVICES. "If any man serve Me, him will My Father honor."

If any man will serve Christ in the way Christ bids him, that is, by following Him. If any man is content not to do as father or grandmother did, but will follow Christ and not man. If any man will break through all customs, all regulations, all rotten proprieties, and just do as Christ did, and imitate Him in all things—that man will have honor, first of all, *in his own soul*. He shall have such blessed peace of conscience, he shall have such sweet fellowship with Christ, he shall have such profound peace from the Father's right hand, that it shall be very apparent to him that the Father honors him.

Look at John Knox, who never feared the face of man. He followed Christ as far as his light went, and how greatly the Father honored him with unruffled serenity of heart. What calm that gigantic spirit had! When the world was all in uproar against him, how peacefully he smiled in the

face of the roaring of the multitude, for God honored him with an indwelling consciousness of being right before the Lord.

Then, again, I am persuaded that God will honor such a man *by success, by prospering him in his ministry and in whatever he may attempt for Christ*. Why is it that so little success rests on some who labor for God? Because they do not serve Christ in the way He would have them serve Him—by imitating Him. Ecclesiastical courts, rubrics, rules, forms, liturgies, and such like, confine too many, who if they would snap the fetter, would be honored of the Lord. If there were in connection with this Church anything which I thought to be unscriptural, I could not expect to have God's blessing in it.

And I think if any man here is a member of a Church of which he can say, "Well, there are many wrong things in it, but I do not think I ought to come out," you cannot expect God's blessing. He that would serve Christ, must follow Christ in little things as well as in great things. Whenever we say, "Well, there are some things wrong in my position but I can do more good where I am," we set ourselves up as masters instead of *servants*. Our business is conscientiously to *follow*, as far as our light goes, the example of Christ in every respect, and in all things. And if this should entail the giving up of our present position and usefulness, we must not consider results, but instantly obey imperative commands.

I claim for my Master immediate, unquestioning, unqualified obedience to all His Words. And I demand of you, in His name, that you renounce everything which prevents your rendering perfect, unhesitating service to His Person and doctrine. Whether as members of a Church, or a community, or in a trade, if you have anything that prevents your following Christ, leave everything and come right out—for you cannot expect great success from God till you have honored Christ by following Him in all things. If you think you know better than Christ, why then I have done with you. If you think that you can lead a better life, or set a better example, you are proud, indeed! Or, if you imagine that in your position you may tolerate yourselves in disobeying His commands, you talk as one of the foolish women talks but not as a disciple of Christ. I say again, if you would be honored of God, you must serve Christ by following Him.

And lastly, such who thus serve Christ, by following Him, *shall have great honor at the last*. We will suppose that the Prince of Wales is wrecked on a certain voyage and is cast on shore with only one companion. The prince falls into the hands of barbarians and there is an opportunity for his companion to escape. But he says, "No, my Prince, I will stay with you to the last, and if we die, we will die together." The prince is thrown into a dungeon. His companion is in the prison with him, and serves him, and waits upon him. The prince is sick—it is a contagious fever—his companion nurses him—puts the cooling liquid to his mouth—and waits on him with a mother's care.

He recovers a little. The fond attendant carries the young prince, as he is getting better, into the open air, and tends him as a mother would her child. They are subject to deep poverty—they share their last crust together. They are hooted at as they go through the streets, and they are hooted at together. At last, by some turn in Providence, it is discovered where the prince is, and he is brought home. Who is the man that the queen will delight to honor? "Make way for this man. He was with my son

in prison—he was with my son when he was near death—he nursed him—he suffered with him—he was reproached for him.” I fancy she would look with greater affection upon the poor servant than upon the greatest statesman. And I think that as long as she lived she would remember him above all the rest, for she would say, “He was with my son in all his sorrow and affliction, and I will honor him above all the mighty ones in the land.”

And now dear Brothers and Sisters, if you and I shall be with Christ, the King's Son. If we shall suffer with Him, and be reproached with Him. If we shall follow Him anywhere and everywhere, making no choice about the way, whether it shall be rough or smooth, whether it shall be green sward or miry bog—if we can go with Him to prison and to death, if such times come—then we shall be the men whom Heaven's King delights to honor. “Make room for him, you angels! Make room you cherubim and seraphim! Stand back you peers of Heaven's realm! Here comes the man. He was poor, mean and afflicted. But he was with My Son and was like My Son. Come here, Man! Here, take your crown and sit with My Son in His glory, for you were with My Son in His shame!” Oh that the Holy Spirit would teach us how to follow Jesus and enable us to tread in His steps!

I conclude by again asking this important question—Are you with Christ today? Have you put your hand into Christ's hand to be Christ's forever? My Hearers, the speaker wants to make this question ring in your ears—Are you with Christ today? For he that is not with Him is against Him. And he that follows not Christ scatters abroad. Do you trust Christ? Oh, Sinner, if you do not, I beseech you trust Him now, and you are saved. If you have trusted Christ, is it the true trust? If it is, it will make you follow Him and you will be obedient to His every wish and word. Faith, such as the Holy Spirit gives, always leads to *obedience*.

Is it so? Is it so? If not, humble yourself before God. Believe in Him who is the only foundation upon which a sinner's hope can be built. Take up your cross daily, and through evil report and through good report, follow the Master even to the end, and the Lord God, the God of Heaven and earth, the fountain of honor, shall glorify you when Christ comes in His kingdom.

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A GOLDEN PRAYER

NO. 1391

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 30, 1877,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Father, glorify Your name.”
John 12:28.***

IN the first part of my discourse this morning I shall strictly keep to my text, as the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and endeavor to show what it teaches us with regard to Him. These are His own words and it would be robbery to borrow them until first we have seen what they meant as they fell from His lips. Their most golden meaning must be seen in the light of His sacred Countenance. Then, in the second part of my sermon, I shall try to point out how the petition before us may be used by ourselves. I pray that Divine Grace may be given us that it may be engraved upon our hearts and that each one of us may be taught by the Holy Spirit daily to say for himself, “Father, glorify Your name.”

I would suggest that these words should be to all the Lord's people in this Church their slogan for another year and, indeed, their prayer throughout life. It will as well behoove the beginner in Grace as the ripe Believer. It will be proper both at the wicket gate of faith as at the portals of Glory. Like a lovely rainbow, let the prayer, “Father, glorify Your name,” arch over the whole period of our life on earth. I cannot suggest a better petition for the present moment, nor, indeed, for *any* moment of our pilgrimage. Let us close the old year with it and open the door of the new to the same note.

As for the past, “Father, glorify Your name in the present. Fulfill this desire unto Your servants and in the future do it yet more abundantly!”

I. Let us look, then, at the words, first of all, IN RESPECT TO OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. They occur in the following connection. He had worked a notable miracle in the raising of Lazarus from the dead. The fame of the miracle had attracted many to hear Him. Enthusiastic crowds had gathered and He had become so extremely popular that the Pharisees said, “the world has gone after Him.” The people were willing to have made Him a king—and a great concourse met Him with branches of palm trees and cried, “Hosanna! Blessed is the King of Israel that comes in the name of the Lord.”

Our Lord passed in royal but humble pomp through the streets of Jerusalem, riding upon a colt, the foal of an ass. This public manifestation, the renown of the miracle and the general talk of the populace led to strangers hearing of Him and enquiring about Him. And certain intelligent Greeks of a very respectable order—for their mode of address to Philip shows their superior behavior—asked to be introduced to Him. They wished to “see Jesus,” not, of course, merely see Him in the streets, for that they could do if they pleased without applying to Philip. No, they

wanted an interview with Him. They wanted to learn more about His teaching and His claims.

I suppose that the sight of these Greeks greatly gladdened the heart of the Savior, for He delighted to see men coming to the light. He seemed to say within Himself, "Behold the nations come to Me. The Gentiles arise and seek their Savior." He saw in those Greeks the advance guard of the Gentile world. He looked upon the strangers with delight, regarding them as representative men, the first of myriads who, from the ends of the earth and the islands of the sea, would come flocking to Him to behold the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Our Lord rejoiced in spirit! His heart was glad within Him and He began to address Himself to the people round about—and to the Greeks who mingled with the throng.

At that very moment the thought flashed across the Savior's mind, "But these nations who are to be born unto Me and to be saved by Me, cannot be so born without birth-pangs, nor saved unless I endure unspeakable suffering as their Redeemer." This fact came vividly before our Lord's mind and it rushed over His spirit like a raging torrent. He saw that He could not become the seed corn of a great harvest unless, first of all, He should fall into the ground and die. He was the one grain of wheat upon whom all depended and He must lose comfort and life—and be buried in the earth—or else He would abide alone and bring forth no fruit. He saw the vicarious suffering which lay in His way and His soul was troubled.

Do not imagine that our Savior dreaded death, in itself considered. He was far superior in sacred courage and strength of mind to any of His servants and yet many of them have welcomed death! And others of them, such as the martyrs, have endured it in its most terrible forms, without fear, even expressing a holy delight in glorifying the name of God by their mortal agony. Our Lord was not less brave than these in prospect of His departure. But never let it be forgotten that the death of Christ was a very peculiar one and, in fact, stands alone by itself! His death was the vindication of Justice. It was the death of the Sin-Bearer. It was a sacrificial, substitutionary, expiatory death—and this is very different from the death of a pardoned and justified Believer who passes out of the world resting on the Atonement and supported by a sense of having been reconciled to God by the great Sacrifice.

Our Lord was called to bear the enormous load of man's transgressions—over His holy soul the dark shadow of human guilt must pass—and on His sensitive spirit must be made to meet the iniquity of us all. His saints' deaths are blessed in the sight of the Lord, but He must be made a curse for us that we might be blessed in Him! And as the mind of Christ clearly perceived this lying in the way of that triumph among the Gentiles which gave Him joy, there was a struggle in His soul—and that struggle was manifested before the assembled people. The Greeks desired to see Jesus and they did see Him in a very remarkable manner—so that they must have been astounded at the sight! If they expected to see a king, they did, indeed, behold a royal soul, but they saw Him in such grief as falls not to the lot of common men. If they wished to see somewhat of His greatness of spirit and power of mind, they did see it, but it was a power

which did not transfigure His face with *glory*, but filled it with an agony marring all its beauty!

I shall not be too bold if I say that Gethsemane was rehearsed in public upon the occasion before us. Our Lord says His soul was troubled. He felt a sort of foreshadowing of that midnight among the olives in which His soul was “exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death.” It was out of that conflict that our text came—in fact, our text is to His suffering in the midst of the crowd what, “nevertheless not as I will, but as You will,” was to the agony of Gethsemane, or what, “It is finished,” was to the passion upon Calvary. It was the culminating point, the climax and the conquest of a great mental battle! And when He had thus spoken He seemed to shake Himself clear of the agony and to emerge from it with the memory of it still upon Him—but with His face set like a flint to go forward to the bitter and the glorious end—this being now His watchword, “Father, glorify Your name.”

I shall need to call your attention, dear Friends, briefly here, first, to the trouble of the Redeemer’s soul. I always tremble within myself when I try to speak of the inner conflicts of our blessed Lord, for it is so easy to make a mistake and darken counsel by words without knowledge. His Person is complex and, therefore, we readily confuse. Yet He Himself is but one and it is equally dangerous to make over nice distinctions. Loving jealousy of our Lord’s honor makes us feel that we scarcely know how to speak of Him! I remember an earnest admirer of the arts who, in pointing with his walking-stick to the beauties of a famous picture, pushed his cane through the canvas and ruined it. And it is possible that in our enthusiasm to point out the beauties and points of interest in the life and death of our Lord, we may spoil it all.

I fear lest in my ignorance I should make sorrow for myself by dishonoring Him for whose honor I would gladly lay down and die. Help me, O Divine Spirit! This much is clear, that our Savior’s heart was full of trouble. He who could still the sea and bid the storms retreat was tempest-tossed in His own soul and cast about Him for anchorage. He who could drive the fever from its lair, or send a legion of demons into the deep was, nevertheless, troubled in spirit and cried, “What shall I say?” Master of all worlds, supreme among the angels and adored at His Father’s right hand, yet He confesses, “Now is My soul troubled.”

Lord of all, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. How near akin it makes Him to us! How human! How compassed with infirmity! We worship Him and rightly so, but still He is a Man and a mourner. We call Him Master and Lord, and we do well, yet He not only washed His disciples’ feet, but His own feet trembled in the rough places of the way. He felt those same commotions of spirit which make our hearts sad within us and cause us to pour out our souls within us. Do not think of the Lord Jesus otherwise than as of a dear Brother born for adversity, or a faithful Husband sharing all our lot, being bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. Did *you* cry out in anguish, “Now is my soul troubled”? Then remember that your Lord has used the same words!

Are you half distracted? Are you tossed to and fro in your thoughts? Do you ever ask, “What shall I say?” Jesus understands by sympathy what it

is you mean. Do you look around you and feel that you know not what to do and does your trembling heart suggest that you should pray, "Father, save me from this hour"? In all this you may see the Well-Beloved's foot-prints—you are not upon a new and strange track. He leads you through no darker rooms than He went through Himself. With the same afflictions He has been afflicted—there is nothing in them novel or surprising to His sympathetic heart! Beloved Friends, let me invite you to consider that not only did our Lord thus suffer, but it is joyful to reflect that He suffered all this without sin!

Therefore it follows that mental conflict is not, in itself, sinful—even the shrinking back of the flesh from suffering is not necessarily evil. And the question, "What shall I say?" and the apparent distraction of the spirit, for the moment, as to what shall be its course, are not, in themselves, criminal. There could be no sin in the Lord Jesus and, consequently, there is not, of necessity, sin in *our* inward struggles, though I am very far from venturing to hope that in any one of them we are quite clear of fault. Our Lord's Nature was so pure that however much it was stirred, it remained clear. But in our case, though the stirring is not sinful, it sets in motion the sin which dwells in us and we are defiled.

Yet I do not believe that all those depressions of spirit which come of sickness, or all those wanderings of mind in the heat of fever, or all the shrinking and drawing back from pain which are essential to our humanity are set down as sin by our heavenly Father—though sin is doubtless mixed with them. If they are sinful in themselves, yet surely they are blotted out as soon as written down, for "like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him." He pities rather than censures or condemns! You do not judge your children harshly for what they say when they are racked with pain or prostrated by weakness! You bear with their little fancies and temper and the like, and you never taunt them with their follies afterwards!

Neither can I think that our heavenly Father would have us doubt our interest in Christ because, in our semi-delirium, we could not realize His love. Nor would He have us question the Divine Grace which is in us because our feverish thoughts were near akin to despair. When the true heart struggles to love and trust and obey, but the poor brain is tortured with dark thoughts, the conflict is not all sinful, nor any of it necessarily so. There may be an awful struggle in the soul and yet the Father may be glorified. The sin lies not in the conflict but in the defeat, if there is defeat. The guilt is not in the shrinking from pain, but in permitting that natural feeling to hinder us from duty or to lead us to rebel against chastisement. "If it is possible, let this cup pass from me," is not a sinful utterance if it is followed by, "nevertheless not as I will, but as You will."

I feel so glad to think our Lord, when He was passing through this inward conflict, spoke out His feelings. It is instructive that He should have done so, for with His strength of mind He was quite capable of preserving a self-contained attitude and keeping His agony to Himself. Yet you notice that neither here, in which case He spoke so that others heard Him, nor at Gethsemane, in which case He took three of His disciples to be with Him and went to them again and again for sympathy—nor even on the

Cross, in which case He cried aloud, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" did He endeavor to conceal His emotion from others.

It may be that by this He intended to teach us wisdom. He would show us by His own example that it is well for us not to be too much shut up within ourselves. Smother not your sorrow, tell it out or it may gather an ungovernable heat! That is the worst of grief which cannot weep or moan. Draw up the sluices—give a vent to pent up feelings! Even though it is but a child who hears your tale, it will relieve your mind to tell it. Anything is better than banking up the fires and concentrating all the heat within the soul. Act not the stoic's part—be not ashamed to let it be known that you are a man—a man who can grieve and be troubled even as others!

It may sometimes be well to follow the poet's advice who says—

***"Bear and still bear and silent be,
Tell no man your misery,"***

but I question if the occasions are very frequent. At any rate, such is not the command of our Lord, nor does His example point in that direction. In speaking out, our Lord gives us a full permit to speak, too. We might have said, "No, I will not tell what is going on within, lest my weakness should seem to dishonor God." Now we know that our Lord did not dishonor the Father by saying, "Now is My soul troubled," and by revealing the inward conflict of His soul! Neither will the fact of our speaking out our grief necessarily dishonor our God. Jesus wept and we may weep. Jesus told His sorrow to His friends and you may do the same.

In thus speaking, our Lord affords us the best of help, for His fellow-feeling is a grand support. Did He say, "Now is My soul troubled"? and did He scarcely know what to ask? But did He, at the last, still triumph and resign Himself into His Father's hands? Then, girt about by the same power, we also will encounter the same sorrow after our measure and endure until we triumph as He did! Even though in the triumph there should be clear evidence of our personal weakness, yet we will not regret it since by that means our God shall be the more surely glorified by the more distinct revelation of His power. I will say no more about the trouble of our Redeemer because I would now ask you to fix your thoughts, for a minute, upon the firm resolve which the text sets forth.

There is a battle, but from the very first moment to the last of it there is really no question in the Savior's mind about what He means to do—His purpose was settled beyond disturbance. The surface of His mind was ruffled, but deep down in His heart the current of the Redeemer's soul flowed on irresistibly in the ordained channel. He was always straitened till He had been baptized with the appointed Baptism. Observe the question raised and see how really it was answered in His heart before He asked it. "Now is My soul troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour?'" Must men be unsaved and Jesus be delivered from the lowering storm? If so, yonder Greeks need not ask to see Him, for there will be no "life look" at Him!

The disciples round about need not cling to Him as their helper, for there is no help in Him unless He dies to redeem the sons of men! Shall men, then, be unredeemed? Shall the blood of Atonement not be spilled and no man be ransomed from going down to the Pit? Shall He remain

alone, the grain of wheat unsown? If He does, He will be happy enough and glorious enough, for Heaven is all His own! Does He need men to make Him blessed? Does He require worms of the dust to make Him glorious? Should He remain alone, He will still be God and Lord!

But, shall the death penalty be left to be borne by men, guilty men, who deserve to bear it? Shall there be no Cross, no Calvary, no open tomb, no Resurrection, no gates of Heaven set wide open for coming souls? There is the question and you see in the text how resolutely Jesus had settled it! He says in effect—"Father, glorify Your name by My death! For this purpose have I come to this hour, that by My agony and bloody sweat, by My Cross and passion, I may redeem the sons of men. Redeemed they must and shall be, cost Me what it may! I have resolved to bear the penalty and magnify Your Law and I will perform it, though Hell itself is let loose against Me and all its waves of fire dash over Me. I will endure the Cross and despise the shame to honor You, My Father."

Observe right well that the text indicates the deep intent which steadied our Lord's resolve. Why is Christ resolved to die? Is it to save men? Yes, but not as the chief reason. His first prayer is not, "Father, save My people," but, "Father, glorify Your name." The Glory of God was the chief end and objective of our Savior's life and death. It is that the Father's name may be illustrious that Jesus would have souls redeemed! His passion had for its main intent the exhibition of the attributes of God. And, Brothers and Sisters, how completely He has glorified Jehovah's name! Upon the Cross we see the Divine Justice in the streaming wounds of the great Substitute—for the Son of God must die when sin is laid upon Him! There, also, you behold infinite Wisdom, for what but Infallible Wisdom could have devised the way whereby God might be just and yet the Justifier of him that believes?

There, too, is love—rich, free, boundless love—never so conspicuous as in the death of man's Redeemer! To this day it still remains a question concerning the Atonement which of the letters is best written—the justice, the wisdom, or the love. In the Atonement the Divine attributes are all so perfectly glorified that no one crowds out the other—each one has its full display without, in the least degree, diminishing the glory of any other! Our blessed Lord, that the Father might be glorified, pushed on to the end which He had set before Him. Whatever conflict might be within His spirit, His heart was fixed upon bearing our load to the death and suffering our penalty to the end.

Now, Brethren, I will detain you here with but one other thought—it is this—the grand result which came of it was that God was, in very deed, greatly glorified and to this fact special testimony was given. A Voice was heard out of Heaven saying, "I have both glorified it and will glorify it again." That Voice speaks of the past—the Incarnation of Christ had glorified the name of God. I am unable to describe to you how much luster the love of God receives from the fact of the Word being made flesh and dwelling among us! It is the mystery of mysteries, the marvel of all marvels that the Creator should espouse the nature of His *creature* and that He should be found in fashion as a man!

Oh, Bethlehem, you have exceedingly magnified the condescension of God! Angels might well sing, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, goodwill towards men." Nor Bethlehem, alone, but Nazareth and the 30 years which our Lord spent on earth all illustrate the condescension, the pity, the long-suffering of God. Did God dwell among us 30 years? Did He abide in humility in the carpenter's shop for the best part of that time and did He afterwards come forth to be a poor Man, a Teacher of peasants, a Friend of sinners, a Man of Sorrows, despised and rejected of men? Could the Holy and the Just, the Infinite and the Glorious thus, as it were, compress infinity into so small a space and marry Deity to such poverty and shame? It was so! Then tune your harps anew, you seraphs, to tell the amazing love and condescension of "Immanuel, God with us."

Well spoke that Voice—"I have glorified it." But listen yet again, for it adds—"and will glorify it again." To my mind that word, "again," sounds like certain voices I have heard in the Alps. The horn is sounded and then follows an echo—no—twice, thrice and perhaps 50 times the music is distinctly repeated! The voices follow each other in gradually melting strains. The metaphor is not complete, for in this case the echoes *increase* in volume. Instead of diminishing, they wax louder and louder. Lo, Jesus hangs upon the Cross and dies—and God is glorified, for Justice has his due. He lies in the grave till the third morning, but He bursts the bonds of Death! Lo, God's great name is glorified again, since the Divine power, truth and faithfulness are all seen in the Resurrection of Christ!

Yet a few more days and He ascends into Heaven, the Man, the God—and a cloud hides Him from our sight—He has glorified the Father's name again by leading captivity captive! Then comes Pentecost and the preaching of the Gospel among the heathen. And then is the name of God glorified by the outpouring of the Spirit! Every conversion of a sinner and every sanctification of a Believer is a fresh glorifying of the name of the Father! And every reception of a perfected one into Heaven—and surely they are entering Heaven every day, troops of them climbing the celestial hills, drawn upward by almighty love—everyone, I say, in entering into Paradise glorifies Jehovah's name again!

And, Brothers and Sisters, by-and-by, when the whole earth shall be filled with His Glory, then will the Father glorify His name again. When in His own time the Lord shall descend from Heaven with a shout with the trumpet of the archangel and the voice of God—and when He shall reign among His ancients gloriously—we shall hear the gladsome acclamation, "Hallelujah, hallelujah, the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!" And when comes the end and He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father, and God shall be All in All—then shall the eternal echoes roll along the glories of the great Father God! The glorious name of the one Jehovah shall, through all space and all eternity, be magnified and the prayer of our once suffering but now exalted Savior shall be fully answered, "Father, glorify Your name."

II. Now, Brothers and Sisters, we will use our text IN REFERENCE TO OURSELVES. May the Holy Spirit direct us in doing so. I pray that this text may be our prayer from this time forth, "Father, glorify Your name." Have you, dear Hearers, ever prayed this prayer? I trust I am addressing

many to whom it is a very familiar desire and yet I question if any here have ever presented it so earnestly as those from whom it has been forced by suffering and grief. God's birds often sing best in cages—at any rate, when they have been loose a little while and their notes grow somewhat dull—He tunes their pipes again if He puts them away awhile and clips their wings.

Now this text, as far as we are concerned, whenever we can use it, indicates conflict ended. Sometimes we are in such a condition that we do not know which way to turn. We are in great affliction. It may not be so much outward trouble as distress of mind which is worst of all. The water has leaked into the ship and that is worse than an ocean outside. The vessel begins to fill. You use the pumps, but cannot keep it afloat. At such times you cry, "What shall I do? What shall I say? Where can I look? I am oppressed and overwhelmed."

But there is an end of the conflict when you turn round and cry, "Father! Father!" A child may have lost its way and it may be sobbing its heart out in its distress, but the moment it sees its father, it is lost no longer—it has found its way and is at rest. Though there may be no difference in your position, nor change in your circumstances, yet if you catch a sight of your heavenly Father, it is enough—you are a lost child no more. When you can pray, "Father, glorify Your name," then there is no more question about, "What shall I say?" You have said the right thing and there let it end.

Now, Brothers and Sisters, concerning this next year upon which we are entering, I hope it will be a year of happiness to you—I very emphatically wish you all a Happy New Year—but nobody can be confident that it will be a year free from trouble. On the contrary, you may be pretty confident that it will not be so, for man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward! We have each, beloved Friends, some dear faces in which we rejoice—may they long smile upon us! But remember that each one of these may be an occasion of sorrow during the next year, for we have neither an immortal child, nor an immortal husband, nor an immortal wife, nor an immortal friend and, therefore, some of these may die within the year.

Moreover the comforts with which we are surrounded may take to themselves wings before another year shall fulfill its months. Earthly joys are as if they were all made of snow—they melt even as the hoar frost and are gone before we conclude our thanksgiving for their coming. It may be you will have a year of drought and shortness of bread—years lean and ill-favored may be your portion. Yes, and yet more—perhaps during the year which has almost dawned, you may have to gather up your feet in the bed and die to meet your father's God. Well now, concerning this approaching year and its mournful possibilities, shall we grow gloomy and desponding? Shall we wish we had never been born or ask that we may die? By no means!

Shall we, on the other hand, grow frivolous and laugh at all things? No, that were ill-becoming in heirs of God. What shall we do? We will breathe this prayer, "Father, glorify Your name." That is to say, if I must lose my property, glorify Your name by my poverty! If I must be bereaved, glorify Your name in my sorrows! If I must die, glorify Your name in my depar-

ture. Now, when you pray in that fashion, your conflict is over! No outward fright nor inward fear remains if that prayer rises from the heart! You have now cast aside all gloomy forebodings and you can thoughtfully and placidly pursue your way into the unknown tomorrow. Pass on, O caravan, into the trackless desert! Still proceed into the wilderness of the future which no mortal eye has seen, for yonder fiery cloudy pillar leads the way and all is well!

“Father, glorify Your name,” is our pillar of cloud and, protected by its shade, we shall not be struck by the heat of prosperity! “Father, glorify Your name,” is our pillar of fire by night—nor shall the darkness of adversity destroy us, for the Lord shall be our light! March on, you pilgrims, without a moment’s delay because of fear. Tarry not for a single instant, this being your banner and your watchword, “Father, glorify Your name.” Torturing doubts and forebodings of the future all end when the glorious name is seen over all!

Secondly, our text breathes a spirit which is the surrender of self. When a man can truly say, “Father, glorify Your name,” he begins to understand that saying of our Savior concerning the corn of wheat falling into the ground and dying, for that prayer means, “Lord, do what You will with me. I will make no stipulations, but leave all to You. Remember that I am dust and deal tenderly with me, but still glorify Your name. Do not spare me, if thereby You would be less glorious. Act not according to my foolish wishes or childish desires, but glorify Your name in me by any means and by all means.”

The prayer means I am willing to be made *nothing* of so that God’s will may be done. I am willing to be as one dead and buried, forgotten and unknown if God may be magnified. I am ready to be buried and sown because I believe that this is the way by which I shall grow and bring forth fruit to God’s praise. This surrender includes obedient service, for our great Master goes on to say, “If any man serves Me, let him follow Me.” True self-renunciation shows itself in the obedient imitation of Christ. “Father, glorify Your name” means waiting the Lord’s bidding and running in His ways.

If the petition is written out at length it runs thus—“Help me to copy my Savior’s example. Help me to follow in His blessed footsteps! This is my desire—passively to honor my heavenly Father by bearing His will and actively to glorify Him by doing His will. Lord, help me to do both of these and never let me forget that I am not my own, but wholly my Lord’s.” The prayer appears to me to be most properly used when it is made a personal one—“Father, glorify Your name in *me*. I am the recipient of so much mercy, get some glory out of me, I pray You.”

Beloved, I think you must have noticed in this world that the man who really lives is the man who more than his fellows has learned to live for others and for God. You do not care for the preacher whose objective is to display his own powers. You go away dissatisfied after hearing his bravest orations! But if any man shall only desire your soul’s good and God’s Glory, you will put up with much eccentricity from him and bear with many infirmities because, instinctively, you love and trust the man who forgets himself.

Now, what you see in preachers I beg you to try and consider in yourselves. If any of you are living for yourselves, you will not be loveable. If you even *act* that your ambition is to be loved, you will miss your mark. But if you will love for love's sake. If you will seek to be Christ-like. If you will lay yourselves out to glorify God, to increase His kingdom and to bless your fellow men, you will live in the highest and noblest sense! Seek not your own greatness, but labor to make Jesus great and you will live! Christians live by dying! Kill self, and Christ shall live in you and so shall you, yourself, most truly live!

The way upward in true life and honor is to go downward in self-humiliation. Renounce all and you shall be rich! Have nothing and you shall have all things! Try to be something and you shall be nothing! Be nothing and you shall live! That is the great lesson which Jesus would teach us, but which we are slow to learn. "Father, glorify Your name" means let the corn of wheat be buried out of sight to lose itself in its outgrowth. O Self, you are a dead thing—may you be laid deep in the sepulcher! You rotten carcass, for such you have become since Jesus died for me—you are an offense to me! Away with you! Do not poison my life, mar my motives, spoil my intents, hinder my self-denials and defile the chastity of my heart! You prompt me to make provision for the flesh—away with you, away with you! "Father, glorify Your name."

In our text, in the next place, a new care is paramount. The man has forgotten self and self is buried like a grain of wheat and now he begins to care for God's Glory. His cry is, "Father, glorify Your name." Oh, if you can get rid of self you will feel in your heart a daily intensified longing to have the name of God glorified! Do you not feel, sometimes, sick at heart as you gaze upon this present generation? My soul is often pained within me when I see how everything is out of joint. Everything is now denied which from our youth we have regarded as the sacred Truth of God! The Infallibility of Scripture is denied! The authenticity of one portion is challenged and the Inspiration of another called in question—and the good old Book is torn to pieces by blind critics!

Eternal Truths of God, against which only blaspheming infidels used to speak, are now questioned by professed ministers of Christ! Doctrines which our sires never *thought* of doubting are now trailed in the mire and that by those who profess to be teachers of God's Word! "Father, glorify Your name" comes leaping to our lips because it is burning in our heart—burning there in holy wrath against the treachery of men! Indignation arises from our jealousy and our eager spirits cry, "Oh, that God would glorify His name!" To many of us this is our heaviest care. Brethren, we desire the Lord to glorify that name in ourselves by preventing our impatience in suffering and keeping us from faintness in labor. We beseech our heavenly Father to destroy our selfishness, to cast out our pride and to overcome every evil propensity which would prevent His getting glory out of us!

Our soul is even as the clusters of the vine which belong to the owner of the vineyard—our whole nature is as the fruit for which the great Vine-dresser waits. Here, fling me into the wine vat! Let every cluster and every grape be gathered and pressed! Great Lord, cast me into the wine vat of

Your service and then squeeze out of me every drop of the essence of life! Let my whole soul flow forth to You! Let the ruddy juice burst forth on the right and on the left—and when the first rich liquid of my life is gone—then even to the utmost let me be pressed till the last drop of the living juice which may bring glory to You shall have come forth! Fling all away that will not turn into Your Glory, but use all that can be used—glorify Your name to the utmost!

O great Father of my spirit, the desire of Your child is to glorify You, for if You are a father you should have honor from Your children. “Honor your father” is the first commandment with promise and it is precious in our eyes. From our inmost hearts we pray, “Our Father which are in Heaven, hallowed be Your name, Your kingdom come.” Now, see how that desire is divested of all sorrow by our casting it upon God. The prayer is not, “Father, help *me* to glorify Your name,” but it is, “Father, glorify Your name.” Your glory is too much for me to fathom—glorify Yourself! In Your Providence, so arrange my position and condition as to glorify Your name! By Your Grace, so sustain me and sanctify me that I may glorify You. I cannot do it, but You can and the desire which I was glad to feel, I am glad, also, to bring by faith to You. “Father, glorify Your name.”

And now, Brothers and Sisters, if you can pray in that fashion, your confidence will come back to you. If you have been greatly distracted, calm peace will visit you again, for now you will say, “I will bear the Lord’s will and will be content. I cannot quarrel with my Master’s dealings any more, for I have asked Him to glorify His name and as I know that He is doing it, I cannot murmur. How can I struggle against that which is really glorifying my Father?” Your heart will cease to question and to quake—and nestle down beneath the eternal wings in deep and happy peace! Filled with patience, you will take the cup which stood untasted and grasp it with willingness if not with eagerness. “It is to glorify God,” you will say—“every drop of this cup is for His Glory”—and therefore you will put the chalice to your lips and drink straight on, and on, and on till you have drained the last drop and find that “It is finished.”

I know you will not fail to do this if your soul has really felt the power of this prayer—“Father, glorify Your name.” Why, sometimes it seems to me that it were worth while to pray to be burned at a stake to the death, if by martyrdom we could glorify God! I do not desire such a death and yet, from one point of view, I have often envied martyrs those ruby crowns which they cast at the feet of their dear Lord. How honorable in them to have glorified God by so much suffering! Surely he is the grandest creature God has made who glorifies Him most. And who is he? Not the tall archangel of whom Milton sings, whose wand might make a mast for some great admiral, but the most insignificant nobody who has long laid upon her bed of weariness and there has praised the Lord by perfect patience!

She, though apparently the least, may be the greatest glorifier of the Father! Perhaps the tiniest creature God has made will bring Him more glory than leviathan that makes the deep to be hoary and causes the waters to boil like in a pot. That which most thoroughly yields itself to God. That which most completely annihilates itself into the eternal All—is most glorifying to Him! May God in His infinite mercy bring us to this self-

annihilation, this desire only for His Glory! Strive after it, Beloved, by the power of the Holy Spirit!

One word to those of you who will have no sympathy with this sermon. You know that hymn in which the enquirer asks?—

***“If I find Him, if I follow,
What reward is here?”***

and the answer is—

***“Many a labor,
Many a sorrow,
Many a tear.”***

Very discouraging this, is it not? You who look for mirth and selfish pleasure turn away in disgust. Yet the lines are very true. Jesus Himself said, “Except a man take up his cross and follow Me, he cannot be My disciple.” But mark you, the day will come when those who were willing to suffer for Christ will be counted to be the only sane persons who ever lived! And when those who looked to the main chance and cared for self—and disregarded God, faith in Christ and love for their fellow men—will be regarded as having been mere idiots and drivellers!

Listen to this parable! It is spring time and yonder is a farmer walking the furrows and sowing his seed. Those who know nothing of farming mock him for his wastefulness with his grain. He is far too wasteful of good food. He is the wise man, is he not, who locks his granary door and preserves his corn? Why should he go and fling it into the cold, thankless ground? Wait till the end of June when the bloom is on the wheat! Wait till July and August have brought the months of harvest and you shall see that he who gave his wheat to die shall, amidst the shouts of, “Harvest home!” be reckoned to have been wise and prudent!

And he who kept the door of his granary bolted through his sluggishness and selfishness shall then be seen to be only fit for Bedlam, for he has no harvest except a mass of tangled weeds. Scatter, scatter your lives for others! Give yourselves up to Jesus! He who in this respect hates his life shall find it, but he that keeps it shall lose it! Still, O you ungodly, if you live to yourselves, God will yet have Glory and even Glory out of you! You shall not rob Him of His honor, nor tear a jewel from His throne! God will be glorified by you and in you in some form or other. Your everlasting lamentations, because of your great selfish mistakes, will vindicate the wisdom and the justice of God to all eternity!

In a future state, though you gnaw the flesh of your right arms for very anguish and sorrow and passion, you will be obliged to acknowledge that the warnings of the Gospel were true and that God is just! Your well-deserved griefs shall help to make up the burden of that song which shall eternally celebrate the wisdom and goodness of God, for you will have to confess that Jesus was right and you were wrong! You will have to admit that to believe in Him and to be His disciple was the right thing—and that to despise Him and to live unto yourself was what He told you it would be—destruction and ruin. God grant His blessing for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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VOICES FROM THE EXCELLENT GLORY

NO. 909

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 9, 1870,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him: and lo a voice from Heaven, saying, This is My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well-pleased.”
Matthew 3:16, 17.*

*“While he yet spoke, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a Voice out of the cloud, which said, This is My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well-pleased; hear Him.”
Matthew 17:5.*

*“Father, glorify Your name. Then came there a Voice from Heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.”
John 12:28.*

THAT our Lord was the true Messiah of God was proved by His answering to all those prophecies which described the promised Messenger of the Covenant. His miracles also proved that God was with Him, and from their character they marked Him out as the ordained Deliverer. To open blind eyes and unstop deaf ears were works foretold as denoting the Messiah. His teachings were equally clear proofs of His mission—there is about them an authority found nowhere else. The words which He spoke are Spirit and Life. They are self-evidencing in their elevation, purity, perfection. “Never man spoke like this Man.”

His Testimony is unique and bears a majesty of Deity about it which bespeaks itself. His resurrection also was a clear proof that he was sent of God. He was “declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead.” But in addition to all this and a great deal more, the Divine Father was pleased, also, to speak out of Heaven with an audible voice to declare that Jesus of Nazareth was no other than the Son of God and the promised Christ for whom the faithful were watching. Thrice did the majesty of Heaven break its sublime silence and bear witness to the Incarnate God. The three occasions, as mentioned in our texts, are most instructive, and shall command our attention this morning. May the Holy Spirit instruct us.

Without any further preface, let us consider the three Testimonies given to our Lord by the voice of the Most High. If time permits we will then notice one or two instructive circumstances connected with them. And we will close by drawing a great practical lesson from them.

I. In endeavoring to bring before your attentive minds THE THREE OCCASIONS ON WHICH THE FATHER, BY A VOICE FROM HEAVEN, BORE WITNESS TO HIS SON, I would invite you to observe, first, when these voices were heard.

Angels had proclaimed His birth, and wise men had seen His star, but the Divine Voice was not heard during the first thirty years of His sojourn. The three celestial utterances were reserved for the brief period of His public life. The first came at the commencement of His public ministry—at His Baptism. The second some little time after the central point of His ministry. And the last, just before He closed His work, by being offered up. It is a fit thing to pray that all our works may be begun, continued, and ended under the Divine blessing.

Certainly our Lord Jesus Christ, as to His public work, both began it, continued it, and ended it with the publicly declared witness of the Most High. How cheering a thing it is at the beginning of a great enterprise to have from God clear Testimony that He has sent you upon it! Such was the Testimony given to the Master in the waters of Jordan, when He was first announced as “the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.”

How sweetly encouraging it is to the soul when the labor is heavy, the opposition vehement, and the spirit faint, to receive another affirming word from the excellent Glory! Such was that which came to Jesus on the Holy Mount, when retiring from the multitude He sought the refreshment of prayer and fellowship with God. Then, as He prayed, the fashion of His countenance was altered and His raiment was white and glistening, and a Voice came out of the cloud, “This is My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well-pleased, hear Him.”

And best of all, when our work is almost done, and the shadows of evening are lengthening—when we are about to depart into the land of spirits—what a consolation it is to receive another refreshment from the Divine mouth! Such our Savior had a little while before He was lifted up from the earth. In answer to His fervent cry, “Father, glorify Your name,” there came a Voice from Heaven saying, “I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.”

In our departing hours we are most anxious about that which was our life’s dearest object. The lifework of Christ was to glorify His Father’s name. Concerning that He prayed, and concerning that the Voice gave full assurance. The result of the Lord’s lifework was declared to be ensured, and therefore, wrapping Himself about with that heavenly Testimony, the great Redeemer went bravely to His death. It is to be noted, then, that at the beginning, the middle, and end of our Master’s work, the Divine Voice was heard.

The first celestial witness was uttered after He had lived for thirty years in comparative obscurity. It seemed meet that when He first appeared, there should be some token that He was what He professed to be. That

heavenly declaration, be it also remembered, came just before His memorable temptation. He was to be forty days in the wilderness tempted of the devil, and among the horrible suggestions hissed forth from the serpent's mouth would be the doubt, "if you are the Son of God." What better fore-arming of our great Champion than the witness, "This is My Beloved Son"?

How in the recollection of that paternal Testimony would the Son be made strong to overcome all the temptations of the Fiend, or to endure the hunger which followed the forty days of lonely fast! Thus ever, my Brethren, it is not with the Master, only, but with the servants. Before temptation there comes spiritual sustenance which makes the heart strong in endurance. Like Elijah of old, the Believer falls asleep. Being awakened, he eats bread of Heaven's own providing and in the strength of that meat he journeys forty days through the wilderness without weariness. Expect that when the Lord tries you He will also send you strength to sustain you under it.

The second occasion of the heavenly utterance was when our Lord was about (according to Luke) to send out other seventy disciples to preach the Word. The twelve had healed the sick, cast out devils and done many mighty works. But now the laborers were to be increased and the harvest more rapidly ingathered. The seventy Evangelists were to carry the Divine Crusade through all the Holy Land.

Brethren, it is instructive that Heaven gave to our Savior, before extending His agencies of mercy, a fresh token for good. And we also, when the Lord calls us to wider service, may go up to the mountain to pray. And while we are there we, too, may expect to enjoy the comforting and strengthening witness of the Spirit within. The heavenly Voice shall whisper, "You are Mine," and we shall descend with radiant countenance to fight anew the battles of the Lord.

The third heavenly Testimony came to our Lord just before His sufferings and death. I need not say to you how well-timed was that witness. With such a death before Him, with such circumstances surrounding Him—all tending to make His agony sharper, and His death more terrible than any which had fallen to the lot of man before. With Gethsemane, with Gabbatha, with Golgotha all before Him. With such words as these yet to be uttered, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death." And these, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"—it was meet that the oppressed Sufferer, who must tread the winepress alone—should receive at the outset a Word from the Throne of the Highest, meeting exactly the point about which His soul was most concerned, namely, the glory of the Father's name.

While still enlarging upon the times when the Divine Voice was heard, we may also note that the first came to our Lord when He was in the attitude of *obedience*. Why needed He to be baptized? It is a *sinner's* ordinance—Jesus is no sinner and needs no washing, no death, no burial!

But He takes the sinner's place, and therefore comes to be buried in Jordan, for, "Thus," says He, "it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness." It was to Christ an act of *obedience*. He took upon Himself the form of a servant, and being found in fashion as a Man, He became obedient to every ordinance of God, and hence He yielded Himself to Baptism. Then came the Voice, "This is My Beloved Son."

Brothers and Sisters, learn that when you are in the path of filial obedience you may expect the Spirit to bear witness with your spirit that you are born of God! But if you live in neglect of any known duty—if you are willfully unobservant of any command of Christ—you may expect that there shall be withheld from you the sweet assuring tokens of Divine love. But if you are scrupulously obedient on desiring to know what is the Lord's will, and then promptly do it—not asking the reason why, nor using your own tastes, or indulging your own whims—then in the path of obedience, especially if it costs you much, you may expect to have the witness in yourself that you are a child of God.

The second attestation came to our Master in His devout retirement. He had gone up to the mountain to pray. His desire was to be alone. He had taken with Him His accustomed bodyguard of three—Peter, James, and John—that they might be with Him while His soul communed with God. I doubt not that, as in the garden, they were bid to remain a stone's cast distance off, for surely Jesus poured out His soul before God alone. And then it was that suddenly the Glory of God shone upon Him. Then, in His retirement, Moses and Elijah appeared, coming forth from the spirit-world to commune with Him. Then did the Father utter a second time the Testimony, "This is My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well-pleased."

Brothers and Sisters, you too, like your Master, may expect to receive Divine Testimonies when you are on the mount of communion alone, when your fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. The neglect of retirement will probably rob you of such assurances. If your prayer should be, "Show me a token for good," the answer will be, "Get you to the top of Tabor, get you away to your retirement. There will I give you the token which your heart desires." But to live evermore spending our strength in public, wasting ourselves in the turmoil of this world, and to neglect the soul-refreshing ordinance of private devotion is to deprive the inner man of the richest of spiritual delights.

The third Testimony came to our Lord in His ministry. He was preaching in the temple when the Father responded to His prayer. Now while I have spoken a good word for obedience, and also have sought to magnify retirement, let it never be forgotten that public service is equally acceptable to God. Our Lord had been conversing with certain enquiring Greeks and declaring the living power of His death to all who chose to hear Him. In that same hour the Father gave an audible answer to His prayer. If you, my Brethren, are called to any form of service, I beseech you, under no

pretext neglect it. The neglect of anything for which you have the talent, and to which you have the call, may deprive you of the inward witness.

Bear much fruit—so shall you be His disciples consciously so. Keep His Commandments—so shall you abide in His love and know it. Forget not to be obedient, forget not to be prayerful in retirement, but forget not, also, that you are meant to shine as a light in this world. Forget not that you must work while it is called today. Forget not that you are not sent into this life merely to enjoy spiritual recreation or even celestial refreshment—but to do a work which no other can do—and for which you must give a personal account.

We must now dismiss the question of the times, and briefly consider to whom the attestations were given. The first at Baptism, came to John and to our Lord, and most probably to them, only. We do not think the Voice from the opened Heaven was necessarily heard by anyone but John and our Lord. The token of the descending dove was given to John as the sign by which he should discern the Christ. “And I knew Him not. But He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom you shall see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizes with the Holy Spirit.”

John probably gathered from all that he had heard of Jesus that He was the great Bridegroom to whom he stood as a friend. But he was not to follow his own judgment—he was to receive a token from God Himself—and till that token came he could not act as one fully and indisputably convinced. When he had immersed our Lord he saw the heavens opened, saw the Spirit descending upon Him, and heard the confirming Voice. And then he knew beyond all doubt that Jesus was the Christ. To the Baptist, alone, that Voice was audible. And then through him it was published to all Judea.

The second Testimony had a somewhat wider range—it came not to one, but to three. Peter, James, and John were present. What if I say to *five*? For there were with them Moses and Elijah. They represented the Law and the Prophets. The three Apostles were the representatives of the Christian Church—as if to show that Law and Gospel meet in Jesus—and the things in Heaven and the things on earth are gathered together in one in Him. The Testimony enlarges, you see. At first one opened ear hears it, next five are assured.

The third time the Voice was heard by many. How many I cannot say, but the crowd in the temple heard it. Many heard it who did not understand it, for they said it thundered—perhaps perversely determining not to believe in the Presence of God—but to ascribe that articulate Voice rather to a rumbling thunder than to the Divine mouth. Others who confessed that they heard words, averred that an angel spoke—men will have anything but God! Thunder, or cherubim, or even devils they will welcome—but Divine interpositions are irksome to them.

Many, we say, heard the third Voice. It was a Testimony to hundreds—may we not learn from this that God’s Testimony to Christ is evermore a growing one? If at first He was revealed to one, then to more, then to a numerous band, expect, my Brethren, the fulfillment of that promise, “the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken it.” If the glory of Jesus is today seen by thousands, it shall yet be unveiled to tens of thousands, and in the latter days the Voice which spoke once and again to our fathers, shall so speak as to shake not only earth, but also Heaven. And in that day, if not before, every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father!

The heavenly Testimony grows and spreads. Jesus is proclaimed as Lord in many hearts. Look not on the present littleness of His visible kingdom, despise not the day of small things. The witness of Jesus is but a spark of fire. But the conflagration thereof shall yet belt the world with holy flames. The three Testimonies were given in this wise. The first, to the greatest of men—for “among those that are born of women there was not a greater Prophet than John the Baptist.” Yet the voice revealed a greater than he, whose shoelaces he was not worthy to untie.

The second was heard by the best of men—the great Lawgiver, the chief of the Prophets, and the noble of the Apostles—yet the Voice bore witness to a better than they. The third time the Voice echoed in the holiest place in the temple—and there it testified to a holier than the holiest shrine. Jesus is everywhere magnified beyond all others as the only Beloved Son of the Father. I need not however enlarge. There is far more of teaching than either time or ability allow me to open up to you.

We come, in the next place, to notice to what God bore Testimony. God never sets His seal to a blank. What was it, then, which He attested? First, at the Jordan, witness was borne to Christ’s miraculous *origin*. “This is My Beloved Son.” He comes not here as the Pharisees, and soldiers, and others have done, a mere son of man. Son of man He is, but He is also Son of the infinite, eternal God. And now on His introduction to His work He receives a spiritual anointing and a recognition from the Father. The seal was set that day to His Godhead and His relation to the Father was acknowledged.

By the second audible declaration it seems to me that the Father sealed the Son’s *appointment* as the great Prophet, and the anointed Servant of God. For in the second Testimony these memorable words were added, “hear Him.” Here God commands us to accept Him as the great Teacher, to acknowledge Him as the Head of the dispensation, to yield to Him our loyal attention and obedience. When the Lord appears, it is necessary that men should know who He is. When He is actually engaged in His work it may be needful to confirm His authority.

This was done on the Holy Mount, for so Peter understood it, as he writes in his second Epistle, “For we have not followed cunningly devised

fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a Voice to Him from the excellent Glory, This is my Beloved Son, in Whom I am well-pleased. And this voice which came from Heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the Holy Mount.”

The third Testimony bore witness to the success of His work. “I have both glorified My name,” says the Father, “and will glorify it again.” “What,” you say, “what if Jesus should not succeed? He has come into the world to vindicate the justice of God, and reveal His love, and so to glorify God—what if He should miss the mark? What, if after all His life of labor and His death of agony, He should be unsuccessful?”

The Father’s Word declares that the results anticipated shall certainly be produced. “I have glorified it,” says the Father—“all Your past life has glorified My name. Your coming down from Heaven, Your life of thirty years’ obedience, all the works which You have done in Your three years of toil. All these have brought renown to the infinite Majesty.

And “I will glorify it again,” in the most supreme sense. Amidst the glooms of the garden, amidst the terrors of Pilate’s hall, and amidst the sorrows of the Cross, I will glorify My name yet again. Yes, and in Your resurrection, in Your ascension, in Your majesty at My right hand, in Your judgment of the quick and the dead I will glorify My name again.” The three Voices may be viewed as attesting the Son’s Person, work, and success.

Some have thought that the three Voices attested our Lord in His three-fold offices. John came proclaiming the kingdom—Jesus was in His Baptism proclaimed as the Chief of the new kingdom. On the second occasion, the Voice which said, “Hear Him,” ordained Him as the Prophet of His people. And on the third occasion Jesus was owned as a Priest. Standing in the midst of priests—in the Temple where sacrifice was offered—Himself about to offer the true sacrifice. And praying that His sacrifice might glorify God, He receives the witness that God has been glorified in Him, and will be yet again.

My Brethren, in this threefold witness receive into your hearts the Testimony of God who cannot lie. Behold your Savior, well-pleasing to His Father. Let Him be well-pleasing to you. Hear Him proclaimed as God’s Beloved. O let Him be the Beloved of your hearts! Hear the Testimony born to Him that He has glorified God, and remember that His further glorifying God in some measure depends on you—for it is by your godly conversation, by your holy patience, by your zealous exertions for your Master’s praise that God in Christ Jesus is to be glorified until He comes. Let these three Testimonies, as they make up a complete and conclusive code of evidence, have force upon your hearts and minds, and win you to a solemn confidence in your Lord and Master.

I shall now ask your attention to the question, How were the Testimonies given? Observe that when our Lord was baptized, the heavens were opened and the Spirit descended. What if this proclaims to us that by His obedience our Lord procured the opening of Heaven for us—that our prayers might ascend to God, and all blessings might descend to us, and especially that the Holy Spirit might come down and rest forever upon the Church of God?

The Master's Baptism was the type of His death. Buried beneath the waters of Jordan, He pictured there His being buried in the deeps of agony and in the darkness of the tomb. Rising from the Jordan, He typified His resurrection. Ascending its banks He represented His Ascension into Heaven. God sees in figure all righteousness fulfilled, and answers the type by the relative type of Heaven opened and the dove descending.

Heaven was not beheld as opened when a second time the Voice was heard. In Luke 9 we read that the Voice came out of the cloud. The overshadowing cloud is a beautiful representation of the Mediatorship of Christ. He, like a glorious cloud, veils the excessive brightness of the Godhead. He shields us, so that when God speaks, He may not speak as from the top of Sinai—with a voice of trumpet and sound of thunder—but may speak through an interposing Medium, with that still, small voice of love which we can hear with delight.

Out of the cloud, my Brethren, God speaks to His people. That is to say, He speaks to us in Christ Jesus. That was a strong utterance of Luther, but it was strictly true, "I will have nothing to do with an absolute God," meaning I will have nothing to do with God out of Christ. If, indeed, we had to do with God out of Christ, what misery were it for us, my Brethren! We should stand in the same terror as Israel did when bounds were set about the Mount. Even Moses said, "I do exceedingly fear and quake." It is a great mercy that the heavenly Voice, as it reaches us, comes out of the cloud.

In reading the narrative of the third Divine Testimony, our mind rests neither upon the opening of Heaven nor the cloud, but upon the Voice alone. It is as if the glory of God in the work of Christ put every other thought aside. The opening of Heaven, or the interposition of a Mediator are but means to the great end of glorifying God. O that this one great object may absorb all our souls! But, alas, the Voice, plain as it was, was misunderstood, and the clearest Revelation that God ever gave to mortals has been misunderstood by many. There will always be those who think of thunder and the so-called grandeur of nature—and others who see only angels or second causes.

Once more, consider what was it that was spoken on those three occasions. There was a difference in each case, though in the first two but slight. The first time the heavenly Voice preached the Gospel, "This is My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well-pleased." The old fathers were likely to say, "Go to Jordan if you would see the Trinity," and we may add, go to

Jordan if you would hear the Gospel. "This is My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well-pleased." Observe the Gospel in this sentence! The Gospel is tidings concerning a blessed Person sent of God. Such tidings the Lord here utters.

This Man rising dripping from the water. This Man is pointed out as the Hope of the world! The Gospel is never preached except where the Person of Jesus Christ is exhibited to men. "I, if I am lifted up"—not truths about Me—but "I Myself, if I am lifted up, will draw all men unto Me." The attraction lies in the Person of Christ, because the real power to save lies there. We have here the Gospel revealing the acceptableness of the chosen Person with God—"My Beloved Son."

What men needed was a Savior who could stand for them before God. One dear to the heart of God. It is good news to us that the Anointed One is well-beloved of the Father. Why, my Hearers, though I have not yet opened up the fullness of that utterance, does not Gospel light break in upon you already? Here is a Person sent of God to save—a Man of your own race, but yet right well-beloved of God. He is so near to God as to be called His Beloved Son! But note, yet more earnestly, the Gospel of the next words, "In Whom I am well-pleased." Not, "with Whom," as hasty readers suppose, but, "*In Whom I am well-pleased.*"

This is the very Gospel—that God, as He looks upon men is well-pleased with all who are *in* Christ. God in Christ is not anger, but good pleasure. If I, a poor sinner, enter by faith *into* Christ, then I may be assured that God is well-pleased with me—that, if I, as His child, come to Him, and by a living faith link my destiny with the life and person of Christ—I need not fear the wrath of Heaven. Sinner, God is not well-pleased with you as you are. Child of God, God is not well-pleased with you as you are—there is enough about either saint or sinner to provoke the Lord to jealousy. But, Sinner, if you are in Christ by faith, God is well-pleased with you. And, O Heir of Heaven, with all your infirmities and imperfections, since you are one with Christ by an eternal and now vital union, God is well-pleased with you! Said I not well that the Gospel sounded from Jordan's waves?

The second sound of the Voice uttered not only the Gospel itself, but the Gospel command, "Hear Him." Matthew Henry has some very delightful remarks upon this expression, "Hear Him." He remarks, in effect, that salvation does not come by seeing, as the Roman church would have it, for the disciples were not directed to behold Christ in His Glory, though the sight deserved all their attention. No, but they were bid to *hear* rather than see. To hear the Gospel is a most important duty, for *faith* comes by *hearing*. Salvation comes not by hearing the doctrines of men but by hearing Jesus Christ.

There stood Moses. And those three Jewish worthies, Peter, James, and John, might have longed for Moses to open his Mouth—and had he spoken to them they would have been very attentive to Him. But the Word

was not, “Hear Moses,” but “Hear Him.” There was Elijah, too. O for a burning word from that master among the Prophets, whose life was flame. But it was not said, “Hear Elijah,” but “Hear Him.” “They have Moses and the Prophets, let them hear them,” is the word sent to careless sinners, but to sincere seekers the direction is, “Hear Him.”

Dear Brothers and Sisters, the great salvation of God comes to us through the Testimony of Jesus Christ—not through the moral essays or philosophical treatises or doctrinal discussions of men. “Hear Him,” the Gospel so commands you. Let not your ears be deaf when God communicates tidings of eternal life.

On the third occasion the Testimony given was not the Gospel nor the Gospel precept, but the Gospel’s result—“I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.” I call your attention to this that you may be earnest in preaching the Gospel. It is through the Gospel that God is glorified. By the poorest Gospel sermon that was ever preached, God, through His Holy Spirit, gets to Himself a glory which the most pompous ritual cannot yield Him. You never speak well of Jesus but what you glorify God. No Gospel Word falls to the ground and is lost. It must accomplish that for which God has sent it.

He has glorified His name by the Gospel, and He will again. Let this encourage those of you who are afraid that the times are very bad and that we are all going to the pope. Do not be at all afraid. God will glorify His name by the Gospel again as He did before. Martin Luther was not, in himself, a character so lovely that one might be overwhelmed with admiration of him. Where, then, lay his power? His power lay in this—that he grasped the true Gospel—and he was a man who, when he grasped a thing, gave it a “grip so firm that the devil himself could not wrench it away from him.

With the Gospel in his hands he could say, “Heaps upon heaps with the weapon of the Gospel I have slain my thousands. Heaps upon heaps the foes of God are overturned.” He was mighty because he declared the Gospel of Jesus Christ—and with this he shook the world and brought about the Reformation. You need not, therefore, despair.

If the ministers of Christ will only come back to preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ, plainly, simply, and with the Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven, we shall drive the Ritualists, those cubs of the old Roman monster, back to their dens, as our fathers did their mother of old. Never lose your faith in the Gospel. Always believe that our power is gone when we get away from the Cross—but know also without a doubt—when we come back to the Truth as it is in Jesus, God glorifies His name.

II. LET US NOW OBSERVE ONE OR TWO INSTRUCTIVE CIRCUMSTANCES connected with these three Divine Testimonies. On each occasion Jesus was in *prayer*.

My dear, dear young people, look at the proofs of that in your Bibles. You will find in one or other of the Evangelists that it is distinctly stated

on each occasion that our Lord was in prayer. Learn, then, that if any child of God would have God speak comfortably to him, he must speak to God in prayer. If you would have the witness of the Holy Spirit in your soul, you must be much in supplication. Neglect not the Mercy Seat.

Notice next that each time the sufferings of Christ were prominently before Him. John, at the waters of Jordan had said, "Behold the Lamb of God," plainly speaking of sacrifice. Baptism itself, the fulfilling of all righteousness, we have seen to be the type of His death, and of His immersion in suffering. On Tabor, on the second occasion, Matthew tells us that, "Behold, there talked with Him two men, which were Moses and Elijah: who appeared in glory, and spoke of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem."

The subject that the best of men talked about when they met was the death of Jesus. No better topic, then, for us when we meet. If we were the most talented and the wisest men that ever lived, if we met together and wanted the most select topic for an eclectic discussion, we ought to choose the Cross. For Jesus, Moses, and Elijah—three great representative men—talked of the Atoning death of the great Substitute. The third time our Lord had just spoken about the hour being come in which He was to be glorified, as you well remember. Learn then, my Brethren, that if you desire to see the glory of Christ, as attested of the Father, you must dwell much on His death.

Do not talk to me about the life of Christ in all its parity, I know it and rejoice in it. But I tell you that the *death* of Christ, in all His misery, is the grandest point of view. The example of Jesus should be exalted by all means—but His Atonement is far grander. And you, Sirs, who take the Man Christ and offer your pretty, complimentary phrases about Him—but then turn round and deny His expiating Sacrifice—I tell you your tawdry offerings are unacceptable to Him. To be complimented by your lips is almost to be censured, for if you do not believe on Him as an Atoning Sacrifice, you do not understand His life. Thus each attestation came in connection with the Lord's *sufferings*, as if the glory of Christ dwelt mainly there.

Once more—each time that Jesus received this Word from the Father He was honoring the Father. In Baptism He was honoring Him by *obedience*. On the mountain He was honoring Him in devotion. In the Temple the very words He was using were, "Father, glorify Your name." Oh, if you would see God's glory, and hear God's Voice in your own heart, honor Him! Spend and be spent for Him! Keep not back your sacrifices, withhold not your offerings! Lay yourselves upon His altar, and when you say with Isaiah, "Here am I, send me," for any service—whatever it may be—then shall you also feel that the Lord is with you, owning both you and your works, and glorifying Himself in it.

III. Lastly, THE PRACTICAL LESSON may be found in the words, "Hear Him."

Earnestly let me speak to everyone here. God has three times with audible Voice spoken out of Heaven to bear witness to Jesus. These are historical facts. I beseech you, then, receive with assured conviction the Truth to which God bears witness. The Man of Nazareth is the Son of the Highest. The Son of Mary is the Savior appointed to bear human sin. He is the way of salvation, and the only way. Doubt not this Truth of God. Accept the Savior, for God declares that He is well-pleased in Him. Hear Him, then, with profound reverence—accept the teaching and invitations of Jesus as not the mere utterances of fallible men—but as the instructions and the loving expostulations of God.

I pray you have respect to every Word and command of Christ. Listen to Him as spirits listen to the voice of the Most High when they bow before the Truth of God. And if He says to you, as He does this morning, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,” hear Him and lovingly obey the command. Hear Him, I pray you, with unconditional obedience. God attests Him as being sent from Heaven. Whatever He says to you, do it. And since He bids you believe Him, be not unbelieving. He has told us to say in His name, “He that believes and is baptized, shall be saved.” Despise not that *double* command. Attend, O Sinner, attend, for it is the Son of God who speaks to you! Trust and be baptized, and you shall be saved. There stands the Gospel stamped with the authority of Deity! Obey it now. May the Holy Spirit lead you to do so.

Hear Him, lastly, with joyful confidence. If God has sent Jesus, trust Him. If He bears the Glory of God’s Seal upon Him, joyfully receive Him. You who have trusted Him, trust Him better from this day forth. Leave your souls right confidently in the hands of Him of whom Jehovah, thrice speaking out of Heaven, declares that He is the only Savior. Receive Him, Sinner, you that would be saved! May the Lord confirm the Testimony which He spoke out of Heaven, by speaking in your hearts by His Holy Spirit, that you may rejoice in His Beloved Son, and glorify God in Him.

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THE CRISIS OF THIS WORLD

NO. 2338

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 10, 1893.
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***“Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me. This He said, signifying what death He should die.”
John 12:31-33.***

OUR Lord passed through His passion in a kind of rehearsal before it came. He saw those Greeks who came to Philip and whom Andrew and Philip brought to Him, and His heart was flushed with joy. This was to be the result of His death, that the Gentiles would be gathered to Him! That thought reminded Him of His approaching decease. It was very near—only a few days would elapse and then He would die upon the Cross. In anticipation of Calvary, His soul was full of trouble—not that He feared death, but His death was to be a very peculiar one. He was to die the Just for the unjust. He was to bear our sins in His own body on the tree and His pure and holy soul shrank from contact with sin! To stand in the sinner's place—to bear His Father's wrath—this bewildered Him. He was very faint of heart and He cried, “What shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify Your name.” Without any wicked weakness, He proved how truly human He was—without any sinful repining at His Father's will, He saw how terrible that will was and He shuddered at what it included. This was a kind of rehearsal for Gethsemane. It was a sipping of that cup of which He was to drink until His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground, while His whole soul poured out the agonized petition, “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless not as I will, but as You will.”

When our Lord Jesus was in this great distress of mind, in anticipation of the terrible sufferings He was about to endure, His Father spoke to Him. And when you are in your direst distress, God will speak to you. If you are His child, when the weakness of your flesh seems ready to prevail over your spirit, you, too, shall have a reassuring voice out of the excellent Glory even as your Master had. He seemed to recover Himself at once and, bracing Himself up, He indulged His heart again with a vision of the glorious result of His death. Then He uttered the happy words on which we are to meditate, tonight, in which He summed up the consequences of His death in these three points—“Now is the judgment of this world. Now shall

the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.”

Let us, first, tonight, *consider the threefold result of Christ's death*. And when we have done that, let us *think about Christ's death as it is described in our text*.

I. First, let US CONSIDER THE THREEFOLD RESULT OF CHRIST'S DEATH.

There is, first, *the judgment of the world*—“Now is the judgment of this world.” If you like, you may read it, “crisis,” for that is the Greek word used here—“Now is the *crisis* of this world.” The world is sick. It grows worse and the physician says that its malady has come to a climax—it is a case of kill or cure. There was a crisis in the world's disease and that crisis was when Christ died! His death was the turning point, the hinge of the world's history. There have been many hinges in history—every nation has a hinge in its history—the Cross of Christ was the hinge of the *world's* history—it had reached the turning point. I thank God that the death of Christ was the future death of sin. When He died, the archenemy received his death stroke. That death was the bruising of Christ's heel, but in that death He bruised the old serpent's head.

Now there is hope for the world—its crisis is passed! Now will the gods of the heathen fall! Now will the dark ignorance of men yield to the Light of the world! After this crisis there shall come a new Heaven and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness, for Christ's first coming is a pledge of His second coming wherein He will exterminate sin and make the wilderness and the solitary places to blossom as the rose. Thus we may render our Savior's words, “Now is the crisis of this world,” the turning point, the hinge, on which all its history hangs. Still, I greatly prefer to keep to our old version, which is a translation whereas mine is only a borrowing of the original word “crisis.”

“Now is the judgment of this world.” This means that when Christ died, the world that lies in the Wicked One, the ungodly world, was judged in this sense—first, it was convicted of being guiltiest of the guilty. I daresay you have heard people rise pretty phrases about the dignity of human nature and so on. They are lying phrases, for human nature is as bad as it can be. If you want the proof of that assertion, behold how God, Himself, came here among men, Incarnate Virtue robed in love! Did men love Him? Did they fall down before Him and do Him homage? The homage of the world was, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” The world hates virtue—it cannot bear perfection—it might endure benevolence, but absolute purity and righteousness it cannot! Its native instincts are wrong. It is not towards the Light of God that men are going—their backs are to the sun—they are journeying into the thick darkness.

And, next, the world was convicted of the stupendous crime of murdering the Son of God! I will not call it regicide, but Deicide—and this is the crime of crimes. Truly was the world guilty of all that Prophets ever charged it with and much more. When wicked men slew the Prince of Life,

the Holy One and the Just, then was it proven that the world is at heart, atheistic, that it hates God and would put God, Himself, to death if He were within its grasp. Thus did men put the Incarnate God to death when He submitted Himself to their power. You need not talk about the virtues of the world—it slew the Christ—and that is enough to condemn it. We need no other proof of its guilt. You cannot bring evidence more complete and overwhelming than this—they slew the Lord of Life and Glory—they said, “This is the heir; come, let us kill Him and the inheritance shall be ours.”

Christ’s death was the judgment of this world, next, by sentencing the world, for if Christ, who was perfectly innocent, must die when He stood in the sinner’s place, what do you think, O guilty men, will *you* not, also, die? If the Well-Beloved of Heaven, bearing nothing but imputed guilt—sins not His own—must, nevertheless, be struck of God and afflicted and a voice must be heard, “Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the Man that is My Fellow, says the Lord of Hosts.” If He must die on yonder cruel tree. If He must cry, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” then, be sure of this, there is wrath treasured up against the Day of Wrath and no soul of man that does evil shall go unpunished! Is there not a God who is the Judge of all the earth and who must do right? If it is right to strike the Innocent, who assumed the place of the guilty, it must surely be right that the truly guilty should die the death! “The soul that sins, it shall die.” So there was not only the conviction, but also the *sentence* of the world, when Jesus died.

And more than that, there is the final ending of the trial when the world rejects Christ. As long as you are here, my Hearers, and Christ is preached to you, there is hope for you. But in that day when you reject Christ, finally, and will have none of Him—when you cry, “Away with Him, away with Him! We will not be washed in His blood, we will not be clothed in His righteousness”—in that day you seal your doom and there remains no hope for you! There is one window in Heaven and through it streams the Light of Life, but if that is closed, no other will ever be opened! “There is none other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” If you have, for the last time, put Christ away. If you have altogether done with Him, you have ended your probation, you have finished your trial, you have put out your last candle—you are forever doomed! When Christ is so rejected as actually to be made away with as He was upon the Cross, then is the judgment of this world.

I wish that I had time to pause here to press these points upon you who belong to the world. There are but two parties, the world and the Church of God. If you are not of the Church of God, you belong to the world—and the world is judged by the death of Christ. If you are not a Christian, you are a member of that great corporation called the world. Men sometimes speak of a Christian world and an un-Christian world, a religious world and an irreligious world, a sporting world, a laughing world, a thieving world, a trading world—but all that is really of the world

is outside the bounds of the Church of God! He who believes in Christ has escaped from the world. "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world," said Christ concerning His disciples. But to the unbelieving Jews He said, "You are from beneath; I am from above: you are of this world; I am not of this world."

Thus, you see the first result of the death of Christ is the world is judged, the world is convicted, the world is sentenced for its rejection of Christ. A Christ-rejecting world is a doomed world—may none of you belong to that world!

The second result of Christ's death is *the casting out of Satan*—"Now shall the prince of this world be cast out." He who holds sway over it shall now lose his throne. The prince of this world is Satan, the archenemy of God and of man, but he is not always to reign as the prince of the power of the air, the chief of the rulers of the darkness of this world. He is to be cast out of his present dominions.

By the death of Christ, Satan's accusations against Believers are answered. One of the practices in which he most delights is that of accusing the people of God and, alas, he has plenty of cause for his charges. But whenever he accuses us, our one answer is, "Jesus died." He says, "These people have sinned," and we reply, "True, but Jesus died for them." And the Cross of Christ stops the mouth of the accuser! Even a feeble saint, looking up to His crucified and risen Savior, can boldly sing—

***"I may my fierce accuser face,
And tell Him you have died."***

Next, Christ's Cross spoils Satan of his universal monarchy. He could once lord it over the whole world and he does very much of that even now, but there is a people over whom he cannot sway his evil scepter! There is a race which has broken loose from him. They are free and they defy him to enslave them again. They care not for his threats, they are not to be won by his blandishments and though he worries and tempts them, yet he cannot destroy them—he can boast no longer of universal dominion! There is a Seed of the woman that has revolted from him, for Jesus, by His death, has redeemed them out of the hand of the enemy and they are free! I heard a story of an old black woman who was waiting upon a lady visiting friends in the South some time after the last great war in America. The lady said to the black servant, "You may very well wait upon a Northerner with great attention, for it is through us that you are free." "Free, Missy, free?" exclaimed the Negress, "I's a slave. I was born a slave." "Oh, but you are free! Do you not know that there has been an Act passed by which you are all free?" "Yes, I did hear something about dat and I said to old Massa, 'I hear dat we is all free.' He said, 'Stuff and nonsense,' so I's bin stoppin' here workin' for Him. Is it true, Missy, that we is all free?" "Oh, yes!" she answered, "you are all free, every slave is now free." "Then," said the woman, "I don't bin serve old Massa any longer; I bid Him 'Good-bye.'" And so it is when Christ sets us free—we do not serve the old massa, Satan, any longer—we bid him "Good-bye."

When we are set free from the dominion of the devil, by the emancipating redemption of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Satan's tyrannical power is crippled. He still has great influence and he does his worst to injure the Kingdom of Christ by persecution, by false doctrine and by a thousand other methods, but Christ has broken his right arm—he cannot work as he once did and, more and more, as the fruit of the Redeemer's passion, Satan's power will be curtailed until, at last, he shall be utterly cast out and the triumphant shout shall be heard, "Hallelujah, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!" Let us never imagine that the devil is going to conquer in the great battle between right and wrong. God's Word tells us plainly enough what his end is to be—"And the devil that deceived them was cast into the Lake of Fire and Brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever."

Now, if any of you suffer through Satan tempting you to despair. If he comes to some of you and entices you to commit a sin which you hate, and against which you strive with all the might God gives you. If, by a mysterious force that you cannot comprehend, he seems to make you do other than you would—take courage and stand up against him, for when Jesus died, He said that, by His death, the Prince of Darkness was cast out and so He is! Sin shall not have dominion over you, nor shall Satan! Only be bold in resisting him, claim your liberty as a child of God and fight under the command of Christ, for the Cross is the conquering banner for all who would overthrow the power of Satan—

***"By all Hell's host withstood
We all Hell's host overthrow!
And conquering them, through Jesus' blood
We still to conquer go."***

The third result of Christ's death is *the central attraction of His Cross*. "I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." Christ on the Cross has become the great magnet attracting men to Himself. What did He mean by this saying? Did He not mean that His sphere of influence would be widened? "While I am here," said He, "I draw a few men to Me. These fishermen have become My disciples, these Greeks have come to see Me, but when I am lifted up upon the Cross, I shall draw all men unto Me—men of all sorts, men out of all nations, multitudes of men, not only of this one age, but of all ages—till the world shall end! I shall become the center of a wider circle, a circle wide as the world. I shall draw all men unto Me." But why is it that Christ draws men to Himself? I answer that it is because, by dying on the Cross, He gave a new and brighter display of His love! Men came to Christ because of His love while He walked the earth—little children especially did—but after He had died that shameful death, how could they help coming to Him? "Scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet perhaps for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commends His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." "Herein is love." And to all the ages the masterpiece of love is the dying Christ praying for His enemies, "Father, forgive them; for

they know not what they do.” Christ on the Cross draws sinners to Himself! Christ Crucified attracts through the infinite love to men which is displayed in that death!

A part of the attraction lies in the wonderful blessings which come to us through Christ’s death. We were drawn to Him because we received pardon through His wounds. We came to Him because we found eternal life through His death upon the tree. Jesus bore the sin of His people, He died in our place and, by doing so, He put away all our iniquities, blotted them out, cast them into the depths of the sea! Only as He was lifted up upon the Cross could that be said to be the case. But when He was crucified, He finished transgression, made an end of all, and brought in everlasting righteousness. Beloved, this is a great attraction to perishing sinners—it is a drawing of love to which they must yield. When Jesus thus attracts us, we run to Him because pardon and eternal life are to be found through His lifting up on the Cross. I would that some here might be drawn to Christ at this moment by the mighty magnet of His death. Remember how the poet sings of the attraction of the Cross—

**“So great, so vast a Sacrifice
May well my hope revive.
If God’s own Son thus bleeds and dies,
The Sinner surely may live!
Oh, that these cords of love Divine
Might draw me, Lord, to Thee!
You have my heart, it shall be Yours,
Yours it shall ever be!”**

The death of Christ attracted to Him multitudes of the sons of men because it expanded the hearts of His people. While He was alive and with them, they never burned with such enthusiasm as after He had died. One of the first effects of His death was the outpouring of the Spirit of God upon them, infusing them with new life, a holy fervor and a sacred enthusiasm which made them go unto the utmost ends of the earth, publishing among the Gentiles full redemption through His precious blood! Christ, when He was lifted up, made His followers disseminate themselves throughout all populations of the globe till their line went forth to the ends of the earth and, like the sun over every clime, so did the Gospel of Jesus Christ enlighten every nation under Heaven. “I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.” Christ is the Center of mankind! He is the Shiloh and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be! They shall come away from the abominations of Rome. They shall come away from the crescent of the false prophet. They shall come away from the idols of the dark places of the earth. They shall come away from infidelity and philosophy and shall come crowding to His dear feet as they feel the marvelous magnetism of His atoning death!

These three things, then, resulted from the death of Christ—the wicked world was judged, the power of Satan was broken and Christ was made the central attraction of sinners to Himself—and that attracting power is

working now! Oh, that these three wonders might be worked in our midst tonight, according to our measure!

II. Now, in the second place, I want you, for a few minutes, to quietly THINK ABOUT THE DEATH OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST AS DESCRIBED IN OUR TEXT.

How much the Holy Spirit desires that we should read the Scriptures intelligently! He had recorded these Words of the Lord Jesus, "I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." If that had been all, we might have asked—Does that lifting up from the earth mean Christ's death? Does it mean His ascension, His going up from the earth till the cloud received Him? Or does it mean our preaching of Christ, when we lift Him up before men, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness? So, to avoid all question, the Holy Spirit added the 33rd verse, "*This He said, signifying what death He should die.*" If there is anything that the Spirit wishes us to be especially clear about, it is all expressions that have to do with our Lord's death. Let us thank Him for that comment inserted here, lest we should make any mistake upon so vital a subject.

Now looking at the words, I want you to notice that *Christ went to His death with a clear view of what it was to be.* There is many a man who has rushed into the battle and died without any idea of what a gunshot wound would be, or what the piercing of a lance would be. But our Lord, as it were, took stock of His death and looked it calmly in the face. He does not speak of it as barely death, but He describes the manner of it—"I, if I am lifted up from the earth." In His own mind, He had gone through the nailing to the wood and He had come to the lifting up of that wood into the air, the fixing of its socket in the ground and, in spirit, He felt Himself already hanging there, lifted up from the earth. Just think of this wondrous fact, as Dr. Watts puts it—

***"This was compassion like a God,
That when the Savior knew
The price of pardon was His blood,
His pity no'er withdrew."***

Knowing that His death was to be by crucifixion, He did not turn from it—He set His face like a flint to endure all that "the Cross" meant. He fully knew what it meant, but you and I do not. There are depths in His sufferings that must be unknown to us, but He knew them all and, with love that was strong as death, He went through it all for your redemption, O Believer! Then, love Him in return with a resolute, determined consecration of your whole being! Yield yourself up to Him, not spasmodically, but of love aforethought, to be wholly His! Somebody said to me, the other day, that all religion, nowadays, either suffered from paralysis or convulsions. I do not want you to have either of those complaints, though I like the convulsions better than the paralysis. Let us not have convulsed religion, but let us have strongly fixed principles, knowing *what* we have to do and *why* we do it, and then, like the Savior, let us go forward, *expecting* difficulty, *expecting* loss, *expecting* ridicule—but willingly and willfully fac-

ing it all for His dear sake, as He, on His part, endured even the Cross for our sake!

Notice, next, that though our Savior knew the bitterness of His death, He read its issues in another light. "I, if I am lifted up"—do you catch the thought? He does not merely mean lifted up on the Cross, He means another kind of lifting up—He means being exalted! When He was lifted up upon the Cross, men thought it degradation, but He looked into His death as one looks into an opal till He sees wondrous rainbows and flames of fire in the precious stone. So Jesus looked into His passion till He saw His Glory! Down in the ruddy depths of that blood-cup, He saw that He was really being lifted up when men thought that He was being cast down. That crown of thorns was a more wondrous diadem than monarch ever wore! His Cross was His Throne. With His outspread hands, He ruled the nations and with His feet fixed there, He trampled on the enemies of men!

O glorious Christ, when I have had a vision of Your Cross, I have seen it, at first, like a common gallows and You were hanging on it like a felon! But, as I have looked, I have seen it begin to rise and tower aloft till it has reached the highest Heaven and by its mighty power lifted up myriads to the Throne of God! I have seen its arms extend and expand until they have embraced all the earth! I have seen the foot of it go down deep as our helpless miseries are—and what a vision I have had of your magnificence, O Crucified One! As Jesus looked forward to His death, He saw more than we can even now see in it and He perceived that it was His Glory to be lifted up on the Cross of Calvary!

Further, *He beheld in it the supply of our great need.* "I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw." He saw that we were far away and could not, of ourselves, come near, so He said, "If I am lifted up, I will draw them." He saw that we would not wish to come; that we would be so hard-hearted and stiff-necked that we would not come if we were called! "But," He said, "I, from the Cross, will draw them. As a magnet draws steel, I will attract them." Oh, think of the Cross of Christ in that light! Some have thought that if we preach the Gospel, we shall always have a congregation. I am not sure of that, but if the Gospel does not attract a congregation, I do not know what will. But Christ does not say, "I, if I am lifted up, will draw all men to little Bethel, or to Salem." He says, "I will draw all men unto Me," that is, to Himself—and we only come to Christ because Christ comes to us!

No man ever comes to Christ unless Christ draws Him and the only magnet that Christ ever uses is Himself. I do believe that we slander Christ when we think that we are to draw the people by something else but the preaching of Christ Crucified. We know that the greatest crowd in London has been held together these 30 years by nothing but the preaching of Christ Crucified. Where is our music? Where is our oratory? Where is anything of attractive architecture, or beauty of ritual? "A bare service," they call it. Yes, but Christ makes up for all deficiencies! Preach Christ and men will be drawn to Him, for so the text says, "I, if I am lifted up

from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.” They are held back by Satan, but the Cross will draw them. They are held back by despair, but the Cross will attract them. They are held back by lack of desire, but the Cross will breed desire. They are held back by love of sin, but the Cross will make them hate the sin that crucified the Savior. “I will draw them. All sorts of men I will draw unto Myself,” says the Crucified Christ. Thus He supplies our great need.

Observe, too, that *Jesus knew that He would live to exercise that attraction*. He says, “I, if I am lifted up from the earth”—what then? “Shall I be dead? No, “I *will* draw all men unto Me.” He lives! Going to death, He expects to live, He glories in His life, He tells of what He means to do after He is risen from the dead! O glorious Christ, to look beyond Your death and find comfort in Your risen life! Cannot you, my Brothers, my Sisters, sometimes look beyond the grave and find comfort in what you will do in Heaven? Oh, will we not glorify our Lord in Heaven? In the anticipation of what we will do in honor of our precious Savior, let us now take up arms against our present trouble, borrowing our weapons from the armory of the future after our earthly life is over!

Jesus saw, too, (and here I must finish), that *the day would come when He would be surrounded by a mighty company*. Can you not see Him? He is lifted up upon the Cross and He begins to draw—and men come to Him, a few at Jerusalem—no, did I say, “a few”?—three thousand in one day! The Crucified has pierced their hearts; the Crucified has begotten faith in them; the Crucified has drawn thousands to Himself! He is preached in Damascus. He is preached at Antioch, Corinth, Rome—and everywhere He is preached, He draws sinners to Himself—and great companies come to Him! By-and-by He is preached in far-off Britain—some pioneer evangelist finds a place in these islands where he can preach to the uncivilized, the Gospel of Christ—and Jesus draws them to Himself! He draws men till, all over Rome’s vast empire, Christ crucified is drawing them from Caesar’s palace and from Caesar’s prison! From the slave at the mill to the senator who rules the city, Christ is drawing them!

The kings who wear their crowns by permission of the Roman power—some of them bow before King Jesus—He is drawing them! The people on the isles of the sea and on every coast, He is drawing them. And today He is *still* drawing them! From the sunny islands of the southern sea, from the far north of Greenland, from Africa, from China, from everywhere, He draws them more and more! And here, in this, our favored island, He has drawn myriads to Himself, but the day shall come when that drawing power will begin to operate yet more freely. They shall *run* to Him! They shall fly to Him with swift wings, as doves fly to their cots. They shall come to Him as on a sudden, till the Church shall cry in astonishment, “Who has begotten me these? These, where had they been?”

As the drops of the morning dew are seen, glittering like diamonds on every hedge, and on every blade of grass, when once the sun is up, so shall Christ’s converts be, like Abraham’s promised seed, “so many as the

stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the seashore, innumerable." Christ's people shall be willing in the day of His power and the great attraction by which they will be drawn to Him will be His death on the Cross! Oh, that He would draw many to Himself tonight! Let this be our prayer to Him—

***“Dear Savior, draw reluctant hearts.
To You let sinners fly
And take the bliss Your love imparts
And drink, and never die!”***

Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 12:19-43.**

Our Lord raised Lazarus from the dead and this miracle made a great sensation among the people. They came to meet Jesus, waving palm branches before Him, and all Jerusalem was on a stir.

Verses 19-22. *The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive you how you prevail nothing? Behold, the world is gone after Him. And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast: the same came, therefore, to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired Him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus. Philip went and told Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip told Jesus.* These were probably Gentiles who were staying at Jerusalem—perhaps proselytes who had come up to the feast. They were touched by the common feeling; they desired to see this wonderful Man who had raised to life one who had been dead four days. They proceeded courteously. They went to one of Christ's disciples who, coming from Galilee of the Gentiles, would be likely to sympathize with them, and they sought an introduction to Jesus. This Philip obtained for them with the help of Andrew.

23. *And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified.* He knew that the hour was come when He must die. Looking through the dark glass of Death, He saw what its result would be and He called it Glory! These few Greeks were the advance guard of the great Gentile army of the Lord—He regarded their coming in that sense.

24. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone: but if it dies, it brings forth much fruit.* Telling them that the source of His Glory would be His death. The reason why the people would hear of Him and come to Him, was that He would be hanged on the Cross. The grain of wheat, when put into the ground, if it remains as it is, will never increase—it must die if it is to bring forth fruit. What is death? The end of existence? None but thoughtless persons imagine that! Death is the resolution of any living substance into its primary elements. It is the division of the soul from the body—originally it was the division of the soul from God. In a grain of wheat, death is the

separation of the particles of which it is composed, that the life-germ may feed upon that which was provided for it. "If it dies," in the true sense of the word, in being separated into its constituent elements, then, "it brings forth much fruit." Christ's way to Glory was through the grave. He must go down that He might mount to the Throne of God.

25. *He that loves his life shall lose it; and he that hates his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.* Live for this world and you shall lose this world and the next, too! Live for the world to come and you shall, in the highest sense, gain both worlds!

26. *If any man serves Me, let him follow Me.* That is the best kind of service—to do what Christ did and to do what Christ bids you do—"If any man serves Me, let Him follow Me."

26. *And where I am, there shall also My servant be: if any man serve Me, Him will My Father honor.* Follow Christ, then, to the Cross. Follow Him to the grave. Follow Him in His humiliation and then the Father will honor you even as He honored His Son.

27. *Now is My soul troubled.* Or, puzzled. This hour of His Glory was the hour of His passion, too.

27. *And what shall I say?* Such sorrow was in His heart that He asked, "What shall I say?" Great trouble brings astonishment, amazement, bewilderment with it—and the human soul of Christ felt as ours feels when in great agony.

27. *Father, save Me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour.* Nature suggests the cry, "Father, save Me from this hour." Grace comes behind the flesh, being a little slower to speak, but it corrects the errors of the flesh and says, "For this cause came I unto this hour."

28. *Father, glorify Your name.* What a prayer! Jesus swallows up His temptation to escape the cup by this all-absorbing petition, "Father, glorify Your name."

28, 29. *Then came there a voice from Heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again. The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered.* They only heard the sound and it was like thunder in their ears.

29. *Others said, An angel spoke to Him.* They distinguished the sound of someone speaking, but they did not recognize the voice of God.

30. *Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of Me, but for your sakes.* "To make you believe that God is with Me and that I am His Son."

31-34. *Now is the Judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me. This He said, signifying what death He should die. The people answered Him, we have heard out of the Law that Christ abides forever: and how say You, The Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?* As if it could not be true that Christ, in His Divine Nature, abides forever, and yet, as Man, could be lifted up to die! It was a sneering question, "Who is this Son of Man?" Our Lord did not answer it, thus teaching us

that some people are not worth answering. Instead of replying to their question, Jesus gave them a practical admonition.

35, 36. *Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the Light with you. Walk while you have the Light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walks in darkness knows not where he goes. While you have Light, believe in the Light, that you may be the children of Light. These things spoke Jesus and departed, and did hide Himself from them. When people determine to reject Christ, He leaves them! Why should He tarry where He is rejected? He "departed, and did hide Himself."*

37-41. *But though He had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on Him; that the saying of Isaiah the Prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke, Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Isaiah said again, He has blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said Isaiah, when he saw His glory, and spoke of Him. Christ is in the Old Testament in many places where, as yet, even we have never seen Him. I doubt not that He lies hidden away in many a Psalm, and many a prophetic utterance that has not yet been fully expounded, or even comprehended by our finite minds. Oh, for eyes to see Him where He sits in His ancient state! What a solemn fact this is, though, that God allows men to be given over to blindness of eyes and hardness of heart! I sometimes fear that it is so with this age. Men will not see—they will not believe! They are desperately set on skepticism—it has become a fashion with them. Like a torrent, it sweeps through the very churches that bear the name of Christ! My fear is God, in His wrath, may give up our land to this curse, and then where will our hope be?*

42, 43. *Nevertheless among the chief rulers, also, many believed on Him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. I wonder whether in this throng there are any of this kind who believe in Christ, and yet never come out and confess Him because they love the praise of men more than the praise of God? If so, I venture to say that they are found among what are called the more respectable people, the men of light and leading, the chief rulers. Among the common people there is very little of this evil. They will generally confess what they believe and bravely come forward to declare that they belong to Christ! It is the chief rulers, the gentlemen of the Sanhedrim, who, if they believe in Christ in their hearts, do not confess Him, lest they should be put out of society, for they love the praise of men more than the praise of God.*

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CHRIST LIFTED UP

NO. 139

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JULY 5, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.”
John 12:32.***

IT was an extraordinary occasion upon which the Savior uttered these words. It was the crisis of the world. We very often speak of the “present crisis of affairs,” and it is very common for persons of every period to believe their own age to be the crisis and turning point of the whole world’s history. They rightly imagine that very much of the future depends upon their present exertions. But they wrongly stretch the thought and imagine that the period of their existence is the very hinge of the history of the world—that it is the crisis. However it may be correct, in a modified sense, that every period of time is in some sense a crisis, yet there never was a time which could be truly called a crisis in comparison with the season when our Savior spoke. In the 31st verse, immediately preceding my text, we find in the English translation, “Now is the *judgment* of this world.” But we find in the Greek, “Now is the *crisis* of this world.” The world had come to a solemn crisis—now was the great turning point of all the world’s history—should Christ die, or should He not? If He would refuse the bitter cup of agony, the world is doomed. If He should pass onward, do battle with the powers of death and Hell and come off a victor, then the world is blessed and her future shall be glorious. Shall He succumb? Then is the world crushed and ruined beneath the trail of the old serpent! Shall He conquer? Shall He lead captivity captive and receive gifts for men? Then this world shall yet see times when there shall be “a new Heaven and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness.” “Now is the crisis of this world!” “The crisis,” He says, “is two-fold. Dealing with Satan and men. I will tell you the result of it. ‘Now shall the prince of this world be cast out.’ Fear not that Hell shall conquer. I shall cast him out. And on the other hand, doubt not that I shall be victorious over the hearts of men. ‘I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.’” Remembering the occasion upon which these words were uttered, we shall now proceed to a discussion of them.

We have three things to notice. *Christ Crucified is Christ’s Glory.* He calls it a lifting Him up. *Christ Crucified, the minister’s theme.* It is the minister’s business to lift Christ up in the Gospel. *Christ Crucified, the*

heart's attraction. "I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." *His own Glory—the minister's theme—the heart's attraction.*

I. I begin then—CHRIST'S CRUCIFIXION IS CHRIST'S GLORY. He uses the words, "lifted up," to express the manner of His death. "I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me. This He said, signifying what death He should die." But notice the choice of the words to express His death. He does not say, I, if I am crucified, I, if I am hanged on the tree. No, but, "I, if I am lifted up"—and in the Greek there is the meaning of exaltation. "I, if I am exalted—I, if I am lifted on high." He took the outward and visible fashion of the Cross, it being a lifting of Him up, to be the type and symbol of the Glory with which the Cross should invest even Him. "I, if I am lifted up."

Now *the Cross of Christ is Christ's Glory.* We will show you how. Man seeks to win his glory by the slaughter of others—Christ by the slaughter of Himself! Men seek to get crowns of gold—He sought a crown of thorns! Men think that glory lies in being exalted over others—Christ thought that His Glory did lie in becoming "a worm and no man," a scoff and reproach among all who beheld Him! He stooped when He conquered. And He counted that the Glory lay as much in the stooping as in the conquest.

Christ was glorified on the Cross, we say, first, *because love is always glorious.* If I might prefer any glory, I would ask to be beloved by men. Surely the greatest glory that a man can have among his fellows is not that of mere admiration, when they stare at him as he passes through the street and throng the avenues to behold him as he rides in his triumph—the greatest fame, the greatest glory of a patriot is the love of his country—to feel that young men and maidens, old men and sires are prepared to fall at his feet in love, to give up all they have to serve him who has served them. Christ won more love by the Cross than He ever did elsewhere. O Lord Jesus, You would never have been as much loved if You had sat in Heaven forever, as You are now loved since You have stooped to death. Not cherubim and seraphim and angels clad in light could ever have loved with hearts so warm as Your redeemed above, or even Your redeemed below. You won love more abundantly by the nail than by Your scepter. Your open side brought You no emptiness of love, for Your people love You with all their hearts! Christ won Glory by His Cross. He was never so lifted up as when He was cast down. And the Christian will bear witness that though he loves his Master anywhere, yet nothing moves his heart to rapture and vehemence of love like the story of the Crucifixion and the agonies of Calvary.

Again—Christ at that time won much Glory *by fortitude.* The Cross was a trial of Christ's fortitude and strength and, therein, it was a garden in which His Glory might be planted. The laurels of His crown were sown

in a soil that was saturated with His own blood. Sometimes the ambitious soldier pants for battle because in days of peace he cannot distinguish himself. "Here I sit," he says, "and rust my sword in my scabbard and win no glory. Let me rush to the cannon's mouth. Though some call honor a painted bauble, it may be so, yet I am a soldier and I need it." And he pants for the encounter that he may win glory. Now, in an infinitely higher sense than that poor glory which the soldier gets, Christ looked upon the Cross as being His way to honor. "Oh," He said, "now shall be the time of My endurance—I have suffered much, but I shall suffer more and then shall the world see what a strong heart of love I have." How patient is the Lamb, how mighty to endure! Never would Christ have had such plans of praise and such songs of honor as He now wins, if He had avoided the conflict and the battle and the agony. We might have blessed Him for what He is and for what He wished to do. We might have loved Him for the very longings of His heart, but we never could have praised Him for His strong endurance, for His intrepid spirit, for His unconquerable love, if we had not seen Him put to the severe test of Crucifixion and the agonies of that awful day. Christ did win Glory by His being crucified!

Again—Christ looked upon His crucifixion *as the completion of all His work* and, therefore, He looked upon it as an exaltation. The completion of an enterprise is the harvest of its honor. Though thousands have perished in the arctic regions and have obtained fame for their intrepid conduct, yet, my Friends, the man who at last discovers the passage is the most of all honored! And though we shall forever remember those bold men who pushed their way through winter in all its might and dared the perils of the deep, yet the man who accomplishes the deed wins more than his share of the glory. Surely the accomplishment of an enterprise is just the point where the honor hangs. And, my Hearers, Christ longed for the Cross because He looked for it as the goal of all His exertions. It was to be the place upon which He could say, "It is finished." He could never say, "It is finished," on His Throne—but on His Cross He did cry it! He preferred the sufferings of Calvary to the honors of the multitude who crowded round about Him. For, preach as He might and bless them as He might and heal them as He might, still was His work undone. He was straitened. He had a Baptism to be baptized with and how was He straitened till it was accomplished! "But," He said, "now I pant for My Cross, for it is the top stone of My labor. I long for My sufferings because they shall be the completion of My great work of Grace." Brothers and Sisters, it is the end that brings the honor. It is the victory that crowns the warrior rather than the battle! And so Christ longed for this, His death, that He might see the completion of His labor. "Yes," He said, "when I am crucified, I am exalted and lifted up."

And, once again—Christ looked upon His crucifixion with the eye of firm faith *as the hour of triumph*. His disciples thought that the Cross would be a degradation. Christ looked through the outward and visible and beheld the spiritual. “The Cross,” He said, “the gallows of My doom, may seem to be cursed with ignominy and the world shall stand round and hiss at the Crucified. My name may be forever dishonored as One who died upon the tree. Cavilers and scoffers may forever throw this in the teeth of My friends—that I died with the malefactor. But I look not at the Cross as you do. I know its ignominy, but I despise the shame—I am prepared to endure it all. I look upon the Cross as the gate of triumph, as the portal of victory! Oh, shall I tell you what I shall behold upon the Cross?—Just when My eyes are swimming with the last tear and when My heart is palpitating with its last pang—just when My body is torn with its last thrill of anguish, then My eyes shall see the head of the dragon broken. It shall see Hell’s towers dismantled and its castle fallen! My eyes shall see My seed eternally saved. I shall behold the ransomed coming from their prisons. In that last moment of My doom, when My mouth is just preparing for its last cry of, ‘It is finished,’ I shall behold the year of My redeemed. I shall shout My triumph in the delivery of all My Beloved! Yes, and I shall then see the world, My own earth conquered and usurpers all dethroned—and I shall behold in vision the glories of the latter days when I shall sit upon the Throne of My father, David, and judge the earth, attended with the pomp of angels and the shouts of My Beloved!” Yes, Christ saw in His Cross the victories of it and, therefore, did He pant and long for it as being the place of victory and the means of conquest! “I,” said Jesus, “if I am lifted up from the earth, if I am exalted,” He puts His Crucifixion as being His Glory! This is the first point of our text.

II. But, now, secondly, CHRIST HAS ANOTHER LIFTING UP, not ignominious but truly honorable! There is a lifting of Him upon the pole of the Gospel, in the preaching of the Word! Christ Jesus is to be lifted up every day. For that purpose He came into the world—“That like as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness,” even so He might, by the preaching of the Truth, be lifted up from the earth, “that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” Christ is THE MINISTER’S GREAT THEME, in opposition to a thousand other things which most men choose. I would prefer that the most prominent feature in my ministry should be the preaching of Christ Jesus. Christ should be most prominent, *not Hell and damnation*. God’s ministers must preach God’s terrors as well as God’s mercies—we are to preach the thunder of God’s Law. If men will sin, we are to tell them that they must be punished for it. If they will transgress, woe unto the watchman who is ashamed to say, “The Lord comes that takes vengeance.” We would be unfaithful to the

solemn charge which God has given us if we were wickedly to stifle all the threats of God's Word. Does God say, "The wicked shall be cast into Hell, with all the nations that forget God?" It is our business to say so! Did the loving Savior talk of the pit of Hell that burns, of the worm that never dies and of the fire that can never be extinguished? It is ours to speak as He spoke and not to mince the matter! It is no mercy to men to hide their doom. But, my Brothers, terrors never ought to be the prominent feature of a minister's preaching—many old divines thought they would do a great deal of good by preaching thus—I do not believe it! Some souls are awakened and terrified by such preaching—they, however, are but few. Sometimes, right solemnly, the sacred mysteries of eternal wrath must be preached, but far more often let us preach the wondrous love of God! There are more souls won by wooing than by threats! It is not Hell, but Christ we desire to preach! O Sinners, we are not afraid to tell you of your doom, but we do not choose to be forever dwelling on that doleful theme! We love rather to tell you of Christ and Him Crucified! We want to have our preaching rather full of the frankincense of the merits of Christ than of the smoke and fire and terrors of Mount Sinai! We are not come unto Mount Sinai but unto Mount Zion—where milder words declare the will of God and rivers of salvation are abundantly flowing!

Again—the theme of a minister should be Christ Jesus in opposition to *mere Doctrine*. Some of my good Brothers are always preaching Doctrine. Well, they are right in doing so, but I would not care to have as the characteristic of my preaching, only Doctrine. I would rather have it said, "He dwelt much upon the Person of Christ and seemed best pleased when he began to tell about the Atonement and the Sacrifice. He was not ashamed of the Doctrines; he was not afraid of threats, but he seemed as if he preached the threats with tears in his eyes and the Doctrine solemnly, as God's own Word. But when he preached of Jesus, his tongue was loosed and his heart was at liberty!" Brothers, there are some men who preach only Doctrine, who are an injury, I believe, to God's Church rather than a benefit! I know of men who have set themselves up as umpires over all spirits. They are the men! Wisdom will die with them. If they were once taken away, the great standard of Truth would be removed! We do not wonder that they hate the Pope—two of a trade never agree, for they are far more popish than he—they being themselves infallible! I am afraid that very much of the soundness of this age is but a mere sound and is not real—it does not enter into the eyes of the heart, nor affect the being. Brothers, we would rather preach Christ than Election! We love Election, we love Predestination, we love the great Doctrines of God's Word, but we had rather preach Christ than preach these! We desire to put Christ over the head of the Doctrine—we make the Doctrine

the Throne for Christ to sit on—but we dare not put Christ at the bottom and then press Him down and overload Him with the Doctrines of His own Word!

And again—the minister ought to preach Christ in opposition to *mere morality*. How many ministers in London could preach as well out of Shakespeare as the Bible, for all they need is a moral maxim? The good man never thinks of mentioning Regeneration. He sometimes talks of moral renovation. He does not think of talking about Perseverance by Grace. No, continuance in well-doing is his perpetual cry. He does not think of preaching, “believe and be saved.” No—his continual exhortation is, “Good Christian people, say your prayers and behave well and by these means you shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven!” The sum and substance of his Gospel is that we can do very well without Christ, that although certainly there is a little amiss in us, yet if we just mend our ways in some little degree, that old text, “except a man be born-again,” need not trouble us. If you want to be made drunkards, if you want to be made dishonest, if you want to be taught every vice in the world—go and hear a moral preacher! These gentlemen, in their attempts to reform and make people moral, are the men that lead them *from* morality! Hear the testimony of holy Bishop Lavington—“We have long been attempting to reform the nation by moral preaching. With what effect? None! On the contrary, we have dexterously preached the people into downright infidelity. We must change our voice! We must preach Christ and Him Crucified—nothing but the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation.”

And yet one more remark—the minister ought to preach Christ in opposition to some who think they ought to preach *learning*. God forbid we should ever preach against learning! The more of it a man can get, the better for him. And the better for his hearers if he has Grace enough to use it well, but there are some who have so much learning that if in the course of their readings they find a very hard word, out comes the pencil-case—they jot it down, to be glorified in the next Sunday morning’s sermon! If they find some outlandish German expression, which, if pulled to pieces, would mean nothing but which looks as if it must be something wonderful—that must always come out—if all the Gospel goes to the wall! You ought to pray to God that they may never be allowed to read anything but their Bibles all week because then you might hear something you could understand—but this would not suit his reference! If he could be understood, he would not be a great preacher, for a great preacher, according to the opinion of some, is a man who is called intellectual. That is to say, a man who knows more about the Bible than the Bible knows about itself—a man who can explain all mysteries by his own intellect—a man who smiles at anything like unction and savor, or the influence of God’s Spirit as being mere fanaticism! Intellect, with him, is

everything. You sit and hear him, you go out, “Dear me, what a remarkable man he is. I suppose he made something out of the text, but I did not know what it was. He seemed to me to be in a fog, himself, although I admit it was an extremely luminous haze.” Then people will go again and be sure to take a pew in *that* Church, because they say he is such a clever man, but the real reason is because they cannot understand him!

In reading the other day a book of advice to ministers, I found it stated and very gravely, too, by some good old tutor of a college, “Always have one part of your sermon which the vulgar cannot comprehend, because in that way you will have a name for learning and what you say that they *can* understand, will impress them the more. By putting in a sentence or two which is incomprehensible, you at once strike their minds as being a superior man and they believe in the weight and the authority of your learning—and therefore they will give credence to the rest which they can comprehend.” Now, I hold that is all wrong. Christ wants us not to preach *learning*, but to preach the good Word of Life in the simplest manner possible. Why, if I could only get lords and ladies to listen to me by preaching to them so that they alone could understand me—they might go and I would not so much as snap my finger for them all! I desire to preach that the servant maid can understand, that the coachman can understand, that the poor and illiterate may hear readily and gladly receive the Word! And mark you, there never will be much good come to the ministry until it is simplified, until our Brothers learn one language, which they do not seem to know. Latin, Greek, French, Hebrew and 20 other languages they know! There is one I would recommend to their very serious study—it is called Anglo-Saxon. If they would just try and learn that, it is astonishing what a mighty language they would find it to be to move the hearts of men! Saxon before every language in the world! When every other has died out for lack of power, Saxon will live and triumph with its iron tongue and its voice of steel! We must have the common, plain language in which to address the people. And mark this, we must have Christ lifted up from the earth, Christ Crucified, without the gauds and pretensions of learning, without the trappings of attempted eloquence or oratory! If Christ Jesus is earnestly preached, He will draw all men unto Him!

III. AND NOW WE GO TO THE THIRD POINT, WHICH IS, INDEED, THE ESSENCE OF THE TEXT—THE ATTRACTIVE POWER OF THE CROSS OF CHRIST. If Christ is thus preached, thus fully held forth, thus simply proclaimed to the people, the effect will be He will draw all men unto Him! Now, I will show the attracting power of Christ in three or four ways. Christ draws *like a trumpet* attracting men to hear the proclamation. Christ draws *like a net* bringing men out of the sea of sin. Christ draws, also, *with bonds of love*. In the next place, Christ attracts *like a*

standard, bringing all the soldiers round Him and, in the last place, Christ draws *like a chariot*. “I, if I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men unto Me.” Now I will try if I can, to explain these points.

First, I said that Christ draws *as a trumpet*. Men have been likely to sound a trumpet to attract an audience to the reading of a proclamation. The people come from their houses at the well-known sound, to listen to what they are desired to know. Now, my Brothers, part of the attractive power of the Gospel lies in attracting people to hear it. You cannot expect people to be blessed by the preaching of the Gospel if they do not hear it! One part of the battle is to get them to listen to its sound. Now, the question is asked in these times, “How are we to get the working classes to listen to the Word?” The answer is, Christ is His own attraction, Christ is the only trumpet that you need to trumpet Christ! Preach the Gospel and the congregation will come of themselves. The only infallible way of getting a good congregation is to do this. “Oh,” said a Socinian once, to a good Christian minister, “I cannot figure it out. My Chapel is always empty and yours always crammed full. And yet I am sure mine is the more rational doctrine and you are not by any means as talented a preacher as I am.” “Well,” said the other, “I will tell you the reason why your Chapel is empty and mine full. The people have a conscience and that conscience tells them that what I preach is true and that what you preach is false, so they will not hear you.” You shall look through the history of this realm ever since the commencement of the days of Protestantism and I will dare to say it without fear of contradiction, that you will almost in every case find that the men who have attracted the greatest mass of people to hear them have been men who were the most evangelical—who preached the most about Christ and Him Crucified! What was there in Whitefield to attract an audience except the simple Gospel preached with a vehement oratory that carried everything before it? Oh, it was not his oratory but the *Gospel* that drew the people! There is a something about the Truth of God that always makes it popular. Tell me if a man preaches the Truth, his Chapel will be empty, Sir, I defy you to prove that! Christ preached His own Truth and the common people heard Him gladly and the multitude flocked to listen to Him. My good ministering Brother, have you got an empty church? Do you want to fill it? I will give you a good recipe and if you will follow it, you will, in all probability, have your chapel full to the doors! Burn all your manuscripts, that is Number One! Give up your notes, that is Number Two. Read your Bible and preach it as you find it in the simplicity of its language. And give up all your Latinized English. Begin to tell the people what you have felt in your own heart and beseech the Holy Spirit to make your heart as hot as a furnace for zeal! Then go out and talk to the people. Speak to them like their brother. Be a man among men. Tell them what you have felt and

what you know and tell it heartily with a good, bold face. And, my dear Friend, I do not care who you are, you will get a congregation! But if you say, "Now, to get a congregation, I must buy an organ." That will not serve you a bit. "But we must have a good choir." I would not care to have a congregation that comes through a good choir. "No," says another, "but really, I must alter a little my style of preaching." My dear Friend, it is not the style of preaching, it is the style of feeling! People sometimes begin to mimic other preachers because they are successful. Why, the worst preachers are those who mimic others whom they look upon as standards! Preach naturally. Preach out of your hearts just what you feel to be true and the old soul-stirring words of the Gospel will soon draw a congregation! "Where the body is, there will the eagles be gathered together."

But if it ended there, what would be the good of it? If the congregation came and listened to the sound and then went away unsaved, of what use would it be? So in the next place, Christ acts *as a net* to draw men unto Him. The Gospel ministry is, in God's Word, compared to a fishery. God's ministers are the fishermen—they go to catch souls, as fishermen go to catch fish. How shall souls be caught? They shall be caught by preaching Christ! Just preach a sermon that is full of Christ and throw it to your congregation, as you throw a net into the sea—you need not look where they are, nor try to fit your sermon to different cases. But throw it in and as sure as God's Word is what it is, it shall not return to Him void! It shall accomplish that which He pleases and prosper in the thing whereto He has sent it. The Gospel never was unsuccessful when it was preached with the demonstration of the Spirit and of power. It is not fine orations upon the death of princes, or the movements of politics which will save souls. If we wish to have sinners saved and to have our Churches increased. If we desire the spread of God's Kingdom, the only thing whereby we can hope to accomplish the end is the lifting up of Christ, for, "I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me."

In the next place, Christ Jesus draws *as the cords of love*. After men are saved, they are still apt to go astray. It needs a cord to reach all the way from a sinner to Heaven! And it needs to have a hand pulling at him all the way. Now Christ Jesus is the band of love that draws the saint to Heaven. O child of God, you would go astray again if Jesus did not hold you fast! It He did not draw you to Himself, you would still wander. Christian people are like our earth. Our world has two forces—it has one tendency to run off at a tangent from its orbit, but the sun draws it by a centripetal power and attracts it to itself—and so between the two forces it is kept in a perpetual circle. Oh, Christian, you would never walk aright and keep in the orbit of Truth if it were not for the influence of Christ perpetually attracting you to the center! You feel, but if you do not

always feel, it is still there—you feel an attraction between your heart and Christ and Christ is perpetually drawing you to Himself, to His likeness, to His Character, to His love, to His bosom and in that way you are kept from your natural tendency to fly off and to be lost in the wide fields of sin! Bless God that Christ lifted up draws all His people unto Him in that fashion.

And now, in the next place Christ Jesus is the center of attraction. Even *as a standard* is the center of gathering, we need unity in these days. We are now crying out, “away with sectarianism.” O for unity! There are some of us who truly pant after it. We do not talk about an evangelical alliance—alliances are made between men of different countries. We believe that the phrase, “Evangelical Alliance,” is a faulty one—it should be, “Evangelical Union”—knit together in union. Why, I am not in alliance with a Brother of the Church of England. I would not be in alliance with him if he were ever so good a man! I would be in *union* with him, I would love him with all my heart, but I would not make a mere alliance with him. He never was my enemy and he never shall be. And, therefore, it is not an alliance I need with him—it is a union! And so with all God’s people—they do not care about alliances. They love real union and communion one with another. Now, what is the right way to bring all the churches to union? “We must revise the Prayer Book,” says one. You may revise it and revise it as long as ever you like, you will never bring some of us to agree to it, for we hate Prayer Books as such, however near perfection! “Well then, we must revise the Doctrines, so that they may meet all classes.” You cannot. That is impossible! “Well then, we must revise the discipline.” Yes, sweep the Augean stable! And then after that, the mass of us will stand as much aloof as ever. “No, but we must, each of us, make mutual concessions.” Indeed, I wonder who will, except the Vicars of Bray, who have no principles at all! For if we have to make mutual concessions, who can be guaranteed that I must not concede a part of what I believe to be true? And that I cannot do, nor can my Brother on the opposite side! The only standard of union that can ever be lifted up in England is the Cross of Christ! As soon as we shall begin to preach Christ and Him Crucified, we shall be all one! We can fight anywhere except at the foot of the Cross—there it is that the order goes forth, “sheathe swords.”

And those who were bitter combatants before, come and prostrate themselves there and say, “You dear Redeemer, You have melted us into one!” Oh, my Brothers, let us all preach the Gospel mightily and there will be union! The Church of England is becoming more united with Dissenters. Our good friends at Exeter Hall have gone a very long way to bless the world and uproot the exclusiveness of their own system. As sure as ever they are alive, they have taken the most excellent step in the

world to pull down the absurd pretensions of some of their own brethren, to the exclusive claim of being “the Church.” I glory and rejoice in it! I bless God for that movement and I pray that the day may come when every bishop may do the same. And I do not glory in it merely because I look upon it as the beginning of union but because of the preaching of the Gospel! But at the same time I know this—let their example be followed and the barriers between Dissenters and the Church of England are not tenable. Even the nationality of Episcopacy must yet come down. If my lord, the bishop of so-and-so, is to have so many thousands a year for preaching to a number of people in Exeter Hall, I have as much right as he has to a State grant, for I serve as many Englishmen as he does! There is no one Church in the world that has any right to take a farthing of national money any more than I have! And if there are ten thousand gathered here, it is an unrighteous thing that we should have no subsidy from the State, when a paltry congregation of thirteen and a half in the City of London is to be supported out of national money! The thing cannot be held long. It is impossible—Christ’s Church will one day reject the patronage of the State. Let all of us begin to preach the Gospel and we shall soon see that the Gospel is self-supporting—and that the Gospel does not want or need entrenchments of bigotry and narrow-mindedness in order to make it stand! No, we shall say, “Brother, there is my pulpit for you. You are an Episcopalian, preach in my pulpit, you are right welcome. The Episcopalian will say, “You are a Baptist and my Brother, there is the parish Church for you.” And I announce that the first chance I get to preach in a parish Church, I will do it and risk the consequences! They are our structures, they belong to all England—we can give them to whom we please and if tomorrow the will of the sovereign people should transfer those edifices to another denomination, there is nothing in the world that can prevent it! But if not, by what law of Christian love is one denomination to shut its pulpit doors against every other? Many of my dear friends in the Episcopal Church are willing to lend their edifices but they dare not.

But mark you—when the Gospel is fully preached, all those things will be broken down—or one Brother will say, “My dear Friend, you preach Christ and so do I, I cannot shut you out of my pulpit.” And another will cry, “I am anxious for the salvation of souls and so are you! Come into my house, come into my heart, I love you.” The only means of unity we shall ever get will be all of us preaching Christ Crucified! When that is done—when every minister’s heart is in the right place, full of anxiety for souls—when every minister feels that, be he called bishop, presbyter, or preacher—all he wants to do is to glorify God and win souls to Jesus, then, my dear Friends, we can maintain our denominational distinctions, but the great bugbear of bigotry and division will have ceased and schism

will no more be known! For that day I anxiously pray. May God send it in His own time. As far as I am concerned, here is my hand for every minister of God in creation and my heart with it—I love all them who love the Lord Jesus Christ! And I feel persuaded that the nearer we all of us come to the one point of putting Christ first, Christ last, Christ midst and Christ without end—the nearer we shall come to the unity of the one Church of Christ in the bond of holy permanence!

And now I close by noticing the last sweet thought—“I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.” Then Christ Jesus will draw all His people to Heaven! He says He will draw them unto Himself. He is in Heaven. Then *Christ is the chariot* in which souls are drawn to Heaven! The people of the Lord are on their way to Heaven, they are carried in everlasting arms. And those arms are the arms of Christ. Christ is carrying them up to His own house, to His own Throne. By-and-by His prayer—“Father, I will that they, whom You have given Me be with Me where I am,” shall be wholly fulfilled! And it is fulfilling now, for He is like a strong courser drawing His children in the chariot of the Covenant of Grace unto Himself. Oh, blessed be God! The Cross is the plank on which we swim to Heaven! The Cross is the great Covenant transport which will weather out the storms and reach its desired Heaven! This is the Chariot, the pillars wherewith are of gold and the bottom thereof silver—it is lined with the purple of the Atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ!

And now, poor Sinner, I would to God Christ would pardon you. Remember His death on Calvary. Remember His agonies and bloody sweat—all this He did for you—if you feel yourself to be a sinner. Does not this draw you to Him?—

***“Though you are guilty He is good,
He’ll wash your soul in Jesus’ blood.”***

You have rebelled against Him and revolted, but He says, “return, backsliding children.” Will not His love draw you? I pray that both may have their power and influence, that you may be drawn to Christ, now, and at last be drawn to Heaven. May God give a blessing for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

Adapted from *The C.H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

THE GREAT ATTRACTION

NO. 775

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 13, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“And I, if I am lifted up from the earth,
will draw all men unto Me.”
John 12:32.*

THE death of our Lord Jesus Christ must have appeared to His Apostles to be an unmitigated misfortune. No doubt they conceived that it would be the death of the cause, a heavy blow and a deep discouragement. Smite the Shepherd and the sheep will be scattered. Strike the Head and what shall become of the members? But our Lord instructed His disciples that this, which seemed so dreary a circumstance, was really the most hopeful of all the points of His history. He assured them that by His death He would totally defeat the powers of darkness. “Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.”

He comforted them yet further by the declaration that His Crucifixion, instead of driving men away from His doctrine, would give to that doctrine a peculiar luster and a special charm. The Cross of Christ, with all its ignominy and shame, is no hindrance to His heavenly teaching but is, in fact, a matchless loadstone by which men are attracted to it. There is such a thing as “the offense of the Cross,” and that offense has not ceased. But listen to the Master's words, “I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.” The attractive power of the Gospel lies mainly in the crucifixion of the Gospel's great Teacher.

The text needs, perhaps, to be illustrated by doctrines which He concealed within itself, and by facts with which it is connected. The Prince of Darkness had drawn away the sons of men by the fascination of flesh-pleasing errors, flattering delusions, alluring pleasures, glittering pomp and outward show. By these he drew all men unto him. The devil led men captive at his will, seducing them from bad to worse. He enticed poor foolish man to his own destruction—as fish are taken by the bait, as birds are lured by decoys—and as ships are wrecked by false lights.

An enormous whirlpool of evil had for many an age sucked into its vortex multitudes who were sailing upon the sea of life. All over the ocean of society the influence of this monstrous whirlpool of evil was felt, more or less powerfully, so that those who escaped from its horrible depths were, nevertheless, much impeded and diverted in their course—and found it hard to reach the desired haven. Even up to the very mouth of the port of peace, the power of this great whirlpool was evidently felt, drawing all men as it could.

Now the Lord Jesus came into the world to produce a counter-attraction, to set in motion a counter-current. Lo, I saw in vision a mysterious hand reaching out of a mighty all-attracting magnet from the sky! It was of so marvelous a power that vessels which were being whirled towards their destruction, were, many of them, suddenly diverted in their course and drawn at once to the magnet and to safety! While others, which did not feel its power to the same saving extent, and became ultimately victims to evil, were nevertheless slowed in their course for awhile, hindered in their desperate folly and prevented from perishing so hastily as they would have done.

Alas, many of them tugged at the oar, or hoisted all sail to escape from the magnet! And so, as they willfully destroyed themselves, they did sad despite to their conscience and perished the more miserably because they despised the great salvation. Just as evil draws all of us, more or less, so Jesus Christ more or less draws all men who hear the Gospel. Some men He draws unto Himself by the effectual drawings of His Divine Grace. These are the "all" here meant—some of all *classes*, the all for whom he shed His blood. But where His name is preached, even those who do not believe in Him feel some of the influence which Christianity spreads abroad throughout society.

His name leavens the lump. The sweet perfume of His spikenard fills all the house where He is sitting. Bent upon instituting the new and heavenly attraction which should overcome the powers of evil, our Lord Jesus came into this world to be lifted up from the earth—not for Himself—but for the sins of others. Down from the heights of Glory He descended, moved by disinterested love. Not that He had anything to gain, but that He might redeem us from our iniquity, and save us from our fearful perils.

On the Cross He effected the redemption of His people. Nailed there in ignominy, in pain, desertion and death, He worked out redemption for His chosen. But men stood at a distance from their best Friend. That is implied in the text. Why should they need to be drawn to Jesus if they were already near to Him? Some stood so far away from the dying Savior that they made His death the subject of mockery, and even found subjects for jest in His dying groans and pangs. All of us were alienated from God and from Christ, who is God's express Image. Our evil hearts had piled great mountains between us and the Lord Jesus Christ. By nature we do not appreciate His love. We do not render to Him the gratitude which He deserves. We pass by as though it were nothing to us that Jesus should die.

Moreover, since man does not come of himself even when he perceives the gracious errand of the Lord Jesus, our heavenly Friend condescends to draw him. The Truth of God is latent in the text—that men not only are at a distance, but that they will not come to Christ of themselves. The Lord never does unnecessary work. We should never hear of Christ's drawing us if we would run without drawing! But the fact is that we stand *away* from Christ and love the distance. Yes, we make the gulf still wider, developing our original hatred to that which is good by adding the force of habit to our original depravity.

Therefore, since men are at a distance and will not come, the Crucified Savior becomes, Himself, the attraction to men. He casts out from Himself bands of love and cords of gracious constraint—and binding these around human hearts He draws them to Himself by an invincible constraint of Divine Grace. Sinners by nature will not come to Jesus, though His charms might even attract the blind and arouse the dead. They will not melt, though surely such beauties might dissolve the adamant, and kindle affection in rocks of ice! But Jesus has a wondrous power about Him to woo and win the sons of men. As out of His mouth goes a two-edged sword, so out of His heart proceed chains of gold by which He binds thousands of willing captives to Himself.

This attraction, according to the text, is to be found operating upon all classes, nations, ranks, and characters of men—it is not to be excluded from remote lands, or dens of infamy nearer home. Here and there kings and princes have believably yielded to its power, while multitudes of the poor have had the Gospel preached to them and have received it in the love of it. I trust there are many of us here, belonging, as we do, to different grades and classes of society, who can verify the truth of this text, “I, if I am lifted up, will draw all men unto Me.” The young, the old, the rich, the poor, the intellectual, the learned, and the ignorant—some of all sorts does Jesus draw, and thus He earns to Himself the glory of being the universal attraction—the attraction to which all hearts must yield when He draws effectually by His Grace.

Having thus skimmed over the text and endeavored to bring before you the thoughts which it kindles, we shall now speak upon what it is in the Cross which becomes attractive to men. Secondly we shall have a word to say concerning the direction in which Christ Crucified draws. And thirdly, with what power He draws.

I. First, dear Friends, WHAT IS THE ATTRACTION OF JESUS CRUCIFIED? It is asserted by our Savior that when lifted up from the earth He would draw all men—He intended by this His Crucifixion—for John tells us in the 33rd verse, “This He said signifying what death He should die.” Let it not be forgotten, then, that the power of the Gospel lies in that which certain persons count to be its weakness and reproach. Christ dying for sinners is the great attraction of Christianity!

Certain preachers have missed all in forgetting this. What is Socinianism but an attempt to have Christ without His Cross? Those who sat around the Cross, and said, “Let Him come down from the Cross and we will believe Him,” were the true ancestors of modern Unitarians who respect the Character of our Lord, and highly esteem Him as a teacher, but reject Him utterly as a Substitute, an Atonement and a Sacrifice for sin. They fondly dream that if they teach His holy life without His ignominious death, men will be attracted to Him. Such has not proved to be the case. “I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me” is true, and shall be true! But Christ merely as a wise teacher, and an eminent example has not drawn the sons of men who are too far fallen to be charmed into holiness by a mere exhibition of moral excellence, however perfect.

Men need not so much a portrait of a man in health as medicine to remove their own diseases. It has been thought by some, of late, that the proper way to draw men to the Gospel is to preach the *future* glory of Christ. This, indeed, is to be preached in its place, for every part of Divine Truth should hold its position in the Gospel harmony. But it is all a mistake, and a very great and terrible mistake, too, for men to put the *glorified* Savior into the place of the *crucified* Savior. You may preach the millennium—you may extol as much as you will the magnificence of those happy days when He shall reign from the river even to the ends of the earth—but you will never make men Christians that way! I have heard it said that the Jews will be converted to Christianity by the doctrine of the Second Coming since the second advent is to us precisely what they think the first advent should be.

But it is not so, Beloved. The only effectual attraction lies where the texts puts it, “I if I am lifted up.” The Savior Crucified draws the Jew as well as the Gentile. The sons of Israel shall not be converted by the doctrine of a glorified Savior, but by the Man of Sorrows who was despised and rejected of men—the Messiah who was cut off, but not for Himself—the Sacrifice offered outside the gate. And from where is this supreme attraction of the Cross? I answer that by the power of the Holy Spirit many have been drawn to Christ by the disinterested love which His death manifests. Does that Man on yonder tree die without the necessity of death out of pure love—out of pure love to those who hated Him? Out of love to the very men who fastened Him to the cruel wood?

Had He nothing to gain? Was it charity in all its perfection—nothing but the milk-white lily of love? Was there nothing else but charity that could bind Him to the tree? Nothing! “You know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might be rich.” “Scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet perhaps for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commends His love toward us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

Many a heart has been so charmed with this that it has run to Christ, drawn by the silken bonds of love! Do not some of you feel as if you could love the dear Lover of souls this morning? Do not even my feeble descriptions of His Godlike work entice you? Oh, do you not feel that you must love One who loved so truly when there was no benefit for Him to receive in return? Why I have thought that if Jesus had never died for me, I yet must love Him for having died for others! And if I had no share in the benefits which His passion procured, yet I have sometimes felt as if, out of admiration for “love so amazing, so Divine,” I must give my heart to Him! Here is one master attraction of the Crucified One.

Others have doubtless been brought to the Savior’s feet by delight in the satisfaction which is rendered to justice by the Redeemer’s death. Many men reason thus with themselves: Conscience is uneasy. Offense has been committed against God. Now, in the nature of things, under all law that is at all respected there must be punishment for offenses. But

how shall the exercise of the prerogative of mercy be rendered perfectly consistent with the fulfillment of the penalty? Yonder bleeding Savior solves the difficulty. He dies, "The Just for the unjust, that He may bring us to God." "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed."

Many men, finding their conscience rendered perfectly at ease when they have come to lean themselves upon the fact that Christ died for sinners, have been so enamored of that glorious Truth of God that the attraction has bound them to the Cross forever. I must confess that this is one of the great considerations which, in the hand of the Holy Spirit, will keep me a Christian as well as make me more and more in love with my Lord. I see not where else Justice can meet with Mercy and embrace! I know not where else Righteousness and Peace can kiss each other except on the Cross where my Master gave up His life for transgressors.

There I see the riddle all solved—fallen man brought back to God—and God, justly incensed at man's offense, able to display His love without in any way tarnishing His unsullied justice, or even diminishing the severity thereof. O my Hearers, this is a blessed attraction, indeed! I would to God that it would attract some of you! O that the thought that your sin can thus be justly forgiven—that there is "No condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," since Christ was condemned in their place—may draw full many of you to Himself!

Many others have been drawn to the Gospel by a sense of the exact suitability of the Atonement of Christ to the necessities of their condition. As the glove fits the hand so does the Crucified Savior suit the necessities of a sinner. Here is exactly what the man needs. He feels himself guilty. He dreads the punishment of his transgression. His conscience, like an adder, stings him. Like a fire ever fed with fresh fuel, it blazes within him. But when he meets with Christ, he meets with peace and he says within himself, "This is precisely what I require. Thirsty, here is living water! Naked, here is a robe of righteousness! Vile, here is an open fountain! Lost and undone, here is One who came to seek and to save that which was lost." Ah, I beseech my Lord to make all of you feel your condition and then you will set a high price upon my Lord!

Some of you imagine that you are rich and increased in goods and have need of nothing—may you feel your deep necessities before God! May you see how spiritual the Law of God is so that it touches your thoughts, and your words and condemns you as much for these as for outward acts of sin. When you once feel your sinnership, sweet will the Savior's name be in your ears, and you will be drawn to the Cross because the Crucified Savior is all that you need!

Further, thousands upon thousands have been effectually drawn to Christ by seeing how graciously, how readily, how wondrously, how abundantly He pardons as He hangs upon the tree. I cannot understand pardon as coming directly from God apart from a Mediator. Jehovah, the Judge of all the earth, is too high, too terrible, too glorious in holiness for

sinners to deal with Him absolutely. Our God is a consuming fire! When He descends on Sinai the mountain smokes and melts as wax.

Behold, the whole earth trembles at His Presence—the pillars thereof are dissolved! Before Him goes the pestilence, at His feet are coals of fire. As He rides upon the wings of the wind He scatters from His pavilion of clouds and darkness, hailstones and coals of fire. As for His voice, it is thunder and the flash of His eyes are lightning. Who can receive pardon from an absolute God? He is great and terrible and will by no means clear the guilty. But when I see God in Christ, and know that “in Him”—that Man who died upon the tree—“dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily,” I can come to Him without fear! And with holy joy I can seek for and receive perfect pardon—from that bleeding hand I dare *expect* pardon!

I am bold to look for great pardon from so great a Savior suffering so greatly. When I hear Him say to the dying thief, “Today shall you be with Me in Paradise,” I can hopefully sing—

***“The dying thief rejoiced to see
That Fountain in his day.
And there may I, though vile as he,
Wash all my sins away!”***

It becomes easy for the soul to understand how sin can be forgiven when it sees how sin has been avenged in the Person of Jesus. O Sinners, my Lord Jesus is able to forgive all manner of sins. “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” “All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.” “Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” How blessed to hear these words preached from that unrivalled pulpit, the Cross! How sweet to hear the dying lips proclaim abounding mercy! How consoling to hear Him speak of the riches of Divine Grace who said, “I thirst,” and “Lama Sabacthani!” Oh, this is to be attracted, indeed! This wondrous pardoning power of the Crucified Redeemer is one of the master attractions of the Cross!

But I must not enlarge. One more particular must suffice. Have not many of us been wonderfully drawn to the Gospel by the intense griefs and agonies of Jesus? Beloved, when we see men in prosperity, it is natural for us to envy. But it is equally natural for us to pity those who are in suffering—and love is in the next degree to pity. So I doubt not that when we have set forth Christ Jesus evidently crucified among you, the gracious Spirit has moved many tender hearts first to pity, and afterwards to *love* the bleeding Lamb! What a melting power there is in Gethsemane! Can you view the bloody drops of sweat as they fall upon the frozen soil and not feel that, in some degree, invisible but irresistible cords are drawing you to Jesus?

Can you see Him flagellated in Pilate’s hall, every thong of the scourge tearing the flesh from His shoulders? Can you see Him as they spit into His lovely face and mar His blessed visage, and not feel as if you could gladly fall down and kiss His feet, and make yourself forever His servant?

And, lastly, can you behold Him hanging upon the hill of Golgotha to die—can you mark Him as His soul is there overwhelmed with the wrath of God, with the bitterness of sin, and with a sense of utter desertion—can you sit down and watch Him there and not be attracted to Him? Ah, I wish that more of you would feel so attracted that you could resist no longer but would come at once and give yourselves up to Him!

You may not feel that you could kiss the King upon His Throne, but will you not kiss the King upon His Cross? You may revolt from Him when He wields a rod of iron, but will you not touch the silver scepter held in the bloodstained hands which bled for His enemies? O come here, sons and daughters of men, and yield yourself to Sorrow's Lord! Daughters of Jerusalem, come here as of old and weep both for Him and for yourselves! O seek a portion in His sin-atoning death—a place in the Heaven which His resurrection has opened!

Before I leave this point, I must observe, dear Friends, that it renders my soul very great comfort to think that the attractive power in my Crucified Lord does not lie in the eloquence of those who preach, nor in the logic and power of persuasion of those who proclaim His Gospel! Ah, poor fools that we are, when we preach we sometimes think souls must be saved because we are fluent! And at another time we suppose no good will be done because we spoke in great mental bondage. But, it is not the *man* who *tells* the story, nor the style in which he tells it—it is the *tale itself* which wins under God the Holy Spirit!

There is in the Cross *itself* a power. The Holy Spirit rests like a dove upon that blood-stained tree and through Him saving Grace comes streaming down to human hearts. It is not *of* man, neither *by* man, for the attractions of Jesus crucified are as a dew from the Lord which carries not for man, neither waits for the sons of men.

II. We proceed to enquire in WHAT DIRECTION DOES THE CROSS ATTRACT? In one word—it attracts towards everything that is good and blessed. No man was ever enticed to evil by a Crucified Savior. The emotions which are properly excited in the soul by the doctrine of the Atonement, must always be towards goodness. The preaching of the Cross does no mischief. Its sacred stream bears no man towards the rock of ruin, but its tendencies are everywhere and at all times towards man's best and happiest estate.

Let us observe that the Cross of Christ draws men from despair to hope. Many have been ready to die of despair because they have said, "There is no salvation for me." To such as these the first beam of hope has come through a Crucified Savior—they have stumbled upon that precious soul-saving text, "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses from all sin," and have been set at liberty! That text has opened the gate of Heaven to many hundreds, and I do not doubt it will to thousands more. They have seen how *Jesus'* suffering put aside the necessity of *our* suffering for sin—and peace at once has bedewed the soul.

It is no mean thing to draw men away from despair, for despair is the root of many sins. When a man says, "There is no hope," then he hunts

after sin like an eager hound after his game. To teach a man that there *is* hope—that there is hope for *him*—is to give him a fair breeze heavenward!, Jesus Crucified presents this to anxious souls. It attracts men, in the next place, from fear to faith. They have been accustomed to think of God with trembling, and to be constantly alarmed at His Presence. Sin has become a burden, but they have not known how to be delivered from it and have feared that they must bear it forever—but the Savior lifted up upon the Cross inspires faith.

We think of Him, and as we think we believe! We meditate, and as we meditate we trust! Confidence comes in by the way of Calvary. The means of creating faith, through the power of the Holy Spirit, is the Cross itself. God works faith in us, but it is through His dying Son. That was a terrible scene in Edinburgh when those lofty houses were filled with occupants who were unable to escape from the smothering smoke and the spreading fire. Suppose a fire escape could have been brought to the rescue, yet there is one thing the fire escape could not have done. If these poor creatures had been too faint and stifled to get out of the windows, it could not have lifted them onto itself and yet that would have been one of the things required for their rescue.

But this the Gospel of Jesus does! It not only comes to men and says, “Now I will save you, if you will get into Me,” but it takes hold of a man and puts him into itself—for Jesus Christ attracts men to Himself—not only comes near enough to them for them to grasp Him, but, as the magnet does with the iron, so Jesus lays hold on sinners’ hearts. Jesus Crucified conducts the man from dread to love. Before God he stood shivering like a slave, crying, “How shall I escape from His Presence? O that I had the wings of the morning that I might fly even to the uttermost parts of the sea, or dive beneath Hell’s darkest wave that I might hide from the yet more terrible Hell of the glance of God’s fiery eyes!”

But when he sees God reconciled in Jesus, then the sinner sings—

***“Till God in human flesh I see,
My thoughts no comfort find.
The holy, just, and sacred Three
Are terrors to my mind.
But if Immanuel’s face appears,
My hope, my joy begins!
His name forbids my slavish fear,
His Grace removes my sins.”***

In this way the soul is led to love God. “We love Him because He first loved us.” Then the attractions of the Cross bring us up from sin to *obedience*. When we are washed in the precious blood we feel grateful to our Lord Jesus and we cannot live to sin. We are dead to it. We cannot any longer take pleasure in that which cost Him His life. It is impossible for us to count that sweet which we know was bitterness to Him. “What will you have me to do?” becomes the question. We submit ourselves with our whole heart to His gracious sway, and to run in the way of His Commandments becomes our soul’s delight.

Thus we are led constantly, also, by the Cross from *self* to Jesus. Nothing will kill self like a sight of the Crucified. Lift up the Savior and down self must go. High thoughts of Christ are always attended by low thoughts of self and vice versa. Think much of yourself? You will think little of the Savior! But a very low esteem of our own merit brings a very high esteem of the merits of Christ—and it is a blessed thing when self is wholly beaten down! It is a victory which altogether is not won by us, I fear, till we lay down our bodies. But if anything can hang up King Self upon the tree until the evening, it is a sight of the tree upon which the Savior bled.

Finally the uplifted Redeemer draws us away from earth to Heaven. Earth holds us fast—we cannot escape from its hold, but we feel a heavenward drawing. It is Jesus Christ who is drawing us—that same Christ who has gone up to the Throne after having trod the winepress. He daily attracts us upward to Himself. Do you not feel His drawing? Oh, I think you do! When the boy's kite goes up very high into the air and gets into the clouds, he cannot see it. Yet he declares, "It is there." Why? "Why," he says, "I can feel its pull." And we know the Lord Jesus Christ is there—He that was crucified, for we can feel Him pull—we can feel Him draw.

O that we could give ourselves wholly up to Him and mount towards Him! I trust we have experienced some of that mounting, for He has "raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places" in Him. We know what the resurrection-life means. We do not forever grovel in worldly cares and carnal thoughts, but sometimes, at least, we get up into the higher atmosphere and have near and dear communion with the Well-Beloved. Savior, draw us more and more!

We return to enquire with what order of power does the Savior lifted up draw men? What are the characteristics and qualities of this power? In brief, first of all, the power with which Christ draws us is, according to the text, a very *gentle* power. "I, if I am lifted up, will draw all men." Drawing is very different from *driving*. The way by which Jesus leads His followers is by soft, gentle influences. "I will draw men." The Law is a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. And the preaching of the terrors of the Law are very useful in their way. But whenever a sinner really comes to Christ, the last action is never a drive—it is always a draw. The dove may have been driven part of the way to the ark by the wind, but the last act of getting into the ark was when Noah put out his hand and pulled the dove into the ark.

The real act which brings us into connection with Christ is always a drawing act—an act of *gentleness*. Every converted man may say, when he is converted, "Your gentleness has made me great." The heathen pictures one of their goddesses in her chariot drawn by doves. Surely it is by doves that we are drawn in the chariot of the Gospel towards the Lord Jesus! How very gentle, though all but Omnipotent, is the influence of the sun upon the earth and all the planets! How they constantly revolve around and follow him in his wondrous march—yet you never feel that he draws!

If you harness a horse to your chariot, he tugs and pulls by fits and starts. But the father of lights draws all the ponderous planets along their appointed ways, and yet there is not enough of a jar to shake an aphid from a rosebud! So there is no noise in the loving drawing of the Savior. Much of the fanaticism which comes with religious excitements is not of God. The genuine dew of Heaven falls calmly—

***“As in soft silence vernal showers
Fall to refresh the fields and flowers,
So in sweet silence from above
Drops the sweet influence of His love.”***

Christ's drawings are gentle.

In the next place, observe that Christ's drawings are *gracious*, for is it not of Grace that He should draw at all? If any of you were about to give away bread to the poor and they would not come for it, I think you would say, “Let them go without it.” You would not attempt to *bring them* to the feast. No, you would say, “It is good enough on my part to be ready to relieve them. But if they will not come, then let their starving be upon their own heads.”

But see what Jesus does! He does not throw a life belt to poor drowning men. Yes, he does—but he does *more*, for this life belt has the wonderful quality of attracting the man unto itself so that though, at first, he might be unwilling to be rescued—this mystic life belt changes his will so that he is willing to be saved. But, next, Jesus draws with a widespread power. “I will draw all men unto Me.” Not every man. Every man is not effectually drawn, for millions of men never heard the name of Jesus Christ at all—but men of all *sorts*—“all men,” that is Jews and Gentiles. It is an “all” signifying all sorts of men. And what a wonderful thing it is that the Cross of Christ does draw all men!

Many thought it never could draw the “roughs”—the harlots the street Arabs—but there have been found for Christ some of His mightiest trophies among the lowest of the low! Nor should we think that the Cross cannot attract the rich, and that it is of little use putting the Gospel before the fashionable classes. Ah, do not tell us this! There is a boundless power in the Cross of Christ. If we preach it to kings and princes, we need not be ashamed. If we could have a parliament of men who were as bad as devils, as proud as Pharaoh, and as furious as Saul of Tarsus—if we preached Christ Crucified to them—it would not be in vain!

This attraction has, in the fourth place, an *effectual* power, for Jesus Christ, in His own elect ones, draws most effectually. I said very gently, but none the less mightily because of the gentleness! The swallows fly across the sea to distant lands. Did you ever feel the influence which attracts them? It is not perceptible by the most delicate of instruments and yet how effectual it is! They cannot lag behind when the time has come. See how they twitter over the gables of our houses and leave those neatly built habitations beneath our eaves. Many a weary mile lies the goal of their pilgrimage across the sea, but there they go! A mysterious influence draws them and He who thus draws the swallow to other lands, and

guides it in its flight, draws men to the Cross so that they never rest till they have left their haunts of sin and come to live where Jesus Christ distributes peace!

I will add, for the comfort of some who are here, that Jesus Christ draws today with a *present power*. "I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." That means that He is drawing them NOW! He does not say that He will, sometimes. He draws now! Oh, I know not whom He may be drawing, but I do trust He is drawing some of you! Here I stand with the Gospel to preach to you like one with a magnet in his hand. Now, do I know who are God's elect? I do not, but I shall soon find out! Are you not like a great heap of steel filings and ashes mixed together? I cannot separate you, neither need I put the filings on this side and ashes on the other! I have only to thrust in the magnet and the division will be effectually made.

Jesus Crucified is the great discriminator! His Atonement is the great detector of God's elect! The Gospel reveals the eternal purpose. If God intends to save you, you will fly to His dear Son. If you are left to perish, it will be because of *your own willfulness in neglecting the Savior and turning your back upon the fountain which cleanses from all sin*. Jesus draws today, and Jesus will draw still. Happy days are coming when He will draw more mightily, when they shall run unto Him! Even multitudes that knew Him not shall run unto Him, because of the Holy One of Israel who has magnified Him. "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied."

Dear Savior, this morning—

***"Draw reluctant hearts!
To You let sinners fly,
And taste the bliss Your love imparts,
And drink and never die."***

The lessons to be drawn from the whole we will give you in two or three words. First, to Believers working for Christ. Learn from the text that if you would win souls you must *draw* them rather than *drive* them. Very few people are bullied into Heaven! The way to bring men to Jesus Christ is not by rough words, and dark looks, and continually warning them—but rather by gentle invitations. Tenderly as a nurse with her child must we seek to win souls.

In the second place, if we would win souls, Jesus Christ must be our great attraction. In the class in the Sunday school, visiting from house to house, or elsewhere, we must keep close to the text, and the text must be the Cross. I must confess there is a very great sweetness to my soul in preaching about Christ. I hope it is never a weariness to preach any part of Divine Truth. But oh, it is delight itself to preach up the Master! Then we have to deal with the kernel of the matter. When we preach Jesus Christ, oh, then we are not putting out the plates and the knives and the forks for the feast—we are handing out the bread itself!

Now we are not, as it were, working in the field at the hedging and the ditching and the sowing, but we are gathering the golden sheaves and

bringing the harvest home. If we want a hundredfold harvest we must sow seed which was steeped in the blood of Cavalry! And, dear Friends, if you want to be drawn nearer to Christ yourselves, do not go to Moses to help you, but get to Christ! Go to Christ to get to Christ. "I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men"—where?—"unto Me." Jesus draws to Himself! Remember, you have never experienced the fullness of the drawing unless you are drawn to Christ. If you are only drawn to *holiness*, or drawn to a *Church*, or to good experiences you have not obtained the fullness and soul of the matter. You must be drawn to Christ—right away from ordinances and everything else—till you get into His bosom. Then you will have found the summum bonum! Then you will have reached that which Christ would have you obtain—that for which He died that you might obtain when He, on the tree was lifted up—that He might draw you unto Himself.

And now, Sinner, if *you* would come to Jesus, let the text whisper a comfortable word in your ear. *He must draw you!* Think much upon His death. Turn, this afternoon, to those chapters in the Evangelists where His death is recorded. Picture that dying Savior to yourself, and ask yourself, "Is this anything to me? Have I a share in it?" Then cover your face with your hands, and kneel down and cry, "O God, be merciful to me a sinner! Wash me in the precious blood." Before long you shall feel that the precious Christ has drawn you to Himself and that you are saved! The Lord bless you for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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THE MARVELOUS MAGNET

SERMON 1717

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

*On an evening when the regular hearers left their seats
to be occupied by strangers.*

*“I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.
This He said, signifying what death He should die.”
John 12:32, 33.*

JESUS is the spokesman here. He tells of His own death by crucifixion and of the result which will follow. It appears, then, that our Lord's power to draw all men to Himself lies mainly in His death. By being lifted up from the earth upon the Cross, He was made to die and He also was made to draw all men unto Himself. There is an attractive power about our Lord's Person, about His life and about His teaching. But, still, the *main* attractive force lies in His death upon the Cross! Most certainly this is rare and strange, for when a great religious leader dies, a large measure of his personal power is gone. The charm of the man's manner, the impressiveness of his personal conviction, the lofty tone of his daily enthusiasm—these are immense helps to a cause while they are with us! But to lose them is a fearful drawback such as makes it perilous for a religious leader to die.

Men may remember a leader's life for a time after his death—they will do so most emphatically if he has been eminently good. We say of the righteous—“Even in their ashes live their habitual fires.” From many a tomb there rises a silent voice more eloquent than the choicest speech—“He being dead yet speaks.” But there is a measure and boundary to the influence of a mere *memory*. How often is it the case that, after a little while, the leader having gone, the feebler folk gradually drop away; the hypocritical openly desert; the lukewarm wander and so the cause dies out. The man's successors desert his principles, or maintain them with but little life and energy and, therefore, what was once a hopeful effort expires like a dying taper. For a man's work to prosper it is not desirable that he should die.

Is it not strange that what is so often fatal to the influence of other men is a gain to our Lord Jesus Christ? For it is by His death that He possesses His most powerful influence over the sons of men! Because Jesus died, He is, this day, the mightiest ruler of human minds, the great center to which all hearts are being drawn! Remember, too, that our Lord Jesus Christ died by a most shameful death. We have come to use the cross as an ornament and, by some, it is regarded as an object of reverence. But the cross, to speak very plainly, was to the ancients what the gallows are to us—an odious instrument of death for felons—exactly that and no more!

The death on a cross was one never allotted to a Roman citizen except for certain heinous crimes. It was regarded as the death penalty of a slave. It was not only painful, it was disgraceful and ignominious. And to say that a man was crucified was, in our Lord's time, exactly tantamount to saying in our speech today that he was hanged. It means just that—and you must accept the death of the cross with all the shame that can be connected with the gallows and the tree of death, or else you will not understand what it meant to Jesus and His disciples.

Now, surely, if a man is hanged, there is an end to his influence among men. When I was looking through all the Bible commentaries in the English language, I found one with a title page attributing it to Dr. Coke. But on further examination I perceived that it was the commentary of Dr. Dodd, who was executed for forgery! After He had been hanged, of course the publishers could not sell a commentary under his name and so they engaged another learned doctor to take it under his wing. The man was hanged and, therefore, people would not read his book—and you are not at all surprised that it should be so.

But here is an amazing thing. The Lord Jesus has lost no influence by having been hanged upon the Cross! No, rather it is *because* of His shameful death that He is able to draw all men unto Himself! His Glory rises from His humiliation! His adorable conquest from His ignominious death! When He “became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross,” shame cast no shame upon His cause, but gilded it with Glory! Christ's death of weakness threw no weakness into Christianity! Say rather that it is the right arm of her power! By the sign of suffering unto death, the Church has conquered and will conquer still! By a love which is strong as death, she has always been victorious and must, forever, remain so. When she has not been ashamed to put the Cross in the forefront, she has never had to be ashamed, for God has been with her and Jesus has drawn all men to Himself.

The Crucified Christ has irresistible attractions—when He stoops into the utmost suffering and scorn, even the brutal must relent—a living Savior men *may* love, but a crucified Savior they *must* love! If they perceive that He loved them and gave Himself for them, their hearts are stolen away—the city of Mansoul is captured before the siege begins when the Prince Emanuel uncovers the beauties of His dying love before the eyes of the rebellious ones! Let us never be ashamed, dear Friends, to preach Christ Crucified—the Son of God lifted up to die among the condemned! Let those of us who teach in the Sunday school, or preach at the street corner, or in any other manner try to set forth the Gospel, always keep a dying Christ to the front!

Christ without the Cross is no Christ at all. Never forget this! He is the eternal God, but bind with that Truth of God the fact that He was nailed to a Roman cross. It is on the tree He triumphed over Satan and it is by the Cross that He must triumph over the world. “I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me. This He said, signifying what death He should die.” The great Truth of the text I have stated to you—let me enlarge thereon.

I. I shall try to speak, first, upon the ATTRACTIVE FORCE WHICH LIES IN A CRUCIFIED SAVIOR. You will observe that it is briefly summed up in

these words—*Himself* to *Himself*. “I will draw all men unto *Me*.” It is not written that Christ will draw all men to the visible Church, for the universal profession of our holy faith is slow enough in coming. Certainly the Lord Jesus Christ will not lend Himself out to draw men to your sect or to mine. He will draw always towards truth and righteousness, but not to dead forms or meaningless distinctions—nor to the memories of former wrongs or party victories.

If the Lord should draw men to the Cathedral or the Tabernacle, the Abbey or the Chapel, it would be of little service to them, unless, in each case they found Him! The main thing that is needed is that they be drawn to Him and none can draw them to Him but Him. Himself drawing them to Himself—this is the soul of the text. I dare say that you have heard the oft-recounted story of the missionaries among the Greenlanders. Our Moravian Brethren, full of fire and zeal and self-denial, went right away among the ignorant folk of Greenland, as those people then were, longing to convert them. Using large prudence, they thought, “These people are so benighted that it cannot be of any use to preach Jesus Christ to them at first. They do not even know that there is a God, so let us begin by teaching them the nature of the Deity, showing them right and wrong, proving to them the need of atonement for sin and setting before them the rewards of the righteous and the penalties of the wicked.”

This was judged to be most fit preparatory work. Watch for the result! They went on for years, but had no converts. What was there in all that fine preparatory teaching that could convert anybody? Jesus was being locked out of the Greenlanders’ hearts by those who wanted Him to enter! But one day one of the missionaries happened to read to a poor Greenlander the story of Jesus bleeding on the Cross and how God had sent His Son to die, “that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” And the Greenlander said, “Would you read me that again? What wonderful words! Did the Son of God die for us poor Greenlanders that we may live?” The missionary answered that it was even so and, clapping his hands, the simple native cried, “Why did you not tell us that before?”

Ah, just so! Why not tell them this at once and leave it to clear its own path? That is the point to begin with! Let us start with the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world. “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” To my mind that is the point to begin with and the point to go on with—yes, that is the Truth of God to conclude with, if there can ever be any conclusion to the grand old story of the Incarnate God who loved His enemies and gave Himself to die in their place, that they might live through Him! The Gospel is Jesus drawing sinners to Himself that they might live through Him!

Dear Hearers, do you know what this means? I know that many of you do and you are happy, for in this knowledge there is life. Would to God that all knew this power of love in Christ—knew it so as to be drawn by almighty love to return that love with all their heart, soul and strength! The best thing that can happen to any of us is to feel Christ drawing him to Christ and to find himself sweetly yielding to the gentle drawing of the Savior’s love! The text says that Jesus Christ will draw all men unto Him—

self. Now, all men who hear of Jesus Christ at all are drawn, but they do not all yield. Some of them pull back and the most awful thing that ever happens to a man is when he pulls back till Jesus lets him go! What a fall is that, when the drawing power is taken away, and the man fails backward into a destruction which he, himself has chosen, having refused eternal life and resisted the Savior's power!

Unhappy is the wretch who strives against his own salvation! Every man that hears the Gospel feels some measure of its drawing power. I appeal to any one of you who has been accustomed to hear it. Does not Jesus sometimes tug hard at your conscience and, though you have pulled back, yet has He not drawn and drawn again? I remember how He drew *me* as a child and, though I drew back from Him, yet He never let me go till He drew me over the border line. Some of you must well remember how you were drawn by a mother's gentle words—by a teacher's earnest pleadings—by a father's admonitions—by a sister's tears—by a pastor's entreaties.

Permit your memories to aid me. Bring up before your mind's eye the many dear ones who have broken their hearts to win you for Jesus. Yes, you have been drawn! I suppose that all of you have felt a measure of that drawing. Why, it is not merely those that *hear* the Gospel, but whole *nations* have been drawn, in other respects, by the all-pervading influence of Jesus and His love! At this instant the influence of Christianity is being felt in every corner of the earth to an extent which it is not easy to exaggerate. If I had an orator's power, I would picture my Savior casting golden chains of love over all nations, wherever the missionary goes preaching His name! The Lord is taming the nations as a man, by degrees, subdues wild beasts!

Jesus is gradually drawing the heathen to Himself. He has had a long tug at India. That dead weight still lies in the furrow. But it must come! It must yield! All those that watch it know that if there is any cause that makes progress in India, it is the cause of Christ. The East appears never to move, but if there is any move, it is Christward. Jesus is drawing China slowly. Japan is being drawn as in a net. Where the testimony of Christ has been borne, the idols begin to shake and their priests confess that a change is coming! Every century sees a marked advance in the world's condition and we shall progress at a quicker rate, yet, when the Church wakes up to a sense of her responsibility and the Holy Spirit is poured out upon the Church to turn us *all* into missionaries, causing us all, in some way or other, to preach the Gospel of Christ!

Jesus is drawing, drawing, drawing! When God meant to scatter the individuals of our race, they would not be scattered—they built a tower to be the center of union! And only by their tongues being so changed that they could not understand one another could their resolve to remain in one company be defeated. But now, behold, the whole earth has the race of men to cover it—the sons of Adam dwell in every region and it is the Father's will to gather together in one the redeemed of the Lord. Therefore He has set in their midst the great Shiloh, of whom it was prophesied of old, "To Him shall the gathering of the people be."

The roaming races do not answer to the Father's call. They do not want to come to the elder Brother's rule, but they will have to come, for He

must reign! Gentile and Jew, African and European—they shall all meet at the Cross, the common center of our entire manhood—for Christ is lifted up and He is drawing all men to Him. But all men are not saved. No, for when drawn they do not come. Yet Christ Crucified is drawing some men of all kinds and sorts to eternal life. When Jesus died on the Cross it was not for my lord and lady only—nor was it only for the working man—it was for all sorts of people—

***“While Grace is offered to the prince,
The poor may take their share.
No mortal has a just pretense
To perish in despair.”***

He that is best taught and instructed has often been drawn to Jesus by the Lord’s overpowering charms. Some of the most learned of men have been delighted to come to Christ. But the most illiterate and rude have equally been drawn by Jesus and it has been their joy to come. I love to hear of the Gospel being preached to the poorest of the poor—and so preached that it reaches those who never were reached by it before. Godspeed every effort by which Jesus is set before the fallen and degraded—so long as it is the Gospel and not mere rant, we wish Godspeed to the most irregular of witnesses—our fears begin only when Jesus is no longer in the front!

We greatly need to have the Gospel preached in the West of London and so preached that our great ones may receive it and find life through Jesus Christ. May such a movement soon take place! How I should like to hear of a converted duke telling out the Gospel, or a reclaimed Knight of the Garter proclaiming mercy for the chief of sinners! Why not? And, blessed be God, the Savior, lifted up, draws all sorts of men to Himself—some of every kind—not the Jew alone, as at the first, but the Gentile too!—

***“None are excluded but those
Who do themselves exclude.
Welcome the learned and polite,
The ignorant and rude.”***

There is no exclusion of any class or creature from the mercy of God in Christ Jesus. “I, if I am lifted up, will draw all men unto Me”—and the history of the Church proves how true this is—the muster roll of the converted includes princes and paupers, peers and pot men

But what is this force that attracts men to the crucified Savior? They come—there is no doubt about it. Look, Sirs—there is nothing in the world that men will hear so gladly as the Gospel. How many years have I stood in this place to preach to a congregation precisely similar to the present! The crowds have been here as regularly as the hours, Sunday after Sunday, morning and evening, year after year! Suppose that I had been appointed to preach upon a scientific subject? Could I have gained or held such audiences? I should have been spun out a long while ago if I had been bound to draw upon myself for my matter. If I had preached any other than the doctrine of Christ Crucified, I should, years ago, have scattered my audience to the winds of Heaven.

But the old theme is always new, always fresh, always attractive. Preach Jesus Christ! That is the recipe for catching men’s ears and laying hold upon men’s hearts. The name of Jesus is to man’s heart the most mighty of charms—man’s ears wait for it as the morning hour waits for

the sun, or as the parched earth waits for the shower! Ring out the name of Jesus—it is the sweetest carol ever sung. Ring it out without fear or stint, for it is always welcome as the flowers in May! Men will never tire of it till the flowers are satiated with sunlight and the grass grows weary of the dew! The music of that blessed silver bell rings out over hill and dale as sweetly as when, on the first Christmas night, the angels sang, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”

There is about Calvary and its infinite stoop of Divine Love a power that never dies out and never will while the world stands. What is it? From where does this universal attractiveness come? Well, first, it is the force of *love*, for Jesus Christ is Incarnate Love. In Him you see One who divested Himself of all His Glory that He might save the guilty—who came down upon earth, not seeking wealth and fame, but simply seeking to do good by saving men—who, having laid aside His honor and His Glory, at last laid aside His life! And all for love—for love which met a sad return—for love which has, however, saved its objectives with a great salvation!

One of the school men says that whenever we know that another person loves us, we cannot help giving back a measure of love in return, and I believe that the statement is true. Certainly, such love as the love of Christ, when it is told out simply, and men can understand it, is certain to excite an interest, to win a degree of attention and so to lead up to better things. Full often this love proves its power over observers by transforming them from enemies into friends and, though they at first despised the Redeemer, His love compels them, at length, to believe and to adore! If I were asked the secret of the attracting power of the Crucified Savior, I would answer that it is invincible love.

The only crime that ever could be laid to Jesus’ charge was that of which the poet sings—“found guilty of excessive love”—loving beyond all reason and beyond all boundaries—loving as none ever loved before! So that if all the rivers of human love ran together, they could not fill such another ocean of love as was in the heart of Jesus the Savior! This it is—this unique, unrivaled love—which draws men to Jesus! The pierced heart of Christ is a loadstone to draw all other hearts. No doubt there is also *this* about the Crucified Savior—that He draws men by *the wonderful rest which His death provides for men*.

The most earnest Christian man must, sometimes, have his doubts as to whether all is right with him. The more sincere a man is, the more does he tremble lest he should deceive himself. You, good Brother, have your personal anxieties; certainly I have mine. But when I turn my eyes to Jesus upon the Cross and view the crown of thorns, the sacred head, the eyes that were red with weeping, the hands nailed fast to the wood and the feet dripping with gore—and when I remember that this shameful death was endured for love of *me*—I am so quiet and so happy in my spirit that I cannot tell how peacefully my life-floods flow! God *must* forgive my grievous fault, for my Redeemer has so grievously answered for it!

When I see Jesus die, I perceive that from now on Divine justice is on the sinner’s side. How can the Lord God punish the same offense twice—first the Substitute—and then the men for whom that Substitute has bled? Christ has bled as Substitute for every man that believes in Him—therefore is every Believer safe! Oh, Brothers and Sisters, when you are

troubled, rest with us by looking to Calvary! And if the first glance does not quiet you, look, and look, and look again—for every grief will die where Jesus died. Not to Bethlehem, where the stars of Christmas burn, do we look for our greatest comfort, but to that place where the sun was darkened at midday and the face of Eternal Love was veiled! Because the Lord of Life and Glory was dying *in siremis*, suffering the most deadly pain for *our sakes*, therefore His wounds distilled the richest balm that ever healed a sinner's wounds!

Men know this. Reading their Bibles, they soon find it out. There is no comfort for them against the anger of God and against their guilty consciences, until they see Christ in their place, suffering for them. The conscience sees with unspeakable delight the Victim provided! She gladly lays her hand on Jesus' head and sees her sin transferred to Him, punished in Him—and thus it finds rest—the rest of God. In the expiatory death of Jesus, the Law is vindicated and God is “just, and yet the Justifier of him that believes.” Dear Friends, believe me, Jesus bestows the peerless pearl of perfect rest on every heart that comes to Him! He fills the soul so that it has no more longings.

You know the horseshoe magnet and you have seen how rapidly it picks up pieces of iron. Have you ever put a piece of iron right across the two ends of the magnet? You will then have noticed that it ceases to attract anything else. The magnetic circuit is completed and the magnet rests perfectly quiet, refusing to go beyond its own circle of pure content. When my soul is filled with Jesus, He completes the circuit of my soul's passions and longings! He is all my salvation and all my desire! Have you found it so? Has not your soul come to an absolutely perfect rest when it has gotten to Christ? When He, Himself, has drawn you to Himself, have you not entered into rest? Because men perceive that such a rest is to be had, therefore they come to Christ. He Himself uses this as an argument why they should come! Remember His cheering words, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” This is part of the attractive force which dwells in the Crucified Savior.

Then I am sure that there is a great attraction about Christ when we see *the change which He works in men*. Have you known a drunk become a Christian, or a thief become upright? Have you seen a harlot made chaste? Have you marked any of the modern miracles which are always going on around us in the form of conversions? If you have taken pleasure in these signs and wonders, I know that you have said, “Lord, I, too, will come to You to be converted.” The sight of His power to elevate and sanctify has attracted you to Jesus and you have fallen at His feet. There is no true, deep, tender, living conversion except through the Cross and, therefore, those that are taught of God do love to come to Christ, that sin may be conquered in them, that the heart of stone may be taken away, that the heart of flesh may be given and that they may walk the happy way of holiness according to the example of their adorable Master.

I could continue thus to show what this attractive force is, but, lest I should weary you, I will only say that it lies much in *His sufferings, themselves*. Is it not a strange thing that suffering attracts? Yes, more—lowly Suffering *conquers*—she sits as a queen upon her throne and reigns by the royalty of her resignation! The ship of the Church has plowed its way

through seas of blood. With the blood-red Cross at the masthead, she has pushed on, even in the night, throwing the crimson spray about her. She has never paused because of persecution, affliction, or death—these are the rough winds which fill her sails. No progress is surer than that which comes of holy suffering. The enemies of the Church have taken her disciples and burned them, but their deaths yielded a sweet savor of life.

It is questionable if a man's influence can be better promoted than by sending him aloft in a chariot of fire. What made us a Protestant nation for so many years? I do not say that we are Protestant *now*—but what made us enthusiastically Anti-papist for so many years? The stakes of Smithfield did it! Men and women stood and saw the martyrs burned—and as they saw them die, they said, “These men are right, and the cause for which they burn is true”—and into the very heart of England martyrdom cast up a way for the Lord Jesus and He entered then and there into Old England's secret soul!

What the martyrs did, in their measure, by their bitter death-pangs, is being done on a Divine scale by the sufferings of the Chief of all martyrs and Head of all witnesses! By the agonies of Jesus, men's affections are moved and their hearts enthralled. Are any of you unconverted and do you wish to be converted? I cannot suggest a better exercise than to read over the story of the death of Christ, as it is told by the four Evangelists. When you have read it once, read it again! And as you read it say, “Lord, I must have a sadly hard heart, or else this would move me to tears. I pray You, change my heart.”

Then read the story again, for surely, at last it will touch you. God the Holy Spirit blessing you, it will move you and you will be among the “all men” that shall be drawn to Jesus by His own personal force! So much, then, about what this force is.

II. Very briefly, my second head is to be—HOW IS THIS FORCE EXERCISED? This force is exercised through the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit of God who puts power into the Truth of God about Christ! And then men feel that Truth and come to Christ and live. But our blessed Lord and Master *uses instruments*. The force of Christ's love is sometimes shown to men by those who already love Him. One Christian makes many. One Believer leads others to faith. To come back to my metaphor of a magnet—you have sometimes seen a battery attached to a coil and then, if you take a nail and put it on the coil, the nail has become a strong magnet. You notice that the nail turns into a magnet, for you take another nail and you put it on the end of it and it holds the second nail fast.

Now number two is turned into a magnet. Try it. Put a third nail upon it. See, it is held fast! Number three has become a magnet. Try the next nail—it holds on to it like grim death—and now number four has become a magnet! Bring another nail within the influence. Number *five* has become a magnet. And so it continues. On and on and on the magnetism goes, from one nail to another. But now, just go to your battery, detach one of your wires—and the nails drop off, directly, for the coil has ceased to be a magnet and the nails have ceased to be magnets, too! All the magnetism comes from the first place from which it started—and when it ceases at the fountainhead, there is an end of it altogether.

Indeed, Jesus Christ is the great attractive magnet and all must begin and end with Him! When Jesus lays hold upon us, we get hold of a brother and before long he turns into a magnet, also. Thus from one to another, the mystic influence proceeds—but the whole of the force abides in Jesus. More and more the Kingdom grows, “ever mighty to prevail,” but all the growing and the prevailing come out of Him! So it is that Jesus works—first by Himself—and then by all who are in Him. May the Lord make us all magnets for Himself. Jesus says, “I, if I am lifted up, will draw all men unto Me,” but He leaves room in His figure for the co-working of all grateful hearts.

Jesus draws men *gradually*. Some are brought to Christ in a moment, but many are drawn by slow degrees. The sun, in some parts of the world, rises above the horizon in a single instant. But in our own country, at this season of the year, it is beautiful to watch the dawn, from the first gray light to the actual break of day. Is it dark, or is it light? Well, it is not quite dark—it is visible darkness! By-and-by there is light. No sun is up as yet, but yet the light increases till the East begins to glow and the West reflects the radiance! Then, by-and-by, up rises the great king of day. So does the Lord bring many to Himself by gentle degrees. They cannot tell when they were converted, but they are converted, for they have come to Christ!

Rest assured that He will not send you back. Do not say, “I am not converted, for I do not know the moment of the great Change.” I knew an old lady, once, who did not know her *birthday*—but I never told her that she was not born because of that, for there she was! And if you do not know when you were made a Christian, yet, if you *are* a Christian, it little matters how or when. If you are really born of God, the date of your new birth is interesting to curiosity but not important to *piety*. Salvation is often accomplished by a lengthened process. I have heard that when they wanted to bridge a great chasm they shot an arrow or a bullet, which drew with it a tiny thread, across the river. That was all the communication from bank to bank and the rolling torrent was far below.

Despise not the day of small things! The insignificant beginning was prophetic of grand results. By means of that little thread, they drew across a piece of twine and, when they had safely grasped it on the other side, they bound a small rope to the end of the twine—and then they drew the rope across! And then to that rope they tied a cable and they drew the cable across—and now, over that chasm, there strides an iron bridge—along which the steam horse rattles with his mighty load! So does Jesus unite us to Himself! He may employ, at first, an insignificant thread of thought. Then a sense of pleasant interest. Then some deeper feeling. Then a crushing emotion; then a faint faith; then stronger faith; then stronger yet, until, at last, we come to be firmly bound to Christ! Oh, be thankful if you have only a thread of communication between you and Jesus, for it will lead to more! Something more hopeful will be drawn across the gulf before long!

Christ’s attractions are often very gradually revealed and their victorious energy is not felt all at once. Moreover, the cords of our Lord’s drawings are very *secret*. You see the swallows twittering round our roofs, hawking in the air, shooting up into the clouds, or flashing by our ears. It

is summer and they are paying us their annual visit. They will be with us for a time, but all of a sudden we will see them getting together about the gable of an old house, holding agitated congregations and evidently discussing matters of importance. The Lord of birds is gently drawing every swallow in England down towards the African coast—and they will all go, without exception—as the secret summons reaches the flying host! They know but little of the way, but their flight is not, therefore, delayed or its course left to uncertainty! Over thousands of miles of sea and land they pursue their course until they come to their resting place.

And then, next spring, the same power that drew them southward will draw them all northward again! And here they will come and we shall hear their joyous twitter and say to ourselves, “Summer is coming, for here are the swallows, again.” By a secret power of that order does Jesus draw home the strangers and the foreigners whom His Grace has chosen—they say to one another, “Come, and let us go up to the House of the Lord. Let us seek the face of the Savior.” The mystic attractions of the power of Christ are secretly drawing many who knew Him not and now they ask their way to Zion with their faces Christ-ward!

Look how the sun draws along the planets. He hastens on in his mighty career in space—I know not where, but drawing with him all the worlds which compose the solar system—all these silently attend his majestic marches. Such is Christ, the great central Sun—all His people follow, for He draws. Stand by the seashore and notice what the moon can do. You do not even see her, for it is high noon—but here comes a wave, and then another, and then another, and the tide rises a little higher today than it did yesterday. What is it that causes this pulse of life, these heart-throbs of the deep? The moon’s attractive power is drawing up the waters from the sea! Even so our glorious Christ, in ways unknown to us, draws the hearts of men by His mighty Spirit wherever He pleases, “I, if I am lifted up, will draw all men unto Me.”

Fail not to observe *how gently* He does it! The classic heathen adored a goddess whom they represented as riding in a chariot drawn by doves. Surely the most tender mode of impulse—power without force, motion born of emotion! Certain of us were wafted to Jesus by some such zephyr. We could not but yield—the softness and tenderness of every touch of Jesus affected us infinitely more than force could possibly have done! Hearts are tender things and are not to be forced open with crowbars—the doors of the heart open gently to Him that holds the key—and who is that but He who made the heart and bought it with His precious blood? The gentleness is equal to the power when Jesus draws men to Himself!

But, oh, how *effectually*! I thought, as I mused upon my text, that I saw a great whirlpool like the maelstrom in the north of Norway. I thought I saw an enormous whirlpool so huge that all the souls of men, like ships of many different forms, were being drawn towards it. With strained sight I gazed upon this monstrous death! Woe to those who are sucked in by that dreadful whirlpool, for there is no escape! The abyss has no bottom, destruction is sure to all who are caught in the tremendous down-rush! Even ships far out at sea on other tacks, though they escape this maelstrom, are hindered in their course by it! This one monstrous devourer la-

bors to absorb all and leaves no bay, nor harbor, nor foreign main unaffected by its perpetual draught.

As I was thinking of this giant evil and wondering how I could navigate my own boat so as to avoid this mouth of Hell, I saw a hand that had the mark of a nail upon its palm, and lo, it held a mighty magnet which attracted every vessel with a force greater than any born of sea or storm! This magnet attracted many ships so that they flew to it at once and were gently drawn towards their desired haven in the very teeth of the maelstrom! I saw other vessels in which the mariners hoisted sail to try to escape the influence of this magnet—and even put out their oars to strive to get away—and some of them did so escape. Alas, they floated farther and farther into the maelstrom's destructive power, to be sucked down to their perdition. These were so besotted that they labored against mercy and resolved to be destroyed—we are glad that all are not left to act so madly.

You must have seen an instance of drawing very often down in the river. A grand vessel is bound for the Indies, but how can it be taken down to the Nore? It is difficult to move the heavy craft. There it must lie. But here comes a steam-tug. The large vessel hands a rope on board the tug and now the steam is up. Tug, tug, tug—the paddle-wheels revolve and the big ship begins to follow the lead! It is no longer motionless; it will soon be walking the waters as a thing of life! A pleasant sight—the tug draws it gently out to sea and then leaves it to pursue its distant voyage. Just so may Jesus draw you away from sinful pleasures and from self-righteousness.

III. I shall conclude by drawing one or two lessons. Then I have done. WHAT DOES ALL THIS IMPLY? “I, if I am lifted up, will draw all men unto Me.” Well, it means this, first—that *men, by nature, are a long way off from Christ*. You were not born converted. Of that I am sure! Nor were you born a Christian and, though they took you to the font and said that they made you a “member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven,” there was not a word of truth in it, for you were such a child of God that you loved *sin*—and such a member of Christ that you knew *nothing* of Him—and such an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven that, unless *God* saves you, you will *never* get there!

I may say of Christians who are made in that way, “Eyes have they, but they see not. Mouths have they, but they speak not, neither speak they through their throats.” And I fear that I must add, “They that make them are like unto them: so is everyone that trusts in them.” It is a poor Christianity that is created by such monstrous folly! “You must be born again,” and you must be born again of the Spirit of God, or you cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven! Man is a long way off from Christ and Christ must draw Him. Friend, ask Him to draw *you*.

I gather another lesson—that *men will not come to Christ unless He draws them*. Sometimes, when I am trying to prepare a sermon to preach, I say to myself, “Why must I take all this trouble?” If men were in their senses they would run to Christ without calling! Why must we put this business so temptingly? Why must we plead? Why must we be so earnest? Because men do *not* want to come, not even to their own Savior! They do not wish to have their sins forgiven! They do not wish to be renewed in heart. And they never will come—no, not one mother's son of them—

unless He that sent Christ to them shall draw them to Christ. A work of Grace in the heart is absolutely necessary before the Sacrifice of the Lord Jesus will be accepted by any one of us. Jesus said, "You will not come to Me that you might have life." What our Lord said is true to this hour—man has *not* improved an atom!

But, then, learn another lesson. If there is any man here that Christ is drawing, he need not ask, "May I come?" Of course you may, if you feel drawn to come! Are you coming? Come, and welcome! Christ never yet turned away a soul that came to Him—not one! "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out." If He is drawing you, run, for you have Scriptural warrant for so doing! "Draw us: we will run after You." If tonight you feel any kind of tugging at your heartstrings, do not hesitate a moment! Come along with you! When God draws, then is your time to move. What do the sailors say? "There's a breeze, Jack. Yes, yes, boys. Up with the anchor! Now for every stitch of canvas. We can make headway now."

Do you feel any kind of breeze? Is the breath of the Holy Spirit moving upon you in any degree? Do you feel inclined to say, "I will go to Jesus"? Then, fly away with you, like a full-sailed ship before a fair wind! And by God's help may you soon make the port of Everlasting Salvation! Let us finish up by saying that if Christ has said thus He will draw, then He will draw tonight! The attractions of the Lord Jesus are continual—He draws, and He will always draw. He is drawing now! Do not pull back, lest His drawing should cease—and you should perish—but rather let your heart sing—

***"He drew me, and I followed on,
Charmed to confess the force Divine."***

Oh Spirit of God, draw men to Jesus! This is the way of salvation—trust Christ and you are saved! Rely wholly upon what Christ is and what He has done—and you are saved! In that very act there is a change effected within you which will show itself forever in your character, for he that believes in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is born again!

The faith which *looks* to Jesus and the life which *lives* upon Jesus come together. I cannot tell you which is first—the new birth, or faith. Can you tell me which spoke of a wheel moves first? No. And these are spokes of one and the same wheel. "He that believes in Him has everlasting life." Oh, believe Him! Trust Him! Lay hold upon Him! Accept Him and go your way—and the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing—and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Amen! So let it be!

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DESPISED LIGHT WITHDRAWN

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“While you have light, believe in the light, that you may be the children of light. These things spoke Jesus, and departed, and did hide Himself from them.”
John 12:36.

OUR Savior was very gentle with those who had real difficulties. He would argue with them over and over again. He would state a Truth of God, and re-state it. He would cast it into the form of a parable, or He would condense it into a sentence comparable to a proverb, or He would enlarge and expand it, for He was gentle with seeking souls as a nurse is with her child. I do not believe that there is any real difficulty in the hearts of those of you who are sincerely seeking Jesus that He will despise. He will not quench the smoking flax, nor break the bruised reed and, therefore, come to Him with your doubts and your anxieties, believing that His tender heart so loves you and so desires your good, that He will sit at your feet that He may induce you to sit at His feet—He will come down to your level that He may lift you up to His level!

I notice, however, that, while it is true that our gracious Master was very gentle and patient with those who had real difficulties, yet He did not always answer everybody's objection. When the difficulty was raised for the sake of questioning and disputing, when it was mere quibbling, when the enquirers were not in earnest and did not really wish to know the Truth of God, He often declined to answer them. My Master has no desire to be merely victor in a debate—He did not come into the world to fight a battle of logic just for the sake of winning it. It is you and your *salvation* that He is seeking!

So was it in the case of these Jews—when they came with fresh objections, saying, “Who is this Son of Man?” our Lord, instead of replying to them, exhorted them to believe and walk in the light while they had it. He assumed that He was the Light—He took that as a thing which had been proven—He did not go over that ground, again, but He let the quibblers know that He claimed to be the Light of Life, the Light of God whereby men can come to God. And He pressed them to cease from questioning and to begin to practice real and true dealing with Himself. “While you have light,” He said, “believe in the light, that you may be the children of light.”

I am not going, on this occasion, to attempt to meet any difficulties, or to answer any questions. The most of you have no difficulties about the way of salvation and many whom I address, here, have done with asking questions about Christ. The point is, how to come to a practical decision.

Spirit of the Living God, make this the day and this the hour when many shall believe in the great Light of God, and shall be made the children of Light once and for all!

I. First of all, I shall call your attention to a very solemn matter which may be described as THE THREATENED END TO A TIME OF PRIVILEGE—“*while* you have the light.” You have no freehold possession of it. You have the light, but the time of light will come to an end. Observe the 35th verse, “Yet a little while is the light with you.” You have it at present, but it will soon be gone from you. Take heed lest it be gone before you have used it, for when it has once been withdrawn, darkness will come upon you and, “He that walks in darkness knows not where he goes.”

Now what was this light of which our Lord thus spoke? To the Jews, it was the *light of the Presence of Christ*. It was a great privilege, indeed, for the people living in that age and in that country to have the Son of God among them bodily. John tells us that there were some few who beheld His Glory, “the Glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth,” but the vast multitude were so blinded that, with God, Himself, in their midst in the Person of His Son, Jesus Christ, they did not perceive who the illustrious Stranger was! He came and He went away, again, and they knew not who it was that they had rejected, “for,” as Paul said in writing to the Corinthians, “had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory.” That was the Light of God that the Jews had—and which they lost.

Christ has never personally come to you, dear Friends, in the flesh, but *the light of His Gospel is still with you*, and in a sense, that is His Presence, for Jesus is the very Life of the Gospel. There is also a light that comes to some men, I might even say in human form, for there are some ministers whom God specially appoints as His representatives to bless others. I cannot help looking back in history to such men as Whitefield and Wesley and their companions in that great revival period. It was a time of bright light while they were among the sons of men! They flew like flaming seraphs over this land, leaving a trail of light behind them which banished much of the darkness in which England had been shrouded. It was a great privilege to have heard those men and, when they were gone, to a large extent, and to many people, the Light of God went with them.” There are some preachers still on the earth whom God blesses very greatly in the conversion of souls, men whom you cannot hear without being profited in your souls.

Without exalting anybody or depreciating anybody, it is a fact that there are some preachers who do not touch your heart and do not stir your spirit—they may be very useful to others and useful in other directions—but they are not of service to *you*. On the other hand, there are those whom God does bless to your soul and if you find anywhere, in this Tabernacle, or in any other House of Prayer where Christ is preached, a voice that really moves you, it is, so to speak, a manifestation of the Light of God to you. Do not, I beseech you, play with it, or trifle with it, for whoever the preacher may be, however humble the instrumentality, if it is instrumentality that is adapted to your case, it should be honored in your conscience and it should be highly regarded in your heart! That light may readily enough be quenched. The preacher and his hearers

may be separated. He may be taken from you, or you may be taken from him. In either case, it may be a very sorrowful experience for you to have to look back upon all you heard and saw in those days when there was an instrumentality exactly suited to your case and yet you refused to be moved by it.

We have always with us the Gospel of Jesus Christ that you can read in this Book whenever you will, but *the Holy Spirit must go with the Gospel* to make it the power of God unto salvation! You cannot see the Light that is in the Word unless the Holy Spirit reveals it to you. Some of you have been under the influence of the Holy Spirit in some measure and degree. There have been times when you have seen sin and have stood aghast at it, when you have seen the Savior, and have admired His blood and righteousness. There have been times when you have been strangely inclined to come away from yourself and your sin, and to come to Jesus and be saved, You remember those powerful drawings, those inward strivings. Remember that this work of the Holy Spirit is but for a time, it lasts not forever. Those solemn words are still true, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." A day may come when the same preaching that now greatly stirs you, will have no influence over you—and when the Spirit of God, Himself, will seem to be entirely absent, both from the means of Grace and from the Bible when you read it. Therefore I put before you this serious consideration, that you are at present favored with the Light of God, but you are only favored with it for a certain term.

Do not reckon upon always having it, for *the Light may be removed from you*. My dear Hearer, the day may come when you will have to go away from this country and be found far off in the bush of Australia, or the backwoods of America. Or you may even, in this country, be located where you will not be able to hear the Gospel, for what you will hear will not be the Gospel, and you will be obliged to confess that it is not! Therefore, while you have the Light of God, remember that it is a favorable season for your decision for Christ. The day may come, as I said before, when the voice that has thrilled you, again and again, and that wakes the echoes of your soul's most secret chambers, shall be silent in death. The time may come when, although your minister and you, yourself, are still left in the same place, yet, so far as *you* are concerned, the Holy Spirit will be gone, and so the Light will have departed from you.

Take heed, I beseech you, lest it really be so, and *use the Light while you have it*. It may, perhaps, seem to some of you that I am raising a needless alarm, but, indeed, it is not so. I do not think that, for many a day, I have come to this platform to speak to you without being informed, during the day, of some one or two who have passed into eternity out of this congregation. Years ago the bulk of us, as Church members, were young, and we lost comparatively few by the stroke of death. But, as it is with the pastor, so is it with the people—we are all getting older. We have entered middle life, the great mass of us, and, consequently, our mortality is largely increasing—and every time we meet we may be positively certain that we shall never, all of us, meet again here!

Between this Sabbath and next Sabbath some in the ranks of our membership will have passed into Heaven—and some out of our congregation will have been called to stand before God. I feel, therefore, like the

guard of a train that is just ready to start. The time is up for us to be off and the guard's whistle has been blown, but there is somebody who wants to talk to me about politics, or there is another person who wants to discuss a theological difficulty, and I feel bound to say, "Sir, the time is up. We must start at once—will you come on board, or must you be left behind? While the train is here at the platform, enter it, take your place, and journey with us to Zion, for now it is time for us to go! We cannot stop here forever." Time and tide wait for no man! Neither will God forever wait for men to turn unto Him and live—the hour shall come when all opportunities will be past—when the gate of mercy will be finally shut. You remember how it was with the wise virgins and the bridegroom, "they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut."

God bless that Word of warning! He can bless it, however feebly it may have been spoken!

II. Now, secondly, I take you a little further into our theme. Here is AN ACT OF GRACE COMMENDED—"While you have the light, *believe in the light.*" This *believing* is the most essential act of a man's life! Therefore our Lord said, "Believe in the light."

First, believe that it is the true Light of God, believe the Gospel to be of God! Many here have proven in their own experience that it is of God and that, "it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes." That Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came into this world and was made Man. That as Man He took upon Himself the sin of His people and suffered for us, "the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God," is most assuredly true! And, that in His name there is salvation, that in Him we have eternal life is, also, equally true. "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life," even now. Believe this to be true.

"Well, I do believe it to be true," says one, "but I am not saved for all that." Then, next, I pray the Holy Spirit to help you to go a little further. Not only believe the Gospel to be of God, but *believe Jesus Christ, Himself.* There is a text that is often misquoted—I have many a time heard it said, "I know *in whom* I have believed," but Paul wrote, "I know whom I have believed." He had not only believed in Christ, but he had *believed* Christ! I want you, dear Friend, if you are sincerely seeking salvation, to believe Christ. Believe Him to be what He says He is—believe that everything He says is true—believe that He, Himself, does save, and can save, and will save you! So believe Him as to hand yourself over to Him and take Him to be your Savior! In a word, as our text says, "while you have light, believe in the light."

It is essential, also, that you should *believe for yourselves.* It is no use for people to try to believe the Gospel for their friends or for their children. Believe it for yourselves! I notice that some unsaved persons will read with great interest accounts of conversions and even feel pleasure in hearing of this and that man being saved. My dear Friend, why not believe Christ *yourself?* Why not take Him to be your own Savior? Remember that it is true to you that, "He that believes in the Son has everlasting life." May you be led at this moment to make it true to yourself! You stand in a banqueting-hall tonight—the tables are delightfully spread with every kind of food that your hunger can crave and every drink that

is suitable to quench your thirst—you have been up and down those table—and admired the generosity of Him that furnished them so liberally. And you have rejoiced as you have seen *others* sit down and feast!

Now I want you to do this. There is the chair for you. What is next? Sit down at the table and begin to feast. It is you, yourself, who will find the Gospel true! It is your own personal participation in this feast that shall be to you, your joy and your salvation! You do not simply need a Savior—knock that little letter “a” out and put in the blessed pronoun, “my,” and say from your heart, “my Savior!” Do not merely say, “I believe that there is pardon for sin”—take Christ to be your own Savior and then you are pardoned—your sin is gone! All that is said in the Word of God to sinners in general is meant for each sinner in particular when he comes and takes it to himself by his own individual faith. There is a passage in Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* where he says—“These are the generals; come to particulars, Man.” That is just what I want to say to you! All that you have heard, all that we have preached, may be put down as generals. But if it is to benefit you, you must come to *particulars*, you must personally appropriate the general Truth of God and say, “This is for me. This I believe. This I will take. This Savior is mine.”

“Still,” says one, “suppose that I should take what was *not* mine.” That is a supposition which every honest man might fairly suggest, but, in this case, so free is the Gospel that you may freely take it and there will be no question about whether you had a right to it. Look, there is a hungry dog! He rushes into a butcher’s shop, jumps up, steals a piece of meat and runs off with it. It is hardly worth the butcher’s while to run after him, to take it away, but if the dog has actually eaten the meat, then I am sure that no sensible butcher will even think of taking it away from him. Now, I would advise you to make a snatch at the Gospel and hungrily devour it by a ravenous faith—and I am sure that no one will ever take it away from you! Have you ever read that promise of our Lord, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out”? I see the Savior standing there and His different disciples come to Him, one after another, and He does not put one of them away from Him!

At last there comes a filthy beggar, leprous as snow—the white scales are on his brow and men flee in terror from him! He comes right up to the Christ and tries to get into His arms. Will He not push Him away? No, for He says, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out,” and He embraces this filthy, leprous beggar and, wonder of wonders, as He presses Him to His breast, the leprosy is healed, the filth is all gone and His rags are transformed to shining raiment! Wonders of Grace belong to Christ! Come along with you, then, and try Him for yourselves! Did He not Himself say, “While you have light, believe in the light”? If you dare to believe in that Light, you shall make no sort of mistake, for Jesus, Himself, bids you to do so!

Very often, at the bottom of our unbelief, there lies this thought, “I am, after all, somebody of importance.” It is the old story of Naaman all over again. He went to the house of Elisha, we are told, “with his horses and with his chariot.” That equipage was a very important part of the real Naaman—his horses and his chariot went to show that he was a great man with his master and he would have Elisha to know that he was a

great man and honorable, albeit that he was a leper. Such a great man, when he goes to the Prophet's door, down that narrow street in the city of Samaria, must still have his horses and his chariot! The coachman thought he never would get down that lane but Naaman said, "You must drive right up to the door. I must go with my horses and with my chariot." The man of God was indoors and Elisha knew how to treat the proud warrior—he did not even go out to him—he sent a message to him, saying, "Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall come, again, to you, and you shall be clean."

Naaman thought that Elisha should have come out to him! He said, "I thought, he will surely come out to me; the proudest man in all Syria has been glad to unloose the laces of my shoes! Did I not come to the Prophet's door with my horses and my chariot? Yet he sent out a bit of a boy, or a servant girl, with a message to me! Then, besides, he tells me to wash! Does he think that I do not wash? I, a prince of Syria, need washing? And if I needed washing, must I come all the way to Jordan to wash in that paltry stream? No, there are Abana and Pharpar, back there at Damascus, the rivers of my very respectable country—may I not wash in them and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage." Yet you know that when he came to a proper state of mind, he did as the Prophet bade him—he washed seven times in Jordan and his leprosy was cleansed. Thus, proud sinner, obey the Gospel command, "Believe and live," and you, too, shall be made whole!

III. I want you, now, to advance another step. I have almost anticipated this third point—"While you have light, believe in the light, *that you may be the children of light.*" Here is A RESULT OF FAITH MENTIONED.

They who believe in Christ receive *a change of nature*. They were born heirs of wrath, but, by Grace they become children of the Light of God. "You were sometimes darkness, but now are you light in the Lord," as soon as you have believed in Jesus Christ! This new birth, this regeneration, is a great puzzle to many poor sinners. One asks, "How can I make myself a new creature in Christ?" Of course, *you* can do nothing of the kind! This is a miracle—it is as much a work of God to make us children of light as it was to make light in the first place! Only God can work this miracle, but mark you this, there never was a soul, yet, that truly believed in Christ, but at the same time it underwent the change called the new birth or regeneration. Christians have often been asked about which is first, faith or regeneration, belief in Christ or being born again. I will tell you, when you answer me this question—When a wheel moves, which spoke moves first? "Oh, they all start together!" you say. So these other things all start together, whether it is the hub of the wheel, which is regeneration, or the spokes of the wheel, which are faith, repentance, hope, love and so on—when the wheel moves, it all moves at once!

If you believe in Jesus Christ and Him crucified, in the moment that you believe, this great change of nature is effected in you, for *faith has, in itself, a singularly transforming power*. It is a fact in everyday experience that when a man comes to believe in his employer, he becomes, at once, a better employee. A person whom I disliked, because I suspected him, becomes, at once, pleasing to me as soon as I trust him. So, faith to-

wards God, in itself, produces a total change of mind in the man who has it.

But, beside that, there goes with faith a *Divine energy which changes the heart of man*. I have heard of an old sinner who had been in prison many a day, growing gray in his iniquity, who took a little child up in his arms, and, as he put his hand upon the boy's curly head, he said, "There would be some hope for me if I could become like this little child." Now, that is exactly what God can do for you! If you believe in Jesus Christ, you shall receive a new and childlike nature. There shall be created in you something better than what is called the primitive innocence of infancy—it shall be a really pure and holy life that shall be given to you and you shall become a new creature in Christ Jesus!

Is not this very wonderful? The text says, "Believe in the light, that you may be the children of light." The children of light—what a wonderful picture that might be if I were an artist and could exercise the power of word painting which some have! "The children of light." Why, in the morning, when the sun first shines forth, those myriads of dew-drops, all brighter than diamonds of the first water—these are the children of light! And those innumerable flowers that open their cups and sweeten the air with their dainty perfume—these are the children of light! And those birds that have been slumbering away, there, during the night, in their hidden corners in the grove, come out and begin at once their charming minstrelsy, for they are the children of the light! I cannot tell you how many and how bright are these things in nature which are the children of light, but God can make us, by His Grace, to be like these things, only far better, children of light *spiritually*.

What are the children of light spiritually? Well, I have met with some of them and it has been a great joy to know them, for these children of light have *a great delight in the Truth of God*. They are not afraid of it, they love to dive into it! As children of light they like to know, they *wish* to know, even the deep things of God. They do not shut their eyes to the Truth of God about eternity. They do not refuse to search their own hearts. They are children of the Light of God and they desire the Light of God to shine! They come to the Light of God that their hearts, their thoughts and their works may be made manifest. They delight to know the Truth of God—error and falsehood are loathsome to them—but that which is true is charming to their judgment.

"Children of light." They are those *who move in a world of knowledge*. They have come to know what others do not know. To them the world is peopled with invisible beings! To them eternal things are no dreams, but they have become realities. Their eyes have been opened to a Light that shines not from the sun and they move in an atmosphere in which they behold things which the telescope cannot reveal. They are children of the Light of God who have come into a world of perception and discoveries to which others are strangers!

"Children of light." I will tell you, again, how you may know them. *They practice truth*. They speak the truth. It is said that an ambassador is a gentleman who is sent abroad to lie for the good of his country. I suppose that common saying is so nearly true that we need not correct it. And a politician is often a gentleman who has learned the art of con-

cealing his thoughts, or who expresses opinions which he trusts will be in accordance with those of his constituency! A child of God is a man who says what he believes, let the world believe it or not! He does not understand, “policy.” He is no mariner who trims his sail to every shifting wind but, believing in the difference between right and wrong, he chooses the right and eschews the wrong, for he is a child of the Light of God! He has made up his mind to follow the right, the true, the good and the gracious at all costs. Now, that is what faith in Christ will do for you. It will make you, by the good Spirit of God, to be a child of light!

A child of light, further, *is one who exhibits the mind and character of God.* He is not an earthworm, hiding himself away in the mold. He is not a rat which loves to be behind the wainscot except at nighttime—he is a child of light. He wears his heart upon his sleeve where birds may peck at it and they will do so, but that will not affect him. It is not for him to conceal anything—what has he to conceal? He lives in the sight of the eternal God and, as for how he appears in the sight of men, what is that to him? Such an one condemns me, but God acquits me, so let the other condemn if he will, what does it matter to me? Such a man acquits and applauds me, but if God condemns me, the acquittal of man is less than nothing and vanity! A child of light should be very bold for his Lord.

You remember that the times were horribly dark in the days when William Farel lived in Switzerland and young John Calvin had written his weighty volumes of treatises called the *Institutes*. They were the product of his early days and he wrote in a flowing style, either in French or Latin, and he thought, if he wrote books and sent them forth, he would have done his part towards the Reformation. But Farel discovered this young writer and said to him, “You must take up the work of the Reformers and carry it on by preaching the Truth.” Calvin replied, “I am a bookish man, I have not the courage and the strength to stand out in the front of the battle—that is for men like Martin Luther. I am a studious person and not so much a man of action.”

Farel reasoned with him and said, “You must come out and take the lead in this Reformation fight,” and he asked him, “Are you afraid of losing your life?” Calvin protested that he had no such fear, he would willingly lay down his life for Jesus Christ if that were necessary, but he shrank from the tumult of controversy.” Then Farel pronounced upon him a curse so terrible, if he did not immediately come and take his proper place, that John Calvin had to yield and he never doubted afterwards, but was always to the front, and always the bravest of the brave! I have often admired the noble veteran, Farel, who could not tolerate that this young man, with so much in him, should simply hold the pen and keep in the background, but threatened that the Lord would follow him with all the vials of His vengeance if he did not take his place at the post of duty. I should like now, if I could, to put my hand upon the shoulder of some young Brother, and call upon him to come out to serve his Lord. I feel myself, tonight, like an Elijah to you—and I charge you, Elisha, quit the cattle and betake yourself to this prophetic ministry! God calls you to it and woe be to you if you stay back from it!

Again, a child of light is one who, by God’s Grace, is *bright, happy, restful, full of joy, life, fruitfulness.* These are the children of the Light of

God and if we believe in Christ, who is the Light of God, and take Him to ourselves with all our hearts, then we shall be the children of Light. I pray that some of you may become the children of Light even tonight. O God, work miracles of mercy in this house! Jehovah, true God, when You answer by fire, then are You known to be God and the priests of Baal flee away. If you will convert men by Your own Omnipotent Grace, they will worship and adore You. If You will not do this, what can my voice do? Pray, O you people of God, that He may bring those who have His Light to believe in the Light and to become the children of Light! These people to whom Christ spoke were bigoted persecuting Jews, yet He said, even to them, "Believe in the light, that you may be the children of light." Whoever may be in my congregation tonight—and doubtless there is a mixed medley here—there are none within these walls whom the power of Divine Grace cannot at this moment save! Our Lord Jesus Christ is as able to save the most abandoned as the most moral and to bring to Himself the most skeptical as well as the most credulous! May that miracle be worked in our midst by His great Grace!

IV. My last point is, A GRIEVOUS CLOSE TO A SERMON.

Christ Himself was the Preacher on this occasion—do you, therefore, infer that these people believed? Let me read to you what happened when the sermon was done. They gathered about that extempore pulpit from which Jesus had addressed them, but, all of a sudden, they could scarcely tell how, He was gone! They said one to another, "Where is He?" According to the latter part of our text, this happened at the close of Christ's sermon—"*These things spoke Jesus, and departed, and did hide Himself from them.*" So, although He had preached as never man preached, though His very soul had run over at His lips in a mighty cascade of love, yet His hearers were not converted, but the Divine Preacher had to go and hide Himself from their malicious violence! The preacher, on this occasion, will not have to do that. No one will seek his life, or try to do him injury, but it is a sad reflection that the same *result* may follow as followed from Christ's own preaching. Men may go their way with their eyes blinded and the question of Isaiah may have to be repeated again and again, "Who has believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?"

Do you blame Jesus because these people rejected His testimony? Do you blame Jesus because He had to escape from their violence? No, no, no—a thousand times, no! And "in that day," in that last dread Day of Judgment, I trust that you will exonerate me from all blame if you are lost, for I have earnestly exhorted you to believe in Jesus, and in Jesus only! There is salvation to be had in Him—will you have it, or will you not? I would gladly grip your hand, to detain you, as that "ancient mariner," of whom Coleridge tells us in his weird poem, transfixed with his glittering eyes the wedding guest, and held him when he wanted to be gone, and I would pray you to remember that tonight may be the turning point, the deciding hour, of your eternal destiny! The scales, I see, are quivering—which way shall they turn? O blessed Christ, cast Your Cross in the balance and turn it, tonight, for the salvation of each one before You, and unto Your name shall be praise forever and ever! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 12:20-50.**

Verses 20-24. Now there were certain Greeks among those who came up to worship at the feast. Then they came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him, saying, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." Philip came and told Andrew, and in turn Andrew and Philip told Jesus. But Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain." I think that our Savior looked upon these Greeks as a sort of vanguard of the great army of Gentiles who would come to Him as the result of His death, but He fixed His eyes upon the *cause* rather than the result, and so He began to talk about that death of His, and how it was that it would work such glorious results. If you want a corn of wheat to grow, you must put it into the ground. It must be resolved into its primary particles—for that is what, "to die," means—and then it must spring up, again, with newness of life, or else it can never be multiplied. It was so with the Lord Jesus, Himself. It is still so with us, it is in proportion as we, ourselves, shall be prepared to die that we shall be prepared to give life to others.

25. *He that loves his life shall lose it; and he that hates his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.* To hoard your energies will be really to destroy them, like hoarded wheat which, in the end, becomes useless. But to give up your energies, to expend your life forces—this is to sow the wheat—and this is the way to ensure the harvest.

26. *If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me.* Do not let him invent some new method of service—"Let him follow Me." If you would do Christ a service, it cannot be by will-worship, or by any way of your own devising! "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me."

26. *And where I am, there shall also My servant be.* "He shall be with Me in tribulation. He shall be with Me in humiliation—and he shall ultimately be with Me in triumph and in Glory."

26. *If anyone serves Me, him will My Father honor.* Those servants of Christ who follow at their Master's heel and do His bidding at all times, are the true knights of the King who win the honors that God alone can give.

27. *Now is My soul troubled and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour?' But for this cause came I unto this hour.* Often, my Brothers and Sisters, should we be checked in prayer if we would be as wise as our Lord. "What shall I say? Shall I ask to be delivered from sickness? Shall I ask that I may not endure the troubles which are the common lot of men? Shall I pray to be screened from persecution?" You see, I am rendering our Lord's question into our language, bringing it down from the lofty height of His Divine thoughts to the level of our poor humanity! We must often pause before we pray, and say with our Lord, "For this cause came I unto this hour. Have I not been brought here on purpose to suffer? Have I not been led to this place that I may glorify God by submitting to all His will?" Therefore, sometimes let us check ourselves in prayer lest

we should ask what is not for our own good or for God's Glory. The next word of the Savior will give us liberty enough, for He went on to say—

28. *Father, glorify Your name.* When we are pleading about that glorious name of Jehovah, we may pray with vehemence and importunity—“Father, whatever I do or suffer, glorify Your name.”

28, 29. *Then came there a voice from Heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again. The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spoke to Him.* Ah, they did not understand the voice of God, or the cause of the voice speaking to them. If the men of the world in our Savior's day did not understand the Father's voice to the Only-Begotten, do not expect that the men of the world, today, will understand the Divine voice in your heart. They will reckon that you are in error and that God has not spoken to you—it has only thundered. They will be ready to invent all kinds of stories of angels and I know not what, so as to get rid of the voice of God to you. But you know it—if you are God's children, you know His voice and you also know what He means when He speaks!

30-32. *Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of Me, but for your sakes. Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.* This is the sermon which has the Greeks for a text. They are already coming, being drawn to Christ, but when He dies, when He is lifted up upon the Cross, instead of losing His attractive power, He will have greater drawing force than ever—“I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.”

33, 34. *This He said, signifying what death He should die. The people answered Him.* As they were always doing, capaciously answering—not answering Him with sentiments that responded to His, but replying against Him with their caviling.

34-41. *We have heard out of the Law that Christ abides forever: and how can say You, ‘The Son of Man must be lifted up?’ Who is this Son of Man? Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walks in darkness knows not where he goes. While you have light, believe in the light, that you may be the children of light. These things spoke Jesus, and departed, and did hide Himself from them. But though He had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on Him: that the saying of Isaiah the Prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke, ‘Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?’ Therefore they could not believe, because that Isaiah said again, ‘He has blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart, that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.’ These things said Isaiah, when he saw His Glory, and spoke of Him.* It is an awful thing to resist the Spirit of God, for if His softening influences are withdrawn, the heart grows hard! If His enlightening influences are taken away, the eyes of the understanding are darkened! I believe there are many who have so long trifled with conscience and violated the best instincts of their nature that they are given up as those who are past hope. I pray God that it may not be so with any here. But it was so with many in the generation among which Christ labored.

42. *Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on Him.* Christ has His secret followers in the darkest days. There are men who believe in Him even when the current of infidelity runs most strongly.

42, 43. *But because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.* For which they deserved great censure! Yet some of them cast away their cowardice at the last, for Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus were among those who confessed their love to the Crucified Christ.

44-49. *Jesus cried and said, He that believes on Me, believes not on Me, but on Him that sent Me. And he that sees Me sees Him that sent Me. I am come a Light into the world, that whoever believes on Me should not abide in darkness. And if any man hears My word, and believes not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejects Me, and receives not My words, has that which judges him—the words that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of Myself, but the Father which sent Me. He gave Me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak.* Christ did not pride Himself upon being a great original thinker. He took His words from His Father's mouth—and the preacher of the Gospel is to be no inventor of new thoughts. The "thoughtful" man of whom we hear so much is just a man who is rebellious against God. The Lord's true servant is to repeat God's thoughts, not his own—to borrow from the Scriptures, to borrow from the teaching of the Holy Spirit—even as the Lord Jesus Christ did.

50. *And I know that His commandment is life everlasting: whatever I speak, therefore, even as the Father said unto Me, so I speak.* If the great Head of the Church was thus only a Messenger, the Deliverer of a message from the Father, should not we, who at our best are such poor ministers of Christ, take heed to it that we, also, can say, "Even as the Father said unto me, so I speak"? God grant it! Amen.

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

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY
TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

ISRAEL AND BRITAIN— A NOTE OF WARNING NO. 1844

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 7, 1885,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“But though He had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on Him: that the saying of Isaiah the Prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke, Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Isaiah said again, He has blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart, that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said Isaiah, when he saw His Glory, and spoke of Him.”
John 12:37-41.*

THE blindness of Israel concerning our Lord was sadly remarkable. It was a blindness of the eyes, for they saw His many miracles and yet believed not. Their ears, also, seemed to be stopped, for they heard His words and did not understand them. And their hearts, also, were heavy, for they did not relent under the plaintive admonitions of a Savior's love. Their hearts were cruel towards the Messiah—they hated Him without a cause. No door was open to the heart of Israel; they had hardened their heart, they had shut their eyes, they had stopped their ears, and even He that spoke as never man spoke gained no access to their souls. They went so far as to crucify Him and cried as they did so, “His blood be on us, and on our children”—words so sadly verified when Jerusalem was destroyed and her children slaughtered, sold as slaves, or scattered to the four corners of the earth. It was, indeed, a terrible blindness which happened unto Israel.

Her rejection of the Lord Jesus is the more amazing because Isaiah gave so clear an account of the Messiah and so clearly pictured Jesus of Nazareth. Descriptions of Him could not have been more explicit than were the prophecies of Isaiah. It would be very easy to construct an entire life of Christ out of the book of Isaiah, beginning with, “a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel,” and ending with, “He made His grave with the wicked and with the rich in His death.” Isaiah spoke of John the Baptist as the “voice crying in the wilderness, prepare you the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.” And he foretold our Lord's ministry by the way of the sea beyond Jordan in Galilee of the Gentiles, where the people who sat in dark-

ness saw great light. The Prophet portrayed his Lord as “despised and rejected of men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.”

Clearest of all is he upon His vicarious sufferings, concerning which he uses a variety of most definite expressions, such as—“The chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.” Isaiah saw so clearly the day of our Lord Jesus that he spoke rather as an *evangelist* than as a Prophet—as an eyewitness, rather than as one foretelling a far-off event. Yet all this clearness was lost upon the men of his generation and upon those who followed after. The nation had so long been fickle towards God and had trifled so long with God’s Truth, that it was, at last, given up to a judicial hardness of heart, so that it could not understand or perceive! They refused the plainest messages of Grace and were so confirmed in unbelief that all their Prophets cried with one plaintive voice, “Who has believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?”

Nor was it alone grievous that Israel sinned against the Light of God which shone in Isaiah’s testimony, but, alas, she closed her eyes against the meridian splendor of our Lord’s own life! Jesus bore His own witness in His Person, teachings, works and gifts. A sad wonder lies in the fact that they did not know the Lord of Glory although they saw His miracles, which were sure witnesses to His claims. He worked among them works which no other man did. There is about our Lord a likeness to God—in all that He does the Godhead shines forth! He is so pure that He can say, “Which of you convicts Me of sin?” How like to Him who is saluted as, “Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts!” His teaching is so full of tenderness and gentleness that since God is Love, we conclude that Christ is God! His many miracles touch upon every point in the great circle of Omnipotence. What is there that God can do which the Christ did not do? Was He not multiform and multitudinous in His works of power and Grace? Herein lay the wonder, that though He did so many miracles before them, not in secret but actually *before their eyes*—though He fed them with bread which they could see and handle, and eat—though He healed the sick and raised the dead, they yet believed not on Him.

How sadly far can men go in unbelief, prejudice and hardness of heart! How dim can human eyes become when men refuse to see! How darkened the understanding when men are unwilling to comprehend! Let us tremble at this, lest we, ourselves, by imitating the chosen people in their unbelief, should fall into like bondage to prejudice and ignorance; lest we, by tampering with the Truth of God should come, at last, to be incapable of perceiving it; lest we, also, by rejecting the testimony of God, should be given up to our own willfulness to believe a lie and refuse the Truth. Such, then, as Isaiah had foreseen, was the state of Israel in our Lord’s day—never clearer evidence and never more obstinate refusal to see it—never truth more plain and never rejection so determined!

Woe to those who close their ears, for the day comes when they shall no longer hear! Woe to those who shut their eyes to the Light of God, for they shall, before long, be made blind! Isaiah was informed that such would be the outcome of his ministry—the Lord bade him say to the people, “Hear

you, indeed, but understand not; and see you, indeed, but perceive not." This must have been a very sad business for so generous and tender-hearted a man of God. It was painful to him to be so clear and yet to be so little understood. He was the Paul of the Old Testament—to him belonged fullness of knowledge, clearness of vision, plainness of speech and faithfulness of spirit—and yet none of these things could make the people understand his message and receive it into their hearts. He was sublime in thought, attractive in word and affectionate in spirit—and yet they did not believe his testimony—so that he must have often been astonished and heart-broken as he spoke in vain to a people who were determined that they would not hear!

This morning I shall draw certain lessons for ourselves from the great evangelical Prophet, his ministry and the people to whom he ministered so vainly. Our first meditation shall be *concerning Isaiah and his ministry*. Our second shall be *concerning the people to whom he spoke*. Alas, I fear that we who speak in the name of the Lord in these last days have, also, to deal with hearts that are gross, ears that are heavy and eyes that are dimmed! Upon this generation, also, there is falling a measure of judicial withdrawal of light and discernment—and we, also, have to cry, "Who has believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?"

I. First, then, let me speak with you CONCERNING ISAIAH AND HIS MINISTRY. Oh, that the Spirit of God may speak with power through me! Our text says two things of Isaiah. First, that "He *saw* His Glory," and secondly, that "He *spoke* of Him."

The first statement is that Isaiah *saw*. Isaiah was a great Seer—his prophesy begins thus—"The vision of Isaiah, the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem." All Prophets were more or less Seers and *saw* what they foretold. But Isaiah, above others, was endowed with the seeing and foreseeing faculty. He had the clearest sight and for that reason he had the clearest speech. When a man speaks so that you cannot understand him, the usual reason is that he does not understand himself. And when a man speaks so as to be readily comprehended, it is because the thought in his own mind is well defined. He that could speak well must see well. Mark the two things in the text—"When Isaiah saw His Glory, and spoke of Him."

In what sense is Isaiah said to have seen that which he spoke? Does it not mean that he realized his thoughts? That they stood out vividly so as to make a deep impression upon his own mind? Things to come were already come in his apprehension—he beheld what he believed, felt what he foretold. He was not a dreamy person, maundering about half-fashioned, undeveloped thoughts, but he was a person who knew, perceived and felt what he preached. He saw with his soul what he set forth with his lips.

But what did he see? It is a most important thing that in these days you and I should see the *same*, for the same work lies before us among a people who are a repetition of that disobedient and gainsaying nation! Read, then, with care the sixth chapter of Isaiah. Open your Bibles and refer to the passage, verse by verse.

First, what Isaiah saw was *the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up*. When the Prophet went abroad among the people, he heard them speaking against the Lord God. Some were contending for one deity and some for another. Some were leaning upon an arm of flesh and others despising the promise of Jehovah, the God of Israel. All this, I say, he saw out of doors and he was troubled. But when he went into the sanctuary of God, he saw the Lord sitting upon a throne—still reigning, still glorious, undisturbed by opposition. He must, then, have felt like David when he said, “Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against His anointed. He that sits in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Yet have I set My king upon My holy hill of Zion.”

As David saw Christ upon the throne amid the strivings of the people, so did Isaiah see the Lord Jesus, not only upon the lowly Mercy Seat, but upon a throne high and lifted up! I pray you, Brothers and Sisters, settle this in your hearts—our Lord is highly exalted as Lord of All! When you see evil occurring, do not imagine that it defeats the eternal purposes of Jehovah! When you hear blasphemy and your blood runs cold, do not think that Christ has lost His Glory! When men riot in sin, do not dream that the reins of affairs are out of Jesus’ hands, for He is still “God over all, blessed forever.” My heart exults this day, as, by undoubting faith, I am assured that He who died on Calvary is now exalted on high, far above all principalities and powers! “You are the King of Glory, O Christ!” To You our spirits ascribe infinite honor, world without end! Though the earth is removed and the mountains are carried into the midst of the sea, yet the Lord reigns! He that died upon the Cross is crowned with majesty and all the angels of God worship Him! “He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet.” Let us have no question about this, for if we have, we shall not be prepared to speak in the Lord’s name with this evil generation. Amid the anarchy of the ages we see the glorious high Throne of our redeeming Lord unmoved, unmovable! This is the Rock of our refuge when the unsettled times rage about us like the waters of the troubled sea. We cannot be afraid, for Christ is on His Throne!

Observe that in Isaiah’s vision he not only saw the Lord “upon a throne high and lifted up,” but he saw that “*His train filled the temple*,” so that in that temple there was room for no one else! The robes of this great King filled all the holy place and neither priests nor offerers could find standing room there. It is a great thing to see how Jesus fills the heavenly places. In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead! Let it be acknowledged to be so in Heaven, for the Glory of our Redeemer fills every street of the upper city, every mansion of the Father’s house. In the Church below, which is also His temple, among His spiritual people, the Glory of the Lord Jesus engages and occupies every heart. They feel that there is none other in whom they can trust, none other whose words they will receive, none other in whom they glory—the Lord Christ is All in All to us and we know no other Master or Savior. His train fills the temple.

I trust it is so among us. From Sabbath to Sabbath the one Glory of this Tabernacle is the Person and work of Jesus. What a Glory has God put upon the Only-Begotten Son, whom He has raised from the dead that He should be Head over all things to His Church, which He fills with His life, light, and love! Nor may we forget that all the things that exist are, in a sense, His temple, and the whole universe is filled with His train, for “He has ascended up far above all heavens that He might fill all things.” Glory be unto our ascended and reigning Lord!

In His vision Isaiah saw *the flaming spirits that wait upon the Christ of God*. He calls them, “seraphims.” The best interpretation we can give is, “burning ones”—they burn in the sense of consuming. They burn up that which ought to be consumed, namely, all kinds of evil. There are powers around our Lord which will destroy evil. You ask me to tell you something about these seraphim—how can I? They have covered their faces and covered their feet! Since nothing is to be seen, what can I tell you? Neither would it be right for us to speak concerning them, for, manifestly, it is their desire to be hidden. Who will violate their wish to be concealed? They covered their faces, they covered their feet and therein they did as good as say, “Look not on us, but look on Him who sits upon the Throne, whose attendants we are.” This much is all we know—exalted intelligences are in waiting upon our Lord and are able to fly swiftly at His bidding. Tremble not concerning this error, or that—it shall be burnt up by those agencies which are at the command of our exalted Lord. Spirits from God shall run to and fro and smite, as with the fire of God, those powers of darkness which now oppress our race. God Himself is a consuming fire—who can dwell with Him but those that are like He? He makes His ministers a flame of fire! Around our Lord are the chariots of God, which are 20,000, even thousands of angels. His power knows no limit! His word runs very swiftly. He speaks and it is done! He commands and it stands fast! Glory be unto You, O Christ! We will not fear nor be discouraged, since these, Your servants, are ready to flame forth at Your bidding. Truly You are Jehovah of Hosts!

This vision of the bodyguard of the Prince of Peace was enough to strengthen Isaiah. Thus comforted, he would calmly confront that rebellious generation. If the Prophet, when he opened the young man’s eyes strengthened his heart by making him see horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha, shall not we be comforted as we behold legions of burning ones surrounding our King and standing ready to fulfill His decrees?

Further, we find that Isaiah saw in that vision *the perpetual adoration which is rendered unto Christ concerning His holiness*. Those bright spirits had never tasted of His mercy, for they had never sinned. They understood nothing of His Grace, for they had not been guilty. But being pure in heart, they gazed on the Lord with opened eyes and adored His holiness! Their whole souls were filled with the contemplation of that one all-embracing attribute—and in responsive song they said, each one, to his fellow, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts.” They emphasized their words by repeating them three times and, perhaps, they alluded, also, to

the Trinity in Unity as they cried, “Holy, holy, holy.” This is the supreme Glory of Christ, that in Him is seen the holiness of God!

Oh my Friends, let us be like these seraphim, ravished with the holiness of the Atonement, awe-struck with the justice of God in the great Sacrifice! Reflect with reverence that God, when He willed to save His elect, would not commit a breach upon His Laws—though He would redeem them from going down into the Pit, yet He would not violate His Word, nor change that most righteous penalty of death—which is the due desert of sin. Rather than stain His holiness, He spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all! Consider the great love of holiness which must have been in the heart of the Father, that He would give up His Son to bleed, sooner than His Law should be dishonored! And think of the great holiness of Christ, that He would rather give His back to the smiters and His cheeks to them that pluck out the hair, yes, rather stretch out His hands to the nails and expire, forsaken of His God, than suffer sin to go unpunished! God would not even, for mercy’s sake, issue an unjust pardon to the souls He loved!

As I stand here this morning I, also, have visions of God—and the Cross seems to me transformed into a burning Throne whereon justice is high and lifted up to the uttermost, as I see God, Himself, in Christ Jesus, bowing His head to death, that He might be just and yet the Justifier of him that believes. Around that Cross I see troops of angels gathering and I hear one crying unto another and saying, “Holy, holy, holy, is Jehovah Jesus, the great Sacrifice for sin!” Do you not unite in their reverent homage? If you do, you will go forth and tell of pardon bought with blood and of the Atonement finished, once and for all! With hallowed confidence you will tell out among the people that the holy Lord reigns from the Cross until all creatures fall down and worship Him that was slain, because His holiness was thereby revealed in noonday splendor!

This was not all that was revealed to the Prophet, for he heard the seraphim say, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts; *the whole earth is full of His Glory.*” Even when men rejected Christ; even when hearts were fat, eyes were dim and ears were heavy—even then—the whole earth was full of the Glory of Christ! When scientists tell us that they cannot see God, I am amazed. To me it is impossible *not* to see Him. Though I cannot pry with scalpel into the anatomy of the human frame, yet when I look upon the mere skin of the human countenance, I see the handiwork of God! Though I cannot dig into the lower strata of the earth and disentomb the fossil and decipher its stone-preserved memorial, yet to me, rock, clay, sand and relics of the past bear the sure hieroglyph of God! Though I cannot inform you of all the interesting details of insect life, or descant upon the secrets of botany, yet to me, bees bring honeyed thoughts of God and flowers breathe the perfume of His love! Where is God? Ask, rather, Where is He *not*?

Not with these grosser senses, but by higher faculties, I see and hear my God! Yes, He does surround me and my faith embraces Him. I am no fool for this—the best authority declares that he is the fool who says in his heart, “There is no God.” Yes, the whole earth is full of the Glory of Christ

and above the earth in every cloud it is seen! And above the cloud every star shines out concerning Him! Alas for the blind eyes that cannot see that which is evidently set forth in every place. Alas for the ears which cannot hear when earth, sea, Heaven and Hell are all echoing to the tread of the Omnipotent Christ of God! Oh Brothers and Sisters, have you ever seen this vision? Have you ever seen God's Glory filling the whole earth? If so, you are prepared for the times that are and are to be times of gloom, darkness, sin and blasphemy—and yet your heart does not tremble for the Ark of the Lord.

When all this was seen by the Prophet, *he noticed that the posts of the doors moved*. If I am rightly informed, there were two huge columns before the Temple called Jachin and Boaz. These were made with singular skill and were the wonder of the age. They were of brass, cast by Solomon—but in the course of ages they had no doubt mellowed into bronze—and there they stood, two tremendous erections, bearing up massive doors! We are told, I know not whether it is correct, that the gates that swung upon these columns required at least 20 men either to open or to shut them. But as the Prophet saw that vision, he noticed that these massive columns trembled and thus did obeisance to the God who was within their gates. Our Revised Version reads it, "The foundations of the thresholds were moved." Even to its foundations, the house trembled with solemn awe of the Divine Presence! Brethren, Heaven, earth, Hell and all created things reflect the Glory of the Lord and thus adore Him! Oh Lord Jesus, You are worthy of all honor. "All the earth does worship You." If it were so with posts and doors, shall not our hearts rejoice with trembling? Shall not our souls be moved in the Presence of the Most High? And will we not fall down before the glorified Christ, as John did, who wrote, "When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead"? Everything is filled with awe in His majestic Presence, save only *man*, the impious rebel who dares defy his God!

Then came the best part of the vision for Isaiah. At the glorious sight, he felt, "Woe is me, for I am undone, I am stricken dumb. I can never speak again, for my lips are unclean, and I dwell among an unclean people." Then, swift as lightning, flew a seraph, bringing a coal more burning than himself from off the Altar of Sacrifice, with which he touched the Prophet's lips. Beloved, this is what we need! We need to feel the Atonement laid home to us; to feel the power of the great Sacrifice of Christ; to hear a voice saying within our spirit, "Your iniquity is put away and your sin is purged." Though that live coal must have blistered the lips which it covered, yet it made them eloquent. Common fire would destroy the organs of speech, but the fire of Sacrifice does not—it unloosens a grateful tongue and helps a grateful heart to tell of the Love immense and unsearchable which offered itself upon the Altar of Sacrifice, that holiness and love might save the sinner. Our peace comes from the Holy, Holy, Holy One, who is just and yet forgives His people's sin. Brother, if you are to proclaim the Glory of your Lord, you must feel the sacrificial coal applied to the place where your impurity is most seen, even to your lips! You must know that you are forgiven, for your conviction that you are clean

before God will give you confidence in telling others the story of the Cross. This is what Isaiah saw.

Listen for a minute to that further word that follows—Isaiah, when he saw His Glory, “*spoke of Him.*” He that has seen this sight must speak!

He spoke in deep humility. Never braver man than Isaiah, but never one who walked in lowlier reverence before His God. He never forgot, to His dying day, that, “Woe is me! For I have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.”

Yet, observe that he spoke with very willing obedience. “Here am I,” he said, “send me.” He offers himself to be God’s mouth to the people, whatever the message may be. He seems to say, “Here am I in the entirety of my being, purchased to You by Your great pardoning love. Use me as You will and send me where You will.” He continued to report his Lord’s message under constant rebuffs and despite the ceaseless obduracy of Israel. Though he cried, “Who has believed our report?” yet he continued that report! That chapter which begins with his complaint has in it not only a continuation of the report, but a fuller version of it than he had ever given before. He was sad but resolute, grieved yet persevering, broken in heart, but not broken down in constancy. Brothers, it needs great Grace to go upon a fruitless errand. One had need see the Glory of the Lord to be enabled to fight a losing battle! I am sometimes afraid that I have to do this, myself, but if it is so, it is not ours to bargain for success, but to yield implicit obedience! It is ours to abide faithful to our commission, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear. Brothers, be it ours to serve the Lord gladly and testify to what we have seen, even though no man should receive our witness.

But then it is said of Isaiah that he, “spoke of Him,” that is, of our Lord Jesus Christ. In all that Isaiah said he had an eye to Christ. It was all his business among men to speak of glories of the coming Son of God. May the Lord give us such a sight of Christ in His Glory, that from this day forth we shall be absorbed in glorifying Him! May our life be a perpetual ministry concerning Christ. Remember that word concerning John the Baptist? “John did no miracle, but all things that John spoke of this Man were true.” If we can do no miracles and achieve no success, let us at least cry without ceasing, “Behold the Lamb of God.” Though we decrease, it matters not so long as He increases—we are glad to disappear, as the morning star is lost at the rising of the sun. It is our delight to imitate the seraphim and with veiled face and covered feet to attend about the Throne of Jehovah Jesus our Lord!

II. I now ask your kind attention to the second part of my subject, which is a very painful one, CONCERNING THE NATION TO WHICH ISAIAH SPOKE. Their terrible sin lay in this, that they were willingly blinded by the Light of God which ought to have been to them a help to see Christ. And they were hardened by those very Truths which ought to have melted them. They became more and more adverse to Christ through beholding in Him such a Character as ought to have won their hearts. To the Prophet’s teaching they were entirely dead. A specimen of this we find in the succeeding chapters of Isaiah. Israel and Syria attacked Ahaz,

whose reign followed those of Uzziah and Jotham. The Prophet came and said to Ahaz, "Take heed, and be quiet; fear not, neither be faint-hearted for the two tails of these smoking firebrands." Ahaz was assured that God would help him if he would but trust in Him. But instead of doing so, the king determined to petition for the help of the great king of Assyria, with the result, in the long run, that, "the king of Assyria came unto him and distressed him, but helped him not."

Isaiah, to confirm his message, bade the king choose any sign either in the depth or in the height above, but the infidel king replied, "I will not ask, neither will I test Jehovah." He had so defiantly cast off allegiance to the true God that he would not even accept a sign, though it was left to his own choice! Thus Isaiah's message was rejected though put in the most winning form, for the hearts of the people were blinded and hardened so as to choose the way of destruction. Ultimately, as you know, the Assyrians carried the whole people away, for they had rejected God's message willfully and wrath came upon them. What a grievous task to be called to preach to such a people!

They went on from bad to worse as a nation. They turned aside grievously from God and when they appeared to cleave to Him, it was in name, only, but not in heart, so that when Christ came they were unable to discern Him, for had they known Him, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory! This blindness was, in part, a punishment for their long rebellion. If men willfully shut their eyes, do you wonder that they become blind? If men will not hear, do you wonder that they grow deaf? If men will not understand, do you wonder that they become stupid? He that perverts the Truth of God shall soon be incapable of knowing the true from the false! If you persist in wearing glasses that distort, everything will be distorted to you—

***"Hear the just Law, the judgment of the skies!
He that hates Truth shall be the dupe of lies."***

But although this blindness was a punishment for former sin, it was, itself, a sin. They willfully rejected the testimony of God against themselves—they refused the self-evident Christ who would so greatly have blessed them. This willful rejection was carried out so effectually that it became impossible to convert and heal them—they could not be instructed or reformed and, therefore, they were given over to destruction. Nothing remained but to allow the Romans to burn the Temple and plow the site of the city. It was a dreadful thing that they should deliberately choose destruction and obstinately involve themselves in the most tremendous of woes.

Poor Israel, we pity you! It was sad, indeed, to fall from so great a height! Yet we are bound to admit that God dealt with you justly, for you did choose your own delusions. The Lord cries, "Oh that My people had hearkened unto Me." Our Savior weeps and cries, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, but you would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate."

What I have to say this morning is this—that I am growingly fearful lest our own country should furnish a parallel to all this. Read the story of England, beginning where you will, and see how gracious God has been to us. Note well our great deliverances from the destruction of the Spanish Armada to the overthrow of Napoleon. Do not forget how often this little country has been made victorious in wars against great peoples who thought to swallow her up. Then reflect how God sent His Light to us—how the Gospel spread all over England—and how it has, in many ways, been rejected. How often since the days of Cromwell, Rome has been allowed to dim the light of our Protestantism—and how it labors to do so still! See how this people have received the Truth of Heaven, but again and again have proved false to it, turning at one time to superstition and at another time to infidelity.

At this moment we are rich and, despite depression in business, we are less tried by it than any other nation. And what causes all of this mercy but increased sin? Why, at this moment we have sin rampant among us almost beyond precedent! Think how the poor are oppressed and ground down with awful poverty in many parts of this great city. Shall not God avenge the cry of starving women? Worse still, if worse can be—those who dare walk our streets after sundown tell us that Sodom, in its most putrid days, could scarcely exceed this metropolis for open vice. To our infinite disgust and horror, the names of certain of the greatest in the land are, at this hour, openly mentioned in connection with the filthiest debauchery! This is not the place for details, nor can I mention the matter, or even think of it without feeling my very soul on fire. Faithfulness requires plain speech—but it is a hideous evil that the dregs of vice should be the chosen luxury of certain of our hereditary legislators and rulers.

Woe unto you, oh land, when your great ones love the harlot's house! Deep is our shame when we know that our judges are not clear in this matter, but social purity has been put to the blush by magistrates of no mean degree. Yes, it is said that the courts of justice have lent themselves to the covering and hushing up of the iniquities of the great. Shall not God be grieved by such a nation as this? He who has read a certain story which is but too well-known, must have felt his ears tingle and his heart tremble! What is coming over us? What horrible clouds are darkening our skies? There were judges, once, who would not have suffered the laws to be trampled on by the great, but would have dealt out equal justice to rich and poor! I cannot persuade myself that it will be otherwise, now, and yet I fear the worst. O God, have mercy upon the land whose judgment seats and palaces are defiled with vice!

This is not all—a general indifference to all religion is creeping over the country—at least over this vast metropolis. Ask those who visit from door to door among our crowded populations and they will tell you that never before in their lives were there so few persons attendant upon the means of Grace. Street after street of this city scarcely possesses more than one regular attendant upon the preaching of the Word of God. The Sabbath is no longer a day of worship with millions! What continual efforts are made to rob us of the Sabbath—to degrade it into a common work-day and to

make a slave of the working-man. Today the Revelation of God is treated with indifference, or talked of as if it deserved no reverence or credit. Unbelief has sapped the foundations of the social fabric.

Worst of all—I must not hold back the charge—many of the avowed ministers of Christ are no ministers of faith at all, but promoters of unbelief! The modern pulpit has taught men to be infidels! What Truth of God is there which has not been doubted by divines, questioned by doctors of divinity and, at length, been denounced by the priests of “modern thought”? Nothing remains upon which a certain school of preachers have not spit their skepticism. The experience of the unbelief of Germany is being repeated here! Among those who are ordained to be the preachers of the Gospel of Christ there are many who preach not faith but doubt and, therefore, they are servants of the devil rather than of the Lord! Think not that I am aiming at the Church of England! With all my objection to a State-Church, I am not so unjust as to conceal my belief that I see in the Episcopal Church, at this time, less of unbelief than among certain Dissenters! In fact, Nonconformity in certain quarters is eaten through and through with a covert Unitarianism, less tolerable than Unitarianism, itself! So frequently are the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel assailed that it becomes necessary, before you cross the threshold of many a Chapel, to ask the question, “Shall I hear the Gospel here, today, or shall I come out hardly knowing whether the Bible is inspired or not? Shall I not be made to doubt the Atonement, the work of the Holy Spirit, the immortality of the soul, the punishment of the wicked, or the deity of Christ?”

I know I shall stir a hornet’s nest by these honest rebukes but I cannot help it. I am burdened and distressed with the state of religion—a pest is in the air—no Truth of God is safe from its withering infection! No signs can be more alarming than the growing infidelity and worldliness which I see among those who call themselves Christians. Does this nation really intend to cast off the fear of God and the doctrines of Holy Scripture to follow the vain imaginings of the sophists and the fashionable follies of the great? Are we to see, again, unbelief and luxurious sin walking hand in hand? If so, there are some of us who mean to take up our sorrowful parable and speak as plainly as we can for truth and holiness, whether we offend or please! Be it ours to still thunder out the Law of God and proclaim with trumpet clearness the Gospel of Jesus, not bating one jot of firm belief in the Revelation of God, nor winking at sin, nor toning down the Truth of God, even though we fear that the only result will be to make this people’s hearts gross, their ears heavy and their eyes blind! If it must be so, my soul shall weep in secret, but still, O Lord, here am I, send me! Be of good courage, O my Heart, for the faithful have not ceased from among men! Other voices will cry aloud and spare not, if haply our land may be purged of its present defilement.

Hearken yet again while I press this subject personally home to you. Has not this word a personal bearing upon some of you? Certain of you have heard the Gospel preached plainly and honestly—and yet you have never received it—is there not creeping over you a fatal indifference? Are not your hearts turning to stone? Possibly you are professors of religion

and yet you do not feel the power of it—what does this mean? If you are not a praying people, nor a holy people and yet are a *professing* people, what an awful doom awaits you! Shall my ministry be a savor of death unto you? It may be that my voice grows stale to you and what I say seems common-place—is this to be the reason for your refusing Christ and His salvation, refusing the power of His Word, refusing holiness which He would work in you? Oh, shall it be so? Will you die?

Dear Hearers, I should not like to meet one of you at the Day of Judgment and have to feel that I preached you into a greater blindness than you might have known! Oh, be converted! Turn you, turn you, why will you die? May God in infinite mercy speak to you that you may believe in Jesus, now, lest that should come upon you which is spoken of by the Prophet, “Behold, you despisers, and wonder, and perish!”

Before I have done, hear the sweet whisper which closes the sixth of Isaiah. Notwithstanding all the terrible work that Isaiah had to do, he was not left without comfort. The Lord said to him, “In it there shall be a tenth.” You know how the Prophet cried, “Except the Lord of Hosts had left us a seed, we had been as Sodom, and been made like unto Gomorrah.” The Lord has His sacred tithe and these He will not lose. The tree has lost its leaves, for it is winter time, but still, it is alive, and the sap will flow again, for its substance is in it! The tree is leveled by the axe, but weep not despairing tears, for it shall sprout again, for life is still in it! Even so the Church must live, the Truth of God must be victorious, purity must conquer, the Christ must reign!

Behold, He comes with clouds and every eye shall see Him! Reject Christ if you will, today, oh you who think yourselves so exceedingly wise, but there is a people who love Him, a secret people who cling to Him—and when He comes, as come He must before long—they will welcome Him and partake in His Glory. As for you that refuse Him this day, how will you stand when He appears? Where will you flee? You shall ask the hills to cover you, but they will refuse! You shall bid the mountains hide you, but they will not yield a cavern for your shelter! Be wise, now, therefore, and no more resist your Lord! “Kiss the Son lest He be angry, and you perish from the way while His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him!” May you and I and all of us be of that blessed number. Amen and Amen!

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 12:37-50; Isaiah 6.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—93, 12, 518.**

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LOVE STRONGER THAN DEATH NO. 2377

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY,
SEPTEMBER 9, 1894.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JULY 5, 1888.

*“When Jesus knew that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.”
John 13:1.*

THIS is a kind of preface to the story of the foot-washing, and a very wonderful preface it is, when coupled with the third and fourth verses, upon which I commented. “Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God, and was going to God, rose from supper and laid aside His garments; and took a towel, and girded Himself.” This is the frame of the picture that is here presented to us. To what shall I compare it? It is like unto a gate of the Golden City—each gate is one huge pearl and surely this verse is a jewel of inestimable price! The foot-washing picture is set within this precious frame.

This memorable and symbolical act took place at the end of our Lord's sojourn here below. The Passion was the end of His life and we may consider that the Passion was about to begin. That same night He would go to Gethsemane and, in less than 24 hours, the dear hands that washed the disciples' feet would be nailed to the accursed wood and He who spoke so tenderly to His little band of followers would be in His death agonies.

It is an important thing to know how a man feels when he comes to the real crisis of his life. He has cultivated a great variety of feelings during his career, but what has been his ruling passion? You will see it now. It has passed into a proverb that, “The ruling passion is strong in death,” and there is great truth in the saying. In the light of the man's departure, we shall see what power really ruled him. It was precisely so with our Divine Master. He had almost reached the end of His earthly life. He had come to a season of awful agony. He was about to endure the great and terrible death of the Cross, by which He was to purchase eternal redemption for all His people. What will be uppermost in His mind, now? What will He think of His disciples, now that He has so many other things to think of—now that the thought of His approaching death comes over Him—now that the agony and bloody sweat of Gethsemane are so near?

What will Jesus think of His disciples at such a time as this and under such circumstances as these? Our text is the answer to that question—“Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God, and was going to God, rose from

supper and laid aside His garments; and took a towel, and girded Himself.” His love was burning as brightly at the Paschal Supper as ever it burned before! Yes, and it seemed as if, in that wondrous prayer that is recorded in the 17th Chapter of John, and in the wonderful discourse which accompanied it, the love of Jesus had never before flamed out so clearly! Then were the great beacon fires lit and the fierce winds that blew around the Savior fanned them to their full force of flame. Now can you say of Jesus, “Behold how He loved His disciples!” for even at the end of His life He still loved those whom He had loved before!

With that thought in your minds, will you follow me while I take the text to pieces and dwell upon almost every word of it?

I. First, then, concerning our blessed Master, let us consider WITH WHOM HE ASSOCIATED and of whom this verse now speaks. They are called, “His own.” It is a brief description, but it is wonderfully full—“Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.”

“His own.” There was a circle—sometimes a wide circle—round the Savior. It was made up of publicans and sinners and He had a measure of love to all of them, a benevolent desire to bless them, but there was an inner circle, containing the 12 Apostles and some godly women who had joined themselves unto Him. These were, “His own.” To them He often expounded the hidden meaning of a parable which He left unexplained to the crowd. To them He often brought many a dainty dish which was especially reserved for their table and not intended for the multitude. Bread and fish would do for the crowd, but Jesus had choicer fare for “His own.” They were a special people—many knew them, many despised them—but Jesus loved them, and this was the main thing which made them “His own.”

You know how they came to be “His own.” *He chose them before the earth was.* A man may surely choose his own wife and Christ chose His own spouse. He chose His own Church and, while the Scripture stands, that doctrine can never be eradicated from it. Before the day-star knew its place, or planets ran their rounds, Christ had made His choice and, having made it, He stood to it! He chose them for His love and He loved them for His choice.

Having loved them and chosen them, *He espoused them unto Himself.* “They shall be Mine,” He said. “I will be married to them, I will be bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh.” Consequently, in the fullness of time, He came here, made one with our humanity, that He might be seen to be a true Husband to “His own”—“His own” by choice—“His own” by espousal.

They were “His own” also, *for His Father gave them to Him.* The Father committed them into His hands. “Yours they were,” said Jesus, “and You gave them to Me.” The Father loved the Son and committed all things into His hands, but He made a special committal of His own chosen people. He gave them to Him and entered with Him into surety engagements on their behalf, that as they were His sheep, committed to His charge, He would deliver them up and not one of them should be torn by the wolf, or die by the frost or the heat, but that all should pass, again, under the

rod of Him that counts them. That Great Shepherd of the sheep will take care of the whole flock that was entrusted to His care! He will not lose one of His sheep or lambs. At the last, Jesus will say, "Here am I, Father, and the children that You have given Me; of all that You gave Me, I have lost none." Thus, they are "His own" by His own choice, "His own" by espousal and, "His own" by His Father's gift!

But these whom He called, "His own," were soon to be His *by a wondrous purchase*. He looked upon their redemption as being already accomplished, for in His prayer He said to His Father, "I have finished the work which You gave Me to do." Beloved Friends, have you ever thought how dearly we are Christ's by His redemption of us? "You are not your own; you are bought with a price." Have you ever realized the price that was paid for you? I sometimes think that if I could have been there, I would have said, "O great and glorious Lord, I beseech You not to pay such a price for me! It is too great a sacrifice that You should be made sin for me, that I might be made the righteousness of God in You!" But He would do it. He loved us better than He loved Himself! He would do it and He has paid the purchase price for us, and we are His—and we will not run back from the glad confession! Well may He call us, "His own," when it cost Him so much to redeem us!

But we have become "His own" *by His conquest of us*. He had called His disciples by His Grace. He had drawn each one of them by cords of love and they had run after Him—and it is the same with you and me. You remember when He drew you, do you not? Can you ever forget when, at last, you yielded to the power of those bands of love, those cords of a Man? Often since then have you sung—

***"Oh, happy day, that fixed my choice
On You, my Savior, and my God!
Well may this glowing heart rejoice
And tell its raptures all abroad!
'Tis done! The great transaction's done!
I am my Lord's, and He is mine—
He drew me, and I followed on,
Charmed to confess the voice Divine."***

Beloved, you are "His own," now, because *you have yielded yourselves to Him*. You delight to think that you are His. There is no greater joy to you than to feel that you belong to Christ! The fact that you are truly Christ's is the fountain of innumerable pleasures and blessings to your heart! Jesus calls us, "His own"—His own sheep, His own disciples, His own friends, His own brethren, the members of His body! What a title for us to wear, "His own"! I have heard of some who have felt it an honor to be called, "The Devil's Own." I trust that you have escaped from such a title as that and now you are Christ's own. How many regiments have felt pleasure in being called, the King's Own, the Queen's Own, the Prince's Own! Oh, but we are HIS OWN! He owns us! He calls us, "His own." Thus He distinguishes us from the rest of mankind and sets us apart unto Himself. "My name shall be named on them," He says. We are "His own." Surely, this is the highest honor that can be put upon us even in the Last Great Day. "They shall be Mine, says the Lord of Hosts, is that day when I make up My jewels."

Now I trust we can say that we desire to serve Christ in our vocation. I feel happy to be among the favored few whose vocation it is to serve Christ, those who are permitted to spend all their time and all their strength in that dear service. We are, "His own," but so are you, "His own," if you *believe* in Him. You, also, are Christ's own, up in an attic. Christ's own at the washtub. Christ's own in the fields at the plow. Christ's own making the hay. I am not wandering from my subject when I say this, for Christ has "His own" among all these classes! "His own" were fishermen. "His own" cast the net into the Sea of Galilee. "His own" drew it to shore. "His own" were the poor of this world. His own, His very own, His choicest and His best friends and followers, were just such! They were unlearned and ignorant men, yet they were "His own." So the Apostle says, "God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confuse the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confuse the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, has God chosen, yes, and things which are not, to bring to nothing things that are: that no flesh should glory in His Presence."

Oh, the wondrous sovereignty of Divine Love! I trust that there are some here, tonight, who Christ calls "His own" although they do not yet know that it is so! Bought with His blood and they are not aware of it? Chosen before the foundation of the world and yet they have not discovered it? May the Lord reveal to you His everlasting love and help you to make *your calling and election sure from this time forth!*

I have said as much as time will permit me to say about our Lord's dear associates, the disciples, whom He calls "His own."

II. Now, in the second place, you have a full description of *how Jesus had felt towards them* up to that moment—"Having loved His own."

How much can be done with one stroke of a pen! I have sometimes marveled to see how much a great artist can do by a single touch. His work has seemed unfinished, but he has come with a brush and just thrown in a few strokes—and the canvas that was dead has seemed to live before you! Now, John is a great master of the art of word-painting and he gives you the whole history of Christ's dealings with His disciples in these few words, "Having loved His own."

For, remember, *that is how He began with them.* They were poor and inconsiderable, but He loved them, and He showed His love to them by calling them to be His disciples. That love worked upon their hearts and made them obedient to His call. He began by loving them. David says, "You have loved my soul out of the pit." I do not know a more beautiful description of conversion and salvation. The love of God loves us up out of the pit and loves us to Christ. Thus Christ loved His people from the beginning and proved His love by drawing them to Himself—and the cords He used to draw them were the bands of His love.

Having begun by loving them, *He went on teaching them,* but all His teaching was love, for they were such dull scholars, quick to forget, yet slow to remember, that He had to keep on loving them or He would have been tired of trying to train them! "Have I been so long time with you and yet have you not known Me, Philip?" There is a mass of love in that ques-

tion! So was it when He was dealing with Thomas. In His tenderness He submitted without question to the doubting disciple's test. He said to Him, "Reach here your finger, and behold My hands; and reach here your hand, and thrust it into My side: and be not faithless, but believing." All His teaching was uttered with lips of love—and all His instruction consisted of lessons of love.

The Lord kept on loving His disciples although *their natures were amazingly imperfect*, all of them! There was not one among them who had what one would call an all-round nature, unless it was John, and even he was nasty in temper and would have called down fire from Heaven upon certain Samaritans. Yet the Master kept on loving them. He had made up His mind to love them and He never ceased to love them as long as He was with them! And He has gone on loving them ever since. At the time when He was about to depart out of the world unto the Father, they still needed to have their feet washed, and He loved them enough to render even that lowly service for them. All the infirmities, the imperfections, the carnality, the dullness and the slowness of their nature which He saw much more clearly than they saw it, did not make Him cease to love them—"Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end."

Strangest of all, when He opened His eyes and looked into the future and saw that *they would soon be cowardly and faithless*, He loved them all the same! He said, "All you shall be offended because of Me this night," and so it came to pass, for, "they all forsook Him, and fled." He told Peter that he would deny Him three times and so he did. Yet it was true all the while, "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." That sums it all up! There was never a touch of hate, there was never any anger, there was never any weariness, there was never any lukewarmness in Jesus towards His disciples—it was always just this—"Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." That is the love of Christ to His chosen and that is the love of Christ to me! I do not think that those gentlemen who have written a, "Life of Christ," could write this part of it. This is a portion of the life of Christ that needs not so much to be written as to be *known in the heart and in the soul*.

How have *you* found Christ, my Brothers and Sisters? If you have known Him, what has been His conduct towards you? You answer, "Love." As for me, I never knew, I never heard of such a Lover as He is! I never dreamed that He could be such as He has been to me! Oh, how I must have vexed and grieved His gracious heart and caused Him pain! But never, never, never *once* have I had anything from Him but love! "Having loved His own." That expression sums up the whole of Christ's conduct towards His chosen people! It is like a miniature painting—it has every feature of His character. There it is, all of it. You may apply a microscope and look as long as you like, but you will find that it is all there. "Having loved His own."

So then, you have seen your Lord associated with His disciples up to this point, and you have learned that He has manifested nothing else towards them but love.

III. But now, thirdly, WHAT A CHANGE WAS COMING OVER HIM! “Jesus knew that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father.”

Dear Friends, it was an amazing change that was coming over Him, for, in the first place, though it is so tenderly described here, *yet He knew that He had to die*. You do not wish me, I am sure, to tell you of all the surroundings of the Cross, of all the bitterness and woe that culminated in that cup of mingled wormwood and gall. Your heart can never fail to remember the wounds He endured when suffering for you.

Well, now, if you and I had to bear all that Christ had to suffer, it would engross our thoughts—we should not be able to think of anything else but that—but it did not engross our Lord’s thoughts! He still thought of “His own.” He loved “His own” unto the end! He went on with that same calm, solid, resolute love which He had shown towards them before. He set His face like a flint to go up to Jerusalem, but there was no flint in His *heart*—it had all gone into His face. He had undertaken the work of His people’s redemption and He must go through with it! Death, itself, could not change His love. You know the love of which Solomon sings at the end of the Canticles—“Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the deeds drown it.” And he says, “Love is strong as death.” Truly, in our Lord’s case, love was *stronger* than that death of deaths which He deigned to die that He might make us live! Now is His great “hour” of trial, but He is true to “His own” even in this dread hour. He is about to die, but He still loves “His own.”

Dear Brothers and Sisters, that is not all! Jesus was about to depart out of this world, *to go away from His disciples*. After a while He would see them no more with His bodily eyes—neither would they hear His voice leading them and teaching them. It may be true that, “Absence makes the heart grow fonder,” but, alas, we have met with many instances in which mortal men have quite forgotten those whom they professed to love when once the sea has rolled between them. Many hearts are dependent upon eyesight. It is a pity that it should be so, but it was not so with Christ. All the distance between earth and Heaven was soon to intervene between our Lord and His disciples, but still He *loved* them and He *loves* them still. No distance makes any difference between Jesus and “His own.” “Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.”

Yet, remember, that the Savior was about to undergo a very amazing change in another respect—*He was going to the Father*. Have any of us the slightest idea of what He is, now, with the Father? I will not attempt to describe the supernal splendors of His Throne, the glories which His redeemed delight to lay at His feet, the songs which angels and cherubim and seraphim continually present before Him—but this verse we love and we can truly sing—

**“Now though He reigns exalted high,
His love is still as great;
Well He remembers Calvary,
Nor lets His saints forget.”**

I cannot describe these wonderful changes of our Lord, from life to death, from death to resurrection, from resurrection to ascension, from

ascension to the glories of His Father's Throne. Would all these changes make any alteration in Him? No, none of them! "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end."

I shall try to speak of that, presently, and that will be my last point. But before we come to that theme, we must see what would be the condition of "His own." I have shown you what would be Christ's condition, and the change that would take place in Him.

IV. Now, fourthly, WHAT WOULD BE THEIR CONDITION?

Why, they would remain where they were—"His own which were in the world." To me, there seems to be a great abyss of meaning in that expression, "in the world." Some of you know more about what this means than others of us do. The Church of God in London is nothing but a camp in the midst of heathendom. The sooner we believe that terrible truth the better, because it is really so—and the Church of God in the world is nothing but a traveling tent in the midst of a world that lies in the Wicked One. We are "in the world." Now, some of you know what it is to be "in the world." When you get home, tonight, there will be little but oaths and cursing. Some of God's dear people, whom He loves with all His heart, are still in the *world*, seeing that which vexes them as much as Lot was vexed by the filthy conversation of the men of Sodom. "In the world!" Now, those whom Christ was about to leave in the world would be left in the midst of all the abounding wickedness, idolatry and blasphemy in about as ungodly an age as man could live in—yet He left them "in the world."

Being in the world, you see, they began to be *persecuted*. They were stoned. They were shut up in prison. They were dragged into the amphitheatre to be torn apart by lions. But "He loved them unto the end." You know how that blessed eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans concludes. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For your sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

In addition to being persecuted, they were liable to be severely *tempted*. All kinds of bribes were put in their way and all sorts of pleasures and lusts were presented to them. They were men of like passions with ourselves, so those temptations were very real to them. They were "in the world" and Jesus had gone to Heaven. They were "in the world," also, in *affliction*. Ah, dear Friends, we find that we, too, are, in this sense, "in the world." However closely we live to God, we have pains of body and we have to grieve as we see our dear relatives suffering. We have losses and crosses because we are "in the world." God's curse still rests upon the earth—"Thorns, also, and thistles shall it bring forth to you." You may do what you like with it, but you cannot make it stop

bringing forth thorns and thistles! They will continue to spring up as surely as the dust will return to the dust from whence it was taken.

In the world, of course, they were in *great labor*, for they were left in the world to seek to convert it, or, at least, to call out the redeemed of Christ from among men by preaching the Gospel to every creature. And, being “in the world,” they were surrounded by *much weakness*—weakness of body and weakness of mind—always needing to call to their Lord for help. He was up there upon the Throne of God and they were down in the dungeon! He was up there, clothed with all power, and they were down here in all weakness!

V. NOW, HOW WILL JESUS BEHAVE TOWARDS THEM? That is our last question. We began with it and we will finish with it. Well, here is the answer. “Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.” And we may rest sure that He always will love them and that He will never change from the tenderness of His heart towards them! “He loved them unto the end.” What does that sentence mean?

I think it means, first, that *He loved them right on*. The Hebrew, “His mercy endures forever,” might be rendered, “His mercy endures to the end.” That is, to the *end which has no end*, for there never will be an end to His mercy—and His love is continual, everlasting love, *it will never come to an end!* Christ, Himself, in His Passion, may be said to have come to an end—and He loved His disciples until His death—but it means that He loves them without any end, forever and ever. Having loved them while He was in the world with them, He loves them right straight on and always will love them when time shall be no more!

I am sure, dear Friends, you believe in the everlasting love of God towards His people. If any of you do not, you are robbing yourselves of one of the greatest comforts that are to be found in the Scriptures. If the Lord can change, where are we? Everything has gone when His everlasting love is gone! I delight to believe that the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed but His kindness shall not depart from us, neither shall the Covenant of His peace be removed—it stands fast forever and ever!

But the sentence may be rendered, “*He loved them to perfection.*” “Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them to perfection.” He could not love them any better—that was impossible. He could not love them more wisely—that would be out of the question. He could not love them more intensely—that is not supposable. Whatever the perfection of love may be—that is what Jesus Christ bestows upon His people! There is no such love in all the world as the love of Christ to His people! And if you were to gather up all the loves that ever were, of men and women, of mothers and children, of friends and friends, and heap up all these loves, the love of Jesus is of superior quality to them all, for none of those loves are absolutely perfect, but Jesus Christ loves to perfection!

Those of you who have the Revised Version will find in the margin the following words, “*to the uttermost.*” “Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them to the uttermost”—to that which is uttermost, farthest and most distant—or, if I turn the word in another way, “He loved them utterly,” unutterably, in such a way that you cannot tell, or conceive, or describe, or imagine how much He loved His people! He

loved His people to the utmost stretch of love! So is it, there is no love like His and, as I said just now, all the loves in the world, compressed into one, would not equal it! “Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them to the uttermost.”

Now, it seems to me that this Truth of God ought to tempt some poor soul to wish to enjoy Christ’s love. “Oh,” says one, “if I did but get *that* love, I would never lose it. He would love me to the uttermost. Oh, if I could but creep in among His people!” The way to discover Christ’s love to you is that you should begin by *trusting* Him, and surely He will help you to do this. He is so true, so good, so able to save unto the uttermost, that if you will come and trust Him, trust Him wholly, trust Him, now, trust Him just as you are—He will save you to the uttermost and show His love to you to the uttermost! I have been preaching what I trust will comfort God’s people, but I wish that some poor soul would come to Christ through it. I believe that is the right way to preach the Gospel.

Have you not noticed, in the story of the Prodigal Son, that the father said, “Bring forth the best robe and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet,” and so on? But he did not go on to say, “Feed him.” Do you notice what he said? It was, “Let *us* eat and be merry.” “Well, but I thought he was thinking about his son.” Yes, and he says, “Let *us* eat.” So, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, let us eat and then sinners will begin to feel their mouths watering and they, also, will want to eat, and to have a share of the feast! This is the only way to make them eat! You can bring a horse to the water, but you cannot make him drink. But you are very likely to do so if you set another horse a-drinking! So, if you and I enjoy the sweetness of the love of Christ, there may be some in the gallery, and some downstairs who will say, “We wish that we knew it, too,” and they will be wanting it! That is the way to make them eat. I pray the Lord, by His Spirit, to lead them to put their trust in this loving Savior, and each one to say—

**“Jesus, lover of my soul,
Let me to Your bosom fly.”**

He *will* let you fly to His bosom! therefore—

“Come, and welcome, sinner, come.”

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: John 13:1-19

Verse 1. *Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.* Our Lord Jesus Christ had a clear foresight of all He had to endure. Future things are happily hidden from *our* eyes. We do not even know the moment when we shall die, nor how it will be. It is well that it is so, but our Lord was able to anticipate His sufferings by knowing all about them—“Jesus knew that His hour was come.” It was all appointed and nothing happens to any of us by accident—chance is banished from the Believer’s creed! There is an appointed “hour” for each one of us and it will come in due season. “Jesus knew that His hour was come, that He should depart out of the world unto the Father.” What a beautiful way of

describing death! Christ's death was certainly a more trying one than ours will be, so that this description may apply to ours as well as to His.

2. *And supper being ended.* I suppose that was the Paschal Supper.

2. *The devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him.* What a horrible purpose for Satan to put into the heart of Judas even in the Presence of Jesus! I hope that the devil will not put any such purpose into your hearts or into mine while we are in this House of Prayer, but no place is sacred from his intrusion, he will come in anywhere. Even where Christ, Himself, is at the head of the table, Judas may be sitting at that same table and Satan may then and there, put into his heart the horrible purpose of betraying his Master.

3, 4. *Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God, and went to God, He arose from supper and laid aside His garments; and took a towel, and girded Himself.* Notice those words, "Jesus knowing...He took a towel, and girded Himself." If He had not known how great He was, there would not have been such condescension in His action, but He knew who He was and what the Father had entrusted to Him—"The Father had given all things into His hands." You might suppose that He would stand up, in a very dignified manner, and put on a purple robe and a golden belt, but, instead of that, He rose from the supper table, laid aside His garments, and took a towel, and girded Himself. He knew that He had come forth from God and that He was going back to God—and He performed this action on the way home to His Father. O dear Brothers and Sisters, if Christ thus stooped, how humble ought we to be! No office should be counted too lowly, no work for His servants should seem to be too humiliating, since Jesus "took a towel and girded Himself."

5. *After that, He poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded.* You see that Jesus does His work well. He omits none of the details of it. He puts Himself in the place of a slave and He performs a slave's duty very thoroughly. I am afraid that, sometimes, we do our work for Him in a slovenly way, but Jesus was not satisfied with simply washing His disciples' feet—He must do the wiping, too. I bless Him that He did so, for this is a picture of what He has done for *us*. He has washed our feet and He often repeats the gracious act. The feet that Jesus washes, He will wipe—He has not begun His task without intending to finish it. I know that He will complete in my soul the work which He has undertaken, for He fulfilled, on the feet of His disciples, the office He had undertaken—"He began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded."

6. *Then came He to Simon Peter: and Peter said to Him, Lord, do You wash my feet?* I do not wonder that he said that. Would not you have been equally astonished had you been there? Peter had some faint idea who Christ was. He had confessed Him in such a way that Jesus had said to Him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona: for flesh and blood has not revealed it unto you, but My Father which is in Heaven." Knowing so much about Christ, Peter marveled at His action. He felt so astonished that He asked, "Do You wash *my* feet?"

7. *Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do, you know not, now; but you shall know hereafter.* I have heard this saying of our Lord applied to affliction and it is very true that what Jesus does, we do not, at present, understand, but we shall know, by-and-by. I do not think, however, that this sentence is very applicable that way, for there was no affliction in having his feet washed. The fact is, Brothers and Sisters, though it is a very humbling thing to say, we do not understand that which Jesus does—even His simplest actions are a mystery to us. We have never gone into the very depths of them so as to comprehend them. “What I do—even though I only wash your feet, plain and simple operation as that is—you know not now; but you shall know hereafter.” Our *knowing* times, dear Friends, are *to come*. We need not be so very anxious to know at present—this is the time of *love*. I would forego the filling of my head, for a while, if I could have my *heart* full, but, alas, we are generally so busy trying to attain merely *head* knowledge! My most intense longing is for a growing *heart*, a heart that truly loves the Savior. That is the way for the head to learn, for knowledge that comes by the way of the heart, and so enters the head, is the best of knowledge! Jesus said to Peter, “What I do, you know not, now; but you shall know hereafter.”

8. *Peter said to Him, You shall never wash my feet.* That is just like Peter. If John had not told us who it was that said this, we would have known that it was Peter! He was always in such a hurry and he spoke so quickly that he made many mistakes, yet he was always so honest and so true, that his Master forgave his faults and helped him to correct them.

8. *He answered him, If I wash you not, you have no part with Me.* If Christ does not cleanse us, we do not belong to Him. If He does not, day by day, exercise a purifying influence over us, we are not His.

9. *Simon Peter said to Him, Lord, not my feet, only, but also my hands and my head.* How that pendulum swings to and fro! It went this way just now—“You shall never wash my feet.” Now it goes right away to the other extreme—“Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.” Go more gently, Peter, be more quiet! Why do you go so far in one direction and then rush off so far in another way? Your Master knows better than you know what is right for you.

10. *Jesus said to him, He that is washed, needs only to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and you are clean, but not all.* Dear Friends, when we believe in Christ, we are washed in the Fountain filled with blood, and we are clean. But this world is such a sinful place that we cannot walk through it for even a day without some of its mire and dust clinging to us. Besides, God’s lilies are so pure that they are hardly fit to bloom in such a defiling atmosphere. Oh, how we need that the dew should wash the lily when the night comes! How greatly we need to have the foot-washing administered to us every day! We need not repeat the first great washing—the bath by which our sins were cleansed—when that was done, it was done once and for all. Our sin was pardoned as before a Judge, but we need it to be taken away as before our Father, for we are now under His loving discipline!

Christ further said to His disciples, “You are clean, but not all.” Does He say that to us at this time? “You are clean, but not all.” Where sits the man, in this House of Prayer, who is not clean? The sinner who has not yet been washed by Jesus Christ? Where sits the woman who is not clean? The Lord have mercy upon you, dear Friends! You know, that in the olden days, they put a red cross on the door of the house where the plague was. We cannot put a cross upon you, but I pray you to consider yourselves as marked men and marked women in the sight of God. And I pray the Lord to take that mark away by causing you to be washed, that you may be clean every whit. How quickly He can wash the foulest sinners! He that believes in Jesus is washed in the precious blood and he is clean. God cleanse us all for His great name’s sake!

11-15. *For He knew who should betray Him; therefore said He, You are not all clean. So after He had washed their feet, and had taken His garments, and was set down again, He said unto them, know you what I have done to you? You call me Master and Lord: and you say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; you, also, ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.* Christ’s actions are the pattern for us to imitate! Oh, that we followed them more closely!

16. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him.* Sometimes we think that we are a deal too great to wash anybody’s feet—we would like to see a person dare propose it to us, such big people as we are! If we talk like that, there is great need that we should be taken down. That would be the true way to rise in the likeness of Jesus! Oh, that we were lowlier in humility! We should be higher in Grace if we were.

17. *If you know these things, happy are you if you do them.* Peter needed to know them. Jesus would have us do them.

18. *I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen.* Christ has a chosen people, though some will not believe it. Yet it is so, for He says, “I know whom I have chosen.”

18, 19. *But that the Scripture may be fulfilled, he that eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me. Now I tell you before it comes, that when it has come to pass, you may believe that I am He.* “That I am.” So, you see, even the great trouble of the early Church—the betrayal by Judas—was used by Christ for the strengthening of His disciples’ faith. He foretold that it would be *as it came to pass*. So, dear Friends, in these latter days, many forsake the Gospel, but Jesus told us that it would be so. He taught His servants to write that there would be a falling away and that in these last days there would be scoffers—and as we read the prophecies and compare them with the fulfillment—even the doleful fact, itself, confirms our faith in our Lord! God bless to us this brief reading of His own Word! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—731, 815, 377.

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THE FAITHFULNESS OF JESUS

NO. 810

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 10, 1868,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Having loved His own which were in the world,
He loved them unto the end.”
John 13:1.*

We shall consider these words first in their evident relation to the Apostles and those who were the companions of Jesus during His sojourn on earth. Afterwards we shall take them in their broader significance as relating to all the Lord's own whom He loves and will love even to the end. “Having loved His own.” Those four words are a brief but complete summary of the Savior's conduct towards His disciples. He *always* loved them. There was never a single action or word which was contrary to the rule of love. He loved them with a love of *pity* when He saw them in their lost estate, and He called them out of it to be His disciples. Touched with a feeling of their infirmities He loved them with a tender and prudent affection and sought to train and educate them so that after His departure they might be good soldiers of His Cross.

He loved them with a love of *complacency* as He walked and talked with them and found solace in their company. Even when He rebuked them He loved them. He subjected them to many trials—for His sake they renounced all that they had. They shared His daily cross-bearing and hourly persecution, but love reigned supreme and undiminished in it all. On Tabor or in Gethsemane He loved His own. Alone, or in the crowd, His heart was true to them. In life and in death His affection failed not. He “loved His own which were in the world.” It is a mullum in parvo, a condensed life of Christ, a miniature of Jesus the Lover of Souls.

As you read the wonderful story of the four Evangelists, you see how true it is that Jesus loved His own—let me cast in by way of interjection this sentence—that when you come to read your own life's story in the light of the New Jerusalem, you will find it to be true, also, concerning your Lord and yourself. If you are, indeed, the Lord's own, He at all times deals lovingly with you and never acts in unkindness or wrath—

*“He may chasten and correct,
But He never can neglect.
He May in faithfulness reprove,
But He never can cease to love.”*

Our Savior's faithfulness towards the chosen band whom He had elected into His fellowship was most remarkable. He had selected persons who must have been but poor companions for one of so gigantic a mind and so large a heart. He must have been greatly shocked at their worldliness. They groveled in the dust when He mounted to the stars. He was

thinking of the baptism with which He was to be baptized, and He was straitened until it was accomplished—but they were disputing which among them should be the greatest! He was ready to deny Himself that He might do His Father's will, and meanwhile they were asking to sit on His right hand and on His left hand in His kingdom! They often misunderstood Him because of the carnality of their minds. And when He warned them of an evil leaven they thought of the loaves which they had forgotten.

Earthworms are miserable company for angels. Moles are but unhappy company for eagles. Yet *love* made our great Master endure the society of His ignorant and carnal followers. They were but babes in Christ and possessed but slight illumination, and yet for all that He who knew all things and is the Wisdom of God, condescended to call them His mother, and sister, and brother. Worse than the fact of their natural worldliness, perhaps, was the apparent impossibility of lifting them out of that low condition! For though never man spoke as *He* spoke, how little did they understand! And though He took them aside and said to them, "Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God," yet after many and plain teachings He was compelled to say to one of the best of them, "Have I been so long a time with you, and yet have you not known Me, Philip?"

They were dull scholars. There is no teacher here who could have had patience with such heavy intellects, but our Lord and Master's love remained evermore at flood tide, notwithstanding their incorrigible stupidity! His love was stronger than their unbelief and ignorance. My Brothers and Sisters, when we love a person we expect to have some little sympathy from him in the great design and aim of our life. I suppose it would be difficult to maintain any deep affection towards persons who had no sort of communion with us in our all-absorbing passion. And yet it was so that our Lord loved disciples who could not be brought to enter at all into the spirit which ruled and governed Him.

They would have taken Him and forced upon Him a crown, while He sought only for a Cross. They imagined and desired for Him the worldly splendor of a terrestrial throne—but He foresaw the reality of glory in sweat of blood and a cruel death. Our Lord was all for self-denial, employing Himself and acting as the Servant of servants. They could not comprehend the rule of self-sacrifice which governed His actions, nor could they see what He aimed at. Had they dared, they would rather have thwarted than assisted Him in His self-sacrificing mission.

They were fools and slow of heart to understand, even though He plainly told them of His decease. When He set His face steadfastly towards Jerusalem, humanly speaking He needed friends to have aided and abetted Him in His high resolve, but He found no help in *them*. When, in that dark, that dreadful night He bowed in prayer and sweat the bloody sweat, He went backward and forward three times, as if seeking a little sympathy from men so dearly loved—but He had to complain of them, "What? Could you not watch with Me one hour?"

Still, having loved them, neither their worldliness nor their stupidity nor their lack of sympathy with Him could prevent Him from loving them

unto the end. Many waters could not quench His love, neither could the floods drown it. The Redeemer's love was made to endure even sterner strains than these. On one or two occasions certain of them were even guilty of impertinence. It was no small trial to the Savior's affection when Peter took Him and began to rebuke Him. Peter rebuking his Master! Surely your Lord will have done with you, you son of Jonas! The Lord turned him about and said, "Get you behind Me, Satan!" But after using that strong expression to rebuke a temptation which was evidently Satanic, His affection to Peter remained unabated.

That was a stern trial, too, when at a later period than our text, "all the disciples forsook Him and fled"—when not even the loving John remained constant to his Master in the hour of betrayal—when one, the boldest of them, with oaths and cursing said, "I know not the Man." Carrying the text beyond its original position we may say that over the head of all infirmities, ignorance, selfishness, desertion, and denial, Jesus Christ, who had loved His own that were in the world, loved them to the end. It was not possible for them, with all their follies, failings, and sins, to break through the magic circle of His affection—He had hedged them in once and for all—He had bound them to Himself with bonds firmer than brass and stronger than triple steel. And neither the temptations of Hell, nor the suggestions of their own corruptions could tear them from His heart.

The attachments of Jesus were abiding—fickleness and instability could never be charged to Him. Others love for a little while and then grow cold. They *profess* eternal attachment and yet forsake. They admire and esteem us till a slight misunderstanding snaps every bond of friendship. But our Lord was the mirror of constancy, the pattern of fidelity, the paragon of unchanging love. As Jonathan clave to David, even so did Jesus cleave to His people. The proofs which our Lord gave of His love to His people were very many and for a little while we will ponder them. They will all go to prove that He loved His people, even to perfection, as the text may be read.

Observe how our Master, having chosen to Himself a people, proved His love by His continual companionship. He sought no other company than theirs among the sons of men. There were minds far deeper in philosophic lore but He communed not with them. There were the great and mighty of this world but our Savior did not court them—He was content to dwell among His own people. He had made His choice and to that choice He kept—fishermen and peasants were His bosom friends!

You would not expect a master to find rest in the society of his scholars. You do not expect men of mind and mark to affectionately consort with those who are far beneath them in attainments. And yet here was love, that Jesus, passing by angels, and kings, and sages chose for His companions unlettered men and women. Those fishermen of Galilee were His companions at all times—and only when He withdrew Himself into the silent mount, and the shadows of midnight did He remove the link of companionship from them—and then only that He might make *intercession for them* with the Eternal God.

Yes, it was a deep proof of the unlimited love of Jesus! A sure sign of its going to the end and verge of possibilities that He abode so long in affectionate fellowship with so poor, so illiterate, so earthbound a company of men! He proved His love by being always ready to instruct them on all points. His teachings were very simple because He loved them so well. The Epistles of Paul, are, in some respects, far deeper than the teachings of Jesus. For instance, Paul more explicitly lays down the doctrine of *justification by faith*, of *total depravity*, of *election*, and kindred Truths of God. And why?

Observe the humility and loving kindness of the Master. He knew infinitely more than Paul, for He is essential Wisdom, but He was pleased, because their weak eyes were not able at that time to bear the full blaze of light, to leave the fuller manifestation of Gospel mysteries until the Spirit had been given. And then He raised up His servant Paul to write, under His guidance, the deep things of God. His love to His disciples is shown as clearly in what He kept back from them as in what He revealed to them. How loving it was on the part of the great Teacher to dwell so often upon the simpler truths and the more practical precepts. It was as though a senior professor of the university should sit down in the family and teach boys and girls their alphabet day after day, or spend all his time in teaching village urchins simple addition and subtraction.

A man who is thoroughly acquainted with the highest branches of knowledge finds it a terrible drudgery to go over and over the first principles—and yet our Lord did this very thing and made no trouble of it. He, by the space of three years, taught the simplicities of the faith and thus indisputably proved His condescending love to perfection towards His own which were in the world. How willing He always was, all His life long, to render any kind of assistance to His followers! Whenever they were in trouble He was their willing and able Friend. When the sea roared and was tempestuous, and He slept for awhile hard by the helm, they had but to wake Him and He rebuked the sea and straightaway the winds and waves were still.

When Peter's wife's mother was sick of a fever, He did but enter the house and speak the word and the fever left her. And when one of His dearest friends had passed beyond ordinary bounds of hope, and was not only dead, but had been buried four days, yet He loved even to that far-reaching end and proved that He was the Resurrection and the Life by effectually crying, "Lazarus, come forth." Everywhere, at all times, He was at the beck and call of His disciples whom He truly called His friends. They might freely express their desires—if they were right, they were granted—and if they were wrong, they were reproved with such gentleness that a refusal was better than a grant.

The Master displayed His love to His disciples throughout His life by the way in which He sought to comfort them when He foresaw that they would be cast down. Especially was this true at the period before His passion—when one would have thought *He* might have sought comfort, He was busy *distributing* it! Those choice words which have flown like a dove

into many a mourner's window bearing the olive branch of peace were the fond utterances of a thoughtful heart. "Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions."

Many such bottles of oil and wine did He apply to the wounds of His disciples. He would not have them suffer any kind of spiritual turmoil. "In the world you shall have tribulation," said He, "but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." His peace He distributed right liberally and left it as His last legacy—"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you. Not as the world gives give I unto you." In the private life of every one of those chosen men there must have been incidents of matchless tenderness. But they are not recorded because if all were written which Jesus did, even the world itself would not contain the things which should have been written! Enough is written to let us see that no tenderness of mothers, or care of friends could match the ever generous forethought of the Friend of man.

That He loved His disciples to the end is seen further in the fact that He constantly pleaded for them when He poured out His strong cries and tears. He watched them with an eye that was quick to perceive their perils and before they knew their danger He had already provided a refuge from it. Before the poison was injected by the old serpent, the antidote was at hand. "Satan has desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat." The temptation had not reached the stage of actual fact—it was only a *desire* on Satan's part—but the Lord outran the enemy with His intercessions and so saved poor Peter from the sieve.

The High Priest, chosen from among men, pleaded in His midnight wrestling for all His people, mentioning their names one by one before the Majesty of Heaven, and so averting evils which otherwise had destroyed them. Surely those sacred pleadings brought down upon the Apostolic band those matchless blessings which qualified them in after years to be the spiritual fathers of the Church and the heralds of salvation to nations! Who doubts the love of such an Intercessor? The text affords us one other illustration, for Jesus took the towel and washed His disciples' feet. This is, no doubt, marked out by our text as a clear proof of boundless love, in that He humbled Himself, made Himself of no reputation, took upon Him the form of a servant and fulfilled a menial's office.

But yet, Beloved, all these things put together do not amount to so overwhelming a proof of abounding love as the fact that, after having lived out His love, the Lord Jesus then *died* to exhibit it yet more. From Gethsemane to Golgotha, along the blood-sprinkled road, you see proof that having loved His own He loved them to the end. Not all the pains of death could shake His firm affection to His own. They may bind His hands but His heart is not restrained from love! They may scourge Him, but they cannot drive out of Him His affection to His beloved! They may slanderously revile Him, but they cannot compel Him to say a word against His people! They may nail Him to the accursed tree and they may bid Him come down from the Cross and they will believe on Him, but they cannot

tempt Him to forsake His work of love! He must press forward for His people's sake until He can say, "It is finished."

Oh, that tragedy upon Calvary was a going to the end, indeed, when, having yielded up comfort, reputation and liberty, He gave up even His last rag of covering and then resigned His breath. Standing, as it were, at the world's end, at the grave's mouth, and at Hell's door—the Cross of Jesus reveals love to the utmost end and is a grand display of the immutability and invincibility of the affection of the heart of Jesus! I need not detain you longer on the text as it related to His people when He was here in the flesh, for I shall need your earnest attention for but a short time while, by the power of the Holy Spirit, I would set forth this precious Truth of God as it relates to *all* His people, to *all* His saints.

We read that our Lord, "Came unto His own, and His own received Him not." And here, in this case we read, "Having loved His own." Now, the words are different in the original. In the first case it is a neuter noun—"He came to His own (things). But in this instance it is a masculine—"Having loved His own (persons)." Now, a man may part with his own *things*—He may sell his own house, or cattle, or merchandise. He may give away his own money. But a man cannot part with his own when it relates to *persons*. He cannot part with his own child, his own wife, his own father or his own brother.

We hold indisputable property in our own relatives—this is real property with an emphasis—our own freehold, our entail, our perpetual possession. The Lord Jesus has just such a property in His own people—they are His brethren, forever near of kin to Him. Now of these "own" persons we read that our Lord, "Having loved His own that were in the world, loved them to the end." The text opens three windows for us, with three outlooks upon the past, the present, and the future.

1. And first, as to the past. Let us with holy contemplation review it. He has loved His own people from of old. A most blessed fact! He has loved them *eternally*. There never was a time when He did *not* love them! His love is positively *dateless*! Before the heavens and earth were made, and the stars were first touched with the torch of flame Jesus had received His people from His Father and written their names on His heart. This everlasting love has a specialty about it. Our Lord has a general love of *benevolence* towards all His creatures, for "God is love." But He has a special place in His heart for His own peculiar ones.

There is a discriminating and distinguishing power about that love that is spoken of in the text, for it is *not* said, "Having loved *all men*," but, "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." Jesus, before all the world, set the crown of His peculiar love upon those whom He foreordained unto His glory. This love of His is infinite! Jesus does not love His own with a *little* of His love nor regard them with some small degree of affection, but He says, "As the Father has loved Me, even so have I loved you," and the Father's love to the Son is inconceivably great since they are One in essence, ineffably One.

The Father cannot but love the Son infinitely, neither does the Son ever love His people less than with all His heart. It is an affection which no angelic mind could measure! It is inconceivable, unknown! Jesus loved His people with a foresight of what they would be. Love is blind, they say, but not the Savior's love. He knew that "His own" would fall in Adam. He knew that as they lived personally each one would become a sinner. He understood that they would be hard to reclaim and difficult to retain. Even after they had been reclaimed He saw every sin that they would commit in the glass of the future, for from His prescient eye nothing can be hidden. And yet He loved His own over the head of all their sins, and their revolts and their shortcomings!

Hence we see that He bears towards them an affection which cannot be changed, for nothing can occur which He has not foreseen. There is nothing, therefore, which has not already been taken into calculation in the matter of His choice. No new circumstance can shed unexpected light upon the case. No startling and unforeseen event can become an argument for a change. Hence Jesus' love is full of immutability. There are no ups and downs in the love of Christ towards His people! On their highest Tabors He loves them, but equally as well in their Gethsemanes. When they wander like lost sheep His great love goes after them. And when they come back with broken hearts His great love restores them. By day, by night, in sickness, in sorrow, in poverty, in famine, in prison, in the hour of death that silver stream of love ripples at their side, never stayed, never diminished! Forever is the sea of Divine Grace at its flood! This sun never sets! This fountain never pauses!

The love of Christ is more than a passion. You and I are moved by passion but the Son of God is not. As Man, He may be, but as God He has no passion. Hence the love of Christ towards His people is a settled principle—self-created and self-sustained—not subject to changes like terrestrial things but firm and stable, built on a rock. Glory be to God, there was something in the very Nature of Christ which made Him love us, something in the very Character of that blessed Divine Person which constrained Him to manifest affection towards His people! It was nothing from outside—that mighty love was born from within. Here again we come back to the same precious Truth of God, that His love cannot be destroyed because the source from which it comes is eternal and is found within Himself!

The love of Jesus Christ in the past has been attested by many deeds of love. That He loved us He proved by the fact that He stood as Surety for us when the Covenant was made, and entered into stipulations on our behalf that He would fulfill the broken Law and that He would offer satisfaction to the justice of God which had been provoked. In the fullness of time He took upon Himself our nature. What higher proof of love than that? In that Nature He lived a life of blameless service. In that Nature He died a death in which all the weight of Divine vengeance for sin was compressed into a few hours of bodily and spiritual anguish.

Now that He lives exalted in the highest Heaven, He is still His people's Servant, interceding for them, representing them at the right hand of God, preparing a place for them, And by His mighty Spirit He is fetching them out from the mass of mankind and preparing them for the place which He has prepared for them in Glory. All these proofs show indeed, my dear Brothers and Sisters, how in the past Jesus Christ has loved His people! Grasp it, I pray you! Now, for a minute, grasp it! Realize it by putting out the hand of individual faith and saying, "He loved me in those hoary ages. He loved me before time began, and days and years were first mapped out! He loved *me* before He had made a star or given light to the sun! He loved *me*, yes, *me* in particular, *me* with a specialty, *me* as much as any of those on whom His heart is set."

Do you believe in Him this morning? Say, poor Sinner, do you cast yourself upon Him and take Him to be your only trust and confidence? Then you may take the text with full assurance as being yours—having loved His own, He loved *you*, even you! I always feel, when I speak upon this topic, as if I would rather sit down and be silent than speak because it is not so much a theme for *speech* as for *meditation*. Expressive silence must sing this hymn in your soul's ears. Jesus did not merely think of you, and pity you, but *loved* you and *betrothed* you unto Himself forever! That an angel should love an ant would be a remarkable stoop, but that Jesus should love *you* is a miracle of miracles, a wonder which never could be excelled! Let each one adoringly bless the name of the Lord who does great wonders.

2. The second window looks out upon the *present*. The text says, "Having loved His own which were in the world." It does not seem to strike one as an extraordinary thing that Jesus should love His own who are in *Heaven*. See them yonder, white robed and fair to look upon! They all have melodious voices! They are all without fault before the Eternal Throne! Well may Jesus love *them*, for there is much beauty in them! His Grace has made them lovable. But to love His own which are in the *world* is quite another and stranger thing. And yet it is the blessed fact to which the text calls attention.

May you now by faith feed upon it—Jesus Christ loved those who were in the world when He was here, and He now loves His own who are in the world today. You are in the world, and, as you all too surely feel, temptations have shown you that you are not yet in Heaven! You have sighed for a lodge in some vast wilderness that you might cease from the troubles of earth, for what with the evil language which you hear, the corrupt practices which come under your notice, the temptations that are thrust in your own way and the persecutions and the cruel mocking with which you are tried, you feel that this is a wretched world to live in!

Now mark, Jesus loves His own who are in the world. You working men that have to work with so many bad fellows. You tradesmen who have to go in among many who shock you. You good work girls who meet with so many tempters—if you are His, He loves His own which are in the world. "Behold," He says, "I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves." Now,

if the Good Shepherd sends forth the sheep into the midst of wolves, you may rest assured that He takes not His eyes off any sheep. He will have a peculiar regard, a watchful affection for those who are exposed to peculiar perils through the sinfulness of the generation among whom they dwell. He loves His own which are in the world.

“Oh!” says one, “I would not mind if it were only temptations, and trials, and persecutions, but oh, I find I am in the world by the fact that I sin myself! If I could but keep my own nature clean all would be well. But, alas, I fall! My angry temper betrays me. Proud thoughts are indulged, vanities lodge with me. I had to come groaning up to the House of God this morning and feel half ashamed to sit with the Lord’s people, for I am less than the least of them all.” This is the result of your being in the world, for so long as you are in this world you will have to wrestle hard with the old nature and its inbred sins.

Well, but Jesus loves His own which are in the world. He sees your imperfection. He knows what you have to struggle with. He understands well enough the uprisings of your nature and He loves you notwithstanding all. “Ah!” says another, “I have come here today burdened with a very heavy trouble. The partner of my life is sick at home and near to death.” “Alas!” cries another, “My dear child is dying and I found it hard to tear myself away from the bedside.” “Worse still,” moans another, “I have a living cross to carry—one of my sons is breaking my heart.” “Ah!” exclaims a fourth, “I have a bill to meet tomorrow and I do not know how it will be done! I fear I shall be ruined.”

All these things go to show that we are yet in the world of sorrow. As the sparks fly upward, so were we born to trouble—why do we count it a strange thing? But Jesus loves His own which are in this dolorous world—this is the balm of our griefs—and I call upon you to hold to it and not let the devil delude you into the idea that the Lord does not love you because affliction happens to you as it does to other men. Of course it must so happen so long as you are in the world! How can you expect exemption? Would you have a glass case made for you to keep you snug away from all the frosts and winds of this world? Would you have your heavenly Father indulge you with all the sweet things of this life and spoil you for the life to come?

Would you strike the root in this world and never be transplanted to the heavenly Eden? Do you wish to have your rest and portion in *this* life? Oh no! You should not wish for that! Well, then, take what God sends you. Receive evil as well as good from Jehovah’s hand, as Job did. But never let it be the thought of your heart that Jesus does not love you because you are subjected to evils which are necessary to the place in which, for wise reasons, He suffers you for a little to remain! He prizes His gold as much while it is in the furnace as when it is drawn forth. Believe in His love now! Do as Rutherford did—he tells us that when banished by his enemies and shut up, as it were, in the world’s dark cellar, he began to feel about him for the wine bottles (for God keeps His choice wines in

the vaults of sorrow), and he soon found the wine of heavenly consolation—wines on the lees, well refined—and drank freely and was refreshed.

You do the same! When you are brought low, believe that there is always a comfort near. When you have much of this world's prosperity you may suspect some *danger* near. After a profound calm comes the terrible tempest. Whenever you are overwhelmed with great trouble you may rest assured that choicest blessings are on the road to you. Jesus Christ will make your consolations to abound in proportion as your tribulations abound! If one scale is heavy, the other shall balance it. While you are in the world you shall be cheered with tokens of the Bridegroom's regard.

3. The third window of the text looks out to the *future*. Having loved His own He "loved them unto the end." He will love His people to the utmost end of their unloveliness. Their sinfulness cannot travel so far but what His love will travel beyond it! Their unbelief, even, shall not be extended to so great a length but what His faithfulness shall still be wider and broader than their unfaithfulness.

He never will suffer one of His chosen to fall into such deadly sin or to go so far in it that He cannot yet outstrip all the strides which his iniquities may have taken. If our sins are mountains, His love shall be like Noah's flood and the tops of the mountains shall be covered—and not so much as a sin shall be found against us. He will love His own to the end, that is, to the end of all their needs.

Deep as their helpless miseries are shall be the extent of His Grace. If their need of pardon abounds, the blood shall be more able to pardon than their sins shall be able to defile. They may need more than this world can hold, and all that Heaven can give, but Jesus will go to the end of all their necessities and even *beyond* them, for He is "able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him." He will love them to the end of their lives—so long as they live here, His love shall be with them. And as there shall be no end of their existence hereafter, He will continue, still, the same fondness to them.

And what if I say He will love them to the end of His own life, if such a thing were allowable? Until the eternal God shall die, His love shall never depart from any of His Beloved. Unless the heart of Jesus shall cease to beat and the eternal Savior shall expire in death, that heart shall never fail in affection towards His people! Nor shall His love ever depart from them. Oh, how charming it is to reflect that to the end Jesus loves, because you cannot raise any objection, or think of any difficulty but what the text meets. If you go ever so far, still it is evident that when you are there you are not beyond the end, and Jesus' love will and must go up to the end—and that is as far as either the sin or the sorrow, the needs or the difficulties of His people can possibly go!

The word translated, "end," in the Greek, frequently signifies to perfection—He loved them to perfection. Oh, the perfection of the love of Jesus Christ! All that His love can do He will do for His people. None shall be able to say that He has omitted anything which was good for them. "No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." Out of all

their needs and necessities there shall not be one left unsupplied, but from the first dawn of Grace in them, even to the last, the perfection of Jesus' love shall be manifested!

What shall we say to all this in closing the sermon this morning? We shall only say this—if Jesus Christ thus loves to the end, how ought we to *persevere* in our love to Him! Sometimes, dear Brethren, we become warmed up and we do a great deal very zealously, but soon, too soon, we grow cold again. It is one of my temptations, and I suppose it is yours, to begin to flag, to cease from one's earnestness, to say, "Well, the thing can go on pretty well without my being quite so fast and zealous."

The true way of living for Christ is to live *always* at the highest possible rate of force. Zealous, not now and then, but *always*, in a good thing for Christ. Sometimes you are very generous, prayerful, and earnest in looking after souls. Why not *always* so? Suppose Jesus were *sometimes* loving to you, *sometimes* thoughtful of you—and imagine that there were intervals of forgetfulness on His part, as there are in your case—what a sorry matter it would be for us! Let us repent that we have been so spasmodic in our affection to Him and let us pray that His Spirit may dwell in us—that He Himself may abide with us that we may be *every day*, as we are sometimes, "always abounding in the work of the Lord," steadfast, unmovable. Beloved, I would have you *always* winning souls, *always* adorning the doctrine of God your Savior by holiness. I would have you *always* much in prayer, *always* in communion. Would God we were so! The constant faithfulness of our Lord should lead us to this!

The second practical remark will be—if these things are so, that Christ loves His own to the end—let us not indulge the wicked thought that He will forsake us. It is impossible that Jesus should leave a soul that hangs upon Him! You may be brought very low, but still underneath you shall be the everlasting arms. You may feel as if you were crushed by the wheels of Providence. Your spirit may sink nearly into despair. But neither "things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus your Lord."

Give not way to the fainting spell of unbelief! Believe in Christ and not in your own *feelings*! Believe in His promise and not in your own frames! What matters it whether it is day or night with you, whether it is winter or summer? Christ Jesus is the same and He has said, "Because I live, you shall live also." Resort to your unfailing Friend! Lean on the arm whose sinews cannot crack! Cast your weight on the shoulders which cannot grow weary! Play the man and be of good courage for the honor of the Gospel—for if the Gospel does not cheer us in time of trouble, what is the good of it? If it will not buoy us up when the floods are out, where is the service of it?

But, my Brothers and Sisters, it will! We are not of those who have to deal with a vacillating Redeemer who casts away His people for their sins and rejects them for their backslidings. We do not have a Savior who loves His own today and hates them tomorrow—a Christ in whom I have no

confidence and in whose existence I do not believe! But we have to deal with One who is the same yesterday, today, and forever—One who never did flinch from His purpose nor turn from His decree! And having to deal with such a One, let us not dishonor His name by wavering, and doubting, and fearing! Cast yourselves on the Lord, you mourners, and rejoice in Him. Lean yourselves upon Him, you burdened ones, and take up your Psalm of praise this morning and go on your way rejoicing!

The last practical remark is—what a misery it must be to be without such a Savior! I scarcely know of any two words more sorrowful than these two—“without Christ”—and yet those words are applicable, I fear, to many in this congregation! You have no heavenly Friend into whose ear to whisper your sorrows. You have no faithful Brother, or mighty Savior to help you in your time of need. Your sins are upon you! Your iniquities are written in the Book of God, engraved as with an iron pen, and written with the point of the diamond. The day of death will soon come and you will have no one to help you over Jordan’s swelling billows. You will stand before the tremendous Throne, where the voice shall be as thunder, and the eyes of the Judge like lightning, and you shall have no Advocate to plead your cause, no Redeemer to take your soul beneath His sheltering wings!

There is still hope, for Jesus is still the Friend of sinners. Come unto Him, you weary! Hasten to Him, you laboring and heavy laden! He shuts out none—He welcomes all who come to Him with broken hearts and downcast eyes, seeking pardon through His precious blood. O that you would come to Him this morning! Before another day shall pass away may you have ended your career of rebellion, and commenced a course of obedience! Then will you sing with us of everlasting love! Then will you rejoice with us in immutable Grace! Then shall our God be *your* God, and our Heaven shall be *your* Heaven. Amen.

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THE LESSONS OF THE FOOT-WASHING

NO. 1499

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 12, 1879,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God, and went to God; He rose from supper, and laid aside His garments; and took a towel, and girded Himself. After that He poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.”
John 13:3-5.

IT seems to me that the true text of this enacted sermon of the foot-washing is to be found in the first verse of the chapter—“Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.” Our Lord washed the feet of His disciples to show that to the last moment of His communion with them He was full of the deepest and truest love to them and was willing to perform the most menial action for their good. Nor was this all, for we may regard that one condescending act as the pledge and type of His daily kindness towards all His own which are in the world. Those deeds of love, which the foot-washing sets forth, are continuous among us and are the sure tokens of His abiding love to us.

Our Lord’s affection for His people is not a transient passion. He loved them before the earth was. He continues to love them and He always will love them, even when these heavens and this earth shall have passed away. In token of the continuance of His love, He has left on record this washing of His disciples’ feet, not because He only did it once, but because it is a type of what He is always doing. Even in His Glory He is caring for His saints with that same condescending love which led Him to wash their feet. And He is acting towards them, spiritually, in the same way.

The love of Christ will assuredly endure all the strain that can ever be put upon it, for at the time when He acted as menial servant to His disciples, His love was enduring and enduring right gloriously, three great trials—any one of which might have broken it had it not been altogether Omnipotent. For, first, He was about to go away from them. Much of human love needs the presence of its object for its maintenance. It is, alas, seldom true that “absence makes the heart grow fonder.” Jesus was about to depart out of this world to the Father and, with the exception of one brief interval, He was to walk no more in the midst of His chosen, or sit at table with them.

Out of sight, however, they would not be out of mind. Though He was just about to take the last terrible journey of death, yet He forgot them not, but graciously made them see that He would remember them still. If you will remember the style of His going, His thoughtfulness of His friends becomes the more remarkable. He was about to leave them by a cruel and ignominious death and, according to the common conduct of men, it

would not have been amazing if He had sought pity and comfort from them—instead of which He forgot Himself and all the pain, grief and death which lay before Him and spent all His time and strength upon the comfort and establishment of His followers!

When He knew that the hour was come when He must depart out of the world with unutterable pangs, He still loved His own with an all-absorbing love. There was much in the prospect of His grievous departure which might, for a season, have diverted His thoughts from them. But they lay so close to the center of His soul that even under such circumstances He washed their feet!

Next, it is to be remembered that our Lord was well aware that one of them had already entertained the idea of betraying Him. There sat one at the table who had held a secret interview with the Pharisees and chief priests—and had taken money as a bribe for his Master's blood. You cannot so dissociate a leading disciple from the rest as not to feel that the whole band was thereby disgraced and the Lord might very well have said, "I will discard My Apostles, for they have betrayed Me." And then you remember that those who did not sell Him or betray Him, nevertheless all forsook Him and fled—forsook Him when they ought to have rallied round Him and have spoken up for Him at the judgment seat.

None of them appeared in answer to the question, "Who shall declare His generation?" Like timid hares, they fled at the first bark of the dogs. It would not have been amazing, had His been a *human* love, if He had said, "They are unworthy of Me—their confidence dies out when they see My sorrow—they betray Me—they forsake Me, therefore I will let them go and care for them no more." No, but knowing what they were, our Lord took a towel and girded Himself and washed their feet, yes, washed the traitor's *feet* and gently handled that heel which had been lifted up against Him—washing from it the dust gathered in its secret walk upon the traitor's errand!—

***"The sight might kings themselves convert,
God only could so far submit:
Satan is in the traitor's heart,
The Lord Most High is at his feet."***

This act of tender, considerate affection, performed under such circumstances to men who acted towards Him in such ungenerous style, proves to us that His love will bear the strain of our ill behavior, our lack of fidelity and our thousand grievous failures. Having loved His own which are in the world, He loves them to the end.

There was a third strain, and a powerful one, too. Our Savior knew that the Father had committed all things into His hands. He knew that there was but a brief interval before He should die and then He would ascend to the Father's right hand and sit there eternally as God Over All, blessed forevermore! Yet He did not disdain to do a slave's work for His beloved ones. Oftentimes circumstances alter affections. A man grows rich and great and forgets his friends. This we would not suspect of Jesus if His had not been a greater change than we mortals can possibly experience. But His was a surpassing accession of glory—from being plunged in ignominy and shame He was exalted to receive the homage of angels and the adoration of the whole universe! One would think that in the prospect

of such honors, though He loved His own, He would not so love them as to become their *Servitor* and, all in disarray, stoop down before them, even to their feet, and do the service of a bondsman!

No wonder that Peter raised an objection suggested by reverential awe. Who could, without protest, receive such humble service from such hands? Yet our Lord did this with Heaven's supernal Glory descending on Him! He disrobed Himself, though angels longed to cast the imperial purple about His shoulders! With all things in His hands, He yet took a towel and wiped the disciples' feet! Beloved, if our Lord's love bore these three strains, we may, like the Apostle, be persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord!

I invite you now, therefore, to see your Savior's enduring and continuing love as set forth to us in this symbolic washing of His disciples' feet and in similar acts of which it is a symbol. I shall ask you to view it, first, as *the type of His continuous love*. And secondly, *as the example of that love as it should be reflected by His people*. May the Holy Spirit be our Interpreter and open to us this choice cabinet of love tokens!

I. First we will look upon this washing of the disciples' feet as THE TYPE OF OUR LORD'S CONTINUOUS LOVE TO US. We will view it in four lights. First, *Christ Jesus still acts as the Host of His people*. Has it never struck you how much the life of Christ with His people lay in intense familiarity with them? How in common things He displayed His brotherhood with them? He began His ministry at a feast at Cana of Galilee, working His first miracle at a wedding. Again and again we find Him eating with His disciples. The last thing He did was to sit at supper with them and He still says to His Church, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man open to Me I will enter in and sup with Him and he with Me."

His own figure for the opening of the new dispensation is a supper—"Blessed is he that shall eat bread at the marriage supper of the Lamb." We do not always view our communion with Christ in this homely light and I fear we forget that the acquaintance of Christ with His people was one of great intimacy and familiar communion, for they did eat and drink with Him and He with them. At this time, also, Jesus is the Host of His Church, providing the Gospel Supper and entertaining us right royally. Instead of meat, He gives us His flesh to eat, rarest of dainties and He cries, "My flesh is meat, indeed, and My blood is drink, indeed."

He prepares a table before us in the presence of our enemies. He satisfies our mouth with good things so that our youth is renewed like the eagles! And, mark you, the Lord is a Host who goes through with His Divine hospitalities and leaves nothing incomplete. In the East the master of the house would wash his guests' feet if they were persons whom he sought to honor. You remember how Abraham bade the angels turn into his tent and also said to them, "Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched and wash your feet." Even so our Master entertains us at His table, not as paupers, but as guests, yes, and not as guests of an ordinary kind, but as *friends* of the highest class, dear to His soul, whose feet He will wash! He can truly say of us, "Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable

and I have loved you.” He treats us as distinguished persons who shall not sit among mean men, but shall have their portion among princes.

This foot-washing, once done, was a fair representation of that honorable entertainment which the King extends to all believing souls when He bids them come to His banqueting table and drink of the wine which He has mingled. I like to think of the Lord as my Host and of myself as no mere waif and stray, but as a welcome guest to whom He is daily fulfilling all a host’s part, granting me all I want, yes, all that I wish for! He Himself gives us honors and comforts us more than could be expected, even, from our most familiar friend. Look, He even washes our feet! What better token need we of His abiding love? Since He continues to entertain His whole Church and treats us all as distinguished visitors, it is clear that He still loves us.

My second rendering of the passage is that *He cares for our minor matters with a personal interest*. Jesus washed their feet and this showed a very tender and familiar consideration of their little needs. That He should ease their weary hearts I can understand. That He should enlighten their clouded brains I can understand. But that He should wash their feet is amazing! A little soil on their feet—will He attend to that? Yes, that He will, and personally, too. He will, Himself, take the basin and the towel and wash their feet! Had they been diseased with leprosy it would seem natural that He should touch them and say, “Be clean.” Or had they been blind or crippled, it would have been probable that He would touch their eyes or heal their limbs.

But a mere defilement of their feet is so a small a matter! Would He attend to *that*? He might have left them to wash one another’s feet, might He not? Surely He had but to suggest it and they would have cheerfully waited on each other. Peter, at any rate, would have been first to obey and to his Lord’s command he would have replied, “Wash them? That I will, with delight!” But no. The Lord laid aside His own garments and took a towel and *He* performed the kindly deed for them! Brothers and Sisters, take your little things to Christ! Those trials of which your heart says, “They are too small. Though they prick me like thorns in the flesh and give me pain, yet they are really too trifling for me to mention in prayer.”

Not so! The Lord loves us to trust Him thoroughly. This is a token of His love, of His continued affection, that even to the little things He will look—even to your smallest problems He will condescend and you may ask Him! Oh, it is bold asking, but you may do it! You may ask Him to wash your feet, for He will do even that! Do not, I pray you, cause your own love to be put under suspicion through a deficiency in your childlike confidence in your condescending Lord! I confess I have often required more faith to pray about some tiny matter of my own than about a thousand things which concern my Master’s Kingdom. And yet when faith is broad and large, love knows that all matters which grieve the minds of His servants touch the heart of the Master and that all which works our good works also His delight. We must believe in Him so much that we can trust each day’s cares with Him, believing that He still washes His disciples’ feet by attending to their minor needs and grief—

***“He overrules all mortal things,
And manages our mean affairs.***

***On humble souls the King of kings
Bestows His counsels and His cares."***

We will now take a third reading of it. This washing of the disciples' feet means that *He provides refreshment for His people*. I do not suppose that many here present know what an intense pleasure it is, in extremely hot countries, to have the feet washed upon coming in after a weary walk. The servant pours forth fresh cool water from a pitcher upon the feet when they are aching with a long journey and hot with burning heat and dust. The result is delightfully refreshing! Our Lord washed His disciples' feet, not only because cleansing was desirable, but also for their pleasure and solace. He takes great pleasure in giving joy to His followers. He desires that His joy should be in us that our joy may be full. He does not want us to be like paupers who have to be content with bare necessities, but to be gentlemen-commoners upon His bounty who shall be served right royally, like princes of the blood whom even the King, Himself, does not disdain to wait upon.

When does the Lord give us these refreshments? He often does this after a journey—I mean after a severe *trial*. When, as pilgrims to Heaven, we have been wearied by the greatness of the way, the Master comes and manifests Himself to us and refreshes us. Sometimes, also, this good cheer comes *before* the trial, for these disciples were now about to enter upon a very rough road—they were doomed to travel through the rest of their lives without the personal Presence of their Master and He seems to say, "Before you set out I will wash your feet. A little refreshment of this kind will strengthen you at the start. And when you are further on your way, the very remembrance of it will come to you like a cool stream of water fresh from the pitcher." So the Master was pleased to refresh them after a journey and *before* a journey and the refreshment was intended, as I have already said, for their souls' delight. It was a feast at which they sat and He wished them to enjoy everything that could make them happy at His table.

Brethren, I have told you that this foot-washing is a type of our Lord's continuous love to us, a type which is followed by action like itself and so it is, in this respect, for He is often refreshing us. Have you not tasted of His cordials? We speak far less of our spiritual delights than we might do, but if we would open our mouths, we could tell of rapturous times, when, though weary and cast down, we have been graciously revived! Sweet promises have been applied to us by our Lord's own hands—like cold water poured upon hot and weary feet—and by this means we have been bathed in rest. A sense of His love has come over us like a dream and yet we were never more awake in our lives! We have been entranced and yet most sober and calm.

Our Lord's love is a dear delight and, when we realize it, the bells of Heaven seem to be ringing close against our ears and choirs of angels to have come down from Glory to make music in our chambers! At such times we often wonder why we were so gladdened, but when, the next day, an extraordinary trouble sets in, we discover the reason and perceive that we have been well nourished that we may go a forty days' journey in the strength of this meat! Yes, we have had those refreshments in this house when the Word has been preached, or when some joyful hymn has borne

us on its wings to Heaven! Or, best of all, at the Communion Table! Nor here alone, for in our own quiet chambers and in the night watches the Lord has refreshed our hearts, for He gives songs in the night. These sweet renewals and lifting up are the tokens that, having loved His own, He loves them to the end.

This is the foot-washing all over again, for Christ is still busy at His works of love. Though He lays not aside His garment today, nor comes among us like a Servant, yet even from the highest Throne in Glory He has ways of executing the same purposes of kindness. Still He gives us inward delight and this joy becomes our strength, making us swift as a young roe to run upon His gracious errands! The weariness which makes the feet heavier is removed by joyful fellowship and so we are washed and refreshed. We who are His ministers need much of this, that we may be as gazelles let loose, giving goodly words.

Our fourth view of the text is more full and accurate, namely, that *Christ continues to guard the purity of His Church*, for though it was not all His meaning, yet by washing their feet He certainly intended their cleansing, for after He had done it He said, "You are clean: he that is washed is clean every whit." Our Lord watches over the purification of all those who are His own and this is a great joy to us who love His Church and are concerned for her honor. To see professors defile themselves is heart-breaking work to loving pastors and our only comfort is that Jesus is quite as jealous of the holiness of His people as ever we can be.

Beloved, I live while I see your pure and holy conversation! But when I see impurity, worldliness and evil among you, it cuts me to the heart! And were it not that I know my Lord is watching over the purity of His people, I would gladly lay down and die. From the occasion which our Lord selected for the foot-washing, it is clear that He would have us seek the special purifying power of His Presence during religious ordinances. I really cannot tell at what point of the evening's proceedings our Lord washed His disciples' feet and, if you read the chapter, you will be somewhat puzzled. It is "before the Passover," yet it is said, "supper being ended," which, I suppose, would be better rendered, "supper being in progress," for after the washing our Lord took a sop, dipped it and gave it to Judas and, therefore, the supper was not over.

Or if one supper may have come to an end, another was just commencing. Was this feast the Passover? Was it the Lord's Supper? Was it the first of the agape, or love feasts, in which the early Church delighted? Which was it? I do not know and I am not much concerned to know. The Lord Jesus Christ made the Passover melt into the Lord's Supper so that you cannot tell where one ends and the other begins! No violent jerk occurred in leaving the lines of the Jewish dispensation for the Christian—for our Lord's disciples went up to the Temple to pray after the veil was torn in two and the legal ceremonies had lost their meaning.

There was a gradual sliding of the one economy into the other and, on the memorable night of the washing of the feet, I suspect that our Master ate and drank with His disciples at a common meal just as the early Christians did when they met together at their love feasts—then probably followed the actual Passover celebration, a night before its time—and this

gradually dissolved into the Lord's Supper of which the cup was "the cup after supper." Anyway, it does not matter much, but it is clear that we need our feet washed before we come to His Table, "Let a man examine Himself and so let Him eat of this bread."

We also need our feet washed while we are at His Table, for there is sin in our holiest things and even when we come most near to our Lord, we need that He wash us according to that text, "If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." Even when we walk in the light and have clearest fellowship with God, the Lord Jesus continues to cleanse us from all sin! And I am sure we need washing after supper. When we come away from worship we have need to get alone and cry, "Cleanse me from secret faults. Let my lack of devotion or my coldness in it be forgiven! Let my lack of zeal, my scantiness of faith and the wandering of my heart be all washed away by You, my Lord and Master, for I much need it."

Our Lord is so anxious for the purification of His people that He is frequently giving them a sweet sense that their transgressions in holy things are put away and thus He seems to say to them, "I have accepted your sacrifice. I have received your prayers and tears and presented them unto My Father. I have washed you and you are clean. Go in peace." This is one of the acts of His continuous love, this daily washing of our feet! We must all have this frequent washing by our Lord—it is *absolutely necessary*. There is a "must" in the case—as we *must* be born again, so we *must* be made holy. It would be to our Lord's dishonor to be followed by disciples who do not walk in integrity and uprightness. As He is, Himself, perfectly holy, He desires to have around Him a holy people purged from all defilement. He is so anxious that He should have such a people that, sooner than they shall not be washed, He will act the part of a Servant and wash their feet Himself.

"Be you clean that bear the vessels of the Lord." You that follow in His footsteps, walk with clean feet. Come not up with the miry clay still sticking to you, but wash, wash daily and follow your pure Master with pure and cleansed hearts, with careful and obedient feet, so that all may see that you are the disciples of the Undefined! His ministers, especially, need this or the people will never cry, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that brings good tidings." Brothers and Sisters, pray for us that we may experience this to the highest degree! These constant washings which are the testimony of Christ's continued love we must all receive. Did He not say to Peter, "If I wash you not, you have no part with Me"? If Jesus does not make you holy, you are not His.

Brother, if you live in sin and love it, you cannot love God! Unless He truly purges your life and makes you to walk in a clean path, you are not His, for He purges His own—such as riot in iniquity prove that they are of *their* father, the devil, for they do *his* works. Whom Jesus loves He purifies. He loved His Church and gave Himself for it that He might sanctify and cleanse it. If, then, you are unholy, ungracious, dishonest, unrighteous—how can you say that you belong to His Church? He washes the feet

of all who are His disciples and if your feet are filthy, you belong not to the faithful band.

This washing must be *spiritual*—no external form will suffice. Christ washed the feet of Judas with water, but inasmuch as Judas had never been bathed in the laver of regeneration and had never been purged in the fountain of forgiving love, that washing which Christ gave to his feet did him no spiritual good! And you, my Friend, may use what external ablutions you will and perform whatever religious ceremonies you please, but unless your *spirit* has been renewed by the Holy Spirit and your heart purged in the sight of God, you still have no part nor lot with Christ's disciples! The mercy is that this purification, which is so necessary and which must be of a spiritual kind, is *very readily given!*

I admire the beauty of the figure in its simple ease. The Scripture does not say that our Master was nailed to the Cross and poured forth a stream from His heart in order to wash His disciples' feet. No, although the act by which He cleansed them was very condescending, yet it was not painful or laborious. He laid aside His garments, girded on the towel and took the pitcher and straightway proceeded to wash the disciples' feet. It was easily done and whatever there was upon the feet was soon removed—it needed no suffering, no dire grief on Jesus' part!

For our *first* washing from the guilt and condemnation of sin it needed that Jesus should lay down His life and fill the cleansing fountain with atoning blood. But for the later removal of sin, the Lord uses an easy process of love. He does, by His Spirit, speedily cleanse us from iniquity, even as our feet are soon washed. How, readily, therefore, we ought to go to Christ about the purging of our consciences from dead works! I have heard it said that the sinner finds great difficulty in going to Christ at first—that is sadly true—but I have also noticed that sometimes there is a difficulty in continuing to go to Him every day of our lives.

To go as a sinner and get washed from sin needs faith, but it also requires a steady confidence to resort to Jesus under a thousand conscious failures and backsliding year after year. I sit down in my chamber and I feel I am a forgiven man—about that I am quite sure and, therefore, I shall never be cast into Hell. But this day I spoke unadvisedly with my lips, or I grew angry, or I am conscious that I was proud, or I have been frivolous and worldly, or I have been selfish—and at the remembrance of those sins I lose my peace and feel I cannot pray. Communion with God seems gone while these faults stare me in the face! The arch-enemy whispers, "You cannot get back into your former happy state."

At such times let us say to him, "O you enemy, I can and will return into fellowship, for my dear Lord and Master has only to take the basin and wash my feet and this He can do right speedily." O my Brothers and Sisters, when a sense of sin revives upon the conscience, do not be persuaded by unbelief that there is an impossibility of escaping it! Go straight to your Master and say, "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow," and He will cleanse you and once again you shall joy and rejoice in Him! Remember the words of our hymn concerning the fountain of Divine Grace—

***"This fountain from guilt not only makes pure,
And gives, soon as felt, an Infallible cure.***

***But if guilt removed returns and remains,
Its power may be proved again and again.***

Mark, however, that this *washing must be given us by our Lord Himself*. He must first wash our feet before we can wash one another's feet. I think I see the Well-Beloved, now, as He pours the pure water on their ankles! Mark how He takes their feet into His kind and tender hands and washes them clean. And then He wipes them with the towel! He continues to do this to us, even now, in a spiritual sense! It is His own dear love that takes away sin from the conscience so that it does not linger there to foul and mar it. Often I think He seems to kiss those feet and say, "Dear child, you are now clean. Watch your footsteps and keep your garments that they be not defiled again. Yet even if they are, I will wash them again, for I still live to cleanse you and put away your transgressions. I mean, before long, to make you as perfect as Myself, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing."

Nor may I leave this point till I bid you mark the condescension of this personal washing, for Abraham did not, himself, wash the angels' feet, but said, "Let a little water be fetched and wash your feet." And Joseph did not personally wash his brother's feet, but the steward of his house brought them in and gave them water and *they* washed their feet! But Jesus does it all Himself. O my Soul, bow down before Him and adore His unparalleled love!

Thus I have shown you that this foot-washing is a symbol of our Redeemer's continuous acts of love. Jesus is always our Host and, therefore, He washes our feet. He always cares for our little matters and in this sense washes our feet. He is always providing refreshments for His people in their pilgrimage to Heaven and thus He washes their feet. He is always guarding the purity of His Church and people—and so, in the fullest sense—He washes their feet.

II. Secondly, we come to practical matters as to ourselves. As THE MODEL OF HIS OWN LOVE FOR HIS PEOPLE, our Lord washed their feet. The love of the saints is their Lord's love in them, which has filled their vessels to the brim and is now running over. Christ's love is the Sun and our love is the moonlight which we are able to give forth because the Sun has looked upon us. Love is first freely imparted and then plentifully diffused. Jesus says, "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water." And then again, "Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."

What we receive, we impart and the Grace which works in us at the first, before long works *by* us. Let us look at this foot-washing in reference to ourselves and our duty and office in the midst of our Brethren. We learn, first, that *there will always be need of service in the Church* and always need of service in the particular direction of promoting purity. The Apostles were 12 strong men—surely they did not require a servant! Yes, they did—they *must* have a servant! They could not do without a servant and, therefore, their Lord supplied the vacant place. And now that the Lord is gone, His Church still needs servants and servants to wash feet, or else all will go amiss.

On earth the Church will never be so clean that it will have no need of foot-washing. The Church will never be able to dispense with purifying

service till the Lord shall come. You, my Brother and Sister Christian, may never expect to join a Church where there will be nothing for you to do—do not even desire such a position of idleness! We shall never get among a community so pure that we shall see no faults in our Brethren and never shall we, ourselves, be so good that they will see no faults in us! Therefore let us render and receive a happy, mutual service in the Church by which the sanctification of one and all will be promoted. In those words, “If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; you also ought to wash one another’s feet,” our Lord speaks as though He would have us reckon upon acting as servants for the benefit of each other. Let us cheerfully accept the position!

We see, next, that *we are not to advocate the abrogation of such service*, or pretend that we have reached a point at which we can dispense with it. The stoic would say, “Washing feet? What is the good of it? What need of washing a man’s feet? If he needs it, let him wash them himself. The first law of Nature is self-love—let every man see to it himself. What have I to do with my Brother’s feet? Let him wash his own. What has he to do with my feet? Let him mind his own business.” That is anti-Christianity! Christianity says, “I am willing that others should help me to be holy and I am also willing to help others to the same end. I am so imperfect that I am willing that anybody should point out my faults and rebuke me for them. And I am so anxious that my Brother should be holy that I will lovingly help him to conquer sin.”

Sometimes it is more humbling to have your own feet washed than to wash other people’s and, therefore, sometimes our pride says, “You shall never wash my feet.” Yet it must be so and pride must sit still like a child and be both washed and wiped. Again, I perceive that to many it is easy to stoop to the poor, but hard to yield to their equals in estate or in ability. I know those who will do a thousand things for a poor man, but they would not do the same service to those of their own rank. You say, “As for that poor soul, I do not mind conceding many points to him, but this other man will crow over me if I yield to his weakness and he will expect me to do it again! And so I may be thought to be a person of no spirit who can easily be put upon and made a general hack.”

That also is the speech of anti-Christianity. True Christianity impels us to render and to accept that service which is mutual among true saints. He who kindly reminds me of my faults helps me to be better—let me not be angry with him, but value him for his faithfulness. On the other hand, I must never hint at a failing in a Brother unless I believe that he will be the better for it and even then I must do it gently, for I am not to scald my Brethren’s feet, but to use cool, sparkling, living water in the washing of them. Refining by *fire* is *God’s* work—refreshing with *water* is *ours*. We are to rebuke in love, not in wrath! We are to wipe as well as wet, to comfort as well as correct.

In the *world* they criticize—that is the business of the public press and it is very much the business of private circles. Hear how gossips say, “Do you see that spot? What a terrible walk that man must have had this morning—look at his feet! He has been very much in the mire, as you can see, for there are the traces upon him.” That is the world’s way. Christ’s

way is very different. He says nothing but takes the basin and begins to wash away the stain. Do not judge and condemn, but seek the restoration and the improvement of the erring. Say to your faulty Brother, "I am very anxious if I may take away your spots. I would not wish to point them out if I did not feel that I should thereby help you to get rid of them."

I fear that many professors follow the world's way and indulge in what we call gossip, which is usually slander and misrepresentation, or, in other words, lying! The best of men may have to endure this, but it is a great pity it should be so. Why will people find pleasure in throwing dirty water over their neighbors? Do you make yourself any better by blackening others? Do you expect to rise by pulling others down? Scorn such attempts! An ambition which suggests such evil means is only worthy of a fiend. O you who truly love your Lord, cease from cruel witticisms and spend your strength in humble and loving washings of your Brothers and Sisters feet and so shall we all become happier, because more like our Lord.

This foot-washing among disciples *should be done very cheerfully*. Nobody asked the Master to bring the basin—no one would have thought of such a thing! It was His own heart of love that made Him do it, out of spontaneous affection for those whom He had chosen. Let us also be ready to perform any office for our Brethren, however lowly. If there is a position in the Church where the worker will have to toil hard and get no thanks for it, take it and be pleased with it! If you can perform a service which few will ever seek to do, themselves, or appreciate when performed by others, yet occupy it with holy delight! Covet humble work and when you get it, be content to continue in it. There is no great rush after the lowest places—you will rob no one by seeking them!

The first place we must have an election for and poll the whole community—but for the very lowest there is no great ambition—therefore select such a place and while you will escape envy, you will also gain a quiet conscience. If we were more thoroughly Christ's, we should cheerfully and voluntarily push ourselves into the places of self-sacrifice, counting it our chief honor to serve God and the Church in ways which are obscure and despised, because in so doing we shall be saved from the Pharisaic spirit which desires the praise of man. When we do anything for Christ's people, not only should we do it cheerfully, but thoroughly. How well our Lord took up the Servant's place! He disrobed Himself until He stood prepared for His task in much the same undress as an attendant at the Turkish baths who takes off all his upper garments.

Our Lord was ready to do His work. He put off all that would hinder Him, for He meant real washing and not a mere form. When you are going to serve your Brethren, do it heartily! Give your Lord zealous and earnest service! Strip to your shirt sleeves, if need be, to serve Christ and His people. Do not attempt to play the fine gentleman—is it not far nobler to be a real Christian? Observe how each point of our Lord's procedure is marked by the Evangelist. "He rose from supper and laid aside His garments; and took a towel and girded Himself. After that He poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded."

He might have left them to wipe themselves, but, no, He must finish His love work! “He wiped them with the towel with which He was girded.” Whenever you serve a Brother or Sister for Christ’s sake, do it thoroughly. Begin it heartily, go on with it steadfastly and do not leave off till the deed is done! If anything is to be done slovenly, let it be something which is done *for you!* But Jesus and His people must have the best which our ability can render. Give the saints of God the pick and choice of your productions—if you wash their feet, wash them well! The foot of the meanest servant of Christ is more honorable than the head of the greatest emperor that ever wore a diadem! It will be seen in eternity to be a greater honor to have performed the most menial service for a true child of God than to have been honored and decorated with stars and garters in the service of the mightiest monarch. Lay yourselves out for thorough service of your Lord in His people and try to be always doing this.

I feel quite sure of my ground in having said that this foot-washing was meant to be a type of what our Lord is always doing, because He puts it thus—“If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; you also ought to wash one another’s feet.” Evidently the inference would be, “If I did this but once, you ought to wash one another’s feet once.” But since the moral is, “You ought *always* to wash one another’s feet,” the doctrine is that, in effect, our Lord is always washing the feet of His people. Let us carry out the lesson and be always in a servant’s attitude among our fellow disciples. Let us always be on bended knee, with the basin and the towel near at hand! Let us always be willing to relieve those who are in need, to restore those who stumble, to reclaim those who wander and to edify and perfect all the body of Christ as far as our ability will permit. Be it ours to promote the holiness of our entire fellow Christians at all times!

You say it is the *pastor’s* business to look after the Church. I know it is, but the true pastor’s wisdom is to set the members of the Church looking after one another! “Bear you one another’s burdens and so fulfill the Law of Christ.” In my own case, the pastorate of one person over 5,000 members is ridiculous unless it is exercised by impressing all the members with the necessity, the duty, the *privilege* of mutual oversight—each one seeking to do good to the other according as he has opportunity.

Let this mind be in you, which is also in Christ Jesus who washed His disciples’ feet. Love one another, I implore you and in honor prefer one another. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let brotherly love continue and always so live that when your Master looks down upon you He may joy and rejoice in you, as I trust He does this day. May this, our beloved Church, be for many a year a pattern of unity and peace within and of strength and activity without, so that a witness may be borne for pure and undefiled religion and a model set up in which shall be seen the handiwork of the Spirit who creates love in the hearts of the saints!

Little children, love one another. Amen.

[This sermon was originally titled, “The *Teaching* of the Foot-Washing.]

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KNOWING AND DOING

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A SERMON
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 20, 1868.

*"If you know these things, happy are you if you do them."
John 13:17.*

The original scope of these words was just this—"If, as you say, you have understood the meaning of this—the washing of your feet by your Master—if you have comprehended My intention in so doing, then it will be to your lasting honor and happiness if you do the same. I have symbolically represented to you, by washing your feet, certain virtues. You shall be a happy people if these virtues are found in you and abound." And have we not abundant proof that our Lord spoke the truth, for where are churches as happy as where they are knit together in brotherly love, where they have laid aside contentions about priority and distinction and where each one becomes a servant of all—everyone willing to take the lowest place and no one contending who shall be the greatest! May we prove, as I trust in our measure we have already done, how true these words are, and never may Diotrefes be in our midst to strive for the preeminence, nor a root of bitterness spring up to trouble us! May we, everyone, try to be like our Lord and happy, indeed, shall we be in such a case.

But the sentence before us is equally applicable to every other Gospel precept. If we understand anything which the Holy Spirit has revealed to us, happy shall we be if we follow its practical intention—if, being first taught and instructed—we afterward practically exemplify in our life and conduct the things which we have learned! That is the one thought I propose to lay upon our hearts and minds this evening! And that one thought may be enough.

You will notice in the text that there are two "ifs"—"If you know these things, happy are you if you do them." It appears, then, first, that *genuine and acceptable service to Christ should be based upon intelligent knowledge*—"If you know these things." And secondly, that all *intelligent understanding of the things of God should lead us to the practice of them*—"Happy are you if you do them." The first "if" shall be taken first—"If you know these things"—

I. ALL SERVICE OF CHRIST IS BASED UPON INTELLIGENT KNOWLEDGE.

Our first observation is that this is an "if" even in this country. "If you know these things." Alas, even in such a city as this, where the Gospel is

to be heard in all our streets and Bibles are to be found in all our homes, it is so sad that tens of thousands do *not* know these things! They are so careless about what God has revealed that they will not even cross the threshold to listen to the Word of God! This day what a mass of Sabbath-breaking has grieved the Spirit of God! All around us there are those who are toiling hard six days in the week for themselves and cannot give to their God and, I may add, to their truer and nobler selves, this one day in which to think of Him. He has written to them the great things of His Law and they have trifled with it! He speaks to them and invites them to hear that their souls may live, but they would rather rest in their beds, or be found in any kind of pleasure sooner than seeking pleasure in the ways of God! Pity this poor city, you who know its sins! Pray for it, you who know its high privileges and solemn responsibilities! Work for it, you who have power with the heavenly Father, until at last the blessing shall come and men shall no longer need to say to their fellows, "Know the Lord."

Alas, this is an "if," however, which does not merely concern those who are outside our walls. There are many who know not these things, though they hear about them—and the reason is because while they come to the place of worship, and the sound of the preaching glides across their ears, *they never give deep, earnest attention to it*. They say that preaching is dull—very possibly it is—but it is very amazing that it should not be still duller when people have no concern to get into its inner meaning, but find it quite enough to come and to go like a door on its hinges! Full often from the humblest teacher something might be learned if we were but anxious to be taught. Or if we learned little by what he said, his very emotions might remind us and one thought, however commonplace, might engender another—and it would not be altogether without profit to sit together in the assembly of the saints.

Oh, how negligently do some hear! They are thinking of their homes, of their horses, of their cattle, of their farm and their merchandise. God gets no such attention from men as legatees give the lawyer when he reads the will. If men would listen to the preaching of the Gospel but half as well as they listen to sweet music, there might be hope of its being a blessing to them! But many understand not the things of God because of their negligent hearing of it.

Alas, too, there are some who attend at least with an outward attention which we cannot blame, but they know not the things of God because they have not yet found out that the letter, that is, the external word, is a killing thing, and that it is the inner *and spiritual sense which is, alone, to be sought after*. To listen to a Doctrine, for instance, is right enough, and to catch the theory of it and be able to repeat the definition may be in some respects valuable. But it is imperative to get into the soul and spirit of that teaching of God which alone is spirit and truth and, consequently, food to the spiritual man! Dead orthodoxy, mere doctrinal correctness—these will never land men in Heaven because they do not even put them into the Kingdom of Heaven now! Men who merely have

these are like botanists who know not the flowers, but only know the names of the divisions and the orders. They are like physicians who speak of drugs they have never seen or used, who would attempt to deal with men's bodies before they had even studied anatomy or seen a bone!

We need to come to the tasting and handling of God's Word. And all the hearing in the world will end in nothing unless the soul gets still closer and in the very soul and secret of the Truths of God. Hence there is an "if," an "if" about the best of hearers, about the most intelligent—"If you *know* these things"—you may have listened to them, have drunk them in from the earliest days of your life, but unless the Holy Spirit has revealed them to you, flesh and blood cannot do so and you cannot, therefore, know them!

It is greatly to be regretted that there are some persons who do not know the Truth of God because they have *no care to know at all*. They have a contempt for anything that God reveals. They are wise men and, therefore, they spend their whole lifetime in studying a piece of rock, or in collecting specimens of beetles, or in any wonderfully wise track of science! But to listen to the eternal Jehovah is quite beneath them! To hear what He has been pleased to say concerning Himself in His own Word seems to them to be trifling. Have I not often met with men who would think it to be worth years of study to make the idlest possible conjectures about the formation of a limestone rock, who yet would laugh in one's face if one began to speak about the soul and the things of the world to come? And these are wise men—at least according to their own estimate of themselves! Whether or not they are fools shall remain for the future to reveal to them—may they find it out before the discovery shall be too late!

Others never will become intelligent in the things of God because *they are prejudiced*. They have made up their minds that they *do* know—and he who thinks he knows will never learn. The conceptions which they received early in life—their training, the fancies which they have forged for themselves as being what should be the truth—these occupy their minds and they cannot see the things of God because the mind has been blinded with other matters. Would to God that we could be clear of prejudice and clear of unholy contempt for God's Truth—and could come simply to Him and ask to be taught as a child by the great Father and lay bare our bosoms that the Holy Spirit might cast out error from us and might write the mind and will of God there clearly! Then, indeed, with such a humble submission and a Divinely earnest desire, there need be no longer an "if" as to whether we learn these things. There is an "if," however.

Let us now observe that *we ought never to rest content while there is an "if."* "If you know these things." My God, is it a question whether I know You or not, whether I know Christ or not, whether I know the Revelation which You have given to us or not? Then begin to teach me now! Oh, Sirs, it will not do to trifle with an ignorance which shall be our last-

ing ruin! We ought not to give sleep to our eyes until we have asked to be taught of God! To be ignorant about the things of ordinary daily life is not wisdom, but to be ignorant about eternal life is stark madness!

An uneducated man stands but little chance in the battle of this life. A man uneducated for eternity—alas, how exposed is he to innumerable adversaries, how sure to fall, how certain to perish! Go, I pray you, Brothers and Sisters, go to the Wise One for wisdom! Go to this Book for the Light of God! Go to the Holy Spirit, Himself, for Divine instruction and let it not be any longer with you a matter of question as to whether you are taught of God or not! Oh, I would speak very earnestly here. I do not ask that you should be learned. I do not ask for myself that I may be profound. But I do pray that we may comprehend with all saints what are the heights and depths and know the love of Christ which passes knowledge, or at least may know Him and be found in Him, clothed in His righteousness and accepted in His merits. It ought not to be an “if.”

But, supposing that there is no “if” with any of us, then what *ground is there for gratitude!* If the Savior need not say, “If you know these things,” but if we can say, “Lord You know that we love You, that we rest in You, that we serve You, that we have been taught of Your Spirit,” then there is no room for self-congratulation, no room for pride! What have you which you have not received? Thank God, dear Friend, that you were not born amidst the heathenism of Africa! Thank God that you were not left to the Sabbath-breaking of London! Thank God that when you did hear the Word, it broke through the outer door and came into the inner chamber of your soul! Thank God that that passage of Scripture was not sent to you, “Come and speak to this people and make their ears heavy that they shall not hear, for their hearts have grown gross”! Blessed be the distinguishing Grace that enabled us, who once were as incapable of this as the dead in their graves, to see and hear spiritually!

What should come of it? Why, if you know these things and have learned them by the Spirit of God, make it the method of showing your gratitude to try and be His instruments in teaching others! If you know these things, be not silent. If you know these things, wrap not up these blessed secrets in your hearts as though they were committed to you only for your own personal enjoyment, but in the name of Him who gave such a priceless gift, go and tell wherever your tongue can be heard, the good news of the salvation of Jesus Christ! And perhaps God may make you a blessing to some of His hidden ones who as yet have not come to Christ.

Thus much about the first “if.” It looks to me like the first arch—and having passed through it, I can see another beyond me—and I must pass to the second if I would get the happiness.

II. THE INTELLIGENT KNOWLEDGE OF THE THINGS OF GOD SHOULD LEAD US TO THE PRACTICE OF THEM.

“If you know these things, happy are you if you do them.”

This second “if” applies to all the things which we have been taught of God. Let me give you, however, a specimen. *Saving Truths*—if you know

them, happy are you if you do them! This is a saving Truth of God—that whoever trusts in Jesus Christ is saved. You know that. If there is anything you ought to know, you who come to this house, you ought to know that, for it is the staple of all our sermonizing every Lord's-Day—that a simple confidence in Jesus Christ, the Savior, saves the soul! Happy are you, then, if you have exercised this simple confidence, for then you are saved! If you have trusted with the whole weight of your sin upon Jesus, you have the happiness of being saved, accepted, secure. Saving Truths ought to, every one of them, be the first objects of practice. That same Spirit who teaches us the Truths of God enables us to put them into action in our daily life. Dear Hearer, have you been a hearer of the good message, but have been a hearer, only? If so, you have missed the joy of the whole business! I pray you go a step farther and believe and live!

After saving Truths come *purifying Truths*. Such is the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit's indwelling. The Holy Spirit dwells in Believers and where He dwells, there should be purity, peace, holiness and purging out of sin.

You believe this, but happy are you if you seek so to act. If you pray that you may not grieve the Spirit of God, nor cause Him to depart from you, your daily anxiety shall bring its results and you shall be happy.

Then, there are certain *ennobling Truths* in God's Word and happy are we if we do them. Such is the Truth of Divine Adoption. Every Believer is a child of God. Happy are we if we live like one, if we exercise the privileges of heirs, if we come to our Father with a child-like confidence, if we plead with Him as a dear son asking a generous Father to supply his needs. Remember that every Doctrine of the Gospel has a practice appended to it and that to get the happiness out of the Doctrine you must put its preceptory part, or its practical inference, into action. You may be as orthodox as you please, but your orthodoxy shall be only like so many grapes untrodden in the winepress! But if you cast them into your daily life, then shall the luscious juice run forth and you shall be satisfied with favor and be full of the goodness of the Lord! Bread on the table will not satisfy you, nor will mere Doctrine. The bread must be taken and eaten—and assimilated—and then shall it comfort you. And so with the Truth of God—it must be a part of yourself and be worked out into your daily life—or else the happiness of it cannot be yours.

If there were time tonight, I would make an inventory of all the Truths of Scripture and say after each one, "If you know these things, happy are you if you do them." If you know it to be a privilege to be united with God's people, come and join the Church! If you know that Jesus bids you be baptized and come to His Table to remember Him, I pray you be not disobedient, even to what you may think to be His least commandment! Whenever you get the glimpse of a Truth from God's Word, or in your conscience by His Spirit, never be a traitor to the heavenly vision! Depend upon it, it is a terrible thing to trifle with knowledge! Some men would not see when they might have seen—and they have always been

blind. Many a man who might have led the van in the Church of God, and have helped on a glorious reformation, has stepped back from the forefront because, perhaps, of some spurious charity with which he indulged the flesh—and he has gone back into the rear—to the vile dust from whence he sprang! But he that is faithful to God, faithful to the convictions of his conscience—and carries all out into practice—shall be among those to whom the Master shall say, “Well done,” at the last. I say to every Truth in Scripture there is a practical conclusion and I beseech you to see to it that you hear Christ say, “If you know these things, happy are you if you do them.”

Why is it that the practice of a Truth of God is required to the enjoyment of the happiness which it brings? Answer—*this is always God’s rule*. The ground is fat and full of bread, but the farmer, by his tillage, must bring out the corn. Down deep in the heart of the earth are the stores of gold and silver—there gleam the precious ores in quantities that might make even Croesus, himself, to blush for poverty! But the metal starts not up from the soil by itself. It must be dug for—it must be cast into the furnace and separated from the ore. There shall be wealth in many nations, and trade shall bring comforts to all ranks, but the sea must be traversed, the sails must be spread, the voyage must be made! Labor everywhere shall bring enjoyment, but without labor there shall be none. God is not the God of idleness! He speaks not to the earth to bid it bring food to the door of the idler. He commands neither the ravens nor any other of His creatures to bring bread and meat for the sluggards. There shall always be practice, and then the result of work shall be the reward. So must it be in the things of God—you must put them into practice to get the blessing they hold! The laws of Nature are wonderful, and a knowledge of them desirable, but a knowledge of all the laws of Nature would never have reaped a field, built a house, found jewels in the mine, or even have made a steam engine without a furnace, a hammer and strenuous toil!

All the knowledge with which a man can cram his brain cannot secure him in his daily needs until he transfers it from his brain to his right hand and sets to work with it! If you would get God’s blessings, then, in Nature or in Grace, carry out the Divine Laws into immediate and energetic practice!

In the next place, for God to give the comforts of His promises to men who will not obey His precepts would be to discourage all Christian effort. Every man would fold his arms and sit down. “If I am to have salvation without believing,” says one, “why should I believe? If I am to have Grace given me without using such Grace as that which is already entrusted to me, then let me eat and drink, for Grace will come to me! Let me be as carnal as I like.” But God will not so act as to give graceless hearts such an excuse!

To give His blessing to those who do not practice His precepts would be, in fact, *to give a premium for sin*. The more knowledge, if that knowledge is not put into practice, the more sin, in consequence! Shall God

reward a man who, sitting in the Light of God, will not walk by the Light? And shall He give enjoyments to those who know His will and who do not that will? No, Sirs, if blessings came to merely knowledge, I suppose the devil would be the most blessed of beings! Certainly if the comforts of the Gospel came to those who understand the Gospel best, but who do not practice it, there would be some of the vilest of mankind who would be orthodox enough—who would, on such a rule, go to Heaven! But they shall find themselves shut out when that judgment shall be given which proceeds upon this rule, “By their fruits you shall know them.” You all see, without any reasoning from me, that it would seem strange, indeed, if God allowed the precepts of the Gospel to be trampled underfoot and then gave the same blessings to the rebellious as to the graciously obedient! It must not, shall not be! See we not, then, that our happiness from the things of God must come, not merely through knowledge, though that is the first stage of Divine Favor—but we must not rest satisfied until we pass into the *second stage*—the *doing* of what we have learned! We close with the question which the text naturally inspires—

III. WHAT IS THE HAPPINESS WHICH THIS PRACTICAL OBEDIENCE BRINGS?

Briefly, it is always a blessed thing to be obedient to God. The very soul of joy to the creature who wants to be truly happy is conformity to the will of the Creator. When God’s will and ours keep pace together, it will be Heaven on earth to us! It is only when our will jars with the Divine mind that our soul’s happiness departs, but when we are helped to lay aside self and say from our inmost soul, “Not my will, but Yours be done,” and so come to be ruled and governed entirely by the Divine Mind, then shall we be in Paradise here below!

Added to this, to increase our happiness if we do these things, *we shall have the blessings promised to the doing thereof*. We are no legalists. We do not believe in salvation by works, nor even in rewards given to men because of any merit on their part, but we do know that if Jesus says, “He that believes shall be saved,” then he that believes will get that salvation and this will be the blessing which he enjoys, and so with every other new Covenant blessing!

Brothers and Sisters, there is a happiness here in practical Christianity and there is a happiness hereafter. In mere nominal Christianity there is no happiness. Look at some of your professors. They have got religion enough to make them miserable! Their attendance at church or chapel—what is it but a bit of slavery? They would not go to church if they could help it, but they think it looks respectable. If they had their way and the force of custom were withdrawn, they would not be found among the worshippers! Look, I say, at many of them. The very sight of their Bible and Prayer Book seems to make their faces long and dismal at once. Prayer—is that a pleasure to them? To sing God’s praise—is that a delight? No, far, far, far from it! And why is this? Because they have never, by Divine Grace, been led solemnly to trust in Jesus and earnestly to give

themselves up to those Truths which only in their practical force and influence can make us happy—but which in their mere theory are “the letter which kills,” and only in practice are they the spirit and life! Oh, that some of you church members would put in practice what you believe! Oh, Sirs, it is well enough to say that a Christian should be consistent, but if you are not honest in your business, how does your belief help you? It is well enough to say that a Christian should be godly, but if you are godless in your families—if family prayer is neglected and private prayer given up—what is the use of your beliefs, what the use of your perfect creeds? You may talk until doomsday about what you believe or what you do not believe, but it is that part of your belief which gets interwoven into the warp and woof of your daily life which affects your business, which really moves you, impels you, or restrains you according to whether you would do right or wrong—it is this, it is this, it is this, and it is just this, only, that is worth having! Your dead religion—it is a corpse—bury it! Your living godliness, your vital godliness, the godliness that vitalizes you and makes you live unto God and His Truth—this it is to be sought after—and may God in His mercy grant it to each one of us! “If you know these things, happy are you if you do them.”

And so we come to a conclusion by noticing that if the text were read in another form, it would read very solemnly, “If you know these things, unhappy, wretched, ruined are you if you do them *not*.” I scarcely feel that I have either strength or will to enter upon the few sentences I meant to have uttered tonight. There are not many of you here who are ignorant of the Gospel. The most of this great assembly have read it and heard it, and if any should ask you, “What is the way of eternal life,” you could give them a very ready answer. And, thank God, there are not a few of you who have put into practice this Gospel! You have looked to Jesus—you are resting in Him. You can say, while confessing many imperfections, that you desire to walk in the ways of obedience to Him who has redeemed you with His blood.

But, painful reflection! There are many—very many—and you know who they are—who know these things, but do them not! Ten years ago they were greatly affected by a sermon and they vowed repentance. The season passed away and their conscience became crippled—no good results came. Some time ago, at an earnest Prayer Meeting, they were again pricked in conscience, but this time they were not so wounded as before. And now, tonight, they are just what they have always been—willing hearers, attentive hearers, kind friends to the Gospel in some respects, contributing towards any godly enterprise, but still they have not surrendered to God by believing in Christ—and so are still strangers to Him as the soul’s Savior. And I have to ask them tonight whether it shall always be so, and, if not always, then how long? “How long halt you between two opinions?” And if it is not to be long, why not end it tonight? Oh, blessed Spirit, they do know! It is not this they need, but they need to feel! They do not love! They do not believe! Oh, give them these, that they may not go down into Hell with the accumulated responsibilities of

abundant Light. “If I had not come and spoken to you,” said Christ, “you had been without sin, but now you have no cloak for your sin.” Oh, the godly mothers of some of you will rise up against you to condemn you, for you knew these things, but you did them not! Some of you, your conscience will speak with a voice of thunder—it will roar like a lion on you when God condemns you because you knew the Gospel and refused it—you understood the way of salvation, but you would not walk therein! There is no place more terrible to be lost than from the shadow of a pulpit! The more plain the Gospel, the more sure your ruin if you reject it! The more earnest the ministry that comes to you with its notes of warning and invitation, the more horrible your overthrow if your ears refuse the words of Jehovah’s love! Tonight, I pray you—and I think I speak in God’s name—cast in your lot with Christ and with God’s people! You are guilty, but He is gracious and delights to pardon! You feel unworthy, and you are, but Christ receives the most undeserving! Rely upon Him now. You have nothing else that will suffice. Oh, cast yourselves upon Him! Happy shall you be if you do this. Other doings without this were mere legalism and vain, but this is the great work, the master work, the God work, that you believe on Jesus Christ whom God has sent! Trust, then, in Him, and your peace shall be like a river and your righteousness like the waves of the sea. Trifle no longer! Listen no longer merely with the outward ear, but now decide that if there is an inner sense, you will find it—if there is a secret Truth, you will hunt it out until you secure it.

If there is a living Christ to pardon you and make you snowy clean, resolve you will find Him! If there is a road to Heaven, determine to find and walk in it. “And now farewell sin, farewell self-righteousness, farewell the shallow pleasures of this world! Jesus, take my heart just as it is—I give it up to You—and help me to do now what I have never done before—to put in practice what I hear, and carry out what I have been taught.” So may God help you and we will meet in Heaven and we will say together there that this night’s text was true, “If you know these things, happy are you if you do them.” God help you to do them, now, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: HEBREWS 11.

First, a definition of faith.

Verses 1-3. *Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report. Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear. There was no pre-existent matter. The world was made by God’s word, so that prior to the things which are seen, there existed that which is not seen. We, dear Friends, when we are trusting in the unseen God, are*

going back to first principles—we are getting to that which is the essence and the source of all. The next verse illustrates the *worship* of faith.

4. *By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he, being dead, yet speaks.* There is no worshipping God aright except by faith. The most gorgeous ceremonies are as nothing in His sight! It is the faith of the heart which He accepts. Next we read of the *reward* of faith.

5, 6. *By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.* See this reward then—it pleases God—and that is reward enough for anyone of us. Next see faith's *safety*.

7. *By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.* Faith can outlive a deluge which drowns the whole world! She has an Ark even when God's wrath sweeps all the rest away! Next we learn the *obedience* of faith.

8-10. *By faith, Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed: and he went out, not knowing where he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.* Here you have the expectation of faith. Faith does not live on things seen—she lives on something yet to come. That which is to come she regards as eternal, not like a mere tent in which she dwells here, but a city that has foundations, fixed and firm. Next we see the *strength* of faith, that strength seen in the deadness of nature.

11-13. *Through faith, also, Sara herself received strength to conceive seed and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised. Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable. These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.* That is a rich word, they, "embraced them." They were far off and yet faith brought them so near that they seemed to receive them to their hearts and feel the comfort of them! Next is the *confession* of faith.

14-19. *For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.* And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from which they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly one. Therefore God

is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared for them a city. By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only-begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall your seed be called. Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from whence also he received him in a figure. Here you have the *triumph* of faith, one of the greatest victories that was ever achieved by faith, when a man was willing, at God's command, to offer up his son, his only son, his son according to promise, his son in whom all the Covenant was to be fulfilled! In the 20th verse you get the *discernment* of faith, faith foreseeing—

20, 21. *By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff.* You remember 'his discernment, how he crossed his hands willingly that he might lay the right hand upon the younger son. Faith is always giving blessings to others and she knows which way to give them, for God makes her wondrous quick of heart and quick of eye.

22, 23. *By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel: and gave commandment concerning his bones. By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months by his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.* Here is the *courage* of faith—

24, 25. *By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter: Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.* Here is the *choice* of faith—

26. *Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.* Here is the *judgment* of faith, by which she judges wisely, choosing rather to be reproached for Christ than to reign with the world.

27, 28. *By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible. Through faith he kept the Passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest He that destroyed the first-born should touch them.* Here, again, you have the *obedience* of faith, taking God's precepts and carrying them out.

29. *By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned.* There you have the difference between faith and presumption—faith goes through the sea. Presumption is drowned in the sea.

30. *By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.* Here are the *weapons* of faith, the *warfare* of faith, with nothing but her ram's horn trumpet she encompasses the giant walls of the city and down they fall!

31. *By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not when she had received the spies with peace.* Here you have faith uniting itself with the people of God—she perished not with them that believed

not, for she had come out from among them and allied herself with the people of God by receiving the spies.

32-35. *And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae: of David, also, and Samuel, and of the Prophets: Who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, grew valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not excepting deliverance: that they might obtain a better resurrection. Oh the victories of faith! When faith takes to working, how mightily she works.*

36, 37. *And others had trial of cruel mocking and scourging, yes, moreover of bonds and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented. You have seen the works of faith and the sufferings of faith—now you see God's estimate of faith. He counts the believing man to be far beyond the rest of mankind!*

38, 39. *(Of whom the world was not worthy). They wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. All these all having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise. It lay in the future to them far more than it does to us, for Christ has now come and we look back to that glorious appearing of our Lord and Savior, but they had altogether to look forward.*

40. *God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect. For it never was God's intention that any part of His Church should be able to do without the rest of it, so that those who lived before the time of Christ cannot do without us—neither can we do without them.*

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

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

“ON HIS BREAST”

NO. 2052

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S DAY, NOVEMBER 18, 1888,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“Now there was leaning on Jesus’ bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved. Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom He spoke. He then lying on Jesus’ breast said unto Him, Lord, who is it? Jesus answered, He it is to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon.”
John 13: 23-26.

PICTURE the Lord and His Apostles at the holy Supper. A world of interest centers here. Two figures, strangely different, met in this scene—met, shortly afterwards to part and never to meet again. To look upon them, they seemed equally disciples of Jesus and from the position which one of them occupied, as leaning on the Lord’s bosom and the other as the treasurer of the Master’s little store, they seemed to be equally trusted and honored followers of the great Lord. You might not have known, by mere sight, which was the better man of the two—John or Judas.

Most probably you would have preferred the gentle manners of John. But I should suppose—for our Lord never chose a man to an office unless he had some qualification—you would also have admired the calm prudence of Judas and his quiet business tact. No doubt you would have thought that he made an excellent treasurer and you would have been glad that your Master, with so little to spare, had lighted upon so vigilant a guard and so prudent a manager. They sat at the same table, engaged in the same exercises and looked much the same kind of men. None of us would have guessed that one of them was John the Divine and the other was Judas the devil.

One of them was the seer of the Apocalypse, the other was the son of perdition. No doubt there are strange mixtures of character in this very house tonight. There will come to this Table the disciple whom Jesus loves. Him we will welcome, saying, “Come in, you blessed of the Lord.” Alas, there may come here a son of perdition. Him we cannot chase away, for we cannot read his heart. For a time both may act and even feel alike. They may even wear well for years. Apparently they may be equally sincere. And yet the day will come when to the right, in his love and his integrity, the faithful disciple will wend his way up to his Master’s bosom forever.

And to the left, the hypocrite will go to his dreadful end and to that Hell which must receive such traitors as he. There is something very solemn about this meeting of such strangely different characters in one common act and in the society of the same Divine Lord. John is here. Is Judas here? Let the question be started and passed round, “Lord, is it I?” He is

the least likely to be the traitor who is nearest to his Lord's heart. He who occupies such a place as John did is not the betrayer. Oh that we might be fired with a loving ambition to be the disciple whom Jesus loved, leaning on Jesus' bosom!

For then, though we ask the question, "Lord, is it I?" it will not linger long upon our hearts. For His love, shed abroad within them, shall answer every question of self-examination and we shall cry, "Lord, You know all things, You know that I love You." Let that stand as an introduction. Glance at yourself and your Brethren at the table and say—How far shall we be like our Lord and the twelve? Will Peter and James and John and Judas all live over again in the assembly of tonight for the breaking of bread? And now our remarks will be very simple.

I. And the first is this—SOME DISCIPLES ARE SPECIALLY LOVED OF THEIR LORD. We believe in the doctrine of election but the principle of election goes to be carried farther than some suppose. There is an election in the midst of the election and another within that. The wider circle contains the inner and a still more select circle forms the innermost ring of all. The Lord had a people around Him who were His disciples. Within them He had twelve. Within the twelve He had three. Within the three He had one disciple whom He loved. And I suppose that what took place around His blessed Person on earth takes place on a larger scale around His adorable Person which is the center of His Church both militant and triumphant.

Probably our Lord's attachment to John was partly a human one. And so far as it were human, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now after the flesh we know Him no more. Any merely human affection which our Lord Jesus bore for John may have passed away. There may, also, have been such affection in Jesus toward John as there would be in any eminent Christian towards another Christly Believer—in anyone whom the Lord made to be a leader of His Church, towards such-and-such a member of that Church in whom He could see most of the lovely characteristics of Himself. I cannot but think that it was so.

But it strikes me that our Lord Jesus loved John in some measure more than the rest, in the entirety of His character, as Jesus Christ, the Son of God as well as the Son of Man. We know that He loved all His disciples. For when my Brother read the chapter just now, how like music did those words sound, "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end"! He loved not *some* of His own. But *all* of them. He loved all His own then and He loves all His own now. There is infinite love in the heart of Jesus towards all His people. And if there are any degrees in that love, yet the lowest degree is inconceivably great.

The very least member of the Divine family may say, "He loved me and gave Himself for me." He loves us beyond all human expression. Beyond all human conception. The great heart of the eternal Father, the great heart of the eternal Son, the great heart of the ever-blessed Spirit, the great heart of the Trinity in unity, beats with love—with love to all the elect, to all the redeemed, to all the called, to all the sanctified people of

God. We are quite sure of this. Yet that love has this difference about it, that it is more enjoyed by some on earth than by others.

It is clear, as a matter of fact, that the Divine Love is manifested to some more clearly than to others. My beloved Brethren, you must know this to be the case. For there are those among us who walk with God, who enjoy the light of Jehovah's countenance, at all times. Who, if depressed, have the art of rolling their burden upon the Lord and soon are delivered from it. You know them, they are the Brethren who feel like singing all the while, for Jesus is their Friend, and they rejoice in Him. There was one in the Old Testament who was called "a man greatly beloved," and there are Daniels on earth even now. Christ has among women still His Marys, whom He loves. He loved Martha, too. But still there was a special place for Mary.

Jesus has still His Johns, whom He peculiarly loves. He loves Peter and Nicodemus and Nathanael and all of them. But still, there are some who know His love more than others, live in it more than others, drink of it more than others, reflect it more than others and become more conformed to it and saturated with it and perfumed with it, than others are. There are first as well as last. All may be of Israel but all the tribes are not Judah and in Judah all the men are not Davids. Who shall deny that there are degrees in Divine Grace? Have we not among us babes and young men and fathers? Have we not first the blade, then the ear and then the full corn in the ear? It is so.

And though I will not argue for degrees in Heaven and, indeed, deprecate the spirit in which the doctrine of degrees in Gory is often set forth, yet we are sure, for we see it with our eyes, that there are degrees of Divine Grace and especially degrees in the enjoyment of the love of Jesus. Among those who do really love their Lord and are really loved by Him, one star differs from another in the glory of that love.

Why was John made "that disciple whom Jesus loved"? Certainly it was not because he was naturally higher in rank than the others, for he was a fisherman, like the most of them. And James was certainly equal in birth, for he was his brother. Our blessed Lord did not love John because of any excess of talent—albeit that John's Apocalypse and his Gospel are, in some respects, the highest parts of revealed Scripture, being both the simplest and the most mysterious portions of Holy Writ. Yet we should not say that John betrayed evidence of so great a mind in itself, naturally, or by education, as Paul had.

He had as much talent as His Lord gave him but there was nothing about him so special that he should for that cause have been loved. And to dismiss the thought with a word, Jesus never loves men on account of talent and we should be unwise if we ourselves did so. These things are external to the man. Our Lord loved John, especially, for a better reason than that. Why did our blessed Lord love John better than others? I can only reply that He exercises a sovereignty of choice and it is not for us to ask the why and wherefore of the movements of the sacred heart. Surely, nothing should be left so free as the love of the Son of God. Let Him love whom He wills. He has an unquestionable right to do so.

But if we venture reverently to look into the familiar love of Jesus, we shall not fail to see that there was about John, through Divine Grace, a most loving spirit. Men love those that are like they and Jesus, as Man, loved John because the processes of Grace had developed in John the image of Jesus. John, like his Lord, had much love. He may have lacked some qualities in which Peter and James and others excelled but he towered above them all in love. He was full of tenderness, and therefore, his Master at once selected him to be His choicest companion and His dearest friend. You know the way, then, to the heart of Christ—let your own heart be full of love and you will know His love. He loves you, you know, altogether apart from anything that is in you, of His own rich and Sovereign Grace.

But for the special manifestation of that love, for your personal enjoyment of it, to fit you for such enjoyment, you must have much love to Him. You greatly need, not a great head, but a great heart. You must have, not more knowledge, but more affection. Not a higher rank in society, but a higher rank in the power to love Jesus and to love your fellow men. Less of self, and more of Jesus and then you shall enjoy more of His love. This being the case, that John had this loving spirit and our Lord Jesus Christ loved him more than others, it led on to the fact that John was the recipient of confidences from Christ which others had not.

I will show you that farther on. But certainly it seems to me that John was made by Jesus His executor and He left him in His will all His earthly possessions. You will say to me, "And pray what possessions had the Master?" Well, He had one possession of which He was very fond and He could not die until He had disposed by His last will and testament of that one earthly possession. It was His mother. He loved her and must care for her. And there passed a little word, a kind of sign, between Him and John at the last moment. Do not think that John would have understood what Jesus meant when He said—"Woman, behold your son," and, "Son, behold your mother!" if there had not been a quiet talk about that matter some time before.

But Jesus, I doubt not, had told John that the only earthly care He had, as Man, was that while He was away slumbering in the grave He would have his mother cared for. And so He left her in John's charge. If you love Jesus Christ very much He will leave something in your charge, depend upon that. And the more you love Him, the more will He trust you with some loving commission which He would not trust with anybody else. I have known Him leave a dear child of His, some dear old saint, for a favored Believer to look after, whom he never would have had to look after if Jesus had not said—"I love this dear old saint and I shall commit him—I shall commit her—to the custody of such a one, because he loves Me and he will take care of this poor one for My sake."

Some of you have nobody to care for. Little know you of Christ's trustfulness towards you—He has not trusted you with anything. Do you not grieve to think that you lack this token of His special love? As sure as ever there is any intimate love between Jesus and any soul, He trusts that soul with something to be done, to be endured, to be guarded, to be mourned

over, or in some way to become a sacred trust. Thus love has occupation, proof, and expression, and this she ever longs for. I know my Master loves me and I rejoice in His love. And sometimes, when I think of this great Church and the College and the Orphanage and the many cares the whole service brings into my heart, I have said, "Have I begotten all this multitude, that I should carry all of them in my bosom and bear their griefs and be troubled with their troubles?" and the answer has always seemed to come to me, "You love Me and I trust you to look after these souls, to help them and care for them, for My sake."

It is so with you that have classes to look after, or families to care for—attend to them, for Jesus' sake. If it is only one little one, hear Jesus say, "Take this child and nurse it for Me and I will give you your wages." You have a charge, each one. And if you have none, I should be afraid you may be Judas, for I cannot think you are John. Had there been the love between you and the Lord which existed between John and Jesus, Jesus would have whispered into your ear about somebody of whom He would say, "Care for him. Care for him for MY sake." And you would have answered, "Lord, that I will—the more You give to me to do for You, the more happy will I be, because I love You and because this trust proves that You do love me."

There is the first head—we perceive Jesus loves some of His disciples more than others.

II. Now, secondly, we note that THE BELOVED ONES COUNT THIS TO BE THEIR GREATEST HONOR. This is evidently in the text. For John, who wrote these words, called himself, "one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved." And I think three times besides he speaks of himself as "that disciple whom Jesus loved." He took his name from his Lord's love, which he evidently counted to be his greatest honor. This was John's most notable title. As a servant of the Queen, having distinguished himself in the service of Her Majesty, becomes the lord of such-and-such a town and he takes the name of the place as a name of honor, so John drops his own birth-given name, as it were, and takes this title instead—"that disciple whom Jesus loves."

He wears it as a Knight of the Garter, or of the Golden Fleece, wears the mark of his Sovereign's esteem. He took it for his honor. And yet, Beloved, there was not a grain of boasting in it, nor even an approach to glorying in the flesh. A sense of love makes us happy but not haughty. How can I proudly boast that Jesus loves me? If you are loved of Him, you will feel that you so little merit it—indeed, that you so altogether demerit it—that you will be amazed to think that He loves you and it will never enter into your head that His love is your due. You will take the title of love but you will give the honor back to Jesus and often you will say—

***"And when I shall die,
'Receive me,' I'll cry,
For Jesus has loved me,
I cannot tell why."***

You will not be able to tell why the Lord loves you so. This will be the wonder of eternity. But there will be no pride in the experience of being dear to the Lord, nor anything to excite self-laudation. You will feel that it

would be a wicked thing to deny His matchless love but yet you will not carnally triumph over others because of it. There would be pride in the affectation of a modesty which would doubt the love of Jesus but there is no pride in the reception of that love, since you yourself are so evidently, so conspicuously undeserving, that no one will dream that Jesus could have loved you because there was anything good in you.

Now, had John been proud, he would have altered the title thus. He would have said, "That disciple who loved Jesus." This would have been true, though not modest. There was, as far as his heart was capable of it, a reciprocity of love between John and Jesus. If Jesus loved him, he loved Jesus. But John never called himself, "That disciple who loved Jesus." No, for he felt as if his own love were altogether unworthy of mention in the presence of the love of Jesus.

Then notice also, as if to show us that there was no pride in taking the title, that he does not say, "John was the disciple whom Jesus loved." We gather from other facts that it was John. All the traditions and beliefs of the early Church went to testify that it was John. We have not, any of us, any doubt about the fact that it was John. It has, as it were, leaked out. But John nowhere says that he was the man. All that he has said is, "That disciple whom Jesus loved." And thus he makes the *love* more conspicuous than the person who received it. We know that it must have been John for many reasons. But still he does not say so. He hides John behind the love of Jesus, which proves that John gloried in the love of Christ but did not boast of it egotistically.

Bengel tells us that John's name means "the love of Jehovah." If you look at Cruden's translation, in the list of the meanings of names in the Concordance, he puts it "the Grace of God," the grace of Jehovah. Bengel reads it "the love of the Lord"—so John just altered the name a little and paraphrased it when he wrote, "whom Jesus loved." It would go into shorter compass if he put it in the Hebrew and would need but little alteration. Sometimes when men succeed to estates, it is a condition that they shall change their names—in this case the name was very little altered from "the loved one of God" into the "loved one of Jesus Christ." And there is no alteration (is there?) in the real meaning of it. When he said, "That disciple whom Jesus loved," it was John "written large." That is all.

It was John a little altered under the New Testament dispensation, the old name sweetened and perfumed by bringing it near to the sweeter name of Jesus Christ his Lord. So precious has its nearness to Jesus made it, that perhaps next to the name of Jesus no name is sweeter than that of John. As Ivan, or Evan, it has a most evangelical, Gospel, sound. It is common in many forms throughout Christendom and many of the noblest disciples have worn it, from John Chrysostom to John Calvin and from John Bunyan to John Wesley and John Newton. In any case the honor of being loved by Jesus is greater than the name John. And happy are they who can claim it!

There are some, then, whom Jesus loves more than others and these men always count that love to be their highest honor.

III. A step farther. A third remark—that THIS SPECIAL LOVE BRINGS SUCH MEN SPECIAL PRIVILEGES. It brought to John the first privilege of being very near to Jesus, his Lord. At that supper he was nearest to the place which Jesus occupied. You know they lay along at the supper somewhat in this fashion—leaning upon the left arm, so as to have the right with which to help themselves to each dish. Now John lay here and Jesus Christ lay just there—so that, when John turned a little backward there was the bosom of Jesus for him to put his head upon. And I suppose that when John asked the question, "Lord, who is it?" he turned his head over and said into his very ear, "Lord, who is it?"

Nobody heard what he said. It was just whispered into the ear of his Lord when his head was in that sacred bosom. And the answer was not heard by anybody except John. But his position of being nearest was brought about by his being best loved. He was nearest in fellowship because dearest in love. Now, Beloved, if you are best loved by Christ, you live nearest to Him. I am sure of it. If you love Him best and He loves you best, you will be more in prayer than others. You will spend more time alone with Jesus than other Christians do. You will abound in petition and praise. You will read His Word with greater diligence. You will drink it in with greater delight.

You will live for Him, too, with greater consecration. Your whole time will be spent in His company. When you are at your work in the house, or the field, or the shop, you will still be with Him. If you are better loved than others, your daily song will be—

***"The day is dark, the night is long,
Unblest with thoughts of You,
And dull to me the sweetest song,
Unless its theme be You."***

"He feeds among the lilies," and keeps near the pure in heart. Our Well-Beloved's delights are with those who delight in Him. You will be close to Jesus if you are dear to Him. The two things go together. If you are living far away in the cold regions of broken fellowship, then I am sure you have but very little conscious enjoyment of the love of Jesus Christ your Lord. The dearest must be the nearest. That is the first privilege.

The second was the privilege of using and receiving tokens of endearment. He leaned his head on Jesus' bosom, looking up into His face. And Jesus looked down on him. There was mutual endearment, for Jesus loved Him and he loved Jesus. And that night, when the blessed Master was in trouble, He wanted His friend with Him and felt a need for John, though he could not help Him much. Jesus felt a need of John's society and sympathy and it made Christ's bosom all the easier to have John's beloved head on it. As for John, it must have been a Heaven below to be thus in the bosom of his Lord. He mentions it three times, you see—twice in this passage and once in the last chapter of his Gospel, where there was no necessity for mentioning it.

He had such a remembrance of his head having once been laid on his Lord's breast, that he must put it in when he is speaking about Peter and himself. He says, "The disciple which also leaned on His breast at supper and said, Lord, which is he that betrays you?" He must needs repeat the

charming fact, for it was such a delight to him. O Beloved, we cannot now touch the bosom of Jesus after the flesh, for He is gone up on high. But there are still most sweet endearments of spirit between the Lord Jesus and His loving disciples. I must not tell abroad the secrets of love, for these things are for those that know them and not for all comers. Choice passages between true hearts are not to be published in the street, lest they become the theme of ridicule.

Pearls are not to be cast before swine. But believe me, at this moment we have, or at least we can have, such intimate enjoyment of the love of Jesus, that even if He were here and we could lean our heads upon His bosom, the endearment could not be more certain, more sweet, or more ravishing to our delighted souls. In very truth we have fellowship with Jesus and that fellowship is no dream or fancy. We speak no fiction, neither do we repeat what others have experienced but we speak of things which we have personally enjoyed. And we know that there is an intimate communion which is one of the private privileges of those whom Jesus loves much, for it has been our privilege. I hope very many of you know this choice blessing of living in the immediate enjoyment of your Savior's love. May you never lose it!

Then is there a third benefit, not only of nearness and endearment but of confidence towards the Lord. For it was a bold thing, surely, for John to lean his head on Christ's bosom. Our Lord did not say, "No, John. No. I am your Master and your Lord. Do you do this to Me as if I were your equal?" No. The meaning of that blessed text, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out," runs in other directions besides that which we generally think of. If you come to Jesus in the most intense manner, He will not repulse you. If your head shall come into His bosom, He will not cast your head out. If you can get your very heart into His heart and come closer to Him than even John dared to do—if you carry that coming beyond all previous comings—yet Jesus neither will, nor can, resent the nearest approaches of anyone of His believing people.

We lose a great deal of Christ's loving fellowship because we are so formal and distant towards Him. We seem to think that He came among men to show them their distance from God and not to be as a Brother to them, to reveal God to them. Jesus seeks to reach our hearts, He stoops to our littleness. Let us pluck up courage to draw near to Him. Well does our hymn put it—

***"Let us be simple with Him, then,
Not backward, stiff, or cold;
As though our Bethlehem could be
What Sinai was of old."***

Lean on him. Lean on the bosom of the Christ of God who loves us and has given Himself for us. Make a confidant as well as a confidence of your Lord. Put all the weight of your care, all the weight of your whole self, and all that concerns you upon Him and then recline with delight upon His bosom.

There was a gracious confidence given to John, which he rightly used towards his Lord. Surely there was a great liberty given to him. Some would have said he took a liberty in thus leaning where no head of king or

emperor might aspire to rise. He was the most honored of all human beings. But surely he took great liberties. No, he did not, for the Lord Himself gave him access with boldness. Great love has privileges which make her boldest advances no intrusion. Love has the key of all the rooms of the Father's house. Love has the range of Paradise. Love may read the very heart of God. Love may come where she wills and go unchallenged.

John said to our Savior, "Lord, who is it?" Jesus looked down at him and said, as if He did not want the others to know at all, "He it is to whom I shall give a sop." He had just to watch a little while. I do not know but it is not improbable that Judas was next at the table—John here, then Jesus and then Judas. Very likely Judas was pretty close to the Lord. For if a man has your purse you want him near you, so as to tell him what you wish to have done with the money. So, when Jesus just turned over and gave a sop to Judas, John knew the meaning of the act. Judas had had his conscience disturbed, I should think, by the utterance of the Savior, when He said, "He that eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me," and by the question of each of the others, "Lord, is it I?"

Judas himself asked that question for a time. But he grew calm again and became reassured and thought he should not be found out. Then the Lord dipped a piece of meat, according to the Oriental custom, in the sauce of the dish and passed it to him. Even then Judas possibly thought, "This is an act of great friendship. He evidently has the utmost confidence in me and has not found me out." Little did he know that the sop was the token of the discovered traitor. Then Judas said, "Lord, is it I?" thinking he should get a pleasant answer, but Jesus answered that it was even he and added, "What you do, do quickly." There that matter ended. But John was thus the recipient of friendly confidence on the part of Christ—he told to Jesus his heart and Jesus told him His heart. He had liberty to go to Christ.

Ah, Brethren! Do you ever feel in prayer as if you were tied up and could not pray? The best of saints will be bound about some things. People come and ask you to pray for this and pray for that. But you cannot so pray unless you have liberty from the Throne. If God gives the prayer of faith, you can pray it—but you cannot pray that prayer at your own will. He that can most often pray the prayer of faith, he that can see farthest into Christ's mysteries, he that can read the riddles of this Divine Samson, is the man whose heart loves Jesus best and whose head lies most in the bosom of his Lord. Be sure of this—if you love much, you shall know the secret of the Lord—for it is with them that fear Him He will show His Covenant.

Now a step farther and a very little more and we have done. This creates special knowledge. I merely give it as a head to help your memories, for I have already dwelt upon it as a matter of fact. The special privileges of love lead on to a special knowledge of Christ. I do not think that any other Evangelist notices Christ's emotion at the supper in the matter of His spirit as John has done. He writes, "When Jesus had thus said, He was troubled in spirit," and so on. John was so close to the Lord, with his head on His breast, that he could tell, by the heaving of His bosom, that

he was troubled. The mind of God is not so revealed to any man now that he can set up to foretell the future like a Prophet. But, mark you, the choice ones among the saints have intimations of the mind of God about many things.

Those who live at court can often foresee the king's movements when others cannot. It is my firm conviction that favored Believers have tokens, warnings and hints from above. Did not the Lord say, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" Even the choicest spirits may not understand the Lord's meaning all at once. But if any man can read anything of the future, it is he that puts his head where all eyes grow clear and all hearts become pure, even upon the breast of Jesus. Oh, to know Christ! The day will come when the saints of God who are great classics, mathematicians, or astronomers—and there have been godly men skilled in all the sciences—the day, I say, shall come when these will count all they know of science to be of little worth compared with the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus their Lord.

Brethren, we value knowledge, culture, science. But when we put them at their highest market price, what are they as compared with the knowledge of Jesus? This is my one ambition—that I may know Him and may comprehend with all saints what are the heights and depths and lengths and breadths and know the love of Christ which passes knowledge. If you love your Lord, you shall know of His doctrine. If you live near Him, you shall understand His feelings. If His secret is with you, you shall know what Prophets and kings desired to know and what angels desire to look into. The Lord bless you and bring each one of you who are His people into this happy condition.

I have done, when I notice two things. The first is this—that the favored position which John occupied did not screen him from the necessity of asking the question, "Lord, is it I?" There really was no suspicion of him, nor any reason for such suspicion. But his heart was in a right state and, therefore, he felt it necessary to say, "Lord, is it I?" as well as any of the rest. And I make this remark because the very persons who do not say, "Lord, is it I?" are those who ought to say it. If you are enjoying more of God's love tonight than ever you did in your life, yet do not profess to have climbed above the need of self-examination, when the question comes, "Are you really one of His?" do not chase it away, as if it were an impertinence?

Entertain the enquiry till you can satisfy it with a sufficient answer. Some professors can afford to sneer at holy anxiety. May I never be of their number! I have heard them ridicule the question—

***"Do I love the Lord or no?
Am I His, or am I not?"***

Now, I do not hesitate to say that every man who loves the Lord has had to ask that question. And has had to ask it all the more because the truth and fervency of his love have made him jealous of himself. He has such an overwhelming sense of what his love ought to be and he has such a consciousness of shortcoming, that he is quite sure to say, "Do I love the

Lord?" It is not your bold talker that is your true lover after all. There is a confidence which is fatal—

***"He who never doubted of his state,
He may—perhaps he may too late."***

If you say, "I am rich and increased in goods and have need of nothing," while you are naked and poor and miserable, it will be a sad deception and the awakening out of it will be sadder still. But if you say, "Oh that I loved my Redeemer more! Oh that I served Him better! But I do love Him. My heart is His and He does love me," then you have answered the question of, "Lord, is it I?" and you may go your way contented.

The other remark, with which I finish, is this—that John's nearness to Christ did not authorize him to make answer to his fellow disciples, nor to judge any of them. Time was when John might have sat in judgment over them. Did he not desire to sit upon a throne judging the twelve tribes of Israel with his brother James? But now that he has his head in his Lord's bosom, he is not anxious to judge, but far otherwise. His Brethren keep asking, "Lord, is it I?" Peter makes signs to him. Fishermen have ways of their own of talking to one another. Peter seems to say, without the use of words, "Pray ask the Master." John does not presume to make a guess as to the traitor's name but he softly says, "Lord, who is it?" He asked that question of his Lord. But he did not himself pitch upon Judas.

No, he might, perhaps, have laid his suspicions upon someone else who would have been innocent. It was wise to refer the matter to the Lord. Some say that they live very near to Jesus. It is an evil sign when men speak of their own attainments. These are the people who, in the next breath, begin to condemn others. But this is not after the manner of the beloved John. Some professors affirm that they are going to have a particularly fine place in Glory, all by themselves. I do not quite understand their theory but I am sure I do not grudge any of my Master's servants any special honor they may desire. As far as I understand them, there is to be a separate place in the kingdom for them, and we poor, ordinary Christians are to be saved—but we must take a lower room. So let it be. We will rejoice in the promotion of our Brethren.

As for myself, if it should ever come to pass that I should have the privilege of living in some first avenue in Heaven among the aristocracy of the skies, I think I should prefer another quarter. I have kept company on earth with such a poor lot of Brethren and I have learned to love them so well that I would rather abide with them in their inferior Heaven than rise with the cream of the cream into the upper places. I like to be with God's people of the poorer class and of the more struggling and afflicted sort. I like to be with God's people who wrestle hard with sins and doubts and fears. If I get spoken to by my very superior Brethren, I find that I have very little pleasant fellowship with them, for I know nothing about their wonderful experience of freedom from conflict and complete deliverance from every evil tendency.

I have never won an inch of the way to Heaven without fighting for it. I have never lived a day but I have had to sorrow over my imperfections. I sometimes get near to God but at that time I weep most about my faults

and failings. Although I have thus spoken after the manner of men, I do not believe in these superior beings, nor in their superior Heaven—but even if I did, I would sooner follow with the flock than run ahead with the greyhounds.

These Brethren judge us and condemn us. They say that we do not understand "the mystery of the kingdom," or something or other. We know Jesus Christ, however—both theirs and ours. We will not deny their piety and grace but bless God that they have so much of them. We hope, however, to get to Heaven the same as they and into Glory the same as they. And we will be glad if so the Lord will enable us. Do you find the spirit of self-exaltation and of condemning others coming over you at times? Conquer it at once by the Holy Spirit's power. Let us cease to judge where we are forbidden to do so. Let us contend earnestly for the Truth of God—but as to the hearts of men—let us leave that to Jesus.

I close by saying—you remember what Jesus said to Peter? Peter was always a little too fast and he therefore ventured to peer into things which did not concern him and so he said to Jesus, as he looked at John, "Lord and what shall this man do?" He did not think badly of Brother John—I should have been ashamed of Peter if he had done so. But still he said, "What shall this man do?" Our blessed Lord replied to him, "What is that to you? Follow you Me." So, when you feel inclined, because you are growing in Divine Grace and becoming somebody, to say, "Lord and what shall this poor member do? And what shall this imperfect Brother be? What shall that poor, blundering new convert do?"—remember the words of Jesus—"What is that to you? Follow you Me."

Mind your Master and mind yourself and let your Brethren stand or fall to their own Lord, as you must. Now, come and lay your head in your Lord's bosom and never mind Peter. May God bless you, for Christ's sake!

LETTER FROM C.H. SPURGEON

Westwood, November 13, 1888.

BELOVED FRIENDS—After a great fight of afflictions, I have had sufficient rest from pain to enjoy the revision of this sermon, concerning which I will only say that it was sweet in the studying, sweet in the preaching and sweet in the preparation for the press—sweet, I mean, to my own heart. May it be as refreshing to every reader!

May I beg the personal favor of the prayers of my Brethren? I am very weak. If the Lord will, I would like to journey to my place of rest—but pray rather that God may be glorified in my sickness and it will suffice me.

Your suffering brother,

C. H. SPURGEON.

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JESUS WASHING HIS DISCIPLES' FEET

NO. 612

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BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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*“Then He came to Simon Peter: and Peter said unto Him,
Lord, do You wash my feet?”
John 13:6.*

OUR Savior had so steadfastly set His face towards the awful sufferings of His passion that when they actually approached He was not in the slightest degree disturbed or disconcerted. If you were perfectly aware that tomorrow morning, after a night of terrible agony, you would be led forth to a cruel and ignominious death you would probably feel like men distracted with terrible apprehensions. At any rate, if through Divine Grace you were able to be calm and peaceful, your mind would scarcely be in a fit state to minister consolation to others, or to conceive new methods of instruction for your friends.

But behold your Lord and Master! It is eventide of the same night in which He was betrayed. He foreknows that the bloody sweat within an hour or two will crimson all His flesh. He is well aware that he who is eating bread with Him will that night betray Him. He foresees that He must feel the Roman scourge and be the victim of Jewish slander. He knows right well that He must bear all the wrath of God on the behalf of His people. And yet He sits at supper. He feasts as if no unusual cloud were lowering. And when the supper is over His inventive mind is fully at work with admirable plans of instruction for His disciples and among the rest He takes off His upper garment.

He wraps Himself about the loins with a towel. He goes to them as they are reclining at full length around the table and coming behind them He begins to wash the feet of first one, and then another! What blessed calmness of mind! What hallowed serenity of spirit! O that our hearts were equally fixed on God in our days of trial and grief! Without question we may go further and take most solemn notice that there was in the near approach of death a joy in Jesus' heart into which no stranger could enter.

Now was about to be accomplished that which He had longed for. Did He not say, “I have a Baptism to be baptized with and how am I straitened till it is accomplished. With desire have I desired to eat this Passover with you before I die”? Did this account for His giving out a hymn of praise on that doleful night? “After supper they sang a hymn.” Did that account for His adding these remarkable words—“Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in Him”? Did His joy in the prospect of what He was about to accomplish for His people swell to the very highest just about the time when the fountains of the depths of His griefs were about to be broken up

and His spirit to be flooded in agony as He cried, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death"?

O to know His joy—the joy of loving even unto death! Let us come at once to the teaching of the Savior and let it be surrounded with an unusual interest because of the fact that it is His dying teaching. Let us see Him as He girds Himself with the towel, remembering that He was soon to be girt with the bands of death! Let us see Him, I say, with a more profound interest because He is just upon the verge of these terrible depths where all the waves and billows of Jehovah's justice dashed over Him.

His sermon beginning, "Let not your heart be troubled," is His swan song. These are the last drops of His life that He is now spending—at the supper table you have the wine which He keeps until now. As we see Him washing His disciples' feet we shall discover choice love worthy of the last solemn hour of departure. We shall take the text in four ways. First here is matter for enquiry, "Lord, do You wash my feet?" Secondly, here is matter for admiration—"Lord, do You wash my feet?" Thirdly, here is matter for gratitude. Fourthly, here is matter for imitation.

I. HERE IS MATTER FOR ENQUIRY. We know that the Savior washed the feet of Peter, but does He wash our feet, also? We do not expect, of course, the literal transaction to take place. But is there anything in the conduct of Christ now analogous to His washing Peter's feet when on earth? He has washed all Believers, once and for all, in His most precious blood.

But of this we do not speak this morning. Cleansing, as before the bar of justice, is completely accomplished forever for all the chosen by the great blood-shedding upon Calvary. That is a matter of the past—a thing for which to bless God for all eternity. "We are clean, through Jesus' blood we are clean." But here is another kind of washing—not of the entire man, but of the *feet* only. Not with blood, but with water—not in the fountain filled from the Savior's veins—but in a basin filled with water. Does our Lord Jesus do anything of this kind now? Does He do anything so humbling to Himself and yet so needful for us?

We answer, yes, He does. And, first, does not the Savior perform an action parallel with this when He watches over the temporal affairs of His people? You know, Beloved, that not a hair of your head falls to the ground without His care. In all your afflictions He is afflicted, and as the Angel of God's Presence, He saves you and carries you. Your most trifling trouble may be taken in prayer to Christ and spread before Him with as much certainty of deliverance as when Hezekiah spread Sennacherib's letter before the Lord—for Jesus waits to be gracious to His own. In every transaction we should adore the providential care of our great Shepherd and Friend for the government is upon His shoulders.

Now, when Jesus thus superintends your mean affairs, looks to your family troubles and bears your household cares, saying unto you, "Cast all your care on Me, for I care for you," is He not, in effect, doing for you what He did for Peter? Is He not washing your feet—for He is caring for your lowest part and minding the poor dust-stained body. O King of Glory, the stars would not make a crown worthy of You! The tempest is but a

poor chariot for Your Glory and the winds are but slow coursers to be harnessed to Your cart. And yet You stoop from all this greatness to observe man, who is less than a worm! To observe *me*—less than the least of all Your saints—and to care for me as a mother cares for her child!

It is even so! He does do it—He does, in this sense, wash His people's feet! When Jesus Christ puts away from us day by day our daily infirmities and sins, does He not wash our feet? Last night, when you bowed the knee, you could not help confessing that there had been much in the week's transactions which was not worthy of your standing and profession. And even tonight, when the engagements of this day are over, you will have to mourn that you foolishly committed the very sins which you repented of weeks ago.

You will have to admit that you have fallen again into the very sloughs of folly and sin from which special Grace delivered you long ago. And yet Jesus Christ will have great patience with you! He will hear your confession of sin! He will say, "I will, be you clean." He will again apply the blood of sprinkling—He will speak peace to your conscience and remove every spot. Oh, it is a great act of eternal love when Christ, once and for all absolves the sinner, takes him from under the dominion of the Law and puts him into the family of God! But what long-suffering and patience there is when the Savior, with much long-suffering, bears the daily follies of the recipient of so much mercy! Day by day and hour by hour He puts away the constant sin of the erring but yet beloved child!

To dry up a flood of sin is something marvelous—but to endure the constant dropping of daily sins—to bear with that constant weary trying of patience, this is Divine, indeed! To blot out the whole of sin like a thick cloud is a great and matchless power, as well as Grace—but to remove the mist of every morning and the damp of every night—oh, this is condescension! I wish I could describe it—it is condescension well imaged in the washing of Peter's feet. Consider again. Our poor prayers which are very much the feet of our soul—since with them we climb to Heaven, with them we run after God—our poor prayers always need washing!

It is oftentimes easier, Brothers and Sisters, to do a thing over at once than it is to mend and patch up a work which has been badly done by others. Then what patience it must require in Christ's case to take my poor, imperfect and polluted prayers and make them fit to be presented before His Father's face! There are His own prayers for me—I thank Him for them—for they prevail. But I cannot help also blessing Him that He should take *my* prayers and put them into the censer and offer them before His Father's face—for I am certain that before they can have been fit to offer they must have experienced a deal of washing.

John tells us that He offers "the prayers of saints"—this is humbling Himself, indeed! Oh, how much of redundancy must have been taken away from our petitions when we have asked for what we ought not to have desired! How much of omission must have been made up when we have forgotten to ask for the things which we most needed! How much of unbelief He must take out of our prayers! How much coldness, deadness of heart! How much formality, wandering of thought! O how much holy life

and unction, holy faith and holy joy, must the dear Redeemer infuse into our supplications before they are fit to come up before the ears of the Lord God of Hosts! Yes, in patiently bearing with my prayers He does daily wash my feet.

Think again. Jesus makes our works acceptable. These may be compared to the soul's feet. It is by the feet that a man expresses his activity—the walk of a Christian—by this we mean the good works which the Christian performs for his Master. But look at our works! If Christ would simply throw all our good works into a heap and let them rot, that would be most deserving of them. If He would take our almsgiving, our preaching, our teaching of others, our prayers and thoughts and works all together and just cast them into Tophet's fire—how dare we complain? But instead of that He is not unrighteous to forget our work of faith and labor of love, but counts that here His Father is glorified in that we bear much fruit.

We remember to have heard of someone who made sugar out of old rags. But then it was found that the sugar cost a great deal more than the sugar was worth. The manufacture cost was more than the goods were worth when produced. And judging from our point of view, this is something like our works. Jesus Christ makes sweetness out of the poor rags of our good works—surely I may say they cost Him more in the manufacturing than ever the raw material could have been worth, or the finished works themselves are worth, except in His esteem. Could He not, if He pleased, convert men without our preaching? But He will not do it! He would rather that they should be brought in by our imperfect preaching and therefore He washes our preaching—He washes our feet!

Could He not save sinners without you, my Sister—without you, my Brother? And yet He sets you longing after souls and opens your mouth to speak a good word to them. And He accepts what you do! But oh, what condescension is there! What tenderness, what Divine stooping from His loftiness, that He should cleanse our works! It is more than He ever did for angels! When an angel had defiled his service, He banished him from Heaven. But with all the imperfection of our service, we expect that in Christ we shall be welcomed into Heaven with the words, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

If you want other instances of the familiar condescension of Christ, let me remind you of how patiently He is content to suffer in His people's sufferings. Not a pang shoots through that head of yours but Jesus knows and feels it! Not a grief makes that bosom heave in which Christ is not a partaker. "I will make all their bed in their sickness." Oh, what a blessed text is that! As one old expositor says, "Not merely make their pillow, but their bolster and their bed and make all their bed, where their feet lie, where their head lies. All, all of it. I will come and I will have such sympathy with them in their entire grief, that from the beginning to the end of it I will make them happy in the midst of grief through My Divine consolations." "I will make all their bed in their sickness."

Have you not had choice manifestations from Christ in your worst seasons—so exactly fitted to the peculiarity of your case—that you did not know which to admire most, the love which visited you, or the conde-

scending care which so brought itself down to your case? He sat down at your bedside and put His loving care so entirely into your position that it felt as you felt and speak to you just the words which your case required. The Lord Jesus loves His people so, that every day He is washing their feet! Their poorest action He accepts. Their deepest sorrow He feels. Their smallest wish He hears and their greatest sin He forgives. He is still their servant as well as their friend—still He takes the basin—still He wears the towel.

It is not only *majestic* deeds that He performs—as wearing the miter on His brow and the precious jewels glittering on His breastplate! He stands up to plead humbly, patiently—like a servant He goes about among His people—washing His disciples' feet. I would to God I could speak worthily on such a theme as this! But it is true, as your experience must tell you, that, “He remembers our low estate, for His mercy endures forever.” Before I pass from this point, it is a matter of enquiry for some here—“Lord, do You wash my feet?” Some of you are not washed by Christ, for you live without thinking of Him. “I never did any harm,” says one, “that I know of.” I will ask you another question—what did you ever do *for* Christ? Can you answer that? You must reply “I have done nothing for Him whatever.”

Ah, then, if you have never been enabled to do anything for Him, I fear it is because you have lived thoughtlessly, without a care for Him. But, if He had ever washed your feet, you could not forget Him. And little as it might be, yet you would have done something and you would now be desiring to do more. Ah, my Hearers, some of you are so far from ever having your feet washed daily that you have never been washed at all! “There is a fountain filled with blood,” but filled in vain, as far as *you* are concerned. There is a Savior, but *you* are unsaved. There is balm in Gilead, but *you* are not healed. There is a Physician there, but you are still sick! There is life in Christ, but you are dead!

The bronze serpent is lifted up but you are dying of the fiery serpent's bite. One look at Jesus will save—but that look you have not given—you are without God, without Christ, without hope and “strangers from the commonwealth of Israel.” May God the Holy Spirit visit you with His quickening power and convince you of your sin this morning! May He make you feel uneasy till you find Christ! May He give you a hunger and a thirst after Him that will never be satisfied till you clasp Him in your arms and say, “Christ is mine!”

I would to God that I had not to make this remark, but I must make it in faithfulness to your souls. You are obliged to answer, “No, no, no. The Lord Jesus has never washed my feet.” But then send up the prayer, “Lord, do it! Lord, do it now for Your love's sake.”

II. Our text is, in the second place, **MATTER FOR ADMIRATION** and that, too, in several respects. It is matter for admiration when we consider the freeness of the deed. “Lord, do You wash my feet?” It is perfectly wonderful that He should, for we have scarcely desired the mercy. If you look the chapter through, you do not find that Peter asked Christ to do it. Peter was lying down—he had just been eating at the supper—he had no thought of Christ's washing his feet!

There was not one of the twelve that ever dreamed of such a thing! And when the Lord began to wash the feet of one, the others did not say, "Lord, come and do the same to me." No, it was unsolicited, unexpected! He comes, without any prayers or supplications on their part and He begins to wash their feet. Peter is surprised. It is great goodness on Christ's part to do what we ask Him to do—to hear our prayers when we really feel our need. But does He perform for us such menial, such generous acts, as to wash our feet without being asked?

Oh, Beloved, if Christ did no more for us than we ask Him to do, we should perish forever! For nine out of ten of the things which He gives us, we never asked for! And what if I were to say that three out of four of them we scarcely know that we want? We do not know our own needs! We have a general view of our necessities, wholesale, as it were—but our daily needs, our daily wants—who among us can know them? Christ's sufferings are said, according to the Greek Liturgy, to have had unknown depths—"Your unknown sufferings." Were not those unknown sufferings endured for our unknown sins and to make a supply for our unknown wants—that we might have that multitude of mercies which we may style unknown mercies?

We should not only bless God for the mercies which we have known, but for those which we have not known—for probably those make up the larger proportion. You that are Christians, some of you who have been believers in Christ ten or twenty years—have there not been many nights on which you have gone to bed without any particular sense of guilt and without any special intercession for peculiar cleansing? You have forgotten to ask for the cleansing, but He has never forgotten to give it! He has spontaneously washed your feet! You have risen in the morning—you were not aware that any special danger would come to you and you did not pray for special protection—but yet He knew it. And unasked and unsought for He has followed you, held the shield over you and kept you from danger.

He has washed your feet without your having desired it, or having known that He had done it! Let His name be praised for this. These unsought favors of unspeakable love, these perpetual mercies of unslumbering carefulness—let them wake us now to gratitude and now may we exclaim with wonder, "Lord, is it so? Do You always continue thus to wash my feet?"

The next subject of wonder is the Glory of the Person. "Lord! King! Master! God! Everlasting! Eternal! Almighty! King of Kings and Lord of Lords! Do you—do YOU wash my feet? You call the stars by their names and they shine by Your light! Mazzaroth comes forth in his season at Your bidding! You guide Arcturus with his sons! The heavens are Yours! The earth also is Yours! You sit upon the circle of the heavens and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers—You hold the waters in the hollow of Your hand, You mete out Heaven with Your span—Lord, do You wash my feet?"

When You were on earth You tread the waters—the depths knew You and were like marble beneath Your feet. You frightened grim Death him-

self, for Lazarus came forth at Your bidding from the shades of the grave! Fevers knew You—leprosy, paralysis, epilepsy—all diseases understood their Master's voice and fled at Your bidding. The winds were hushed at Your will—even the devils were subject to You! Though You were veiled in manhood Your creatures perceived Your greatness! Angels ministered unto You and the heavens were opened unto You. And do You wash my feet?

O my Brothers and Sisters, meditate on this! It is far more a theme for thought than for speech. He whom the angels worship takes a towel and girds Himself! Hark to the song, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth! Heaven and earth are full of the majesty of Your Glory. All the earth does worship You, You eternal Son of the Father." "Lord, do You wash my feet?" Oh, think of this, spiritual men and women! Think till your hearts melt with love! No one else could cleanse us. The infinite God must take away the infinite blackness and filth of His people's sins! What a stoop is here!

Let us lift up our eyes and wonder! Let us lift up our voices and praise His name that He should ever wash our feet! Change again the word. Observe the lowliness of the office. "Lord, do *You* wash my feet?" Here comes a traveler who has journeyed far. He is very weary. There is much dust upon his sandals and his feet are stained with travel. As soon as he treads the threshold of the hospitable house—a black slave, a servant, a hired servant—takes off his sandals, brings a basin, a pitcher full of water and begins to pour the water upon his feet, having first unloosed the latches of his shoes and taken them off.

The *host* does not stoop to this office! It is not the part of a *master* to wash feet! It is servile, menial, humiliating work. Yet this, which was the lowest of all offices in the East, is that which the Savior undertakes! Not in fiction and metaphor, but in reality, for every one of us! "Lord, do *You* wash my feet? To wash my head, Lord, is very gracious. To purge my mind from evil thoughts is very loving. To wash my hands, to take my heart and make that clean is very condescending—but do *You* absolutely do a slave's work and wash my feet? Lord, will You take the meanest part of me and wash that? I know You have said You will sanctify my spirit and my soul—there is much there—but will You sanctify my body, too? My feet, the lowest part of the man, the meanest part? Are You not content to leave spot or wrinkle upon me anywhere and therefore do You humble Yourself to the meanest, basest, lowest action of all—to wash my feet?"

Truly, Beloved, this is subject of wonder! And yet the wonder is excelled if you remember that He shared a slave's death, as well as a slave's life. A slave's life—when He washed our feet! A slave's death—when they sold Him for thirty pieces of silver and afterwards pierced His hands and His feet. I put this deed of love in contrast. Conceive Him now in the highest heavens, with the keys of Heaven and earth and Hell swinging at His side. He is holding the silver scepter by which He governs all creation—can you imagine Him as every knee bows and every tongue confesses that He is Lord to the glory of God the Father? And yet He, that same One, comes down from the grandeur of Heaven and the splendor of infinite honor and

He washes, absolutely washes, in a slave's garb and after a menial manner, the feet of His disciples!

Oh, that we felt a tender admiration worthy of this miracle of love! Once again, there is a note of wonder if you lay the stress upon the word "my"—"Lord, do you wash *my* feet?" Perhaps to some of you this will be the greatest marvel of all—the unworthiness of the object of this washing. "Do you wash *my* feet?" You have favored me with more mercies than the most of men! You have overwhelmed me with Your bounties. And yet my heart is hard towards You—I am often unbelieving, forgetful, slothful, careless. You might well cast me away forever! Because of my ingratitude You might well say, "Depart, I will have no more to do with you—I have had enough of patience. I cannot endure your ill manners!" Yet do You, Lord, absolutely condescend to wash *my* feet?

"Here You have displayed Yourself more gloriously than ever—Your Grace has out-Graced itself." Thus would the preacher speak and he thinks he hears you follow him. "Lord," you say, "I once cursed You to Your face. There was a time when Your holy day was my best day of business—when Your House was a place which I abhorred! Your Book was unread. My knee was never bent to You—I boasted of my own righteousness! I was a sinner black and filthy—and do You wash *my* feet?!"

I hear a Sister, with peculiar tenderness, say, "O Jesus, I would gladly wash Your feet with my tears and wipe them with the hair of my head, for I have been a sinner. And do You wash *my* feet?!" I think I hear another say, "Lord, I once denied You. I made a profession of Your faith, but in an evil hour I fell. I went into sin. I said, "I know not the Man!" And do You wash *my* feet?! I hear another say, "Lord, You know my private sins, my secret vices. I dare not tell into the ear of my fellow creature the faults into which I have fallen! I am only fit to be firewood in Hell-fire. There is nothing in me but what is not damnable! I am altogether as an unclean thing! And do You wash *my* feet?!"

Oh, you that are the people of God, cannot you all find some special reason for wonder at this? There are some of you who are so poor that even some of your own Christian brethren are wicked enough to be half ashamed to own you! Yet Jesus Christ washes *your* feet! Your clothes would not sell for sixpence and yet He washes your feet! You scarcely have enough shoe leather to keep your feet from the cold and yet He washes them! You have been laughed at and despised and ridiculed and yet you have Christ to wash your feet!

The moment your name is mentioned there are some ready at once to slander you and abuse you—yet so tenderly does Jesus love you that He washes your foulest part. However, I must leave you to think—for I cannot talk—I must leave you to think on such a precious passage as this. Certainly the angels of Heaven will never leave off wondering how it can be that their King, their Prince, their Leader, could so humble Himself as to become a Servant of servants—to take the very meanest of His people and declare that He will wash their feet—yes, and do it, too.

One more subject for wonder. It is perfectly marvelous to remember that Christ does so completely wash our feet. "Do You wash my feet, Lord?"

Then there cannot be any filth on them. Do You wash my feet? Then they must be clean. It cannot be that You could wash and yet filth remain." When things are washed by careless servants, they need washing again—but when they are washed by the loving hands of Jesus—washed by Him who made Heaven and earth, surely they cannot be badly done! Come, then, you that feel you have been sinning the last week—you that are God's people, you that are resting on Christ but have a sense of guilt upon your consciences and cannot get rid of it and are sighing and crying—ask this question, "Lord, do You wash my feet? Then I will come to You. I will come with my feet all filthy if there is such a bath as this to be washed in.

"If my sins are returned to me and appear to remain upon my conscience, if You wait, still, to wash me from present guilt and present depravity, then here I am—as at the first I came, I come again—nothing but Your merit do I rely upon! Nothing but Your love is my confidence! I give myself up to You—take me as I am and wash me clean." I say it is a subject for admiration, how thoroughly clean Christ does wash His people, so that they can really cry, "There is no spot nor wrinkle, nor any such thing, even upon my feet! I shall be presented holy, unblamable and unreprouvable in the sight of God, through Jesus Christ my Lord."

III. Now we will turn from admiration to what may be more practical—to GRATITUDE. I hope we already feel that Heaven-born flame glowing in our souls. Here is matter for gratitude, then. I heard the other day of a meeting for prayer at which my dear Brother Offord—who so marvelously made confession of sin at our great Prayer Meeting in the first week of January—was moved to make another confession. And he did so in such a manner that the whole assembly was moved and there were audible sobs and cries from God's people while they confessed their transgressions.

No sooner had he done so, than some Brother, wise above what is written, rose in the assembly and said he thanked God he could not join in the confession—his sins were all forgiven him and therefore he had no sins to confess! He stood before God so accepted in Christ that he had no sins whatever to make confession of. His prayer went far to spoil the meeting and to grieve the people of God!

I do occasionally meet with erring Brethren, who say, "I never make any confession of sin." "I have prayed for months," said one to me, "and I have never made any confession of sin. I believe all my sins are forgiven and I have none to confess." Now, at the very first mention of this, do you not feel shocked? The holy sensibilities of a child of God suffer violence from the very thought of such absence of repentance! I should have been surprised if I did not hold myself prepared to hear any monstrosity from persons tinctured with the gall of Plymouth Brethren. Concerning that sect, much as I love and respect many of its members, I dare not say less than this—that God alone knows what they will teach tomorrow!

They seem to be given up to the inventions of their own vainglorious minds to concoct and devise delusions without number. They have one mark of the Babylon which they profess to abhor—for mystery is written on their very brow. I pray God to keep our young people from their company, for their professions and pretences are such as might, if it were

possible, deceive the very elect! Gracious men I grant them to be, but as to doctrine as mad as March hares and as perverse as bullocks unaccustomed to the yoke! When I first heard this doctrine of not confessing sins, I was startled. I felt as if I could have no more communion with a man who could talk in that way. Go on your knees and not confess sin? My dear Friends, I hope to die with this upon my lips, "I have gone astray like a lost sheep. Seek Your servant, for I do not forget Your Commandments."

I hold that I shall be out of Christ altogether when I reject repentance and confession. I know that my sins are forgiven me! There is no man in the world who preaches more than I do the doctrine that Christ has forever made a full atonement for the sins of all His people! But as to not making a confession of sin, God forbid these lips should ever utter anything so unGospel-like, so un-Christlike! Let us put this matter before you plainly. It is quite certain that those whom Christ has washed in His precious blood need not make a confession of sin as before God the Judge because they are no longer under God as Judge. They are not ruled and governed upon the principle of Law at all. Christ has forever taken away all their sins in a *legal* sense so that no one can bring anything to their charge and they need not confess where there is no one to accuse.

The blood of Jesus has set His people entirely away from the position of prisoners under the Law. They do not stand where they can be condemned. They are no longer culprits or criminals. They are taken from under the dominion of the Judge. But what are God's people? Why they are children and as long as God is their Father and they are children, and *imperfect* children, nature teaches them that it is the duty of children to make a confession to their Father. If my boy should do anything amiss—God forbid it ever should be—but suppose it were some petty theft, I might say, "My Child, as far as that theft is concerned, no policeman shall take you. You shall not be taken before the bar or put in prison for that. You are quite forgiven as far as that is concerned."

I do not wish him to go before the magistrate and make a confession—but then he has offended *me*, his father. And I, as his father, expect him to confess the wrong that he has done to me and if he does not, I chasten him, not by way of penal infliction—that is not my part as a father, I have nothing to do with penalties to my children—but by way of chastisement that he may be led to see his fault, and may do it no more. No father who has his wits about him ever chastens his child in the light of punishment for the offense itself. No, he says, that is not my business—the offense must be punished by *God*, or if it is an offense against the law of the land, by the law of the land. When a father scourges, he does it for chastisement—for the good of the person chastised—not as a vindication of law and order.

Now the Lord never chastens His people because of any sin in them in order to punish them for their sin—He has punished Christ instead of them—they are quite clear there. But now having become children, and offending as children, ought they not every day to go before their heavenly Father and confess the sin and acknowledge the iniquity? The Divine Grace of God in the heart would teach us all that it should be so. We daily

offend as children. We offend, as we could not offend if we were not children. I doubt my Father—I am guilty of a want of love to Him, or obedience to Him. I offend as I could not offend if I were not His child.

Supposing that this offense against my Father is not at once washed away by the cleansing power of the Lord Jesus—what will be the consequence of it? Why I shall get under the thralldom of bad habit. I shall feel such defilement in my nature that I shall do it again and again and again—what I had once done—till I get into the habit of doing it. If I am not washed from these offenses against my Father, I shall feel at a distance from Him. I shall begin to doubt His love to me. I shall tremble at Him. Most likely I shall be afraid to pray to Him—I shall get to be like the prodigal, who, while he was a child, was yet far off from his father. If I am not washed, I shall very soon have need to feel the rod and I shall have it.

But oh, Beloved, if the Lord Jesus Christ, day by day shall come to me and wash my feet from these defilements of offenses against my Father, why then I shall, to a great extent, escape the rod! I shall feel a holy love to my Father! I shall walk in the light of His countenance! I shall have joy and peace through believing and I shall go through my Christian career, not only as saved, but as one enjoying present peace in God through Jesus Christ my Lord! I think you can see the difference between Christ putting away sin by blood and by water. I think you can see the distinction between confessing sin as a culprit and confessing sin as a child. And I think you can see how much gratitude you owe to Christ, that after having once set you free from the Law, He, day by day, as your Elder Brother, goes in before your Father's face and still keeps you right before the Father.

And when there has been any defilement, or any wrong, He washes your feet from it that you may still stand with peace in your conscience, with joy in your heart, with love in your bosom and with the Father's love shed abroad in you! Here is matter for gratitude—that having once washed head and hands and feet with blood—He still does daily wash my feet with water. For my part, I mean to keep on praying, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us." And it shall always be my joy that, "if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father," and, "the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleanses us from all sin."

IV. The last point is MATTER FOR IMITATION. Does Jesus wash our feet? Then we ought to wash one another's feet. Some of our Brethren, the Scotch Baptists, were accustomed to wash the saints' feet literally. I dare say it would not do some of the saints much harm. But still it never was intended for us to carry out literally the example of the Savior. There is a *spiritual* meaning here and what He means is this—if there is any deed of kindness or love that we can do for the very meanest and most obscure of God's people, we ought to be willing to do it—to be servants to God's servants—to feel like Abigail did, when she said to David, "Let your handmaid be a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my Lord."

Abigail became David's wife—that is the true position of every Christian—but yet she felt she was not worthy even to wash his servants' feet.

That must be our spirit. Do you know any poor bedridden soul? Go and talk with that poor woman, or that poor man. Seek to take comfort to that poor man's miserable lodgings. Do you know a Brother who is rather angry in temper and he wants a kind word said to him and someone says, "I will not speak to any such person as he is?" Do it—do it, my dear Brothers and Sisters—go and wash his feet! Do you know one who has gone astray? Someone says, "I would not like to be seen in association with him." My dear Friend, you are *spiritual*—go and restore such an one in the spirit of meekness.

Wash his feet! There is another riding the high horse—he is very, very proud. One says, "I am not going to humble myself to him." My dear Brother, go to him and wash his feet! Whenever there is a child of God who has any defilement upon him and you are able to point it out and rid him of it—submit to any degradation, put yourself in any position—sooner than that child of God should be the subject of sin! Especially let those who are highest among us seek to do the lowest offices. "Whoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant." Remember that Christ's way of rising is to go down. He descended, that He might ascend. And so must we.

Let us count that forevermore it is our highest honor and our greatest glory to lay aside all honor and all glory and to win honor and glory out of shame and humiliation for Christ Jesus' sake. I believe this is done in this Church. I hope we are as free as possible from the feeling of caste—God deliver us from the last relic and remnant of it! You are Brothers and Sisters in Christ! Love one another!

"Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted—but the rich in that he is made low." You are Brothers and Sisters and one is your Master, even Christ. Try to carry out, every one of you to your utmost, the teaching of your Lord—that you should wash one another's feet. You have an opportunity of doing it in the collection—for I believe that these servants of God—these aged ministers, these ministers who are in great poverty—need today that you should, by your contributions, wash their feet.

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THE UNKNOWN WAYS OF LOVE

NO. 1293

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 14, 1876,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do you know not now;
but you shall know hereafter.”*
John 13:7.

THESE words of our Lord were spoken in answer to Peter's exclamation of surprise, “Lord, do You wash *my* feet?” It was a very natural expression of astonishment and one which deserved no censure, but, at the same time it was not a very wise remark, for, although it was a marvelously condescending act for the Lord Jesus to wash His disciples' feet, He had already performed a greater condescension by coming upon the earth, at all, in the form of a *man*. For the Son of the Highest to dwell among mortals in a human body, capable of being girt about with a towel and able to take a basin and pour water into it, is a far greater marvel than that He should, being a Man, leave the supper table and act as a menial *servant* by washing His disciples' feet.

Had Peter understood what his Master had prophesied and explained to him, namely, the Lord's approaching sufferings and death, he would have seen that for his Master to take a towel and basin was little compared with His having our iniquities laid upon Himself and being made a Sacrifice for sin! It surprises you much to see the Lord of Glory wear a towel—does it not amaze you, still more, to see Him clad in the purple robe of mockery? Are you not still *more* astonished to see His clothes stripped from Him and to hear Him cry upon the Cross, “I can see all My bones: they look and stare upon Me”?

It is amazing that He should take the basin in the upper room, but surely it was more extraordinary that He should take the cup in the garden and drink in its full bitterness till He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground! To wash the disciples' feet with water was certainly a surprising action, but to pour out His heart's blood to wash *us all* was by far the greater, for this involved His death, His making His grave with the wicked and His being numbered with the transgressors! The expression of Peter is thus seen to be very natural, but not very profound.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, do you not think it very likely that our pretty pious speeches which strike us as very proper, seem, to our friends, to be very commendable, will, one of these days, appear to be mere baby prattling and do even now appear so to the Lord Jesus? Those choice sayings and holy sentences which we have read with admiration and greatly valued—even those are not like the Words of Jesus for solid intrinsic weight and worth but may, in other lights, appear far less beautiful than they do now. I have, myself, proved in different humors and frames of mind that the very things which struck me as being so very deep and gracious have at other times appeared to be one-sided, shallow, or question-

able. We *know* in part and *prophesy* in part—our highest attainments, here, are those of little children, and even for the close student—the deeply experienced Christian, the venerable man of years and the graciously anointed instructor of the Churches, there is no room for boasting.

Note, next, that our Savior answered Peter's speech in the words of the text which are as admirable for their tone as for their matter. Which should we admire the more in this reply, its meekness or its majesty? To Peter's ignorant simplicity how gentle He is! "What I do you know not now; but you shall know hereafter." And yet how royally He confronts Peter's objection and how distinctly His majestic Personality puts down the too conspicuous individuality of Peter! "What I do you know not now."

How perfect the blending of the majesty and the meekness! Who shall tell which of the colors is better laid on? This is *always* the way of our Lord Jesus! You shall find, through life, Beloved, that whenever Jesus Christ comes to rebuke you, He will do so powerfully but gently. He will speak as a Friend and as a King. You will feel both His love and His authority and acknowledge the power of both His goodness and His greatness. His smile shall not make you presume, nor shall His royal glance cause you to tremble. You will find His left hand supporting you while in His right you see His imperial scepter. Blessed Savior, are You more meek or more majestic? We cannot tell, but certainly to our hearts You are both kind and kingly, sweet and sovereign, gracious and glorious!

I. Let us now come to the words themselves. We have looked at the occasion of them and at the manner of them. We will now weigh their matter. The words, themselves, have suggested to me many thoughts and among them, first, that IN OUR LORD'S DOINGS THERE IS MUCH WHICH WE CANNOT UNDERSTAND. Our text is not merely true about the washing of the feet, but it is true concerning all that our Lord does—"What I do you know not now." We may know the *external* part of what He does, or think we do, but there is more in His actions than any of us can conceive. The external is not all—there are wrapped up, within, other mercies which we perceive and yet greater mercies as yet unknown to us.

You traverse the soil of Canaan, drink of its rivers and are refreshed by its corn and wine and oil, but the goodly land has hidden riches—its stones are iron and out of its hills you may dig brass. The brooks of which you drink derive their coolest waters from springs which have tapped "the deep which lies under." If you know, in some measure, what Jesus does, the whole mystery is not altogether laid bare to your eyes. There are folds of His manifold Grace which, as yet, are unopened. The work of Jesus is beyond you—it is lower than your fall, higher than your desire—it surpasses you and is altogether too high for you! You simply cannot attain to its measurement. Who can, by searching, find it out unto perfection? Our lack of knowledge of the Divine doings is a wide subject and I shall not attempt to explore its boundaries, but shall restrain myself by the text.

Brothers and Sisters, there are many things that God does which we cannot understand, now, and probably never shall. For instance, why did He permit evil, at first, and still tolerates it? To this enquiry the Divine answer would be "What I do you know not." Leave that alone! It is our highest wisdom to be ignorant where God has not enlightened us. It is great

folly to pretend to know when we do not—there lives not a man, nor ever *will* live a man—who has even an approximation to an understanding of the dread mystery of the existence of moral evil! The bottom of this abyss no mind can reach! He is foolhardy who ventures on the plunge. Let this dread secret alone! You cannot endure the white heat which burns around it!

Many a man has lost the eyes of his reason while trying to peer into this fiery furnace. What have you to do with that which God conceals from you? It is God's business, not yours! The thing was done before you were born and He who permitted it can answer for Himself if He cares to do so. And, with regard to predestination—that God ordains all things and has before His eyes the chart of everything that has been, is, or shall be—is most true! But who knows the depths of foreknowledge and destiny? To sit down and pluck the eternal purposes to pieces, to question their justice and impugn their wisdom is both folly and audacity!

Here the darkness thickens and out of it comes forth the proclamation—"What I do you know not." The things which are revealed belong to us and to our children—but as to the unrevealed, if it is to the Glory of God to conceal a thing, let it be concealed! Jesus has torn the veil of the Holy Place and into the secret of Divine love you may now freely enter. But other veils, which He tears not, you may not touch. Some Truths of God are closed up from our understanding, even as the Ark of the Covenant was shut against prying eyes. Let us not violate their sanctity lest we meet the doom of the men of Bethshemesh, but let us zealously guard them as priceless treasures that we may obtain the blessing which rested upon the house of Obededom.

The same remark applies to the great designs of God in Providence. He is pleased, in prophecy, to tell us what He has meant by His Providence and, perhaps, it will be one of the enjoyments of the future state to see the hand of God in the whole current of history. But while incidents are occurring, we must not expect to understand their drift and bearing. The wonderful tapestry of human history, all woven in the loom of God's infinite wisdom, will astonish both men and angels when it is complete! But while it is yet unfinished, it will not be possible for us to imagine the completed pattern. From between those wheels of Providence, which are full of eyes, I hear a voice which said, "What I do you know not now."

So we will confine ourselves to the loving acts of the Lord Jesus Christ, since what the Lord was doing with Peter was not very mysterious, nor a deed of transcendent power, nor of stern justice. He was humbly girding Himself with a towel and pouring water into a basin to wash his followers' feet. It was a very simple matter and evidently a very gracious, kind and condescending act. And yet, even concerning that, Jesus said, "What I do you know not now." My Brothers and Sisters, even the acts of our Lord Jesus Christ in His loving condescension we do not fully understand. Ah, think a minute—how can we? Does not our Lord's love always surpass our knowledge, since He, Himself, is the greatest of all mysteries? Let me read these words to you—"Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God, and went to God;

He arose from supper, and laid aside His garments; and took a towel, and girded Himself.”

Do you understand the higher and the lower points of this transaction? You must comprehend them *both* before you can see what He has done. “Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands.” Can you see the Glory of this? Jesus, our Lord, was conscious that His Father had made Him Head over all things to His Church and that He had laid the government upon His shoulders and given Him the key of David that He might open and no man shut, and shut and no man open. He knew, assuredly, that at His belt swung the keys of Heaven, death and Hell—and that having fulfilled the commission of the Eternal God, He was about to return to His Throne.

Have you grasped the idea? Do you perceive the Glory of which Jesus was conscious? If you have done so, then descend by one long sweep—He, this Lord of All, having all things in His hands, takes off His garments, foregoes the common dress of an ordinary man, and places Himself in the undress of a *servant*! He wears a towel that He may wait upon His own disciples! Can you follow Him from such a height to such a depth? A superior in the East never washes an inferior’s feet—Christ acts as if He were *inferior* to His friends! He acts as if He were inferior to those poor *fishermen*—those foolish scholars who learned so slowly and with whom He had spent so much time and yet they did not know Him—those 12 men who soon forgot what they knew and needed Him to explain, again and again, line upon line and precept upon precept! Having loved them to the end, He stoops to the extreme of stooping and bows at their feet to cleanse their defilement! Who, I say, can compute the depth of *this* descent?

You cannot know what Christ has done for you because you cannot conceive how high He is by Nature! Neither can you guess how low He stooped in His humiliation and death. With an eagle’s wing you could not soar so high as to behold Him as God over all, blessed forever, sitting at the right hand of the Father, the adored of cherubim and seraphim! Nor could you dive, even if you dared to take a plunge into the abyss, until you reached the depth of, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me!” And yet, you must *somehow* know the interval—I was about to say, “the infinity”—between these two points of height and depth before you can know what Jesus has done for you!

Moreover, think awhile. Was anything that Jesus did understood while He was doing it? He is born a Babe in Bethlehem, but who knew what He did in the manger? A few shepherds and two or three favored saints discerned the Savior in the Babe, but to the mass of mankind He was unknown. God came on earth and angels sung His advent, but O Earth, your Lord might have said to you, “What I do you know not now”! He lived here the life of a carpenter’s son—that life was the most august event in all human history—but men knew not what it was or what it meant! “The world knew Him not.”

He came forward to preach the Gospel—did they know who it was that spoke as never man spoke? Did they comprehend what He spoke? Ah, no. He was hid from their eyes! At last He laid aside the life He had so

strangely taken—who knew the reason of His death upon the Cross? Did even His disciples know, though He had told them? When the earth shook and graves were opened by His last cry, did even His own followers understand what a Sacrifice had been offered? No, and until the Spirit was poured upon them from on high they did not comprehend that it behooved Christ to suffer. He could say to each of His own disciples, of all that He had done, “What I do you know not now.”

This is true, too, of every separate gift which our Lord’s love has given to His people. You have been justified in Jesus Christ, but do you fully know the wondrous righteousness with which Justification by Faith has endowed you? You are accepted in the Beloved, but did any one of you ever realize what it is to have full acceptance with the Father? I know you have realized the fact and rejoiced in it, but have you *known*, yes, *can* you know the full sweetness of its meaning? You are one with Christ and members of His body! Do you comprehend that? You are joint heirs with Christ! Do you know the full significance of that?

He is betrothed to you in an everlasting marriage! Do you know what that means? Ah no, these wonders of His love, we hear of them and we believe them, but, “What I do,” He said, “you know not now.” Our Lord is doing great things by way of preparing us for a higher state of existence! We shall soon be rid of this vile body and be released from this narrow world—we are going to a sphere more suited for our Heaven-born life where we shall be the comrades of angels and commune with the spirits of the just made perfect—and serve the Lord day and night in His temple. But what Glory shall be, we do not know, for the ear has not heard it, nor the eye beheld it, nor the heart conceived it. As for the preparations which are going on within us to make us ready for this sublime condition, we know that they are being carried on, but we cannot, as yet, see their course, their separate tendencies and their ultimate issues.

The instrument does not comprehend the tuner. The tuner fetches harsh sounds from those disordered strings, but all those jarring notes are necessary to the harmonious condition which he is aiming to produce. If the discords were not discovered, the music of the future would be marred. My Brothers and Sisters, concerning *all* that Christ has done it is true, “What I do you know not now.” Oh, if His work were little, we could measure it! If His love were scanty, we could know it! If His wisdom were finite we could judge it! But, where everything is past finding out, who can pretend to know?

Remember, that in our salvation Christ, Himself, is the sum and substance. In it every attribute of His Divinity is brought into exercise to the fullest. He makes it His Glory, counting our salvation to be His coronet and crown jewels and, therefore, it is not at all marvelous that we should not know what He does.

II. Our second thought is a sweet one. OUR LACK OF UNDERSTANDING DOES NOT PREVENT THE EFFICACY OF OUR LORD’S WORK. “What I do you know not now.” Peter does not know what Christ is doing when He washes his feet, but the Master washes them just as clean whether Peter understands it or not. Jesus did not say, “There, Peter, you do not understand what I am doing by washing your feet, and so I shall not wash

them until you do.” No, no. He moves on with the basin and towel and washes them clean, though Peter does not know why.

Is not this a great mercy, Brothers and Sisters, that the blessings which Christ bestows upon us are not dependent for their efficacy upon our capacity to understand them? Just look out a little in the world and see how true this is. A mother has her little child on her lap and she is washing its face. The child does not like the water and it cries. Ah, Babe, if you could understand it, you would smile! The child cries and struggles in the mother’s arms, but it is washed all the same—the mother waits not for the child to know what she is doing, but completes her work of love. So is the Lord often exercising Divine acts upon us and we do not appreciate them, neither are we pleased. Perhaps we even strive against His work of love, but for all that, He perseveres and turns not away His hand because of our crying.

Does the tree understand pruning? Does the land comprehend plowing? Yet pruning and plowing produce their good results. The physician stands at the bedside of the patient and gives him medicine, medicine which is unpalatable and which, in its operation, causes the patient to feel worse than he was before. The sufferer cannot understand this and, therefore, he draws unhappy conclusions. But the power of the medicine does not depend upon the patient’s understanding its qualities and, therefore, it will do him good, though it puzzles him by its strange manner of working. If a fool eats his dinner, it will satisfy his hunger as much as if he were a philosopher and understood the processes of digestion. This is a great mercy, for the most of men can never become philosophers!

It is not necessary for a man to be learned in the nature of combustion in order to be warmed by a fire. A man may be ignorant of the laws of light and yet be able to see. He may know nothing of acoustics and yet be quick of hearing. A passenger who does not know a valve from a wheel, enters a carriage at the station and he will be drawn to his journey’s end by the engine as well as if he were learned in mechanics. It is the same in the spiritual as in the natural world. The efficacy of spiritual forces does not depend upon our capacity to understand them.

I have mentioned this very simple fact because it really is necessary for us to remember it. We are so knowing, or think we are—we think it so essential that we should form a judgment of what the Lord is doing. Ah, dear Brothers and Sisters, there are more essential things than this! It is better to trust, to submit, to obey, to love, than to know. Let the Lord alone! He is doing rightly enough, be sure of that. Is He to be questioned and questioned again by *us*? Are *we* to judge His judgment? Dare we demand answers to our impertinent enquiries and say, why this and why that, and why the other? Were He a God if He would submit to such examination? If we call ourselves His disciples, how can we justify a spirit which would arraign our Lord? Be still and know that He is God!

What more would you know? Remember that the things which you understand are for your good, but they can only bring you a small amount of benefit because they must be, in themselves, small, or you would not be able to measure them. When a great, deep good is coming to you, you will not be able to comprehend it, for your comprehension is narrow. Yet it will

be none the less but all the more a blessing because you know it not! Joseph is gone and here is his bloody coat! “Without doubt he is torn in pieces! All these things are against me! Ah, how my heart is broken with the loss of my darling child. I cannot understand it. It cannot be right.”

So talks poor Jacob, but it *was* right, all the same for that! Joseph was on the sure road to Pharaoh’s throne and to providing for his brethren in the land of Egypt. So it is with you, my Brothers and Sisters, under your present trial and affliction. You cannot understand it now, but that does not make a pennyworth of difference! It is working out for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory! Be content to let faith rule and knowledge wait—and what you know not now you shall know hereafter.

III. A third thought is that OUR NOT BEING ABLE TO KNOW WHAT THE LORD DOES SHOULD NEVER SHAKE OUR CONFIDENCE IN HIM. I hope, dear Brothers and Sisters, our faith in Christ does not rest upon our capacity to *understand* what He does! If so, I fear it is not faith at all, but a mere exercise of self-conceited carnal reason. Some things which the Lord has done bear upon their very forefront the impression of His infinite love, but I hope you know enough of Him, now, to be able to believe that where there are no traces of love apparent to you, His love is as surely there. I rejoice in that part of my text which runs thus, “What *I* do.” This washing of the feet was not being done by Bartholomew, or Nathanael—it was the personal act of the Lord, Himself.

Now, when the Master and Lord is doing it, who needs to raise a question or to suggest enquiry? It must be right if He does it—to question His conduct would be an insult to His majestic love. Do you know Christ? Then you know the Character of His deeds. Do you know your Lord? Then you are sure that He will never act unkindly, unbecomingly, or unwisely. He can never send a needless sorrow, or wantonly cause a tear to flow. Can He? Here, then, is the question—not, “Why is it done?—but, “*Who* is doing it? And if the Lord is doing it, we can have no doubt about the excellence of His design. We believe that He is right when we cannot see that He is so. If we do not trust Him far beyond what we know, it will show that our confidence in Him is very limited.

When a person only obeys another because he chooses to obey and sees it a proper thing to do, he has not the spirit of implicit obedience at all. And when a person only confides in another as far as he can see that he is safe, he is a stranger to implicit confidence. Confidence has its sphere beyond the boundaries of knowledge. Where judgment ceases, faith begins. “What *I* do you know not now.” Ah, You most beloved of our souls, You spoke the Truth in that, but we can reply to You that we know and are sure that what You do is supremely good.

IV. Fourthly, OUR LACK OF UNDERSTANDING AS TO WHAT OUR LORD DOES GENERALLY SHOWS ITSELF MOST IN DEFERENCE TO HIS PERSONAL DEALINGS WITH OURSELVES. “What *I* do you know not now” refers to His washing Peter’s feet. Brothers and Sisters, if there is anything which we are not likely to understand thoroughly well, it is that which has to do with *ourselves*. We are too close home to see clearly. In this case the looker-on sees more than the player. We generally form a

better opinion of the character, position and needs of another than we do concerning ourselves.

It is said of Moses' face that everyone saw it shine but one man—and that was Moses—for he could not see his own countenance. So, also, if a man's face is black, it is black to everybody but himself—he does not see his own spots. We cannot form accurate estimates of ourselves and so we must not expect, when Christ is personally dealing with us, that we should be able to understand what He does to us. Besides, if the Lord is dealing with us in an afflicting way, we are generally in an unfavorable state of mind for forming any judgment at all, being, as a rule, too disturbed in mind by the affliction, itself.

When a hospital patient is under the knife, he is a poor judge of the necessity of the operation or the skill of the surgeon. Later, when the wound has healed, he will judge better than he can do when the knife is just cutting through nerve, and sinew and bone. Judge nothing before the time! You are not in a condition to judge and therefore do not attempt it. When you are smarting under the rod, your opinions, estimates and forecasts are about as much to be depended upon as the whistling of the wind or the dashing of the waves. Cease from judging, calculating and foreboding—believe that He who ordains our lot orders all things in kindness and wisdom!

I do not wonder that Peter was puzzled and could not understand his Lord's procedure, for it is always a hard thing for an active and energetic mind to see the wisdom of being compelled to do nothing. Here is a man who can drag a net to the shore full of big fishes and, instead of using his strength, he is made to sit still and do nothing! Peter, the hardy, vigorous worker, must sit down like a gentleman, or a cripple, and do nothing. He does not understand. He has been very useful and he thinks he could be useful now. He could, at any rate, wait at the table, or carry the basin, or wash his fellows' feet if it must be done. But he is bound to sit still and do nothing and he does not understand it.

Brothers and Sisters, the hardest work a man has to do, who wants to serve the Lord Jesus, is to stand aside in forced inactivity and take no share in what is going on! It is hard to be put on the shelf among the cracked crockery and to be of no more use than a broken vessel while yet you feel you could be useful if you had but strength to leave your chamber. The proud idea that you have been wonderfully useful tempts you to repine at being laid among the lumber! And you feel it to be a very mysterious business altogether.

Then, what is worse, not only can Peter not do anything, he is a *receiver* from others and must be waited on by them, and chiefly by his Master, whom he, at other times, loved to serve! To have his feet washed must have appeared, to a hardy fisherman like Peter, a strange luxury. He would say, "Cannot I do it myself? I am not used to be waited on." To sit there and, while doing nothing, to be also engrossing the care of another, must have been a unusual position to him. It is very unpleasant for an active man to be unable to work and to be dependent upon others for every little detail and necessity of life. To borrow other people's strength and tax other people's care is not desirable.

To stand in need of anxious prayers and to awake pitying thoughts, seems strange to those who have been accustomed to *do* rather than to suffer. “Why,” you seem to say, “I have prayed for *them*. I have worked for them! Are they, now, to pray and work for me? I have fed the sheep. Are the sheep going to feed me? I have washed the saints’ feet. Are they going to wash mine? Am I to be dependent upon others and not be able to lend a hand or lift a finger”? Ah, well, we must not ask questions, but we are very apt to do so. We do not know, and we become inquisitive, but the Savior says, “What I do you know not now.”

All the while there is very prominent in our minds a sense of insignificance and unworthiness which makes our receipt of favors the more perplexing. “What?” asks Peter, “I, unworthy Peter, shall I be washed by the Lord Jesus Christ”? So it seems to us unworthy sinners, “Why should God’s people be thinking about *me* and careful about me? Why has the Lord, Himself, deigned to make my bed in my sickness? Why has His blessed Spirit condescended to be *my* Comforter, applying precious promises to me? Why all this to *me*?” We do not comprehend it. We are lost in wonder and it is no marvel that we are. Yet, dear Brothers and Sisters, if our eyes are opened, the Lord’s afflicting dealings are not so wonderfully mysterious, after all, for we need purging and cleansing even as Peter needed his feet washed.

We greatly need the sacred purging of Jesus’ love for the removal of daily defilement. Sometimes trials in business, sad bereavements, acts of ingratitude, pains of sickness, or depressions of spirit are just the basin and the water and the towel in which our Lord is washing our feet. We are clean through the blood of Jesus, but the daily cleansing we still need. It is a wonder that some of us are ever out of the furnace, for our dross is so abundant. I shall not be surprised if I find myself often under the flail, for the straw and the chaff are plentiful in me. Some metals are so apt to rust that it is no wonder that they are often burnished. Some soils need a deal of plowing—they are very apt to cake and grow hard—and therefore must be broken up.

So it is with us. There is a need for what the Lord is doing. In Peter’s case there was a need of fellowship, for our Lord said, “If I wash you not you have no part with Me.” You cannot have fellowship with Christ unless He does this or that for you. No, especially unless He tries you, for how shall you know the suffering Savior unless you suffer, yourself? Communion with the afflicted Redeemer is promoted by our personal afflictions. There was a need, yet again, for Peter and the rest to learn the lesson of washing their Brothers’ feet by seeing the Lord wash theirs. No man can rightly wash another’s feet till his own feet have been washed by his Savior.

It is, in the kingdom of Christ, a law that there must be *experience* before there can be expertness. You must be comforted or you can not comfort. You must find mercy, yourself, or you can not lead others in the search. You must be washed or you cannot wash. Thus there were good reasons for our Lord’s act, but they were not seen by Peter, nor do the motives for our Lord’s dispensations towards us always appear upon the surface. When Jesus, Himself, is dealing with us, especially if it is in a way of

trial, we do not understand it and He has need to say, “What I do you know not now.”

V. Our last thought for the present is—UPON THIS POINT AND UPON MANY OTHERS WE SHALL, ONE DAY, BE INFORMED. “What I do you know not now, *but you shall know hereafter.*” That, “hereafter,” may be very soon. Peter knew within a few minutes what Jesus meant, for He said to him, “Know you what I have done unto you? If I, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you ought, also, to wash one another’s feet.” Thus the light was not long in breaking. Why are you in such a hurry, when you are in trouble, to begin spelling out an *evil* reason for God’s dealings, when, if you will but wait, you shall know the right reason in a short time?

A child is in an ill temper because there has been a rule made by the father and not explained. And so it sits down and sulks and thinks of some unkind, ungenerous motive on the father’s part. In a minute or two, after it understands it all and has to eat its own words, it confesses, “How bad of me to impute such unkindness to my dear loving father, who is always seeking my good.” If you will get reasoning in haste about your Lord’s dispensations, you will have to take all your reasoning back and you will have to afflict your soul for being so hasty. Therefore wait awhile, for, “you shall know hereafter,” and that, “hereafter,” may be very near.

Peter understood his Master’s washing his feet better, after his sad fall and threefold denial. I should not wonder that when the Lord turned and looked upon Peter—and he went out and wept bitterly—the penitent disciple said to himself, “Now I begin to see why my Lord washed my feet.” When he perceived how badly he needed washing, he would prize the token which his Lord had given him. He saw his own frailties and imperfections as he had not seen them before, for he had said, “Though all men should be offended, yet will I never be offended,” but after his sad denial he knew himself to be as apt to err as the rest of the Brothers.

At a certain point of your experience you will possibly discover the explanation of your present adversity. After the Lord had met with Peter at the sea and had said to him, “Feed My sheep,” and, “Feed My lambs,” another method of explanation was open to him. When Peter began to be a pastor and to deal with the souls of others, he would clearly see why his Master washed his feet, for he would find that he had much to do of the same kind of service. Often does our work *for* Jesus unfold the work *of* Jesus and we know our Lord by being called to follow in His footsteps. Yonder in Heaven, best of all, Peter understands why the Master washed his feet and surely, sometimes, Peter must inwardly smile to think of what he once thought and said.

Peter sings amid the heavenly throng, “Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood.” And then he thinks to himself, “In my folly, in the days of my flesh, I said unto Him, ‘You shall never wash my feet.’ I loved Him when I said it, but what monstrous folly lay in my speech!” Ah, he understands it, now, and we shall understand as he does, soon! All things will be clear when we once pass into the region of Light. I anticipate the blessed confidences of Heaven! How blessed will be those familiar Revelations of mysteries so long obscure! What sweet com-

munications there will be between God and His people in the world to come! I look forward to the time when we shall see the knots untied and the riddles all explained—then shall we see the good of apparent evil—and the life which lay in the bosom of death.

Could we hear the stories of pilgrims who have reached Home, they would run like this—“I was traveling a pleasant road, blessing God for so delightful a pilgrimage, but suddenly a huge rock fell across my path and I had, with regret, to turn back and traverse a more rugged road. I never understood why until I came home to Heaven and now He tells me, ‘Child, there was a precipice but a little way in front and you would have been dashed to pieces and, therefore, I blocked up your way.’”

Another who has reached the desired haven will tell us, “The vessel in which I sailed was wrecked. She struck upon a rock and on a broken fragment of her timbers I swam to shore. I could never comprehend the reason for this calamity till now. now I learn that the ship was being steered by evil hands to a shore where I would have been made a slave and kept in lifelong captivity, and there was no way of deliverance but by dashing the boat to shivers and landing her passengers where they would be free.”

Brothers and Sisters, you will bless God in Heaven more for your sorrows than your joys! When you once ascend the celestial hills you will see that the best blessings came to you in the roughest garments. Your pearls were found in oyster shells and your jewels were brought out of Egypt. Sickness, trial, adversity, bereavement and pain have been more truly angels of God to you than your wealth, your health, your strength, your comfort—ininitely more so than your laughter and your ease! O Brothers and Sisters, we shall know hereafter! Well, as we shall know hereafter, we may leave the knowing till then—and give all our attention, now, to obeying and trusting!

I have done when I have added a warning to those out of Christ. There are some in this congregation who do not know my Lord. I have been much exercised in my mind about you while I have been confined to my chamber and unable to address you. And my prayer has been that the Holy Spirit would bless to your conversion the messages of my Brothers who have kindly occupied this pulpit. If you still remain unconverted, I would like to say to you that you do not know what God has been doing with you and you do not know what He is doing with you now—but you will know hereafter. You have Sabbath days, but you do not know their value—you will value them differently, by-and-by, when you lie dying—and especially when you are called before the Judgment Seat of God!

You have your Bible and you neglect it—you do not know that God has sent a love letter to you in that form—you will know it when you stand before His awful bar! Some of you have been pleaded with very often and earnestly entreated to lay hold on eternal life—and the Lord has backed up our entreaties by sending sickness to you and personal trouble. Well, you have not known much about it and you have not *wished* to know—but you will *have* to know hereafter! If you die without Christ, you will wake up in eternity and cry, “Ah me, that ever the Lord should call me and I refuse! That He should stretch out His hand and I should disre-

gard.” In Hell it will be an awful discovery, “I was the subject of Gospel invitations, I was the object of earnest entreaties, but I continued in my sin and here I am, eternally lost!”

What I earnestly desire should happen would be that you should, this morning, find out what the Lord has done for you and should understand it and should open your eyes and say, “Here am I, a man who has lived long in sin and I have been spared on purpose that God might save me before I die.” Or perhaps it will take this form—“Here I am, a young man, and I came in here this morning with no precise motive, little knowing what God was about to do with me. But I know it now. He has brought me here that I may, this morning, believe in Jesus and give my heart to Him!”

O hearers of the Gospel, if you once come to know what God has really done *with* you and *for* you, you will hardly forgive yourselves for your conduct towards Him! You will say, “Did He really love me so and redeem me with such a price? And have I been so unkind and thoughtless towards Him?” You will upbraid yourselves and chasten yourselves and grieve to think you should have treated so good a Friend so terribly! O may the Divine Spirit, this morning, open your eyes to know what the Lord Jesus does for you and His Grace shall be magnified in you! Amen and amen!

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 13:1-17.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—327, 689, 778.**

MR. SPURGEON requests his friends to unite with him in thanking the ever-merciful Father for permitting him, again, to leave the bed of sickness and preach the Word to the great congregation. He also entreats his kind readers to pray for him whenever the sermons are useful to themselves, for the preacher growingly needs to be upheld by Grace in answer to the supplications of the Lord’s people. Pray that affliction may be sanctified, physical strength given to preach the Gospel and, above all, the unction of the Holy Spirit to make the Word effectual in the heart of saints and sinners.

[If you will click on the link, *Volumes 22-24 (1876-78)*, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org> and open the sermons in Volume 22, before this sermon, you will notice many sermons with no dates on them—these indicate that Brother Spurgeon was sick. The sermons with no dates were preached by Brother Spurgeon, most assuredly—we just do not know when. Remember, he preached up to 10 sermons a week, and only 63 volumes (approximately 3,560 sermons) were published, many after his death in 1892.—Ed.]

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

THE SINE QUA NON

NO. 926

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 17, 1870,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Jesus answered him, If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me.”
John 13:8.***

IN matchless condescension our Lord had girt Himself as a servant, and was washing the feet of the disciples. Peter, struck with such a spectacle, would not allow his Lord to act as a menial, and flatly refused to have his feet washed by his Master. But he changed his mind at once when he was told that a refusal to receive this act of kindness from his Lord would be a virtual rejection of all part in Him, “If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me.” I do not think our Lord here was thinking so much of the literal washing, as of that which the outward ablution was meant to represent. This is clear when we remember that our Lord replied to Peter concerning this washing, “What I do you know not now. But you shall know hereafter.”

Now as to the literal washing, Peter knew all about *it*, and there was nothing to be explained except its inner meaning, and spiritual teaching. This it was that Peter did not then know, and was afterwards to learn. Our Lord, therefore, evidently referred not so much to the actual foot-washing, as to the *spiritual* washing, which is absolutely essential to all His people. Remember, too, that the mere cleansing of the feet did not involve union to Christ, for the feet of Judas were washed, and our Lord did not at all mean that Judas should imagine that he had any part with the Lord whom he was resolved to betray.

The traitor was numbered among the disciples, and therefore he partook of the outward ordinance, but it did not convey to him any spiritual interest in Christ Jesus. Therefore we conclude that the foot-washing was only secondarily important. Yet we deny not that our Lord did mean so much about this mere outward washing, that had Peter obstinately refused to yield to it, he would have proved himself to have had no true loyalty of heart, and consequently no part in Christ.

Any act of direct and intentional rebellion against Christ's authority, obstinately and knowingly continued in, would be a sure token that the person guilty of it was no true partaker with Christ. How shall I be His servant if I willfully reject any one of His commands? How can I consider myself to be truly a Christian while my will is rebellious, and refuses to submit to the express orders of my Lord? Let us consider this as professors, and practice instant obedience. Never let us obstinately refuse obedience to a command because it seems to us to be nonessential or trivial. We are not to be judges but servants. No motive can excuse disobedience.

Let us ask for Divine Grace that as soon as ever we see a sin to be sin we may shun it, and as soon as we perceive a duty to be a duty we may at once practice it, and never be guilty of any willful rebellion, since that

might prove us to be without Christ. However, I still believe that Christ's main teaching in my text referred not to the washing with water, but to the cleansing of our spiritual nature by His precious blood and by His Eternal Spirit. In this sense read again the words, "If I do not wash you, you have no, part with Me."

I. First suffer me to occupy your thoughts a few minutes with THE GREAT OBJECT OF OUR DESIRE. Our great object is to have a part in Jesus Christ. I am addressing myself, for the most part, to those who regularly hear the Word, and who have a respect for the name of Jesus, and a longing to be saved with His salvation. I hope there is not one among us who would consider it a barren honor to have a part with Christ, nor one who would think it to be a small calamity to be deprived of his part with Jesus the Son of God.

Brethren, you and I desire to have part in the merit of His righteousness. We have no righteousness of our own, but we desire that He should be the Lord our Righteousness, that in His righteousness arrayed we should not be found naked in the day of the great wedding feast, but with the wedding garment on may sit down to the marriage supper. We desire to have a part in His death. Jesus died that He might make atonement for guilt, and we desire a part in His atoning sacrifice. We are guilty. Our heart yearns to be washed in the blood, to be cleansed by that expiation, and to stand before the Lord accepted in the Beloved.

We hope that the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world will give us a part in His sin-removing power. We believe in His Resurrection, and our prayer is that we may have part in it—because He rose we also may rise, and may forever, both in body and in soul, enjoy eternal blessedness. Our faith has seen the Crucified One ascending to the skies, and we desire a part in His ascension, to share in the blessings which He received for rebellions men when He led captivity captive. Yes, and before long to tread that same starry way, and enter into the rest where He is, and behold the Glory which God has given to Him.

We aspire to share in His intercession. Before the Father's Throne He presents His ever-accepted supplication, and we trust that He pleads for us that blessings numberless may descend upon us unworthy ones. We were wretched, indeed, if we had not a persuasion that we share a part in the pleadings of our great High Priest. We trust our name is engraved on one of the precious stones of His breastplate, and is so borne before God. Moreover, we know that Christ sits at the right hand of God as King, all things being delivered into His hands, and we desire to have a part with Him in His kingdom, to be partakers of the peace which His scepter brings—yes, and to be ourselves made kings to reign with Him.

Moreover, we expect His second advent. In the same manner as He went up to Heaven, in that same manner will He descend, with the trump of the archangel and the voice of God, in His own proper Person actually and really, not in myth and phantom, but in very deed. As He is gone from us, so shall He come again, and then will He take to Himself all power, and reign from the river even unto the ends of the earth. We hope to participate in the glory of His appearing and kingdom.

Whatever the Millennium may be, whatever the splendor of the latter day, our aspiration is that we may have a part with Christ in all these things. We would not shun His Cross, for we desire His crown. We would not desert Him in His humiliation, for we hope to attend Him in His triumph. We would cheerfully go forth without the camp and bear the reproach for His sake, for we hope to stand among the camp of the faithful ones when the crowns of immortality shall be distributed. Our soul's deepest desire is that we may have a part with Christ.

My dear Brethren, I hope most of us here present know what it is to have a part in Christ, for we were elect in Him from before the foundation of the world. We have been made partakers of His Spirit, and have been brought into union with Him. We have submitted ourselves to His government. We are looking to Him for our salvation. We have a part with Him as members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones—a part with Him as branches in the vine, as stones in the temple. We are serving under His banner in the same holy war, and laborers in the same sacred service. We have a part with Him as His friends and as His chosen whom He has admitted into the most familiar communion with Himself.

We are much deceived if this is not the case. But if it, indeed, is so, we feel that the blessed fact is altogether due to Divine Grace, and it could never have been so if we had not first been washed. If we have not as yet participated in the blessings which come to us through Christ, we know, this morning, for the text tells us, that we must be washed before we can have a part with Him. Brethren, we desire to be sons as He is a Son. We wish to be heirs as He is an Heir. We pant to be accepted as He is accepted. We aspire to be, before long, glorified as He is glorified. This is a blessing worthy of the utmost intensity of desire, and it is a blessing which we must obtain or we shall sink miserably down to everlasting destruction—since to be without Christ is to be without hope.

II. After these few words upon what it is to have a part with Jesus, I come to notice, in the second place, THE ESSENTIAL QUALIFICATION FOR OBTAINING AND ENJOYING A PART WITH CHRIST. It is essential that He should wash us. Observe then, that the qualification is not one of *merit* on *our* part, it is one of *mercy* on *His* part. If He had said, "Except you obtain a superior degree of holiness, you have no part in Me," we might have become dispirited, desponding, and even despairing.

But the very chief of sinners may find comfort in such a word as this. Here is nothing of merit but all of mercy. Whatever is your sin, O Sinner, Christ can wash you! The only qualification for having a part in all Covenant blessings is that you as a sinner are washed by Jesus. There is no specification of something to be given on our part. It is something to be *received*. It is not demanded that we act as servants to Christ and wash His feet, but that He in tender condescension should be servant to us and wash our feet. If there were a matter of *giving* mentioned, O you poor and needy, you who are spiritually bankrupt, there might be reason for you to mourn! But since the *essential*, the great sine qua non is one of mercy alone, you may be comforted. You have but to come in all your filth and all your unworthiness and be washed, and this one thing shall give you part and lot in Christ.

But what is meant by this washing, which is the essential qualification for a man to have part with Christ? I understand it to mean one thing, namely, purification through the Lord Jesus—which one thing, however, will be best understood if we describe it as four things.

First, no man has any part in Christ who does not receive the first all-essential washing in the precious blood, by which all sin is once and forever put away. The moment a sinner believes in Jesus Christ, his iniquities are seen as laid on Christ the Substitute, and the Believer himself is free from sin. Though he may have been up to now black as an Ethiopian, yet is he washed in the fountain filled from the Redeemer's veins, and he stands before God without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. There is such a blessed fact as the instantaneous reception of a perfect pardon through faith in Jesus Christ, and this happens the moment a sinner truly looks to the great atoning Sacrifice.

If you rely on the Substitute, and the matchless expiation which He made for human guilt, your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you. If He does not wash you, you have no part in Him—but if His blood atones for you, He is yours. If you do not receive His perfect, unrivalled, Godlike blood-washing, you are no Christian. Whatever is your profession, whatever your supposed experience, whatever your reformation, whatever you may have attempted or accomplished—if you have never come as a guilty one, and seen your sin laid upon the bleeding Son of God, you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity—you have neither part nor lot in this matter. Without faith in the Atonement you can have no part in Christ.

There follows a second cleansing, which is, in some respects, but a branch of the first, namely, daily pardon for sin through faith in Jesus. As day by day we fall into sin, we are taught to pray each day, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us." And there is provision made in Christ Jesus for this daily pardon, since besides being the Paschal Lamb, our Lord is the morning and evening Lamb for daily guilt. This is what Christ meant, especially when He washed the disciples' feet, for He told them that He did not wash their head and their hands, because they had been washed. And, therefore, as being clean, they needed not to wash anything but their feet.

We who have once been pardoned have no need to be pardoned again in the sense in which we were at first. But we do have need in another sense, and in another respect, to seek a daily forgiveness of recurring sin. To use a simile which may, perhaps, explain what I mean—the priest of God, when first consecrated, was washed from head to foot, and so baptized into the service of the sanctuary. But later, each time he went to offer sacrifice, he washed his feet and his hands in the brazen laver. No need to give the complete immersion on each occasion—that had been given at first—and he was ceremonially purged from pollution, and made a priest unto God.

But accidental defilement, incidental to everyday life, had to be cleansed away, not to make the man a priest, but to keep him in proper condition for the right discharge of his priestly office. Even so, every Believer is made a priest unto God, and does not need to be made a priest

again, but to be daily cleansed from everything that might prevent him from the best discharge of his sacred duties. Permit me the use of another simile—here is a Blackamoor, black from head to foot. But he is washed in a miraculous bath, and so made white, white as snow. The man will never want another washing to remove his natural blackness, that is gone forever.

But, my Brethren, he may still need frequent washings, for as a white man he will constantly need the removal of stains incident to his being in this world. A sinner does not need, again, the first washing to be repeated, for that has put him into a new position towards God—but he needs a washing as a justified man to maintain his conscience in peace, and his heart pure for service. The leper, once purged under the Law, was clean and might go into the congregation of the Lord's House. Yet as a clean man and as admitted into the congregation, he had the ordinary need to wash which was incidental to every Israelite.

Or to put it yet in another form—I, a criminal, am forgiven. All my crimes against the great Judge of all the earth are blotted out. I need no second acquittal. The acquittal which was given me when I first believed in Christ included all my sins, past, present, and to come. As before the bar of God I am clean, and need no further washing—but now being made a child, I stand not at His bar, but at His table, and alas—I commit sins as a child! Sins which will not condemn me, for I am not under the Law but under Grace, but sins which require me as a child to go to my Father, and say to Him each day, "My Father in Heaven, forgive me my daily trespasses, as I forgive them that trespass against me." This it is which you must receive every day, and if you do not receive it, you have no part in Christ.

If you think you do not sin at all, and have not, therefore, any need of washing, you have no part in Christ. If you fancy that you do not require this daily washing of the feet, take it for granted that you are too proud to understand yourself and that you have not been humbled as you ought to be. All those who are in Christ feel that they need each day that He should come and wash their feet. Though they are clean every whit, yet still they need their feet to be washed by Him.

A third thing included in this feet-washing, I believe, is the continual sanctification which faith in Jesus Christ carries on within us by the power of the Holy Spirit. If a man professes to be a Christian and is not in his walk and conversation holier than other men, that man's profession is vain. There are some who seem to think that we are to come to Christ as sinners, and then after having believed in Him are to live as we did before.

My Brethren, it is not so. Christ saves His people *from* their sins. When you hear the complaints of God's servants concerning their temptations and their indwelling sins, you are not to conclude that sin has dominion over them, or that they have not overcome sin, or that they are not the men they once were. No, my Brethren, I believe the holier a man becomes, the more he mourns over the unholiness which remains in him. But he is in very truth a far better man—he is a spiritual and holy man. If Jesus washes you not, so that you become godly and upright, you may depend upon it, you have no part in Him.

If He does not wash that tongue, and cleanse away those angry, or idle, or filthy words. If He does not wash those hands, and render them impossible to perform a dishonest or unchaste act. If He does not wash your feet and render it impossible they should be able to carry you to the haunts of vice and criminal amusement—you have no part in Him. It is all worthless for unconverted persons to be baptized and come to His Table, for if He has not *sanctified* you in some measure He has not *justified* you.

If you are not a changed man, neither are you a saved man. And if you do not aspire after holiness, neither need you hope that you shall have a part in the Heaven of the blessed. “If I wash you not, you have no part with Me.” It includes then, you see, the first pardon, the successive pardons of each day, and the sanctifying work by which He cleanses us with the washing of water by the Word.

Once more, I think, in this foot-washing, our Savior meant to get forth the daily communion which the true Christian has with Christ. It was a very singular thing for a disciple to be sitting there and for the Master to be washing his feet. It was an astounding fact, a wonder, a miracle, a Divine Grace which Peter could hardly think possible. But every Christian’s life must be a series of similar wonders. Each day he will have to obtain from his Lord some things for which it really seems as if he ought not to have dared to ask. They appear too good and too great for him to receive.

I know, and you know what it is to go to the Lord Jesus Christ about little things, about household cares, about daily trials, about the troubles of our spirit, the distractions of our mind. It is a mark of a child to be able to do so. It is, in fact, a continuance of the foot-washing which our Lord gave to Peter. Washing feet is not a great or essential act. A man may live, though his feet after a journey may not be cooled by the refreshing stream from the pitcher. It is a small act, a grateful and refreshing act, and just such things Jesus Christ must continue to do for you and for me, if we are His people. We shall, in times of need, find Jesus in our chamber still clothed with the towel and bearing the basin—ready still to wait on us and administer loving refreshments.

And we shall often wonder, “What? Did He really help me in such a thing as that, and did I dare to take such a case as that to Him?” Unbelief will say, “I dare not do that again. Lord, You shall never wash my feet. I cannot, I dare not make a servant of You for such common things as these. I will leave the great matters of salvation with You, but I will not come to You each day for ordinary things.” But, Beloved, unless we do so—unless we live this life of reception of great Grace for little occasions. Unless we live receiving wonders of loving kindness which we feel we have no right to receive—marvels of mercy surpassing all expectation. Unless, I say, our life is made up of tender mercies of which we are utterly unworthy—Jesus is not washing our feet—and we have no part with Him.

Put these four things together, and I think you have caught the thought of our Master. It is very blessed to think that the very first portion of the least Believer is to be washed, and this is the most essential thing of all. Though we may not as yet wear those brighter Graces which are the ornaments of the Christian life, and cannot as yet rejoice that we are full-

grown men in Christ—yet if we are only little babes whose chief portion is to be washed, we have sure evidence of a part with Jesus.

We may be too little to do much service. We may be too weak to achieve great victories. But if our Lord has but taken us to Himself, and washed us, we have a part with Him. The most essential thing, you see, is that which the feeblest and the newest born of all the heavenly family possesses. Washing is for every trembling sinner who trusts in Christ—and it is as good proof of a part in Christ as the highest degree of Grace.

III. But I must pass on now to notice, in the third place, WHY THIS WASHING IS SO ESSENTIAL. And I answer, first, unless Christ washes us we have no part in Him because the claims of our Lord require it. Suppose a man shall say, “I have no need of washing.” Brethren, it is clear that he has no part in Christ, because Christ came on purpose to cleanse His people from their *sins*. He came not to call the righteous, but *sinner*s to repentance. The whole have no need of a physician—only they that are sick.

If a man does not take Jesus to be his Savior, he may say what he likes about Him, but he does not even know the meaning of His name. May not a very sincere person admire Christ’s Character, and talk well of Him? Yes, and we shall be glad that he is able to go so far in the right way. But let not such a man deceive himself with the hope that he will be a partaker of any of the blessings which Christ brings unless he acknowledges that for which Christ is the Christ or the anointed One—namely, to bring the Gospel of salvation to the unworthy.

One of old said, “Aut Caesar aut nullus”—he would be either Caesar or nobody. And so Jesus Christ will be either acknowledged the anointed Savior, or He will be nothing to you. If you will not take Him to be an Expiation for your sins, and the true Refiner of your life, you refuse Him altogether. Mere admiration of the physician gives no part in his healing power. The loudest praises of light give not vision to blind men. Jesus is either the Savior or nothing. For this He lived. For this He died. Alas, for those who will not receive Him in this Character! In the long run you shall always find that, despite their soft speeches, they have not received the true Christ of God.

He who rejects Jesus as an atoning Sacrifice is sure to doubt His Godhead, and so to reject His grander nature. The deniers of the Atonement, who are supposed to be admirers of the example of Christ, generally turn out to be the greatest enemies to vital Christianity. There are no more real enemies of Christ than those who deny the doctrine of the Cross. If they do not accept Christ to wash them, they soon prove that they have no part in Him. Unless men need cleansing from sin, and unless His blood, alone, can cleanse them, Our Lord came on a frivolous errand—He descended to this world to perform an unnecessary work—and He was foolish enough to shed His blood with the most absurd of motives.

If men need to be washed, then He came in Divine wisdom and philanthropy, and He lived and He died with an object worthy of His Divine mind—and His life was no mistake. But if men do *not* need cleansing, Christ’s death was a mistake, and His whole life, I dare to say it, was a piece of base imposture—for He was evermore professing Himself to be the

Savior of sinners, and the Pardoner of sin. He spoke of giving rest to the weary, and of saving the lost—if He could not save, or if men did not require saving—the life of Christ was a mistake, and His mission an imposition. Jesus Christ is nothing, His very name is ridiculous—if there are none to save, and if He is not a Savior anointed.

You have no part in Christ, then, however much you applaud Him, unless you are washed by Him. You have rejected that for which He lived, and for which He died—you have despised that which He considers to be His noble lifework, and for the joy of which He gave Himself up to death, if you refuse to be washed by Him. Someone, perhaps, may say, “I believe I need washing, but I am confident I can purify myself. I have bad habits, and undesirable infirmities, but I can master the habits and can conquer the infirmity. I believe a man ought to be holy and become like God, and by diligent perseverance I conceive that I can do it.”

Do it, then, Sir. I challenge you to do it, but you certainly have no part in Christ. Whatever you may think of Christ, you can have no part in Him, for He comes on purpose to save His people from their sins. His very name is Jesus the Savior—for that same reason was He born—and if you can do it yourself, you are a rival to Him—you are an Antichrist. You will owe Him nothing, and you shall have no part in Him. Ah, see then, and mark it well—unless we are washed, we ignore the claims of Christ—we cast a slur upon the great labor of His life, and we rob Him of His main Glory.

Furthermore, the Lord Jesus Christ is Himself so infinitely pure, so altogether holy, both as God and Man, that when we come to Him we must first be cleansed by Him before He can enter into fellowship with us. There is a fellowship with us as sinners which He graciously adopts, for He receives sinners and eats with them. But into fellowship with His deep thoughts, His blessed purposes, and His Divine Nature, He brings no man till first He has washed Him in His blood. If you refuse Him, then, as the Refiner who shall purify the sons of Levi, and take away their dross and sin, and then present them to Himself as much fine gold, you have refused all part in Christ.

Again, the blessings which are in Christ are so spiritual that till we are cleansed we cannot enjoy them. Who can see God but those who are first made pure in heart? Who can have peace with God but those who are justified by faith? The blessings of the Covenant are not like oil and wine, which the ungodly man can rejoice in—neither are they like silver and gold, which the carnal heart can laugh over. But they are *blessings*, pure and refined, which the natural man knows not—which only the man renewed by the Spirit of God can ever prize—for to others they are far above and out of sight. You must be born again. You must be washed. You must be renewed in the spirit of your minds or else Heaven, itself, would not be a Heaven to you—and the things of the kingdom of God you could not know—its joys you could not enter into. Your lack of washing disqualifies you.

Moreover, man’s nature is such that if he did but know it, it is impossible for him to have part with Christ without washing. Peter did not see on his feet what Christ could see there. I mean not on the flesh of his feet, but on what they represent, namely, his daily life. Christ could see in Pe-

ter blots and blurs, and spots and defilement which made Him indeed say, "Alas, My poor Follower, you can have no part with Me unless I wash you. Poor Peter, if you did know yourself, you would see how impossible it is for Me to give you a portion with Me till first I have cleansed you." So, Brethren, if we had a sight of ourselves, a true sight in God's own light—instead of starting back from Christ the Purifier, we would cry to Him incessantly, "Wash me, O Lord, purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean—wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."

For all these reasons, then, the washing by our Master becomes a necessity. You cannot have a part in Christ unless you are washed by Him.

IV. Just for a moment or two I shall ask you to think of some THINGS WHICH HAVE BEEN PUT FORWARD AS SUBSTITUTES for being washed by Jesus Christ.

Peter had such a love for his Master, and such an admiration for Him that he very humbly said, "Do You wash *my* feet?" Now would not Peter's humble reverential estimation of Christ stand him in good place? Might he not be accepted even though his feet were not washed? Ah, no! "If I wash you not, you have no part in Me." If any of you feel your unworthiness, and mourn it, and are kept back from Christ by the thought that you are not fit to be saved—will this humility, this *supposed* humility—save you? My Hearer, the answer is NO. Unless you have faith in Christ, *and He washes you*, you have no part in Him.

No repentance, no remorse, no chastening of your spirit, no humbling of your soul—if they exist apart from a living faith in Him—can give you any part in Him. O that you would give up this ruinous humility and trust in Jesus to cleanse you! For unless you do, though you humble yourself from morning to morning, and water the earth with your tears, and make your bed to swim with them—yet shall you have no part in Christ. Peter had performed distinguished service for his Master. He had gone with the other Apostles and preached the Gospel, and cast out devils. And he was one of those who returned and said, "Lord, even the devils are subject to us"—would not this do? Would not these achievements prove that Peter had part in Christ?

He preached so boldly, he faced the crowd so nobly—would not that suffice? No, my dear Hearers. Though any of us should possess tongues of men and of angels, and give our bodies to be burned—yet if Christ washes us not, we have no part in Him. We must not hope that the noble service can stand in the place of the washing by the expiatory Atonement of Christ.

But Peter had enjoyed very remarkable views of Christ's Glory. He was one of the three who went up the Mount of Transfiguration, and there saw the Lord in splendor. And at other times with the other two favorites of the Master, he had been admitted to sights denied to common eyes—would not all this prove his part in Jesus? I sometimes hear men and women boasting out of measure of the "coming Glory." And I know they give their chief attention to the prophecies of that Glory. I would not deny them all that they are likely to get from such studies.

But I would remind them that it is not as glorified as the fact that Jesus puts away sin. He atoned for it as Christ Crucified, and as such He is

our hope. Though a man bathe day after day in the very light of the Millennium, and though he understand all mysteries—yet if Jesus washes him not, if he has not justification through the blood, and holiness through the work of the Spirit—it profits him nothing. Visions of Glory, however transporting they may be, give you no part in Him.

But Peter had walked on water once when his Master bade him come to Him! Though he did, at last, begin to sink, yet for awhile he trod the waves, and found the water marble beneath his feet. Did not that prove him to possess a part in Christ? No, my Brethren, not if Christ washed him not. If you had faith to remove mountains, yet if you had not this blood-washing, this *daily* washing, you would have no part in Christ. But this man Peter had received deep instruction! Did not his Master say, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood have not revealed it unto you”? Yes, but I add that though you possessed all knowledge, and could interpret all mysteries, yet if Jesus washes you not, you have no part in Him.

It is not the power to occupy the pulpit. It is not the power to cast out a devil. It is not the power to work a miracle. It is not the power, even, to shake Heaven or earth that can prove you to have a part in Christ—it is the simply going down humbly to the fountain filled with blood and being washed there, which is the indispensable qualification—and nothing else can stand in the place of this. Peter, no doubt, was full of zealous enthusiasm. He could say, “Though all should deny You, yet will not I. I will go with You to prison and to death.” But the greatest imaginable zeal does not prove a man to have a part in Christ if he is not truly washed.

I do implore you, my dear Hearers, to do what I anxiously wish to do myself, namely, to make sure that you have been cleansed in the blood of Jesus. It is one thing to know about that blood. It is another thing to have it applied to the conscience. It is one thing to know you ought daily to be washed. It is quite another thing to get that daily washing. It is one thing to believe, “I ought to be holy.” It is another thing to have the Holy Spirit dwelling in me to make me holy. It is one thing to see the faults of others—but quite another thing to confess my own and to be cleansed from them by the Savior.

Search yourselves, I pray you. You may have but little time to do it in—therefore be on the alert, and examine yourself! For don’t you hear the sentence, full of love and full of pity, and yet as stern as the thunderclaps which pealed from Sinai’s Smoking summit—“If I wash you not, you have no part in Me”? If He does not justify you. If He does not daily forgive you. If He does not daily sanctify you. If He does not daily perform condescending deeds of tenderness and kindness towards you, you have no part in Him.

V. So let us close with LESSONS OF WISDOM upon which I linger but a minute or two. The lesson of wisdom which comes first is this—let no supposed humility keep any of you from believing in Jesus Christ. The way of Grace is miracle from beginning to end. Stagger not, therefore, to begin with accepting a miracle of Grace. You say, “I cannot believe that Christ could forgive such a Hell-deserving sinner as I am. I have not any

claims on Him. I have been such a wretch. I cannot think that simply on my trusting Him, He, out of His abundant mercy, will forgive my sins.”

My dear Friend, if you cannot believe that to begin with—it is but the commencement miracle—there are still greater things than these! “But I am so unworthy!” I know you are, it is all true—you are much more unworthy than you have any idea of. You do not deserve to live. You do not deserve to be out of Hell. But since God is gracious, and He bids you trust Christ and you shall live, do not be damned because you are too proudly humble to be saved! You tell me I speak sarcastically. I tell you, rather, I speak the Truth of God. It is Satan who deceives you by making you believe that there is any humility in doubting the mercy of God in Christ Jesus!

What if you are the worst sinner out of damnation? If God tells you He will save you upon your believing and being baptized, why, Man, believe and be baptized and be saved! And may God the Holy Spirit lead you to do that now. What have you to do with saying it is too good a thing? If God chooses to give it, who are you to say it is too good? You must be washed by Christ or else perish! O do not stand back because it seems too good for you to receive! You must be washed, I say, or perish! Take the good that God provides you and be grateful for it.

What if God Himself came down from Heaven and put on human flesh and suffered and died that you might not suffer and die? I grant you it is a miracle that makes the very seraphim astonished and causes the whole universe to tremble with amazement. But why do you draw back from it and say, “Because it is so great I will not receive it”? Do you refuse the air because a bounteous God has made it so abundant? Do you refuse to drink of the river because it is so deep and broad? Will you refuse God’s mercy because that mercy is so illimitable, so vast, so Divine? O do not! I say again, damn not yourself under pretense of humility—but come as you are, and accept the mercy which is freely presented to you in Christ Jesus, in the Gospel which He has bid us preach. Remember, “He that believes and is baptized, shall be saved. He that believes not, shall be damned.”

A further lesson of wisdom is this—as you must not let a supposed humility keep you back, so let no other kind of *feeling* keep you from Christ. The feeling may seem to be very right and very proper, but if it prevents your being saved, it is a bad feeling. I know your human nature may excuse it and say, “Why, this is commendable for a man to feel his sin so great! Is it not even praiseworthy?” I answer, nothing is commendable which makes a man think that God cannot forgive him. Feel your sin to be as great as you will, but do not, therefore, slander God as though He were unwilling to forgive you.

Your feeling may look pretty in the darkness of your ignorance, but in the brightness of the eternal light, any feeling that keeps you away from the Cross and away from your Father God is a damnable feeling, and therefore away with it! Believe at once! I charge you to believe in the name of Jesus of Nazareth! I, His servant charge you in His name—believe Him! As He spoke to the winds and they were hushed, and to the waves and they were stilled, so in His name I speak to you all! I say trust Him and

you shall find peace for your spirit and joy for your soul, both now and forever.

The last word shall be this—remember, my dear Friends, what you are if you remain unwashed. And remember what you will be if you are washed. If you remain unwashed you have no part in Him. The past unforgiven, the present unchanged, the future unsanctified. There remains for you, when the dread summons comes that shall separate your soul from your body, nothing that can comfort, nothing that can afford a ray of hope. Convicted before the bar of God of ten thousand offenses against His righteous Law, convicted of mad, insane rebellion against God in having refused the Gospel of His dear Son, you must be driven from His Presence. And I warn you that within the cover of His Book there is not so much as a single jot or tittle that breathes anything like consolation to a spirit that has once been condemned of God after death.

Men have tried to contort this Bible and make it say something that might encourage a soul to reject Christ. But there is here nothing but a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation which shall devour the unbeliever. It is now or never with you! I beseech you—look to Jesus Christ and live! To be washed! How simple! Nothing is asked of you but to take what Christ has made ready for you. To be washed! How necessary! To be washed now! How easy! O cast not away the promise of God through unbelief, but accept the washing, lest you cast yourself into eternal condemnation!

If you believe in Jesus now, you shall be cleansed, your life shall become new. The preaching of morality helps but little. Men have been preached at with morality till they have become drunkards and swearers. Vice laughs at the preaching of morality. But the preaching of Christ Crucified and the Gospel of Substitution is efficacious—as many here are testifying by their renewed lives and changed behavior.

Trust Christ, then, and as your present life will be changed, your future life will be unboundedly blessed. When your turn shall come to depart out of the world unto the Father, you shall be with Jesus where He is—and you shall behold His Glory. Oh, then, be washed and have part in all the splendor that is to be revealed! Be washed now, and His shall be the glory. Amen.

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CHRIST'S "NEW COMMANDMENT" NO. 2936

A SERMON
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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***"A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another: as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."
John 13:34, 35.***

I CAN never doubt, or for a moment distrust the affection of my dear people to myself. I certainly do not ask for any more of your love, for I have as much as one man ought to have—perhaps a little more—certainly a great deal more than I deserve. I can now fairly turn round and say to you, putting myself altogether on one side, "Let brotherly love continue and let the warmth of your affection towards one another increase." And I can say this, too, without anybody daring to insinuate that there is something wrong in the Church—some division or schism here. Blessed be God, I do not think that a microscopic eye could discover anything of the kind! There may be some of you who do not like certain persons quite as much as you like other people. I do not wonder at that, for there will always be some partialities even among the best of friends. Our Lord Jesus, Himself, had 12 Apostles and out of the twelve, three especially favored ones. and out of the three, one who leaned upon His bosom. There are some people who are more lovable than other people and we can hardly help loving them more than others. Still, I know of no special reason of that kind why I should preach this sermon. I bless the Lord that you are as loving as you are and pray that you may increase more and more in your love to one another.

I am going to speak upon our text thus. First, *the title which our Lord gave to this commandment.* He called it "a new commandment." Secondly, the example by which He expounded it—"That you love one another as I have loved you." And thirdly, the result by which He enforced it—"By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

I. First, then, THE TITLE WHICH CHRIST GAVE TO THIS COMMANDMENT—"a new commandment."

Many of you, I do not doubt, have heard the story of Archbishop Usher and Mr. Rutherford. But it is so appropriate to this subject that I cannot help telling it again. The archbishop had heard of the wondrous power of Rutherford's devotion and of the singular beauty of the arrangement of his household, and he wished to witness it himself. But he could not tell how to do so until it occurred to him that he might disguise himself as a poor traveler. Accordingly, at nightfall, he knocked at the door of Mr. Rutherford's house and was received by Mrs. Rutherford. He asked if he

could find lodgings there for the night, to which she answered, "Yes," for they entertained strangers. She placed him in the kitchen and gave him something to eat. It was a part of her regular family discipline, on Saturday evening, to catechize the children and the servants and, of course, the poor man in the kitchen came in among them.

Mrs. Rutherford put to all of them some questions concerning the commandments and to this poor man she put the question, "How many commandments are there?" And he answered, "Eleven." "Ah," she said, "what a sad thing that a man of your age, whose hair is sprinkled with gray, should not even know how many commandments there are, for there is not a child above six years old in our parish who does not know that." The poor man said nothing in reply, but he had his oatmeal porridge and went to bed. Later, he rose and listened to Rutherford's midnight prayer. He was charmed with it, made himself known to him, borrowed a better coat from him, preached for him on the Sunday morning and surprised Mrs. Rutherford by taking as his text, "A new commandment I give unto you," and by commencing with the observation that this might very properly be called the eleventh commandment. By-and-by the archbishop went on his way and he and Rutherford had been refreshed together. It is the eleventh commandment and if, the next time we are asked how many commandments there are, we answer, "Eleven," we shall reply rightly enough.

But why is it a new commandment? Is it not included in the ten? You know how our Lord approved the lawyer's summary of the Ten Commandments—"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." How is this a new commandment then—"That you love one another"?

It is new, first, *as to the extent of the love*. We are to love our neighbor as ourselves, but we are to love our fellow Christians as Christ loved us—and that is far more than we love ourselves. Christ loved us better than He loved Himself, for He loved us so much that He gave Himself for us, so that now no one of us is to say, "I am to love my friend, my brother, my fellow creatures as I love myself," but to interpret Christ's command thus, "I am to love my fellow Christians even as Jesus Christ who died for me, has loved me." This is a nobler kind of love altogether to the love which we are to manifest to our neighbors. That is the love of benevolence, but this is a love of affinity and close relationship and involves a higher degree of self-sacrifice than was enjoined by the Law of Moses, or than would have been understood by the bulk of mankind to have been intended by the precept which bids us love one another even as we love ourselves.

Next, it is a new commandment *because it is backed by a new reason*. The old commandment was backed by this declaration, "I am the Lord your God, which have brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." The Israelite was to obey that Law because of the redemption which God had worked for his nation in Egypt. But we are commanded to love one another because Christ has redeemed us from a far worse bondage than that of Egypt and with a far costlier Sacrifice

than the offering up of myriads of paschal lambs. "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us." He has brought us out from under the iron yoke of sin and Satan and has broken our bonds asunder. Our enemies have pursued us, but He has destroyed them at the sea, even at the Red Sea. He has redeemed us with His own heart's blood and, therefore, His new commandment comes to us with the greatest possible force, "That you love one another as I have loved you."

It is a new commandment because of the extent of it and also because of the reason by which it is supported.

It is a new commandment, also, *because it is a new love, springing from a new nature and embracing a new nation.* I am bound, as a man, to love my fellow man because he is a man. But I am bound, as a *regenerate man*, to love my fellow Christian still more because he, also, is regenerate. The ties of blood ought to be recognized by us far more than they are. We are too apt to forget that God "has made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth." So that by the common tie of blood we are all brethren. But, Beloved, the ties of Grace are far stronger than the ties of blood. If you are really born of God, you are Brothers by a brotherhood that is stronger, even, than the natural brotherhood which enabled you to lie in the same cradle and to hang at the same breast, for brothers according to the flesh may be eternally separated. The right hand of the King may be the position accorded to the one and his left hand may be the position assigned to the other. But Brothers who are truly born of God, share a brotherhood which must last forever! They who are now Brothers and Sisters in Christ shall always be Brothers and Sisters!

It is a very blessed thing when we are able to love one another because the Grace that is in any one of us sees the Grace that is in another and discerns in that other, not the flesh and blood of the Savior, but such a resemblance to Christ that it must love that other one for His sake! As it is true that if we are of the world, the world will love its own, so is it true that if we are of the Spirit, the Spirit will love His own! The whole redeemed family of Christ is firmly bound together. Born of God ourselves, we keep looking out to see others who have been "born-again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible." And when we do see them, we cannot help loving them. There is a bond of union between us at once. There are certain Brethren who hold that communion among Christians ought to be restricted—they say that if Believers are disobedient, especially with regard to Baptism, they ought not to be communed with. I do not judge my Brothers and Sisters who hold those views, but I do not hesitate to tell them that they hold views which it is quite impossible for them to carry out. If they are, themselves, in the body of Christ they must of necessity commune with all the other members of the mystical body of Christ—they cannot help themselves! Suppose that my little finger has been properly washed and cleansed, but that the rest of my hand is not so clean and that, therefore, my finger holds it to be its duty to shut off the rest of my hand from communion with itself? It cannot do it—it is impossible unless it is severed from the

hand! It must commune with the rest of the body, whether it is washed or unwashed. You may deny your friend the outward form of fellowship because he is not baptized, but you cannot deny him the inner fellowship which is much more important. You are allied to God and therefore you must have fellowship with all others who are allied to God, whether you like it or not! It is not a thing which your church discipline can touch—it can no more be bound than can the waves of air which are constantly in motion. "The wind blows where it wishes," and the Divine breath of fellowship comes where it pleases and the life of God will manifest itself in all the members of the body of Christ! And neither can you by any possibility restrain it.

The love which Christ commands His followers to have towards one another is not the ordinary love of man to man as such, but the love of the new-born man to the new-born man. Let us who love the Lord, love each other fervently in that sense. This is a love which arises out of a totally new union. A man who is a Christian belongs to a very special family. That family circle does not comprehend the whole human race—it is a family inside the larger human family, yet separated from it by an inner spiritual life. What if I say that the distance between the saved and the unsaved is like a great gulf? It is true that by the almighty Grace of God, there is a way across that gulf and many pass over it—still, the gulf is very deep and broad. But the moment a man is born unto God he enters that inner circle and becomes a member of a new family. Within that sacred circle of electing love, all bonds of nationality are broken forever. There we are no longer Frenchmen or Englishmen, Americans or Russians, black or white, bond or free, but we are "all one in Christ Jesus." There neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails! There the barbarian is no less and the Greek is no more than any other member of the redeemed family. We are Brothers and Sisters because, in Christ we are all in one family and, therefore it is that we are called to a new kind of love, a love which is like the love of the brothers of the same house, only more sublime, and with better reasons lying at the bottom than even the love of consanguinity can boast.

And, beloved Friends, this is a new commandment *because it is enforced by new necessities*. Christians ought to love one another because they are the subjects of one King who is also their Savior. We are a little band of Brothers and Sisters in the midst of a vast multitude of enemies. "Behold," said Christ to His disciples, "I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves." If you are true Christians, you will not have the love of worldlings—you cannot have it! They will be sure to ridicule you, call you fools, or hypocrites, or something equally uncomplimentary. Well, then, cling the more closely to one another! Whatever opposition you meet with outside, let it only weld you into a firmer unit, the one with the other. We are like a small company of soldiers in an enemy's country, strongly garrisoned by the vast battalions of the foe, so we must hold together—we must be as one man, banded together in closest fellowship—as our Great Captain bids us. God grant that the very fact that we are found in an enemy's country may result in making us more completely one than we have ever been before!

When I hear a Christian man finding fault with his minister, I always wish that the devil had found somebody else to do his dirty work. I hope that none of you will ever be found complaining of God's servants who are doing their best to help their Lord's cause. There are plenty who are ready to find fault with them and it is much better that their faults—if they have faults—should be pointed out by an enemy rather than by you who belong to the same family as they do! Even if you should know that a professor is a hypocrite, it may be the duty of a Christian to say, "Let him fall by the hand of another. I would rather not give evidence against him." When I hear my Master say, "One of you shall betray Me," I may have a shrewd suspicion that He refers to Judas, but it will be wiser for me to say, "Lord, is it I?" rather than to ask, "Lord, is it Judas?"

Further, dear Brothers and Sisters, this is a new commandment *because it is suggested by new characteristics*. In our fellow men there *may* be something lovable, but in our fellow Christians, there *must* be something lovable. Suppose they are only newly born to God—for my part, I hardly know of a more beautiful sight than a newborn Christian! I like to hear the prayer of the one who is just converted—there may be much of mistake and imperfection in it, but that does not spoil it! A lamb does not bleat in quite the same tones that a sheep uses, yet a lamb is a very beautiful object and one likes to hear its feeble notes. And there is a beauty about the lambs in Christ's flock as well as about the full-grown sheep. There is nothing more lovely to be seen in the whole world than an aged Believer who has lived very near to God. How calm the old gentleman's spirit—and when he begins to talk about the things of God and to testify concerning the love of his Lord—how charmingly he talks! There is much that is beautiful about all true Christians, so try and search out their excellences rather than their defects. If we are, ourselves, in a right state of heart, we are all the more likely to admire that which is good in others, just as Mercy and Christiana, when they came up from their bath, admired one another. I would advise you, Beloved, to imitate those gracious women. There is a beauty about your friend that there is not about yourself. Do not be always gazing in the mirror—there are fairer sights to be seen than any you will find there! Look into your fellow Christian's face and as you see anything there that is the work of the Spirit, love him because of that.

And, once more, *this is a new commandment because it is a preparation for better prospects than we have ever enjoyed before*. We who believe in Jesus are going to live together in Heaven forever and ever, so we may as well be good friends while we are here! We shall see each other there in one common glory and be occupied forever in one common employment—the adoration of our Lord and Master. The remembrance of this Truth of God ought to break down many of the barriers which at present exist in society. There was a wealthy Christian, a man who stood very high in social position, who was in the habit of picking out godly people of a far lower class than that to which he, himself, belonged. He would bring home to his table the farmer from the plow, or the smith from the smithy, and one of his rich friends ridiculed him for seeking

such associates. But he replied, "I do not think you ought to ridicule me for picking out those who are, socially, lower than myself, for those whom I have brought to my table are men and women who, I believe, will be nearer to the Throne of God in Heaven than I shall be. They are very poor, but they are better, more pious and more gracious than I am—so I thought that I might as well pick the best company I could while I was here—and associate with them." I like that gentleman's idea, and I can also bear witness that I have often learned more in an hour's conversation with a godly poor man than I have learned from an educated man who has known but little of the things of God! Never judge men by the clothes they wear, but by what they are in themselves! It is a man's heart and, above all, it is the Grace of God that dwells within the man's heart that you and I are to prize and love—may God help us to do so!

Thus, I think I have said enough concerning the new commandment which Christ gave to His disciples.

II. Now I must pass on to the second point—THE EXAMPLE BY WHICH CHRIST EXPOUNDED THIS NEW COMMANDMENT. "As I have loved you, that you also love one another."

First, *Christ loved them unselfishly*. He certainly had nothing to gain from associating with them and nothing to learn from them. It is true that He used them to help in the extension of His cause, but He first made them fit to be used. He owed nothing to them and they owed everything to Him. There was nothing in them when He first called them—and to the very last there was nothing good in them except what His Grace had put there—and there was not nearly as much of that as there ought to have been, for He had to say, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet have you not known Me, Philip?" Christians, you also are to love one another, not because of the gain which you get *from* one another, but rather because of the good you can do *to* one another.

I once heard a minister speak very grumblingly of the Baptist denomination. He said, "I do not know what the denomination ever did for me." I could not help thinking to myself, "Well now, that is a question which has never occurred to me and probably never will. The question that has occurred to me is, What can I do for the denomination?" And I think that is the kind of question which every Christian minister ought to ask, not only concerning the denomination, but concerning Christians in general. We ought not to ask, "What can these people do for me?" No, put the shoe on the other foot and say, "What can I do for these people?" If you want to love a man, you must not get him to do you a kindness, but you must do a kindness to him and then you will love him. You cannot do good to another person without finding growing up in your heart some degree of interest in the person to whom you have done that good. It is possible that a child may forget its mother, forget that it drew its life, its nourishment and all the comforts of its infancy from its mother, but the mother does not forget that she reared it in its weakness and brought it up to strength. If you want to love a person, do some loving thing for that person and love will spring up in your soul to that person. Our Lord Jesus Christ loved His disciples unselfishly—let us do the same.

He also loved them very trustingly for, though He was not unwise and put no confidence in man, yet I might slightly alter one of our hymns and say concerning our Lord, "Oh, see how Jesus did trust unto Himself unto the childish love of His disciples!" He never wore any armor when He was alone with them. In the midst of skeptical scribes and Pharisees, we can see Him standing like a man on His guard, with His sword drawn in His hand, but as soon as He gets among His own followers, He opens His heart to them and tells them many things that He does not tell others—so many, indeed, that He once said to them, "If it were not so, I would have told you," as if He had no secrets from them, but unveiled His very heart to them! Of course, you cannot do this to the full with all professing Christian but still, when you are among your fellow Christians, do not always go about suspecting everybody. I would sooner be taken in a thousand times than I would unjustly suspect one true-hearted man. It is a shameful thing for any one of you to move among your fellow Christians and to be saying in your hearts, "I am afraid that many of them are hypocrites." Sir, I am greatly afraid that you are yourself a hypocrite, for most men measure other people's corn with the bushel that they keep at home! So, if you think ill of other people, the sin is probably in yourself. I have often said that if there is any place where I am quite at home, it is among my own congregation—

***"There my best friends, my kindred, dwell!
There God my Savior reigns!"***

There must be a hearty spirit of trustfulness between those who love the same Christ or else a lasting union between them is impossible.

Next, *Christ loved His disciples sympathetically*. He grieved with them in their griefs and rejoiced with them in their joys. He entered into most intimate fellowship with them in their varied experiences. Let us try to do the same with our Brothers and Sisters in Christ. Let us weep with those that weep and rejoice with those that rejoice. Nothing tends so greatly to oil the wheels of life as a little loving sympathy—let us always be ready with a good supply of it wherever it is needed.

Our Lord also loved His disciples patiently. They must often have grieved Him by their ignorance and unbelief. If any of us had been in His place, we would have said, "You set of dummies, we cannot bear with you any longer." But our loving Lord did not talk like that. After He had told them the Truth of God 20 times and yet they did not know it, He went on in the same fashion and told it to them again and again until they *did* know it. As He was so patient with His disciples, it ill becomes us, who are ourselves so imperfect, to say concerning any of our fellow Christians, "I cannot feel any affection for So-and-So," or, "I cannot have any communion with So-and-So." Do you talk like that because you perceive some imperfection in them? But, my dear Brother, have not you many imperfections? It may be that some other person is looking upon you in the same cold light in which you are looking upon him and that he is finding as much fault with you as you are finding with him! If so, it is a great pity that any of us should be impatient with one another when our Lord Jesus Christ is so patient with us.

Once more, *our Lord loved His disciples practically*. His love did not consist in the mere effervescence of transient emotion or in only kind words, but He loved them deeply and shared all that He had with them. He even condescended to wash their feet as though He had been their servant! What more could He do for them? Yet He did far more than that, for He laid down His life for them. He gave up all He had for them. He gave up all the members of His body and all the faculties of His soul—His entire Nature—that He might save His people. “Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.” “As I have loved you,” He said, “even so love you one another.” What a marvelous exposition of the precept the whole life and death of Jesus Christ make up for us! May we have the Grace to follow where the path is so plainly marked out for us!

III. And now, thirdly, I am to speak of THE RESULT BY WHICH THE PRECEPT IS ENFORCED. “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Among all of them who know that we are Christ's disciples, there is one very important person—and that is yourself. If you have love towards Christ's disciples, you will know that you are one of His disciples, for how does the Beloved Apostle John put it? “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.” It will be one of the clearest evidences to your own heart that you are really a disciple of Jesus when you realize that for Christ's sake, you love the whole redeemed family of God! By this test shall all men know that you are His disciples and you shall begin by knowing it yourself.

By this test shall your fellow Christians also know that you are Christ's disciples. I do not know of anything which more commends a Christian to his fellow Christians than a true spirit of love. I have read many controversial works and I have admired the force of the arguments in many of them. But when I have read them, I have not gathered from the perusal that the writers on either side were very eminently followers of Christ. They may have been—it was no business of mine to judge as to that matter. They may have been showing other precious qualities while they were contending for the faith once and for all delivered to the saints, but the Grace of Christian charity has not always been very manifest. For instance, if you read the controversy between Mr. Wesley and Mr. Toplady—well, I do not know which was the worse of the two—they could both say a thing very sharply when they tried and the devil helped them to make it even sharper. Yet they were, both of them, good men and it was not according to the nature of either of them to say anything bad of the other. It is quite a relief to notice how Mr. Whitefield conducted his controversy with Mr. Wesley. As I have read it, I have said to myself, “This man is a Christian and no mistake.” It is reported that Mr. Whitefield was one day asked by a partisan, “Do you think that we, when we get to Heaven, shall see John Wesley there?” “No,” said George Whitefield, “I do not think we shall.” The questioner was very delighted with that answer, but Mr. Whitefield added, “I believe that Mr. John Wesley will have a place so near the Throne of God and that such poor creature as you and I will be so far off as to be hardly able to see him.”

As I read such remarks made by Mr. Whitefield, I have said to myself, "By this I know, as a Christian, that he must be a Christian," for I saw that he loved his brother, Wesley, even while he so earnestly differed from him on certain points of Doctrine. Yes, dear Brothers and Sisters, if we cannot differ, and yet love one another—if we cannot allow each Brother to go his own way in the service of God and to have the liberty of working after his own fashion—if we cannot do that, we shall fail to convince our fellow Christians that we, ourselves, are Christians!

But the point of our Savior's remark is here—"By this all will know that you are My disciples." That is to say, *the outside world will know it*. Let me tell you a remarkable instance of this. In the early days of Christianity, a terrible plague broke out in Alexandria. It was very dangerous to be near a person smitten with the disease and to touch such a person meant almost certain death. When the plague broke out, the heathen in Alexandria thrust out of their houses every person who had the slightest sign of the disease and left them to starve—and would not even bury their bodies for fear of contagion. But the Christians visited one another when they were sick with the plague and no Christian was left to die unattended. They were zealous to go and visit each other, although they knew that they would, in all probability, catch the disease. And among the carcasses outside the walls of Alexandria there was not found one single corpse of a Christian, for, with sedulous care, they committed the bodies of their beloved to the earth in the sure and certain hope of Resurrection unto eternal life. And the heathen said to one another, "What is the meaning of this?" And the answer went throughout all Egypt, "This is the religion of Jesus of Nazareth, for these Christians love one another." No sermon can be so eloquent to the world as a true manifestation of the love of Christ! And when God restores to His Church genuine, hearty, and sincere Christian love—I trust we have not wholly lost it—but when He gives us much more of it, then shall the world be more impressed by the Gospel than it is at present!

I will tell you an anecdote. It is one which, I fear, might be multiplied a thousand times and yet be true. During a revival, a young woman came into a certain congregation and was impressed by the services. She heard that the Christian Church was the home of union and love—in fact, a little Heaven. And perhaps more charmed by the beauty of the Church than by the beauty of Christ, she joined the fellowship of Believers there. After a little while she heard some Christians speaking very bitterly of others. Indeed, speaking of the faults of others, not at all as if they grieved over them, but as though they rather rejoiced to have something to say against their fellow Christians! Immediately the thought crossed the mind of the young woman, "I have been deceived. The Christian Church is not the holy and happy family that I believed it to be." That conviction led to doubts upon many of the doctrines that she had been taught there. She soon neglected the means of Grace and then became skeptical concerning the Savior Himself. All this followed from finding disagreement where she had hoped to find Christian love and union. It pleased the Lord to bring her, at last, back to the Savior's feet, but, for

many years she was the subject of great doubt and inward struggle—and the occasion of it was the lack of love among Christians! O Beloved, do not let it be so among you! If ours is not a loving Church, I have labored in vain and spent my strength for nothing! If you love not one another, surely you do not love the Savior! But if you are knit together in love, then is our joy fulfilled in you and Christ also rejoices over you!

I have finished my discourse when I have said a word or two to those who are out of the family of Christ. It must be a very sad thing not to be a member of the family of which the Head is the loving Lord, Himself—where the law that governs the family is the rule of love and where the distinguishing mark of every member of the family is love, one to another. And if it is true that we must either belong to that family, or else belong to another family of which Cain, who slew his brother, was the firstborn son, it makes it a very solemn matter! There are two seeds in the world and if you do not belong to Christ the Living Seed, you belong to the serpent's seed. Woe to the man who is not of the family of God! Egypt had to weep and wail on that very night when Israel, beneath the blood-sprinkled lintel, could afford to sing and shout. And when the day comes for God to let loose the angel of vengeance, woe unto you unless you belong to the family of love—to the host of the living God!

"How can I get love?" asks one. Love comes by the way of faith. First trust the Master and then you will soon learn to love His servants. Rely upon the Savior and you will then feel an affection for all the saved ones. Commit yourself now into the hands that were pierced for sinners and you will soon joyfully give a loving embrace to those for whom Christ's precious blood was shed! May we all meet in Heaven, where love reigns supreme, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: JOHN 13:1-17.

Verse 1. *Now before the feast of the Passover.* Or, just as it was about to begin—

1. *When Jesus knew that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.* That is a very beautiful description of Christ's death—"His hour was that He should depart out of this world unto the Father"—just as though He was merely going on a journey, leaving one land for another! And if this is a fair description of such a stormy passage as that of our Lord Jesus, who died for our sins upon Calvary's Cross, it must with equal truth describe the death of any of the children of God. There is also an appointed time for us to depart and to be with Christ which is far better than remaining here. The loosing of the cable, the spreading of the sail, the crossing over the narrow sea, the coming to the eternal haven and the abiding there—what Christian heart needs to dread this? How much better is it even to look forward to it with ardent anticipation! Think much of the abiding love of Christ—"Having loved His own"—His by Election, His by Redemption, for He regarded that as already done which was about to be accomplished—"Having loved His

own which were in the world"—not yet in Heaven, but still in the midst of trial, still imperfect, even as you and I are—"He loved them unto the end," or, "unto the perfection," as it might be rendered. The Alpha of His love which we find in eternity bids us believe that we shall find the Omega of it nowhere but there.

2-4. *And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him; Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God, and went to God; He arose from supper, and laid aside His garments; and took a towel, and girded Himself.* Notice the wonderful contrast revealed to us in these verses! Our Lord Jesus Christ had a very vivid realization that He had come from God and was going back to God, and that all things had been given into His hand. Yet, while He knew that and had a more than ordinary consciousness of His own dignified Nature and position, He condescended to wash His disciples feet! Though many years elapsed between the event and the time when John recorded it, all the details seem to have been still present in his memory so that he distinctly mentions each separate act—"He rose from supper, and laid aside His upper garment and took a towel, and girded Himself."

5. *After that He poured water into a basin.* The one that ordinarily stood in the guest chamber for the washing of the hands and feet of the guests.

5, 6. *And began to wash the disciples feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded. Then came He to Simon Peter: and Peter said unto Him, Lord, do You wash my feet? You must lay the stress on the pronouns in order to get the full force of the original. "Lord, do YOU wash MY feet?"* The contrast is between Peter's Master and himself.

7, 8. *Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do you know not now, but you shall know hereafter. Peter said unto Him, You shall never wash my feet.* That is, "NEVER, as long as I live You shall do such a thing as that!"

8-10. *Jesus answered him, If I wash you not, you have no part with Me. Simon Peter said unto Him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus said to him, he that is washed needs not, save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and you are clean, but not all.* We have often, in commenting, noticed Peter's fault. Perhaps we have noticed that too much. Let us now notice Peter's excellence. I admire his humility in thinking it too mean an office for Christ to wash his feet. It seems to me to be a most proper feeling which prompted him to ask, "Do You wash my feet?" It seemed an overwhelming condescension of love which he could scarcely permit. No doubt he spoke too positively when he said to Christ "You shall never wash my feet," but still, his motive in speaking thus was a good one. It was because he could not allow his Lord to stoop so low—he thought it ill manners to permit such an One as Christ to wash the feet of such an one as the poor fisherman, Peter. I have already said that there was something that was not right and yet that was perfectly natural to this "rock" disciple, and this "dove" disciple, who was such a strange mixture of boastfulness and fickleness. Yet do not forget

how much of good there was in him. I wish all of us were half as good as Peter. That was a grand utterance, "Wash not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." He meant, "Lord, let me have all the cleansing I can, not only such as the washing of my feet would bring, but such as the washing of my head and my hands also would bring. Let me be clear of everything which would prevent full fellowship with You, for I long to be altogether one with You."

Then our Savior meekly, gently, quietly, explained that there was no need for the washing of his head and his hands, for his whole being had already been renewed by the one great act of Regeneration. And as he had been cleansed from sin by the free gift of pardon at the time when he first believed, there was no need of any repetition of the spiritual bathing. All that was required was the washing of his feet—a beautiful distinction always to be observed. He that believes in Christ is fully forgiven. He is like a man who has gone into the bath and washed, but, when he steps out of the bath and puts his foot on the ground, he often soils it, so that before he robes himself, he needs to wash his feet again. That is our condition as Believers in Jesus—we are washed in His precious blood and are whiter than snow—but these feet of ours constantly touch this defiling earth so they need, every day, to be washed. Christ our Lord Jesus said to Peter, "He that is bathed needs not, save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and you are clean, but not all."

11. *For He knew who should betray Him; therefore said He, You are not all clean.* They were all washed so far as their feet were concerned, but not all of them had been cleansed in the sacred bath which removes the stains of sin!

12-17. *So after He had washed their feet, and had taken His garments, and was set down again, He said unto them, Know you what I have done to you? You call me Master and Lord: and you say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Verity, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If you know these things, happy are you if you do them. Blessed are they who, when they understand the meaning of Christ's example, imitate it in their own lives!*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—412, 891, 87.

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

LET NOT YOUR HEART BE TROUBLED

NO. 730

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING JANUARY 20, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Let not your heart be troubled:
you believe in God, believe also in Me.”
John 14:1.*

THE disciples had been like lambs carried in the warm bosom of a loving Shepherd. They were now about to be left by Him and would hear the howling of the wolves and endure the terrors of the snowstorm. They had been like tender plants conserved in a hothouse, a warm and genial atmosphere had always surrounded them—they were now to endure the wintry world with its nipping frosts. And so it was to be proven whether or not they had an inward vitality which could exist when outward protections were withdrawn.

Their Master, their Head, was to be taken from them. Well might they cry with Elisha, “My Father, my Father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof!” We too, dear Friends, though we have not enjoyed, perhaps, so entire an immunity as did the Apostles, were at one time very graciously shielded from trouble. We had a summertime of joy and an autumn of peace far different than this present winter of our discontent. It frequently happens that after conversion, God, who tempers the wind to the shorn lamb, gives to the weaklings of the flock a period of repose during which they rejoice with David, “He makes me to lie down in green pastures, He leads me beside the still waters.” But for all of us there will come a time of trouble similar to that sorrowful occasion which led the Savior to utter these memorable heart-cheering words.

If our conscious communion with Jesus should not be interrupted, yet some other form of tribulation awaits us, for the testimony of earth's poet that, “man is made to mourn,” is well borne out by the inspired declaration, “man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards.” We must not expect that we shall be exceptions to the general lot of our race! There is no discharge in this war. We must all be conscripts in the armies of grief. We, too, shall do battle with strong temptations and feel the wounds of adversity. Albeit that yonder ship so lately launched upon a glassy sea has all her streamers flying, and rejoices in a favorable wind—let her captain remember that the sea is treacherous, that winds are variable, and that the stoutest vessel may find it more than difficult to outride a hurricane.

I rejoice to see the courage of that young man who has but just joined the army of the Church militant, and is buckling on the glittering armor of faith! As yet there are no dents and bruises on that fair helmet and burnished breastplate. But let the wearer reckon upon blows, and bruises, and bloodstains! No, let him *rejoice* if he endure hardness as a good soldier, for without the fight where would be the victory? Brethren in our Lord Jesus, without due trial, where would be our experience? And without the experience, where would be the holy increase of our faith, and the joyful triumph of our love through the manifested power of Christ?

We must expect, then, to walk with our Lord to the gates of Gethsemane—both His and ours! We must expect to cross the Brook Kedron in company with our Master, and it will be well if we hear Him say to us as He did to His disciples on that eventful night, “Let not your hearts be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in Me.” My Brothers and Sisters, some of us live at this hour in the midst of trouble. We do not remember any period more dark with portents of evil than the present watch of earth’s long night. Few events have occurred of late to cheer the general gloom. Our hopeful spirit has been accustomed to say, all things considered, there are no times like the times present. Think about whether any times have been more vexatious and troublesome than those which just now are passing over our head.

The political atmosphere is far from being clear, no, it is thick and heavy with death-damps of mutual distrust which bring no increase to England’s greatness, but greatly the reverse. There are those who think that our trade, especially in its more speculative department, has become thoroughly rotten. And one thing is quite certain—many well-known infamous transactions have sapped the foundations of credit and stained our national honor. Is all England bankrupt, and our wealth a sham? Let us hope not.

But who can see without alarm the great portion of our trade which is going from us through the folly of the many who combine to regulate what ought to be left perfectly free? If our trade continues much longer to depart from us, we shall become a generation of beggars who will deserve no pity because we brought our poverty upon ourselves. There are, we fear, dark days coming upon this land. In fact, the dark days are here, for in no year of the last twenty has there been, Brethren, such deep and wide-spread distress in London as at the present moment.

I am far from endorsing all the fears of the timid, yet I do see much ground for pleading earnestly with God to send to our rulers political wisdom to end the bitter disputes of class with class, and to grant to our whole nation Divine Grace to repent of its many sins, that the chastening rod may be withdrawn.

Apart from these, we have each a share of home-trials. Is there one here who is happy enough to wholly escape from the troubles of the earth? Some have the wolf at the door—shortness of bread just now is felt in the houses of many a Christian—some of you are compelled to eat your bread with carefulness. You go to your God in the morning and ask Him to provide for you your daily food, and repeat that prayer with more meaning than usual, for just now God is making us feel that He can break the staff of bread and send a famine in the land if He so wills it.

Many who are not altogether poor are, nevertheless, in sorrow, for reverses in business have, during the last few months, brought the affairs of many of the Lord’s people into a very perilous state, so that they cannot but be troubled in spirit. Vexations abound and many a path is strewn with thorns. If this is not the shape of our trouble, sickness may be raging where penury has not entered. Beyond all these there may be afflictions which it were not well to mention—griefs which must be carried by the mother alone—trials which the father alone must bear, or sorrows in which none but the daughter can share.

We all have our homes full of trials. Day by day this bitter manna falls around the camp. Trials arising among the Church of God are many, and we might add, that to the genuine Christian they are as heavy as any which he has to bear. I am sure, to those of us who have to look upon the Church with

the anxious eye of loving shepherds, to those of us who are set by God for the guidance and rule of His people, there are troubles enough, and more than enough, to bow us to the earth. In the best-ordered Church, such as this is and long has been, it must needs be that offenses come. Sometimes it is a jealousy between Brothers. At another time a strife between Sisters.

Sometimes it is this one who has fallen into gross sin (God forgive these who have pierced us through with many sorrows!) and another time it is a gradual backsliding which the pastor can detect, but which the subject of it cannot discern. Sometimes it is a heresy, which, springing up, troubles us. At another time it is a slander, which, like a deadly serpent, creeps through the grass. I have had little enough to complain of in these respects, but still such things are with us, even with *us*, and we must not count them strange, as though some strange thing had happened to us. While men are imperfect there will be sins among the best of them which will cause sorrow both to themselves and to those of the Lord's people who are in fellowship with them.

Worst of all are *soul* troubles. God save you from these! Oh the grief of being conscious of having fallen from high places of enjoyment! Conscious of having wasted opportunities for eminent usefulness! Conscious of having been lax in prayer, of having been negligent in study, of having been—alas, that we should have to add it—unguarded in word and act! Ah, Friends, when the soul feels all this and cannot get to the blood of sprinkling as it would—cannot return to the light of God's countenance as it would desire—it is trouble, indeed! It is terrible to be compelled to sit and sing—

***“Where is the blessedness I knew,
When first I saw the Lord?
Where is the soul-refreshing view
Of Jesus and His Word?”***

But my tale is all too long. It is clear that this mortal life has troubles enough. Suppose that these should meet and that the man, as a patriot, is oppressed with the ills of his country? Suppose, as a father and a husband, he is depressed with the cares of home? Or as a Christian he is afflicted with the troubles in the Church, and as a saint made to walk heavily before the Lord because of inward afflictions? “Why, then, he is in a sorry plight,” you say. Indeed he is! But, blessed be God, he is in a plight in which the words of the text are still applicable to him—“Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in Me.”

Ceasing from this dolorous prelude, let us observe that the advice of the text is very timely and wise. Secondly, let us notice that the advice of the text is practicable. It is not given us to mock us—we must seek to carry it out! And lastly, and perhaps that last may yield us good cheer, the advice of the text is very precious.

I. FIRST, THEN, THE ADVICE OF THE TEXT IS VERY TIMELY AND WISE. There is no need to say, “Let not your heart be troubled,” when you are not in affliction. When all things go well with you, you will need another caution—“Let not your heart be exalted above measure: if riches increase, set not your heart upon them.” The word, “Let not your heart be troubled,” is timely, and it is wise.

A few minutes thought will lead you to see it. It is the easiest thing in the world, in times of difficulty, to let the heart be troubled. It is very natural for us to give up and drift with the stream, to feel that it is of no use “taking arms against” such “a sea of trouble”—that it is better to lie passive and to say, “If

one must be ruined, so let it be.” Despairing idleness is easy enough, especially to evil rebellious spirits who are willing enough to get into further mischief that they may have more with which to blame God, against whose Providence they have quarreled. Our Lord will not have us be so rebellious. He bids us pluck up heart and be of good courage in the worst possible condition—and here is the wisdom of His advice, namely, that a troubled heart will not help us in our difficulties or out of them.

It has never been perceived in time of drought that lamentations have brought showers of rain, or that in seasons of frost, doubts, fears, and discouragements, have produced a thaw. We have never heard of a man, whose business was declining, who managed to multiply the number of his customers by unbelief in God. I do not remember reading of a person, whose wife or child was sick, who discovered any miraculous healing power in rebellion against the Most High. It is a dark night, but the darkness of your heart will not light a candle for you. It is a terrible tempest, but to quench the fires of comfort and open the doors to admit the howling winds into the chambers of your spirit will not stay the storm.

No good comes out of fretful, petulant, unbelieving heart-trouble. This lion yields no honey. If it would help you, you might reasonably sit down and weep till the tears had washed away your woe. If it were really to some practical benefit to be suspicious of God and distrustful of Providence, why, then, you might have a shadow of excuse—but as this is a mine out of which no one ever dug any silver, as this is a fishery out of which the diver never brought up a pearl—we would say, “Renounce that which cannot be of service to you, for as it can do no good, it is certain that it does much mischief.”

A doubting, fretful spirit takes from us the joys we have. You have not all you could wish, but you still have more than you deserve. Your circumstances are not what they might be, but still they are not even now so bad as the circumstances of some others. Your unbelief makes you forget that health still remains for you if poverty oppresses you. And if both health and abundance have departed, you are still a *child of God* and your name is not blotted out from the roll of the chosen! Why, Brothers and Sisters, there are flowers that bloom in winter, if we have but grace to see them! Never was there a night so dark for the soul but what some lone star of hope might be discerned! And never a spiritual tempest so terrible but what there was a haven into which the soul could dock if it had but enough confidence in God to make a run for it.

Rest assured that though you have fallen very low, you might have fallen lower if it were not that underneath are the everlasting arms. A doubting, distrustful spirit will wither the few blossoms which remain upon your bough, and if half the wells are frozen by affliction, unbelief will freeze the other half by its despondency. Brothers and Sisters, you will win no good, but you may get incalculable mischief by a troubled heart—it is a root which bears no fruit except wormwood!

A troubled heart makes that which is bad worse. It magnifies, aggravates, caricatures, misrepresents. If but an ordinary foe is in your way, a troubled heart makes him swell into a giant. “We were in their sight but as grasshoppers,” said the ten evil spies. “Yes, and we were but as grasshoppers in our *own* sight when we saw them.” But it was not so. No doubt the men were very tall, but they were not so big, after all, as to make an ordinary six-foot man

look like a grasshopper! Their *fears* made them grasshoppers by first making them *fools*. If they had possessed but ordinary courage they would have been men—but being cowardly they subsided into grasshoppers.

After all, what is an extra three, four, or five feet of flesh to a man? Is not the bravest soul the tallest? If he of shorter stature is but nimble and courageous, he will have the best of it. Little David made short work of great Goliath. Yet so it is—unbelief makes out our difficulties to be most gigantic and then it leads us to suppose that never a soul had such difficulties before—and so we egotistically lament, “I am the man that has seen affliction.” We claim to be peers in the realm of misery, if not the emperors of the kingdom of grief. Yet it is not so. Why? What ails you? The headache is excruciating? Well, it is bad enough, but what would you say if you had seven such aches at once, and cold and nakedness to back them?

The twitches of rheumatism are horrible? Right well can I endorse that statement! But what then? Why there have been men who have lived with such tortures thrice told all their lives—like Baxter—who could tell all his bones because each one had made itself heard by its own peculiar pain. I know that you and I often suffer under depression of spirit and physical pain, but what is our complaint compared with the diseases of Calvin, the man who preached at the break of every day to the students in the cathedral, and worked on till long past midnight, and was all the while a mass of disease—a complicated agony?

You are poor? Ah yes, but you have your own room, scanty as it is, and there are hundreds in the workhouse who find sorry comfort there. It is true you have to work hard! Yes, but think of the Huguenot galley slave in the olden times, who for the love of Christ was bound with chains to the oar, and scarcely knew rest day nor night. Think of the sufferings of the martyrs of Smithfield, or of the saints who rotted in their prisons. Above all, let your eyes turn to the great Apostle and High priest of your profession, and “consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest you be weary and faint in your mind.”—

***“His way was much rougher and darker than mine,
Did Christ, my Lord, suffer, and shall I repine?”***

Yet this is the habit of Unbelief—to draw our picture in the blackest possible colors—to tell us that the road is unusually rough and utterly impassable. He tells us that the storm is such a tornado as never blew before, and that our name will be down in the wreck register—that it is impossible that we should ever reach the haven.

Moreover, a troubled heart is most dishonorable to God. It makes the Christian think very harshly of his tender heavenly Friend. It leads him to suspect eternal faithfulness and to doubt unchangeable love. Is this a little thing? It breathes into the Christian a proud rebellious spirit. He judges his Judge, and misjudges. He has not learned Job’s philosophy. He cannot say, “Shall we receive good from the hand of the Lord, and shall we not also receive evil? The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord.”

Inward distress makes the humble, meek, teachable child of God to become a willful, wicked, rebellious offender in spirit. Is this a little thing? And meanwhile it makes the family and the outsiders who know the Christian to doubt the reality of those Truths of God of which the Christian used to boast in his brighter days. Satan suggests to them, “You see, these Christian people are no

better sustained than others. The props which they leaned upon when they did not want them are of no service to them now that they do require them.”

“See,” says the Fiend, “they are as petulant, as unbelieving, and as rebellious as the rest of mankind! It is all a sham, a piece of enthusiasm which will not endure an ordinary trial.” Is this a small matter? Surely there are mouths enough to revile the Throne of God! There are lips enough to utter blasphemy against Him without His own dear children turning against Him because He frowns upon them. Surely they should be bowed to the earth at the mere suspicion that they could do such a thing, and cry to God to save them from a troubled heart lest they should rebel against Him!

I feel, with regard to the Christian Church, that the truth which I am endeavoring to bring forward is above all things essential. The mischief of the Christian Church at large is a lack of holy confidence in God. The reason why we have had, as a Church, I believe, unprecedented prosperity has been that on the whole we have been a courageous, hopeful, and joyous body of Christian people who have believed in our own principles most intensely, and have endeavored to propagate them with the most vehement earnestness.

Now I can suppose the devil coming in among us and endeavoring to dishearten us by this or that supposed failure or difficulty. “Oh,” says he, “will you ever win the victory? See! Sin still abounds, notwithstanding all the preaching and all the praying. Are not the jails full? Do you see any great moral change worked after all? Surely you will not make the advances you expected—you may as well give it up.” Yes, and when once an army can be demoralized by a lack of spirit—when once the British soldier can be assured that he cannot win the day—that even at the push of the bayonet nothing can await him but defeat, then the rational conclusion he draws is that every man had better take care of himself, and look to his heels and fly to his home.

But oh, if we can feel that the victory is not precarious nor even *doubtful* but absolutely *certain*! If each one of us can rest assured that the Lord of Hosts is with us! That the God of Jacob is our refuge. That the most discouraging circumstances which can possibly occur are only mere incidents in the great struggle—mere eddies in the mighty current that is bearing everything before it. If we can but feel that sooner should Heaven and earth pass away than God’s promise be broken! I say, if we can keep our courage up at all times—if from the youngest of us who have lately joined, to the venerable veterans who have for years fought at our side we can feel that we must win, that the purposes of God must be fulfilled, that the kingdoms of this world must become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ—then we shall see bright and glorious things!

Some of you grow discouraged because you have taught in the Sunday school and you have seen no conversions in your class, and you want to sneak away among the baggage. Others of you have tried to preach in the streets and you did not get on, and you feel half inclined not to do anything more. Isn’t this right? Some of you have not felt as happy with other Christian people as you would like to be. You do not think others respect you quite up to the mark that you have marked for yourselves on your thermometer of dignity, and you are inclined to run away. Isn’t this right?

Now I will boldly say to those of you who are inclined to run, run—for our resolution is to stand fast. Those who are afraid, let them go to their homes—for our eyes are on the battle and the crown. Those of you who cannot bear a

little roughness and cannot fight for Christ, I had almost said, we shall be better without your cowardly spirits—but I would rather pray for you, that you may pluck up heart and cry with holy boldness, “Nothing shall discourage us.” If all the devils in Hell should appear visibly before us, and show their teeth with flame pouring from their mouths as from ten thousand ovens, yet so long as the Lord of Hosts lives, by His Grace we will not fear, but lift up our banners and laugh our enemies to scorn!—

**“We will in life and death
His steadfast truth declare,
And publish with our latest breath
His love and guardian care.”**

There is a great deal more to say, but we cannot say it. Perhaps you will think it over, and perhaps you will perceive that of all the mischief that might happen to a good man, it is certainly one of the greatest to let his heart be troubled. And that of all the good things that belong to a Christian soldier, a bold heart and confidence in God are not the least! As long as we do not lose heart we have not lost the day. But if confidence in God departs, then the floods have burst into the vessel, and what can save it? What indeed, but that eternal love which comes in to the rescue even at our extremity?

II. In the second place, THE ADVICE THAT IS GIVEN IS PRACTICABLE—it can be carried out. “Let not your heart be troubled.” “Oh,” says somebody, “that’s very easy to *say*, but very hard to *do*.” Here’s a man who has fallen into a deep ditch and you lean over the hurdle and say to him, “Don’t be troubled about it.” “Ah,” he says, “that’s very pretty for you that are standing up there, but how am I to be at ease while up to my neck in mire?”

There is a noble ship stranded and liable to be broken up by the breakers, and we speak from a trumpet and say to the mariners on board, “Don’t be alarmed.” “Oh,” they say, “very likely not, when every timber is shivering and the vessel is going to pieces!” But when He who speaks is full of love, pity, and might, and has it in His own power to make His advice become prophetic of deliverance, we need not raise difficulties, but we may conclude that if Jesus says, “Let not your heart be troubled,” our heart need not be troubled!

There is a way of keeping the heart out of trouble, and the Savior prescribes the method. First, He indicates that our resort must be to *faith*. If in your worst times you would keep your head above water, the life belt must be *faith*. Now, Christian, do you not know this? In the olden times how were men kept from perishing but by faith? Read that mighty chapter in Hebrews, and see what faith did—how Believers overcame armies, put to flight the army of aliens, quenched the violence of fire—and stopped the mouths of lions! There is *nothing* which faith has not done or cannot do! Faith is girdled about with the Omnipotence of God for her girdle. She is the great wonder-worker.

Why, there were men in the olden times whose troubles were greater than yours, whose discouragement’s and difficulties in serving God were a great deal more severe than any you and I have known, yet they trusted God! They trusted God, and they were not confounded. They rested in Him, and they were not ashamed. Their puny arms worked miracles, and their uplifted voices in prayer brought blessings from on high. What God did of old He will do now—He is the same yesterday, today and forever.

Christian, betake yourself to faith. Did not faith bring your first comfort to you? Remember when you were in despair under a sense of sin? What brought you joy? Was it good works? Was it your inward feelings? The first ray of light

that came to your poor dark spirit, did it not come from the Cross through believing? Oh, that blessed day when first I cast myself on Jesus and saw my sins numbered on the scapegoat's head of old! What a flood of light faith brought then! Open the same window, for the sun is in the same place and you will get light from it. Go not, I pray you, to any other well but to this well of your spiritual Bethlehem which is within the gate, the water of which is still sweet and still free to you.

Ah, dear Friends, there is one reason why you should resort to faith, namely, that it is the only thing you have to resort to! What can you do if you do not trust your God? Under many troubles, when they are *real* troubles, the creature is evidently put to a nonplus and human ingenuity, itself, fails. We are like the seamen in a storm who reel to and fro and stagger like drunken men and are at their wits end. Oh let us, now that every other anchor is drug, cast out the great sheet anchor, for that will hold. Now that every refuge has failed, let us fly to the Strong for strength, for God will be our helper!

Surely it ought not to be difficult for a child to believe his father! It should not, therefore, be difficult for us to trust in our God, and so to lift our spirits out of the tumult of their doubts. Somebody will say, "Well, I can understand that faith is a practical way of getting out of trouble, but I cannot understand how we are to *have* faith." Well, in this the Savior helps us. You remember what He said when the people were hungry—"Give you them to eat." "Ah," they said, "there are so many! How can we feed them?"

The Master began by saying, "How many loaves have you?" That is just what He says here. He says, "It is faith that will get you out of trouble, but how much faith have you?" He answers for them, "You believe in God." I must do the same by you. Faith is that which will deliver you. You say, "Where am I to get it?" Well, you have some already, have you not? You have five barley loaves and a few small fishes. You are unbelieving creatures but you have *some* measure of faith. You believe that there is a God.

"Yes," you say. You believe He is unchangeable. You believe that He is full of love, good and kind, and true and faithful. Now really, that is a great deal to begin with! You believe in God—the most of us believe in a great deal more than that—we not only believe in a God, and in the excellence of His Character, but we believe that He has a chosen people. We believe that He has made a Covenant with them, ordered in all things and sure. We believe that the promises of His Covenant will be fulfilled, that He never puts away His people. We believe that all things work together for good to them that love God. We believe that the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin. We believe that the Holy Spirit is given to dwell in His people.

Now this is a great deal, a solid fulcrum upon which to place the lever. If you believe all that, you have only properly to employ this faith in order to lift your soul out of the horrible ditch of doubt and fear into which it has stumbled. You believe all this? Surely, then, there is some room for hope and confidence! The Savior goes on to say, "You believe in God," very well, exercise that same faith with regard to the case in hand. The case in hand was this—could they trust a dying Savior? Could they rest upon One who was about to be crucified, dead and buried—who would be gone from them except that His poor mangled body would remain in their midst?

"Now," says Jesus, "you see you have had enough of faith to believe in God. Now exercise that same faith upon Me. Trust Me as you trust God." From this

I infer that the drift of the exhortation I am to give you this morning is this. "You have believed God about other things. Exercise that same faith about this thing whatever it may be. You have believed God concerning the pardon of your soul, believe God about the child, about the wife, about the money, about the present difficulty. You have believed, concerning God, the great invisible One, and His great spiritual promises—now believe concerning this *visible* thing, this loss of yours, this cross of yours, this trial, this present affliction—exercise faith about that.

Jesus Christ did, in effect, say to His people, "It is true I am going from you, but I want you to believe that I am not going far. I shall be in the same house as you are in, for my Father's house has many rooms in it. And though you will be here in these earthly mansions and I shall be in the heavenly mansions, yet they are all in the Father's house, for in My Father's house are many dwelling places." "I want you to believe," says Jesus, "that when I am away from you I am about your interests, I am preparing a place for you, and moreover that I intend coming back to you. My heart will be with you, and My Person shall soon return to you."

Now then, the drift of that applied to our case is this—believe that the present loss you sustain, or the present discouragement which threatens to overwhelm you—believe that God has a high design in it! That as Christ's departure was to prepare eternal mansions for His people, so your present loss is to prepare you for a *spiritual* gain. I like that word of Christ when He says, "If it were not so I would have told you." When a man makes a general statement, if he knows an exception he ought to mention it. And if he does not mention it his statement is not strictly true. Jesus says, "If it were not so I would have told you."

There is a great word of His which says, "All things work together for good to them that love God." A very awkward thing has happened to you. The trouble which you are now suffering is a very singular one. Now, if ever there had been any exception to the rule which we have quoted, God, in honor, would have told it to you when He made the general statement, "All things work together for good to them that love God." Such is His love and wisdom that if there had been *one* trial that could happen to *one* of His people which would *not* work for the good of that child of His, He would have said, "Dear child, there *is* an exception—one trouble will happen to you which will not work for your good."

I am positive that there is no exception to the statement that all things work together for good to them that love God, because if there had been an exception He would have put it in—He would have told us of it that we might know how far to trust and when to leave off trusting—how far to rejoice and when to be cast down. Your case, then, is no exception to the rule! All that is happening is working for your everlasting benefit!

Another place, however, another place will reveal this to you. Think of your Father's house and its mansions, and it will mitigate your griefs. "Alas for us if you were all, and nothing beyond, O earth!" There is another and a better land, and in your Father's house, where the many mansions are, it may be you shall be privileged to understand how these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, have worked out for you a far more exceedingly and eternal weight of glory.

Before I close this point, let me say it ought to be a great deal easier for you and me to live above heart-trouble than it was to the Apostles. I mean easier than it was to the Apostles at the time when the Savior spoke to them and for forty days afterwards. You say, "How was that?" Why because you have three things which they had not. You have *experience* of many past troubles out of which you have been delivered. They had only been converted at the outside of three years. They had not known much trouble, for Jesus in the flesh had dwelt among them to screen off troubles from them.

Some of you have been converted 30, 40—what if I say 60 years? And you have had abundance of trouble—you have not been screened from it. Now all this experience ought to make it easier for you to say, "My heart shall not be troubled." Again, you have received the Holy Spirit, and they had not. The Holy Spirit was not given, as you remember, until the day of Pentecost. His direct government in the Church was not required while Christ was here. You have the Spirit, the Comforter to abide with you forever! Surely you ought to be less distracted than they were!

Thirdly, you have the whole of Scripture—they had but a part. They certainly had not the richest Scriptures of all, for they had not the Evangelists nor any of the New Testament, and having, as we have, all that store of promise and comfort, we ought, surely, to find it no hard work to obey the sweet precept, "Let not your heart be troubled."

III. THE EXHORTATION OF THE TEXT OUGHT TO BE VERY PRECIOUS TO ALL OF US THIS MORNING, and we should make a point of pleading for the Holy Spirit's aid to enable us to carry it out. Remember that the loving advice came from Him who said, "Let not your heart be troubled." Who could have said it but the Lord Jesus, the Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief?

The mother says to the child, "Do not cry, child, be patient." That sounds very differently from what it would have done if the schoolmaster had said it. Or if a stranger in the street had spoken. "Do not let your heart be troubled," might be a stinging remark from a stranger! But coming from the Savior, who "knows what strong temptations mean, for He has felt the same," it drops like virgin honey for sweetness, and like the balm of Gilead for healing power. Jesus says, "Let not your heart be troubled." His own face was towards the Cross. He was hard by the olivepress of Gethsemane. He was about to be troubled as never man was troubled, and yet among His last words were these, "Let not your hearts be troubled," as if He wanted to monopolize all tears and would not have them shed so much as one!

He said it as if He longed to take all the heart-trouble Himself and remove it far from them. He said it as if He would have them exercise their hearts so much with believing that they would not have the smallest room left for grief! As if He would have them so much taken up with the glorious result of His sufferings in procuring for them eternal mansions that they would not think about their own present losses, but let them be swallowed up in a mighty sea of joyful expectation. Oh the tenderness of Christ! "Let not your hearts be troubled."

He is not here, this morning, in Person, (would God He were!) but oh, if He will but look at us out of those eyes of His which wept, and make us feel that this cheering word wells up from that heart which was pierced with the spear, we shall find it to be a blessed word to our soul! Say it, sweet Jesus! Say to

every mourner, “Let not your heart be troubled.” Brothers and Sisters, the text should have to us the dignity of a *command* as well as the sweetness of counsel. Shall we be tormented with trouble after the Captain has said, “Let not your heart be troubled”?

The Master of your spirit, who has bought you with His precious blood, demands that the harp strings of your heart should resound to the touch of His love, and of His love, alone. And will you surrender those strings to be dolorously smitten by grief and unbelief? No, rather like George Herbert, say, “My harp shall find You, and every string shall have its attribute to sing. At Your Word, instead of mourning, I will bring forth joy! As You bid me I will put off my sackcloth and cast away my ashes and I will rejoice in the Lord always, and yet again I will rejoice.”

Prize the counsel, because it comes from the Well-Beloved. Prize it, next, because it *points* to Him. He says, “You believe in God, believe also in Me.” You know, if it were not for the connection which requires the particular construction here used, one would have looked to find these words, “You believe in Me, believe also in God.” Jesus was speaking to Jews—disciples, who from their youth up had learned to believe in Emmanuel—believe in Me. There, there—there is the very cream of the whole matter! If you want comfort, Christian, you *must* hear Jesus say, Believe also in Me. You must approach afresh to the Fountain, and believe in the power of the blood! You must take that fair linen of His righteousness and put it on, and believe that—

**“With His spotless vesture on,
You’re holy as the Holy One.”**

You must see Jesus dead in His grave and believe that *you* died there in Him, and that *your* sin was buried there in Him. You must see Him rise, and you must believe also in Him, that His resurrection was *your* resurrection, that you are risen in Him! You must mark Him as He climbs the starry way up to the appointed throne of His reward! This must be your belief, also, in Him, that He has raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Himself. You must see Him far above all principalities and powers—the ever-living and reigning Lord—and you must believe that because He lives you shall live, also.

You must see Him with all things put under His feet, and you must believe that all things are under His feet for *you*—sin, death, Hell, things present and things to come—all subject unto the Son that He may give to you and to as many as the Father has given Him, eternal life! Oh, this is comfort! No place for a child’s aching head like its mother’s bosom! No shadow of a great rock in this weary land like our Savior’s love consciously overshadowing us! His own side is the place where He does from the sun protect His flock. This is the pasture where He makes them lie down! This is the river from which He gives them drink, namely, Himself. Communion with Jesus is glory!

The saints feast, but it is upon His flesh! They drink, but it is of His blood! They triumph, but it is in His shame! They rejoice, but it is in His grief! They live, but it is with His life! And they reign, but it is through His power! It is precious advice, then, because it comes from Him and points to Him.

Once more, it is precious advice because it speaks *of* Him. It says. “In My Father’s house are many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you: I go to prepare a place for you.” Jesus is here seen in *action*—anything which makes us remember Christ should be prized. Jesus Christ comes to comfort us—and that comfort is all about Himself. We should greatly prize it. We want

to know more of Jesus. One great deficiency is our ignorance of Him, and if the advice of this morning is calculated to make us know Him better and value Him more, let us prize it! Think of all He said and did, and what He is doing for us now.

Now let your thoughts see Him beyond the glittering starry sky with the many crowns upon His head. See Him as your Representative, claiming your rights, pleading before the Throne for you, scattering blessings for you on earth, and preparing joys for you above! That is the last thought, namely, that the advice is *precious*, because it hints that we are to be with Him forever. “An hour with my God,” says the hymn, “will make up for it all.” So it will. But what will an *eternity* with our God be? Forever to behold Him smiling! Forever to dwell in Him! “Abide in Me.” That is Heaven on earth. “Abide in Me” is all the Heaven we shall want in Heaven!

He is preparing the place now, making *it* ready for us above, and here below making *us* ready for it. Courage, then, Brothers and Sisters, courage! Let us not fret about the way—our *heads* are towards home. We are not outward-bound vessels, thank God. Every wind that blows is bringing us nearer to our native land. Our tents are frail, we often pitch and strike them, but we nightly pitch them—

“A day’s march nearer home.”

Be of good cheer, soldier! The battle must soon end. And that bloodstained banner, when it shall wave so high, and that shout of triumph, when it shall thrill from so many thousand lips, and that grand assembly of heroes—all of them made more than conquerors, and the sight of the King in His beauty, riding in the chariot of His triumph, paved with love for the daughters of Jerusalem, and the acclamations of spirits glorified, and the shouts and joyful music of cherubim and seraphim—all these shall make up for all the battles of today—

**“And they who, with their Master,
Have conquered in the fight,
Forever and forever
Are clad in robes of light.”**

Be that, by God’s Grace, ours. Amen.

Adapted from *The C.H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

“LET NOT YOUR HEART BE TROUBLED”

NO. 1741

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 23, 1883,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. And where I go you know, and the way you know.”
John 14:1-4.

WE may well feel glad that God’s people, whose lives are recorded in the Old and New Testaments, were men of like passions with ourselves. I have known many a poor sinner pluck up hope as he has observed the sins and struggles of those who were saved by Grace. And I have known many of the heirs of Heaven find consolation as they have observed how imperfect beings like themselves have prevailed with God in prayer and have been delivered in their time of distress. I am very glad that the Apostles were not perfect men—they would then have understood all that Jesus said at once—and we would have lost our Lord’s instructive explanations. They would also have lived above all trouble of mind—and then the Master would not have said to them these golden words, “Let not your heart be troubled.”

It is, however, most evident from our text that it is not according to our Lord’s mind that any of His servants should be troubled in heart. He takes no delight in the doubt and disquietude of His people. When He saw that because of what He had said to them, sorrow had filled the hearts of His Apostles, He pleaded with them in great love and besought them to be comforted. As when a mother comforts her child, He cried, “Let not your heart be troubled.” Jesus says the same to you, my Friend, if you are one of His downcast ones. He would not have you sad. “Comfort you, comfort you My people; speak you comfortably to Jerusalem,” is a command even of the old dispensation, and I am quite sure that under this clearer revelation, the Lord would have His people free from heartbreak.

Has not the Holy Spirit especially undertaken the work of comfort in order that it may be effectually done? Trials depress the hearts of God’s children, for which the most tender ministry fails to afford consolation—and then it is most sweet for the failing comforter to remember the unfailing Comforter—and to commit the case of the sorrowful spirit into Divine hands. Seeing that one Person of the blessed Trinity has undertaken to be the Comforter, we see how important it is that our hearts should be filled with consolation. Happy religion in which it is our *duty* to be glad! Blessed Gospel by which we are *forbidden* to be troubled in heart! Is it not a thing greatly to be admired that the Lord Jesus should think so carefully of His friends at such a time?

Great personal sorrows may well be an excuse if the griefs of others are somewhat overlooked. Jesus was going to His last bitter agony and to death, itself, and yet He overflowed with sympathy for His followers. Had it been you or I, we would have asked for sympathy for ourselves. Our cry would have been, “Have pity upon me, O my Friends, for the hand of God has touched me!” But, instead of that, our Lord cast His own crushing sorrows into the background and bent His mind to the work of sustaining His chosen under their far inferior griefs. He knew that He was about to be “exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death.” He knew that He would soon be in an agony through bearing “the chastisement of our peace.” But before He plunged into the deep, He must dry the tears of those He loved so well and, therefore, He said most touchingly, “Let not your heart be troubled.”

While I admire this condescending tenderness of love, at the same time I cannot help adoring the marvelous confidence of our blessed Lord, who, though He knows that He is to be put to a shameful death, yet feels no fear, but bids His disciples to trust Him implicitly. The black darkness of the awful midnight was beginning to surround Him, yet how brave His Words—“Believe also in Me.” He knew, in that threatening hour, that He had come forth from the Father and that He was in the Father and the Father in Him—and so He says, “You believe in God, believe also in Me.” The calm bearing of their Master must have greatly tended to confirm His servants in their faith. While we see here His confidence as Man, we also feel that this is not a speech which a mere man would have uttered, even had he been a *good* man—for no mere creature would thus match Himself with God.

That Jesus is a good Man, few question. That He must be God is, therefore, proven by these words. Would Jesus bid us trust in an arm of flesh? Is it not written—“Cursed is the man that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm”? Yet the Holy Jesus says, “You believe in God, believe also in Me.” This association of Himself with God, as the object of human confidence in the time of trouble, betokens a consciousness of His own Divine power and Godhead—and it is a mystery in whose difficulties faith takes pleasure—to see in our Lord Jesus, the faith of a Man for Himself—and the faithfulness of God for others.

Come then, dear Friends, close up to the text and may the Spirit of God be with us! I will read the text again very distinctly. Pray that you may feel the words even more powerfully than the Apostles felt them, for they had not yet received the Comforter, and so they were not yet led into all the Truth of God—in this we excel them as they were that night—let us, therefore, hopefully pray that we may know the Glory of our Lord’s Words, and hear them spoken into our very soul by the Holy Spirit. “Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. And where I go you know, and the way you know.”

These Words are, in themselves, much better than any sermon. What can our discourse be but a dilution of the essential spirit of consolation which is contained in the Words of the Lord Jesus? Now let us, first, taste of the bitter waters of heart-trouble and, secondly, let us drink deep of the sweet waters of Divine consolation!

I. First, then, LET US TASTE OF THE BITTER WATERS. “Because I have said these things unto you, sorrow has filled your heart.” I would not confine the comfort to any one form of affliction, for it is a balm for every wound. But still, it will be well to enquire what was the particular trouble of the disciples? It may be that some of us are passing through it, now, or we may be plunged in it before long. It was this—Jesus was to die—their Lord, whom they sincerely loved, was about to go from them by a shameful, painful death. What tender heart could bear to think of that? Yet He had told them that it would be so—and they began to remember His former Words in which He had said that the Son of Man would be betrayed into the hands of wicked men and would be scourged and put to death.

They were now to pass through all the bitterness of seeing Him accused, condemned and crucified. In a short time He was actually seized, bound, carried to the High Priest’s house, hurried to Pilate, then to Herod, back to Pilate, stripped, scourged, mocked, insulted. They saw Him conducted through the streets of Jerusalem bearing His Cross. They beheld Him hanging on the tree between two thieves and heard Him cry, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” A bitter drink was this! In proportion as they loved their Lord, they must have deeply grieved for Him—and they needed that He should say, “Let not your heart be troubled.”

Today, those who love the Lord Jesus have to behold a spiritual repetition of His shameful treatment at the hands of men, for even now He is crucified afresh by those who account His Cross a stumbling block and the preaching of it foolishness. Ah me! How is Christ still misunderstood, misrepresented, despised, mocked and rejected of men! They cannot touch Him, really, for there He sits, enthroned in the Heaven of heavens! But as far as they can, they slay Him over again and again! A malignant spirit is manifested to the Gospel as once it was to Christ in Person. Some with coarse blasphemies and not a few with cunning assaults upon this part of Scripture, and on that, are doing their best to bruise the heel of the Seed of the woman. It is a huge grief to see the mass of mankind pass by the Cross with averted eyes as if the Savior’s death was nothing—nothing, at least, to them. In proportion as you feel a zeal for the Crucified and for His saving Truth, it is wormwood and gall to give in this age of unbelief. Christ Jesus is nailed up between the two thieves of superstition and unbelief, while around Him still gathers the fierce opposition of the rude and the polished, the ignorant and the wise.

In addition to this, the Apostles had for an outlook the expectation that their Lord would be away from them. They did not, at first, understand His saying, “A little while and you shall not see Me: and again, a little while, and you shall see Me, because I go to the Father.” Now it dawned upon them that they were to be left as sheep without a shepherd, for their

Master and Head was to be taken from them. This was, to them, a source of dread and dismay, for they said to themselves, “What shall we do without Him? We are a little flock; how shall we be defended when He is gone, and the wolf is prowling? When the Scribes and Pharisees gather about us, how shall we answer them? As for our Lord’s cause and kingdom, how can it be safe in such trembling hands as ours? Alas for the Gospel of salvation when Jesus is not with us!”

This was a bitter sorrow—and something of this kind of feeling often crosses our own hearts as we tremble for the ark of the Lord. My heart is sad when I see the state of religion among us! Oh for an hour of the Son of Man in these darkening days! It is written there shall come, in the last days, scoffers—and they have come, but, oh, that the Lord Himself were here in Person! Oh, that the Lord would pluck His right hand out of His bosom and show us, once again, the wonders of Pentecost, to the confusion of His adversaries and to the delight of all His friends!

He has not come as yet. Nearly 2,000 years have rolled away since He departed—the night is dark and there is no sign of dawn! The ship of the Church is tossed with tempest and Jesus has not come to us! We know that He is with us in a spiritual sense, but, oh, that we had Him in the Glory of His power! Surely He knows our need and the urgency of the times and we are apt to cry, “It is time for You, Lord, to work, for they make void Your Law.” But they felt a third grief, and it was this—that He was to be betrayed by one of them! The 12 were chosen men, but one of them was a devil and sold his Lord. This pierced the hearts of the faithful—“the Son of Man is betrayed.”

He is not taken by open seizure, but He is sold for 30 pieces of silver by one whom He entrusted with His little store. He that dipped with Him in the dish had sold Him for paltry gain. This cut them to the heart, even as it did the Master, Himself, for our Lord felt the treachery of His friend. Of this water the faithful at this hour are made to drink—for what do we see at this day? What do we see in various places but persons that are reputed to be ministers of the Gospel whose main business seems to be to undermine our holy faith and batter down the Truths of God which are commonly received in the Christian Church? Certain of them preach as if they were ordained, not of God, but of the devil! And anointed, not by the Holy Spirit, but by the spirit of infidelity!

Under the banner of “advanced thought,” they make war upon those eternal Truths for which confessors contended and martyrs bled—and by which the saints of past ages have been sustained in their dying hours! It is not an enemy—then we could have borne and answered it. If the outward and avowed infidel attacks Inspiration, let him do so. It is a free country, let him speak! But when a man enters our pulpits, opens the Sacred Volume, and denies that it is inspired, what is he doing there? How does his conscience allow him to assume an office which he perverts? To make him a shepherd who is a *wolf*—to make him a dresser of the vineyard who, with his axe, cuts up the very roots of the vines—this is an incomprehensible folly on the part of the churches! It is a dagger to every believing heart that Judas should be represented in the Christian Church

by so many of the professed ministers of Christ! They betray their Master with a kiss.

Then there came another pang at the back of this, for one of them, though true-hearted and loyal, would that night deny his Lord. Peter, in many respects the leader of the little company, had been warned that he would act the coward and vehemently deny his Lord. This is bitterness, indeed, of which those that love the Church of God are compelled full often to drink—to see men whom we cannot but believe to be the disciples of Jesus Christ carried away by temptation, by fear of man or by the fashion of the times—so that Christ and His Gospel are virtually denied by them!

The fear of being thought dogmatic or labeled a Puritan closes many a mouth which ought to be declaring Him to be the Son of God with power and extolling His glorious majesty in defiance of all that dare oppose Him! The hearts of some who best love Jesus grow heavy at the sight of the worldliness and lukewarmness of many of His professed followers. Hence it seems to me to be a most seasonable hour for introducing you to the sweet waters of our text, of which I bid you drink till every trace of bitterness is gone from your mouth—for the Master says to you, even to you—“Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in Me.”

II. Under our second head LET US DRINK OF THE SWEET WATERS and refresh our souls. First, in this wonderful text our Master indicates to us the true means of comfort under every sort of disquietude. How does He put it? “Let not your heart be troubled”—believe! Kindly look down your Bibles and you will see that this direction is repeated. He says, in the opening of the 11th verse, “Believe Me.” And then, again, in the second clause, “Believe Me.” I thought, as I tried to enter into the meaning of this sacred utterance, that I heard Jesus at my side saying thrice to me, “Believe Me! Believe Me! Believe Me!”

Could any one of the 11 that were with Him have disbelieved their present Lord? He says, “Believe Me! Believe Me! Believe Me!” as if there was great need to urge them to faith in Him. Is there no other cure, then, for a troubled heart? No other is required! This is all sufficient through God. If believing in Jesus, you are still troubled, believe in Him *again*—yet more thoroughly and heartily. If even *that* should not take away the disquiet of your mind, believe in Him to a third degree—and continue to do so with increasing simplicity and force. Regard this as the one and only medicine for the disease of fear and trouble! Jesus prescribes, “Believe, believe, believe in Me!” Believe not only in certain doctrines, but in Jesus Himself—in Him as able to carry out every promise that He has made! Believe in Him as you believe in God!

One has been, at times, apt to think it easier to believe in Jesus than in God, but this is a thought of spiritual infancy—more advanced Believers find it not so. To a Jew, this was certainly the right way of putting it, and I think to us Gentiles it is, also, when we have been long in the faith, for we get to believe in God as a matter of course—but faith in Jesus requires a further confidence. I believe in God’s power in creation in that He can make what He wills, and shape what He has made. I believe in His power

in Providence, that He can bring to pass His eternal purposes, and do as He wills among the armies in Heaven and among the inhabitants of this lower world. I believe, concerning God, that all things are possible with Him. Just in that way I am called upon to believe in Jesus, that He is as Omnipotent in power and as sure in His working as the Lord from whom come all the forces of nature—and just as certain to accomplish His purposes as God is to achieve His design in the works of Providence.

Relying upon the Savior with the implicit faith which every right-minded man renders towards God, we shall only give our Lord the faith which He justly claims. He is faithful and true and His power can effect His promise—let us depend trustfully upon Him—and perfect peace shall come into our hearts. These disciples knew that the Savior was to be away from them, so that they could not see Him nor hear His voice. What of that? Is it not so with God, in whom we believe? “No man has seen God at any time”—yet you believe in the invisible God working all things, sustaining all things! In the same manner believe in the absent and invisible Christ, that He is still as mighty as though you could see Him walking the waves, or multiplying the loaves, or healing the sick, or raising the dead! Believe Him—and sorrow and sighs will flee away!

Believe in Him as always living, even as you believe in the eternity of God. You believe in the eternal existence of the Most High whom you have not seen! Even so, believe in the everlasting life of the Son of God. Yes, though you see Him die, though you see Him laid in the grave, yet believe in Him that He has not ceased to be. Look for His reappearance, even as you believe in God. Yes, and when He is gone from you, and a cloud has received Him out of your sight, believe that He lives, even as God lives—and because He lives, you shall live, also! You believe in the wisdom of God; you believe in the faithfulness of God; you believe in the goodness of God—“Even as you believe in God,” says Jesus, “believe also in Me.” Faith in Jesus Christ, Himself, as an ever-living and Divine Person, is the best quietus for every kind of fear! He is the “King Eternal, Immortal, Invisible,” “The Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace!” And therefore you may safely rest in Him. This is the first ingredient of this priceless comfort.

But now our Lord proceeded to say that though He was going from them, He was only going to His Father’s house. “In My Father’s house are many mansions.” Yes, and this was sweet comfort. “I am going,” He said, “and on My way you will see Me scourged, bleeding, mocked and buffeted. But I shall pass through all this to the joy, rest and honor of My Father’s house.” God is everywhere present, and yet as on earth He had a tabernacle in which He specially manifested Himself, so there is a place where He, in a peculiar manner, is revealed. The Temple was a type of that matchless abode of God which eye has not seen—we call it Heaven, the pavilion of God, the home of holy angels and of those pure spirits who dwell in His immediate Presence.

In Heaven God may be said to have His habitation and Jesus was going there to be received on His return to all the honor which awaited His finished service. He was, in fact, going home—as a son who is returning to

his father’s house from which he had gone upon his father’s business. He was going where He would be with the Father, where He would be perfectly at rest, where He would be above the assaults of the wicked—where He would never suffer or die again—He was going to reassume the Glory which He had with the Father before the world was! Oh, if they had perfectly understood this, they would have understood the Savior’s words, “If you loved Me, you would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father.”

Imagination fails to picture the Glory of our Lord’s return; the honorable escort which heralded His approach to the Eternal City; the heartiness of the welcome of the Conqueror to the skies! I think the Psalmist gives us liberty to believe that when our Lord ascended, the bright ones of the sky came to meet Him and cried, “Lift up your heads, O you gates; and be you lift up, you everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in.” May we not believe of bright seraphs and ministering angels that—

***“They brought His chariot from on high
To bear Him to His throne;
Clapped their triumphant wings and cried,
The glorious work is done!”?***

“He was seen of angels.” They beheld that “joyous re-entry,” the opening of the eternal doors to the King of Glory and the triumph through the celestial streets of Him who led captivity captive and scattered gifts among men! They saw the enthronement of Jesus who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, but was then and there crowned with glory and honor!

These are not things of which these stammering lips of mine can speak, but they are things for you to consider when the Spirit of the Lord is upon you. Muse upon them for your delight! Jesus has gone by the way of Calvary up to His Father’s house! All His work and warfare done, He is rewarded for His sojourn among men as Man. All the shame which His work necessitated is now lost in the splendor of His mediatorial reign! You people of God, be no more troubled, for your Lord is King, your Savior reigns! Men may still scoff at Him, but they cannot rob Him of a ray of Glory! They may reject Him, but the Lord God Omnipotent has crowned Him! They may deny His existence, but He lives! They may rebelliously cry, “Let us break His bands asunder, and cast His cords from us,” but the Lord has set His King upon His holy hill of Zion and none can thrust Him from His Throne! Hallelujah!

“God has highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow.” Let not your hearts be troubled by the noise of controversy and the blasphemy and rebuke of an evil age! Though there is confusion as when the sea roars and the fullness thereof, and the wicked foam in their rage against the Lord and against His Anointed, yet the Lord sits upon the flood! The Lord sits King forever. Again, let us say, “Hallelujah!” The Prince has come unto His own again! He has entered into His Father’s palace! The heavens have received Him! Why should we be troubled?

Thirdly, our Lord gave His servants comfort in another way—He gave them to understand by implication that a great many would follow Him to His Father’s house. He did not only assure them that He was going to His

Father's house, but He said, “in My Father's house are many mansions.” These mansions are not built to stand empty! God does nothing in vain and, therefore, it is natural to conclude that a multitude of spirits, innumerable beyond all count, will rise in due time to occupy those many mansions in the Father's house! Now, I see in this great comfort to them because they doubtless feared that if their Lord was absent, His Kingdom might fail. How would there be converts if He were crucified? How could they expect, poor creatures as they were, to set up a kingdom of righteousness on the earth? How could they turn the world upside down and bring multitudes to His feet whom He had purchased with His blood, if His conquering right arm was not seen at their head?

The Lord Jesus in effect said, “I am going, but I shall lead the way for a vast host who will come to the prepared abodes. Like the corn of wheat which is cast into the ground to die, I shall bring forth much fruit which shall be housed in the abiding resting places.” This is one part of our comfort at this hour. It matters little how men fight against the Gospel, for the Lord knows them that are His—and He will ransom, by power, those redeemed by His blood! He has a multitude according to the Election of Grace whom He will bring in. Though they seem, today, to be a small remnant, yet He will fill the many mansions! This stands fast as a rock—“All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me; and him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.”

They boast that “they will not come unto Christ,” but the Spirit of God foresaw that they would reject the salvation of the Lord. What said Jesus to those like they? “You believe not, because you are not of My sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life.” The wicked unbelief of men is their own condemnation! But Jesus loses not the reward of His passion. We fling back into the faces of the despisers of Christ the scorn which they pour upon Him and remind them that those who despise Him shall be lightly esteemed—their names shall be written in the earth. What if they come not to Him? It is their own loss, and well did He say of them, “No man can come to Me except the Father which has sent Me draw Him.” Their wickedness is their inability and their destruction! They betray, by their opposition, the fact that they are not the chosen of the Most High.

But “the redeemed of the Lord shall come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads.” “He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied.” This matter is not left to the free will of man, so that Jesus may be disappointed! Oh no, “they will not come unto Him, that they may have life”—but they shall yet know that the eternal Spirit has power over the human conscience and *will*, and can *make men willing* in the day of His power! If Jesus is lifted up, He will draw all men to Him. There shall be no failure as to the Lord's redeeming work, even though the froward reject the counsel of God against themselves. What Jesus has bought with His blood, He will not lose! What He died to accomplish shall surely be performed! And what He rose again to carry out shall be effected though all the devils in Hell and unbelievers upon earth should join in

league against Him! Oh, you enemy, rejoice not over the cause of the Messiah, for though it seems to fall, it shall arise again!

But our Lord went much further, for He said, “I go to prepare a place for you.” I think He did not only refer to the many mansions for our spirits, but to the ultimate place of our risen bodies, of which I will speak before long. In our Lord’s going away, as well as in His continuance in His Father’s Presence, He would be engaged in preparing a place for His own. He was going that He might clear all impediment out of the way. Their sins blocked the road—like mountains, their iniquities opposed all passage—but now that He is gone, it may be said, “The breaker is come up before them, and the Lord on the head of them.” He has broken down every wall of partition and He has opened every iron gate. The way into the kingdom is opened for all Believers. He passed through death to Resurrection and Ascension to remove every obstacle from our path.

He went from us, also, to fulfill every condition, for it was absolutely necessary that all who entered Heaven should wear a perfect righteousness and should be made perfect in character—no sin can enter the Holy City! The saints could not be perfected without being washed in His precious blood and renewed by the Holy Spirit. And so the Savior endured the death of the Cross—and when He arose, He sent us the sanctifying Spirit that we might be fitted for His rest. Thus He may be said to have prepared the place of our rest by removing from its gateway the sin which blocked all entrance. He went away, also, that He might be in a position to secure that place for all His people. He entered Heaven as our Forerunner, to occupy the place in our name; to take possession of Heaven as the Representative of all His people.

He was going that He might, in Heaven itself, act as Intercessor, pleading before the Throne of God and, therefore, be able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by Him. He was going there to assume the reins of Providence, having all things put under His feet, and having all power given to Him in Heaven and in earth so He might bless His people abundantly. By being in Heaven, our Lord occupies a vantage-ground for the sure accomplishing of His purposes of love. As Joseph went down into Egypt to store the granaries, to prepare for Israel a home in Goshen, and to sit upon the throne for their protection, so has our Lord gone away into Glory for our good—and He is doing for us, upon His Throne, what could not so advantageously have been done for us here.

At the same time, I am inclined to think that there is a special sense in these words over and above the preparing of Heaven for us. I think our Lord Jesus meant to say, “I go to prepare a place for you” in this sense—that there would, in the end, be a place found for their entire manhood. Mark that word, “a place.” We are too apt to entertain cloudy ideas of the ultimate inheritance of those who attain unto the resurrection of the dead. “Heaven is a state,” says somebody. Yes, certainly it is a state—but it is a *place*, too—and in the future it will be more distinctly a place. Observe that our blessed Lord went away in *body*—not as a disembodied spirit—but as One who had eaten with His disciples, and whose body had been handled by them. His body needed a “place.” And He is gone to prepare a

place for us—not only as we shall be for a while, pure spirits, but as we are to be ultimately—body, soul and spirit.

When a child of God dies, where does his spirit go? There is no question about that matter—we are informed by the inspired Apostle—“absent from the body, present with the Lord.” But matter and something yet remains. My spirit is not the whole of myself, for I am taught so to respect my *body* as to regard it as a precious portion of my complete self—the temple of God. The Lord Jesus Christ did not redeem only my spirit, but my body, too, and consequently He means to have a “place” where I—this person who is here, in the wholeness of my individuality—may rest forever. Jesus means to have a place made for the entire manhood of His chosen that they may be where He is and as He is. Our ultimate abode will be a state of blessedness, but it must also be a *place* suited for our risen bodies!

Heaven is not, therefore, a cloud-land—an airy something, impalpable and dreamy. Oh, no, it will be as really a place as this earth is a place! Our glorious Lord has gone for the ultimate purpose of preparing a suitable place for His people. There will be a place for their spirits, if spirits need a place, but He has gone to prepare a place for them as body, soul and spirit. I delight to remember that Jesus did not go as a spirit, but in His risen *body*, bearing the scars of His wounds. Come, you that think you will never rise again! You who imagine that the scattering of our dust forbids all hope of the restoration of our bodies! We shall go where Christ has gone and *as* He has gone. He leads the way in His body and we shall follow in ours. Ultimately there shall be the complete redemption of the purchased possession—not a bone shall be left in the regions of death—not a relic for the devil to glory over!

Jesus said to Mary, “Your brother shall rise again.” He did not need to say your brother’s *spirit* shall live immortally, but your brother shall “rise again.” His body shall come forth out of the tomb. Well might the Apostles’ hearts be comforted when they learned the blessed errand upon which their Lord was going!

The next consolation was the promise of His sure return—“If I go away to prepare a place for you, I will come again.” Listen, then! Jesus is coming again! In the same manner as He ascended, He will return—that is, *really, literally* and in bodily form! He meant no play upon words when He so plainly said, without proverb, “I will come again,” or more sweetly, still, “I go away and come again unto you.” This is our loudest note of joy, “Behold, He comes!” This is our never-failing comfort! Observe that the Savior, in this place, says nothing about death; nothing about the peace and rest of Believers till He is come, for He looks on to the end. It is not necessary to put every Truth of God into one sentence—and so our Lord is content to mention the brightest of our hopes—and leave other blessings for mention at other times. *Here* the consolation is that He will come—come *personally* to gather us in!

He will not send an angel, nor even a host of cherubim to fetch us up into our eternal state, but the Lord, Himself, will descend from Heaven. It is to be our marriage day and the glorious Bridegroom will come in person! When the Bride is prepared for her Husband, will He not come to

fetch her to His home? O Beloved, do you not see where our Lord's thoughts were? He was dwelling upon the happy day of His ultimate victory when He shall come to be admired in all them that believe! That is where He would have His people's thoughts be. But alas, they forget His Advent. The Lord shall come—let your hearts anticipate that day of days! His enemies *cannot* stop His coming!

“Let not your heart be troubled.” His enemies may hate Him, but they cannot hinder Him. They cannot impede His glorious return, not by the twinkling of an eye! What an answer will His coming be to every adversary! How will they weep and wail because of Him! As surely as He lives, He will come, and what confusion this will bring upon the wise men who at this hour are reasoning against His Deity and ridiculing His Atonement! Again I say, “Let not your heart be troubled” as to the present state of religion—it will not last long. Do not worry yourselves into unbelief though this man may have turned traitor, or the other may have become a backslider, for the wheels of time are hurrying on the day of the glorious manifestation of the Lord from Heaven!

What will be the astonishment of the whole world when, with all the holy angels, He shall descend from Heaven and shall glorify His people? For that is the next comfort—He will receive us! When He comes, He will receive His followers with a courtly reception. It will be their marriage reception! It shall be the marriage supper of the Son of God! Then shall descend out of Heaven the new Jerusalem prepared as a bride for her husband. Then shall come the day of the Resurrection and the dead in Christ shall rise. Then all His people who are alive at the time of His coming shall be suddenly transformed so as to be delivered from all the frailties and imperfections of their mortal bodies—“The dead shall be raised incorruptible and we shall be changed.” Then we shall be presented spirit, soul and body “without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing”—in the clear and absolute perfection of our sanctified manhood—presented unto Christ Himself.

This is the sweetest idea of Heaven that can be, that we shall be with Christ, that we shall see Him, that we shall speak to Him, that we shall commune with Him most intimately, that we shall glorify Him, that He will glorify us and that we shall never be separated from Him forever and ever! “Let not your heart be troubled”—all this is near at hand and our Lord's going away has secured it for us. For this was the last point of the consolation, that when He came and received His people to Himself, He would place them eternally where He is, that they may be with Him.

Oh, joy! Joy! Joy! Unutterable joy! Can we not, now, once and for all, dismiss every fear in the prospect of the endless bliss reserved for us?—

**“See that Glory, how resplendent!
Brighter far than fancy paints!
There in majesty transcendent,
Jesus reigns, the King of saints!
Spread your wings, my Soul, and fly
Straight to yonder world of joy!
Joyful crowds, His throne surrounding,
Sing with rapture of His love!
Through the heavens His praises sounding,**

**Filling all the courts above.
Spread your wings, my Soul, and fly
Straight to yonder world of joy!”**

The Lord talks to us as if we now knew all about His goings and doings—and so we do as far as all practical purposes are concerned. He says, “Where I go you know.” He is not gone to a place unknown, remote, dangerous. He has only gone home. “Where I go you know.” When a mother sends her boy to Australia, she is usually troubled because she may never see him again, but he replies, “Dear Mother, the distance is nothing, now—we cross the ocean in a very few weeks—and I shall speedily come back again.”

Then the mother is cheered. She thinks of the ocean as a little bit of blue between her and her son—and looks for him to return if necessary. So the Savior says, “Where I go you know.” As much as to say—“I told you, I am going to your own Father’s house, to the mansions where your spirits will soon come. And I am going for the blessed purpose of making it ready to receive you in the entirety of your nature. You are thus made to know all about My departure and My business. I am going to a glorious place which eye has not seen, but My Spirit will reveal it to you. You know where I am going and you know, also, the way by which I am going—I am going through suffering and death, through Atonement and righteousness—this is the way to Heaven for you, also, and you will find it all in Me. You shall, in due time, enter Heaven by My Atonement, by My death, by My sacrifice, for ‘I am the way.’ You know the way, but remember, it is only the way and not the end. Do not imagine that the wicked can make an end of Me! Believe that Christ on the Cross, Christ in the sepulcher is not the end, but the way.”

This, Beloved, is the way for us as well as for our Lord. He could not reach His crown except by the Cross, nor His mediatorial Glory except by death! And that way once made in His own Person is open for all who believe in Him. Thus you know where the Lord has gone and you know the road—therefore, be encouraged, for He is not far away—He is not inaccessible! You shall soon be with Him. “Let not your heart be troubled.” Oh, brave Master, shall You be followed by a tribe of cowards? No, we will not lose heart through the trials of the day. Oh, holy Master, You did meet Your death with song, for, “after supper they sang a hymn!” Shall not we go through our griefs with joyful trust? Oh, confident Lord, bidding us believe in You as in God, Himself, we *do* believe in You, by Your Grace, and we also grow confident!

O, my Master, Your undisturbed serenity of faith infuses itself into our souls and we are made strong! When we hear You bravely talking of Your death which You had to accomplish at Jerusalem, and then of Your after-Glory, we, also, think hopefully of all the opposition of ungodly men and, waiting for Your appearing, we solace ourselves with that blessed hope! Make no tarrying, O our Lord! Come quickly! Amen.

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“A PREPARED PLACE FOR A PREPARED PEOPLE” NO. 2751

**A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, NOVEMBER 3, 1901.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, MAY 25, 1879.**

***“I go to prepare a place for you.”
John 14:2.***

***“Giving thanks unto the Father, who has qualified us to be
partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.”
Colossians 1:12.***

MY real text is not in the Bible—it is one of those Christian proverbs which are not Inspired in words, but the spirit of which is Inspired, “Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people.” You have often heard that sentence. It is familiar in your mouths as household words, and well it may be.

Yet I shall have two texts from the Scriptures. The first will be our Savior’s words to His disciples, “I go to prepare a place for you,” from which we learn that “Heaven is a prepared place.” And the second will be Paul’s words to the Colossians, “Giving thanks unto the Father, who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light,” from which we learn that there is a prepared people, a people made qualified to be partakers of the inheritance which Christ has gone to prepare for them!

I. I am not going to have any further preface, but I will begin at once to speak upon THE PREPARATION OF HEAVEN. “I go to prepare a place for you.”

It is many months since I began to turn this sentence over. I think I might truly say that for several *years* I have thought of it, and thought of it again, and thought of it yet again—that our Lord Jesus Christ, before returning to Heaven, should say to His disciples, “I go to prepare a place for you.” Is there any difficulty about this passage? Yes, it is very difficult to explain. Indeed, I do not think that we really can know all that Christ meant when He uttered these words. A father said to his children, when the summer sun had waxed hot, “I shall go to the seaside today to prepare a place for you.” His little child asked, “What does father mean when he says that he will prepare a place for us?” And his mother answered, “My child, I cannot tell you all that your father means, but you

will see when you get there. But now it must be enough for you that although you do not know what Father will have to do at the seaside in preparing a place for you, he knows what he is going to do.”

And, dear Friends, there is this consolation for us that even if we can hardly guess what it is that Christ can find to do to prepare Heaven for us, He knows what is needed, and He knows how to do it! And that is infinitely better than our knowing, because even if we knew what was needed, we could not do it. But with Christ to know and to do are two things that run parallel. He knows that there are certain preparations to be made. He knows what those preparations must be and He is equal to the task of making them! He has not gone upon an errand which He cannot fulfill. And when we get to Heaven, we shall know—perhaps it may take us a long while to find it all out—but we shall know and discover throughout eternity what He meant when He said, “I go to prepare a place for you.”

I do not profess to be able to explain our Lord’s words, but I am going simply to make a few remarks upon them. And first, I ask you to notice that *Heaven is already prepared for Christ’s people*. Christ has told us that when He comes in His Glory, He will say to those on His right hand, “Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” So, there is an inheritance which the Father has already prepared for the people whom He gave to His Son—and this inheritance is reserved for them. But if it was prepared from the foundation of the world, how can it be said to be prepared by Christ? The explanation probably is that it was prepared in the eternal purpose of the Father—prepared by wise forethought—arranged for—predestinated—prepared in that sense—it was provided in the eternal arrangements of Jehovah, that there should be a suitable place for His people to dwell in forever. He made the pavilion of the sun and He gave the stars their appointed positions—would He forget to prepare a place for His people? He gave to angels their places and even to fallen spirits He has appointed a prison—so He would not forget, when He was arranging the entire universe, that a place would be needed for the twice-born, the heirs of Grace, the members of the mystical body of Christ Jesus, His brethren who were to be made like unto Him. Therefore, in purpose, plan and decree, long before God had laid the foundations of this poor world and the morning stars had sung together over creation’s six days’ work accomplished, He had prepared a place for His people! It was not actually prepared, but it was in the purpose and plan of the eternal mind and, therefore, might be regarded as already done.

Our Lord Jesus Christ has gone to Heaven, He says, that He may prepare a place for His servants, and we may be helped to form some idea of what He means by this expression if we just think a little about it. And, first, I am sure *that must be a very great and glorious place which needs Christ to prepare*. If we do not know all that He means, we can get at least this much out of His declaration. He spoke this world into being. It was not, but He said, “Be,” and it was at once made. Then He spoke it into

order, into light, into life, into beauty. He had but to speak and what He willed was done. But now that He is *preparing* a place for His people. He has gone to Heaven on purpose to do it. He used to stand still here on earth and work miracles, but this was a miracle that He could not perform while He was here. He had to go back to His home above in order to prepare a place for His people. What sort of place, then, must it be that needs Christ Himself to prepare it? He might have said, “Angels, garnish a mansion for My Beloved.” He might have spoken to the firstborn sons of light and said, “Pile a temple of jewels for My chosen.” But, no, He leaves not the work to them, but He says, “I go to prepare a place for you.”

Brothers and Sisters, He *will do it well, for He knows all about us*. He knows what will give us the most happiness—and what will best develop all our spiritual faculties forever. He loves us, too, so well that as the preparing is left to Him, I know that He will prepare us nothing second-rate, nothing that could possibly be excelled. We shall have the best of the best, and much of it! We shall have all that even His great heart can give us! Nothing will be stinted for, as He is preparing it, it will be a right royal and Divine preparation. If, when the prodigal came back to his father, there was the preparation of the fatted calf, the music and dancing and the gold ring and the best robe, what will be the preparation when we do not come home as prodigals, but as the bride prepared for her husband, or as the Beloved children, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, coming home to the Father who shall see His own image in us and rejoice over us with singing? It is a grand place that Christ prepares, I know, for never was there another such a lordly host as He is! It is a mansion of delights, I know, that He prepares, for never was there another architect with thought so magnificent as His, and never were other hands so skilled at quarrying living stones and putting them, one upon another, as His hands have ever been! This thought ought to cheer us much—it must be something very wonderful that Christ prepares as a fit place for His people.

And I think I may add to this, that *it must be something very sweet when it is prepared*. If you go to a friend’s house and just fall in with the ordinary proceedings of the family, you are very comfortable and you are glad not to disarrange anything. But if, when you arrive, you see that everything has been done on an extra scale to prepare for your coming, you feel still more grateful. It has often happened to an honored guest that he could not help observing that he was not being treated as his friends lived every day of the week and all the year round. That guest chamber had evidently been newly furnished and everything that was possible had been thought of to do him honor. If you were treated thus as a guest, there was pleasure for you in the fact that so much had been prepared for you. Did your husband ever take you to a new house and point out to you how he had purchased everything that he thought would please you? Had that little room been furnished especially for you and did he anticipate your tastes, providing this little thing and that that he

knew you would like? Well, it was not merely that you enjoyed the things, themselves, but they all seemed to you so much sweeter because they had been prepared for you by your beloved husband. And when you get to Heaven, you will be astonished to see this and that and the other joy that was prepared for you because Christ thought of you, and provided just what you would most appreciate. You will be no stranger there, Beloved! You will say, “There has been here a hand that helped me when I was in distress. There has been here, I know, an eye that saw me when I was wandering far from God. There has been in this place a heart that cared for me—that same heart that loved me and that bled for me down below upon the Cross. It is my Savior who has prepared this place for me!”

I do not know whether I can convey to you all my thoughts upon this theme, but it does seem to me so pleasant to think that we are going to a place where we shall not be the first travelers through the country but where *a Pioneer has gone before us*—the best of pioneers who went before us with this one objective in His mind, that He might get all ready and prepare the place for us. I think, Brothers and Sisters, that those who will be there before us will say, when we arrive there, “We are glad you have come, for everything has been prepared for you.” It would be an eternal sorrow in Heaven if the saints should miss their way and perish, as some falsely tell us, for then, what about the preparations for their reception? They would all have been made in vain—harps prepared which no fingers would ever play—and crowns which no heads would ever wear! I do not believe it! I have never dreamed that such a thing could happen. I feel certain that He who prepared the place for the people, will prepare the people for the place and that if He gets all ready for them, He means to bring them Home that they may enjoy the things which He has laid up for them that love Him.

I know that I am not explaining the preparation of Heaven, yet I hope I am draining some comfortable thoughts out of the subject. If Christ is preparing Heaven, then it will be what our Scotch friends call, “a bonny place.” And if it is prepared for us, when we get there, it will exactly fit us. It will be the very Heaven we wanted—a better Heaven than we ever dreamed of—a better Heaven than we ever pictured even when our imagination took its loftiest heights! The Heaven of God and yet a Heaven exactly suited to such happy creatures as we then shall be!

Now, however, let us try to come a little closer to the subject and attempt to explain our Lord’s words. Jesus Christ has gone to prepare a place for His people. Does not this refer, if we keep it to its strict meaning, to *the ultimate place of God’s people*? You see, Christ mentions a *place*, not a state. And He speaks of going to it, and coming back from it—“I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself.” Christ is speaking of Himself in His full Manhood, without any figurative meaning to His words. He meant that He was going with all His Human Nature, away from this world. And that He was going to prepare a place for us, intend-

ing to come again, with all that glorified Human Nature about Him, to receive us unto Himself! This does not mean His spiritual coming in death, nor any kind of spiritual coming, as to its first meaning, at any rate. I am persuaded that the clear run of the words involves our Lord's coming, in His Second Advent, when He will come to receive, not you or me as individuals who, one by one, will enter into rest, but to receive His whole Church into the place which He shall then have prepared for her. After the Resurrection, you must remember, we shall need a place to live—a literal, material place of abode, for this body of ours will be alive as well as our spirit and it will need a world to live in—a new Heaven and a new earth.

I am not going to enter into any speculations about the matter, but it seems clear enough to me, in this text, that Christ is preparing a place somewhere not for *disembodied* spirits, for they are already before the Throne of God perfectly blessed—but for the entire manhood of His people, when spirit, soul and body shall be again united and the complete man shall receive the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body, and the whole manhood of every Believer shall be perfected in the Glory of Christ. I do not know what better world, in many respects, there could be than this, so far as material nature is concerned. It is so full of the beauty and loveliness that God pours upon it on every side! It is a wonderful world—

**“Where every prospect pleases,
And only man is vile”—**

but I could not reconcile myself to the idea that this world would be Heaven. No. My thoughts rise far above the loftiest hills, the most flowery meadows, the rolling ocean and the flowing rivers. Earth has not space enough to be our Heaven! She has too narrow a boundary and she is too coarse a thing, bright gem though she is, for perfected manhood to possess throughout eternity! It will do well enough for the thousand years of Glory—if it shall *literally* be that—we shall reign with Christ upon it during the millennial age. But it is a drossy thing and if it ever is to be the scene of the new heavens and the new earth, it must first pass through the fire. The very smell of sin is upon it—and God will not use this globe as a vessel unto honor until He has purified it with fire as once He did with water. And then, perhaps, it may serve for this higher purpose, but I scarcely think it will. Even now Jesus is preparing and has gone away on purpose to prepare a place for us—and He will come again, “with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God”—and He will catch His people away and will bear them to the eternal home where their happiness shall know no end. That is what I suppose to be the meaning of our Lord's words.

“But,” perhaps you say to me, “what do you mean by what you have been saying?” I reply—I do not know to the fullest. I can but dimly guess at the meaning of what my Lord has said—that He is doing something so glorious for ALL His people that, perhaps, if I did know it, I might not be allowed to tell you, for there are some things which, when a man knows them, it is not lawful for him to utter. Did not Paul see a great deal when

he was caught up into paradise? Yet he has told us very little about it, for there was a finger laid upon his lips that bade him know it for himself, but not to tell it to others. “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him.” And though He has “revealed them unto us by His Spirit,” even the Spirit who searches the deep things of God, yet is it not possible for us to tell all that has been revealed to us!

It strikes me that there is some little light to be obtained concerning this preparation of Heaven by Christ if I leave the direct and literal meaning of the words and think of the future state as a whole rather than in detail. Do you not think, dear Friends, that *our Lord Jesus Christ prepares Heaven for His people by going there?* I mean this. Supposing you were to be lifted up to a state which was looked upon as heavenly, but that Jesus was not there—it would be no Heaven to you. But wherever I may go, when I do go, if Jesus is already there, I do not care where it is! Wherever He is shall be my Heaven, for, as I said in the reading, [the exposition at the end of the sermon] that is our very first and last thought about Heaven—to be with Christ where He is! To be with Christ is far better than to be anywhere else! Well, then, the first thing that Christ had to do, in order to prepare Heaven for His people, was to go to Heaven, for that made it Heaven! Then were Heaven’s lamps kindled. Then did Heaven’s heralds ring out their supernal melodies. Then did the whole of the New Jerusalem seem to be ablaze with a glory brighter than the sun, for, “the Lamb is the light thereof.” When He comes there, then all is bliss! Do you not see, Beloved, that He has prepared Heaven by going there? His being there will make it Heaven for you, so you need not begin asking what else there will be in Heaven! There will be all manner of rare delights to spiritual men, but the chief of them all will be that Jesus is there! As Rowland Hill used to sing, so may you and I comfort ourselves with this thought—

**“And this I do find—we two are so joined—
He’ll not be in Glory and leave me behind.”**

If I may but be where He is, that shall be Heaven to me!

But another reflection is this—that *our Lord Jesus Christ has prepared Heaven for His people by the merit of His Atonement.* Thus has He opened the Kingdom of Heaven to all Believers. He tore the veil and made a way into the Holiest of All for all who trust Him. But, in addition to that, He perfumed Heaven with the fragrance of His Sacrifice. If Heaven is the place of the Godhead, as we know it is, we could not have stood there without the Mediator! If Heaven is the Throne of the great King, we could not have stood there without the cloud of perfumed incense from Christ’s meritorious death and righteousness ever rising up before that Throne of God! But now, Heaven is a safe place for the saints to enter. Now may they tread that sea of glass like as of fire and know that it is glass, and that no fire from it will consume them. Now will they be able to come up near to God and not be afraid. I quote again a passage that often leaps to my lips—a text of Scripture which is often shamefully misused—“Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among

us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?” Why, none of us could unless Christ had changed us by His Grace—but now we may do so!

What is the Scriptural answer to those questions, “Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?” What do the Scriptures say? Listen! “He that walks righteously and speaks uprightly. He that despises the gain of oppressions, that shakes his hands from holding bribes, that stops his ears from hearing of blood and shuts his eyes from seeing evils. He shall dwell on high: his place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure. Your eyes shall see the King in His beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off.”

This is the man who shall dwell there! With God, who is a consuming fire, we, like the holy children in the burning fiery furnace, shall find it safe to dwell and find it bliss to dwell because Christ is there! But there would have been no Heaven in the Presence of God for any man that lives, after sin had once come into the world, if Jesus had not gone there as the High Priest of old went up to the blazing throne whereon the Shekinah shone and sprinkled it with blood out of the basin, and then waved the censer to and fro till the thick smoke hid the cherubim and, for a while resting, spoke with God. Even so has Christ gone within the veil and sprinkled His own atoning blood upon His Father’s Throne and then waved aloft the censer full of the incense of His mercy! And now it is safe for us to have access with boldness to the Throne of Glory as well as to the Throne of Grace. Thus has He prepared a place for us!

Another meaning, I think, is allowable, namely, that *Christ has prepared Heaven for us by appearing there in His Glory*. I said that His very Presence made Heaven, but now I add that His Glory there makes Heaven yet more glorious. How does Christ describe the heavenly state? “Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My Glory.” It will be their bliss, then, to see His Glory, but there would have been no Glory for them to see if He had not gone there in His Glory! But now with His Presence there, in all His majesty and splendor, Heaven is still more glorious! Oh, how I long to see Him in His Glory! Long to see Him, did I say? I would part with all the joys of time and sense to gaze upon Him seated upon His Throne. Oh, what will it be to see Him? You have seen how painters have failed when they have tried to depict Him. The bravest artist may well tremble and the brightest colors fade when anyone tries to paint Him even in His humiliation! There is no other face so marred as His face was, but what will it be in Heaven when it is marred no more? No tear in His eyes! No spit running down His cheeks! No giving of His face to them that pluck out the hair, but, oh, the Glory of Manhood perfected and allied with Deity! “The King in His beauty!” Why, I think to see Him but for a minute, if we never saw Him again, might furnish us with an eternity of bliss! But we shall gaze upon Him, in His glory, day without night, never fainting, or flagging, or tiring, but delighting forever to behold Him smile, forevermore

to call Him ours and to see Him still before us! He has gone to Heaven, then, in His Glory and, surely, that is preparing a place for us!

Besides that, we cannot tell what arrangements had to be made in order to prepare a place of eternal blessedness for the Lord's redeemed. Certain it is that in the economy of the universe, everything has its place. Men have discovered, as you know, what they call evolution. They think that one thing grows out of another because long before they were born everybody with half an eye could see that one thing fitted into another and, as one step rises above another step by a beautiful gradation, so do the created things of God. Not that they grow out of each other any more than the stones of a staircase grow out of one another—they rise above each other, but they were so made from the first by the skill and wisdom of God. That a dewdrop should be precisely of the size and shape that it is, is necessary to the perfection of the universe. That there should be insects born in such a month to fertilize the flowers that bloom in that month, and others to suck the sweetness of those flowers is all necessary. God has arranged everything, from the little to the great, with perfect skill. There is a place for everything with God and everything in its place.

It was a question where to put man. He once had a place. When God created this world, He made a pyramid and set man upon the very top of it, giving him dominion over all the works of His hands. But then man fell. Now it is more difficult to restore than it was, at first, to place. Often and often you must have found that when a thing has gone awry, it has cost you more trouble to set it right than if it had to be made *de novo*. Where, then, was the place for man to be? O matchless Love, O sacred Wisdom that provided that man's place should be where Christ's place was and is! Lo, He who came down from Heaven and who was also in Heaven, has gone back to Heaven! He carried manhood with Him and, in so doing, one with Him, His Church, has found her place. His union to the Godhead has found a place for His Church at the right hand of God, even the Father, where Christ sits—and all is as it should be!

As I have already told you, I do not know much about this matter, but I should not wonder if there has been going on, ever since Christ went up to Heaven, a putting things straight—getting this race of creatures into its proper place and that other race, and the other race, so that, when we get to Heaven, nobody will say, “You have got my place.” Not even Gabriel will say to me, “Why, what business have you here? You have got my place.” No, no—you shall have a place of your own, Beloved—and all the members of Christ's Church shall find a place prepared which no one else shall be able to claim, for nobody shall be dispossessed or put out of his rightful position.

It struck me, as I turned this subject over in my mind, that *our Lord Jesus Christ knew that there was a place to be prepared for each one of His people*. It may be—I cannot tell—that in some part of the society of Heaven, one spirit will be happier than it might have been in another part. You know that even though you love all the Brethren, you cannot

help feeling most at home with some of them. Our blessed Lord and Master had no sinful favoritism, yet He did love 12 men better than all the rest of His disciples. And out of the 12 He loved three whom He introduced into mysteries from which He excluded the other nine. And even out of the three, there was one, you know, who was “that disciple whom Jesus loved.” Now, everybody here has his favorites. I do not know if we shall carry anything of that spirit to Heaven. If we do, Christ has so prepared a place for us that you shall be nearest, in your position and occupation, to those who would contribute most to your happiness. You shall be where you can most honor God and most enjoy God. You would be glad enough to be anywhere—would you not?—with the very least of the saints in Heaven if there ‘be any degrees of glory’ among their thrones, or at His feet, as long as you might see Christ’s face. But, depend upon it, if there is any association—any more intimate connection—between some saints than among others, Jesus Christ will so beautifully arrange it that we shall all be in the happiest places.

If you were to give a dinner party and you had a number of friends there, you would like to pick the seats for them. You would say, “Now, there is So-and-So. I know that he would like to sit next to So-and-So.” And you would try to arrange it so. Well, in that grand wedding feast above, our Savior has so prepared a place for us that He will find us each the right position. I was talking, this afternoon, with one whom I very dearly love and she said to me, “I hope my place in Heaven will not be far from yours.” And I replied, “Well, I trust so, too, but we are not married or given in marriage there.” Such ties and such relationships must end, as far as they are after the flesh, but we know that there have been bonds of spirit that may still continue. I sometimes think that if I could have any choice as to those I should live near in Heaven, I should like to live in the region of such strange folk as Rowland Hill and John Berridge. I think I should get on best with them, for we could talk together of the way wherein God led us and of how He brought souls to Christ by us. Though some said that we were a deal too merry when we were down below and that the people laughed when they listened to us, and some spoke as if that were a great sin, we will make them laugh up yonder, I guarantee you, as we tell again the wonders of redeeming love and of the Grace of God—their mouths shall be filled with laughter and their tongues with singing! And then—

**“Loudest of the crowd I’ll sing,
While Heaven’s resounding mansions ring
With shouts of Sovereign Grace”**

and I expect each of you who love the Lord will do the same!

I have no time for the other part of the sermon. You must come again to hear about THE PREPARED PEOPLE. But let me just say this to you—The place is prepared, are you prepared for it? Do you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? If so, your preparation has begun. Do you love the Lord and love His people? If so, your preparation is going on. Do you hate sin and do you pant after holiness? If so, your preparation is progressing. Are you nothing at all and is Jesus Christ your All-in-All? Then you are

almost ready and may the Lord keep you in that condition and, before long, swing up the gates of pearl and let you into the prepared place!

May the Lord bring us all safely there, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 14:1-12; COLOSSIANS 1:1-19.**

John 14:1. *Let not your heart be troubled.* This is one of those verses that you may read as slowly as you like and spell out every letter and find honey in it all.

1. *You believe in God, believe also in Me.* As Jews, they had already known and seen the power of God. They were now to rise to the faith of Christians and to believe in Jesus their Savior. Even though they should see Him die, they were not to doubt Him. “You believe in God, believe also in Me.”

2. *In My Father's house are many mansions.* So there is room for many. There are homes for many. There is wealth for many. “In My Father's house are many mansions.”

2. *It were not so, I would have told you.* The Savior seems to say to His disciples, “I keep nothing back from you. Had there been some sorrowful fact to be revealed to you, I would at length have told you of it.”

2. *I go to prepare a place for you.* “There must be a Heaven, for I am going there, Myself, and I am going on purpose to make it ready for you.”

3. *And If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.* That is the first and simplest idea of Heaven—to be with Christ—and I think it is the last and most sublime idea of Heaven, too! To be with Christ—“that where I am, there you may be also.”

4, 5. *And where I go you know, and the way you know.* Thomas said unto Him, Lord, we know not where You go; and how can we know the way? The Apostles blundered and lost themselves in the words of their Master, instead of entering into the spirit of what He said. So we must not wonder if we often do the same. Unless we wait upon God to be instructed by His Spirit, even the most plain passages of Scripture may be obscure to us.

6, 7. *Jesus said unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father, but by Me. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also. And from henceforth you know Him, and have seen Him.* Jesus had been talking about the many mansions and now He talks about the Father. Is the Father, then, the same as Heaven? Yes, indeed—to come to the Father is to come to perfect blessedness, to know the fullness of His eternal love and to enjoy it in face-to-face communion—this is Heaven! What higher bliss can we desire?

8, 9. *Philip said unto Him, Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us. Jesus said unto him, Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He that has seen Me has seen the Father, so how can you say, Show us the Father? Do we, then, see the Father when*

we see Christ? And is the Father's Presence Heaven? Then Christ is Heaven and to be with Him is Heaven! It is even so. He is the way to Heaven, the truth of Heaven, the life of Heaven. He is Heaven's everything—

**“His track I see, and I'll pursue
The narrow way, till Him I view”—**

and when I view Him, shall I not have seen the Father and have entered into the Father's rest?

10-12. *Do you not believe I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of Myself: but the Father that dwells in Me. He does the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me: or else believe Me for the very works' sake. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believes on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do because I go unto My Father. In consequence of Christ's going to the Father and the Spirit of God descending upon Christ's disciples, they are enabled to outdo their Master in some forms of holy service! For instance, some of them brought more to the faith than Christ Himself had done during His lifetime—and so realized the fulfillment of this promise—“The works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do because I go unto My Father.”*

Colossians 1:1-14. *Paul an Apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are at Colosse: Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which you have to all the saints, for the hope which is laid up for you in Heaven, whereof you heard before in the word of the truth of the Gospel; which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and brings forth fruit, as it does also in you, since the day you heard of it, and knew the Grace of God in truth: as you also learned of Epaphras our dear fellow servant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ; who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit. For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that you might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness; giving thanks unto the Father, who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light: who has delivered us from the power of darkness, and has translated us into the Kingdom of His dear Son: in whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins. As we read these words, we cannot help noticing how positively the Apostle speaks. There are no, “hope so,” “trust so,” “ifs” and, “buts.” It is all, “it is so” and, “it is so.” And, beloved Brothers and Sisters, concerning eternal matters, nothing but certainties will suffice for us. Allow uncertainties about your estates if you will, but we must have positive assurance concerning eternal things! And nothing short of this ought to content our spirits. Can we all*

say, as we listen to these words, “God has delivered us from the power of darkness; He has translated us into the Kingdom of His dear Son, in whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins”?

15. *Who is the image of the invisible God.* Admire this delightful passage in which the Apostle seems to burn and glow while he describes his Lord and Master, “who is the image of the invisible God.”

15-19. *The first-born of every creature: for by Him were all things created, that are in Heaven, and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether they are thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist. And He is the Head of the body, the Church: who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell.* Blessed be His glorious name! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”— 875, 852, 866.

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

THE WAY TO GOD

NO. 245

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MARCH 27, 1859,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“No man comes unto the Father, but by Me.”
John 14:6.***

THERE are many men in this world who so far from coming to God are going as far as they can *from* Him. Nothing would delight such men so much as to be clean rid of His Presence and to be entirely escaped from the bounds of His dominions. They would be content to make their bed in Hell, if they could thus find a satisfactory answer to the question, “Where shall I go from Your Spirit, or where shall I flee from Your Presence?” Their hearts are at enmity with God. They hate His Words and His ways. They know that God is angry with them. And they in return are angry with God.

There is another class who are but very little in advance of these. It cannot be said of them, with the same emphatic meaning, that they actually hate God, but nevertheless they run from Him. Perhaps they would indignantly repel a charge of abhorring God, but nevertheless, it is true of them, that they live in utter disregard of Him. They say in their hearts “No God.” God is not in all their thoughts. They may have sublime thoughts of nature, but few yearnings after Him who made nature. They think much of time and sense and of the things that are below. But as to eternity and its substantial realities, the things that are unseen and everlasting, these they scarce can think upon.

“Beware, you that forget God,” for your state is no better than the state of those I first described. “The wicked shall be turned into Hell.” Those who hate God shall feel His torment, but so shall their companions, for thus runs the text, “The wicked shall be cast into Hell with all the nations that forget God.” It is not needful that you should *hate* God—only that you should go to war with Him in order to destroy yourself. The simple *neglect* of Him is enough to ruin you. Thus has the Apostle put it, “How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?” You need not fly upon the thick bosses of Jehovah’s buckler. You need not rush upon the point of his glittering spear. Stand still and do nothing. Regard Him not—shut your eyes to His existence and engross yourself with the groveling toys of earth and you have as surely destroyed yourselves as if you had defied Him to His

face. Neglect of God is the open gate of damnation. To forget God is to ensure a portion in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone.

There is to be found, however, upon the face of the earth a third class of men who would not like to be classed among the enemies of God and who can truly say that they are not utterly indifferent with regard to His favor. They would prefer to be numbered with those who are *seeking* God. Their desire is to go to their Father. They may not as yet, perhaps, be brought to that only way at coming which He has ordained, but still their profession is that they desire to worship God and to come before Him with thanksgiving and show themselves glad in Him. It is to this very character, one that has so much that is hopeful in it, that I shall address myself particularly this morning. But indeed, to everyone in this assembly would I desire to preach the great truth of the text. No man—desire he ever so earnestly, labor he ever so diligently—no man comes unto the Father, but by Jesus Christ.

When Adam was perfect in the garden of Eden, God walked with him in the cool of the day. God and man held the most intimate and affectionate communion with one another. Man was a happy creature. God was a condescending Creator and the two met together and held sweet converse and communion. But from the moment when Adam touched the forbidden fruit, the way from God to man became blocked up—the bridge was broken down, a great gulf was fixed—so that if it had not been for the Divine plan of Grace, we could not have ascended to God, and neither could God in justice come down to us. Happily, however, the Everlasting Covenant ordered in all things and sure, had provided for this great catastrophe. Christ Jesus the Mediator had in old eternity been ordained to become the medium of access between man and God.

If you want a figure of Him, remember the memorable dream of Jacob. He laid him down in a solitary place and he dreamed a dream which had in it something more substantial than anything he had seen with his eyes wide open. He saw a *ladder*, the foot whereof rested upon earth and the top thereof reached to Heaven itself. Upon this ladder he saw angels ascending and descending. Now this ladder was Christ. Christ in His humanity rested upon the earth, He is bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. In His Divinity He reaches to the highest Heaven, for He is very God of very God. When our prayers ascend on high they must tread the staves of this ladder and when God's blessings descend to us, the rounds of this marvelous ladder must be the means of their descent. Never has a prayer ascended to God save through Jesus Christ.

Never has a blessing come down to man save through the same Divine Mediator. There is now a highway, a way of holiness wherein the redeemed can walk to God and God can come to us. The king's highway—

**“The way the holy Prophets went—
The road that leads from banishment.”**

Jesus Christ, the Way, the Truth and the Life. Let us think for a moment of Jesus Christ as the way to God. The reason why man cannot come to God as he did in the garden is that *God* is the *same*, but *man* is *changed*. God is as affectionate and as condescending as ever, but man is unholy and impure. Now God is as pure as He is affectionate, while God is love it is just as true that God is infinitely just and holy. His holy eyes cannot endure iniquity. If, then, a sinful creature could obtain access to God, if a rebellious creature could come into the immediate presence of the Most High, the effect must be disastrous in the extreme, for it would be a necessity of God's nature that He must utterly devour the creature in which He sees sin to be.

Come into the presence of God, O Sinner, and you might as well march into a consuming fire. As Nebuchadnezzar's furnace burned the men who came to throw in the three holy children so must God, the consuming Fire, burn and destroy us—if we approach Him with our prayers and thanksgivings—were it not for the interposition of Jesus Christ the Mediator. I say this is a necessity of His nature. God is necessarily Just and justice cannot endure a sin. God is necessarily pure and holy—He might sooner cease to be God than cease to be pure. Now, the approach of impurity to Him He must repel. Though no laws can bind Him, yet the law of His nature never can be broken. His nature is, “I will by no means clear the guilty.” He is slow to anger, He is great in power and He is ready to forgive, but so long as guilt lies unforgiven He is also ready to punish, no, He *must* punish or else cease to be.

Consequently, no man can come to God as a sinner, unless he comes to Him to be utterly destroyed and that without remedy. You do not wish so to come to God. Happy is it, then, that we are enabled to tell all our fellow creatures of a way whereby we can come with joy and gladness to the Father—through Jesus Christ.

Now, this morning I shall have to divide my subject into three or four heads and notice—

I. Some men have a desire to come to God in worship, but there are many who desire to come to Him the wrong way. You will sometimes meet with men who say, “Well, I do not go up to a Church or Chapel—it is all ridiculous. I do not read the Bible. I have no faith in Christ. But I spend my Sunday in the open air—in that glorious temple which God has built. How Divinely can I worship Him there, while ‘the lark, singing, up to Heaven's gate ascends.’ While every flower tells me of Him whose breath perfumes it and whose pencil paints. While all the cattle on a thousand hills are lowing forth his praise I feel that in His temple does everyone speak of

His glory. What need for me to go and hear what you call the Gospel, to join in the united song of praise, or bend my knee in prayer? I worship the god of nature,” says such a man, “not the God of Revelation, but the god of nature.”

To this man we reply in the words of our text. Your thanksgiving and your praise are unacceptable to the God you worship, for that God has declared that no man comes to Him except through His Son, Jesus Christ. If then, you reject the way of access and persist in bringing your prayers and your thanksgivings to Him in a way which He does not acknowledge, remember, this shall you have as the answer to your prayers and your thanksgivings. You shall lie down in sorrow when God shall come to judge you at the Last Great Day. The true Christian can “go from nature up to nature’s God,” because he has come from nature’s God down to nature. No man can climb the steeps and “go from nature up to nature’s God,” unless he has first descended. God must take you up into the mount where He dwells, first, and then you can come down, as Moses did from the top of Sinai. But, until He has caught you up there, your weary feet shall be exhausted and your strength decay before you can reach the God of nature through your works.

Now, my Friend, you may be very sincere, as you imagine, in all your prayers and thanksgivings offered to the unpropitiated God of nature in your garden, or in the fields, but, sincere though they are, they miss the mark. They are not shot from a bow which is strong enough to carry them to their desired target. They miss the mark, I say, and they shall fall back on your own head to your injury. But they shall not reach the Throne of God. But I observe here that those men who talk about natural religion, as far as I know them, have no religion at all. I have noticed that the people who say, “I can worship God without attending any religious service, or believing in Jesus,” do not really do so. I have sometimes had an opportunity on a Sunday of seeing many worshippers of the god of nature come down the lane where I reside. They consist, for the most part, of men who carry cages with them in which to catch birds on the common.

There is another very respectable confraternity of men who go to a boxing place somewhere about there, where they spend their day in the bowling alley and many fist fights. These might adopt the cry of our genteel sinners, “We don’t want to go into a Church or Chapel—we spend our Sunday in the worship of the god of nature.” And very fine worship it is. I mostly find that those people who worship the “god of nature” worship the god of fallen nature—that is, the devil—not the God of the glorious nature which is spread about us in the roaring sea, the rolling flood and the blooming meads. No, for the most part the men who talk like that know, in their own conscience, that the god they worship is their belly, their own

lusts. And they glory in their shame. Don't believe all the nonsense that you hear from the Sunday league and all that, when they talk about worshipping the god of nature. Do they do it? Follow any of them into their privacy and see whether any of this fine devotion of theirs has any existence whatever and I think you will discover at once that they are greater hypocrites than the men they call hypocrites.

But again, is it not rather a suspicious circumstance that these men who are so much ahead of us, that worship the god of nature prefer the company, according to their own confession, of sheep and bullocks and horses and skylarks, to the presence of the saints of God? It looks rather suspicious when a man finds more congenial company in a sheepfold than he does in an assembly of intelligent beings. It looks as if his own mind were brutish when he can never get his spirit wound up into devotion till he gets into the midst of brutes. For my part, I feel more able to worship God in the great congregation, in the assembly of the saints, than anywhere Else. "In the courts of the Lord's house, in the midst of you, O Jerusalem, praise the Lord!" I know that all His works praise Him. It is my joy to feel that the changing seasons are but the varied characteristics of God—that spring speaks of His tenderness and love, summer of His majesty, autumn of His bounty and winter of His awful power. But still I know that in His sanctuary I behold His glory yet more fully and there I discover Him to my heart's solace and delight. The true Christian can worship God in nature. But a man who has not learned to worship God in his house, I am quite sure has not learned to worship God anywhere.

Natural religion is a lie. Men may say much about it, but it does not exist. Trace these Pharisaic members of the synagogue of Satan to their homes and you will find that they make this natural religion an excuse for religion. It is an utter impossibility for any man to come to God in worship, save through Jesus Christ. See, then, how my text shuts out of all acceptance with God all those who do not receive Christ to be the Son of God, the Mediator. Men sometimes say, "All are right—whether they are Jews or Gentiles, whatever they may be, they are all right." Now, be it understood once and for all, that the religion of Christ gives no heed to such a fancy. It claims for itself, alone, the solitary throne in the kingdom of religious truth. It uses no chains and racks to obtain an unwilling profession of its faith. But the unbeliever is not flattered with promises of security—rather, he is threatened with a doom dreadful beyond all thought.

There is not, in this Book of God, one single sentence which could lead me to believe that there is a way to God for the Mohammedan, for the Jew, or for anyone who does not come to Him through Jesus Christ. The religion of Christ is exclusive in this. It declares that no other foundation can man lay than that which is laid, Jesus Christ. It declares that no man

can come to God except through Jesus. All the charity of which some men talk is deceitful and valueless. We can have no hope for those who receive not Christ. We pity them, we love them, we pray for them, we plead for them that they may be brought to this. But we dare not deceive them, we dare not tell them that God will hear their prayers, if they will not come to Him through Jesus Christ. No, we will be as tolerant as Jesus was, but Jesus Himself said, "He that believes not must be damned," and whatever you may be—Unitarian, Socinian, Infidel, deist, theist, or what-not—however sincere your prayers—God abhors and hates them if you do not offer them through Jesus Christ, the one way between the sinner and God.

II. Other men there are who, conscious that they cannot come to God as perfect beings in worship, desire to approach Him in the way of penitence. But mark, even in the way of penitence, no man can come to God except through Jesus Christ. Those tears in your eyes, when Jesus the Sun of Righteousness shines on them, are as diamonds in the esteem of the God of Mercy. But even your tears and sighs and groans cannot prevail with the heart of God, unless they are mingled with a humble faith in Jesus Christ, His only Son. In vain you weep till your eyes are red to blindness. In vain you groan till your ribs burst with your expanding heart of agony. In vain you kneel till your knees are stiff with prayer. God hears you not. He accepts you not until you make mention of Jesus the crucified, His Son, the Savior of mankind. Oh, it is mournful to see how men try to approach God in any way but through Jesus Christ.

You have the Romish Church putting men to penance, in order that they may so come to God. It was but one day this week I went into a Romish cathedral and there, to my disgust and horror, I saw poor women on their knees, going entirely round the cathedral having as a penance to pray before a whole set of pictures that were exhibited upon the walls. Well, I thought, if this be acceptable to their god, I am sure it would not be to mine! To give these poor women the rheumatism, or something worse, in order that god might be pleased with them, is the most extraordinary way of going to work that I know of. What a god must theirs be, that is pleased with poor souls when they torture themselves.

Behold the monk—if he would gratify his god, he must not wash himself. For their god is a god of filth and according to their own confession, cleanliness is not acceptable to him. Again, he must fast—their god is a god of starvation. It is quite clear he is not our God—for our God is a God of bounty. The poor monk must flog himself—he must flagellate his poor back till the blood runs down in streams—their god delights in the blood of his creatures, evidently, and nothing pleases him so much, according to their own confession, as for his creatures to torture themselves. Happily

however, their god has nothing whatever to do with our God. Their god is an old Romish pagan demon that was cursed of old and is cursed now. But our God is a God who takes delight in the happiness of his creatures, who, if there is any merit anywhere, would sooner see it in our happiness than in our sorrow, although, mark you, there is no merit in either. When we come to God in penitence we must bring but one oblation, for there is but one way of offering acceptable penitence to God and that is through Jesus Christ our Lord.

We will imagine there is a man over yonder who is feeling that he has been guilty, but he desires to be forgiven. "Oh," says he, "I know I am guilty. I feel that I deserve God's wrath. Well, I will promise I will never be drunk again. I will not swear—make a resolution that I will be better." Ah, Friend, ah, Friend! You will never come to God in penitence that way. O Man, that way—that way of works—is a way of death. The very first time you put your foot on it I can hear the low mutterings of the thunder—*"Cursed is every man that continues not in all things that are written in the book of the Law to do them."* Go on with your resolves—try to carry them out. You shall find that this road of yours will grow more difficult every day. The more you do, the more you will have to do. When you have climbed a hill, you will see a mountain beyond. When you have forded a stream, you will see a sea before you and no means of crossing it. The way to Heaven through good works would be a very hard one, even if it were a possible one. Conscience is like the horseleech—it always cries, "Give, give, give." Conscience is never satisfied with the best works that we can do. It always wants more.

But ah, I remind you, Man, that if you go on in that way of works and seek to be forgiven through it, your destruction is as sure as if you did run in the way of sin. Mark you, Man, the Jews of old would not accept the righteousness of Christ and they went about to establish their own righteousness and would not submit themselves to the righteousness of Christ and hence they perished and that without mercy. And so shall you. O turn from that way! God will not receive you in it. Turn from it! If you were perfect and had never broken God's Law at all, then might you be saved by the Law. But *one* sin breaks the Law to shivers and you cannot mend the breach. You are lost if you stand on the footing of works. Come away, then, come away! Come to the Cross of Christ! There is no way to Heaven but by Jesus Christ. Come! Both from your works and your sins. Look to Him and live. Look to Him and see your sins forgiven. Look to Him and behold your penitence accepted and a gracious answer given.

III. There are other men who feel, "Well, we know Jesus must forgive our sins, it is through His sufferings that we must be pardoned. But," say they, "we desire now to be acceptable to God all the days of our life. We

will therefore endeavor to come to God in a way in which He shall accept us." Many there are that light upon a way like this. "We will be very scrupulous," say they, "in all our transactions, exact in our dealings with men and bountiful in our liberality to God. In this way shall we be accepted. Christ," say they, "shall be trusted to take away our sins but we will have the clothing of ourselves with a robe of righteousness. We will let Christ wash us and wash our works, too, if He pleases. But at least we will be the manufacturers of our own virtues and excellencies. God shall accept us through what *we* do—Jesus shall make up the deficiency. He shall darn a hole or two that may occur in the garment, but nevertheless we will stick to the old cloth throughout and though we do hear that our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, yet we will have them washed and wear them over again, rags though they are."

Now, mark, my Hearers, as when we come to God first we must bring nothing with us but the blood of Christ, so when we come to Him afterwards, we must still bring nothing but the same offering. A guilty sinner, when he approaches God's Throne, can never be pardoned, except by pleading the blood once shed by Christ. The highest saint, the most eminent professor, can no more be accepted by God than the meanest sinner, unless he still pleads the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ. The Arminian, despite his denial of it, has in his own mind, a notion that his acceptance with God in some measure depends upon his own actions. Although many Arminian divines say that they do not believe this, yet they must nevertheless believe it. It lies at the very root and basis of their fallen doctrine. They believe that if the Christian falls into sin, God will cast him out of His family. And I say it follows as a necessary influence that acceptance of a Christian, must, on that theory, depend on good works—so that in coming to God he comes through his own good behavior and not through what Jesus did.

Now mark, this is an offensive falsehood and as damnable an error as if I were to preach that salvation was entirely by works. There is no part of the Christian's experience in which a Christian can deal with God otherwise than through Christ. At the beginning it is all through Christ. In the middle it is all through Christ. And in the end it must be the same. If it were possible for you, my Brother, to be clean rid of sin, you still could not come to God except through Christ. When your faith shall grow into assurance, when the follies of your life shall all be expunged, when your character shall be saintly, when your heart shall be perfectly sanctified—even *then* the means of access and the mode of acceptance of your soul before God will remain unalterable and unchanged. Jesus, Jesus, JESUS—the path for the sinner and the way for the saint. No road to God—

even for the holiest man—no road to God’s acceptance, but through Jesus and through Jesus, only.

Do we not each of us in ourselves at times have an aptness to come to God in some other way than through Jesus Christ? “Now you have preached well,” says Satan, “you have been successful in such-and-such a labor. Ah,” says the devil, “how liberal you have been in such-and-such a cause. Now go to God in prayer.” And we go and we pray with such assurance we think we are sure to be heard. But perhaps without our knowing it there is lurking at the bottom of our excellent fluency in prayer an evil thought that surely God will hear us, for we have been so diligent and liberal. And on the other hand, when we have been committing sin, when conscience chides us, then we go to the Throne and we are half afraid, because we say God will not hear us. Is not that still pride? Why, were we ever better than we are now? Were we not always and are we not now, as bad as ever we can be? In ourselves is there anything that can commend us to God? Is not the very fact that when in our good state we come boldly and when in our low state we come timidly, proof that there is lurking in us a secret suspicion that we are to come to God by something that is in *us*?

Oh, if we could but learn this Truth of God and stand to it—our acceptance with God depends upon *nothing* that we do, or can do—nothing that we can think, or feel, or be—but depends wholly and entirely and solely upon what Jesus is and what He has done and what He has suffered! Let us once get that thought—and it is in the text—we shall then be able, by the Divine assistance of the Holy Spirit, to come to God at all times with boldness, knowing that we were so coming through *Christ* and therefore we might always come boldly to the Throne of Grace.

Have I here today?—I am sure I have—some timid soul that is afraid to come to God through Christ? Ah, my dear Brothers and Sisters, I know your fear and I can pity you. But I know your fear and I can blame you, too. What? Are you afraid to come to God through Christ and do you want someone to speak to Christ for you? Oh, foolish Heart! You do need a Mediator in coming to God, but you do not need any in coming to Christ. Go to Him just as you are, without making yourself any better. Go straight away, rags and sin and leprosy and blotches and sores and all, straight away to Him. Do not be afraid that the Father will reject you if you come alone through Him. Let me lead you, my poor, timid Brother, to this way. Come with me. Do you see yon Cross? Do you mark that glorious Man dying on it in agonies that cannot be described? Do you not think that those sufferings are enough to expiate the wrath of God? Why, listen to Him! Will you not believe what He says?—“It is finished!” He cries before He gives up the ghost.

Now, if Jesus thought it finished, do you not think it so? If He Himself thought that He had done enough, is not that enough for you that is enough for Him? Come boldly, for Jesus smiles upon you. His blood is dropping—his

heart is still flowing with the blood and water. Come! None ever were cast out—shall you be the first? Those arms that are nailed to the Cross are wide open, as if they would show you that they can receive the biggest of sinners. Those feet that are nailed to the Cross are fastened there as if they meant to stop there and wait to be gracious to you. O do you see His pierced side, it seems as if it said to you, “My heart is not hard to reach. See, here is a straight road to it opened by the Roman spear. Come, breathe your sighs into My heart and I will hear and answer.”

Come, Soul! Come this way. How safe it is, for over it hangs the banner of Jehovah’s love. And on the ground is the mark of blood of the Savior’s footsteps. This gory pathway to the Throne of God, I now entreat you to enter. Jesus made it. Jesus smoothed it. Jesus dyed it with His blood. Come, come away poor soul! Come, put your trust alone in Jesus and then you need not come to God the Father with trembling and with dismay. God help you, timid one, God help you. You have no need to despond—Jesus said He will cast out none that come to Him by faith.

IV. I shall not keep you much longer, but I must now observe that there are others who desire to come to God in communion. You will meet, every now and then, with a devout man who has but very imperfect notions of the Gospel and who, nevertheless, has a kind of reverence for the living God. He is an astronomer and he will tell you that an undevout astronomer is mad. He says that while his eyes look through the telescope glass upon the wondrous worlds that float in ether, he communes with God, marvels at His power and admires His matchless benevolence and skill. The geologist, too, will tell you that when digging into the deep foundations of the world and bringing out those old inhabitants, who in days of yore stalked through gigantic forests, he feels he can talk with God the Eternal One—that those gray hairs of an ancient world remind him of the Ancient of Days—and the bones of a buried generation all remind him of the Eternal One, who was before all things and by whom all things consist.

Now, these men are sincere. But do not imagine for an instant that their devotion is acceptable, or that their communion is true and real, unless in this they tincture and savor their communion with the knowledge that Jesus Christ is the only way of access to God. Oh, Soul, if you would walk with God, as Adam did in Eden and it is quite possible—if you would walk with Him as Enoch did and that is quite possible, too—if you would see Him face to face and talk to Him as a man would talk with his friend, remember you must be set in the cleft of the rock, Christ Jesus, or else you cannot do it. Once let a man stand in that cleft and see Jesus’ blood, then he can commune with God in nature readily enough. Standing at the foot of the mountain he may see that hill like a wedge piercing the ebon darkness and his soul may climb the summit and enter into the invisible. He may look upon that awful summit as upon an ambassador sent from earth to Heaven—and

his spirit may seem to rise on the mountaintop, until it appears to grasp the hand of the Almighty One.

But mark, the steep summit of fellowship cannot be climbed, except Jesus Christ lend Himself to be the sacred ladder and gives strength to the weary footsteps of our faith. He is the way to God. He is the Truth to guide us. He is the life to enable us to run in the road. Without Christ there is no way to communion, no truth in communion and no life in our pretended fellowship. Christian, take heed that you never try to commune with God except through Jesus Christ. Never try to commune with Him even through the Holy Spirit, if you forget Christ. The Holy Spirit acts the communion. But still, Christ is the medium through which it flows. The Holy Spirit runs through Christ as through a channel. As water from the conduit runs through the pipe, so fellowship must run through Jesus Christ. There can be no coming of God to us and no going of our soul to God, except through the highway of communion, Jesus Christ, the Man and yet the God.

V. And lastly, to conclude—Who is there among us who does not desire to come to God in Heaven? Lives there a man with soul so dead that he has no desire for another and a better world? Is there a heart so seared that it never longs to be at rest—an eye so blind that it never looks into the hereafter and a soul so stolid that it never leaps with exulting spirit, in the prospect of a world of joy and happiness? The wild untutored savage of the woods looks to another world and when some beloved one is buried, he lights a fire upon the grave, to light the spirit through the dreary shades of death, that it may find its way to paradise. And then he sits upon the grave, when the fire is quenched and thinks of the spirit that is gone and hopes for it that it has gone to the kingdom of the blessed, to the land of the hereafter. Never is he content, unless he hopes that the spirit of his beloved one is gone to a better land.

And shall it be imagined that any of us who are living in a Christian country are shutting our eyes to the future and never think of looking beyond the grave? There are many here—no, all of us are longing for another and a better world. O world of woe, what were you if you were not a steppingstone to a world of bliss? O land of graves and shrouds, of pick-axe and of spade, what were you if we did not dive through you into the land of light? O vale of tears, what were you, if it were not that you are the pathway to the mountain of transfiguration? O valley of Baca, filled with tears of sorrow, till the pools thereof are overflowing—what were you, if you did not lead to the tabernacles of our God—the peaceful sanctuary in which we hope to dwell?

But there is no way to Heaven, whatever our hopes may be, but through Christ. O spirit of man, there is no way to the gates of pearl but through the bleeding side of Jesus. These are the gates of Paradise—these bleeding wounds. If you would find your way to God's bright Throne, find first your way to Jesus' shameful Cross. If you would know the way to happiness,

tread in that path of misery which Jesus trod. What? Attempt another way? Man, are you mad enough to think that you can rend the posts and bars and gates of Heaven from their perpetual places and force your way by your created strength? The arm of God shall dash you down to the nethermost pit. Or do you think to purchase with your riches and your gold a foothold in paradise? Fool! What is your gold where streets are made of it and where the gates are solid pearl—where the foundations are of jasper and the walls whereof are precious gems?

And do you think to get there by your merits? Ah, fool that you are, by pride fell the angels and by your pride you fall. In your talking of merit you confess that you are Lucifer himself incarnate. Away with you! Heaven is not for such as you are. But do you say, “I will leave my wealth after I have gone. I will build a hospital, or feed the poor.” Then let *men* pay you. You have worked for your nation, let *them* pay the debt. Let *them* rear the stony pillar and set your effigy upon the top. If you have worked for your country, let your country pay you what they owe to you. But God, what does He owe to you? You have forgotten him, you have despised his Son, you have rejected his Gospel. Be you warrior, statesman—Patriot, let *men* pay you. God owes you nothing and all you can do will not bribe Him to admit you to His palace, if you come not in the right way through Jesus Christ, who lived and died and is alive forever more and has the keys of Heaven at His side.

Come, now, you that have nothing to bring, come to Christ this morning, you perishing, you guilty and you lost. God’s ambassador stands before you and as though Christ did woo you, he pleads with you to come to Jesus NOW. You that are under conviction of sin and want salvation, believe on Him now. In your heart, poor sinner, say—

**“Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Your blood was shed for me,
And that you bid me come to You,
O Lamb of God, I come.”**

The invitation is freely given, the proclamation is openly made. My God is not a God of hatred and of anger. He is a God of love. He bids you who are thirsty, who are longing to see His face, He bids you now come. And He tells you and he confirms the same with an oath—“As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked but that the wicked turn from his way and live—turn you, turn you from your evil ways. For why will you die, O house of Israel?”

Come now! “The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that hears say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” O Spirit of God, draw sinners to Christ! O glorious One, be pleased now to draw them to the Father, through Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

JESUS THE WAY

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***“Jesus said unto him, I am the way.”
John 14:6.***

IT is coming on dark and we are lost among the mountains. There is an awful precipice there, a quarter of a mile straight down. There is a bog over yonder and if a man once gets into it, he will never get out again. There is a forest yonder and if one should be lost in its tangled paths, he will certainly not find his way out till the rising of the sun. What do we need just now? Why, we need someone who will tell us the way! Our friend the philosopher, with whom we talked half-an-hour ago, was very valuable to us, then, and gave us a great deal of information. But, as he does not happen to know the way, we would sooner have the poorest peasant lad that feeds the sheep upon the hills for a companion than that man. The classic scholar, who has been repeating to us some admirable lines from Horace and delighting us with an admirable quotation from Virgil, did very well, indeed, for us while we could see our path and had hope of reaching our home by nightfall. But now the poorest lass with uncombed hair who can just point the way to the cottage where we may rest tonight will be of more value to us. What we need is to know the way!

This is just the case, dear Friends, with poor fallen humanity. The need of mankind is not the refined lecture of the learned, nor the acute discussion of the debater—we simply need someone, be it a lad or be it a lass, to show us the way! And the most precious person you and I have seen, or ever shall see, will be the person who shall be blessed and honored of God to us to say, “Behold the way to God, to life, to salvation and to Heaven.” I shall not need, then, to offer any apology for coming out again to show the way. There are many here who are lost and there are some upon whom the shades of night are falling. Their hair is gray, they pant as they walk and rest upon their staff for the support of their tottering legs. Their case is dangerous and when they cannot, of themselves, discover the pathway, surely they will heed any voice, however hoarse, from any person, however rough he may be, if they may but discover what is the way to eternal life!

Travelling some time ago, the coachman, when it was getting nearly dark, informed us that he had never been on that road before—and one can hardly tell how pleased we were to see a signpost. Now, a signpost is not a very interesting thing—there is nothing very poetical about it. It

may be questionable whether it decorates the road as it sticks out an arm with only a word or two written on it, but, toward night, when neither the driver nor you know the way, it is about the most pleasant thing you can greet! I shall stand here tonight as a simple signpost. The words may be dry, but it shall be enough for you if they do but show you the way! Mr. Jay tells us that on one occasion, when riding on the mail-coach to Bath, he asked a great many questions of the coachman. He asked, "Whose seat is that? What squire owns that fine lawn? And what gentleman is the squire of yonder parish?" To all which questions the driver only answered. "I don't know. I don't know." At last, Mr. Jay said to him, "Well, what do you know?" "Why," he said, "I know how to drive you to Bath." Well, now, I pretend to no greater knowledge than this—I do know the way to Heaven and I do hope I shall be able to tell it to you so plainly and so simply that some here who are lost as in a wild forest may see the path and, by the Grace of God, be enabled to run in it!

I. First of all, then, let us notice THE EXCLUSIVENESS OF OUR TEXT—"I am the way."

Christ declares that He, and only He, is the way to peace with God, to pardon, to righteousness and to Heaven! Falsehood may tolerate falsehood, but truth never can. Two lies can live in the same house and never quarrel. But truth cannot bear a lie even though it should be in the highest part of the attic! Truth has sworn war to the knife against falsehood and hence it never knows what it is to admit that its contrary can shake hands with itself. The Hindu meets the Muslim and he says, "No doubt you are sincere as well as we are, and you and we shall at last meet in the right place." They would salute the Christian, too, and say the same to him, but it is a necessity, if our religion is true, that it should denounce every other and that it should say unto those who know not Christ, "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Yes, it goes still further and pronounces its anathema upon those who pretend to any other way! "Though we or an angel from Heaven preach any other Gospel than that which you have received, let him be accursed." I simply mention certain other ways to assure you, in God's name, that there are roads which lead to Hell and that none of them can bring you to Heaven—for there is only one way by which the soul can come to God and find eternal life—and that way is Christ!

I think I see mankind lost as in a great wilderness. There are no paths and there comes suddenly before the sad eyes of the lost wayfarers, a hag whose hand is blood-red and with her eyes flashing fire she points and says, "Lost men, this is the way." And what is that before our eyes? I see the car of Juggernaut rolling through the streets and crushing, at every revolution of its wheels, a poor man's flesh and bones which, when the spirit has departed with a groan, lie there a monument of superstition! And having pointed there, this hag will tell the mother to take her child and throw her dear one into the river Ganges. "This is the way," says the foul hag of *Superstition*, "by which you are to come to God." But we denounce her! In God's name, we denounce her as a demon

escaped from Hell! “Shall I give my first-born for my transgressions, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?” Ah, no, God abhors such a sacrifice! You cannot, in your reason, think that what is abhorrent to you can be acceptable to God! That what you yourselves would loathe to look upon can be delightful to Him! No, Brothers and Sisters, God asks no laceration of the flesh, no starving, no hair shirts, no cord about the loins—for all these He cares nothing—they are a weariness to Him. If you would please God, speaking after the manner of men, you are more likely to do it by being happy than by being miserable! Do you think that a man would please other men by groans and sighs? I think not. And how, then, should he please God by putting himself to torture if God is such a God as we find revealed to us in Holy Writ? Turn, then, all you nations of the East and oh, that all lands would turn from this cruel lie, for this is not the way to Heaven!

In our own country we have much more lovely deceivers than this old hag—*false prophets* who are more likely to mislead you. Let me glance at some of the popular ways of going to Heaven which will surely lead to Hell. There is *the way of good works*. I had thought that we had scattered so many millions of tracts, preached so much in the streets and talked so long about men being saved by the blood of Christ and not by themselves, that really, the old-fashioned heresy of self-righteousness would have been driven out of the field! But it still holds a firm position. When I get into conversation with people, I find, in all grades of society, there is still the same belief that men will go to Heaven by what they did.

“Ah,” said one to me yesterday, “I suppose you sometimes feel cast down.” “Yes,” I said, “I do.” “Why,” said he, “I should think the best men at times can hardly look back upon their lives with pleasure and, therefore, they must feel a little afraid for the future.” “Oh,” I said, “if I had to look on my past life as the ground of my expectations for the future, I would be cast down, indeed! But do you not know that all my good works will not save me and that all the sins I have ever committed in the past will never damn me?” “No,” he said, and he looked astonished at such strange doctrine as that! The Gospel teaches, indeed, that when a man believes in Christ, the sin of the past is all blotted out and Christ’s righteousness is given to him so the man is not saved by what he *is*, nor damned for who he *was*, but he is “saved through Jesus Christ and through Jesus Christ alone.”

I sat in a boat not a great while ago, and while the man was rowing me, I thought I would talk with him. He began to talk to me about sundry “new lights” that had sprung up in the village. People always take more notice of will-o-the-wisps than they do of the sun, itself. The question at length arose how he hoped to go to Heaven. Well, he had brought up eight children, he had never had any help from the parish, he was an honest man and always did his neighbors a good turn. When the cholera was rife, he was about the only man in the village that would get up at night and run for the doctor—and he felt that if he did not go to Heaven it would fare very badly with most people. So, indeed, I am afraid it will, and with him, too, if that is all he rests on!

I tell these two stories, culled from two classes of society, because I know we have need to keep on repudiating this old lie of Satan's that men are to be saved by their works. Those fig leaves that Adam wove together to cover his nakedness are still in favor with his descendants. They will not take the robe of Christ's righteousness, but will rather go about to save themselves. A word or two with you, my Friend. Do you say you will go to Heaven by keeping the Law of God? Ah, you have heard the old proverb about locking the stable when the horse is gone? I am afraid it is very applicable to you! So you are going to keep the stable shut, now, and you are sure the horse shall never get out? If you will kindly go and look, you will find it is already out! Why, how can you keep to Law which you have already broken? If you would be saved, the Law of God is like a chaste alabaster vase which must be presented to God without crack or spot—but do you not see that you have broken the vase? Why, there is a crack there! “Ah,” you say, “that was a long time ago.” Yes, I know it was, but it is still a crack. And there is the black mark of your thumb just underneath there. Why, man, the vase is already broken—and you cannot go to Heaven by your good works when you have none! No, you have broken all God's Commandments. Read the 20th Chapter of Exodus—read it through and see if there is a single Commandment which you have not violated! And I think you will soon find that from the first to the very last, you will be obliged to cry, “I have sinned, O Lord, and am condemned in this thing!” You have already broken the Law of God.

But then you will tell me that you have not broken it in public and that you cultivate an outward respect for it. Yes, but what does it matter if inwardly the heart is wrong? Even if a man could keep the outward letter of the Law without flaw or mistake, yet, inasmuch as by reason of the spirituality of the Law it is utterly impossible that any of the fallen race of Adam can keep it. No man can be saved by it!

I heard a story the other day which illustrates the way in which people make a distinction between inward and outward sin. A certain Sunday school superintendent happened to hear a girl at the end of the school crying very bitterly after the other scholars had gone. He went to her and asked her what she was crying about and she said, “The lady superintendent has kept me and has been talking to me about my dress. She says I ought not to dress so fine. I pay for it, Sir, and I have a right to wear it.” The lady was called and after some little conversation with the superintendent, who was wise and prudent, the girl was sent home. Now the lady herself was noted for the fineness of her dress. She was most elaborately dressed at all times so, after the girl was gone, our friend put this question to her, “Miss So-and-So, you will excuse me, but did it never suggest itself to you that your own dress is rather fine?” “Yes,” she said, “but then, that girl has flowers in her bonnet.” “Well,” he said, “excuse me”—and he looked at her—“I think you have flowers in yours.” “Ah, yes,” she replied, “but do you not see, mine are inside my bonnet and hers are outside?” Now, this is just how some people speak about sin. You condemn a man because he is such a sinner—you would

not associate with such a great sinner! If you would but look at yourselves, you would see that you are as great a sinner as he is, only here is the difference—you have the blotches of character *inside* and he has them *outside*! In truth, sometimes, the outside sinner is the less discreditable of the two. Do you really think that God makes such vain and empty distinctions as this? No, verily. If sin is in you or on you, whether it is inward or outward sin, it destroys you! And since you cannot keep the Law in your inward parts, why go about to strain and break yourselves with impossibilities?

This is *not* the way to Heaven. Since Adam fell, no man has ever passed through this gate into everlasting life. Besides, even supposing that the past were blotted out, you cannot keep the Law of God in the future, for what is your nature? It is such a base one that it is sure to violate the Law. You have heard of the women who were ordered to fill a large vessel with water and were told to bring the water in buckets that were full of holes. This is just your toil—you have to fill the tremendous ocean of the Law and your buckets are full of holes! Your nature, mend it all you may, and repair it as you will, is still full of holes and your pretended goodness will ooze out drop by drop and, more than that, your labors shall be like water spilt upon the ground which cannot be gathered up. O Sirs! I pray you, do not seek to enter Heaven by the works of the Law, for thus says the Spirit, “By the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified.”

There is another guide, however, that is quite as popular, or rather more so. He calls himself *Sincere Obedience*. This is how he puts it—“Well, if I cannot keep the whole of the Law, yet I will trust to the mercy of God to make up for the rest! I have no doubt that what I do may go some considerable way and then the Lord Jesus Christ will make up the weight. I may be a little deficient, perhaps an ounce or two, but then the Atonement will come in and so the scale will be turned in my favor.” Ah, and do you think that Jesus Christ will ever yoke Himself with you to work out your salvation? “I have trod the winepress *alone*; and of the people there was none with Me.” This is the triumphant shout of the Warrior as He comes back from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah and do you think that after that peerless speech, your puny voice will be heard saying, “But I was there! I did my part and my portion”? No, verily, you sin in indulging the *thought*—and you do but doubly curse yourself in imagining that Christ will ever do part of the work and will allow you to be His helper! Like the work of Creation, so is that of Salvation—of the Lord alone—from the beginning to the end it is not *of* man, neither *by* man.

There is another error, too, which is popular in certain quarters, and that is, *salvation by ceremonies*. We have it in the Catholic Church this very day. Certain hocus-pocuses pronounced by the priest and the thing is done. We have a similar sleight of hand, too, in that which is next door to the Church of Rome—the Puseyite community in our own land. We are nothing! We are not regularly ordained! We are laymen. We have no right to preach and so forth. But they—the immediate descendants of the

Apostles—they are *the* men—one touch of their finger, one mark of the cross and an heir of wrath becomes instantaneously “a member of Christ, a child of God and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven.” Tis true, the child may afterwards come to be hanged, but we are told that we ought unfeignedly and devoutly to believe that it was, in holy sprinkling, then and there, made a part of the body of Christ! Do you believe it? Englishmen, do you believe it? Has the echo of Wycliffe’s voice so died out that these base-born hirelings of Rome are to come back and usurp dominion over your consciences? Sons of the Covenanters, descendants of the glorious Puritans, will you ever tolerate this—worse than Romanism—this disguised Popery which endeavors to enter by stealth into your church? No, verily, let it be accursed! As said the Apostle, so say we! And from Gerizim to Ebal let all Israel say, “Amen!”

Oliver Cromwell once walked into the House of Commons while he was yet Mr. Cromwell, the member for Huntington and, putting down his hat, he said, “I have just come from St. Paul’s Cross, and I have heard a man there preach flat Popery.” Indeed, if Mr. Cromwell were here now, he might go into many of our churches and say, “I heard a man there preach flat Popery.” But I do trust, dear Friends, that the honest protest of God’s ministers and the earnest zeal of those blessed men of God who are in the Established Church—I mean the Evangelical clergy—will still be able to keep down this very popular delusion! You might as well hope to be saved by the mumblings of a witch as by the doings of a priest! You might as well hope to enter Heaven by blasphemies as by a priest mumbling over certain words which he thinks to have virtue in them! God, even our God, has denounced again and again those who delight in these errors and who keep back the blood of Jesus and the power and merit of His righteousness! Do not, I pray you, any of you think that this is the way to Heaven, for it is not! “Jesus said unto him, I am the way.”

I scarcely need to mention any more of these old roads, for each man seems to have one for himself. One man is subscribing so many pounds to charity, so it is well with him. Another intends to build a row of almshouses, so it is well with him. Another was always of a very respectable family and hopes he shall not be sent with common folks down to Hell and so, with one thing and another, all men have some sort of refuge! But I say to you again, if you have any refuge but that which is set forth in the text, it is a refuge of lies and the hail shall sweep it away! May God sweep it away tonight and leave you bare and without any shelter, that you may be led to accept Christ as the way, the only way to Heaven!

Understand us, then. We may seem intolerant. We may seem to speak very harshly, but it is as much as our soul is worth to have any mistake here. There is no way to Heaven but one! That one way is Christ and if you walk in it, you must simply, wholly and *only* trust in what Jesus Christ did on the Cross and what He does today in His intercession in Heaven. And he that comes not in by this door shall never come in at all! He that will not bend his back to this yoke shall not be accepted of God. Heaven has but this one gate and if you will not enter this, there remains

nothing for you but “a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation.”

II. We have now to notice THE PERSONALITY OF THE TEXT—“*I am the way.*”

We will suppose again that we have lost our way and we meet a man and ask him which is the way. He says, “I am the way.” What does he mean? If he had said, “I am the guide,” I could understand that, but he says he is the way! Suppose he has a horse and carriage and I ask him the way and he says, “I am the way”? No, you are the conveyance along the way, not the way. I cannot comprehend how you can be the way. But I will suppose that I am in a tract of country, something like that which is left bare by the receding tide at the mouth of the Solway Firth. Young men and children sometimes go far out on those sands and the tide may suddenly return before they are well aware of it—and so they may be left to drown. We are two children playing on the sands and suddenly we perceive that the sea has shut us in all round and there is no possibility for us to get to land. But here comes a man on a noble horse and as we cry to him, “Sir, which is the way of escape?” he stoops down from his horse, steadily lifts us up, and then says, “My children, I am the way.” Now here we can perfectly understand it because he does the work so fully, so wholly, and so entirely himself that it becomes common sense for him to say, “I am the way of escape for you.” Or put it in another way. There is a fire yonder. There is a child up at the window and he enquires the way of escape. A strong man lifts up his arms—all he wants the child to do is just drop down and let him catch him, so he answers, “I am the way, my child! If you would be delivered from the burning house, I am the way of deliverance.”

You see, if He only *showed us the way* in which we should go, Christ could not say, “I am the way.” But when He does it all from first to last, when He takes it altogether out of our hands and makes it His own business, from the Alpha to the Omega, then it becomes no straining of human speech for the Master to say, “I am the way.” Let us put it plainly. You are in debt to God, Sinner. You say, “How can I pay Him? Can I lie in the flames of Hell? If I do, even if I should abide with eternal burnings, I cannot pay the debt—I must lie there forever.” Christ replies, “I am the way,” and He speaks the truth because He is the Payer and the Payment. He, in your place, Sinner—if you now believe on Christ—He, in your place, took all your guilt and paid all your debts, even to the utmost farthing! If you are a Believer, your discharge is signed and sealed, for there is nothing due from you to God but faithfulness and love.

But you tell me that you owe to God perfect obedience. You do—and Christ has perfectly obeyed and He tells you, therefore, “I am the way.” He has kept the Law, magnified it and made it honorable. And what you have to do is to take the work that He has finished and you shall find Him to be the way. Do you want to be a child of God tonight? Christ says, “I am the way.” Be one with Christ and then, as Christ is God’s Son, you will be God’s child, too! Would you have peace with God? Trust Christ tonight. Put your soul in Christ’s hands—He is our Peace and so

will He be the way to peace for you. Would you, in fine, be saved tonight? O my dear Hearers, are there not some among you who would tonight be saved? Then Jesus says, "I am the way," not merely the Savior, but the Salvation! Trust Christ and you have salvation, for Christ says, "I am your salvation." Take Him and in taking Him, you have the blood that washes, the robe that clothes, the medicine that heals, the jewels that decorate—you have the life that shall persevere and the crown that shall adorn! Christ is All-in-All! All you have to do is trust Christ and, trusting Him, you shall find Him to be the way from the beginning, even to the end!

III. But I must close by urging you to accept the counsel here implied. "I am the way." Not merely, "I *was* the way for the thief on the cross," but, "I *am* the way for you tonight." Not, "I *will be* the way when you feel your need more, and when you have worked yourself into a better state," but, "I am, Sinner, the way right now. I am the way for you just as you are—to all that you need, I am the way." We sometimes see railways approaching towns, but they do not bring them right into the heart of the place. And then you must take a cab or an omnibus to finish the journey. But this "way" runs right from the heart of manhood's depravity into the very center of Glory and there is no need to take anything to complete the road. You recollect what good Richard Weaver said on that platform when he was illustrating the fact of Christ saving sinners and saving them now? He told us a story of his friend in Dublin who took him a first class ticket for Liverpool, as he said, "All the way through," and you will remember how he illustrated this by saying that when he came to Christ, he put his trust in Him and had a first-class ticket to Heaven all the way through. "I did not get out to get a new ticket," he said, "there was no fear that my ticket would be exhausted half-way, for it was a ticket all the way through. I paid nothing," said Richard, "but that didn't matter—my ticket was enough. The guards came and looked in and said, 'Show your tickets, Gentlemen.' They didn't say, 'Show yourselves,' but, 'Show your tickets,' and they didn't come to the door and say, 'Now, Mr. Weaver, you have no business in that class carriage. You are only a poor man. You must come out. You are not dressed smartly enough.' No, as soon as they saw my ticket, the ticket all the way through, that was enough! And so"—well said that man of God—"when the devil comes to me and says, 'Richard Weaver, how do you hope to get to Heaven?' I show him the ticket. He says, 'Look at yourself.' No, I say, that is just what I am not going to do! I look at my ticket. My doubts and fears say, Look at what you are. Ah, never mind what I am—I look to what Christ gave me and which He bought and paid for Himself—that ticket of faith which will surely carry me all the way through."

That is about the end of the journey, you see. The ticket will take you to the end. Christ is the way to the end, too, but I want, tonight, to show you that He is the way to your end as well as to God's end! Christ has run the railroad right into Heaven, but does it run from where I am? Because, if not, if there is a space between me and the place where that railway stops, how am I to get there? I cannot have the cab of Morality,

for the axle is broken. I shall not get up into the great omnibus of Ceremonies, for the driver has lost his badge and I am sure there will be mischief come of that. How, then, am I to get there? I cannot get there at all unless the road comes right here to where I am. Well, glory be to God, it does come to just where you are tonight, Sinner! There needs no addition of yours—no preparing for Christ—no meeting Jesus Christ half-way—no cleaning yourselves to let Him give you the finishing touch—no mending your garments, that He may afterwards make them superfine—no, but, just as you are, Christ says, “I am the way.”

But you say, “Lord, what would You have me to do?” “Do?” He says. “Do? Nothing but believe on Me—trust Me—trust Me now.” Did I hear one up in those boxes in the top gallery say, “When I get home tonight, I’ll pray”? I hope you will, but that is not the Gospel. The Gospel is, trust Jesus Christ now! Christ is the way NOW—not only from your chamber to Heaven, but from this place, from the very spot where you now are, to Heaven! I say again, dear Brothers and Sisters, that I abhor from my very heart that new kind of legality which is preached by some ministers who will have it that we must not tell the sinner to believe on Christ *now*, but that he must undergo a preparatory process of conviction and the like. This is Popery back again, for it has the very essence of Popery within it. Instead of that, I lift up my Master’s Cross before the dying and the dead—before the blind, the ruined and the filthy, and say—TRUST JESUS CHRIST AND YOU ARE SAVED!

“But I have many sins.” He had many drops of blood! “But I am a great sinner.” He is a great Savior! “But I am so black.” His blood is so efficacious that it can make you as white as snow! “But I am so old.” Yes, but He can make you to be born-again! “But I have rejected Him so often.” He will not reject you! “But I am the last person in the world to be saved.” Then that is where Christ begins—he always begins at the last man! “But, I cannot believe that.” Cannot believe what? What did I ask you to believe? “I cannot believe.” Cannot believe what? I say again! My Master is the Lord from Heaven that cannot lie and you tell me you cannot believe Him? My Master never lied to angel or to men and He cannot, for He is Truth itself! And this is what He says, that whoever among you will trust Him tonight, He will save you! And if you say you cannot believe Him, you make God a liar because you believe not on His Son Jesus Christ!

I charge you, by the Day of Judgment and by the flaming world, say not that the God who made you will lie to you! Sinner, there shall never be found in Hell a spirit that can say, “I trusted Christ and was deceived. I rested on the Cross and its rotten timbers creaked and failed me. I looked to the blood of Jesus and it could not cleanse me. I cried to Heaven, but Heaven would not hear. I took Jesus in my arms to be my Mediator and yet I was driven from the gate of mercy. There was no pity for me.” Never, never shall there be such a case! I would to God—I was about to say that I were not preaching to depraved men and yet to whom else should we go—because this is the sorrowful reflection, that so many of you will turn on your heels and say, “There is nothing in it.”

But who are those who will look to Christ? Why, those whom God has chosen! In whom the Spirit, as the result of Divine Election, will effectually work and who shall be the real trophies of the Redeemer's passion! But, mark you, you have all heard the Gospel tonight—and when you and I meet face to face while the trumpet of judgment is ringing in every human ear—when this solid earth shall shake, when the Heavens shall bow and the stars shall pale their feeble light—I will bear this witness, that I told you plainly the way of salvation! And in that great day I shall be able to say to each one of you, “If you perish, your blood lies not at my door.” Is there one who has not understood me? Is there one who still thinks that he is shut out and that he cannot be saved? To you, Sir, yes, to you, I add this extra word, “He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him!” And though you are black with robbery, or red with blood, or stained with lust up to your elbows, He is able still to save! And trusting Him—with all your heart trusting Him—you shall find that He will surely bring you to the place where He shall see you with delight, having washed you in His blood!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ROMANS 6.**

Verse 1. *What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that Grace may abound?* This seems to be a very plausible temptation. It is one which frequently came in the Apostle's way and, therefore, he very often had to denounce it. It is one of the vilest suggestions of Satan that could possibly come to men.

2. *God forbid! How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?* The whole spirit of the Gospel is opposed to the idea of sinning because God is gracious. It is a horrible Satanic suggestion—“As pardon can be so easily obtained from God, let us sin the more against Him.” The bare suggestion is utterly degrading and diabolical.

3. *Know you not that as many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death?* Was not that the real meaning of our Baptism? Had it any meaning whatever unless we were really dead with Christ and therefore were buried with Him?

4. *Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even as we also should walk in newness of life.* There is a parallel between Christ and the true Christian. There is a likeness between the Head of the Church and the members of His mystical body. Christ died and was buried—and His people are reckoned as dead and buried in Him.

5-7. *For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin.* That is, he that died to sin when Christ died is free from sin's condemning power.

8-10. *Now if we are dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him: knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dies no more, death has no more dominion over Him. For in that He died, He died unto sin once: but in that He lives, He lives unto God.* In the next verse, the parallel between Christ and Christians comes up again. As Christ died and was buried, and rose from the dead and now lives to die no more, so is it with us who believe in Him and are in Him by a vital union. In Him we died and in Him we rose, and in Him we now live in newness of life.

11-13. *Likewise reckon you also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield you your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.* “Your members”—that is, the various parts of your body and the faculties of your mind are to be yielded up to God “as instruments of righteousness.”

14. *For sin shall not have dominion over you: for you are not under the Law, but under Grace.* While you were under the Law and simply heard it command you to do your duty, the command seemed to awaken all the hostility of your nature so that you remained under the dominion of sin. But now no longer does the Law speak to you as it did before. You are not now under the Law, but another principle governs you. The Grace, the favor, the love which God has shown to you in Christ Jesus, appeals to your heart and you cheerfully yield to it the obedience which, when the Law demanded it, your unregenerate spirit refused to render!

15. *What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the Law, but under Grace? God forbid!* Again the Apostle is shocked at such a suggestion. There are some who have denied that the Law was binding upon them in any sense and who, therefore, have claimed liberty to sin. But they can find no footing anywhere within the sacred enclosure of God’s Word.

16. *Know you not that to whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants you are to whom you obey? Whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?* If, then, a man lives a life of sin, he proves that he is the servant of sin, for he has obeyed its commands! And let that man know assuredly that he has nothing to do with Christ while he is living in sin! But if a man lives in obedience to Christ and seeks after righteousness and true holiness, that man is evidently the servant of righteousness and so the servant of God.

17. *But God be thanked, that you were the servants of sin, but you have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered to you.* Or, as the marginal reading renders it, in harmony with the original, “whereto you were delivered,” for the doctrine was the mold and you were the metal, reduced to a molten condition, and then poured into the mold to take the shape of Gospel Truth. God be thanked for this—that though you did formerly serve sin, you now serve it no longer.

18, 19. *Being then made free from sin, you became the servant of righteousness. I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of*

your flesh: for as you have yielded your members, servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members, servant to righteousness unto holiness. How powerfully this plea ought to sound with any whose former life was full of positive, plain uncleanness in the sight of God! And how earnestly should the redeemed spirit cry to God to preserve the body pure and chaste before Him!

20. *For when you were the servants of sin, you were free from righteousness.* You did not then trouble yourselves about that matter at all—you left the things of God and piety alone.

21. *What fruit had you then in these things whereof you are now ashamed? For the end of these things is death.* You had such pleasure as sin could give you, but was it worth having? You derived some profit, perhaps, from evil pursuits, but did the profit ever make up for the loss which you thereby sustained? O you who have had experience of sin to the full, has it, after all, turned out to be the fair and lovely thing that it once seemed to be? No, the serpent had azure scales, but its fangs have poured poison into your blood! It came to you with all manner of deceivableness of unrighteousness, like Jezebel with her painted face, but it has worked nothing for you but sorrow and suffering—and it will work your eternal ruin unless God, in His great mercy, shall prevent it.

22. *But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, you have your fruit unto holiness, and in the end, everlasting life.* Oh, what wondrous changes the Grace of God works! “*But now.*” Paul must have rejoiced to write those two words. He had dwelt upon what men were before the Lord began to deal with them in mercy, “*but now*” he could say, “*being made free from sin, and become servants to God, you have your fruit unto holiness, and in the end everlasting life.*”

23. *For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

THE ONLY ROAD

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***“Jesus said to Him, I am the way, the truth, and the life;
no man comes to the Father but by Me.”***
John 14:6.

JESUS had been speaking about the Father, about His going to the Father, about the Father's house and about going there. And He was asked by Thomas this question, “We know not where You are going, and how can we know the way?” We are to understand this verse as being an answer to that question. He tells him where He was going, namely, to the Father, and also the way to the Father, namely, by Himself.

Now this verse has been read and read, too, with a great deal of profit, without always being read correctly. For instance, suppose I were to divide my sermon into three parts, tonight, and show that, first, Christ is the way? Secondly, that He is the truth? And thirdly, that He is the life? I do not think I should be able to give you the meaning of the text, for you will observe that He is not speaking about three things—He does not say, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life”—He is speaking about only one thing, namely, that He is the way, and then the two words, truth and the life, are put in to explain what He means by the *way*. So I think.

Luther, taking the first meaning and putting in an, “and,” for it is necessary to put one in to make it out, says Christ is the way, that is, through Him men begin to be Christians. Secondly, He is the truth, that is, through Him they are instructed further in the faith. Thirdly, He is the life, that is, through Him they enter into eternal blessedness in the life to come.

Now it is very true, but it is not the Truth of God taught here—at least, we think not, certainly if we follow the strict analogy of the language. Augustine read the passage this way, “I am the way, the true way and the living way.” But that is not quite it. There is truth in that and it is more correct than Luther's reading—but we cannot see the sense without some considerable violation of the language. It is true, but not the Truth of God taught here.

What we want to do is not only to preach about the Truth of God, but the Truth of God that is in our text. It appears to us that *this* was our

Lord's meaning—"I am the way to God." That is the great teaching—"No man comes to the Father but by Me and I am the way in this respect—that no man can come to know the truth with regard to the Father except He knows Me as the truth. And, secondly, no man can possess the life by which He comes to the Father except He receives Me as the life. I am the way to the Father in a double sense—of being the truth which teaches men about the Father and being the life which enables men to come to the Father and have practical communion."

Believing that to be the meaning of the text, we will try and work it out. First, then, Christ is the way to the Father as He is the truth. Secondly, He is the way to the Father as He is the life. And, thirdly, taking the general statement with which the verse closes, He is altogether and in all respects the *only* way to the Father—"No man comes to the Father, but by Me."

To begin, then—**I. CHRIST IS THE WAY TO THE FATHER SO FAR AS HE IS THE TRUTH.** He is so in this respect—nobody knows the Father until, first of all, He knows Jesus Christ. God the Father is to be seen in Nature. He has painted every flower and He it is that hangs every blade of grass with the glistening pearl of dew. But so dim are our eyes and, after all, so little of the more spiritual parts of His Character could God reveal in mere materialism, that man does not behold God there. We are often told that we are to go from Nature up to Nature's God—just about as easy to go from the higher pinnacle of the Alps to the stars! The step is too long for human nature. Men have never taken it. Those men of old who ransacked Nature—the old philosophers and teachers of the heathen—did *not* discover God. "The world, by wisdom, knew not God."

Oh, what a maze of deities they had—what strange gods! What strange characters they gave to God! Our very children—in their classical learning in schools, get their minds polluted by reading the deeds of beings that were called gods among the heathens. If a man does not form the same false conception of God the ancient heathen did, it is partly to be accounted for by the almost unconscious effect of Christianity upon men's minds! Men cannot form such ideals of God living in England as they could, living in Greece, before the Gospel had been preached there—yet every idea of God that is not drawn by men from Revelation and is not brought to men through Jesus Christ, the Mediator, is sure to be a false one, a lopsided one—an ideal of God in which some one virtue preponderates to the destruction of others. It is not God at all! It is a gross caricature of God. It is, in fact, no more God that men think out by reason than the golden calf was God which came out of the fire when Aaron had thrust gold into it. They did not know God.

You have only to take up the works of any of our great original thinkers who scorn to call themselves Christians, and though you will see that Christianity has molded their thought, you will only see truth so far as it has done that, unconsciously, to themselves. But where you get their real thoughts and reasonings, you will find that they have not come to the Father because they have neglected the great Truth of God which is in Christ, which is the way to the great Truths which are in God the Father.

Now while this is true with regard to the Person of the Father, Himself, let me remind you, in the next place, that it is true with regard to *everything* about the Father. Now there is one doctrine in Scripture which is peculiar to the Father. It is the doctrine of Election. The Father has chosen us to be His people. Everywhere in Scripture it is put down as the work of the First Person of the blessed Trinity—to choose a people to Himself that shall show forth His praise. Now there are many persons who want to get at that doctrine. I have known many unconverted people want to understand it. I frequently get letters from persons troubled about it. They say that they should feel peace if they could understand that doctrine.

But, beloved Friends, if any such are here tonight, I will speak to them. You cannot get to Election—you cannot get to the Father by a direct road from where you are. Just read that signpost. “No man comes to the Father but by Christ.” If, then, you want to understand election, begin with Redemption! You will never understand the eternal choice till you begin at the Cross. Begin with this, “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.” Do not begin at the 9th of Romans. You had much better begin at the 3rd of John, “Like as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

You will be worrying yourself, bothering your poor head and tormenting your poor heart for many years if you try to get to the Father first! Your business is to take God’s Law and rule—and go to the Son upon the Cross, first—and then to the Father upon His Throne. It would be a strange thing if our children would insist upon going to the University before they went to grammar school. They would never learn anything in that way because the studies of the University are too severe for them until, first of all, they have gone to preparatory schools. It were an odd thing, indeed, if every man that took down his Bible, should always begin it backwards and read Revelation first—and if every man read the Lord’s Prayer beginning at, “Amen,” and went backward to, “Our Father!”

Yet some minds will persist in this. There is a charm to them about the mystery of Sovereignty and Election, and they must begin with that. Little

children, why must you first eat strong meat? Here is milk for you—be satisfied with your milk! It will strengthen you. You shall have the strong meat, by-and-bye, when, by reason of use, your senses have been exercised! Listen to Christ's tender words, "No man comes to the Father but by Me." There is no way to Election except through Redemption.

And now, another illustration of the same Truth of God. Even the Fatherhood of God is known only in Christ. This is what is mainly intended in this verse. It is not known as a Truth of God, till, first of all, we know the Truth concerning Christ. And the Truth concerning Jesus, the First-Born and elder Brother, is the way to learn the truth concerning the entire family. What a muddle there is made in this world about the Fatherhood of God. According to some, we are, all of us, all alike His children and He must be, indeed, a strange Father if His dealings with the sons of men are to be considered as the dealings of a Father.

Indeed, we can very well understand why some have said, "How can we account for this pit of Hell?" Would a father put his children there? Certainly he would not. And if God is a Father to all mankind, alike, and in the same sense, then it would be utterly unaccountable that there should be any eternal destruction from the Presence of the Lord. But this fatherhood is a fiction, a sheer and clear fiction—an invention of modern times! There is another fatherhood in which God is the Father of the twice-born, the Father of the *regenerate*. The God and Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and, next of all, those who are in Jesus Christ. And when you come to know Christ as the Son—and yourself as one with Him—then you begin to know what the Fatherhood of God means in its specialty to the elect, in its truth, in its depth and in its blessed outflow—that, being a Father, He chastens us, He loves us, feeds us, guides us, trains us, educates us and provides for us an inheritance which none shall ever be able to take from us!

I venture to say it here, again, that no man knows anything in truth about the Fatherhood of God till he knows something about union with Christ—his own sonship by virtue of his brotherhood with Jesus. No man comes to the Father but through the Son!

And now I shall take another point of the same great Truth of God. It is commonly thought that anybody can understand the mercy of God—at any rate, we can get to it. But, Beloved, an infinite deal of mischief has been created in this world by a mistaken notion about mercy with regard to God—that God is not very particular about our sins, that He does not judge us too severely, that He knows we are tempted a great deal—that we have strong passions and, therefore, He winks at it all and, notwithstanding that we are not what we ought to be, yet He will graciously overlook it and accept us. That is the common notion of God's mercy, but there is

nothing whatever in Holy Scripture to support it—there is no grain of evidence that such mercy as that is in the heart of God at all!

The Lord is angry with the wicked every day! He *hates* sin, even a single sin! He will by *no means* spare the wicked. He neither closes His eyes against sin, nor will He stay His hand from the punishment of sin. No man comes to the Father's mercy till He has learnt Christ! But when you come to Jesus Christ—and you understand that God took His Son from His bosom and put Him to *death* in our place that He might have mercy upon us without the violation of His justice—when we see how He made Christ to be our Substitute, in order that He might freely and fully forgive—then we see what kind of mercy God's mercy is! It is not mercy to the *sin*—He punished that—it is mercy to the *sinner*! It is not mercy that thinks little of sin, for He put His Son to death when sin was laid upon Him! It is not mercy that winks at sin and treats it as though it were a trifle, for He made His Son cry out, “Why have You forsaken Me?” It is a kind of mercy that is consistent with the fiercest wrath against every particle of iniquity! The Lord is a consuming fire and will by no means spare the guilty! Every transgression shall have its recompense of reward.

But yet He is a “God merciful and gracious, passing by transgression, iniquity, and sin,” and this you can only know the meaning of when you know Christ as the Truth of God that conducts you to the great Truth of the mercy of God! Equally, the same remark might be made upon God's justice, but I shall not tarry upon that. I shall rather close these observations upon this first head by saying that we do not truly know the power and dominion of God till we, first of all, know Christ. We may know God to be Omnipotent. We may understand that He does as He wills, but that Truth, in its real force, never breaks upon the soul till it shines through the Mediator! I am alarmed to think of God's greatness. I am afraid when I think of His supremacy. I know that He can do as He wills and yet I rebel! I know that He can punish me, that He can crush me—and I tremble in His Presence—but I feel no love to Him until I see His love to me in the Person of His dear Son.

And then, in a moment, I bless Him, for He is Omnipotent, and I can see His Omnipotence on all sides. I bless Him that He is the King! Let the children of Zion be joyful in the King. I thank Him that He does as He wills. I rejoice that He does, for He only wills to do that which is for the good of His own chosen ones. You cannot love God in any one of His attributes, or know Him aright and truly unless it is through first knowing Jesus Christ!

Beloved, then let me say to you, gathering all up in one—you will do serious mischief to yourselves if you study any Truth concerning God apart from Jesus Christ. Luther was quite right when he said, “I will have noth-

ing to do with an absolute god. I will not try to study him as god. I know that I cannot look at the sun; I must have a smoked glass to look through—I must have the Person of the God-Man to take away the blinding Glory of the invisible God—invisible because too bright for my eyes to gaze upon. You must have God in Christ. I will not try to study anything else.”

Our preaching, if we do not preach Christ, is useless! We may preach what we like about the Father, what we like about portions of Scripture—but if there is no Christ, there will be no good come of it. Somebody once said, “Why is it that the Methodists and others get people to hear them and they have conversions, but you do not find crowds go to hear Unitarians, neither do you hear of conversions?” And somebody said, “There is no blood in the Unitarian religion and the blood is the very life of it.” Leave out the atoning Sacrifice and you have left out the marrow from the bones, and the bones from the body! The fabric becomes soft, weak, powerless, yes, you have left out the very soul of the Gospel if you leave out Christ, the Mediator, Christ, the Surety, Christ, the Atonement, Christ suffering in our place! As our preaching ought to be full of Christ, so let your studies of Scripture be!

Read everything in the light of Christ! Calvinism I believe in, but not Calvinism without Christ—it becomes fatalism then. I am thankful to hear the practical preacher who preaches the precepts, but I do not believe in his preaching without Christ. He will get into legal bondage as sure as he is a man. The one thing that will keep preaching alive is to keep Christ in it—Christ at the top, Christ at the bottom, Christ in the middle and Christ all the way through! Many a man’s theology is a very gold pot of ointment, but there is a nasty fly in it that will make it stink—and there is *nothing* that will get the stinking fly out of the ointment but Christ—He keeps our theology sweet and pure. We do not know Christ, Himself, nor anything about Him to any saving and practical purpose, except in that way. The Truth of God that is in Christ is the way by which we get to the Truth concerning God.

And now we shall pass on to the second point.

II. CHRIST IS THE WAY TO THE FATHER AS HE IS THE LIFE. We get life through Him—then we come to God. But we are dead till we get Christ—and God is not the God of the dead, but of the living! We are dead, I say, till we get Christ and the place of the dead is on the earth—not in Heaven. Bury the dead out of my sight, corruption cannot inherit the Kingdom of God! Now observe we never come to God till first we get life enough in Christ to have Him as a hope of pardon. I never dared think of coming to God till, first of all, I saw that He had laid help upon One that is mighty, even upon Christ Jesus. When I understood that the only-

begotten Son of God became Man for the sinner's sake and suffered in the sinner's place, then I thought, "There is hope for me."

And the next thought I had was, "I will arise and go unto my Father, and I will confess my sin, hoping that He will have mercy upon me." Is there one here that wants to be reconciled to God? Soul, your only hope of ever being reconciled to Him is on the Cross—it is through Jesus—and only through Jesus, that you can have even half a hope that is worth having of ever being the friend of God. Oh, look there! Go to His bleeding wounds to get life and you will then begin to get to God!

But it was later when that hope grew into possession and into faith—it was then that we came to God by Christ. Many of you remember when you not only had a hope of being pardoned, but knew you were! Perhaps you remember the very day when all the load of your sin was rolled off your shoulders and you felt light as air, though, before, your heart had been heavy as lead. You remember that time. Did you not, at that moment, look at God and bless Him with all your heart? Did you not feel you loved Him because He blotted out your sin? Did you not feel that day that you could talk to Him, that you could praise Him, that you could magnify Him, that you could live for Him and die for Him? I know I did! I knew I had come to God because in Christ I had the full assurance that my transgressions were forgiven me! The life that gives the assurance of pardon is the life which is the way by which we come to God. Since then, Beloved—since we have come to God through complete pardon, we have often come to Him in prayer. But I will ask you, Did you ever get to the Father in prayer except through the Son? Have you ever tried to pray and forgotten Christ? If you have, it has been a dead failure!

Remember the Primitive Methodist Prayer Meeting, where the brother got hampered in prayer and could not go on? Somebody in the meeting cried out, "Plead the blood, Brother! Plead the blood!" Yes, and then the man began to pray again! You have always found it so, I know—that you could not pray till you got to pleading the blood. I have many a time been with God in prayer, asking for a great blessing—and I have felt that I had not got it till I could come to such a text as this, "Do it, for You have promised it. Do it, for You will glorify Your Son—do it for His sake, He deserves it! You have promised that He shall have the full reward for His soul's travail—do it for His sake."

Then I have felt I have got it, for I had got the Father because I had pleaded the Son. The Son's life within my soul had helped me to plead His precious merit and the life that showed itself in the breath of prayer enabled me to get to God the Father. You must have felt this, Believers—you must have felt this, I know. It is just the same when coming to God in praise. It is easy enough to sing a Psalm, pleasant enough to get a hymn

and hum it over to yourself, alone, but for real worship of God and thorough devout praise of Him, you will never do it unless you have been, first, to the foot of the Cross! There is no music that is sweet to God unless Christ tunes the harp. If there is no blood on the harp, there will be no music such as God can accept. When the Lord touches the tongue, then it praises Him aright—but only if He touches it with a drop of Jesus' blood—nothing else! “Oh, let the redeemed of the Lord say so,” says the Psalmist—“let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom He has redeemed out of the hands of the enemy”—as if He felt that nobody could praise God so well as those that had tasted of the redemption that was by Christ Jesus. The way for every chorister to come unto God with a sincere thank offering in to come *via Crucis*—by the way of the Cross! Only in that way can He be accepted with His thank offering.

But, Beloved, I trust we know what it is to come to God as a matter of lifelong experience. It ought not to be by fits and starts that we come to the Father, but, like Enoch, we are to walk with God! It should be habitual with us, to commune with the Most High. But, mark you, it can never be so unless it is habitual with us to rest upon the finished work of Christ. Lose your sense of acceptance in the Beloved and you will lose communion with God! Get away from the foot of the Cross and you have got away from the foot of that ladder, the top of which reaches to Heaven. There is no other ladder but Christ, Himself, in His Atonement. Get away from that and you have taken away the bridge by which you can get to God at all! Fellowship with God must come through faith in Christ! The meeting place under the Law is the meeting place under the Gospel.

Now, under the Law, the only meeting place was the Mercy Seat, the propitiatory that covered the Law, that golden slab covered the Law on stone. There God met with His people. And Jesus Christ covers God's Law completely! Our sins are not seen—His righteousness, His propitiation—that is seen and God will meet us there! But He will meet us nowhere else! We can only come, then, to communion with the Father by reckoning and resting upon the mediatorial work of the Son. And assuredly, at the last, we shall want to come to the Father through Christ when the veil that now separates us from the invisible world shall begin to be torn in two. We shall long to be in the many mansions and to hear our Father's welcome, but we shall have to die with Jesus' name upon our lips in order to get there! We shall have to rise, too—our spirit will have to mount with Jesus! He must give it the wing and when our body rises, it must be in the image of Jesus and in the life of Jesus, otherwise we cannot come to the Father for the Glory entrance or the Grace entrance.

It is because Christ is the life that we are able to come. We have no way, whatever, and no possibility of ever discovering a way by which, in

our life, we can have fellowship with God—the God of our salvation—except by receiving life through Jesus Christ! Oh, men and women, I trust you desire to be at one with your Maker! I trust you wish to be friends with Him who can crush you as a moth between His fingers! I hope there is a desire within your soul to have Him for a Friend whom nothing can endure to have for an enemy! If, then, you will come to God, there is the gate—that gate with the mark, with the *blood mark*—you must go through there—through the wounds of Jesus!

You get to God's heart only in that way. He has shut every other gate of mercy, if there ever were another open, and this one stands open as the *only one*—but it is open night and day! You must come to God the Father through Jesus Christ the Son, who suffered, died, rose again and sits at the right hand of His Father forever.

Now we shall close our discourse by the third point, but very briefly. The last sentence of the text takes a sort of sweep—a broad sweep. It does not state that Christ is the way because He is the truth, or because He is the life, only, but it says without exception, “No man comes unto the Father but by Me,” by which I understand, first, that—

III. CHRIST IS THE ONLY WAY THAT GOD HAS APPOINTED by which we can come to the Father. The priest tells me that I must get to the Father only through him. He is a liar and there is no other answer necessary but that! We need not enter into such a question to debate with him. I would as soon believe a cow, if it could speak and tell me that I was to come to God by it, as believe that I was to come to God through a sinner like myself! No, God does not come to me in that shape—He has better ways and modes. “There is one God,” says the Scripture, “and one Mediator between God and man, the Man, Christ Jesus.” In that way we believe, but in the way of *priestcraft* we do *not* believe and may God save us from it!

This is the only one, the absolutely solitary way to God, for God never appointed another—that is to say, He has never appointed a way through ceremonies, nor a way through frames of feeling, nor a way through good works. What is the picture of the way to Heaven by good works, Why, it is Mount Sinai all on a blaze, like Etna smoking and heaving like a great volcano! And where are the people that want to get to Heaven by good works? There they are, down in the valley! There is a great ring set round the mountain. Why don't they come up? In the first place, they do not *want* to come up, for the mountain is altogether on a smoke! Even Moses said, “I do exceedingly fear and quake.” In the next place, they *cannot* come up, for there are boundaries set about the mountain—“and if so much as a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart.” You cannot get nearer to God than that on the foot-

ing of works, for Mount Sinai is the symbol of works! Look to the flames that Moses saw, and shrink, and tremble, and despair! You cannot get to God that way!

Calvary is the mountain! Why do you leap high hills? This is the hill that God has chosen—the Calvary of the Cross—the Golgotha of the tremendous Sacrifice! There you *can* get to God—He has appointed that to be the place where you shall meet with Him. Oh, do not try to find another way! Be not so arrogant as to say, “This is *my* way,” but take God’s way and come humbly, now, to Jesus Crucified, and you shall meet with God and find mercy and pardon tonight! It is the only *appointed* way.

Next, it is the only *actual* way. You never did meet the man that got to God except through Jesus Christ. I have known men who talked about worshipping the pure god of Nature. I knew one who never went to a place of worship and when I spoke to him, he said, “I worship God in my own garden.” I said, “Yes, I suppose that is a god made of wood. I think I heard you knocking him down the other morning.” And I believe that is the true worship of Nature. It does not go much beyond that sort of thing and, if you find out those who profess to find God without coming to Jesus Christ, you will find their god is their belly and that they worship pleasure—and they lie in their throat when they talk about coming to God apart from Jesus Christ! They do not come! No one ever did come and no one ever shall come—the majority of them do not *want* to come. He that casts off Christ casts off God with Him, or he that says, “I would come to God, but will not come to Christ,” contradicts himself.

There is, deep down in his very soul, a hatred of God, the very true God, or else there would be no hatred to the Christ of God. But Jesus Christ is the way, the only way and, blessed be God’s name, He is an open way! Whoever desires to come to God the Father, tonight, may come through Jesus Christ! The way to God is open. There are no bolts nor bars, no bogs across the road to keep a sinner out. God’s mercy is as free as the air we breathe to every soul that will take Christ and rest in Jesus Christ. This is the one condition—come to God by Christ—and you may come. Come now! Come with all your sins about you! Come in all your filth, and rags, and leprosy. Come, though the sentence of wrath hovers over you and the black clouds of justice threaten to smite you with the lightning of eternal wrath! You may come now and as you are, tonight, if you will but come through Christ.

We need a Mediator between our souls and God, but we do not need any mediator between our souls and Christ. We need to get ready to come to God, but we need not get ready to come to Christ! You cannot come to God unless you are washed in the blood of Christ and clothed in the righteousness of Christ! But you may come to Christ just as you are—no

need to rid yourselves of one foul blot. Come just as you are, without any good thing, whatever, without even enough goodness in you to be seen with a microscope! Come just as you are, even if you have so much sin that eternity could scarcely hold it! You may come to Christ though you are almost as bad as a devil. Though, in some respects, you are a very devil, yet you may come to God *in* Christ, but not to God *out* of Christ! You must come to Christ, first, and, at the foot of the Cross, look up to the atoning Sacrifice. There is a way to God's heart for you, even you!

And this way is a most suitable one for all here present. You know if there is a ladder, it is no use to anybody if it does not go to the top. If I want to go up to the top of a house—and a ladder goes only half-way—it is of no use to me. If I want to go to God, I need a way that reaches up to God. Now Christ is, Himself, God. He will lead us right up to God through Himself if we get to Him.

Now, a ladder that went to the top would be no good for me if it did not go down to the bottom! Though it reached to the top of the house, yet if it only went half-way down, I could not get there. Christ is a Man just like myself. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was born of a virgin and was a sufferer of human infirmities, even as you are—and died as you will. He lived in suffering, as you may. Oh, then, look—the Ladder has its foot in His Humanity and, again, has its top in His Deity! Climb it! He is a suitable Savior for you!

What kind of Man was Jesus Christ when He was here on earth? He was very holy, but was He very reserved? Was He distant? Did He turn His back when He saw a sinner? Did He get to the other side of the street lest He should touch him and so be defiled with the presence of a publican or a harlot? The Pharisees did that, but not the Master, for this Man received sinners and ate with them! He sat at the same table with them and He was called the friend of publicans and sinners. Oh, Sinner, what a Christ, Christ is! What a suitable Savior for you! Do not think, today, that He is the judge of sinners! Today He is the *friend* of sinners! Do not look at Him, today, as though He were the censurer of sinners, the critic and the cynic against sinners. No, but the *lover* of sinners' souls! Oh Sinner, may His Spirit draw you to come to Him, tonight, in these pews!

Let this silent cry go up, "Jesus, Son of Man and Son of God, bring me to Your Father! Teach me Your Father by teaching me Yourself! Give me life before God by giving me life in You. You are the way—Yourself, in Your own Person. I trust You—be the way for me, for me, for *me*, unworthy though I am! Dear, dear Savior, glorify Your mercy by forgiving my sin, my great sin, and accept my unworthy person through Your infinite compassion, and reconcile me unto God."

Oh, such a prayer as that will be heard! Have you prayed it? It is heard! If you do not feel it is heard, pray it again! Keep on praying it but, above all, look to Christ upon the Cross! Count the purple drops as they distil from His dear wounds! Remember that He was God that died upon that Cross. Sit and look, and look, and look, and look again! Look, I say, and look again—and if peace does not come with looking, keep on looking and you will get peace there—and faith there, and life there! You will not *take* faith to Christ—you will *get* faith *from* Christ! Keep on looking! Keep on looking!

I heard a Brother say the other day that what he saw, he always looked at. And that is a sensible thing to do with a great many things, but, above all, with Christ. If you see Him, keep on looking at Him! It does not merely say, “See Christ,” but, “Look unto Him, look unto Him, and be you saved, all you ends of the earth.” God grant you that gracious life—look, for Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen.

END OF VOLUME 62

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THE WAY

NO. 942

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 24, 1870,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Jesus said unto him, I am the way.”
John 14:6.***

THE most precious things lie in the smallest compass. Diamonds have much value in little space. Those Scriptural sayings which are fullest of meaning are many of them couched in the fewest words. Who shall measure the depth of that sentence, “God is love”? Or that other, “God is light”? Who shall know the lengths and breadths of this declaration, “Christ is all”? How clearly is the whole Gospel condensed into that line, “By Grace are you saved”? There are many more Divine Words of a like character, all short, and as sweet as they are short, precious beyond comparison, and as brief as precious. Our text, with its four words, and those all monosyllables, and none of more than three letters, is among the chief of these Bibles in miniature. “I am the way.”

It were difficult, and it were as wicked as difficult, to be otherwise than simple in preaching such a text as this. May God grant that some of you may be reached by my simple testimony, and led in the way to Heaven. May those who are already in the way be strengthened, comforted, and quickened in it. And may God be glorified and sinners converted—then our hearts shall be exceedingly glad.

I. We shall go at once to the text, and consider, in the first place, HOW JESUS CHRIST IS THE WAY, AND HOW HE COMES TO BE SO. How is He the way? A way supposes two points—from which and to which. Christ is the way from man’s ruin to the Father. Our Lord was speaking of man’s coming to the Father, so we know where the way leads, and we know very well that the way were of no service unless it came to where we are by nature, and that is in the place of ruin and of wrath. Christ is the way that leads from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City—from the ruin of our father Adam right up to the glory of our Father who is in Heaven.

Christ is the way, then, first, from the guilt of sin to the Father. The great difficulty was—How is sin to be put away? Many attempts have been made to remove it, but there is no way of our escaping from the guilt of sin except by Jesus Christ. Some have hoped for pardon by future good conduct, but as we all know, the payment of a *future* debt can by no means discharge a *past* debt. So even the perfect future obedience of man, could he achieve it, could not touch his past sins. Self-righteousness, therefore, even if it could reach perfection, would not be “the way.”

Some hope much from the mercy of God, but the Law knows nothing of clearing the sinner of guilt by a Sovereign act of mercy—that cannot be done. For then God’s Justice would be impugned, His Law would be virtually annulled. He will by no means clear the guilty. Every transgression must have its just recompense of reward so that the absolute mercy of God as such is not the way out of the guilt of sin. That mercy is blocked

up by avenging Justice, and over the face of that star of hope called absolute mercy there passes an eclipsing shadow because God is righteous as well as gracious.

There is no way by which a sinner can escape from the guilt of sin but that which is revealed in Jesus Christ. God has sent forth His Son, His only Son. The Word was made flesh and came under the Law—upon that mysterious Being who combined both Godhead and manhood in one Person, the Lord has laid the iniquity of us all. By imputation the transgressions of His elect have been laid upon their Covenant Head, so that He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bore the sin of many. He voluntarily undertook to be the Substitute and Covenant Surety of His chosen.

And in this way, by the transferring of sin from the sinner to Christ, the sinner ceases to be regarded as a sinner, and his guilt is removed. Here is the way for that sinner to approach the Father. His sin is laid upon Christ, who became the Substitute for all sinners that ever have believed or ever shall believe on Him. The whole mountain mass of the sins of Believers lies not on them any longer, but on Christ. He has taken their transgressions, He has borne their iniquities, their sins are moved from them and laid on Him.

Now listen! The only way in which sin can be taken from any one of us is by this method. It is not imputed unto *us*, it is imputed unto *HIM*. But think not that the sin which was laid upon Christ of old lies upon Christ now. It does not, for the day came when the punishment for all that sin was demanded. The sword of vengeance awoke against human sin, and it would have destroyed all the flock, but the Shepherd came into the place of the flock, and He bore the strokes of the sword. And there upon yonder once accursed, but now forever blessed, tree, the Savior endured the fullness of Divine wrath on account of sin.

Now, where is the sin of His people? He has cast it into the depths of the sea. By bearing its punishment He has caused it no more to exist. It is as though it had never been. It is annihilated, it is gone! If it is searched for, it cannot be found. Jesus Christ, by His taking the sin and then discharging all the liability that was due to God from that sin, has forever finished transgression—mark the word—made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness for His people.

Now, Sinner, if you would get away from your sin, Christ is the way. This is the way by which you can escape from it. I have already told you that your future reformation cannot remove your past sins. Neither can the mercy of God, considered as an attribute by itself, clear you from your sin. But this wonderful deed of love and wisdom, this marvelous transaction that makes Heaven and earth ring with grateful songs when glorified spirits see further into it, and when angelic intellects are able to grasp it—this wondrous transaction can clear you from sin as it has cleared many of us. For we are this day before God justified, so that none can lay anything to our charge.

Sinners we are in ourselves, but not sinners before God's Judgment Seat, for Jesus has made us clean. We are whiter than snow, our sins being removed from us far as the east is from the west by our great atoning Substitute. Here is a way consistent with Divine Justice, a way exactly meeting what you need. Oh, I pray God that while the words are used, "I

am the way," your spirit may say, "Blessed be His name, Jesus shall be *my* way. I will this day believe on Him and thus escape from my guilt."

The text refers to the guilt of sin, but then, "I am the way" is as true concerning the wrath of God on account of sin. You will see at once, and, therefore, I need not use many words about it, that the way to escape from wrath is to escape from the sin which causes the wrath. Remove the cause, you remove the effect. Now, when the sin of God's people was moved from them to Christ, the wrath of God went where the sin went, and it fell upon Christ, until He said, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

When that bitter cup of wrath had been drained to its dregs, it was emptied forever, and not one drop was left for a believing soul to taste. The wrath of God towards the Believer has ceased to be, and at this moment there is no angry thought in God's heart towards a justified person. Whosoever has believed in Christ, his sins were laid on Christ, and punished in Christ, and God is not, and cannot be angry with the man for whom Jesus was a Substitute—for he has no sins for God to be angry with.

"Oh," you say, "but does he not sin?" He does, but it is not imputed to him, according to the saying of the Psalmist in the thirty-second Psalm—"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity." He commits sin, but it is not imputed to him, and so the wrath never comes on him. He is free from guilt and wrath. God has love to him, unbounded love, and though He may chasten him, yet this is not in anger, but with purposes of love to him for his spiritual and everlasting good. So you see, Christ is the way out of Divine wrath as well as out of our sin.

And listen. There comes upon us in consequence of sin, when the Lord deals with us and makes us see sin, a deep and terrible depression of spirit. It is in some more and in some less, but in every case, "when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." Sin, as soon as it is really felt in the soul to be sin, kills us, blasts our former hopes, crushes our pride, lays us like bruised and mangled things before the burning Throne of Justice. Oftentimes souls have been heard to cry, "There is no soundness in my flesh because of Your anger! Neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin. For my iniquities are gone over my head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me. My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness."

Many such expressions, it may be, you, my awakened Hearer, have been made to utter, but, oh, if you come to see that all this sin of yours is *not* yours, that in Christ Jesus God has put away your sins by your Savior's bearing them and enduring their punishment, I say, if you see this, you will speedily rejoice! In a moment those waves of wrath will pass away from you, and your spirit will sing, "Hope in God: for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God." I know a truly awakened conscience never will believe in the pardon of sin without Atonement first made.

But when you hear that Atonement has been made, that Christ suffered instead of you, that His death has glorified the Justice of God more than your lying in Hell could have glorified Him—that His Atonement is to God's injured Law a better vindication than even your eternal destruc-

tion—do you not see it, do you not lay hold on it, and does not your heart leap at the sound of this glorious Gospel of the blessed God? Christ is the way, then, out of the guilt of your sin, out of the wrath of God for your sin, and out of your sense of that wrath.

But more, Christ is the way to escape from the *power* of sin. The great object of a penitent soul is to get away from the tyranny and slavery of evil habits and of corrupt desires. A man may break off some of his sins by his own unaided efforts. For instance, no man need be a drunkard, common determination may have done with those intoxicating cups. No man need be a swearer. Let him understand what a wantonness of iniquity there is in that sin, and he may surely give it up. Still, sin dwells in fallen creatures, and the imagination of the thoughts of their hearts is evil, and that continually. Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?

Man, your sinfulness is such that you can not cease from sin. But Man, there is a power above and beyond you which can deliver you from the power of sin and make you holy. It is found in Christ Jesus, in Christ Jesus as I have preached Him to you this day. Let me tell you my own experience. Whenever I feel that I have sinned and desire to overcome that sin for the future, the devil at the same time comes to me and whispers, “How can you be a pardoned person and accepted with God while you sin in this way?” If I listen to this I drop into despondency, and if I continued in that state I should fall into despair, and should commit sin more frequently than before.

But God’s Grace comes in and says to my soul, “You have sinned—but did not Jesus come to save sinners? You are not saved because you are righteous. For Christ died for the ungodly.” And my faith says, “Though I have sinned, I have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and though I am guilty, yet by Grace I am saved, and I am a child of God, still.” And what then? Why, then the tears begin to flow, and I say, “How could I ever sin against my God who is so good to me? Now I will overcome that sin,” and, by His Grace, I get strong to fight with sin through the conviction that I am God’s child.

Doubts and fears, and the thought that God is angry only drive you further into sin. But the faith, which in the teeth of sin still believes in God’s love, and still believes in the perfect pardon Christ has given, which God Himself can never take back again—that holy faith which still clings to the Cross with, “If I perish I perish, but to this atoning Sacrifice I cling.” That faith, I say, makes you strong against sin. The saints in Glory overcame through the blood of the Lamb, and there is no other way of overcoming.

The precious blood of Atonement, wherever sprinkled, kills sin, and he that lives in the full belief of it will be purified from sinful habits, as says that precious text—“If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” It is walking under a sense of Divine love as manifest in Christ. It is walking with the full conviction of pardon through the blood that brings to us freedom from the reigning power of sin. So, Soul, Jesus Christ is “the way” to escape from sin, its guilt, its wrath, its fear, its power.

Now we must have a word or two upon the other end of the way. I said it was *from* sin, *to* what? To the Father. Now the way to the Father is alone by Jesus Christ. We have for this the express saying of Christ—“No man

comes unto the Father, but by Me.” We hear talk of getting to God the Father by Nature, but it is a ladder too short to reach the Infinite. God is somewhat seen in His works, but I believe those who have seen the grandest works of God, and have also seen God in Christ, will tell you that God is no more mirrored in His works than is the whole universe in a dewdrop.

Earth is not broad enough to reflect the image of God. He does not mirror Himself in the sea—it is a glass too small to show the Deity. He cannot reveal His whole Glory in the materialism of this poor world of ours—its axles would groan and crack beneath the weight of Deity. It is in Christ that Jehovah reveals Himself more fully than in all Nature, though you summon sun, moon, and stars, and read all their hieroglyphs. God is revealed in Christ in a way in which He cannot be in anything of time or of space.

Learn, then, that we get our best apprehensions of the Father through the Son. “He that has seen Me has seen the Father.” It is only by Christ that we realize the Fatherhood of God. I do not believe any man has any idea of what the Fatherhood of God is till he knows Jesus Christ as the First-Born among many Brethren, and knows the power of His Atonement to bring us near to God. The common Fatherhood doctrine that God is the Father of us all because He made us all, is not true in the most real and tender sense of Fatherhood. A potter makes ten thousand vessels, but he is not the father of one of them.

It is not everything that a man makes that he is the father of, or if he is so called, it is only in a modified sense. We are God’s children when we are created anew in Christ Jesus—when regeneration has made us partakers of the Divine Nature. Sonship is no ordinary privilege common to *all* mankind—it is the high prerogative of the chosen. For what says the Scripture—“Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knows us not, because it knew Him not.” When we are adopted into the Divine family, then, and not till then, do we know God as the Father.

As for unbelievers, they have not known the Father, for our Lord says, “O righteous Father, the world has not known You.” He that has seen Christ has seen the Father, and only he. But the very Essence of Christ is seen in His expiatory death, and therefore we can never grasp the Fatherhood of God till we have believed in the Atonement of His Son. “Whosoever denies the Son, the same has not the Father, but He that acknowledges the Son has the Father, also.” May we, then, realize the Father through knowing in very deed the Lord, for to a knowledge of the Father He is the only way.

Again, Jesus is the way to conscious acceptance with the Father. I know, my dear troubled Friend, you feel this morning that you would give anything and everything if you could know that God had accepted you, and loved you, and that you were His dear child. Now, you can never know this until first you come to the Cross and see Jesus Christ dying there as a Substitute for you and for all who trust Him. You trust Him—your sins are on Him—you are clear.

The very next feeling of your soul will be, “I am not only pardoned in Christ, but I am accepted before God in Christ Jesus. For Christ’s sake, and as one with Christ I am now dear to God. And what is very marvelous,

I am as dear to God as Jesus Christ Himself is! I am brought as near as Christ is! I am what Christ is, for He who was once my Representative in my sin, and bore the wrath for me, is now my Representative in His Glory, and has obtained favor and innumerable blessings for me.”

This is a blessed thing. “The Father Himself loves you.” “Made near by the blood of Christ.” “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like He. For we shall see Him as He is.” The gift of Christ to us is a full proof of Divine love, and wherever it is received it is the proof of God’s love to the receiver.

So, too, the way to have communion with the Father is the same. “Oh how I long to talk with God,” says one. “He seems to be a long way off, and the thick darkness shuts Him out from me. O that I could speak with Him, even though the only word I said were that of the returning prodigal: “Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before You.” Beloved, when you see Jesus Christ who bore your sins in His own body on the tree. When you see Him ascending up to Heaven you have access with boldness unto God, because Christ has entered within the veil and stands in the Presence of God for you.

You talk with God when you draw near in Jesus Christ. Your conviction that all your sin is put away through Him, that you are accepted through Him, that you live in Him as the member lives in the body, that He is your Covenant Head, and that His honors and glories are all reflected upon you—this assured belief brings you so near to God that as a man speaks with his friend, even so do you commune with Him. “Truly, our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.”

Again, we, by Jesus, come to resemble the Father. There is no way to get the likeness of the Father except by learning God’s love in the Person of His dear Son. Here, too, Christ is the way. You imitate Christ, and so become like the Father. You commune with Jesus Christ, and as you talk with Him, His Character sacredly operates upon yourself, and you are changed from glory to glory, as by the image of the Lord. I do believe, dear Brethren, that the moment we forget Christ, and then seek after personal sanctification, we are trying to get to our journey’s end by declining to tread the road to it.

It is, at least I find it so, impossible to grow in Grace except by abiding evermore at the foot of the Cross. When I know by faith—not by any other evidence than by faith—that Jesus loved me, and gave Himself for me. When I see Grace, magnified in sin, laid on *Him* rather than on *me*. And when I see Justice magnified, in that sin being put away by Him—and when I see Grace and Justice together—clasping hands in solemn covenant to secure my soul against all fear of risk, then I feel that I am master over sin! Then I feel my soul loves God, yearns after God, mounts up to God—and then it is she becomes more like God than she was before. So Christ is the way from sin, with all we can say of it, to the Father, with all the blessed things that flow from His Throne.

II. WHAT SORT OF WAY IS CHRIST, AND FOR WHAT SORT OF PEOPLE? First, let me say He is the King’s highway, which means that He is the Divinely-appointed way from sin to the Father. If we came to you, dear Friends, who are seeking salvation, and told you of a way of mercy, you would naturally enquire, “Who said it was the way? Who appointed

it?” And if we replied that it was appointed by the last council at Rome, I should not wonder if you felt serious doubts about the matter, and questioned whether a council of men could infallibly determine the way of Grace.

But I have to tell you this day that Jesus Christ is “the way” of God’s appointment. Thus says the word—“Being justified freely by His Grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God has set forth to be a Propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the Justifier of him which believes in Jesus.” God the Father devised this plan of salvation by the transference of sin to Christ, and by the punishment of Christ the Substitute, instead of us.

It is clear to me that if God is satisfied with the way, I ought to be. If He, the aggrieved party, feels that Christ has finished the work and that He can now justly forgive us, why need we raise questions? O God, if You can look at Jesus and be well-pleased in Him, surely I can. If You are perfectly content with the sufferings and death of Your dear Son, surely I may be. Now, then, because it is the King’s highway, (I recommend you, my Hearers, to be very clear here), if you are trusting in Christ who is the way of Divine appointment, if He were to fail you, which He cannot do, the blame would not lie with *you*, but with *Him* who appointed Him. I speak reverently. But He has appointed a way which cannot fail, for He is Infinite Wisdom and Infinite Power.

Then, as the King’s highway it is an open way, I can come to it and need ask no man’s leave. If I am treading the King’s highway I cannot be a trespasser there. Poor Sinner, Christ is the way from your sin to God, and you need ask nobody’s leave to come to God through Jesus Christ. “He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him.” “Him that comes to Me,” He said, “I will in no wise cast out.” Come and welcome! God appoints the way, and when He appoints the way, He puts it thus in 1 John 2:21, “And He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world”—in order that any sinner in the whole world who wills to come to the Father by Christ may pluck up courage and perceive that his sins have been laid on Jesus.

Again, it is a perfect way. “I am the way.” The way from sin to the Father by Christ is complete. It would not be complete unless it came down where you are, but it does. Where are you? Up to your throat in drunkenness? Where are you? Defiled by evil living? Soul, there is a road from where you are right up to the immaculate perfection of the Blessed Savior at God’s right hand, and that road is CHRIST.

You have not to make a road to get to Christ—Christ comes to you where you are. The good Samaritan did not ask the wounded man to come to him and promise that then he would pour in the oil and wine. No, he came where he was and poured it in. Christ will come where you are. Saul of Tarsus did not go far to meet Christ. He was riding to the devil as fast as he could, but he was suddenly struck down, then and there where he was—and as he was—and Jesus spoke life to him.

He can do just the same with you. You think you have some preparations to make, some feelings to pass through, something or other to perform before you may believe that Christ has taken your sins. But all you

can do to make yourself fit for Christ is to make yourself *unfit*. All your preparations are but foul lumber—put them all away. You must come as you are, as a sinner, for Jesus came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance—“the whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick.”

And if, as you are, you will come and take God’s way, and trust Jesus with all your heart to save you, you will find He will prove to be the very Savior you need, for He is so perfect a road that there is nothing needed at the beginning. And nothing will be needed at the end. Some have supposed that faith in the atoning sacrifice may carry us a certain way, and after that we must stand on another footing. God forbid I should say a single word against good works. Did I not the other Sunday morning address you from these words, “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord”?

But good works are not the *way* to Heaven, in whole or in part. They are *fruits of salvation*. They are the sure products of those who are saved, but they *do not save* a man. A faith that produces no works will never save anybody. But that which saves men is not the work which comes from the faith, but the faith itself, the faith in Jesus Christ. The top and bottom, the beginning and end of salvation, lies in the Redeemer, and not in us. “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending,” says the Lord.

If you think that you are to patch up Christ’s robe of righteousness, or that Jesus is to begin and you are to complete, you know nothing of Christ, and need to be taught something of yourself. It must be *all* Christ or no Christ, *all* mercy or no mercy. Grace must lay the foundation, and Grace must put on the topstone, or else there can be no salvation. “I am the way,” then, means that Christ is the way from where the sinner now is right up to where God is, and he that gets Christ shall come to the Father.

Christ is a free way. There is not a toll-bar at the entrance, nor anywhere along the road. Many are afraid to come into this road to Heaven because they cannot pay the charges—but there are no charges whatever! Whoever wills to have Christ may have Him for the taking. He that will pay for Christ cannot have Him at all. You may have Him for the asking. He is freely given. The way in which to have Christ is the way in which you have water, that is, by drinking. Receive Christ, for “unto as many has received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to as many as believed on His name.”

There are no legal conditions of salvation laid down anywhere. I know it is sometimes said that repentance and faith are conditions—from one point of view, and in one aspect, I might tolerate the term—but truly and really there is no bargain made between God and a sinner. It is never you do this and I will do that. It is always, “I will do this for you, and then you shall believe and repent as the result.” If faith, is, in one respect a condition, it is in another respect a gift of God, and though we are commanded to repent, yet Jesus is exalted on High to *give* repentance.

So you poor sinners who have no repentance, or anything of your own, I bid you come to Jesus Christ for everything. He is the way, and the whole way. This is a free way—nothing to pay, nothing to do, nothing to be, nothing to bring, no merits—no deserving, no preparations. It is all of Grace. All the gift of God to the very vilest of the vile. Oh, it does some-

times seem too good to be true, that all for nothing I, a great sinner, shall be saved! But when I think of what the Savior is—that He is God—that He came from Heaven. That He became a Man for my sake. That He, the God-Man, Immanuel, was born and died, and bore the wrath of God—by His Grace I can believe it.

And, O my Lord, I dare no more add any of my driveling merits to the worth of Your dear Son than of stitching some foul, infected rags from a dunghill to a garment made of worked gold! How could I put any nothingness of mine, that only my folly calls anything, side by side with the ever-precious merits of Your dear Son?

Again, let me add, it is a permanent way. Jesus says, “I am the way—not a way for Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, only, but for you. Not for the Apostles, and martyrs, and early saints, only, but for YOU—

**“His precious blood shall never lose its power,
Till all the ransomed Church of God
Are saved to sin no more.”**

It is a way that never has been broken up, and never will be. All the floods of all His people’s sins have never made a swamp or bog-hole in this blessed way.

All the earthquakes and upheavals of our rebellious natures have never made a gap or chasm in this glorious way. Straight from the very gates of Hell, where the sinner is by nature, right up to the hilltops of Heaven, this glorious causeway runs in one unbroken line, and will, forever and forever, till every elect one shall be gathered safe into the eternal Home!

Let me add it is a joyful way. You noted in the chapter we read that the redeemed are to return with songs, and everlasting joy is to be upon their heads. All Believers in Christ as such are a happy and rejoicing people. “But,” says one, “I have seen Believers mourn!” That is because they wander from the way. If they continued simply trusting in the Substitution of Christ, if they kept their eye on Him, and on Him only, they would know no sorrow. Where there is no sin there is no sorrow. And when the Believer knows that he has no sin—that it is put away in Christ—then he also has no sorrow. Then his peace is like a river, because his righteousness is as the waves of the sea. Dear Heart, if you would be happy, come unto Christ, and abide with Him!

Lastly, on this point, He is the *only* way. So is He the only way that you cannot be saved if you trust anywhere else. This way which God has planned of laying sin upon the Substitute, is such that it is the only possible way, and therefore God will not have you insult His wisdom and His Grace by trying to patch up another. Do not try to find a way by your own feelings or your own works. There is no such way. All these supposed ways will end in disappointment and in ruin. Jesus Christ is the one foundation, build on Him. God help you to say, “I will now cast myself flat upon Christ, having no confidence in myself. I will make Him my confidence, He shall be my All in All.” If you have done that, you are a saved soul! Go your way and rejoice with joy unspeakable.

Thus we see what kind of way it is, but for what sort of people is it made? Hurriedly in these two or three words, I reply, for all sorts of people. Christ is the way to Heaven for anybody and everybody who is led to walk there. Christ is the way to Heaven for you, poor Wanderer, though you have sought the theater and music hall, and worse places, to drive

away your melancholy. Come to Jesus, for He is the way to peace, the very way for a wanderer like you. Christ is the way for exiles, for banished ones, for those who have not seen the face of God for many a day, though once they rejoiced in Him. Backslider, if you would get back to your God, Christ is the way.

Christ is the way for captives. You, who bear your chains clanking about you today, who feel as if you never would be free—take heart, take heart—there is a way of escape yet, and Christ is that way! Make a desperate push for it, and say, “I will throw myself into His arms. If He reject me I shall be the first one. But I will go and rest on the bloody sacrifice of that dear Son of God who sweat great drops of blood because of my heavy sins, my heavy, heavy sins.

Christ is the way, let me add, for the poorest of the poor. Our Master, when He makes a feast, sends us out to bring in men from the highways and hedges, highwaymen and hedge birds—those who have not a house or a friend of their own. You who are lowest of the low and vilest of the vile! You who are all but in Hell, and are condemned already, you who lie at Hell’s dark door bound in affliction and iron, shut out from mercy, as you think—Christ is the way for you!

For all who long to escape from sin. For all who would come to God. For all who have a desire after mercy or eternal life. The great trumpet is blown, and may they come that are ready to perish, may the most needy and abject, and lost, and self-condemned, say, “I will come now and trust in Jesus who died the Just for the unjust to bring us to God.”

III. The last point is, HOW WE MAKE CHRIST OUR WAY, AND WHETHER HE IS OUR WAY NOW. How do we make Christ our way? Why, as we make any other way our way. We hear a man say, “This is my way.” How does he make that his way? Has he got the title-deeds of it? Has he a charter from his Majesty? No, nothing of the sort. The way in which I shall make the Clapham Road my way after I have done preaching is by getting into it.

And the way in which Christ becomes a sinner’s way is simply by going to Christ. That is all. You have no legal rights, no forms or ceremonies to go through—you have but to come to the King’s highway by trusting Christ, and Christ is yours. “But may I,” says one, “without any warrant, come and trust Christ?” What warrant do you want? The only warrant is God’s permission, and you have a great deal more than that—you have God’s *command*—which is more than permission. He has said, “Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believes not shall be damned.”

In believing you do what that Gospel warrants by its command. “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved,” is God’s Word! You certainly have a right to do what God *commands* you to do, so that your right to trust Christ lies in God’s command. He says He will save you through what Christ has done. Will you believe Him? Will you believe Him so as to trust today in what Christ has done? If you do not, you make God a liar. If you do, you glorify God by believing His testimony, and you glorify His Son by trusting in His work—and you are saved.

Now, in order to keep the way your own, all you do is to continue in it. How do you keep any other way as your own? By any charter, by any fresh right that you had not at first? No, not at all. “This is my way,” say I,

as long as I still keep to that way. If I turn the other way I cannot say that it is my way, at least nobody would believe a way to be my way if I went in a contrary direction. If I leap over the hedge and go off in another direction and say, "This is my way," I lie. Man alive—that is your way which you go—your possession of the way lies in your keeping the way.

So now, Christian, Christ continues yours by the same way in which He became yours. That is by your still trusting Him, not by anything you *do*, or are by yourself, or in yourself. Because Jesus lives, you live also, not because of anything you do. "The just shall live by *faith*," not by any other means. You are not to begin in the Spirit and then be made perfect in the flesh. You are not to begin to walk by confidence in Christ and afterwards go on to walk by confidence in your own evidences and graces. Your evidences and graces will always shine best when you think the least of them, and always will be brightest with God when you look most at His dear Son, and not at them.

If you ever take your best virtues and sanctifications and make them a ground of hope, you are building on that which will crumble beneath you in the time of trial. But as long as you keep to this, "Still a sinner, but still washed in the blood. Still in myself guilty, but no guilt of mine imputed to me, all laid on my Substitute. Still my best prayers, my best hymns, my almsgivings, my preaching, my all—all defiled—but yet I am clean through Him that washes my feet and makes me clean in His most precious blood."

This is the way to live, the way to live evermore, not only as a beginner, but when you are advanced in Divine Grace—the way to live when you are becoming a mature matron or veteran soldier, and the way when you come to die. It is especially, then, in those last moments, that we fling everything away but just what Christ has done. We might have been troubling ourselves a great deal before about marks, evidences, and so on, But when it comes to the last, we are like the good man who, on his dying bed, tried to pick out what was good and what was bad of his own doings. He said he was a long while judging them, but they were so much of a burden that he at last tied them all up in one bundle and flung them over, and rested on Christ alone. That is the very best thing for us all to do even now—

***"None but Jesus, none but Jesus,
Can do helpless sinners good."***

This will not make you unholy but holy. If you believe this, you will seek to honor and glorify God with all your might, and when you have done all, you will feel that you are unprofitable servants. And into His dear arms you will cast yourselves, and pray that the hands that were pierced may still embrace you and keep you safe in death and in eternity.

Now, the question to finish with is this, "Is Christ my way today?" Oh, I know many of you could rise up and say, "Yes, He is, He is all my salvation and all my desire—

***"Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to the Cross I cling."***

"My God, You know all things. You know my soul's only reliance is on Your dying, Your risen, Your ever-living Son, who is my hope, my All."

But, perhaps there are some here who are not in this way, because they do not even know it. I believe there is no doctrine so little known in Eng-

land as the Gospel. While a great many doctrines are preached, and very properly so, and the precepts are preached, yet there are hearers who have heard for years, and yet do not know this fundamental, essential doctrine of the Gospel—that God laid sin on Christ that He might take sin off from us, and punished Him that He might be Just and yet the justifier of the ungodly. If you have never heard it before you have heard it now. You will not perish, therefore, with that excuse. If you put aside that way of salvation, it will not be because you have never heard it. If you perish, there will be no excuse for you.

But there are some who do not believe this plan to be Divine. When they hear it and understand it, they scrap it. Some will say it is inconsistent with the pursuit of morality. Others will say it is fantastic or unjust. One will say this and another that. But though the Cross of Christ is to them that perish foolishness, to us who are saved it is the wisdom of God and the power of God—and God forbid we should preach any other Gospel to you. Some there are who even hate it. They will gnash their teeth at the idea of being pardoned through the merit of Another, their righteous self feels indignant at being insulted by being put right out of the market.

Ah, cast not your soul away out of mere hate to God, but kiss Him whom God has made King this day, and trust in Him who is Priest forever after the order of Melchisedec, to put away the sin of man by His own great sacrifice. Come now to Him and take the Atonement and the peace which He brings. Some are not saved because they are too fearful to come this way, but to such I would speak very gently. The bruised reed He will not break, the smoking flax He will not quench. Let not your sense of sin make you think little of my Master.

You are a great sinner, but He is a greater Savior. Do not say that you have matched Christ, or overmatched Him. Come, Goliath Sinner, the Son of David can conquer you or save you yet—“Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” Think of David, how foully he had transgressed, yet with all the lust stains, and the murder spots upon him, he had faith enough to say, “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.”

And so shall you be whiter than snow, when once the bloody sacrifice of Christ in all its merit has become yours, as it may this very morning if you simply trust in Him. May my God the Eternal Spirit, may my God the blessed Father, may my God, even Jesus the Son, draw many reluctant hearts now, and His shall be the praise. Amen.

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CHIDING AND CHEERING

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“Have I been with you so long, and yet have you not known Me, Philip?”
John 14:9.

THIS Chapter gives us a very delightful picture of the companionship and kindly conversation which were kept up between our Savior and His 12 disciples when He dwelt with them in this world. Though they looked up to Him as if they felt there was none upon earth beside Him, yet they were as simple and free in speaking to Him as if they merely talked to one another. And did not He behave to them like a true friend, always mindful of their childishness, but gentle, tender, and patient? Warning without wounding, correcting without much censure, and comforting them without concealing the dangers to which they were exposed? Thus we notice how they speak to Him with a natural, easy familiarity. And He talks to them in full sympathy with their weakness, teaching them little by little as they are able to learn. They ask just such questions as a boy might ask of his father. Often they show their ignorance, but never do they seem timid in His Presence, or ashamed to let Him see how shallow and hard of understanding they are. Yet He is never petulant with them. Even though He would chide them for their dullness, His rebukes are not harsh. Thus, when Philip says to Him, “Lord, show us the Father and it suffices us,” Jesus answers him with a question which quietly rebukes his simplicity—“Have I been with you so long, and yet have you not known Me, Philip?” What lenience, what compassion! “Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him.” Oh, how should the children of such a Father cling to His knees, sit at His feet, hang on His lips and pour out their hearts before Him! Such, Beloved, was the demeanor that Jesus loved to exhibit towards His disciples! And such was the behavior that He liked to encourage on their part towards Himself. As there were no chills in that friendliness of His, so there could hardly be much shyness or backwardness in those conversations of theirs. I linger on the picture. He, on whose brow majestic sweetness reigns, is all generous, condescending and, I might almost say, He is affable, while they, poor in spirit, weak in faith, grow open and ingenuous, confidential and confiding in His society. Language fails me to describe to you what I see in the text and its surroundings. Here is the Man, Christ Jesus, Divine in His Person, in His Character and in His conduct, unveiling the Father to babes in Grace who do not and cannot understand the

charm that first drew them and then bound them to Him! But He who once sojourned here below, now sits exalted high at the right hand of God. In bodily Presence He is not among us. He is not to be seen by mortal eyes, yet in spirit He abides with us and His Presence is known and felt by gracious hearts. Believe me, then, He is the same Jesus! He is by no means changed. The terms on which He would have us live with Him and walk with Him are far above mere service. He calls us “friends.” Why, do you think He does that? Is it because we have done so much for Him? No, it is because He has done so much for us, and told us so much, and kept nothing back from us! In truth, He is our Friend and Counselor, and He would have us come to Him and ask His advice in the most frank and simple manner. When we feel that we lack wisdom, He never upbraids us, but He always gives liberally to those who ask Him. We may play the child with Him—He deigns to be pleased with our childish prattle. Our prayers may be full of inquiries. Our supplications may be laden with difficulties that we cannot unravel. Yet He will condescend to explain them all, and by His Spirit He will continue to teach and lead us further into the Truth of God. Oh, how I wish we always cultivated this childlike spirit towards Jesus, for He always has a compassionate spirit towards us!

What dull scholars we all are! “Have I been with you so long, and yet have you not known Me?” These words suggest two redactions, on each of which I shall have a few remarks to offer. First, *notwithstanding the highest privileges that can be enjoyed in obtaining instruction, we may yet remain ignorant of Jesus Christ.* And secondly, *when we do know Him, the most favored disciples have still much to learn.* So far as our religious training is concerned—

I. THE BEST OF MEN CANNOT IMPART TO US A KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST.

Here were Apostles who had been with Jesus, Himself, for three years in His public labors and in His private retirement. They had been, as it were, students in His college—He Himself had been their Tutor. They could not have been placed in more advantageous circumstances! No better tutor could have been found. He taught them both by His works and by His words. He was constantly doing miracles and performing wondrous actions, by which He showed His Glory and revealed His Nature. But there were some of them that, after all this teaching, did not know—did not know what? Why, they did not know *Him!* They did not know the main point of all His teaching. They did not know the Teacher, Himself! He had been so long with them, and yet they did not know Him! I am not now, in this first part of our discourse, alluding so much to Philip, whose knowledge was imperfect, his light but a glimmer and his thoughts, therefore, often perplexed, as I am to Judas Iscariot. The career of that unhappy man—his calling, his course, his character, his conduct, his crime and the consequences of his crime—all conspire to produce a picture on which we gaze with wild amazement! And as we

ponder it, we feel a sinking at the inmost heart. It shows us how near a man may be to Christ in the daily walks of life. How much he may see of Christ in His works of mercy toward the children of men, and how often he may hear of Christ the words of counsel and comfort, of wisdom and warning— and yet be totally ignorant of Christ, deriving no virtue from Him, entering into no sympathy with Him—till at length he falls away to perish with an awful, terrible destruction! Or, to make the peril more thoroughly our own, it would appear that we might associate with the followers of Christ in our homes, have constantly before our eyes the charities which are dispensed in the name of Christ, and be privileged to listen to the most enlightened and eloquent preachers of Christ—and yet never discern Him as the Son of God, sent of the Father, the very essence and quintessence of the Covenant of Grace! His name may be most familiar to our ears, while, alas, our hearts are alien to Him! Had Judas known his Master more truly, could he have dealt Him so treacherously? Had He known Christ to be One with the Father, would he have sold Him for 30 pieces of silver? Had he known Him to be “God over all, blessed forever,” would he have betrayed Him to the chief priests? Oh, no! Though he had seen Him tread the sea and heard the voice that called back Lazarus from the tomb, yet Judas saw only the man, the Nazarene, whom he could sell and give over traitorously to His foes! Certainly he did not so know Jesus as to trust Him—he had never yielded up his soul to rely upon the Messiah, the Christ, the Appointed, the Anointed Savior. Judas was pre-eminently one who, though he had been a long time with Christ, yet knew Him not in the matter of saving faith. And I am sure he did not know Him so as to love Him. If he had loved Him, he would not have deceived Him, or given Him the traitorous kiss. Learn, then, from Judas’ example, rather than from Philip’s, just now, that you and I may have been hearers of the Word for years and yet may not know Jesus!

Oh, but if we do know Him, let us be very grateful that the Holy Spirit has taught us something of His sacred mission! How much more, if you have been made acquainted with the dignity and excellence of His Person, and confessed Him to be the Son of God! What thanks will you then render unto the Father? Remember what Christ said to Simon Peter when he proved that he knew Him beyond all the rumors that were floating about, beyond all the opinions that were entertained, beyond all the prejudices that were nursed among the rulers or the people of those days. He said, “Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood have not revealed this unto you, but My Father who is in Heaven.” No minister can make us know Christ! No book, no, not even the Bible, itself, apart from this celestial teaching! So Paul prays “that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened.” This will make Jesus Christ in the Deity of His Person, in the excellence of His work, in the love of His heart, in the faith-

fulness of His Character, to be truly known by us, so that we shall trust Him implicitly and love Him undividedly! I do beg to press this very earnestly upon many of you here present. The question of our text has a strong admonition, when set in this light, for some of you. Has not Jesus been, as it were, a long time with you, you who are regular attendants at this place of worship? Ah, you have discerned His Presence by the words spoken and the signs worked in your midst. When we have preached the Gospel earnestly and faithfully, with the Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven, as at least we sometimes have preached it, then Jesus has come very near to you—often and often has He pleaded with you—you have felt a Presence greater than that of man while His Truth has been declared. “Has He been with you so long, and yet have you not known Him?” That He has been with you is certain, for His saints bear witness of Him. While you have been sitting on these seats, there have been all around you gracious hearts that have rejoiced because they have seen the Savior! Sorrowing hearts have been relieved of many cares, and weeping eyes whose tears have been wiped away. The presence of Jesus has made the heartstrings of many here to sound like harps of joy! Has He been with you so long, near unto you, seen by your neighbors and yet have you not known Him? Oh, poor souls! Poor Philip! Poor John! Poor Mary who could sit in such an assembly where others saw the Savior, and yet not to have known Him! Moreover, Jesus has been here, for many like you *have* seen Him. Perhaps your own wife has been converted. Your brother has seen the Lord. Your sister has come to know Christ as her Savior. And so long has He been with you that now you could count some dozen or more of your companions that have come to know Jesus, yet you have not known Him! Oh, it is hard to live where Divine Grace is freely distributed, and yet have none of it yourself! Where there is a general famine, as there lately was in the city of Paris, each man bears the stress with some patience, the more so because others are in a same plight. But oh, to starve in this city, when you see others feasting on plenty! Oh, this is sad, sad work! And some of you are being lost, while others are being saved—the very Sabbaths when others find Jesus, you go away without a thought of Him! The sermon which pierces others’ hearts glides past you! The exhortation which points others to Calvary, you hear, but never heed! You are still a stranger to Him, though He has come so very near you! And has it been so long that He has been with you, and yet, and yet, have you not known Him? Oh, this is grievous!

“So *long*,” the Savior says, have I been with you so long—*so long*? I must linger just one minute on that word. To be an unbeliever a day or even an hour after you have heard the Gospel is a very long time. A day! What does it mean? “Only a day,” you will sometimes say. At another time you say, “a whole day,” with a prolonged emphasis. You know time must often be measured by the condition in which a man is placed. To be beneath a lion’s claw, or with one’s arm in a lion’s mouth five minutes is a great deal too long! It is a dreadful condition to have life in jeopardy

and to be so long in fear. I have heard of one who fell down a deep crevice upon a glacier—between the deep blue ice. If you look down and throw a stone, it is long before you hear the sound, showing that the stone has reached the bottom. A traveler once slid down one by accident, and there he lay, wedged in by the ice. I think it was fully an hour before the ropes were brought. Why, that must have seemed a dreadful while to wait! An hour, you know, in good society, cheerfully spent, seems short, but an hour between the jaws of death, how dreadful! Now, an unbeliever is in as great a danger as that, and even in greater danger! He is under God's anger every minute that he is an unbeliever! It is a long time to be in jeopardy of your soul. A long time to be under the sentence of death. A very long time to be without hope. Ah, but did I speak of *hours*? Did I speak of *months*? *Years*, rather must I come to, for it has been many years with some of you! You remember your mother's pleadings, the Sunday school teacher's entreaties and now the gray hairs begin to appear here and there upon you, and you are still unsaved! "Have I been with you so long?" Perhaps you don't think it long, but it is long to God! You know if you have a child that has been very, very disobedient, and you say to him, "Now do as I tell you," he waits in stubborn silence. Some minutes afterwards you say, "My child, I must be obeyed. Do it." Still he looks angry and sullen, and bites his lips. It is a long time for you to wait—you feel you must soon chastise him. Oh, what a long time it has been for God to be waiting! There are some men whom you cannot provoke for a minute without rousing their temper and exciting their resentment. Who among us could stand such provocation, say, for an hour? I am afraid the best tempered man here, if incessantly provoked from morning to night for a week, would find that it needed much more Grace than he had in stock to keep him from anger. But for 40 years to provoke the Lord to anger? Marvel not that He was grieved, yes, and aggrieved with that generation. "Have I been so long time with you?" Has Christ been so long in your midst? Have His words sounded in your ears? Have you seen His deeds of mercy in blessing others? And yet all this while, with you so long and you do not know Him? You have not desired to trust Him, but you have bid Him go His way to wait your convenience—you intend to send for Him. Take care lest that convenient season comes not until the harvest is past and the summer is ended, and the day of Grace is over with you! Oh, may the question ring an alarm in your conscience! I commend it to your earnest attention, all of you who are unsaved!

And now I propose to address a few thoughts to the people of God. Beloved Friends, by the teaching of God's Spirit, we do know the Savior! Of a truth we know the Son of Man to be One with the Father. We have been taught to discern in the face of Jesus of Nazareth the express image of God. We love Him. We reverence Him, we adore Him as our God, the Redeemer of our souls. We have much joy and much peace in believing and

worshipping. Now, with all this knowledge, it is very possible—no, I think it is quite certain—that—

II. ALL OF US HAVE A GREAT DEAL MORE TO LEARN.

Here and there, at many a turn, our vision is so clouded, our faith so weak, our memory so treacherous, Jesus might say to each of us, as He said to Philip, “Have I been with you so long, and yet have you not known Me?” *We are slow to acquaint ourselves with our Lord and Master, though He is with us.* This is all the more strange, because, if a man lives with you, you pretty soon think you know him. You who have long held communion and kept company, as it were, with Jesus, ought to have known Him better than you do. Some men you cannot know because they are so changeable. You think you know them today, yet they are very different tomorrow. But “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.” I remember some 12 or 15 years ago I was asked—very earnestly asked by a painter to sit for my portrait. I did sit some 10 or 12 times, and at the end of each sitting, when I looked at what he had done, I thought the picture less like me than it had been before! He seemed to be much of the same opinion, though he was an eminent and skilled artist. At last he dashed his brush across the canvas and gave up his task in despair. When I asked him why, he said, “I never see your face twice alike—it is quite impossible for me to paint you.” No such complaint can be made of our Lord’s Character! Or, at least, though a thousand fresh beauties rise to our view as we gaze on His lovely face, and though the majesty and the meekness that blend in Him surpass all power of delineation, yet He is evermore Jesus—the same, ever lovely, ever kind and true, ever gracious—therefore, by resorting to Him and communing with Him, we ought more and more to know Him! Some people, it is true, you cannot know—they are so retiring and reserved. However long you live with them, you cannot make their acquaintance. They practice so much restraint curbing their feelings, hiding their thoughts, and sparing their words that you see not themselves. They show you not what they are, but what they would appear. Whether it is because they are proud, or because they are timid, from self-esteem or from diffidence, they veil the features of their mind, and it is only on some remarkable occasion, through a sudden grief or an unexpected joy, that they look, and act, and speak with perfect freedom and natural simplicity! Not so our Savior—He reveals Himself with open face. He wears His heart upon His sleeve. He is frank and ingenuous with His people. “If it were not so, I would have told you,” He said to His disciples, as if He could appeal to them, and their conscience could witness that He had kept back no secrets from them—that between Him and them there was no reticence—that all He had they should have and all He left they should be privy to. How ought we, then, to know Christ, since He is neither changeable nor reserved? And yet, Brothers and Sisters, to how limited an extent do we really know Him!

In various particulars *our ignorance, or rather our lack of perception, is palpable.* Some of the true servants of our Lord—perhaps there are such

here present—do not know the very alphabet of His teaching! They discern not the great Doctrines of the Gospel so as to rejoice in them. Does Jesus say, “As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you”? And again, “I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit”? They start back frightened at the Doctrine of Election, and shudder at the very sound of a predestinating purpose! Or does He say, “I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish”? They are shocked at the Doctrine of Final Perseverance and bleat out their cries of distress as though they thought that nothing could be more unsafe than security—timorous creatures! I do not think this lack of wisdom is as much their fault as their misfortune. They were taught, when they were young, to be afraid of these Doctrines—they then turned a deaf ear to them—and now they have gotten old, they are rather perplexed than comforted by them!

Understand me, my dear Brothers and Sisters, Jesus Christ loved you, and He tells you the Father Himself loved you before the foundation of the world! He did not begin to love you after you loved Him. Is that a new Truth of God to you? That is the Doctrine of Election! You have been denying it! You thought it was a horrible and dangerous presumption. Have you known Christ so long and not found that out yet? Now, here is another Doctrine. Jesus Christ will always love you. Whom once He loves, He never leaves, but loves them to the end. That is the Doctrine of Final Perseverance. You have been afraid of that, have you not? Well, but have you known Christ and not found that out? Do you think He can change? Do you believe that He will make you a member of His body and cut you off? Do you imagine that He will die for you and then let you perish? “If, when you were an enemy, you were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, you shall be saved through His life.” My dear Brothers and Sisters, I will not argue that point with you, but I do believe that if you knew Jesus Christ better, you would think differently, for any man who supposes that Christ did not love His people before the world began, or that He will not love them when the world has ceased to be, may well hear Jesus say, “Have I been so long with you, and yet have you not known Me, My friend Arminius? Have you not found Me out yet, so as to know that I am God, that I change not and, therefore, the sons of Jacob are not consumed?”

But some of His saints *do not know their Lord in the tenderness of His heart*, and the richness of His forgiving mercy! Perhaps there is a Believer here who has fallen into some great sin. My Brother, my Sister, I am grieved enough to hear it, and I trust your grief is more than you can express. If like David, you have gone astray and done evil in the sight of Heaven, then I hope, like David, you will feel broken bones and have David’s penitence to go to God again for fresh forgiveness. After making a profession by faith, you have fallen into sin and sunk into despondency. Jesus Christ appears to you and He says, “Soul, have you sinned after

coming to Me? Have you sinned and brought My name into dishonor? I am still ready to forgive you. Come and put your trust again in Me, and your transgression shall be blotted out.” Doubt whispers, “Lord, I cannot see how You can forgive this.” “Why,” He would say, “have I been so long with you, and yet you do not know Me? When did I ever refuse to forgive one of My servants? Did not Peter deny Me? Yes, with oaths and cursing? And what did I do to Peter? Did I say, Peter shall never be My servant again? No. I did but look at him and that broke his heart. And afterwards I said to him, Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me? That is all I said that looked like chastisement, and I forgave him, and made him My disciple.” Oh, child of God, stained with sin, if you say, “Christ cannot wash me again,” then you have been a long time with Him and you have not known Him! Or, again, into what a morbid state our minds will sometimes sink. The other day I was in this plight, and perhaps you may be in the same, full of wandering thoughts. I could not read a Chapter with any sort of understanding. After going through two or three verses, I felt that I might as well have been reading *Virgil*. I tried to pray. Oh, such prayers!—a few words and then it was as if I was not praying at all! So I thought within myself, “Can the Lord accept me, a poor, weak, worthless soul as I am? I cannot control my thoughts.” Then came headache and pain, till I was worse, still, and I began to question how I could be accepted of God in my devotion when it was all dull and languid, without fire or fervor. But afterwards I thought to myself thus—If my dear child had been told to do a thing, and he was sick and ill, and did his best, I know I would not blame him—I would say, “Poor soul, I see he would do it better if he could.” And can I imagine that my Lord, when He has known me so long, will judge me by the distraction of my mind or the weakness of my body? Ah, but sometimes I have feared He would! If any of you are harboring such a thought, you may see Him standing by you and hear Him addressing you in these tender accents, “Have I been with you so long, and yet have you not known Me? Do not you know Me well enough to understand that I can interpret your feeblest prayer? Do you think Me a harsh tyrant, or a hard taskmaster? Why, I love you! I pity you from my very soul! Do not misjudge Me—I do not misjudge you, I take the will for the deed. I read your groans and I bottle up your tears.”

The question may sometimes be driven home to us in another kind of experience, *When called to suffer in mind, in body, or in estate*, it is easy for those who would comfort us to quote that sweet assuring passage of Scripture, “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God.” But it is not half as easy for those who smart under adversity to encourage themselves in the Lord. When racked with many pains from which you seek in vain for relief, or when you are very poor and straitened in your circumstances—when your cupboard is bare and you have no work to do—when the children are crying for bread and you have no wages to receive, then have you not felt, amidst your weighty griefs, how black thoughts will haunt your mind, dark surmises will hover about

your imagination and, oh, it might happen in some unguarded moment, that rebellious murmurings would come upon your sins? "Can this be right? Can God be kind? Has He forgotten to be gracious? Where now is that all-bountiful Providence we were known to look to? Is this in any way consistent with love?" But hush, my Soul, nor dare repine! It is the voice of Jesus which says to you, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me? The last time I afflicted you, did not it turn out for your good? You have had sore trials by the way—were they not means of great blessing to you? Don't you know Me yet? Cannot you trust Me?" Here is the bitter medicine—you have taken some before, and your health has been restored. You took a draught the other day when the fever was upon you, and it drove it away. Don't you know enough of the skill of your physician to put yourself in his hands and take whatever he prescribes, cheerfully and without objections? Surely, Brothers and Sisters, we would not wince so much at our afflictions if we did but know the Master better! From the hand of the Lord we would accept them, and we would bow to the will of the Lord in bearing them.

The same may be said to us *when we are called to some new labor*. Preacher, teacher, visitor—may any of them find their labor of love and irksome toil, when beset with difficulties and consumed with sorrows? The young minister encountering tastes and tempers that vex his soul. The superintendent of a class striving to instruct children who will not listen, much less learn. The visitor who is repulsed by those she courts and upbraided by those she strives to befriend—all of these are apt to complain, "Lord, why have You called me to this particular work? In other departments I might have succeeded—this I cannot do. I have neither the ability nor the strength." Then, again, might Jesus lay His dear pierced hand on your shoulder and say, "Have I been with you so long, and yet have you not known Me? Did I ever send you to a warfare at your own charges? Did I ever give you work to perform and leave you unsupported? Have I not always proved that, as your day, so shall your strength be?" Go in this, your might, for I will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not doubt Me, for if you do, you have not known Me."

The scruple that sometimes comes over God's children about *praying for little things* is another instance of their not knowing Christ. "Oh," says one, "if my child were dying, I could pray about that, but when he is only fretful and hard to manage, though it does worry me a good deal, and sorely grieves my spirit, yet I cannot go and lay such a trivial matter before my great Lord!" Then you don't know Him. "Have I been so long with you, and have you not known Me, Philip?" Has not the Lord said that He counts the hairs of our head, and that not a sparrow falls to the ground without His decree? Your Savior is as great in His attention to tiny needs as in His administration of grand affairs! Take the thorn in your finger to Christ! Take the stone in your shoe to Christ! I mean, Pilgrim, if you get a little care that may fester and breed great pain, take that to Christ! I

mean, Pilgrim, if you have a little trial on your way to Heaven, take that to Christ, or else you shall do amiss! You know Him not if you cannot trust Him with anything and everything, whatever it may be that relates to your welfare!

Now I shall give you two more instances which show how we may be with Christ and yet may not have known Him as we should. One shall be this. Every now and then I hear Christians saying—(I am glad to hear it)—“I offered prayer on such-and-such an account, and God has graciously heard me.” I am pleased to hear them make *the confession of answered prayer* for it tends to cheer and encourage others. But when they go on to exclaim, “Is it not surprising? Does not it seem almost incredible? Is it not marvelous?” I think they betray a weakness! Have I not heard many speak of Mr. Muller’s orphan houses at Bristol, and the honor put on him as extraordinary? It seems as though they thought it unbelievable that God would hear that dear man’s prayers! “More than two thousand children supported by prayer and faith,” they said—“How amazing!” as if our Lord, in this, had exceeded His own promise! Well, but has Christ been so long with us that we think these things strange? Were I to hear it reported that such a man, after having been married 20 years, had taken a present home to his wife, which he had handed to her very kindly and very generously, but which she had accepted with a look of surprise and an exclamation of, “Who would have thought it?” I would say, “Ah, then, they have lived a rather sorry life together, or else, though she might have been delighted, she certainly would not have been astounded at her husband’s generosity to her! Or, again, if I heard that a certain individual had paid his debts, and if it was talked of down Cheapside and all over London, I should naturally infer that it was a great wonder he did so, that on his part it was a thing uncommon and on the part of his creditors a thing unexpected! So, too, when I hear it spoken of as passing strange, a prodigy, that God should be gracious to His people, I blush for those who are amazed at what they might have expected! Am I to understand it to be really surprising that the Faithful Promiser keeps His promise? That our heavenly Father bestows good things on His children? That He who encouraged us to ask and engaged Himself to give, should answer our petitions? I dare not think thus! It seems to me that your sudden surprises tell of evil surmises! I would rather say, with that good old Christian lady who, when she was told of God’s hearing prayer, and asked if it was not surprising, replied, “No, it is just like Him! It is His way. He is always doing it!” Ah, truly, when we express surprise at His answering prayer and delivering His servants according to His promise, He might well say, “What? Have I been with you so long, and have you not known Me?”

With one more instance I conclude. Full many a time I have heard the Master’s voice in the inner chambers of my heart, expostulating with me thus—Have I been with you so long, and have you not known Me? And then I have said, Alas, Lord, I have not known You as I should and I feel

that I cannot know You as I would. Come, Beloved, let us talk it over together. Sometimes, in deep quietude of spirit, our heart has been giving itself to devotion—it may have been a time of suffering. The world was all shut out, and sweetly did our soul begin to perceive the love and the loveliness of Christ, till the vision of the Savior grew clearer and brighter and more brilliant. We saw His Godhead, admired His condescension that He should stoop to redeem. We saw His Manhood, grateful that He would come so near to us as to be bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. We saw Him at Gethsemane—seemed to count the bloody drops as they fell in a sweat from His brow. We saw Him on the Cross, marked His hands and feet. Our soul could follow Him up to Heaven, there view Him on the right hand of the Throne of God, pleading. We drew near unto Him. He wrapped us in His crimson vest and told us all His name.

Then we felt we knew more in that hour than we had ever known before, so that all we had known seemed nothing! We said to our soul, “Have we been so long time with Him, and yet have we not known Him till this hour, as we know Him now?” Now, between here and Heaven, unless we go Home very shortly, there will come a good many of these openings of the golden gates—times in which the King will bring us to His banqueting house. Doubtless, each time will He reveal Himself more intimately when we look more fully at Him and discover more of His blessed features and His sacred mind—each time we shall rise up from the sacred festival and say, “Long time as I have been with Him, I have not known Him until now.” On every fresh occasion we shall be ready to exclaim, like the Queen of Sheba when she saw the glory of Solomon, “The half has not been told me.” And when you get face to face with Him, your admiration will become so intense that though you will have a grateful remembrance of all you did know of Him on earth, you will say, “I was a long time with Him—twenty, 30, forty years, but I did not then know Him as I know Him now! I had a little fellowship with Him in the valley of tears below, but oh, I did but paint a bleary-eyed picture of the lovely King. Mine was but a poor dreamy, smoky imagination of this bright Sun, this Sun of Righteousness in His Glory, my King, the Chief among ten thousand, the altogether lovely.” I pray, Brothers and Sisters, that, gathering round His Table, you may have just such a season as shall make you ashamed of what you have known before in comparison with what you see now of His beauty! And then may you go on further and further learning of Christ, making discoveries of His Glory till you shall be with Him where He is, to behold that Glory, and to be participators in it!

God bless you at this feast of His love. May He be present with us to make glad our hearts! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
REVELATION 19:11-16.**

11-13. *And I saw Heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and He who sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He does judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns; and He had a name written, that no man knew, but He, Himself. And He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and His name is called The Word of God.* That same Logos of whom John wrote in the Gospel now stands before him and he beholds Him in His Glory. What a delight it must have been to the seer of Patmos to see his Lord and Master once again in different array from that in which he had beheld Him when, in humiliation, He tabernacled here among the sons of men! His name is still the same—The Logos—The Word of God.

14-16. *And the armies which were in Heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations: and He shall rule them with a rod of iron: and He treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.* And this is the Man of Nazareth. This is the crucified, despised, and rejected One. *Servus servorum* once.—Servant of servants but now King of kings and Lord of lords! And what will the end be of the battle that He wages? Will any of His adversaries escape? Will they hold their own? No, they shall utterly be destroyed before Him! All the powers of evil, of false doctrine—everything contrary to His mind—shall be destroyed. And this is set forth in symbolic imagery by the dreadful battle feast which usually succeeds a battle, when the vultures smell the carrion from afar and come to rend the spoil. It shall not be thus with the bodies of men, but thus with evil—thus with the powers of darkness.

—Adapted from the *C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

LOVE'S LAW AND LIFE

NO. 1932

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,
DECEMBER 5, 1886,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 30, 1886.**

***"If you love Me, keep My commandments."
John 14:15.***

THIS is a chapter singularly full of certainties and remarkably studded with "*ifs*." Concerning most of the great things in it there never can be an, "if," and yet, "if," comes up, I think, no less than seven times in the chapter and, "if," too, not about trifles, but about the most solemn subjects. It is, perhaps, worthy of mention that with each of these, "*ifs*," there is something connected, as following out of it, or appearing to be involved in it, or connected with it.

Look at the second verse. "In my Father's house are many mansions: *if* it were not so, I would have told you." If there had been no place for us in the Glory Land, Jesus would have told us. If any Truth of God which had not been revealed would have made our hope a folly, our Lord Jesus would have warned us of it, for He has not come to lure us into a fool's paradise and, at the last, deceive us. He will tell us all that it is necessary for us to know in order to a wise faith and a sure hope. The Lord has not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth—He has not spoken in contradiction of His revealed Word. Nothing in His secret decrees or hidden designs can shake our confidence, or darken our expectation. "*If* it were not so, I would have told you." Had there been a secret thing which would have injured your prospects, it should have been dragged to light that you might not be deceived, for the Lord Jesus has no desire to win disciples by the suppression of distasteful Truths. If there were anything yet to be revealed which would render your hope a delusion at the end, you would have been made acquainted with it—Jesus, Himself, would break the sad news to you—He would not leave you to be horrified by finding it out for yourselves! He kindly declares, "*I* would have told you."

Notice the third verse. Again we meet with, "if," and its consequence. "*If* I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself." If the Lord Jesus should go away (and this is a supposition no longer, for He has gone), then He would return, again, in due time. Since He *has* gone, He will come again, for He has made the one to depend on the other. We make no question that He went up into Heaven, for He rose from out the circle of His followers and they saw Him as He went up into

Heaven. They had no sort of doubt as to the fact that the cloud received Him out of their sight and, moreover, they received assurance out of Heaven, by an angelic messenger, that, "He shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go into Heaven." "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself." His going Home pledges Him to come and compels us to look for Him!

The next, "if," comes at *the beginning of the seventh verse*—"If you had known Me, you should have known My Father, also." If we really know the Lord Christ, we know God. In fact, there is no knowing God aright except through His Son Jesus! It is evidently true that men do not long hold to theism pure and simple. If our scientific men get away from the Christ, the Incarnate God, before long they drift away from God altogether. They begin to slide down the mountain when they quit the Incarnate Deity—and there is no more foothold to stop them. No man comes to the Father but by the Son—and no man long keeps to the Father who does not keep to his faith in the Son. Those who know Christ know God, but those who are ignorant of the Savior are ignorant of God, however much they may pride themselves upon their religion! They may know another god, but the only living and true God is unknown except by those who receive Jesus. The Divine Fatherhood, of which we hear so much in certain quarters, is only to be seen through the window of Incarnation and Sacrifice. We must see Jesus before we can gain even so much as a *glimpse* at the Infinite, the Incomprehensible and the Invisible! God comes not within finite perception till He enters human flesh—and there we behold His Glory, full of Grace and truth.

The next variety of, "if," you will find a little farther down in the chapter, namely, *in the 14th verse*—"If you shall ask anything in My name, I will do it." The, "if," in this case involves an uncertainty about our prayers, if an uncertainty at all. Taking it for granted that we ask mercies in the name of Jesus, a glorious certainty is linked to them. Jesus says, "I will do it." Here our Lord speaks after a Sovereign style. We may not say, "I will," but the, "I wills," pertain to Christ. He can answer and He has the right to answer—and, therefore. He says without reservation, "I will." "If you shall ask anything in My name, I will do it." Oh that we might put the first, "if," out of court by continually petitioning the Lord and signing our petitions with the name of Jesus! May we be importunate only in prayers to which we are warranted to set that august name and then, boldly using His name and authority, we need be under no apprehension of failure! The great Father in Heaven never denies the power of His Son's name, neither does the Son Himself draw back from the keeping of His own pledges! True prayer operates with the same certainty as the laws of Nature. "Delight yourself, also, in the Lord and He shall give you the desires of your heart." Oh that we did delight more in the Divine name and Character—and then our prayers would always speed to the Throne!

Now comes the, "if," of our text, of which I will say nothing for the moment. "If you love Me, keep My commandments." Something, you see, is to come out of this, "if," as out of all the others. *If* something, *then* some-

thing—“*If you love me,*” then carry it out to the legitimate result—“keep My commandments.”

You have the next, “if,” in verse 23—“Jesus answered and said to him, *If a man loves Me, he will keep My words.*” Respect to His wisdom and obedience to His authority will grow out of love. “The love of Christ constrains us.” We hear that passage often misquoted, “The love of Christ *ought* to constrain us,” but that is a corruption of the text. The Apostle tells us that it *does* constrain us and, if it really enters the heart, it will do so. It is an active, moving power, influencing the inner life and then the external conduct—

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

“If a man loves Me, he will keep my words.” He will believe in the verbal inspiration of His Lord. He will regard His teaching as Infallible. He will attend to it and remember it. More than this, he will, by his conduct, carry out the words of his Lord and so keep them in the best possible manner by enshrining them in his daily life.

The chapter almost closes at the 28th verse by saying, “If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said, I go unto My Father, for My Father is greater than I.” Where there is an intelligent love to Christ, we rejoice in His gains even though we, ourselves, appear to be losers thereby. The corporeal absence of our Lord from our midst might seem to be a great loss to us, but we rejoice in it because it is for His own greater Glory. If He is enthroned in Glory, we dare not lament His absence. Our love agrees to His departure, yes, rejoices in it, for anything which conduces to His exaltation is sweet to us. Let us at this moment, because we love Him, rejoice that He has gone to the Father!

So you see the chapter, if you read it, though enriched with heavenly certainties, is yet besprinkled with, “ifs.” Like little pools of sparkling water among the ever abiding rocks, these, “ifs,” gleam in the light of Heaven and refresh us even to look upon them.

Let us now think of our own text and may the Holy Spirit lead us into the secret chambers of it! “*If you love Me, keep My commandments.*”

The present, “if” is a serious one. Let that stand as our first head. Secondly, *the test which is added concerning it is a very judicious one*—“If you love Me, keep My commandments.” In the third place, I will give you the reading of the Revised Version, and say, *that test will be endured by love,* for the words may be interpreted—“If you love Me, you will keep my commandments.” Obedience will follow upon love as a matter of certainty.

I. To begin, then, THE “IF” IN OUR TEXT IS A VERY SERIOUS ONE. It goes to the very root of the matter. Love belongs to the heart and every surgeon will tell you that a disease of the heart may not be trifled with. A clever doctor said to me, “I feel at my ease with any matter if it does not touch the head or the heart.” Solomon bids us keep the heart with all diligence, “for out of it are the issues of life.” If the mainspring fails, all the works of a watch refuse to act. We cannot, therefore, think little of a ques-

tion which concerns our love, for it deals with a vital part. O Friends, I hope there is no question about our love for Jesus!

Observe how our Savior puts this, "if," concerning love in such a way as to teach us that *love must be prior to obedience*. The text is not, "Keep My commandments and then love Me." No, we do not expect pure streams till the fountain is cleansed. Nor does He say—"Keep My commandments and love Me at the same time," as two separate things, although that might, in a measure, correspond with truth. But love is put first because it is first in importance and first in experience. "If you love Me"—we must begin with love—then, "keep My commandments." Obedience must have love for its mother, nurse and food. The essence of obedience lies in the hearty love which prompts the deed rather than in the deed itself. I can conceive it possible that a man might, in his outward life, keep Christ's commandments and yet might never keep them at all so as to be accepted before God. If he became obedient by compulsion, but would have disobeyed if he dared, then his heart was not right before God and his actions were of little worth. The commandments are to be kept out of love to Him who gave them. In obedience, to love is to live—if we love Christ we *live* Christ. Love to the Person of our Lord is the very salt of our sacrifices. To put it most practically—I often say to myself, "Today I have performed all the duties of my office, but have I been careful to abide in my Lord's love? I have not failed as to *doing* all that was possible—I have gone from early morning till late at night, packing as much work as possible into every hour and trying to do it with all my heart. But have I, after all, done this as unto the Lord and for His sake?"

I tremble lest I should serve God merely because I happen to be a minister and am called to preach His Word, or because the natural routine of the day carries me through it. I am concerned that I may be impelled by no force but the love of Jesus! This fear often humbles me in the dust and prevents all glorying in what I have done. Only as we love our Lord can our obedience be true and acceptable. The main care of our lives should be to do right and to do it because we love the Lord. We must walk *before* the Lord as Abraham did and *with* the Lord as Enoch did. Unless we are under the constant constraint of love to the Lord Jesus Christ we shall fail terribly—

***"Knowledge, alas! is all in vain,
And all in vain our fear,
In vain our labor and our pain
If love is absent there."***

See, dear Friends, how inward true religion is—how far it exceeds all external formalism? How deep is the seat of true Grace! You cannot hope to do that which Christ can smile upon until your heart is renewed. A heart at enmity with God cannot be made acceptable by mere acts of piety. It is not what your hands are doing, nor even what your lips are saying. The main thing is what your *heart is meaning and intending*. Which way are your affections tending? The great flywheel which moves the whole ma-

chinery of life is fixed in the heart—therefore this is the most important of all suggestions—“If you love Me.”

“If you love Me” is a searching sound. I start as I hear it! He that believes in the Lord Jesus Christ for his salvation produces, as the first fruit of his faith, love to Christ—this must be in us and abound, or nothing is right. Packed away within that box of sweets called, “love,” you shall find every holy thing, but if you have no love, what have you? Though you wear your fingers to the bone with service, weep your eyes out with repentance, make your knees hard with kneeling and dry your throat with shouting, yet if the heart does not beat with love, your religion falls to the ground like a withered leaf in autumn! Love is the chief jewel in the bracelet of obedience! Hear the text, and mark it well—“If you love Me, keep My commandments.”

O Sirs, what a mass of religion is cast out as worthless by this text! Men may keep on going to Church and going to Chapel and they may be religious, yes, throughout a whole life and, apparently, they may be blameless in their moral conduct—and yet there may be nothing in them because there is no love to the ever-blessed Christ at the bottom of the profession! When the heathen killed their sacrifices in order to prophesy future events from the entrails, the worst sign they ever got was when the priest, after searching into the victim, could not find a heart—or if that heart was small and shriveled. The soothsayers always declared that this omen was the sure sign of calamity. All the signs were evil if the heart of the offering was absent or deficient. It is so in very deed with religion and with each religious person. He that searches us searches principally our hearts! He who tries mankind tries chiefly the reins of the children of men. The Master is in our midst, tonight, walking down these aisles with noiseless tread, girt about the paps with a golden girdle and robed in snow-white garments down to His feet. Look! He stops before each one of us and gently asks, “Do you love Me?” Three times He repeats the question! He waits for an answer. It is a vital question—do not refuse a reply. Oh that the Spirit of the Lord may enable you to answer in sincerity and truth and say, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You!”

This matter of love to Jesus is put prior to every other because *it is the best reason for our obedience to Him*. Notice—“If you love Me, keep My commandments.” Personal affection will produce personal obedience. Do you not see the drift of the words? The blessed Jesus says, “If you love Me, keep My commandments” because, truly, operative love is mainly love to a person and love to our Lord's Person begets obedience to His precepts! There are some men for whom you would do anything—you will to yield to their will. If such a person were to say to you, “Do this,” you would do it without question. Perhaps he stands to you in the relation of master and you are his willing servant. Perhaps he is a venerated friend and because you esteem and love him, his word is law to you. The Savior may much more safely than any other be installed in such a position! From the throne of your affections He says, “If you love Me—if your heart really goes out to Me—then let My word be a commandment. Let My commandment

be kept in your memory and then further kept by being observed in your life." So you see the reason why the Master begins with the heart—because there is no hope of obedience to Him in our actions unless He is enshrined in our *affections*! This is the spring and source of all holy living—love to the Holy One. Dear friends, have you been captured by the beauties of Jesus and are you held in a Divine captivity to the adorable Person of your redeeming Lord? Then you have within you the impulse which constrains you to keep His commandments!

It was greatly necessary for our Lord thus to address His disciples. Yes, it was necessary to speak, thus, even to the Apostles. He says to the chosen 12, "If you love Me." We should never have doubted one of them. We now know by the result that one of them was a traitor to his Lord and sold Him for pieces of silver, but no one suspected him, for he seemed as loyal as any one of them. Ah, if that question, "If you love Me," needed to be raised in the sacred college of the 12, much more must it be allowed to sift our Churches and to test ourselves! Brothers and Sisters, this word is exceedingly necessary in the present assembly! Hear its voice—"If you love Me." The mixed multitude here gathered together may be compared to the heap on the threshing floor and there is need of the winnowing fan. Perhaps you have almost taken it for granted that you love Jesus—but it must not be taken for granted! Some of you have been born in a religious atmosphere, you have lived in the midst of godly people and you have never been out into the wicked world to be tempted by its follies—therefore you come to an immediate conclusion that you must assuredly love the Lord! This is unwise and perilous! Never glory in armor which you have not tested, nor rejoice in love to Christ which has not sustained trial!

What an awful thing if you should be deceived and mistaken! It is most kind of the Savior to raise a question about your love and thus give you an opportunity of examining yourself and seeing whether you are right at heart. It will be far better for you to err upon the side of too great anxiety than on that of carnal security. To be afraid that you are wrong and so to make sure of being right, will bring you to a far better end than being sure that you are right and, therefore, refusing to look into the ground of your hope! I would have you fully assured of your love for Jesus, but I would not have you deceived by a belief that you love Him if you do not. Lord, search us and try us!

Remember, if any man loves not the Lord Jesus Christ he will be *anathema maranatha*—cursed at His coming! This applies to every man, even though he is most eminent. An Apostle turned out to be a son of perdition—may not you? Every man, even though he is a learned bishop, or a popular pastor, or a renowned evangelist, or a venerable elder, or an active deacon, or the most ancient member of the most orthodox assembly, may yet turn out to be no lover of the Lord! Though he has gathered to break bread in the sacred name with a select company, yet if he does not truly love the Lord Jesus Christ, the curse rests upon him, whoever he may be. So let us take from the Master's lips the heart-searching words at this time, "If you love Me, keep My commandments." Let us take

them personally home, as if addressed to each one of us personally and alone.

While considering the text, let each one view himself apart. What have you to do in this matter with keeping the vineyards of others? See to your own hearts. The text does not say, "If the Church loves Me," or, "If such-and-such a minister loves Me," or, "If your brothers love Me." No, but it is, "If *you* love Me, keep My commandments." The most important question for each one to answer is that which concerns his personal attachment to his Redeemer and the personal obedience which comes out of it. I press this enquiry upon each one. It may seem a trite and commonplace question, but it needs to be put again and again before all in our congregations. The preacher needs to be thus questioned—he gets into the habit of reading his Bible for other people. The Sunday school teacher needs this enquiry—he, also, is apt to study the Scriptures for his class rather than for himself. We all need the Truth of God to come home to us with personal and forcible application, for we are always inclined to shift unpleasant enquiries upon others. In the case of very deaf people, when they hold up their horns, we speak right down into them—and I wish to speak home pointedly to each one of you at this time. Let the text sound into your individual ear and heart—"If you love Me, keep My commandments."

The question is answerable, however. It was put to the Apostles and they could answer it. Peter spoke as all the 11 would have done when he said, "You know that I love You." It is not a question concerning mysteries out of range and beyond judgement—it deals with a plain matter of fact. A man may know whether he loves the Lord or not and he ought to know. He who is jealous of himself and is, therefore, half afraid to speak positively, may all the more truly be a lover of the Lord. Holy caution may raise a question where the answer is far more certain than in the breasts of those who never even make the enquiry because they are carnally secure. Do not be content with merely longing to love Jesus or with longing to know whether you love Him. Not to know whether you love the Lord Jesus is a state of mind so dangerous that I exhort you never to go to sleep until you have escaped from it! A man has no right to smile—I had almost said, he has no right, either to eat bread or drink water so long as that question hangs in the balances! It ought to be decided. It can be decided! It can be decided at once. Not love Jesus? It were better for me not to live than not to love Him! Not love Christ? May the terrible fact never be hidden from my weeping eyes! Perhaps the dread discovery may drive me to better things. If I do love my Lord, I can never rest with the shadow of a doubt darkening the life of my love. A question on such a matter is unbearable—

***"Do not I love You from my soul?
Then let me nothing love.
Dead be my heart to every joy,
When Jesus cannot move.
Would not my heart pour forth its blood
In honor of Your name
And challenge the cold hand of death***

***To dampen the immortal flame?
You know I love You, dearest Lord,
But oh, I long to soar
Far from the sphere of mortal joys,
And learn to love You more.***

Brothers and Sisters, hear the question suggested by this little word, "if!" Consider it well and rest not until you can say, "I love the Lord because He has heard my voice and my supplication." So much, then, concerning the serious nature of this, "if."

II. In the second place, let me observe that THE TEST WHICH IS PROPOSED IN THE TEXT IS A VERY JUDICIOUS ONE. "If you love Me, *keep My commandments.*" This is the best proof of love.

The test indicated does not suggest a lawless liberty. It is true we are not under the Law, but under Grace, but yet we are under Law to Christ and if we love Him we are to keep His commandments. Let us never enter into the counsel of those who do not believe that there are any commandments for Believers to keep. Those who do away with duty, do away with sin and, consequently, with the Savior! It is not written—"If you love Me, do whatever you please." Jesus does not say—"So long as you love Me in your hearts, I care nothing about your lives." There is no such doctrine as that between the covers of this Holy Book! He that loves Christ is the freest man out of Heaven, but he is also the most under bonds. He is free, for Christ has loosed his bonds, but he is put under bonds to Christ by grateful love! The love of Christ constrains him from this day on to live to the Lord who loved him, lived for him, died for him and rose again. No, dear Friends, we do not desire a lawless life. He that is not under the law as a power for condemnation, yet can say that with his heart he delights in the Law of God! He longs after perfect holiness and in his soul yields hearty homage to the precepts of the Lord Jesus. Love is Law—the Law of love is the strongest of all Laws! Christ has become our Master and King and His commandments are not grievous!

The text also contains no fanatical challenge. We do not read, "If you love Me, perform some extraordinary act." The test required is not an outburst of extravagance, or an attempt to realize the ambitious project of a fevered brain. Nothing of the kind! Hermits, nuns and religious mad-caps find no example or precept here! Some persons think that if they love Jesus they must enter a convent, retire to a cell, dress themselves oddly, or shave their heads. It has been the thought of some men, "If we love Christ we must strip ourselves of everything we possess, put on sackcloth, tie ropes round our waists and pine in the desert." Others have thought it wise to make light of themselves by oddity of dress and behavior. The Savior does not say anything of the kind—"If you love Me, keep My commandments." Every now and then we find members of our Churches who must leave their trades and their callings to show their love for Jesus—children may starve and wives may pine but their mad whimsies must be carried out for love of Jesus! Under this influence, they rush into all sorts of foolery and soon ruin their characters because they will not take the

advice of sobriety and cannot be satisfied with the grand test of love which our Lord, Himself, herein lays down! The text does not condemn these light-headed projects in detail, but it does so in the gross by proposing a far more reasonable test—"If you love Me, keep My commandments." Do not spin theories in your excited brains and vow that you will do this desperate thing and the other. The probability is that you are not seeking the Glory of the Lord, but you are wanting notoriety for yourself! You are aiming at supreme devotion so that you may become a distinguished person and that people may talk about your superior saintship. You may even go so far as to court persecution from selfish motives. The Savior, who was wise and knew what was in men and knew, also, what would be the most sure test of true love to Himself, says, "If you love Me, keep My commandments." This is a much more difficult thing than to follow out the dictates of a crazy brain.

Why does the Savior give us this as a test? I think that one reason is because it is one which tests *whether you are loving Christ in His true position*, or whether your love is to a Christ of your own making and your own placing. It is easy to crave a half Christ and refuse a whole Christ. It is easy, also, to follow a Christ of your own construction who is merely an antichrist. The real Christ is so great and glorious that He has a right to give commandments! Moses never used an expression such as our Savior here employs. He might say, "Keep God's commandments," but he would never have said, "Keep *my* commandments." That dear and Divine Person whom we call Master and Lord here says, "Keep My commandments." What a commanding person He must be! What lordship He has over His people! How great He is among His saints! If you keep His commandments, you are putting Him into the position which He claims. By obedience you acknowledge His sovereignty and Godhead and say with Thomas, "My Lord and my God."

I am afraid that a great many people know a Christ who is meek and lowly, their servant and Savior, but they do not know the Lord Jesus Christ. Alas, my Friends, such people set up a false Christ! We do not love Jesus at all if He is not our Lord and God. It is all cant and hypocrisy, this love to Christ which robs Him of His Deity! I abhor that love to Christ which does not make Him King of kings and Lord of lords. Love Him and belittle Him? It is absurd! Follow your own will in preference to His will and then talk of love to Him? Ridiculous! This is but the devil's counterfeit of love—it is a contradiction of all true love. Love is loyal! Love crowns its Lord with obedience. If you love Jesus aright, you view His every precept as a Divine Commandment. You love the true Christ if you love a commanding Christ as well as a saving Christ and look to Him for the guidance of your life as well as for the pardon of your sin.

This test, again, is very judicious, because *it proves the living presence of the object of your love*. Love always desires to have its object near and it has a faculty of bringing its object near. If you love anybody, that person may be far away and yet to your thoughts, he is close at hand. Love brings the beloved one so near that the thought of him acts upon its life. A gen-

tleman has faithful servants. He goes away and leaves his house in their charge—he has gone abroad and yet he is at home to his servants, for every day their work is done as if he were there to see! He is coming home soon—they hardly know when, but they keep all things in readiness for his return, let it happen when it may. They are not eye-servants and so they work none the less because he is absent. If he does not see *them*, yet the eyes of their love always see *him* and, therefore, they work as if he were at home. Their affection keeps him always near.

A dear father is dead and he has left his property to a son who honors his memory. What does the son do? He is generous, like his father, and when he is asked why, he replies, "I do exactly what I believe my dear father would have done if he had been here." "Why?" "Because I love him." When a man is dead, he lives to those who love him! So the living Christ, who is *not* dead, but has gone away, is made present to us by our realizing love—and the proof of our love is that Jesus is so present that He constrains our actions, influences our motives and is the cause of our obedience! Jesus seems to say—"If you love Me, now that I am gone, you will do as you would have done if I were still with you and looking at you. You will continue to keep My commandments, as in My Presence."

It is a most judicious test, again, because, by keeping our Lord's commandments, we are doing that which is most pleasing to Him and will most glorify Him! Some enthusiastic Methodist cries—

"Oh, what shall I do my Savior to praise?"

Listen, my Brother—if you love your Savior, keep His commandments! This is all you have to do and a great all, too. Among the rest, you may come and be baptized while you are thus earnest to praise your Lord. "If you love Me, keep My commandments." There is the answer to every rapturous enquiry! Jesus is more glorified by a consistent obedience to His commands than by the most extravagant zeal that we can possibly display in what is only will-worship because He has never commanded it. If you wish to break the alabaster box and fill the house with sweet perfume. If you wish to crown His head with rarest gems, the method is before you—"Keep My commandments." You cannot do your Lord so great a favor, or, in the long run, bring to Him so real an honor, as by a complete, continual, hearty obedience to every one of His commandments!

Moreover, the Savior knew, when He bade us try this test, "If you love Me, keep My commandments," that *it would prepare us for honoring and glorifying Him in many other ways*. Read the context—"If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever." You can greatly glorify Christ if you are filled with the Holy Spirit. But you cannot be filled with the Holy Spirit if you do not keep Christ's commandments! The Spirit of God as a Comforter will come only to those to whom He comes as a Sanctifier. By making us holy, He will qualify us for being useful. The Savior says, "If you love Me, keep My commandments," because we shall then obtain that Divine Gift by which we can glorify His name! If

there is any service which your love would aspire to, obedience to your Lord is the way to it!

But, indeed, I need not stand here and argue. When a friend is dying and he asks you to prove your love by such-and-such a deed, he may ask what he wills—you give him *carte blanche*. It may be the simplest thing or the hardest thing, but if he will prescribe it as a test of love, you will not tell him no. If your wife should say to you, "You are going to journey far from me and I shall not see you again for many days. I beg you, therefore, to carry my portrait within your watch-case," you would not fail to do so. It would be a simple thing, but it would be sacred to you. Baptism and the Lord's Supper will never be slighted by those whose hearts are fully possessed with love to Jesus! They may seem trifles, but if the Lord Jesus commands them, they cannot be neglected! To leave off your wedding ring might be no great crime and yet no loving wife would do it. Even so, none who regard outward ordinances as love tokens will think of neglecting them. Ours is not to ask for reasons. Ours is not to dispute about whether the deed is essential or non-essential. Ours is to obey right lovingly! Bridegroom of our hearts, say what You will and we will obey You! If only You will smile and strengthen us, nothing shall be impossible if great, nothing trifling if small!

III. Time has well-near gone, or we would dwell upon the third head, which we must now leave, only praying God to prove the truth of it. The third head is this—TRUE LOVE WILL ENDURE THIS TEST. "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." This is the Revised Version and I hope it will be written out in capitals upon our revised lives! We *will* obey, we *must* obey since we love Him by whom the command is given!

Come then, Brothers and Sisters, as the time has gone, let me say this much to you. If you love Christ, set to work to *find out what His commandments are*. Study the Scriptures upon every point upon which you have the slightest question. This sacred oracle must guide you.

Next, *be always true to your convictions* about what Christ's commandments are. Carry them out at all hazards and carry them out at once. It will be wicked to say, "Until now I have obeyed, but I shall stop here." We are committed to implicit obedience to the whole of the Master's will, involve what it may. Will you not agree to this at the outset? If you love Him, you will not object.

Take note of every commandment as it concerns you. Let me mention one or two, and beg you to obey them as you hear them. "Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." Is not this a call to you, my Brother, to be a missionary? Do you hear it? Will you not say, "Here am I, send me"? Another person has come into this house to-night full of enmity—somebody has treated him very badly and he cannot forget it, I pray him to hear the Lord's command—"Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar and there remember that your brother has anything against you; leave there your gift before the altar and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother and then come and offer your gift." And again, "Little children, love one another." If any of you are in debt, obey this

commandment—"Owe no man anything, but to love one another." If you neglect the poor and live in a stingy way, hear this commandment—"Give to him that asks you and from him that would borrow of you turn not away." At the back of all comes this is—"If you love Me, keep My commandments." I might stay here all night, and mention, one after another, the commandments which would be specially applicable to each one of my hearers, but I pray the Holy Spirit to bring all things to your remembrance.

If there is a commandment which you do not relish, it ought to be a warning to you that there is something wrong in your heart that needs setting right. If you ever quarrel with one of Christ's commands, end that quarrel by especially attending to it beyond every other! Do as the miserly man did when he conquered his avarice, once and for all. He was a Christian and he promised he would give a pound to the Church, but the devil whispered, "You need your money, do not pay." The man stamped his foot and said, "I will give two!" Then the devil said, "Surely you are going mad! Save your money." The man replied that he would not be conquered, he would give four pounds. "Now," said Satan, "you must be insane." Then said the man, "I will give eight and if you don't stop your tempting, I will give 16 for I will not be the slave of covetousness." The point is to throw your whole soul into that very duty wherein you are most tempted to be slack. Jesus does not say, "If you love Me, keep this commandment or that." Out of love obey *every* command!

Many of you do not love my Lord Jesus Christ. I have not preached to *you*, but that very fact should make you thoughtful. Go home and consider that the preacher said nothing to you because you do not love the Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, *cannot* keep His commandments. Write down in black and white—"I do not love the Lord Jesus Christ." If it is really so, be honest enough to make a note of it and think it over. If you love Jesus, you may joyfully write out, "I love the Lord Jesus. Oh for Grace to love Him more!" But if you do not love Him, it will be honest to put it upon record. Write it boldly—"I do not love the Lord Jesus Christ." Look at it and look again—and oh, may God the Holy Spirit lead you to repent of not loving Jesus who is the Altogether Lovely One and the great lover of men's souls! Oh that you may begin to love Him at once! Amen and Amen.

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THE PARACLETE

NO. 1074

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 6, 1872,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***"I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter,
that He may abide with you forever."
John 14:16.***

THE unspeakable gift of the Son of God was followed up by the equally priceless gift of the Holy Spirit. Must it not be confessed by us that we think far less of the Holy Spirit than we should? I am sure we do not exalt the Savior too much, nor is He too often the subject of our meditations, but at the same time we give to the Holy Spirit a very disproportionate place compared with the Redeemer. I fear that we even grieve the Spirit by our neglect of Him. Let me invite your devout contemplations to the special work of the Holy Spirit. Such an invitation is necessary. The subject has not grown stale, for it too seldom occupies our thoughts.

We have not been unduly engrossed with honoring the Spirit of God for this is a fault seldom or never committed. We have met with uninstructed persons who have glorified the love of Jesus beyond that of the Father, and there are others so occupied with the decrees of the Father as to cast the work of the Son into the background—but very few and far between are those Believers who have dwelt upon the doctrine of the Holy Spirit beyond its proper measure and degree. The mistake has almost invariably been made in the opposite direction.

The personal name of the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity is, "the Spirit," or the, "Holy Spirit," which words describe His Nature as being a pure, spiritual, immaterial existence and His Character as being in Himself and in His workings pre-eminently holy. We commonly also speak of Him as the, "Holy Ghost," but the name is now an erroneous one. The word "ghost" was the same as "spirit" in years gone by, when the present translation of the Bible was made, but it does not popularly signify "spirit" now. Superstition has degraded the word from its elevated meaning and it might be as well, perhaps, if the word were dropped altogether and we confined ourselves to the more accurate word, "Holy Spirit."

The term, "Holy Spirit," is His personal title and we have in this verse His official title—He is in the English version called, the "Comforter," but the word used in the original, upon which we will meditate this morning, has a much wider range of meaning. The word is *Parakletos*—we used it just now in our hymn, translating it into the English as, "Paraclete"—

***"Cheer our desponding hearts,
You heavenly Paraclete!
Give us to lie, with humble hope,
At our Redeemer's feet."***

Now, it is true that the name, "Comforter," is a fair translation from some points of view, but it rather translates a *corner* of the word than the whole of it. It is a light which really streams from the text, but it is one of

the seven prismatic colors rather than the combined light of the very instructive and wonderful word, Paraclete. Understand, then, that we have now to consider, this morning, the official title of the Holy Spirit. May we be filled with loving reverence while we study His gracious work and His official name.

I. First, this morning, I shall try to EXPLAIN HOW THE SPIRIT OF GOD IS THE PARACLETE. The word, Paraclete, is so full that it is extremely difficult to convey to you all its meaning. It is like those Hebrew words which contain so much in a small compass. It is sternly and even primitively sublime in its simplicity, yet it comprehends great things. Literally, it signifies, “called to,” or, “called beside” another to aid him. It is synonymous verbally, though not in sense, with the Latin word, *advocatus*, a person called in to speak for us by pleading our cause. Yet, as we have come to use the word, “advocate,” in a different sense, that word, although it would, like that of, “comforter,” convey a part of the meaning, it could not contain it all.

Paraclete is wider than “advocate” and wider than “comforter.” I think the meaning of the word, “Paraclete,” might be put under the two headings of one “called to,” and one “calling to.” One called to, that is, to come to our aid, to help our infirmities, to suggest, to advocate, to guide and so on—and one who, in consequence thereof, for our benefit, calls to us—for some see in it the idea of monitor, and certainly the blessed Paraclete is our Teacher, Remembrancer, Incentive and Comforter. His work as One called in to help us, consists very largely in His strengthening us by admonition, by instruction, by encouragement and by those works which would come under the head of a Teacher or a Comforter.

Paraclete is a word too extensive in meaning to be exchanged for any one word in any language. It is most comprehensive and we shall hope not so much to *interpret* as to paraphrase it in the first head of our sermon this morning. Let us take all the passages in John 14:15-16 which refer to this title and study them with care. From the first, which is our text, we learn that the Holy Spirit, as the Paraclete, is to be to *us* all that Jesus was to His disciples. Read the text, “I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter,” plainly teaching that the Lord Jesus Christ is the *first* Paraclete and that the Holy Spirit is a *second* Paraclete occupying the same position as the living Jesus did.

It would not be easy to describe all that Jesus was to His disciples when He dwelt among them. If we called Him their “Guide, and Counselor, and Friend,” we should but have begun to catalogue His kindnesses. What a valiant leader is to an army when his very presence inspires them with valor, when his wisdom and tact conduct them to certain victory and when his influence over them nerves and strengthens them in the day of battle—all that, and more, was Jesus Christ to His disciples! What the shepherd is to the sheep, the sheep being foolish and the shepherd, alone, wise—the sheep being defenseless and the shepherd strong to protect them—the sheep being without power to provide for themselves in any degree, and the shepherd able to give them all they require—all that was Jesus Christ to His people!

You see Socrates in the midst of his pupils and you observe at once that the great philosopher is the factotum of his school. But still, some follower of Socrates may improve upon what he teaches. Now, when you see Jesus, you observe at once that all His disciples are but as little children compared with their Master and that the school would cease at once if the great Teacher were gone. He is not only the Founder but the Finisher of our system. Jesus is to us not only the doctor but the doctrine—"He is the Way, and the Truth, and the Life."

The disciple of Christ feels Jesus to be inexpressibly precious. He does not know how many uses Christ can be put to, but this he knows—Christ is All in All to him. As the Orientals say of the palm tree, that every fragment of it is of use—and there is scarcely any domestic arrangement into which the palm tree, in some form or other, does not enter—even so Jesus Christ is good for everything to His people and there is nothing that they have to do, or feel, or know that is good or excellent, but Jesus Christ enters into it. What would that little company of disciples have been as they went through the streets of Jerusalem without their Lord? Conceive Him absent and no other Paraclete to fill His place and you see no longer a powerful band of teachers equipped to revolutionize the world, but a company of fishermen without intelligence and without influence—a band which in a short time will melt under the influence of unbelief and cowardice! Christ was All in All to His people while He was here.

Now, all that Jesus was, the Spirit of God is now to the Church. He is "another Paraclete to abide with us forever." If there is this day any power in the Church of God, it is because the Holy Spirit is in the midst of her. If she is able to work any spiritual miracles, it is through the might of His indwelling. If there is any light in her instruction; if there is any life in her ministry; if there is any glory gotten to God; if there is any good worked among the sons of men, it is entirely because the Holy Spirit is still with her! The entire weight of influence of the Church as a whole, and every Christian in particular, comes from the abiding Presence of the sacred Paraclete!

And Brothers and Sisters, we shall do well to treat the Holy Spirit as we would have treated Christ had He been yet among us. Our Lord's disciples told Him their troubles. We must trust the Comforter with ours. Whenever they felt that they were barbed by the adversary, they fell back upon their Leader's power—so must we call in the aid of the Holy Spirit. When they needed guidance they sought direction from Jesus—we, also, must seek and abide by the Spirit's leadings. When, knowing what to do, they felt themselves weak for the accomplishment of it, they waited upon their Master for strength—and so must we upon the Spirit of all Grace. Treat the Holy Spirit with the love and tender respect which are due to the Savior, and the Spirit of God will deal with you as the Son of God did with His disciples.

Now, Beloved, we must pass on in our review of the passages of Scripture which relate to the Paraclete and remember there are only five. We know that the Holy Spirit comforts the people of God by the mere fact of His Presence and indwelling. "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Paraclete that He may abide with you forever." "For," says the 17th

verse, “He dwells with you, and shall be in you.” Beloved, I have said that the mere fact of the Presence of the Holy Spirit is comfort to the saints, and is it not? Jesus has not left you orphans, O you His chosen friends! He has gone, but He has left an equally Divine Substitute, the Holy Spirit!

And if at this moment you do not feel His power, if you are even crying out under a sense of your own natural deadness, yet is it not a comfort to you that there is a Holy Spirit and that the Holy Spirit dwells in you at this present time? You are not required to bring down the Holy Spirit from Heaven by praying—

**“Come Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove,
With all Your quickening powers.”**

He *has* come down from Heaven and has never gone back again! He dwells in His Church perpetually and is not to be brought from on high. He is lawfully to be *called upon* to work in us, and He is always here! “Oh,” you say, “then I must have hope, for if the Spirit of God is in me, I know that He will expel my sin. If I were alone and had to fight my spiritual battles alone, I might despair. But if it is true that the eternal God Himself, in the majesty of His Omnipotence, dwells within my bosom, then, my Heart, be of good comfort and be encouraged! The Lord who is in you is mightier than all they that are against you.”

Satan may roar, the lusts of the flesh may rebel and the temptations of the world may assail, but if the Holy Spirit is really resident within the Believer’s heart, then perfection will one day be attained and the last enemy will be trod down! It is consolation to us to know that the Holy Spirit dwells in us and He deserves His name of Comforter from the mere fact of His Presence and indwelling. But we pass on to notice that according to the 26th verse, the Spirit of God exercises His office as a Paraclete and comforts us by His teaching—“The Comforter, who is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatever I have said unto you.”

It is a part of the Spirit’s work to make us understand what Jesus taught. If He were merely to bring to remembrance the words of Jesus it would do us little good—even as when a child learns his Catechism and does not understand it, it is not of much service to him to bring to remembrance the words of the questions and answers. But if you first *teach* him their meaning and *then* bring the words to remembrance, you have conferred upon him a double and an inestimable gift. Now, we can, so far as the letter goes, learn from the Scriptures the words of Jesus for ourselves—but to *understand* these teachings is the *gift* of the Spirit of God and of none else! After He takes the key and lets us into the inner meaning of the Lord’s words—after He makes us experimentally and inwardly to know the force and the power of the Truth of God which Christ revealed—then it is very profitable to us to have brought up before our minds the very words of Jesus and they come to us full of power and sweetness.

Now, Beloved, you perceive that while the word, “Comforter,” does not take in all the meaning of the word Paraclete, yet every work of His assists our consolation and the Holy Spirit as a teacher teaches us Truths which comfort us. What comfort is there in the world equal to the words of Jesus when they are really understood? Is not Jesus Christ Himself, “the consolation of Israel”? And, therefore, everything that is of Him is full of conso-

lation to Israel. If the Spirit of God makes us understand the doctrines of Christ, as, for instance His teaching concerning the pardon of sin by faith, and the love of God towards the contrite—and His teaching in His own Person of the need of a Substitute and of the provision of a Substitute—if those things are really taught to our souls, the Paraclete becomes, indeed, a Comforter to us! I can, as God may help me, teach you the letter of God's Word, but there is One who teaches you to profit effectually and savingly. May He exercise His office upon each one of you!

Furthermore, we note that in this manner, through the Holy Spirit, we obtain peace. Observe the verse which follows: "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world gives, give I unto you." He who is taught of God naturally enjoys peace for if I am taught that my sins were laid on Jesus and the chastisement of my peace was upon Him, how can I help having peace? If I am taught that Jesus intercedes for me before the Eternal Throne and has taken His blood as my Atonement into the Holy Place, how can I help having peace? And if I am taught the promises of God and made to know that they are, "yes and amen in Christ Jesus," how can I be prevented from enjoying peace? Can I not sing—

***"The Gospel bears my spirit up
A faithful and unchanging God
Lays the foundation for my hope,
In oaths, and promises, and blood"?***

Let the Spirit of God reveal God to you as the everlasting God who loved you before the world was! As the unchanging God who never can turn away His heart from you and can you do otherwise than rejoice with exceedingly great joy? Let the Spirit of God reveal to you the pierced hands and feet of Jesus. Let Him enable you to put your finger into the prints of the nails and touch the wounds of His feet, and lay your heart to His heart—why, if you have not peace you would be a melancholy miracle of perverse despondency! But you must have rest when you have Jesus Christ, yes, and such a rest that Jesus calls it, "My peace," the very peace that is in the heart of Christ, the unruffled serenity of the conquering Savior who has finished forever the work which God gave Him to do. What rich comfort is this which the Paraclete brings to us!

But we have not brought out all the meanings yet, for, as we have already said, the word, Paraclete, signifies Advocate. You remember in John's first Epistle he uses this expression, "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous"? Now in the Greek the passage stands, "If any man sin, we have a Paraclete with the Father"—it is the same word which is here rendered Comforter and you see clearly that it would not do to render it Comforter in that place, else it would read, "If any man sin, we have a Comforter with the Father," which would be absurd! The word means, "Advocate," there, and so it must here. The Spirit of God exercises for us the office of an Advocate—but He is *not* an Advocate or Intercessor in Heaven—our Lord Jesus Christ fills that office. The Holy Spirit does not intercede for the saints, but He makes intercession *in* the saints according to the will of God. God the Son makes intercession *for* the saints. God the Holy Spirit makes intercession *in* the saints.

Let me show you how that is, by bringing you back to the chapters which we are studying. In the 15th chapter we find the Savior describing His saints in the world as hated and persecuted for His sake, and He bids them expect this. But He consoles them in the 26th and 27th verses—“When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth, which proceeds from the Father, He shall testify of Me: and you also shall bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning.”

Now the passage means just this—while Jesus Christ was here, if anyone had anything to say against Him or His disciples, forward to the front came the Master and He soon baffled His foes so that they confessed, “Never man spoke like this Man.” At this present time our Master and Head is gone from us—how are we to answer the attacks of the world? Why, we have another Paraclete to come to the front and speak for us, and if we had but confidence in Him, Beloved, He would have spoken for us much more loudly than sometimes He has done! And whenever we learn to leave the business in His hands He will do two things for us—first, He will speak for us Himself—and next, He will enable us also to bear witness. At this present time many questions of doctrine are mooted, many objections to the Truth of God are started and there are many who would lay the axe at the very root of Christianity and cut it down as a rotten tree.

What is our answer? I will tell you. Nearly all the books that have been written to answer modern philosophies are a waste of time and a waste of paper. The only way in which the Church can hold her own and answer her detractors is by real power from God! Has she done anything for the world? Can she produce results? For by her fruits shall she be proved to be a tree of life to the nations! Now the Spirit of God, if we would but trust Him and give up all this idolatry of human learning, cleverness, genius, eloquence, and rhetoric and I know not what beside, would soon answer our adversaries! He would silence some of them by converting them as He answered Saul of Tarsus by turning him from a persecutor to an Apostle.

He would silence others by confounding them, by making them see their own children and relations brought to know the Truth of God! If there is not a miraculous spiritual power in the Church of God at this day, she is an impostor! At this moment the only vindication of our existence is the Presence and work of the Paraclete among us. Is He still working and witnessing for Christ? I fear He is not in some Churches, but here we behold Him. Look at His workings in this place. Nearly 20 years ago our ministry commenced in this city under much opposition and hostile criticism—the preacher being condemned on all hands as vulgar, unlearned, and, in fact, a nine days’ wonder! Jesus Christ was preached by us in simpler language than men had been accustomed to hear, and every one of our sermons was full of the old-fashioned Gospel.

Many other pulpits were intellectual, but we were Puritanical. Rhetorical essays were the wares retailed by most of the preachers, but we gave the people the Gospel—we brought out before the world the old Reformers’ doctrines, Calvinistic truth, Augustinian teaching and Pauline dogma. We were not ashamed to be the “echo of an exploded evangelism,” as some

wisecrack called us. We preached Christ and Him Crucified, and by the space of these 20 years have we ever lacked a congregation? When has not this vast hall been thronged? Have we ever lacked conversions? Has a Sunday passed over us without them? Has not the history of this Church, from its littleness in Park Street until now, been a march of triumph with the hearts and souls of men as the spoil of the war of which the standard has been Christ Crucified?

And it is so everywhere! Only let men come back to the Gospel and preach it ardently, not with comeliness of words and affectation of polished speech, but as a burning heart compels them and as the Spirit of God teaches them to speak it! Then will great signs and wonders be seen! We must have signs following—else we cannot answer the world. Let them sneer; let them rave; let them curse; let them lie—God will answer them! It is ours in the power of the Spirit of God to keep on preaching Christ and glorifying the Savior. Just as Jesus always met the adversary in a moment and the disciples had no need of any other Defender, so we have another Paraclete, who in answer to prayer will vindicate His own cause and gloriously avenge His own elect.

And, then, Brothers and Sisters, we are promised that this same Spirit will make us witnesses, too. It shall be given us in the same hour what we shall speak. The Christians who were brought before the Roman tribunals often nonplussed their enemies, not by excellency of words and human wisdom, but by their holy simplicity and zeal. Christ, by His Spirit, was manifest in the midst of the primitive saints and they were victorious through this other Paraclete who was with them. Moreover, Brethren, the advocacy of the Holy Spirit does not merely relate to the ungodly, but it has to do with ourselves. The Spirit of God is an Advocate with us, or within us. He leads us into comfort and advocates our cause before the judgment seat of our conscience. This work He does in a manner strange to flesh and blood. Beloved, if the Holy Spirit is an advocate within you, speaking peace within you by Jesus Christ, I will tell you how He will plead with you.

First, He will convict you of sin. He will show you to be altogether lost and ruined, and undone—for till your self-righteousness is swept out of you there will be no solid consolation. He will convict you of the master sin of having been an unbeliever in Christ and He will lay you low at the foot of the Cross as well as at the foot of Sinai to make you feel that you are a sinner against Love as well as Law—a rebel against the five wounds of Jesus as well as against the Ten Commandments of God. And when He has done this He will convict you of righteousness, (John 16:10) that is to say, He will show you that the righteousness of Christ renders you perfectly acceptable with God. He will show you, in fact, that Jesus is “made of God unto you righteousness.”

Then the Spirit of God will comfort you again by bringing home to you a sense of judgment. He will show you that you and your sins were both judged and condemned on Calvary. He will show you that the evil which now seeks to get the mastery over you was then and there judged and condemned to die, so that you are fighting with a convicted adversary who only lingers for a little while and then shall be entirely dead, even as he

now is crucified with Christ. When the Spirit of God has brought these three things home to you, what an Advocate He will be with you! He will say, "Heart, can you now despair? What will you despair about? Your sin was laid on Jesus! What do you fear? Oh Heart, do you lament your lack of righteousness? You have it all in Jesus! Why do you tremble? Do you fear the coming judgment? You have been judged and condemned in Christ—therefore the sin that is in you shall die—and your inner life shall live eternally."

It is blessed when the Spirit of God argues thus in our conscience. Memory will say, "You did such-and-such that will condemn you." But the Spirit of God replies, "That has been already acknowledged. I have already condemned this sin, but it was laid upon the great Scapegoat's head and carried away." Then Fear will come up and say, "The Lord will visit this man's sin upon him." The Spirit of God will plead again, and ask, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? Is God unrighteous to forget the work and labor of His dear Son?" So with blessed debating power the Holy Comforter within our soul will plead and intercede in us and we shall obtain consolation!

Once again, the Holy Spirit is a Paraclete according to the 16th chapter, at the 13th verse, by His *guiding* us into all Truth, which is, I think, more than was meant by His *teaching* us all Truth. There are a number of caverns, full of sparkling stalactites, in some parts of the world. Now, it is a good thing when you are traveling, to be taught where each of these caverns is—that is teaching you truth. But it is a better thing when the guide comes forward with his flaming torch and conducts you down through the winding passages into the great subterranean chambers and holds his flambeau aloft while 10,000 crystals, like stars, vying in color with the rainbow, flash their beams upon you!

So the Spirit of God will convince you that such-and-such a teaching is the Truth of God and that is very much to know. But when He leads you *into* it so that you *experimentally* know it, taste it, and feel it—oh, then you are admitted to the innermost cave of jewels where "the diamond lights up the secret mine!" It is a blessed thing when the Spirit of God guides us into all Truth! A great many Christians never get *into* the Truth. They sit on the outside of it, but do not enter in. It is like a great nut to them—they polish the shell and prize it—but if they could once pierce the kernel and taste the interior flavor of the nut, how greatly would they be comforted!

John Bunyan used to say he never knew a Truth of God until it was burned into him as with a hot iron. I sympathize in that expression. There are some Truths in the Bible which nobody could make me doubt at all because they are interwoven with my vitality. And others are so profitable to my inmost soul that I could not give them up—they are the very life and joy of my being. There is an old story of a bishop making £10,000 a year who had an argument with a young man upon the correctness of Episcopacy, and at the end replied to his antagonist—"Does this young man imagine that he can reason me out of £10,000 a year?"

Self-interest in the bishop's case sustained his reasoning! The same is true with me, only in an infinitely higher degree and in a far more spiri-

tual sense. If the doctrines I preach to you are not true, I am a lost man—my life becomes an agonizing disappointment and my death a horrible calamity. I know the Gospel is true because I have tried and proved its power! I know its inside as well as its outside! I do not merely believe its creed, but its Truth is to me real and practical. Hence I say, “Does the fool think he can argue me out of my peace of heart, my joy in the Lord, my hope of Heaven?” It cannot be! The experienced Believer is invulnerable from head to foot against anything and everything that can be hurled against him by skepticism. We are as sure of the Truth of the Gospel as we are of our own existence!

The old philosopher heard a man assert that we do not exist, and his only reply was to get up and walk! So when we hear arguments against our holy faith, all we have to do is just live on in the power of the Spirit and silence gainsayers. May the Holy Spirit thus lead you into all Truth—into the secret of the Lord may He conduct you—and there may you feast upon fat things, full of marrow and upon wines on the lees well-refined.

Once more, in the 16th chapter and 14th verse, we are told that the Paraclete glorifies Christ by, “taking of the things of Christ and showing them to us.” Could infinite Wisdom select a sweeter topic for a disconsolate heart than, “the things of Christ?” Ah, Man, when you speak of the things of Christ to a broken heart you have laid your fingers on the right string! You may bring me the things of Moses and of David, of Solomon and of Daniel—but what are *they* to me compared with the things of Christ? Bring me the things of Christ! These are the balm of Gilead! These are the plasters which heal the sores! These are the true medicines of diseased souls!

Therefore the Holy Spirit, in His infinite wisdom, lifts Jesus up before us, makes Him great in our esteem, glorifies Him in our hearts and straightway our souls are full of consolation! How could it be otherwise? I am sorry that my subject is much too long for my time this morning, and therefore I must pass away from this first head to glance at the second point which I had hoped to have dwelt upon at length.

II. We shall now, secondly, REMARK UPON THE NATURE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT’S COMFORT, and will speak very briefly. It is evident from the passages we have read to you this morning that the Spirit of God never dissociates His comfort from His Character. John 14:15—“If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter.” The Spirit of God never comforts a man in his sin! Disobedient Christians must not expect consolation. The Holy Spirit *sanctifies* and *then* consoles. Search and look, you who hang your heads like bulrushes! See what it is that makes you sorrow—obey, and you shall be comforted!

Next, the Spirit of God does not aim at working mere comfort by itself and alone, but He produces peace in the heart as the result of other divinely useful processes. He does not comfort us as a fond mother may please her wayward child by yielding to its foolish wishes. The mother does not teach the child anything, nor does she cleanse its body or purify its heart in order to comfort it—perhaps she even neglects these to please the little one. But the Holy Spirit never acts so unwisely. He blesses by

purity and *then* by peace. When a man is feeling pain he is very desirous that the surgeon should administer some drug which will stop the unpleasant sensation immediately—yet the surgeon refuses to do anything of the kind but endeavors to remove the *cause* of the evil—which lies far deeper than the pain. Is not the doctor right?

So the Spirit of God comforts us by taking away our ignorance and giving us knowledge, by removing our misapprehensions and giving us clear understanding and by taking away our insensibility and convicting us of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. Do not expect to get comfort by merely running to sweet texts, or listening to pleasing preachers who give you nothing but cups of sugared doctrine! Expect to find comfort through the holy, reproving, humbling, strengthening, sanctifying processes which are the operation of the Divine Paraclete!

Note next, the comfort of the Holy Spirit is not a comfort founded upon concealment. Some have obtained consolation by conveniently forgetting troublesome Truths of God. Now the Holy Spirit lays the whole Truth of God open before us. He brings *all* Truth to our recollection and hides nothing from us. Therefore, the comfort we obtain from Him is worth having—the consolation, not of fools but of wise men—peace, not for blind bats but for bright-eyed eagles! A peace which age and experience will not invalidate, but which both these will deepen, causing it to grow with our growth and strengthen with our strength. Such is the consolation which the Holy Spirit gives.

And mark, and be glad of it, it is a comfort always in connection with Jesus. If you get near to Jesus in your contemplations, you feel you are approaching those comforts which the Spirit intends you to enjoy. Oh, Beloved, do not run for consolation to mere prophecies of the future, or soft reflections about the past. Hard by the Cross is the deep well of undefiled consolation from which the Eternal Spirit draws full buckets for His thirsty people! Be afraid of that comfort which is not based upon the Truth of God! Hate the comfort which does not come from Christ! Water from the well of Bethlehem is what you need.

It is comfort, too, which is always available. The comforts of the Holy Spirit do not depend upon health, strength, wealth, position or friendship. The Holy Spirit comforts us through the Truth, and the Truth does not change. He comforts us through Jesus, and He is, “yes, and amen.” Therefore our comforts may be quite as lively when we are dying as when we are in vigorous health. And our consolations may be even more abounding when the purse is empty and the cruse of oil low than when all worldly store and cheer abound to us. This is the comfort, Beloved, which in all ages has been the mainstay of Believers.

It was the comfort of the Spirit which brought the martyrs to stand before their accusers and to face death without fear. It was the comfort of the Holy Spirit which led the Waldenses to count not their lives dear to them. It made Luther so brave in the face of death and Latimer so merry even upon the blazing stake! Many a man has died in ecstasy under the power of this consolation and many a woman has pined away slowly, rejoicing to do so, because when heart and flesh have failed her, this conso-

lation has been the strength of her soul! If you can know the Holy Spirit as your Paraclete you need not desire any other consolation!

III. And now, finally, let us utter SOME OBSERVATIONS UPON THE WHOLE SUBJECT. First, to the Believer—Dear Brothers and Sisters, honor the Spirit of God as you would honor Jesus Christ if He were present! If Jesus Christ were dwelling in your house you would not ignore Him, you would not go about your business as if He were not there! Do not ignore the Presence of the Holy Spirit in your soul! I beseech you, do not live as if you had not heard whether there were a Holy Spirit. To Him pay your constant adorations. Reverence the august Guest who has been pleased to make your body His sacred abode. Love Him, obey Him, worship Him!

Take care never to impute the vain imaginings of your fancy to Him. I have seen the Spirit of God shamefully dishonored by persons—I hope they were insane—who have said that they have had this and that revealed to them. There has not, for some years, passed over my head a single week in which I have not been pestered with the revelations of hypocrites or maniacs. Semi-lunatics are very fond of coming with messages from the Lord to me and it may save them some trouble if I tell them once and for all that I will have none of their stupid messages. When my Lord and Master has any message to me He knows where I am and He will send it to me direct, and not by mad-caps!

Never dream that events are revealed to you by Heaven, or you may come to be like those idiots who dare impute their blatant follies to the Holy Spirit. If you feel your tongue itch to talk nonsense, trace it to the devil, not to the Spirit of God! Whatever is to be revealed by the Spirit to any of us is in the Word of God already—He adds nothing to the Bible, and never will. Let persons who have revelations of this, that, and the other, go to bed and wake up in their senses. I only wish they would follow the advice and no longer insult the Holy Spirit by laying their nonsense at His door.

At the same time, since the Holy Spirit is with you, Beloved, in all your learning ask Him to teach you. In all your suffering ask Him to sustain you. In all your teaching ask Him to give you the right words. In all your witness-bearing ask Him to give you constant wisdom and in all service depend upon Him for His help. Believingly reckon upon the Holy Spirit. We do not continually take Him into our calculations as we should. We reckon up so many missionaries, so much money and so many schools—and so conclude the list of our forces. The Holy Spirit is our great need, not learning or culture! Little knowledge or great knowledge shall answer almost as well if the Spirit of God is there—but all your knowledge shall be worthless without Him.

Let but the Spirit of God come and all shall be right. I would we took the power of the Spirit into our calculations always. You have a class at school and do not feel fit to teach it—ask Him to help you and you do not know how well you will teach! You are called to preach, but you feel you cannot—you are dull and your talk will be flat, stale, unprofitable. Bring the Holy Spirit into it and if He fires you, you shall find even the slender materials you have collected will set the people on a blaze! We ought to

reckon upon the Spirit—He is our main force—what if I say He is our *only* force and we grieve Him exceedingly when we do not reckon upon Him?

Love the Spirit. Worship the Spirit. Trust the Spirit. Obey the Spirit, and, as a Church, cry mightily to the Spirit! Beseech Him to let His mighty power be known and felt among you. The Lord fire your hearts with this sacred flame, for as this made Pentecost stand out from all other days, may it make the close of this year stand out in our history from all other years. Come, Holy Spirit, now! You are with us, but come with power and let us feel Your sacred might!

To the unconverted, these few words—Dear Friend, if you are ever to be saved, the Holy Spirit is essential to you. Except you are born-again from above, you can never see the kingdom of God, much less enter it. Without the Holy Spirit you are dead. You will never come to any life unless He quickens you and even the Savior Himself upon the Cross will never be a Savior to you till the Holy Spirit comes and gives you eyes with which to look upon Him and a heart with which to receive Him! Remember that.

Therefore I charge you take care that you honor the Spirit and never say a word against Him, lest you be found guilty of that sin against the Holy Spirit which shall never be forgiven, neither in this world nor in that which is to come. And let me ask you, has He ever convinced you of the sin in not believing in Jesus? Has He convinced you that there is no righteousness but in Christ? Has He convinced you that God will judge you and all the rest of mankind according to our Gospel by Christ Jesus? If so, since He has done that much for you, beseech Him now to take of the things of Christ and show them to you. There is hope for you there. All the salvation of a sinner lies in Jesus—and when the Spirit of God brings Jesus to the heart, He brings salvation!

Oh, poor Heart, you will never get out of Doubting Castle, never cease to be a captive, till the Spirit brings the things of Jesus to you! And I pray that He may, and that He may do so at once. Submit yourself, now, to all that He teaches you! Believe the Truth of God as He reveals it. Above all, listen and be obedient to that great command, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” “Incline your ear, and come unto Me: hear, and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.” “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.”

May the Spirit of God lead you in the way of humble confession of sin, of repentance of sin and of believing in Jesus, and then we will meet in Heaven to bless the Eternal Paraclete, with the Father and Son forever! Amen.

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THE PERSONALITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

NO. 4

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JANUARY 21, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.**

***“And I will pray the Father and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever: even the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it sees Him not, neither knows Him: but you know Him for He dwells with you and shall be in you.”
John 14:16, 17.***

You will be surprised to hear me announce that I do not intend this morning to say anything about the Holy Spirit as the Comforter. I propose to reserve that for a special Sermon this evening. [See Sermon #5, Vol. 1—THE COMFORTER—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at www.spurgeongems.org] In this discourse I shall endeavor to explain and enforce certain other doctrines which I believe are plainly taught in this text and which I hope God the Holy Spirit may make profitable to our souls. Old John Newton once said that there were some books which he could not read, they were good and sound enough, but, he said, “they are books of halfpence—you have to take so much in quantity before you have any value. There are other books of silver and others of gold, but I have one book that is a book of bank notes. And every leaf is a bank note of immense value.” So I found with this text—that I had a bank note of so large a sum, that I could not preach on all of it this morning. I should have to keep you several hours before I could unfold to you the whole value of this precious promise—one of the last which Christ gave to His people.

I invite your attention to this passage because we shall find in it some instruction on four points, first, concerning *the true and proper Personality of the Holy Spirit*. Secondly, concerning *the united agency of the glorious Three Persons in the work of our salvation*. Thirdly, we shall find *something to establish the Doctrine of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the souls of all Believers*. And fourthly, we shall find out *the reason why the carnal mind rejects the Holy Spirit*.

I. First of all, we shall have some little instruction concerning the proper PERSONALITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. We are so much accustomed to talk about the influence of the Holy Spirit and His sacred operations and Graces that we are apt to forget that the Holy Spirit is truly and actually a Person—that He is a subsistence—an existence. Or as we Trinitarians usually say, one Person in the essence of the Godhead. I am afraid that though we do not know it, we have acquired the habit of re-

garding the Holy Spirit as an emanation flowing from the Father and the Son, but not as being actually a Person, Himself. I know it is not easy to carry about in our mind the idea of the Holy Spirit as a Person. I can think of the Father as a Person, because His acts are such as I can understand. I see Him hang the world in ether. I behold Him swaddling a newborn sea in bands of darkness. I know it is He who formed the drops of hail, who leads forth the stars by their hosts and calls them by their name, I can conceive of Him as a Person because I behold His operations. I can realize Jesus, the Son of Man, as a real Person because He is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh. It takes no great stretch of my imagination to picture the Baby in Bethlehem, or to behold the, "Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief." I can easily realize the King of Martyrs, as He was persecuted in Pilate's hall, or nailed to the accursed tree for our sins. Nor do I find it difficult at times to realize the Person of my Jesus sitting on His Throne in Heaven. Or girt with clouds and wearing the diadem of all creation, calling the earth to judgment and summoning us to hear our final sentence. But when I come to deal with the Holy Spirit—His operations are so mysterious, His doings are so secret, His acts are so removed from everything that is of sense and of the body—that I cannot so easily get the idea of His being a Person. But a Person He is. God the Holy Spirit is not an influence, an emanation, a stream of something flowing from the Father. He is as much an actual Person as either God the Son, or God the Father. I shall attempt, this morning, a little, to establish the Doctrine and to show you the truth of it—that God the Holy Spirit is actually a Person.

The first proof we shall gather from the pool of holy Baptism. Let me take you down, as I have taken others, into the pool. It is now concealed, but I wish it were always open to your view. Let me take you to the baptismal font, where Believers put on the name of the Lord Jesus and you shall hear me pronounce the solemn words, "I baptize you in the name,"—mark—"in the *name*," not names—"of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Everyone who is baptized according to the true form laid down in Scripture must be a Trinitarian—otherwise his Baptism is a farce and a lie and he, himself, is found a deceiver and a hypocrite before God! As the Father is mentioned and as the Son is mentioned, so is the Holy Spirit and the whole is summed up as being a Trinity in unity, by its being said, not the *names*, but the "name"—the glorious *name*—the Jehovah name, "of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Let me remind you that the same thing occurs each time you are dismissed from this House of Prayer. In pronouncing the solemn closing benediction, we invoke on your behalf the love of Jesus Christ, the grace of the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. And thus, according to the Apostolic manner, we make a manifest distinction between the Persons showing that we believe the Father to be a Person, the

Son to be a Person and the Holy Spirit to be a Person. Were there no other proofs in Scripture, I think these would be sufficient for every sensible man. He would see that if the Holy Spirit were a mere influence, He would not be mentioned in conjunction with Two whom we all confess to be actual and proper Persons.

A second argument arises from the fact that the Holy Spirit has actually made different appearances on earth. The Great Spirit has manifested Himself to man. He has put on a form so that while He has not been beheld by mortal men, He has been so veiled in appearance that He was seen, so far as that appearance was concerned, by the eyes of all beholders. Do you see Jesus Christ our Savior? There is the river Jordan, with its shelving banks and its willows weeping at its side. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, descends into the stream and the holy Baptist, John, plunges Him into the waves. The doors of Heaven are opened. A miraculous Appearance presents itself—a bright light shining from the sky, brighter than the sun in all its grandeur—and down in a flood of glory descends something which you recognize to be a dove. It rests on Jesus—it sits upon His sacred head and as the old painters put a halo round the brow of Jesus, so did the Holy Spirit shed a resplendence around the face of Him who came to fulfill all Righteousness and therefore commenced with the ordinances of Baptism! The Holy Spirit was seen as a dove—to mark His purity and His gentleness—and He came down like a dove *from Heaven* to show that it is from Heaven alone that He descends. Nor is this the only time when the Holy Spirit has been manifest in a visible shape. You notice that company of disciples gathered together in an upper room—they are waiting for some promised blessing—by-and-by it shall come. Hark, there is a sound as of a rushing mighty wind! It fills all the house where they are sitting. Astonished, they look around them, wondering what will come next. Soon a bright light appears, shining upon the heads of each—cloven tongues of fire sat upon them! What were these marvelous appearances of wind and flame but a display of the Holy Spirit in His proper Person? I say the fact of an appearance manifests that He must be a Person. An influence could not appear—an attribute could not appear—we cannot see *attributes*—we cannot behold *influences*. The Holy Spirit must, then, be a Person—since He was beheld by mortal eyes and came under the cognizance of mortal sense.

Another proof is from the fact that personal qualities are, in Scripture, ascribed to the Holy Spirit. First, let me read to you a text in which the Holy Spirit is spoken of as having understanding. In the 1st Epistle to the Corinthians, Chapter 2, you will read, “But as it is written, eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him. But God has revealed them unto us by His Spirit—for the Spirit searches all things, yes,

the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knows no man, but the Spirit of God.”

Here you see an understanding—a power of knowledge is ascribed to the Holy Spirit. Now, if there are any persons here whose minds are of so preposterous a complexion that they would ascribe one attribute to another and would speak of a mere influence having understanding—then I give up! But I believe every rational man will admit that when anything is spoken of as having an understanding it must be an existence—it must, in fact, be a Person. In the 12th Chapter, 11th verse of the same Epistle, you will find a will ascribed to the Holy Spirit. “But all these work that one and the self same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He wills.” So it is plain the Spirit has a will. He does not come from God simply at God’s will, but He has a will of His own, which is always in keeping with the will of the infinite Jehovah, but is, nevertheless, distinct and separate. Therefore I say He is a Person. In another text power is ascribed to the Holy Spirit and power is a thing which can only be ascribed to an existence. In Romans 15:13, it is written, “Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.” I need not insist upon it, because it is self-evident, that wherever you find understanding, will and power—you must also find an existence. It cannot be a mere attribute. It cannot be a metaphor. It cannot be a personified influence. It must be a Person!

But I have a proof which, perhaps, will be more telling upon you than any other. Acts and deeds are ascribed to the Holy Spirit—therefore He must be a Person. You read in the first Chapter of the Book of Genesis, that the Spirit brooded over the surface of the earth, when it was as yet all disorder and confusion. This world was once a mass of chaotic matter. There was no order. It was like the valley of darkness and of the shadow of death. God the Holy Spirit spread His wings over it. He sowed the seeds of life in it—the germs from which all beings sprang were implanted by Him. He impregnated the earth so that it became capable of life. Now it must have been a Person who brought order out of confusion! It must have been an existence who hovered over this world and made it what it now is. But do we not read in Scripture something more of the Holy Spirit? Yes, we are told that “holy men of old spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” When Moses penned the Pentateuch, the Holy Spirit moved his hand. When David wrote the Psalms and discoursed sweet music on his harp, it was the Holy Spirit that gave his fingers their Seraphic motion. When Solomon dropped from his lips the words of the Proverbs of wisdom, or when he hymned the Canticles of love it was the HOLY SPIRIT who gave him words of knowledge and hymns of rapture! Ah, and what fire was that which touched the lips of the eloquent Isaiah? What hand was that which came upon Daniel? What might was that

which made Jeremiah so plaintive in his grief? Or what was that which winged Ezekiel and made him, like an eagle, soar into mysteries aloft and see the mighty unknown beyond our reach? Who was it that made Amos, the herdsman, a Prophet? Who taught the rough Haggai to pronounce his thundering sentences? Who showed Habakkuk the horses of Jehovah marching through the waters? Or who kindled the burning eloquence of Nahum? Who caused Malachi to close up the book with the muttering of the word “curse”? Who was in each of these, save the Holy Spirit? And must it not have been a Person who spoke in and through these ancient witnesses? We must believe it. We cannot avoid believing it, when we recall that, “holy men of old spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”

And when has the Holy Spirit ceased to have an influence upon men? We find that still He deals with His ministers and with all His saints. Turn to the Acts and you will find that the Holy Spirit *said*, “Separate me Paul and Barnabas for the work.” I never heard of an *attribute* saying such a thing! The Holy Spirit said to Peter, “Go to the centurion and what I have cleansed, that call not you common.” The Holy Spirit caught away Philip after he had baptized yon eunuch and carried him to another place. And the Holy Spirit said to Paul, “you shall not go into that city, but shall turn into another.” And we know that the Holy Spirit was lied unto by Ananias and Sapphira, when it was said, “you have not lied unto man, but unto God.” Again, that power which we feel every day who are called to preach—that wondrous spell which makes our lips so potent—that power which gives us thoughts which are like birds from a far-off region, not the natives of our soul. That influence which I sometimes strangely feel, which, if it does not give me poetry and eloquence, gives me a might I never felt before and lifts me above my fellow man. That majesty with which He clothes His ministers, till in the midst of the battle they cry, aha! like the war-horse of Job and move themselves like leviathans in the water. That power which gives us might over men and causes them to sit and listen as if their ears were chained, as if they were entranced by the power of some magician’s wand—that power must come from a Person—it must come from the Holy Spirit!

But is it not said in Scripture and do we not feel it, dear Brothers and Sisters, that it is the Holy Spirit who regenerates the soul? It is the Holy Spirit who quickens us! “You has He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins.” It is the Holy Spirit who imparts the first germ of life, convicting us of sin, of righteousness and of judgment to come. And is it not the Holy Spirit who after that flame is kindled, still fans it with the breath of His mouth and keeps it alive? Its Author is its Preserver! Oh, can it be said that it is the Holy Spirit who strives in men’s souls, that it is the Holy Spirit who brings them to the foot of Sinai and then guides them into the sweet place that is called Calvary—can it be said that He does all these things and yet is not a Person? It may be said, but it must

be said by fools! For he never can be a wise man who can consider that these things can be done by any other than a glorious Person—a Divine Person.

Allow me to give you one more proof and I shall have done. Certain feelings are ascribed to the Holy Spirit which can only be understood upon the supposition that He is actually a Person. In the 4th Chapter of Ephesians, verse 30, it is said that the Holy Spirit can be grieved—“Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption.” In Isaiah 63:10 it is said that the Holy Spirit can be vexed—“But they rebelled and vexed His Holy Spirit, therefore He was turned to be their enemy and He fought against them.” In Acts 7:51 you read that the Holy Spirit can be resisted—“you stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, you do always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you.” And in the 5th Chapter, 9th verse of the same book, you will find that the Holy Spirit may be tempted. We are there informed that Peter said to Ananias and Sapphira, “How is it that you have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord?” Now, these things could not be *emotions* which might be ascribed to a quality or an emanation—they must be understood to relate to a Person. An *influence* could not be grieved. It must be a Person who can be grieved, vexed, or resisted.

And now, dear Brethren, I think I have fully established the point of the Personality of the Holy Spirit. Allow me now, most earnestly, to impress upon you the absolute necessity of being sound unto the Doctrine of the Trinity. I knew a man, a good minister of Jesus Christ he was—I believe he was before he turned aside unto heresy—he began to doubt the glorious Divinity of our blessed Lord and for years he preached the heterodox Doctrine. Then one day he happened to hear a very eccentric old minister preaching from the text, “But there the *glorious Lord* shall be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams, wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby. Your tackle is loosed—they could not well strengthen their mast, they could not spread the sail.” “Now,” said the old minister, “you give up the Trinity and your tackle is loosed, you cannot strengthen your masts. Once give up the Doctrine of three Persons and your tackle is all gone. Your mast, which ought to be a support to your vessel, is a rickety one and shakes.” A Gospel without a Trinity? It is a pyramid built upon its apex! A Gospel without the Trinity? It is a rope of sand that cannot hold together! A Gospel without the Trinity? Then, indeed, Satan can overturn it. But, give me a Gospel with the Trinity and the might of Hell cannot prevail against it. No man can any more overthrow it than a bubble could split a rock, or a feather break in halves a mountain! “Get the thought of the three Persons and you have the marrow of all Divinity. Only know the Father and know the Son and know the Holy Spirit to be One and all things will appear clear. This is the golden key to the secrets of nature.

This is the silken clue of the labyrinths of mystery and he who understands this, will soon understand as much as mortals ever can know.”

II. Now for the second point—the UNITED AGENCY of the Three Persons in the work of our salvation. Look at the text and you will find all the three Persons mentioned. “I,”—that is the Son—“will pray the Father and He shall give you another Comforter.” There are the three Persons mentioned—all of them doing something for our salvation. “I will pray,” says the Son. “I will send,” says the Father. “I will comfort,” says the Holy Spirit. Now, let us, for a few moments, discourse upon this wondrous theme—the unity of the Three Persons with regard to the great purpose of the salvation of the elect. When God first made man, He said, “Let *Us* make man,” not let *Me*, but “Let *Us* make man in *Our* own image.” The Covenant Elohim said to each other, “Let *Us* unitedly become the Creator of man.” So, when in ages far gone by in eternity, they said, “Let *Us* save man,” it was not the Father who said, “Let *Me* save man,” but the Three Persons conjointly said with One consent, “Let *Us* save man.” It is to me a source of sweet comfort to think that it is not one Person of the Trinity that is engaged for my salvation. It is not simply one Person of the Godhead who vows that He will redeem me, but it is a glorious Trio of God-like Ones and the Three declare, unitedly, “*We* will save man.”

Now, observe here that each Person is spoken of as performing a separate office. “I will pray,” says the Son—that is *intercession*. “I will send,” says the Father—that is *donation*. “I will comfort,” says the Holy Spirit—that is *supernatural* influence. Oh, if it were possible for us to see the three Persons of the Godhead, we should behold one of them standing before the Throne with outstretched hands crying day and night, “O Lord, how long?” We should see one girt with Urim and Thummim, precious stones, on which are written the twelve names of the tribes of Israel. We should behold Him crying unto His Father, “Forget not Your promises, forget not Your Covenant.” We should hear Him make mention of our sorrows and tell forth our griefs on our behalf, for He is our Intercessor. And could we behold the Father, we should not see Him a listless and idle spectator of the intercession of the Son. We would see Him with attentive ears listening to every word of Jesus and granting every petition. Where is the Holy Spirit all the while? Is He lying idle? Oh no, He is floating over the earth and when He sees a weary soul, He says, “Come to Jesus, He will give you rest.” When He beholds an eye filled with tears, He wipes away the tears and bids the mourner look for comfort on the Cross. When He sees the tempest-tossed Believer, He takes the helm of his soul and speaks the word of consolation. He helps the broken in heart and binds up their wounds! And always on His mission of mercy, He flies around the world, being everywhere present. Behold how the Three Persons work together. Do not say, then, “I am grateful to the Son”—you ought to be, but God the Son no more saves you than God the

Father. Do not imagine that God the Father is a great tyrant and that God the Son had to die to make Him merciful. It was not to make the Father's love flow towards His people! Oh, no. One loves as much as the other. The Three are conjoined in the great purpose of rescuing the elect from damnation!

But you must notice another thing in my text which will show the blessed unity of the Three—the one Person promises to the Other. The Son says, “I will pray the Father.” “Very well,” the disciples may have said, “We can trust You for that.” “And He will send you.” You see, here is the Son signing a bond on behalf of the Father. “He will send you another Comforter.” There is a bond on behalf of the Holy Spirit, too. “And He will abide with you forever.” One person speaks for the other and how could they if there were any disagreement between them? If one wished to save and the other not, they could not promise on one Another's behalf. But whatever the Son says, the Father listens to. Whatever the Father promises, the Holy Spirit works. And whatever the Holy Spirit injects into the soul—God the Father fulfills. So the Three together mutually promise on one Another's behalf. There is a bond with three names appended—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. By three immutable things, as well as by two, the Christian is secured beyond the reach of death and Hell. A Trinity of Securities, because there is a Trinity of God!

III. Our third point is the INDWELLING of the Holy Spirit in Believers. Now Beloved, these first two things have been matters of pure Doctrine—this is the subject of *experience*. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is a subject so profound and so having to do with the inner man, that no soul will be able truly and really to comprehend what I say, unless it has been taught of God. I have heard of an old minister, who told a Fellow of one of the Cambridge Colleges that he understood a language that he never learnt in all his life. “I have not,” he said, “even a smattering of Greek and I know no Latin, but thank God I can talk the language of Canaan—and that is more than you can!” So, Beloved, I shall now have to talk a little of the language of Canaan. If you cannot comprehend me, I am much afraid it is because you are not of Israelite extraction—you are not a child of God nor an inheritor of the kingdom of Heaven.

We are told in the text, that Jesus would send the Comforter, who would abide in the saints forever—who would dwell with them and be *in them*. Old Ignatius, the martyr, used to call himself Theophorus, or the God-bearer, “because,” said he, “I bear about with me the Holy Spirit.” And truly every Christian is a God-bearer. Know you not that you are temples of the Holy Spirit? For He dwells in you! That man is no Christian who is not the subject of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. He may talk well, he may understand theology and be a sound Calvinist. He will be the child of nature finely dressed, but not the living child. He may be a man of so profound an intellect, so gigantic a soul, so comprehensive a

mind and so lofty an imagination that he may dive into all the secrets of Nature. He may know the path which the eagle's eye has not seen and go into depths where mortals reach not. But he shall not be a Christian with all his knowledge. He shall not be a son of God with all his researches, unless he understands what it is to have the Holy Spirit dwelling in him and abiding in him—yes and that *forever*.

Some people call this fanaticism and they say, “you are a Quaker, why not follow George Fox?” Well we would not mind that much—we would follow anyone who followed the Holy Spirit. Even he, with all his eccentricities, I doubt not, was, in many cases, actually inspired by the Holy Spirit. And whenever I find a man in whom there rests the Spirit of God, the Spirit within me leaps to hear the Spirit within him and he feels that we are one. The Spirit of God in one Christian soul recognizes the Spirit in another. I recollect talking with a good man, as I believe he was, who was insisting that it was impossible for us to know whether we had the Holy Spirit within us or not. I would like him to be here this morning, because I would read this verse to him—“But you know Him, for He dwells with you and shall be in you.” Ah, you think you cannot tell whether you have the Holy Spirit or not? Can I tell whether I am alive or not? If I were touched by electricity, could I tell whether I was or not? I suppose I should. The shock would be strong enough to make me know where I stood. So, if I have God within me—if I have Deity tabernacling in my breast—if I have God the Holy Spirit resting in my heart and making a temple of my body—do you think I shall not know it? Call it fanaticism if you will. But I trust that there are some of us who know what it is to be always, or generally, under the influence of the Holy Spirit—*always* in one sense—*generally* in another! When we have difficulties, we ask the direction of the Holy Spirit. When we do not understand a portion of Holy Scripture, we ask God the Holy Spirit to shine upon us. When we are depressed, the Holy Spirit comforts us. You cannot tell what the wondrous power of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is—how it pulls back the hand of the saint when he would touch the forbidden thing. How it prompts him to make a covenant with his eyes. How it binds his feet, lest they should fall in a slippery way, how it restrains his heart and keeps him from temptation. O you who know nothing of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, despise it not! O despise not the Holy Spirit, for it is the unpardonable sin! “He that speaks a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him, but he that speaks against the Holy Spirit, it shall never be forgiven him, either in this life, or that which is to come.” So says the Word of God. Therefore, tremble, lest in anything you despise the influences of the Holy Spirit!

But before closing this point, there is one little word which pleases me very much. That is, “forever.” You knew I would not miss that! You were certain I could not let it go without observation. “Abide with you forever.”

I wish I could get an Arminian here to finish my sermon. I fancy I see him taking that word, "forever." He would say, "for—forever." He would have to stammer and stutter! For he never could get it out all at once. He might stand and pull it about and at last he would have to say, "the translation is wrong." And then I suppose the poor man would have to prove that the original was wrong, too. Ah, but blessed be God, we can read it—"He shall abide with you *forever*." Once give me the Holy Spirit and I shall never lose Him till "forever" has run out—till eternity has spun its everlasting rounds!

IV. Now we have to close up with a brief remark on the reason why the world rejects the Holy Spirit. It is said, "Whom the world cannot receive, because it sees Him not, neither knows Him." You know what is sometimes meant by "the world"—those whom God, in His wondrous Sovereignty, passed over when He chose His people—the preterite ones. Those passed over in God's wondrous preterition—not the reprobates who were condemned to damnation by some awful decree, but those passed over by God, when He chose out His elect. These cannot receive the Spirit. Again, it means all in a carnal state are not able to procure themselves this Divine influence. And thus it is true, "Whom the world cannot receive."

The unregenerate world of sinners despises the Holy Spirit, "because it sees Him not." Yes, I believe this is the great secret why many laugh at the idea of the existence of the Holy Spirit—because they see Him not. You tell the worldling, "I have the Holy Spirit within me." He says, "I cannot see it." He wants it to be something tangible—a thing he can recognize with his senses. Have you ever heard the argument used by a good old Christian against an infidel doctor? The doctor said there was no soul and he asked, "Did you ever see a soul?" "No," said the Christian. "Did you ever hear a soul?" "No." "Did you ever smell a soul?" "No." "Did you ever taste a soul?" "No." "Did you ever feel a soul?" "Yes," said the man—"I feel I have one within me." "Well," said the doctor, "there are four senses against one—you have only one on your side." "Very well," said the Christian, "Did you ever see a pain?" "No." "Did you ever hear a pain?" "No." "Did you ever smell a pain?" "No." "Did you ever taste a pain?" "No." "Did you ever feel a pain?" "Yes," "And that is quite enough, I suppose, to prove there is a pain?" "Yes." So the worldling says there is no Holy Spirit because he cannot see Him. Well, but we feel Him. You say that is fanaticism and that we never felt Him. Suppose you tell me that honey is bitter, I reply "No, I am sure you cannot have tasted it. Taste it and try." So with the Holy Spirit. If you did but feel His influence, you would no longer say there is no Holy Spirit because you cannot see it. Are there not many things, even in nature, which we cannot see? Did you ever see the wind? No. But you know there is wind when you behold the hurricane tossing the waves about and rending down the habitations of

men. Or when in the soft evening zephyr it kisses the flowers and makes dewdrops hang in pearly coronets around the rose. Did you ever see electricity? No, but you know there is such a thing, for it travels along the wires for thousands of miles and carries our messages. Though you cannot see the thing, itself, you know there is such a thing. So you must believe there is a Holy Spirit working in us, both to will and to do, even though it is beyond our senses.

But the last reason why worldly men laugh at the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit is because they do not *know* it. If they knew it by heart-felt experience and if they recognized its agency in the soul—if they had ever been touched by it. If they had been made to tremble under a sense of sin—if they had had their hearts melted—they would never have doubted the existence of the Holy Spirit!

And now, Beloved, it says, “He dwells with you and shall be in you.” We will close up with that sweet recollection—the Holy Spirit dwells in all Believers and shall be with them!

One word of comment and advice to the saints of God and to sinners and I have done. Saints of the Lord! You have, this morning, heard that God the Holy Spirit is a Person. You have had it proved to your souls. What follows from this? Why, it follows how earnest you should be—in prayer to the Holy Spirit, as well as *for* the Holy Spirit. Let me say that this is an inference that you should lift up your prayers to the Holy Spirit, that you should cry earnestly unto Him, for He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all you can ask or think. See this mass of people? What is to convert it? See this crowd—who is to make my influence permeate through the mass? You know this place has now a mighty influence—and God blessing us, it will continue to have an influence—not only upon this city but upon England at large. We now enjoy the press as well as the pulpit and certainly, I should say before the close of the year, more than two hundred thousand of my productions will be scattered through the land—words uttered by my lips, or written by my pen. But how can this influence be rendered for good? How shall God’s glory be promoted by it? Only by incessant prayer for the Holy Spirit—by constantly calling down the influence of the Holy Spirit upon us! We want Him to rest upon every page that is printed and upon every word that is uttered. Let us then be doubly earnest in pleading with the Holy Spirit, that He would come and acknowledge our labors, that the whole Church at large may be revived thereby and not ourselves only, but the whole world share in the benefit!

Then to the ungodly I have this one closing word to say. Always be careful how you speak of the Holy Spirit. I do not know what the unpardonable sin is and I do not think any man understands it. But it is something like this—“He that speaks a word against the Holy Spirit, it shall never be forgiven him.” I do not know what that means—but tread care-

fully! There is danger. There is a pit which our ignorance has covered by sand—tread carefully—you may be in it before the next hour. If there is any strife in your heart today, perhaps you will go to the ale-house and forget it. Perhaps there is some voice speaking in your soul and you will put it away. I do not tell you you will be resisting the Holy Spirit and committing the unpardonable sin. But it is somewhere there. Be very careful. Oh, there is no crime on earth so black as the crime against the Holy Spirit. You may blaspheme the Father and you shall be damned for it unless you repent. You may blaspheme the Son—and Hell shall be your portion, unless you are forgiven. But blaspheme the Holy Spirit and thus says the Lord, “There is no forgiveness, neither in this world, nor in the world which is to come.” I cannot tell you what it is. I do not profess to understand it. But there it is. It is the danger signal. Stop, Man, stop! If you have despised the Holy Spirit, if you have laughed at His revelations and scorned what Christians call His influence, I beseech you, stop! This morning seriously deliberate—perhaps some of you have actually committed the unpardonable sin. Stop! Let fear stop you. Sit down. Do not drive on so rashly as you have done. You who are such a profligate in sin, you who have uttered such hard words against the Trinity, stop!

Ah, it makes us all stop. It makes us all draw up and say, “Have I not perhaps done so?” Let us think of this and let us not at any time trifle either with the words, or the acts of God the Holy Spirit.

Adapted from *The C.H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

INTIMATE KNOWLEDGE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT NO. 2074

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, MARCH 10, 1889,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“The Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it sees Him not, neither knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and shall be in you.”
John 14:17.*

THE part of the text on which we shall meditate is this—“The Spirit of Truth, you know Him, for He dwells with you and shall be in you.” Observe that the Holy Spirit is here called the Spirit of Truth. There is much meaning in this expression. He is the Teacher of the Truth of God, unalloyed Truth, practical, divinely effective Truth of God. He never teaches anything but the Truth of God. If it comes from the Spirit of God, we may receive it from Him without any hesitation. It is He that takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto us. And these things are true and He thus proves Himself to be the Spirit of Truth.

He is the very Spirit and soul of Truth, the essence, the life and power of it. Divine Truth, when merely heard, takes no effect upon the mind until the Spirit of God enlivens it, and then it becomes a quickening force. He makes the Truth of God itself, in its reality and substance, to enter the soul and affect the heart. He is the Teacher of Truth and He is Himself the active power that makes Truth to be Truth to us in the assurance of our inmost souls. He is the Spirit of Truth in this sense, too, that He works truthfulness in His people. In those with whom the Holy Spirit works effectually “there is no deceit.”

They are open-hearted, honest, sincere and true. They have an intense affection for the Truth of God and a zeal for it. They are by His truthful influence preserved from deadly error. If it were possible, false teachers would deceive even the elect. But where the Spirit of God dwells, He detects for us the false from the true and He gives us the spirit of a sound mind by which we reject that which is false and cleave only to that which is revealed of God. In this sense He is the Spirit of Truth. And as He works truthfulness in His people, so the work that He does is always true and real work.

You may get up an animal excitement and your converts will, in due time fail—but the Spirit of God works true conversion, sincere repentance and saving faith such as no sun of persecution can dry up and wither. He works deep conviction of sin and simple faith in the Lord Jesus. And these things abide in the heart. The new birth, as He works it, is not after the fancied manner of baptismal regeneration but after an effective spiritual

manner so that a Divine life is imparted and the man becomes a child of God. He produces real sanctification—not the pretense of perfection but the reality of holiness. Everything the Spirit of God does is substance and not shadow. The baseless fabric of a vision is the work of man. But the eternal, abiding, everlasting work of Divine Grace is wrought by the Spirit of Truth alone.

As He is the Spirit of Truth, we may be sure that whatever He sets His seal upon, is true. He will only bear witness to the Truth of God. He will not assist in maintaining error. Mark this word—careful observation will show that in proportion as the nominal Church of the present day has departed from the truth of God, the Spirit of God has departed from her. He can never set His seal to a lie. The testimony of His sacred operation in “signs following,” is borne only to the Truth of God. If I preach to you that which is not the Word of the Lord, it will not be followed by the work of the Spirit of Truth. There will be no conversions among sinners and there will be no edification for the people of God.

It is by the Truth of God as His instrument that the Spirit of God works. And we must be very careful that we do not bring forth any other instrument. Let us not talk, as some do, as if Scriptural doctrine were of little or no consequence. For where the doctrine is not of God, the Spirit of Truth is grieved and He will depart from such a ministry. Except we keep close to the Words of the Lord Jesus and the Revelation of the inspired Book, the Spirit of Truth will show His displeasure by refusing to use our utterances. In vain your music, your architecture, your learning and your “bright services” if the Truth of God is given up. Farewell to the witness of the Spirit in the hearts of men when men are taught the inventions of men in the place of the Revelation of God.

If the Holy Spirit is bearing witness in your spirit that you are the children of God, then you are truly born of God. The presence of the Divine Paraclete is the seal of your adoption. If He dwells in you, this is the token of your sonship. For He does not dwell in the unregenerate. If He helps, strengthens, comforts, guides, illuminates and sanctifies you, you have a seal which you need not question—the seal of God upon you—that you are His chosen and shall be His in the day when He makes up His jewels.

This brings me to the doctrine upon which I shall enlarge this morning. This is the distinction between the men of the world and the disciples of Christ. The world knows nothing of the Holy Spirit. But the disciples of Christ know Him. For the Lord Jesus says, “He dwells with you and shall be in you.” There are a great many distinctions in the world of a religious kind—one man wears his phylacteries, another is girt with camel’s hair. One man comes with multiplied ceremonies, another with none at all. You cannot judge who are the people of God by these *external* things.

Forms of Church government and modes of worship may be important in their own place—but before the Lord the infallible test is this—do you bear the fruit of the Spirit of God in you? Does He indwell you? “If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.” But he that has the Spirit dwelling within his soul, he it is that is a true born heir of Heaven.

We have raised a solemn question to begin with, have we not? But, dear Friends, I do not desire it to remain a question. I pray that it may be no question with anyone of you but that you may know that it is so and may go on to enjoy the blessed privilege of being on intimate terms with the Holy Spirit—"But you know Him, for He dwells with you and shall be in you."

I. To come close up to my subject, the first head will be BELIEVERS IN JESUS CHRIST KNOW THE HOLY SPIRIT. They know Him, to begin with, by believing what has been taught them concerning the Comforter by the Lord Jesus Christ. When Jesus Christ had taught His people concerning the Holy Spirit and they had received His teaching, He said, "You know Him. For He dwells with you and shall be in you." If they had refused the sayings of Christ, if they had possessed no love, if they had not kept His Commandments, if they had arrogantly resolved to find out this mystery for themselves by their own thinking, apart from the instruction of their Master, they would not have known the Spirit of God. We must begin our acquaintance with the Spirit by sitting at the feet of Jesus and accepting His testimony as sure.

But more than this—we know the Holy Spirit by knowing our Lord Jesus and by Him knowing the Father. There is such an intimate union between the Holy Spirit, the Father, and the Son, that to know the Holy Spirit we must know the Son of God, and know the Father. If we know the Lord Jesus, we have the Spirit of God. For by no one else could the things of Christ be revealed to us. Beginning then, at the very beginning—do you know the Lord Jesus Christ? You know something about Him—but do you *know* Him? Is He your friend, your acquaintance? Are you on personal terms of fellowship with Him?

If so, then you see the Father in His face. Jesus says, "He that has seen Me has seen the Father." And He tells His people, "From henceforth you know Him and have seen Him." You are, therefore, acquainted with God the Father through Jesus Christ the Son. And you have seen the glory of His Grace beaming in your Savior's face. In this way you have become acquainted with the Holy Spirit who is not divided from the Father and the Son. As you know the Son you know the Father, and in this way you come to know the Holy Spirit. No man comes to the Father but by the Son, and he that comes to the Father receives the Spirit.

We know the Holy Spirit, next, by His operations upon us. We not only know *about* His operations but we have been the subjects of them. All those who are true disciples of Christ have felt a divinely supernatural power working upon them. First, the Holy Spirit operates to our spiritual quickening. There was a time when we were dead in trespasses and in sins—holy feeling was unknown to us and the life of faith was far from us. At that time we did not desire nor even know spiritual things—we were carnally minded and the carnal mind knows not the things which are of God.

The Spirit of God came upon us and we were awakened and made to live. Do you remember that? Many of us can distinctly remember when we

passed from death unto life. With others, the visible life may have been made manifest more gradually, but even in them there was a moment when the vital force entered the soul and they can now rejoice that they have been quickened who were once spiritually dead. You know the Spirit in measure when He breathes upon your dead heart and it begins to throb with the heavenly life. In connection with that quickening there was conviction of sin. In what a powerful light does the Holy Spirit set our sin!

In my discourses to you about sin I try to show you how heinous it is and how terrible are its consequences. But when a single beam from the Spirit of Truth shines upon sin, it makes it appear “exceeding sinful.” I remember how Mr. Bunyan said, when under conviction, “I thought none but the devil himself could equal me for inward wickedness and pollution of mind.” When the Spirit of God revealed him to himself he would have willingly changed places with toads and serpents for he esteemed the most loathsome objects to be better than himself. This revelation of darkness is the effect of light—the light of the Spirit of God. And when He convicts us of sin we begin to know Him.

After having convicted us of sin, He leads us to repentance and to faith in Jesus Christ—then we know Him! How many a promise did some of you hear but you could not receive it! How many a comforting discourse did you listen to and yet it did not comfort you! But when the Spirit of God came—in a moment you saw Jesus as the Consolation of Israel, the Friend of sinners, the atoning Sacrifice, the Surety of the Covenant of Grace—and sweet peace came streaming into your soul! At that time you did not only know that the Holy Spirit leads to Jesus Christ but you knew that He was leading you. In that respect you knew Him by an experimental acquaintance which is the best of knowledge.

Since that time, beloved Brethren, we have known the Holy Spirit in many ways—restraining from evil, stimulating to good, instructing, consoling, directing and enlivening. He has been to us the Spirit of reviving—we have grown dull and cold and sleepy, till that verse of the hymn has been verified—

***“In vain we tune our formal songs,
In vain we strive to rise,
Hosannas languish on our tongues,
And our devotion dies.”***

But no sooner has the Spirit visited us than we have felt all alive—bright, cheerful and intense. Then our whole heart has run in the ways of God’s commands and we have rejoiced in His name. How true is that word, “He restores my soul”! Thus have we known the Holy Spirit by His operations within us.

Oftentimes He has acted as an illuminator. A difficult Scripture or mysterious doctrine has been before me—I have looked at the original and I have examined what the best Biblical students have written upon it. And yet, when I have thus used all the helps within reach, the point has remained in the dark. My best aid has ever been to resort to the great Author of the sacred Word—even the Holy Spirit Himself. He can, by blessing

the means which we are using, or by directly leading the mind in the right track put an end to all difficulty. He has the clue of every maze, the solution of every riddle. And to whom He wills, He can reveal the secret of the Lord.

Dear young Believers, you who wish to understand the Scriptures, seek this light from above for this is the *true* light. Other lights may mislead but this is clear and sure. To have the Spirit of God lighting up the inner chambers of truth is a great gift. Truth of the deeper sort is comparable to a cavern into which we cannot find our way except by a guide and a light. When the Spirit of Truth is come He pours daylight into the darkness and leads us into all Truth of God. He does not merely show the Truth but He leads us into it so that we stand within it and rejoice in the hidden treasure which it contains. Then we know Him as our sacred Illuminator.

I especially note that we also know Him as the Comforter. Alas for the disturbance of heart which we receive in the world—perhaps even in the family! Few things, it may be, are as we could wish and therefore we are sorely troubled. But when the Spirit of God comes, peace flows to us like a river and Jesus breathes on us and says, “Peace be unto you.” Do you know that peace? Many saints of God have enjoyed a heavenly calm upon their sick beds—when pain should have distracted them. The Spirit of God has rested them in Jesus. I have heard of one saint, near his end, who asked, “Is this dying? Then I should like to keep on dying forever.”

He felt so much comfort—such a flood of joy which the Holy Spirit creates—that death itself had not only lost its sting but had even become a joy to him! The comforts of the Holy Spirit take bitterness out of wormwood and gall and the sting out of the last enemy. May God give us His Grace to know the Holy Spirit as our Comforter! Happy knowledge! I trust that we have oftentimes known the Holy Spirit as guiding us in various ways. I will not speak largely on this for some might not understand it. But I know for sure that the Holy Spirit does give to His favored people hints as to things to come. I say not that any man is inspired to tell the future. But I do say that choice saints have received preparations for the future and foreshadowing of their coming experiences.

When Believers come into difficult circumstances they bow the knee and cry for guidance, even as David said, “Bring here the ephod.” The oracle is not dumb, but in some way, not always to be explained, the Spirit of God guides our steps through life if we are willing to obey His monitions. Is it not written, “Your ears shall hear a word behind you saying, This is the way, walk you in it”? The Divine communications of the Holy Spirit are the precious heritage of true saints. But they are a peculiar voice to their own souls and are not to be repeated in words.

If you know these Divine workings, as I am sure many of you do, then through His operations you are made to know the Holy Spirit—that deep calm—that peace which only He can give. That exhilaration, that superlative joy as of Heaven begun below which only the Lord can work. That steadfast courage, that holy patience, that fixedness of heart, that gentleness of manner and firmness of purpose which come only from above—

these all introduce you to the wonder-working Spirit who takes pleasure thus to operate upon the minds of the heirs of eternal glory. Thus we know the Holy Spirit by His works and gifts and revelations.

But I do not think we have entered the center of the text even yet. "You know Him," says the text—you know not only His work but Himself. I may know the great achievements of an artist in marble but I may not know the sculptor himself. I may know a man's paintings and therefore I may guess somewhat of his character but yet I may not know the man himself. "You know *Him*," says our Lord. And truly we know the Holy Spirit as to His personality. If the Holy Spirit were a mere influence, we should read, "You know *it*." Let us always shun the mistake of calling the Holy Spirit "it." *It* cannot do anything. *It* is a dead thing—the Holy Spirit is a living, blessed *Person* and I hope we can say that we know Him as such. Others may doubt His personality. But we believe in the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ and behold, in the names given to Him, the emotions ascribed to Him and the acts performed by Him, abundant proofs of His sacred personality. In our hearts we know HIM.

As we know His personality so we know also His Divinity because the Holy Spirit work in us effects which none but God could work. Who can give life to the spiritually dead? Who but the Lord and Giver of life? Who can instruct and illuminate as the Holy Spirit does? Only because He is Divine can He guide us into all Truth and purify us unto perfect holiness. There have been things worked in us—in our experience—in which we have beheld not only the finger of God but God Himself working in our hearts to will and to do of His own good pleasure. Oh, worship the Holy Spirit! The greatest crime of sinners is to blaspheme the Holy Spirit—and the greatest fault of saints is to *neglect* the Holy Spirit. Let us adore Him, yield to Him, confide in Him—and pray that we may know Him to the fullest.

So it comes to this—that as we know the Holy Spirit's personality and Godhead we come to know Him. I mean this—that there is now a personal relationship between the Believer and the Holy Spirit, a conscious and clear fellowship and communion. The communion of the Holy Spirit is one of the three choice blessings of the great Benediction. Do we not enjoy it? We speak with Him and He speaks with us. We trust Him and He puts us in trust with many a precious Truth of God. We are not strangers now. We do not talk of Him as a personage a long way off of whom we have heard—a Divine mystery with which Prophets and Apostles were acquainted in remote ages—but we *know* Him.

Come, let me look into your faces, my Beloved in the Lord, and let me ask you, Is this true or not? If you are obliged to say, "We do not know whether there is any Holy Spirit, for we are utter strangers to Him," then I pray the Lord to deal graciously with you and manifest His Son Jesus Christ to you by the power of that same Holy Spirit of whom we speak. The Spirit of Truth is to those of us who trust in the Lord Jesus our present help. He is more familiar with us than any other Person. For He enters within, where none else find admission. "You know Him. For He

dwells with you and shall be in you.” Thus much upon our first head. Now I will take you to another exceedingly important and interesting. May the Holy Spirit help me.

II. The second head is this—**BELIEVERS KNOW THE HOLY SPIRIT THROUGH HIMSELF.** Let us read the text again—“You know Him, for He dwells with you and shall be in you.” It is not, “You know Him for you have heard gracious preaching.” Nor, “You know Him for you have read about Him in the Scriptures.” No—“You know Him, for He dwells with you and shall be in you.” The moon cannot help us to see the sun nor can man reveal God. God can only be seen in His own light. No one can reveal the Holy Spirit but the Holy Spirit.

I thought this morning, coming along—I have to preach about the Holy Spirit. But what can I do without the Holy Spirit Himself? I can only preach aright concerning Him by His own Presence with me. And if He is not there, I shall only darken counsel by words without knowledge. Why is it that we know the Holy Spirit only by the Holy Spirit? I answer first, on account of the inadequacy of all means. By what methods can you make a man know the Holy Spirit? He is not to be discerned by the senses, nor perceived by eyes or ears. What if the preacher should be as eloquent as an angel—in what way would that make you know the Holy Spirit? You would probably remember more of the man than of his Subject. Nothing is more to be deplored than a hungering after mere oratory.

It would be infinitely better to speak with a stammer the Truth of God than to pour forth a flood of words in which the Truth is drowned. Words are nothing but air and wind and they cannot possibly reveal the Holy Spirit. No outward ordinances can reach the point any more than human speech. We greatly rejoice in the Baptism of Believers and in the breaking of bread in which the death of the Lord Jesus is set forth before us. But in what symbol could we fully see the Holy Spirit? If He were even to descend upon us as a dove we should see only the visible shape—we would not necessarily discern the Spirit. The Spirit Himself must reveal Himself.

Beloved, there is no chariot in which God can ride to us—the axles of creation itself would break beneath the enormous load of Deity. It is not possible for God to reveal Himself fully by His works—He is seen only by Himself. Therefore the Son of God, Himself, has come to us as “God with us.” In Him we see God. The Holy Spirit must Himself come into the heart to which He would make Himself known.

This is even more clear from the inability of our nature to discover the Holy Spirit. We are dead by nature and how can we know anything until He makes us alive? Our eyes are spiritually blinded—how can we see Him until He opens our eyes? We are altogether without strength by nature—how can we run after Him until He first comes to us and gives us the power to do so? We are unable to perceive the Holy Spirit—the carnal man knows not the things which are of God for they are spiritual and must be spiritually discerned. We must be endowed with a spirit before we can discern the great Spirit. Flesh cannot transform itself into spirit. No, it is

the Lord Himself who must come and breathe into us the Spirit of life and then we perceive Him who is the Spirit of Truth.

The Holy Spirit must reveal Himself to us if we are to know Him—this is clear from the nature of the case. How do I know a man but by the man himself appearing to me and speaking to me and manifesting himself to me? You cannot with accuracy judge of a man by his writings. It is a curious circumstance that Mr. Toplady, who wrote very bitterly on behalf of the Truth of God, was, in temper, the sweetest of men. On the other hand, Mr. Romaine, of Blackfriars, who in their writings seem to be the gentlest of beings were by no means free from harshness. You must see a man. No, more—you must *live* with a man in order to *know* him. You must live with the Holy Spirit and He must dwell with you and be in you, before you can speak of knowing Him at all.

The facts of the case prove this. I shall put it to any Believer here who can humbly say, “I know Him, for He dwells with me and is in me.” How do you know the Holy Spirit but by the Holy Spirit? Did you learn your religion from me? Then you have it all to unlearn. Did you learn it out of a book? You have need to begin again. Did you inherit it from your parents or borrow it from your friends? Then you are still ignorant of the vital point—God is only known through Himself. The Holy Spirit by the Holy Spirit. Have you not found it so in your own case? Why, you have sat and heard a sermon which was in itself cheering, comforting and quickening, for your neighbor said, “What a happy time we have enjoyed!” Alas, you thought you had never felt more stupid and lifeless. Have you not gone down the Tabernacle steps and said to yourself, “I am as hard as stone and as cold as a winter’s fog? What shall I do?”

Thus are you without the Spirit of God. But when the Divine Spirit comes upon you, such complaints are at an end. Then does the lame man leap as an hart and the tongue of the dumb is made to sing. Then are you full of living joy in listening to the Gospel—every word you hear seems to be on wheels. And towards you the cherubim fly swiftly bringing live coals from off the altar.

III. My third head is BELIEVERS ENJOY A SACRED INTIMACY WITH THE SPIRIT OF GOD. I am not going to withdraw that word intimacy. It is warranted by the language of our Lord. For He says, “You know Him, for He dwells with you and shall be in you.”

First, He says, “He dwells with you.” Is not that a wonderful sentence? The Holy Spirit is God, and therefore the Heaven of heavens cannot contain Him—and yet behold the condescending fact—“He dwells with you.” The Holy Spirit is now upon earth, the vicar and representative of the Lord Jesus Christ who said, “I will send you another Comforter”—that is, another Helper and Advocate like Himself. Consider how our Lord dwelt with His disciples. After the same fashion, the Spirit of Truth dwells with us. Jesus permitted His disciples the most intimate communion with Himself—they ran to Him with their troubles, they told Him their difficulties, they confessed their doubts.

He was their Master and Lord, and yet He washed their feet. He ate and drank with them and permitted the freest conversation. You never find our Lord repelling their approaches or resenting their familiarities. He did not draw a ring round Himself and say, "Keep your distance." Now, in the same manner, the Spirit of Truth deals with Believers. "He dwells with you." You may go to Him at any time, you may ask what you will of Him, you may speak to Him as a man speaks with his friend. You cannot see Him, but He sees you, which is much better. You cannot hear His voice, but He hears yours. No, He hears your *thoughts*. He is most near to those who are in Christ. "He dwells with you."

Dwelling with us, He is in our assemblies. It is He who fulfils the promise of our Lord, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." It is by the Holy Spirit that the Lord Jesus is with us. That we might enjoy that sacred Presence, it was expedient for our Lord to go away. Beloved, what a mercy it is when the Holy Spirit is in our assembly! What a dreary business it is when the Holy Spirit is gone from the congregation! The people come and go and perhaps there may be fine music, splendid millinery, admirable eloquence, a vast crowd, or a wealthy congregation. But what of these things? They are a bag of wind! If the Holy Spirit is not in the congregation, it is gathered together in vain. Behold, the people spend themselves for very vanity if the Lord is not among them. But the Comforter does come into our assemblies. For it is written, "He dwells with you."

He also comes into our homes—"He dwells with you." Where do you dwell, O true Believer? Is it in a very poor lodging?"—"He dwells with you." It may be, dear Friend, you live on board ship and are tossed upon the sea—"He dwells with you." Perhaps you go to work in a mine far beneath the surface of the earth—"He dwells with you." Many choice saints are bed-ridden but the Spirit dwells with them. I commend to all of you who love the Lord these gracious words—"He dwells with you." The first disciples said to the Lord Jesus, "Master, where do you dwell?" He answered, "Come and see." So I bid you note where the Divine Spirit chooses to dwell—behold and wonder—He dwells with His people wherever they are! He does not leave them alone but He abides with them as a shepherd with his flock.

Well may we know Him for He takes up His abode with us. And He does this, not as a latent, inoperative influence but He works in the place where He dwells. He makes our members instruments of His working and sanctifies the faculties of our nature as vessels of a temple wherein He dwells. He perfumes every chamber of the house of manhood and consecrates every corner of our being. O Believer, "He dwells with you" in all the might of His Godhead and you are made strong in the inner man by His strengthening! Fall back upon the Holy Spirit in the moment of your weakness.

Alas, my Brethren, are there any moments when we are not weak? Fall back, therefore, upon the Holy Spirit at all times. Even in the prayer in which you seek strength, ask that the Spirit may help your infirmities.

Even for the faith which brings you all Divine Grace ask for the Spirit of God to work faith in you. “He dwells with you,” for you are unable to live without His constant presence and you need not attempt the perilous experiment.

The second sentence runs, “He shall be in you.” This is a greater marvel. “Know you not that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit?” Take care of them, never defile them. Let not the idea of drunkenness, gluttony, or lust come near you. For it is written, “If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy.” With what reverence should we look upon the body now that it has been redeemed by the Lord Jesus and is indwelt by the Holy Spirit! The Spirit also dwells within your minds. We possess Him and He possesses us. “He shall be in you,” as a king in his palace, or a soul in its body. I am afraid that many professors know nothing about this. I must be talking nonsense in the esteem of some of you—if it seems nonsense, let that fact condemn you. You cannot be right before God unless the Spirit of God is in you, in your mind, your heart, your desires, your fears, your hopes, your inmost life.

The Spirit must permeate your entire being, filling it full with His floods, even as the waters cover the channels of the deep. “He shall be in you.” It is a wonderful fact. The Spirit shall be in you as the source of your life and the force of your life. What cannot a man do when the Holy Spirit is in him? His weakest endeavor will prosper when the Holy Spirit is pouring His life into him. For he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water that brings forth his fruit in his season. His leaf also shall not wither. And whatsoever he does, shall prosper. But without the Holy Spirit, what barren and withered trees we are! May we never know the awful drought which comes of the absence of the Spirit!

Brethren, when our Lord Jesus Christ came upon the earth and was beheld as God in human flesh, that was to us the pledge of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in us—for as God dwelt in the human Person of the Lord Jesus Christ—even so does the Spirit abide in our humanity. Our Lord’s life on earth was the picture of the Spirit’s indwelling. As He was anointed of the Spirit, even so are we in our measure. “He went about doing good.” He lived consecrated to God, loving the sons of men. And thus will the Spirit of God within us cause us to live—we shall imitate the Christ of God through the Spirit of God. The death of Christ was the way by which the Spirit was enabled to come to sinful men. By His great sacrifice the stone is rolled away which once blocked the road—

***“It is through the purchase of His death,
Who hung upon the tree,
The Spirit is sent down to breathe
On such dry bones as we.”***

When our Lord rose from the dead, we had the guarantee that even so the Spirit of God would quicken our mortal bodies and renew us into newness of life. But it was when our Lord ascended up on high, leading captivity captive that the Holy Spirit was actually given. When our Redeemer returned to His Father’s Throne, He scattered the largess of

Heaven—He gave the Holy Spirit to men of various offices and to His whole Church. Then were the days of refreshing by Divine visitation. Your ascended Lord gives you this token of His love—the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in you—prize it above all things. Do you know it? It seems like an impertinence for me to put this question to some of you who are gray-headed, and yet there is need. I trust you knew the Holy Spirit before I was born. But yet I cannot help pressing the enquiry, for you may not know Him even now.

I have urged the question upon myself and therefore I urge it upon you. Does the Spirit of Truth dwell in you? If not, what will you do?

IV. I come to a conclusion with one more observation. BELIEVERS SHALL HAVE A CONTINUANCE AND AN INCREASE FOR THE SPIRIT'S INTIMACY. "He dwells with you and shall be in you."

Mark well the increase. Is it not a blessed step from "with" to "in"? "He dwells *with* you"—that is, a Friend in the same house. "And shall be *in* you," that is, a Spirit within yourself. This is nearer, dearer, more mysterious and more effective by far. The bread yonder is "with" me. I eat it and now it is "in" me. It could not nourish me until it advanced from "with" to "in." What a distinct advance it is for the child of God when he rises from the Spirit of God being *with* him to the Spirit of God being *in* him! When the Spirit of God helped the Apostles to work miracles, He was with them. But when they came to feel His spiritual work in their own souls and to rejoice in the comfort which He brought to them, then He was in them. Even if you could obtain miraculous gifts, you ought not to be satisfied to speak with tongues, nor to work miracles. But you should press on to know the Spirit *with* yourself—indwelling, communing, quickening you.

"He shall be in you." Notice that in consequence of this, we know Him. If a person dwells with us, we begin to know him. But if he dwells within us and has become intertwined with our being, then we know him, indeed. "He shall be in you" is a high degree of intimacy. As we have noticed the increase, so remark the continuance—"He shall be in you." There is no period in which the Holy Spirit will have finished His work so as to go away and leave the Believer to himself. Our Savior says of the Comforter, that He "shall abide with you forever." Grieve not the Spirit of God, I pray you—quench Him not, resist Him not—but carefully cherish in your hearts this Divine word, "He shall be in you." What comfort is here!

You dread the days of age and infirmity, but "He shall be in you." You tremble before that trial which threatens you, but "He shall be in you." You do not know how you will answer the gainsayer—take no thought what you shall speak—it shall be given you in the same hour what you shall speak, for He shall be in you. And when the last moment approaches, when you must breathe out your soul to God—the living Spirit who dwells with you, even as the nurse sits at your bedside—shall then be in you and by His living power within shall transform death into the gate of endless life. "He dwells with you and shall be in you." O child of God, your Comforter will not leave you! He will continue still to take up His

residence within you until you shall be taken up to dwell where Jesus is forever and ever.

This is our great reliance for the future upholding of the Church as a whole and of each individual Believer—the Spirit of God dwells with us and shall be in us. The Church of God will never be destroyed. The gates of Hell shall not prevail against her. For the Holy Spirit dwells *with* us and shall be *in* us to the end of the world. This is the reliance of the child of God personally for his perseverance in Divine Grace. He knows that Jesus lives and therefore he shall live. And the Holy Spirit is within him, as the life of Christ, which can never die. The Believer pushes on despite a thousand obstacles, knowing that God gives him the victory through the Lord Jesus Christ—out of whose hand none can pluck him.

I have done. And yet I have done nothing unless the Spirit of God shall bless the word spoken. Oh, that some of you who have never known the Spirit of God may feel His power coming upon you at this moment! You may be sitting in the pew very careless, even now, and yet before you leave He may descend and soften your hard heart. The other day the ground was hard as iron and the water was turned to ice. But there came a breath from the south and soon a thaw set in, the snow vanished and the ice was gone—even so the Holy Spirit breathes on us and our inward frost disappears at once.

Come, Holy Spirit. Come even now. Let us implore His Presence and power. Pray for a closer, clearer knowledge of Him, O Children of God! Pray that sinners may be met with by His Grace. The first token of the Spirit's work will be that they will begin to feel their sin and cry for mercy—and when that is done, the glad tidings of pardon are for them. To them we say, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved and your house." The Lord make the word effectual, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

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THE SAINT AND THE SPIRIT

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BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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*“But you know Him; for He dwells with you, and shall be in you.”
John 14:17.*

THE Holy Spirit, although He is the most active, most potent, and most real Worker in the world, is not discerned by the mass of mankind. The great majority of men are affected only by what they see, or hear, or feel. Their life is confined to the narrow range of their *senses*. “What shall we eat?” Or, “What shall we drink?” Or, “With what shall we be clothed?”—these are the trinity of questions which absorb the attention and effort of the worldly. If they can *see* a thing, they believe in it! If they can *hear* the sound of it, they recognize it. If they can *discern* its shape, they put it down as real. They know not that the things which are seen are temporal, and therefore shadowy—and that the things which are *not* seen are the only substantial things, because they exist forever.

There they are, owlets fluttering in darkness, earthworms confined to their groveling sphere, mere moles borrowing in the dark earth. They have no eagle wing to bear them aloft, no eagle eyes with which to see afar off. Because the Holy Spirit is neither seen with the eye nor heard with the ear, therefore the world cannot receive Him because it sees Him not, neither knows Him. There are a few nobler spirits in the world whose souls are above mere dead matter, who mount into the spirit-world, in a certain sense. They recognize the existence of the soul and believe in its immortality and grandeur, but still, never having believed in the Spirit of God, their eye is blind to the first and chief of spiritual beings. Whatever else they see, they see not Him, and though they hear some voices from the land unknown, yet they hear not the Divine voice.

Celestial influences pass over them as sound through a forest which stirs not so much as a single leaf—no power or passion of their spirit being moved by the Holy One of Israel. They can think of things sublime, and philosophize upon spiritual topics. Their theories are plausible and sometimes they speak as though they were among the number of God's enlightened, but still, having no faith, they are without the Holy Spirit. Feeling none of His Divine energy they have no life in Him, no love to Him, and the affections not being moved, none of the other powers yield to the mighty influence of the glorious Spirit of the living God.

Beloved Friends, the vital distinction between the man of God and the man of the world is this: the man of God knows the Holy Spirit, for He is with him and dwells in him. But the man of the world knows not the Holy Spirit. He may know His name, but he is not *personally* acquainted with that Glorious One, because he sees Him not, neither knows Him. Mere

outward distinctions, such as may be caused by Baptism or the participation of the Lord's Supper, are nothing at all apart from the Holy Spirit.

Mere nominal distinctions, caused by wearing the name of "Christian," or the name of Mohammedan, are just superficial, surface works. But if you know the Holy Spirit you are a new creature in Christ Jesus! You have passed from death unto life! You shall never come into condemnation. If you know *not* the Spirit, then you are carnal and sensual, and not having the Spirit you are dead in sin.

You have not the Spirit which quickens and the flesh can profit you nothing. Whatever you may have attained in depth of knowledge or in excellence of morality, or in boldness of profession—you have foolishly begun to build your house at the top instead of at the bottom! And your house, lacking a foundation, will fall to pieces—and all your building shall be but as the card house of little children, or the sand-built tower of the fool which falls in the day of the storm.

The great question which I want to raise in every heart this morning will be this: Do you know the Spirit of God? Does He dwell with you? Is He in you? If you have not the Spirit of Christ, you are none of His. But if the Spirit is in you, the body, indeed, is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. You are a living child of God if the Spirit of God dwells in you—without Him you are dead while you live.

In trying to show this morning, so far as our poor powers can show, what it is the Believer knows of the Holy Spirit, I shall first say that the Believer knows the Holy Spirit by virtue of His operations. Secondly, and better still, he knows the Holy Spirit by virtue of His personal indwelling. And, thirdly, that the Believer shall know the Holy Spirit yet better, for the text says, He "shall be in you."

I. First, the Holy Spirit is known to Believers, and is with Believers THROUGH HIS OPERATIONS IN THEM AND UPON THEM. My Brothers and Sisters, we have seen the operations of the Holy Spirit in the Church at large. It was the Holy Spirit who at the very first formed the Church. It is He who called out the chosen ones, quickened them, made them living stones fit to be built together for a habitation of God through the Spirit. It is He who binds these living stones together, for all Christian unity comes from Him as the Spirit of Peace, the Holy Dove proceeding from the Father.

The first manifest dedication and consecration of the Church of the Lord Jesus was at Pentecost, and here the Holy Spirit was the great active Agent. You have not forgotten those words, "When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from Heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit."

On that day the ascended Savior, having obtained gifts for men, fulfilled that ancient promise pronounced by the mouth of the prophet Joel, "I will pour out My Spirit upon flesh." There had been no Church of God composed of Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and dwellers in Mesopotamia if the

Spirit of God had not then been poured out upon the first few hundred chosen souls that they might be messengers of mercy unto others, to bring in the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Since then, dear Friends, the Holy Spirit has been a gracious Agent in supplying the Church with her ministry.

There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. "And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom. To another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit. To another faith by the same Spirit. To another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit. To another the working of miracles. To another prophecy. To another discerning of spirits. To another many kinds of tongues. To another the interpretation of tongues. But all these works that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He wills."

"Having, then, gifts differing according to the Grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith. Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering. Or he that teaches, on teaching. Or he that exhorts, on exhortation. He that gives, let him do it with simplicity. He that rules, with diligence. He that shows mercy, with cheerfulness." In all our efforts let us depend upon Divine power, for without it we are as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. The gentle dews of Barnabas are useless without the dew of the Spirit, and Boanerges' thunder is all in vain unless the lightening of the Holy Spirit shall go with it.

Brethren, the more than golden treasure of the Church is the Holy Spirit! The treasury of the Church is not under the lock and key of the State—her caskets of wealth are not to be opened by the power of the policeman or by an Act of Parliament. The true treasury of the Church is not even found in the gold and silver which may voluntarily be given to her—in the power and energy of the Holy Spirit are the riches of the Church of God! That is a rich Church which shall meet in a barn or under the blue vault of Heaven if the Holy Spirit is there! But that is a poor Church with "Ichabod" legibly written across its wall, which, with all its wealth, its intelligence, and its respectability, is devoid of the Spirit of the living God.

This is the Church's power, her energy, her life, the earnest of her future glory, the present power by which she is to resist and conquer her foes. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the Church is as manifest to many of us as any other great fact can possibly be. Even when we have doubted whether we, ourselves, possessed the Spirit, we have been charmed to see His work in others. We have seen conversions, which nothing but Omnipotence could have worked! We have seen Graces exemplified in Christians which unaided human nature could not have produced! We have seen virtues in our fellows which we have delighted to admire! We have coveted earnestly the good gifts God has given to them—we have not envied them nor sought to make their excellencies to appear less beautiful than they are—on the contrary, we have seen, to the honor

and praise of God, such virtues and excellencies in Believers as have compelled us to feel that the Holy Spirit is still in the midst of His people!

Thus we know the Holy Spirit because we can distinctly recognize His action in the Church of God. We can discern it on every page of history. We see it in our own times. We have seen it graciously in revivals—we hope to see it yet more. And, as a Church, meeting in this place, I am sure we can bear our testimony, even thousands of us, that the Holy Spirit has been here, blessing us, indeed, and of a truth!

But, Beloved, no man knows the Holy Spirit to any great extent by mere observation of His work in the Church. Let me come closer to your souls and deal more personally with your inward experiences. The only way to know the Holy Spirit is by feeling Him at work in *your own souls*. Now, the works of the Holy Spirit within a regenerate man are very many. It is not possible for me to mention them all, but at the commencement let me say that the most of them find an illustration in the work of the Holy Spirit upon the Person of our Lord, who is our Covenant Head and Representative.

What the Spirit did for Jesus, the Mediator, the Head of the body, He repeats after the manner and the measure of each man in each member of the body of Christ. The same oil bedews the skirts of the garment as that which fell so copiously upon the Head. The same Spirit descends to the very meanest Christian as that which was upon Christ, the Anointed One of God. Now, you will remember that the Holy Spirit was concerned in the very birth of our Lord on earth. The angel said to Mary, “The Holy Spirit shall come upon you, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow you. Therefore also that Holy Thing which shall be born of you shall be called the Son of God.”

Our Lord was born into this world through the marvelous, mysterious, secret operation of the Divine Spirit. He was born of the Virgin Mary but He is the Son of the Highest. Our Lord might have addressed the Holy Spirit and said, “A body have You prepared Me.” Beloved, anything like a new birth in you and me is also of the Holy Spirit! Christ was not born at Bethlehem without the Spirit of God, and neither is He born in our hearts. The Christ in the manger is begotten by the Holy Spirit, and the Christ in every humble heart comes there by the same Divine agency.

In us Christ must be conceived. In us Christ must be formed. And this it is that Paul longed for when he said, “I travail in birth till Christ be formed in you the hope of glory.” It is the Spirit’s work, then, to bring Christ to any one of us, and to make us to know Christ and every good desire towards Jesus. Much less every real reception of Jesus into the soul is the work of the Spirit of Grace. When our Lord was grown up and had come to those years in which He exercised His public ministry, although He was baptized by man with water, He was also baptized with the Holy Spirit. In the midst of Jordan, you will remember, when He was fulfilling all righteousness, He saw the heavens opened, and lo, the Spirit of God descended upon Him like a dove and did rest upon Him.

That was His consecration to His work. That was the anointing which commissioned and qualified Him as the Servant of God. He was that day

publicly and effectually set apart by the Holy Spirit to be distinctly the great Captain of our salvation, the Apostle and High Priest of our profession! Beloved, it is thus that you and I must be separated from the world by the Holy Spirit resting upon us! With all His dove-like influences He must descend into our souls, that from then on we may not serve sin but become the servants of God. It is only in the power of His Divine anointing that we can have power to minister in the Lord's House as the sent servants of the Master of the household.

Then, in Jesus Christ's three and a half years of ministry, the power by which He worked miracles, and the power by which He preached is ascribed to the Holy Spirit. Jesus Himself said that He cast out devils by the Spirit of God—it was His own declaration. So, albeit that as God He could work what miracles He willed, yet He chose to use the Divine power of the Holy Spirit of God in the working of many of His wonders.

Beloved, you have not forgotten the famous text of His sermon at Nazareth, which is appropriate to the point in hand, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek. He has sent Me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."

Did the Master work in the power of the Spirit of God, and shall not the servants do so? If you would work such works as Christ did, you must work them in the power which Christ bestowed so abundantly on His Church when He ascended to His Father. If you would be here on earth wonder-workers to arouse the dead, to open blind eyes, and to set at liberty the captives—and to this you are ordained in your measure even as He was, every one of you—then you must have the power of the Holy Spirit resting upon you, for only by that power can you lead the life of Christ on earth!

The resurrection of Christ from the dead is sometimes in Scripture ascribed to the Holy Spirit. You will recollect that passage in the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, at the 11th verse: here you are promised that the same power which "raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies." Our resurrection from the death of sin is worked in us by the Holy Spirit. There is no rising out of the grave of sin unless the voice shall say, "Lazarus, come forth."

And with that voice, there must go that irresistible life-giving power without which the dead in sin will remain dead until they corrupt and are cast into Tophet where their worm dies not, and their fire is not quenched. See then, Beloved, from the birth of Christ to His resurrection, He was pleased to put honor upon the Holy Spirit by receiving abundantly of His power. He was anointed as Man with the oil of gladness above His fellows, and though able, as God, to have done as He pleased, independently, yet in order that the unity of the blessed Trinity might be manifest to us, Christ went not without His Father's sending, and spoke not His own words, but His Father's words. And so the power which rested upon Him, which He chose to use, was the power of the Holy Spirit.

Now, as the strength of the Head, so must the strength of the members be. As the Head was anointed of the Spirit, so must the members be anointed in like manner. As the Head rose from the dead, so must the members rise by the same power—by the energy of that Holy Comforter who has been shed abroad upon the people of God. By virtue of the Lord Jesus Christ's ascension we must be sustained and perfected that the many Brethren may in all things be made like to the Elder Brother. There is much more in this illustration than I can bring forth, therefore I leave it with you as a goodly dish to feed upon at your leisure.

In enlarging upon the operations of the blessed Spirit, dear Friends, if you and I know the Spirit of God at all, we shall know Him first as having operated upon us to convict us of our sin. I trust I shall never be second to anyone in preaching plainly that whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ has everlasting life. Yet I cannot but think that many, in their overzeal for preaching up the simplicity of faith, have fallen into grievous error by disparaging repentance of sin, and setting at nothing all idea of a sinner's coming to Jesus because sin has become loathsome and unbearable. Beloved, no one ever *did* come to Christ nor ever *will* until he feels his *need* of Jesus Christ!

Though it is the duty of the minister to preach the Gospel to every sinner, yet that Gospel never can be and never will be of any value to a soul until that soul is emptied of self, made to see its sin and to abhor it. Now, if ever you and I have spied out our disease, have seen the blotches of our spiritual leprosy, have been made to know that it is more than skin-deep and lies far down in the very core of our being. If ever we have been made to feel that the whole head is sick and the whole heart is faint (and I am sure we must feel this before we can savingly put our trust in Jesus), this is the finger of God, this is the work of the Spirit of God in the soul!

"When He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He shall convince the world of sin." And if you have been convinced of sin, the Spirit of God has come to you. There is no convincer like the Spirit. Beloved, I may tell you of your sins—I do try to do so as plainly as I know. I may set before you the heinousness of sin as against a just, and holy, and merciful God. I may try to show you the bitterness of sin in its eternal results. But all this is *nothing* until the Holy Spirit comes—and then, without words or with them, by whichever way He chooses to act—He can make your soul shake! He can make your whole heart quiver till rottenness enters into your bones.

I pray God that all of us may feel this in such a measure as He may think fit to show it to us. But you will never doubt the existence of the Holy Spirit after such an experience of His power as a consuming fire and a rushing mighty wind! When He wields the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, and drives that sword through you again, and again, and again, you will know Him beyond a question! When He takes the great sledge hammer of the Law and breaks you in pieces, and pounds you like wheat in a mortar with the pestle—you will never have doubts about His power! You will know Him, for He is with you and has bowed you in the dust by His Presence.

But next, if you know the Holy Spirit, you will also know Him as the great Revealer of Christ. There is the serpent lifted up on the pole in the midst of the sin-bitten, dying, host. But, Brothers and Sisters, many may die, albeit that the bronze serpent is within view, unless someone shall direct their eyes to the spot. How many have I known, who, when they have been told about Christ and the plan of salvation, have said, "Where is He?" And they have turned their poor bewildered glances everywhere except to the right place! And even when their eyes have had a little light, they have been looking for quite another Christ than the one who is set before them in the Gospel.

Oh, I remember how long I looked for Christ but could not find Him, and when at last I did spy Him, I perceived how near He was while my eyes were looking a long way off for Him—looking up into Heaven or into my own soul! But of this I am conscious at this moment—that I never could under *any* ministry have been enabled to spy out my Lord Jesus if it had not been that the Holy Spirit cast a ray of light upon Christ and opened my eyes so that I could perceive Him! It is our duty to set forth Christ very plainly, manifestly, crucified, in the congregation. But Jesus Christ is never seen by any light which comes from either the minister or his hearer—the light must come from the Holy Spirit.

When the Holy Spirit shines full upon the crown of thorns and the five wounds and the mournful countenance of the Man of Sorrows, oh, how the wounds glisten, and how fair is Jesus to a poor sinner's tearful eyes! But without that light a man may sit at the foot of the Cross and see nothing, and even die in his darkness and sin. Brethren, if you have ever put your trust in Jesus, you will know the Holy Spirit who worked your faith in you and led you to trust in the finished salvation of our exalted Savior!

Since that blessed day, have we not often known the Spirit as our helper in prayer? I went to my chamber and I bowed upon my knees and tried to cry unto God, but though I sought to pray, I could not till on a sudden I found a Friend. It is written, "The Spirit also helps our infirmities...for He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God." What delightful praying it is when the Holy Spirit indites the prayer so that we have nothing to do but just to read what He writes—to utter what He suggests, to speak out what He speaks—to be the ram's horn trumpet and He the breath that causes the sound! Oh, it is rapturous praying when the Spirit helps you pray!

Ah, Beloved, you know what this means, some of you. When you have had wrestling times like Jacob at Jabbok's brook. When you have been able to say, like Luther, "I have overcome, I have had my desire of God," to what did you ascribe your prevalence, your moving that arm which moves the world, but to the Holy Spirit, who is the great Helper of His people in times of prayer? Yes, we know the Spirit in that respect, for He is with us daily.

Then, when we rose from our knees, we opened the Scriptures and began to read, and the Spirit of Truth acted as Interpreter. He wrote the Book, and therefore He understands its meaning. What Bible readings those are when the Spirit of God is the Expositor! It is poor reading when

you merely sound the words and find not the Spirit! The letter kills, the Spirit is life. When “a glory gilds the sacred page, majestic like the sun”—when every letter reflects the light of Deity, and every Word glows in the Presence of the living God like the bush at Horeb’s mountain that glowed with living fire—ah, then, Bible readings become soul-fattening times and the soul, being taught of God, sees the Father, has communion with the Son, and is filled with life, and light, and joy ineffable!

You may say, perhaps, the Spirit of God is with us in these solitary and secret engagements and so we know Him, but is He with us in public? Ah, Beloved, you know not the Spirit unless you have often recognized Him in His operations as the great Calmer and Quieter of His people’s minds when under distractions. It is perfectly marvelous how a soul that is like the Lake of Galilee, tossed with a thousand waves, becomes smooth as a sheet of glass when the Holy Spirit breathes upon it. Cares, losses, woes, brokenness of heart—every shape of human misery yields to the soft whisper of the Spirit of God! Oh, if you do not know the Comforter, I pity you!

You may have a thousand friends, but they are nothing compared to this *one* Comforter. All the remedies of other comforters can only be applied to the ear, but this celestial medicine affects the heart itself with matchless power of consolation. He does not merely give us something out of which we may draw comfort, but He actually *comforts* us for He reaches the secret spring of our being and sheds a sacred peace abroad.

Yes, we know the Heavenly Dove! We have known Him when we have heard the slander of the many, and fear was on every side. We have known Him, for He has helped us to say—

***“If on my face, for Your dear name,
Shame and reproach shall be,
I’ll hail reproach, and welcome shame,
If You remember me.”***

We have known Him when we have lost much. When friend after friend has been hurried away to the grave. When there has been disappointment without, and dismay within, we have turned to Him and have rested in the infallible promise of an immutable God, “I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.” I trust you know the Holy Spirit as the Comforter!

More especially is the Spirit known to Believers as their Sanctifier. In a certain sense we are sanctified by the blood of Jesus and by the election of the Father. We are set apart by election to be made holy through the blood by the power of the Holy Spirit. This third kind of sanctification which consists in the subjugation of inbred sin, and in the victory of the new life over the old nature—this is the daily work of the Spirit of God in the soul. It is the Spirit’s work to check the unruly passion, to put the bit into the mouth of the fiery desire! It is the Spirit’s work to feed the new-born soul, to give it energy and vigor, to give it victory over the old enemy.

And, glory be to God, it will be the Spirit’s work, one day, to make us exactly like our Master! We shall be fashioned into His image—we are to be melted and poured anew into the mold—and made like the First-born among many Brethren! And while we shall give the Savior the praise for having washed us in His blood, yet we shall also bless the Holy Spirit who

has worked all our works in us, and worked in us to will and to do according to the good pleasure of the Father—

***“And every virtue we possess,
And every victory won,
And every thought of holiness,
Are His, and His alone.”***

My dear Brethren, I have not time to mention at length the multiform and hallowed works of the Spirit in us, but I trust you know them so well that you know Him by them. Suffice it to say that if you would receive blessing from the ministry, it must be through the power of the Spirit. And if, on the other hand, you would minister with power to others, you must wait upon that Spirit for your help. If we are ever to be lifted up from selfishness to disinterested sacrifice. If we are ever to be raised from cowardly doubts and fears to dauntless courage. If ever we are to arise from worldliness and carnality into heavenly mindedness and true spirituality. If ever we are to shake off the serpent slough of our old nature, and put on the pure vesture of Christ’s likeness. If ever, in fine, we are to be delivered from this present evil world and to be filled with all the fullness of God, we must find our strength for each and all in the power and energy and quickening Spirit of the living God.

I leave this point, only endeavoring to urge each one to enquire, “What do I know of all this?” I am afraid many of you know nothing at all about it. You are a good sort of people. You were sprinkled when you were infants and have been regularly to Church or Chapel all your lives. You do not owe anything and live as you should live in many respects. But you think that outward morality and outward religion are everything. You use your hymnbooks and prayer books, and behave yourselves like respectable people—but if you have not the Spirit you are lost.

The external without the inward is good for nothing. It is *all* good for nothing. A wagonload of profession is not worth an ounce of Divine Grace—“You must be born again.” The Holy Spirit must come into your souls, or else, if for a 1,000 years you could persevere in the most reputable external religion, you would end where you began—or in something *worse*, namely, in weariness of flesh about such empty things—or in a self-righteousness which would be more damnable, perhaps, than open sin.

Beware of resting in anything short of the indwelling Spirit. You must have the Spirit! You cannot pass the gate of pearl without it. You cannot know Christ without it. “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” This is no slight change which can be easily worked. You must be *made* new creatures—old things must pass away—and all things must become new. This is a *work* that your free agency cannot accomplish. This is a *work* that your poor weakness, which you call strength, will never be able to achieve. You must, therefore, have power from *above*. God must come into contact with you! The Eternal Spirit must dwell in your soul or else you can never dwell in Heaven! Let this be laid home to your heart and God bless the thought to your soul’s profit.

II. Very briefly, in the second place, the chosen of God not only know the Spirit by His operations which they have seen in the Church, and

which they have felt in themselves, but, **THEY KNOW HIM BY HIS PERSONAL INDWELLING IN THEIR SOULS.** I shall not attempt to preach upon this great mystery, but I should like you to catch the thought and to hold it in your hearts. You know that Jesus Christ gave us His righteousness and His blood, and He did a great deal more and then gave us Himself. “He loved us, and gave Himself for us.”

You have learned to distinguish between the gifts of Christ, and Christ Himself. Now, the Holy Spirit gives us His operations and His influences, for which we should be very grateful. But the greatest gift is not the operation nor the influence, but *Himself*, which “dwells with you and shall be in you.” The great Covenant gift is the Holy Spirit Himself. Do you understand that Truth of God? It is asserted many times in Scripture that the bodies of the saints are the *temples* of the Holy Spirit. God dwells in you! You are the *temples* of God!

Now, do not cut that down and say that it means that He *influences* us and operates upon us. It does mean that, but it means a great deal more. It means literally this—that the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the sacred Trinity, actually dwells in every regenerate man and woman—that He has made our bodies to be His shrine and He is the indwelling Lord. Do you perceive this grand doctrine? I say again, not merely the Graces of God, nor the operations of the Spirit, but the *Spirit Himself* dwells in us! He is everywhere. He fills all in all, but still He has a special residence—and though we are told in the chapter before us that the Father and the Son take up their abode with us, yet not in the same sense in which the Holy Spirit does.

He *Personally* dwells in the Church, and in each Believer. God the Holy Spirit is pleased to dwell in our bodies, not so as to deify our *humanity*, or to take us into connection with Deity in the same way as the humanity of Jesus was exalted, but still so as truly to dwell in us and abide in us! Brothers and Sisters, gather up this manna, it is better than angels’ food! And when you have received this Truth of God thoroughly into your soul, you will say, “This is wondrously condescending; for, O Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof, and yet here it is, ‘God dwells in me and I in Him.’”

This indwelling must be singularly effective. It is very powerful for a great God to send His influences, but if He comes *Himself*? There is no way of doing work well, you know, except doing it yourself. And when the Master comes and gives Personal attendance, it is sure to be done! Since the Holy Spirit dwells in us, how well His sanctifying work will be done! Depend upon it, He will not leave a single relic of sin when His work is achieved, because He has not sent an angel to us, but He has *Himself* come here to effect the Divine purpose of making us qualified for the kingdom.

Oh, how effective that presence must be! How delightfully encouraging is this indwelling, “If God actually dwells in me, then what may I not expect? There can be no blessing too great to expect if I have received the Holy Spirit Himself. If I am like one of old, a man full of the Holy Spirit, then I cannot be empty of anything else, for when God gives Himself, how

shall He not also give us all things?" Brethren, if this is so, how potently sanctifying the thought is—for if God dwells in us—let us not defile these bodies.

What a powerful operation that Truth ought to have, and will have, upon every man who believes it, for "every man that has this hope in him purifies himself, even as He is pure." We must make the temple pure while God is with us. We cannot prostitute the soul to sin while the Holy Spirit resides with us, and embraces us in the mighty cloud of His Divine influences. What can be nobler than a Christian? Talk of kings and queens—what are they compared with men who, every day, carry God about with them? When Ignatius stood before the judges, they said, "You are called the God-bearer, Theophorus. What do you mean by this?"

He said, "I *am* a God-bearer. God dwells in me." When the persecutor looked at him and said he blasphemed, he replied that the Holy Spirit dwelt in him. Ah, and Ignatius proved it! For when they put him to a cruel death, he bore it with undaunted courage. God shone through the man, and made human weakness a platform for Divine strength! If you and I dare to say God dwells in us, we must prove it, too. Perhaps not by a cruel death, but by what is far more difficult—a *holy life*.

The Lord help us so to live that men may take knowledge of us that God looks through our eyes! That the love of God acts through our hands in deeds of integrity and kindness! That God speaks through our tongues in words of truth and holiness! And that God has been pleased to fill us to the full with His own love, breathing Himself into us that we might breathe out Himself among the sons of men in actions that shall be like Christ, and reflect honor upon His name.

Thus I have brought before you a rich thought for meditation.

III. Now, in the third place, Beloved, if we thus know the Holy Spirit, WE SHALL KNOW HIM BETTER SOON. We shall be more instructed, and the instructed disciple knows the master better than he who is in the A, B, C, class. We shall be more fully sanctified, and the pure in heart see God. And the more pure we become, the more clearly shall we see the great Purifier. The Holy Spirit will daily reveal Christ to us, and as we grow more like Christ we shall see more *of* Christ, and more of *Him* whose office it is to take of the things of Christ and show them unto us.

None of us know to what we may yet attain. I had no idea, when I first knew the Lord, of even the small attainment to which I have come in Divine Truth. I have put away many a childish thing and learned many a manly truth which was too high for me before. But if the Lord shall spare our lives—why, Beloved, we have specimens among us of saints who have known the Lord 40 or 50 years, who far outstrip us in a thousand things—I do not know what we may be even here! I do not think any man knows to what a Christian may attain.

We become warped and crippled by our small conceptions of the possible in Divine Grace. Many Christians get Chinese shoes put on their feet and never get developed, and therefore they think there must be doubts and fears always. There is no need for it. A man might as well live without doubts and fears as not—if he would grow in Divine Grace, he would out-

grow unbelief. We fancy if we get to be as full of faith as Abraham that it will be a great attainment. Oh, but Abraham only lived in the twilight, when Christ had not come!

We live in a better age than Abraham, after the coming of Christ, and we ought never to stint ourselves to the same degree as those ancient saints. We are to *excel* them and mount higher and higher. You know not how sweet and clear the air is, how glorious the views above these clouds, if you could but stretch your wings of love and confidence and zeal, and mount above the world. We do not know what we shall be! We cannot tell what we shall know of the love and of the Spirit of God here. There *is* one thing we know—that when He shall appear, whose coming is our daily hope, we shall be like He, for we shall see Him as He is.

And when we shall be like He, then we shall know the Spirit of God, for we shall be filled with wisdom and knowledge, and made in the image of Christ, who is our All in All. If any of you desire the Spirit of God, remember that your business is not with Him first, but with the Cross of Christ. Trust Christ, poor, broken-hearted Sinner. I pray that the Holy Spirit may give you precious faith to do it. Your brokenness of heart comes from Him. The Christian who is saved has to do with the Spirit of God, but to you, poor Sinner, the Gospel command is, look to Jesus, look to Jesus and live! May the Lord bless you, for Jesus Christ's sake.

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THE BELIEVER NOT AN ORPHAN NO. 2990

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 31, 1906.

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

*“I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.”
John 14:18.*

You will notice that the margin reads, “I will not leave you orphans: I will come to you.” In the absence of our Lord Jesus Christ, the disciples were like children deprived of their parents. During the three years in which He had been with them, He had solved all their difficulties, borne all their burdens and supplied all their needs. Whenever a case was too hard or too heavy for them, they took it to Him. When their enemies well near overcame them, Jesus came to the rescue and turned the tide of battle. They were all happy and safe enough while the Master was with them. He walked in their midst like a father amid a large family of children, making all the household glad. But now He was about to be taken from them by an ignominious death and they might well feel that they would be like little children deprived of their natural and beloved Protector. Our Savior knew the fear that was in their hearts and before they could express it, He removed it by saying “You shall not be left alone in this wild and desert world. Though I must be absent from you in the flesh, yet I will be present with you in a more efficacious manner. I will come to you spiritually and you shall derive from My spiritual Presence even more good than you could have had from My bodily Presence, had I still continued in your midst.”

I. First, here is AN EVIL AVERTED.

Without their Lord, Believers would, apart from the Holy Spirit, be like other orphans—unhappy and desolate. Give them what you might, their loss could not have been recompensed. No number of lamps can make up for the sun’s absence—blaze as they may, it is still night. No circle of friends can supply to a bereaved woman the loss of her husband—without him she is still a widow. Even thus, without Jesus, it is inevitable that the saints should be as orphans. But Jesus has promised in the text that we shall not be so— He declares the only thing that can remove the trial shall be ours—“I will come to you.”

Now remember that *an orphan is one whose parents are dead*. This, in itself, is a great sorrow, if there were no other. The dear father, so well-beloved, was suddenly smitten down with sickness. They watched him with anxiety. They nursed him with sedulous care, but he expired. The loving eyes are closed in darkness for them. Those active hands will no longer toil for the family. That heart and brain will no longer feel and think for them. Beneath the green grass the father sleeps. And every time the child surveys that hallowed hillock, his heart swells with grief.

Beloved, we are not orphans in that sense, for our Lord Jesus is not dead! It is true that He died, for one of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side and forthwith came out blood and water—a sure evidence that the pericardium had been pierced and that the fountain of life had been broken up. He died, that is certain, but He now is not dead! Go not to the grave to seek Him. Angel voices say, “He is not here, for He is risen.” He could not be held by the bands of death. We do not worship a dead Christ, nor do we even think of Him now as a corpse. That picture on the wall which the Romanists paint and worship, represents Christ as dead, but oh, it is so good to think of Christ as living, remaining in an existence real and true, none the less living because He died, but all the more truly full of life because He has passed through the portals of the grave and is now reigning forever! See then, dear Friends, the bitter root of the orphan’s sorrow is gone from us, for our Jesus is not dead! No mausoleum enshrines His ashes, no pyramid embalms His body, no monument records the place of His permanent sepulcher!

The orphan has a sharp sorrow springing out of the death of his parents, namely, that *he is left alone*. He cannot now make appeals to the wisdom of the parent who could direct him. He cannot run, as once he did, when he was weary, to climb the parental knee. He cannot lean his aching head upon the parental bosom. “Father,” he may say, but no voice gives an answer. “Mother,” he may cry, but that fond title which would awaken the mother if she slept, cannot awaken her from the bed of death! The child is alone, alone as to those two hearts which were its best companions. The parent and lover are gone! The little ones know what it is to be deserted and forsaken. But we are not so—we are not orphans. It is true that Jesus is not here in body, but His spiritual Presence is quite as blessed as His bodily Presence would have been. No, it is *better*, for supposing Jesus Christ to be here in Person, you could not all come and touch the hem of His garment—not all at once, at any rate. There might be thousands waiting all the world over to speak with Him, but how could they all reach Him if He were merely here in body? You might all be wanting to tell Him something, but, in the body He could only receive some one or two of you at a time.

But in spirit, there is no need for you to stir from the pew, no need to say a word—Jesus hears your thoughts talk and attends to all your needs at the same moment! There is no need for us to press to get at Him because the throng is great, for He is as near to me as He is to you, and as near to you as to saints in America, or the islands of the Southern Sea. He is everywhere present and all His beloved may talk with Him! You can tell Him, at this moment, the sorrows which you dare not open up to anyone else. You will feel that in declaring them to Him, you have not breathed them to the air, but that a real Person has heard you. One as real as though you could grip His hand and could see the loving flash of His eyes and mark the sympathetic change of His Countenance.

Is it not so with you, you children of a living Savior? You know it is! You have a Friend that sticks closer than a brother! You have a near and dear One who, in the dead of the night is in the chamber, and in the heat and burden of the day is in the field of labor. You are not orphans—the “Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The

Prince of Peace" is with you—your Lord is here and, as one whom his mother comforts, so Jesus comforts you!

The orphan, too, *has lost the kind hands which always took care that food and raiment should be provided, that the table should be well stored, and that the house should be kept in comfort.* Poor feeble one, who will provide for his needs? His father is dead, his mother is gone—who will take care of the little wanderer now! But it is not so with us! Jesus has not left us orphans. His care for His people is no less, now, than it was when He sat at the table with Mary, and Martha and Lazarus, whom "Jesus loved." Instead of the provisions being less, they are even greater, for since the Holy Spirit has been given to us, we have richer fare and are more indulged with spiritual comforts than Believers were before the bodily Presence of the Master had departed! Do your souls hunger tonight? Jesus gives you the bread of Heaven! Do you thirst tonight!? The waters from the Rock cease not to flow—

"Come, make your needs, your burdens known."

You have but to make known your needs to have them all supplied! Christ waits to be gracious in the midst of this assembly. He is here with His golden hands, opening those hands to supply the needs of every living soul. "Oh," says one, "I am poor and needy." Go on with the quotation. "Yet the Lord thinks upon me." "Ah," says another, "I have besought the Lord thrice to tear away a thorn in the flesh from me." Remember what He said to Paul? "My Grace is sufficient for you." You are not left without the strength you need. The Lord is still your Shepherd. He will provide for you till He leads you through death's dark valley and brings you to the shining pastures upon the hilltops of Glory! You are not destitute? You need not beg an asylum from an ungodly world by bowing to its demands, or trusting its vain promises—for Jesus will never leave you, nor forsake you!

The orphan, too, is *left without the instruction which is most suitable for a child.* We may say what we will, but there is none so fit to form a child's character as the parent. It is a very sad loss for a child to have lost either father or mother in its early days, for the most skillful preceptor, though he may do much—by the blessing of God, very much—is but a stop-gap, and but half makes up for the original ordinance of Providence that the parent's love should fashion the child's mind. But, dear Friends, we are not orphans! We who believe in Jesus are not left without an education. Jesus is not here, Himself, it is true. I daresay some of you wish you could come on Lord's-Days and listen to Him! Would it not be sweet to look up to this pulpit and see the Crucified One, and to hear Him preach? Ah, so you think, but the Apostle says, "Though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more."

It is most for your profit that you should receive the Spirit of Truth, not through the golden vessel of Christ in His actual Presence here, but through the poor earthen vessels of humble servants of God like ourselves. At any rate, whether we speak, or an angel from Heaven, the speaker matters not—it is the Spirit of God, alone, that is the power of the Word and makes that Word become vital and quickening to you. You

now have the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit is so given that there is not a Truth of God which you may not understand. You may be led into the deepest mystery by His teaching. You may be made to know and to comprehend those knotty points in the Word of God which have hitherto puzzled you. You have but humbly to look up to Jesus and His Spirit will still teach you. I tell you, though you are poor and ignorant, and perhaps can scarcely read a word in the Bible—for all that, you may be better instructed in the things of God than doctors of divinity if you go to the Holy Spirit and are taught of Him! Those who go only to books and to the letter and are taught of men, may be fools in the sight of God, but those who go to Jesus and sit at His feet, and ask to be taught of His Spirit, shall be wise unto salvation! Blessed be God, there are not a few among us of this sort. We are not left orphans—we still have an Instructor with us!

There is one point in which the orphan is often sorrowfully reminded of his orphanhood, namely, *in lacking a defender*. It is so natural in a little child, when some big boys bully him, to cry, "I'll tell my father!" How often did we use to say so, and how often have we heard from the little ones since, "I'll tell Mother!" Sometimes, the not being able to do this is a much severer loss than we can guess. Unkind and cruel men have snatched away from orphans the little which a father's love had left behind and, in the court of law, there has been no defender to protect the orphan's goods. Had the father been there, the child would have had its rights, scarcely would any have dared to infringe them. But, in the absence of the father, the orphan is eaten up like bread and the wicked of the earth devour his estate. In this sense, the saints are not orphans. The devil would rob us of our heritage if he could, but there is an Advocate with the Father who pleads for us. Satan would snatch from us every promise and tear from us all the comforts of the Covenant, but we are not orphans. And when he brings a suit-at-law against us and thinks that we are the only defendants in the case, he is mistaken, for we have an Advocate on high! Christ comes in and pleads, as the sinner's Friend, for us—and when He pleads at the Bar of Justice, there is no fear but that His plea will be of effect, and our inheritance shall be safe! He has not left us orphans.

Now I want, without saying many words, to get you who love the Master to feel what a very precious thought this is, that you are not alone in this world—that if you have no earthly friends, if you have none to whom you can take your cares, if you are quite lonely so far as outward friends are concerned—yet Jesus is with you, is *really with you*, practically with you, able to help you and ready to do so! You have a good and kind Protector close at hand at this present moment, for Christ has said it, "I will not leave you orphans."

II. Secondly, there is A CONSOLATION PROVIDED. The remedy by which the evil is averted is this—our Lord Jesus said, "I will come to you."

What does this mean? Does it not mean, from the context, "*I will come to you by My Spirit?*" Beloved, we must not confuse the Persons of the Godhead. The Holy Spirit is not the Son of God. Jesus, the Son of God, is not the Holy Spirit. They are two distinct Persons of the one Godhead.

But there is such a wonderful unity and the blessed Spirit acts so marvelously as the Vicar of Christ, that it is quite correct to say that when the Spirit comes, Jesus comes, too. And, "I will come to you," means—"I, by My Spirit, who shall take My place and represent Me, I will come to be with you." See then, Christian, you have the Holy Spirit in you and with you to be the Representative of Christ! Christ is with you now, not in Person, but by His Representative—an efficient, almighty, Divine, everlasting Representative who stands for Christ and is as Christ to you in His Presence in your souls.

Because you thus have Christ by His Spirit, you cannot be orphans, for the Spirit of God is always with you! It is a delightful Truth of God that the Spirit of God always dwells in Believers—not sometimes, but always. He is not always active in Believers and He may be grieved until His sensible Presence is altogether withdrawn, but His secret Presence is always there. At no single moment is the Spirit of God wholly gone from a Believer. The Believer would die spiritually if this could happen, but that cannot be, for Jesus has said, "Because I live, you shall live also." Even when the Believer sins, the Holy Spirit does not utterly depart from him, but is still in him to make him smart for the sin into which he has fallen. The Believer's prayers prove that the Holy Spirit is still within him. "Take not your Holy Spirit from me," was the prayer of a saint who had fallen very foully, but in whom the Spirit of God still kept His residence, notwithstanding all the foulness of David's guilt and sin!

But, Beloved, in addition to this, Jesus Christ, by His Spirit, *makes visits to His people of a peculiar kind*. The Holy Spirit becomes wonderfully active and potent at certain times of refreshing. We are then especially and joyfully sensible of His Divine Power. His influence streams through every chamber of our nature and floods our dark soul with His glorious rays as the sun shining in its strength. Oh, how delightful this is! Sometimes we have felt this at the Lord's Table. My soul pants to sit with you at that Table because I remember many a happy time when the emblems of bread and wine have assisted my faith and kindled the passions of my soul into a heavenly flame! I am equally sure that at the Prayer Meeting, under the preaching of the Word, in private meditation and in searching the Scriptures, we can say that Jesus Christ has come to us. What? Have you no hill Mizar to remember—

***"No Tabor-visits to recount
When with Him in the holy mount?"***

Oh, yes! Some of these blessed seasons have left their impression upon our memories so that the remembrance of those blessed seasons when Jesus Christ manifested Himself unto us as He does not unto the world will mingle among our dying thoughts! Oh, to be wrapped in that crimson vest, closely pressed to His open side! Oh, to put our finger into the print of the nails and to thrust our hand into His side! We know what this means by past experience.

And now, gathering up the few thoughts I have uttered, let me remind you, dear Friends, that *every word of the text is instructive*—"I will not leave you orphans: I will come to you." Observe the, "I," there twice over.

“I will not leave you orphans—father and mother may, but I will not. Friends once beloved may turn stony-hearted, but I will not. Judas may play the traitor and Ahithophel may betray his David, but I will not leave you comfortless. You have had many disappointments, great heart-breaking sorrows, but I have never caused you any. I—the faithful and true Witness, the Immutable, the unchangeable Jesus, the same yesterday, today and forever—I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.” Catch at that word, “I,” and let your souls say, “Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. If You had said, ‘I will send an angel to you,’ it would have been a great mercy, but what do You say, ‘I will come unto you’? If You had bid some of my Brothers and Sisters come and speak a word of comfort to me, I would have been thankful—but You have put it thus in the first person, ‘I will come unto you.’ O my Lord, what shall I say, what shall I do but feel a hungering and a thirsting after You which nothing shall satisfy till You shall fulfill Your own Word, ‘I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you’?”

And then notice the persons to whom it is addressed, “I will not leave you comfortless: you, Peter, who will deny Me. *You*, Thomas, who will doubt Me: I will not leave *you* comfortless.” O you who are so little in Israel that you sometimes think it is a pity that your name is in the church book at all because you feel yourselves to be so worthless, so unworthy, He will not leave you comfortless, not even you! “O Lord,” you say, “if You would look after the rest of Your sheep, I would bless You for Your tenderness to them, but I—I deserve to be left! If I were forsaken of You, I could not blame You, for I have played the harlot against Your love, but yet You say, ‘I will not leave you.’” Heir of Heaven, do not lose your part in this promise! I pray you say, “Lord, come unto me and though You refresh all my Brothers and Sisters, yet, Lord, refresh me with some of the droppings of Your love! O Lord, fill the cup for me! My thirsty spirit pants for it—

***“I thirst, I faint, I die to prove
The greatness of redeeming love,
The love of Christ to me.”***

Now, Lord, fulfill Your word to Your unworthy handmaid, as I stand, like Hannah, in Your Presence. Come unto me, Your servant, unworthy to lift so much as my eyes toward Heaven, and only daring to say, ‘God be merciful to me, a sinner.’ Fulfill Your promise even to *me*, ‘I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.’” Take whichever of the words you will and they each one sparkle and flash after this fashion!

Observe, too, *the richness and sufficiency of the text*—“I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.” Jesus does not promise, “I will send you sanctifying Grace, or sustaining mercy, or precious mercy,” but He promises you the only thing that will prevent your being orphans, “I will come to you.” Ah, Lord! Your Grace is sweet, but You are better! The vine is good, but the clusters are better! It is well enough to have a gift from Your hands, but oh, to touch the hand itself! It is well enough to hear the words of Your lips, but to kiss those lips, as the spouse did in the Song, this is still better! You know, if there is an orphan child, you cannot prevent its continuing an orphan. You may feel great kindness towards it, supply its needs and do all you possibly can for it, but it is still an

orphan. It must get its father and its mother back, or else it will still be an orphan. So, our blessed Lord, knowing this, does not say, "I will do this and that for you," but, "I will come to you."

Do you not see, dear Friends, that there is not only all you can need, but all you think you need wrapped up in a sentence, "I will come to you"? "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell," so that when Christ comes, in Him "all fullness" comes! "In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily," so that when Jesus comes, the very Godhead comes to the Believer!—

***"All my capacious powers can wish
In You do they richly meet"—***

and if You shall come to me, it is better than all the gifts of Your Covenant. If I get You, I get all, and more than all, at once." Observe, then, the language and the sufficiency of the promise.

But I want you to notice, further, *the continued freshness and force of the promise*. Somebody here owes another person 50 pounds, and he gives him a note of hand, "I promise to pay you 50 pounds." Very well. The man calls with that note of hand tomorrow and gets 50 pounds. And what is the good of the note of hand now? Why, it is of no further value, it is discharged! How would you like to have a note of hand which would always stand good? That would be a right royal present. "I promise to pay *evermore*, and this bond, though paid a thousand times, shall still hold good." Who would not like to have a bond of that sort? Yet this is the promise which Christ gives you! "I will not leave you orphans: I will come to you." The first time a sinner looks to Christ, Christ comes to him. And what then? Why, the next minute it is still, "I will come to you." But here is one who has known Christ for 50 years and he has had this promise fulfilled a thousand times a year! Is it not done with? Oh, no! There it stands, just as fresh as when Jesus first spoke it, "I will come to you." Then we will treat our Lord in His own fashion and take Him at His word! We will go to Him as often as we can, for we shall never weary Him—and when He has kept His promise most, then is it that we will go to Him and ask Him to still keep it! And after ten thousand proofs of the truth of it, we will only have a greater hungering and thirsting to get it fulfilled again! This is fit provision for life and for death, "I will come to you." In the last moment, when your pulse beats faintly and you are just about to pass the curtain and enter into the invisible world, you may have this upon your lips, and say to your Lord, "My Master, fulfill to me the word on which You have caused me to hope, 'I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.'"

Let me remind you that the text *is at this moment valid* and for this I delight in it. "I will not leave you comfortless." That means *now*, "I will not leave you comfortless now." Are you comfortless at this hour? It is your own fault. Jesus Christ does not leave you so, nor make you so. There are rich and precious things in this promise, "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you, I will come to you now." It may be a very dull time with you and you are pining to come nearer to Christ. Very well, then, plead the promise before the Lord! Plead the promise as you

sit where you are—"Lord, You have said that You will come unto me; come unto me tonight."

There are many reasons, Believer, why you should plead thus. You want Him. You need Him. You require Him. Therefore plead the promise and expect its fulfillment! And oh, when He comes, what a joy it is! He is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber with his garments fragrant with aloes and cassia! How well the oil of joy will perfume your heart! How soon will your sackcloth be put away and the garments of gladness adorn you! With what joy of heart will your heavy soul begin to sing when Jesus Christ shall whisper that you are His and that He is yours! Come, my Beloved, do not tarry! Be like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of separation and prove to me Your promise is true, "I will not leave you orphans: I will come to you."

And now, dear Friends, in conclusion, let me remind you that *there are many who have no share in the text*. What can I say to such? From my soul I pity you who do not know what the love of Christ means. Oh, if you could but tell the joy of God's people, you would not rest an hour without it! Remember that if you sincerely desire to find Christ, He is to be found in the way of faith. Trust Him and He is yours! Depend upon the merit of His Sacrifice—cast yourselves entirely upon that and you are saved—and Christ is yours!

God grant that we may all break bread in the Kingdom above, feast with Jesus and share His Glory! We are expecting His second coming. He is coming personally and gloriously. This is the brightest hope of His people. This will be the fullness of their redemption, the time of their resurrection. Anticipate it, Beloved, and may God make your souls to sing for joy!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: JOHN 15.

Many of you know the words of this chapter by heart. You could repeat them without a mistake. May the savor of them abide in your hearts even as the letter of them abides in your memory!

Verse 1. *I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.* We thank You, O Savior, for this blessed answer to the often-repeated question, "Which is the true Church?" Are you one with Christ? Then are you a part of the true vine. If we have a real, vital, personal, saving connection with Christ, to whatever section of the visible Church we may belong, we are part of "the true vine." And we are told, in the next sentence, who is the great Caretaker of the Church. Some of us are much occupied in Christ's service and there is a tendency with all of us to get like Martha—"cumbered" in serving for Him. We are apt to fancy that the burden of all the churches lies upon our shoulders, but, Beloved, this is a great mistake. Jesus said, "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser." He will take the utmost possible care of it, for it is very dear to Him. There is not a branch in that vine which the Father does not love with Infinite affection and, as for the majestic stem, even Jesus, He loves Him beyond measure.

2. *Every branch in Me that bears not fruit He takes away.* This operation is always going on. God is continually taking away from the Church, in some way or other, non-fruit-bearers. We know that these do not truly belong to Christ, for fruit must come from vital union to Him. But it is a trial to the Church to have non-fruit-bearing branches. These are taken away, sometimes by death, sometimes by judgment, sometimes by the open discovery of their secret sin—the culmination of their backslides in overt acts of transgression. “Every branch in Me that bears not fruit He takes away.” But side by side with this action another process is constantly going on.

2. *And every branch that bears fruit, He purges it, that it may bring forth more fruit.* Is this, then, dear Friend, one reason why you are being chastened—because you are a fruit-bearing branch? If you bore no fruit, you would be left unpruned because the knife would do its sterner work upon you by taking you altogether away. If you really do bring forth fruit to God, you must expect to have trial, trouble, affliction—and that full often.

3. *Now you are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.* That was a “word” which had sorely grieved them and cut them to the quick, so that the Savior had to say to them, more than once, “Let not your heart be troubled.” (See the 1st, and the 27th, verses of the preceding chapter). They had felt the sharp edge of the pruning-knife, so Jesus said to them, “Now you are clean (purged or pruned) through the word which I have spoken unto you.”

4. *Abide in Me, and I in you.* The main thing is not restless activity, running here and there, and doing this and that, and the other thing—it is abiding in Christ, persevering, constantly cleaving to Christ by virtue of a vital union with Him—“Abide in Me, and I in you.”

4. *As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abides in the vine; no more can you, except you abide in Me.* You may hurry, and flurry and worry, but you will lose by it. Keep close to Christ. Never let your heart be dissociated from intimate communion with Him. So shall you bring forth fruit, but no way else.

5, 6. *I am the vine, you are the branches: he that abides in Me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit: for without Me you can do nothing. If a man abides not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered: and men gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.* The vine is of use for nothing but fruit-bearing and if it does not bear fruit, it is good for nothing except to be burned. In the social economy of life, a man may be of some use however bad he may be, but a man who is in the nominal Church of Christ and yet does not bring forth fruit unto God, is of no use whatever! There is nothing to be done with him but to gather him up with the sere autumn leaves and the decaying stalks of vegetation, to be burned in the corner outside the wall. How trying is the smoke that comes from such a burning as that! We pastors sometimes get it into our eyes and it fills them with bitter tears. I know of nothing that is more grievous to us than this putting out of the unworthy, this casting the fruitless vine branches into the fire that they may be burned.

7. *You abide in Me, and My words abide in you.* You see that doctrinal vitality is necessary to true union to Christ. Some, in these days, talk about a spiritual attachment to the Person of Christ, while they shoot their envenomed darts against the dogmas of Christ. But that will not do. “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you”—My words of doctrine, precept, or promise—“then”—

7. *You shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.* This is the secret of successful prayer! Christ listens to your words because you listen to His words. If you are conformed to His will, He will grant you your will. Disobedient children, when they pray, may expect to get the rod for an answer. In true kindness, God may refuse to listen to them until they are willing to listen to Him.

8. *Herein is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit.* What a wonderful vine that must be whose branches glorify God! Who ever heard of such a thing? The very branches do this and they do it by bearing fruit. How this ought to excite us to desire to bear Christian Graces and to do Christian service, and to endure with resignation the Lord’s will, for those are the clusters that hang upon this vine.

8. *So shall you be My disciples.* For Christ is not merely a fruit-bearer, but a bearer of much fruit. If we are to be Christ’s disciples, we must not be content with doing something for Him, but we must do everything that is possible to us! And God can strengthen us till we shall get beyond our natural possibilities into a still loftier realm.

9. *As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you: continue you in My love.* As truly as the Father loves the Son, so truly does Jesus love us. No, more than that, in the same manner as the Father loved the Son—that is, without beginning, without cessation, without change, without end, without measure—so does Jesus love us! There are many great texts in the Bible, but I have often questioned whether there is a bigger text than this—a vaster abyss of meaning than can be found in these few words, “As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you.”

“Continue you in My love.” Recognize it, enjoy it, walk in consistency with it, reflect it—“Continue you in My love.”

10. *If you keep My commandments, you shall abide in My love, even as I have kept My Father’s commandments, and abide in His love.* I said just now that the doctrinal words of Christ were to be regarded by us. So, dearly-beloved, the precepts or commands of God must always be regarded. It is an idle tale for men to talk of a mythical visionary love to Christ which does not result in obedience to His will. We must keep His commandments, or we cannot truly say to Him, “You know all things, You know that I love You.”

11. *These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.* Good children are truly happy when their parents are happy in them. When they, through the good teaching and example of their parents, bring honor and joy to their parents, then they are sure to be, themselves, joyful. Oh, that we might so live that Christ’s joy might abide in us—for then our joy would be full!

12. *This is My commandment, That you love one another as I have loved you.* Are you doing this, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, really loving one another? Do you ever pick holes in each other’s character? Do

you ever judge a fellow Christian harshly? If you do these things, chide yourself and cease from this evil habit at once, for Your Lord says to you, "This is My commandment, That you love one another, as I have loved you."

13. *Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.* "You are My friends if you do whatever I command you." I lift you above the rank of servant and make you My table companions, privileged to sit at the table with Me in communion. I put you down on My list of associates and familiars with whom I take sweet counsel, and in company with whom I walk to the House of God. "You are My Friends if you do whatever I command you." This condition applies to the whole range of Christ's commands. We are not to omit any one of them, nor to make a little nick in our conscience as some do, nor to neglect what seems to be a comparatively small duty, for neglected duties, even of the lesser kind, often set upon us as little stones in a boot do upon a traveler. They lame him—they may not prevent him from travelling—but they mar his comfort on the road. Be scrupulous, Brothers and Sisters, lest, through the neglect of what some regard as scruples, you should bring upon yourselves great sorrows.

14-16. *You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knows not what his lord does: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you. You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you.* "That is where the love began—not with you, but with Me."

16. *And ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain.* There are some people who are very fond of quoting the first part of this verse, they are very glad to hear a sermon upon the free, Sovereign Grace of God. They cannot too often repeat the words, "you have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you," but they do not talk so much about the next clause—"and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain." Let us accept all God's Words as He has given them to us and keep up the due proportion of the whole. Note that Christ is not speaking here of spasmodic piety, the religion that can only be kept up by popular preaching, great meetings, much excitement and all that sort of thing—but of the religion of principle that bears its clusters to-morrow as well as today, and even months and years hence! The religion that bears its fruit every month and the leaf whereof does not wither! May we be such branches in the true vine that our fruit shall thus remain.

16. *That whatever you shall ask of the Father in My name, He may give it to you.* For, where the fruit remains, power in prayer will remain. If we are constantly living unto God, we shall find ourselves privileged to have the ear of God and when we pray to Him, He will grant us the desire of our hearts.

17. *These things I command you, that you love one another.* Our Lord repeated the command, for He knew how prone even His disciples would be to disobey it.

18. *If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you.* It is no new thing for the ungodly to hate the godly, so let us not be surprised if that is our portion.

19, 20. *If you were of the world, the world would love his own: but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept My saying, they will keep yours also.* It ought to be quite sufficient for the servant if he is treated as his Lord was—what higher honor than that could he wish to have?

21. *But all these things will they do unto you for My name's sake, because they know not Him that sent Me.* They professed to know God and some of them even thought that they were rendering acceptable service to God when they rejected His Son, whom He had sent to them!

22-24. *If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin. He that hates Me hates My Father also. If I had not done among them the works which no other man did, they had not had sin: but now they have both seen and hated both Me and My Father.* Our Lord did not mean that they would have been sinless if He had not come to them, but that His coming and their rejection of Him had enormously increased and intensified their sinfulness.

25. *But this came to pass that the Word might be fulfilled that is written in their Law, They hated Me without a cause.* They fulfilled what had been written long before, even as they afterwards did when they put Christ to death.

26, 27. *But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth, which proceeds from the Father, He shall testify of Me: and you also shall bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning.* The witness of the Spirit of Truth still continues and Christ's disciples are still privileged to be co-witnesses, even with the Holy Spirit, Himself. Let us take care to avail ourselves of this privilege whenever we can.

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

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NO. 2953

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PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 1905,

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*“Yet a little while, and the world sees Me no more, but you see Me:
because I live, you shall live also.”*
John 14:19.

IT is very noticeable in this verse and in many other parts of the New Testament, what a sharp line of demarcation the Lord draws between His people and the world—“*The world sees Me no more, but you see Me.*” We have the same Truth of God taught in John’s first Epistle. “We know that *we* are of God, and the *whole world* lies in the Wicked One.” It is quite evident that our Lord kept prominent in His teaching the distinction between the regenerate and the unregenerate—the converted and the unconverted—those who have been quickened by the Holy Spirit and those who have remained dead in trespasses and sins. This distinction which our Lord kept up so strikingly, should always be made clear in every ministry. I feel that much evil comes of a mode of address which is adopted by some of my ministerial brothers in which they speak to the entire congregation as though all who were present were Christians. That is a false theory to go upon because it is not at all likely that any congregation ever gathered together will consist wholly of Christians. The mere coming together for public worship, nowadays, does not at all prove people to be followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. When they met in the Catacombs or in the caves of the earth and every worshipper had to carry his life in his hands, there might have been some excuse for addressing the whole assembly as Christians. In these days we know right well that there are unconverted persons in the audience and it is proper, therefore, to have one message to the saints and another message to the sinners—and to let it be seen, all through the sermon, that the preacher is aware that the Lord has made a distinction between Israel and Egypt—between them that fear Him and them that fear Him not.

The same rule ought, I think, to be observed in prayer. It is a radical mistake to have forms of prayer which take it for granted that the whole congregation is saved. In this way, many persons are comforted who ought to be awakened to a sense of their true spiritual condition. At the grave, especially, things are said of men who have lived and died in sin, which are calculated to make unsaved survivors think lightly of their own lost state. There should be one prayer for the saint and another prayer for the sinner—and all through the supplication, as well as the preaching, there should be such a distinction as Christ drew, in this

verse, between His disciples and “the world”—between those who continue to see Jesus and those who will never behold His face with joy—either in this world or in that which is to come.

If you look carefully at our text you will notice in it, first, a fact which should solemnize the mind of every unconverted person here, namely, that *the religious privileges enjoyed by the world will, sooner or later, be taken away*—“Yet a little while, and the world sees Me no more.” Secondly, the text very clearly tells us that *the Holy Spirit has given to Believers a sight of Christ*—“but you see Me.” And, thirdly, *this sight is accompanied by a life which is linked with the life of Christ*—“because I live, you shall live also.”

I. So the first lesson to be learned from our text is that **THE PRESENT PRIVILEGES ENJOYED BY THE WORLD WILL BE TAKEN AWAY**—“Yet a little while, and the world sees Me no more.”

For a comparatively long time Jesus was seen here among the sons of men. I call His life a long time, for every moment of it must have been painful to Him, since, for His pure spirit to have dwelt in the midst of impurity such as pervades this world must always have been painful. Yet He tarried here and worked innumerable miracles of blessing. Sometimes He fed the thousands who crowded around Him. He was constantly healing the sick and doing everything that He could for man’s good—the summary of His life was that “He went about doing good.” He is gone, now, and the world sees Him no more. How shamefully the men of the world treated Him! It would not be right for Him to come back to another persecution and a second Crucifixion. They said, “This is the heir. Come, let us kill Him and let us seize on His inheritance.” They did kill Him, but He will never come here to be killed again! When He comes the next time, it will be in a very different fashion and for a very different purpose. The world will never again see Him as it saw Him then—

**“A lowly Man before His foes,
A humble Man, and full of woes.”**

No, Earth, you have lost your Miracle-Worker. You sick ones, you have lost your Great Physician. You hungry ones, you have lost Him whose blessed hands fed you! Never again will the weeping Mary and Martha see their brother raised to life. Never again will sorrowing widows have their dead sons restored to them from the grave’s mouth. No, Jesus has gone and all the blessings which He was known to bestow have ceased to be given, for the world sees Him no more. It will see Him again, certainly, but in a very different fashion—it will not see Him as Savior, a Friend and Physician—it will only see Him with the rod of iron in His hand, passing sentence upon those who said, “We will not have this Man to reign over us”!

Now, what has taken place as to the physical sight of Christ by the sons of men will take place with all of you as to your mental sight of Christ unless you receive from the Gospel an inner and spiritual sight of Him. *All of you have, in a certain sense, seen Jesus Christ.* I mean that when the Sabbath bells ring out, you are accustomed to go where you hear concerning Christ and His great salvation. There you sit and Jesus Christ is set forth evidently crucified among you—and blessed are your

eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear what Prophets and kings in vain desired to see and hear concerning Christ in days of yore. You go to your houses and there is that precious Book, the Bible, which contains the image of your Savior's face almost on every page. Your family altar brings Jesus very near even to some of you unconverted ones! The Kingdom of God has, indeed, come near to you. Nowadays Jesus Christ is preached in almost every street. A man need not go far, especially on the Sabbath, if he wants to hear about Jesus Christ. So far as the hearing with the ears is concerned, He may be heard of almost everywhere! But it will not always be so. Some of you will soon go where the Sabbath bell is never heard. You will go where Sabbaths, themselves, are all unknown, except as dreadful memories of shamefully neglected privileges. You will go where no minister will tell you of Grace, and mercy, and pardon bought with blood. You will go where you will never hear the music of—

“Those charming bells, Free Grace and dying love.”

The very opposite sound to that will forever grate upon your ears! There will be no godly teacher there to urge you to seek the Lord in your youth and to give Him your heart while you are yet young. There will be no loving parents there, with tears, sighs and pious examples striving to lead you to Jesus. There will be no faithful preacher there, earnestly endeavoring, in simple language, to tell you the old, old story and to point you to Christ upon the Cross! Only a little while and there shall be no Bible for you to read, no Mercy Seat to which you can go, no promise which you can plead, no blood of Jesus in which you can ask to be washed—for you will be beyond the line of hope and beyond the reach of mercy. You will be in Hell.

I am sure that if I had to come to you and say that I had received a Revelation from Heaven telling me that never again would some of you be permitted to attend a place of worship, never again to read your Bible, never again to kneel in prayer—but that you were forever to be denied all these eternal privileges—you would feel unhappy, indeed. I wish you felt something of that kind of unhappiness now, because to have these privileges and yet to neglect them is as bad as—in some respects, it is even worse than—it would be to have the privileges taken away! Godly Mr. Rogers, of Dedham, was preaching on one occasion about the Scriptures and their value, and endeavoring to impress upon the people the duty of prizing the Word and being obedient to it. And, to bring the Truth of God home very clearly to their consciences, he asked them to imagine that he was commissioned to take away the Bible from them. He took it up from the pulpit and turned round with it in his hand. “There,” he said, “you are never to have it again. It has been a dreary Book to many of you—you have not cared for it and you have neglected the reading of it, so I must take it away and you shall never hear another sermon from it, or hear anything more read from it.” Then he pictured them all weeping and begging that the Book might be brought back to them again. And I would that, even though the Lord should not take these privileges away from you while you are in this life, you might

nevertheless prize them, for this life will soon be ended—and then these privileges will be gone forever!

Notice also that our Savior said, “Yet *a little while*, and the world sees Me no more.” Oh, it is *such* a little while even if we live the longest life that is possible to men! But human lives are often cut short, suddenly and unexpectedly. Useful servants of the Lord Jesus Christ are taken away in the very midst of their usefulness and the Home-call to them is a message to us, saying, “Be you, also, ready, for in such an hour as you think not, the Son of Man comes.” Some of you young people are reckoning that it will be a long while before you need come to a decision, but, I pray you, think how short your lifetime may be! Certainly, if you do ever reach that period in which the voice of mercy shall cease to have a syllable to address you, you will then realize what a little time it has been. Why, even if a man could live as long as Methuselah, yet, if he once found himself shut up in Hell, a life of a thousand years would seem to be but as a pin’s point compared with the endless eternity—and he would grieve and lament bitterly that he had wasted in sin those winged hours upon which his destiny throughout eternity had hung! A little while, Sinner, and you will never have another invitation to come to Christ! A little while and there will be no outstretched arms of Him who died upon the Cross, “the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.” A little while—and *such* a little while—and you will see Jesus no more as a Savior, but you will see Him as your Judge and hear Him say, not, “Come, you blessed,” but, “Depart, you cursed.” Those who have outward privileges and yet neglect them, shall have them taken from them—and then how will they dare to appear before God?

II. Let us now turn to the second point, which is far more sweet to our souls. Let us think upon HOW THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS GIVEN SIGHT TO THE PEOPLE OF GOD—“The world sees Me no more, but you see Me.”

In the deepest meaning of the word, *no one ever truly sees Christ until the Holy Spirit opens his eyes*. There are some persons who have very strange notions of what it means to see Christ. I occasionally have to talk with poor, ignorant people—who do not, however, think themselves ignorant—who tell me that they have seen Christ. But I soon discover that they mean that they fancy they have seen Him with their natural eyes! I tell them that it is impossible and then they tell me of some dream in which they think they saw Him. Now, my dear Friend, even supposing you had a vision and that you did see Christ in it—do not place any reliance upon that. There is many a man who has had a vision of the devil, yet has gone to Heaven—and there is many a man who has had a vision of Christ yet has gone to Hell! There is nothing in that. Did not great multitudes who lived in the days of Christ upon the earth, see Him with their natural eyes? Yet they were not saved! Many even stood around the Cross and saw Him die in that dread culmination of His life-work, when He was paying the price of His people’s redemption. They stood and gazed at Him, but their hearts were not softened even by that matchless sight, for they jeered and jested while He was in His death-throes! That which can be seen with these eyes is of little consequence!

The true sight of Christ—that sight which alone can save—is a *spiritual* sight, the sight of the inward soul!

Our Lord Jesus Christ said to His disciples, “You see Me.” Let us notice the ways in which Believers see Him in a *spiritual* sense. We see Him, first, with that earliest glance which continues throughout our whole lives—the *life-look at the Lord Jesus Christ*. You remember when you first saw Him thus. Could any other word describe your experience? You did not see anything with your natural eyes, but you perceived, in your soul, that Jesus Christ stood as the one Substitute for sinners and that, trusting in Him, your sin would be forever removed from you. And you trusted in Him. You looked unto Him and were lightened, and your face was not ashamed. Possibly before that you had been a diligent student of the Scriptures and you may have been a tolerably intelligent theologian. But you knew more of Christ in a single moment, when you had looked to Him with that saving glance, than you had ever learned from any book, or heard from any ministry! Then you could say, “I have heard of You with the hearing of the ears, but now my eyes see You.” Then you knew what was meant by pardon through His precious blood and justification by His righteousness, for you had looked for yourself and had seen that Christ is able to save, for He had saved you! From that moment you began to see Christ with the opened eyes of your spiritual understanding. Just as Christ’s disciples were made to know that He was in the Father and that the Father was in Him, so you began to know that Jesus of Nazareth was in you and that you were in Him! You began to understand the eternal relationship between Christ and the Father, and between the Father and yourself. You began to perceive the offices of Christ as Prophet, Priest and King. You began to study Him—the different points of His Character, the different stages of His life, the different gleams of Glory that shone even amid the darkness of His death—and so you saw Him.

O dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, *since that happy day we have had many precious sights of Christ* and we have been constantly led to see more and more of Him! The Holy Spirit has lit up Christ to us by degrees, just as I have sometimes seen the lighting up of an illumination in which some one word was to be spelt out in letters of light. They have brought it out, letter by letter, with bright lamps and, at last, you could see the whole word. I am afraid that we have not yet learned to spell the whole of Jesus Christ’s name, but what we do know, we would not give up for twice ten thousand worlds! We do not yet see Him so clearly as we shall see Him, by-and-by, but still, our spiritual understanding does perceive far more of Him than it once did and we expect, in due time, to “be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge.”

If you follow the run of the chapter from which our text is taken, you will be helped further to perceive how it is that we see Christ. According to the 12th verse, *we see Christ by participating in His power*. “He that believes on Me, the works that I do shall he also do; and greater works

than these shall he do; because I go unto My Father.” A preacher who has never seen Christ in the way I have been describing, delivers sermons which are without spiritual power. But if anyone—even the feeblest among us—will teach others the Truths of God which he has received from the Holy Spirit, feeling that all power in Heaven and earth is given to Christ and that, therefore, He has sent His servants to preach His Gospel to all nations—such a man, I say, will have the Presence of Christ and shall realize it by the power which will rest upon him and by the results which will follow his testimony! Yes, Brothers and Sisters, Christ is still with His people! The power of Christ is not only up there in Heaven, but it is given to Him on earth as well, and He clothes with His Spirit those who preach His Gospel simply and humbly! And that Spirit breaks men’s hearts and binds them up again—slays men *spiritually* and makes them alive again—and does great marvels so that the power of Jesus Christ is truly seen in the midst of the assembly! Out of His mouth proceeds that two-edged sword with which the battles of Divine Grace are fought and won. I wonder how many of you who are here have ever seen Christ in this sense—that His power has rested upon you in all forms of Christian service that are done as unto the Lord?

If you have seen Christ thus, you have also seen Him in the sense described in the 13th and 14th verses, *pleading through you and with you in prayer*—“Whatever you shall ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you shall ask anything in My name, I will do it.” Have you ever prayed in that way, as though Christ had said to you, “Go to My Father and tell Him I sent you. Use My name with Him, for My name has authority in the courts of Heaven”? It is, indeed, blessed, when you are pleading with God, to feel that Christ is pleading through you—to see Him, as it were, as the great High Priest of our profession, standing before God with outstretched hands, pleading the merit of His blood that we may prevail! It is powerful pleading when you have Christ praying by your side and know that you have Him there—and when you feel that your prayer is not the petition of a suppliant who is pleading alone, but the utterance of one who is covered up and lost sight of in the Person of the greater Pleader—the Lord Jesus Christ. This is, indeed, seeing Christ. “You see Me,” said Christ to His disciples, and we do see Him when we realize His power with us in the hour of prayer!

We see Christ, again, *when we are obedient to His commands*, for the 15th verse tells us that He said to His disciples, “If you love Me, keep My commandments.” A real Christian does what Christ bids him do, whether he is observed of men or not, because he realizes that he is in the Presence of Christ. The very best check upon sinful passions and the most Divine incentive to spiritual earnestness is the Presence of Christ. O Brothers and Sisters, I cannot tell you what a delight it is to feel sure that Christ is near you and observing you—to feel as if His hands were upon your shoulder and His shadow resting upon you, like that of a father leaning over his child and guiding the child’s hand as he writes his copy—while you are trying to serve Him and yielding yourself up completely to Him, saying, “Tell me, my Lord, what You have for me to do

and, by Your Grace, I will do it, for I live in Your sight and to please You is the one desire of my soul.”

Sinners never see Christ in this way. In fact, they do not care anything about Him. The children of God constantly see Jesus Christ before them so that if they are tempted to sin, they cry, “How can we do this great wickedness and sin against God?” If they are tempted to slumber when they ought to be actively engaged in His service, they can hear Christ knocking at their door and saying to them, “Open to Me.” And they rise from their beds and open the door to Him and go forth with Him to do His will! You can, each one of you judge, Beloved, whether in this sense Christ can say to you, “You see Me.”

Christ is also to be seen by Believers *in the efficacy of His Spirit*. Read what He says in the 17th verse—“Even the Spirit of Truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it sees Him not, neither knows Him: but you know Him; for He dwells with you and shall be in you.” Have you ever felt the Presence and power of the Spirit of God working within you? Does He ever comfort you when you are depressed? Does He ever guide you when you are in perplexity? Has He ever come upon you to calm you when you have been getting excited with worldly joy? Have you ever known the Spirit of God illuminate a Truth which before you could not understand? Have you not known Him to point out to you a way of answering your accuser or adversary which you had not thought of, giving you in the same hour the very words that you should speak? Some of us know what it is to be more swayed by the Spirit of God than by our own spirit—and it should be so with every Christian. He should yield himself up absolutely to that Divine Spirit who will bear him wherever He pleases, upward or downward, to ecstatic joy or to holy sorrow, but always onward in that which glorifies God! Those who feel this power of the Holy Spirit really see Jesus Christ and so hear Him say to them as He said to His disciples, “You see Me.”

And, Beloved, I must add here what some of you know right well—I would that we all knew it more and more—that *Jesus Christ is to be seen by that near, and dear, and intimate communion which He permits His children to have with Him*. They are to be daily walking with God, but as the sea, though always full, is not always at flood-tide, so the Believer, who lives nearest to God, will not always experience precisely the same delights. There are high days and holidays for us—have you not had them? We hardly like to talk about them, for the love-dealings of Christ with our souls are such sacred secrets between Himself and us that we can scarcely speak of them to others. We have known such joy in fellowship with Christ that we have felt almost as the Apostle did when he said that “He was caught up into Paradise and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.” Indeed, we cannot utter them, for human language can never express the bliss which sometimes fills our spirit when Jesus Christ reveals Himself to us! It is vain for infidels to tell me that there is no Christ for I have seen Him! When men tell us that there is no Heaven, we say, as Bunyan’s pilgrims did, “What? No Mount Zion? Did we not see from the Delectable Mountains, the gate

of the city?” Do they tell us that the love of Christ is a myth? We reply that it has been shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit and that, therefore, we can never doubt its reality and power!

There is an individual who is accustomed to go down the sewers and who has no sense of smell—“He has got no nose,” a man told me once. Suppose that this man comes into a place which has been recently perfumed with perfume of roses or lavender water and, while we are all saying, “What a delicious perfume!” He says, “I do not believe there is any perfume here.” But we are sure that there is. He says that he cannot see it, he cannot hear it, he cannot taste it, he cannot feel it and he cannot smell it, so he does not believe it is there. No, poor man, he has lost one of his senses, so he cannot perceive it. And the world has lost its *spiritual sense*—that delicate nostril which can perceive the sweet perfume of the Rose of Sharon and detect His Presence wherever He may be! But we, Beloved, are not to be argued out of an undoubted fact of our spiritual experience! It is useless to try to pervert a genuine Christian from the faith because he knows it, for he has tasted and handled it, and felt it! It is not a matter of opinion to him, but a matter of fact. The heathen philosophers said of the early Christians, that they were the most obstinate men and women that they ever met. They said that the plainest arguments were lost upon them, for they clung to certain things which they asserted to be facts and no one could, by any logic whatever, induce them to deny those facts! If we are genuine Christians, we are of the same stamp as those early saints. We might change our opinions, but we cannot give up our knowledge of the great facts of our spiritual experience—and we do know that Jesus Christ has revealed Himself unto us as He does not unto the world—and we dare not deny that it is so!

He has given us such sweet fellowship with Himself that only in Heaven, itself, can we ever be happier! Sometimes we have seemed to sit on the very doorstep of Heaven and have heard the music inside—and we have wondered whether they could be happier, there, than we were outside. We have felt that they must have larger capacity for joy than we had if they had more joy than we possessed, for we were as full of joy as we could be! Well, this being the case with us, we cannot be made to deny the faith by anything that may be said to us by those who are strangers to our joy. “You see Me,” said Christ to His disciples and, oftentimes we have felt that He might also say to us, “You see Me,” for, in the highest sense, it is true.

Beloved Friends, I must leave this point, but I wish, first, to ask everyone here, “Have *you* thus seen Jesus Christ? Do you see Him at this moment?” Remember that you must *spiritually* see Him with the eyes of your soul or else, when He comes to Judgment, you will in vain call upon the rocks to hide you from His face! Recollect, also, that you cannot see Christ till the Spirit of God opens your eyes. You are spiritually blind. You are dead! And only the Spirit of God can make you live and give you sight. Oh, that the prayer might ascend from every unsaved soul here, “Blessed Spirit, breathe into me the breath of life that my dead soul may be quickened and that my darkened mind may be enlightened that I may

truly see You.” May the Lord first give you that prayer—and then may He graciously answer it in your happy experience this very hour!

III. My last point is this—THE HOLY SPIRIT NOT ONLY GIVES US LIGHT, BUT HE ALSO GIVES US LIFE. Jesus said to His disciples, “Because I live, you shall live also.”

Every soul that has seen Christ in the ways I have described is a living soul, and such a living soul that as long as Christ lives, and because Christ lives, that soul shall also live! What a precious promise this is! One needs to have a whole sermon upon it—“Because I live, you shall live also.”

That is to say, *we first get spiritual life from Christ.* We are dead in trespasses and sins, but a glance from His eyes through the gracious operation of the Holy Spirit, creates the first spark of life within us and then we look to Him—and so we live! We find in Jesus Christ and in context and in communion with Him, all that our souls need, so that we not only derive from Him spiritual life, but also the sustenance of that life.

Then, *we get the life of Christ reproduced in us by living in fellowship with Him*—a life which is to bloom and come to perfection in the eternal life with Christ in Glory. All the life that any Believer ever had on the face of the earth, he must have derived from the Lord Jesus Christ for he had none of his own. And when the Holy Spirit had given him this life from Jesus Christ, he could not keep it alive by his own power. He had to remain in union with Jesus if he was to continue to live, as Christ reminded His disciples, “Without Me, (severed from Me), you can do nothing.” Let us recognize this fact, Beloved, that we who have seen Christ have a new life within us which we did not create and which we could not nourish and sustain, but which Jesus keeps, feeds and preserves through the gracious ministry of the Holy Spirit! And thus we live as the world does not live—it is dead in sin, but we are alive unto God by Jesus Christ!

This life, being Christ’s life, is an everlasting life. “I give unto them eternal life,” says Christ concerning His sheep. Somebody once said, “Ah, but they may lose it!” What nonsense! How can they lose eternal life! How can that be eternal which comes to an end? “Eternal life” means a life that never ends! Language can only be meant to conceal men’s thoughts if it does not mean that! But God uses language, not for the sake of concealing His Truth, but in order to reveal it! And when the Lord Jesus Christ puts everlasting life into a Believer, he has everlasting life and he will live forever! And for this reason he will live forever because Christ will live forever. “Because I live, you shall live also.” When Christ can die, then can the Believer perish. When it shall be possible for Christ to be cast out of Heaven—for His power and Glory to be taken from Him, yes, for His very Deity to wax old and grow effete with age—then may the Believer’s life be quenched, but not till then!

What strange notions some people seem to have about this matter! The Doctrine of Final Perseverance, or the Eternal Preservation of Believers, seems to me to be written as with a beam of sunlight

throughout the whole of Scripture! If that is not true, there is nothing at all in the Bible that is true, for that Truth of God is there if anything is! It is impossible to understand the Bible at all if it is not so. But it is so, glory be to God! What do the objectors say concerning the mystical body of Christ? Do they suppose that Christ's body keeps losing its members, as lobsters lose their claws, and grow fresh ones? Is that their strange simile—that the blessed mystical body of Christ goes on changing its members and getting new ones? To suggest such a monstrosity is approaching blasphemy! The members of Christ's body must be safe forever, for they are one with Him. Shall Christ be mutilated? Shall He be cut in pieces and His beauty marred? That is impossible—

**“Once in Christ in Christ forever!
Nothing from His love can sever.”**

He never did and He never can lose one of those who are in Him!

Put your trust in Jesus, dear Friends, and this passage shall be true concerning you, “As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God”—“being born-again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which lives and abides forever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withers and the flower thereof falls away; but the Word of the Lord endures forever.” Blessed is the man who has this Word of the Lord sown in His heart as a living seed which cannot die or be destroyed! The Lord grant this blessing to each one of you, for His dear Son's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 14:15-31.**

Verses 15-17. *If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever, even the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it sees Him not, neither knows Him but you know Him; for He dwells with you, and shall be in you.* “I am going away from you. You will not have My personal Presence much longer, but I will send you One who will never go away from you, for whom there is no death and no departure—‘another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever, even the Spirit of Truth’—who knows the Truths of God, who can teach the Truths of God and who applies the Truth to the hearts and consciences of men—‘whom the world cannot receive, because it sees Him not, neither knows Him.’” Let us not imagine that the world will ever receive the Spirit of God. It is supposed, by some, that the world gets more enlightened from age to age, but that is a supposition for which there is not the slightest foundation! The death of human nature never develops into life! The darkness brought by the Fall never becomes the Light of God without the operation of a supernatural power. It is the Spirit of God that works this change in God's own children—“but you know Him, for He dwells with you, and shall be in you.” He was with them in a certain sense even while Christ was here, otherwise they would have learned

nothing. And He was more fully in them when Christ had gone back to Heaven—hence they learned, after Pentecost, more of the meaning of the Gospel than they had ever gathered from the teaching of their Master.

18, 19. *I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world sees Me no more; but you see Me: because I live, you shall live also.* There is a continuous sight of Christ even as there is a continuous life in Christ. They who have not received the life of Christ cannot see Christ. How can there be eyes without life? And how can there be the spiritual sight of Christ without the spiritual life in you?

20. *At that day you shall know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.* This is a wonderful trinity of unities, each one a mystery, but each one to be known by the Believer when he is instructed of the Spirit of God—Christ in the Father, the saints in Christ, and Christ in them. He that experimentally knows what it is to be in Christ knows more than all the secular philosophers who have ever lived!

21. *He that has My commandments, and keeps them, he it is that loves Me: and he that loves Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him and will manifest Myself to him.* Oh, what privileges are enjoyed by those who love the Lord Jesus Christ! We cannot help loving Him and, by that love we are assured that the Father, Himself, loves us and we have the promise that Christ will yet more and more manifest Himself to us!

22. *Judas said unto Him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself unto us, and not unto the world?* “Why are we the subjects of this election, this selection, this gracious manifestation?”

23. *Jesus answered and said unto him, if a man loves Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him.* Just as the angels came to believing Abraham and sojourned for a little while with him, so will Jesus and the Father, strangers in this world, become sojourners with us. Jesus says of the man who loves Him, “My Father will love him, and We will come unto him and make Our abode with him.” This is not a mere call, it is residence—“We will make Our abode with him.” God, whom the Heavens cannot contain, yet comes and dwells in a lowly heart and abides with a loving spirit—“We will come unto him and make our abode with him.” There is an aroma about these words which I cannot convey to you. But if you have the spiritual nostrils, you will perceive their fragrance for yourselves.

24. *He that loves Me not keeps not My sayings: and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father’s which sent Me.* You see that the Lord Jesus Christ does not profess to be a great original thinker, but He speaks as the Messenger sent by the Father. And unless we, also, are commissioned and taught by the Father, of what value will our poor feeble thoughts be? Our only power lies in the fact that we do not utter our own thoughts, but the Truths of God which have been taught to us by the Holy Spirit! To some, this may look like weakness, but it is real strength.

25-27. *These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will*

send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatever I have said unto you. Peace I leave with you. When men in the East met one another, they usually gave the salutation, “Peace be unto you,” “Peace be to this house.” But Christ says—

27. *My peace I give unto you: not as the world gives, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.* “I do not say, ‘Peace, Peace,’ where there is no peace. It is not a mere formal salutation, but there is a real, true peace communicated to you when I thus speak.”

28. *You have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If you loved Me, you would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for My Father is greater than I.* Love makes us rejoice in the prosperity of the one we love. The Lord Jesus Christ, in coming to this earth, had taken upon Himself a subordinate position—He had become the stepping-stone between man and God. But now that He was returning to His Glory—returning to His Father—it was the duty of those who loved Him to rejoice—and we should do the same now. He has left behind Him the humiliation, the scorn, the spitting, the Crucifixion—and who among us, who truly loves Him, would wish to bring Him back to this poor earth as He same at first? Ah, no! It is well that all that is over! There is sweetest music to our ears in our Lord’s declaration, “It is finished,” and our soul swims in a sea of light as we think of the ineffable Glory with the father to which He has returned forever!

29-31. *And now I have told you before it comes to pass, that when it is comes to pass, you might believe. Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the Prince of this world comes, and has nothing in Me. But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.* “Let us go to Gethsemane and to the Passion! Let us go fulfill the Father’s will!” It was a sure proof of Christ’s love when He went forward from speaking to suffering that He might save His own forever!

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—785, 451, 841.

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NO. 3401

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 9, 1914.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, DECEMBER 1, 1867.

*"Yet a little while, and the world will see Me no more; but you will see Me. Because I live, you shall live also."
John 14:19.*

THIS was and is the mark of the true Believer—that he sees Jesus. When Jesus was here among men, the world saw Him in a certain sense, but yet in truth it did not see Him at all. The world's eyes saw the outside of Christ—the flesh of the Man, Christ, but the true Christ the ungodly eyes could not discern. They could not perceive those wonderful attributes of Character, those delightful graces and charms which made up the true spiritual Christ. They saw but the husk, and not the kernel. They saw the quartz of the golden nugget, but not the pure gold which that quartz contained. They saw but the external Man—the real, spiritual Christ they could not see. But unto as many as God had chosen, Christ manifested Himself as He did not unto the world! There were some to whom He said, "The world sees Me not, but you see Me." Some there were whose eyes were anointed with the heavenly salve, so that they saw in "the Man, Christ Jesus," the God, the glorious Savior, the King-of-kings, The Wonderful, The Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace!

The blind world said of Him that He was a root out of a dry ground. And when they saw Him there was no beauty in Him that they should desire Him. He was despised and rejected of men. But God's elect were men who saw Him as God over all, blessed forever, descending to tabernacle among men and to take upon Himself man's imperfect nature, so that He might redeem him from all iniquity and save him.

Now, to this hour, this is the mark of the true Christian. This is to be of the elect! This is the very badge and symbol of the faithful—they see Jesus. They look beyond the clouds. Other men see the cloud and the darkness and they know not what it is. But these men with more than eagle eyes, pierce through the clouds of mere sensual impressions and

see the Glory that was always His, even the Glory of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of Grace and truth. Beloved, have you ever seen Jesus with the eyes of faith? Have you ever perceived the glory of His Person and the beauty of His Character? Have you so perceived Jesus as to trust in Him? Have you been so enamored of Him as to have yielded yourselves to be His servants forever? Do you take up His Cross? Do you avow yourselves to be His followers, come what may? If so, then you are saved! But if you see not Christ with your spirit, neither do you know Him, nor shall you enjoy a portion with Him.

Blessed be God, there is this to be said—that he who has once seen Christ, shall always see Him! The eyes may sometimes gather dimness, but the Light of God shall yet return. Where Christ has opened blind eyes, blindness comes not back again! He takes the cataract totally away. He does not give a transient gleam of spiritual sight and then permit the soul to go back into the darkness of its grave—the sight which He gives is the sight of things eternal—a sight which shall strengthen and grow until at the last, when death shall take away every barrier which parts us from the unseen world. We shall know even as we are known and see even as we are seen! To see Jesus is Heaven begun! And Heaven consummated is but to see Jesus no longer through a glass darkly, but face to face—still it is to see Jesus, to behold the King in His beauty! This, I say, is the sum and substance of life eternal—and it is true life here below.

And now our Lord, speaking to those who had seen Him, truly seen Him and in spiritual recognition, talks to them concerning life. Sometimes it is ours to speak to you of death, not necessarily with gloom, for it is illuminated with rays of heavenly light to the Christian, but here and now we desire to speak of life, the best and most divine life! We will forget the raven with its dusky wings and see only the tender, gentle dove, bearing for each one of us the olive branch of peace and victory.

We shall speak of life—life of the highest possible degree—not the life which gladdens our eyes in the sunlight when we behold the flowers of the field opening their cups. This is vegetable life. Nor the life of the young lambs as they frisk and caper and dance for very gladness in the spring sunbeams. This is but animal life. Nor even the life that enables men to think and speak upon common themes of interest and perform the ordinary duties of their different callings—this is but mental and social life. We reach to something still higher—*spiritual* life—life in Christ Jesus! A life twice-created, a life which is grafted and is an advance upon the first life which we have when we are born—far surpassing the life of the flesh because that shall, by-and-by, expire—this is a life which springs from incorruptible seed and which lives forever!

The text, in talking to us about life, gives us, first, *the assurance that Jesus lives*. It then *promises us that His people shall live*. And it clearly states that there is a link of connection between the two things—that because Jesus lives—His people shall live also First, then—

I. JESUS LIVES.

He always lived. There never was a time when He was not. “Before the hills were brought forth I was there,” He says. The eternal Wisdom of God is from everlasting. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God, and the Word was with God. The same was in the beginning with God.” The life, however, which we think is intended in the text, is not His Divine life—His life as Deity—but His life as Man, His life as Mediator between God and man. In that life He lives! We needed not to be assured of His Divine life, but seeing that as a Mediator, He died, it was necessary to assure us that as a Mediator He descended into the tomb. It is well for us to be assured that as a Mediator He rose again from His grave and now lives at the right hand of the Father, no more to bleed and die.

Jesus Christ at this time lives *in His proper Manhood*. He lives as to His soul—His human soul is as it was on earth. He lives as to His human body. He is a Man before the Throne of God and I have no doubt that He wears the symbol, of course, mightily glorified, of His sufferings—

**“Looks like a Lamb that had been slain.
And wears His priesthood still.”**

That very Christ, who did once as a Baby lie upon His mother's breast and who, afterwards, trod the waves of Gennesaret—who, after His resurrection ate a piece of broiled fish and of honeycomb—that very Christ is now before the eternal Throne of God! In very soul and body the Man, Christ Jesus, is there! He lives!

He lives a real life. We are so very apt to mystify and becloud everything and to suppose that Christ lives by His influence only, or lives by His Spirit. Brothers and Sisters, *He lives*—the very Man that died, as surely as He bled upon the tree, and in His own proper Person, from five actual wounds poured out the warm life-torrents of His heart, so surely does He actually live at this present moment in the midst of unnumbered hearts that sound His praise—the delightful Object of the vision of the myriads of spirits who continually adore Him! He actually lives! He really and truly lives as He lived here below!

He lives, also, actively—not in some wondrous sleep of quiet and sacred repose. He is as busy, now, as He was when here. He proposed to Himself, when He went away, a certain work. “I go to prepare a place for you,” He said. He is still preparing that place for us. He also daily intercedes for His people. Oh, if your faith is strong enough, even now you

can see Him standing before the Throne of God, pleading His glorious merits! I think I see Him now as clearly as ever the Jews saw Aaron when he stood with his breastplate on before the Mercy Seat, for remember, the Jew never did see Aaron at all there, for the curtain was dropped and Aaron was behind the veil. And, therefore, the Jew could only see him in his fancy. But I say I see Him as clearly as that, for I see my Lord, not by fancy, but by faith! There, where the veil is torn in two, so that He is not hidden from my soul's gaze, I see Him with my name and yours upon His breast, pleading before God!

Why, gaze awhile and you may think you see Him now! Just as the Jew saw Aaron waving the censer, standing between the living and the dead and stopping the plague, even so is Christ standing at this hour between the living and the dead—and so moving the whole Deity to spare the guilty yet a little longer—while He makes intercession for them that they may live! And then comes His higher intercession for His elect, of whom He says, “I pray for them. I pray not for the world.” He lives, then, an actual life of which you and I reap the daily fruits! Not a life of slumber and stillness, but an active, busy life by which He continually dispenses gifts to us!

For this reason it is well to remind you that, therefore, Jesus can only live as a Man in one place. When we speak of Christ being found in every assembly of His people, we understand that of His Presence in His Godhead and by His Holy Spirit, who rules on earth in this dispensation of the Spirit. But the Man, Christ, can be but in one place. And He is now at the right hand of the Majesty on high. It is absurd, it is horrible both to faith and to reason to say that Christ's body is eaten and that His blood is drunk in tens of thousands of places wherever priests choose to offer what they call, “the mass!” It is a “mass” of profanity, indeed! Our Lord Jesus Christ, as to His real, positive, corporeal Presence, is not here. As to His flesh and His blood, He is not and cannot be here! He will be here one day—when He shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the trumpet of the archangel and the voice of God! But in His real Person, He is now where His saints are—before the Throne of God, from where, by-and-by, He will descend. Meanwhile, His spiritual Presence is our joy and our gladness, but His corporeal Presence—a Doctrine which our faith grasps and lays hold of—His corporeal presence is before the Throne of God and there He lives in proper flesh and blood as the Son of Man.

Brothers and Sisters, listen to a brief sketch of the biography of Christ's life in Glory. When the holy women and godly men wrapped Him in spices and laid Him in the tomb, Jesus was dead. There for parts of three

days and nights He tarried. He saw no corruption, but yet He was in the place of corruption. No worm could assail that Holy Thing which no sin had tainted—and yet He laid in the place where death seemed sovereign. A while He slept, and the Church mourned, but blessed was the day when, at the first rosy dawn of light, the Savior rose!

Then could He say, "I live." His body, instinct with life, rose from its slumber and began at once to put off the grave clothes. He unwound the winding-sheets and the fine white linen and laid them carefully down. And He left them there for you and me, that we might have our bed well sheeted when we come to lie in it at the last.

As for the napkin, He unwound it and laid it by itself, as though that were for us who are living, to wipe our eyes when our dear ones are taken away—since we have no cause to sorrow as they do who have no hope. And when this was done, an angel rolled away the stone and forth came the Savior—glorious, no doubt, but so much like other men that Mary "supposed Him to have been the gardener," so that there could have been no very supernatural splendor surrounding His Person! He revealed Himself to many of His disciples—sometimes to as many as 500 at once. He ate with them. He drank with them. He was a Man among men with them, till, when 40 days had passed, He gathered them all at Olivet, the mountain from which He had so often addressed them, and took His final leave. While He was blessing them, His hands outstretched in benediction, a cloud received Him out of their sight. And since then He has sat down at the right hand of God, expecting till His enemies be made His footstool. He is tarrying there yet a little while longer. When the fullness of time shall come—if I may go on with His biography—He will come again. "This same Jesus," said the angels, "which is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come in a like manner as you have seen Him go into Heaven." He will, therefore, come in proper Person a second time, without a sin-offering unto salvation. Then will He gather His saints together who have made a Covenant with Him by sacrifice. Then shall they reign with Him. Then shall the earth be covered with His Glory. All nations shall bow before Him and all people shall call Him blessed! And then shall come the end, when He shall deliver up the Kingdom to God, even the Father, and God shall be All-in-All. But Christ shall still live, for He has received a priesthood after the order of Melchisedec, without beginning of days, or end of years—a priest forever. When suns and moons shall grow dim with age and the round world shall all dissolve like the morning hoar-frost, and time shall be rolled up like a vesture, and all the ages shall have been trodden out like sparks beneath the foot of the Eternal God, then shall Jesus Christ still live on, world without end!

Thus have we spoken concerning Christ as living. But now, in the next place—

II. LIFE IS PROMISED TO CHRIST'S PEOPLE.

This does not mean their natural existence. They have received that from Adam and, through their sin, it has become a curse to them rather than a blessing. Should they remain unpardoned, the fact of continued existence will become to them the most dreadful of calamities since it must be an existence in God's holy abhorrence of sin forever—driven from every glimpse or hope of forgiveness!

The life which comes to us through Christ is of this sort—I trust you know it in your own hearts—it is *spiritual life, given to us in regeneration*. When the Holy Spirit quickens a dead soul, that dead soul then receives the life of Christ! No man is alive unto God, spiritually, except through Christ. Because Christ lives, we live. When a dead soul gets into living contact with the living Savior by the power of the Spirit, then it is, that spiritual life begins. The very first evidence of spiritual life is trusting in Jesus, which shows that as the first symptom is alliance to Christ, the cause of the life must be somewhere here, namely—union with Christ! One of the very first outward signs is prayer—prayer to Christ and that, again, rises from the fact that Christ gives us of His life—and then that life goes back again to Him. Brothers, if you seek the life of other souls and desire to see them brought to God, preach Christ to them! Do you not see, “Because I live, you shall live”? Then no sinner will ever live spiritually apart from Christ! Though you and I cannot quicken them, yet we can preach the Gospel to them—and faith comes by hearing! And where faith is, there is life. It is no use trying to raise the dead by preaching the Law of God to them. That is only covering them up fairly with a lie in their right hand—but to preach of dying love and of rising power, to tell of pardons bought with blood and to declare that Christ died a Substitute for sinners—this is the hopeful way of bringing life to the dead! It is by such instrumentality that souls are brought to eternal life. Because Christ is alive, His elect, in due time, receive spiritual life by the power of the Holy Spirit and, although once they were dead in sin, they begin to live unto righteousness!

Further, *this spiritual life is preserved in us by Christ still living*. “Because I continue to live, you shall continue to live also.” The text clearly means that—it bears that paraphrase. Oh, dear Friends, when we once get spiritual life into us, what a thousand enemies there are who try to put it out! Many and many a time has it seemed to go hard with my soul as to whether I really had a spark of life within my spirit. Temptation after temptation have I endured until it appeared as if I must yield my hold

on Christ and give up my hope! There has been conflict upon conflict, and struggle upon struggle until, at last, the enemy has got his foot upon my neck and my whole being has trembled! And had it not been for Christ's promise, "Because I live, you shall live also," it might have gone harder with me and I might have despaired and given up all hope—and laid down to die. The assurance, then, that the spiritual life of the Christian must be maintained because Christ lives, was the only power to get me the victory! Let it teach us, then, this practical lesson. Whenever our spiritual life is very weak and we need it to grow stronger, let us get to the living Christ for the supply of His strength! When you feel you are ready to die, spiritually, go to the Savior for revived life. The text is like a hand that points us to the storehouse. You who are in the desert, there is a secret spring under your feet, and you know not where it is—this is the mysterious finger which points you to the spot! Contemplate Christ! Believe in Christ! Draw yourselves by faith nearer and nearer to the Lord Jesus Christ and so shall your life receive a Divine impetus which it has not known for many a day. "Because I live, you shall live also."

And further, Brothers and Sisters, *we get from Christ an educated life*. Any man may be spiritually alive and yet he may not know much about the higher life. There is, in spiritual life, a scale of degrees. One man is just alive unto God. Another man may be active and vigorous. Another may be rapturously consecrated. I hope you and I will anxiously desire to get the highest form of spiritual life that is known! We do not wish to be beggars in the Kingdom of Christ, but if we can, to take our place in the House of Peers—to be princes through Jesus Christ. We need not be poor—Christ is willing to enrich us. We are not straitened in Him—we are straitened in ourselves. Now, Christ gives the promise, "Because I live," He says, "the highest life, far above all principalities and powers—you shall also live this higher life with Me." You may have it! You may obtain it, but Brothers and Sisters, if you want to get it, never go to Moses for it! Never go to yourselves for it. Do not seek to school yourselves by rules, regulations and resolutions, or by a morbid asceticism such as some men delight in! But go to the living Savior and in the living liberty which you will enjoy in communion with Him, your soul will take unto itself, wings, and mount into a clearer atmosphere! Your spirit will be braced to a higher degree of robust devotion! You will draw nearer to Heaven because you have got nearer to Christ, who is the Lord of Heaven! "Because I live, you shall have life: you shall have that life continued and you shall have that life yet more abundantly. I am come not only that you may have life, but more abundantly." These are your Master's words! Plead them before your Master's Throne!

And now, Brothers and Sisters, we will go a little further. We will suppose that you are well acquainted with these forms of life, but now there comes a jerk, as it were. You are travelling along the iron road of the railway and there comes a sudden jerk and you stop. What is it? It is the thought of death! Well, but Jesus tells us, here, that that is of no consequence! It is an item in the great world of life that to you who are in Him is scarcely worth consideration because the text overrides that and swallows it up! As it is written "death is swallowed up in victory"—it is made as though it did not exist! "Because I live, you shall live also." Your continued life of happiness, of holiness, of spirituality, of consecration and of obedience—which, indeed, is your only life worth having—is guaranteed to you in the text! Death cannot interfere with it, not even by the space of a single second! No, I tell you not even by the space of the ticking of a clock! What? A Christian die? "Because I live, you shall live also," is never suspended! There is no time for it to be suspended. Do you know what death really is? Does it take long to die? I have heard of men who have been said to be weeks in dying. Not so! They were weeks living—the dying occupied no space—that was done at once and immediately. And so with the Believer. To him death is so slight a jerk that he still keeps on upon the same line! He still lives, only there is this difference, that it is as though the railway had been running through a tunnel and he now comes out of it into the open plain. His life below was the train in the tunnel, but when he dies, as we call it, there is a jerk and then it comes right out of the tunnel into the fair, open, plain country of Heaven where all is clear and bright! Where all the birds are singing and the darkness is over, the mist and fogs are gone and his soul is forever blessed! "Because I live a life that cannot be suspended," Christ seems to say, "you shall live also."

At the bottom of every man's heart there is, I suppose, a fear of ceasing to be. Some infidels seem to find comfort in the thought of being annihilated, but that thought is, perhaps, the most abhorrent that ever crossed the human mind! There is a something within us that tells us we are immortal, or there is, at any rate, something which makes us hope we are, but we shrink with loathing from the idea of being annihilated! Now, at that point comes in our text and it says, "What? Annihilated? You who believe in Jesus cannot be! You shall live also, live with that higher life which you have received—a life of beauty, a life of excellence, of holiness and of God-likeness! That new life implanted within you shall never be suspended." No, never by the space of a single tick, for, "Because I live, you shall live also."

Further, Brothers and Sisters, our text is such a wide one that we have a hold of the fact that we are to continue to live as to our spirits and our souls. The text, beneath its sheltering wings, like a hen gathering her brood, gathers many precious Truths of God. The next one is that *this very body of ours is to live, too*. It must take its time for that. It must abide in the earth, whereon it has dwelt. It is so decreed that there it should lie unless Christ should come before that time. But concerning this very body, there is no decree of annihilation. It will smolder away. It may be taken up by the spade of the careless sexton and all the atoms of the body be scattered to the winds of Heaven! But there is a life-germ within it which no human power can destroy, and over which the Divine eyes perpetually watch—and when that mysterious and long-expected sound of the angelic trumpet shall ring over land and sea, through Heaven and earth, and the graves shall all be opened, then shall my soul find my body yet again—fashioned after a more beautiful form, more fit for the spirit than before! More elastic, altogether free from weakness, no longer such as shall be subject to pain, sickness, accident, decay, to ultimate corruption—but a spiritual body, raised in power, in glory and in immortality! Not raised in the likeness of the first Adam in the Garden, but in the likeness of the Second Adam in the everlasting Paradise of God!

Courage my eyes, courage! You shall be closed for a while, but you shall see the Redeemer when He stands a second time upon the earth. Courage, my fingers and my hands! You must, for a time, lie still and motionless, but you shall not be so forever, for you, even you, shall strike the strings of those celestial harps that pour forth His praise! Courage, all you members of my body which have been sanctified to be members of Christ and made to be parts of the Holy Spirit's Temple—you shall all take your part in the grand triumphal entry of Christ when He shall descend to take possession of His Kingdom! "Though worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God whom I shall behold for myself and not another." So go to your bed in the earth, poor body, and sleep there awhile. Bathe yourself like her who bathed herself in spices to make herself ready for the King—so go and get yourself prepared to meet your Lord! Take off your workday dress and put on your Sabbath garments, your bridal array and then shall you come to the King and see Him in His beauty, and crown Him with the crown wherewith His mother crowned Him in the days of His espousals. Yes, because He lives in the body which He bore, this body shall live again also.

And so, Beloved, the text amounts to this, that in body and soul the Christian shall be immortal like his Master! When our reign on earth—

whether it shall last a thousand years, or a thousand ages—(we know not what the Word of God intends)—but when that glorified state on earth which I do most assuredly believe in, shall be over, and it shall be said—

**“Now Jehovah’s banner’s furled,
Sheathed His sword because ‘tis done”—**

when the drama of the mediatorial reign shall all be closed and we shall dwell under the immediate Sovereignty of God once again, then, Beloved, every Believer shall be with Christ, eternally glorified, for here stands the irrevocable decree and the Divine mandate of Creation’s Lord, who is also the redeeming Lamb, “Because I live, you shall live also.” Reel, you pillars of earth! Be shaken, you arches of the starry heavens! Pass away, O Time, and you, you rolling worlds, dissolve into your native nothingness! But the Believer must live on because Jesus lives! And until the Lord’s Christ can bow His head. Until He who only has immortality can expire. Until God, Himself, can cease to be, no soul that believed in Jesus can lose the incorruptible Life which God’s own Spirit has put within it!

I want to sing, Brothers and Sisters, rather than to talk with you. These are words and thoughts fit for some ancient bard, or for the spirit of some Inspired Prophet sent from Heaven! I do but lisp where even seraphs might find their loudest songs fail in the theme. Let your hearts mount! Let your souls exult! Let your spirits be glad! Do you

**“Long for evening to undress,
That you may rest with God,”**

and enter into His Heaven? Do you long for the evening of death when your toil shall be over and the hour of your bliss shall have come? I shall have no time, I fear, for the third and last point, and, therefore, must only give a few hints of what I would have said.

III. THIS LIFE IS LINKED WITH CHRIST’S LIFE.

Immortal, all glorious, promised to true Believers, it is bound up with the life of our immortal Lord. Why is this? First, because *Christ leads a justified life*. I scarcely know how to express my meaning. You understand that so long as Jesus was here, He lay under the charge of our sins. While He was in the world, His Father had made to meet upon Him the iniquity of us all. But when He died, His death discharged all the liabilities of His elect. The handwriting of ordinances that was against us, was then taken away. When He went to Calvary as our Surety, the sins of all His people were His debts—He had taken them upon Himself. But when He rose from the dead in the garden that first Easter morning He had no debts of ours! He had no longer any substitutional engagement or liability! All the debts which He had taken upon Himself as our Redeemer, He had fully and completely discharged. No officer can arrest a man for debt who has none, and Christ now lives, therefore, as a justified Per-

son. And Brothers and Sisters, no officer of Justice can arrest any of the people for whom Christ paid their debts! How, then, shall death have any dominion over those whose debts are all discharged? How shall they be laid in prison for whom Christ was laid in prison? How shall they suffer death, which is the penalty of sin, for whom Christ has already suffered all the penalties which Justice could have demanded? Because He lives the life of One who has discharged the debts of His people, they must, in Justice, live!

Secondly, *Christ lives a representative life*. He is no longer Christ for Himself. As the Member of Parliament represents a town, so Jesus Christ represents all the people who are in Him. And as long as He lives, they live. He is their Covenant Head. As long as Adam stands, his race shall stand. When Adam falls, the human race falls. While, therefore, Christ lives, the Christly ones who are in Him, live through His representation.

In the next place, *Christ lives a perfect life*. Perhaps you do not see how this is a link between His living and your living, but it is, because we are a part of Christ. According to the Word of Scripture, every Believer is a member of Christ's body. Now, a man who lives perfectly has not lost his finger, or his arm, or his hand. A man may be alive with many of his limbs taken away, but you can scarcely call him a perfect living man. But I cannot imagine a maimed Christ. I have never been able to conceive in my soul, of Christ lacking any of His members! Such a thing was never seen on earth. The barbarous cruelty of the Jews could not effect that and, by the Providence of God, Pilate's officers were not permitted to cause such a thing. "Not a bone of Him shall be broken," was the ancient prophecy. They broke the legs of the first and second thief, but when they came to the matchless Lord, they saw He was already dead, so they broke not His legs. Even in His earthly body, which was the type of His spiritual body, He must suffer no maiming injury! Therefore, my Brothers and Sisters, because Christ lives as a perfect Christ, everyone that is one with Him must live also!

Then, fourthly, *Christ lives a blessed life*—a life of perfect blessedness and, therefore, we must live also. "Why?" you say. Why, look—there is a mother here. She is alive. She is in good health, but she is not perfectly happy, for she is a Rachel weeping for her children and will not be comforted because they are not! Time will heal her wounds, it is true, for the most affectionate heart cannot be always mourning, but our Lord Jesus Christ, in that Infinitely affectionate heart of His, would not only mourn over one of His children, if lost, but He would mourn forever over it! I cannot conceive of Christ being happy and losing one of His dear children! I cannot conceive Christ to be personally blessed and yet one of the

members of His own Person cast into the “outer darkness.” Because He lives in perfect happiness, I conceive that all who are dear to Him will be round about Him! It shall not be said that He lost one of them, nor shall one of the family be missing, but—

**“All the chosen seed
Shall meet around the Throne
To bless the conduct of His Grace
And make His wonders known!”**

And lastly, *Christ leads a triumphant life* and, therefore, you shall live also! You say again, “How is that?” Why, Brothers and Sisters, the triumph of Christ concerns us! This is the triumph of Christ, “Of all those whom You have given Me, I have lost none.” Now, suppose there to be heard a whisper from the infernal Pit, “Aha! Aha! You lie! There is one here whom the Father gave You, but whom You did lose”? Why, Christ would never be able to speak again by way of triumph! He could never boast anymore! Then might He put down His crown! If it were but to happen in that one case, at any rate, the enemy would have got the advantage over Him and He would not have been the Conqueror all along the line. But, glory be to God! He who trod the winepress with none for His assistant, came forth out of the crimson conflict, having smitten all His foes and won a complete victory! There shall not be in the whole campaign a single point over which Satan shall be able to boast!

Christ has brought many sons to glory as the Captain of their salvation and never yet has He failed! And He never shall in any point, neither the least nor the greatest, neither the strongest nor the weakest. This is essential, dear Friends. It is essential to the acclamations of Heaven that every soul that believes in Jesus should live forever. It is essential to the everlasting harmony and to the joy of Christ throughout eternity, that all who trust in Him should be preserved and kept safe, even until the end. Therefore, says the text, “Because I live, you shall live also.” So I leave this Truth of God with you, only praying that those who have no part in this matter may seek Christ at this very time—and be led by the Spirit to cry mightily to Him—and His promise is, “They that seek Me early shall find Me.” Seek you the Lord while He may be found. Call you upon Him while He is near.”

God bless you, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

SEEING JESUS

NO. 3443

A SERMON
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“Yet a little while, and the world sees Me no more; but you see Me.”
John 14:19.

WHATEVER religious privileges men of the world may have, they will lose them. It was a great favor to see Christ in the flesh. Kings and Prophets had desired to see His day and had died disappointed because He had not come, but that sight of Him which the generation in which Christ lived enjoyed was taken from them. They were none the better and, in some respects, they were all the worse for having seen Him, whose blood was on them and on their children. So, as a general Truth of God, all the outward religious privileges which any of you may enjoy, if you do not become *spiritual* men and are not, indeed, Christ's disciples, will be taken from you, speedily taken from you, leaving no blessing behind, but rather a curse! You are hearers of the Gospel today, some of you, though unconverted—but you shall not always hear it. There is a land where Sabbath bells never ring, where the joyful feet of the messengers of mercy are never seen, and where no loving exhortations and no affectionate entreaties will be addressed to you! Now you join in song with God's people but you will not do so soon—another sound, more strange and full of trembling—will be in your ears! Some of you, it may be, unconverted as you are, even venture to touch the ordinances and have been baptized and have come to the Lord's Table. There will be another baptism for you and you will eat bread at a far different table from that of the Lord, by-and-by, for unless you are converted, these, instead of being means of Grace, shall be swift messengers against you to your condemnation! It is a very sorrowful case when a man is so bad that that which is good becomes bad to him, and a fearful proof of the fall of our race and the depravity of our unregenerate nature—that even the best religious privileges will only become a savor of death unto death unto us unless the Grace of God shall change our hearts!

Note, then, that as the text says that the world which saw Christ should soon see Him no more, so it teaches us that there are many outward privileges in religion that even worldly people enjoy that they shall soon enjoy no more, for, as they would not have the inward spiritual Grace, they shall not forever have the outward and visible sign to tread

beneath their feet! As they would not receive the Grace of God into their hearts in the power of it, so shall the very offers of love and the outward ministrations of mercy be withdrawn from them!

With that black foil, the gem of our text may shine the brighter. “But you see Me”—you, My people. You that have believed, you who, by Grace, have received the new nature. You who have passed from death unto life—when the world sees Christ no more, you shall see Him in His Glory! And even now, while a blind world beholds Him not, you are enjoying a sight of Him. Our first word tonight, after this preface, shall be—

I. SPIRITUAL DIFFERENCES.

The world sees Him no more, but you see Him. The difference lies in the kind of sight. The world’s sight of Christ, in the first place, *was only a sight to the eyes* and, consequently, the moment Christ was gone out of this world, the world saw Him no more. But when He was gone, there were others who had seen Him with a different sight, which was not affected by His corporeal absence—they continued to see because their seeing had been something other than the sight of the eyes. Now, when Jesus Christ was here upon earth, all that an ungodly man saw of Christ was His outward form—as some think incomparably beautiful, and so I suppose it was at the first. So perfect a spirit must surely have been enshrined within a matchless, outward form! I can conceive Him to have been full of Grace, even in the common sense of that term, as well as in its higher meaning. But in later years, such were the griefs of His heart that we know that He appeared to be older than He was, for the Jews said, “You are not yet fifty years old,” when He was but a little more than thirty. Such was the decay, probably, such the emaciation that grief brought upon Him, that He had no form or comeliness, and when men looked upon Him they saw Him as the Man of Sorrows and the acquaintance of grief. Whatever the outward form may have been, it was certainly all that the ungodly man saw, all that the Pharisee saw, all that Pilate saw, all that Herod saw—just that outward form. They did not, therefore, see the real Christ of God at all, and in proof that they did not see Him, we find that some of them could only see in Him an impostor, who pretended to be what He was not. Others could only see in Him an ordinary Prophet, a remarkable man, but still one of the common of Prophets, and no more. They could not see in Him what His disciples saw, namely, His glorious inward Character, the Glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth.

Now, you do not know a man because you happen to know the color of his eyes, the peculiar curl of his hair, or what kind of features he may possess. You know a man better when you have lived with him, when you know his spirit, when you have traced his virtues, when you have read his secrets. That is the man. The spirit is the man. The body is, after all, but the shrine in which the spirit dwells. The world saw Christ only as to His outward form—and when He was gone they saw Him no

more in that respect. But His disciples had seen His inward Nature. Some of them had seen what flesh and blood could not reveal to them—they had been made to see, by having their eyes spiritually anointed with heavenly eye-salves and, consequently, when Christ was gone from their natural sight, they continued to see—and I venture to say they saw more clearly than they had done before, for now, when He was taken up from them, they began to read what He had said to them with greater understanding! They began to see some of His actions in a different light—and much that they did not understand at one time when He was with them, because they could not bear it, they began to understand now that He was gone because His Spirit revealed it—their understandings being capable of receiving the deeper Truth. They saw the better for His absence, while the world saw not at all!

Beloved Friend, I shall ask you, before I pass on—Have you ever had such a sight of Jesus Christ? No, I do not mean, did you ever *dream* you saw Him? I do not mean, did you ever think you saw a vision? I do not care whether you have or have not. If you saw the devil, that would not send you to Hell—and if you saw Christ, it would not send you to Heaven. But have you ever had that *spiritual* sight of Him which has made you to understand His Character? Have you ever seen Him as the Christ of God, the God-Man, the Only-Begotten, the Well-Beloved, the Savior, the King of your spirit? Have you so seen Him as to be subdued by the sight and to be at once enlisted in His service? Oh, this is the sight which He gives to His own people, the sight which saves, the sight of which He speaks when He says, “The world sees Me no more, but you see Me”—the difference between the sight of the eyes and the sight of the inner man!

We have a sight of Christ, further, which not only lasts when Christ is gone, *but which lasts when our eyes are gone*. The world can only see while the eye endures. If the eye should by any means be filmed, or if especially the eye and all the powers of the body should be smitten by death, then there would be to the world no sight of Christ. But in our case our sight of Jesus Christ is one which has been known to be even brightened by the eyes being quenched—a sight which grows more and more clear as the flesh decays, a sight which will be clearest of all when we have done with eyes altogether, when we shall be in the disembodied and spiritual state—then shall we see the King in His beauty to perfection and though, after a while there shall be added to that sight a corporeal sight, when the body shall rise again from the grave, yet meanwhile our sight is such that if our eyes were taken away from us, we thank God it would not dim our sight of Christ one bit! There are some in this place, tonight, whom I remember with affectionate regard, who have not seen the light of the sun for many years, and yet their eyes see the face of Christ almost always, for their love to Christ is so fervent and the communion they have with Christ is so constant that the loss of their eyes seems to be, in their case, almost a privilege! They see the better because

that drop screen has crossed the optic glass and shut them out from the world. Yes, and if any of us should be overtaken by the gradual closing of the eyes, heavy as such an affliction must be, we thank God we shall still be able to see Him! And when the eye-strings break in death, then, even then, shall we see Him! And while we lie pining there, and friends think us shut out from everything that is happy, we shall but consider ourselves shut in, waiting for the full appearing of the Lord our Savior! The sight, then, which God gives to His people, is a sight which is not dependent upon Christ's bodily Presence, and is not dependent, in the next place, upon our bodily eyes!

On this matter of spiritual differences we remark next, that the sight which is here meant is *one which is an available thing when everything else goes to the contrary*. When everything prospers with a man of the world, even he sees, and says, "Perhaps God is here." If he is an outwardly religious man, though not inwardly so, if he mingles in a congregation where there is some degree of religious excitement, if his own mind is gratified, he will say he thinks Christ is there. But the child of God can see Jesus Christ where nobody else can, namely, in the midst of the storm and the tempest, where everything threatens present destruction! The Believer hears Him say, "It is I," and sees Him walking upon the waves—sees Him not only in exciting religious meetings, but in the quiet of solitude. Worldlings in solitude see nothing, have no holy thoughts—but there the Christian perceives Jesus, and if that solitude is attended with much of trial, and temptation, and inward sorrow, and distress, yet faith is fully at work and the Believer looks through every mist and cloud, and still sees Jesus, according to His promise—"Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." It is a poor faith that can only see Christ in the sunlight. It is a brave faith that sees Him at midnight. It is poor faith that believes that Jesus is there when all prospers, but it is right faith that knows He is there when nothing prospers except faith, which prospers most when tried. It is glorious to be able to read God's Word sometimes backwards—not to believe that His hard messages mean unkindness, but to understand that there is love in every stroke of the rod, eternal love in every hard word that falls from the Savior's lips. Faith, then, not only sees Jesus when He is corporeally absent, and sees Him without corporeal eyes, but sees Him when to sense it seems quite impossible that Jesus should be there! Note these differences, and let us pass on. Now we have here—

II. SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT.

I shall ask you, Brothers and Sisters, now quietly to look into yourselves to see whether you have the spiritual discernment we shall now speak of. We see Him. We see Him, first, with a trust which hangs all its confidence upon Him. The world does not see Christ as the great Foundation Stone of its hope. It sees its own works. It hopes in ceremonies and in outward forms. But we see Him. Whenever our faith looks abroad,

she sees nothing but Jesus. “No man, but Jesus only.” On that dear Cross my soul hangs all her confidence—not a rag anywhere else!—

**“All my trust on You is stayed,
All my help from You I bring.”**

This is an essential mark of a Christian, that he sees Jesus with the simple faith that relies alone upon Him. Dear Hearer, do you in this respect see Jesus? If so, rest assured that where He is in His Glory, you shall shortly be! There is life in that look! There is more than life present—there is life eternal in a look at Him! I hope you are not among those who say, “I did look to Jesus once.” No, we still see Him. The life of our faith dwells in a perpetual life-look at Christ! We do not say that we have seen Him and then we have withdrawn our glance, but we continue still to look. Our faith does not depend on something done in the past in us, but on that finished work which abides still for us, and to which we look day by day. We see Him with the look of a simple faith.

We see Him, next, *with the look of a reverent worship*. Where is He tonight, Christian, do you think? He is yonder as to His body—He is yonder at the right hand of the Father! I will not try to use my imagination to picture Him there in that supernal splendor which far outshines the lamps of Heaven, otherwise we might so speak of Him that you might seem to hear Him pleading, now, for you, and see Him wearing your names engraved on the jewels of His breastplate, displayed before the Father’s face for you at this hour. But though we will not thus picture Him, yet we see Him there by faith, and our soul bows and worships! All hail! All hail! Immanuel, Son of Mary and Son of God! Man and God, we worship You with all our hearts! Had we crowns, we would cast them at Your feet, but as these are not ours as yet, we bring You our songs, and our prayers, and our hearts’ love. And here, tonight, in the assembly of Your saints, we look at You and we worship You!

Now, I am conscious in my own heart, tonight, of a clearer sight of Christ than the sight which I take of you sitting in your pews. As I see you in your pews, I do but glance upon the flesh in which you live. As for what you really may be, I cannot see you. Your thoughts and your feelings are all unseen of me. But when I look at Christ, tonight, though I cannot see His flesh, nor behold His scars, nor all the Glory of His risen body, yet I can see Him, for I know what He is thinking of, I know what He is feeling, I know what He is looking for, I know what His heart is bent on. He is full of love to His people! He is thinking of their interests! He is pleading for us! He is working for us as an intercessor before the Throne of God! We see Him with the glance of reverent adoration, then, and see Him clearly, too!

Again, we see the Lord Jesus Christ tonight—I trust we do—with the eye of sanctified obedience. We believe that He is here. We believe that when we go to our homes He will be with us in spirit. That when we go to our business or to our work tomorrow morning, He will still be with us.

Now we could not sin in His Presence as other men sin. We dare not plunge into the common customs of the world. We could not use the world's talk. We would not yield to its maxims, and why? Because Jesus is there and a sense of His Presence is always a check to us against temptation, and oftentimes it is not only a negative force, but a sense of His Presence compels us to serve Him as best we may! I wish we saw Jesus more usually in this sense, and yet, my Brothers and Sisters, I hope some of us do, as a general rule, see Him daily thus, as though He were overshadowing us. I know I often do when I am sitting and thinking of what I shall say to you, and I start, as though I could look up and see Him looking down on me. And as I am walking by the way it often happens that I almost seem to check myself as though I heard His footsteps at my side. I know it cannot be, but I am conscious of His Presence, conscious that He talks with me and I with Him. Is it so with you? I know it is with many of you. Oh, cherish this more! Some of us lose His Presence by the week or the month together, and it is very sad, sorely sad, to be living in such a world as this, far off from Christ. Oh, Sheep, you cannot afford to be so far off from the Shepherd when the wolf is so near! Child, you cannot afford to be so far away from your Elder Brother when the pestilence is walking in darkness and the arrows are flying by day, and none but Himself can shield you! Oh, try to get into the fullness of this thought—we see Him, not only up there, reverently to be worshipped, but here to be worshipped by our feeling the restraints and the constraints of His Presence, feeling with regard to Him as Hagar did with regard to Jehovah in the wilderness when she said, “You God see me”—You Christ see me. You Crucified One, You are with me. You exalted Lord, I tread in Your footsteps. How can I consent to sin when You are so near me? Still we see Him!

We see Him further, dear Friends, oftentimes with a trust which consoles us in hours of difficulty. Mark what I mean here. Oftentimes the servant of God, when he sees how ill things go in the world, and especially in the religious world, is apt to think that Jesus is not there. Indeed, it needs a great deal of faith to see Jesus when things are sluggish in the Church, when there are ministers who do not seem to care about souls being saved, when there are churches that fall asleep, and when the world seems to grow more wicked, more lascivious in its amusements and more blatant in its atheistic blasphemy! But faith learns to know that Jesus is still here, that He cannot be away from the army. He is the Prince and He is concerned in the victory. He cannot be away. The whole of what goes on in the world is still under His direction and His control. Life has not put away the keys, blessed be His name! Nor has He left them to the devil, but they are at His belt. There they hang—the sovereign keys of death and Hell, still entrusted to Him, alone! He has not left the chariot for some diabolic Jehu to drive, and bring confusion upon

this world. The government shall be upon His shoulder! He shall be called The Wonderful, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Still—

**“He everywhere has sway,
And all things serve His might.”**

When He allows, for a while, the powers of evil to have a longer tether than usual, it is that afterwards He may pull them in again and prove His power and lift them up to scorn by defeating them, even with all the advantages they seem to gain! Have confidence, child of God! The Church of God is safe! There is no danger to that. The pillars of that house no Samson shall ever remove! The house goes on building, stone by stone, both by night and by day, most surely and most certainly, and the Top Stone shall be brought forth with shouts of, “Grace, Grace unto Him.” We see Him, then, with the eye of a confidence that consoles us greatly in the times of darkness and of despair!

And, Brothers and Sisters, I trust we see Christ oftentimes *with a joy which enlivens us*. Do you not think that a Believer ought to be ashamed to be sad? “Oh,” says one, “we have a great deal of trouble.” Yes, I know we have, and what a mercy it is that we have! I have a great many things that God has given me that I much value, but of all the things I ever had, next to His dear Son, that which I value most is the cross that is the heaviest. I have got more good out of my affliction than out of all my prosperity! I would not be without a cross for all the world! Blessed be God, one loves to learn to bear his sorrows, for one does not seem to need faith to see that it is good. One gets by experience to see how good it is and to love our Father’s cup, out of which He gives us the gall every morning which is so bitter, but oh, it has done us so much good! Like the man subject to fever, walking through the malaria districts, he does not shudder to drink the quinine as the child does who thinks it is so bitter—the man feels the tonic effects of it, so that at last he comes to accept that cup with thankfulness—so, Brothers and Sisters, our afflictions ought not to make us sad! When they come to us we should remember that their ordinary tendency is sadness, but their extraordinary tendency, when they are rightly used, is to make us rather rejoice because our Father pleases to send us these things! An old German writer tells us of some birds which were in the house of a neighbor of his and which were being taught to sing. Some were bullfinches, I think, and they were teaching them to pipe, but there were some other birds—larks, and nightingales, and so on, and these were in the dark. It was very cruel—the poor little things were in the dark, and could see no light. But, he said, these were they that could sing the sweetest. And oftentimes the child of God, when he gets a sense of the Lord’s Presence, is one of the birds that can sing best in the dark. Why, when it is all light, you know, there are plenty of things to distract our attention. But when it is all dark, and Christ comes in, and He is the only thing to be seen, why, then He is better than all the things we do not see and His Light is brighter

than all the stars that have been put out! And now we can sing more clearly about His Presence than we could about all the world's gifts, and about all the outward joys that have been taken away. Do but let a child of God know that Christ is with him, and his joy will be unspeakable and full of glory!—

**“Since Christ is rich, while I am poor,
What can I need beside?”**

Since my Beloved is mine, and I am His, I will even sit down by Babel's stream and sing the Lord's song, for the land is not strange where He is. Even Kedar's tents are bright as the silken embroideries of Solomon when Jesus comes there, and Meshech is no longer a name of lamentation and of sorrow, but a name of joy and gladness when Jesus sojourns with us, a Pilgrim and a Stranger, as we also are! We see Jesus with the joy that enlivens us. And so once more, Beloved, we have learned to see Jesus *with the hope that inspires us*, for, having seen Him once, here, we do not believe that He is teasing us. We cannot, we will not be led to imagine that if we have lived to see Him here as in a glass darkly, we shall be denied that for which we have been educated—even a face to face view of Him! No, Beloved, the day is coming—every winged hour is bringing it nearer—when we shall see the King in His beauty for ourselves, and not another for us! Did you ever try to put yourselves into that happy condition when you shall see Him? I have sometimes been on the top of a Swiss mountain to see the sun rise. I must confess I was never successful. I have strained my eyes in watching to see when the sun should rise, but the clouds have generally concealed it. But a sunrise is always a glorious thing, and what will the Everlasting Sunrise be, when, from the top of Pisgah we shall see Him, when from the top of Nebo we shall see our Savior? Beloved, it is well that we shall not be in the body, then, for surely, that sight of Him would be too much for us! It is well that when this body shall see Him, it shall be a risen body, strengthened and accommodated to such an excess of bliss, for if He were to reveal Himself, now, to us, as He does to the saints in Heaven, I suppose we would die with the excess of brightness! But do you ever try to picture to yourselves that you see Him? Christiana asked Mercy what made her laugh. “Did I laugh?” she asked. “Yes, last night you laughed in your sleep.” Then Mercy told her dream, of how she had seen the land, had been within the gates of pearl, and seen the King. And Christiana said that well she might laugh. And have you never laughed at the thought that your eyes shall soon see the Christ of God, the Man that died for you, that these weeping eyes shall weep no more, but shall look full on Him? Oh, 'tis well worth the pilgrimage! When Godfrey had led his troops up to Jerusalem, they had not yet captured the city, but the very sight of it made their hearts leap for joy! But what will it be to see, not the new Jerusalem only, but the King of the new Jerusalem, to have Him forever as ours, and to lie in His embrace without fear of banishment, world without end? Come, you disconsolate, pluck up courage! Come over the thorny way,

for the end is sweet and it will make amends for all the toil of the road! Oh, that we were but looking at Him now, and that the kisses of His mouth were ours forever and ever!—

***“My heart is with Him on His throne,
And ill can brook delay,
Each moment listening for the voice,
‘Rise up, and come away.’”***

May we have such a sight as this, then, inflaming our hope, inspiring our desires and making us long for the bright day when we shall see Him face to face! I shall close these fragmentary thoughts with two or three—

III. WORDS OF SPIRITUAL ENCOURAGEMENT.

My Brothers and Sisters, some of you, perhaps, have been following me while I talked about a sight of Christ, and you said, “Yes. Well, I hope I know something about these things—not what I want, or what I wish, or what I hope I shall know—but still, I know something of them.” Well, then, please remember that if you see Jesus, the Holy Spirit made you see Him. You would never have seen Jesus in that spiritual way by the power of human nature, or if you had been left to yourselves. Here is a clear mark, then, that the Holy Spirit has begun to work in your soul! Be grateful tonight, oh, be grateful that ever He should come to those bleary eyes of yours and open them! That ever He should come to that dead soul of yours and make it live! Tens of thousands who are wiser, greater and, perhaps, better than you in some respects, are left as blind as bats, while you, through Sovereign Grace, are made to see! Will you not praise Him? Have you no music for Him? Are there no good works that shall be like palm branches, with which you can strew His pathway in your joyful adoration of His Grace to you tonight?

Please remember, too, *that if you have received this sight, this sight will lead you to other sights.* We see Him. Lay the stress there a moment. There are some here who do not see the Doctrine of Election. My dear Brother, I wish you did, but if you can see *Him*, be glad for that. There are some who cannot see the mysterious Doctrines of the Word of God. They are often puzzled with the higher mysteries which belong to men in Christ. My dear Friends, you shall see all these, by-and-by, if you see Him! See Jesus first, and in Jesus, and through Jesus, you shall be led into all the Truths of God! “What body of divinity,” said someone to me the other day, “do you recommend?” I answered, “I have never heard of but one.” “But there are several.” No, there is only one—the only body that divinity ever had was the body of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and the study of that body of divinity will make you systematic theologians of the best kind! Begin at the center, with the sun, and you will understand astronomy! And if you put anything in the center of your system, except Christ, you will be sure to be in a thousand muddles and will never be able to understand the things of the Kingdom of God! A sight of

Jesus secures a sight of other things. He that has seen Him has seen the Father, seen the Spirit, and shall see all the rest!

Let us encourage ourselves with the thought that a sight of Jesus Christ makes amends for a great deal else that we do see. And what do I see? I see wars on all sides. I see sin in my members, but I see Him and, therefore, I know that He will subdue sin. "You shall call His name, Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." I see a thousand imperfections and weaknesses in my daily walk and conversation, but when I see Him, it covers all, for His blood and righteousness shall cover all the iniquities of Israel, and if they are searched for, they shall not be found. My dear Brothers and Sisters, perhaps some of you see poverty tonight. Some of you Brothers see many difficulties in your calling—some Brother minister here, perhaps, sees much disappointment about his sphere of labor. But, my dear Friends, if you can see Him, you shall find that that one sight will make amends for all the black and dreary visions that rise before you—and you shall be content and look on them with holy cheerfulness if you have fully learned to look on Him!

To look on Him, again, is, as we have said before, *to prepare our eyes for the greatest sight that ever eyes can see*. If we see Him today, it is a small thing compared to that. It is a small thing to see angels, as we shall see them, hovering about our dying bed. It is a small thing to see the shining ones, as we shall see them, meeting us at the river's brink to help us up the hill whereon the Celestial stands. If we see Him, it will be, comparatively, no very great advance to see the innumerable company of angels and the glorious Church of the First-Born, whose names are written in Heaven, for in seeing Him we have had the earnest and the pledge of all these wondrous sights! We shall not fear to see the world on fire, though the elements dissolve with fervent heat. We shall not fear to see the graves all opened and the myriads of the saints departed starting up from their graves. We shall not fear to see the dread assize and the Judgment Seat, and the King with the balances in His hand, weighing out the fates of men! We shall not fear to look upon yonder Hell, with all its horrors past conception dire, nor on yon eternity, through which the terrors of Divine Justice shall blaze forth as consuming fires! There is *nothing* that can alarm the man who has seen the Lord! No, there shall be little that shall astonish him, for the sight of Jesus is the glorious sight of all things in embryo. It is the sight that shall make a Heaven within us, while teaching us, by His Spirit, what the Heaven shall be in which we shall dwell hereafter! Press forward for more of this sight of Christ. Get your eyes clear, and God grant that you may continue to see Him and only Him.

If any here have never seen Jesus, let me remind them of this one text, "Like as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." To believe on Him is to trust Him. If you trust

Him, you shall have everlasting life, but if you trust not in Jesus Christ, you shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on you! May these words never be forgotten by you till you have, by His Grace, looked to Christ. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 110:1-7; HEBREWS 7:1-14.**

Verse 1. *The LORD said unto my Lord. Or Jehovah said unto my Adonai.*

1, 2. *Sit You at My right hand, until I make Your enemies Your footstool. The LORD shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion: rule You in the midst of Your enemies.* This is the Messiah, this is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews, the King of Kings, and the Lord of Lords. Where are His subjects?

3. *Your people shall be willing in the day of Your power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: You have the dew of Your youth.* A willing people shall make up the forces of this great King—and upon them the freshness of the morning shall rest!

4. *The LORD has sworn, and will not repent, You are a Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.* King and Priest. None other of the house of David save our Lord Jesus Christ could claim the union of these two offices. In Christ we have a King and a Priest, as also with Melchizedek of old, a great type of Jesus.

5-7. *The Lord at Your right hand, shall strike through kings in the day of His wrath. He shall judge among the heathen, He shall fill the places with dead bodies; He shall wound the heads over many countries. He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall He lift up the head.* This conqueror shall be refreshed in His journey; therefore shall He lift up the head.

HEBREWS 7:1-14.

Verse 1, 2. *For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him: To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of Righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of Peace.* His very names being instructive, Righteousness first, and Peace afterwards, as it is with our Divine Lord who has brought in everlasting righteousness, and speaks peace to guilty men!

3. *Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abides a priest continually.* Melchisedec just passed across the page—he has no predecessor, he has no successor. We see him in Scripture and we know nothing of his descent. We know nothing of his death. We only know that he was a priest of the Most High God—and this very silence about him is

highly significant and instructive—for in this he is “like unto the Son of God, who abides a priest continually.” Now consider who this great man was, unto whom even “the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth part of his spoil.” If Abraham, the father of the faithful, the friend of God, paid tribute to him, how great must he have been, how high his office!

5-7. *And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham. But he whose descent is not counted from them receive tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises. And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better.* Therefore, Abraham was less than Melchisedec—he could not bless Melchisedec, but Melchisedec could bless him. How great, then, was he. How far greater still is that Lord of ours of whom Melchisedec was but a type!

8-10. *And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receives them of whom it is witnessed that he lives. And as I may so say, Levi also, who receives tithes, paid tithes in Abraham, for he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him.* Thus the old priesthood, the Levitical and Aaronic priesthood, did homage unto the Melchisedec priesthood, which is still greater!

11. *If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?* We read in the Psalm just now, “You are a Priest forever after the order of Melchisedec,” which proves that the priests of the order of Levi were not sufficient—there was need of a still greater priesthood.

12. *For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.* The law of the priesthood alters, since the person of the priest, the character of the priest, and the very office of the priest had altered too.

13. *For He of whom these things are spoken pertains to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar.* According to the belief of the Jewish people, the Messiah was to come of the tribe of Judah, yet none of the house of David or of the tribe of Judah ever presumed to present themselves as priests of the order of God.

14. *For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah; of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood.* So there was an entire change of the priesthood and of the law of priests.

—Adapted from the C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

LIFE IN CHRIST

NO. 968

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 1, 1871,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Because I live, you shall live also.”
John 14:19.***

This world saw our Lord Jesus for a very little time, but now it sees Him no more. It only saw Him with the outward eye and after a carnal sort, so that when the clouds received Him and concealed Him from bodily vision, this spiritually blind world lost sight of Him altogether. Here and there, however, among the crowds of the sightless there were a few chosen men who had received spiritual sight—Christ had been Light to them—He had opened their blind eyes, and they had seen Him as the world had not seen Him. In a high and full sense they could say, “We have seen the Lord,” for they had in some degree perceived His Godhead, discerned His mission, and learned His spiritual Character. Since spiritual sight does not depend upon the bodily presence of its object, those persons who had seen Jesus spiritually, saw Him after He had gone out of the world unto the Father.

We who have the same sight still see Him. Read carefully the words of the verse before us—“Yet a little while, and the world sees me no more. But you see me.” It is a distinguishing mark of a true follower of Jesus that he sees his Lord and Master when He is not to be seen by the bodily eye. He sees Him intelligently and spiritually. He knows his Lord, discerns His Character, apprehends Him by faith, gazes upon Him with admiration, and looks to Him for all he needs.

Now, my Brethren, remember that as our first sight of Christ brought us into spiritual life, for we looked unto Him and were saved, so it is by the continuance of this spiritual sight of Christ that our spiritual life is consciously maintained. We lived by *looking*, we *still* live by looking. *Faith* is still the medium by which life comes to us from the life-giving Lord. It is not only upon the first day of the Christian's life that he must look to Jesus only, but every day of that life, even until the last—his motto must be, “Looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith.”

The world sees Him no more, for it never saw Him aright. But you have seen Him and lived, and now, through continuing still to see Him, you remain in life. Let us always remember the intimate connection between faith and spiritual life. Faith is the life-look. We must never think that we live by *works*, by *feelings*, or by *ceremonies*. “The just shall live by faith.” We dare not preach to the ungodly sinner a way of obtaining life by the works of the Law, neither dare we hold up to the most advanced Believer a way of sustaining life by legal means. We should, in such a case, expect to hear the Apostle's exhortation, “Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now made perfect by the flesh?”

Our glorying is that our life is not dependent on *ourselves*, but is safe in our Lord, as says the Apostle, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live. Yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." Because He lives, we live, and shall live forever. God grant that our eyes may always be clear towards Jesus, our Life. May we have no confidence but in our Redeemer. May our eyes be so fixed upon Him that no other object may in any measure or degree shut out our view of Him as our All in All.

The text contains in it very much of the weighty Truths of God—far more than we shall be able to bring forth from it this morning. First, we see in it a *life*. Secondly, that *life preserved*. And thirdly, *the reason for the preservation of that life*—"Because I live, you shall live also."

I. First, we have LIFE here spoken of. We must not confuse this with *existence*. It were, indeed, to reduce a very rich text to a poverty-stricken sentence if we read it, "Because I exist, you shall exist also." We could not say of such a use of words that the water of ordinary speech was turned to wine, but rather that the wine was turned to water. *Before* the disciples believed in Jesus they *existed*, and altogether apart from Him as their spiritual life their existence would have been continued. It was something far other and higher than immortal *existence* which our Lord was here dealing with.

Life, what is it? We know practically, but we cannot tell in words. We know it, however, to be a mystery of different degrees. As all flesh is not the same flesh, so all life is not the same life. There is the life of the vegetable, the cedar of Lebanon, the hyssop on the wall. There is a considerable different meaning when we come to animal life—the eagle or the ox. Animal life moves in quite a different world from that in which the plant vegetates—sensation, appetite, instinct are things to which plants are dead, though they may possess some imitation of them, for one life mimics another. Animal life rises far above the experience and apprehension of the flower of the field.

Then there is mental life, which all of us possess. This introduces us into quite another realm from that which is inhabited by the mere beast. To judge, to foresee, to imagine, to invent, to perform moral acts—are not these functions which the ox has not? Now, let it be clear to you, that far above *mental* life there is another form of life of which the mere carnal man can form no more idea than the plant of the animal, or the animal of the poet. The carnal mind knows not spiritual things because it has no spiritual capacities. As the beast cannot comprehend the pursuits of the philosopher, so the man who is but a natural man cannot comprehend the experience of the spiritually minded. Thus says the Scripture—"The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him. Neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is judged of no man."

There is in Believers a life which is not to be found in other men—nobler, far more Divine—education cannot raise the natural man into it, neither can refinement reach it. For at its best, "that which is born of the

flesh is flesh,” and to all must the humbling Truth of God be spoken, “You must be born again.”

It is to be remarked concerning our life in Christ that it is the removal of the penalty which fell upon our race for Adam’s sin. “In the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die,” was the Lord’s threat to our first parent, who was the representative of the race. He did eat of that fruit. And since God is true and His Word never fails, we may be sure of this—that in that same day Adam died. It is true that he did not cease to *exist*, but that is quite another thing from dying. The threat was not that he should *ultimately* die, but, “In the day you eat thereof you shall surely die.” And it is beyond all doubt that the Lord kept His Word to the letter.

If the first threat were not carried out we might take liberty to trifle with all others. Rest assured, then, that the threat was fulfilled on the spot. The *spiritual* life departed from Adam. He was no longer at one with God, no more able to live and breathe in the same sphere as the Lord. He fell from his first estate. He had need, if he should enter into spiritual life, to be born again, even as you and I must be. As he hides himself from his Maker and utters vain excuses before his God, you see that he is dead to the life of God—dead in trespasses and sins. We also, being heirs of wrath even as others, are, through the Fall, are dead—dead in trespasses and sins. And if ever we are to possess spiritual life, it must be said of us, “And you has He quickened.”

We must be as “those that are alive from the dead.” The world is the valley of dry bones, and Divine Grace raises the chosen into newness of life. The Fall brought universal death, in the deep spiritual sense of that word, over all mankind. But Jesus delivers us from the consequences of the Fall by implanting in us a spiritual life. By no other means can this death be removed—“He that believes on the Son has everlasting life: and they that believe not the Son shall not see life. But the wrath of God abides on him.” The work of regeneration, in which the new life is implanted, effectually restores the ruin of the Fall, for we are born again, “not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which lives and abides forever.”

But you remind me that sin still remains in us after we have received the Divine life. I know it does, and it is called “the body of this death.” And this it is which the new life has to struggle with. There is a contention which rages within—between the power of the *death* in the first Adam—and the power of the *life* of the second Adam. But the heavenly life will ultimately overcome the deadly energy of sin. Even today our inner life groans after deliverance, but with its groan of, “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” it mingles the thankful song, “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

This life is of a purely spiritual kind. We find analogies and resemblances of it in the common mental life, but they are only analogies—the spiritual life is far above the carnal life. There are scarcely words in which it can be described. To know this life you must *have* it. It must pulsate within your own bosom, for no explanations of others can tell you what this life is. It is one of the secrets of the Lord. It would not be possible for

us, with the greatest skill, to communicate to a horse, to explain any conception of what imagination is to him.

Neither could we, by the most diligent use of words, communicate to carnal minds what it is to be joined unto the Lord so as to be one spirit. One thing we know, namely, that the spiritual life is intimately connected with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the soul. When He comes we are “born again from above,” “born of the Spirit.” While He works in us mightily, our life is active and powerful. If He withdraws His active operations, our new life becomes faint and sickly. Christ is our life, but He works in us through His Holy Spirit, who dwells in us forevermore.

Further, we know that this life very much consists in union with God. “For to be carnally minded is death. But to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither, indeed, can be. So then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God.” Death as to the body consists in the body being separated from the soul. The death of the soul lies mainly in the soul’s being separated from its God. For the soul to be in union with God is the soul’s highest life. In His Presence it unfolds itself like an opening flower. Away from Him it pines and loses all its beauty and excellence till it becomes as a thing destroyed. Let the soul obey God—let it be holy, pure, gracious—then is it happy, and truly living.

But a soul separated from God is a soul blasted, killed, destroyed. It exists in a dreadful death. All its true peace, dignity, and glory are gone. It is a hideous ruin—the mere corpse of manhood. The new life brings us near to God, makes us think of Him, makes us love Him, and ultimately makes us like He is. My Brethren, it is in proportion as you get near to God that you enter into the full enjoyment of life—that life which Jesus Christ gives you—and which Jesus Christ preserves in you. “In His favor is life” (Psa. 30:5). “The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life” (Prov. 14:27).

To turn to God is “repentance unto life.” To forget God is for a man to be “dead while he lives.” To believe the witness of God is to possess the faith which overcomes the world. “He that believes on the Son of God has the witness in himself: he that believes not God has made Him a liar, because he believes not the record that God gave of His Son. And this is the record, that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that has the Son has life. And he that has not the Son of God has not life.”

This life within the soul bears fruit on earth in righteousness and true holiness. It blooms with sweetest flowers of fellowship with God below, and it is made perfect in the Presence of God in Heaven. The life of glorified spirits above is but the life of justified men here below. It is the same life, only it is delivered from encumbrances and has come to the fullness of its strength. The life of Heaven is in every Believer even now. The moment a sinner believes in Jesus he receives from God that selfsame life which shall look down serenely upon the conflagration of earth, and the passing away of these lower skies.

Blessed is that man who has everlasting life—who is made a partaker of the Divine nature—who is born again from above! Blessed is he who is born of God by a seed which remains in him, for he is the man upon whom the second death has no power! He shall enjoy life eternal when the

wicked go away into everlasting punishment. Thus much concerning this life.

We have now to ask each of you whether you have received it. Have you been born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God? Was there a time with you when you passed from death unto life, or are you abiding in death? Have you the witness in yourself that you have been operated upon by a Divinely spiritual power? Is there something in you which was not once there—not a faculty developed by education—but a life implanted by God Himself? Do you feel an inward craving unknown to carnal minds, a longing desire which this world could neither excite nor gratify? Is there a strange tenant within that body of yours, a prince incognito, an exiled spirit sighing for a land as yet unseen—of which it is a native, and for which it yearns?

Do you walk among the sons of men as a being of another race, not of the world, even as Christ was not of the world? Can you say with the favored Apostle, “We know that the Son of God is come, and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son, Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.” Oh, then, thank God for this, and thank God yet more that you have an infallible guarantee that your life shall be continued and perfected, for so says the text, “Because I live, you shall live also.”

II. Our second head treats of life preserved. “Because I live, you shall live also.” There stands the promise, “*You shall live also.*” This heavenly life of yours which you have received shall be preserved to you. Concerning this sentence let me draw your attention, first of all, to its *fullness*—“You shall live.”

I think I see in that much more than lies upon the surface. Whatever is meant by *living* shall be ours. All the degree of life which is secured in the Covenant of Grace, believers shall have. Moreover, all your new nature shall live—shall thoroughly live—shall *eternally* live. By this Word it is secured that the eternal life implanted at regeneration shall never die out. As our Lord said, so shall it be, “Whosoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst. But the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” We may be tempted, but we shall not be so led astray as to cease to live in Christ.

It may be that we shall decline in Divine Grace—a thousand sorrows that it should be so! But we shall not so decline as to become utter apostates, or sons of perdition. “He that is begotten of God keeps himself, and that Wicked One touches him not.” Thus says the Redeemer unto you, you trembling children of God! “You shall live,” you shall never perish—neither shall any pluck you out of His hands. May I not view this precious Word as referring to all the essential spiritual Graces which make up the new man? Not even, in *part*, shall the new man die. “You shall live,” applies to all the parts of our new-born nature.

If there is any Believer here who has not lived to the full extent he might have done, let him lay hold upon this promise. And seeing that it secures the preservation of all his new nature, let him have courage to seek a higher degree of health. “I am come,” says Christ, “that you might have life, and have it more abundantly.” There is no reason, Christian,

why your love to Jesus should not become flaming, ardent, conquering! For it LIVES, and ever must live!

As to your faith, it, also, has immortal vitality in it. And though it is just now weak, and staggering—lift up the hands that hang down and confirm the feeble knees—for your faith shall not die out! Here in your Lord's promise: the abiding nature of the vital faculties of your spirit is guaranteed. There is no stint to the fullness of life which is given you in Christ Jesus. I know not who shall tell me what it must be to live in all the fullness of Christian life. Beneath the skies I would labor to attain it, but herein is my joy—that it shall be most surely mine, for His Word is faithful and true.

As surely as I have this day eternal life by reason of faith in Christ Jesus, so surely shall I reach its fullness when Christ, who is my Life, shall appear. Even here on earth I have the permit to seek for the fullest development of this life! No, I have a precept in this promise *bidding* me to seek after it. "You shall live," means that the new life shall not be destroyed—no, not as to any of its essentials. All the members of the spiritual man shall be safe. We may say of it as of the Lord Himself, "Not a bone of Him shall be broken."

The shield of Christ's own life covers all the faculties of our spiritual nature. We shall not enter into life lame or maimed. He will present us faultless before the Presence of His Glory, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, much less any dead limbs or decayed faculties. It is a grand promise and covers the spiritual nature as with the wings of God—so that we may apply to it the words of David, in the ninety-first Psalm:

"Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings shall you trust: His Truth shall be your shield and buckler. You shall not be afraid for the terror by night, nor for the arrow that flies by day. Nor for the pestilence that walks in darkness. Nor for the destruction that wastes at noonday. A thousand shall fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand. But it shall not come near you."

The text secures that the death penalty of the Law shall never fall upon Believers. The quickened man shall never fall back into the old death from which he has escaped. He shall not be numbered with the dead, and condemned either in this life or the next. Never shall the spiritually living become again dead in sin. As Jesus, being raised from the dead dies no more, death has no more dominion over Him. Even so sin shall not have dominion over us again. Once, through the offense of one, death reigned in us. But now having received abundance of Grace and of the gift of righteousness, we shall reign in life by one, Christ Jesus—Romans 5:17. "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Rom. 5:10).

We are united to Christ this day by bands of spiritual life which neither things present nor things to come can separate. Our union to Jesus is *eternal*. It may be assailed. But it shall never be destroyed. The old body of this death may for awhile prevail, and like Herod it may seek the young child's life, but it cannot die. Who shall condemn to death that which is

not under the Law? Who shall slay that which abides under the shadow of the Almighty? Even as sin reigned unto death, even so must Divine Grace reign unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

Notice carefully the continuance insisted upon in this verse. Continuance is, indeed, the main element of this promise—"You shall live." It means, certainly, that during our abode in this body we shall live. We shall not be again reduced to our death-state during our sojourn here. Ten thousand attempts will be made to bring us under dominion to the Law of sin and death—but this one Word baffles all. Your soul may be so assailed that it shall seem as if you could not keep your hold on Christ—but Christ shall keep *His* hold on *you*.

The incorruptible seed may be crushed, bruised, buried, but the life within it shall not be extinguished, it shall yet arise. "You shall live." When you see all around you ten thousand elements of death, think, Believers, how grand is this Word of God, "You shall live." No falling from Grace for you! No being cast out of the Covenant! No being driven from the Father's house and left to perish. "You shall live"!

Nor is this all, for when the natural death comes—which indeed to us is no longer death—our inner life shall suffer no hurt whatever. It will not even be suspended for a moment. It is not a thing which can be touched by death. The shafts of the last enemy can have no more effect upon the spiritual than a javelin upon a cloud. Even in the very crisis, when the soul is separated from the body, no damage shall be done to the spiritual nature. And in the awful *future*, when the Judgment comes, when the thrones are set—and the multitudes are gathered, and to the right the righteous, and to the left the wicked—let what may of terror and of horror come forth, the begotten of God shall live!

Onward through eternity, whatever may be the changes which yet are to be disclosed, nothing shall affect our God-given life. Like the life of God Himself—eternal, and ever-blessed, it shall continue. Should everything else be swept away, the righteous must live on! I mean not, merely, that they shall *exist*—but they shall *live* in all the fullness of that far-reaching, much-comprehending word "life." Bearing the Nature of God as far as the creature can participate in it, the begotten from the dead shall prove the sureness of the promise, "You shall live."

Let me further call to your notice that the fact here stated is universal in application to all spiritual life. The promise is, "You shall live," that is to say, every child of God shall live. Everyone who sees Christ, as the world sees Him not, is living and shall live. I can understand such a promise given to eminent saints who live near to God, but my soul would prostrate herself before the Throne in reverent loving wonder when she hears this word spoken to the very least and meanest of the saints, "You shall live."

You are not exempted, you whose faith is but as a smoking flax—you shall live! The Lord bestows security upon the least of His people as well as upon the greatest. It is plain that the reason given for the preservation of the new life is as applicable to one saint as to another. If it had been said, "Because your faith is strong, you shall live," then weak faith would have perished. But when it is written, "Because I live," the argument is as powerful in the one case as in the other. Take it home to yourself, my

Brothers and Sisters—however heavy your heart, or dim your hope—Jesus lives! And you shall live!

Note, yet again, that this text is exceedingly broad. Mark its *breadth* and see how it meets everything to the contrary, and overturns all the hopes of the Adversary. “You shall live.” Then the inbred corruption which rises within us shall not stifle the new creature. Chained as the spirit seems to be to the loathsome and corrupt body of this death, it shall live in spite of its hideous companionship. Though besetting sins may be as arrows, and fleshly lusts like drawn swords, yet Grace shall not be slain. Neither the fever of hasty passion, nor the palsy of timorousness, nor the leprosy of covetousness, nor any other disease of sin shall so break forth in the old nature as to destroy the new. Nor shall outward circumstances overthrow the inner life. “For He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. They shall bear you up in their hands, lest you dash your foot against a stone.”

If Providence should cast you into a godless family where you dwell as in a sepulcher, and the air you breathe is laden with the fog of death, yet shall you live! Evil example shall not poison your spirit—you shall drink this deadly thing and it shall not hurt you. You shall be kept from giving way to evil. You shall not be decoyed by fair temptation. You shall not be cowed by fierce persecution—mightier is He that is in you than he which is in the world. Satan will attack you, and his weapons are deadly, but you shall foil him at all points. To you is it given to tread upon the lion and adder, the young lion and the dragon shall you trample under foot. If God should allow you. for a while. to be sorely tried, as He did His servant Job, and if the devil should have all the world to help him in his attempt to destroy your spiritual life—yet even on the dunghill of poverty, and in the wretchedness of sickness, your spirit shall still maintain its holy life—and you shall prove it so by blessing and magnifying God, notwithstanding all!

We little dream what may be reserved for us. We may have to climb steps of prosperity, slippery and dangerous, but we shall live! We may be called to sink in the dark waters of adversity. All God’s waves and billows may go over us, but we shall live! We may traverse pestilent swamps of error, or burning deserts of unbelief, but the Divine life shall live amid the domains of death. Let the future be bright or black, we need not wish to turn the page. That which we prize best, namely, our spiritual life, is hid with Christ in God, beyond the reach of harm, and we shall live! If old age shall be our portion, and our crown shall be delayed till we have fought a long and weary battle—nevertheless we shall live. Or if sudden death should cut short the time of our trial here, yet we shall have lived in the fullness of this word.

III. Our third point—the *reason* for the security of the spiritual life. The reason assigned is this, “Because I live, you shall live also.” Christ has life, essentially, as God. Christ, as Man, having fulfilled His life-work, having offered full Atonement for human sin, dies no more. Death has no more dominion over Him. His life is communicated to us, and becomes the guarantee to us that we shall live also.

Observe, first, that this is the *sole reason* of the Believer's spiritual life. "Because I live, you shall live also." The means by which the soul is pardoned is found in the precious blood of Jesus. The cause of its obtaining spiritual life at first is found in Christ's finished work. And the only reason why the Christian continues to live after he is quickened, lies in Jesus Christ, who lives and was dead and is alive forevermore. When I first come to Christ, I know I must find all in Him, for I feel I have nothing of my own. But all my life long I am to acknowledge the same absolute dependence. I am still to look for everything to Him. "I am the vine, you are the branches: he that abides in Me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit: for without Me you can do nothing."

The temptation is after we have looked to Jesus and found life there, to fancy that in future time we are to sustain ourselves in spiritual existence by some means within *ourselves*, or by supplies extra and apart from Christ. But it must not be so—all for the future as well as all for the past is wrapped up in the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus. Because He died, you are pardoned. Because He lives, you live. All your life still lies in Him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Does not the Christian's life depend upon his prayerfulness? Could he be a Christian if he ceased to pray?

We reply, the Christian's spiritual health depends upon his prayerfulness, but that prayerfulness depends on something else. The reason why the hands of the clock move may be found, first, in a certain wheel which operates upon them, but if you go to the primary cause of all, you reach the main-spring, or the weight, which is the source of all the motion. Many secondary causes tend to sustain spiritual life. But the *primary* cause, the first and foremost, is because Jesus Christ lives. "All my fresh springs are in You."

While Jesus lives, He sends the Spirit. The Spirit being sent, we pray. Our prayer becomes the evidence of our spiritual life. "But are not good works essential to the maintenance of the spiritual life?" Certainly, if there are no good works, we have no evidence of spiritual life. In its season the tree must bring forth its fruit and its leaves. If there is no outward sign, we suspect that there is no motion of the sap within. Still, to the tree, the fruit is not the *cause* of life, but the *result* of it. And to the life of the Christian, good works bear the same relationship—they are its outgrowth—not its root.

If, then, my spiritual life is low, what am I to look to? I am *not* to look to my prayers! I am *not* to find comfort in my works! I may from these discover how declining I am—but if I want my life to be renovated, I must fly to the Fountain of my life—Jesus Christ—for there, and there only, shall I find restoration! Do let us remember this—that we are not saved because of anything that *we are*, or anything that *we do*. And we do not remain saved because of anything we are or can be. A man is saved because *Christ died for him*. He continues saved because *Christ lives for him*. The sole reason why the spiritual life abides is because Jesus lives.

This is to get upon a rock, above the fogs which cover all things down below. If my life rests on something within *me*, then today I live, and tomorrow I die. But if my spiritual life rests in Christ, then in my dark

frames—yes, and when sin has most raged against my spirit—still I live in the ever-living One, whose life never changes.

Secondly, it is a *sufficient* cause for our life. “Because I live, you shall live also.” It must be enough to make Believers live that Christ lives. For first, Christ’s life is a proof that His work has accomplished the absolution of His people from their sins. He would have been in the tomb to this hour had He not made a complete satisfaction for their sins. His rising again from the dead is the testimony of God that He has accepted the Atonement of His dear Son. His resurrection is our full acquittal.

Then if the living Christ is our acquittal, how can God condemn us to die for sins which He has, by the fact of Christ’s resurrection, declared to be forever blotted out? If Jesus lives, how can we die? Shall there be two deaths for one sin—the death of Christ and the death of those for whom He died? God forbid that there should be any such injustice with the Most High! The very fact that Jesus lives proves that our sin has been atoned for, that we are absolved, and therefore, cannot die.

Jesus is the representative of those for whom He is the federal Head. Shall the representative live, and yet those represented, die? How shall the living represent the dead? But in His life I see my own life, for as Levi was in the loins of Abraham, so is every saint in the loins of Christ—and the life of Christ is representatively the life of all His people.

Moreover, He is the Surety for His people. He is under bonds and pledges to bring His redeemed safely home. His own declaration is, “I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hands.” Will He break His Covenant bonds? Shall His Suretyship be cast to the winds? It cannot be. The fact that Jesus lives guarantees our life to all eternity. Remember, that if any of His people for whom He died, to whom He has given spiritual life—should after all die—Christ would be disappointed of His intent, which supposition involves the grossest blasphemy.

What He came to do, He will do. As many as His Father gave Him, so many shall He have for His reward. The purchase-price shall not be given in vain. A Redemption so marvelous as that which He has presented upon the Cross shall never in any degree become a failure. His life, which proves His labor to be over, guarantees to Himself His reward, and that is to be found in the salvation of His people. Know you not, my Brethren, that if one of those to whom Christ has given spiritual life should, after all, fall and die, it would argue either that He had a want of power to keep them, or a want of will to do so?

Shall we conceive Him to be devoid of power? Then how is He the mighty God? Is He devoid of will to keep His people—is that conceivable? Cast out the traitorous thought! He must be as willing as He is able, and as able as He is willing. While He was in the world He kept His people. Having loved His own, He loved them to the end. He is “the same yesterday, today, and forever.” He will not suffer one of these little ones to perish.

Remember, and this, perhaps, will cheer you most of all—that all who have spiritual life are one with Christ Jesus. Jesus is the Head of the mystical body, they are the members. Suppose one of the members of the

mystical body of Christ should die, then from that moment—with reverence it is spoken—Christ is not a complete Christ. What were the head without the body? A most ghastly sight! What were the head with only a part of the members? Certainly not perfect. There must be every member present to make a complete body.

Therefore we gather that you, Brother, though you think yourself the meanest part of the body, are, nevertheless essential to its perfection. And you, Sister, though you fancy yourself to be one of the uncomely portions of the body, yet you must be there, or else the body cannot be perfect, and Christ cannot be a complete Christ. From Him, the Head, the life streams into all the members—and while that Head lives as a perfect Head of a perfect body—all the members must live also. As we have often said, as long as a man's head is above water you cannot drown his limbs.

As long as our Head is above the reach of spiritual death we, also, are the same—no weapons can hurt, no poison can destroy, not all Hell's fires could burn, nor all earth's floods could drown, the spiritual life within us—it must be safe because it is indissolubly one with Jesus Christ the Lord. What comfort, then, lies in this, the sole but sufficient reason for the *eternal* maintenance of the new-born life within us—"Because I live, you shall live also."

And let it be remembered that this reason is an *abiding* reason—"Because I live, you shall live also"—a reason which has as much force at one time as another. From causes variable the effects are variable. But remaining causes produce permanent effects. Jesus *always* lives. Yesterday, dear Brothers and Sisters, you were exalted in fellowship with Him, and stood upon the mountaintop. Then your hearts were glad, and your spirits rejoiced, and you could say, "We live in Christ."

Today darkness has intervened, you do not feel the motions of the inner life as you did yesterday, but do not, therefore, conclude that the life is not there. What is to be your sign—what is to be the rainbow of the Covenant to you? Why, that Jesus lives! Do you doubt that He lives? You dare not! You trust Him. Doubt not, then, that you live—for *your* life is as sure as His. Believe, also, that you *shall* live—for that, also, is as sure as the fact that He lives. God gave to Noah a token that He would not destroy the earth—it was the rainbow—but the rainbow is not often seen. There are peculiar circumstances before the bow is placed in the cloud.

You, Brothers and Sisters—you have a token of God's Covenant given you in the text which can *always* be seen. Neither sun nor shower are necessary for its appearance. The living Christ is the token that you live, too. God gave to David the token of the sun and the moon. He said if the ordinances of day and night should be changed, then would He cast off the seed of David. There are times when neither sun nor moon appear—but your token is plain when these are hidden. Christ at all times lives. When you are lowest, when you cannot pray, when you can hardly groan, when you do not seem to have spiritual life enough even to heave a desire—still, if you cling to Jesus, this life is as surely in you as there is life in Christ Himself at the right hand of the Father.

And lastly, it is a most *instructive* cause. It instructs us in many ways—let us hint at three. It instructs us to admire the condescension of Christ.

Look at the two pronouns, “you,” and “I.” Shall they ever come into contact? Yes, here they stand in close connection with each other. “I”—the AM! The Infinite! “You,” the creatures of an hour. Yet I, the Infinite, come into union with you, the finite. I, the Eternal, take you, the fleeting, and I make you live because I live. What? Is there such a bond between me and Christ? Is there such a link between His life and mine? Blessed be His name! Adored be His infinite condescension!

It demands of us, next, abundance of gratitude. Apart from Christ we are dead in trespasses and sins. Look at the depth of our degradation! But in Christ we LIVE! Live with His own life. Look at the height of our exaltation, and let our thankfulness be proportioned to this infinity of mercy. Measure, if you can, from the lowest Hell to the highest Heaven—and so great let your thankfulness be to Him who has lifted you from death to life. Let the last lesson be your seeing the all-importance of close communion with Jesus. Union with Christ makes you live! Keep up your enjoyment of that union, that you may clearly perceive and enjoy your life.

Begin this year with the prayer, “Nearer to You, my Lord, nearer to You.” Think much of the spiritual life and less of this poor carnal life which will so soon be over. Go to the Source of Life for an increase of spiritual life. Go to Jesus. Think of Him more than you have done! Pray to Him more. Use His name more believingly in your supplications. Serve Him better, and seek to grow into His likeness in all things. Make an advance this year. Life is a *growing* thing. Your life only grows by getting nearer to Christ—therefore get under the beams of the Sun of Righteousness.

Time brings you nearer to Him—you will soon be where He is in Heaven. Let Grace bring you nearer, also. You taste more of His love as fresh mercies come. Give Him more of your love, more of your fellowship. Abide in Him, and may His Word abide in you from now on and forever, and all shall be to His glory. Amen.

Portion of Scripture read before Sermon—Colossians 3

Adapted from *The C.H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

CHRIST MANIFESTING HIMSELF TO HIS PEOPLE NO. 29

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JUNE 10, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL.**

***“Judas said unto Him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that You
will manifest Yourself unto us and not unto the world?”
John 14:22.***

WHAT a blessed Master Jesus Christ was! How familiar did He allow His disciples to make themselves with Him! Though He was the Lord of Life and Glory, the Great and Mighty One, as well as the Man of Nazareth, yet see how He talks with His poor disciples, the fishermen, just as if He had been one of the same class and order with themselves! He was none of your dignitaries who pride themselves on that dignity—none of those ecclesiastics who love to carry much of formality about them and to walk above other men—as if they were not, indeed, their fellows. But He talks to His disciples just as a father would to his children—even more kindly than a master might to his pupils. He lets them put the simplest questions to Him and, instead of rebuking them for their familiarity, He condescends to answer everything they please to ask Him! Philip uttered a sentence which one would think no sensible man who had been so long a time with Jesus ever could have troubled Him with. He said, “Show us the Father and it suffices us.” A stupid idea! As if Jesus Christ could show the Father—that is to say, could show God to Philip! And Jesus kindly answered—“Have you been so long a time with Me and yet have you not known Me, Philip? Believe you not that I am in the Father and the Father in Me? He that has seen Me has seen the Father.” And now comes Judas (not Iscariot). And he, also, puts a very simple and easy question—one he needed not to have asked. But Jesus Christ, instead of rebuking him, simply passes on to another subject and forbears most wisely to answer the enquiry because He would teach him more by silence than He could do by an explanation. We must also notice here how very particular the Holy Spirit is that a good man should not be confounded with a bad one. He says, “Judas, not Iscariot.” There were two of the name of Judas. The one who betrayed our Lord and the other who wrote the Epistle of Jude, who should properly have been called Judas.

Some of us, in reading the name, Judas, might have said, “Ah, it was that traitor Judas Iscariot that asked the question.” But the Holy Spirit would not allow this mistake to be made. This, again, should teach us that it is not an idle wish for us to desire that our name should be handed down to posterity. We ought all to wish to have an unblemished character. We ought to desire to have that promise fulfilled, “The memory of the just is blessed.” I would not wish my name to be mistaken for that of some criminal who was hanged. I would not wish to have my name written, even by mistake, in the calendar of infamy. However much I may now be misrepresented, it will one day be known that I have honestly strived for the Glory of my Master. And God will say, “Judas, not Iscariot.” The man was no deceiver after all.

But we will now forsake Judas altogether and proceed to look at our text. It contains two things—first, *an important fact*. Secondly, *an interesting enquiry*. “Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself unto us and not unto the world?” Here is a fact and an enquiry concerning it.

I. First, then, here is A GREAT FACT—that Jesus Christ does reveal Himself to His people, but He does not unto the world! The fact is implied in the question. And even if Scripture did not declare it to be the Truth, there are many of us who have a Scripture written in our hearts—the Bible of *experience*—which teaches us that it is true. Ask Christians whether they have not had manifestations of their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, in a peculiar and wonderful manner, such as they never felt when they were in their unregenerate state. Turn to the biographies of eminent saints and you will find, there, instances recorded in which Jesus has been pleased, in a very special manner, to speak to their souls, to unfold the wonders of His Person and let them discern the matchless glories of His office! Yes, so have their souls been steeped in happiness that they have thought themselves to be in Heaven? Although they were not there, they were well near on the threshold of it—for when Jesus manifests Himself to His people, it is a young Heaven on earth, it is a Paradise in embryo, it is the beginning of the bliss of the glorified! Yes and it shall be the consummation of that bliss when Jesus Christ shall perfectly unveil Himself to the admiring eyes of all His people and they shall be like He and shall see Him as He is! We are about to talk somewhat, this morning, then, concerning that special manifestation which Jesus Christ vouchsafes to His people and to His people, only. We will make four observations here. We will observe, first, something concerning the favored persons—“unto *us*, not unto the world.” Secondly, concerning special seasons—“How is it that You *will*?” He was not doing it just then. But, “You will.” There are special seasons. Thirdly, some remarks con-

cerning the wonderful display—"You will manifest *Yourself* unto us, as You do not unto the world." Then, fourthly, we shall dwell a little upon *the effects* which this manifestation will produce upon our souls.

1. First, then, who are the favored people to whom Jesus Christ manifests Himself? "How is it that You will manifest Yourself unto *us* and not unto the world?" It appears from the text that the persons to whom Jesus Christ shows Himself in this wonderful manner do not belong to the world. Who, then, are these people? I am sure it would be difficult for you or me to discover them. I shall, therefore, this morning, employ a fiction and shall bid some spirit from an unknown world point out these distinguished individuals. O Spirit! I give you an errand. There are a certain number of people *in* this world who are not *of* it—go, search them out and come back and tell me what you have found. We give the spirit time. He flies round the world and he returns. "I have seen," says he, "a multitude of men. They are all pursuing one common path. With one objective I have seen them trampling on each other in the fury of their hot pursuit. I have seen them hurrying after something which each one desired for himself—but in the midst of the throng I saw a few marching in the opposite direction. They, with much elbowing and strong opposition were going exactly contrary to the stream! I saw written on the foreheads of those who were proceeding with the crowd, the word 'Self.' But I marked those who were proceeding in the other direction and behold, they had inscribed upon their brows, 'Christ.' And as I listened to them frequently in their soliloquies I heard them say, 'For us to live is Christ, for us to die is gain.' I marked these men. I saw them constantly pursuing their way in the teeth of all defiance, going against every opposition. I wondered where they were going. And I saw that before them was a wicket gate and on it the words—'Mercy for the chief of sinners.' I saw them enter there. I marked them as they ran along the walls of salvation. Tracking them along to their destination, I saw them at last fold their arms in death, shut their eyes with tranquility. And I heard angels sing their requiem and a voice shouted, 'Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord.' Surely these must be the persons who are not of the world." You have spoken rightly, O Spirit. These are the individuals. What did you see of them, O Spirit? Did they assemble and congregate together? Or did they mix with the rest of humanity? "Why," he says, "I noticed that once in the week they crowded to a certain place they called the House of God. I heard their songs of praise. I saw them bend their knees in reverence, not only in that house, but in private. I witnessed their groaning, their struggles and their agonies. I knew that they were men of prayer and men that loved God. I saw them gather in secret assemblies to tell what the Lord

had done for their souls. I marked that they would not be found with the wicked. I saw some houses that they would not enter. At the corner of the street there stood a house, well lighted up with many a lamp. And there were on its front some mystic signs, the marks of woe and ill-doings. I saw the wicked there, reeling to and fro. I observed them in their drunkenness. But I marked how the Christian puts up his hand before his eyes and passed by that place. I saw, too, another haunt of Hell, where there were enacted scenes that eyes should not have beheld—where shouts of revelry and mirth, but not songs of holiness, were heard. I looked round that theater and I discerned not a single one of these blessed persons. They would not run in the ways of the wicked, nor sit in the seat of the scorner, nor stand in the council of the unrighteous! I marked that like ‘birds of a feather they would flock together’—that they found their mates and there they went—that they built their nest in the same tree and would make their habitation beneath the same roof. Yes,” said the spirit, “I heard one of them exclaim, ‘He that tells lies shall not abide in my sight.’ I saw him drive the liar from his house and bid the profligate depart from him. I marked them. They were a select and separate people and I said, surely these are the men of whom it is written, ‘They shall dwell alone, they shall not be numbered among the people.’”

Well, Spirit, rightly have you described them. I wonder how many there are here? The men to whom God will reveal Himself and not to the world. They are men who are not worldly in principle, in action, in conversation, in desires, in object, or in end. These are the persons. Do not tell me anything about universal Grace, or universal manifestations! While I have the power I will proclaim Free Grace to peculiar characters, as long as I find it written, “You will manifest Yourself to us, but not to the world.”

Our next remark is concerning *special seasons*. These highly favored men do not always see Jesus Christ alike. They do not always dive in the sunshine of His Countenance. There are special times when God is pleased to reveal Himself to His people. And these seasons are generally of two kinds—times of duty and times of trial. I never found a lazy or indifferent Christian have a manifestation of Jesus Christ. I never heard one who gave himself wholly to business talk much of spiritual manifestations. No, poor Soul, he had got religion enough to save him, but not enough to make him realize the spiritual and special blessings of a Christian! Those who do but little for Christ, Christ does but little for them in the way of special favors. Those who sit down, fold their arms, eat, drink and are satisfied, are not the men who enter into the secret chamber of the Most High and enjoy the Presence of the Almighty! The

men who are the most zealous for their Master discern the most of His loving kindness and enjoy the richest blessings from the Lord. Ask a Christian when he is the happiest—he will say when he works the most. I know *I* am. I have not tried rest yet and no doubt I shall find it anything but rest when I have it. When I pass a *day* without preaching my Master's name I feel that I have not done what I ought to have done and I do not rest satisfied till I am within the four boards of a pulpit again! When we work the hardest, we feel Divine Grace the most plentiful. When we dig the deepest we get the sweetest water. He who toils the most has his bread the most sweetened. And depend upon it—drops of sweat are blessed things to make dry bread go down. We shall always have more happiness, the more we labor for Christ. As for Issachar, who is so strong, crouching down between two burdens—the man who is doing little—the promise is, “A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass and a rod for the fool's back.” The man who is idle must have chastisement. But he who serves his God may rejoice, for God will treat him with dainties. He will give him his portion mixed with honey. He will say, “I have taken your bread and dipped it in My own dish. Take it and eat it, for you are one who works in My own vineyard.” It will be in seasons of duty, or, as I have said, in seasons of trial. And you must not suppose when a Christian is laid aside from duty that he is doing nothing. Do not imagine that the time of your sickness has been lost to you. You were not only profiting yourselves, but actually serving God by your suffering, if you bore it patiently. Don't you know the text—“We fill up that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ, for His body's sake, which is the Church.” Christ's mystical body, you are aware, is made up of the Head and all the members. The Head had a certain amount to suffer—that is all finished. But the *body* has a measured portion to endure also. And the more *you* suffer, so much the less suffering there is for somebody else. There is a certain quantum of trial which the whole Church has to sustain before it gets to Heaven. For as Jesus Christ was afflicted, even so the whole of His people must have fellowship with His sufferings.

There is a cup that is full of mixture and the righteous must drink it. We must all have a sip from it. But if one of us can take a deep draught and do it patiently, there is so much the less for our fellows. Let us not complain, then—for it is in the time of trouble we see most of Jesus. Before Israel fought Amalek, God gave them water from the Rock and sent them manna from Heaven. And before Jacob met Esau, the Angel of God wrestled with him at the brook Jabbok and hosts of angels met him at Mahanaim. Previous to trial you may generally expect a season of joy—and when that season of joy is over, you may say, “We must expect some

danger now, for we have received too much delight.” But when the trial comes, then expect to have delight with it. For our troubles are generally proportioned to our joys and our joys are usually proportioned to our troubles. The more bitter the vessel of grief, the sweeter the cup of consolation. The heavier weight of trial, here, the brighter the crown of glory hereafter! In fact, the same word in Hebrew signifies “weight” and “glory.” A weight of trouble is a glory to a Christian, for it is an honor to him. And glory is a weight, for it often bows him down and makes him lie low at his Master’s feet. I appeal to my Brothers and Sisters and ask them when it is they have seen most of Jesus—when they have been walking in the garden of delights, or when the bitter medicine has been in their mouth? Have you not had better visions of Jesus when you have been racked with pain than when you have been elevated by prosperity? When the barn has been full, the oil vat has been bursting and the wine has been running over, it is often *then* that the sanctuary of God has been forsaken and the cabinet of God’s loving kindness is nearly disregarded. But when the fig tree does not blossom and when there are no herds in the stalls, *then* it is that God often comes nearest to His children and most reveals Himself to them.

2. The next thought is, *the wondrous display, itself*. Jesus Christ manifests *Himself*. There are many manifestations of God to His children, but this is the most precious of all! Some manifestations we never wish to have again. We do not want to have that discovery which we had of our sinfulness, when first we were awakened—we will leave it to God—we will never pray for it. But here is a manifestation we should like to have every day. “I will manifest Myself to him.” He does this in different ways. I have had, for a long while, a manifestation of His sufferings in Gethsemane. I have been for months musing on His agonies. I think I have even eaten the bitter herbs that grow there and drank of that black brook, Kidron. I have sometimes gone up stairs alone, to put myself in the very posture Jesus Christ was in and I thought I could sympathize with Him in His sufferings. I thought I saw the sweat of blood falling down to the ground. I had so sweet a view of my Savior in His agonies, I hope that one day I may be able to accompany Him still further and see Him on Calvary and hear His death shriek “Eli, Eli, lama Sabachthani?” Some of you, I know, have seen Jesus with the eyes of faith quite as plainly as if you had seen Him with your natural eyes. You could see your Savior hanging on the Cross. You thought you saw the very crown of thorns on His head and the drops of blood streaming down His face. You heard His cry. You saw His bleeding side. You beheld the nails and before long you could have gone and pulled them out. You could have wrapped Him up

in linen and spices and carried His body and washed it with tears and anointed it with precious ointment. At other times you have had a manifestation of Christ in His gifts. You have seen that mighty Sacrifice He offered, the pile smoking up to Heaven and all your sins burnt up with it. You have seen clearly the justifying righteousness He has put upon you. And as you have looked at yourselves you have said—

***“Strangely, my Soul, are you arrayed
By the great sacred Three.
In sweetest harmony of praise
Let all my powers agree.”***

There are times when you have felt much joy at the exaltation of Jesus Christ as displayed in His gifts.

Then, again, you will see Him in His triumph, with one foot upon Satan and the other upon death. You will be able to behold Him marching up the sky with all the glittering hosts behind Him. And in due time you will have a manifestation of Him to your soul, as sitting on His Father's Throne until His enemies are made His footstool. And faith will sometimes so outsoar the wings of time that we can bring futurity to the present and see that great and pompous appearance when, on the Great White Throne, the King shall sit and grasp His scepter and when His saints before Him shall shout His praise! If I were to go much farther, I should be accused of fanaticism and so it may be. But yet I will believe and must believe that there are seasons when the Christian lives next door to Heaven. If I have not gone within an inch of the pearly gates, I am not here! If I have not sometimes snuffed the incense from the censers of the glorified and heard the music of their harps, I think I am not a living man! There have been seasons of ecstatic joy, when I have climbed the highest mountains and I have caught some sweet whisper from the Throne of God. Have you had such manifestations? I will not condemn you if you have not—but I believe most Christians have them and if they are much in duty and much in suffering they *will* have them. It is not given to all to have that portion. But to some it is and such men know what religion means. I was reading a short time ago of a Mr. Tennant. He was about to preach one evening and thought he would take a walk. As he was walking in the woods he felt so overpoweringly the Presence of Christ and such a manifestation of Him, that he knelt down and they could not find him at the hour when he was to have preached. He continued there for hours, insensible as to whether he was in the body or out of the body. And when they awakened him, he looked like a man who had been with Jesus and whose face shone! He would never forget, he said, to his dying day, that season of communion, when positively,

though he could not see Christ, Christ was there, holding fellowship with him! Heart against heart, in the sweetest manner. A wondrous display it must have been. You must know something of it, if not much—otherwise you have not gone far on your spiritual course. God teach you more and lead you deeper! “Then shall you know, when you follow on to know the Lord.”

4. Then *what will be the natural effects of this spiritual manifestation?* The first effect will be *humility*. If a man says, “I have had such-and-such spiritual communications, I am a great man”—he has never had any communications at all. For “God has respect unto the humble, but the proud He knows *afar off*.” He does not want to come near the proud to know them and will never give them any visits of love. It will give a man *happiness*. For he must be happy who lives near to God. Again—it will give a man *holiness*. A man who has not holiness has never had this manifestation. Some men profess a great deal—but do not believe any man unless you see that his deeds answer to what he says. “Be not deceived, God is not mocked.” He will not bestow His favors upon the wicked. While He will not cast away a perfect man, neither will He respect an evil doer. Thus there will be three effects of nearness to Jesus, all beginning with the letter “h”—humility, happiness and holiness. May God give them to us!

II. Now for the second point—AN INTERESTING INQUIRY. Judas said, “How is it that You will manifest Yourself unto us and not unto the world?” How was this inquiry suggested and how was it answered?

First, it was suggested by *ignorance*. Poor Judas thought—“How can Jesus manifest Himself to us and not to the world? Why, if He comes down again, the world will see Him as well as we. How can He do it? Suppose He appears in a chariot of fire, or descends in a cloudy pillar—if we see Him, the world must see Him, too.” So, poor thing, he very ignorantly said, “How can it be, Lord?” Perhaps, too, the question was put by reason of his *great kindness*. “Ah, Lord,” he said, “how can it be that You will manifest Yourself to us and not unto the world?” He was slightly an Arminian—he wanted it all to be given to everybody! And he said, “How is it that You will manifest Yourself to us and not unto the world?” “O Lord,” he said, “I wish it were for everybody! I wish it were—my benevolence bids me wish it.” Ah, my Beloved, we never need be more benevolent than God is! Some say, “If all sinners were saved, it would glorify God more.” Certainly God knows better than we do how many sinners will glorify Him and we had better leave the number to Him and not get to meddling with what we have no business with! It says in Scripture, “Fools will be meddling.” And fools they are who go meddling with what is

no concern of theirs. But however this was, Judas said, “Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself unto us and not unto the world?” Perhaps, again, it was *love to His Master* that made him put the question. “O Lord, I thought You would come and be King over all the world. And now it appears that You are only to be King over some.” He wished Christ’s dominion might be universal. He wanted to see every heart the Savior’s Throne. He desired everyone to bow to Him and a very just and laudable wish it was. And so he asked Christ, “How can it be, Lord, that You will not conquer all?” Jesus never answered the question. It was right to ask it. But we shall never get the solution of it till we get up yonder. Perhaps not there. Yet again—perhaps the question was proposed by *admiration*. “Oh,” he said, “how is it that You will manifest to *us* and not unto the world?” Why, he might have said of himself, “What am I? What is my Brother, Peter, here? Nothing but a fisherman. What is John? Nothing but a fisherman. And as for Matthew, he was a publican and cheated hundreds. And Zaccheus, how many widows’ houses did he devour! And yet You say You will manifest Yourself unto *us* and not unto the world? There stands Mary the sinner—what did she do that You should manifest Yourself to her? And there is Mary Magdalene—she had seven devils. Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself unto *us* and not unto the world?” Is not this a question we have often had to ask of our own souls?—

**“Pause, my Soul, adore and wonder;
Ask, O why such love to me?”**

And the only answer we could give was—

**“Grace has put me in the number
Of the Savior’s family.”**

Come to me and ask me, “Sir, why am I a Christian? Why does God love *me*?” I must reply, “Because He does love you.” “But why does He love *me*?” The only answer I can give you again is, “Because He would love you.” For it is written, “He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy.” Surely we might admiringly stand here and say, “Lord. Why, Lord, why do You manifest Yourself unto *us* and not unto the world?” “Yes,” but some would say, “because you are better than the world. That is the reason. A fine lot better by nature, certainly!” Better than the world by nature? Why, some of us were rather worse! There are some of you here who once indulged in every form of vice—who would blush to stand up here and tell the sins you have committed! But God has manifested Himself to you as He does not unto the world. Surely we shall have a perpetual cause of wonder in the doings of Sovereign Grace.

But *what is the answer?* Why does Christ manifest Himself to some as He does not unto the world? The question was not answered. For it was unanswerable. Our Lord went on to say—"If a man loves Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him and We will come unto him and make Our abode with him." He did not tell him why He would manifest Himself unto them and not unto the world. I have often been asked this question myself—"You say God manifests Himself to some and not to others—can you tell me why?" Well, Jesus Christ did not and I cannot be expected to do it any more than He did! But I will ask you whether you have any objection to it. Is it not enough that He should do so? He has declared that He has "power over the clay, to make of the same lump one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor." And if anyone finds fault, He says, "Who are you, O man? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, why have You made me thus?" What man shall ask of his father, "Why have you begotten me?" "Am I not God and can I not do what I will with My own?" "But," says the objector, "is it not unjust for God to manifest Himself to one and not to the other?" God replies—"Do you charge Me with injustice? In what respect? Do I owe you anything? Bring the bill and I will pay it. Do I owe you Divine Grace? Then Grace would not be Grace! It would be a debt. If I owe you Grace, you shall have it." "But why should my brother have it? He is equally as bad as I." "Surely," replies the King, "I may give as I please." You have two beggars at your door—have you not a right to turn one away and give the other something? And can I not do as I will with my own? "I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy and to whom I will I give it." "Well," says the objector, "suppose I ask and plead for it, shall I not have it?" "Yes, you shall," says *God*, for so the promise runs—"Everyone that asks receives and he that seeks finds and to him that knocks it shall be opened." "But I cannot have it unless it is written that I shall have it." "Yes, but if you ask, it is written that you shall ask. And the means are as much ordained as the end—you could not ask unless I inclined you. And now do not talk to Me of injustice. I ask you to find the passage in My Word where I ever promised to give Grace to everyone. Vile wretch! Have you not rebelled against Me? Your doom is to be sent to Hell forever. Do you not deserve it?" "Yes." "Then who are you that dare to accuse Me of injustice? If I have 50 men on a scaffold to be hanged, have I not a right to pardon which I will and give the punishment to all the rest? Will you not yield to it?" "No," says the objector, "I will never yield to it." "Then, my Friend, expect not salvation till you do." Is there a man here who kicks against Divine Sovereignty? It is a testing Doctrine. And if he does not receive it, it shows that his pride is not out of him. If we do but preach Di-

vine Sovereignty, some will say, "That man is an Antinomian and a hyper." We disdain your slander and remind you that the accusation might more properly be made against yourself. It is *you* that are the Antinomian, in rebelling against Divine Sovereignty! But a man who receives the Doctrine of Sovereignty will go to the Throne of God, saying—

***"Perhaps He will admit my plea,
Perhaps will hear my prayer—
But if I perish I will pray,
And perish only there."***

And now, what do you say to this, my Friends? I know what some would say. They would cry, "Nonsense!" We believe religion is a thing very good to keep people in order. But as to these manifestations and these ecstasies, we do not believe in them."

Very well, Beloved. I have just proved the Truth of what the text says. He does not manifest Himself unto the world. And you have proved, yourself, that you are one of the world because you have not any manifestations. But there are some Christians here who say, "We do not know much about these manifestations." No, I know you do not. The Church has been getting, for the last few years, into a lean, starved state. God has sent very few preachers who would preach up these special things and the Church has been getting lower and lower. And what would become of us, I cannot tell, if there were not saved a little salt, which God has scattered over the putrefying mass. Some of us have been living on low ground, when we might have been standing on high places. We have been tarrying in the valley of Baca, when we might as well have been living on the top of Carmel. I would not choose to dwell in a valley, if I might build my house on the delectable mountains. O Christian! Up this morning! Let your feet be shod with light once more! Trip lightly across the plain of trouble—get to the side of Calvary—ascend to the very summit! And from Calvary, I tell you—you can see across the plain as far as Heaven, itself! If you can but get to Pisgah's top, you shall sing—

***"Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood
Stand dressed in living green."***

And, by God's Grace, your spirit shall become like the chariots of Amminadib! Seek, my Brothers and Sisters such spiritual manifestations, if you have never experienced them. And if you have been privileged to enjoy them, seek more of them. For what is there that can so certainly make life happy and so fit you for the sky, as these revelations of Jesus Christ? Oh, you who despise what we enjoy, from the depths of my soul I pity you!. Take heed, lest the first revelation you have of Christ is when He shall be revealed in flaming fire—taking vengeance on His enemies!

If He is not revealed in mercy, He will be in justice. God give you Grace to see Him on Calvary before you see Him on Sinai. To behold Him as the Savior of sinners before you see Him as the Judge of the quick and dead. God bless you and lead you back to these manifestations constantly! Amen. Amen. Amen.

Adapted from *The C.H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

A BLESSED GOSPEL CHAIN NO. 2895

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 4, 1904.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 2, 1876.

*“Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man loves Me, he will keep
My words; and My Father will love him, and We will come unto
him, and make Our abode with him.”*
John 14:23.

THIS is a blessed chain of Gospel experience. Our text is not meant for the men of the world who have their portion in this life, but for the chosen, called and faithful who are brought into the inner circle of Christ's disciples and taught to understand the mysteries of His Kingdom. It was in answer to the question of Judas (“not Iscariot”) as to how Christ would manifest Himself to His own and not to the world, that these words were spoken. Christ explained that it would be manifest who were His own people by certain marks and signs. They would be those who love Him and keep His commandments and so win the confidence of the Father—and the Father and the Son would come to these loving and obedient disciples and make Their abode with them. God grant that all of us may be able to take each of the steps here mentioned so that our Lord may manifest Himself to us as He does not unto the world!

The subject upon which I am about to speak to you is one which the preacher cannot handle without the people. I must have God's people with me in spirit to help me while I am dealing with such a topic as this. You know that in the Church of England service there are certain places where the clergyman says, “saying after me,” so that it is not simply the minister uttering the prayer or the confession, but he is a sort of preceptor leading the rest of the congregation. In a similar style, I want you people of God, as the Holy Spirit shall enable you, to bend all your thoughts and energies in this direction and step by step climb with me to these distinct spiritual platforms—ascending from the one to the other by the Spirit's gracious aid—that your fellowship may be with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.

I. Our text begins with the first link in this golden chain, namely, LOVE TO CHRIST—“If a man loves Me.”

This, “if,” seems to me to stand at the portals of our text like a sentinel at the gate of a palace, to prevent anybody from entering who ought not to enter. It is an, “if,” that may be passed around the present assembly, for I fear that all in this house do not love the Lord Jesus Christ. If you

cannot answer in the affirmative the question asked by the lips of Jesus, Himself, “Do you love Me?” you have nothing to do with the rest of this verse. Indeed, what have you to do with *any* of the privileges revealed in the Bible, or with any of the blessings promised there, as long as you are without love to Christ? Let that, “if,” stand, then, as with a drawn sword—like the cherubim at the gate of the Garden of Eden—to keep you from daring to intrude where you have no right to go if you do not love the Lord Jesus Christ! “If a man loves Me.”

Are you a lover of the Lord, dear Hearer? Put not that question aside, but answer it honestly, in His sight, for *there are some who only pretend to love Him*, but really do not—some who make a loud profession, but their language is hypocritical, for their conduct is not consistent with their profession. Do you love the Lord Jesus with your whole heart? He is well worthy of your love, so let the question go round the whole assembly and not miss any one of us, “Do you love Me?”

For there are some, too, who are *Christ’s disciples only by profession*. All they give Him is a cold-hearted assent to His teaching. Their head is convinced and, in a measure, their life is not altogether inconsistent with their profession, but their heart is dead. Or, if it is at all alive, it is like that of the church of Laodicea, neither cold nor hot, but lukewarm—and that is a state which Christ abhors! He must occupy the throne of our hearts and be the best loved of all, or else we lack that which is essential to true Christianity!

“If a man loves Me,” says Christ. So, do you love Him? I do not ask whether you love His offices, though I hope you do. You love the Prophet, the Priest, the King, the Shepherd, the Savior and whatever other title He assumes. Each of these names is music to your ears—but do you love Christ, Himself? I will not ask whether you love His work, especially the great Redemption which comprehends such innumerable blessings. I hope you do, but it is a *personal love to Christ* that is spoken of here. Jesus says, “If any man loves *Me*.” Have you realized Christ, personally, as still alive, gone into Heaven and soon to come again in all the glory of His Father and of the holy angels? Say, Brother, Sister, do *you* love Him? “If,” says Christ, “*if* a man loves Me”—so it is right and wise for each one of us to put that question to ourselves, even though we know that we can answer it satisfactorily and say—

“Yes, I love You, and adore—

Oh, for Grace to love You more!”

And if there should be any doubt about the matter, we ought to put the question, pointedly, again and again and again and let not ourselves escape till there is a definite answer given, one way or another! Heart of mine, do you really love the Savior? Brothers and Sisters, put this question to yourselves—and if you do love Him, let your love well up like a mighty geyser—the hot spring that leaps up to a great height! So let the hot spring of your love to Jesus leap up now—and let each one of you say to Him—

**“My Jesus, I love You, I know You are mine,
For You all the follies of sin I resign.
My gracious Redeemer, my Savior are You,**

If ever I loved You, my Jesus 'tis now."

If you can do so, then you may add—

***"I will love You in life, I will love You in death,
And praise You as long as You lend me breath
And say when the death-dew lies cold on my brow,
If ever I loved You, my Jesus, 'tis now."***

Remember that *if you do love Him, He must have loved you first*. Think of His ancient love—the love that was fixed upon you before the earth was—when He saw you in the glass of futurity and beheld all that you would be in the ruinous fall of Adam and by your own personal transgression—and yet loved you, notwithstanding all that! Think of Him when the fullness of time was come, stripping Himself of all His Glory and descending from the Throne of Infinite Majesty to the manger of humiliation and, being there, as a Baby, swaddled in His weakness! Will you not love Him who became God Incarnate for you? Think of Him all through His life—a life of poverty, for He had nowhere to lay His head—a life of rejection, for, “He came unto His own and His own received Him not”—a life of pain, for He bore our sicknesses—a life of dishonor, for He was despised and rejected of men! Will you further think of Him in the Garden of Gethsemane? Will not your love be stirred as you watch the bloody sweat and hear His groans and mark His tears as He pleads with God until He prevails? Follow Him to the judgment seat and hear Him there charged with sedition and with blasphemy—if you can bear it!

Then see the soldiers as they spit in His face and mock Him while they thrust a reed into His hand for a scepter and put on His brow a crown of thorns as His only diadem! See Him tied up to be scourged till the cruel thongs lacerate and tear His precious flesh and He suffers indescribable agonies! And when you have followed Him that far, go still further and stand at the foot of the Cross and mark the crimson stream that flows from His hands, feet and side! Stand and watch Him when the soldier's spear has pierced His heart and made the blood and water flow forth for your pardon and cleansing. Did He suffer all this for you and do you not love Him in return? May I not tell that, “if,” to get out of the way and let you pass, that you may take the next step? Track Him as He rises from the grave for you—as He ascends to Heaven for you and obtains great gifts for you! Up there, before His Father's face, He pleads for you and governs all things as King of kings and Lord of lords—and governs all for *you*! Up there He prepares many mansions for His own people and gets ready to come to earth the second time that He may receive His people unto Himself, that where He is they may be forever and forevermore!

As you think of all this, love the Lord, you who are His saints, you who have been washed in His blood, love Him! You who are wearing the spotless robe of His righteousness—love Him! You who call Him, “Husband,” love Him—you who are married to Him—united in bonds that can never be severed!

II. If this is true of you, let us pass on to the next point—that of KEEPING CHRIST'S WORDS. “If any man loves Me, says Christ, “he will keep My words. “Let us see how far we have kept His words.

I trust that, first, we keep His words *by treasuring them and prizing them*. Brothers and Sisters, I hope that we venerate every word that Christ has ever uttered. I trust that we desire to treasure up every syllable that He has ever spoken. There is not a word of His, recorded in the Gospels, or in any other of the Inspired pages of Revelation, by which we do not set more store than for much fine gold.

I trust that we keep Christ's words, next, by trying to *know* them. Are you all diligent students of the Word of God? Do you search the Scriptures? Do you live upon the Truths of God that the Lord has spoken? You should, for every word that comes out of His mouth is the true food of your souls! I must ask you whether you are doing these two things. Are you keeping Christ's words by prizing them and by seeking to be so familiar with them that you know what His words are?

Then, next, do you endeavor to lift the latch and *to find your way into the inner meaning of His words*? Do you pierce the shell to get at the kernel? Does the Spirit of God lead you into all Truth, or are you content with the rudiments of the faith? This is the way to keep Christ's words, namely, by endeavoring, to your very utmost, to understand what the meaning of those words may be!

Then, when you know the meaning of them, *do you seek to keep them in your hearts*? Do you love what Christ has spoken so that you delight to know what it is and love it because it is His Doctrine? Will you sit at His feet and receive the instruction that He is willing to impart? Have you attained to that stage that you even love His rebukes? If His words come home to you and sharply reprove you, do you love them even then, and lay bare your heart before Him that you may feel more and more the faithful wounds of this, your beloved Friend? Do you also love His precepts? Are they as sweet to you as His promises, or, if you could do as you wish, would you cut them out of the Bible and get rid of them? O Brothers and Sisters, it is a blessed proof that Divine Grace has been largely given to us when even the smallest word uttered by Jesus Christ is more precious to us than all the diamonds in the world and we feel that we only want to know what He has said and to love whatever He has spoken!

"If a man loves Me, he will keep My words." This declaration of our Lord suggests this question—*Do we keep His words practically*? That is a most important point, for you will not be able to get any further if you stumble here. Do you endeavor, in a practical way, to keep all His moral precepts? Are you trying to be in your lives, as far as you can, like He—or are you selfish, unkind, worldly? Are you endeavoring to be like He who has left you an example that you should follow in His steps? Come, answer honestly! Is this the objective of your life? Are you seeking to be molded by the Holy Spirit in that way? And are you practically keeping Christ's words as to the precepts of the Gospel? Have you believed on Him? Believing on Him, have you been baptized according to His command? Being baptized, do you come to His Table according to His bidding, "This do in remembrance of Me"? Or do you turn on your heels and say that these are nonessential things?

Beloved, if your heart is right with God, you will want to know all His words and to put them into practice! What care I about the words of any earthly church? They are only the words of men! But search and find the words of Christ—and wherever they lead you, even though you are the only one who has ever been led in that way—follow wherever He leads. You cannot take the next step mentioned in my text unless you can deliberately say, “Yes, Lord, ‘Your words were found and I did eat them; and Your word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart, for I am called by Your name, O Lord God of Hosts,’ and I long to walk in all Your statutes and ordinances, blamelessly, even to the end of my days.” You may err, you may make mistakes—you may even sin—but the intent of your heart must be that having loved the Lord, you will keep His words in those various senses that I have mentioned.

III. If you have been enabled to pass through these two gates, you may now come to the next one which tells us of A HIGH PRIVILEGE AND GREAT JOY—“He will keep My words; and *My Father will love him.*”

What wonderful words these are—“My Father will love him”! It is quite certain that He will do so, for when a man loves Jesus, he is in sympathy with the Eternal Father, Himself. You know, my Brothers and Sisters, that the Father’s love is fixed upon His only-begotten Son. One with Himself in His essential Deity, He has loved Him from eternity! But since Jesus has been obedient unto death, “even the death of the Cross,” we cannot imagine what must be the Father’s complacency in the blessed Person of our risen and ascended Lord! This is a deep subject and there is no human mind that can ever fathom the depths of it and tell how truly and how wonderfully the Father loves His everlasting Son! So, you see, Brothers and Sisters, that if we love Jesus Christ, our heart meets the heart of God, for the Father also loves Him! Have you never felt, when you have been trying to praise Jesus, that you are doing, in your feeble way, just what God has always been doing in His own Infinite way? The ever-blessed Spirit is continually glorifying Jesus—and when you are doing the same, God and you—though with very unequal footsteps—are treading the same path and are in sympathy, one with the other!

Then, besides the fact that you are in sympathy with the Father in having one Object of love, you are also in sympathy with Him as to character. Jesus said, “If a man loves Me, he will keep My words.” Well, when you are keeping Christ’s words—when the Divine Spirit is making you obedient to Jesus and like Jesus—you are treading the path where your Heavenly Father would have you walk and, therefore, He loves *you!*

Let me make a clear distinction here. I am not now speaking about the general love of God towards all mankind—that love of benevolence and beneficence which is displayed even towards the thankless and the evil. Neither am I speaking, just now, concerning the essential love of God towards His own elect whom He loves irrespectively of their character because of His own Sovereign choice of them from eternity. I am speaking of that complacent love which God, as a Father, has towards His own children. You know that you often say to your child, “If you do this or that, your father will love you,” yet you know that a father will love his

child, as his child, and always must do so even if his character is not all that the father desires it to be. But what a love that is which a father has to a good, dutiful, obedient child! It is a love of which he talks to him again and again, a love which he manifests to him in many sweet and kindly words, a love which he displays to him in many actions which he would not otherwise have done, bestowing upon him many favors which it would not have been safe to bestow upon him if he had been a naughty, disobedient child.

Never forget that our Heavenly Father exercises wise discipline in His house. He has rods for His children who disobey Him and He has smiles for His children who keep His commands. If we walk contrary to Him, He has told us that He will walk contrary to us. But if our ways please Him, there are many choice favors which He bestows upon us. This teaching is not suggestive of legal bondage, for we are not under Law, but under Grace. But this is the Law of God's House under the rule of Grace—for instance, if a man keeps the Lord's commandments, He will have power with God in prayer. But when a man lives habitually in sin, or even occasionally falls into sin, he cannot pray so as to prevail, he cannot win the ear of God as he used to do. You know right well that if you have offended the Lord in any way, you cannot enjoy the Gospel as you did before you so sinned. The Bible, instead of smiling upon you, seems to threaten you in every text and every line—it seems to rise up, as in letters of fire, and burn its way into your conscience!

It is certainly true that the Lord deals differently with His own children according to their condition and character. So, when a man is brought into such a state of heart that he keeps Christ's words, then his character is of such a kind that God can take a complacent delight in him and, in this sense can love him. It is in such a case as this that the Father will let us know that He loves us, that He will assure us of that love and shed it abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. He will give us special blessings, perhaps in Providence, but certainly in Grace. He will give us special joy and rejoicing—our horn shall be exalted and our feet shall stand upon the high places of the earth. All things—even His trials—shall be blessed to the man who walks aright with God—and the way to do that is to love Christ and to keep His words! Of such a man, Jesus says, "My Father will love him."

IV. If you have passed through these three gates, you come to another which bears this inscription, "WE WILL COME UNTO HIM."

This is a singular use of the plural pronoun—"We will come unto him." It is a proof of the distinct Personality of the Father and of the Son. Jesus says, "If a man loves Me," (do not forget the previous links in this blessed Gospel chain), "he will keep My words; and *My Father will love him.*" And then follows this gracious assurance—"We will come unto him." Does not this mean, first, *distance removed?* There is no longer a gap between such a man's soul and his God. He feels heavy in heart, perhaps, and thinks, "I cannot get near to God," but he hears this comforting message, "We will come unto him" and, soon, over all the mountains of division that there may have been in the past, like a roe, or a young hart, the

Well-Beloved comes and the Great Father, when He sees, in the distance, His child returning to Him, runs to meet Him and holds him to His heart! What a wondrous Divine coming this is! Christ and His Father, by the Holy Spirit, come to pay the Believer a most gracious visit! Yes, Beloved, if you are living in love to Christ and keeping His words, there will not be any distance separating you from the Father and the Son, but the text will be blessedly fulfilled in your experience—"We will come unto him."

And while it means distance removed, it also means *honor conferred*. Many a great nobleman has beggared himself that he might receive a prince or a king into his house. The entertainment of royalty has meant the mortgaging of his estates! That is a poor return for the honor of receiving a visit from his sovereign. But, behold, my Brothers and Sisters, how different it is with us! The obedient lover of the Lord Jesus Christ has the Father and the Son to visit him and he is greatly enriched by their coming! He may be very poor, but Jesus says, "We will come unto him." He may be obscure and illiterate, but Jesus says, "We will come unto him." Do you all, dear Friends, know what this coming means? Did you ever know the Son to come to you with His precious blood applied to your conscience till you realized that every one of your sins was forgiven? Have you taken Jesus up in your arms, spiritually, as old Simeon did literally, and said with him, "Lord, now let you Your servant depart in peace according to Your word, for my eyes have seen Your salvation"? Has Jesus seemed, to your faith, to be as near to you as one who sat on the same chair with you and talked with you in most familiar conversation? It has been so with some of us—and it has often been so.

This also has meant *knowledge increased*. Jesus has revealed Himself to us by coming to us even as He came to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus. Then, in addition, have you not known the Father come to you in His Divine relationship, yet making you feel yourself His child and causing you to realize that He loved you as truly as you love your own children, only much more deeply and fervently than human love can ever be? Have you not received at His hands such tokens for good and such benedictions as only He could give—so that you felt the Divine Fatherhood to be something coming very near to you and the Spirit of God, operating within you, has made you cry, "Abba, Father," with an unstammering tongue? "We will come unto him." The Savior will come and the Father will come—and the blessed Spirit will represent Them both in the Believer's heart!

So, "We will come unto him," means distance removed, honor conferred and knowledge increased. And it also means *assistance brought*, for, if the Father and the Son come to us, what more can we need? With Their gracious Presence in our souls we have Omnipotence and Omniscience, Infinity and All-Sufficiency on our side—and Grace to help us in every time of need!

V. The last clause of the text, and the sweetest of all, is, "AND MAKE OUR ABODE WITH HIM."

Can you catch the full meaning of that phrase? Jesus says that the Father and the Son will visit us—they will come to us as the three

blessed ones came to Abraham when he was at the tent door and he entertained the Lord and His attendant angels—but they did not make Their abode with him. They went on their way and Abraham was left in the plains of Mamre. God often visited Abraham and spoke familiarly with him, but our Savior’s promise goes beyond that. He says, “We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him.” To make your abode with a person is for that person and yourself to have the same house and home—and to live together. In this case, it means that the Lord will make His people to be His Temple wherein He will dwell continually. “We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him.” I have turned that thought over and over again until I have got the sweetness of it into my own heart, but I cannot communicate it to your minds and hearts—only the Holy Spirit can do that.

See what this expression means. *What knowledge of one another is implied here!* Do you want to know a person? You must live with him—you do not really know someone, however much you may think you know him, until you have done so. But, oh, if the Father and the Son come and live with us, we shall know Them—know the Father and the Son! This is not the portion of carnal minds—neither is it for professing Christians who have not fulfilled the conditions laid down by our Lord. It is for those who love Christ and keep His words—those who consciously live in the enjoyment of the Father’s complacency and who have fellowship with the Father and with the Son by the Spirit! To these privileged individuals, God reveals Himself in His Triune Personality—and to them He will make known all that is in His Covenant of love and mercy!

This expression also implies *a sacred friendship*, for, when God comes to dwell with men, He does not thus dwell with His enemies, but only with those who love Him and between whom and Himself there is mutual sympathy. O Beloved, if God the Father and God the Son shall indeed come to dwell with us, it will be to us a proof of wondrous love, dear familiarity and intense friendship! If you go to live with an earthly friend, it is quite possible for you to stay too long and to outstay your welcome. But God knows all about the man with whom He comes to live and Jesus says, “We will make Our abode with him,” because He knows that His Spirit has purified and sanctified that heart and made it ready to receive Himself and His Father, too! You remember how Jeremiah pleaded with the Lord not merely to be as a sojourner? “O the hope of Israel, the Savior thereof in time of trouble, why should You be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turns aside to tarry for a night?” But this is not the way that the Father and the Son deal with us, for Jesus says that They will make Their abode with us! Does not this imply a very sacred friendship, indeed, between God and our soul?

It also reveals *the complete acceptance of the man before God*, for, when anyone comes to stay with you, it is taken for granted that you exercise hospitality towards him. He eats and drinks in your house and, for the time, he makes himself at home with you. “But,” you ask, “is it possible that God should accept the hospitality of *man*?” Yes, it is. Listen to the words of Christ, Himself—“Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if

any man hears My voice, and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." Oh, the blessedness of thus entertaining the King of kings! Then will He drink of my milk and my wine and eat the pleasant fruits that are grown in the garden of my soul. Will that which I present to Him be acceptable to Him? It must be, or else He would not live in my house! And when the Father and the Son come to dwell in the soul of the Believer, then all that he does will be accepted. If he is, himself, accepted, his thoughts and his words, his prayers and his praises, his almsgiving and his labors for Christ will be accepted by both the Father and the Son!

What a blessed state for anyone to reach! For then it shall come to pass that this reception on God's part, from us, shall be followed by a sevenfold reception on our part, from Him. You do not imagine, I hope, that, when God the Father and God the Son make Their abode in a man that the man will continue to be just as he was when they came to him? No, my Brothers and Sisters, the Lord pays well for His lodging! Where He stays, He turns everything that He touches into gold. When He comes into a human heart, it may be dark, but He floods it with the Light of Heaven. It may have been cold before, but He warms it with the glow of His Almighty Love. A man without the indwelling of God is like the bush in Horeb when it was only a bush—but when the Father and the Son come to him, then it is with him as when the bush burned with fire yet was not consumed! The Lord brings Heaven to you when He comes to you—and you are rich beyond the intents of bliss. All things are yours, for you are Christ's and Christ is God's, and Christ and God have come to make Their abode with you!

Now, according to our Lord's promise, "We will come to him, and will make Our abode with him," it is implied that *there they mean to stay*. Let me take your thoughts back, for a minute, to the earlier links in this blessed Gospel chain and remind you that it is only, "*if a man loves Me,*" and it is only, "*if he keep My words,*" that the Savior's promise applies. "We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him." Have the Father and the Son come to your heart? Then I charge you, do nothing that might cause them to depart from you even for a moment. If you ever get into conscious enjoyment of the Divine Indwelling, be jealous of your heart lest it should ever depart from your Lord, or drive Him from you. Say, with the spouse, "I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that you stir not up, nor awake my Love, until He pleases."

"But," perhaps you ask, "can we keep Him? Can we always keep Him?" I believe you can. By the blessed help of the Divine Spirit who has taught you to love Him and to keep His words, you may have near and dear fellowship with your Lord by the month and by the year together! I am sure that we have too low a standard of the possibilities of Christian fellowship, Christian enjoyment and Christian living. Aim at the highest conceivable degree of holiness and though you will not be perfect, never excuse yourselves because you are not! Always aim at something higher and yet still higher than you have already reached. Ask the Lord to come and abide with you forever. You will be happy Christians if you attain to

this privilege and stay in that condition. And we shall be a blessed Church if the most or all of us should attain to it. I mean to go in for this blessing, by God's gracious help—will not you, my Brother, my Sister? Can any of you be content to live a lower life than is possible to you? I hope you will not be, but that you will reach all of these steps that I have pointed out to you and ask God in prayer to help you to surmount them. "Lord, help me to love Jesus. Set my soul on fire with love to Him. Lord, enable me to keep all His words and never to trifle with His Truth in anything. And then, Father, look upon me with complacency. Make me such that You can take delight in me. See the resemblance to Your Son in me, because you have made me to be like He and then, Father, and Savior, come and abide with me forever and ever. Amen." Such a prayer as that, truly presented, will be answered and the Lord shall get glory from it!

But, alas, many of you have nothing to do with this text because you do not love Christ! And the first thing you have to do is not to think about loving Him, but about trusting Him, for you know that the only way of salvation is by trusting Christ. So, if you do not trust Him, you are not in the way of salvation. Have you ever thought of what is involved in being an unbeliever? The Apostle John says, "He that believes not God has made Him a liar because he believes not the record that God gave of His Son." Do you really mean to make God out to be a liar? Surely you cannot! The very thought is too horrible to be entertained for a moment! Well, then, believe His record concerning His Son. That record declares that He is the Propitiation for our sins. Then if you rely upon that Propitiation and trust to Him who made it, you are saved!

I often have the remark made to me by an anxious soul, "But, Sir, I cannot believe. I wish I could." This is the answer which I generally give to the person who says that—"What? You cannot believe? Come, now, let us have that matter out. You cannot believe God? Could you believe me?" Of course, the answer is, "Oh, yes, Sir, I can believe you!" I reply—"Yes, I suppose that is because you have confidence in my character and believe that I would not tell you a lie. Then, in the name of everything that is good and reasonable, how is it that you dare say that you cannot believe God? Is He a liar? Has He ever given you any cause to say to Him, 'I cannot believe You'? What do you mean? Give me some reason why you cannot believe God! What has He done that you cannot believe Him?"

Well, they do not quite see it in that light but, still, they return to that sentence, "I cannot believe." Well now, Sinner, if Jesus Christ were present and He were to say to you, "Trust Me and I will save you. Believe My promise and you shall enter into eternal life." Would you look Him in the face and say, "I cannot believe You"? And if He asked you the question, "Why can you not believe Me?" What would be your reply? Surely a man can believe what is true. There have been times, with me, since I have known the Savior, when it seemed to me as if I could not doubt my Lord—as if I could not find a reason, even if I ransacked Heaven, earth and Hell, why I should doubt Him. I proclaim that I do not know any reason why I should not trust Christ! I cannot conceive of any. Well, will

men continue this monstrous, unjust, ungenerous conduct? Alas, they will.

“But,” says someone, “if I do trust my soul to Christ, will He save me?” Try Him and see. You have His own promise that He will cast out none who come to Him. So, if you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ this very moment—this very moment you are saved! What more need I say? May the Blessed Spirit cause you to cease, by your unbelief, from practically making God a liar and may you now come and trust in Jesus, the Substitute and Surety for His people! So shall you rest your weary hearts upon His loving bosom and it shall be well with you forever and ever. May God bless you all, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 14:15-31.**

Verses 15, 16. *If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever.* Is it not very sweet to think that the Spirit of God is given to the Church in answer to the prayer of Christ? Prayer is a holy exercise, for Jesus prayed. And what a powerful influence prayer has, for His prayer has brought to us “another Comforter.”

17. *Even the Spirit of Truth whom the world cannot receive, because it sees Him not, neither knows Him.* This poor world will not receive anything which it cannot see. It is ruled by its senses—it is carnal and fleshly—and minds not the things that are unseen. It cannot discern them.

17, 18. *But you know Him, for He dwells with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.* That expression, “I will not leave you comfortless,” might be rendered, “I will not leave you orphans.”

19. *Yet a little while, and the world sees Me no more; but you see Me: because I live, you shall live also.* What a wealth of meaning these words contain! The sentences are very simple, but they are also sublime. The gorgeous language in which some orators indulge is, when the meaning of it is condensed, like great clouds of steam which produce but a few drops of water! But here you have vast Truths of God pressed into a small compass and those that seem most plain are really the most deep. “Because I live, you shall live also.” As surely as Christ lives, so must His people! They cannot die, for He lives to die no more—and they live in Him.

20. *At that day you shall know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.* Mysterious triple union—Christ in the Father, we in Christ and Christ in us. This is a complete riddle to all who have never been taught by the Spirit of God.

21, 22. *He that has My commandments, and keeps them, he it is who loves Me: and he who loves Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him. Judas (not Iscariot) said unto Him, Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself unto us, and not unto the world?* He really did answer the question, though perhaps not directly.

This is the process by which He manifests Himself unto His people and not unto the world—

23, 24. *Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man loves Me, He will keep My words; and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him. He that loves Me not keeps not My sayings: and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's which sent Me.* There is Divine Authority at the back of every word uttered by the Man, Christ Jesus. His message comes not from Himself, alone, but from the Eternal Father as well.

20-28. *These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatever I have said unto you. Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you; not as the world gives, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. You have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said, I go unto the Father: for My Father is greater than I. And truly so He was, for Christ had, for a while, laid aside His own greatness and taken the position of a Servant.*

29, 30. *And now I have told you before it comes to pass, that when it is come to pass, you might believe. Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world comes, and has nothing in Me.* His words must come to an end, for He was going to perform His mightiest deeds. He could converse no longer, for He was going from converse to conflict. He must meet His great enemy now and leave His dearest friends.

31. *But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.* And so He went to the Garden of Gethsemane—a brave, gentle, confident, victorious spirit “straitened” till He had accomplished the great work of our redemption!

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

THE PRIVATE TUTOR

NO. 1842

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 24, 1885,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“He that loves Me not keeps not My sayings: and the Word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father’s which sent Me. These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, Whatever I have said unto you.”
John 14:24 26.***

ALL through this thrice-blessed chapter, man cuts a very sorry figure. Whoever it is that speaks, whether it is Philip, or Judas, or Thomas, each one displays his own ignorance, either by asking an unwise question or by making a mistaken request. Yet, Brothers and Sisters, these Apostolic men were, by no means, inferior persons, but so superior that we sink into insignificance in comparison with them! Jesus made them heralds of His Gospel, master-builders of His Church and, if *they* displayed such ignorance, even when the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, had personally spoken to them, *we* must not wonder that we are apt to blunder. Neither should we despair if we find ourselves dull and slow. If those fathers of the Church so greatly needed to be taught of the Holy Spirit, how much more do we? If they could receive nothing except by the Spirit of God, how can we hope to be wise apart from His instructions? Our position should be sitting with Mary at the Master’s feet, varied with bowing into the dust before the Lord under a humble sense of our folly. The chapter before us is well watered with streams of comfort, but I confess it is always a valley of humiliation to me, as I see what poor creatures even the chief of saints are when left to themselves.

But, at the same time, how wonderfully, throughout this passage, do we see the loving kindness of our God in condescending to the weaknesses of His people. In one verse of our text, the 26th, we have the whole Trinity at work upon the Believer—“The Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name.” There we have the Holy Spirit, the Father and the Son, uniting Their sacred energies for the illumination of the chosen! Each Divine Person seeks to make the Other to be more fully known—the Son speaking what He hears from the Father—and the Spirit taking the things of the Son and revealing them to us! The whole Trinity working in us to will and to do according to the Divine pleasure. What we are, my Brothers and Sisters, is of small consequence compared with what He is who works all our works in us!

What if we are nothing but clay? The great Potter knows how to fashion us to His praise. The great item is not what the clay is, but what the Potter can make out of it. Let us not despond because of what we are by nature, but let us rejoice as we remember the wisdom and power of God who has begun a good work in us and will not cease from His working till He has perfected His design! We must comfort one another with these thoughts. Lie low and be more and more teachable—but be hopeful, for you shall be taught. Confess your own ignorance, but confide in the Lord's power to teach you. Rest assured that even for *you* there is a noble destiny—God shall reveal Himself to you and *in* you—and you shall not only know for yourself, but shall declare to principalities and powers in the heavenly places the manifold wisdom of God!

In handling my text at this time, I desire to be entirely under the power of the Spirit of God. Not with enticing words of man's wisdom would I preach. Not with the garnishing of oratory would I foolishly dream of lending power to the Omnipotent Word of God, but with all simplicity I would speak plainly that which the Holy Spirit teaches by our text.

It appears to me that there are three things, here, worthy of patient observation. One is, *the test of a true Believer*—"He that loves Me not keeps not My sayings." A second is, *the need of a true Believer*—he needs to be taught of the Holy Spirit and to have his memory refreshed by the same gracious Spirit—"He shall bring all things to your remembrance." The best disciple needs help in his understanding and in his memory. Thirdly, let us think of *the privilege of a true Believer*—"The Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatever I have said unto you."

I. Let us begin with THE TEST OF A TRUE BELIEVER and let each one consent to be tested. Let each man put himself into the scale that he may know his weight, for the Lord ponders the heart. He who never judges himself will perish in the judgment of the Last Great Day.

I would draw your attention to the fact that in this passage and elsewhere in Scripture, men are divided into two classes and not a word is said of a neutral or intermediate class. The 21st verse says, "He that has My commandments, and keeps them, he it is that loves Me." And the 24th verse says negatively, "He that loves Me not keeps not My sayings." Evidently there are two sorts of persons in that part of the world which is visited by the Gospel—he that loves Christ and he that loves Him not. If you once hear the Gospel, you can never be indifferent to it. You must either be its friend or its foe, its disciple or its opposer. If once the Lord Jesus Christ crosses the orbit of your life, you can never, again, be neutral. You must either reject Him or receive Him—believe Him or call Him a liar. I would urge home upon each of you that simple but solemn Truth of God, lest any person should think himself omitted from the range of my discourse. I would so spread the net that no fish may remain outside its meshes!

The Gospel must, in the nature of things, be to you who hear it, either a savor of life unto life, or of death unto death. By this Gospel you shall be judged and it shall either bring you where there is no condemnation to

them that are in Christ Jesus, or it shall leave you where you are condemned, already, because you have not believed upon the Son of God! Do not, therefore, hope to live and die as if there were no Christ! Attempt not to say, "He is nothing to me." Though you pass by the Cross and refuse to look on Christ, yet the Crucified One looks on *you* and casts His shadow on your path. His blood will be upon you, either to cry out against you, as a murderer of the Son of God, or else to be your cleansing from all sin! As to the Person of your Lord, it is evident that you either love Him or do *not* love Him—one of the two it must be. What is your condition at this hour? Sitting among the people of God in this house on this Sabbath, are you lovers of the Lord Jesus, or are you His enemies?

May God bless that stroke of the winnowing fan, so that by it the chaff may be separated from the wheat. But the test is this, *the loving of Christ*. Loving Christ is *not* the way of salvation—that can only be ascribed to *faith*, as it is written, "He that believes on Me has everlasting life." But the flower which comes out of the seed of faith is love. And faith is not true faith unless it works by love and so purifies the heart.

Observe that *the love is personal*—"He that loves *Me* not." He speaks not, here, of love to doctrine, but of love to Himself—"He that loves *Me*." There is a *personal* Christ and He is to be loved by each one of us *individually*. Do not think of Christ as an historic person who came and went away, whose memory may be dear, but who cannot personally be the object of a present love. If you are truly His disciple and a partaker of His salvation, you love *Him*. You realize Him as a living Person—as much so as your own self, as your dear wife or your near friend—and your heart, in deed and in truth, is bound to Him. The tendrils of your affection must lay hold on Jesus, climbing upwards toward God by laying hold upon His Son. You may not always be able to say that you are sure that you love Him because your agony to be right may create in you a painful anxiety and even a morbid jealousy as to your own sincerity—but you do love Him if you are called by His Grace. But if you do not love Him, you have never tasted of His power to save.

When I read those words just now, "He that loves *Me* not," I felt as if I must repeat the words of Paul and say, "Let him be Anathema Maranatha"—cursed at the coming of the Lord—for is it not an awful thing for any heart to refuse to love Jesus? The most lovable of all beings is Jesus! It is *unnatural* not to love One so amiable. As streams of water naturally flow into the lowest part of the valley, so one would have thought that the condescension of Jesus for our sakes made it natural for the love of men to run towards Him and concentrate itself within Him! Alas, our nature is now unnatural and it is only as the Spirit of God creates a new love in the heart that we yield our love to the ever-blessed Savior! If we are not lovers of the Lord Jesus, the Spirit of all Grace has not made us to know and trust Christ, for if we knew Jesus and trusted Him, our heart must be wedded to Him. Christ *trusted* must be Christ *loved*! We must love God when once the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

Judge yourselves, then—do you love Jesus truly and supremely? He says, "He that loves son or daughter more than *Me* is not worthy of *Me*."

He claims the first place in the hearts of His people. He is an all-engrossing Savior who will never be satisfied till He has monopolized all our affections and carried our hearts away to abide with Him in the treasury above. Let it be a matter, then, of personal trial with each one of you. Hear your risen Lord saying, "Do you love Me?" Not to Simon, alone, but to you, John, and to you, Mary, He says, "Do you love Me?" He stands here this morning, as once He stood by the lake of Galilee, and He puts this loving enquiry to each disciple, "Do you love Me?" Is His adorable Person the object of your intense regard? Can you fall at His feet and say, "Lord, You know all things. You know that I love You. Show me what You would have me to do."

Furthermore, as we look at this text, we observe that, inasmuch as it is not always possible to gauge the emotions and the affections, *a further test is given us*—"He that loves Me not keeps not My sayings." I may know, therefore, whether I love the Lord Jesus Christ by answering this further question, Do I keep His sayings? What does this mean? It means, first, have we *a reverent regard for all the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ*? Do we receive them as being our standard of doctrine and our rule of life? Remember that, in effect, all that is in the Old Testament as well as in the New must be considered to be the sayings of Christ, for He says that He came not to destroy the Law, but to establish it. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one tittle of the Law shall fail. The whole record of Inspiration is endorsed by Christ and may be said to be His sayings.

Now, do you accept these sacred Scriptures as your Infallible guide? Remember, the sayings of Jesus are the Word of the Father. Mark how Jesus says, "The Word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me." I tremble as I see, in this day, such a trifling with the Word of God—such a haste to criticize this and question that! There are degrees of inspiration, so we are told, and if that is so, we can be sure of *nothing*, since we have, first, to decide some subtle question as to the measure of the inspiration! As well have no Bible as such a Bible! Brothers and Sisters, the Word of the Lord shall have no such treatment from me and I trust it will not be so served by any of you, for if so, you will rob yourselves of comfort and offer grievous disrespect to your Divine Lord! I hope we can declare concerning all His sayings—"Your Word was found and I did eat it, and it was unto me as my necessary food." More to be desired are these sayings than gold, yes, than much fine gold—they are sweeter, also, than honey and the honeycomb. Did a saying come from Christ? Has Jesus set forth a Truth in these Scriptures? Then it is not ours to judge, not ours to doubt, but ours to accept with implicit faith! The authority of Jesus stands to us in the place of reasoning. We so reverence Him that we reverence His sayings as being the Truth of God, themselves.

To keep His sayings means, further, *to make careful storage of them in the memory*. To keep these sayings must mean to lay them up in the heart. The blessed Virgin "kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart," and so does every Christian. "Your Word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against You." It is a blessed thing when we are not content to hear God's Word on the Lord's-Day, only, but listen to its ech-

oes every day in the week. We constantly chew the cud by meditation and so we are nourished. We delight to know the meaning of the Word by keeping it continually before our minds. We keep the heavenly object long before the sensitive plate of our mind till it is perfectly photographed there and we, ourselves, are changed by it from glory to glory as by the image of the Lord. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, unless we reverence the Word and hoard it up as the choicest of treasures, we have no proof that we love Christ!

Further than this, to keep Christ's sayings must mean that, having learned them and retained them in the memory, we also further keep them in the mind by *frequent contemplation*. There is a great failure in this respect, I am afraid, among many professors. But those who fervently love Jesus and are sanctified to His service delight to be much engaged in meditating upon the sayings of Jesus. Our earthly cares are our burden, but our heavenly thoughts are our rest. What are human sciences but glimpses at transient and shadowy things? But *spiritual* meditation yields us views of eternal and substantial Truths of God! As I walk through my house and rejoice in the comforts of my home, I say to myself, "These are only mine for a little while. God has prolonged my life, but at any moment these visible things may melt away and I may be where things are real, though they are now invisible."

Everything that has to do with this world is a vain show! But as for the world to come, he that has a possession therein has true riches! Should not our thoughts go most after that which is most? Should we not give the best of our consideration to that which is best? The most of our time to that which is not of time, but of eternity? I am sure he that loves Jesus delights to think upon the choice Words which fell from His lips. We sit down under His shadow, for He is to us the Tree of Life and not a single leaf of His shall wither, nor the least of His sayings fall to the ground.

Still, I have no doubt that the main meaning of keeping Christ's sayings is found in *obeying Him*. Dear Friends, I do not want to say anything that will be severe, but yet I shall put to you a question which ought to alarm many professors. Did you ever spend a whole day, from morning to night, in distinctly and resolutely doing that which would honor Christ? I do not mean did you give up your business? Did you quit your family? Such strange conduct would not honor Jesus, but would do the reverse! But have you, day after day, thought and acted as if Jesus were your Master and you His servant? Is it habitual with you to say, "I will only do that which Christ would do if He were in my place? His example shall be my Law. I will not be ruled by the hope of personal advantage or selfish comfort—to me the supreme rule shall be—"What would Jesus do? What would Jesus have me to do?"

I am afraid certain professors fancy that to hold a sound creed, to attend a faithful ministry and to subscribe, now and then, to charitable works, is about the whole of religion. But you utterly miss the mark if you judge such matters to be the chief items of godliness. The chief matter is to love Christ so that we live for Him and honor Him by obedience to Him! We cannot serve Christ by following our own whims. He who follows his

own vagaries is a vagrant—only he who obeys Jesus is His follower. By doing what Jesus bids us—by catching His Spirit, by seeing things in His way of seeing them and by acting both towards man and towards God in His way of acting—we may make men see what a glorious Savior we have! We ought to so display the sweet fruit of the Holy Spirit in our lives that men may be filled with admiration of our Lord! May God help us to do this, for if we do *not* keep our Lord’s sayings by our holy living, we have no proof that we love Christ—and if we do not love Him, then we are *not* His disciples!

I beg you, my fellow Brothers and Sisters, to apply this text to yourselves! Is the Lord Jesus revered by you as your Teacher? Do you bow before the authority of His Word? Do you turn to the Bible and say of it—

***“This is the judge that ends the strife,
Where wit and reason fail”?***

Have you subjected your intellect to His teaching? The loose thinkers of the present day imagine that they may believe what they like and think what they please. But it is not so. They do as good as say, “Our minds are our own. God shall never rule over us.” But this becomes not a saint. Our Lord Jesus will be King of our entire nature, or of none of it! I claim the province of the understanding for my Lord, for it is a part of His empire which He will not leave in the hands of the enemy! We are as responsible for our beliefs as for our acts! We are never in full subordination to our Lord till we yield ourselves devoutly and reverently to His instruction, calling Him Master and Lord, because so He is!

Brethren, do you yield your whole lives to Jesus? Do you aim at perfect obedience? Do you repent your failures? Do you cry to Him daily, “My Master, mold me to Your will, for to bear Your image is my ambition. I would re-live Your life and be Your representative on earth, even as You are my Representative in Heaven. Oh, that I could say of Your Father and my Father, ‘I do always the things which please Him!’”

II. So much for the test of discipleship. Now, in the second place, I beg you to follow me while I speak for a minute or two upon THE NEEDS OF A TRUE BELIEVER.

The Believer, though he truly loves his Lord is, nevertheless, a most necessitous person and sadly full of needs. He does not need any better Gospel—the Lord Jesus Christ taught us the best Gospel that could be and, indeed, there can be no other. When Paul spoke of “another Gospel,” he added, “which is not another; but there are some that trouble you.” We desire nothing wiser, fuller, or better than the doctrine which our Lord once delivered to the saints. I heard of a mother speaking to her boy the other day words of truth and soberness. Her hopeful and eager son was tempted to run after certain loyalties of doctrine and practice and she said to him, “What we have heard from our minister is enough for me, for it is according to Scripture. Your father and mother have lived on this Gospel and it has helped them through a thousand troubles, even to this day. And your dear old grandfather and grandmother lived on the same Gospel and died upon it triumphantly! Therefore, hold fast by it. We have tried it and proved it, therefore do not depart from it.”

That was common-sense talk. I am afraid of the new gospel. I have not proved it, but what I have seen of its results in others makes me tremble! Let those who will, go to sea in ships of reed or of cardboard—heart-of-oak suffices for me! Such vessels have carried men to the ends of the world and home again for many years and in these, alone, will I cross the ocean. Those who seek after the novelties of this conceited century seek to push their Lord from His place, that a philosopher may fill His Throne! They seem to say, “Stand back, You Galilean! You were good enough for the dark ages, but we need a brighter light for these brighter times.” I return to what I said before—we need no better Gospel than that which God Himself has set forth in the Person of His Son Jesus Christ.

These disciples to whom our Lord spoke did not need any better Preacher—they could not imagine a better. “Never man spoke like this Man.” What power and authority there was in Him and what an unction of the Holy One was upon Him! I cannot say that of you, for you, beloved Friends, might often sigh for an abler preacher and it may be that in some places where you live, your Sabbaths are a bondage to you because the pure Gospel is not declared and the sheep are not fed. But in the case of these Apostles, they could not have had a better Preacher and yet, for all that, because the Holy Spirit was not yet fully given and was not dwelling in them, they had really learned very little. You see the Lord Jesus Christ says of Himself, “These things have I *spoken* unto you.” He does not say that He had actually *taught* them. The last Words of my text are, “All things whatever I have *said* unto you.” All that Jesus had done, if we view Him merely as a Preacher, was to speak and to say. But He could not *teach* the heart, apart from the Holy Spirit! Between Christ on earth and His disciples what a distance there was! In His condescension He came very near to them, yet you always perceive a gulf between the wise Master and the foolish disciples. Now the Holy Spirit annihilates that distance by *dwelling* in us!

The best instructed of the Apostles failed to understand his Lord while He merely spoke to them. Often the disciples ran away with the words which He had uttered and dwelt upon their letter, altogether missing their *spiritual* meaning. Frequently when they obtained a glimpse of the spiritual meaning, they beclouded it with some prejudice or tradition of their own, which, like smoke, obscured their vision. As to memory, they displayed but little of that faculty towards spiritual things—they were constantly forgetting what the Lord had told them—and acting in a manner directly the opposite of His precept and example.

Externally, all was provided—outward ministries of the noblest order were vouchsafed. But they needed something within them—an inward and effectual Teacher, a secret and powerful Remembrancer! Yes, more, they required to be caused to enjoy what they knew and remembered—they needed the Comforter to extract for them the honey of consolation from the honeycomb of doctrine! Their Lord had taught them all manner of comfortable Truths and yet He had to say to them, “Let not your heart be troubled.” He had supplied them with the best arguments for courage and yet they were afraid. They required a Helper who would make them *under-*

stand the Truth, *remember* the Truth and *enjoy* the Truth. And this is just what you and I stand in need of every hour, for we may sit under the most edifying preacher and remain unedified if we look to his words, only. We may hear the best doctrine and yet be unable to get at it so as to receive it and feel the power of it. Truth without the Spirit of God profits not the soul.

Even if you understand, you may forget. I dare say you have often to lament that the good Word of God slips away from you and this is a great evil. Why do we forget? Is it not largely through ignorance and lack of understanding? When a child does not understand his lesson, he soon forgets it. He who does not obtain a clear view of the Truth of God will fail to remember it, just as you soon forget a person whom you have only seen casually for a few moments and in a dim light. We cannot easily hold in the memory that which we have not firmly grasped with the mind. Again, we forget heavenly things because we are so occupied with worldly things—our cares, our joys, our pleasures, our pursuits often crowd the things of God into a corner and even tread them down with heedless fury! We forget our *eternal* prospects because we are thinking of our *immediate* interests. Our circumstances compel us to think of lower objects, but we need Divine help to abide in communion with the higher matters. We need Someone to bring these things to our remembrance and to elevate us to a superior region of mind and heart.

At times we forget our Lord's sayings and become bewildered by many afflictions. Trouble follows trouble—we go from darkness to deeper darkness in our experiences—and we are so worried that we forget. When we most need the promise, we are most apt to forget it. There are good solid steps all through the Slough of Despond—but when a man is passing through that horrible place, he is usually so hurried and confused that he cannot see the steppingstones, but slips into the deep mire where there is no standing. It is ill for us to be in a storm and our anchor at home. The promise is admired when we do not require it, but how often is it forgotten when it would be of the utmost service! We need a Prompter, a Friend out of sight to suggest the proper word, or else we blunder and flounder and do not act our parts aright. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to refresh our memories.

Sometimes, I am afraid, our memories fail us because we are not particularly anxious to remember. Certain precepts are so contrary to the carnal mind that if we can forget them we are sure to do so. You know how easy it is, in your family reading, to omit parts of God's Word which are too close and personal. We are afraid of the razor which cuts too close to the skin. Have you not felt, in the morning, when your servants have been gathered together, that you could not well read a certain passage because you had been out of temper, or unkind, or in some other way out of proper form? You feared that they would say, "Our master and the Bible do not agree." In your own private thoughts, a precept occurs to you, but you feel it convenient to ignore it because it would stand in the way of a design which you are cherishing. You intend to go through with your purpose and, therefore, you shut your eyes to an inconvenient text.

But if we are under the guidance of the Spirit of God, He will bring to our remembrance the duty in its proper time and we shall bring forth our fruit in its season. It is extremely easy to be wise after folly and to be calm after the danger is over. We find the candle when the night is ended. We cry, "Dear me, if I had felt, yesterday, what I feel today, how differently I would have acted!" We are so often a little behind the market. We lock the door after the horse is stolen. Fruit out of season is always deficient in flavor—never are the scent and the taste so perfect as in the middle of the season. Oh, that we may bring forth our fruit in its due season—patience in tribulation, courage in danger, holiness in life and hope in death! We fail to do this because that evil nature which is in us makes us forget at the precise moment what we ought to remember. It is the office of the Holy Spirit to bring before us the sayings of Christ in their due order and time. Do you not need this?

III. Hoping to retain your prayerful attention, I proceed to notice THE PRIVILEGE OF THE TRUE BELIEVER. It is the true disciple's privilege to possess, in the Holy Spirit, a private Tutor, a Prompter and a Comforter.

The Lord Jesus says, "The Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things." Christ, in His sayings, gave us our class book, complete and Infallible, but through our dullness, we need more. That young man has gone to college. He has with him all necessary books and in them is to be found all that he will need to learn. Even thus the Lord Jesus has given us, in His sayings, all that we need to know. But the young man's father wishes him to become a learned man and, therefore, he engages a private tutor for him—one who will teach him what the books contain. With his tutor's help, his books are of far greater use to him than before. If any passage is difficult, the tutor explains it. He puts the youth into the way of reading his books so as to get the full value of them. Spiritually, this is the office of the Holy Spirit—He finds us the key wherewith to open up the mystery which otherwise would be out of our reach.

He really teaches us. To *teach* you is a very different thing from speaking to you. A person may speak to a company of young people and yet teach them nothing. If I am anxious to instruct a Brother on any point, I do not merely speak to him, but I go over the ground carefully, set out each point distinctly, repeat my statements deliberately and illustrate them appropriately. The Spirit of God, when He takes the child of God out of the company and speaks privately to his heart, goes over the Truth of God with him till it is made clear and happily apprehended. We need to have the Truth of God opened up to the understanding, impressed upon the heart, made real to the apprehension, applied to the mind, worked into the affections and endeared to the soul. It is one thing to hear the Word of God, but it is another thing to *learn* the Word of God—it is one thing to be told, but quite another thing to be *taught*.

The Spirit teaches the saints, either at once or by degrees, all the Truths of Christ. Some parts of that whole you will never learn, except upon a sick bed, or in deep depression of spirit, or in bereavement and adversity—while other Truths will only be learned on the bright moun-

tains of assurance and communion with God. It is the Spirit's province to burn Truth into the soul, to engrave it upon the renewed heart and make the mind sure and certain as to what it knows. No knowledge is so sure as that which the Holy Spirit communicates to our spirit. *Inward* teaching is *effectual* teaching. A man taught of God knows and cannot be made to question what he knows. Time was, whenever I heard a skeptical remark, I felt wounded and somewhat shaken. I am no longer shaken by these wandering winds. There are certain things of which I am as sure of as my own existence! I have seen, tasted and handled them—and I am past being argued out of them by those who know nothing about them.

I am a lost man if the old, old Gospel is not true! There is no way of salvation for me if it is not of Grace through faith in the atoning Sacrifice! And as I know that I am *not* lost, but am surely a saved man, I know that the Word which has saved me is the Truth of God! Those who are familiar with spiritual realities defy denial—they set their inward consciousness against 10,000 skepticisms—if they cannot convince others, they are convinced themselves. We must be taught by the Spirit of God in a secret, personal, unquestionable, effectual manner! We must be made to feel the power of the Truth of God by a spiritual inoculation with it, so that it enters into our very life and becomes part and parcel of ourselves.

It is promised us that the Comforter will teach us *all things*—that is, all the things which Jesus said and did. Have we realized this far-reaching privilege? There is a great variety in the knowledge of Christ. Nobody need think that he will exhaust it. There is, moreover, a proportion in the things of Christ, and we need to know all that our Lord has set forth. Jesus does not teach only doctrine, though some professors crave doctrine and doctrine, alone. Jesus does not teach all practice—He teaches practice wondrously—but He also declares doctrine! Our Lord does not teach either doctrine or practice without *experience*, but He makes a perfect blend to our edification. The way with some of God's people is either to have nothing but doctrine, or else nothing but practice, or else nothing but experience—and this warps and spoils them. Give yourself up to the Spirit of God and He will teach you all things—here a little and there a little—here a little of what you should *know*, there a little of what you should *feel* and then, again, a little of what you should *do*.

Remember that especially in the *doing* part of it, the Spirit of God must be your Teacher. A lad is put apprentice to a handicraft. How does he learn it? Why, by seeing how his master does it and by doing it, himself! At first he spoils the material and his master needs to have much patience with him—but, at last, practice makes perfect and the apprentice becomes a journeyman. The Spirit of God, with wonderful condescension, puts us to practice a little patience. We soon get weary of that task. When He gives us an opportunity of producing love—love to some poor wretched waif on life's rough sea—we are apt to grow chilled by his ingratitude and wearied with our non-success. The Holy Spirit drills us in heavenly marching till we keep step with our Lord and men take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus and have learned of Him.

Brothers and Sisters, you are to keep your Lord's sayings and never go beyond them, but to do this will need the private tutoring of the Holy Spirit—and you must not be satisfied unless He wakens you morning by morning and opens your ears to hear what He has to say, bringing home to your heart and conscience the things that make you wise unto salvation.

As we need something beside this, it is a mercy that we have it. We require that our memories be strengthened. What wretched memories we have as to Divine things! As I have already said, we recollect when it is too late and thus our memories serve, rather, to minister to our regret than to our improvement. It should not be so and if we will put ourselves under the teaching of the Spirit of God it shall not remain so. He will strengthen our memories spiritually. He often brings the Truth of God to our minds—do you not find it so? While you are sitting here, this morning, flashes of the Light of God have been around you. Branch roads have opened up as we have proceeded. Vistas of the Truth of God have rejoiced your vision. You have cried with wonder, “I never saw that before!” That is the Spirit of God! Frequently a doctrine comes home to you with the force of a new discovery—you had *heard* the Truth, before, but you had never *seen* it—but the Spirit brings it to your remembrance with singular vivacity and force!

He refreshes the mind by vivid recollections. He refreshes the heart by melting gratitude. I have known times when my memory of the love of Christ has made me sit down and weep for very joy! Oh, what gratitude wells up in the heart when the Holy Spirit brings all that Christ did to remembrance and we hear Him say from His Cross, “I did all this for you—what have you done for Me?” It is the Spirit's work to refresh the memory of the heart as well as the memory of the mind. Often He refreshes the memory of the conscience—not quite so pleasant an operation. I have been doing, for years, wrong things without knowing them to be wrong. I have been neglecting a manifest duty for a long time, but all of a sudden that duty has been brought to my remembrance as one of the things which Jesus told me. I bless the Holy Spirit for thus sanctifying me by giving me a higher standard of holiness and making me more particular about things which I glossed over with but slight attention. This is a part of the work of the Holy Spirit of God, to bring all things to your remembrance, whatever He has told you.

I am sure the Spirit of God often blesses us by bringing things to the memory of our hope. Perhaps this is an odd way of putting it, for how can *hope* have a memory? But I mean this, that hope seems to forget that the Lord has said, “I will never leave you, nor forsake you,” Hope seems to forget that—

***“There is a land of pure delight,
Where saints immortal reign.”***

And sometimes the Spirit of God brings all that glorious revelation of the world to come before our minds. Have you never felt Glory begun below? Have not the pearly gates seemed to stand, not ajar, but wide open—and have you not, in spirit, walked down the streets of gold and worn your crown—and cast it at your Savior's feet? Then you have said to yourself, “I

can bear this pain. I can put up with these depressions and these inconveniences, for I know that there is laid up for me, in Heaven, a crown of life that fades not." The Spirit of God thus brings all things to our remembrance!

I shall say no more, but pray the Spirit of God to come upon you this very day and bring to your remembrance all things that Christ has ever said to you. There will be a mixture of sunny memories and sorrowing memories, but they will be blessed memories, all of them! I thought, when I was trying to prepare a subject for this morning, "All that I have preached for these many years is taken from me and printed, so that I cannot repeat it—what shall I do?" And then this Truth of God came to me, "He shall teach you." "He shall teach you," and I begged Him to teach me that I might teach *you*. I thought, "Alas, I have had many bright and sparkling thoughts at times, but they do not come just now." I sat still, waiting—and then the fact came to me that the Holy Spirit would bring all things to my remembrance whatever the Lord Jesus had said. I find my natural memory to be less powerful than it used to be in the days of my youth. Shall I, therefore, be allowed to forget when I am teaching? No, "He shall teach you, and bring all things to your remembrance." How beautiful!

I have noticed old people whose memories have been sadly feeble. I knew one who forgot his children. But I never knew an old saint, yet, who forgot the name of the Savior, or failed to remember His love! Sometimes the Holy Spirit bears such witness in the heart that the memory is very strong about Divine things even when it fails about spiritual things. So, my dear old Friend, you that the youngsters sometimes amuse themselves with because your memory has got to be like an old sieve that lets everything through—it will not let your Lord through—you will always feel the music of His name! You will never forget your Well-Beloved if you live to be as old as Methuselah! Memory, though it leaves no other name, shall leave that name recorded there! Christ's love is not hung upon us like a garland on a tree, but it is cut into us and, as the tree grows, the letters grow deeper and broader every day! The Holy Spirit, who is the life of Believers, writes more and more clearly upon that life the glorious and blessed name of Jesus!

I wish that any here who do not know Christ would cry for the Spirit of God to teach Him to them. If you long to be saved, pray that by His Spirit the Lord Jesus may bring you into the bond of the Covenant, for His love's sake. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—

John 14:15-31; 16:1-14.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—152, 455, 458.

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THE TEACHING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT NO. 315

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MAY 13, 1860,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.

*“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father
will send in My name, He shall teach you all things
and bring all things to your remembrance,
whatever I have said unto you.”*

John 14:26.

THERE are many choice gifts comprehended in the Covenant of Grace, but the first and richest of them are these two—the gift of Jesus Christ *for* us and the gift of the Holy Spirit *to* us. The first of these I trust we are not likely to undervalue. We delight to hear of that “unspeakable gift”—the Son of God, who bare our sins and carried our sorrows and endured our punishment in His own body on the tree. There is something so tangible in the Cross, the nails, the vinegar, the spear, that we are not able to forget the Master, especially when so often we enjoy the delightful privilege of assembling round His table and breaking bread in remembrance of Him.

But the second great gift, by no means inferior to the first—the gift of the Holy Spirit to us—is so spiritual and we are so carnal—is so mysterious and we are so material—that we are very apt to forget its value, yes and even to forget the gift altogether. And yet, my Brethren, let us ever remember that Christ on the Cross is of no value to us apart from the Holy Spirit *in* us. In vain that blood is flowing, unless the finger of the Spirit applies the blood to our conscience. In vain is that garment of righteousness worked out, a garment without seam, woven from the top throughout—unless the Holy Spirit wraps it around us and arrays us in its costly folds.

The river of the water of life cannot quench our thirst till the Spirit presents the goblet and lifts it to our lip. All the things that are in the Paradise of God itself could never be blissful to us so long as we are dead Souls—and dead souls we are until that heavenly wind comes from the four corners of the earth and breathes upon us slain, that we may live. We do not hesitate to say that we owe as much to God the Holy Spirit as we do to God the Son. Indeed, it were a high sin and misdemeanor to attempt to put one Person of the Divine Trinity before another. You, O Father, are the source of all grace, all love and mercy towards us. You, O Son, are the channel of Your Father’s mercy and without You Your Father’s love could never flow to us. And you, O Spirit—You are He who enables us to receive that Divine virtue which flows from the Fountainhead, the Father, through Christ the Channel—and by Your means enters into our spirit and there abides and brings forth its glorious fruit. Magnify, then, the Spirit, you who are partakers of it—praise, laud and love His name always, for it is seemly to do so.

My work this morning is to set forth the work of the Holy Spirit, not as a Comforter, or as a Quickener, or as a Sanctifier, but principally as a Teacher, although we shall have to touch upon these other points in passing.

The Holy Spirit is the great Teacher of the Father's children. The Father begets us by His own will through the Word of Truth. Jesus Christ takes us into union with Himself, so that we become in a second sense the children of God. Then God the Holy Spirit breathes into us the "spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." Having given us that spirit of adoption, He trains us, becomes our great Educator, cleanses away our ignorance and reveals one Truth of God after another—until at last we comprehend with all saints what are the heights and depths and lengths and breadths—and know the love of Christ which passes knowledge. And then the Spirit introduces the educated ones to the general assembly and Church of the firstborn whose names are written in Heaven.

Concerning this Teacher, these three things—first, what He teaches. Secondly, His methods of teaching. And thirdly, the nature and characteristics of that teaching.

I. First, then, WHAT THE HOLY SPIRIT TEACHES US. And here, indeed, we have a wide field spread before us, for He teaches to God's people all they do that is acceptable to the Father and all they know that is profitable to themselves.

1. I say that He teaches them all that they do. Now, there are some things which you and I can do naturally, when we are but children without any teaching. Who ever taught a child to cry? It is natural to it. The first sign of its life is its shrill feeble cry of pain. Ever afterwards you need never send it to school to teach it to utter the cry of its grief, the well-known expression of its little sorrows. Ah, my Brethren, but you and I as *spiritual* infants, had to be *taught* to cry. For we could not even cry of ourselves, till we had received "the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." There are cries and groans which cannot be uttered in words and speech—simple as this language of the new nature seems to be.

But even these feeblest groans, sighing, cries, and tears are marks of education. We must be taught to do this, or else we are not sufficient to do even these little things in and of ourselves. Children, as we know, have to be taught to speak and it is by degrees that they are able to pronounce first the shorter and afterwards the longer words. We, too, are taught to speak. We have none of us learned, as yet, the whole vocabulary of Canaan. I trust we are able to say some of the words. But we shall never be able to pronounce them all till we come into that land where we shall see Christ and "shall be like He; for we shall see Him as He is."

The sayings of the saints, when they are good and true, are the teachings of the Spirit. Marked you not that passage—"No man can say that Jesus is the Christ but by the Holy Spirit"? He may say as much in dead words, but the Spirit's saying, the saying of the *soul*, he can never attain to, except as he is taught by the Holy Spirit. Those first words which we ever used as Christians—"God be merciful to me, a sinner," were taught us by the Holy Spirit. And that song which we shall sing

before the Throne—"Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever," shall but be the ripe fruit of that same tree of knowledge of good and evil which the Holy Spirit has planted in the soil of our hearts.

Further, as we are taught to cry and taught to speak by the Holy Spirit, so are all God's people taught to walk and act by Him. "It is not in man that walks to direct his steps." We may take the best heed to our life, but we shall stumble or go astray unless He who first set us in the path shall guide us in it. "I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms." "He makes me to lie down in green pastures: He leads me beside the still waters." To stray is natural. To keep the path of right is *spiritual*. To err is human. To be holy is Divine. To fall is the natural effect of evil. But to stand is the glorious effect of the Holy Spirit working in us, both to will and to do of his own good pleasure.

There was never yet a heavenly thought, never yet a hallowed deed, never yet a consecrated act acceptable to God by Jesus Christ, which was not worked in us by the Holy Spirit. You have worked all our works in us. "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them."

Now as it is with the simple deeds of the Christian, his crying, his speaking, his walking, his acting—all these are teachings of the Holy Spirit—so is it with the higher efforts of his nature. The preaching of the Gospel, when it is done right, is only accomplished through the power of the Holy Spirit. That sermon which is based upon human genius is worthless. That sermon which has been obtained through human knowledge and which has no other force in it than the force of logic or of oratory, is spent in vain. God works not by such tools as these. He cleans not spirits by the water from broken cisterns—neither does he save souls by thoughts which come from men's brains, apart from the Divine influence which goes with them.

We might have all the learning of the sages of Greece, no, better still, all the knowledge of the twelve Apostles put together—and then we might have the tongue of a seraph and the eyes and heart of a Savior—but apart from the Spirit of the living God, our preaching would yet be vain and our hearers and ourselves would still abide in our sins. To preach rightly can only be accomplished by the Holy Spirit. There may be a thing called preaching that is of human energy, but God's ministers are taught of the Holy One. And when their word is blessed, either to saint or sinner, the blessing comes not of them, but of the Holy Spirit and unto Him be all the glory, for it is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaks in you.

So is it with sacred song. Whose are the wings with which I mount towards the skies in sacred harmony and joy? They are Your wings, O Holy Dove! Whose is the fire with which my spirit flames at times of hallowed consecration? Yours is the flame, O fiery Spirit! Yours. Whose is the tongue of fire which rested on the apostolic lips? Yours was that cleft tongue, You, Holy One of Israel! Whose is that dew which falls upon the withered blade and makes it smile and fire? Yours are those holy drops, You Dew of God. You are that womb of the morning from where these

beauties of holiness proceed. You have worked an in us and unto You would we give well-deserved thanks. So, then, all the doings of the Christian, both the little and the major doings, are all the teachings of the Holy Spirit.

2. But now, farther—all that the Believer truly knows which is profitable to himself is taught him by the Holy Spirit. We may learn very much from the Word of God morally and mentally, but the Christian philosopher understands that there is a distinction between soul and spirit. He knows that the mere natural soul or intellect of man may instruct itself well enough out of the Word of God, but that *spiritual things* are only to be *spiritually discerned*. He knows that until that third, higher principle—the spirit—is infused into us in regeneration, we have not even the capability or the possibility of knowing spiritual things.

Now it is this third, higher principle, of which the Apostle speaks when he speaks of “body, soul and spirit.” Mental philosophers declare there is no such thing as the third part—the spirit. They can find a body and a soul, but no spirit. They are quite right—there is no such thing in *natural* men. That third principle—the spirit—is an infusion of the Holy Spirit at regeneration and is not to be detected by mental philosophy. It is altogether a subtler thing—a thing too rare, too heavenly to be described by Dugald, Stewart, or Reid, or Brown or any of those mighty men who could dissect the mind, but who could not understand the spirit.

Now, the Spirit of God first gives us a spirit and then afterwards educates that spirit. All that our spirit knows is taught it by the Holy Spirit. Perhaps the first thing that we learn of is sin—He reproves us of sin. No man knows the exceeding sinfulness of sin but by the Holy Spirit. You may punish a man, you may tell him of the wrath of God and of sin—but you cannot make him know what an evil and a bitter thing sin is till the Holy Spirit has taught it to him.

’Tis an awful lesson, indeed, to learn—and when the Holy Spirit makes us sit down upon the stool of penitence and begins to drill this great Truth of God into us—that sin is damnation in the bud—that it is Hell in the germ—it is *then* when we begin to perceive it. Then we cry out, “Now I know how vile I am, my soul abhors itself in dust and ashes!” No man, I repeat it, will ever know the sinfulness of sin by argument, by punishment, by moral discipline, or by any means apart from the education of the Holy Spirit. It is a truth beyond the reach of human intellect to know how base a thing sin is. The spirit alone, engrafted and given by the Holy Spirit—that spirit alone can learn the lesson and only the Holy Spirit can teach it.

The next lesson the Spirit teaches us is the total ruin, depravity and helplessness of self. Men pretend to know this by nature, but they do not know it. They can only speak the words of experience as parrots speak like men. But to know myself utterly lost and ruined, to know myself so lost, “that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwells no good thing,” is a knowledge so distasteful, so hateful, so abominable to the carnal intellect, that man would not learn it if he could. If he has learnt it, it is a clear proof that God the Holy Spirit has made him willing to see the Truth of God and willing to receive it.

We sometimes hear great preachers telling us that there is something grand left in man yet. They say that when Adam fell he might have broken his little finger, but did not ruin himself entirely—that man is a grand being—in fact a noble creature and that we are all wrong in telling men they are depraved and thundering out the Law of God at them—am I astonished that they should speak thus? No, my Brethren, it is the language of the carnal mind the whole world over and in every age. No wonder that a man is eloquent upon this point—every man needs to be eloquent when he has to defend a lie.

No wonder that glorious sentences have been uttered and flowery periods poured forth from a cornucopia of eloquence upon this subject. A man need exhaust all logic and all rhetoric to defend a falsehood—and it is no wonder that he seeks to do it, for man believes himself to be rich and increased in goods and to have need of nothing—till the Holy Spirit teaches him that he is naked and poor and miserable.

These lessons being learned, the Spirit proceeds to teach us further of the nature and character of God. God is to be heard in every wind and seen in every cloud. God's goodness and God's Omnipotence, the world clearly manifests to us in the works of creation, but where do I read of His grace, where do I read of His mercy, or of His justice? There are lines which I cannot read in creation. Those must have ears, indeed, who can hear the notes of mercy or of grace whispering in the evening gale.

No, Brethren, these parts of God's attributes are only revealed to us in this precious Book and there they are so revealed that we cannot know them until the Spirit opens our eyes to perceive them. Only He can enable us to understand the inflexibility of Divine justice and to see how God exacts punishment for every jot and tittle of sin. Only the Holy Spirit can enable us to know that that full justice does not eclipse His equally full mercy—but that the two move around each other, without for a single instant coming into contact, or conflict, or casting the slightest shadow one *or* the other. To see how God is just and yet the Justifier of the ungodly and so to know God that my spirit loves His nature, appreciates His attributes and desires to be like He—this is a knowledge which astronomy cannot teach—which all the researches of the sciences can never give to us.

We must be taught of God, if we ever learn of Him—we must be taught of God, by God the Holy Spirit. Oh, that we may learn this lesson well, that we may be able to sing of His faithfulness, of His covenant love, of His immutability, of His boundless mercy, of His inflexible justice. Oh, that we may be able to talk to one another concerning that incomprehensible One and may see Him even as a man sees His friend—and may come to walk with Him as Enoch did all the days of our life! This, indeed, must be an education given to us by the Holy Spirit.

But not to tarry on these points, though they are prolific of thought, let us observe that the Holy Spirit specially teaches us of Jesus Christ. It is the Holy Spirit who manifests the Savior to us in the glory of His Person—the complex Character of His Manhood and of His Deity. It is He who tells us of the love of His heart, of the power of His arms, of the clearness of His eyes, the preciousness of His blood and of the prevalence of His plea.

To know that Christ is my Redeemer is to know more than Plato could have taught me. To know that I am a member of His body, of His flesh and of His bones—that my name is on His breast and engraved on the palms of his hands—is to know more than the Universities of Oxford or Cambridge could teach to all their scholars, learn they ever so well.

Not at the feet of Gamaliel did Paul learn to say, “He loved me and gave Himself for me.” Not in the midst of the Rabbis, or at the feet of the members of the Sanhedrim, did Paul learn to cry—“Those things which I counted gain, I now count loss for Christ’s sake.” “God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” No, this must have been taught as He Himself confesses—“not of flesh and blood, but of the Holy Spirit.”

I need only hint that it is also the Spirit who teaches us our adoption. Indeed, all the privileges of the new covenant, beginning from regeneration, running through redemption, justification pardon, sanctification, adoption, preservation, continual safety, even unto an abundant entrance into the kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ—all is the teaching of the Holy Spirit. Especially that last point, for “eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him. But God has revealed them unto us by His Spirit, for the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.” He leads us into the truth of joys to come, carries our spirit upwards and gives us—

***“That inward calm within the breast,
The surest pledge of glorious rest,
Which for the Church of God remains,
The end of cares, the end of pains.”***

II. And now I come to the second point, which is this—THE METHODS BY WHICH THE HOLY SPIRIT TEACHES GOD’S CHILDREN THESE PRECIOUS THINGS.

Here we must remark that we know nothing of the precise way of operation because the Spirit is mysterious. We know not from where He comes nor where He goes. But still let us describe what we can perceive. And first, in teaching God’s people, one of the first things the Spirit does is to excite interest in their minds. I frequently find that when men are being educated for the ministry, the hardest thing is to set them going.

They are like bats on the ground. If once a bat gets on the earth he cannot fly until he creeps to the top of a stone and gets a little above the earth and then he gets wing and can fly well enough. So there are many who have not got their energies aroused—they have talent but it is asleep—and we want a kind of railway whistle to blow in their ears to make them start up and rub away the film from their eyes so that they may see.

Now it is just so with men—when the Spirit of God begins to teach them, He excites their interest in the things which He wishes them to learn. He shows them that these things here a personal bearing upon their soul’s present and eternal welfare. He so brings precious Truths of God home, that what the man thought was utterly indifferent yesterday, he now begins to esteem inestimably precious “Oh,” says he, “theology! Of what use can it be to me?” But now the knowledge of Christ and Him

crucified has become to him the most desirable and excellent of all the sciences. The Holy Spirit awakens his interest.

That done, He gives to the man a teachable spirit. There be men who will not learn. They profess that they want to know, but you never found the right way of teaching them. Teach them little by little and they say—“Do you think I am a child?” Tell them a great deal at once and they say—“You have not the power to make me comprehend!” I have been compelled sometimes to say to a man, when I have been trying to make him understand and he has said “I cannot understand you,” “Well, Sir, I am thankful it is not my duty to give you an understanding if you have none.”

Now, the Holy Spirit makes a man willing to learn in any shape. The disciple sits down at the feet of Christ. And let Christ speak as He may and teach Him as He will, whether with the rod, or with a smile, he is quite willing to learn. Distasteful the lessons are, but the regenerated pupil loves to learn best the very things he once hated. Cutting to his pride the doctrines of the Gospel, each one of them may be—but for this very reason he loves them. He cries, “Lord, humble me. Lord, bring me down. Teach me those things that will make me cover my head with dust and ashes. Show me my nothingness—teach me my emptiness. Reveal to me my filthiness.” the Holy Spirit thus proceeds with His work awaking interest and enkindling a teachable spirit.

This done, the Holy Spirit in the next place puts the Truth of God in a dear light. How hard it is, sometimes, to state a fact which you perfectly understand yourself, in such a way that another man may see it. It is like the telescope. There are many persons who are disappointed with a telescope, because whenever they walk into an observatory and put their eye to the glass, expecting to see the rings of Saturn and the belts of Jupiter, they have said, “I can see nothing at all. A piece of glass and a grain or two of dust is all I can see!”

“But,” says the astronomer, when he comes, “I can see Saturn in all her glory.” Why cannot you? Because the focus does not suit the stranger’s eye. By a little skill, the focus can be altered so that the observer may be able to see what he could not see before. So is it with language. It is a sort of telescope by which I enable another to see my thoughts, but I cannot always give him the right focus. Now the Holy Spirit always gives the right focus to every Truth of God. He sheds a light so strong and forcible upon the Word, that the spirit says. “Now I see it, now I understand it.”

Even here, in this precious Book, there are words which I have looked at a hundred times, but I could not understand them, till at some favored hour, the key-word seemed as if it leaped up from the midst of the verse and said to me, “Look at the verse in my light,” and at once I perceived—not always from a word in the verse itself, but sometimes in the context—I perceived the meaning which I could not see before. This, too, is a part of the Spirit’s training—to shed a light upon the Truths of God.

But the Spirit not only enlightens the Truth of God, but He enlightens the understanding. ‘Tis marvelous, too, how the Holy Spirit does teach men who seemed as if they never could learn. I would not wish to say anything which my brother might be grieved at. But I do know some Brethren, I won’t say they are here today, but they are not out of the

place—some Brethren whose opinion I would not take in anything worldly on any account. If it were anything to do with pounds, shillings and pence—anything where human judgment was concerned—I should not consult them. But those men have a deeper, truer and more experimental knowledge of the Word of God than many who preach it, because the Holy Spirit never tried to teach them grammar and never meant to teach them business. He never wanted to teach them astronomy. But He has taught them the Word of God and they understand it.

Other teachers have labored to beat the elements of science into them but without success, for they are as thick and addled in their brains as they can be. But the Holy Spirit has taught them the Word of God and they are clear enough there. I come in close contact with some young men. When we are taking our lessons for illustration out of the sciences, they seem to be all profound. But when I ask them a question to see if they have understood, they are lost. But, mark you, when we come to read a chapter out of some old Puritan book—come to theology—those Brethren give me the smartest and sharpest answers of the whole class.

When we once come to deal with things experimental and controversial, I find those men are able to double up their opponents and vanquish them at once, because they are deeply read in the Word of God. The Spirit has taught them the things of Christ, but He has not taught them anything else. I have perceived, also, that when the Spirit of God has enlarged the understanding to receive Bible truths, that understanding becomes more capable of receiving other truths.

I heard, some time ago, from a brother minister, when we were comparing notes, the story of a man who had been the dullest creature that was known. He was not more than one grade above an idiot, but when he was converted to God, one of the first things he wanted to do was to read the Bible. They had a long, long trek to teach him a verse, but he would learn it, he would master it. He stuck at it as hard as ever he could, till he was able to read, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God." That man was by-and-by asked to engage in prayer. At first he hardly put a sentence together. By-and-by he arrived at a considerable degree of fluency, because he would do it. He would not stand still, he said, in the Prayer Meeting and not have a word to say for his Master.

He began to read his Bible much and to pray with a great deal of profit and acceptableness to those that heard and after awhile, he actually began to speak in the villages and became sometime after an honored and acceptable pastor of one of our Baptist Churches. Had it not been for the Spirit of God first expanding the understanding to receive religious truth, that understanding might have been cramped and fettered and fast bolted to this very day. And the man might have been ever after an idiot and so have gone down to his grave—while now he stands up to tell to sinners round, in burning language, the story of the Cross of Christ. The Spirit teaches us by enlightening the understanding.

Lest I weary you, let me hurry on through the other points. He teaches us also by refreshing the memory. "He shall bring all things to your remembrance." He puts all those old treasures into the ark of our soul

and when the time comes, He opens it and brings out these precious things in right good order and shows them to us again and again. He refreshes the memory and when this is done, He does better—He teaches us the Word, by making us feel its effect and that, after all, is the best way of learning. You may try to teach a child the meaning of the term “sweetness.” But words will not avail. Give him some honey and he will never forget it.

You might seek to tell him of the glorious mountains and the Alps that pierce the clouds and send their peaks, like white-robed ambassadors up to the courts of Heaven. Take him there, let him see them and he will never forget them. You might seek to paint to him the grandeur of the American continent, with its hills and lakes and rivers, such as the world has never seen—let him go and view it and he will know more of the land than he could know by all your teaching, when he sits at home.

So the Holy Spirit does not only tell us of Christ’s love—He sheds it abroad in the heart. He does not merely tell us of the sweetness of pardon—He gives us a sense of no condemnation and then we know all about it—better than we could have done by any teaching of words and thoughts. He takes us into the banqueting house and waves the banner of love over us. He bids us visit the garden of love and makes us lie among the lilies. He gives us that bundle of camphor, even our Beloved, and bids us place it all night betwixt our breasts. He takes us to the Cross of Christ and He bids us put our finger into the print of the nails and our hands into His side and tells us not to come “faithless, but believing,” and so in the highest and most effectual manner He teaches us to profit.

III. But now I shall come to my third point. Although I feel as if I wished my subject were somewhat less comprehensive, but indeed it is a fault which does not often happen—to have too much rather than too little to speak of. But when we come upon a topic where God is to be glorified, then here, indeed, our tongue must be like the pen of a ready writer, as we speak of the things that we have made touching the King.

I am now to speak to you about the CHARACTERISTICS AND NATURE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT’S TEACHING. And first I would remark that the Holy Spirit teaches sovereignly. He teaches whom He pleases. He takes the fool and makes him know the wonders of the dying love of Christ, to bring aspiring wisdom low and make the pride of man humble and abase itself. And as the Spirit teaches whom He wills, He has His own hours of instruction and He will not be limited and bound by us.

And then again He teaches *as* He wills—some by affliction, some by communion. Some He teaches by the Word read, some by the Word spoken, some by neither, but directly by His own agency. And so also the Holy Spirit is a Sovereign in that He teaches in whatever degree He pleases. He will make one man learn much, while another comprehends but little. Some Christians wear their beards early—they come to a rapid and high degree of maturity and that on a sudden. Others creep but slowly to the goal and are very long in reaching it. Some Christians in early years understand more than others whose hairs have turned gray.

The Holy Spirit is a Sovereign. He does not have all His pupils in one class and teach them all the same lesson by simultaneous instruction.

But each man is in a separate class, each man learning a separate lesson. Some beginning at the end of the book, some at the beginning and some in the middle—some learning one doctrine and some another, some going backwards and some forwards. The Holy Spirit teaches sovereignly and gives to every man according as He wills. But then, wherever He teaches, He teaches effectually.

He never failed to make us learn yet. No scholar was ever turned out of the Spirit's school incorrigible. He teaches all His children, not some of them—"All your children shall be taught of the Lord and great shall be the peace of your children"—the last sentence being a proof that they have been effectually taught. Never once did the Spirit bring home the Truth of God to the heart and yet that heart fail to receive it. He has modes of touching the secret springs of life and putting the Truth of God into the very core of the being. He casts His healing mixtures into the fountain itself—not into the streams.

We instruct the ear and the ear is far removed from the heart. He teaches the heart itself and therefore his every word falls upon good soil and brings forth good and abundant fruit—he teaches effectually. Dear Brothers and Sisters, do you feel yourself to be a great fool sometimes? Your great Schoolmaster will make a good scholar of you yet. He will so teach you that you shall be able to enter the kingdom of Heaven knowing as much as the brightest saints. Teaching thus sovereignly and effectually, I may add, He teaches infallibly. We teach you errors through want of caution, sometimes through over zeal and again through the weakness of our own mind.

In the greatest preacher or teacher that ever lived there was some degree of error and hence our hearers should always bring what we say to the Law and the Testimony. But the Holy Spirit never teaches error—if you have learned anything by the Spirit of God, it is pure—unadulterated, undiluted Truth of God. Put yourself daily under His teaching and you shall never learn a word amiss, nor a thought awry, but become infallibly taught—well taught in the whole Truth of God as it is in Jesus.

Further, where the Spirit thus teaches infallibly He teaches continually. Whom once He teaches, He never leaves till He has completed our education. On and on and on, however dull the scholar, however frail the memory, however corrupt the mind, He still continues with His gracious work, till He has trained us up and made us "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."

Nor does He leave us till He has taught us completely. For as our text says, "He shall teach you all things." There is not a Truth of God so high that it shall not yet be mastered, nor a doctrine so hard that it shall not yet be received. High up, high up, tower the heights of the hill of knowledge—but there, when there—your feet shall stand. Weary may be the way and weak your knees, but up there you shall climb and one day with your forehead bathed in the sunlight of Heaven—your soul shall stand and look down on tempests, mists and all earth's clouds and smoke—and see the Master face to face and be like He and know Him as He is. This is the joy of the Christian, that he shall be completely taught

and that the Holy Spirit will never give him up till He has taught him all truth.

I fear, however, that this morning I weary you. Such a theme as this will not be likely to be suitable to all minds. As I have already said, the spiritual mind alone receives spiritual things and the doctrine of the Spirit's agency will never be very interesting to those who are entire strangers to it. I could not make another man understand the force of an electric shock unless he has felt it. It would not be likely at all that he would believe in those secret energies which move the world, unless he had some means of testing for himself.

And those of you that never felt the Spirit's energy are as much strangers to it as a stone would be. You are out of your element when you hear of the Spirit. You know nothing of His Divine power. You have never been taught of Him and therefore how you should be careful to know what truths He teaches!

I close, therefore, with this sorrowful reflection. Alas, alas, a thousand times alas, that there should be so many who know not their danger, who feel not their load and in whose heart the light of the Holy Spirit has never shone! Is it your case, my dear Hearer, this morning? I do not ask you whether you have ever been educated in the school of learning. That you may be and you may have taken your degree and been first in honors—but you may still be as the wild ass's colt that knows nothing about these things.

Religion and the truth of it is not to be learnt by the head. Years of reading, hours of assiduous study, will never make a man a Christian. "It is the Spirit that quickens. The flesh profits nothing." Oh, are you destitute of the Spirit of the living God? For oh, I charge you to remember this, my Hearer—if in your soul mysterious and supernatural influences of the Holy Spirit have never been shed abroad, you are an utter stranger to all the things of God. The promises are not yours. Heaven is not yours. You are on your road to the land of the dead, to the region of the corpse—where their worm dies not and their fire is not quenched. Oh that the Spirit of God may rest upon you now!

Remember, you are absolutely dependent upon His influence. You are in God's hand today to be saved or to be lost—not in your own hands, but in His. You are dead in sins. Unless He quickens you, you must remain so. The moth beneath your finger is not more absolutely at your mercy than you are now at the mercy of God. Let Him but will to leave you as you are and you are lost. But oh, if mercy speaks and says, "Let that man live," you are saved. I would that you could feel the weight of this tremendous doctrine of sovereignty. It is like the hammer of Thor, it may shake your heart however stout it is and make your rocky soul tremble to its base—

***"Life, death and Hell and worlds unknown,
Hang on His firm decree."***

Your destiny hangs there now. And will you rebel against the God in whose hand your soul's eternal fate now rests? Will you lift the puny hand of your rebellion against Him who alone can quicken you—without whose gracious energy you are dead and must be destroyed? Will you go this day and sin against light and against knowledge? Will you go today and reject

mercy which is proclaimed to you in Christ Jesus? If so, no fool was ever so mad as you are, to reject Him without whom you are dead and lost and ruined. O that instead thereof there may be the sweet whisper of the Spirit saying, "Obey the Divine command, believe on Christ and live!"

Hear the voice of Jehovah, who cries, "This is the commandment, that you believe in Jesus Christ whom he has sent!" Thus obedient, God says within Himself, "I have set My love upon him, therefore will I deliver him. I will set him on high because he has known My name." And you shall yet live to sing in Heaven of that sovereignty which, when your soul trembled in the balances, decided for your salvation and gave you light and joy unspeakable. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died on Calvary's Cross, "and whoever believes on Him shall be saved."

"Unto you therefore which believe He is precious—but unto them which are disobedient the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner and a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense." Believe that record true! Cast down your weapons. Yield to the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit. And He shall assuredly prove to you that, in that very yielding, there was a proof that He had loved you. For He made you yield. He made you willing to bow before Him in the day of His power.

May the Holy Spirit now rest on the word I have spoken, for Jesus' sake!

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*“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance, whatever I have said unto you.”
John 14:26.*

THE Savior, when He departed from this world, provided for all the needs of His people, not so much by giving them divers benefits, but by promising them the Presence of a gracious Person who should supply them all that their spiritual needs might demand. I trust there are many of us who know in some degree the value of the promise, “I will send the Comforter unto you,” and that we know that when that Comforter comes, He brings us all good things. We have not to look in one place for quickening and in another place for comfort, in another for instruction and in a fourth for illumination. But when we receive the Spirit, we have all things in one! I may say of Him, as of Jesus Christ, “In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” In Jesus it dwelt in a real human Nature, physical as well as spiritual, but in the Holy Spirit we have the same fullness of Deity, but He comes in and dwells—resides—in His people!

Our Savior here directs us to one particular blessing, which the coming of the Holy Spirit would bring us, namely, that of Divine Instruction. In endeavoring to enter in some measure into the text, tonight—too briefly to enter into it fully—we shall, first of all remark that the text suggests to us—

I. THE VALUE OF ALL THAT JESUS CHRIST HAS SPOKEN.

For He tells us that the Holy Spirit shall “bring to our remembrance all things whatever He has said unto us.”

When the Savior was with His disciples, it is very possible that many of His choice sayings fell to the ground *for lack of attention on their part*. They did not, perhaps, know that every word of His had a fullness in it that should have been treasured up by them as priceless. But now He tells them that it shall be the Holy Spirit’s office to teach them all such Truth and to bring all their meanings to their remembrance. Brothers and Sisters, there is a great danger nowadays in not attaching sufficient importance to the teaching of Scripture. You will sometimes hear persons

speaking very disparagingly of doctrinal Truth and others will smile at anything like dispensational Truth. Some are inclined to throw experimental teaching in the background and some few speak very sadly about the practical Truth of God. But our Lord here speaks of “all things whatever I have said unto you,” and He also speaks of the Spirit teaching us “all things.” We may, therefore, believe that every Truth of God that is revealed in Scripture has its proper place and its importance. And we may gather this from the fact *that Christ has taken the trouble to speak it*. We do not believe that He has uttered one foolish word—no more—not one useless word, for in the whole compass of His teaching there is not to be found a single passage which should have been left unsaid. There may be repetitions, but there are no redundancies. He may have taught the same Truth in several shapes, but He has never taught it once too often. He has never revealed a Truth which it were better to conceal, just as He has never concealed a truth which it would have been better to reveal. If my Lord has taught anything, it must be worth my while to learn it! If Christ lifts the veil, it is my privilege to look—and what He manifests to me I ought not to be slow to gaze upon.

Moreover, Brothers and Sisters, in addition to the importance which must attach to these things because Christ has spoken them, there is this—that He now *sends the Holy Spirit to teach them to us*. If you say that any one part of the Truth of God is unimportant, you do as good as say that to that extent the Holy Spirit has come upon an unimportant or valueless mission! You perceive it is declared that He is to teach us “all things,” but if some of these “all things” are really of such minor importance and so quite non-essential, then surely it is not worth while disturbing our minds with them. And so to that degree, at any rate, we accuse the Holy Spirit of having come to do what is not necessary to be done! And I trust that our minds recoil with holy repulsion from such a half-blasphemy as that. Beloved Brothers and Sisters, He teaches us “all things,” because it is necessary for us to learn all things—and so He comes to bring to our remembrance not part, but, in turn, the whole of our Lord’s wondrous teaching! That teaching is essential to our knowledge of Divine things, to our comfort and progress in spiritual things—that remembrance is part of our soul’s discipline and advance.

I wish that some of my friends would get this very simple and very old Truth of God into the depths of their minds and hearts, for then they would surely study a great many things that they now overlook—and I think they would not be so apt to excuse their own lack of diligence in the school of Christ, by saying, “Well, there are some all-important Doctrines. We have studied them and that is enough.” Brothers and Sisters, when a boy goes to school, he may say, “If I learn arithmetic, I shall be able to be a tradesman and that is what I shall be. I do not want to read that dry Latin book. I do not care to read that book of poetry. It does not matter about my writing such a very elegant round hand.” But the schoolmaster says, “My boy, you are put under my teaching to learn all

things and it is not for you to pick and choose what class you will attend.” Now, we are scholars under the tuition of the blessed Spirit and it is not for us to say, “I will learn the Doctrine of Justification by Faith, and when I know that, I shall not trouble my mind about Election. I shall not raise any question about Final Perseverance. I shall not enquire into the ordinances, whether Believer’s Baptism or infant Baptism is right—I take no interest in these things—I have learned the essential matter and I will neglect the rest.” You will not say this if you are an obedient disciple, for do you not know that the ministers of Christ have received a commission to teach all things that Christ has taught them, and do you think that our commission is frivolous and vexatious? Do you think that Christ would bid us teach you what it is no need of you to learn, or, especially, that the Holy Spirit would, Himself, come to dwell in the midst of His Church and to teach them all things, when out of those, “all things,” there are, according to your vain supposition, some things that were quite as well, if not better, left alone? Brothers and Sisters, whatever the Lord has spoken as a Master concerns His servants! Whatever He has delivered as a Prophet, concerns His disciples—whatever He has spoken as a Friend, concerns us, His friends—and whatever He has taught us as Lord concerns everyone of us as members of His body, of His flesh and His bones!

I must again reiterate this Truth of God. I do not think I can leave it without still trying to further impress it upon your minds. There is a tendency, among us all, I suppose, to choose some part of the Truth of God and attach undue importance to that, to the neglect of other Truths.

It is a grave question if this is not the origin of various divisions which are to be found in the Church of Christ—not so much heresy, as the attaching of disproportionate importance to some Truth of God, to the disparaging or neglecting of others equally necessary. Some Brother speaking to me the other day, declared of a certain Truth, “You cannot have too much of a good thing.” Whereupon I remarked, that a nose was a good thing, but it might be possible to so exaggerate it that you would spoil the beauty of the face. A mouth is a good thing and yet it may be very possible to have such a mouth that there would be no particular beauty about the visage, for the beauty of the man consists in proportion, and the beauty of Divine Truth consists in the proportion in which every part of it is brought into view. Now, there are some who exaggerate one feature and some another. There are some Brothers who are fond of what is called “the high side” of Doctrine. I am fond of it, too, very fond of it, but there is a temptation to bring that out and to neglect, perhaps, the practical part of the Gospel and to cast into the background, possibly, the invitations of the Gospel and those Truths which concern our usefulness in the world. Then, on the other hand, there are some who are so enamored of experience that nothing but experimental Truth will suit them—they must be always harping upon that one string and they look down with contempt upon those who hold fast Doctrinal Truth, which is

very wrong—and shows that they have not yet been led into all the Truths of God!

Alas, how many are so taken up with practical teaching that they grow legal for lack of having the salt of the Doctrines of Grace to keep them right. But oh, if it were possible for our minds to hold all the Truth of God, as far as a finite mind could grasp it! If we could but cast aside the prejudices of education and, perhaps, of constitution, too, and say to the Holy Spirit, “My Lord, I will bind myself neither to this party nor to that. I will subscribe neither to this formula nor to that. I am prepared to receive Your mind into my mind. I am prepared to give up much that I hold dear if You will show me that it is not according to Your will—and I am prepared to receive the Gospel from You, as You shall be pleased to show it to me!” It is *all* Truth and not *some* Truths of God that the Holy Spirit comes to teach! To teach His children Truth in all its harmony, Truth in all its parts, Truth, indeed, as a whole!

But it may be said, “There must be some Truths which are not so essential as others!” That is granted. There are some Truths that are so vital to salvation and peace with God. And there are some others that do not vitally concern the regeneration and conversion of the soul—and upon these, men may be in error, and yet not risk their souls for all eternity. But still, even these Truths are part of the whole body of Truth, and the body cannot do without its head, its heart, though it might lose a limb. Yet is that a reason why I should chop off a limb, or consent to have it maimed, because I could still exist without it?

I could exist without an eye. Shall I not, therefore, mind being blinded? There may be a bone in my body, possibly there are several, the use of which even the anatomist does not know. There are some nerves, especially nerves in connection with the organs of secretion, the use of which are not known to the best physiologists, but nobody, I suppose, would like to dispense with them because each man who thinks, must feel that that God who made the man knew best how to make him perfect and how to adapt him to the position in which he would be placed. There may be bones or nerves in the human system which will never be used but once in our lives—and yet if they were not there, we might not be able to get through that particular juncture. So is it with the Truths of Scripture. There may be a Truth which I shall never need to use and which may never have a practical turn to serve in my life, but once—and then if I do not happen to know that Truth just at that time, I may entail on myself a host of sorrows through my own ignorance—sorrows which I ought to have prevented.

The Holy Spirit comes to teach all the Truth of God and I beg yet again, for the fourth time, to reiterate that all Truth must be necessary for you and for me, or else the Spirit of God would not have come to teach it to us, and that while we may give more prominent importance to the greater and more vital Truths, yet there is not one Truth in Scripture to which we are allowed to say, “Be still! Be quiet—we do not need you.”

Brothers and Sisters, how many of you might be happy if you did but study Doctrinal Truth! You go lean and starved through the world because your minister does not preach the Doctrines of Grace, does not give you the full weight of the Truths of the Sovereign Grace of God.

Still, if you but studied them for yourselves, you might yet have bright eyes and an elastic, bounding footstep, and rejoice in the everlasting love of God which never leaves His people, but preserves and glorifies them in the end!

And some, too, are always groaning from a sense of inward corruption and very properly studying their own hearts, but they might live glad-some, triumphant lives if they did but learn a little more of the liberty wherewith Christ makes His people free, and seek to drink in the precious Truths of our standing in Christ and our perfection in Him. It is the willful neglect or refusal to believe some majestic Truth of God that is the cause of nearly all our doubts and fears—and a great many other pieces of mischief that keep us from serving and honoring our Lord as He deserves to be served and honored by those who are not their own, but are bought with a price.

This first point we may now leave, if the Holy Spirit will but bring it home with power to our souls, for this Truth of God, among others, must be taught us by Him. We now come to a second point which is clearly in the text, namely, not only the value of all Truth that our Lord Jesus Christ has spoken, but—

II. THE NEED OF THE HOLY SPIRIT TO TEACH US ALL THE TRUTH.

But cannot an honest and a willing mind learn all the Truths of God that are in Scripture without the teaching of the Holy Spirit? I infer that it cannot from the fact that the *Holy Spirit is provided*. There is nothing that is unnecessary in the Covenant of Grace—and the Divine Power is never unnecessarily exerted. It is constantly remarked of the miracles that there is not one of them that can be dispensed with—and God never interferes to do out of the course of Nature what might be done according to the ordinary laws of Nature. If the Christian were fully equipped to know and understand the Divine mind without the teaching of the Holy Spirit, then the Holy Spirit would not have been given. We should not find the Holy Spirit here unless it were necessary that He should be here. Even with Christ for a Teacher, mark—so that there was no fault in the Teacher—with Christ for a Teacher, the disciples did not learn these Truths without the teaching of the Holy Spirit! I infer, therefore, that much more is that teaching now necessary and that the Spirit of God should abide with us, to teach us Truth, and to bring the things which we have learned to our remembrance. And why? Is it not because *there is a radical defect in us as disciples*? Are we not frequently inattentive? Do we not sometimes feel a lack of interest in the Truths of God which we receive from the Word, which I may now call the lips of Christ? A child may be very plainly taught, but if you cannot get its attention, if you cannot catch its will and interest it, it will not learn much—that which

you teach it will glide like oil over a slab of marble—it does not penetrate and permeate and, consequently, is not properly and thoroughly learned. And often on the Lord's-Day you will hear most delightful Truths, but if you are not interested in them, it does not catch your mind.

And in reading Scripture, how seldom do we show as much interest as we do in reading a letter from a friend? With what glistening eyes will some persons read the will of their relatives—and they never forget what they read there because mind and heart are deeply interested.

But alas, how often do we turn from these sacred pages without enough interest to learn what is in them!

We are not so eager to drink in their spirit. We do not bring our souls up to the Truth and it is not any wonder, therefore, if we do not learn those Truths of God which are so spiritual that they can only be grasped by a soul in active, alert exercise!

Besides this, we do not learn because of *our ready prejudice against the special Truth we ought to learn*. A great part of God's Truth is very unpalatable to human nature—to learn it is something like taking bitter medicine—people do not choose it with enthusiasm.

There are some Truths which would always be unpalatable, even to Christians, Christians as they are, if it were not for the sugar which sometimes goes with the Truth, and but for this it would be very nauseous to them. There are some minds which seem, more than others, to kick against certain points of Divine Truth, either from their prejudices, their education, or the nature and force of their constitution—and it is only the Spirit of God who can irresistibly come and convince the understanding! Ah, Friends, when the scholar does not want to know, it needs a God to teach him—and sometimes our minds do not wish to know the Truth. I should not like to say a hard thing of God's people, but I believe there are many of them who do not want to know too much. I have often thought that it has been the case with myself, and I believe it is the case with others. There is an awkward Truth which, if it were learned, would throw us out of our present comfortable position and might even necessitate a change of our ecclesiastical connections if we were to know it—and so we do not want to know it! We do not read any book that might make us know it. We try to look at things on our own side if we can, and do not look fairly at the subject, nor enquire into it. It must, therefore, need the Spirit of God to teach us when a Truth of God is so unpalatable and we are so unwilling to learn it! Then, besides this, Beloved, when we recollect *the intense spirituality of truth* and how our carnal natures are always prone to adulterate it with our own predilections and the notions of the flesh. When all things around us bring the Truth of God down from its high spiritual atmosphere, where alone it can flourish, into the smoky, cloudy region of our materialism. When they bring down food worthy of angels to become poor bread even for mortals, then we see how desperately we need the Holy Spirit to help us as learners in the school of Christ!

We seize the fair fruit of Divine Truth with a careless, hasty hands, mar its heavenly bloom, never knowing its richest beauty and essence—and then we feel how true of us are Paul’s words, Inspired of the Holy Spirit, written to certain Christians, “Not as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, and babes in Christ Jesus.”

These, then, are a few of the reasons why the Spirit of God is needed. There are plenty more, of which we will speak another day, but I think every Christian knows experimentally that he never does fully learn the Truth and hold it tenaciously except by the teaching and sustaining Grace of God the Holy Spirit. I like our young people to learn the *Westminster Assembly’s Confession of Faith*. It is a “form of sound words” that is well worth committing to memory, but even Christian people, when they know them, will find that unless those Truths are, one by one, brought home to the soul, they have only the shell of Truth, but do not know the life and inner essence of it. We must have everything we truly learn burnt into us by the Holy Spirit! It must be taught us sometimes by painful experience, at other times by blissful enjoyment—sometimes by a marvelous illumination, a light shining upon a passage in such a way that we see it as we never saw it before—and though we may have read it 20 times, we now for the first time in our lives see its true meaning and rejoice! Why, dear Friends, what is the ministry without the Spirit of God? Do you not often come and go, and find no comfort in attending a place of worship? And even the Bible, itself, without the Spirit of God is but a lantern without a light! And what is even the Mercy Seat, except the Holy Spirit is there, enabling us to drink into the very life and soul of the Divine teaching? It is not that Book as it is there on the paper—it is that Book as it must be written on the fleshy tablets of our heart which becomes to us the Word of God, the word of our salvation in which we rejoice and upon which we often feed!

This second truth you know, and will never doubt, that we need the Holy Spirit to teach us Truth of God. The third thing that is in the text is this—the Holy Spirit is said not only to teach us, but—

III. TO BRING TO OUR REMEMBRANCE THE TRUTH WHICH WE HAVE RECEIVED.

Mark! The Holy Spirit does not now reveal fresh Truth beyond what is already in the Word of God. There is a special curse pronounced upon any who shall add to this Book—and you may rest assured that the Holy Spirit will not so transgress in a matter which He has peremptorily forbidden all His children to commit! When persons start up as Prophets, or Prophetesses, and tell us that they have had special visions from the Lord and they know what is going to happen next year, we always understand that their proper destination is Bethlehem Hospital [London insane asylum] and we begin immediately to shun them and their books! We are persuaded that the Holy Spirit makes no such fresh revelations to men, but teaches us what Christ taught, bringing all these things to our re-

membrance! What Christ has taught, and only that, it is His joyous work to make plain and clear and powerful to us!

Why do we need to have the Truths of God thus spoken brought to our remembrance? Is it not that we often trust our memories not to forget these Truths, but, “he who trusts his own heart is a fool,” and so is he who relies absolutely on his own memory. For anything bad, alas, we may trust it only too well—we are sure to recollect the thing far better forgotten. But if it is anything very good and soul-inspiring, memory has a paralysis in the fingers and cannot retain it in their grasp! You may remember a great many things in business—these are sure to write themselves deeply on the memory—but Divine things which concern the future state are often written so illegibly that they are very readily blurred, blotted out! We need the Holy Spirit to bring these things to our remembrance.

And then, again, *we are so constantly beset with cares* that it is little marvelous that the things of God should slip away from us. You have but one day in the week, as it were, devoted to these things—one day of building and six of pulling down! With many it is one day’s storing and six days’ scattering. It is but a slight advance that we make towards Heaven. Believe me, it is one of the greatest joys of my heart to see you here so constantly at Prayer Meetings and on Lecture Nights. It always seems to me to be one of the best signs of vital godliness that can well be exhibited, except a holy life, to see people willing to come out to the week-night services. Any hypocrite will come on Sundays, but to come on weekdays seems to me to be a favorable sign and a proof of sincerity. But even then how little do we get! Perhaps there is trouble in the family—from the first thing in the morning till the last thing at night it is nothing but hard work and there is the looking for the wherewithal we shall be clothed—and we do not always cast our care on Him who cares for us. So the thorns too often choke up the seed and did not the Holy Spirit bring these things to our remembrance, they might quickly slip away altogether.

There is, again, Brothers and Sisters, another reason for needing to be reminded of these Truths of God, namely, because *we forget what we do not thoroughly apprehend*. I have a notion that as a rule, what a man thoroughly understands, through and through, he does not forget. When you have mastered a fact or truth, seen it from all points, grown familiar with it, it is not easy to let it slip. You may hold a joint of meat in your hand and be very hungry all the while. But cook your joint, eat it, and properly digest what you eat, and it is yours and hunger goes. The man who receives the Truth of God in the mere letter of it may quickly forget it, but he who has received it in the spirit, understood it, digested it, assimilated it, will never altogether lose its nourishing and power! When a Truth is understood, it is somewhat like it was with the boy from whom the priest took away his New Testament. “Ah,” said the boy, “but what

will you do with the 10 chapters that I have learned by heart? You cannot take those away.”

Memory does not readily lose the things she really understands. And when the heart has penetrated into the marrow of the Truth of God and the Truth of God into the marrow of the heart, it abides! But, alas, with the most of Divine things, we do not seek to enter into them as we should. We hear them and that is all. We hear, but we do not understand and, therefore, the Spirit of God is needed to ring the bells of Heaven again and again in our ears and to make us hear the same Truth over and over again, bringing to remembrance what Christ has told us.

If it is asked how He does this, the answer is that He does it by instrumentality, as well as by His own immediate action. He does it through the preaching of the Word! The Word of God brings to your mind the old Truths of God that you have heard ever since you were a boy, or girl and, thank God, they have not lost their preciousness, but are just as sweet to your ears now, as they were when you heard them from old Dr. So-and-So, who has now gone home to Heaven! Thank God you still love that Truth whenever it is brought to your remembrance. I like to use the same Bible always in my study, and to mark it so that I may afterwards know the places which once filled me with delight and comfort. And sometimes the good old Book which we have studied so long will thus bring things to our remembrance. Then there is communion with Christian Brothers and Sisters. Sometimes even an illiterate Christian Brother may set a Truth in such a light as you never saw it in before, just like some of those fine old pieces of architecture which are very fine from one point of view, but some day you are taken to another point and you say, “Well, I think it is even more beautiful from this place of revealing than from the other.” So my conversation with Christian Brothers and Sisters often sheds for me a new light upon long-known and precious Truths. But over and above all this, I believe that the Holy Spirit does actually come into contact with our spirits, apart from human instrumentality, and that when we are walking by the way, sitting in the house, or in our chamber of prayer, flashes sudden light upon the Truth and so we learn what we knew not before and, turning to God’s Word, we perceive it to be blest Truth that was always there, but which we had not seen until the Holy Spirit opened our eyes! Brothers and Sisters, if we do not experimentally know what it is to have the Truth of God as it is in Jesus brought to our remembrance by the Holy Spirit, we must not rest satisfied until we do, for this is one of the marks and evidences, as well as one of the *privileges* of the child of God, that the Holy Spirit is his personal Teacher. “All your children shall be taught of the Lord,” and again and again does the adorable Third Person of the Divine Trinity teach us the things of Christ and bring them constantly to our remembrance!

I am sorry that I cannot enter more fully into this point for need of time, but we must now close with the last point which is a question for us all—

IV. HOW FAR HAS THIS OFFICE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT BEEN PERFORMED IN US?

I will first ask those of you who profess to be *the people of God*. Has the Holy Spirit taught you anything? Is that a hard question? It is one that was asked of old—"Have you received the Holy Spirit since you believed?" I am solemnly afraid that there are some professors who are content to have been convicted of sin, to have been led to trust in Christ, but who, after that, are utterly indifferent to the Holy Spirit as their Teacher. They sit in the House of God, but they do not apply their minds to learn the Truth. They pin their faith to somebody's sleeve and are content to believe according to the last speaker they hear, so that they will one day believe one thing, and another day another thing and so are carried about with every wind of doctrine! Brothers and Sisters, these things ought not to be! Receiving Christ as a Priest, we ought also to receive Him as a Prophet. And if we are quickened by the Holy Spirit, we ought also to seek to be illuminated and instructed by Him. Have you and I felt the Holy Spirit at work with us, endearing Doctrine and making it more precious to us? Have we, indeed, ever sought His influence, or have we, though professing Christians, lived thoughtlessly in this respect? Do you not think that if we have done so, we have grieved the Holy Spirit? What grieves a man more than to deny the importance of the office and work for which he lives? What should grieve the Holy Spirit more than this, among other things, to forget His office as our Instructor and to ignore altogether the great purpose for which He is to be found in the midst of the Christian Church at all times? Surely we should be seeking with all our prayers to pray, "Teach me, O God! And lead me in the plain Truth!" And we should long to sit with Mary at the Master's feet. Do you really study your Bibles, my dear Brothers and Sisters? Why you can scarcely bring out a magazine or a newspaper, nowadays, and make it pay, even with religious people, without a tale! It is one of the signs of the times that feeble fiction reading is as common among Christians as among others, and that our young disciples—young men and women both—must have a sensational novel in a religious form, or they will not read at all!

Time was when Christian women, as well as men, read history, studied the fascinations of science and cultivated their best qualities of mind and heart. And Christian men in days past, in the Puritan and later ages, sought to be acquainted with solid literature, as well as with the Word of God. But it seems to be the last mark of the degeneracy of God's people that they must have their ears tickled with a straw and cannot read solid Truth. You need not wonder that we cannot breed men on chaff, or that they are blown about with every wind of Doctrine when this is the food on which they live. There are certain silkworms which grow the color of the leaves they feed on and you may depend upon it that those who live on this frivolous literature will lead frivolous lives, and those who take nothing but these milk-and-water tales will not be likely to have about them anything solid or robust, or anything vigorously real!

Do not talk to me of reading such things! Brothers and Sisters, when you and I have read our Bibles through so as to find nothing there to interest us, it is high time that we asked God to teach us how to read them! It is a sign of a lack of Grace if the Bible is a dry Book. It is a dry Book, a very dry Book, to a graceless soul—but it has more in it than all the rest of the volumes in the world put together! And the more it is studied, the more will the interest of the student in it increase. Besides, we have such an abundance of other Christian literature that no Christian ought to say he is obliged to read the other poor stuff. We have no time to spare for this, when the soul is starving and dying for lack of knowledge! Let us pray the Holy Spirit to lead us into the Word of God and then give ourselves to its earnest and loving study.

But this question will scarcely refer at all to some now present. My dear Hearers, are you among *those who have no interest in these things?*

It is not likely that you should desire the Holy Spirit to instruct you. There are, I fear, some here who have no hope and are without God in the world. The mere statement of the fact ought to excite us all to prayer for such. But, alas, it is so commonly known that there are many out of Christ and without hope, that we do not feel distressed about it as we should. If there were fewer unregenerate sinners than there are, we would probably be more concerned about them. If there were only a dozen unconverted persons in the world, all the Church of God would be praying for their conversion, but because there are many millions of them, they are so common that we do not look upon them with the awe, the tenderness and the yearning sympathy which we ought to feel.

There are some here to whom the Holy Spirit is an unknown Person, who have never been made alive unto God by Him and, consequently, cannot desire that they may be instructed by Him. Oh, that the blessed Spirit would come and convince them of their sin in not believing, which is the greatest of all sins—and the very sin of which the Spirit comes to convince men! “He shall convince them of sin because they believe not on Me.” Oh, may He convince them of this sin and then may they understand that there is nothing for them to do, but that Christ has done it for them—and that all they have to do is to receive the finished work, to wear the finished robe, to look to Jesus Christ and to find life in the look! Pray for them, Brothers and Sisters, that the Holy Spirit may help their infirmities, that they may know Christ and may come to Him! May God bless the Gospel to them whenever it is preached! And when they are told that “the Son of Man came into the world to seek and to save that which was lost,” may they cry unto Him and trust Him, for this is the vital part of the business and, trusting in Him, they shall enter into eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ROMANS 9:26-32.**

The Jews thought that God must certainly save them. They thought they had a birth claim. Were they not the children of Abraham? Surely they had some right to it! This Chapter battles the question of right. No man has any right to the Grace of God. The terms are inconsistent. But that same Grace delights to save and bless even the perverse and rebellious who will yield to its blessed power!

Verse 26. *And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, You are not My people; they shall be called the children of the living God. That in the very same place where their sins made it patent and palpable they were not God's people—in that very same place shall men confess that they are the children of the living God! Oh, what has not Grace done?*

27-29. *Isaiah also cries out concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel is as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved: For He will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth. And as Isaiah said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodom, and been made like unto Gomorrah. God has a people, then, even in Israel with all its rejection! And He always will have, for He will never make the seed of Abraham to be as Sodom and Gomorrah! He will love His own and glorify Himself in the midst of His people.*

30. *What shall we say then? Why, say this—*

30. *That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. For thousands of years they worshipped brutish idols and blocks and stones. Their philosophy was mixed with filthiness. Their lives were abhorrent to God. Even these, at last, have attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith, for the Gospel being preached among the Gentiles, they have believed in Jesus and they are saved!*

31. *But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. Israel followed after the law of righteousness with many ceremonies and external washings, wearing of phylacteries and bordered garments. Alas, poor Israel!*

32. *Why? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the Law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone. And God is determined that they that are of the Law shall not inherit it! He has made it a Sovereign Decree that the Believer shall be justified and saved, but no one else. They sought it not by faith, but as it were, by the works of the Law.*

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

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

THE COMFORTER

NO. 5

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH EVENING, JANUARY 21, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.**

“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance, whatever I have said unto you.”

John 14:26

GOOD old Simeon called Jesus the Consolation of Israel. And so He was. Before His actual appearance His name was the Day-Star, cheering the darkness and Prophet of the rising sun. To Him they looked with the same hope which cheers the nightly watcher, when from the lonely castle top he sees the fairest of the stars and hails her as the usher of the morn. When He was on earth, He must have been the consolation of all those who were privileged to be His companions. We can imagine how readily the disciples would run to Christ to tell Him of their griefs and how sweetly with that matchless intonation of His voice, He would speak to them and bid their fears be gone. Like children, they would consider Him as their Father—and to Him every need, every groan, every sorrow, every agony, would at once be carried and He, like a wise physician, had a balm for every wound—He had mingled a cordial for their every care! And readily did He dispense some mighty remedy to allay all the fever of their troubles. Oh, it must have been sweet to have lived with Christ! Surely sorrows, then, were but joys in masks because they gave an opportunity to go to Jesus to have them removed! Oh, would to God some of us may say that we could have lain our weary heads upon the bosom of Jesus! And that our birth had been in that happy era when we might have heard His kind voice and seen His kind look—when He said, “Let the weary ones come unto Me.”

But now He was about to die. Great prophecies were to be fulfilled and great purposes were to be answered. And therefore Jesus must go. It behooved Him to suffer, that He might be made a Propitiation for our sins. It behooved Him to slumber in the dust awhile, that He might perfume the chamber of the grave to make it—

***“No more a morgue to fence
The relics of lost innocence.”***

It behooved Him to have a Resurrection, that we who shall one day be the dead in Christ, might rise first and in glorious bodies stand upon earth. And it behooved Him that He should ascend up on high, that He

might lead captivity captive—that He might chain the fiends of Hell—that He might lash them to His chariot wheels and drag them up high Heaven’s hill, to make them feel a second overthrow from His right arm when He should dash them from the pinnacles of Heaven down to deeper depths beneath. “It is right I should go away from you,” said Jesus, “for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come.” Jesus must go. Weep, you disciples. Jesus must be gone! Mourn, you poor ones who are to be left without a Comforter. But hear how kindly Jesus speaks—“I will not leave you comfortless, I will pray the Father and He shall send you another Comforter, who shall be with you and shall dwell in you forever.” He would not leave those few poor sheep alone in the wilderness. He would not desert His children and leave them fatherless. Albeit that He had a mighty mission which did fill His heart and hand. Albeit that He had so much to perform that we might have thought that even His gigantic intellect would be overburdened. Albeit He had so much to suffer that we might suppose His whole soul to be concentrated upon the thought of the sufferings to be endured. Yet it was not so—before He left, He gave soothing words of comfort. Like the Good Samaritan, He poured in oil and wine. And we see what He promised—“I will send you another Comforter—One who shall be just what I have been, yes even more. He shall console you in your sorrows, remove your doubts. He will comfort you in your afflictions and stand as My vicar on earth, to do that which I would have done, had I tarried with you.”

Before I discourse of the Holy Spirit as the Comforter, I must make one or two remarks on the different translations of the word rendered, “Comforter.” The Flemish translation, which you are aware is adopted by Roman Catholics, has left the word untranslated and gives it, “Paraclete.” “But the Paraclete which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things.” This is the original Greek word and it has some other meanings besides “Comforter.” Sometimes it means the monitor or instructor—“I will send you another Monitor, another Teacher.” Frequently it means “Advocate.” But the most common meaning of the word is that which we have here—“I will send you another *Comforter*.” However, we cannot pass over those other two interpretations without saying something upon them.

“I will send you another *Teacher*.” Jesus Christ had been the official Teacher of His saints while on earth. They called no man Rabbi except Christ. They sat at no men’s feet to learn their doctrines. But they had them direct from the lips of Him who “spoke as never man spoke.” “And now,” He says, “when I am gone, where shall you find the great infallible Teacher? Shall I set you up a Pope at Rome, to whom you shall go and who shall be your infallible oracle? Shall I give you the councils of the

church to be held to decide all knotty points?” Christ said no such thing. “I am the Infallible Paraclete or Teacher, and when I am gone, I will send you another Teacher and He shall be the Person who is to explain Scripture. “He shall be the authoritative Oracle of God who shall make all dark things light, who shall unravel mysteries, who shall untwist all knots of Revelation and shall make you understand what you could not discover, had it not been for His influence.” And Beloved, no man ever learns anything aright, unless he is taught of the Spirit. You may learn election and you may know it so that you shall be damned by it, if you are not taught of the Holy Spirit. For I have known some who have learned election to their soul’s destruction. They have learned it, so that they said they were of the elect, whereas they had no marks, no evidences and no work of the Holy Spirit in their souls. There is a way of learning the Truth of God in Satan’s college and holding it in licentiousness. But if so, it shall be to your souls as poison to your veins and prove your everlasting ruin. No man can know Jesus Christ unless he is taught of God. There is no Doctrine of the Bible which can be safely, thoroughly and truly learned, except by the agency of the one authoritative Teacher. Ah, tell me not of systems of divinity, tell me not of schemes of theology, tell me not of infallible commentators, of most learned and most arrogant doctors. But tell me of the Great Teacher who shall instruct us, the sons of God and shall make us wise to understand all things! He is *the* Teacher. It matters not what this or that man says. I rest on no man’s boasting authority, nor will you. You are not to be carried away with the craftiness of men, nor sleights of words—this is the authoritative oracle, the Holy Spirit resting in the hearts of His children.

The other translation is *advocate*. Have you ever thought how the Holy Spirit can be said to be an Advocate? You know Jesus Christ is called The Wonderful, The Counselor and Mighty God. But how can the Holy Spirit be said to be an Advocate? I suppose it is thus—He is an Advocate on earth to plead against the enemies of the Cross. How was it that Paul could so ably plead before Felix and Agrippa? How was it that the Apostles stood unawed before the magistrates and confessed their Lord? How has it come to pass that in all times, God’s ministers have been made fearless as lions and their brows have been firmer than brass, their hearts sterner than steel and their words like the language of God? Why, it is simply for this reason—that it was not the *man* who pleaded—but it was God the Holy Spirit pleading *through* him.

Have you ever seen an earnest minister, with hands uplifted and eyes dropping tears, pleading with the sons of men? Have you never admired that portrait from the hand of old John Bunyan? A grave person with eyes uplifted to Heaven, the best of books in his hand, the Law of Truth

written on his lips, the world behind his back, standing as if he pleaded with men and a crown of gold hanging over his head. Who gave that minister so blessed a manner and such goodly matter? From where came his skill? Did he acquire it in college? Did he learn it in a seminary? Ah, no. He learned it of the God of Jacob! He learned it of the Holy Spirit—for the Holy Spirit is the great Counselor who teaches us how to advocate His cause aright!

But, besides this, the Holy Spirit is the Advocate in men's hearts. Ah, I have known men reject a Doctrine until the Holy Spirit began to illumine them. We who are the advocates of the Truth are often very poor pleaders. We spoil our cause by the words we use. But it is a mercy that the brief is in the hand of a special Pleader who will advocate successfully and overcome the sinner's opposition. Did you ever know Him to fail once? Brothers and Sisters, I speak to your souls! Has not God in old times convinced you of sin? Did not the Holy Spirit come and prove that you were guilty, although no minister could ever get you out of your self-righteousness? Did He not advocate Christ's righteousness? Did He not stand and tell you that your works were filthy rags? And when you had well-near still refused to listen to His voice, did He not fetch Hell's drum and make it sound about your ears, bidding you look through the vista of future years and see the Throne set, the Books open, the sword brandished, Hell burning, fiends howling and the damned shrieking forever? And did He not thus convince you of the judgment to come? He is a mighty Advocate when He pleads in the soul of sin, of righteousness and of the judgment to come. Blessed Advocate! Plead in my heart, plead with my conscience! When I sin, make conscience bold to tell me of it. When I err, make conscience speak at once—and when I turn aside to crooked ways, then advocate the cause of righteousness and bid me sit down in confusion, knowing my guiltiness in the sight of God!

But there is yet another sense in which the Holy Spirit advocates and that is He advocates our cause with Jesus Christ, with groaning that cannot be uttered. O my Soul, you are ready to burst within me! O my heart, you are swelled with grief. The hot tide of my emotion would well-near overflow the channels of my veins. I long to speak, but the very desire chains my tongue. I wish to pray, but the fervency of my feeling curbs my language. There is a groaning within that cannot be uttered. Do you know who can utter that groaning, who can understand it and who can put it into heavenly language and utter it in a celestial tongue so that Christ can hear it? Oh, yes, it is God the Holy Spirit! He advocates our cause with Christ and then Christ advocates it with His Father. He is the Advocate who makes intercession for us, with groaning that cannot be uttered!

Having thus explained the Spirit's office as Teacher and Advocate, we come now to the translation of our version—the *Comforter*. And here I shall have three divisions. First, the *Comforter*. Secondly, the *comfort*. And thirdly, the *comforted*.

I. First, then, the COMFORTER. Briefly let me run over in my mind and in your minds, too, the characteristics of this glorious Comforter. Let me tell you some of the attributes of His comfort so that you may understand how well adapted He is to your case.

And first, we will remark that God the Holy Spirit is a very *loving* Comforter. I am in distress and need consolation. Some passerby hears of my sorrow and he steps within, sits down and tries to cheer me. He speaks soothing words. But he loves me not—he is a stranger—he knows me not at all. He has only come in to try his skill. And what is the consequence? His words run over me like oil upon a slab of marble—they are like the pattering rain upon the rock. They do not break my grief. It stands unmoved, as adamant because he has no love for me. But let someone who loves me dearly as his own life come and plead with me. Then truly his words are music. They taste like honey. He knows the password of the doors of my heart and my ear is attentive to every word. I catch the intonation of each syllable as it falls, for it is like the harmony of the harps of Heaven. Oh, there is a voice in love—it speaks a language which is its own—it is an idiom and an accent which none can mimic! Wisdom cannot imitate it, oratory cannot attain unto it. It is love, alone, which can reach the mourning heart! Love is the only handkerchief which can wipe the mourner's tears away. And is not the Holy Spirit a loving Comforter? Do you know, O saint, how much the Holy Spirit loves you? Can you measure the love of the Spirit? Do you know how great is the affection of His soul towards you? Go, measure Heaven with your span. Go, weigh the mountains in the scales. Go, take the ocean's water and count each drop. Go count the sand upon the sea's wide shore—and when you have accomplished this—you can tell how much He loves you! He has loved you long, He has loved you well. He loved you always and He still shall love you. Surely He is the Person to comfort you, because He loves you. Admit Him, then, to your heart, O Christian, that He may comfort you in your distress!

But next He is a *faithful* Comforter. Love sometimes proves unfaithful. "Oh, sharper than a serpent's tooth" is an unfaithful friend! Oh, far more bitter than the gall of bitterness to have a friend to turn from me in my distress! Oh, woe of woes, to have one who loves me in my prosperity forsake me in the dark days of my trouble. Sad, indeed, but such is not God's Spirit! He always loves me and loves even to the end—a faithful Comforter! Child of God, you are in trouble, a little while ago you found

Him a sweet and loving Comforter. You obtained relief from Him when others were but broken cisterns. He sheltered you in His bosom and carried you in His arms. Oh, why do you distrust Him *now*? Away with your fears! For He is a faithful Comforter. “Ah, but” you say, “I fear I shall be sick and shall be deprived of His ordinances.” Nevertheless, He shall visit you on your sick bed and sit by your side to give you consolation. “Ah, but I have distresses greater than you can conceive of, wave upon wave rolls over me. Deep calls unto deep at the noise of the Eternal’s waterspouts.” Nevertheless, He will be faithful to His promise. “Ah, but I have sinned.” So you have, but sin cannot sever you from His love. He loves you still! Think not, O poor downcast child of God, that He loves you less because the scars of your old sins have marred your beauty. Oh, no. He loved you when He foreknew your sin. He loved you with the knowledge of what the aggregate of your wickedness would be. And He does not love you less now. Come to Him in all boldness of faith. Tell Him you have grieved Him and He will forget your wandering and will receive you again. The kisses of His love shall be bestowed upon you and the arms of His Grace shall embrace you. He is faithful—trust Him. He will never deceive you, Trust Him—He will never leave you.

Again—He is an *unwearied* Comforter. I have sometimes tried to comfort persons that have been tried. You now and then meet with the case of a nervous person. You ask, “What is your trouble?” You are told and you try, if possible, to remove it. But while you are preparing your artillery to battle the trouble, you find that it has shifted its quarters and is occupying quite a different position. You change your argument and begin again. But lo, it is again gone and you are bewildered. You feel like Hercules cutting off the ever-growing heads of the Hydra. And you give up your task in despair. You meet with persons whom it is impossible to comfort, reminding me of the man who locked himself up in fetters and threw the key away, so that nobody could unlock him. I have found some in the fetters of despair. “O, I am the man,” they say, “who has seen affliction. Pity me, pity me, O my Friends.” And the more you try to comfort such people, the worse they get. And therefore, out of all heart, we leave them to wander alone among the tombs of their former joys. But the Holy Spirit is never out of heart with those whom He wishes to comfort. He attempts to comfort us and we run away from the sweet cordial. He gives some sweet draught to cure us and we will not drink it. He gives some wondrous potion to charm away all our troubles and we put it away from us. Still He pursues us. And though we say that we will not be comforted, He says we *shall* be and when He has said, He does it. He is not to be wearied by all our sins, not by all our murmurings.

And oh, how *wise* a Comforter is the Holy Spirit! Job had comforters and I think he spoke the truth when he said, “Miserable comforters are you all.” But I dare say they esteemed themselves wise. And when the young man, Elihu, rose to speak, they thought he had a world of impudence. Were they not “grave and reverend seniors?” Did not they comprehend his grief and sorrow? If they could not comfort him, who could? But they did not find out the cause. They thought he was not really a child of God, that he was self-righteous. And they gave him the wrong medicine. It is a bad case when the doctor mistakes the disease and gives a wrong prescription and so, perhaps, kills the patient. Sometimes, when we go and visit people we mistake their disease—we want to comfort them on this point—whereas they do not require any such comfort at all. They would be better left alone than spoiled by such unwise comforters as we are. But oh, how wise the Holy Spirit is! He takes the soul, lays it on the table and dissects it in a moment. He finds out the root of the matter. He sees where the complaint is and then He applies the knife where something is required to be taken away, or puts a plaster where the sore is. And He never mistakes. Oh, how wise, the blessed Holy Spirit! From every comforter I turn and leave them all—for You are He who alone give the wisest consolation!

Then mark how *safe* a Comforter the Holy Spirit is. All comfort is not safe. Mark that. There is a young man over there very melancholy. You know how he became so? He stepped into the House of God and heard a powerful preacher and the Word of God was blessed and convinced him of sin! When he went home, his father and the rest found there was something different about him. “Oh,” they said, “John is mad. He is crazy,” and what said his mother? “Send him into the country for a week, let him go to the ball or to the theater.” John! Did you find any comfort there? “Ah, no, they made me worse, for while I was there, I thought Hell might open and swallow me up.” Did you find any relief in the gaieties of the world? “No,” you say, “I thought it was an idle waste of time.” Alas, this is miserable comfort, but it is the comfort of the worldling! And when a Christian gets into distress, how many will recommend him this remedy and the other. “Go and hear Mr. So-and-So preach—have a few friends at your house—read such-and-such a consoling volume. And very likely it is the most unsafe advice in the world. The devil will sometimes come to men’s souls as a false comforter and he will say to the soul, “What need is there to make all this ado about repentance? You are no worse than other people.” And he will try to make the soul believe that what is *presumption* is the real assurance of the Holy Spirit. Thus he deceives many by false comfort. Ah, there have been many, like infants, destroyed by elixirs given to lull them to sleep. Many have been ruined by

the cry of “peace, peace,” when there is no peace—hearing gentle things—when they ought to be stirred to the quick. Cleopatra’s asp was brought in a basket of flowers. And men’s ruin often lurks in fair and sweet speeches. But the Holy Spirit’s comfort is safe and you may rest on it. Let Him speak and there is a reality about it. Let Him give the cup of consolation and you may drink it to the bottom, for in its depths there are no dregs, nothing to intoxicate or ruin—it is all safe.

Moreover, the Holy Spirit is an *active* Comforter—He does not comfort by words, but by deeds. Some comfort by, “Be you warmed and be you filled, giving nothing.” But the Holy Spirit *gives*. He intercedes with Jesus. He gives us promises, He gives us Grace and so He comforts us. Mark again—He is always a *successful* Comforter. He never attempts what He cannot accomplish!

Then to close up—He is an *ever-present* Comforter, so that you never have to send for Him. Your God is always near you and when you need comfort in your distress, behold, the Word is near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart. He is an ever-present help in time of trouble. I wish I had time to expand these thoughts. But I cannot.

II. The second thing is the COMFORT. Now there are some persons who make a great mistake about the influence of the Holy Spirit. A foolish man who had a fancy to preach in a certain pulpit, though in truth was quite incapable of the duty, called upon the minister and assured him solemnly that it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he was to preach in his pulpit. “Very well,” said the minister, “I suppose I must not doubt your assertion, but as it has not been revealed to me that I am to let you preach, you must go your way until it is.” I have heard many fanatical persons say the Holy Spirit revealed this and that to them. Now that is very generally revealed nonsense! The Holy Spirit does not reveal anything fresh. He brings old things to our remembrance. “He shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have told you.” The canon of Revelation is closed. There is no more to be added. God does not give a fresh Revelation, but the rivets of the old one. When it has been forgotten and laid in the dusty chamber of our memory, He fetches it out and cleans the picture. But He does not paint a new one. There are no new Doctrines, but the old ones are often revived! It is not, I say, by any new Revelation that the Spirit comforts. He does so by telling us old things over again. He brings a fresh lamp to manifest the treasures hidden in Scripture. He unlocks the strong chests in which the Truth has long lain and He points to secret chambers filled with untold riches. But He comes no more, for enough is done. Believer, there is enough in the Bible for you to live upon forever. If you should outnumber the years of Methuselah, there would be no need for a fresh

Revelation. If you should live till Christ should come upon the earth, there would be no necessity for the addition of a single word. If you should go down as deep as Jonah, or even descend as David said he did, into the belly of Hell, still there would be enough in the Bible to comfort you without a supplementary sentence. But Christ says, "He shall take of Mine and shall show it unto you." Now let me just tell you briefly what it is the Holy Spirit tells us.

Ah, does He not whisper to the heart, "Saint, be of good cheer. There is One who died for you—look to Calvary—behold His wounds. See the torrent gushing from His side. There is your Purchaser and you are secure. He loves you with an everlasting love and this chastisement is meant for your good. Each stroke is working your healing—by the blueness of the wound your soul is made better. "Whom He loves He chastens and scourges every son whom He receives. Doubt not His Grace because of your tribulation, but believe that He loves you as much in seasons of trouble as in times of happiness." And then, moreover, He says, "What is all your suffering compared with that of your Lord's or what, when weighed in the scales of Jesus' agonies, is all your distress?" And especially at times does the Holy Spirit take back the veil of Heaven and lets the soul behold the Glory of the upper world! Then it is that the saint can say, "Oh, you are a Comforter to me!"—

***"Let cares like a wild deluge come,
And storms of sorrow fall;
May I but safely reach my home,
My God, my Heaven, my All."***

Some of you could follow, were I to tell of manifestations of Heaven. You, too, have left sun, moon and stars at your feet while in your flight. Outstripping the tardy lightning, you have seemed to enter the gates of pearl and tread the golden streets, borne aloft on wings of the Spirit. But here we must not trust *ourselves*, lest, lost in reverie, we forget our theme.

III. And now thirdly, who are the COMFORTED persons? I like, you know, at the end of my sermon, to cry out, "Divide! Divide!" There are two parties here—some who are the comforted and others who are the comfortless ones. Some who have received the consolation of the Holy Spirit and some who have not. Now let us try and sift you and see which is the chaff and which is the wheat. And may God grant that some of the chaff may this night be transformed into His wheat!

You may say, "How am I to know whether I am a recipient of the comfort of the Holy Spirit?" You may know it by *one* rule. If you have received one blessing from God, you will receive all other blessings, too. Let me explain myself—if I could come here as an auctioneer and sell the Gospel off in lots, I should dispose of it all. If I could say, here is Justification through the blood of Christ, free, giving away, gratis—many a one would

say, "I will have Justification—give it to me. I wish to be justified, I wish to be pardoned." Suppose I took Sanctification, the giving up of all sin, a thorough change of heart, leaving off drunkenness and swearing? Many would say, "I don't want that. I should like to go to Heaven, but I do not want that holiness. I should like to be saved at last, but I should like to have my drink. I should like to enter Glory, but then I must have an oath or two on the road." No, but Sinner, if you have one blessing, you shall have all! God will never divide the Gospel. He will not give Justification to that man and Sanctification to another. He will not give pardon to one and holiness to another. No, it all goes together! Whom He calls, them He justifies. Whom He justifies, them He sanctifies. And whom He sanctifies, them He also glorifies. Oh, if I could lay down nothing but the *comforts* of the Gospel, you would fly to them as flies do to honey. When you come to be ill, you send for the clergyman. Ah, you all want your minister, then, to come and give you consoling words. But if he is an honest man, he will not give some of you a particle of consolation. He will not commence pouring oil when the knife would be better. I want to make a man feel his sins before I dare tell him anything about Christ. I want to probe into his soul and make him feel that he is lost before I tell him anything about the purchased blessing! It is the ruin of many to tell them, "Now just believe on Christ and that is all you have to do." If, instead of dying they get better, they rise up whitewashed hypocrites—that is all. I have heard of a city missionary who kept a record of two thousand persons who were supposed to be on their deathbed, but recovered and whom he would have put down as converted persons had they died. And how many do you think lived a Christian life afterwards out of the two thousand! Not two! Positively he could only find one who was found to live afterwards in the fear of God! Is it not horrible that when men and women come to die, they should cry, "Comfort, comfort"? and therefore their friends conclude that they are children of God, while, after all, they have no right to consolation, but are intruders upon the enclosed grounds of the blessed God. O God! May these people ever be kept from having comfort when they have no right to it! Have you the other blessings? Have you had conviction of sin? Have you ever felt your guilt before God? Have your souls been humbled at Jesus' feet? And have you been made to look to Calvary, alone, for your refuge? If not, you have no right to consolation! Do not take an atom of it. The Spirit is a Convincer before He is a Comforter. And you must have the other operations of the Holy Spirit before you can derive anything from this!

And now I have done. You have heard what this babbling has said once more. What has it been? Something about the Comforter. But let me ask you, before you go, what do you know about the Comforter? Each one of

you before descending the steps of this Chapel—let this solemn question run through your souls—“What do you know of the Comforter?” Oh, poor Souls, if you know not the Comforter, I will tell you what you shall know—you shall know the Judge! If you know not the Comforter on earth, you shall know the Condemner in the next world, who shall cry, “Depart you cursed into everlasting fire in Hell.” Well might Whitfield call out, “O earth, earth, earth, hear the Word of the Lord!” If we were to live here forever, you might slight the Gospel. If you had a lease of your lives, you might despise the Comforter. But Sirs, you must die! Since last we met together, probably some have gone to their long last home. And before we meet again in this sanctuary, some here will be among the glorified above, or among the damned below! Which will it be? Let your soul answer. If tonight you fell down dead in your pews, or where you are standing in the gallery—where would you be?—In *Heaven* or in *Hell*?

Ah, deceive not yourselves—let conscience have its perfect work. And if, in the sight of God, you are obliged to say, “I tremble and fear lest my portion should be with unbelievers,” listen one moment and then I have done with you. “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved and he that believes not shall be damned.” Weary Sinner, hellish Sinner, you who are the devil’s castaway, reprobate, profligate, harlot, robber, thief, adulterer, fornicator, drunkard, swearer, Sabbath-breaker—listen! I speak to you as well as the rest. I exempt no man. God has said there is no exemption here. “*Whoever* believes in the name of Jesus Christ shall be saved.” Sin is no barrier—your guilt is no obstacle. *Whoever*—though he were as black in sin as Satan, though he were filthy as a fiend—whichever this night believes, shall have every sin forgiven, shall have every crime erased, shall have every iniquity blotted out. He shall be saved in the Lord Jesus Christ and shall stand in Heaven safe and secure!

That is the glorious Gospel. May God apply it home to your hearts and give you faith in Jesus!—

***“We have listened to the preacher—Truth
By Him has now been shown.
But we need a GREATER TEACHER,
From the everlasting Throne—
APPLICATION is the work of God alone.”***

Adapted from *The C.H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

THE BEST OF MASTERS

NO. 247

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, APRIL 10, 1859,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

*“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you:
not as the world gives, give I unto you.”
John 14:27.*

THE Gospel of John is peculiarly the history of Jesus, the Son of God. Matthew deals with Jesus as the Prince of the house of David. Mark treats of Him as the Servant of servants. And Luke views Him as the Son of Man. But John, with eagle eye, looks beyond all the clouds of His humanity, and seeing the clear shining of His Divinity, writes of Him especially as the Son of God, the Word, that in the beginning was with God and was God. It seems but right, then, that since Jesus came from Heaven, He should sometimes put both Himself and His cause in contrast with that which is of the earth. You will find through several chapters wherein our Savior is addressing His disciples, He continually contrasts Himself, His gifts and His love, with those of the world. He came from Heaven that He might fight and wrestle with an evil and a wicked world. That He might rescue His people from it. That He might cleanse the world and, at last, might present the earth itself to Himself, to be the new Heaven and the new earth, wherein righteousness should dwell.

I say, it seems but right, that in a Gospel which particularly views Christ as of heavenly origin and as very God of very God, that there should frequently be a contrast between Christ and the world, between the kingdom which is from Heaven and the kingdoms of this earth. Now, our text presents us with one contrast between Christ and the world—“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you. Not as the world gives, give I unto you.” He gives in a more Divine fashion than the world can ever give, even when its hand is most laden with its gifts.

Now, I shall take my text this morning and endeavor to talk of it thusly—first, viewing it with regard to the peace which Christ gives—He does not give peace as the world gives it. Secondly, I shall take a larger view of the subject and look upon *all* the gifts of Christ and say that, “not as the world gives, does He bestow His mercies on us.” And then close with a practical inference from the whole subject.

I. First of all, IN THE MATTER OF PEACE, Christ gives us peace, but not as the world gives it. For, in the first place, the world gives peace in a complimentary style. It was usual among the Orientals, for the wayfarer to

say to the person whom he met, "Peace be to you." And generally, when a house was entered, the benediction of peace was bestowed by every person who stepped across the threshold. These were often but vain and empty expressions of compliment. Those very utterances might proceed from the lips of an enemy. "The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart. His Words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords." It is the same with the world today. Everyone salutes us in writing with a, "Dear Sir," or a, "My dear Sir," and concludes, "Yours very truly," and, "Yours sincerely." We call all, "friends," and if we meet but casually we express the utmost anxiety with regard to one another's health and we carefully enquire after each other's families. Perhaps we shall no sooner have passed by the person than we shall forget his existence and certainly shall entertain no anxious thoughts with regard to his welfare, nor any loving remembrance of him. The world gives very largely when it gives compliments.

Oh, what blessings would descend upon all our heads if the blessings uttered could be blessings bestowed. Even when the "Good bye" is given, which translated means, "God be with you"—if that could be but true and if God could be with us, in answer to that prayer, so little understood, how rich might we be! But alas, the way of the world is, "Be you warmed and be you filled." But it has not that which should warm, nor that which should fill. It is a world of words—high-sounding, empty, all-deceiving words. Now, not so, does Christ give. If He says, "Peace be with you," His benediction is most true and full of sweet sincerity. He left His own peace in Heaven, that He might give the peace which He enjoyed with His Father to us in this world of sorrow, for thus He puts it, "My peace I give unto you." Christ, when He blesses, blesses not in word only, but in deed. The lips of truth cannot promise more than the hands of love will surely give. He gives not in compliment.

Furthermore, even when the world's wishes of peace are sincere, what are they but mere wishes? If I am met by my most sincere friend and he wishes to give a benediction, he cannot bestow one. 'Tis God's to bless His people with peace. We may bless with the wish but not with the deed. It may be our desire that every mercy should cluster round the head of our friend—that his pillow should be smooth, that his path should be easy, that his heart should be happy, that his end may be peace. But we must leave it with God to fulfill our prayers. If our power were equal to our will, how richly would we bless our friends with the priceless jewel of peace. But Christ says, "Not as the world gives, give I unto you." His wishes for us shall be accomplished and He Himself shall work them out.

Does He wish for us that we may be sanctified? Lo, He will sanctify us and present us without spot, or wrinkle, or any such things. Is it His will that we should be with Him where He is? It shall be done and we shall behold His glory and we shall share in it. There was never a wish in

Christ's heart with regard to His people that merely ended in a wish. The wish is but the bow string—the blessing is the arrow shot from it. Christ has not an empty bow, but His quiver is filled with arrows and every time He wishes, He fits a blessing on the string and sends it to us. Oh, rest assured that not as the world gives, with the empty wish, the deceitful brook, the empty well, does Christ give to us. He gives a fullness and a reality in all that He bestows.

Yet, furthermore, I may remark that, with regard to peace, the world gives only peace in prospect. There is not a man alive who is not hoping for better times. Even boys believe that better times are coming—times of rest and peace. The man who is just beginning in business expects that he shall take his rest and be much at ease, when he shall have succeeded in establishing a connection. Or if he finds that, as business increases, cares multiply, he hopes that, in a little time, the whole matter will become more steady, and that by the employment of honest persons, much of the care may be taken from him. And that time comes. But he finds that, even then, there are fresh cares which have arisen as the others have died out. He then looks forward to the time when, in his green old age, he shall retire to some country retreat and there spend the rest of his days in peace. For the most part that is but a vision and gray age in its retirement has its troubles still. Still, when men grow old, trouble is as young as ever and man finds just as much to prick and wound in the thorns of earth as when for the first time he trod its soil.

We are all intending and beginning to be peaceful. We are all going to be happy by-and-by. We have all made up our minds that soon we will have done with desiring more and then we will make our rest. This is the miraculous mistake of man—that he is always *beginning* to live. But he never does live. He always *intends* to be satisfied, but he never is. He always *means* to sit down in content, but that period never arrives. He has always something to vex him, but still hopes the day shall come when he shall be vexed no more.

Now, not as the world gives, does Christ give to us. The world puts before us a mirage in the desert. We see before us what we fancy to be springs of water and spreading palm trees—and we rush forward, but it is not there. It is only a few rods ahead and on we go, full wearily and foot-sore and now it is a little further on. Still we hurry on, but as we progress the vision flies before us, and we never reach it. Not thus does Christ bless. He gives and gives now. He gives in present foretaste and will give assuredly in the world which is to come. Yes, even now, the true Christian can say he has peace in Christ.

Oh, there are some of us who know what it is to be so content and happy when our thoughts are exercised upon our standing in Christ, that we could say we have not a wish beyond. We could sit still forever and rest in Him. Verily, we can testify that they who have believed do enter into

rest. We have seen the billows roar, we have marked the storm gathering, we have seen the black clouds big with tempest, gathering overhead. And we have been enabled to defy all these things and to find rest in Christ, notwithstanding. No, and when the clouds have emptied out their horrors, when the lightning has scathed the brow of darkness and the thunder has rolled tremendous through the sky, we have known what it is, even then, to rest in the bosom of Christ as a babe upon the breast of its mother. We have had a quiet and a perfect rest while the world has been in arms abroad.

Christ gives a real peace, not a something that we have to hunt for tomorrow, but a thing that we have now. And the true Believer can say that when he is enabled to see himself in Christ, he has all he wants. He can rest on beds of spices, feed among the lilies of satisfaction and neither ask nor wish for anything beyond. "Peace I give unto you. Not as the world gives, I give unto you."

Yet again—I remark once more, that all the peace which the world ever did give to any man was a delusion. I know some who possess the world's peace. I would to God that peace were broken. Some of you are content with yourselves. You are good enough you say, or, if not good enough, 'tis easy to amend. You fold your arms and you say, "Why make myself miserable about religion? Why trouble myself about the interests of another world?" Ah, Man, I would to God you could be made wretched—that you could be made miserable, for mark, your sleep is the sleep of death! It is one of the devil's great devices for destroying souls, to satisfy men—to give them the drug of indifference, the tincture of procrastination and so to stultify and stupefy them, that they go on from day-to-day, careless and reckless, till in Hell they lift up their eyes. Why, if you are concerned about your souls there is hope for you. The way to peace lies through distress. You must first be agitated before you can be pacified.

But, if you now say, "peace, peace," I tell you there is no peace. And if you now say, "be quiet, be still, hush!" I warn you, that all the quiet of which you boast is nothing but the hush before the hurricane—when the world seems as if it stands still in terror. When the birds droop their wings upon the trees and cease their notes—when the very lion hides himself in the thicket and when he roars no more, but is still waiting for the rushing wings of tempest. Here is a picture of your vaunted peace! Your calm is but a prelude of an eternal storm. The sunshine of today is but the index of the awful shower of tomorrow, a shower of red rain of vengeance and of hail mingled with fire. Oh, the peace the world gives is delusive. They that rest there, rest upon a bed of death.

But the peace which Christ gives is no delusion. When the Christian can sit down and say "I have nothing to fear. I have nothing to trouble me—nothing to tremble at, neither for this world, nor for the next," he is

not saying one word more than he has good ground for saying. No he is not going so far as he might go. He may say—

***“Now let earth’s old pillars shake,
And all the wheels of nature break.
My steadfast soul shall fear no more,
Than solid rocks when billows roar.”***

That peace has no pretense in it. It is not pompous. It is a reality. Profound though it is, it is not one whit more profound than it is warranted to be. The Believer rests upon a solid rock and all the waves of trouble can never make that rock give way, or shake the foundation of his peace. “Not as the world gives, give I unto you.”

II. Now having touched upon the first point, I come to the second IN THE MATTER OF GIVING. Take a broad view of it. In whatever the world gives, Christ does not give after the same fashion.

In the first place, the world gives scantily. Even the world’s best friends have had cause to complain of its contemptible treatment. In reading the biographies of mighty men whom the world honors, you will be soon convinced that the world is a most ungrateful friend. If you should devote your whole life to serve the world and make it happy, think not the world would ever return you so much as a dolt. Robert Burns is an instance of the world’s fine gratitude. There was the world’s poet—he sung the roaring tankards foaming. He sang the loves of women and the joys of lust—the world admired him, but what did the world do for him? He might drag along his whole life in almost poverty. When the time comes for Robert Burns to be honored, (which was all too late for a buried man,) how did they honor him? He had poor relatives. Look to the subscription list and see how magnificent the donations they received! They honored him with libations of whiskey which they drunk themselves. That was all they would give him. The devotion of the Scotch drunkards to their poet is a devotion to their drunkenness, not to him. Doubtless there are many true-hearted men who bewail the sinner as much as they admire the genius, but the mass like him none worse for his faults. However, if it had been ordained and decreed that every drunkard who honored Burns should go without his whiskey for a week—there was not a dozen of them would have done it—not half a dozen. Their honor to him was a honor to themselves. It was an opportunity for drunkenness, at least in thousands of instances.

As I stood by his monument some little time ago, I saw around it a most dismal, dingy set out of withered flowers and I thought, “Ah, this is his honor! O, Burns! How have you spent your life to have a withered wreath for the world’s payment of a life of mighty genius and a flood of marvelous song!” Yes, when the world pays best, she pays nothing, and when she pays least, she pays her flatterers with scorn. She rewards their services with neglect and poverty. Many a statesman might I quote who

has spent his life in the world's service and at first the world said "Go on, go on," and he was clapped everywhere. He was doing something to serve his time. But he made a little mistake, a mistake perhaps, which will prove not to have been a mistake at all when the books of history shall be read with a clearer eye. "Down with him," says the world, "we will have nothing more to do with him." All he may have done before went for nothing. One mistake, one flaw in his political career—"Down with him, cast him to the dogs, we will have nothing to do with him again."

Ah, the world pays scantily indeed! What will it do for those it loves the best! When it has done all it can, the last resource of the world is to give a man a title (and what is that)? And then to give him a tall pillar and set him up there to bear all weathers, to be pitilessly exposed to every storm. And there he stands for fools to gaze at, one of the world's great ones paid in stone. It is true the world has paid that out of its own heart, for that is what the world's heart is made of. The world pays scantily.

But did you ever hear a Christian who complained thus of his Master? "No," will he say "when I serve Christ, I feel that my *work* is my wages. That labor for Christ is its own reward. He gives me joy on earth, with a fullness of bliss hereafter." Oh, Christ is a good Paymaster. "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life." He that serves Christ may get but little gold and silver such as this world calls precious, but he gets a gold and a silver that shall never be melted in the last refining fire, that shall glitter among the precious things of immortality throughout eternity. The world pays niggardly and scantily, but not so Christ.

Again—if you will serve the world and you wish to have gifts from it, the world will pay you half-heartedly. Now by the world I mean the religious world quite as much as any other part of it. I mean the whole world—religious, political, good, bad and indifferent—the whole lot of them. If you serve the world it will pay you half-heartedly. Let a man spend himself for his fellow creatures' interests, what will he get for it? Some will praise him, some will abuse him. The men that escape without abuse in this world are the men who do nothing at all. He who is most valiant and useful must expect to be most reprobated and abhorred. Those men who are borne upon the waves of popular applause are not the men whose worth is true—real philanthropists must swim against the stream. The whole list of the world's benefactors is an army of martyrs. All along, the path of the good is marked with blood and fire. The world does not pay the men that serve it really, except with ingratitude. I say, to come back, even when the world does pay, it pays half-heartedly. Did you ever know a man yet, concerning whom the world's mind was one? I never heard of any.

"Oh," says one, "So-and-So is one of the best men of his times." Go down the next street and you will hear it said, "He is the biggest vagabond living." Go to one and you will hear him say, "I never heard a man of such genius as that is." "Oh," says another, "mere twaddle." "There is such a

newspaper,” says one, “how ably it defends the rights of the people.” “Oh,” says another, “mere democracy—seeking to pull down everything that is constitutional and proper.” The world never made up its mind about any man yet. There is not a soul living concerning whom the world is unanimous.

But when Christ gives anything, He always gives with all His heart. He does not say to his people, “There, I give you this, but still I have half-a-mind to keep it back.” No, Christ gives His heart to all His people. There is no double-mindedness in Jesus. If we are enabled by Free Grace to serve Him and to love Him, we may rest quite sure that in the rich reward which His Grace shall give us, His whole heart shall go with every blessing. When Christ blesses the poor needy soul, He does not give with one hand and smite with the other. But he gives him mercies with both His hands—both full. He asks the sinner simply to receive all that He is willing to give.

Then again, whenever the world gives anything, it gives mostly to those who do not want it. I remember once, when a lad, having a dog which I very much prized and some man in the street asked me to give him the dog. I thought it was pretty impudent and I said as much. A gentlemen, however, to whom I told it, said, “Now suppose the Duke of So-and-So”—who was a great man in the neighborhood—“asked you for the dog—would you give it him?” I said, “I think I would.” He said, “Then you are just like all the world. You would give to those who do not want.” Who in the whole of this congregation would object to give anything to the Queen? Not a soul of us and yet, perhaps, there is no person in the world who so little needs our gifts. We can always give to those who do not require anything. For we feel that there is some little honor conferred upon us—an honor bestowed by the reception.

Now, look at Jesus. When He gives to His friends, He gets no honor from them—the honor is in His own free heart that should lead Him to give to such poor worms. Great men have gone to Christ with mere professions and they have asked Him to be good to them, but then they have at the same time declared that they had a righteousness of their own and did not want much of Him. And He has sent them about their business and given them nothing. He said, “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” But whenever poor, lost sinners have gone to Christ, He has never turned one of them away—never. He has given all they could possibly want and infinitely more than they thought they could ever expect. Might not Jesus say to us, when we ask Him for the blessings of His Grace, “You are impudent in daring to ask.” But instead of that, He loves to be asked and He freely and richly gives—“Not as the world gives.” For He gives to those who need it most.

Again, there is another view of the world’s gifts. The world gives to its friends, Any man will help his own friends. If we help not our own relatives and friends then are we worse than heathen men and publicans. But

the world generally confines its good wishes and blessings to its class and kin. It cannot think of giving blessings to its enemies. Did you ever hear yet of the world's blessing an enemy? Never. It gives its benefactions to its friends and but very scantily even to them. But Christ gives His benefactions to His enemies. "Not as the world gives," He may truly say. The world says, "I must see whether you deserve it. I must see that your case is a good one." It enquires and enquires and enquires again. But Christ only sees that our case is a bad one and then He gives. He wants not a *good* case but a *bad* case. He knows our necessity and, once discovering our necessity, not all our sin can stop the hand of His bounty.

Oh, if Jesus should call to mind some of the hard speeches we have uttered about Him, He would never bless us surely, if it were not that His ways are far above our ways. Why, remember, Man, it is not long ago since you cursed Him—since you laughed at His people—despised His ministers and could spit

upon His Bible. Jesus has cast all that behind His back and loved you in spite of yourself. Would the world have done that? Let a man get up and rail at his fellows, will they forgive and, after forgiving, will they begin to bless? Will they die for their enemies? Oh, no! Such a thing never entered into the heart of manhood. But Christ blesses rebels, traitors, enemies to His Cross. He brings them to know His love and taste of His eternal mercies. A thousand remarks seem to start up and I scarcely know which to choose. "Not as the world gives give I unto you."

The world always gives with a stingy motive. The most of us are compelled to economy. If we give anything away to a poor man we generally hope that he will not come back. If we give him half a-crown it is very often, as we say, to get rid of him. If we bestow a little charity it is in the hope that we shall not see his face again, for really we do not like the same men continually begging at our door when the world is so full of beggars. Did you ever hear of a man who gave a beggar something to encourage him to keep on begging of him? I must confess I never did such a thing and am not likely to begin. But that is just what Christ does. When He gives us a little grace, His motive is to make us ask for more. And when He gives us more grace, it is given with the very motive to make us come and ask again. He gives us silver blessings to induce us to ask for golden mercies. And when we have golden favors, those same mercies are given on purpose to lead us to pray more earnestly and open our mouth wider that we may receive more.

What a strange giver Christ is! What a strange Friend, that He gives on purpose to make us beg more! The more you ask of Christ, the more you can ask. The more you receive, the more you will want. The more you know Him, the more you will desire to know Him. The more grace you receive, the more grace you will pant after. And when you are full of grace, you will never be content till you get full of glory. Christ's way of giving is,

“Of His fullness have we received and grace for grace”—grace to make us pant for more grace—grace to make us long after something higher, something fuller and richer still. “Not as the world gives, give I unto you.”

Again—when the world gives anything it is almost always with a selfish motive. The Christian man gives, not hoping to receive again. But the world lends that it may borrow. It gives that it may receive. There are many men whose whole lives are a looking after self. They would not like to be told so. But even their benefactions to a hospital, or to a charity, are merely given because the name should be in the list. We know that too many persons would not think of relieving private want unless they thought there was a merit in it and so thought it would stand good for them at last. They would infinitely prefer to do their good in the lumps. I know, at this day, a man that I believe would give twenty pounds, fifty pounds, or a hundred pounds to a charity, but who would let his own relatives starve rather than give them anything, because it would never be *known*—no one would talk about it. The world’s motive for bestowing a blessing is in order that some rich fruit may flow from it. If the world rewards a warrior, its ostensible reason is that other soldiers may fight bravely. If it rewards some great artist, it is to encourage the profession, that is, to help themselves, by getting others to amuse them as well as this man has done.

There is always an ulterior object in the world’s generosity. Not so in Christ’s. When He gives us mercies, He has nothing whatever to get from us. It is our delight to live to Him. But our living to Him cannot increase *His* glory—He is God over all, blessed forever. He gives us more than He can ever receive. And though we with grateful hearts desire to live to Him, that very gratitude is first His gift. The well of love is filled out of the spring of God—otherwise it had been the grave of mercies and not a fountain of praise.

Now, what more shall I say? I seem to have brought out the most prominent points of the worlds giving, but let me add one more. “Not as the world gives, give I unto you.” All that the world gives, it only bestows for a season—it must go back again. You have riches, Man, as the reward of your toils. What shall you be the better for them in a few short months? Your broad acres, your leagues of land shall dwindle into a short six feet of clay. Your mansion—what shall it shrivel into—but into a small coffin, over which shall be thrown a little dirt to hide your putrid dust and save the world a nuisance? The world will have all back of you. Naked you did come into it and it will take care you shall take nothing out of it, for naked shall you go out of it again.

Oh, Man, you have accumulated knowledge until you have become a walking encyclopedia, but what shall you take with you? What difference shall there be between your hollow skull and that of the meanest peasant, when some wanton sexton, in some future year, shall take it up, or split it

with his spade? What shall you be the better for all those big thoughts that have stretched your skull and all those marvelous conceptions that have made it ache so much, that you could scarcely carry it upon your shoulders? You will go back again to your fellow earth and the worm shall eat you and the philosopher shall taste no sweeter to his tooth than did the peasant.

And, then, whether you are prince or king, or whether you are a poor, ignorant man, the worms shall make no distinction. You shall still rot—still be consumed—noisome gases and a handful of dust shall be your whole residue. What then can the world give? If it tried it could not give you anything that would last. It cannot give you anything better than air. It can give you nothing that can pass into eternity with you. What? Though it follow you with the trumpet of fame, that trumpet cannot be heard half-way across the Jordan. If all the men in the world clapped their hands in your praise, not one angel, even on the very borders of the celestial world would observe the tumult of applause. The world can give you nothing that you can carry with you. You are at the best a packhorse, that shall carry its burden till it ends its journey and then it must lie down and die. You do but carry a burden on your back, and verily, death shall unload you before you are allowed to enter another world.

How different is Christ in His gifts! What He gives He gives forever. When He bestows mercies they are lasting things. No shadows does He give, but real substance—no fancies, but eternal realities does He bestow. Oh, men of this world, when your gold is melted—when your diamonds have dissolved in gas—when your estates have gone—when your hopes are lost and when your goods are destroyed, then shall the people of God begin to know their riches. Then shall they shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

“Not as the world gives, give I unto you.”

III. Now this brings me to one PRACTICAL REFLECTION, OR RATHER EXHORTATION TO GOD’S PEOPLE. If this is true, my Hearers, I beseech you serve not the world—serve none but Christ, for He is the *best* master. Serve Him with all your might, because He so richly has given and so richly will give. I would not serve the world for the best empire in it. A king once said he wished all his subjects could be kings for a day, for “they would soon discover,” he said, “that the art of governing is not so easy as they think and that a crown is not so soft a thing to wear as they imagine.” No, the world may abuse us if it likes. If it abuses us we are not very sad there, because the world is not our master and as long as our own Master is satisfied, we care not for a stranger. If anyone should walk into your garden and say to your gardener, “I do not like the arrangement of these beds. I do not like those flowers. You are evidently a careless man.” He would say, “Well, my master has been round this morning. He did not say much, but I saw a smile of satisfaction on his face. Therefore, what is

that to you? It is no business of yours. I am not your servant. I do not serve you.”

Now, the world is a bad paymaster to those that obey and serve it. Let every Christian make up his mind that he will have nothing to do with serving the world. If the world scorns and frowns, let him say, “It is no business of yours. You are not my master. I do not serve you. If it amuses you to abuse me go on, it will not hurt me.” There is even in the mind of Christians at times too much of a tendency to time-serving. We are all so apt to think that we really must bow to public opinion, to this, that and the other. Oh, you will never be happy until the Holy Spirit has brought you to this—that you will fear God and that you will fear no one else—that you will serve God with undivided heart. I go further—I would not even serve the Church if I must have it for a master. I can serve God, I can serve Christ. For Christ is a blessed Master. But I would not advise any of you to make the Church your master. Wherever the Church is we are all bound to serve the Brethren, to serve the Church of Christ as we are bound to assist in a common cause—but think not that even the dictum of the Church is to be your judge. Imagine not that even its praise is that which you are to seek.

You are to seek the praise of Christ. His Church may do wrong, his ministers make mistakes, but Christ Himself can never be in error. Serve Christ—this is the practical exhortation from the whole subject. My dear Friends, you that love Christ and have been chosen by him from before the foundation of the world, who have been bought with his blood, have been washed and pardoned and forgiven—if Christ gives to you, not as the world gives—then I beseech you serve Christ better than worldlings serve the world. Oh, it is astonishing what men have done to serve the world! They have rushed to the cannon’s mouth and given their life to be food for powder and they have thought they were well rewarded with a little praise. Men, too, have sweated at the furnace. They have spent their livings, have starved their families, to invent some luxuries for the tables of the rich. Men have undergone unheard of labors, toils that positively appall you to read of, merely to become eminent in their profession, to be first in the rank of artisans among which they were numbered.

When the world has a gulf to fill, it never lacks a Curtis to leap into it, but Christ often sees his cause left and deserted by reason of the coldness of his friends. There is many a battle wherein the warriors of Christ turn their backs, though armed and carrying bows. I was thinking yesterday and the thought struck me forcibly, that one thousand eight hundred years ago, or a little more, there were a few men met in an upper chamber for worship—about four hundred of them. They met and they prayed and they preached and there was a Divine fire kindled in their bosoms. And in a few years, they had preached the Gospel in every language under Heaven and the mass of the world became professedly Christians. Now

here is a room, not with four hundred persons, but oftentimes filled with thousands and yet does the religion of Christ progress as it should? No.

If there were but a little, but a hundredth part of the zeal of Christ's disciples that there was in olden times, before another year rolls round, there would be missionaries in every town. The Gospel would be preached in every village of India and China and every other nation accessible to the foot of the missionary. As it is we are an idle generation. A tribe of dwarfs has succeeded to a race of giants and now Christ's cause creeps where it once ran and only runs where once it was desirous to fly as with wings of lightning. Oh, that God would make bare His arm! And if ever He does, the first sign of it will be that the Church will begin to serve Christ more zealously. Some will give their blood to die in the preaching of the Word. Others will pour their wealth into coffers of the Church and every living soul numbered in the family of Christ will spend itself and be spent for its Master's honor.

"Not as the world gives, give I unto you." O Jesus, not as the world's followers give, do we desire to give to You. They give their lives but once, we would "die daily." They give much of their talent, we would give all. Take our heart and seal it, make it as Your own, that we may live to Your honor and die in Your arms and sit upon Your throne with You forever and ever. Amen

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SPIRITUAL PEACE

NO. 300

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, FEBRUARY 19, 1860,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.**

***“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.”
John 14:27.***

OUR Lord was now about to die, to depart from this world and to ascend to His Father. He therefore makes his will. And this is the blessed legacy which He leaves to the faithful—“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.”

We may rest well assured that this testament of our Lord Jesus Christ is valid. You have here His own signature. It is signed, sealed and delivered in the presence of the eleven Apostles, who are faithful and true witnesses. ‘Tis true a testament is not in force while the testator lives, but Jesus Christ has died once and for all. And now none can dispute His legacy. The will is in force, because the testator has died. It may however, sometimes happen that a testator’s wishes in a will may be disregarded and he, powerless beneath the sod, is quite unable to rise and demand that his last will should be carried out. But our Lord Jesus Christ who died and therefore made His will valid rose again and now He lives to see every stipulation of it carried out. And this blessed codicil, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you,” is sure to all the blood-bought seed. Peace is theirs and must be theirs, because He died and put the will in force and lives to see the will fulfilled.

The donation, the blessed legacy which our Lord has here left, is His peace. This might be considered as being peace with all the creatures. God has made a league of peace between His people and the whole universe. “For you shall be in league with the stones of the field—and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with you.” “All things work together for good to them that love God.” Providence that was once estranged and seemed to work counter to our welfare, has now become at peace with us. The wheels revolve in happy order and bear us blessings as often as they turn.

The words of our Lord may also refer to the peace which exists among the people of God toward one another. There is a peace of God which reigns in our hearts through Jesus Christ, by which we are bound in closest ties of unity and concord to every other child of God whom we may meet with in our pilgrimage here below. Leaving, however, these two sorts of peace, which I believe to be comprehended in the legacy, let us proceed to consider two kinds of peace, which in our experience resolve themselves into one and which are surely the richest part of this benediction.

Our Savior here means peace with God and peace with our own conscience. There is first, peace with God for He “has reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ.” He has put away the wall which separated us from Jehovah and now there is “peace on earth” and “goodwill toward men.” When sin is put away, God has no cause of warfare against His creature—Christ has put our sins away and therefore there is a virtual substantial peace established between God and our souls. This, however, might exist without our clearly understanding and rejoicing in it. Christ has therefore left us peace in the conscience. Peace with God is the treaty. Peace in the conscience is the publication of it. Peace with God is the fountain and peace with conscience is the crystal stream which issues from it. There is a peace decreed in the court of Divine Justice in Heaven. And then there follows as a necessary consequence, as soon as the news is known, a peace in the minor court of human judgment wherein conscience sits upon the throne to judge us according to our works.

The legacy, then, of Christ is a twofold peace—a peace of friendship, of agreement, of love, of everlasting union between the elect and God. It is next a peace of sweet enjoyment, of quiet rest of the understanding and the conscience. When there are no winds above, there will be no tempests below. When Heaven is serene earth is quiet. Conscience reflects the complacency of God. “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, by whom also we have received the atonement.”

I propose this morning, if God the Holy Spirit shall graciously assist, to speak of this peace thus—first, its secret groundwork. Then its noble nature. Thirdly, its blessed effects. Fourthly, its interruptions and means of maintenance and then I shall close by some words of solemn warning to those of you who have never enjoyed peace with God and consequently never have had true peace with yourselves.

I. First, then, THE PEACE WHICH A TRUE CHRISTIAN ENJOYS WITH GOD AND HIS CONSCIENCE HAS A SOLID GROUNDWORK TO REST UPON. It is not built upon a pleasing fiction of his imagination—a delusive dream of his ignorance. But it is built on facts, on positive truths, on essential verities. It is founded upon a rock and though the rains descend and the winds blow and the floods beat upon that house, it shall not fall, because its foundation is secure. When a man has faith in the blood of Christ there is but little wonder that he has peace, for indeed he is fully warranted in enjoying the most profound calm which mortal heart can know. For thus he reasons with himself—God has said, “He that believes is justified from all things,” and, moreover, that, “he that believes on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved.”

Now, my faith is unfeignedly fixed in the great substitutionary sacrifice of Christ—therefore I am now justified from all things and stand accepted in Christ as a Believer. The necessary consequence of that is, that he possesses peace of mind. If God has punished Christ in my place, He will not

punish me again. "Being once purged I have no more conscience of sin." Under the Jewish ceremonial mention was made of sin every year. The atoning lamb must be slaughtered a thousand times. But "this Man, having made one atonement for sins, forever sat down at the right hand of the majesty in the heavens." How, I ask, can the man tremble who believes himself forgiven? It were strange, indeed if his faith did not breathe a holy calm into his bosom.

Again—the child of God receives his peace from another golden pipe—for a sense of pardon has been shed abroad in his soul. He not only believes his forgiveness from the testimony of God, but he has a sense of pardon. Do any of you know what this is? It is something more than a belief in Christ. It is the cream of faith, the full ripe fruit of believing. It is a high and special privilege which God gives after faith. If I have not that sense of pardon I am still bound to believe and then, believing, I shall by and by advance to the seeing of that which I believed and hoped for. The Holy Spirit sometimes sheds abroad in the Believer a consciousness that he is forgiven. By mysterious agency He fills the soul with the light of glory. If all the false witnesses on earth should rise up and tell the man at that time that God is not reconciled to him—that his sins remain unforgiven—he would be able to laugh them to scorn. For says he, "the love of God is shed abroad in my heart by the Holy Spirit." He feels that he is reconciled to God. He has come from faith up to enjoyment and every power of his soul feels the Divine dew as it gently distils from Heaven.

The understanding feels it, it is enlightened. The will feels it, it is subjected to the will of God. The heart feels it, it is fired with holy love. The hope feels it, for it looks forward to the day when the whole man shall be made like its Covenant Head, Jesus Christ. Every flower in the garden of humanity feels the sweet south wind of the Spirit, as it blows upon it and causes the sweet spices to send forth their perfume. What wonder, then, that man has peace with God when the Holy Spirit becomes a royal tenant of the heart, with all His glorious train of blessings?

Ah, poor tried Soul, what peace and joy unspeakable would reign in your soul if you did but believe on Christ? "Yes," you say, "but I want God to manifest to me that I am forgiven." Poor Soul, He will not do that at once. He bids you believe Christ, first, and then He will make manifest to you the pardon of your sin. It is by faith we are saved, not by enjoyment. But when I believe Christ and take Him at His word, even when my feelings seem to contradict my faith, then, as a gracious reward, He will honor my faith by giving me to feel that which I once believed when I did not feel it.

The Believer also enjoys, in favored seasons, such an intimacy with the Lord Jesus Christ, that he cannot but be at peace. Oh, there are sweet words which Christ whispers in the ears of His people. And there are love-visits which He pays to them, which a man would not believe even though it should be told unto him. You must know for yourselves what it is to

have fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. There is such a thing as Christ manifesting Himself to us as He does not unto the world. All black and frightful thoughts are banished. "I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is Mine." This is the one all-absorbing feeling of the spirit. And what wonder is it, that the Believer has peace when Christ thus dwells in his heart and reigns there without a rival, so that he knows no man, save Jesus only. It were a miracle of miracles if we did not have peace. And the strangest thing in Christian experience is that our peace is not more continued and the only explanation of our misery is that our communion is broken, that our fellowship is marred, else would our peace be like a river and our righteousness like the waves of the sea.

That venerable man of God, Joseph Irons, who but a little while ago ascended to our Father in Heaven, says, "What wonder that a Christian man has peace when he carries the title-deeds of Heaven in his bosom!" This is another solid groundwork of confidence. We know that Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people and the Christian can sometimes cry with the Apostles, "Thanks be unto the Father, who has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." Feeling that God has given him the meetness, he discovers that this preparation is a warrant for the hope that he shall enter into the dwelling place of the glorified. He can lift his eye above and say, "Yon bright world is mine, my entailed inheritance. Life keeps me from it, but death shall bring me to it. My sins cannot destroy the Heaven-written indentures, Heaven is mine. Satan himself cannot shut me out of it. I must, I shall be where Jesus is, for after Him my spirit longs and to Him my soul is knit."

Oh, Brethren, it is not a marvel when all is blest within and all is calm above, that justified men possess, "a peace with God which passes all understanding." You will perhaps be saying, well, but the Christian has troubles like other men—losses in business, deaths in his family and sickness of body! Yes, but he has another groundwork for his peace—an assurance of the faithfulness and covenant fidelity of his God and Father. He believes that God is a faithful God—that whom He has loved He will not cast away.

All the dark Providences to him are but blessings in disguise. When his cup is bitter, he believes it is mixed by love and it must all end well, for God secures the ultimate result. Therefore come foul, come fair, come all weathers, his soul shelters itself beneath the twin wings of the faithfulness and power of his Covenant God. The sanctified spirit is so resigned to his Father's will that he will not murmur. To him, as Madame Guyon was wont to say—"It is equal whether love ordain his life or death, appoint him weal or woe."

He is content to take just what his Father sends him, knowing that his Father understands him better than he understands himself. He gives up the helm of his ship to the hand of a gracious God. And he himself is enabled to fall asleep softly in the cabin. He believes that his Captain has

power over winds and waves. And when he sometimes feels his ship rocking in the storm, he cries with Herbert—

***“Though winds and waves assault my keel,
He does preserve it. He does steer,
Even when the boat seems most to reel.
Storms are the triumph of His art;
Sure, He may hide His face, but not His heart.”***

No wonder, then, that he has peace, when he can feel this and knows that he who has begun the good work, has both the will and the power to perfect it, unto the day of Christ.

II. Having hurriedly unveiled the secret groundwork of the Christian’s peace, we must dwell for a few minutes upon ITS NOBLE CHARACTER. The peace of other men is ignoble and base. Their peace is born in the outskirts of sin. Self-conceit and ignorance are its parents. The man knows not what he is and therefore thinks himself to be something—when he is nothing. He says—“I am rich and increased in goods,” while he is naked and poor and miserable.

Not such is the birth of the Christian’s peace. That is born of the Spirit. It is a peace which God the Father gives, for He is the God of all peace. It is a peace which Jesus Christ bought, for He has made peace with His blood and He is our peace. And it is a peace which the Holy Spirit works—He is its Author and its founder in the soul. Our peace then, is God’s own child and God-like is its character. His Spirit is its sire and it is like its Father. It is “My peace,” says Christ! Not man’s peace, but the unruffled calm—the profound peace of the Eternal Son of God. Oh, if we had but this one thing within our bosoms, this Divine peace, a Christian were a glorious thing, indeed.

And even now kings and mighty men of this world are as nothing when once compared with the Christian. For he wears a jewel in his bosom which all the world could not buy—a jewel fashioned from old eternity and ordained by Sovereign Grace to be the high blessing, the right royal inheritance of the chosen sons of God. This peace, then, is Divine in its origin. And it is also Divine in its nourishment. It is a peace which the world cannot give. And it cannot contribute towards its maintenance. The daintiest morsels that ever carnal sense fed upon would be bitter to the mouth of this sweet peace. You may bring your much fine corn, your sweet wine and your flowing oil, your dainties tempt us not, for this peace feeds upon angels’ food and it cannot relish any food that grows on earth.

If you should give a Christian ten times as much riches as he has, you would not cause him ten times as much peace. But probably, ten times more distress. You might magnify him in honor, or strengthen him with health—yet, neither would his honor or his health contribute to his peace, for that peace flows from a Divine source, and there are no tributary streams from the hills of earth to feed that Divine current. The stream flows from the Throne of God and by God alone is it sustained. It is, then, a peace Divinely born and Divinely nourished.

And let me again remark, it is a peace that lives above circumstances. The world has tried hard to put an end to the Christian's peace and it has never been able to accomplish it. I remember, in my early childhood, having heard an old man utter in prayer, a saying which stuck by me—"O Lord, give unto your servants that peace which the world can neither give nor take away." Ah, the whole might of our enemies cannot take it away. Poverty cannot destroy it. The Christian in his rags can have peace with God. Sickness cannot mar it. Lying on his bed, the saint is joyful in the midst of the fires.

Persecution cannot ruin it, for persecution cannot separate the Believer from Christ—and while he is one with Christ his soul is full of peace. "Put your hand here," said the martyr to his executioner, when he was led to the stake, "put your hand here and now put your hand on your own heart and feel which beats the hardest and which is the most troubled." Strangely was the executioner struck with awe, when he found the Christian man as calm as though he were going to a wedding feast, while he himself has all agitation at having to perform so desperate a deed.

Oh, world! We *defy* you to rob us of our peace! We did not get it of you and you can not rend it from us. It is set as a seal upon our arm. It is strong as death and invincible as the grave. Your stream, O Jordan, cannot drown it, black and deep though your depths may be. In the midst of your tremendous billows our soul is confident and rests still on Him that loved us and gave Himself for us. Frequently have I had to remark that Christians placed in the most unfavorable circumstances are, as a rule, better Christians than those who are placed in propitious positions.

In the midst of a very large Church of persons in all ranks, with the condition of most of whom I am as thoroughly conversant as man can well be, I have observed that the women who come from houses where they have ungodly husbands and trying children—that the young people who come from workshops where they are opposed and laughed at—that the people who come from the depths of poverty, from the dens and kens of our city, are the brightest jewels that are set in the crown of the Church. It seems as if God would defeat nature—not only make the hyssop grow on the wall, but make the cedar grow there, too—he finds his brightest pearls in the darkest waters and brings up his most precious jewels from the filthiest dung hills—

***"Wonders of grace to God belong,
Repeat His mercies in your song."***

And this I have found too, that often the more disturbed a Christian man is, the purer is his peace. The heavier the rolling swell his griefs and sorrow, the more still and calm and profound is the peace that reigns within his heart. So then, it is peace Divinely born, Divinely nourished and one which is quite above the influence of this poor whirling world.

Further, I must remark briefly upon the nature of this peace, that it is profound and real. "The peace of God," says an Apostle, "that passes all

understanding.” This peace not only fills all the senses to the brim till every power is satiated with delight. But it fills the understanding which can take in the whole world and understand many things which are not within the range of vision—even the understanding cannot take in the length and the breadth of this peace. And not only will the understanding fail to compass it, but all understanding is outdone. When our judgment has exerted itself to the utmost, it cannot comprehend the heights and depths of this profound peace.

Have you ever imagined what must be the stillness of the caverns in the depth of the seas? A thousand fathoms beneath the bosom of the floods, where the mariners’ bones lie undisturbed? Where pearls are born and corals that never see the light—where the long lost gold and silver of the merchants lie sprinkled on the sandy floor? Down in the rock caves and the silent palaces of darkness where waves dash not and the intruding foot of the diver has never trodden? So clear, so calm is the peace of God, the placid rest of the assured Believer.

Or lift up your eyes to the stars. Have you ever dreamed a sweet dream of the quietude of those noiseless orbs? Let us mount beyond the realm of noise and riot—let us tread the noiseless highway of the silent orbs. The thunders are far below us, the confused tumult of the crowd defiles not the sanctity of this wondrous quiet. See how the stars sleep on their golden couches, or only open their bright eyes to keep watch upon that storm less sea of ether and guard the solemn boundaries of the reign of peace. Such is the peace and calm that reigns in the Christian’s bosom. “Sweet calm,” one calls it. “Perfect peace,” David styles it. Another one calls it “great peace.” “Great peace have all they that love Your Law and nothing shall offend them.”

Last year—I tell you now a secret of my own heart—I had one text which thrust itself upon my remembrance many times a day. I dreamed of it when I slept. When I awoke it went with me and I verified it and rejoiced in it—“His soul shall dwell at ease.” It is my promise now. There is such an ease—quite consistent with labor, with agony for the souls of men, with an earnest desire for yet greater attainments in Divine life. There is such an ease—it is not to be gained by all the appliances of luxury, by all the aggrandizement of wealth—an ease in which “not a wave of trouble rolls across the peaceful breast.” But all is calm and all is clear and all is joy and love. May we evermore dwell in that serene atmosphere and never lose our hold of this peace.

Lest there should be any of you who do not understand what I have said, I will try and say it over again briefly in an example. Do you see that man? He has been taken up before a cruel tribunal. He is condemned to die. The hour draws near—he is taken to prison and placed there with two soldiers to guard him and four soldiers outside the door. The night comes on—he lies down, but in how uncomfortable a position! Chained between two soldiers! He lies down and he falls asleep—not the sleep of the guilty

criminal, whose very sense of dread makes his eyelids heavy. But a calm sleep which is given by God and which ends in an angelic vision, by which he is delivered. Peter sleeps, when the death sentence is above his head and the sword is ready to penetrate his soul.

See another picture? There are Paul and Silas yonder—they have been preaching and their feet are thrust in the stocks for it. They will die on the morrow. But in the midnight they sing praises unto God and the prisoners hear them. One would have thought in such a loathsome dungeon as that, they would have groaned and moaned all night long, or that at best they might have slept. But no, they sang praises to God and the prisoners heard them. There is the peace—the calm, the quietude of the heir of Heaven.

I might give you another picture—of our ancient Nonconformists, in the days of that most persecuting Queen Elizabeth. She cast into prison among very many others, two of our forefathers, of the name of Greenwood and Barrow. They were caused to lie in that loathsome stinking dungeon—the Clink Prison—shut in one huge room with maniacs, murderers, felons and the like—compelled to listen to their frightful conversation. One day there came a warrant that they must die. The two men were led out and tied to the cart and were about to be taken away to death.

But they were no sooner outside the gate than a messenger rode up. The Queen had sent a reprieve. They were taken back. Calmly and quietly they returned to their prison. And the next day they were taken to Newgate and, just as suddenly, there come a second messenger, to say they must be taken away to Tyburn to die. They were again tied to the cart. They ascended the scaffold, the ropes were put round their necks and they were allowed to stand in that position and address the assembled multitude and bear witness to the liberty of Christ's Church and to the right of private judgment among men. They concluded their speech and a second time that wretched Queen sent them a reprieve and they were taken back a second time to the dungeon and there they lay in Newgate.

But only for few days more and then a third time they were taken out and this time they were hanged in reality. But they went as cheerfully to the scaffold on each occasion as men go to their beds and seemed as joyous, as though they were going to a crown, rather than to a halter. Such specimens all the Churches of Christ can show. Wherever there has been a true Christian, the world has tried its best to put out his peace. But it is a peace that never can be quenched—it will live on. With halter about its neck, with the hot pincers tearing away its flesh, with the sword in its very bones, it will live, till, mounting from the burning bush of earth, this bird of paradise shall wear its glittering plumage in the midst of the garden of paradise.

III. Having detained you longer on this point than I thought I should do, I hasten to the third point, THE EFFECTS OF THIS DIVINE PEACE.

The blessed effects of this Divine peace are, first of all, joy. You will notice that the words “joy” and “peace” are continually put together. For joy without peace were an unhallowed and an unhappy joy—the crackling of thorns under a pot, unsound, mere flames of joy, but not the red glowing coals of bliss. Now, Divine peace gives joy to the Christian. And such joy! Have you ever seen the first gleam of joy when it has come into the eye of the penitent? It has been my happy lot to pray with many a convicted sinner, to witness the deep agony of spirit and deeply sympathize with the poor creature in his trouble for sin.

I have prayed and have exhorted to faith and I have seen that flash of joy, when at last the hopeful word was spoken, “I do believe on the Lord Jesus Christ with all my heart.” Oh, that look of joy! It is as if the gates of Heaven had been opened for a moment and some flash of glory had blazed upon the eye and had been reflected from there. I remember my own joy, when I first had peace with God. I thought I could dance all the way home. I could understand what John Bunyan said, when he declared he wanted to tell the crows on the plowed land all about it. He was too full to hold, he felt he must tell someone.

Oh, there was joy in the household that day, when all heard that the eldest son had found a Savior and knew himself to be forgiven—bliss compared with which all earth’s joys are less than nothing and vanity. As the counterfeit to the real coin, so are the base joys of earth to the real joy which springs from peace with God. Young man! Young woman! You could have bliss such as you never knew before, you must be reconciled to God through the blood of Christ. For till then, real joy and lasting pleasure you can never know. The first effect of this peace, then, is joy.

Then follows another—love. He that is at peace with God through the blood of Christ is constrained to love Him that died for him. “Precious Jesus!” he cries, “help me to serve You! Take me as I am and make me something. Use me in Your cause. Send me to the farthest part of the green earth, if You will, to tell sinners the way of salvation. I will cheerfully go, for my peace fans the flame of love, that all that I am and all I have shall be, must be, forever Yours.”

Then next, there comes an anxiety after holiness. He that is at peace with God does not wish to go into sin. For he is careful lest he should lose that peace. He is like a woman that has escaped from a burning house. He is afraid of every candle afterwards—lest he should come again into the like danger. He walks humbly with his God. Constrained by grace, this sweet fruit of the Spirit, peace, leads him to endeavor to keep all the commandments of God and to serve his Lord with all his might.

Then again, this peace will help us to bear affliction. Paul describes it as a shoe. As he says, “Your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace.” It enables us to tread on the sharpest flints of sorrow, yes, on adders and on serpents, also. It gives us power to walk over the briars of this world and our feet are not wounded. We tread the fires and we are

not burned. This Divine shoe of peace makes us walk without weariness and run without fainting. I can do all things when my soul is at peace with God. There are no sufferings that shall move my soul to pain—no terrors that shall blanch my cheek—there are no wounds that shall compel me to an ignominious fear when my spirit is at peace with God.

It makes a man a giant—swells the dwarf to a Goliath size. He becomes mightiest of the mighty. And while the weaklings creep about this little earth, bowed down to the very dust, he strides it like a Colossus. God has made him great and mighty, because He has filled his soul with peace and with overflowing joy.

More might I tell you of the blessed effects of this peace, but I shall be content, after I have simply noticed that this peace gives boldness at the Throne and access to a Father's Mercy Seat. We feel we are reconciled and therefore we stand no longer at a distance—but we come up to Him—even to His knees. We spread our wants before Him, plead our cause and rest satisfied of success—because there is no enmity in our Father's heart to us and none in ours to Him. We are one with God and He is one with us, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

IV. And now I have a practical duty to perform and with this I shall close after having said a few words to those who know nothing of this peace. The practical remarks I have to make are upon the subject of **INTERRUPTIONS OF PEACE.**

All Christians have a right to perfect peace, but they have not all the possession of it. There are times when gloomy doubts prevail and we fear to say that God is ours. We lose a consciousness of pardon and we grope in the noonday as in the night. How is this? I think these interruptions may be owing to one of four causes.

Sometimes they are due to the ferocious temptations of Satan. There are periods when with unexampled cruelty Satan assaults the children of God. It is not to be expected that they will maintain perfect peace while they are fighting with Apollyon. When poor Christian was wounded in his head and in his hands and in his feet, no wonder that he did groan exceedingly and as Bunyan has it, "I never saw him all the while give so much as one pleasant look, till he perceived he had wounded Apollyon with his two-edged sword. Then, indeed, he did smile and look upward. But it was the most dreadful fight that ever I saw."

Mark, there is no such thing as a disturbance of the reality of the peace between God and the soul. For God is always at peace with those who are reconciled to Him by Christ. But there is a disturbance of the enjoyment of that peace and that is often effected by the howling of that great dog of Hell. He comes against us with all his might, with his mouth open ready to swallow us up. And were it not for Divine mercy he would do so. It is but little marvel that sometimes our peace is affected, when Satan is fierce in his temptations.

At another time a want of peace may arise from ignorance. I do not wonder that a man who believes Arminian doctrine, for instance, has little peace. There is nothing in the doctrine to give him any. It is a bone without marrow, it is a religion that seems to me to be cold, sapless, with no marrow, fruitless—bitter and not sweet. There is nothing about it but the whip of the Law. There are no grand certainties—no glorious facts of Covenant love, of discriminating grace, of Almighty faithfulness and suretyship engagements. I will never quarrel with the man that can live on such stones and scorpions as conditional election, haphazard redemption, questionable perseverance and unavailing regeneration. There may be some, I suppose, who can live on this dry meat. If they can live on it, be it so.

But I believe many of our doubts and fears arise from doctrinal ignorance. You have not, perhaps, a clear view of that Covenant made between the Father and His glorious Son, Jesus Christ. You do not know how to spell the word “Gospel” without mixing up the word “law” in it. Perhaps you have not learned fully to look out of self to Christ for everything. You do not know how to distinguish between sanctification, which varies, and justification, which is permanent. Many Believers have not come to discern between the work of the Spirit and the work of the Son. And what marvel, if you are ignorant, that you sometimes lack peace? Learn more of that precious Book and your peace shall be more continual.

Then again this peace is usually marred by sin. God hides His face behind the clouds of dust which His own flock makes as they travel along the road of this world. We sin and then we sorrow for it. God still loves His child, even when he sins. But He will not let the child know it. That child’s name is in the family register. But the Father clasps up the book and will not let him read it till he thoroughly repents again and comes back once more to Jesus Christ. If you can have peace and yet live in sin, mark this—you are unrenewed. If you can live in iniquity and yet have peace in your conscience—your conscience is seared and dead.

But the Christian man—he sins—begins to smart. If not at the very moment he falls, it is not long before his Father’s rod is on his back and he begins to cry—

***“Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?
Where is the soul-refreshing view
Of Jesus and His Word?”***

Once more—our peace may be interrupted also by unbelief. Indeed, this is the sharpest knife of the four and will most readily cut the golden thread of our enjoyments.

And now, if you would maintain unbroken peace, take advice from God’s minister this morning, young though he is in years. Take advice, which he can warrant to be good, for it is Scriptural. If you would keep your peace continual and unbroken, look always to the sacrifice of Christ. Never permit your eye to turn to anything but Jesus. When you repent,

my Hearer, still keep your eye on the Cross. When you labor, labor in the strength of the Crucified One. Everything you do, whether it is self-examination, fasting, meditation, or prayer, do all under the shadow of Jesus' Cross. Or otherwise, live as you will, your peace will be but a sorry thing. You shall be full of disquiet and of sore trouble. Live near the Cross and your peace shall be continual.

Another piece of advice. Walk humbly with your God. Peace is a jewel. God puts it on your finger—be proud of it—and He will take it off again. Peace is a noble garment—boast of your dress—and God will take it away from you. Remember the hole of the pit from where you were dug and the quarry of manure from where you were hewn. And when you have the bright crown of peace on your head, remember your sin-black feet. No, even when that crown is there, cover it and your face still with those two wings, the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ. In this way shall your peace be maintained.

And again—walk in boldness, avoid every appearance of evil. “Be not conformed to this world.” Stand up for Truth of God and rectitude. Suffer not the maxims of men to sway your judgment. Seek the Holy Spirit that you may live like Christ and live near to Christ and your peace shall not be interrupted.

As for those of you who have never had peace with God, I can entertain but one sentiment towards you, namely, that of pity. Poor Souls! Poor Souls! Poor Souls, that never knew the peace which Jesus Christ gives to His people. And my pity is all the more needed, because you do not pity yourselves.

Ah, souls, the day is coming when that God to whom you are now an enemy, shall stare you in the face. You must see Him. And He is “a consuming fire.” You must look into that blazing furnace and sink and despair. And die. Die, did I say? Worse than that. You must be cast into the pit of damnation, where dying were a blessing that can never be granted.

Oh, may God give you peace through His Son! If you are now convicted of sin, the exhortation is, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.” Just as you are, you are bid to put your trust in Him that did die upon the tree. And if you do this, your sins shall all be forgiven now and you shall have peace with God. And, before long, you shall know it in your own conscience and rejoice. Oh, seek this peace and pursue it. And above all, seek the Peacemaker, Christ Jesus and you shall be saved. God bless you for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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THE CAUSE AND EFFECT OF HEART TROUBLE NO. 3076

**A SERMON
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***DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 12, 1874.***

***“Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”
John 14:27.***

THERE appeared to be great cause for their heart to be troubled and abundant reason for being afraid, for their Lord was about to be taken from them. What would a few timid disciples be able to do without their Master? He had always been their Teacher, Friend and Guide. When they had been assailed by adversaries, He had always espoused their cause and routed their enemies. They were safe enough as long as He was with them, but what would they be without Him? And, alas, He was going away to die! He was about to be dragged away like a common felon, falsely accused by bribed witnesses and then put to the cruel and shameful death of the Cross. Would not the ignominious death of the Captain be followed by the destruction of the army and the disastrous close of the holy war? The disciples might well be seriously afraid when they knew that their great adversary was very powerful, exceedingly cunning and desperately determined to crush out the new kingdom. It must have sounded somewhat strange in their ears that the Savior should say to them, “Do not be troubled about it, and do not be afraid.”

I am sure that the tone of voice which He used would prevent them from imagining that He was mocking them. Sometimes when a man is in very great trouble, it sounds almost like mockery to say to him, “Let not your heart be troubled.” “How can I help it?” he says. “How can I be otherwise than troubled under such a trial as this? You tell me not to be afraid, but if you were in a similar position, wouldn’t you be afraid?” And we are half inclined not to repeat the exhortation, lest we should seem to be exulting over the weakness of the desponding. But we must not forget that Jesus Christ was, Himself, in trouble at that time—and yet He was perfectly calm. He was about to bear the brunt of the storm, yet He was not afraid and, therefore, being a fellow sufferer with His disciples in the trouble and being Himself the perfect pattern of sublime patience and dauntless courage, He could most properly say to them, “Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” And, moreover, there would be such a charm about the way in which He would say it, and such a gracious influence would go with every syllable, that the most cowardly

among them must have been strengthened—and the most desponding would endeavor to shake off his fears. May the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, apply to every troubled soul here, our Savior's words of exhortation which form our text, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

I. And, first, dear Friends, let me remind you that if we are troubled and fearful, THERE IS VERY OFTEN AN EVIL CAUSE AT THE BOTTOM OF IT.

"An evil cause?" asks one. Yes, an evil cause. Permit me to use a paradox and say that it is not trouble that troubles a man so much as something else that is the secret of the trouble. I have seen many in sore trouble who, nevertheless, have not been troubled. They have been tried, but their heart has not even been wounded in the trial. The more their troubles have come upon them, the higher have they risen in Divine Grace. As their afflictions have abounded, so have their joys abounded through Christ Jesus! Do not tell me that sickness naturally depresses, for I have seen many under various forms of sickness who have been able to sing cheerily upon their beds and to praise God amid the fires! Do not tell me that poverty puts an end to a Christian's joy, for it is not so. The golden oil that feeds the lamp of the Christian's joy is not drawn from the wells of earth—it comes from quite another source. The Christian's joy does not spring from what he possesses, nor his sorrow from what he lacks. As his exaltation does not come from the world, so neither does his depression, if he lives near to God. So it is not *trouble* that troubles saints—it is something far worse than that. Let us see if we can discover what the evil cause of it may be.

With some, it is *an unhumbléd heart*. I am afraid that there are many Christians in great trouble who are so proud that they will not admit that God has a right to deal with them as He is dealing. They think that there ought to be some more lenient dispensations of Providence for them. They imagine themselves to be the kind of persons upon whom the sun should always shine, who ought to walk in silver slippers and whose path should be always smooth. And if it is not so, they fancy that God is dealing harshly with them—that He is not kind to them—and they doubt His love. You may tell them that the martyrs suffered far more than they do. You may point them to many of their fellow Christians who are in much worse circumstances than they are, but that will not reconcile them to their own trials. The fact is, there is a self-love about them which has exaggerated itself beyond all due proportions into a sinful self-esteem! And this proud, vain-glorious idea of what they ought to have and ought to be, rebels against the Sovereignty of God and refuses to submit to the will of the Most High!

Remember that our sorrows usually spring out of ourselves and that when self is conquered, sorrow is, to a great extent, banished from the human heart. We may have a rebellious spirit concerning the Providence of God in many ways. I have heard of one whose husband had died and she was wearing mourning for him many years after his death. She

refused to be comforted until a member of the Society of Friends said to her very pointedly, "Woman, have you not forgiven God yet?" and the remark struck home to her. There are some who actually quarrel with God over the loss of husband, or wife, or child, or parent, or friend. Now, in such a quarrel as that, one or the other must bend—and it is certain that God cannot! He has done what was right and He had a right to do what He pleased. It is the unhumiliated heart which sets up its judgment in opposition to God's judgment and dares to think that God has been unkind or even unjust. It is this wicked pride which is at the root of some of the worst sorrows which have embittered the lot of mankind! O my dear Friend, shall not God do as He wills with you and with yours? God gives, so shall He not take? Will you receive good at the hands of the Lord and will you not receive what you think to be evil? Are you so different in disposition from Job that you cannot and will not say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord"? Then I must remind you that the Holy Spirit will never begin to comfort you until this unhumiliated spirit of yours is subdued! You must get rid of this rebellion against the Most High, or else your heart must continue to be troubled—

***"Mortals, be dumb! What creature dares
Dispute His awful will?
Ask no account of His affairs
But tremble and be still."***

If it is God who has done it, no question can be raised concerning it. If it is God who has done it, no doubt as to the rightness of it can arise in the mind of any intelligent Believer. Brothers and Sisters, if we could see what God sees, we would feel that the heaviest trouble we have ever had was the thing that we would choose above all other things! You probably sometimes think that the course of Divine Providence is very mysterious, but were you as well informed concerning all the circumstances as the Lord is, you would say, "That is the course I, myself, would have chosen." I do not doubt that when Believers get to Heaven and look back upon their pathway on earth, and recall God's dealings with them, they will admire the amazing loving kindness and unerring wisdom of God in arranging all that they have passed through—and that they will feel that they would not have anything altered, but have had it all just as it has happened.

In many others, perhaps in the majority, the cause of heart trouble lies in *mistrust of God*. This is especially true in reference to being afraid. They are afraid that their present trials will crush them, or that some future trial will cause their destruction. But, Brothers and Sisters, you need not be afraid because of the greatness of your trial, for you must be well aware that others have had greater trials and yet have survived them! Nor need you be afraid because of the severity of your present distress, for you have been in equal distress before and yet have been delivered out of it! The real secret of your being troubled and afraid lies in the fact that you doubt your God. Either you do not think that He is

equal to the emergency, or else you conceive that He has forgotten you, or is angry with you, or that His mercy is clean gone and that He will be favorable to you no more.

In any case, you are dishonoring Him by doubting Him. I know that it is the notion of some people that a state of doubting is really a high state of perfection. I heard, the other day, of a man of whom I was told that he had walked in holiness and godliness for many years, yet he had never uttered an expression which could lead anyone to think that he really believed himself to be saved. He did not dare to say that lest he should be guilty of presumption. As I listened to the story, I could not help asking, "How long has he lived in this state?" "Forty years," was the answer. "Well then," I replied, "he has been living for these forty years in grievous sin, for there is no sin which so dishonors God as does the sin of unbelief. And for a professor of religion to continue, year after year, in such a state as that until it becomes chronic is indeed terrible." Yet, as I said just now, there are some persons who think it right to continue in such a state as this. I do not wonder that their hearts are troubled! Beloved, if you believe in your God, you know that He will bring you through your present trouble and all future trials as well. If you truly love Him, you know that all things are working together for your good. Therefore, let not your heart be troubled! No, it cannot be, for your faith will drive out your fear—your confidence in God will keep your heart from being troubled.

The third evil cause of trouble of heart in some is, I fear, *covetousness*. I believe in calling things by their right names. I have known persons who have possessed quite enough to guarantee to them according to all human probabilities that they would never lack food and raiment as long as they live—yet they were troubled. Why? Well they were losing some of their money. But why did that trouble them? It was because they had not obeyed that injunction of the Apostle, "Having food and raiment let us be therewith content." I have known persons who have had so much money that if they had lived to be as old as Methuselah, they would probably have had plenty—yet, when some small loss happened to them, you would suppose that they were so poor that they must go to the workhouse! Although they had abundance left, they were afraid because of their covetousness. A man may be covetous of his own things as well as of the things of other people. He may covet his own goods by grasping them, holding them and making them his god—and when the Master comes to take away some of the goods which He has lent to him as His steward—he is troubled and afraid and cannot endure the loss of that which he has learned to love too well! It is very difficult for man to have much money running through his hands without some of it sticking. It is very sticky stuff—and when it once sticks to the hands, they are not clean in the sight of the Lord! Unless a man is able to use money without abusing it, accepting it as a talent lent to him and not as a treasure given to him—it will very soon happen that the more money he has, the more troubles he will have. Just in proportion as our substance is increased,

our daily cares will be increased. And on that very soil which we most covet will grow the thorns and thistles which will make our bed uneasy by night and our deathbed hard to lie on when we come to die! So beware of covetousness, Brothers and Sisters, for otherwise you will very soon fall into trouble and fear.

Suppose, my Friend, you have more wealth than another man possesses? Then you owe to God more gratitude than that other man does! Besides, if you have more to carry than another man has, probably you also have more care than that other man has—and what is there in that to make you proud? Would even a donkey that has to carry a double load be proud because its burden was twice as heavy as that of another donkey? No, it would not be so stupid! The man who has one stick when he starts on his journey has all that he needs. Shall another man who carries 20 sticks boast over him when only one of them will be any use to him? He that has a sufficiency should be satisfied with it, but he that has more than a sufficiency has no cause to be proud concerning it. If you have more than others have, you have a greater trust and a greater charge than others have—therefore be humbler than others are and wait upon God more than others do. You have a full cup to carry, so you need a steady hand and must beware of having an unsteady head. Ask God to keep you meek and lowly as your worldly circumstances rise, for so you will rise with your circumstances. But if you are exalted and puffed up because God prospers you, you will come down even though your circumstances go up! It is poor prosperity when a man becomes outwardly richer, but inwardly poorer—when he has more gold, but less Grace—when he has more land, but less love to God. May God in His mercy preserve us all from such “prosperity” as that, and also preserve us from the pride which so often accompanies such prosperity! Remember what Paul was Inspired to write to the Corinthians—“Who makes you to differ from another? And what have you that you did not receive? Now if you received it, why do you glory as if you had not received it?”

I am afraid there are some professors who are troubled and afraid through an unequally bad cause, namely, *envy*. Alas, some good men have fallen into this gross sin! The Psalmist was envious when he saw the prosperity of the wicked. And he said, “Behold, these are the ungodly who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence. For all the daylong I have been plagued, and chastened every morning.” It seemed as if he had the rough side of the road although he feared his God, while the wicked had the smooth path. Yes, and the poor Christians is very apt to get into a similar state of mind and to say, “How is it that I have to pine in poverty while God’s enemies are pampered in luxury? Why should I have to go hungry and in rags, while Dives, yonder, is clothed in purple and fine linen and fares sumptuously every day?” If any of you have felt like this, the best way to cure you of your daily trouble must be to get you no longer to look with the green eyes of jealousy upon the good

things that others have, but to feel that God has a right to give where He pleases. And if He chooses to give an abundance of husks to the swine, you who are His children should be the last to envy them!

I think I have, at least once before, quoted in your hearing an illustration used by William Huntington with reference to those who live by faith, depending upon the daily bounty of God. He says, "Their case is something like that of a daughter whose father does not give her a large dowry when she is married, but who gives her what is called in the country, a hand-basket portion. That is to say, one day he will send down to her house a ham. Another time a basket of eggs. Sometimes a sack of flour. But every week something or other is sent to her from her old home, 'with father's love,' and by these continued tokens of love, the daughter probably gets more than if she had received her portion in a lump sum. And she gets her father's love sent with it every time." It is possible that if the Lord gave to His people all at once, everything that they would need this side of Heaven, they might afterwards think that He had forgotten them, or they might forget Him! But His daily gifts, bestowed in answer to their prayers—and each one coming with their Father's love stamped upon it, will keep Him constantly in their remembrance! In this way we shall have many loving reminders that He does not forget us—and oft-renewed assurances that He changes not and will also not suffer His children to lack any good thing. Let then the fact that God gives us all that we have, sweeten it all and make us satisfied even if that all is sometimes only a scanty supply.

In other cases I am afraid that *anger* is the cause of heart trouble and fear. Some people—I will not say some Christians, because where anger abides in the heart, it is very questionable whether the life of God can exist there at the same time! But some professors have grown angry, possibly without reason. And because they could not work their will upon the person who had offended them, they have never been at rest—and they have really done themselves serious injury through cherishing such an evil spirit! It is a desperately bad case when a professor of religion begins to feel as Haman did when Mordecai would not bow down to him. It was nothing to Haman that he was the greatest favorite of King Ahasuerus as long as Mordecai at the gate would not cringe before him. You also know how he purposed to rid himself of his enemy and how he was hanged on the very gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. His sad end ought to be a warning to all who are at all like he was in spirit. I implore you, Beloved, to love one another! And if at any time you have been grieved and vexed by others, forgive them. A forgiving spirit is a ready way to please. Your hearts must be troubled if you have in them any vestige of malice, or anger, or enmity, or unkindness toward anybody. "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." And if any can have God's peace to the full in their hearts, it is those who are fully at peace with their fellow men. Search and see, therefore, whether your trouble of heart may not have been caused by something of that sort.

Alas, I must also mention another evil cause of heart trouble and fear. It is that which is displayed by persons of *a very fretful disposition, peevish, self-willed, and very exacting of other people*. Some of them are good people, too, when they are in their right minds and in a right humor! But when they happen to be in their fits, the best place to be in regard to them is as far off as possible! This kind of disposition may sometimes spring from constitutional peculiarities, or it may be the result of sickness and, therefore, we ought to be very patient with such people. But if any of us are at all afflicted in that way, we ought not to expect too much patience from other people, neither ought we to try their patience more than we can help. It should be our determination, in the name and strength of God, to fight against the propensity to be troubled, vexed, cross and murmuring—for all of us know what a disagreeable thing it is. I do not wonder that God is angry with murmurers—and it is not very surprising if we also get vexed with them. Suppose you help a poor man again and again, yet he never shows the slightest gratitude, but always has more complaints and murmurs more each time he comes to you? It will give you no pleasure to have further contact with him. Let us all take care not to fall into that state of mind—a child of God should not be like that. Certainly he is not like his Master if he is, for you never read of Jesus Christ murmuring or fretting and being peevish. You never heard anyone who really knew Him say that Jesus Christ was one of those exacting people whom nobody could please. Why, on the contrary, He was one of those whom you could scarcely displease! And even when wicked men nailed Him to the tree, He prayed for them, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” [See Sermons # 897, Volume 15—THE FIRST CRY FROM THE CROSS; #2263, Volume 38—CHRIST’S PLEA FOR IGNORANT SINNERS and #3068, Volume 53—UNKNOWN DEPTHS AND HEIGHTS—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

“Let not your heart be troubled,” for the probability is that if you look below the trouble, you will find that there is underneath it some evil thing which is the real cause of the trouble. Therefore, O you children of God, in whom dwells the Spirit of God, strive against it!

II. Now, in the second place, and briefly—if we are God’s children, we ought not to have our heart troubled and afraid because THERE IS REALLY NO GOOD REASON IN ALL THE WORLD FOR SUCH TROUBLE AND FEAR.

Remember, first of all, that *you are forgiven*. Nothing ought to be a cause of trouble to a man whose sins are forgiven. There is a poor man, at this moment, lying in prison in the condemned cell. Suppose that you were able to go to him and say, “Here is a free pardon for you.” If, after that, you were to say to him, “You will have to work hard all your life. You will have to live in a poor cottage,” I am sure that he would say, “I don’t care what work I do, nor where I live, so long as I am pardoned! If I do but escape the gallows, you may do anything else that you like with me.” So, dear Friend, you are forgiven, you are a child of God, you are an heir of Heaven and you can never be cast into Hell! Cannot you also say,

“Well, then, you may do what you will with me, so long as I am pardoned”? When a man’s sins are forgiven, what cause can he have to complain? Rather would we say with the Psalmist, “He has not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.” And therefore let each one of us say, “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: who forgives all your iniquities; who heals all your diseases; who redeems your life from destruction; who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies.”

Then next, there is no cause for you Christians to be troubled, *for your best interests are perfectly safe*. You have not lost your spiritual birthright and you will never lose it! Being children of God, you are children of God forever! You have not lost your redemption—you were bought with a price and you are free forever. You have not lost your union to Christ. You are still one with Him and because He lives, you shall also live. You have not lost your hopes of Heaven. You have not lost your interest in the eternal joys. You have not lost the justifying righteousness of Christ, nor the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit. All these precious things and many more are yours—therefore you have no cause to be troubled or fearful. If you were going home after this service and you were carrying a very large sum of money in your pocket—and if, when you reached your destination, you put your hand in your pocket and found that you had lost your handkerchief. And if you put your hand in your pocket, again, and found that the bag of gold was all right, you would surely not trouble about the loss of your handkerchief! Your money being safe—the loss of which would have been your ruin—you would be so delighted that you would not mind about your trivial loss. Suppose we heard of great shipwreck and that among those who were rescued was a man who, as soon as he was brought ashore, set up a great lament because he had lost his hat? Everybody would laugh at him for being so foolish—and that is very much like the trouble of a child of God who sits down and frets and worries over insignificant trifles while his immortal interests are all safe! His soul is safe. God is His, Heaven is His. He has not lost any of his real treasures. Therefore let him give heed to the Master’s words to His first disciples, “Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”

Remember, too, O children of God, that *the troubles you are now enduring have not come to you by chance*—they were laid upon you by the gracious hand of the all-wise Jehovah who is your loving Father and Friend—

***“To His Church, His joy and treasure,
Every trial works for good—
They are dealt in weight and measure,
Yet how little understood.
Not in anger,
But from His dear covenant love.”***

Well then, if God sends you your trials, why are you troubled and afraid because of them?

Recollect, too, that *your present trials are working for your eternal good*, as Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” Do you not know that your troubles have already been blessed to you? Were you ever so spiritually enriched as you have been in times of storm and in hours of pain? Have you not often thought, when you grew well again, that you would like to go back to the bed of suffering, that you might grow in Grace as you did when you were there? So, as your trials have thus enriched you, why should you be troubled and afraid because of them?

Then, beside this, *all the troubles of the children of God will work out to God’s Glory*. The poet was right when he represented God, Himself, as saying of His people—

**“From all their afflictions My Glory shall spring,
And the deeper their sorrows, the louder they’ll sing.”**

Will you not, therefore, be glad to be troubled, seeing that thus God is being glorified in you?

Remember, too, that *your trials will soon be over* and then there will begin the bliss of Heaven which will never, never end. So the Christian pilgrim can sing—

**“The road may be rough, but it cannot be long.
And I’ll smooth it with hope, and cheer it with song.”**

What if the shallows of the night fall grimly around you and the cold blast chills you to your bones? ‘Tis but a little sleep and then morning breaks, and the sun rises in the land where—

**“Everlasting spring abides,
And never-withering flowers—**

and you shall be where no night winds can ever come, or darkness ever again oppress your happy spirits! Therefore, comfort yourselves and comfort one another with these cheering thoughts.

III. Lastly, Believers ought not to be troubled or afraid because, as such a spirit comes from evil and there is no just cause or reason for it, **SO IT GENERALLY LEADS TO EVIL.**

It leads to evil to yourself. It is a very mischievous thing for a child of God to be constantly troubled and afraid. It makes him selfish—he gets to looking for comfort for himself. It makes him weak, faint, fretful and so leads him to yet further rebellion and murmuring against the Lord. God seems to attach very great importance to His people being happy. You know Isaiah was Inspired to write, “Comfort you, comfort you My people, says our God.” And David was moved to say, “Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, you righteous: and shout for joy, all you that are upright in heart.” And again, “Let the righteous be glad; let them rejoice before God: yes, let them exceedingly rejoice.” While Paul writes to the saints at Philippi, “Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.” “The oil of joy” is to the soul what oil is to the body—it gives suppleness and helps to make us strong—

**“Why should the children of a King
Go mourning all their days?”**

He would not have them do so for their own sakes. Genuine Christians may have two Heavens if they will—a Heaven below, and a Heaven above—we may drink of both the upper and the nether springs if God's Grace shall enable us to believe in God and to believe also in Jesus Christ. So let not trouble be your trouble, for it is an evil thing for yourself.

Further, do not let it be your trouble because *it leads to evil to your fellow Christians*. They see your mournful face and they are very apt to catch the infection. Some of you remember dear old Mr. Dransfield, our beloved elder who has gone to Heaven. Whenever he used to come into this building, it was like the shining of the sun! On a Lord's-Day morning when he came into the vestry, if it was a heavy, foggy morning, he would say to me, "Well, my dear Pastor, the morning is not very bright, but we can be very happy in our souls even on such a morning as this is. The fog cannot get into our hearts, blessed be God!" And then he would be sure to tell me some cheering thing that had happened during the week—some soul had been converted—or something that would help to gladden us all before we began the service. I have heard of deacons who have always been sure, on the Sabbath morning, to tell the minister any unpleasant thing that had happened during the week—so as to depress his spirit in order that they might feel duly miserable under his ministry during the rest of the morning. Never do that, Brothers and Sisters, but be bright and cheerful for the sake of your fellow Christians. I always think there is quite enough misery in the world without my making any more. There are more than enough wild beasts to howl in this wide wilderness, so I need not do any howling. Let us be among the people of whom it is written, "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them." As God's great caravan of saints goes traveling through the Sahara of this world, let them make the clarion of holy joy ring out triumphant notes till the desert itself shall "rejoice even with joy and singing."

Make it to be so, Beloved. Here is Mr. Ready-to-Halt coming along on his crutches. Smile at him and bid him welcome. Here is Miss Much-Afraid. Do not go to her with the story of the dragons and the giants, but tell her about the great King of the way and about the Celestial City that you have seen from the top of Mount Clear! And if you find anyone who is giving way to despondency so much that he scarcely thinks that he can be a child of God at all, let the very light of your countenance tell him that there is no real reason for a Believer's distress of mind and lead him to expect that even *he* will find precious promises in the Word which shall enable him to rejoice in the Lord! I think that many Christians have scandalized the Lord's name and cause before the ungodly. Many professors make it appear that there is not much difference between the Church and the world—but I believe that there is sufficient power in true religion to lift a Christian right up above the world and to make him live in such a serene atmosphere that, notwithstanding all the briars and troubles that may come upon him, he will be able to say, as David did

when he fled from Saul, “My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise. Awake, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early.”

Moreover, *this being troubled and afraid does much mischief among sinners*. They hear that we are the children of God, that we have found Grace and favor in the sight of the Lord and they watch to see what sort of people we are. If they see us prosper and see that we are happy, then they say, “Yes, we also are happy when we prosper.” If they see us at services and meetings and find us rejoicing, they say, “Yes, of course, that is a sort of religious dissipation and they are happy.” They watch till they catch us on the sickbed—and then when pain is sharp upon us, if they see us patient, they say, “There is something in religion after all.” They wait till we are poor, or till we are bereaved—and then if we are calm under losses and crosses—and still praise the Lord, they say “Ah! There is something real in it.” They watch when we come to die and if they can hear us sing some sweet song in the midst of the river, and can witness a calm hallowed peace resting upon us in the last solemn hour, they whisper to one another, “There is something real and true here. There is a supernatural power that makes these men able to die as we could not die.” Thus they are often led by the Spirit of God to seek Grace for themselves—that they also may be saved!

Patient Christians and joyful Christians are better preachers in the homes where they live than we can ever be from our pulpits! And happy Christians who at all times, and under all circumstances, wear a cheerful aspect, greatly recommend the Gospel to others. You know that if you saw a man-servant who looked very thin and lean, and as he went about, he seemed to be always wringing his hands in misery and sighing, you would say, “That poor fellow must have a hard time of it. He has got a bad master, you may depend upon it. I should think he has small wages and very short commons. He lives in the house, doesn’t he? There’s very little to be had there, I am sure.” You hear that the gentleman needs another servant and as you read the advertisement, you say, “That won’t suit me, the poor wretch he already has is such a woe-begone creature that I don’t wish to be as he is.” How different it is in other households! A bright, cheerful man-servant says, “I have, been with my master for many years and the longer I live with him, the better I like him. He is the best master I ever heard or read of. I used to serve another man, but he treated me so shamefully that I ran away from him. But ever since I have been in this house I cannot tell you how happy I have been. I like my master’s service, I like his other servants, I like his wages, I like everything about him! And I shall be very glad to see you in the same happy service.” “Oh!” you would say, “That place will do well for me if the master will but have me.” You know that there are more flies caught with honey than with vinegar—and there are more souls brought to Christ by happy Christians than there ever will be by all the dreadful gloom and solemnity which some people find it necessary to put on! I say that because I suspect that some of it is not genuine. There are some who

think that it is right to look as if true religion were the summit of misery, but it is not so. "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid," lest you should bring up a bad report and make people think that the land which flows with milk and honey is not a good land, but a land that eats up the inhabitants thereof.

To close in a sentence or two—if you are always troubled and afraid, *you will bring dishonor upon the name of God* and you will make the ways of religion to be evilly spoken of. Let it not be so, O mourning Christian! Ask the Lord to help you to put away the ashes and to take the oil of joy instead of mourning, and the garment of praise in place of the spirit of heaviness—

***"Sing, though sense and carnal reason
Gladly would stop the joyful song!
Sing, and count it highest treason
For a saint to hold his tongue!
Sing, for you shall Heaven inherit,
Sing, and never the song have done—
Sing to Father, Son, and Spirit,
One in Three, and Three in One!"***

My one regret, in preaching this sermon is that I cannot address it to you all. There are some unconverted persons here who are troubled. I hope you will be still more troubled! I cannot say to you, "Do not be afraid," for you ought to be even more afraid than you are and you have everything to make you afraid. But though you are troubled and afraid, remember that there is a Savior and that this Savior may be yours—for whoever believes in Him shall have his sins forgiven and shall be delivered from the wrath to come. If you believe in Him with all your heart, then my text may be addressed to you—but not till then. May God lead you so to believe and then we will say to you, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." Amen.

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

LOVE'S TRANSFORMATIONS— A COMMUNION MEDITATION NO. 1871

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

***“If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said, I go unto the Father.”
John 14:28.***

THE loving Jesus saw a shade of sadness fall upon the faces of the 12 while He talked to them of His departure. Though He was, Himself, to die, with His usual self-forgetfulness He only thought of them and He desired to comfort them—to comfort them about the present sorrow of His departure. See how skillfully, how wisely He drew upon their love for their comfort. The most common and usual source of comfort is Christ's love to us, but in this instance the most applicable and the most influential source of comfort was their love to Him. He said, therefore, to them, “If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said, I go unto the Father.” It was well and wisely spoken, for He touched them upon a point in which they were very tender—if anything could move them to comfort, it would be His appeal to their loyal love. He had appealed to that, before, when He said, “If you love Me, keep My commandments,” but now, in softer, sweeter, more tender tones, He seems to say, “If you love Me, cease your sorrow and begin to rejoice.”

The Lord may give *us* drink from that same spring. It is a lower spring compared with the upper spring of His own sweet love, but He may cause it to flow most preciously so that when we are not bold enough to drink of the higher stream, we may taste of this. If we are able to say, “You know all things, You know that I love You,” we may be cheered by that Truth of God. “So surely as you do love Me,” says Christ, “you will rejoice rather than sorrow because I said, I go unto My Father.” Oh, what a blessed Master we serve, who quotes our love, not to blame us for its feebleness, but to draw a happy inference from it! So much does He desire our peace, our restfulness in His own dear Self, that even the love we give to Him, He gives back to us and bids us find comfort in it!

Let that stand as a preface. And now I shall deal with the text by way of making some three or four observations upon it.

I. And the first is this—IT WILL BE MUCH FOR OUR COMFORT TO TRY TO SEE THINGS IN CHRIST'S LIGHT. Notice the expression, "If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said, I go unto the Father."

Christ had told them that He was about to die. He had said in very plain language on a former occasion, "The Son of Man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes and they shall condemn Him to death, and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify Him." But now He looks at the matter in another light. His present view of it is, "I go unto the Father." Their view of it was, "Jesus is to die." His view of it was, "I go unto My Father." Oh, how often our hearts would grow happy if we could but see things in Christ's light! Let us try to do so.

For, here observe, that *Christ sees through things*. You and I look at them and we see Pilate, Herod, the judgement seat, the scourge, the Cross, the spear, the sepulcher—but Jesus looks *through* them and He sees the Father's Throne and Himself exalted upon it. Could we not, sometimes, try to see affairs in Christ's light by looking through them? Come, Brothers and Sisters, that present affliction which seems not to be joyous but grievous, nevertheless, afterwards yields the peaceable fruits of righteousness! Can you not look at the, "afterwards," and thus discern the end as the Lord does? Your present estate is tossed about and troubled, for you are on a stormy sea, but you are being tossed towards the port and driven, even, by the storm, towards your desired haven! Can you not see through matters as Jesus did? Why dwell always on *this* life? Can you not see what it leads to? "The way may be rough, but it cannot be long." And then comes an eternity of joy! Can you not spy this out? Your Lord did, for though His passage into Glory was infinitely rougher than yours—though He had to swim through seas of blood and breast the breakers of Hell, itself, in His death-pangs—yet He looked beyond all and said, "I go unto the Father." See things in Christ's light! See the end as well as the beginning and the middle—and you will be comforted!

Do you not see, too, that the light in which Christ sees things is such that *He notices the bearing of things*? He says, in effect, "If you could see My death as I see it—as a going unto the Father—you would rejoice." He sees the ultimate result and bearing of things. Oh, if we could always do the same and perceive what will come of our present sorrow! And if we just understood what it tends to and what God means to bring out of it all, then we should not so much see the fire as the pure ingot that comes forth of it! Then we should not so much see the plowing and the scattering of the seed to be buried beneath frost and snow, but we should hear the

shouts of harvest and see the yellow sheaves gathered into the garner. Oh, to see Providences in Christ's light!

But I do not mean to dwell upon this. I only want to throw out the thought so that every troubled one may now think of his own case as Christ would think of it. If you have a sorrow, how would Jesus deal with this sorrow if it were His own? If you are, just now, in darkness, what would be Christ's outlook from the window of faith? What would He see as coming out of this affliction? There is no better rule for Christian conduct than, "What would Jesus do?" I was much struck when I saw that question hanging up in our Orphanage girls' school—"What would Jesus do?" Friend, this is what you should do! What does Jesus think about trial?—for according to the measure of your capacity, my Brothers and Sisters, that is what *you* should think of it. Try this holy rule and you will find the major part of your sorrows transformed into joys. A clear understanding of the nature of our trial would lead us to glory in tribulation! All that has to do with Jesus is joyous when seen in His light! If you understood His passion, you would see His Glory. If you understood His tomb, you would see His Resurrection. If you understood His death, you would see His Throne.

II. Our second observation is this—OUR LOVE OUGHT TO GO TOWARDS OUR LORD'S PERSON. "If you loved *Me*, you would rejoice." Come, my dear Friends, gather up your thoughts a minute while I remind you that the best love that we have should go to Jesus Christ, Himself—not so much to His salvation, as to *Himself*, should our hearts fly. "If you loved *Me*, you would rejoice." We do well to love Christ's house, His day, His Bible, His Church, His service, His blood and His Throne—but we must, above all these things, love His Person. That is the tender point; "we love *Him*" and other things in Him. We love His Church for His sake; His truth because it is His truth; His Cross because He bore it for us and His salvation because purchased by His blood. I counsel you to pull up the sluices of your love and let the full tide flow towards Jesus.

For, first, He is the source of all benefits. Therefore, in loving Him you value the benefits, but you trace them to their fountainhead. Should we love the gift better than the giver? Should the wife love her jewels better than the beloved one who gave them? It must not be so! Love the very Person of Jesus—the God, the Man, Emmanuel, God With Us. Realize Him as a distinct Existence. Let Him stand before you now "with scars of honor in His flesh and triumph in His eyes" as we sang just now. Love Him as the Source of your hope, your pardon, your life, your future Glory!

Loving Him, we learn to prize all His gifts the more, for he that loves the giver values the smallest gift for the giver's sake. Your love to the Person of Jesus will not make you think less of the benefits which He bestows, but

infinitely more. Shoot at the center of the target. Love Him and, loving Him, you will value all that He gives.

Loving Jesus, we have Him for our own and that is a great blessing. A man may love gold and not have it. A man may love fame and not have it. But he that loves Christ has Christ, for certainly there was never yet a hand of love stretched out to embrace Him unlawfully! He is the property of all who lay hold of Him with their hearts.

Love Him, and then you will sympathize with Him. His work will awaken your greatest interest. When His cause seems to decline, you will grieve with Him. And when He wins the day, you will shout the victory with Him. Love Him and you will love the souls of men. Love Jesus and you will seek to bring sinners to Him. Nothing can do you so much good and fit you so well for His service as to love Him. Love Him and you will love His people, for never heart did love Christ and hate His Church. He that loves the Head loves the members. "Everyone that loves Him that be-gat, loves him, also, that is begotten of Him. We know that we love Jesus when we love the Brethren.

Love Christ and you will have a possession which will last forever, for other things expire, but love never fails. "Whether there are prophecies, they shall fail; whether there are tongues, they shall cease." But he that loves, possesses a coin that is current in the skies. He shall go on to love forever. When the sun shall be darkened and the stars shall fall from Heaven like withered leaves, he that loves Jesus shall still go on to love and find in that love his Heaven!

Remember, if you love the Son, the Father will love you. That is a precious Word of His which you will find in the 16th Chapter of John, at the 27th Verse. There is a common Object of love between the Believer and the Father. When you glorify Christ, the Father says, "Amen," to what you do. There is no lover of the Christ equal to the Father. "The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hands." Therefore love the Son and yield all honor to Him, even as the Father does.

If you love Him you may well do so. It is necessary—absolutely necessary—that you should love your own Lord, for I will tell you a secret thing, only to be whispered in the believing ear—you are *married* to Him—and what is the marriage state without love? What, then, would the Church be to Christ if she loved Him not? What a wretched farce this union would be if there were no love between the soul and Christ to whom it is united! You are a member of His body—shall not the hand love the Head? Shall not the foot love the Head? God forbid that we should be without love to Jesus Christ—love to His own altogether lovely Self. May God the Holy Spirit work in us abundantly to love Jesus who tenderly says, "If you loved Me, you would rejoice!"

III. My third observation is that **SOMETIMES OUR SORROWS PUT A QUESTION ON OUR LOVE.** Do you not notice that it was because they were very sorrowful, not seeing things in the Master's light, that Jesus said, "If you loved Me, you would rejoice"? Let us try, tonight, to check the sorrow which may be in our bosoms at this hour, since it may cast an, "if," upon our love to Christ.

Notice that if sorrow about the loss of an earthly thing eats into your heart, it puts an, "if," upon your love to Christ. Many are the cries of woe—"Alas, I have lost my property! I have lost the old house in which my fathers lived. I have lost my job! I have lost my dearest friend!" Is it, therefore, true that because of this loss, you have no joy left? Have you lost your Savior? I thought you called Him your Best-Beloved and you said that He was your All—is *He* also gone? Did I not hear you say, "Whom have I in Heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside You"? Is that true? Oh, over-burdened heart! Oh, heavy spirit! Do you love Jesus? Then why are you disconsolate? An, "if," comes up when we think of your despair.

So, too, when we too much repine under personal affliction, a question is suggested. You may be ill, tonight, or you may be fearing that an illness is coming. Or you may be in pain or weakness. Because you fear that consumption is upon you, your heart is very heavy. Truly, it is a sad thing to be diseased, but who sent you this? Whose will is it that it should be so? Who is the Lord of the house? Is not the grief your Lord's will, your Savior's will? You say you love Him and yet you will not let Him have His way and are in a pet with Him and would dispute His love in sending this affliction! Is that so, my Brother? Does not that murmuring of yours put an, "if," of question upon your love to your blessed Savior?

You say, too, that you have been trusting Him and yet you have fallen into difficulties and straits. You do not know which way to turn and you suspect that His Providence is not wise. Do you think so? If you loved Him as you should, would you think so? Is there not an, "if," somewhere? I do not mean an, "if," about your loving Him, but about your loving Him as you ought! I think if you loved Him as He deserves, you would say, "The King can do no wrong. My King is kind, wise, loving. I yield everything into His blessed hands."

And so your sorrow is occasioned by the fear of death! You go burdened every day about death, do you? That is a poor compliment to the Well-Beloved. I thought you loved Him! Love Him—and not wish to see His face? It is a dark passage, is it? Oh, if the way were still darker, since He is on the other side, let us pass through it with a song! To be with Him where He is—are you reluctant? Reluctant to behold His face? Reluctant to be forever in His bosom? Is there not an, "if," somewhere?

No, your grief is not about your death—it is about those that have died whom you loved. You cannot forgive God for taking away those you loved so well. Who has them, Friend? Who has them? I will tell you. It is One who, when He was here, said, “Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am.” He prayed for them! He died for them! And now He has His own and you are displeased? Do you stand fretting because Christ has His own? What? Are you pettish because what He lent you, for a while, He has taken back? Were not your dear ones always more His than yours? Do you love Him, then, and grudge your child, your baby to Jesus? Do you grudge your mother, your brother, your wife, your husband to Him that bought them with His blood? Oh, I say again, it puts an, “if,” upon your love—not on the *existence* of it, but on the *degree* of it. If you loved Him, you would rejoice that He sees the travail of His soul and has His saints with Him in Glory.

IV. That brings me to the closing remark, which contains the gist of the text. All the rest is meant to lead up to it, namely, this—that OUR LOVE TO OUR DIVINE LORD OUGHT TO BE SUCH THAT HIS EXALTATION, THOUGH IT SHOULD BE OUR LOSS, SHOULD, NEVERTHELESS, GIVE US UNFEIGNED DELIGHT. I will put this very simply before you. There is a daughter of yours in Christ and she is fading away by consumption. She is very happy in the Lord and full of joyful expectation. She is about to die and you are all round the bed. You, her dear mother, stand there weeping most of all. Now, your dear girl shall give you an explanation of my text. She says, “Mother, do you not know that I shall soon be with the angels and shall see the face of God, without fault? If you loved me, Mother, you would rejoice to think that I shall be away from all this weakness and this pain. If you love me, you will be glad to think that your child shall be in Glory.” Your girl’s sweet words shall tell you what Jesus meant. He meant, “If you loved Me very much. If you loved Me—not merely My Presence and the comforts that I bring you, and the charm with which I invest your earthly life—but if you loved Me, you would say, ‘Blessed Lord, we readily deny ourselves Your company and all the joy it brings because it is better for You to be gone to the Father. It is more glorious for You to be in Heaven than here and, therefore, we rejoice in Your exaltation.’”

You see how it was with those disciples. I need not enlarge upon their case. When Jesus had died and risen again—and had gone away from His disciples, He took upon Himself the Glory which He had laid aside. The Glory which He had with God before the world was, He reassumed at the time when He entered Heaven! Then, too, as the God-Man, He was invested with a new splendor. The Father said, “Let all the angels of God worship Him,” and they adored Him. New songs went up from every golden street and all Heaven rang with, “Hosanna! Hosanna! Hosanna!” as

Christ ascended to His Throne, To the Throne He ascends and there He sits, King and Priest, forever enthroned until His enemies are made His footstool. No more the bloody sweat—no more the cruel spear—no more the dark and lonesome tomb! He is exalted above all exaltation, higher than the kings of the earth, far above all principalities and powers and every name that is named! We ought to be glad of this—exceedingly glad. These disciples were bound to be glad if they loved Christ, for though they could no more enjoy His company, could not sit at the table with Him, could not walk through the streets with Him any more, yet it was good for Him to be gone to Glory and, therefore, they were compelled to rejoice!

I want, in conclusion, to draw one or two parallel cases which may be practically applicable to yourselves.

Suppose, Beloved, that it should always be for Christ's Glory to leave you in the dark? Would you not rejoice to have it so? A little while ago it was so with me. A few years ago I remember preaching to you from the text, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me," and I think that if ever soul of mortal man knew the bitter meaning of that cry, I did. I preached hearing the clanking of my own chains while I spoke to you. It was sad work. That night, before I went home, I knew the reason. There came into the vestry a man as nearly insane as man could be. Despair hung like a cloud over his countenance and, as he took my hand, he said, "I have never met a man before that seemed to know where I am. Talk with me." I saw him the next day and several days and, by God's help, saved him from self-destruction. Then did I rejoice because I saw that Christ was glorified! I would lose my Master's company, dark as the day would be to me without it—lose it, yes, by the months together—if it would make Him glorious in the heart of one poor downcast man, or bring a single sinner to His feet!

Be willing to say the same, Brothers and Sisters. Love Christ and be willing for Him to give you the cold shoulder instead of the kiss of His lips if He might be more glorified! God bring us to reach that state of self-denial to be willing to forego that greatest luxury of Heaven for which angels themselves pine—the Presence of the Lord—if thereby Jesus may be the better served.

Well, now, suppose that you are going to be laid aside, afflicted, troubled and it should be God's intent that by this you should become more useful and more fitted for His service? If you love Him, you will rejoice at this. You will accept chastisement with thankfulness and say, "Lay on the stripes! Multiply the pain! Only fashion me so that I can glorify You! Make no account of anything else but this—that You may be exalted in my mortal body whether I live or whether I die!"

It is possible, dear Friend, that you are going to be eclipsed by one who has a brighter light than any God has yet given you. None of us like this. Somebody is coming forward who will preach better than you. That Sunday school teacher is going to teach better than you. Somebody near you will display more Grace and more gifts than you. What then? If you love Jesus you will rejoice that it should be so! Do you remember what Paul did? There were some who preached Christ out of contention and ill-will and wanted to get the better of Paul. They desired that their names would be cried up above the Apostles. "Ah," said Paul, "so long as Christ is preached I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice!" Well spoken, Paul!

I like the valor of the soldier who helped to fill the ditch with his dead body that his captain might march to victory. Throw yourselves into oblivion that Jesus may triumph! It were a small sacrifice for all the Church to die a martyr's death if Jesus were but raised one inch the higher among men! Let us exhibit the self-denying spirit which is born of love. "If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said, I go unto the Father."

Suppose that it should also happen that some of you are going to be deprived of all the privileges of hearing the Gospel because you are going away to a foreign land? You are extremely sorry, but suppose that Jesus means to make use of you to advance His Glory among the heathen—by naming His name where it was never known before? Then you may rejoice in banishment, rejoice to deny yourselves Gospel privileges, rejoice to be scattered far and wide by mountain, stream and sea so that you might bring forth a harvest to His Glory!

Brethren, if you should be sinking lower and lower in your own esteem, be not sorry for it. If Christ is rising higher and higher in your esteem, count it all gain! Sink, O self, down to death and the abyss! Sink, sink, till there is nothing left of you! Go down, pride, self-conceit, self-trust, self-seeking! Go even though your going should cause despondency, so long as Christ is crowned! Sink, sink, Soul, if Jesus rises! If you can trust Him better, love Him better and admire Him more, so let it be!

As you come to His Table, say in your hearts, "Lord, make me glad, or make me sad, so long as You are exalted! Lord, let me have Your presence, but let me be without it, so long as You are exalted and extolled!"

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*John 14: (parts).*
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—318, 317, 786.**

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A SHARP KNIFE FOR THE VINE BRANCHES NO. 774

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 6, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Every branch in Me that bears not fruit He takes away: and every branch that bears fruit, He purges it, that it may bring forth more fruit.”
John 15:2.***

THESE are the words of Jesus. Unto YOU that believe He is precious, and every word that He speaks is precious for His sake. You will be sure, then, to give every syllable its weight and to let each word fall upon your soul as coming directly from His lips. These are the words of our Lord Jesus just before His departure from the world. We reckon the words of dying men to be worth keeping, and especially of such a matchless Man as our Lord and Master.

It may be said of Him, “You have kept the best wine until now,” for in this chapter and in that which follows we have some of the choicest, deepest, and richest words that the Master ever uttered. You will endeavor, then, to hear Him speaking as upon the verge of Gethsemane. You will listen to these sentences as coming to you associated with the groans and bloody sweat of His agony.

These are words, moreover, about *us*, and therefore to be received by us with profound attention. The most of us who are here, are in Christ, some one way or another. The majority of us profess to be Christians. The text, then, is directed to us. When Jesus speaks about anything, it is weighty and demands our ear. But when He speaks about ourselves to ourselves, we must give Him the *heart* as well as the ear, and give most earnest heed to the things which He speaks to us, lest by any means we let them slip. We may have to regret one day that we did not listen to His voice in love, for we may have to hear it when we must listen to it, when the tones have become those of *judgment*, and Jesus the *Judge* shall say unto us, “I know you not,” even though we shall venture to plead that we ate and drank in His Presence, and that He taught in our streets.

Having, then, your solemn attention, we will read the text again: “Every branch in Me that bears not fruit He takes away: and every branch that bears fruit, He purges it, that it may bring forth more fruit.” The text suggests self-examination. It conveys instruction, and invites meditation.

I. In the first place, it SUGGESTS SELF-EXAMINATION. I hear in these solemn words the tones of His voice of whom Malachi said, “Who may abide the day of His coming? And who shall stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner’s fire, and like fullers’ soap.” I discern in these two heart-searching sentences, the voice of Him of whom John said, “His fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner. But He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” Truly the Lord’s “fire is in Zion, and His furnace in Jerusalem.” Happy shall that man be who can bear to be thrust into the flames and to

be covered with the hot coals of the burning Truths of God here taught! But he shall be found reprobate who cannot bear the trial.

1. Observe that our text mentions two characters who are in some respects exceedingly alike. They are both branches, they are both branches in the Vine: "Every branch in Me." How much alike persons may apparently be, who, in God's sight stand at opposite poles of character! Both the persons described in the text were in Christ: in Christ in different senses, it is obvious, because the first persons were not so in Christ as to bring forth fruit, consequently, as fruit is that by which we are to *judge* a man, they were not in Christ *effectually*, graciously, influentially, or so as to receive the fruit-creating sap.

If they had brought forth fruit, their fruitfulness would have been a sign that they were in Christ *savingly*. Who will venture to say that a man who yields no fruit of righteousness can be really a Christian? Yet they were *in Christ* in some sense or other, that is to say, the two characters were equally esteemed to be Christians. Their names were enrolled in the same Church register—in the common judgment of men they were equally Christian. According to their own profession they were so. In many other respects which we need not now catalog, they were both in Christ as His avowed disciples—as soldiers professedly fighting under His banner—as servants wearing His livery.

These two persons were probably equally sound in their doctrinal views. They held the same precious Truths of God. If they heard falsehood, they were equally earnest to denounce it. When they listened to the Gospel they received it with joy, and so received it as to be willing to assist in the spread of it—and even to make sacrifices for its extension. These persons were equally attentive to ordinances. How often has it happened that two persons of widely different states before the Lord have been baptized at the same hour, in the same water, into the same name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit! And they have then broken bread together with equal apparent fervency, and with equal professions of enjoyment and devotion!

These people have been equally fair in their profession. Their moral conduct has, in the judgment of all onlookers, been much the same. They have avoided everything of ill repute and they have, in their measure, sought after that which was comely and lovely in the estimation of men. Ah, there will often be found two who publicly pray alike, have an equal gift in prayer—and what is worse, *preach* with equal earnestness and zeal! And to all appearance their family prayer is maintained with the same consistency. But for all this the end of the one shall be to be cast away as a branch to be *burned*—while the end of the other shall be to bring forth fruit unto perfection—with everlasting life as the reward.

Ah, Friends, man can counterfeit cleverly, but when the devil helps him he becomes master of the art! You will see pieces of coinage which it is almost impossible for you to discover to be mere counterfeits by their appearance, or even by their ring. In the scales of weight they almost deceive you—but you put them into the fire—and then the discovery is made! Doubtless there are thousands in all Christian Churches who have the stamp and the impress of the King upon them. They look like the genuine shekels of the sanctuary who, after all, are only fit to be like bad money,

fastened down on the footstool of the judgment seat with a nail driven through them—to their everlasting reprobation and disgrace!

How can we tell a bold man from a coward? Two soldiers wear the same uniforms—they talk equally loudly of what they will do when the enemy shall come. It is the *battle* that tests and proves them. Some peculiar phase of the conflict will bring out the difference. But till the battle comes how easy it is for the base coward to play the hero while, perhaps, the bravest man may modestly shrink into the rear! Our text, then, brings before us two characters apparently alike.

2. Then, in the second place it shows us the distinction between them—the great and solemn difference. The first branch brought forth no fruit. The second branch bore some fruit. “By their fruits you shall know them.” We have no right to judge of our neighbors’ motives and thoughts except so far as they may be clearly discoverable by their actions and words. The *interior* we must leave with God, but the exterior we *may* judge, and *must* judge. There is a sense in which we are not to judge men, but there is another sense in which he would be an arrant fool who did not constantly exercise his judgment upon men. “By their fruits you shall know them,” is our Lord’s own canon of sacred criticism. If you would judge men and judge yourselves, this is the one test—“by their fruits.”

Now, then, what do you professors say who are present here today—you who are so regular in your attendance upon the means of Divine Grace? Will you now search yourselves to see whether you have any fruit? That you may be helped in such an investigation let me remind you that the Apostle Paul has given us a list of these fruits in his fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Galatians. He says in the 22nd verse, “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.”

Nine kinds of fruit—all of these should be “in us and abound.” Let us question ourselves whether we have any of them. Say, Professor, have you brought forth the fruit of love? Searching question, this! I do not ask if you can *talk* of love, but, do you *feel* it? I do not say, is love upon your *tongue*? But, does love rule your *heart*? Do you love God as a child loves its father? Do you love the Savior from a sense of gratitude to Him who bought you with His blood? Do you feel the love of the gracious Comforter who dwells in you, if you are, indeed, a child of God? What do you know about love to the Brethren?

Do you love the Saints, as Brothers and Sisters in Christ whether they belong to *your* Church or not? Whether they please you or serve your turn or not? Say, do you love God’s poor? Do you love God’s persecuted and despised ones? Answer, I pray you. What about love to the kingdom of the Lord’s dear Son, and to the souls of men? Can you sit still and be satisfied with being saved, yourself, while your neighbors are being damned by the thousands? Are your eyes never wet with tears for impenitent souls? Do the terrors of the Lord never get hold upon you, when you think of men plunging themselves into perdition? “He that loves not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?” Have you this fruit, then? If not, “every branch in Me that bears not fruit He takes away.”

Next comes *joy*. Does your religion ever give you joy? Is it mere matter of duty, a heavy chain for you to drag about like a convict, or is your relig-

ion a harp for you to dance to the tune of? Do you ever rejoice in Jesus Christ? Do you know what the “joy of the Lord” means? Does it ever give you joy to think that He is the same even when the fig tree does not blossom and the herd is cut off from the stall? Do you feel a joy in reading the promises of God’s Word? Have you a joy in secret prayer—that joy which the world never gave you—and cannot take away from you? Have you a secret joy, like a spring shut up, a fountain sealed which is only open to you and your Lord, because your fellowship is with Him and not with the sons of sin?

He that never mourned because of sin has never repented, but he who has never rejoiced because of forgiveness cannot have seen the Cross! Come, then, have you produced this fruit of joy? The Lord give it more and more to you! If you have never had it, then hear the sentence—“Every branch in Me that bears not fruit He takes away.”

Next follows *peace*. Oh, blessed fruit! An autumn fruit, mellow and sweet, and fit for an angel’s tooth. It is the fruit the blessed feed upon in Heaven—peace with God, peace of conscience, peace with one’s fellow men—“the peace of God which passes all understanding.” The peace which “keeps the heart and mind through Jesus Christ.” “Great peace have they which love Your Law: and nothing shall offend them.” “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Ah, my Hearers, some of you make a great deal of noise, perhaps, about religion, and yet never have peace of conscience! This is what ceremonialists never can obtain. “We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle” of outward ordinances, and carnal, vainglorious, pompous ceremonies. Of our altar, where the finished sacrifice is eaten as a peace offering, they cannot eat. They find no peace after all their “masses,” and holy offices, and processions, and sacred hours, and priestcraft, and I know not what! Poor slaves, they go down to their graves as much in bondage as ever—with the dreary prospect of a purgatorial fire before them—no delightful prospect of waking up in the likeness of Christ! They have no sense of the truth of that glorious passage, “and you are complete in Him.” He that has Christ has this one of His fruits, namely, *peace*. He who knows no peace with God has good need to tremble.

Mention is next made of *long-suffering*. I fear there are many professors who have very little of this, a quality which may be viewed in many aspects. There is patience, which bears God’s chastising hand and does not turn against Him, but says, “The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” Long-suffering towards God—suffering long. Then there is long-suffering towards man—bearing persecution without apostasy. Bearing slander and reproach without revenge—bearing the errors and mistakes of mankind with tender compassion. The Believer should have much of this.

Some of us, perhaps, may be naturally quick-tempered. Divine Grace must overcome angry passions. It is not for you to say, “I cannot help it.” The fruit of the Spirit is long-suffering—you *must* help it! If there is no change in your temper, there is no change in you at all—you still have need to be converted. If the Grace of God does not help you, in a measure, to keep under that temper which will be there, but which you must restrain, you have need to go to God and ask Him to make sound work in

you, or there is no work of Grace there as of yet. We must have long-suffering—or we may be found fruitless—and then woe unto us.

Next in order is *gentleness*, by which I understand *kindness*. The Christian is a man of kindness. He recognizes his kindness with his fellow men. He wishes to treat them as his kin. He has compassion for those who are suffering. He endeavors to make his manners kind and courteous. He knows that there is a natural offense in the Cross to carnal men. He does not wish, therefore, to make any offense of his own. He desires in his own life not to be morose, suspicious, harsh, proud or domineering, but he seeks to imitate his Master, who said of Himself, “Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.”

The Believer in Christ should be gentle towards all men with whom he comes in contact. This is one of the fruits of the Spirit, and, I may add, a fruit of the Spirit in which many professors are terribly deficient. Do not think that I judge you. I judge you not—there *is* One that judges you, it is this Word of God which we speak. Gentleness is the fruit of the Spirit and if you have it not, you have not this fruit of the Spirit—and what says the text, “Every branch in Me that bears not fruit He takes away!”

We are next reminded of *goodness*, by which is undoubtedly meant beneficence, benevolence, generosity—not merely kindness of manner—but bounty of heart. Oh what a fine thing it is when our Christianity gives us a noble spirit! We cannot all be nobles in pocket, but every child of God should be a noble in his *heart*. “Come in,” said a poor Scotch woman to some of the Lord’s people, “I have room for ten of you in my house, but I have room for 10,000 of you in my heart.”

So should the Believer say, “Come in, you that are in need. I have not the power to help many of you, but I have the will to help all of you if I could.” The Christian should be like his Lord and Master—easily entreated, ready to communicate, making it his delight and his business to distribute, like a cloud that is full of rain and empties itself upon the earth. A Christian should be like the bright and sparkling sun scattering his beams abroad and not hiding or hoarding his light. If you have not this fruit of the Spirit in some measure I beseech you to remember the solemn words of the text, “Every branch in Me that bears not fruit He takes away.”

Then comes *faith*, by which is probably not meant the *Grace* of faith which is rather a root than a fruit, yet that is included. The fruit of the Spirit is, indeed, faith in God. Without this there is not even the commencement of anything like security in the soul. Do you believe on the Son of God? Have you faith? If you have faith but as a grain of mustard seed, it is a sign of life within you. If you have little of it, pray, “Lord, increase our faith!”

But the faith here, I think, means *faithfulness*—faithfulness towards God, faithfulness towards conscience. How little some Christians make of that nowadays! Why they swallow their consciences! There are ministers who subscribe to words which they know to be deceiving the people and help to buttress a Church which is doing its utmost to lead this nation into downright Popery. The good and gracious ministers in the Establishment are the prop and pillar of it and by their influence they maintain a system which enables traitors to pollute this land with Popery.

O that our friends had a little more tenderness of conscience and would come out from their unhallowed alliance with the Popish Ritualists. How earnestly do I pray that none of us have the remotest connection with anything which would take us back to that Antichrist which God hates—which He so hates that He has bid His servant John call the apostate church by a dreadful name—a brand of infamy, a name which God never uses till He has cast off and utterly abhorred a thing.

My Brothers and Sisters, may your consciences be faithful and may you be faithful to your consciences! Men that trifle with doctrine, it seems to me, little know what sins they commit. I tell you who trifle with doctrines that you are as bad as thieves! You are worse, for the thief only robs men, but you rob *God* and your own souls! By helping to foster error, you are heaping together the elements of a pestilence which, unless Divine Grace prevents, will utterly destroy this land.

We must have faithfulness, also, in our dealings with our fellow men in business. Saints are men of honor. The Christian man “swears to his own hurt, and changes not.” He does not take an oath, but his word is his bond. O that we may have this fruit of the Spirit—faithfulness, directness, straight-forwardness, doing the right, loving the true, and walking uprightly before the Lord our God!

The next fruit is *meekness*. May we possess much of this for there is a peculiar benediction promised to the meek—“Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.” The Christian is to be as harmless as a dove. In his Master’s battles, bold as a lion, but for *himself* and for his own causes, tender, gentle, shunning debate, loving quietness, ready to take a rebuke rather than to administer one—feeling himself to be weak and frail. Moses was the meekest of men, often provoked, but only once speaking unadvisedly with his lips. It is marvelous how he bore with the people! They were the most provoking people in the world, except ourselves—but yet, like as a nurse is tender with a sick child—even so was he with a foolish people.

How often did they provoke him and grieve his spirit! He grew angry in ignorance and dashed the two tablets of stone upon the ground when he saw the idolatry of the people. Moses, the meekest of men, could not bear that! And God’s meekest servants grow wrathful when they think of the idolatry into which this land is sliding so rapidly. But meek we must be towards all men—and if we have not this fruit, the Master says, “Every branch in Me that bears not fruit He takes away.”

Do not forget *temperance*, which is now generally used in respect to meats and drinks, but which has a far wider significance, though it includes that. The man who indulges the appetites of the flesh and cannot control himself as to eating and drinking need not even *pretend* to be a Christian. He has first to prove that he is equal to a *beast* before he may pretend to be a child of God! He has first to show that he is a *man* before he may claim to be a Christian. Those who indulge in drunkenness shall drink of the wine of God’s wrath before long, and then how bitter will their sweet wines be to them! How will that which has been sweet to the throat be as poison in the heart forever and ever! If we have not that kind of temperance, evidently we can know nothing about true religion.

But there must be an equal temperance in all other things, a temperance in your dress, in your expenditure, in your temper and, indeed, in

every act. There is a moderation to be observed, a narrow road to be followed which the tutored eye of the spiritual man can see and which it is a fruit of the Spirit for the spiritual foot to tread. God grant that we may have these fruits. Beloved in the Lord, I am persuaded that no Truth of God needs to be pressed more upon my own soul and yours than this—that positive fruit is the *only* test of our being in Christ. It is so easy for us to wrap ourselves up in the idea that attention to religious ceremonies is the test, but it is not so, for, “Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees,” who were the most religious people of their day, “you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of Heaven.”

I know it is easy to think, “Well, I do not indulge in drunkenness. I am no rogue. I do not do this or that.” This matters little! Remember that the judgment will not be about those things which you do *not* do, but about positive things. How does Jesus Christ put that judgment matter? “I was hungry and you gave me no meat. I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink. I was a stranger and you took Me not in. Naked, and you clothed Me not. Sick, and in prison, and you visited Me not.” The absence of positive fruit was that which condemned the lost. “Every tree,” says John, “that bears no fruit shall be hewn down and cast into the fire.” He does not say, “Every tree that bears *bitter* fruit, or sour grapes,” but “Every tree that brings forth *no fruit*.”

Fruitless professors, tremble! I may not speak so as to make this Truth of God penetrate as I wish it should into your inmost souls, but I pray the eternal Spirit to make it like fire in the bones of every deceived man and woman! If my Lord shall come to you, my Hearer, day after day, as He once came to the fig tree, and should find leaves upon you and no fruit, I tell you He will say, “Henceforth let no fruit be on you forever,” and you shall wither away. What is His own parable The master of the vineyard said to the husbandman, “Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none: cut it down; why cumberest it the ground?”

And when the husbandman interceded, you will remember his intercession was only so far: “If it bears fruit, well: and if not, then after that you shall cut it down.” Jesus the Intercessor agrees with His Father the Husbandman. Mercy agrees with Justice—if there is no fruit—the tree must come down. May I beseech you to lay these things to heart. You must bear fruit unto God by the power of the Spirit or it is down with you! God fingers His axe this morning. It is sharp and if He does but lift it, woe to you, barren fig tree! Woe, indeed, to me also, if I am found barren in the day of the Lord’s appearing!

In closing this weighty business of self-examination, I must remind you that our Lord tells us that although these persons were in some points alike, the solemn difference between them led to a solemn result—“Every branch in Me that bears not fruit He takes away.” There are many ways in which the Lord takes away barren branches. Sometimes He allows the professor to apostatize. He gets rich and then he will not go to the place of worship which he used to frequent when he was a poorer man and was humble enough to hear the Gospel—he must go to some fashionable place where he can listen to anything but the Truth of God—and thus by his own pride he is taken away.

Or else he is allowed to fall into open sin. We always should regret the falls of professors, but sometimes it is possible that discovered sins may be a blessing, for they take away from the Church men who never ought to have been there and who were an injury to it. Many bright professors have stood well for a long time, but at last they have been snuffed out ecclesiastically by reason of their outward sins. God has taken them away. Some have been taken away in a more terrible sense, by death. God has removed them. They have lived in the Church and died in the Church, but have been taken away in solemn judgment and cast into the fire.

Then there is a taking away which is worst of all, when the Master shall say, "Depart, you cursed!" Now, remember, these were respectable people. These were people like you—decent, good people, who attended a place of worship, and contributed, and were very moral—but still they had not Divine Grace in their souls. They had nominal Christianity, but not the fruit of the Spirit, and what was done with them? "Lord, cannot some mild means be used? How sad to see these branches cut off!" "No," He says, "if they bring not forth fruit, they must be taken away." "But, Lord, they never reeled in and out of the gin palace! Lord, they were much too good and much too amiable to be found among the debased and the debauched!"

"Take them away! They brought no fruit, and they must be taken away." "But, Master, they were so diligent in the use of ordinances. They were so constant and regular in the form of prayer!" "They brought forth no fruit," says He, "take them away." There is only this one thing for them—if they had, through saving faith, been made to bear the fruit of the Spirit, they would have been saved—but as there was no fruit, take them away. What is done with that which is taken away? If I could take you just outside the garden wall I would let you see a heap of weeds and slips that are taken from the vine. There they are heaped together with a little straw, and the gardener burns them. The other branches with their purple clusters are in honor, but these dishonored things are burnt outside the gate.

I cannot describe to you that day of doom, that terrible fate which shall come upon fruitless branches of the spiritual vine. They will be outside the gate with a great gulf fixed between them and Heaven, where the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever—"where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched." If such people are cast away, what will become of some of you? If these good people who were in Christ, in a way, still perish because they brought forth no fruit, O you who are like hemlock in the furrows of the field, you who produce the grapes of Gomorrah and the apples of Sodom—what shall be your doom in the day of account when the Master shall come forth in robes of judgment to execute righteousness among the sons of men?

II. Briefly on the second point. THE TEXT CONVEYS INSTRUCTION. Looking at it carefully we observe that the fruit-bearing branches are not perfect. If they were perfect they would not need pruning. But the fact is there is much of original inbred sin remaining in the best of God's people. So whenever the sap within them is strong for the production of fruit there is a tendency for that strength to turn into evil, and instead of good fruit evil is produced. It is the strength of the tree and the richness of the sap which makes the branch produce too much wood so that it needs

pruning. The gardener desires to see that strength in clusters, but alas, instead it runs into wood.

Now observe that in a Christian when the sap comes into him to produce confidence in God, because of the evil that is in him it often produces confidence in *himself*, and he who would be strong in faith becomes strong in carnal security. When the sap would produce zeal, how very frequently it turns into rashness, and instead of zeal with knowledge, fanaticism is brought forth! Suppose the sap flows to produce self-examination? Very generally unbelief is the outgrowth and instead of the man doubting himself, he begins to doubt his Lord. How often have I seen even the joy of the Lord turned into pride, and when the man should rejoice in Christ Jesus he has began to rejoice in himself, to grow proud and say, "What a fine experience I possess!"

That love which we ought to bear towards our neighbors—how apt is that to run into love of the world and carnal complacency towards its evil ways! The gentleness which I praised just now often turns to a silly compliance with everybody's whim. And meekness, which is a fruit of the Spirit, how often *that* becomes an excuse for holding your tongue when you ought boldly to speak! The fact is, it is very difficult to keep ourselves, when we are in a flourishing state, from producing wood instead of grapes. God grant us Divine Grace to keep us from this evil! And I do not know how the Grace can come except by His judicious pruning.

I say the fruit-bearing branches are not perfect because they bear a great deal that is not fruit, and, moreover, not one of them bears as much fruit as it ought to do. I do not agree with Mr. Wesley's opinion about perfection. It is very difficult to see how he could have done more than he did, but I do not doubt that even *he* felt that he might have been more like his Lord. None of the Lord's people with whom I ever came into communion have dared to think themselves perfect—and if they had said so, and proved it—I should have rejoiced to think that there were such people, but greatly sorrowed to find that I belong to a very different order of beings myself. "In me, that is, in my flesh, there dwells no good thing."

The Master is bringing us upon our way to bring forth more fruit, but as yet, the fruit-bearing branches are not perfect. Therefore we are taught, in the second place, that pruning is the lot of all the fruitful Saints. You may escape it if you are not fruitful—you will be cut off—you will not be pruned. But all the fruit-bearing Saints must feel the knife. Observe Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—had not those Patriarchs their trials? Moses and David, Jeremiah and Daniel—who among those escaped? Though they honored their Master much, who escaped without the pruning knife? And if you come to the Believers of the New Testament, surely the flame was seven times hotter with regard to them than with regard to the elder Brethren.

How does the Lord prune His people, then? It is generally said by *affliction*. I question if that could be proved as it stands—it needs explanation. It is generally thought that our trials and troubles purge us. I am not sure of that, they certainly are lost upon some. Our Lord tells us what it is that prunes us. "Now," says He, in the third verse of the chapter, "you are clean (or pruned) through the Word which I have spoken unto you." It is the *Word* that prunes the Christian, it is the *Truth* that purges him—the

Scripture, made living and powerful by the Holy Spirit—which effectually cleanses the Christian.

“What, then, does *affliction* do?” you ask. Well, if I may say so, affliction is the handle of the knife—affliction is the grindstone that sharpens up the Word of God. Affliction is the dresser which removes our soft garments and lays bare the diseased flesh so that the surgeon’s lancet may get at it. Affliction makes us ready to feel the Word, but the true pruner is the Word in the hand of the Great Husbandman. Sometimes when you lay stretched upon a bed of sickness you think more upon the Word than you did before. That is one great thing. In the next place, you see more the applicability of that Word to yourself. In the third place, the Holy Spirit makes you feel more, while you are thus laid aside, the force of the Word than you did before.

Ask that affliction may be *sanctified*, Beloved, but always remember there is no more tendency in affliction in itself to sanctify us than there is in prosperity! In fact, the natural tendency of affliction is to make us rebel against God which is quite opposite to sanctification. It is the Word coming to us while *in* affliction that purges us. It is God the Holy Spirit laying home Divine Truths and applying the blood of Jesus, and working in all His Divine energy in the soul. It is this that prunes us, and affliction is only the handle of the knife, or what if I say the ladder which the gardener takes to reach the vine so that he may prune it better?

Now it may be that some of us have been afflicted a great deal and have *not* been pruned. I know some people who have been very poor—I do not see that they are any better for it. And I know some others who have been very sick, but I have never heard that they have been improved. Alas, some people are of such a character that if they were stricken till their whole head were sick—and their whole heart faint—they would not be benefited! If they were beaten till they were all bruises and putrefying sores they would still go on to rebel—for these things only provoke them to a greater hatred against the Most High. We must be pruned, but it must be by the Word, through affliction.

Now the object in this pruning is never condemnatory. God does not purge His children with a view to visit them penally for sin. He chastises, but He cannot *punish* those for whom Jesus Christ has been already punished! You have no right to say, when a man is afflicted, that it is because he has done wrong. On the contrary, “every branch that bears fruit He purges.” Just the branch that is good for something gets the pruning knife! Do not say of yourselves, or of other people, “That man must have been a great offender or he would not have met with such a judgment.” Nonsense! Who was a holier man than Job? But has any been brought lower than he?

Why, the fact is, it is because the Lord loves His people that He chastens them—not because of any anger that He has towards them! Learn, Beloved, especially you under trial, not to see an angry God in your pains or your losses, or your crosses—instead, see a Husbandman who thinks you a branch whom He estimates at so great a rate that He will take the trouble to prune you—which He would not do if He had not a kind consideration towards you. The real reason is that more fruit may be produced, which I understand to mean more in *quantity*.

A good man who feels the power of the Word pruning him of this and that superfluity, sets to work, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to do more for Jesus. Before he was afflicted he did not know how to be patient. He learns it at last—a hard lesson. Before he was poor he did not know how to be humble, but he learns that. Before the Word came with power he did not know how to pray with his fellows, or to speak to sinners, or lay himself out for usefulness. But now the more he is pruned, the more he serves his Lord.

More fruit in variety, too, may be intended. One tree can only produce one kind of fruit, usually, but the Lord's people can produce many, as we have already seen. And the more they are pruned the more they will produce. There will be all kinds of fruit, both new and old, which they will lay up for their Beloved. There will be more in quality, too. The man may not pray *more*, but he will pray more *earnestly*. He may not preach more sermons, but he will preach them more thoroughly from his heart with a greater unction. It may be that he will not be more in communion with God as to *time*, but it will be a *closer* communion. He will throw himself more thoroughly into the Divine element of communion and will become more hearty in all that he does.

This is the result of the pruning which our heavenly Father gives. And if such is the result, the Lord keep on pruning, for what greater blessing can a man have than to produce much fruit for God? Better to serve God much than to become a prince. He that does much for Christ shall shine as the stars forever and ever! He is good in God. He is blessing his fellow men. He is bringing joy into his own spirit. Oh, if on bended knee we might seek but one favor, I think we should not ask the wisdom which Solomon craved—we would petition for this—that we might bring forth much fruit, so that we might be Christ's disciples.

III. To conclude. Our text INVITES MEDITATION. I will hint at the points on which it invites our thoughts. It suggests to every unconverted person here this one thought—it seems that it is not very easy for the righteous to be saved—"If the righteous scarcely are saved, where shall the ungodly and the wicked appear?" If the branches in Christ that bear no fruit are taken away, what must become of the Sabbath-breakers, the despisers of God, the atheists, the drunkards, the unchaste, the dishonest, the blasphemers? I raise the question—solve it! Let it burn into your soul!

Secondly, what a mercy it is to the Believer that it is *pruning* with him and not cutting off! Ah, let the knife be very sharp. Let the Word of God throw us into the great deeps till we almost despair. Yet, thank God we are not cast into Hell! Dear Friends, your prayer should be, "Lord, let Your Word cut deep into me. Do not let the preacher mince matters with me. Deliver him from sewing pillows under my armholes and lulling me to sleep. Lord, I would be faithfully dealt with! I put the proud flesh before You—cut it out that the wound heals not so as to be worse when healed than it was when a running sore."

What a mercy it is not to be cut off! Ah, Christian, you are desponding and doubting today while the Word is searching you—but you might have been in Hell! Think of that! You are poor, or you are full of pain, but you might have been driven from the Presence of God! How can you, as a living man, complain about whatever God may place upon you? In the next

place it would be well to think how gently the pruning has been done with the most of us, up till now, compared with our barrenness. I wonder the Lord has not cut us much more. He who has a deep-seated disease requires sharp medicine. And when the sore runs deep, the doctor must cut deep, too. With all the rust that is on us, it is a wonder we are not filed more. There is so much alloy, it is marvelous that we are not more often put into the fire. O Spirit of God, You have hard work with some of us! Still we bless You, for Your gentleness has been manifested very graciously. How tenderly have You dealt with our frail dust, O God of love!

Again, how earnestly we ought to seek for more fruit! If this is what God seeks after, *we* should be after it! If He often goes the length of pruning the vine—although He does not love to do it, for He does not afflict willingly, or grieve the children of men for nothing—let us agree with God and seek to yield more fruit. How concerned should every one of us be to be efficaciously and truly one with Christ! I ought to have said that the whole gist of the text lies in that “in Me, in Me, in Me.” You see, if a man is not in Christ at all, why then, of course, there is no hope of any sort! And then, when he *is* in Christ, there come the questions—is he in Christ by living faith, by real trust? Has he the faith of God’s elect? Has he been born again from above? Is he a spiritual Grace-taught soul? Let these be the questions which shall rest upon our minds.

I would that this morning my text might be sweet to you. Sweet, I said, because if for the moment it seems bitter, the *end* is sweetness. Faithful are the wounds of such a friend as Jesus! If He has wounded any of you, it is not to drive you from Him but to make you cling closer to Him! Have you never learned that, when you feel the most humbled, most afraid, most full of sin, most conscious of your own imperfection, the best thing is to cling to Christ more?

“Well, Lord, if I have been the most cursed hypocrite that ever lived, I will come to You. If up to this moment I have been deceived and have not had a grain of true faith, nor a single one of the fruits of the Spirit, yet here I am, a poor vile sinner! I fly to the fountain—a naked sinner. I wrap Your righteousness about my loins! I am a poor sin-sick, lost sinner—I look up to You on yonder Cross and I do believe that You can save me! From the very jaws of death, and out of the belly of Hell do I cry unto You, and You will hear me.”

O Sinners and Saints, come to Christ again whether you are His experimentally, or are strangers to Him, come to Him now, for still the Gospel bell rings out sweetly, “Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” O God, grant us Grace to come now afresh, and Yours be the praise! Amen, and Amen.

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WITHOUT CHRIST—NOTHING

NO. 1625

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 23, 1881,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Without Me you can do nothing.”
John 15:5.

THIS is not the language of a man of ordinary mold. No saint, no Prophet, no Apostle would ever have addressed a company of faithful men and have said to them, “Without me you can do nothing.” Had Jesus Christ been, as some say, a *good* man and nothing more, such language as this would have been unseemly and inconsistent. Among the virtues of a *perfect* man we must certainly reckon modesty, but this from a mere *man* would have been shamelessly immodest! It is impossible to conceive that Jesus of Nazareth, had He not been more than man, could ever have uttered the sentence, “Without Me you can do nothing.” My Brothers and Sisters, I hear, in this sentence, the voice of that Divine Person without whom was not anything made that was made! The majesty of the words reveals the Godhead of Him that uttered them. The “I Am” comes out in the personal word, “Me,” and the claim of all power unveils the Omnipotent!

These words mean Godhead or nothing! The spirit in which we listen to this language is that of adoration. Let us bow our heads in solemn worship and so unite with the multitude before the Throne of God who ascribe power and dominion and might to Him that sits upon the Throne and to the Lamb. In this adoring state of mind we shall be the better prepared to enter into the innermost soul of the text. I am not going to preach upon the moral inability of the unregenerate, although in that doctrine I most firmly believe—for that Truth of God did not come in our Lord's way when He uttered these words—and neither did He allude to it.

It is quite true that unregenerate men, being without Christ, can do no spiritual action whatever, and can do nothing which is acceptable in the sight of God. But our Lord was not speaking to unregenerate men at all, nor speaking about them. He was surrounded by His Apostles, the 11 out of whom Judas had been weeded, and it is to them as branches of the true Vine that He says, “Without Me you can do nothing.” The statement refers to such as are in the Vine and even to such as have been pruned and have, for a while, been found abiding in the stem which is Christ—even in such there is an utter incapacity for holy produce if separated from Christ!

We are not called upon, just now, to speak upon all forms of doing, as beyond us, but of that form of it which is intended in the text. There are certain forms of doing in which men excel who know little or nothing of Christ. But the text must be viewed in its own context and the Truth of God is clear. Believers are here described under the figure of branches in

the vine—and the doing alluded to must, therefore, be the bearing of fruit! I might render it, “Apart from Me you can produce nothing, make nothing, create nothing, bring forth nothing.” The reference, therefore, is to that doing which may be set forth by the fruit of the vine’s branch and, therefore, to those good works and Divine Graces of the Spirit which are expected from men who are spiritually united to Christ. It is of *these* that He says, “Without Me you can do nothing.”

Our text is only another form of the fourth verse—“As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can you, except you abide in Me.” I am therefore going to address myself to you who profess to know and love the Lord and are anxious to glorify His name. And I have to remind you that union to Christ is essential, for only as you are one with Him and continue to be so, can you bring forth the fruits which prove you to be truly His.

I. Reading, again, this solemn sentence, “Without Me you can do nothing,” it first of all excites in me AN ASPIRATION OF HOPE. There is something to be done—our religion is to have a grand practical outcome! I have been thinking of Christ as the Vine, and of the myriads of branches in Him, and my heart has hoped for great things. From such a root, what a vintage must come! Being branches in Him, what fruit we must produce! There can be nothing scanty or poverty-stricken in the fruit of a Vine so full of sap! Fruit of the best quality, fruit in the utmost abundance, fruit unrivalled must be borne by such a Vine. That word, “do,” has music in it! Yes, Brethren, Jesus went about doing good and, being in Him, *we* shall do good! Everything about Him is efficient, practical—in a word, fruit bearing—and being joined to Him, much will yet be done by us.

We have been saved by the almighty Grace of God apart from all doings of our own and now that we are saved, we long to do something in return! We feel a high ambition to be of some use and service to our great Lord and Master. The text, even though there is a negative in it, yet raises in our soul the hope that before we go from here and are no more, we may even here on earth do something for Christ! Beloved, there is the ambition and hope before us of doing something in the way of glorifying God by bringing forth the fruits of holiness, peace and love. We would adorn the Doctrine of God, our Savior, in all things. By pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by love unfeigned, by every good and holy work we would show forth the praises of our God!

Apart from the Lord Jesus we know we cannot be holy—but joined unto Him we overcome the world, the flesh and the devil—and we walk with garments unspotted from the world! The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance and all manner of holy conversation. For none of these things are we equal of ourselves, and yet by faith we say with Paul, “I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me.” We may be adorned with plentiful clusters. We may cause the Savior to have joy in us that our joy may be full! Great possibilities are before us! We aspire not only to produce fruit in ourselves, but to bear much fruit in the conversion of others, even as

Paul desired concerning the Romans, that he might have fruit among them.

In this matter we can do nothing whatever, alone, but being united unto Christ we bring forth increase unto the Lord. Our Lord Jesus said, "The works that I do shall you do also, and greater works than these shall you do, because I go unto the Father." Brothers and Sisters, a hope springs up in our bosom that we may, each one of us, bring many souls to Jesus! Not because we have any power in ourselves, but because we are united to Jesus, we joyfully hope to bring forth fruit in the way of leading others to the knowledge of the Gospel! My soul takes fire of hope and I say to myself, if it is so, all these branches and all alive—how much fruit of further blessing will ripen for this poor world? Men shall be blessed in us because we are blessed in Christ!

What must be the influence of ten thousand godly examples? What must be the influence upon our country of thousands of Christian men and women practically advancing love, peace, justice, virtue, holiness? And if each one is seeking to bring others to Christ, what numerous conversions there must be and how large must the Church of God be increased? Do you not know that if there were only 10,000 real Christians in the world, yet if each one of these brought one other to Christ every year it would not need 20 years to accomplish the conversion of the entire population of the globe? This is a simple sum in arithmetic which any schoolboy can work out. Certainly it is a small thing that each one should bring another to the Lord! And surely, if we are one with Him, we may hope to see it done!

So I sit down and dream right comfortably, according to the promise, "Your young men shall see visions and your old men shall dream dreams." See these thousands of branches proceeding from such a stem as Christ Jesus—and with such sap as the Holy Spirit flowing through them, why, surely, this vine must soon clothe the mountains with its verdure and there shall not remain a single barren rock unadorned with the blessed foliage! Then shall the mountains drop sweet wine and all the hills shall melt! Not because of any natural fertility in the branches, but because of their glorious root, stem and sap, each one shall bear full clusters and each fruitful branch shall run over the wall!

Beloved Friends in Christ, have you not strong desires to see some such consummation? Do you not long to take a share in the high enterprise of winning the world to Christ? Oh, you that are young and full of spirits, do you not long to press to the front of this great crusade? Our souls pine to see the knowledge of the Lord covering the earth as the waters cover the sea! It is glad tidings to us that, joined unto Christ, we can do something in this great business—something upon which the Lord will smile—something which shall redound to the glory of His name! We are not condemned to inaction. We are not denied the joy of service, the superior blessedness of giving and of doing. The Lord has chosen us and ordained us to go and bring forth fruit, fruit that shall remain! This is the aspiration which rises in our soul—may the Lord grant that we may see it take actual form in our lives!

II. But now, in the second place, there passes through my heart a shudder—A SHUDDER OF FEAR. Albeit I glow and burn with strong desire and rise upon the wing of a mighty ambition to do something great for Christ, yet I read the text and a sudden trembling takes hold upon me. “Without Me”—it is *possible*, then, that I may be *without* Christ and so may be utterly incapacitated for all good! Come, Friends, I want you to feel, even though it casts a cold chill over you, that you may possibly be, “without Christ.” I would have you feel it in the very marrow of your bones—yes, in the center of your hearts.

You profess to be in Christ, but are you? The large majority of those to whom I speak this morning are visible members of the visible Church of Christ. But what if you should not be so in Him as to bring forth fruit? Evidently there are branches which, in a certain sense are in the vine, and yet bring forth no fruit! It is written, “Every branch in Me that bears not fruit He takes away.” Yes, you are a member, perhaps an elder, perhaps a deacon, possibly a minister—and so you are in the Vine—but are you bringing forth the fruits of holiness? Are you consecrated? Are you endeavoring to bring others to Jesus Christ?

Or is your profession a thing apart from a holy life and devoid of all influence upon others? Does it give you a name among the people of God and nothing more? Say, is it a mere natural association with the Church, or is it a living, Supernatural union with Christ? Let the thought go through you and prostrate you before Him who looks down from Heaven upon you! He lifts His pierced hands and cries, “Without Me you can do nothing.” My Friend, if you are without Christ, what is the use of carrying on that Bible class, for you can do nothing? What is the use of my coming to this pulpit if I am without Christ? What is the use of your going down into the Sunday school this afternoon if, after all, you are without Christ?

Unless we have the Lord Jesus, ourselves, we cannot take Him to others! Unless within us we have the Living Water springing up unto eternal life, we cannot overflow so that out of our midst shall flow rivers of Living Water! I will put the thought another way—What if you should be in Christ, but not so in Him as to *abide* in Him? It appears from our Lord’s words that some branches in Him are cast forth and are withered. “If a man *abide* not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch and is withered.” Some who are called by His name and reckoned among His disciples—whose names are heard whenever the roll of the Church is read—yet do not continue in Him. My Hearer, what if it should happen that you are only in Christ on Sunday, but in the *world* all the rest of the week?

What if you are only in Christ at the Communion Table, or at the Prayer Meeting, or at certain periods of devotion? What if you are off and on with Christ? What if you play fast and loose with the Lord? What if you are an outside saint and an inside devil? Ah me, what will come of such conduct as this? And yet, some persist in attempting to hold an intermittent communion with Christ—in Christ today because it is the Sabbath—out of Christ tomorrow because it is the market and obedience to Christ might be inconvenient when they buy and sell. This will not do! We must

be so in Christ as to be *always* in Him, or else we are not living branches of the living Vine and we cannot produce fruit.

If there were such a thing as a vine branch that was only occasionally joined to the stem, would you expect it to yield a cluster to the farmer? So neither can you, if you are off and on with Christ. You can do nothing if there is not constant union. One year when I was traveling towards my usual winter resting place, I stopped at Marseilles, and there was overtaken by great pain. In my room in the hotel I found it cold and so I asked for a fire. I was sitting in a very desponding mood, when suddenly the tears came to my eyes, as if struck with a great sorrow. I shall never forget the thoughts which stirred my heart! The porter came in to light the fire. He had in his hand a bundle of twigs.

I called to him to let me look at it. He was about to push it into the stove as fuel with which to kindle the fire. As I took the bundle into my hand, I found it was made of vine branches—branches that had been cut off, now that the pruning time was come. Ah me, I thought, will this be my portion? Here I am, away from home, unable to bear fruit, as I love to do. Shall I end with this as my portion? Shall I be gathered for the fire? Those vine shoots were parts of a good vine, no doubt—branches that once looked fair and green—but now they were fuel for the flame. They had been cut off and cast off as useless things! And then men gathered them and tied them in bundles and they were ignobly thrust into the fire.

What a picture! There goes a bundle of ministers into the fire! There is a bundle of elders! There's another bundle of deacons! Next a bundle of Church members, a bundle of Sunday school teachers! "Men gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." Dear brothers and Sisters, shall this be the lot of any of us who have named the name of Christ? Well did I say a shudder may go through us as we listen to those words, "without Me." Our end without Christ will be terrible, indeed! First, no fruit; then no life; and, at last, no place among the saints, no existence in the Church of God! Without Christ we *do* nothing, we *are* nothing, we are *worse* than nothing! This is now the condition of the heathen and it was our own condition once—God forbid that we should find it to be our condition now—"without Christ, having no hope!" Here is grave cause for heart-searching and I leave the matter with you to that end.

III. Having come so far in our second head, under the third I behold A VISION OF TOTAL FAILURE. "Without Me," says the text, "you can do nothing"—you can produce nothing. The visible Church of Christ has tried this experiment a great many times, already, and always with the same result. Separated from Christ, His Church can do nothing which she was formed to do. She is sent into the world upon a high enterprise, with noble aims before her and grand forces at her disposal—but if she should cease from communion with Christ—she would become wholly incapable!

Now what are the outward signs of any community being apart from Christ? Answer—first, it may be seen in a ministry without Christ in its doctrine. This we have seen, ourselves. Woe is the day that it is so! History tells us that not only in the Romish Church and the Anglican Church, but among the Nonconformist Churches, Christ has been, at times, forgotten!

Not only among Unitarians, but among Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists—all round, Jesus has been dishonored. Attempts have been made to do something without Christ as the truth to be preached. Ah me, what folly it is! They preach up intellectualism and hope that this will be the great power of God, but it is not.

“Surely,” they say, “novelties of thought and refinements of speech will attract and win converts! If the preachers aspire to be leaders of thought—will they not command the multitude and charm the intelligent? Add music and architecture and what is to hinder success?” Many a young minister has given up his whole mind to this—to try and be exceedingly refined and intellectual—and what has he done with these showy means? The sum total is expressed in the text—“Nothing.” “Without Me you can do nothing.” What emptiness this folly has created—when the pulpit is without Christ, the pews are soon without people!

I knew a chapel where an eminent divine was to be heard for years. A converted Jew, coming to London to visit a friend, set out on Sunday morning to find a place of Christian worship and he chanced to enter the chapel of this eminent divine. When he came back he said that he feared he had made a mistake—he had turned into a building which he hoped was a Christian place of assembly, but as he had not heard the name of Jesus all the morning, he thought, perhaps, he had fallen in with some other religionists. I fear that many modern sermons might just as fairly have been delivered in a Muslim mosque as in a Christian Church! We have too many preachers of whom we might complain, “they have taken away my Lord and I know not where they have laid Him.”

Christianity without Christ is a strange thing, indeed. And what comes of it where it is held up to the people? Why, by-and-by there are not enough people to support the ministry! Empty benches are plentiful and the thing gets pretty nearly wound up. Blessed be God for it! I am heartily glad that without Christ these pretended ministers cannot prosper! Leave Christ out of the preaching and you shall do nothing. Only advertise it all over London, Mr. Baker, that you are making bread without flour—put it in every paper, “Bread without flour”—and you may soon shut up your shop, for your customers will hurry off to other bakers!

Somehow there is a strange prejudice in people’s minds in favor of bread made with flour and there is also an unaccountable prejudice in the human mind which makes men think that if there is a Gospel, it must have Christ in it. A sermon without Christ as its beginning, middle and end is a mistake in conception and a crime in execution! However grand the language, it will be merely much ado about nothing if Christ is not there. Yes, and I mean by Christ not merely His example and the ethical precepts of His teaching, but His atoning blood, His wondrous satisfaction made for human sin and the grand doctrine of, “believe and live.” If, “Life for a look at the Crucified One” is obscured, all is dark! If justification by faith is not set in the very forefront in the full blaze of light, nothing can be accomplished! Without Christ in the doctrine you shall do nothing!

Further, without acknowledging always the absolute supremacy of Christ, we shall do nothing. Jesus is much complimented, nowadays, but

He is not *submitted* to as absolute Lord! I hear many pretty things about Christ from men who reject His Gospel. “Lives of Christ” we have in any quantity! Oh for one which would set Him forth in His Glory as God, as Head of the Church and Lord of All! I should greatly like to see a, “Life of Christ,” written by one who know Him by communion with Him and by reverently sitting at His feet! Most of the pretty things about Jesus which I read nowadays seem to have been written by persons who have seen Him through a telescope at a great distance and know Him, “according to Matthew,” but not according to personal fellowship! Oh, for a “Life of Christ,” by Samuel Rutherford or George Herbert, or by some other sweet spirit to whom the Ever-Blessed One is such a familiar Friend!

Certain modern praises of Jesus are written upon the theory that, on the whole, the Savior has given us a religion that is tolerably suited to the enlightenment of the 19th Century and may be allowed to last a little longer. Jesus is commended by these critics and somewhat admired as preferable to most teachers—but He is, by no means, to be blindly followed. It is fortunate for Jesus that He commends Himself to the “best thought” and ripest culture of the period, for, if He had not done so, these wise gentlemen would have exposed Him as being behind the times! Of course they have, every now and then, to rectify certain of His dogmas, especially such as Justification by Faith, or Atonement, or the Doctrine of Election!

These are old-fashioned things which belong to an older and less enlightened period and, therefore, they adapt them by tearing out their real meaning. The Doctrines of Grace, according to the infallible critics of the period, are out of date—nobody believes them and they settle off old-fashioned Believers as non-existent! Christ is rectified and squared—and His garment without seam is taken off and He is dressed out in proper style—as by a West-End clothier. Then He is introduced to us as a remarkable teacher and we are advised to accept Him as far as He goes. For the present the wise ones tolerate Jesus, but there is no telling what is to come—the progress of this age is so astonishing that it is just possible we shall, before long, leave Christ and Christianity behind!

Now, what will come of this foolish wisdom? Nothing but delusions, mischief, infidelity, anarchy and all manner of imaginable and unimaginable ills. The fact is, if you do not acknowledge Christ to be All, you have virtually left Him out and are without Him! We must preach the Gospel because Christ has revealed it. “Thus says the Lord,” is to be our logic. We must preach the Gospel as ambassadors delivering their message—that is to say, in the King’s name—by an authority not their own. We preach our doctrines, not because we consider that they are convenient and profitable, but because Christ has commanded us to proclaim them. We believe the Doctrines of Grace, not because the enlightenment of the age sets its wonderful imprimatur upon them, but because they are true and are the voice of God!

Age or no age has nothing to do with us. The world hates Christ and must hate Him—if it would boldly denounce Christ, it would be to us a more hopeful sign than its deceitful Judas kiss. We keep simply to this—

the Lord has said it and we care not who approves or disapproves. Jesus is God and Head of the Church—and we must do what He bids us and say what He tells us—if we fail in this, nothing of good will come of it. If the Church gets back to her loyalty, she shall see what her Lord will do, but without Christ as absolute Lord, Infallible Teacher and honored King, all must be failure even to the end.

Go a little further—you may have sound doctrine and yet do nothing unless you have Christ in your spirit. I have known all the Doctrines of Grace to be unmistakably preached and yet there have been no conversions—for this reason—that they were not expected and scarcely desired. In former years many orthodox preachers thought it to be their sole duty to comfort and confirm the godly few who by dint of great perseverance found out the holes and corners in which they prophesied. These brethren spoke of sinners as of people whom God might possibly gather in if He thought fit to do so—but they did not care much whether He did so or not. As to weeping over sinners as Christ wept over Jerusalem; as to venturing to invite them to Christ as the Lord did when He stretched out His hands all the day long; as to lamenting with Jeremiah over a perishing people—they had no sympathy with such emotions and feared that they savored of Arminianism.

Both preacher and congregation were cased in a hard shell and lived as if their own salvation was the only design of their existence. If anybody did grow zealous and seek conversions, straightway they said he was indiscreet, or conceited. When a Church falls into this condition it is, as to its spirit, “without Christ.” What comes of it? Some of you know by your own observation what comes of it. The comfortable corporation exists and grows for a little while, but it comes to nothing in the long run. And so it must—there can be no fruit-bearing where there is not the Spirit of Christ as well as the doctrine of Christ. Unless the Spirit of the Lord rests upon you, causing you to agonize for the salvation of men even as Jesus did, you can do nothing!

But above all things we must have Christ with us in the power of His actual Presence. Do we always think of this—“Without Me you can do nothing”? We are going out this afternoon to teach the young—shall we be quite sure to take Christ with us? Or on the road shall we suddenly stop and say, “I am without my Master and I must not dare go another step”? The abiding consciousness of the love of Christ in our soul is the essential element of our strength. We can no more convert a sinner without Christ than we could light up new stars in the sky! Power to change the human will—power to enlighten the intellect as to the things of God and to influence the mind as to repentance and faith—must come *entirely* from the Most High.

Do we feel that? Or do we put our thoughts together for an address and say, “Now, that is a strong point, and that will produce effect.” And do we rest there? If so, we can do nothing at all! The power lies with the Master, not with the servant! The might is in the hand, not in the weapon! We must have Christ in these pews and in these aisles—and in this pulpit—and Christ down in our Sunday school! And we must have Christ at the

street corner when we stand there to talk of Him! And we must feel that He is with us even to the end of the world, or we shall do nothing! We have, then, before us a vision of total failure if we attempt, in any way, to do without Christ. He says, "Without Me you can do nothing." It is in the *doing* that the failure is most conspicuous.

You may talk a good deal without Him. You may *hold* congresses, conferences and conventions. But *doing* is another matter! Without Jesus you can talk any quantity, but without Him you can do nothing. The most eloquent discourse without Him will be all a bottle of smoke. You shall lay your plans, arrange your machinery and start your schemes, but without the Lord you will do nothing! Immeasurable cloudland of proposals and not a spot of solid doing large enough for a dove's foot to rest on—such shall be the end of all! You may have all the money that generosity can lavish, all the learning that your universities can supply and all the oratory that the most gifted can lay at your feet, but, "without Me," says Christ, "you can do nothing." Fuss, flare, fireworks and failure—that is the end of it! "Without Me you can do nothing."

Let me repeat those words again, "Do *nothing*." "Do nothing" and the world dying around us! Africa in darkness, China perishing! India sunk in superstition and a Church which can do nothing! No bread to be handed out to the hungry and the multitude fainting and dying! The rock to be smitten and the Water of Life to leap out for the thirsty, but not a drop forthcoming because Jesus is not there! Ministers, evangelists, churches, salvation armies, the world dies for need of you and yet, "you can do nothing" if your Lord is away! The age shall advance in discovery and men of science shall do their little best, but *you* shall do "nothing" without Christ—absolutely nothing! You shall not proceed a single inch upon your toilsome way, though you row till the oars snap with the strain! You shall be drifted back by winds and currents unless you take Jesus into the ship.

Remember that all the while the great Husbandman is watching you, for His eye is on every vine branch. He sees that you are producing no grapes and He is coming round with that sharp knife of His, cutting here and there! What must become of you who produce nothing? It makes one's very soul curdle within him to think that we should live to do nothing! Yet I fear that thousands of Christians get no further than this! They are not immoral, dishonest, or profane—but they *do* nothing! They think of what they would *like* to do and they plan and they propose—but they do nothing. There are plenty buds, but not a single grape is produced and all because they do not get into that vital, overflowing, effectual communion with Christ which would fill them with life and constrain them to bring forth fruit unto the Glory of God! There is a vision, then, of the failure all along the line if we try to do without Christ.

IV. But now, fourthly, I hear A VOICE OF WISDOM, a still small voice which speaks out of the text and says to us who are in Christ, let us acknowledge this. Down on your knees, bow your mouths in the dust and say, "Lord, it is true! Without you we can do nothing, nothing whatever that is good and acceptable in the sight of God! We have not ability of our-

selves to *think* anything of ourselves, but our ability is of God.” Now, do not speak thus, as if you paid a compliment which orthodoxy requires you to make—but from the depths of your soul, smitten with an absolute self-despair, acknowledge the truth unto God. “To will is present with me, but how to perform that which I would, I find not. Lord, I am a good-for-nothing do-nothing! I am a fruitless, barren, dry, rotten branch without You, and this I feel in my inmost soul. Be not far from me, but quicken me by Your Presence.”

Next, let us pray. If without Christ we can do nothing. Let us cry to Him that we may never be without Him! Let us, with strong crying and tears, entreat His abiding Presence. He comes to those who seek Him—let us never cease seeking! In conscious fellowship with Him, let us plead that the fellowship should always be unbroken. Let us pray that we may be so knit and joined to Jesus that we may be one spirit with Him, never to be separated from Him again. Master and Lord, let the life floods of Your Grace never cease to flow into us, for we know that we must be thus supplied or we can produce nothing! Brothers and Sisters, let us have much more prayer than has been usual among us. Prayer is appointed to convey the blessings God ordains to give—let us constantly use the appointed means and may the result be always increasing from day to day.

Next, let us personally cleave to Jesus. Let us not attempt a life of separation, for that were to seek the living among the dead! Do not let us depart from Him for a single minute! Would you like to be caught at any one second of your life in a condition in which you could do nothing? I must confess I should not like to be in that state, incapable of defense against my enemies, or of service for my Lord. If an awakened one should come before you under distress of mind and you should feel quite incapable of doing any good for him—what a sad perplexity! Or if you did not feel incapable and yet should really *be* so—and what if you should, therefore, talk on in a religious way but know no power in it? Would it not be a sad thing? May you never be in such a state that you would be a do-nothing, with opportunities afforded and yet without strength to utilize them! If you are divided from Christ you are divided from the possibility of doing good; cling therefore, to the Savior with your whole might and let nothing take you away from Him—no, not for an hour!

Heartily submit yourselves, also, dear Friends, to the Lord’s headship and leadership, and ask to do everything in His style and way. He will not be with you unless you accept Him as your Master. There must be no quarrel about supremacy—you must yield yourself up absolutely to Him, to be, to do, or to suffer according to His will. When it is wholly so, He will be with you and you shall do everything that is required of you. Wonderful things will the Lord perform through you when once He is your All in All! Will we not have it so?

Once more—joyfully believe in Him. Though without Him you can do nothing, yet *with* Him all things are possible! Omnipotence is in that man who has Christ in him! Weakness, itself, you may be, but you shall learn to glory in that weakness because the power of Christ rests upon you if your union and communion with Christ are continually kept up! Oh for a

grand confidence in Christ! We have not believed in Him, yet, up to the measure of the hem of His garment, for even *that* faith made the sick woman whole! Oh to believe up to the measure of His infinite Deity! Oh for the splendor of the faith which measures itself by the Christ in whom it trusts! May God bring us there! Then shall we bring forth much fruit to the Glory of His name.

V. And now, lastly. While I was listening to my text, as a child puts a shell to its ear and listens till it hears the deep sea rolling in its windings, I heard within my text A SONG OF CONTENTMENT. “Without Me you can do nothing.” My heart said, “Lord, what is there that I want to do without You? There is no pain in this thought to me. If I can do without You, I am sorry to possess so dangerous a power. I am happy to be deprived of all strength except that which comes from You. It charms, it exhilarates and delights my soul to think that You are my All. You have made me penniless as to all wealth of my own that I might dip my hand into Your treasury! You have taken all power away from every sinew and muscle of mine that I may rest on Your bosom.” “Without Me you can do nothing.”

Be it so. Brothers and Sisters, are you not all agreed? Do you wish to have it altered, any of you that love His dear name? I am sure you do not, for suppose, dear Friends, we *could* do something without Christ? Then He would not have the Glory of it. Who wishes that? There would be little crowns for our poor little heads, for we should have done something without Him. But now there is one great crown for that dear head which once was pierced with thorns—for all His saints put together cannot do anything without Him! The goodly fellowship of the Apostles; the noble army of martyrs and the triumphant host of the redeemed by blood, all put together, can do nothing without Jesus! Let Him be crowned with majesty who works in us both to will and to do of His own good pleasure! For our own sakes, for our Lord’s sake, we are glad that it is so!

All things are more ours by being His! And if our fruit is His, rather than our own, it is none the less, but all the more ours! Is not this rare music for a holy ear? I feel so glad that without Christ we can do nothing because I fear that if the Church could do something without Christ she would try to live without Him! If she could teach the school and bring the children to salvation without Christ, I am afraid Christ would never go into a Sunday school again. If we could preach successfully without Jesus, I suspect that the Lord Jesus Christ would seldom stand on high among the people again. If our Christian literature could bless men without Christ, I am afraid we should set the printing press going and never think about the Crucified One in the matter. If there could be work done by the Church without Jesus, there would be rooms into which He would never be invited—and these would soon become a sort of Blue Beard’s chambers full of horror. A something that we could do without Christ? Why the mass of the Church would get to working that machinery tremendously and all the rest would be neglected—and so it is a blessed thing for the whole Church that she *must* have Christ everywhere! “Without Me you can do nothing.”

As I listened to the song within these words I began to laugh—I wonder if you will laugh, too? It was to myself I laughed, like Abraham of old. I thought of those who are going to destroy the orthodox doctrine from off the face of the earth. How they boast of the decline and death of old-fashioned evangelism! I have read once or twice that I am the last of the Puritans, the race is all dying out! To this I object—I am willing to be esteemed last in *merit*—but not last as ending the race! There are many others who are steadfast in the faith! They say our old theology is decaying and that nobody believes it. It is all a lie! But *wise* men say so and, therefore, we are bound to consider ourselves obsolete and extinct. We are, in their esteem, as much out of date as antediluvians would be could they walk down our streets. Yes, they are going to quench our coal and blot us out from Israel.

Newspapers and reviews and the general intelligence of the age all join to dance upon our graves! Put on your night-caps, you good people of the evangelical order, and go home to bed and sleep the sleep of the righteous, for the end of you is come! Thus say the Philistines, but the armies of the Lord think not. The adversaries exult exceedingly, but Christ is not with them. They know very little about Him. They do not work in His Spirit, nor cry Him up, nor extol the Gospel of His precious blood—and so I believe that when they have done—their little best will come to nothing. “Without Me you can do nothing.” If this is true of Apostles, much more of opposers! If His friends can do nothing without Him, I am sure His foes can do nothing against Him! If they who follow His steps and lie in His bosom can do nothing without Him, I am sure His adversaries cannot—and so I laughed at their laughter and smiled at their confusion.

I laughed, too, because I remembered a story of a New England service when the pastor, one afternoon, was preaching in His own solemn way, and the good people were listening or sleeping, as their minds inclined. It was a substantial edifice where they assembled, fit to outlive an earthquake. All went on peacefully in the Meeting House that afternoon till suddenly a lunatic jumped up, denounced the minister and declared that he would at once pull down the Meeting House about their ears! Taking hold of one of the pillars of the gallery, this newly announced Samson repeated his threat!

Everybody rose. The women were ready to faint. The men began to rush to the doors and there was danger that the people would be trampled on as they rushed down the aisles! There was about to be a great tumult. No one could see the end of it, when suddenly one cool Brother sitting near the pulpit produced calm by a single sentence. “Let him try!” was the stern sarcasm which hushed the tempest!

Even so, today the enemy is about to disprove the Gospel and crush out the Doctrines of Grace! Are you distressed, alarmed, astounded? So far from that, my reply to the adversary’s boast that he will pull down the pillars of our Zion is only this —LET HIM TRY! Amen.

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**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, NOVEMBER 11, 1860,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.**

***“Without Me you can do nothing.”
John 15:5.***

CONSCIOUS of this Truth of God in my own case, I would earnestly seek the help of God’s Spirit in preaching as in every other spiritual exercise, for, without Him I can do nothing. It is a remarkable fact that all the heresies which have arisen in the Christian Church have had a decided tendency to dishonor God and to flatter man. They have always had for their covert, if not for their open aim, the exaltation of human nature and the casting down of the sovereignty of Divine Grace. Robbing God of the glory which is due unto His name, these false Prophets would shed a counterfeit luster upon the head of the rebellious and depraved creature.

On the other hand, the doctrines of the Gospel, commonly known as the Doctrines of Grace, are distinguished for this peculiarity above every other, namely, that they sink the creature very low and present the Lord Jehovah before us as sitting upon a Throne, high and lifted up. So true is this, that the most uneducated Christian may, even if he is incapable of refuting an erroneous discourse, always be able to discover its untruthfulness, if it glorifies man at the expense of God.

The merest babe in grace may carry this test with him—in the midst of the diversities of opinion with which he is surrounded, he may always judge and judge infallibly too, of the truth or falsehood of a doctrine by testing it thus—“Does it glorify God?” If it is so it is true. “Does it exalt man?” Then it must be false. On the other hand, does it lay man very low and speak of him in terms which tend to make him feel his degradation? Then doubtless it is full of the Truth of God. And does it put the crown upon the head of God and not upon the head of man’s free will, or free agency, or good works? Then assuredly it is a doctrine according to godliness for it is the very Truth of the Lord our God.

My text—the very word of Christ, contains in it a doctrine which belongs to the class of those which speak against the vaunting of humanity, casting down its high hopes—and scorning its proud looks and to the same degree this sentence honors Christ and lifts Him up in the estimation of all His people.

This morning I shall speak of my text thus—Jesus said, “Without Me you can do nothing.” First, this is true of His saints in matters relating to themselves. Secondly, this is even more manifestly true of unconverted and unregenerate men. Thirdly it will be found by experience to be equally a fact if we look at saints in relation to sinners—without Christ the most earnest saint can do nothing whatever for the conversion of the sinner.

I. To begin, then, with THE SAINT IN RELATION TO HIMSELF. Jesus said to the Apostles and if to them, certainly as strongly, if not more so, to us, “Without Me you can do nothing.” Let us explain this. Then try to support it. And then draw the practical lessons from it.

1. Child of God—Jesus Christ speaks to you personally this morning and He says to you, “Without Me you can do nothing.” Do you understand this? Mark how decisively it speaks! I borrow from Augustine much of the exposition which follows. He observes that this sentence seems to have been written to put an end to the impudent impostures of the Pelagians, for the text does not say, “Without Me you can *hardly* do anything. It will be with extreme difficulty that you will be able to accomplish a good work or to achieve a holy purpose.”

No, it lays the axe far more decisively to the root. It says, “Without Me you can do nothing”—absolutely, positively nothing at all. What? Even if I seek and strive, if I bring all my energies to a single point—concentrate all my faculties to the purpose—can I not, then, do it? If I am extremely watchful, if I am intensely earnest, if I am sincerely prayerful—can I not then accomplish something, even if the Spirit’s influence is withheld? It may be it shall cost me much difficulty. It may be hard rowing against the stream. But may I not, with my own unaided power, if I strain it to the utmost—may I not speed at least a little in the things of God?

“No,” says the Lord Jesus, “No. Without Me you can do nothing.” Strive as you might—struggle as you might—your striving and your struggling would be strength misapplied. They would not speed you towards the goal—they would but sink you deeper into the mire of desperation or of presumption. Mark, further, the text does not say, “Without Me you can not do *some* great things—some special acts of piety some high and supernatural deeds of daring—of self-denial and self-sacrifice.” No, “Without Me you can do nothing.” Including in the sentence, as you will clearly perceive, those little acts of grace—those little deeds of piety—for which, perhaps, in our proud self-conceit, we think ourselves to be already sufficiently equipped.

You can do nothing, not only is the higher duty beyond your power, but the lesser duty, too. You are not capable of performing the lowest act of the Divine life, except as you receive strength from God the Holy Spirit. And surely, my Brethren, it is generally in these little things that we find out most of all our weaknesses. Peter can walk the waves of the sea, but he cannot bear the jest of a little maid. Job can endure the loss of all things, but the upbraiding words of his false friends, though they are but words and break no bones—make him speak far more bitterly than all the sore boils and pains which were in his very skin.

Jonah said he did well to be angry, even unto death, about a gourd. Have you not often heard that mighty men who have outlived hundreds of battles have been slain at last by the most trivial accident? And has it not been so with professed Christians? They stood uprightly in the midst of the greatest trials—they have outlived the most arduous struggles and yet, in an evil hour, trusting to themselves, their foot has slipped under some slight temptation, or because of some small difficulty. John Newton says—“The Grace of God is as necessary to create a right temper in

Christians on the breaking of a china plate as on the death of an only son.”

These little leaks need the most careful stopping. The plague of flies is no more easy to be stayed than that of the destroying angel. In little, as well as in great things, the just must live by faith. In trifles as well as in nobler exercises the Believer should be conscious of his own inability—should never say of any act, “Now I am strong enough to perform this. I need not go to God in prayer about this. This is so little a thing, it is beneath the dignity of God and I am quite sufficient for it of myself.” No, Believer, you are sufficient for nothing at all. Without Christ you can do nothing that is good, nothing that is right. “We have not sufficiency of ourselves to think anything of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God.” “We know not what to pray for as we ought.” “We do feel each day that to will is present with us, but how to perform that which we would, we find not.”

Our strength is not only weakness but *perfect* weakness—weakness even for little things—weakness for ounces as truly as for tons. Weakness in drops of grief as well as of seas of sorrow. Weakness for splinters of trial as well as for the terrible darts of the Evil One. In everything, Christian, you are powerless apart from the Lord who is your strength and your salvation. Learn, then, the meaning of this text, “Without Me you can do nothing.”

In further explaining the meaning of this passage, let me remark that Christ did not say “Without Me you can *perfect* nothing,” but, “Without Me you can *do* nothing.” The Pelagian might perhaps admit that the Christian could not complete the good work unaided. But then he might do much towards it. Says he, “If he does not finish, he may begin, if he is not the Omega, he may at least be the Alpha. If he cannot bring out the glorious top-stone and crane it up to the sublime height in which it is to stand forever and ever, he may at least dig out the foundations and lay in the first hidden stone.”

“No,” says Christ, “Without Me you can do nothing.” As in that last glorious leap when the Believer shall vault from his dying bed into the land of the living, all his strength must be of God—so must it be in that first trembling step when as a penitent he comes to Christ and rests his soul on Him. Do not say, if you are about to undertake some enterprise, “I will begin this and then God will give me grace to make up my deficiencies, but I will trust in myself as far as I can.”

Ah, you foolish one, your trowel is covered with untempered mortar, you build with wood and hay and stubble. So far from its being yours to do much apart from the Spirit of God you can do nothing whatever. You can neither lift a finger, nor stir a hand in this spiritual work apart from God. You can not put on the white robe of glory—no, more—you can not unwrap yourself from the clothes of your death. Even this must be done for you, from the beginning to the end.

And yet further, to put the meaning in a forcible light. There might be some who would say, “Well, while the text may be understood to say the Believer cannot commence any good thing, yet possibly he may, after it is

commenced with great assistance of God the Holy Spirit in his own salvation, he may do something apart from the Spirit.” Ah, my Brethren, when the Spirit of God is with us we do much. When He is in us He makes us the instrument of our own deliverance. But let the Spirit of God be taken away from the Christian man, albeit that he is renewed, albeit that he has a new heart and a right spirit, yet would he retain that new heart and right spirit not one single hour, no—not for a tenth of a second, if the Spirit of God were once withdrawn from him.

There is no support for the new life to be found in the natural soil of manhood. Every dew drop with which the sweet flower of Paradise is nourished in our heart had to be brought there from Heaven, for naturally our heart is a rock too barren to yield any subsistence to the plants of Paradise. If in our soul there flows a river of the water of life, its rise is in the mountains of God’s eternal purpose. The river finds no tributary springs in our heart. Flesh can yield no aid to spirit. Unrenewed nature can be a huge impediment to Divine Grace, but assistance it can never be.

The Apostle Paul never found the old man a help to the new man. If it had been so, he would not have cried out—“O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death.” He would have shaken hands with that body of death and thanked it for its assistance if it yielded any. But he felt it was of no more use to him than would a dead, rotten, corrupt, filthy noxious carcass be to a living man if he had it chained side by side with him. When we shall get rid of self and self’s power, then we shall be strong, but all the strength of nature is but a weakness to Divine Grace and all the power and energy of the flesh is but an hindrance to the Lord and not a help to Him. Without Him—in the widest sense in which the language can be possibly understood—we can do nothing.

2. And now, having thus sought to explain the text in regard to the Christian, let me try to support it. I would support it first of all by the common consent of all Believers in all ages. With the exception of ancient Pelagians and their modern off-spring, I do not know that the Church has afforded any instance of any professors who have doubted the inability of man apart from God the Holy Spirit. Our confessions of faith are nearly unanimous upon this point. But I hear some one say—“Do not the Arminians believe that there is natural strength in man by which he can do something?” No, my Brethren, the true Arminian can believe no such thing. Arminius speaks right well upon this point. I quote his words, as I have them in a translation—“It is impossible for free will without grace to begin or perfect any true or spiritual good. I say, the grace of Christ, which pertains to regeneration is simply and absolutely necessary for the illumination of the mind, the ordering of the affections and the inclination of the will to that which is good.

“It is that which operates on the mind, the affections, and the will, which infuses good thoughts into the mind, inspires good desires into the affections and leads the will to execute good thoughts and good desires. It goes before, accompanies, and follows. It excites, assists, works in us to will and works with us that we may not will in vain. It averts temptations, stands by and aids us in temptations, supports us against the flesh, the

world, and Satan. And in the conflict, it grants us to enjoy the victory. It raises up again those who are conquered and fallen, it establishes them and endues them with new strength and renders them more cautious. It begins, promotes, perfects and consummates salvation. I confess that the mind of the natural and carnal man is darkened, his affections are depraved, his will is refractory and that the man is dead in sin.”

Richard Watson, who among modern Arminians is considered to be a standard Divine, especially in the Wesleyan denomination, is equally clear upon this point. He fully admits that, “The sin of Adam introduced into his nature such a radical impotence and depravity, that it is impossible for his descendants to make any voluntary effort (of themselves) towards piety and virtue,” and then he quotes with great approbation an expression of Calvin’s, in which Calvin says that, “Man is so totally overwhelmed, as with a deluge, that no part is free from sin, and therefore, whatever proceeds from him is accounted sin.”

It is very satisfactory to have these testimonies to the common doctrine of the Church. I know that some Arminians are not so sound even as Arminius or Richard Watson. I know that some of them do not understand any creed at all, not even their own, for in all denominations there are men so ignorant of all theology that they will venture upon any assertion whatever, claiming to be Arminian, or Calvinistic, without knowing what either Calvin or Arminius taught. Arminians would be much better even if they were as good as Arminius. Much as he swerved from the faith in some respects, he was not one-half so grave a heretic as multitudes of his followers, but in many points would be as stern and unflinching a defender of the faith as John Calvin, himself.

But my dear Friends, instead of dwelling upon this point any longer, let me make one or two other remarks. Suppose for a moment that the doctrine of our text were not true and that Christians had power in themselves to do something. Take down your Bibles when you get home and see what a great many promises of the Word of God would be without any value to you. God never made a promise which was not necessary. Now if I have strength of my own, God certainly will not need to make me a promise of giving His strength to me.

But inasmuch as there are scores of promises in which it is written, “Unto him that has no might, He increases strength”—inasmuch as we are often told that, “young men do faint and are weary and the youths do utterly fail, but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength”—I think you see that the very fact of these promises prove that they are needed, and if needed, it must be because man is weak.

But again, what should we make of the praises of the saints? Have you not heard them all through Holy Scripture ascribing their strength and their power to God? Did they not all, from the first even to the last, confess that all their fresh springs were in Him? That He, the Lord Jehovah, was their strength and their song and had become their salvation? Did they not unanimously confess that their sufficiency was of God, that when they were weak, then were they strong? That in themselves they were nothing? I say, what do you make of these praises?

What are they? Are they not mere empty wind, if these men really had in themselves strength and power to do good?

And what are the songs before the Throne—those eternal cries of “Salvation be unto our God that sits upon the Throne and unto the Lamb”? How can they ascribe power and dominion and might to Him forever and ever, if their power was of themselves? Must there not be a mingled strain? And while they sing the power of Divine Grace, must there not be some interludes in which they will chant the power of nature, too? If they came to Heaven partly by God and partly by themselves, must not some of the saved harpers sing to Divine Grace, but others of them vary the strain, at least at intervals, to the praise of him who by his own strength did snap the fetters of his sin and by his own watchfulness did preserve himself unto eternal life? It is blasphemy to think thus.

Oh, no, my Brethren, it is because they had no power on earth but that in which God gave to them that they have no song in Heaven except the song which exalts and praises God!

Other arguments, I suppose, are unnecessary, but yet let me mention one other. If it were so, that man had power in himself, what were the need of the Holy Spirit’s office at all? The office of the Holy Spirit becomes at once useless if man can do anything and everything. What need to quicken men by the Spirit, if they can take the first step towards quickening themselves? What need to strengthen us with might according to His Spirit in the inner man, if the inner man is already strong enough in its own natural power? What need that the Spirit should daily teach God’s people, if they can instruct themselves?

What need that I should pray, “Hold you me up,” if I can hold myself up? Prayers for spiritual aid are prayers for mercies that are unneeded if we have strength of our own. I do declare that if man has grace enough to keep himself one single hour from sin, it is not necessary for him to pray at least during that hour. Why should he want more strength than he needs? Should he have it to spend it upon his lusts? If it is possible for me to perform any one holy action apart from the Lord Jesus, then let me at least perform that one action independently of Him. Let me for that time dispense with the Holy Spirit.

But you revolt from such an idea. I say your blood would curdle if I should continue to talk thus. “No,” you say, “day by day we have need to pray. Hour by hour we have need to trust. ‘My soul, wait you only upon God, for my expectation is from Him.’ ” I am compelled to feel each day I can no nothing without Him—my strength is wholly His. The very fact that the offices of the Holy Spirit are needed, by our experience, proves that we can do nothing without Him.

3. Now let us discuss this doctrine. We see here a reason for the deepest humility. Are you proud, Believer, because you have done some little service to the Church and to your times? Who makes you to differ and what have you which you have not received? Have you shed a little light upon the darkness? Ah, who lit your candle? And who is it that keeps you still shining and prevents you from being extinguished? Have you overcome temptation? Hang not up your banner—do not decorate your own bosom with the glory, for who made you strong in the battle?

Who made your sword sharp and enabled you to strike home? Remember, you have done nothing whatever of yourself. If you are this day a vessel unto honor, decorated and gilded—if now you are a precious vase, filled with the sweetest perfume—remember you did not make yourself so. You are the clay and He is the potter. You may be a vessel unto honor, yet not a vessel unto your own honor—you are a vessel unto the honor of Him that made you. If you stand among your fellow men as the angels stand among the fallen spirits—a chosen one, distinguished from them—remember, it was not any goodness in *yourself* that made you to be chosen, nor has it been any of your own efforts, or your own power, which has lifted you out of the miry clay and set your feet on the Rock and established your goings.

Off with the crown from your proud head and lay down your honors at the feet of Him who gave them to you! Come with cherubim and seraphim and veil your face and cry, “Not unto us, not unto us, but unto His name be all the glory forever and ever.” And when you are thus bowed down with humility, be prepared to learn another lesson, namely—never to depend on yourself again. If you have anything to do, go not forth to do it leaning on an arm of flesh. First bow your knee and ask power of Him who makes you strong, and then you shall come back from your labor rejoicing. But if you go in your own strength, you shall break your plowshare on the rock. You shall sow your seed by the side of the salt sea, upon the barren sand, and you shall look upon the naked acres in years to come—they shall not yield you so much as a single blade to make your heart glad.

“Trust in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.” But that strength is not available to you so long as you repose in any strength of your own. He will help you if you are but as a worm, but if you are strong in yourself, He will take away His own power from you and cause you to stumble and fall. And happy shall it be if you stumble not to be broken into pieces. Learn, then, the Divine Grace of depending daily upon God and do this constantly with proper humility.

Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, I would speak very earnestly here before I turn from this point, for this is a common vice with us all—to wish to grow independent. We get a little stock of grace on hand and we think we will spend our pocket money before we will go again to our Father’s treasury. We have a little faith, our Master honors us with enjoyment of His presence and we grow so great that we cry, “My mountain stands firm—I shall never be moved.” Ah, there is always a trial near at hand. Do we not make most of our trials through our boasting and do we not kindle our own furnace with the fuel of our pride?

If we were more childlike, resting more simply on the Spirit’s power, should we not be more happy? Does not God our Father hide His face, because to see His face too much might make us exalted above measure? Does not that thorn tear our flesh because otherwise we should lie upon the bed of carnal security and sleep all day long? Oh, we might always be on the mountaintop if we had not such dizzy heads and such slippery feet. We might always have our mouths full of sweetness if it were not that we

are so weak that we cannot bear these sweet things always. We must have a draught of wormwood that we may be brought back again by a bitter tonic into a healthy state of soul. I pray you seek to lie flat on the ground before our God, for every inch we rise higher than that, is an inch too high. Not an inch heavenward, but an inch Hell-ward. Every grain of self-strength we gain is a grain of weakness and every particle of self-reliance is but a new particle of poison infused into our veins. From all reliance upon self and all carnal security, good Lord deliver us!

II. I now turn to the second part of the discourse, upon which I shall dwell briefly but earnestly. “Without Me you can do nothing.” If this is true of the saint, we affirm that it is equally, if not even more forcibly true of THE SINNER.

Instead of making a distinction here, as I have done under the first head, let me at once speak to the conscience. Sinner, the child of God who has been quickened and renewed, feels that without Christ he can do nothing. How much more must this be true of you, for you are absolutely dead in trespasses and sins. When the branch is in the vine and has been grafted into the good olive, it can then bring forth no good fruit without the stem. How much less, then, can you hope to do anything, for you are not even grafted in. You belong to the wild olive—how can you bring forth fruit? If when the Christian’s face has been made white he cannot keep it so, how much more shall the Ethiopian—such as you are—change his skin, or the leopard his spots?

If when healed of his leprosy the Believer feels that the leprosy would break out daily were it not for the constant miraculous power of the Good Physician, how much less can you, all over defiled with the leprosy of sin, make yourself clean? Sinner, it is true of you that unless visited by the Holy Spirit, unless united to Christ, you can do nothing. We do not assert that you are physically incapable—you can perform natural acts. You can go to the House of God. You can read God’s Word. You can do a thousand things, which only need your arms and legs and eyes.

Nor are you even mentally incapable. You can discern between good and evil. You can judge of truth and error and in choosing the false and rejecting the true you are verily guilty. We speak now of your actions *spiritually*, not morally. Of all spiritual acts you are as totally incapable as the dead in the graveyards, or as the dried bones after they have passed through the fire. There remains in you no spiritual life, no spiritual power with which to help yourself. You are utterly ruined, entirely undone.

And in yourself you are beyond the reach of all hope and of all human help. Yet remember, I pray you, that this incapacity of yours is a *sinful* one. It is not one which is your misfortune, but your *sin*. You are incapable of righteousness, but you *are* capable enough of iniquity and your very incapacity is in itself a deadly and a damning sin. Again—your incapacity does not deliver you from your duty. Though you can do nothing, it is equally your duty to do everything which God commands.

Though you can not pay the debt, for you are utterly bankrupt, it is still your duty to pay it. God has not remitted His Law because you have lost power to obey. No, even the Gospel itself does not take back one of its precepts because you can not fulfill them in and of yourself. Still does God

demand of you that you should, “love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your strength.” though you can no more do this than you can fly. Still does He demand of you that you turn from sin and that you believe in the Lord Jesus with all your heart, though you can no more accomplish this than a stone can transform itself into an angel, or silent rocks chant forth the hallelujahs of eternity.

Thus, you see, Sinner, in what a state you are. You have a Lord to demand of you, but you have nothing wherewith to pay. You have the same claims upon you as Adam had in the garden, but you have lost all capacity to fulfill the demand. Oh, Sinner! What a lost thing you are! What a lost thing you are!

But I hear someone say, “Preaching like this will paralyze men’s exertions and make them say, ‘I can do nothing.’” Ah, my Friends, it is just this which we wish to make them say. We wish to paralyze their exertions. We wish to strike them with a sense of their inability. Do not think I would deny or shrink from the consequences of this Truth of God upon the sinner’s conscience. It is just this I wish to bring him to. The Arminian seeks to bring men to *activity*. I seek to bring him to no such thing at first, but to a sense of his *inability*. For when the sinner has come to know his inability, then God the Spirit works in him and then shall the activity begin! But activity apart from a *sense of inability* is but putting the sinner on a path which seems to lead to Heaven, but which will really lead to Hell.

I care not, though it should be said thousands have been converted by a preaching contrary to this. The conversion of most of these has been a fallacy. I have been lately in a district where a most excellent Brother in Christ had worked a very great revival. It was said that nearly every person in the town had been converted and the town is as drunken, as profane, as blasphemous this day, as it was before. I am persuaded that much of the excitement and fanatical ravings which have disgraced the true revival movement, are no more the work of God, but the work of Satan, himself.

I would discern between the precious and the vile. God has made bare His arm—multitudes have been converted during the last few years by true revival work. But that excitement which has attended some of these revivals is nothing more than the excitement of the passions of men—making men weep about their *parents*, but not about their *sins*—making them cry about their *children*, but not about their *souls*—making them tremble for the moment, but not reaching their inmost heart. We shall need to have the Master come again, with a fan in His hand, thoroughly to purge His floor. I may state an unpalatable Truth of God, but the floor is getting heaped with chaff now and preachers are receiving into Churches men that will need to be cast out again.

They may be received with sound of trumpet, but they will have to be thrust out the back door with the noise of weeping because they were not savingly converted to God. I feel in my own conscience that I were not clear of man’s blood unless I did declare that any conversion which does not bear in it a consciousness of man’s total loss and ruin—any

conversion which does not teach man the fact that he can do nothing, is a conversion from which he needs be converted and a repentance which needs to be repented of.

Still, I hear another say, "It must be an ill thing to bring men to feel that they can do nothing." It is no ill thing, I would to God that every sinner felt it in his own soul. "But," says one, "I knew a man who used to say he could do nothing, therefore, he would not try." My Friend, what that man said is one thing. What he felt was another. I venture to affirm that that man did not believe what he said, or he would not have added the last sentence. He thought in his own heart that he could believe and could repent and could be saved when he liked.

He still treasured up in his soul the fallacy that one of these fine days, when he had a more convenient season, he would come to Christ. That was his inmost thought. What he said was but a mere presence to screen his conscience from your rebuke. Why, men and women, if you could be made to feel that you were so lost, so ruined, that you could do nothing, it would fill you with trembling and with self-despair and then you would cry out in the midst of your horror, "Lord save me, or I perish." "God be merciful to me, a sinner."

I say again, it is because you do not feel it, but only say you do and you therefore make your saying it an excuse for a want of feeling it. I pray God the Spirit strike you now with a sense of powerlessness, that at once you may fall flat on your face and feel in your inmost heart that your salvation lies in Christ's hands and not in your own. And that if you are saved, it must be the work of Divine Grace in you and of Divine Grace for you. It cannot be your own work since you have no power to do it, in and of yourself.

If I could only bring you there! Oh, my God, bring the sinner there! I pray You bring him there! If you are come there already, poor Sinner, God has begun a good work in you. I tell you, if you are come to know this Truth of God really in your very heart, God the Spirit has begun to save you and by the work of His own hands He will never leave. Do not misunderstand me. If you merely say, "I can do nothing—(any man can say that)—that is not the Spirit's work. But if you feel you can do nothing, then that is the Spirit's work. Is not this doctrine very unpalatable? There are many of my hearers who do not like it now. Perhaps they will go away and say, "This is a hard saying—who can bear it?" I do not expect the natural man to receive a spiritual Truth of God.

If you have received it, I thank God for it. He that strips you will clothe you. He that has killed you this morning will quicken you. He that has made you feel that you can do nothing will give you strength to do all things. If you could see the bottom of your own treasury, that there is not a farthing left in it—if you could feel your own emptiness—I am sure you would soon see Christ's fullness and would discover that He is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him. Remember, though we can do nothing, He can do all things—though we can neither begin nor end—"He is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the Author and the Finisher of our faith."

III. I now close with the third head, "Without Me you can do nothing." This is true of THE SAINT ON THE SINNER'S ACCOUNT.

Brethren, I sometimes hear of men called Revivalists and I suppose it is imagined that there is some power in them or about them to create a revival. I should be sorry to wear the title lest I should be thought to arrogate any power to myself. I know, too, that people sometimes plan to have a revival at a certain time. As if the Spirit of God were at their disposal, as if they could make the wind, which blows where it pleases and when it pleases, come at their beck and at their command.

I think all that is beginning at the wrong end. Instead, we ought to hold meetings for prayer, to confess our inability. If we began by feeling we could not do anything, we should do everything. But when we begin by thinking we can do everything, we shall end in doing nothing. The Church of today needs more and more to have this fact driven right into her heart. Church of God, you are powerless. You have no strength, no might to convert a single soul apart from the Spirit of God. Have any of you proved this to be true in your own experience?

Perhaps I look upon a father who has many children. He says, "There is one of my sons who completely confounds me. I have prayed for him, I have talked with him. I have sought to instruct him. But I can only go up to my chamber and on my knees feel that unless God will save him, that boy will never be saved." It is a good thing that you should feel this, for now you will go to work in the right way, using not your *own* tools, nor your *own* power, but the strength of God. And I, too, may come up into the pulpit feeling I may preach—yes, with the tongues of men and of angels I may preach. And not I, alone, but all my Brethren in the ministry—we may all of us preach vehemently, earnestly—but there will be no power whatever in our preaching for the winning of a single soul, apart from that Spirit of God who goes forth with the Word.

We want ministers always to feel that it is not the mere adaptation of the sermon to the salvation of souls, but the *application* of that sermon to the soul. It is not the mere fact that we are earnest but the energy of the Spirit going with our earnestness, to quicken the heart and arouse the conscience. Sunday-School teachers, you must pray to understand this. It will not unnerve you, it will not paralyze you—it will make you strong—for when we are weak then we are strong. You want to feel that you could no more convert a child in your class than create a world—that you could no more change a heart than make an ocean blaze—or compel the solid granite to mount in watery fountains to the sky.

You know that this is in God's hand, not in yours. Yours it is to use the means, but God's to work the result. Go, then, each of you, beloved of your God, to your separate works, casting aside all your own trust and depending simply, wholly and entirely upon God. I do believe there would be much more good done in the world if some of those who try to do good, looked less to their own carnal power to do it. I mean by this, if they had less apparent power they would have more strength.

There is a story told by Toplady of a Doctor Guyse, a very learned man. He was in the habit of preparing his sermons very carefully, and he used

to read them very accurately. He did so for years, but there was never known to be a sinner saved under him—never such a wonder! The poor good man—for he was an earnest man and wished to do good—was one day at prayer in the pulpit, praying to God that he would make him a useful minister. When he had finished his prayer he was stone blind. He had sufficient self-possession to preach the sermon extemporaneously, which he had prepared with notes. People did not notice his blindness, but they never heard the doctor preach such a sermon as that before!

There was deep attention, there were souls saved. He found his way from the pulpit and began to express his deep sorrow that he had lost his eyesight, when some good old woman who was present, said, perhaps a little unkindly, but still very truthfully—“Doctor, we have never heard you preach like this before and if that is the result of your being blind, it is a pity you were not blind twenty years ago, for you have done more good today than you have done in twenty years.”

So I do not know whether it would not be a good thing if some of our fine sermon readers were struck blind—if they were compelled to be less elaborate in the preparation of their sermons. Then they might lose some half-dozen hard words, which they always write down as soon as they meet with them and use them as stones in the middle of the sermon. And then, perhaps, when they came up into the pulpit, though condemned by critics as speaking vulgar language, they might talk of commonplace things such as poor people could appreciate.

If they would only do this, God being with them, the absence of their mental power would be the means of more spiritual power and they would have reason to thank God—that the man had become less—and that God did shine out with greater resplendence. For what are many learned men, after all, but stained glass windows to keep out the light?

Oh that we had more men who were as the plain glass of the poor man's cottage, to let the light of God shine through them! Let the Church feel that her power is not *mental* power, but *spiritual* power. “Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord.” She might then use all her learning, all her education and all her eloquence. She would use them well, too, if she did but feel that these were but her weapons *in the hand of God* for the pulling down of strongholds.

May God add His blessing for Jesus Christ's sake.

Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

THE SECRET OF POWER IN PRAYER

NO. 2002

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, JANUARY 8, 1888,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*"If you abide in Me and My Words abide in you, you shall ask
what you will and it shall be done unto you."
John 15:7.*

THE gifts of Divine Grace are not enjoyed all at once by Believers. Coming unto Christ, we are saved by a true union with Him. But it is by *abiding* in that union that we further receive the purity, the joy, the power, the blessedness which are stored up in Him for His people. See how our Lord states this when He speaks to the believing Jews in the eighth chapter of this Gospel, at the thirty-first and thirty-second verses— "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, If you continue in My word, then are you My disciples, indeed. And you shall know the Truth and the Truth shall make you free." We do not know all the Truth of God at once—we learn it by *abiding* in Jesus.

Perseverance in Divine Grace is an educational process by which we learn the Truth of God fully. The emancipating power of that Truth is also gradually perceived and enjoyed. "The Truth shall make you free." One bond after another snaps and we are free, indeed. You that are young beginners in the Divine life may be cheered to know that there is something better, still, for you—you have not yet received the full recompense of your faith. As our hymn puts it—"It is better than before." You shall have happier views of heavenly things as you climb the hill of spiritual experience. As you abide in Christ you shall have firmer confidence, richer joy, greater stability, more communion with Jesus and greater delight in the Lord your God.

Infancy is beset with many evils from which manhood is exempt—it is the same in the spiritual as in the natural world. There are these degrees of attainment among Believers and the Savior here incites us to reach a high position by mentioning a certain privilege which is not for all who say that they are in Christ but for those only who are *abiders* in Him. Every Believer should be an abider but many have hardly earned the name as yet. Jesus says, "If you abide in Me and My Words abide in you, you shall ask what you will and it shall be done unto you." You have to *live* with Christ to know Him and the longer you live with Him the more will you admire and adore Him—yes, and the more you will receive from Him, even grace for grace.

Truly He is a blessed Christ to one who is but a month old in Divine Grace. But these babes can hardly tell what a precious Jesus He is to those whose acquaintance with Him covers well-near half a century! Je-

sus, in the esteem of abiding Believers, grows sweeter and dearer, fairer and more lovely each day. Not that He improves in Himself, for He is perfect. But as *we* increase in our knowledge of Him, we appreciate more thoroughly His matchless excellences. How glowingly do His old acquaintances exclaim, "Yes, He is altogether lovely!" Oh, that we may continue to grow up in Him in all things who is our Head, that we thus may prize Him more and more!

I call your earnest attention to our text, begging you to consider with me three questions. First, what is this special blessing? "You shall ask what you will and it shall be done unto you." Secondly, how is this special blessing obtained? "If you abide in Me and My Words abide in you." Then, thirdly, why is it obtained in this way? There must be a reason for the conditions laid down as necessary to obtaining the promised power in prayer. Oh, that the anointing of the Holy Spirit which abides on us may now make this subject very profitable to us!

I. WHAT IS THIS SPECIAL BLESSING? Let us read the verse again. Jesus says, "If you abide in Me and My Words abide in you, you shall ask what you will and it shall be done unto you."

Observe that our Lord had been warning us that, severed from Him we can do nothing, and therefore we might naturally have expected that He would now show us how we can do all spiritual acts. But the text does not run as we should have expected it to run. The Lord Jesus does not say, "Without Me you can do nothing, but if you abide in Me and My Words abide in you, you shall do all spiritual and gracious things." He does not now speak of what they *should*, themselves, be enabled to do but of what should be done *unto* them—"it shall be done unto you."

He says not, "Strength shall be given you sufficient for all those holy doings of which you are incapable apart from Me." That would have been true enough, and it is the Truth of God which we looked for here. But our most wise Lord improves upon all parallelisms of speech and improves upon all expectancies of heart and says something better, still. He does not say, "If you abide in Me and My Words abide in you, you shall do spiritual things." But, "*you shall ask.*" By prayer you shall be enabled to do. But before all attempts to do, "You shall ask." The choice privilege here given is a mighty prevailing *prayerfulness*. Power in prayer is very much the gauge of our spiritual condition. And when that is secured to us in a high degree, we are favored as to all other matters.

One of the first results, then, of our abiding union with Christ will be the certain exercise of prayer—"You shall ask." If others neither seek, nor knock, nor ask, you, at any rate, shall do so. Those who keep away from Jesus do not pray. Those in whom communion with Christ is suspended feel as if they could not pray. But Jesus says, "If you abide in Me and My Words abide in you, you shall ask." Prayer comes spontaneously from those who abide in Jesus, even as certain oriental trees, without pressure, shed their fragrant gums.

Prayer is the natural out-gushing of a soul in communion with Jesus. Just as the leaf and the fruit will come out of the vine without any con-

scious effort on the part of the branch but simply because of its living union with the stem, so prayer buds and blossoms and produces fruit out of souls abiding in Jesus. As stars shine, so do abiders pray. It is their use and their second nature. They do not say to themselves, "Now it is the time for us to get to our task and pray." No, they pray as wise men eat, namely, when the desire for it is upon them. They do not cry out as under bondage, "At this time I ought to be in prayer but I do not feel like it. What a weariness it is!" No, they have a glad errand at the Mercy Seat and they are rejoiced to go upon it.

Hearts abiding in Christ send forth supplications as fires send out flames and sparks. Souls abiding in Jesus open the day with prayer. Prayer surrounds them as an atmosphere all day long. At night they fall asleep praying. I have known them even dream a prayer and, at any rate, they are able joyfully to say, "When I awake, I am still with You." Habitual asking comes out of abiding in Christ. You will not need urging to prayer when you are abiding with Jesus—He says, "You shall ask." And depend upon it, you will!

You shall also feel most powerfully the *necessity* of prayer. Your great need of prayer will be vividly seen. Do I hear you say—"What? When we abide in Christ and His Words abide in us, have we not already attained?" Far are we, then, from being satisfied with ourselves. It is *then* that we feel more than ever that we must ask for *more* Divine Grace. He that knows Christ best knows his own necessities best. He that is most conscious of life in Christ is also most convinced of his own death apart from Christ. He who most clearly discerns the perfect character of Jesus will be most urgent in prayer for Divine Grace to grow like He. The more I seem to be in my Lord, the more I desire to obtain from Him since I know that all that is in Him is put there on purpose that I may receive it.

"Of His fullness have all we received, and grace for grace." It is just in proportion as we are linked to Christ's fullness that we feel the necessity of drawing from it by constant prayer. Nobody needs to prove to an abider in Christ the doctrine of prayer, for we enjoy the thing itself. Prayer is now as much a necessity of our spiritual life as breath is of our natural life—we cannot live without asking favors of the Lord! "If you abide in Me and My Words abide in you, you shall ask"—and you shall not wish to cease from asking. He has said, "Seek you My face," and your heart will answer, "Your face, Lord, will I seek."

Note next, that the fruit of our abiding is not only the exercise of prayer and a sense of the necessity of prayer, but it includes *liberty* in prayer—"You shall ask what you will." Have you not been on your knees at times without power to pray? Have you not felt that you could not plead as you desired? You wanted to pray but the waters were frozen up and would not flow. You said mournfully, "I am shut up and cannot come forth." The will was present but not the freedom to present that will in prayer. Do you, then, desire liberty in prayer so that you may speak with God as a man speaks with his friend? Here is the way to it—"If you abide in Me and My Words abide in you, you shall ask what you will."

I do not mean that you will gain liberty as to mere fluency of utterance—for that is a very *inferior* gift. Fluency is a questionable endowment, especially when it is not attended with weight of thought and depth of feeling. Some Brethren pray by the yard. But true prayer is measured by weight and not by length. A single groan before God may have more fullness of prayer in it than a fine oration of great length. He that dwells with God in Christ Jesus—*he* is the man whose steps are enlarged in intercession. He comes boldly because he abides at the Throne. He sees the golden scepter stretched out and hears the King saying, “Ask what you will and it shall be done unto you.”

It is the man who abides in conscious union with his Lord who has freedom of access in prayer. Well may he come to Christ readily, for he is *in* Christ, and *abides* in Him. Attempt not to seize this holy liberty by excitement, or presumption—there is but one way of really gaining it and here it is—“If you abide in Me and My Words abide in you, you shall ask what you will.” By this means alone shall you be enabled to open your mouth wide, that God may fill it. Thus shall you become Israel’s and as princes, have power with God.

This is not all—the favored man has the privilege of *successful* prayer. “You shall ask what you will and it shall be done unto you.” *You* may not do it, but it shall be done *unto* you. You long to bear fruit—ask and it shall be done unto you. Look at the vine branch. It simply remains in the vine and by remaining in the vine the fruit comes from it. It is done *unto* it. Brothers and Sisters in Christ, the purpose of your being, its one object and design, is to bring forth fruit to the glory of the Father—to gain this end you must abide in Christ, as the branch abides in the vine. This is the method by which your prayer for fruitfulness will become successful. “It shall be done unto you.”

Concerning this matter, “you shall ask what you will and it shall be done unto you.” You shall have wonderful prevalence with God in prayer, insomuch that before you call He will answer and while you are yet speaking He will hear. “The desire of the righteous shall be granted.” To the same effect is the other text—“Delight yourself also in the Lord. And He shall give you the desires of your heart.” There is a great breadth in this text, “You shall ask what you will and it shall be done unto you.” The Lord gives the abider *carte blanche*. He puts into his hand a signed check and permits him to fill it up as he wills.

Does the text mean what it says? I never knew my Lord to say anything He did not mean. I am sure that He may sometimes mean more than we understand Him to say, but He never means less. Mind you, He does not say to all men, “I will give you whatever you ask.” Oh no, that would be an unkind kindness—but He speaks to His disciples and says, “If you abide in Me and My Words abide in you, you shall ask what you will and it shall be done unto you.” It is to a certain class of men who have already received great Grace at His hands—it is to them He commits this marvelous power of prayer.

O my dear Friends, if I may covet earnestly one thing above every other, it is this—that I may be able to ask what I will of the Lord and have it! The man who prevails in prayer is the man to preach successfully, for he may well prevail with man for God when he has already prevailed with God for men! This is the man to face the difficulties of business life. For what can baffle him when he can take all to God in prayer? One such man as this, or one such woman as this in a Church is worth ten thousand of us common people. In these we find the peerage of the skies. In these are the men in whom is fulfilled God's purpose concerning man, whom He made to have dominion over all the works of His hands.

The stamp of sovereignty is on the brows of these men—they shape the history of nations, they guide the current events through their power on high. We see Jesus with all things put under Him by the Divine purpose and as we rise into that image. We also are clothed with dominion and are made kings and priests unto God. Behold Elijah, with the keys of the rain swinging at his girdle—he shuts or opens the windows of Heaven! There are such men still alive. Aspire to be such men and women, I beseech you, that to you the text may be fulfilled, “You shall ask what you will and it shall be done unto you.”

The text seems to imply that if we reach this point of privilege, this gift shall be a perpetuity—“You shall ask,” you shall always ask—you shall never get beyond asking but you shall ask successfully. “You shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.” Here we have the gift of *continual* prayer. Not for the week of prayer, not during a month's conference, nor upon a few special occasions shall you pray prevailingly. But you shall possess this power with God so long as you abide in Christ and His Words abide in you. God will put His Omnipotence at your disposal—He will put forth His Godhead to fulfill the desires which His own Spirit has worked in you.

I wish I could make this jewel glitter before the eyes of all the saints till they cried out, “Oh that we had it!” This power in prayer is like the sword of Goliath—wisely may every David say—“There is none like it; give it to me.” This weapon of all-prayer beats the enemy and at the same time enriches its possessor with all the wealth of God. How can he lack anything to whom the Lord has said, “Ask what you will and it shall be done unto you”? Oh, come, let us seek this promise. Listen and learn the way. Follow me, while by the light of the text I point out the path. May the Lord lead us in it by His Holy Spirit!

II. How is this privilege of mighty prayerfulness TO BE OBTAINED? The answer is, “If you abide in Me and My Words abide in you.” Here are the two feet by which we climb to power with God in prayer.

Beloved, the first line tells us that we are to abide in Christ Jesus our Lord. It is taken for granted that we are already in Him. May it be taken for granted in your case, dear Hearer? If so, you are to abide where you are. As Believers we are to remain tenaciously clinging to Jesus, lovingly knit to Jesus. We are to abide in Him by always trusting Him, and Him only, with the same simple faith which joined us to Him at the first. We

must never admit any other thing or person into our heart's confidence as our hope of salvation. We must rest alone in Jesus as we received Him at the first. His Godhead, His Manhood, His life, His death, His resurrection, His glory at the right hand of the Father—in a word, Himself—must be our heart's sole reliance. This is absolutely essential. A temporary faith will not save—an abiding faith is necessary.

But abiding in the Lord Jesus does not only mean *trusting* in Him. It includes our yielding ourselves up to Him to receive His life and to let that life work out its results in us. We live *in* Him, *by* Him, *for* Him, *to* Him, when we abide in Him. We feel that all our separate life has gone—for “you are dead and your life is hid with Christ.” We are nothing if we get away from Jesus—we would then be branches withered and fit only to be cast into the fire. We have no reason for existence except that which we find in Christ—and what a marvelous reason that is! The vine needs the branch as truly as the branch needs the vine. No vine ever bore any fruit except upon its branches. Truly it bears all the branches and so bears all the fruit.

But yet it is by the branch that the vine displays its fruitfulness. Thus are abiding Believers necessary to the fulfillment of their Lord's design. Wonderful thing to say—that the saints are necessary to their Savior! The Church is His body—the fullness of Him that fills all in all. I want you to recognize this, that you may see your blessed responsibility, your practical obligation to bring forth fruit that the Lord Jesus may be glorified in you. Abide in Him. Never diminish your consecration to His honor and glory. Never dream of being your own master. Be not the servant of men but abide in Christ. Let Him be the Object, as well as the Source, of your existence.

Oh, if you get there and stop there in perpetual communion with your Lord, you will soon realize a joy, a delight, a power in prayer such as you never knew before! There are times when we are conscious that we are in Christ and we know our fellowship with Him. And oh, the joy and the peace which we drink from this cup! Let us abide there. “Abide in Me,” says Jesus. You are not to come and go but to *abide*. Let that blessed sinking of yourself into His life, the spending of all your powers for Jesus and the firm faith of your union with Him remain in you forever. Oh, that we might attain to this by the Holy Spirit!

As if to help us to understand this, our gracious Lord has given us a delightful parable. Let us look through this discourse of the vine and its branches. Jesus says, “Every branch in Me that bears fruit, He purges it.” Take care that you abide in Christ when you are being purged. “Oh,” says one, “I thought I was a Christian. But, alas! I have more troubles than ever—men ridicule me, the devil tempts me and my business affairs go wrong.” Brother, if you are to have *power* in prayer you must take care that you abide in Christ when the sharp knife is cutting everything away. Endure trial and never dream of giving up your faith because of it. Say, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.”

Your Lord warned you when you first came into the vine that you would have to be purged and cut closely. And if you are now feeling the purging process you must not think that some strange thing has happened unto you. Rebel not because of anything you may have to suffer from the dear hand of your heavenly Father—who is the husbandman of the vineyard. No, but cling to Jesus all the more closely. Say, “Cut, Lord, cut to the quick if You will! But I will cling to You. To whom should we go? You have the words of eternal life.” Yes, cling to Jesus when the purging knife is in His hand and so “shall you ask what you will and it shall be done unto you.”

Take care, also, that when the purging operation has been carried out you still cleave to your Lord. Notice the third verse—“Now you are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in Me and I in you.” Abide *after* cleansing where you were *before* cleansing. When you are *sanctified*, abide where you were when first *justified*. When you see the work of the Spirit increasing in you do not let the devil tempt. He will try to get you to boast that now you are somebody, you need not come to Jesus as a poor sinner and rest in His precious blood alone for salvation. Abide still in Jesus. As you kept to Him when the knife cut you, keep to Him now that the tender grapes begin to form.

Do not say to yourself, “What a fruitful branch I am! How greatly I adorn the vine! Now I am full of vigor!” You are nothing and nobody. Only as you abide in Christ are you one whit better than the waste wood which is burned in the fire. “But do we not make progress?” Yes, we grow, but we abide—we never go an inch further—we abide in Him. Or, if not, we are cast forth and are withered. Our whole hope lies in Jesus at our best times as well as at our worst. Jesus says, “Now you are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in Me and I in you.” Abide in Him as to all your fruitfulness. “As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can you, except you abide in Me.”

“Here, then, I have something to do,” cries one. Certainly you have, but not apart from Jesus. The branch has to bear fruit. But if the branch imagines that it is going to produce a cluster, or even a grape out of itself alone, it is utterly mistaken. The fruit of the branch must come forth of the stem. Your work for Christ must be Christ’s work in you or else it will be good for nothing. I pray you, see to this. Your Sunday school teaching, your preaching or whatever you do, must be done in Christ Jesus. Not by your natural talent can you win souls, nor by plans of your own inventing can you save men. Beware of homemade schemes. Do for Jesus what Jesus bids you do. Remember that our work for Christ, as we call it, must be Christ’s work first if it is to be accepted of Him. Abide in Him as to your fruit-bearing.

Yes, abide in Him as to your very *life*. Do not say, “I have been a Christian man now 20 or 30 years, I can do without continued dependence upon Christ.” No, you could not do without Him if you were as old as Methuselah! Your very *being* as a Christian depends upon your still clinging, still trusting, still depending on your Master—and this He must give you—

for it all comes from Him and Him alone. To sum it all up, if you want that splendid power in prayer of which I spoke just now, you must remain in loving, living, lasting, conscious, practical, abiding union with the Lord Jesus Christ. And if you get to that by *Divine Grace*, then you shall ask what you will and it shall be done unto you.

But there is a second qualification mentioned in the text and you must not forget it—"and My Words abide in you." How important, then, are Christ's Words! He said in the fourth verse, "Abide in Me and I in you," and now as a parallel to this it is, "If you abide in Me and My Words abide in you." What, then? Are Christ's Words and Himself identical? Yes, practically so. Some talk about Christ being the Master, but as to doctrine they do not care what His Word declares. So long as their hearts are right towards His Person they claim liberty of thought. Yes, but this is a mere subterfuge.

We cannot separate Christ from the Word. For, in the first place, He *is* the Word. And, in the next place, how dare we call Him Master and Lord and do not the things which He says and reject the Truth of God which He teaches? We must obey His precepts or He will not accept us as disciples. Especially that precept of love which is the essence of all His Words. We must love God and our Brethren—yes, we must cherish love to all men and seek their good. Anger and malice must be far from us. We must walk even as He walked. If Christ's Words abide not in you, both as to belief and practice, you are not in Christ. Christ and His Gospel and His commands are one.

If you will not have Christ and His Words, neither will He have you nor your words. And you shall ask in vain—you shall by-and-by give up asking—you shall become as a withered branch. Beloved, I am persuaded better things of you and things that accompany salvation, though I thus speak. Oh for Divine Grace to pass through these two-leaved gates, these two golden doors! "If you abide in Me and My Words abide in you." Push through the two and enter into this large room—"You shall ask what you will and it shall be done unto you."

III. It is my last work to try to show WHY THIS PRIVILEGE SHOULD BE SO OBTAINED. This extraordinary power of prayer—why is it given to those who abide in Christ? May what I have to say encourage you to make the glorious attempt to win this pearl of great price! Why is it, that by abiding in Christ and having His Words abide in us, we get to this liberty and prevalence in prayer?

I answer, first, because of the fullness of Christ. You may very well ask what you will when you abide in Christ, because whatever you may require is already lodged in Him. Good Bishop Hall worked out this thought in a famous passage. I will give you the substance of it—Do you desire the Grace of the Spirit? Go to your Lord's anointing. Do you seek holiness? Go to His example. Do you desire pardon of sin? Look to His blood. Do you need mortification of sin? Look to His Crucifixion. Do you need to be buried to the world? Go to His tomb. Do you want to feel the fullness of a heavenly life? Behold His Resurrection. Would you rise above the world?

Mark His Ascension. Would you contemplate heavenly things? Remember His sitting at the right hand of God and know that He “has raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places.”

I see clearly enough why the branch gets all it wants while it abides in the stem, since all it wants is already *in* the stem and is placed there for the sake of the branch. What does the branch want more than the stem can give it? If it did want more it could not get it. For it has no other means of living but by sucking its life out of the stem. O my precious Lord, if I want anything which is not in You, I desire always to be without it. I desire to be denied a wish which wanders outside of Yourself. But if the supply of my desire is already in You for me, why should I go elsewhere? You are my All—where else should I look? Beloved, “it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell,” and the good pleasure of the Father is our good pleasure, also—we are glad to draw everything from Jesus. We feel sure that, ask what we will, we shall have it, since He has it ready for us.

The next reason for this is the richness of the Word of God. Catch this thought, “If My Words abide in you, you shall ask what you will and it shall be done unto you.” The best praying man is the man who is most believably familiar with the promises of God. After all, prayer is nothing but taking God’s promises to Him and saying to Him, “Do as You have said.” Prayer is the promise utilized. A prayer which is not based on a promise has no true foundation. If I go to the bank without a check I need not expect to get money. It is the “order to pay” which is my power inside the bank and my warrant for expecting to receive.

You that have Christ’s Words abiding in you are equipped with those things which the Lord regards with attention. If the Word of God abides in you, you are the man that can pray because you meet the great God with His own Words and thus overcome omnipotence with omnipotence. You put your finger down upon the very lines and say, “Do as You have said.” This is the best praying in all the world! O Beloved, be filled with God’s Word. Study what Jesus has said, what the Holy Spirit has left on record in this divinely-inspired Book and in proportion as you *feed* on the Word and are *filled* with the Word and *retain* the Word in your faith and *obey* the Word in your life—in that proportion you will be a master in the art of prayer!

You will acquire skill as a wrestler with the Covenant angel in proportion as you can plead the promises of your faithful God. Be well instructed in the doctrines of Divine Grace and let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, that you may know how to prevail at the Throne of Grace. Abiding in Christ, and His Words abiding in you are like the right hand and the left hand of Moses, which were held up in prayer, so that Amalek was smitten, Israel was delivered and God was glorified!

Let us go a little further—you still may say you do not quite see why a man who abides in Christ and in whom Christ’s Words abide, should be allowed to ask whatever he wills and it shall be done unto him. I answer you again—it is so because in such a man as that there is a predomi-

nance of Divine Grace which causes him to have a renewed will which is according to the will of God. Suppose a man of God is in prayer and he thinks that such-and-such a thing is desirable, yet he remembers that he is nothing but a babe in the presence of his all-wise Father and so he bows his will and asks as a favor to be taught what to will.

Though God bids him ask what he wills, he shrinks and cries, "My Lord, here is a request which I am not quite clear about. As far as I can judge, it is a desirable thing and I will it. But, Lord, I am not fit to judge for myself and therefore I pray You, give not as *I* will, but as *You* will." Do you not see that when we are in such a condition as this, *our* real will is *God's* will? Deep down in our hearts we will only that which the Lord Himself wills. And what is this but to ask what we will and it is done to us? It becomes safe for God to say to the sanctified soul, "Ask what you will and it shall be done unto you." The heavenly instincts of *that* man lead him right. The Divine Grace that is within his soul thrusts down all covetous lusting and foul desires and his will is the actual *shadow* of God's will.

The spiritual life is master in him and so his aspirations are holy, heavenly, God-like. He has been made a partaker of the Divine Nature—and as a son is like his father, so now in desire and will he is one with his God. As the echo answers to the voice, so does the renewed heart echo the mind of the Lord. Our desires are reflected beams of the Divine will—you shall ask what you will and it shall be even so.

You clearly see that the holy God cannot pick up a common man in the street and say to him, "I will give you whatever you will." What would he ask for? He would ask for a good drink, or permission to enjoy himself in evil lust. It would be very unsafe to trust the most of men with this permit. But when the Lord has taken a man and has made him new—has quickened him into newness of life and has formed him in the image of His dear Son—then He can trust him! Behold, the great Father treats us in our measure as He treats His First-Born. Jesus could say, "I know that You hear Me always," and the Lord is educating us to the same assurance.

We can say with one of old, "My God will hear me." Do not your mouths water for this privilege of prevailing prayer? Do not your hearts long to get at this? It is by the way of holiness. It is by the way of union to Christ. It is by the way of a permanent abiding in Him and an obedient holding fast of His Truths that you are to come to this privilege! Behold, the only safe and true way—when once that way is really trod—it is a most sure and effectual way of gaining substantial power in prayer.

I have not quite done. A man will succeed in prayer when his faith is strong. And this is the case with those who abide in Jesus. It is *faith* that prevails in prayer. The real eloquence of prayer is a believing desire. "All things are possible to him that believes." A man abiding in Christ, with Christ's Words abiding in him, is eminently a Believer and consequently eminently successful in prayer. He has strong faith, indeed, for his faith

has brought him into vital contact with Christ and he is, therefore, at the source of every blessing and may drink to his full at the well itself.

Such a man, once more, will also possess the indwelling of the Spirit of God. If we abide in Christ and His Words abide in us, then the Holy Spirit has come and taken up His residence in us. And what better help in prayer can we have? Is it not a wonderful thing that the Holy Spirit, Himself, makes intercession in the saints according to the will of God? He “makes intercession for us with groans that cannot be uttered.” What man knows the mind of a man save the spirit of a man? The Spirit of God knows the mind of God and He works in us to will what God wills, so that a believing man’s prayer is God’s purpose reflected in the soul as in a mirror.

The eternal decrees of God project their shadows over the hearts of godly men in the form of prayer. What God intends to do He tells unto His servants by inclining them to ask Him to do what He Himself is resolved to do. God says, “I will do this and that.” But then He adds, “For this will I be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them.” How clear it is that if we abide in Christ and His Words abide in us we may ask what we will! For we shall only ask what the Spirit of God moves us to ask. And it were impossible that God the Holy Spirit and God the Father should be at cross-purposes with one another. What the one prompts us to ask, the other has assuredly determined to bestow.

I struck out a line just now to which I must return for a single moment. Beloved, do you not know that when we abide in Christ and His Words abide in us, the Father looks upon us with the same eye with which He looks upon His dear Son? Christ is the vine and the vine includes the branches. The branches are a part of the vine. God, therefore, looks upon us as *part* of Christ—members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. Such is the Father’s love to Jesus that He denies Him nothing. He was obedient to death, even the death of the Cross. Therefore does His Father love Him as the God-Man Mediator and He will grant Him all His petitions. And is it so that when you and I are in real union to Christ, the Lord God looks upon us in the same way as He looks on Jesus and says to us, “I will deny you nothing. You shall ask what you will and it shall be done unto you”? So do I understand the text.

I call your attention to the fact that in that 15th chapter, the ninth verse, which I did not read this morning, runs thus—“As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you.” The same love which God gives to His Son, the Son gives to us! And therefore we are dwellers in the love of the Father *and* of the Son. How can our prayers be rejected? Will not infinite love have respect unto our petitions? O dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, if your prayers speed not to the Throne, suspect that there is some sin that hinders them—your Father’s love sees a necessity for chastening you this way.

If you do not abide in Christ, how can you hope to pray successfully? If you pick and choose His Words and doubt this and doubt that, how can you hope to speed to the Throne? If you are willfully disobedient to any of

His Words, will not this account for failure in prayer? But abide in Christ and take fast hold upon His Words and be altogether His disciple—*then* shall you be heard of Him. Sitting at Jesus' feet, hearing His Words, you may lift up your eyes to His dear face and say, "My Lord, hear me now." And He will answer you graciously—He will say unto you, "I have heard you in a time accepted and in the day of salvation have I succored you. Ask what you will and it shall be done unto you." Oh for power at the Mercy Seat!

Beloved Friends, do not hear this sermon and then go away and forget it. Try to reach this place of boundless influence. What a Church we could be if you were all mighty in prayer! Dear children of God, do you want to be half starved? Beloved Brethren, do you desire to be poor, little, puny, driveling children who will never grow into men? I pray you, aspire to be strong in the Lord and to enjoy this exceedingly high privilege. What an army would you be if you all had this power with God in prayer! It is within your reach, you children of God! Only abide in Christ and let His Words abide in you and then this special privilege will be yours! These are not irksome duties but they are in themselves a joy. Go in for them with your whole heart and then you shall get this added to you—that you shall ask what you will and it shall be done unto you.

Unhappily, to a portion of this congregation my text says nothing at all. For some of you are not even in Christ, and therefore you cannot abide in Him. O Sirs, what shall I say to you? You seem to me to miss a very Heaven even now! If there were no Hell hereafter, it is Hell enough not to know Christ now—not to know what it is to prevail with God in prayer—not to know the choice privilege of abiding in Him and His Words abiding in you. Your first matter is that you believe in Jesus Christ to the saving of your souls, yielding your *souls* to His cleansing, your *lives* to His government. God has sent Him forth as a Savior, accept Him. Receive Him as your Teacher. Yield yourself up to Him as your Master. May His gracious Spirit come and do this work upon you now. And then, after this, but not before, you may aspire to this honor.

First of all—"You must be born again." I cannot say to you as you are now, "Grow," because you will only grow a bigger sinner. However much you may be developed, you will only develop what is in you—and that is the heir of wrath will become more and more the child of evil. You must be made anew in Christ—there must be an absolute change, a reversal of all the currents of nature, a making of you a new creature in Christ Jesus. And then you may aspire to abide in Christ and let His Words abide in you and the consequent prevalence with God in prayer shall be yours.

Gracious Lord, help us this morning. Poor creatures as we are, we can only lie at Your feet. Come Yourself and uplift us to Yourself for Your mercy's sake! Amen.

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LOVE AT ITS UTMOST

NO. 1982

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 11, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you: continue you in My love.”
John 15:9.***

IN the love of Christ we find our best joy. The pastures of the Great Shepherd are wide, but the sweetest grasses grow close to His pierced feet. The love of Jesus is the center of salvation—it is as the sun in the midst of the heavens of Grace. I trust that while I lead your meditations this morning towards this golden theme, you will be able to enter in spirit into the heart and soul of it. Paul said, when he spoke of marriage, “Behold, I show you a mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the Church.” There is always much that is mysterious, here, but it is always the mystery of love. You believe in this love; you know it; you have tasted it and, therefore, I speak to an audience who will appreciate the subject, however faulty may be my handling of it.

Oh, for a higher experience! May the Lord at this hour conduct us into His banqueting house and rejoice us with His love, which is better than wine! Many of us will bring to the feast a keen appetite—that is all we can contribute—and even *that* is a gift of love! Oh, that we may have a quick eye to see the beauties of the Lord and a discerning heart to perceive how His love to us enhances all His charms!

The love of Christ to His people is the sweetest, fullest and most profitable theme that a preacher can bring before his people. And it is always a suitable and seasonable subject, whatever the condition of the congregation may be. But we greatly need the aid of the Holy Spirit to prepare our minds for the enjoyment of this Truth of God. It is one thing to hear the outward sound of love—it is another thing to feel an inward sense of it. It is pleasant to hear the rippling of the brook, but if you are dying of thirst, that silver music will not refresh you if you are unable to drink of the stream! Come, Holy Spirit, come! We beseech You, take of the things of Christ and glorify Him by revealing them to our inmost souls!

I. We will plunge into the subject at once. Here is our first exhortation—LET US UNQUESTIONINGLY BELIEVE THAT JESUS LOVES US. That is to say, if we are, indeed, *in Him*, He loves us infinitely. Our Lord is speaking here, not of His general love of *benevolence*, but of that peculiar and special affection which He bears to His own, of whom He says, “I have chosen you out of the world.” If we are in Him, as the branches are in the vine, and if we prove the reality of that union by bringing forth the fruits

of Grace to His Glory, then we are the objects of the Savior's peculiar love. He speaks to us as a Church and to each one personally, and says, "As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you." O my Hearer, does He speak thus to you? Have you taken hold of Christ by faith? Has He saved you? Is your life derived from Him? Is He your hope, your joy, your all? If this is so, then doubt not that He speaks to you with His own lips as well as out of this Book of record. As truly as if He stood at your side and grasped your hand and spoke with His eyes looking into your eyes with tenderness of love, He says to you, "As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you: continue you in My love."

That He truly loves us, we may confidently believe, for He, Himself, is at pains to assure us of it in so many words. He does not leave it to an inference, although the inference might be safely drawn from the 10,000 love-deeds of His life and death. But He deliberately declares His love—"As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you." Do you doubt His words?—words spoken in the solemn night of His agony and registered in the volume of Inspiration? Does not your heart respond to Him as He says, "I have loved you"? Do you not answer, "Yes, Lord, it is true, indeed! There is little need for You to tell me this with Your lips, for You have assured me of it by Your wounds. I know that You love me. Oh, that I loved You better in return!"

As if to confirm us in our belief beyond all wavering and to lead out our hearts to behold the largeness of His affection, He quotes a parallel to His love of the most extraordinary kind. He looks not to the loves of earth, but to the greatest love of Heaven, and says, "As the *Father* has loved Me, so have I loved you." Beloved, you *do* not, *dare* not, *could* not, doubt the love of the Father to His Son! It is one of those unquestionable Truths about which you never dreamed of holding an argument. Our Lord would have us place His love to us in the same category with the Father's love to Himself! We are to be as confident of the one as of the other. What a wonderful certainty is conveyed to us by this token! The Father regards with boundless love, the Son, with whom He is in essential union, since they are one God—and as surely as this is the case—so surely does Jesus love the people whom He has taken into marriage union with Himself forever. Doubt not! It would be a sort of blasphemy to doubt after such a pledge as this! Think of it and let your assurance become doubly sure!

Behold the course and proof of our Redeemer's love! *He chose us in love*. The reason of His choice was love. Remember how He puts it in the seventh chapter of Deuteronomy? God there speaks of His choice of Israel—"You are an holy people unto the Lord your God: the Lord your God has chosen you to be a special people unto Himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The Lord did not set His love upon you, nor choose you because you were more in number than any people; for you were the fewest of all people: but because the Lord loved you." He loved you because He loved you! Election is based upon affection and that affection is its own fountain. The whole system of Divine Love springs from the love of God and from nothing else. Jesus loves us because He is Love!

If I must add anything to that statement, it will suffice me to quote the Well-Beloved's own Words when He thanked the Father that He had hid these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them unto babes. He said, "Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Your sight." O Believer, Jesus loved you before the world began and all because He would love you! He loved you in order that He might manifest His love to you. He loved you in order that you might be conformed unto His image, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren and that thus we might share His Nature and His Character and His Father's love, and so draw nearer and nearer to Him in ever-growing fellowship of affection! See the love which is its own cause, spending itself and, by its own efficacy, working out its gracious purposes—everyone of which is as full of love as the love which designed it!

Having thus chosen us for love, so great was the love of our Lord that *He became Man for love of us*. He "counted it not robbery to be equal with God," but became Man that He might carry out His purposes of love to us. It is written, "For this cause shall a man leave his father and shall cleave to his wife, and the two shall be one flesh." And this has its highest exemplification in Christ, who left His Father that He might become one flesh with His Church. He took our nature so that He might be able to do for us and suffer for us what, otherwise, He could not have done and suffered. By thus talking upon Himself our nature, He established a nearer union and a sweeter fellowship with His beloved Church than could otherwise have existed. If He had never become the Babe of Bethlehem and the Man of Nazareth, how could He have been made in all points like unto His brethren? Think what that love must have been which brought the Lord of Glory from the highest Heaven to become the Man of Sorrows for our sakes!

Having become a Man for us, we remember that *Jesus died because of love*. "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." That laying down of life in our Lord's case was specially a proof of love, for He died *voluntarily*—there was no necessity upon Him, as upon us, to die. Other men, if they died for us, would but pay the debt of nature a little before its time, but Jesus died who needed not to die, so far as He, Himself, was concerned. He died, also, amid circumstances of pain, shame and desertion which made that death peculiarly bitter. The death of the Cross is to us the highest proof of our Savior's infinite love to us. He must die the death of a felon, between two thieves, utterly friendless, the object of general ridicule—and this He must do as bearing our sins in His own body. All this makes us say, "Behold how He loved us!" O Beloved! Can we doubt Christ's love, since He laid down His life, "the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God"?

It was *because of this love*, remember, dear child of God, that *the Lord made you live*. I cannot quote at full length that memorable passage in the 16th Chapter of Ezekiel, but there you have our condition represented as that of a deserted infant cast out to die, unwashed, unswaddled, bleeding itself to death in filth and misery. And it is written that when the Lord

passed by, He said unto that infant, "Live." Even thus did He speak to us—and we lived and rose out of our misery. He declares that the time when He thus passed by was "a time of love." Shall I not touch your hearts when I remind you of the Lord's time of love to you? Remember your cast-out condition, your helpless distress, your hopeless ruin. You lay between the very jaws of death and no eye pitied you—you did not even pity yourself! Jesus looked on you long before you looked to Him! He spoke to you before you spoke to Him. He said, "Live!" and you lived, but before that you were dead in trespasses and sins! Then He washed, clothed, beautified and adopted you. He made a wretched foundling to be joint-heir with Himself. O love! Matchless love! We owe our spiritual life to love and, therefore, as long as we live we will praise the Lover of our souls!

Inasmuch as we are, by nature, at a distance from God, we needed *to be brought near*. We have been brought near to Him by love. Jeremiah has a famous passage—"The Lord has appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you." Do you remember when the bands of a man were fastened around you and you felt the cords of love drawing more and more forcibly? You could not tell why you were so singularly inclined to better things, but it was so. In yourself you were, at first, lifeless as a log! But soon you began to feel a yielding, yes, and an inclination—and at last that stubborn will relented—and new desires took the place of former aversions. Then you ran in the way in which you were drawn—your will had at last been made truly free, so that you delighted in the will of God! Love did all this. Love was more than conqueror, for it did not vanquish the enemy by force, but turned him into a grateful friend. By the recollection of those drawings which have not ceased, even now, let us believe in the love of Jesus! Do you not feel Him drawing you even as you sit in this House of Prayer? Then under a present sense of His love, cry out "The love of Christ constrains us." I charge you, have no doubt about the love of your Divine Lord which even now is working within you.

Time would fail me if I were to go into all the fruits of the love of Christ to you. For love He has forgiven you! Have you ever forgotten the blotting out of your iniquities by that hand of love? For love He has fed you day by day with the best of spiritual meat. "You are complete in Him." All your needs His love has supplied—there are shoes for your pilgrimage, armor for your warfare, strength for your labor, rest for your weariness, comfort for your sorrow. No good thing does His love withhold! You have an inward satisfaction in Christ which all the world could not produce. Moreover, He has led you through this wilderness life in safety to this day. In dark and devious roads He has been near you. His rod and His staff have comforted you. You have not gone astray and that, not because there was not the spirit of straying in you, but because the great Shepherd has kept you in His paths. How often has He succored you and delivered you! How graciously has He helped your weakness, enlightened your darkness, allayed your fears, renewed your hope and, above all, preserved you from sin!

As I look back upon my own life, I am filled with adoring thankfulness. I know that the retrospect which each one of you is looking upon is very much the same. Surely, goodness and mercy have brightened all the days of our lives! Each day has been so wonderful that if we had only lived that *one day*, we would have had cause to praise the Lord forever and ever. When all the days are “threaded on time’s string,” what a bracelet of mercies they make! What shall I say of my Lord’s love? If I liken it for height to the mountains, I see Alps piled on Alps. “Your mercy, O God, is in the heavens.” If I liken it for depth to the sea, I am again lost in the comparison—I can only cry, “O the depths!” As to counting the gifts of His love, if we think of them, they are more in number than the sands of the sea! Let us not doubt His love, for that would be wanton cruelty, but, sitting down in stillness of mind, let our hearts quietly beat time to this one sentence—He loves me—He loves me. More surely than parent or child, or husband or wife, or the best tried friend, Jesus loves His blood-bought ones! O my Soul, He loves you! Be you always ravished with His love.

Yet I must not quite close the list till I remind you that you are now, this very day, in union with Him. You are laid on Him and cemented to Him as a stone is built upon the foundation. You are also joined to Him vitally as the branch is to the stem and as the member to the body. You are, moreover, joined to Him by a living, loving, lasting union, as the bride is united to the Bridegroom. You are identical with your Covenant Head today in the purposes of God. God has dealt with Him as though He had sinned your sin—and now He deals with you as though you had brought His righteousness! In the purposes of God you are wrapped up with the Lord Jesus Christ. Herein is love!

The future of Jesus is to be your future! You are to be with Him where He is. When Luther was in his worst troubles, a friend came in to see him and noticed that he had written upon the wall in big letters the word, “VIVIT!” He enquired of Luther what he meant by, “VIVIT”? Luther answered, “Jesus lives and if He did not live I would not care to live an hour.” Yes, our life is bound up with that of Jesus! We are not called upon to live of ourselves—that would be death—but we have life and all things in union with Him. This is love, indeed, which rests not till it is one with its object. O you unconverted ones, how can you live apart from Christ? To live one hour apart from Christ is to live in infinite peril, since in that hour you may die and pass beyond the realms of hope!

O Beloved, you that love Him, are one with Him by an infinite and indestructible union! “Who shall separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?” This eternal oneness is the security both of Grace and Glory to us. Certain of our dear Brothers and Sisters have lately gone up the shining road. We might envy them if we did not know that even *here* we have the Lord’s love to cheer us. Let us love Jesus for His love to our Brethren, for now they share His Throne, lie in His bosom and are indulged with a vision of His Glory. We also are on our way to the wedding feast—let us keep our lamps burning. Comfort yourselves with the Divine hope of everlasting joy. His love which came to us from Heaven to earth

will bear us up from earth to Heaven! Heart cannot conceive what love has laid up for those whom it has chosen.

II. But I cannot proceed further after this fashion. I must now exhibit my theme in another light. LET US MEDITATE CONTINUALLY UPON THE LOVE OF CHRIST. I would help your meditations by giving a few hints. Do not think that I am preaching, but consider that you are alone in your chambers and that I am speaking through a telephone to you. Let me vanish and let Jesus stand before you.

Meditate upon the love of Christ to you. *It is a love ancient and venerable, tried and proved.* He loved you when you were not. He loved you when you were, but were not what you should be. He has loved you into spiritual being—He has loved you so as to keep you in that being. He loved you so as to suffer and to die. And He loves you so as to permit you to suffer for His sake. He has loved you so well as to bear with your ill manners, your shortcomings and your transgressions, your coldness, your backsliding, your lack of prayer, your hardness of heart, your little love to your Brethren and all the other sins of which I will not now accuse you, for it is a time of love. He has loved you right on without pausing or slackening. Some of you have known His love these 20, 30, 40, 50 years! Yes, some of you even more than that. It is no new thing with us to sing, “Jesus loves me.”

All this while He has never failed us once, nor done us an ill turn. The kindest husband that ever lived may sometimes be faulty, but this Husband of our souls overflows with Divine affection every day, and all the day. We could not find fault or flaw in His love if we were to try! Doubtless, in the future we shall have to make continued trial of His love, but we are sure it will endure every test. We may have rough ways to traverse, but He will tread them with us and we shall lean upon our Beloved. We may be very sick and faint, but He has borne our sicknesses and will sympathize with us. He has said, and we believe it, “I will never leave you, nor forsake you.” His promise is, “Certainly I will be with you. Even to your old age I am He; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you.” The longer we live, the more abundant evidence shall we receive of that love of Christ which, at this moment, is assuredly ours. At this moment we believe in this love as implicitly as yonder babe believes in its mother’s love and stretches out its little hands to be embraced in those dear arms. Is it not so, dear Friends? Do you not lean on the bosom of your Lord without a shadow of mistrust—and do you not, there, find your fears all laid asleep? What love is this!

Remember, also, in your meditation, that *His love to you has been most free.* It was unbought and even unsought. In Hosea it is written, “I will love them freely.” And surely, if ever there was a case in which that verse was transparently true, it is in my case! Was it not so in yours? What was there in you that could have won His love? If He could see any beauty in *me*, it must have been first in His own eyes. They say that love is blind and certainly, though our heavenly Bridegroom is not blind, yet He was somewhat kinder, for He saw our deformities of sin and folly—and yet He

loved us notwithstanding all! He saw our iniquities and then He cast them into the depths of the sea. Jesus, lover of my soul, You love me and that love is free, indeed! How could You be enamored with such an one as I am? It could only be because You love those who most need Your love and can least repay it. Inasmuch as it is even so, what shall I do but admire and adore? Brothers and Sisters, let us muse and meditate, pray and praise, wonder and worship Him whom, having not seen, we love! Let us love Him because He first loved us! Beholding the generous upbringing of a love which we could not deserve and would not seek, let us freely love in return.

This love of our Lord's, so free, so full, so forceful, was and is *most amazing*. We shall never bear better or more surprising news than this, that Jesus loves us! Nothing more surprising ever came to me than to learn "He loved me, and gave Himself for me." Others may, perhaps, see what is worked by the Lord's Grace in us, and this may make them the less astonished at the Lord's love towards us. But we know ourselves and see our blemishes as well as our beauties and, therefore, we know that there is *nothing* lovable in us by nature. When we see our Lord's beauty, we see nothing but deformity in ourselves! The more we perceive His love, the more do we abhor ourselves because of our own need of love to Him and because of the defilements into which we have fallen. We are amazed at our sin, but more amazed at His love! We shall go on reading in the golden Book of Christ's love throughout all eternity—and the longer we study it, the more we shall be astonished that the Holy and the Glorious and the Ever-Blessed should ever have espoused in love such insignificant, polluted, and fickle-hearted creatures as we are!

The love of Jesus is love *most practical*. Christ loves not in word, only, but in deed and in truth. There is a greater force to my mind in Christ's deeds of love than in all the words which even He could have uttered. His deeds emphasize His words. Words cannot, to the fullest, express the mind of love—language filters from the lips, while feeling gushes from the heart. Jesus has written out His love in living characters. O Master! Never man spoke like You, and yet that was Your most eloquent discourse when You did say but little, but did stretch Your hands on the Cross, that they might be nailed there! Then did You pour out Your heart, not in oratory, but in blood and water! Jesus has given to us His crown, His garments, His body, His soul, His life, Himself! Said I not well that His is practical love? It is love full of tenderness, rich in bounty, lavish in thoughtfulness, firm in constancy, strong as death, mightier than the grave.

Think, again, that *it was personal love*. The Lord Jesus Christ loves each one of His people as much as if He had not one more. All the heart of Christ goes out to *each one of us*! The great sun shines today on this round earth—and while it pours its limitless flood of light on all, that one tiny daisy, as it bathes in the brightness, is able to say, "The sun is all mine." Though there are myriads of flowers in the meadows and the gardens, yet this one flower may freely possess all that the sun can give, or rather all that the little flower can *receive*—as much as if it were the only

flower that blooms! So Jesus is to me, to you, to each one of us—all our own—neither lose we anything by the fact that He is all the own of so many millions! No, we gain by His being thus possessed by so many Brothers and Sisters, for we find our bliss repeated in the happiness of all whom Jesus loves as He loves us! In the text we read, “so have I loved you.” Mark how the two personal pronouns, “I,” and, “you,” stand with nothing but, “love,” between! The Lord Jesus, Himself, delighted in us, even in us who are not worthy to be named in the same day with Him! Glory be to His holy name forever!

The pith of our text lies in this, that to make us know a little of how much He loves us, our Lord has paralleled His love to us with the Father’s love to Him. What kind of love was that? Here we get into deep waters! Each thought is an abyss. We know that the Father loved the Son *without beginning*, even from *eternity*. It is not conceivable that there ever was a period when the Father did not love His Son—neither is it conceivable by those who read this Book of the Lord aright that there ever could have been a time when Jesus did not love *His people*. This love constrained Him in the council chamber of eternity to become the Surety of the Covenant for those His Father gave Him. In that time before time began, the Lord’s love went forth, for His goings forth were of old, from everlasting! Not when *we* began to love *Him*, nor even when we began to *be*, did the love of our redeeming Lord commence its Divine history—but from of old, before the earth was. Some of you dote upon antiquities, but this, to me, is the most precious of all ancient things—the everlasting love of Jesus!

We also feel sure that the Father loves the Son *without end*. There cannot come an hour when the Father will banish the Son from His heart. Till then, Jesus will never cast off His people! The unchanging Christ of God will never cease to love His redeemed, for the Father will never cease to love Him! Has He not said, “I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands. The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the Covenant of My peace be removed, says the Lord that has mercy on you”?

Beloved, we must not fail to note the intimacy of this love, for Jesus said, “I and My Father are one.” Even such is His love to us. It is intimate in character, for Jesus says, “I in them, and You in Me, that they may be made perfect in one.” Jesus has made Himself one with His people. He loves them with a marvelous intimacy, so that in loving them He loves Himself, for He has made them to be “members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.” I go further—our Lord loved us *better* than He loved Himself, for they truly said of Him, “He saved others; Himself He could not save.” His mighty love made Him to be a Sacrifice for His people, that He might redeem them from under the curse of the Law.

It is a love, in fact, *immeasurable*—there is no boundary to it. The Father must love the Son inconceivably. As God, Himself, is incomprehensible, so is the love of the Divine Persons to each other. Jesus also loves His chosen without limit. He loves unto the end with a love which has no end. We can only become conscious of a limited portion of that love, but it is

not limited in itself. To this ocean there is neither shore nor bottom. Jesus loves Omnipotently, everlastingly and infinitely!

His love is also *immutable*, like that of His Father to Him. Change is unknown to the heart of Jesus. He cannot love us more and He will not love us less. I spoke of the ocean just now, but it was a faulty emblem, for it ebbs and flows, while our Lord's love is always at the fullest.

Now the point I want to bring you to is this—remember that the Father's intimate and infinite and unchanging love to His Son did not prevent His Son from being "a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief." It did not prevent His having to say, "I have not where to lay My head." It did not prevent His bloody sweat in Gethsemane. "Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered." Even He had to cry, "If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me," and to add, "nevertheless not as I will, but as You will." Do you think that you will be excused the bitter cup? You in your prayers have said, "My Father, if You love me let me not be poor, let me not be bereaved, let me not be laid aside, let me not be spoken evilly of." You know not what you ask! You pray against promotion when you pray against affliction! It was necessary for the greater Glory of the Mediator, in His complex Person as God and Man, that He should greatly suffer and give Himself a Ransom for many and, therefore, the love of the Father did not withhold the wormwood and the gall!

And now, for other purposes known to the wise heart of Jesus, it is necessary that you, His disciple, should be made to drink of His cup and to be baptized with His baptism—and He will not deny you the privilege! You must be made a partaker of Christ's sufferings, that you may the better have fellowship with Him in the highest form of His Glory. Therefore, believe that Christ loves you when He afflicts you—that He loves you when He declines to remove the cup of trembling from your lips! You would decline the high honors He intends you, but His love forbids the heavy loss. If we are to reign with Him, we must first suffer with Him—and so His love urges us on to the suffering out of a high regard for our eternal welfare.

O you that are shrinking from the Cross, are you willing to forego the crown? Surely you are not so foolish! Why, you can be sure that these griefs are necessary for you, that your soul may be enlarged and enabled to contain more of delight and of bliss in Christ Jesus your Lord throughout eternity. To spare you that pin's prick today would be to make you a loser throughout the endless ages! Therefore, lift up your finger to the needle and be ready to endure the sharp point for an instant, seeing it is the trifling penalty of your rank as a follower of the Crucified. "These light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work for us a far more exceedingly and eternal weight of glory." And, therefore, why do we draw back from them?

God grant us Grace to meditate much upon this love of Jesus Christ to us paralleled only by the Father's love to Him and, meditating, may we become content to have fellowship with Christ in His sufferings, that we may partake in His Glory!

III. Bear with me while I come, in the third place, to say, LET US EXPERIENCE AND ADMIRE THE POWER WHICH THIS LOVE HAS OVER US. I asked you to forget me, just now, and to regard me as a mere telephone. But now I desire to retire altogether, that only Jesus may rule in your mind and heart in the fullness of His power. What can be more powerful than this love? What can be operative in so many ways and in such varied methods? Happy is the man who is always under the spell of its power!

The love of Christ received into the heart *acts as a catholicon*. The old doctors searched for many a day to find a universal remedy. They sought in vain—yet here we have it! Christ is all medicine for all ailments, but He is vastly more than that. He heals and He fills! He fills and He beautifies! He beautifies and He confirms! He confirms and He perfects. Wondrously does His love work on men. Let the love of Christ be believed in and felt in your hearts and *it will humble you*. Proud self goes out when sweet love comes in—the flesh dies through the power of that love on which the spirit lives. Can I be proud when my Beloved unveils to me His love which passes knowledge? Impossible! No, I feel ready to sink into the ground when I see His Glories—“My soul melted while my Beloved spoke.” Brothers and Sisters the love of Christ is such a torrent that when it floods the soul, it carries self before it.

Love has also a melting influence. The hammer of the Law breaks, but the heart, when thus broken, is like a broken flint, every bit of which is still flint. When the love of Jesus performs its office, it dissolves us, turning the flint into flesh. An old Divine says that when the Law creates repentance, the tears are hard as hailstones in the sinner’s eyes. And I believe it is so. But when the Gospel makes us repent, our weeping is as the dew of the morning! What a blessed softness Grace produces! How tender is the heart which Jesus touches with His pierced hands!

This love of Christ, how *consoling* it is to mourning hearts! This is the best candle for one who is lying in bed in the dark. Oh, you Much-Afraids and Desponding-Ones, who are hardly able to enjoy my subject this morning, I would gladly lift you up and cheer you by this sweet love, for, indeed, it is a balm for you! Do not turn away from this heavenly cordial. Do not try to doubt—you can scarcely do so when you think of our Redeemer’s love! What? Desponding? When your Beloved gives you the kisses of His lips and says, “I have loved you with an everlasting love”? If His Presence does not cheer you, surely Heaven itself would not make you glad, for what is Heaven but the full enjoyment of His love?

The love of Jesus has *a cleansing and sanctifying power*. To kill the love of sin, live in the love of Christ! He whom Christ loves hates sin. We begin to say within ourselves—What shall I quit for Christ? What shall I do for Christ? The love of Jesus shed abroad in the soul has a sanctifying savor—it perfumes the heart with holiness. His love is as a fire of odoriferous woods—it consumes sin and gives forth a fragrance of virtue. No furnace ever purifies our heart like the love of Jesus which burns like coals of juniper. The way of love is the road to perfectness. Jonathan will not of-

fend the David whom he loves. A heart enamored of the holy Jesus will be very jealous lest it grieve Him by sin.

A sweet sense of Christ's love also *strengthens us*. Love is strong as death and it makes us strong for the duties of life. Those holy women in Scotland tied to stakes to be drowned by the incoming tide—what made them so brave in their confession of loyalty to Jesus? What but a sense of His love to them? Feeble men and women were cast to the lions in the Roman amphitheatre—did you ever hear that they cowered before the wild beasts, or asked mercy of the cruel crowd that sat around and gazed on their agonies? Ah, no! Christ's soldiers never quail! And if you ask the secret of their courage, it is that *He loves them*—and they cannot but be bold for His dear sake!

This it is, too, that *makes us tender to others* and compassionate for this poor, ruined world. If any of you want to love the souls of men, learn how Christ loved you. You will love the vilest for His sake. If you would have eyes with which to weep over this sinful city, see how Jesus wept for *you*. If you would be prompt at all times to help the needy and succor the afflicted, keep close to the side of your gentle, tender, compassionate Lord—and as you feel His love to you—you will feel pity for others.

It is this that *inflames men with a true zeal for God* and for the good of men. Some hardly know what it is to be zealous. But there are a few saints yet remaining who are like pillars of flame from morning till night. We have some among us—my only fear is lest they consume themselves and are gone before others have caught the flame! Would you know the secret of that holy flame which sits upon some apostolic men? The love of Jesus is that heavenly fire! They burn with love as they think of Him whose love made Him a whole Burnt Offering for them.

This love *fills Believers with delight*. If you would be always happy, sustain your mirth upon the spiced wine of His pomegranate. He loves me. He loves me! O joyous thought! Such an assurance creates a Paradise in a prison and a Heaven in heaviness!

Now I invite you, in conclusion, dear Friends, to enter into this love of Christ by personal enjoyment. Wade into this river of the Water of Life. Do I hear you cry, "It is up to the ankles"? Go deeper, Brother! "It is up to the knees." Go deeper, Sister! Think more of Divine love! Value it more; live upon it more; trust it more! "Sir, it is up to my loins." Go deeper, Brother! Thank God when it begins to lift you from your feet and bear you up above all earthly things. When you cannot touch the bottom, rejoice! When you must swim, be happy to cast yourself upon the blessed flood. You cannot drown—these are not waters to sink in, but "waters to swim in." Be you as a bird in the air, a fish in the stream, an angel in Heaven! Let the love of Christ be your element—to you let *love* and *live* be the same word! You cannot think too much of Christ's love! The wise man says, "Eat not too much honey," but you cannot enjoy too much of the love of Christ! Get absorbed into it! Be swallowed up in it till it is "no more I, but Christ that lives in me."

And when you are once immersed in this love, continue in it. Christ does not love you today and cast you away to-morrow. Shall your faith be inconstant when His faithfulness is so abiding? How is it that you, today, are so happy in the Lord, and tomorrow will be so dreary? Are you up on Sunday and down on Monday? Is your God only the God of the Sabbath, and not of the whole week? What? Is Christ a Sunday Christ and not a Monday Christ? And is His love a Sabbath theme and not an inspiration for Tuesdays and Wednesdays? Beloved, this must not be! Why, it is a childish thing—I retract the word as dishonoring to dear children—it is a *foolish* thing to be warm with this love, today, and then to be cold tomorrow! Surely near such a fire we ought to be always warm! Abide in His love! Jesus Christ would have His people remain in a high, happy, holy, heavenly condition!

Do you say you think it is impossible? I do not agree with you. Enoch walked with God for many a year till, at last, he walked away with God. Try after continued communion. Too often we get up to the top of the hill and slide down, again, like boys at play. Come, come—this will never do. Let us keep up to the height which we reach. If I climb to the top of a hill, I am by no means able to boast, for at once I see another hill beyond—which I had not before perceived. I aspire to climb *that* new summit and I doubt not that if I attain it, I shall there spy another—and so on till the end. It is never ours to write the word, “finality.” *Higher and holier* is still our watch word! But why must we come down into the marshes again? What can be the good of rushing out of the sunshine of Christ’s love into the fogs of distrust? To where we have attained, let us abide in it and seek Grace to go on to something more.

Does not our Lord intend this when He says, “Continue you in My love”? “Oh,” says one, “you set us a hard task.” No, Brother, I have set before you a pleasant *privilege*, but I admit that you will *not reach it by your own power* and as you are in yourself. But I am not talking to you as you are in yourself! I am talking to you as you are *in Christ*—and as you are in Christ all power is given to you! Exercise that power! Henceforth, instead of singing a song which breaks up into verses with groans between, let us chant a Psalm that goes right straight on and has, in every verse, the joyous stanza, “His mercy endures forever.”

My Beloved is mine and I am His. And till the day breaks and the shadows flee away, my soul shall feast upon His love—and joy and rejoice in Him! God help you to do this for His name’s sake! Oh, unconverted hearers, do you not wish to taste our joys? Come as you are and trust in Jesus—and they shall be yours! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 15.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—916, 798, 792.**

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CHEERING WORDS

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

“As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you: continue you in My love.”
John 15:9.

THE Savior was about to leave His disciples and this was the hardest trial which they had ever experienced. As there could be no trial to them like the loss of the Savior's Presence, it was at this time Jesus brought forth His richest consolation. He seems to have kept the best wine and the most potent cordial till the time when their spirits most required to be comforted. He said to them more fully than He had ever said it before, “Take this for your comfort—live upon it while I am absent from you. Live upon it always—that as the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you.”

But what is this richest of all cordials? What is this marrow and fatness? It is the *assurance* of His love to us and surely there cannot be a more delightful thought that can fill the soul of a mortal than this—“The Son of God loves me.” Did you ever sit down for half an hour and try to masticate and digest this thought? That God should *pity* me, I can understand, being so far inferior to Himself and so full of misery. That He should be *generous* to me, I can comprehend, from the liberality and bounty of His Nature and from my great necessities. But that He should *love* me is amazing! I cannot see anything lovely in myself and there are many who see that there is much ugliness about me—and I do not doubt that there is—and yet He who knows me better than I know myself and is not unmindful of my infirmities and weaknesses says He loves me! He does not put me at arm's length and then feed me from His bounty—that would be gracious—He opens wide His bosom and takes me into His heart! He closes the golden doors and takes me in to dwell forever, that in the ivory palaces I may be made glad with the cassia and the aloes of His delightful Presence!

Man, did you ever get this into you soul? Then though you may be clothed in rags, you will feel as though you were wrapped about with imperial purple! Although you may dwell in a very poor and lonely cottage, when this thought shines upon you, you would not change your cottage for a palace! Unto which of the angels did He ever say this? I believe angels are the subjects of Divine Love in a certain sense, but I have never read of Christ saying to them, “As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you.” This is the special privilege for the sons of Adam who have fallen which angels never have. How marvelous! And is it not more than marvelous, that God should have selected *me* out of the sons of Adam? Perhaps there is nothing in any of you which you can look upon as a

reason why God should love you. Did I say, “perhaps”? Why, there are 10,000 things about every one of us that might have won for us the Almighty’s hatred! Instead of this, He says He loves us, His people! Surely, if I were to say no more, but sit down and leave you to think over the fact that God loves you and that your name is dear to Jehovah, your souls might be satisfied as with marrow and fatness!

The text, itself, clearly contains two things—a *declaration* and an *exhortation*.

I. THE DECLARATION is like a door on two hinges and on these the text swings. The hinges are, “as,” and, “so”—“As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you.” What if I call them two diamond pivots upon which the pearly gate of Love turns to shut in God’s people?

These words may be viewed in four lights. The word, “as,” is used here for the sake of *affirmation*. The Savior does as much as say, in the most solemn manner possible, to His believing people, “I love you and I love you as surely as My Father loves Me.” There are a great many new doctrines starting up, nowadays, and perhaps tomorrow morning there will be another. New opinions are constantly coming up, but I do not remember ever hearing anybody say that the Father does not love the Son. Whatever new heresies there may be—and there will be plenty of them—I do not suppose that this will ever be the subject of heresy. It is so firmly believed, that I never heard a sermon preached to prove it—it is a doctrine taken for granted and laid hold of as being an elementary Truth of the Christian system. Jesus Christ, then, says, “You do not doubt that the Father loves Me. Now, just as surely as the Father loves Me, I say, solemnly and truly, that I love you.” He says this to each of us who trusts in Him—to all of you poor, troubled Christians who have so many cares that you would not like to count them—you to whom it was whispered, the other day—

**“The Lord has quite forsaken you—
Your God will be gracious no more.”**

“No,” says Jesus, “you do not think that the Father has cast Me off, or ceased to love Me? Then do not think that I have cast you off, or ceased to love you. You are the purchase of My blood and as surely as the Father loves Me, so do I still love you.”

This, “as,” may not only be regarded as an affirmation, but also what is very near akin to it, a *confirmation*. In order to strengthen their faith, God has been pleased to give His people not merely His Word, but tokens and signs to confirm His Word. When Noah had been delivered from the flood by means of an ark, he might still have been very timid at the first shower of rain and have been afraid that the world was going to be drowned, again. But to remove any fears he might have had, lo, there appears in the heavens God’s rainbow, a bow of many colors, illustrating the joy which there should be in the hearts of those with whom God had made a Covenant! Not a black bow as though it were bent on destruction, nor a crimson bow as though it were dipped in blood—but a rainbow of many colors, a bow turned upwards, not shooting the arrows of vengeance upon mankind, but hinting to us that we may shoot our prayers up to Heaven—a bow unstrung and a bow without an arrow to show that

God had ceased from warring with His creatures and had made peace with man. As soon as Noah saw that rainbow, he said, "I shall not be drowned, the world will not be destroyed by a flood!"

God also gave His servant, David, a sign when He told him that as long as the sun and moon should shine in their places, He would not break His Covenant with David. The rainbow is a very sweet sign, but we cannot always see it. And the sun and moon are not always visible, so the Lord has been pleased to give to His people a sign which is always visible, a symbol which is good by day and by night, and which is not dependent upon raindrops and sunbeams. The Christian, by the eyes of faith, can always look up to Heaven and see Christ in the bosom of His Father! You have no doubt, I am sure, that Christ is the object of Divine affection. You can see it clearly and there is no doctrinal error at all clouding your view of the love of the Father for His Son. Now this is, to me, the token that Jesus Christ loves me! I look up and see Jesus resting in His Father's heart—and I, a poor sinner, resting upon Jesus and finding all my help in Him—know that I am in Christ's heart and that nothing shall ever pluck me from it. I know this because I have the sign that, "as" the Father loves the Son, "so" Christ loves me. May God give us Grace to see and rejoice in this, "as," of confirmation!

But perhaps the fullness of this meaning lies in the fact that this is an, "as," and a, "so," of *comparison*. I think the text means that in the same way as the Father loves the Son, just in the same way Jesus loves His people. And how does the Father love the Son? He loved Him without beginning! You meet with strange people, sometimes, but I do not recollect ever meeting with anyone who thought that God the Father did not, at some time or other, love the Son. It is commonly and currently believed among all who accept the Bible as true, that from everlasting to everlasting the love of God is set upon His Son. We believe that long "before worlds were made or time began" the Lord Jesus Christ was dear to His eternal Father. Now, as the Father loves Christ, so Christ loves us and, therefore, He loves us without beginning! Long before the lamps of Heaven were kindled, or the stars began to twinkle in the sky—when as yet all this world slept in the mind of God as unborn forests sleep within the acorn—we were in the heart of Christ!

When we rest upon Christ, we may be infallibly certain that His foreseeing eyes beheld us and that His foreloving heart loved us when as yet we had no being! In the book wherein all His members were written, which in continuance were fashioned when as yet there were none of them, there He read our names, our forms, our lineaments. He saw our characters and knew our sins—

***"He saw us ruined in the Fall,
Yet loved us, notwithstanding all."***

You can go back to the beginning of *human* affection—you can easily go back to the beginning of your love to God, but God's love to us is a deep which has no bottom—

***"The streams of love
I trace up to their Fountain—God!
And in His mighty breast I see***

Eternal thoughts of love to me.

And I suppose we all believe *that the Father loves His Son without end.* You have no idea, I suppose, that at any time the Father will cease to love His own dear Son. You cannot suppose such a thing—your mind can hardly conjure up such a blasphemous thought as that there should ever be a division among the Persons of the Trinity and that Jesus Christ should be driven from His Father’s heart! “Now,” says Christ, “as the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you,” that is, without end—

***“Once in Christ, in Christ forever!
Nothing from His love can sever.”***

This is a great and precious Truth of God, but I know some people who use it very badly, for they say, “I was in Christ once and, therefore, I must be in Christ now.” But that is not the question! If you were once in Christ, you *are* in Christ now—but can you really and truly say that you are in Christ now? Are you now resting upon Him? Are you now walking in His ways? Are you now reflecting His image? Are you now trusting that His Spirit dwells in you? If not, I do not care *what* you say about having been *once* in Christ, for I do not believe *that* unless you are in Christ now! This Truth, which you use as a buttress for your presumption, should rather be used as a stimulus to self-examination! Remember, it is written, “But if any man draws back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him.” And if you have drawn back, you have given clear proof that His soul has no pleasure in you, for they who are in Christ Jesus are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation—they are preserved by Christ Jesus—they are sanctified by His indwelling Spirit and their path, according to Solomon, “is as the shining light, that shines more and more unto the perfect day.” God grant that we may prove our calling by our perseverance!

Let us, just for a moment, suck in the Truth of this very precious doctrine that, as surely as the Father will always continue to love Jesus Christ, so Jesus Christ will always continue to love us. Some of us, perhaps, look forward to old age without expecting any great delight in it. There are times when the grinders fail because they are few and they that look out of the windows are darkened. But, Saint, you need not fear the loosing of the silver cord, for your God shall never change—*His* eyes shall not wax dim—His natural force shall never abate! If you should be bowed double with infirmity, yet remember that the everlasting God faints not, neither is weary and His love for you will never cease! Perhaps at times we look forward to death with a sort of shiver. I know that there are seasons when even the very best of God’s servants do not find death the sweetest possible subject for contemplation, but I do not think that any of us who believe in Jesus have the slightest reason to be afraid to die. On the contrary, we may rejoice in it, for our Savior will not leave us in the hour of death. Still is He in the Father’s bosom and still shall we be there even when the chill floods are about us and the crashing of the eternal waves shall be sounding in our ears! Rest confident, Christian, that even down to the grave, Christ will go with you and that up, again, from it, He will be your Guide and your Companion to the Celestial Hills!

I am sure you are all perfectly agreed, too, that God the Father loves Jesus Christ *without any change*. You do not believe, as instructed disciples, that the Father loved Jesus Christ more, at one time, than at another. It is our belief that when Christ said, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" He was still as dear to His Father's heart as He ever had been. There was a hiding of His face from His Son, but not a turning away of His heart! Can you suppose that His Father loved Him the least when *He was most obedient*? When He was obedient unto *death* and fulfilled His Father's will at all hazards in the awful darkness, do you think that, then, the Father's heart was cold and stony towards Him? Oh, no! It was but a change of manifestation, but His inward love was still the same!

Now, Christian, take this for your own comfort, that there is never any change in Jesus Christ's love to those who rest in Him. Yesterday you were on Tabor's top and you said, "He loves me." Today you are in the Valley of Humiliation, but He loves you just the same. On the hill Mizar and far away among the Hermons, you heard His voice which spoke so sweetly with the turtle-notes of love. And now, on the sea, or even *in* the sea, when all his waves and billows go over you, and deep calls unto deep at the noise of his waterspouts, He is just as loving to you as ever He was! He does not change one whit. If you lived in certain lands, you might look up and see on the mountain some glorious old peak lifting its snow-white head into the clouds. When you look up the next morning, can you see the mountain? No, you see nothing but fog. Is there no mountain? Oh, yes—

***"The mountains, when in darkness hidden,
Are real as in the day."***

So is it with you. You look up today and see your Father's love and rejoice in it—tomorrow you may not see it so clearly, but it has not gone, for it abides fixed and stable—and never changes. Gourds may grow and wither, but God's love neither grows *nor* withers—it knows not the shadow of a change! As the Father loves Christ without change, so does Christ love us without change.

Once more and then we shall entrench upon another interpretation of the word, "as." I think it also means that *the Father loves the Son without any measure*. I was going to say that this is an, "as," of degree, but it is a degree without any degree, or rather, it is a degree which cannot be measured! You cannot say of the Father's love to the Son that He loves Him up to such a point and there stops—and you cannot say of Jesus Christ's love to His people that He loves them so much, but does not love them any farther—

***"Oh, no! Christ loves His Church,
His glory 'tis to bless
He cannot love her more,
He will not love her less."***

The whole heart of Christ was emptied into His people's hearts! You say His people's hearts could not hold it all? Very likely, but that is no reason why Christ *did not give us all*. If I cannot hold all the sea, yet God may give me all the sea. The Christian is filled with all the fullness of

God. He has as much of Christ in him as he can hold. He is in Christ and Christ is in him. He dwells in God and God dwells in him. Both of these are Scriptural expressions. There is no conceivable limit to the love of God to us in Jesus Christ and if you need proof of it, go to Calvary and see, there, how He gave Himself for us—how He was stripped naked to His shame that He might clothe us! How He spared neither hands, nor feet, nor head, nor back—no, He spared not even His own heart—but poured out from it blood and water! “Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for” those whom He loves. There cannot be greater love than that of Christ! He went as far as infinity could go in love and do you know how far that is? No—

***“Imagination’s utmost stretch
In wonder dies away”***

at the thought of Infinite Love stretching its wings and putting itself forth to its highest pitch. Such is Jesus Christ’s love to you!

What was that you said the other night? That you were afraid you would exhaust the patience of God? A little fish said, once, he was afraid he would drink the sea dry, but there was never any the less water in the sea for all that he drank, for he was in the sea and all he drank was still in the sea! So all that we get from God is still in God, for, “in Him we live, and move and have our being.” If you could give to a poor man in the street any quantity of money and still have just as much in your own pockets, no, if you could still have *the same money* in your own pockets that you had given to him, the man would say, “Well, giving does not impoverish you, restraining does not enrich you and, therefore you may well give freely.” Oh, there are some of us who have such large appetites for Divine Love! I have sometimes felt such hungering after my God that I thought my soul could never be satisfied. I have thirsted after Him till I have felt like behemoth, who trusts that he can drink up Jordan at a draught! But there is enough in God to satisfy all our soul’s needs. We sometimes sing what is strictly true—

***“All my capacious powers can wish,
In You do richly meet.”***

Come, then, Beloved, you have a full Savior, a precious Savior, one who loves you without measure, without any degree, even as the Father loves Him! There is much food here for those who know how to feed upon it. May the Holy Spirit help us to do so!

II. Let me now ask your patient attention while I speak upon THE EXHORTATION OF THE TEXT—“Continue in My love.”

“What, what?” asks one, “does He love us with an everlasting love and yet thus admonishes us, ‘Continue in My love?’” Yes, yes—the certainty of the thing does not at all weaken the force of the precept. This is God’s plan, to work out His own purpose by an exhortation. Diligent students of God’s Word must have noticed that the very things which in one part of Scripture are spoken of as unconditional gifts, are, in other parts spoken of as blessings to be anxiously desired and eagerly sought after. The two things are correct and consistent, one with the other, only some people get one of their eyes bound up so that they are not able to see two Truths at the same time! I am thankful if you can see one, but I should

be still more glad if you could see two because I think that *then* you would be more like the perfect man in Christ Jesus who enters into life with both eyes! You find in one place that God is exhorting His people to good works as if their good works were all their own—and yet in another place He tells them that their good works are the gifts of His Spirit! In one place He tells the saints that they *shall* hold on their way and in another place He exhorts them *to* hold on their way. This is not at all inconsistent because the exhortation, by God's Grace applied to the heart, ministers to the fulfillment of the decree. My good old grandfather, I think, was quite right, when he said, "I rest my salvation upon the finished work of Jesus Christ as if I had never performed a good work in all my life. And then I endeavor to do good works as if everything depended upon them." This is what the Savior seems to say to His disciples, "Continue in My love, continue in the path of obedience, in the path of faith and, by your keeping of this exhortation shall My purpose be fulfilled, and you shall be preserved in My love."

Not that this is exactly the meaning of the text. Although this may lie on the surface, it seems to me rather to suggest such counsel as this, "*Continue to exhibit to others the love which I have exhibited to you.*" Some professed Christians never get into Christ's love at all in this sense of it. It strikes me that one of the truest signs of Grace in the young Christian is his love to others. As soon as ever he is, himself saved, he wants to have other people saved! I do not believe that Heaven is a place into which, if I get there, I shall be eternally happy at the thought of other people being shut out. On the contrary, I look forward to it as the place where Christ shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied—and it is not a little that will satisfy Him!

If you ever get any comfort from the thought of others being shut out, you may keep your comfort to yourselves. My comfort is and I hope it always will be, to labor to be the means of bringing others in. Oh, to bring sinners to Christ! Oh, to feel the same love beating in our hearts which Christ has beating in His—not to the same degree, of course, but the same kind of love. Oh, to be baptized into that same river of love in which Christ was baptized, and to come out of it to continue in the same sort of love, so as to have the same love to others which Jesus Christ had to us! Do not be afraid of having too much love for precious souls. Do not think that you will ever go beyond the love of Jesus Christ in that matter. Poor cold hearts as we are, how shall we warm into anything like His affection?—

***"Did Christ over sinners weep,
And shall our cheeks be dry?"***

Ah, there are some cheeks that were never wet with the tears for others, yet! And there are some hearts that never were ready to break for the conversion of others! "Well," says one, "every tub must stand on its own bottom." Yes, Sir, and if you trust to *yourself*, it will be to your everlasting ruin! If you have found honey, your first desire is that another should taste of its sweetness and, having found Christ, yourself, your first instinct will be to turn round and say to others, "Behold the Lamb of God, that takes away the sin of the world." I find that when I preach the Gos-

pel without tenderness, I do not get such a blessing as I do when it melts my own soul. It is a good thing when the preacher finds his own heart breaking. Heart-broken ministers are very soon made heart-breaking ministers! Love to others has a kind of sympathetic influence and under the blessing of God the Holy Spirit, when men see that we care about them, they are often led to care about themselves. May all Christians here get fully into Christ's love and learn to look at sinners as Christ looked at them in all their awful danger—and weep over them even as Christ wept over Jerusalem!

I think, however, that the Savior meant even a little more than this. Sometimes we get into Christ's love and *enjoy it in our own hearts*. It is the sweetest thing this side Heaven to know and enjoy the love of Jesus Christ, to have our head lying on His bosom so that we can feel His heart beat, and then to hear Him say, "I have loved you and given Myself for you." You know this, don't you? Then I know your prayer will be like that of the spouse, "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth: for Your love is better than wine." I do not know how it is with you, but I find it rather more easy to *get into* this state than to *stay* there. I can get up the mountain, by God's Grace, but the difficulty is to stay there. Peter said, "It is good for us to be here; let us build three tabernacles." Yes, but it is not so easy to build *one* tabernacle upon the mountain. Christ's love-visits are so often like those of angels—few and far between! But yet we cannot blame our Beloved. Forbid it, my tongue, that you should ever say a word against Him! No, He would never turn me out of doors. The fault is my own—it is I who leave the table and refuse to stay with Him any longer. Oh, may His love bind us so fast to the altar that we may never stray from it, but may continue in His love!

"Well," says one, "I do not think that any man could stay long in communion with Christ if he had as many troubles as I have." Did you ever read about Enoch? We are told that he lived 365 years and walked with God. And if Enoch walked with God so long, do you think that you cannot walk with Him for the few years of your short life? "Oh," you say, "but Enoch was differently situated from what I am." And yet it is written, "Enoch walked with God and begat sons and daughters," which seems to say that the common engagements of life and the ordinary cares of a family need not break off our walking with God! "But," you say, "he did not live in such times as these." No, he did *not* live in such good ones, for he lived before the rising of the Sun—he lived in the twilight, in the dim, dark ages before the great Sun of Righteousness had arisen with healing beneath His wings! Enoch walked with God nearly 400 years, but there are some of us who cannot walk with Him for 400 hours!

Oh, may the Lord grant us more Grace, for that is where the mischief lies! The most of God's people, I am afraid, are in the condition of being just barely alive. Sometimes a man is washed up on a rock and you put your hand to his bosom to see if there is any heat left in him, and hold a mirror to his nose to see if he has any breath. You look for signs and evidences and, at last you say, "Yes, he is alive!" And this is just like a great many of you! You have to look for signs and evidences to know if you are

alive! You are just washed up on the Rock and that is all. But look at many of us here—we do not need signs and evidences! We are alive, by God's Grace, and we know that we are! We can talk and laugh, and eat and drink, and engage in business. We are perfectly sure that we are alive because we are in good health! And so it is with Christians when they get to be in good sound *spiritual* health and are enabled, by Divine Grace, to do much for their Master! I would not be satisfied with being merely alive if I were lying stretched upon the bed and someone should say to me, "Well, you know you are alive," I would tell him that I was not satisfied merely with *that*—I wanted to be healthy and well! God grant that we may not only *know* Christ's love, but that we may get into the soul of it, into the marrow and fatness of it—till we *live* in it—and then may God's Grace help us to continue in it!

But there are some poor souls here who have never got into this love at all, nor do they know anything about it. Perhaps, dear Friends, you desire to know it. Well, there is only one place where you can see it. The window through which you can look into God's heart is the Cross of Christ! If you want to read the love of God, go and look through the wounds of the Savior! And as you stand looking through those wounds, you will, if you listen, hear a voice saying—

***"Love's redeeming work is done!
Come, and welcome, Sinner, come!"***

I have never heard of Jesus Christ shutting the door against a sinner. There is a notice that is put in some gentlemen's parks stating that they do not allow beggars or dogs there. But Jesus Christ puts up a notice that He *does* allow beggars! In fact, there are none but beggars who ever go to Him—and even those who are such beggars that you would not pick their clothes from a dunghill, Jesus Christ receives into His house, into His heart, into the bath of His blood and wraps them in the robe of His perfect righteousness! O poor Sinner, come and try Him, and He will not cast you out!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: JOHN 15.

Verse 1. *I am the true Vine, and My Father is the Husbandman.* Not only the Mosaic Law, but the whole of creation is full of types of Christ. All the vines that we see in this world are only, as it were, typical, but Christ is the *substance*—the substance of Nature as well as of Grace. "I am the true Vine," and the real Husbandman, who watches over everything, who has the whole Church, yes, the whole universe, under His care, is the great Father. "My Father is the Husbandman."

2. *Every branch in Me that bears not fruit He takes away.* It has no right to be there, for it is not there by a vital union—it will only harbor mischief if it is allowed to remain. Therefore let it be taken away and taken away it certainly will be by the Husbandman who makes no mistakes.

2. *And every branch that bears fruit, He purges it, that it may bring forth more fruit.* So there is taking away for the fruitless branches and pruning for the fruit-bearing branches! Are you suffering under the prun-

ing-knife just now? Accept it joyfully! How much better that the knife should cut off your superfluities than that it should cut you off! The mercy is that although God will purge and prune His vine branches, He will not destroy them!

3. *Now you are clean through the Word which I have spoken unto you.* Christ had so dealt with His disciples that He left them like a pruned branch, ready and prepared for fruitfulness.

4. *Abide in Me, and I in you.* The pruning is nothing without the abiding in Christ. You may suffer again and again, but no good can come of it except you have vital, continuous, everlasting *union with Christ*. You cannot take a branch away from the vine for a little while and then put it back again—its life depends upon the perfect continuity of its union. So is it with us and Christ—the branch is in the Vine, and the Vine is in the branch. The very essence and sap of the Vine are in the branch even as the branch is part and parcel of the Vine.

4, 5. *As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can you, except you abide in Me. I am the Vine, you are the branches.* You are not the Vine—do not think that you are! And if God blesses you and makes you of some importance in the Church, yet do not *dream* that you are the Church, that you are the very root and stem of it. Ah, no, at the utmost, “you are the branches”!

5. *He that abides in Me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit.* Oh, what a searching word is this! Are we bringing forth much fruit? I trust, dear Brothers and Sisters, that we are bringing forth *some* fruit, but, oh, what a test is this, “He that abides in Me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit.” Christ expects much from those who have this doubly high privilege of having Him in them and of being, themselves, in Him!

5, 6. *For without Me you can do nothing. If a man abides not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.* And are there enough of them for that? It is enough to bring tears into one’s eyes to think that there should be enough fruitless, unabiding—merely nominal members of Christ’s Church—for men to gather to make a fire! Oh, sad, sad thing is this! It is the grief of the Church! It is the sorrow of God’s ministers! It ought to call for great self-examination in our own hearts that mere professors—those who apostatize after having made a profession of religion—do not seem to have been thought by the Savior to be here and there one, but to be so many that “men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.”

7. *If you abide in Me, and My Words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.* Power in prayer is dependent upon full enjoyment of union and communion with Christ! It is not every man who can ask of God what he wills and get it—it is such a man, and such a man only—as shall be found abiding in Christ and having Christ’s Words abiding in him. If we do not take notice of what Christ says, can we expect that He will take notice of what we say? If we do not obey Him when He asks this and that of us, how can we reckon that He will give us

this and that when we ask it of Him? No, this is the condition of power in prayer, “If you abide in Me, and My Words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.”

8. *Herein is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit; so shall you be My disciples.* You shall be known to be the disciples of the much fruit-bearing Savior! He was no moderately good Man. He was not One who was only a little useful in the world. Our blessed Master was perfectly consecrated! He abounded in every good word and work and, unless we are the same, how shall men think that we are His disciples?

9. *As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you.* Matchless, matchless Word of God! The love of God the Father to the Son is the immeasurable measure of the love of Christ to His people—without beginning, without end, without change, without bounds! As the Father loved Christ, so has Christ loved us.

9. *Continue in My love.* Abide in it, live in it as the fish lives in the stream, enjoy it—do nothing contrary to it.

10, 11. *If you keep My commandments, you shall abide in My love; even as I have kept My Father’s commandments, and abide in His love. These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.* When Christ cannot rejoice in us, you may rest assured that we cannot rejoice in ourselves! But when His Grace so operates upon us that He sees that in us which gives Him contentment, then it is that we shall feel a blessed contentment ourselves.

12. *This is My commandment, That you love one another, as I have loved you.* I am sure you will never love each other too much. You cannot go beyond this rule—“Love one another, as I have loved you.”

13. *Greater love has no man than this that he lay down his life for his friends.* What more has he that he can lay down when, having given up all else, he gives life, itself, for them?

14. *You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.* You cannot be His friends if you are disobedient to His commands. An act of disobedience is unfriendliness. Yes, and the omission of obedience is unfriendliness to Christ. I wish we would always remember that every sin, either of omission or of commission, is an unfriendly act towards our best Friend.

15. *Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knows not what his lord does: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you.* The Law made man do this and that, but it communicated very little of the secret counsels of God. But there is a holy familiarity between Christ and His people, a sacred confidence which Christ has manifested towards us in revealing the very heart of God to us and, therefore, we are put upon a very high standing, not as servants, but as friends. O friends of Christ, show yourselves friendly by your entire obedience to His gracious will!

16. *You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained, yes, that you should go and bring forth fruit and that your fruit should remain: that whatever you shall ask of the Father in My name, He may give it to*

you. Fruitfulness, perseverance, and power in prayer—these are the priceless gifts that come to us through our being one with Christ!

17. *These things I command you, that you love one another.* As if there were many things in that one command. It is but one command, but it is so comprehensive that all the commandments are fulfilled in this one, “that you love one another.”

18. *If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you.* So you need not be at all surprised if the world hates you.

19. *If you were of the world, the world would love his own: but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.* Therefore expect it, in some form or other, for you will be sure to meet with it! The seed of the serpent never will love the seed of the woman.

20, 21. *Remember the word that I said to you, The servant is not greater than his master. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept My sayings, they will keep yours, also. But all these things will they do unto you for My name’s sake, because they know not Him that sent Me.* “If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin”—as if all the rest would scarcely have been sin at all in comparison with that sin against the Light of God which men committed after Christ had spoken to them! What an amazing thing it is that the very Word of God which is the creation of all good should, through the perversity of men’s will, become, also, the creation of evil!

22, 23. *If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin. He that hates Me, hates My Father, also.* There is a hatred of God in all hatred of the Mediator! Men may say that they love God, and yet despise Christ, but it cannot be so. Christ is so truly God and so clear a manifestation of God that if men knew God, they would certainly hate Him if they hate Christ!

24-27, *If I had not done among them the works which no other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both Me and My Father. But this came to pass that the Word might be fulfilled that is written in their Law, They hated Me without a cause. But when the Comforter comes, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth, which proceeds from the Father, He shall testify of Me: and you, also, shall bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning.*

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY
TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

CHRIST'S JOY AND OURS

NO. 2935

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 11, 1905.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 3, 1875.

*"These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full."
John 15:11.*

THERE is a sentence which has crept among our common proverbs so that it is repeated as if it were altogether true—"Man was made to mourn." There is a truth in that sentence, but there is also a falsehood in it. Man was not originally made to mourn—he was made to rejoice. The Garden of Eden was his place of happy abode and, as long as he continued obedient to God, nothing grew in that garden which could cause him sorrow. For his delight the flowers breathed out their perfume. For his delight the landscapes were full of beauty and the rivers rippled over golden sands. God made human beings as He made His other creatures, to be happy. They are capable of happiness. They are in their right element when they are happy and now that Jesus Christ has come to restore the ruins of the Fall, He has to bring back to us the old joy—only it shall be even sweeter and deeper than it could have been if we had never lost it! A Christian has never fully realized what Christ came to make him until he has grasped the joy of the Lord. Christ wishes His people to be happy. When they are perfect, as He will make them in due time, they shall also be perfectly happy. As Heaven is the place of pure holiness, so is it the place of unalloyed happiness and, in proportion as we get ready for Heaven, we shall have some of the joy which belongs to Heaven. And it is our Savior's will that even now His joy should remain in us and that our joy should be full.

I. My first remark upon the text will be this—all THAT JESUS SPEAKS IS MEANT TO PRODUCE JOY IN HIS PEOPLE. "These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you."

If you will read through the Chapter from which our text is taken and also the Chapter which precedes it, you will see the nature of the words which Jesus Christ speaks to His people. Sometimes *they are words of instruction*. He talks to us that we may know the Truth of God and the meaning of the Truth. But His objective is that, knowing the Truth, we may have joy in it. I will not say that the more a Christian knows, the more joy he has, but I can truly say that ignorance often hides from us many wells of delight of which we might otherwise drink, and that all other things being equal, the best-instructed Christian will be the happiest man. He will know the Truth and the Truth will make him free.

The Truth of God will kill a thousand fears which ignorance would have fostered within him. The knowledge of the love of God, the knowledge of the full Atonement made on Calvary, the knowledge of the Eternal Covenant, the knowledge of the immutable faithfulness of Jehovah—indeed, all knowledge which reveals God in His relationship to His people—will tend to create comfort in the hearts of the saints. Be not, therefore, careless about Scriptural Doctrine—study the Word of God and seek to understand the mind of the Spirit as revealed in it, for this blessed Book was written for your learning, that “through patience and comfort of the Scriptures you might have hope.” If you are diligent students of the Word, you will find that you have good reason to rejoice in the Lord under all circumstances.

But sometimes our Lord also spoke *words of warning*. In this Chapter, we find Him telling His disciples that they were branches of a vine and that branches which bore no fruit had to be cut off and cast into the fire. At first sight, it seems to us that there is nothing consoling in such words as those—they sound sharply in our ears and make us start and be afraid—and we ask ourselves, “Are we bearing fruit?” Well, Brothers and Sisters, but such heart-searching as that is eminently beneficial and tends to deepen true joy in us! Christ would not have us rejoice with the false joy of presumption, so He bares the sharp knife and cuts *that* joy away. Joy on a false basis would prevent us from having true joy and, therefore, the Master gives us the sharp and cutting word that we may be sound in the faith, that we may be sound in the life of God and that so the joy we may get may be worth having—not the mere surf and foam of a wave that is driven with the wind and tossed, but the solid foundation of the Rock of Ages!

Our Lord also tells us that even the branches that bear fruit will have to be pruned that they may bring forth more fruit. “Unpleasant Truth that!” Somebody might say—“It will give me no joy to know that I shall have to endure the knife of correction and affliction.” Yes, dear Brother, but, “tribulation works patience, and patience, experience, and experience, hope, and hope makes one not ashamed because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us.” So, beginning rather high up in this pedigree, you finally get to joy and get to it by the only right method! To try to sail up to joy by the balloon of fancy is dangerous work, but to mount up to it by Jacob's ladder, every round of which God has placed at the proper distance, is to climb to Heaven by the safe road which He has appointed! There is nothing which the Lord Jesus says to us, by way of warning, which does not guard us against sorrow, conduct us away from danger and point us to the path of safety. If we will but listen to these words of warning, they will thus guide us to the truest happiness that mortals can ever find either here or hereafter!

You will notice, as you read the Chapter, that our Lord, in addition to words of instruction and words of warning, utters *some very humbling words*. I think that is a very humbling verse in which He says, “As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can

you, except you abide in Me.” But it is good for us to be humbled and brought low. The Valley of Humiliation has always struck me as being the most beautiful place in the whole of the pilgrimage which John Bunyan describes. To see that shepherd boy sitting down among the sheep and to hear him playing upon his pipe, and singing—

**“He that is down need fear no fall,
He that is low no pride.
He that is humble ever shall
Have God to be his Guide”**

teaches us that to be brought down to our true condition of nothingness before God and made to feel our entire dependence upon the power of the Holy Spirit is the true way to promote in us a joy which angels themselves might envy! Be thankful, therefore, Beloved, whenever you read the Scripture, whether it instructs you, or warns you, or humbles you. Say to yourself, “Somehow or other, this tends to my present and eternal joy and, therefore, I will give the more earnest heed to it lest by any means I should lose the blessing it is intended to convey to me.”

The Chapter also abounds in gracious *words of promise* such as this—“If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you shall ask what you will and it shall be done unto you.” There are other promises here, every one of which is full of consolation to the children of God. Are any of you lacking in joy at this time? Do you feel dull and heavy of heart? Are you dead and tried? Then listen to what Jesus Christ says here—“These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.” What are the things that He says to you in other parts of His Word? He says, “Take therefore no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself.” “Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in Me.” “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand.” In this strain does our Lord graciously talk to us—do not let Him talk to us in vain! My Brothers and Sisters, do not allow His precious promises to fall upon your ears as the good Seed fell upon the rocky or stony soil! The promise of harvest gives joy to the earth. Rob not your Lord of the sheaves which He deserves to gather from your heart and life, but believe His Word, rest upon it and rejoice in it, realizing that His Words of promise are meant to bring you great joy!

So are His Words of *precept*. This chapter contains many of them, for He tells us that it is His command that we should love our brethren and also that we should continue in His love. He gives us many precepts of that kind, and every precept in God's Word is a signpost pointing out the road to joy. The Commandments upon the tablets of stone seem very hard, even though cut by the finger of God, Himself, and the granite on which they are engraved is hard and cold. But the precepts of the Lord Jesus are tender and gracious and bring us joy and life. As you read them, you may be quite sure of two things—that is, if Christ denies you anything, it is not good for you and if Christ commands you to do anything, obedience will promote your highest welfare! O child of God,

never quibble at any precept of your Lord! If your proud flesh should rebel, pray it down, for rest assured that if you were so selfish as only to wish to do that which would promote your own happiness, it would be the path of wisdom to be obedient to your Lord and Master. I repeat what I said just now. The precepts of Christ are signposts indicating the way to joy. If you keep His Commandments, you shall abide in His love. And if you carefully watch His eyes, as the handmaidens watch the eyes of their mistress, so as to do at once all that He bids you do, you shall have the peace of God flowing into your soul like a river and that peace shall never fail to bring you solid and lasting joy!

II. Now secondly, I gather from the text that WHEN OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST JOYS IN US, THEN WE ALSO HAVE JOY.

This meaning of the text is the interpretation given to it by several of the early fathers. "These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you." "That is to say," they say, "that I may rejoice over you, and rejoice in you, and be pleased with you, and that so your joy may be full." I am not certain that this is the meaning of the text, nor am I sure that it is *not*, but, anyway, it is a very blessed Truth of God. It means this. A child knows that its father loves it, and while it is quite sure that its father will never cease to love it, it also knows that if it is disobedient, the father will be displeased and grieved. But the obedient child gives pleasure to its father by its obedience and when it has done so, it receives pleasure, itself, from that very fact. There used to be servants in the olden time—and I suppose there are some now—who were so attached to their masters that if they gave satisfaction to them, they were perfectly satisfied. But the least word of displeasure from their master wounded them to the very heart. Perhaps a better illustration may be found in the nearer and dearer relationship of the wife and the husband. The wife, if she has pleased her husband, is delighted in the joy which she has given to him. But if by any means she has displeased him, she is unhappy until she has removed the cause of his displeasure and has again given him joy. Now I know that my Lord Jesus loves me and that He will never do anything else but love me. Yet He may not always be pleased with me and when He has no joy in me, my joy also goes if I have a heart that is true towards Him. But when He has joy in me—when He can rejoice in me, then is my joy also full. And everyone of you whom the Lord has loved will find this to be true—that in proportion as Jesus Christ can look upon you with joy as obedient and faithful to Him, in that proportion will your conscience be at ease and your mind will find joy in the thought that you are acceptable to Him.

What are the ways in which we can really please Christ Jesus and so have joy in Christ's pleasure? According to the Chapter before us, *we please Him when we abide in Him*. "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you." If you sometimes abide in Christ and sometimes turn away from Him, you will give Him no pleasure, but if He is the indispensable Companion of your daily life—if you are unhappy should even a cloud come between you and your Lord—if you feel that you must be as closely connected

with Him as the limb is with the head, or as the branch is with the stem, then you will please Him and He will take delight in your fellowship. Fervent love to Christ is very pleasing to Him, but the chilly, lukewarm love of Laodicea is nauseous to Him, so that He says, "Because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of My mouth." If you continue, day by day, to walk with God carefully and prayerfully, and to abide continually in Christ, He will look upon you with eyes of satisfaction and delight and will see in you the reward of His soul-travail—and you, being conscious that you are giving joy to Him, will find that your own cup of joy is also full to overflowing! What greater joy can a man have than to feel that he is pleasing Christ? My fellow creatures may condemn what I do, but if Christ accepts it, it matters not to me how many may condemn it. They may misrepresent and misjudge me and impute wrong motives to me, and sneer and snarl at me, but if I can keep up constant and unbroken communion with the Christ of God, what cause have I for sorrow? No, if He is joyful in us, then our joy shall remain in us and shall be full.

Our Lord Jesus has also told us that *He has joy in us when we bring forth much fruit*. "Herein is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit; so shall you be My disciples." That is to say, "I will recognize in you the evidence of true discipleship with satisfaction and delight." Brothers and Sisters in Christ, are we bringing forth much fruit unto God? Are you called to suffer? Then do you, in your suffering, bring forth the fruit of patience? Or, are you strong and in robust health? Then are you, with that health and strength, rendering to the Lord the fruit of holy activity? Are you doing all you can for the Lord Jesus who has done so much for you? You have received much from Him—are you yielding an adequate return to Him? It is little enough when it is what we call, much, but, oh, how little it is when it is little in our own estimation! But when our Lord Jesus Christ sees us doing much for God, He is pleased with us, as the gardener is when, having planted a tree, and dug about it, and fertilized it, and pruned it, he sees it at last covered with golden fruit. He is pleased with his fruitful tree and Christ is pleased with His fruit-bearing disciples! Are we making Christ glad in this fashion? If so, our own joy shall be full. I am not surprised that some Christians have so little joy when I remember how little joy they are giving to Jesus because they are bringing forth such a little fruit to His praise and Glory. Brothers and Sisters, see to this matter, I pray you! If I cannot enforce this Truth of God with the power that it deserves, may the Holy Spirit cause the Truth to come home with power to your hearts!

Our Lord also tells us that *He has joy in us when we keep His Commandments*. "If you keep My Commandments, you shall abide in My love; even as I have kept My Father's Commandments and abide in His love. These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. This is My Commandment, That you love one another, as I have loved you." He that walks carefully in the matter of obedience to Christ's Commands, wishing never to do anything

offensive to Him, asking for a tender conscience that he may be at once aware when he is doing wrong, and earnestly desiring to leave no duty undone—such a man as that must be happy! He may not laugh much. He may have very little to say when in frivolous company. But there is a joy that laughter would but mock. There is a sacred mirth within to which the merriment of fools is but as the crackling of thorns under a pot. And the man with a tender conscience has that joy! The careful walker has that joy! The man who, when he puts his head upon his pillow at night, can feel, “I have not been all that I want to be but still I have aimed at holiness. I have tried to curb my passions, I have sought to find out my Master’s will and in every point to do it.” Such a man sleeps sweetly and if he wakes, there is music in his heart! And such a man, whatever the trials of life may be, has abundant sources of joy within himself. He is pleasing to Christ, Christ joys in him and his joy is full!

And *this is peculiarly the case with those who love the brethren*. Those are some who do not love their brethren at all. Or if they do, they love themselves a great deal more. They are very apt to judge and to condemn their brethren. If they can find a little fault, they magnify it and if they can find none, they invent some. I know persons who seem to be, by nature, qualified to be monks or hermits, living quite alone. According to their notion of things, they are much too good for society. No church is pure enough for them. No ministry can profit them. No one else can reach as high as the wonderful position to which, in their self-conceit, they fancy that they have attained! Let none of us be of that sort. Many of the children of God are far better than we are and the worst one in his family has some points in which he is better than we are. I feel, sometimes, as though I would give my eyes to be as sure of Heaven as the most obscure and the least in all the family of God! And I think that such times may come to some of you if you imagine yourselves to be so great and good. You strong cattle that push with horn and with shoulder—and drive back the weak ones—the Lord may say to you, “Get you gone! You belong not to Me, for My people are not thus rough and boastful—not thus proud and haughty. I look to the man who is humble, to him who has a contrite spirit and who trembles at My Word.”

Did you ever try to pray to God under the influence of a consciousness of possessing the higher life? Did you ever try to pray to God that way? If you ever did, I do not think you will do it a second time! I tried it once, but I am not likely to repeat the experiment. I thought I would try to pray to God in that fashion, but it did not seem to come naturally from me. And when I had done so, I thought I heard somebody at a distance saying, “God be merciful to me a sinner,” and he went home to his house justified! And then I had to tear off my Pharisaic robes and get back to where the poor publican had been standing, for his place and his prayer suited me admirably! I cannot make out what has happened to some of my brethren who fancy themselves so wonderfully good. I wish the Lord would strip them of their self-righteousness and let them see themselves as they really are in His sight! Their fine notions concerning the higher

life would soon vanish them. Brothers and Sisters, the highest life I ever hope to reach this side of Heaven is to say from my very soul—

***“I the chief of sinners am,
But Jesus died for me.”***

I have not the slightest desire to suppose that I have advanced in the spiritual life many stages beyond my brethren. As long as I trust simply to the blood and righteousness of Christ and think nothing of myself, I believe that I shall continue to be pleasing to the Lord Jesus Christ that His joy will be in me and that my joy will be full.

III. Now, thirdly, I think we may gather from the text that THE JOY WHICH JESUS GIVES TO HIS PEOPLE IS HIS OWN JOY. “That *My* joy might remain in you.”

I daresay you have noticed that a man cannot communicate to another any joy except that of which he is himself conscious. Here is a man who is rich. He can tell you the joy or riches, but he cannot give that joy to a poor man. Here is another man who takes delight in all sorts of foolery. He can tell you the joy of nonsense, but he cannot go beyond that. So, when Jesus gives us joy, He gives us His own joy and what do you think it is? I must put it very briefly.

The joy of Jesus is, first, *the joy of abiding in His Father's love*. He knows that His Father loves Him—that He never did anything else but love Him—that He loved Him before the earth was—that He loved Him when He was in the manger and that He loved Him when He was on the Cross. Now that is the joy which Christ gives to you—the joy of knowing that your Father loves you! Let me stop a little while so that you who are really Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ may just roll that sweet morsel under your tongue—the everlasting God loves you! I have known the time when I have felt as if I could leap up at the very thought of God's love to me. That He pities you and cares for you, you can understand. But that He *loves* you—well, if that does not make your joy full, there is nothing that can! It ought to fill us with delight to know that we are loved of the Lord with an everlasting and infinite love, even as Jesus Christ is loved. “The Father Himself loves you,” declares Christ, so surely you share Christ's joy—and that fact should make your own joy full!

Christ's joy is also *the joy of hallowed friendship*. He said to His disciples, “Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knows not what his Lord does: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of My Father, I have made known unto you.” The friends of Jesus are those who are taken by Him into most intimate fellowship—to lean upon His breast and to become His constant companions. Our Lord Jesus Christ has great joy in being on the most friendly terms with His people and have not you also great joy in being on such friendly terms with Him? What higher joy do you want or can you have? I have heard a man say, very boastfully, that he once dined with Lord So-and-So. And another, just for the sake of showing off, spoke of his friend, Sir John somebody or other! But you have the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Friend, your Divine Companion! You are going to sit and feast with Him presently at His own table. He calls you no more His servant, but His

friend! Does not that fact make you rejoice with exceeding joy? What is your heart made of if it does not leap with joy at such an assurance as that? You are Beloved of the Lord and a friend of the Son of God! Kings might well be willing to give up their crowns if they could have such bliss as this!

Moreover, *our Lord Jesus felt an intense delight in glorifying His Father.* It was His constant joy to bring Glory to His Father. Have you ever felt the joy of glorifying God, or do you now feed joy in Christ because He has glorified His Father? I solemnly declare that if Christ would not save me, I would love Him for what He has done to exhibit the Character of God! I have sometimes thought that if He were to drive me out of doors, I would stand there in the cold and say, "Do what You will with me. Crush me if You will. But I will always love You, for there never was another such as You are, never one who so well deserved my love and so fully won my affection and admiration as You have done." How gloriously has Christ rolled away the great load of human sin, adequately recompensed the claims of Divine Justice and magnified the Law and made it honorable! He took the greatest possible delight in doing this. It was for the joy that was set before Him that He endured the Cross, despising the shame. Let that joy be yours, also! Rejoice that the Law of God is honored, that Justice is satisfied and that Free Grace is gloriously displayed in the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was the joy of Christ that He should finish the work which His Father gave Him to do. And He has finished it and, therefore, He is glad!

Will you not also rejoice in His finished work? You have not to put a single stitch to the robe of righteousness which He has worked—it is woven from the top throughout and absolutely perfect in every respect. You have not to contribute even a quarter of a penny to the ransom price for your redemption, for it is paid to the uttermost farthing. The great redemptive work is finished forever and Christ has done it all! He is Alpha and He is Omega. He is the Author and He is also the Finisher of our faith! Sit down, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, and just feed on this precious Truth of God! Surely this is the "feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined," of which the Prophet Isaiah long ago wrote. I see You, Lord Jesus, with Your foot upon the dragon's neck! I see You with death and Hell beneath Your feet! I see the Glory that adorns Your triumphant brow as You wait till the whole earth shall acknowledge You as King, for You have once and for all said, "It is finished," and finished it certainly is! And shall not my poor heart rejoice because You have finished it, and finished it for me?

IV. My last observation is that WHEN CHRIST COMMUNICATES HIS JOY TO HIS PEOPLE, IT IS A JOY WHICH REMAINS AND A JOY WHICH IS FULL.

No other joy remains. There is a great deal of very proper joy in many families when children are born, yet how many little coffins are followed by weeping mothers? There is joy when God fills the barn, and very properly so, for a bountiful harvest should make men glad. But the

winter soon comes, with its cold and dark and dreary weather. But, *Brothers and Sisters, when we get the joy of the Lord, it remains!* Why? Because the cause of it remains. The well will continue as long as the spring runs and the joy of a Christian is one that can never alter because the cause of it never alters! God's love never changes towards His people. The Atonement never loses its efficacy. Our Lord Jesus Christ never ceases His intercession. His acceptableness with God on our behalf never varies. The promises do not change. The Covenant is not like the moon—sometimes waxing and sometimes waning. Oh, no, if you rejoice with Christ's joy today, you will have the same cause for rejoicing tomorrow, and forever, and forevermore, for He says that His joy shall remain in you!

Then, next, *this joy is full joy*. Then, dear Brothers and Sisters, if our joy is full, two things are very clear. First, there is no room for any more joy and, secondly, there is no room for any sorrow! When a man gets to know the love of God to him, he is so full of delight that he does not need any more joy. The pleasures of this world lose all their former charm. When a man has eaten all he can eat, you may set whatever you like before him, but he has no appetite for it. "Enough is as good as a feast," we say. When a man is forgiven by God and knows that he is saved, the joy of the Lord enters his soul and he says, "You may take all other joys and do what you like with them. I have my God, my Savior, and I need no more." Then, ambition ceases, lust is quiet, covetousness is dead and desires that once roamed abroad, now stay at home. The saved one says, "My God, You are enough for me. What more can I require? Since You have said to me, 'I love you,' and my heart has responded, 'My God, I love You, too,' I have more true wealth at my disposal than if I had all the mines of the Indies under my control!"

There is, also, no longer any room for sorrow, for if Christ's joy has filled us, where can sorrow go? "But the man has lost his gold." "Yes," he says, "but if the Lord likes to take it from me, let Him have it." "But the man is bereaved of those that are very dear to him, as Job was." Yet he says, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." When a man consciously realizes the love of God in his soul, he cannot want more than that. I wish that all of us had that realization, for then our joy would be so great that we would have no room left for sorrow!

Now, dear Brothers and Sisters, as you come to the Table of your Lord in this spirit, you will feel so full of joy that you will be too full for words. People really full of joy do not usually talk much. A person who is carrying a glass that is full to the brim does not go dancing along like one who has nothing to carry! He is very quiet and steady, for he does not want to spill the contents of the glass. So, the man who has the joy of the Lord filling his soul is often quiet—he cannot say much about it. I have even known that joy to get so full that we have scarcely known whether we have been in the body or out of the body. Pain, sickness, depression of spirit—all seem to have been taken right away and the man has had so

clear a view of Christ and his mind has been so abstracted from everything else, that afterwards it has almost seemed like a dream to him to have felt the love of God in its almighty power lifting him above all surrounding circumstances!

Then, dear Brothers and Sisters, if it is so with us, the joy of the Lord will be much too full for us ever to forget it. If, at this moment, our soul is filled with Christ's joy, it is possible that 20 or 30 years hence, any one of us may be able to say, "I remember that first Sabbath night in the year 1875 at the Tabernacle! My Lord then met with me, looked into my soul and saw there was a void there—and He poured His own heart's joy into me until my soul could not hold any more!" And perhaps, in some dark time in the future, your present experience will be a great stay to your soul and you will recall David's words in a similar case, "O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember You from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar." And you will say, "Though, now deep calls unto deep at the noise of Your waterspouts, the remembrance of that bright season causes me to know that You do not forsake those on whom Your love has once been set." Come close to your Lord, Beloved! I delight to come very near to Him. To touch the hem of His garment is enough for sinners, but it is not enough for saints. We need to sit at His feet with Mary and to lay our heads upon His bosom as John did.

O you unconverted ones, look to Jesus, for if you look to Him, you shall live! But as for you who are converted, a look will not be enough for you. You need to keep on gazing at Him and for Him to keep on gazing at you till He shall say to you, "You have ravished My heart, My Sister, My Spouse; you have ravished My heart with one of your eyes, with one chain of your neck." And you also shall say, "He brought me to the banqueting house, and His banner over me was love. Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples: for I am sick of love." Oh, that there might now be such sweet fellowship between Christ and all His blood-sprinkled ones that if we cannot pass the portals of Heaven, we shall be very near them! And if we cannot hear the songs of the angels, at any rate they will hear ours! And if we cannot look within and behold their joys, let us at least tempt them to look without and see ours, and half wish that they might be allowed to sit with us at this Communion Table, though that is an honor reserved for sinners saved by Sovereign Grace, for—

***"Never did angels taste above
Redeeming Grace and dying love."***

Thus may the Master smile on you, my Dearly-Beloved, and make you to be such eminent saints that He can have great joy in you—for then His joy shall remain in you and your joy shall be full!

How I wish that everybody here knew my dear Lord and Master! I tell you who do not know Christ and do not experimentally know what true religion is that five minutes realization of the love of Christ would be better for you than a million years of your present choicest delights! There is more brightness in the dark side of Christ than in the brightest

side of this poor world! I would sooner lie on a bed and ache in every limb with the death-sweat standing on my brow, by the month and year together, persecuted, despised, forsaken, poor and naked, with the dogs to lick my sores and the devils to tempt my soul and have Christ for my Friend—than sit in the palaces of wicked kings with all their wealth, luxury, pampering and sin! Even at our worst estate, it is better to be God's dog than the devil's darling! It is better to have the crumbs and the moldy crusts that fall from Christ's table for the dogs than to sit at the head of princely banquets with the ungodly! "I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."

God bless you and save you! And He will do so if you trust in Jesus, His dear Son. As soon as you trust in Jesus, you are saved! God grant that you may do so this very hour for His dear name's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 15:1-11.**

John 15:1. *I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.* All other vines were but types and shadows. Christ is the substance—God's ideal vine—"the true vine." Israel was a vine—the figure is a common one throughout the Old Testament—but it was a false vine and it bore bitter grapes!

2. *Every branch in Me that bears not fruit He takes away.* The true description of a real saint is that he is in Christ, that he abides in Christ and that he bears fruit unto Christ. Where there are not these three things, there is no real saintship and so the man is taken away. Whatever he seems to be and seems to have, he is taken away. Oh, the sad loss of many professors in being taken away! What a terrible doom—to have had a name to live and then to be taken away!

2. *And every branch that bears fruit, He purges it, that it may bring forth more fruit.* The vine is very apt to become unclean and unhealthy. There are all sorts of creatures that love to suck its juices, so that even the most fruitful bough needs to be cleansed. Besides, the vine has a great tendency to run to wood, so the pruning knife must be used very sharply. It will be used upon all who are really in Christ and who are abiding in Christ.

3. *Now you are clean.* Those to whom the Savior spoke. "Now you are clean."

3. *Through the word which I have spoken unto you.* That is the great purger! Affliction is used, but it is rather the handle of the knife than the knife itself.

4. *Abide in Me.* "Now that you are clean, do not imagine that you can do without Me—"Abide in Me"

4. *And I in you.* As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can you, except you abide in Me. It is not a transient faith. It is not saying, "I was converted so many years ago." But it is a

living faith, an abiding faith, a constant vital union with Christ that marks the true heir of Heaven.

5. *I am the vine, you are the branches: he that abides in Me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit: for without Me you can do nothing. "Severed from Me, you can bear no fruit whatever. Not only can you not do much, but you can do nothing apart from Me."*

6. *If a man abides not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered.* As I have already reminded you, it is only an abiding faith that is a real faith—the faith that remains fixed in Christ—the vital union with Christ maintains day by day.

6-11. *And men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit; so shall you be My disciple. As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you: continue you in My love. If you keep My commandments, you shall abide in My love; even as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love. These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. If you are Christ's disciples now, you are to keep on being His disciples and to grow more and more so as the years advance.*

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

LOVE'S CROWNING DEED

NO. 1128

**A SERMON DELIVERED OF LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 24, 1873,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay
down his life for his friends.”
John 15:13.***

I HAVE lately in my ministry very much detained you in the balmy region of Divine loving kindness. Our subjects have frequently been full of love. I have, perhaps, repeated myself, and gone over the same ground again and again, but I could not help it. My own soul was in a grateful condition and therefore out of the abundance of the heart the mouth has spoken. Truly I have little reason to excuse myself, for the region of love to Christ is the native place of the Christian. We were first brought to know Christ and to rest in Him through His love, and there, in the warmth of His tenderness, we were born to God. Not by the terrors of justice, nor the threats of vengeance were we reconciled, but Divine Grace drew us with cords of love.

Now, we have sometimes heard of sickly persons, that the physician has recommended them to try their native air, in hopes of restoration. So we, also, recommend every backsliding Christian to try the native air of Christ's love and we charge every healthy Believer to abide in it. Let the Believer under decays of Grace go back to the Cross—there he found his hope, there he must find it again. There his love to Jesus began—we, “love Him because He first loved us”—and there must His love be again inflamed. The atmosphere around the Cross of Christ is bracing to the soul. Get to think much of His love and you grow strong and vigorous in Grace.

As the dwellers in the low-lying Alpine valleys become weak and full of disease in the close, damp atmosphere, but soon recover health and strength if they climb the hillside and tarry there, so in this world of selfishness, where every man is fighting for his own and the mean spirit of caring only for one's own self reigns predominant, the saints become weak and diseased, even as worldlings are. But up on the hillsides, where we learn Christ's self-denying, disinterested affection to the sons of men, we are braced to nobler and better lives. If men are ever to be truly great they must be nurtured beneath the wing of Free Grace and dying love.

The grandeur of the Redeemer's example suggests to His disciples to make their own lives sublime, and both furnishes them with motives for doing so and with forces to constrain them thereto. Moreover, we may well tarry for many a day in the region of the love of Christ because not only is it our native region and full of bracing influences, but it has an outlook towards the better shore. As shipwrecked mariners upon a desert island

have been known to linger most of the day upon that headland which pushes farthest out into the main ocean, in the hope that, perhaps, if they cannot catch a glimpse of their own country across the waves, they may possibly discern a sail which had left one of the ports of the well-beloved land, so it is that while we are sitting on the headlands of Divine Love we may look across to Heaven and become familiar with the spirits of the just.

If ever we are to see Heaven while we are yet tarrying here, it must surely be from Cape Cross or Mount Fellowship—from that jutting piece of holy *experience* of Divine Love which runs away from the ordinary thoughts of men and approaches the heart of Christ. There, at any rate, do I long to sit for many an hour till the eternal day shall break and the shadows flee away. And I shall dwell with all the chosen in the land where there is no more sin—for if there can be found a Heaven below, it is where Heaven came down from Heaven to die for sinful men, that sinful men might go up to Heaven to live eternally.

Our subject this morning, then, is Divine Love, and we have chosen the highest hill in all the goodly land for you to climb. We shall take you, today, to Love's most sacred shrine, to the Jerusalem of the holy land of Love, to the labor of Love where it was transfigured, and put on its most beautiful garments. Where it became, indeed, too bright for mortal eye fully to gaze upon it, too lustrous for this dim vision of ours. Let us come to Calvary where we find Love stronger than death, conquering the grave for our sakes!

We shall speak, first, upon Love's crowning act—"Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." But, then, since the text, grand as it is, and high, so that we cannot attain unto it, yet seems to fall short of the great argument—though it is one of the Master's own sayings—we shall speak upon the sevenfold crown of Jesus' Love. And when we have done so, we shall have some royal things to say which befit the place whereon we stand when we are gathered at the foot of the Cross.

I. First, then, LOVE'S CROWNING DEED. There is a climax to everything and the climax of love is to die for a beloved one. "Free Grace and dying love" are the noblest themes among men and when united they are sublimity itself. Love can do much, can do infinite things, but greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. This is the ultima thule of love—its sails can find no further shore, its deeds of self-denial can go no further. To lay down one's life is the most that love can do. This is clear if we consider, first, that when a man dies for his friends, it proves his deep sincerity. Lip-love, proverbially, is a thing to be questioned—too often is it a counterfeit. Love which speaks can use hyperbolic expressions at its will, and when you have heard all you can hear of love's speech, you are not sure that it is love, for all are not hunters that blow the horn, all are not friends who cry up friendship.

There is much among men of a feeling which bears all the likeness of that priceless thing called love, which is more precious than the gold of Ophir, and yet for all that, as all is not gold that glitters, so it is not all love that walks delicately and feigns affection. But a man is no liar when he is willing to *die* to prove his love. All suspicion of insincerity must then be banished. We are sure he loves who dies for love. Yes, it is not bare sincerity that we see in such a case—we see the intensity of his affection.

A man may make us feel that he is intensely in earnest when he speaks with burning words and he may perform many actions which may all appear to show how intense he is, and yet for all that, he may but be a skillful player, understanding well the art of simulating that which he does not feel. But when a man dies for the cause he has espoused, you know that his is no superficial passion! You are sure that the core of his nature must be on fire when his love consumes his life. If he will shed his blood for the object loved—there must be blood in the veins of his love—it is a living love. Who can question the solemn vehemence of a man's love when he passes through the sepulcher and yields his soul up for the thing he professes to love? So that "greater love has no man than this," because he can give no greater proof of the sincerity and intensity of his affection than to lay down his life for his friends.

And, again, it proves the thorough self-abnegation of the heart when the man risks life, itself, for love. Love and self-denial for the object loved go hand-in-hand. If I profess to love a certain person and yet will neither give my silver nor my gold to relieve his needs, nor in any way deny myself comfort or ease for his sake, such love is contemptible. It wears the name, but lacks the reality of love—true love must be measured by the degree to which the person loving will be willing to subject himself to crosses and losses—to suffering and self-denials. After all, the value of a thing in the market is what a man will give for it, and you must estimate the value of a man's love by that which he is willing to give up for it. What will he do to prove his affection? What will he suffer for the sake of benefiting his beloved? Greater love for friends has no man than this, that he lay down his life for them.

Even Satan acknowledged the reality of the virtue which would lead a man to die, when he spoke concerning Job to God. He made little of Job's losing his sheep, and his cattle, and his children and remaining patient. But he said, "Skin for skin; yes all that a man has will he give for his life; but put forth now Your hand, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse You to Your face." So if love could give up its cattle and its land, its outward treasures and possessions, it would be somewhat strong, but comparatively it would fail if it could not go further and endure personal suffering. Yes, and the laying down of life, itself.

No such failure occurred in the Redeemer's love. Our Savior stripped Himself of all His glories and by a thousand self-denials proved His love. But the most convincing evidence was given when He gave up His life for us. "Hereby perceive we the love of God," says the Apostle John, "because

He laid down His life for us.” As if John passed by everything else which the Son of God had done for us and put his finger upon His *death* and said, “Hereby we perceive the love of God towards us.” It was majestic love that made the Lord Jesus lay aside, “His attire and rings of light,” and lend their glory to the stars. He stripped off His azure mantle and hung it on the sky and then come down to earth to wear the poor, mean garments of our flesh and blood—in which to toil and labor like ourselves. But the masterpiece of love was when He would even put off the garment of His flesh and yield Himself to the superlative agonies of death by crucifixion! He could go no further. Self-abnegation had achieved its utmost. He could deny Himself no more when He denied Himself leave to live.

Again, Beloved, the reason why death for its object is the crowning deed of love is this, that it excels all other deeds. Jesus Christ had proven His love by dwelling among His people as their Brother, and participating in their poverty as their Friend, till He could say, “Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but I, the Son of Man, have not where to lay My head.” He had manifested His love by telling them all He knew of the Father, unveiling the secrets of eternity to simple fishermen. He showed His love by the patience with which He bore with their faults, never harshly rebuking, but only gently chiding them—and even that but seldom. He revealed His love to them by the miracles He worked on their behalf and the honor which He put upon them by using them in His service. Indeed, there were ten thousand princely acts of the love of Jesus Christ towards His own, but none of them can, for a moment, endure comparison with His dying for them—the agonizing death of the Cross surpasses all the rest!

These life-actions of His love are bright as stars, and, like the stars, if you gaze upon them, they will be seen to be far greater than you dreamed, but yet they are only stars compared with this clear, blazing sun of Infinite Love which is to be seen in the Lord's dying for His people on the bloody tree. Then, I must add that His death did, in effect, comprehend all other acts, for when a man lays down his life for his friend he has laid down everything else. Give up life, and you have given up wealth—where is the wealth of a dead man? Renounce life and you have relinquished position—where is the rank of a man who lies in the sepulcher? Lay down life and you have forsaken enjoyment—what enjoyment can there be to the denizen of the morgue? Giving up life, you have given up all things, therefore the force of that reasoning, “He that spared not His own Son but freely delivered Him up for us all, how will He not with Him also freely give us all things?”

The giving of the life of His dear Son was the giving of all that His Son was. And as Christ is Infinite, and All in All, the delivering up of His life was the concession of All in All to us—there could be nothing more. Beloved, I speak but too coldly upon a theme which ought to stir *my* soul, first, and yours afterwards. Spirit of the living God, come like a quickening wind from Heaven and let the sparks of our love glow into a mighty

furnace just now, even now, if it may so please You! Beloved, we now remark that for a man to die for his friends is evidently the grandest of all proofs of his love in itself. The words glide over my tongue and drop from my lips very readily—"lay down his life for his friends," but do you know or feel what the words *mean*?

To *die* for another! There are some who will not even give of their substance to the poor. It seems like wrenching away a limb for them to give a trifle to God's poor servants. Such people cannot guess what it must be to have love enough to die for another, any more than a blind man can imagine what colors can be like—such persons are out of court altogether. There have been loving spirits who have denied themselves comfort and ease, and even common necessities, for the sake of their fellow men. Only such as these are in a measure qualified to form an idea of what it must be to die for another. But still, none of us can fully know what it means. To die for another! Conceive it! Concentrate your thoughts upon it! We start back from death, for under any light in which you may place it, human nature can never regard death as otherwise than a terrible thing.

To pass away into the Glory-land is so bright a hope that death is swallowed up in the victory, but the death itself is a bitter thing, and therefore *needs* to be swallowed up in the victory before we can bear it. It is a bitter pill and must be drowned in a sweet potion before we can rejoice in it. I am certain that no person, apart from sweet reflections of the Presence of God and the heavenly future, could regard death other than as a dreadful calamity. Even our Savior did not regard His approaching death without trembling! The thought of dying was not, in itself, otherwise than saddening, even to Him. Witness the bloody sweat as it streamed from Him in Gethsemane, and that man-like putting away of the cup with, "If it is possible let this cup pass from Me"!

As you think of that soul-conflict let it increase your idea of the God-like Love which took the cup resolutely, with both its hands, and drank right on, and never stayed its dreadful draught till the Lord had drank damnation dry for all His people, swallowing up their deaths in His own most comprehensive death! It is no light thing to die. We speak too flip-pantly of death, but dying is no child's-play to any man—and dying as the Savior died—in awful agonies of body and tortures of soul, it was a great thing, indeed, for His love to do. You may surround death, if you please, with luxury. You may place at the bedside all the dear assuagements of the most tender love. You may alleviate pain by the art of the apothecary and the physician. And you may decorate the dying couch with the honor of a nation's anxious care—but death, for all that, is, in itself, no slight thing—and when borne for others it is the masterpiece of Love.

And so, closing this point of Love's crowning action, let me say that after a man has died for another, there can be no question raised about his love. Unbelief would be insane if it should venture to intrude itself at the foot of the Cross, though, alas, it has been there and has there proved its utter unreasonableness! If a man dies for his friend, he must love him,

nobody can question that! And Jesus, dying for His people, must love them—who shall cast a doubt upon that fact? Shame on any of God's children that they should ever raise questions on a matter so conclusively proven! As if the Lord Jesus knew that even this masterpiece of Love might still be intruded upon by unbelief, He rose again from the dead and rose with His love as fresh as ever in His heart—and went to Heaven leading captivity captive—His eyes flashing with the eternal Love that brought Him down!

He passed through the pearly gates and rode in triumph up to His Great Father's Throne, and though He looked upon His Father with Love ineffable and eternal, He gazed upon His people, too, for His heart was still theirs. Even at this hour, from His Throne among the seraphim, where He sits in Glory, He looks down upon His people with pitying love and condescending Grace—

***“Now, though He reigns exalted high,
His love is still as great.
Well He remembers Calvary,
Nor let His saints forget.”***

He is all Love and altogether Love. “Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”

II. THE SEVEN CROWNS OF JESUS' DYING LOVE are our second point. I hope I shall have your interested attention while I show that above that highest act of human love there is a something in Christ's death for love's sake still more elevated. Men's dying for their friends—this is superlative—but Christ's dying for us is as much above man's superlative as that could be above mere commonplace. Let me show you this in seven points. The first is this—Jesus is immortal, therefore the special character of His death.

Damon is willing to die for Pythias. The classic story shows that each of the two friends was anxious to die for the other. But suppose Damon dies for Pythias, he is only antedating what must occur, for Damon must die one day and if he lays down his life for his friend, say ten years before he otherwise would have done so, still he only loses that ten years' life—he must die sooner or later. Or if Pythias dies and Damon escapes, it may be that only by a few weeks one of them has anticipated the departure, for they must both die eventually. When a man lays down his life for his friend, he does not lay down what he could keep altogether. He could only have kept it for a while. Even if he had lived as long as mortals can, till gray hairs are on their head, he must, at last, have yielded to the arrows of Death.

A substitutionary death for love's sake in ordinary cases would be but a slightly premature payment of that debt of Nature which must be paid by all. But such is not the case with Jesus. Jesus needed not die at all! There was no ground or reason why He should die apart from His laying down His life in the place of His friends. Up there in Glory was the Christ of God forever with the Father, eternal and everlasting. No age passed over His brow. We may say of Him, “Your locks are bushy and black as the raven,

You have the dew of Your youth.” He came to earth and assumed our Nature that He might be capable of death, yet remember, though *capable* of death, His body need not have died. As it was it never saw corruption, because there was not in it the element of sin which necessitated death and decay.

Our Lord Jesus, and none but He, could stand at the brink of the grave and say, “No man takes My life from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again.” We poor mortal men have only power to die, but Christ had power to live! Crown Him, then! Set a new crown upon His beloved head! Let other lovers who have died for their friends be crowned with silver, but for Jesus, bring forth the golden diadem and set it upon the head of the Immortal who never needed to have died, and yet became a mortal, yielding Himself to death’s pangs without necessity, except the necessity of His mighty love!

Note, next, that in the cases of persons who have yielded up their lives for others they may have entertained and probably did entertain the prospect that the supreme penalty would not have been enacted from them. They hoped that they might yet escape. Damon stood before Dionysius, the tyrant, willing to be slain instead of Pythias. But you will remember that the tyrant was so struck with the devotion of the two friends that he did not put either of them to death and so the proffered substitute escaped. There is an old story of a pious miner who was in the pit with an ungodly man at work. They had lighted the fuse and were about to blast a piece of rock with the powder, and it was necessary that they should both leave the mine before the powder exploded.

They both got into the bucket, but the hand above which was to wind them up was not strong enough to draw the two together, and the pious miner, leaping from the bucket, said to his friend, “You are an unconverted man, and if you die your soul will be lost. Get up in the bucket as quickly as you can! As for me, I commit my soul into the hands of God, and if I die I am saved.” This lover of his neighbor’s soul was spared, for he was found in perfect safety arched over by the fragments which had been blown from the rock—he escaped. But remember well that such a thing could not occur in the case of our dear Redeemer. He knew that if He was to give a ransom for our souls He had no loophole for escape. He must surely die. It was either He die, or His people must—there was no other alternative. If we were to escape from the pit through Him, He must perish in the pit Himself. There was no hope for Him. There was no way by which the cup could pass from Him.

Men have bravely risked their lives for their friends. Perhaps had they been certain that the risk would have ended in death they would have hesitated. Jesus was certain that our salvation involved death to Him—the cup must be drained to the bottom—He must endure the mortal agony and in all the extreme sufferings of death He must not be spared one jot or tittle. Yet deliberately, for our sakes, He espoused Death that He might espouse us. I say again, bring forth another diadem! Put a second crown

upon that once thorn-crowned head! All hail, Immanuel! Monarch of Misery, and Lord of Love! Was ever love like Yours? Lift up His praises, all you sons of song! Exalt Him, all you heavenly ones! Yes, set His throne higher than the stars! And let Him be extolled above the angels, because with full intent He bowed His head to Death. He knew that it behooved Him to suffer, it behooved that He should be made a Sacrifice for sin, and yet for the joy that was set before Him, He endured the Cross, despising the shame.

Note a third grand excellency in the crowning deed of Jesus' love, namely, that He could have had no motive in that death but one of pure, unmingled love and pity. You remember when the Russian nobleman was crossing the steppes of that vast country in the snow, the wolves followed the sledge in greedy packs, eager to devour the travelers. The horses were lashed to their utmost speed, but needed not the lash, for they fled for their lives from their howling pursuers. Whatever could stay the eager wolves for a time was thrown to them in vain. A horse was loosed—they pursued it, tore it to pieces, and still followed, like grim Death.

At last a devoted servant, who had long lived with his master's family, said, "There remains but one hope for you. I will throw myself to the wolves and then you will have time to escape." There was great love in this, but doubtless it was mingled with a habit of obedience, a sense of reverence to the head of the household, and probably emotions of gratitude for many obligations which had been received through a long course of years. I do not depreciate the sacrifice, far from it. Would that there were more of such a noble spirit among the sons of men! But still, you can see a wide difference between that noble sacrifice and the nobler deed of Jesus laying down His life for those who never obliged Him, never served Him—who were infinitely His inferiors and who could have no claims upon His gratitude.

If I had seen the *nobleman* surrender himself to the wolves to save his servant, and if that servant had in former days tried to be an assassin and had sought his life—and yet the master had given himself up for the undeserving menial—I could see some parallel. But as the case stands, there is a wide distinction. Jesus had no motive in His heart but that He loved us, loved us with all the greatness of His glorious Nature—loved us, and therefore for love, pure love, and love alone—He gave Himself up to bleed and die—

***"With all His sufferings full in view
And woes to us unknown,
Forth to the tack His spirit flew,
'Twas love that urged Him on."***

Put the third crown upon His glorious head! Oh angels, bring forth the immortal coronet which has been stored up for ages for Him alone, and let it glitter upon that ever-blessed brow!

Fourthly, remember, as I have already begun to hint, that in our Savior's case it was not precisely, though it was, in a sense, death for His friends. Greater love has no man than this towards his *friends* that he lay down his life for them. Read the text so, and it expresses a great truth—

but greater love a man may have than to lay down his life for his friends, namely—if he dies for his *enemies*! And here is the greatness of Jesus' love, that though He called us "friends," the friendship was all on His side at the first. He called us friends, but our hearts called Him enemy, for we were opposed to Him. We loved not in return for His love. "We hid, as it were, our faces from Him, He was despised, and we esteemed Him not." Oh the enmity of the human heart to Jesus! There is nothing like it! Of all enmities that have ever come from the Pit that is bottomless, the enmity of the heart to the Christ of God is the strangest and most bitter of all!

And yet for men polluted and depraved, for men hardened till their hearts are like the nether millstone, for men who could not return and could not reciprocate the love He felt, Jesus Christ gave Himself to die! "Scarcely for a righteous man one will die, yet perhaps for a good (benevolent) man one could even dare to die, but God commends His love to us in that while we were yet sinners in due time Christ died for the ungodly."—

***"O love of unexampled kind!
That leaves all thought so far behind;
Where length, and breadth, and depth, and height,
Are lost to my astonished sight."***

Bring forth the royal diadem again, I say, and crown our loving Lord, the Lord of Love, for as He is King of kings everywhere else, so is He King of kings in the region of affection!

I shall not, I hope, weary you when I now observe that there was another glorious point about Christ's dying for us for we had, ourselves, been the cause of the difficulty which required a death. There were two brothers on board a raft once, upon which they had escaped from a foundering ship. There was not enough food, and it was proposed to reduce the number that some, at least, might be able to live. So many must die. They cast lots for life and death. One of the brothers was drawn and was doomed to be thrown into the sea. His brother interposed and said, "You have a wife and children at home. I am single and therefore can be better spared. I will die instead of you." "No," said his brother, "not so. Why should you? The lot has fallen upon me." And they struggled with each other in mutual arguments of love, till at last the substitute was thrown into the sea.

Now, there was no ground of difference between those two brothers whatever. They were friends and more than friends. They had not caused the difficulty which required the sacrifice of one of them. They could not blame one another for forcing upon them the dreadful alternative. But in our case there would never have been a need for anyone to die if we had not been the offenders, the *willful* offenders. And who was the offended one? Whose injured honor required the death? I speak not untruthfully if I say it was the Christ that died who was, Himself, the offended One. Against God the sin had been committed, against the majesty of the Divine Ruler! And in order to wipe the stain away from Divine Justice it was imperative that the penalty should be exacted and the sinful one should die. So He who was offended took the place of the offender and died, that

the debt due to His own Justice might be paid. It is the case of the *judge* bearing the penalty which he feels compelled to pronounce upon the culprit!

Like the old classic story of the father who, on the judgment bench, condemns his son to lose his eyes for an act of adultery, and then puts out one of his own eyes to save an eye for his son—the judge himself bore a portion of the penalty. In our case, He who vindicated the honor of His own Law, and bore *all* the penalty, was the Christ who loved those who had offended His Sovereignty and grieved His holiness! I say again—but where are the lips that shall say it aright?—Bring forth, bring forth a new diadem of more than imperial splendor, to crown the Redeemer's blessed head anew, and let all the harps of Heaven pour forth the richest music in praise of His supreme love!

Note, again, that there have been men who died for others, but they have never borne the sins of others. They were willing to take the punishment, but not the *guilt*. Those cases which I have already mentioned did not involve character. Pythias has offended Dionysius, Damon is ready to die for him, but Damon does not bear the offense given by Pythias. A brother is thrown into the sea for a brother, but there is no fault in the case. The servant dies for his master in Russia, but the servant's character rises—it is in no degree associated with any fault of the master—and the master is, indeed, faultless in the case. But here, before Christ must die, it must be written, "He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bore the sin of many." "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." "He made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." "He was made a curse for us, as it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree."

Now, far be it from our hearts to say that Christ was ever less than perfectly holy and spotless, and yet there had to be established a connection between Him and sinners by the way of *substitution*, which must have been hard for His perfect Nature to endure. For Him to be hung up between two felons. For Him to be accused of blasphemy. For Him to be numbered with transgressors. For Him to suffer, the Just for the unjust, bearing His Father's wrath as if He had been guilty—this is amazing and surpasses all thought! Bring forth the brightest crowns and put them on His head, while we pass on to weave a seventh chaplet for that adorable brow! For remember, once more, the death of Christ was a proof of superlative love, because in His case He was denied all the helps and alleviations which in other cases make death to be less than death.

I marvel not that a saint can die joyously. Well may his brow be placid and his eyes bright, for he sees his heavenly Father gazing down upon him and Glory awaiting him! Well may his spirit be rapt in joy, even while the death-sweat is on his face, for the angels have come to meet him and he sees the far-off land, and the gates of pearl growing nearer every hour! But ah, to die upon a Cross without a pitying eye upon you, surrounded by a scoffing multitude—and to die there appealing to God, who turns

away His face! To die with this as your requiem, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me!" To startle the midnight darkness with an, "Eli, Eli, lama Sabachthani" of awful anguish such as never had been heard before—this is terrible!

The triumph of Love in the death of Jesus rises clear above all other heroic acts of self-sacrifice! Even as we have seen the lone peak of the monarch of mountains rise out from all adjoining alps and pierce the clouds to hold familiar converse with the stars, so does this love of Christ soar far above anything else in human history, or that can be conceived by the heart of man! His death was more terrible, His passing away more grievous by far. Greater love has no man than this, that He lay down such a life in such a fashion, and for such enemies so utterly unworthy! Oh, I will not say, Crown Him—what are crowns to Him? Blessed Lamb of God, our hearts love You! We fall at Your feet in adoring reverence, and magnify You in the silence of our souls.

III. Lastly, and I must be very brief, as my time has fled, MANY ROYAL THINGS OUGHT TO BE SUGGESTED TO US BY THIS ROYAL LOVE. And first, dear Brothers and Sisters, how this thought of Christ's proving His love by His death ennobles self-denial. I do not know how you feel, but I feel utterly mean when I think of what Christ has done for me. To live a life of comparative ease and enjoyment shames me. To work to weariness seems nothing. After all, what are we doing compared with what He has done? Those who can suffer, who can lay down their lives in mission fields and bear hardships, and poverty, and persecution for Christ—my Brethren, these are to be envied—they have a portion above their Brethren!

It makes us feel ashamed to be at home and to possess any comforts when JESUS so denied Himself. I say the thought of the Lord's bleeding love makes us think ourselves mean to be what we are. It makes us nothing in our own sight, while it causes us to honor before God the self-denial of others and wish that we had the means of practicing it. And oh, how it prompts us to heroism! When you get to the Cross you have left the realm of little men—you have reached the nursery of true chivalry. Does Christ die?—then we feel we could die, too! What grand things men have done when they have lived in the love of Christ! That story of the Moravians comes to my mind, and I will repeat it, though you may often have heard it, how in the South of Africa there was, years ago, a place of lepers into which persons afflicted with leprosy were driven.

There was a tract of country surrounded by high walls, from which none could escape. There was only one gate and he who went in never came out again. Certain Moravians looked over the wall and saw two men—one, whose arms had rotted off with leprosy, was carrying on his back another who had lost his legs—and between the two they were making holes in the ground and planting seeds. The two Moravians thought, "They are dying of a foul disease by hundreds inside that place. We will go and preach the Gospel to them. But," they said, "if we go in, we can never come out again. There we will die of leprosy, too." They went in and they

never did come out till they went home to Heaven. They died for others for the love of Jesus.

Two others of these holy men went to the West Indian Islands, where there was an estate to which a man could not go to preach the Gospel unless he was a slave. And these two men sold themselves for slaves, to work as others worked, that they might tell their fellow slaves the Gospel. Oh, if we had that spirit of Jesus among us we should do great things! We need it bad, and must have it. The Church has lost everything when she has lost her old heroism! She has lost her power to conquer the world when the love of Christ no longer constrains her. But mark how the heroics in this case is sweetly tintured and flavored with gentleness. The chivalry of the olden times was cruel. It consisted very much in a strong fellow cased in steel going about and knocking others to pieces who did not happen to wear similar suits of steel.

Nowadays we could get a good deal of that courage back, I dare say, but we shall be best without it. We need that blessed chivalry of love in which a man feels, "I would suffer any insult from that man if I could do him good for Christ's sake. And I would be a doormat to my Lord's temple gate, that all who come by might wipe their feet upon me, if they could thereby honor Christ." The grand heroism of being nothing for Christ's sake, or anything for the Church's sake—that is the heroism of the Cross, for Christ made Himself of no reputation and took upon Himself the form of a Servant, and being found in fashion as a Man, He became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. O blessed Spirit, teach us to perform heroic acts of self-abnegation for Jesus' name's sake!

And, lastly, there seems to come to my ears from the Cross a gentle voice that says, "Sinner, Sinner, guilty Sinner, I did all this for you, what have you done for Me?" And yet another which says, "Return unto Me! Look unto Me and be you saved, all you ends of the earth." I wish I knew how to preach to you Christ Crucified. I feel ashamed of myself that I cannot do better than I have done. I pray the Lord to set it before you in a far better way than any of my words can. But, oh, guilty Sinner, there is life in a look at the Redeemer! Turn, now, your eyes to Him and trust Him! Simply by trusting Him you shall find pardon, mercy, eternal life and Heaven. Faith is a look at the Great Substitute. God help you to get that look for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 15.

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ONE ASPECT OF CHRIST'S DEATH

NO. 2986

A SERMON
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ON THURSDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 14, 1875.

*“Greater love has no man than this, that
a man lay down his life for his friends.”
John 15:13.*

I FELT, today, after a very weary and, in some respects, a very sorrowful week, as if I could not preach tonight—or that if I did stand up to speak, it must be upon some very easy and simple theme and, at the same time, it must be some great subject which would give me plenty of sea-room. I think the text I have read to you fulfills both these conditions. And, although I shall not attempt to sail across it, or to fathom it, for that would be impossible, yet, at any rate, there will be no fear that I shall run aground, or need to exercise great skill in threading my way through a tortuous channel, where, perhaps, one might be on the rock or the sandbank before he was aware of his danger. If there is anything about which Christians are sure—and concerning which they can speak with confidence, surely it is the love of Christ! And though that is one of the simplest things in the world, yet it is also the very sweetest. Whenever you spread the table for any meal, you are pretty sure to put bread and salt upon it. And whenever we preach, if we preach as we should, we are sure to have something of the savor of the love of Christ in our preaching. I have heard that in a certain country, the way in which a stranger is welcomed is by giving him just bread and salt—nothing more. That is what I am about to do. We will have bread and salt on the table—the essential things, the common things—but, blessed be God, with a fullness of nourishment and a savor of tastefulness in them which those who are taught of God will be able to relish!

The death of Jesus Christ may be viewed in many aspects, but we, Brothers and Sisters, have learned to see very clearly the substitutionary character of it. It is our delight to believe that Christ laid down His life for the sake of His friends, thereby rendering complete satisfaction to offended Justice, presenting Himself as a vicarious Sacrifice in their place, that they might be reconciled to God and might be “accepted in the Beloved.” We are quite sure about this Truth of God. We do not gather it from this particular verse which I have selected for my text, but from the whole run and tenor of Scripture, but especially from such a passage as

this, "Forasmuch as you know that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."

This Doctrine of Redemption tallies with the types of the old Jewish dispensation and corresponds with the prophetic descriptions of the promised Messiah, especially those wonderful chapters in Isaiah and Ezekiel in which His Character is so accurately foretold. This view of Christ dying as the great substitutionary Sacrifice for sinners cannot be dispensed with for a single moment—it seems to us to be the very essence of the Gospel. Cloudiness with regard to this great central Truth of God involves mistiness concerning everything else. And the poet was quite right when he wrote—

***"You cannot be right in the rest
Unless you think rightly of Him."***

If you have any question about that great Truth, you will have your brain more or less muddled concerning every other Doctrine in the Word of God. And I would take this Doctrine just as I would the Doctrine of Justification by Faith, as being the test of a standing or falling church, and of a God-sent ministry!

Yet, Brothers and Sisters, there are other aspects of the death of Christ beside the one I have mentioned and a Christian's eyes should see both the greater objects and also the smaller ones. I am always glad that a painter does not merely give us the foreground of his picture, but gives us the background, too—and even when his painting is a portrait and he desires to have all our attention fixed upon the portrait—yet he does not neglect the little accessories of the picture. They may be unimportant, but if they are properly painted, they will not distract attention from the main subject of the picture, but will rather help to point to it. Now, the death of Christ was the greatest possible display of the love of God to men. Never forget that it was not merely Infinite Justice that blazed forth from the Cross, but also Infinite Affection! Indeed, the Cross displayed all the attributes of God and they can still be plainly perceived by those whose eyes have been Divinely opened. God revealed Himself there, through the dying Savior, in a very wonderful way. If I may use such an image—and I think I may—through the smoked glass of the humanity of Christ, the Deity of God in all its fullness can be better seen by us than if we could, with our naked eyes, gaze upon the excessive brightness of that Glory. Indeed, blindness would follow upon a vision of absolute Deity—if such a vision were even possible. To dwell long upon the Doctrine of the Trinity, and to vex your mind with the various theories of that mysterious subject which men have imagined, is the sure road to Socinianism or some other heresy! But, to see God veiled in human flesh and especially to see Him revealed in the Person of the dying Mediator, is to see God in the only way in which He *can* be seen by mortal men! We

do, not, therefore, for a moment forget that Christ's death was the greatest possible display of God's love to men.

It was, doubtless, also necessary to complete the perfect example of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He would have set before us a grand example of self-denial and disinterested love, even if He had not died for us, for it was no little thing that He should make Himself of no reputation and take upon Himself the form of a Servant and be made in the likeness of men and humble Himself as He did. Still, becoming "obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross," was the crown of His life. It was because He endured the Cross, despising the shame, that Paul wrote to the Hebrews, "Consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest you be wearied and faint in your minds." We also may remember that we "have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin," but Christ has done this and more than this! He knows what it is to be made perfect through sufferings. I have no doubt that they speak the truth who say that the death of Christ was the climax of His example, but I am going to call your attention to another aspect of His death, namely, as a display of His own love to His own people—"Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." This is, I believe, what Christ meant—that His love to His friends was to be most clearly made manifest by His dying for them!

There is no need, with such a subject as this, for the use of grand periods and eloquent language, even if I ever indulged in that kind of thing. But I shall just give utterance to a few simple Truths of God which you already know, trying to stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance. And, first, *let us contemplate the love of Christ resplendent in the act of death*, laying down His life for His friends. Secondly, *let us see that love enhanced by a consideration of the friends for whom He laid down His life*. And then, thirdly, *let us see the love of Christ reflected and reproduced by His friends*. This, however, will have to be done outside this place—I can only make the rough outline of the picture which is to be drawn by all of you who are the friends of Christ. My text reminds us of one of the strongest reasons why we should love one another even as Christ has loved us—"Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

I. Let us, then, first SEE CHRIST'S LOVE RESPLENDENT IN THE LAYING DOWN OF HIS LIFE FOR HIS PEOPLE.

When He says, "Greater love has no man than this," He seems to me to imply that there are manifestations of His love which are not as great as this. The love of the Lord Jesus Christ to His people is always great. I may truly say that it is always greater than any other love. I might even say that it is always in the superlative degree—the greatest love there ever was, or is, or can be! Yet there are displays of that love which can be rightly described as great, greater, greatest. Our Lord had already

displayed His love to His people in the great and the greater forms of it—now He was about to display it in the highest and greatest of all ways.

It was great love that made Him come to this earth and be Incarnate here. Have you ever thought of the greatness of the love of Christ in being a Child, a Youth, a Man and of His love in being willing to live in obscurity and retirement as the Son of Mary for 30 years? Wondrous love was there in that arrangement by which He was able, from His own experience, to sympathize with retiring Christians and with young Believers whose duties do not cause them to be conspicuous in the world. The thought of God in the carpenter's shop at Nazareth is to me very wonderful. As Moses took off his shoes at the sight of God in the burning bush, we may well manifest our awe and reverence as we see the Son of God, the express image of His Father's Person, in the midst of the implements used by the village carpenter! That was truly great love.

Then, when the time arrived for Him to come forth from His obscurity, *He showed great love to His friends in calling them to Him one by one.* His mind was altogether unique. He had the tenderness of a woman, yet He was to the highest degree, manly. Indeed, all the attributes of a perfect man and a perfect woman appear to have been blessedly blessed in His perfect Humanity. We might have supposed that He would have looked for companions somewhat like Himself, though I know not where He could have found them, but He seems to me to have looked for those whom, in a wondrous way, He could make to be like Himself rather than for those who were already like Himself! So He finds some fishermen—very rough fellows to be associated with the gentle Jesus! He finds a tax-gatherer—commercial, grasping—a strange companion for Him who cared not one farthing for gold or silver! The Apostles, as a whole, were a motley crew. Speaking after the manner of men, one could almost account for Jesus choosing John and there are some points in Peter that are very lovable, yet, as a band of men called to such exceptional service, they were rough and coarse! We might have thought that Christ would have looked for more refinement in those who were to be His daily companions for three years—and had He been thinking only of Himself, He might have sought others than He did seek. Certainly, Brothers and Sisters, in my own case, I have often felt that I could adopt the language of Faber, which we sang just now—

***“How many hearts You might have had
More innocent than mine!
How many souls more worthy far
Of that pure touch of Thine!
Ah, Grace! Into unlikeliest heart
It is your boast to come—
The glory of your light to find
In darkest spots a home.”***

So Jesus Christ showed His love to His friends in the very act of calling them to be His friends. And *He also showed His love in fitting*

them for the position to which He had called them. He laid Himself out to teach them, to train them, to build up their characters upon a firm foundation and to infuse into their minds right principles and noble sentiments so that they could be fully qualified to be the servants of the churches and the glory of Christ—vessels to be used no longer for merely worldly purposes, but to be meet for the Master's use! With what singular wisdom He trained them! With what patience He bore with them! Had they had any other master, they would, many a time, have been liable to be discharged for their stupidity, but He simply said, "Have I been so long a time with you, and yet have you not known Me, Philip?"

This was a proof of great love on His part, yet He seems to me to have shown even greater love when, towards the end of His life, *He bade these friends of His sit and eat and drink with Him at His Table* and expressed His desire that His friends should continue, in all later ages, thus to remember Him. Then, after the Supper, He rose from the table, laid aside His outer garment, took a towel and girded Himself—poured water into a basin and washed His disciples' feet! Oh, this was great love indeed!

Still, our text talks about a greater display of Christ's love than this, so we conclude that while to choose and call, to instruct and edify, to entertain and refresh was proof of very great love on Christ's part—to *die for His friends was evidence of still greater love.* There are, in this world, many persons who will lay themselves out to help their fellow creatures to resist temptation and to struggle out of the ways of vice into the path of virtue and who would, with heroic self-denial, bring themselves well-near to the grave's mouth to accomplish these ends—but they will not lay down their lives for their fellows. If they did, it would be the greatest thing they could possibly do for them, for the text is true, "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

But *our Lord was willing to die for His friends.* Some people might lay down their lives for their friends, but it would be quite unwillingly that they would do so. They might make the supreme sacrifice under the force of some strong compelling passion, yet they would escape if they could. But look at our blessed Lord and Master! When the time came for Him to go out of this world unto His Father, He did not make the slightest effort to escape from death. Judas knew the place where He was in the habit of going for private meditation and prayer—and to that very place our Master went, as He had often gone before, although He knew that He would meet the traitor there. When the officers and men from the chief priests and Pharisees came there with lanterns and torches and weapons, a word from Him made them fall to the ground! He could, therefore, in an instant, have driven them all out of the garden and have escaped from them. But He did not do so. He could never have been delivered up to be put to death, either by Jews or by Romans, if He had not been perfectly willing to die! From the time when they took Him to

Annas to the moment when they nailed Him to the Cross, one solitary wish on His part would have scattered all His foes and He could have gone wherever He pleased—but He would not express such a wish, or even cherish it. Admire the wonderful reticence of Christ! That He did not speak in His own defense, was marvelous, but, that He did not even wish to escape, or think of escaping, is still more amazing, for a thought would have been sufficient to have procured His release! How wonderfully Omnipotence held in check Omnipotence! How majestic does that almighty attribute appear when it proved its power over itself by not using the power which it manifestly possesses!

More than that, remember that *our Lord Jesus Christ was under no sort of necessity to die*. When a man lays down his life for his friend—and how seldom has that been done—he only anticipates the debt of Nature which, in any case, he has to pay before long. If you were to die for me, or I were to die for you, tomorrow, we would, both of us, only do a little earlier what we must both ultimately do! Death will, before long, claim everyone of us, and to the sepulcher we must all descend unless our Lord should speedily come. But He possessed inherent immortality! No sentence of death was written across His brow—He could live on forever even when He was in the grave—corruption could have no dominion over Him. He could say, with an emphasis that the Psalmist could not use, “You will not leave My soul in Hell; neither will You suffer your Holy One to see corruption.” So Jesus Christ’s laying down of His life for His friends was beyond anything that could ever happen in any other man’s life, a voluntary act and, consequently, a more wonderful display of love than could ever be given in any other case. “Greater love has no man than this.”

We must also remember that *our Lord Jesus Christ had been accustomed, for many years, to contemplate the laying low of His life before He actually did so*. No, I must not speak of *years*—doubtless from *eternity* He had foreseen that terrible time when He would have to do battle on His people’s behalf, with all the powers of Darkness. He had looked forward to that hour with the strong glance of the eyes that could weep for sorrow, but could not grow dim with fear. And, often, when He was here below, He seemed to long for the time when He could make the master-sacrifice of His life. He said, “I have a baptism to be baptized with and how am I straitened till it is accomplished!” His face was set, not merely once, but in very deed always, steadfastly to go unto Jerusalem, knowing well all that would befall Him there. Now, what man is there who could look death in the face, for the sake of his friend, year after year, and even contemplate it with ardent desire? We might, in an outburst of strong affection, in a moment of unusual excitement, be willing to leap into the gulf of death in order to rescue a sinking friend, but as for the quiet resolution that could calmly think it all over and weigh every circumstance—and ponder over every detail and then

deliberately give oneself up to death—where could you find such a spirit as that? It is only to be seen in Him who has given the grandest display of love that was ever manifested on earth or even in Heaven—and whose death was the grandest manifestation of that love!

Let me also further remind you that *our Lord Jesus Christ did actually die for His friends*. He was not merely willing to do so and long contemplated dying, but He *did* really die and He died under circumstances that rendered the laying down of His life for His friends the more remarkable! He died for them, yet they had all forsaken Him in the hour of His greatest need, after having fallen asleep and left Him to endure in utter loneliness the agony of bloody sweat. When He was arraigned before His enemies, Peter, the boldest man in His little band of disciples, was so cowed with fear that he denied, with oaths and curses, that he even *knew* Him! These “friends” of His were quite unworthy of His love, yet He died for them. Do men generally die for such “friends” as they proved themselves to be? No, but they have often cried with Job, “Miserable comforters are you all.” Yet Christ died for His friends though they forsook Him when He most needed their sympathy and support.

And *He had to die for them under a criminal charge*. I believe that there are many of us who would not be nearly as much startled by death as by a criminal accusation. When I have seen some good man whom I have highly esteemed, charged falsely, as I think, with high misdemeanors, I have felt that I would sooner die than be guilty of the crime of which he has been accused. But here is our gracious Lord and Master willingly giving Himself up to death although He is innocent of the crime's laid to His charge—sedition against the State and blasphemy against God. It is a felon's death that He must die—not merely a death *like that* of a felon, but the death *of a felon*, for the verdict of one tribunal after another is that He is worthy of death—and the popular voice applauds the verdict, and cries, “Let Him be crucified!” O You blessed Son of God, were You thus numbered with the transgressors? Yes, He was. And this was the greatest manifestation of His love.

Let us not forget, too, that *Christ's death was attended by cruelties of the grossest sort*. I will not harrow up your feelings with any description of that terrible flagellation which He received at the hands of the Roman lictors. Yes, Christ did suffer intensely in many ways, as the Prophet Isaiah had foretold that He would—“He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.” All the sufferings of Christ's—physical, mental, and spiritual—which were attendant upon His death, are to be regarded by us with awestruck and grateful emotions, for they help to make up the perfection of His wondrous work of laying down His life for His friends!

Remember, too, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, as I have already reminded you, that *Christ, although He was absolutely innocent, did die as the Substitute for sinners*. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "For He (that is, God) has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." And to the Galatians He wrote, "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree." To a pure mind, contact with sin in any form is truly horrible. I can imagine the Savior being willing to suffer and even being willing to die—but His holy Nature must have revolted at the thought that He must stand in the sinner's place, that He must be reckoned as the sinner, that against Him the sword of Divine Justice must be drawn and that in His heart it must find a sheath! The great terror of Christ's death upon the Cross must have been that it was the penalty for *sin*—the execution of the righteous judgment of God against unrighteousness and iniquity! None of us can even guess—perhaps the lost souls in Hell cannot tell—what it must have been for Christ to have come thus under the wrath of God because of the sins of His people. When we have been deeply convinced of sin, we may have had some slight conception of what it was, but our most vivid imagination must have been dim and feeble compared with the terrible reality!

Above all else, let us remember that *our Savior died forsaken of His God*. Even the martyrs were not obliged to do that. They stood at the stake and clapped their hands—they even sang songs of triumph amidst the fury of the flames! But Jesus had to cry, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" That is the pitiful wail of a broken heart and a sinking spirit. It does not surprise us that "the earth did quake and the rocks split"—it would have been a greater wonder if they had not been stirred at the sound of such grief as His! O Beloved, greater love has no man than this, that he will even dare to die forsaken of his God! I thank God that *we* are not asked to do this! But Jesus did it for us, His friends. Oh, what amazing love is His! There is much more that might be said upon this stupendous theme, but I must ask the Holy Spirit to lead you into the mystery of those unknown depths of suffering by which Christ manifested His love to His friends.

II. Now, secondly, I want to show you that THE LOVE OF CHRIST, IN LAYING DOWN HIS LIFE, WAS GREATLY ENHANCED BY THE CHARACTER OF THOSE FOR WHOM HE LAID DOWN HIS LIFE, namely, "His friends."

Let it never be forgotten by us that this sacred title is one which our Lord Himself gave to His disciples—"I have called you friends." If we are His disciples, we are also His friends. Our original title would have been enemies, for that is what we were—but He has transformed us into His friends, for, "when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son." The text would not be true if you were to put the

emphasis in the wrong place. "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his *friends*," for Christ manifested greater love than that in laying down His life for His *enemies*. It is indeed surprising that He should have laid down His life for those who were His enemies and who are only His friends because He has made them so. You scorned Him, you despised Him, you crucified Him, your sins were the nails and the spear that pierced His hands, feet and side—yet He died for you! He was the sandalwood tree, and yours was the hand that held the axe that wounded Him, yet He perfumed the axe, and also the hand that wielded it—and healed that hand of all its leprosies—yes, healed your whole being of whatever disease it had. Thank God for love like that!

Then, putting aside the fact that we were once His enemies, think of the *greatness of His love is laying down His life for such insignificant people as we are*. I have heard the argument used by unbelievers that it is not feasible—considering the immense size of the universe and the inconceivable number of starry worlds in it, that this little inconsiderable speck of a globe, which, in proportion to the rest of the universe, is as a single atom of dust to the entire chain of the Alps—to think that Christ should come to redeem the inhabitants of such a poor little world as this is and that if He came to the earth at all, many of the poorest and meanest of the people would be the peculiar objects of His choice! Well, it *is* marvelous! It is a marvelous instance of the condescension of Christ—and while it may stagger the faith of some, it certainly inflames the love of others! We feel that if He condescends to choose us, our love shall rise to the utmost heights that it can reach—and we will bless and magnify the name of the Lord in that, while He took not up angels, He took up the seed of Abraham! While He left the fallen angels to perish without hope, He has come to save us, the fallen sons of Adam, and has laid down His life for us!

There is, however, a Truth of God that is even more significant and instructive than that. It is not merely true that we were once Christ's enemies and that we were also utterly insignificant and unworthy of His notice, but *it is amazing that He should lay down His life for such unworthy friends, even as friends, as we are*. There are some professing Christians who can speak of themselves in terms of admiration, but, from my inmost heart I loathe such speeches more and more every day that I live. Those who talk in such boastful fashion must be constituted very differently from me. While they are congratulating themselves upon all the good things that they find within themselves, I have to lie humbly at the foot of Christ's Cross and marvel that I am saved at all, for I know that I am saved. I have to wonder that I do not believe Christ more and equally wonder that I am privileged to believe in Him at all—to wonder that I do not love Him more, and equally to wonder that I love Him at all—to wonder that I am not holier and equally to wonder that I have any

desire to be holy at all considering what a polluted, debased, depraved nature I find still within my soul notwithstanding all that Divine Grace has done in me! If God were ever to allow the fountains of the great deeps of depravity to break up in the best man that lives, he would make as bad a devil as Satan, himself, is. I care nothing for what these boasters say concerning their own perfections—I feel sure that they do not know themselves, or they could not talk as they often do! There is tinder enough in the saint who is nearest to Heaven to kindle another Hell if God should but permit a spark to fall upon it. In the very best of men, there is an infernal and well-near infinite depth of depravity! Some Christians never seem to find this out. I almost wish that they might not do so, for it is a painful discovery for anyone to make—but it has the beneficial effect of making us cease from trusting in ourselves and causing us to glory only in the Lord.

Why should Christ ever have loved *us*? Why should He ever have loved us? When at His Table, we often have wandering thoughts. Even in our faith we often find a mixture of unbelief. Even when we love Him, we grieve that we do not love Him more. Even when we are closest to Him in communion, we have to smite our breast and mourn that we do not enjoy the nearness we might have, and ought to have, for, after being so greatly loved by Christ, we ought to be sinless! Under such obligations to Christ as we have, we ought to be wholly sanctified—spirit, soul, and body—and never have a wandering thought or an unholy desire. But that we are not what we ought to be is very clear. And the wonder is that Jesus Christ should ever have laid down His life for such miserable “friends” as we have proven ourselves to be! Beauty, you know, will often win affection against a man’s better judgment, for there is something about it which is so attractive that it overcomes him. But Christ’s love to us was not won by any beauty that He saw in us. When He says to us as the Bridegroom in the Song of Solomon says to His bride, “Turn away your eyes from Me, for they have overcome Me.” And when He says, “You are all fair, My love; there is no spot in you,” I think He must see Himself mirrored in us and that this is why He loves us, for certainly there is nothing lovable in us but what He has bestowed upon us by His Grace! I do not know what you, Beloved, say concerning this theme upon which I have been speaking, but I think you will agree with me when I say that, to me, the superlative point of the love of Christ is that He laid down His life for *me*, unworthy as I have been even since I have been His friend!

III. I must speak very briefly upon the last point which is that THIS GREAT LOVE OF CHRIST IS TO BE REFLECTED AND REPRODUCED BY HIS FRIENDS.

Christ is the sun in our heavens and His Church is the moon. Why does the sun shine upon the moon? For the moon’s sake? Yes, in part, but also for the sake of the earth, which would be dark at night if the moon did not reflect the light it receives from the sun. Brother, Sister,

the light of Christ's love has fallen upon you, not only that it may benefit you, but also that you may reflect it.

First, *reflect it upon Christ*. He has loved you, so love Him in return! It is a blessed thing, sometimes, to do nothing but love Christ for a while. It is well, at least now and then, for us not to think so much of what we are going to do for Christ as of what He did for us and what He is to us. If I ever try to secure a quiet half-hour's meditation upon His love to me, somebody is pretty sure to come and knock at the door. But if I can keep the door-knocker still, and get alone with my Lord and only think about His love to me—not trying to elaborate any theories, or to understand any doctrines, but just sitting down with the view of loving Him who gave Himself for me—I tell you, Sirs, that this thought is positively inebriating to the soul! It not merely refreshes, quickens, consoles, but it absolutely overcomes us with intense delight till we feel as though we could only fall upon our face and worship the Lamb who was slain for us! At such times we have to make our expressive silence mean His praise, for our soul is so full of His love that we cannot possibly express it. That is the first thing for Christians to do—as Christ is shining upon you with His love—shine back upon Him with your love!

Then, next, He said to His disciples, "This is My commandment, That you love one another, as I loved you." *As you have received the light of Christ's love, pass it on to your fellow Christians*. Do you want to know where to find Christ? He is dwelling in His people and especially in His poor people, in His suffering people, in His tried people! So, when your heart is full of love to your Lord, let some of the light of it shine upon them. Perhaps this is a dark time with them and a kind word from you, or a kind action, will be like the light of the moon to them in the middle of the night, and will cause them great gladness. The moon cannot shine as brightly as the sun does, and you cannot love as much as Christ does—but you can be like the moon and shine with borrowed light—you can reflect upon others the light of the love which Christ has shed upon your own soul.

And when you have done that, remember that *your light will be even more needed in the dark world of the ungodly*. "Christ died for the ungodly," and that is what you were once! O Beloved, I pray you, love the sons of men! Somebody has asked, "How are we to convert sinners?" That is not our work. It is only the Spirit of God who can do that. But what we can do is this, we can *love sinners to Christ*. That is the way in which God says that He worked—"I drew them with words of a man, with bands of love." I will give you this message as a text for you to preach upon practically all your life—*Love sinners to Christ!* Love the enmity out of them if they hate the Gospel. Love the prejudice out of them if they cannot bear to hear it preached. Love them out of their vices! Love them up from their degradation, for love is of God, and God is Love and God

dwells in love. That which is in Him and comes from Him, is the best thing in the world to draw people to Him! So use no other cords but the cords of a man, and no bands but the bands of love. When you really love souls, it is amazing how wise you will be in dealing with them.

I have never heard that anybody has opened a school for teaching young mothers how to manage their first babies, but, somehow or other, when love is in the mother's heart, she finds out the proper way to care for her baby. And better than any College training for the home or the foreign field of service for the Savior is it to get your heart full of love to your Lord. Then you will know how to do His work—it will come to you by a sort of sacred instinct. You will know when you are to tell them of the terrors of the Law, and when to speak of the loveliness of Christ, and just how to deal with them under all manner of circumstances. The love of Christ will teach you how to do this if it is shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Spirit which is given unto you.

Oh, that all men knew, by happy personal experience, what the love of Jesus is! I have not said much to you unconverted people who are present, but I have often thought that when we are preaching about Christ, even if we do not say much directly to you, the subject itself speaks to you. It is like spreading a dinner where there are hungry people near. You have only to say to such persons, "You are welcome to all there is on the table," and there is no need of a sermon, or any eloquence. Their mouths begin to water while you are laying the cloth and the sight of the provisions makes them begin to eat as soon as you say, "Come along." What big slices they take! Well, poor starving souls, here is the great Gospel feast—may your mouths water for a taste of it! All I have to say is—

"Come and welcome, sinner, come."

Come and taste the great love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. May His gracious Spirit bring you, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

THE FRIENDS OF JESUS

NO. 1552

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 8, 1880,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.”
John 15:14.***

OUR Lord Jesus Christ is beyond all comparison the best of friends—a friend in need, a friend indeed. “Friend!” said Socrates, “there is no friend!” But Socrates did not know our Lord Jesus, or he would have added, “except the Savior.” In the heart of our Lord Jesus there burns such friendship towards us that all other forms of it are as dim candles to the sun. “Greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friend.” An ordinary man has gone as far as he can when he has died for his friend and yet he would have died anyway, so that in dying for his friend he does but pay, somewhat beforehand, a debt which must inevitably be discharged a little further on. With Christ there was no necessity to die at all and this, therefore, places His love and His friendship by itself.

He died who needed not to die and died in agony when He might have lived in Glory—never did man give such proof of friendship as this! Let the friendship of our Lord to us stand as the model of our friendship to Him. It cannot be so in all respects because our situations and conditions are different. His must always be the love of the greater to the less, the love of the Benefactor to one in need, the love of the Redeemer to those who are bought with a price but, setting those points aside, the whole tone and spirit of our Lord's friendship are such that the more closely we can imitate it the better. Such friendship as His should be reflected in a friendship most hearty and self-sacrificing on our part.

Our Lord does not, I think, in this text speak to us about His being our friend, but about our being His friends. He is “the friend of sinners,” but sinners are not His friends till their hearts are changed. “You are My friends if you do whatever I command you”—we are not His friends till then. His love to us is entirely of Himself, but friendship needs something from *us*. Friendship cannot be all on one side—one-sided friendship is more fitly called mercy, grace, or benevolence—friendship in its full sense is *mutual*. You may do all you will for a man and be perfectly benevolent and yet he may make you no return—friendship can only exist where there is a *response*.

Therefore we have not before us the question as to whether Christ loves us or not, as to whether Christ has pity on us or not, for in another part of Scripture we read of “His great love wherewith He loved us even when we were dead in trespasses and sins.” He befriended us when we were enemies, but that is not our subject just now—the question is about *our*

being friends to *Him* and such we must be made if, indeed, there is to be any intimacy of mutual friendship. Friendship cannot be, as I have said before, all on one side. It is like a pair of scales—there must be something to balance on the other side—there must be a *return* of kindly feeling from the person loved.

Jesus tells us here that if we are to be His friends, we must do whatever He commands us and that out of love to Him. Beloved, it is the highest honor in the world to be called the friend of Christ. There is surely no title that excels in dignity that which was worn by Abraham, who was called, “The friend of God.” Lord Brooke was so delighted with the friendship of Sir Philip Sydney that he ordered to be engraved upon his tomb nothing but this—“Here lies the friend of Sir Philip Sydney.” There is beauty in such a feeling, but yet it is a small matter compared with being able to say, “Here *lives* a friend of *Christ!*”

O wondrous condescension that He should call *me*, “Friend”! If I am, indeed, a true Believer, not only is He my friend, without which I could have no hope here or hereafter, but He has, in the abounding of His Grace, been pleased to regard me as *His* friend and write me down in the honored list of intimates who are permitted to speak familiarly with Him—as those do between whom there are no secrets, for their hearts are revealed to Him while He hides nothing from them, but says, “If it were not so I would have told you.”

Beloved, in what a light this sets *obedience* to Christ’s commandments! I cannot help, at this early moment in the sermon, noting how the doctrine of our text transfigures obedience and makes it the joy and glory of life! How precious it is, for it is a better seal to friendship than the possession of the largest gifts and influence. Christ does not say, “You are My friends if you rise to a position of respectability among men, or honor in the Church.” No, however poor you may be and those to whom He spoke these words were very poor, He says, “You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.” Obedience is better than wealth and better than rank! Jesus values His friends, not by what they have, or what they wear, but by what they *do*.

The 11 Apostles we may put down as having remarkable qualifications for their lifework, yet their Lord does not say, “You are My friends because I have endowed you with abilities for the Apostleship.” Even to these leaders of His sacramental host Jesus says plainly, “You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.” That is the point by which your friendship shall be tested—“If you are obedient you are My Friends.” He says neither less nor more to any of us who, this day, aspire to the high dignity of being contained within the circle of His personal friends. You must, my Brothers and Sisters, yield obedience to your Master and Lord and be *eager* to do it, or you are not His bosom friends.

This is the one essential which Grace, alone, can give us. Do we rebel against the request? Far from it! Our joy and delight lie in bearing our Beloved’s easy yoke.

I. Let us come to the subject more closely and notice first, that OUR LORD HIMSELF TELLS US WHAT OBEDIENCE HE REQUESTS from those who call themselves His friends. True friends are eager to know what they can do to please the objects of their love. Let us gladly listen to what our adorable Lord now speaks to the select circle of His chosen. He asks of one and all *obedience*. None of us are exempted from doing His commandments. However lofty or however lowly our condition, we must obey. If our talent is but one, we must obey and if we have 10, still we must obey. There can be no friendship with Christ unless we are willing, each one, to yield Him hearty, loyal service.

Let it go round, then, to all of you upon whom the name of Jesus Christ is named—if enrolled among the friends of Jesus, you must be careful about your own personal obedience to His blessed will. Forget not that even to the queen, standing on His right in gold of Ophir, the word is given, “He is your Lord and worship you Him.” It must be *active* obedience, notice that. “You are My friends, if you *do* whatever I command you.” Some think it is quite sufficient if they avoid what He forbids. Abstinence from evil is a great part of righteousness, but it is not enough for friendship. If a man can say, “I am not a drunk, I am not dishonest, I am not unchaste, I am not a violator of the Sabbath, I am not a liar,” so far so good—but such righteousness does not exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees—and they cannot enter the kingdom of God!

It is well if you do not willfully transgress, but if you are to be Christ’s friends there must be far more than that. It would be a poor friendship with your Master which only said, “I am Your friend and to prove it, I don’t insult You, I don’t rob You, I don’t speak evil of You.” Surely there must be more positive evidence to certify friendship! The Lord Jesus Christ lays great stress upon positive duties. It is, “if you *do* whatever I command you.” At the Last Day He will say, “I was hungry and you gave me meat: I was thirsty and you gave me drink.” In that memorable 25th chapter of Matthew nothing is said about *negative virtues*—only *positive actions* are cited and dwelt upon in detail.

You know it is an old English saying, “He is my friend who grinds at my mill.” That is to say, friendship shows itself in doing helpful acts which prove sincerity. Fine words are mere wind and go for nothing if not backed up with substantial deeds of kindness. Friendship cannot live on windy talk, it needs the bread of matter of fact. The Inspired Word says, “Show Me a proof of your love; show it by doing whatever I command you.” We are clear, from the wording of the text, that the obedience Christ expects from us is continuous. He does not say, “If you *sometimes* do what I command you—if you do it on Sundays, for instance—if you do what I command you in your place of worship, that will suffice. No, we are to abide in Him and keep His statutes even unto the end.

I am *not* now preaching *works* as the way of *salvation* but as the *evidences* of *fellowship*, which is quite another thing. We must seek in every place, at all times and under all circumstances to do as Jesus bids us out of a cheerful spirit of reverence to Him. Such tender, loving subjection as

a godly wife gives to her husband must be gladly yielded by us throughout life if we are His friends. This obedience must also be universal. "You are My friends if you do whatever I command you." No sooner is anything discovered to be the subject of a command than the man who is a true friend of Christ says, "I will do it," and he does it. He does not pick and choose which precept he will keep and which he will neglect, for this is self-will and not obedience.

I have known some professors err greatly in this matter. They have been very strict over one point and they have blamed everybody who did not come up to their strictness, talking as if that *one* duty fulfilled the whole Law of God! Straining at gnats has been a very leading business with many. They have bought a choice assortment of strainers of the very finest net to get out all the gnats from their cup, but at the same time, on another day they have opened their mouths and swallowed a camel without a qualm. This will not do! The test is, "If you do *whatever* I command you." I do not mean that little things are unimportant—far from it. If there is a gnat that Christ bids you strain, strain it out with great diligence—do not let a midge escape you if He bids you remove it.

The smallest command of Christ may often be the most important and I will tell you why. Some things are great, evidently great and, for many reasons even a hypocritical professor will attend to them. But the test may lie in the minor points, which hypocrites do not take the trouble to notice, since no human tongue would praise them for doing them. Here is the proof of your love. Will you do the smaller thing for Jesus as well as the more weighty matter? Too many say, "I do not see any use in it. I can be saved without it. There are a great many different opinions on the point," and so on. All this comes of evil and is not consistent with the spirit of friendship with Christ, for love pleases, even in trifles.

Is it Christ's will? Is it plainly a precept of His Word? Then it is not yours to reason why, nor to raise any question. The reality of your subjection to your Lord and Master may hinge upon those seemingly insignificant points. A domestic servant might place the breakfast on the table and feel that she had done her duty, but if her mistress told her to place the salt at the corner and she did not, she would be asked the cause of her neglect. Suppose she replied to her mistress, "I did not think it necessary. I placed the breakfast before you, but a little salt was too trifling a matter for me to troubled about." Her mistress might answer, "But I told you to be sure and put out the saltcellar. Mind you, do so tomorrow."

Next morning there is no salt and the maid says she did not see the need of setting it on the table. Her mistress is displeased and tells her that her wish must be carried out. Will she not be a very foolish and vexatious girl if she refuses to do so because she does not see the need of it? I think it is likely that the young woman would have to find other employment before long, for such conduct is very annoying. So it is with those professors who say, "I have attended to the *main* things and what I neglect is quite a minor matter." Such are not even good *servants* and they can never be friends! I beseech you, dear Brothers and Sisters, labor after universal

obedience. "Whatever He says to you, do it." Only by an earnest endeavor to carry out the whole of His will can you live in happy fellowship with Him and be, indeed, His friends.

Note well that this obedience is to be rendered as to Christ Himself. Put the emphasis on the little word, I—"You are My friends if you do whatever *I* command you." We are to do these things because Jesus commands them. Does not the royal Person of our Lord cast a very strong light upon the necessity of obedience? When we refuse to obey, we refuse to do what the Lord, Himself, commands! When the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God and our Redeemer, is denied obedience, it is treason! How can rebels against the King be His Majesty's friends? The precepts of Scripture are not the commandments of man nor the ordinances of angels, but the Laws of Christ and how dare we despise them! We are to act rightly because Jesus commands us and we love to do His pleasure—there can be no friendship without this. Oh for Grace to serve the Lord with gladness!

To close this first point, it appears that our Lord would have us obey Him out of a friendly spirit. Obedience to Christ as if we were *forced* to do it under pains and penalties would be of no worth as a proof of friendship. Everyone can see that. He speaks not of slaves, but of friends. He would not have us perform duties from fear of punishment or love of reward. That which He can accept of His friends must be the fruit of love. His will must be our Law because His Person is our delight. Some professors need to be whipped to their duties. They must hear stirring sermons and attend exciting meetings and live under pressure. But those who are Christ's friends need no spur but love. "The love of Christ constrains us." True hearts do what Jesus bids them without flogging and dogging, urging and forcing. Constrained virtue is spoiled in the making, as many a piece of earthenware is cracked in the baking. The wine of our obedience must flow freely from the ripe cluster of the soul's love or it will not be fit for the royal cup. When duty becomes delight and precepts are as sweet as promises, then are we Christ's friends and not till then.

II. Having thus set forth what kind of obedience Christ requests, I now notice, in the second place, that our Lord leads us to gather from this sentence that **THOSE WHO DO NOT OBEY HIM ARE NOT FRIENDS OF HIS.** He may yet look upon them and be their friend by changing their hearts and forgiving their sins, but as yet they are no friends of His, for a man who does not obey Christ does not give the Savior His proper place and this is an unfriendly deed. If I have a friend, I am very careful that if he has honor anywhere, he shall certainly have due respect from me. If he is my superior, I am anxious that he should not think me intrusive, or imagine that I would take undue advantage of his kindness. He will be higher in my esteem than in the regard of anyone else.

He who is truly Christ's friend delights to honor Him as a great King, but he who will not yield Him His sovereign rights is a traitor and not a friend. Our Lord is the Head over all things to His Church and this involves the joyful submission of the members. Disobedience denies to Christ the dignity of that holy Headship which is His prerogative over all

the members of His mystical body and this is not the part of a true friend. How can you be His friend if you will not admit His rule? It is vain to boast that you trust His Cross if you do not reverence His crown! He who does not do His commandments cannot be Christ's friend because he is not of one mind with Christ—that is evident. Can two walk together unless they are agreed?

True friendship exists not between those who differ upon first principles and there can be no points of agreement between Jesus Christ and the man who will not obey Him, for he, in fact, says, "Lord Jesus, Your pure and holy will is obnoxious to me! Your sweet and gracious commands are a weariness to me!" What friendship can be here? They are not of one mind—Christ is for holiness—this man is for sin! Christ is for spiritual-mindedness—this man is carnal-minded. Christ is for love, this man is for self. Christ is for glorifying the Father, this man is for honoring himself—how can there be any friendship when they are diametrically opposed in design, object and spirit? It is not possible!

He who obeys not Christ cannot be Christ's friend though he may profess to be. He may be a very high and loud professor and for that reason he may be all the more an enemy of the Cross, for when men see this man walking according to his own lusts, they cry out, "You, also, were with Jesus of Nazareth," and they attribute all his faults to his religion and straightway begin to blaspheme the name of Christ! Through the inconsistent conduct of our Lord's professed friends, His cause is more hindered than by anything else! Suppose you and I had some very intimate associate who was found drunk in the street, or committing burglary or theft? Should we not feel disgraced by his conduct? When he was brought before the magistrate would you like to have it said, "This person is the bosom friend of So-and-So"?

Oh, you would cover your face and beg your neighbors never to mention it. For such a fellow to be known as your friend would compromise your name and character. We say this even weeping, that Jesus Christ's name is compromised and His honor is tarnished among men by many who wear the name of Christian without having the spirit of Christ! Such cannot be His dear companions. Alas for the wounds which Jesus has received in the house of His friends! When Caesar fell, he was slain by the daggers of his friends! In trust he found treason. Those whose lives he had spared, spared not his life. Woe to those who, under the garb of Christianity, crucify the Lord afresh and put Him to an open shame!

Nothing burns Christ's cheeks like a Judas kiss and He has had many such. Those that obey Him not cannot be acknowledged by Jesus as His friends, for that would dishonor Him, indeed. Time was—I know not how it is now—when if any man wanted to be made a count, or to get an honorable title, he had only to pay so much at Rome into the Papal bank and he could be made a noble at once. The titles thus purchased were neither honorable to those who gave them nor to those who received them. Whatever his pretended vicar may do, our Lord Himself sells no dignities. The

title of "Friends of Jesus" goes with a certain character and cannot be otherwise obtained.

Those are His friends who obey Him—"If you love Me, keep My commandments." He grants this patent of nobility to all Believers who lovingly follow Him, but on His list of friends He enters none beside. Do you not see that His honor requires this? Would you have our Lord stand up and say, "The drunk is My friend"? Would you hear Him say, "That fraudulent bankrupt is My intimate companion"? Would you have Jesus claim friendly companionship with the vicious and profane? A man is known by his company—what would be thought of Jesus if His intimate associates were men of loose morals and unrighteous principles? To go among them for their good is one thing. To make them His friends is another.

Where there is no kinship, no likeness, no point of agreement, the fair flower of friendship cannot take root. We may, therefore, read the text negatively, "You are *not* My friends, if you do *not* the things which I command you."

III. Our third observation is—THOSE WHO BEST OBEY CHRIST ARE ON THE BEST OF TERMS WITH HIM. "You are My friends," He seems to say, "and live near to Me, enjoying practical personal friendship and daily communion with Me when you promptly obey." Some of you know by personal experience, Brothers and Sisters, that you cannot walk in holy union with Christ unless you keep His commandments. There is no feeling of communion between our souls and Christ when we are conscious of having done wrong and yet are not sorry for it. If we know that we have erred, as we often do, and our hearts break because we have grieved our Beloved and we go and tell Him our grief and confess our sin, we are still His friends and He kisses away our tears, saying, "I know your weakness. I willingly blot out your offenses. There is no breach of friendship between us. I will still manifest Myself to you."

When we know that we are wrong and feel no softening of heart about it, then we cannot pray, we cannot speak with the Beloved and we cannot walk with Him as His friends. Familiarity with Jesus ceases when we become familiar with known sin. If, again, knowing any act to be wrong we persevere in it, there cannot be any happy friendship between us and our Savior. If conscience has told you, dear Brother, that such-and-such a thing ought to be given up and you continue in it, the next time you are on your knees you will feel yourself greatly hampered. And when you sit down before your open Bible and hope to have communion with Christ as you have formerly enjoyed, you will find that He has withdrawn Himself and will not be found by you. Is there any wonder?

If sin lies at the door, how can the Lord smile on us? Secret sin will poison communion at the fountainhead. If there is a quarrel between you and Christ and you are hugging to your bosom that which He abhors, how can you enjoy friendship? He tells you that sin is a viper that will kill you, but you reply, "It is a necklace of jewels" and, therefore, you put it about your neck. Do you wonder that because He loves you He is grieved at such mad behavior? Oh, do not thus bring injury upon yourself! Do not thus

pour contempt upon His wise commands! Some Christians will never get into full fellowship with Christ because they neglect to study His Word and search out what His will is. It ought to be a serious work with every Christian, especially in commencing his career, to find what is the will of his Lord on all subjects.

Half the Christian people in the world are content to ask, "What is the rule of our Church?" That is not the question—the question is—"What is the rule of Christ?" Some plead, "My father and mother before me did so." I sympathize, in a measure, with that feeling. Filial reverence commands admiration, but yet, in *spiritual* things we are to call no man, "father," but make the Lord Jesus our Master and exemplar. God has not placed your conscience in your mother's keeping, nor has He committed to your father the right or the power to stand responsible for you—every man must bear his own burden and render his own account.

Search the Scriptures for yourselves, each one of you, and follow no rule but that which is Inspired. Take your light directly from the sun! Let holy Scripture be your unquestioned rule of faith and practice and, if there is any point about which you are uncertain, I charge you by your loyalty to Christ, if you are His friends, try and find out what His will is. And when you once are sure upon that point, never mind the human authorities or dignitaries that oppose His Law. Let there be no question, no hesitation, no delay. If He commands you, carry out His will though the gates of Hell thunder at you! You are not His friends, or, at any rate, you are not His friends so as to enjoy the friendship unless you resolutely seek to please Him in all things!

The intimacy between you and Christ will be disturbed by sin. You cannot lean your head upon His bosom and say, "Lord, I know Your will, but I do not mean to do it." Could you look up into that dear face—that visage once so marred, now lovelier than Heaven, itself—and say, "My Lord, I love You, but I will not do Your will in *every* point"? By the very love He bears to you, He will chasten you for that rebellious spirit if you indulge in it! It is a horrible evil! Holy eyes will not endure it! He is a jealous lover and will not tolerate sin, which is His rival. "You are My friends if you do whatever I command you." Oh, Beloved, see to this! Under all the crosses and losses and trials of life, there is no comfort more desirable than the confidence that you have aimed at doing your Lord's will.

If a man suffers for Christ's sake while steadily pursuing the course of holiness, he may rejoice in such suffering. Losses borne in the defense of the right and the true are gains! Jesus is never nearer His friends than when they bravely bear shame for His sake. If we get into trouble by our own folly, we feel the smart at our very heart. But if we are wounded in our Lord's battles, the scars are honorable. For His sake we may accept reproach and bind it about us as a wreath of honor. Jesus delights to be the Companion of those who are cast out by kinsfolk and acquaintances for the Truth of God's sake and for fidelity to His Cross.

They may call the faithful one fanatic and enthusiast and all such ill-sounding names, but over these there is no need to fret, for the honor of

being Christ's friend infinitely outweighs the world's opinion. When we follow the Lamb wherever He goes, He is responsible for the results—we are not—

***“Though dark is my way, since He is my guide,
‘Tis mine to obey, ‘tis His to provide.”***

The consequences which follow from our doing right belong to God! Abhor the theory that for the sake of a great good you may do a little wrong! I have heard men say, yes, Christian men, too, “If I were strictly to follow my convictions I should have to leave a post of great usefulness and, therefore, I remain where I am and quiet my conscience as well as I can. I should lose opportunities of doing good which I now possess if I were to put in practice all I believe and, therefore, I remain in a position which I could not justify on any other ground.”

Is this according to the mind of Jesus? Is this your kindness to your Friend? How many bow in the house of Rimmon and hope that the Lord will have mercy upon His servants in this thing? We shall see if it will be so. We may not do evil that good may come! If I knew that to do right would shake this whole island I should be bound to do it! God helping me, I would do it! And if I heard that a wrong act would apparently bless a whole nation, I have no right to do wrong on that account. No bribe of supposed usefulness should purchase our conscience. Right is right and must always end in blessing—and wrong is wrong and must always end in curse, though for a while it may wear the appearance of surpassing good. Did not the devil lead our first parents astray by the suggestion that great benefit would arise out of their transgression? “Your eyes shall be opened and you shall be as gods,” said the arch-deceiver!

Would it not be a grand thing for men to grow unto gods? “Certainly,” says Eve, “I would not lose the opportunity. The race which is yet to be would blame me if I did. I would not have men remain inferior creatures through my neglect.” For the sake of the promised good, she ventured upon evil. Thousands of people sin because it seems so advantageous, so wise, so necessary, so sure to turn out well. Hear what Christ says—“You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.” If you do evil that good may come, you cannot walk with Jesus! But if your heart is set towards His statutes you shall find Him loving you and taking up His abode with you.

IV. Fourthly, by our text we are taught that **THE MOST FRIENDLY ACTION A MAN CAN DO FOR JESUS IS TO OBEY HIM**—“You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.” Rich men have thought to do the most friendly act possible towards Christ by giving an immense sum to build a church, or to found almshouses or schools. If they are Believers and have done this thing as an act of obedience to Christ's Law of stewardship, they have done well and the more of such munificence the better. But where splendid benefactions are given out of ostentation, or from the idea that some merit will be gained by the consecration of a large amount of wealth, the whole business is unacceptable!

If a man should give all the substance of his house for love it would utterly be contemned. Jesus asks not lavish expenditure, but *ourselves*. He has made this the token of true love—"If you do whatever I command you." "To obey is better than sacrifice and to listen than the fat of rams." However much we are able to give, we are bound to give it and should give it cheerfully. But if we suppose that any amount of giving can stand as a substitute for personal *obeying* we are greatly mistaken. To bring our wealth and not to yield our hearts is to give the casket and steal the jewels. How dare we bring our sacrifice in a leprous hand? We must be cleansed in the atoning blood before we can be accepted and our hearts must be changed before our offering can be pure in God's sight.

Others have imagined that they could show their friendliness to Christ by some remarkable action of self-mortification. Among Romanists, especially in the old times, it was believed that misery and merit went together and so men tortured themselves that they might please God. They went for many a day without washing themselves or their clothes and fancied that they thus acquired the odor of sanctity! I do not believe that Jesus thinks a man any more His friend because he is dirty. Some have put on a hair shirt, or have worn a chain belt next to their skin which made raw wounds. I do not think that the kind Lord Jesus counts these things to be friendly acts. Ask any humane person whether *he* would be gratified by knowing that a friend wore a hair shirt for his sake and he would answer, "Pray let the poor creature wear whatever is most *comfortable* to him and that will please me best."

The loving Jesus takes no delight in pain and discomfort—the starving of the body is no doctrine of His. John the Baptist might be an ascetic, but certainly Jesus was not—He came eating and drinking, a man among men! He did not come to demand the rigors of a hermitage or a monastery, else He had never been seen at feasts. When we hear of the nuns of St. Ann sleeping bolt upright in their coffins, we take no particular satisfaction in their doing so—a kind heart would beg them to go to bed. I went to a monastery some time ago and over each bed was a little cat-o'nine tails, which I sincerely hope was used to the satisfaction of the possessor, but I did not copy the idea and buy a couple for my sons! Neither have I sent one to each of my special friends, for I should never ask them to flog themselves as a proof of friendship!

Our Lord cannot be gratified by self-inflicted, self-invented tortures! These things are will-worship, which is no worship at all! You may fast 40 days if you like, but you will gain no merit by it. Jesus Christ has not demanded this as the gauge of friendship, neither will He regard us as His friends for this. He says, "You are My friends if you do whatever I command you," but He does not command you to starve, or to wear sackcloth, or to shut yourselves up in a cell. Pride invents these things, but Grace teaches obedience! Certain persons have thought it would be the noblest form of holy service to enter into brotherhoods and sisterhoods. They fancied that they would be Christ's friends, indeed, if they joined "the Society of Jesus."

I have sometimes asked myself whether it might not be well to form a league of Christian men all banded together, to live alone for Jesus and to give themselves up entirely and wholly to His work—but assuredly the formation of guilds, sisterhoods, or brotherhoods other than the great brotherhood of the Church of God is a thing never contemplated in the New Testament—you shall find no foreshadowing of Franciscans and Dominicans there! All godly women were Sisters of Mercy and all Christ-like men were of the Society of Jesus, but of monastic and conventual vows we read nothing! That which is not commanded in Scripture is superstition! We are to worship God according to His will, not according to our will.

And though I were to consecrate myself entirely to what Papists called the “religious life” and get away from the associations of ordinary men and try to spend my whole time in lonely contemplations, yet there would be nothing in it, because the Lord Jesus never required it at my hands. The thing that He *does* ask for is that we will do whatever He commands us. Why is it that people try to do something which He never commanded? A schoolmaster will suffer me to appeal to him on this point. If he said to a boy in the school, “Now is the time for you to take your slate and attend to arithmetic,” and the boy, instead, fetched his copy-book, would he not ask if he had understood him? If, after a few minutes, he finds the boy writing, does he say, “You have written that line very well?” Not at all! It is small matter whether the writing is well or ill done, for to be writing at all when he was told to be ciphering is a gross act of insubordination!

So is it with you and me. We may do something else and do it splendidly well and other people may say, “What a pious man he is.” But if we do not the Lord’s will, we shall not be His friends. We may wear a piece of leather for a sandal and brown serge for a garment and not wear boots and coats, but there is no Grace in apparel! Excellence lies in doing what Christ has commanded! Some think it a very friendly act towards Christ to attend many religious services in a consecrated building. They are at matins and vespers and feasts and fasts without number. Some of us prefer to have our religious services each day in our own homes and it will be a dreadful thing when family prayer is given up for public services. But a number of people think little of family devotion—they need to go to the parish church or to some other temple made with hands—but let no man *dream* that Jesus is thus made our friend!

We are not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is. It is well to be found meeting with God’s people as often as we can. But still, you may multiply your sacraments and increase your ceremonies and you may attend to this service and to the other service until your heart is worn away with grinding at the mill of outward religion—but you are Christ’s friends only if you do whatever He commands you—that is a better test than early communion or daily “mass.” It comes to this, dear friends, that we must steadily, carefully, persistently, cheerfully do the will of God from the heart in daily life—from the first waking moment till our eyes are closed. Say concerning everything, “What would Jesus have me do about this? What is the teaching of Christ as to this?”

“Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks unto God and the Father by Him.”

You may be a domestic servant and never be able to give a pound to church work, but you are Jesus’ friend if you do whatever He commands you. You may be a housewife and not able to do anything outside of the little family which requires all your attention, but if you are fulfilling your duty to your children, doing that which Christ commands you, you are among the friends of Jesus! You may be only a plain working man, or a tradesman with a small shop. Nobody hears of your name, but if you set the example of honesty, uprightness and piety, doing all things as to Christ because He has saved you, He will call you His friend. What patent of nobility can equal this? Friendship with Christ is worth a thousand dukedoms!

The practical outcome of it all is this—examine every question as to duty by the light of this one enquiry—“Will this be a friendly action to Christ? If I do this, shall I act as Christ’s friend? Will my conduct honor Him? Then I am glad. If it will dishonor Him, I will have nothing to do with it.” Set each distinct action, as far as you are able, in the scales and let this be the weight—is it a friendly action towards your Redeemer? I wish that we all lived as if Jesus were always present, as if we could see His wounds and gaze into His lovely countenance. Suppose that tomorrow you are brought into temptation by being asked to do something questionable? Decide it this way—if Jesus could come in at that moment and show you His hands and His feet, how would you act in His sight?

Behave as you would act under the realized Presence of the Well-Beloved. You would not do anything unkind to Him, would you? Certainly you would not do anything to grieve Him if you saw Him before your eyes! Well, keep Him always before you. The Psalmist cried, “I have set the Lord always before me.” You will need much of the Holy Spirit’s anointing to do this. May God give it to you. Live, dear Friends, as if Christ would come at once and detect you in the very act. Do that which you would not be ashamed of if the next instant you should see the Lord sitting on the Throne of His Glory and calling you before His bar. Thus living, you shall delight yourself in the abundance of peace—

***“So shall your walk be close with God,
Calm and serene your frame.
So purer light shall mark the road
That leads you to the Lamb.”***

Obedience will gladden you with the blissful Presence of your Lord and in that Presence you shall find fullness of joy. You shall be the envied of all wise men, for you shall be the beloved of the Lord. And your pathway, if it is not always smooth, shall always be safe, for Jesus never leaves His friends and He will never leave you! He will keep you even to the end. May this be my happy case and yours. Amen.

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FRIENDSHIP'S GUIDE

NO. 3437

A SERMON
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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“You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.”
John 15:14.

IT is very easy to understand how Jesus Christ is our Friend. Did ever anyone deserve the name so well? Who can prove his friendship as Jesus proved it by laying down His life for those He calls His friends? But it is a mark of wonderful condescension on His part that He should call us His friends and it confers upon us the highest conceivable honor that such a Lord as He is, so infinitely superior to us, should condescend to enter into terms of friendship with us. My Friend, O Jesus, You are, for You have redeemed my soul from death and Hell—but that I should be Your *friend*—nothing but Your loving, condescending tenderness could ever have conceived of this! If you do put such a title as this upon me, teach me how I may act in conformity with it. Beloved, there is *a mutual friendship* between Christ and the Believer. There cannot be friendship if it is all on one side. There is bounty, there is kindness and there may be some gratitude in return, but friendship is a reciprocal thing. In its fullest sense, it is between two, and the one heart must be as the other heart, or else there is no friendship. Now every Believer is a friend to Jesus, and Jesus is a Friend to him. They are friends because they have a mutual love for each other. The Believer does not love His Lord as much as Jesus loves him, for his heart is little compared with Jesus' heart. But when the Believer is in a right state, he loves Jesus with all his heart, soul and strength. He feels that there is none in the world that can have a place in his affections at all comparable with his Lord and Master. He can say—

***“My Jesus I love You: I know You are mine,
For You, all the follies of sin I resign.”***

And if Jesus loves us, we also love Him. Friendship has in it *a mutual delight*. Two friends value each other. Now the delight of Jesus is with the sons of men. In those whom He has redeemed with His blood, He sees the satisfaction for the travail of His soul. He says of His Church that her name is Hephzibah—“My delight is in her”—and on the other hand, the Believer's delight is in Christ. “He is all my salvation and all my desire,” says the Believer. “He is the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely.” None can be compared with Him. It is sweet to think of the saint looking on the Savior and the Savior looking on the saint—and the

two, together, blending their love in mutual delight in each other. This love and this delight lead to mutual converse. Persons can hardly maintain friendship if they only see each other now and then. If there is no communion by letter or in any other way, I should think friendship could scarcely be maintained. But oh, Jesus reveals Himself to His people and His people tell out their hearts to Jesus! Do not suppose that because He is not here, for He is risen, that therefore we have no conversation with Him. Our prayers speak into His ears, our tears fall into His heart. When we are wounded, His wounds bleed afresh. He is the Head, and we the members and, however great the body, if you wound the body, the head feels it at once, so close is the communion. Yes, and we do converse with Him in meditation, in adoration, alone in our chambers. Though we have not seen Him with these eyes, which are, after all, poor things, we have seen Him with our soul's eyes, which are brighter eyes by far! And as we have beheld Him, our soul has melted for joy in the glance of His beauty.

Now to make friendship, there will be not only mutual love, delight, and conversation, but friends must have *harmony of thought*. I will not say identity, for man and man must always be two, and Christ and His people, though one in some respects, are two existences. But though two notes, though different, may be in perfect harmony, so is it with the heart of Christ and the heart of His renewed child. What Jesus loves, we love. what Jesus hates, we hate. What Jesus seeks, we seek—what Jesus shuns, we shun. This is true friendship when there is but one heart in two bodies, and when one heart in the two produces with undivided strength one objective. Now Christ's objective is His Father's Glory. If you are Christ's friends, that objective is yours, too. His objective is to seek and save the lost—if you love Him, you also seek to save the lost in your way. He loves truth, holiness, righteousness. He delights in that which puts an end to misery, to evil, to cruelty, to wrong-doing. Do you delight in the same? If so, unity of design, harmony of thought will very greatly make up the friendship between you and Jesus. Oh, and we are going to the same great end! Where He is, there our hearts are drawn. We are living here for the same purpose that brought Him here—and when our work is done, the same reward that gladdened Him, shall also gladden us—we also shall enter into the joy of our Lord! Some of you do not know much about this—I am talking strange things to some of you. Jesus—yes, you read of Him. Jesus—you hear of Him. It is proper to receive His name, but oh, you have never spoken with Him! You have never known Him to be real nor conceived of Him as such! I pray that you may be made spiritual, may be born-again. Until you are, you cannot be a friend of Christ. But when you are, and may it come now, this very hour, may you discover that He is a great Friend, and then, out of love to Him, may you become a friend of His!

Now we are not left in the dark as friends of Jesus as to the best way of showing our friendship. Two persons may be great friends and one may wish to serve the other, and say, "I hardly know what I can do to please my friend. I wish I knew his needs. I wish I knew his desires—I

would strive to gratify them.” Now you have, tonight, given to you as lovers of Jesus—you have the guide as to how you can prove yourselves His friends. “You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.” We have, then, in the text, the guide for friendship, and I will say this about it—it contains seven things. The first is—

I. TRUE FRIENDS OF CHRIST, HIMSELF, DISTINCTLY ACKNOWLEDGE HIS TRUE POSITION TOWARDS THEMSELVES.

That position is contained in these words, “I command you.” We are friends of Jesus, but Jesus must still be first—“I *command* you.” The genuine friend of Christ does not command himself—he has taken Christ’s yoke upon him and is now Christ’s servant. He does not, now, follow his own whims in religion, nor does he think he is to be dictator to himself. In becoming Christ’s friend, he agrees to subordinate his mind and will to the supremacy of Christ Jesus the Lord. Now then, friend of Jesus, note this! You are not your own—from now on not your own master, neither are you your own guide. I am often afraid when I hear persons talk of the glorious excellence of liberty of conscience, that they make a mistake as to what liberty of conscience is. What is liberty of conscience? Is it liberty to believe anything I like—liberty to hold any Doctrine I please? No! It is such liberty with regard to the civil magistrate and with regard to my fellow man. Before my fellow man I have a right to believe what I will, and he may not call me to account—I am free there. But does such freedom exist before God? I think not! The friend of Jesus asks to have his conscience taught. He lays his judgment at the feet of the great Teacher and all the liberty that he wants for his conscience is to have it purified and cleansed, that it may be a fit guide for him to follow—otherwise a distorted, perverted, dark, polluted conscience may as readily lead a man to Hell as if he never had a conscience at all! It is not because I am conscientious that I am right. As I have often told you, a man may conscientiously drink arsenic or prussic acid and believe that it will do him good—but he would die for all that. Ah, and a man might conscientiously believe a lie, and he will reap the fruit of that lie! You are a friend of Jesus, to take your command from His lips and lay down at His feet, for He says, “I command you.”

But mark, though Christ has to command His friends, *we are not to let anyone else command us*. Oh, shun the slavery of all who take their religion from men, be they who they may, whether called priests or presbyters, or from human creeds or books! Read them, gather what you can from them all, but, “One is your Master, even Christ,” and all you are brethren. No Church may lord it over your minds, for the Church may err, but not so Christ. “Whatever I command you,” says He. He is Infallible—He will bid you do no ill! But a Church of fallible men is still fallible, and may slide aside, first a little, then more, then much, then monstrously—then utterly apostatize from the faith of God’s elect! Therefore your Guide, your Leader, is no one but Jesus! “Do whatever I command you.” There is too much among us of doing whatever our particular *religion* may command us. I charge you, Brothers and Sisters, do nothing of

the sort! What are your councils? What are your assemblies? Nothing—less than nothing, I think! If they decree anything contrary to God's will, they are mischief makers. Christ is the Head of the Church, and He has not vacated His high position in the midst of His Israel. Yield to Him! Go to the fountainhead, the statute book that shows His will, and get it there. You have enough there, though all contradict you. You have enough there, and all the councils of the fathers, and all the Church will be less than the small dust in the balance if you find not the law to be Christ's! Whatever He says, the true friend of Jesus does—neither less nor more—for he knows that none can legislate in his realm but the King, Himself, and all that pretend to legislate do but err when they get away from the, "It is written," of the grand old Word of God!

Remember, too, all friends of Christ's, that *this Doctrine of Christ's supremacy stands good always*. He is your Lord and He is to command you everywhere, not only in your religious thought, but at home, in the chamber, in the parlor, in the drawing room, outside, in the street, on the mart, on the Exchange, in your shop. His rule contained in His own life—His Golden Rule, "Do you to others as you would have them do to you"—His new commandment that you love one another—these are always binding! A soldier may have a furlough, but a Christian never does. You might plead that concerning such-and-such a law you were exempt before men—but to Christ you are never exempt, nor would you wish to be, for His service is freedom, and His Law, O friend of Christ, has now become your delight! Grasp, then, that first thought, "You are My friends if I command you"—if you recognize Him as being the Leader and the Commander unto you, His people. You must recognize Christ in that capacity—and Him only—or you are not His friends!

But note, again, the text has in it a word which I may paraphrase in this way—

II. WE ARE TO RECOGNIZES OUR OWN PERSONAL OBLIGATIONS.

You are my friends if you do whatever I command *you*. The mass of mankind who pretend to be religious, suppose this Bible to be written to all sorts of good people, but not particularly to themselves. And there are they who think that the commands of Christ are very proper to be read, and to be heard, and to be proclaimed—but they do not look upon them as being binding on themselves. Friend of Jesus, Jesus has a right to your service and to your obedience! What He bids, He bids you—if to no other, yet to you. Then the zeal of some good men does not exempt me. If my minister is very useful, that is not myself. I am Christ's friend if I do whatever He commands me. Then the intense fervor of the Church does not permit me to recoil and say, "There is nothing for me to do." No, I am His friend if I do what He commands me. If, on the other hand, I dwell among a slumbering Church, if I see all around me the signs of sloth, yet I am not to judge the Church and excuse myself, and say, "I do as much as others—perhaps a little more. I am not so hardhearted as So-and-So." Oh, Sirs, what have you to do with your brethren, with your fellow servants? To your own Master you must stand or fall, as they must—and

you are Christ's friend if you do whatever He commands you! It does seem to be very difficult to get men to individualize themselves in the things of God. They do not count themselves rich because England is rich—they do not consider themselves to be getting rich because the bank interest rate is lower! They want to get the solid coins in their own grasp and to their own banking account! But when I come to religion, men talk of this denomination and that Church, and that other—anything but about themselves! But you, O friend of Christ, you must live before the Lord as though there were no other! “You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.” Now we will lay the force of our thought on another word. Observe here that—

III. THE TRUE FRIEND OF CHRIST OBSERVES CAREFULLY ALL THAT CHRIST SAYS.

It is not “You are My friends if you do *some* things that I command you.” But, “You are My friends if you do *whatever* I command you”—*whatever*. Are there public duties? Do they require courage? I must perform them. Are there private duties? Are they unseen of men? They are as much incumbent upon me—I must discharge them. Are there commands of precept by way of ordinance? I must keep them. Are there commands by way of morals? I must obey them, however hard or stern they may seem. *Whatever* Christ commands is the Law to His people. O England, England, when will the day come back when this Book which is said to be the only religion of Protestants shall be truly so? The Bible, and the Bible, only, is the religion of Protestants—so they say, but it is not so! There are many things practiced by so-called Protestants that are not here! Where are your holy baptisms? Where are your confirmations? Where are half the ceremonies, if not all, of the Church of England and many other bodies? They are inventions of man, and man only, having not so much as a shred or trace of foundation in God's own Book! You have made another book—your bishops have made another book—and laid it on the top of God's own book, and these are your Bible—not the Bible, and the Bible only, but the Book of Common Prayer! And with other denominations—dissenting denominations—there is too much of the same sort of thing. “What said John Calvin?” What care I what he said, or did not say? “What said John Wesley?” What care I what John Wesley said, or did not say? The Master—the MASTER—let us do whatever *HE* commands us! These were His good servants, as I believe, both of them, John Wesley and John Calvin—and if they did better than I, which I know they did, therein will I rejoice and bless God, and wherein they followed the Master, I, with unequal footsteps, would seek to follow, too—but to say that I will do this because John this or John that taught it—shame on the Christian that dares to bow his head to such a yoke as that! Let every Christian contend for this—that he is to do whatever Christ commands! Does it kick over the conventionalities of the Church? Let them go over! Does it burn the tag rags you thought so much of—your venerable things that you laid up as holy relics? Burn every one of them! What right have they to stand in contradiction to the Law of Christ? No,

whatever He commands—not more, not less—this is to be our religion and our Law, and to it let every Christian stand! Happy day shall it be for the Church and for the world when this is true! Once more, it is clear from one word, that—

IV. THE TEXT IS VERY PRACTICAL.

“You are My friends if you *do* whatever I command you”—not “if you do some things.” Not, “if you talk about it,” for lip service is hypocrisy! Not, “if you tell others to do it”—there is a great deal of religion that is very much like charity, and you know what charity is! A sees B is very badly off and he writes a letter at once to C to help B. So is it with religion—A sees it a duty that such a thing should be done and tells B that he is very wrong not to do it. That is what is called religion. But as I understand religion, it is this—A sees B needing help and gives it to him! A sees a duty and does it, himself, and after he has done it, himself, then he may talk to B about it—but not till then! “You are My friends if you *do* whatever I command you.” Well, some of you have been thinking about it a long while—it is time for you to *do* it! He commands you to love your brother—you have been talking about that—well, do it! Don't grumble and complain, and criticize any longer. You know He commands you to forgive any who offend you. Do not *know* it any longer, but go and *do* it! Some of you believe that you ought to be baptized and make a profession of your faith. What is the good of thinking of it? Go and do it! Go and do it! It is in the keeping of His commandments that there is great reward! He does not do the will of God who says, “Well, I am turning it over, and one of these days I suppose I shall be moved to do it.” What do you need to move you but this—that you owe everything to Christ—and that Christ commands you? A soldier in the day of battle only needs the command, and on he marches—and a true friend of Jesus pays to Him as perfect an obedience as a soldier to his captain, or at least he desires to do it. A lift of Jesus' finger and away he goes! One look from Jesus' eyes shall cause him to stop, or make a rapid advance, just as the word may be!

V. THIS COMMAND IS VERY SIMPLE.

I shall close by commending this text to you because it is so. You are My friends if you acknowledge Me your Master in everything—your own personal Master—and then do what I tell you. Now how plain is this? There is no mistake about it. It is obedience Christ asks for! “To obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams.” And what a blessing it is that this text gives us such a very simple thing to do! Suppose Jesus Christ were to say, “That man is My friend who will support a minister, who will build a place of worship, who will go out abroad for a missionary.” Oh, there are some of you who would weep and say, “I can do none of those things! I wish I could! It would be my greatest pleasure if I could.” My dear Friends, the poorest man, the poorest woman here who is a true friend of Christ can do this—you can do whatever He commands you! By the power of His blessed Spirit who has made you love Him, you can watch earnestly to be holy, to be loving as Jesus was. The notion with a great many is, “I need to show that I am Christ's friend—

now I must shut myself up and get away from everybody.” That is not what Christ says! He says, “Do whatever I command you”—not run away from the battle, but fight through and win it. “No, but,” says another, “what can I do to praise my Savior? I must speak about Him.” Yet, perhaps, that dear friend could not put three words together consecutively. Dear Brother, if God has not given you that gift, you need not cry that you have not got it! Go and do whatever He commands you—that will be better than sacrifice. I know some persons who are very attentive to sermons. I am glad they are. They wish to get out on weeknights, and I am glad they are. I wish all were able to. But many a mother will be serving God much better by keeping the house clean, and the garments mended, than by coming to hear a sermon! You must do *whatever* He commands you, and what He commands you as a wife, is to discharge a wife's duty.

When I sometimes see a religious serving man, a great talker, who does not groom his employer's horses well, and who, if he can get an excuse for leaving work, will, I think, “That man might do more good in minding his employer's business than in running here and there to make a show of religion.” I believe plain, holy, godly living is more needed—a great deal more—than fine preaching! And if my preaching does not, by God's Grace, produce in you a finer character than that, then I am preaching for nothing! I heard of a man the other day who could preach with his feet, and I know a great many who do. That is, preaching with living and daily walk and conversation. It is, after all, to be upright in business, to be affectionate in the family, to make those around you happy, to *live* Christ—that is, after all, true friendship with Christ! No big words of ready talkers, no polished periods, no gift of prayer will ever be so acceptable to the Lord Jesus Christ as the simple piety that graces the fireside, that adorns the private and the public life of the Believer. “You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.” Practically to prove that Jesus Christ is your Lord is the highest service that you can, any of you, render to Him! May God help you to render it from this time forth with undeviating correctness! And with the help of His Spirit may you yet do it more and more. Let me conclude by observing that though this seems a very simple thing, yet after all—

VI. IT IS A MOST USEFUL AND NECESSARY THING.

It is not possible that a rebel should be a friend to Christ. If a man says of any Law of Christ, “I do not mean to keep that,” then, Sir, you have virtually said, “I do not mean to have Christ for my Lord,” and that means that you cannot have Him as your Savior. If you do not know a thing to be Christ's, well, I believe you are still sinful, for you ought to know it. The laws of our country never excuse a person for breaking the law because he says he did not know the law. It is presumed that everybody ought to know it. And the Bible is not such a Book as they cannot understand if they try. Any person can find out Christ's will if he likes. But suppose you know it is Christ's will, and do not choose to do it—if you put your foot down and say, “I shall not do it,” then there is an end of all friendship! Obedience, then, is an essential of true friendship to

Christ, for those who make a profession of friendship and don't do what He commands are the worst enemies He has! No city that is besieged need fear so much the enemy outside, as treachery inside. If there is known to be treachery inside, then the stress of war becomes severe. So if inside the Church there are persons who deliberately say, "We are disciples of Christ, but we will not be obedient to His will," there is sedition and treason inside the camp! And these are they of whom Paul said, "I have told you even weeping—that they are the enemies, the special enemies, of the Cross of Christ." And let me say this keeping of the Law of Christ is, after all—

VII. THE BEST WAY OF SERVING HIM AS A MATTER OF USEFULNESS.

Sermons preached at home are the best sermons. Sermons at sick beds by holy women, sermons to drunk husbands by the patient godliness of the much-suffering wife, sermons by holy fathers and mothers in their loving anxiety for wayward sons and daughters, sermons by servants in the rectitude of their conduct to their employers, sermons by Christian tradesmen preached in their bills and in their trade by strict attention to everything upright—these are sermons that the world must hear! These are things that will glorify Christ! These are the most friendly actions that you can do for Jesus. You raise His name in the market, you make men think the better of His religion by the holiness and consistency of your conduct. You are His friend!

I dismiss you with this upon your minds. If you are His friends, obey His command, imitate His example and seek to have this not in theory, but as a matter of fact of daily life. The day will come, my Hearers, when to be a friend of Christ will be the grandest thing beneath the heavens. He is an exiled Prince in regard to this world, now, and men despise Him, but He is coming to His crown before long! And when He shall appear in the clouds of Heaven, as He shortly shall, all those who were His friends on earth, who stood in the pillory with Him and suffered for Him—these shall shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of His Father! Oh, it will then be a grand day, a brave day, for those who died for Him, for those who were made poor for conscience sake, for those who left kindred and friends for His name. I think I hear the King say, "Make way, angels! Make way, cherubim and seraphim! These poor men and women were friends of Mine! When I was in exile, they suffered with Me. They were willing to bear reproach for Me—let them come! They shall be courtiers round My Throne. They were friends of Mine in My humiliation—they shall be friends with Me in My Glory. "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the world." And oh, how will all men who were *not* His friends—how they will hide their heads and wish they had never been born to continue at enmity with Him! They did not know who it was they were despising when they laughed at His people. They did not know what it was they trampled on when they put their profane feet upon the Cross of Christ. They did not know who they insulted when they broke the Sabbath and lived god-

less, Christless lives—but they will know it then, when they see the King on His throne, for their cry will be—their bitter lament shall be—“Fall on us, you mountains! Cover us, you rocks, and hide us—hide us from the face of Him that sits on the Throne.” What? Can you not face Him? You used to jeer at His people! You used to say, “It is all nonsense, this religion.” Cannot you face Him? Cannot you face Him? He has not spoken yet! No thunderbolts are in His hand. Can you not face Him? No, they are ashamed—they dare not look, they dare not gaze on such heavenly beauty! They seek shelter—they hold their hands before their eyes. They ask the mountains to afford them a hiding place, for could they be such fools as to despise Him who died for His enemies, to despise the Christ of God, to despise the Everlasting Creator who out of mighty love, gave up His life for men? Before He speaks a word, before He pronounces a sentence, this shame shall begin their Hell, “Hide us from the face of Him that sits on the Throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.”

God bless you, dear Friends, save you by His great mercy, richly bless every one of you and make you Christ's friends. Amen and amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 12:37-50; ISAIAH 6.**

Verse 37. *But though He had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on Him.* They had an opportunity of seeing with their eyes what the Christ could do. He had even raised the dead in the midst of them—and yet this is the sorrowful statement.

38-40. *That the saying of Isaiah the Prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke, Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Isaiah said again, He has blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts and be converted, and I should heal them.* This passage is very frequently quoted in the Old Testament—it was so exceedingly appropriate to the condition of the unbelieving Jews. They were willfully blinded. They could see it. They were forced to hear it. There was much that even touched their hearts, but they hardened their hearts against it, and to this day they remain the same!

41-43. *These things said Isaiah, when he saw His glory and spoke of Him. Nevertheless, among the chief rulers also many believed on Him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue. For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.* And this is a common disease to this day. There are many who know the Truths of God who, nevertheless, keep very quiet about it. They do not like to be despised. They cannot endure to seem to be separate from their fellow men—it is not respectable to be decided for Christ and to come out from among them—so they love the praise of men more than the praise of God!

44. *Jesus cried and said, He that believes on Me, believes not on Me, but on Him that sent Me.* Faith in Christ is faith in God—he that trusts the Son has accepted the witness of the Father!

45. *And He that sees Me sees Him that sent Me.* Wonderful expression! Perhaps we never fully realize it. Christ is seeable. God is not—but when we see the Christ, we do virtually see all of God that we may desire to see! The Invisible has made Himself visible in Christ—in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

46. *I am come a light into the world, that whoever believes on Me should not abide in darkness.* True faith in Christ sheds light on everything concerning which light is desirable. You shall understand things when you have come unto the right standpoint, when you have gotten to believe in Christ. I wonder not that those who doubt concerning Him, doubt about everything—if they will not have this light, how shall they see?

47. *And if any man hears My words and believes not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.* Under this present dispensation, it is not the time of judgment. The Lord leaves you that are unbelievers to yourselves. He does not come as yet, to judge you—there is a Second Coming when He will be both Judge and Witness—and Condemner of those who have rejected Him! But at present it is a dispensation of pure mercy. “He that rejects Me, and receives not My words, has One that judges Him.” There is a great God above who reckons this to be among the greatest of all human crimes—that they reject His Son. We speak of unbelief very lightly, and there are some who trifle with it as if it had no moral quality at all—but God does not!

48. *He that rejects Me, and receives not My words, has One that judges him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.* Look, you, to that—the Gospel which you refuse will judge you at the last day! We know that the Lord Jesus Christ shall judge the world, says Paul, “according to my Gospel,” and he that sins against the Gospel of love will certainly involve himself in the most solemn condemnation! He perishes that sins against the law—he dies without mercy at the mouth of one or two witnesses. Of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy, who sins against love and rejects the Savior?

49. *For I have not spoken of Myself; but the Father which sent Me, He gave Me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak.* God at the back of Christ. Omnipotence supporting Love. The expostulations of Christ, not left to our will to do as we like with them, but solemnly sanctioned by the royalties of God, so that to refute them is treason against the Majesty of Heaven!

50. *And I know that His commandment is life everlasting: whatever I speak, therefore, even as the Father said unto Me, so I speak.* The eternal authority of God is at the back of the testimony of Christ. Oh, that men would not be so unwise as to reject it! Now in our reading at the 41st verse we met with these words— “These things said Isaiah, when he saw

His Glory and spoke of Him.” Now let us read the passage which gives us an account of Isaiah’s seeing the Glory of Christ.

ISAIAH 6.

Verse 1. *In the year King Uzziah died.* You remember him, that leprous king, that king who had thrust himself into the priests’ office and was struck with leprosy, and shut up in a separate house during the rest of his life. In the year that he died, Isaiah saw a greater King, whom no defilement can ever touch, a King that reigns and lives forever, though Uzziah dies.

1. *I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the Temple.* Whenever you read in the Old Testament that any man saw the Lord—understand it is the Second Person of the Divine Trinity—the Lord Jesus Christ! He makes Himself, as we have said, visible to men, and God in Him.

2. *Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he did fly.* There are the spirits that dwell in the Presence of God, nearest to Him, and as He is a consuming fire, they come to be like He, for the seraphims are burning ones, consumers, burning and shining lights who wait upon God who is Light of Life. Notice how humble they are in that Presence—they cover themselves before that Infinite Majesty!

3, 4. *And one cried upon another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of Hosts: the whole earth is full of His Glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.* And if even the voice of a seraph moved the very foundations of the Temple, what will the voice of God do when He shall speak once more? According to that word, He shall shake not only earth, but also Heaven! What awe and trembling should be upon us when we wait upon God, if even the posts of the doors move! “Then said I, woe is me!” All God’s saints do this when they get a view of Him. There was never a boastful thought in any man’s mind in the Presence of God. They that talk of their own purity have not known God, neither seen Him. How could they? This is the cry of all the purified when they come into the Presence of God—“Woe is me, for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips.” What made him think of lips, but the voice of the seraphim as responsively they cried to one another, “Holy, holy, holy”? Then Isaiah thought of his own lips! Oh, Brothers and Sisters, what impurity comes out of our lips! Perhaps more, there, than anywhere else is the impurity of the heart discovered in our idle words, our evil words.

5-7. *Then said I, Woe is me! For I am undone because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of Hosts. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar. And he laid it upon my mouth and said, Lo, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged.* Just where Isaiah felt the impurity, there he felt the expiation!

His lips were unclean, but now a touch of the altar coal, a communication from the great Sacrifice, has taken all his iniquity away and his sin is buried!

8. *Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us? Then said I, Here am I: send me.* Observe the unity and the plurality, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?” Upon what theory, but that of the Doctrine of the Trinity, can we explain so singular a change from the singular to the plural? “Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us? Then said I, Here am I: send me.” This man, now so lowly, so purified with the vision of God, just seen by Him, how cheerfully does he spring forward at the word of invitation! “Here am I: send me.” Now see what a sorrowful mission, God, in these next verses, assured Isaiah that his ministry so far as the conversion of the Jews were concerned, would be altogether fruitless! They would not receive his testimony.

9, 10. *And He said Go, and tell this people, Hear you, indeed, but understand not; and see you, indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.* What a ministry—dark with insufferable light! So bright, so clear, that men should have willfully to harden their hearts and shut their eyes if they did not understand and receive it!

11, 12. *Then said I, Lord, how long? And He answered, Until the cities are wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land is utterly desolate. And the LORD has removed men far away and there is a great forsaking in the midst of the land.* So it happened, as you know—the people were carried away captive. They still refused—they would not believe even when Christ came! And then the destruction of Jerusalem and the sweeping clear of their country was the final stroke of God. “But yet in it shall be a tenth.” There is always a gleam of light from God’s Grace in the thickest darkness of His Justice. God has His tithe.

13. *But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return, and shall be eaten: as a teil tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves; so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof.* And, therefore, the Jewish nation is not destroyed, but still exists—and the Church of God is not destroyed, despite all that happens to it. There is a substance in it, according to the election of Grace, for which may God be praised!

—Adapted from the *C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY

NO. 194

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON THE SABBATH MORNING, MAY 16, 1858,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin:
but now they have no cloak for their sin.”
John 15:22.***

THE peculiar sin of the Jews, the sin which aggravated above everything their former iniquities, was their rejection of Jesus Christ as the Messiah. He had been very plainly described in the books of the Prophets and they who waited for Him, such as Simeon and Anna, no sooner beheld Him even in His infant state, than they rejoiced to see Him and understood that God had sent forth His salvation.

But because Jesus Christ did not answer the expectation of that evil generation—because He did not come arrayed in pomp and clothed with power, because He had not the outward garnishing of a prince and the honors of a king, they shut their eyes against Him. He was “a root out of a dry ground,” He was “despised and they esteemed Him not.”

Nor did their sin stop there. Not content with denying his Messiahship, they were exceeding hot against Him in their anger. They hunted Him all His life, seeking His blood. Nor were they content till their fiendish malice had been fully glutted by sitting down at the foot of the Cross and watching the dying throes and the expiring agonies of their crucified Messiah. Though over the Cross itself the words were written, “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews,” yet they knew not their king, God’s everlasting Son. And knowing Him not, they crucified Him, “for had they known Him, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory.”

Now, the sin of the Jews is every day repeated by the Gentiles. That which they did once, many have done every day. Are there not many of you now present this day, listening to my voice, who forget the Messiah? You do not trouble yourself to deny Him. You would not degrade yourselves, in what is called a Christian country, by standing up to blaspheme His name. Perhaps you hold the right doctrine concerning Him and believe Him to be the Son of God as well as the Son of Mary. But still you neglect His claims and give Him no honor and do not accept Him as worthy of your trust. He is not your Redeemer. You are not looking for His second advent, nor are you expecting to be saved through His blood. No, even worse—you are this day crucifying Him—for know you not that as many as put away from them the Gospel of Christ, they crucify the Lord afresh and open wide His wounds?

As often as you hear the Word preached and reject it, as often as you are warned and stifle the voice of your conscience, as often as you are

made to tremble and yet say, "Go your way for this time, when I have a more convenient season, I will send for you," so often do you in effect grasp the hammer and the nail and once more pierce His hands and make the blood issue from His side. And there are other ways by which you wound Him through His members. As often as you despise His ministers, cast stumbling blocks in the way of His servants, impede His Gospel by your evil example, or by your hard words seek to pervert the seeker from the way of the Truth of God—then you commit that great iniquity which brought the curse upon the Jew and which has doomed him to wander through the earth, until the day of the second advent when *He* shall come who shall even by the Jew be acknowledged the King of the Jews—for whom both Jew and Gentile are now looking with anxious expectation, even Messiah, the Prince who came once to suffer, but who comes again to reign.

And now I shall endeavor this morning to show the parallel between your case and that of the Jew. Not doing so in set phrase, but yet incidentally, as God shall help me. I will appeal to your conscience and make you feel that in rejecting Christ you commit the same sin and incur the same doom. We shall note, first of all, *the excellence of the ministry, since Christ comes in it and speaks to men*—"If I had not spoken to them." We shall notice, secondly, *the aggravation of sin caused by the rejection of Christ's message*—"If I had not spoken to them they had not had sin." Thirdly, *the death of all excuses, caused by the preaching of the Word*—"Now they have no cloak for their sin." And then, in the last place, we shall briefly, but very solemnly announce *the fearfully aggravated doom of those who thus reject the Savior and increase their guilt by despising Him*.

I. In the first place, this morning it is ours to say and to say truly, too, that in THE PREACHING OF THIS GOSPEL THERE IS TO MAN'S CONSCIENCE THE COMING OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST AND THE SPEAKING OF THE SAVIOR THROUGH US. When Israel of old despised Moses and murmured against him, Moses meekly said, "You have not murmured against us, but you have murmured against the Lord God of Israel." And truly the minister may, with Scripture warrant, say the same—he that despises us, despises not us, but Him that sent us. He who rejects the message rejects not what we say, but rejects the message of the everlasting God.

The minister is but a man. He has no priestly power, but is a man called out of the rest of mankind and endowed with the Holy Spirit to speak to his fellow men. And when he preaches the Truth of God with power sent down from Heaven, God owns him by calling him His ambassador and puts him in the high and responsible position of a watchman on the walls of Zion. And God bids all men take heed that a faithful message, faithfully delivered, when despised and trampled on, amounts to rebellion against Him and to sin and iniquity against the Most High.

As for what I may say, as a man, it is but little that I should say it. But if I speak as the Lord's ambassador, take heed that you slight not the message. It is the Word of God sent down from Heaven which we preach

with the power of the Holy Spirit, earnestly beseeching you to believe it. And remember, it is at the peril of your own souls that you put it from you, for it is not we that speak, but the Spirit of the Lord our God who speaks in us. With what a solemnity does this invest the Gospel ministry!

O you sons of men, the ministry is not the speaking of men, but the speaking of God through men. As many as are the real, called, and sent servants of God, are not the authors of their message. But they first hear it from their Master and they speak it to the people and they see ever before their eyes these solemn words—"Take heed unto yourself and unto the doctrine. Continue in them—for in doing this you shall both save yourself and them that hear you."

And they hear behind them this awful threat—"If you warn them not they shall perish, but their blood will I require at your hand." Oh, that you might see written in letters of fire before you this day the words of the Prophet—"O earth, earth, earth, hear the Word of the Lord." For as far as our ministry is true and untainted by error, it is God's Word and it has the same right and claim to your belief as if God Himself should speak it from the top of Sinai, instead of speaking it through the humble ministry of the Word of God.

And now let us pause over this doctrine and let us ask ourselves this solemn question. Have we not all of us grossly sinned against God in the neglect that we have often put upon the means of grace? How often have you stayed away from the House of God when God Himself was speaking there? What would have been the doom of Israel if, when summoned on that sacred day to hear the Word of God from the top of the mountain, they had perversely rambled into the wilderness, rather than attend to hear it?

And yet that is what you have done. You have sought your own pleasure and listened to the siren song of temptation. You have shut your ear against the voice of the Most High. And when He has Himself been speaking in His own House, you have turned aside unto crooked ways and have not regarded the voice of the Lord your God. And when you have come up to the House of God, how often has there been the careless eye, the inattentive ear! You have heard as though you heard not. Your ear has been penetrated, but the hidden man of the heart has been deaf and you have been like the deaf adder. Charm we never so wisely, you would not listen nor regard us.

God Himself has spoken, too, at times in your conscience so that you have heard it. You have stood in the aisle and your knees have knocked together. You have sat in your pew and while some mighty Boanerges has thundered out the Word you have heard it said, as with an angel's voice, "*Prepare to meet your God—consider your way—set your house in order, for you shall die and not live.*" And yet you have gone out of God's House and have forgotten what manner of men you were.

You have quenched the Spirit, you have done despite to the Spirit of Grace. You have put far from you the struggles of your conscience. You have throttled those infant prayers that were beginning to cry in your

heart. You have drowned those new-born desires that were just springing up. You have put away from you everything that was good and sacred. You have turned again to your own ways and have once more wandered on the mountains of sin and in the valley of iniquity. Ah, my Friends, just think, then, for a moment, that in *all this you have despised God*.

I am certain if the Holy Spirit would but apply this one solemn truth to your consciences this morning, this Hall of Music would be turned into a house of mourning and this place would become a Bochim, a place of weeping and lamentation. Oh, to have despised God! To have trampled under foot the Son of Man, to have passed by His Cross, to have rejected the wooings of His love and the warnings of His grace! How solemn! Did you ever think of this before? You have thought it was but despising *man*—will you now think of it as despising Christ? For Christ has spoken to you.

Ah, God is my witness that oftentimes Christ has wept with these eyes and spoken to you with these lips. I have sought nothing but the winning of your souls. Sometimes with rough words have I endeavored to drive you to the Cross and at other times with weeping accents have I sought to weep you to my Redeemer. And I am sure I did not speak myself then, but Jesus spoke through me. And inasmuch as you did hear and weep and then went away and did forget, remember that Christ spoke to you.

It was He who said, “Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth.” It was He who said, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden.” It was He who warned you that if you neglected this great salvation you must perish. And in having put away the warning and rejected the invitation you have not despised *us*, but you have despised our Master. And woe unto you, except you repent, for ‘tis a fearful thing to have despised the voice of Him that speaks from Heaven.

II. And now we must notice the second point, namely, that THE REJECTION OF THE GOSPEL AGGRAVATES MEN’S SIN. Now, do not let me be misunderstood. I have heard of persons who, having gone to the House of God, have been filled with a sense of sin and at last they have been driven almost to despair, for Satan has tempted them to forsake the House of God. For says he, “The more you go, the more you increase your condemnation.” Now I believe that this is an error. We do not increase our condemnation by going to the House of God. We are far more likely to increase it by staying away. For in staying away from the House of God there is a *double* rejection of Christ.

You reject Him even with the outward mind, as well as with the inward spirit. You neglect even the lying at the pool of Bethesda—you are worse than the man who lay at the pool, but could not get in. You will not lie there and therefore, neglecting the hearing of the Word of God, you do indeed incur a fearful doom. But if you go up to the House of God sincerely seeking a blessing—if you do not get comfort—if you do not find grace in the means, still, if you go there devoutly seeking it, your condemnation is not increased.

Your sin is not aggravated merely by the hearing of the Gospel, but by the willful and wicked rejection of it when it is heard. The man who listens to the sound of the Gospel and after having heard it, turns upon his heel with a laugh, or who, after hearing time after time and being visibly affected, allows the cares and the pleasures of this wicked life to come in and choke the seed—such a man does in a fearful measure increase his guilt.

And now we will just notice why, in a two-fold measure, he does this. Because, in the first place *he gets a new sin that he never had before* and beside that, he aggravates all his other sins. Bring me here a Hottentot, or a man from Kamschatka—a wild savage who has never listened to the Word. That man may have every sin in the catalogue of guilt except one. But that one I am sure he has not. He has not the sin of rejecting the Gospel when it is preached to him. But you, when you hear the Gospel, have an opportunity for committing a fresh sin. And if you have rejected it, you have added a fresh iniquity to all those others that hang about your neck.

I have often been rebuked by certain men who have erred from the Truth of God, for preaching the doctrine that it is a sin in men, if they reject the Gospel of Christ. I care not for every scornful title—I am certain that I have the warrant of God's Word in so preaching and I do not believe that any man can be faithful to men's souls and clear of their blood unless he bears his frequent and solemn testimony upon this vital subject.

“When He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will reprove the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment—of sin, because they believe not in Me.” “And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world and men loved darkness rather than light.” “He that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” “If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin—but now have they both seen and hated both Me and My Father.”

“Woe unto you, Chorazin! Woe unto you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the Judgment, than for you.” “If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin.” “Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?”

“He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment, suppose you, shall he be thought worthy, who has trodden under foot the Son of God and has counted the blood of the Covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an un-

holy thing and has done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know Him that has said, Vengeance belongs unto Me, I will recompense, says the Lord. And again, the Lord shall judge His people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

I have been quoting, you see, some Scripture passages and if they do not mean that unbelief is a sin and *the* sin, which, above all others, damns men’s souls, they do not mean anything at all, but they are just a dead letter in the Word of God. Now, adultery, murder, theft and lying—all these are damning and deadly sins—but repentance can cleanse all these, through the blood of Christ. But to reject Christ destroys a man hopelessly. The murderer, the thief, the drunkard may yet enter the kingdom of Heaven, if, repenting of his sins, he will lay hold on the Cross of Christ. But with these sins a man is inevitably lost if he believes not on the Lord Jesus Christ.

And now, my Hearers, will you consider for one moment what an awful sin this is, which you add to all your other sins? Everything lies in the heart of this sin—the rejecting of Christ. There is murder in this. For if the man on the scaffold rejects a pardon, does he not murder himself? There is pride in this. For you reject Christ because your proud hearts have turned you aside. There is rebellion in this. For we rebel against God when we reject Christ. There is high treason in this. For you reject a king. You put far from you Him who is crowned king of the earth and you incur therefore the weightiest of all guilt.

Oh, to think that the Lord Jesus should come from Heaven—to think for a moment that He should hang upon the tree—that there He should die in agonies extreme and that from that Cross He should this day look down upon you and should say, “Come unto Me, you weary and you heavy laden”—that you should still turn away from Him—it is the unkindest stab of all. What more brutish, what more devilish, than to turn away from Him who gave His life for you? Oh that you were wise, that you understood this, that you would consider your latter end!

But again, we do not only add a new sin to the catalogs of guilt but *we aggravate all the rest*. You cannot sin so cheaply as other people, you who have had the Gospel. When the unenlightened and ignorant sin, their conscience does not prick them. And there is not that guilt in the sin of the ignorant that there is in the sin of the enlightened. Did you steal before? That was bad enough. But hear the Gospel and continue a thief and you are a thief, indeed. Did you lie before you heard the Gospel? The liar shall have his portion in the lake. But lie after hearing the Gospel, and it seems as if the fire of Tophet should be fanned up to a seven-fold fury. He who sins ignorantly has some little excuse. But he who sins against light and knowledge sins presumptuously.

Under the Law there was no atonement for this—presumptuous sins were out of the pole of legal atonement. But blessed be God, Christ has atoned for even these and he that believes shall be saved, despite even his guilt. Oh, I beseech you, remember that the sin of unbelief blackens every other sin. It is like Jeroboam. It is said of him he sinned and made Israel

to sin. So unbelief sins itself and leads to every other sin. Unbelief is the file by which you sharpen the axe—the coulter and the sword which you use in rebellion against the Most High. Your sins become more exceeding sinful the more you disbelieve in Christ, the more you know of Him and the longer you reject Him. This is God's Truth. But a Truth that is to be spoken with reluctance and with many groans in our spirits.

Oh to have such a message to deliver to you, to *you* I say, for if there is a people under Heaven to whom my text applies, it is you. If there is one race of men in the world who have more to account for than others, it is yourselves. There are doubtless others who are on an equality with you, who sit under a faithful and earnest ministry. But as God shall judge between you and me at the Great Day to the utmost of my power I have been faithful to your souls. I have never in this pulpit sought by hard words, by technical language, to magnify my own wisdom.

I have spoken to you plainly. And not a word, to the best of my knowledge, has escaped these lips which every one of you could not understand. You have had a simple Gospel. I have not stood here and preached *coldly* to you. I could say as I came up yon stairs, "The burden of the Lord was upon me." For my heart has come here heavy and my soul has been hot within me. And when I have preached feebly, my words may have been uncouth and my language far from proper, but my *heart* never has been wanting. This whole soul has spoken to you. And if I could have ransacked Heaven and earth to find language that might have won you to the Savior, I would have done so.

I have not shunned to reprove you, I have never minced matters. I have spoken to this age of its iniquities and to you of your sins. I have not softened down the Bible to suit the carnal tastes of men. I have said *damn*, where God said damn—I have not sweetened it into "condemn." I have not minced matters, nor endeavored to veil or conceal the Truth of God, but as to every man's conscience in the sight of God, have I endeavored to commend the Gospel earnestly and with power and with a plain, outspoken, earnest and honest ministry.

I have not kept back the glorious doctrines of grace, although by preaching them the enemies of the Cross have called me an Antinomian. Nor have I been afraid to preach man's solemn responsibility, although another tribe have slandered me as an Arminian. And in saying this, I say it not in a way of glorying. I say it for your rebuke—if you have rejected the Gospel—for you shall have sinned far above that of any other men in casting away Christ. a double measure of the fury of the wrath of God shall fall on you. Sin, then, is aggravated by the rejection of Christ.

III. And now, in the third place, THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST TAKES AWAY ALL EXCUSE FROM THOSE WHO HEAR IT AND REJECT IT. "Now have they no cloak for their sin." A cloak is a very poor covering for sin. When there is an all-seeing eye to look through it in the great day of the tempest of God's wrath, a cloak will be a very poor shelter. But man is always fond of a cloak in the day of cold and rain. We see men gathering their cloaks about them and if they have no shelter and no ref-

uge, still they feel a little comforted by their garment. And so it is with you. You will gather together, if you can, an excuse for your sin and when conscience pricks you, you will seek to heal the wound with an excuse.

And even in the Day of Judgment, although a cloak will be a sorry covering, yet it will be better than nothing at all. "But now you have no cloak for your sin." The traveler is left in the rain without his covering, exposed to the tempest without that garment which once did shelter him. "Now you have no cloak for your sin"—discovered, detected and unmasked, you are left inexcusable, without a cloak for your iniquity. And now let me just notice how the preaching of the Gospel, when it is faithfully performed, takes away all cloaks for sin.

In the first place, one man might get up and say, "I did not know I was doing wrong when I committed such and such an iniquity." Now, *that* you cannot say. God has by His Law told you solemnly what is wrong. There stand the Ten Commandments. And there stands the comment of our Master where He has enlarged upon the Commandment and told us that the old Law "you shall not commit adultery" forbade also all sins of the lascivious look and the evil eye. If the Sepoy commits iniquity, there is a cloak for it. I doubt not that his conscience tells him that he does wrong, but his sacred books teach that he is doing right and therefore he has that cloak.

If the Mohammedan commits lust, I doubt not his conscience does prick him, but his sacred books give him liberty. But you profess to believe your Bibles and have them in your houses and have the preachers of them in all your streets. And therefore when you sin, you sin with the proclamation of the Law upon the very wall before your eyes—you do willfully violate a well-known Law which has come from Heaven and come to you.

Again—you might say, "When I sinned, I did not know how great would be the punishment." Of this also, by the Gospel, you are left without excuse. Did not Jesus Christ tell you and does He not tell you every day, that those who will not have Him shall be cast into outer darkness, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth? Has He not said, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal"? Does He not Himself declare that the wicked shall be burned up with unquenchable fire?

Has He not told you of a place where their worm dies not and where their fire is not quenched? And the ministers of the Gospel have not shunned to tell you this, too. You have sinned, though you knew you would be lost by it. You have taken the poisonous draught, not thinking that it was harmless—you knew that every drop in the cup was scalding with damnation and yet you have taken the cup and drained it to its dregs. You have destroyed your own souls with your eyes open. You have gone like a fool to the stocks, like an ox to the slaughter and like a lamb you have licked the knife of the butcher. In this, then, you are left without excuse.

But some of you may say, “Ah, I heard the Gospel, it is true, and I knew that I was doing wrong, but I did not know what I must do to be saved.” Is there one among you who can urge such an excuse as this? Methinks you will not have the impudence to do so. “Believe and live,” is preached every day in your hearing. Many of you these ten, twenty, thirty, forty, or fifty years have been hearing the Gospel and you dare not say, “I did not know what the Gospel was.”

From your earliest childhood many of you have listened to it. The name of Jesus was mingled with the hush of lullaby. You drank in a holy Gospel with your mother’s milk and yet despite all that, you have never sought Christ. “Knowledge is power,” men say. Alas! Knowledge, when not used, is *wrath*, WRATH, WRATH to the uttermost, against the man who knows and yet does that which he knows to be wrong.

Methinks I can hear another say, “Well, I heard the Gospel preached, but I never had a good example set me.” Some of you may say that and it would be partially true. But there are others of you, concerning whom I may say that this would be a lying excuse. Ah, Man. You have been very fond of speaking of the inconsistencies of Christians. You have said, “They do not live as they ought.” And alas, there is too much truth in what you have said. But there was one Christian whom you knew and whose character you were compelled to admire. Do you not remember her? It was the mother who brought you forth.

That has always been the one difficulty with you up to this day. You could have rejected the Gospel very easily, but your mother’s example stood before you and you could not overcome that. Do you not remember among the first early darkling of your recollection how you opened your little eyes in the morning and you saw a mother’s loving face looking down upon you and you caught her with a tear in her eye and you heard her say, “God bless the child, may he call the Redeemer blessed!” You remember how your father did often chide you—*she* did seldom chide—she often spoke in tones of love. Recollect that little upper room where she took you aside and putting her arms round your neck, dedicated you to God and prayed that the Lord would save you in your childhood?

Remember the letter she gave you and your book in which she wrote your name when you left the parental roof to go abroad and the sorrow with which she wrote to you when she heard you had begun to plunge in gaiety and mix with the ungodly? Remember that sorrowful look with which she did wring your hand the last time you left her? Remember how she said to you, “You will bring my hairs with sorrow to the grave, if you walk in the ways of iniquity”?

Well, you knew that what she said was not cant. There was reality in that. You could laugh at the minister, you could say it was *his business*, but at *her* you could not scoff. She was a Christian, there was no mistake about it. How often did she put up with your angry temper and bear with your rough manners, for she was a sweet spirit, almost too good for earth—can you remember that? You were not there when she was dying, you could not arrive in time. But she said to her friend as she was dying,

“There is only one thing that I want, then I could die happy—oh, that I could see my children walking in the Truth of God.” Now, I apprehend such an example leaves you without a cloak for your wickedness and if you commit iniquity after that, how fearful must be the weight of your woe!

But others of you can say that you had no such mother. Your first school was the street and the first example you ever had was that of a swearing father. Remember, my Friend, there is one perfect example—Christ and Him you have heard of, though you have not seen Him. Jesus Christ, the Man of Nazareth, was a perfect Man. In Him was there no sin, neither was there guile in His mouth. And if you have never seen anything like Christian worth anywhere else, yet you can see it in Christ. And in venturing such an excuse as this, remember you have ventured upon a lie, for the example of Christ, the works of Christ, as well as the Words of Christ, leave you without excuse for your sin.

Ah, and I think I hear one more excuse offered and that is this: “Well, I certainly had many advantages, but they were never sent home to my conscience so that I felt them.” Now, there are very few of you here who can say that. Some of you will say, “Yes, I heard the minister, but he never made an impression upon me.” Ah, young men and young women and all of you this morning, I must be a witness against you in the Day of Judgment that this is untrue. For, but now, your consciences were touched. Did I not see some soft tears of repentance—I trust they were such—flowing but just now? No, you have not always been unmoved by the Gospel. You have grown old now and it takes a deal to stir you, but it was not always so.

There was a time in your youth when you were very susceptible of impressing. Remember the sins of your youth will cause your bones to rot, if you have still persevered in rejecting the Gospel. Your old heart has grown hard—still you are without excuse. You did feel once, yes, and even now you cannot help feeling. I know there are some of you that can scarcely keep your seats at the thought of your iniquities. And you have almost vowed, some of you, that this day you will seek God and the first thing you will do will be to climb to your chamber and shut the door and seek the Lord.

Ah, but I remember a story of one who remarked to a minister, what an amazing thing it was to see so many people weeping. “No,” said the minister, “I will tell you something more amazing still—that so many will forget all they wept about when they get outside the door.” And you will do this. Still, when you have done it, you will remember that you have not been without the strivings of God’s Spirit. You will remember that God has, this morning, as it were, put a hurdle across your road, dug a ditch in your way and put up a hand-post and said, “Take warning! Beware, beware, beware! You are rushing madly into the ways of iniquity!”

And I have come before you this morning and in God’s name I have said, “Stop, stop, stop, thus says the Lord, consider your ways, why will you die? Turn you, turn you, why will you die O house of Israel?” And,

now, if you will put this from you, it must be even so. If you will put out these sparks, if you will quench this first burning torch, it must be so! On your own head be your blood—at your own door lay your iniquities.

IV. But now I have one thing more to do. And it is awful work. For I have, as it were, to PUT ON THE BLACK CAP AND PRONOUNCE THE SENTENCE OF CONDEMNATION. For those who live and die rejecting Christ there is a most fearful doom. They shall perish with utter destruction. There are degrees of punishment. But the highest degree is given to the man who rejects Christ. You have noticed that passage, I dare say, that the liar and the whoremonger and drunkards shall have their portion—whom do you suppose with?—with *unbelievers*—as if Hell were made first of all for unbelievers—as if the pit were dug not for whoremongers and swearers and drunkards, but for men who despise Christ, because that is the A-1 sin, the cardinal vice and men are condemned for that.

Other iniquities come following after them, but this one goes before them to judgment. Imagine for a moment that time has passed and that the Day of Judgment is come. We are all gathered together, both quick and dead. The trumpet blast waxes exceeding loud and long. We are all attentive, expecting something marvelous. The exchange stands still in its business—the shop is deserted by the tradesman. The crowded streets are filled. All men stand still. They feel that the last great business day is come and that now they must settle their accounts forever.

A solemn stillness fills the air—no sound is heard. All, all is noiseless. Presently a great white cloud with solemn state sails through the sky and then—hark! the twofold clamor of the startled earth. On that cloud there sits one like unto the Son of Man. Every eye looks and at last there is heard a unanimous shout—“It is He! It is He!” And after that you hear on the one hand, shouts of “Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Welcome, Welcome, Welcome Son of God.”

But mixed with that there is a deep bass, composed of the weeping and the wailing of the men and women who have persecuted Him and who have rejected Him. Listen! I think I can dissect the sonnet, I think I can hear the words as they come separately, each one of them, tolling like a death knell. What say they? They say, “Rocks hide us, mountains fall upon us, hide us from the face of Him that sits upon the throne.” And shall you be among the number of those who say to the rocks “Hide us”?

My impenitent Hearer! Suppose for a moment that you have gone out of this world and that you have died impenitent and that you are among those who are weeping and wailing and gnashing their teeth. Oh, what will then be your terror! Blanched cheeks and knocking knees are nothing compared to your horror of heart, when you shall be drunk, but not with wine. And when you shall reel to and fro with the intoxication of amazement and shall fall down and roll in the dust for horror and dismay.

For there He comes and there He is, with fierce, fire-darting eyes. And now the time is come for the great division. The voice is heard, “Gather My people from the four winds of Heaven, My elect in whom My soul delights.”

They are gathered at the right hand and there they are. And now says He, "Gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn." And you are gathered and on the left hand there you are, gathered into the bundle. All that is wanted is the lighting of the pile. Where shall be the torch that shall kindle them? The tares are to be burned—where is the flame?

The flame comes out of *His mouth* and it is composed of words like these—"Depart, you cursed into everlasting fire, in Hell, prepared for the devil and his angels." Do you linger? "*Depart!*" Do you seek a blessing? "*You are cursed.*" I curse you with a curse. Do you seek to escape? *It is everlasting fire.* Do you stop and plead? No, "*I called and you refused. I stretched out My hands and you regarded Me not, therefore I will mock at your calamity, I will laugh when your fear comes.*" "*Depart, again, I say, depart forever!*"

And you are gone. And what is your reflection? Why, it is this—"Oh, would to God that I never had been born! Oh, that I had never heard the Gospel preached, that I might never have had the sin of rejecting it!" This will be the gnawing of the worm in your conscience—"I knew better but I did not do better. As I sowed the wind, it is right I should reap the whirlwind. I was checked, but I would not be stopped. I was wooed, but I would not be invited. Now I see that I have murdered myself. Oh, thought above all thoughts most deadly! I am lost, lost, lost! And this is the horror of horrors—I have caused *myself* to be lost. I have put from me the Gospel of Christ. I have destroyed myself."

Shall this be so with you, my Hearer? Shall this be so with you? I pray it may not! O may the Holy Spirit now constrain you to come to Jesus, for I know that you art too vile to yield, unless He compels you. But I hope for you. Methinks I hear you say, "What must I do to be saved?" Let me tell you the way of salvation and then farewell. If you would be saved, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." For the Scripture says, "He that believes and is immersed shall be saved. He that believes not shall be damned!" There Jesus hangs, dying on His Cross! Look to Him and live—

***"Venture on Him, venture wholly,
Let no other trust intrude;
None but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good."***

Be you wicked, filthy, depraved, degraded—you are still invited to Christ. The devil's castaways Christ takes in—the offscouring, the dross, the scum, the chaff, the sewage of this world—are now invited to Christ. Come to Him now and obtain mercy. But if you harden your hearts—

***"The Lord in anger dressed
Shall lift His hand and swear,
'You that despised My promised rest,
Shall have no portion there.'*"**

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HATRED WITHOUT CAUSE

NO. 89

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JUNE 29, 1856,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.**

*“They hated Me without a cause.”
John 15:25.*

IT is usually understood that the quotation our Savior here refers to is to be found in the 35th Psalm, at the 19th verse, where David says, speaking of himself, immediately, and of the Savior, prophetically, “Let not them who are My enemies rejoice over Me, neither let them wink with the eye that hate Me without a cause.” Our Savior refers to that as being applicable to Himself and thus He really tells us, in effect, that many of the Psalms are Messianic, or refer to the Messiah! And therefore Dr. Hawker did not err when he said he believed the Psalms referred to the Savior, though he may have carried the Truth of God too far. But it will be a good plan, in reading the Psalms, if we continually look at them as alluding not so much to David, as to the Man of whom David was the type, Jesus Christ, David’s Lord.

No Being was ever more lovely than the Savior. It would seem almost impossible not to have affection for Him. Certainly at first sight it would seem far more difficult to hate Him than to love Him. And yet, loveable as He was, “altogether lovely”—no Being so early met with hatred and no creature ever endured such a continual persecution as He had to suffer! He is no sooner ushered into the world than the sword of Herod is ready to cut Him off. The innocents of Bethlehem, by their dreadful massacre, gave a sad foretaste of the sufferings which Christ would endure and of the hatred that men would pour upon His devoted head! From His first moment, to the Cross, save the temporary lull while He was a child, it seemed as if all the world were in league against Him and all men sought to destroy Him! In different ways that hatred displayed itself. Sometimes in overt deeds, as when they took Him to the brow of the hill and would have cast Him down headlong. Or when they took up stones, again, to stone Him, because He said that Abraham desired to see His day and saw it and was glad. At other times that hatred showed itself in words of slander, such as these—“He is a drunken man and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners.” Or in looks of contempt, as when they looked suspiciously at Him because He did eat with publicans and sinners and sat down to table with unwashed hands. At other times that hatred dwelt

entirely in their thoughts and they thought within themselves, “This Man blasphemes,” because He said, “Your sins are forgiven you.” At almost every time there was a hatred towards Christ! Even when they took Him and would have made Him king—and a shallow fleeting flood of popular applause would have wafted him onto an unsteady throne—even then, there was a latent hatred towards Him! A hatred only kept hidden by loaves and fishes, but which only needed an equal quantity of loaves and fishes offered by the priests to develop it, itself, into the cry of, “Crucify Him, crucify Him,” instead of the shout of, “Hosanna! Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord.”

All grades of men hated Him. Most men have to meet with some opposition. But then it is frequently a *class* opposition and there are other classes who look at them with respect. The demagogue, who is admired by the poor, must expect to be despised by the rich. And he who labors for the aristocracy, of course, meets with the contempt of the many. But here was a Man who walked among the people, who loved them, who spoke to rich and poor as though they were (as indeed they are) on one level in His blessed sight—and yet all classes conspired to hate Him! The priests cried Him down because He spoiled their dogmas. The nobles would put Him to death because He spoke of being a king. The poor, for some reasons best known to themselves, though they admired His eloquence and frequently would have fallen prostrate in worship before Him, on account of the wondrous deeds He did—even these, led by men who ought to have guided them better—conspired to put Him to death and to consummate their guilt by nailing Him to the tree! Then they wagged their heads, bade Him, if He could build a Temple in three days, to save Himself and come down from the Cross. Christ was the Hated One, the Slandered and Scorned One—He was “despised and rejected of men, a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief.”

Now, we shall try, this morning, first, to *justify the Savior’s remarks, that He was hated without a cause.* And secondly, to *dwell upon the sin of men—that men hated Him without a cause.* In the third place, to *give a lesson or two to Christ’s own people* which they may well learn from the fact that their Savior was hated without a cause.

I. First, then, Beloved, let us JUSTIFY WHAT THE SAVIOR SAID—“They hated Me without a cause.” And we remark, that apart from the consideration of man’s sinfulness and Christ’s purity, there certainly is no cause whatever to be discovered why the world should have hated Him!

First let us regard Christ *in His Person.* Was there anything in Christ’s Person as a Man, when He lived in this world, which had a natural tendency to make any person hate Him? Let us remark that there was an

absence of almost everything which excites hatred between man and man! In the first place, there was *no great rank* in Christ to excite envy. It is a well-known fact that let a man be ever so good, if he is at all lifted above his fellow creatures by riches, or by title—though many will respect him—yet many will often speak against him. Not so much for what he is, as for his rank and his title. It seems to be natural to men to despise nobles. Each man, individually, thinks it a wonderful thing to know a lord. But put men together and they will despise lords and bishops and speak very lightly of principalities and powers. Now Christ had none of the outward circumstances of rank. He had no chariot, no long sleeves, no elevation above His fellows. When He walked abroad, there were no heralds to attend Him, there was no pomp to do Him honor. In fact, one would think that Christ's appearance would naturally have engendered pity! Instead of being lifted above men, He did, in some sense, seem to be below them, for foxes had holes and the birds of the air had nests, but the Son of Man had not where to lay His Head. Many a democrat has railed against the archbishop when he has gone by Lambeth Palace. But would he curse or despise him if he were told the archbishop had not where to lay his head, but simply toiled for the Truth's sake and had no reward? The envy, naturally excited by rank, station and such-like, could not have operated in Christ's case. There was nothing in His garb to attract attention. It was the garb of the peasant of Galilee—"of one piece, woven from the top throughout." Nor was there anything in His rank. He might have been the son of an ancient royal family but its royalty was apparently extinct and He was only known as the Son of the Carpenter. They hated Him, then, in that sense, "without a cause."

Many persons seem to have envy excited in them against those who *exercise rule* or government over them. The very fact of a man having authority over me stirs up my evil passions and I begin to look at him with suspicion because he is invested with that authority. Some men naturally fall into the groove and obey simply because the rule is made. Principalities and powers are established and they submit themselves for the Lord's sake. But the many, especially in these republican times, seem to have a natural tendency to kick against authority, simply because it is authority! But if authorities and governments were changed every month, I believe that in some countries, in France, for instance, there would be revolutions as much under one government as under another! In fact, they hate all government there and wish to be without law, that each man may do what is right in his own eyes. But this did not operate in Christ's case—He was not a king. He did not assume sway over the multitude. It is true He was Lord over tempests and seas. It is true He could command demons and, if He pleased, men would have been His obedient

servants. But He did not assume power over them. He marshaled no armies, He promulgated no laws, He made Himself no great one in the land! The people did just as they liked, for all the authority He exercised over them. In fact, instead of binding laws upon them which were severe, He seemed to have loosened the rigidity of their system! For when the adulterous woman, who, otherwise, would have been put to death, was brought before Him, He said, “Neither do I condemn you.” And He relaxed, to a certain extent, the rigidity of the Sabbatical ordinance which was, in some respects, too burdensome, saying, “The Sabbath was made for man.” Surely, then, they hated Him “without a cause.”

Some men make others dislike them because they are *proud*. I know some men that I could have liked very well if the starch had been left out of them. I could really sympathize with them and admire them if they had the least degree of condescension—but they seem to walk about the world with such a style of pride! They may not be proud—very likely they are not—but, as an old Divine said, “When we see a fox’s tail sticking out of a hole, we naturally expect the fox is there.” And, somehow or other, the human mind cannot bear pride. We always kick against it. But there was nothing of that in our Savior. How humble He was! Why He stooped to anything! He would wash His disciples feet. And when He walked about among men, there was no parade about Him, as if He would say to them, “See My talent, see My power, see My rank, see My dignity—stand by—I am greater than you.” No, He takes His seat—there is Matthew, the publican, sitting beside Him—and He does not think He is hurt by the publican, although He is the worst of sinners. And there is a harlot—He speaks to her. There is another with seven devils—He casts the devils out of her. And another, who has the leprosy and He even *touches* the leper to show how humble He was and that there was nothing of pride about Him. Oh, could you have seen the Savior, He was the very paragon of humility! There were none of your forms of etiquette and politeness about Him. He had that true politeness which makes itself affable to all men because it is kind and loving to all. There was no pride in the Savior and, consequently, there was nothing to excite men’s anger on that account. Therefore, they hated Him “without a cause.”

There are others who you cannot help disliking because they are so snappish and waspish and *angry*. They look as if they were born on some terribly dark stormy day and as if, in the mixture of their body, no small quantity of vinegar was employed. You could not sit long with them without feeling that you have to keep your tongue on a pretty tight chain. You must not talk freely, or there would be a quarrel, for they would make you an offender for a word! You may say, “Such an one is, no doubt, a good man. But really, that temper of his, I cannot bear it.” And when a

man stands prominently before the public, with a nasty sour disposition, one feels inclined to dislike him. But there was nothing of this about our Savior. “When He was reviled, He reviled not again.” If men spat in His face, He said nothing to them. And when they smote Him, He did not curse them. He sat still and bore their scorn. He walked through the world with contempt and infamy constantly poured upon Him. But, “He answered not a word.” He was never angry. You cannot find, in reading the Savior’s life, that He spoke one angry word, save those words of holy wrath which He poured, like scalding oil, upon the head of Pharisaic pride! Then, indeed, His wrath did boil, but it was holy wrath! With such a loving, kind, gentle spirit, one would have thought that He would have gone through the world as easily as possible. His kind spirit seemed to make a straight road for His feet. But, notwithstanding all that, they hated Him! Truly, we can say, “they hated Him without a cause.”

There is another set of people you can scarcely help disliking. They are *selfish* people. Now we know some persons who are very excellent in temper, who are extremely honest and upright—but they are so selfish! When you are with them, you feel that they are just friends to you for what they can get out of you. And when you have served their turn, they will just lay you aside and endeavor to find another. In trying to do good, their good deeds have ulterior objectives, but, somehow or other, they are always found out! And no man in the world gets a greater share of public odium than the man who lives a selfish life. Among the most miserable men in the universe, kicked about the world like a football, is the selfish miser! But in Christ there was nothing selfish. Whatever He did, He did for others. He had a marvelous power of working miracles, but He would not even change a stone into bread for Himself. He reserved His miraculous power for others. He did not seem to have a particle of self in His whole Nature. In fact, the description of His life might be written very briefly—“He saved others, Himself He did not save.” He walked about. He touched the poorest, the meanest and those who were the most sick. He cared not what men might say of Him. He seemed to have no regard for fame, or dignity, or ease, or honor. Neither His bodily nor His mental comforts were in the least regarded by Him. Self-sacrifice was the life of Christ. But He did it with such an ease that it seemed no sacrifice. Ah, Beloved, in that sense, certainly they hated Christ without a cause—for there was nothing in Christ to excite their hatred—in fact, there was everything, on the contrary, to bind the whole world to love and reverence a Character so eminently unselfish.

Another sort of people there are that I do not like—the *hypocritical*—no, I think I could even live with the selfish man if I knew him to be selfish. But the hypocrite—do not let him come anywhere near where I am!

Let a public man be a hypocrite, once, and the world will scarcely trust him again. They will hate him! But Christ was, in this particular, free from any blame. And if they hated Him, they hated Him not for that—for there never was a more unvarnished man than Christ. He was called, you know, the Child Jesus—because as a child speaks itself out and has no reserve and no craftiness—even so was it with Jesus. He had no affectation, no deceit. There was no change about Him. He was “without variability or shadow of turning.” Whatever the world may say of Christ, they never said they believed He was a hypocrite. And among all the slanders they brought against Him, they never disputed His sincerity. Had they been able to show that He really had been imposing upon them, they might have had some grounds for hating Him, but He lived in the sunlight of sincerity and walked on the very mountaintop of continual observation. He could not be a hypocrite and men knew He could not. And yet men hated Him. Verily, my Friends, if you survey the Character of Christ, in all His loveliness, in all His benevolence, in all His sincerity, in all intense eagerness to benefit man, you must say, indeed, “they hated Him without a cause.” There was nothing in Christ’s Person to lead men to hate Him.

In the next place, *was there anything in Christ’s errand* which could make people hate Him? If they had asked Him, “For what reason have You come from Heaven?” Would there have been anything in His answer likely to excite their indignation and hatred? I think not. For what purpose did He come? He came, first of all, to explain mysteries—to tell them what was meant by the sacrificial lamb, what was the significance of the scapegoat, what was intended by the ark, the brazen serpent and the pot of manna. He came to rend the veil of the Holy of Holies and to show men secrets they had never seen before. Should they have hated One who lifted the veil of mystery and made dark things light and expounded riddles? Should they have hated Him who taught them what Abraham desired to see and what Prophets and kings had longed to know, but died without a knowledge of? Was there anything in *that* to make them hate Him? What else did He come for? He came on earth to reclaim the wanderer. And is there anything in that, that should make men hate Christ? If He came to reform the drunkard, to reclaim the harlot, gather in the publicans and sinners and bring prodigals to their father’s houses, again, surely that is something with which every philanthropist should agree! It is that for which our governments are formed and fashioned—to bring men to a better state! And if Christ came for that purpose—was there anything in that to make men hate Him? For what else did He come? He came to heal the diseases of the body—is that a legitimate object of hatred? Shall I hate the physician who goes about gratuitously

healing all manner of diseases? Are deaf ears unstopped, are mouths opened, are the dead raised, are the blind made to see and widows blest with their sons? Are these causes why a man should be hated? Surely, He might well say, "For which of these works do you stone Me? If I have done good works why do you speak against Me?" But none of these works were the cause of men's hatred—they hated Him without a cause! And He came on earth to die, that sinners might not die—was that a cause of hatred? Ought I to hate the Savior because He came to quench the flames of Hell for me? Should I despise Him who allowed His Father's flaming sword to be quenched in His own blood? Shall I look with indignation upon the Substitute who takes my sins and griefs upon Him and carries my sorrows? Shall I hate and despise the Man who loved me better than He loved Himself—who loved me so much that He visited the gloomy grave for my salvation? Are these the causes of hatred? Surely His errand was one that ought to have made us sing His praise forever and join the harps of angels in their rapturous songs! "They hated Me without a cause."

But once more—*was there anything in Christ's Doctrine* that should have made us hate Him? No, we answer. There was nothing in His Doctrine that should have excited men's hatred. Take His perceptive Doctrines. Did He not tell us to do to others as we would they should to us? Was He not also the exponent of everything lovely and honorable and of good repute? And was not His teaching the very essence of virtue—so that if virtue's self had written it—it could not have written such a perfect code of lovely morals and excellent virtues? Was it the ethical part of His Doctrines that men hated? He taught that rich and poor must stand on one level. He taught that His Gospel was not to be confined to one particular nation, but was to be gloriously expansive, so as to cover the world. This perhaps, was one principal reason of their hating Him. But surely there was no justifiable cause for their indignation in this. There was nothing in Christ to lead men to hate Him. "They hated Him without a cause."

II. And now, in the second place, I come to dwell on MAN'S SIN, that he should have hated the Savior without a cause. Ah, Beloved, I will not tell you of man's adulteries and fornications and murders and poisonings and sodomies. I will not tell you of man's wars and bloodsheds and cruelties and rebellions. If I want to tell you of man's sin, I must tell you that man is a *deicide*—that he put to death his God and slew his Savior! And when I have told you that, I have given you the essence of all sin—the masterpiece of crime—the very pinnacle and climax of the terrific pyramid of mortal guilt. Man outdid himself when he put his Savior to death and sin did out-Herod, Herod, when it slew the Lord of the Universe, the

Lover of the race of man who came on earth to die! Never does sin appear so exceedingly sinful as when we see it pointed at the Person of Christ whom it hated without a cause! In every other case when man has hated goodness, there have always been some extenuating circumstances. We never see goodness in this world without alloy—however great may be any man’s goodness—there is always some peg whereon we may hang a censure. However excellent a man may be, there is always some fault which may diminish our admiration or our love. But in the Savior, there was nothing of this! There was nothing that could blot the picture—holiness stood out to the very life! There was holiness—only holiness! Let a man hate Whitefield, one of the holiest men that ever lived, he would tell you he did not hate his goodness, but he hated his ranting, preaching and the extraordinary anecdotes he told. Or he would pull out something that dropped from his lips and hold it up to derision. But in Christ’s case, men could not do that. For though they sought for false witnesses, yet their witnesses agreed not together! There was nothing in Him but holiness—and any person with half an eye can see that the thing men hated was simply that Christ was Perfect. They could not have hated Him for anything else. And thus you see the abominable, detestable evil of the human heart—that man hates goodness simply because it is such! It is not true that we Christian people are hated because of our infirmities. Men make our infirmities a nail whereon to hang their laughter—but if we were not Christians, they would not hate our infirmities. They hold our inconsistencies up to ridicule. But I do not believe our inconsistencies are really what they care about. We might be as inconsistent as all the rest of the world if we did not profess religion, or if they did not think we had any. But because the Savior had no inconsistencies or infirmities, men were stripped of all their excuses for hating Him—but it came out that man *naturally* hates goodness—because he is so evil that he cannot but detest it!

And now let me appeal to every sinner present and ask him whether he ever had any cause for hating Christ. But someone says, “I do not hate Him. If He were to come to my house, I would love Him very much.” But it is very remarkable that Christ lives next door to you, in the person of poor Betty, there. She goes to such-and-such a Chapel, and you say she is nothing but a poor canting Methodist! Why don’t you like Betty? She is one of Christ’s members and, “Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these, you have done it unto Me.” You say you do not hate Christ. Now, look across the Chapel. Don’t you know a man, a member of this place, a very holy man, but somehow or other you cannot stand him because he once told you of your faults? Ah, Sir, if you loved Christ you would love His members! What? Tell me you love my head,

but you do not love my hands? My dear Fellow, you cannot cut my head off and let me be the same person! If you love Christ, the Head, you must love His members. But you say, "I do love His people." Very well, then. You have passed from death unto life, if you love the Brethren. But you say, "I am not sure that I am a changed character. I am not aware that there is any opposition in my heart to Christ and His Gospel." You may not be aware of it, but it is your not being aware of it that makes your case all the more sad! Perhaps if you knew it and wept over it, you would come to Christ. But since you do not know it and do not feel it, that is a proof of your hostility. Now, listen, I must suppose you to be hostile to Christ unless you love Him! For I know there are only two opinions of Him. You must either hate Him or love Him. As for indifference with regard to Christ, it is just a clear impossibility. A man might as well say, "I am indifferent towards honesty." Why, then he is dishonest, is he not? You are indifferent to Christ? Then you hate Him. And why is it that you hate Him? Many a time you have been wooed by the Gospel. You have resisted appeals, many of them—come, now—for which of Christ's works do you hate Him? Have I a persecutor here? Sinner! For what do you hate Christ? Do you curse Him? Tell me what He has done that you should be angry with Him. Point to a single fault of His in His carriage towards you. Has Christ ever hurt you? "Oh," says one, "He has taken my wife and made her one of His children and she has been baptized and comes to Chapel and I cannot bear that." Ah, Sinner, is *that* why you hate Christ? Would you have hated Christ if He had snatched your wife from the flames, if He had saved her from going down to death? No, you would love Him! And He has saved your wife's soul. Ah, if He never saves you, if you love your wife, you will have enough cause to love Him, to think He has been so good to you! I tell you, if you hate Christ, you not only hate Him without a cause, but you hate Him when you have ample cause to love Him! Come, poor Sinner, what have you got by hating Christ? You have stings of conscience. Many a sinner, by hating Christ, has been locked up in jail, has a ragged coat, a diseased body, a nasty filthy house, with broken windows, a poor wife, nearly beaten to death and children that scamper out of the way as soon as father comes home. What have you got by hating Christ? Oh, if you were to estimate your gains, you would find that getting Christ would be a gain, but that hating Him is a dead loss to you!

Now, if you hate Christ and Christ's religion, I tell you that you hate Christ without a cause! And let me give you one solemn warning, which is this—if you keep on hating Christ till you die—you will not hurt Christ by it, but you will hurt yourself most awfully. Oh, may God deliver you from being haters of Christ! There is nothing to get by it, but everything

to lose by it. For what cause do you hate Christ, Sinner? For what cause do you hate Christ, Persecutor? For what cause do you hate Christ, you carnal, ungodly men? What do you hate Christ's Gospel for?—His Ministers? What hurt have they done you? What hurt *can* they do you when they long to do you all the good in the world? Why is it you hate Christ? Ah, it is only because you are so desperately set on mischief—because the poison of asps is under your lips and your throat is an open sepulcher! Otherwise, you would love Christ. They hated Him “without a cause.”

And now, Christian, I must preach at you for just a moment. Surely, you have great reason to love Christ, now, for you once hated Him without a cause. Did you ever treat a friend ill and did not know it? It has been the misfortune of most of us to do it, sometimes. We had some suspicion that a friend had done us an injury. We quarreled with him for weeks and he had not done it at all! What he had done was only to warn us. Ah, there are never tears like those we shed when we have injured a friend. And should we not weep when we have injured the Savior? Did He not come to my door one cold, damp, night and I shut my door against Him? Oh, I have done what I cannot undo! I have slighted my Lord, I have insulted my Friend, I have thrown dishonors upon Him whom I admire! Shall I not weep for Him? Oh, shall I not spend my very life for Him? For my sins, my own treachery spilled His blood! Monuments, ah, monuments I will build wherever I live, wherever I go. I'll pile up monuments of praise that His name may be spread. And wherever I wander, I'll tell what He did, with many a tear, that I so long have ill-treated Him and so fearfully misunderstood Him. Brothers and Sisters, *we* hated Him without a cause, therefore let us love Him!

III. Two LESSONS TO THE SAINTS.

In the first place, *if your Master was hated without a cause, do not expect to get off very easily in the world.* If your Master was subject to all this contempt and all this pain, do you suppose you will always ride through this world in a chariot? If you do, you will be marvelously mistaken! As your Master was persecuted, you must expect to be the same. Some of you pity us when we are persecuted and despised. Ah, save your pity, keep it for those of whom the world speaks well! Keep it for those against whom the woe is pronounced, “Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you.” Save your pity for earth's favorites! Save your pity for this world's lords that are applauded by all men! We ask not for your pity. No, Sirs, in all these things, we rejoice and “glory in tribulations, also, knowing that the things which happen unto us, happen for the furtherance of the Gospel.” And we count it all joy when we fall into manifold temptations for we rejoice that thus the name of Christ is known and His kingdom extended!

The other lesson is, *take care—if the world does hate you—that it hates you without a cause*. If the world is to oppose you, it is of no use *making* the world oppose you! This world is bitter enough without my putting vinegar in it. Some people seem to fancy the world will persecute them—therefore they put themselves into a fighting posture—as if they invited persecutions. Now, I do not see any good in doing that. Do not try and make other people dislike you. Really, the opposition some people meet with, is not for righteousness' sake, but for their own sin's sake, or their own nasty temper's sake! Many a Christian lives in a house—a Christian servant girl, perhaps. She says she is persecuted for righteousness' sake. But she has a bad disposition. She sometimes speaks sharply—and then her mistress reproveth her. That is not being persecuted for righteousness' sake! There is another, a merchant in the city, perhaps. He is not looked upon with much esteem. He says he is persecuted for righteousness' sake, whereas it is really because he did not keep a bargain some time ago. Another man says he is persecuted for righteousness' sake. But he goes about assuming authority over everybody and, now and then, persons turn round and upbraid him! Look to it, Christian people, that if you are persecuted, it truly is for righteousness' sake. For if you get any persecution *yourself*, you must keep it yourself. The persecutions you bring on yourself for your own sins—Christ has nothing to do with them—they are chastisements on you! They hated Christ without a cause. Then fear not to be hated. They hated Christ without a cause. Then court not to be hated and give the world no cause for it.

And now may you who hate Christ, love Him! Oh that He would bring Himself to you now! Oh, that He would show Himself to you! And then surely you must love Him at once. He that believes on the Lord Jesus will be sure to love Him and He that loves Him shall be saved! Oh, that God would give you faith and give you love, for Christ Jesus' sake. Amen.

Adapted from *The C.H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

CHRIST'S PAST AND PRESENT WITNESSES NO. 2709

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 13, 1901.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 7, 1880.

*“And you also shall bear witness, because you have
been with Me from the beginning.”
John 15:27.*

OUR Lord Jesus Christ ought to be believed upon His own unsupported Word, first, because of the Divinity of His Nature. God cannot lie and that Christ is God is abundantly proved by His miracles. He did that which none but God could do. He ought also to be believed because of the perfection of His Character, for even the enemies of the Gospel have been obliged to confess that the perfection of the Character of Jesus is altogether undeniable. They have critically examined it, but they have not been able to find a single fault or flaw in it. They have thrust the Character of Christ into a furnace such as that in which men try silver—and they have heated the furnace seven times hotter than usual—yet has the Character of Christ come forth unhurt from every trial. A perfect Man ought to be believed when He speaks. The perfection of His Character proves Him to be worthy of confidence.

Put together, then, the Godhead and the perfect Manhood of Christ, and I am not too bold when I say that He deserves to be believed upon His bare Word without any further witness. Yet such is the natural infidelity of the human heart with regard to anything that comes from God—so resolutely do men shut their eyes against the light lest they should be reproved by it—that our Lord Jesus Christ has not left Himself without witnesses. The first and chief Witness to Christ is the Holy Spirit. Read again the verse preceding our text, upon which I have already commented—“When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth, which proceeds from the Father, He shall testify of Me.” The Holy Spirit is still here on earth, working spiritual miracles in the hearts of men, and those works of His are the attestation and seal of the mission of Christ, that He is, indeed, the Savior of men. “There are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.” The water and the blood are two things about which we, ourselves, become witnesses, as I shall show you directly, but the point I want you to notice just now is that as it was with the Apostles, so is it in a measure with ourselves, for we are called, as they were, to the most honorable office conceivable, see-

ing that we are called to do what the Holy Spirit, Himself, deigns to do, that is, to witness to Christ, for, after He had spoken of the testimony of the Spirit of Truth, He added, "And you also shall bear witness." We are to be laborers together with the Holy Spirit! We are to stand, as it were, in the witness-box with Him, and bear similar testimony to that which He bears concerning Christ—"He shall testify of Me: and you also shall bear witness." Oh, what an honorable position we are to occupy! What a grand work we are to do—a work which an angel might envy us, for we are to be witnesses, together with the Holy Spirit, concerning Christ!

In handling this text, I shall have, first of all, to remark that *the Apostles were witnesses to the facts of Christ's life*. He said to them, "You also shall bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning." Then I shall have to show you that *Believers are now witnesses to the results of Christ's Gospel*. We have not been with Him from the beginning and, therefore, our witness is not concerning the facts of His life—but we can testify to the *results* of His Gospel. When I have spoken upon those two themes, I shall close by noticing the *objective of both these forms of testimony*—the Apostles' witness to the facts of Christ's life and the Believers' witness to the results of those facts.

I. First, then, the Apostles were stated by Christ to be WITNESSES TO THE FACTS OF HIS LIFE, from the time when they became His disciples, right down to the day when He was taken up into Heaven.

You know, dear Friends, how any historical fact comes to be accepted as a fact. It is by the weight of the evidence by which it is supported. If Tacitus, for instance, makes a statement in his history, as a rule we believe what he says because he is known to be a veracious historian. But Tacitus is certainly not more reliable than is Matthew, or Mark, or Luke, or John, because Tacitus never died for the defense of any statement that he made. But those who bore witness concerning Christ, and were His historians, were ready to die and did die rather than deny anything that they had said concerning their Lord and Master. When we find discrepancies in the writings of historians, we examine and weigh the evidence as to any contradictions, so as to see which is the correct record of the facts in question. If anyone made a statement that such-and-such a thing happened yesterday, and you needed to ascertain if the statement were true, you would call witnesses who saw it. Suppose you could not get those witnesses for a month—their testimony would be just as good in a month's time as it is today. Suppose you could not get them together for 50 years—their evidence would be just as valid. Or if they had written their testimony, and had it duly attested, what they had written would be just as good evidence 50 years hence as it would be today and, if true at all, it would stand true—yes, as true as the testimony of these witnesses stands though 1,800 years and more have elapsed since they bore their witness! We have, concerning the life of Christ, the testimony of those who were with Him from the beginning—and their testimony is good because it complies with certain rules which usually apply to reliable evidence.

The first rule is, when witness is borne to any fact, that *the witnesses must be sufficiently numerous*. There were 11 true Apostles, and 11 good men are quite enough to testify to any fact known to them. There were others besides the Apostles who were with Christ from the beginning, and in the mouth of any two of these good honest witnesses a fact might be established, so that, in the mouth of the eleven, the truth remains beyond all doubt.

Further, *the 11 Apostles had actual sight of the things to which they bore witness*. You remember that John says, concerning the blood and the water which flowed from Christ's side when the soldier pierced it with a spear, "He that saw it bares record, and his record is true: and he knows that he says true." And the same might have been said of all the facts which John records in his Gospel, for he was an eyewitness of them—and so was Matthew. He was on the spot and what he wrote was not hearsay, but what he saw with his eyes, and his ears had heard, and his hands had handled. Well, now, 11 witnesses who have actually seen a certain thing would be a sufficient number to prevent mistakes and, as I have already reminded you, there were many more than 11 witnesses on many occasions, especially the witnesses to our Lord's Resurrection, for there were over 500 brethren at once, and it was not possible that such a large company as that should have been deceived.

Again, *these witnesses bore their testimony at or near the time when the events happened*, for the Apostles came forward and spoke concerning Christ and His holy, useful, and miraculous life, and His wondrous death and Resurrection just after the events had occurred. They only waited a little while, according to their Lord's instructions, and then they stood up in the midst of Jerusalem—Peter, who had been with Christ from the beginning, and the other Apostles, bearing witness that these things were even so. Had they been liars and false witnesses, they would have been put to confusion, and would have been unable to open their mouths again! But, as they said, these things were not done in a corner, they were common town talk and admitted by everybody to be facts. Moreover, in order especially to establish historical facts, the witnesses must bear testimony on the spot—and these 11 men did not go off to Rome and there begin to publish that Jesus was the Son of God, and that He worked miracles, and that He rose from the dead! They did go to Rome and everywhere else, ultimately, but they began at Jerusalem where they would have been contradicted if men could contradict them anywhere! But so fully was their witness known to be true that the very first time they stood up to bear their testimony, though they were unlearned and ignorant men, there were 3,000 persons who became the disciples of their slain Master simply through their witness as blessed by the Holy Spirit!

I do not know whether you are prepared to doubt their testimony, but I am not. I am resolved to believe that what they spoke was true and the more so because *they spoke very plainly*. When a man wants to take you in, he often speaks in a roundabout fashion. He guards his statements and puts them in such a way that he can afterwards say, "Ah, you did

not quite understand me! You made a mistake in thinking that was what I meant." But when the people who listened to Peter and John saw their boldness, and heard the plain manner in which they gave their testimony, they knew that the Apostles were speaking of the things which they had themselves witnessed. There was no misunderstanding their language—they were plain, honest, simple-minded, straightforward witnesses to Christ who gave their testimony with great plainness of speech.

Besides, *they all agreed in their testimony*. True, when we read the four Gospels, we notice that they contain just those little differences which prove the men to have been honest, for, if you set four men to tell a story, they will all tell it differently even though each one of them speaks the truth, for each of them will look at the matter from a different standpoint. If all four of them spoke in exactly the same words and there were no apparent discrepancies between them, you would know that they had laid their heads together and concocted the tale in order to deceive their hearers. A judge in court would soon find them out and he would say, "That is a trumped-up story, so they, none of them, go an inch beyond the other for fear they should contradict one another, and so be found out." But the four Evangelists differ in their statements only as honest men must of necessity differ if they are independent witnesses—and their agreement in the facts to which they testify helps to confirm their witness—and to make assurance doubly sure.

Best of all, remember that *these men had nothing to gain by their witness concerning Christ*. They left all and followed Him. Instead of gaining by their testimony, they were losers of their property, they were losers of their reputation, they were losers of their comforts, they were losers, even, of their lives! They were so certain that what they had seen was really true that, rather than deny it, "they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented." Yet not one of the 11 ever drew back and denied the truth of the testimony that he had given! And even the 12th, who was a traitor, confessed that he had taken blood money for the betrayal of his innocent Master. In committing suicide, he gave such witness as "the son of perdition" could that, after all, the Bible was true. His testimony did not, in the least, invalidate the witness of the 11 Apostles.

Now, my dear Friends, it is upon the evidence of these witnesses that the Gospel first commenced to win belief among the sons of men. True, the Spirit of God witnessed to the truth of that Gospel, but, as far as human instrumentality was concerned, the Apostles were also witnesses and they were good and sufficient witnesses. Nobody ought to ask for any better ones—and if anyone will not believe them, it may be truly said, "Neither would he believe though one rose from the dead."

II. Having spoken of the Apostolic witnesses to the facts of Christ's life, I am now to speak of THE PRESENT WITNESSES TO THE RESULTS OF HIS GOSPEL.

We who were not with Christ from the beginning cannot bear our personal testimony to the facts of His life. We neither saw Him in Bethle-

hem's manger, nor on Calvary's Cross, nor in Joseph's tomb, nor as He ascended into Glory from the Mount of Olives, so we cannot testify to those facts as the Apostles could. But we can bear witness to some other things. We can testify to the results of the Gospel as we have realized them in ourselves. And here we are something better even than eyewitnesses, for we *feel* as well as *see* the things concerning which we testify. I want, my dear Brothers and Sisters, to put very briefly before you some things about which you are to bear witness of Christ. Read the text again, with the exception of the last three words—"You also shall bear witness, because you have been with Me"—and learn from it that you cannot witness for Christ unless you have been with Him. You must have had *spiritual* dealings with the Lord Jesus Christ and felt the power of His spiritual Presence upon you, or else you cannot be such a witness as our text describes. But if you have been with Him, you can testify of Him.

The first thing to which some of us can bear witness is *the peace-giving power of His precious blood*. We were once thoroughly convinced that we had broken the Law of God and we were under a dreadful apprehension that God, the Just One, would punish us for this sin. We sought all sorts of ways to find comfort, but we never found any. We tried every nostrum of the wise men of the day, but they all failed us altogether. But the very first time that, by faith, we saw Jesus hanging on the Cross, and knew that by His Sacrifice, He had made Atonement for our sin—I say that, the very moment we put our trust in Him, our conscience found a wonderful peace and rest! Was it not so with you, Beloved? You were, by faith, *with Jesus* as you saw Him hanging upon the accursed tree as your Substitute and Surety! Did you not, then, by the Grace of God, find immediate relief from the terrible burden of sin which threatened to crush you to the earth? Well, now that you have thus been with Him, you can bear witness to that fact, can you not?

I know that my witness about it did not need to be told with my lips, for I had not long been in the house, that morning when I found the Savior, before one who had been anxious about me, said, "There is a change come over my son." And a delicate question was put, which soon drew out of me the confession that I had looked to Christ and that I was lightened. Why, they could all see in my face the evidence of the change that had been worked—there was all the difference between bondage and liberty, or between despair and delight—and it was because I had been with Christ that I had, in a moment, leaped out of nature's darkness into His marvelous light! So, now, whenever anybody says to me, "Your view of the Atonement, you know, is very old-fashioned—the Doctrine of Substitution is quite out of date"—I am not at all shaken in my belief. The gentlemen of the modern-thought school, who have been to Germany for their theology, do not like that glorious Doctrine of Substitution! They think that the Atonement is a something or other, that in some way or other, somehow or other, has something or other to do with the salvation of men—but I tell them that their cloudy Gospel might have surrounded me till my hair grew gray, but I would never have been any the better for it! I would never have found peace with God, nor come to love the Lord at

all if it had not been that I distinctly saw that He, who knew no sin, was made sin for me, that I might be made the righteousness of God in Him! When I realized that although I had gone astray from God, and broken His righteous Law, He had laid my iniquity on Christ, and punished Him in my place, my soul found rest at once and, to this day, it cannot rest under any other explanation of the Atonement of Christ! So I bear my own personal witness, and many of you can heartily join with me in bearing similar testimony. You have *been with Christ*, so you can speak of the power of His substitutionary Sacrifice as begetting peace in your soul!

Next, we can bear witness to another thing. As soon as we believed in Jesus Christ, *we found ourselves strangely altered*. Perhaps we had formerly had a merely moral struggle against sin—that was quite proper as far as it went, yet we never succeeded in that struggle. I have known many persons who were accustomed to give way to passion, and who never could curb their temper, but when they believed in Jesus, to their surprise they found that the lion was changed into a lamb. I have known men who had fallen into the habit of using profane language and who could not break away from the evil even when they became aware of the wrong of it—but when they have, by faith, looked to Jesus, and so have been saved—they have never had a temptation to use an oath again. All inclination to that sin seems to have gone clean away from them. Many a time have I seen a drunk, who has signed the pledge—a very good thing to do—but it has not been any use in his case, for he has not kept it. Yet have I known him, when he has been converted to Christ, keep that pledge and a great deal more—he has gone beyond abstinence from strong drink—and has had multitudes of virtues. There are many persons, here present, who do not need to tell people that believing in Christ has worked a complete change in them, because anybody who is acquainted with them can see it.

One man's wife knows all about that change. She had a black eye last year, but she never gets one now. She is as happy as the birds in the air with that husband of hers who has given up going to the public house, and who is now found walking in the ways of God. There is a mother who said to me, "I know that my boy is converted, Sir. Oh, what a trouble he had been to me! What a rebellious, disobedient child he was! But, now, though he is only a little boy, he makes a conscience of obeying his mother and he tries to make everybody happy." This is witness-bearing, and this is what our Lord Jesus Christ meant you who have been with Him, and have learned of Him, to do. His transforming hand has touched you, and changed you—and you can bear witness of that fact. Why, if all the unbelievers in the world were to say to some people whom I know, "The Grace of God has made no difference in you," they would be obliged to laugh with a holy laughter like that of Abraham! They could not help it, for the Grace of God has so completely changed them that if Hell were made into Heaven, the difference would not be much greater than is the change from what they were to what they now are! Well, this is good witness. I pray God that many of you may be able to bear it.

There is a third witness which many of us can also bear. When we get near to Christ in holy fellowship and commune much with Him in private prayer, we find that our love for good things becomes very strong, our zeal for God's cause is intensified and, moreover, our love to all mankind is increased. We find ourselves willing to forgive our adversaries and we are anxious in every way to prove the reality of our love to God. But if we get away from Christ, we do not take much interest in holy things. Then our chief concern consists in making as much money as we can, or in enjoying as much so-called pleasure as we can. If any of you, Brothers and Sisters, try the modern theology, you will soon see whether it will do your soul any good. I have known some who have tried it and I have noticed the change in their life and conversation—no spirituality, no love to God, and no care about the best things. They talk about *political* religion, but there is very little of vital godliness that is ever spoken of by them.

But if you get near to Christ and learn the power of His precious blood, and dwell in Him, and live upon Him, you will then see whether it does not sanctify you. I am sure you must all bear witness, you who live farthest away from Christ, that you are worse men and worse women when you wander away from Him, and that the nearer you get to Him, and the more He occupies your thoughts, the more swiftly is your evil temper overcome, and your whole heart filled with love to God and love to men. I know it is so! And that is another witness to the Truth of the Gospel, for that which promotes holiness cannot be, itself, a lie! I lay it down as an axiom that whatever makes men holy must be true, because truth and right are in the same line of things. That which creates evil is itself a falsehood, and that which creates holiness is and must be true.

Another thing to which we can bear witness is, the renewing power of God's Grace. Whenever we grow dull with regard to eternal things, and careless concerning our own souls, we find, I think, that getting near to Christ again, coming back to the Cross, plunging afresh in the—

***“Fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins”—***

sitting at His feet again, eating His flesh and drinking His blood again—all this wonderfully refreshes us. There is a fable concerning a bath, of which it was said that if old men washed therein, it took the furrows from their brows and made them young again. But, certainly, when we dwell in Christ, He takes away the decrepitude of our declining Grace and we grow vigorous once more. We renew our youth, like the eagle's, when our mouth is satisfied with the good things of Christ! Have you not found it to be so, you who had grown dull and cold? Have you not been refreshed and revived by coming back to Him? The very genius of the Christian religion is enthusiasm, but the enthusiasm is created by contact with Christ. As we come near to our great Captain, every soldier in the ranks of the King's army feels that he must be a hero. We look at His scars and wounds, and see what He did and suffered, and then we feel that it would be mean and contemptible on our part to be otherwise than altogether in earnest for so great and good a Lord, and for so grand a cause!

I think that many of you must also have noticed—and if so, you can bear witness to it—the *comforting power of the Presence of Christ with you*. All of you who know the Lord have had troubles of different kinds to carry to the Lord in prayer. I will suppose that you, my Friend, have lost a good deal of money in business, and that you have fretted and worried a great deal over it. If it has been so with you, I will tell you when you worried over your loss—it was before you took the matter to the Lord in prayer. But after you had spread the whole case before Him, it is amazing how different it looked! The circumstances seemed quite changed and you took up the cross, and you found it very light compared with what it had been before. Perhaps some of you know what it is to be teased and perplexed by unreasonable and wicked men, and you have been apt to get very snappish under their attacks. If that is what has happened to you, my Brother, I know when it was—it was when you had not been with Jesus and tried to meet the trouble by yourself. But after you have had a few minutes of private prayer, you have come down into the arena and you have seemed to say, “I am ready for you now! You may do what you like, for I am calm and quiet, and I can bear it all, for I have been with Jesus, and He has given me strength according to my day.” If you have been slandered and persecuted for righteousness’ sake, and have had your heart wounded by some cruel stab, you have been restored by getting near to Christ, and you have been able to sing—

***“If on my face for Your dear name,
Shame and reproaches be,
All hail reproach, and welcome shame,
If You remember me.”***

On the bed of sickness, or by the grave where your loved ones are buried, your heart has been sustained and comforted if you have been with Jesus! Yes, that witness is true, and tens of thousands can confirm it, that there is no sustaining power in anything else that is worthy to be compared with the sustaining energy of communion with the Lord Jesus Christ! Those who have ever felt its gracious influence must know that this is the Truth of God, for Christ’s Presence most wondrously bears their spirit up when everything else gives way.

One of the evidences of the Truth of the Gospel which, perhaps, strikes onlookers more than any other, is the serenity with which the Presence of Christ endows His people when they come to die. Their end is often very peaceful and very beautiful. There died, last week, not far from here, a young man whose brother, as he watched him, saw tokens of such wonderful happiness in him that he said to him, “Brother, what can I do to be as happy as you are?” The dying man’s answer was, “It is all in Number 1,500. It is all in Number 1,500.” You know that sermon of mine about the bronze serpent? [Volume 25, #1500— “LIFTING UP THE BRONZE SERPENT”—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org> .] The young man said to his brother, “It is all in Number 1,500. It is Jesus only, Jesus only. Look to Jesus, look and live. It is all there.” His brother said that he could not tell exactly when he passed away, so sweet was the serenity that the Presence of the Master gave him. I could take you to the Stockwell Orphanage, to the bedside of a little boy who may be in Heaven

by now, but when I saw him on Monday, he said to me, "I shall soon die, Mr. Spurgeon. And when I think I am going, as I sometimes do at night, I clap my hands at the thought that I shall so soon be with Jesus." Poor little fellow, he could hardly lift those thin hands of his, yet he clapped them with delight at the thought that he should so soon be with Jesus! It would have done you good if you could have seen him, and so it would if you could have seen our dear Sister, Mrs. White, the wife of our beloved elder, when she knew that she had a cancer which would soon take her Home. The look of her face is with me now. I sat by her bedside and it was more than a sermon to me—it made me feel willing to die at any time when I saw the calm serenity with which that suffering saint looked forward to her departure. She did not regard death as a thing to be spoken of as a dreadful and terrible matter, but she calmly spoke of being with Christ, which was far better than being with the dearest friends on earth!

This holy serenity has often convinced ungodly men of the Truth of the Gospel—and though you and I cannot at present bear that witness, yet very likely we shall do so in due season and, already, so many thousands of saints have borne this witness to the power of faith in Christ that it ought to be regarded, and a deaf ear ought not to be turned to it. Look at the thousands of martyrs who have calmly stood at the stake and been burned to death for Christ's sake, and yet have cried, "None but Jesus! None but Jesus!" And, faithful to the end, have gone up in a chariot of fire to be "forever with the Lord." What but the Gospel of Christ could string them up to such wondrous courage and press their spirits into such a sacred equanimity that even death itself was despised by them, so that they cried, with the Apostle, "O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?" In all these points, you also, who love the Lord, are to be witnesses for Christ.

I had many other things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. Therefore, let me sum up all by saying—beloved Brothers and Sisters, members of this Church, and members of the one Church of Jesus Christ, be good witnesses for your Lord, remembering that you are standing up with the Holy Spirit to testify concerning Him. Oh, be such witnesses that none need be ashamed of you!

Remember that *witness must be personal, not hearsay*. A good woman in the witness box begins, "She said," said she, but the judge stops her, and says, "We do not want to know what *she* said, what did you yourself see?" So, dear Friends, it is no use for you to try to bear testimony to the world about a thing you never saw and never felt. Personal godliness must be at the bottom of all evidence concerning the Gospel of Jesus Christ. If a man has no faith, let him not talk about faith. If he has never known the Lord, let him hold his tongue till he does know Him, for it must be *personal* witness that must be borne if it is to be of any value.

Further, *it must be real, not fancied*. The judge would at once stop a witness if he said, "My lord, I thought," and he would say, "We do not want your thoughts, my dear Sir. What did you *see*?" In like manner, we want to know what you have felt about Christ, not what you have fancied

concerning Him. What has been really true in your spiritual life? What has been proved to be true by your actions?

Next, *good witness must be consistent, not contradictory*, for, when a witness contradicts himself, his evidence is not regarded as of any value. So, if you say, "The Gospel makes me holy," but you are caught in an act of cheating, or you lose your temper, or your talk is not clean, men will say, "Out of the same mouth proceeds blessing and cursing, but which are we to believe?"

And, once more, *good testimony must be persistent, not variable*, for, if a man says one thing now, and another thing another time, you naturally say, "We never know where to find that fellow." That is the case with far too many professors—we do not know where to find them. On a Sunday, they are careful to carry a Bible and a hymn-book, but I have heard that, on a week day, they are more likely to have a pack of cards in their hand. On Sunday, it is, "Sing a hymn to Jesus." But on Monday, it is, "Sing to anybody you like." On Sunday, it is, "Fear God." But on Monday, if it were not for the fear of the policeman, nobody knows what they might attempt! This will not do. If you are not consistent throughout your whole lives—if you are not all of one piece—I almost wish that you were all the bad piece, because this mixture, this mangle-mangle, this Baal and Jehovah, this partly for God and partly for Mammon—this is the great mischief-making thing in the professing Church today! Oh, that God would give us the Grace to bear persistent, consistent, unvarying witness to the power of the Gospel on our souls and in our lives!

To anyone who does not believe the Gospel, I have this word to say. My Friend, you have come in here tonight and yet you are not a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. Is the Gospel true? Probably you reply, "Yes, I believe it is true." Well, then, if it is true, why do you not believe it? If Jesus Christ is true, why do you not believe Him? The Gospel tells you about your souls, about eternity, about Heaven, about Hell, about the only way of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. Then, if it is true, why do you not believe it? Why do you not see to it that your soul is right with God through believing in Jesus Christ? I would like to bring you to a point so that you would say of the Gospel, "I believe it," or, "I reject it."

Suppose you should reject it? Then you practically say that the Apostles were liars—that they bore testimony to a set of lies! More than that, you are prepared to say that all the myriads of martyrs who died for the Truth of God were fools, for they died in the defense of a fiction—that they went to prison and lost all things, and suffered every kind of ill treatment and torture for the sake of this Gospel—yet you say that they were fools, all of them, and that you are the one wise man who knows more than all of them! Well, we have only your word for that, and we are not as sure about it as you seem to be. Further, you are prepared to say that all of us who declare that belief in Christ gave us peace of conscience, changed our lives, comforts our hearts and supports us in sickness—you say that we are all under a delusion! And your mother, when she died sweetly rejoicing in Christ—was she deluded, too? And the little child who died singing of Jesus, and who bade her father follow her to

Heaven, was she also deceived? Were these wrong? Were all these mistaken? And those of whom I have spoken, whom I have myself seen within this last week, of whose calmness and serenity on their deathbeds I have testified to you—was that all a delusion? I should like you to say that to the little boy at the Orphanage, only I do not think that you would have the heart to do it. But if you did, it would not make any difference to him because he knows better!

If you were to tell me, when I eat my dinner, that I am not nourished by it, and that I do not enjoy it—that it is only just an idea and a fancy—well, you know, I would not argue with you—I would laugh at you! And I often feel inclined to laugh at unbelievers—only I remember how much they are losing, and in what danger they stand—so my laughter turns to tears. Oh, that you would believe the Gospel! It makes me happy. It makes me blessed. I cannot live without it and I dare not die without it! And, blessed be God, I will not try either experiment, to live without it, or to die without it. No, I can still say—

***“Ever since by faith I saw the stream
His flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die”—***

for I know that it is true! I have been with Jesus and, therefore, I bear witness to Him! Go and do likewise, only do it much better than I have done it, all you who have been with Him, and God bless you, for Christ's sake! Amen and Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: JOHN 15:12-27.

Verse 12. *This is My commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you. O Beloved, do keep this commandment! Overlook each other's infirmities. Bear with each other's faults. Love one another as Christ has loved us!*

13-15. *Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knows not what his lord does: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you. “I have explained Myself to you in such a way that I have proved that you are My friends. A master sets his servant to work without explaining what his objective is in that work, but I have explained to you what My Father's design is. Therefore, you are My friends.”*

16-21. *You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatever you shall ask of the Father in My name, He may give it to you. These things I command you, that you love one another. If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own: but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said unto you, A servant is not*

greater than his master. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept My saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for My name's sake, because they know not Him that sent Me. We cannot expect, therefore, to receive honor and to wear a crown of gold where Jesus wore a crown of thorns!

22-24. *If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin. He that hates Me, hates My Father also. If I had not done among them the works which no other man did, they had not had sin. They would have been comparatively free from sin.*

24-26. *But now have they both seen and hated both Me and My Father. But this happened that the Word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated Me without a cause. But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth, who proceeds from the Father, He shall testify of Me. Notice that blessed Truth of God—that even that Divine Person, the Holy Spirit, when He comes to visit us, has nothing better to speak of than our Lord Jesus Christ! “He shall testify of Me.” Even the Holy Spirit, when He exercises the function of the Comforter, testifies of Christ! Is He not the consolation of Israel? Well did the poet write—*

***“You dear Redeemer, dying Lamb,
We love to hear of Thee!
No music's like Your charming name,
Nor half so sweet can be.”***

27. *And you also shall bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning.*

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—660, 980, 809.

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

THE SUPERLATIVE EXCELLENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT NO. 574

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 12, 1864,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is expedient for you that I go away:
for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you;
but if I depart, I will send Him unto you.”*
John 16:7.

THE saints of God may very justly reckon their losses among their greatest gains. The adversities of Believers minister much to their prosperity. Although we know this, through the infirmity of the flesh we tremble at soul-enriching afflictions and dread to see those black ships which bring us such freights of golden treasure. When the Holy Spirit sanctifies the furnace, the flame refines our gold and consumes our dross, yet the dull ore of our nature likes not the glowing coals and had rather lie quiet in the dark mines of earth. As silly children cry because they are called to drink the medicine which will heal their sicknesses, even so do we.

Our gracious Savior, however, loves us too wisely to spare us the trouble because of our childish fears. He foresees the advantage which will spring from our griefs and therefore thrusts us into them out of wisdom and true affection. It was a very great trouble to these first Apostles to lose their Teacher and Friend. Sorrow had filled their hearts at the thought that He should depart, but yet His departure was to give them the greater blessing of the Holy Spirit. And therefore their entreaties and tears cannot avert the dreaded separation. Christ will not gratify their wishes at so vast an expense as the withholding of the Spirit. Mourn as they may under the severe trial, Jesus will not remain with them because His departure is in the highest degree expedient.

Beloved, let us expect to be subject to the same loving discipline. Let us reckon upon losing happy frames and choice enjoyments when Jesus knows that the loss will be better for us than the enjoyment. God has given two great gifts to His people—the first is His Son *for* us. The second is His Spirit *to* us. After He had given His Son for us, to become Incarnate, to work righteousness, and to offer an Atonement—after that gift had been fully bestowed there remained no more to be conferred in that respect. “It is finished!” proclaimed the completion of Atonement and His Resurrection showed the perfection of Justification. It was not, therefore, necessary that Christ should remain any longer upon earth since His work below is forever finished.

Now is the season for the *second* gift, the descent of the Holy Spirit. This could not be bestowed until Christ had ascended, because this choice favor was reserved to grace, with highest honor, the triumphant ascension of the great Redeemer. “When He ascended up on high, He led

captivity captive and gave gifts unto men.” This was, as Peter tells us, the great promise which Jesus received of His Father. “Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has shed forth this, which you now see and hear.” That His triumphal entrance into Heaven might be stamped with signal Glory, the gifts of the Spirit of God could not be scattered among the sons of men until the Lord had gone up with a shout, even the Lord with the sound of trumpet.

The first gift being completed, it became necessary that He, whose Person and work make up that priceless gift, should withdraw Himself that He might have power to distribute the second benefit by which alone the first gift becomes of any service to us. Christ Crucified is of no practical value to us without the work of the Holy Spirit. And the Atonement which Jesus worked can never save a single soul unless the blessed Spirit of God shall apply it to the heart and conscience. Jesus is never seen until the Holy Spirit opens the eyes—the water from the Well of Life is never received until the Holy Spirit has drawn it from the depths.

As medicine unused for want of the physician’s word. As sweets untasted because out of reach. As treasure unvalued because hidden in the earth—such is Jesus the Savior—until the Holy Spirit teaches us to know Him and applies His blood to our souls. It is to the honor of the Holy Spirit that I desire to speak this morning and O, may the same hallowed flame which of old sat upon the Apostles now rest upon the preacher and may the Word come with power to our hearts!

I. We shall commence our discourse by the remark that **THE BODILY PRESENCE OF CHRIST MUST HAVE BEEN EXCEEDINGLY PRECIOUS.** How precious those alone can tell who much love Christ. Love always desires to be in the company of the thing beloved and absence causes grief. What is fully meant by the expression, “Sorrow has filled your heart,” those only can know who anticipate a like painful bereavement. Jesus had become the Joy of their eyes, the Sun of their days, the Star of their nights—like the spouse, as she came up from the wilderness—they leaned upon their Beloved. They were as little children and now that their Lord and Master was going, they felt they should be left orphans.

Well might they have great sorrow of heart! So much love, so much sorrow, when the object of love is withdrawn. Judge, my Brethren, the joy which the bodily Presence of Christ would give to us this morning, and then you can tell how precious it must be. Have we not, some of us, been looking for years for the personal advent of Christ? We have lifted up our eyes in the morning and we have said, “Perhaps He will come this day.” And when the day has closed we have continued our watching in our sleepless hours and renewed our hopes with the rising of the sun. We longingly expect Him according to His promise. And like men who watch for their Lord, we stand with loins girt about waiting for His appearing.

We are looking for and hastening unto the Day of the Lord. This is the bright hope which cheers the Christian, the hope that the Savior shall descend to reign among His people gloriously. Suppose Him to appear suddenly on this platform now—how would you clap your hands! Why, the lame among you would, at the joy of His appearance, leap like a hart and

even the dumb might sing for joy! The Presence of the Master! What rapture! Come quickly! Come quickly, Lord Jesus!

It must be, indeed, a precious thing to enjoy the corporeal Presence of Christ. Think of the advantage it would be in the instruction of His people. No mystery need puzzle us if we could refer all to Him. The disputes of the Christian Church would soon be ended for He would tell us what His Word meant beyond dispute. There would be no discouragement to the Church in her work of faith and labor of love, for the Presence of Christ would be the end of all difficulties and insure conquest over all enemies. We should not have to mourn as we now do over our forgetfulness of Jesus, for we should sometimes catch a look at Him. And a sight of Him would give us a store of joy so that like the Prophet of Horeb we could go forty days in the strength of that meat!

It were a delightful thing to know that Christ was somewhere upon earth, for then He would take the personal supervision of His universal Church. He could warn us of apostates. He could reject the hypocrites. He would comfort the feeble-minded and rebuke the erring. How delightful would it be to see Him walking among the golden candlesticks, holding the stars in His right hand! Churches need not, then, be subdivided and rent with evil passions. Christ would create unity. Schism would cease to be and heresy would be rooted out. The Presence of Jesus, whose countenance is as the sun shining in his strength, would ripen all the fruits of our garden, consume all the weeds, and quicken every plant!

The two-edged sword of His mouth would slay His foes and His eyes of fire would kindle the holy passions of His friends. But I shall not enlarge upon that point because it is one in which fancy exercises itself at the expense of judgment. I question whether the pleasure, which the thought of Christ's being here in the flesh has given us just now, may not have had a leaven of carnality in it. I question whether the Church is yet prepared to enjoy the corporeal Presence of her Savior without falling into the error of knowing Him after the flesh. It may be it shall need centuries of education before the Church is fit to see her Savior in the flesh on earth again, because I see in my own self—and I suppose it is so in you—that much of the delight which I expect from the company of Christ is according to the sight of the eyes and the judgment of the mind. And sight is ever the mark and symbol of the flesh.

II. However, leaving that point, we come to the second, which is THAT THE PRESENCE OF THE COMFORTER, AS WE HAVE IT UPON EARTH, IS VERY MUCH BETTER THAN THE BODILY PRESENCE OF CHRIST. We have fancied that the bodily Presence of Christ would make us blessed and confer innumerable benefits. But according to our text the Presence of the Holy Spirit working in the Church is more expedient for the Church. I think this will be clear to you, if you think for a moment, that the bodily Presence of Christ on earth, however good it might be for the Church, would in our present condition involve many inconveniences which are avoided by His Presence through the Holy Spirit.

Christ, being most truly Man, must as to His Manhood inhabit a certain place and in order to get to Christ, it would be necessary for us to travel to His place of residence. Conceive all men compelled to travel from

the ends of the earth to visit the Lord Jesus Christ, dwelling upon Mount Zion, or in the city of Jerusalem. What a lengthened voyage would that be for those who live in the far-off ends of the world!

Doubtless they would joyfully undertake it and as pence would be universal and poverty be banished, men might not be restrained from taking such a journey, but might all be able to accomplish it? As they could not all live where they could every morning see Christ, they must be content with every now and then getting a glimpse of Him. But see, my Brethren, the Holy Spirit, the vicar of Christ, dwells everywhere! And if we wish to apply to the Holy Spirit, we have no need to move an inch. In the closet we can find Him, or in the streets we can talk with Him. Jesus Christ could not be present in this congregation after the flesh and yet present in a neighboring Church, much less present in America and in Australia and in Europe and in Africa, at the same time.

But the Holy Spirit is everywhere! And through that Holy Spirit Christ keeps His promise, "Where two or three are met together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." He could not keep that promise according to the *flesh*—at least we are quite unable to conceive of His so doing. But through the Holy Spirit we sweetly enjoy His Presence and hope to do so to the world's end. Think again—access to Christ—if He were here in His corporeal Personality, would not be very easy to all Believers. There are only twenty-four hours in the day and if our Lord never slept, if, as a Man, He could still live and, like the saints above, rest not day nor night, yet there are only the twenty-four hours. And what were twenty-four hours for the supervision of a Church which we trust will cover the whole earth?

How could a thousand millions of Believers all receive immediate personal comfort either from His lips or the smiles of His face? Even at the present moment there are some millions of true saints upon earth—what could one man do by his personal presence—even though that one man were Incarnate Deity? What could He do in one day for the comfort of all of these? Why, we could not possibly expect each one of us to see Him every day—no, we could scarcely expect to have our turn once in the year!

But, Beloved, we can now see Jesus every hour and every moment of every hour! So often as you bow the knee, His Spirit, who represents Him, can commune with you and bless you. No matter whether it is in the dead of night that your cry goes up, or under the blaze of burning noon—there is the Spirit waiting to be gracious and your sighs and cries climb up to Christ in Heaven and return with answers of peace. These difficulties did not occur to you, perhaps, in your first thoughts. But if you meditate awhile you will see that the Presence of the Spirit, avoiding that difficulty, makes Christ accessible to every saint at all times. Not to a few choice favorites, but to every believing man and woman the Holy Spirit is accessible and thus the whole body of the faithful can enjoy present and perpetual communion with Christ.

We ought to consider yet once more that Christ's Presence in the flesh upon earth, for any other purpose than that of ending the present dispensation, would involve another difficulty. Of course every Word which Christ had spoken from the time of the Apostles until now would have

been Inspired. Being Inspired it would have been a thousand pities that it should fall to the ground. Busy scribes would therefore be always taking down Christ's Words. And, my Brethren, if in the short course of three years our Savior managed to do and to say so much that one of the Evangelists informs us that if all had been written the world itself could not have contained the books which would have been written—I ask you to imagine what a mass of literature the Christian Church would have acquired if she had preserved the Words of Christ throughout these one thousand eight hundred and sixty-four years!

Certainly we should not have had the Word of God in the simple compact form of a pocket Bible—it would have consisted of innumerable volumes of the sayings and deeds of the Lord Jesus Christ! Only the studious, no, not even the studious could have read all the Lord's teachings! And the poor and the illiterate must ever have been at a great disadvantage. But now we have a Book which is finished within a narrow compass with not another line to be added to it. The canon of Revelation is sealed up forever and the poorest man in England, believing in Christ, going with a humble soul to that Book and looking up to Jesus Christ who is present through His Spirit, though not after the flesh, may, in a short time comprehend the Doctrines of Grace and understand with all saints what are the heights and depths and know the love of Christ which passes knowledge.

So then, on the score of inconvenience, precious as the corporeal Presence of Christ might be, it is infinitely better for the Church's good that, until the day of her Millennial Glory, Christ should be present by His Spirit and not in the flesh. Yet more, my Brethren! If Jesus Christ were still present with His Church in the flesh, the life of faith would not have such room for its display as it now has. The more there is visible to the eyes, the less room for faith—the least faith, the most show. The Romish Church, which has little enough of true faith, provides everything to work upon the senses—your nostrils are regaled with incense and your ears are delighted with sweet sounds. The more faith grows, the less it needs outward helps. And when faith shows her true character and is clean divorced from sense and sight, then she wants absolutely nothing to rest upon but the invisible power of God!

She then has learned to hang as the world hangs—upon no seen support! Just as the eternal arch of yon blue sky springs right up without props, so faith rests upon the invisible pillars of God's Truth and faithfulness, needing nothing to shore or buttress her. The Presence of Christ Jesus here in bodily flesh and the knowing of Him according to the flesh, would be the bringing back of the saints to a life of sight and in a measure spoil the simplicity of naked trust. You remember the Apostle Paul says, "We now know no man after the flesh. Yes," says he, "though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now after the flesh know we Him no more." To the skeptic, who should ask us, "Why do you believe in Christ?" if Jesus had remained upon the earth, we could always give an easy answer—"There He is—there is the Man. Behold Him as He continues still to work miracles."

There would be very little room for faith's holy adherence to the bare Word of God and no opportunity for her to glorify God, trusting where she cannot trace. But now, Beloved, the fact that we have nothing visible to point to which carnal minds can understand—this very fact makes the path of faith more truly congenial with its noble character—

**“Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees,
And looks to that alone,”**

which she could hardly do, if she could look upon the visible Person of a present Savior. Happy day will it be for us when faith enjoys the full fruition of her hopes in the triumphant advent of her Lord! But His absence, alone, can train and educate her to the needed point of spiritual refinement.

Furthermore, the Presence of Jesus Christ on earth would materially affect the character of God's great battle against error and sin. Suppose that Christ were to destroy the preachers of error by miracle. Suppose that persecuting monarchs had their arms dried up, or that all men who would oppose Christ were suddenly devoured by fire. Why then it would be more a battle between physical greatness and moral evil, than a warfare in which only *spiritual* force is employed on the side of right. But now that Christ has gone, the fight is all between Spirit and spirit—between God the Holy Spirit and Satan—between Truth and error. It is between the earnestness of believing men and the infatuation of unbelieving men. Now the fight is fair.

We have no miracles on our side—we do not want them—the Holy Spirit is enough! We call no fire from Heaven—no earthquake shakes the ground beneath our foemen's feet. Korah is not swallowed up. Dathan does not go down alive into the pit. Physical force is left to our enemies—we do not ask for it. Why? Because by the Divine working we can vanquish error without it. In the name of the Holy One of Israel, in whose cause we have been enlisted—by His might we are enough—no need for miracles and signs and wonders. If Christ were here still working miracles, the battle were not so spiritual as it now is. But the absence of the corporeal Savior makes it a spiritual conflict of Spirit of the noblest and most sublime order.

Again, dear Friends, the Holy Spirit is more valuable to the Church in her present militant state than the Presence of Christ could be conceived to be, because Christ must be here in one of two ways—either He must be here *suffering*, or *not suffering*. If Christ were here suffering, then how could we conclude that His Atonement was finished? Is it not much better for our faith that our blessed Lord, having once and for all made expiation for sin, should sit at the right hand of the Father? Is it not much better, I ask, than to see Him still struggling and suffering here below? “Oh, but,” you say, “perhaps He would not suffer!” Then I pray you, do not wish to have Him here till our warfare is accomplished, for to see an unsuffering Christ in the midst of His suffering people—to see His face calm and clear when yours and mine are wrinkled with grief—to see Him smiling when we are weeping, this were intolerable! No, it could not be! Brethren, if He is a suffering Christ in our sight, then we should suspect that He had not finished His work.

And, on the other hand, if He is an unsuffering Christ, then it would look as if He were not a faithful High Priest made like unto His Brethren. These two difficulties throw us back into a state of thankfulness to God that we have not the dilemma to answer, but that the Spirit of God, who is Christ present on earth, relieves us from these difficulties and gives us all the advantage we could expect from Christ's Presence in a tenfold degree. Only this one further remark, that the personal Presence of Christ, much as we think of it, did not produce very great results in His disciples until the Spirit was poured forth from on high.

Christ was their Teacher—how much did they learn? Why, there is Philip—Christ has to say to him, “Have I been so long time with you and yet have you not known Me, Philip?” They were puzzled by questions which little children can now answer! You can see that at the end of their three years course of training with Christ, they had made but slender progress. Christ is not only their Teacher, but their Comforter—yet how frequently Christ failed to console them because of their unbelief. After He had uttered that delightful discourse which we have been reading, He found them sleeping for sorrow. In this very chapter, when He is trying to comfort them, He adds, “But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow has filled your heart.”

Christ's object was to foster the Graces of His disciples—but where were their Graces? Here is Peter—he has not even the Grace of courage and consistency, but denies his Master while the rest of them forsake Him and flee. There was not even the Spirit of Christ infused into them! Their zeal was not tempered with *love*, for they wanted fire from Heaven to consume His adversaries and Peter drew a sword to cut off the High Priest's servant's ear. They scarcely knew the Truths which their Master taught and they were far enough from imbibing His heavenly Spirit. Even their endowments were slender. It is true they once worked miracles and preached, but with what success?

Do you ever hear of Peter winning three thousand sinners under a sermon till the Holy Spirit came? Do you find any of them able to edify others and build up the Church of Christ? No, the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ, considered only as to its immediate fruits, was not to be compared with ministries after the descent of the Spirit. “He came unto His own and His own received Him not.” His great work as a Redeemer was a complete triumph from beginning to end. But as a Teacher, since the Spirit of God was only upon *Him* and not upon the people, His words were rejected, His entreaties were despised and His warnings unheeded by the great multitude of the people.

The mighty blessing came when the words of Joel were fulfilled, “And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh. And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out My Spirit.” That was the blessing and a blessing which, we venture to say again, was so rich and so rare that it was, indeed, expedient that Jesus Christ should go, that the Holy Spirit might descend.

III. I now pass on to the third point of the subject with brevity. We have come thus far—the Presence of Christ admitted to be precious, but the Presence of the Holy Spirit most clearly shown to be of more practical value to the Church of God than the corporeal Presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. Advance, then, to the third point, THE PRESENCE OF THE COMFORTER IS SUPERLATIVELY VALUABLE. We may gather this, first, from the effects which were seen upon the day of Pentecost. On the day of Pentecost the heavenly Wind sounded the alarm of war. The soldiers were ill prepared for it. They were a slender band, having only this virtue—they were content to wait until power was given to them.

They sat still in the upper room. That mighty sound was heard across Jerusalem. The forceful Whirlwind travels on until it reaches the chosen spot. It fills the place where they are sitting. Here was an omen of what the Spirit of God is to be to the Church! It is to come mysteriously upon the Church according to the Sovereign will of God. But when He comes like the Wind, it is to purge the moral atmosphere and to quicken the pulse of all who spiritually breathe. This is a blessing, indeed! A gift which the Church greatly wants—I would that this rushing mighty Wind would come upon this Church with an irresistible force which should carry everything before it—the force of Truth, but of more than Truth—the force of God driving His Truth home upon the heart and conscience of men!

I would that you and I could breathe this Wind and receive its invigorating influence that we might be made champions of God and of His Truth. O that it would drive away our mists of doubt and clouds of error! Come, Sacred Wind, England needs You—the whole earth requires You! The foul gases which brood in this deadly calm would fly if Your Divine lightning enlightened the world and set the moral atmosphere in commotion. Come, Holy Spirit, come. We can do nothing without You! If we have Your Wind, we spread our sails and speed onward towards Glory!

Then the Spirit came as fire. A fire-shower accompanied the rushing mighty Wind. What a blessing is this to the Church! The Church wants fire to quicken her ministers, to give zeal and energy to all her members. Having this fire, she burns her way to success! The world meets her with the fire of firewood, but she confronts the world with the fire of kindling spirits and of souls aglow with the love of Jesus Christ. She trusts not to the wit and eloquence and wisdom of her preachers, but to the Divine Fire which clothes them with energy. She knows that men are irresistible when they are filled with hallowed enthusiasm sent from God. She trusts, therefore, in this and her cry is, “Come, Holy Fire, abide upon our pastors and teachers! Rest upon every one of us!” This Fire is a blessing Christ did not bring us in Person, but which He now gives through His Spirit to the Church.

Then there came from the fire-shower a descent of tongues. This, too, is the privilege of the Church. When the Lord gave the Apostles different tongues, He did, as it were, give them the keys of the various kingdoms. “Go,” says He, “Judea is not My only dominion. Go and unlock the gates of every empire. Here are the keys, you can speak every language.” Dear Friends, though we can no longer speak with every man in his own tongue, yet we have the keys of the whole world swinging at our girdle if

we have the Spirit of God with us. You have the keys of human hearts if the Spirit of God speaks through you. I have this day the keys of the hearts of the multitudes here if the Holy Spirit wills to use them!

There is an efficacy about the Gospel, when the Spirit is with us, little dreamed of by those who call it the foolishness of men. I am persuaded that the results which have followed ministry in our lifetime are trivial and insignificant compared with what they would be if the Spirit of God were more mightily at work in our midst. There is no reason in the nature of the Gospel or the power of the Spirit why a whole congregation should not be converted under one sermon! There is no reason in God's Nature why a *nation* should not be born in a day and why, within a single twelve months, a dozen ministers preaching throughout the world might not be the means of converting every elect son and daughter of Adam to a knowledge of the Truth of God. The Spirit of God is perfectly Irresistible when He puts forth His full power!

His power is so Divinely Omnipotent that the moment He goes forth the work is achieved, The great prophetic event, we see, occurred on the day of Pentecost. The success given was only the first fruits—Pentecost is not the harvest. We have been accustomed to look on Pentecost as a great and wonderful display of Divine power not at all to be equaled in modern times. Brethren, it is to be *exceeded!* I stand not upon Pentecost as upon a towering mountain, wondering at my height, but I look at Pentecost as a little rising knoll from which I am to look up to mountains far loftier! I look not to Pentecost as the shouting of our harvest home and the bringing in of the sheaves into the garner. No! But as an offering of the first wave sheaf before the altar of God!

You must *expect* greater things, *pray* for greater things, *long* for greater things! Here is this England of ours, sunk in stolid ignorance of the Gospel. Weighing like a nightmare upon her bosom we have baptismal regeneration supported by a horde of priests who either believe that dogma, or hold their benefices by subscribing to a lie. How is this incubus to be shaken off from the living bosom of England? "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord." There is France cursed with infidelity, fickle, gay, given up to pleasure—how is she to be made sober and sanctified unto God? "Not by might, but by My Spirit, says the Lord." Yonder is Germany, with her metaphysical skepticism, her half-Romanism, that is to say, Lutheranism—and her abounding Popery! How is she to arise? "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord." Away there in Italy sits old Rome, the harlot of the seven hills, still reigning queen triumphant over the great part of the earth! How is she to die? Where is the sword which shall find out her heart? "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord."

The one thing, then, which we need, is the Spirit of God! Do not say that we need money—we shall have it soon enough when the Spirit touches men's hearts. Do not say that we need buildings, Churches, edifices—all these may be very well in subservience—but the main need of the Church is the Spirit and men into whom the Spirit may be poured! If there were only one prayer which I might pray before I died, it should be this: "Lord, send to Your Church men filled with the Holy Spirit and with

fire.” Give to any denomination such men and its progress must be mighty—keep back such men, send them college gentlemen of great refinement and profound learning, but of little fire and Grace—dumb dogs which cannot bark—and straightway that denomination must decline. Let the Spirit come and the preacher may be rustic, simple, rough, unmannered—but the Holy Spirit being upon him—none of his adversaries shall stand against him! His word shall be with power to the shaking of the gates of Hell!

Beloved, did I not say well when I said that the Spirit of God is of superlative importance to the Church and that the day of Pentecost seems to tell us this? Remember, Brethren, and here is another thought which should make the Spirit very dear to you—without the Holy Spirit no good thing ever did or ever can come into any of your hearts—no sigh of penitence! No cry of faith! No glance of love! No tear of hallowed sorrow! Your heart can never palpitate with Divine life except through the Spirit! You are not capable of the smallest degree of spiritual emotion, much less spiritual action, apart from the Holy Spirit! Dead you lie, living only for evil, and absolutely dead for God until the Holy Spirit comes and raises you from the grave!

There is nothing good in you today, my Brothers and Sisters, which was not *put* there. The flowers of Christ are all exotics—“In me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing.” Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? No one! Everything must come from Christ and Christ gives nothing to men except through the Spirit of all Grace. Prize, then, the Spirit as the channel of all good which comes into you. And further, no good thing can come *out* of you apart from the Spirit. Let it be in you, yet it lies dormant except God works in you to will and to do of His own good pleasure. Do you desire to preach? How can you unless the Holy Spirit touches your tongue? Do you desire to pray? Alas, what dull work it is unless the Spirit makes intercession for you! Do you desire to subdue sin? Would you be holy? Would you imitate your Master? Do you desire to rise to superlative heights of spirituality? Are you wanting to be made like the angels of God, full of zeal and ardor for the Master’s cause? You cannot without the Spirit—“Without Me you can do nothing.”

O branch of the vine, you can have no fruit without the sap! O child of God, you have no life within you apart from the life which God gives you through His Spirit! Said I not well, then, that the Holy Spirit is superlatively precious, so that even the Presence of Christ after the flesh is not to be compared to His Presence for glory and for power?

IV. This brings us to the conclusion, which is a practical point. Brethren, if these things are so, let us, who are believers in Christ, view the mysterious Spirit with deep awe and reverence. Let us so reverence Him as not to grieve Him or provoke Him to anger by our sins. Let us not quench Him in one of His faintest motions in our soul. Let us foster every suggestion and be ready to obey every prompting. If the Holy Spirit is, indeed, so mighty, let us do nothing without Him. Let us begin no project and carry on no enterprise and conclude no transaction without imploring His blessing. Let us pay Him the due homage of feeling our entire weakness apart from Him, and then depending alone upon Him, having this for

our prayer, "Open my heart and my whole being to Your incoming and uphold me with Your free Spirit when I shall have received that Spirit in my inward parts."

You who are unconverted, let me beseech you, whatever you do, never despise the Spirit of God. Remember, there is a special honor put upon Him in Scripture—"All manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men, but the sin against the Holy Spirit shall never be forgiven, neither in this world nor in that which is to come." Remember, "If a man speaks a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him. But if he speaks a word against the Holy Spirit, it shall never be forgiven him." This is the sin which is unto death, of which even the loving John says—"I do not say that you shall pray for it." Tremble, therefore, in His Presence! Take your shoes off, for when His name is mentioned, the place where you stand is holy ground. Let the Spirit be treated with reverence.

In the next place, as a practical remark, let us, viewing the might of the Spirit, take courage today. We know, Brethren, that we, as a body of people seeking to adhere closely to Scripture and to practice the ordinances and hold the doctrines as we have received them from the Lord Himself, are but poor and despised. And when we look at the great ones of the earth, we see them on the side of the false and not of the true. Where are the kings and the nobles? Where are the princes, and where are the mighty men?

Are they not against the Lord of Hosts. Where is the gold? Where is the silver? Where is the architecture? Where is the wisdom? Where is the eloquence? Is it not banded against the Lord of Hosts? What? Shall we, then, be discouraged? Our fathers were not! They bore their testimony in the stocks and in the prison, but they feared not for the good old cause! As John Bunyan, they learned to rot in dungeons, but they learned not to play the coward. They suffered and they testified that they were not discouraged. Why? Because they knew (not that Truth is mighty and will prevail, for Truth is not mighty and will not prevail in this world until men are different from what they are), but they knew that the Spirit of God is mighty and will prevail!

Better to have a small Church of poor men and the Spirit of God with them, than to have a hierarchy of nobles, to have an army of titled princes and prelates without the Holy Spirit! For this is not merely the sinew of strength, but it is strength itself! Where the Spirit of God is—there is liberty and power! Courage then, Brethren! We have only to seek for that which God has promised to give and we can do wonders. He will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him. Wake up, members of this Church, to earnest prayer. And all Believers throughout the world, cry aloud unto God to let His bare arm be seen. Wake, children of God, for you know the power of prayer!

Give the Covenant angel no rest till he speaks the word and the Spirit works mightily among the sons of men. Prayer is work adapted to each of you who are in Christ. You cannot preach, you cannot teach, but you can pray! And your private prayer, unknown by men, shall be registered in Heaven, Those silent but earnest cries of yours shall bring down a blessing. The other morning, when we were holding special prayer, there were

some Brethren present who kept saying during the prayer to themselves, scarcely loud enough to be heard, “Do Lord! Do! Grant it! Hear it!” That is a kind of praying which I love in Prayer Meetings!

I would not care for the loud shouts of some of our Methodist Brethren, though if they like they are welcome to it. But I do like to hear friends praying with the groaning which cannot be uttered, “Lord, send the Spirit! Send the Spirit, Lord! Work! Work! Work!” During sermon time it is what numbers of Churches should be doing, crying out to God in their hearts. As you walk the streets when you see sin you should pray, “Lord, put it down by Your Spirit!” And when you mark a struggling Brother striving to do good, you should cry, “Lord, help him! Help him by Your Spirit.” I am persuaded we only need more prayer and there is no limit to the blessing! You may evangelize England, you may evangelize Europe, you may Christianize the world—if you do but know how to *pray*.

Prayer can get anything of God, prayer can get everything—God denies nothing to the man who knows how to ask. The Lord never shuts His storehouse till you shut your mouth! God will never stop His arm till you stop your tongue. Cry aloud and spare not! Give Him no rest till He sends forth His Spirit once again to stir the waters and to brood over this dark world till light and life shall come! Cry day and night, O you elect of God, for He will avenge you speedily. The time of battle draws near! Rome sharpens her sword for the fight! The men of error gnash their teeth in rage! Now for the sword of the Lord and of Gideon! Now for the old might and majesty of the ancient days! Now for the shaking of the walls of Jericho, even though we have no better weapons than rams’ horns! Now for the driving out of the heathen, and for the establishment of God’s Israel in the land! Now for the coming of the Holy Spirit with such might and power that as Noah’s flood covered the mountaintops, Jehovah’s flood of Glory shall cover the highest summits of sin and iniquity and the whole world over, the Lord God Omnipotent shall reign!

You who have not the Spirit pray for it. May He prompt you to pray this morning! Unconverted Sinners, may the Spirit give you faith! Remember that the Holy Spirit tells you to trust Christ. If you honor the Holy Spirit, trust Christ. I know you must be regenerate, for the man who trusts Christ *is* regenerate. You must repent, you must be holy, but the man who trusts Christ *shall* repent and *shall* be made holy. The germs of repentance and holiness are in him already. Trust Christ, Sinner! It is the Holy Spirit’s mandate to you this morning. May He constrain you to trust Him and He shall have the Glory, world without end. Amen.

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THE HOLY SPIRIT'S THREEFOLD CONVICTION OF MEN NO. 1708

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 25, 1883,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father, and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.”
John 16:8-11.*

THE Apostles had a stern task before them. They were to go into all nations and proclaim the Gospel to every creature, beginning at Jerusalem. Remember, only two or three years before they were simple fishermen engaged upon the Galilean Lake—men of little or no education, men of no rank or standing. At best they were but Jews and that nation was despised everywhere, while these peasants were not even men of repute among their own nation! Yet these men were to turn the world upside down! They were told by their Lord that they would be brought before rulers and kings for His sake and that they would be persecuted wherever they went. They were to proclaim the Gospel in the teeth of the imperial power of Rome, the ancient wisdom of Greece and the fierce cruelties of barbaric lands. And they were to set up the kingdom of peace and righteousness.

At the very time when they were about to receive their commission, they were also to lose the bodily Presence of their great Leader. While He was with them, they had felt no fear. If they were puzzled at any time by the Scribes and Pharisees, they resorted to Jesus, and they were rescued from bewilderment. Never man spoke like that Man! Never did such wisdom and prudence dwell in any mind as dwelt in the mind of Christ! His Presence was their protection, the broad shield behind which they securely stood, whatever shafts might be shot at them by their adversaries. But now that He was to depart out of the world unto the Father, they would be deprived of their fortress and high tower—they would be as children bereft of their father, or, at best, as soldiers without a general. Here was a sad case. Work given and power withdrawn—a battle beginning and the conquering Captain leaving.

How happy it was for these disciples that our blessed Lord could tell them that His going away would be for their gain rather than for their loss! For when He was gone, the Spirit of God would come to be an Advocate *for* them and *with* them, and by His power they would be able to silence all their enemies and achieve their mission! The Holy Spirit was to be their Comforter, that they might not be afraid, and their Advocate, that they might not be baffled. When they spoke, there would be a power within them suggesting their words, a power with those words convincing

their hearers, and a power in their hearers causing the word spoken to abide in their memories—that power would be Divine, the power of the Holy Spirit, who is One God with the Father and the Son.

It is one thing for men to speak, and quite another thing for God to speak through men. The work of proclaiming the Gospel to the world was far too great for the 12, but it was by no means too great for the Spirit of God! Who can limit His power? Is anything too hard for the Lord? The Holy Spirit being their Helper, these feeble men were equal to the task which God had committed to their trust. The Presence of the Holy Spirit was better for them than the bodily Presence of the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus could only have been in one place as to His corporeal Presence, but the Holy Spirit could be everywhere! The sight of Jesus would but appeal to the senses, but the power of the Holy Spirit touched the heart and worked spiritual life and saving faith! Thus, by His own withdrawal and the sending of the Spirit, our Lord furnished His servants for the conflict.

We will, at this time, observe what the Holy Spirit did as an Advocate. The passage cannot be fully understood unless we give it three renderings. But I do not pretend that even then, we shall have pressed from this choice cluster, all the generous wine of its meaning! To my mind, it is a compendium of all the work of the Spirit of God. By our three readings we shall see much—first, the Spirit of God goes with the preaching of the Gospel to reprove men of sin—and so to embarrass them in the presence of the preacher of righteousness. Secondly (and this is a much more blessed result), to convict men of sin and so to lead them to repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. And, thirdly, the ultimate result of the Holy Spirit's work will be to convict men before all intelligent beings of having been guilty of the grossest sin—having opposed the most perfect righteousness and of having defied the most glorious judgment. We shall try to see the meaning of the passage through these three windows.

I. First, we believe that a promise is here made to the servants of Christ that when they go forth to preach the Gospel the Holy Spirit will be with them TO REPROVE MEN. By this is meant, not so much to save them as to *silence* them. When the minister of Christ stands up to plead his Master's cause, another Advocate appears in court, whose pleadings would make it hard for men to resist the Truth of God. Observe how this reproof was given with regard to sin. On the day of Pentecost the disciples spoke with many different tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. Men from all countries under Heaven heard themselves addressed in their native tongues! This was a great marvel and all Jerusalem rang with it!

And when Peter stood up to preach to the assembled multitude and told the Jews that they had crucified the Holy One and the Just, the signs and wonders worked by the Spirit in the name of Jesus were a witness which they could not refute. The very fact that the Spirit of God had given to these unlettered men the gift of tongues was evidence that Jesus of Nazareth, of whom they spoke, was no impostor! It was laid down in the old Jewish Law that if a man prophesied and his prophecies did not come to pass, he was to be condemned as a false prophet. But if that which he said came to pass, then he was a true Prophet. Now, the Lord Jesus

Christ had promised the outpouring of the Spirit, which had also been foretold in reference to the Messiah by the Prophet Joel. When, therefore, that mark of the true Messiah was set upon Jesus of Nazareth by the coming of the Holy Spirit and the working of miracles, men were reprov'd for having refused to believe in Jesus.

The evidence was brought home to them that they had, with wicked hands, crucified the Lord of Glory—and so they stood reprov'd. All the subsequent miracles went to prove the same thing, for when the Apostles worked miracles, the world was reprov'd of sin because it believed not on Christ. It was not that a few disciples testified to the sin of the race, but the Holy Spirit, Himself, made men tremble, as by His deeds of power, He bore witness to the Lord Jesus and exhibited the fact that in crucifying Jesus, the world had put to death the Incarnate Son of God! Do you not see the terrible power with which the first disciples were thus armed? It was more to them than the rod in the hand of Moses with which he smote Pharaoh with so many plagues. It needed all the willfulness of that stiff-necked generation to resist the Holy Spirit and refuse to bow before Him whom they had pierced—they were full of malice and obstinacy—but in their secret hearts they were sore put to it and felt that they were fighting against God.

Do you not see, too, dear Friends, how the working of the Holy Spirit with the Apostles and their immediate followers was a wonderful rebuke to the world concerning the matter of righteousness? Jesus was gone and His Divine example no longer stood out like clear light reprov'ing their darkness—but the Holy Spirit attested that righteousness and compelled them to feel that Jesus was the Holy One and that His cause was righteous. The teaching of the Apostles, sealed by the Holy Spirit, made the world see what righteousness was as they had never seen it before! A fresh standard of morals was set up in the world and it has never been taken down—it stands in its place to rebuke, if not to improve! The world was then sunk in the uttermost depths of vice—even its good men were loathsome! But now another kind of righteousness was exhibited in the teachings of the Lord Jesus and the Spirit came to set the seal of Divine approval to it so that if men continued in sin, it might be against light and knowledge, for they now *knew* what was righteousness and could no longer be mistaken upon that point. God was with the preachers of a new righteousness and by many different signs and wonders He attested the cause of the Gospel.

Now, Brothers, we also rejoice in this, seeing that the witness of the Truth of God is for all time and we know of a surety that the Kingdom which our Lord Jesus has set up among men is Divinely sanctioned as the Kingdom of Righteousness which, in the end, shall grind to powder the powers of evil! We are the covenanted servants of a Lord whose righteousness was declared among men by the personal witness of God the Holy Spirit. Are you not glad to be enlisted in such a service? Oh, world, are you not embarrassed for resisting such a kingdom? These 12 fishermen could not, of themselves, have exhibited a new standard of righteousness among men! They could not, on their own, have set before all nations a higher ideal of moral excellence! But when the eternal power and majesty

of the Godhead vouched for the righteousness of the Lord Jesus, the course of the Apostolic Church became like that of the sun in the heavens!

“Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.” None could stand against them, for, as when the morning breaks, the darkness flies and the bats and the night birds hasten away, so when the messengers of mercy proclaimed the Righteousness of God, man’s hypocrisy and self-glorying fled away! Then, too, they were made to feel that a judgment had come; that somehow the life and the death of Jesus of Nazareth had made a crisis in the world’s history and condemned the way and manner of the ungodly. All historians must confess that the turning point of the race is the Cross of Christ. From that moment the power of evil received its mortal wound! It dies hard, but from that hour it was doomed. At the death of our Lord, the heathen oracles were struck dumb. There had been oracles all over the world, either the product of evil spirits or of crafty priests, but after the Christian era the world ceased to believe in these voices and they were no more heard.

Systems of false worship, so firmly rooted in prejudice and custom that it seemed impossible that they should ever be overthrown, were torn up by their roots by the breath of the Lord. The Apostles might have said to all the systems of falsehood, “as a bowing wall shall you be, and as a tottering fence.” Men could not help perceiving that the Prince of Darkness had been cast down from his undivided power and that he spoke, from then on, with bated breath. The Seed of the woman had met the old serpent and, in the duel between them, He had gained such a victory that the cause of evil was henceforth hopeless. Moreover, the thought flashed upon humanity more clearly than ever—there would be a Day of Judgment! Men heard and felt the truth of the warning that God would judge the world, at the last, by the Man, Christ Jesus!

The dim forms of Rhadamanthus on a cloudy judgment seat and of the assembly before his throne, and of the crowds divided according to their lives, now began to assume another and far more definite shape. It was written on the heart of mankind that there is a judgment to come! Men will rise again! They shall stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ to give an account of the things done in the body, whether good or evil. The world heard this and the tidings have never been forgotten! The Holy Spirit has reproved men by the prospect of judgment! The Holy Spirit attested the life of Christ, the teaching of the Apostles and all the grand Truths of God that were contained therein, by what He did in the way of miracles and by what He did in the way of enlightening, impressing and subduing human hearts. Henceforth man is accused and rebuked by the great Advocate! And all who remain in opposition to the Lord Jesus, remain so in defiance of the clearest proofs of His mission. He who rejects human testimony when it is true is foolish, but he who despises the witness of the Holy Spirit is profane, for he calls the Spirit of Truth a liar! Let him beware lest he so sin against the Holy Spirit as to come under the most terrible of curses—for it is written of him that speaks against the Holy Spirit—“he has no forgiveness.”

Brothers and Sisters, does not that put the Apostles in quite a different position from that in which they appeared to be? If we judge according to sense and carnal reason, their adventure was Quixotic, their success was impossible! Everybody would have said to them, "Go back to your nets and to your boats. What can you do against the established system of Judaism in your own country? And if that is too hard for you, what will you be able to do in other lands? There are nations that have been tutored in their own learning for thousands of years and have become adept in all the arts and sciences! They have brought all the charms of poetry, music and statuary to support their idolatrous systems—you are fools to think that you unlearned and ignorant men can ever overturn all this!"

Would not prudence agree with this? Yes, but if *God* is in these men—if He that dwelt in the bush at Horeb and made it burn, though it was not consumed—will dwell in them and each one of them shall be gifted with a tongue of fire, this is a different business altogether! Surely, He that made the world, could make it new! He that said, "Let there be light, and there was light," could command light to shine upon the moral and spiritual night. Thus much upon the first reading of the text. Let us advance to that which will more interest you.

II. The Holy Spirit was to go with the preaching of the Word of God TO CONVINCEN MEN of three great prominent Truths of God. This was to be a *saving* Word—they are to be so convinced as to repent of sin, to accept of righteousness and yield themselves to the judgment of the Lord. Here we see as in a map, the work of the Spirit upon the hearts of those who are ordained unto eternal life! Those three effects are all necessary and each one is, in the highest degree, important to true conversion. First, the Holy Spirit is come to convince men of sin. It is absolutely necessary that men should be convinced of sin.

The fashionable theology of the day is—"Convince men of the goodness of God! Show them the universal fatherhood and assure them of unlimited mercy. Win them by God's love, but never mention His wrath against sin, or the need of an Atonement, or the possibility of there being a place of punishment! Do not censure poor creatures for their failings. Do not judge and condemn. Do not search the heart or lead men to be low-spirited and sorrowful. Comfort and encourage, but never accuse and threaten!" Yes, that is the way of *man*—but the way of the Spirit of God is very different! He comes on purpose to convince men of sin, to make them feel that they are guilty, greatly guilty—so guilty that they are lost, ruined and undone! He comes to remind them not only of God's loveliness, but of their own *unloveliness*—of their own enmity and hatred to this God of Love and, consequently, of their terrible sin in thus ill-using One so infinitely kind.

The Holy Spirit does not come to make sinners comfortable in their sins, but to cause them to grieve over their sins! He does not help them to forget their sin, or think little of it, but He comes to convince them of the horrible enormity of their iniquity! It is no work of the Spirit to pipe to men's dancing—He does not bring forth flute, harp, dulcimer and all kinds of music to charm the unbelieving into a good opinion of themselves—He comes to make sin appear sin and to let us see its fearful consequences! He comes to wound so that no human balm can heal! He

comes to kill so that no *earthly* power can make us live! The flowers bedeck the meadows when the grass is green, but lo, a burning wind comes from the desert and the grass withers and the flowers fall away. What is it that makes the beauty and excellence of human righteousness to wither as the green herb? Isaiah says it is "because the Spirit of the Lord blows upon it."

There is a withering work of the Spirit of God which we must experience or we shall never know His quickening and restoring power. This withering is a most necessary experience and, just now, needs much to be insisted on. Today we have so many built up who were never pulled down; so many filled who were never emptied; so many exalted who were never humbled that I, the more earnestly, remind you that the Holy Spirit must convince us of sin or we cannot be saved! This work is most necessary because without it there is no leading men to receive the Gospel of the Grace of God. We cannot make headway with certain people because they profess faith very readily, but they are not convinced of *anything*. "Oh, yes, we are sinners, no doubt, and Christ died for sinners"—that is the free-and-easy way with which they handle heavenly mysteries—as if they were the nonsense verses of a boy's exercise, or the stories of Mother Goose!

This is all mockery and we are weary of it. But get near a real sinner and you have found a man you can deal with—I mean the man who is a sinner and there is no mistake about it—he mourns in his inmost soul that he is so. In such a man you find one who will welcome the Gospel, welcome Grace and welcome a Savior. To him the news of pardon will be as cold water to a thirsty soul—and the Doctrines of Grace will be as honey dropping from the comb! "A sinner," says one of our songsters, "is a sacred thing"—the Holy Spirit has made Him so. Your sham sinner is a horrid creature, but a man truly convinced of sin by the Spirit of God is a being to be sought after as a jewel that will adorn the crown of the Redeemer!

Note here, that the Spirit of God comes to convince men of sin because they never will be convinced of sin apart from His Divine advocacy. A natural conscience touched by the Spirit of God may do a good deal in the way of showing a man his faults. It may thus make him uneasy and may bring about a reformation of life. But it is only the Spirit of God that, to the full extent, convinces a man of sin so as to bring forth repentance, self-despair and faith in Jesus. For what is the sin that you and I are guilty of? Ah, Brothers and Sisters, it is not easy to tell, but this I know, that the extent of sin is never known till the Spirit of God reveals the secret chambers of the heart's abominations. We do a thousand things that we do not know to be sin till the Spirit of God enlightens us and pleads the cause of holiness in us.

What natural man, for instance, ever laments over evil thoughts or desires, or the imaginations which flit across his mind? Yet all these are sins and sins which cause a gracious heart the deepest distress! If we were never actually to *commit* evil, yet if we *desire* to do so, we have already sinned! And if we feel pleasure in thinking of evil, we have already sinned. This poison is in our nature and shows itself in a thousand ways. The fact that we not only sin, but are, by nature, sinful, is one which our pride

kicks against—and we will not learn it till the Spirit of God teaches it to us. Neither does any man know the exceeding sinfulness of sin till the Light of God falls upon the black mass from the Holy Spirit. Every sin is, as it were, an assault upon God's Throne, Glory and life. Sin would dethrone the Most High and destroy Him if it could—but men do not see this. They talk of sin most lightly and know not that it scatters firebrands and death.

I tell you, when the Spirit of God makes a man see sin in its naked deformity, he is horrified! When I saw, or thought I saw, the heinousness of sin, it was intolerable and I had no rest in my spirit. Some such sight we must all have, or we shall never look to the Lord Jesus to take away our sin. None but those whose wounds smart are likely to apply for the heavenly balm. The Holy Spirit dwells upon one point in particular—"of sin, because they believe not on Me." None see the sin of unbelief except by His light. A man thinks, "Well, if I have not believed in Christ, that is a pity, perhaps, but still, I was never a thief, or a liar, or a drunk, or unchaste. Unbelief is a matter of very little consequence. I can set that right at any time." But the Holy Spirit makes a man see that not to believe in Christ is a crowning, damning sin, since, "he that believes not has made God a liar"—and what can be more atrocious than that?

He who believes not on Christ has rejected God's mercy and has done despite to the grandest display of God's love! He has despised God's unspeakable Gift and trampled on the blood of Christ! In this he has dishonored God on a very tender point. He has insulted Him concerning His only-begotten Son! How I wish that the Spirit of God would come upon unbelievers, here, and make them see what they are and where they are with regard to the one and only Savior! How shall they escape, who neglect so great a salvation? It will not matter how feebly I speak this morning if the Spirit of God will only work by the Truth of God on you—you will perceive the greatness of your crime and you will never rest until you have believed on the Lord Jesus—and found forgiveness for your high offense against the bleeding Lamb!

So far, then, upon the first operation of the Holy Spirit. The next work of the Spirit is to convince men of righteousness, that is to say, in Gospel terms, to show them that they have *no* righteousness of their own and no means of working righteousness—and that apart from Grace they are condemned! Thus He leads them to value the righteousness of God which is, upon all them that believe, a righteousness which covers sin and renders them acceptable with God. Lend me your ears a moment while I call your attention to a great wonder! Among men, if a person is convicted of wrong-doing, the next step is judgment. A young man, for instance, has been in the service of an employer and he has embezzled money—he is convicted of the theft by process of law and found guilty. What follows next?

Why, judgment is pronounced and he must suffer the penalty! But observe how our gracious God interpolates another process. Truly, His ways are not our ways! "He shall convince of sin." The next step would be judgment, but no, the Lord inserts an up to now unknown middle term and convinces "of righteousness." Be amazed at this! The Lord takes a

man, even when he is sinful and conscious of that sin, and makes him righteous on the spot by putting away his sin and justifying him by the righteousness of faith, a righteousness which comes to him by the worthiness of Another who has worked out a righteousness for him! Can that be? Brothers and Sisters, this seems to be unthinkable—so impossible that it needs the Spirit of God to convince men of it!

I may now set forth the great plan whereby the Lord Jesus is made of God unto us righteousness! I may show how the Son of God became Man that He might fully keep the Law of God for us and, having done so, and having added His passive obedience to His active service, He presented to His Father a complete vindication of His injured Law so that every man that believes on Him shall be delivered from condemnation and accepted in the Beloved! I might also tell how Christ's righteousness is set to our account so that faith is reckoned unto us for righteousness, even as was the case with faithful Abraham. Yet all my labor will be in vain till the Spirit shall make it plain! Many hear the gladsome tidings, but they do not receive the Truth of God, for they are not convinced of it. They need to be *persuaded* of it before they will embrace it—and that persuasion is not in my power.

Did I hear one remark, "I cannot see this way of righteousness"? I answer, No, and you never will until the Spirit of God convinces you of it! Note well the great point of the Spirit's argument—"Of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more." Our Lord was sent into the world to work out a righteousness and here, He says, "I go." But He would not go till He had done His work. He says, also, "I go to My Father." But He would not go back to His Father till He had fulfilled His Covenant engagements. "I go to My Father," that is, I go to receive a reward and to sit upon My Father's Throne. But He could not have received this Glory if He had not finished His appointed work! Behold, then, Christ has finished a righteousness which is freely given to all them that believe! And all those who trust in Christ are, for His sake, rewarded as righteous before God—and are, in fact, righteous, so that Paul says, "Who is he that condemns?"

His ground for asking that question is the same as that which the Spirit uses in my text. Paul says, "It is Christ that died, yes, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us." He quotes, as the Holy Spirit does, the resurrection, ascension and enthronement of the great Intercessor as the proof positive that there is a perfect righteousness for all believing sinners! I know that many will say, "This is making people righteous who are not righteous" and, therefore, they will raise many objections. Just so! This is the Glory of God, that He justifies the ungodly and saves sinners by Christ. "Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity."

"I do not see it," cries one. And our answer is, "We know you do not! We are not in the least surprised that you reject our testimony—we never expected you to receive it unless the arm of the Lord should be revealed and the Holy Spirit should convince you of righteousness." No man comes to Christ who is not drawn of the Father and enlightened by the Spirit! But if the Spirit convinces you, we shall soon hear you sing—

***"Jesus, Your blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress!"***

***Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,
With joy shall I lift up my head.***

Dear people of God, pray hard that the Spirit of God may, even now, convince unbelievers that the only true righteousness for mortal men is that which comes not by the works of the Law, but by the hearing of faith!

But then comes a third point, the Spirit of God is to convince men of judgment. To whom is this judgment committed? "The Father has committed all judgment unto the Son." The true penitent feels that if he had all his sins forgiven him, yet it will not serve his turn so long as he lies wallowing in sin. He feels that the great enemy of his soul must be dethroned, or else forgiveness, itself, will afford him no rest of heart. He must be rescued from the *power* as well as from the *guilt* of sin, or else he abides in bondage. He must see the power of evil hewn in pieces before the Lord, as Samuel hewed Agag of old. Listen, O troubled one! You *shall* be set free, for, "the prince of this world is judged." Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil—and on the Cross, our Redeemer judged Satan, overcame him and cast him down!

Satan is now a condemned criminal, a vanquished rebel. His reigning power over all Believers is broken. He has great wrath, knowing that his time is short, but that wrath is held in check by his Conqueror! In His passion, our Lord fought Satan foot to foot and overcame him, spoiling principalities and powers and making a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it. Do you believe this? May the Spirit of God convince you of it! O tried Believer, the Lord Jesus overthrew the devil for you! He crushed the powers of darkness for you! Believing in Him, you shall find evil dethroned in you and all the forces of sin hurled from their high places! You shall overcome through the blood of the Lamb! Again, I ask, do you believe this? Christ is made of God unto us sanctification—He saves His people from their sins—He makes them holy and so breaks in pieces their enemy.

Though it will cost you many a conflict and the beaded sweat may, in the hour of temptation, stand upon your brow as you fear that you will fall from holiness, yet the Lord shall bruise Satan under your feet, shortly, for He has already bruised him under His own feet on your behalf! The Spirit of God is needed to convince our unbelieving hearts that it is so. Most men dream that they must overcome sin by their own strength. Alas, the strong armed man still keeps the house against our feebleness. You have a pretty piece of work before you if, in your own strength, you venture on this conflict. I can hear the devil laughing at you even now! This leviathan is not to be tamed by *you*. Job would say, "Will you play with him as with a bird?" Do you think the devil is as easily managed as a woman carries her pet bird on her finger and puts it to her lip to peck a seed?

Can you draw out leviathan with a hook? Will he speak soft words unto you? Will you take him to be a servant forever? Your arrows cannot come at him, nor your sword wound him! "Lay your hand upon him, remember the battle, do no more." A Divine power is needed and that power is ready to display itself if it is humbly sought! Many who are convinced of the righteousness of Christ are not yet fully convinced that evil is judged, condemned and cast down. They are haunted with the dread that they may yet perish by the hand of the enemy. Oh, my Brothers and Sisters, see the need of the Holy Spirit to advocate in your heart the cause of and

Truth of God—and make you believe that the Lord Jesus has supreme power over every enemy!

I sometimes meet with a Christian who tells me the world is all going to the bad, the Gospel is being utterly defeated, Christ is routed, the devil is waving the black flag and shouting victory. I know how terrible is the conflict, but I believe that my Lord Jesus has judged the whole kingdom of evil and, in that fact I see Satan fall like lightning from Heaven! Our Lord must reign! His enemies must lick the dust! We shall judge the fallen angels at the Last Great Day and, meanwhile, a believing life is a life of triumph over the arch enemy! In the power of the Spirit it shall be proven that truth is mightier than error, love is stronger than hate and holiness is higher than sin, for the Lord's right hand and His holy arm have gotten Him the victory! Behold how the ascended Savior leads captivity captive! See how He comes from Edom with dyed garments from Bozrah, for He has trodden sin and Hell in the winepress and now He travels in the greatness of His strength, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save!

Let me run again over this ground, that we may not overlook anything. Dear Friends, those of us who are saved still need the Holy Spirit with us every day to convince us of sin! Good men do, at this hour, most complacently, things which, in clearer light, they would never think of doing! May the Holy Spirit continually show us layer after layer of sin, that we may remove it. May He reveal to us rank after rank of sin, that we may conquer all its forces. May He especially make known to us the sin of not believing in Christ, for even *we* have our doubts and fears. After a sermon concerning sin, the poor child of God cries out, "I dare not believe! I am afraid I shall be lost, after all." This unbelief is another sin. Strange way of escaping from sin by plunging into it!

To doubt the Lord is to add sin to sin! No sin is more pernicious than the sin of not believing. Whenever our heart distrusts the Lord, we grieve His Spirit—therefore we always need the Holy Spirit to convince us of this evil and bitter thing—and to lead us to trust after a child-like fashion. Any mistrust of God's promise; any fear of failure on God's part; any *thought* of His unfaithfulness is a crime against the honor of the Divine majesty! Oh, convincing Spirit, dwell with me from day to day convincing me of sin and especially making me to feel that the worst of all evils is to question my faithful Friend. So, also, may you always have the Spirit of God dwelling with you, convincing you of righteousness.

May those of you who are, indeed, Believers, never question but what you are righteous before God. We who believe are made the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus! Are we assured of this? If so, do not think and talk as if you were still under the curse of the Law, for you are no longer in any such condition. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Oh, may the Spirit of God convince you of that every day—and convince you of it on the ground that Jesus is reigning yonder at the Father's right hand!. The interest of each Believer in His Lord is clear and sure. If Jesus is there, I am there. If the Father has accepted Him, He has accepted me!

Do you catch the logic of it? You are *in* Christ, you are one *with* Him—as He is, so are you in Him! Hold fast to the fact that you are not condemned. How can you be? You are at the right hand of God in Christ. You, condemned? Why, you are “accepted in the Beloved,” for your Representative is accepted by God and made to sit upon His Throne! Jesus is exalted, not for Himself, alone, but for *all* those who believe in Him! May the blessed Spirit fully convince you of this grand Truth of God!

And, next, may He convince you of judgment—namely, that you have been judged and your enemy has been judged and condemned. The Day of Judgment is not a thing to be dreaded by a Believer. We have stood our trial, and have been acquitted. Our Representative has borne the penalty of our sin. Our chastisement is passed, for Jesus has borne it—He was numbered with transgressors. There is, now, no curse for us! There can be none—Heaven, earth, Hell cannot find a curse for those whom God has blessed—since the Lord Jesus “was made a curse for us.” May the Spirit of God come on you afresh, my dearly Beloved, and make you confident and joyful in Him who is the Lord our righteousness, by whom evil has been judged, once and for all!

II. Last of all, let us read our text by rendering it, “convict”—“The Spirit of God will CONVICT the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.” There is the world. It stands a prisoner at the bar and the charge is that it is and has been full of sin. In courts of law you are often surprised with what comes out. You look at the prisoner and he seems to be a quiet, respectable person. And you say, “I should not think *he* is guilty.” But the advocate who has engaged to plead the cause of righteousness stands up and gives an outline of the case—and you speedily change your mind, until, as the evidence proceeds, you say to yourself, “That is a villain if ever there was one.”

Now hear the Spirit of God! The Spirit came into the world to make all men know that Jesus is the Christ. And He attested to that fact by miracles that could not be questioned, miracles without number! He has, moreover, attested the truth of the Gospel by the conversion of myriads, whose happy and holy lives have been a proof that Jesus Christ was, indeed, sent forth from God. But what did this wicked world do with Christ? They gave Him a felon's death! They nailed Him to a cross! By this, the world is condemned! We need no further evidence. The world is convicted—self-condemned by the slaughter of Him who was Incarnate Goodness and unbounded Love! The world is base enough to desire to slay its God even when He comes on an errand of love!

Take the accused away! The world's guilt is proven beyond question. The wrath of God abides on it. What follows upon this? The trial is viewed from another point. The world has declared that the Gospel is not righteous, that the system which our Lord has come to establish is not true. Up to this day the world is continually raising objections, trying to confuse Believers and, if possible, to defeat our most holy cause. But the Spirit of God, by His teaching, proves that the Gospel is full of righteousness and, by all His operations through the Word of God, He proves that the Gospel is holy, just, good and tends to make men pure, godly, peace-

able and holy. By sanctifying men through the Gospel so that they lead gracious lives, the Holy Spirit proves that the Gospel is righteous!

This process grows more and more complete as time rolls on. Were not the world unrighteous, it would, long ago, have yielded to the holy message and its holy Messenger. But it will be forced to acknowledge the Truth one day. The Holy Spirit makes the world know that Christ is righteous by flashing into its face the fact that Christ has gone—gone up to Glory, at the right hand of God—and this could not have been had He not been the Righteous One. When the world shall see Jesus enthroned, at the last, and all mankind shall behold the Son of Man on the clouds of Heaven, what conviction will seize on every mind! There will be no agnostics, then! Not a skeptic will be found in that day! Christ seen at the Father's right hand will end all unbelief!

And then the Spirit of God shall make men see the judgment. Before the day actually comes, they shall perceive that since Christ has judged the devil; since Christ has cast him down from his high places and his power over the world is already broken, assuredly He will smite all that are in the dominion of Satan and will not allow one of them to escape. The cause of evil is judged and its case is desperate. Oh, how the Spirit of God will convict men at that last day when they hear the Judge say, "Come, you blessed of My Father," or, "Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire." Brothers and Sisters, will you be convinced by the Holy Spirit, now, or will you wait till then? Shall it be the convincement of Grace or the conviction of wrath? The Spirit still bears witness with us who preach the Gospel—will you yield to that Gospel and believe it, now? Or will you wait until the blaze of the last tremendous day? Which shall it be?

I think I hear you say, "The Gospel is true." Why, then, do you not believe it? If you confess "sin," why are you not washed from it? If there is "righteousness," why do you not seek it? If there is "judgment," why do you not ask to be so cleansed that you need not be afraid of it? Oh, Sirs, the most of men act as if they were born fools! If they were sick and we had a sure medicine for them, they would rush to us for it! If they were poor and we brought them gold, they would trample us down in their vehemence to snatch at wealth!

But when there is Christ to be had, the Divine remedy for sin—Christ to be had as a perfect Righteousness, Christ to make them stand securely at the last dread day—they turn their backs upon the heavenly Gift! Oh, Spirit of God, win these madmen! Bring back these fools and make them sane and wise, for Christ Jesus' sake! Amen.

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THE HOLY SPIRIT—THE GREAT TEACHER

NO. 50

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, NOVEMBER 18, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.**

“Howbeit when He, the Spirit of Truth, has come, He will guide you into all Truth: for He will not speak of Himself; but whatever He hears, that will He speak: and He will show you things to come.”

THIS generation has gradually and almost imperceptibly, become, to a great extent, a godless generation. One of the diseases of the present generation of mankind is their secret but deep-seated godlessness by which they have so far departed from the knowledge of God. Science has discovered to us second causes. And therefore, many have too much forgotten the first Great Cause, the Author of All—they have so far been able to pry into secrets that the great axiom of the existence of a God has been too much neglected. Even among professing Christians, while there is a great amount of religion, there is too little *godliness*—there is much external formalism, but too little inward acknowledgment of God—too little living on God, living with God and relying upon God! Hence arises the sad fact that when you enter many of our places of worship, you will certainly hear the name of God mentioned—but except in the benediction, you would scarcely know there was a Trinity! In many places dedicated to Jehovah, the name of Jesus is too often kept in the background. The Holy Spirit is almost entirely neglected. And very little is said concerning His sacred influence. Even religious men in this age have become, to a large degree, godless. We sadly require more preaching regarding God—more preaching of those things which look not so much at the creature to be saved, as at God, the Great One, to be praised! My firm conviction is that in proportion as we have more regard for the sacred Godhead—the wondrous Trinity in Unity—shall we see a greater display of God’s power and a more glorious manifestation of His might in our Churches. May God send us a Christ-exalting, Spirit-loving ministry—men who shall proclaim God, the Holy Spirit, in all His offices and shall extol God, the Savior, as the Author and Finisher of our faith! Men who shall not neglect that Great God, the Father of His people, who, before all worlds, elected us in Christ, His Son, justified us through His righteousness and will inevitably preserve us and gather us together in one—in the consummation of all things at the Last Great Day.

Our text has regard to God, the Holy Spirit. Of Him we shall speak and Him, only, if His sweet influence shall rest upon us.

The disciples had been instructed by Christ concerning certain elementary Doctrines, but Jesus did not teach His disciples more than what we should call the A B Cs of religion. He gives His reasons for this in the 12th verse—“I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear

them now.” His disciples were not possessors of the Spirit. They had the Spirit as far as the work of conversion was concerned, but not as to the matters of bright illumination, profound instruction, prophecy and Inspiration. Jesus says, “I am now about to depart and when I go from you, I will send the Comforter unto you. You cannot bear these things, now. Howbeit, when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all Truth.” The same promise that He made to His Apostles, stands good to all His children! And in reviewing it, we shall take it as our portion and heritage—and shall not consider ourselves intruders upon the manor of the Apostles, or upon their exclusive rights and prerogatives—for we conceive that Jesus says, even to us, “When He, the Spirit of Truth is come, He will guide you into all Truth.”

Dwelling exclusively upon our text, we have five things to say. First of all, here is *an attainment mentioned*—a knowledge of all Truth. Secondly, here is *a difficulty suggested*—which is that we need guidance into all Truth. Thirdly, here is *a Person provided*—“When He, the Spirit, shall come, He shall guide you into all Truth.” Fourthly, here is *a manner hinted at*—“He shall guide you into all Truth.” Fifthly, here is *a sign given as to the working of the Spirit*—we may know whether He works by His “guiding us into *all Truth*”—into all of *one* thing. Not *truths*, but *Truth*.

I. Here is AN ATTAINMENT MENTIONED, which is a knowledge of all Truth. We know that some conceive Doctrinal knowledge to be of very little importance and of no practical use. We do not think so. We believe the science of Christ Crucified and a judgment of the teachings of Scripture to be exceedingly valuable. We think it is right that the Christian ministry should not only be awakening, but instructing. Not merely awakening, but enlightening—that it should appeal not only to the passions but to the understanding! We are far from thinking Doctrinal knowledge to be of secondary importance. We believe it to be one of the first things in the Christian life—to know the Truth and then to practice it. We scarcely need, this morning, to tell you how desirable it is for us to be well taught in things of the Kingdom of God!

First of all, *Nature itself*, (when it has been sanctified by Divine Grace), *gives us a strong desire to know all Truth*. The natural man separates himself and intermeddles with all knowledge. God has put an instinct in him by which he is rendered unsatisfied if he cannot probe a mystery to its bottom. He can never be content until he can solve secrets. What we call, curiosity, is something given us of God impelling us to search into the knowledge of natural things. That curiosity, sanctified by the Spirit, is also brought to bear in matters of heavenly science and celestial wisdom. “Bless the Lord,” said David, “O my Soul, and *all that is within me*, bless His holy name!” If there is a curiosity within us, it ought to be employed and developed in a search after the Truth of God. “All that is within me,” sanctified by the Spirit, should be developed, And, verily, the Christian feels an intense longing to bury his ignorance and receive wisdom. If he, when in his natural estate, panted for terrestrial knowledge, how much more ardent is the wish to unravel, if possible, the sacred

mysteries of God's Word? A true Christian is always intently reading and searching the Scripture that he may be able to certify himself as to its main and cardinal Truths. I do not think much of that man who does not wish to understand Doctrines. I cannot conceive him to be in a right position when he thinks it does not matter whether he believes a lie or the Truth of God, whether he is heretic or orthodox, whether he received the Word of God as it is written, or as it is diluted and misconstrued by man! God's Word will always be, to a Christian, a source of great anxiety. A sacred instinct within will lead him to pry into it. He will seek to understand it. Oh, there are some who forget this—men who purposely abstain from mentioning what are called, High Doctrines, because they think if they should mention them, they would be dangerous! So they keep them back. Foolish men! They do not know anything of human nature—for if they did understand a grain's worth of humanity, they would know that the hiding of these things compels men to search them out! From the fact that they do not mention them, they drive men to places where these and these, only, are preached. They say, "If I preach election and predestination and these dark things, people will all go straight away and become Antinomians." I am not so sure if they were to be called Antinomians, it would hurt them much—but hear me, oh, you ministers that conceal these Truths of God—that is the way to make them Antinomians, by *silencing* these Doctrines! Curiosity is strong—if you tell them they must not pluck the Truth, they will be sure to do it! But if you give it to them as you find it in God's Word, they will not seek to "wrest" it. Enlightened men *will* have the Truth and if they see election in Scripture, they will say, "*it is there* and I will find it out. If I cannot get it in one place, I will get it in another." The true Christian has an inward longing and anxiety after it. He is hungry and thirsty after the Word of Righteousness and he must and will feed on this Bread of Heaven, or at all hazards he will leave the husks which unsound Divines would offer him.

Not only is this attainment to be desired because Nature teaches us so, but a knowledge of all Truth is *very essential for our comfort*. I believe that many persons have been distressed half their lives from the fact that they had not clear views of Truth. Many poor souls, for instance, under conviction, abide three or four times as long in sorrow of mind as they would require to do if they had someone to instruct them in the great matter of Justification. So there are Believers who are often troubling themselves about falling away. But if they knew in their soul the great consolation, that we are kept by the Grace of God, through faith, unto salvation, they would be no more troubled about it! So have I found some distressed about the unpardonable sin. But God instructs us in that Doctrine and shows us that no conscience that is really awakened can ever commit that sin! He shows us that we need never fear or tremble—all that distress is for nothing! Depend on this, the more you know of God's Truth—all things else being equal—the more comfortable you will be as a Christian! Nothing can give a greater light on your path than a clear understanding of Divine things! It is a mangle-mangled Gospel too

commonly preached which causes the downcast faces of Christians! Give me the congregation whose faces are bright with joy, let their eyes glisten at the sound of the Gospel, then will I believe that it is God's own Words they are receiving! Instead thereof, you will often see melancholy congregations whose visages are not much different from the bitter countenance of poor creatures swallowing medicine because the Word spoken terrifies them by its legality, instead of comforting them by its Grace! We love a cheerful Gospel and we think "all the Truth" will tend to comfort the Christian!

"Comfort again?" says another, "always comfort!" Ah, but there is another reason why we prize the Truth of God—because we believe that a true knowledge of all the Truth *will keep us very much out of danger*. No Doctrine is so calculated to preserve a man from sin as the Doctrine of the Grace of God! Those who have called it a licentious Doctrine did not know anything at all about it! Poor ignorant things, they little knew that their own vile stuff was the most licentious doctrine under Heaven. If they knew the Grace of God in Truth, they would soon see that there was no preservative from lying like a knowledge that we are elect of God from the foundation of the world! There is nothing like a belief in my eternal perseverance and the Immutability of my Father's affection which can keep me near to Him from a motive of simple gratitude! Nothing makes a man so virtuous as the belief of the Truth of God. A lying doctrine will soon beget a lying practice. A man cannot have an erroneous belief without, by-and-by, having an erroneous life. I believe the one thing naturally begets the other. Keep near God's Truth. Keep near His Word—keep the head right and especially keep your *heart* right with regard to Truth—and your feet will not go far astray!

Again—I also hold that this attainment to the knowledge of all Truth is very desirable for *the usefulness which it will give us in the world at large*. We would not be selfish—we would always consider whether a thing will be beneficial to others. A knowledge of all Truth will make us very serviceable in this world. We shall be skillful physicians who know how to take the poor distressed soul aside, to put a finger on his eye and take the scale off for him—that Heaven's light may comfort him! There will be no character, however perplexing may be its peculiar phase, but we shall be able to speak to it and comfort it. He who holds the Truth is usually the most useful man. As a good Presbyterian Brother said to me the other day—"I know God has blessed you exceedingly in gathering in souls, but it is an extraordinary fact that nearly all the men I know—with scarcely an exception—who have been made useful in gathering in souls, have held the great Doctrines of the Grace of God." Almost every man whom God has blessed to the building up of the Church in prosperity—and around whom the people have rallied—has been a man who has held firmly to Free Grace from first to last, through the finished salvation of Christ! Do you really think you need have errors in your Doctrine to make you useful? We have some who preach Calvinism during the first part of the sermon, but finish up with Arminianism because they think

that will make them useful! Useful? Nonsense! That is all it is. A man, if he cannot be useful with the Truth, cannot be useful with an error! There is enough in the pure Doctrine of God without introducing heresies to preach to sinners. As far as I know, I never felt hampered or cramped in addressing the ungodly in my life. I can speak with as much fervency and yet not in the same style as those who hold the contrary views of God's Truth. Those who hold God's Word, never need add something untrue in speaking to men. The sturdy Truth of God touches every chord in every man's heart. If we can, by God's Grace, put our hand inside a man's heart, we need nothing but that whole Truth to move him thoroughly and to stir him up! There is nothing like the real Truth of God and the whole Truth of God, to make a man useful.

II. Now, again—here is a DIFFICULTY SUGGESTED, and that is that we require a Guide to conduct us into all Truth. The difficulty is that Truth is not so easy to discover. There is no man born in this world by nature who has the Truth in his heart. There is no creature that ever was fashioned, since the Fall, who has a knowledge of Truth innate and natural. It has been disputed by many philosophers whether there are such things as innate ideas at all. But it is of no use disputing as to whether there are any innate ideas of the Truth of God! There are none such. There are ideas of everything that is wrong and evil. But in us—that is, our flesh—there dwells no *good* thing. We are born in sin and shaped in iniquity. In sin did our mother conceive us. There is nothing good in us and no tendency to righteousness. Then, since we are not born with the Truth, we have the task of searching for it. If we are to be blest by being eminently useful as Christians, we must be well-instructed in matters of Revelation. But here is the difficulty—that we cannot follow without a Guide the winding paths of Truth. Why is this?

First, because of *the very great intricacy of Truth, itself*—the Truth of God, itself, is no easy thing to discover. Those who fancy they know everything and constantly dogmatize with the spirit of, "We are the men, and wisdom will die with us," of course see no difficulties whatever in the system they hold. But I believe the most earnest student of Scripture will find things in the Bible which puzzle him. However earnestly he reads it, he will see some mysteries too deep for him to understand. He will cry out, "Truth! I cannot find you! I know not where you are, you are beyond me! I cannot fully view you." Truth is a path so narrow that two can scarcely walk together in it. We usually tread the narrow way in single file—two men can seldom walk arm in arm in the Truth. We believe the same Truth in the main, but we cannot walk together in the path—it is too narrow. The way of Truth is very difficult. If you step an inch aside on the right, you are in a dangerous error. If you swerve a little to the left, you are equally in the mire. On the one hand, there is a huge precipice and on the other a deep morass. Unless you keep to the true line, to the breadth of a hair, you will go astray. Truth is a narrow path, indeed! It is a path the eagle's eye has not seen and a depth the diver has not visited. It is like the veins of metal in a mine—it is often of excessive thinness

and, moreover, it runs not in one continued layer. Lose it once and you may dig for miles and not discover it again! The eye must perpetually watch the direction of the lode. Grains of Truth are like the grains of gold in the rivers of Australia—they must be shaken by the hand of patience and washed in the stream of honesty, or the fine gold will be mingled with sand! Truth is often mingled with error and it is hard to distinguish it. But we bless God, He is said, “When the Spirit of Truth is come, He will guide you into all Truth”

Another reason why we need a Guide is *the jealousy of error*. It busily steals upon us and if I may so describe our position, we are often like we were on Thursday night in that tremendous fog. Most of us were feeling for ourselves and wondering where on earth we were! We could scarcely see an inch before us. We came to a place where there were three turns. We thought we knew the old spot. There was the lamppost and now we must take a sharp turn to the left. But not so. We ought to have gone a little to the right! We have been so often to the same place that we think we know every flagstone and there’s our friend’s shop over the way. It is dark, but we think we must be quite right and all the while we are quite wrong and find ourselves half-a-mile out of the way! So it is with matters of Truth. We think, surely this is the right path. And the voice of the Evil One whispers, “That is the way, walk in it.” You do so and you find, to your great dismay, that instead of the path of Truth, you have been walking in the paths of unrighteousness and erroneous doctrines. The way of life is a labyrinth. The grassiest paths and the most bewitching are the farthest away from right! The most enticing are those which are garnished with wrested Truths. I believe there is not a counterfeit coin in the world so much like a genuine one, as some errors are like the Truth. One is base metal, the other is true gold. Still, in externals they differ very little.

We also need a Guide, because *we are so prone to go astray*. Why, if the path of Heaven were as straight as Bunyan pictures it, with no turning to the right hand or left—and no doubt it is—still, we are so prone to go astray that we should go to the right to the Mountains of Destruction, or to the left in the dark Wood of Desolation. David says, “I have gone astray like a lost sheep.” That means *very often*—for if a sheep is put into a field 20 times, if it does not get out 21 times, it will be because it cannot find a hole in the hedge! If Grace did not guide us, we would go astray though there were signposts all the way to Heaven! Let it be written, “Miklat, Miklat, the way to refuge,” we would turn aside and the avenger of blood would overtake us! If some guide did not, like the angels in Sodom, put his hand on our shoulders and cry, “Escape! Escape for your life! Look not behind you! Stay not in all the plain,” we would surely perish! These, then, are the reasons why we need a Guide.

III. In the third place, here is A PERSON PROVIDED. This is none other than God—and this God is none other than a Person. This Person is, “He, the Spirit,” the “Spirit of Truth.” Not an influence or an emanation but actually a Person! “When the Spirit of Truth is come, He shall guide

you into all Truth.” Now, we wish you to look at this Guide to consider how adapted He is to us.

In the first place, He is *Infallible*. He knows everything and cannot lead us astray. If I pin my sleeve to another man’s coat, he may lead me part of the way, rightly, but, by-and-by, he will go wrong, himself, and I shall be led astray with him. But if I give myself to the Holy Spirit and ask His guidance, there is no fear of my wandering!

Again, we rejoice in this Spirit because He is *ever-present*. We fall into a difficulty sometimes. We say, “Oh, if I could take this to my minister, he would explain it! But I live so far off and am not able to see him.” That perplexes us and we turn the text round and round and cannot make anything out of it. We look at the commentators. We take down pious Thomas Scott and, as usual, he says nothing about it if it is a dark passage. Then we go to holy Matthew Henry and if it is an easy Scripture, he is sure to explain it. But if it is a text hard to be understood, it is likely enough, of course, left in its own gloom. And even Dr. Gill, himself, the most consistent of commentators—when he comes to a hard passage—he manifestly avoids it in some degree. But when we have no commentator or minister, we have still the Holy Spirit! And let me tell you a little secret—whenever you cannot understand a text, open your Bible, bend your knees and pray over that text. And if it does not split into atoms and open itself, try again! If prayer does not explain it, it is one of the things God did not intend you to know and you may be content to be ignorant of it! Prayer is the key that opens the cabinets of mystery! Prayer and faith are sacred picklocks that can open secrets and obtain great treasures! There is no college for holy education like that of the blessed Spirit, for He is an ever-present Tutor to whom we have only to bend the knees and He is at our side—the great Expositor of Truth!

But there is one thing about the suitability of this Guide which is remarkable. I do not know whether it has struck you—the Holy Spirit can “guide us *into* a Truth.” Now, man can guide us *to* a Truth, but it is only the Holy Spirit who can “guide us *into* a Truth.” “When He, the Spirit of Truth, shall come, He shall guide you *into*”—mark that word—“all Truth.” Now, for instance, it is a long while before you can lead some people to the Doctrine of Election. But when you have made them see its correctness, you have not led them “into” it. You may show them that it is plainly stated in Scripture, but they will turn away and hate it. You take them to another great Truth but they have been brought up in a different fashion and though they cannot answer your arguments, they say, “The man is right, perhaps,” and they whisper—but so low that Conscience, itself, cannot hear—“but it is so contrary to my prejudices that I cannot receive it.” After you have led them *to* the Truth and they see it is true, how hard it is to lead them *into* it! There are many of my hearers who are brought *to* the Truth of their depravity but they are not brought *into* it and made to feel it! Some of you are brought to know the Truth that God keeps us from day to day. But you rarely get into it, so as to live in continual dependence upon God, the Holy Spirit, and draw fresh supplies

from Him! The thing is to get inside it! A Christian should do with Truth as a snail does with his shell—live inside it, as well as carry it on his back and bear it perpetually about with him! The Holy Spirit, it is said, shall lead us *into all Truth*. You may be brought to a chamber where there is an abundance of gold and silver, but you will be no richer unless you effect an entrance. It is the Spirit's work to unbar the two-leaved gates and bring us into a Truth, so that we may get inside it and, as dear old Rowland Hill said, "Not only hold the Truth, but have the Truth hold us."

IV. Fourthly, here is A METHOD SUGGESTED—"He shall guide you into all Truth." Now I must have an illustration. I must compare Truth to some cave or grotto that you have heard of, with wondrous stalactites hanging from the roof and others starting from the floor. A cavern, glittering with spar and abounding in marvels! Before entering the cavern, you inquire for a guide, who comes with his lighted flambeau. He conducts you down to a considerable depth and you find yourself in the midst of the cave. He leads you through different chambers. Here he points to a little stream rushing from amid the rocks and indicates its rise and progress. There he points to some peculiar rock and tells you its name. Then he takes you into a large natural hall, tells you how many persons once feasted in it, and so on. Truth is a grand series of caverns! It is our glory to have so great and wise a Conductor. Imagine that we are coming to the darkness of it. He is a Light of God shining in the midst of us to guide us. And by the Light, He shows us wondrous things. In three ways the Holy Spirit teaches us—by suggestion, direction and illumination.

First, he guides us into all Truth *by suggesting it*. There are thoughts that dwell in our minds that were not born there but which were exotics brought from Heaven and put there by the Spirit. It is not a fancy that angels whisper into our ears and that devils do the same—both good and evil spirits hold converse with men. And some of us have known it. We have had strange thoughts which were not the offspring of our souls, but which came from angelic visitors. And direct temptations and evil insinuations have we had which were not brewed in our own souls, but which came from the poisonous cauldron of Hell! So the Spirit speaks in men's ears, sometimes in the darkness of the night. In ages gone by, He spoke in dreams and visions, but now He speaks by His Word. Have you not, at times, had unaccountably in the middle of your business, a thought concerning God and heavenly things and could not tell from where it came? Have you not been reading or studying the Scripture but a text came across your mind and you could not help it? Though you even put it down, it was like cork in water and would swim up again to the top of your mind! Well, that good thought was put there by the Spirit. He often guides His people into all Truth by suggesting, just as the guide in the grotto does with his flambeau. He does not say a word, perhaps, but He walks into a passage, Himself, and you follow Him. So the Spirit suggests a thought and your heart follows it up. Well can I remember the manner

in which I learned the Doctrines of Grace in a single instant. Born, as all of us are, by nature, an Arminian, I still believed the old things I had heard continually from the pulpit and did not see the Grace of God. I remember sitting one day in the House of God and hearing a sermon as dry as possible and as worthless as all such sermons are, when a thought struck my mind—how came I to be converted? I prayed, thought I. Then I thought how came I to pray? I was induced to pray by reading the Scriptures. How came I to read the Scriptures? Why did I read them and what led me to them? And then, in a moment, I saw that God was at the bottom of all and that He was the Author of faith! And then the whole Doctrine opened up to me, from which, by God's Grace, I have not departed.

But sometimes He leads us *by direction*. The guide points and says—"There, gentlemen, go along that particular path, that is the way." So the Spirit gives a direction and tendency to our thoughts. Not suggesting a new one, but letting a particular thought, when it starts, take such-and-such a direction. Not so much putting a boat on the stream as steering it when it is there! When our thoughts are considering sacred things, He leads us into a more excellent channel from that in which we started. Time after time have you commenced a meditation on a certain Doctrine and, unaccountably, you were gradually led away into another. And then you saw how one Doctrine leaned on another, as is the case with the stones in the arch of a bridge—all hanging on the keystone of Jesus Christ, Crucified! You were brought to see these things, not by a new idea suggested, but by direction given to your thoughts!

But perhaps the best way in which the Holy Spirit leads us into all Truth is by *illumination*. He illuminates the Bible. Now, have any of you an illuminated Bible at home? "No," says one, "I have a Morocco Bible. I have a Polyglot Bible. I have a Marginal Reference Bible." Ah, that is all very well—but have you an *illuminated* Bible? "Yes, I have a large family Bible with pictures in it. There is a picture of John the Baptist baptizing Christ by pouring water on His head and many other nonsensical things." But that is not what I mean—have you an *illuminated* Bible? "Yes, I have a Bible with splendid engravings in it." Yes. I know you may have. But have you an *illuminated* Bible? "I don't understand what you mean by an, 'illuminated Bible.'" Well, it is the Christian who has an illuminated Bible. He does not buy it originally illuminated, but when he reads it—

***"A glory gilds the sacred page,
Majestic like the sun!
Which gives a light to every age,
It gives, but borrows none."***

There is nothing like reading an illuminated Bible! Beloved, you may read to all eternity and never learn anything by it unless it is illuminated by the Holy Spirit! And then the words shine forth like stars! The book seems made of gold leaf. Every single letter glitters like a diamond! Oh, it is a blessed thing to read an illuminated Bible lit up by the radiance of the Holy Spirit! Have you read the Bible and studied it, my Brothers and Sisters, and yet have your eyes been unenlightened? Go and say, "O

Lord, gild the Bible for me. I need an expounded Bible. Illuminate it! Shine upon it, for I cannot read it to profit unless You enlighten me.” Blind men may read the Bible with their fingers, but blind souls cannot. We need a light to read the Bible by, there is no reading it in the dark. Thus the Holy Spirit leads us into all Truth, by suggesting ideas, by directing our thoughts and by illuminating the Scriptures when we read them!

V. The last thing is AN EVIDENCE. The question arises, How may I know whether I am enlightened by the Spirit’s influence and led into all Truth? First, you may know the Spirit’s influence by its *unity*—He guides us into all *Truth*. Secondly, by its *universality*—He guides us into *all* Truth.

First, if you are judging a minister, whether he has the Holy Spirit in him or not, you may know him, in the first place, by *the constant unity of his testimony*. A man cannot be enlightened by the Holy Spirit who preaches yes and no. The Spirit never says one thing, at one time, and another thing at another time! There are, indeed, many good men who say both yes and no, but still their contrary testimonies are not both from God the Spirit, for God the Spirit cannot witness to black and white, to a lie and to the Truth of God! It has been always held as a first principle that Truth is one thing. But some persons say, “I find one thing in one part of the Bible and another thing in another, and though it contradicts itself, must I believe it?” All quite right, Brother, *if it did contradict itself*. But the fault is not in the wood, but in the carpenter! Many carpenters do not understand dove-tailing, so there are many preachers who do not understand dove-tailing. It is very nice work and it is not easily learned—it takes some apprenticeship to make all Doctrines square together. Some preachers preach very good Calvinism for half-an-hour and the next quarter-of-an hour Arminianism. If they are Calvinists, let them stick to Calvinism! If they are Arminians, let them stick to that—let their preaching be all of one piece! Don’t let them pile up things only to kick them all down again. Let us have one thing woven from the top, throughout, and let us not tear it! How did Solomon know the true mother of the child? “Cut it in halves,” he said. The woman who was not the mother did not care, as long as the other did not get the whole, and she consented. “Ah,” said the true mother, “give her the living child. Let her have it, rather than cut it in halves.” So the true child of God would say, “I give it up, let my opponent conquer. I do not want to have the Truth cut in halves. I would rather be all wrong than have the Word altered to my taste!” We do not want to have a divided Bible. No, we claim the whole living child or none at all! We may rest assured of this, that until we get rid of our linsey-woolsey doctrine and cease to sow mingled seed, we shall not have a blessing! An enlightened mind cannot believe a Gospel which denies itself. It must be one thing or the other. One thing cannot contradict another and yet it and its opposite be equally true! You may know the Spirit’s influence, then, by the unity of its testimony!

And you may know it by its *universality*. The true child of God will not be led into *some* Truth but into *all* Truth. When first he starts, he will not know half the Truth. He will believe it, but not understand it. He will have the germ of it, but not the sum total in all its breadth and length. There is nothing like learning by experience. A man cannot set up for a theologian in a week. Certain Doctrines take years to develop themselves. Like the aloe that takes a hundred years to be dressed, there are some Truths that must lie long in the heart before they really come out and make themselves appear so that we can speak of them as that we know, and testify of that which we have seen. The Spirit will gradually lead us into all Truth. For instance, if it is true that Jesus Christ is to personally reign upon the earth for a thousand years, as I am inclined to believe it is, if I am under the Spirit, that will be more and more opened to me until I, with confidence, declare it. Some men begin very timidly. A man says, at first, "I know we are justified by faith and have peace with God. But so many have cried out against Eternal Justification that I am afraid of it." But he is gradually enlightened and led to see that in the same hour when all his debts were paid, a full discharge was given—that in the moment when his sin was cancelled, every elect soul was justified in God's mind—though they were not justified in their own minds till afterwards. The Spirit shall lead you into all Truth.

Now, what are the practical inferences from this great Doctrine? The first is with reference to the Christian who is afraid of his own ignorance. How many are there who are just enlightened and have tasted of heavenly things, who are afraid they are too ignorant to be saved? Beloved, God the Holy Spirit can teach anyone, however illiterate, however uneducated! I have known some men who were almost idiots before conversion, but they afterwards had their faculties wonderfully developed! Some time ago there was a man who was so ignorant that he could not read and he never spoke anything like grammar in his life, unless by mistake. And moreover, he was considered to be what the people in his neighborhood called, "daft." But when he was converted, the first thing he did was to pray. He stammered out a few words and in a little time his powers of speaking began to develop themselves! Then he thought he would like to read the Scriptures and, after long, long months of labor, he learned to read! And what was the next thing? He thought he could preach—and he did preach a little in his own homely way, in his house. Then he thought, "I must read a few more books." And so his mind expanded, until, I believe, he is at the present day a useful minister, settled in a country village, laboring for God! It needs but little intellect to be taught of God. If you feel your ignorance, do not despair! Go to the Spirit—the great Teacher—and ask His sacred influence, and it shall come to pass that He "shall guide you into all Truth."

Another inference is this—whenever any of our Brethren do not understand the Truth, let us take a hint as to the best way of dealing with them. Do not let us argue with them! I have heard many controversies, but never heard of any good from one of them! We have had controver-

sies with certain men called Secularists and very strong arguments have been brought against them. But I believe that the Day of Judgment shall declare that a very small amount of good was ever done by contending with these men. Better leave them alone—where there is no fuel, the fire goes out. And he that debates with them puts wood upon the fire. So with regard to Baptism. It is of no use to quarrel with our Paedo-Baptist friends! If we simply pray for them, that the God of Truth may lead them to see the true Doctrine, they will come to it far more easily than by discussions! Few men are taught by controversy, for—

“A man convinced against his will, is of the same opinion still.”

Pray for them that the Spirit of Truth may lead them “into all Truth.” Do not be angry with your brother, but pray for him. Cry, “Lord! open his eyes that he may behold wondrous things out of Your Law.”

Lastly, we speak to some of you who know nothing about the Spirit of Truth, nor about the Truth of God, itself. It may be that some of you are saying, “We care not much which of you are right, we are happily indifferent to it.” Ah, but, poor Sinner, if you knew the gift of God and who it was that spoke the Truth, you would not say, “I care not for it”! If you knew how essential the Truth is to your salvation, you would not talk so! If you knew that the Truth of God is that you are a worthless sinner—but if you believe, then God, from all eternity, apart from all your merits, loved you! If you knew that He bought you with the Redeemer’s blood and justified you in the forum of Heaven—and will, by-and-by, justify you in the forum of your conscience through the Holy Spirit by faith. If you knew that there is a Heaven for you beyond the chance of a failure, a crown for you, the luster of which can never be dimmed—*then* you would say, “Indeed the Truth is precious to my soul!” Why, my ungodly Hearers, these men of error want to take away the Truth which alone can save you—the only Gospel that can deliver you from Hell! They deny the great Truths of Free Grace, those fundamental Doctrines which alone can snatch a sinner from Hell! And even though you do not feel interest in them, now, I still would say you ought to desire to see them promoted.

May God give you Grace to know the Truth in your hearts! May the Spirit “guide you into all Truth!” For if you do not know the Truth, here, remember there will be a sorrowful learning of it in the dark chambers of the pit of Hell where the only light shall be the flames of Hell! May you here know the Truth! And the Truth shall make you free—and if the Son shall make you free, you shall be free, indeed, for He says, “I am the Way, the Truth, the Life.” Believe on Jesus, you chief of sinners! Trust His love and mercy and you are saved, for God the Spirit gives faith and eternal life!

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

THE HOLY SPIRIT GLORIFYING CHRIST NO. 2907

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*“He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.”
John 16:14.*

THE needs of spiritual men are very great, but they cannot be greater than the power of the Divine Trinity is able to meet. We have one God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—One in Three and Three in One. And that blessed Trinity in Unity gives Himself to sinners that they may be saved. In the first place, every good thing that a sinner needs is in the Father. The prodigal son was wise when he said, “I will arise and go to my father.” Every good and perfect gift comes from God the Father, the first Person in the blessed Trinity, because every good gift and every perfect gift can only be found in Him. But the needy soul says, “How shall I get to the Father? He is infinitely above me. How shall I reach up to Him?” In order that you might obtain the blessings of Grace, God was in Christ Jesus, the second ever-blessed Person of the Sacred Trinity. Let me read you part of the verse that follows my text—“All things that the Father has are Mine.” So you see, everything is in the Father, first, and the Father puts all things into Christ. “It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell.” Now you can get to Christ because He is Man as well as God. He is “over all, God blessed forever,” but He came into this world, was born of the Virgin Mary, lived a life of poverty, “suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried.” He is the conduit conveying to us all blessings from the Father. In the Gospel of John we read, “Of His fullness have we all received and grace for grace.” Thus you see the Father with every good thing in Himself putting all fullness into the Mediator, the Man Christ Jesus who is also the Son of God.

Now I hear a poor soul say, “But I cannot get to Christ. I am blind and lame. If I could get to Him, He would open my eyes, but I am so lame that I cannot run or even walk to Him. If I could get to Him, He would give me strength, but I lie as one dead. I cannot see Christ or tell where to find Him.” Here comes in the work of the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the blessed Unity! It is His office to take of the things of Christ and show them unto saints and sinners, too. We cannot see them, but we shall see them quickly enough when He shows them to us! Our sin puts a veil between us and Christ. The Holy Spirit comes and takes the veil away from our heart and then we see Christ. It is the Holy Spirit’s office to come between us and Christ, to lead us to Christ, even as the Son of God comes

between us and the Father, to lead us to the Father so that we have the whole Trinity uniting to save a sinner—the Triune God bowing down out of Heaven for the salvation of rebellious men! Every time we dismiss you from this House of Prayer, we pronounce upon you the blessing of the Sacred Trinity—“May the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you!” And you need all that to make a sinner into a saint and to keep a saint from going back to being a sinner again! The whole blessed Godhead—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—must work upon every soul that is to be saved!

See how Divinely they work together—how the Father glorifies the Son, how the Holy Spirit glorifies Jesus, how both the Holy Spirit and the Lord Jesus glorify the Father! These Three are One, sweetly uniting in the salvation of the chosen seed.

Tonight our work is to speak of the Holy Spirit. Oh, what a blessed Person He is! He is not merely a sacred influence, but a Divine Person—“very God of very God.” He is the Spirit of holiness to be revered, to be spoken of with delight, yet with trembling, for, remember, there is a sin against the Holy Spirit. A word spoken against the Son of Man may be forgiven, but blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (whatever that may be, I know not) is put down as a sin beyond the line of Divine Forgiveness! Therefore reverence, honor and worship God the Holy Spirit, in whom lies the only hope that any of us can ever have of seeing Jesus and so of seeing God the Father!

First, tonight, I shall try to speak of *what the Holy Spirit does*. “He will receive of Mine and show it to you.” Secondly I shall seek to set forth *what the Holy Spirit aims at*. “He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.” And, thirdly, I shall explain how *in both these things He acts as the Comforter*, for we read in the seventh verse, our Savior say, “If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you,” and it is of the Comforter that He says, “He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.”

I. First we are to consider WHAT THE HOLY SPIRIT DOES. Jesus says, “He will receive of Mine and show it to you.”

The Holy Spirit, then, *deals with the things of Christ*. How I wish that all Christ’s ministers would imitate the Holy Spirit in this respect! When you are dealing with the things of Christ, you are on Holy Spirit ground—you are following the track of the Holy Spirit. Does the Holy Spirit deal with science? What is science? Another name for the ignorance of men. Does the Holy Spirit deal with politics? What are politics? Another name for every man getting as much as he can out of the nation. Does the Holy Spirit deal with these things? No, my Brothers, “He will receive of Mine.” O my Brother, the Holy Spirit will leave you if you go gadding about after these insignificant trifles! He will leave you if you aim at magnifying yourself, your wisdom and your plans, for the Holy Spirit is taken up with the things of Christ! “He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.” I like what Mr. Wesley said to his preachers. “Leave other things alone,” he said, “you are called to win souls.” So I believe it is with all true preachers. We may leave other things alone. The

Holy Spirit, who is our Teacher, will acknowledge and bless us if we keep to His line of things. O preacher of the Gospel, what can you receive like the things of Christ? And what can you talk of so precious to the souls of men as the things of Christ? Therefore follow the Holy Spirit in dealing with the things of Christ.

Next, the Holy Spirit *deals with feeble men*. “He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.” “To you.” He is not above dealing with simple minds. He comes to those who have no training, no education and He takes the things of Christ and shows them to such minds. The greatest mind of man that was ever created was a poor puny thing compared with the infinite mind of God! We may boast about the great capacity of the human intellect, but what a narrow and contracted thing it is at its utmost width! So, for the Holy Spirit to come and teach the little mind of man is a great condescension. But we see the great condescension of the Holy Spirit even more when we read, “Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called.” And when we hear the Savior say, “I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, because You have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and has revealed them unto babes.” The Holy Spirit takes of the things of Christ and shows them to those who are babes compared with the wise men of this world! The Lord Jesus might have selected princes to be His Apostles. He might have gathered together 12 of the greatest kings of the earth, or at least 12 senators from Rome—but he did not—He took fishermen and men belonging to that class to be the pioneers of His Kingdom! And God the Holy Spirit takes of the things of Christ, high and sublime as they are, and shows them to men like these Apostles were—men ready to follow where the Lord led them and to learn what the Lord taught them.

If you think of the condescension of the Holy Spirit in taking of the things of Christ and showing them to us, you will not talk any more about coming down to the level of children when you talk to them. I remember a young man who was a great fool, but did not know it and, therefore, was all the greater fool. Once, speaking to children, he said, “My dear children, it takes a great deal to bring a great mind down to your capacities.” You cannot show me a word of Christ of that kind! Where does the Holy Spirit ever talk about its being a great come-down for Him to teach children, or to teach us? No, no! He glorifies Christ by taking of His things and showing them to us, even such poor ignorant scholars as we are.

If I understand what is meant here, I think that it means, first, that the Holy Spirit *helps us to understand the words of Christ*. If we will study the teaching of the Savior, it must be with the Holy Spirit as the Light of God to guide us. He will show us what Christ meant by the words He uttered. We shall not lose ourselves in the Savior’s verbiage, but we shall get at the inner meaning of Christ’s mind and be instructed therein, for the Lord Jesus says, “He will receive of Mine and show it to you.” A sermon of Christ—even a single word of Christ—set in the Light of the Holy Spirit shines like a diamond! No, like a fixed star, with light that is never

dim! Happy men and happy women who read the words of Christ in the Light shed upon them by the Holy Spirit! But I do not think that this is all that the text means.

It means this—"Not only shall He reveal My words, but My *things*," for Christ says, "All things that the Father has are Mine: therefore said I that He shall take of Mine, and shall show it to you."

The Holy Spirit takes the *Nature* of Christ and shows it to us. It is easy to say, "I believe Him to be God and Man," but the point is to apprehend that He is God and, therefore, able to save and even to work impossibilities. And to believe that He is Man and, therefore, feels for you, sympathizes with you and, therefore, is a Brother born to help you in your adversities. May the Holy Spirit make you see the God-Man tonight! May He show you the Humanity and the Deity of Christ as they are most blessedly united in His adorable Person—and you will be greatly comforted thereby.

The Holy Spirit shows to us the *offices* of Christ. He is Prophet, Priest, King. Especially to you, Sinner, Christ is a Savior. Now, if you know that He takes up the work of saving sinners and that it is His business to save men, why then, dear Friend, surely you will have confidence in Him and not be afraid to come to Him! If I wanted my shoes mended, I would not take my hat off when I went into a cobbler's shop and say, "Please excuse me. May I beg you to be so good as to mend my shoes?" No, it is his trade! It is his business. He is glad to see me. "What do you need, Sir?" he asks and he is glad for the work. And when Christ puts over His door, "Savior," I, needing to be saved, go to Him, for I believe that He knows His calling and that He can carry it out and that He will be glad to see me—and that I shall not be more glad to be saved than He will be to save me! I want you to catch that idea. If the Holy Spirit will show you that, it will bring you very near to joy and peace this very night!

May the Holy Spirit also show you Christ's *engagements*! He has come into the world engaged to save sinners. He pledged Himself to the Father to bring many sons and daughters to Glory and He must do it. He has bound Himself to His Father, as the Surety of the Covenant, that He will bring sinners into reconciliation with God. May the Holy Spirit show that fact to you—and right gladly you will leap into the Savior's arms!

It is very sweet when the Holy Spirit shows us the *love* of Christ—how intensely He loves men! How He loved them of old, for His delights were with the sons of men—not because He had redeemed them, but He redeemed them because He loved them and delighted in them! Christ has had an eternal love to His people—

**"His heart is made of tenderness,
His heart melts with love."**

It is His Heaven to bring men to Heaven! It is His Glory to bring sons and daughters to Glory! He is never so happy as when He is receiving sinners. And if the Holy Spirit will show you the depth and the height, the length and the breadth of the love of Christ to sinners, it will go a long way towards bringing all who are in this house, tonight, to accept the Savior.

And when the Holy Spirit shows you the *mercy* of Christ—how willingly He forgives, how He passes by iniquity, transgression and sin—how He casts your sins into the sea, throws them behind God’s back, puts them away forever—ah, when you see this, then your hearts will be won to Him!

Specially I would desire the Holy Spirit to show you the *blood* of Christ. A Spirit-taught view of the blood of Christ is the most wonderful sight that ever weeping eyes beheld! There is your sin, your wicked, horrible, damnable sin—but Christ comes into the world and takes the sin and suffers in your place! And the blood of such an One as He, perfect Man and Infinite God—such blood as was poured out on Calvary’s tree—must take away sin! Oh, for a sight of it! If any of you are now despairing and the Holy Spirit will take of the blood of Christ and show it to you, despair will have no place in you any longer! It will be gone, for “the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin,” and He that believes in Him is forgiven all His iniquities!

And if the Holy Spirit will also take of the *prayers* of Christ and show them to you, what a sight you will have! Christ on earth, praying till He gets into a bloody sweat! Christ in Heaven, praying with all His glorious vestments on, accepted by the Father, glorified at the Father’s right hand and making intercession for transgressor—praying for you, praying for all who come to God by Him and able, therefore, to save them to the uttermost! This is the sight you will have! A knowledge of the intercession of Christ for guilty men is enough to make despair flee away once and for all! I can only tell you these things, but if the Holy Spirit will take of them and show them to you, oh, Beloved, you will have joy and peace tonight through believing!

One thing I must add, however, and then I will leave this point upon which we could dilate for six months. I want you to remember that *whatever the Holy Spirit shows you, you may have*. Do you see that? He takes of the things of Christ and shows them to us. But why? Not as a boy at school does to one of his companions when he is teasing him. I remember often seeing it done. He pulls out of his pocket a beautiful apple and shows it to his schoolmate. “There,” he says, “do you see that apple?” Is he going to say, “Now I am going to give you a piece of it”? No, not he! He only shows him the apple to tantalize him. Now, it would be blasphemy to imagine that the Holy Spirit would show you the things of Christ and then say, “You cannot have them.” No, whatever He shows you, you may have! Whatever you see in Christ, you may have! Whatever the Holy Spirit makes you to see in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus, you may have it! And He shows it to you on purpose that you may have it, for He is no Tantalus to mock us with the sight of a blessing beyond our reach. He waits to bless us. Lay that thought up in your heart—it may help you some day, if not now. You remember what God said to Jacob, “The land where you lie, to you will I give it.” If you find any promise in this Book and you dare to lie down upon it, it is yours! If you can just lie down and rest on it, it is yours—for it was not put there for you to rest on it without

its being fulfilled to you! Only stretch yourself on any Covenant blessing and it is yours forever. God help us to do so!

II. But now, secondly, and very briefly, let us consider WHAT THE HOLY SPIRIT AIMS AT. Well, He aims at this—Jesus says, “He shall glorify Me.” When He shows us the things of Christ, His objective is to glorify Christ. The Holy Spirit’s objective is to make Christ appear to be great and glorious to you and to me. The Lord Jesus Christ is infinitely glorious and even the Holy Spirit cannot make Him glorious except to our apprehension—but His desire is that we may see and know more of Christ—that we may honor Him more and glorify Him more.

Well, how does the Holy Spirit go about this work? In this simple way, *by showing us the things of Christ*. Is not this a blessedly simple fact that when even the Holy Spirit intends to glorify Christ, all that He does is to show us Christ? Well, but does He not put fine words together and weave a spell of eloquence? No. He simply shows us Christ. Now, if you wanted to praise Jesus Christ tonight, what would you have to do? Why, you would only have to speak of Him as He is—holy, blessed, glorious! You would show Him, as it were, in order to praise Him, for there is no glorifying Christ except by making Him to be seen. Then He has the Glory that rightly belongs to Him. No words are needed, no descriptions are needed. “He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.

And is it not strange that Christ should be glorified by His *being shown to you*? To you, my dear Friend! Perhaps you are saying, “I am a nobody.” Yes, but Christ is glorified by being shown to you! “Oh, but I am very poor, very illiterate and besides, very wicked!” Yes, but Christ is glorified by being shown to you! Now a great king or a great queen would not be rendered much more illustrious by being shown to a little Sunday school girl, or exhibited to a crossing-sweeper boy. At least they would not think so—but Christ does not act as an earthly monarch might. He reckons it to be His Glory for the poorest pair of eyes that ever wept to look by faith upon Him. He reckons it to be His greatest honor for the poorest man, the poorest woman, or the poorest child that ever lived to see Him in the Light in which the Holy Spirit sets Him! Is not this a blessed Truth of God?

I put it very simply and briefly. The Holy Spirit, you see, glorifies Christ by showing Him to sinners. Therefore, if you want to glorify Christ, do the same! Do not go and write a ponderous book and put fine words together. Tell sinners, in simple language, what Christ is. “I cannot praise Him,” says one. You do not need to praise Him. Say what He is. If a man says to me, “Show me the sun,” do I say, “Well, you must wait till I strike a match and light a candle—and then I will show you the sun”? That would be ridiculous, would it not? And for our candles to be held up to show Christ is absurd. *Tell* what He is. *Tell* what He is to you. *Tell* what He did for you. *Tell* what He did for sinners. That is all. “He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.”

I will not say more on this point except that if any of us are to glorify Christ, we must talk much of Him. We must tell what the Holy Spirit has

told us and we must pray the Holy Spirit to bless to the minds of men the Truths of God we speak by enabling them to see Christ as the Spirit reveals Him.

III. But now, thirdly, in both of these things—showing to us the things of Christ and glorifying Christ—THE HOLY SPIRIT IS A COMFORTER. Gracious Spirit, be a Comforter now to some poor struggling ones in the Tabernacle by showing them the things of Christ and by glorifying Him in their salvation!

First, in showing to men the things of Christ, the Holy Spirit is a Comforter. *There is no comfort like a sight of Christ.* Sinner, your only comfort must lie in your Savior, in His precious blood and in His Resurrection from the dead. Look that way, man! If you look inside, you will never find any comfort there. Look where the Holy Spirit looks. “He will receive of Mine and show it to you.” When a thing is shown to you, it is meant for you to look at it. If you want real comfort, I will tell you where to look, namely, to the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. “Oh,” you say, “but I am a wretched sinner!” I know you are. You are a great deal worse than you think you are. “Oh, but I think myself the worst that ever lived.” No, you are worse than that! You do not know half your depravity. You are worse than you ever dreamed you were! But that is not where to look for comfort. “I am brutish,” one says. “I am proud. I am self-righteous. I am envious. I have everything in me that is bad, Sir, and if I have a little bit that is good, sometimes, it is gone before I can see it. I am just lost, ruined and undone!” That is quite true—but I never told you to look there. Your comfort lies in this, “He will receive of Mine”—that is, of Christ’s—“and shall show it to you.” Your hope of transformation, of gaining a new character altogether, of eternal life, lies in Christ who quickens the dead and makes all things new! Look away from self and look to Christ, for He alone can save you!

A sight of Christ is the destruction of despair. “Oh, but the devil tells me that I shall be cast into Hell! There is no hope for me.” What does it matter what the devil tells you? He was a liar from the beginning. Let him say what he likes, but if you will look away to Christ, that will be the end of the devil’s power over you! If the Holy Spirit shows you what Christ came to do on the Cross and what He is doing on His throne in Heaven, that will be the end of these troublous thoughts from Satan and you will be comforted.

Dear child of God, are you in *sorrow* tonight? May the Holy Spirit take of the things of Christ and show them to you! That is the end to sorrow when you see Jesus, for sorrow, itself, is so sweetly sanctified by the companionship of Christ which it brings you that you will be glad to drink of His cup and to be baptized with His Baptism!

Are you *in need* tonight, without even a place to lay your head? So, too, was He! “The Son of Man has not where to lay His head.” Go to Him with your troubles. He will help you to bear your poverty. He will help you to get out of it for He is able to help you in temporal trials as well as in spiritual ones. Therefore go to Christ! All power is given unto Him in

Heaven and in earth. Nothing is too hard for the Lord. Go your way to Him—and a sight of Him will give you comfort.

Are you *persecuted*? Well, a sight of the thorn-crowned brow will take the thorn out of persecution. Are you very, very low? I think that you have all heard the story I am about to tell you, but some of you have, perhaps, forgotten it. Many years ago when this great congregation first met in the Surrey Music Hall and the terrible tragedy occurred—when many persons were either killed or wounded in the panic—I did my best to hold the people together till I heard that some were dead. And then I broke down like a man stunned and for a fortnight or so I had little reason left. I felt so broken in heart that I thought that I would never be able to face a congregation again. And I went down to a friend's house, a few miles away, to be very quiet and still. I was walking round his garden and I well remember the spot and even the time when this passage came to me, "Him has God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior." And this thought came into my mind at once, "You are only a soldier in the great King's army and you may die in a ditch. But it does not matter what becomes of you as long as your King is exalted. *He*—HE is glorious! God has highly exalted Him." You have heard of the old French soldiers when they lay dying. If the emperor came by when they were ready to expire, they would raise themselves up and give one more cheer for their beloved leader. "*Viva l'Empereur!*" would be their dying words. And so I thought, "He is exalted. What does it matters about *me*?"

And in a moment my reason was perfectly restored! I was as clear as possible. I went into the house, had family prayer and came back to preach to my congregation on the following Sabbath—restored only by having looked to Jesus and having seen that He was glorious! If He is to the front, what does it matter what happens to us? Rank on rank we will die in the battle if He wins the victory! Only let the Man on the White Horse win—Let the King who died for us and washed us in His precious blood be glorified—and it is enough for us!

But now, lastly, *when Christ is glorified in the heart, He acts as a Comforter, too*. I believe, Brothers and Sisters, that we would not have half the trouble that we have if we thought more of Christ. The fact is that we think so much of ourselves that we get troubled. But someone says, "But I have so many troubles." Why should you not have a great many troubles? Who are you that you should not have troubles? "Oh, but I have had loss after loss which you do not know of!" Very likely, dear Friend, I do not know of your losses, but is it any wonder that you should have them? "Oh," says one, "I seem to be kicked about like a football." Why should you not be? What are you? "Oh," said one poor penitent to me the other night, "for me to come to Christ, Sir, after my past life, seems so mean." I said, "Yes, so it is. But then, you *are* mean. It was a mean business of the prodigal son to come home and eat his father's bread and the fatted calf after he had spent his substance in riotous living." It was a mean thing, was it not? But then, the father did not think it mean! He clasped him to his bosom and welcomed him home. Come along, you mean sinners, you that have served the devil and now want to

run away from him! Steal away from Satan at once, for my Lord is ready to receive you! You have no idea how willing He is to welcome you! He is so ready to forgive that you have not yet guessed how much sin He can forgive! "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." Up to your necks in filth, in your very hearts saturated with the foulest iniquity—yet, if you come to Christ He will wash you whiter than snow! "Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Come along and try my Lord!

Have exalted ideas of Christ! Oh, if a man will but have great thoughts of Christ, he shall then find his troubles lessening and his sins disappearing! I see you have been putting Christ on a wrong scale altogether! Perhaps even you people of God have not thought of Christ as you ought to do. I have heard of a certain commander who had led his troops into a rather difficult position. He knew what he was doing, but the soldiers did not all know—and there would be a battle in the morning. So he thought that he would go round from tent to tent and listen to what the soldiers said. He listened and there was one of them saying to his fellows, "See what a mess we are in now! Do you see, we have only so many cavalry, and so many infantry, and we have only a small quantity of artillery. And on the other side there are so many thousands against us! So strong, so mighty, that we shall be cut to pieces in the morning." And the general drew aside the canvas, and there they saw him standing and he said, "How many do you count *me* for?" He had won every battle that he had ever engaged in! He was the conqueror of conquerors. "How many do you count me for?"

O Souls, you have never counted Christ for what He is! You have put down your sins, but you have never counted what kind of a Christ He is who has come to save you! Rather do like Luther, who said that when the devil came to him, he brought him a long sheet containing a list of his sins, or of a great number of them and Luther said to him, "Is that all?" "No," said the devil. "Well go and fetch some more, then." Away went Satan to bring him another long list, as long as your arm. Said Luther, "Is that all?" "Oh, no," said the devil, "I have yet more." "Well go and bring them all," said Luther. "Fetch them all out, the whole list of them." Then it was a very long black list. I think that I have heard that it would have gone round the world twice. I know that mine would. Well, what did Luther say when he saw them all? He said, "Write at the bottom of them, 'The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin!'" It does not matter how long the list is when you write those blessed words at the end of it! Then the sins are all gone!

Did you ever take up from your table a bill for a large sum? You felt a kind of flush coming over your face. You looked down the list. It was a rather long list of items, perhaps from a lawyer or a builder. But when you looked at it, you saw that there was a penny stamp at the bottom and that the account was receipted. "Oh," you said, "I do not care how long it is, for it is all paid." So, though your sins are many, if you have a receipt at the bottom—if you have trusted Jesus—your sins are all gone,

drowned in the Red Sea of your Savior's blood and Christ is glorified in Your salvation! May God the Holy Spirit bring every unsaved one here tonight to repentance and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord bless every one of you, for His name's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 16.**

Verse 1. *These things have I spoken unto you, that you should not be offended.* The temptation is when Christ is despised and rejected for our hearts to begin to sink and our faith to fail. Therefore did Christ warn His disciples that they "should not be offended."

2. *They shall put you out of the synagogues: yes, the time comes that whoever kills you will think that he does God service.* The best of men are but men at the best and they are very apt to fail when they find persecution hot against them—especially when even religious men of a certain kind count it to be a religious duty to persecute the people of God.

3. *And these things will they do unto you because they have not known the Father, nor Me.* This verse reminds us of our Lord's prayer on the Cross, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Persecution of God's people usually arises from ignorance of God the Father and God the Son.

4. *But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, you may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning because I was with you.* "I was your Protector. By My Presence I so sustained your hearts that it did not matter what trouble you fell into. But now I am going away and, therefore, I give you this warning."

5, 6. *But now I go My way to Him that sent Me and none of you asks Me, Where are You going? But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow has filled your hearts.* We sometimes endure a needless sorrow for which the asking of a single question might remove it. Our Lord says to His disciples, "If you knew where I was going and understood My motive in going, your sorrow at My departure would be relieved."

7. *Nevertheless I tell you the truth It is expedient for you that I go away.* "It is for your profit to lose My Presence, precious as that has been to you."

7. *For if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you.* The word, "Comforter," might just as well have been translated, "Advocate." The Holy Spirit is that Divine Advocate who pleads the cause of God in us and for us—and so comforts us. He it is who is now with us. If Jesus Christ were still upon earth in the flesh, He could only be in one place at one time. If He were in this assembly, He could not also be in Jerusalem or in New York. But the Comforter can be in all the gatherings of the Lord's people and with each individual Believer, the whole world over.

8-12. *And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment of sin, because they believe not on Me; of*

righteousness, because I go to My Father, and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now. Teachers, learn wisdom from Christ! He did not try to teach His disciples everything at once, but, by teaching them one Truth of God, He prepared them for another Truth. Let us do the same with those whom we try to teach. Let us dispense to them the simpler Truths of God, first, and afterwards those that are deeper and more mysterious.

13, 14. *However when He the Spirit of Truth is come, He will guide you into all Truth: for He shall not speak of Himself, but whatever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. That spirit which does not glorify Christ is not the Spirit of God! Hereby shall you discern between the spirit of error and the Spirit of Truth!*

15, 16. *All things that the Father has are Mine: therefore said I, that He shall take of Mine, and shall show it to you. A little while, and you shall not see Me: and again a little while, and you shall see Me, because I go to the Father. This is what our whole life is—"a little while." But in that little while there are little whiles of sadness and little whiles of gladness—little whiles in which we have Christ with us and little whiles in which we see Him, but find Him not. Blessed be God, we are going away from the land of these changing little whiles up to the Place where the sun shines in its strength forever and ever!*

17, 18. *Then said some of His disciples among themselves, What is this that He says unto us, A little while, and you shall not see Me: and, again, a little while, and you shall see Me: and, Because I go to the Father? They said therefore, What is this that He says, A little while? We cannot tell what He says. Sometimes, when you are reading the Bible, you will come across a text of which you will say to yourselves, "What is this? We cannot tell what He says." But do not give up reading the Bible because you cannot understand it! There is a great deal that a father says which his child cannot comprehend, yet it is a part of the child's education to be with his father and to hear some things that he does not, at first, understand but, by-and-by, it all becomes clear. So, Believer, what you know not now you shall know hereafter.*

19. *Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask Him. They did not ask Him, but they desired to do so—and a desire is a prayer. Where our blessed Master is present, the very desires of His people are prayers, even though their lips remain closed.*

19, 20. *And said unto them, Do you enquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and you shall not see Me: and again, a little while, and you shall see Me? Verily, verily, I say unto you, That you shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and you shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. Oh, what a blessed promise!*

21-24. *A woman when she is in travail has sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembers no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And you now, therefore, have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice,*

and your joy no man takes from you. And in that day you shall ask Me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatever you shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it to you. Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full. They had asked very little and they had never asked even that little in Christ's name—and there are but few Christians who do so even now. They ask for Christ's sake, which is a good plea, but to ask in Christ's name is still better! When you feel conscious that you have Christ's authority to use His name, you can put the King's own signature at the bottom of your petitions! There are some prayers to which a man dares not set Christ's seal, but when the prayer is such that Christ Himself might have offered it, then we may present it in His name and we may be certain that we shall receive what we have asked.

25-28. *These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time comes when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall show you plainly of the Father. At that day you shall ask in My name. And I say not unto you that I will pray the Father for you, for the Father Himself loves you because you have loved Me and have believed that I came from God. I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father.* Here are four unfathomable depths—"I came forth from the Father"—there is Christ's eternal Pre-Existence. "And am come into the world"—there is His Incarnation. "Again, I leave the world,"—there is His death, Resurrection and Ascension into the Glory of God. "And go to the Father"—there is His exaltation to the Father's right hand."

29. *His disciples said unto Him, Lo, now You speak plainly, and speak no proverb.* Did you ever, when reading the Bible, come across a text that was opened up to you so sweetly that you cried out just as these disciples did "Lo, now You speak plainly, and speak no proverb"?

30, 31. *Now are we sure that You know all things, and need not that any man should ask You: by this we believe that You came forth from God. Jesus answered them, Do you now believe?* Listen you who imagine that you are so strong in faith and every Grace, that you think you are almost perfect—"Do you now believe?"

32. *Behold, the hour comes, yes, is now come, that you shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone.* Ah, me! These were the men who said they believed in Him, yet, in His time of trial they fled like cowardly unbelievers! God help us and sustain us, or we shall do as they did!

32, 33. *And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. These things I have spoken unto you that in Me you might have peace. In the world you shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.*

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

THE SPIRIT'S OFFICE TOWARDS DISCIPLES NO. 3062

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 17, 1907.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 23, 1865.**

***“He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you.”
John 16:14.***

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon this passage are as follows—#465, Volume 8—
THE HOLY SPIRIT GLORIFYING CHRIST; #2213, Volume 37—“HONEY IN THE MOUTH”;
#2382, Volume 40—THE HOLY SPIRIT'S CHIEF OFFICE.

An Exposition of John 16:1-22, was published with #3052, Volume 53—
CHRIST'S LONELINESS AND OURS—

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

MANY persons are anxiously asking the question, “Are we partakers of the Holy Spirit?” With enlarged anxiety, they reason thus, “We have felt certain inward emotions. There has been in us, we trust, a change of life. Eager are our desires for God and His Grace. Do these come of the Spirit of God? When we find a suggestion which appears to be holy in our soul, does it come from Him? When we are at any time filled with earnestness and pray, or our soul has peculiar delight in considering Divine things, may we say with truth that we are under the operation of the Holy Spirit?” I do not intend to go thoroughly into the resolution of these scruples—that would be too wide a subject for a short evening's discourse—but there is one point which may often relieve your perplexities. It appears from the text that it is the work and office and custom of the Holy Spirit to glorify Christ. If, therefore, with much strength and fervor in your soul, you glorify Him, you may trust that it comes from the Spirit of God. But if there is anything in you which is derogatory to the Character or Person or Glory of the Lord Jesus, it may either come from Satan or from your own corrupt mind. But from the Spirit of God it never came and it would be blasphemy to impute it to Him. Whatever you feel which lifts Christ on high in your soul comes of the Spirit—but whatever there may be which exalts self or anything else in the place of Christ—no matter from where it comes—the Holy Spirit has nothing to do with it!

Let us then just handle this point. The Holy Spirit glorifies Christ in His people. How does He do it and how far may I judge that He is at work in me?

One way in which the Holy Spirit glorifies Christ is *this—He gives us more and more debasing views of ourselves.* There are two Gods, as it

were. One the true, the other the false. Self first mounts the throne in our heart and the higher the throne of self is exalted, the lower must Christ go. Much of self, little of the Savior. Exalted views of self, self-power, or self-righteousness, and then there are sure to be low views of Christ. But when self goes down, then Christ at once rises. It may be said of self, as John the Baptist once said of Christ and himself, "He must increase, but I must decrease." If you have had shallow views of your own natural depravity, then you have had very shallow thoughts of Christ. If you think sin to be delightful, if Gethsemane, Golgotha and Calvary seem to you to be names without weight or meaning. If you have never groaned under sin, I do not wonder that you think little of Christ's groans, griefs and bloody sweat. But when you come to know yourself as verily lost and undone, then you will prize your Deliverer! When the dread word, "lost," has seemed to fall like a death knell upon your ears, then the tidings that the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost will be as sweet to you as the Christmas carol of the angels, when they sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." If you feel the disease, you will value the Physician. If you know your own emptiness, you will prize Christ's fullness. But if you reject the teaching of the Holy Spirit which shows you your utter helplessness and worthlessness, in so doing you have rejected Christ and put far from you that Savior who alone came to save sinners! It is, then, a most precious thing when we begin to sink lower and lower in our own estimation. At the commencement of spiritual life we believe that we are nothing. As we advance, we find that we are less than nothing. May the Holy Spirit so work in you! Some of you are, perhaps, depending and thinking that you are not children of God, or else you would not be so cast down as you are. I pray you to understand this matter aright. Instead of having any reason for despondency, you will find a subject for joy, for I am sure that the Spirit is honoring Christ when He is lowering you in your own estimation.

Still more to the point, when the Holy Spirit really works in the heart of man, He honors Christ in every respect. *He honors the Person of Christ.* Those who think but little of His Deity are not taught of the Spirit of God. No man is taught by the Holy Spirit to regard the only-begotten Son of the Father as a secondary God, for the Holy Spirit teaches us upon this wise, "When He brings in the First-Begotten into the world, He says, "And let all the angels of God worship Him." "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." The Spirit always teaches concerning Christ that He is God over all, blessed forever. Some have had lowering views of His Humanity. Every now and then we hear dark hints about the Human Nature of our Lord Jesus Christ, His peccability and so on. But this never comes from the Spirit of God. Both the Deity and the Humanity of Christ receive honor in the Christian's soul when the Spirit comes there with the Light of God—

***"Jesus is worthy to receive
Honor and power Divine."***

That very Man who did hang upon Calvary we now adore. He is exalted far above all principalities and powers. All teaching which honors Christ in His Person is of the Spirit. And that which dishonors Him should be branded with its evil authorship.

The Spirit also glorifies Christ in His work. Have you ever seen the finished work of Christ? He came into the world to save men and He did save them. He did not make a bridge over which they might possibly get across, but He carried them across the bridge. He did not so far accomplish the work of redemption that, by their own exertions, some persons might climb to Heaven, but He, Himself, entered into the heavenly places and took possession, representatively, of the Throne of God for all His people who were in Him. The salvation of the elect, so far as Christ is concerned, is finished. He took upon His shoulders all their guilt. He was punished for that guilt and they were then and there justified. He rose again, having shaken off alike the punishment and the iniquities that incurred it. He entered into Glory and they were then and there virtually made possessors of an inheritance which nothing will ever be able to take from them! Let the Christian feel that the teaching which lowers the work of Christ or makes it dependent upon the will of man as to its effect, puts the Cross on the ground and says, "That blood is shed, but it may be shed in vain, shed in vain for you"—let us all feel that such teaching comes not from the Spirit of God! That teaching which, pointing to the Cross, says, "He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied." That teaching which makes the Atonement a true atonement which forever put away the vindictive Justice of God from every soul for whom that Atonement was offered, exalts Christ and, therefore, it is a teaching which comes from the Spirit of God! When your heart is brought to rest upon what Christ has done. When, laying aside all confidence in your own works, knowledge, prayers, doing, or believing, you come to rest upon what Christ has done in its simplicity—then is Jesus Christ exalted in your heart and it must have been the work of the Spirit of Divine Grace! The Person, then, and the work of Christ are exalted.

The Holy Spirit also exalts Christ in all His offices. That teaching which calls a man a priest and bids me take my child to receive some "grace" at his priestly hands and which puts another man into lawn sleeves and bids me kneel before him to receive a confirmation of my "grace" from his pretentious fingers. That system of religion which lifts up any one man above his fellow men, as if there were any priests other than the common and general priesthood which belongs to every child of God—such teaching as that lowers Christ by lifting up human priests into Christ's place! The Spirit bears witness that Christ is the Great High Priest of His Church. It is from His hands we receive the blessing! Through His blood we receive the washing! And nowhere else will we look for the Divine Grace that comes alone from Him!

Christ, too, is exalted by the Spirit in His prophetic as well as in His priestly office. Shall I call any man master so as to take him for my teacher? All teaching which lifts up Wesley, or Calvin, or any man, living

or dead, in the place of the authorized Teacher and which says that their teachings are to be taken as though they were the Infallible Revelations of Christ is not of the Spirit of God! But that teaching which says, "One is your Master, even Christ, and all you are brethren," and which tells us of the holy equality of all saints and that the true Teacher and the only Teacher who can speak with authority is Jesus Christ, the Son of God—such teaching you may accept as coming from God the Holy Spirit.

Then Christ occupies a third office. He is Prophet and Priest—and He is also King. And any teaching which takes Christ off the Throne of God and puts someone else on it, is not according to the Spirit of God. The Headship of Christ in His Church is the Doctrine which, perhaps, beyond all others, needs to be taught at this time. It was for this that Scotland's sons suffered misery and death. Cast out, they wandered in the morasses and among the mountains. I stood, the other day, near the place where the monument is raised to thousands of men who had shed their blood for Christ—and I felt it no small privilege to stand where Guthrie and others had poured out their blood for the defense of the Headship of the Church when Charles the Second would be the head of the Church, or James, or some other man of like character. But would this be tolerated by true-hearted saints of God's own true Church? No! None but rogues and cowards will ever admit the authority of men or women over the Church of Christ, or permit them to usurp the Divine rights of the Lord Jesus! When that day comes, when the King of kings shall sit upon His throne, He will take summary vengeance upon the traitors who have dared to give up His high prerogatives! Christian, make Christ your Priest who absolves you! Take Him as your only Leader and Prophet, who is the truth and the life for you! And then take Him as your King and bow your knees before Him! Take Christ in all His offices to be exalted, for so the Spirit teaches.

Then *Christ is also exalted by the Holy Spirit in His Word*. There are some who think and say that they can do without the Bible. But certainly such think and speak not by the Spirit of God! This is always an Infallible test of the work of the Spirit—that He honors God's own Word. I could think no man true who, first of all, professed to write out his own mind and then afterwards contradicted it. Then how can that spirit be true that contradicts the writing of the Spirit of the living God? Bring whatever you have of revelation to the test of Scripture—if it is not in accordance with it—throw it away! I wish this rule were learned by all men, for every now and then we read of or meet with persons who think that the Spirit has revealed to them something over and above what is in Scripture. Now this is never the case! Any man who says that he has had more revealed to him than is in the Holy Scriptures, incurs the curse of the last chapter of Revelation! He must take care lest, since he adds to the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, "God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this Book." "It is finished," must be said concerning this Book as we close it. Not a single verse or Revelation shall henceforth

come of the Spirit. Until Christ comes, this Book is sealed, so far as any addition to it is concerned!

Indeed, *there is nothing which concerns Christ which the Spirit of God does not magnify*. Consider any of His offices or His relationships and you will find that the Spirit magnifies them and glorifies them—and so presents them to the Believer's soul that he may rejoice therein.

Now, I advance a little further. The Holy Spirit's work is to glorify Christ and *this He will do by filling you with Christ*. If you are subject to the work of the Spirit, then ought you to have much of the spirit of Christ within you. But if you can live days and weeks without thinking of Christ, set yourself down as being a hypocrite, if you will, for you are not a true Christian! The very mark of the blessed man is that he lives upon God's Word. "In His Law does he meditate day and night." We feed upon Christ and as our bodies could not live without food, so neither can our souls live without Jesus. The Spirit of God will also fill your heart with Christ so that the more you have of that Spirit, the more intense will be your love of the Savior until, at last, you will be able to say—

***"Jesus, the very thought of You
With sweetness fills my breast."***

When the Spirit of God is with you, you will indeed feel that it is so. No joy can be compared with that of the love of Christ shed abroad in your heart. When the Spirit has thus filled your thoughts and heart, He will be sure to occupy your tongues. They who love the Savior must speak of Him! In choice company they will tell some of the secrets of His love, and in any company they will not be ashamed to acknowledge that they are His servants. Occupying their tongue, He will also be sure to engage it in prayer for them and they will not cease to offer such prayers as these—"Your Kingdom come, Jesus. Be You exalted. Oh, when will You come in Your chariot of salvation to ride over the whole earth? Come quickly, O come quickly, Lord Jesus!" And then, too, your tongue will be employed in songs concerning Him. It is always a token of a revival of religion, it is said, when there is a revival of Psalmody. When Luther's preaching began to tell upon men, you could hear plowmen at the plow-tail singing Luther's Psalms. Whitefield and Wesley would never have done the great work they did if it had not been for Charles Wesley's poetry and for the singing of such men as Toplady, Scott, Newton and many others of the same class. And even now we mark that since there has been somewhat of a religious revival in our various denominations, there are more hymnbooks than there ever were before and far more attention is paid to Christian Psalmody than ever before. When your heart is full of Christ you will want to sing! It is a blessed thing to sing at your labor and work, if you are in a place where you can do so. And if the world should laugh at you, you must tell them that you have as good a right to sing the songs that delight your heart as they have to sing any of the songs in which their hearts delight. Praise His name, Christians! Be not dumb! Sing aloud to Jesus, the Lamb! And if we, as Englishmen, can sometimes

sing our national air, let us as Believers have our national hymn and sing—

**“Crown Him, crown Him,
Crown Him Lord of all!”**

And surely when the Spirit of God thus honors Christ in the tongue, it will not stop there! It comes to the acts of daily life. *The Spirit shall glorify Christ by helping you to glorify Him in your own actions.* I spoke, this morning [See Sermon #626, Volume 11—THE WATERER WATERED—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] of some who set themselves apart for extraordinary service. I did not, however, intend to imply that that was at all necessary, for you may serve Christ as good housewives. You may serve Him as merchants, shopkeepers and, in short, in every condition of life. Our religion is for the market-place, for the shop, for the streets and for the field. And as God's Being is not confined to temples made by the hands of men, but is present everywhere—on heath, and city, and moor, and field—in the sunbeams that light the peasant's cot as well as the monarch's palace—present in the minute as well as in the magnificent—down there in the glades where the red deer wander and the child loves to play. And up there where the storms gather upon the mountain's hoary brow—as visible in a blade of grass as in the cedar and the tall waving pine—to be seen as well in the dewdrop as in the avalanche—as certainly in the falling of a leaf as in the tremendous roar of the thunder—everywhere present—so is true religion everywhere—in the cottage as well as in the temple, in business as well as in devotions. Abroad in the streets as well as in the silence of retirement! Up yonder where men wrestle with God and down there where they come to contend with men and for His Truth! You have never received the Spirit so as to know that Christ is the Glorified One unless in your life as well as with your lips you show forth His praise!

If the Spirit has thus far instructed you, He will conduct you a little further and you *may accept His teaching because it glorifies Christ.* There are some Doctrines which are not often preached in certain pulpits. They are supposed to be rather dangerous. Speaking of a certain hymnbook, I remarked to a minister in whose pulpit I preached, that I did not like the hymnbook, as I could never find a hymn that sang of the Covenant of Grace or the Doctrine of Election. “Oh, well,” he said, “that is no disadvantage to me, for I never say anything about those Doctrines!” And I can quite believe what he said. There are certain higher Truths of God which only belong to those who have passed through the rudiments and have done with the grammar-school books and can enter into the university! One of the things which glorify Christ is where the Spirit makes us understand the eternal love of Christ to His people and His Covenant engagements for them.

Christian, I would have you know that Christ never did begin to love you! Before the mountains were piled, or the clouds had gathered about them, Christ had set His heart upon you! No, when this great world, the sun, moon and stars slept in the mind of God like forests in an acorn-cup, then—then had Jehovah-Jesus love for you! And when the proper

time came, He offered Himself up as a Surety for your souls, to pay your debts, to stand as your Representative, to keep you in this world and to present you at the last to the Father as a priceless jewel. Oh, how you will glorify Christ if you have faith enough to take in this Divine mystery! Stagger not at electing love—it is one of the highest notes of heavenly music! Be not afraid of such a verse as this—“I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.” Here is marrow and fatness such as saints fed upon in days long since gone!

Take another Truth of God, the precious Truth of the *finished* work of Christ for His people. How often do you hear Christ's work preached as if it were only begun and many hold Him up as though He had commenced a fitting garment but had left off somewhere so that by adding our rags we might complete the work! I was in one of the vaults of the British Museum some time since, when the sculptures came from Nineveh and one of them was unfinished. There was evidently the last mark which the mason had made before he was destroyed or, it may be, called away from his work to which he never returned. But Jesus Christ has left no sculpture of this kind—He has *finished* all His work. “It is finished,” were words that gladdened earth and made Heaven more glorious! There is now nothing for souls to do to save themselves. For where Jesus died, that soul is saved and all that that soul has to do is, being saved, to show its gratitude and love as one that is brought to life from the dead—

***“Loved of my God, for Him again
With love intense I burn.
Chosen of Him before time began,
I chose Him in return.”***

You may know that *perfection* in Christ by a firm reliance upon the Scriptures. How can you perish? You are saved! There is, therefore, now no condemnation recorded against you. Who shall lay anything to your charge? Who shall separate you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, your Lord?

If there is one Doctrine, however, more sweet and yet more deep than another, it is the Divine Doctrine of that Eternal Union which exists between Christ and His people. It is the Spirit's work to take the golden key and let us into this secret cabinet. Believers are one with Christ! By vital personal union they are one with Him! They are members of His body, or as He, Himself, says, they are the branches and He is the Vine. They are the members and He is the Head. I know of nothing that can be more delightful than this union—this eternal union—with Christ—

***“One in the tomb, one when He rose,
One when He triumphed over His foes!
One when in Heaven He took His seat,
While seraphs sang all Hell's defeat!
This sacred tie forbids our fears
For all He is or has is ours.
With Him, our Head, we stand or fall—
Our Life, our Surety and our All.”***

It used to be said by an excellent theologian that any man who understood the two Covenants of Works and Grace was a master in theology. Yet, oh how few Christians there seem to be who really understand the Covenant of Grace! "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." We fell, not by our own fault, but by Adam's fault. And we rise not by our own virtue, but by virtue of our union with Christ! If you are in Christ, Believer, you are safe while Christ stands. You cannot drown the body until you drown the Head. My foot may be deep in the streams, but until the billows roll over my brow, my foot is not drowned—and until Christ shall perish, no soul that is one with Christ can be destroyed, for He said to His disciples, "Because I live, you shall also live." Did time permit, I might enter into some more of those sublime mysteries which make the core and pith of the comfort of the Christian, but I forbear. May the Spirit of God glorify Christ by taking these things of Christ and revealing them to you and making them personally yours!

And to close—the Holy Spirit will continue all your life, if you are a Believer in Christ, to further His work in you *by writing all that concerns Christ upon your experience and your life*. I long to see in the Church more men and women who have Christ so glorified in them that their faith never staggers—who have neither doubts nor fears, who know whom they have believed, who are persuaded that He is able to keep that which they have committed unto Him, who leave all things to the Father's wisdom—and find everything in a perfect Savior! I long to see some of you, Brothers and Sisters, made partakers of our overflowing joy! I long to see your eyes flash with the joyous radiance of your Savior's Presence. I pray that you may be so full of joy that when you speak, you may cheer the downcast and lift up the countenances of the sad. I want you to have added to this an intense and fervent love—love which shall perform impossibilities, which shall dare anything for Christ, which, instinct with zeal, shall thresh the mountains and beat them small, and shall winnow the wheat from the chaff upon the threshing floor. I pray that you may have that mighty consecration of spirit which shall make you altogether unearthly, that as you have borne the image of the earthy, you may also bear the image of the heavenly and that as you have been conformed to the first Adam in the curse, and in all the infirmities and griefs of this mortal life, you may be conformed to the Second Adam in His pure unselfish love for man, His noble, all-daring, all-consuming love for His Father and for His cause.

I am persuaded that the Spirit does not glorify Christ in us so much as He would if we gave ourselves up more fully to the Savior. As one said on a certain occasion, there is a fleet lying in the river, richly-laden, but it cannot come up because the river is blocked up with ice. So I think I see my Master's love lying out far down the river and it would gladly come to my poor soul to enrich me and make me holy and heavenly, but alas, the coldness of my heart, like ice, blocks up the channel and I get not what I might obtain! Come, heavenly love, and melt the ice! Flow,

streams of Grace, and dissolve every barrier! Come, Jesus, come into my heart and let Your treasures be mine forevermore! Oh that I could stir some Believers here to seek more than is generally enjoyed by Christians! May God give you the seraphic earnestness of a Whitefield, the deep piety of a Martyn and the lovely spirit of a Newton or a Cowper! May He fill you to the brim with Himself till you shall be like a city set upon a hill that cannot be hid—and like unto candles in the house that enlightens all around!

[Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon on various aspects of the Covenant of Grace are as follows—#19, Volume 1—DAVID'S DYING SONG; # 93, Volume 3—GOD IN THE COVENANT; #103, Volume 2—CHRIST IN THE COVENANT; #212, Volume 4—THE NEW HEART; #233, Volume 5—FREE GRACE; #251, Volume 5—THE NECESSITY OF THE SPIRIT'S WORK; #277, Volume 5—THE BLOOD OF THE EVERLASTING COVENANT; #456, Volume 8—THE STONY HEART REMOVED; #517, Volume 8—THE RAINBOW; #714, Volume 12—A SAVIOR SUCH AS YOU NEED; #1046, Volume 18—COVENANT BLESSINGS; #1129, Volume 19—THE HEART OF FLESH; #1186, Volume 20—THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT; #1289, Volume 22—THE HEART FULL AND THE MOUTH CLOSED; #1451, Volume 25—THE COVENANT PLEADED; #1840, Volume 31—THE BOND OF THE COVENANT; #1886, Volume 32—GOD'S REMEMBRANCE OF HIS COVENANT; #1921, Volume 32—CLEANSING—A COVENANT BLESSING; #1942, Volume 33—SALT FOR SACRIFICE; #2092, Volume 35—GOD'S OWN GOSPEL CALL; #2108, Volume 35—PERSEVERANCE IN HOLINESS; #2200, Volume 37—THE COVENANT PROMISE OF THE SPIRIT; #2316, Volume 39—TWELVE COVENANT MERCIES; #2427, Volume 41—“THE ARK OF THE COVENANT”; #2438, Volume 41—“TWO IMMUTABLE THINGS”; No. 2506, Volume 43—GOD'S LAW IN MAN'S HEART and No. 3048, Volume 53—THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE COVENANT—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

But, alas, there are some here who know not my Master at all, who are strangers to His love! There is Christ looking down upon you with tearful eyes and He bids you come to Him. That blood which you have hitherto despised will wash away your every sin. Only cast yourself upon Him. Look up into those languid eyes, for they are full of pity. That streaming blood flows to every soul that trusts in Jesus. Read the mystery of that pierced heart—there is love alone written there. Study the anguish of that poor martyred body, for in every pang you can learn the story of His compassion. And as you see Him bowing His head and hear Him saying, “Father, into Your hands I commend my spirit.” He asks you, every one, to commend your spirit to Him. Do it, do it now, God helping you—and Christ will thus be glorified!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: GALATIANS 2:15-21; 3.

Galatians 2:15-21. *We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the Law: for by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified. But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid! For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the Law am dead to the Law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved*

me, and gave Himself for me. I do not frustrate the Grace of God: for if righteousness comes by the Law, then Christ is dead in vain. Paul is arguing against the idea of salvation by works, or salvation by ceremonies. And he shows, beyond all question, that salvation is by the Grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ. Mark the strength of the Apostle's argument in the 21st verse—"If righteousness comes by the Law, then Christ is dead in sin." That is to say, there was no need for Christ to die—the Crucifixion was a superfluity if men can save themselves by their own good works. Paul is very emphatic about the matter. He puts it as plainly as possible: "If righteousness comes by the Law, then Christ is dead in vain."

Galatians 3:1, 2. *O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ has been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received you the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by the hearing of faith?* "When the Spirit of God came upon you, and renewed you—when He endued some of you with miraculous gifts—did this power come by the works of the Law, or through your believing the Gospel? 'Received you the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by the hearing of faith?'"

3. *Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now made perfect by the flesh?* "Is this work to be partly God's and partly your own? And if He has begun it with a basis of gold, are you to perfect it with your poor dust and clay? Are you so foolish as to attempt to do this?" [See Sermon #1534, Volume 26—Salvation by Works, a Criminal Doctrine—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

4, 5. *Have you suffered so many things in vain? If it is yet in vain. He therefore that ministers to you the Spirit, and works miracles among you, does He it by the works of the Law, or by the hearing of faith?* They knew very well that the miracles came as the result of faith and were an attestation and seal of the Gospel of Faith, and not of the works of the Law.

6, 7. *Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know you therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.* He was the father of the faithful—that is of the believing—not of those who trust in their own works. These are only like Ishmael, who must be cast out of the chosen family—but the true children, the real Isaacs, are those who are born according to the promise of Grace. [See Sermon #1705, Volume 29—THE HEARING OF FAITH—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

8. *And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the Gospel unto Abraham, saying, In you shall all nations be blessed.* That is, "in you, because you are the father of Believers. You are a sort of head and prototype of men who believe in Me and so, 'in you shall all nations be blessed' and in your Seed, too, as you shall be the father of the Christ, shall all nations be blessed."

9-11. *So then they which are of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. For as many as are of the works of the Law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continues not in all things which*

are written in the book of the Law to do them. But that no man is justified by the Law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. If then, even those who are just live by faith, how can any expect that they shall live by their works? [See Sermons #814, Volume 14—LIFE BY FAITH and #2809, Volume 48—FAITH—LIFE—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

12. *And the Law is not of faith: but The man that does them shall live in them.* The Law says nothing about faith. It speaks only about *doing*—“You shall do My judgments, and keep My ordinances, to walk therein: I am the Lord your God. You shall therefore keep My statutes, and My judgments: which if a man does, he shall live in them: I am the Lord.”

13. *Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a Curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree.* There is the key of the mystery! Christ is our Substitute. He fulfilled the Law's demands by His perfect obedience and He suffered the Law's utmost penalty by His death upon the Cross. And now, all those who believe in Him are forever justified because of what He did for them. [See Sermon #873, Volume 15—CHRIST MADE A CURSE FOR US; and #2093, Volume 35—THE CURSE AND THE CURSE FOR US—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

14, 15. *That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. Brethren, I speak after the manner of men. Though it is but a man's covenant, yet if it is confirmed.* If it is legally drawn up, signed, sealed and witnessed.

15. *No man disannuls, or adds thereto.* There it stands and an appeal can be made to it in any court of Law where it may be produced.

16, 17. *Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He says not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to your Seed, which is Christ. And this I say, that the Covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the Law which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of no effect.* That is clear enough. The Covenant made with Abraham and his Seed cannot be affected by anything that was said or done on Sinai. Whatever the Covenant of Works may be, or say, or do, it comes in more than four centuries after this glorious Covenant of Grace had been signed, sealed and ratified! Therefore it cannot be affected, it must stand fast forever.

18. *For if the inheritance is of the Law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.* So, then, we know it is by promise and God must keep His promise—and we must believe it. It must be true and if we do believe it, we shall prove it to be true and it will be fulfilled in every jot and tittle to every believing soul.

19-22. *What purpose, then, does the Law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one. Is the Law then against the promises of God? God forbid! For if there had been a Law given which could have given life, verily righteousness would have been by the Law.*

But the Scripture has concluded all are under sin. Or, “shut us all up under sin.” The Law has come and proved us all guilty, and shut us all up as in a great prison from which we cannot escape by any power of our OWN. [See Sermons #1145, Volume 19—THE GREAT JAIL—AND HOW TO GET OUT OF IT and #2402, Volume 41—UNDER ARREST —Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

22-24. *That the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came, we were kept under the Law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Therefore the Law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ.* [See Sermon 1196, Volume 20—THE STERN TEACHER—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] It whipped us to Christ and taught us that we could not be saved except by Christ.

24-28. *That we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For you are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for you are all one in Christ Jesus.* Yet some foolish people still talk about our Jewish origin! What would that matter even if it were true? “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free.” All these distinctions are done away with and Christ is All—and Believers, whether Jews or Gentiles—“are all one in Christ Jesus.”

29. *And if you are Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise,* So that all the blessings which God promised to Abraham belong to you who are Believers in Christ! And you may take them and rejoice in them! But if you are without faith in Christ, then are you without the one essential thing which gives you an interest in the Covenant of Grace!

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

A PROMISE AND PRECEDENT

NO. 3127

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 14, 1909.

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ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 4, 1874.

“He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you.”
John 16:14.

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon, upon this passage, are as follows— Sermons #565, Volume 8—THE HOLY SPIRIT GLORIFYING CHRIST; #2212, Volume 37—“HONEY IN THE MOUTH!” and #3062, Volume 53—THE SPIRIT'S OFFICE TOWARDS DISCIPLES—
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JESUS CHRIST, our gracious Lord and Master, is here speaking of the Holy Spirit and He says of Him, “He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you.” Our Lord Jesus Christ, in His own personal teaching, did not plainly declare all the Truths which He intended to reveal because the Holy Spirit was not then given to His disciples and they were not, at that time, able to receive all that He might have taught them. He Himself said to them, “I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now.” The germ of everything that would be revealed was in the teaching of Christ, but not the full development of it. That was left till after the Holy Spirit had been given on the day of Pentecost. In the Acts of the Apostles, in their various Epistles and in the Apocalypse given to John, we have the full Revelation of the Truth of God—the Holy Spirit there taking of the things of Christ and revealing them to us and also, according to His promise, showing us, in the Book of the Revelation, “things to come.”

Note that our Savior did not go away from His disciples and leave the Spirit to come upon them without previously intimating to them the fact that He was coming. He prepared them for the change. While He was here upon earth, He was personally at the head of His people and as it was His purpose that the Holy Spirit should act as His Substitute during His absence, He informed His followers that it would be so. He told them that the Spirit of God would come, that He would more fully reveal the great Truths which He had Himself taught to His disciples and that He would apply the Truths already revealed to the hearts of His people so that they would be able to understand much that had, up to now, been beyond their comprehension. There was no separation of the dispensation of Christ from that of the Holy Spirit, but they were

dovetailed and pieced into one another by these memorable words of the Lord Jesus just before He went to Gethsemane and Calvary—"He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you."

In considering this declaration of our Savior with regard to the Holy Spirit, we shall view it in three aspects, praying that God will make it a blessing while we are meditating upon it. We shall, first, *view the text doctrinally*. Secondly, *consider it as a promise*. And, thirdly, *look upon it as a precedent or model by which we should work*.

I. First, then, WE WILL VIEW THE TEXT DOCTRINALLY.

This declaration of Christ contains some most important Doctrines and the best is this—that *it is the office and aim of the Holy Spirit to glorify Jesus Christ*. No study in Scripture is more interesting or profitable to the Christian than the Revelation which is given to us concerning the Sacred Trinity and the various parts which the Divine Persons take in the work of our salvation. John Bunyan wrote a notable work upon the Trinity and the Christian—and nothing could be more appropriate, for there would be no Christian without the Trinity! It needs the Father, the Son and the Spirit to produce that noblest kind of man, a Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ! The various offices of the blessed Trinity in Unity are usually distinct and clearly defined, yet they sometimes intertwist and interchange, just as Jesus in our text bears witness to the Spirit and the Spirit continually bears witness to the Lord Jesus and glorifies Him. Brothers and Sisters, I pray you will remember that when the Spirit convicts the world of sin, it is in order that the convicted sinner may learn the preciousness of that Savior to whom the Spirit bears witness! When He convicts the world of judgment, it is not only that the Judge may be honored as He deserves to be, but also that the way by which judgment may be averted through the substitutionary Sacrifice of Christ may be made clear to the sinner's mind. And when He convicts the world of righteousness, what righteousness is it but that which Jesus Christ has worked out and brought in—that righteousness alone in which saved sinners are able to appear before God without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing? The Holy Spirit always works with this aim and objective—to lead sinners to admire, adore and trust in Jesus Christ! His Omnipotence bends itself to this end—that Jesus Christ may be glorified in the hearts and lives of sinners saved by His Grace!

I gather from our text another Doctrine, namely, that, *any teaching which does not glorify Jesus Christ is not the teaching of the Holy Spirit*. By this simple test, the humblest among us may be able to judge even that form of teaching which is most pretentious. And if it cannot endure this test, it may be rejected without hesitation! The poorest man who enters any assembly, if he hears a Doctrine that glorifies Christ, can say, "I may safely listen to this teaching, for the Spirit of God will set His seal to it." But if, on the other hand, amidst a blaze of intellectual splendor

and a brilliant display of mere human knowledge, nothing is said that will glorify the Lord Jesus Christ, the true child of God says to himself, “What business have I to be in this place? This is not the company that is congenial to me, nor the teaching to which I ought to give heed. Here is neither the food for my soul nor yet the opportunity of glorifying my dear Lord and Master! I will leave this assembly and seek to find some other place where the Spirit of God is at work in His chosen ministry of glorifying Christ.” Thus the great Doctrine that it is the Spirit’s work to glorify Christ furnishes us with a spiritual detector by which we may discover what is true gold and what is counterfeit—and by which we may judge whether the voices that we hear are voices of the night which cry out to us to follow them in the darkness, or the voices of the dawning which herald the coming of the day!

There is this further Doctrine in the text, that *the Holy Spirit, in glorifying Christ, acts in sacred concert with the other Persons of the blessed Trinity*, for Jesus said, “He shall receive of Mine.” I am not going to explain this declaration of Christ. I cannot do so, for I do not, myself, fully understand it. All I can say is that the Holy Spirit is represented here as receiving the things of Christ. Now the Holy Spirit is continually spoken of in the Scriptures as Divine and He certainly is Divine—yet Christ here says that He receives or takes from the Father the things of Christ that He may show them to us. They are not His own things—things of His own devising or suggesting—but those which Christ calls His. So, just as Jesus said that He did not come in His own name, but in the name of the Father who had sent Him, so the Spirit of God does not come in His own name, nor come with His own message—but He receives the things of Christ and shows them to us. I delight in this sharing of the great work by the glorious Trinity in Unity! I love to see the Father, Son and Spirit all taking part in the salvation of the elect! Just as in the Creation, God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness,” and there was a council held to decide as to that early work, so here it is not merely one of the Persons of the Trinity, but all Three who are concerned in the greater work of man’s new creation! The Spirit receives from the Father the things of Christ and so it is as though God said, “Let Us make man new in Our image, after Our likeness.” Father, Son and Spirit work together in perfecting the new creation—so let us always give undivided and equal honor to the Father, to the Son and to the Holy Spirit—

***“Give to the Father praise,
Give glory to the Son,
And to the Spirit of His Grace
Be equal honor done!”***

Further, I want you to notice that *the Holy Spirit, being bent upon glorifying Christ, glorifies Him with His own things*. Jesus says, “He shall receive of Mine.” The Holy Spirit does not go after something apart from

Christ in order to bring glory to Christ—if Christ is to be glorified, the crown must be made out of His own jewels—and the jewels must be found in His own mine! So, Beloved, in order to honor Christ, you must go to Christ—you must find Christ’s honors in Christ Himself. Even the Holy Spirit, who is Omniscient, does not look outside of Christ in order to find something with which to glorify Him. “He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine.” And none of us can ever honor Christ by bringing anything to Him. If we want to honor Him, we must honor Him with that which is already His own. If I want to honor the Lord Jesus Christ at this moment, how can I do it better than by preaching of His own Person, His own Manhood, His own Godhead, His own life, His own death, His own Resurrection, His own Ascension and His own coming again in the glory of His Father with the holy angels? It must be with the things of Christ that we honor Christ!

If the Holy Spirit willed to do so, He could bring forth matchless novelties in honor of Christ, but He does not will to do so. He honors Christ with that which is Christ’s—and if you and I, standing in the pulpit or anywhere else, want to honor Christ, we must not seek to excogitate some brilliant thought from our own brain, or come before our fellows to display the results of our own wonderful culture—the grand flowers which we have grown in the well-tilled garden of our own highly educated minds! Oh no—Christ must have His own flowers to smell if He is to have a sweet and acceptable posy brought to Him! The ingredients of the incense put into His censer must be all His own—nothing else will be acceptable to Him. Even in the Song of Solomon, you remember that when Christ comes into His own garden, He says, “I have gathered My myrrh with My spice; I have eaten My honeycomb with My honey; I have drunk My wine with My milk.” Nothing will so glorify Christ as that which is already His own! The Spirit of God knows this and, therefore, in order to glorify Christ, He takes of Christ’s own things and of nothing else.

Continuing a little further—this view of the Doctrine in the text—I would remind you that when the Holy Spirit wishes to glorify Christ with Christ’s own things, *He presents them to the hearts of Believers*—“He shall receive of Mine, and shall *show* it unto you.” Without His Divine assistance, you cannot see it—not because it is not visible, but because your eyes are too dim to perceive it. The work of the Spirit of God is to shine upon the beauties of Christ so that we can see them. And when He does so illuminate them, it is a glorifying of Christ for us to see those beauties! It is not merely to Christ’s Glory for us to talk about them—that is another way of glorifying Him—but if you cannot talk, if you have no gifts of eloquence, notice this blessed Truth of God and be comforted by it—Christ is glorified by your *seeing* His Glory! Suppose that you are so slow of speech that you cannot even tell your own wife or child what you

have seen of the beauties of Christ, yet the Holy Spirit has glorified Christ when He has shown those beauties to you. Perhaps you are only a poor servant, or a humble working man living and laboring in obscurity—or possibly a young child or a maiden scarcely known beyond your own family circle, yet believe me—when you see the Lord Jesus Christ in His beauty, as He is revealed to you by the light of the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ is glorified! It is true that He is glorified when I proclaim His dear name to the thousands who gather in this House of Prayer, but He is also glorified in that little bedroom of yours where, perhaps in the dead of night when you lie awake, you say to yourself, “Precious Christ, what a dear Savior You are to me!” When you get a fresh view of Him. When you catch a new ray of light streaming upon His blessed Countenance and you perceive a few more of those lines of love that are written there—Jesus Christ is glorified! I think this is part of what Christ meant when He said to His disciples concerning the Holy Spirit, “He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you.”

Oh, what a wondrous view of Christ the Holy Spirit sometimes gives us! As yet, however, I am afraid that very few of us have had more than a partial view of Him. Have you not sometimes stood upon a hill when it has been a day of mingled cloud and sunshine and there has been a break in the clouds—and the sun has shone through and that hill over yonder has been all ablaze with the golden sunlight—and that part of the landscape has been marvelously illuminated? All down the valley there was gloom. But presently the clouds shifted again and then the beams of light traveled down into the plains and the river flowing below flashed in the sunlight while the hill was once more enveloped in shade! As the clouds continued to move, the sunshine kept lighting up different parts of the landscape. It is just like that with regard to our view of Christ! The Spirit of God, who is the very perfection of light, shines upon Christ with a brilliance that the sun never possessed! Sometimes the Spirit shines upon Christ’s Priesthood and oh, what a wonderful sight it is, then, for us to see Christ offering up Himself as the one great Sacrifice for sin! Another time it may be that the Spirit shines especially upon the prophetic Character of Christ and we then admire Him as revealing God to us and teaching us the Truth! Perhaps the next day the Spirit shows us Christ’s royal Character and then we cry, or more probably we sing—

***“All hail the power of Jesus’ name!
Let angels prostrate fall!
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of All!
Babes, men and sires who know His love,
Who feel your sin and thrall,
Now joy with all the hosts above
And crown Him Lord of All!”***

Sometimes a beam of light will shine upon Christ's hands that were pierced by the nails and then we wonderingly ask, "How could the hands of the Creator of the universe be thus nailed to the tree for us?" And soon the Spirit's bright light gleams upon the face of Jesus and we then—

***"See Divine compassion
Floating in His languid eyes"***

as He bows His head to death for us. But what will it be if the Holy Spirit shall be pleased to give us a full view of Christ upon the Cross? Then will our happy spirits indeed glorify Him and each redeemed one will softly sing—

***"Sweet the moments, rich in blessing,
Which before the Cross I spend.
Life, and health, and peace possessing
From the sinner's dying Friend.
Here I'll sit forever viewing
Mercy's streams, in streams of blood.
Precious drops! My soul bedewing
Plead and claim my peace with God.
Here it is I find my Heaven
While upon the Cross I gaze—
Love I much? I've more forgiven.
I'm a miracle of Grace."***

Oh, for such a sight of Christ as that, for thus Jesus is glorified and we are truly blessed!

II. Now secondly, I want to show you that THE TEXT MAY BE VIEWED AS A PROMISE. He shall—these are three of the blessed "shalls" and "wills" of Christ—"He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you."

Come, dear child of God, and lay hold of this precious promise of Christ! If you get the promise of a man and you believe that he is an honest man, you value his promise. But here you have the promise of your God and Savior, Jesus Christ, the faithful Promiser, so you may well prize that! Are you not sometimes the subject of grave doubts as to whether you really glorify Christ? If so, fall back upon His blessed promise. The Holy Spirit in you shall glorify Christ, for He shall take of the things of Christ and shall show them to you. Possibly you fear that in the days to come, you will bring no glory to Christ. You know your own feebleness, your lack of talent and your lack of opportunity for glorifying Christ. You have cried many a time—

***"Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing
My great Redeemer's praise!
The glories of my God and King
The triumphs of His Grace!"***

Yet you grieve that you cannot glorify Him and you are afraid that you never will be able to do so. Listen to this precious promise again—"He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you," even to you, though you are His poorest, weakest, meanest child! Though

you will not be able to say much about it to others, you will glorify Christ by looking at Him as He is revealed to you by the Holy Spirit! We honor the sun as we look at it, or bask in its beams—I do not know what else we can do to show our appreciation of the sun but lie in the sunlight and thank God for letting the sun shine upon us. I have often thought of the lilies and the roses in the garden and of how they praise the God who made them. Not by singing, as the birds do, nor by lowing, like the cattle, nor by clapping their hands in joy and exultation like the trees of the woods do—the lilies and the roses praise God by just receiving from Him everything that they possess, drinking in His dew and rain and sunshine and standing there in all their beauty pouring out the fragrance that He has poured into them! And that is how you must glorify Christ, my Brothers and Sisters who are in Him. See Christ as the Spirit shows Him to you! Receive of His fullness, pour out the Grace that He has poured into you—and you shall in this way glorify Christ!

Now, Beloved, *this promise is being daily fulfilled in all true Believers.* God is being glorified in them by their sight of the Lord Jesus Christ as He is revealed to them by the Holy Spirit. As they walk to and from their daily work. As they sit down for a while to read their Bibles. As they kneel in prayer at their bedsides and are lost in wonder, love and praise at the Spirit's revelation of the beauties of Christ, Christ is being glorified by the Holy Spirit in them! Do not talk to me of your fine "altars" studded with all manner of precious gems, with flowers, candles and images thereon. Do not tell me about your grand cathedrals with all the splendor of their architecture! The best altar in the world is a broken and a contrite heart and the truest cathedral is a soul that is rejoicing in the indwelling God! When the Holy Spirit comes and reveals Christ in the soul, there is the Altar, there is the Temple, there is the true worship for which God cares beyond all else—and that is really glorifying Christ!

As this promise is being thus constantly fulfilled, I am sure, Beloved, that it is most desirable that it should be more and more fulfilled and, therefore, I exhort you to *plead it before God.* Say, "Lord, will You graciously bid the Holy Spirit to glorify Christ in me and to reveal Christ to me more than He has ever yet done?" As you offer this prayer, if you really mean it, you will be more earnest than you have ever been in your meditation concerning Christ, in your searching of the Word to find out all that you can about Christ and in your fellowship with Christ. What a man truly prays for, he diligently seeks after until he obtains it if it really is in accordance with the will of God. If our minds are entirely occupied with the *world*, is it at all likely that the Spirit of God will show the things of Christ to us? We must give adequate space to the Spirit. We must give Him time and opportunities—putting other things away from us and placing our souls before the Spirit in a waiting and expectant attitude! As sensitive plates are put before that object which they are

intended to reproduce, so let us be placed before the view of Christ which the Spirit of God desires to reveal to us—then the image of Christ shall be imprinted upon us and thus He will first be glorified by our seeing Him in the light that the Spirit sheds upon Him, and then He will be further glorified by others seeing His likeness reproduced in us!

I think I have clearly shown you that our text is a promise made by Christ to His disciples. And I have also shown you that it is a promise which ought to be pleaded at the Throne of Grace, so may I entreat every Christian here to really plead it? A promise is just like a check—but a check is of no real value unless it is taken to the bank and exchanged for cash. You know how we cash our checks—why do we not take God's promises to Him to have them fulfilled just as readily as we take man's promises to the bank to have them fulfilled? I think that a good many long prayers which some consider very fine things, are merely exhibitions of uncertainty and unbelief. If I have a check about the genuineness of which there is some doubt—and I take it to the bank—it is probable that I shall be delayed some little time while there is a conversation between the clerks concerning it—a comparison of signatures, an examination of ledgers and ever so many other things. But if I have a genuine check about which there is no question whatever, what is the usual order of procedure? I go to the counter, put the check down, perhaps scarcely say a word except to indicate how I will take the change, pick up my sovereigns or bank notes and walk away! And that is how I like to pray—I ask God for what He has promised to give me. I believe that He will fulfill His promise and I go my way feeling sure that I have received that for which I asked! As a sensible man, when he has received from the bank clerk the change for his check, puts the money in his pocket and goes about his business, so should you act towards your God when you pray to Him. Say, “Lord, You have promised such-and-such a blessing to me. I come to You and plead Your own promise. And I believe that You will fulfill it to me.” At all events, that is the way that I delight to pray.

You ask me, “Would you not be longer in prayer than that?” No, not on that one occasion. I shall probably be at the bank with another check, presently, so I cannot afford to take more time than is necessary with this one. You can do a great deal of business at this blessed bank if you do it quickly! But if you waste your time loitering at the counter and chatting with the clerk, that is not the way to honor the great Lord of the bank! Some people seem to think that in prayer, they must go through the Westminster Assembly's Confession of Faith, or some similar compendium of Doctrine—but that is not real praying. If, however, you will do your business with your God just as you would do your business with your banker, you will be sure to come back to Him again and again, for there is no man who does so much of this sacred business of pleading with God as the man who is most successful with Him! If you have

succeeded once in prayer, I guarantee that you will pray again! And after a second time of successful pleading, you will pray a third time more easily and more confidently! And God will take care that you shall have plenty of reasons for praying! Only do make it real praying. Say, "Lord Jesus, You have said that the Holy Spirit shall glorify You by taking of Your things and showing them to Your people. I believe it, Lord. Let me prove it to be true at the Communion Table tonight! Let me prove it to be true in my private devotions all through this week! Let me prove it to be true all through this year and all through my life." Pray thus, and then, according to your faith shall it be unto you!

III. Now we shall think of the text in the last way which I indicated, AS A PRECEDENT FOR GLORIFYING CHRIST.

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, I know that a great number of you who are now present wish above all things that the Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in this world. And I also know that you who have tasted that the Lord is gracious have this for your highest ambition, that you may, by some means or other, by sickness or by health, by poverty or by wealth, by life or by death, bring glory to Him. Very well, then, that being the case, let this text be a guide to you in your efforts.

In order to glorify Christ, it seems, first, that *it will be wisdom on your part to rely upon the Holy Spirit*. You say that you want to glorify Christ—that is also what the Holy Spirit wants to do! That is what He has long been doing and is still doing—therefore cast in your lot with Him—get Him to help you do the same work as He is doing. I have sometimes seen some young fellows rowing upstream, and it has been a heavy task to them. But there has come along a barge pulled quickly by horses, or better still, a steam launch, and the young men have called out to those on board, "Throw us a rope, please!" And then those who were before toiling in rowing have gone along easily enough. So, when I see the Spirit of God contending against all opposition—steaming upstream, as it were—in order to glorify Christ. As I need to go upstream, too, for the same purpose, I seek to act in connection with His Omnipotence, so that He may work with me and that I may be drawn onward and upward by His almighty power! My Sister, do not go to that Sunday school class of yours again until you have asked the Holy Spirit to go with you! My Brother, do not go up those pulpit stairs again, nor even up the stairs of that infirmary where you go visit the sick, or of that prison where you go to visit the inmates without first saying, "Spirit of God, it is Your business to glorify Christ and that is also my business—so will You graciously go with me and go in me? Give me the right words to utter and the right spirit in which to utter them. You and I are perfectly agreed in what we are seeking in this matter. Oh, work by me so that Jesus Christ may be glorified!"

I see also another thing in this precedent, which is that *if I want to glorify Christ, I must first take care to apprehend Him clearly myself*. Two of Christ's declarations in the text show me this. The Holy Spirit does not glorify Christ till first He receives of the things of Christ—"He shall receive of Mine." And then He does not glorify Christ in us except by showing the things of Christ to us, so that if you and I want to glorify Christ, our first objective must be to see Him and to see His Glory for ourselves. You cannot, I think, do good to others to any great extent unless you are living in the light of God's Countenance. The Lord's general rule is first to give the provision into the disciples hands before those disciples are able to feed the multitude. Wait awhile, dear Brother, and go to your Lord and say to Him, "Lord, fill me with Your own fullness, for how can I hope to pour out to others till You have done so? Show me Yourself, for how can I describe You to others unless I have Your image very vividly revealed to my own mind and heart? If I am myself rejoicing in You, then shall I be able to tell others, with fluent tongue, how gracious You are. If I hear Your voice giving me a message to deliver from You, then shall I be able to tell the message with all the greater impressiveness and power because I received it first from You."

The next point is also clear from the precedent of the text—that is, in conjunction with the Holy Spirit, having ourselves apprehended Christ—*if we want to glorify Christ, we must tell others about the things of Christ*. "You have said that already," says someone. Very well, then, if I have. I will say it again because I do not know anything that needs more to be said nowadays than this—that the way for any of us to glorify Jesus is to show to others the things of Jesus. How many congregations there are in which the greatest treat to the people would be a sermon about the Lord Jesus Christ and especially about His substitutionary Sacrifice! I have heard it said that there are thousands of sermons preached about the Gospel, but very few in which there is the Gospel, itself. This will not do! Souls will never be saved that way! Nobody has ever had his hunger satisfied by hearing a discourse about bread! It is bread, itself, that is needed to feed the hungry, so keep on, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, giving the Bread of Life to starving souls! I know that many call us fools and say that we are the old stick-in-the-mud Puritans who never get any further—but never mind, dear Friends, what they say—keep on feeding the hungry! We do not mean to change our message even if all should reject it. Here we have stood, these many years, talking to you about Jesus Christ and Him Crucified—and if anybody heard us 20 years ago and shall come again now, he will hear just the same message as he heard then! Why do we not make progress, as others do? Simply because there is nothing which we should regard as progress except progressing in the knowledge of this precious Truth of Jesus Christ and Him Crucified!

In the Infallible Truth of God, which has been revealed by the Holy Spirit, there is no possibility of progress or advance! He has been pleased to reveal the whole Truth, so there is nothing more to be revealed! We can continually search further and deeper into the Truth that has been revealed, and so may be enabled, by the help of the Spirit of God, to speak better concerning it, but better Truth we never shall have and “another Gospel” we never will declare! We should certainly be “accursed” if we did, for there is but one Gospel—and to that Gospel we shall remain steadfast, God helping us—even to the end. Hit that nail on the head again, Brother! Drive it in further and clinch it on the other side. Stick to the Gospel! It may be a long time before it wins, but it will win in the long run! Some say that it is going out of fashion, and that it is at a discount. We were told, the other day, that Calvinism is almost obsolete, but we do not mind what men say about it—we believe that it will yet see everything else obsolete! When modern culture has been blown away, like the thistledown from the side of the hill, the Gospel I have preached will stand like the eternal hills, themselves, outliving every opposition, for God Himself has piled this Truth like a mighty mountain and it shall stand fast till Christ Himself shall come! Not a jot or tittle of it shall ever pass away. The Holy Spirit glorifies Christ by taking of the things of Christ, so let us take care that we follow that precedent and glorify Christ in the same way!

But with regard to the things of Christ, of course *the Holy Spirit glorifies Christ by explaining them, by showing them to us*. So, Beloved, your business and mine is to make the things of Christ plain to people as far as we can. Show them to them—turn them first one way and then another—try and get them to see all of them that there is to be seen. You have not wasted your time if you have taught one child to read and understand one verse like this, “The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” You have done something that was worth doing if you have only whispered into one human ear this short message, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” In some way or other, keep on showing to saints and sinners the things of Christ! That will glorify Christ, somehow or other, both in them that are saved and in them that perish—and will be a sweet savor unto God in every place where Christ is made known! Keep on then, my dear fellow workers, at this blessed work of glorifying Christ!

There are many of you who are doing this under great discouragements, but I pray you not to leave off doing it. It is the Holy Spirit’s way to continue this work unceasingly, so let it be your way, also, as long as you live! But take care that the things which you show to others are the things which you have really received yourself. You must have experimental religion, or else you cannot tell of it to others with any hope that they will accept it. How idle it would be for me to come here to

preach to you of a way of salvation which I had never tried and proved in my own experience! It would be as foolish as for a sick man to stand before a company of his fellow patients and recommend to them a medicine which he had never taken! Do not be guilty of such inconsistency, dear Friends, but live upon Christ! Get more and more of Christ into your soul and then you will be able to go and say to others, "We have found Him of whom Moses and the Prophets did write! We have found Him whom God has set forth to be the Propitiation for our sins, the Healer of all our wounds, the Comforter in all our woes." They will probably say to you, "What do you know about all this?" Then you will begin to tell how you were broken down on account of sin and how Jesus met with you in His mercy and saved you with His great salvation! As you tell the story, they will want to know more and more about it, for personal narratives are always interesting! And then you will, by-and-by, see the tears glistening in their eyes as one or another tremblingly asks, "Would Jesus save *me* in that way? I wonder if I went to Him and confessed my sin, whether I, too, would receive pardon and become a child of God." Then you would seize the golden opportunity and, laying a loving hand upon his shoulder, you would say, "Come, dear Friend, let us kneel down and pray together. Let us together seek that dear Savior who has said, 'Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.'"

If you are moved to act and speak like that, I cannot tell how often God the Holy Spirit would glorify Christ by enabling you, first, to receive the things of Christ, yourself, and then to so show them to others that they would be moved to say, "We will go with you to the Cross of Calvary. We will go with you to the sinner's Savior. Where you were saved, there we, also, will be saved." How I wish that all in this congregation would make this resolve now through the effectual working of the ever-blessed Spirit, "Jesus is a great Savior! We will have Him as our Savior." How I wish that this sacred impulse might come upon all of us who are now in this building, that we might all be unhappy and unsatisfied until we found Christ! That is the way for you to glorify Christ, Sinner—not for you to bring Him any of your own goodness—but to go to Him and take of His goodness! Not for you to try to make yourself better, but to come to Him just as you are, and accept Him as your Savior, to be your Lord and Master forever!

May the Holy Spirit lead you to do so! Do it, blessed Spirit! You love to glorify Christ—here is Your opportunity in this vast congregation! Come and work this great work for Jesus' sake! Amen.

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

THE HOLY SPIRIT GLORIFYING CHRIST

NO. 465

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 17, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“He shall glorify Me: for He shall take of Mine,
and shall show it unto you.”
John 16:14.*

WE always need the Spirit of God in our preaching. But I think we more especially require His Divine direction and instruction when the subject is *Himself*—for the Holy Spirit is so mysterious in His varied attributes and operations, that unless He Himself shall reveal Himself to us and give us the words in which to speak of Him, we shall surely fail either to understand for ourselves, or to enlighten others. In *His* light we see light, but without Him we grope like blind men in the dark.

Certain sins against the Holy Spirit continually exist in a degree in the Christian Church. *Unholiness of life* grieves the Holy Spirit. When Christian men walk not according to the Gospel. When their conversation is not ordered according to the pattern of Christ, then the Holy Spirit, who has no fellowship with unholiness, withdraws Himself in a measure from the Church. *Discord*, too, strife among Brethren, forgetfulness of the new commandment, that we love one another, grieves the sacred Dove—for as His nature is peaceable, as His office is to be the peace giver—so He tarrys not where there is the din and noise of contending parties.

So, also, when He perceives His saints to be diseased with *worldliness*, when we prefer the treasures of Egypt to the reproach of Christ, and seek rather the things which are seen, which are temporal, than the things which are not seen, which are eternal—then again is the Holy Spirit quenched and departs from our midst. Above all, pride and that *murmuring, rebellion, unbelief, obstinacy* and self-seeking which pride leads to—all this grieves the Holy Spirit, for He dwells with those who are humble and of a contrite spirit. Where there is the voice of murmuring, where one man seeks to lift himself above another, and all to exalt themselves above their despised Lord, the Holy Spirit hides Himself and suffers barrenness to take the place of plenty, and death to reign where once life triumphed.

These are a few of the common and the constant infirmities of the Church, by which the Holy Spirit is much hindered in those marvelous manifestations which otherwise would be common and usual in the midst of our Israel.

But there are two faults of the Church which appear to me periodically to manifest themselves. The one is when men ascribe wrong things to the Holy Spirit, and make Him the Author of human novelties and delusions. In seasons when the minds of good men were anxiously alive to spiritual operations, certain weak-headed or designing persons have grown fanatical. Bewildered by their own confused feelings and puffed up by their fleshly minds, they have forsaken the true light which is in the Word, to follow after the will-o'-the-wisps of their own fancies, the absurdities of their own brains. Such vainglorious fools aspiring to be leaders, masters

of sects, will boldly tell men of itching ears that fresh doctrines have been especially revealed to them.

They prate much of what they call the inner light (which is often an inner darkness), which dim candle they exalt above the light of the Word of God, and tell you that marvelous things have been taught to them in dreams and visions. Ah, this is a high and crying crime. What? Will you lay at the door of the Holy Spirit a deed which God has solemnly cursed? Do you not start back at such a thought? Is it not almost blasphemy to imagine it? And yet remember, he that adds a single word to the canon of inspiration is cursed. Give ear to the very words of the Lord our God, "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this Book. And if any man shall take away from the Words of the Book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the Book of Life and out of the holy city and from the things which are written in this Book."

And do you think the Holy Spirit would do that which involves a curse upon man? If I venture to add to God's Word, or to take from it, I do it with this as my penalty—that God shall blot my name out of the Book of Life and out of the holy city. And yet these base pretenders, who would lay their foolish notions at the door of God the Holy Spirit, will have it that He has taught them more than is in the Book, that He has removed that which God laid down as the grand landmark and added to the finished testimony of God. Let none of you have any sort of patience with men who talk thus.

Deny their very first principle. Tell them—whether it is the deceiver of Western America, or the false prophet of Arabia—tell them that they are all impostors, for they ascribe to the Holy Spirit that which is impossible for Him to commit—a violation of the revealed will of God in which it is declared that the canon of inspiration is shut up once and for all. A little of this evil I detect among godly people. I find that sometimes even gracious men think they have had revelations. Texts of Scripture are no doubt laid home by the Holy Spirit to the souls of men as much today as in Paul's time, and there can be no doubt whatever that the Spirit brings all things Christ has taught to our remembrance, and that He leads us into all Truth.

But when a man tells me that the Holy Spirit has revealed to him something that is not in the Bible, he lies! Is that a hard word? It does but express the Truth of God. The man may have dreamed his revelation, he may have fancied it—but the Holy Spirit goes never beyond the written Word. "He shall take of Mine and shall show it unto you." And beyond what Christ has spoken and what Christ has taught, the Holy Spirit goes in no sense and in no respect. You understand what Christ has taught through the Spirit's teaching. But anything beyond the teaching of Christ and His Apostles must be not of God but of man.

This is a most important principle to be held fast by all godly people, for the day may come when false prophets shall arise and delude the people, and by this shall we be able to discover them. If they claim anything beyond what Christ has taught, put them aside, for they are false prophets, wolves in sheep's clothing. The Spirit only teaches us that which Christ has taught beforehand either by Himself or by the inspired Apostles. "He shall take of Mine and shall show it unto you."

Just now we are in little danger from the excesses of fevered brains, for, as a rule, our sin is in being far too cold and dead to spiritual influences. I fear we are liable to another evil and are apt to forget the Person and work of the Comforter altogether. We fear some congregations might say, "We have not so much as heard whether there is any Holy Spirit." From how many modern sermons would you even know that there was a Holy Spirit? If it were not for the benediction, or the doxology, you might go in and out of many Churches and meeting houses in a year and scarcely know that there was such a Person as that blessed, blessed Giver of all good, the Holy Spirit.

Sometimes we hear a little about His influences, as if the Holy Spirit were not as truly a Person as even Jesus Christ Himself, who in flesh and blood trod this earth. Oh, dear Friends, I fear the first danger—that of running wild with whimsies and fancies about inner lights and new revelations. But I equally dread this last, this putting the Revelation above the Revealer, this taking the Book without the Author, this preaching of the Truth of God without the great Truth Applier—this going forth to work with the Sword, forgetting that it is the Sword of the Spirit and only as mighty as the Holy Spirit makes it "mighty to the pulling down of strongholds."

May this Church ever continue to reverence the Holy Spirit without exaggerating His work! May we prize Him, love Him, and adore Him because He so wondrously glorifies our blessed Lord! With this, by way of preface, I shall now come at once to our text, using it three ways—first, *as a test to try various things by*. Secondly, *as a direction how to honor Jesus*. And thirdly, *as a stimulus, stirring us up to glorify Christ*.

I. First, then, we shall use our text AS A TEST. There are a thousand things that claim to be of the Holy Spirit. How can we know whether they are or not? Here is a simple mode of discovering, "He shall glorify Me."

1. Let us, first of all, apply this test to *ministers*. There are crowds of preachers and reverend divines nowadays in the world. But all are not ministers of God. A true minister is a creation of the God of Heaven. It is no more in the power of the Church than it is in the power of the bishops to make ministers. Independency is as weak as Episcopacy on this point. God, alone, ordains ministers. All that the Church can do is to recognize them. We cannot make them at our colleges. We cannot make them by the laying on of hands, nor even by the choice of the Church. God must make them—God must ordain them. It is only for the Church to perceive God's work, and cheerfully to submit to His choice.

And, there are some churches which clearly are not of the Holy Spirit, because they glorify ceremonies. We could take you into certain places of worship where the general strain of ministry is a glorification of Baptism, the blessed Eucharist, confirmation, priesthood, and so on. There you hear much of the childish millinery with which they deck the altar, and much is said of those grotesque garments in which their priests disguise themselves. We could point to many places where the main object of teaching seems to be to exalt a rubric, to magnify a liturgy, to hold up a hierarchy, or to extol a ritual. All such churches we may at once sweepingly and unerringly condemn. They are not of the Holy Spirit, for the Holy Spirit teaches us not to magnify outward rites, but Christ. And that teaching is not of the Holy Spirit which does not glorify the Lord Jesus.

Into other places we might take you where very clearly the object is the extolling of doctrine. From the first of January to the last of December the minister bitterly contends for the favorite corners of his faith. Doctrine, with certain friends, is everything, and their rigid orthodoxy is the one care of their life. Now, against a sound creed and the Doctrines of Grace we have not a word to say. God be thanked that we love these things as much as those who exalt them above measure. We are not a whit behind the chief of these champions in our zeal for orthodoxy.

But still our Lord is, and must be, the leading theme of our ministry. We must continue to exalt Him rather than Calvinism, or any other system of theology. We are bold to say it, much as we love the Master's Throne, we still love the Master better. And dearly as we love battling for the walls of His vineyard, yet the clusters of His Eshcol are sweeter to our taste. We love Christ better than creed, and we think we would rather magnify our Master than any set of truths, however important they may be.

There are certain doctrinal Brethren, good enough in their way, but still you can evidently see that the doctrine of election is a thing that they contend more for than the doctrine of the redemption of Christ. Or if it is redemption, it is the *specialty* of redemption rather than the Divine sacrifice itself. I love to preach the distinguishing Grace of God, but I am far from thinking that some four or five points comprise all the truths which God has revealed. Be it ours to preach the doctrines as Dr. Hawker preached them—with Christ as their sum and substance. "A full Christ for empty sinners"—may this be our theme. To a great extent it is true of a church that seeks only to exalt doctrines, that it has not the fullness of the Holy Spirit in it, for of the Holy Spirit it is written, "He shall glorify *Me*."

Another class of ministers are well known to those of us who have looked upon the Church of God at large, whose ministry tends mainly to magnify a certain experience. If you have felt thus and thus, and so and so, no words of praise can be too strong for you. But if you have been led in another way, in a different path, then depend on it, according to the judgment of these divines, you never knew vital godliness at all. They are as intimate with the secrets of Heaven as the pope himself, and are quite as infallible as he, in their small dominions. Some of these Brethren have, no doubt, gone through a very deep and awful experience—they have lived so much in sin, and have been so untrue to their Lord, that it is little marvel if they have to walk in darkness and see no light. These Brethren hold up that experience as a model and tell us that unless we know all they have learned, we are not Christ's.

Now, I say not a word against experimental preaching. I believe it to be the most soul-fattening preaching in the world—but it must be experience about *Christ*, it must be an experience that leads me out of self to Jesus—and if any ministry is experimental, yet does not exalt Christ, I have cause to suspect whether the Holy Spirit is with it, for this stands as an unchanging rule—"He shall glorify *Me*."

And, dear Brothers and Sisters, once again, we are cursed with some few men—would to God they were fewer—whose teaching constantly is, "morality." If we will *do* this, and *do* that and the other, we shall be saved—the old Law of Moses is toned down and then held up as the road to Heaven. Now, at once, you may forsake the synagogues where such

men are in the chief places. If any man exalt the works of flesh, and not the finished work of Christ—if the *doings*, the *willings*, the *prayers*, the *feelings* of man, are put in the place of the blood and righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ—that church is not of the Holy Spirit.

And what might I say of many who produce each Sunday their pretty little essays, their elaborate disquisitions, their high-sounding periods? What shall I say of all these, but that they are as “sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal,” inasmuch as they forget Christ, the Person of Christ—God and man, the work of Christ—His Atonement and righteousness? The resurrection of Christ—the gift and joy of the saints, the intercession of Christ—our hope and our strength, and the second advent of Christ, which is as the bright morning star to every weary watcher in this world’s darkness? That Church, and that Church only, is of the Holy Spirit which magnifies Christ Jesus.

And here, dear Brethren in the ministry—and there are some such present—how bitterly may you and I lament much of our ministry because it has not glorified Christ! When we shall lie stretched upon our dying beds, we shall look back with satisfaction to that poor stammering sermon in which we magnified the Master. We shall look with intense regret to that well-delivered oration in which we glorified a sect, or lifted up an ordinance at the expense of our Lord. Oh, what joy it shall be to remember that we did lift *Him* up, however feebly, yet we did extol *Him*. Though sometimes utterance would not come as our heart would have it, yet we did point to His flowing wounds and said, “Behold the way to God.”

Oh, the sweet bliss of a Whitfield when he retires to his last couch, to feel that he did preach Jesus, whether it was at the market, or on the hill side, or in the Church, or in the barn! What a consolation to feel that he did cry faithfully, “Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid!” Oh, the curse on the other hand, that shall rest on a man who, in his last moments, shall have to reflect—“I preached other men’s sermons and talked of anything but Christ. I lifted up anything but the Lord”! Oh, how shall the howling of his eternal doom commence in his ear! How shall the judgments of God get hold upon him even before he passes to the dread tribunal of the Most High. We must, as preachers, come back more and more to this rule—to feel that if the Holy Spirit is in us, He will make us glorify Christ.

2. Having thus tried ministers, let us now take the same test with regard to *doctrine*. And very briefly here, lay it down as a self-evident truth that any teaching, whatever authority it may claim, which does not glorify Christ, is most assuredly false. And on the other hand, I think we shall seldom be wrong if we believe that when a teaching lifts Christ up and puts many crowns upon His head, it must be a doctrine according to godliness.

Dear Friends, Socinianism must be utterly abhorred of us, for it strikes at once at the Deity of our blessed Lord and Master. We cannot give to such persons even the name of Christians. Mohammedan they may be—it were well if they would join with those men—they may be good men, they may be moral men, they may be excellent citizens, but Christians they cannot be, if they deny our Lord to be very God of very God and worthy to be worshipped even as is the Father.

I marvel that sundry Dissenters should have fraternized with Arians and Socinians in attacking the Church of England, in the present sorrowfully mistaken onslaught called the Bicentenary. And I can only pray that the Lord may not visit them for this shameful confederacy with His enemies. In Arminianism, which is a mixture of truth and error, there is the doctrine of the saints falling from Divine Grace. This is a doctrine which is more dishonorable to Christ than I can tell you. To my mind, it seems to put its black and sooty finger right down the escutcheon of my Lord and Master, setting Him as a laughingstock to the whole world. It says He is One who begins to build and is not able to finish—there is a blot upon His power.

He loves, and yet He loves not to the end—there is a blot upon His faithfulness. He says, “I give unto My sheep eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand.” And yet, according to the Arminian, they *do* perish—according to that doctrine which is a stain upon His truthfulness. In fact, the doctrine of final falling away impugns the whole Character of Christ so much that it would render Him unworthy of our faith. When they shall prove that one who was once in Christ has fallen away and has been lost, I know not Christ, for He has violated His Word. He can no more be “the Truth,” when He has thus put His own promises into the background and suffered His darlings to fall into the power of the dog.

If there is anything in Scripture as plain as noonday, it is the doctrine that, “He that believes in Him *has everlasting life*, and shall never perish, neither shall he come into condemnation.” If the child of God can be disinherited, if Christ can divorce His spouse, if the Good Shepherd shall lose His sheep, if the limbs of Christ’s mystical body can be cut off, or can be allowed to rot, then I know not what Scripture teaches, nor do I understand how Christ can be worthy of the Believer’s trust. That doctrine, I think, must be reprobated, because it stains the honor and glory of Christ.

Without alluding to others, let that suffice as an instance. Examine well all doctrines. Look not at them with complacency because they are put in cunning language, or asserted in vigorous declamation. But if you perceive that any teaching dishonors Christ and makes much of human ability—if it exalts man and derogates from the Grace of God—it is false and dangerous. And if, on the other hand, it lays man in the dust and lifts up Christ as a Savior, the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End of salvation, you may safely say that is the Holy Spirit’s doctrine, for He shall glorify Christ.

3. Again, we may use our text as a means by which to try much of the *conviction* through which a sinner passes. In the first dawn of our spiritual life a mighty tempest of spiritual influence sweeps over the heart. The Holy Spirit is active, and the prince of the power of the air is active, too. There is more of God and more of Satan in a new convert, than perhaps in any other stage of human existence. For just then Satan rages with extraordinary fury to drag back the soul to destruction, and the Holy Spirit works in him mightily, with a power which only Omnipotence can wield.

How, in this confusion, can a man know what part of his conviction is of God, and what part of the devil? Young man, listen to me. You have a thought in your head that you are too great a sinner to be saved. That is

not of the Holy Spirit, clearly, because it detracts from the power of Christ as a Savior. That cannot be of the Holy Spirit, for the Holy Spirit glorifies Christ. “Yes, Sir, but I feel myself to be a great sinner, utterly lost and ruined.” That is of the Holy Spirit, because it lays you low in order that the greatness of Christ’s salvation may be the more apparent.

“Oh but,” you say, “I am not fit to come to Christ.” Surely this feeling is not of the Holy Spirit, but of the devil, for it does not glorify Christ. What? Are you to make yourself *fit* to come to Christ? Why, that is making you a Christ—yes, it is making you an antichrist, which is no work of Heaven but a foul design of Hell. “But I heard old Mr. So-and-So say the other day, Sir, that when he was converted, he seemed to be dragged by the hair of his head to the very depths of Hell. He said his soul was full of blasphemy and his heart was in such an awful state that he cursed the day of his birth, because he thought he was shut out of the Covenant and was utterly lost beyond the reach of mercy.”

Very well, no doubt what he has told you was his veritable experience. But do you want to experience every piece of devilry that a good man has known? Because a good man trips and falls into the gutter, must you trip and fall there, too? Because Jonah descends into the whale’s belly, must we all dive into the sea? I tell you, Soul, that much of what your friend felt was not of God, but of his own corrupt heart and of the devil—and he knows it, and he will confess the same to you. Why, therefore, should you pant after that which is sinful and Satanic? Why should you desire to drink the poison of asps and sniff the fumes of Tophet?

If the Lord brings you, this morning, to put your soul just as it is into the hands of the Redeemer, honoring Him by a childlike trust, you have an experience infinitely more precious than the howling of devils, and the ravings of your proud heart could ever yield you. To be *nothing*, and to accept Christ as *everything*, is worked in us of the Holy Spirit—all the rest, those horrible insinuations, that terrible Hell-shaking—may be all dispensed with. Good men have felt these, but they are not good things. They come from Satan and are to be avoided and prayed against—not to be sought after.

I pray you, therefore, let the Holy Spirit lead you in His own way and ask not to be led in a way of your own choice. Why long for darkness when the Master wills to let you walk in the light? Into these balances, then, put all your convictions, and discover how far they are of God and how far of Satan. That which glorifies Christ is of the Holy Spirit. All the rest is of flesh, or of Hell.

4. Thus, we may test what is called *experience*. Very much of the experience of a Christian is not Christian experience. If any person should mount the platform and say, “I will tell you the experience of a man,” and then inform us that he had been five times tried at the Old Bailey, you would say, “Well, *you* may have experienced that disgrace but it is not fair to call it human experience.”

So, a Christian man may fall into great darkness and into sin, too. Let us mournfully confess it. But then, if he shall set up his darkness and his sin as being Christian experience, we say, “No. We do not judge *you*, *you* may be a Christian and know all this, but we cannot allow *you* to judge us and decide our spiritual state according to *your* peculiar method of *feeling*. I fear that many biographies have done as much mischief as service.

While no doubt they comfort many who fall into the same state, yet a sufficient discrimination is not made between the man stirred by the powers of evil, and the same man when filled with the Holy Spirit.

When we get to that which comes from beneath we ought to write always in the spirit of our Apostle who cannot describe himself without an agony—"Oh, wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ my Lord." That which glorifies Christ is true Christian experience, and that which does anything but this, a Christian may experience—but it is not *Christian* experience.

5. Let us lift the scales of judgment once more. I think our text gives us an excellent test by which to *try ourselves*. My Hearer, are you saved or not, this morning? If you are saved, the bent, the tenor, the bias of your life is to *glorify Christ*. What do you say in looking back? Does the past glorify! "When I think of the love that cleansed me from such sin, of the Divine Grace that broke a heart so hard as mine, of the faithfulness that has kept me to this day, I can only glorify Christ." And what about the present? "Oh," can you say, "when I think of what I now am by the Grace of God and what I should have been now if the Holy Spirit had not prevented. When I look within and see so much blackness, I must magnify the Grace that keeps me. And when I look without and see so many temptations, I must and will speak well of His dear name. I must glorify my Lord Jesus"?

And what do you say about the future? Will you glorify Him *then*? I think I see even the timid ones with their eyes, a little brightening up when they say, "Yes! If He will but once bring me across the river, if I ever get beyond gunshot of the devil, and behold the face of Christ in Glory, I will sing loudest of all the crowd. I will magnify Him with all my powers, for I shall owe more to Him than anyone else before the Throne. I will never cease to sing with all the blood-washed throng, 'Bring forth the royal diadem, and crown him Lord of all.'"

Oh, if your heart is not so that Christ is ALL to you, and if your soul is not desiring this morning to honor Him, Him only, then indeed, I fear the Holy Spirit has had no dealing with your spirit, for where He has been at work, He *must*, He *shall* glorify Christ.

II. We are now to use our text as DIRECTION. How are we to glorify Christ?

The text tells us that we must have the Holy Spirit. Let our text, then, be sanctified to our *humiliation*. Here are we saved by the rich love of Christ, delivered from our sins, and made alive unto God. And yet we are such weak things that we cannot glorify Christ without the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. We may pant, and long, and pray that we may have helped to honor our Master, but we shall only dishonor Him and disgrace His cause, unless the Holy Spirit holds us up and strengthen us. Do you hear that, Christian Man and Woman? You have ten talents but those ten talents shall make you ten times a worse defaulter to your Master unless the Holy Spirit helps you.

You have eloquence, you have wit, you have wealth—with none of these can you glorify Christ, unless the Holy Spirit is with you. For, "*He shall glorify Me.*" Man cannot, except as the Holy Spirit is with him. Bow your heads, then, O you saints of God, and ascribe glory unto the Holy Spirit, but unto yourselves shame and confusion of face. Let us employ this text

as an excitement to *earnest prayer*. We as a Church, and I may speak freely for my own flock, we long to see Christ glorified. It is to this end we seek to train up our sons, young men in our much-loved college, that they may go forth as preachers of the Word.

We have agencies by which we hope to do something in our generation for our Master—but what is everything we can do without the Holy Spirit? Let us, therefore, pray without ceasing. Oh, without prayer, what are the Church's agencies but the stretching out of a dead man's arm, or the lifting up of the lid of a blind man's eye? Only when the Holy Spirit comes is there any life and force and power. Cry then mightily unto God, O you who seek to glorify Christ, for without the Holy Spirit you utterly fail.

And here what a lesson our text reads us of *entire dependence* upon the Holy Spirit. You can do *nothing*, you ministers of God! *Nothing*, you faithful watchmen of Jerusalem! You can do *nothing*, you teachers of youth, *nothing* you heralds of the Cross in foreign fields, *nothing* you ten thousands who are willing to give all your substance, your time and your talents—absolutely *nothing* can you accomplish until God the Holy Spirit comes.

We are by the seaside. There are a number of ships left high and dry by the ebb of the tide. A long tract of mud stretches out before us. What is to be done? Call the king's horses, bring the king's men, gather together the wise and the mighty. What can they all do? Nothing—their learning can only avail to prove most clearly that they can do nothing. But see, the tide rolls in, wave after wave rises from the deep, and lo, every ship floats and all the mud and sand is covered with the fullness of the sea. So is it with the Churches. We all lie high and dry upon the beach and there is nothing but the rock and mud of our own inability that is visible—and we can do nothing, absolutely nothing, till the holy tide comes.

The blessed spirit of revival, the Holy Spirit, is poured out, and now the heaviest Church is floating out to sea and that which was most inactive begins to move! Oh, what can we *not* do if we have the Holy Spirit? What can we do if we have Him not? See our utter and entire dependence upon Him. When we, as a Church, first came out into broader light and more public notice, I bear my witness, we had an entire dependence upon the Holy Spirit. What prayers have I heard, what striving and what groaning! We are reaping now the ripe fruits of the early sowing.

Lo, your minister but a stripling from the country—all untrained in academic lore, knowing nothing but just the doctrine of the Cross—came forth before the multitudes to proclaim simply the Word. How he felt his nothingness then, and how often he told you so! You cried to God, and the child, the lad, was helped. What mighty deeds were done in the conversion of hundreds! And now we have a name, and there is a great temptation to rest upon our success, and for men to think there is something in the preacher, that he can gather the crowd, can preach the Word, and it is sure to be blessed when he preaches it.

Brothers and Sisters, again I say we are *nothing*, we are *less* than nothing. Your minister is a fool, and nothing beyond. Unless the Holy Spirit is with him, he is able to do nothing except mischief. Nothing that shall be profitable to you, or make any heart glad but the heart of the Evil One, unless the Holy Spirit is with us still. Joyously would I receive again the jeer, the sneer, the constant slander that was heaped upon my devoted

head, if I might have back again your entire dependence upon the Holy Spirit.

Oh, members of this Church, you who have been quickened under our word, let not your faith stand in the wisdom of man, but in the demonstration of the Spirit! And let us one and all feel that we are still as weak as water, and as vain as the whistling wind, unless He that was first with us is with us still. "He shall glorify Me." The Holy Spirit shall do it. None can do it if He is absent.

I know I am addressing some this morning who have seen the goings forth of the Holy One of Israel. In fact we as a Church have had to rejoice these nearly nine years in a blessed revival. But how diligent should we be while we have that revival, in order that we may retain it! All the farmers in England cannot make it leave off raining but when it does leave off and the sun shines, I know what they do—get their wheat in as quickly as they can. All the sailors on the ocean cannot make a capful of wind. When the sail flaps to and fro they cannot make it swell out as in the gale—but what can they do when the wind does blow? They can crowd on every yard of canvas.

So all the Christians in the world cannot make the Holy Spirit work. "The wind blows where it lists, and you hear the sound thereof, but can not tell from where it comes nor where it goes." But what we can do is this, when we have the Holy Spirit—we can *use* Him. When He is with us we can *work*. We must make hay while the sun shines. We must grind while the wind blows, we must be active and diligent for God when the visitation of the Holy Spirit is with us. The revival has, to a great extent, ceased in many places. I fear it is because they did not diligently use its influence.

In Ireland how much of revival there was but the Holy Spirit withdrew necessarily because it was held up as a curiosity. Every newspaper reeked with the news of the revival. People went from England to see it. It could not last, then. God never does His great works to be stared at, to be held up as curiosities. The thing was ruined the moment men began curiously to talk of it, and spread abroad the news as of a phenomenon worthy of philosophical investigation.

These good things should never be made a subject of. "Come, see my zeal for the Lord of Hosts." While the good work goes on we should be so hard at work for the Master, that we have not time to put into every penny newspaper the tale of what God is doing. Let us then be up while the Master is with us, and doing His work, doing it in the Spirit's own way, seeking to glorify Jesus, and seeking to retain the Spirit in our midst.

III. And now, lastly, I am to take my text by way of A STIMULUS. Does the Holy Spirit glorify Christ? Ah, then, how should we aim to do it! Let us make, then, Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, let us make this the one object of our life—to glorify Christ. You have been a man in a large way of business. Could you say while you were doing business so largely that your object was to honor Christ in it?

Well, you have come down in the world. You have a smaller shop now. Yes, and suppose you can glorify God more? Then you are in a better position than you used to be. I have seen many a man who prospered in his soul and honored his Master much, who has made a wrong step and has injured his usefulness and happiness. Wanting to get more business, he

has launched into wide speculations and has had less time for serving his Lord. And he has thus really been in a worse position, for spirituals were under a decay.

You may have seen in the newspapers an instance of what sometimes comes through getting wealthy. A man and his wife were prospering in a little way of business, as hard-working people, near Birmingham. A friend died and left the wife some 1,300, no great sum but quite enough to ruin a man. They at once took a public house and you will remember that he now lies in prison on a charge of murdering his wife. Little marvel that when, tempted by what little they had, to seek after more they entered upon an ill occupation in order to increase their wealth. That evil trade soon led to vicious habits and to death.

Now I have seen Believers mournfully impoverish their souls by seeking after carnal wealth instead of seeking Christ. But let a man's only object be to glorify Christ, and he will feel very little concern where Providence places him, so long as he may still promote his one object and put crowns on the Redeemer's head.

This brings me to say, Brethren, while we make this our aim, let us take every opportunity of glorifying Christ. We throw thousands of opportunities away. Where we might do good, we neglect it. I chide my own self here very bitterly, and very often, but I fear I might chide many of you, too. You had an opportunity yesterday but you lost it. You might have spoken for Christ but you did not. No one can tell the good you might have done, but you did not do it. You were backward. Oh, as the Holy Spirit glorifies Christ everywhere, so do you! I pray you do this always, not merely at particular times, but make your whole life a glorifying of Christ.

As I sat on an omnibus yesterday, I heard a man saying behind me how greatly he admired the continental way of keeping Sundays—going to Church in the morning, and going to the theater at night. "Don't you see," he said, "it is irrational to think that the Almighty expects us to spend the whole day in praying. There is no man living who can pray for six hours together, let alone twelve." That was just putting in broad language what most ungodly people feel. I wonder what they would make of the Apostle Paul's admonition, "Pray without ceasing." Here was a man who thought that nobody could pray for six hours together, while the saints of God are to continue *always* in prayer.

No man comes up to the stature of the Christian, or such a man as he should be, unless he cannot only pray for six hours together but his whole life long. It was said of good old Rowland Hill that people did not so much notice his particular times of retirement, for he was a man who was always praying, wherever he might be. You would often find him alone talking to himself. And even in company his heart would be going away to the object of his best love—he would still be in communion with Christ.

Be always glorifying Christ, Christians, from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof. Whether you work at a lap stone, or drive a plow, or lay the stones in a building—serve the Master in all these things. Whether you are diligent with the pen, or whether you buy and sell, or plow the sea—do all even to your eating or your drinking in the name of the Lord Jesus—and so like the Holy Spirit let it be said of you, "He shall glorify Me."

We conclude by endeavoring to magnify our Master ourselves. I want to say just two or three things to glorify Him and they shall be just these. I shall say this to the poor troubled doubting sinner, "Sinner, my Master is able to save you." "Oh but I am the biggest sinner out of Hell." Yes, and He is the greatest of all Saviors. "Yes, but I have gone over head and ears in iniquity." Yes, and He was baptized also in His agonies that He might save you. "Oh but He *cannot* save me!" Yes! He can! And if I am now addressing the scum of the earth, one of the devil's sweepings, one who is hardly fit for decent company, my Master is able to save you. Unto the uttermost He saves, and your sin, though black, He can cleanse and make you whiter than snow.

I would say something else to glorify *Him*. He is *willing* to save you. His generous heart *desires* you. Your perishing will not make Him glad, but He will weep over you as He did over Jerusalem. But your being saved will give Him to see of the travail of His soul. "Do you know who you are speaking to, Sir?" No I don't, but my Master does. For now He fixes His poor tearful eyes on you. Where is the sinner? Behind that pillar? Or in yonder corner? The Master looks at him, and He says, "Come unto Me all you that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly of heart and you shall find rest unto your souls."

What? Are you so far away? How loudly does He call you, "Come, Sinner, repent and come." Are you willing to come? Lo! He meets you! In the road He meets you—embracing you, He falls upon your neck to kiss you. He says, even this morning, He says it, "Take off his rags and clothe him in fine apparel. Wash him and make him clean, for I have put away his sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud his iniquities."

That which glorifies Christ the most of all is the preaching of the Gospel to sinners, and therefore have I glorified Him now and would do so as long as I live. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved, for he that believes and is baptized shall be saved. He that believes not shall be damned. God give us to glorify Christ by trusting in Him! Amen.

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“HONEY IN THE MOUTH!”

NO. 2213

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, JULY 19, 1891,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
ON FRIDAY MORNING, APRIL 24, 1891,
AT THE CONFERENCE OF THE PASTORS’ COLLEGE
EVANGELICAL ASSOCIATION.**

***“He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father has are Mine: therefore said I, that He shall take of Mine and shall show it unto you.”
John 16:14, 15.***

BELOVED Friends, here you have the Trinity, and there is no salvation apart from the Trinity! It must be the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. “All things that the Father has are Mine,” says Christ, and the Father has all things. They were always His; they are still His; they always will be His—and they cannot become ours till they change ownership—till Christ can say, “All things that the Father has are Mine”—for it is by virtue of the representative Character of Christ standing as the Surety of the Covenant, that the “all things” of the Father are passed over to the Son, that they might be passed over to us. “It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell; and of His fullness have all we received.” But yet we are so dull that though the conduit pipe is laid on to the great fountain, we cannot get at it. We are lame. We cannot reach it, but in comes the third Person of the Divine Unity, even the Holy Spirit, and He receives of the things of Christ and then delivers them over to us! So we actually receive, through Jesus Christ, by the Spirit, what is in the Father!

Ralph Erskine, in his preface to a sermon upon the 15th verse, has a notable piece. He speaks of Grace as *honey*—honey for the cheering of the saints, for the sweetening of their mouths and hearts—but he says that in the Father, “the honey is in the flower, which is at such a distance from us that we could never extract it.” In the Son, “the honey is in the comb, prepared for us in our Immanuel, God-Man, Redeemer, the Word that was made flesh, saying, ‘All things that the Father has are Mine; and Mine for your use and benefit—it is in the comb. But then, next, we have honey in the mouth—the Spirit taking all things and making application of them, by showing them unto us and making us to eat and drink with Christ, and share of these ‘all things’—yes, not only eat the honey, but the honey-comb with the honey—not only His benefits, but Himself.”

It is a very beautiful division of the subject. Honey in the flower in God, as in mystery, really there. There never will be any more honey than there is in the flower. There it is. But how shall you and I get it? We have not

wisdom to extract the sweetness. We are not as the bees that are able to find it out. It is bee honey, not man honey. Yet you see in Christ it becomes the honey in the honeycomb and, therefore, He is sweet to our taste as honey dropping from the comb. Sometimes we are so faint that we cannot reach out a hand to grasp that honeycomb and, alas, there was a time when our palates were so depraved that we preferred bitter things and even thought them sweet! But now that the Holy Spirit has come, we have got the honey in the mouth and the taste that enjoys it! Yes, we have now so long enjoyed it that the honey of Grace has entered into our constitution and we have become sweet unto God—His sweetness having been conveyed by this strange method unto us.

Beloved Friends, I scarcely need say to you, keep the existence of the Trinity prominent in your ministry! Remember, you cannot pray without the Trinity. If the full work of salvation requires a Trinity, so does that very breath by which we live. You cannot draw near to the Father except through the Son and by the Holy Spirit. There is undoubtedly a trinity in nature. There certainly constantly turns up the need of a Trinity in the realm of Grace—and when we get to Heaven we shall understand, perhaps, more fully what is meant by the Trinity in Unity. But if that is a thing never to be understood, we shall at least apprehend it more lovingly, and we shall rejoice more completely as the three tones of our music shall rise up in perfect harmony unto Him who is One and indivisible, and yet is Three, forever blessed, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God!

Now for the point which I am to open up to you this morning, though *I* cannot do it, but *He* must do it. We must sit here and have the text acted out upon ourselves. “He shall glorify Me. He shall take of Mine and shall show it unto you.” May it be so just now!

First, *what the Holy Spirit does*—“He shall take of Mine and shall show it unto you.” Secondly, *what the Holy Spirit aims at and really effects*—“He shall glorify Me.” And then, thirdly, *how, in doing both these things, He is the Comforter*. It is the Comforter that does this and we shall find our richest, surest comfort in this work of the Holy Spirit, who shall take of the things of Christ and show them unto us.

I. First, **WHAT THE HOLY SPIRIT DOES**. It is clear, Beloved Friends, that the Holy Spirit *deals with the things of Christ*. As our brother, Archibald Brown, said, when expounding the chapter just now, He does not aim at any originality. He deals with the things of Christ. All things that Christ had heard from His Father He made known to us. He kept to them. And now the Spirit takes of the things of Christ and of nothing else. Do not let us strain at anything new. The Holy Spirit could deal with anything in Heaven above, or in the earth beneath—the story of the ages past, the story of the ages to come, the inward secrets of the earth, the evolution of all things, if there is an evolution. He could do it all! Like the Master, He could handle any topic He chose, but He confines Himself to the things of Christ and therein finds unutterable liberty and boundless freedom.

Do you think, dear Friend, that you can be wiser than the Holy Spirit? And if His choice must be a wise one, will yours be a wise one if you begin

to take of the things of something or somebody else? You will have the Holy Spirit near you when you are receiving of the things of Christ, but, as the Holy Spirit is said never to receive anything else, when you are handling other things on the Sabbath, you will be handling them alone—and the pulpit is a dreary solitude, even in the midst of a crowd—if the Holy Spirit is not with you there. You may, if you please, think through a theology out of your own vast brain, but the Holy Spirit is not with you there. And, mark you, there are some of us that are resolved to tarry with the things of Christ and keep on dealing with them as far as He enables us to do so! And we feel that we are in such blessed company with the Divine Spirit that we do not envy you that wider range of thought, if you prefer it.

The Holy Spirit still exists, works and teaches in the Church. And we have a test by which to know whether what people claim to be Revelation is Revelation or not—“He shall receive of Mine.” The Holy Spirit will never go farther than the Cross and the coming of the Lord. He will go no farther than that which concerns Christ. “He shall receive of Mine.” When, therefore, anybody whispers in my ear that there has been revealed to him this or that, which I do not find in the teaching of Christ and His Apostles, I tell him that we must be taught by the Holy Spirit. His one vocation is to deal with the things of Christ! If we do not remember this, we may be carried away by quirks, as many have been. Those who will have to do with other things, let them—but as for us, we shall be satisfied to confine our thoughts and our teaching within these limitless limits—“He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you.”

I like to think of the Holy Spirit handling such things. They seem so worthy of Him. Now has He got among the hills. Now is His mighty mind among the infinities when He has to deal with Christ, for Christ is the Infinite veiled in the finite. Why, He seems something more than Infinite when He gets into the finite, and the Christ of Bethlehem is less to be understood than the Christ of the Father’s bosom! He seems, if it were possible, to have out-infinite the infinite, and the Spirit of God has themes here worthy of His vast Nature!

When you have been the whole Sunday morning whittling away a text to the small end of nothing, what have you done? A king spent a day in trying to make a portrait on a cherrystone—a king who was ruling empires! And here is a minister who professes to have been called of the Holy Spirit to the employ of taking of the things of Christ, who spent a whole morning with precious souls who were dying while he spoke to them on a theme concerning which it did not signify the turn of a hair whether it was so or not! Oh, imitate the Holy Spirit! If you profess to have Him dwelling in you, be moved by Him! Let it be said of you, in your measure, as of the Holy Spirit without measure, “He shall receive of Mine and shall show it unto you.”

But, next, what does the Holy Spirit do? Why, *He deals with feeble men*. Yes, He dwells with us poor creatures! I can understand the Holy Spirit taking the things of Christ and rejoicing therein, but the marvel is that He should glorify Christ by coming and showing these things to us! And yet,

Brothers, it is among us that Christ is to get His glory. Our eyes must see Him! An unseen Christ is little glorious. And the things of Christ unknown—the things of Christ untasted and unloved—seem to have lost their brilliance to a high degree. The Holy Spirit, therefore, feeling that to show a sinner the salvation of Christ glorifies Him, spends His time and has been spending these centuries in taking of the things of Christ and showing them to us. Ah, it is a great condescension on His part to show them to us. And it is a miracle, too. If it were reported that suddenly stones had life, hills had eyes and trees had ears, it would be a strange thing. But for us who were dead and blind and deaf in an awful sense—for the spiritual is more emphatic than the natural—for us to be so far gone and for the Holy Spirit to be able to show the things of Christ to us is to His honor! And He does it. He comes from Heaven to dwell with us. Let us honor and bless His name.

I never could make up my mind which to admire most as an act of condescension—the Incarnation of Christ, or the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The Incarnation of Christ is marvelous—that He should dwell in human nature, but, observe, the Holy Spirit dwells in human nature in its *sinfulness*—not in perfect human nature, but in *imperfect* human nature! And He continues to dwell, not in one body, which was fashioned strangely for Himself and was pure and without taint, but He dwells in *our* bodies! Know you not that they are the temples of the Holy Spirit, which were defiled by nature and in which a measure of defilement still remains, despite His indwelling? And this He has done these multitudes of years, not in one instance, nor in thousands of instances, but in a number that no man can number! He continues to come into contact with sinful humanity! Not to the angels, nor to the seraphim, nor to the cherubim, nor to the host who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, does He show the things of Christ—but He shall show them to *us*!

I suppose that it means this, that *He takes of the words of our Lord*—those which He spoke personally and by His Apostles. Let us never allow anybody to divide between the word of the Apostles and the word of Christ! Our Savior has joined them together. “Neither pray I for these, alone, but for them, also, which shall believe on Me through their word.” And if any begin rejecting the Apostolic word, they will be outside the number for whom Christ prays—they shut themselves out by that very fact! I wish that they would solemnly remember that the word of the Apostles is the word of Christ. He tarried not long enough, after He had risen from the dead, to give us a further exposition of His mind and will. And He could not have given it before His death, because it would have been unsuitable. “I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now.” After the descent of the Holy Spirit, the disciples were prepared to receive that which Christ spoke by His servants, Paul and Peter, and James and John.

Certain doctrines which we are sometimes taunted about as being not revealed by Christ, but by His Apostles, were all revealed by Christ, every one of them! They can all be found in His teaching, but they are very

much in the parabolic form. It is after He has gone up into Glory and has prepared a people, by His Spirit, to understand the Truths of God more fully, that He sends His Apostles and says, “Go forth, and open up to those whom I have chosen out of the world the meaning of all I said.” The meaning is all there, just as all the New Testament is in the Old! And sometimes I have thought that, instead of the Old being less inspired than the New, it is more inspired! Things are packed away more tightly in the Old Testament than in the New, if possible. There are worlds of meaning in one pregnant line in the Old Testament—and in Christ’s words it is just so. He is the Old Testament to which the Epistles come in as a kind of New Testament, but they are all one and indivisible—they cannot be separated.

Well, now, the words of the Lord Jesus, and the words of His Apostles, are to be *expounded* to us by the Holy Spirit. We shall never get at the center of their meaning apart from His teaching. We shall never get at their meaning at all if we begin disputing about the words, saying, “I cannot accept the words.” If you will not have the shell, you will never have the chick! It is impossible. “The words are not Inspired,” they say. Here is a man in the witness box and he has sworn to speak the truth and he says that he has. And now he is cross-examined and he says, “Now, I have spoken the truth, but I do not stand by my words.” The cross-examining lawyer has got hold of a certain statement of his. The witness says, “Oh, I do not swear to the words, you know.” The question is asked, “What, then, do you swear to? There is nothing else. We do not know anything about your meaning. All that you have sworn to must be your words.” But what the fellow means is this—he is a liar. He is a perjurer. Well, I say no more than commonsense would suggest to you if you were sitting in a court. Now, if a man says, “I have spoken the truth, but still I do not swear to the words,” what is left? If we have no Inspiration in the Words of God, we have got an impalpable Inspiration that oozes away between your fingers and leaves nothing behind!

Well, take the words and never dispute over them! Still, into their soulfulness of meaning you cannot come until the Holy Spirit shall lead you into them. They that wrote them for you did not fully understand what they wrote in many instances. There were some of them who enquired and searched diligently to know what manner of things those were which the Holy Spirit had spoken to them and of which He had made them speak. And you to whom the words come will have to do the same. You must go and say, “Great Master, we thank You for the Book with all our hearts. And we thank You for putting the Book into words. But now, good Master, we will not quibble over the letter, as did the Jews and the rabbis and the scribes of old, and so miss Your meaning. Open wide the door of the words, that we may enter into the secret closet of their meaning. Teach us this, we pray You. You have the key. Lead us in.”

Dear Friends, whenever you want to understand a text of Scripture, try to read the original. Consult anybody who has studied what the original means, but remember that the quickest way into a text is praying in the

Holy Spirit. Pray the chapter over! I do not hesitate to say that if a chapter is read upon one’s knees, looking up at every word to Him that gave it, the meaning will come to you with infinitely more light than by any other method of studying it. “He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine and shall show it unto you.” He shall re-deliver the Master’s message to you in the fullness of its meaning!

But I do not think that is all that the text means. “He shall receive of Mine.” In the next verse the Lord goes on to say, “All things that the Father has are Mine.” I think that it means, therefore, *that the Holy Spirit will show us the things of Christ*. Here is a text for us—“The things of Christ.” Christ speaks as if He had not any things, just then, which were specially His own, for He had not yet died. He had not yet risen. He was not pleading, then, as the great Intercessor in Heaven—all that was to come. But still, He says, “Even now all things that the Father has are Mine”—all His attributes, all His Glory, all His rest, all His happiness, all His blessedness. *All that is Mine and the Holy Spirit shall show that to you.*”

But I might almost read my text in another light, for He *has* died, risen and gone on high, and lo, He comes! His chariots are on the way! Now, there are certain things which the Father has and which Jesus Christ has, which are truly the things of Christ, *emphatically* the things of Christ. And my prayer is that you and I, preachers of the Gospel, might have this text fulfilled in us—“He shall take of Mine”—My things—“and shall show them unto you.”

Suppose, dear Brothers, that we are going to preach the Word, again, and the Holy Spirit shows to us our Master in His Godhead. Oh, how we will preach Him as Divine—how surely He can bless our congregation! How certainly He must be able to subdue all things unto Himself, seeing that He is very God of very God! It is equally sweet to see Him as Man. Oh, to have the Spirit’s view of Christ’s Manhood, distinctly to recognize that He is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh—and that in His infinite tenderness He will be compassionate to me and deal with my poor people and with the troubled consciences that are round me! I have still to go to them and tell them of One who is touched with the feeling of their infirmities, having been tempted in all points like as they still are! Oh, my Brothers, if we once, no, if *every time* before we preach, we get a view of Christ in His Divine and Human Natures and come down fresh from that vision to speak about Him, what glorious preaching it would be for our people!

It is a glorious thing to get a view of the offices of Christ by the Holy Spirit, but especially of His office as a Savior! I have often said to Him, “You must save my people. It is no business of mine. I never set up in that line, or put over my door that I was a savior—but *You* have been apprenticed to this trade! You have learned it by experience and You claim it as Your own honor. You are exalted on high to be a Prince and a Savior. Do Your own work, my Lord.” I took this text and used it with sinners the other Sunday night, and I know that God blessed it when I said to them, “May the Holy Spirit show you that Christ is a Savior! A physician does

not expect you to make any apologies when you call upon him because you are ill, for he is a physician and he needs you in order that he may prove his skill. So Christ is a Savior and you need not apologize for going to Him! He cannot be a Savior if there is not somebody to be saved!” The fact is, Christ cannot get hold of us anywhere except by our sin. The point of contact between the sick one and the physician is the disease. Our *sin* is the point of contact between us and Christ. Oh, that the Spirit of God would take of Christ’s Divine offices, especially that of a Savior, and show them unto us!

Did the Holy Spirit ever show you these thing of Christ, namely, His Covenant engagements? When He struck hands with the Father, it was that He would bring many sons to Glory—that of those whom the Father gave Him, He would lose none, but that they should be saved, for He is under bonds to His Father to bring His elect Home. When the sheep have to pass, again, under the hands of Him that counts them, they will go under the rod, one by one, each one having the blood-mark—and He will never rest till the number in the heavenly fold shall tally with the number in the Book.

So I believe and it has seemed delightful to me to have this shown to me when I have gone to preach. It is a dull, dreary, wet, foggy morning. There are only a few present. Yes, but they are picked people whom God has ordained to be there—and there will be the right number there! I shall preach and there will be some saved. We do not go at a chance, but, guided by the blessed Spirit of God, we go with a living certainty, knowing that God has a people that Christ is bound to bring Home and bring them Home He will! And while He shall see of the travail of His soul, His Father shall delight in every one of them! If you get a clear view of that, it will give you backbone and make you strong. “He shall take of Mine and shall show you my Covenant engagements, and when you see them, you shall be comforted.”

But, Beloved, the Holy Spirit favors you by taking what is peculiarly Christ’s, namely, His love, and showing that to you. We have seen it, seen it sometimes more vividly than at other times. But if the full blaze of the Holy Spirit were to be concentrated upon the love of Christ—and our eyesight enlarged to its utmost capacity—it would be such a vision that Heaven could not excel it! We should sit with our Bible before us in our study and feel, “Well now, here is a man, whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell. Such a man is caught up into the third Heaven.” Oh, to see the love of Christ in the light of the Holy Spirit! When it is so revealed to us, it is not merely the surface which we see, but the love of Christ itself! You know that you never saw anything yet, strictly speaking. You only see the *appearance* of the thing—the light reflected by it—that is all you see. But the Holy Spirit shows us the naked Truth of God, the *essence* of the love of Christ! And what that essence is—that love without beginning, without change, without limit, without end—and that love set upon His people simply from motives within Himself. And from no motive

ab extra—what that must be, what tongue can tell? Oh, it is a ravishing sight!

I think that if there could be one sight more wonderful than the love of Christ, it would be the blood of Christ—

***“Much we talk of Jesus’ blood,
But how little’s understood.”***

It is the climax of God! I do not know of anything more Divine. It seems to me as if all the eternal purposes worked up to the blood of the Cross and then worked from the blood of the Cross towards the sublime consummation of all things. Oh, to think that He should become Man! God has made spirit, pure spirit, embodied spirit—and then materialism—and somehow, as if He would take all up into one, the Godhead links Himself with the material and He wears dust about Him even as we wear it! And taking it all up, He then goes and, in that fashion, redeems His people from all the evil of their soul, their spirit and their body by the pouring out of a life which, while it was Human, was so in connection with the Divine, that we speak correctly of “the blood of God.”

Turn to the 20th chapter of Acts and read how the Apostle Paul puts it—“Feed the Church of God, which He has purchased with His own blood.” I believe that Dr. Watts is not wrong when he says—“God that loved and died.” It is an incorrect accuracy, a strictly absolute accuracy of incorrectness! So it must be ever when the finite talks of the Infinite. It was a wonderful Sacrifice that could absolutely obliterate, annihilate and extinguish sin and all the traces that could possibly remain of it, for, “He has finished the transgression, made an end of sins, made reconciliation for iniquity and brought in everlasting righteousness.” Ah, dear Friends, you have seen this, have you not? But you have yet to see more of it. And when we get to Heaven, we shall then know what that blood means—and with what vigor shall we sing, “Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood”! Will anybody be there to say, “Is not that the religion of the shambles?” as they blasphemously call it. Ah, my Friends, they will find themselves where they will wish they had believed “the religion of the shambles”! And I think that it will burn like coals of juniper into the soul of any man that has ever dared to talk like that, that he did despite unto the blood of God and so, by his own willful deeds, will be cast away forever.

May the Holy Spirit show unto you Gethsemane, Gabbatha and Golgotha! And then, may it please Him to give you a sight of what our Lord is now doing! Oh, how it would cheer you up at any time when you were depressed, only to see Him standing and pleading for you! Do you not think that if your wife were ill, your child were sick and there was hardly any food in the cupboard—if you were to go out the back door and you saw Him with the breastplate on, and all the stones glittering—and your name there and Him pleading for you—don’t you think you would go in and say, “There, Wife, it is all right, He is praying for us”? Oh, it would be a comfort if the Holy Spirit showed you a pleading Christ! And then, to think that He is *reigning* as well as pleading! He is at the right hand of God, even the Fa-

ther, who has put all things under His feet. And He waits till the last enemy shall lie there. Now, you are not afraid, are you, of those who have been snubbing you and opposing you? Remember, He has said, “All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth. Go you therefore, and teach all nations; and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”

Next, and best of all, may the Holy Spirit give you a clear view of His coming. This is our most brilliant hope—“Lo, He comes!” The more the adversary waxes bold and the less of faith there is, and when zeal seems almost extinct, these are the tokens of His coming. The Lord always said that He would not come unless there was first a falling away. And so the darker the night grows and the fiercer the storm becomes, the better will we remember that He of the lake of Galilee came to them upon the waves in the night when the storm was wildest. Oh, what will His enemies say when He comes? When they behold the nail-prints of the Glorified and the Man with the Crown of thorns—when they see Him really come, they that have despised His Word and His ever-blessed blood—how will they flee before that face of injured love! And we, on the contrary, through His infinite mercy, will say, “This is what the Holy Spirit showed us and now we behold it literally! We thank Him for the foresights which He gave us of the Beatific Vision.”

I am not yet done on the first head, because there is one point which I want you to remember. When the Holy Spirit takes of the things of Christ and shows them to us, He has a purpose in so doing. You will not laugh, I hope, when I remind you of what the little boys sometimes do at school with one another. I have seen a boy take out of his pocket an apple and say to his schoolmate, “Do you see that apple?” “Yes,” says the other. “Then, you may see me eat it,” he says. But the Holy Spirit is no Tantalus, taking of the things of Christ and holding them up to mock us! No. He says, “Do you see these things? If you can see them, you may *have* them.” Did not Christ, Himself, say, “Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth”? *Looking* gives you a claim and if you can see Him, He is yours! It is with you, with regard to the Spirit showing you things, as it was with Jacob. You know Jacob lay down and went to sleep. And the Lord said to him, “The land whereon you lie, to you will I give it.” Now, wherever you go, throughout the whole of Scripture, if you can find a place where you can lie down, that is yours! If you can sleep on a promise, that promise is yours! “Lift up now your eyes,” said God to Abraham, “and look from the place where you, are northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: for all the land which you see, to you will I give it.”

May the Lord increase our holy vision of delighted faith, for there is nothing we see but we may also enjoy—all that is in Christ is there for us!

II. Now, secondly, WHAT THE HOLY SPIRIT AIMS AT AND WHAT HE REALLY ACCOMPLISHES. “He shall glorify Me.”

Ah, Brothers, the Holy Spirit never comes to glorify *us*, or to glorify a denomination, or, I think, even to glorify a systematic arrangement of doctrines! He comes to glorify CHRIST! If we want to be in accord with Him, we must preach in order to glorify Christ. May we never have this

thought—“I will put that bit in. It will sound well. The friends will feel that oratory is not quite extinct, that Demosthenes lives again in this village.” No, no! I would say, “Brother, though it is a very delightful piece, strike that out because if you have had a thought of that kind about it, you had better not put yourself in the way of temptation by using it.” “Yes, that is a magnificent sentence! I do not know where I met with it, or whether it is my own. I am afraid that most of our friends will not understand it, but then it will give them an impression that they have a deep thinker in their pulpit.” Well then, it may be very admirable and, further, it might be a very right thing to give them that precious piece; but if you have that thought about it, strike it out! Strike it out ruthlessly! Say, “No, no, no! If it is not distinctly my aim to glorify Christ, I am not in accord with the aim of the Holy Spirit and I cannot expect His help! We shall not be pulling the same way and, therefore, I will have nothing of which I cannot say that I am saying it simply, sincerely and only that I may glorify Christ.”

How, then, does the Holy Spirit glorify Christ? It is very beautiful to think that He glorifies Christ *by showing Christ's things*. If you wanted to do honor to a man, you would, perhaps, take him a present to decorate his house. But here, if you want to glorify Christ, you must go and take the things *out of Christ's house*—“the things of Christ.” Whenever we have to praise God, what do we do? We simply say what He is! “You are this and You are that.” There is no other praise. We cannot fetch anything from anywhere else and bring it to God—the praises of God are simply the facts about Himself! If you want to praise the Lord Jesus Christ, tell the people about Him. Take of the things of Christ and show them to the people—and you will glorify Christ.

Alas, I know what you will do. You will weave words together and you will form and fashion them in a marvelous manner till you have produced a charming piece of literature. When you have carefully done that, put it in the fire under the oven—and let it burn! Possibly you may help to bake some bread with it. Brethren, it is better for us to tell what Christ is than to invent 10,000 fine words of praise in reference to Him. “He shall glorify Me, for He shall receive of Mine and shall show it unto you.”

Again, I think that the blessed Spirit glorifies Christ by showing us the things of Christ *as Christ's*. Oh, to be pardoned! Yes, it is a great thing, but to find that pardon in His wounds—that is a greater thing! Oh, to get peace! Yes, but to find that peace in the blood of His Cross! Brothers, have the blood-mark very visibly on all your mercies! They are all marked with the blood of the Cross, but sometimes we think so much of the sweetness of the bread, or of the coolness of the waters, that we forget from *where* these came and *how* they came—and then they lack their choicest flavor. That it came from Christ is the best thing about the best thing that ever came from Christ! That He saves *me* is, somehow, better than my being saved! It is a blessed thing to go to Heaven, but I do not know that it is not a better thing to be in Christ and so, as the result of it, to get into Heaven. It is Himself and that which comes of Himself that becomes best of all because it comes of Himself! So the Holy Spirit shall glorify Christ by

making us see that these things of Christ are, indeed, of Christ, and completely of Christ—and still are in connection with Christ—and we only enjoy them because we are in connection with Christ.

Then it is said in the text, “He shall glorify Me: for He shall take of Mine and shall show it *unto you*.” Yes, it does glorify Christ for the Holy Spirit to show Christ to us. How often I have wished that men of great minds might be converted! I have wished that we could have a few Miltons and such men, to sing of the love of Christ. A few mighty men who teach politics and the like, to consecrate their talents to the preaching of the Gospel. Why is it not so? Well, because the Holy Spirit does not seem to think that that would be the way to supremely glorify Christ and He prefers, as a better way, to take us commonplace sort of persons and to take the things of Christ and to show them to *us*. He does glorify Christ and, blessed be His name that ever my bleary eyes should look upon His infinite loveliness! That ever such a wretch as I, who can understand everything but what I ought to understand, should be made to comprehend the heights and depths and to know, with all saints, the love of Christ that passes knowledge!

You see, in a school, that clever boy. Well, it is not much for the master to have made a scholar of *him*. But here is one who shines as a scholar and his mother says that he was the greatest dolt in the family! All his schoolfellows say, “Why, he was the butt of all our jokes! He seemed to have no brains, but our master, somehow, got some brains into him and made him know something which he appeared, at one time, incapable of knowing.” Somehow, it does seem to be as if our very folly, impotence and spiritual death—if the Holy Spirit shows to us the things of Christ—will go towards the increase of that great *glorifying of Christ* at which the Holy Spirit aims!

Then, Beloved Brothers, since it is for the honor of Christ for His things to be shown to men, He will show them to us, *that we may go and show them to other people*. This we cannot do, except as He is with us to make the others to see. But He will be with us while we tell forth what He has taught us and so the Holy Spirit will really be showing to others while He is showing to us! A secondary influence will flow from this service, for we shall be helped to *use the right means* to make others see the things of Christ.

III. Our time is almost gone, but in the third place I must just point out to you HOW HE IS, IN BOTH OF THESE THINGS, OUR COMFORTER. He is so, first, for this reason—that *there is no comfort in the world like a sight of Christ*. He shows to us the things of Christ. Oh, Brothers, if you are poor and if the Holy Spirit shows you that Christ had not where to lay His head, what a sight for you! And if you are sick and if the Holy Spirit shows you what sufferings Christ endured, what comfort comes to you! If you are made to see the things of Christ, each thing according to the condition which you are in, how speedily you are delivered out of your sorrow!

And then, if the Holy Spirit glorifies Christ, *that is the cure for every kind of sorrow*. He is the Comforter. I may have told you before, but I can-

not help telling you again, that many years ago, after the terrible tragedy in the Surrey Royal Gardens, [See “Emotional Trial by ‘Fire!’”—<http://www.pilgrimpublications.com/agonies.htm> EOD] I had to go away into the country and keep quite still. The very sight of the Bible made me cry. I could only keep alone in the garden and I was heavy and sad, for people had been killed and there I was, half dead, myself.

And I remember how I got back my comfort and I preached on the Sabbath after I recovered. I had been walking round the garden and I was standing under a tree. If it is there now, I should know it and I remember these words—“Him has God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior.” “Oh,” I thought to myself, “I am only a common soldier. If I die in a ditch, I do not care. The King is honored. He wins the victory.” And I was like those French soldiers in the old times who loved the emperor—and you know how, when they were dying, if he rode by, the wounded man would raise himself up on his elbow and cry once more, “*Vive l’Empereur!*” for the emperor was engraved on his heart! And so, I am sure, it is with everyone of you, my Brothers, in this holy war! If our Lord and King is exalted, then let other things go which way they like. If He is exalted, never mind what becomes of us. We are a set of pigmies—it is all right if *He* is exalted! God’s Truth is safe. We are perfectly willing to be forgotten, derided, slandered, or anything else that men please. The cause is safe and the King is on the Throne. Hallelujah! Blessed be His name! Amen.

MR. SPURGEON UPDATE:

Another anxious week has passed, and by the blessing of the Lord upon the means used, MR. SPURGEON’S life is still spared. United and almost universal prayer for his complete recovery has continued to be offered and, at the time that this sermon is sent to the printers, there appears to be a slight improvement in the dear sufferer’s condition which is still very critical. MRS. SPURGEON and the other members of the family, as well as the Church at the Tabernacle, are very grateful for all the sympathy that has found expression in various ways. And they entreat all Believers to continue pleading for MR. SPURGEON’S full restoration, if it is the Lord’s will.

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THE HOLY SPIRIT'S CHIEF OFFICE NO 2382

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY,
OCTOBER 14, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JULY 26, 1888.**

***“He shall glorify Me: for He shall take of Mine, and shall show it to you.
All things that the Father has are Mine: therefore said I, that
He shall take of Mine and shall show it to you.”
John 16:14, 15.***

IT is the chief office of the Holy Spirit to glorify Christ. He does many things, but this is what He aims at in all of them—to glorify Christ. Brothers and Sisters, what the Holy Spirit does must be right for us to imitate! Therefore, let us endeavor to glorify Christ. To what higher ends can we devote ourselves, than to something to which God the Holy Spirit devotes Himself? Be this, then, your continual prayer, “Blessed Spirit, help me to always glorify the Lord Jesus Christ!”

Observe that the Holy Spirit glorifies Christ by showing to us the things of Christ. It is a great marvel that there should be any Glory given to Christ by showing Him to such poor creatures as we are! What? To make us see Christ—does that glorify Him? For our weak eyes to behold Him, for our trembling hearts to know Him and to love Him—does this glorify Him? It is even so, for the Holy Spirit chooses this as His principal way of glorifying the Lord Jesus. He takes of the things of Christ, not to show them to angels, not to write them in letters of fire across the brow of night, but to show them to us! Within the little temple of a sanctified heart, Christ is praised, not so much by what we do, or think, as by what we see. This puts great value upon meditation, upon the study of God's Word, and upon silent thought under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, for Jesus says, “He shall glorify Me: for He shall take of Mine, and shall show it to you.”

Here is a Gospel word at the very outset of our sermon! Poor sinner, conscious of your sin, it is possible for Christ to be glorified by His being shown to you! If you look to Him, if you see Him to be a suitable Savior, an all-sufficient Savior. If your mind's eye takes Him in. If He is effectually shown to you by the Holy Spirit, He is thereby glorified! Sinner as you are, unworthy, apparently, to become the arena of Christ's Glory, yet shall you be a temple in which the King's Glory shall be revealed and your poor heart, like a mirror, shall reflect His Grace—

***“Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove,
With all Your quickening powers”***

and show Christ to the sinner, that Christ may be glorified in the sinner's salvation!

If that great work of Grace is really done at the beginning of the sermon, I shall not mind, even, if I never finish it! God the Holy Spirit will have worked more *without me* than I could possibly have worked myself, and to the Triune Jehovah shall be all the praise! Oh, that the name of Christ may be glorified in every one of you! Has the Holy Spirit shown you Christ, the Sin-Bearer, the one Sacrifice for sin, exalted on high, to give repentance and remission? If so, then the Holy Spirit has glorified Christ, even in you!

Now, proceeding to examine the text a little in detail, my first observation upon it is this—*the Holy Spirit is our Lord's Glorifier*. "He shall glorify Me." Secondly, *Christ's own things are His best Glory*. "He shall glorify Me: for He shall take of Mine, and shall show it to you." And, thirdly, *Christ's Glory is His Father's Glory*. "All things that the Father has are Mine: therefore said I, that He shall take of Mine, and shall show it to you."

I. To begin, then, THE HOLY SPIRIT IS OUR LORD'S GLORIFIER. I want you to keep this Truth of God in your mind and never to forget it—that which does *not* glorify Christ is *not* of the Holy Spirit, and that which is of the Holy Spirit invariably glorifies our Lord Jesus Christ!

First, then, *have an eye to this Truth in all comforts*. If a comfort which you think you need and which appears to you to be very sweet, does not glorify Christ, look very suspiciously upon it. If, in conversing with an apparently religious man, he prates about truth which he says is comforting, but which does not honor Christ, do not have anything to do with it! It is a poisonous sweet—it may charm you for a moment, but it will ruin your soul forever if you partake of it. But blessed are those comforts which smell of Christ, those consolations in which there is a fragrance of myrrh, aloes and cassia, out of the King's palace—the comfort drawn from His Person, from His work, from His blood, from the Resurrection, from His Glory—the comfort directly fetched from that sacred spot where He trod the winepress alone! This is wine of which you may drink, forget your misery and be unhappy no more!

But always look with great suspicion upon any comfort offered to you, either as a sinner or a saint, which does not come distinctly from Christ. Say, "I will not be comforted till Jesus comforts me. I will refuse to lay aside my despondency until He removes my sin. I will not go to Mr. Civility, or Mr. Legality, for the unloading of my burden. No hands shall ever lift the load of conscious sin from off my heart but those that were nailed to the Cross, when Jesus, Himself, bore my sins in His own body on the tree." Please carry this Truth of God with you wherever you go as a kind of spiritual litmus paper by which you may test everything that is presented to you as a cordial or comfort. If it does not glorify Christ, let it not console or please you!

In the next place, *have an eye to this Truth of God in all ministries*. There are many ministries in the world and they are very diverse from one another, but this Truth will enable you to judge which is right out of them all. That ministry which makes much of Christ, is of the Holy Spirit, but that ministry which decries Him, ignores Him, or puts Him in

the background in any degree, is not of the Spirit of God! Any doctrine which magnifies man, but not man's Redeemer. Any doctrine which denies the depth of the Fall and, consequently, derogates from the greatness of salvation. Any doctrine which makes sin less and, therefore, makes *Christ's work* less—away with it, away with it! This shall be your infallible test as to whether it is of the Holy Spirit or not, for Jesus says, "He shall glorify Me." It were better to speak five words to the Glory of Christ, than to be the greatest orator who ever lived and to neglect or dishonor the Lord Jesus Christ!

We, my Brothers, who are preachers of the Word, have but a short time to live. Let us dedicate all that time to the glorious work of magnifying Christ! Longfellow says, in his *Psalm of Life*, that, "Art is long," but longer, still, is the great art of lifting up the Crucified before the eyes of the sin-bitten sons of men. Let us keep to that one employment! If we have but this one string upon which we can play, we may discourse such music on it as would ravish angels and will save men! Therefore, again I say, let us keep to that alone! Cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer and all kinds of music are for Nebuchadnezzar's golden image, but as for our God, our one harp is Christ Jesus! We will touch every string of that wondrous instrument, even though it is with trembling fingers—and marvelous shall be the music we shall evoke from it!

All ministries, therefore, must be subjected to this test—if they do not glorify Christ, they are not of the Holy Spirit.

We should also *have an eye to this Truth in all religious movements* and judge them by this standard. If they are of the Holy Spirit, they glorify Christ. There are great movements in the world, every now and then, and we are inclined to look upon them hopefully, for any stir is better than stagnation. But, by-and-by, we begin to fear, with a holy jealousy, what their effects will be. How shall we judge them? To what test shall we put them? Always to *this* test—does this movement glorify Christ? Is Christ preached? Then, therein, I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice! Are men pointed to Christ? Then this is the ministry of salvation! Is He preached as First and Last? Are men bid to be justified by faith in Him and then to follow Him, and copy His Divine example? It is well! I do not believe that any man ever lifted up the Cross of Christ in a hurtful way. If it is but the Cross that is seen, it is the *sight of the Cross*, not of the hands that lift it, that will bring salvation. Some modern movements are heralded with great noise and some come quietly, but if they glorify Christ, it is well.

But, dear Friends, if it is some new theory that is propounded. If it is some old error revived. If it is something very glittering and fascinating and, for a while it bears the multitudes away, think nothing of it. Unless it glorifies Christ, it is not for you and me. "*Aliquid Christi*," as one of the old fathers said, "Anything of Christ," and I love it! But nothing of Christ, or something against Christ—and it may be very fine and flowery, and it may be very fascinating and charming, highly poetical, and in consonance with the spirit of the age—but we say of it, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity where there is no Christ!" Where He is lifted up there is all that is needed for the salvation of a guilty race! Judge every movement, then,

not by those who adhere to it, nor by those who admire and praise it, but by this Word of our Lord, "He shall glorify Me." The Spirit of God is not in it if it does not glorify Christ!

Once again, Brothers, I pray you, *eye this Truth of God when you are under a sense of great weakness*—physical, mental, or spiritual. You have finished preaching a sermon, you have completed a round with your tracts, or you have ended your Sunday school work for another Sabbath. You say to yourself, "I fear that I have done very poorly." You groan as you go to your bed because you think that you have not glorified Christ. It is as well that you should groan if that is the case. I will not forbid it, but I will relieve the bitterness of your distress by reminding you that it is the *Holy Spirit who is to glorify Christ*—"He shall glorify Me." If I preach and the Holy Spirit is with me, Christ will be glorified! But if I were able to speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but without the power of the Holy Spirit, Christ would *not* be glorified. Sometimes our weakness may even help to make way for the greater display of the might of God. If so, we may glory in infirmity, that the power of Christ may rest upon us! It is not merely we, who speak, but the Spirit of the Lord who speaks by us.

There is a sound of abundance of rain outside the Tabernacle—would God that there were also the sound of abundance of rain within our hearts! May the Holy Spirit come at this moment and come at all times whenever His servants are trying to glorify Christ—and do, Himself, what must always be His own work! How can you and I glorify anybody, much less glorify Him who is infinitely glorious? But the Holy Spirit, being, Himself, the glorious God, can glorify the glorious Christ! It is a work worthy of God and it shows us, when we think of it, the absolute need of our crying to the Holy Spirit that He would take us in His hands and use us as a workman uses his hammer. What can a hammer do without the hand that grasps it? And what can we do without the Spirit of God?

I will make only one more observation upon this first point. If the Holy Spirit is to glorify Christ, *I beg you to have an eye to the Truth of God amid all oppositions, controversies and contentions*. If we, alone, had the task of glorifying Christ, we might be beaten. But as the Holy Spirit is the Glorifier of Christ, His Glory is in very safe hands. "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?" The Holy Spirit is still to the front! The eternal purpose of God to set His King upon the Throne and to make Jesus Christ reign forever and ever must be fulfilled, for the Holy Spirit has undertaken to see it accomplished! Amidst the surging tumults of the battle, the result of the conflict is never in doubt for a moment! It may seem as though the fate of Christ's cause hung in a balance and that the scales were in equilibrium, but it is not so. The glory of Christ never wanes—it must increase from day to day as it is made known in the hearts of men by the Holy Spirit! And the day shall come when Christ's praise shall go up from *all* human tongues. To Him every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the Glory of God the Father! Therefore, lift up the hands that hang down and confirm the feeble knees. If *you* have failed to glorify Christ by

your speech as you should, there is Another who has done it and who will still do it, according to Christ's words, "He shall glorify Me." My text seems to be a silver bell, ringing sweet comfort into the dispirited worker's ears, "He shall glorify Me."

That is the first point—the Holy Spirit is our Lord's Glorifier. Keep that Truth of God before your mind's eye under all circumstances.

II. Now, secondly, CHRIST'S OWN THINGS ARE HIS BEST GLORY. When the Holy Spirit wants to glorify Christ, what does He do? He does not go abroad for anything—He comes to Christ, Himself, for that which will be for Christ's own Glory—"He shall glorify Me: for He shall take of Mine, and shall show it to you." There can be no Glory *added* to Christ! It must be His own Glory which He has, *already*, which is made more apparent to the hearts of God's chosen by the Holy Spirit!

First of all, *Christ needs no new inventions to glorify Him.* "We have struck out a new line of things," says one. Have you? "We have discovered something very wonderful." I dare say you have, but Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever, needs none of your inventions, or discoveries, or additions to His Truth. A plain Christ is always the loveliest Christ. Dress Him up and you have deformed Him and defamed Him. Bring Him out just as He is—the Christ of God, nothing else but Christ, unless you bring in His Cross—for we preach Christ Crucified! Indeed, you cannot have the Christ without the Cross, but preach Christ Crucified and you have given Him all the Glory that He wants. The Holy Spirit does not reveal in these last times any fresh ordinances, or any novel doctrines, or any new evolutions—He simply brings to mind the things which Christ, Himself, spoke, He brings Christ's own things to us and, in that was, glorifies Him!

Think for a minute of *Christ's Person* as revealed to us by the Holy Spirit. What can more glorify Him than for us to see His Person, very God of very God, and yet as truly Man? What a wondrous Being, as Human as ourselves, but as Divine as God! Was there ever another like He? Never!

Think of His Incarnation, His birth at Bethlehem. There was greater Glory among the oxen in the stall than ever was seen where those born in marble halls were swathed in purple and fine linen! Was there ever another Baby like Christ? Never! I wonder not that the wise men fell down to worship Him!

Look at His *life*, the standing wonder of all ages! Men who have not worshipped Him, have admired Him. His life is incomparable, unique—there is nothing like it in all the history of mankind! Imagination has never been able to invent anything approximating to the perfect beauty of the life of Jesus Christ!

Think of His *death*. There have been many heroic and martyr deaths, but there is not one that can be set side by side with Christ's death. He did not pay the debt of nature as others do, and yet He paid our nature's debt. He did not die because He must—He died because He would. The only "must" that came upon Him was a necessity of all-conquering love. The Cross of Christ is the greatest wonder of fact or of fiction! Fiction in-

vents many marvelous things, but nothing that can be looked at for a moment in comparison with the Cross of Christ!

Think of our Lord's *Resurrection*. If this is one of the things that are taken and shown to you by the Holy Spirit, it will fill you with holy delight! I am sure that I could go into that sepulcher, where John and Peter went, and spend a lifetime in reverencing Him who broke down the barriers of the tomb and made it a passageway to Heaven. Instead of being a dungeon and a *cul-de-sac* into which all men seemed to go, but none could ever come out, Christ has, by His Resurrection, made a tunnel right through the grave! Jesus, by dying, has killed death for all Believers!

Then think of His *Ascension*. But why need I take you over all these scenes with which you are blessedly familiar? What a wondrous fact that when the cloud received Him out of the disciples' sight, the angels came to convoy Him to His heavenly Home!—

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

Think of Him, now, *at His Father's right hand*, adored of all the heavenly host, and then let your mind fly forward to the glory of His Second Advent, the final judgment with its terrible terrors, the millennium with its indescribable bliss and the Heaven of heavens, with its endless and unparalleled splendor! If these things are shown to you by the Holy Spirit, the beatific visions will, indeed, glorify Christ, and you will sit down and sing with the blessed Virgin, “My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God, my Savior.”

Thus you see that the things which glorify Christ are all in Christ—the Holy Spirit fetches nothing from abroad, but He takes of the things of Christ and shows them to us. The glory of kings lies in their silver and their gold, their silk and their gems, but the Glory of Christ lies in Himself! If we want to glorify a man, we bring him presents. If we wish to glorify Christ, we must accept presents *from Him*. Thus we take the cup of salvation, calling upon the name of the Lord, and in so doing we glorify Christ!

Notice, next, that *these things of Christ are too bright for us to see till the Spirit shows them to us*. We cannot see them because of their excessive Glory, until the Holy Spirit tenderly reveals them to us, until He takes of the things of Christ and shows them to us.

What does this mean? Does it not mean, first, that He enlightens our understandings? It is wonderful how the Holy Spirit can take a fool and make him know the wonders of Christ's dying love. And He does make him know it very quickly when He begins to teach him. Some of us have been very slow learners, yet the Holy Spirit has been able to teach something, even, to us! He opens the Scriptures and He also opens our minds—and when there are these two openings, together, what a wonderful opening it is! It becomes like a new revelation—the first is the revelation of the letter, which we have in the Book—the second is the revelation of the Spirit, which we get in our own spirit. O my dear Friend, if the

Holy Spirit has ever enlightened your understanding, you know what it is for Him to show the things of Christ to you!

But next, He does this by a work upon the whole soul. I mean this. When the Holy Spirit convinces us of sin, we become fitted to see Christ and so the blessed Spirit shows Christ to us. When we are conscious of our feebleness, then we see Christ's strength, and thus the Holy Spirit shows Him to us. Often, the operations of the Spirit of God may seem not to be directly the *showing* of Christ to us, but as *they prepare us for seeing Him*, they are a part of the work.

The Holy Spirit sometimes shows Christ to us by His power of vivifying the Truth of God. I do not know whether I can quite tell you what I mean, but I have, sometimes, seen a Truth of God differently from what I have ever seen it before. I knew it long ago, I acknowledged it as part of the Divine Revelation, but now I realize it, grip it, grasp it, or, what is better, it seems to get a grip of me and hold me in its mighty hands! Have you not, sometimes, been overjoyed with a promise which never seemed anything to you before? Or a doctrine which you believed, but never fully appreciated, has suddenly become to you a gem of the first water, a very Kohinoor, or, "Fountain of Light"?

The Holy Spirit has a way of focusing the Light of God and, when it falls in this special way upon a certain point, then the Truth is revealed to us. He shall take of the things of Christ and show them to you. Have you ever felt ready to jump for joy, ready to jump from your seat, ready to sit up in your bed at night and sing praises to God through the overpowering influence of some grand old Truth which has seemed to be, at once, quite new to you? The Holy Spirit also shows to us the things of Christ in our experience. As we journey on in life, we pass up hill and down dale, through bright sunlight and through dark shadows—and in each of these conditions we learn a little more of Christ, a little more of His Grace, a little more of His Glory, a little more of His sin-bearing, a little more of His glorious righteousness! Blessed is the life which is just one long lesson upon the Glory of Christ! And I think that is what every Christian life should be. "Every dark and bending line" in our experience should meet in the center of Christ's Glory and should lead us nearer and nearer to the power of enjoying the bliss at His right hand forever and ever. Thus the Holy Spirit takes of the things of Christ and shows them to us, and so glorifies Christ.

Beloved, the practical lesson for us to learn is this—*let us try to live under the influence of the Holy Spirit*. To that end, let us think very reverently of Him. Some never think of Him at all. How many sermons there are without even an allusion to Him! Shame on the preachers of such discourses! If any hearers come without praying for the Holy Spirit, shame on such hearers! We know and we confess that He is everything to our spiritual life—then why do we not remember Him with greater love, worship Him with greater honor and think of Him continually with greater reverence? Beware of committing the sin against the Holy Spirit! If any of you feel any gentle touches of His power when you are hearing a sermon, beware lest you harden your heart against it! Whenever the sa-

cred fire comes as but a spark, quench not the Holy Spirit, but pray that the spark may become a flame.

And you, Christian people, cry to Him that you may not read your Bibles without His light. Do not pray without being helped by the Spirit. Above all, may you never preach without the Holy Spirit! It seems a pity when a man asks to be guided of the Spirit in His preaching—and then pulls out a manuscript and reads it! The Holy Spirit may bless what he reads, but He cannot very well guide him when he has tied himself down to what he has written! And it will be the same with the speaker if he only repeats what he has learned and leaves no room for the Spirit to give him a new thought, a fresh Revelation of Christ! How can he hope for the Divine blessing under such circumstances? Oh, it were better for us to sit still until some of us were moved by the Spirit to get up and speak, than for us to prescribe the methods by which He should speak to us and even to write down the very words we mean to utter! What room is there for the Spirit's operations then—

“Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove,”

I cannot help breaking out into that prayer, “Blessed Spirit, abide with us! Take of the things of Christ and show them to us that Christ may be glorified.”

III. I am only going to speak a minute or two on the last point. It is a very deep one, much too deep for me. I am unable to take you into the depths of my text, I will not pretend to do so. I believe that there are meanings here which probably we shall never understand till we get to Heaven. “What you know not now, you shall know hereafter.” But this is the point—CHRIST'S GLORY IS HIS FATHER'S GLORY—“All things that the Father has are Mine: therefore said I, that He shall take of Mine, and shall show it to you.”

First, *Christ has all that the Father has*. Think of that! No mere man dares to say, “All things that the Father has are mine.” All the Godhead is in Christ—not only all the attributes of it, but the *essence* of it. The Nicene Creed well puts it and it is not too strong in the expression: “Light of Light, very God of very God,” for Christ has all that the Father has. When we come to Christ, we come to Omnipotent, Omnipresent Omniscience—we come to Almighty Immutability—we come, in fact, to the eternal Godhead! The Father has all things and all power is given to Christ in Heaven and on earth, so that He has all that the Father has!

And, further, *the Father is glorified in Christ's Glory*. Never let us fall into the false notion that if we magnify Christ, we are depreciating the Father. If any lips have ever spoken concerning the Christ of God so as to depreciate the God of Christ, let those lips be covered with shame! We never preached Christ as merciful and the Father as only just, or Christ as moving the Father to be gracious. That is a slander which has been cast upon us, but there is not an atom of truth in it! We have known and believed what Christ, Himself, said, “I and My Father are One.” The more glorious Christ is, the more glorious the Father is—and when men, professedly Christians, begin to cast off Christ, they cast off God the Father to a large extent. Irreverence to the Son of God soon becomes irreverence to God the Father, Himself! But, dear Friends, we delight to honor Christ,

and we will continue to do so. Even when we stand in the Heaven of heavens, before the burning Throne of the Infinite Jehovah, we will sing praises unto Him and unto the Lamb, putting the two evermore in that Divine conjunction in which they are always to be found!

Thus, you see, Christ has all that the Father has, and when He is glorified, the Father, also, is glorified.

Next, *the Holy Spirit must lead us to see this*, and I am sure that He will. If we give ourselves up to His teaching, we shall fall into no errors. It will be a great mystery, but we shall know enough so that it will never trouble us. If you sit down and try to study the mystery of the Eternal—well, I believe that the longer you look, the more you will be like persons who look into the sea from a great height, until they grow dizzy, and are ready to fall and to be drowned. Believe what the Spirit teaches you and adore your Divine Teacher—then shall His instruction become easy to you. I believe that as we grow older, we come to worship God as Abraham did, as Jehovah, the great I AM. Jesus does not fade into the background, but the glorious Godhead seems to become more and more apparent to us. Our Lord's Word to His disciples, "You believe in God, believe also in Me," as we grow older, seems to turn into this, "You believe in Me, believe also in God." And as we come to a full confidence in the glorious Lord, the God of Nature, and of Providence, and of Redemption, and of Heaven, the Holy Spirit gives us to know more of the glories of Christ!

I have talked with you as well as I could upon this sublime theme and if I did not know that the Holy Spirit glorifies Christ, I would go home miserable, for I have not been able to glorify my Lord as I would. But I know that the Holy Spirit can take what I have said out of my very heart and can put it into your hearts—and He can add to it whatever I have omitted. Go, you who love the Lord, and glorify Him! Try to do it by your lips and by your lives. Go and preach Him, preach more of Him, and preach Him up higher, and higher, and higher!

An old lady, of whom I have heard, made a mistake in what she said, yet there was a Truth behind her blunder. She had been to a little Baptist Chapel where a high Calvinist preached and, on coming away she said that she liked "High Calvary" preachers best. So do I! Give me a "High Calvary" preacher—one who will make Calvary the highest of all the mountains! I suppose it was not a hill at all, but only a mound. Still, let us lift it higher and higher, and say to all other hills, "Why leap you, you high hills? This is the hill which God desires to dwell in! Yes, the Lord will dwell in it forever." The Crucified Christ is wiser than all the wisdom of the world! The Cross of Christ has more novelty in it than all the fresh things of the earth! O Believers and preachers of the Gospel, glorify Christ! May the Holy Spirit help you to do so!

And you, poor Sinners, who think that you cannot glorify Christ at all, come and trust Him—

"Come naked, come filthy, come just as you are,"

and believe that He will receive you, for that will glorify Him! Believe, even now, O Sinner at death's door, that Christ can make you live, and your faith will glorify Him! Look up out of the awful depths of Hell into

which conscience has cast you and believe that He can pluck you out of the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay and set your feet upon a rock, and your trust will glorify Him! It is in the power of the sinner to give Christ the greatest Glory, if the Holy Spirit enables him to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. You may come, you who are more leprous, more diseased, more corrupt than any other! And if you look to Him and He saves you, oh, then you will praise Him!

You will be of the mind of the one I have spoken of many times, who said to me, "Sir, you say that Christ can save *me*? Well, if He does, He shall never hear the last of it." No, and He never will hear the last of it! Blessed Jesus—

***"I will love You in life, I will love You in death
And praise You as long as You lend me breath;
And say when the death-dew lies cold on my brow,
If ever I loved You, my Jesus, 'tis now!
In mansions of glory and endless delight,
I'll ever adore You in Heaven so bright.
I'll sing with the glittering crown on my brow,
If ever I loved You, my Jesus, 'tis now."***

We will do nothing else but praise Christ and glorify Him, if He will but save us from sin! God grant that it may be so with all of us, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
*John 16:1-16.***

Verse 1. *These things have I spoken unto you, that you should not be offended.* Or, "made to stumble." Christ would not have you who are His people caused to stumble by anything that happens to you. He wants you to walk without tripping. His angels bear you up in their hands lest at any time you should dash your foot against a stone. He, Himself, as your Guardian, comes and speaks beforehand to let you know what is to occur to you, that you may not be caused to stumble by any fresh trial that may assail you.

2. *They shall put you out of the synagogues: yes, the time comes, that whoever kills you will think that he does God service.* Christ's disciples were to expect opposition of the most cruel kind. They were to be put away from those with whom they had long worshipped. They were even to run the risk of losing their lives, but Jesus foretold what would happen to them, that they might not be stumbled at it. Such was their Lord's love to them that He would not have them attacked unawares. By His Grace they would hold on and hold out—they would persevere to the end, but there would have to be a struggle—and to help them in the fight, Jesus tells them all about it before it begins. We say, "Forewarned, forearmed." So the disciples were, and so are you. Your Lord tells you that you will not get to Heaven without trials—"In the world you shall have tribulation." And He tells you this that it may not surprise you when it comes—that it may not act upon you like a sudden gust of wind that would upset a little ship—but that you may just keep everything in trim

looking for the storm to come. "These things have I spoken unto you, that you should not be caused to stumble."

3. *And these things will they do unto you because they have not known the Father, nor Me.* The persecuting Jews professed to be worshippers of Jehovah, but they did not know the Christ, whom He sent and, therefore, in very truth they did *not* know the Father, either. How can you expect that those who do not know the Father will know the Son, or any of the other children of the Divine family? As they rejected the Elder Brother, will they not, also, reject the younger ones? Is the disciple to be above his Master, or the servant to be treated better than his Lord? Think not so and, therefore, expect that *you* will not be known, even as the Father and the Son were not known—

***"Tis no surprising thing
That we should be unknown!
The Jewish world knew not their King,
God's everlasting Son."***

4. *But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, you may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you.* Our Lord did tell His disciples something about, "these things." He warned them to expect opposition, but He did not dwell upon that theme. He did not expatiate upon it. He did not, at first, give that prominence to it which He was about to do, and He explains to His disciples *why* He had not talked much upon that topic—"because I was with you." It did not matter how they were opposed so long as He was with them. His society more than made up for anything they might have to suffer and, dear child of God, if you now enjoy the Presence of Christ, and the power of His Spirit, you need not mind what happens to you!

5, 6. *But now I go My way to Him that sent Me, and none of you asks Me, Where are You going? But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow has filled your heart.* They were cast down because He was going away from them. Love awoke fear. It was a hard thing for them to have to miss Him—they could not tell what might happen to them when their Leader was gone from their midst. Do you wonder that they were filled with sorrow? Yet there was no real cause for grief—there was, rather, reason for rejoicing when they understood the true lesson of Christ's departure! There is no real cause for your sorrow, dear Friends. If you knew all things, you would rejoice exceedingly in that very thing that *now* most troubles you.

7. *Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.* And the Comforter is better for us than the personal Presence of Christ! We do not always think so, but it is true. It is better for the Church to have the Holy Spirit in the midst of her than for Christ to be here in His bodily Presence on the earth.

8. *And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgement.* The world is not as yet convinced, but it is convicted—though it does not acknowledge its guilt—there is more than sufficient evidence to prove it guilty in the sight of God.

9. *Of sin, because they believe not on Me.* What must be the depth of human wickedness that sinners will not accept a Divine Savior? This is the crowning, crushing proof of human guilt—"They believe not on Me."

10. *Of righteousness, because I go to My Father, and you see Me no more.* Christ was righteous, the Righteous One, whom men rejected, for He has gone up to the Father's side, where He could not have been if He had not perfected righteousness. The very going back of Christ to the Father's Throne proves that righteousness does exist and convicts men of sinning against it!

11. *Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.* The Gospel judges him and dethrones him and, as there has been a judgment of the world's king, so there will be a judgment of the world, itself.

12. *I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.* Some teachers overload their hearers with the Truth of God till, I might truly say, that they pile on the agony. Truth which cannot be received is often most irksome and burdensome to the hearer. When the mind is not in a fit condition to bear any more instruction, it is cruel work to impose it. Our Lord Jesus did not so overburden His disciples—"I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now."

13. *Howbeit when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all Truth: for He shall not speak of Himself.* This is a very wonderful expression—"He shall not speak of Himself." We have plenty of men, nowadays, who boast that they *do* speak of or from themselves—that is to say, they profess to borrow from no one, not even from God! They are original thinkers, inventors! They bring forth fresh things out of the depth of their wonderful minds. But even the Holy Spirit is, here, said not to "speak of Himself."

13. *But whatever He shall hear, that shall He speak.* That is just our business—to hear God's message and then to speak it—and if the Holy Spirit does this and if Jesus did it, we may also be glad to do the same! We are no inventors of great novelties—we are simply the bearers of the message of the Most High, the declarers of the old Truths of God which God has revealed to us.

13-16. *And He will show you things to come. He shall glorify Me: for He shall take of Mine, and shall show it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine: therefore said I, that He shall take of Mine, and shall show it to you. A little while, and you shall not see Me: and again, a little while, and you shall see Me, because I go to the Father.* How wonderful this is! We are to see Jesus because He has gone to the Father! It looks as if that were a reason why we should *not* see Him, but we see Him better, by faith, now that He has gone to the Father, than we could have seen Him while He was here below covered with the veil of His humiliation! Yet it is hardly surprising that the disciples were puzzled by their Lord's words—"A little while, and you shall not see Me: and again, a little while, and you shall see Me." And, "Because I go to the Father."

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"— 426, 437, 416.

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A WONDERFUL TRANSFORMATION

NO. 2983

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 12, 1906.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 3, 1875.**

***“Your sorrow shall be turned into joy.”
John 16:20.***

You all know that at that time, our Lord was speaking of His death which would cause the deepest grief to His own people, while the ungodly world would rejoice and laugh them to scorn. So He bade them look beyond the immediate present into the future and believe that, ultimately, the cause of their sorrow would become a fountain of perpetual joy to them. It is always well to look a little ahead. Instead of deploring the dark clouds, let us anticipate the fruits and the flowers that will follow the descent of the needed showers. We might be always wretched if we lived only in the present, for our brightest time is yet to come. We are now, as Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, only in the twilight of our day—the high noon shall come to us by-and-by.

But although our Savior's words, just then, related immediately to His death, He was such a wonderful speaker that everything He said had a wider meaning in it than one might at first imagine. Even the leaves of the Tree of Life are for the healing of the nations—and even those words of Christ which have a direct application to a special occasion have a further wondrous power about them—and may be used on other occasions as well as upon the one when they were first uttered. I think I may fairly say that our Lord did not merely mean that just when He died, His children would have sorrow, but that we may take His words as a prophecy that all who truly follow Him will have their seasons of darkness and gloom. Our Lord Jesus Christ has nowhere promised to His people immunity from trial. On the contrary, He said to His disciples, “In the world you shall have tribulation.” I cannot imagine a better promise for the wheat than that it shall be threshed—and that is the promise that is made to us if we are the Lord's wheat—and not the enemy's tares, “You shall have the threshing which shall fit you for the heavenly garner.” You need not mourn, Beloved, that it is to be so. If you do, it will make no difference, for your Lord has declared that “in the world you shall have tribulation.” Rest quite sure of that. If you could ask those Believers who are now in Heaven, they would tell you that they came through great tribulation—many of them not only washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb, but they sealed their faithfulness to Him with their own blood!

Our Lord meant His disciples to feel the sorrow that was to come upon them, for He said to them, "You shall weep and lament," and He did not express any blame upon them for doing so. I would not have any of you imaging that there is any virtue in stoicism. I once heard a woman who wished to show the wonders worked in her by the Grace of God, say that when her baby was taken from her, she was so resigned to the Divine will that she did not even shed a tear! But I do not believe that it ever was the Divine will that mothers should lose their babies without shedding tears over them. I thank God that I did not have a mother who could have acted like that. And I believe that as Jesus, Himself, wept, there can be no virtue in our saying that we do not weep. God means you to feel the rod, my Brother, my Sister. He intends you to sometimes weep and lament, as Peter says, "if need be, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations." It is not merely the temptation or trial for which there is a necessity, but that we should be in heaviness is also a necessary part of our earthly discipline. Unfelt trial is no trial! Certainly it would be an unsanctified trial. Christ never meant Christians to be stoics. There is a wide and grave distinction between a gracious acquiescence in the Divine will and a callous steeling of your heart to bear anything that happens without any feeling whatever. "You shall be sorrowful," says our Lord to His disciples, and "you shall weep and lament." It is through the weeping and the lamenting, oftentimes, that the very kernel of the blessing comes to us!

Our Savior mentions one aggravation of our grief which some of us have often felt—"the world shall rejoice." That is the old story. David found his own trials all the harder to bear when he saw the prosperity of the wicked. He had been plagued all the day long and chastened every morning—he could have endured that if he had not seen that the ungodly had more than heart could wish! He found himself, sometimes, even troubled with the fear of death, but as for the wicked, he said, "There are no bonds in their death: but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men." It makes our bitterness all the more bitter when the saints of God are afflicted and the enemies of God are made to dwell in ease. I daresay when you were a boy, you may have fallen and hurt yourself—and while you were smarting from your bruises, the other lads who were around you, were laughing at you! The pain was all the sharper because of their laughing. And the righteous are wounded to the quick when they see the ungodly prospering—prospering, apparently, by their ungodliness. And when these ungodly persons point the finger of scorn at them and ask, "Where is your God now? Is this the result of serving Him?" When this is your lot, remember that your Savior told His disciples that it would be so—and He has told you the same. While you are sorrowing, you shall hear their shouts of revelry. You shall be up in your own room weeping and you shall hear the sound of their merry feet in the dizzy dance. The very contrast between their circumstances and your own will make you feel your grief more. Well, if this is to be our lot, we must not count it a

strange thing when it comes, but we may hear our Master say to us, "I told you that it would be so." When it happens to any of you, Beloved, you must say, "This is even as Jesus Christ said it would be."

His first disciples, if they ventured out into the streets of Jerusalem after their Savior's crucifixion, and while He was lying in the tomb of Joseph, must have found it very trying to hear the jests and jeers of those who had put the Nazarene to death. "There is an end of Him now," they said. "His imposture is exposed and His disciples—poor, foolish fanatics—will soon come to their senses and the whole thing will collapse." Just so. That was what Jesus said would happen, "you shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice."

Now, what was the Savior's cure for all this? It was the fact that this trial was to last only for a little while—for a very little while. In the case of His first disciples, it was only to last for a few days and then it would be over, for they would hear the joyful announcement, "The Lord is risen, indeed, and has appeared to Simon." So is it to be with you and with me, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ. Our sorrows are all, like ourselves, mortal. There are no immortal sorrows for immortal saints! They come, but, blessed be God, they also go like birds of the air—they fly over our heads but they cannot make their abode in our souls. We suffer today, but we shall rejoice tomorrow! "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning." But as for yonder laughing sinner, what weeping and wailing will be his portion unless he repents and weeps in penitence over his many sins! The prosperity of the wicked is like a thin layer of ice on which they always stand in peril. In a moment they may be brought down to destruction! And the place that knew them will know them no more forever. Our weeping is soon to end, but their weeping will never end. Our joy will be forever, but their joy will speedily come to an end. Look a little ahead, Christian pilgrims, for you will soon have passed through the Valley of the Shadow of Death and have come into the land where even the shadow of death shall never fall across your pathway again!

In speaking those comforting words to His disciples, our Savior made use of this memorable sentence, "Your sorrow shall be turned into joy." As I read the whole passage, I pondered over those words and tried to find out their meaning. Perhaps you think, as you glance at them, that they mean that the man who was sorrowful would be joyous. That is part of their meaning, but they mean a great deal more than that. They mean, literally and actually, your sorrow, itself, shall be *turned into joy*—not the sorrow to be taken away and joy to be put in its place—but the very sorrow which now grieves you, shall be turned into joy! This is a very wonderful transformation and only the God who works great marvels could possibly accomplish it—could, somehow, not only take away the bitterness and give sweetness in its place, but turn the bitterness, itself, into sweetness!

That is to be the subject of our present meditation and I am glad to have, in the communion at which many of us will presently unite in the

highest act of Christian fellowship, an apt illustration of my theme. You know that the Supper of the Lord is not at all a funereal gathering, but it is a sacred festival at which we sit at our ease, restfully enjoying ourselves as at a banquet. But what are the provisions for this feast and what do they represent? That bread, that wine—what do they mean? They represent, my dear Friends, sorrow—sorrow even unto death! The bread, separate from the wine, represents the flesh of Christ separate from His blood, and so they set forth death. The broken bread represents the flesh of Christ bruised, marred, suffering, full of anguish. The wine represents Christ's blood poured out upon the Cross amidst agony which only ended with His death. Yet these emblems of sorrow and suffering furnish us with our great feast of love! This is, indeed, joy arising out of sorrow! The festival is itself the ordained memorial of the greatest grief that was ever endured on earth. Here, then, as you gather around this Table, you shall see, in the outward signs and emblems, that sorrow is turned into joy!

I. If you will keep that picture in your mind's eye, it will help me to bring out the meaning of the text. And our first point will be this—OUR SORROW AS TO OUR BLESSED LORD IS NOW TURNED INTO JOY. The very things that make us grieve concerning Him are the things which make us rejoice concerning Him!

And, first, *this comes to pass when we look upon Him as tempted, tried and tested in a thousand ways.* We see Him no sooner rising from the waters of Baptism than He is led into the desert to be tempted by the devil. And we grieve to think that, for our sakes, it was necessary that He should there bear the brunt of a fierce duel with the Prince of Darkness. We see Him afterwards, all His life, tempted, tried and tested this way and that—sometimes by a scribe or a Pharisee, sometimes by a Sadducee. All sorts of temptations were brought to bear upon Him, for He “was in all points tempted like as we are.” But, oh, how thankful we are to know that He was thus tempted, for those very temptations helped to prove the sinlessness of His Character! How could we know what there was in a man who was never tested and tried? But our Lord was tested at every point—and at no point did He fall. It is established, beyond all question, that He is the Lamb of God without blemish and without spot. You cannot tell what a man's strength of character is unless he is tried. There must be something to develop the excellence that lies hidden in his nature. And we ought to rejoice and bless God that our Savior was passed, like silver, through the furnace seven times and, like gold, was tried again and again in the crucible in the hottest part of the furnace yet there was found no dross in Him, but only the pure, precious metal without a particle of alloy! Therein do we greatly rejoice! He “was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” He was tempted by Satan and contradicted by sinners, yet He was found faultless to the end and, thus, our joy arises out of that which otherwise would have made us mourn!

Further, dear Brothers and Sisters, remember that the griefs and trials of our Lord not only manifested His sinless Character, but *they made Him fit for that priestly office which He has undertaken on our behalf*. The Captain of our salvation was made “perfect through sufferings.” It was necessary that He who would really be a Benefactor to men should know them thoroughly and understand them. How can He sympathize with them in their sorrows unless He has, at least to some extent, felt as they do? So, our merciful and faithful High Priest is one who can be “touched with the feeling of our infirmities,” seeing that He was tempted and tried even as we are. I think that had I been alive at the time, I would have spared my Lord many of His griefs had it been in my power—and many of you will say the same. He would never have needed to say, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head,” for you would gladly have given Him the best room in your house! Ah, but then the poor would have missed that gracious Word of God which, I have no doubt, has often comforted them when they have been houseless and forlorn! You would not have allowed Him, if you could have helped it, to be weary, and worn, and hungry, and thirsty. You would have liberally supplied all His needs to the utmost of your power. But then He would not have been so fully in sympathy as He now is with those who have to endure the direst straits of poverty, seeing that He has passed through a similar experience to theirs. What joy it is to a sorrowing soul to know that Jesus has gone that way long before!

I had a great grief that struck me down to the very dust, but I looked up and saw that face that was marred more than any other. And I rose to my feet in hope and joyful confidence and I said, “Are You, my Lord, here where I am? Have you suffered thus, and did you endure far more than I can ever know of grief and brokenness of heart? Then, Savior, I rejoice and bless Your holy name!” I know that you, Beloved, must often have grieved over your Savior’s suffering, though you have been, at the same time, glad to remember that He passed through it all—because He thus became such a matchless Comforter, “who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way” because of the very experience through which He passed—“for in that He Himself has suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted.”

The meaning of the text comes out even more clearly when we think of *the sorrows to which our Lord had been referring, which ended in His death*. Oh, the griefs of Jesus when He laid down His life for His sheep! Have you not sometimes said, or at least thought, that the ransom price was too costly for such insignificant creatures as we are? Think of the agony and bloody sweat, the scourging, the spitting, the shame, the hounding through the streets, the piercing of the hands and feet, the mockery, the vinegar, the gall, the “Eloi Eloi, lama Sabachthani?” and all the other horrors and terrors that gathered around the Cross! We wish that this might never have happened and yet the fact that they *did* happen brings to us unspeakable bliss! It is our greatest joy to know that

Jesus bled and died upon the tree! How else could our sins be put away? How else could we, who are God's enemies, be reconciled and brought near to Him? How else could Heaven be made secure for us? We might, from one aspect of Christ's sufferings, chant a mournful *miserere* at the foot of the Cross, but before we have done more than just commence the sad strain, we perceive the blessed results that come to the children of men through Christ's death—so we lay down our instruments of mourning and take up the harp and the trumpet—and sound forth glad notes of rejoicing and thanksgiving!

Our sorrow about Christ's death is also turned into joy because not only do we derive the greatest possible benefit from it, but *Jesus Himself, by His death, achieved such wonders*. That precious body of His, that fair lily all stained with crimson lines where flowed His heart's blood must have been a piteous sight for anyone to see. I wonder how any artist could ever paint the taking down of Christ from the Cross, or the robing Him for the sepulcher? They were sorrowful sights for art to spend itself upon. Jesus, the final Conqueror, lies in the grave! The cerements of the tomb are wrapped about Him who once wore the purple of the universe! But we have scarcely time to sorrow over these facts before we recollect that the death of Christ was the death of sin! The death of Christ was the overthrow of Satan! The death of Christ was the death of death! And out of His very tomb we hear that pealing trumpet note, "O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the Law. But thanks be to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." I am glad that He fought with Satan in the Garden and vanquished Him. I am glad that He fought with sin upon the Cross and destroyed it. I am glad that He fought with grim death in that dark hour and that He seized him by the throat and held him captive. I am glad that He ever entered the gloomy sepulcher, for He rifled it of all its terrors for all His loved ones, tore its iron bars away and set His people free! So you see, it is all gladness, even as He said to His disciples, "Your sorrow shall be turned into joy."

And whatever else there may be of sorrow that came out of Christ's Cross, we may all be glad of it, for *now Christ Himself is the more glorious because of it*. It is true that nothing could add to His Glory as God, but seeing that He assumed our Nature and became Man as well as God, He added to His Glory by all the shame He bore! There is not a reproach that pierced His heart which did not make Him more beautiful! There is not a line of sorrow that furrowed His face which did not make Him more lovely—that marred Countenance is more to be admired by us than all the comeliness of earthly beauty! He was always superlatively beautiful. His beauty was such as might well hold the angels spellbound as they looked upon Him! The sun and moon and stars were dim compared with the brightness of His eyes. Heaven and earth could not find His equal and if all Heaven had been sold, it could not have purchased this precious Pearl! Yet the setting of the pearl has made Christ appear even brighter than before—the setting of His Humanity, the setting of His

sufferings, His pangs, His shameful death has made His beauty shine out the more resplendent! The plant that sprang from Jesse's root is now the plant of renown! He who was despised at Nazareth is glorified in Paradise and the more glorified because, between Nazareth and Paradise, He was "despised and rejected of men, a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief." Blessed Savior, we rejoice that You have gained by all Your sorrows, for therefore has God highly exalted You, and given You a name which is above every name!

II. But, now, secondly, and very briefly, I want to remind you that THE SORROW OF THE WHOLE CHURCH HAS ALSO BEEN TURNED INTO JOY.

In speaking of the *sorrows of the persecuted Church of Christ*, I will not compare them to the sorrows of her Lord. But if anything could have been comparable to the suffering of the Bridegroom, it would have been the suffering of the bride. Think of the early ages of the Church of God under the Roman persecutions. Think of the Church of Christ among the Vaudois of the Alps, or in England during the Marian persecution. Our blood runs cold as we read of what the saints of God have suffered! I have often put up Foxe's Book of Martyrs upon the shelf and thought that I could not read it any more—it is such a terribly true account of what human nature can bear when faith in Christ sustains it. Yet, Brothers and Sisters, we are not sorry that the martyrs suffered as they did. Or if we are, that very sorrow is turned into joy at the remembrance of how Christ has been glorified through the sufferings of His saints! Even our poor humanity looks more comely when we recall what it endured for Christ's sake. When I think of the honor of being a martyr for the Truth of God, I confess that I would sooner be a martyr than be the angel Gabriel, for I think it would be far better to have gone to Heaven from one of Smithfield's stakes than to have been always in Heaven. What honor it has brought to Christ that poor, feeble men could love Him so that they could bleed and die for Him! Yes, and women, too, like that brave Anne Askew, who, after they had racked her till they had put every bone out of joint, was still courageous enough to argue on behalf of her dear Lord! When they thought that her womanly weakness would make her give way, she seemed stronger than any man might have been as she said to her persecutors—

***"I am not she that lyst
My anker to let fall
For every dryslynge myst;
My shippe's substancyal"—***

and so defied them to do their worst! The Church of God may well rejoice as she thinks of the noble army of martyrs who praise the Lord on high for, among the sweetest notes that ascend even in Heaven, are the songs that come from the white-robed throng who shed their blood rather than deny their Lord!

The Church of Christ has also passed through a fierce fire of opposition, as well as of persecution. Heresy after heresy has raged. Men have arisen

who have denied this, and that, and the other Doctrines taught in the Scriptures. And every time these oppositions have come, certain feeble folk in the Church have been greatly alarmed but, in looking back upon them all up to the present, I think that they are causes for joy rather than sorrow! Whenever what is supposed to be a new heresy comes up, I say to myself, "Ah, I know you! I remember reading about you. There was an old pair of shoes, worn by heresy many hundreds of years ago which were thrown on a dunghill—and you have picked them up and refurbished them a little, and brought them forth as if they had been new." I bless the Lord that at this moment there scarcely remains *any* Doctrine to be defended for the first time, for they have all been fought over so fiercely in years gone by that there is hardly any point that our noble forefathers did not defend! And they did their work so well that we can frequently use their weapons for the defense of the Truth today. Who would wish to have kept the Word of God from going through this furnace of opposition? It is like silver seven times purified in a furnace of earth. Philosophers have tried you, O precious Book, but you were not found wanting! Atheists have tried you! Sneering skeptics have tried you! They have all passed you through the fire, but not even the smell of fire is upon you to this day! And therein do we rejoice, yes, and will rejoice! And the day will come when the present errors and opposition will only be recorded on the pages of history as things for our successors to rejoice over just as we now rejoice over the past victories of the Truth of God!

And once again, dear Friends, not only is it so with the persecutions and oppositions of the Church of Christ, but the *Church's difficulties have also become themes of rejoicing*. As I look abroad upon the world at the present time, it does seem an impossible thing that the nations of the earth should ever be converted to Christ. It is impossible so far as man alone is concerned, yet God has commanded the Christian Church to evangelize the world! Someone complains that the Church is too feeble and its adherents too few to accomplish such a task as this. The fewer the fighters, the greater their share of glory when the victory is won! In order to overcome indifference, idolatry, atheism, Mohammedanism and Popery, the battle must be a very stern one, but who wants Christ's followers to fight only little battles? My Brothers and Sisters, let us thank God that our foes are so numerous! It matters not how many there may be of them—there are only the more to be destroyed! What said David concerning his adversaries? "They compassed me about; yes, they compassed me about; but in the name of the Lord I will destroy them." When the Last Great Day shall come and Jehovah's banner shall be finally furled because the Book of the Wars of the Lord shall have reached its last page, it will be a grand thing to tell the story of the whole campaign! Then it will be known to all that the fight for the faith was not a mere skirmish against a few feeble folk, nor was it a brief battle which began and ended in an hour—but it was a tremendous conflict "against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." They gather, they

gather, my Brothers and Sisters, thick as the clouds in the day of tempest, but, out of Heaven Jehovah, Himself, will thunder and give battle and scatter them—and they shall fly before Him like the chaff before the wind!

III. Now, lastly, to come down from those high themes to minor matters, **OUR OWN PERSONAL SORROW SHALL BE TURNED INTO JOY.**

When I think of the sorrows of Christ and the sorrows of His Church as a whole, I say to myself, “What pin pricks are our griefs compared with the great gash in the Savior’s side, and the many scars that adorn His Church today!” But, dear Friends, whatever our sorrows may be, they will be turned into joy. Sometimes we witness this wonderful transformation. Poor old Jacob sorrowed greatly when he thought that he had lost his favorite son, Joseph. “An evil beast has devoured him,” he said. “Joseph is without doubt torn in pieces.” And he wrung his hands and wept bitterly for many a day over his lost Joseph. Then came the famine and the poor old man was dreadfully alarmed concerning his large family. He must send some of his sons into Egypt to buy corn, and when he sends them there, they do not all come back, for Simeon is detained as a hostage—and the lord of the land says that they shall not see his face again unless they bring Benjamin with them—Benjamin, the dear and only remaining child of the beloved Rachel! Jacob cannot bear the thought of parting with him, so he says to his sons, “You have bereaved me of my children; Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and you will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me.” Poor old soul, what a mistake he made! Why, everything was as much for him as it could possibly be! There was his dear Joseph, down in Egypt, next to Pharaoh on the throne and ready to provide for his poor old father and all the family during the time of famine! Then there was the famine to make him send down to Egypt and find out where Joseph was, so that he might go and see his face again, and confess that the Lord had dealt graciously with him. You dear children of God who get to fretting and are troubled should carry out Cowper’s good advice—

***“Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His Grace—
Behind a frowning Providence
He hides a smiling face!”***

You have quite enough to cry over without fretting concerning things that, some day, you will rejoice over! The Lord will put your tears into His bottle and when He shows them to you, by-and-by, I think you will say, “How foolish I was ever to shed them, because the very thing I wept over was really a cause for rejoicing if I could but have seen a little way ahead.” It is so sometimes, in Providence, as you will find over and over again between here and Heaven!

Our sorrows, dear Friends, are turned into joy in many different ways. For instance, there are some of us who are such naughty children *that we never seem to come close to our Heavenly Father unless some sorrow drives us to Him.* We ought to be more with Him in days of sunshine, if it

were possible, than in days of storm, but it is not always so. It is said that there are some dogs which, the more you whip them, the more they love you. I should not like to try that plan even on a dog, but I fear that some of us are very much like dogs in that respect, if the saying is true. When we have a great trouble, or get a sharp cut, we seem to wake up and say, "Lord, we forgot You when all was going smoothly. We wandered from You, then, but now we must come back to You." And there is a special softness of heart and mellowness of spirit which we often get through being tried and troubled. And when that is the case, you and I have great cause to rejoice in our sorrows, if they draw us nearer to God and bring us to a clear and more careful walk with Him. If they draw us away from worldliness, self-sufficiency and self-complacency, our sorrows, if we are wise men and women, will be immediately turned into joy!

Again, there is no doubt that, to many, *sorrow is a great means of opening the eyes to the preciousness of the promises of God*. I believe that there are some of God's promises of which we shall never get to know the meaning until we have been placed in the circumstances for which those promises were written. Certain objects in Nature can only be seen from certain points of view. And there are precious things in the Covenant of Grace that can only be perceived from the deep places of trouble. Well, then, if your trouble brings you into a position where you can understand more of the loving kindness of the Lord, you may be very thankful that you were ever put there and may thus find your sorrow turned into joy.

Again, *sorrow often gives us further fellowship with Christ*. There are times when we can say, "Now, Lord, we can sympathize with You better than we ever did before, for we have felt somewhat as You did in Your agony here below." We have sometimes felt as though that prophecy had been fulfilled to us, "You shall indeed drink of My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with." For instance, if friends forsake you—if he that eats bread with you lifts up his heel against you, you can say, "Now, Lord, I know a little better what Your feeling was when Judas so basely betrayed You." You cannot so fully comprehend the griefs of Christ unless, in your humble measure, you have to pass through a somewhat similar experience. But when you perceive that you can sympathize more with Christ because of your own sorrow, then, for certain, your sorrow is turned into joy.

Sorrow also gives us fellowship with our Lord in another way—*when we feel as if Christ and we had become partners in one trouble*. Here is a cross and I have to carry one end of it. But I look around and see that my Lord is carrying the heavier end of it—and then it is a very sweet sorrow to carry the cross in partnership with Christ! Rutherford says, in one of his letters, "When Christ's dear child is carrying a burden, it often happens that Christ says, 'Halves, My love,' and carries half of it for him." It is indeed sweet when it is so. If there is a ring of fire on your finger and that ring means that you are married to Christ, you may well

be willing to wear it, whatever suffering it may cause you. Those were blessed bolts that fastened you to the Cross even though they were bolts of iron that went right through your flesh, for they kept you the more closely to your Lord! Our motto must be, “Anywhere with Jesus, nowhere without Jesus.” Anywhere with Jesus! Yes, even in Nebuchadnezzar’s furnace! When we have the Son of God with us, the glowing coals cannot hurt us—they become a bed of roses to us when He is there! Where Jesus is, our sorrow is turned into joy.

I must not fail to remind you that there is a time coming when “the sorrows of death” will get hold upon us and I want you, Brothers and Sisters, to understand that unless the Lord shall come first, *we shall not escape the sorrow of dying, but it will be turned into joy.* It has been my great joy to see many Christians in their last moments on earth and I am sure that the merriest people I have ever seen have been dying saints! I have been to wedding feasts. I have seen the joy of young people in their youth. I have seen the joy of the merchant when he has made a prosperous venture and I have, myself, experienced joys of various kinds, but I have never seen any joy that I have so envied as that which has sparkled in the eyes of departing Believers! There rises up before me now a vision of the two eyes of a poor consumptive girl—oh, how bright they were! I heard that she must soon die, so I went to try to comfort her. To comfort her? Oh, dear, she needed no comforting from me! Every now and then she would burst forth into a verse of sacred song and when she stopped, she would tell me how precious Jesus was to her, what love visits He had already paid her, and how soon she expected to be with Him forever! There was not, in all the palaces of Europe, or in all the mansions of the wealthy, or in all the ballrooms of the happy, such a merry and joyous spirit as I saw shining through the bright eyes of that poor consumptive girl who had very little here below, but who had so much laid up for her in Heaven that it did not matter what she had here!

Yes, Beloved, your sorrow will be turned into joy! Many of you will not even know that you are dying—you will shut your eyes on earth and open them in Heaven! Some of you may be dreading death, for there is still a measure of unbelief remaining in you, but also in your case, death will be swallowed up in victory! Just as when some people have to take medicine which is very bitter, it is put into some sweet liquid and they drink it down without tasting the bitterness, so will it be with all of us who are trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ when we have to drink our last potion. In a few more days, or weeks, or months, or years—it does not matter which, for it will be a very short time at the longest—all of us who love the Lord will be with Him where He is—to behold His Glory and to share it with Him forever! Have any of you any sorrows that you still wish to talk about? Some of you are very poor and others of you are very much tried and troubled in many ways, but, my dear Friends, when you and I get up there—and we shall do so before long—I think you will have the best of it! If there is any truth in that line—

“The deeper their sorrows, the louder they’ll sing”—

the more sorrows you have had, the more will you sing! Nobody enjoys wealth like a man who has been poor. Nobody enjoys health like a man who has been sick. I think that the most pleasant days I ever spend are they that follow a long illness when I, at last, begin to creep outside and drink in the sweet fresh air again. And, oh, what joy it will be to you poor ones and you sick ones and you tried ones to get into the land where all is plentiful, where all is peaceful, where all is gladsome, where all is holy! You will be there soon—some of you will be there very soon. Dr. Watts says that—

***“There, on a green and flowery mount,
Our weary souls shall sit.
And with transporting joys recount
The labors of our feet.”***

That is to say, the very sorrows that we pass through in our earthly pilgrimage will constitute topics for joyful conversations in Heaven. I do not doubt that it will be so.

In Heaven we shall be as glad of our troubles as of our mercies! Perhaps it will appear to us, then, that God never loved us so much as when He chastened and tried us. When we get home to Glory, we shall be like children who have grown up, who, sometimes say to a wise parent, “Father, I have forgotten about the holidays you gave me. I have forgotten about the pocket money you gave me. I have forgotten about a great many sweet things that I very much liked when I was a child, but I have never forgotten that whipping which you gave me when I did wrong, for it saved me from turning altogether aside. Dear Father, I know you did not like to do it, but I am very grateful to you for it now—more grateful for that whipping than for all the sponge cakes and sweetmeats that you gave me.” And, in like manner, when we get home to Heaven, I have no doubt that we shall feel and perhaps say, “Lord, we are grateful to You for everything, but most of all for our sorrows. We see that had You left us unchastised, we would never have been what we now are and, thus, our sorrows are turned into joy.”

As for you who are not Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, I want you to ponder most solemnly these few words and carry them home with you. *If you remain as you are, your joys will be turned into sorrows. God grant that they may not be, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.*

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

SORROW AT THE CROSS TURNED INTO JOY NO. 1442

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING NOVEMBER 3, 1878,
BY C.H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE NEWINGTON.**

*“Verily, verily, I say unto you, that you shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and you shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman, when she is in travail, has sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembers no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And you now, therefore, have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man will take from you.”
John 16:20-22.*

WE were singing, just now a hymn in which the first verse started a difficult question—

*“‘It is finished.’ Shall we raise
Songs of sorrow, or of praise?
Mourn to see the Savior die,
Or proclaim His victory?”*

The case is very well argued in the second and third verses—

*“If of Calvary we tell,
How can songs of triumph swell?
If of man redeemed from woe,
How shall notes of mourning flow?
Ours the guilt which pierced His side,
Ours the sin for which He died;
But the blood which flowed that day
Washed our sin and guilt away.”*

The conclusion at which we arrived in the concluding verse seems to me to be the right one—

*“Lamb of God! Your death has given
Pardon, peace and hope of Heaven:
‘It is finished.’ Let us raise
Songs of thankfulness and praise!”*

The chief thought connected with the Redeemer's death should be that of grateful praise! That our Lord Jesus Christ died upon the Cross is a very natural cause for sorrow and well may they who pierced Him—and we are all among the number—look unto Him and mourn for their sin and be in bitterness for Him as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.

Before we *know* that we are pardoned, our grief may well be exceedingly heavy, for till sin is put away we stand guilty of the Savior's blood! While our souls are only conscious of our guilty share in the Redeemer's blood, we may well stand aghast at the sight of the accursed tree, but the case is altered when, by faith, we discern the glorious fruit of our Lord's sufferings and know that on the Cross He saved us and triumphed in the deed. The feeling of sorrow at the sight of the crucified Savior is one to be culti-

vated up to a certain point, especially if we take care to avoid mere sentimentality and turn our grief into repentance—the result is “godly sorrow” which works after a godly sort—and it is likely to create in us an intense horror of sin and a strong determination to purge ourselves from all fellowship with the works of darkness.

We do not, therefore, condemn those who frequently preach upon the sufferings of our Lord with the view of exciting emotions of grief in the hearts of their hearers, for such emotions have a softening and sanctifying influence if attended by faith and directed by sound wisdom. There is, however, a middle path in everything, and this needs to be followed, for we believe that such preaching may be carried too far. It is most remarkable and instructive that the Apostles do not appear in their sermons or Epistles to have spoken of the death of our Lord with any kind of regret. The Gospels mention their distress during the actual occurrence of the Crucifixion, but after the Resurrection and especially after Pentecost, we hear of no such grief. If I confine myself to the sayings and writings of the Apostles, I can scarcely find a passage from which I could preach a sermon upon *sorrow* on account of the death of Jesus.

On the contrary, there are many expressions which treat of the Crucifixion in the spirit of exulting joy. Remember the well-known exclamation of Paul—“God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” He had, no doubt, as vivid an idea of the agonies of our Lord as any of us have ever attained and yet, instead of saying, “God forbid that I should cease to weep at the sight of my crucified Master,” he declares that he *glories* in His Cross. The death of Jesus was to him a thing to rejoice in and even to glory in! He kept no black fasts to commemorate the world’s redemption! Note well the exalted key in which he speaks of our Lord’s death in the Epistle to the Colossians—“Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His Cross; and having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.”

When you turn to John’s Epistles, where most of all pathos and tenderness would naturally abound, you hear no weeping and wailing, but he speaks of the cleansing blood which is the very center of the great Sacrifice, in a calm, quiet, happy manner, which is far removed from bursting grief and flowing tears. He says, “If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” This allusion to the blood of Atonement rather suggests joy and peace than woe and agony! “This is He,” says John, “that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood.” And it is evidently to John a theme of congratulation and delight rather than a cause for sorrow that Jesus came by blood as well as by water.

Peter, also, when he mentions the death of his Lord and Master, speaks of “the precious blood of Christ,” but not in words of sadness. And he describes our Lord’s bearing our sins in His own body on the tree, but not in the language of lament. He says of those who suffered for the Gospel, “Re-

joice, inasmuch as you are partakers in Christ's sufferings." Now, if he finds joy in those sufferings of ours which are in fellowship with the sufferings of Christ, much more, I gather, did he find ground for rejoicing in the sufferings of Christ, Himself! I do not believe that the "three hours' agony," the darkened church, the altar in mourning, the tolling of a bell and all the other mock funereal rites of superstition derive even the least encouragement from the spirit and language of the Apostles! Those practical charades in which the Crucifixion is mimicked in many churches on Good Friday are more worthy of the heathen women weeping for Thammuz, or of Baal's priests crying and cutting themselves with knives, than of a Christian assembly who know that the Lord is not here, for He is risen!

Let us mourn, by all means, for Jesus died. But by no means let us make mourning the prominent thought in connection with His death if we have obtained, thereby, the pardon of our sins! The language of our text allowed and yet forbade sorrow! It gave permission to weep, but only for a little while, and then it forbade all further weeping by the promise to turn the sorrow into joy. "You shall weep and lament," that is, His disciples, while He was dying and dead and buried, would be sorely distressed. "And you shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy"—their grief would end when they saw Him risen from the dead! And so it did, for we read, "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord." The sight of the Cross to their unbelief was sadness, and sadness only—but now, to the eye of *faith*, it is the most gladsome sight that ever the human eye can rest upon!

The Cross is as the light of the morning which ends the long and dreary darkness which covered the nations. Oh wounds of Jesus, you are as stars breaking the night of man's despair! Oh spear, you have opened the fountain of healing for mortal woe! Oh crown of thorns, you are a constellation of promises! Eyes that were red with weeping sparkle with hope at the sight of You, O bleeding Lord! As for Your tortured body, O Emmanuel, the blood which dropped, cried from the ground and proclaimed peace, pardon and Paradise to all Believers! Though laid in the grave by Your weeping friends, Your body, O Divine Savior, is no longer in Joseph's tomb, for You are risen from the dead and we find in the songs of Resurrection and Ascension an abundant solace for the griefs of Your death! Like a woman to whom a son is born, we forget the travail for the joy of the glorious birth which the Church and the world may now gaze upon with the utmost delight as they behold in Jesus, "the Firstborn from the dead."

The subject for this morning, then, you will readily guess, is how far we should sorrow for the death of Jesus and how much further we are permitted to rejoice. The first point will be the death of our Lord was and still is a theme for sorrow. But secondly, that sorrow is transmuted into joy. When we have meditated upon these two points we shall for a little space notice a general principle which underlies all holy sorrow as well as this particular form of it.

I. First, then, THE DEATH OF OUR LORD WAS AND IS A TIME FOR SORROW. I make a point of saying it was so because during the three

days of the Savior's burial there was more cause for distress than there can be now that He is risen. To the disciples, first of all, the death of Jesus was the loss of His personal Presence. It was a great delight to that little family to have the Lord always among them as their Father and their Teacher and it was a great grief to think that they should no more hear His loving voice or catch the smile of His Countenance. It brought untold comforts to them to be able to go to Him with all their questions; to fly to Him in every moment of difficulty; to resort to Him in every hour of sorrow. Happy, happy disciples to have such a Master always in their midst communing with them in love, guiding them by His perfect example, animating them by His glorious Presence, relieving all their needs and guarding them from all ills.

Do you wonder that their hearts were heavy at the prospect of His going away from them? They felt that they would be sheep without a shepherd— orphan children bereft of their best friend and helper. Do you wonder, I say, that they wept and lamented when the Rock of their confidence, the Delight of their eyes, the Hope of their souls was taken from them? What would you think if your best earthly friend was hurried away from you by a shameful death? They sorrowed not only because of their own personal loss by His removal, but because He, Himself, was very dear to them. They could not bear that He should be gone in whom their hearts centered all their affection! Their sorrow showed that their hearts were loyal to their Beloved and would never receive another occupant to sit upon the throne of their affections.

They wept and they lamented because their bosom's Lord was gone and His seat was empty. They could not endure the absence of their best Beloved. As pines the dove for its mate, so mourned they for Him whom their soul loved. Whom had they in Heaven if Jesus were gone? Certainly there was none upon earth that they could desire beside Him. They were widowed and they wept and refused to be comforted. Nothing could compensate them for Jesus' absence, for He was their All in All. For His sake they had left all and followed Him and now they cannot bear that they should lose Him and so lose more than all!

You who have been bereaved of those whom you have dearly loved and deeply revered, will be able to guess what kind of sorrow filled the hearts of the disciples when their Beloved said that He was about to go from them and that they would not see Him for a while. This mourning was natural and it is natural that we, also, should feel some regret that our Lord is away from us now as to His bodily Presence, though I trust we have, by this time, learned to see the expediency of His absence and are so satisfied with it that we patiently wait and quietly hope until His next appearing. It added greatly to the disciples' sorrow that the world would be rejoicing because their Lord was gone. "The world shall rejoice."

His eager enemies would hasten Him off to Pilate's judgment seat and triumph when they forced an unwilling sentence from that time-serving ruler. They would rejoice when they saw Him bearing His Cross along the way of dolorous. They would stand around the Cross and mock Him with their cruel gazes and with their ribald speeches—and when He was dead

they would say, "This deceiver can speak no more! We have triumphed over Him who set our pretensions at nothing and exposed us before the people." They thought that they had quenched the light which had proved painful to their darkened eyes and, therefore, they were glad—and by their gladness swelled the torrent of the disciples' sorrow.

Brothers and Sisters, you know when you are in pain or in sorrow yourselves, how very bitter is the coarse laugh of an adversary who exults over your misery and extracts mirth from your tears. This made the disciples smart at their Lord's death. Why should the wicked rejoice over Him? Why should the scornful Pharisee and priests shout insults over His dead body? This rubbed salt into the wounds of the downcast disciples and infused a double gall and wormwood into the cup which was already bitter enough. You do not wonder, therefore, that they wept and lamented when their Lord was put to death by wicked hands. Magdalene weeping at the sepulcher acted as her gracious nature prompted her and she was a fair sample of all the rest.

They had this, also, to make them sorrowful, that His death was, for a time, the disappointment of all their hopes. They at first had fondly looked for a kingdom—a *temporal* kingdom, such as their brother Jews expected. Even when our Lord had moderated their expectations and enlightened their views so that they did not quite so much look for an actual temporal sovereignty, yet that thought that, "this was He that would have restored the kingdom to Israel," lingered with them. If any of them were so enlightened as to believe in a *spiritual* kingdom, as perhaps some of them were in a measure, yet by Jesus' death it must have seemed that all their hopes were shattered. Without a leader, how could they succeed? How could a kingdom be set up when the King, Himself, was slain? He who has been betrayed by coward hands, how can He reign? He that was to be the King has been spat upon and mocked and nailed up like a felon to the gallows of wood—where is His dominion?

He is cut off out of the land of the living—who will now serve Him? Clay cold His body lies in Joseph's tomb and a seal is set upon the stone which shuts up the sepulcher—is this not the end of holy hopes—the final close to all holy ambitions? How can they be happy who have seen an end of their fairest dream? Poor followers of the dead Monarch, how can they have hope for His cause and crown? Doubtless in their unbelief they sorrowed deeply because their hope seemed blasted and their faith overturned. They knew so little of the meaning of the present and guessed so little of what the future would be that sorrow filled their hearts and they were ready to perish! You must remember that added to this was the sight which many of them had of their beloved Master in His agonies. Who would not grieve to see Him hurried away at dead of night from holy retirement to be falsely accused? Might not angels wish to weep in sympathy with Him?

Who can keep from sorrowing when Jesus stands insulted by menials, reviled by abjects, forsaken by His friends, blasphemed by His foes? It was enough to make a man's heart break to see the Lamb of God so roughly handled! Who can endure to see the innocent Savior nailed up there in the

midst of a scornful crew? Who could endure to see His pangs as they were mirrored in His Countenance, or to hear His sorrows as they expressed themselves in His painful cries of, "I thirst"? And in the still sharper agonizing exclamation, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

It is little marvel that it was said of the Virgin that the sword pierced through her heart, for surely there was never sorrow like unto Jesus' sorrow, nor grief which could be likened unto His grief! His heavy woes must have pierced through the heart of all right-minded men who beheld His unexampled miseries and especially must all personal lovers of Christ have felt ready to die, themselves, when they saw Him thus put to death! Oh deeps of sorrow which my Lord has suffered—shall there be no deeps to answer to You? When all God's waves and billows go over You, O Jesus, shall not we, also, be plunged into sorrow? Yes, verily, we will drink of Your cup and be baptized with Your Baptism. We will now sit down before Your Cross and watch with You one hour while love and grief conjointly occupy our souls. Now, at the remembrance of what our Lord endured, every Christian feels sympathy with Him. You cannot read the four stories of the Evangelists and weave them into one by imagination and affection without feeling that the minor key befits your voice at such a time, if you at all attempt to sing. There *must* be—it is natural that there *should* be—sorrow because Christ has died.

One of the sharpest points about our sorrow at Jesus' death is this—that we were the cause of it. We virtually crucified the Lord, seeing it was because we were sinners that He must be made a Sacrifice. Had none of us gone astray like lost sheep, then our wanderings would not have been gathered up and laid upon the Shepherd's head. The sword which pierced His heart through and through was forged by our offenses—the vengeance was due for sins which *we* had committed and Justice exacted its rights at His hands. What loving disciple will refuse to sorrow when he sees that he, himself, has put his Lord to death? Now, putting all these things together, I think I see abundant reason why the disciples should be sorrowful and why they should even express their sorrow by weeping and lamenting. They sorrowed as those do who attend a funeral—for weeping and lamenting abound at eastern funerals.

Orientalers are much more demonstrative than we are and, therefore, at the deaths of relatives they make a far greater show of grief by loud cries and flowing tears. The disciples are represented as using the same forcible expressions to set forth their woe—"You shall weep and lament"—a woe worthy of the buried One whom they mourned. "You shall weep and lament"—there was a double vent for a double sorrow—eyes wept and voices lamented. Christ's death was a true funeral to His followers and caused a crushing sorrow as much as if they had, each one, been bereft of all his house! Who marvels that it was so? "Sorrow has filled your hearts," says Christ. They had no room to think of anything else but His death. Their heart was full to bursting with grief because He was taken from them and that grief was so sharp as to be likened to one of the keenest pangs which Nature is capable of bearing—the pangs of a travailing woman—pangs

which seem as if they must bring death with them, but compared with which death, itself, might be a relief!

The sharpness of their anguish in the hour of their trial was all that they could bear; more would have destroyed them! All this they felt and it is no wonder if we feel, in degree, as they did when we take a retrospect of what the Savior endured on our behalf. So far we are bound to concede that the death of our Lord works sorrow, but there is a moderation even in the most justifiable mourning—and we are not to indulge excessive grief even at the foot of the Cross, lest it degenerate into folly.

II. Now, secondly, the Truth of God expressly taught in the text is that THIS SORROW IS CHANGED INTO JOY. “Your sorrow shall be turned into joy.” Not *exchanged* for joy, but actually transmuted so that the grief becomes joy—the cause of sorrow becomes the source of rejoicing! Begin with what I said was a very sharp point of this sorrow and you will see at once how it is turned into joy. That Jesus Christ died for our sins is a sharp sorrow—we lament that our crimes became the nails and our unbelief the spear—and yet, my Brothers and Sisters, this is the greatest joy of all! If each one of us can say, “He loved me and gave Himself for me,” we are truly happy. If you know by *personal* faith that Jesus took your sins and suffered for them on the Cross so that now your debt is paid and your transgression is blotted out forever by His precious blood, you do not need half-a-dozen words from me to indicate that this which was the center of your grief is also the essence of your joy!

What were it to us if He had saved all the rest of mankind if He had not redeemed us unto God by His blood? We might have been glad from sheer humanity that others should be benefited, but what would have been our deep regret to be, ourselves, excluded from the Grace? Blessed be the Savior’s name, we are not left out! In proportion as we repentantly upbraid ourselves for Jesus’ death, in that same measure may we believingly exult in the fact that His Sacrifice has forever put away our sins and, therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Because God has condemned sin in the flesh of Jesus Christ, therefore He will no more condemn us—we are henceforth free—that the righteousness of the Law may be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit! Heartily do we lament our sin, but we do not lament that Christ has put it away nor lament the death by which He put it away! Rather do our hearts rejoice in all His atoning agonies and glory at every mention of that death by which He has reconciled us unto God. ‘Tis a sad thought that we committed the sin which burdened our Lord, but it is a joy to think that He has taken on Himself our personal sins and carried them away!

The next point of joy is that Jesus Christ has now suffered all that was required of Him. That He should suffer was cause for grief, but that He has now suffered *all* is equal cause for joy. When a champion returns from the wars bearing the scars of conflict by which he gained his honors, does anyone lament over his campaigns? When he left the castle, his wife hung about his neck and mourned that her lord must go to the wars to bleed and perhaps to die. But when he returns with sounding trumpet and

banner held aloft, bringing his trophies with him—honored and exalted by reason of his victories in many lands—do his dearest friends regret his toils and suffering? Do they keep fast correspondent to the days in which he was covered with the sweat and dust of battle? Do they toll a bell on the anniversary of his conflict? Do they weep over the scars which are still upon him? Do they not *glory* in them as honorable memorials of his valor? They reckon that the marks the hero bears in his flesh are the noblest insignia of his glory and the best tokens of his prowess!

So let us not grieve, today, that Jesus' hands were pierced! Behold, they are now "as gold rings set with the beryl." Let us not lament that His feet were nailed to the tree, for His legs are now to us "pillars of marble set upon sockets of fine gold." The face more marred than that of any man is now the more lovely for its marring and He, Himself, despite His agonies, is now endowed with a beauty which even the ravished spouse in the Song could only describe as "altogether lovely." The mighty love which enabled Him to endure His mighty passion has impressed upon Him charms altogether inconceivable in their sweetness! Let us not mourn, then, for the agony is all over and He is none the worse for having endured it. There is no Cross for Him now, except in the sense that the Cross honors and glorifies Him! There remains for Him no cruel spear nor crown of thorns, except that from these He derives a revenue of honor and titles always new which exult Him higher and yet higher in the love of His saints.

Glory be unto God, Christ has not left a pang unsuffered of all His substitutionary sorrows! Of our dread ransom price He has paid the utmost farthing! The atoning griefs have all been endured! The cup of wrath is drunk quite dry and because of this, we, with all the hosts above, will rejoice forever and ever! We are glad not only that the hour of travail is over, but that our Lord has survived His pains. He died a real death, but now He lives a real life! He lay in the tomb and it was no fiction that the breath had departed from Him—it is equally no fiction that our Redeemer lives! The Lord is risen, indeed! He has survived the death struggle and the agony and He lives unhurt! He has come out of the furnace without so much as the smell of fire upon Him! He is not injured in any faculty, whether human or Divine. He is not robbed of any glory, but His name is now surrounded with brighter luster than ever! He has lost no dominion, He claims superior rights and rules over a new empire. He is a gainer by His losses! He has risen by His descent.

All along the line He is victorious at every point. Never yet was there a victory won but what it was in some respects a loss as well as a gain—but our Lord's triumph is unmingled glory—to Himself a gain as well as to us who share in it. Shall we not, then, rejoice? What? Would you sit and weep by a mother as she exultingly shows her new-born child? Would you call together a company of mourners to lament and to bewail when the heir is born into the household? This were to mock the mother's gladness! And so, today, should we use dreary music and sing dolorous hymns when the Lord is risen and is not only unhurt, unharmed and unconquered, but is far more glorified and exalted than before His death? He

has gone into Glory because all His work is done! Shall not your sorrow be turned into joy in the most emphatic sense?

And there is this to add to it, that the grand end which His death was meant to accomplish is all attained. What was that end? I may divide it into three parts. It was the putting away of sin by the Sacrifice of Himself and that is complete. He has finished transgression. He has made an end of sin! He has taken the whole load of the sin of His elect and hurled it into the bottomless abyss! If it is searched for, it shall not be found—no, it shall not be—says the Lord! He has put away our sin as far from us as the east is from the west and He has risen, again, to prove that all for whom He died are justified in Him.

A second purpose was the salvation of His chosen and that salvation is secured. When He died and rose again the salvation of all that were in Him was placed beyond all hazard. He has redeemed us unto God by His blood by an effectual redemption. None shall be enslaved who were by Him redeemed; none shall be left in sin or cast into Hell whose names are engraved on the palms of His hands. He has gone into Glory, carrying their names upon His heart and He stands pleading there for them and, therefore, He is able to save them to the uttermost. “I will,” He says, “that they whom You have given Me be with Me where I am, that they may behold My Glory,” and that effectual plea secures their being with Him and like He when the end shall be.

The grand objective, however, of His death was the Glory of God and, truly, God is glorified in the death of His Son beyond anything that was known before or since! Here the very heart of God is laid open to the inspection of all believing eyes—His justice and His love, His stern severity which will not pass by sin without atonement and His boundless love that gives His best, His darling from His bosom, that He may bleed and die in our place—

***“Here depths of wisdom shine,
Which angels cannot trace
The highest rank of cherubim
Still lost in wonder gaze.”***

Yes, O Christ of God, “it is finished.” You have done all You intended to do! The whole of Your design is achieved—not one purpose has failed, nor even one part of it fallen through—and, therefore, shall we not rejoice? The child is born, shall we not be glad? The travail would have been a subject for great grief had the mother died, or had the child perished in the birth—but now that all is over and all is well—why should we remember any more the anguish?

Jesus lives and His great salvation makes glad the sons of men! Why should we tune the mournful string and mourn like doves? No! Ring out the clarion, for the battle is fought and the victory is won forever! Victory, VICTORY, VICTORY! His own right hand and His holy arm has gotten Him the victory! Though the Champion died in the conflict, yet in His death He slew Death and destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, Satan! Our glorious Champion has risen from His fall, for He could not be held by the bands of death! He has smitten His enemies, but, as for Himself, He has come up from the grave; He has risen as from the heart of the sea!

Let us exult like Israel at the Red Sea when Pharaoh was overthrown! With timbrel and dance let the daughters of Israel go forth to sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously and utterly destroyed all our adversaries.

We have not yet completed this work of changing sorrow into joy till we notice that now the greatest possible blessings accrue to us because He was made a curse for us. Through His death come pardon, reconciliation, access, acceptance—His blood “speaks better things than that of Abel” and invokes all Heaven’s blessings upon our heads! But Jesus is not dead! He is risen and that resurrection brings justification and the safeguard of His perpetual plea in Heaven! It brings us His representative Presence in Glory and the making of all things ready for us in the many mansions! It brings us a share in that “all power which is given unto Him in Heaven and in earth,” in the strength of which He bids us go and teach all nations, baptizing them into His sacred name.

Beloved, Pentecost comes to us because Jesus went away from us! The gifts of the Holy Spirit—illuminating, comforting, quickening, the power to proclaim the Word and the might which attends that Word—all have come to us because He is no longer with us, but through the regions of the dead has passed to reach His crown! And now, today, we have this great joy, again, that because He died there is a kingdom set up in the world, a kingdom which never can be moved, a kingdom whose power lies in weakness and yet it is irresistible! It is a kingdom whose glory lies in suffering and yet it cannot be crushed! It is a kingdom of love, a kingdom of unselfishness, a kingdom of kindness, truth, purity, holiness and happiness! Jesus wears the imperial purple of a kingdom in which God loves men and men love God! Having proved Himself the Prince of self-sacrificing love, He is justly exalted to the throne amid the acclamations of all His saints!

His kingdoms, shapeless as it looks to carnal eyes, like a stone cut out of a mountain without hands, will, nevertheless, break all the kingdoms of this world to shivers in due time and fill the whole earth! His kingdom will grow and extend, till, from a handful of corn upon the top of the mountains its fruit shall so increase that it shall shake like Lebanon! It is a kingdom which shall comprehend all ranks and conditions of men, men of all colors, of all lands and nations, encircling all even as the ocean surrounds many lands. The unsuffering kingdom of the suffering Shepherd, inaugurated by His death, established by His Resurrection, extended by the Pentecostal descent of the Holy Spirit and secured by the Eternal Covenant is hastening on. Every winged hour brings it nearer to its perfect manifestation. Yes, the kingdom comes! The kingdom whose foundation was laid in the blood of its King at Calvary!

Happy are they who are helping it on, for when the Lord shall be revealed, they, also, shall be manifested with Him. The Chief among 10,000 and the 10,000 who were with Him shall stand side by side in the day of victory, even as they stood side by side in the hour of strife. Then, indeed, our sorrow shall be turned into joy! There we must leave the subject, only noticing this one fact, that that joy is right hearty joy. “Your hearts shall

rejoice," said the Savior. Ours is no superficial mirth, but heart-deep bliss! That joy is also abiding joy. "Your joy no man takes from you." No, nor devil, either! Nor time nor eternity can rob us of it. At the foot of the Cross there wells up a flashing, sparkling fountain of joy which can never be dried up, but must flow on forever! In summer and in winter shall it be and none shall be able to keep us back from the living flood, but we shall drink to the full forever and ever!

III. And, now, my last point is THE GENERAL PRINCIPLE INVOLVED IN THIS ONE PARTICULAR INSTANCE. The general principle is this, that in connection with Christ you must *expect* to have sorrow. "You shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice." But whatever sorrow you feel in connection with Jesus, there is this consolation—the pangs are all birth-pangs—they are all the necessary preliminaries of an ever-increasing, abounding joy! Brothers and Sisters, since you have come to know Christ, you have felt a smarter grief on account of sin. Let it continue with you, for it is working holiness in you and holiness is happiness.

You have felt, of late, a keener sensibility on account of the sins of those around you. Do not wish to be deprived of it—it will be the means of your loving them more, praying more for them and seeking more their good—and you will be the better qualified to do them real service and to lead them to your Lord. Perhaps you have had to bear a little persecution, hard words and the cold shoulder. Do not fret, for all this is necessary to make you have fellowship with Christ's sufferings that you may know more of Him and may become more like He. You sometimes see the cause of Christ as it were dead and you are grieved about it, as well you might be. The enemy triumphs; false doctrine is advanced; Jesus seems to be crucified afresh, or hidden away in the grave, forgotten, as a dead man out of mind. It is well that you should feel this, but in that very feeling there should be the full persuasion that the Truth of Christ cannot long be buried, but waits to rise again with power!

Never did the Gospel lie in the grave more than its three days. Never did a lion roar upon it but what it turned and tore the enemy and found honey in its carcass in later days. Whenever the Truth of God seems to be repulsed, she does but draw back to take a more wondrous leap forward! As when the tide ebbs out very far, we expect it to return again in the fullness of its strength, so is it with the Church. If we see a small fall in the tide we know that it will not rise very far, but when we see the stream sinking right away and leaving the river-bed almost dry, we expect to see it roll in at flood tide till the banks overflow! Always look for the triumph of Christianity when others tell you it is defeated! Expect to find in the very quarter where it is covered with most disgrace and shame, that there it will win its most glorious laurels! The Truth's superlative victories follow upon its worst defeats.

Have faith in God. You tell me you have that. "Then," says your Master, "you believe in God, believe also in Me." Believe in Christ! Trust in Him! Rest in Him! Fight for Him! Labor for Him! Suffer for Him, for He must conquer! Even now does He sit as King upon the hill of Zion and soon the heathen shall become His inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth

shall be His possession! Your sorrow shall be turned into joy in all these cases. Whenever your sorrow is the result of your belonging to Christ, always congratulate yourself upon it, since as the spring begets the summer, so does sorrow in connection with Christ bring forth joy to us in the Lord! By-and-by will come your last sorrow—unless the Lord should suddenly appear, you will die. But be content to die! Look forward to it without the slightest alarm! Death is the gate of endless joy and shall we dread to enter there? No, Jesus being with you, meet death joyfully, for to die is to burst the bonds of this death which everywhere surrounds us and to enter into the true life of liberty and bliss. Even to the end, sorrow shall be to you the birth-pang of your joy! Carry that thought with you and be always glad.

With one remark I finish. I will not dwell upon it, but leave it to abide in the memories of those whom it concerns. I present it to the minds of all those who are *not* believers in Christ. Did you notice that the Lord said, “You shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: you shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.” Now, what is implied there to complete the sentence? Why, that the world’s joy shall be turned into sorrow! Even so shall it be. There is not a pleasure which the ungodly man enjoys when he is indulging in sin but what will curdle into grief and be his sorrow forever. Depend upon it that the wine of transgression will sour into the gripping vinegar of remorse which shall dissolve the rebel’s soul! The sparks which now delight you shall kindle the flames of your eternal misery! Every sin, though sweet when it is like a green fig, is bitterness itself when it comes to its ripeness.

Woe unto you that laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep! Woe unto you that now rejoice in sin, for you shall gnash your teeth and weep and wail because of that very Christ whom you now reject! All things will soon be turned upside down. Blessed are you that mourn *now*, for you shall be comforted. But woe unto you that are full this day, for you shall hunger! The sun will soon be set for you that rejoice in sin. Sadness, like a thick cloud, is now descending to surround you eternally in its horrible gloom! Out of that cloud shall leap the flashes of eternal Justice and from it shall peal the thunderclaps of righteous condemnation!

“Upon the wicked He shall rain snares, fire and brimstone and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup.” The Lord deliver you from such a doom by leading you, now, to yield to Jesus and to believe in His name. May He grant this prayer for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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JOY IN PLACE OF SORROW

NO. 2525

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“And you now, therefore, have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man takes from you.”
John 16:22.

Joy is the normal condition of a Believer. His proper state, his healthy state, is that of happiness and gladness. As I have often reminded you, it has become a Christian duty for Believers to be glad. “Rejoice in the Lord,” is a precept given to us over and over again and I believe that, broadly speaking, the general condition of God’s people is one of joy. It is not a falsehood if we say, “Happy are you, O Israel!” True Christians are the happiest people under Heaven. They have many sorrows, but there is a text which says, “As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.” And old Master Brooks has a good note upon the passage. He says that it does not say, “As sorrowful, yet *as* always rejoicing.” The “*quasi*”—the “*as*”—relates only to the *sorrow*. The joy is real, without any “*quasi*.” Christians have *quasi* sorrow, but they have *real* rejoicing! They are oftentimes as if they were sad—yes, as if they were, of all men, most miserable, but in the very depths of their soul they have “the peace of God which passes all understanding,” to keep their heart and mind through Christ Jesus.

I will venture to assert that Christians, at least, always have matter for joy. They are never short of material out of which they may make melody unto the Lord! If they will, they may rejoice, for they have plenty of causes for joy. The Lord has done great things for them and they ought to add, “Therefore we are glad.” And, as they have plenty of matter for joy, so they have ample motive for joy, for when they joy and rejoice, they glorify God, they prove the reality of their faith and they make their religion attractive to others!

The joy of the Lord is their strength, their beauty, their charm. There are always reasons why a Christian should be happy and as he has matter for joy and motive for joy, so he always has a measure of joy! He may seem to be overwhelmed with trouble, but his boat still floats. He may seem to run short of joy, as the widow in Elijah’s day ran short of meal and oil, but there shall always be a cake for him to eat and a little oil shall still remain in the cruse. His joy shall never utterly fail him—he shall always have a sufficient measure of hope to enable him to keep his lamp alight in the darkest night.

Above and beyond all this, the Christian always has a remainder of joy which shall be his in due time. What he has not yet in his own hand, is in the pierced hands of Jesus, held there fast and safe against all comers! And he may and he should always sing—

***“Glory to You for all the Grace
I have not yet tasted.”***

Some people have but little in possession at present, but they have a reversionary interest in a large estate. And it is so with us. We have a heritage of joy that as yet we have not entered upon, but it is ours by a covenant of salt, and none can break the sacred inheritance. So let us again take up the language of the hymn we sang at the beginning of the service—

***“The hill of Zion yields
A thousand sacred sweets,
Before we reach the heavenly fields,
Or walk the golden streets.”***

Thus you see, dear Friends, that Believers have matter for joy, motive for joy, a measure of joy already possessed and a greater remainder of joy yet to be realized! God’s people are a happy people, a blessed people. May my soul always be numbered among them!

Now, coming to the text, which is intended to promote our joy, I gather two observations—first, that the Lord Jesus *enters into our sorrows*. He does not overlook them, but He says, “You now, therefore, have sorrow.” Secondly, *the Lord Jesus creates our joy*. “But I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man takes from you.”

I. First, then, dear Friends, you who are sorrowful, listen to this former part of the discourse. THE LORD JESUS CHRIST ENTERS INTO OUR SORROWS.

One point in which He enters into them is this—He *sees our quickness in sorrowing*. Perhaps you did not notice that in the text, but it is there. You observe, in the 20th verse, that Jesus said to His disciples, “You shall be sorrowful,” and He compared them to a woman in travail. But then He did not say what we might have thought He would have said, “You *will*, therefore, have sorrow,” but He said, “You *now*, therefore, have sorrow.” He saw their faces begin to pale before the sorrow had really come. He had not gone away from them, for there He stood in their midst—but in the expectation that He would go, their eyes began to grow dim and the tears commenced to roll down their cheeks, so He said as He looked at them, “You now, therefore, have sorrow.” And, Beloved, you and I also are very quick at this work of sorrowing. I wish that we anticipated our joys with half the readiness that we anticipate our sorrows! We would be much happier if we did, but there is many a child of God who cries long before he is hurt and sorrows long before his troubles actually come to him.

We often run to meet our troubles—we seem as if we were hungry to have our mouth full of bitterness and eager to drink the waters of Marah. It is a pity that it should be so with us. These disciples had not yet lost their Master—He was still with them and a child-like spirit might have

said, "Ah, well, blessed Master, if You are only going to be with us five minutes, we may as well be happy for that five minutes! If You are going away in half-an-hour, at any rate You are here as yet. Let us not begin to be cast down until the parting moment really comes." "Ah!" you say, "but it was very natural that they should begin to sorrow." Yes, and that is exactly what I say. It is very natural, it is so wonderfully natural that it is pretty nearly *universal* with us! But it is not any the better for being natural, is it? You take your medicine when the proper time comes for taking it, but do not be taking it all day long! There are many Christian people who chew their pills instead of swallowing them. If they took their sorrows when they came and accepted them as having been sent straight from God, there would not be half the bitterness in their mouths that there now is when they begin to think concerning some future trial, "Oh, it is coming! I know it is coming! I can see that it is coming!" The shadow of the sorrow is often worse than the sorrow, itself, and as Young speaks of him who "feels a thousands deaths in fearing one," so I doubt not that we often feel a thousand sorrows in anticipating one. They will come soon enough, Brothers and Sisters—do not go to meet them! Go forth to meet the *Bridegroom*, but there cannot be any particular need to meet your *troubles*. Let them come when they must come—and welcome them—but why should you conjure up those which, perhaps, have no existence at all?

Notice, next, that our Lord has a very quick eye to observe our *sorrows which relate to Himself*. He says, "You now, therefore, have sorrow." That is, "sorrow because I am going away from you. Sorrow because I am about to die." I think that the Lord loves His people to have that kind of sorrow. While the Bridegroom is with the children of the bride chamber, it is fit and comely that they should rejoice. But when the Bridegroom is gone, it is loyalty to Him and it is a fit and comely thing that they should sorrow. Now, Brothers and Sisters, whenever your heart gets heavy because you have lost your Lord's company, it is a proper sorrow. Whenever you hear His name blasphemed, whenever you find false doctrine preached instead of the Truth, whenever you see men undermining the blessed Gospel, when you notice apostates turning this way and that and forsaking the paths of Christ, you *should* sorrow. And, if you do, I believe that your Lord looks upon such sorrow as a token of your loyal affection to Him and, so far from condemning it, He justifies it and He says, "You now, therefore, have sorrow." He looks at the reason for it and He says, "This is not a causeless grief."

He did not blame the disciples for sorrowing when He was gone. No, He expected that they would do so and He saw the reason for their grief and spoke tenderly of it. If there can be found a reason for the sorrow of a child of God, Christ will find it. I know that, often, worldlings are unable to understand our sorrow. They say, "Why does this man fret and worry? He has everything that heart can wish." But the Savior knows the secrets of the soul and He puts His finger on the source of our grief and says, "You now, therefore, have sorrow." And if that, "therefore," is be-

cause of something touching Himself and His Kingdom, and His work in the world, He justifies the sorrow and He will help us to bear it and, in due time, He will remove it! Let us, then, bless our Lord Jesus Christ that while He knows how quick we are to sorrow before we need to, yet He does approve of our sorrowing when there is a need for it and specially when it concerns His own dear Self.

Observe, further, that our blessed Master is quick to notice *the limit of our sorrow*. Take your pencil, if you will, and put a black mark under that third word in our text, “And you now, therefore, have sorrow.” I feel as if I could almost kiss that word, “You now, therefore, have sorrow.” What does that word, “now,” mean? Well, sometimes, it only means just the next few minutes—“You now, therefore, have sorrow.” But, “now,” cannot mean long—if, “you now, therefore, have sorrow,” it does not mean that you will have sorrow forever! Listen—“Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.” “Many are the afflictions of the righteous.” Did you ever read that in the Psalm? Sing it in deep bass tones! Growl it out if you will! “Many are the afflictions of the righteous.” Up rises another singer and sends up the soprano note higher than my voice can go—“But the Lord delivers him out of them all!” And that glorious note seems to kill the other. “You now, therefore, have sorrow.”

Ah, but what is that little “now”? It is a mere drop that trembles on my fingertips! It is “an inch of time, a moment’s space.” “You now, therefore, have sorrow.” Perhaps tomorrow morning all that sorrow will be over and if not, that, “now,” is driving away on red-hot axles and will soon be gone! And there shall come the hereafter of endless joy and boundless bliss. Our Lord Jesus Christ recollects this fact when you do not. You say, “I am so sorrowful, so broken down.” And the Savior puts His dear pierced hand on you, and He says, “Yes, you are so *now*, that is all. It is only *now*, and it will all soon be ended. And then you will take your harp down from the willows and sing and rejoice with the happiest and the merriest of the saints of God.”

Notice, also, that the Lord Jesus Christ so enters into our sorrow that *He has an eye to the outcome of it all*. He says to each Believer, “Yes, dear Child, you have sorrow, you have great sorrow, but you know what it is to produce. A woman, when she is in travail, has great sorrow, but in a short time her sorrow is turned into joy when her child is born into the world.” So every sorrow of a child of God is the birth pang of a joy. I do not know whether you have noticed, but I have, that most of our joys, if they are of an earthly kind, are very expensive before long. You cannot delight in the creature without sorrow coming of it. You cannot love your wife, your child with a most lawful and laudable love, but one of these days it will be most expensive love—when the loved ones are taken away, or they sicken and suffer. The more we love them, the more they cost us! But our *sorrows* are fish that come to us with money in their mouths. Whenever they come, they always bring us joy! If you dig round the roots of a deep sorrow, you shall find tubers of joy, with stores of heavenly bliss laid up in them! They who sorrow for Christ shall soon have Christ

to make them forget their sorrow. They who sorrow for His Kingdom, or sorrow for more of His righteousness, or sorrow for more of His likeness, or sorrow for closer communion with Him shall, before long, find to the delight of their soul that their sorrow is turned into joy!

Is not that a wonderful promise? “Your sorrow shall be turned into joy.” If any man here were greatly in debt and someone were to say, “All your debts shall be transformed into assets,” well, it is clear that then the richest man here would be the man that had the biggest debts! So is it with our sorrows—the more of them that we have, the more joys we shall have, because they are to be turned into joy. If, as Believers, we have much sorrow, we shall have much joy coming out of it! Therefore, with the Apostle, “we glory in tribulations, also,” and triumph in the afflictions and trials of this mortal life, seeing that they shall work our lasting good.

Once more upon this first point, our Lord Jesus Christ sees that our sorrows *will come to an end*, for He says, “You now, therefore, have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice.” The Lord knows that His people are not hopelessly locked up in prison, they are not to be eternally in the shade. They shall soon come out of their sorrows and the darkness shall be turned into the brightness of the day. Our Lord can see this and He would have us see it, too, so He points it out to us. O sons and daughters of sorrow, I pray the Comforter to apply this Word with power to your souls!

II. Now I have to play on a higher string. Let me have your most earnest attention while I dwell for a little while on the latter part of our subject—the Lord Jesus creates our joy. He says, in the second half of the text, “I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man takes from you.”

Observe, first, that when the Lord Jesus Christ comes to make His people glad, He *always touches the very center of their grief*. The disciples’ grief was that Jesus would soon be gone from them. “Well,” He said, “I will see you again.” So, Beloved, when the Lord Jesus shall come to you in your hour of sorrow, He will touch the center of your grief, whatever it is. There is a wonderful adaptation in the Word of God to the peculiarities of all His people. There are some very odd texts in the Bible—do you know why they are there? It is because there are so many odd people about—and those texts are meant specially for them! You may see upon a locksmith’s ring a number of strangely-shaped keys—it is because there are so many strangely-made locks! And in God’s Word there is a key to fit every lock. There is a key for the strange lock that is inside your heart, my Brother or my Sister, and the Lord knows how to meet your case exactly and to touch your out-of-the-way, singular, special, peculiar, idiosyncrasy of sorrow! He can get at it and put it right away from you.

Notice, next, that *the Good Physician makes the plaster wider than the wound*. He says not what we might have thought that He would say, “You will sorrow because you cannot see Me, but you shall see Me again.” That

plaster would have just fitted the sore, but He says, "*I will see you again.*" That is a great deal better! That covers the sorrow and covers all the wounds of all God's people right down to this day, for though we do not see Him again just yet, yet He is still seeing us again as much as ever He saw those disciples when He stood in the midst of them and said, "Peace be unto you." Oh, I love this Characteristic of my Master that, when He meets a poor Believer who asks Him for a penny, He says, "Here, take seven." When we knock at His door and say, "A friend, who is on a journey, has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him; lend me three loaves," He says, "Take as many as you need." His liberality far outruns our needs and our desires—and He is both able and willing "to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." So that our Lord Jesus Christ creates our joy by touching the very center of our grief and then by covering it with that which is greater than the grief itself!

Note, further, whenever the Lord Jesus Christ comes to one of His sorrowing people to give him joy, He *gives it most effectually*. What does He say to His disciples? "I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice." That is more than any mere man could say. When I get to talking with God's downcast people, I can say to them, "I will see you again and talk with you again, and I shall be glad if I can make your heart rejoice." But I can never be sure that I shall succeed in cheering them. You and I, dear Friends, are very poor comforters, and we often fail. But when the Good Physician comes to any of His patients, He knows how to make the medicine effectual! "*I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice.*" See how the Lord Jesus Christ handles human hearts. This morning we had a grand subject in which we showed how the Lord, in His Omnipotence, by His authority and power, cast out devils with a word. [Sermon #1765, Volume 30, *An Astounding Miracle*—read/download the entire sermon for free at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>] And here we have another instance of His Omnipotence! He does not say, "I will try to cheer your heart." He says, "Your heart shall rejoice," just as if He had our hearts in His hand and could do with them as He pleased, which is really the case! His Divine Spirit can now so effectually apply the comforts of the Word that it shall not be said, "You *ought* to rejoice," but, "You *shall* rejoice." The Lord can lift up the light of His Countenance upon us till we are glad in Him.

I want you also to notice that while the Lord's application of joy to the heart is very effectual, it is *very deep and very full*. "I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice." When the worldling is glad, you hear him laughing from his teeth outwards! He puts on a merry look, yet all the while there is heaviness in his heart. His wine vats are full to bursting and the sound of the buyer is in his ears, but there is a fear in his conscience and his soul is disquieted. But when the Lord Jesus Christ comes to deal with His people, He deals with their *hearts*, with the inmost core of their being, with the very center of their soul! "Your heart shall rejoice." Do you not know what this experience is, beloved Brothers and Sisters? I think you do. Sometimes you could not explain your joy, it is too deep—it is so excessive that words and noise of any kind seem

quite out of place. You need to get alone and, in the silence of your soul, sit still, like David before the Lord, and there to drink in full draughts of His love. "I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice."

True Christians need never covet the poor joy of worldlings. We cannot fall into the insanity of living with such miserable ends and objects as those which are compassed within the short pale of our existence here below. It has become slavery to us and I bear witness for myself and for you, also, that we do not forsake the pleasures of the world because we think that we are denying ourselves! It is no self-denial to us, for they would not please us. I have gone by a whole line of sties and seen the pigs feeding greedily, but I never thought that I was denying myself because I did not feed with them. I never wished to have a law passed that the unclean beasts should not have their swill. No, let them have it, and as much as they can eat! And we say just the same of the pleasures of the carnal man. We do not envy him that which is so great a relish, it is no self-denial to us to go without it—we have come out of that style of living and we do not want to go back to it. When the man says that he is perfectly happy and satisfied, we think, "Just so, no doubt you are, and we have seen many a fat bullock in the field look perfectly content." But Christians have different pleasures and higher joys! And we cannot be bullocks, we cannot be swine. We have been brought out of that kind of merely animal life! We have been lifted up into another and a higher style of living and it is nothing short of a miracle of the Divine hand which has brought us right out of it, so that we have done with it forever, and loathe it, and could not go back to it under any circumstances whatever! Old things are passed away! Behold, all things are become new. The Lord has brought us out of the region of darkness into His marvelous light and delivered us forever from the power and dominion of Satan!

I saw, the other day, a blind fish that had been accustomed to live in a dark cave. It had not any eyes and it did not *need* any eyes because it lived where light never came. There are some people who are just like that fish—they are perfectly satisfied to be blind and, what is more—there are some blind persons who declare that there is no such thing as light, for they say that they never saw it! Just so—they have not any eyes with which to see it. The carnal mind cannot understand the things of God. There is not the faculty in it by which it can understand them. The carnal mind has not the Spirit of God! Spiritual things must be spiritually discerned and until God, the Holy Spirit, comes and creates in us the eye-faculty called the spirit, by which we become body, soul, and spirit, we are like the blind fish which has no eyes. We are just mere men, but not men of God. We have not passed into the new world of spiritual perceptions. But, by the Grace of God, many of us have been made partakers of the Divine Nature and so have been permitted to share the joy of which our text speaks.

But I must get to the end of my discourse by reminding you that the glory of the Christian's joy lies in the fact that it is *permanent*. "Your joy no man takes from you." "Well," says one, "I wonder what that joy is?"

Let me tell you and then I will close. The sorrow about which Christ spoke to His disciples was that He was going away from them. Therefore the joy of which He spoke is that now He sees us again! I want you, dear Friends, specially to notice, as I have already told you, that it does not say that *you* see Him, but that *He* sees you and, therefore, to you, Peter's words may be applied, "Whom having not seen, you love; in whom, though now you see Him not, yet, believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

What, then, is our joy? It is, first, that Christ is not dead. He is alive, He is risen from the dead! Next, He reigns as well as lives, and He reigns for us—He is ruling all things on our behalf and, as He sees us with His royal eyes, He also pleads for us before the eternal Throne of God! And He is coming again! We know not when, but we know that He is coming quickly and that He is already on the road. He shall descend in like manner as they saw Him go up into Heaven.

All this is the joy of the Christian which no man takes from him! No man shall ever take from me the joy that Christ rose from the dead! I know that He did—there is no historical fact that is so certainly attested as this, that Christ died, was buried and, on the third day, rose again from the dead! And therein I do rejoice, yes, and will rejoice! If He rose not from the dead, then my preaching is vain and your faith is also vain—but as He surely rose from the dead, then every trouble has gone. I do not think that those poor disciples had any joy while Christ was in the grave. They could not rejoice then. Their big sorrow swallowed up all joy. And I do not think that if you and I were what we ought to be, we should have any sorrow, now that Christ is out of the grave—the joy because He has risen ought to swallow up every sorrow that we have—it should be a joy that no man can take from us!

There is this further joy that no man can take from me, that Jesus Christ reigns, King of kings and Lord of lords! I have often told you how, many years ago, that doctrine saved my reason. And I am alive and here to preach because of that glorious Truth of God. After the terrible tragedy in the Surrey Gardens Music Hall, my mind seemed to fail me, and my reason reeled. I had to get away and be alone. And so I walked about a friend's garden. Someone watched me, for they did not know what might happen to me—I was so unmanned that I did not seem able to pray or to read the Scriptures. But as I was walking in the garden, there came to me this passage, "Therefore God also has highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name." And I said to myself, "I am a poor soldier, wounded in the battle, and lying in the ditch. But there rides the King and all is well with Him, for He is King of kings and Lord of lords!" I seemed to rouse myself up out of the ditch and cry, "Hallelujah be to His blessed name!" and in that moment all my faculties returned to me! I walked into the house, and said, "I am perfectly well. I can preach next Sunday." And I did preach, the following Sabbath, from the text that had been so blessed to my own heart and mind. [Sermon #101, Volume 2, *The Exaltation of Christ*—read/download the entire sermon for free at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>]

What matters it what becomes of me? Whether I live or whether I die, no man can take this joy from me, that Jesus Christ lives, reigns, triumphs and that He shall surely come to judge the quick and the dead according to my Gospel!

I preach to you, Beloved, a joy that no man takes from you! If you begin to live by your own feelings, you will sometimes be up and sometimes down, and be always unsettled. Now live on this Truth of God—first, that Jesus died. Then if you believe on Him, you died in Him. Next, that He was buried and that your sins were buried with Him. Then, that He rose again and you rose in Him—and now that He lives and reigns forever and ever, your cause is safe in His hands and apart from your cause altogether, your spirit may rejoice that the cause of right, the cause of truth, the cause of God, is secure beyond all hazard because He who went away from us for a little while, though we have not seen Him, yet sees us, and our hearts do and will rejoice in Him! Blessed be His holy name!

I wish that all of you shared in this joy, but those who do not believe in Jesus cannot. Dear young people, I have a great longing that very early in life you should be reconciled to God by the death of His Son. It is such a joy to know the Lord early that I cannot understand why so many wish to put it off. There is a young man who wants to be married and he wrote to me to ask whether, on a certain day, I could marry him. I could not, for I could not be here, so I proposed to him to wait a week till I came back. Instead of which, he proposed that it should be a week *earlier*, as he said, to accommodate *me*! I notice that there is no wish to put off a wedding and I do not wonder that it is so, but I do marvel that, in the far higher joy of being married to Christ, the greater and truer delight of becoming one with Him forever, so many want it to be a week later, or a month later, or even a year later!

Oh, did you know that happy day when Jesus puts our sins away—if there were a time fixed and you knew it—I think you would grow almost impatient to have it even earlier! Do not postpone this heavenly marriage, I pray you, who have been at enmity against God! Do not put off being reconciled to Him, for he who fights with God had better quickly end the battle! So be silent and end all your discussions with God without a word unless it is such a word as this, “Lord, I believe! Help You my unbelief!” God grant that you may be led to believe in Jesus *now*, for His name’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: JOHN 16:16-33.

Our Lord is speaking to His disciples before His departure from them to be crucified, and He says.

Verse 16. *A little while, and you shall not see Me: and again, a little while, and you shall see Me, because I go to the Father.* It is wonderful how He could talk thus calmly about His death, knowing that it would be a death of bitter shame and terrible agony. Yet He does, as it were, pass

over that view of it as He says, "A little while, and you shall not see Me: and again, a little while, and you shall see Me."—"Because I die?" No. "Because I am crucified?" No, but, "Because I go to the Father." Beloved, always think of your departure out of the world in the same light—"I go to the Father." Do not say, "I die. I languish upon the bed of pain. I expire." No, but, "I go to the Father."

17, 18. *Then said some of His disciples among themselves, What is this that He says unto us, A little while, and you shall not see Me: and again, a little while, and you shall see Me: and, Because I go to the Father? They said therefore, What is this that He says, A little while? We cannot tell what He says. Then why not ask Him? But are not you and I often very slow to ask the meaning of the Master's Words? You read in Scripture something that you cannot understand, and you say to yourself, "I cannot make out the meaning of that chapter." But do you always pray over it and ask the Writer to tell you what He intended when He wrote it? It is a grand thing to have this Inspired Book. But it is a grander thing, still, to have the Spirit of God, who inspired it, abiding with His people forever! But we fail to learn many a secret from the Word because we do not pray our way into it. He who does not know can scarcely have his ignorance pitied when it remains willful. If you can know for the asking, why not ask?*

19. *Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask Him, and said unto them, Do you inquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and you shall not see Me: and again, a little while, and you shall see Me? They might have inquired a long while among themselves and all in vain! But to go to their Lord was the short way out of the difficulty, for He could explain it. See how ready He is to explain, for He expounds the Truth even to those who had not asked for an exposition! In this matter, He was found of them that sought Him not. Knowing that they were desirous to ask, He accepted the will for the deed, the wish for the prayer—and He answered the secret longing of their heart.*

20. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, That you shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice. "I am going away from you, and while I am gone, it will be all weeping and lamenting with you, but while I am gone the world shall have its hour of triumph—it shall think that I am slain and that My cause is defeated."*

20, 21. *And you shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail has sorrow because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembers no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. So, when Christ came back again, they would remember no more the sorrow of their travail hour in which they saw Him bound, spat upon and taken off to execution—and mocked upon the tree. The joy that would come of it all would obliterate the remembrance of the sorrow!*

22, 23. *And you now, therefore, have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man takes from you. And in that day you shall ask Me nothing. "You shall not need to make, anymore,*

inquiries of Me, for everything shall then be explained to you by the Spirit.”

23. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatever you shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it to you.* “This shall be one fruit of My passion, that, henceforth, whatever you shall ask of the Father, in My name, shall be given to you; and though you may not, perhaps, address your prayers to Me personally, yet addressed to the Father, in My name, they shall succeed.”

24. *Hitherto have you asked nothing in My name.* “You have not yet learned how to use My name in prayer.” Our Lord had not yet taught them so to pray, but now we know what it is to ask in the name of Christ—it is to pray with the authority of the risen and glorified Son of God!

24. *Ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full.* See how our Lord continues to drive at that point, for He would have His people happy. He wants you, Beloved, to be joy-full—full of joy! Not merely to have a little joy hidden away in a corner somewhere, but, “that your joy may be full.”

25, 26. *These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time comes when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall show you plainly of the Father. At that day you shall ask in My name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you.* Though that is, indeed, what our Lord does!

27. *For the Father Himself loves you.* “The Father, whom you are so apt to think of as sterner than Myself, and further off than I, the Son of Man am, ‘the Father Himself loves you.’”

27. *Because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came out from God.* Have you, dear Friends, love to Christ? Do you believe that Christ came forth from God? Then does the Father give His special love to you!

28. *I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world. Again, I leave the world, and go to the Father.* Had He not clearly explained what He meant by being absent a little while, and then coming back again?

29, 30. *His disciples said unto Him, Lo, now speak You plainly, and speak no proverb. Now are we sure.* Now they can give reasons for the hope that is in them. “Now are we sure.”

30. *That You know all things, and need not that any man should ask You. By this we believe that You came forth from God.* They are very positive, but notice the check that our Lord put upon all this confident assurance!

31, 32. *Jesus answered them, Do you now believe? Behold, the hour comes, yes, is now come, that you shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone.* Whenever there is any boasting upon your lips, even though you may think that you can rightly say, “Now we are sure,” stop a bit, dear Friends, stop a bit! We have not, any of us, all the good we think we have. No, they who think themselves perfect think the most amiss. They are altogether mistaken and there is some latent unbelief even where faith is strongest. Christ still asks, “Do you now believe?”

You have only to be sufficiently tried and to be tempted long enough—and in that very point where you think you are strongest you will fail. “Now are we sure,” say the confident disciples. “Ah,” says Christ, “do you now believe? Behold, the hour comes, yes, is now come, that you shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone!”

32. *And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.* How gloriously is that blessed Truth of God put in just here! The awful solitude that Christ was about to pass through can hardly be understood by us. It was not only that every friend forsook Him, but that there was not, under Heaven, a single person who could sympathize with Him. He was going through deeps that no other could ever fathom. He was to bear grief which no other could ever bear! You may, indeed, sip of His cup, but you can never drink it to its dregs as He did! You may be baptized with His baptism; but into the depths of the abyss of woe into which He was immersed, you cannot go. “Alone! Alone!” Never was there a human being so much alone as was the Man, Christ Jesus, in that dread hour! And yet He says, “I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.” O brave Master, make us also brave! May we be willing to stand alone for Your sake, and to feel that we are never so little alone as when we are alone with You!

33. *These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me you might have peace.* Your Lord wants you to have peace. Come, then, you tried ones, you who are tossed about with a thousand troublous thoughts—it is Your Master’s wish and will that you should have peace!

33. *In the world you shall have tribulation.* You have found that true, have you not? Perhaps you are finding it true just now. “In the world you shall have tribulation.”

33. *But be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.* And in that overcoming He has conquered for you, also, and He guarantees to you the victory in His name!

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NO. 2800

**A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, OCTOBER 12, 1902.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 3, 1878.**

*“In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I shall pray the Father for you, for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God.”
John 16:26, 27.*

THE present time in which we live is highly favored and ought to be highly valued. Let us never grudge the Patriarchs their communion with God when, sometimes, He spoke personally into their ear, or revealed Himself visibly to them. Blessed are our eyes, for they see, and our ears, for they hear the things which kings and Prophets waited for in vain. That which was denied to them has been revealed to us and we are, therefore, peculiarly privileged. Though John the Baptist, living on the very verge of the Gospel dispensation, was the greatest man who had been born of woman, yet the least in the kingdom of Heaven is greater than he—and we are now living in that kingdom of Heaven, although there is, at present, much to mar the glory of the reign of Christ on earth. Be grateful, therefore, O you sons of men who are also sons of God—be grateful that you live in this truly golden age, for, with all its sorrows and all its shortcomings, it is an age of great mercy and of high privilege!

I venture even to set the present period above that brave age in which Jesus dwelt here among men. We are very apt to look upon that time as being the sunniest era which the Church of God ever enjoyed, yet it was not so. The dispensation of the Holy Spirit is of a higher order than the dispensation of the humiliated and suffering Savior. That was the day of the Church’s childhood, when her Lord instructed her by pictures and taught her letters, but kept back many of the grander and deeper Truths of God because she was not able to bear them. But now the Holy Spirit has been given to lead us into all Truth and He takes of the things of Christ and shows them to us. It was but the twilight of the Gospel dispensation, or only its dawning hour when our Lord was here. True, He is the Sun of Righteousness, but His disciples saw only a little of His Glory, for their eyes were but slightly opened and they had less of the Light of God from Him than we have, though the blessedness of His corporeal personal Presence is denied to us.

At that time there was much backwardness in prayer even among the Apostles of Christ. Just before our text, we read that Christ said to them,

"Hitherto have you asked nothing in My name." We read of our Master praying—

***"Cold mountains and the midnight air,
Witnessed the fervor of His prayer"—***

but we read very little about the prayers of the disciples. They did once get as far as to say, "Lord, teach us to pray," but very little did any of them seem to know, then, of the power of prayer. Now, the Lord has not only taught us to pray, but He has also given us the Holy Spirit to help our infirmities and to make intercession for us with groaning which cannot be uttered. In many other respects upon which I need not, now, dwell in detail, we are far in advance of the highly-favored 12 who remained with Christ, or the privileged 70 who were sent forth by Him to teach, to preach and to heal the sick. It is a blessed period in which we live and I want you who are believers in Christ to prize your privileges. If you have been lamenting your lot, I want you to feel that your birth could scarcely have been at a more auspicious period and that to be living in the time when the Spirit of God has been given—and His sacred influences are exercising their power in the Church—is a high honor which God has granted to you!

I am led to make these remarks because our text commences with the words, "At that day," which is the present period, the time when Christ has returned to His Father's right hand after His terrible death-pangs on Calvary—the period when we are no longer full of sorrow because He died, but our sorrow has turned into joy on His account and on our own, too. It is "at that day" that the blessings I am going to speak of are given to us, so that we are even now enjoying them, or ought to be doing so.

Taking the text as referring to the period in which we live, I notice, first, *the Believer's daily exercise*—"In that day you will ask in My name." Secondly, we have *the Believer's privileged position*—"I do not say to you, that I shall pray the Father for you, for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God." Then, thirdly, I shall try, practically, to suggest what should be *the Believer's natural conclusion* from the blessed Truth of God which is here revealed to us.

I. First, then, let us notice THE BELIEVER'S DAILY EXERCISE. It is to ask and to continue asking—"In that day you will ask in My name."

It is a very simple matter to ask, but how gracious it is, on the part of God, to append to such a simple thing as asking the promise of giving! He has not said, "Deserve the blessing," but, "Ask for it." He does not say, "Purchase it," but, "Ask for it." Not, "Labor until you at length procure it by your own toil," but, "Ask for it." Brothers and Sisters, if Heaven is to be had for the *asking* and if all that is needed to bring us to Heaven is to be had for the *asking*, who would not ask? Whatever else a Believer may fail to do, he should never fail, surely, in asking! If we have never asked God for anything at all, we may be quite sure that we were never converted. A prayerless soul must be a Christless soul. But if we are really in Christ, we must have practiced the sacred art of asking and we

ought to go on continually with it. If there is any difficulty in our minds, let us ask, for the Holy Spirit can solve it. If there is any need in our homes, let us ask, for our Heavenly Father can supply it. If there is any weakness in our spiritual nature, let us ask, for God can strengthen us. If there is any longing desire of our soul which even leads to great heaviness of spirit, let us ask, for our desire can be granted if it is a right one—and our heaviness can be removed. To ask, my Brothers and Sisters, is very simple—and let the Lord’s name be praised that, usually, the best asking is that which is the most simple!

To ask anything of God does not require that you should use a set form of words. The children in your family do not read a petition to you when they need any favor at your hands—they state their need in childish language—you understand them and grant their request if it is a right and proper one—and compliance with it is within your power. Act in just the same way with your God! We are often far too careful about picking and choosing the phrases that we use in prayer. Do you think that God is pleased with a display of oratory, or that He takes notice of your elocution when you come to the Throne of Grace? It may suit a teacher of English composition to criticize your sentences, but God thinks much more of your *desires* than of the words in which they are expressed. It may be natural for a scholar to consider the accuracy of your terms, but God especially marks the earnestness of your soul. There is no other place where the heart should be so free as before the Mercy Seat. There, you may talk out your very soul, for that is the best prayer that you can present. Ask not for what some tell you that you should ask, but for that which you feel the need of—that which the Holy Spirit has made you to hunger and to thirst for—ask for that.

Ask always. Your whole life should be spent in asking! When the morning breaks, ask for the mercy needed during the day. And when the day has closed its eyelids and you go to your bed, ask for the protection and rest that you need during the night. Ask when your voice can be heard only by your God in secret. And ask when your tongue may not be able to move, but only your spirit whispers into the ear of God. Never hesitate to ask because of the greatness of the blessing you desire. The Lord is a great God though you are so little—and He delights to give great things to those who ask them at His hands. And be not backward to ask because of your unworthiness. You can never have any worthiness of your own—therefore, if a sense of unworthiness would check your prayer, now, it might always hinder you from praying. Yet the Lord bids you pray, so it must be right for you to pray! Ask when you have fought for something and cannot win it. Ask when you have toiled for it and cannot gain it—ask and have it! Come before your God in all the rags of your sinfulness and conscious ill-desert and ask, for that is all you have to do. “Ask, and you shall receive,” is the message that shines out with heavenly radiance over the Mercy Seat. Read it and obey it—open your mouth wide, for God will fill it.

Our Lord told His disciples that in addition to asking, *they were to ask in His name*—“In that day you will ask in My name.” That is the most delightful way of asking. We often say, at the end of our petition, “Lord, grant it, for Jesus’ sake,” and that is a very proper plea. It means, “Because of what Jesus did, will You not deal well with me? I have done nothing that can ensure a favorable answer to my supplication, but will You not give it to me because Jesus deserves it? For His sake, hear me, O Lord!” That is a good way to pray, but it is a still better way if you can use the name of Christ and ask in His name. You know what you do at a shop when another bids you go there and purchase goods in his name and charge them to his account. Or suppose that you have authorized your servant to go to a certain shop and you have said to the trader, “Whatever he comes for in my name, let him have it.” Perhaps he has no money of his own. Possibly he is a very poor person, but, armed with your authority, he can get from that trader as much as you could get if you were to go. His warrant carries him as far as your name has weight. So, Jesus says to us, “Use My name when you are speaking to My Father.” “And how far may I go in using that name?” As far as Christ Himself can go! Whatever power there is about the name of Jesus, whatever influence it has in His Father’s heart, that power and that influence we are permitted to exercise in prayer! My Lord, I used to ask You to do certain things for Your Son’s sake, but now I come with a still stronger plea, for He has bid me use His name and ask that You will do for me even as You would do for Him. My Father, if You can refuse your First-Born, then you can refuse me. And if I am asking for such a thing as He could not ask for, neither would I wish to ask for it—I desire to make this the gauge of my prayer, both for its extent and for its acceptance. If He would have refused to pray it, so also would I. And if that which I ask at Your hands seems a blessing to me, but would not have seemed a blessing to Him, I would say, “Not as I will, but as You will,” that I may still be able to use His name. No right-minded man would use another person’s name improperly—and if you are asking God for something for yourself merely with a selfish motive, you must not defile that blessed name of His by linking it with such a prayer as that! But, using His name aright, you have great liberty and a high privilege in being permitted to come and pray, not only for the sake of Jesus, but also in the *name* of Jesus!

Our text tells us that this asking in the name of Christ is to be the constant exercise of Christians “in that day.” What is that day? According to the context, it is *the time of persecution*—“They shall put you out of the synagogues, yes, the time comes that whoever kills you will think that he does God a service.” At such a time as that, Christians are sure to pray. We have not, perhaps, in England, at the present day, a tenth of the prayer that used to go up in the dark days of Queen Mary. Ah, Beloved, when Brothers and Sisters are in prison for the faith—when they are likely to be laid on the rack—when the little church has to be called together because the pastor is to be burned tomorrow morning and the young people all want to be up early to stand round and to cheer him

with their weeping eyes if they cannot do anything more for him. And when the youngsters come home and their fathers ask them why they went there, they say they went to learn the way if they should have to die in the same manner themselves—ah, then, prayer is a reality! And when they gather together in out-of-the-way corners and in lonely caverns—when they dare not raise their voices lest the watchers should hear them and take them to prison—yet, in solemn undertones they cry unto the Lord—then it is real prayer! It is that effectual fervent prayer of righteous men that avails much. Then it is, if ever, that the Church of God does really pray! If any of you are, in your little way, at all subject to persecution, be sure to pray, for our Savior said, “In that day you will ask in My name.” Let that persecution be a sort of reminder to you of your duty and privilege! If you have been at all slack in prayer and somebody treats you ill for Christ’s sake, say, “Now is the time for me to pray more earnestly than ever, for Jesus said, especially of the time of persecution, ‘In that day you will ask in My name.’”

If you read further on in the chapter, you will find that “that day” is *when the Spirit of God has instructed the followers of Christ*. “In that day,” He said, “you shall ask Me nothing.” That is, “You shall put no questions to Me, for the Spirit of God shall instruct you. He shall glorify Me, for He shall receive of Mine and shall show it unto you.” Now, the more Light of God and understanding a man gets from Heaven, the more he will pray. If there is any so-called light that makes a man lax in prayer, that light is darkness. Some time ago, when there were a great many people about who professed to be perfect, I heard of one who had grown so conceited that she said her mind was so conformed to the will of God that there was no need for her to pray because her mind and God’s mind were so perfectly at one. Yes, and when a person imagines that he is so good that he need not pray, he had better begin by crying, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” I daresay you have heard of those people who climb so high up the ladder that they fall down the other side—and that is exactly what people do when they begin to carry any Truth of God to extravagance and push a point beyond its legitimate issues. That which makes you cease to pray is of the devil, so say to him, “Get you behind me, Satan.” The very suggestion that you can do without prayer must have come from beneath—it cannot have come from above. The more the Spirit of God teaches a Christian the things of God, the more it makes him ask in the name of Jesus Christ.

Once again, that day is *a day of great joy*—“your sorrow shall be turned into joy...In that day you will ask in My name.” Perhaps someone says, “But sorrowful times are good time for prayer, are they not?” I grant you that they are, but, oh, when sorrow is turned to joy, doubt gives place to faith and Hope, herself, becomes eclipsed by a measure of delightful fruition—then is the time to pray! When your heart is ready to dance and your mouth is full of sweetness, then draw near to God in prayer. When He has given you most, then ask all the more from Him! Suppose this is a good day with you—a day of glad tidings—then seize

such a good opportunity to pray! There is a high tide in your affairs just now—then take it at the flood, that it may lead you on to spiritual wealth and wash you up high and near to your God! O Beloved, if ever in your lives you pray, let it be especially when the Lord reveals Himself so graciously to you that your heart is glad and your glory rejoices! Let that be a day of asking in the name of Jesus Christ!

Brothers and Sisters, I wish I could speak even more impressively upon this most delightful theme. For if there is one point, more than others, that touches the very vitals of Christian existence, it is this prayerfulness—this asking of God and receiving from Him in answer to our earnest believing supplication. Is prayer a reality with you, dear Friends, or is it a mere mockery? Is it a sort of religious rite that you feel bound to perform, or has it become as essential to your spiritual being as breathing is to your natural being? Is it now to you a matter of course that you should pray? Is it as natural for you to ask of your Father who is in Heaven as it is for your little children to ask of you who are fathers on earth? I feel that it must be so with me—not praying merely because I ought, but because I love the sacred exercise—not praying at a certain hour because it is the set time for prayer, but praying because I *want* to pray, praying because I *must* pray! A man scarcely needs to be reminded that he must breathe. It is essential to his very life that he should breathe and it is essential to our spiritual life that we should pray. I never thought it necessary to prepare a discourse to exhort you to eat, neither ought it to be necessary to exhort Christians to pray. It should be to you an instinct of your new nature, as natural to your spiritual being as a good appetite is to a man in health. There should be a holy hunger and thirst to pray. And the soul never prays so well as when it is reminded, not by the hour of the day or night, but by its real needs—and when it resorts to its place of private prayer, not because it thinks it ought, but because it feels that it must, and shall, and will go there—and is delighted at the privilege of having communion with its God!

My objective, in the second part of my sermon, will be to stir you up to such a feeling as that, so I will say no more upon this first portion of my theme, the Believer’s daily exercise—“In that day you will ask in My name.”

II. Well now, secondly, we have THE BELIEVER’S PRIVILEGED POSITION with regard to praying.

Believers ought to be abundant in prayer because, first, *they have the holy Spirit to prompt them*. Is that in the text? Yes, or, at least it is implied in the text, for Jesus says, “In that day you will ask.” But how could He affirm so positively that we should ask unless He intended to send His Spirit to lead us to ask? The promise is, itself, *a guarantee that He will see it fulfilled!* So we have the Holy Spirit to prompt us to pray—but not merely to prompt us to pray, but to tell us for what we should pray, “for we know not what we should pray for as we ought” until He teaches us! Someone perhaps asks, “Why do you pray, when everything is settled by the Divine decree?” It is true that everything is so settled and it is for that

very reason that we pray! The Spirit of God leads us to desire exactly what God has decreed and though we cannot open and read the book of His decrees, the Holy Spirit can read that book, so He guides us to pray in accordance with its secret records—and He also makes intercession for us “according to the will of God.” “For what man knows the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so, no man knows the things of God, but the Spirit of God.” And what the Spirit of God knows to be the mind of God, He makes our mind to be, also, and thus we also pray “according to the will of God.” A true prayer is the echo of the eternal purpose of God. We say that “coming events cast their shadows before them” and our prayers are the shadows before God’s mercies. Who would not pray when prayer becomes to him a consecrated mystery in which one Person of the Sacred Trinity operates upon his mind and excites his desires? It ought to lead us to be much in prayer because our prayers are prompted by the Holy Spirit—

**“Pray, always pray, the Holy Spirit pleads
Within you all your daily, hourly needs.”**

Next, we ought to be much in prayer *because we have the high honor of being allowed to use the name of Christ in our prayer*—“In that day you will ask in My name.” If a king were to entrust us with his seal, or if that king had the power to make money as fast as he willed it simply by his signature—and he allowed us the use of that signature—I do not think many of us would remain poor. If he would only give us that privilege, we would take care to make considerable drafts before we had finished with his seal and signature! And our Lord Jesus does, as it were, take off the signet ring from His finger and says to His servants, “Ask in My name.” And, therefore, we issue drafts upon the Infinity of God! There is no limit put to our requests except this, “All things, whatever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive.” Oh, how this ought to encourage us to pray! Shall we allow such a golden opportunity as this to pass by unused? O Believers, with the Holy Spirit to tell you what to ask and the Lord Jesus to endorse your asking, will you not pray without ceasing?

But, beyond all this, there is the great encouragement to constant prayer which we derive from the fact that *our Lord Jesus Christ is continually making intercession for us*. Our poor prayers are blotted, blurred and stained with sin. But our Great High Priest sprinkles them with His own most precious blood and so purifies them, and then, with His own dear hands, He lays them before the Mercy Seat—and for His sake they are sure to be accepted! “If any man sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” And He is always pleading for us. So, as we have a Divine Intercessor within the veil who never forgets to present our prayers before His Father’s Throne of Grace, how boldly ought we to come to the Mercy Seat! And what large things we ought to ask of God in Christ’s name!

Our text, however, seems to me to suggest that our Lord Jesus wished to prevent His disciples from making a mistake concerning His intercession, so, on this occasion, He said, “I do not say to you, that I will pray

the Father for you.” There was no need that He should say that just then, for He had already said it a great many times, so He needed not to repeat it. But, at that time, He seemed as if He meant to say, “I do not want you to exaggerate even My intercession at My Father’s expense. I will intercede for you, but you must not imagine that I do so because My Father is unwilling to hear you when you come to Him in My name. You must not get into your minds the strange idea that, by My pleading, I shall make My Father willing to bless you, for the Father Himself loves you.” This brings us to a very precious point which is that we should be greatly encouraged to pray, not only because the Spirit prompts us and the Son intercedes for us, but *because the Father Himself loves us*.

Oh, how we ought to pray now that we have the ear—no, more, the very *heart* of the King! To have such a Teacher as the Holy Spirit and such an Advocate as our Lord Jesus Christ ought to be a great encouragement to us—but to have the heart of the King, Himself, is best of all! “The Father Himself loves you.” You know, dear Brothers and Sisters, that shallow thinkers often make mistakes concerning the Father and the Son in relation to the Atonement. They think that the Atonement of Christ was necessary to make the Father love His people, whereas the Truth of God is that the Father, *because* He loved His people, gave His only-begotten Son to make propitiation for them! God was always love, as truly love as the Son was and is—we must make no mistake about that matter. So, concerning Christ’s intercession, there is a tendency, in certain quarters, to fall into the error of supposing that the Father is difficult to please and that Jesus must pacify Him before He will grant our requests. It is not so, “for the Father Himself loves you.” I think that when a sinner is coming to God, he had better, at first, fix his eyes wholly upon Jesus the Mediator, but as for those of us who have believed in Jesus, we are forgiven, we are in a totally different position from that in which the unbeliever stands. We have had our sins blotted out and we may come to the Father Himself—of course, always coming through the Mediator—yet all the while rejoicing in His gracious assurance, “The Father Himself loves you.”—

**“Pray, always pray, though weary, faint, and lone,
Prayer nestles by the Father’s sheltering Throne.”**

The text says that the Father loves us *because we have loved Jesus, and have believed that He came forth from the Father*. Do not make the mistake of imagining that the love of God to us is caused by our love to Christ. Oh, no! “We love Him because He first loved us.” The first love of God is a love of benevolence—a love of compassion—a love towards the unworthy and the undeserving. God, out of love, forgives us and saves us, but there is another love, besides that, which we must never forget. When He has brought us to love His dear Son—when He has brought us to trust in Him because we believe that He came forth from the Father, then the Father has a love of complacency and delight toward us. You can easily see the difference between the two kinds of love, for it is often illustrated in human history. A man finds a poor child in the street and

he takes pity upon it, carries it into his house, clothes it and cares for it. That is one kind of love—the love of benevolence. But suppose that child should develop into a beautiful boy, or a lovely girl, who, with engaging manners, should ingratiate himself or herself into the very heart of the one who was so kind to it in earlier days? Then there springs up a second sort of love.

The man says, “I loved that child when I picked it up, a bundle of rags and filth, and misery, but look at its loveliness now! See how this little one takes to the rest of the family—see how grateful it is—how it loves me! I cannot help loving it more than I did at the first.” That is another kind of love altogether, and the Lord has just such a love as that, only of an infinitely higher kind, toward all who trust and love His Son! You know that the Father loves Jesus Christ so much that when He sees that you, also, love Him, He loves you all the more for that reason. He had unbounded confidence in Christ when He sent Him into the world—and when He sees that you, also, have confidence in Him, He loves you, too, for you two are agreed upon that matter. Nothing binds people together so much as a common love to the same object. If there is some one person who is dear to both, there is at once a tie between the two. How often a husband’s heart is held firmly by the wife because, between the two, there is a little one who is dear to both of them! Perhaps, in some foolish fit of anger, they might have parted from one another, but their child is the bond that holds them together. And between us and our God, in a sense infinitely above my poor comparison, there is a wonderful union because He confides in Jesus, and we confide in Him, too. He loves Jesus, and we love Him, too, and now, because of this, our Savior says to us, “The Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God.”

I cannot explain this marvelous mystery, but I want you who know that you do love Christ, and believe that He came forth from God, to open your whole souls and try to take in this sublime Truth of God, “*The Father Himself loves you.*” Not, “pities you.” Not, “promises to help you.” Not, “considers you,” but, “the Father Himself loves you.” It is no use attempting to explain what love is—you must feel it if you would realize what it is. You did not doubt your mother’s words when you were little and she caught you in her arms and said, “I love you.” You believed her, you rested in her love and you returned it as far as you could. So the great God says to you, “I love you because you love My Son. There are many faults and failings in you, but you love My Son, so I love you.” Did you not say, just now, “Lord, you know all things, you know that I love You”? You said that to the Lord Jesus and, because it is true, the Father Himself loves you! I remember when one of the sweet passages in Solomon’s Song came home to my heart with absolutely ravishing power—it seemed to carry me right out of myself—it was that verse in which the Heavenly Bridegroom says to His spouse, “You are all fair, My love; there is no spot in you.” That is what the Lord says to His people as He sees them in Christ. When He perceives that they love Christ, He calls them

His Hephzibah, that is, "My delight is in her." "The Father Himself loves you." This little sentence is not so much a theme for preaching as for quiet meditation! You need to get alone into your chamber, sit down and just ring that silver bell again, and again, and again, "the Father Himself loves you." Do you love *me*? Why should He love *me*? How can He love *me*? Yet Jesus knows and, as He says it is so, then so it is, glory be to His holy name!

III. I have little time left to speak of THE BELIEVER'S NATURAL CONCLUSION which he is to draw from these words of Christ.

He says, first, "*If all this is true, then, what power I have!* What power I have at the Mercy Seat with the Spirit to prompt me, Christ to plead for me and the Father, Himself, smiling at me as I come—and saying to me, 'Come and welcome, for I love you; none can be more welcome than you are. Come, My child, ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.'" But, Beloved, have you ever really believed that you have this power? Have you not asked and hoped when you ought to have asked and *believed*? Have you not asked as if there was just a bare possibility that you might be heard? Have you not prayed as though your many pleadings and your abundant tears *might* move the hard heart of God? Has not your supplication often been presented on some such theory as that? If so, I hope that in future you will be able to rise to the Believer's true position and say, "I am God's child and He loves me—and coming to Him through Jesus Christ His Son, and moved by His Holy Spirit, I will ask of Him whatever I need, for I know that I shall receive that which I have asked of Him in the name of Jesus and for His sake."

If you ever realize that you have that power, (and I earnestly hope that you will), *take care that you use it.* Use it for your children, use it for all your relatives, use it for any of the seat-holders who sit near you and are unconverted. Pick them out and pray for them by name—and be not content till you hear that they are saved! May I ask you also to use this power in prayer on my behalf? I shall be so rich if you who have power with God will pray for me! My preaching will be poverty-stricken if you cease to pray for me. You who can pray, I beg you to plead with God for His Church, for His Truth, for His cause on the earth. These are dark days, but you can bring on a spiritual summertime if you know how to pray that effectual fervent prayer of the righteous man that avails much. The Truth of God seems, for a while, to be suffering defeat, and the battle for the right waxes hotter and fiercer, but the banner of victory will soon float in the breeze if you know how to pray aright! The praying legion is the conquering legion! Bring to the front the men and women who can pray—and the devil will tremble and flee, for well he knows that those who are mighty with God are mightier even than he is. The history of the future depends very largely upon the prayers of the present. If you and other Believers restrain prayer, you may help to bring on long, dark, chilly winters for the Church of God—but if you and they are aroused to go up, as Elijah went to Carmel and if, with your face between your knees, you cry mightily unto the Lord God of Israel, surely, as the Lord lives,

you shall see the skies covered with clouds and there shall be “a sound of abundance of rain.”

I speak reverently, yet truthfully, when I say that the keys of Heaven swing at the belt of the man who knows how to pray. I mean not commonplace praying, such as some practice, but such prayer as I have been speaking of—prompted by the Spirit of God—first purified and then presented by the Savior—and offered by a man who knows that the Father Himself loves him. I am awestruck as I think of the tremendous power of which prayer is capable. It is not Omnipotent, yet it commands Omnipotence. It is not Omniscient, yet prayer is as the very eyes of God! He who can truly pray has first read the heart of God and then spoken out what is there. Prayer overcomes the Eternal! What more can I say of it? When Israel sinned against the Lord, Moses pleaded for the guilty nation even after God had said to him, “Let Me alone, that My wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of you a great nation.” But the prevailing prayer won the day, for, “the Lord repented of the evil which He thought to do unto His people.” May God teach you, who are loved of the Father because you love the Son, to pray such a prayer as that of Moses!

In a specially-careful manner, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, we ought to mention the answers to prayer which we have received. It would not be prudent, proper, or even possible, to mention all of them, for there are love passages in prayer between Christ and the soul which never must be told unless it is in choice company, and on rare occasions. Some of our communing with the Lord Jesus are too sacred, too spiritual, too heavenly ever to be spoken of this side the gates of pearl—but the bulk of the Lord’s replies to our petitions are such as might be written across the skies, that every eye might read them. Make sure that you do not bury these gracious facts in the lead of ingratitude. Imitate David, who tells us in Psalm 118:5, “I called upon the Lord in distress: the Lord answered me, and set me in a large place.”

Yes, and do not only declare how God answers prayer, but tell of the power of faith in all the ways in which it moves itself. Sit down at the fireside and talk of faith’s doings to your children, that they may tell them to their children and to the generations yet to follow—that all men may know that all things are possible to him that believes. Recount the fulfillment of promises to faith, deliverance from trouble through faith and the enjoyment of supreme happiness through faith. Sound it forth in all your neighborhoods that, “It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes.” Ring out clearly such words as these—“Trust you in the Lord forever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.” Tell everybody why you know that it is so, for you have turned to friends in the time of trouble and they have given you the cold shoulder. You have even been foolish enough to hope for help from great men who had it in their power to aid you, but they have looked down upon you with disdain and wondered how you dared to ask such aid from their high mightiness!

Let all men know that the Majesty of Heaven has never thus treated your humble appeals. From the Throne of the Highest there has never come a harsh reply, or a contemptuous rejection of your lowly suit. No, the Lord has been better to you than even your hope expected or your faith believed! God has answered you richly, helped you efficiently, gladdened you abundantly and filled your spirit with a sweet content. Truly, God is good to Israel! It is no vain thing to wait upon the Lord. The path of faith is the path of strength and safety!

How unhappy is the lot of some here present who never pray! It matters little what other power you possess—if you have no power with God, you are powerless! To those who never pray, or who insult God with an empty form of prayer in which there is no heart, there will come a day when *they will pray*. As surely as they live and die as they now are, they will pray! But their prayers will not be answered. Dives prayed for a drop of water to cool his burning tongue, but his request was refused, for it was too late to pray, then—yet he might have had the Water of Life to drink had he prayed while he was upon the earth! It is in Hell that prayer, of a sort, abounds, but the answer to such petitions is, “Because I have called, and you refused; I have stretched out My hand, and no man regarded; but you have set at nothing all My counsel, and would none of My reproof; I, also, will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear comes.” Ask now, I entreat you, for God will hear you if you call upon Him now. But “when once the Master of the house is risen up, and has shut the door,” no knocking “at that day” will avail to get it open again! No pleading, moaning, groaning, crying or wailing will then prevail, for prayer will have had its day, and Justice, with drawn sword, will stand before the Mercy Seat, barring the way to it forever.

The Lord bring you all to believe in Jesus, and to fervently love Him with a pure heart before it be too late, for His dear name’s sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—782, 735.

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

ALONE, YET NOT ALONE

NO. 2271

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, AUGUST 28, 1892.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 2, 1900.**

“Jesus answered them, Do you now believe? Behold, the hour comes, yes, is now come, that you shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.”
John 16:31, 32.

OUR Lord looks for faith as the result of His teaching and I think that I hear Him say, at the end of every service, “Do you now believe? You have listened. You have made remarks about the speaker—do you now believe? You have been made to feel, you have brushed the tears away, but do you now *believe*? For anything short of believing leaves you short of salvation.” I would like to put the question of my text to every hearer in this great house tonight. You have listened, now, to years of sermons—“Do you now believe?” You are getting gray. The Gospel is very familiar to you—you have heard it preached for many, many years—but, “do you now believe?” This is the crucial point. According to your answer truthfully given to this question, you may decide as to your condition before God, “Do you now believe?”

Christ loves faith wherever He sees it. It is to Him a precious thing. To you who believe, He is precious, He is an honor. And upon Him you who believe confer all the honor it is possible for you to confer. Your trust adorns Him with jewels, your confidence in Him puts the crown on His head! But our Lord is very discriminating. He distinguishes between faith and presumption, and between faith and *our idea of faith*. These disciples now said that they were sure—“Now are we sure that You know all things, and need not that any man should ask You.” “Yes! Yes!” the Savior seemed to say, “That is your measure of your own faith. But I do not measure it in the same way that you do.” If there are any here who say, “As to the matter of faith, I need no caution, I scarcely need admonition, I believe! Oh, you cannot tell how firmly.” No, my dear Friend, and perhaps *you* cannot tell how *weakly* you believe. At any rate, do not mistake your belief in your own faith for faith in Christ, for belief in your own faith may be only self-conceit, while faith in Christ gives glory to God and brings salvation to the Believer!

To take the disciples down a notch, the Savior reminds them that whatever faith they had, they were a long while coming to it. “Do you *now*

believe? *Three years* have I been teaching you. *Three years* have I worked miracles in your midst. *Three years* have you seen Me and you might have seen the Father in Me, but after all this time have you at last come to a little faith?" Oh, Friends, we have never any reason to boast of our faith, for we have been very long coming to it! We now trust Christ—I hope that many of us can sincerely say that we lean all our weight on Him. We believe in God, we believe also in His Son, Jesus Christ—but it took months to drive us out of our self-confidence! It took *years* to lift us out of despair! It has taken all this time for the Lord, in the power of His own Spirit, to work out what little faith we have!

Then our Lord reminded them of another thing still more humbling—that as their faith was long in coming, it might be very *quick in going*. "Do you now believe?" He asks. "Behold, the hour comes, yes, is now come, that you shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone." O Beloved, a little trouble arises—an unforeseen difficulty occurs—and where is your faith? A little persecution, the idle banter of an unbeliever, the sarcasm of an agnostic—and where is your faith? Is it not so with many, that while in good company they can almost brag of their faith, but if the company is changed, they certainly have no faith to brag of? The men who were so glib of tongue are now quiet and though, before, they wore their helmets bedight with plumes, they would now hide them away, and hide their *heads*, too, if they could! They are ashamed of Him, now, in whom, once, they gloried! O Friends, let him that glories, glory only in the Lord! Let the Believer never boast of his believing, lest he be reminded how long he was in coming to it, and how soon he may be parted from it!

Our Lord's disciples did not very readily take this caution. I do not suppose *any of them took it*. Certainly Peter did not, and the rest of them were very much like he. When Peter said to Jesus, "Though all men shall be offended because of You, yet will I never be offended." And, "Though I should die with You, yet will I not deny You." Then we read, "Likewise also said all the disciples." We may say, tonight, "There is no man among us who will ever be a traitor to Christ! There is no woman here who will ever grow cold of heart!" That is our self-flattery. What others have done, however base and mean, we, too, are capable of doing. If we think we are not, it is our *pride*, and our pride, alone, that makes us think so. Our Savior, therefore, to call the particular attention of His disciples to their danger, said, not merely, "the hour comes," but, "*Behold*, the hour comes." He puts in a, "Behold!" An, "Ecce!" As the old writers used to put a hand in the margin, or an N.B., note bene, to call attention to something special, so the Savior puts, here, a, "Behold!" "Look here!" "See this!" You who have just put on your armor think that you have won the victory—"Behold, the hour comes, yes, is now come, that you shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone."

I pray you, therefore, Brothers and Sisters, and I speak to myself as well as to you, *let us learn the lesson of our frailty*. And though we are honestly trusting in Christ, tonight, let each one cry, "Hold You me up

and I shall be safe.” Let the prayer go up from all of you who are in these galleries, and from all who are sitting downstairs in those pews, from the most experienced and established of you, as well as from those who have but recently been brought to know the Lord—let each one cry, “Lord, keep me, for I cannot keep myself!” Alas! Alas! We have seen even the standard-bearers fall! And when that is the case, how sadly do the common soldiers mourn! They who stood like rocks have been made to totter. God keep us! Christ of God, keep us by Your eternal Spirit! Amen.

Now I am going to take you away from that prefatory consideration, still keeping, however, much in the same vein. Let us learn, tonight, from our Lord, first, His trial—“You shall be scattered every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone.” Secondly, His confidence—“And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.” And then, thirdly, His example, for in all this, we are to follow His steps. May we, if we have our Lord’s trial, also have His confidence because we imitate His example!

I. First, then, notice OUR LORD’S TRIAL, for the same may happen to you.

He was left alone. Why, those 11 Apostles that are around Him, and to whom He is talking, surely *they* will not leave their Lord! They are so sure that they will stand any fire that may be directed against them—and yet not *one of them* will stand firm. They will all forsake Him and flee. In the Garden, the three who are His bodyguards will fall asleep and the rest of the disciples will do the same! And when He stands before Pilate and Herod, none of them will be there to defend Him—*not a solitary voice will be lifted up for Him.*

The sure ones left Him whom they so certainly believed—and they were honest men, too, when they spoke so confidently. There was no hypocrisy about what they said. They meant it! They did, each one, verily believe that he could go to prison and to death, and that he would do so rather than deny his Lord. In their own esteem, they were not boasting—they were only saying what they really intended to do. Here is the bitterness of your trial, when, in your hour of need, your good, honest friends are gone—your real friends fainting and weary. They cannot go your pace. They cannot confront the storm that you are called upon to face—and they are gone. Alas, for our dear Lord, what grief it was to Him! They who were so confident and they who were really true, yet, nevertheless, were scattered—and He was left alone.

They also *really loved Christ.* I am sure that Peter’s was not a new love when he said, “You know all things; You know that I love You.” He did love his Master. Even when he denied his Lord there was love in his heart towards Him. So was it with the other disciples—they all loved their Lord—yet all of them left Him! And poor weak things that they were, they turned their backs in the day of battle. It is a grief to our hearts to be forsaken of good friends and loving friends. I do not know, but if you were sure that they had been hypocrites, you might almost be glad that they were gone. But your very knowledge that they were true at heart, as true as such poor things could be, increases the bitterness that they should leave you.

You need not think, when this occurs in your experience, that any strange thing has happened to you, for Christ was thus left alone.

Notice, *that He was left by every man*. “You shall be scattered, every man to his own.” “Every man.” When the trial comes, does not John remain? Does not he remember that dear breast on which He leaned his head? Is John gone? Yes, “every man.” Christ looked and there was none to stand by Him. He must confront His accusers without a single witness in His favor! Every man was gone. Ah, this was a trial, indeed! But one true friend, a Damon or a Pythias, to be faithful to one another even unto death, and the trial is not so overwhelming. But, no, every man is gone to his own, and Christ is left alone! Of the people there is none with Him, not even one of those who had been His most intimate friends.

What were they? Well, *every man was looking to his own safety*— “You shall be scattered, every man to his own.” Is not that the very essence of selfishness and of meanness, “Every man to his own”? This is all that Christ received from the best of His followers! They left Him and went, every man, to his own—to his own house, to see to his own security, to screen his own character, to preserve his own life. “Every man to his own.” Are these Your friends, O Jesus? Lover of men, are these Your lovers?

Do *you* wonder if, sometimes, you find that *your* friends would take care of you only that they must take care of themselves? They would keep you, but then you cost too much—you are too “dear” a friend! The expense of your friendship has to be looked at, and their income will not bear it. “Every man to his own.” The Savior had also to feel this.

And, remember this happened *when Christ’s special hour was come*. “The hour comes.” Christ’s hour, the hour of the power of darkness. It was then that they left Him. When He did not need their friendship, they were His very good friends. When they could do nothing for Him if they tried, they were His faithful followers. But the pinch has come—now might they watch with Him one hour. Now might they go with Him amid the rabble throng and interpose, at least the vote of the minority against the masses—but they are gone! Like your swallows, they have disappeared before the first frost has covered the brook. Like the green leaves of summer, where are they now in this wintry time? Alas, alas, for friendship, when it fails when most it is needed! And it failed the Savior then.

He was left, also, *in violation of every bond*. These men who left Him were pledged to stand by Him. They had given Him a promise to die with Him. These were His choice companions. He had called them from the fishing spots of Galilee and made them His disciples. These were His Apostles, the chief men in His new Kingdom. They were to sit upon thrones, judging the 12 tribes of Israel. These, He had redeemed unto Himself. These were to be partakers of His Glory in the day of His appearing. Never were men bound to man as they were bound to Christ—and yet they left Him alone. Dear Friend, do not expect gratitude from your fellow creatures—it is a very rare thing in this world! The more you do for men,

the less will be their return. I speak not, now, like one who thinks ill of my fellow men, but I know that it is so, alas, in many instances.

And if it is not *your* lot, you may thank God that it is not—and wonder why you are an exception to the rule. If, by-and-by, you shall come down in the world and need the help of those you helped in days gone by, they will, as a rule, be the last to help you and the first to tread you down! Certainly, with our Lord Jesus Christ, those who were nearest and who owed Him most, fled from Him, and He derived from them no succor. It was “every man to his own”—and they left Him alone to be bound and beaten by His unfeeling adversaries—and to be taken away to prison and to death.

There is the first division of our subject—our Lord’s trial. I say, again, that a like trial may happen to some here. It has happened often to bold defenders of the faith, to find themselves left to hold the bridge alone. And it is a sharp, stern trial to the man who is called to endure it.

II. More cheery talk shall we have on our second head, which is OUR LORD’S CONFIDENCE. He says, “You shall leave Me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.”

Observe, then, that Christ’s confidence was confidence that the Father was with Him, and this confidence kept Him to His purpose. Look at the disciples flee—they are all scattered, every man to his own. Has Christ gone? Not He! John, Peter, James, Thomas, and all the rest are gone. Has Christ gone? Not He! There He stands. They have left Him alone, but there He is, still standing to His purpose. He has come to save and He will save. He has come to redeem and He will redeem. He has come to overcome the world and He will overcome it. They have left Him alone. They have not taken Him away with them. He is no coward. From His purpose He never flees, blessed be His name! He stood fast in that dread hour when all forsook Him and fled. *This was because His confidence was in God.*

Next, observe that this confidence in God not only kept Him to His purpose, but it sustained Him in the prospect of the trial. Notice how it runs—“You shall leave Me alone: and yet I am not alone.” Christ does not say, “I *shall* not be alone.” That was true, but He said, “I *am* not alone.” I love to read the experience of the child of God in the present tense—the gifts, graces and promises of God in the present tense—“I am not alone.” “The Lord is my Shepherd,” as well as “I shall not want.” “He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters.” He is doing everything for me *now*. The blessed Christ says that the prospect of God’s being with Him all through the trouble, and the Presence of God with Him *now*, is His comfort in the prospect of it. You who were here this morning know what a sad discourse we had from the text, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” [Sermon #2133, Volume 36—Read/download entire sermon at <http://www.spurgeongems.org> .] I took this text for my evening discourse because it is the counterpart of the one we considered this morning, for our Lord could truly say to His disciples, “And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.”

Our Lord's declaration was contradicted by appearances. Did He not have to say to God—"Why have You forsaken Me?" How, then, could He say, "The Father is with Me"? It was true—and in a part of my morning sermon I tried to show that, while God forsook Him in His official capacity as the Lawgiver and the Executive of the Law, yet in His personal relation to Him, He did not and could not forsake Him. The Father was with Him! Oh, is it not blessed on the part of Christ to stand to this? He knows that His Father is with Him, even when He feels, in another sense, that the Father has forsaken Him! Beloved, if *everybody* leaves you, and even God seems to leave you, still hold to your confidence in God! Do not believe that God can forsake His own. Do not even *dream* it—it cannot be! He never did forsake His own! He never can and He never will! The Father is with Jesus Christ, even when He knows that He will have to say, "Why have You forsaken Me?"

Yet, *it was assuredly true* that the Father was with Christ when He was left alone. How was the Father with Him, then? Beloved, even when the Father did not look on Christ, or give Him one smile, or one word of comfort, He was still with Him. How so? Well, He was with Him as to His eternal purposes and Covenant. They had entered into Covenant together for the redemption of men, for the salvation of the elect—they had crossed hands and pledged each other to carry out the Divine purpose and the Everlasting Covenant. I remember that passage about Abraham going with Isaac to Mount Moriah, where Isaac was to be offered up. It is written, "So they went both of them together." So did the Eternal Father and His beloved Son when God was about to give up His own Son to death. There was no divided purpose—they went, both of Them, together. All the work of Christ was the work of the Father—and the Father supported Him in it to the very fullest!

In the design and method of the Atonement, the Father and the Son were together. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son," but Jesus so loved the world that He gave *Himself*. The Atonement was the *gift* of the Father, but it was the *work* of the Son. In all that He suffered He could say, "The Father is with Me in it. I am doing that which will glorify Him and content Him." He went not alone to prison and to death! In all things He did that which pleased the Father—and the Father was with Him in it all.

All the decrees of God were at the back of Christ. It is written in the sealed Book, but who shall read it except the Christ? Whatever is written there is written in support of Christ. There is not a decree in the Book of Destiny but works out for Christ's Glory and according to Christ's mind. It is not merely 12 legions of angels that are behind the Cross, but the God of the angels is there, too! It is not merely the forces of Providence that shall work together to achieve the purpose of the Creator, but the God of Providence, the Infinite Jehovah, is in league with Jesus and He can say it, as He goes out to die, "I am not alone: because the Father is with Me." Is not this a glorious Truth of God, that our Lord Christ was not alone? So far as earthly companions were concerned, the Words of God written by

Isaiah could be literally uttered by Christ, "I have trodden the winepress alone." Every *man* was gone, but *God* was always with Him!

Since then, *it has been made manifest that God was with Christ*. He proved it by raising Him from the dead. Did not the Father also prove that He was with the Son by sending the Holy Spirit at Pentecost with many signs and wonders? Jesus is not alone! All the work of the Holy Spirit since, in convincing men of sin and leading them to Jesus, is proof that He is not alone. Beloved, all the history of Providence, since the day when Christ was taken up into Heaven, proves that He is not alone. Alone? The Christ alone? Why, the beasts of the field are in league with Him! The stars in their courses fight for Him! Every event of history, give it but time and space, will make His Kingdom come! Every turn of yonder enormous wheels of Providence shall make His chariot of triumph come nearer and nearer over the necks of His foes. Even now, by faith, "we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor."—

***"Look, you saints, the sight is glorious!
See the "Man of Sorrows" now,
From the fight returned victorious,
Every knee to Him shall bow:
Crown Him, crown Him;
Crowns become the Victor's brow."***

Jesus is the focus of all power and wisdom. God is with Him and the day comes when He shall appear in His Glory. In His millennial reign among the sons of God it shall be seen that He is not alone—and when He shall come in the Glory of the Father and all His holy angels with Him, then shall He be able to say with even greater emphasis, "I am not alone: because the Father is with Me." And when He sits upon the Great White Throne and divides mankind—His friends to the right, His foes to the left—and pronounces eternal wrath upon rebels and opens Heaven to Believers, then shall all worlds know that the Man of Nazareth is not alone! Alone? I seem as if I must laugh at the very thought! All Heaven and earth, things present and things to come, time and eternity, life and death, are all with Him. Men may forsake Him, but He is not alone!

III. Now, I want, in the third place, to teach the lessons of OUR LORD'S EXAMPLE. As my time has nearly gone, I must speak very briefly of these lessons.

First, *learn fidelity when others fail*. Are you a Christian? Do you trust Christ? Do you love Him? Then never desert Him. "Oh, but," says one, "the current runs the other way now." Brother, let it run—it will leave off when it has run away. I believe in Him who rose again from the dead, whose righteousness does justify me, whose blood does wash me whiter than snow. "But the philosophers tell us that this is not *scientific*." I am unscientific, then, and I delight to be unscientific! "Oh, but the deep thinkers say this is inconsistent with progress!" Well, let it be inconsistent with progress. "Oh, but all the world denies it!" So much the worse for the world. Let it deny the Truth of God if it will. That was a grand spirit of

Athanasius when he said, “Athanasius contra mundum”—that is, “Athanasius against the whole world.”

And every Christian may be of this spirit and *ought* to be of this spirit! Is this Book true? What matters it though every Tom Fool says that it is a lie! Let Tom Fools say that if they will, but it is true, and hold you to it! If God the Holy Spirit has taught you to trust in Christ, trust in Christ no matter what other people do. What? Do you live on the breath of other men’s nostrils? Do you count heads and then jump with the larger number? Is that your way? Why, surely such a man as that is hardly worth saving! Is he a man, or is he not a cat that must look before he jumps? No, if you are a man, and you believe in Christ, stand up for Christ—

**“Stand up! Stand up for Jesus!
You soldiers of the Cross!
Lift high His royal banner—
It must not suffer loss!
From victory unto victory
His army shall He lead,
Till every foe is vanquished,
And Christ is Lord, indeed!
Stand up! Stand up for Jesus!
The trumpet call obey.
Forth to the mighty conflict,
In this His glorious day!
You that are men, now serve Him,
Against unnumbered foes;
Your courage rise with danger,
And strength to strength oppose.”**

And when the many turn aside, stand the more boldly and the more confidently, for your confidence and boldness are all the more needed at such a time. Your Lord did not forsake His grand errand when all men forsook Him. Do not renounce your lifework and your faith, even though all others should renounce theirs.

Next, with your Master, *believe that God is All-Sufficient*. Read this—“You shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone: and yet I am not alone, because”—what? “Because there will be half-a-dozen of you faithful”? No. “Because three of you will cling to Me?” No. “Because the Father is with Me.” Oh, we do not count as we should! There is a million against you. Is *God* for you? Well, then, *you* are in the majority! What, after all, is a million, but one and so many ciphers? Trust in God and let the millions go their way. God is enough! When he that spoke in the academy found everybody leaving him in his speaking except Plato, he still kept on. Someone said, “Speaker, you have no audience but Plato.” “No audience but Plato?” he said, “Plato is enough for 50 orators!” So, truly, if you have no other Helper but God, stand where you are—for God is not only enough for you, but for *all* the faithful, weak as we may be!

Next, learn another lesson. *Rest in God, despite appearances*. Are you very poor? Are you weak? Are you slandered? Are you scourged with God’s heaviest rod? Yet kick not at Him any more than your Lord did! He said, “The Father is with Me,” even though He had to cry, “Why have You for-

saken Me?” Believe Him when you can not see Him! Believe Him when He smiles not! Believe Him when He frowns. Believe Him when He smites. Believe Him when He slays, for that is the climax of it all, to say like Job, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.” It is His to do what He likes. It is mine to trust Him—let Him do as He wills! I throw my arms about my God and say, “My God, my God,” even when no sensible joys are felt—and I am obliged to walk by faith.

Lastly, struggling child of God, standing firm for the Truth of God and the right, *expect that your trouble will not last long*. Did you notice how Christ puts it, “Behold, the hour comes”? Only an hour! “Behold, the hour comes.” It is not a year, Brother, it is not a year. It is not a month. It is not a day—it is but an hour. “The hour comes.” To Christ it was certainly a long hour when He hung upon the Cross, but He calls the whole period from the bloody sweat to the death on the Cross, “the hour.” It is the part of faith to shorten days to hours. It is your part, tonight, to remember that if you have to suffer and to stand alone for Christ, it is but for an hour. How willingly have we waited when it has been but for an hour! How cheerfully have we gone on in the dark when we have known that it was only for an hour! Our trial is but for an hour! Literally, before another hour strikes, some of us may be with God—but whether it is so with us, or not, we may still sing—

***“Let doubt, then, and danger my progress oppose,
They only make Heaven more sweet at the close.
Come joy or come sorrow, whate’er may befall,
An hour with my God will make up for them all.”***

But if not literally only an hour, yet certainly the longest reign of persecution is but short. It is soon over when we once get Home. I think that it will help to make a merry holiday in the land that flows with milk and honey, to sit one of these days by one of those rippling streams and say, “I remember when so-and-so forsook me and I stood fast by the Truth of God as I knew it and believed it. They all forsook me and it did seem hard to bear at the time, but my loneliness did not last long, it was soon over—and when the Lord said, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant’—it did not seem, then, that it had been an hour, but only the blinking of an eye, or as when, in the night, the candle is blown out and lighted again by its own smoke, so short was the time of darkness.”

So it shall seem in Heaven as if we never had suffered anything for Christ. The martyr shall go in the red-hot chariot from the stake—and when he gets to Heaven, he will have forgotten that he burned to death, in the exceeding joy of beholding his Master! It is but an hour and we shall meet before the golden Throne of God and stand upon the sea of glass, and sing forever, “Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God and His Father—to Him be Glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON
JOHN 16:16-33.**

Verse 16. *A little while and you shall not see Me: and again, a little while, and you shall see Me, because I go to the Father.* Remember that the disciples were on the verge of great trouble. Their Leader and Friend was about to be taken away from them by a cruel death. They were to be tried as they had never been tried before. The Savior, therefore, prepared their minds for the trial. I have often noticed that before a great trouble comes, the Spirit of God secretly comforts in a very remarkable manner those who are to be tried. Perhaps, tonight, without knowing it, we may be near some great affliction or sorrow. If so, may the Lord store us with comfort and strength for the coming hour of need!

17, 18. *There said some of His disciples among themselves, What is this that He says unto us, A little while, and you shall not see Me: and again, a little while, and you shall see Me: and, Because I go to the Father? They said, therefore, What is this that He says, A little while? We cannot tell what He says.* It was only too plain. We often do not understand our Master because we imagine that there is some deep significance in His Words when their meaning lies upon the very surface. If you would understand the Gospel as you understand the common talk of life, it would be wise. If we could but bring men to believe God as a child believes its mother—practically and really—then their salvation would be a very simple and speedy matter.

19, 20. *Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask Him, and said unto them, Do you enquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and you shall not see Me: and again, a little while, and you shall see Me? Verily, verily, I say unto you, That you shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice.* Sometimes the world appears to have the best of it. Its mouth is full of laughter while the child of God cannot speak for sorrow. Ah, well, there is time enough for a change. We may very well let those laugh today who will have to gnash their teeth forever! Judge not God by your present circumstances. Take the rough with the smooth. Be willing to go to Heaven up the bleak side of the hill.

20. *And you shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.* So, the more of it the better! If your sorrow is to be turned into joy, then the more sorrow, the more joy! Happy is he who endures trial, since his trial is to be turned into happiness!

21, 22. *A woman when she is in travail has sorrow because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembers no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And you now therefore have sorrow.* But your sorrow is the pang of life.

22. *But I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man takes from you.* The joy that comes by sorrow in connection with Christ is the joy of which we shall never be bereaved. Let us thank God that there is a joy which no man can take away. Happy are they who have it!

23. *And in that day you shall ask Me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatever you shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you.*

This is a grand promise! If we dare ask in the name of Christ and it is not everything that we could ask for in His name—if our petition is such that we honestly judge that we may put Christ's name to it, if it is a thing that Christ would have asked, if it is a thing that Christ could have asked—let us ask in Christ's name, and the Father will give it!

24. *Until now you have asked nothing in My name.* You have not been bold enough. You have asked a few petty things, but you have never fully made use of Christ's name. How many Christians have never learned to pray in the name of Christ! They say at the end of their petition, "For Christ's sake." That is good as far as it goes. I may ask a man to give me such and such a thing for the sake of another—that is good pleading so far as it goes. But if I dare to use the authority that my friend gives me to put his name at the bottom of my request, that is another and a higher thing! To ask in the name of Christ, to plead under His authority—this is to pray, indeed!

24. *Ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full.* "That your joy may be full"—a ripe joy, a joy that fills your being, that sparkles in your eyes, dances in your feet, leaps in your heart—an unutterable, inexpressible joy! "That your joy may be full."

25, 26. *These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time comes when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall show you plainly of the Father. At that day you shall ask in My name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you.* Though that is true,

27. *For the Father Himself loves you.* What a delightful little sentence! "The Father Himself loves you."

27. *Because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came out from God.* God's first love to us is from Himself. There is another love that grows in His heart because of our love to His Son. You love your child. The reason lies in your own heart. After a while, that dear, loving, affectionate child has won a farther place in your affection, and you love him because of his choice and special love to you. Remember that Psalm, "Because He has set His love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he has known My name." Our love of God wins from Him another love of a different sort, although it comes from the same Fountain as the first—"For the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came out from God."

28-30. *I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father. His disciples said unto Him, Lo, now speak You plainly, and speak no proverb. Now are we sure that You know all things and need not that any more should ask You: by this we believe that You came forth from God.* One does not see any reason why they should have been made so strong in faith just then. But we were not there to hear Christ's words. There is many a message which depends upon the tone and manner of the speaker for its influence over the people who hear it. When you read the story, afterwards, without the earnest manner and the living tone of the speaker, you do not see why it had such a strange effect upon his hearers. So we do not quite see here, by the calm reading

of this narrative, why the disciples leaped, all of a sudden, into such confidence.

31. *Jesus answered them, Do you now believe?* He did not feel so sure of their faith as they did. We often think we have great heaps of the gold of faith, and it glitters very brightly, but it is not the precious metal, after all. So Jesus said, “Do you now believe?”

32. *Behold, the hour comes, yes, is now come, that you shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.* These poor creatures, who were so bold and so over sure, would all be runaways! If persecution were to arise in our day, I wonder how many of us would be found true men? Ah, you think you are true blue, but you would run at the first touch of water, not to mention fire! Are there not many of us who are but poor Believers? If our faith were sharply tried, would it stand the test?

33. *These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me you might have peace. In the world you shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.* Christ wants His disciples to have peace. Are you fretting tonight? Are you afraid of Monday? Are you fearful about the trials of the week? Christ wants you to be at peace! Be quiet. Be quiet. Let all be still within your heart and wait your Father’s will. “In the world you shall have tribulation.” On God’s threshing floor the flail will be kept going. If you are a child of God, you will have to suffer. The Captain of our salvation was made perfect through *sufferings*—and good soldiers of Jesus Christ must expect to pass through the same experience. As long as you are here, you will be tried—“In the world you shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” Think of that! The Christ who is about to sweat great drops of blood and to die on the Cross of Calvary, says, “I have overcome.” It is not Julius Caesar’s, “Veni, vidi, vici,” but it is Christ’s, “Veni, vidi, vici”—“I came, I saw, I conquered.” “I have overcome.”

And as He has overcome, so shall you, if you are His true follower!

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CHRIST'S LONELINESS AND OURS

NO. 3052

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 8, 1907.

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

“Jesus answered them, Do you now believe? Behold, the hour comes, yes, is now come, that you shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.”
John 16:31, 32.

[Another sermon by Mr. Spurgeon upon the same text is #2271, Volume 38—ALONE, YET NOT ALONE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

“Do you now believe?” Then it seems that faith held them fast to Christ, but as soon as fear prevailed they were scattered and left their Master alone. Faith has an attracting and upholding power. It is the root of constancy and the source of perseverance under the power of God’s Spirit. While we believe, we remain faithful to our Lord. When we are unbelieving, we are scattered, “every man to his own.” While we trust, we follow closely. When we give way to fear, we ungratefully forsake our Lord. May the Holy Spirit maintain our faith in full vigor that it may nourish all our other Graces! Faith being strong, no faculty of the inner man will languish, but if faith declines, the energy of our spiritual nature speedily decays. If you believe not, you shall not be established, but “the just shall live by faith” to the fullest force of life.

This being noted, our meditation shall now be fixed alone upon the Savior’s loneliness and the measure in which the Believer is brought into the same condition.

I. THE LONELINESS OF THE SAVIOR.

Note *the fact of it*. He was left alone—alone just when most, as Man, He needed human sympathy. Solitude to Him, during His earthly life, was often the cause of strength. He was strong in public ministry because of the hours spent in secret wrestling with God on the lone mountainside. But when He came to the hour of His agony, His perfect Humanity pined after human sympathy, yet it was denied Him. He was alone in the Garden of Gethsemane though He took the eleven with Him. Yet must He leave eight of them outside at the garden gate—and the three, the choice, the *élite* of them all—though they were brought somewhat nearer to the scene of His passion, yet even they must remain at a stone’s cast distance. None could enter into the inner circle of His sufferings where the furnace was heated seven times hotter than it was known to be heated. In the bloody sweat and the agony of Gethsemane, the Savior trod the winepress alone. [See Sermon #2567, Volume 44—THE SINGLE-HANDED CONQUEST—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] His specially-favored disciples might have

watched with Him, wept with Him and prayed for Him—but they did not. They left His lone prayer to ascend to Heaven unattended by sympathetic cries.

He was alone, too, when put upon His trial. False witnesses were found to bear lying testimony against Him, but no man stood forward to attest the honesty, quietness and goodness of His life. Surely one of the many who had been healed by Him, or of the crowds that had been fed by His bountiful hands or, still likelier, some of those who had received the pardon of their sins and enlightenment of their minds by His teaching might have come forward to defend Him! But no, His coward followers are silent when their Lord is slandered. “He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter” and no pitying voice entreats that He may be delivered. True, His judge’s wife tries to persuade her husband to have nothing to do with Him and her vacillating husband offers to liberate Him if the mob will have it so—but none will raise the shout of “loose Him and let Him go.” He was not literally alone upon the Cross, yet He was really so in a deep spiritual sense. Though a few loving ones gathered at the foot of the Cross, yet these could offer Him no assistance and probably dared not utter more than a tearful protest. Perhaps the boldest there was that dying thief who called Him, Lord, and expostulated with his brother-malefactor, saying, “This Man has done nothing amiss.” [See Sermon #1881, Volume 32—THE DYING THIEF IN A NEW LIGHT —Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Few, indeed, were the voices that were lifted up on behalf of the Man of Sorrows. From the time when He bowed in agony amid the deep shades of the Mount of Olives, till the moment when He entered the thicker darkness of the valley of death-shade, He was left to suffer alone.

Here was the fact. What was *the reason for it*? We conclude that fear overcame the hearts of His disciples. It is natural that men should care for their lives, but these men pushed this instinct of self-preservation beyond its legitimate sphere. And when they found that the Master was taken and that probably the disciples might share His fate, they each one, in the panic of the moment, fled in haste! They were not all traitors, but they were all cowards for the time being. They meant not to desert their Lord—they even scorned the thought when it was put to them in calmer moments—but they were taken by surprise and, like a flock of sheep, they fled from the wolf. They rallied after a little while and mustered courage enough to follow Him from afar off. They did not quite forget Him—they watched Him to His latter end, they kept together after He was dead—they united to bury Him and they came together instinctively on the first day of the week. They had not altogether cast off their loyalty to their Lord and Master, for He was still keeping those whom the Father had given Him that none of them might be lost—yet fear had, for awhile, defeated their faith and they had left Him alone.

There was a deeper reason, however, for the Savior’s loneliness. It was a condition of His sufferings that He should be forsaken. Desertion was a necessary ingredient in that cup of vicarious suffering which He had covenanted to drink for us. We deserved to be forsaken and, therefore, He must be. Since our sins against man, as well as our sins against God

deserved that we should be forsaken of men, He, bearing our sins against God and man, is forsaken. It cannot be that a sinner should enjoy true friendship. Sin is a separating thing and so, when Christ is made the Sin-Bearer, His friends must leave Him. Besides, this was one jewel in the crown of His Glory. It was said, in triumph, by the great hero of old who typified our Lord, "I have trodden the winepress alone and of the people there was none with me." To make that true in the severest sense, it was necessary that the Captain of our salvation should, by His single arm, defeat the whole of Hell's battalions! His are the sole laurels of the war, for, "His right hand and His holy arm have gotten Him the victory."

Can you, for a moment, enter into *the sorrow of that loneliness*? There are men to whom it is a small matter to be friendless. Their coarse minds scorn the gentle joys of fellowship. Sterner virtues may tread beneath their iron heel the sweet flowers of friendship and men may be so defiantly self-reliant that, like lions, they are most at home amid congenial solitudes. Sympathy they scorn as womanish and fellowship as a superfluity. But our Savior was not like they—He was too perfect a Man to become isolated and misanthropical. His grand gentle Nature was full of sympathy towards others and, therefore, sought it in return. You hear the voice of grief at the loss of brotherly sympathy in the mournful accents of that gentle rebuke, "What? Could you not watch with Me one hour?" How could they sleep while He must sweat? How could they repose while His soul was "exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death"? He showed the greatness of His soul even in its depression when He lovingly excused them by saying, "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

How sad to Him it was that they should desert Him! The brave Peter and all the rest of them, all taking to their heels! Worse still was it to receive the traitor's kiss with the word, "Hail, Master," as the son of perdition betrayed his Friend to win the blood-money! David lamented the villainy of Ahithophel, but the Savior, inasmuch as He was of a more tender spirit than the son of Jesse, even more keenly felt the treachery of Judas. For Peter to say that he knew Him not and, with cursing and swearing to deny Him three times in succession was terribly cruel. There was such an element of deliberation about that denial that it must have cut the Savior to the very quick. But where was John—John who leaned on His bosom—"that disciple whom Jesus loved"—where was John? Did not he say a word, nor even interject a single syllable for his dear Friend? Has Jonathan forgotten his David? The Master might have said to John, "Your love to Me was wonderful, passing the love of women," but, alas, John is gone with the rest! He has nothing to say for his Master! Though he remains at the foot of the Cross to the last, yet even he cannot defend Him! Jesus is all alone—all alone and none of us can fully fathom the sorrow of His lonely heart.

This is a painful meditation and, therefore, let us notice *the result of our Savior's loneliness*. Did it destroy Him? Did it overwhelm Him? It pained Him but it did not dismay Him. "You shall leave Me alone: and yet I am not alone," says He, "because the Father is with Me." The effect of

that solace in His soul was wonderful. Our Savior did not turn aside from the purpose of redeeming His people though they proved so unworthy of being redeemed. Might He not well have said, "You have forsaken Me, so I will forsake you"? It would have seemed but natural for Him to have exclaimed, "You are types of all My people, you care little enough for Me: I have come into this world to save you, but you do not try to rescue Me; you have deserted Me, so I leave you to your fate." But no, "having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." And although they forsook Him, yet He fulfilled to each one of them His ancient promise, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." The Baptism wherewith He was to be baptized He would still accomplish and be immersed in the floods of death for their sake!

Nor did He merely exhibit constancy to His purpose. He displayed great courageousness of spirit. He was all alone, but yet how peaceful He was! The calmness of the Savior is amazing. When He was brought before Herod, He would not utter one hasty or complaining word. His perfect silence was the fittest eloquence and, therefore, He was majestically mute. Before Pilate, until it was necessary for Him to speak, not a syllable could be extorted from Him. All along He possessed His soul in patience. In the Garden and afterwards, He was quiet as a lamb, surrendering Himself to the Sacrifice without a struggle. His solemn, deliberate self-surrender, in His loneliness, has an awfulness of love in it—more fit for thought than words. His brave spirit was not to be cowed, though it stood at bay alone and all the dogs of Hell raged around Him!

Mark too not only the constancy and the courageousness of our Savior, but His matchless unselfishness, for, while His disciples forsook Him and fled, He forgave them in His inmost heart and cherished no resentment against them. When He rose again His conduct to these runaways was that of a loving shepherd or a tender friend—He fully forgave them all. If He did mention it, it was only in that gentle way in which He inquired of Peter, "Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?"—reminding him of his failure for his lasting improvement and benefit—and giving him an honorable commission as the token that it was all condoned.

Inquire awhile *the reason for this result*. Why was it that our Savior, in His loneliness, thus stood so constant, courageous and forgiving? Was it not because He fell back into the arms of His Father when He was forsaken by His friends? It was even so—"The Father is with Me." Look carefully at that word. As the Savior uttered it, it was true that the Father's Presence was with Him, but I beg you to remember that it was not true, in every sense, all the way through His passion. The Father was not with Him on the Cross in the sense of manifested personal favor. His cry, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" shows that our Savior did not, at that time, derive comfort from any present revelation of the love of God to Him as Man. [See Sermon #2133, Volume 36—"MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?"—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] The conscious Presence and display of love were taken away.

There is, therefore, another meaning in these words, "Because the Father is with Me" and surely it is this—*the Father was always with Him in His design*. The enterprise He had undertaken was the salvation of His people—and the Father was wholly and always with Him in that respect. In that sense He was with Him even where He deserted Him—it was but a form of the Father's being with Christ that He should be forsaken of God. I am not quite stating a paradox and if it should sound like one to any here, let me expound it. It was in pursuance of Their united great design that the Father forsook the Son. Both were resolved upon the same gracious purpose and, therefore, the Father must forsake the Son, that the Son's purpose and the Father's purpose in our redemption might be achieved! He was with Him when He forsook Him—with Him in design when He was not with Him in the smiles of His face.

Furthermore, *the Father was always with our Lord in His co-working*. When Jesus was in Gethsemane and the staves and lanterns were being prepared, the God of Providence was permitting or arranging it all. When Jesus was taken before Caiaphas, Herod, Pilate and Annas, God was allowing all this to be done—the Father was with Christ fulfilling the prophecies, answering the types and accomplishing their Covenant engagements. Through the whole sad chapter it might be said, "My Father works." Even amid the thick darkness and the dire suffering of Christ, the Father was with Christ, working those very sufferings in Him, for "it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief." Into this fact Christ sinks as into a sea of comfort—"The Father is with Me." "It is enough," He says, "My own chosen friends forsake Me and My dearest earthly friends leave me. Those whom I have purchased with My blood deny Me, but My Father is with Me." By a matchless exercise of faith, our Redeemer realized this and was sustained even in that dread hour!

II. We shall make practical use of our subject by considering THE CHRISTIAN IN HIS LONELINESS.

No Believer traverses all the road to Heaven in company. There must be lonely spots here and there, though the greater part of our heavenward pilgrimage is made cheerful by the society of fellow travelers. "They go from company to company; every one of them in Zion appears before God." Christ's sheep love to go in flocks. "They that feared the Lord spoke often one to another." We take sweet counsel together and walk to the House of God in company. Yet somewhere or other on the road, every Christian will find narrow paths and close places where pilgrims must march in single file.

Sometimes the child of God endures loneliness arising from *the absence of godly society*. It may be that in his early days as a Christian, he mixed much with gracious persons, was able to attend many of their meetings and to converse in private with the excellent of the earth. But now his lot is cast where he is as a sparrow alone on the housetop. No others in the family think as he does. He enjoys no familiar converse concerning his Lord and has no one to counsel or console him. He often wishes he could find friends to whom he could open his mind. He would rejoice to see a Christian minister or an advanced Believer but, like

Joseph in Egypt, he is a stranger in a strange land. This is a very great trial to the Christian, an ordeal of the most severe character. Even the strong may dread it and the weak are sorely shaken by it. To such lonely ones, our Lord's words, now before us, are commended with the prayer that they may make them their own—"I am alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me." When Jacob was alone at Bethel, he laid down to sleep and soon was in a region peopled by innumerable spirits, above whom was God Himself! That vision made the night at Bethel the least lonely season that Jacob ever spent! [See Sermon #402, Volume 7—JACOB'S WAKING EXCLAMATION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Your meditations, O solitary ones, as you read the Bible in secret, and your prayer's, as you draw near to God in your lonely room, and your Savior Himself in His blessed Person, will be to you what the ladder was to Jacob! The words of God's Book, made living to you, shall be to your mind the angels and God Himself shall have fellowship with you! If you lament your loneliness, cure it by seeking heavenly company. If you have no companions below who are holy, seek all the more to commune with those who are in Heaven where Christ sits at the right hand of God!

God's people are frequently made lonely *through obedience to honest convictions*. It may happen that you live in the midst of professing Christians and you have received Light upon a part of God's Word which you had formerly neglected, either a Doctrine, or an ordinance, or some other matter—and having received that Light, if you are as you should be—you are at once obedient to it. It will frequently result, from this action on your part, that you will greatly vex many good people whom you love and respect, but to whose wishes you cannot yield. Your Master's will once known, father or mother may not stand in your way—you do not wish to be singular, or obstinate, or offensive—but you must do the Lord's will even if it should sever every fond connection! Perhaps, for a time, prejudiced persons may almost deny you Christian fellowship. Many a baptized Believer has been made to know what it means to be almost tabooed and shut out because he cannot see as others see, but is resolved to follow his conscience at all hazards. Under such circumstances, even in a godly household, a Christian who fully carries out his convictions may find himself treading a separated path. Be bold, my dear Brothers and Sisters, and do not flinch! Your Savior walked alone and you must do so too.

Perhaps this lone obedience is to be a test of your faith. Persevere! Yield not a particle of the Truth of God! These very friends who now turn their backs on you, if they are good for anything, will respect you all the more for having the courage to be honest—and perhaps the day will come when, through your example, they will be led in the same obedient way. At any rate, do not mar your testimony by hesitancy or wavering, but "follow the Lamb wherever He goes." Fall back upon this Truth of God—you may displease and alienate friends and be charged with bigotry, self-will and obstinacy, but you are not alone when you follow the path of obedience, for the Father is with you! If what you hold is God's Truth, God is with you in maintaining it. If the ordinance to which you submit

was ordained by Christ, Jesus is with you in it. Care not how either the Church or the world reviles you! Serve your Master and He will not desert you! With all due deference to others, pay yet greater deference to the Lord who bought you with His blood! Where He leads, follow without delay—the Father will be with you in so doing.

The solitary way is appointed to *Believers who rise to eminence of faith*. In these days the common run of Christians have but struggling faith. Should you sift the great mountain of visible Christianity very carefully, will you find so much as ten grains of faith in the whole? When the Son of Man comes, keen as His eyes are to discover faith, shall He find it on the earth? Here and there we meet a man to whom it is given to believe in God with mighty faith. As soon as such a man strikes out on a project and sets about a work which none but men of his mold would venture upon, straightway there arises a clamor, "The man is overzealous!" Or he will be charged with an innovating spirit, rashness, fanaticism, or absurdity. Should the work go on, the opposers whisper together, "Wait a little while and you'll see the end of all this wildfire." Have we not heard them criticize an earnest Evangelist by saying, "His preaching is mere excitement, the result of it is spasmodic"? At another time, "The enterprise which he carries out is Quixotic. His designs are Utopian"? What said the sober semi-faith of men to Luther? Luther had read this passage, "By the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight." He went to a venerable Divine about it and complained of the enormities of Rome. What was the good but weak brother's reply? "Go you to your cell and pray and study for yourself, and leave these weighty matters alone." Here it would have ended had the brave Reformer continued to consult with flesh and blood! But his faith enabled him to go alone, if none would accompany him! He nailed up his theses on the church door and showed that one man, at least, had faith in the Gospel and in its God! Then trouble came, but Luther minded it not because the Father was with him! We also must be prepared, if God gives us strong faith, to ride far ahead like spiritual Uhlans who bravely pioneer the way for the rank and file of the army. It were well if the Church of God had more sons swifter than eagles and bolder than lions in God's service—men who can do and dare alone—till laggards gain courage from them and follow in their track. These Valiant-for-Truths full often pursue a solitary path, but let them console themselves with this word of the solitary Savior, "Yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me." If we can but believe in God, He will never desert us! If we can dare, God will do! If we can trust, God will never allow us to be confounded, world without end! It is sweet beyond expression to climb where only God can lead and plant the standard on the highest towers of the foe!

Another form of loneliness is the portion of *Christians when they come into deep soul-conflict*. My Brothers and Sisters, some of you understand what I mean by that. Our faith, at times, has to fight for very existence! The old Adam within us rages mightily and the new spirit within us, like a young lion, disdains to be vanquished and so these two mighty ones contend till our spirit is full of agony! Some of us know what it is to be

tempted with blasphemies we would not dare repeat, to be vexed with horrid temptations which we have grappled with and overcome, but which have almost cost us resistance unto blood. In such inward conflicts, saints must be alone. They cannot tell their feelings to others—they would not dare to do so. And if they did, their own brethren would despise or upbraid them, for the most of professors would not even know what they meant—and even those who have trodden other fiery ways would not be able to sympathize in all, but would answer them thus, “Those are points in which I cannot go with you.” Christ alone was tempted in all points like as we are, though without sin. No one man is tempted in all points exactly like another man and each man has certain trials in which he must stand alone amid the rage of war, with not even a book to help him, or a biography to assist him—no man ever having gone that way before except that one Man whose trail reveals His nail-pierced feet. He alone knows all the devious paths of sorrow. Yet, even in such by-ways, the Father is with us, helping, sustaining and giving us Grace to conquer at the close.

We will not, however, dwell on this aspect of solitary walking, for we have three others to mention. Many dear Brothers and Sisters have to endure *the solitude of unnoticed labor*. They are serving God in a way which is exceedingly useful, but not at all noticeable. How very sweet to many workers are those little corners of the newspapers and magazines which describe their labors and successes. Yet some who are doing what God will think a great deal more of at the last never see their names in print. Yonder beloved Brother is plodding away in a little country village—nobody knows anything about him, but he is bringing souls to God. Unknown to fame, the angels are acquainted with him and a few precious ones whom he has led to Jesus know him well. Perhaps yonder Sister has a little class in the Sunday school. There is nothing striking in her or in her class. Now and then a little child ascends to Heaven to report her success and occasionally another comes into the Church—but nobody thinks of her as a very remarkable worker. She is a flower that blooms almost unseen, but she is none the less fragrant! Or shall we think of the humble City Missionary? The Superintendent of the District knows that he goes his regular rounds, but he has no idea of the earnest prayers and deep devotedness of that obscure lover of Jesus. The City Mission Magazine puts him down as trying to do his duty, but nobody knows what it costs him to cry and sigh over souls. There is a Bible-woman—she is mentioned in the Report as making so many visits a week, but nobody reports all that she is doing for the poor and needy and how many are saved in the Lord through her instrumentality. Hundreds of God's dear servants are serving Him without the encouragement of man's approving eye—yet God is with them!

Never mind *where* you work—care more about *how* you work! Never mind who sees or does not see you as long as God approves your efforts! If He smiles, be content. We cannot be always sure when we are most useful. A certain minister with very great difficulty reached a place where he had promised to preach. There was deep snow upon the ground,

therefore only one hearer came. However, he preached as zealously as if there had been a thousand! Years later, when he was travelling in that same part of the country, he met a man who had been the founder of a Church in the village and from it, scores of other Churches had been established. The man came to see him and said, "I have good reason to remember you, Sir, for I was once your only hearer. And what has been done here has been brought about instrumentally through my conversion under that sermon." We cannot estimate our success. One child in the Sunday school, converted, may turn out to be worth 500 others because he may be the means of bringing 10,000 to Christ! It is not the acreage you sow, it is the multiplication which *God gives* to the Seed which will make up the harvest! You have less to do with being successful than with being faithful! Your main comfort is that, in your labor, you are not alone, for God, the Eternal One, who guides the marches of the stars, is with you!

There is such a thing—I would that we might reach it—as *the solitude of elevated piety*. In the plain everything is in company, but the higher you ascend, the more lonely is the mountain path. At this moment there must be an awful solitude on the top of Mont Blanc. Where the stars look silently on the monarch of mountains, how deep the silence above the untrodden snows! How lonely is the summit of the Matterhorn, or the peak of Monte Rosa! When a man grows in Grace, he rises out of the fellowship of the many and draws nearer to God. Unless placed in very happy circumstances, he will find very few who understand the higher life and can thoroughly commune with him. But then the man will be as humble as he is high and he will fall back, necessarily and naturally, upon the eternal fellowship of God. As the mountain pierces the skies and offers its massive peak to be the footstool of the Throne of God, so the good man passes within the veil, unseen by mortal eyes, into the secret place of the tabernacle of the Most High where he abides under the shadow of the Almighty.

The last solitude will come to us all *in the hour of death*. Down to the river's brink they may go with us, a weeping company—wife, children and friends. Their kind looks will mean the help they cannot give. To that river's brink they may go in fond companionship, but then, as with our Lord, the cloud received Him out of His disciples' sight, so must we be received out of sight of our beloved ones. The chariot of fire must take Elijah away from Elisha. We must ascend alone. Bunyan may picture Christian and Hopeful together in the stream, but it is not so—they pass, each one, alone through the river. Yet we shall not be alone, my Brothers and Sisters—we correct our speech—the Father will be with us! Jesus will be with us! The Eternal Comforter will be with us! The everlasting Godhead in the Trinity of Persons shall be with us! And the angels of God shall be our convoy. Let us go our way, rejoicing that when we shall be alone, we shall not be alone because the Father will be with us—as He is with us even now!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

JOHN 16:1-22.

Verse 1. *These things have I spoken unto you, that you should not be offended.* “That you should not be scandalized when you see Me put to death, and when you miss My bodily Presence from your midst. I want to prepare you for the shame and death that lie before Me and also prepare you for all that lies before you, for many of you will have to drink of My cup and to be baptized with My Baptism.” “These things have I spoken unto you, that you should not be offended,” or ashamed, or scandalized, or caused to stumble when they come to pass.

2. *They shall put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time comes that whoever kills you will think that he does God service.* That terrible “time” did come very soon—and the Jewish and other persecutors hunted down the Christians in almost every place where they could be found. Nothing would satisfy their cruel foes but the blood of multitudes of martyrs! And many of the persecutors actually thought that they were doing God service while they were putting His children to torture and death!

3, 4. *And these things will they do unto you because they have not known the Father, nor Me. But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, you may remember that I told you of them.* To be forewarned is to be forearmed, especially when the Lord Jesus Christ gives the forewarning. And His disciples were thus to be forearmed and braced up for the coming conflict.

4. *And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you.* “I needed not, at the beginning of My ministry, to trouble you about these things. Even then you and I were hated by evil men, but I was with you, so I was able to protect you from them.” The persecutors could not slay Christ’s sheep, as they desired to do, as long as their Shepherd was still with them, so His warning words were not needed while He was in their midst. Christ does not teach us everything at once—if He did, we might be so confused that we should not learn anything! Perhaps we have sometimes wished that our ears could hear more than they now do, but it is most probable that if we could hear more, we would really understand less than we do now. Have you, at any time, had your hearing more than usually acute? If so, you must then have heard a thousand sounds which it would have been better for you not to have heard, for they so confused and confounded one another that you did not hear anything distinctly. It is just so with the mind—it is capable of receiving a certain quantity of the Truth of God, but if too much Truth is placed before it at once, it produces confusion in the mind’s ears and in the mind’s eyes and we really hear less, see less and understand less than we would do if less were set before us! The Master knew that His disciples were like narrow-necked bottles which must be gradually filled. So He only revealed the Truth to them as they were able to receive it.

5, 6. *But now I go My way to Him that sent Me; and none of you asks Me, Where are You going? But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow has filled your heart.* Sorrow sometimes prevents us from learning

the lessons that Christ wishes to teach us. You remember that in the Garden of Gethsemane, Christ's disciples were "sleeping for sorrow," and so they lost some of the lessons that they might otherwise have learned. Those who are in great trouble are often in that dazed condition in which half-awakened persons are. And there is a measure of sleepiness about us all in times of sorrow. It was so with the disciples on this occasion and, therefore, they did not ask their Lord what they might have asked Him if sorrow had not filled their hearts—"None of you asks Me, Where are You going?"

7-9. *Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you. And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on Me.* Which is the head of all sin, the root of all sin, the sin which lies in front of the door of Mercy and blocks the sinner's way! Oh, that the Spirit of God would convince all here who are not Believers on the Lord Jesus Christ, that they are living in the greatest of all sins, "because they believe not on Christ"!

10. *Of righteousness, because I go to My Father, and you see Me no more.* Of course Christ would not have been received back by His Father if He had not completed the work of righteousness which His Father gave Him the commission to perform. The risen and glorified Savior is the great testimony to the righteousness both of Christ and of His Gospel!

11. *Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.* Christ has already judged the prince of the powers of evil, so you may depend upon it that He will also judge all those who are under the dominion of the traitor prince who has usurped his Master's position and authority. Christ has summoned the dread lord of evil to His bar and judged him. Think not, O you who are his servants, that any of you will be able to elude the vigilance of the great Judge of All! Judgment will assuredly come to the common soldiers of the Prince of Darkness since their captain, himself, has been judged and condemned!

12. *I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now.* Here again observe the reticence of the Savior for His disciples' good—still graciously keeping from them what they could not bear to hear. And are not you, Beloved, thankful that you do not, at this moment, know what is to happen to you in the future? It is wise for each one of us to say—

***"My God, I would not wish to read
My fate with curious eyes—
What gloomy lines are writ for me,
Or what bright scenes arise."***

It is best for you, at present, to know but little. Prize what you do know and be content to leave all that is not yet revealed, for "the secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever."

13. *Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all Truth.* All that you need to know and may know, He will teach you. If

you cannot find your way into the heart of any Truth of God, the Spirit of God has the clue to it, so ask Him to guide you into it. There is such a thing as seeing the outside of a Truth—that is good as far as it goes, but the blessedness lies in getting to the *inside* of the Truth of God—the very kernel and core of it.

13, 14. *For He shall not speak of Himself; but whatever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come. He shall glorify Me.* That is the distinctive mark of the Spirit of God. If any man says that he speaks by the Spirit, you can test him in this way—does what he say glorify Christ? If not, away with him, for he is not speaking as the Holy Spirit speaks!

14-18. *For He shall receive of Mine and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father has are Mine: therefore said I, that He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you. A little while, and you shall not see Me: and again, a little while, and you shall see Me, because I go to the Father. Then said some of His disciples among themselves, What is this that He says unto us, A little while, and you shall not see Me: and again, a little while, and you shall see Me: and, Because I go to the Father? They said therefore, What is this that He says, A little while? We cannot tell what He says.* These disciples of Christ were almost as ignorant as the rank outsiders were! Though they had been with Jesus for three years, they had not learned what is clear enough to every Sunday school child, today, and what is certainly perfectly understood by all who are taught of God! They said, “What is this that He says unto us, A little while, and you shall not see Me: and again, a little while, and you shall see Me: and, because I go to the Father? They said therefore, What is this that He says, A little while? We cannot tell what He says.”

19-22. *Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask Him, and said unto them, Do you inquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and you shall not see Me: and again, a little while, and you shall see Me? Verily, verily, I say unto you, That you shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and you shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail has sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembers no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And you now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man takes from you.*

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CHRIST THE OVERCOMER OF THE WORLD

NO. 1327

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 3, 1876,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE NEWINGTON.

*"Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."
John 16:33.*

WHEN these words were spoken, our Savior was about to leave His disciples to go to His death for their sakes. His great anxiety was that they might not be too much cast down by the trials which would come upon them. He desired to prepare their minds for the heavy sorrows which awaited them, while the powers of darkness and the men of the world worked their will upon Him. Now observe, Beloved, that our Lord Jesus, in whom dwells infinite wisdom, knew all the secret springs of comfort and all the hallowed sources of consolation in Heaven and under Heaven, and yet in order to console His disciples He spoke not of heavenly mysteries nor of secrets hidden in the breast of God, but He spoke concerning Himself.

Does He not teach us, then, that there is no balm for the heart like Himself, no consolation of Israel comparable to His Person and His work? If even such a Divine Barnabas, such a first-born Son of consolation as the Lord, Himself, must point to what He, Himself, has done, so He can make His followers be of good cheer, then how wise it must be in ministers to preach much of Jesus by way of encouragement to the Lord's afflicted and how prudent it is for mourners to look to Him for the comfort they need. "Be of good cheer," He said, "I"—something about Himself—"I have overcome the world."

So then, Beloved, in all times of depression of spirit hasten away to the Lord Jesus Christ! Whenever the cares of this life burden you and your way seems hard for your weary feet, fly to your Lord! There may be other sources of consolation, but they will not, at *all* times, serve your turn. But in Him there dwells such a fullness of comfort that whether it is in summer or in winter, the streams of comfort are always flowing! In your high estate or in your low estate and from whatever quarter your trouble may arise, you can resort at once to Him and you shall find that He strengthens the hands that hang down and confirms the feeble knees.

A further remark suggests itself that the Lord Jesus must be more than man from the tone which He assumed. There are certain persons who deny the Godhead of our Lord and yet think well of Jesus as a man. Indeed, they have uttered many highly complimentary things with regard to His Character. But I wonder why it does not strike them that there is a great deal of assumption, presumption, pride, egotism and all that style of folly in this Man if He is nothing more than a man! For what good man whom you would wish to imitate would say to others, "Be of good cheer: I

have overcome the world”? This is altogether too much for a mere man to say!

The Lord Jesus Christ frequently spoke about Himself, and about what He had done, and commended Himself to His disciples as one could never have done who was only a man and of a lowly mind. The Lord was certainly meek and lowly in heart, but no man of that character would have told others so. There is an inconsistency here which none can account for but those who believe Him to be the Son of God! Understand Him to be Divine—put Him in His true position as speaking down out of the excellency of His Deity to His disciples—and then you can comprehend His so speaking, Yes, it becomes infinitely seemly and beautiful!

Deny His Godhead and I, for one, am quite unable to understand how the words before us, and others like them, could ever have fallen from His lips—for none will dare to say that He was boastful! Blessed are You, O, Son of Man, You are also Son of God and, therefore, you not only speak to us with the sympathizing tenderness of a brother man, but with the majestic authority of the Only-Begotten of the Father! Divinely condescending are Your words, “I have overcome the world.”

If you look at this claim of Jesus without the eyes of faith, does it not wear an extraordinary appearance? How could the betrayed Man of Nazareth say, “I have overcome the world”? We can imagine Napoleon speaking thus when he had crushed the nations beneath his feet and shaped the map of Europe to his will. We can imagine Alexander speaking thus when he had rifled the palaces of Persia and led her ancient monarchs captive. But who is this that speaks this way? It is a Galilean who wears a *peasant’s* garment and consorts with the poor and the fallen! He has neither wealth nor worldly rank nor honor among men and yet speaks of having overcome the *world*!

He is about to be betrayed by His own base follower into the hands of His enemies and to be led out to judgment and to death, and yet He says, “I have overcome the world.” He is casting an eye to His Cross with all its shame and to the death which ensued from it, and yet He says, “I have overcome the world.” He had not where to lay His head. He had not a disciple that would stand up for Him, for He had just said, “You shall be scattered, every man to His own, and shall leave Me alone.” He was to be charged with blasphemy and sedition and brought before the judge—and find no man to declare His generation. He was to be given up to brutal soldiers to be mocked and despitefully used and spat upon!

His hands and feet were to be nailed to the Cross that He might die a felon’s death—and yet He said, “I have overcome the world.” How marvelous and yet how true! He spoke not after the manner of the flesh nor after the sight of the eyes. We must use faith’s optics here and look within the veil—then we shall see not only the despised bodily Person of the Son of Man, but the indwelling, noble, all-conquering Soul which transformed shame into honor and death into glory!

May God the Holy Spirit enable us to look through the external to the internal and see how marvelously the ignominious death was the rough garment which concealed the matchless victory from the purblind eyes of

carnal man! During the last two Sabbath mornings I have spoken of our Lord Jesus Christ—first, as the end of the Law and, secondly, as the conqueror over the old serpent. Now we come to speak of Him as *the Overcomer of the world*—addressing His disciples He said, “Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” Now, *what is this world that He speaks about? And how has He overcome it? And what good cheer is there in the fact for us?*

I. WHAT IS THIS WORLD TO WHICH HE IS REFERRING? I scarcely know a word which is used with so many senses as this word, “world.” If you will turn to your Bibles you will find the word, “world,” used in widely different ways, for there is a world which Christ made, “He was in the world and the world was made by Him”—that is, the *physical* world. There is a world which God so loved that He gave His only-begotten Son that whoever believes in Him might not perish. There are several forms of this favorable use.

Then there is a world, the world *here* meant, which “lies in the Wicked One”—a world which knows not Christ but which is ever more opposed to Him—a world for which He says that He does not pray and a world which He would not have us love—“Love not the world, neither the things which are in the world.” Without going into these various meanings and shades of meaning, which are very abundant, let us just say that we scarcely know how to define what is meant here in so many words, though we know well enough what is meant. Scripture does not give us definitions, but uses language in a popular manner, since it speaks to common people.

“The world” is very much the equivalent of the “seed of the serpent,” of which we spoke last Sunday. The world here means the visible embodiment of that spirit of evil which was in the serpent and which now works in the children of disobedience. It is the human form of the same evil force with which our Lord contended when He overcame the devil. It means the power of evil in the unregenerate mass of mankind, the energy and power of sin as it dwells in that portion of the world which abides in death and lies in the Wicked One. The devil is the god of this world and the prince of this world and, therefore, he who is the friend of this world is the enemy of God!

The world is the opposite of the Church. There is a Church which Christ has redeemed and chosen out of the world and separated unto Himself from among men. And of these as renewed by the power of Divine Grace, He says, “You are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” And again, “Because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.” Now, the rest of mankind not comprehended among the chosen, the redeemed, the called, the saved, are called the *world*. Of these our Lord said, “O, righteous Father, the world has not known You.” And John said, “The world knows us not because it knew Him not.”

This is the power which displays a deadly enmity against Christ and against His chosen—therefore it is called, “this present evil world,” while the kingdom of Grace is spoken of as, “the world to come.” This is the

world of which it is said, "He that is born of God overcomes the world." You will see that "the world" includes the ungodly themselves, as well as the force of evil in them. But it marks them out not as creatures nor even as men who have sinned, but as unregenerate, carnal and rebellious and, therefore, as the *living* embodiments of an evil power which works against God—and so we read of "the world of the ungodly."

Perhaps I ought to add that there has grown up out of the existence of unconverted men and the prevalence of sin in them, certain customs, fashions, maxims, rules, modes, manners, forces—all of which go to make up what is called, "the world," and there are also certain principles, desires, lusts, governments and powers which also make up a part of the evil thing called, "the world." Jesus says, "My kingdom is not of this world." James speaks of keeping ourselves "unspotted from the world." John says, "the world passes away and the lust thereof." And Paul says, "not conformed to this world, but be you transformed."

Moreover, I may say that the present constitution and arrangement of all things in this fallen state may be comprehended in the term, "world," for everything has come under vanity by reason of sin and things are not, today, according to the original plan of the Most High as designed for man in His innocence. Behold there are trials and troubles springing out of our very existence in this life of which it is said, "in the world you shall have tribulation." To many a child of God there have befallen hunger and disease and suffering—and unkindness and various forms of evil which belong not to the world to come, nor to the kingdom which Christ has set up—but which come to them because they are in this present evil world which has become so because the race of men have fallen under the curse and consequence of sin.

Now the world is all these matters put together—this great conglomeration of mischief among men, this evil which dwells here and there and everywhere men are scattered—this is the thing which we call the world. Every one of us know what it is better than we can tell to anybody else and, perhaps, while I am explaining, I am rather confusing than expounding. You know just what the world is to some of you—it is not more than your own little family, as to outward form, but much more as to *influence*. Your actual world may be confined to your own house, but the same principles enter into the domestic circle which pervade kingdoms and states.

To others the world takes a wide sweep as they necessarily meet with ungodly men in business and this we must do unless we are to go altogether out of the world, which is no part of our Lord's plan, for He says, "I pray not that You should take them out of the world." To some who look at the whole mass of mankind and are called, thoughtfully, to consider them all because they have to be God's messengers to them, the tendencies and outgoings of the human mind towards that which is evil, and the spirit of men's actions as done against God in all nations and ages—all these go to make up to them, "the world."

But be it what it may, it is a thing out of which tribulation will be sure to come to us. Christ tells us so. It may come in the form of temporal trial of some shape or other. It may come in the form of temptation which will

alight upon us from our fellow men. It may come in the form of persecution to a greater or less extent according to our position, but it will come! "In the world you shall have tribulation." We are sojourners in an enemy's country and the people of the land where we tarry are not our friends and will not help us on our pilgrimage to Heaven. All spiritual men in the world are our friends, but then, like ourselves, they are in the world but they are not of it. From the kingdom of this world of which Satan is lord we must expect fierce opposition against which we must contend even unto victory if we are to enter into everlasting rest.

II. Now this brings me to the more interesting topic in the second place, of HOW HAS CHRIST OVERCOME THE WORLD? And we answer, first He did so *in His life*, then *in His death*, and then *in His rising and His reigning*. First, Christ overcame the world in His life. This is a wonderful study, the overcoming of the world in the life of Christ! I reckon that those first 30 years of which we know so little were a wonderful preparation for His conflict with the world and that though only in the carpenter's shop, obscure and unknown to the great outside world, yet in fact He was not merely preparing for the battle, but He was, then, beginning to overcome it.

In the patience which made Him bide His time we see the dawn of the victory. When we are intent upon doing good and we see mischief and sin triumphant everywhere, we are eager to begin. But suppose it were not the great Father's will that we should be immediately engaged in the fray? How strongly would the world, then, tempt us to go forward before our time? A transgression of discipline may be caused by too much zeal and this as much breaks through the law of obedience as dullness or sloth would do!

The Roman soldier was accounted guilty who, when the army was left with the orders that no man should strike a blow in the leader's absence, nevertheless stepped forward and slew a Gaul. The act was one of valor, but it was contrary to military discipline and might have had most baleful results—and so it was condemned. Thus is it, sometimes, with us. Before we are ready, before we have received our commission, we are in a hurry to step forward and smite the foe. That temptation must have come to Christ from the world—many a time—as He heard what was going on in the reign of error and hypocrisy. His benevolent impulses might have suggested to Him to be up and doing, had it not been that He was incapable of wrong desires.

Doubtless He was willing to be healing the sick. Was not the land full of sufferers? He would gladly be saving souls—were they not going down to the Pit by thousands? He would gladly have confuted error, for falsehood was doing deadly work—but His hour was not yet come. Our Lord and Master had nothing to say till His Father bade Him speak. We know He was under a strong impulse to be at work, for when He went up to the temple, He said, "Know you not that I must be about My Father's business?" That utterance revealed the fire that burned within His soul and yet He was not preaching nor healing, nor disputing, but still remained in obscurity all those 30 years because God would have it so.

When the Lord would have us quiet, we are doing His will best by being quiet. But yet to be still and calm for so long a time was a wonderful instance of how all His surroundings could not master Him—not even when they seemed to work with His philanthropy—He still remained obedient to God and thus proved Himself the Overcomer of the world. When He appears upon the scene of public action you know how He overcomes the world in many ways. First, *by remaining always faithful to His testimony*. He never modified it, not even by so much as a solitary word to please the sons of men. From the first day in which He began to preach, even to the closing sentence which He uttered, it was all the Truth of God and nothing but the Truth of God!

It was the Truth of God uncolored by prevailing sentiment, untainted by popular error. He did not, after the manner of the Jesuit, disguise His doctrine by so shaping it that men would hardly know but what it was the very error in which they had been brought up! Jesus came out with plain speaking and set Himself in opposition to all the powers which ruled the thought and creed of the age. He was no guarder of Truth. He allowed Truth to fight her own battles in her own way. And you know how she bares her breast to her antagonist's darts and finds in her own immutable, immortal, and invulnerable life her shield and her spear. His speech was confident, for He knew that Truth would conquer in the long run and, therefore, He gave forth His doctrine without respect to the age or its prejudices.

I do not think that you can say that of anybody else's ministry, not even of the best and bravest of His servants. We can see, in looking at Luther, great and glorious Luther, how Romanism tinged all that he did, more or less. And the darkness of the age cast some gloom, even over the serene and steadfast soul of Calvin. Of each one of the Reformers we must say the same—bright stars as all of these were—yet they kept not themselves untarnished by the sphere in which they shone. Every man is more or less affected by his age and we are obliged, as we read history, to make continual allowances, for we all admit that it would not be fair to judge the men of former times by the standard of the 19th Century.

But, Sirs, you may test Christ Jesus, if you will, by the 19th Century light, if light it is! You may judge Him by any century, yes, you may try Him by the bright light of the Throne of God! His teaching is pure Truth of God without any mixture. It will stand the test of time and of eternity! His teaching was not affected by the fact of His being born a Jew, nor by the prevalence of the Rabbinical traditions, nor by the growth of the Greek philosophy, nor by any other of the peculiar influences which were then abroad. His teaching was in the world, but it was not of it, nor tinged by it! It was the Truth of God as He had received it from the Father—and the world could not make Him add to it, or take from it, or change it in the least degree and, therefore—in this respect He overcame the world.

Observe Him, next, in *the deep calm which pervaded His spirit at times when He received the approbation of men*. Our Lord was popular to a very high degree at certain times. How the people thronged around Him as His benevolent hands scattered healing on all sides! How they approved of

Him when He fed them! But how clearly He saw through that selfish approbation and said, "You seek Me because of the loaves and fishes." He never lost His self-possession. You never find Him elated by the multitudes following Him. There is not an expression that He ever used which even contains a suspicion of self-glorification.

Amid their hosannas His mind is quietly reposing in God. He leaves their acclamations and applause to refresh Himself by prayer upon the cold mountains, in the midnight air. He communed with God and so lived above the praises of men. He walked among them holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners—even when they would have taken Him by force and made Him a king! Once He rides in triumph, as He might often have done if He had pleased, but then it was in such humble style that His pomp was far other than that of kings! It was a manifestation of lowliness rather than a display of majesty. Amid the willing hosannas of little children and of those whom He had blessed, He rides along, but you can see that He indulges none of the thoughts of a worldly conqueror, none of the proud ideas of the warrior who returns from the battle stained with blood.

No, He is still as meek and as gentle and as kindly as ever He was! His triumph has not a grain of self-exaltation in it. He had overcome the world. What could the world give Him, Brothers and Sisters? An imperial Nature like His, in which the Manhood held such close communion with Deity is not readily to be imagined! What was there, here below, to cause pride in Him? If the trumpet of fame had sounded out its loudest note, what could it have been compared with the songs of cherubim and seraphim to which His ear had been accustomed throughout all ages? No, allied with His Deity, His Manhood was superior to all the arts of flattery and to all the honors which mankind could offer Him. He overcame the world.

He was the same when the world tried the other plan upon Him. It frowned at Him but He was still calm. He had scarcely commenced to preach before they would have cast Him headlong from the brow of the hill! Do you not expect, as they are hurrying Him to the precipice, to see Him turn round upon them and denounce them at least with burning words such as Elijah used? But no, He speaks not an angry word! He slips away and is gone out of their midst. In the synagogue they often gnashed their teeth at Him in their malice, but if ever He was moved to indignation it was not because of anything directed against Himself. He always bore all and scarcely ever spoke a word by way of reply to merely personal attacks.

If calumnies were heaped upon Him, He went on as calmly as if they had not abused Him, nor desired to slay Him. When He is brought before His judges, what a difference there is between the Master and His servant, Paul. He is smitten, but He does not say like Paul, "God shall smite you, you white-washed wall!" No, but like a lamb before her shearers, He is dumb and opens not His mouth. If they could have made Him angry, they would have overcome Him—but He was still loving. He was gentle, quiet, patient—however much they provoked Him. Point me to an impatient

word—there is not even a *tradition* of an angry look that He gave on account of any offense rendered to Himself.

They could not drive Him from His purposes of love, nor could they make Him say anything or do anything that was contrary to perfect love! He calls down no fire from Heaven—no she bears come out of the woods to devour those who have mocked Him. No, He can say, “I have overcome the world,” for whether it smiles or whether it frowns, in the perfect peace and quiet of His spirit, in the delicious calm of communion with God, the Man of Sorrows holds on His conquering way! His victory will be seen in another form. He overcame the world as to the *unselfishness of His aims*. When men find themselves in a world like this they generally say, “What is our market? What can we make out of it?”

This is how they are trained from childhood. “Boy, you have to fight your own way! Mind you look to your own interests and rise in the world.” The book which is commended to the young man shows him how to make the best use of all things for himself. He must take care of, “Number One,” and mind the main chance. The boy is told by his wise instructors, “you must look to yourself or nobody else will look to you. And whatever you may do for others, be doubly sure to guard your own interests.”

That is the world’s prudence, the essence of all her politics, the basis of her political economy—every man and every nation must take care of themselves. If you wish for any other politics or economics you will be considered to be foolish theorists and probably a little touched in the head! Self is the man! The world’s law of self-preservation is the sovereign rule and nothing can go on rightly if you interfere with the gospel of selfishness—so the commercial and political Solomons assure us.

Now, look at the Lord Jesus Christ when He was in the world and you will learn nothing of such principles except their condemnation! The world could not overcome Him by leading Him into a selfish mode of action. Did it ever enter into His soul, even for a moment, what He could do for Himself? There were riches, but He had not where to lay His head. The little store He had, He committed to the trust of Judas—and as long as there were any poor in the land they were sure to share in what was in the bag. He set so little account by estate, stock and funds that no mention is made of such things by either of His four biographers! He had wholly and altogether risen above the world in that respect, for with whatever evil the most spiteful infidels have ever charged our Lord, they have never, to my knowledge, accused Him of avarice, greed, or selfishness in any form. He had overcome the world.

Then, again, the Master overcame the world in that *He did not stoop to use its power*. He did not use that form of power which is peculiar to the world even for unselfish purposes. I can conceive a man, even apart from the Spirit of God, rising superior to riches and desiring only the promotion of some great principle which has possessed his heart. But you will usually notice that when men have done so, they have been ready to promote good by evil, or at least they have judged that great principles might be pushed on by force of arms, or bribes, or policy. Mahomet had grasped a grand truth when he said, “There is no God but God.”

The unity of the Godhead is a truth of the utmost value—but then here comes the means to be used for the propagation of this grand truth—the scimitar! “Off with the infidels’ heads! If they have false gods, or will not acknowledge the unity of the Godhead, they are not fit to live.” Can you imagine our Lord Jesus Christ doing this? Why, then the world would have conquered *Him*. But He conquered the world in that He would not employ, in the slightest degree, this form of power. He might have gathered troops about Him—and His heroic example, together with His miraculous powers— must soon have swept away the Roman empire and converted the Jew!

And then across Europe and Asia and Africa His victorious legions might have gone trampling down all manner of evil. And with the Cross for His banner and the sword for His weapon, the idols would have fallen and the whole world must have been made to bow at His feet! But no, when Peter takes out the sword, He says, “Put up your sword into its sheath. They that take the sword shall perish with the sword.” Well did He say, “My kingdom is not of this world, else would My servants fight.” And He might, if He had pleased, have allied His Church with the State, as His mistaken friends have done in these degenerate times—and then there might have been penal laws against those who dared dissent—and there might have been forced contributions for the support of His Church and such like things.

You have read, I dare say, of such things being done, but not in the Gospels, nor in the Acts of the Apostles! These things are done by those who forget the Christ of God, for He uses no instrument but love, no sword but the Truth, no power but the Eternal Spirit and, in the very fact that He put all the worldly forces aside, He overcame the world! So, Brothers and Sisters, He overcame the world by *His fearlessness of the world’s elite*, for many a man who has braved the frowns of the multitude cannot bear the criticism of the few who think they have monopolized all wisdom!

But Christ meets the Pharisee and pays no honor to his phylactery. He confronts the Sadducee and yields not to his cold philosophy. Neither does He conceal the difficulties of the faith to escape his sneer. And He braves, also, the Herodian, who is the worldly politician, and He gives him an unanswerable reply. He is the same before them all! He is Master in all positions, overcoming the world’s wisdom and supposed intelligence by His own simple testimony to the Truth of God! And He overcame the world in His life, best of all, *by the constancy of His love*. He loved the most unlovely men. He loved those who hated Him. He loved those who despised Him.

You and I are readily turned aside from loving when we receive ungrateful treatment and thus we are conquered by the world. But He kept to His great objective—“He saved others, Himself He could not save.” And He died with this prayer on His lips, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Not soured in the least, blessed Savior, You are, at the last, just as tender as at the first! We have seen fine spirits, full of generosity, who have had to deal with a crooked and perverse generation until they have, at last, grown hard and cold. Nero, who weeps when he signs the

first death warrant of a criminal, at last comes to gloat in the blood of his subjects! Thus do sweet flowers wither into noxious corruption. As for You, precious Savior, You are always fragrant with love! No spot comes upon Your lovely Character, though You traverse a miry road. You are as kind to men at Your departure as You were at Your coming, for You have overcome the world!

I can only say on the next point that *Christ, by His death, overcame the world* because, by a wondrous act of self-sacrifice, the Son of God smote to the heart the principle of selfishness which is the very soul and life-blood of the world. There, too, by redeeming fallen man, He lifted man up from the power which the world exercises over him, for He taught men that they are redeemed, that they are no longer their own but bought with a price, and thus *redemption* became the note of liberty from the bondage of self-love and the hammer which breaks the fetters of the world and its lusts. By reconciling men unto God through His great Atonement, He also has removed them from the despair which otherwise had kept them down in sin and made them the willing slaves of the world. Now are they pardoned, and, being justified, they are made to be the friends of God! And being the friends of God they become enemies to God's enemies and are separated from the world—and so the world, by Christ's death, is overcome.

But chiefly has He overcome *by His rising and His reigning*, for when He rose He bruised the serpent's head and that serpent is the Prince of this world and has dominion over it. Christ has conquered the world's Prince and led him in chains—and now has Christ assumed the Sovereignty over all things here below. God has put all things under His feet. At His belt are the keys of Providence. He rules among the multitude and in the council chambers of kings. As Joseph governed Egypt for the good of Israel, so does Jehovah Jesus govern all things for the good of His people. Now the world can go no further in persecuting His people than He permits!

Not a martyr can burn, nor a confessor be imprisoned without the permit of Jesus Christ who is the Lord of all! The government is upon His shoulders and His kingdom rules over all. Brothers and Sisters, this is a great joy to us, to think of the reigning power of Christ as having overcome the world! There is yet this other thought that He has overcome the world *by the gift of the Holy Spirit*. That gift was practically the world's conquest. Jesus has set up a rival kingdom now—a kingdom of love and righteousness! Already the world feels its power by the Spirit. I do not believe that there is a dark place in the center of Africa which is not, to some extent, improved by the influence of Christianity. Even the wilderness rejoices and is glad for Him.

No barbarous power dares to do what once it did, or if it does, there is such a clamor raised against its cruelty that very soon it has to say *pecavi*, and confess its faults. This moment the stone cut out of the mountain without hands has begun to smite old Dagon! It is breaking his head and breaking his hands. And the very stump of him shall yet be dashed in pieces! There is no power in this world so vital, so potent as the power of

Christ at this day! I say nothing just now of heavenly or spiritual things. I speak only of temporal and moral influences—even in these, the Cross is to the front! He of whom Voltaire said that He lived in the twilight of His day, is going from strength to strength!

It was true it was the twilight, but it was the twilight of the morning and the full noon is coming! Every year the name of Jesus brings more light to this poor world! Every year hastens on the time when the Cross which is the lighthouse of humanity—the world's lighthouse amid the storm—shall shine forth more and more brightly over the troubled waters till the great calm shall come! The words shall become more and more universally true, "I, if I am lifted up, will draw all men unto Me." Thus has He overcome the world.

III. Now, lastly, WHAT CHEER IS THERE HERE FOR US? Why, first, that if the Man, Christ Jesus, has overcome the world at its worst, we, who are in Him, shall overcome the world, too, through the same power which dwelt in Him! He has put His life into His people! He has given His Spirit to dwell in them and they shall be more than conquerors! He overcame the world when it attacked Him in the worst possible shape, for He was poorer than any of you! He was more sick and sad than any of you! He was more despised and persecuted than any of you! And He was deprived of certain Divine consolations which God has promised never to take away from His saints—and yet, with all possible disadvantages—Christ overcame the world! Therefore be assured *we* shall conquer, also, in His strength.

Besides, He overcame the world when nobody else had overcome it. It was as it were a young lion which had never been defeated in fight. It roared upon Him out of the thicket and leaped upon Him in the fullness of its strength. Now, if our greater Samson did tear this young lion as though it were a kid, and fling it down as a vanquished thing, you may depend upon it that now it is an old lion—and gray and covered with the wounds which He gave it of old—we, having the Lord's life and power in us, will overcome it, too! Blessed be His name! What good cheer there is in His victory. He does as good as say to us, "I have overcome the world, and you, in whom I dwell, who are clothed with My Spirit, must overcome it, too."

But then, next, remember He overcame the world as our Head and Representative, and it may truly be said that if the members do not overcome, then the head has not perfectly gained the victory. If it were possible for the members to be defeated, why then, the head, itself, could not claim a complete victory, since it is one with the members. So Jesus Christ, our Covenant Head and Representative, in whose loins lay all the spiritual seed, conquered the world for us and we conquered the world *in* Him! He is our Adam and what was done by Him was actually done *for* us and virtually done *by* us! Have courage then, for you must conquer! It must happen to you as unto your Head—where the Head is, shall the members be—and as the Head is, so must the members be!

And now, Brothers and Sisters, I ask you whether you have not found it so? Is it not true, at this moment, that the world is overcome in you? Does

self govern you? Are you working to acquire wealth for your own aggrandizement? Are you living to win honor and fame among men? Are you afraid of men's frowns? Are you the slave of popular opinion? Do you do things because it is the custom to do them? Are you the slaves of fashion? If you are, you know nothing about this victory! But if you are true Christians, I know what you say—"Lord, I am Your servant. You have loosed my bonds. From now on the world has no dominion over me and though it tempts me, and frightens me, and flatters me, yet still I rise superior to it by the power of Your Spirit, for the love of Christ constrains me, and I live not unto myself and unto things that are seen, but unto Christ and to things invisible."

If it is so, who has done this for you? Who but Christ the Overcomer, who is formed in you the Hope of Glory? Be of good cheer, for you have overcome the world by virtue of His dwelling in you! So, Brothers and Sisters, let us go back to the world and its tribulations without fear! Its trials cannot hurt us! In the process we shall get good, as the wheat does out of the threshing. Let us go forth to combat the world, for it cannot overcome us! There was never a man, yet, with the life of God in his soul, whom the whole world could subdue! No, all the world and Hell together cannot conquer the smallest babe in the family of the Lord Jesus Christ!

Lo, you are harnessed with salvation! You are covered with Omnipotence! Your heads are covered with the protection of the Atonement, and Christ, Himself, the Son of God, is your Captain! Take up your battle cry with courage and fear not, for more is He that is for you than all they that are against you! It is said of the glorified saints, "They overcame through the blood of the Lamb," "and this is the victory which overcomes the world, even our faith." Be steadfast even to the end, for you shall be more than conquerors through Him that has loved you. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 16:1-33.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—326, 633, 739.**

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SWEET PEACE FOR TRIED BELIEVERS

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

*“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you might have peace.
In the world you will have tribulation: but be of good cheer;
I have overcome the world.”
John 16:33.*

THIS most delightful passage occurs at the close of the last of our Savior's sermons before He went to the Father. Let us treasure it as we lay up a man's last words. Wonderfully full is that sermon—it is of a piece with His last prayer—and that rises above all other pleadings of men! This farewell discourse may occupy but a short space in Scripture, but the thoughts suggested by it are so many that I suppose that the world itself might hardly contain the books that might fairly be written upon it. It took our Lord but a moment to speak some of its sentences—it will take us a lifetime to fully understand them! Perhaps we never shall understand some of these gracious sayings till we have put away all childish things and shall have come to the fullness of the stature of men in Christ Jesus. We shall never see all the richness of the Grace of this sermon till we have risen beyond these mists and clouds into the clearer atmosphere of the unclouded skies. In that Happy Country, being ourselves raised to a nobler condition, we shall be better able to comprehend the deep things of God, concerning which our Savior spoke in His supreme discourse. Meanwhile, let us apply our heart and mind to the consideration of these last Words of the greatest of all Preachers, the dearest of all Teachers and, may the Spirit of our God open them up to us!

Observe concerning the preaching of our Lord Jesus how eminently practical it is. You never find in the Master's speaking a single sentence spoken for what orators use to call, “effect.” He never introduces a pretty bit here and there to let men see how poetical His mind could be. He never goes a little aside to introduce a something which was quite unnecessary to the display of the subject, but very necessary to the display of the *orator*. Nothing so little, so self-seeking, ever governs the mind of Jesus. Far from it! His soul goes with His subject and He has no second objective—He would convey His meaning to His hearers and His mind is concentrated on that aim. He keeps hard at it, steadily driving at His point and He always speaks with the one desire, that the Truth should go home to the heart and should be blessed to the hearer. Hence He adopted the method in this instance of summing up and doing what the old divines used to call “making the improvement” at the end, when the Truths of

God which they had spoken was turned to practical account and the uses of the topic were enlarged upon. We might have found out, perhaps, by diligent study, what the practical drift of the Savior's discourse was, for it is never difficult for a spiritual mind to perceive His drift, but He meant not only that we might possibly see what He was aiming at, but that we should be *sure* of seeing it—and so He puts it into the plainest language and says, "These things have I spoken to you, that in Me you might have peace."

If this was our Lord's objective, I do not doubt that He had fully accomplished it! All that He had said tended to produce peace in His disciples' hearts, but He knew that their minds were dark—that they had but slight capacity as yet, and so, in His infinite tenderness, He told then, as one might tell a child, what He intended His address to produce. We thank Him for this and herein would we endeavor to emulate Him. We hope that our friends will always bear with us when we try to be very plain and simple—and spend much of our strength in pointing out what is the practical bearing of the Truth which we are teaching. It will be better to be considered needlessly explicit than to miss the end we have in view.

Let us greatly prize this conclusion of the Savior's ministry! It is all the more endeared to some of us by the fact that *our Lord finished as He began*. He is our peace. He came to bring it and He left it behind Him as He went away. Even before He had commenced His life-work, it was announced of Him that He came to bring "peace on earth, good will toward men." And before He is taken up, His last Words must necessarily be, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you." It was meet that He should close the service of His life wherein He had preached peace, by pronouncing this as His benediction. "These things have I spoken to you, that in Me you might have peace."

In trying to handle this text, tonight, aiming at the same practical end as my Divine Lord and Master, I shall notice, first of all, *the Believer in Christ*, and in Christ he is at peace. Secondly, *the Believer in the world*, and in the world he has tribulation. And, thirdly, *the Believer in the world and in Christ*, and in that condition he has victory! "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." May the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of peace, bless the word which I may now speak to you!

I. First, you have THE BELIEVER IN CHRIST spoken of in reference to his peace. Jesus says—"That in Me you might have peace." It is worthy of careful consideration that in Jesus, Himself, there was always an abiding peace present. *He had peace*. If He had not, Himself, possessed peace, we could not have had peace in Him. But what a holy calm there was upon the spirit of our Divine Master! Read His life through and dwell upon any one, delightful characteristic, and you will find Him perfect. But if you study it carefully in order to remark upon His manliness, His self-possession, His calm and peaceful bearing in the midst of turmoil and provocation, you will find Him to be a master of the art of peace. Truly in patience He possessed His soul! Never man had more to disturb Him, but never man was less disturbed! He could not be turned aside from anything which He had resolved to do, for He set His face like a flint and, in

the doing of it, He could not be excited or discouraged, for His spirit was not of this changing world. Men might oppose Him, but He endured great contradiction of sinners against Himself with marvelous long-suffering. When His eager and foolish disciples would push Him forward, or would hold Him back, He was moved neither in the one direction nor in the other by any of them. He steadfastly held to the even tenor of His way, His soul abiding in God, giving glory to God and resting in the eternal Power and Godhead which He knew to be always at His side. The background of the life of Christ is the Omnipresence of the Father. Wherever you see Him—you see Him quite alone when every disciple has forsaken Him—you see this text expounded, “You will leave Me alone, and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.”

Now this fact that He felt the Presence of the Father and did not occasionally speak to God, but *dwelt* with Him—that He did not resort to God as a make-shift in time of trouble, but abode with God at *all times* and so kept His spirit above everything that would draw it down—this it was that filled Him with an unbroken peace. Even Gethsemane did not break that peace! Covered with the bloody sweat, He still cries, “Not as I will, but as You will.” When His soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death, yet He knows where His Father is and He keeps His hold upon Him and maintains His intimacy with Him. He feels that one word from Him would presently bring more than 12 legions of angels to His rescue. Such is the position of favor which He still occupies with God, even when the sin of man is laid upon Him!

O Friends, Christ has peace enough and to spare! He is, Himself, personally, the deep well-spring of an endless peace and, therefore, we can understand why we always find peace in Him. One calm and quiet man has sometimes spread peace through what otherwise would have been terrified company. One Paul standing in the sinking ship saves all from ruin by the majesty of His immovable courage. And one Christ—such a Christ as ours—in the midst of a Church turns a horde of cowards into an army of heroes! His infinite peace breathes peace into our vacillating spirits. We rest because we see how He rests.

Now, as the Master had peace in Himself, *He had a strong desire that all His disciples should have peace.* I was about to say that it was with our Lord, “the ruling passion strong in death.” It was strong within Him when He was coming very near His passion and was about to go into Gethsemane—and then to Golgotha. Quietly He said, “These things have I spoken to you, that in Me you might have peace.” Our Lord Jesus Christ delights to see His people firm, calm, happy! I do not think that He is so pleased to see them excited, although we have those around us who seem to think that great Grace can only display itself by raving and raging. The religion of the quiet Jesus was never intended to drive us to the verge of insanity. “He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear His voice in the streets.” His Holy Spirit is no raven or eagle, but a dove—His holy influences are powerful and, therefore, calm. Weakness hurries, rages, shouts—for it has need to do so. Strength moves with its own delib-

erate serenity and effects its purpose. To those who think that saints should be maniacs, Jesus says, "Peace! Peace!"

On the other hand, we are quite certain that our Lord Jesus does not desire His disciples to be depressed. To some the fit color for piety seems to be gray, drab, or full mourning. But it is not so—the saints are arrayed in white linen, which is the emblem of gladness as well as of purity. The Savior does not wish His disciples to go through the world as through a twilight of sadness, whispering in fear because of judgments to come and suppressing all joy because of the evils with which they are surrounded. No, Brothers and Sisters, Jesus wishes us all to be happy in Himself, with a quiet peacefulness like His own. He was no laughing maker of merriment, but still He was serenely confident and He would have us keep to His pitch and be at peace. "These things have I spoken to you, that in Me you might have peace."

We have a great end to serve. We have a grand life to live. We have a grand Helper ready to help us if we will but believe in Him! Therefore, we need not blow a trumpet before we begin and we need not make a fuss when we are in the midst of our service, nor need we lie down on the ground as if we were the most wretched of men because of our heavenly calling. No, but we may feel, "The Lord of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge," and walk with God through life in that holy quiet which springs of conscious strength. Let us enjoy the calm of heart which comes of knowing that the reserves of God are infinite and that at any moment they can come to the front and deliver us should an emergency occur. Oh, that we could learn the art of peace from Christ! He desires that we should have it. Then we should not be so often up and so speedily down—today so brimming over and tomorrow so empty—one moment so fast and another so slow—unduly exhilarated at one moment and at the next so needlessly depressed. We ought not to be movable as waves, but fixed as stars! We ought not to be as thistledown, the sport of every wind, but as yonder granite peak which defies the storms of the ages! "These things have I spoken to you, that in Me you might have peace"—"peace"—oh, to get it and to keep it, through Jesus Christ our Lord!

Thus I have noticed that He had peace and He wished us to have it.

But now notice again that *in order to their having peace He spoke to them certain words*—"These things have I spoken to you, that in Me you might have peace." It will do you good, when you are at home, to read over the preceding chapter and note with diligence what the Lord Jesus said in order to give His disciples peace, for that same thing will give us peace. If you please, you may go back to the 15th chapter and even to the 14th, where you read—"Let not your heart be troubled." When you are at it, you may, if you like, go all through the Book, backward or forward, searching for peace as for a pearl—and you will not err, even then—for the great objective of all these Scriptures which, in the deepest sense, were all spoken by Jesus Christ, is that you may have peace! But especially let us dwell upon these particular words in this 16th chapter of John, for to these He chiefly alludes.

Now, what did He say to them that they might have peace? One thing was that *He foretold their trials*. He said to them, "They shall put you out of the synagogues: yes, the time comes, that whoever kills you will think that he does God service." Learn, then, that one way for you to gain peace is to reflect upon that trial is promised you, that trial is in the Covenant, that persecution and the ill-will of an ungodly world are evils which you are bound to endure! They are guaranteed to you by the very fact of your being of the seed of the woman whose heel must be bruised—and they *will* come to you in your measure. Expect trials as you look for clouds and rain in the English climate. If this island is your dwelling place, you cannot look for the climate of India! Neither ought you to complain of winter and frost for these are a part of a Briton's inheritance. You must take the rough with the smooth.

When exceedingly severe persecutions and afflictions happen to you, they will seem to the adversary to be evident tokens of perdition, but to you they will be evident tokens of the Truth of God's Word and of your being, yourself, a true lineal descendant of that persecuted Savior who told you, "If they persecute Me, they will also persecute you. The disciple is not above His Master, nor the servant above His Lord." Do, then, make yourself familiar with trial. Wonder when it does *not* come! And when it does come, say, "Ah, you are an old acquaintance of mine." There is such a thing as carrying your cross till you are so accustomed to it that you would be almost uneasy without it. You may bear a burden on your back so long that if that burden were taken away, you would miss it. The Lord has made some of His children fond of their cross. It was so with Rutherford. He said at last that he was half afraid lest his cross, which had become so sweet to him, might rival Christ, Himself! I never feel any fear of *that* myself, for pain is very much dreaded by my coward flesh, but I suppose that there are saints who have come to feel that the bitter is so beneficial that they would prefer its tonic to the sweetest cup that was ever mingled. It is an acquired taste, no doubt, but he that has it will be at peace about trouble. It shall help you greatly to attain peace if you expect rough treatment while you are a sojourner in this present evil world.

The next thing He did to comfort them was that *He told them why He was going away*. It is often a choice blessing, when you have a great trial, to know why it is sent. That is a wise petition if not pressed too far—"Show me why You contend with me." The Savior was going because it was expedient for them that He should go. Does it not take away the sting of a trial when you know by faith that it is expedient that such and such a grief should happen to you? If it is expedient that the dear child should be taken from your arms—expedient that the business should not prosper—expedient that you, yourself, should be struck with a sickness which no faith will remove so that you bow to Divine Wisdom. The God who is better to you than all your fears, yes, better than your hopes, intends, perhaps, the affliction to remain with you until it lifts the latch of Heaven for you and lets you into your eternal rest! Now, when the Savior told them why He was going, the condescending information was meant to produce peace

in their hearts. He has also told you why your trials are sent to you—they work your lasting good! Therefore rest concerning them.

Further, to give them peace, the Savior went on *to speak to them of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, and what the Comforter would do*. He enlarged upon that theme since it was so cheering. Beloved, if you want peace, think much of the Divine Comforter. You are not left alone. You are not left without the most tender sympathy of One who knows how to cheer the heaviest heart! You are not left without a Friend more able than all other friends to enter into your secret griefs and administer to you the most potent consolations. Think much of the Holy Spirit in His office as Comforter and the meditation will foster peace within your spirit. How ill we treat the Holy Spirit by our few and superficial thoughts of Him! Let us henceforth adore Him with deeper love and reverence.

Then He told them about *the power of prayer*. He said, “Whatever you shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it to you.” And again, “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.” What a breath of peace cools the forehead of the man who remembers that he may pray and that prayer is heard in Heaven! There is a noise in the streets. There is a disturbance within doors—even your own *heart* is perturbed—what then? Let us pray! The known remedy for unknown evils is prayer. Oh, the peace that comes from the Mercy Seat! You that are familiar with it will bear me witness that it is wonderful what storms it will quell, what cyclones it will quiet! Only pray and you are master of the situation! Like your Master, you may walk the waves of the sea when you have but the power in His name to speak to those waves and bid them be still! And He gives you that power when you draw near to Him in believing prayer!

All this must have greatly tended to produce peace, but as if this might not be enough, our tender Lord let slip a precious Word that ought to give peace to all our minds—“*The Father Himself loves you.*” The love of God the Father is a treasure-house of peace! The Father Himself—not moved by the importunities of His pleading Son, but Himself, of His own accord, loves *you*! O Father God, how have You sometimes been slandered, as though You were hesitant to love us and Your Son must necessarily persuade You! No, it is not so! God loved His people and, therefore, He sent His Son to redeem them. “He so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.” Christ is not the *cause* of Divine Love, but the sweetest and best *Fruit* of it. “The Father Himself loves you.” Therefore, be of good cheer, and let your peace be like a river!

And then, dear Friends, *He confirmed their faith in Himself*. He so spoke to them that they, at last, said, “Now are we sure. By this we believe,” and so on. This is the way to get peace! Peace comes by the way of *faith*. Those of you who are very fond of doubts, can, perhaps, tell me whether you ever derived any peace from them. Time is but ill-used when we pore over books which are calculated to shake our faith—as well eat food which is sure to make us ill! There are certain men who are always busy with the Scriptures to try and find difficulties in them—and if they cannot find them in the English version then, straightway, they will sooner have a new

translation than miss their precious difficulty! This is as foolish as if we should refuse to eat our Christmas pudding because we could not find any stones in the plums, or any hard lumps in the sugar upon which to break our teeth! The great objective of some men seems to be to find in the Bible something which they *cannot* believe. For my part, I am delighted with what I *do* believe! They cultivate doubts while a wise man regards them as weeds, and burns them in a heap!

The Lord knows there is sorrow enough in this world without laboring to make more. And I should like to ask all such critics and great discoverers whether they believe that their discoveries tend at all to the creation of peace in their own minds, or in the minds of others? I believe, and then I get peace. I believe and am sure—then is my peace like a river and my righteousness like the waves of the sea! Luther tells us how he found peace when one said to him, “I believe in the forgiveness of sins.” Oh, if one did but believe what he professes to believe! I mean believed it fully! That way lies peace—in believing up to the hilt. The child-like way of sitting at Jesus’ feet and receiving His Words—this is the path of peace. All the outgrowth of quibbling and caviling may be summed up as thorns and briars, tearing the flesh and rending the spirit. These things had Christ spoken, that they might believe in Him, for well He knew that the victory which overcomes trial is *faith* and not doubt. Believing—not questioning, is the King’s Highway!

I must notice that *our Master’s wish that we might have peace was qualified by those two words, “in Me”*—“That *in Me* you might have peace.” Remember, then, you may not expect to derive peace from yourselves. You will turn that dunghill over a long while before you find the jewel of peace in it! Our Lord did not even intend that we should find peace in outward ordinances, or religious exercises. No doubt it is very quieting to read a chapter, or to attend a service, or to come to the Lord’s Table—but it is not the Lord’s intent that these should, of themselves, yield us peace. These are to be means *to* peace, but the peace must always be in Himself, in His own blessed Person! We must get to Him, for this is His wish, “that in Me you might have peace”—peace *only* in Him, but peace *always* in Him. Peace of the deepest, truest, most constant, most emphatic kind is only found in Jesus! Peace in all seasons, and in all difficulties. Peace forever—all this is in Him—and only in Him. Outside of Him it is all tossing to and fro, questions, fog, haze and fear. But *in Him* we dwell as in a sheepfold, where the sheep lie down and rest. In Him we are in a home where all is love and comfort. Brothers and Sisters, let us not wander from this sacred center of serene repose lest we wander from peace! It is this Man who shall be the peace, this Son of God who shall give us rest! Let us then come to Him at once in every case. Yes, let us always abide in Him. His wish is that His joy may be in us and, therefore, He says, “These things have I spoken to you, that in Me you might have peace.”

Thus have I said well-near enough to you upon this first point of the Believer in Christ and His peace.

II. I have been a long while on that head so I need to be all the shorter on the second—THE BELIEVER IN THE WORLD finds himself like wheat

under the flail, for so the text puts it, “In the world you will have tribulation.”

That is, first, *you are not screened from any kind of trouble*. You are in Christ and the Savior saves you from your sins, but He has not promised that you will have no sorrow. He has not promised to screen you from either poverty, or toil, or sickness, or slander, or any of the common ills of mankind. Some of the very best of His beloved have been enriched and indulged by being permitted to undergo much secret discipline of pain, sorrow and need. Your Lord, among the treasures that He gives you, grants a cross. You start back and say, “Not that, Lord!” but He answers, “Yes, this, My child. This and no other.” The cross is the best piece of furniture in your house, though you have sometimes wished it was not there. It shall always work your good—it works it now. Some of the comforts allotted to you in Providence will be questionable in their effect upon you, by reason of your sinfulness and weakness. But the cross which the Lord appoints you has no result but your good! It is a bitter tree, apparently, but it is a healthful medicine. Take it, child of God! Plant it and let it grow—and its fruit shall be sweet. We are not guarded from tribulation, but we are promised it—and we are benefited by it.

We are not favored by being promised the admiration of the ungodly. “In the world”—not merely in this present state, but in this ungodly world—we shall have tribulation. Worldlings will not gather round you to admire your excellence and assist your piety. If they did, I should think that either the world had changed, or else it had made a mistake about you. Which of the two it is, I do not say. I do not think that it can be that the world has changed. Worldlings may like a Christian for certain externals. They may admire him for certain advantages they get from him. But as a Christian, they cannot love him. That is impossible! There is an enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman—and you had better understand that it is so because the serpent has not changed his nature—but is still a vile deceiver and destroyer! He still exhibits his glittering scales and speaks as craftily and flatteringly to us as he did to mother Eve and, perhaps, to you. He says that he loves you more than he can tell, only you are so unfriendly and suspicious that he has never been able to show his affection. Yes, he sees in you so much to admire that he wishes you were not quite so strait-laced, for then he could introduce you to his dear friends and children, for you would do them no end of good! Hit him across the head if you get an opportunity, for he means no good to you.

Of all the devils in the world, I hate a roaring devil least, but a *flattering* devil is the worst devil that ever a man meets! When the world pretends to love, understand that it now hates you more cordially than ever and is carefully baiting its trap to catch you and ruin you! Beware of the Judas kiss with which the Christ was betrayed and with which you will be betrayed unless you are well upon your guard. In the world and from the world you *will* have tribulation!

The text puts this in such a broad way that it gives a hint that in the world you will have tribulation *often*. Affliction is not with us always, but

it is well to be always *prepared* for it. There are times in which we enjoy prosperity—some Christians enjoy much of it—and do not let them be much alarmed because they do so, for what the Lord's Providence sends us is not harmful, in itself, and is to be accepted without suspicion. I remember that a person came to me, once, and told me that she had prayed for affliction. I replied, "Dear Soul, dear Soul, do not be so foolish! You will have quite enough trouble without asking for it." If a child were to ask his father to let him be whipped, he would be a strange sort of child! And I should think he would not be likely to repeat the experiment if he had a practical man for a father! No, no, no! That is not our path of duty. If God spares us tribulation, let us be thankful to Him. But if He does not spare us, let us be equally thankful. This last is a hard lesson to learn, but we ought to learn it. We shall frequently endure tribulation, for we are born to it at our first birth, as the sparks fly upward. It is also certain that our second birth introduces us to a second set of tribulations. He sang a true song who gave us this verse—

***"Poor and afflicted,' 'tis their lot.
They know it and they murmur not.
It would ill become them to refuse
The state their Master deigned to choose."***

Again, in the world you will *emphatically* have tribulation. If anybody else has it, you will. And if nobody else has it, yet you will have it. You will have it, perhaps, where you least wish it or reckon on it. "A man's foes shall be they of his own household." "Any cross but the one I have," cried one. Surely it would not be a cross if you had the choosing of it, for it is of the essence of a cross that it should run counter to our liking! It must be something from which the flesh shrinks, which is not for the present, joyous, but grievous. So our Lord puts it, "In the world you will have tribulation." I wonder how many Christians here could say that they have *not* found it so. I think that the most of us—at least, all I know of—would say that the prophecy of our Lord has been abundantly verified. And must it not be so in the nature of things? Has not this world been a place of sorrow ever since Adam broke his Maker's command? Did not the mandate then go forth, "Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to you. Dust you are, and unto dust shall you return"?

To a Christian man must not the world bring tribulation and anguish because it is a world which lies in the Wicked One? The Christian is not of the world, even as Christ is not of the world. He is out of his element. He is an alien. He is a pilgrim. Can he expect the comforts of home while he tarries here? It is an uncongenial world to his spiritual nature. There is nothing in it to help him. This world is a foe to Grace—not a friend to it—and, therefore, the gracious man must have tribulation. If he is to be like his Lord, he certainly will have it. And if he is to be like the Lord's people, he will have it, for they are a line of cross-bearers. There is no exception to this rule if you take the whole of any Believer's life, though for a while certain favored men may seem to be the darlings of Providence. Job multiplied his riches and dwelt at ease with a hedge about him. He thought, perhaps, that he would have no tribulation to bear, but the flail seemed

made of iron when at last it fell! So may the most prosperous have all the greater trial when the day of adversity arrives.

Brethren, I was thinking, as I turned over this subject, that though there is tribulation in the world, we still get far too fond of the world. We are always trying to pluck handfuls of its flowers—and if its roses had no thorns we would bury ourselves in heaps of them! We would never quit the nest and learn to fly if the Lord did not stir up our nest even as does the eagle. We should want to tarry here forever and say, “Lo, this is my home,” if it were not that an unkind world gives us aliens’ treatment and forces us to feel that we are in exile here. One said to a great man, as he looked over his gardens, “These are the things that make it hard to die.” As we are not to live here, but must soon be up and away to the better land where our life can far better develop, it is meet that in the world we should have tribulation, that we may turn our thoughts and our desires towards that dear City of our God where alone is our dwelling place! Thanks be unto God for the tribulation which weans our thoughts from earth and wins them for Heaven! And let all the people say, “Amen.”

III. But now, lastly, let us view THE BELIEVER IN THE WORLD AND IN CHRIST—and this means victory! I will occupy but a moment or two to say that if we dwell in Christ, though we also have to dwell in the world, yet we shall overcome the world.

I call your special attention to the words of our Lord Jesus in the text—“Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” *Our Lord was, all that time, still in the world.* Do you know where Christ was when He said that? Why, He was on the edge of Gethsemane! He was at the foot, so to speak, of Golgotha—where He was to die! He had not then borne the scourge and the Cross. But I dare not lay my hand upon my Master and say, “Good Lord, You have made a mistake. You have not yet overcome, for the worst part of the battle has not come to You.” He knew what He said and made no error in saying it. Oh, but it was bravely spoken! The faith which abode in Him made Him say, “I have overcome.” On the verge of the fight, He said, “I have overcome.” John caught up this word when he, afterwards, said, “This is the victory which overcomes the world, even our faith,” because it was by *faith* that our blessed Lord said at this moment, “I have overcome the world.” He spoke in the Prescience of faith. He took for granted that He would overcome the world, for the Father was with Him!

But up to that point it was assuredly true, as it was even to the end, that *He had really overcome the world.* Its blandishments He had overcome. Its temptations He had overcome. Its terrors He had overcome. Its errors He had overcome. Everything in the world that had assailed Him, He had put to the rout. He was tempted in all points like as we are, but He remained without sin. He had overcome everything that had come to attack His holiness, His patience, His self-sacrifice—He had been victor at every point!

Now, here is a matter of joyful consideration—our Lord says, “Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” But what cheer is there in that? Well, the cheer lies in the fact which He does not here state, but which He had stated before, namely, that *He is one with us and we are one with*

Him. He does as good as say, “I have overcome the world and you are in Me, your Head. My overcoming of the world belongs to you. I, your Leader, have overcome the world for you. I have led the way in this dread fight and conquered the adversaries which you have now to fight with. And thus I have virtually won the battle before you begin it.”—

**“Hell and your sins obstruct your course
But Hell and sins are vanquished foes.
Your Jesus nailed them to His Cross,
And sang the triumph when He rose.”**

“I have, Myself,” says Jesus, “overcome for you that you may overcome in Me. Now, go to the fight, to rout the already worsted enemy, and triumph over a serpent whose head I have already broken.”

*We derive, then, from the fact that Christ has overcome, the assurance that we shall overcome, since we are one with Him, members of His body and parts of Himself! O Brothers and Sisters, you must fight your way through. You cannot quit this conflict. You have to cut your way through a solid wall of difficulties—there is no other course! But you are going to do it. You will do it! A great commander commences a campaign. Does he desire that there shall be no battle? If so, how is it a war? How is he a soldier? He certainly can send home no reports of victory if there is no fighting. He can never come to be a great commander if he never distinguishes himself in the field. So let us consider that every battle-field to which God calls us is only another opportunity of victory and, Christ being with us, another *certainty* of victory! Onward, then, you Christian soldiers!—*

**“Let your drooping hearts be glad;
March in heavenly armor clad.”**

Let not the brightness of your armor be stained by the rust of fear! You shall overcome as surely as your Lord has overcome. If you commit yourself to His keeping and abide in Him who is All in All to you, no defeat can possibly befall you.

I have this last word to add. There may be some here who will say, “Look, look. These Christian people have plenty of trouble.” That is quite true, but they are not the only ones to be pitied—“Many sorrows shall be to the wicked.” Those who are not in Christ Jesus shall also find tribulation in this world, for thorns and thistles spring up more numerous in the field of the sluggard than anywhere else. The wicked shall find that there are special sorrows for them—whips of scorpions for them, especially when they get farther on in life—and their youthful fires burn down to a black ash. Woe unto sinners when they have to reap the fruits of their evil deeds! O Sirs, I would not go through life without a Savior, as you do, no, not if I might be made an emperor! To have to fight this life-battle without Christ is sure defeat! What a discovery it will be when, having struggled through one life of sorrow, you shall find yourself beginning another life of *greater* sorrow which will never come to an end!

It is an awful thing for a man to go from Hell to Hell—to make this world a Hell and then find another Hell in the next world! But it were a blessed thing to go through 50 hells to Heaven, if such a thing could be. It is glorious to struggle on through poverty, sickness, persecution and to hear, at last, the word, “Well done!” That will be glorious! Who aspires to

it? God help each one of us to labor after it and give us strength to carry on the holy war and fight it through, even to the end!

But if you are wrapping yourselves up in these poor joys, these wretched rags of earth—and are living to make money, or to get drink, or to enjoy yourselves in the hurtful luxuries of lust—God have mercy upon you and save you! Hear the Gospel, each one of you! “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” The Lord lead you to do so, for His name’s sake! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 16.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—734, 744, 779.**

A POSTSCRIPT TO THE SERMON FROM MR. SPURGEON:

At this time I am compelled by fervent gratitude to acknowledge, in the mass, a vast amount of loving encouragement for which it is impossible for me to tender individual thanks. The “Down Grade” controversy has cost me dearly in several ways and the pain of heart I have endured, I would not wish any other man to bear. But the floods of enthusiastic sympathy have washed out the footprints of sorrow and left many precious things upon the shores of my memory. I had cast myself upon the Lord, alone, willing to be forsaken of all for the Truth of God’s sake—and, therefore, it is an extra joy to find so many unlooked-for-friends and helpers in every part of the Christian Church. Human sympathy is, in this case, the basket of silver to bear to me the golden apples of Divine consolation! I now know of a surety that there are tens of thousands that have not bowed the knee to “modern thought.”

I have felt some little fear lest my orphans should be made to suffer through my actions. They, at least, are innocent of any controversy, yet it is within the possibilities of unhallowed anger that subscriptions to their support should be withheld because of my protest and secession. Those who maintain error are not always very choice in their arguments. I can bear anything, myself, God helping me, but I hope I shall not see the Orphanage, or any other of the Institutions under my care, suffering through this solemn debate. Will not my faithful friends see that it is not so? I have no great alarm about it, but it is sometimes well to stir up pure minds by way of remembrance.

During my absence, letters containing aid for the Orphanage had better be directed to Mr. F. G. Ladds, Stockwell Orphanage, Clapham Road, London—and he will report them to me.

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GOOD CHEER FROM CHRIST'S VICTORY OVER THE WORLD

NO. 3285

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 18, 1912.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

***“These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me you might have peace.
In the world you shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer,
I have overcome the world.”
John 16:33***

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon the same text are #1327, Volume 22—
CHRIST THE OVERCOMER OF THE WORLD and #1994, Volume 33—
SWEET PEACE FOR TRIED BELIEVERS—
read/download both sermons free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

The Believer is in two places, and he lives two lives. In the text there are two places spoken of—“in Me” and, “in the world.”

The saint's noblest life is “hid with Christ in God.” This is his new life, his spiritual life, his incorruptible life, his everlasting life. Rejoice, Beloved, if you are in Christ, and enjoy the privilege which belongs to that condition—“that in Me you might have peace.” Do not be satisfied without it! It is your right through your relationship to the Prince of Peace. Because you are in Christ, your life of lives is always safe and should be always restful. Your greatest interests are all secure, for they are guaranteed by the Covenant of which Jesus is the Surety. Your treasure, your eternal portion, is laid up with Him in Heaven where neither rust nor robber can enter. Therefore, be of good cheer! Be restful and happy, for you are in Christ and He has said, “These things have I spoken unto you, that in Me you might have peace.”

You are sorrowfully conscience that you also live another life, for you dwell in the midst of evil men, or, as the text puts it, you are “in the world.” I need not enlarge upon that fact, for probably, dear Friend, every time you go out to business or to daily labor, you find by the ungodly speeches of graceless men, that you are in the world which lies in the Wicked One. Even while you dwell in the sweet seclusion of domestic life, though your family has been graciously visited, and your dear ones are all Believers, yet even *there* matters occur which make you feel that you are “in the world—a world of sin and sorrow. You are not yet in Heaven—do not dream that you are. It would be a pity for a sailor to expect the sea to be as stable as the land, for the sea will be the sea to the end and the world will be the world to you as long you are in it.

The Savior warns His people, "In the world you shall have tribulation." That is to say, your condition will at times be as unpleasant as that of wheat under the flail, for the Latin word, "tribulation," signifies threshing. Many blows of the flail are needed to separate your chaff from your wheat and, therefore, while you are in this world, you are on the threshing-floor. The Greek word which Jesus used is not quite of the same import as our English-Latin word, but it means pressing grief and searching trial. You must at times experience trial while you are in the world, though not always to the same degree, for God gives some of His people much rest even while here below—but this does not arise out of the world—it is His own special gift. "In the world you shall have tribulation" is as sure a fact as that in Christ you shall have peace!

Now, because of this tribulation and the sorrow which is likely to come of it, our Savior gives us the words of good cheer to which our attention is directed in the text. We have first to show *what sorrow the comfort is aimed at* and, secondly, *what is the actual comfort here bestowed*.

I. WHAT IS THIS TRIBULATION IN THE WORLD AT WHICH THE SAVIOR'S WORDS OF COMFORT ARE AIMED?

It includes *the afflictions which come upon us because we are men living among men* and not yet at Home among angels and glorified saints. We dwell among beings who are born to trouble as the sparks fly upward. Between other men and us there are many points of difference, but we share with them in the common infirmities, labors, sicknesses, bereavements and necessities of our fallen race. We are outside of Eden's gate with the rest of Adam's family. We may be greatly beloved of God and yet be poor. God's love to Lazarus did not prevent his lying at the rich man's gate, nor hinder the dogs from licking his sores. Saints may be sick as well as other men—Job and David and Hezekiah felt sore diseases. Saints go into the hospital as well as sinners, for their bodies are liable to the same accidents and ailments. Such diseases as men bring upon themselves by vice, the godly escape and, therefore, as a rule, God's people have a great advantage over the reckless and reprobate in point of health. But, still, in this respect the best of men are only men and it will often be said, "Lord, he whom You love is sick." Upon the bodies of the godly the elements have the same power as upon others—upon them the hot desert wind blows, or through their garments the cold penetrates—the sun scorches them in the fierceness of its summer heat, or chilling dampness threaten the flame of life. In this respect, one event happens unto all, though not without mysterious and blessed differences. No screen is set around the godly to protect them from physical suffering—they are not living in the land of Goshen so that light cheers their dwelling while the dense fog hangs over the rest of the land! Scant is the need to dwell up this theme, for it is well known that "many are the afflictions of the righteous," because they are in a world which, for a while, is made subject to vanity.

Nor may we forget that we endure a second set of tribulation *because we are Christians*. Ishmael was not mocked, but Isaac was, for he was born after the promise. Esau's posterity never suffered bondage in Egypt, but Israel must be trained by hard service. *Persecution is for the righteous*, wicked men are in honor among their ungodly associates. Slander shoots her poisoned arrows, not at the vicious, but at the virtuous. Birds do not peck at sour fruit, but they wage war upon the sweet and ripe. Holy men must expect to be misrepresented, misinterpreted and often willfully maligned—while hypocrites have their reward in undeserved homage. Carry what load you choose upon your shoulders and no one will notice it unless, indeed, they obey the good old rule and “respect the burden.” But if you take up Christ's Cross and bravely bear it, few will respect the burden, or praise the bearer! Graceless men will add weight to your load, for the offense of the Cross has not ceased. The seed of the serpent still has enmity against the Seed of the woman, and one and another will commence biting at the heel which treads the sacred way of Christ. It is the nature of the wicked to hate the righteous, even as the wolf rages against the sheep. This world cannot be the friend of the friend of God unless, indeed, Belial can have concord with Christ—and this we know is impossible! In one form or another, the Egyptian will oppress the Israelite till the day of the bringing out with a high hand and an outstretched arm. If today the enmity is restrained in its manifestation, it is because the law of the land, by the good Providence of God, does not now allow the rack, the stake, or the dungeon. Our Lord said to His first disciples, “In the world you shall have tribulation,” and He explained it to mean that men would put them out of the synagogues. Yes, that the time would come when those that *killed* them would think that they did God service! Tribulation of that sort remains up to the measure in which it is not hindered by Divine Power. The spirit out of which it sprang cannot die till men are renewed. A man's foes are still they of his own household. “All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”

Nor is the opposition of the world confined to persecution. It sometimes takes the far more dangerous form of flattery—pleasing baits are held out and allurements are used to decoy the Believer from his Lord. Many have been grievously wounded by the world when it has met them with the kiss of Judas on its lips and a dagger in its right hand wherewith to slay the soul! Woe unto those who are ignorant of its devices! This is a sore trouble under the sun, that men are false—their words are softer than butter, but inwardly they are drawn swords! This has often surprised young Christians. They imagined that since the godly were charmed at the sight of their early graces, all others would be equally pleased. They are dumbfounded when they find that their good is evilly spoken of. Is any hearer of mine one of these raw recruits? Let him learn that to be a soldier of the Cross means real war—not a sham fight! He is

in an enemy's country and the time will yet come when, as a veteran warrior, he will be surprised if he lives a day without a conflict, or is able for an hour to sheathe his sword—

***“Must I be carried to the skies,
On flowery beds of ease,
While others fought to win the prize
And sailed through bloody seas?
Are there no foes for me to face?
Must I not stem the flood
To help me on to God?
Surely I must fight if I would reign—
Increase my courage, Lord!
I'll bear the toil, endure the pains,
Supported by Your Word”***

Certain tender hearts are not only surprised, but they are daunted and grieved by the world's opposition. Gentle, loving spirits who would not oppose anybody if they could help it, keenly feel the wanton assaults of those whom they would rather please than provoke. The sensitiveness of love renders the choicest characters the most susceptible of pain under cruel opposition—especially when it comes from beloved kinsfolk. To those who love God and man, it is at times an agony to be compelled to appear as the cause of strife, even for Christ's sake. We would gladly follow peace with all men, yet are we often forced to cry—

***“My soul with him that hates peace
Has long a dweller been!
I am for peace, but when I speak,
For battle they are keen.
My soul distracted mourns and pines
To reach that peaceful shore
Where all the weary are at rest,
And troubles vex no more.”***

We are sent forth as sheep among wolves—and this jars upon our gentleness which loves far better to lie down in the green pastures near the Shepherd and in the midst of flock.

We are most of all grieved to think that men should not love Christ. It makes us deeply sorrowful that they should not see the beauties of the Man of Sorrows. In our inmost hearts we are wounded when they wound our Well-Beloved. That they oppose *us* is little—but that they stumble at the great Foundation Stone upon which they will surely be broken, is terrible to perceive! They sin against light and love. They sin against their own souls—and this is a tribulation which bruises every holy heart and causes every loving spirit to bleed.

This calls for constant watchfulness, since our very love to men might become, unless salted by the Grace of God, a cause of decay to our purity. Some spirits love fighting and are never more happy than when they can denounce, resist, secede and contend. These are members of the Church Militant in another than the best sense. When the Grace of God enters their hearts and consecrates their obstinacy into firmness, they

make fine men in a way, but if we measure them by the scale of love, and that, I take it, is the standard of the sanctuary—for he is most like God who loves most and he has come nearest to the image of Christ whose heart is fullest of tenderness—these rougher spirits turn out to be rather dwarfs than giants in the Kingdom of God. We must have backbone and must be prepared to contend earnestly for the faith, but yet the more love we exhibit, the better! And, therefore, the more pain it will cost us to be continually at war with unloving spirits. This is a part of the tribulation which we must endure—and the more bravely we face it, the more thoroughly shall we win the battles of peace and purity!

Is not this enough upon the darker side of the picture?

II. Let us now consider WHAT THE COMFORT IS WHICH JESUS GRACIOUSLY OFFERS US. “Be of good cheer,” He says, “I have overcome the world.” This is a glorious sentence spoken by the greatest Conqueror that ever lived—in whom all His people shall yet be “more than conquerors.”

Here let us view our Lord in His blessed Person, for there is much of good cheer in the contemplation. Remember, first, that *our blessed Lord was a Man*. Believe all that this means, for many are apt to think that because He was God as well as Man, therefore He was not so fully a Man. The tendency is to separate Him from the race and so from ourselves, but I pray you, Friend, to respect that Jesus was in some respects more a Man than any of us!

There are some points in which no one man is all that manhood is—but Jesus was the summary of all manhood. I might almost venture to say that He had about Him the whole Nature of mankind as it respects to the mental conformation of both man and woman, for He was as tender as woman though as strong as man. Holy women, as much as godly men, find in Jesus all that is in their own souls. There is nothing effeminate in Him and yet all the loveliness which is feminine—read His life story and see. He was Man in the broadest sense of the term, taking up in one the whole genus. Men are of certain ranks and grades, but Christ is without limit, save only that in Him was no sin. Though a Jew, He bore no special national peculiarity, for Gentiles find in Him their next of kin. You apply no descriptive word to the Son of Man, except that you call Him “the Man of Sorrows.” He was a Man who greatly suffered in body and in mind, and displayed His Manhood by the bravery of His endurance—a Man rejoicing in man’s joy, depressed in man’s grief—a Man who ran up the entire scale of humanity, from its deepest to its highest tone. Now, if a typical man has overcome the world, then man has done it and man can be enabled to do it again! This inspires courage and vanishes despair. It was the mighty power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in Him by which Jesus overcame the world—and that same quiet power, if it dwells in us, will make us win the same victory by faith. The arch enemy has been conquered by Man and our hearts may be comforted by the convic-

tion that by God working in us, we, too, shall bruise Satan under our feet shortly!

It is cheering to remember that wherein our Lord's was a special case, it is to our comfort, for He, as Man, entered into the conflict under serious disadvantages which we cannot labor under. He was weighted with a care unique and unexampled. Be our charge what it may, it cannot be comparable to His heavy burden as the Shepherd of Souls. We think ourselves overburdened and speak of life as though it were rendered too stern a conflict by the load of our cares and responsibilities. But what comparison is there between our load and that of Jesus? A pastor with a great flock is not without his hourly anxieties, but what are those to the cares of the Chief Shepherd? He watched over the great multitude which no man can number—who were committed to Him by the Father—and for these He carried all their grief! Here was a burden such as you and I, dear Friend, cannot even imagine! And yet, without laying aside the weight, He fought the world and overcame it! Let His name be praised and let His victory be the comfort of all that labor and are heavy laden—

***“His is the victor's name,
Who fought our fight alone!
Triumphant saints no honor claim—
His conquest was His own.”***

Remember, next, that He was loaded with substitutionary sorrows which He bore for us. These are not ours. He came into the world to suffer griefs that were not His own. He had human guilt laid upon Him to bear and, because of that, He was bowed down till He was exceedingly sorrowful even unto death. Some seem to think we are to imitate Christ in being men of sorrows as He was. No, no! The argument is the other way! Because Jesus took our sorrows, we may leave them all with Him, rolling our burden upon the Lord. Because He was grieved for me and in my place, it is my privilege to rejoice with unspeakable joy in full redemption! No weight of sin remains to press us to the dust! Christ has carried it all away—and in His sepulcher He has buried it forever! Yet never let us forget what an inconceivable pressure our sin put upon Him, for remembering this, it becomes the more a comfort to us that, notwithstanding all, He could say, “I have overcome the world.”

Remember, again, that our Lord in the battle with the world, was the center of the attack. When the whole host marches to the fight, we, each one, take our place in the ranks and the war goes on against us all. But where, do you think, the arrows fly most thickly? Where were the javelins hurled one after the other, thick as hail? “The Standard-Bearer among ten thousand” was the chief target! It seems to me as if the Prince of Darkness had said to his armies, “Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the King of Israel,” for He was tempted in all points like as we are. You and I encounter some temptations, but He endured them all! I have mine and you have yours, but He had mine and yours, and such

as are common to all His saints—and yet, standing in the thick of the fray, He remained unwounded and cried aloud—“I have overcome the world.” Divine Grace, then, can also clothe us with triumph, for against us no such supreme charges of hosts upon hosts will ever be led. The whole band has gathered together against Him—but never against any one of His feeble followers!

Remember, also, that the Redeemer was, in many respects, a lonely Man. If we need spiritual succor, we know someone to whom we can go. If we need converse with a superior mind, we can find such an one among our Brothers and Sisters. But our blessed Master could scarcely find a kindred spirit, and never an adviser. Like some lone mountaintop which towers above all surrounding heights, He stood alone where winter's snowstorms beat full upon Him, spending all their fury on His unshielded height! We are but valley dwellers and rise not to His loftiness. To whom could He tell His secret grief? To Peter, James or John? As well might a mother whisper to her babe the throes that rend her heart! He did once, in deep distress, resort to the three noblest spirits among the 12 Apostles, but they slept for sorrow and could not watch with Him one hour! O lonely Christ, if You did overcome this world alone, how surely shall Your warrior Brothers and Sisters overcome it when they stand shoulder to shoulder, cheering each man his fellow and, above all, when You are in the field communicating Your victorious valor to the whole host!

I have not finished this setting forth of the disadvantage under which the Savior lay, for I beg you to notice that there were possibilities about our Lord that were never ours. A man who does not know his letters is little tempted to be proud of his learning. And the man who lives from hand to mouth and never has a penny to lay by can hardly be tempted to be purse proud! We poor creatures could not be tempted to the same degree as our great Lord. The multitude would have taken Him by force and made Him a king—no, more—all the kingdoms of the earth were proffered Him and instead of suffering poverty and yielding Himself up to death, He might have pushed Caesar from his throne! The world with all its honors, the cattle on a thousand hills and secret mines, and rocks of gold and silver were all His—and He might have left His life-work to be the greatest, richest, mightiest monarch that ever reigned—had He not been Jesus, to whom such things are the dirt beneath His feet! But none of us have such great offers and brilliant opportunities and, therefore, we have not such a battle to fight as He had. Shall we not, by His help, overcome the lesser temptations, since He went on to victory over the greatest that can be imagined?

Remember, too, that the intense zeal that burned in His spirit, had He been capable of ever yielding to a temptation, might have suggested to Him in a hundred ways, a turning aside from His own line of action by which He had resolved to conquer the world. He came to vanquish evil by

the force of love and truth through His Spirit. If some of His followers had been girt with His power, they would not have kept to His order of battle! I stood in Rome, one day, at the bottom of the Santa Scala, and watched the poor votaries of superstition creeping up those so-called sacred steps upon their knees, imagining them to be the very stairs which our Lord descended when Pilate said, "Behold the Man." As I saw certain priests watching their dupes, I longed for a thunder bolt or two with which to make a clearance of Pope, cardinals, and priests! But the spirit our Lord Jesus was not so hot—for when James and John asked, "Lord, will You that we command fire to come down from Heaven and consume them?" their Lord replied, "You know not what manner of spirit you are of." We may never have been tempted to ask fire from Heaven because we knew that we could not get it—but our Lord had only to ask His Father and He would presently have sent Him legions of angels! See with grief what a part of the Church has done—certain professors easily fell into the snare which their Lord avoided!

Suppose the Lord Jesus had been made a king and had marshaled an army? He might have set up an established Church and have maintained it by the power and wealth of the State. A temple might have been built in every parish in the Roman empire and the heathen might have been compelled to pay tithes for the support of the ministry and Apostleship. By the help of imperial prestige and patronage, nominal professors of the faith would have been multiplied by millions and, outwardly, religion would have prevailed! Would it not have been as great a blessing as our Established Church is to us? But the Lord Jesus Christ did not choose this method, for His Kingdom is not to be set up by any force than by that of truth and love! It was His purpose to die for men, but not to lift the mailed hand of power, or even the jeweled finger of rank to bring them into subjection. Jesus *loves* men to Himself—Love and Truth are His battle-ax and weapons of war. Thus He overcame the world which was in that most insidious form of worldliness—the suggestion to make alliance with it and set up a mongrel society, a kingdom at once earthly and heavenly, a State Church, a society loyal both to God and Mammon, fearing the Lord and serving the High Court of Parliament! It might have appeared to us to be the readiest means to bless the world—but it was not His Father's way, nor the way of holiness—and, therefore, He would not follow it, but overcame it! No force may be put on conscience. The altar of God must not be polluted by forced offerings. Caesar must not step beyond his province. However great the proffered benefit, the Lord never did evil that good might come!

Let us now observe that the main point of the comfort lies in the fact that not only did our Lord overcome the world as an individual, but *He vanquished it as the Representative Man*. Clear a space! Clear a space! A deadly fight is to be fought! Here comes into the battle, stalking along, a monster man towering high above his fellows. He is for Philistia! Here comes the champion of Israel, a ruddy youth. These two are to decide the

day. Anxious eyes are turned towards the field of duel. Philistia, look to your champion! Israel, watch your stripling with beating heart! O maids of Judah, lift up your prayers for the son of Jesse, that he may play the man this day! As we watch that fight and see the stone sink into the champion's brow, and behold the youth taking off the giant's head and bringing it to the camp, we are ready to join in the dances of the jubilant women, for David has won the victory! See the result of his deed—the victory of David is the triumph of every man in Israel's land! It was a *representative* conflict—Israel against Philistia—and when Philistia's hero fell, Israel was the conqueror. Up to the spoil, O sons of Jacob! The uncircumcised are utterly routed! They fly! Pursue them and scatter them as dust before the whirlwind! Even so, when Christ overcame the world, the victory was won on the behalf of all His people and today we face a vanquished foe. Up and spoil the enemy! Let your infirmities become the subject of your glorying! Let your tribulations become the themes of your thanksgivings! And if you are persecuted for righteousness' sake, do not whine and whimper as though some dread calamity had come upon you, but rejoice that you are made participators of the honors of Prophets and saints—and of your great Leader who won the battle as your Champion!

In closing, let us remember that here we have not merely representation, but also *union*. "I have overcome the world," means more than, "I overcame in your name." All Believers have virtually overcome the world, for they are one with Christ! Did my hands win the victory? Then my feet triumph! Did my head achieve the conquest? Then my heart shares the honor! The soles of my feet are victorious when my head is crowned. When Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, was victorious over the foe, every member of His Mystical Body, even the most uncomely, was, virtually, a conqueror in the conquering Head! So let us shout the victory and wave the palm branch, for we are more than conquerors through Him that has loved us! Said He not well when He bade us be of good cheer, for He had overcome the world? Therefore, struggling Brothers and Sisters, obey His word, and—

BE OF GOOD CHEER!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 12:20-50.**

Our Lord had gained a sudden popularity through raising Lazarus from the dead. And the people had attended Him with great enthusiasm as He rode through the streets of Jerusalem. For the time, things looked very bright with Him, but He knew that He was soon to suffer and to die. And the overshadowing of that great eclipse was already upon His heart. Note how He looked forward to it and how He spoke concerning it.

Verses 20-22 *And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast: the same came therefore to Philip, which was of*

Bethsaida of Galilee, and entreated him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus. Philip came and told Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip told Jesus. Probably these persons were proselytes to the Jewish faith. They had renounced their idols and they had come to worship the only true God. And now they had a wish to see Jesus—not out of idle curiosity, but because they felt a certain degree of respect for Him. They wanted to know more of His teaching and to learn whether He was, indeed, the promised Messiah. The disciples encouraged these seekers—they would not have brought mere curiosity-mongers to their Master, but they saw that there was something better in these Greeks—so they consulted together and their opinion was that they must tell Jesus about them.

23. *And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified.* He was about to die, yet He speaks of His death as *being glorified*. For the joy that was set before Him, He seems to overlook the intervening humiliation in the prospect of the Glory that would come of it through the salvation of multitudes of strangers from the very ends of the earth! He looks on these Greeks as the vanguard of a great army of Gentiles who would continue to come to Him and pay Him homage. Hear what He says next—

24. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it brings forth much fruit.* [See Sermon #3024 Volume 53—CHRIST'S DEATH AND OURS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] He knew that He must die, for His living, preaching and miracle-working would never produce such results as His death would accomplish! He must go down into the ground, out of sight, and there must lie like a buried grain of wheat, that out of Him there might spring a great harvest to the Glory of God! And these Greeks were like a first handful, a wave-sheaf unto God, a promise of the great harvest that would be the result of His death—“If it dies, it brings forth much fruit.”

25, 26. *He that loves his life shall lose it: and he that hates his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall also My servant be: if any man serves Me, him will My Father honor.* [See Sermons #463, Volume 8—CHRIST'S SERVANT—HIS DUTY AND REWARD; #2449, Volume 42—THE RULE AND REWARD OF SERVING CHRIST; #2651, Volume 45—THE CHRISTIAN'S SERVICE AND HONOR and #2874, Volume 50—PRECEPTS AND PROMISES—Read/download all these sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] It is an honor to be allowed to serve Christ, but God will bestow still further honor upon those who faithfully serve Him!

27-29. *Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour? But for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify Your name. Then came there a Voice from Heaven, saying, I have both glorified it and will glorify it again. The people, therefore, that stood by and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spoke to Him.* How ready they were to find an explanation for that “Voice from Heaven” which they could not comprehend! Some “said that it thundered: others

said, An angel spoke to Him.” But here is Christ’s own interpretation of the mystery—

30, 31. *Jesus answered and said, This Voice came not because of Me, but for your sakes. Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the Prince of this world be cast out.* Satan may have thought that he had triumphed when Christ was crucified, but that death upon the Cross was the deathblow to the devil’s usurpation!

32, 33. *And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me. This He said, signifying what death He should die.* [See Sermons #139, Volume 3—CHRIST LIFTED UP; #775, Volume 13—THE GREAT ATTRACTION and #1717, Volume 29—THE MARVELOUS MAGNET—Read/download all these sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] There is no magnet like the death of Christ! He is still able to draw men unto Him because of the attractive force of His atoning Sacrifice.

34-36. *The people answered Him, We have heard from the Law that Christ abides forever: and how say You, the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man? Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walks in darkness knows not where he goes. While you have light, believe in the light, that you may be the children of light. These things spoke Jesus, and departed, and did hide Himself from them. At first sight, this may not seem to have been an answer to their question, “Who is this Son of Man?” Yet it was a very direct answer, for He was “the Light of the world” and, as the Light was soon to be withdrawn from them, there was all the greater need of Christ’s injunctions, “Walk while you have the light, lest darkness come upon you. While you have light, believe in the light, that you may be the children of light.”*

37-41. *But though He had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on Him: that the sayings of Isaiah the Prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke, Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Isaiah said again, He has blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said Isaiah, when He saw His Glory, and spoke of Him.* [See Sermon #1844, Volume 31—ISRAEL AND BRITAIN—A NOTE OF WARNING—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Isaiah was sent upon a painful errand to tell the people that they would hear, but they would not understand—that they would see, but they would not perceive. And so it happened to Israel as a nation, and to this day Israel rejects the true Messiah. Oh, that none of us may imitate their evil example by negligence and contempt of the Revelation of God, lest after playing with Scripture and trifling with the Christ of God, the Lord should at last in anger declare that we should see, but should not perceive, that we should hear, but should not understand!

42, 43. *Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on Him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.* Are there any here who believe in Christ, but who have never confessed Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue and lose the praise of men? Are you afraid of your family, your father, or your husband? Or is there some friend who would be angry with you if you confessed Christ? If so, be no longer such a coward, I pray you, but come out boldly and confess Him who will not be ashamed to confess you before His Father and the holy angels!

44-50. *Jesus cried and said, He that believes on Me, believes not on Me, but on Him that sent Me. And he that sees Me sees Him that sent Me. I am come as a light into the world, that whoever believes on Me should not abide in darkness. And if any man hears My word and believes not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejects Me, and receives not My words, has one that judges him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of Myself, but the Father which sent Me, He gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that His commandment is life everlasting: whatever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto Me, so I speak.*

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

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

THE SON GLORIFIED BY THE FATHER AND THE FATHER GLORIFIED BY THE SON NO. 1465A

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

***“These words spoke Jesus, and lifted up His eyes to Heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You.”
John 17:1.***

THIS was a prayer after a sermon. These words Jesus spoke and then He lifted up His eyes to Heaven in supplication. No discourse should be unattended by prayer, for how can we expect a blessing on what we have heard or spoken unless we ask it of the Lord? The sower should water with many a supplication the seed that he has sown and the hearer should diligently seek the favor of Him who gives bread to the eater as well as seed to the sower. *It was a prayer in connection with the Lord’s Supper.* Surely above all things, prayer should mix with every part of our attendance at the sacred table. Dare we come to the sacred feast without prayer? Can we sit there without prayer? Can we retire without prayer? If so, let us not wonder if the ordinance should be a mere form and unrefreshing to our souls. With sermon and with sacrament let us mingle the salt of supplication without prescribing how much.

Observe *the attitude of the prayer.* The Savior, it appears, prayed with uplifted eyes. There is much in this outward manifestation of His devotion. We have not time to enter into it fully, but this may suffice—the uplifted eyes showed to Whom He was speaking and it bore testimony that that He was not idly drawing the bow at a venture, but directing His prayer unto *God* and looking up as the arrow ascended to His Father’s Throne. It showed, also, that He was looking away from and above His disciples and their sympathy, above all the world and its enmity and even above Himself. His outlook was towards the Invisible—this is for our instruction. He could have prayed with eyes closed if it had so pleased Him, but His were the opened eyes of faith and love which could look into the face of God and could yet look upon all things round without distraction and, therefore, it was not necessary for Him to draw down the curtains of His eyelids, but He gazed into the opened Heaven.

Notice *the commencement of His prayer,* for it furnishes our text. He began by saying, “Father.” He did not say, “Our Father.” “Our Father” is for *us*, for *we*, in the filial relationship which we sustain, are many. But, “Father,” is for Him, for He is one and He is such a Son as, in some respects, we can never be. Into the mysterious doctrine of the eternal filiation it is not ours to enter, but we know it to be a Truth of God. “Father,” is a word appropriate to our Lord’s lips, alone, in its highest conceivable sense and

how grandly it comes from Him! It shows His love to God, His confidence in God, His complete resignation to the Divine will and His sweet acquiescence in it. He is about to be broken in pieces with the iron rod of His Father's vengeance, but He calls Him, "Father." He is about to drink that cup of wormwood and gall which would have been Hell to us if He had not drained it dry, but He says, "Father."

And herein He sets us an example—in all times of tribulation let us fall back upon our sonship, our adoption and the fatherhood of our great God! To our Father let us go, for to whom else should a child so naturally fly? Where else can we go but to our Father who knows what we have need of before we ask Him and who will never desert His own, but, like a father pities his children, will pity them that fear Him? *The prayer itself*—the very *fact* of the prayer—shows us His manhood. Jesus pleads—He must be Man. He lifts His eyes to Heaven and He cries, "Father"—He must be like ourselves, a Man.

But the prayer, in some respects, speaks of the Deity which it scarcely veils. As in some statues which you must often have looked upon with admiration, you seem to see the face of the figure through the marble veil, so it is here in the prayer of Christ that the God shines through the Man. It is such a prayer as only He might offer who is God as well as Man. Dare *you* say, "Father, glorify me, that I may glorify You"? That would be a presumptuous expression for creature lips to utter! Only He who counted it not robbery to be equal with God, though He made Himself of no reputation, might thus pray! Though He cries to God, "Father, glorify Your Son," yet may He add and put no explanatory sentence with it, "that Your Son also may glorify You." He is able to return all the Glory God may give and has the power as much to magnify the Father's name as the Father may magnify His name. Here I see the Humanity, but I admire and adore the Deity of our blessed Lord.

The first sentence of His prayer reveals His foresight—"Father, the hour is come"—the hour ordained in the eternal purpose. The hour prophesied of which Daniel sought to know. The hour towards which all hours had pointed. The central hour—the hour up to which men dated and from which they shall date again if they read time right. The hinge, pivot and turning point of all human history! The dark, yet delivering hour! The hour of vengeance and of acceptance. "The hour is come." He knew it. His inward Infallible foresight made Him know that now was the time for Him to offer up Himself a Sacrifice for sin. His expression is, however, very choice. "*The hour is come.*" His faith thinks it but an hour—the midnight of Gethsemane, the morning of the scourging, the day of the crucifixion—all are but an hour, a short space.

Now is He in trouble, for His time of travail is come. But He counts it as an hour for joy of that which shall be born into the world by His grievous pangs! Thus His love and patience make Him despise the time of shame and reckon it but a brief interval. The foresight of which we have spoken makes Him look beyond the hour. You and I look into the hour of darkness, as a frequent rule, and see no further, for our eyes are dim through unbelief. But He goes on beyond the hour and His prayer is, "Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You." He fixes His eyes upon the Glory

that was yet to be revealed and for joy of that He counts even His death to be but an hour—looking upon it as soon to be over and lost in the Glory of His Father!

In all this, Brothers and Sisters, let us imitate our Lord and let us keep our eyes not on the present, but on the future; not on this light affliction, which is but for a moment, but on the far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory which will come of it. And let us with holy confidence, whenever our hour of darkness arrives, resort to our God in secret. The best preparation for the worst hour is prayer! The best remedy for a depressed spirit is nearness to God! In this, then, let us follow our Master and may the Holy Spirit help us to do so. Let us now consider the essential words of the prayer. They are twofold and in them we find first *a petition for Himself*—“Father, glorify Your Son.” And, secondly, *the motive of that petition*—“that Your Son also may glorify You.”

I. Begin, then, with THE PETITION FOR HIMSELF and I invite you to observe it as an *answered* petition. More than 1,800 years have rolled away since those Divine Words fell from our blessed Master’s lips and they have been answered and are *still* being answered! We shall not look upon them from the standpoint of the Apostles, but from our own, and regard the prayer as one which is granted. And, first, *it was answered in and during His sufferings*. Some of the early fathers confined the sense of these words to the passion of our Lord and I like their strong expressions when they say that His Cross was His Throne and Gethsemane was as glorious as Olivet, if not more so—for the glory of the Cross would be a wonderful theme if man had mind and words enough to expound upon it.

Do we speak of ignominy? Doubtless He died a felon’s death. Do we speak of shame? No doubt they spat upon Him and derided Him. Do we speak of weakness? No doubt He slept in a grave. But in His ignominy, shame and weakness, Jesus is most honorable, adorable and strong! Faith sees a moral and spiritual splendor about her crucified Lord which outshines all the previous glories of His eternal Throne. I shall not so confine the sense of the words, but yet that sense must be included. The Son of God was glorified while He was dying and *it was one part of His Glory that He should be able to bear the enormous load of human guilt*. As a race we lay crushed beneath it.

A thousand Samsons could not relieve us! Angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim could never lift the stupendous mass! But this one Man, alone, with no help—in weakness of body and in death pangs—bore away the enormous load of human guilt! The chastisement of our peace was upon Him—the Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all! What a load it was! And that He could bear it was, indeed, a display of His Glory. The lost in Hell cannot bear the wrath of God! An eternity of suffering will not have discharged the dreadful penalty and yet He bore that burden in an hour! Oh, marvelous strength of the Incarnate God! Glorious are You, indeed, O Christ, upon Your Cross! More glorious, even, than in that moment when, with a word, you shall shake not only earth, but also Heaven, for now the weight of angry Heaven rests on You and You stand fast beneath it. Glorify Him, Beloved, you for whom He bore that weight! Glorify Him that He was able to endure it!

He was glorified, also, in the manner in which He bore it, in that He sustained it without shrinking or starting back. There was no guilt or guile in Him, though questioned again and again before Caiaphas, Herod and Pilate. There were no angry speeches when He was brow-beaten, buffeted, blindfolded and spit upon. He displayed nothing but gentleness, even when His enemies had pierced His hands and His feet—nothing but triumphant pity and almighty love even when they mocked His agonies. They could not anger Him with all their reviling and when they cried, “Let Him come down from the Cross and we will believe on Him,” yet He did not loosen a hand from the cruel tree to smite the scorners nor shake His feet free from the nail to spurn the blasphemers.

When you think of His physical agonies, of His mental torture, of His spiritual darkness—when you consider that all the powers of earth and Hell were let loose upon Him. And when, worst of all, you remember that the Father’s face was hidden from Him till He cried, “Why have You forsaken Me?” and yet consider that our Champion, having begun the redeeming work, went through with it and never drew back His hands from the Covenant which He had made, nor flinched under the strokes He bore—I say He was glorious in His passion and His prayer was heard! The Father *did* glorify His Son even on the tree! It was an hour of Glory that might dazzle angels’ eyes—that hour when He said, “It is finished,” and gave up the ghost. What had He finished? He had finished that which saved His people! He had peopled Heaven with immortal spirits who shall delight in Him forever and had shaken the gates of Hell! God indeed glorified His Son in enabling Him to bear and bear so well, all the weight of sin and the penalty that was due to it.

And now, today, Beloved, we see that *God glorified His Son in His death because in dying He saved His people*. I do not believe for a single moment that the result of Christ’s death ever was, or ever could be, uncertain. That which He intended to do by it, will be done and has been so far done to the last jot and tittle up to this moment. His great object was the redemption of His chosen—“Christ loved His Church and gave Himself for it.” It is said of a certain company that they sing, “He has redeemed us from among men.” Now, when He died, He did not render the redemption of His people *possible*, but He ransomed them *completely*.

By His agonies and death He did not merely give a bare hope of the pardon of sin, but He hurled the sin of all His elect into the depths of the sea in that same moment! He did not merely make the salvation of men a *possibility* if they would, but He *saved* His people then and there! He finished the work which He came to do, in proof whereof it is written that, “this Man, after He had offered one Sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God.” And He would not have sat there if His work had not been done! According to the words of the Prophet, He had finished transgression, made an end of sin and brought in everlasting righteousness, for He had offered an effectual Atonement which none can deny. And so the Father glorified His Son, even when He died, since He accepted His redeeming blood on the behalf of His people.

The Father glorified His Son by making Him, even in the hour of His passion, to be victorious over all His enemies. Those nailed feet bruised the

serpent's head so that he could never resume his former power. Those nailed hands grasped the serpent of sin and strangled it! And that dying head, as it bowed itself, smote Death with its own sword, as David smote Goliath, for He, "death by dying slew." The powers of evil were tremendous. Think of sin, of Satan and of death—but all their hosts were defeated in that one pitched battle of which the Cross was the banner and the dying Redeemer the Champion! O glorious Lord, You have led captivity captive, making a show of Your adversaries openly even on Your Cross, and nailing to the accursed tree the handwriting of ordinances that was against us. Yes, the Father glorified You even *there* while yet You were in the agonies of death!

Beside this, *there were some outward signs of the glory of Christ even in His death* which we can scarcely stop to mention. Did not the Temple rend her veil? Did not the Sun conceal his face? Did not the rocks split and the dead arise? Was not all Jerusalem filled with tremor and did not the centurion cry, "Truly, this was the Son of God"? Yes, the Father glorified His Son even when it pleased Him to bruise Him and to put Him to grief! With one hand He smote and with the other hand He glorified! There was a power to crush, but there was also a power to sustain working at the same time. The Father glorified His Son.

And now, Beloved, what shall I say concerning *the Father glorifying the Son after His death and as the result of it?* I will not attempt to expound it, but I will simply say that the rending of the veil at the moment of His death was the glorifying of Christ—for now there is a way to the Throne of God made manifest for us, which before had been closed. Then the opening of His pierced side was another glorifying of Him, for this day the double fountain is to Believers the effectual cleansing of both the guilt and the power of sin! And thus the Savior's pierced heart glorified Him in its power to bless. Then that poor body lay in the grave—I call it poor, for so it seemed—wrapped in linen and the spices. But, Beloved, the Father glorified even that dead Body which men thought to be corruptible, for it saw no corruption!

During the three days and nights no worm could come near it, nor trace of decay. That crystal vase in which the rich ointment of the Savior's soul had dwelt must not be injured. "Not a bone of Him shall be broken." Beautified by those scars as when a skillful artist renders an image more lovely than before by marks of the engraver's tool, that body must be safely guarded by watching angels till the morning came. It barely dawned. As yet the sun was rising and lo, the Sun of Righteousness, Himself, arose! As a man arising from his couch puts on his garments, so did our Lord put on the vesture of the Body which He had laid aside and came again into the world alive as to His Body and His Soul—a perfect Man!

Oh, it was a grand glorifying of Christ when the Father raised Him from the dead and He was seen by His disciples once again! Death had no bands to hold Him. The sepulcher's ward could not confine the unequalled Prisoner. Declared to be glorious by His Resurrection from the dead, His prayer was heard! And before long, when a few weeks had passed over Him, there came another Glory—for from the brow of Olivet He gently ascended, floating in the air from the company of His disciples,

rising up in the midst of angels till a cloud received Him out of human sight—

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

His Father glorified Him and now He sits at the right hand of God! Words, you are dumb things, you cannot tell of His present Glory!

Early the other morning there came to my bedside a Brother to awaken me whose face seemed to beam with joy as he said, “In my sleep last night I thought I saw the Lord upon His Throne! And oh, the Glory which the Father put upon Him! I wish I could fall asleep again that I might continue to dream on.” The tears were in his eyes, as he said, “Oh, the Glory of Christ! Oh, the Glory of Christ!” I reminded him of how Mercy laughed in her sleep and Christiana asked her why, and when she told her dream, the matron said she might well laugh if she so dreamed! Happy are those who, sleeping or waking—living or dying—may but get a glimpse of His Glory! Nothing ever ravishes my heart like the thought of my Lord’s being glorified! Oh, if I could, by some means, help to honor Him! If only I may but be the earthen vessel in which His treasure should be stored, or the trumpet by which His name might be proclaimed! That would be joy enough for me!

And you all feel the same, you who love Him. You delight to think how high His Throne is and how bright is His Countenance, and how resplendent are His courts. Have patience. You shall see Him soon, for the Father will glorify Him in the Second Advent. He tarries; He tarries long, as we think, yet He says, “Behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me.” He is coming to be glorified, even among the sons of men! So shall the prayer of the text be fulfilled in the golden ages yet to dawn—and then throughout eternity!

II. We pause a moment and then we shall briefly think of THE MOTIVE OF HIS PRAYER. “Father, glorify Your Son, *that your Son also may glorify You.*” Do notice this. When you pray, it is a grand thing to pray with a clean heart but selfishness is uncleanness. In our blessed Lord there was no selfishness. He said, “I seek not My own Glory” and even in this prayer that word of His is true, for He only seeks Glory that He may glorify the Father. Beloved, the desire of our Lord is granted, for God is glorified in Jesus Christ more than in any other way.

The Glory of God in Nature is inconceivable. This round world and all that dwell therein. The open sea calmly mirroring the sky or ruffled with tempests. The wondrous expanse of Heaven, fleecy with clouds, or blue beneath a torrid sun, or lit up with innumerable stars. Yon hills with all their forests. Yon laughing valleys with their lowing herds and bleating flocks—“These are Your glorious works, Parent of good, almighty,” You get Glory from every flickering blade of grass or frond of fern and every flitting insect and creeping worm mean Your praise! There is nothing but what glorifies You, from leviathan to a minnow. Yet all Nature put together fails to reveal all Your glorious attributes! The Divine faithfulness, justice and truth are scarcely manifest in Nature, though traces of them may be

seen—but in the face of Jesus, who is the express Image of the Father, God is glorified to the fullest!

In the death of Christ, above all things, God is glorified, for there all the attributes of God are seen. There was the power which sustained Christ beneath His more than Herculean task. There is the love which surrendered the Darling of its bosom that He might die instead of traitors. There is the justice which would not, *could not* forgive sin without satisfaction. There is the Truth of God which had threatened to punish and *did* punish—which had promised to give a Savior and *did* give Him. There is the faithfulness to the Covenant which kept that Covenant at such a dread expense. There is the wisdom which planned the marvelous way! O, salvation by a Substitute—no, let me put it all together—the wholeness, the holiness of God! Yes, all His attributes are seen, each one equally magnified in the death of Jesus Christ. *He* is glorious and the Triune God is glorified in Him.

And now, Beloved, God is glorified in the death of Christ by the love of all those whom Jesus saves; by the sacred awe and filial fear of all whom Jesus brings to the Father's feet; by the ardent, patient devotion of all who are consecrated in heart and feel the sacred flame of love to Christ setting their souls on fire! Up there in Heaven, where the white-robed never cease to sing—and here below where martyrs were burned for their love of God; where confessors defied all adversaries to spread abroad the Glory of His name; where humble Christians suffer in patience, or labor on with diligence, or walk in holiness—the Father's name is glorified through the passion of the Christ of God!

We had many things to say, but time fails us and, therefore, we close with these three observations which we want to leave upon your minds. The first is this. *Christ's motive should be ours*. When you ask a blessing from God, ask it that you may glorify God by it. Do you pine to have your health back again? Be sure that you want to spend it for Him. Do you desire temporal advancement? Desire it that you may promote His Glory. Do you even long for growth in Grace? Ask it only that you may glorify Him! If there is anything that you dare wish and pray for, put it so—"Father, bless Your child that Your child may, in return, bless You and serve You." Those are clean prayers which have such a motive—all others have the taint of *self* about them. God help you to do everything for His Glory—to speak for His Glory, to live for His Glory, to die for His Glory—and then you shall rise again and live forever for His Glory! Happy, happy is the man whose lot this shall be! Let this be the desire which masters you, even that which moved your Lord!

Next, *Christ's theology should be ours*. What is *that*? Why, first that He is to be glorified and, secondly, that the Father is to be glorified! Error sometimes blows one way and sometimes another. In years gone by, the difficulty was to bring men to glorify the Lord Jesus—they would worship God—but not the Christ of God. And so there came the great Arian fight and afterwards Socinian controversies, for they would not glorify Christ. Oh, you who have been saved by Him, I am not afraid of you on *that* point, but nowadays there appears to be, in some minds, a forgetfulness of the *Father!*

Christ is loved, for He died, but many seem to look upon the Father as having no share in the wondrous work of redemption! But, Beloved, they are one in our salvation! Father, Son and Spirit agree in one in our redemption and it would be fatal, indeed, for us to set one Person of the Divine Trinity above the other two! Let all men honor the Son even as they honor the Father—and honor the Father even as they honor the Son! It would be traitorous to Christ's inmost wish if we were to glorify the Son and fail to reverence and love the Father!

Lastly, *let every Believer here see His security*. Is it not a most wonderful guarantee of the safety of everyone for whom Christ died, that the Glory of Christ and the Glory of the Father—and I may add the glory of the blessed Spirit—are all equally concerned in the salvation of the believing soul? Dare I say it? It would be a blot upon the everlasting Glory if one believing soul were ever lost! Then were God's Truth no longer sure; His faithfulness no longer firm; His love no more immutable! His power might be doubted—His *changeableness* would be proven. But, Beloved, it cannot be! Christ will not lose a sheep of His flock, nor will the Comforter lose a spirit in which He has once began to indwell! You can rest in this!

Abide without doubt or fear in Christ, for the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but the Covenant of His love shall not be removed from you, says the Lord that has mercy on you. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, dear Hearers and these Divine privileges shall be yours! And as I prayed just now, so I pray yet again, that these things may belong to every soul in this house without exception, through faith in Christ Jesus, by the work of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Amen!

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 17.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—416, 412, 233.**

The Colportage Society conducted by Mr. Spurgeon supports 82 men in needy districts and does a great work in selling Bibles and healthy literature. Owing to the depression of trade and the falling off of subscriptions, this branch of holy service is, at this moment, in a difficult position and will soon be in urgent need unless the Lord should move some of His stewards to help. It seems necessary to give this announcement so that friends may know that there is a channel for their gifts and a reason for bringing them forth. Mr. Spurgeon feels confident that by some means or other the present necessity for the Lord's work will be graciously supplied and furnish fresh occasion for gratitude and increased faith.

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

GENERAL AND YET PARTICULAR NO. 566

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 24, 1864,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“You have given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.”
John 17:2.***

THIS was used by our Savior as an argument why the Father should glorify Him in His dread hour of conflict. Our Lord did as much as say, “You have already given Me what I now ask. Therefore, since You have virtually bestowed it upon me in the Covenant, give it Me now in very deed.” So the Believer, when he prays, asks for what is already his own. And when we come before the Lord in prayer this should encourage us much, that our heavenly Father has already given us all things in giving us His Son, so that we ask for what is virtually our own.

The text itself we will try to open up briefly. It contains two statements—first, that Christ, as a Mediator, has received from God universal authority over all flesh. And secondly, that the object of this is special and peculiar, that He may give eternal life to as many as the Father has given to Him. You have universal power, but you have within it a special purpose. We know that our Lord Jesus Christ has all power given to Him in Heaven and in earth—“Angels and men before Him fall and devils fear and fly.” All things, whether animate or inanimate, confess the majesty of Him who is King of kings and Lord of lords.

Our text, however, mentions the most stubborn thing in all the world—“flesh.” Jesus has power over all flesh. That willful, wicked, disobedient thing called flesh Christ knows how to govern. He has power over all men as fallen men, for such the term, flesh, describes. I understand, then, that Christ has power over all men, to pardon all whom He wills. Christ has this day as Mediator, power to convict of sin every living soul by His Spirit, if so He wills. And power to bring all men to the footstool of His Grace and to give them pardon if so it seems good in His sight. We do not believe that there is any exception to this rule—Christ has power over every man born of Adam, to give to him the Grace of conviction and the Grace of pardon, if so it should please Him to do.

He has power also to make those who are not convicted of sin and who are not pardoned, subservient to His purpose. He has power to restrain their evil passions from running to an excess of riot. He can use them as His drudges to effect His purposes even when they proudly rebel against Him—so that though they boast themselves in their own free will—they shall really be working out His own eternal purpose. He has a bit often in the mouth of His fiercest enemy and a hook in the jaw of the bloodiest persecutor.

Over all flesh He has authority whether it is crowned with royalty or wrapped in rags! Whether it curses with profanity or bows down with rev-

erent adoration. There is not a mortal man from the equator to the poles, of any rank or any language, or bearing any hue upon his skin who is not subject to this universal mediatorial power of the Lord Jesus Christ. If I understand my text and Scriptures parallel with it, it was ordained in order to the salvation of the chosen, that the whole world of man should be taken from under the immediate rule of God as absolute God and placed under a new form of government of which the Mediator should be King and Head.

As the result of this gracious arrangement a fallen race is permitted to exist—a sinful world coming into contact with an absolute God must have been instantaneously doomed to Hell. Man, while yet a rebel, lives on in virtue of the mediatorial power of Jesus! He has stepped in between avenging Justice and the sinner and so the sinner is spared. I trace to Christ's Atonement the continued life of the most obdurate. All the long-suffering mercy of God seems to me to flow through the channel of the Savior's authority over all flesh.

It is in virtue of this power that the Gospel is preached to all men—"All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth. Go you, therefore, and teach all nations." Hence the command to believe receives its Divine sanction and those are condemned who believe not in His name. On account of this universal dispensation of mediatorship, an honest, gracious, and sincere invitation is given to whomever will, to drink of the Water of Life freely. It is, I say, on account of this universal mediatorial power of Christ that I can stand upon this platform and say in the broadest possible terms, that whoever believes on the Lord Jesus shall never perish, but have eternal life! And I can preach a Gospel which, in its proclamation, is as wide as the ruin and as extensive as the Fall.

But why all this? The text tells us that the object and design of all this was not universal, but special—that the intention of God in thus putting all men under the power of Christ was not that *all* men might receive eternal life, but that He might *give* eternal life to as many as had been *given to Him*. So that in all this universal dealing there is the *special* and peculiar design that the chosen may receive life—that the *elect* may be filled with spiritual life on earth and afterwards enter into the Glory life above.

God might doubtless have acted upon another plan and have given Christ power only over His elect if He had willed, that He might give eternal life to them. But it has not so pleased God. It has, on the contrary, pleased Him to put the whole race under the mediatorial sway of Jesus in order that He might give eternal life to those who were chosen out of the world. God might have commissioned His servants to go into the world and preach the Gospel to the chosen only—He might have told us to present Christ only to certain persons upon whom there should be a peculiar mark. It has not so pleased Him.

He bids us go "into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." His high decree and Divine intent being that those whom He has ordained unto eternal life shall, through believing, enter into the life which He has ordained for them. I do not know whether I have brought before you what I am certain is the full idea of the text—a *general* power given to

the Mediator over all flesh—as the result of which a proclamation of mercy is universally published to men and a general declaration of salvation through faith presented to all creatures. But this always with a *special*, limited, definite design—that a *chosen* people—separated from before all worlds from the rest of mankind should obtain eternal life.

I have aimed in my ministry constantly to preach, as far as I can, the whole of the Gospel rather than a fragment of it. Therefore those Brethren who are sounder than the Bible abhor me as much as if I were an Arminian. And on the other side, the enemies of the Doctrines of Grace often represent me as an Ultra-Calvinist. I am rejoiced to receive the censure of both sides! I am not ambitious to be numbered in the roll of either party. I have never cultivated the acquaintance nor desired the approbation of those men who shut their eyes to Truths of God which they do not wish to see.

I never desired to be reputed so excessively Calvinistic as to neglect one part of Scripture in order to maintain another. If I am thought to be inconsistent with myself, I am very glad to be so, so long as I am *not* inconsistent with Holy Scripture. Sure I am that all the Truth of God is really consistent, but equally certain am I that it is not apparently so to our poor, finite minds. In nine cases out of ten he who is nervously anxious to be manifestly consistent with himself in his theological system, if he gains his end, is merely consistent with a fool!

He who is consistent with Scripture is consistent with perfect Wisdom. He who is consistent with himself is at best consistent with imperfection, folly and insignificance. To keep to Scripture, even though it should involve a charge of personal inconsistency, is to be faithful to God and men's souls. My text seems to me to present that double aspect which so many people either cannot or will not see.

Here is the great Atonement by which the Mediator has the whole world put under His dominion. But still here is a special object for this Atonement—the ingathering, or rather out-gathering—of a chosen and peculiar people unto eternal life.

I. Let us, this morning, meditate upon the principle of the text and our first remark shall be that THE DOCTRINE OF A GENERAL DISPLAY OF POWER FOR THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF A SPECIAL OBJECT IS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE ANALOGY OF NATURE. In the world around us we shall find the Creator accomplishing special purposes by a far wider display of power than the immediate object appears to require. Take, for instance, yonder plant. What is the main object for which a plant lives? Every botanist and every common observer will tell you that its object in living is that it may produce seed and perpetuate its like.

God's object, then, in yonder plant is to produce a seed from it that its species may be perpetuated. How will He do it? Will He send an angel to watch over the seed and the seed alone? No, my Brethren, there *shall* be a watchful care over root, stem, cells, tissues, leaves and flowers. Although when winter comes, every leaf will drop off and rot in the ground and never be heard of again, yet those leaves have been the object of a superintending care, most marvelous and wise. Though the real object of it all

has been the seed alone, yet stem and leaf and cell have all been watched over.

Just so, I think, it is in God's dealings with His elect. He is looking to them as to the seed and substance of mankind, but those graceless ones who will perish forever like fading leaves have been the object of His tender care. If you tell me that the leaves were not absolutely necessary to the seed, I will give you another illustration still more clear. You are not to think that when God is about to accomplish a purpose He studies just how much will do it and then spends no more power than a pinching economy finds needful.

We are wanting rain. Our gardens and fields are crying out for showers. Well, our gracious God will send it to us very soon. But will He just allot a shower to that piece of ground which requires it—will He not rather send a wide range of rain? I have sometimes wondered at this, that when the shower falls it must be God's intention to bless the field and yet He scatters the liquid blessing upon the salt and briny sea where no plants can be nourished and where it seems to be a waste to pour the cooling drops. You shall find it rain quite as heavily upon the Atlantic as upon the thirsty earth which is opening its mouth for the moisture.

Why is this? Because it is the rule of God when He is accomplishing a purpose to deal after a *general* fashion though still the object is specific. Here is this air about us. Why is it made up of oxygen, hydrogen and nitrogen and so on? Is it not that plants and animals may live upon it? Surely this is the Creator's drift in making such a compound. But suppose you transfer yourself in imagination to the polar regions where life cannot exist, or to spots in the great desert of Sahara where even the vulture with swift wing has never flown. You will find the air composed of precisely the same particles!

Why is this? There is no animal to breathe it, no plant to bloom in it. Why then the same? Simply because God is not like finite man—He has not to stint Himself to such an expenditure as shall just accomplish His own purpose—He acts like a God and in the infinity of His Nature He gives more than is absolutely necessary for the accomplishment of His purpose. Think again, now, of nature in another aspect. We are proud enough to think that God made this world for the comfort of man and with an eye to human convenience. Suppose we grant that principle for a moment.

Here is a violet peeping out among the green leaves. Why has it that delicious perfume making glad the spring? Why, you tell me it is to gratify man. Very likely, very likely. But here are millions upon millions of violets which are never smelt by anybody which grow among the nettles at the back of the Church, or away in the woods where not even a child has wandered, or at a distance from the abodes of men where they are never seen or heard of, for—

***“Full many a flower is doomed to blush unseen,
And waste its fragrance on the desert air.”***

Why is everything so painted by the sun? Why do crystals sparkle when the sunbeams fall upon them? How is it you see the many lines of a rainbow when the sun is shining on a crystal?

Why it must be to gratify the eye. God would have this world a place of beauty and a joy forever! But crystals sparkle in the polar regions where

there is not even a bear to look upon them! In that inhospitable region where life goes out and where we believe no creature having life could possibly exist, the sun still shines and still the crystal flashes back to Him the colors of the iris. Why is this? Why is this? I cannot tell you, except that I perceive that God gives to the sun a power over all things that He may give pleasure to the eye.

What multitudes of landscapes were never gazed upon by the artist's eye, yet there they are, sleeping in their beauty beneath the eyes of God. How the birds are singing this morning, how they are pouring forth from their throats sweet melodious strains and yet they are singing quite as well in the deep forest glade where no man can ever hear them as in our gardens and walks. Why is this? Do we not think that the birds sing for *our* joy and that the landscape is spread out for man's mental delight?

It certainly is so, and yet there are landscapes and birds where there are no men to see and ears to hear. So I think I might continue all the morning giving you analogies from Nature in which God, in the accomplishment of a specific purpose adopts a general mode of action.

II. I will take another view of the question. THIS PRINCIPLE IS SEEN IN PROVIDENCE. All of you believe in a general Providence. You believe that God superintends all the affairs of the universe so that there is not a grain of dust blowing in the street today which has not its orbit ordained and fixed as much as the planets in the sky. You believe that God overrules the motions of the rush that waves by the river as much as he does the policy of kings and emperors. Do not you believe in a *special* Providence, too?

I do, and I believe you do. You believe that God is watching specially over His own people and that all things work together for good to them who love God, to them who are called according to His purpose. And did it ever strike you that there was any inconsistency in believing in a general and a special Providence? I do not suppose it ever did—I know it never did me. I know I feel quite easy in believing the two things and I should have been very uneasy in not being able to believe both. I do not see why the Christian may not transfer the idea and believe that there is a general influence for good flowing from the mediatorial sacrifice of Christ and yet its special design and definite object is the giving of eternal life to as many as the Father gave Him.

We will take one or two instances in Providence. There is Jonah going to Tarshish. He has betrayed his Master and has fled from Nineveh. The Lord will have him back. He intends to bring him back in a strange conveyance—He has prepared a great fish to swallow him! How is Jonah to be got out of the ship? The storm must come and when the storm comes what does it do? Does it shake Jonah? Does it expose Jonah's life to danger? It does, but it also shakes the whole ship and all who are in the ship are afraid that they shall suffer shipwreck. And what is more, if there were a thousand ships upon the sea that day they felt the storm and yet God's special object was to have Jonah thrown into the sea—though all the ships upon the sea must be tossed with the tempest, still there is the *special* design.

Take another thing. It is ordained according to prophecy that Christ must be born at Bethlehem. Then Mary His mother, who is great with child, must be brought to Bethlehem. How shall it be done? Why, in order to fetch Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem, *every* man and woman in Judea must go to the place of their pedigree and still, though God's express design is to bring Mary there that Jesus may be born, He uses a *general* method in order to accomplish it and every other Jewish man and woman must go to the place of their pedigree!

Here, again, is a *particular* object accomplished by *general* means. I might continue with many, many other instances, but indeed, you have only to open your eyes and see. My Brethren, if you pray tomorrow for God to send a favorable wind to waft the missionary-ship to its haven, the same wind will waft a merchantman, or a pirate, too, if they are going the same way. It may be that you pray that rain may come to extinguish a fire, and perhaps a shower comes, but you do not expect it to fall just where the fire is, but also for miles around. If you know some poor man living in Lancashire and you pray for him, that God would deliver him from poverty—if your prayer is heard, it may very likely be by quickening the trade of the whole country and conferring a blessing on the people of the whole neighborhood!

In fact, you know yourselves if you are praying to God to bless your children, it is not possible that your children should be blessed without the blessing coming down upon others, because God's blessing any one man is the means indirectly of blessing other people. You cannot have a godly family down a court without the whole court being the better for it. You cannot have one Christian man favored by his God without his household having some portion of the favor. God sends the favor only to His servants—that is the *special* intention—but still there comes with that a wider blessing.

While thinking over this matter I could only compare it to the moon when surrounded with a halo. The interior ring was the moon's own self, but round about it was a halo of brightness. Such is God's dealing with His people. There is the central substance of eternal, immutable love—but round about it there is a Divine halo—it encompasses all the creatures of God and makes them, in some measure, to participate in the light of the great central love, which belongs peculiarly to His saints.

III. Let us for one moment show that this has been ILLUSTRATED BY MIRACLES. Joshua is fighting with the Canaanites. There has been a long battle, but he desires to see his enemy exterminated and boldly turning round he cries to the sun, "Stand still upon Gibeon. And you, moon, in the valley of Ajalon." What did the sun and moon stand still for? Why to help Joshua against the Canaanites! But do you not think all the people everywhere had a longer day as the result? Did not every man who looked up wonder how it was that the sun stood still? There was a poor man with a hard task and he was afraid he should not finish it before the sun went down. How glad was he to find an extra hour added to the day!

He knew nothing about the special purpose and yet there was a special purpose in it all. Every man and woman on that side of the hemisphere enjoyed a length of light unusual for that time and yet there was no de-

sign of blessing *them* in Joshua's prayer. They were blessed incidentally. The real object was that the children of Israel might fight the battle and complete it. Take another miracle—Sennacherib has come against Jerusalem—he is about to swallow up Hezekiah and all the little kingdom of Judah. Hezekiah takes Rabshakeh's letter and lays it before the Lord. As the result of this, the angel of the Lord went through the camp of Sennacherib and slew his mighty men and the power of Assyria was broken.

What was the effect of it? There was the little straggling kingdom of Babylon, then contending for existence with Assyria. That kingdom was spared and became afterwards the destroyer of Assyria. And you read that Berodachbaladan, the king, sent messengers to Hezekiah to thank him for what was done. You see Babylon gets good out of the destruction of Sennacherib, but was this the main design? Certainly not. The grand object of God in destroying Sennacherib was to deliver Hezekiah and His people and yet the whole earth rejoices and has rest when the great hammer of the Lord falls on Assyria and its empire is broken and destroyed. It was a blessing to all the East when the power of the despot was broken that night—but the object of it was for Israel and for Israel, alone.

Come to the days of Christ and observe another miracle—there is a ship tossed within the tempest. Her mast is ready to go over the side. Her timbers crack—she will be swamped and go down. No, she will not—for there sleeps with His head upon the helm, the Master of the tempest, the Lord High Admiral of the sea, King Jesus! And when He has been awakened He stands up and rebukes the winds and waves and instantly there is a great calm. Why did He make the calm? For the preservation of His disciples and His own ship. But did the calm end there and give no blessing to others? We are informed that there were with Him many other little ships and so they all enjoyed the calm, too. The direct and definite intention was to make His disciples at peace and in safety. But the effect of it did not end with the disciples, but every ship which was out upon the sea of Nazareth that night enjoyed the calm.

One more instance and I will not multiply them, lest I fatigue you. Paul and Silas are in prison—God's object is to terrify the jailer and to bring out of prison His two servants, Paul and Silas. What does it say?—"The foundations of the prison were shaken and Paul and Silas had their bands loosed"? No, Brethren. "And every man's bands were loosed." Was it God's object to bring every man out of prison? No one dreams of such a thing! This was merely a concurrent benefit which went with God's special object in dealing with His poor persecuted followers, Paul and Silas.

So I believe that as it was in these miracles, so it is in that grander miracle, the great work of Grace. Jesus Christ comes into the world as a Propitiation for our sins and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world. And yet it is true He loved His Church and gave Himself for it. He laid down His life for His sheep and for His people did He die and not for the world, in one sense, and yet in that other sense which I have tried to bring out, He was a Propitiation for the sins of the whole world.

IV. Let us now LOOK AT FACTS. How do we really find the Gospel operate? I think I see this island of Great Britain covered with forests with men living in them having their naked bodies painted, dwelling in caves,

feeding upon herbs and acorns. I think I see a simple-minded man—some think it was Paul—landing upon the shore and coming forward, trying to teach these savages the way of salvation. Oh, what a prolific hour was that when first the Gospel was preached in Britain! What has been the effect of it?

Brethren, let us answer another question first—What was the immediate design of God in sending the Gospel to Great Britain? My answer is to save as many as He had ordained to eternal life. That was His great object. But what has been the effect of it? I trace the liberty, the happiness and the prosperity of our country throughout these many centuries, to the prevalence of the Gospel in it. And though I believe God's design in sending the Gospel—I mean the central design—was that He might separate unto Himself His own chosen people, yet in connection with the Gospel, innumerable and incalculable blessings have come to every Englishman.

And there does not live a man who claims the name of Briton who is not under solemn obligation to the preaching of the Gospel for ten thousand benefits. Christ has, indeed, in England, seemed to have power over all Englishmen, that He might give eternal life to as many as the Father gave Him. Look at the Reformation. What was God's object in raising up Luther and Calvin and Zwingli to work the Reformation? Why, for this grand purpose—that Christ might see of the travail of His soul and that His chosen might believe in Him. That was the purpose of the Reformation! But what did the Reformation accomplish?

Not only this, but a thousand things besides, for it was to the Reformation that arts and sciences owed their progress. The human mind was liberated and expanded. And millions of people who never obtained eternal life through Jesus Christ, nevertheless, through the glorious Reformation obtained their liberty and ten thousand other mercies beyond all price. This is a matter of fact. And if you take the Gospel to the South Seas, if you preach it to the benighted people there, you will find that it will subdue all flesh to its Divine power. But still the object is kept in view—that as many as God gave to Christ might have eternal life.

Let us observe one self-evident truth. It is a remarkable fact that where the Gospel is *not* preached in its general aspect, God does not seem to work out His special object to any large extent. I mean to say that if you will go into any Chapel in London and you find a minister there who preaches nothing whatever of the Word of God, except that one part of it which is most blessedly and sweetly true—God's electing love—if you will listen to that man and hear him preach from the first of January to the end of December upon that one topic—the specialty and peculiarity of Divine Grace—you need not go into the vestry to ask the deacons if they have many conversions.

I am certain you will find there are few, indeed, and those mostly among persons who were convicted of sin and aroused elsewhere, and who obtain liberty under the gracious doctrine. But the absolute conversion of many is not a thing to be expected, and certainly not a thing found where the preacher is so restrained by his sense of electing love as to be unable to boldly preach the rest of the Gospel and say, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." You have only to try it, dear

Friends—put your feet into the Chinese shoes and prevent their growing to the proper size, in order to keep them in ecclesiastical comeliness—and you will soon find your walk of usefulness very much restricted.

Hold on to the point of being consistent! Make that the main thing—banish those texts which speak about anything general—never open your mouth with a universal invitation! Make it out that the Bible has not a word in it directed to men as men, but only to the *chosen* and I will undertake that unless there is an unprecedented act of God's Sovereignty, you shall preach from one end of the year to the other and you shall not be troubled at the number of the elect people. There will be very few who will ever come forward.

But I know also, (and he who will look candidly will see it), that the most effective ministry is that one which is not ashamed of the Doctrines of Grace! The ministry which does not stutter or stammer in talking about election! Does not trim or cut the Divine Sovereignty of God, but which is equally clear upon the other point that God has declared His own solemn oath, "I will not the death of a sinner, but had rather that he should turn unto Me and live." A ministry which holds Sovereignty but holds *man's responsibility*, too, which dares to talk about God's special object with bold voice and yet insists upon it that He has proclaimed to every creature under Heaven this gracious proclamation, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved."

Well, now, these are facts and facts which are not to be disputed, either. We hear people sometimes sneer and say, "Ah, there are many conversions, but are they genuine?" Sir, they are genuine! For we will boast this much that if there are not genuine conversions found in this Church, for instance, there are no conversions genuine under Heaven. For when I see harlots made chaste and remaining honorable women year after year. When I know drunkards who forswear the cup and who labor with their might for the reclaiming of others. When I look upon those who were once singing the song of the lascivious on the ale-bench who now for years—mark you, not months—for years persevere in holiness, I make this my glory!

If any can find better conversions under Heaven let them find them! I am satisfied that they are such converts as Apostolic times added to the Church—such as honor God in their lives and glorify Christ daily by their walk and conversation. I believe you shall find most conversions where neither Truth of God is held back, but where, as in the text, the two are taught. "You have given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him."

V. OUR PRINCIPLE EXPLAINS MANY SCRIPTURES and this goes very much in its favor. I like to read my Bible so as never to have to blink when I approach a text. I like to have a theology which enables me to read it right through from beginning to end and to say, "I am as pleased with that text as I am with the other." You know, Brothers and Sisters, you must be conscious of it, that there are many texts of Scripture which look wonderfully like universal redemption. Wonderfully like it and if they do not intend some sort of generality, they certainly speak in a very singular manner.

Such a text as this, “He is the Propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world.” “Who gave Himself a ransom for all to be testified in due time.” I might mention more of these—but if you get with an Arminian brother he will have them all at his fingertips, so you will spare me the trouble. These people are always dwelling upon these, and think they have quite upset the doctrine of particular redemption though that is as plain in Scripture as the nose upon a man’s face! We know Scripture says, “He has laid down His life for the sheep.” He has redeemed us from among men. “Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it.” And you know that passage—“Husbands love your wives even as Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it.”

How did He love the Church? He loved the Church with a *special* love, far above that which He gives to others, or else according to that metaphor a husband ought to love his wife, and love every other woman just as much! That is the natural inference of that text. But you clearly see there must have been a *special love* intended in the husband towards the wife and so there must be a special love in Christ. He loved the Church and gave Himself for it.

Now do you not think, Brethren, as there are two sets of texts in the Bible, the one of which very clearly speaks about the infinite value of the Atonement and another which very evidently speaks about the intention of that Atonement being for the chosen and for the chosen only, that the best way is to believe them both and to say, “Yes, I see it—as the result of Christ’s death all men are put under the system of mediatorial Grace, so that Christ has power over them. But the *object* of His doing this is not that He may save *all* of them, but that He may save out of these all which He now has in His own hands—those whom the Father has given Him”?

The shepherd trusts me with all his sheep in order that I may sever from them twenty which he has marked. A father tells me to go into the midst of his family, his whole family, in order that I may take out of it one of his sons to be educated. So God gives to Christ all flesh, says the text, but still always with this definite and distinct purpose—that He may give eternal life to those whom He has given to Him.

VI. Let us go on in the sixth place to say briefly that this seems quite CONSISTENT WITH THE NATURE OF GOD. We too often measure God after a *human* standard and therefore make mistakes. Remember that God has such an abundance of mercy and Grace and power, that He never has to calculate how much will be necessary for the accomplishment of His purpose. He does largely and literally like one who cannot but act in an infinitely gracious manner. If you have some chickens and you wish to feed them, you will only throw down as much barley as the fowls will want, but you do not think of feeding all the sparrows of the neighborhood!

It would be a very good thing if you could for they all need food. But you throw down as much as will accomplish your purpose. Now our God never has to stint Himself in this way, but with large handfuls He feeds the special objects of His care and the ravens and kites besides. God, again, exhibits a kingly character in His great methods of general love. At the coronation of the old kings, the fountains in Cheapside ran with red

wine. Now you will say, "What a waste!" The gutters ran down on both sides with wine. It was not necessary, was it? The king's object was that his subjects might have wine.

Well, if that were his only object that might have been accomplished by opening the bottles one by one and stopping when there was just enough to satisfy their thirst. Why did it run down the streets? Was it a waste? Not at all, it exhibited the royal glory. The king was glad to give the people wine to drink, but he wanted also to show himself a king and as nobody but a king could make gutters run with wine, therefore he did it to illustrate his own magnificence. And our God, when He is about to exhibit mercy, does not say, "So much will just accomplish My purpose and save My elect"—that is His main object. But behold, He makes the rivers run with wine and the floods with milk, so there is enough and to spare and yet no waste, because His grander object is His own Glory, and He is glorified even by that love which does not effectually save.

When Napoleon was at war, his favorite tactics were, we are told, always to bring crushing battalions to bear upon some one point to carry everything before him. That, my dear Friends, is the mode of procedure in which you and I have to act. If we have to accomplish a purpose, we must concentrate the whole of our might upon that one point. But suppose one greater than Napoleon, or a Napoleon with ten times ten thousand times more troops than he had? He would not need to concentrate his battalions upon one point, but simply cry to all his hosts, "Advance!" and they would go crushing down his foes at every point of the line.

So our God cares for the salvation of His elect. But that is not the only thing He cares about—His own Glory is higher than this. His Glory is the whole of the line and our God, while He effectually saves those whom He has chosen, has no need to bring all His power upon one point. He has abundance to spare after He has done all that we know of. He can, while He is blessing His people, also bless the entire universe according to His own will. And I doubt not that so He does and that Heaven and earth are full of the majesty of His Glory, because Heaven and earth, though they may not alike participate in the fullness of Divine complacency, are full of the beams of His love.

VII. I have to conclude by saying that this principle is a MODEL FOR OUR CONDUCT. I was talking the other day with a Brother. He said he did not think the conversion of the world was the legitimate object of missionary enterprise, because all that Christ intended by the Gospel was the gathering out of a people. Well now, it seems to me that my dear friend was quite right and quite wrong. As to God's purpose in the sending of the Gospel to the world he was quite right, it is the gathering out of a people.

But as to *my* work he was quite wrong, for the work of God's minister is not the gathering out of a people. Christ surely knows what His own disciple is to do. Just hear. "Go you and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." That is *our* work. He did not say, "Go you and sever out of all nations a people to be taught and to be baptized." No! Christ's marching orders to His people are in these words, "Preach the Gospel to every creature." What will be the result of this universal proclamation?

The chosen will be saved. Then, Lord, why not send me to Your chosen? Why send me to all nations? “What business have you to question your Master’s will? Is not this the very way in which I have chosen, that My elect shall be brought, by the preaching of the Gospel to all nations?” I look as the result of missionary enterprise, not for the world’s conversion—I do not expect it—I believe that God will gather out of all people His chosen, and that Christ will come and when He comes, then shall He reign from the river even to the ends of the earth. But all the missionary societies put together will never convert the world, nor do I believe they will do very much towards it unless they very soon alter their tactics.

We shall have to try something very different from all the societies which have ever been in operation before we see any great results. I am waiting for a good time to come. Till then we must use old vessels till we get better ones, but better ones will be found. My own impression is that the world will never be converted by missionary agencies, but that is not your business—I am not to make God’s decrees the rule of my walk. I am to make God’s revealed will my rule of action. Christ tells me to, “Preach the Gospel to every creature,” and if I were absolutely certain there was not one elect man upon earth, I would obey and preach the Gospel for all that—because if there were not a single soul saved by it, we are unto God a sweet-smelling savor.

So then, I say to you individually, talk about Christ everywhere—preach Jesus Christ to every creature. Say to every man and woman you meet, “There is life in a look at the Crucified One.” Tell men that, “Whoever comes unto Him, He will in no wise cast out,” and let this be always your comfort, that all that the Father gives to Him shall come to Him! That Jesus shall see His seed. That of all that the Father has given Him He will lose none, but will present them all at His right hand at last. Fly back to God’s electing love and the decrees of God as the pillow of your rest.

But take the *general* command and the *universal* power of Christ over all flesh as the sword with which you fight and the staff upon which you lean. It is for this end that I ask you, dear Friends, to contribute as you shall see fit, to the spreading of the Gospel in foreign lands by the Missionary Society. I do not believe it is a perfect organization—I believe it is full of faults. I believe, however, it is the only way in which we can send the Gospel to the heathen just now.

We will have a better plan by-and-by, I hope, but meanwhile—as this is the only one—let us use it with vigor, for, after all, it is not the instrumentality, but God. And if I have to look upon this as an ox-goad—an unfit tool to strike the Philistines, yet as I have not a better I will use it till a better shall be found! Meanwhile let us pray the Lord to speed His own cause and gather out His chosen by His Grace. Amen.

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ETERNAL LIFE!

NO. 2396

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, JANUARY 20, 1895,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNAOLE, NEWINOTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 6, 1887.**

*“This is life eternal, that they might know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent.”
John 17:3.*

*“We are in Him that is true, even in His Son, Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols.”
1 John 5:20, 21.*

OUR subject this morning [Sermon #1946, Volume 33—*Eternal Life within Present Grasp*—Read/download entire sermon at <http://www.spurgeongems.org> .] was concerning laying hold on eternal life, and I thought that I would say a little more, tonight, about eternal life. Many people, when they hear or read that expression, suppose that it means Heaven. It does mean that, but it means much more. Eternal life commences *here*—it begins in the Believer as soon as he is born again. Then he receives into him that same life which he will have throughout eternity! Eternal life is not a thing of changes. The river widens and deepens, as I showed you this morning, but it is always the same river of the Water of Life—it always flows from the same Source—it is always constituted in the same manner. The life of the new-born Christian who, only a few minutes ago began to pray, is precisely the same life which is to be found in yonder bright spirits that have now been thousands of years in perfection at the right hand of God praising His name! Death does not transport Believers into a new life—it simply rids us of certain impediments that hamper our true life in its upward flow. The life of the Christian, here, is the triumphant life that is to be enjoyed hereafter! It is one and the same life so far as its real nature is concerned.

It was the great end of the life, death and work of Christ to give this eternal life to all Believers. He came into the world on purpose, that they should forever live through Him. He has not accomplished His design in you, my Hearer, unless He has made you live unto God. There is a Savior—that you know—but He is *not* your Savior unless He has infused into you a life infinitely superior to that which was born in you at the first. “You must be born again.” And by that new birth you must receive a higher and more Divine life than that which throbs in your bosom by nature. Judge for yourself whether Christ has come into the world to any purpose that affects you and especially judge whether you have received eternal life at His hands. Remember how it is written, “As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to

them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” The ever-living God is not the Father of dead souls, but He is the Father of those whom He has *quicken*ed—and the power to become sons of God lies, in a great measure, in the life which is Divinely imparted to all who receive Christ and believe on His name.

It is in the power of Christ to give this eternal life. In the verse preceding our first text, the Lord Jesus, addressing His Father, says of Himself, “You have given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.” The Father has life in Himself and He quickens all who live—and even so, the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, has life in Himself—and this life He imparts to all who believe in Him. It is in His power to bestow that life upon every soul that trusts Him and He delights in exercising His Divine prerogative.

Our Lord Jesus bestows this eternal life only upon His elect. Speaking to His Father, in the verse I quoted just now, He says of Himself, “You have given Him power over all flesh that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.” God has an elect people. So long as the Bible endures, there is no way of getting that doctrine out of it unless men willfully pervert its plainest teaching. From before the foundation of the world the Lord chose a people unto Himself, according to the Sovereign purpose of His own will, even as He says, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.”

These people whom God has chosen are made known by their being quickened, in due time, into a higher and superior life than that of the flesh. Till then they are like the rest of mankind—dead as the dry bones of Ezekiel’s Valley of Vision—but the Divine breath of the Eternal Spirit blows upon them and they are made to live and stand upon their feet, an exceedingly great army! By this test can all of you know whether you are the subjects upon whom God’s Grace has worked. Is there a new life within your soul? Have you been raised from death unto life? Have you been made to feel new emotions, new desires, new longings, new pains and new joys? For, if you have, then are you the people of God! But if not, I pray that in you, also, Divine Grace may yet be thus magnified.

The question for us now to consider is in what does this eternal life consist? I do not propose to answer the question as it might be answered, in various ways, but only according to the first of our two texts—“This is life eternal, that they might know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent.”

I. First, then, ETERNAL LIFE CONSISTS IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE ONLY TRUE GOD.

Let us think for a little while upon the lack of this knowledge. The loss of this knowledge followed upon the Fall. As long as man knew his God, trusted his God and obeyed his God, he was happy enough. But man must know the fallen spirit and, once making acquaintance with him, man must know the knowledge of good and evil. And, contrary to the Lord’s command, he must take of the forbidden fruit and eat. So he lost the knowledge of God and, with that loss, he lost everything! The highest

privilege of manhood is to be acquainted with God—and when our first father turned his back upon God and began to unlearn whatever he had known of his Creator and to forget all that had been revealed concerning his Lord, then came the Fall—and it was a fall, indeed!

Out of this lack of knowledge of God grew all manner of idolatries. Man must have a God—he cannot be happy without one. There are some who struggle hard before they yield, but, as surely as a dog must have a master, so surely man must have a God! There is a great superior Being, our Creator, Preserver and Judge, whom we must have as our Redeemer, or else we are utterly undone. Without God, our nature is disabled and divided—its best part has run away—it becomes dead, in fact, when it becomes separated from God. It was the lack of knowledge of the only true God that led men to bow down before blocks of wood and stone, to worship the sun, moon and stars—and to set up all manner of visible objects and to say of them—“These are our gods.” Oh, to what terrible mischief, to what mental and spiritual death, the lack of the knowledge of God has led the sons of men!

Nor is this all that the lack of the knowledge of the true God has produced in us. It has spoiled the best aspirations of the noblest men such as Plato and Socrates. Blindly feeling after God, yet without truly knowing Him, what could they do? They could rise to no great height—they could accomplish but little. Men such as they reared an altar and inscribed thereon, “To the unknown god.” But what kind of prayer is that which is offered to a god whom we do not know? What comfort can come out of an unknown god? What peace, what rest, what joy can come from a being after whom we grope in the dark, but whom we do not know? Not to know the only true God is death—death even to the noblest spirits among us! But it is a much more terrible death to those who, knowing nothing of God, seek that which will please self, indulge their vile lusts and follow their unbridled passions! What is all that, indeed, but the result of the fact that, not knowing God, they are seeking to submit themselves to some other lord? Man must have a master! He is like a horse that must have a rider! He is so constituted that unless he yields himself to a power superior to himself, he grovels and sinks down yet more and more until his condition is little better than that of the beasts that perish! Indeed, in some respects, he is worse off than they are.

I can scarcely picture what manhood would have been if we had never fallen. The chief joy, I think, would have been that each one among us would have had the only true God as ours. We should have been born into the world, whatever our circumstances, under the patronage of God! We would have gone forth to our labor, sweetly singing in the companionship of God. We would have retired to our rest at night—supposing that things had been as they are now—and we would have fallen asleep as in the embraces of our God, or on our Father’s breast. Days would have had a brightness about them superior to any the sun can yield, and nights would have had nothing for us to dread even in their densest darkness, for the Lord would still have been there! As a child is happy and knows no care nor need while a good father provides for him everything he needs, such would man have been. Oh, men are miserable who

have not known their God! Unhappy men! Well may Scripture speak of them as dead, for it is death to be without the knowledge of God!

But, Brothers and Sisters, what is this knowledge of God which is eternal life? Let us talk a little about *the meaning of this knowledge*. It is *not* eternal life to know that there is a God! A great many people know as much as that and still remain dead. Those who know not that there is a God are dead in the dark, but those who know that there is a God and yet do not trust Him, are dead in the light! That condition is, perhaps, the worse of the two. At any rate, it involves a greater responsibility. Yet, to know that there is a God is not the same thing as *knowing* God. I may know that there is a Queen of England, but I may not know her. I know that there are many persons in the world whom I do not know and it is a sad thing for anyone to know that there is a God and yet not truly to know God.

To explain what is meant by knowing God, I must say, first, that it is to know Him as God, that is to say, to know Him as God to us. I have already told you that everybody has something that is god to him—something that is superior to himself and which rules him—something to which he looks up to and which he worships. Now, the great invisible Jehovah, the one God that made Heaven and earth, in whose hands our breath is, who has revealed Himself in the Trinity of His Divine Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit—the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob—the God of the whole earth, must be God to us! That means that we reverence Him, that we bow before Him as worshippers, that we submit ourselves to His Law, that we seek to do His pleasure. No man really knows God who does not know Him as God, and does not accept Him as His God—and to accept God as your God is eternal life! This is how eternal life becomes yours! And if you have come to that point, you have eternal life.

Still, that statement does not fully explain what it is to know God. It is to be on terms of personal acquaintance with Him. The Lord is not to be seen, neither can His footsteps be heard, but to know God is to be conscious of His Presence by an inward sense which does both see and hear. It is to feel that He is everywhere—on the land or on the sea and, knowing that He is there, to rejoice in being with Him! In fact, it is to find great delight in this God who is not far from any of us. It is to be (let me put it very plainly) *on speaking terms with Him!* It is to be so reconciled to Him that you have no dread of Him, no bondage and fear when you think of Him.

You then regard God as your best Friend whom you love and, in whom you delight, to whom you talk as naturally as you talk to friend or father, into whose bosom you pour your griefs, into whose heart you tell your joys. God is nearer than your most familiar friend, nearer to you than eyes and ears, nearer to you than your own body, for He gets within your soul, which your body can never do! If you really know, experimentally, what I am talking about, you have eternal life. If this is so, that you know the only true God, distinctly recognizing His Presence, speaking with Him and rejoicing in Him and, if, above all, you are striving to be like He—if His Spirit in you is photographing the image of God upon your nature so

that the old image, which He gave to Adam, but which was effaced by sin, is being reproduced in you by the Holy Spirit—then you know the only true God and this, dear Friends, is eternal life!

Now, having shown you what the lack of this knowledge produces and the meaning of this knowledge, let me briefly speak of *the connection between the knowledge of God and eternal life*.

A man without God is a living man, of course, for he works, he eats, he drinks. Yes, but he has missed the only true life. He has missed a secret happiness which is the very *essence* of life and, without which life is really death. You do not know it, dear Hearer, if you have never believed in Christ! And I do not expect you to believe what I say, but let me tell you that there is a something that makes life worth living when you once come to know God. There is a secret bliss—I cannot call it anything less than bliss! There is a little Heaven, a compendious, compressed, essential Heaven which God drops into that soul that lives with Him, so that we know that which makes us leap for joy and makes us bless God that we were ever created! If I had no God, I could say, “Cursed was the day in which it was said to my mother that a man-child was born into the world.” But now I thank God for my existence! Sometimes, when in great pain and anguish, yet having God with me, I have felt inclined not to curse the day of my birth, but to rejoice that I was ever born, even if I had to live a life of perpetual pain, seeing that I have a God who is, indeed, my own!

To have a God also means that you have a grand objective in life. Look at many of you, how you work hard from morning to night just to provide enough to keep body and soul together. If you have not a God, you are wretched creatures, indeed! But the slave who tugs at the oar of the galley and receives no pay but the cruel lash, is a happy and blessed man if God is with him! Many and many a Huguenot prisoner, condemned for life to the galleys because of his faith, has been happier than the king upon his throne who thrust him there! With God, all conditions of life become life that is life, indeed—but without Him, there is nothing to live for! Here is a poor fellow who lives till he has accumulated millions—it must be all the harder to die and leave so much, must it not? What is the good of it? To get a paragraph in the Illustrated London News saying that So-and-So died worth so much? Oh, the misery of having existed for so small a result! But when you have God, you have something to live for, something that makes every little thing sublime and turns the most common actions of daily life into a holy exercise of a royal priesthood unto the Most High!

The man who has God also has the explanation of a great many things which puzzle other people and he has something better, still, for he has his God to fall back upon when he cannot explain anything. I like, sometimes, to have to pull up against a huge granite rock and feel, “I never shall see through that rock and I shall never see my way through that difficulty.” Well, I do not need to see my way through it! I do not need a tunnel from here to New Zealand—do you? I know that I cannot go through the very heart of the earth and I have no wish to do so. I am very glad to know that I cannot, by a stamp of my foot, force my way through

to the other side of the globe—it would be a poor globe if I could! I would not worship a god that I could fully understand. I do not know how I would feel devout over a faith which I perfectly comprehended. If I could put my religion into my pocket, like a box of lozenges, I should soon suck it all away, but I like something that is grander than my loftiest thought, more sublime than my noblest conceptions, and which tops me altogether! And I find it a blessed thing in life, when troubled with all these difficult problems of our teeming population and ever-present distress, to fall back upon this fact—“There is a God who will overrule it all and, from the seeming evil, will produce a good—and from that good something better, to His own praise and glory!”

A man with God—you may strip him, but he is clothed in the Light of God. A man with God—you may shut him up in prison, but he is perfectly at liberty, for his spirit soars into the immensities! A man with God—he may be afflicted with a hundred diseases at once, but he has the best of all health, even the sanity of his soul! A man with God has a window to his room—a man without God goes round, and round, and round, and looks, but does not see anything at all! Sometimes he thinks, “I wish that I could see something, but there is nothing to be seen.” To those who are without God, the future is all a blank—they call themselves “agnostics”—that is, men who do not know anything. But you who have God look for eternal life in His Presence. If men talk to you of joy, you say, “Oh, yes, there must be joy to one who is at peace with God. It cannot be that any man who loves God and is reconciled to Him, should be perpetually unhappy!” That cannot be, so that, in knowing God, there springs up in the man’s heart a hope, no, an *assurance* that it must be well with his soul and that, though Heaven and earth should pass away, God’s Word can never pass away and, therefore, the safety of the man who clings to that Word must be secure! Yes, to know the only true God is to get where life is life, to get into eternal life—not mere existence, but into that which is worthy to be called life, indeed!

II. Now, dear Brothers and Sisters, in the second place, notice that ETERNAL LIFE ALSO CONSISTS IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST, WHOM GOD HAS SENT—“This is life eternal, that they might know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent.”

Our second text shows that the first one by no means implies that Jesus Christ is not God, for it expressly declares, concerning Jesus Christ, “This is the true God, and eternal life.” This is the teaching of both passages. *It would not be eternal life to know God apart from Christ.* God the Father, apart from Jesus Christ, is just an Almighty Being infinitely just, whose Laws I have violated—a Being infinitely loving, who would bless me, but who cannot do so while I violate His Laws—a God full of tremendous power and unerring wisdom who would exercise all these for me but that I, having broken His Law, the penalties of that Law are inevitable, and cannot be reversed! It was wise and just on God’s part to append a penalty to sin—nothing could be crueler than to allow men to sin without being punished for it! It would be abhorrent to a God of Love as much as to a God of Justice if sin could be made a trifle and there were no punishment attached to it. The first knowledge you and I ever get of

God, when we come to know Him, is as One who is infinitely loving, but who, nevertheless, no, who, *for that very reason*, is infinitely Just and *must punish sin*.

No one knows the true God in the real sense of knowledge except through Jesus Christ, for no man comes unto the Father but by the Son. But even if he could know God, in a measure, apart from the Revelation of Him in Christ Jesus, it would be a knowledge of terror that would make him flee away and avoid God! It would not be life to our souls to know God apart from His Son, Jesus Christ! We must know the Christ whom He has sent or our knowledge does not bring eternal life to us. But, Beloved, when we see God in Christ meeting us, demanding a penalty and yet providing it, Himself, decreeing the punishment most justly and then bearing it *Himself*. When we see Him to be both Judge and Expiation, both Ruler and Sacrifice, then we see that “herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the Propitiation for our sins.” Then it is, in the knowledge of God *in Christ* and God *through Christ*, that we find that we have entered into eternal life!

Let me add, here, that it would not be eternal life to know Jesus Christ *if He were not God*—if, as some say, He was only a good man—that He was only a good man is impossible, for He was the worst of impostors if He was not God, for He spoke of Himself as God! And if He were not Divine, then He imposed on men. If He were nothing but a mere man, how could He give us eternal life? And of what use were trust in Him? But if He who bled on Calvary was very God of very God, as well as Man, then the sacrifice He offered has an infinite value about it and I, even I, dare trust my soul to Him with the full assurance that there must be, in such a Savior, ability to save to the uttermost all them that come unto God by Him!

How do we come to know Christ? I do not think it necessary, at this time, to explain much about how we know Christ, because I am addressing thousands of persons who do know Him. Brothers and Sisters, you know Christ *in the glory of His Divine Person*, God and Man. You have no doubts about either His Deity or His Humanity—you have tasted of the sympathy that comes to you through His Manhood, and you have felt the majesty of His Godhead—He is to you your Brother and yet your God! You know Him, then, in the glory of His Person.

You also know Him in *the peace-speaking power of His precious blood*. This is, to me, the best evidence of the Truth of our holy religion. I was once troubled and tossed to and fro, driven almost to despair under a sense of sin—it was only when I understood Christ’s *substitutionary Sacrifice* and realized that He stood in my place and bore my sin in His own body on the Cross that I obtained peace with God! I know the power of His blood by the peace it brought me! Do not many of you know it also? I am sure that many of you do. Whenever sin returns to assail you and you get troubled and perplexed, do you not go and look, again, to Christ upon the Cross, and all your anxiety disappears? The wounds of Jesus bleed a balsam that heals your wounds! And His death yields the life that delivers you from going down to death!

We also know Christ in *the perfection of His righteousness*. By faith we have put on that glorious robe and we have gone in unto God with our Brother's garments on—and the Lord has accepted us for His sake—and we have come from the Divine Presence exceedingly comforted and blessed, “accepted in the Beloved.” We know, dear Friends, now, what communion with God means. I have never seen Him, but I know Him better than anybody I ever saw! I have never heard His voice, nor do I expect to hear it till these ears are deaf in the grave, unless the Lord should first come suddenly, but I know His voice better than I know the voice of anyone on earth! I can discern it in a moment. A stranger will I not follow, for I know not the voice of strangers, but if there is any Truth of God uttered, I know that Truth by a kind of instinct within my soul. The charm of it is that Jesus has spoken it and it commands my immediate loyal acceptance. Question anything Christ has said? Brethren, if I find Christ contradicting everything that I ever *thought of*, or any decision I had *arrived at*, I would, without regret, fling every thought in my mind to the winds—and I would embrace each syllable that He has spoken with a joy most intense and a loyalty that never questions!

I have heard of “life in London.” I do not know much about what that expression means, but I know what life in Christ is, and there is nothing like it! *Life in Heaven is only life in Christ*—if He were gone from the realms of bliss, there would be no life in Heaven, itself—the center, the core, the soul of the everlasting joy of the redeemed lies in the fact of Christ being with them and their knowing Him! This is life eternal, to know Jesus Christ whom God has sent, and to know God in Him.

This will give you life, you daughters of despair who are at death's dark door—know God and Christ and you shall live! This will give you life, you disappointed ones, to whom life seems to be like a sucked orange which you would gladly throw away! This will be the cup of life, again, and put into it the nectar of true life. This will give you something to trust in! This will give you rest to your spirit, this will give you power for service, this will give you a holy expectancy for the world to come! In fact, everything that life means comes to the man who knows God and knows Christ—and everything that death means comes to the man who does *not* know God, and does *not* know Christ—he is dead even while he continues to exist.

I have finished all my discourse but for one fragment. Did you notice the last clause in our second text? “This is the true God, and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols.” Do you see the drift of the Apostle's injunction? You live by the true God, you live by Jesus Christ—therefore, keep yourselves from idols. Idols are untrue gods and they are death to you. Therefore, “Little children, keep yourselves from idols.”

Of course, I need not say to you that we must carefully preserve our integrity in the matter of worshipping anything that *can be seen*. No child of God may dare to worship a picture, an image, or anything that is visible! I would like to break out of every church window every image of the saints, lest it should be worshipped—and especially to banish from all public observation every symbol and sign that ever has been worshipped in the Church of Rome lest they should be worshipped again! I see, in the

symbolism of certain churches, a tendency to set up something visible as an object of worship. Remember the commandment, “You shall have no other gods before Me,” that is, have *nothing* to worship but God, and then, next, “You shall not make unto you any engraved image, or any likeness of anything that is in Heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: you shall not bow down yourself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep My Commandments.”

The worship of the cross, the crucifix, the “consecrated” bread, or anything of that kind is sheer idolatry, and it always brings death with it. Gospel Light dies out when anything but the true God is worshipped. Therefore, away with idols! Have a holy iconoclastic zeal against anything that is regarded by men with the reverence which is due to God, alone!

But keep yourselves from all other idols—from the idols of your own brain, from creeds of your own making, from thoughts of your own imagining. Keep yourselves from letting anything but God rule you. Keep yourselves from golden idols—keep yourselves from the love of fame—keep yourselves from the adoration of human science! “Keep yourselves from idols.” There is no God but God and Christ Jesus, His Son, is the only Mediator between God and men. Keep yourselves from allowing anything but God to get the upper hand of you. Make not gods of yourselves, your own persons—make not gods of your families, make not gods of your children.

Verily, I say unto you, there are many who worship their children and set them up as little gods! And when they are taken away from them, as they will be when they worship them, then they cry out against God most bitterly. How could they think that God would allow the little Dagon to be set up in His place? It must be God first, God last, God midst, and God, without end! May He make it so with us that, from now on, we shall have this eternal life which consists in knowing the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM 27.

Verse 1. *The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?* If all your light comes from the Father of Lights, with whom is no variable-ness, neither shadow of turning, you need not be afraid of losing your light! “The Lord is my light and my salvation.” If your salvation comes from the God of Salvation, if it is worked out by the Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ, you need not be afraid that you will ever be robbed of that salvation—and you may confidently sing, “Jehovah is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?”

1. *The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?* “He puts His own force into me and if He who is Omnipotent is the strength of my life, who can stand against me? If my strength were in myself, I might well be afraid, but if it is in God, alone, if, ‘the Lord is the strength

of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?” Dismiss your fears, then, whatever may be the cause of them, all you who are trusting in the Lord Jehovah! The causes of fear are many, but the *cure* of fear is one, namely, faith in the living God!

2. *When the wicked, even my enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell.* This is the record of the Psalmist's past experience. David was a soldier and he had a soldier's dangers and a soldier's deliverances. And here he writes the history of his battles. These are dispatches from the field. When the Psalmist's enemies rushed upon him like hungry lions seeking to eat him up, they stumbled and fell! He had not to fight, or even to sound a trumpet, for the Lord fought for him!

3. *Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident.* The past gives him confidence both for the present and for the future. Happy is the man who can fall back upon his past experience, not to make of it a bed to lie upon, but to make of it a lever with which to lift his soul out of the Slough of Despond! I think I have sometimes said that we may use our past experiences as the bargemen use their oars when they push backward to drive the boat forward. You must never lie down upon past mercies and say, "I am satisfied with all that has happened," but use the past to help you in the present and the future.

4. *One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the House of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in His Temple.* David wanted to spend his days in the House of his God and we, also, may do the same, not only in the place that is used for public worship, but wherever we may be! The great House of God is everywhere and His children can always be at home with Him. That is the ideal of a Christian's life, to be always in God's House—

***“No more a stranger or a guest,
But like a child at home.”***

David desired not only that he might dwell in God's House, but that he might spend his time in adoring contemplation of the beauty of his God—“to behold the beauty of the Lord.” Did you ever think of the wonderful beauties that there are in the Character of the Most High? If you want to see them, behold Him who is altogether lovely, in whom the Father is to be most clearly seen, though veiled in human flesh! This should also be *our* lifelong work, to study, to understand, and to enjoy the beauty of the Lord, “and to enquire in His Temple,” not only to see Him, but to speak with Him and to hear Him speak. A Christian is one who makes enquiries of his God—he is an enquirer when he begins, and he should be an enquirer till he ends. The Apostle Peter tells us that the angels belong to the honorable company of enquirers concerning “things that accompany salvation.” “Which things the angels desire to look into.” Christian men should go to God with their enquiries and when they come to public worship, this should be one great end of it, “to enquire in His Temple.”

5. *For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion.* “For”—and this is a reason for dismissing all our fear—“in the time of trouble He

shall hide me.” “I am so little that I may easily be hidden away by One so great as God is. ‘He shall hide me in His pavilion,’ in His own royal tent and beneath the majesty of His Sovereignty my soul shall find perfect security.”

5. *In the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me.* “In that Most Holy Place where none can come and live but those whom God brings there! In the sacred spot where the security must be absolute! In the Tabernacle of Sacrifice sprinkled with the blood of Atonement, shall He hide me.” Oh, what a hiding place is this for one who is in trouble!

6. *He shall set me up upon a rock.* What perfect security the child of God has, first, in the pavilion of Sovereignty, next, in the secrecy of Sacrifice—and thirdly, on the rock of Immutability! “He shall set me up upon a rock.”

6. *And now shall my head be lifted up above my enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in His tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises unto the LORD.* If an ungodly man’s head were lifted up above His enemies, he would begin to denounce them and to curse them. But when a Believer’s head is thus lifted up, he begins to praise his God. Then are his songs louder and sweeter than they ever were before! “I will sing, yes, I will sing praises unto the LORD.”

7. *Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice: have mercy also upon me, and answer me.* I thought you were going to sing, David, but you are at prayer, I see. This is how we live spiritually—we breathe in the air by prayer, and we breathe it out by praise! This is the holy respiration of a Christian’s life! Prayer and praise must be mingled in a divinely wise proportion and then they make a sweet incense, acceptable to God. I hope we can say that we have never finished praying but that we feel we must begin singing, and that we have never finished singing but that we must begin praying! What a blessed interchange this makes for the whole of life! “I will sing, yes, I will sing praises unto the Lord. Hear, O Lord, when I cry with my voice: have mercy, also, upon me, and answer me.”

8. *When You said, Seek you My face; my heart said unto You, Your face, LORD, will I seek.* The child of God knows His Father’s voice and responds to it. God’s Word is like a seal and we should be like the wax, ready to take the impress of it. “Seek you My face.” “Your face, Lord, will I seek.” It is the same expression reversed, just as it is when the seal makes an impression.

9. *Hide not Your face far from me.* I do not know why the translators put in that word, “far.” It is printed in italics, but it should not be there at all! “Hide not Your face from me at all, my Lord. I do not ask You not to hide it far from me, but I pray You not to hide it at all! Make no break in my sunlight. Let me always see You—this is all I ask. Hide not Your face from me.”

9. *Put not Your servant away in anger.* “Put not Your servant away.” God will not put away His children, but He does, sometimes, put His servants away. I know that this is often a prayer of mine. I wonder whether it is yours also—“Dismiss me not from Your service, Lord.” We may remain His children and yet we may scarcely be fit to be employed, any

longer, in His service. Let this be your prayer as well as David's, "Put not Your servant away in anger."

9. *You have been my help.* "Yes, that You have, O Lord! You have been my help."

9, 10. *Leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation. When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up.* There is a poor child and his father and mother have both gone away and left him. But the Divine Father comes along, picks the child up and clasps him to His bosom—"Then the Lord will take me up." It is a wonderful thing to be taken up by God! A man prospers in business and people say, "Oh, yes, he may get on very well, for such-and-such a great man has taken him up!" But how much better shall you and I prosper who can say, "The Lord will take me up"? If He has taken us up, what a wonderful Patron we have! There is no other like the Lord!

11. *Teach me Your way, O LORD.* "I am only a child. Teach me, Lord. I am fatherless and motherless. Take me into Your orphanage and teach me Your way, O Lord!"

11. *And lead me in a plain path, because of my enemies.* "Make my way to be very straightforward! May my life be such that I never have to apologize for it! May there be no places in it about which unpleasant questions can be asked! Lead me in a plain path because of my enemies. If they can find fault with me, they will do so and if they cannot rightly find fault with me, they will make up some accusation against me. Therefore, O Lord, 'lead me in a plain path because of my enemies.'"

12, 13. *Deliver me not over unto the will of my enemies: for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty. I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.* Men say that "seeing is believing," but that is not true—believing is seeing! So David says, "I had fainted unless I had believed to see." It is by *believing* that we see "the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living."

14. *Wait on the LORD.* I think I hear David say this short sentence to each one in this great assembly tonight, "Wait on the Lord."

14. *Be of good courage and He shall strengthen your heart: wait, I say.* David says it from his own experience and thus, as it were, puts his name and seal at the end of the Psalm—"Wait, I say"—

14. *On the LORD.* Everyone who has ever proven the power of prayer may use the same words as David did! The preacher certainly does and with the Psalmist, he exclaims, "Wait, I say, on the Lord."

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY
TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

CHRIST'S PASTORAL PRAYER FOR HIS PEOPLE NO. 2331

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 22, 1893.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 1, 1889.

*"I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which
You have given Me; for they are Yours. And all Mine
are Yours, and Yours are Mine; and I am glorified in them."
John 17:9, 10.*

To begin with, I remark that our Lord Jesus pleads for His own people. When He puts on His priestly breastplate, it is for the tribes whose names are there. When He presents the atoning Sacrifice, it is for Israel whom God has chosen, and He utters this great Truth of God, which some regard as narrow, but which we adore, "I pray for them: I pray not for the world." The point to which I want to call attention is this—the reason why Christ prays not for the world, but for His people. He puts it, "For they are Yours," as if they were all the dearer to Him because they were the Father's—"I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which You have given Me, for they are Yours." We might have half thought that Jesus would have said, "They are Mine and, therefore, I pray for them." It would have been true, but there would not have been the beauty of Truth about it which we have here. He loves us all the better and He prays for us all the more fervently because we are the *Father's*. Such is His love to His Father, that our being the Father's sheds upon us an extra halo of beauty! Because we belong to the Father, therefore does the Savior plead for us with all the greater earnestness at the Throne of the heavenly Grace.

But this leads us on to remember that our Lord had undertaken suretyship engagements on account of His people—He undertook to preserve the Father's gift—"Those that You gave Me, I have kept, and none of them is lost." He looked upon the sheep of His pasture as belonging to His Father and the Father had put them into His charge, saying to Him, "Of Your hand will I require them." As Jacob kept his uncle's flocks—by day the heat devoured him and at night the frost—but he was more careful over them because they were Laban's than if they had been his own. He was to give an account of all the sheep committed to him and he did so—and he lost none of Laban's sheep. His care over them was partly accounted for by the fact that they did not belong to himself, but belonged to his uncle, Laban.

Understand this twofold reason, then, for Christ's pastoral prayer for His people. He first prays for them because they belong to the Father and, therefore, have a peculiar value in His eyes. And next, because they be-

long to the Father, He is under suretyship engagements to deliver them all to the Father in that Last Great Day when the sheep shall pass under the rod of Him that counts them. Now you see where I am bringing you, tonight. I am not going to preach, at this time, to the world any more than Christ, upon this occasion, prayed for the world, but I am going to preach to His own people as He, in this intercessory prayer, pleaded for them. I trust that they will all follow me, step by step, through this great theme, and I pray the Lord that, in these deep central Truths of the Gospel, we may find real refreshment for our souls tonight.

I. In calling your attention to my text, I want you to notice, first, THE INTENSITY OF THE SENSE OF PROPERTY WHICH CHRIST HAS IN HIS PEOPLE.

Here are *six words setting forth Christ's property in those who are saved*—"Them which You have given Me"—(that is one), "for they are Yours. And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine; and I am glorified in them." There are certain persons so precious to Christ that they are marked all over with special tokens that they belong to Him, as I have known a man write his name in a book which he has greatly valued and then he has turned over some pages and written his name again, and, as we have sometimes known persons, when they have highly valued a thing, to put their mark, their seal, their stamp here, there and almost everywhere upon it! So, notice in my text how the Lord seems to have the seal in His hand and He stamps it all over His peculiar possession! "They are Yours. And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine." It is all possessive pronouns, to show that God looks upon His people as His portion, His possession, His property. "They shall be Mine, says the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels." Every man has something or other which he values above the rest of his estate and here the Lord, by so often reiterating the words which signify possession, proves that He values His people above everything! Let us show that we appreciate this privilege of being set apart unto God and let us each one say to Him—

***"Take my poor heart, and let it be
Forever closed to all but Thee!
Seal You my breast and let me wear
That pledge of love forever there."***

I call your attention, next, to the fact that, while there are these six expressions here, *they are all applied to the Lord's own people*. "My," (that is, the saints), are Yours, (that is, the saints), "and Yours," (that is, the saints), are Mine, (that is, the saints). These broad arrows of the King of Kings are all stamped upon His people! While the marks of possession are numerous, they are all set upon one object. What? Does not God care for anything else? I answer, No. As compared with His own people, He cares for nothing else. "The Lord's portion is His people: Jacob is the lot of His inheritance." Has not God other things? Ah, what is there that He has *not*? The silver and the gold are His and the cattle on a thousand hills. All things are of God—of Him, and by Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things—yet He reckons them not in comparison with His people! You know how you, dearly Beloved, value your children much more than you do anything else. If there were a fire in your house, tonight, and you could

only carry one thing out of it, Mother, would you hesitate a moment as to what that one thing would be? You would carry your baby and let everything else be consumed in the flames! And it is so with God. He cares for His people beyond everything else. He is the Lord God of Israel, and in Israel He has set His name, and there He takes His delight. There does He rest in His love and over her does He rejoice with singing!

I want you to notice these different points, not because I can fully explain them all to you, but if I can only give you some of these great Truths to think about and to help you to communion with Christ, tonight, I shall have done well. I want you to note, yet further, concerning these notes of possession, that *they occur in the private communion between the Father and the Son*. It is in our Lord's prayer, when He is in the inner sanctuary speaking with the Father, that we have these words, "All Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine." It is not to you and to me that He is talking, now. The Son of God is speaking with the Father when They are in very near communion, One with the Other. Now, what does this say to me but that the Father and the Son greatly value Believers? What people talk about when they are alone—not what they say in the market, not what they talk of in the midst of the confused mob, but what they say when they are in private—that lays bare their heart! Here is the Son speaking to the Father, not about thrones and royalties, nor cherubim and seraphim, but about poor men and women—in those days mostly fishermen and peasant folk—who believed on Him!

They are talking about these people and the Son is taking His own solace with the Father in Their secret privacy by talking about these precious jewels, these dear ones that are Their peculiar treasure. You have not any notion how much God loves you! Dear Brother, dear Sister, you have never, yet, had half an idea, or the tithe of an idea, of how precious you are to Christ! You think, because you are so imperfect, and you fall so much below your own ideal, that, therefore, He does not love you much. You think that He cannot do so. Have you ever measured the depth of Christ's agony in Gethsemane and of His death on Calvary? If you have tried to do so, you will be quite sure that, apart from anything in you or about you, He loves you with a love that passes knowledge! Believe it. "But I do not love Him as I should," I think I hear you say. No, and you never will unless you first know His love to you. Believe it! Believe it to the highest degree, that He so loves you that when there is no one who can commune with Him but the Father, even *then* Their talk is about Their mutual estimate of you—how much They love you! "All Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine."

Only one other thought under this head and I but put it before you and leave it with you, for I cannot expound it tonight. *All that Jesus says is about all His people*, for He says, "All Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine." These high, secret talks are not about some few saints who have reached a "higher life," but about all of us who belong to Him! Jesus bears all of us on His heart and He speaks of us all to the Father—"All Mine are Yours." "That poor woman who could never serve her Lord except by patient endurance, she is Mine," says Jesus. "She is Yours, great Father." "That poor girl, newly-converted, whose only spiritual life was spent upon

a sickbed and then she exhaled to Heaven, like a dewdrop of the morning, she is Mine, and she is Yours. That poor child who often stumbles, who never brought much credit to the sacred name, He is Mine and He is Yours. "All Mine are Yours." I seem as if I heard a silver bell ringing out! The very tones of the words are like the music from the harps of angels! "My—Yours. Yours— Mine." May such sweet risings and fallings of heavenly melodies charm all our ears!

I think that I have said enough to show you the intensity of the sense of property which Christ has in His people—"All Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine."

II. The next head of my discourse is THE INTENSITY OF UNITED INTEREST BETWEEN THE FATHER AND THE SON CONCERNING BELIEVERS.

First, let me say that *Jesus loves us because we belong to the Father.* Turn that Truth of God over. "My Father has chosen them, My Father loves them. Therefore," says Jesus, "I love them and I lay down My life for them, and I will take My life, again, for them, and live throughout eternity for them. They are dear to Me because they are dear to My Father." Have you not often loved another person for the sake of a third one upon whom all your heart was set? There is an old proverb and I cannot help quoting it just now. It is, "Love me, love my dog." It is as if the Lord Jesus so loved the Father that even such poor dogs as we are get loved by Him for His Father's sake! To the eyes of Jesus we are radiant with beauty because God has loved us.

Now turn that thought round the other way, *the Father loves us because we belong to Christ.* At first, the Father's love in election was Sovereign and self-contained, but now, today, since He has given us over to Christ, He takes a greater delight in us. "They are My Son's sheep," He says, "He bought them with His blood." Better still—"That is My Son's spouse," He says. "That is My Son's bride. I love her for His sake." There was that first love which came fresh from the Father's heart, but now, through this one channel of love to Jesus, the Father pours a double flood of love on us for His dear Son's sake. He sees the blood of Jesus sprinkled on us. He remembers the token and, for the sake of His beloved Son, He prizes us beyond all price! Jesus loves us because we belong to the Father—and the Father loves us because we belong to Jesus!

Now come still closer to the central thought of the text, All Mine are Yours." *All who are the Son's are the Father's.* Do we belong to Jesus? Then we belong to the Father! Have I been washed in the precious blood? Can I sing, tonight—

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

Then, by redemption I belong to Christ! But, at the same time, I may be sure that I belong to the Father—"All Mine are Yours." Are you trusting in Christ? Then you are one of God's elect! That high and deep mystery of predestination need trouble no man's heart if he is a believer in Christ. If you believe in Christ, Christ has redeemed you and the Father chose you

from before the foundation of the world! You may rest happily in that firm belief, "All Mine are Yours." How often have I met with people puzzling themselves about election! They want to know if they are elect. No man can come to the Father but by Christ—no man can come to election except through redemption! If you have come to Christ and are His redeemed, it is certain beyond all doubt that you were chosen of God and are the Father's elect. "All Mine are Yours."

So, if I am bought by Christ's precious blood, I am not to sit down and say how grateful I am to Christ as though He were apart from the Father, and more loving and more tender than the Father. No, no! I belong to the Father if I belong to Christ—and I have for the Father the same gratitude, the same love, and I would render the same service as to Jesus, for Jesus puts it, "All Mine are Yours."

If, tonight, also, I am a servant of Christ. If, because He bought me, I try to serve Him, then I am a servant of the Father if I am a servant of the Son. "All Mine, whatever position they occupy, belong to You, great Father," and they have all the privileges which come to those who belong to the Father. I hope that I do not weary you. I cannot make these things entertaining to the careless—I do not try to do so. But you who love my Lord and His Truth ought to rejoice, tonight, to think that, in being the property of Christ, you are assured that you are the property of the Father! "All Mine are Yours."—

***"With Christ our Lord we share our part
In the affections of His heart.
Nor shall our souls be removed
Till He forgets His First-Beloved."***

But now you have to look at the other part of it—"and Yours are Mine." *All who are the Father's are the Son's.* If you belong to the Father, you belong to the Son. If you are elect, and so the Father's, you are redeemed, and so the Son's. If you are adopted, and so the Father's, you are justified in Christ and so you are the Son's. If you are regenerated, and so are begotten of the Father, your life is still dependent upon the Son. Remember that while one Biblical figure sets us forth as children who have, each one, a life within himself, another equally valid figure represents us as branches of the Vine which die unless they continue united to the Stem. "All Yours are Mine." If you are the Father's, you must be Christ's. If your life is given you of the Father, it still depends entirely upon the Son.

What a wonderful mixture all this is! The Father and the Son are One and we are one with the Father and with the Son! A mystic union is established between us and the Father by reason of our union with the Son and the Son's union with the Father. See to what a glorious height our humanity has risen through Christ! By the Grace of God, you who were like stones in the brook are made sons of God! Lifted out of your dead materialism, you are elevated into a spiritual life and you are united to God! You have not any idea, tonight, of what God has already done for you and truly, it does not yet appear what you shall be. A Christian man is the noblest work of God! God has here reached the fullness of His power and His Grace in making us to be one with His own dear Son, and so bringing us into union and communion with Himself. Oh, if the words that I speak

could convey to you the fullness of their own meaning, you might spring to your feet, electrified with holy joy to think of this—that we should be Christ's and the Father's—and that we should be thought worthy to be the object of intricate transactions and inter-communions of the dearest kind between the Father and the Son! We, even we, who are but dust and ashes at our very best, are favored as angels never were! Therefore let all praise be ascribed to Sovereign Grace!

III. And now I shall only detain you a few minutes longer while I speak upon the third part of our subject, that is, THE GLORY OF CHRIST. “And I am glorified in them.” I must confess that while the former part of my subject was very deep, this third part seems to me to be still deeper—“I am glorified in them.”

If Christ had said, “I will glorify them,” I could have understood it. If He had said, “I am pleased with them,” I might have set it down to His great kindness to them. But when He says, “I am glorified in them,” it is very amazing. The sun can be reflected, but you need proper objects to act as reflectors—and the brighter they are, the better will they reflect. You and I do not seem to have the power of reflecting Christ's Glory. We break up the glorious rays that shine upon us. We spoil, we ruin so much of the good that falls upon us. Yet Christ says that He is glorified in us! Take these words home, dear Friend, to yourself, and think that the Lord Jesus met you, tonight, and as you went out of the Tabernacle, said to you, “You are Mine. You are My Father's and I am glorified in you.” I dare not say that it would be a proud moment for you, but I dare say that there would be more in it to make you feel exalted for Him to say, “I am glorified in you,” than if you could have all the honors that all the kings can put upon all men in the world! I think that I could say, “Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace, according to Your Word,” if He would but say to me, “I am glorified in your ministry.” I hope that He is. I believe that He is, but, oh, for an assuring word, if not spoken to us personally, yet spoken to His Father about us, as in our text, “I am glorified in them”!

How can this be? Well, it is a very wide subject. Christ is glorified in His people in many ways. *He is glorified by saving such sinners*—taking these people, so sinful, so lost, so unworthy. When the Lord lays hold upon a drunk, a thief, an adulterer. When He arrests one who has been guilty of blasphemy, whose very heart is reeking with evil thoughts. When He picks up the far-off one, the abandoned, the dissolute, the fallen, as He often does, and when He says, “These shall be Mine. I will wash these in My blood. I will use these to speak My Word.” Oh, then, He is glorified in them! Read the lives of many great sinners who have afterwards become great saints and you will see how they have tried to glorify Him, not only she who washed His feet with her tears, but many another like her. Oh, how they have loved to praise Him! Eyes have wept tears, lips have spoken words—but hearts have felt what neither eyes nor lips could speak—of adoring gratitude to Him. “I am glorified in them.” Great sinners, Christ is glorified in you! Some of you Pharisees, if you were to be converted, would not bring Christ such Glory as He gets through saving publicans and harlots! Even if you struggled into Heaven, it would be with very little music for Him on the road, certainly no tears and no ointment for His feet, and

no wiping them with the hairs of your head! You are too respectable ever to do that. But when He saves great sinners, He can truly say, "I am glorified in them," and each of them can sing—

***"It passes praises, that dear love of Yours,
My Jesus, Savior: yet this heart of mine
Would sing that love, so full, so rich, so free,
Which brings a rebel sinner, such as me,
Near unto God."***

And Christ is glorified by the perseverance which He shows in the matter of their salvation. See how He begins to save and the man resists. He follows up His kind endeavor and the man rebels. He hunts him, pursues him, dogs his footsteps. He will have the man, but the man will not have Him! But the Lord, without violating the free will of man, which He never does, yet at length brings the one who was most unwilling to lie at His feet and he that hated most begins to love! And he that was most stout-hearted bows his knees in lowliest humility. It is amazing how persevering the Lord is in the salvation of a sinner—yes, and in the salvation of His own, for you would have broken loose long ago if your great Shepherd had not penned you up within the fold! Many of you would have started aside and have lost yourselves if it had not been for constraints of Sovereign Grace which have kept you to this day and will not let you go! Christ is glorified in you. Oh, when you once get to Heaven, when the angels know all that you were and all that you tried to be. When the whole story of Almighty, Infinite Grace is told, as it will be told, then will Christ be glorified in you!

Beloved, *we actively glorify Christ when we display Christian Graces.* You who are loving, forgiving, tender-hearted, gentle, meek, self-sacrificing—you glorify Him—He is glorified in you. You who are upright and who will not be moved from your integrity. You who can despise the sinner's gold and will not sell your conscience for it. You who are bold and brave for Christ. You who can bear and suffer for His name's sake—all your Graces come from Him! As all the flowers are bred and begotten of the sun, so all that is in you that is good comes from Christ, the Sun of Righteousness! And therefore He is glorified in you.

But, Beloved, God's people have glorified Christ in many other ways. *When they make Him the object of all their trust, they glorify Him.* When they say, "Though I am the chief of sinners, yet, I trust Him. Though my mind is dark and though my temptations abound, I believe that He can save to the uttermost, I trust Him." Christ is more glorified by a sinner's humble faith than by a seraph's loudest song! If you believe, you glorify Him. Child of God, are you, tonight, very dark, dull and heavy? Do you feel half dead, spiritually? Come to your Lord's feet and kiss them—and believe that He can save—no, that He *has* saved you, even you, and thus you will glorify His holy name. "Oh," said a Believer, the other day, "I know whom I have believed. Christ is mine!" "Ah," said another, "that is *presumption.*" Beloved, it is nothing of the kind! It is not presumption for a child to acknowledge his own father. It might be pride for him to be ashamed of his father—it is certainly great alienation from his father if he is ashamed to acknowledge him. "I know whom I have believed." Happy state of heart, to be absolutely sure that you are resting upon Christ, that

He is your Savior, that you believe in Him, for Jesus said, "He that believes on Me has everlasting life." I believe on Him and I have everlasting life! "He that believes on Him is not condemned." I believe on Him and I am not condemned! Make sure work of this, not only by signs and evidences, but do even better—make the one sign and the one evidence to be this—"Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. I, a sinner, accept His great Sacrifice and I am saved."

Especially, I think that *God's people glorify Christ by a cheerful conversation*. If you go about moaning and mourning, pining and complaining, you bring no honor to His name. But if, when you fast, you appear not unto men to fast. If you can wear a cheerful countenance even when your heart is heavy. And if, above all, you can rally your spirit out of its depths and begin to bless God when the cupboard is empty, and friends are few, then you will, indeed, glorify Christ!

Many are the ways in which this good work may be done—let us try to do it. "I am glorified in them," says Christ. That is, *by their bold confession of Christ*. Do I address myself to any here who love Christ, but who have never acknowledged it? Come out and come out very soon! He deserves to have all the glory that you can give Him. If He has healed you, be not like the nine who forgot that Christ had healed their leprosy. Come and praise the name of the great Healer and let others know what Christ can do! I am afraid that there are a great many here, tonight, who hope that they are Christians, but they have never said so. What are you ashamed of? Ashamed of your Lord? I am afraid that you do not, after all, love Him! Now, at this time, at this particular crisis in the history of the Church and the world, if we do not publicly take sides with Christ, we shall really be against Him! The time has now come when we cannot afford to have go-betweens. You must be for Him or for His enemies and, tonight, He asks you, if you are really His, to say it! Come forward, unite yourself with His people and let it be seen by your life and conversation that you belong to Christ! If not, how can it be true, "I am glorified in them"? Is Christ glorified in a non-confessing people, a people that hope to go slinking into Heaven by the by-roads or across the fields, but dare not come into the King's Highway and travel with the King's subjects, and confess that they belong to Him?

Lastly, I think that *Christ is glorified in His people by their efforts to extend His Kingdom*. What efforts are you making? There is a great deal of force in a Church like this, but I am afraid that there is a great deal of wasted steam, wasted power here. The tendency is, so often, to leave everything to be done by the minister, or else by one or two leading people, but I pray you, Beloved, if you are Christ's, and if you belong to the Father, if, unworthy though you are, you are claimed with a double ownership by the Father and the Son, try to be of use to Them! Let it be seen by your winning others to Christ that He is glorified in you! I believe that, by diligent attendance to even the smallest Sunday school class, Christ is glorified in you. By that private conversation in your own room. By that letter which you dropped into the post with many a prayer. By *anything* that you have done with a pure motive, trusting in God in order to glorify Christ, He is glorified in you!

Do not mistake my meaning with regard to serving the Lord. I think it exceedingly wrong when I hear exhortations made to young people, "Quit your service as domestics and come out into spiritual work. Business men, leave your shops. Workmen, give up your trades. You cannot serve Christ in that calling, come away from it altogether." I beg to say that *nothing* will be more pestilent than such advice as that! There are men called by the Grace of God to separate themselves from every earthly occupation and they have special gifts for the work of the ministry, but to *ever* imagine that the bulk of Christian people cannot serve God in their daily calling is to think altogether contrary to the mind of the Spirit of God! If you are a servant, remain a servant! If you are a waiter, go on with your waiting! If you are a tradesman, go on with your trade! Let every man abide in the calling wherein he is called, unless there is in him some special call from God to devote himself to the ministry. Go on with your employment, dear Christian people, and do not imagine that you are to turn hermits, or monks, or nuns! You would not glorify God if you did so!

Soldiers of Christ are to fight the battle out where they are. To quit the field and shut yourselves up would be to render it impossible that you should get the victory. The work of God is as holy and acceptable in domestic service, or in trade, as any service that can be rendered in the pulpit, or even by the foreign missionary! We thank God for the men specially called and set apart for His work, but we know that they could do nothing unless the salt of our holy faith should permeate the daily life of other Christians. You godly mothers—you are the glory of the Church of Christ! You hard working men and women who endure patiently, "as seeing Him who is invisible," are the crown and glory of the Church of God! You who do not shirk your daily labor, but stand manfully to it, obeying Christ in it, are proving what the Christian religion was meant to do! We can, if we are truly priests unto God, make our everyday garments into vestments, our meals into sacraments and our houses into temples for God's worship! Our very beds will be within the veil, and our inmost thoughts will be as a sweet incense perpetually smoking up to the Most High. Dream not that there is *anything* about any honest calling that degrades a man, or hinders him in glorifying God! But sanctify it all till the bells upon the horses shall ring out, "Holiness to the Lord," and the pots in your houses shall be as holy as the vessels of the sanctuary!

Now, I want that we should so come to the Communion Table, tonight, that even here Christ may be glorified in us. Ah, you may sit at the Lord's Table wearing a fine dress or a diamond ring and you may think that you are somebody of importance, but you are not! Ah, you may come to the Lord's Table and say, "Here is an experienced Christian man who knows a thing or two." You are not glorifying Christ that way—you are only a nobody! But if you come, tonight, saying, "Lord, I am hungry, You can feed me"—that is glorifying Him! If you come saying, "Lord, I have no merit and no worthiness. I come because You have died for me and I trust You"—you are glorifying Him! He glorifies Christ most who takes most *from* Him and who then gives most back *to* Him! Come, empty pitcher, come and be filled! And, when you are filled, pour all out at the dear feet of Him who filled you! Come, trembler, come and let Him touch you with His strength-

ening hands, and then go out and work—and use the strength which He has given you! I fear that I have not led you where I wanted to bring you—close to my Lord and to the Father—yet I have done my best. May the Lord forgive my feebleness and wandering, and yet bless you for His dear name's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 17.**

Verses 1, 2. *These words spoke Jesus and lifted up His eyes to Heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You: as You have given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.* Here the Doctrines of a General and a Particular redemption sweetly blend, “As You have given Him power over all flesh,” they are all under Christ’s mediatorial government by virtue of His matchless Sacrifice. But the object in view is specially the gift of everlasting life to the chosen people—“that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.”

3. *And this is life eternal, that they might know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent.* No man has life eternal, then, who is in ignorance of God and of His Son, Jesus Christ. But once we know God and Christ, we have sure evidence that we possess a life that can never die—“This is life eternal.”

4-6. *I have glorified You on the earth: I have finished the work which You gave Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify You Me with Your own Self, with the Glory which I had with You before the world was. I have manifested Your name unto the men which You gave Me out of the world: Yours they were, and You gave them to Me; and they have kept Your Word.* Is not that sweetly put on the part of our Divine Lord? These chosen men had been poor creatures at the very best—very forgetful and very erring—yet their Lord brings no charges against them but He says to His Father, “They have kept Your Word.”

7. *Now they have known that all things whatever You have given Me are of You.* “They have learned to link the Father and the Son. They know that though I am the channel of all blessing, yet You, O My Father, are the fountain from which it flows.”—

**“Jesus, we bless Your Father’s name!
Your God and ours are both the same!
What heavenly blessings from His Throne
Flow down to sinners through His Son!”**

8. *For I have given unto them the Words which You gave Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from You, and they have believed that You did send Me.* He is looking at them in contrast with the world which utterly rejected Him—in contrast with that world, the disciples had received and known Christ. Oh, what a blessed distinction does the Grace of God make between men! We were all blind by nature, but now that we see, it is because the sacred finger of Christ has

touched our eyes and opened them! Let Him have all the glory for it, yet let us note how well He speaks of His people. "For I have given unto them the Words which You gave Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from You, and they have believed that You did send Me."

9, 10. *I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which You have given Me; for they are Yours. And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine; and I am glorified in them.* Oh, the blessed union of interests between Christ and the Father! How surely do we belong to the Father if we, in very deed, belong to Christ! And what a holy unity is thus established!

11. *And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your own name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one, as We are.* Here is a prayer, then, for the preservation and the unity of the people of God—two very necessary petitions. Would God that they might be fulfilled in us, that we might be kept, and kept even to the end—and then kept in living union with all the people of God, and with the Father and with the Son!

12, 13. *While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name: those that You gave Me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the Scripture might be fulfilled. And now come I to You and these things I speak in the world, that they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves.* In this wondrous prayer, note the special design of the Words of Christ—not only that we might have joy, but that we might have Christ's joy—and not merely have a little of it, but might have it fulfilled in ourselves.

14-16. *I have given them Your Word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the Evil One. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.* Jesus puts twice over this most special and important fact, which we must never forget—"They are not of the world." Let us never live as if we were of the world, but where such a vivid distinction has been made, God grant that there may be an equal distinction in our lives! Now comes the prayer for sanctification.

17, 18. *Sanctify them through Your Truth: Your Word is Truth. As You have sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.* Christ was the great Missionary, the Messiah, the Sent One. We are the minor missionaries, sent out into the world to accomplish the Father's will and purpose.

19, 20. *And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the Truth. Neither pray I for these, alone, but for them, also, which shall believe on Me through their word.* That shows that Christ's prayer embraces us, also, who have been brought to believe on Him through the word which the Apostles declared. Christ, with prescient eyes, looked on every one of us who believe on Him and prayed for each one of us as much as He did for John, and Peter, and James.

21, 22. *That they all may be one; as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that You have sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them; that*

they may be one, even as We are One. Unity is the glory of the Church of Christ! It shall be the very crown of the Church of the living God and when she puts it on, then will the wondering world acknowledge and accept her Lord!

23. *I in them, and You in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.* Wonderful words! How shall we dive into their depths? To think that the Father should have loved us even as He loved His only-begotten Son! Oh, the heights and depths of this wondrous love!

24, 25. *Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My Glory, which You have given Me: for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world has not known You: but I have known You, and these have known that You have sent Me.* Do you notice the division that there is here. There are two parties—there is the world and there is the Church. What is it that divides them? Read these two clauses—“The world has not known You.” “These have known that You have sent Me.” What stands between? “But I have known You.” It is Christ, Himself, coming in between the two parties, like the cloudy-fiery pillar, black with darkness to the Egyptians, but bright with light to the Israelites! Oh, to have Christ between You and the world! It is the best form of separation—“I have known You, and these have known that You have sent Me.”

26. *And I have declared unto them Your name, and will declare it.* I read it to you as it stands. Our good translators were always afraid of using a word too often, for fear of falling into tautology. So, for what they considered the beauty of the language, they used the word, “declared,” instead of, “I made known.” But why should they have done so? Who were they that they should have needed to improve on Christ's Words? It should be the same Word right on—“The world has not known You: but I have known You, and these have known that You have sent Me. And I have made known unto them Your name, and will make it known.”

26. *That the love wherewith You have loved Me may be in them, and I in them.* Oh, that this love may be in us, for Christ's sake! Amen.

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**THE PASTOR'S RETURN.
THREE SPECIALLY-SELECTED SERMONS TO HIS
CHURCH, CONGREGATION, READERS AND FRIENDS,
CONSISTING OF
A RETROSPECT [No. 1882]
A PROSPECT
AND AN
EXHORTATION [No. 1884.]**

**PROSPECT—"HE WILL KEEP"
NO. 1883**

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

*"Now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I
come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your own name
those whom You have given Me that they may
be one, as We are. While I was with them in the world,
I kept them in Your name: those whom You gave Me
I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition;
that the Scripture might be fulfilled."
John 17:11, 12.*

WHAT a wonderful intercommunion and fellowship exists between the Father and the Son in the matter of redemption! It is the Father who gave the Son—it is the Son who gave Himself. It is the Father who gave us to the Son—it is the Son who has bought us with a price and has kept us by His hand. Here, in the text, the Father who gave, receives back from the Son, the Son praying to Him in these terms, "Holy Father, keep through Your own name those whom You have given Me." We cannot doubt the personality of the Father and of the Son, nor their essential unity. There are not three Gods, but one God. The Father and the Son, though two in one sense, are one in another. I delight to see the traces of the Trinity in every act of Grace. From the first transactions of Covenant love, even to the ingathering of the whole election of Grace and the introduction of the chosen into Glory, we hear the sound of that voice which of old said, "Let Us make man." The three Divine Persons work together in absolute union for the production of one grand result. "Glory be unto the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end! Amen."

Observe that our text is all about *keeping*. Three or four times over we have some tense or other of the word, "keep." "Holy Father, *keep* those whom You have given Me." "While I was with them in the world, I *kept* them." Greatly do we need keeping. You have been redeemed, but you must still be kept. You have been regenerated, but you must be kept. You are pure in heart and hands, but you must be kept. You are quickened

with the Divine life, you have aspirations after the holiest things, your love to Christ is intense—but you must be kept. You have had a deep experience and you know the temptations of the enemy—but still, you must be kept. The sunlight of Heaven rests upon your honored brow. You are near the gates of Glory, but you must be kept. The same hand that bought you must keep you—and the same Father who has begotten you, again, unto a lively hope, must keep you to His eternal Kingdom and Glory. All Glory be unto Him who is able to keep us from falling! Let all those unite in the song who are kept by the power of God! Here lies our topic and we will not wander far from it.

First, we will notice a choice pastorate which was enjoyed by some of God's people. Secondly, we shall observe that this choice pastorate, was, after all, but a temporary privilege. And, thirdly, we shall see that those who enjoyed it were brought, by-and-by, to the exact place where we must always be and, therefore, were made the objects of a blessed prayer, "Holy Father, keep through Your own name those whom You have given Me."

I. First, here is A CHOICE PASTORATE. Our little children sing—

***"I think when I read that sweet story of old,
When Jesus was here among men,
How He called little children like lambs to his fold.
I should like to have been with them!"***

And so forth. Might not you and I well wish that we had been numbered with the 12, or that we had been among the Marys? It was certainly a choice privilege to be one of the Apostles who were the intimates of Christ, the bodyguard of Jesus. These men saw Him in His privacy, understood His dark sayings and read His heart. That privilege cannot be ours. Let us think of them without envy and learn something from them.

You notice what the Savior did for the 12 who were round about Him—"While I was with them in the world, I kept them." *This care was continuous.* It looks as if He did this above everything else. He kept them. He was a guard to His people. He made this the chief employment of His life. While He went about doing good and reclaiming the wandering, He never diverted His care from His people. Loving them as His own, He loved them to the end. In this chapter you have "the ruling passion strong in death." He has kept them in life and now He says, "I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You." And the one thought of His heart is, "What is to become of *them*? While I was with them, I kept them. What will they do, now, that I am taken from them? They will have nobody to resolve their doubts, nobody to abate their discords, no one to answer their adversaries, no one to cheer them into holy confidence. What will the poor babes do when their Nurse has gone? What will the half-instructed scholars do when their Teacher shall be taken up from among them?" He closes His life on earth by commending them to the keeping of His heavenly Father!

Surely, Brothers and Sisters, this teaches us that *this care is always needed.* Sheep never outgrow the necessity for their being kept by the Shepherd. If the 11 always required keeping, I am sure that you and I do. We are not better than Thomas, or Peter, or John. We have among us many a Thomas who will not believe without a superfluity of evidence. We have many a Peter, rash and impetuous, and many a John who would call fire from Heaven upon the adversaries of the cause! We are full of flaws

and failures, are we not? We shall crumble to the dust if the Lord does not keep us! Is there one man among us that can live unless the Eternal Life shall continue to flow into him? I am sure there is not!

We are all so greatly dependent upon the continual keeping of our Lord, that I look with joy to a *care always personal*. I read with pleasure that the Lord, Himself, all the while that He was here, kept those whom the Father gave Him—those 11 priceless gems were always in His custody. I bless His name that they enjoyed a ministry so tenderly personal—"While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name." He lays stress upon His personal care—"I kept them." The Good Shepherd kept the sheep, not by proxy, but by His own hands. There is no nourishment for the child like that which comes from its own mother's breast—and a child of God only thrives as he lives upon Christ, Himself. Those of us who are under-shepherds exercise a very poverty-stricken ministry compared with that of our Lord, but we should at least give the best we have. We should be willing, night and day with tears, to the utmost of our strength and even beyond it, to help the feeble and cheer the faint, if by any means we may preserve the flock of God committed to our imperfect charge. Do you not wish that you had Christ for your Pastor? You may well wish it! But it cannot be, for He has ascended. Truly, it was a choice privilege to the 11 that Christ could say of them, "while I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name."

What must have been the effect of the personality of Christ upon those eleven? There are some men whose influence upon others has, for lack of a better word, been called, "magical." History tells us of warriors who have been courageous and skillful in the marshalling of battalions—and these have inspired their soldiers with boundless loyalty, grappling them to themselves with hooks of steel. Certain heroes have been absolutely supreme over their fellow men—a willing homage has been rendered to them. The influence of the Christ upon those who actually lived with Him must have been superlative. Think of it! There were but 11 of them, but He so molded them that the little handful of seed brought forth a harvest, the fruit of which did shake like Lebanon! They were nothing but peasants when they came under His hand, but when they left it, they were the fathers of a new age! They were the Patriarchs of 12 tribes of a new Israel! The Apostles, after they had been with Jesus, were men of a superior mold. Though they had little human learning, they were the best educated men on the earth! Each man of them was more than a prince, in having touched the skirts of Deity, in bearing upon his face the brightness of the eternal Godhead, in speaking with a word which, like the Word of God Himself, was utterly irresistible! They were men anointed above their fellows, men to the fullness of manhood, men beyond the utmost height to which the schools could have trained them. What a privilege to have had Jesus, Himself, for one's own private Tutor!

Our Lord's care was most successful. Of the 11, not one was lost. I should not have marveled at all, apart from what we know of our Lord's gracious power, if the whole 11 had gone back. They were very fickle, at first, and extremely ignorant. And, at the same time, they were strongly tempted. Influences which made some go back and walk no more with Jesus would, naturally, have had the same power over them if Jesus had not kept them. Yet of those whom the Father gave Him, not one of them

was lost! His marvelous pastorate was so successful that He could say, "Of those whom You have given Me I have lost none." Thomas, John, Peter, James—they are all kept. The training of the Master has qualified each one for his lofty office. Oh, that you and I may be helped by Divine Grace to keep with us all the souls God has given us, that we may, at last, say of all our Hearers, "Here am I and the children that You have given me!" Our Lord's was a wonderful pastorate, was it not?

But, nevertheless, it was attended with an awful sorrow, for He says, "None of them is lost, but the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled." Our Savior never meant us to understand that Judas was one of those whom the Father gave Him. He never made a mistake about that. Very early he said, "I have chosen you 12 and one of you is a devil." He had spoken distinctly about the character and doom of Judas. Some have asked, "How could Jesus have all knowledge and yet permit a man like Judas to be one of the twelve?" Brethren, He did it advisedly, with wisdom aforethought, for He knew that often, in the ages to come, people would say, "Can this Christianity be true which has such false-hearted traitors in its midst, which has such sellers of the Master even among its leaders?" He allowed that objection to come up at the very first and suffered a covetous traitor to be one of the twelve.

The Savior sometimes seemed to speak of Judas as if he were one of His, but then He was speaking popularly and according to the method of common conversation. He permits the Evangelist to call him, "one of the twelve," as if He would let us feel that men may go very far on the way to Heaven and have everything except the essential matter—and yet may perish. When Judas cast out devils and in Christ's name did many wonderful works, it would have been impossible for any but the Omniscient God to have seen any difference between him and any other of the twelve. In some respects Judas excelled others of the Apostles! He probably had not half the faults of Peter, nor half the doubts of Thomas. There were fine qualities within him, but they were all leavened by that supreme *covetousness* which mastered him and made him the son of perdition. He seemed very near to being all that he should be, yet the Master described him in this prayer, not as one that would be lost, but as one that was *already* lost. "None of them is lost but the son of perdition."

He calls him "the son of perdition" and you may be sure that He did not give him that name without great sorrow. The Watcher over the sons of men could not lose even Judas without deep regrets. He sighs, "He that eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me." Among the bitter herbs of His Passover, none was more like to wormwood and gall than that word, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, one of you shall betray Me." As there is inexpressible sweetness in the doctrine of the Final Perseverance of the Saints, so there is an unutterable horror in other doctrines which guard it, such as that which our Lord lays down in the words, "if the salt has lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is therefore good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men." Final Perseverance is a rose of Heaven's own garden, but it is set with thorns—and those thorns are such cases as those of Judas and of others that drew back unto perdition.

See, then, in this choice pastorate of our Master, the great need there is of keeping. Let us pray for Him to keep us to the end.

II. Secondly, and very briefly, let us speak of A TEMPORARY PRIVILEGE. The eleven were not to have Christ with them always. He was to ascend unto His Throne and then they were to fall back on another mode of living, common to all saints.

Now, why was Christ with them at all? It was because they were very weak. They needed fostering and nurturing. Look, Brothers and Sisters, you had great joys in your early days. You then enjoyed raptures and transports. It may be you have not had them lately, for you have traveled to Heaven at a steadier pace. My mother dandled me upon her knee when I was a babe, but she never thought of nursing me when I became a man. Certain spiritual joys are the privilege and the necessity of our religious babyhood, but we outgrow them. The Lord took the eleven when they were in their infancy and He was with them in the world and kept them. Why, then, did He go away? Why, for this reason, that they might grow to spiritual manhood! If He had always remained with them, working miracles and teaching them by His personal Presence, they would always have been mere children. It was expedient for them that He should go, for then the Holy Spirit came upon them and they rose into the full vigor of manhood! While Jesus was with them, they were little children, but in His absence they became men in Christ, quitting themselves valorously through faith in His name. Many joys of sense are allowed to trembling saints which are taken from them when they become strong in the Lord.

You also, dear Friends, have enjoyed a profitable pastorate and you are now about to lose it. You have not been under Christ's personal teaching, that could not be—but you have been under the teaching of some man whom God has very greatly blessed in the ministry of His Word. Alas, you are now going far from the much-loved means of Grace! I pray God that you may now grow *stronger*. Now that the plant is put out into the cold, may it have strength and vigor enough to bear the frost! I see my gardener hardening off young plants and it may be the Lord is about to do the same with you. A boat in the builder's yard has been gradually fashioned to perfection and beautified with abundant care. But it must be launched! It must be washed by the rough sea. It must know the wear and tear of storms. Israel must not always fatten in Goshen—the tribes must be led into the wilderness and must be conducted over stony places—for thus the Lord brings His chosen to their promised rest.

Please note that, choice as the privilege was of having Jesus, Himself, to be their Pastor, apart from the Grace of God this special gift had no power in it. The Lord Jesus Christ might preach, but He could not touch the heart of the son of perdition! He looked on Peter and Peter went out and wept bitterly, but the Lord might have looked till Dooms Day at Judas and there would have been no tears of penitence in Judas's eyes. Alas, Judas heard every sermon that Christ preached, saw all the mighty deeds that He did—even saw the bloody sweat upon His face in the Garden of Gethsemane—and kissed that face with traitorous lips! No ministry of itself can turn a heart of stone into flesh. "You must be born from above." Though the Son of God, Himself, is the Preacher, yet when the congregation goes out, 11 in whom there is the Grace of God are blessed—but the son of perdition remains just what he was—hardened even to the end.

Let this be a warning to such as are not profited under the Word when faithfully preached. Beware lest you perish under the Gospel and so per-

ish with a vengeance! If, however, a choice ministry is about to be removed from any of you, let this thought minister a measure of comfort to you, that, after all, the essential thing is not to be taken from you, for even in the absence of the best outward ministry, the Spirit of God can bless you! But without that Spirit of God, even the ministry of Christ, Himself, in the days of His flesh, could not have been effectual to you!

III. So now I come, in the last place, to show you where the Master left His disciples, where we all are, where we may well be content to be! We are all the objects of A BLESSED PRAYER. "Holy Father, keep through Your own name those whom You have given Me that they may be one, as We are." Beneath this Divine petition we *all* find shelter!

Notice how He begins—"Father." Oh, yes, it is the Father who keeps us! Children of God, who can be a better keeper for you than your Father? To whom can you cry with such certainty of being heard as to your Father in Heaven? Whose heart will so soon be moved? Whose ears will be so quick to hear? Whose feet will be so swift to save as your Father's? The Lord Jesus was tender to us when He selected that title of the great God and did not say, "Jehovah," or "Elohim, keep Your people," but, "Father, keep them."

And then He puts it, "*Holy Father*," but why that? Why, just because the keeping means, *keep us holy*, and who can make us holy but the Holy God and who can *keep us holy* but He who is, Himself, holy? Who will have such an intense interest in our growing holiness as One whose name is the *Holy Father*? Beloved, I love well this title—it commends itself to my faith and breeds assurance in my soul! If the blessed hand of Jesus has put me into the bosom of the Holy Father that I may be kept, why, the keeping is sure and certain! The Holy One will never suffer us to be polluted or defiled!

Carefully note that the prayer is still—"Keep them: keep them." What keeping do you and I require? I was thinking of the various forms of keeping that we, as a Church, might seek. We need keeping from discord. "Holy Father, keep them that they may be one." It is a very wonderful thing when a dozen people agree for a dozen weeks. We are such an odd lot of people—I did not mean you in particular, but I mean *all members* of Christian Churches—that it is really no wonder when we disagree. The wonder is that we have been so long and so heartily united! I praise and bless God for our years of spiritual harmony. Knowing that despite our imperfections, our tendencies to self-exaltation, the easiness of misunderstanding one another, the readiness with which we provoke and are provoked without cause, it is very amazing to me that we should have had no strifes or divisions. "Holy Father, keep us." Let us pray that prayer very often! We do not know how soon we may be all sixes and sevens. Let us pray God that we may not fall foul of one another through the entrance of some serpents of discord into our happy paradise.

But, Brothers and Sisters, to be kept in unity is not enough—we need keeping from error. The world swarms with false doctrines like Egypt with frogs in the day of her plague! You cannot put your head outside the door without having a flight of heresies buzzing around you. As some cities on the Continent have been full of cholera, so has this city been full of "modern thought" and I will not attempt to decide which is the worse of the two! But it is a great mercy to be kept from the silly love of novelties and

to be helped to adhere to the old faith, to cling to the old Cross. Happy is he who is determined to know nothing save Jesus Christ and Him crucified! "Holy Father, keep us." We have seen some go to the east and some to the west, some to the moon and some to the stars, some to perfection and some to licentiousness. Keep us, Holy Father! Keep us staunch in Your Truth even to the end!

But it would not be enough for us to be kept united and firm in the Truth of God—we need, also, to be kept from sin. Saints must be kept, or they will soon be sinners. How have I seen the brightest men tarnished with the foulest lusts! How have I mourned as I have known those who preached holiness with wondrous power to practice unholiness in their private lives! You and I are so ready to be upset by a sudden squall of temptation, especially such as carries much sail and little ballast, that we have need to pray each one, for himself, and then for all his Brothers and Sisters, "Holy Father, keep us: keep us from all evil."

Nor would that be enough, for there is such a thing as being kept perfectly moral, outwardly proper and decorous and yet our hearts may gradually subside into spiritual death. Have you never seen it? It was not putridity—it was not even ghastliness. The corpse was washed—washed with rosewater—and there were touches of paint on the cheeks and lips that almost veiled the work of death. Fitly draped and with a smile upon its countenance, it looked a welcome to you, yet it was a corpse! Could you have thought it? O Church of God, beware of accepting the semblance of life! In the battles between the Spaniards and the Moors, when the Cid, Rodrigo Diaz, had fallen in the fight, the Spaniards set his body upright upon his milk-white steed and went forth to battle with his corpse at their head! How often had his presence made victory secure to his comrades! Until the Moors discovered that the mighty arm was palsied by death, they fled before the sword of the great Cid! But when once they knew that the uplifted falchion was held in a dead hand, they recovered spirit.

And so you can make a dead church sit upright in the saddle, wearing all its harness of war, and you can make it bear aloft the great sword of the Lord and, for a time, its death may be unsuspected. But once let the world find out the dreadful secret and its hour of defeat has come! A dead church, like a dead lion, is sport for children! A church devoid of spiritual life is the laughing stock of devils. God keep us that we never fall into the condition of spiritual decay! Pray from the bottom of your hearts, my Brothers and Sisters, in unison with the sweet prayer of our living, loving Lord, "Holy Father, keep through Your own name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one, as We are."

Observe, further, that our Lord Jesus Christ asks that we may be kept *through God's own name*. It requires the very name of God to keep a Christian!

By the word, "name," is sometimes meant the whole Character of God, the whole royal power and prerogative of God. Frequently, *power* is meant by the word, "name." There is no keeping one of us, much less the whole ship's company, except the sacred name of God shall exert all its power to keep off our foe. The Savior concludes with this plea, "Holy Father, keep through Your own name those whom You have given Me." I do not know whether it will strike you, but it strikes me as very touching. He seems to say, "Father, You did give these to Me. They are very precious to Me. They

are My jewels. Now I am going away and, therefore, I must leave them. O My Father, keep for Me the sweet tokens of Your own love to Me! These are Your forget-me-nots and I have valued them, therefore I ask you, while I go up to yonder bloody tree and die and, when afterwards I come to You and enjoy My eternal rest, take care of these whom You have given Me."

It is like a husband who has obtained his bride, but now finds that he must go away from her. He gives her back to her father who originally gave her to him and says, "Take care of her for my sake. As you love me, take care of her." We are talking about you, you believers in Christ! Listen, therefore, with diligence. "The Father Himself loves you." The Father gave you to Jesus because He loved Jesus. He wanted Jesus to have that which would give Him most delight and so He gave *you* to Him! And now that Jesus cannot be with you by His bodily Presence, He gives you over to the great Father, from whose loving hands He first received you, and He says, "Holy Father, keep them." Do you think the Father will answer the Son's request? I am sure that He will. I feel safe in those Almighty hands in which Jesus has placed me—

***"I know that safe with God remains,
Protected by His power,
All that to Jesus appertains,
Till the decisive hour."***

Remember that double-handed safety of which Jesus speaks in John 10:28, 29—"They shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them to Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand."

Do you belong to Christ, dear Hearer? You are not alone in being owned by that royal Proprietor—many of us are the sheep of His flock and the children of His love. We are going to gather around our Lord's table. Will you go away, or will you come with us and say, "We belong to Him and we would share His banquet of love?" If you must go away this once, hasten to put yourself right, that you may obey your Lord in the future. End this forgetfulness of your dying Lord, I pray you! Give yourself to Jesus and that shall be the best evidence that the Father gave you to Jesus, for never did a heart give itself to Jesus except as the result of the eternal purpose of God and the work of the Spirit within. Beloved Hearer, yield yourself to the Well-Beloved, whose love shall henceforth be your joy, your safeguard, your perfection, your bliss! Yield yourself, now, without an hour's delay!

Let the Lord's people now come and keep the feast with joy and gladness, singing praises unto the name of the Great Keeper of Israel who does neither slumber nor sleep!

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CHRIST'S NEGATIVE AND POSITIVE PRAYER

NO. 2355

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, APRIL 8, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 5, 1888.**

***"I pray not that You should take them out of the world,
but that You should keep them from evil."
John 17:15.***

NOTICE, in the prayer of our Divine Lord, what honor He always puts upon God the Father. He ascribes to God everything—the taking the disciples out of the world, or the keeping them from the evil in the world. Let us never neglect to look for God's hand in all that happens to the saints and let us not fall into the error of those who deny the Great First Cause and are always dealing with appearances, forgetting the Mighty God who shapes our ends and rules our destinies. If we die, it is not by chance, but because God takes us out of the world. Believers fall asleep in Jesus, neither before nor after the predestined time. No disease or accident can cut short their lives and it would not be possible to prolong their existence beyond the time appointed by the Lord. I like to believe—whatever it may be to some of you, to me it is very sweet to believe that—

***"All must come, and last, and end,
As shall please my heavenly Friend.
Plagues and deaths around me fly,
Till He bids, I cannot die!
Not a single shaft can hit
Till the God of Love thinks fit."***

Our lives are entirely in the keeping of our loving Father. You can see that Truth of God in the text. Jesus speaks of God as taking the beloved ones out of the world and it is even so. This fact should make us cease to be anxious about when or how we shall die and it should, at the same time, reconcile us to the time and the manner of the going Home of any whom we love most dearly. They were not snatched away by the robber, Death—they were taken out of the world by our dear Father's gracious hand! Let us say concerning them what Job said of his loved ones, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

See, also, how our Lord Jesus honors the Father by ascribing to Him the keeping of the saints from evil, for He says, "I pray not that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from evil." Beloved, our escape from evil, at the first, was by the Father's Grace. Our persevering in righteousness until now has been worked in

us by the Father's hand, through the Divine Spirit and, this day, if we have not apostatized—if we have not denied the faith and proved traitors to Christ—we must ascribe it entirely to the Grace of God! As the Psalmist says, "It is He that has made us, and not we, ourselves," and it is He who keeps us, and not we, ourselves, for, again quoting the 100th Psalm, "We are His people, and the sheep of His pasture."

I want you, as far as you possibly can, to be constantly recognizing God's overruling hand—God, in our death, taking us out of the world, and God, in our life, keeping us from evil, and upholding us in our integrity. When you get thus near to God and realize that God is always present with you, you are in the right frame of mind for prayer. You are also in the state and condition of heart which will give you courage in time of danger—you are, indeed, ready for anything and for everything, whatever may come to you, when God is thus consciously overshadowing your spirit. This much, I think, the prayer of our Lord plainly suggests.

Observe, again, that God has us absolutely at His disposal. Let us always remember that great Truth. The prayer of Jesus recognizes His Father's Sovereignty, but, we, ourselves, must also recognize that we are entirely in God's hands. He can take us out of the world, or He can keep us in the world and preserve us from evil. We are glad to be at the disposal of our God! As His people, we would have no voice or choice in fixing our own position, but with the Psalmist we would say, "He shall choose our inheritance for us." Whether we stay, or whether we go, depends entirely upon the Lord's will and Christ, in His prayer, recognizes that it is so. He would not pray for a matter which was not in the hands of Him to whom He prayed. He felt that His people were absolutely at His Father's disposal and, therefore, He presented the prayer which is to be the subject of our meditation tonight.

Now, in this petition, there are two things. There is, first, *the negative prayer*—"I pray not that You should take them out of the world." And then, secondly, there is *the positive prayer*—"But that You should keep them from evil."

I. There is here, first, THE NEGATIVE PRAYER—"I pray not that you should take them out of the world."

At first sight, that seems almost unkind on our Savior's part. What could happen better than for those whom the world hated to be taken out of the world? Jesus, Himself, was going out of the world—what could He do that should have greater love in it than to pray that they might go with Him? I have often felt as Thomas did when he said, "Let us, also, go, that we may die with Him." Has Jesus gone? Why should we tarry here? Has Jesus entered Glory? Let us be with Him where He is, that we may behold His Glory. There is nothing left to detain us below since He has ascended to His Father's right hand—but there is *everything* to attract us upward since He is there who is our heart's Lord, our All in All! Have you not often felt inclined to pray for yourself that the Lord would take you out of the world? I mean, not merely in times of depression, when, like Elijah, *who never died*, you are ready to pray, "Now, O Lord, take away

my life,” but in times of exultation, when you have been near to the gates of Heaven in ecstatic joy and holy gladness—have you not wished to slip in? “Lord, it is good for us to be here: if You will, let us make here three tabernacles.” Have you not said so in your heart, if not with your voice? No, have you not wished, not to stay on the Mount of Transfiguration, but from that point to take your heavenward flight and land yourself in the New Jerusalem, to go no more out forever? I know that, sometimes, on a Sabbath, when we have been singing, to the tune Prospect—

**“On Jordan’s stormy banks I stand,
And cast a wishful eye
To Canaan’s fair and happy land,
Where my possessions lie,”**

I have felt that I could, from my heart, sing the last verse of the hymn—

**“Filled with delight, my raptured soul
Can here no longer stay.
Though Jordan’s waves around me roll,
Fearless I’d launch away.”**

Yet the Savior says, “I pray not that You should take them out of the world.” I am sure, therefore, that it is a better thing for us to stay here till our appointed time than it is for us to be taken out of the world. It may not be better in all respects, but there are some points in which it is an advantage for Believers to remain here. Our Savior loves us so much that He would be certain to ask the very best thing for us. Therefore, for us to be taken out of the world at once, would not be, all things considered, the best disposition of us that the Lord could make.

How is that? Well, first, if we, who are Christ’s people, were taken out of the world, then *the world, itself, could perish*. Do we contemplate, with any pleasure, such a catastrophe as that? “You are the light of the world.” Take all the lights away and the murky atmosphere, which is dark enough, even now, would become dense as Egyptian midnight—and life would be intolerable. “You are the salt of the earth.” Should the salt be taken away, putrefaction would revel without limit—corruption would then have nothing to contend with it and the world would reek in the nostrils of God, Himself, till He would be obliged to destroy it!

I look along the ages and I see mankind given up to debauchery and eaten up with worldliness, yet the sinners are permitted to live on year after year. But I also see a strange-looking ship that has been built on dry land and I watch the only family on the earth that fears God, going up into that strange-shaped vessel, and the door is shut by God, Himself! I hear it as it closes and the moment that door is shut, what happens? The world is doomed! God pulls up the sluices of the great deep that lies under and He throws open the floodgates of Heaven—the fountains gush up from below and the rains pour down from above till the whole world is drowned! This awful judgment did not begin till Noah, the one righteous man, was taken away from the rest of mankind and shut in the ark—*“The same day* were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of Heaven were opened. And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights. *In the same day* entered Noah, and Shem,

and Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife, and the three wives of His sons with them, into the ark."

I look again, and away yonder, I behold, in the vale of Siddim, the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. If I go within their gates, I hear and see that which disgusts my soul. Things that it were a shame even to speak of, are done in those cities! There is one good man who lives there, and only one. And I see him, early one morning, fleeing with his wife and daughters out of the city. The moment he has passed beyond the bounds of the condemned cities and escaped to little Zoar, what happens? Destruction is poured out of Heaven upon the guilty people—"The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar. *Then* the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of Heaven and He overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities and that which grew upon the ground."

Because we do not wish such awful destruction as that, either by water or by fire, to fall upon this guilty world, we ask God to permit the salt to remain in the earth, the light to still burn in it, the Noah to still linger, the Lot to still dwell here yet a little while. When the Lord shall begin rapidly to gather His saints Home, as He may do, by-and-by, and when the wail is heard, "The faithful fail from among the children of men," then shall come dark days, indeed, and the earth shall know the terrible vengeance of Almighty God!

This, then, is one reason why Christ does not pray that we should be taken out of the world—because it would be the ruin of guilty men if the saints were removed from the earth which is only preserved for their sake.

Does not the Lord also wish the righteous to stay in the world a while that *they may be the means of the salvation of others*? How came Jesus here, Himself? He came to seek and to save that which was lost and when He went away, He did not take His disciples out of the world because their ministry was to be blessed to many of their fellow creatures. In this very prayer to His Father, He said, "As You have sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." They who might be safely housed in Heaven stay here that they may be the means of saving others. Mother is still here, though her son has well-near broken her heart. She is left on the earth that she may yet win that boy for Christ. And our old gray-headed friend, whose infirmities are multiplying, is still among us though he would be far happier among the harps of angels—but he is detained here that his grandson, or his still unconverted daughter may hear from his lips, once more, a loving, living testimony for the Lord Jesus and may, thereby be turned to God.

I think that there are many of you who do not, yourselves, love the Lord, who, nevertheless, ought to be very grateful to Him for saying, "I pray not that You should take them out of the world." Oh, dear man, you do not want to lose that loving wife of yours! She has brought you here, tonight, after a good deal of coaxing and tender persuasion. You do not think of her God, or care about the Lord Jesus, but your wife is still liv-

ing to seek the salvation of your soul! I believe she will win you, yet, by God's Grace! There are many who might, long ago, have received their reward and would have been thrice happy to do so, but they have yet to preach the everlasting Gospel and yet to win more souls to Christ! It is more necessary for sinners that Paul should abide in the flesh a little longer, though he, himself, has a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better!

Beloved Christian Brothers and Sisters, if the Lord is keeping any of us here with the objective of using us in the salvation of others, let us take care that we answer the purpose of our continued existence on the earth—let us be up and doing! Let us be earnestly seeking the souls of our relatives! Let us be zealously endeavoring to bring others to Christ! I am sometimes saddened when I hear of households conducted by professedly Christian people—places where one would think that God's name would be upon every tongue—and yet servants may live for years in such families and their masters and mistresses never speak to them about their souls! And many men, employing hundreds of people, will give them their wages as if they had no souls to care about, for they take no interest in the eternal welfare of those who work for them in temporal things! Do not let it be so with you, dear Friends! Masters and mistresses, there are occasions in which you can go to your servants and those employed by you and, without being at all intrusive, can seek to interest them in the things of God! You can call at their homes, perhaps, and the offering of a prayer and speaking to them about the Gospel of Christ may reach them, and bring them to the Savior, where our sermons have failed to do so. I charge you, by Him who bought you by His blood, either go to Heaven and glorify Christ, there, or else, if you remain in the world, glorify Him here! But whether you live, or whether you die, see to this matter, that you answer the Divine purpose, which is that being saved, yourself, you may become the means of saving others.

There is a second reason, then, for our Lord wishing His disciples to stay here, that they may be the means of the salvation of others.

Next, I think the Lord lets His people stay in the world *that they may serve Him in the place where they sinned against Him*. If I had been converted just now, and the Lord were to open the gates of Heaven and say, "Come in," I think that I would step back and say, "Dear Master, may I stay here just a little while to undo some of the mischief that I did in my ungodly state?" I can fancy that someone here would pray, "Lord, there is my friend who used to go to the theater and the music-hall with me, and I taught him much that was mischievous. Will it please You to let me tarry here and tell him about Your great salvation?" I think that another would say, "Lord, I spent so many years in the service of Satan. Now, before I go Home to see Your face, let me have a few years in *Your* service! I would like to undo, by Your Grace, at least a portion of the evil that I have done before I stand in Your Presence amid the eternal splendors of Heaven." It seems to me that it is most gracious of the Lord to let us remain here to serve Him where we sinned against Him, and not to take us

Home as soon as we are converted. I think that we shall congratulate ourselves, even in Heaven, that we had some opportunity of contending for the faith, or of bearing reproach for Christ's sake, or of seeking to win souls for Him before we entered upon our everlasting rest.

Is not that a good reason why the Savior did not pray that His disciples might be taken out of the world?

And is not this another good reason why saints are left in the world? *The Lord keeps His people here that He may exhibit in them the power of Divine Grace.* Just as He permitted Job to be tempted by the devil, that all the world might see how God can enable a man, by patience, to triumph, so He keeps us here to let the devil and all men know what His Grace can do for His people and, also, to let angels and principalities and powers in the heavenly places behold what saints God can make out of guilty sinners! He takes those who had gone far away in sin and brings them near by the blood of Jesus! He fashions the rough, knotty timber that did not seem as if it could ever be shaped, and uses it in the building of His Temple. He makes wonders of Grace out of sinful men and women—such marvels of mercy that the angels will stand and gaze at them throughout eternity, as they say, “How could God make such perfect beings as these out of such sinful material?”

All this will be “to the praise of the Glory of His Grace, wherein He has made us accepted in the Beloved.” You see, we cannot exhibit patience in Heaven. So far as we now know anything about Heaven, it does not seem possible that there will be any need of patience there. We cannot manifest strength of faith in Heaven, for faith will be lost in *sight*. We can take our love into Glory—there are some flowers that will sweetly open in the land where they have no need of the sun, for Christ is better than the sun! There are certain flowers of less sweet perfume and those can only be developed in the earth and the Lord, therefore, bids us tarry here a while, that He may show what Grace can do in sustaining us in suffering, upholding us under trials and protecting us against temptation. O soldiers of the Cross, do You want crowns without having contended for them?—

**“Must You be carried to the skies
On flowery beds of ease,
While others fought to win the prize
And sailed through bloody seas?”**

Ask no such thing! Be satisfied to take your share in the conflict, or else I do not see how you can so sweetly relish the triumph which God will give to His people in due time.

Thus, the Lord exhibits the power of His Grace in us and that is another reason why we have to tarry here a while.

Next, I shall have to say many things very briefly where I could have wished to have had time for enlargement. Do you not think that we are kept here *to prepare us for Heaven?* Are we not as yet like children who need education for that truer, higher life? When a boy first goes to school, you do not put into his hands the higher classics. He must plod through his grammar. He must learn many elementary lessons and then

he must work hard on dry and dreary roots. And afterwards you will give him some classic poet that he may read intelligently. So must you and I, here below, go plodding throughout primers. We must work hard at our grammars. We must still have a slate and pencil and when we have become proficient in all, we have to learn, here, so that we shall the better enjoy the holy rest and perfect service which make up the Heaven of the blessed.

Let me give you an illustration of what I mean. A boy is sent to school and his parents pinch themselves to pay for him to have a good education. It is not every boy who will say this to himself, but if he does, he is a first-rate lad—"My poor father and mother are doing all they can to give me a first-class education here. They want to make something of me and I am going to learn with all my heart, so that I may be worthy of all that my parents design for me, and not waste one single shilling of the money they are spending upon me." Such a boy is diligent at his books. He labors where others loiter and treasures up in his mind everything that he learns while others forget it. Now the Lord Jesus Christ is thus putting some of us to school, training us for high employment hereafter! He means to make something of us, by-and-by, and our desire, now, is to be prepared, as far as possible, for what Christ intends for us, that we may be the more to His praise and glory—and our own completeness forever and ever.

I have often been puzzled by those words of the Lord Jesus, "I go to prepare a place for you." What there was about Heaven that was not ready, I do not know, except it was that Jesus, Himself, was not there. But I can easily understand this truth, that *we are not ready for Heaven* yet, for Heaven consists more in character than in place. We have to be more completely sanctified, more truly developed in all good things than we are at present. We are not yet fit for Glory, so Jesus does not pray that we should be taken out of the world, but we are to wait, here, a little longer till His Grace has more fully fitted us for Glory.

Does not the Lord, also, by keeping us here, mean us *to see more of the wisdom, the power, the Grace, and the Truth of God?* Within this last month—a month of remarkable pain and travail for me—I have had certain experiences which I shall never forget! But I would pass through seas ten times as deep and boisterous, merely for the sake of having those experiences repeated! There are some of them which I could not tell, here. There are facts connected with them that would be discreditable to some who had to do with them, though greatly honorable to other. But as to my God, they have shown me His faithfulness, His power, His tenderness, His wisdom—and I believe that, had I been in Heaven, I would not have seen as much of some of the attributes of God as I have seen here below! If you had been an angel, forever praising God in Glory, could you tell how faithful He is to a tried saint? Could you say, if you had not experienced it here on earth, how surely He comforts His people in their deepest sorrows? There are some pearls in these troubled waters that the sea of glass, itself, can never contain! There are some

bright eternal lessons that we would never have known if it had not been for our earthly trials, even if we might have had an archangel for a schoolmaster! Therefore we must stay here, a while, and suffer affliction, temptation, depression of spirit, slander and abuse that we may learn, thereby, the deeper Truths of God's Revelation.

I shall have to abandon the second part of my subject, I see, for my time has already nearly gone. I must, however, make just one more remark upon our first head.

I think that our Lord Jesus does not pray that we may be called out of the world because *He knows that we shall be taken to Heaven in due time*. He scarcely thinks of that as a matter of prayer—it is so entirely in the Father's hands that He leaves it there. I would not encourage anybody here to pray that he might die and, on the other hand, I do not know that I would incite anybody here to pray very earnestly that he might *live*. Hezekiah prayed that his life might be lengthened and his prayer was granted. Manasseh would not have been born if Hezekiah had not lived those extra 15 years, but it would have been a good thing if Manasseh had never been born! Those sins and iniquities with which he made Judah to sin with his idols, though they were forgiven, yet filled up the cup of the nation's perversion from God and fixed the doom of that apostate people! I do not know if the lifting of our finger could make us live for another 20 years, whether we had not better hesitate to lift that finger! At any rate, I feel quite clear about the other side of the question—we have no business to pray that we may die.

As I have already reminded you, the man who prayed that he might die, never died at all! How foolish he was to pray that he might die, when God had intended that he should go to Heaven by a whirlwind, with a chariot and horses of fire! We shall all die in good time, unless the Lord shall come in the splendor of His Second Advent. If You and I had the choice of the time of our death, there would be just a tinge of the element of suicide about it and that is the very worst form of murder. This is clearly our duty, to leave ourselves wholly and unreservedly in the hands of Him to whom belong the issues of life—it is certainly our best course.

This, then, is our Lord's negative prayer—"I pray not that You should take them out of the world."

II. Secondly, if time had permitted, I was also to have spoken to you about THE POSITIVE PRAYER. I will only hint at this.

What did Jesus pray for His disciples? That God would keep them from evil. This is the right prayer for you to offer for yourself. Do not pray to get out of the battle—ask God that you may never be a coward, but that you may bravely play the man in the day of danger. Do not seek to be screened from affliction, but plead that you may never be driven to sin *by* your affliction. You need not even pray that you may not have prosperity, but you may entreat the Lord that prosperity may not make you proud, or worldly. Let your condition be as God wills it, but let your great anxiety be that you may be kept from all sin in every condition.

“I pray not that you should take them out of the world, but that you should keep them from evil.” We need to be kept from the evil of *apostasy*, the evil of *worldliness*, from the evil of *unholiness*, from the evil of getting to be as men of the world are—that is the main point. I do not think that it matters much what the condition of a man is so long as his heart is above his condition. I remember that St. Bernard, as he is usually called—Bernard, of Clairvaux—one of the holiest and humblest of men, was, one day, riding on a mule to a certain monastery. One who saw him said, “I think Bernard is getting proud because he is riding on a mule, and sitting upon a cloth which has a fringe of gold lace on it.” Now Bernard was a man who cared nothing for that sort of thing and when the other charged him with pride, he said, “Perhaps it may be so, but I never noticed that I had any cloth at all.” Someone else had put that fine cloth upon the mule without his knowing anything about it. He really thought that he was riding on the animal’s bare back, for his mind was taken up with something far more important.

If you are rich and you have a cloth with a gold fringe on it, do not be conscious of its existence—let your soul rise above it! If you are poor and you have no saddle at all, do not notice your lack, but let your soul soar above such matters. Pray not that you may be taken out of this or that, be it poverty or be it wealth, be it sickness or be it health—but pray that you may be kept from the evil of it, for there *is* an evil in every case! If you are making money, we ought to have a special Prayer Meeting for you, to pray that you may be kept from evil. I said to a Brother who was going to a banquet, the other day, “Well, we will pray for you, dear Friend, for you are going into a place of peril.” I do not think there was any great risk to such a man in going—perhaps some of those who stayed at home and complained of him were in more danger! The great point is not where you *are*, not what you are as to circumstances, but that you may be kept by almighty power from the evil which might come out of any circumstances unless you were Divinely preserved from evil! Oh, that the Lord Jesus may say this concerning us, tonight—“I pray not that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from evil!” If so, we can leave everything else in His dear hands.

But, Brothers and Sisters, do not let us be anxious to get to Heaven just yet. Let us seek to fight our way there in valiant fashion. Do not let us be so earnest about the end as about the way—laying hold on Christ and lifting up His dear Cross as our banner! Oh, that all of you would do this and follow the Lamb wherever He goes! We will just bend our thoughts to this one point and not think so much of going to Heaven as of avoiding sin! Lord, keep me out of evil! Then let me live or let me die, hold me up or press me down, let me dance with joy of heart, or let me lie and pine in an agony of pain with anguish racking every bone in my body, it shall be all the same to me—so long as nothing of the evil of surrounding circumstances enters into me—do with me as you will, O my God!

God bless you, dear Friends, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 17.**

Verse 1. *These words spoke Jesus, lifted up His eyes to Heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come.* The hour to which He had so long looked forward to. The hour which He had anticipated with ardent desire—"The hour is come." On the very night that Jesus prayed this prayer, Luke's record tells us, "When the hour was come, He sat down, and the twelve Apostles with Him. And He said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer." So He began His great intercessory prayer, "Father, the hour is come"—

1, 2. *Glorify Your Son that Your Son also may glorify You: as You have given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.* In these words we have both the general and the special aspects of redemption. Christ has received power over all flesh, but with this peculiar design, that He should give eternal life to as many as His Father has given Him. Who are they who have been given to Him by His Father? All who come to Him by faith, even as He said, "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me." To all of these Jesus gives eternal life.

3. *And this is life eternal, that they might know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent.* Do you know God? Do you know Jesus Christ? Are you on speaking terms, on loving terms with them? Are They your Friends? Then you have eternal life, for, "this is life eternal, that they might know You the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent."

4-6. *I have glorified You on the earth: I have finished the work which You gave Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify You Me with Your own Self with the glory which I had with You before the world was. I have manifested Your name unto the men which You gave Me out of the world: Yours they were, and You gave them to Me; and they have kept Your Word.* What a sweet thing for the Lord Jesus to say of that poor, much-erring company of disciples, "They have kept Your Word"! "They have not been all they might have been, nor all they ought to have been, but, O My Father, they have kept Your Word!" I trust that we may be found faithful to the Truths of God that the Holy Spirit has taught us, and obedient to its precepts, that our Lord may be able to say to His Father concerning us, also, "They have kept Your Word."

7, 8. *Now they have known that all things to whatever You have given Me are of You. For I have given unto them the Words which You gave Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from You, and they have believed that You did send Me.* See how the Lord Jesus, Himself, takes all His teaching from the Father. You never hear from Him any boast about being the originator of profound thoughts. No, He just repeated to His disciples the Words He had received from the Father—"I have given unto them the Words which You gave Me." If Jesus

acted thus, how much more must the messengers of God receive the Word from the Lord's mouth and speak it as they receive it!

9, 10. *I pray for them: I pray not for the world but for them which You have given Me, for they are Yours. And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine: and I am glorified in them.* Is not this a wonderful prayer? If anybody possessing the greatest possible inventive faculty were asked to produce a prayer which could be fitly prayed by a Person who was both God and Man, it would be an impossible task! This chapter has about it all the air of truthfulness. It ought to be sufficient to convince any man that Christ was God and Man. There is such a wonderful mixing of the two Natures without any confusion of ideas, so manifestly does He plead as Man, and yet so clearly does He also pray as none but the Son of God could pray, that He must be the God-Man, the one Mediator between God and man!

11, 12. *And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your own name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one, as We are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name: those that You gave Me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.* It was known and foretold that Judas would be lost. Therefore, the Savior, the great Keeper of the sheep, is not to be held responsible for the loss of, "the son of perdition," who was never committed to His charge.

13-17. *And now come I to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them Your Word and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through Your Truth: Your Word is Truth.* Our Divine Lord seems to think nothing about His own sufferings! All His thoughts are occupied with that which concerns His people. All His prayers are for *them*, that they may be made holy, and that so God may be glorified in them.

18-19. *As You have sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself.* Or, "I set myself apart."

19, 20. *That they, also, might be sanctified through the Truth. Neither pray I for these, alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word.* They were only a handful of disciples, but you cannot tell what a multitude will believe on Christ through their word! There were but 12 Apostles yet John beheld a hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel and, after that, he beheld a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, standing before the Throne of God, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and with palms in their hands! The Savior doubtless linked His little band of disciples with the ancient promise, "There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the moun-

tains, the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon.” What great events from little causes, spring! Whenever You are doing good, remember not only those who are immediately saved, but the others who will be blessed through them, even as our Savior said, “Neither pray I for these, alone, but for them, also, which shall believe on Me through their word.” We who have believed on Jesus, through the Word preached or written by the Apostles, are also included in this prayer of their Lord and ours. Notice what our Savior asked of His Father for them and for us—

21. *That they all may be one; as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they, also, may be one in Us: that the world may believe that You have sent Me.* And when Christians, being one in Christ, and one in the Truth of God, shall become more manifestly one in heart, and life, and faith—what glad days we may hope to see!

22, 23. *And the glory which You gave Me I have given them: that they may be one, even as We are one: I in them, and them in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them, as You have loved Me.* This is a wonderful expression! Where will you find anything like it? It is, indeed, marvelous that God should have loved His people even as He loved Christ, His Son, yet that is what the Lord Jesus here says—“You have sent Me, and have loved them, as You have loved Me.”

24-26. *Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My Glory, which You have given Me: for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world has not known You: but I have known You, and these have known that You have sent Me. And I have declared unto them Your name—*

“Your Character, Your work”

26. *And will declare it: that the love wherewith You have loved Me may be in them, and I in them.* This prayer is for You and for Me, as much as for the 12 Apostles. May the Lord fulfill it in all of us as well as in them, for His dear name’s sake! Amen.

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THE PRESERVATION OF CHRISTIANS IN THE WORLD NO. 2703

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 2D, 1900.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON A THURSDAY EVENING, IN THE YEAR 1855.

***“I pray not that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil.”
John 17:15.***

THE text, as we observed on a former occasion, [Sermon #47, Volume 1—*CHRIST'S PRAYER FOR HIS PEOPLE*—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>] contains two prayers—a negative prayer and a positive prayer. First, there is *the negative prayer*—“I pray not that You should take them out of the world.” There are wise ends to be observed by their remaining here. It will ultimately increase their happiness in Heaven. It will give glory to God. It shall be the means of the conversion of others—therefore, “I pray not that you should take them out of the world,” but I do pray—and here comes *the positive prayer*—“that, while they are in it, you should keep them from the evil.”

I. Let us first, then, CONSIDER THE EVIL FROM WHICH CHRIST PRAYS THAT HIS PEOPLE MAY BE KEPT.

We have no hesitation in declaring that the only evil here intended is the evil of sin. It may be true that Jesus Christ pleads with His Father to preserve us from some of the direful afflictions which might be too much for our mortal frame to endure. It may be that, sometimes, the blows and attacks of the enemy are warded off by the arm of the intercession of Jesus. It may be that the great aegis of Almighty God is often held over our heads in matters of Providence to keep us from evil when we walk, and to guard us lest we dash our feet against a stone. We feel persuaded, however, that neither of these things is here intended, but that, “the evil,” so continually spoken of in Scripture, the evil pre-eminently here meant, is sin and nothing else. “I pray that you should keep them from the evil.”

Afflictions are often beneficial, therefore Christ does not plead that we should be kept entirely from this kind of evil. Trial brings us to His feet and gives new life to prayer, therefore Christ has not asked that this bittersweet might not be given to us. Death itself, which seems an evil, is a good thing for Believers, so Christ does not ask that we may not die. The petition He puts up here for His people is, “I pray that You should keep them from the evil”—the special evil, the particular, the deadly evil of sin.

Let us here remark that *sin is an unqualified evil*. It is the evil without the mitigation of any good in it. In sin there can be no good—it is evil, only evil and that continually. The lowest form of sin is “the evil.” The highest is “the evil” more fully developed. Sin in an angel was “the evil,” for it turned him into a devil. Sin in Eden was “the evil,” for it plucked up the fair trees by the roots and blasted all their fruits—and sent Adam out to till the ground from where he was taken. Sin is always an evil—it brings no profit to anyone. It shall not profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul, and in especially the Christian it is evil, nothing but evil. Sin can never benefit him, it is an evil, only an evil, a powerful evil and a dreadful evil—it is unmitigated evil—it is “the evil.”

It is true, out of evil God brings good. Sometimes the very sins of God’s people are overruled so as to preserve them from some greater sin, but that does not destroy “the evil.” If God sends out bears from the woods to execute his commission, and they slay the mocking children, they are still bears. And if sin is sometimes made to be the means of honoring God, yet sin is sin, notwithstanding any purpose that God may accomplish by it. And no false preaching can ever make us believe any doctrine which would take away the deadly character which by right belongs to sin. It is always hurtful and dangerous.

The Christian who trusts that, by any one sin, he may keep himself out of difficulty, or get himself out of difficulty, makes a terrible mistake. This cannot bring you good. “But,” you say, “I am in real difficulties. My creditors are pressing me, what shall I do? If I could draw that accommodation bill, or forge that note, there might be some good in it.” There cannot be any good in it! Sin is evil! It is “the evil.” It is “the evil” without a single particle of goodness. It is “the evil” without any mitigation whatever. “Oh,” says another, “if I were to do such-and-such a thing—it is but a little evil—I should then prosper in business! And then I could dedicate myself to God and serve Him better! And so, out of the evil, I could bring a good. The end would justify the means.” No! If the means are bad, they are bad. If the means are evil, they are evil. Sin is sin and nothing but sin—and however there may, sometimes, appear to be temporary advantages in it—it is still evil, and only evil. What though the noxious draught may sometimes stimulate the man and seem to make him mightier, it really weakens him—and it will ultimately destroy him. A man may fancy sin to be good for a time. It may patch him up in respectability and make him stand a little more favorably in the eyes of worldlings, but the house repaired with such rotten material as that shall fall, notwithstanding all that is done to prop it up! All sin is unmitigated evil, and the only name we will give to it is, “evil.” Let the monster plead as it may and ask us to call it good, we charge it with having slain our Lord—and we condemn it as an evil to be hated and avoided. A serpent may have beauteous blue hues upon his scales, but he is a deadly thing and is to be crushed to the earth.

Next, we say that sin is “the evil” because it is *an unparalleled evil*. You can find nothing in the world so evil as sin. Nothing has so desolated this fair earth of ours as sin has. Tell me that war has slain its tens and

hundreds of thousands, that earthquakes have shaken down vast cities, that pestilence has devoured millions—describe to me the concussion of the elements, speak to me of the wild uproar of Nature abroad, and remind me of how it smites down man, and destroys his handiwork—but when you have written out the black catalog of all the terrible things that have happened to man, I will still tell you that sin stands up as the monster evil, the giant topping them all, head and shoulders above them, the most unqualified and unparalleled evil in the world!

You ask me whether sin has done much evil, I answer you, “Yes.” Look at Eden’s garden blasted, a whole world drowned with water, even the tops of the mountains covered! Watch the earth open and Korah, Dathan, and Abiram go down into the Pit. Watch fire rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah and see the cities of the plain, with all their inhabitants, destroyed. But sin has done more than that—it has dug a Hell somewhere, we know not where—not in the caverns of the earth. That were a direful thought, that this home of the righteous for a season should become the dwelling of the damned. If there is anything worse than that, sin is guilty of it, for it slaughtered Emmanuel, it slew the Lord of Life and Glory! Sin betrayed Him, scourged Him, put a crown of thorns upon His head, spit in His face, crucified Him, nailed His hands and His feet to the accursed tree! Sin sat by and watched Him till He died. And that moment—blessed be His name!—the sins of all His people were finished. Sin is unparalleled. No evil can compare with it. Find what evil you please, sin stands out first and foremost as “the evil.”

Sin also, *in some sense, is an evil that has no remedy*. You may, perhaps, be somewhat startled by that thought, especially when you have so continually heard me say that the death of Christ takes away from a Christian the very guilt of his sin, so that he is not guilty before God, but stands accepted in Christ, with his Savior’s righteousness on, so that he can plead that before God and even claim the merits imputed to him through Jesus. Still, what I have said is true—that for sin there still remains no remedy, even to the Christian, when he has committed it. There *is the remedy of forgiveness*, so far as he is concerned, but there is no remedy for the sin itself. Where, for instance, is the remedy for a sinful word that I have spoken? Can my tears bring it back and stop it from doing an injury to my fellow creatures? Even though Christ has forgiven me, that will not end the wrong I may have done to others. When I drop a single stone of sin into the ocean of this universe, it will continue to make circle after circle, always expanding. I may, through my whole life, labor with more than seraphic zeal, and with a Christ-like heart to undo the evil I have done—but if I might work throughout eternity I could never untie those knots that I have tied, or dash down those mountains that I have piled, or dry up the rivers I have dug.

True, the sin is all forgiven. It will never be laid to my charge, but, I think, though Christ has forgiven me, I shall never forgive myself for some things in which I may have disgraced His name and dishonored His blessed Person. When some of you old blasphemers recollect that some in Hell were damned by your means, you may thank God that you are

saved, but you cannot undo that ruin to immortal souls. Sin is the evil. Well might Jesus pray for His people, "Father, keep them from the evil," for an evil it is, which, though it has a remedy as to itself, has no remedy as to its consequences upon others. God grant that any evils which we may have worked, may be as much remedied as it is possible by the future holiness of our lives!

Once more, *sin is a most pestilent evil because it brings every other evil with it.* I think the worst evil sin has ever done to me is this—it has sometimes robbed me of the Presence of my blessed Master. There have been seasons when the Spirit has been withdrawn from me. There have been times when I have sought my Beloved, but have not found Him—when I have ardently desired His Presence, but could not find it, and my only song was—

***"What peaceful hours I once enjoyed,
How sweet their memory still!
But now I find an aching void
The world can never fill."***

Sin was that veil that came between me and my Lord. Dear old Joseph Irons used to say, "Christ often hides His face behind the clouds of dust His own children kick up." So we make dust by our sins and Christ hides behind it. We build a wall by our transgressions and our Beloved hides behind that wall. Ah, Sin, you are, indeed, an evil, for you have robbed me of His sweet society, and taken away His blessed company! You have been sitting on the throne of my heart and He will not tolerate such an insult—He will not stay where sin is. You have entered into my soul and Jesus has said, "I will not tarry where there is sin. My Presence shall drive out sin, or sin shall drive out My Presence." "O Sin, how much misery I experience through you!" the Christian can say. Ah, Sin, how many poor and fettered Believers have had their fetters first forged by you? Sin, you are the anvil on which our doubts are welded. Sin, you are the fire in which our spirits are often molten down to grief. We could do all things were it not for you. O Sin—you clip the wings of faith, you dampen the flame of love, you destroy the energy of zeal—you are "the evil." My Master calls you so, and such you are. You need not to be re-named—that name once given you shall bear forever—and throughout eternity you shall be pointed at, in the pillory of scorn, by all the saints, as, "the evil." Well might Christ ask His Father that while He did not wish His children to be taken out of the world, He did wish that they might be kept from the evil!

I charge you, you young converts who are about to put on the Lord Jesus Christ, remember that sin is "the evil." Through all your future lives you must remember that this is "the evil" you are to shun. Fear not affliction, fear not persecution—rather, rejoice, and be exceedingly glad if that should be your lot, for great is your reward in Heaven! But, I charge you, fear sin! I commend you to the God of all Grace who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the Presence of His Glory. But yet I beg you always to recollect that sin, itself, is "the evil" to you. It will always be so to you as long as you live and, though forgiven, it is still pardoned *sin*. Shun it in the least degree! Do not give way to lit-

tle sins and you will not give way to big ones. Remember the proverb, "Take care of the pence, and the pounds will take care of themselves." Beware of little sins and you will not commit great ones. I charge you, keep your hearts in the love of God and may God, Himself, preserve you, according to our Savior's prayer, "that You should keep them from the evil."

II. We can make only a very few remarks upon the second point, which is THE DANGER TO WHICH CHRIST'S PEOPLE ARE EXPOSED. Is there any danger of Christian men running into sin? After they have believed in Jesus and after they have been pardoned, will they commit sin again? After they have been adopted into God's family, will they sin? Will they, *can* they sin after all that! O Beloved! I thought once, when my Lord first pardoned me, that I could never sin against Him anymore. When black from head to foot, He spoke the cleansing word and made me white—when He took off my rags and clothed me in royal garments, and kissed me with the kisses of His love, and showed me His deep, affectionate heart, I thought, "O blessed Jesus! Can I ever again sin against You? Can it be that I, a pardoned rebel, whom You have forgiven so much, could do such a thing?" "No, precious Jesus," the young, convert thinks, "I can come and wash Your feet with my tears and wipe them with the hairs of my head, but I cannot sin, I will not sin." Ah, how soon is that beautiful vision taken away! How soon the theory is spoiled by experience!

Beloved, do you not find that you are in danger of sinning right now? Those of us who are young—what danger of sinning we are in! While our passions are strong and our lusts furious, we have need to be kept of God, or we shall sin against Him. And you middle-aged gentlemen, to you, also, I have a word or two to say. You always pray so particularly for the young and the young people are very much obliged to you—and they always intend to pray especially for you, because *you* are in the most dangerous position! I remind you of what I have told you before, that there is in Scripture no instance of a young man falling into sin, but there is more than one such instance of a middle-aged man!

You grandparents with snowy heads, whose hairs are whitened with age—know you not that you still have need of Divine keeping or you will fall? O you veterans in the army of the Lord, do you not acknowledge that if His Grace were withdrawn from you, you have enough tinder in your hearts to catch fire, for your souls are not yet perfectly purified? When I ask my old Brothers and Sisters whether sin is still present with them, each one of them always says, "Well, I thought I had a bad heart, once, but I *know* I have one now. I thought I was vile, once, but I know I am now. I grow viler and viler as the years roll on and I see myself to be more and more so every day." Is it not so with you? Ah, is it not just so with you perpetually? And will you not confess, till your last dying moment, that you will be kept if God keeps you, but that if He were to leave you, you would be lost? I was pleased to hear some of the good answers the young people gave me when I asked them, "Do you think you will be kept faithful to Christ to the end?" "Yes, by God's Grace," they said. "But

suppose God should leave you?" I next asked, and how exceedingly proper the answer was! "God will not leave me, so I cannot tell anything about that." That was a sweet way of answering the question. He has promised that He will not leave us, nor forsake us, so, Christian, while we warn you of the danger if God should leave you, we comfort you by telling you that He will not leave you!

Mark the terrible threats that those poor Arminians have been speaking of so much. Those who know nothing of the Doctrines of Grace make out that sinners fall and come in again, and fall again, and come in again—and a more unscriptural doctrine cannot be propounded, for God solemnly declares that if it were possible for a man, once regenerated and sanctified, to apostatize, he would be lost beyond all remedy and there would remain no hope for him—"but a certain fearful looking for judgment and fiery indignation." I charge you to remember that if it were possible for you thus to fall, there is the precipice over which you must drop. There is no ransom for you in such a case as that! If true conversion fails, God will never try twice! If once He puts His hand on you, and fails, He has done with you. But it is not possible, glory be to His name! He has not yet failed and He never will! Still, we warn you, and Scripture tells us to do so, to remember that we shall be kept only through faith unto salvation and that our Lord Jesus Christ said, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them to Me, is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand."

III. This brings us to speak, thirdly, concerning THE KEEPER OF CHRIST'S PEOPLE. "I pray that You should keep them from the evil."

We often get to keeping ourselves, Beloved, and a bad job we make of it, when we do that. If a Christian tries to keep his own heart without asking the help of God, he will be just as good a keeper as those guards whom Herod set to watch the Apostle Peter, and who, when they opened the prison doors in the morning, found that the prisoner had escaped. You may stand and watch your heart without God, but you will find that it has escaped and gone after sin, notwithstanding. The Christian must not trust to his guarding himself because he will sometimes be asleep, and then the enemy will catch him unawares. People are often ready, as the saying is, to put a lock on the stable door when the horse is gone. And Christians are sometimes very careful after they have sinned. Ah, but the thing is to lock the door while the horse is *in* the stable—and to take care *before* you sin. It is better to keep your house from being on fire than to get the fire put out ever so quickly.

We, all of us, have need to be kept by God. We think we can keep ourselves, but we cannot, for poor flesh and blood will fail. Though the spirit may be willing, the flesh is weak, and if it were possible for us to keep ourselves a little while, we should soon be overcome with spiritual slumber. And then, you know, the devil would come walking into the camp in the middle of the night, and if he caught us slumbering, and off our guard, he would, if allowed of God, hurry us away to perdition! If you

trust yourselves to God, He will preserve you. But if you try to keep yourselves, you will fail. How many different schemes people have for keeping themselves from sin! Why do they not go and ask God to keep them, instead of binding themselves hand and foot to this thing and the other, and so thinking to avoid sin? Let us give our hearts to God thoroughly, for He will preserve His own people. Oh, what a gracious promise the Lord has given concerning His vineyard—"I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." Is not that a precious expression, "I the Lord do keep it"? The Lord seems to speak in His own defense, "They say I do not keep it, but I do. They say that I let My people fall away, but I do not. Look at My vineyard, 'I the Lord do keep it.' Whatever they may say, 'I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.'" This is the only ground of our confidence—that God keeps the feet of His saints and none that trust in Him shall be desolate.

We must now conclude, praying on behalf of the Lord's people that God would keep them. Remember, Believer, that *while it says God will keep you, He does it by means*. You must look after each other. I like to admonish you to look after your Brothers and Sisters. Why, there are some of you sitting with only a rail between you, and yet you do not know your next door neighbors! Some of you, I know, sometimes talk too much, but I would rather you talk a little too much than not talk at all. Oh, how little like Christians some of you are—sitting down, side by side, and yet not knowing one another! The Church is meant to be a place where we shall be like children at home. Be sure to look after these young friends who are coming into the Church—try and take care of them. We need a few fathers who will lead them in the right way. Poor Souls, you cannot expect them to know much. Some of them, indeed, may have been long in the service of God—others have just commenced to run the Christian race—you must look after the young ones, and then the prayer of Christ will be fulfilled in their case, "I pray that You should keep them from the evil."

Finally, *remember that the only Keeper of the saints is God*, and put your souls day by day into His hands. I beseech you, by the love of Christ, forget not His holy prayer of which I have been speaking to you! Often meditate upon the Grace that put you into the Savior's custody. Oh, forget not that you have been His from all eternity, and that it ill becomes you to sin! Do not forget that you are elect in Christ and it would be a disgrace to you to transgress. Recollect that you are one of the aristocracy of the universe—you must not mix with vile worldlings! Remember that the blood royal of Heaven runs in your veins—therefore do not disgrace yourselves by acts which might be tolerated in a beggar, but which would demean a prince of the heavenly household! Stand on your dignity! Think of your future glory! Remember where you stand and in whom you stand—in the Person of Jesus! Fall at His feet daily! Grasp His strength hourly, crying out—

***"Oh, for this no power have I
My strength is at Your feet to lie."***

O Beloved, you who do not love the Lord, I cannot pray that God would keep you from the evil because you are already in it! But I do pray God to take you out of it. There are some of you who do not feel sin to be an evil and shall I tell you why? Did you ever try to pull a bucket up a well? You know that when it is full of water, you can pull it easily so long as the bucket remains in the water—but when it gets above the water, you know how heavy it is. It is just so with you. While you are in sin, you do not feel it to be a burden—it does not seem to be evil! But if the Lord once draws you out of sin, you will find it to be an intolerable, a heinous evil! May the Lord, this night, wind some of you up! Though you are very deep down, may He draw you up out of sin and give you acceptance in the Beloved! May you have new hearts and right spirits which are alone the gift of God! Remember the words of the Lord Jesus—“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for everyone that asks receives; and he that seeks, finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened.” God give you Grace to ask, and seek, and knock, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 49:1-23.**

Verses 1, 2. *Listen, O isles, unto Me; and hearken, you people from far; the Lord has called Me from the womb; from the bowels of My mother has He made mention of My name. And He has made My mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of His hand has He hid Me, and made Me a polished shaft; in His quiver has He hid Me.* Our Lord Jesus, that great Prophet of the Church, was in a special manner the Lord’s in the matter of His birth. A wondrous holy mystery hangs about His birth at Bethlehem—He was, in that respect, the Lord’s in a very remarkable sense. “He has made My mouth like a sharp sword.” You know how our Lord’s mouth, or the Word of His Gospel that issues from His mouth, is like a sharp sword—how it conquers—how it cuts its way—how, wherever it goes, it pierces “even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” “In the shadow of His hand has He hid Me.” You know how the protecting hand of God always covered Christ and how His Gospel is always sheltered by the Providence of God.

3. *And said unto Me, You are My servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.* It is wonderful condescension on Christ’s part to take the name of His Church so that He, Himself, is called, “Israel,” in this passage. And there is another passage, equally remarkable, where the Church is allowed to take one of the names of Christ—“This is the name wherewith she shall be called, The Lord Our Righteousness.” Such an intermingling of interests, such a wonderful union is there between Christ and His Church, that these two are truly one!

4. *Then I said, I have labored in vain, I have spent My strength for nothing, and in vain: yet surely My judgment is with the LORD, and My work with My God.* Our Savior did, in His earthly ministry, to a large extent la-

bor in vain. “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.” He was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, yet how few of them recognized Him as the good Shepherd. He told His disciples that after He returned to His Father, those who believed in Him should do even greater things than He had done. That promise was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost and since then it has been fulfilled over and over again in the history of the Christian Church.

5. *And now, says the LORD that formed Me from the womb to be His servant, to bring Jacob again to Him, Though Israel is not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, and My God shall be My strength.* What though the Jews still reject the Messiah, their sin does not affect His honor. His Glory is still as great as ever it was in the esteem of the Most High!

6. *And He said, It is a light thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give You for a light to the Gentiles, that You may be My salvation unto the end of the earth.* What a blessed passage this is for you and for me, Beloved! Strangers to the commonwealth of Israel were we, but, now, we who were afar off are made near by the blood of Jesus and so are made fellow-heirs with the seed of Abraham, partakers of the same Covenant blessing as the father of the faithful enjoys. In this let us exceedingly rejoice! And for this let us praise and magnify the name of the Lord.

7. *Thus says the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel, and His Holy One, to Him whom man despises, to Him whom the nation abhors.* What a true picture this is of the way in which the Jews still treat the promised Messiah! To this day they gnash their teeth at the very mention of the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And the bitterest words of blasphemy that are ever uttered by human lips come from the mouth of Israel against the Lord Jesus—“Him whom the nation abhors.”

7. *To a Servant of rulers, Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the LORD that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and He shall choose You.* The Father has chosen Christ to be the precious cornerstone of the eternal Temple and He has also chosen all the living stones that are to be joined to Him forever.

8, 9. *Thus says the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard You, and in a day of salvation have I helped You: and I will preserve You, and give You for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages; that You may say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Show yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places.* Dear Brothers and Sisters, what honor the Lord has put upon Christ! In proportion as He has been the despised of men and the abhorred of the Jewish nation, God has made Him to be His own delight, His Well-Beloved. He displays through Him the marvels of His saving power for His own Glory. I pray that it may be displayed in our midst just now, and in the way mentioned here—“I will preserve You, and give You for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages; that You may say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness. Show yourselves.”

Come, Beloved, after you receive such a message as this from God's mouth, what prison can hold you? What darkness can conceal you? The Word of Christ shall break your bonds asunder and change your darkness into the glory of noonday! May this gracious work be done for any of you who are prisoners!

10. *They shall not hunger nor thirst.* To the woman at the well, Christ said, "Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst." That is a parallel to this passage—"They shall not hunger nor thirst."

10. *Neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for He that has mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall He guide them.* Oh, the wondrous sweetness of these exceedingly great and precious promises! They are all concerning Christ, you see. Undoubtedly they are given with an eye to us, but yet much more with an eye to Him, that He may be glorified in the deliverance and guidance of His people, in the protection of them from danger, and in the abundant provision for the supply of all their needs. It would not be for Christ's honor to let you die of thirst, poor thirsty one! It would not glorify Him to lead you where there were no springs of water. Be sure, then, that God will always do that which will glorify His Son—and He will therefore deal well with you for His sake.

11, 12. *And I will make all My mountains a way, and My highways shall be exalted. Behold, these shall come from far and, lo, these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim.* From far-away China they must come to Christ! The result of His death is not left to chance. Some say that His death did something or other, which, somehow or other, will benefit somebody or other. But we never speak in that indefinite way. We know that Christ, by His death, did eternally redeem His people, and we are quite sure that He will have all those for whom He laid down the ransom price. He died with a clear intent, a definite purpose, and for the joy that was set before Him, He "endured the Cross, despising the shame." "He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied." The Divine intent and purpose of the death of Christ cannot possibly be frustrated. He reigns from the Cross and He shall win and conquer world without end!

13. *Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the Lord has comforted His people, and will have mercy upon His afflicted.* How? Why, by the very coming of Christ, by His birth at Bethlehem, and all the blessings which come with the Incarnate God, His afflicted ones are consoled and all His people are Divinely comforted. Shall we not, then, rejoice in Christ, who is Himself so full of joy that He teaches the very heavens to sing and the mountains to break forth in praise?

14. *But Zion said.* Hear the lament of the poor Jewish Church, like a castaway left all alone—

14. *The LORD has forsaken me, and my Lord has forgotten me.* When we are glad in the Lord and are singing out our heart's joy, there is pretty sure to be someone or other who sorrowfully sighs, "The Lord has for-

saken me.” People say that there never was a feast so well furnished but that somebody went away unsatisfied—but God will not have it so at His festivals and, therefore, the rest of the chapter shows how the Lord comforted this poor Zion, whose lamentation and mourning He had heard. Notice how He begins.

15. *Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? “Can a woman”—the most tender parent of the two—“forget her child”—her own child, her feeble little child that still depends upon her for its nutriment and life—“her sucking child”?*

15. *Yes, they may forget.* It is just possible. There have been such monstrosities—“they may forget.”

15. *Yet will I not forget you—*

**“Yet, says the Lord, should Nature change,
And mothers, monsters prove,
Zion still dwells upon the heart
Of everlasting love.”**

How that gracious assurance should comfort the little handful, the “remnant, weak and small,” of God’s people among the Jews! How it should also comfort any of God’s servants who are under a cloud and who have lost, for a while, the enjoyment of His Presence!

16. *Behold, I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands.* Where they must be seen and where He can do nothing without touching His people while doing it. When a name is engraved on the hand with which a man works, that name goes into his work and leaves its impress on the work.

16, 17. *Your walls are continually before Me. Your children shall make haste; your destroyers and they that made you waste shall go forth of you.* Jerusalem, the very Jerusalem that is in Palestine, shall be rebuilt! God will remember her walls and the Church of God in Israel shall yet rise from that sad low estate in which it has been these many centuries. And all God’s cast-down ones shall be comforted and His churches that seem to be left to die, shall be raised up again, for our God is no changeling. His heart does not come and go towards the sons of men—

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

18. *Lift up your eyes round about and behold: all these gather themselves together, and come to you.* What are all converted Gentiles doing, after all, but coming to the one Church? It is no longer a matter of Jew or Gentile, but all who believe are one in Christ Jesus. Let poor Zion rejoice that she herself is enriched by the conversion of these far-off sinners of the Gentiles!

18. *As I live, says the LORD, you shall surely clothe yourself with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them on you, as a bride does.* Converts are the garments of the Church, her bridal array, her ornaments and her jewels. I wish that all churches thought so, but many of them think that gorgeous architecture, the garnishing of the material building in which they meet, the sound of sweet music and the smell of fragrant incense and choice flowers make up the dignity and glory of a church—but they

do no such thing! Converts are the true glory of a church—"You shall surely clothe yourself with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them on you, as a bride does."

19, 20. *For your waste and your desolate places, and the land of your destruction, shall even now be too narrow by reason of the inhabitants, and they that swallowed you up shall be far away. The children which you shall have, after you have lost the others.* The children of your childlessness—so it runs—the children of your widowhood. It was strange that she should have children then. It is not so among men, but it is so with the Church of God—"The children which you shall have, after you have lost the others."

20-23. *Shall say again in your ears, The place is too small for me: give me a place that I may dwell. Then shall you say in your heart, Who has begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro? And who has brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; these, where had they been? Thus says the Lord GOD, Behold, I will lift up My hand to the Gentiles, and set up My standard to the people: and they shall bring your sons in their arms, and your daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders. And kings shall be your nursing fathers, and their queens your nursing mothers: they shall bow down to you with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of your feet.* I have heard this passage quoted as a reason why there should be a State Church—that kings should nourish the Church—Henry VIII, for instance, and George IV. It was poor milk, I am sure, that they ever gave the Church of God. Yet I have no objection whatever to this text being carried out to the fullest—yes, to the very letter—only mind where the kings are to be put! What place does the verse say that they are to occupy? "They shall bow down to you with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of your feet." There is no headship of the Church, here—nothing of that sort! The kings are to be at the feet of the Church, and that is what the State ought to do—submit itself to God and obey His commands, and give full liberty to the preaching of the Gospel! This is all that the true Church of Christ asks, and all she can ever fairly take if she is loyal to her Lord.

23. *And you shall know that I am the LORD.* "Jehovah." "You shall understand the greatness of your God, His infiniteness, His majesty, His all-sufficiency. You shall know that I am the I AM."

23. *For they shall not be ashamed that wait for Me.* Glory be to His holy name, none that wait for Him shall ever have cause to be ashamed! May we all be of that blessed number, for Christ's sake! Amen.

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY
TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

CHRIST'S PRAYER FOR HIS PEOPLE

NO. 47

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, OCTOBER 21, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.**

***“I pray not that You should take them out of the world,
but that You should keep them from the Evil One.”
John 17:15.***

THIS prayer of Christ is an ever precious portion to all true Believers from the fact that each of them has an inalienable interest in it. Everyone of us, Beloved, when we listen to the words of Christ, should remember that He is praying for us—that while it is for the great body of His elect He intercedes in this Chapter and the one preceding it—yet it is also for each Believer in particular that He offers intercession. However weak we are, however poor, however little our faith, or however small our Grace may be, our names are still written on His heart! Nor shall we lose our share in Jesus' love.

I will proceed at once to the discussion of the text as my time is limited. First, there is a *negative prayer*—“I pray *not* that You should take them out of the world.” Second, here is a *positive prayer*—“but that You should keep them from the Evil One.”

We have, then, a *negative prayer* in this verse. “I pray *not* that You should take them out of the world.” Now Beloved, when we see persons converted to God—when men are turned from iniquity unto righteousness, from sinners into saints, the thought sometimes strikes us—would it not be good to take them at once to Heaven? Would it not be an excellent thing to translate them speedily from the realms of sin to the breast of the Lord who loves them with an everlasting love? Would it not be wiser to take the young plants out of the chilly air of this world where they may possibly be injured and weakened and transplant them at once to the land where they may bloom forever in peace and tranquility? Not so, however, does Jesus pray. When the man had the devils cast out of him, he said to Jesus, “Lord, I will follow You wherever You go.” But Jesus said to him, “Go to your friends and relations and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you.” Some men, when they are converted, are all for going speedily to Heaven. But they have not done with earth yet. They would like to wear the crown without bearing the Cross. They desire to win without running and conquer without a battle. But their

whim has no countenance from Jesus, for He exclaims, "I pray not that You should take them out of the world."

I shall first of all speak of *the meanings of this prayer*. Secondly, *the reasons for this prayer*. Thirdly, *the Doctrinal inferences that we may derive from it*. And fourthly, *the practical lessons it teaches*. Briefly on each point.

I. First. THE MEANINGS OF THIS PRAYER. "I pray not that you should take them out of the world." Now there are two senses in which this prayer may be understood. One is—He prays not that they should, *by retirement and solitude*, be kept entirely separate from the world. And the second—He asks not that they should be taken away *by death*.

First, as regards *retirement from the world and solitude*. Some hermits and others have fancied that if we were to shut ourselves out from the world and live alone, we would then be more devoted to God and serve Him better. Many men of old lived in deserts, never coming into the cities, wandering about alone, praying in caves and forests and thinking they were contaminated and rendered impure if once they mingled with mankind. So have we among the Roman Catholics, persons who act the part of hermits living far from the common haunts of men and believing that by so doing they shall abundantly serve God. There are, also, certain orders of monks and nuns who live almost alone, seeing only their fellows and fancying that they are putting honor upon God and winning salvation for themselves. Now it is too late in the day for any of us to speak against monasticism. It has demonstrated its own fallacy! It was found that some of those men who had separated from society were guilty of more vile and vicious practices and sinned more grossly than men who were in the world. There are not many who can depart from the customs of social life and in solitude maintain their spirit, pure and unsullied. Why, Brothers and Sisters, common sense tells us at once that living alone is not the way to serve God! It may be the way to serve *self* and wrap ourselves in a garment of self-complacency. But it cannot be the way to truly worship God. If it is possible, by this means, to fulfill one part of the great Law of God, we cannot possibly carry out the other portion—to love our neighbor as ourselves, for we thus become unable to bind up the broken-hearted, to bring the wanderer back, or to win souls from death and sin! Out of the heart proceeds all evil and if we were in retirement, we would sin because we would carry our hearts with us into whatever solitude we entered. If we could but once get rid of our hearts, if there were some means of rendering our natures perfect—*then* we *might* be able to live alone! But as we now are, that door must be well enforced so that could keep out the devil. That Hell must be much secluded

so that sin cannot enter. I have heard of a man who thought he could live without sin if he were to dwell alone. He took a pitcher of water and a store of bread, and provided some wood and shut himself up in a solitary cell, saying, "Now I shall live in peace." But in a moment or two he chanced to kick the pitcher over and he, thereupon, used an angry expression. Then he said, "I see it is possible to lose one's temper even when alone." And he at once returned to live among men!

But it may be understood in a second sense. "I pray not that You should take them out of this world"—*by death*. That is a sweet and blessed mode of taking us out of the world which will happen to us all, by-and-by. In a few more years the chariot of fire and the horses of fire will take away the Lord's soldiers. But Jesus does not pray that *one* of His chosen people should be too soon removed—He does not desire to see His newly-begotten souls plume their wings and fly aloft to Heaven until their time shall come. How frequently does the wearied pilgrim put up the prayer, "O that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away and be at rest." But Christ does not pray like that. He leaves us to His Father, until, like shocks of corn fully ripe, we shall, each of us, be gathered into our Master's garner! Jesus does not plead for our immediate removal by death. He asks that we may do well in the world, but He never asks for us to be gathered in before we are ripe. Thus I have explained the two meanings of the words, "I pray not that You should take them out of the world"—either by living retired from men, or being taken away by death.

II. Now the second point was THE REASONS FOR THIS PETITION. These reasons are threefold. Christ does not pray that we should be taken out of the world because our abode here is for our own good, for the world's benefit and for His Glory!

1. First, *it would not be for our own good to be taken out of this world*. I leave out the first idea of the text and only speak of it concerning death. We conceive that the greatest blessing we shall ever receive of God is to die. But doubtless it would not be for our good to withdraw from this world as soon as we had escaped from sin. It is better for us to tarry a little while—far better. And the reasons for this are—first, because *a little stay on earth will make Heaven all the sweeter*. Nothing makes rest so sweet as toil! Nothing can render security so pleasant as a long exposure to alarms and fears and battles. No Heaven will be so sweet as a Heaven which has been preceded by torments and pains! I think the deeper draughts of woe we drink here below, the sweeter will be those draughts of eternal glory which we shall receive from the golden bowls of bliss! The more we are battered and scarred on earth, the more glorious will be our victory above when the shouts of a thousand times ten thousand angels

welcome us to our Father's palace! The more trials—the more bliss. The more sufferings—the more ecstasies. The more depression—the higher the exaltation. Thus we shall gain more of Heaven by the sufferings we shall pass through here below. Let us not, then, my Brothers and Sisters, fear to advance through our trials—they are for our good. To stop here awhile is for our benefit. Why? We would not know how to converse in Heaven if we had not a few trials and hardships to tell of and some tales of delivering Grace to repeat with joy. An old sailor likes to have passed through a few shipwrecks and storms, however hazardous they may have been, for if he anchors in Greenwich Hospital, he will there tell his companions, with great pleasure, of his hair-raising escapes! There will be some old soldiers in Heaven, too, who will recount their fights—how their Master delivered them and how He won the victory and kept off all their foes.

Again, *we would not have fellowship with Christ if we did not stop here.* Fellowship with Christ is so honorable a thing that it is worth while to suffer that we may thereby enjoy it. You have sometimes heard me express a desire that I might be in the number of those who shall be alive and remain and so shall escape death. But a dear friend of mine says he had rather die, in order that he might thus have fellowship with Christ in His sufferings—and I think the thought finds an echo in my own breast! To die with Jesus makes death a perfect treasure. To be a follower in the grave with Him makes death a pleasure. Moreover, you and I might be taken for cowards, although we may have fellowship with Him in His Glory, if we had no scars to prove the sufferings we had passed through and the wounds we had received for His name! Thus, again, you see it is for our good to be here—we would not have known fellowship with the Savior if we had not tarried here a little while. I would never have known the Savior's love half as much if I had not been in the storms of affliction. How sweet it is to learn the Savior's love when nobody else loves us! When friends flee away, what a blessed thing it is to see that the Savior does not forsake us but still keeps us and holds fast by us and clings to us and will not let us go! O Beloved Brothers and Sisters, believe that your remaining here on earth is for your eternal benefit and, therefore, Jesus said, "I pray not that You should take them out of the world."

2. And again, *it is for the good of other people.* I think we should all be willing to remain on earth for the good of others. Why may not saints die as soon as they are converted? For this reason—because God meant that they should be the means of the salvation of their brethren. You would not, surely, wish to go out of the world if there were a soul to be saved by you! I think if I could go to Glory before I had converted all the souls al-

lotted to me, I would not be happy. But that would be impossible, for God will not shut His saints in till they have been spiritual fathers to those appointed. We do not wish to enter Heaven till our work is done—it would make us uneasy on our beds if there were one single soul left to be saved by our means! Tarry, then, Christian. There is a brand to be plucked out of the fire, a sinner to be saved from his sins, a rebel to be turned from the error of his ways—and maybe that sinner is one of your relatives! Maybe, poor widow, you are spared in this world because there is a wayward son of yours not yet saved. Perhaps God has designed to make you the favored instrument of bringing him to Glory. And you gray-headed Christian, it may be that though, “the grasshopper is a burden to you” and you long to go, you are kept here because one of your offspring, by your instrumentality is yet to be saved. Tarry, then, for your son’s sake, who came from your loins. I know how deeply you love him and for his sake, surely, you are content to be left here a little—counting it for the best that you may bring in your son to Glory with you!

3. But the third reason is because *it is for God’s Glory*. A tried saint brings more glory to God than an untried one. I do verily think in my own soul that a Believer in a dungeon reflects more glory on his Master than a Believer in Paradise! I believe that a child of God in the burning fiery furnace, whose hair is yet unscorched and upon whom the smell of the fire has not passed, displays more of the Glory of the Godhead than even he who stands with a crown upon his head, perpetually singing praises before the Eternal Throne. Nothing reflects so much honor on a workman as a trial of his work and its endurance of it. So with God. It honors Him when His saints preserve their integrity. Peter honored Christ more when he walked upon the water than when he stood upon the land. There was no glory given to God by his walking on the solid shore, but there was glory reflected when he trod upon the water. Peter saw the Lord coming on the water and he said to Him, “Lord, if it is You, bid me come unto You on the water. And He said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water to go to Jesus.” What may we not go through, Christians, at His command? O I think we could rise and cut Agag to pieces and hew Satan, himself, and break his head through the power of Jesus! It is, then, for the glory of Jesus that we yet tarry. If my lying in the dust would elevate Christ one inch higher, I would say, “O let me remain, for it is sweet to be here for the Lord.” And if to live here forever would make Christ more glorious, I would prefer to live here eternally. If we could but add more jewels to the crown of Christ by remaining here, why should we wish to be taken out of the world? We would say, “It is blessed to be anywhere where we can glorify Him.”

III. The third point is THE DOCTRINAL INFERENCE WE MAY DERIVE FROM THIS PRAYER.

The first inference—*Death is God taking the people out of the world and when we die we are removed by God.* Death is not an independent being who comes at his own will to carry us away when he pleases. In fact, it is not true that Death takes away the Christian at all—God, alone, can remove His children from this world. Whether the humble peasant, or the reigning monarch, one hand lifts them to the sky. You will see this by referring to the Revelation where the vintage of the wicked is gathered by an angel but the harvest of the righteous is reaped by Christ, Himself. “And another angel came out of the temple which is in Heaven, he, also, having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over the fire and cried with a loud cry to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in your sharp sickle and gather the cluster of the vine of the earth. For her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.” These were the wicked. But if you go to the preceding passage, it says, “And I looked and behold a white cloud and upon the cloud One sat like unto the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown and in His hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in Your sickle and reap—for the time is come for You to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And *He that sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth. And the earth was reaped.*” Christ is the Reaper who cuts His own corn! He will not trust an angel to do it. God, alone, has the issues of life in His hand.

The next thing is that *dying is not of one-half so much importance as living to Christ.* “I pray not that You should take them out of the world.” He does not make their dying an object of prayer, “but that You should keep them from the Evil One.” He prays that they should be preserved in life knowing that their death would assuredly follow rightly, as a matter of course. Many say, one to the other, “Have you heard that So-and-So is dead?” “How did he die?” They should say, “How did he live?” It may be an important question—how does a man die? But the more important one is, how does a man live? What curious notions people get about death! The question they ask is not whether a man dies in the Lord Jesus, but, “Has he had a very easy death? Did he die gently?” If so, they conclude that all is well. If I ask, “Had he any affection to trust in Christ?” the reply probably will be, “Well, at all events, I thought he had. He had a very easy death.” People think so much of an easy death—if there are no pains in death, if they are not in trouble and not plagued like oth-

ers—they falsely conclude all to be well. But though like sheep they are laid in the grave, they may awaken to destruction in the morning! It is not a sign of Grace that our dying is easy. It is natural for persons in the decay of strength to die easily. Many of the most vicious men who have destroyed the power of their bodies have an easy, painless death from the fact that there is nothing to struggle against death. But then, though they die like lambs, they wake up in sorrow! Do not put any confidence in deathbeds, my dear Friends. Do not look on them as evidences of Christianity. The great evidence is not how a man dies—but how he lives!

IV. The practical lesson we learn from this part of the text—"I pray not that You should take them out of the world," is this—*that we never have any encouragement to peevishly ask God to let us die.* Christians are always wanting to die when they have any trouble or trial. You ask them, Why? "Because we would be with the Lord." O yes, they want to be with the Lord when troubles and temptations come upon them! But it is not because they are "panting to be with the Lord"—it is because they desire to get rid of their troubles—otherwise they would not want to die at all times when a little vexation is upon them! They want to get Home, not so much for the Savior's company, as to get out of the little hard work! They did not wish to go away when they were in quiet and prosperity. Like lazy fellows, as most of us are, when we get into a little labor we beg to go home. It is quite right, sometimes, that you should desire to depart because you would not prove yourself to be a true Israelite if you did not want to go to Jerusalem. You may pray to be taken Home out of the world, but Christ will not take up the petition. When your prayers come to the Lord, this little one may try to get among them, but Christ will say, "I do not know anything about you, 'I pray not that You should take them out of the world.'" You may wish it sincerely and really desire it, but you will not, at present, get your Master to pray with you. Instead of crying, or wishing to be away from the battle, brace yourself up in the name of the Lord! Think every wish to escape the fight is but a desertion of your Master. Do not so much as think of rest, but remember that though you may cry, "Let me retire into the tent," you will not be admitted until you return a victor! Therefore stop here and work and labor.

My dear Friends, I had intended to preach from the other half of the verse, but that is quite impossible. The time is so far gone and I can only manage the first part. So I must depart from my original intention. And I will restrict myself to some thoughts which occur to me upon the first portion of our text.

"I pray not that You should take them out of the world." Perhaps tomorrow you will be saying, "I am very sorry Sunday is over. I am obliged

to go to business again. I wish it were always Sunday, that I might attend to my preaching, or to the schools, or to the Prayer Meeting, or to the tract-distributing. No obstructions of the world afflict me there, no vexations of the spirit occur there. I am sick of the world. Oh, if I could never go into it again." Let me jog your elbow a bit. Does Jesus think so? Hear Him! "I pray not that You should take them out of the world." There is no remedy for the ill, if it is an ill—therefore endure it with becoming fortitude! Yes, rather seek to improve the opportunity thus afforded you of conferring a blessing upon your race and of gaining advantages for yourselves.

The pious mind will know how to improve the very sight of sin to its own sanctification. It will learn humility when it remembers that restraining Grace, alone, prevents a similar fault in itself. It will gather subjects for gratitude and admiration from the fact that Grace, alone, has made it to differ. Never shall we value Divine Grace so much as when we see the evil from which it delivers us! Never shall we more abhor sin than when we discern its visible deformity! Bad society is, in itself, like the poisonous cassava shrub—but if baked in the fire of Grace, it may even be rendered useful! True Grace casts salt into the poisonous stream and then, when forced to ford it, the filth is destroyed. Abide, then, O Soldier, in the trenches of labor and battle, for the hardness of service is beneficial to you.

But remember while here that you lose no opportunity of attacking the foe. Never miss an opportunity of having a shot at the devil! Be ready on all occasions to do mischief to the enemy. In business, drop a word of savor and unction. In company, turn the conversation heavenward. In private, wrestle at the Throne. I do not advise you to intrude religion at unseasonable hours. I do not conceive it to be your duty, when a customer calls to pay a bill, to ask him into your office and spend half an hour in prayer with him. Nor would I think it necessary to sanctify your ribbons and shawls by exhorting the purchasers across the counter! Some have not been quite innocent of the charge of cant who make as much use of religion to attract customers as they do of their plate glass window. Do not talk of religion to be heard of men but when a fair opportunity offers, out with your rifle and take a steady aim! Cromwell's singular advice to his soldiers was, "Trust in God, my Friends, and keep your powder dry." In a better sense this is mine—more than all keep up a continual fire on the Enemy by a holy life! Nothing will more reprove sin than your holiness. If you cannot tell the stick it is crooked, you can prove it to be so by laying a straight one side by side with it. So put your purity before the impure and they will be effectually reproved!

Well then, again, *do not be afraid to go out into the world to do good*. Christ is keeping you in the world for the advantage of your fellow men. I am sometimes wicked enough to think that I would rather go anywhere than stand up again and preach my Master's Gospel. Like Jonah, I have thought I would really pay my fare to be carried away to Tarshish, instead of coming back to Nineveh. So would some of you who have tried to preach and found you could not succeed as you desired. But do not be down-hearted, my Brothers! A Christian should never get so. If you have but one listener, today, perhaps the next time the number will be doubled, and so on, till they cannot be counted! Never say, "I wish to go out of this World." Do not murmur, "My life is prolonged beyond my joys." Do what you can! Do not go among people with fear. Do not be ashamed to look duty in the face. If you are not successful, at first, do not be cowards and run away from your guns! We should do all we can to bring our guns into line with our Brothers and take good aim at our foes. Never desert your work, though you come home distressed in spirit, though you see no gleam of success and nothing is gained. Remember you cannot run out of the battle, but you must go on. And you cannot escape the service. On, then, and glory shall be yours, by God's Grace!

Now, my brethren, what bearing has this text upon the ungodly? There are some here, my dear Friends, of whom I have sometimes thought that I could almost pray that God would take them out of the world! I can tell you why—they are so wicked—so dreadfully wicked! They are such hardened reprobates, with such iron souls, that they seem as if they never would be turned to God! There are some here whose portion it would appear to be damned and to lead others to the same condition. I know a village where there is a man so vicious, so abandoned, that I could almost pray for him to be removed out of the world. He is so awfully wicked that many of those I thought hopeful Christians, have been poisoned by his example. Indeed, he seems to be depraving the entire population! He stands like a deadly Upas tree, with outspread branches, over-shadowing the whole place. He is consuming all around him. And instead of it being a mercy for him to be here, it would be like a mercy if he were gone! Are not some of you like that man? Are you not so bad that you are doing all the mischief in the world you can? You never do anything for the cause of Christ. You are always trying to do your utmost against it. You never sow a little blade of God's grass where none grew before. You are of no service and yet you are spared because Jesus says, "I pray not that You should take them out of the world." He prays that you may be in the world a little longer! And what has He preserved you from? First, fever comes and bows you down. But Christ says, "Let him

not depart yet. O spare him now." And you are spared. The second time disease comes near you and great pains bow you down. Again He prays, "Spare him!" And you are yet safe. The third time you are fast approaching your end. Now the angel of death is lifting up the glittering steel and his axe is almost fallen on you. Yet Christ says, "Spare him, angel! Spare him—perhaps he may yet turn to Me with full purpose of heart." He whom you hate, loved you so much that He interceded for you and, therefore, you were spared till now. Remember, however, that this reprieve will not continue forever. At last Justice will cry, "Cut him down, he cumberes the ground." Some of you have been cumbering the ground for 60 or 70 years—old sinners—of no use in this world. Is it so? There you are! Occupying the ground, keeping other trees from growing and of no use! Your family is being damned by your example. The whole neighborhood is tainted by you. Do not tell me I should not speak so roughly. I tell you as long as I have a tongue in my head you shall have no mince-meat from me! If you are lost, it shall not be for want of plain speaking and honest warning. Oh, you cumber-grounds! How much digging and dunging have you received at the Lord's hand and yet you are fruitless? The axe will soon be at your root and oh, the fire into which you shall be cast! Ungodly man, you are spared until your overflowing cup of sin is dropping like oil upon the flame of vengeance and the increasing fire will presently reach you. The longer the archer draws the bow, the more mighty is the force of the arrow. What though vengeance tarries, it is that its sword may be sharpened and its arm nerved for direr execution. Oh, you gray-heads! A little more delay and the stroke shall fall—tremble and kiss the Son, lest He be angry and you perish in the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little!

And yet, I think some of you who have cumbered the ground do most heartily desire to serve God. Poor Sinner! I rejoice that you feel that you have been a cumber-ground. Do you confess that you have been a poor thorn and briar until now? Do you acknowledge that the Lord had been just to you if He had damned you? Then come as you are and cast yourself on Jesus—without works, without merit! Will you ask the Lord to turn you into a good fig tree? If you will, He will do it, for He declares that He hears prayer!

There was once a poor man in a small country town who had not all the sense people usually have. But he had sense enough to be a great drunkard and swearer. As God would have it, he once listened to a poor woman who was singing—

***"I'm a poor sinner and nothing at all,
But Jesus Christ is my All-in-All"***

Home he went, repeating these words—he put his trust in a crucified Savior and was really converted. Well, he soon came to Church and although he was a peddler and always traveling about, he said, “I want to join your Church.” They, remembering his sinful way of life, required some great evidence of a change before they received him, “Oh” he said, “I must come in.” “But you have been such a great sinner and you are unconverted,” added the Elders. “Well,” said poor Jack, “I don’t know if I’m unconverted and I confess I am a *great* sinner—but—

***“I’m a poor sinner and nothing at all,
But Jesus Christ is my All-in-All.”***

They could not get from him any other testimony save this. He would only say—

***“I’m a poor sinner and nothing at all,
But Jesus Christ is my All-in-All.”***

They could not refuse him and, therefore, accepted him for fellowship. After this he was always happy. When a Christian said to him, “But you always seem so happy and pleased, Jack. How is it?” “Well” he said, “I ought to be happy, for—

***“I’m a poor sinner and nothing at all,
But Jesus Christ is my All-in-All.”***

“Well but,” said the gentleman, “I can’t see how you can be always so happy and sure. I sometimes lose my evidences.” “I don’t,” said Jack,

***“I’m a poor sinner and nothing at all,
But Jesus Christ is in my All-in-All.”***

“Ah,” said a friend, “I am at times miserable because I remember my sad sinfulness even since conversion.” “Ah,” said Jack, “you have not begun to sing—

***“I’m a poor sinner and nothing at all,
But Jesus Christ is my All-in-All.”***

“Oh,” said the friend, “How do you get rid of your doubts and fears? My faith frequently fails and I miss my sure hope in Christ. My frames are so variable and feelings so contrary, what do you think of that?” “Think?” said poor Jack, “Why Master, I have no good things to care about—

***“I’m a poor sinner and nothing at all,
But Jesus Christ is my All-in-All.”***

Well, then, if there is anyone here who is “a poor sinner and nothing at all”—where is he? In the gallery, or sitting down below? If he cannot say all that poor man said, if he can say the first line, he need not fear to say the second! Never mind if he can’t say—

“Jesus Christ is my All-in-All.”

If he can say—

“I’m a poor sinner and nothing at all,”

he is most assuredly on the right road!

“Oh, but,” says one, “I am sinful, vile, worthless.” All right! You’re “a poor sinner and nothing at all,” and Jesus Christ is willing to be your “All-in-All.” “But I have blasphemed God, departed from His ways and grievous! I transgressed.” Well, I believe all that and a great deal more and am very glad to hear it. For thus I see you are—

“A poor sinner and nothing at all.”

I am very glad if you will hold that opinion of yourself. “Ah! but I am afraid I have sinned too much. When I try, I cannot do anything! When I try to mend my ways. When I try to believe in Christ, I cannot.” We are glad, very glad of it Brother, that you are—

“A poor sinner and nothing at all.”

If you had a single particle of goodness. If you had a little bit—not big enough to cover the top of your little finger, we would not be glad. But if you are—

***“A poor sinner and nothing at all,
Jesus Christ is your All-in-All.”***

Come! Will you have Him? You are “nothing at all.” Will you have Christ? Here He stands. Ask—it is all He wants, for you are the object of His regard. There are only three steps. One is to step out of self. The second is to step upon Jesus. The third is to step into Heaven. You have taken one step. I am sure you will take the others. God never makes you feel you are, “A poor sinner and nothing at all,” but, sooner or later, He gives—

“Jesus Christ as your All-in-All.”

O poor Sinner, do not be doubtful of my Master’s power! Do but touch the hem of His garment and you shall be made whole! Like the poor woman in the crowd, do but get at it and touch it and He will surely say unto you, “you are saved.”

If you will go to Him with this cry—

***“I’m a poor sinner and nothing at all,
And Jesus Christ is my All-in-All.”***

Then you will see the blessed reason why Jesus interceded thus—“I pray not that You should take them out of the world.”

Adapted from *The C.H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST'S PEOPLE

NO. 78

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, NOVEMBER 22, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.**

***“They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.”
John 17:16.***

Christ's prayer was for a special people. He declared that He did not offer an universal intercession. "I pray for *them*," He said. "I pray not for the world, but for them which You have given Me, for they are Yours." In reading this beautiful prayer through, only one question arises to our minds—Who are the people that are described as, "them," or as, "they"? Who are these favored individuals who share a Savior's prayers, are recognized by a Savior's love, have their names written on the stones of His precious breastplate and have their character and their circumstances mentioned by the lips of the High Priest before the Throne on High? The answer to that question is supplied by the words of our text. The people for whom Christ prays are an unearthly people. They are a people somewhat above the world, distinguished altogether from it. "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."

I shall treat my text, first of all, *Doctrinally*. Secondly, *experimentally*. And thirdly, *practically*.

I. First, we shall take our text and look at it DOCTRINALLY. The Doctrine of it is that God's people are a people who are not of the world, even as Christ was not of the world. It is not so much that they are not of the world as that they are, "not of the world, *even as Christ was not of the world.*" This is an important distinction, for there are to be found certain people who are not of the world and yet they are not Christians. Among them I would mention sentimentalists—people who are always crying and groaning in affected sentimental ways. Their spirits are so refined, their characters are so delicate, that they could not attend to ordinary business. They would think it rather degrading to their spiritual nature to attend to anything connected with the world. They live much in the air of romances and novels. They love to read things that fetch tears from their eyes. They would like to continually live in a cottage near a forest, or to inhabit some quiet cave where they could read, "Zimmerman on Solitude," forever! For they feel that they are "not of the world." The fact is, there is something too flimsy about them to stand the wear and tear of

this wicked world! They are so pre-eminently good that they cannot bear to do as we poor human creatures do. I have heard of one young lady who thought herself so spiritually-minded that she could not work. A very wise minister said to her, "That is quite correct! You are so spiritually-minded that you cannot work—very well, you are so spiritually-minded that you shall not eat unless you do." That brought her back from her great spiritual-mindedness! There is a stupid sentimentalism that certain persons nurse themselves into. They read a parcel of books that intoxicate their brains and then fancy that they have a lofty destiny. These people are "not of the world," truly. But the world does not need them and the world would not miss them, much, if they were clean gone forever!

There is such a thing as being "not of the world," from high order of sentimentalism and yet not being a Christian after all. For it is not so much being, "not of the world," as being, "not of the world, *even as Christ was not of the world.*" There are others, too, like your monks and those other mad individuals of the Catholic Church, who are not of the world. They are so awfully good that they could not live with us sinful creatures at all! They must be distinguished from us altogether. They must not wear, of course, a boot that would at all approach to a worldly shoe—they must have a sole of leather strapped on with two or three thongs, like the far-famed, "Father" Ignatius! They could not be expected to wear worldly coats and waistcoats. But they must have peculiar garbs, cut in certain fashions, like the Passionists. They must wear particular dresses, particular garments, particular habits. And we know that some men are "not of the world" by the peculiar mouthing they give to all their words—the sort of sweet, savory, buttery flavor they give to the English language because they think themselves so eminently sanctified that they fancy it would be wrong to indulge in anything in which ordinary mortals indulge. Such persons are, however, reminded that their being, "not of the world," has nothing to do with it! It is not being, "not of the world," so much as being "not of the world, *even as Christ was not of the world.*"

This is the distinguishing mark—being different from the world in those respects in which Christ was different. Not making ourselves singular in unimportant points, as those poor creatures do, but being different from the world in those respects in which the Son of God and the Son of Man, Jesus Christ, our glorious Exemplar, was distinguished from the rest of mankind! And I think this will burst out in great clearness and beauty to us if we consider that Christ was not of the world in Nature. That He was not of the world again, in Office. And above all, that He was not of the world in His Character.

1. First, *Christ was not of the world in Nature*. What was there about Christ that was worldly? In one point of view His Nature was Divine. And as Divine, it was perfect, pure, unsullied, spotless! He could not descend to things of earthliness and sin. In another sense He was Human. And His Human Nature, which was born of the Virgin Mary, was begotten of the Holy Spirit and, therefore, was so pure that in it rested nothing that was worldly. He was not like we ordinary men. We are all born with worldliness in our hearts. Solomon well says, "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child." It is not only there, but it is *bound up in it*—it is tied up in his heart and is difficult to remove! And so with each of us—when we were children, earthliness and carnality were bound up in our nature. But Christ was not so. His Nature was not a worldly one. It was essentially different from that of everyone else, although He sat down and talked with them. Mark the difference! He stood side by side with a Pharisee. But everyone could see He was not of the Pharisee's world. He sat by a Samaritan woman and though He conversed with her very freely, who is it that fails to see that He was not of that Samaritan woman's world—not a sinner like she was? He mingled with the Publicans, no, He sat down at the Publican's feast and ate with Publicans and sinners. But you could see by the holy actions and the peculiar gestures He there carried with Him, that he was not of the Publicans' world, though He mixed with them. There was something so different in His Nature that you could not have found an individual in all the world whom you could have set beside Him and said, "There! He is of that Man's world." No, not even John, though he leaned on His bosom and partook very much of his Lord's Spirit, was exactly of that world to which Jesus belonged. For even he once, in his Boanergean spirit, said words to this effect, "Let us call down fire from Heaven on the heads of those who oppose You"—a thing that Christ could not endure for a moment and, thereby, proved that He was something even beyond John's world.

Well, Beloved, in some sense, the Christian is not of the world even in his nature. I do not mean in his corrupt and fallen nature, but in his *new* nature. There is something in a Christian that is utterly and entirely distinct from that of anybody else. Many persons think that the difference between a Christian and a worldling consists in this—one goes to chapel twice on the Sabbath, another does not go but once, or perhaps not at all. One of them takes the sacrament, the other does not. One pays attention to holy things, the other pays very little attention to them. But, ah, Beloved, that does not make a Christian! The distinction between a Christian and a worldling is not merely external, but *internal*. The difference is one of *nature* and not of act!

A Christian is as essentially different from a worldling as a dove is from a raven, or a lamb from a lion. He is not of the world even in his nature. You could not make him a worldling if you were able to do to him what you liked. You might cause him to fall into some temporary sin, but you could not make him a worldling. You might cause him to backslide, but you could not make him a sinner, as he used to be. He is not of the world by his nature. He is a twice-born man! In his veins run the blood of the royal family of the universe. He is a nobleman. He is a Heaven-born child. His freedom is not merely a bought one—he has his liberty by his new-born nature. He is begotten again unto a lively hope. He is not of the world by his nature—he is essentially and entirely different from the world! There are persons now in this Chapel who are more totally distinct from one another than you can even conceive. I have some here who are intelligent and some who are ignorant. Some who are rich and some who are poor. But I do not allude to *those* distinctions—they all melt away into nothing in that great distinction—dead or alive, spiritual or carnal, Christian or worldling! And, oh, if you are God's people, then you are not of the world in your nature, for you are “not of the world, even as Christ was not of the world.”

2. Again—you are not of the world in your office. Christ's Office had nothing to do with worldly things. “Are you a king, then?” Yes. I am a king, but My Kingdom is not of this world. “Are you a priest?” Yes. I am a Priest. But My Priesthood is not the priesthood which I shall soon lay aside, or which shall be discontinued as that of others has been. “Are you a teacher?” Yes. But My Doctrines are not the doctrines of morality, doctrines that concern earthly dealings simply between man and man. My Doctrine comes down from Heaven. So Jesus Christ, we say, is “not of the world.” He had no Office that could be termed a worldly one and He had no aim which was in the least worldly. He did not seek His own applause, His own fame, His own honor. His very Office was not of the world! And, O Believer! What is *your* office? Have you none at all? Why, Man, you are a priest unto the Lord your God! Your office is to offer a sacrifice of prayer and praise each day. Ask a Christian what he is. Say to him—“What is your official standing? What are you by office?” Well, if he answers you properly, he will not say, “I am a draper, or druggist,” or anything of that sort. No. He will say, “I am a priest unto my God. The office unto which I am called is to be the salt of the earth. I am a city set on a hill, a light that cannot be hid. That is my office. My office is not a worldly one.” Whether yours is the office of the minister, or the deacon, or the Church member, you are not of this world in your office, even as Christ was not of the world—your occupation is not a worldly one!

3. Again, *you are not of the world in your character.* That is the chief point in which Christ was not of the world. And now, Brothers and Sisters, I shall have to turn somewhat from Doctrine to practice before I get to this part of the subject rightly. I must reprove many of the Lord's people, that they do not sufficiently manifest that they are not of the world in character, even as Christ was not of the world. Oh, how many of you there are who will assemble around the Table at the Supper of your Lord, who do not live like your Savior! How many of you there are who join our Church and walk with us and yet are not worthy of your high calling and profession! Mark you, the churches all around and let your eyes run with tears when you remember that of many of their members it cannot be said, "*you are not of the world,*" for they *are* of the world! O, my Hearers, I fear many of you are worldly, carnal and covetous. And yet you join the churches and stand well with God's people by a hypocritical profession! O you whitewashed sepulchers! You would deceive even the very elect! You make clean the outside of the cup and platter, but your inward part is wickedness. O that a thundering voice might speak this to your ears!—"Those whom Christ loves are not of the world," but you are of the world—therefore you cannot be His, even though you profess to be! For those who love Him are not such as you. Look at Jesus' Character—how different from every other man's—pure, perfect, spotless! Even such should be the life of the Believer. I plead not for the possibility of sinless conduct in Christians, but I must hold that Divine Grace makes men to differ and that God's people will be very different from other kinds of people! A servant of God will be a God's-man everywhere. As a chemist, he could not indulge in any tricks that such men might play with their drugs. As a grocer—if indeed it is not a phantom that such things are done—he could not mix sloe leaves with tea or red lead in the pepper. If he practiced any other kind of business, he could not, for a moment, condescend to the little petty shifts called, "methods of business." To him it is nothing what is called, "business"—it is what is called God's Law—he feels that he is not of the world, consequently, he goes against its fashions and its maxims!

A singular story is told of a certain Quaker. One day he was bathing in the Thames and a waterman called out to him, "Ha! There goes the Quaker." "How do you know I'm a Quaker?" "Because you swim against the stream. It is the way the Quakers always do." That is the way Christians always ought to do—to swim against the stream! The Lord's people should not go along with the rest in their worldliness. Their characters should be visibly different. You should be such men and women that your fellows can recognize you without any difficulty and say, "Such a

person is a Christian.” Ah, Beloved, it would puzzle the angel Gabriel, himself, to tell whether some of you are Christians or not, if he were sent down to the world to pick out the righteous from the wicked! None but God could do it, for in these days of worldly religion they are so much alike. It was an ill day for the world when the sons of God and the daughters of men were mingled together—and it is an ill day, now, when Christians and worldlings are so mixed that you cannot tell the difference between them! God save us from a day of fire that may devour us in consequence! But O Beloved! the Christian will be always different from the world. This is a great Doctrine and it will be found as true in ages to come as in the centuries which are past. Looking back into history we read this lesson—“They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” We see them driven to the catacombs of Rome. We see them hunted about like partridges. And wherever in history you find God’s servants, you can recognize them by their distinct, unvarying character—they were not of the world, but were a people scarred and peeled. A people entirely distinct from the nations! And if in this age there are no different people. If there are none to be found who differ from other people—there are no Christians—for Christians will always be different from the world! They are not of the world, even as Christ is not of the world. This is the Doctrine.

II. Now for treating this text EXPERIMENTALLY.

Do we, dearly Beloved, feel this Truth of God? Has it ever been laid to our souls so that we can *feel* it is ours? “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” Have we ever felt that we are not of the world? Perhaps there is a Believer sitting in a pew tonight who says, “Well, Sir, I can’t say that I feel as if I were not of the world, for I have just come from my shop and worldliness is still hanging about me.” Another says, “I have been in trouble and my mind is very much harassed—I can’t feel that I am different from the world. I am afraid that I am of the world.” But Beloved, we must not judge ourselves rashly, because just at this moment we discern not the spot of God’s children. Let me tell you there are always certain testing moments when you can tell of what kind of stuff a man is made. Two men are walking. Part of the way their road lies side by side. How do you tell which man is going to the right and which to the left? Why, when they come to the turning point. Now, tonight is not a turning point.

Let me tell you one or two turning points, when every Christian will feel that he is not of the world. One is, when he gets into very *deep trouble*. I do believe and proclaim that we never feel so unearthly as when we get plunged down into trouble. Ah, when some creature comfort has

been swept away, when some precious blessing has withered in our sight, like the fair lily, snapped at the stalk—when some mercy has been withered, like Jonah's gourd in the night—then it is that the Christian feels, "I am not of the world." His cloak is torn from him and the cold wind whistles almost through him. And then he says, "I am a stranger in the world, as all my fathers were. Lord, You have been my dwelling place in all generations." You have had at times deep sorrows. Thank God for them! They are testing moments. When the furnace is hot, it is then that the gold is tried best. Have you felt at such a time that you were not of the world? Or, have you rather sat down and said, "Oh, I do not deserve this trouble"? Did you break under it? Did you bow down before it and let it crush you while you cursed your Maker? Or did your spirit, even under its load, still lift itself unto Him, like a man all dislocated on the battle-field, whose limbs are cut away, but who still lifts himself up as best he can and looks over the field to see if there is a friend approaching? Did you do so? Or did you lie down in desperation and despair? If you did that, I think you are no Christian. But if there was a rising up, it was a testing moment and it proved that you were "not of the world," because you could master affliction—because you could tread it under foot and say—

***"When all created streams are dry,
His goodness is the same!
With this I am well satisfied,
And glory in His name."***

But another testing moment is *prosperity*. Oh, there have been some of God's people who have been more tried by prosperity than by adversity! Of the two trials, the trial of adversity is less severe to the spiritual man than that of prosperity. "As the fining pot for silver, so is a man to his praise." It is a terrible thing to be prosperous. You had need to pray to God not only to help you in your troubles, but to help you in your blessings. Mr. Whitefield once had a petition to put up for a young man who had—stop, you will think it was for a young man who had lost his father or his property. No!—"The prayers of the congregation are desired for a young man who has become heir to an immense fortune and who feels he has need of much Divine Grace to keep him humble in the midst of riches." That is the kind of prayer that ought to be put up! Prosperity is a hard thing to bear. Now, perhaps you have become almost intoxicated with worldly delights, even as a Christian. Everything goes well with you. You have loved and you are loved. Your affairs are prosperous. Your heart rejoices, your eyes sparkle. You tread the earth with a happy soul and a joyous countenance. You are a happy man, for you have

found that even in worldly things, “godliness with contentment is great gain.” Did you ever feel—

**“These can never satisfy.
Give me Christ, or else I die”?**

Did you feel that these comforts were nothing but the leaves of the tree and not the fruit and that you could not live upon mere leaves? Did you feel they were, after all, nothing but husks? Or did you not sit down and say, “Now, Soul, take your ease. You have goods laid up for many years. Eat, drink and be merry”? If you did imitate the rich fool, then you were of the world! But if your spirit went up above your prosperity so that you still lived near to God, then you proved that you were a child of God, for you were not of the world. These are testing points—both prosperity and adversity.

Again—you may test yourselves in this way *in solitude and in company*. In solitude you may tell whether you are not of the world. I sit down, throw the window up, look out on the stars and think of them as the eye of God looking down upon me! And oh, does it not seem glorious, at times, to consider the heavens when we can say, “Ah, beyond those stars is my house not made with hands—those stars are milestones on the road to Glory and I shall soon tread the glittering way, or be carried by seraphs far beyond them and be there!” Have you felt in solitude that you are not of the world? And so again in company? Ah, Beloved, believe me, company is one of the best tests for a Christian. You are invited to an evening party. Sundry amusements are provided which are not considered exactly sinful, but which certainly cannot come under the name of pious amusements. You sit there with the rest. There is a deal of idle chat going on. You would be thought Puritanical to protest against it. Have you not come away—and, notwithstanding all has been very pleasant and friends have been very agreeable—have you not been inclined to say, “Ah, that does not do for me. I would rather be in a Prayer Meeting. I would rather be in an old broken down cow-lodge with six old women, so long as I could be with the people of God, than in fine rooms with all the dainties and delicacies that could be provided without the company of Jesus. By God's Grace I will seek to shun all these places as much as possible.” That is a good test. You will prove in this way that you are not of the world. And you may do so in a great many other ways which I have no time to mention. Have you felt this experimentally, so that you can say, “I know that I am not of the world. I see it. I experience it.” Don't just talk of Doctrine. Give me Doctrine ground into *experience*. Doctrine is good. But experience is better! Experimental Doctrine is the true Doctrine which comforts and which edifies.

IV. And now, lastly, we must briefly apply this in PRACTICE. "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." And, first, allow me, man or woman, to apply this to you. *You who are of the world*, whose maxims, whose habits, whose behavior, whose feelings, whose *everything* is worldly and carnal, listen to this. Perhaps you make some profession of religion. Hear me, then. Your boasting of religion is empty as a phantom and shall pass away when the sun rises, as the ghosts sleep in their grave at the crowing of the cock. You have some pleasure in that professional religion of yours wherewith you are arrayed. Which you carry about you as a cloak and use as a stalking horse to your business—and a net to catch the honor in the world. And yet you are worldly, like other men. Then I tell you if there is no distinction between yourself and the worldly, the doom of the worldly shall be your doom! If you were marked and watched, your next door tradesman would act as you do and you act as he does. There is no distinction between you and the world. Hear me, then. It is God's solemn Truth—you are none of His! If you are like the rest of the world, you are of the world. You are a goat and with goats you shall be cursed. For the sheep can always be distinguished from the goats by their appearance. O you worldly men of the world! You carnal professors, you who crowd our Churches and fill our places of worship—this is God's Truth—let me say it solemnly. If I should say it as I ought, it would be weeping tears of blood. You are, with all your profession, "in the gall of bitterness." With all your boastings, you are "in bonds of iniquity." For you act as others and you shall go where others go. And it shall be done with you as with more notorious heirs of Hell!

There is an old story which was once told of a Dissenting minister. The old custom was that a minister might stop at an inn and not pay anything for his bed or his board. And when he went to preach, from place to place he was charged nothing for the conveyance in which he rode. But on one occasion, a certain minister stopped at an inn and went to bed. The landlord listened and heard no prayer—so when the preacher came down in the morning, he was presented his bill. "Oh, I am not going to pay that, for I am a minister." "Ah," said the landlord, "you went to bed last night like a sinner and you shall pay this morning like a sinner! I will not let you go." Now, it strikes me that this will be the case with some of you when you come to God's bar. Though you pretended to be a Christian, you acted like a sinner and you shall fare like a sinner, too. Your actions were unrighteous. They were far from God. And you shall have a portion with those whose character was the same as yours. "Be not deceived." It is easy to be so. "God is not mocked," though we often are,

both minister and people. "God is not mocked. Whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap."

And now we want to apply this to many *true children of God* who are here. By way of caution I say, my Brother and Sister Christian, you are not of the world. I am not going to speak harshly to you because you are my Brother or Sister and in speaking to you I speak to myself, also, for I am as guilty as you are. Brothers and Sisters, have we not often been too much like the world? Do we not, sometimes, in our conversation talk too much like the world? Come, let me ask myself—are there not too many idle words that I say? Yes, that there are. And do I not sometimes give occasion to the enemy to blaspheme because I am not so different from the world as I ought to be? Come, Brother. Come Sister. Let us confess our sins together. Have we not been too worldly? Ah, we have. Oh, let this solemn thought cross our minds—suppose that after all we should not be His! For it is written, "You are not of the world." O God, if we are not right, make us so! Where we are a little right, make us still more right! And where we are wrong, amend us!

Allow me to tell a story to you. I told it when I was preaching last Tuesday morning, but it is worth telling again. There is a great evil in many of us being too light and frothy in our conversation. A very strange thing once happened. A minister had been preaching in a country village very earnestly and fervently. In the midst of his congregation there was a young man who was deeply impressed with a sense of sin under the sermon. He therefore sought the minister as he went out, in hopes of walking home with him. They walked till they came to a friend's house. On the road, the minister had talked about anything except the subject on which he had preached, though he preached very earnestly and even with tears in his eye. The young man thought within himself, "Oh, I wish I could unburden my heart and speak to him. But I cannot. He does not say anything, now, about what he spoke of in the pulpit." When they were at supper that evening, the conversation was very far from what it should be and the minister indulged in all kinds of jokes and light sayings. The young man had gone into the house with eyes filled with tears, feeling like a sinner should feel. But as soon as he got outside after the conversation, he stamped his foot and said, "It is a lie from beginning to end! That man has preached like an angel and now he has talked like a devil." Some years after, the young man was taken ill and sent for this same minister. The minister did not know him. "Do you remember preaching at such-and-such a village?" asked the young man. "I do." "Your text was very deeply laid to my heart." "Thank God for that," said the minister. "Do not be so quick about thanking God," said the young

man. "Do you know what you talked of that evening afterwards, when I went to supper with you? *Sir I shall be damned!* And I will charge *you* before God's Throne with being the author of my damnation! On that night I did feel my sin. But you were the means of scattering all my impressions." That is a solemn thought, Brothers and Sisters. and teaches us how we should curb our tongues, especially those who are so light-hearted, after solemn services and earnest preaching—that we should not betray levity. Oh, let us take heed that we are not of the world, even as Christ was not of the world.

And Christian, lastly, by way of practice, let me comfort you with this. You are not of the world for your home is in Heaven. Be content to be here a little while, for you are not of the world and you shall go up to your own bright inheritance, by-and-by. A man in traveling goes into an inn. It is rather uncomfortable, "Well," says he, "I shall not have to stay here many nights. I have only to sleep here tonight. I shall be at home in the morning, so I don't care much about one night's lodging being a little uncomfortable." So, Christian, this world is never a very comfortable one—but remember you are not of the world! This world is like an inn. You are only lodging here a little while. Put up with a little inconvenience because you are not of the world, even as Christ is not of the world. And by-and-by, up yonder, you shall be gathered into your Father's house and there you will find that there is a new Heaven and a new earth provided for those who are "not of the world."

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

OUR LORD'S PRAYER FOR HIS PEOPLE'S SANCTIFICATION

NO. 1890

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 7, 1886,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Sanctify them through Your truth: Your Word is truth.”
John 17:17.*

OUR Lord Jesus prayed much for His people while He was here on earth. He made Peter the special subject of His intercession when He knew that he was in extraordinary danger. The midnight wrestling of the Son of Man was for His people. In the sacred Record, however, much more space is taken up by our Lord's intercessions as He nears the end of His labors. After the closing supper, His public preaching work being ended and nothing remaining to be done but to die, He gave Himself wholly to prayer. He was not, again, to instruct the multitude, nor to heal the sick and, in the interval which remained, before He should lay down His life, He girded Himself for special intercession. He poured out His soul in life before He poured it out in death!

In this wonderful prayer, our Lord, as our great High Priest, appears to enter upon that perpetual office of intercession which He is now exercising at the right hand of the Father. Our Lord always seemed, in the eagerness of His love, to be anticipating His work. Before He was set apart for His life-work, by the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Him, He must, of necessity, be about His Father's business. Before He finally suffered at the hands of cruel men, He had a baptism to be baptized with and He was straitened till it was accomplished. Before He actually died, He was covered with a bloody sweat and was exceedingly sorrowful even unto death. And in this case, before He, in person, entered within the veil, He made intercession for us. He never tarries when the good of His people calls for Him. His love has wings as well as feet—it is always true of Him! “He rode upon a cherub and did fly: yes, He did fly upon the wings of the wind.” O Beloved, what a Friend we have in Jesus! He is so willing, so speedy to do for us all that we need. Oh that we could imitate Him in this and be quick of understanding to perceive our line of service—and eager of heart to enter upon it!

This chapter, which ought to be universally known as the Lord's Prayer, may be called the Holy of Holies of the Word of God. Here we are admitted to that secret place where the Son of God speaks with the Father in closest fellowship of love. Here we look into the heart of Jesus as He sets out, in order, His desires and requests before His Father on our behalf. Here Inspiration lifts her veil and we behold Truth of God face to face. Our text

lies somewhere near the middle of the prayer—it is the heart of it. Our Lord's desire for the *sanctification* of His people pervades the whole prayer, but it is gathered up, declared and intensified in the one sentence that I have read to you—"Sanctify them through Your truth: Your Word is truth." How invaluable must the blessing of sanctification be when our Lord, in the highest reach of His intercession, cries, "Sanctify them!" In sight of His passion. On the night before His death, our Savior lifts His eyes to the great Father and cries in His most plaintive tones, "Father, sanctify them."

The place where we stand is holy ground and the subject of which we speak demands our solemn thought. Come, Holy Spirit, and teach us the full meaning of this prayer for holiness!

First, I call your attention to what it is the Savior asks—"sanctify them." And then, for whom He asks it—it is for those whom His Father had given Him. Thirdly, we shall note of whom He asks it—He asks this sanctification of God the Father, Himself, for He, alone, it is who can sanctify His people. Lastly, we will enquire how is this blessing to be worked?—"Sanctify them through Your truth." And our Lord adds an explanatory sentence which was a confession of His own faith towards the Word of the Lord and an instruction to our faith in the same matter. "Your Word is truth."

I. At the beginning, then, consider WHAT HE ASKED. What is this inestimable blessing which our Savior so earnestly requests at the Father's hand? He first prays, "Holy Father, keep them." And again, "Keep them from the Evil One." But this negative blessing of preservation from the Evil One is not enough—He seeks positive holiness for them and, therefore, He cries, "sanctify them." The word is one of considerable range of meaning. I am not able to follow it through all its shades, so one or two must suffice.

It means, first, *dedicate them to Your service*, for such must be the meaning of the word further down, when we read, "For their sakes I sanctify Myself." In the Lord's case it cannot mean purification from sin, because our Savior was undefiled—His Nature was unblemished by sin and His actions were unspotted. No eye of man, nor glance of fiend, could discover fault in Him and the search of God only resulted in the declaration that in Him, God was well pleased. Our Lord's sanctification was His consecration to the fulfillment of the Divine purpose, His absorption in the will of the Father. "Lo, I come to do Your will, O God." In this sense our interceding Lord asks that all His people may, by the Father, be ordained and consecrated unto *holy service*. The prayer means, "Father, consecrate them to Your own Self. Let them be temples for Your indwelling, instruments for Your use."

Under Jewish law, the tribe of Levi was chosen out of the 12 and ordained to the service of the Lord, instead of the first-born, of whom the Lord had said, "All the first-born of the children of Israel are Mine: on the day that I smote every first-born in the land of Egypt I sanctified them for myself" (Num 8:17). Out of the tribe of Levi one family was taken and dedicated to the priesthood. Aaron and his sons are said to have been sanctified (Levi 8:30). A certain tent was sanctified to the service of God and, therefore, it became a sanctuary—and the vessels that were in it,

whether they were greater, like the altar, the holy table and the Ark of the Covenant, or whether they were of less degree, like the bowls and the snuff-dishes of the candlestick—were all dedicated or *sanctified* (Num 7:1). None of these things could be used for any other purpose than the service of Jehovah. In His courts there was a holy fire, a holy bread and a holy oil. The holy anointing oil, for instance, was reserved for sacred uses. “Upon man’s flesh it shall not be poured.” And again, “Whoever shall make like unto that, to smell thereto, shall even be cut off from his people.”

These sanctified things were reserved for holy purposes and any other use of them was strictly forbidden. Bullocks, lambs, sheep, turtledoves and so forth were given by devout offerers, brought to the Holy Place and dedicated unto God and from then on they belonged to God and must be presented at His altar. This is one part of the meaning of our Lord’s prayer. He would have each of us consecrated unto the Lord, designated and ordained for Divine purposes. We are not the world’s, otherwise we might be ambitious. We are not Satan’s, otherwise we might be covetous. We are not our own, otherwise we might be selfish. We are bought with a price and, therefore, we are His by whom the price is paid. We belong to Jesus and He presents us to His Father—and begs Him to accept us and sanctify us to His own purposes. Do we not most heartily concur in this dedication? Do we not cry, “Father, sanctify us to Your service?” I am sure we do if we have realized our redeemed condition!

Beloved Brothers and Sisters, if the sprinkling of the blood, of which we spoke last Lord’s Day, [*The Blood of Sprinkling (Second Sermon)* Sermon No. 1889, Volume 32] has really taken effect upon us, we belong, from this time forth, unto Him that died for us and rose again! We regard ourselves as God’s children, the liveried servants of the great King—that livery, the robe of righteousness. We were as sheep going astray, but we have now returned unto the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls and, from this day on we are His people and the sheep of His pasture. If any should ask, “To whom do you belong?” We answer, “I belong to Christ.” If any enquire, “What is your occupation?” We reply with Jonah, “I fear God.” We are not now at our own disposal, neither can we hire ourselves out to inferior objects, mercenary aims, or selfish ambitions—for we are engaged by solemn contract to the service of our God! We have lifted up our hands unto the Lord and we cannot draw back. Neither do we wish to withdraw from the delightful compact and Covenant—we desire to keep it even to the end! We seek no liberty to sin, nor license for self—rather do we cry, “Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar. Sanctify us, O Lord! Let us know and let all the world know that we are Yours because we belong to Christ!”

In addition to this, those who belonged to God and were dedicated to His service were *set apart and separated from others*. There was a special service for the setting apart of priests. Certain rites were performed at the sanctifying of dedicated places and vessels. You remember with what solemn service the Tabernacle was set up and with what pomp of devotion the Temple, itself, was set apart for the Divine service? The Sabbath, which the Lord has sanctified, is set apart from the rest of time. To man it

is a *dies non*, because it is the Lord's-Day. The Lord would have those who are dedicated to Him to be separated from the rest of mankind. For this purpose He brought Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees and Israel out of Egypt. "The people shall dwell alone and shall not be reckoned among the nations." The Lord says of His chosen, "This people have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise." Before long this secret purpose is followed by the open call—"Come out from among them, and be you separate; touch not the unclean thing and I will be a Father unto you, and you shall be My sons and daughters." The Church of Christ is to be a chaste virgin, wholly set apart for the Lord Christ—His own words concerning His people are these, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."

By the election of Grace from before the foundation of the world, this distinction commences and the names are written in Heaven! Thereupon follows a redemption, peculiar and special, as it is written, "These were redeemed from among men, being the first fruits unto God and to the Lamb." This redemption is followed by effectual calling wherein men are made to come forth from the old world into the Kingdom of Christ. This is attended with regeneration, in which they receive a new life and so become as much distinguished from their fellow men as the living are from the dead! This separating work is further carried on in what is commonly known as sanctification, whereby the man of God is removed farther and farther from all fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness and is changed from glory unto glory, into an ever-growing likeness of his Lord, who was "holy, harmless, undefiled separate from sinners."

Those who are sanctified in this sense have ceased to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. They have ceased to run with the multitude to do evil. They are not conformed to this present evil world and they are strangers and pilgrims upon the earth. The more assuredly this is true of them, the better! There are some, in these apostate days, who think that the Church cannot do better than to come down to the world to learn her ways, follow her maxims and acquire her "culture." In fact, the notion is that the world is to be conquered by our *conforming* to it. This is as contrary to Scripture as light is to darkness! The more distinct the line between him that fears God and him that fears Him not, the better all round. It will be a black day when the sun, itself, is turned into darkness. When the salt has lost its savor and no longer opposes putrefaction, the world will rot with a vengeance! That text is still true, "You are of God, little children, and the whole world lies in the Wicked One."

The seed of the woman knows no terms with the serpent brood but continual war! Our Lord says that in this matter He came not to send peace on the earth, but a sword. "Because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you." If the Church seeks to cultivate the friendship of the world, she has this message from the Holy Spirit by the pen of the Apostle James—"You adulterers and adulteresses, know you not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." He charges all who would please the world with the black and filthy crime of spiritual adultery! The heart which ought to be given to Christ

and purity must not wander forth wantonly to woo the defiled and polluted things of this present evil world! Separation from the world is Christ's prayer for us.

Put these two things together, dedication to God and separation unto Him, and you are nearing the meaning of the prayer. But, mark you, it is not all separation that is meant, for, as I told you in the reading, there are some who "separate themselves" and yet are sensual, not having the Spirit. Separation for separation's sake savors rather of Babel than of Jerusalem! It is one thing to separate from the world and another thing to be separate from the *Church*. Where we believe that there is living faith in Jesus and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, we are not called to division, but to unity! For actual and manifest sin we must separate ourselves from offenders—but we err if we carry on this separation where it is not authorized by the Word of God. The Corinthians and Galatians were far from being perfect in life and they had made many mistakes in doctrine—yes, even upon vital points—but inasmuch as they were truly in Christ, Paul did not command any to come out of those Churches and to be separate from them—he exhorted them to prove, each man, his own work. And he labored to bring them all back to the one and only Gospel and to a clearer knowledge of it.

We are to be faithful to the Truth of God, but we are not to be of a contentious spirit, separating ourselves from those who are living members of the one and indivisible body of Christ. To promote the unity of the Church by creating new divisions is not wise! Cultivate at once the love of the Truth and the love of the Brethren. The body of Christ will not be perfected by being torn apart! Truth should be the companion of love. If we heartily love even those who are, in some measure, in error, but who possess the life of God in their souls, we shall be the more likely to set them right. Separation from the world is a solemn duty—indeed it is the hard point—the crux and burden of our religion! It is not easy to be filled with love to men and yet for God's sake and even for their own sake, to be separated from them. May the Lord teach us this.

At the same time, this word, "sanctification," means what is commonly understood by it, namely, *the making of the people of God holy*. "Sanctify them," that is, work in them a pure and holy character. "Lord, make your people holy," should be our daily prayer. I want you to notice that this word, here used in the Greek, is not that which is rendered, "Purify," but it has another shade of meaning. Had it meant, "purify," it would hardly have been used in reference to our Lord as it is in the next verse.

It has a higher meaning than that. O Brothers and Sisters, if you are called Christians, there must be no room for doubt as to the fact that you are purged from the common sins and ordinary transgressions of mankind—otherwise you are manifestly liars unto God and deceivers of your own souls! They that are not moral. They that are not honest. They that are not kind. They that are not truthful are far from the Kingdom of God! How can these be the children of God who are not even decent children of *men*? Thus we judge and rightly judge, that the life of God cannot be in that man's soul who abides willfully in any known sin and takes pleasure in it. No, purification is not all. We will take it for granted that you who

profess to be Christians have escaped from the foul pollution of lust and falsehood. But if you have not done so, humble yourselves before God and be ashamed, for you need the very beginnings of Grace! "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh."

But sanctification is something more than mere morality and respectability. It is not only deliverance from the common sins of men, but also from the hardness, deadness and carnality of nature—it is deliverance from that which is of the flesh at its very best—and admittance into that which is spiritual and Divine. That which is carnal comes not into communion with the *spiritual* Kingdom or Christ—we need that the spiritual nature should rise above that which is merely natural. This is our prayer—"Lord, spiritualize us! Elevate us! Make us to dwell in communion with God. Make us to know Him whom flesh and blood cannot reveal or discern." May the Spirit of the living God have full sovereignty over us and perfect in us the will of the Lord, for this is to be sanctified!

Sanctification is a higher word than purification, for it includes that word and vastly more. It is not sufficient to be negatively clean—we need to be adorned with *all* the virtues. If you are merely moral, how does your righteousness exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees? If you pay your lawful debts, give alms to the poor and observe the rites of your religion, what do you do more than others whom you, yourselves, reckon to be in error?

Children of God should exhibit the love of God. They should be filled with zeal for His Glory. They should live generous, unselfish lives. They should walk with God and commune with the Most High. Ours should be a purpose and an aim far higher than the best of the unregenerate can understand. We ought to reach unto a life and a Kingdom of which the mass of mankind know nothing and care less. I am afraid that this spiritual sense of the prayer is one that is often forgotten. Oh that God's Holy Spirit might make us to know it by experimentally feeling it in ourselves! May, "Holiness to the Lord" be written across the brow of our consecrated humanity!

Beloved, this prayer of our Lord is most necessary, for without sanctification how can we be saved, since it is written, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord"? How can we be saved from sin if sin still has dominion over us? If we are not living holy, godly, spiritual lives—how can we say that we are redeemed from the power of evil?

Without sanctification we shall be unfit for service. Our Lord Jesus contemplated the sending of each one of us into the world even as the Father sent Him into the world. But how can He give a mission to unsanctified men and women? Must not the vessels of the Lord be clean?

Without sanctification we cannot enjoy the innermost sweets of our holy faith. The unsanctified are full of doubts and fears and do we wonder? The unsanctified often say of the outward exercise of religion, "What a weariness it is!" And no wonder, for they know not the internal joys of it, having never learned to delight themselves in God! If they walk not in the light of the Lord's Countenance, how can they know the Heaven below which comes of true godliness? Oh, it is a prayer that needs to be prayed

for me, for you, for this Church and for the whole Church of God! "Father, sanctify them through Your truth."

II. Now I want you to notice, in the second place, FOR WHOM THIS PRAYER WAS OFFERED. It was not offered for the outside world. It would not be a suitable prayer for those who are dead in sin. Our Lord referred to the company of men and women who were already saved, of whom He said that they had kept God's Word—"Yours they were, and You gave them to Me." They were, therefore, already sanctified in the sense of being consecrated and *set apart* for holy purposes. And they were also sanctified, in a measure, in the sense of being made holy in character—for the immediate disciples of our Lord, with all their errors and deficiencies—were holy men. It was for the *Apostles* that Jesus thus prayed, so that we may be sure that the most eminent saints need still to have this prayer offered for *them*—"Sanctify them through Your truth." Though, my Sisters, you may be Deborahs, worthy to be called mothers in Israel, yet you need to be made more holy. Though, my Brothers, you may be true fathers in God, of whom the Scripture says, truly, that we have "not many," yet you still need that Jesus should pray for you—"Sanctify them through Your truth."

These chosen ones were sanctified, but only to a degree. Justification is perfect the moment it is received, but sanctification is a matter of *growth*. He that is justified, is justified once and for all by the perfect work of Jesus, but he that is sanctified by Christ Jesus must grow up in all things into Him who is the Head. To make us holy is a life-work and for it we should seek the Divine operation every hour, for, "He that has worked us for the same thing is God." We should rise to the utmost pitch of holy living and never content ourselves with present attainments. Those who are most pure and honorable have yet their shortcomings and errors to mourn over. When the Lord turns the light strong upon us, we soon see the spots upon our clothes—it is, indeed, when we walk in the Light, as God is in the Light, that we see most our need of the cleansing blood of Jesus! If we have done well, to God be the Glory! But we might have done better. If we have loved much, to God's Grace be the praise! But we ought to have loved more. If we have believed and believed steadfastly, we ought to have believed to a far higher degree in our Almighty Friend! We are still below our capacities—there is a something yet beyond us. O you sanctified ones, it is for you that Jesus prays that the Father may still sanctify you!

I want you to notice more particularly that these Believers, for whom our Lord prayed, were to be the preachers and teachers of their own and succeeding generations. These were the handful of seed-corn out of which would grow the Church of the future, whose harvest would gladden all lands. To prepare them to be sent out as Christ's missionaries, they must be sanctified. How shall a holy God send out unholy messengers? An un-sanctified minister is an unsent minister! An unholy missionary is a pest to the tribe he visits! An unholy teacher in a school is an injury, rather than a blessing to the class he conducts! Only in proportion as you are sanctified unto God can you hope for the power of the Holy Spirit to rest on you and to work with you, so as to bring others to the Savior's feet!

How much may each of us have been hampered and hindered by lack of holiness! God will not use unclean instruments! No, He will not even have His holy vessels borne by unclean hands. "To the wicked, God says, What have you to do to declare My statutes?" A whole host may be defeated because of one Achan in the camp—and this is our constant fear. Holiness is an essential qualification to a man's fitness for being used of the Lord God for the extension of His Kingdom. Therefore our Lord's prayer for His Apostles and other workers—"Holy Father, sanctify them."

Furthermore, our Lord Jesus Christ was about to pray, "that they all might be one," and for this desirable result holiness is needed. Why are we not one? Sin is the great dividing element! The perfectly holy would be perfectly united. The more saintly men are, the more they love their Lord and one another—and thus they come into closer union with each other. Our errors and our sins are roots of bitterness which spring up and trouble us—and many are defiled. Our infirmities of judgment are aggravated by our imperfections of character—and our walking at a distance from our God—and these breed coldness and lukewarmness, out of which grow disunion and division, sects and heresies. If we were all abiding in Christ to the fullest, we would abide in union with *each other* and *with God*—and our Lord's great prayer for the unity of His Church would be fulfilled!

Moreover, our Lord finished His most comprehensive prayer by a petition that we might all be with Him—with Him where He is, that we may behold His Glory. Full sanctification is essential to this. Shall the unsanctified dwell with Christ in Heaven? Shall unholy eyes behold His Glory? It cannot be! How can we participate in the splendor and triumphs of the exalted Head if we are not members of His body? And how can a holy Head have impure and dishonest members? No, Brothers and Sisters, we must be holy, for Christ is holy! Uprightness of walk and cleanness of heart are absolutely requisite for the purposes of Christian life, whether here or hereafter. Those who live in sin are the servants of sin! Only those who are renewed by the Holy Spirit unto truth, holiness and love, can hope to be partakers of holy joys and heavenly bliss!

III. I am compelled by shortness of time to be brief upon each point, but I must dwell for a little upon the third subject of consideration which is this—TO WHOM THIS PRAYER IS DIRECTED. "Sanctify them through Your truth." No one can sanctify a soul but Almighty God, the great Father of Spirits. He who made us must also make us holy, or we shall never attain that character. Our dear Savior calls the great God, "*Holy Father*," in this prayer, and it is the part of the holy God to create holiness, while a holy *Father* can only be the Father of holy children, for like begets like. To you that believe in Jesus, He gives power to become the sons of God. And a part of that power lies in becoming holy according to the manner and Character of our Father who is in Heaven. As we are holy, so do we bear the image of that Lord from Heaven who, as the second Man, is the First-Born to whom the many Brethren are conformed. The holy Father in Heaven will acknowledge those as His children upon earth who are holy. The very Nature of God should encourage us in our prayers for holiness, for He will not be slow to work in us to will and to do according to His perfect will.

Beloved, this sanctification is a work of God from its earliest stage. We go astray of ourselves, but we never return to the Great Shepherd apart from His Divine drawing. Regeneration, in which sanctification begins, is wholly the work of the Spirit of God. Our first discovery of wrong and our first pang of penitence are the work of Divine Grace! Every thought of holiness and every desire after purity must come from the Lord, alone, for we are, by nature, wedded to iniquity. So, also, the ultimate conquest of sin in us and the making of us perfectly like our Lord must be entirely the work of the Lord God, who makes all things new, since we have no power to carry on so great a work by ourselves. This is a creation—can we create? This is a resurrection—can we raise the dead? Our degenerate nature can rot into a still direr putrefaction, but it can never return to purity or sweeten itself into perfection—this is of God and God, alone! Sanctification is as much the work of God as the making of the heavens and the earth. Who is sufficient for these things? We go not even a *step* in sanctification in our own strength! Whatever we think we advance of ourselves is but a fictitious progress which will lead to bitter disappointment. Real sanctification is entirely, from first to last, the work of the Spirit of the blessed God, whom the Father has sent forth that He might sanctify His chosen ones. See, then, what a great thing sanctification is and how necessary it is that our Lord should pray unto His Father, “Sanctify them through Your truth.”

The Truth of God, alone, will not sanctify a man. We may maintain an orthodox creed and it is highly important that we should do so, but if it does not touch our heart and influence our character—what is the value of our orthodoxy? It is not the doctrine which, of itself, sanctifies, but the Father sanctifies by means of the doctrine! The Truth is the element in which we are made to live in order to holiness. Falsehood leads to sin, Truth leads to holiness—but there is a lying spirit and there is also the Spirit of Truth—and by these the error and the Truth are used as means to an end. Truth must be applied with spiritual power to the mind, the conscience and the heart, or else a man may receive the Truth of God and yet hold it in unrighteousness! I believe this to be the crowning work of God in man, that His people should be perfectly delivered from evil. He elected them that they might be a peculiar people, zealous for good works. He ransomed them that He might redeem them from all iniquity and purify them unto Himself. He effectually calls them to a high and holy vocation, even to virtue and true holiness.

Every work of the Spirit of God upon the new nature aims at the purification, the consecration, the perfecting of those whom God, in love, has taken to be His own. Yes, more—all the events of Providence around us work towards that one end! For this our joys and our sorrows; for this our pains of body and griefs of heart; for this our losses and our crosses—all these are sacred medicines by which we are cured of the disease of nature and prepared for the enjoyment of perfect spiritual health! All that befalls us on our road to Heaven is meant to fit us for our journey's end. Our way through the wilderness is meant to try us and to prove us, that our evils may be discovered, repented of and overcome—and that thus we may be without fault before the Throne of God at the last. We are being educated

for the skies, being made meet for the assembly of the perfect. It does not yet appear what we shall be, but we are struggling up towards it and we know that when Jesus shall appear, we shall be like He, for we shall see Him as He is. We are rising—by hard wrestling, long watching and patient waiting—we are rising into holiness! These tribulations thresh our wheat and get the chaff away! These afflictions consume our dross and tin to make the gold more pure! All things work together for good to them that love God—and the net result of them all will be the presenting of the chosen unto God, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing!

Thus I have reminded you that the prayer for sanctification is offered to the Divine Father and this leads us to look out of ourselves and wholly to our God! Do not set about the work of sanctification yourselves, as if you could perform it alone. Do not imagine that holiness will necessarily follow because you listen to an earnest preacher, or unite in sacred worship. My Brothers and Sisters, God Himself must work within you! The Holy Spirit must inhabit you and this can only come to you by faith in the Lord Jesus! Believe in Him for your sanctification, even as you have believed for your pardon and justification! He alone can bestow sanctification upon you, for this is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

IV. This is a great subject, but I have but short time, so I have, in the last place, to notice with much brevity HOW SANCTIFICATION IS TO BE WORKED IN BELIEVERS. “Sanctify them through Your truth: Your Word is truth.” Beloved, observe how God has joined holiness and His truth together. There has been a tendency of late to divide truth of doctrine from truth of precept. Men say that Christianity is a life and not a creed—this is a part truth, but very near akin to a lie. Christianity is a life which grows out of the Truth of God. Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth, as well as the Life—and He is not properly received unless He is accepted in that threefold character.

No holy life will be produced in us by the belief of falsehood. Sanctification in visible character comes out of edification in the inner faith of the heart, or otherwise it is a mere shell. Good works are the fruit of true faith and true faith is a sincere belief of the Truth of God. Every Truth leads towards holiness. Every error of doctrine, directly or indirectly, leads to sin. A twist of the understanding will, sooner or later, inevitably bring a contortion of the life. The straight line of the Truth of God drawn on the heart will produce a direct course of gracious walking in the life. Do not imagine that you can live on spiritual carrion and yet be in fine moral health, or that you can drink poisonous error and yet lift up a face without spot before God! Even God, Himself, only sanctifies us by His Truth. Only that teaching will sanctify you which is taken from God's Word! That teaching which is not true, nor the Truth of God, cannot sanctify you! Error may puff you up—it may even make you think that you are sanctified—but there is a very serious difference between boasting of sanctification and being sanctified! And there is a very grave difference between setting up to be superior to others and being really accepted before God. Believe me, God works sanctification in us by His Truth and by nothing else!

But what is the Truth? There is the point. Is the truth that which I imagine to be revealed to me by some private communication? Am I to

fancy that I enjoy some special Revelation and am I to order my life by voices, dreams and impressions? Brothers and Sisters, fall not into this common delusion! *God's Word to us is in Holy Scripture.* All the Truth that sanctifies men is in God's Word! Do not listen to those who cry, "Lo here!" and, "Lo there!" I am plucked by the sleeve almost every day by crazy persons and pretenders who think that they have Revelations from God. One man tells me that God has sent a message to me by him—and I reply, "No, Sir, the Lord knows where I dwell and He is so near to me that He would not need to send to me by you." Another man announces, in God's name, a dogma which, on the face of it, is a lie against the Holy Spirit. He says the Spirit of God told him so-and-so, but we know that the Holy Spirit never contradicts Himself. If your imaginary Revelation is not according to this Word of God, it has no weight with us! And if it is according to this Word, it is no new thing!

Brothers and Sisters, this Bible is enough if the Lord does but use it and quicken it by His Spirit in our hearts. Truth is neither your opinion, nor mine—your message, nor mine! Jesus says, "Your Word is truth." That which sanctifies men is not only truth, but it is the particular Truth of God which is revealed in God's Word—"Your Word is truth." What a blessing it is that all the Truth that is necessary to sanctify us is revealed in the Word of God, so that we have not to expend our energies upon discovering the Truth of God, but may, to our far greater profit, use Revealed Truth for its Divine ends and purposes! There will be no more Revelations—no more are needed! The Canon is fixed and complete—and he that adds to it shall have added to him the plagues that are written in this Book! What need of more when here is enough for every practical purpose? "Sanctify them through Your truth: Your Word is truth."

This being so, the Truth which it is necessary for us to receive is evidently fixed. You cannot change Holy Scripture. You may arrive more and more accurately at the original text, but, for all practical purposes, the text we have is correct enough—and our old Authorized Version is a sound one. Scripture, itself, cannot be broken—we cannot take from it nor add to it. The Lord has never re-written nor revised His Word, nor will He ever do so. Our teachings are full of errors, but the Spirit makes no mistakes. We have the "Retractations" of Augustine, but there are no retractations with Prophets and Apostles. The faith has been delivered once and for all to the saints and it stands fast forever. "Your Word is truth." The Scripture, alone, is absolute Truth, essential Truth, decisive Truth, authoritative Truth, undiluted Truth, eternal, everlasting Truth! Truth given us in the Word of God is that which is to sanctify all Believers to the end of time—God will use it to that end.

Learn, then, my Brothers, how earnestly you ought to search the Scriptures! See, my Sisters, how studiously you should read this Book of God! If this is the Truth of God and the Truth with which God sanctifies us, let us learn it, hold it and stand fast in it! To Him that gave us the Book, let us pledge ourselves never to depart from His testimonies. To us, at any rate, God's Word is Truth. "But they argue differently in the schools!" Let them argue! "But oratory with its flowery speech speaks otherwise!" Let it speak—words are but air and tongues but clay! O God, "Your Word is

truth." "But philosophers have contradicted it!" Let them contradict it! Who are they? God's Word is Truth—we will go no farther while the world stands. But then, let us be equally firm in our conviction that we do not know the Truth aright unless *it makes us holy*. We do not hold Truth of God in a true way unless it leads us to a true life. If you use the back of a knife it will not cut—the Truth of God has its handle and its blade—see that you use it properly. You can make pure water kill a man—you must use every good thing aright or it will not be good. The Truth of God, when fully used, will daily destroy sin, nourish Grace, suggest noble desires and urge to holy acts. O Sirs, I do pray that we may, by our lives, adorn the Doctrine of God our Savior in all things! Some do not. I say this to our shame and to my own hourly sorrow.

The one point of failure to be most deeply regretted would be a failure in the holiness of our Church members. If you act as others do, what witness do you bear? If your families are not graciously ordered; if your business is not conducted upon principles of the strictest integrity; if your speech is questionable as to purity or truthfulness; if your lives are open to serious rebuke—how can God accept you or send a blessing on the Church to which you belong? It is all lies and deceit to talk about your being the people of God when even men of the world shame you! Your faith in the Lord Jesus must operate upon your lives to make you faithful and true! It must check you here and excite you there—it must keep you back from this and drive you on to that—it must constantly operate upon thought and speech and act, or else you know nothing of its saving power! How can I speak more distinctly and emphatically? Do not come to me with your experiences, your convictions and your professions unless you sanctify the name of God in your lives!

O Brothers and Sisters, we had better quit our professions if we do not live up to them! In the name of Him who breathed this prayer just before His face was encrimsoned with the bloody sweat, let us cry mightily unto the Father, "Sanctify us through Your truth: Your Word is truth." As a people, we have stuck unto the Word of the Lord, but are we practically obeying it? We have determined, as a congregation, to keep the old ways and I, for one, as the minister, am solemnly bound to the old faith! Oh that we might commend it by our holiness! Nothing is the Truth of God to me but this one Book—this Infallibly Inspired Writing of the Spirit of God! It is incumbent upon us to show the hallowed influence of this Book. The vows of God are on us, that by our godly lives we should show forth His praises who has brought us out of darkness into His marvelous light.

This Bible is our treasure! We prize each page of it. Let us bind it in the best fashion, in the best Morocco of a clear, intelligent faith. Then let us put a golden clasp upon it and gild its edges by a life of love, truth, purity and zeal. Thus shall we commend the volume to those who have never looked within its pages. Brothers and Sisters, the sacred roll, with its seven seals, must not be held in hands defiled and polluted! But with clean hands and pure heart we must hold it forth and proclaim it among men! God help us so to do for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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BELIEVERS SENT BY CHRIST, AS CHRIST IS SENT BY THE FATHER NO. 2144

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 11, 1890,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“As You have sent Me into the world, even so have
I also sent them into the world.”
John 17:18.*

HERE is a great fact mentioned, namely, that the Father sent the Son into the world. Our Lord's disciples believed this. Jesus says Himself, “They have believed that You did send me.” It is one of the first essentials of saving faith to believe in Christ as the Sent One of God. They had proved, in their own experience, that Jesus was sent of God, for they had found Him to be sent to *them*. Especially they knew this because they had found in Him eternal life. To them it had been eternal life “to know the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom He had sent.”

They had entered into the possession of a new and heavenly life and they rejoiced in it so that to them the fact that God had sent His Son into the world was indisputable. It was a fact upon which they based their salvation! It was their hope, their joy, their theme of thought and subject of conversation. They declared it with the accent of assurance. Our Lord based upon that fact another. He says to His Father, “As You have sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.” As surely as Christ was sent into the world by the Father, so surely are the saints sent into the world by Christ.

Note well that I say, “the saints”—I mean not the Apostles only—but *all* Believers. I dare not limit the reference to what are called ordained ministers or Apostles, for I believe it includes all the chosen of God. Was the prayer, contained in this 17th chapter of John, for the Apostles only? I think not! Surely our Lord prayed for *all* whom the Father had given to Him and not for ministers only. Beyond question, our great Intercessor pleaded for all those whom the Father gave to Him and therefore it is of all these that He speaks in the words of our text. He mentions not only the officers, but the rank and file of the chosen host who have been called by Divine Grace to know Him as sent of God. He says to them all without exception, “As the Father has sent Me, even so I send you.”

I do not for a moment dispute the need of a special call to the office of pastor or elder in the Church of God. Nor do I question that there are officers in the Church of God upon whom peculiar responsibility rests—but no class of men may be exalted into a caste of Brahmins who are, alone, sent into the world by the great Head of the Church. We who spend our lives in teaching are your *servants* for Christ's sake and we rejoice that

you, also, have a high calling of God in Christ Jesus. If we have more knowledge of Scripture or larger gifts of utterance, accept us as your fellow servants whose talents are cheerfully employed for your sakes! But if you have not these same talents, you have others and you are equally given to Christ, to be by Him sent into the world.

This is no trifle, but a very solemn business. To our Lord it was a special matter of prayer. It is here in that prayer which always seemed to me to be the core of the whole Bible. Our Lord pleads not only about our being saved, but about our being *sent*. There is something here which deserves our deepest thought. There are two petitions in our Lord's prayer which bear upon this. First comes the petition—"Holy Father, keep them." You cannot serve God unless He preserves you. You will never keep the Lord's flock unless He first shepherds you. The Lord of the vineyard must keep the keepers or their vineyards will not be kept.

The other prayer immediately precedes the text—"Sanctify them." You cannot go out into the world as the sent ones of Christ unless you are sanctified. God will use no unholy messenger—you must be consecrated and cleansed—devoted and dedicated to God, alone, or else you will not have the first qualification for the Divine mission. Christ's prayer is, "Sanctify them through Your Truth." The more Truth of God you believe, the more sanctified you will be. The operation of the Truth of God upon the mind is to separate a man from the world unto the service of God. Just in proportion as Truth is given up, worldliness and frivolity are sure to prevail.

A Church which grows so enlightened as to neglect the Doctrines of Grace also falls in love with the vain amusements of the world. It has been so in all past ages and it is sadly so today. But a Church which, in a living way, holds fast the Truth once and for all delivered to the saints will also separate itself from the ways of the world—in fact, the world and the worldly Church will shun it—and push it into the place of separation. The more separated we are, after our Master's fashion, the more fit shall we be to do His bidding! Our Lord was evidently most careful as to our commission which He bases upon His own commission and declares to be as certain and real as His own sending by the Father.

He so values this that He prays, "Father, keep them," and, "Father, sanctify them." May those two prayers be heard for *us* and then we shall stand with our loins girt, our shoes on our feet, our lamps trimmed and our lights burning—ready to go forth at the command of the Most High to the very ends of the earth. Our mission by Jesus grows out of His mission by the Father—and we may learn much about it by considering how the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.

I. I would open up this subject by asking you, first, WHAT OUR LORD'S BEING SENT INVOLVED TO HIMSELF, for, to a large extent, there will be a parallel between His being sent and ours. The parallel is drawn by way of *quality*, not of *equality*. Christ's commission is on a higher scale than ours, for He was sent to be a Propitiation and Covenant-Head and so came into positions which it would be presumption for us to dream of oc-

cupying. Still, there is a likeness, though it is only that of a drop in the sea.

Our Lord's mission involved *complete subjection to the Father's will*. He said, "My Father is greater than I"—this did not relate to His essential Nature and dignity as God, but to the *position* which He took up in reference to the Father when He was sent to be our Savior. He that sends is greater than He that is sent—the Savior took up that subordinate position that He might do the Father's will. From that time forth, so long as He remained under His commission, He did not speak His own words nor do His own deeds—but He listened to the Father's will—and what the Father said to Him He both spoke and did.

That is exactly where you and I have to place ourselves now, deliberately and unreservedly. Our Lord sends us and we are to be, in very deed, subordinate to His command in all things. We are no longer masters—we have become servants. Our will is lost in the will of our glorious Superior. If we are ambitious and our ambition is guided by wisdom, it will take us down to that basin and the towel and we shall be willing to wash the disciples' feet to show that we are sent by our condescending Lord. We shall, from now on, have no respect unto our own dignity or interest, but shall lay ourselves out to serve Him to whom we belong. Whatever He says to us we shall aim to do. Although we are sons of God, yet now we are also *servants* and we would not do our own will but the will of Him that sent us.

Oh, to be sound on this point so as to yield our members in perfect obedience and even bring every thought into subjection to Christ! Oh, to die to self and live in Christ! Can you drink of this cup and be baptized with this Baptism? I trust you can and, if so, you shall fulfill the errand upon which He sends you. This meant for our Lord *the quitting of His rest*. He reigned in Heaven—all angels paid Him homage—but when the Father sent Him, He left His high abode. He was laid in the manger, for there was no room for Him in the inn. Where the horned oxen fed, there must the Holy Child be cradled. The royalties of Heaven are left behind—the rest which He enjoyed in the bosom of the Father must be renounced for toil, hunger, thirst and weariness—and the death of the Cross.

Dear Friends, you may serve the Lord and yet be as happy as your Lord was. But if Jesus has sent you into the world you are not to seek ease or comfort—you are not even to make your own *spiritual* comfort the first object of your thought. How nice that evening at home would be! But you are sent and therefore must turn out to win souls. How delightful it would be to read that book through and to leave the class alone! But you must not, for you are sent to instruct and save. From now on you are to consider nothing but how you can answer the design of Him who has sent you. Your aim must be to do the utmost possible for your Lord.

The Christian who does much is still an idler if he could do more. We have never reached the point of diligence till we are doing all that lies in us and are, even then, wishing to do far more. Bought with His precious blood, the vows of the Lord are upon us and we renounce our natural love of ease that we may please Him who has sent us. When sent of God, the

Savior also had *to forego even Heaven itself*. He was here on earth the God-Man, the Mediator and He did not return to the splendor of His Father's court till He could say, "I have finished the work which You gave me to do and now, O Father, glorify You Me." We must not sigh for Heaven while so much is to be done on earth. The rest of Glory will come soon—but just now we have to do with the work of Grace. Let us stick to our work here below and do it thoroughly, for our Lord has gone above and is preparing a place for us.

Is it not wonderful how God, even now, denies Himself for the salvation of men? Why does not our Lord come at once in His Glory? Why do we not see the millennial reign begin? It is because of the long-suffering of God—He waits and puts off the closing scene because He is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." He keeps back even the glorious Advent to give men space for salvation! That for which Jesus longs, and the Spirit longs, and the spouse longs, is kept back in mercy to the guilty!

The Bridegroom postpones His marriage day that men may be brought to Him by the Divine long-suffering. If Jesus can do this, surely we may well wait out of compassion to our fellow men. Even our hope of being forever with the Lord may wait a while. So long as there is another sinner for us to rescue we will remain in this land of our exile. That is what our Lord means—the Father has sent Me from Heaven and kept Me out of Heaven for the sake of men—and even so shall I detain *you* among the tents of Kedar for a while that you may bring in My redeemed through the Gospel. The words of our text are, "As you have sent Me *into the world*" and this implies *affinity with men*.

Our Lord was not sent to the edge of the world to look over the fence and converse hopefully from a distance. He was sent right *into* the world. He took on human Nature and became bone of our bone. We read, "Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners for to hear Him." He was a Man among men. In this way Jesus has sent you, my Brothers and Sisters, into families, into offices, into establishments, into places where you labor for daily bread among a company of ungodly men. Do not cry out because you have thus to mingle with them.

Your Lord was sent into the world, not, I say, to the outskirts of it, nor to some elevated mountain high above it from which He might look down. He was sent into the world in an emphatic sense and so are you sent, wisely sent, to tarry even among unconverted, infidel and impure men that you may do for Christ His great work and make known His salvation! He was sent into the world and this involved *abiding in humiliation*. "The world knew Him not," therefore the world knows *us* not because it knew Him not. You are not sent into the world to be honored and pampered—nor even to receive your righteous due. If God aimed at *your* immediate glorification He would take you to Heaven. But He aims at your *humiliation*, that you may be like His First-Born.

You are to have fellowship with the Only-Begotten in many ways and among the rest you are to be partakers of His suffering! Expect to be mis-

understood, misrepresented, belied, ridiculed and so forth—for so was the Sent of the Father. You are to expect evil treatment—for as the Father sent His Son into a world which was sure to treat Him ill, so has He sent you into the same world which will treat you in the same manner if you are like your Lord. Be not surprised at persecution but expect it and take it as part of the Covenant consequences, for as Ishmael mocked Isaac, so will the seed after the flesh persecute that which is born according to promise.

In a word, your being sent of Christ involves *unreserved dedication to His work*. When Christ came into the world He did nothing but what His Father sent Him to do. He had no secondary objective of any sort. From the reservoir of His being no little stream trickled away in waste—the whole of it went to turn the great mill-wheel of His life. The whole current and force of His Nature went in one way, working out one design. Now, as the Father sent Jesus, so has Jesus sent *you* to be from now on by occupation a Christian. You are to be consecrated wholly and alone to the one object for which Christ has set you apart.

There may be other lawful objectives but these you render subsidiary to the one objective of your life. You have but two eyes and those eyes look to your Lord. From now on you belong to Christ—body, soul and spirit—from the morning light to the evening shade and through the night watches. There is not a hair of your head but what Jesus values, for He has put it down in the inventory—“the very hairs of your head are all numbered.” Give Him, then, every single power, however feeble. Give Him every part of your nature, however insignificant. Let your whole being be the Lord’s for, “you are not your own; you are bought with a price.”

“This is a high standard,” says one. My Brothers and Sisters, it is none too high and it is sad that any should think it so. God help you to know that you are sent and clearly to perceive what your mission involves. We, too, are missioned from above! We, too, are to have a hand in the saving of the world!

II. Secondly, having thus shown you the parallel so far, I now ask you to CONSIDER WHY OUR LORD WAS SENT INTO THE WORLD. *Our Lord came here with one design*. Christ was not sent to teach a correct system of philosophy. He was not Plato, but Jesus—not a sage, but a Savior. He could have solved the problems of the universe but He did not even allude to them. He was not an Aristotle, ruling the world of human thought, although He could have done so easily had He chosen.

Blessed be His name, He came to save from *sin* and this no Plato or Aristotle could have done! All the sages and philosophers put together are not worth so much as the little finger of Christ! Christ entered into no rivalry with the academy—He came on a very different errand. Neither was our Lord sent to be an inventor or a discoverer. All the discoveries that have been made in modern times could have been at once revealed by Him but that was not His objective and He kept scrupulously to His one design.

He could have told us the secret of the Dark Continent but He was not sent for that end. He could have anticipated all that we have slowly learned and saved the world the long processes of experiment and observation—but this was not the objective of His mission. He did not come to be a conqueror. God gave us in Him neither Alexander nor Caesar—of such slaughterers the world has always had enough and to spare. He conquers evil but not by the sword. Our Lord did not come even to be a politician, a reformer of governments, a rectifier of social economics. There came one to Him who said, “Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me.” You might have supposed that the Lord would have arbitrated in that case but He did not do so, for He said, “Who made Me a judge or a divider over you?”

He kept to His one business and we shall be wise to do the same. Point me to a single instance in which He interfered with the government of Pilate or of Herod! Had He anything to say about the tyranny of Caesar? When He takes Caesar’s penny in His hand, He simply says, “Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s, and unto God the things that are God’s.” He was none of Caesar’s for He belonged to God and to God alone! Should not Christian people take heed that they follow Christ in this unity of aim and purpose?

This I know, I am not sent to preach to you any new philosophical system nor to advocate any political party, nor to meddle with any of those social matters which can be better managed by others. It is mine to preach the Gospel of the Grace of God and this one thing I do! If you can serve Christ and your fellow man in any way, do it—but never get away from your one aim and purpose. If we are enabled to save men’s souls by the Holy Spirit resting upon our teaching we may die content even though we have left 50 other excellent things undone. There are enough of the dead to bury the dead. Burying the dead is a good work—but this will be a labor more congenial to the dead around us than to ourselves—let us leave it to them.

We cannot do everything—let us do that which we are sent to do. Oh, that every Christian would feel that whatever else he would like to be, his first business is to be a servant of Christ! Your first concern is to serve Christ and it ought to be your second concern to serve Christ! Then I would claim that it should be your third and I shall get far on in numbers before I should allow any other character to take a leading position. May no possible objective bear any comparison in your desires and endeavors in comparison with your resolve to glorify God your Savior!

Notice, further, that *our Lord was not sent to be ministered unto, but to minister*. I fear that many of His professed servants think they have been sent to be ministered unto. Their religion consists in coming to places of worship to be ministered unto. Through the week they would like to have very particular attention from the pastor and the Church officers—and you hear them grumbling that they are not sufficiently looked after. Surely they must have been sent, not to minister, but to be ministered unto!

Brethren, let us give them as much as we can of our services for they evidently need them, but Jesus was not sent to be visited and waited on, and served—He came to minister to others and He did so to the fullest! He could truly say, “I am among you as He that serves.” Beloved Friend, you know that it is more blessed to give than to receive—therefore feel it to be your joy to live as one who is sent by Jesus to be the servant of the Church and the winner of souls! Let us enquire what was Christ’s work upon earth. It was, first, *to teach*. Wherever He went He was an instructor of the ignorant. He preached of the kingdom and of faith and of Divine Grace.

We are to teach. “I do not know anything,” says one. Then do not tell it but first go to the Lord and ask Him to teach *you* something. And as soon as ever you know the A B Cs of the Gospel, go and teach somebody that A B C. You need not teach him D E F and G H I till you have advanced so far yourself—but teach all you are taught. Learn first, but when you have learned, then let others learn from you. As your Master, be teaching the Gospel everywhere. Forget not that *He lived* and His living was *teaching*. His actions were so many heads of His life-sermon. His every movement was instructive. He went about doing good. Make your life tally with your teaching and make your life to be a part of your teaching—no, make it the best part of your discourse. The most solid and most emphatic teaching that comes from you should be what you *do* rather than what you say—and Christ has sent you into the world for that end.

Our Lord came, also, *to suffer for the cause of truth and righteousness*. If you follow Him closely, you must expect to suffer, also. Do not cry out about it, as though some strange thing had happened to you. Take joyfully the spoiling of your good name. If Christ has sent you forth like sheep in the midst of wolves, wonder not that the wolf gives you a bite or two—is it not his nature? Let the wolf howl, but do not trouble yourself about it for what else should a wolf do? When pain, weakness and bodily infirmity seize on you and you lie for days and weeks tossed with pain all through the sleepless nights, take it all patiently and say, “I am sent to show patience, that men may see what Grace can do.”

You are sent *to save men*. It is true that you have not to *redeem* them by blood—that the Lord has done most effectually! You have not to suffer as a substitute—for His one Sacrifice has sufficed. But you are sent to seek and to save that which was lost by proclaiming salvation by Christ Jesus. Every man who is saved, himself, should feel that he is called at once to labor for the salvation of others! Your election is not only election to personal salvation but to personal *service*. You are chosen that, through your being saved, others may be called into the like felicity. View this very clearly and get it fixed in your minds—then carry it out in your daily lives.

“Ah,” you say, “our Lord might very well give Himself up to His work, for if He had not done so the whole world must have perished.” Listen, *your work is also indispensable*. How is the work of Christ to be made effectual among the sons of men for their salvation? Must they not *hear* it that they

may believe it? How shall they hear without a preacher? I venture to say that as the salvation of man depended upon Christ, so, in another sense, the salvation of men at this hour depends upon the Church of God. If Believers do not go and preach Christ, who will? If you that love Him do not commend Him, who will? Do you think that the Houses of Parliament will ever meet together to consider the evangelization of the heathen? If the Government did take such work in hand, it could do nothing for it is not a fit agent and it would hinder rather than help the good design.

Do you think the worldlings, the skeptics, the critics will ever unite to spread the kingdom of Christ and save the souls of men? Do not dream it! If the Church of God does not go forth on her holy errand, nothing will be done. "But it might be done by angels," says one. I know it might, but, "unto the angels has He not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak." He has committed unto *us* the word of reconciliation, even to us who are men—and we must attend to it, or great guilt will lie upon us. I should like every Christian to feel that he has to be the instrument of salvation to certain persons. It is all allotted—the whole country is measured and divided, and we have each our portion which we must conquer for our Lord.

If I belong to the tribe of Judah, I have to help my Brothers and Sisters to drive out the Canaanites from our portion. If you belong to the tribe of Issachar, or Benjamin, you must look to your own allotment and clear it of the enemy. Joshua is the leader, but every Israelite is in His army. Christ has power over all flesh, as the Head of the body, and He has given to each of His members a portion of His power so that each member of His body has power over some portion of the "all flesh," and that power must be used in the giving of eternal life to as many as the Father has given to Jesus! God grant that you may feel this and may go to your work as Christ went to His!

III. This leads me a little further and I now invite you to CONSIDER HOW OUR LORD CAME, for this will show us how we ought to go forward when we are sent. First, our Lord came *with alacrity*. The work of our Redeemer was no forced work. He was sent, but He willingly came—

***"Down from the shining seats above
With joyful haste He fled."***

"Lo, I come to do Your will, O God," He said. He came cheerfully among the sons of men. You that are sent of Christ must always go gladly to your service—never look as if you were driven to the field like oxen which love not the plow.

God does not delight in a slavish spirit. If we serve Christ because of the yoke of duty, we shall serve badly. But when our service is our pleasure—when we thank God that to us is this Grace given that we should "preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ"—then we shall labor wisely, zealously and acceptably. Next, our Lord came *with authority*. The Lord God had sent Him. He had the Father at His back. Be sure that when Jesus sends you, you are invested with authority and they that despise you do it at their peril. Your blunders and mistakes are not

authorized—but so far as you speak His Word with a desire for His Glory—he that receives you receives Christ, even as our Lord said, “He that receives Me receives Him that sent Me.” God is with you, be not afraid—your Lord will not let your words fall to the ground.

Our Lord came *with ability*, too. What did His ability consist in? Mainly in this—“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me.” This is also where your sufficiency must be found and you can have as much as you please of it. You cannot get every faculty of the brain, but you can have every influence of the Spirit. It may be you cannot reach the highest form of education or of utterance, but these things are not vital—God can speak by your stammering tongue, even as in the case of Moses. You shall do the Lord’s work and do it well, if you are anointed of the Holy Spirit. He who does Christ’s work in Christ’s power works an abiding work which will eternally glorify God. He who sends us out into the world to carry the Gospel to every creature will give us Divine Grace to obey His bidding.

Our Lord came *with absorption*. Jesus came, as I have said before, to do what He was sent to do and nothing else. He meddled with nothing beyond His vocation—every thought of His Manhood, every power of His Godhead He devoted to fulfilling the errand on which He came. His zeal had eaten Him up. He was covered with it as with a cloak. The Man Christ was all on fire and all on fire with one desire—that He might finish the work which His Father had given Him to do—for this joy He endured the Cross, despising the shame.

Our Lord came *with abiding resolve* to go through with His mission to the end. He never thought of going back. He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem. He pressed through shame and through death to accomplish our redemption. In these days we shall not do much unless we have a desperate determination to persevere in the teeth of difficulties. Those who can go back will go back. Remember how Gideon proclaimed throughout the host that if any man was faint-hearted he might go home? So do we proclaim today—go home if you are wavering! If you do not love Christ enough to be resolved to serve Him to the last, what is the good of you? You will break down and lose us the victory at some important crisis.

He that has been bought with the blood of Christ and knows it, feels that he must endure to the end—for only he that endures to the end shall be saved. We go because our Lord’s sending constrains us. “Woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel!” Woe is unto you if you do not teach the children, or speak to individuals, or write letters, or in some way fulfill your mission!

IV. Bear with me a little, while I bid you CONSIDER HOW OUR LORD BEHAVED AS THE SENT ONE. Oh, that we may learn from Him how to fulfill our own mission! Our Lord *began early*. While He was yet a youth, He said, “Know you not that I must be about My Father’s business?” As soon as ever a man is converted, he should enquire, “Lord, what will You have me do?” Young Believer, do not let many weeks pass over your head before you have attempted something for your Lord. I will correct that ex-

hortation—I wish you would not let a single *day* pass away without your bearing testimony for your Master.

But, next, *our Lord waited very patiently*. He was 30 years old before He preached openly. We do not know all that He did in the workshop at Nazareth. Is it not possible that He supported His widowed mother by His labor? We do not know, but of this we are sure, that it is the first duty of many young men to look after their parents. It is the duty of all to “show piety at home.” Many Christian women will have done well if they have carried out home duties. She was a holy woman upon whose grave they placed this epitaph, “She made home happy.” This is what Jesus did for the first 30 years of His life. He was doing the Father’s will when He was a young Man at home.

Though He did not preach, yet while He was working and learning He was carrying out the purpose for which He was sent. When the time came for Him to commence His more public service, *He sought proper entrance* into it. He did not blunder into God’s work by a rush and a leap—He went to John to be baptized and to be publicly recognized as the Messiah. John was the porter and he opened the gate to the Good Shepherd who came in by the door and did not climb up some other way. He came to John who represented the prophetic chair of the Jewish Church and so He entered into His work as Minister in a lawful and proper way.

I like our young friends, when they feel their time has come for public service, to begin in right style and due order, carrying out the Lord’s mind in the Lord’s way. Willfulness in beginning may throw a man out of gear as to his future work and it argues a spirit ill-prepared for acceptable service. That being passed, *see how He labored at His work*. He was always doing the Father’s will. He worked all day and every day and everywhere, with everybody. Some Christian people can only render occasional service. They are very good at a Convention. They save up their holiness for meetings. At a religious gathering they are in fine form, but they are not everyday saints. The kind of person the Church needs most is the maid-of-all-work—the worker who can turn his hand to anything which Providence allots him and is glad to do so, however humbling it may be.

My venerated grandmother owned a set of choice china, which, I believe, is, part of it, in existence today. Why does it exist now? It has seen little service! It only came out on high-days and holidays—maybe once in six months when ministers and friends came to tea. It was a very nice set of old china—too good for children to break. Some Christians are like that fine old ware—it would not do to use them too often. They are too good for everyday. They do not teach their servants and try to win the poor people in their own neighborhood to Christ—but they talk well at a Conference. Oh, you fine bits of egg-shell china, I know you! Don’t fear! I am not going to break you. Yet I would somewhat trouble you by the remark that in the case of such ware as you are more pieces get broken in the cupboard than on the table!

You will last all the longer if you get to work for Christ in everyday work. Jesus was not sent out for particular occasions and neither are you.

We use our Lord for a thousand hallowed purposes and even so will He use us from time to time if we are but ready and willing. Notice about our Lord's service, that *His prayers always kept pace with His work*. This is where most of us fail. When our Lord had a long day's work, we find Him taking a long night's prayer. "I have so much to do," says one, "that I could not be long in prayer." That is putting the case upwards the wrong way! When you have most to do, you have most need to pray—and unless you keep up the proportion, your offering will fail in quality.

The holy incense was sweet before God because in that sacred compound there was a proportion of each spice. And so, in our lives, there must be a due measure of Word, work, prayer and praise. I may say of prayer what one said of salt in the Scripture, "Salt without prescribing how much." Prayer can never be in excess. You can salt meat too much but you cannot salt your service too much with prayer. If you are accustomed to pray in your walk and works at all hours and seasons you do not err. There never will be in any of us a superfluity of devotion. God help you to be like His Son, who, though He was sent and had the Father with Him, yet could not live without prayer! May you not only feel your need of prayer but fill up that need abundantly!

Once more, in all that Jesus did *He remained in constant fellowship with the Father*. He said, "He that sent Me is with Me." That is a beautiful sentence. Let me repeat it—"He that sent Me is with Me." The great Father had never to call to Jesus and say, "Come nearer. You are departing from Me. You are too busy with Mary and Lazarus and Peter and John and so You are forgetting Me." No, no. He did always the things that pleased God and He was always in communion with the great Father in everything that He did. "Ah!" says one, "it is hard to commune with God and be very busy." Yes, but it will prove harder, still, to have been very busy and *not* to have dwelt with God. It is easy to do much when you walk with God—and easier, still, to make a great fuss and do nothing because the Lord is away.

To get near Omnipotence will not make *you* omnipotent, but it will make you *feel* Omnipotence working with you. Oh, that we might thus dwell with God as Jesus did, for He has sent us for this, even as the Father sent Him! I would leave with you four words. We are sent, therefore whenever we try to press Christ upon men *we are not guilty of intrusion*. We have sometimes known strangers asked in this place about their souls, by certain of our friends, and they have grown angry at such a question. This is very silly of them, is it not? But I hope the friend who meets with an angry answer will not be at all hurt.

You are not intrusive though the angry person says you are. You are sent and where Jesus sends you, you have a right to go. The postman frequently knocks at the door as late as ten o'clock. I suppose you need to be asleep. Do you cry out—"How dare you make that noise?" No, he is the *postman*—an officer of Her Majesty—and he is sent out with the last mail and must deliver the letters. You cannot blame him for doing that for which he is sent! Go and knock at the doors of the careless and the

sleepy! Give them a startling word. Do not let them perish for lack of a warning or an invitation. Go on without fear—your commission is your warrant—if Jesus has sent you, you have a right to speak even to princes and kings!

Next, we are sent, therefore *we dare not run away*. If Jesus bids us go forward, we must not retreat. If what we have preached and taught is of God, if we are ridiculed for it let us take no notice but steam ahead. Put more coals in the furnace! Get the steam up and go faster than ever in the same course. We defy the devil to stop us for we are sent! Next, we are sent, therefore *we are sure to be helped*. Our King never sends a servant on an errand at his own charges. *Our* own power fails us, but He never allows *His* power to fail us when engaged in His service. Those who are sent shall be sustained! But, if we are sent, remember, lastly, *we have to give an account*. Our Lord does not call for the timesheet every night, but a timesheet is kept, all the same—and there will be a day for passing in the checks and we shall have to answer for what we have done.

I speak not now to you ungodly ones, whose account will be terrible at that Last Great Day. God save you! May you believe on Him whom God has sent! But now I speak to Christian people—you will have to render in your account and may God grant you may not have to make a lamentable return in this fashion—“On such a day so much wood, and on such a day so much hay, and on such a day so much stubble.” Let there be down in your book nothing but gold, silver and precious stones—for it must all be tried with fire—and if you yourself are saved, if your work is burned up you will suffer loss. What pain to find your lifework to be a lot of wood, hay and stubble which will blaze furiously and die out in ashes!

You know what I mean—so much time spent in planning frivolous amusements for the people, so much talent expended in teaching what is not the Gospel, so much zeal consumed upon matters which do not concern eternal things—all this will burn. Beloved, do your Master’s work! Win souls! Preach Christ! Expound your Bibles! Pray men to be reconciled to God—plead with men to come to Christ! This kind of work will stand the fire and when the Last Great Day shall dawn, this will remain to glory and honor! God bless you, Brethren, for Christ’s sake!

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 17.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—257, 258, 262.**

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CHRIST'S PRAYER FOR BELIEVERS

NO. 3133

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[ON BEHALF OF THE GOSPEL MINISTERS' RELIEF SOCIETY.]

*"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also who shall believe on Me through their word."
John 17:20.*

IN the very opening of this subject one feels inexpressibly delighted to see the wondrous love of our Savior towards His people. He here promises that He will intercede for each of them before His Father's Throne and He declares that this intercession also rises for those who are yet uncalled, unconverted and unregenerated! Mark the depth of His affection—He spends all His time in continually interceding for His people. I marvel at the condescension of Jesus Christ, that His people's names are always on His lips. When we consider that notwithstanding all His exceeding Grace and affection towards them, they transgress and rebel, it appears amazing that He should mention their names, or that He should regard their persons! But when we remember that, day by day, in that land where there is no night, He who stands before His Father's Throne bears perpetually on His breast their names deeply cut in the precious jewels and stones of the breastplate, and always with outspread hands, pleads for them, we cannot but admire His love for them and feel a deep veneration for that Divine Grace which makes Him declare, "For Zion's sake will I not hold My peace and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest until the righteousness thereof goes forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burns."

You must also note here the peculiar knowledge which our Savior, Jesus Christ, has of all His people, as well as His particular love for them, for He says He prays for those who are yet uncalled. Now, none of us who have faith in God, none of those called and led to believe in Jesus, are unknown to Him. He knows His redeemed as well in one condition as another. He knows which of two drunks shall turn and become one of His family. There are none so sunk in the depths of sin and wickedness that if they are His by the Covenant of His Grace, do not even *now* share in His intercession! He knows His Beloved when there is no visible mark by which to know them. He discerns His sheep when, to other people, they seem like wolves or goats. He recognizes His family when they are

black as the tents of Kedar and He knows they shall be fair as the curtains of Solomon! He knows His children when they do not know themselves to be His, when they fancy they are lost beyond rescue, or when they foolishly conceive that they can save themselves. Yes, and when all hope fails them—when it seems that the Lord does not know them and the Gospel does not know them—when no Christian knows them and the minister can give them no comfort—Christ knows them even then, for it is still written, “I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for those whom You have given Me out of the world; those who have not yet believed; but who shall believe through the word of those who are already called.”

Another thought before we pass to the subject, for we need to suggest a few of these thoughts just to start with, as they are in the text. The other thought is this—mark how Jesus loves all His people with the same affection. He could not pray for those few who, in His lifetime, had believed on Him without suddenly (to speak after the manner of men), recollecting that these were but a handful and, therefore, He stirs Himself up and says, “My Father, neither pray I for these, alone, but also for them who shall believe on Me through their word”—as much as to say, “These are not My special favorites because they are converted so early. I do not love these better than others. I pray also for those who shall yet be called. I pray as much for one of My people as for another.” It is well said by the Apostle Paul, “there is no difference.” And verily, Beloved, there is no difference in the affection of God towards His children! There is an elect out of the elect, I will acknowledge, as to gifts and standing and as to the labor they may accomplish in this world—but there is no election out of the elect as for a deeper extent of love! They are all loved alike! They are all written in the same book of eternal love and life. They were all purchased with the same precious blood of the Savior. One was not purchased with His foot, another with His hand, but *all* with His very heart's blood. They are all justified with the same righteousness, all sanctified by the same Spirit and they shall all enter the same Heaven! They are all saved by the same Grace, loved by the same love, heirs of the same inheritance—and Jesus Christ puts them all together when He says, “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them, also, who shall believe on Me through their word.”

I. Let us now proceed to the text. The first thing we learn from it is this, that GOD LOVES HIS PEOPLE BEFORE THEY BELIEVE ON HIM.

Jesus Christ would never pray for those whom He did not love. He is no hypocrite in His prayers. Some people are. Many prayers are not worth buying. Indeed, they are not worth taking gratis—they are not prayers at all! I have heard some pray for their Brothers in the ministry and at the same time they do not act with them, or for them. We have seen many bow the knee in prayer for such-and-such a person and when they rise, their knees are unbent, but their hands are raised to strike the very person for whom they were praying! We have too many hypocritical

prayers that are good for nothing! We might roll many into a parcel and nobody would pick them up in the streets—they are worse than useless, they are absolutely wicked! For a man to bend his knees and utter the hypocritical language of affection before God which he never feels in his heart is little short of blaspheming God! We must have very light thoughts of God when we try to deceive Him with such prayers as these. But Jesus Christ never prayed a deceitful prayer. If He intercedes for any, He loves them. If He pleads for any, He has chosen them. If He asks His Father that they may be blessed, we are sure that He asks it from His heart. Christ's prayers all come from His inmost soul. You never hear Him mentioning anyone's name before the Throne of God whom He does not really love with an eternal affection. Hence, then, if Jesus Christ prayed for His people before they were called and before they believed—and if His intercession implies love—He must have loved His people before they believed on Him.

This will very easily appear to you to be a Doctrine of Truth if we consider the Scriptures at large. Some men will talk against it as a wonderfully wicked Doctrine. I refer to those who believe in creature merit and who imagine that we are "*made children of God*" *by some act of our own*. But I think no sincere and earnest student of Scripture will ever believe that God commences to love His people when they begin to love Him! Such a thought would be utterly inconsistent with the Nature of God. Do you not know that God is an eternal, self-existent Being, that to say He loves *now*, is, in fact, to say He *always did love*, since with God there is no past and can be no future? What we call past, present and future, He wraps up in one eternal NOW. And if you say that He loves you *now*, you thereby say that He loved you yesterday, He loved you in the past eternity and He will love you forever—for *now* with God is past, present and future! Those who talk of God's beginning to love His people know not "what they say, nor whereof they affirm." They might speak of man beginning to love. They might speak of angels beginning to love. But of God we never can since He, without beginning, had a deathless love in His heart. He has an affection which has no source except in Himself. He could not begin, for He is without beginning of years and without end of days! From everlasting to everlasting He is God—and from everlasting to everlasting His mercies extend to His people.

That is an argument, I think, that none can answer—that God loved His wandering people not only because Christ intercedes for uncalled ones, but because, from the very Nature of God, He must have loved them forever if He loves them at all. But we do not need this proof that God loved His people before they believed. Go to Calvary and you shall see the greatest proof. Did my Savior die for me because I believed on Him? No! I was not then in existence. I was not even formed, "and curiously worked in the lowest parts of the earth." Could the Savior, then, have died because I had faith when I was not in existence? Could that

have been the origin of the Savior's love towards me? Oh, no! My Savior died for me long before I believed!

"But," you say, "He foresaw that you would have faith and, therefore, He loved you." What did He foresee about my faith? Did He foresee that I would get that faith, myself, and that I would believe on Him of myself? No, my Friends, Christ could not foresee that because no Christian will ever say that faith came of itself without the gift and without the assistance of the Holy Spirit! I have met with a great many, and talked about the matter, but I never knew one who could put his hand on his heart and say, "I believed in Jesus without the assistance of the Holy Spirit." I have seen many dying men and asked them this question, and never did I meet with such an one. *God foresaw that He would give you faith and therefore loved you*—is not that absolutely absurd? It is as much as to say, I foresee I shall give a beggar a shilling when I go out of this place and, therefore, because I foresee that gift, I love him, or you foresee that you will give something tonight towards the Society for the Relief of Faithful Gospel Ministers and, therefore, you will then love God's ministers because you foresee you will give them something! My gift is not the cause of my benevolence, but my benevolence is the cause of my giving it! God does not love His people because they have faith—He loved them long before. Faith is the gift of God. Does my natural father love me because he fed me and because he clothed me? No, he clothed and fed me because he loved me—but his love was prior to his gift. His gifts did not draw his love to me because he loved me *before* he gave them. And if any man says, "God loves me because I can do this or that for Him," he talks nonsense! God cannot love me because of what He has given me Himself. You may say, "He loves me because I love Him," but God gave you that love! God does not love you because you are so holy—you are holy because God loves you! And your holiness is God's *gift*.

In the very beginning, when this great universe lay in the mind of God like unborn forests in the acorn cup—long before the echoes waked the solitudes, before the mountains were brought forth and long before the light flashed through the sky—God loved His chosen creatures! Before there were creatures, when the ether was not fanned by the angel's wings. When space itself had not an existence. When there was nothing save God alone—even then, in that loneliness of Deity, and in that deep quiet and profundity—His heart moved with love for His chosen. Their names were written on His heart and then were they dear to His soul! Jesus loved His people before the foundation of the world, even from eternity. He purchased me with His blood. He let His heart run out in one deep gaping wound for me long before I loved Him! Yes, when He first came to me, did I not spurn Him? When He knocked at the door and asked for entrance, did I not drive Him away and do despite to His Grace? Ah, I can remember that I full often did—until at last, by His effectual Grace, He said, "I must, I will come in"—and then He turned my heart and made me love Him! But even until now I would have resisted Him had it not

been for His Grace. Well, then, since He purchased me when I was dead in sins, does it not follow as a necessary and logical consequence that He must have loved me? And therefore, the Savior said, "Neither pray I for these, alone, but for them also who shall believe on Me through their word."

II. The second thing we learn from the text is THE USE OF A GOSPEL MINISTRY.

Captious and quibbling persons will object, "You say that God loves His people and, therefore, they will be saved. Then what is the good of your preaching?" What is the good of your preaching? When I say that God loves a multitude that no man can number, a countless host of the race of men, do you ask me what is the good of preaching? *What is the good of preaching?* To fetch these diamonds of the Lord out of the dung-hill, to go down to the depths, as the diver does, to fetch up God's pearls from the place where they are lying! *What is the good of preaching?* To cut down the good corn and gather it into the garner. *What is the good of preaching?* To fetch out God's elect from the ruins of the Fall and make them stand on the Rock, Christ Jesus, and see their standing sure! Ah, you who ask what is the good of preaching because God has ordained some to salvation, we ask you whether it would not be a most foolish thing to say, because there is to be a harvest, what is the good of sowing? There is to be a harvest, what is the use of reaping? The very reason why we sow and reap is because we feel assured there is to be a harvest! And if, indeed, I believed there was not a number who must be saved, I could not go into a pulpit again! Only once make me think that no one is certain to be saved and I will not care to preach! But now I know that a countless number must be saved, I am confident that Christ, "shall see His Seed, He shall prolong His days." I know that if there is much to dispirit me in my ministry and I see but little of its effects, yet He shall keep all whom the Father has given Him—and this makes me preach! I come into this Chapel tonight with the assurance that God has some child of His in this place—not yet called—and I feel confident that He will call someone by the use of the ministry, so why not by me? I know there are not a few souls whom God has given me through my ministry, not only hundreds, but thousands. I have seen some hundreds of those who profess to have been brought to God through my preaching at Park Street and elsewhere, and with that confidence I must go on. I know that Jesus must have a "Seed." His people must increase and it is the very purpose of the ministry to seek them out and bring them into God's fold. Our Savior tells us the use of the ministry is that they may "believe on Me through *their word*."

There is one peculiarity about this. Christ says, "They shall believe on Me through their word." Have you ever heard people call out about running after men? They say, "You are all running after such-and-such a *man*." What then, would you have them run after—a woman? You say,

“The people go after one particular man.” Whom else shall they go after? Some persons say, “We went to such-and-such a place and the people there love their minister too much.” That would be very dreadful, but it is not so. As for ministers being in danger of being ruined by too much love, it very seldom falls to their lot! Very generally they get quite as many kicks as anything else—and if they do get too much love in any particular place, they get too much of the reverse somewhere else. If we get a little sweet, somebody else is sure to put in much that is bitter. Is it not singular that Christ should say, “They shall believe on Me through *their* word?” Now, do God’s people believe on Christ through the word of the ministry? We know that our faith does not rest on the word of man, but on the Word of God. We do not rest on any man, yet it is through “*their*” word—that is, through the word of the Apostles—and through the word of every faithful minister!

I take it that *the Gospel is the minister’s own word when he speaks from experience*. What is in the Bible is God’s Word. What God speaks to me by experience becomes my word as well as God’s. And it is then “*their*” word when ministers come into the pulpit with God’s Word in their hearts. I think a minister is not only called to preach what he finds in the Bible—the mere naked Doctrines—but what he has experienced in his own heart, what he has tasted, felt and handled. If he does this, he will be greatly in danger of being called an egotist. Very likely he will use too many, “I’s.” Well, he cannot preach John Smith’s experience, or anybody else’s experience—he can only preach his own—so then he will have to say, “I.” But if he does not preach experimentally what he has felt, it will not be through *his* word! When we speak that which we know and testify that which we have seen and felt—if we say we know the Savior will pardon sinners because He has pardoned us—then it is not only God’s Word, but it is also *our* word! If I say to a child of God, “Go, and cast your burden on the Lord and you will find relief, for I have done so,” then it is not only God’s Word, but my word.

When he has proved the Savior’s Word by experience, then it becomes the minister’s word, *as also when he has it manifested to him by the Holy Spirit*. Some people say that these manifestations are all nonsense. I have heard many object to applied texts. Such men do not understand much about the real law of piety, or else they would see texts manifested to them at one time which they had never seen before. I know many of my ministering Brothers who now testify that they have sometimes taken a text and tried to break it. They have smitten it with a sledgehammer, but they could not get an atom off it. And they have had to throw it aside. But another time, my Friends, when that same text comes before us, though it seemed hard as granite when we took it up in our hands before, it now crumbles and breaks in pieces! Why? Because God’s Holy Spirit shines upon it, now, and He did not do so before! And we might have continued hitting it till we broke the head off our hammer and not a scrap would have come off it—but the Holy Spirit’s manifestation re-

vealed the text—and most texts are to be learned so! It is not often by sitting down in deep thought that we get at the meaning—it is by leaving it until, in some hallowed hour of high spiritual communion, we get into the very secret chamber where the meaning of the text lies! In some solemn moment we dive down into the very depths where the meaning of the text is hidden. God teaches us the meaning and then it becomes *our* word! It is ours by application and we believe, my Brothers and Sisters, that sinners will be converted to God, not only by preaching the Gospel we find in the Bible, but by preaching the Gospel we find in our hearts, “known and read of all men”!

Let us then come into our pulpits with this determination (I speak to my Brothers in the ministry), that by the help of God we will bring our own experience to bear upon it. We will sometimes talk of ourselves and not be ashamed of it, for whatever the Lord our God says unto us, not only in His Word, but by experience, and by His Spirit, that will we speak to the people.

These two points I have mentioned—first, God loves His people before they have faith. And, secondly, the ministry has its use in bringing men to faith by “their word.”

III. Now, thirdly, notwithstanding this, GOD IS SUPERIOR TO THE MINISTRY AND DOES NOT REQUIRE IT. If He chose, He could do without His ministers.

I have told you that ministers are necessary, in the present state of things, to bring men to the Lord Jesus Christ, that they may have faith in Him. But when I said they were necessary, I spoke as men speak. With God, ministers are not necessary. He could do without them. I thought today, as I walked along, “God could do without me.” I thought of many men who are preaching and I thought, “God could do without them—take them all away and God could do without them.” I thought of some members of my Church, very dear to me, who seem to be pillars of it, and I thought, “What could I do without them?” And then the thought came across my mind, “God could do without *them*.” The people of God would still be saved just as well without them, if God so pleased! God is enough in Himself, without the addition of any one of His preachers. When He made angels, it was not because He needed them. He could have accomplished His will without the wings of a flaming seraph and without the voice of a glorious cherub. When He made the stars, it was not because He needed them. He was Light, Himself, without the light of sun, moon, or stars. When He made man, it was not because He needed man—it was because He would make him—and for no other reason. There was no necessity for it. He would be the same eternal God were all His creatures dead. And if He were to blot out those lines of wisdom and Grace written in the universe, He would be just as glorious and great as ever! And God can do without His servants in the Gospel ministry—but this being a dispensation of means, He is not a God acting without means.

God *does not* do without them, though He could if He would. God elected His people without ministers. He did not need any ministers to help Him in that. He redeemed His people without ministers. What great Divine could have helped Christ to redeem His people? Yes, more, He can, if He pleases, call His people without ministers, for we know how some have become the subjects of Grace by the reading of the Word, without the assistance of the ministry! And some in the Sunday school have received the words of eternal life. This should make our pride subside at once. I know it is a great honor and should comfort us much to know that God is making use of us—but He could, if He pleased, well enough accomplish His ends and purposes without you and without me! If tomorrow we were laid in our coffins and if our people should go out weeping because their pastors were dead, God has other men whom He could raise up. Or if He did not choose to raise other men up, He could attain His ends without us. And possibly there is a time coming when Gospel ministers shall not be needed—when men shall need no man to say to his brother, “Know the Lord,” for all shall know Him, from the least even to the greatest! There are happy days coming “when the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.” When there shall be no need of the messengers upon the mountains to publish the glad tidings of salvation. When the sunshine of the Lord shall supplant our poor farthing rushlight and when Jesus shall “come in His Glory, and all His holy angels with Him.” And we shall have too much to do to stand and admire Him without standing up to preach to men concerning Him who is present in their midst!

IV. But then, our fourth point is that GOD WILL NEVER DO WITHOUT HIS MINISTERS AS LONG AS THIS DISPENSATION LASTS because Jesus Christ said, “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them, also, who shall believe on Me through their word.” Hence it follows that there always will be, as long as this dispensation lasts, a people who are to be gathered and ministers to gather them in. As long as there are unsaved and unconverted persons who are the elect of God, there will be some ministers to preach to them. As long as there are those who are under conviction of sin, He will have some who will proclaim the message of pardon. Christ says in the text, “Neither pray I for these, alone, but for them, also, who shall believe on Him through their word.”

Someone may object, and say, “Yes, but ‘their word’ signifies the word of the Apostles.” Then another might ask, “Are you the successors of the Apostles?” There has been a vast deal of fudge in these days about “the successors of the Apostles.” We have people who pretend to be the successors of the Apostles. There are the Roman Catholics. But, I think, if Peter and Paul were to come and see those who claim to be their successors, they would think there was a mighty difference between themselves and them! By way of parable, suppose the Virgin Mary, Peter and Paul should come one Sunday and go to a certain cathedral? Well, when they entered, the Virgin would hear them singing together to her honor, and

praise, and glory. She would nudge Peter and say, "What are these people doing? They are worshipping me! My Son said to me, 'Woman, what have I to do with you?' *He* never worshipped me! Let us get out of this place." But they stay a little longer and they hear one of them say that the Apostle Peter was the Head of the Church—and his successor, the Pope, was therefore the Head. Peter nudges the Virgin Mary and says, "What a lie that is! I was never Head of the Church at all! Did I not fall into sin? I, the Head of the Church? A pretty Head I was!" Soon afterwards, Paul hears them preaching justification by works. "Let's go," he says, "there is no Gospel here! I preached justification by faith without works, and they are preaching justification by works!" And so, upon that, they all three of them leave! By-and-by, they come to a place where they hear the people singing, "Glory, honor, praise and power be unto the Lamb that sits upon the Throne!" And they hear them speak of those who were "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." "Ah," says Peter, "this is the right place, and here I will stay."

Those are the successors of the Apostles who are like the Apostles! Are those the successors of the Apostles who take our money from us by force to pay for their religion? Are those the successors of the Apostles who go to Brother So-and-So's house and take away his table and his spoon, and his candlestick, to pay rates for a religion in which he does not believe? I have never read about a church-tax in Corinth, or about the Apostle Paul seizing some property of someone in Jerusalem! Such men successors of the Apostles? They may be in godliness, for holy men are sometimes very much mistaken, but I say again, those who are like the Apostles are their successors—not men who are ashamed to speak to anybody else because they think they are above them—not those who cannot speak plain words! Have we not some ministers, to understand, whom you need to take a dictionary always to Chapel with you? Do you call them the successors of the Apostles? Your judgments answer, "No." A downright honest man who speaks what can be understood, who declares God's Gospel in unmeasured terms, as God would have him speak it—He is a successor of the Apostles! And it is through "*their*" word (the Apostles' word, and the word of the successors of the Apostles), that men are to be saved! Successors of the Apostles! I am as much a successor of the Apostles as the Bishop of Bath, the Bishop of London, or the bishop of anywhere else—and perhaps more so. We are all bishops who are called of God, ordained by the Most High! We trace our ordination to the hands of the Almighty who has put His hands on our head! There will always be successors of the Apostles! The Christian ministry shall never cease till the last period of time! Never has there been a spiritual night so dark as that there have been no stars to illuminate it—never a sky so clouded that the sun could not shine through it. There always have been some lights and, until the last hour, there always shall be some who are girded with the strength of the Omnipotent and made strong in the al-

mighty God, Jehovah, who shall testify their word, which is, after all, God's Word, that thereby men shall be saved!

Now, my dear Brothers and Sisters, having directed your attention to the fact that we are quite sure God will always have a ministry, and always use it—and since a ministry, under God, is necessary, though He could do without them, what should we do for them? I will tell you what some people say—*starve them*. I do not say it is so here, or with my people, but it is so in many country villages. Unfortunately, there are many farmers who could afford to give much to the cause of God, who, while their servant Betty sits in the gallery and pays her shilling a quarter for her pew, the master only pays a shilling a quarter, too. But Christ's ministers give themselves to the work because they feel they must preach—and they would rather preach on dry bread than be silent!

We have formed this Society just to help them. I can assure you if any one of our dear friends stood in the position I have occupied for a single year, when you come to cast up your income, if you felt any benevolence, you would have very little left—indeed, you would have nothing left if you listened to the claims made upon you!

Now, one other thought. If God sends ministers into the world to preach His Gospel, how ill does it become us to hurt them! "He that touches you, touches the apple of His eye." I have always felt very careful about touching a child of God. You know that there is nothing that puts a man so much on his mettle as to touch his children. I have seen a father calm and placid and very gentle—someone has touched his children—the father flashed into his face at once! Do what you like—touch his property, or his house and he may be vexed—but touch his child and then his fury comes up at once! He cannot stand that. Oh, my Friends, a heavy responsibility rests on the heads of some, even of God's people, if you view it in that light! Touch God's people? Touch God's chosen? Touch God's favorites? Touch God's darlings? Oh, let us take heed! We had better allow one to pass who professes to be a child of God, and is not, than that we should treat harshly or unkindly any of these who really are His! And I think if there is any difference in the case of Gospel ministers, this has a special force. We should, above all, seek not to injure their character by spreading evil reports against them. They will have enough of that from the wicked world! We had need be tender of them and plant a hedge around them to protect them in every way. They are the standard-bearers of Christendom and if the standard-bearer falls, what a disgrace it brings on everything! We ought to stand by them, pray for them, plead with God for them that He will hold up their hands.

I have been talking about the Gospel ministry. What is it to do? Is it to bring men to faith in Christ? Now I am tonight to attempt to do it before I leave this place! Yes, and by Gods help, so I will.

Now, a word or two very briefly to two or three characters. First, there is a man sitting here tonight who says he is "no worse than others" and who believes he shall enter Heaven as well as any other person. He says,

"I do not see why any man should set himself above me." My mission from Heaven is, under the Holy Spirit, to knock your works down and bring you to faith in Jesus Christ! Remember that it is written in Scripture, "By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." You cannot get to Heaven by your works! You might as well seek to mount the stars on a tread wheel as to go to Heaven by works, for as you get up a step, you will always come down as low as before! If you cannot be perfect, God will not save you by works. If you could truly say, "I never committed a sin in all my life and never had a wicked thought, and never shall have," *possibly* you then might be saved by works. But since that is impossible, if you trust in the law and hang yourself upon it, you shall find it will break by your weight. You stand on a sandy foundation and when the wind blows and the storm rises, you will be led to see it is a refuge of lies—that your confidence was ill founded, that your works were bad at the bottom, after all, and that though you fancied you were righteous, you were deceiving yourself and others—and must suffer the sentence of the wicked!

Someone among you may say, "I know that I am a very great sinner, but then I intend to reform. I shall turn to Christ and then I shall be saved." You intend to reform, do you? So did the damned in Hell once! You intend to reform? So doubtless did Judas when he went and cast down the money in the Temple! But instead of his reformation being good, he went out and hanged himself. You intend to reform? Your intention is like a bubble blown by the mouth of a child, who shall soon be broken in the air! You intend to reform? Your reformation is like the smoke of a chimney which the wind shall sweep away. Suppose you do reform and you really get better? You think Jesus Christ will save you and so you will get to Heaven between the two? Have you never heard the old proverb, "Between two stools he came to the ground?" Verily, I tell you, that if you trust in two things, you will be lost! Works cannot help you. Any man who trusts so much as a single hair's breadth to his works is a lost soul! He who trusts to the least atom of works, though it is so small that he cannot discern it, will be lost! It must be—

***"Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Your Cross I cling"—***

or else a man must be lost! For it is no use his trusting partly in works, and partly to the Savior. You must feel, "I am quite stripped of everything."

I love to find those who have not got anything good at all about them. Some like to find something good in men before they preach to them, but I like to find men who think there is nothing good in them—and then to preach God's Sovereign Mercy to them. You who have any good of your own, throw it away! You who have nothing, come to Christ! I advise you who think you are good, not to say you are so when you are before God. If you were in a hospital and needed to be attended to, what would you do? Would you write over your bed, or tell your doctor you were not so

bad, after all? You would be rather inclined to appear worse than you really were! See if you can describe yourself worse than you really are. You may say, "That is wicked advice." No, it is not, because I am quite sure you cannot do it. Go and write bad characters against yourselves tonight. I speak to you who know this is true—not to you who are deceiving yourselves with your own righteousness. You who now feel your need of a Savior, exaggerate that feeling before God, if it is possible. He who felt himself the most guilty of all sinners said, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief."

If there is anyone here tonight who thinks himself, "the chief of sinners," I have called him and God has called him! I wish he would act like a man I once saw in the County Court, when I was sitting there. He said, "Make way! Make way! His Honor has called me." And He elbowed his way up, because the judge had called him! God says, "Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Say, "Stand back, for God calls me and I will come!" Sinner, it is Jesus you must rely on, and it is not yourself. It is nothing that you have, or can have—it is nothing that you do, or can do—you can be saved by Jesus Christ alone. Have faith in Him and rely on the Savior. Do you feel your need of a Savior? Then come and cast yourself upon Him! Leave off being *anything* and let Christ be everything! Leave off doing, and let Him do! Say—

***"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On Christ's kind arms I fall!
He is my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus and my all."***

If any are awakened tonight by my words, I have not done it, nor has the sinner done it—but to God's praise be it spoken! And to His name be all the glory!

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

UNITY IN CHRIST

NO. 668

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JANUARY 7, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe
in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as
You, Father, are in Me, and I in You;
that they also may be one in Us, that the world
may believe that You sent Me.”
John 17:20, 21.***

FOR several years I have thankfully received the text of the first Sabbath in the year from a venerable clergyman of a parish in the suburbs of our city. Spared by a gracious Providence, my good Brother has sent me, with his Christian salutations, these two verses for my subject. As we have enjoyed together for several years a true communion of spirit in the things of God, I can only hope, that until one or the other of us shall be taken up to dwell above, we may walk together in holy service, loving each other fervently with a pure heart.

The most tender and touching prayer of the Master contained in this chapter opens up to us His inmost heart. He was in Gethsemane and His passion was just commencing. He stood like a victim at the altar where the wood was already laid in order and the fire was kindled to consume the sacrifice. Lifting up His eyes to Heaven, with true filial love gazing upon His Father's Throne, and resting in humble confidence upon Heaven's strength, He looked away for a moment from the strife and resistance unto blood which was going on below. He asked for that upon which His heart was most fully set. He opened His mouth wide that His God might fill it.

This prayer, I take it, was not only the casual expression of the Savior's desire at the last, but is a sort of model of the prayer which is incessantly going up from Him to the Eternal Throne. There is a difference in the mode of its offering. With sighs and tears He offered up His humble suit *below*—but with authority He now pleads enthroned in Glory! But the plea is the same—that which He desired while still below is that which His soul pants after now that He is taken up and is glorified above. It is significant, Beloved, that the Savior should, in His last moments, not only desire the salvation of all His people, but should plead for the unity of the saved ones—that being saved they might be united.

It was not enough that each sheep should be taken from the jaw of the wolf. He would have all the sheep gathered into one fold under His own care. He was not satisfied that the members of His body should, each of them, be saved as the result of His death—He must have those members fashioned into a glorious body! Unity lying so very near the Savior's heart

at such a time of overwhelming trial must have been held by Him to be priceless beyond all price! It is of this unity that we shall speak this morning—on this wise—first of all, we will have a little to say upon the unity *desired*. Then upon the work necessary—namely, that the chosen be gathered in. Thirdly, upon prayer offered. Fourthly, upon the result anticipated, and fifthly, upon the question suggested.

I. First, then, UPON THE UNITY DESIRED. These words of the Savior have been perverted to the doing of a world of mischief. Ecclesiastics have fallen asleep, which, indeed, is their ordinary condition. And while asleep they have dreamed a dream—a dream founded upon the letter of the Savior's words of which they discern not the *spiritual* sense. They have proved in their own case, as has been proved in thousands of others, that the letter kills, and only the spirit gives life.

Falling asleep, I say, these ecclesiastics have dreamed of a great confederation presided over by a number of ministers, these again governed by superior officers, and these again by others, and these topped at last by a supreme visible head who must be either a person or a council. This great confederacy, containing within itself kingdoms and nations, becomes so powerful as to work upon States, to influence politics, to guide councils and even to gather together and to move armies. True, the shadow of the Savior's teaching, "My kingdom is not of this World," must have caused an occasional nightmare in the midst of their dream, but they dreamed on!

And what is worse, they turned the dream into a *reality*, and the time was when the professed followers of Christ *were* all one. When looking north, south, east, west—from the center at the Vatican—one united body covered all Europe! And what was the result? Did the world believe that God had sent Christ? The world believed the very opposite! The world was persuaded that God had nothing to do with that great crushing, tyrannous, superstitious, ignorant thing which called itself Christianity.

And thinking men became infidels, and it was the hardest possible thing to find a genuine intelligent Believer north, south, east, or west. All professors were one, but the world believed not—the fact being that this was *not* the unity which Jesus had so much as thought of. It was never His intention to set up a great united body to be called a Church which should dominate and lord everywhere over the souls of men. He never intended a Church within its ranks, kings, princes and statesmen who might be worldly, ungodly, hateful, sensual, and devilish. It was never Christ's design to set up a conscience-crushing engine of uniformity.

And so the great man-devised machine, when it was brought to perfection and set to work with the greatest possible vigor, instead of working out that the world should believe that the Father had sent Christ, worked out just this—that the world did not believe anything at all—but became infidel, licentious, and rotten at the core! And the system had to be abated as a common nuisance and something better brought into the world to restore morality. Yet people dream that dream still—even good people do so!

The Puritans, after they had been hunted and hauled to prison in this country, fled to New England, and no sooner had they seated themselves upon the shore than they began to say, "We must all be one! There must be no schism!" And the big whip was brought out for the Quaker's back, and the manacles for the Baptist's bleeding wrists, because these men, somehow or other, would not be one after this kind of fashion, but would think for themselves and obey God rather than man.

Nowadays Dr. Pusey dreams that the Anglican and the Russian Church may be united, and then perhaps the Romish may chime in—and so once more all may be one. A mere dream! A mere chimera of a kindly but whimsical brain! If it should ever come to be a reality it would prove to be an upas tree at the roots of which every honest man must at once lay his axe. But what did the Savior mean, "That they all may be *one*, as You, Father, are in Me"?

We must begin at the beginning. What were the elements of this unity which Christ so anxiously desired? The answer is very distinctly given us in this chapter. The unity was to be composed of the people who are here called "they." "That *they* all may be one." Will you let your eyes run down the chapter to see who *they* are? Look in the second verse: "That He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him."

The unity, then proposed, is of persons specially given to Jesus by the Father! Not, then, of all men who happen to dwell in any particular province, district, or city—but a unity of persons who have received, not common life as all have—but life *eternal*. Special persons, then, who have been quickened by God the Holy Spirit and have been brought into vital union with the Person of the Lord Jesus are to be one.

Further, they are described in the sixth verse as persons to whom God's name has been manifested—people who have seen what others never saw—and have beheld what others cannot know. They are men given out of the world, so the verse tells us—chosen men, taken out from the ordinary mass—not, then, the multitude. Not kingdoms, states, empires—but *selected* persons. They are persons who have been schooled and have learned unusual lessons—"Now they have known that all things whatever You have given Me are of You." And they have learned their lesson well, for we find it written, "They have kept Your Word. They have believed that You did send Me."

They are described in the ninth verse as being prayed for by Christ in a sense in which He never prays for the world at all. They are people, according to the tenth verse, in whom God is glorified—in whom the name of Jesus shines with resplendent luster. Look the whole chapter through and you will discover that the unity which the Master intended was that of *chosen persons* who, by the Holy Spirit conferring life upon them, are led to believe in Jesus Christ! They are spiritual-minded men who live in the realm of spirit, prize spiritual things, and form a confederacy and a kingdom which is spiritual and not of this world.

Here is the secret. Carnal minds hear that Jesus is to wear a crown of pearls—they find pearls in shells—they try to join the oyster shells to-

gether and what strange thing they make! But Jesus will have no union of the *shells*—the shells must be struck off as worthless things! The jewels, and the jewels, only, are to be joined together! It is rumored that the King is to wear a crown and that pure gold is to form that brilliant circlet. Straightway men bring their huge nuggets and would fashion the diadem of masses of rock, earth, quartz, and I know not what. But the King wears no such crown as that! He will refine the gold. He will melt away the earth. The crown is to be made of *pure* gold, not of the material with which that gold happens to be united.

The one Church of God—of what is it composed, then? Is it composed of the Church of England, the Congregational Union, the Wesleyan Conference and the Baptist body? No, it is not. Is not, then, the Church of England a part of the Church of Christ, and the Baptist denomination a part? No! I deny that these bodies, as such unrefined and in the gross, are a part of the great unity for which Jesus prayed. But there *are* Believers united with the Church of England who are a part of the body of Christ. And there are Believers in all denominations of Christians. Yes, and many in no visible Church at all, who are in Christ Jesus, and consequently in the great unity.

The Church of England is not a part of Christ's true body, nor any other denomination as such. The *spiritual* unity is made up of *spiritual* men, separated, picked out, cleared away from all the mass with which they happen to be united. I have spoken very boldly perhaps, and may be misunderstood. But I mean this—that you cannot take out any visible Church, however pure, and say that as it stands it belongs to the spiritual unity for which Jesus prayed. There are in the visible Churches a certain number of God's elect, and *these* are of the body of Jesus Christ. But their fellow professors, if unconverted, are not in the mystical union. Christ's body is not made up of denominations, nor of presbyteries, nor of Christian societies—it is made up of saints chosen of God from before the foundation of the world—redeemed by blood, called by His Spirit and made one with Jesus.

But now, passing on, what is the bond which keeps these united ones together? Among others, there is the bond of the same origin. Every person who is a partaker of the life of God has sprung from the same Divine Father. The Spirit of God has quickened all the faithful alike. No matter that Luther may be very dissimilar from Calvin—Luther is made and created a new creature in Christ Jesus by that same fiat which created Calvin. No matter that Juan de Valdes, in the same age, may hide himself in the Court of Spain and scarcely be recognized as a Believer, yet when we turn over his volume today we find in his, "One Hundred Considerations," the very same spirit of Divine Grace which breathes in Calvin's "Institutes," or in Luther's "Bondage of the Human Will."

And we discover there the same life in each—they have been quickened by the same Spirit and made to live by the same energy! And though they knew it not, they were still one. No, more—all true Believers are supported by the same strength! The life which makes vital the prayer of a Believer

today is the same life which quickened the cry of a Believer two thousand years ago. And if this world shall last so long as another thousand years, the same Spirit which made the tear trickle from the eyes of a penitent then is that which this day makes us bows before God Most High.

Moreover, all Believers have the same aim and object. Every true saint is shot from the same bow and is speeding towards the same target. There may be, there *will* be much that is not of God about the man, much of human infirmity, defilement and corruption—but still the inward spirit within him which God has put there is forcing its way to the same perfection of holiness, and is, meanwhile, seeking to glorify God!

Above all, the Holy Spirit, who indwells in every Believer, is the true fount of oneness. Some of the Christians in this land of ours two hundred years ago were strangely different in outward manners from their Brethren of 1866. But when we talk with them through their old folios and octavos, we find, if we are the Lord's people, that we are quite at home with them. Though the manifestation may vary, yet the same Spirit of God works the same Graces, the same virtues, the same excellencies—and thus helps all saints to prove themselves to be of one tribe.

I meet an Englishman anywhere in the wide world over and I recognize in him some likeness to myself. There is some characteristic or other about him by which his nationality is betrayed. And so I meet a Christian five hundred years back in the midst of Romanism and darkness, but his speech betrays him. If my soul shall traverse space in one hundred years to come, although Christianity may have assumed another outward garb and fashion, I shall still recognize the Christian! I shall still detect the Galilean brogue. There will be something which will show to me that if I am an heir of Heaven I am one with the past and one with the future—yes, one with all the saints of the living God.

This is a very different bond from that which men try to impose upon each other in order to create union. They put straps round the outside. They tie us together with many knots and we feel uneasy. But God puts a Divine life inside of us and then we wear the sacred bonds of love with ease. If you get the limbs of a dead man you can tie them together and then if you send the body on a journey and the carriage jolts, a leg will slip out of its place and an arm may be dislocated. But get a living man and you may send him where you will and the ligatures of life will prevent his dropping asunder. In all the truly elect children of God who are called, and chosen, and faithful, there is a bond of Divine mysterious love running right through the whole. And they are one and must be one—the Holy Spirit being the life which unites them.

There are tokens which evidence this union and prove that the people of God are one. We hear much moaning over our divisions. There may be some that are to be deplored among ecclesiastical confederacies, but in the *spiritual* Church of the living God I am really at a loss to discover the divisions which are so loudly proclaimed. It strikes me that the tokens of union are much more prominent than the tokens of division.

But what are they? First there is a union in *judgment* upon all vital matters. I converse with a spiritual man and no matter what he calls himself, when we talk of sin, pardon, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and such like themes, we are agreed. We speak of our blessed Lord. My Friend says that Jesus is fair and lovely: so do I. He says that he has nothing else to trust to but the precious blood: nor have I anything else. I tell him that I find myself a poor, weak creature: he laments the same. I live in his house a little while: we pray together at the family altar—you could not tell which it was that prayed—Calvinist or Arminian. We pray so exactly alike and when we open the hymn book, very likely if he happens to be a Wesleyan he chooses to sing, “Jesus, lover of my soul.” I will sing it, and then next morning he will sing with me, “Rock of Ages, cleft for me.”

If the Spirit of God is in us we are all agreed upon great points. Let me say that among true saints the points of union, even in matters of *judgment*, are ninety-nine, and the points of difference are only as one. In *experimental* points, as face answers to face, so does the heart of man to man. Only get upon experimental topics concerning soul-dealings with God—leave the letter and get to the spirit, crack the shells and eat the kernel of spiritual truth—and you will find that the points of agreement between genuine Christians are something marvelous!

But this union is to be seen most plainly in union of *heart*. I am told that Christians do not love each other. I am very sorry if that is true, but I rather doubt it, for I suspect that those who do not love each other are not Christians. Where the Spirit of God is there *must* be love, and if I have once known and recognized any man to be my Brother in Christ Jesus, the love of Christ constrains me no more to think of him as a stranger or foreigner, but a fellow citizen with the saints.

Now I hate High Churchism as my soul hates Satan. But I love George Herbert, although George Herbert is a desperately High Churchman. I hate his High Churchism, but I love George Herbert from my very soul and I have a warm corner in my heart for every man who is like he is. Let me find a man who loves my Lord Jesus Christ as George Herbert did and I do not ask myself whether I shall love him or not! There is no room for question, for I cannot help myself—unless I can leave off loving Jesus Christ, I cannot cease loving those who love Him!

Here is George Fox, the Quaker—a strange sort of body it is true—going about the world making much noise and stir. But I love the man with all my soul because he had an awful respect for the Presence of God and an intense love for everything spiritual. How is it that I cannot help loving George Herbert and George Fox who are, in some things, complete opposites? Because they both loved the Master! I will defy you, if you have any love to Jesus Christ, to pick or choose among His people. You may hate as much as you will the shells in which the pearls lie, and the dross with which the gold is mixed, but the true, the precious blood-bought gold, the true pearl, Heaven-dyed, you must esteem! You must love a *spiritual* man wherever you may find him.

Such love exists among the people of God, and if anybody says it does not I can only fear that the speaker is unfit to judge. If I come across a man in whom there is the Spirit of Christ, I must love him. If I did not I should prove I was not in the union. Oneness in judgment, in experience, and in heart are some of the evidences of this union. But if you want more plain and palpable union, which even carnal eyes can see, note the unity of Christian *prayer*. Oh, how slight the difference there! Well-taught Believers address the Throne of Grace in the same style, whatever may be the particular form which their Church organization may have assumed.

So is it with *praise*. There, indeed, we are as one, and our music goes up with sweet accord to the Throne of the heavenly Grace. Beloved, we are one in *action*—true Christians anywhere are all doing the same work. Here is a Brother preaching. I do not care about that white thing he has on, but if he is a genuine Christian, he is preaching Christ Crucified. And here am I, and he may not like me because I have not that white rag on, but still I delight to preach Christ Crucified. When you come to the real lifework of the Christian, it is the same in every case, it is holding up the Cross of Christ.

“Oh,” you say, “but there are many Christians in the world preaching this and that and the other.” I am saying nothing of them or about them. I am saying nothing about their ecclesiastical belongings. I am saying nothing about those who merely cling to the Church. I am speaking of the *elect*, the precious ones, the simpleminded Christ-taught men and women. Their motive of action is the same and there is among them a true union which is the answer to our Lord’s prayer. He did not plead in vain—what He sought He has obtained—and the truly quickened are this day one, and shall evermore remain so.

I think I hear someone saying, “But I cannot see this unity.” My answer is, “One reason may be because of your lack of information.” I saw a large building the other day being erected. I do not know that it was any business of mine, but I did puzzle myself to make out how that would make a complete structure. It seemed to me that the gables would come in so very awkwardly. But I dare say if I had seen a plan, there might have been some central tower or some combination by which the wings, one of which appeared to be rather longer than the other, might have been brought into harmony. The architect, doubtless, had a unity in his mind which I had not in mine.

So you and I have not the necessary information as to what the Church is to be. The unity of the Church is not to be seen by you today—do not even think it—the plan is not worked out yet. God is building over yonder and you only see the foundation. In another part the top stone is all but ready but you cannot comprehend it. Shall the Master show you His plan? Is the Divine Architect bound to take you into His studio to show *you* all His secret motives and designs? Not so! Wait awhile and you will find that all these diversities and differences among spiritually-minded men, when the master plan comes to be worked out, are different parts of the grand

whole! And you, with the astonished world, will then know that God *has* sent the Lord Jesus!

I go into a great factory. There is a wheel spinning a way in which it is perfectly indifferent and careless of every other wheel. There is another wheel going in an opposite direction! All sorts of motions concentric and eccentric—and I say, “What an extraordinary muddle this all seems!” Just so—I do not understand the machinery. So when I go into the great *visible* Church of God, if I look with the eyes of my spirit I can see the inner harmony. But if with these eyes I look upon the great outward Church, I cannot see it, nor will it ever be seen till the hidden Church shall be made manifest at the appearing of the Lord.

The reason why you do not see the unity of the Church may be because of the present roughness of the material. See yonder a number of stones—here, a number of trees. I cannot see the unity. Of course not. When these trees are all cut into planks—when these stones are all squared—then you may begin to see them as a whole. The various stones of the Divine building of the Church are all out of shape at present—they are not polished. We shall never be one till we are *sanctified*. The unity of Christ is a unity of *holy*, not *unholy* beings. And as we, each of us, grow more and more prepared by the work of Christ for our own place, we shall discover more and more the unity of the Church.

Perhaps, too, let me say, we cannot see the unity of the Church because we ourselves cannot see *anything*. Is that a hard saying? Who can bear it? There are thousands of professors who cannot see anything. Do not suppose, dear Friends, that the unity of the Church is a thing that is to be seen by these eyes of ours. Never! Everything *spiritual* is spiritually discerned. You must get *spiritual* eyes before you can see it. Many people say there is no unity. I should be astonished if there were any which they could see or feel! They are not in Christ themselves. Their hearts have never felt what spiritual life means—how should they be able to understand that into which they have never entered?

See what carnal-mindedness does with Christ’s teaching. Christ teaches His people that they must eat His flesh and drink His blood. Carnal-Mind Says, “I know what that means.” And straightway he runs to the pantry and brings out a loaf of bread and a cup of wine. Spiritual men weep at such ignorance. Jesus says, “That they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me.” “I know what that means,” says Carnal-Mind—“They are all to worship after the same fashion, and use the same ritual.” That is all poor Carnal-Mind knows about it! He confuses the outward with the inward and misses the Lord’s meaning.

But, Beloved, you know better than this! You do know, I trust, and feel this very day in your soul that the true saints of the living God are one with each other at this very moment. You understand that they recognize and discover this unity in proportion as they become like their Lord and Master, and are conformed to His image, and made fit for the place which they are to occupy. Just as Professor Owen can take up a bone, and from that one bone can discover the whole structure of the entire animal, I do

not doubt but what there is a mutual dependence and consistency between every Christian and his fellows. And it is such that if we understood the science of *spiritual* comparative anatomy, as we may do in Heaven, we should be able to form from any one Christian the fashion of the entire Church of God from the mutual dependence of one upon the other!

But it would not be according to the fashion of the beast that was, and now is, and is yet to come, which calls itself the Church of Christ, and is nothing better than Antichrist. It would take the fashion of the Lord from Heaven, of whose body we are members.

II. I have talked too long upon this matter of unity to spare much time for the other points, and therefore only a hint at them. The second head was to be, THE WORK THAT IS TO BE DONE BEFORE THIS UNITY CAN BE COMPLETE. There are many chosen ones who have not yet believed in Jesus Christ and the Church cannot be one till these are saved. Here is work to be done—work to be done by instruments. These chosen ones are to believe—that is a work of Divine Grace, but they are to believe through our work. Brethren, if you would promote the unity of Christ’s Church, look after His lost sheep—seek out wandering souls.

If you ask what is to be your work, the answer is in the text—it is to be concerning Christ. They are to believe in Him. Every soul that believes in Christ is built into the great Gospel unity in its measure, and you will never see the Church as a whole while there is one soul left unsaved for whom the Savior shed His precious blood. Go out and teach His Word! Tell of the doctrines of Grace as He has given you ability. Hold up Christ before the eyes of men and you will be the means in God’s hand of bringing them to believe in Him—and so the Church shall be built up and made one.

Here is work for the beginning of the year! Here is work till the end of the year! Do not sit down and scheme and plot and plan how this denomination may melt into the other—you leave *that* alone. Your business is to go and—

**“Tell to sinners round
What a Savior you have found,”**

for that is God’s way of using you to complete the unity of His Church. Unless these are saved the Church is not perfect. That is a wonderful text that, “They without us cannot be made perfect.” That is to say, saints in Heaven cannot be perfect unless we get there. What? The blessed saints in Heaven not perfect except the rest of Believers come there? So the Scripture tells us, for they would be a part of the body and not a *whole* body—they cannot be perfect as a flock unless the rest of the sheep come there.

They beckon us from the battlement of Heaven and say to us, “Come up here, for without you we cannot be one as Jesus Christ is one with His Father. We are an imperfect body till you come.” And we, from our position of Grace, turn round to the sinful world and we say to the chosen of God from among that sinful world, “Come to Jesus! Trust Jesus! Believe in Him! For without you we cannot be perfect, nor can the heavenly ones themselves be, for there must be one complete Church! The city must be

walled all round—if there is one gap in the wall the city will not be one. Come, then, put your trust in Jesus, that His Church may be one.”

III. The third point was to be, **HERE IS PRAYER OFFERED.** Beloved, Christ prays for the unity of His Church that all saints who have gone to Heaven in days gone by—that all saints who live now—that all who ever live may be brought into the unity of the one life in Himself. I fear We do not attach enough importance to the power of Christ’s prayer. We think of Joshua fighting in the valley, but we forget our Moses with hands outstretched upon the hill.

We are looking at the wheels of the machine—go back to our old figure—and we are thinking that this wheel, and that, and the other, is wanting more oil, or not working exactly to its point. Ah, but let us never forget the *engine*, that mysterious motive force which is hidden and concealed, upon which the action of the whole depends! Christ’s prayer for His people is the great motive force by which the Spirit of God is sent to us and the whole Church is kept filled with life! And the whole of that force is tending to this one thing—unity! It is removing everything which keeps us from being one. It is working with all its Divine Omnipotence to bring us into a *visible* unity when Christ shall stand in the latter days upon the earth.

Beloved, let us have hope for sinners yet unconverted! Christ is praying for them! Let us have hope for the entire body of the faithful! Christ is praying for their unity, and what He prays for must be effected! He never pleads in vain! He prays that the Church may be one, and it is one! He prays that they may be perfect and complete, and it shall be amidst eternal hallelujahs!

IV. Then, there was **THE RESULT ANTICIPATED FROM THE WHOLE.** “That the world may believe that You have sent Me.” The effect of sight of the complete Church upon human minds will be overwhelming. Angels and principalities will look at Christ’s perfect Church with awe. They will all exclaim, “What a marvel! What a wonder! What a masterpiece of Divine power and wisdom!” When they saw the foundation laid in the precious blood of Christ, they gazed long and wistfully—but when they see the whole Church complete, every spire and pinnacle, and the great top-stone brought out with shouting, all built of precious jewels and pearls, fashioned like the similitude of a palace—why they will make Heaven ring again and again!

When the world was made they sang for joy. But how shall the vaults of Heaven echo when the Church is all complete and the new creation shall have been perfected? What will be the effect upon men? Astonishment will be the effect upon angels, but what upon men? Why the world, that wicked world which rejected Christ, that wicked crucifying world which would have none of Him and which now will have none of His people—that wicked world which hates His saints and has strived with all its might to pluck down the walls of His Church will **BELIEVE!** They will be compelled to believe that God has sent His Son!

They will bite their tongues with rage! They will gnash their teeth with horror! But there will be no doubt about it. Do not suppose that the world will ever be convinced so as to believe in Christ and to be saved by the unity of the Church. It is not anticipated in this chapter that the world ever will be saved! That is not dreamed of the whole chapter through—the world is spoken of as something for which Christ does *not* pray—whose enlightenment is *not* anticipated. But that world, though it weeps, and wails, and curses, and abhors, shall be made distinctly to recognize the divinity of Christ's mission when it shall see the entire unity of the Church!

Why, before my astonished gaze this morning there seems to me to rise up as from a great sea of confusion a wondrous building! I see the first stone sunk into the depths of that sea dyed with blood. I see the top of it just emerging above lofty waves of strife and confusion. Now I see other stones built on that, all of them dyed with blood—the first Apostles—all of them martyrs. I see stone rising upon stone as age succeeds age. At first nearly all the foundations are laid in the fair vermilion of martyrdom, but the structure rises! The stones are very different—they come from Asia, Africa, America, Europe—they are taken from among princes and from among peasants.

These stones are very diverse. Perhaps while they were here they scarcely recognized that they belonged to the same building, but there they are—and for 1860 years that building goes on, and on, and on—building—every stone being made ready! We know not how many more years that masterly edifice will take, but at the last, despite all the frowns of Hell and all the power of devils, that edifice will be completed—not a single stone being lost, not one elect child of God being absent—and not one of those stones having suffered any injury nor been put out of its place! And the whole so fair, so matchless, such a display of power and wisdom and love, that even the hateful ones whose hearts are hard as adamant against the Most High will be compelled to say God must have sent Christ! They cannot restrain that confession when all the Church shall be one as the Father is one with Christ. O happy day!

V. The concluding suggestion was to be this—ARE WE PARTS OF THAT GREAT UNITY? There is the question! It is not this morning, Are you members of a Christian Church? “I know how you get at it,” you say, “Well, a certain number of Churches are evangelical and orthodox. They make up orthodox Protestantism. Now, I am a Baptist. Very well. I am a Baptist, and the Baptist churches are orthodox, therefore I am a Christian. I am an Episcopalian, and Episcopacy is one branch of Protestantism. Very well, I am a Protestant, I am a Christian.”

Ah, that is your *carnal* way of talking! You may be very grievously mistaken if *that* is your argument. But if you can go another way to work and say, “I have received eternal life for I have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and I am given of the Father unto Him.” Why then, Beloved, you come at it directly! Being one with Christ you are one with His people! But do not, when you are looking for this unity, look for an outward but for an

inward thing. Do not look for a matter that is to be written on sheets of paper, on rolls and books—look for a bond written on *hearts*, and consciences, and souls!

Do not be looking for all saints in one room, but in Christ! All living upon heavenly bread, and drinking of the wines on the lees well refined that come from Christ Jesus. Look for a *spiritual* union and you will find it! If you look for the other thing you will not find it, and if you did find it, it would be a great and awful thing from which you might pray God to deliver His Church. As spiritual men, look for spiritual unity—but first begin by asking whether you are spiritual yourselves. Have you been born into the family? Have you been washed with the blood? Have you passed from death unto life? If not, even if you could be in the body you would be as a dead substance in the body working a fester, a gangrene—necessitating pain and suffering—you would be a thing accursed to be cast away.

But are you alive by the life of Christ? Does God dwell in you, and do you dwell in Him? Then, my dear Brother, give me your hand! Never mind about a thousand differences if you are in Christ and I am in Christ! We cannot be two, we must be one. Let us love each other fervently with a pure heart. Let us live on earth as those who are to live together a long eternity in Heaven. Let us help each other's spiritual growth. Let us aid each other as far as possible in every holy, spiritual enterprise which is for the promotion of the kingdom of the Lord.

And let us chase out of our hearts everything which would break the unity which God has established. Let us cast from us every false doctrine, every false thought of pride, enmity, envy, bitterness that we, whom God has made one, may be one before men as well as before the eyes of the heart-searching God.

May the Lord bless us, dear Friends, as a Church. May He make us one, and keep us so. It will be the dead stuff among us that will make the divisions. It is the living children of God that make the unity! It is the living ones that are bound together. There will be no fear about that—Christ's prayer takes care of us—that we shall be one. As for those of you who are joined with us in visible fellowship and are not one with Christ, may the Lord save you with His great salvation, and His shall be the praise. Amen and Amen.

Adapted from *The C.H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

THE GLORY, UNITY AND TRIUMPH OF THE CHURCH NO. 1472

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 4, 1879,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“And the Glory which You gave Me, I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are One: I in them, and You in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that You have sent Me and have loved them, as You have loved Me.”
John 17:22-3.

SOME words serve many uses and have many meanings. We are very apt to make mistakes if we give the same sense in all places to the same word. The word, “world,” throughout Scripture is used with a very remarkable variety of meaning and one had need to have his wits about him and to read carefully in order to know what is the precise force of the term in each place where it occurs. In the text before us it is evident that Christ had a view to the world—He desired that the world might know that the Father had sent Him and might know, also, that God had loved His people even as He had loved His Son. From the somewhat altered expression in the 21st verse, we feel convinced that our Lord did not limit His desires for the world to its having a bare knowledge of these facts, but wished that it should also *believe* them, for thus runs the verse—“That the world may *believe* that You have sent Me.”

He wished, then, that this “world” might do exactly what He elsewhere says His own disciples had already done—“O righteous Father, the world has not known You: but I have known You, and these have known that You have sent Me.” Certainly there is a world for which Jesus did not pray, for He said, “I pray for them: I pray not for the world,” yet here there is a world for which, if He does not actually pray, He yet prays that certain gracious events may occur in order that certain results may be produced upon the world.

I say again, the word, “world,” therefore, has many shades of meaning ranging from that jet black meaning in which the, “world lies in the Wicked One” and, that other, “love not the world, neither the things that are in the world,” upward to the milder senses in John 1:10, “He was in the world and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not.” And yet higher to the brighter meaning, “The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ.” It is not in the worst sense that our text speaks of the world, but in the same manner as we find it used in such passages as these, “The Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world.” “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.” And again in 1 John 2, “And He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.”

It is certain that, “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have ever-

lasting life,” and we cannot suppose that the great Redeemer would refuse to pray for those for whom He was given. I understand in this particular place by the word, “world,” the whole mass of mankind upon the face of the earth who are not as yet converted. Among them there is an elect part, for our Lord speaks of some men who shall yet believe on Him through the word of His servants, but these, at this present moment, are undistinguished from the rest. I understand here by the word, “world,” all as yet unrenewed out of the whole living family of man—and on account of *these* our Lord would have His believing people brought into that admirable condition which we shall now attempt to describe.

For the sake of the world He would have the Church in a high state of holy beauty and strength. May His gracious prayer be answered in all of us by the working of the Holy Spirit! I trust that I may say of all of you, my Beloved in Christ, that you are living with this objective. At any rate, I know that you desire to live for the Glory of our Lord Jesus and the salvation of men. We would make all men see what is the fellowship of this mystery, for we would have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the Truth of God. Our wish is to bring multitudes to the Savior and to conquer province after province of this revolted world for King Jesus. “Let the whole earth be filled with His Glory” is a prayer which we *cannot, dare not, would not fail to pray!*

Half the world would be a poor reward for the Redeemer’s travail. “The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof.” Even here, where He was despised and rejected of men, our Lord must reign with fullness of Glory, having dominion from sea to sea and from the river even to the ends of the earth! This is the consummation towards which we are tending, by the Grace of God. We are striving earnestly for it, according to His working, which works in us mightily. Daily we labor to bring others into subjection to that blessed Sovereignty under which we delight to dwell!

In this place our Lord tells us that this desirable end is to be brought about by a marvelous unity which, described in our text, is a unity of men with Christ, a unity of these men in Christ with one another and the unity of Christ Himself with the eternal Father. “I in them, and You in Me, that they may be made perfect in one.” Let us speak about this unity this morning, always keeping in mind the drift, end and objective of it, namely, that the world may believe that God has sent the Lord Jesus.

First, then, let us think upon *the great means of that unity* And then, secondly, upon *the unity itself*. Lastly, let us more fully consider *the effect to be produced by it*.

I. First, then, let us reflect upon THE GREAT MEANS OF THE UNITY which Christ proposes here. It lies, in a nutshell, “The Glory which you gave Me I have given them,” with this objective, “that they may be one, even as We are One.” Here our blessed Lord does not speak of what He will give to His disciples, though there is a Glory which is laid up for them which the faithful shall receive at the last—but He mentions a Glory which He has *already* given them. This could not be the incommunicable Glory of His Godhead, for that was His by Nature and not by the Father’s gift. He speaks throughout the whole of His prayer in the capacity of the Mediator who is both God and Man in one Person and the Glory which He says He had given to His people is a Glory which the Father had given to Him in His complex Person as Incarnate God.

We are to regard, therefore, our Lord Jesus Christ as speaking here as Immanuel, God With Us, who, though He counted it no robbery to be equal with God, had made Himself of no reputation and taken upon Himself the form of a Servant. He appeared on earth as the Son of Man, the Son of God—but even in that condescending capacity He was surrounded with a Glory of which John speaks in his first chapter, “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His Glory, the Glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth.” As the Word made flesh, the Father has given our Lord exceeding Glory. The explanations of the words before us are as many as the words themselves and I suppose there is a measure of truth in each of them. I do not think it possible in one sermon, perhaps not in a hundred, nor even in a thousand, to bring out all that is intended here! Therefore I shall not attempt any such a task, but shall only follow one narrow track of practical thought, even as one passes through a field of corn along a narrow pathway gathering a few ears as he moves along.

It seems to me that a main part of the Glory of our Lord, when on earth, lay in the moral and spiritual Glory of His Character. He was, indeed, glorious in holiness and this is evidently the Glory which He transfers to us. See the second Epistle to the Corinthians, the third chapter and 18th verse, “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the Glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” To the same effect are Peter’s words in his first Epistle, “If you are reproached for the name of Christ, happy are you, for the Spirit of Glory and of God rests upon you.” The essence and cause of the Glory which the Father gave the Son was, first of all, that He endowed Him with the Holy Spirit. “God gives not the Spirit by measure unto Him; the Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand” (John 3:34, 35).

The Holy Spirit descended upon our Lord in His Baptism and abode upon Him so that in the power of the indwelling Spirit He lived, spoke, acted and in all that He did, the Spirit of God was manifest! In Him was fulfilled the Word of the Lord by the Prophet Isaiah, “And there shall come forth a Rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of His roots: and the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord; and shall make Him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord.” In this Spirit there is Glory, for the Prophet further says, “His rest shall be glorious.”

Now this Glory, our Lord Jesus has given to all His disciples. Upon each true disciple, the Spirit of God rests according to his measure. If we have not the anointing to the fullest, it is either from lack of capacity or by reason of our own sin, for the Spirit of God is given to the saints—He dwells with us and shall be in us always. My Brothers and Sisters, I would to God we realized this, that the Glory of the Holy Spirit which was given to Christ is also given to us, so that it is ours to think, to feel, to speak, to act under His guiding influence and supernatural power! What are we apart from the Holy Spirit? How can we hope to convince even one man, much less the *world*, that God has sent His Son unless the Holy Spirit is with us?

But if He will come and I trust He *has* come upon many of us—if He will take possession of every faculty and rule and reign in us in all the splendor of His holiness—then we shall, indeed, become a power for the conversion of mankind! Behold the Lord Jesus has given us this Spirit and in that power let us forever live. Owing to this endowment of the Holy Spirit, there rested upon Jesus Christ a wondrous Glory in many respects. One of His first Glories was that as Man He knew the name and Character of God. He knew what no man knows unless it is revealed to him by the Holy Spirit, namely, the Nature, attributes and mind of God. “The pure in heart shall see God,” and those pure eyes of His had seen God to the fullest!

Has He not given us that same vision of the Father? Yes, for He tells us, “He that has seen Me, has seen the Father.” And again in the sixth verse, “I have manifested Your name unto the men which You gave me out of the world.” Our eyes have been opened by the blessed Spirit of God to see the invisible and our understandings have been strengthened to know the incomprehensible! Now, according to the language of the Apostle, we, “know God, or rather are known of God.” “No man has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.” Not to the fullest have we beheld the Father, but still, according as we have received this Glory which rested upon Christ we have been made to know the Father! And now we have access to the heavenly; we are familiar with the Divine; we speak with the Most High and delight ourselves in the Lord!

As we gaze into the unspeakable Glory, we discern something of the holiness, the justice and the wisdom of Jehovah and we behold yet more of His great mercy and abounding love. We were once blinded, but now it is our Glory that we see and know the Lord our God! Henceforth we become like our Lord in another beam of His Glory, for we, also, begin to manifest the Divine name unto the sons of men who dwell around us! The Church, like the moon, reflects the Glory of the great Father of Lights and so is glorious with the borrowed splendor which her Lord puts upon her. Christ’s knowledge of the Father is given to us and we endeavor to make it known to others. If men would see God, let them look at Jesus, for there is He to be seen! And, with bated breath, we add—let them look at Christ’s *people*, for there, also, is God revealed! It is the Glory of the saints that they are the mirrors of the Divine Character! And when they wear the Glory which Jesus has given them, they manifest the eternal name unto those whom the Lord has ordained to bless by their means!

The Glory of our Lord consisted, next, in the power of the Spirit in His receiving, keeping and giving forth the Word of God. Our Lord Jesus was a full Revelation of the mind of God. “The Law was given by Moses, but Grace and Truth came by Jesus Christ.” He knew the plan of God—that blessed method of infinite love—and He imparted it to His followers. “I have given unto them the Words which You gave Me; and they have received them.” The depository of the Divine Word was Christ—and this was greatly to His Glory. Is not the logos, THE WORD, one of the brightest of His titles? But now, this day, He has given to *us* the Word, speaking it into our souls and, from now on we are to hold forth the Word of Life in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.

Would you know the mind of God? It is not merely in a book—it is still incarnated in men in whom the Spirit of the Lord is present! Still does the Lord make known His mind and will by the earnest, fervent teaching, pleading and lives of those in whom the Spirit of God dwells! Do you think this to be a small Glory? Why, my Beloved, the Glory of possessing the Spirit of God; the Glory of knowing the eternal God; the Glory of having received His Word is such as distinguishes the *chosen man* above his fellows infinitely more than all the crowns, titles and decorations which monarchs can bestow! Tell me not of your stars and garters, your ribbons and your crosses—to be made partakers of the Holy Spirit and guardians of the Truth of God is a greater Glory than the princes of this world can so much as imagine!

This Glory of the Lord Jesus also lay in the sanctification of His blessed Person. He said, “For their sakes I sanctify Myself.” Look at how consecrated to God He was from His childhood till He said, “It is finished!” What holiness shone upon His very brow where a guileless soul unveiled itself in brave sincerity! You could not have been with Him at a funeral or at a marriage banquet, in a sick chamber or in the midst of a crowd, in the presence of carping adversaries or in the bosom of His family of 12 without being charmed by that Divine Holiness which hedged Him round about! There was about Him a sweetness of unspeakable affection and a majesty of unsullied purity which made Him glorious above all the sons of men! His enemies spat upon Him, but that very spit was the unconscious homage which malignant evil pays to conquering goodness!

The ungodly crucified Him, but even in that very act there was a sort of confession that they were baffled and confused and could not stand before Him! They cried, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” because His perfect purity rendered their own wickedness inexcusable and lashed their conscience with reflections which could not be borne. Our Lord’s moral Glory was great, for He was the pattern and paragon of everything that is lovely and of good repute—and He was wholly sanctified unto God! This is the Glory which He gives to us! His prayer is, “Sanctify them through Your Truth: Your Word is Truth.”

His disciples live unto holiness and are known as a people zealous of good works. I have to speak as I find matters laid down in the Word of God and if you do not find them to be so in yourselves, my Brothers and Sisters, then you must judge yourselves by the Word of God so that you are not judged at the last and condemned! So it is that those who have truly received Christ become a special, marked and separated people. They are as much consecrated to God as the priests were under the old dispensation and, therefore, they live for God, they live unto God and their whole being is subjected to the mind of God! This is a high state of Grace, but nothing less than this ought to content any Christian!

Well, then, our great Master gives us, next, the Glory of His own mission. “As You have sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.” It is the Glory of Jesus that He is the Messiah, the Sent One—and now, behold, He sends all His servants to be messiahs or *missionaries* to mankind! Christ Jesus was sent to reveal the Father, sent to reclaim the wandering souls of men, sent to seek and to save the lost—and this is *exactly* what every true Christian is sent into the world to do—he is commissioned to reveal God in his every act and word! He is com-

missioned to win back rebellious hearts! He is commissioned to save the sons of men and bring them up out of the horrible pit into which their sins have cast them!

This is a Glory, indeed, for they that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars forever and ever. What a promise is that, "And saviors shall come up on mount Zion, and the kingdom shall be the Lord's." Every Christian man, according to his measure, becomes among his race what Jesus was when He was here below, the Friend of men, the Seeker of the lost. Again, I trust your glad hearts appreciate this Glory, for let me say it is such a Glory that if it involves much strict living and much self-denial—if it involves much disgrace, misrepresentation, reproach—and even should it involve death by martyrdom, blessed is the man upon whom all these things come because the spirit of Glory and of Christ rests upon him!

The true glory of any man is the man himself, the character he bears and not the estate which he possesses. My Brothers and Sisters, can I hope that you have a resplendent spiritual character? Dare I hope to win the same myself? Let us look again at this Glory of the Son of God! Christ Jesus was the Man of men, the model Man, the most manly Man in all respects and yet He was, of all men, the most fully subordinated to the Divine Law and the most obedient in all things to the Father's will! See your calling, my Brethren! You, too, are not to be common men, nor to belong to the herd that run foolishly after their own lusts—but you are to be model men, manly and brave, yet always submissive to the great Father of your spirits. We are to be such men that those who look upon us may wish that there were such as we are.

Jesus was especially a model in His perfect self-abnegation. What did He seek for Himself? A kingdom? Yes, but a kingdom whose crown was made of thorns—a kingdom of *suffering* love. What did He live for? That He might be glorified? Yes, but that He might be glorified by saving others while refusing to save Himself! His crowning Glory is that He humbled Himself and made Himself of no reputation and became obedient to death, even the death of the Cross! Such shall you and I be if we have the Glory of Christ resting upon us—we shall give up, forever, all self-seeking, all desire to shine, all wish to be great, all craving to be rich—and we shall live not unto ourselves, but unto Him that died for us!

We are to live for God's Glory and for Christ's purpose in the conviction of the world and if we do, the Spirit of Glory will be resting upon us. The matchless Man of Nazareth had this Glory—that He was one with God. The objectives, aims and thoughts of God were His objectives, aims and thoughts. His life ran parallel with the path of the Most High. This Man was accepted of God—the love of God ever rested upon Him—He had access to God, He could speak with the Father when He would and answers out of the excellent Glory were vouchsafed Him. He was prevalent with God, for His prayers brought down and *still* bring down countless blessings upon the sons of men! He was the Son of God and He overcame the world in the power of His sonship.

Now, this Glory which the Father gave Him, He has given us, that we, too, may be accepted; that we, too, may have access; that we, too, may have prevalence in prayer; that we, too, may have the Spirit of adoption and that we, too, may trample upon sin and overcome the hosts of dark-

ness. This is the Glory which rests upon *all* the faithful! Mark well that wherever this Glory is seen, true unity is developed. Suppose I were to find a man living in the likeness of Christ with this spiritual Glory conspicuous upon him? It may be that he is poor and illiterate, but what of that? Suppose he is a coal heaver—the Glory of his character will be, none the less, more conspicuous than the dust! Then let us find another man on whom the same spiritual Glory rests and we will suppose that he is an earl, a supposition which, thank God, is not an impossible one!

The Glory will be none the more dim because of the good man's honors. There, then, are the two—coal heaver and coroneted. And does it need half an eye to see that the Glory of each is one? The holy consecration in each case is the same and the degrees of rank do not affect the essential beauty of either! Is it not the same *life* which dwells in all saintly bosoms and the same *love* which prompts each holy deed? In a princess or in a dairyman's daughter; in a scholar or in a peasant, the glory of a high character is one. If you found among a savage tribe a single convert, truly consecrated to Christ and living unto God according to the measure of his light, his manners might be rude and his knowledge slender, but there would be upon him the same kind of Glory which you would mark as adorning a polished, educated Christian lady who, in the midst of her circle, spends a lovely life for Jesus.

Should the untutored convert die by the spear of the savage whose soul he sought to bless, he is written in the same roll of martyrs as that which bears the names of bishops and Apostles. Holiness is everywhere most precious! Unselfishness is in *any* instance beyond all price! Let us see love to God and love to men and they are everywhere alike and reveal a oneness of inward life! In fact, oneness with Him who is the true life of men! If you bring a company of common Christians together and they begin discoursing and discussing, I dare say they will jangle and debate world without end! But if you could select a number of those upon whom the Glory rests which the Father gave to His Son, I will guarantee you this, that within a short time they will be all on their knees together, or singing together, or engaged in some form of loving fellowship!

The people who are not one with each other are those who are not one with Christ! But once filled with His Spirit, we are one of necessity. You cannot help it, it is scarcely a matter of duty—it becomes a matter of necessity that you who have the love of Christ within you should love the Brothers and Sisters! Spiritual men are so essentially one, that like two drops which close together, they have an increasing tendency to unite. Spiritual men may wear different denominational names and may differ in their conscientious convictions on some matters, but these things do not hinder *union*—they rather give a zest to it! If the Glory which the Father gave to Christ is resting upon these, they have discerned the mystical unity which encompasses them all and they are delighted to acknowledge it by deeds of brotherly love rendered with spontaneous cheerfulness, blessing him who performs them and those who receive the benefits!

Beloved, those in whom Christ lives are *not uniform, but one*. Uniformity may be found in death, but this unity is life! Those who are quite uniform may yet have no love to each other, while those who differ widely may still be truly and intensely one. Our children are not uniform, but they make one family. Sons born at the same birth may exhibit a remarkable differ-

ence of character and yet the father may be seen in both and they may be equally one in the family circle and in all the love which makes home the abode of happiness. So it is with all Believers—born of the same everlasting Father, they are one in spirit, one in character, one in objective, one in aim—yes, one in the fullest sense.

At this moment, despite apparent differences, the whole host of the spiritual are one and they press forward as with the tramp of one man against the common foe. I speak not of *professors*. I speak not of the *external* church. I speak not of the mixed multitude that come up out of Egypt and debase the character of our Israel! I speak of those of whom Christ could say to His Father, “The Glory which You have given Me I have given them”—*these* are one as the Father and the Son are One, but mere *professors* are not!

II. Time flies too rapidly, alas, and therefore we must, with great brevity, think upon the second point, namely, THE UNITY ITSELF. As I have remarked, it is *not* uniformity. This our Lord says nothing of. Though we *are* one body in Him, yet all the members have not the same office—the eye is very different from the ear—and the foot has not the same form as the hand. Neither does He speak of any formal organization by which unity is to be secured. How many have tried to create a mechanical union and have made confusion worse confusion! Their eagerness for unity has threatened to dash everything to shivers! The very first step towards a visible unity of the Church is, with most men, that *they* shall fix a standard of what the Church ought to be and cut off everybody who will not conform to their idea!

See how certain Brothers, to show how they hate sectarianism, invent a new sect and diligently earn from their fellow-Believers the character of being more bitter and bigoted than any other professors! The oddities of non-sectarians are the scandal of the age! They have talked of union and scattered the saints right and left. Let us follow practical methods and we shall find them in the unity which the text describes.

First, it is written—“I in them.” Christ lives in His people and we are to act so, in the power of the Holy Spirit, that onlookers shall say, “Surely Christ lives again in that man, for he acts out the precepts of Jesus. Did you notice how he bore the insult? Did you notice how he laid himself out to oblige and to serve? Did you observe how, without introducing religious talk, he gradually steered the conversation towards that which is to edification? Do you see how, if he stays in a hotel, or if he sojourns in a family, or if he sits in a workroom, his presence is soon felt by the pleasure which he diffuses, the confidence which he inspires?” He is everyone’s friend when he is needed—the servant of all, the example of all. His voice is always for peace and if he does, now and then, speak upbraidingly, men’s consciences admit that he is just. Such a man honors his Lord by reminding men of Him.

Our first consideration should not be, “Now I am here, how can I be comfortable?” but, “I am here, how can I please others for their good? How can I relieve the distressed, help the weary, or cheer the sad?” It is a grand thing to do good in little ways. It is a glory to be the sweetener of life at home, the self-forgetting friend of all around. The world, before long, confesses that Christ is in such a man! The true Christian is Jesus come to life! His name implies this—how is he a Christian who is not like

Christ? We commonly say that the oil upon the head runs down to the skirts of the garment—is it so? Is the love of Jesus, the generosity of Jesus, the zeal of Jesus, the gentleness of Jesus, the consecration of Jesus to be seen in us? If so, the Glory of Jesus rests on us! But if not, we have need to begin again and do our first works.

The next point of the union is. “You in Me.” That is, God is in Christ. This is manifestly true, for you cannot read the life of Christ without seeing God in Him. “Come, now,” said one to an unbeliever, “what do you think of the life of Christ?” “I am free to confess,” said the other, “that it seems to me to be a very marvelous life and in every way worthy of praise.” “You do not, however, think Jesus Christ to be God?” “No, I do not.” “But suppose,” said the Christian, “that God had been here among men in human form—could He have acted more purely or more benevolently?” “No,” said the other, “If I admit the possibility of such a thing, I am not able to conceive of anything more divinely good.” “Why, then,” said the Christian, “do you not see that in very deed God was in Christ Jesus and He was One with God?” So we believe and we rejoice greatly to hear our Lord say, “I and my Father are One.” See, then, the unity of Christ in us and God in Christ Jesus!

This brings about the union of Believers with the Father—being one with Christ and Christ being One with the Father. The point is reached for which our Lord prayed, “That they all may be one; as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that You have sent Me.” Couple this with Believers being one with each other and you get the being, “made perfect in one,” of which our text speaks. If you and I are one in Christ and one *with* Christ, then we are one with God, seeing Christ is One with God—and thus not in some few characteristics are we alike and one in name, but in life, in aim and in desire!

Brothers and Sisters, if you and I are living for the same design which our Lord lived for and if the very life which quickens us is the life of Jesus, then, since Jesus lives always for the same thing which God purposes and works out, then surely there is a grand unity—the likes of which is not found in the universe! This has great depths in it, which is grounded upon a mystical, spiritual union, but I leave the depths of doctrine, just now, to speak upon the experimental and practical Truths of God which grow out of the matter of fact.

Moved by the same love of holiness; inspired by the same spirit of love, tenderness and kindness, the eternal Father’s will is the will of the Son and the Spirit works in us to will and to do according to the good pleasure of the Lord. According to the measure of Grace, the members of the body feel and move in union with the Head, who also is in union with the Father. “Your kingdom come” is God’s will thrilling through all the members of the body of Christ. Death to sin, destruction of strife, the end of injustice, the chasing away of every form of error—these are the common objectives of the Father and of all those whom He has begotten. The propagation of the Truth of God, the increase of love, the reign of gentleness and peace among men—these are the mind of God, the mind of Christ and the mind of all the saints—and so are we one with each other by ties spiritual and Divine!

III. I could not enlarge upon that subject though I wished to do so, for I must now notice THE EFFECT WHICH THIS PRODUCES according to our Lord's prophecy and prayer. First, it will convict the world of the Truth of Christ's mission—"That the world may know that You have sent Me." How will they know it? Why, when they see such characters as I have so feebly tried to paint! When they see men who are no longer selfish, hard and ungenerous—when they see men no longer governed by their passions, no longer earth-bound—when they see loving men, men who desire that which is holy, just and good! When they see men living for God, the world will say, "Their Master must have been sent of God."

Such men as these, alas, are so uncommon. And they are so precious when we find them that if the Lord Jesus has created such by His teaching and His Spirit, by their fruits may we know them, even as we know His people and He is manifestly sent of God. And then, Brothers and Sisters, not only will their characters convince the world, but their unity will convince it because the ungodly world will say, "We see the glory of Christianity in the poor man and we see the same in the rich man. We see a glory about a Christian prince and we see the same glory about a Christian needle woman! And we observe that when these people meet each other there is a Divine union among them, for they are one. Surely their Master must be sent of God."

Christian people have things to talk about which others do not understand and they pursue one common objective which others disregard. Whether they have little or much, they yield their all to one common cause and objective. Whether possessed of little ability or great ability, they are alike consecrated. One spirit breathes in them! See how they love one another! Even the world can see that while its great ones are always contending, these dwell in love! The world can easily see that while common men emulate each other and strive as to who shall be the greatest, these only strive to serve the common cause, to help each other and to stoop for their fellows' good! The world cannot help perceiving the divinity of the mission of Christ which has produced this perfect love and union among His followers. Then do they say, "assuredly God must have sent their Leader, Christ Jesus, or He could not have produced such results."

Do you ask me where we see this? I reply that it is far too little seen, but when we *shall* see it in the whole Church, then will the world be convinced! Oh, my Brethren, only fancy a Church of the size of this, put down in this south of London, made up of holy men and holy women like Christ, who, with all their imperfections, as to the general bent and current of their lives are living unto God and for the Glory of Christ and for the good of their fellow men! Picture such a Church in perfect unity and I tell you it would present an argument for Christianity which would infinitely surpass all the books of analogy and evidence which have ever been written! This would be a nut which the adversary could not crack! It would baffle all his criticisms and syllogisms!

One individual Christian has often presented to the most desperate unbeliever a difficulty which has staggered him. "I could be altogether an atheist," said one, "if it were not for my aged mother. While I see her peace of mind, her holy living, her gentle, quiet temper, I cannot but believe that there is a power in religion which I cannot understand." If we would convince the world, my Brothers and Sisters, it must be by the Glory which

God has given to His Son resting upon each and all of us and so compacting us together, fusing us into one mass of living union! Only in the foundation of unity in Christ can the battle be won!

But the world is also to be convinced of the Father's *love* to us—"And have loved them as You have loved Me." Shall we ever convince them of that? Yes, when the world sees bodies of truly consecrated men and women living together in holy love, then they will also see much joy, much peace, much mutual consolation—and they will perceive that the very stars in Heaven fight for them, that the Providence of God makes all things work together for their good—and that the Lord has a special care over them as a shepherd has over his flock. Then they will say, "These are the people that God has blessed. Look how He loves them!" They perceive, however, that they have to suffer and that they are afflicted and despised—and so they come to say, "God seems to love them just as He loved His Son, whom He did not spare from suffering, pain and grief, but whom He upheld under all"—and so they learn that God has the same special regard for those Christ-like ones that He has for their Master and Lord. They shall be made to see this! It will be forced upon them!

Moreover, as these men and women grow more and more like Jesus the world will conclude that since God loved Jesus, He must love those who are like Christ! Why, do not even the ungodly, though they would be loath to confess it, take a kind of delight in a high and noble character? They have an admiration for it and their conscience tells them that God admires those in whom His Christ has produced it. They cannot avoid the feeling that God loves holy and loving people—and that it is great love on His part to make them what they are. So far the world becomes convinced.

But somebody may say, "What does our Lord mean by the world's knowing and believing this?" I answer that, doubtless, a part of the world will be convinced that Christ was sent of God. And part will be convinced that God loves His people. And yet they will stand out in obstinacy against God, for to the end even the Gospel, itself, will be a savor of death unto death to some!

Well, you and I have answered the purpose of God even upon such characters when it comes to pass that they are without excuse. But it is evident from this chapter that there is another part of the world who will not only know and believe historically, but will do this *spiritually*—that part of the world comprehended in our Lord's prayer—"Neither pray I for those alone, but for them, also, who shall believe on Me through their word." And I take it, Brothers and Sisters, that when the day shall come that Christians are Christians, then we shall see great masses of the world convinced of the Truth of Christianity and large numbers of the world suppliant at Jesus' feet!

The Christianity which is presented to the public gaze I would not be unduly censorious, but I fear it is often a Christianity which the world does well to despise. When the Jew went to Rome and asked for Christianity, he saw the Christians, so called, worshipping the Virgin Mary and images of saints and relics and bones and I know not what. And he justly said, "The Lord has said to Israel, 'The Lord your God is one God,' and, 'You shall not make unto yourself any graven image, nor the likeness of anything that is in Heaven above nor in the earth beneath. You shall not bow down to them nor worship them.'" On the strength of such revelation

the Jew rejected the Christianity of Rome and he did well. Don't you agree?

Now, here comes another Christianity which has lately displayed itself to many heathen nations. It comes with the Bible in its knapsack and the Martini-Henry rifle in its hand. Is not this a fine combination for conversion? Jesus comes before the Zulu riding upon a Gatling gun! Of course, these poor heathen know nothing about our political combinations, but if they suppose that Christians are invading their land, will they, therefore, love Christ? Missionaries, here is a difficulty for you to explain—how will you deal with it? You come from a Christian nation, a nation which enjoys the unspeakable privilege of a national Church, a nation which salutes the savages in Christ's name with shot and shell!

Will they receive Christianity coming in such guise? If they do not, small blame can we pour upon them—they will be only acting according to the light of reason and common sense! If there shall ever come a Christianity which suffers long, is kind, does no evil but seeks good to its neighbor; which teaches love to God and love to man; which seeks not its own, but lays itself out for others, then I do not say that an ungodly world will be enamored of it if left to itself, but I do believe that the Spirit of God will go forth with it and will convict men of sin and of righteousness and of judgment—and then shall the scattered family of Adam accept the one true faith and enter into a league of amity with each other—and there shall be Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good-will towards men! Love conquers all. Love is the logic which convinces!

Notice two passages of Scripture with which I finish. One thing you want the world to know is that you are the Disciples of Christ. "By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one to another." Does our Lord wish the world to be convinced? How does He, Himself, act? Hear Him! "But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence." Love, you see again, proves the unity of the Son with the Father! And here again, in this second text, it is the love of the Father to the chosen which is to be the sign unto the world. Therefore, let love abound. Let it be all the weapons of our war!

I know I have preached very feebly to you this morning upon such a theme. The subject is a great deal too much for my limited capacity, but it is good for us to feel how little we are, how low we are. It is good to look above our struggling selves to something much beyond our present attainments. I lie prostrate on my face before the Lord and confess that I have not yet attained all that I have set forth to you and, I suspect, that your confession is very like my own. Let us not be discouraged, for by Grace we are on the way and we will not rest till we reach the goal! O for Grace so to live unto God in Christ Jesus that the world shall never be able to answer the argument of our lives! Help us, O Spirit of the Lord! Amen.

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THE REDEEMER'S PRAYER

NO. 188

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

***“Father, I will that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am;
that they may behold My glory, which You have given Me: for You
loved Me before the foundations of the world.”
John 17:24.***

WHEN the high priest of old entered into the most holy place, he kindled the incense in his censer and waving it before him he perfumed the air with its sweet fragrance and veiled the mercy seat with the denseness of its smoke. Thus was it written concerning him, “He shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the Lord and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small and bring *it* within the veil—and he shall put the incense upon the fire before the Lord, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that *is* upon the testimony, that he die not.”

Even so our Lord Jesus Christ, when He would once for all enter within the veil with His own blood to make an atonement for sin, did first offer strong crying and prayers in this 17th chapter of John. We have, as it were, the smoking of the Savior’s pontifical censer. He prayed for the people for whom He was about to die and before He sprinkled them with His blood, He did sanctify them with His supplications. This prayer, therefore, stands pre-eminent in Holy Writ as *the* Lord’s Prayer—the special and peculiar prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And “if,” as an old Divine has it, “it is lawful to prefer one Scripture above another, we may say, though all is gold, yet this is a pearl in the gold. Though all are like the heavens, this is as the sun and stars.” Or if one part of Scripture is more dear to the Believer than any other, it must be this which contains his Master’s last prayer before He entered through the rent veil of His own crucified body. How sweet it is to see that not Himself, but His people, constituted the staple of His prayer! He did pray for Himself—he said, “Father, glorify Me!” But while He had one prayer for Himself, He had many for His people. Continually did He pray for them—“Father, sanctify them!” “Father, keep them!” “Father, make them one!”

And then He concluded His supplication with, “Father, I will that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am.” Melancthon well

said there was never a more excellent, more holy, more fruitful and more affectionate voice ever heard in Heaven or in earth, than this prayer.

We shall first notice *the style of the prayer*. Secondly, *the persons interested in it*. And thirdly, *the great petitions offered*—the last head constituting the main part of our discourse.

I. First, notice THE STYLE OF THE PRAYER—it is singular—it is, “Father, *I will*.” Now, I cannot but conceive that there is something more in the expression, “I will” than a mere wish. It seems to one, that when Jesus said “I will,” although perhaps it might not be proper to say that He made a demand, yet we may say that He pleaded with authority. He was asking for that which He knew to be His own and uttering an, “I will” as potent as any *fiat* that ever sprang from the lips of the Almighty. “Father, I will.” It is an unusual thing to find Jesus Christ saying to God, “I will.”

You know that before the mountains were brought forth, it was said of Christ, “in the volume of the book it is written of Me, I delight to do *Your will*, O God.” And we find while He was on earth, that He never mentioned His own will, that He expressly declared, “I came not to do My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me.” It is true you do hear Him when addressing men, saying “I will,” for He says, “I will, be you clean.” But in His prayers to His Father He prayed with all humility—

**“With sighs and groans He offered up,
His humble suit below.”**

“*I will*,” therefore, seems to be an exception to the rule. But we must remember that Christ was now in an exceptional condition. He had never been before where He was now. He was now come to the end of His work. He could say, “I have finished the work which you gave Me to do,” and therefore, looking forward to the time when the sacrifice would be complete and He should ascend on high, He sees that His work is done and takes His own will back again and says, “Father, I will.” Now, mark that such a prayer as this would be totally unbecoming in our lips. We are never to say, “Father, *I will*.” Our prayer is to be, “Not my will, but Yours be done.”

We are to mention our *wishes*, but our *wills* are to subside to the will of God. We are to feel that while it is ours to desire, it is God's to will. But how pleasant, I repeat, it is to find the Savior pleading with such authority as this—for this puts the stamp of certainty upon His prayer. Whatsoever He has asked for in that chapter He shall have beyond a doubt. At other times when He pleaded as a Mediator, in His humility He was eminently successful in His intercessions. How much more shall His prayer prevail now that He takes to Himself His great power and with authority cries, “Father, I will.” I love that opening to the prayer. It is a blessed guarantee

of its fulfillment, rendering it so sure that we may now look upon Christ's prayer as a promise which shall be assuredly fulfilled.

II. Thus much concerning the style of the prayer. And now we NOTICE THE PERSONS FOR WHOM HE PRAYED. "Father, I will that *they also, whom You have given Me*, be with Me where I am." This was not an universal prayer. It was a prayer including within it a certain class and portion of mankind who are designated as "those whom the Father had given Him." Now we are taught to believe that God the Father did, from before the foundation of the world, give unto His Son Jesus Christ a number whom no man can number, who were to be the reward of His death, the purchase of the travail of His soul—who were to be infallibly brought unto everlasting Glory by the merits of His passion and the power of His resurrection.

These are the people here referred to. Sometimes in Scripture they are called the *elect*, because when the Father gave them to Christ He chose them out from among men. At other times they are called the Beloved, because God's love was set upon them of old. They are called Israel. For like Israel of old, they are a chosen people, a royal generation. They are called God's inheritance, for they are especially dear to God's heart. And as a man cares for his inheritance and his portion, so the Lord cares especially for them.

Let me not be misunderstood. The people whom Christ here prays for are those whom God the Father out of His own free love and sovereign good pleasure ordained unto eternal life and who, in order that His design might be accomplished, were given into the hands of Christ the Mediator—by Him to be redeemed, sanctified and perfected and by Him to be glorified everlastingly. These people and none others are the object of our Savior's prayer. It is not for me to defend the doctrine. It is Scriptural—that is my only defense. It is not for me to vindicate God from any profane charge of partiality or injustice. If there are any wicked enough to impute this to Him, let them settle the matter with their Maker. Let the thing formed, if it have arrogance enough, say to Him that formed it, "Why have You made me thus?" I am not God's apologist, He needs no defender. "Who are you, O man, that replies against God? Has He not, like the potter, power over the clay, to make one vessel to honor and another to dishonor?"

Instead of disputing, let us enquire who are these people? Do we belong to them? Oh, let each heart now put the solemn query, "Am I included in that happy throng whom God the Father gave to Christ?" Beloved, I cannot tell you by the mere hearing of your names. But if I know your character, I can tell you decisively—or rather, you will need no telling, for the Holy Spirit will bear witness in your hearts that you are among the num-

ber. Answer this question—Have you given yourselves to Christ? Have you been brought, by the constraining power of His own free love, to make a voluntary surrender of yourself to Him?

Have you said, “O Lord other lords have had dominion over me. But now I reject them and I give myself up to You”?—

**“Other refuge have I none;
Hangs my helpless soul on You.**

And as I have no other refuge, so I have no other Lord. Little am I worth, but such as I am, I give all I have and all I am to You. It is true, I was never worth Your purchasing, but since You have bought me, You shall have me. Lord, I make a full surrender of myself to You.” Well, Soul, if you have done this, if you have given yourself to Christ it is but the result of that ancient grant made by Jehovah to His Son long before the worlds were made. And, once again, can you feel today that you are Christ's? If you can remember the time when He sought you and brought you to Himself, you say with the spouse, “I am my Beloved's.”

Can you now from your inmost soul say, “Whom have I in Heaven but You and there is none upon earth that I desire beside You”? If so, trouble not your minds about election, there is nothing troublesome in election to you. He that believes is elected, he who is given to Christ now, was given to Christ from before the foundation of the world. You need not dispute Divine decrees, but sit down and draw honey out of this rock and wine out of this flinty rock. Oh, it is a hard, hard doctrine to a man who has no interest in it, but when a man has once a title to it, then it is like the rock in the wilderness, it streams with refreshing water whereat myriads may drink and never thirst again.

Well does the Church of England say of that doctrine, “it is full of sweet, pleasant and unspeakable comfort to godly persons.” And though it is like the Tarpeian rock, from where many a malefactor has been dashed to pieces in presumption, yet it is like Pisgah, from whose lofty summit the spires of Heaven may be seen in the distance. Again, I say, be not cast down, neither let your hearts be disconsolate. If you are given to Christ now, you are among the happy number for whom He intercedes above and you shall be gathered among the glorious throng, to be with Him where He is and to behold His glory.

III. I very briefly pass over these two points, because I desire to dwell upon the third, which is THE PETITIONS WHICH THE SAVIOR OFFERS. Christ prayed, if I understand His prayer, for three things—things which constitute Heaven's greatest joy, Heaven's sweetest employment and Heaven's highest privilege.

1. The first great thing He prayed for is that which is *Heaven's greatest joy*—“Father, I will that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me

where I am.” If you notice, every word in the sentence is necessary to its fullness. He does not say—“I pray that those, whom You have given me, may be where I am.” But, “*with Me* where I am.” And he does not only pray that they might be *with Him*, but that they might be with Him in the same place *where He is*. And mark, He did not say He wished his people to be in Heaven, but with Him in Heaven, because that makes Heaven, Heaven. It is the very essence and marrow of Heaven to be with Christ.

Heaven without Christ would be but an empty place—it would lose its happiness, it would be a harp without strings. And where would be the music?—A sea without water, a very pool of Tantalus. He prayed, then, that we might be with Christ—that is our companionship—with Him where He is—that is our position. It seems as if He would tell us that Heaven is both a condition and a state—in the company of Christ and in the place where Christ is.

I might enlarge very much on these points, but I just throw out the raw material of a few thoughts, that will furnish you with topics of meditation in the afternoon. Let us now pause and think how sweet this prayer is, by contrasting it with our attainments on earth. “Father, I will that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am.” Ah, Brothers and Sisters, we know a little of what it is to be with Christ. There are some happy moments, sweet pauses between the din of the continued battles of this wearied life. There are some soft times, like couches of rest, wherein we do repose. There are hours when our Master comes to us and makes us, or ever we are aware, like the chariots of Aminadab. It is true, we have not been caught up to the third Heaven, like Paul, to hear words which it is unlawful for us to utter. But we have sometimes thought that the third heavens have come down to us.

Sometimes I have said within myself, “Well, if this is not Heaven, it is next door to it.” And we have thought that we were dwelling in the suburbs of the celestial city. You were in that land which Bunyan calls the land Beulah. You were so near to Heaven that the angels did flit across the stream and bring you sweet bunches of myrrh and bundles of frankincense, which grow in the beds of spices on the hills and you pressed these to your heart and said with the spouse, “A bundle of myrrh, is my Well-Beloved unto me. He shall lie all night between my breasts,” for I am ravished with His love and filled with His delights. He has made Himself near to me, He has unveiled His countenance and manifested all His love.

But, Beloved, while this gives us a foretaste of Heaven, we may nevertheless use our state on earth as a complete contrast to the state of the glorified above. For here, when we see our Master, it is but at a distance. We are sometimes, we think, in His company but still we cannot help feeling that there is a great gulf fixed between us, even when we come the

nearest to Him. We talk, you know, about laying our head upon His bosom and sitting at His feet. But alas, we find it, after all, to be very metaphorical compared with the reality which we shall enjoy above. We have seen His face, we trust we have sometimes looked into His heart and tasted that He is gracious, but still long nights of darkness lay between us.

We have cried again and again with the bride, "Oh, that you were as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother! When I should find you without, I would kiss you; yes, I should not be despised. I would lead you and bring you into my mother's house, who would instruct me—I would cause you to drink of spiced wine of the juice of my pomegranate." We were with Him but still He was in an upper room of the house and we below. We were with Him but still we felt that we were absent from Him, even when we were the nearest to Him.

Again—even the sweetest visits from Christ, how short they are! Christ comes and goes very much like an angel. His visits are few and far between with the most of us and oh! so short—alas, too short for bliss. One moment our eyes see Him and we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, but again a little time and we do not see Him. Our Beloved withdraws Himself from us. Like a roe or a young hart He leaps over the mountain of division. He is gone back to the land of spices and feeds no more among the lilies—

***"If today He deigns to bless us
With a sense of pardoned sin,
He tomorrow may distress us,
Make us feel the plague within"***

Oh, how sweet the prospect of the time when we shall not see Him at a distance, but face to face. There is a sermon in those words, "face to face." And then we shall not see Him for a little time, but—

***"Millions of years our wondering eyes,
Shall over our Savior's beauties rove;
And myriad ages we'll adore,
The wonders of His love."***

Oh, if it is sweet to see Him now and then, how sweet to gaze on that blessed face forever and never have a cloud rolling between and never have to turn one's eyes away to look on a world of weariness and woe! Blest days! When shall You come, when our companionship with Christ shall be close and uninterrupted?

And let us remark, again, that when we get a glimpse of Christ, many step in to interfere. We have our hours of contemplation when we draw near to Jesus, but alas, how the world steps in and interrupts—even our most quiet moments—the shop, the field, the child, the wife, the head, perhaps the very heart, all these are interlopers between ourselves and

Jesus. Christ loves quiet. He will not talk to our souls in the busy market place, but He says, "Come, my Love, into the vineyard, get you away into the villages, there will I show you My love."

But when we go to the villages, behold the Philistine is there, the Canaanite has invaded the land. When we would be free from all thought except thoughts of Jesus, the wandering band of Bedouin thoughts come upon us and they take away our treasures and spoil our tents. We are like Abraham with his sacrifice. We lay out the pieces ready for the burning but foul birds come to feast on the sacrifice which we desire to keep for our God and for Him alone. We have to do as Abraham did; "When the birds came down upon the sacrifice, Abraham drove them away."

But in Heaven there shall be no interruption, no weeping eyes shall make us for a moment pause in our vision, no earthly joys, no sensual delights, shall create a discord in our melody. There shall we have no fields to till, no garments to spin, no wearied limbs, no dark distresses, no burning thirsts, no pangs of hunger, no weeping of bereavement. We shall have nothing to do or think upon but forever to gaze upon that Sun of Righteousness with eyes that cannot be blinded and with a heart that can never be weary. To lie in those arms forever—throughout a whole eternity to be pressed to His bosom, to feel the beatings of His ever faithful heart. To drink His love. To be satisfied forever with His favor and full with the goodness of the Lord! Oh, if we have only to die to get to such delights as these—death is gain, it is swallowed up in victory!

Nor must we turn away from the sweet thought that we are to be with Christ where He is, until we have remembered that though we often draw near to Jesus on earth, yet the most we ever have of Him is but a sip of the well. We sometimes come to the wells of Elim and the seventy palm trees, but when sitting beneath the palm trees we feel that it is just like an oasis—tomorrow we shall have to be treading the burning sands with the scorching sky above us. One day we sit down and we drink from the sweet soft spring. Tomorrow we know that we have to be standing with parched lips over Marah's fount and crying, "Alas, alas! It is bitter. I cannot drink thereof."

But oh, in Heaven we shall do what holy Rutherford says—we shall put the well head to our lips and drink right on from that well that never can be drained. We shall drink to our souls utmost full. Yes, as much of Jesus as the finite can hold of infinity shall the Believer receive. We shall not then see Him for the twinkling of an eye and then lose Him, but we shall see Him forever. We shall not eat of manna that shall be like a small round thing, a coriander seed, but the manna whereof we feed shall be mountains, the broad hills of food—there we shall have rivers of delight and oceans of ecstatic joy.

Oh, it is very hard for us to tell with all that we can guess of Heaven—how large, how deep, how high—how broad it is. When Israel ate of that one fair branch which came from Eshcol, they guessed what the clusters of Canaan must be. And when they tasted the honey they guessed the sweetness. But I warrant no man in all that host had any idea of how full that land was of fertility and sweetness—how the very brooks ran with honey and the very rocks did teem with fatness. Nor can any of us who have lived the nearest to our Master form more than the faintest guess of what it is to be with Jesus where He is.

Now all that to help my feeble description of what being with Jesus is—if you have faith in Christ, just think over this fact, that in a few more months you will know more about it than the wisest mortal can tell. A few more rolling suns and you and I shall be in Heaven. Go on, O Time, with your swiftest pinions fly! A few more years and I shall see His face. O can you say, my Hearer, “I shall see His face”? Come, you gray-headed one, nearing the goal of life, can you with confidence say, “I know that my Redeemer lives”? If you can say that, it will fill your soul with joy. I can never think of it without being moved to tears. To think that this head shall wear a crown—that these poor fingers shall strike the harp-strings of everlasting song—that these poor lips, which now faintly tells the wonders of redeeming grace, shall join with cherubim and seraphim and rival them in melody. Is it not too good to be true? Does it not seem sometimes as if the very greatness of the thought overwhelmed our faith?

But true it is and though too great for us to receive it, it is not too great for God to give. We *shall* be with Him where He is. Yes, John—you lay your head upon your Savior's bosom once and I have often envied you. But I shall have your place by-and-by. Yes, Mary. It was your sweet delight to sit at your Master's feet while Martha was cumbered with her much serving. I, too, am too much cumbered with this world. But I shall leave my Martha's cares in the tomb and sit to hear your Master's voice. Yes, O spouse, you did ask to be kissed with the kisses of His lips and what you asked for poor humanity shall yet see. And the poorest, mean and most illiterate of you, who have trusted in Jesus, shall yet put your lips to the lips of your Savior, not as Judas did, but with a true “Hail, Master!” you shall kiss Him. And then, wrapped in the beams of His love, as a dim star is eclipsed in the sunlight, so shall you sink into the sweet forgetfulness of ecstasy which is the best description we can give of the joys of the redeemed. “Father, I will that they whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am.” That is Heaven's sweetest joy—to be with Christ.

2. And now the next prayer is, “that they may behold My glory which You have given Me.” This is *Heaven's sweetest employment*. I doubt not there are many joys in Heaven which will amplify the grand joy with which

we have just started. I feel confident that the meeting of departed friends, the society of Apostles, Prophets, priests and martyrs, will amplify the joy of the redeemed. But still the sun that will give them the greatest light to their joy will be the fact that they are with Jesus Christ and behold His face. And now there may be other employments in Heaven but that mentioned in the text is the chief one, "That they may behold My glory." O for the tongue of angels! O for the lips of Cherubim! For one moment to depict the mighty scenes which the Christian shall behold when he sees the glory of his Master, Jesus Christ!

Let us pass as in a panorama before your eyes the great scenes of glory which you shall behold after death. The *moment* the soul departs from this body it will behold the glory of Christ. The glory of His Person will be the first thing that will arrest our attention. There will He sit in the midst of the Throne and our eyes will first be caught with the glory of His appearance. Perhaps we shall be struck with astonishment. Is this the visage that was more marred than that of any man? Are these the hands that once rude iron tore? Is that the head that once was crowned with thorns? Oh, how shall our admiration rise and rise and rise to the very highest pitch, when we shall see Him who was—

***"The weary Man and full of woes
The humble Man before His foes,"***

now King of kings and Lord of lords!

What? Are those fire-darting eyes the very eyes that once wept over Jerusalem? Are those feet shod with sandals of light the feet that once were torn by the flinty acres of the Holy Land? Is that the Man, who scarred and bruised was carried to His tomb? Yes, 'tis He. And that shall absorb our thoughts—the Godhead and the Manhood of Christ. The wondrous fact that He is God over all blessed forever and yet Man, bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh. And when for an instant we have noted this, I doubt not the next glory we shall see will be the glory of His *enthronement*.

Oh, how will the Christian stop at the foot of His Master's Throne and look upward and if there could be tears in Heaven, tears of rich delight will roll down his cheeks when he looks and sees the Man enthroned. "Oh," says he "I often used to sing on earth, Crown Him! Crown Him! Crown Him! King of kings and Lord of lords!" And now I see Him, up those hills of glorious light my soul does not dare to climb. There, there He sits! Dark with insufferable light His garments appear. Millions of angels bow themselves around Him. The redeemed before His Throne prostrate themselves with rapture. Ah, we shall not deliberate many moments but taking our crowns in our hands we shall help to swell that solemn pomp and casting our crowns at His feet, we shall join the everlasting song, "Unto

Him that has loved us and washed us from our sins in His blood, unto Him be glory forever and ever.”

Can you imagine the magnificence of the Savior? Can you conceive how thrones and princes, principalities and powers—all wait at His beck and command? You cannot tell how well the tiara of the universe does fit His brow, or how the regal purple of all worlds does gird His shoulders. But certain it is, from the highest Heaven to the deepest Hell, He is Lord of lords—from the furthest east to the remotest west, He is Master of all. The songs of all creatures find a focus in Him. He is the grand reservoir of praise. All the rivers run into the sea and all the hallelujahs come to Him, for He is Lord of all. Oh, this is Heaven—it is all the Heaven I wish—to see my Master exalted—for this has often braced my loins when I have been weary and often steeled my courage when I have been faint. “The Lord also has highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, both of things in Heaven and things on earth and things under the earth.”

And then the Believer will have to wait a little while and then he shall see more glorious things yet. After a few years, he will see the glories of the latter day. We are told in prophecy that this world is to become the dominion of Christ. At present, idolatry and bloodshed and cruelty and lusts do reign. But the hour is coming when this Augean stable shall be cleansed once and forever, when these huge shambles of Aceldama shall yet become the temple of the living God. We believe that in those times Christ with solemn pomp will descend from Heaven to reign upon this earth.

We cannot read our Bibles and believe them literally without believing that there are bright days coming, when Christ shall sit upon the Throne of His father David, when He shall hold His court on earth and reign among His ancients gloriously. But oh, if it is so, you and I shall see it, if we belong to the happy number who have put their trust in Christ. These eyes shall see that pompous appearance, when He shall stand in the latter day upon the earth. “My eyes shall see Him and not another’s.”

I could almost weep to think that I have lost the opportunity of seeing Christ on earth as crucified. I do think the twelve Apostles were very highly favored, but when we shall see our Savior here and shall be like our Head, we shall think that all deficiencies are made up in the eternal weight of glory. When from the center to the poles the harmony of this world shall all be given to His praise, these ears shall hear it and when all nations shall join the shout, this tongue shall join the shout, also. Happy men and happy women who have such a hope, so to behold the Savior's glory.

And then, after that a little pause, a thousand years shall run their golden cycle and then shall come the judgment. Christ, with sound of trumpet, in pomp terrific, shall descend from Heaven—Angels shall form His bodyguard surrounding Him on either hand. The chariots of the Lord are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels. The whole sky shall be clad with wonders. Prodigies and miracles shall be as rife and as plentiful as the leaves upon the trees. The earth shall totter at the tramp of the Omnipotent. The pillars of the heavens shall stagger like drunken men beneath the weight of the eternal splendor—Heaven shall display itself in the sky, while on earth all men shall be assembled. The sea shall give up its dead.

The graves shall yield their tenants from the cemetery and the graveyard and the battlefield. Men shall start in their thousands. And every eye shall see Him and they who have crucified Him. And while the unbelieving world shall weep and wail because of Him, seeking to hide themselves from the face of Him that sits upon the Throne, Believers shall come forward and with songs and choral symphonies, shall meet their Lord. Then shall they be caught up together with the Lord in the air and after He has said, "Come, you blessed" they shall sit upon His throne, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. They shall take their seats as assessors upon that awful judgment bench. And when at the last He shall say, "Depart, you cursed," and His left hand shall open the door of thunder and let loose the flames of fire, they shall cry, Amen.

And when the earth shall vanish and men shall sink into their appointed doom, they, gladly seeing the triumph of their Master, shall shout again, again, again the shout of victory—"Hallelujah, for the Lord God has triumphed over all."

And to complete the scene, when the Savior shall ascend on high for the last time, His victories all completed and Death himself being slain, He, like a mighty conqueror about to ride through Heaven's bright streets, shall drag at His chariot wheel Hell and death. You and I, attendants at His side, shall shout the Victor to His throne and while the angels clap their bright wings and cry, "the Mediator's work is done," you and I—

***"Louder than they all shall sing
While Heaven's resounding mansions ring,
With shouts of Sovereign Grace."***

We shall behold His glory! Picture whatever splendor and magnificence you please if you do but conceive it rightly, you shall behold it.

You see people in this world running through the streets when a king or a queen ride through them. How they do climb to their housetops to see some warrior return from battle. Ah, what a trifle! What is it to see a piece of flesh and blood though it is crowned with gold? But oh, what is it to see

the Son of God with Heaven's highest honors to attend Him, entering within the pearly gates, while the vast universe resounds with "Hallelujah! for the Lord God Omnipotent reigns."

3. I must close by noticing the last point, which is this in our Savior's prayer—*Heaven's greatest privilege* is also included. Mark, we are not only to be with Christ and to behold His glory, but we are to be *like* Christ and to be glorified with Him. Is He bright? So shall you be. Is He enthroned? So shall you be. Does He wear a crown? So shall you. Is He a priest? So shall you be a priest and a king to offer acceptable sacrifices forever. Mark, that in all Christ has, a Believer has a share. This seems to me to be the sum total and the crowning of it all—to reign with Christ—to ride in His triumphal chariot and have a portion of His joy. To be honored with Him, to be accepted in Him, to be glorified with Him. This is Heaven, this is Heaven, indeed!

And now, how many of you are there here who have any hope that this shall be your lot? Well said Chrysostom, "The pains of Hell are not the greatest part of Hell. The loss of Heaven is the weightiest woe of Hell." To lose the sight of Christ, the company of Christ, to lose the beholding of His glories—this must be the greatest part of the damnation of the lost.

Oh, you that have not this bright hope, how is it that you can live? You are going through a dark world, to a darker eternity. I beseech you stop and pause. Consider for a moment whether it is worth while to lose Heaven for this poor earth. What? Pawn eternal glories for the pitiful pence of a few moments of the world's enjoyments. No, stop I beseech you! Weigh the bargain before you accept it. What shall it profit you to gain the whole world and lose your soul and lose such a Heaven as this? But as for you who have a hope, I beseech you hold it fast, live on it, rejoice in it—

***"A hope so much Divine,
May trials well endure,
May purge your soul from sense and sin,
As Christ the Lord is pure."***

Live near your Master now, and so shall your evidences be bright. And when you come to cross the flood, you shall see Him face to face and what that is, only they can tell who enjoy it every hour.

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WHY THEY LEAVE US

NO. 1892

**A SERMON SUGGESTED BY THE DEATH OF CHARLES STANFORD, D.D.,
MINISTER OF DENMARK PLACE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL.**

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 21, 1886,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me,
be with Me where I am; that they may behold My Glory,
which You have given Me: for You loved Me
before the foundation of the world.”
John 17:24.***

THE prayer of the Savior rises as it proceeds. He asked for His people that they might be preserved from the world, then that they might be sanctified and then that they might be made manifestly one. And now He reaches His crowning point—that they may be with Him where He is and behold His Glory! It is well, when in prayer, the spirit takes to itself wings. The prayer that swings to and fro like a door upon its hinges may admit to fellowship, but that prayer is more after the Divine pattern which, like a ladder, rises rung by rung, until it loses itself in Heaven!

This last step of our Lord's prayer is not only above all the rest, but it is a longer step than any of the others. He here ascends, not from one blessing which may be enjoyed on earth, to another of higher degree, but He mounts right away from all that is of this present state into that which is reserved for the eternal future. He quits the highest peaks of Grace and, at a single stride, His prayer sets its foot in Glory—“That they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am.”

There is also this to be noticed concerning this Divine prayer, that not only does it rise as to its subject, but it even ascends as to the place which the Intercessor appears to occupy! Has it not been so with yourselves in prayer, at times, that you have hardly known where you were? You might have cried with Paul, “Whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell.” Do not these words of our Lord Jesus remind you of this? Was He not carried away by the fervor of His devotion? Where was He when He uttered the words of our text? If I follow the language, I might conclude that our Lord was already in Heaven! He says, “Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My Glory.” Does He not mean that they should be in Heaven with Him? Of course He does, yet He was not in Heaven—He was still in the midst of His Apostles, in the body upon earth—and He had yet Gethsemane and Golgotha before Him before He could enter His Glory!

He had prayed Himself into such an exaltation of feeling that His *prayer* was in Heaven and He, Himself, was there in spirit. What a hint this gives to us! How readily may we quit the field of battle and the place of agony—and rise into such fellowship with God—that we may think and speak and act as if we were already in possession of our eternal joy! By the ardor of prayer and the confidence of faith, we may be caught up into Paradise and there utter words which are beyond the latitude of earth and are dated “from the Delectable Mountains.”

Nor is this all, for still the prayer rises, not only as to its matter and place, but, in a very amazing way it also takes to itself a higher style. Before, our Lord had asked and pleaded, but now He uses a firmer word—He says, “Father, I will.” I would not force that word so as to make it bear an imperious or commanding meaning, for the Savior speaks not so to the Father, but still, it has a more elevated tone about it than asking. Our Lord, here, uses the royal manner rather than the tone of His humiliation. He speaks like unto the Son of God! He addresses the great Father as One who counts it not robbery to be equal with Him, but exercises the prerogative of His Eternal Sonship. He says, “I will.” This is a tone which belongs not to us except in a very modified degree, but it teaches us a lesson.

It is well in prayer, when the Holy Spirit helps us, not only to groan out of the dust as suppliant sinners, but to seek unto our Father in the spirit of adoption with the confidence of children—and then, with the promise of God in our hands—we may, with consecrated bravery, lay hold upon the Covenant Angel, and cry, “I will not let You go unless You bless me.” Importunity is a humble approach to this Divine, “I will.” The will consecrated, educated and sanctified may and must reveal itself in our more spiritual petitions, just as, with equal correctness, it hides away when the pleading is for temporal things and whispers, “Not as I will, but as You will.” The Lord pours upon His pleading servants, at times, a kind of inspiration by which they rise into power in prayer and have their will of the Lord! Is it not written, “Delight yourself in the Lord and He shall give you the desires of your heart?” We come, at last, to feel that the desires of our heart are inspired by His Spirit, and then that we have the petitions which we have asked of Him!

There ought to be much for our edification in a text like this, which in subject, place and style rises to such an elevation! It is the apex of this wonderful pyramid of prayer—the last rung of the ladder of the Light of God. O Spirit of the Lord, instruct us while we behold it!

I have taken this text because it has taken hold on me. Our beloved Brother, Charles Stanford, has just been taken from us. I seem to be standing as one of a company of disciples and my Brothers are melting away. My Brothers, my comrades, my delights are leaving me for the better land. We have enjoyed holy and happy fellowship in days of peace and we have stood shoulder to shoulder in the battle of the Lord—but we are melting away. One has gone. Another has gone. Before we look round, another will have departed. We see them for a moment and they vanish from our gaze. It is true they do not rise into the air like the Divine Master from Olivet, yet they do rise, I am persuaded of that! Only the poor body de-

scends and that descent is for a very little while. They rise to be forever with the Lord! The grief is to us who are left behind.

What a gap is left where stood Hugh Stowell Brown! Who is to fill it? What a gap is left where stood Charles Stanford! Who is to fill it? Who among us will go next? We stand like amazed men. Some of us stood next in the rank with those who have been taken. Why this constant thinning of our ranks while the warfare is so stern? Why this removal of the very best when we so much need the noblest examples? I am bowed down and could best express myself in a flood of tears as I survey the line of graves so newly dug! But, by God's Grace, I restrain myself from so carnal a mode of regarding the matter and look upon it in a clearer light. The Master is gathering the ripest of His fruit—and well does He deserve them! His own dear hands are putting His apples of gold into His baskets of silver—and as we see that it is the Lord—we are no longer bewildered.

His Word, as it comes before us in the text, calms and quiets our spirits. It dries our tears and calls us to rejoicing as we hear our heavenly Bridegroom praying, "Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am." We understand why the dearest and best are going. We see in whose hand is held the magnet which attracts them to the skies. One by one they must depart from this lowland country to dwell above in the palace of the King, for Jesus is drawing them to Himself! Our dear babes go Home because "He gathers the lambs with His arm and carries them in His bosom." And our ripe saints go Home because the Beloved is come into His garden to gather lilies. These words of our Lord Jesus explain the continual Home-going. They are the answer to the riddle which we call death.

I am going to talk of how our honored Brothers and Sisters are not because God takes them. And I shall be happy if my words shall prepare us to exercise a holy readiness to see the grand request of our Redeemer fulfilled, even though it costs us many a sorrowful parting.

I. Let us begin as our text begins and thus the first thought about the continual gathering to the house above will be THE HOME WORD—the rallying word—"Father." Observe, our Lord had said, "Holy Father," and toward the close of the prayer He said, "O Righteous Father," but in commencing this particular petition, He uses the word, "Father," by itself. This relationship is, in itself, so dear that it agrees best with the loftiest petition. I like to think of that name, "Father," as used in this connection. Is it not the center of living unity? If there is to be a family gathering and reunion, where should it be but in the father's house? Who is at the head of the table but the father? All the interests of the children unite in the parent and he feels for them all.

From the great Father, the Lord Jesus, Himself, came forth. We do not understand the Doctrine of the Eternal Affiliation—we adore the mystery into which we may not pry. But we know that as our Lord Jesus is God-and-Man-Mediator, He came forth from the Father and unto the Father's will He submitted Himself in so doing. As for us, we come distinctly of that Father—it is He that made us, and not we, ourselves—and, better and brighter fact still, of His own will He begat us by the Word of Truth. We

were born a second time from Heaven and from our Heavenly Father our spiritual life is derived.

The whole of this sermon through, I want to show you that it is right that we should part with our Brothers and Sisters and joyfully permit of their going Home. And surely I may at once ask you—What can be more right than that children should go home to their Father? From Him they came! To Him they owe their life! Should they not always tend towards Him and should not this be the goal of their being, that they should, at last, dwell in His Presence? To go away from the Father and to live apart from Him is the sorrow of our fallen nature as it plays the prodigal. But the coming back to the Father is restoration to life, to peace, to happiness! Yes, all our hopeful steps are towards the Father! We are saved when, by believing in the name of Jesus, we receive power to become the sons of God. Our sanctification lies in the bosom of our adoption. Because Jesus comes from the Father and leads us back to the Father, therefore is there a Heaven for us! Therefore, whenever we think of Heaven, let us chiefly think of the Father, for it is in our Father's House that there are many mansions—and it is to the Father that our Lord has gone, that He may prepare a place for us!

“FATHER!” Why, it is a bell that rings us Home! He who has the spirit of adoption feels that the Father draws him Home and he would gladly run after Him. How intensely did Jesus turn to the Father! He cannot speak of the Glory where He is to be without coupling His Father with it. Brothers and Sisters, it is in the Father that we live and move and have our being! Is there any spiritual life in the world which does not continually proceed from the life of the great Father? Is it not by the continual work of the Holy Spirit from the Father that we remain spiritual men? And as from Him we live, so for Him we live, if we live aright! We wish so to act as to glorify God in everything! Even our salvation should not be an ultimate end with any of us—we should desire to glorify God by our salvation! We look upon the doctrines that we preach and the precepts which we obey, as means to the Glory of God, even the Father.

This is the consummation which the First-Born looks for and to which all of us who are like He are aspiring, namely, that God may be All in All—that the great Father may be had in honor and may be worshipped in every place. Since, then, we are from Him, of Him, to Him and for Him, this word, “Father,” calls us to gather at His feet! Shall any one of us lament the process? No! We dare not complain that our choicest Brethren are taken up to gladden the great Father's House. Our Brother is gone and we ask, “Where is he gone?” And when the answer comes, “He is gone to the Father,” all notion of complaint is over! To whom else should he go? When the great First-Born went away from us, He told His sorrowing followers that He was going to their Father and His Father—and that answer was enough. So, when our friend, or our child, or our wife, or our Brother is gone, it is enough that he is with the Father. To call them back does not occur to us, but rather we, each one, desire to follow after them—

***“Father, I long, I faint to see
The place of Your abode!*”**

***I'd leave Your earthly courts and flee
Up to Your seat, my God."***

A child may be happy at school, but he longs for the holidays. Is it merely to escape his lessons? Ah, no! Ask him and he will tell you, "I want to go home to see my father." The same is equally true and possibly more so, if we include the feminine form of parentage. What a home cry is that of, "Mother!" The sight of that dear face has been longed and hungered for by many a child when far away. Mother or father, whichever you will, they are blended in the great Fatherhood of God. Let it but be said that anyone has gone to his father and no further question is asked as to the right of his going there. To the father belongs the first possession of the child—should he not have his own child at home? The Savior wipes our tears away with a handkerchief which is marked in the corner with this word—"Father."

II. Secondly, I want your thoughts upon THE HOME IMPETUS. The force which draws us Home lies in the word, "I will." Jesus Christ, our most true God, veiled in human form, bows His knee and prays and throws His Divine energy into the prayer for the bringing Home of His redeemed. This one irresistible, everlastingly almighty prayer carries everything before it. "Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am," is the centripetal energy which is drawing all the family of God towards its one Home.

How shall the chosen get Home to the Father? Chariots are provided. Here are the chariots of fire and horses of fire in this prayer. "I will," says Jesus, "that they be with Me"—and with Him they must be! There are difficulties in the way—long nights and darkness lie between—hills of guilt, forests of trouble and bands of fierce temptations. Yet the pilgrims shall surely reach their journey's end, for the Lord's, "I will," shall be a wall of fire round about them. In this petition I see both sword and shield for the Church militant. Here I see the eagles' wings on which they shall be borne up till they enter within the golden gates! Jesus says, "I will" and, who is he that shall hinder the homecoming of the chosen? As well hope to arrest the marches of the stars of Heaven!

Examine the energy of this, "I will," for a moment, and you will see, first, that it has the force of an intercessory prayer. It is a gem from that wonderful breastplate of jewels which our great High Priest wore upon His breast when He offered His fullest intercession. I cannot imagine our Lord's interceding in vain. If He asks that we may be with Him where He is, He must assuredly have His request! It is written, that, "He was heard in that He feared." When with strong crying and tears He poured out His soul unto death, His Father granted the requests of His heart. I do not wonder that it should be so—how could the Best Beloved fail of that which He sought in intercession from His Father God! Mark, then, that the force of irresistible intercession is drawing every blood-bought soul into the place where Jesus is. You cannot hold your dying babe, for Jesus asks for it to be with Him. Will you come into competition with your Lord? Surely you will not! You cannot hold your aged father, nor detain your beloved

mother beyond the time appointed, for the intercession of Christ has such a force about it that they must ascend even as sparks must seek the sun!

More than intercession is found in the expression, "I will." It suggests the idea of a testamentary bequest and appointment. The Lord Jesus is making His last will and testament and He writes, "Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me." No man who makes his will likes to have it frustrated. Our Savior's testament will assuredly be carried out in every jot and tittle and, if for no other reason, yet certainly for this cause, that though He died and thus made His will valid, yet He lives, again, to be His own Executor and to carry out His will. When I read in our Lord's testament the words, "Father, I will that they be with Me," I ask, "Who is to hold them back?" They must, in due time, be with Him, for the will of the ever-blessed Savior must be carried out—there can be no standing against a force of that kind!

Nor is this all—the words read to me, not only like intercession and testamentary decree, but there is a strong expression of *desire, resolve and purpose*. Jesus desires it and says, "I will." It is a deliberate desire—a forcible, distinct, resolute, determined purpose. The will of God is supreme Law. It needs not that He should speak—He does but will or purpose and the thing is done. Now read my text—"I will that they be with Me." The Son of God wills it! How are the saints to be hindered from what the Lord wills? They must rise from their beds of dust and silent clay—they must rise to be with Jesus where He is, for Jesus wills it! By your anxious care you may seek to detain them—you may sit about their bed and nurse them both night and day—but they must quit these dark abodes when Jesus gives the signal! You may clutch them with affectionate eagerness and even cry in despair, "They shall not go, we cannot bear to part with them!"—but go they must when Jesus calls.

Take back your naughty hands which would detain them, for naughty they are if you would rob your Savior! Would you cross His will? Would you set at nothing His testament? You could not if you would! You would not if you could! Rather be inclined to go with them than think to resist the heavenly attraction which raises them up. If Jesus says, "I will," then it is yours to say, "Not as I will, but as You will. They were never so much mine as they are Yours. I never had so much right to them as You have who have bought them. They never so truly could be at home with me as they will be at Home with You in Your own bosom. So my will dissolves itself into Your will and I say with steadfast resignation, 'Let them go.'"

Brothers and Sisters, you perceive the forces which are bearing away our beloved ones. I see tender hands reaching after us this morning. They are invisible to sense, but palpable to faith. Cords of love are being cast about the chosen and they are being drawn out secretly from their fellows. Would you break those bands asunder and cast those cords from us? I beseech you, think not so, but let that pierced hand which bought the beloved ones seek out its own purchase and bring them Home. Should not Jesus have His own? Do we not bow our knee and pray for Jesus, "Your will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven"?

III. But now I want to conduct you farther into the text. We have had the Home word and the Home bringing impetus—and now let us carefully note THE HOME CHARACTER. “Father, I will that *they, also, whom You have given Me*, be with Me where I am.” The description is—“They, also, whom You have given Me.” The Greek is somewhat difficult to translate. The translators of the Revised Version were, no doubt, excellent Greek scholars, and if they had known a little more English, they might have come a little nearer to a perfect translation, but they do not always appear to think the common English reader to be worthy of their consideration. This is their translation in the present instance—“Father, that which You have given Me, I will that, where I am they, also, may be with Me.” This, to speak plainly, sounds very much like nonsense! It is the translation which a boy would present to his tutor at school, but it is of small use to the general reader. It is literal, no doubt, but literalisms are often another proof that the letter kills. Translators into the English tongue might have contrived to have given us words with a meaning in them! I merely quote the version to show you that there is here a something in the singular as well as persons in the plural. “Father, I will concerning *that* which You have given Me, that *they* may be with Me where I am.”

Our Lord looked upon those whom the Father gave Him as one—one body, one Church, one bride—He willed that as a whole, the Church should be with Him where He is. Then He looked again and saw each of the many individuals of whom the one Church is composed and He prayed that each, that all of these, might be with Him and behold His Glory. Jesus never so prays for the whole Church as to forget a single member! Neither does He so pray for the members, individually, as to overlook the corporate capacity of the whole. Sweet thought! Jesus wills to have the whole of what He bought with His precious blood with Him in Heaven—He will not lose any part. He did not die for a *part* of a Church, nor will He be satisfied unless the entire flock which He has purchased shall be gathered around Him.

But while the Lord looks at those whom His Father gave Him as one body, He looks upon you and me and each Believer here as a part of that great unity—and His prayer is that all of us may be with Him. I believe that He prays as much for the least as for the greatest, as much for Benjamin, as for Judah, as much for the despondent as for those who are fully assured. The prayer is one of great breadth and comprehensiveness, but yet it is not the prayer which those who believe in Universalism would put into His mouth. He does not pray that those who die *unbelievers* may be with Him where He is, neither does He will that souls in Hell should one day come out of it and be with Him in Glory. There is no trace of that doctrine in holy writ—those who teach such fables draw their inspiration from some other source! The new “purgatory,” in which so many have come to believe, is unknown to Holy Scripture. No, our Lord’s prayer is distinctly for those whom the Father gave Him—for everyone of these, but for no others. His, “I will,” concerns *them* only.

I feel right glad that there is no sort of personal character mentioned here, but only—“Those whom You have given Me.” It seems as if the Lord,

in His last moments, was not so much looking at the fruit of Grace as at Grace, itself. He did not so much note either the perfections or the imperfections of His people, but only the fact that they were His by the eternal gift of the Father. They belonged to the Father—"Yours they were." The Father gave them to Jesus—"You gave them to Me." The Father gave them as a love token and a means of His Son's glorification—"Yours they were and You gave them to Me"—and now our Lord pleads that because they were the Father's gift to Him, He should have them with Him. Does anybody quibble as to Christ's right to have those with Him who were His Father's—whom His Father gave to Him and whom He, Himself, actually took into His own possession? No, they ought to be with Him, since they are His in so Divine a manner!

If I possess a love-token that some dear one has given me, I may rightly desire to have it with me. Nobody can have such a right to your wedding ring, good Sister, as you have yourself! And are not Christ's saints, as it were, a signet upon His finger, a token which His Father gave Him of His good pleasure in Him? Should they not be with Jesus where He is, since they are His crown jewels and His Glory? We, in our creature love, lift up our hands and cry, "My Lord, my Master, let me have this dear one with me a little longer. I need the companionship of one so sweet, or life will be misery to me." But if Jesus looks us in the face and says, "Is your right better than Mine?" we draw back at once! He has a greater part in His saints than we can have. O Jesus, Your Father gave them to You of old. They are His reward for the travail of Your soul and far be it from us to deny You! Though blinded by our tears, we can yet see the rights of Jesus and we loyally admit them. We cry concerning our best beloved, "The Lord has taken away and blessed be the name of the Lord." Does not the text sweetly comfort us in the taking away of one and another, since it shows how they belong to Christ?

IV. And now, advancing another step, Christ reveals to us something concerning THE HOME COMPANIONSHIP in the Glory Land. Those who are taken away, where have they gone? The text says, "I will that they, also, whom You have given Me be with Me where I am; that they may behold My Glory."

By this language we are impressed with *the nearness of the saint to Christ in Glory*—"That they may be with Me." Think for a moment—when our Lord used these words and John took them down, the disciples were with Him. They had left the supper table where they had feasted together. The Master had said, "Arise, let us go from here"—and it was in the very midst of them that the Lord Jesus offered this choice prayer. Learn, then, that in Heaven the saints will be nearer to Christ than the Apostles were when they sat at the table with Him or heard Him pray! That was a nearness which might consist only in place and their minds might still be, as they often were, far away from Him. But up in Heaven we shall be one with Him in sympathy, in spirit, in conscious fellowship! We shall be with Jesus in the closest, clearest and most complete sense. No fellowship on earth can reach to the plenitude of the communion which we shall enjoy

above. "With Him"—"forever with the Lord"—this is Heaven! Who would wish to detain from such companionship those whom we love?

Yet do not drop the thought of *place*, lest you refine away the essence of the prayer. Let us see the *spiritual* clearly, but let us not, on that account, make the *sense* less real, less matter of fact. To the prayer that His saints may be with Him, our Lord added the words, "May be with Me where I am." Our bodies will rise from the dust, and they *must occupy a place*—that place will be where Jesus is! Even spirits must be somewhere and that somewhere with us is to be where Jesus is! We are to be, not metaphorically and fancifully, but really, truly, *literally* with Jesus! We shall enjoy an intense nearness to Him in that blessed place which the Father has prepared for Him and which He is preparing for us. There is a place where Jesus is revealed in all the splendor of His majesty, amid angels and glorified spirits—and those whom our Lord's will has taken away from us have *not* gone into banishment in a mysterious land, neither are they shut up in a house of detention till there is a general jail delivery—but they are with Christ in Paradise!

They serve Him and they see His face. Who would be so cruel as to keep a saint from such a fair country? I would desire all good for my children, my relatives, my friends—and what good is better than to be where Jesus is? Are you not glad to hear of the promotion of those you love? Will you quarrel with God because some of your dearest ones are promoted to the skies? The thought of their amazing bliss greatly moderates our natural grief. We weep for ourselves, but as we remember their companionship with the Altogether Lovely One, a smile blends with our tears!

Notice the *occupation* of those who are with Jesus—"That they may behold My Glory." I do not wonder that Jesus wants His dear ones to be with Him for this purpose, since love always pines for a partner in its joys. When I have been abroad and have been specially charmed with glorious scenery, I have, a hundred times, felt myself saying, almost involuntarily, "How I wish that my dear wife could be here! I would enjoy this a hundred times more if she could but see it!" It is an instinct of affection to seek fellowship in joy. The Lord Jesus is truly Human and He feels this unselfish desire of every loving human heart and, therefore, says, "Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My Glory."

Our Lord graciously permits His disciples to have fellowship with Him in His suffering and, therefore, He is all the more desirous that they should participate in His Glory. He knows that nothing will be a greater joy to them than to see Him exalted! Therefore He would give them this highest form of delight. Was not Joseph delighted when he said to his brothers, "You shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt," and still more so when he could actually *show* his father how great was his power, how exalted was his rank? It is joy for Jesus to let us behold His joy and it will be Glory for us to behold His Glory! Should not the redeemed ascend to such blessed delights? Would you hinder them? How unselfish it is on our Lord's part to think Himself not fully glorified till *we* behold His Glory!

How unselfish He will make us, also, since it will be our Glory to see His Glory! He does not say that He is going to take us Home that we may be *in* Glory, but that we may *behold His Glory!* His Glory is better to us than any personal glory—all things are more ours by being His! Glory apart from Him is not Glory! Beloved, even as our Lord seems to lose Himself in His people, His people hide themselves away in Him. It is His Glory to glorify them—it is their glory to glorify Him—and it will be the glory of glories for them to be glorified together! Who would not go to this Heaven? Who would keep a Brother or Sister out of it an hour?

Observe the fellowship which exists in the Glory Land. Read the verse—“That they may behold My Glory, which You have given Me.” What a blending of Persons! Where did our Lord’s Glory come from? “You gave it to Me,” says Jesus. Hence it is the Father’s Glory passed over to the Son! Yet Jesus calls it, “*My* Glory,” for it is truly His own. The saints are to behold this and it will be their glory to see it. Here we have the Father and the Elder Brother, and the many Brethren and a wonderful communism of interests and possessions. It is always so in a loving family. There we draw no hard and fast lines of *meum* and *teum*. “All yours are mine and mine are yours.” We ask not, “Whose is this?” Or, “Whose is that?” when we are at home! If you were to go into a stranger’s house, you would not think of taking this or that. But as your father’s own son, you make yourself at home and no one enquires, “What are you doing?”

Bridegroom and bride do not quarrel about property whether it is his or hers. Laws have been made, lately, to settle different estates for those who are one—this is well enough when love is gone—but true conjugal love laughs at all that can make separate that which God has joined together! The wife says, “That is mine.” “No” says the caviler, “it is your husband’s.” Her answer is, “and therefore it is mine.” In that blessed union into which Divine Love has admitted us, Christ is ours and we are Christ’s. His Father is our Father. We are one with Him. He is one with the Father and, therefore, all things are ours and the Father, Himself, loves us. All this will not only be true in Heaven, but it will there be realized and acted on!

So when the Lord brings His people Home, we shall be one with Him and He one with the Father—and we, also, in Him, one with the Father, so that we shall then find boundless glory in beholding the Glory of our Lord and God! My text has baffled me. I am beaten back by its blaze of light! Forgive me. I had a thought, but I cannot express it. The fire of my text burns with such fervent heat that it threatens to consume me if I draw nearer to it. Easily could I step into Heaven—so I feel at this moment!

V. I must end by speaking of THE HOME ATMOSPHERE. None of us can wish our departed friends back from their thrones. Since they have gone to be where Jesus is and to enter so fully into the most blissful fellowship with Him and the Father, we would not have them return, even, for an *instant* to this poor country! We only wish that our turn for migration may soon come. We would not be too long divided from our fellows. If some of the birds have gone to the sunny land, let us plume our wings to follow them. There will be only a little interval between our parting and our everlasting meeting. Look at the many who died before we came into

the world. Some of them have been together in Heaven now for thousands of years! To them it must seem that they were only divided by a moment's interval. Their continents of fellowship have made the channel of death seem but a streak of sea. Soon we shall take the same view of things!

Breathe the Home atmosphere. Jesus tells us that the atmosphere of His Home is *love*—"You loved Me before the foundation of the world." Brothers and Sisters, can you follow me in a great flight? Can you stretch broader wings than the condor ever knew and fly back into eternity before the beginning of it? There was a day before all days, when there was no day but the Ancient of Days! There was a time before all time, when only God WAS—the Uncreated, the Only-Existent One. The Divine Three—Father, Son and Spirit lived in blessed consort with each Other, delighting in each Other. Oh the intensity of the Divine Love of the Father to the Son! There was no world, no sun, no moon, no stars, no universe, but God, alone—and the whole of God's Omnipotence flowed forth in a stream of love to the Son—while the Son's whole Being remained eternally One with the Father by a mysterious essential union.

How came all this which we now see and hear? Why this creation? Why this fall of Adam? This redemption? This Church? This Heaven? How came it all about? It needed not to have been, but the Father's love made Him resolve to show forth the Glory of His Son. The mysterious volume which has been gradually unfolded before us has only this one design—the Father would make known His love to the Son and make the Son's glories to appear before the eyes of those whom the Father gave Him! This Fall and this Redemption and the story as a whole—so far as the Divine Purpose is concerned—are the fruit of the Father's love to the Son and His delight in glorifying the Son! Those myriads, those white-robed myriads, harping to music infinitely deep—what do they all mean? They are the Father's delight in the Son! That He might be glorified forever, He permitted that He should bear a human body, should suffer, bleed and die so that there might come out of Him, as a harvest comes from a dying and buried corn of wheat, all the countless hosts of elect souls, ordained forever to a felicity exceeding bounds!

These are the bride of the Lamb, the body of Christ, the fullness of Him that fills all in all. Their destiny is so high that no language can fully describe it! God only knows the love of God and all that it has prepared for those who are the objects of it. Love wraps up the whole in its cloth of gold. Love is both the source and the channel and the end of the Divine act. Because the Father loved the Son, He gave us to Him and ordained that we should be with Him. His love to us is love to the Son. "Not for your sakes do I do this, O House of Israel; be ashamed and be confounded." Because of the boundless, ineffable, infinite love of the great Father toward His Son, He has, therefore, ordained this whole system of salvation and redemption, that Jesus in the Church of His redeemed might everlastingly be glorified!

Let our saintly ones go Home, Beloved, if that is the design of their going. Since all comes of Divine Love and all sets forth Divine Love, let them go to Him who loves them—let Divine Love fulfill its purpose of bringing

many sons unto Glory! Since the Father once made our Lord perfect by His sufferings, let Him now be made perfectly glorious by the coming up of His redeemed from the purifying bath of His Atonement! I see them rise like sheep from the washing, all of them gathering with delight at the feet of that great Shepherd of the sheep!

Beloved, I am now lost in the subject. I breathe that heavenly air! Love surrounds all and conquers grief. I will not cause the temperature to fall by uttering any other words but this—Hold your friends lovingly, but be ready to yield them to Jesus. Detain them not from Him to whom they belong. When they are sick—fast and pray—but when they are departed, do much as David did who washed his face, ate and drank. You cannot bring them back again. You will go to them—they cannot return to you. Comfort yourselves with the double thought of their joy in Christ and Christ's joy in them! Add the *triple* thought of the Father's joy in Christ and in them! Let us watch the Master's call. Let us not dread the question—who next and who next? Let none of us start back as though we hoped to linger longer than others. Let us even desire to see our names in the celestial conscription! Let us be willing to be dealt with just as our Lord pleases. Let no doubt intervene. Let no gloom encompass us. Dying is but going Home—indeed, there is no dying for the saints!

Charles Stanford is gone! Thus was his death told to me—“He drew up his feet and smiled.” Thus will you and I depart. He had borne his testimony in the light, even when blind. He had cheered us all, though he was the greatest sufferer of us all! And now the film has gone from the eyes and the anguish is gone from the heart and, blessed be God, he is with Jesus! He smiled! What a sight was that which caused that smile! I have seen many faces of dear departed ones lit up with splendor. Of many I could feel sure that they had seen a vision of angels. Traces of a reflected Glory hung about their countenances. O Brothers and Sisters, we shall soon know more of Heaven than all the divines can tell us!

Let us go home, now, to our own dwellings, but let us pledge ourselves that we will meet again. But where shall we appoint the trysting place? It would be idle to appoint any spot of earth, for this assembly will never come together again in this world! We will meet with Jesus, where He is, where we shall behold His Glory. Some of you cannot do this. Turn from your evil ways! Turn to the right, where stands that Cross, and keep straight on and you will come to Jesus in Glory. Blessed be the name of the Lord! Amen.

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THE RIGHTEOUS FATHER KNOWN AND LOVED NO. 1378

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 14, 1877,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“O righteous Father, the world has not known You. But I have known You, and these have known that You have sent Me. And I have declared unto them Your name, and will declare it; that the love with which You have loved Me may be in them, and I in them.”
John 17:25, 26.***

THESE are the last sentences of our Lord's most wonderful prayer. May they not be regarded as the flower and crown of the whole intercession? Minds usually burn and glow and reach their highest fervor as they proceed and it will not be wrong to conceive of the Savior as having here reached the climax of His pleading, the summit of His supplication. He has kept the best wine until now and brings forth His richest sentences last. How, then, shall our slender ability attain to “the height of this great argument”?

It is far beyond our little skill to draw forth all the sweets which lie within these words like ointment in a box of alabaster. For their full consideration, a lifetime would be too brief and the mind of the most Grace-taught Believer too feeble! Here are great deeps which neither reason nor thought can fathom nor experience fully know. Only the scholars of the New Jerusalem who have, for ages, studied the manifold wisdom of God in the glorious work of redemption and, perhaps not even they, would be able to discover all that the Savior meant by these most simple but yet most pregnant words.

John's Gospel is always easy for the child to read, but it is always hard for the man to understand. And these two verses, which are almost entirely made up of words of one syllable, contain mysteries which baffle the most enlightened understanding. When I consider what they veil, I am constrained to cry out, “O the depths!” I can only hope to present to you a few grains of gold which have been washed down by the streams of meditation—I cannot take you to the secret mines from which the treasures have been borne. It shall need your own experience and the personal teaching of the Holy Spirit for you to know the height and depth of the Truths of Gods spoken here. And even then it shall require death and resurrection and a sight of the Eternal Glory to qualify you wholly to comprehend them!

There are two things in the text manifest to every careful reader. There is, first, a knowledge which is exceedingly peculiar and inestimably precious—“O righteous Father, the world has not known You. But I have known You, and these have known that You have sent Me.” In connection

with this knowledge you will observe that there is a great Teacher who first knows for Himself that which He teaches—"I have known You." And then He communicates His knowledge—"And I have declared unto them Your name, and will declare it." That fruitful theme shall furnish the first topic of our meditation. May the Holy Spirit lead us into it.

The second part of the text is not knowledge—it is that to which all Divine knowledge is intended to lead, namely, love. The 26th verse speaks of wonderful discoveries of a love of infinite excellence—"That the love with which You have loved Me may be in them." And you notice that in order to bring that love home to us, there is a Divine Indweller who goes with it, and without whom it could not be! As a Teacher is required to bring us the choice knowledge, so an Indweller is necessary to infuse into us the infinite love—"And I in them." Jesus must teach us or we shall not know the Father. He must dwell in us or we shall not rejoice in His love.

Thus our first subject is Divine knowledge and the Divine Instructor. Our second subject is indwelling love and the indwelling Lord. The two are one! The blessed Person of our Lord Jesus is so connected with both and so unites both that the subject is one! To know God in Christ Jesus is to love Him—and to be loved of Him is the cause of our being made to know Him! When Jesus declares the Father's name, we both know and love. And when we see the Father in the Son we are filled both with instruction and affection.

I. Our text speaks of A KNOWLEDGE OF INFINITE VALUE AND ITS TEACHER. What is that knowledge? Jesus tells us in verse 26—"I have declared unto them Your name." God has made man and, naturally, man ought to know his Maker. The creature should acquaint itself with its Creator. The subject should know the name of his King. But by reason of the blindness of our heart, through the depravity engendered by the Fall and, also, by reason of each man's personal sin, there is none that understands, there is none that seeks after God.

Whatever else fallen man desires to know (and by nature he is always ready to eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil), yet he desires not to know his God, but says to Him, "Depart from us. We desire not the knowledge of Your ways." Yet it is evident that a man can never be in a proper state till he knows his God and is at peace with Him. A man who is totally ignorant of God must be in a dark state of mind—and since he loves that darkness—it is plain that his mind is biased against good. His willful ignorance of God proves his enmity to Him. While man is opposed to God he cannot be happy, holy, or safe. How can he be, when he fights against One who is perfect holiness and love?

Our Lord Jesus Christ, therefore, in coming to save us, makes it a part of His office to reveal the Father to us. He brings us the knowledge of the Glory of God, for it shines in His own face. "God was manifest in the flesh." Man must know God in order to be saved and, therefore, the Lord Jesus of old promised in the 22nd Psalm, "I will declare Your name unto My brethren," and here, in our text, He confesses, "I have declared unto them Your name, and will declare it." By the term, "name," He means the *existence* of God, the Nature of God, the Character of God, the work of

God, the Revelation of God, for the word, "name" is a peculiarly expressive word in Scripture and comprehends all that by which a person is properly described. In this case it comprehends the whole of God and our Lord Jesus Christ has come to make God known to us to the fullest.

He says, "If you had known Me, you would have known My Father, also." This should suggest to each of us a searching question, Do I know the Lord? If you do not, it is quite certain that our Lord's Words apply to you, "you must be born again." Without a knowledge of God, you bear evidence that you are still in Nature's darkness and in the natural alienation of your spirit. You belong to that world which lies in the Wicked One, of which our Lord said, "O righteous Father, the world has not known You." O that by the teaching of the Holy Spirit you may yet know the Father!

In verse 25 there is a testing name given to God, a name by which we may decide whether we know the name of the Lord or not. What is that? I call your particular attention to it, for my whole subject turns upon it. It is this—"O *righteous* Father." I know of no other place in Scripture where God is called by that name. In this prayer Jesus had not addressed His Father by that title before. He had spoken of Him as, "Father," and also as, "Holy Father," but here, alone, it is—"O *righteous* Father." I say that the knowledge of this name may serve as a test as to whether you truly and spiritually know God, or have only a notional and outward idea of Him. If you know Him aright, you know and understand what is comprehended under those two simple words which are so remarkable when found in combination—"righteous Father."

He is "righteous"—having the attributes of a Judge and Ruler. He is just, impartial, by no means sparing the guilty. He is "Father"—near of kin, loving, tender, forgiving. In His Character and in His dealings with His people He blends the two as they were never combined before! How can the judge and the father be found in one? When guilty men are concerned, how can both characters be carried out to the fullest? How is it possible? There is but one answer and that is found in the Sacrifice of Jesus which has joined the two in one! In the Atonement of our Lord Jesus "mercy and truth are met together—righteousness and peace have kissed each other." In the sacred Substitution we see declared how God is "righteous," and yet, "Father"—in the sublime transactions of Calvary He manifests all the love of a tender Father's heart and all the justice of an impartial Ruler's sword!

This is the knowledge which our Lord has come to declare among the men whom He has chosen out of the world. And He assures us, first, that this is peculiar knowledge. "O righteous Father, the world has not known You." The heathen world knew nothing of a righteous Father—it scarcely knew God as Father—though here and there a line of a heathen poet might speak of men as the offspring of God, the true idea of Divine Fatherhood was unknown to sages and philosophers. As to the righteousness of *God*, they had but clouded notions. A future judgment and a system of rewards and punishments they saw by the light of natural conscience. But true righteousness in the governing of the universe they had not discovered—they knew not because they did not wish to know.

Their gods were generally monsters of iniquity. As to righteousness and love being combined, they imagined no such thing! The idea of a god who should be at once sternly righteous and yet infinitely tender had not occurred to them. How could it? Being themselves unrighteous, they sought not after a righteous God! He was not at all in their thoughts. Being themselves cruel and loveless, they could not discover a Deity whose name is Love. All the wisdom of antiquity went to fabricate gods of quite another kind. The world, by wisdom, knew not the God who is called "righteous Father." It is more humbling to have to add that the Christian world does not know God as a "righteous Father," either, but persists in forsaking this grand, glorious and Scriptural view of Him.

Mark you, I draw a very grave distinction between the Christian Church and the Christian world! The Christian world is a conglomeration of good and evil—the embodiment of the unreal and unspiritual which, nevertheless, desires to bear the Christian name. It is the world pretending to be the friend of Christ and you know how hollow is the pretense. The Christian Church, made up of the men taught of God and born of the Spirit, is another matter! There we have something very different, for these know the righteous Father. Skeptics labeled as, "thinkers," reject the evangelical idea of God and the Atonement which that idea involves. Worldly wisdom talks of "the universal fatherhood of God," and babbles forever about that mere dream, that fiction of folly against which the Bible is a plain and pointed protest.

Universal Fatherhood, indeed, when our Lord Jesus said, "If God were your Father you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God. You are of your father, the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do." Is it not described as a special wonder of love that we should be called the sons of God? (1 John 3:1.) Did not the Holy Spirit say by His servant John, "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil; whoever does not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loves not his brother"? The philosophic Christian world knows an effeminate, indiscriminate fatherhood, but not, "the righteous Father." It will not bow before the majesty of His justice.

According to the tenor of its teaching, sin is a misfortune, transgression a mere trifle, and the souls that suffer for willful guilt are objects to be pitied, rather than to be blamed! The world's "thinkers" are continually drawing upon our feelings to make us pity those who are punished—but they have little to say in order to make us hate the evil which deserved the doom. Sin, according to them, does not, of itself, demand punishment, but penalties are to be exacted or remitted for the general good, if, indeed, they are to be executed at all! All necessary and inevitable connection between guilt and its punishment is denied. They dare to call justice, *revenge*, and speak of atonement as if were a compensation for private annoyance.

The Christian *world* does not seem to have learned the Truth that "a God all mercy were a God unjust," and that a God unjust would soon be discovered to be a God without love—in fact, no God whatever. "Righteous Father!" This is the peculiar Revelation which is received by those who

have been taught of the Holy Spirit—and to this day Jesus Christ may say, “O righteous Father, the world has not known You.” Men kick against the doctrine of the Atonement, they quarrel with Substitution, they are fierce in their sarcasms against the mention of the precious blood of Christ and sneer superciliously at those who hold fast the old Truths of God. They stumble at this stumbling stone and strive evermore to overthrow this rock of the Truth of God! And yet, depend upon it, this is the test question by which we shall know whether a man knows God aright or knows Him not!

There is much in this knowledge which renders it very distinctive, for it reveals the condition of the mind which receives it. A man who knows God as, “righteous Father,” shows that he has some knowledge of himself. He has perceived the sin within his nature and it has burdened him. The righteousness of God has appeared to him in its threatening form and he had been bowed before it under a sense of his guilt. You can see, too, that the man also knows something of his Savior. He has evidently seen the Son, or else he would not know the Father, for of old Jesus said, “No man comes unto the Father but by Me.” He has seen God’s great Gift to man and learned His boundless love!

His knowledge of the “righteous Father” shows that his heart has submitted itself to the justice of God. He has been in the place where David stood when he said, “Against You, You only, have I sinned and done this evil in Your sight; that You might be justified when You speak, and be clear when You judge.” He has evidently bared his back to the lash of punishment and felt that he deserved all the blows which it could lay upon him. Inasmuch as it knows the Lord as a “righteous Father” you can see that the heart has learned to trust God, for no man calls Him, Father, in spirit and in truth till first he possesses a living faith and some kindling of Divine love. Submission and trust compose a condition of character which is peculiar to a renewed soul, but will surely be found in a man if he is, indeed, saved, for it is the mark of being saved from self-justification and from the hatred bred by despair.

When we see in a man an unconditional submission to the justice of God and yet a trustful hopefulness in His boundless love, we may be sure that he is a renewed man. He cries, “You are righteous, O my God, and if You destroy me, I can say nothing. But, Father, You will not destroy me, for I perceive that you are Love. Though I see You grasp Your sword of fire, yet do I trust You, for I still believe You to be gracious and loving.” The knowledge described in the text is not only peculiar to those who are taught of God, but it reveals peculiarities in them which Grace has implanted there. They believe because they are Christ’s sheep and know His voice. The life within them receives the living Truth of God. They would not have come to know the “righteous Father” unless there had been a change in their character worked by the Spirit of God—and that once done, they know Him as of necessity.

I would next say that this knowledge is eminently consolatory. It is but little that I know, but I feel that I would cheerfully part with it all so long as I may be allowed to retain the knowledge contained in these two words,

“righteous Father.” This is my life, my light, my love, my delight, my Heaven! If all the productions of wit and wisdom throughout all past ages could be as effectually consumed as the Alexandrian library when it was burned to ashes. If man did but retain the knowledge of these two words, “righteous Father,” he might be content to see the whole mass pass away in smoke! To know the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom He has sent, is the climax, the essence, the sum total of wisdom! I said that it was consolatory and so it is to the last degree. For a man to know that God is his Father is delightful beyond measure!

To feel that God forgives him as the father forgave the prodigal. To know that He has received him into His heart and home as the father did his once lost boy is unspeakably delightful! But when we further learn that all this is done without the violation of justice—that all this deed of Grace is done *righteously*—and so done that even Justice demands it should be done, then are we full of wondering love! Beloved, God is as just in loving His sinful people as He could have been in manifesting His displeasure towards them! He is as just in forgiving as He could have been in punishing—and this is the glory of the whole matter! This being understood, we see our position in Christ Jesus to be unassailable. We see that Justice cannot punish us, for Jesus has borne our penalty! It cannot demand more at our hands, for our great Substitute has rendered to it the full tale of obedience. In Christ Jesus, God is just and yet our Justifier! We are so safe that we begin to challenge opposition and cry, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” We take up a triumphant note and sing with exceeding joy, “If God is for us, who can be against us!” If God is righteous and yet my Father, then I am saved and saved in such a way that the attributes of God are glorified by *my salvation* and, therefore, I am most securely and certainly saved! Why should I not rejoice?

One more fact about this knowledge of God as a “righteous Father”—it is a knowledge which causes its possessor to enjoy much fellowship with Jesus. Notice how our Lord puts it. “O righteous Father, the world has not known You. But I have known You, and these have known that You have sent Me.” “I have known You.” Ah, yes, of old the Son of God knew the glorious Character of the Godhead! Being Himself God, He knew that justice was an essential attribute of Deity, which never, never could be tarnished or made to yield a hair’s breadth! And He knew, also, that God is Love and that His love would never cease to be His special glory and delight! He knew of old that, speaking after the manner of men, these two attributes were each resolved to suffer no eclipse. He knew that each of them must keep its place.

God must be just, and must be a Father. Consequently, when dealing with sinners, He must smite and He must spare. Our Lord saw how these two necessities stood like the eternal hills and how our doom seemed to roll between—and it was He who condescended, for our sakes, to bring these two together by His own endurance of justice and manifestation of love. He determined to take upon Himself our Nature and bear our sin which was the cause of the quarrel! And then, by enduring the punishment of our sins, He magnified justice—and to an equal degree glorified

love. He came, He saw and solved the difficulty—and now the Judge is as righteous as if He were not love and the Father is as loving as if righteousness had never been offended! This grand Character of God as “righteous Father” was so dear to our Lord and so much admired by Him that He died to maintain and vindicate it! And when you and I come to know it, I am sure we so much delight in it that we feel we would sooner die than give up this Truth of God!

This great Revelation of God is not a dogma that may or may not be accepted—it must be so! I do, in my soul, believe this Truth of God to be an article of a standing or of a falling of a Christian Church. If you put away the doctrine of the Substitutionary Sacrifice of Christ, you have disemboweled the Gospel and torn from it, its very heart! Angels need no longer sing glory to God in the highest and peace on earth if it is not true the union of the Divine Glory and human salvation is found in Jesus! The glad news dwindles down very lamentably if the Atonement is denied! But it cannot be disproved—God is just and yet the Justifier of him that believes! Christ has died that this Truth of God may be clear and His people live to declare it and feel that it were worth a thousand martyrdoms to maintain it! Herein we have fellowship with Christ, for He knows the “righteous Father” and rejoices in Him—and *we* know the “righteous Father,” too, in Christ—and love and bless Him and wonder at Him every day more and more.

Thus I have, to the best of my power, described the invaluable knowledge. May we all be taught of the Lord and all know Him, from the least to the greatest.

Now, this knowledge comes to us by a Teacher. That Teacher is spoken of in verse twenty-six. “I have declared unto them Your name, and will declare it.” Our Beloved Lord has most fitly declared to us this name of “righteous Father,” for He, Himself, knows it as none other can know it! And He here confesses this intimate knowledge, saying, “but I have known You.” “No man knows the Father save the Son” and the Son knows the rectitude of the Father’s government and the love of the Father’s heart beyond all others. Is He not Himself, “very God of very God”? And does He not perceive this wondrous union of the two ranges of attributes in the Person of the Father with a clearness of vision which no one else possesses? Fit is it, therefore, that He should declare to us what He has seen and known of the Father.

He declared the “righteous Father” in His life, for in His life He incarnated Truth and Grace. Jesus Christ on earth was without sin in thought, in word and in deed. Point me to a sin He ever committed, inculcated, or excused. Righteousness was about Him as the atmosphere which He breathed. Well did the Psalmist say of Him, “You love righteousness and hate wickedness.” And yet what love there was in Him and pity for the wandering sheep! He mingled with sinners and yet was separate from sinners. He touched their diseases and healed them and yet was not defiled by their impurities. He took their infirmities upon Himself and yet in Him, personally, there was no trace of sin. Our Lord was so righteous that you

perceived at once that He was not of this world—and yet He was so lovingly human that He was altogether a Man among men.

He was not at all separated from them in the way in which John the Baptist was, who “came neither eating nor drinking.” Nor was He divided from His fellows, as many a man of genius has been, by eccentric modes of thought. He was man’s Brother and his Physician, his Friend and his Savior! When you want to know the Father’s righteousness and love, read the history of Jesus Christ—no, *know* the Lord Jesus, Himself and you know the Father! His death, however, most gloriously illustrated this beyond everything else. Behold, He dies that the “righteous Father” may be seen! He has taken upon Himself man’s sin and He is brought to the place where man must answer for his sin. He is silent before His accusers. He is condemned and numbered with the transgressors.

Now He must die the sinner’s death. Look, He is nailed to the Cross and now God, Himself, forsakes Him, for He has laid the guilt of man upon Him and, therefore, cannot be present to make His spirit glad. The deserted Savior cries, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” and well He might, when His own Father in righteousness turned His face from Him! Beloved, when Jesus Christ died there was a greater display of the righteousness and the fatherhood of God than could have been possible by any other means! Then the mystery was made plain and the depth opened up to its very bottom! O Lord our God, what an abyss of adorable goodness have You thus laid bare before us!—

***“How our hearts tremble at Your love immense!
In love immense, inviolably just!
You, rather than Your justice should be stained,
Did stain the Cross with blood of your own Son.”***

And now, today, it is the business of our Lord to continue to reveal the righteous fatherhood of God and He does so by the work of His Holy Spirit. Do you not remember when He revealed it to you? When you were bowed down with grief on account of sin? When you longed to be reconciled to God but could not see how, then the Spirit of God came to you and pointed you to the full Atonement made, to the utmost ransom paid and you clapped your hands for very joy as you perceived that God could be your Father and receive you as His child and yet His righteousness need not suffer the slightest decrease! That Spirit of God working on the behalf of Christ is still declaring this among the nations! As the years roll on He is opening the eyes of the blind and bringing His own chosen, one by one, to behold the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ! And then they can say, “O righteous Father, I know You and rejoice in You.”

To each one of us who are saved, Jesus is declaring this “righteous Father” more and more. I hope I know more of this than I did 20 years ago. Brothers and Sisters, don’t you, too? I trust that every day we see a little more of the righteous fatherhood of God and shall continue to do so, world without end! We shall, as we grow in Grace, look further and further into the wondrous mystery of the justice which was satisfied and the love which furnished the satisfaction! Beloved, it shall be a part of our Lord’s joy, even in eternity, to still declare to us the name of God, the “righteous Father.” Will it not be our joy to sit at His feet and learn of Him? Is He not

a blessed Teacher? Has He not been very patient with us? Blessed be His name for all His care and patience towards us. He has taught us much and means to teach us more. Let us bend a listening ear and bow a willing heart while, from day to day, He shall continue to declare unto us the “righteous Father.”

Now, if at any time I should seem to preach the doctrine of the Substitution of Christ too often and if you should say, “He is harping upon the old string,” I shall not hesitate to quote my Master’s words and say, “I have declared unto them Your name, and will declare it.” This Truth of God is one that needs continual declaration! It should be sounded often in the Christian’s ears to keep alive His sense of obligation to the Wisdom which devised and the Love which carried out the plan of our salvation to the glory of the “righteous Father.”

II. But now, secondly, this heavenly knowledge is not given to us for its own sake alone. Even the high and blessed Revelation of the “righteous Father” is not made to us that we may know it and end in knowing. Our Lord says, “I have declared unto them Your name, and *will* declare it, that the love with which You have loved Me may be in them, and I in them.” The objective of the knowledge bestowed upon us is the infusion of a LOVE UNRIVALLED IN VALUE and extraordinary to the last degree! Let us speak upon it. First, notice that this discovery of love which is spoken of in the 26th verse is an inward discovery of it—“That the love with which You have loved Me may be *in* them.” It was always *on* them, for the Father has always loved His people—but here it is spoken of as, “in them.”

What does that mean? I think it means that they may know it, be persuaded of it, believe it and enjoy it—that they, through knowing the righteous name, may come to perceive the love of God towards them. Do you not see the connection? Jesus Christ our Lord dies for us that God may be righteous and yet may save us! Is it not clear as a pikestaff to you that God loves His people with a very wonderful love when He gives His own Son to die and satisfy justice on their behalf? Nothing can prove that love so clearly. Nothing can bring it home so forcibly as the sacrificial death of the Only Begotten. Therefore does Christ declare the blessed name of the “righteous Father,” in order that it may come home to you with an unconquerable power that the Father loves you and loves you beyond conception, seeing that not even His dear Son was so loved as to be spared, but *He* must die that *you* might live and that the justice of God might be satisfied on your account!

There is no way of knowing the love of God like knowing the “righteous Father” and the Atonement which that Character necessitated. “Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us.” You may say, “I see His love in every flower that blooms and every breeze that blows.” It is true, but it is the same love, after all, which He has towards a horse or a cow—for do not flowers bloom and breezes blow for them? “We see the love of God,” say some, “in giving us meat to eat and raiment to put on.” So do I, but this, also, is the same love which He bears to ravens and to lilies, for does He not feed the one and clothe the other? I need something more by way of love than this. “I see God’s love,” says one, “in

Christ's coming to teach us and make us better." No doubt you do, and so do I, but I do not feel it one half so forcibly as when I gaze upon Calvary and see the innocent Victim bleeding for my crimes. "Herein is love!"

When the Divine Father gives up His best Beloved for guilty man, we may well say, "Behold how He loved him!" Come and see this spectacle of love! It is none other than the Lord of Heaven who must *die* to vindicate the jealous purity of the Divine government! Is He God's only begotten Son and must He bear man's guilt? Miracle of miracles! Must the spotless Son bear human guilt? He must! He did! Tell it and let Heaven be astonished, still, though it has heard the wonder nearly 2,000 years! Upon Him who never sinned the Lord has laid our iniquities! Bearing that guilt, must He suffer? He must. If God loves His people, His Son must suffer in their place—must suffer shame, must suffer desertion, must suffer death. What? Must He die? Incarnate Deity be put to death? A felon's death? Can this be? It has been! It is finished! Such was the love of God that "He spared not His only begotten Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all." Be astonished, O heavens, forever and ever, that love could accomplish such a feat as this!

Now, then, Christ has come on purpose to declare the name of God that the love of God may be perceived by us, its power felt, its Glory recognized, its greatness wondered at, its infinitude delighted in. But now notice, and here is the very heart of our subject, that this love was of a most extraordinary kind. "That the love with which You have loved Me may be in them." What is the love with which God loved His Son? Come, you philosophers and divines! Come, you who have learned to blend imagination with cool judgment—come and think this over—the love with which the Father loved His Son! Believer, He loves you as He loves His best Beloved! He is His only begotten Son—Son in a very mysterious manner—for we cannot understand that Divine filiation in which the Father is eternal and the Son also eternal.

He loves you as He loves such a Son. There is more than sonship, there is natural unity of Essence, for the Father and Son are one God! And how the one God loves, how the Father loves, the Son, I know not, except that I know there can be no limit to such love. It must be altogether boundless and unspeakable! Now, if you fully know the righteous fatherhood of God, as Christ would have you know it, you will learn that God loved you as He loved His Son. Do you not see that it is so? If He had not loved you as He loved the Son, He would have spared His Son! Is not that clear? If He had not loved you as He loved His Son, He would have said to His Son, "Son, You shall never leave Heaven for that polluted planet. You shall never descend to poverty and suffering. You shall never have Your hands and feet pierced. You shall never be despised and spit upon and put to a cruel death."

But because He loved us as He loved His Son, He gave His Son! Does not that fact warm your hearts? Does it not burn like coals of juniper within your bosoms? "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable Gift"! No, that is not all. We learn from the verse which precedes our text that the Father loved our Lord eternally—"For You loved Me before the foundation

of the world.” Perceive, then, that God has also loved you, dear child of His, from before the foundation of the world! Before you had a being, His prescient eye foresaw your existence and you were the object of His love! How or why, I cannot tell you, but He loved you and He still loves you as He loves His Son! May the power of that love be felt in Your heart, now! It was a love of complacency and delight!

Remember those words of the Lord which He spoke concerning His Son in the day of His Baptism and at two other occasions when the heavens opened—“This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” Always draw a distinction between the love of benevolence, with which God loves *all* His creatures, and the love of *complacency* which is reserved for His own. He calls His Church His Hephzibah, “My delight is in her.” He says not so of the world! God never said concerning any wicked man, “This is my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,” for He is *not* pleased with him, but angry with him every day! But concerning all those who know the “righteous Father” it is the prayer of Christ that the love with which the Father loves Him may be in them—and by that He means that they may *feel* that the Lord has, *in them*, a father’s content.

Do try, if you can, to realize this high privilege. It is true, O Believer, that God, the infinite Father, takes pleasure in you! It is true, but it is very surprising! Often have I turned over that Word in the Song where the Bridegroom says to the bride, “You are all fair, My love. There is no spot on you.” How can this be? Why, we are all spots! Yet does the Eternal Father view us *in Christ*! And in Him He takes delight in us as a father does in his children. “My delights were with the sons of men.” “He shall rest in His love, He shall rejoice over you with singing.” When you know God as “righteous,” and yet, “Father,” then shall you see that, inasmuch as the righteous way of salvation has put away all sin by laying it upon Christ, there is no reason why the Lord should be angry with us! And inasmuch as the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us, there is a legal reason why He should be satisfied with His people. And inasmuch as we have become one with Christ, there is good cause why He should take a delight in us, even for His Son’s sake!

God the Father loves His Son infinitely! How could He do less? Without beginning has He loved Him and without an end will He love Him and, also, without change, without limit and without degree! In the same way does He love His people, whose hope is fixed in Him as the “righteous Father.” This love, wherever it reigns in the heart, creates a return love to God. You cannot really know all this and enjoy it without feeling, “My God, I love You in return.” And that high and noble passion works to the cleansing of the soul and the purging out of sin—and so it becomes a sanctifying influence by which a Christian is made to be “holiness unto the Lord.”

To close—this love within the soul comes through an Indweller. Observe the last words of the text, “That the love with which You have loved Me may be in them, and I in them.” What does this mean? I cannot tell you all it means. Let us skim the surface just for a minute. It means this. The Holy Spirit is the representative of Christ now upon earth and if ever the

love of God the Father is to be known by any one of us, the Lord Jesus, by the Spirit, must be in us. Without the Spirit of God actually *resident in us* we cannot know the righteous Father! We are as blind and dead men until He quickens and illuminates us—all the letter-teaching in the world will benefit us nothing—we must be born again!

My dear Hearers, there may be some of you to whom all my talk, this morning, must seem very strange. You cannot see anything in it. Let the fact cause you to suspect that you must be in the dark. When even the love of God to His people becomes a dry theme to you, it looks suspicious! Surely you have no part nor lot in it, or else you would relish a discourse upon it! The reason why you do not comprehend it is because you have not the Spirit of Christ—and if you have not the Spirit of Christ, you are none of His. May this convince you of your condition and may you be led to seek Christ and find everlasting life.

But when the text says that Christ is *in* His people, it means, besides the indwelling of the Spirit, that *Christ* is in us! He is in us by faith, for we have taken Christ Jesus as the great atoning Sacrifice to be our sole and only confidence. Therefore He is in us, trusted and loved, fed upon and believed in. If He is so, then it is quite clear that we know the “righteous Father!” And when we know the “righteous Father,” then it follows that we must have some discoveries of His great love to us. Are you trusting Christ? Is Jesus, in you, the hope of Glory? Do you trust in Him, alone? If so, go and drink to the fullest, the sweetness of the text and let no man say you cannot! Christ is in you, moreover, by a real and vital union with you. You are in Him as a branch is in the vine and He is in you as the sap is in the branch.

You are in Him as a member is in the body and He is in you as the life is in all the members. We know that Jesus quickens us and because He lives, we live, also. From now on we are one with Christ! It must be so, because if God did not see us in Christ, He could not regard us with complacency or, in other words, love us as He loves His Son! If He did not, in looking upon a man, see the love and the Nature of His Only Begotten in Him, how could He love him? He views us as part and parcel of His own dear Son and so His delight is in us!

Beloved, the Lord sees, in addition to all this, something of a likeness to Christ in us, worked by His Spirit, for if Jesus is, indeed, in us, we shall grow to be like He and shall manifest somewhat of His spirit and Nature. The more we have of likeness to Jesus, the more will it be evident that the love of God is in us and is working in us, “to will and to do of His own good pleasure.” May God grant that what I have spoken so feebly may, nevertheless, be sweetly enjoyed by you, for I am persuaded that in the text there lies many a banquet for saints that hunger and thirst after righteousness—and a depth of mystical teaching which it shall be well for you to search into with all your powers. God bless you, my Beloved, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

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“LOVE AND I”—A MYSTERY

NO. 1667

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, JULY 2, 1882,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“I have declared unto them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You have loved Me may be in them, and I in them.”
John 17:26.*

FOR several Sabbath mornings my mind has been directed into subjects which I might fitly call the deep things of God. I think I have never felt my own incompetence more fully than in trying to handle such subjects. It is a soil into which one may dig and dig as deep as you will and still never exhaust the golden nuggets which lie within it! I am, however, comforted by this fact, that these subjects are so fruitful that even we who can only scratch the surface of them shall yet get a harvest from them. I read, once, of the plains of India, that they were so fertile that you had only to tickle them with a hoe and they laughed with plenty—and surely such a text as this may be described as equally fruitful—even under our feeble husbandry.

Pearls lie on the surface here as well as in the depth. We have only to search its surface and stir the soil a little, and we shall be astonished at the plenitude of spiritual wealth which lies before us. Oh, that the Spirit of God may help us to enjoy the blessed Truths which are here set forth! Here is the priceless treasure, but it lies hidden till He reveals it to us. You see, this text is taken out of our Lord’s last prayer with His disciples. He did as good as say, “I am about to leave you, I am about to die for you and for awhile you will not see Me. But now, before we separate, let us pray.” It is one of those impulses that you have felt yourselves. When you have been about to part from those you love, to leave them, perhaps, in danger and difficulty, you have felt you could do no less than say, “Let us draw near unto God.” Your heart found no way of expressing itself at all so fitting, so congenial, so satisfactory as to draw near unto the great Father and spread your case before Him.

Now, a prayer from such a One as Jesus, our Lord and Master—a prayer in such a company, with the 11 whom He had chosen and who had been with Him from the beginning. A prayer under such circumstances, I say, when He was just on the brink of the brook of Kedron and was about to cross that gloomy stream and go up to Calvary and there lay down His life—such a prayer as this, so living, earnest, loving and Divine—deserves the most studious meditations of all Believers! I invite you to bring your best thoughts and skill for the navigation of this sea. It is not a creek or bay, but the main ocean itself!

We cannot hope to fathom its depths. This is true of any sentence of this matchless prayer, but for me, the work of exposition becomes unusually heavy because my text is the close and climax of this marvelous supplication—it is the central mystery of all! In the lowest depth there is still a lower depth—and this verse is one of those deeps which still exceed the rest! Oh, how much we need the Spirit of God! Pray for His bedewing! Pray that His balmy influences may descend upon us richly! You will observe that the last word of our Lord’s prayer is concerning love. This is the last petition which He offers, “That the love with which You have loved Me may be in them, and I in them.” He reaches no greater height than this, namely, that His people be filled with the Father’s love!

How could He rise higher? For this is to be filled with all the fullness of God, since God *is Love* and he that loves Him dwells in God and God in him. What importance ought you and I to attach to the Grace of love! How highly we should esteem that which Jesus makes the crown jewel of all. If we have faith, let us not be satisfied unless our faith works by love and purifies the soul. Let us not be content, indeed, until the love of Christ is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us. Well did the poet say—

**“Only love to us be given,
Lord, we ask no other Heaven,”**

For, indeed, there is no other Heaven below and scarcely is there any other Heaven above than to reach to the fullness of perfect love, for this is where the prayer of the Son of David ends, in praying, “that the love with which You have loved Me may be in them.” What a subject! The highest that even our Lord Jesus reached in His noblest prayer! Again, with groans, my heart cries, Holy Spirit, help!

I shall, this morning, try to speak first, upon the food of love, or what love lives upon. Secondly, upon the love, itself—what kind of love it is. And then, thirdly, upon the companion of love. “That the love with which You have loved Me may be in them, and I in them.”

I. First, THE FOOD OF LOVE to God—what is it? It is knowledge. “I have made known unto them Your name, and will make it known.” We cannot love a God whom we do not know! A measure of knowledge is necessary to affection. However lovely God may be, a man blind of soul cannot perceive Him and, therefore, is not touched by His loveliness. Only when the eyes are opened to behold the loveliness of God will the heart go out towards God who is so desirable an object for the affections. Brothers and Sisters, we must *know* in order to *believe*! We must know in order to hope and we must especially know in order to love. Hence the great desirableness that you should know the Lord and His great love which passes knowledge.

You cannot reciprocate love which you have never known, even as a man cannot derive strength from food which he has not eaten. Till first of all the love of God has come into your heart and you have been made a partaker of it, you cannot rejoice in it or return it. Therefore our Lord took care to feed His disciples’ hearts upon the Father’s name. He labored to

make the Father known to them. This is one of His great efforts with them and He is grieved when He sees their ignorance and has to say to one of them, “Have I been so long time with you and yet have you not known Me, Philip? He that has seen Me has seen the Father; and why do you say, then, Show us the Father?” Study much, then, the Word of God—be diligent in turning the pages of Scripture and in hearing God’s true ministers, that the flame of love within your hearts may be revived by the fuel of holy knowledge which you place upon it.

Pile on the logs of sandal wood and let the perfumed fires burn before the Lord! Heap on the handfuls of frankincense and sweet odors of sacred knowledge, that on the altar of your heart there may always be burning the sacred flame of love to God in Christ Jesus! The knowledge, here spoken of, is a knowledge which Jesus gave them. “I have known You and these have known that You have sent Me. And I have declared unto them Your name, and will declare it.” O Beloved, it is not knowledge that you and I pick up as a matter of book-learning that will ever bring out our love to the Father! It is *only* knowledge given us by Christ through His Spirit! It is not knowledge communicated by the preacher, alone, which will bless you, for however much he may be taught of God, himself, he cannot preach to the *heart* unless the blessed Spirit of God comes and takes of the things that are spoken and reveals them and makes them manifest to each individual heart so that, in consequence, it knows the Lord.

Jesus said, “O righteous Father, the world has not known You,” and you and I would have been in the same condition, strangers to God, without God and without hope in the world, if the Spirit of God had not taken of Divine things and applied them to our souls so that we are made to know them! Every living word of knowledge is the work of the living God! If you only know what you have found out for yourself, or picked up by your own industry apart from Jesus, you know nothing aright—it must be by the direct and distinct teaching of God the Holy Spirit that you must learn to profit! Only Jesus Christ can reveal the Father. He Himself said, “No man comes unto the Father but by Me.” He that knows not Christ knows not the Father! But when Jesus Christ reveals Him, ah, then we do know Him after a special, personal, peculiar, inward knowledge!

This knowledge brings with it a life and a love with which the soul is not puffed up, but built up. By such knowledge we grow up into Him in all things who is our Head, being taught of the Son of God. This knowledge, dear Friends, comes to us gradually. The text indicates this. “I have declared unto them Your name, and will declare it.” As if, though they knew the Father, there was far more to know and the Lord Jesus was resolved to teach them more. Are you growing in knowledge, my Brothers and Sisters? My labor is lost if you are not growing in Grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I hope you know much more of God than you did 20 years ago when you first came to Him. That little knowledge which you received by Grace when you found “life in a look at the Crucified One” has saved you—but in these later years you have added to your faith, knowledge, and to your knowledge, experience.

You have gone on to know more deeply what you knew before and to know the *details* of what you seemed to know in the grass and the lump at first. You have come to look *into* things as well as *upon* things—a look at Christ saves—but oh, it is the look *into* Christ that wins the heart’s love and holds it fast and binds us to Him as with fetters of gold! We ought, every day, to be adding something to this inestimably precious store, that as we are known of God so we may know God and become, thereby, transformed from Glory unto Glory through His Spirit! Are you not thankful for this blessed word of the Lord Jesus—“I will declare it”? “I will make it known”?

He did so at His Resurrection, when He taught His people things they knew not before. But He did so much more after He had ascended up on high when the Spirit of God was given. “He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatever I have said unto you.” And now, today, in the hearts of His people, He is daily teaching us something that we do not know! All our experience tends that way. When the Spirit of God blesses an affliction to us, it is one of the Savior’s illuminated books out of which we learn something more of the Father’s name and, consequently, come to love Him better, for that is the thing Christ aims at. He would so make known the Father that the love with which the Father has loved Him may be in us—and that He, Himself, may be in us! This knowledge distinguishes us from the world. It is the mark by which the elect are made manifest. In the sixth verse of this chapter our Lord says, “I have manifested Your name unto the men which You gave Me out of the world: Yours they were, and You gave them to Me; and they have kept Your Word.” The world does not know the Father and cannot know Him, for it abides in the darkness and death of sin. Judge yourselves, therefore, by this sure test, and let the love which grows out of gracious knowledge be a token for good unto you.

Now let me try to show you what the Savior meant when He said, “I have declared unto them Your name, and will declare.” This knowledge which breeds love is knowledge of the name of God. What does He mean by, “Your name”? Now, I do not think I would preach an unprofitable sermon if I were to stay with the context and say that the “name” here meant is especially the name used in the 25th verse—“O *righteous* Father, the world has not known You.” This is the name which we most need to know—“Righteous Father.” Observe the singular combination here. Righteous and yet a Father. “Righteous”—to us poor sinners, a word of *terror* when we first hear it. “Father”—oh, how sweet! That is a word of good cheer even to us prodigals—but we are afraid to lay hold upon it, for our sins arise and conscience protests that God must be righteous and punish sin.

Our joy begins when we see the two united—“Righteous Father”—a Father full of love and nothing but love to His people, and yet righteous as a Judge, as righteous as if He were not a Father. Dealing out His righteousness with stern severity as the Judge of all the earth must do, and yet a Father at the same time! I acknowledge that I never did love God at all,

nor could I embrace Him in my affections till I understood how He could be just and yet the Justifier of him that believes in Jesus. How, in a word, He could be the, “Righteous Father.” That satisfied my conscience and my heart at the same time, for my conscience said, It is well, God has not put away sin without a Sacrifice, and has not winked at sin nor waived His justice in order to indulge His mercy.

But He remains just as He ever was—the same thrice-holy God who will by no means spare the guilty. He has laid the punishment of our sins upon Christ. He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. And all this He has done that He might act to us as a Father and save His own children from the result of their transgressions! He has given His only-begotten Son to die in our stead that many sons might be brought to Glory through Him. It is at the Cross we understand this riddle. Here we see the righteous Father. But the world will not learn it and a large part of the *professing* church, which is nothing better than the world, wrongfully named with Christ’s name, will not learn it!

They do anything they can to get away from Atonement—love without righteousness is their idol! Substitution is a word that is hard for the world to spell—they cannot abide it. That Christ should suffer in the place of the guilty and bear that we might never bear the Father’s righteous wrath—this they cannot agree with! Many pretend to keep the Atonement and yet they tear the heart out of it. They profess to believe in the Gospel, but it is a gospel without the blood of the Atonement—and a bloodless gospel is a lifeless gospel—a dead gospel and a *damning* gospel! Let those take heed who cannot see God as a righteous Father, for they are numbered among the *world* who know Him not! “These have known You,” says our Lord. These who have been taught by Christ and only these, come to find as much joy in the word, “righteous,” as in the word, “Father.” And blending the two together they feel an intense love to the “Righteous Father” and their hearts rejoice in a holy Gospel, a message of mercy consistent with justice, a Covenant salvation ordered in all things and sure because it does no violence to Law and does not bind the hands of Justice.

Beloved, if this revelation of the atoning blood does not make your heart love Jesus and love the Father, it is because you are not in Him! But if you know this secret as to how righteousness and peace have kissed each other, you know the name that wins the affection of Believers to God. My own heart is glad and rejoices every hour because I find rest in Substitution, safety in the vindication of the Law, and bliss in the Glory of the Divine Character—

***“Lo! In the Grace that rescued man
His brightest form of Glory shines!
Here, on the Cross, ‘tis fairest drawn
In precious blond and crimson lines.
Here I behold His inmost heart,
Where Grace and vengeance strangely join,
Piercing His Son with sharpest smart,
To make the purchased pleasure mine.*”**

***Oh, the sweet wonders of that Cross,
Where God the Savior loved and died!
Her noblest life my spirit draws
From His dear wounds and bleeding side.”***

Still, I would take the word, “name,” in a wider sense. “I have declared unto them Your name,” which signifies “Your Character.” The word, “name,” is used as a sort of summary of all the attributes of God. All these attributes are well adapted to win the love of all regenerate spirits. Just think for a minute. God is holy. To a holy mind there is nothing in the world, there is nothing in *Heaven* more beautiful than holiness! We read of the beauties of holiness, for to a soul that is purified, holiness is superlatively lovely. Now, beauty wins love and, consequently, when Jesus Christ makes known His holy Father and shows us, in His life and in His death, the holiness of the Ever-Blessed, then our heart is won to the Father. “Oh,” you say, “but holiness does not always win love.” No, not the love of the defiled hearts that cannot appreciate it. But those who are pure in heart and can see God, no sooner behold His holiness than they are enamored of it and their souls at once delight in Him!

Moreover, we learn from our Lord Jesus that God is good. “There is none good but one: that is God.” How inexpressibly good He is! There is no goodness but what comes from God! His name, “God,” is but short for “good,” and all the good things that we receive in this life and for the life to come are but enlargements of His blessed name. “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and comes down from the Father of lights.” Blessings enjoyed by us are streams that flow from the fountainhead of God’s infinite goodness to the sons of men. A man cannot help loving God when once he knows Him to be good, for all men love that which they apprehend to be good to them. A man says, “Gold is good; rest is good; fame is good” and, therefore, he seeks after these things. And when he comes to know that God is good, oh, then his spirit follows hard after Him. He cannot help but love that which he is persuaded is in the highest sense, good!

The soul that knows the name of the Lord rejoices at the very mention of Him. To sinners like ourselves, perhaps the next word may have more sweetness. God is merciful—He is always ready to forgive. Note how the Prophet says, “Who is a God like unto You, passing by transgression?” He does not say, “Who is a *man* like unto You?” for none among our race can, for a moment, be compared with Him. But even if the gods of the heathen were gods, none of them could be likened unto the Lord for mercy! Now, when a man knows that he has offended and yet the person offended readily and freely forgives, why, it wins his love! If he is a right-hearted man, he cries, “I cannot, again, offend one who so generously casts all my offenses behind his back.”

The mercy of God is such a love-winning attribute that, as I told you the other Sunday, 26 times in a single Psalm the ancient Church sang, “His mercy endures forever.” Free Grace and pardoning love sensibly known in the soul will win your hearts unto God forever, so that you shall be His willing servants as long as you have any being. But there is still a

higher word. God is Love and there is a something about love which always wins love. When Love puts on her own golden armor and bares her sword, bright with her own unselfishness, she goes on conquering and to conquer! Let a man once apprehend that God is Love; that this is God's very *essence*, and he must at once love God. I do not mean merely “apprehend,” that God is Love in the cold intellect—but when his heart begins to glow and burn with that Divine Revelation—then straightway the spirit is joined unto the Lord and rests with delight in the great Father of spirits. Love knits and binds. Oh to feel more of its uniting power!

Thus have I shown you the manna which love feeds upon, the nectar which it drinks. Everything in God is lovely and there is no trait in His Character that is other than lovely. All the loveliness that can be conceived are heaped up in God without the slightest admixture of adulteration. He is Love altogether, wholly and emphatically. Oh, surely our Lord and Master was wise when He fed His people's love upon such meat as this!

II. Brothers and Sisters, we have as yet only been standing at the furnace mouth—let us now enter into the devouring flame while we speak, in the second place, upon THE LOVE ITSELF. Observe, first, what this love is *not*. “I have declared unto them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You have loved Me may be in them.” Notice that the prayer is not that the Father's love may be set upon them, or moved towards them. God does not love us because we know Him, for He loved us before we knew Him, even as Paul speaks of, “His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses and sins.”

Jesus has not come to set His Father's love upon the chosen. Oh, no! He did not even die with that objective, for the Father's love was upon the chosen from “before the foundation of the world.” “The Father Himself loves you” was *always* true. Christ did not die to make His Father loving, but because His Father *is* loving—the atoning blood is the outflow of the very heart of God toward us! So do not make a mistake about this. Our Lord speaks not of the Divine Love in itself, but in *us*. This is not the eternal love of God towards us of which we are now reading, but that love *in us*. We are inwardly to feel the love which proceeds from the Father and so to have it in us. We are to have the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given to us. It is to be recognized by us, felt in us, made the subject of inward joy—this it is that our Lord wishes to produce—that the love of God may be in us, dwelling in our hearts, a welcome guest, the sovereign of our souls.

And this love is of a very peculiar sort. Let me read the verse again—“That the love with which You have loved Me may be in them.” It is God's own love in us! The love of the Father towards Jesus springs up like a crystal fountain and then the sparkling drops fall and overflow, as you have seen the fountains do, and we are the cups into which this overflowing love of God towards Christ Jesus flows—and flows till we, too, are full! The inward love so much desired for us by our Lord is no emotion of nature, no attachment proceeding from the unregenerate will, but it is the

Father's love transplanted into the soil of these poor hearts and becoming our love to Jesus, as we shall have to show in the next point.

But is not this a wonderful thing—that God's love to Jesus should dwell in our hearts? And yet it is so. The love with which we love Christ, mark you, is God's love to Christ—“That the love with which You have loved Me may be in them.” All true love, such as the Father delights in and accepts at our hands, is nothing but His own love which has come streaming down from His own heart into our renewed minds! But what can this mean? I must ask you to observe that it includes within itself four precious things. First, the text means that our Lord Jesus Christ desires us to have a distinct recognition of the Father's love to Him. He wants the love with which the Father loves Him to be felt in us so that we may say, “Yes, I know the Father loved Him, for I, who am such a poor, unworthy and foolish creature, yet love Him and, oh, how His Father must love Him!”

I love Him! Yes, by His Grace it were a blessed thing to die for Him, but if I love Him, oh, how must His Father love him who can see all His beauty and can appreciate every distinct piece of loveliness that is in Him! God never loved anything as He loves Christ, except His people, and they have had to be lifted up to that position by the love which the Father has to His Son. For, first and foremost, the Father and the Son are One—they are One in essence. The Savior has been with the Father from the beginning and His delight has been with Him, even as the Father testified, “This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” Oh, try to feel, if you can, the love of the Father to His Son, or else you will not love the Father as you should for the amazing Sacrifice which He made in giving Jesus to us!

Think what it cost Him to tear His Well-Beloved from His bosom and send Him down below to be “despised and rejected.” Think what it cost Him to nail Him up to yonder Cross and then forsake Him and hide His face from Him because He had laid all our sins upon Him! Oh, the love He must have had to us to have made His Best-Beloved to become a curse for us, as it is written, “Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree.” I want you to get this right into your souls, dear Friends. Do not hold it as a dry doctrine, but let it touch your heart! Let it flow into your heart like a boiling stream till your whole souls become like Icelandic geysers which boil and bubble up and send their steam aloft into the clouds! Oh, to have the soul filled with the love of the Father towards Him who is altogether lovely!

Now, go a step further and deeper. Our text bears a further reading. Remember that you are to have in your heart a sense of the Father's love to you and to remember that it is precisely the same love with which He loves His Son. “That the love with which You have loved Me may be in them.” Oh, wonder of wonders! I feel more inclined to sit down and meditate upon it than to stand up and talk about it! The love with which He loved His Son—such is His love to all His chosen ones! Can you believe it, that you should be the object of God's delight, even as Christ is, because you are in Christ? That you should be the object of the Father's love as

truly as Christ is, because He sees you to be part and parcel of the mystical body of His Well-Beloved Son?

Do not tell me that God the Father does not love you as well as He does Christ—the point can be settled by the most grand matter of fact that ever was! When there was a choice between Christ and His people—which should die of the two—the Father freely delivered up His Son that we might live through Him! Oh, what a meeting there must have been of the seas of love that day, when God’s great love to us came rolling in like a glorious springtide and His love to His Son came rolling in at the same time! If they had met and collided, we cannot imagine the result! But when they both took to rolling together in one mighty torrent, what a stream of love was there! The Lord Jesus sank that we might swim! He sank that we might rise and now we are borne onward forever by the mighty sweep of infinite Love into an everlasting blessedness which tongues and lips can never fully set forth! Oh, be ravished with this! Be carried away with it! Be in ecstasy at love so amazing, so Divine—the Father loves you even as He loves His Son—after the same manner and sort He loves all His redeemed!

But now this goes to a third meaning and that is that we are to give back a reflection of this love and to love Jesus as the Father loves Him. A dear old friend, speaking to me, the other day, in a rapturous tone, said, “I love Jesus as the Father loves Him.” This is true. Not *equally*, but *like*. Is not this a blessed thought? I said, “O Friend, that is a strong thing to say!” “Ah,” said he, “but not stronger than Jesus would have it when He prays that ‘the love with which You have loved Me may be in them, and I in them.’” His people love Christ as the Father loves Him—in the same way, though from lack of capacity they cannot reach to the same immeasurable force of love. Oh, to throw back on Christ His Father’s love! The Father is the Sun and we are the moon, but the moonlight is the same light as the Sunlight! We can see a difference because reflection robs the light of much of its heat and its brilliance, but it is the same light! The moon has not a ray of light but what came from the sun and we have not a live coal of love to Christ but what came from the Father!

We are as the moon, shining by reflected light, but Jesus loves the moonlight of our love and rejoices in it. Let us give Him all of it—let us always try to be as the full moon and let us not dwindle down to a mere ring of love, or a crescent of affection—let us render no half moon love! Let us not be half dark and cold, but let us shine on Christ with all the light we can possibly reflect of His Father’s love, saying in our very soul—

***“My Jesus, I love You,
I know You are mine,
For You all the follies
Of sin I resign.”***

And then, fourthly, this love of the Father in us is to go beaming forth from us to all around. When we get the love with which the Father loves the Son into our hearts, then it is to go out towards all the chosen seed. He that loves Him that begat, loves, also, them that are begotten of Him.

Yes, and your love is to go forth to all the sons of men, seeking their good for God’s Glory, that they may be brought in to know the same Savior in whom we rejoice. Oh, if the love of the Father to Christ once enters into a man’s soul, it will change him! It will sway him with the noblest passion! It will make him a zealot for Christ! It will cast out his selfishness! It will change him into the image of Christ and fit him to dwell in Heaven where love is perfected.

So I conclude this second head by saying that this indwelling of the Father’s love in us has the most blessed results. It has an expulsive result. As soon as ever it gets into the heart it says to all love of sin, “Get you away; there remains no room for you here.” When the Light of God enters in, the darkness receives immediate notice of ejection—the night is gone as soon as the dawn appears! It has, also, a repulsive power by which it repels the *assaults* of sin. As though a man did snatch the sun out of the heavens and made a round shield with it—and hold it in the very face of the Prince of Darkness and blind him with the light, so does the love of God the Father repel the enemy! It girds the soul with the armor of light. It repels the devil, the love of the world, the love of sin and all outward temptations.

And then what an impulsive power it has. Get the love of Christ into you and it is as when an engine receives fire and steam and so obtains the force which drives it. Then you have strengthening! Then you have motive power! Then are you urged on to this and that heroic deed which, apart from this sublime love, you would never have thought of! For Christ you can live, for Christ you can suffer, for Christ you can die when once the Father’s love to Him has taken full possession of your spirit! And, oh, how elevating it is! How it lifts a man up above self and sin! How it makes him seek the things that are above! How purifying it is and how happy it makes the subject of its influence! If you are unhappy, you need more of the love of God!

“Oh,” you say, “I need a larger *income*.” Nonsense! A man is not made happy by money. You will do very well in poverty if you have enough of the love of God. Oh, but if your soul is filled with the love of God, your spirit will be ready to dance at the very sound of His name! You murmur and repine at Providence because the fire of your love is burning low. Come, get the ashes together! Pray the Spirit of God to blow upon them—beg Him to bring fresh fuel of holy knowledge till your soul becomes like Nebuchadnezzar’s furnace, heated seven times hotter! This is the kind of love we should have towards Christ. No blessing can excel it. Oh, Savior, let Your prayer be fulfilled in me and in all Your dear people this morning! And may the love with which the Father has loved You be in us.

III. Thirdly, here is THE COMPANION OF LOVE. “I in them.” Look at the text a minute and just catch those two words. Here is, “love,” and, “I”—love and Christ come together! Oh, blessed guests! “Love and I,” says Christ. As if He felt He never had a companion that suited Him better. “Love” and “I”—Jesus is always at home where Love is reigning. When Love lives in His people’s hearts, Jesus lives there, too. Does Jesus, then,

live in the hearts of His people? Yes—wherever there is the love of the Father shed abroad in them, Jesus must be there. We have His word for it and we are sure that Jesus knows where He is.

We are sure that He is where Love is for, first, where there is love there is life, and where there is life there is Christ, for He, Himself, says, "I am the Life." There is no true life in the Believer's soul that is divided from Christ! We are sure of that—so that where there is love there is life—and where there is life there is Christ. Again, where there is the love of God in the heart there is the Holy Spirit. But wherever the Holy Spirit is, there is Christ, for the Holy Spirit is Christ's Representative and it is in that sense that He tells us, "Lo, I am with you always," namely, because the Spirit is come to be always with us. So where there is love, there is the Spirit of God and where there is the Spirit of God there is Christ. So it is always, "Love and I."

Furthermore, where there is love there is faith, for faith works by love—and there never was true love to Christ apart from faith. But where there is faith there is always Christ, for if there is faith in Him, He has been received into the soul. Jesus is always near to that faith which has Himself for its foundation and resting place. Where there is love there is faith. Where there is faith there is Christ and so it is, "love and I." Yes, but where there is the Father's love toward Christ in the heart, God Himself is there! I am sure of that, for God is Love. So if there is love within us, there must be God, and where God is, there Christ is, for He says. "I and my Father are One." So you see, for these reasons and for many others besides, where there is love there must be Jesus Christ. "I in them."

Yes, if I were commanded to preach for seven years from these three words, I would never exhaust the text! I am quite certain. I might exhaust *you* and exhaust *myself* by laboring to tell out the sacred secret, but I should never exhaust the text! "I in them." It is the most blessed word I know of! You, Beloved, need not go abroad to find the Lord Jesus Christ. Where does He live? He lives within you! "I in them." As soon as ever you pray, you are sure He hears you because He is within you! He is not knocking at your door—He has entered into you and there He dwells—and He will go no more out forever. What a blessed sense of power this gives to us. "I in them." Then it is no more, "I," in weakness, but, since Jesus dwells in me, "I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me." "I in them." It is the Glory of the Believer that Christ dwells in him. "Unto you that believe He is precious." Hence we gather the security of the Believer. Brothers and Sisters, if Christ is in me, and I am overcome, Christ is conquered, too, for He is in me! "I in them."

I cannot comprehend the doctrine of Believers falling from Grace! If Christ has once entered into them, will He not abide with them? Paul says, "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord," To that persuasion I set my hand and seal! Well, then, if Christ is in us, whatever happens to us

will happen to Him! We shall be losers if we do not get to Heaven—but so will He, for He is in us—and so is a partaker of our condition. If it is an indissoluble union—and so He declares it is— “I in them,” then His destiny and ours are linked together! And if He wins the victory, we conquer in Him! If He sits at the right hand of God, we shall sit at the right hand of God with Him, for He is in us!

I know not what more to say, not because I have nothing more, but because I do not know which to bring forward out of a thousand precious things! But I leave the subject with you. Go home and live in the power of this blessed text. Go home and be as happy as you can be to live—and if you get a little happier, that will not hurt you, for then you will be in Heaven. Keep up unbroken joy in the Lord! It is not, “I in *them*” for Sundays and gone on Mondays! It is not, “I in them” when they sit in the Tabernacle, and out of them when they reach home. No! “I in them” and that forever and forever! Go and rejoice!

Show this blind world that you have a happiness which as much outshines theirs as the sun outshines the sparks which fly from the chimney and expire! Go forth with joy and be led forth with peace! Let the mountains and the hills break forth before you into singing—

***“All that remains for me
Is but to love and sing,
And wait until the angels come,
To bear me to the King.”***

“Oh, but I have my troubles.” I know you have your troubles, but they are not worthy to be compared with the Glory that shall be revealed in you, nor even with your present glory! I feel as if I could not think about troubles, nor sins, nor anything else when I once behold the love of God to me! When I feel my love to Christ, which is but God’s love to Christ, burning within my soul, then I glory in tribulation, for the power of God shall, through these afflictions, be made manifest in me! “I in them.” God bless you with the knowledge of this mystery, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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JESUS IN GETHSEMANE

NO. 2767

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 23, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 6, 1881.

“When Jesus had spoken these words, He went forth with His disciples over the Brook Kidron, where there was a garden, which He and His disciples entered. And Judas, who betrayed Him, also knew the place; for Jesus often met there with His disciples.”
John 18:1, 2.

I REMEMBER to have read somewhere, though I cannot just now recall the authority, that Bethany—to which place one would have thought the Savior would have gone to spend the night, at the house of Mary and her sister, Martha, was over the brow of the Mount of Olives and was out of the bounds of the city of Jerusalem. Now, at the Passover, it was incumbent that all who kept the feast should spend the whole night within the boundary of the city and our Divine Lord and Master, scrupulous to observe every point of the old Law of God, did not go over the hill, but stayed within the area which was technically considered to be part and parcel of Jerusalem—so that His going to Gethsemane was, in part, a fulfillment of the Ceremonial Law and, for that reason, He went no further and sought no other shelter.

Our Lord also knew that on that particular night He would be betrayed into the hands of His enemies and, therefore, He would need to be prepared, by a special season of devotion, for the terrible ordeal He was about to endure. That Passover night was a night to be remembered on this account and He would, therefore, keep it peculiarly sacred. But it was to be made still more memorable as the time of the commencement of His passion sufferings, so He determined to spend the whole night in prayer to His Father. In this act He reminds us of Jacob by the Brook Jabbok—when he had to face trouble in the morning, he spent the night in wrestling prayer—and this Greater Jacob spent His night, not by Jabbok, but by the black, foul Brook Kidron, and there wrestled with mightier Power. Even than the Patriarch put forth in his notable night struggle with the Angel of the Covenant. I want you to try, in thought, to go as far as Gethsemane. And I think you ought to be encouraged to go there because our text says, “Jesus often met there with His disciples.”

I. And, first, so far as we can in thought, LET US VIEW THE PLACE.

I have never seen the Garden of Gethsemane. Many travelers tell us that they have done so and they have described what they saw there. My impression is that not one of them ever saw the real spot and that not a trace of it remains. There are certain old olive trees, within an enclosure, which are commonly thought to have been growing at the time of the Savior—but that seems scarcely possible, for Josephus tells us that the whole of the trees round about Jerusalem were cut down—many of them to be made into crosses for the crucifixion of the Jews. Others of them to assist in building the bulwarks with which the Roman emperor surrounded the doomed city. There does not seem to have been scarcely anything left that would be a true relic of the old city and I cannot imagine that the olive trees would be spared. From what I have heard from Brothers and Sisters who have gone to the reputed Garden of Gethsemane, I conclude that it is not very helpful to one's devotions to go there at all. One who thought to spend a part of his Sabbath there, and who hoped to enjoy much fellowship with Christ in the place, said that he was made very bitterly to learn the meaning of our Savior's words to the woman at the well of Sychar, "The hour comes when you shall neither, in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father...The hour comes, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeks such to worship Him."

I do not want to find out exactly where Gethsemane was. It is enough for me to know that it was at the side of Mount Olivet and that *it was a very retired spot*. My conception of it is the result of having, for many winters, resided in a little town in the South of France where olive trees grow to perfection and where, on the side of the hills, I have often sat down in olive groves and I have said to myself, "Gethsemane was a place just like this." I am sure it was so, because one olive garden on the side of a hill must necessarily be very much like another. The hills are lined out in terrace above terrace, each one seldom above eight, 10, or 12 feet wide. Then you rise, say, five, six, seven, or eight feet and there is another terrace and so on right up the hill—and on these terraces the olive trees grow.

One of the charms of an olive garden of that kind is that as soon as you get into it, you may sit down under the lee of the bank at the back of the terrace—perhaps in an angle where you are sheltered from the wind—and you will be completely hidden from all observers. I have had persons sitting within a few yards of me, of whose presence I had no idea. One Sabbath, when we had been spending a little time in prayer together, I saw what appeared to be an Englishman's tall hat moving away, at a little distance, just above one of the terraces. By-and-by, I recognized the head that was under the hat as that of a Christian Brother whom I knew—and I found that he had been walking up and down there, study-

ing his sermon for the afternoon. He had not noticed us, except that he had heard some sounds that seemed to him like prayer and praise. Many of you might be in an olive garden, but, unless you made some sign of recognition to your friends, they would scarcely know that anybody else was there! And under the thick, yet light foliage, with the glints of sunlight shining through, or at night under the kind of ashy, gray color, with the moonlight glimmering through with its silvery beams, I cannot imagine a more delightful place of retreat—a place where one would feel surer of being quite alone, even though somebody might be near you—a place where you might feel free to express your thoughts and your prayers because, at any rate, to your own consciousness, you would seem to be entirely alone.

I cannot help thinking that our Savior also loved to get among the olive trees because of the very congenial form of the olive. It twists and winds and turns about as though it were in an agony. It has to draw up oil out of the flinty rock and it seems to do so with labor and travail. The very shape of many olive trees seems to suggest that thought. So, an olive garden is a place of painful pleasure and of fruitful toil, where the oil is rich and fat, but where much effort has to be expended in the extraction of it out of the hard soil on which the olive stands. I believe that others have felt about this matter as I have felt, namely, that there is no tree which seems more suggestive of a fellow-feeling with the sufferer than an olive—no shade that is more sweetly pensive, more suitable to the season of sorrow—and the hour of devout meditation. I marvel not, therefore, that Jesus sought the Garden of Gethsemane that He might be quite alone—that He might pour out His soul before God and yet might have some companions within call without being disturbed by their immediate presence.

One reason for His going to that particular garden was because He had gone there so often that He loved to be in the old familiar place. Do you not feel something of that in your own special place of prayer? I do not like reading out of other people's Bibles as well as out of my own. I do not know how it is, but I like my own study Bible best of all, and if I must have a smaller one, I prefer one that has the words on the same page as in my Bible so that I may easily find them. And I do not know whether you feel the same, but I can usually pray best in one place. There are certain spots where I delight to be when I draw near to God—there is some association connected with them of former interviews with my Heavenly Father that makes the old armchair to be the very best place at which one can kneel. So, I think the Savior loved Gethsemane because He had oftentimes resorted there with His disciples and, therefore, He makes that the sacred spot where His last agony of prayer shall be poured out before His Father.

II. That, however, is only the introduction to the main matter of our meditations. So, now, LET US VIEW THE SAVIOR IN GETHSEMANE, THAT WE MAY IMITATE HIM.

And, first, our blessed Lord is to be imitated by us in that *He frequently sought and enjoyed retirement*. His was a very busy life. He had much more to do than you and I have, yet He found abundant time for private prayer. He was much holier than any of us are, yet He realized His need of private prayer and meditation. He was much wiser than we shall ever be, yet He felt the necessity for retiring into solitude for communion with His Father. He had much power over Himself, He could control and compose Himself far more readily than we can, yet, amid the distractions of the world, He felt that He must frequently get away alone. It would be well for us if we were more often alone. We are so busy—so taken up with this or that committee meeting, working-class, Sunday school, preaching, talking, visiting, gossiping—all sorts of things, good, bad, or indifferent—that we have no leisure for the due cultivation of our spiritual life! We rush from pillar to post without proper time for rest, but, Brothers and Sisters, if we want to be strong, if we mean to be like Jesus, our Lord and Savior, we must have our Gethsemane, our place for secret retirement where we can get alone with our God. I think it was Luther who said, “I have a hard day’s work before me today—it will take me many hours and there will be a stern struggle, so I must have at least three hours prayer, that I may gain the necessary strength for my task.” Ah, we do not act in that wise fashion nowadays—we feel as if we cannot spare the time for private prayer, but, had we more communion with God—we would have more influence with men.

But our blessed Master is especially to be imitated in that *He sought retirement when He was about to enter upon the great struggle of His life*. Just then, when Judas was about to give the traitor’s kiss—when scribes and Pharisees were about to hound Him to the Cross—it was then that He felt that He must get away to Gethsemane and be alone in prayer with His Father! What did you do, my dear Brother, when you apprehended trial? Why, you sought out a sympathizing friend! I shall not blame you for desiring the consolations of true friendship, but I shall not commend you if you put them into the place of communion with God. Are you, even now, dreading some approaching calamity? What are you doing to meet it? I will not suggest that you should neglect certain precautions, but I would admonish you that the first and best precaution is to get away to your God in prayer! As the feeble conies find their shelter in the solid rock, and as the doves fly away to their home in the dovecot, so should Christians, when they expect trouble, fly straight away to their God upon the wings of fear and faith! Your great strength does not lie in your hair, otherwise you might feel as proud as Samson was in the days of his vic-

tories! Your great strength lies in your God! Therefore, get away to Him with all speed and ask Him from help in this, your hour of need!

Some of you pray when you are, as it were, at Calvary, but not at Gethsemane. I mean you pray when the trouble comes upon you, but not when it is on the road. Yet your Master here teaches you that to conquer at your Calvary, you must commence by wrestling at your Gethsemane. When as yet it is but the shadow of your coming trial that spreads its black wings over you, cry to God for help! When you are not emptying the bitter cup—when you are only sipping the first drops of the wormwood and the gall, begin, even then, to pray, “Not as I will, but as You will, O my Father!” You will thus be the better able to drink of the cup to its very dregs when God shall place it in your hands.

We may also imitate our Lord—as far as it would be in our line, *in His taking His disciples with Him*. At any rate, if we do not imitate Him in this respect, we may certainly admire Him, for He took the disciples with Him, I think, for two purposes. First, for their good. Remember, Brothers and Sisters, that the next morning was to be a day of trial for them as well as for Himself. He was to be taken to trial and condemnation, but they were to be severely tried, in their fidelity to Him, by seeing their Lord and Master put to a shameful death. So He took them with Him that they also might pray—that they might learn how to pray by hearing His wondrous prayers—that they might watch and pray, lest they should enter into temptation. Now, sometimes in your special hour of trouble, I believe that it will be for the good of others for you to communicate to them the story of your distress and ask them to join you in prayer concerning it. I have often done this, so I can urge you to do the same. I found it a great blessing, on one dark day of my life, to ask my sons, though they were but lads, to come into my room and pray with their father in his time of trouble. I know that it was good for them, and their prayers were helpful to me, but I acted as I did in part that they might realize their share in domestic responsibilities—that they might come to know their father’s God—and might learn to trust Him in their time of trouble.

But our Savior also took His disciples with Him to Gethsemane that they might assist to comfort Him and, in this respect, He is to be imitated by us because of His wonderful humility. If those disciples had all done their best, what would it have been worth? But what they really did was most discouraging to Christ, instead of being at all helpful to Him. They went to sleep when they should have watched with their Lord and they did not assist Him with their prayers as they might have done. It is noteworthy that He did not ask them to pray with Him—He bade them watch and pray, lest they should enter into temptation. But He said to them, “What? Could you not watch with Me one hour?” He did not say, “What? Could you not *pray* with me one hour?” He knew that they could not do that. What mortal man could pray at such a time as that, when great

drops of bloody sweat punctuated every paragraph of His petition? No, they could not pray with Him, but they might have watched with Him—yet that they did not.

Sometimes, dear Friends, when a very great trial comes upon you, it will be well for you to ask some Brothers and Sisters, who cannot do much, but who can do something to come and watch with you and pray with you. If it does not do any good to you, it will be good for them—but it will do good to you, also, I feel sure. Often—I have to confess it—I have got two Brothers to kneel with me in prayer when I have been depressed through this late illness of mine. And their honest, earnest, hearty prayers in my study have often lifted me right up into joy and peace! I believe it has also done them good. I know it has done me good and I feel sure that you might often be a blessing to others if you did not mind confessing to them when you are depressed and sad at heart. Say, “Come into my room and watch with me one hour.” And you may add to that request this other one, “Come and pray with me,” for some of them can pray as well as you can, and even better. So imitate the Savior in endeavoring not only to pray yourself, but to call to your assistance the praying legion of God’s elect ones when a great trial is impending.

Still, our Lord’s example may mainly be followed in another direction, namely, when we do pray in the presence of a great trouble, *it is well to pray with much importunity*. Our Savior prayed in Gethsemane three times, using the same words. He prayed with such intensity of desire that His heart seemed to burn with anguish. The canals overflowed their banks and the red streams came bursting down in bloody drops that fell upon the earth in that rightly-named “olive-press.” Ah, that is the way to pray—if not actually unto a bloody sweat, as we may not have to do, or be able to do, yet with such intensity of hearty earnestness as we can—and as we ought—when God the Holy Spirit is working mightily in us! We cannot expect to be helped in our time of trouble unless it is intense prayer that we send up to Heaven.

But imitate Christ also *in the matter of your prayer*. I feel sure that He only softly whispered the request, “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me.” You also may present that petition, but mind that you say it very softly. Yet I feel certain that it was with all His might that our Savior said, “Nevertheless not as I will, but as You will.” In the presence or in the prospect of a great trouble, make this your prayer to God, “Your will be done.” Brace up your soul to this point—having asked the Lord to screen you, if it should seem good in His sight, resign yourself absolutely into His hands and say, “Nevertheless, O my Father, not as I will, but as You will!”

It is prevailing prayer when one gets as far as that! A man is prepared to die when he knows how to present that petition! That is the best preparation for any cross that may come upon your shoulders. You can die a

martyr's death and clap your hands even in the midst of the fire if you can, with all your soul, really pray as Jesus prayed, "Not as I will, but as You will." This is the objective which I set before you, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ—that if you are expecting sickness—if you are fearing loss—if you are anticipating bereavement—if you are dreading death—let this be your great ultimatum, go to God now, in the time of your distress and, by mighty prevailing prayer, with such prayerful sympathy as others can give you, breathe out this one petition, "Your will be done, O my Father! Your will be done! Help me to do it! Help me to bear it! Help me to go through with it all to Your honor and Glory. Let me be baptized with Your Baptism, and drink of Your cup, even to the dregs."

Sometimes, dear Friends, you may wish, in your hearts, that the Lord would make great use of you and yet, perhaps, He may not do so. Well, a man who holds his tongue when Christ tells him to do so, is glorifying Christ more than if he opened his mouth and broke the Master's commandment. There are some of the Lord's people who, by a quiet, holy, consistent manifestation of what the Lord has done for them, glorify Him more than they would do if they went from place to place telling out His Gospel in a way which would make the Gospel itself disgusting to those who heard it. That is quite possible, for some people do it. If my Lord puts me in the front rank, blessed be His name for it, and I must fight for Him there as best I can. But if He says to me, "Lie in bed! Be bed-ridden for seven years, and never get up!"—I have nothing to do but to glorify Him in that way. He is the best soldier who does exactly what his captain bids him.

III. Now, in the third place, and only briefly, LET US VIEW THE DISCIPLES IN GETHSEMANE, BY WAY OF INSTRUCTION TO OURSELVES.

Probably, the disciples *had often been with their Master to Gethsemane*—I suppose, sometimes by day, and oftentimes by night, in secret conclave they had been instructed in the olive garden. It had been their Academy! There they had been with the Master in prayer—no doubt, each one praying and learning how to pray better from His Divine example. Dear Brothers and Sisters, I recommend you oftentimes to get to the place where you can best commune with your God.

But, now, the disciples came to Gethsemane *because a great trouble was impending*. They were brought there that they might watch and pray. So, get to the place of prayer, at this time of trouble, and at all other times of trial that shall come upon you throughout your whole life. Whenever you hear the knell ringing out all earthly joy, let it ring you into the garden of prayer! Whenever there is the shadow of a coming trouble looming before you, let there also be the substance of more intense communion with God! These disciples were, however, at this time, called to enter into fellowship with their Master in the thicker, deeper darkness that was coming over Him—far denser than any that was com-

ing over them. And you are called, dear Brothers and Sisters, each in your own measure, to be baptized unto Jesus in the cloud and in the sea, that you may have fellowship with Him in His sufferings. Be not ashamed to go even to Gethsemane with Christ, entering into a knowledge of what He suffered by being made, according to your capacity, to suffer in the same manner. All His true followers have to go there. Some have only to stand at the outside gate and keep watch, but His highly-favored ones have to go into the denser gloom and to be nearer to their Lord in His greatest agonies. If we are His true disciples, we must have fellowship with Him in His sufferings.

Our difficulty is that the flesh shrinks from this trial, and that, like the disciples, *we sleep when we ought to watch*. When the time of trial comes, if we get depressed in spirit about it, we are apt not to pray with that fervor and vigor which greater hopefulness would have begotten. And when we come to feel something of what the Savior endured, we are apt to be overwhelmed by it rather than stimulated by it and so, when He comes to us, He finds us, like the disciples, “sleeping for sorrow.” The Master gently said, “The spirit, indeed, is willing, but the flesh is weak.” But I do not suppose that one of the disciples made any excuse for himself. I feel, if I may judge them from myself, that I would always have said, “I never can forgive myself for going to sleep that night! How could I fall asleep when He said, ‘Watch with Me’? And when He came again, with His face red with bloody sweat, and with that disappointed look upon His Countenance, said, ‘What? Could you not watch with Me one hour?’ how could I go to sleep a second time? And then, how could I go to sleep a third time?” Oh, I think that Simon Peter must always have remembered that his Savior said to him, “Simon, could you not watch with Me one hour?” That question must have stuck by him all his life—and James and John must have felt the same.

Brothers and Sisters, are any of you sleeping under similar circumstances—while Christ’s Church is suffering—while Christ’s cause is suffering—while Christ’s people are suffering—while a trial is coming upon you to help you into fellowship with Him? Are you, instead of being aroused to a higher and more intense devotion, sinking into deeper sleep? If so, Christ may, in His great love, excuse you, but I beg you not to begin making excuses for yourself! No, awake, Brothers and Sisters and “watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation.”

That slumber of theirs must have been *greatly rebuked by their Savior’s kindness to them*. As I understand the narrative, our Lord came to His disciples three times and, on the third occasion, He found them still heavy with sleep, so He sat down beside them and said to them, “Sleep on now, and take your rest.” There He sat, patiently waiting for the traitor’s arrival—not expecting any help or sympathy from His disciples, but just watching over them as they would not watch with Him, praying for

them as they would not pray for themselves—and letting them take another nap while He made Himself ready to meet Judas and the rabble throng that would so soon surround Him. Our Master, in His great tenderness, sometimes indulges us with such sleeps as these, yet we may have to regret them and to wish that we had had sufficient strength of mind and earnestness of heart to stay awake and watch with Him in His season of sorrow. It appears to me that of all the 11 good disciples, there was not one who stayed awake. There was one vile traitor and he was wide-awake. He never went to sleep—he was awake enough to sell his Master and to act as guide to those who came to capture Him.

I think also that at least partly in consequence of that slumber of the disciples, within a short time, *“they all forsook Him and fled.”* They seem, for the time, to have slept away their attachment to their Lord and waking, as from a disturbed dream, they scarcely knew what they did, and helter-skelter, away they fled! The sheep were all scattered and the Shepherd was left alone, thus fulfilling the ancient prophecy, *“Smite the Shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered.”* And that other word, *“I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me.”* Wake up, Brothers and Sisters, otherwise you, too, may forsake your Master—and in the hour when you ought most to prove your fidelity, it may be that your slumbering state of heart will lead on to backsliding—and to forsaking of your Lord. God grant that it may not!

IV. Now I close with a word of warning which I have almost anticipated. LET US, IN THOUGHT, GO TO GETHSEMANE TO TAKE WARNING FROM JUDAS. Let me read to you the latter part of the text—*“Judas who betrayed Him, also knew the place: for Jesus oftentimes met there with His disciples.”*

“Judas who betrayed Him, also knew the place.” Yes, *he had probably, many times, been there all night with Christ.* He had sat with the other disciples in a circle round their Lord on one of those olive-clad terraces and he had listened to His wondrous words in the soft moonlight. He had often heard His Master pray there. *“Judas who betrayed Him,”* had heard Him pray in Gethsemane. He knew the tones of His voice, the pathos of His pleading, the intense agony of that great heart of love when it was poured out in prayer! He had, no doubt, joined with the other disciples when they said, *“Lord, teach us to pray.”*

“Judas who betrayed Him, also knew the place.” He could have pointed out to us the very spot where the Savior most loved to be—that angle in the terrace, that little corner out of the way, where the Master was known to find a seat when He sat down and taught the chosen band around Him. Yes, Judas knew the place, and it was because he knew the place that he was able to betray Christ, for, if he had not known where Jesus was, he could not have taken the guard there.

It does seem, to me, very dreadful that familiarity with Christ should have qualified this man to become a traitor. And it is still true that, sometimes, familiarity with religion may qualify men to become apostates. Oh, if there is a Judas here, I would speak very solemnly to you! You know the place. You know all about church government and church order, and you can go and tell pretty tales about the mistakes made by some of God's servants who would not err if they could help it. Yes, you know the church members. You know where there are flaws of character and infirmity of spirit. You know how to go and spread the story of them among worldlings and you can make such mischief as you could not make if you had not known the place! Yes, and you know the Doctrines of Grace, at least with a measure of head-knowledge, and you know how to twist them so as to make them seem ridiculous, even those eternal Truths of God which ravish the hearts of angels and of the redeemed from among men! Because you know them so well, you know how to parody them and to caricature them—and to make the Grace of God, itself, seem to be a farce!

Yes, you know the place. You have been to the Lord's Table and you have heard the saints speak of their raptures and their ecstasies—and you pretended that you were sharing them. So you know how to go back to the world and to represent true godliness as being all cant and hypocrisy—and you make rare fun out of those most solemn secrets of which a man would scarcely speak to his fellow because they are the private transactions between his soul and his God!

I can hardly realize how terrible will be the doom of those who, after making a profession of religion, have prostituted their knowledge of the inner working of the Church of God and made it the material for novels in which Christ's Gospel is held up to scorn! Yet there have been such men who have not been content to be like birds that have fouled their own nests, for they have also gone forth and also tried to foul the nest of every believing heart that they could reach. What a dreadful thing it will be if any one of us, here, should know the place and, therefore, should betray the Savior! Do you know the place of private prayer, or do you think you do? Do you know the place where men go when the shadow of a coming trial is looming before them? Do you think you know something about fellowship with Christ in His sufferings? But, what if the greed of gold should override in you, as it did in Judas, such natural attachment as you feel towards Christ and better things? And what if even Gethsemane should, like a pit, open wide its mouth to swallow you up? It is terrible to contemplate, yet it may be true, for, "Judas who betrayed Him, also knew the place."

I cannot bear to think that anyone of you should be familiar with the ins and outs of this Tabernacle and yet should betray Christ—that you should be one of those who gather around this Communion Table, that

you should be familiar with all the loving and tender expressions which we are known to use here, and yet, after all, should forsake our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ! Pass the disciples' question around and each one ask it, "Lord, is it I? Is it I?"—

***"When any turn from Zion's way,
(Alas, what numbers do)!
I think I hear my Savior say,
'Will you forsake Me too?'
'Ah Lord! With such a heart as mine,
Unless You hold me fast, I feel I must, I shall decline,
And prove like them at last."***

Therefore, hold me up, O Lord, and I shall be safe; keep me even to the end, for Your dear Son's sake! Amen.

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

On the way from the supper table to the Garden of Gethsemane, or while still lingering in the upper room, our Lord spoke this wondrous parable.

Verse 1. *I am the true Vine.* All other vines are but shadows of Christ. They represent Christ, but He is Himself the substance, the essence, the one great reality. He is the Truth of all things that exist. "I am the true Vine." Does anybody ask which is the true Church? All who are vitally joined to Christ are in the true Church, for He says, "I am the true Vine."

1. *And My Father is the Vinedresser.* He cares for the Church with infinite wisdom and love. No one else can care for that true Vine as the Father—the Vinedresser—does.

2. *Every branch in Me that bears not fruit He takes away.* If there are any who are only nominally in Christ and who, therefore, bear no fruit, their doom is certain, for, in order to final perseverance and eternal safety, there must be fruit-bearing.

2. *And every branch that bears fruit, He purges it, that it may bring forth more fruit.* Pruning, then, is for fruit-bearers. If the branch were dead, what would be the good of pruning it? Say not, dear Friends that your afflictions must be caused by your sins—no, rather they may come in consequence of your *virtues*! Because you do bear fruit, it is worthwhile for the Vinedresser to use His knife upon you, that you may bring forth more fruit!

3, 4. *Now you are clean through the word, which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you.* Give good heed to that sweet word, Beloved Brothers and Sisters, "Abide in Me." Do not seem to get into Christ and then depart from Him. Pray for constancy to all your other Graces.

4, 5. *As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can you, except you abide in Me. I am the Vine, you are the branches. He that abides in Me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit, for without Me you can do nothing.* You know how the branch is in the vine, it is a component part of the vine. But do not forget that the vine is also in the branch—that the sap, which is the very life of the vine, flows into every living branch. So we are in Christ, and Christ is in us, and He says to us, as the marginal reading has it, “Severed from Me, you can do nothing.” What? Not even a little, Lord? Can we not do something good, something acceptable apart from You? No, “Without Me, you can do nothing.”

6. *If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.* That is all that can be done with fruitless vine-branches. You cannot make anything of them. Other trees yield timber and are useful for various purposes, but with the vine, it is as the Prophet Ezekiel says, “Son of man, What is the vine tree more than any tree, or than a branch which is among the trees of the forest? Shall wood be taken from them to do any work? Or will men take a pin of it to hang any vessel on it? Behold, it is cast into the fire for fuel; the fire devours both the ends of it, and the midst of it is burned. Is it meet for any work?” It is useless if it is fruitless and so is it with us—if we do not bear fruit unto God, we are of no service to Him whatever.

7. *If you abide in Me and My words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done for you.* Here is the secret of prevailing prayer! It is not every man who chooses to pray who shall have whatever he asks of God! But the successful pleader is the man who abides in Christ and in whom Christ’s words abide. God will not hear our words if we disregard His words! We cannot expect our prayers to be prevalent if we are severed from our Lord.

8. *Herein is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit; so shall you be My disciples.* “Much fruit” should be produced by the disciples of the much-doing Christ. The true Vine was full of fruit and it scarcely can be believed that we are branches of that Vine if we exhibit only a little fruit. It is “much fruit” that proves our union to this Vine.

HYMNS FROM OUR OWN HYMN BOOK—319, 271, 278.

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

*"If, therefore, you seek Me, let these go their way."
John 18:8.*

WE need but hint at the circumstances under which these words were uttered. Our Savior was in the Garden of Gethsemane with His disciples when a multitude came with the officers commissioned by the High Priest to seize Him. He went boldly towards them and asked, "Whom do you seek?" They answered, "Jesus of Nazareth." At His words, "I am He," "they drew back and fell to the ground," and then Jesus said to them, "I have told you that I am He. If, therefore, you seek Me, let these go their way."

Now, in a very simple manner, I shall try, first of all, to draw a few lessons from this occurrence and then, secondly, to bring out a great Truth of God which I think is foreshadowed in this utterance of our Redeemer.

I. First, let us CONSIDER THE LESSONS OF THE OCCURRENCE ITSELF. Our Savior said to these people, "If, therefore, you seek Me, let these go their way."

In this incident, our Master proved His own willingness to die. This word of His was a mandate so powerful that none of the disciples were seized, much less put to death. There was Peter, who had drawn his sword and cut off the ear of the High Priest's servant. We should naturally have expected that he would have been arrested, or smitten to the earth, but so powerful was the command of Christ that not a finger was laid upon His hasty-tempered disciple. Peter and John later went into the judgment hall—into the very teeth of our Lord's enemies—but, with the exception of a few jeers, they were allowed to go their way. John did even more than that, for he went within the range of the spears of the Roman soldiers and stood at the foot of Christ's Cross and wept—yet not a finger was laid on him, nor on any of Christ's disciples—not for lack of will, for, you remember, they seized a young man who left his garment in their hands, and fled naked—evidently supposing him to have been a disciple of Christ. This shows, then, the power of Christ's mandate that, in that hour of darkness, not so much as one of His disciples was maltreated, but all were allowed to go their way. If Christ, then, by His simple word, delivered His disciples, how much more could He have delivered Himself?

And in His not doing so, you cannot fail to see how willing He was to die. One word threw them to the ground. Another word would have hurled them into the arms of death! But our Savior would not speak the word which might have saved Himself, for He came to save others, not Himself.

There is something very courageous in the Savior's saying, "If you seek Me." You know that when Adam sinned, God had to seek the culprit, but, in this case, when Christ stood as the Surety for His people, instead of being sought, He seemed to seek His executioners! "If you seek Me," He said—and He put in an, "if," as though it were not so much their seeking Him as His seeking them—for He had come into their very midst to die. Our blessed Lord was well acquainted with the circumstances of His own death. He sat at the table, at the institution of the Lord's Supper on that memorable evening—why could He not wait and be seized there? But no, dauntless, "the Lion of the tribe of Judah" steps out and boldly faces His enemy! He does not wait to be attacked, but goes forth to meet death, to give Himself up for us. Scarcely any martyr has done such a deed as this! God has helped them to die when they have been delivered into the hands of their enemies, but our Savior goes to His enemies and says, "Here I am. If you seek Me, I have come to give Myself up. I will put you to no trouble in searching for Me. There is no necessity to hunt through the length and breadth of Jerusalem to find Me. Here I am. If you seek Me, I am ready to die. Take Me, I have no opposition to make. 'If you seek Me,' all I have to say is, 'Let these go their way.' As for Myself, I am willing enough to die!"

Learn, then, Christian, the readiness of your Master to suffer for you. He was no unwilling Savior. You have, sometimes, borrowed money from a friend and when you have taken it from him, it was a grief to you to accept it, for he looked upon you as a beggar, or even as a robber who had demanded spoil of him. But when you take Christ's favors, there is this sweet consideration with them, that they are all given willingly! The blood that you drink and the flesh that you eat, *spiritually*, is no dole of a strained benevolence, but the voluntary, munificent gift from the heart of Jesus to you and to your brethren. Rejoice, then, in the willingness of Christ to suffer for you!

In the second place, upon the very face of our text we read *the care of Christ towards His people*. "If, therefore, you seek Me, let these go their way." Oh, the agony of the Savior's heart at that moment! A friend in trouble is frequently forgetful—expect not a man in great grief to remember you—the heart is then so full of its own bitterness it has no time to think of others. I would pardon any man for not noticing me in the street if he were ill. I would easily forgive anyone for forgetting anything when loaded with pain and sorrow and surely, Beloved, we might have thought it not hard of Jesus if He had forgotten His disciples in His hour of grief! But mark how kind His heart is—"If you seek Me"—I say nothing about how you should treat *Me*—but 'let these'—these disciples were the only ones He cared about. He cared not for Himself—"let *these* go their way."

Like the mother in the snowstorm who takes off her own clothes to wrap around her cold shivering baby—what does she care though the cold blast should find out her inmost soul, and though her body is frozen like ice, if her baby but lives? Her first thought, after she is restored to consciousness, when she has been well-nigh benumbed to death, but chafed to life by kindness, is concerning that baby! It was even so with Jesus. “Let these go their way.”—

**“When Justice, by our sins provoked,
Drew forth its dreadful sword,
He gave His soul up to the stroke
Without a murmuring word.
This was compassion like a God,
That when the Savior knew
The price of pardon was His blood,
His pity ne'er withdrew.
Now though He reigns exalted high,
His love is still as great.
Well He remembers Calvary,
Nor lets His saints forget.”**

They are all remembered, all borne upon His heart and still cared for. Therefore you are cared for, you lamb of the flock! You are cared for, poor Ready-to-Halt! You are remembered, Miss Despondency! You are regarded with the eyes of love, timid Mr. Fearing! Though you stumble at every stone, yet your Savior's love fails not! He remembers you, for He cared for His disciples in His hour of greatest sorrow.

In the next place, learn from this incident *our Savior's wisdom*. When He said, “Let these go their way,” there was wisdom in it. How? Because they were not prepared to suffer and it would have been unwise to have allowed them to suffer, then, even if they had been prepared—for if they had suffered, then, it would have been thought that at least they shared the honor of our redemption—therefore Christ would have none but thieves upon the mount of doom, lest any should suppose that He had a helper! He tread the winepress alone and of the people there were none with Him. Besides, these disciples were but infants in Divine Grace—they had not received the plenitude of the Spirit. They were not fit to suffer. Therefore Christ said, “If you seek Me, let these go their way.” These raw recruits must not yet bear the brunt of the battle. Let them tarry until, by a greater experience and by greater Grace, they shall be made brave to die and shall, each of them in his turn, wear the crown of martyrdom. But not now. Christ spared His people at that moment since it would have been unwise to have allowed them to die then.

Learn also, Christians, from your Master's example, *the duty of putting yourselves in the way of suffering when you can save your Brothers and Sisters*. Oh, there is something glorious in the spirit Christ manifested in placing Himself first. “If you seek Me, let these go their way.” That is the spirit all Christians ought to have—the spirit of heroic self-sacrifice for the disciples' sake. The mere professor says, “Let *me* go my way, seek another to be put to death.” But if we were what we should be, we would, each one, say, “If you seek *me*, let *these* go their way.” How many of us

would be ready to escape martyrdom and allow our Brethren to be burned! That would not be the spirit of our Master. How frequently you are ready to allow ridicule and shame to fall upon the Church if you can but be spared! How very frequently you will allow a Brother to perform a duty, at much inconvenience, which you could do without any trouble to yourself! Now, if you were like your Master, you would say, "Let these go their way." If there is sufficient ground for it, let me suffer. If there is a painful duty, let me do it. Let others escape, let them go free—lo, I will be, myself, a willing substitute for them in this matter." Oh, we need, everywhere, more of this spirit to be able to say to the poor saint, "Poverty is seeking you. I will, in some degree, bear the inconvenience that you may be spared. You are sick. I will watch you. You are in need. I will clothe you. You are hungry. I will feed you. I will stand in your place as far as I am able, that you may go your way."

These seem to me to be the lessons to be learned from our Savior's words, "If, therefore, you seek Me, let these go their way."

II. Now I come to notice, secondly, THE GREAT DOCTRINE WHICH THIS INCIDENT SEEMS TO FORESHADOW.

Will you please observe the next verse to the text? "That the saying might be fulfilled, which He spoke, 'Of them which You gave Me have I lost none.'" If I had quoted this passage in such a connection, you would have told me it was a misquotation. You would have said, "Why, my dear Sir, that has nothing to do with the disciples going their way or not!" Ah, but you would be quite in error if you talked like that! God's Spirit knows how to quote, if we do not. Very often we refer our hearers to a text which we think is exactly adapted and pertinent to the point before us when it has really nothing to do with the matter. And, often, the Holy Spirit quotes a text which we think unsuitable, but, on closer examination, we find that the very gist of it bears directly upon the subject. This was the beginning of Christ's deliverances which He would, through eternity, vouchsafe to all His children. Inasmuch as He then said, "Let these go their way," *it was the foreshadowing, the picturing of the great deed of Substitution* whereby Christ would be able to say, "If, therefore, you seek Me, let these go their way." This point will appear dearly if we look at how Christ treats His people in Providence and at the bar of Justice.

It has always seemed to me as if *Christ had borne the brunt of Providence for His people* so that now all things work together for their good! When Christ came into the world, He did, in spirit, say something like this, "You wild beasts of the field, you are against My people—come, now, be against Me and, then, let these go their way." This was according to the ancient prophecy—"I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field and with the fowls of Heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground." Christ seemed to say, "Stones, you are enemies to My flock—take Me for their Substitute and be at enmity against Me. And then it shall be written, 'The stones of the field shall be in league with them.'" Christ, as it were, said to Providence, "Your black and bitter face shall look on Me. Your quiver, full of fiery darts, shall be emptied, and

they shall all find their target here in My bosom. Your dread aspect shall be seen by Me, but, 'Let these go their way.'

Providence has indicted its evils on Christ and has now only good for God's people! "What? Only good, Sir?" you say, "why, I am poor, I am sick!" Yes, but it is only good, for that is good which works good. "All things work together for good to them that love God." Christ even says to kings, "Touch not My anointed and do My prophets no harm." "Let these go their way." The kings of the earth have been seeking Christ's Church, to destroy and to devour it, so Christ lets them find Him and put Him to death! And before He dies, He turns round to the kings, and says, "Touch not My anointed and do My prophets no harm." He speaks to trouble, to trial, to grief, to accident and to peril as He says, "You have sought Me, now let My people go their way." We would never have known the sweetness of the Psalm—

***"He that has made his refuge God,
Shall find a most secure abode"—***

if Christ had not died! The only way that you and I can have a refuge is by Christ bearing the brunt of our trouble. How does a shield save me? It saves me by bearing the blows, itself. The shield does, as it were, say to the swords of the enemy, "If you seek me, let this warrior go his way." So Christ, our Shield and God's Anointed, bears the brunt of Providence, the evil and the woe, thereof, and He now says to the mysterious dispensations of God concerning all the children of the Lord, "Let these go their way.' Never, never work ill to them, but let them have only good."

The other thought is, *Christ has said this of His people even to Justice.* Before the Throne of God, fiery Justice once drew his sword and went out after sinners, to find many and to cast them into the Pit. His sword thirsted for the blood of all that had sinned. But there stood a chosen multitude, reserved by love and chosen by Grace, and Justice said, "They are sinners. I will have them, I will sheathe this sword in their hearts, for they are sinners and they must perish." Then Christ came forward and asked him, "Whom do you seek?" "Sinners," answered Justice. Then Jesus said, "They are not sinners. They were sinners, once, but they are now righteous, clothed in My righteousness. If you seek the sinner, here am I." "What?" said Justice, "are You the sinner?" "No, not the sinner, but I am the sinner's Substitute. All the sinner's guilt was imputed to Me. All his unrighteousness is Mine and all My righteousness is his. I, the Savior, am the sinner's Substitute. Take Me." And Justice accepted the substitution, took the Savior, crucified Him, nailed Him to that Cross whose agonies we commemorate at the Communion Table. In that hour Jesus cried, "If you seek Me, let these go their way." Who are they that are to go their way? Why, the very men whose former way was one of iniquity and whose end would have been destruction if the curse had not been made to fall upon the head of Jesus!

"Let these go their way." Oh, that a wonderful sentence! I never knew its sweetness till I found the Lord, but I did know something of its power. Do you ask, "How was that?" Why, long before you know the Lord, you

have some of the power of the blood of Christ resting upon you. "How so?" do you ask? Why, do you not know it to be a fact that—

***"Determined to save, He watched o'er our path,
When Satan's blind slaves, we sported with death"?***

And so, some of the benefits of Christ's death were ours before we knew Him and before we loved Him! The reason why I was not damned before I knew the Savior was that He had said, "Let him go his way. I have died for him." You would have been in Hell these 20 years, Saint, for you were then unregenerate. But Christ said, "Let him go his way. If you seek Me, he shall go his way, sinner though he is." And now, when gloomy fears arise, and dark thoughts roll over our mind, let this be our comfort! We are still sinners—guilty and vile—but the same voice says, "Let these go their way." It is the "let" of *command*—and who can hinder when God lets in this sense? "Let these go their way." You are going up Bunyan's Hill Difficulty and there are lions at the top. Christians remember this message, "Let these go their way." You will, perhaps, get into Giant Despair's dungeon. Here is a key that will fit the lock—"Let these go their way." You will be tumbling about in the Slough of Despond—here is a stone to put your foot on to help you to get out—"Let these go their way." Why? Because they pray? No. Because they serve God? No—the mandate was given before they did either the one or the other. "Let these go their way" because Christ died in their place!

The day is coming, and shall soon be here, when you and I shall stretch our wings and fly away to the land that is very far off. I think I might picture in my imagination the soul when it has left the body. The Believer speeds his way up to his native city, Jerusalem, "the mother of us all." But at the gate one stands and he says, "Have you a right to admission here? It is written, 'He that walks righteously, and speaks uprightly; he that despises the gain of oppressions, that shakes his hands from holding of bribes, that stops his ears from hearing of blood, and shuts his eyes from seeing evil; he shall dwell on high.' Are you such an one?" "Ah," says the soul, "I hope by Grace I have been made so; but I cannot claim to have always been so, for 'I the chief of sinners am.'" "Then how came you here? This gate gives no admission to those who are sinners." While the angel is thus parleying, I hear a Voice crying, "Let these go their way" and, forthwith, the gates of Heaven are opened and every soul for whom Christ died enters into Paradise!

Come, Saint, close up this simple meditation by looking yonder. See Christ, with Justice, Vengeance, Wrath, all seeking Him. Lo, they have found Him! They have slain Him! He is buried! He has risen again! Oh, see them seeking Him and, as you sit down at His Table, think, "When they sought Him, they let me go my way." And what a sweet way it is! I am allowed to come to His Table of Communion. Why? Because they sought *Him*. I am invited to hold fellowship with Jesus. Why? Because they sought Him. I am permitted to have a good hope through Divine Grace and, more than that, "I know that when this earthly house of my

tabernacle is dissolved, I have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

Why am I to go that way? Why? Because they sought *Him* and found Him! Otherwise, where had I been now? My place might have been on the alehouse bench, or, perhaps, in the seat of the scorner. And what would have been my prospect? Why, that, at the last, I would be in Hell among the fiends and the lost spirits of the Pit! But now I tread the paths of righteousness and the ways of Grace. Oh, let me remember why I do so—it is because they sought You, O precious Lord of mine! They sought You, my dear Redeemer and my God! They sought Your heart and broke it! They sought Your head and crowned it with thorns! They sought Your hands and nailed them to the tree! They sought Your feet and pierced them! They sought Your body, they slew and buried it! And now, though the roaring lion may seek me ever so much, he cannot devour me! Never can I be torn in pieces, never can I be destroyed, for I carry with me this sweet passport of the King of Heaven, "Let these go their way."

O child of God, take this with you for your safe conduct everywhere! When men travel abroad, they carry with them a permit to go to this town and the other. Take this little sentence, Brother or Sister in Jesus, and when Unbelief stops you, draw it out, and say, "He has said, 'Let these go their way.'" And when Satan stops you, hold out to him this Divine Mandate, "Let these go their way." And when Death shall stop you, take out this sweet permit from your Master, "Let these go their way." And when the Throne of Judgment shall be set and you stand before it, plead this sentence, plead it even before Your Maker, "My Master said, 'Let these go their way.'"

Oh, cheering words! I could weep them all out, but I will say no more. I hope many of you will enjoy the sweetness of them while we gather around the Lord's Table, in obedience to His gracious command, "This do in remembrance of Me."

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: JOHN 17; 18:1-9.

John 17:1. *These words spoke Jesus, and lifted up His eyes to Heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify Your Son, that Your Son may also glorify You.* Jesus is going forth to die and He knows it, yet He prays to His Father, "Glorify Your Son." There was no way of His coming to that Glory except by passing through tears, blood, agony and death. He only asks that He may be glorified in what He is about to do and suffer—and He is ready for it all—"Father, the hour is come; glorify Your Son, that Your Son may also glorify You."

2. *As You have given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.* In that saying of our Lord's we have an explanation of what He did by His redemption. There was a universal aspect of it—"You have given Him power over all flesh." There was a special design in it—"That He should give eternal life to as many as

You have given Him.” Sometimes, two views of the same thing may appear to contradict each other, but when we are taught of God, we soon discover that they do not really do so, and that a grand Truth may be contained in the two descriptions of it. Christ had, by virtue of His death, power over all flesh, but it was for a distinct purpose—“that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.”

3. *And this is eternal life, that they might know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent.* By this, then, dear Friends, we can know whether we have eternal life or not. Do we know the Father? Do we know Jesus Christ as the Messiah, the Sent One? Are we resting in that blessed knowledge? If so, He has given us eternal life.

4, 5. *I have glorified You on the earth: I have finished the work which You gave Me to do, And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself with the Glory which I had with You before the world was.* In deep humility, Jesus had laid that Glory aside for a while. He had tabernacled in human flesh—and when He spoke these words, the time was approaching when—

“All His world and warfare done,”

He would go back to His pristine Glory with something more added to it.

6. *I have manifested Your name unto the men which You gave Me out of the world.* They had not, all of them, clearly seen that manifestation. Jesus had to ask the question, “Have I been so long with you, and yet have you not known Me, Philip?” Still, that was not the fault of the manifestation. Christ had manifested the name—that is, the Character—of God unto those who had been given to Him out of the world.

6. *Yours they were and You gave them to Me; and they have kept Your Word.* We might have expected that the verse would end, “and I have kept them.” But their keeping God’s Word is the evidence that Christ *has* kept them! Whenever a soul loves the Word of God, delights in the teaching of Christ, glories in those things which the world calls dogmas—as if they were so much dog’s meat—when you and I can feed upon these things—when every utterance of Christ is dear and precious to us—that is good evidence of our being called out of the world and separated unto Christ! It is one of the marks of Divine Grace which Jesus works in those whom the Father has given Him. “Yours they were and You gave them to Me; and they have kept Your Word.”

7. *Now they have known that all things whatever You have given Me are of You.* The Father gives Christ the Truth which Christ gives to us. The Father gives Christ the souls which Jesus keeps until the day of His power. There is mutual communion between God the Father and His blessed Son—let us never say a word that might look as if we did not understand the Oneness, the everlasting and Infinite Oneness—which there is between the sacred Persons of the Divine Unity.

8. *For I have given unto them the Words which You gave Me.* You know how men talk against “verbal Inspiration.” Yet Christ says, “I have given unto them *the Words* which You gave Me.” Many are trifling with the

teaching of God's Word as if it were of no importance at all. Not so Christ! "I have given unto them the Words which You gave Me."

8. *And they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from You, and they have believed that You did send Me.* Firmly do we believe this and in our heart of hearts we accept every part of the teaching of Christ, no matter what it is. I hear people say, sometimes, "Oh, but that is not essential!" There is a great deal of mischief hatched out of that egg! O Friends, it is essential that Christ's disciples should treasure whatever He has said! Never trifle with that part of the Word of God which seems to be less essential to salvation than another portion, for if it is not essential to salvation, it may be essential to your comfort, or your holiness, or your strength, or your usefulness. And if it be essential to God's Glory, let us never trample it in the mire, or in any way dishonor it. Who am I that I should say, "This which God has spoken is important, but that other is not"? It does not do for us to presume to judge the Word of God—we should rather let the Word of God judge us.

9. *I pray for them.*—Blessed Words! Christ prays for His own people. "I pray for them." *I pray not for the world, but for them which You have given Me.* In that last hour, just before His Passion, His thoughts were separating the precious from the vile and His prayer ascended for His own people. "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which You have given Me."

9, 10. *For they are Yours. And all Mine are Yours and Yours are Mine; and I am glorified in them.* It is a wonderful thing that Christ should be glorified in His people! Can it be that He shall be glorified in *me*? Dear child of God, you sometimes sit in the corner and think to yourself, "How insignificant I am! The Church on earth would not miss me if I were taken away. And the choirs of Heaven cannot need me." Oh, but your Lord is glorified in You! If you are one of His chosen and redeemed people, in your very weakness and need He finds opportunity to glorify His strength and His fullness! He knows the truth about this matter and He says, "I am glorified in them."

11. *And now I am no more in the world.* He was going away. He has now gone.

11. *But these are in the world.* We know we are, do we not, Brothers and Sisters? We have a thousand things, some of them very painful and humiliating, to remind us that we are still in the world.

11. *And I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your own name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one, as We are.* Oh, what blessed keeping is that—to be kept in spiritual oneness! I do not expect to see the people of God in visible oneness, but as there was a secret, invisible Union, most real and most true, between the Father and the Son, so there is, at this time, a secret union in the hearts of all Believers, most deep, most real, most true! I may never have seen that good friend before, but as soon as we begin to talk of Jesus and His love, if we are the living children of the living God, the bond of unity is felt at once by both of us! "One is your Master, even Christ; and all you are brethren."

12. *While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name: those that You gave Me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the Scripture might be fulfilled.* What a blessed Shepherd is this who never lost a sheep! Judas crept in among the flock, but he was never truly one of the flock. He was never a son of God. He was “the son of perdition” all along. Christ has kept all His sheep and all His lambs—and He will do the same, dear Friends, even to the end.

13. *And now come I to You and these things I speak in the world, that they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves.* What an unselfish Savior! His heart is ready to break with His impending sufferings and yet He prays for us, that we may be filled with His joy! I suppose that it is true that the Man of Sorrows was the happiest man who ever lived. “For the joy that was set before Him, He endured the Cross, despising the shame.” And, notwithstanding His boundless and bottomless grief, there was within Him such communion with God, love to men and the certainty of His ultimate triumph that kept Him still joyous above the seas of tribulation! He prays that that same joy may be fulfilled in us. May God graciously grant it to all of us who believe in Jesus!

14, 15. *I have given them Your Word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the Evil One.* There is a reason for God’s elect being allowed to remain in the world. They are never left like wheat in the field, to perish through the damp and cold, or to be devoured by the birds of the air. Oh, no! We are left for God’s Glory, that men may see what the Grace of God can do in poor frail bodies. We are left for the service of Christ’s Church, that we may be here for a while to carry on the cause of God, to be the means of comforting the little ones and to seek the conversion of sinners. We are to be like salt to prevent putrefaction. We are God’s preventive men, to prevent as much of the evil as we can—and we are to fight with the evil that cannot be prevented and to seek to overthrow it in Christ’s name.

16. *They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.* Many, nowadays, say that we ought to blend the Church with the congregation and that it is a great pity to have any division between them. A great many good people are outside the Church—therefore try to make the Church as much like the world as you can! That is a silly trick of the devil which the wise servants of God will answer by saying, “To whom we give place for subjection? No, not for an hour!” There must always be a broad line of demarcation between the Church of Christ and the world—it will be an evil day when that line is abolished. The sons of God took to themselves wives of the daughters of men, but that kind of union brought mischief with it, and it will always do so.

17. *Sanctify them through Your Truth: Your Word is Truth.* We cannot afford to give up God’s Inspired Word because it is a means of our sanctification. If this is taken away, it is not such-and-such a dogma, as they call it, put into the background, but it is the Truth of God that would

sanctify us which is discarded, it is God's own Word that is flung to the dogs! And that must never be.

18, 19. *As You have sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they, also, might be sanctified through the Truth. "I set Myself apart unto holiness, that they, also, might be set apart unto holy uses through the Truth."*

20. *Neither pray I for these alone, but for them, also, which shall believe on Me through their word.* Our Lord knew that the little circle around Him would grow into a multitude that no man can number, out of all nations, kindreds, people and tongues—so He prayed for all whom His Father had given Him.

21, 22. *That they all may be one as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that You have sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are One.* The Church will never know her true Glory till she knows her perfect oneness—the One Church will be the glorious Church!

23. *I in them, and You in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.* That is a grand expression—"You have loved them, as You have loved Me." What? With the same love? It is even so—a love without beginning, a love without change, a love without bounds, a love without end! "You have loved them as You have loved Me."

24-26. *Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My Glory, which You have given me: for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world has not known You: but I have known You, and these have known that You have sent Me. And I have declared unto them Your name, and will declare it: that the love in which You have loved Me may be in them, and I in them.* This blessed prayer was heard by the Father. All of it must be fulfilled—and untold blessings do and shall come to us through this intercession of our Lord. Blessed be His holy name!

John 18:1. *When Jesus had spoken these words, He went forth with His disciples over the brook Kidron, where was a garden, into which He entered, and His disciples.* Our Lord could not cross that "brook Kidron" without being reminded of the time when David went that way in the hour of his sorrow, though He knew that He had to face a far greater trial than that of David. The very brook would remind Him of His approaching Sacrifice, for through it flowed the blood and refuse from the Temple.

2. *And Judas, also, which betrayed Him, knew the place: for Jesus often resorted there with His disciples.* The place of our Lord's frequent retirement for private prayer was well known to Judas, who had often gone there with his Lord and his fellow disciples.

3. *Judas, then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, went there with lanterns and torches and weapons.* How completely the traitor must have been in the power of Satan—and how hardened and callous he must have grown, that he could

lead, “there,” the men who were going to arrest the Savior! Truly it was by wicked hands that Christ was taken, crucified and slain! Yet, unconsciously, these evil men were carrying out “the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.” How strangely were they equipped for their deed of darkness! “With lanterns and torches and weapons.” They were coming to the Light of the world bearing “lanterns and torches!” And armed with “weapons” that they might use against “the Lamb of God.” If He had wished to deliver Himself, all their “weapons” would have been in vain—and their “lanterns and torches” would not have revealed Him, even with the help of the full moon, which was probably shining at the time.

4, 5. *Jesus, therefore, knowing all things that should come upon Him, went forth and said unto them, Whom do you seek? They answered Him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus said unto them, I am He. And Judas also, which betrayed Him, stood with them.* Notice, dear Friends, that the word, “He” is in italics, showing that it is not in the original. Our Lord here twice used the name of Jehovah, I AM—as He did on certain other memorable occasions. It was most fitting that, as He was going out to die, He should declare that it was no mere man who was about to suffer on the Cross, but that, while He was truly Man, He was also “very God of very God.”

6. *As soon, then, as He had said unto them, I am He, they drew back and fell to the ground.* The simple utterance of His name drove them from Him and drove them to the earth! What would have happened if He had put forth His almighty power?

7-9. *Then He asked them again, Whom do you seek? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered, I have told You that I am He. If, therefore, You seek Me, let these go their way: that the saying might be fulfilled, which He spoke, Of them which You gave Me, I have lost none.*

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

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY
TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

THE LIVING CARE OF THE DYING CHRIST

NO. 2368

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, JULY 8, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 15, 1888.

“Jesus answered, I have told you that I am He: if, therefore, you seek Me, let these go their way: that the saying might be fulfilled which He spoke, Of those which You gave Me have I lost none.”
John 18:8, 9.

THE two remarkable miracles which our Lord worked in the Garden of Gethsemane ought not to be lightly passed over. The first was the falling to the ground of the soldiers and the servants of the priests. Jesus did but speak to them and there was such power and majesty about His Presence and His voice that, “they went backward, and fell to the ground.” They were quite unable to seize Him. Here was a display, in some measure, of Christ's Divine Power. These men would have fallen into the grave and into Hell, itself, if Jesus had put forth the full force of His strength! He only spoke a word and down they fell—they had no power whatever against Him. Beloved, take comfort from this miracle! When the enemies and foes of Christ come against Him, He can easily overthrow them. Many times have there been crises in the Church's history when it seemed as if the Truth of God would be destroyed. Then has come the opportunity for Divine interposition. A word from Christ has vanquished His enemies! They that were waiting, like lions, ready to leap upon their prey, have been disappointed. Jesus has but spoken and they have fallen backward to the ground. Therefore, take heart and be not dismayed even in the darkest hour. Let Christ only utter a word and the victory is certain to be with Him!

The other miracle was this, that seeing the company that came together to take Him, He should be able, at pleasure, to screen His disciples so that not one of them was injured. The ear of the High Priest's servant was cut off—it was the opposite party that received the wound—but no ear of Peter or finger of John was struck. The Apostles escaped altogether unharmed. They were not able to protect themselves, being a very small number compared with the posse that had come forth from the High Priest, yet their Master preserved them! From this we learn that the Lord Jesus Christ is able to take care of His own. When they seem to be like so many lambs in the midst of wolves, He can keep them so that no wolf can devour them. He has done it and He will continue to do so! “Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the

Kingdom.” He will preserve you by His own miraculous power and you need not be dismayed at any force that is arrayed against you.

Think, then, of those two miracles. You may need to remember them—there may come a time when it shall be a great joy for you to think of Christ, all ruddy from the bloody sweat, yet driving back His adversaries with only a *word*, and rescuing the little handful of His disciples from anything like harm.

But in my text I notice something which seems to me very remarkable—“If, therefore,” said Jesus, “you seek Me, let these go their way: that the saying might be fulfilled.” After such an expression, you naturally expect some Old Testament text—something said by David in the Psalms or by one of the Prophets—but it is not so! It is, “that the saying might be fulfilled, which *He* spoke, “*Of them which You gave Me have I lost none.*” It is but an hour or two since Jesus uttered this sentence, but it is already among the Inspired Scriptures and it begins to take effect and to be fulfilled at once! It is not the *age* of God’s Word, but the *Truth* of it that constitutes its power! What Christ had said that very night in prayer was as true and as much the Word of the King as that which God had spoken by His Spirit through holy men ages before!

Beloved, learn this lesson—the Word of Christ is to be depended upon! You may hang your whole destiny upon it! What Christ has said is full of the Truth of God. He is, Yes and Amen, and so are all His Words—they stand fast forever and ever, like His own eternal Godhead. Therefore, since this Word of Christ, which had only just been spoken, must be fulfilled, believe that every Word of His will be carried out to the utmost! Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one Word which was spoken by our Savior shall ever fail—it shall not fail even the least of us in our worst hour of peril! I read this Truth of God in the text with very great delight. We might have expected to find an Old Testament Scripture quoted here, but the New Testament Scripture is put upon the same level as the Old and, coming from the lips of Christ, we are pleased to see it so soon fulfilled.

The soldiers and officers from the chief priests had come forth that night especially to arrest Christ. Peter, James, John, Bartholomew, Thomas and the rest of the Apostles are all there, but Judas has come to betray, not the servants, but their Master. And they who are with the traitor have come to take not the disciples, but their Lord. To me, there is something encouraging about this fact, although it is a dismal one. The fight of the great adversary is not so much against *us* as against our Master. Satan’s emissaries are very furious, sometimes, with the faithful defenders of the Truth, but their fury is not so much against *them* as against the Truth and against the Christ who is the center of that Truth. In olden times, they hated Luther, Calvin and Zwingli, and the rest of the Reformers, but the main point of attack was the Doctrine of Justification by Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And at this day the great fight is around the Cross. Did Jesus die as His people’s Substitute? That is the question and there are some, I grieve

to say it, to whom that text is applicable, “He that despised Moses’ Law died without mercy, under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose you, shall he be thought worthy, who has trodden under foot the Son of God, and has counted the blood of the Covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and has done despite unto the Spirit of Grace?” This is the chief aim of the enemy’s assaults—to get rid of Christ, to get rid of the Atonement, to get rid of His suffering in the place of men! They say they can embrace the rest of the Gospel, but what, “rest,” is there? What is there left? A bloodless, Christless Gospel is neither fit for the land nor for the dunghill—it neither honors God nor converts the sons of men!

This is our consolation, that the attack is, after all, against the Master, Himself. Our Lord Jesus Christ is still the great target for the archer’s arrows. Though His enemies do not always let His disciples go their way, yet they do seek Him—it is against Him that they rave most of all. As it is the quarrel of God’s Covenant, He will fight it out to the end! And so far as *your* part in the battle is concerned, as it is for His Truth, His eternal power and Godhead and His great Sacrifice, you may safely go through with it, for he who fights for this cause shall surely have God with him.

Now let us come to our text and try to learn some lessons from it. I notice here, first, *Christ’s dying care for His disciples*. Then, next, I see that *His care extends to their bodies*. And, thirdly, I observe that *His care offers Himself instead of them*. He thrusts Himself upon the edge of the adversaries’ sword and says, “If, therefore, you seek Me, let these go their way.”

I. First, then, I call upon you to notice in our text CHRIST’S DYING CARE FOR HIS DISCIPLES. Let me correct what I have said and put it, THE LIVING CARE OF THE DYING CHRIST, for you see He is occupied, first of all, with His disciples’ safety. The soldiers have come to seize Him, but He does not seek to escape. They bind Him, but He does not burst His bonds. They will take Him to prison and to death, but He has not a word to say in His own defense. He utters no curse against His persecutors. His one thought is for His disciples! His ruling passion is strong in death—His love still masters Him.

This was the more wonderful because He was *in the first brunt of the danger*. He had been betrayed by Judas and the High Priest’s servants were gathering about Him to capture Him, yet He was calm and quiet, and His one thought was concerning the 11 who were with Him. Usually, we become quieter when we get used to a trouble—it is in the first fluster of it that we are disconcerted and thrown off balance. I suppose it is so with you. I know it is so with me. We learn, after a little while, to look calmly around us. We gird up the loins of our mind and we begin to think as we *should* think—but at first we are like birds driven out to sea by a rough wind—that have not learned, yet, to manage their wings in the gale. It was not so with our Savior. In that first moment of attack He still thought of His disciples. Oh, the splendor of that love which could not be disturbed! Many waters could not quench it even at their first

breaking out, nor could the floods drown it when they were swollen to their highest! Beloved, Jesus never forgets you who are His own. Never does anything happen in this world or in Heaven that leads Him to forget you. He has engraved your names upon the palms of His hands—they are written upon His heart! So be it, the first brunt of *your* battle or of His own, He still thinks of you and cares for you.

But it is more remarkable, still, that Jesus thought of His disciples *in the faintness of His agony*. All crimson from the bloody sweat, He rose from under the olive trees, came forward and stood there in the torch-light before His persecutors. But the light that fell upon His brow revealed no care for anything but the safety of His followers. His whole soul had gone out to them. That crimson sweat meant a heart flowing out at every pore with love for those whom His Father had given Him, and whom He had so long preserved. I doubt not that He was faint with the dreadful agony. He must have been brought to the very lowest point of endurance by it, yet He still thought of His disciples! Beloved, when you and I are sick and faint, other people do not expect us to think of *them*. We grow a little selfish when we are weak and ill—we want someone to moisten our lips, we expect our friends to watch over us and wipe the sweat from our brow. It was not so with our Master! He came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister! And He does so by saying to the rabble throng, “If, therefore, you seek Me, let these go their way.”

And mark, dear Friends, that our Lord Jesus was not only in the brunt of danger, and in the faintness of His agony, but He was *in full prospect of a cruel death*. He knew all that was to be done to Him. When you and I have to suffer, we do not know what is before us—it is a happy circumstance that we do not. But Jesus knew that they would buffet Him, that they would blindfold Him, that they would spit in His face, that they would scourge Him. He knew that the crown of thorns would tear His temples. He knew that He would be led forth like a malefactor, bearing the gallows on His shoulder. He knew that they would nail His feet and hands to the cruel Cross. He knew that He would cry, “I thirst.” He knew that His Father must forsake Him on account of the sin of man that would be laid upon Him. He knew all that! These huge Atlantic billows of grief already cast their spray in His face. His lips were salt with the brine of His coming grief, but He did not think of that—His one thought was for His Beloved, those whom His Father had given Him. Till He dies, He will keep His eye on His sheep and He will grasp His Shepherd’s crook with which to drive the foe from them. Oh, the all-absorbing, self-consuming love of Christ! Verily, it was like coals of juniper which have a most vehement flame! Do you know that love, Beloved? If so, let your hearts reciprocate it—loving Him in return with all the strength of your life and all the wealth of your being! Even *then* you can never love Him as He has loved you.

I must add that it was all the more remarkable that Jesus should continue to think of His disciples at such a time when *He knew what they were*. They had been asleep, even while He was in the bloody sweat! Even

the three whom He had chosen as His bodyguard and stationed within a stone's throw of His terrible agony, had slept! Jesus also knew that the 11 would all forsake Him and flee, and that one of them would even deny Him. Yet He thought of them. O Lord, how can You think of such sinful creatures as we are? I feel glad that these Apostles were not perfect. We must not rejoice in anything that is evil, but still, it is some comfort to me that though they were such poor creatures as they were, Jesus cared for them, for now I can believe that He loves me!

Though I sleep when I ought to wake and watch with Him, yet He loves me. Although, under the brunt of a strong temptation, I may flee—He still loves me! Yes, and even if I should deny Him, yet I can understand that, as He loved Peter, He may still love me. O faulty saints, you who love Him and yet often fail Him! You who trust Him and yet are oftentimes dismayed! Gather strength, I pray you, from this wonderful love of Jesus! Is not the love of Christ a mass of miracles, all wonders packed together? It is not a subject for surprise that He should love, but that He should love *such worms as we are*—that He should love us when we were dead in trespasses and sins, that He should love us into life, should love us despite our faults, should love us to perfection—and should love us till He brings us to share His Glory! Rejoice, then, in this wondrous care of Christ—the dying Christ with a living care for His disciples!

II. But now, secondly, HIS CARE EXTENDS TO THEIR BODIES.

I will not be long upon this point, but I want you to note some of the sweetness there is in it. When I was reading to you, just now, you must have noticed that our Lord said, “Those that You gave Me, I have kept, and none of them is lost.” Surely He meant that He kept them from wandering into sin, did He not? Did He not mean that He kept them unto eternal salvation? Undoubtedly He did, but the greater includes the less. He who keeps a man, keeps the *whole* man—spirit, soul and body. So our Lord Jesus, here, interprets His own prayer, which dealt with the souls of His people. He mainly interprets it as to their *bodies*, for He bade those who came to seize Him to let His disciples go, saying, “If, therefore, you seek Me, let these go their way.”

You say to me, “That is a small interpretation of a great utterance.” I know it is and that is the comfort of it, that if there are small meanings to the promises, you may quote them and pray for them, as well as believe in and pray for the greater and immeasurable meaning of the promises! I like to believe that He who loves me as an immortal spirit, loves me as a mortal man. He who loves me as I shall be before His Throne in Glory, loved me as I was when I hung upon my mother's breast—and loves me as I now am—with many a weakness and infirmity clinging to me! He who takes care of the soul, takes care of the body, too.

Notice that *this care of our Lord was effectual*. Is it not amazing that none of those soldiers and servants of the High Priest touched one of the eleven? Is it not remarkable that Malchus, having lost his right ear, did not feel it his duty to thrust at Peter? But the Savior interposes and just *touches* the wounded ear, and it is healed! And Peter is allowed to go.

That act of Peter was enough to bring on a battle royal all round and we know that the whole eleven had only two swords between them. They could have made only a very feeble stand against a band of armed men, yet not *one* of them was injured. How well does Jesus protect His own!

What is more remarkable, the Apostles were not harmed at the time of Christ's death. It would not at all have surprised me if the mob that cried, "Crucify Him, crucify Him," had also said, "Here are some of His disciples, let us also put them to death! Let us increase the agonies of the dying Nazarene by the slaughter of His disciples before His eyes." Yet not a dog moved his tongue against them! And when it was reported that Christ had risen from the dead, why did not His enemies pounce upon Mary Magdalene and the rest of the women? Forty days was Jesus on the earth and I do not find that in all that time there was any hindrance to the coming or going *anywhere* of any of His disciples! After the Holy Spirit had been poured out, there came a time of persecution, but until then it was not in the Savior's mind that the Jews should touch one of His disciples—and they *could not*. The devil cannot go any farther than his chain permits—and the worst enemies of Christ can do no more than Christ allows. What an effectual care was this of the Master which held the broad shield of His Divine protection not only over the eleven, but also over all the rest of the faithful! He was at His lowest when they took Him, bound Him and led Him away, but even then, with His Sovereign Word, He protected His people from all harm—as to their bodies as well as their souls.

Notice, also, that *it was necessary that they should have special protection*. Jesus meant them all to remain alive to see Him after His death, that they might be witnesses of His Resurrection. They were a little handful of seed corn and He would not have one grain wasted, because it was by that precious wheat that His Church was to be fed and the world was to be sown with spiritual life!

Besides, they were not ready, yet, to bear persecution. Afterwards they bore it manfully, joyfully—but just now they were poor feeble children until the Spirit of God was poured out. Brothers and Sisters, the Lord Jesus Christ can shelter us from sickness and from every kind of bodily affliction until we are fit to bear it. And He can also preserve us from death till our work is done. It is a good saying, though it is not a Scriptural one, "We are immortal till our work is done." If God has given you anything to do, get to the doing of it! The time is short, but dream not that you shall be cut off too soon! You have a work for your time and you shall have time for your work. Believe it and you may go between the jaws of behemoth without a fear, while God has work for you to accomplish for Him! Therefore, be not afraid, for Jesus says, "Let these go their way."

Once more, *the care which the Lord took of His people was much better than their own care*. See, Peter is going to take care of his Master, but he makes a poor mess of it. But when his Master took care of him, that was a very different affair. Peter is going to fight for his Brothers—out comes

the sword—off goes the ear of Malchus! And Peter probably regretted that he had not cut off his head. But what good did Peter do? He only increased the danger they were in and made the men feel the more furious against them. But Christ's Word was ample—here was sufficient defense for all the Apostles, "Let these go their way," and go their way they did! Brothers and Sisters, we would do a deal better in many things if we did not do anything at all! There is many a man who is drowning and makes his drowning sure by his struggling. I am told that if he could but lie still on his back, he would float! And I believe that in many a trouble we make the trouble 10 times worse by our kicking and plunging.

"O rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him." Especially do so if it is a matter of scandal. If anybody speaks evil of you, do not answer him. I have had a great deal of experience of this kind—perhaps as much as anybody—and I have always found that if I get a spot of mud anywhere on my coat, and I proceeded to brush it off, it is much worse than before. Leave it alone till it is dry—then it will come off easily. Perhaps even then you had better leave somebody else to do your clothes-brushing and your boot-cleaning—you cannot do it nearly so well, yourself, as somebody else can do it for you. I say again, we should do better, often, if we did nothing. These 11 Apostles did best when Peter had put up that ugly old sword of his and left off fighting and, at His Master's Word, went away safe and sound from the armed men who had arrested His Lord.

Beloved, you are all right if you are in Jesus Christ's hands—right for your body, right for your estate, right for your character, right for little things as well as for great—if you just leave all in those dear hands that never fail, because they act for the dear heart that never ceases to beat with infinite affection towards all those whom the Father has given to Him.

III. I have continued longer than I intended, so I am coming, now, to the third and last point, which is this—CHRIST'S CARE LED HIM TO OFFER HIMSELF INSTEAD OF HIS PEOPLE.

Jesus said, "If, therefore, you seek Me, let these go their way." This was as much as to say, "You cannot hurt both Myself and My people." This is a great Truth of God, though I put it very simply to you. When the judgments of God are abroad, it is not possible that they should fall on both Christ and His people. Was Jesus Christ the Substitute for His people? Grant that, then, if the punishment of sin fell on Christ, it cannot fall on those for whom Christ died! It is not according to natural justice, much less Divine Justice, that the Substitute should suffer first, and then the person for whom He stood as Substitute should also suffer. That cannot be! Why have a Substitute at all unless that Substitute, by His suffering, clears those for whom He was substituted?

I will give you a very simple illustration. You will find it in the Book of Deuteronomy. There is the old Divine ordinance that when a man found a bird's nest and there were young birds in the nest, if he took the young, he must let the mother bird go free, he must not take both—that was contrary to the Divine Law. So, Christ may die, or His people may die—

but not *both* of them. Justice will not have it that they shall both suffer. And the Lord Jesus Christ gives a tongue to that great Law when He says, "If you seek Me, here I am, but let these go their way, for you cannot take us both." That were contrary to the sacred Law and to the Divine equity which lies at the bottom of everything that is true. Did Christ, my Ransom, die for me? Then I shall not die. Did He pay my debt? Then it is paid and I shall not be called upon to pay it—

***"If You have my discharge procured,
And freely in my place endured
The whole of wrath Divine.
Payment God cannot twice demand—
First at my bleeding Surety's hand,
And then, again, at mine."***

Did Jesus suffer in my place outside the city gate? Then, turn you, my Soul, unto your rest, since He died for you! Justice could not claim both the Surety and those for whom He stood as Substitute! And, Beloved, *it was the Master who died*. They did seek Him, they did take Him, they did crucify Him—He did bear it all as His people's Substitute. "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Do not be deceived about this matter, but grip it as a fact most sure that the Lord Jesus Christ did bear His people's sins in His own body on the tree. "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed." Brothers and Sisters, I am not making this up and telling you words of my own. These are the precious Truths of Holy Writ, Divinely Inspired. Oh, that all would believe them!

Christ has suffered in the place of His people. What then? As I have said to you, before, both cannot suffer, therefore, as Jesus suffered, *you who are His people are clear*. Perhaps you will go down to the grave. Unless the Lord should speedily come, we shall die, but, since Jesus died, death cannot hold us! The resurrection trumpet will ring out its silver note and this will be the message to the dull cold ear of death, "Since I died, let these go their way," and every sepulcher shall open wide, the caverns of death shall no longer enclose the bodies of the saints, but from beds of dust and silent clay the whole of Christ's redeemed shall rise! Because He lives, they shall also live! Death sought Him and, therefore, death must let these who belong to Him go their way!

And as for Justice, there comes the dread tremendous day, the day for which all other days were made—the Day of Judgment and of condemnation of ungodly men! Shall I stand shivering before that eternal Judgment Seat? No, not so! Shall I feel the earth quake beneath me and see Heaven splitting above me, and the stars falling like withered leaves in autumn? Doubtless it will be so. Will the avenging angel come with his dread sword of fire and sweep us poor sinful ones away? He will, unless we are in Christ! But if we are among the blood-redeemed ones, he must stay his fiery vengeance, for there shall come a voice from the risen and reigning Savior, "You have smitten Me, therefore let these go their way." And because He died for us, we shall go our way! Which way? Up yonder shining staircase made of light! Up where the angels come and go, we

shall make our way, like children who run upstairs at home, up into the world of the Light of God and to the home of Glory where our Savior's face is the sun and His Presence makes Heaven! Yes, and this shall be our permit for ascending there—Jesus has loved us and has died to redeem us from our sins.

With this I close, dear Hearers. When I come into this pulpit and especially during the last two or three Sunday nights when I have felt my head swim at the sight of you, I seem like one standing on a high cliff, half afraid to remain there—and I think to myself, “Shall I long preach to these people?” Well, well, whether I do or do not, I would press home this question upon your consciences as I shall meet you in that Great Day—have you a share in Jesus Christ's love and care? Did He bear your sins in His own body on the tree? Do you believe in Him? That is, do you *trust* Him? Have you put your soul into His hands that He may save it? If so, you are justified by Him, you are saved in Him!

Say, dear Friend, next—do you obey Him? Is He your Master and Lord? Is His will the supreme law of your life? Or do you wish it to be so and pray to make it so? Then again you may go your way, for Christ has stood in your place. Do you suffer *with* Him? Are you willing to suffer *for* Him? There are some who will go with Christ if He will put on His silver slippers, His purple mantle and His jeweled crown. How good they are! How bravely will they say, “I am a Christian,” when everybody will throw primroses in their path! Yes, but when people sneer and call you an old Puritan, a Methodist, a Presbyterian, or some other pretty name—and when those who preach to you are much abused and evil things are said of them—can you take the side of a despised Christ? Can you stand at His Cross? Can you acknowledge Him when the blood is dripping from His wounds, when everybody thrusts out their tongue at Him and have ill words for the Crucified One? Can you say, “I still love Him”?

Remember the good Scotch woman, when Claverhouse had murdered her godly husband. “Ah,” he said, “what do you think of your bonny husband, now?” She answered, “I always thought my man was very beautiful, but I never saw him look as lovely as he does now, that he has died for his Master.” Can you say the same of Christ? He was always precious to me. I love Him in every shape and form, but when I see Him put on His crimson robe and bleed at every pore for me. When the rubies are in His hands and on His feet, and I see Him still despised and rejected of men, I love Him more than ever! And I love His Cross and take it up. I love His shame and His reproach, and count it “greater riches than the treasures in Egypt.” If it is so with you. If you are with Him in His shame, I will guarantee that you shall be with Him in His Glory!

I count it to be a mean position to be only with a reigning Christ on earth and to go with Him only in fair weather. Oh, but this is the pledge and proof of love—if you are with Him when the snowflakes blow into your face and the storm comes hurtling against you—and you can follow bravely where He leads the way! God make you such followers of the Crucified! May your feet know what it is to be pricked with thorns, or

your head will never know what it is to feel the weight of the Glory diadem! May you be willing to be despised and rejected, for if not, you have thrown away your crown! God bless you, dear Friends, and blessed be His name for helping me, again, to speak to you tonight! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
John 17:1-12; 18:1-14.

1. *These words spoke Jesus, and lifted up His eyes to Heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come.* This is, in a very special sense, our Lord's prayer. What a word that is from the lips of Jesus, "Father"! This was the night of His deepest sorrow and His heaviest woe, but He begins His prayer with this tender expression, "Father, the hour is come." The hour of darkness, the hour of His passion and death had now arrived.

1. *Glorify Your Son, that Your Son, also, may glorify You.* Did Jesus look upon His suffering as His Glory? He does not merely pray, "Sustain Your Son," but, "Glorify Your Son." In truth, our Lord's lowest stoop was His highest Glory! He was never more resplendent than when He hung upon the Cross—that was His true spiritual throne, so He prayed, "Glorify Your Son"—Enable Him to bear the agony and to pass through it to Glory. "That Your Son, also, may glorify You." The death of Christ was a great glorifying of God. We see His love and His justice rendered more glorious in the death of Christ than they would have been by any other method!

2. *As You have given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.* In this verse you get the doctrines of General and Particular Redemption blended. By His death, Christ obtained power over all flesh. His death had some relation to every man, but the special objective of it was the salvation of the elect. The purpose of the shower is to water one particular field, but the rain falls everywhere, so plenteous is the bounty of God. The objective of Christ's Atonement is to purchase eternal life for those who were given to Him by His Father, but He has also obtained power over all flesh.

3. *And this is life eternal, that they might know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent.* To know God is eternal life. If you know God, if you know Jesus Christ whom He has sent, you are spiritually quickened. That knowledge has brought to you, no, it is, in *itself*, the *new life*—"This is life eternal"—not life for a few years but life *eternal*. Mark the final perseverance of the saints, how they shall hold on and hold out forever.

4. *I have glorified You on the earth: I have finished the work which You gave Me to do.* Jesus regards His work as already done, although He had yet to die, to pay the ransom price for His people. Yet, by a leap of holy faith, He says, "I have finished the work which You gave Me to do."

5. *And now, O Father, glorify You, Me, with Your own Self with the Glory which I had with You before the world was.* Jesus had laid aside

His Glory for our sakes. Now He asks that His work, being regarded as done, His Glory may be given back to Him.

6. *I have manifested Your name unto the men which You gave Me out of the world: Yours they were, and You gave them Me: and they have kept Your Word.* God's people belong to Him. He gives them to His Son—Christ gives them His Word and they keep it. “They have kept Your Word.” Do we keep God's Word? Do we hold to it? Do we make it the guide of our whole life? Do we seek to obey it? This is the token of God's chosen people.

7-12. *Now they have known that all things whatever You have given Me are of You. For I have given unto them the Words which You gave Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from You, and they have believed that You did send Me. I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which You have given Me; for they are Yours. And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine; and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You, Holy Father. Keep through Your own name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one, as We are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name: those that You gave Me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the Scripture might be fulfilled.* Christ always has kept His people! He still keeps His people and He will keep His people forever! The sheep shall be delivered into the hands of the Father in full number—there shall not be one of them missing in that day when they shall pass under the rod of the Great Shepherd. We cannot read all this prayer of our Lord, tonight. We must now go, in the language of the next chapter, with the Master into the garden of His grief.

John 18:1. *When Jesus had spoken these words, He went forth with His disciples over the brook Kidron.* A dark, foul brook through which flowed the blood and refuse from the Temple. King David crossed that brook one night in bitter sorrow—and now the Savior crossed it when it was near to midnight—“He went forth with His disciples over the brook Kidron.”

1-2. *Where was a garden, into the which He entered, and His disciples. And Judas, also, which betrayed Him, knew the place: for Jesus oftentimes resorted there with His disciples.* Our Lord went there to pray and Judas knew that this was His custom. Are we such men of prayer that others know where we pray? Have you some familiar place where you go to meet your Lord? I am afraid that many know where we *trade* and many know where we *preach* but, perhaps, few know where we *pray*. God grant that we may be often at the Mercy Seat! We would be better men and women if we were more frequently at the Throne of Grace.

3. *Judas, then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, came there with lanterns and torches and weapons.* “Lanterns” to give light to the Sun! “Torches” to discern the Light of the World! “Weapons” with which to fight with the Lamb of God,

the unarmed Sufferer! Strange treatment, this, for Him who came to save and bless!

4, 5. *Jesus, therefore, knowing all things that should come upon Him, went forth and said unto them, Whom do you seek? They answered Him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus said to them, I am He. Or, "I Am."* It is remarkable that Jesus should, in His betrayal, twice use this expression, thus uttering the very name of Jehovah!

5. *And Judas, also, which betrayed Him, stood with them.* What a hardened wretch he must have been, to be able to stand with them! One would have thought that, having betrayed his Master, he would have hidden himself away for shame, but no, "Judas, also, which betrayed Him, stood with them." His heart must have been steeled.

6. *As soon, then, as He had said unto them, I am He, they went backward and fell to the ground.* Christ's Almighty Power cast them down at once! He needed not to lift His hand or even His finger—He only said, "I am" and, "they went backward and fell to the ground."

7. *Then asked He them, again, Whom do you seek? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth.* Do they return to the fray? Having once felt Christ's Divine Power, do they summon courage enough to attack Him again? Yes, for there is no limit to the malice and impudence of the human heart!

8-10. *Jesus answered, I have told you that I am He: if, therefore, you seek Me, let these go their way: that the saying might be fulfilled, which He spoke, Of them which You gave Me have I lost none. Then Simon Peter—Always ready to boil over. Always full of zeal and rash impetuosity, Peter—*

10. *Having a sword, drew it and struck the High Priest's servant and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus.* Peter struck at his head—he was not content with trying to wound—he meant to kill Malchus. But he, "cut off his right ear."

11-14. *Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up your sword into the sheath: the cup which My Father has given Me, shall I not drink it? Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus and bound Him, and led Him away to Annas first; for he was father-in-law to Caiaphas, which was the High Priest that same year. Now Caiaphas was he which gave counsel to the Jews that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.* Saying a great deal more than he thought he was saying, for he uttered a great Gospel Truth when he said, "It was expedient that one man should die for the people."

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—382, 401, 293.

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THE CAPTIVE SAVIOR FREEING HIS PEOPLE

NO. 722

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“Jesus answered, ‘I have told you that I am He. If therefore you seek Me, let these go their way,’ that the saying might be fulfilled, which He spoke, ‘Of them whom You gave Me have I lost none.’ ”
John 18:8, 9.

THE whole story of our Lord’s passion is exceedingly rich in meaning. One is tempted to linger over every separate sentence of the narratives given by the Evangelists. It is possible to preach several series of sermons upon the whole story, and there is not a single incident, though it may seem to be but accidental, which might not furnish a wealth of holy thought to the careful student.

In looking through this chapter one was greatly tempted to speak awhile upon the Master’s selecting the place of His prayer as the place of His agony and betrayal—the holy prudence and forethought by which He had, as it were, cast up His entrenchments and made His defenses upon the very spot where He knew He should meet the shock of the evening’s first onslaught. This is a lesson to us, Christians, not to venture out into the day’s battle without girding on our armor, nor make a voyage upon the sea of life without having seen to it that the vessel is well supplied against every possible danger which may be encountered upon the storm-tossed sea. Jesus *prays* before He fights, and so must we if we would overcome.

One is tempted, also, to dwell upon that remarkable expression, “Judas, also, which betrayed Him, knew the place,” to show the futility of knowledge apart from sincerity. Oh, the injuriousness of knowledge, if it is not attended with corresponding Grace! Had the traitor not known he could not have betrayed, and had he not been an intimate friend, he could not have been so base a wretch! Strange, but strangely true is it, that the ability to become the child of perdition by betraying his Master was found in the fact of his having been the near acquaintance of the Savior. He could never have been so sevenfold an inheritor of Hell if he had not been so largely a receiver of the privilege of companionship with Christ.

Direful truth, that to be educated to take the highest degree in Hell it is almost necessary to enter hypocritically into the school of Christ. Terrible reflection, which should well check any of us who make high professions without a corresponding weight of sincerity. But as time does not allow

us, like the bee, to gather honey from *every* flower, we shall dwell upon the text. In this passage there is much instruction and we shall endeavor to draw it forth. And then we shall take the liberty to *spiritualize* it, to set the words in another sense in order that we may still be promoting our great object of setting forth our Lord Jesus Christ.

I. When we observe the words of the text, we notice upon the very surface a sure proof of THE WILLINGNESS OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST TO GIVE HIMSELF TO SUFFER FOR OUR SINS. The voluntary character of Christ's suffering makes it beam with a matchless splendor of love! He needed not to have died. If it had been His good pleasure He might have tarried gloriously among the songs of angels. He came not to earth to win a crown because He had none, for all honor and glory are His by right.

It was not to earn a dominion, or because He was not Lord of principalities and powers, that He descended from the skies: "Who, though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we, through His poverty, might be made rich." It was a disinterested mission upon which the Redeemer came to the abodes of sinful men. He had nothing to gain—rather He had everything to lose—and yet let me say to correct myself, by that losing He *did* gain, for as our Mediator, He is clothed with a special glory of unrivalled Grace, unequalled by any other manifestation of the Divine perfections.

The proofs that the Master went voluntarily to His death are very abundant. He rose from supper when He knew that Judas had gone out to betray Him, but He did not seek a hiding place in the corners of Jerusalem, or retire to the calm retreat of Bethany. If He had chosen to parry His betrayer's thrust that night and to wait until the day, the fickle multitude would have gathered around Him and protected Him from His foes, for they would soon have been won to His side if He would have consented to become their king.

Instead of retreating, even for a moment, Jesus, attended by His disciples, boldly advanced to the spot where Judas had planned to betray Him. He went as calmly as though He had made an appointment to meet a friend there, and would not be late when he arrived. He entered upon His terrible sufferings with His whole heart, with the full concurrence of His whole being having a baptism to be baptized with, and being straitened until it was accomplished. What true courage is in those words, "Arise, let us go from this place," when He knew that He was going to the Cross! When the band came to take Him, it appears that they did not know Him. "I am He." He said to them twice, "Whom are you seeking?"

He had to reveal himself, or the lanterns and the torches would not have revealed him. He was not, after all, taken by Judas' kiss—the kiss was given—but in the confusion they may have missed the token. Jesus had to ask, "Whom are you seeking?" And He had to twice announce Himself plainly with the words, "I am He." He yielded Himself to His blood-thirsty foes and went willingly with His tormentors! It is very clear that He

went willingly, for since a single word made the captors fall to the ground, what could He *not* have done?

Another word and they would have descended into the tomb! Another, and they would have been hurled into Hell! He put forth just that little finger of His potency in order to let them feel what He could have done if He had chosen to lay bare the arm of His strength and to utter but one word of wrath against them. It is very sure that he went willingly, for how could He have gone at all if not with His own consent? There was no power on earth that could possibly have bound the Lord Jesus, had He been unwilling. He who said, "Let these go their way," and by that word secured the safety of all His disciples, it is certain could have said the same of Himself and so have gone His way where He would.

Men might as well speak of loading the sun with chains, or holding the lightning flash in bondage, or like the foolish king of old, fettering the wild uproarious sea as to suppose that they could constrain the Lord of Life and Glory, and lead Him a captive against His will! He was led, and led bound, too, but He could have snapped those bonds as Samson did the Philistines' bonds of old. There were other cords that bound Him—invisible to carnal sense—the bonds of Covenant engagements, the bonds of His own oath and promise, the bonds of His love to you and to me, my Brothers and Sisters. There were the mighty bonds of His marriage union to our souls which constrained Him, without a word, to yield Himself as a lamb to the slaughter.

The willingness of Jesus! Let us see it clearly, and let us reverently adore Him for it. Blessed Master! You go of Yourself to die for us! No compulsion but that of Your own heart! Nothing brought You to the tomb but Your almighty love to us! I do not intend to dwell upon this thought, but having brought it before you, the practical use of it is just this—Let us take care that our service of Christ shall ever be most manifestly a cheerful and a willing one. Let us never come, for instance, up to the place of worship unwillingly, merely because of custom, or because it is the right thing to do—which we would gladly avoid doing if we dare. Let us never contribute of our substance to the Master's cause with a grudging hand, as though a tax collector were wringing from us what we could not afford.

Let us never enter upon Christian exercises as a slave would enter upon his labor, hearing the crack of the whip behind him. But let *love* put wings to our feet and inspire our souls with a sacred alacrity, that as the seraphs fly upon the high behests of Heaven, we may run upon our Savior's commands with as much swiftness as mortals can command. Let our duty be our delight! Let the service of Christ be a kingdom to us! Let us count it to be our highest gain to suffer loss for Him, and our greatest ease to be fully immersed in abundant labors for His sake. His willing sacrifice ought to ensure *our* willing sacrifice. The Savior bleeds freely like

the camphor tree that needs no pressure—let us as freely, from our very hearts, pour forth our love and all the kindred graces and deeds of virtue.

II. Turning from this thought, I beg you, secondly, to notice OUR LORD'S CARE FOR HIS PEOPLE IN THE HOURS OF HIS GREATEST DISTURBANCE OF MIND. "If you seek Me, let these go their way." That word was intended, in the first place, to be a preservation for His immediate attendants. It is singular that the Jews did not surround that little handful of disciples, put them in prison, and then execute them in due season. If they had done so, where would have been the Christian church?

If they, the first nucleus of Christianity had been destroyed, as it seems likely they could have been, where would have been the Church of after ages? But those words, "Let these go their way," very efficiently protected all the weak and trembling fugitives. Why did not the soldiers capture John? He seems to have gone in and out of the palace without even a single word of challenge. Why did they not seize Peter? They were searching for witnesses, why did they not examine Peter under torture, as was the Roman custom, in order to have extorted from him some railing accusation against his Lord whom he so readily denied?

Where were the others? Timid, trembling folk, they had fled like harts and roes when they first heard the baying of the dogs of persecution—why were they not hunted up? The Jews did not lack for will, for afterwards they were gratified when James was killed with the sword, and pleased when Peter was laid in prison—why were they allowed to go unharmed? Was it not because the Master had need of them? The Holy Spirit had not yet been poured out upon them, and they were not yet fit to be martyrs. They were like green wood that would not burn! They were as yet unbroken to the sacred yoke of suffering. They had not been endowed with that irresistible spiritual strength which made them able to bear tribulation with rejoicing, and therefore that good Shepherd, who tempers the wind to shorn lambs, tempered the wind to these young beginners.

Those words, "If you therefore seek Me, let these go their way," were like coats of mail to them, or those fabled, invisible garments which concealed their wearers from their enemies. Under the more than bronze shield of their Lord's words, the disciples walked securely in the midst of the boisterous mob! We find John and others of the disciples even standing at the foot of the Cross while those who gnashed their teeth at Christ and laughed at Him, and revealed their savage malice in a thousand ways, did not touch so much as a hair of their heads, or, as far as we know, utter one jest against them. The words of Jesus proved to be right royal words—they were Divine words—and men were constrained to obey them.

The Lord had said, "Touch not Mine Anointed, and do My Prophets no harm," and therefore, for the time, His disciples were safe. It strikes me that the expression was not only a guard for the disciples for the time,

but, as no Scripture is of private interpretation, I believe that such a royal passport has been given to *all* Christ's people in the way of Providence. Fear not, you servant of Christ, you are immortal till your work is done! When you are fit to suffer, and if needs be, even to die, Christ will not screen you from so high an honor, but permit you to drink of His cup, and to be baptized with His baptism! But until your hour is come you may go and return secure from death. Though cruel men may desire your ill, and devise mischief against you, you are safe enough until the Lord shall be pleased to let loose the lion—and even then you shall suffer no permanent injury.

It is wonderful, in the lives of some of God's ministers, how strikingly they have been preserved from imminent peril. We cannot read the life of Calvin without being surprised that he should have been permitted to die peaceably in his bed, an honored man, surrounded by the town councilors and the great ones of the very city from which he had been once expelled! It seems astounding that a poor weak man whose body was emaciated with diseases of all kinds, who had no arms to wield against the furious hosts of Rome, should yet live in usefulness and then die in circumstances of peace and comfort.

It is no less remarkable that the brave hero of the Cross, Martin Luther, should seem as if he had carried a safe conduct pass, which permitted him to go anywhere and everywhere. He stood up in the Diet of Worms expecting to die, but he came out unscathed! He passed, as it were, between the very jaws of death and yet remained unharmed. Though, as I have said before, Christ has suffered many of His people to die for Him, and they have rejoiced to do so, yet, when He has willed to preserve any of His servants who were needed for a special work, as Calvin and Luther undoubtedly were, He had a way of taking care of them, and saying, "Let these go their way."

Take, for instance, another illustration, the life of our remarkable reformer, John Wickliffe. Many times his life was not worth a week's wages, and yet the old enemy of the Saints were robbed of their prey and could never touch a bone of him until years after he had been buried. When he was brought up for trial before the bishop at St. Paul's, it was a very singular circumstance that John of Gaunt should stand at his side, fully armed, proudly covering the godly man with the prestige of his rank and the arm of his power!

When Wickliffe was faint with standing, and begged to be allowed to sit, the bishop tells him that heretics shall have no seats, but John of Gaunt with rough, uncourtly words swears that he *shall* sit when he wills! And when the time comes the good man goes forth through the midst of the rabble protected by his friend! I know not that John of Gaunt knew the Truth of God, but yet God touched the man's heart to protect His servant in the hour of peril. Vultures, when God has willed it, have protected doves, and eagles have covered with their wings defenseless children

whom God would save. When the Lord wills it, if all Hell should shoot such a shower of arrows as should put out the sun, and if all those arrows were aimed at *one* poor heart, yet not a single shaft would find its mark, but all would be turned aside by an invisible but irresistible power from the man whom Jehovah ordained to save!

We understand, then, that Jesus has issued a royal passport for all His servants which enables them to live on in the midst of deaths innumerable. Mystically understood, the words have a far deeper meaning. The true seizure of Christ was not by Romans or by the envious Jews, but by our *sins*. And the true deliverance which Jesus gave to His disciples was not so much from Roman weapons as from the penalty of our sins. How anxiously do I desire that those here this morning, whose sins have been tormenting them, would hear the voice of Jesus, "If therefore you seek Me, let these go their way." The Law of God comes out to seek us who have violated it. It has many and just demands against us, but Jesus, who stood in our place, puts Himself before the Law, and He says, "Do you seek Me? Here I am. But when you take Me prisoner let these, for whom I stood, go their way."

So then, Beloved, when the Law met with the Lord Jesus and made Him its servant, and constrained Him to bear its penalty, all those for whom Christ stood were, by His being bound, absolutely and forever set free! Christ's suffering the penalty of the Law was the means of removing His people forever from under the legal yoke. Now let me try to apply that Truth to your case. A poor soul under distress of mind has gone to the priest, and the priest says, "If you would be pardoned do penance." While the poor soul is flogging his back and laying on the stripes most earnestly I think I hear the Savior saying to the whole tribe of priests, "Let these poor souls go their way. My shoulders have borne all *they* ought to have borne. My heart has suffered all the griefs that *they* were condemned to know. The chastisement of their peace was upon Me, and by My stripes they are healed. Let these go!"

Put away your whip! Cease from your bodily tortures, they are of no service! The Law has taken the Redeemer, it does not want *you*. You need not suffer, Christ has suffered and all *your* sufferings will now be useless and in vain! Christ has paid the debt, no need for you to attempt it again. Another poor trembler has been sitting under a legal ministry, and he has been told that if he would be saved he must keep the Commandments. He has, therefore, endeavored to forego this sin and the other, and as far as possible to be perfect in holiness. But he has made no headway. His soul is as much in bondage as ever, unsaved with all his exertions, destitute, still, of true peace notwithstanding all his good works.

This morning my Master cries to the preacher who talks after this fashion, "Let these poor bondaged ones go their way. Do not preach to them salvation by their own doing! Do not tell them that they are to earn admittance to Heaven. I have worked out and finished their redemption!"

Their salvation is complete in ME! There is nothing for sinners to do to win forgiveness. All they have to do is to receive what I have done for them! All the righteousness they need to recommend them before God is *My* righteousness—which requires not that theirs be added to it—for why should their rags be joined to my cloth of gold? All the merit a sinner can plead is the merit of My passion. Why should they seek after merit through their repentance and their good works? Why should such stagnant water be poured into the midst of the wine of My merit?”

Away with your fancied good works! Away with your boasts, your religions doings, your weeping, and your prayers—for if they are used as a ground of confidence instead of the work of Jesus Christ, they are things of *nothing*—mere rottenness and dung to be cast upon the dunghill! Since Jesus was accepted and punished by the Law, sinners believing in Him are free from the Law’s exactions and may go their way!

Perhaps there are some here in whose hearts the Law of God is making terrible confusion. You feel that you have broken the Law and that you cannot keep it. And now the Law is flogging you! It has tied you up as they tie up soldiers in the army to the stocks and it has been laying on the great cat-o’-ten-tails to your back—the Ten Commandments of the Law—till you are smarting, smarting all over! Your whole conscience is troubled. Now the Lord Jesus Christ says to the Law, “Put up, put up that whip! Do not smite the sinner any more! Did you not smite Me, why should you vex him?”

Sinner, the only way in which you can escape from the Law’s whip is this—hasten to Jesus Christ. You must flee to Christ! You must trust in Jesus, and if you shall trust in Jesus He will cast His robe over you! He will lift up the broad shield of His merit and protect you from the shafts of the foe, so that you can say to the Law, “I am not under the curse of the Law now, for I have fulfilled it in the Person of my Surety, and I have suffered its penalty in the Person of my Savior—

***“The terrors of Law and of God
With me can have nothing to do!
My Savior’s obedience and blood
Hide all my transgressions from view.”***

Jesus Christ, then, as He stands before the Law and is bound by the Law, and flogged by the Law, and crucified by the Law, and buried by the Law, says to you who trust in Him, “Go your way. The Law cannot touch you, for it has struck Me instead of you. I was your Substitute, and you may go free.” Why you all know that this is simple justice! If another person shall have paid your debts, you are not afraid of being immersed again in those debts, are you? And if you are drafted for the army and a substitute has taken your place, you are not afraid of being drawn a second time, are you? So the Lord Jesus Christ is the Substitute for all His people, and if He was a substitute for *you*, the Law has no further penal claims upon you! Christ has obeyed it. Christ has suffered its

penalty. You may rejoice in the Law as being, now, to you, a gracious rule of *life*—but it is not to you a yoke of bondage—you are not under it as a slave! You are free from its dominion! You are not under the Law! You are under Grace!

What a blessing is this! Further, these words seem to me to bear such a meaning as this—that as we are delivered from legal exaction so are we also delivered from all penal *infliction*. I wish that some children of God were clearer on this point. When you suffer tribulation, affliction and adversity, do not think that God is punishing you for your sins, for no *child of God* can be punished *penally* for sin. Let me not be misunderstood. A man is brought before God, first of all, as a criminal before a judge. You and I have stood there. Through Christ's blood and righteousness we have been absolved and acquitted as before God the Judge, and it is not possible for the Law to lay so much as the weight of a feather upon us since we have been perfectly acquitted. In all the pains and sufferings which a Christian may endure, there is not so much as a single *ounce* of penal infliction. God cannot punish a man whom He has pardoned!

And that criminal, being pardoned, is then adopted into the family and becomes a child. Now, if he shall, as a child, offend against his father's rule, he will be chastened for it. Everyone can see the distinction between the chastening of a *father* and the punishment of a *judge*. If your child were to steal, you would not think of punishing that child in the light in which the judge would do it, who would commit him to imprisonment for having broken the law. No, you *chasten* your child yourself, not so much to avenge the law as for the child's good, that he may not do this evil thing again.

So our heavenly Father chastens His people with the rod of the Covenant, but He never punishes them with the sword of vengeance. There is a difference between chastening and punishing. Punishing is from a *judge*—Christ has suffered all such punishment—so that no penal infliction can fall upon a soul that believes in Him. But we *may* have chastisement which comes to us as the result of a father's love, but not as the result of a judge's anger. We have felt such chastisement, and have reason to bless God for it. Our Lord Jesus says with regard to all legal penalty, "If you seek Me, I have borne it: let these go free."

Once more, this text will have its grandest fulfillment at the last. When the destroying angel shall come forth with his sword of fire to smite the sinner. When the gulf of Hell shall open and vomit forth its floods of flame. When the dread trumpet shall sound and shall make all ears to hear the voice of an avenging God, Christ shall stand forth in the front of all the blood-bought souls that came to trust under the shadow of the wings of His mercy, and He will say to Justice, "You have sought Me once, and you have found all you can ask of Me. Then let these go their way." And up the glorious steeps of the celestial hills the happy throng shall stream, singing

as they pass through the gates of pearl and tread the pavement of transparent gold, “Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His blood, unto Him be glory forever and ever!”

Then shall the great freeing of the slaves take place because Christ was bound! Then shall the deliverance of the captive come, because Christ slept in the prison house of the tomb. “If you seek Me, let these go their way.” I would to God that some here would perceive that the way of deliverance is for the Lord Jesus to be bound in their stead. Trust in Jesus, and it shall be so.

III. Thirdly, but very briefly, notice why our Lord exhibited this great care for His people. PONDER OVER HIS SAYING concerning them, “That the saying might be fulfilled which He spoke, Of them which you gave Me I have lost none.” Here is much of matter for thought at your leisure. Do you know that that text was a prayer? Now here it is made into a *promise*. What? Then is everything that Christ asks for guaranteed to His people, so that His prayer is God’s promise? It is so!

Notice next, that verbally understood, this expression, which is quoted from the seventeenth of John, could only relate to the *souls* of God’s people. But here it is taken as though it related to their *bodies*. From which I gather that we are never wrong in understanding promises in the largest possible sense. It is, I believe, a rule of law that if a man should get a privilege from the king, that privilege is to be understood in the widest sense, whereas a punishment, or penalty, is always to be understood in the *narrowest* sense.

In the olden times, when princes and kings used to grant monopolies, if a king had granted a monopoly upon all kinds of foreign fruits, if the words had so run, you may rest assured that the person obtaining that monopoly would have put everything down as foreign fruit that could possibly bear the name—and he would have been justified by the law for doing so. Now, when the great King gives a promise, you may encompass everything within its range which can possibly come under the promise! And we may be sure that the Lord will not run back from His word! God’s words are never to be taken with a rebate, or discount, but with such blessed interest as your faith is able to put to them! The grant of eternal life includes such providential protections and provisions as shall be necessary on the road to Heaven. The house is secured for the sake of the tenant, and the body because of the soul.

There is also one more remark I cannot help making, namely, that this text is not in the form of a promise at all. “Of them which you *gave* Me have I lost none.” It relates to the *past*—but here it is used as a reason why none should be lost of the present. From which I gather that as Jesus has done in the past so will He act in the future, and that all He ever *was* to His people He *will* be to them forever more. We may look upon every past act of Divine Grace as being a token and guarantee of future Grace, and we may gather from all our experience of the Lord’s goodness in the

days that are gone, that He will do yet again unto us as He has done, and still more abundantly until we see His face in Heaven!

The gracious words before us read as follows: “Of all them which You have given Me I have lost none.” Then some are *given*. There is an *elect* nation. Oh that we may be found in that happy number! Then Jesus keeps those who are given! They cannot keep themselves, but He can keep them and will. He so well preserves them that not so much as one is lost. I have sometimes thought I might imagine such a scene as this at the gates of Heaven when the great Shepherd comes to give His charge. “Here I am,” He says, “and the children which You have given Me.” “But are they everyone brought safely here?” “Yes,” says the great Shepherd, “of all whom You have given Me I have lost none.”

“But where is Peter? Did he not deny You to Your face in the hall? Did he not three times say, “I know Him not!” “Yes, but I made him go out and weep bitterly, and then I washed him in My precious blood, and here he is,” and Peter sings as sweetly as any! Then, perhaps, the question may be asked, “And where is such a one, the least of all the saints?” Brother, you feel yourself to be the weakest, the meanest, the most useless, but an enquiry will be made for you, and the answer will be, “He is here! Of all whom You have given Me I have lost none.”

Oh, happy sheep in the care of such a Shepherd! Oh happy, happy hearts that can rely upon such a Keeper! Dear Hearer, is Jesus yours? Are you depending upon Him? Say, have you cast yourself upon Him? Then do not fear concerning your last days! It must be well at the last, if it is well now. If you are now in Christ, He never did cast away any and He never will. Oh if you have but come to Him and are now depending on Him—

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

He suffered for you and therefore you shall go your way, and the Covenant shall be fulfilled. “Of those whom You have given Me I have lost none.”

I have thus used the text as briefly as I could. I shall want your patience a few minutes while I apply this text in a sort of SPIRITUAL SENSE. The first remark in this department of the subject is—many seek Jesus but do not know who He is. So that Christ says to them, “Whom do you seek?” Some here this morning are seeking rest, but they do not know that *Jesus* is the rest. You feel an aching void in your hearts. You are not happy. The theater does not give you the pleasure it once did. Somehow life has grown insipid to you. There is a still small voice within your soul like the voice of wailing—like Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted.

You are seeking you know not what. You have begun to read your Bible. You are eager to attend upon the preaching of the Gospel but you

do not know what it is you want. Ah well, it is a good thing to be a seeker. Though you cannot tell what it is you need, if you do but desire and lift up your voice to God sincerely and earnestly, He will be found of you. We now note the fact that those who seek Christ will find Him, but they find Him only because He reveals Himself to them. These men sought Christ to *kill* Him, yet He came and said, "I am He."

There was a woman, if you remember, at the well of Sychar, who sought Him for a very different purpose. She said, "I know that Messiah comes, which is called Christ. When He is come He will tell us all things." And Jesus said, "I that speak unto you am He." Whoever seeks Jesus, Jesus will show Himself to them! They came with lanterns and with torches, but they did not find Christ with lanterns and with torches. And you, too, may come, dear Friend, with a great many of your own inventions—a great many fancies and imaginings—but you will not find Him. How could you expect to find the sun with a lantern?

No. Christ must come and reveal Himself to you, and if you seek Him He will do so. Only continue to seek Him. Let not past disappointments make you leave off seeking. As long as you have breath continue in prayer. I charge you before the living God if you have sought in vain, do not let Satan make you give up! Ask that Christ would lead you in the right way, for if you did but know the right way you need not seek long, for He is here now. Jesus can forgive this morning! Before you leave that seat you shall have a full assurance of your interest in Him if you are led to understand the way of salvation!

That way is simply to trust Christ! Simply to believe that He can and will save you, and to trust yourself with Him. I will never believe that He will let a sincere soul go hungering and thirsting after Him, and let that soul die without Him! Though He may be pleased for a while to let that spirit wander, even in apparent blackness and darkness, yet He will at the last lift the veil from His blessed face, and ah, the sight of that face will well repay you for all the sighs and cries with which you sought Him! To hear Him say, "I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you," will so wake up the music of Heaven within your soul that you will think of the months of weariness and the nights of waiting as all too little, and more than enough repaid!

One thing more. When Jesus is found there is always much to be given up. "If you seek Me, let these go their way." There are always many things that you will have to let go if you have Christ, and this is very often the testing point. If a man keeps a public house which he opens on Sunday, in which cursing and swearing abounds. If he has encouraged all sorts of vice in order to increase his customers, can he continue in this and yet have Christ? Impossible! Now that man would like to go to Heaven, but if he would, he must let go of his evil occupation. Yonder is a woman who has tasted the pleasures of sin. She would gladly have a Savior, but if she will have a Savior she must let her sins go.

There is a young man over yonder, proud, vain, giddy. If he would have Christ, he must let all these evils go. Our sins must be abandoned or we cannot receive a Savior. Christ Jesus will *pardon* sin, but He will never dwell in the same heart with sin. Though you may have been as base as base could be, it can all be forgiven you now—but if you continue in it—there is no mercy for you. He that confesses his sin and forsakes it shall find mercy—but not the man who with hypocritical lip bewails it, and then with vicious heart plunges into it again. “If you seek Me, let these go.”

What? Can't you give them up? Silly companions, idle habits, foolish songs, pleasure-seeking, so-called—are these too dear to be renounced? Really, some of the things which give pleasure to men nowadays are so absurd, so empty, so devoid of true wit that I wonder the swine do not revolt against the moldy husks which they are fed with now-a-days! We cannot wonder that swine eat husks—it is natural they should and we would not deny them their native food. If I were a swine, I think I should like to have husks that have some sort of substance in them, but the world's pleasure grows more and more vapid and worthless—the pleasure of idiots rather than of men.

Can't you give these poor things up? Are they such dear attractions, such precious things, that you let Heaven go, and Christ go, sooner than let *them* go? No, I hope it will be a voice of power to you, and that you will say, “My Savior let them all go! What are they to me? I shall find ten thousand times more pleasure, and more profit, too, in following Christ than in following the best of them. So I let them go forever, and may they never entice me again.” Have you any self-righteousness remaining? Are you in your own conceit better than other people? Do you secretly trust in your works? Now if you want Christ, you must let all that go!

Christ will tread the winepress alone, and of the people, there must be none with Him. And if you seek to be saved by Christ it must not be by the works of the Law, but by Grace alone. Would to God that there might be a clean sweep made in some of your hearts, and that you would come to Jesus all empty-handed as you are, and say, “Yes, Master, Your precious blood, Your triumphant Resurrection, Your effectual plea—these are our hope and these our joy. We would serve You in life, and bless You in death. Yours we are, Son of God, and all that we have! Take us and keep us, and Yours be the praise. Amen.

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CHRIST BEFORE ANNAS

NO. 2820

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, MARCH 1, 1903.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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“Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus and bound Him and led Him away to Annas first: for he was father-in-law to Caiaphas, who was the high priest that same year...The high priest then asked Jesus of His disciples and of His doctrine. Jesus answered him, I spoke openly to the world; I taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, where the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why do you ask Me? Ask them who heard Me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said. And when He had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answer You the high priest so? Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why do you strike Me?”
John 18:12, 13, 19-23.

NOTE the words in verse 13—“and led him away to Annas first.” This man, Annas, has not become so infamous as Pontius Pilate because his name did not happen to be mentioned in the Creed, but, in some respects, he was even more guilty than the Roman governor. He was one of those who handed over our Lord to Pilate and he is included in the judgment, “he that delivered Me unto you has the greater sin.” It must not be forgotten that he was first in trying the Savior—let him have the full benefit of it—“*They led him away to Annas first.*”

Who was this man to whose palace the Lord Jesus was first conducted? He was a man who had been high priest actually for a time and had, for some 50 years, been regarded as high priest by the Jews, while members of his family, one after another, had in turns nominally held the office. The high-priesthood had been degraded from its permanence to become little more than an annual office and hence the Evangelist significantly says of Caiaphas that, “he was the high priest that same year.” But Annas would seem to have been secretly regarded by the Jews as the real high priest and respect to him in that capacity was the more easily offered because, according to Josephus, five of his sons and his son-in-

law, Caiaphas, had succeeded him in the sacred office. To him, then, it was due that the victim of the priests should be first taken. He shall have this mark of distinction—"they led him away to Annas first." The Sacrifice of God, the Lamb of His Passover, the Scapegoat of the Lord's Atonement shall be brought before the priest before He is slain.

The house of Annas was united to that of Caiaphas and it was proposed to detain the prisoner there till the Sanhedrin could be hastily convened for His trial. If He should be brought into the palace of Annas, the old man would be gratified by a sight of Jesus and by conducting a preliminary examination, acting as deputy for his son-in-law. Without leaving his own house, he could thus indulge his malice and have a finger in the business. Priestly hate is always deep and unrelenting. Today none are such enemies of Christ's holy Gospel as those who delight in priestcraft—and it is not without prophetic meaning that our Lord must be led as a prisoner, first to a priest's house—"they led him away to Annas first." Not in the soldiers' barracks, nor in the governor's hall, but in the high priest's palace must Jesus meet with His first captivity! There it is that Christ in bonds seems not altogether out of place—

**"See how the patient Jesus stands,
Insulted in His lowest case!
Sinners have bound the Almighty hands,
And spit in their Creator's face."**

Annas bore a very promising name, for it signifies *clement* or *merciful*, yet he was the man to begin the work of ensnaring the Lord Jesus in His speech, if He could be ensnared. He examined Him first in a semi-private manner, that, by cunning questions, he might extract from Him some ground of accusation. Under pretence of mercy, he turned inquisitor and put his Victim to the question. This priest, whose name was clemency, showed the usual tender mercies of the wicked, which are proverbially cruel. When Jesus is to be ill-treated by His servants, there is usually a pretence of pity and compassion. Persecutors are grieved to feel forced to be harsh—their tender spirits are wounded by being compelled to say a word against the Lord's people! Gladly would they love them if they would not be so obstinate! With sweet language they inflict bitter wounds—their words are softer than butter—but inwardly they are drawn swords.

If I read aright the character of this man, Annas, he was one of the Savior's bitterest enemies. He was a Sadducee. Is not this the "liberal" side? Do we not reckon Pharisees to be the straitest sect of the Jews? Why he should have been so bitter against the Savior is pretty clear, since, if Pharisees, in their multiplication of ceremonies and self-righteousness, hate the Christ, so also do the Sadducees in their unbelief and rejection of the great Truths of Revelation. Here, Ritualism and Rationalism go hand in hand and the free-thinker, with all his profession of liberality, usually displays none of it toward the followers of the Truth of

God. The Broad Church is usually narrow enough when the Doctrine of the Cross is under discussion! Whether this Sadducee had an interest in the sales that were effected in the temple and whether, as some suppose, he was greatly irritated and touched in a very tender point, namely, in his pocket, when Jesus overthrew the tables of the money-changers and the seats of them that sold doves, I cannot tell. But, certainly, for some reason or other, Annas was among the first of our Lord's persecutors, not only in order of time, but also in point of malice. The wealthy latitudinarian has a fierce enmity to the Gospel of Christ Jesus and will be found second to none in hunting down the adherents of Christ.

Did the military tribune and his cohort stop at the house of Annas because he had been at the bottom of the business and Pilate had ordered them, for the time, to do the will of the high priest and his father-in-law? Was this long-headed old gentleman the counselor of the conspirators? Did the force of character which kept him to the front for half a century, make him a leader at this juncture? Is it possible that they called at the house of Annas to hand over their Victim that Judas might receive the blood money? At all events we hear no more of the traitor as being in the company of those who had seized upon his Lord.

At any rate, the Lord is led to Annas, *first*, and we feel sure that there was a motive for that act. Annas, in some sense, had a priority in the peerage of enmity to Jesus—he was malignant, cruel and unscrupulous enough to be premier in the ministry of persecutors. In all matters, there are first, as well as last, and this man leads the van among the unjust judges of our Lord. He was a favorite of the first and most detestable of the Herods and a friend of Pilate, the governor, and so, a fit ringleader in procuring the judicial murder of the Innocent. All hope of justice was gone when the Holy One and the Just was delivered into those cruel and unrighteous hands! He was as determined as he was cold-blooded—and a lamb might as well look for favor from a wolf as Jesus expect candor from the old deputy high priest. For many a long years he had held his own by flattering Herod, the Roman and the Jew—and he set about the work of mastering the Nazarene with cool determination and deep subtlety, hoping to pave the way for the men of the Sanhedrin who were even then being mustered to do the deed of blood on which their hearts were set.

In the house of this man, then, who is very properly called the high priest, having quite as good a right to the title as Caiaphas had, we see these two things. First, we see *our Lord under examination*. And, secondly, we see *our Lord wrongfully struck*.

I. First, let us, tenderly, lovingly, adoringly, look at OUR DIVINE MASTER UNDER EXAMINATION.

My first remark is that *this examination was informal and extrajudicial*. Jesus was not yet accused of anything, so far. No judge had taken his place upon the judgment seat, neither were any witnesses called to give evidence against the Prisoner. It was a sort of private examination, held with the view of extorting something from the Captive which might afterwards be used against Him. You know how strongly and how properly our law forbids anything of the kind and, though it may not have been contrary to Jewish law, it was certainly contrary to the eternal laws of right and wrong! A prisoner should not thus be questioned with the object of entangling him in his speech and making him incriminate himself. If there is no charge formulated against him, let him go his way. If the entries on the charge sheet are not completed, let him be remanded, but let him not be set before one of his most cruel foes to be questioned to his own detriment!

This is what was done in our Savior's case when He was brought before Annas. And I think that I know many who treat Him, at this time, quite as badly. They ask questions about Him and make enquiries concerning Him, but they do not do it honestly and sincerely, or according to the rules of justice. You know how captious unbelievers often are, how they pick up any misquoted text, or half a text torn from its context, and say that they are enquiring about Christ, when they are not doing it either judicially or as they would wish to be questioned were they themselves under examination! I fear that the bulk of those who quibble at the faith of Christ, do it not as honest men, nor as they would wish to have their own characters investigated. The last book which some of them think of reading is the New Testament—and the last thing that they try to understand is Christ's true Character. And one of the last things that they will ever listen to is a full and fair statement of what His Gospel really is. Still, to this day, the representatives of Annas are here and there, and almost everywhere, questioning the followers of Christ with the design of finding out something to jeer at, something which may be hawked about as a discrepancy, or held up as obsolete and inconsistent with the spirit of this wonderful century of which I hear so often that I am utterly sick of it—and long for the time when the 19th Century shall go down to its ignoble grave!

Next, *this questioning of Christ was one-sided*. "The high priest then asked Jesus of His disciples and of His doctrine." Why did he not ask Him about Himself—who and what He was—and enquire especially concerning His miracles and His whole course of life? Why did not Annas enquire, "Did You raise the dead? Did You open blind eyes? Did You heal the lepers? Did You go about doing good?" Oh, no, there were no questions about any such things—they were all passed over as of no importance!

The questions began with the weakest point of all, or that which men have often regarded as the weakest—he “asked Jesus of His disciples.” Can a leader help the follies and weaknesses of his followers? I suppose Annas put his question thus, “Where are Your disciples?” “Ah, there was Peter down there in the hall, but Christ could not call him up to witness for Him. John was probably somewhere in the background, but the rest had forsaken their Lord and fled. Annas, no doubt asked, “Who are these disciples of Yours? Where did You pick them up?” I dare say he knew that they were men of Galilee, mostly plain fishermen, and he meant to cast a slur upon Christ on that account. If he had known more about those disciples, he might have put a great many questions which would have reflected but little honor upon the religion of Jesus.

This is just as men do now—they ask concerning Christ’s disciples. I do not deny that it is quite fair to enquire what is the influence of Christianity upon the men who believe it, but, oftentimes, that one point is thrust so prominently into the front that the wonders which Christ, Himself, worked, are thrown into the background—and the investigation thus becomes one-sided. We are quite willing that Christ, Himself, and His work—all that has been, all that is to be, all His designs and purposes—should be examined. But, for the most part, men search for that which they think to be the weakest point of assault and they say, “Look at So-and-So, one of Christ’s disciples. And look at So-and-So, one of His ministers! See what divisions there are in the churches,” and so forth. Yes, but surely, if Christ is examined at all, He deserves to have a full and fair examination—it should not be upon only one point. Blessed be His name, it matters not upon what point He is examined! He always has His answer ready, and a glorious one it is! If men were really willing to know the Truth of God, they would take an all-round view of Him and look at Him from this point and from that—and then judge Him.

Further, *this examination* was very disorderly, for the high priest asked Christ “of His disciples and of His doctrine.” Now, logically, the enquiry should have been, first, concerning His doctrine and then with respect to His disciples—first as to His teaching and then as to the people influenced by it. But men like Annas put their questions anyway—upside down, the first last and the last first—so that they may secure some accusation against Christ. Now, if any man will sit down quietly and really study the life, Character and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth, we shall be delighted to hear what he has to say about it, but let him study it in due order. Let him not pick out this, and leave out that, and put everything out of gear, so as to make a monster of Him. Let Him be looked at after the same manner as one would look at any other religious teacher, or as we might examine the character of any man brought before a court of law. I ask those, if there are any such now present, who have spoken

harshly of our blessed Lord and Master, to do themselves the justice and to do Christ the justice, to adopt another course and to examine Him as they would wish to be examined themselves, if their character and their designs were called in question.

Annas did not so, for *his examination of Christ was concerning His disciples and His doctrine*. With regard to His disciples, our Master said nothing. He had been saying much about them to His Father and, in His almighty love and wisdom, He could have said much, then and there, concerning His disciples if He had chosen to do so, but He did not and therein He proved His wisdom. All through the Scriptures we find comparatively little said concerning God's people. The record is mostly of their faults and their failings. The reason for that is that this is not the day of their manifestation. That day comes on apace and, "when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father." Annas thought that Christ's followers were a set of fanatics—ignorant, unskilled, worthless people—the lower orders. The catacombs tell us, as we read the rude inscriptions there, how few of those godly folk, of whom the world was not worthy, were men of education—the most of them were evidently plain, humble, common people. Our Lord Jesus Christ has no great reverence for earthly rank or grandeur—He loves the man, but cares little for the garb he wears—and of the poorest saints it is true that "He is not ashamed to call them brethren."

It is a mercy for us, who are on Christ's side, and who have been despised in consequence, that, in the Resurrection, there will also be a resurrection of reputations as well as of bodies. There will be a bestowal of honor that has been denied here and of credit that has been refused on earth. God has said it, so it must be true, "Light is sown for the righteous," and their glad harvest time shall surely come! And then the glory will forever blot out the shame and derision which may have been poured upon the faithful for the sake of Jesus Christ their Lord and Master. As yet, we will not ask Him concerning His disciples, but that is the point that the adversary harps upon. Therefore, O you disciples of Jesus, watch and pray, and seek to be like your Master! Pray to be kept from the evil which is in the world and, as for the rest, if men despise you, count that as part of the bargain upon which you have entered—a bargain which shall, in due season, fill you with eternal bliss!

Annas also asked Christ concerning His doctrine—what it was that He taught those who listened to Him. I will not go into that matter, for I want to speak at some length upon *the answer which Christ gave to Annas*. He first protested that it was not fair for Him to be thus questioned in private as to what He had said in public. The proper thing was to ask those who had heard Him, "for," He said, "I spoke openly to the world. I

always taught in the synagogue, and in the temple.’ I chose the most public places for My teaching. I had no hole-and-corner gatherings, no little conventicle in which I urged My followers to sedition. No, ‘I spoke openly.’ The heavens heard Me. On the side of the hills, I proclaimed My message. By the seashore, I spoke to all who gathered around Me. Multitudes were often present at My services—they know what I said, and they could bear witness concerning it if they were asked to do so.”

There was great openness about Christ. There was an utter absence of anything like the Jesuitical plan of saying one thing and meaning another, or using expressions that had double meaning in them. It is true that our Lord did not explain to the great mass of the people all that He said to them, for they were so stupid that they would not receive it. But, at the same time, there was nothing that His hearers really needed to know that He concealed from them. He carried His heart where all might read it and even in His common teaching to the multitude, there was, if they had but had eyes to see it, all that He taught to His disciples in the most private place. There was no wish, on His part, to keep back any Truth of God that ought to be made known to those who gathered to hear Him.

I have heard it said that there are certain Truths in God’s Word which it is better for us not to preach. It is admitted that they are true, but it is alleged that they are not edifying. I will not agree to any such plan! This is just going back to old Rome’s method. Whatever it has seemed good to God’s wisdom to reveal, it is wise for God’s servants to proclaim. Who are we that we are to judge between this Truth of God and that and to say that this we are to preach, and that we are to withhold? This system would make us to be, after all, the judges of what Christ’s Gospel is to be! It must not be so among us, Beloved—that would be assuming a responsibility which we are quite unable to bear. I believe that it is because the Doctrines of Grace have been too much kept from the pulpit, that the pews are getting so empty. Leave the Doctrines of Grace out of the preaching and you have left the marrow and fatness out of it! What is there to make the people rush to your houses of prayer and crowd them, if there is no preaching of the Election of Grace—no declaration of Particular Redemption and Effectual Calling, no proclamation of the blessed Final Perseverance of the Saints? If you leave these glorious Truths out of your preaching, you have put on the table nothing but the horseradish and the parsley—the roast is conspicuous by its absence!

Some people say that these things are to be talked of among the saints, but must not be preached to sinners. Oh, say not so! Every Doctrine of God’s Word is good! Every Truth in the Bible is precious! The omission of any one part of it, willfully, and with design, may so impair the whole of our testimony that, instead of being like Hermon, “wet with dew,” our ministry will be like the accursed Gilboa, upon which no dew

descended. Whatever the Lord has taught you by His Spirit, my Brother, tell to others! According as you have opportunity, reveal to them what God has revealed to you. Remember how Christ Himself charged His disciples, "What I tell you in darkness, that speak in light; what you hear in the ear, that preach upon the housetops." And, today, the sublime and majestic Truths of God which cluster around the Sovereignty of God are as much to be proclaimed as the softer, most tender and apparently more winsome words which tell of infinite mercy to the chief of sinners! *All truths are to be preached in due proportion*—there is a time for this, and a time for that—and none must be omitted. There is a particular stone which is to be the key of the arch, and another which is to go on this side, another lower down and yet another still lower down—and the omitting of any one stone, because it does not happen to be of what we reckon to the orthodox shape for usefulness, may spoil the whole bridge and it may come down with a crash! Oh, that we may so build in our teaching that our building will last throughout eternity! At the end of our ministry, may we be able to say, "I have kept back nothing; all that Christ taught me, I have taught to others and so I have made full proof of my ministry." Christ was able to appeal to those who had heard Him and who could tell what His testimony had been. May God give us Grace to imitate Him in this respect!

Our blessed Lord answered Annas by referring him to His public life and teaching. There was no need for any other defense. We cannot imagine anything more convincing. No eloquence of speech or forcibleness of argument could have completely put the wily adversary out of the field. The inquisitor, himself, was so ashamed and, for the moment, so confounded, that a zealous official struck Jesus with his open hand. The innocent, unabashed face of the persecuted Nazarene was thus slapped because His simple defense had silenced His cruel opponent! What a wonderful answer it was! How it commends His whole Character to us and makes Him seem to be even more truly majestic than ever!

I am sure there is not one of us who would dare to say of our lives, at least not so unreservedly, what Jesus could truly say of His. Our Lord's life was emphatically lived among men. He was no recluse. From early morning to the last thing at night, He was associated with men and, therefore, all that He did was done before the eyes of men. That "fierce light that beats about a throne" always beat about Him. He was constantly being watched—every word that He uttered was remembered. Again and again, His enemies endeavored to catch Him in His speech. He could scarcely be allowed a moment's leisure when He might relax, like one at his own fireside. He was always before the Argus-eyes of the ungodly world who would see faults where there were none, and who, if

there had been the least speck of blame, would have magnified it and published it to the ends of the earth!

Moreover, our Lord was by no means a silent Man. He spoke and spoke often. Witness the Books that we have by way of record of that quiet life of His—and the things that He said and did were far more than those that are recorded, for John says, “And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written, everyone, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.” Yet there was never any act or word of Christ’s in which friend or foe could find a single speck of sin at all. He could even challenge Satan, himself, to find a flaw in His life—“The prince of this world comes, and has nothing on Me.”

His speech, too, was not only very frequent, but it was also very plain. He spoke so simply that even little children could understand Him. I should think there was never one person in His audience who could truthfully say that he could not comprehend what the Preacher meant. And yet, though they could all tell what His meaning was, they could not honestly find fault with that meaning.

Another thing that is worthy of observation is that He spoke frequently under great provocation. Yet He never lost His temper, nor spoke unadvisedly with His lips. You and I know that if we ever lose our temper, we are apt to say all manner of unwise, foolish and wicked words—but our blessed Savior never sinned in that way, however great was the provocation to which He was subjected. He was also often misrepresented and our tendency is, when men speak falsely of us, to go beyond the bounds of truth or prudence in replying to them. Our Lord Jesus never did that. The pendulum of the great clock of His wonderful life never swung too far either one way or the other. You have not to correct any one saying of the Savior by what He said at some other time—all His utterances are the absolute Truth of God, whether taken separately, or taken together. Even the false witnesses who were bribed to bring accusations against Him, altogether failed to find anything that could be laid to His charge!

It must not be forgotten, also, that our blessed Master frequently spoke in the midst of turmoil. He did not always have such a quiet, orderly assembly as we have when we gather for public worship—He had to speak, often, amidst the clamor of the angry mob and the opposition and even the maledictions of those who hated Him. Yet, even under these trying circumstances, He spoke so that He could fearlessly challenge them all to find fault with anything that He had said in their hearing. Our Lord had spoken to all sorts of characters—bad, good and indifferent—and there was especially one who betrayed Him, who had heard many of His most secret speeches. Judas had been with Him in His retirement and had listened to His words when only the favored few had been present,

yet there was no single sentence or syllable that even he could plead in extenuation of his great crime in betraying his Lord.

II. I have spoken at such length upon this first part of my subject that I have very little time left for the second portion, namely, OUR LORD JESUS WRONGFULLY STRUCK—“When He had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by, struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answer You the high priest so?”

His answer was a very simple one and a very proper one in all respects, yet, at the same time, it must have been a very stinging one if Annas was the kind of man that I think he was, for our Savior seemed to say, (you may read it between the lines), “I am not plotting in secret against another man’s life. I have not talked with another man with the object of entangling him in his speech. I have not been a conspirator, but I have spoken publicly in the synagogues and taught in the temple, in the very center of the place of concourse—but in secret I have said nothing.” This must have been a very sharp rebuke to Annas, if any conscience was left in the wretched man! So one of the lackeys that stood around the hierarch struck Christ and said, “Answer You the high priest so?”

Now, in the first instance, Christ met with the opposition of a so-called enquiry. But here He had the vulgar opposition of persecution. Alas, there are still many who never enquire about Christ at all, but they decide against Him and then they begin to persecute wife, child, friend, neighbor, or whoever it may be that is on Christ’s side! And, often, they strike him as this officer struck our Lord. This was a most cowardly act, for Christ was bound and helpless. Yet we have the same sort of conduct in our own day. It does seem to me a wretched thing that if some people choose to go through the streets singing hymns, they are pelted with stones and mud while their own hands are bound. They cannot turn round and fight their assailants, for their Christianity has tied their hands—and the cruel mobs know it. If these men want to fight, why do they not find some fellows like themselves, walking through the streets, and attack them and then see what will come of it? They are afraid to do that, for, to this day, persecution is always against men whose hands are bound. If our religion taught us to answer sharply and to give cuff for cuff, and kick for kick, it would be all fair—but when we are commanded not to resist evil and our very faithfulness to Christ prevents our replying to the foul language that is used against us, it is brutally cruel that we should be thus persecuted. Read all history through and see whether some have not degraded themselves utterly beneath contempt by burning men who would not have touched a hair of their heads—and putting to death poor men and women who could not have done them any injury and who never wished to do so. That is the story of Christ and His fol-

lowers all the way through—first, to be questioned by people who do not want to know the Truth and, next, to be persecuted by people who really have not anything to say against them.

To the man who thus wrongfully struck Him, our Savior said, “If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why do you strike Me?” We also may say to those who wantonly strike Christ’s followers. “Why do you do it? Has Christianity done any harm to manhood in general, or to you in particular?” What has been the force that has broken the power of tyrants? At the bottom, in many countries, it has been the Word of God that has made men free. In our own times, what ended the slave trade and set the Negro free? What is it that, today, is the most potent force against the drunkenness of our land? Surely, nothing but the Gospel of Jesus Christ! Have we, as Christians, any aim, in all the world, of which anyone can accuse us? Are we doing mischief to our fellow men? Do we teach drunkenness, or lust, or oppression? Do you hear from us anything about robbing you of your birthright, or injuring you in any way whatever? No, you know that it is not so! Our war is for peace. Every blow that we strike is against blows. If we have to denounce anything, we do most of all denounce denunciation—and if we are bitter at all, most of all are we bitter against bitterness, envy, malice and all uncharitableness!

Oh, that we could always give to our persecutors such an answer as our blessed Master gave to the officer who struck Him, “If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why do you strike me?” There are times when we dare not say that, but we would rather say, “If I have spoken evil, do not remember it, do not bring it to my recollection. If I have spoken evil, try to forget it, or, at least, if you remember it, repeat it not to another, for I am afraid that I may have said much that might stain my profession and grieve my God.” I think that if we had our choice as to whether we would be slapped on the face, or have our own words brought up as witnesses against us, we would, each one, say, “If I have spoken evil, do not bear witness of the evil, but much rather slap me than bear witness against me.”

Yet it is not always so. There are times when, in conscious integrity, or concerning certain words or acts of ours, we can challenge any man to find fault with us. But, taking the whole range of our lives, in public and in private, most of us would be loath to ask for such a test as that. When our adversaries persecute us, we might say to them, “Ah, if you really knew all that we have been, you would not so much persecute us for our goodness, but punish us for our badness.” When I have been slandered, I have often said to myself, “Ah, they have spoken a lie against me, but if they had known me better, they might have said quite as bad a thing as that and yet have only spoken what was true.” There is not one man liv-

ing, who is in his right mind, who would like to have all his thoughts written down, or all his words and acts recorded. We have often wished that half our words could be blotted out with our tears—and then the other half would have to be washed with that precious blood of Jesus before we could, ourselves, endure it.

Now, I think that all this of which I have been speaking to you, ought very much to endear the Master to us and it will do so if we remember and believe that God “has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” Here is a Lamb that is fit for sacrifice. The high priest and all his officers may examine it as much as they please—they will find that it is perfect. There is not a blemish in it. There is no redundancy and there is no omission. There is neither speck nor spot of sin in Christ—we cannot find any fault in Him. Whether we look at Him within or without, in His youth, or in His childhood, or in His Manhood—in His life or in His death—in His speech or in His silence, in His feelings, or in His thoughts, or in His acts—He is good, and only good—and blessed be His holy name forever and ever! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—289, 274, 268.

[In closing his discourse, Mr. Spurgeon intimated that he had intended also to speak, in that sermon, upon Annas sending Christ bound to Caiaphas, but that he had been obliged, through lack of time, and the importance of that topic, to leave it to be dealt with in another discourse. This will be the one to be published for reading on Lord’s-Day, March 15th, and will be entitled, “*Christ in Bonds*.”—Sermon #2822, Volume 49—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

A SERMON FOR A WINTER'S EVENING NO. 3181

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 20, 1910.

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

***“And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals, for it was cold: and they warmed themselves: and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself.”
John 18:18.***

WE note from this incident that *it was a cold night in which our Redeemer agonized in the Garden of Gethsemane.* [See Sermon #2767, Volume 48—JESUS IN GETHSEMANE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] A cold night and yet He sweat! A cold night and yet there fell from Him, not the sweat of a man who earns the staff of life, but the sweat of One who was earning life, itself. “His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” No natural heat of the sun, or of a sultry evening caused this! The heat within His soul distilled those sacred drops! His heart’s throbs were so mighty that it seemed to empty itself and His life-floods rushed with such awful force that the veins, like overfilled rivers, burst their banks and covered His blessed Person with gory drops! On such a wintry night as this, while you wrap your garments about you, I would ask you to remember the olive garden and the lone Sufferer, all unsheltered, entering into the dread anguish by which He won our souls from death and Hell! The sharp frost may be a useful monitor to us if it makes us think of Him and remember that dark, that doleful night when all the powers of evil met and, even unto blood, He strove with them for our sakes!

Now we will take you away from the Garden to the high priest’s hall where the incident occurred which is regarded in the text—and we will make as good a use as we can of it. I suppose it was a large dark hall in which the soldiers, the priests and the rabble were gathered together. There may have been a few lamps lighting up the far end where Christ was with His judge and His accusers. But the greater part of the hall would have no other light than the glare of the fire which had been kindled—a charcoal fire, around which the band of men who had seized Christ and the servants of the high priest gathered to keep themselves warm. We are going to make five observations upon that and upon the fact that Peter was among those who warmed themselves at that fire.

I. The first observation is this. **THIS IS A TYPICAL INCIDENT AS TO THE MOST OF MEN.**

Jesus Christ was being tried. Some were very busy about it, being full of malice and burning with rage. But a great many more were indifferent—and in the Presence of a rejected and maltreated Savior were carelessly warming their hands. It was not a matter that interested them.

They did not care whether He escaped or was condemned—it was very cold and so they warmed their hands. Now, in a land like this, where Jesus Christ is preached, it is a sad circumstance that there are individuals who oppose Him and His Gospel. There is the infidel who denies the Gospel altogether. There is the superstitious man who sets up another way of salvation. And there is the persecutor who rages at Christ and His people. Yet these active enemies are comparatively few—the great bulk of those who hear the Gospel are not open opponents—but like Gallio, care for none of these things. They know that there is a Christ and they have some idea of His salvation, but it does not interest them, or awaken any sympathy in their minds. “What shall we eat and what shall we drink?”—these are the great questions of their catechism! But as to who this glorious Sufferer is and why He died, and what are the blessings which He bought with His precious blood—none of these things move them—and they forget, neglect, or despise the great salvation and the Savior, too! They are full of the business of warming their hands! The death of Jesus may be important to other people. It may concern ministers, clergymen and professors, but it is nothing at all to them. They have other matters to attend to and their own comfort is their main concern. Around that charcoal fire the servants of the high priest warmed their hands and so, in their temporal comforts, or in murmuring at the lack of them, the most of men spend their lives. To them it is nothing that Jesus should die! A rise in their wages, a fall in provisions, or a change in the money market is far more important to them!

If you think of it, this is a very terrible thing. Christ came into the world to save men, yet men do not think it worth their while to turn their gaze upon Him! He takes their nature, but His Incarnation does not interest them. He dies that men may not perish—and men care not one whit for His great love! One goes away to his farm and another to his merchandise. One has bought a yoke of oxen and goes to test them. Another has married a wife and, therefore, he cannot come. They are eager for the bread which perishes, but they make light of the meat which endures the everlasting life! They think much of this world, but nothing of the world to come. Jesus is over yonder at His trial and they are warming their hands!

I pray you think this over a few minutes, any of you who have been indifferent to the great realities of redemption, and see what it is and who it is that you thus treat with discourtesy. It is the Son of God, the Redeemer of men, whom you neglect! Can you imitate those who rattled the dice-box at the foot of the Cross, in utter hardness of heart, though Christ's blood was falling upon them as they cast lots for His clothes? Can you trifle in the Presence of a dying Savior? *Can you*, did I say? Alas, some have done so for thirty, forty, fifty and even 60 years! And unless the almighty Grace of God prevents, they will continue to trifle, still—to sport, play and seek their own welfare in the Presence of the bleeding Son of God, within earshot of His dying groans!

Look, He dies and they place His body in the sepulcher! But on the third day, according to His promise, He rises again from the dead! That risen Savior is surrounded by the glory of unspeakably precious promis-

es, for He has risen for the justification of His people and as the first fruits of them that slept—the great pledge that all those who sleep in Him shall rise as He has risen! An august mystery—a mystery which brought angels out of Heaven, the one to sit at the head and the other at the feet, where His body had lain! And yet men eat, drink, sleep and wake as if no risen Jesus had been here! In the Presence of the risen Christ many only warm their hands, for it is cold. The animal has mastered the mental. The body, which is the baser part of man, and cleaves to the dust, has subdued the soul, and so the man allows himself to trifle in the Presence of Jesus risen from the dead!

Nor is this all, for He that rose from the dead ascended after 40 days! A cloud received Him out of the sight of His disciples and He rose into Glory and now He sits at the right hand of the Father, reigning there, head over all principalities and powers—King of kings and Lord of lords! Men do not generally trifle in the presence of a king. If they have petitions to present, they put on an air of reverence. In the Presence of the Royal Intercessor who pleads for us day and night, one would think there would be some interest excited! But no, the multitude warm their hands and think nothing of Him. In His Presence, they forget His redeeming love, neglect His great salvation and remain without God and without Christ. This is terrible! As I see the worldling merely caring for his personal comfort while Christ is in Glory, I marvel, first, at the insolence of the sinner and, secondly, at the Infinite Patience of the Savior!

The Lord Jesus is to come a second time to judge the earth in righteousness. When He shall appear, no man knows, but come He will—and everyone of us must stand before Him. If we are alive and remain, we shall join in that great throng. And if we fall asleep before His coming, we shall rise from the dead at the sound of the trumpet which proclaims His Advent—and shall all be judged of the Most High. The hour of His appearing is not revealed in order that we may always stand on tiptoe, expecting it to be today, or tomorrow, for He has said, "Behold, I come quickly." Oh, how can you still be money-grubbing, pleasure-seeking, enjoying yourselves, living only for this world, living to get a competence, living to be what is called, "respectable," and to feed yourselves like the beasts of the field? Have you no thoughts for the Judge and the day of His coming? Shall our immortal spirits spend all their energies on these trifling temporary things in prospect of that great tremendous Day when Christ with clouds shall come? Surely the solemnities of judgment should constrain us to think of something nobler than earth and time!

There was no harm in their warming their hands, neither is there any harm in our attending to the things of this life. Indeed, they ought to be seen to, and seen to with care—but there is something higher, something nobler and loftier for us to do than to serve ourselves! And as it was horrible that we should be so callous in the presence of the suffering Jews, so is the widespread indifference of sinners a terrible thing! I would to God that the unthinking portion of those who hear the Gospel might be startled out of their groveling care for the things of this life and each one of them be led to ask, "What have I to do with this Jesus of Nazareth? Is

His blood sprinkled upon me? Has He cleansed me from my sin? May I hope for salvation through Him?" Oh, consider these things and give an answer to your consciences! And God do so with you as you shall think of Christ, your Lord.

II. Secondly, we remark that FOR A DISCIPLE TO MAKE HIS OWN COMFORT THE CHIEF THING IN THE PRESENCE OF HIS SUFFERING MASTER IS MOST INCONSISTENT.

One does not wonder at the high priest's servants making a fire of coals, for it was cold—and one is not surprised at their standing to warm their hands, for they knew but little, comparatively, of Christ. They had never tasted of His love, they had never seen His miracles, they had not been asked to watch with Him in the Garden of Gethsemane, they had never heard Him say, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona, for flesh and blood has not revealed it unto you." The marvel is that *Peter* should stand there among them warming his hands! Why did he do so? Not because he was indifferent to his Master. Let us do him justice—it is plain that he was in a dreadful state of mind that night. He was so attached to his Master that he followed Him up to the door of the hall and stopped there till John came out and admitted him. He went up to the fire because he thought he must act as others did, so as to escape suspicion. And as they warmed their hands, he did the same, so as to appear as one of them. It so happened, however, that the light of the fire shone upon his face and lit up his countenance, so that one said, "You are one of His disciples." Then, to get away from observation, we find Peter passing into another part of the hall, where, I suppose, it was darker. The people were talking and Peter must talk, for it was his weakness to do so, and, moreover, he might have been suspected again had he been silent. Then another remarked, "You also are of Galilee, for your speech betrays you." He was discovered, again, and so made for the door, but was known there, also. He was all in a tremble. He did love his Master, weak as his faith was and, therefore, he could not leave Him—and yet he was afraid to confess Him. He was worried and troubled, tossed to and fro between a desire to rush forward and do some rash thing for his Lord—and a fear for his own life! He went to the fire because nobody would think that a follower of Jesus could warm his hands while his Master was being despitely entreated.

You see the gist of my observation, that for a disciple of Christ to make his own ease and comfort the main thing is most palpably inconsistent with the Christian character! Ah, dear Brothers and Sisters, our Lord had not where to lay His head. Though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor—can it be consistent for the Christian to make the getting of money the main business of life? Is such a disciple like his Master? The Master gives up everything—shall the disciple labor to aggrandize himself?

Some warm their hands, not at the fire of wealth so much as at the fire of honor. They want approbation, respect, esteem—and they will do anything to gain it. Conscience is violated and principle is forgotten to gain the approbation of their fellow men. Whatever happens, they must be respected and admired. Is this as it should be? Are they really dis-

ciples of the Nazarene? Is that their Master, despised and rejected, spit upon and jeered? Is He their Lord who made Himself of no reputation? If so, how can they court the smiles of men and sacrifice the Truth of God to popularity? What can be more inconsistent than the disciple warming his hands and the Master enduring the contradiction of sinners against Himself? Dear Brothers and Sisters, every time our cheek crimson with shame because of the taunts of the wicked and we lower our colors because of the jeers of the godless, we are guilty at heart of the meanness of seeking to fare better than our Lord! Every time we check a testimony because it would involve us in censure, every time we stay from a labor because we covet ease, every time we are impatient at the suffering which the Cross involves, every time we “make provision for the flesh, to obey the lusts thereof,” every time we seek ease where He toiled, honor where He was put to shame and luxury where He endured an ignominious death—we are like Peter among the ribald throng—warming our hands at the fire while our Lord is buffeted and shamefully entreated! May the Holy Spirit keep us from this!

III. We now come to our third observation. IT IS MUCH BETTER TO BE COLD THAN TO WARM OURSELVES WHERE WE ARE EXPOSED TO TEMPTATION.

Peter, if he had known it, was better off outside the door than in the hall. I suppose he had forgotten the Master's warnings, for if he had thought of them, he would have said to himself, “Peter, you had better go home. Did not Jesus, in fact, tell you to go home when He said to those who came to seize Him, ‘If you seek Me, let these go their way?’” It would seem to have been the path of humble obedience to have gone his way and not to have pressed into the hall. Though no doubt the motives which led both Peter and John into the high priest's house were commendable, Peter's position among the soldiers and hangers-on around the fire was extremely full of peril and offered no corresponding advantages. Did he not know that “evil communications corrupt good manners”? Did he not know that the men who had taken his Lord prisoner were not fit associates for him? Should he not have felt that though he might have his hands warmed, he would be likely to get his heart blackened by mixing with such company?

Brothers and Sisters, I like to warm my hands, but if I cannot warm them without burning them, I would rather keep them cold! Many things are in a measure desirable, but if you cannot obtain them without exposing yourself to the smut of sin, you had better leave them alone. I have known professors far too anxious to mix with what is called, “good society.” Now, for the most part, good society, as things are, nowadays, is very bad society for a Christian. The best society in the world for me, I know, is to associate with my Brothers and Sisters in Christ. Title, rank and wealth are a poor compensation for the lack of true religion! Yet some professors covet the honors of the ungodly world and they say, “It is not so much for ourselves—we are advanced in years—but we want to bring the girls out, and our young men, you know, our sons must have some society.” Yes, and for the sake of this dangerous luxury our churches are

deprived of successors to godly fathers! Instead of seeing the younger members of Christian households drafted into our ranks, we have continually to begin again with new converts from the outer world. Full often professors who God prospers in this world so train their children that they forsake the spiritual worship of God and turn their backs on principles for which their forefathers dared to bleed and die! I charge you, Brothers and Sisters, remember that if you cannot be admitted into "society" without concealing your principles, you are far better off without society! Has not our Lord called us to go outside the camp? Are we not warned against being conformed to this world? Deny yourselves the warm place around society's charcoal fire, for its sulfurous vapor will do you more harm than the cold!

Some whom I have known have ventured very far upon very dangerous ground to win the affection of a chosen object. There is no wiser precept in Holy Scripture than that which commands Christians to marry "only in the Lord." It never can conduce to take comfort of any Christian man or woman to be unequally yoked together with an unbeliever—you had far better remain in the cold of your bachelor or spinster life than warm your hands at the fire of unhallowed marriage!

Not a few are tempted by the cleverness of certain literature to defile their minds with skeptical and even blasphemous writings. Such-and-such a "Quarterly" or, "Fortnightly," is so very clever that you are regarded as a Philistine and an ignoramus if you do not read it! Yet if you do read it, you are never the better, but very much the worse for your pains—why, then, yield to its more than doubtful influence? Do you pray the better for such reading? Have you more faith in God after perusing such works? No, but doubts which would not otherwise have occurred to you are sown in your mind, difficulties which only exist in ungodly brains are conjured up—and the time which ought to have been spent in devotion and in growing in Grace, and in bringing others to Jesus—you waste in battling for the very life of your faith which you have needlessly exposed to assault! I do not believe it to be essential to roll in a ditch every day for the sake of proving the efficacy of the clothes brush! Neither is it worthwhile to seek out infidel doubts in order to try our logical powers upon them! Some tell us that we must keep abreast of the times, but if the times run the wrong way, I see no reason why we should run with them! Rather let us leave the times and dwell in the eternities. If I can be cheered and refreshed by good literature, and be the better and wiser for it, I am thankful. But if I must, in warming my hands, defile them with unbelief, I will sooner let them become blue with cold!

Perhaps, dear Friends, our liability to be injured by that which renders us comfortable is one reason why God does not subject some of His best people to the trials of prosperity. Have you not sometimes wished that you were rich? I daresay you have. But perhaps you never will be. You did prosper, once, but it came to an end. Once or twice the prize of wealth seemed within your reach—others seized it—and you are still working hard and earning a bare crust. We do not know what you might have been if you had been allowed to succeed. In warming your hands you might have burned them. Many Christians have been impoverished

by their wealth and brought to inward wretchedness by outward prosperity. You have flourished best in the soil in which the Lord has kept you—anywhere else you might have run to seed. Some years since, when the first larch tree was introduced into England, the person who had brought home the specimen put it into his hothouse to grow. It did not flourish, and no wonder, for it delights in a colder atmosphere! The gardener therefore pulled up the spindly thing by the roots and threw it upon the dunghill! And there, to everybody's surprise, it grew wonderfully! It was created to flourish under trying circumstances—and perhaps you are of the same order. Learn the lesson and be content to be where you are!

IV. A fourth observation is this—IF A CHRISTIAN ACTS INCONSISTENTLY, HE IS PRETTY SURE TO BE FOUND OUT.

Here was Peter warming his hands and he thought that nobody would know him—but his face, as we said before, was illuminated by the light of the fire and one said, “Surely you are one of His disciples.” The fire did not merely warm, but it threw light on him and showed him up. And so, when it comes to pass that a Christian gets into association with the ungodly and figures with them, his sin will find him out. I have noticed, in a very wide sphere of observation, that bad men may do wrong for years and not be discovered—and that hypocrites may contrive to carry on their hypocrisy half a lifetime without being unmasked. But a true man, a real child of God, if he shall only do a tenth as much wrong as others, will be certain to be detected! Peter tried to look uncommonly comfortable and calm while at the fire, but he could not do it. He revealed himself by the twitches of his face and the very look of him! And when he spoke, as we have already said, the tones of his voice betrayed him. A Philistine helmet will not sit well upon an Israelite! He wears it awkwardly and is known, though in disguise. Ah, Christian, you had better keep to your own company—it is of no use for you to try to travel *incognito* through this world, for it will detect you! Never go where you will be ashamed to be seen, for you will be seen. A city set on a hill cannot be hid! A lighted candle must be seen. A speckled bird will be noticed where no note is taken of others. Worldlings have lynx eyes with which to spy out erring professors—and they are sure to publish your faults for they are sweet morsels to them! “Report it! Report it!” they say. In vain will you try to pass yourself off as a stranger to Christ—your speech will betray you and the finger of scorn will be justly pointed at you for your inconsistency! Therefore, keep to your own company and walk not in the way of the wicked.

V. The fifth point is this—and you all know it to be true—IT IS A GREAT DEAL EASIER TO WARM YOUR HANDS THAN YOUR HEARTS.

A few coals in a fire suffice to warm Peter's hands, but even the Infinite Love of Jesus did not, just then, warm his heart. O Sirs, what was the scene at the end of the hall? Was not that enough to set all hearts aglow? It was a bush that burned with fire and was not consumed! It was the Son of God struck on the mouth and vilely slandered—and yet bearing it all for love of us! O Sirs, there was a furnace at the other end of the hall—a furnace of Divine Love! If Peter had but looked at his Master's

face, marred with agony, and seen upon it the mark of His terrible night's sweat, surely, had his heart been right, it would have burned within him! One marvels that with such a sight before him—if Peter had been Peter—if he had only been true to that true heart of his, he would have braved the malice of the throng, placed himself side by side with his Lord and said, “Do to me whatever you do to Him. If you smite Him, smite me. Take me and let me suffer with Him.” If he might not have done that, one would not have wondered if Peter had sat there and wept till he broke his heart to see his Master treated so! But alas, the sight of his Lord, accused and betrayed, did not warm Peter's heart.

My Brothers and Sisters, we sometimes wish that we had actually seen our Lord, but seeing Christ after the flesh was of small service to Peter. It was when the Holy Spirit used the glance of Jesus as a special means of Grace that Peter's heart was thawed and his eyes dropped with tears of repentance! O Lord and Master, though a bodily sight of You would not warm us if You should walk up these aisles and should show Your pierced hands in this pulpit. Yet, if Your blessed Spirit will come upon us tonight, we shall see You by faith and the sight will make our hearts burn within us, though it is winter! Come, sacred Spirit, shed abroad the love of Jesus in our souls and so shall our love be kindled, and burn vehemently! Grant it, therefore, we pray You, for Your love's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 18:1-27.**

Verse 1. *When Jesus had spoken these words, He went out with His disciples over the Brook Kidron, where was a garden, into which He entered, and His disciples.* From our Lord's example, we should learn, when trouble is near, to meet it with composure. Our Savior did not sit still, but, as the hour approached for His betrayal and death, “He went out with His disciples.” The passing over the black Brook Kidron, through which flowed the filth of the Temple, was very significant. King David had crossed that brook long before when he had been driven from his home by Absalom's rebellion—and now the Greater David went “over the Brook Kidron, where was a garden.” He especially wanted solitude, just then, for one of the best preparations for suffering is to get alone with God. Learn this lesson, also, from your Lord's example and, as He put Gethsemane before Calvary, if you can put an hour of prayerful contemplation before your expected suffering, it will be a great help to you.

2. *And Judas, also, who betrayed Him, knew the place: for Jesus oft-times resorted there with His disciples.* That dark and gloomy olive garden was no pleasure garden that night! It had often been a place of retirement and of prayer for the Master. What happy memories His disciples must have had of being with Him there for a season of prayer! It was a very choice privilege for them to be with Him when He preached, but it must have been, if possible, a still greater privilege to be with Him when He prayed. It is not recorded that His disciples ever said to Him, “Lord, teach us how to preach,” but at least one of them was so struck with His

prayers that he said, "Lord, teach us to pray." We may well ask Him to do that for us now. Perhaps some of you would like to be taught how you can become great—it is much more important for you to be taught to become prayerful!

3. *Then Judas, having received a detachment of men and of officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, came there with lanterns, torches and weapons.* It does not matter much about the band of men and officers with lanterns and torches and weapons, but the dreadful part of the narrative is that they were led by one who had been a disciple of Christ, one who had been numbered with the Apostles! Is Christ still betrayed by His professed friends? Yes, it is so, but may you and I never be guilty of that terrible crime! Yet why should we not unless the Grace of God should prevent it? We are of the same flesh and blood as Judas—and although we might not be tempted by a sum of money, we may be tempted by a sinful pleasure or by a sinful shame. Lest we should be led astray, let us pray that we may not enter into temptation and especially ask that we may be preserved from betraying our Lord as Judas did.

4. *Jesus, therefore, knowing all things that should come upon Him, went forth and said to them, Whom are you seeking?* Because of His Divinity, He knew all that would come upon Him, but what a wondrous Manhood His was that although He knew all that would befall Him, He went forth calm and composed, resigned to His Father's will and said to those who had come to seize Him, "Whom are you seeking?" I think He is saying to some of us, "whom are you seeking?" We have not come here to slay Him. We have not come here to fight against Him and lead Him away to crucify Him. Yet I hope that we can truly say that we have come seeking Jesus. If this is really your heart's desire, it shall surely be fulfilled to you!

5. *They answered Him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus said unto them, I am He.* Or, rather, "I Am," pronouncing the words with a Divine dignity which had a startling effect upon them.

5, 6. *And Judas, also, who betrayed Him, stood with them. As soon, then, as He had said to them, I am He, they went backward and fell to the ground.* It seems as if our Lord intended to let them realize something of His Divine Power and Glory, for the utterance of that august expression, I Am, which is His Father's name, staggered them and they fell to the ground. Do you not wonder that they did not rise up and go away and leave Him after they had fallen at His feet and asked His forgiveness? They did not act so, for the power of fear, when it is not accompanied by love, is very small. There was enough power in it to make them fall down to the ground, but there was not power enough in it to make them fall at Christ's feet confessing their sin!

7, 8. *Then He asked them again, Whom are you seeking? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered, I have told you that I am He: if, therefore, you seek Me, let these go their way.* [See Sermons #2616, Volume 45—CHRIST'S CARE OF HIS DISCIPLES and #2368, Volume 40—THE LIVING CARE OF THE DYING CHRIST—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] It is very cheering to us to think of our Lord meeting all the enemies of His people,

gathering up all their weapons into His own heart, that His people might go free. You and I, if we had been in such a case, would have been hurried and worried—and our fears would have made us selfish—we would have forgotten our poor friends who were with us! But Jesus thought not of Himself—He thought of His poor trembling disciples and, therefore, He said, “If, therefore, you seek Me, let these go their way.”

9. *That the saying might be fulfilled which He spoke, Of them which You gave Me have I lost none.* He had only said that just a little while before, but this verse shows us that the New Testament is as sure to be fulfilled as the Old Testament. It was a new saying, not then written, yet it had all the life and power of God in it! So it must live and must be fulfilled.

10. *Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus.* Here is every prospect of a fight! Simon Peter has begun it and the armed men will be eager to continue it. We always have our Simon Peters about—men of emotion, men of impulse, men of impetuosity. They are not a bad sort of Christians and I do not know what we would do without them. Our cold, frozen thinkers would not do much without our warm-hearted Peters to help to thaw them! Still, Peter was only one of the 12 Apostles and though they call him the head of the church, he made a very poor head of the church just then! He drew a sword and began to use that carnal weapon by cutting off the right ear of Malchus! It was a great mercy that the Lord was there to heal the ear and to forbid the use of the sword in His defense.

11. *Then Jesus said unto Peter, Put your sword into the sheath. Shall I not drink the cup which My Father has given Me?* Here is another helpful lesson for any of you who have a trial before you. Do not seek to set the trial aside—use no wrong means to escape from affliction—drink your ordained cup! Though Peter's sword is handy, put it up into its sheath and do not use it. Bear and forbear, on and on and on to the end of the chapter! Drink the cup that your Father gives you. However bitter it is, it is sweetened by the fact that He gives it to you! Shall not a true son of God drink the cup that his Father presents to him? There can be no harm in it and it must work you some real good—so put up your sword and lift the cup to your lips—and drink it to the dregs.

12. *Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus and bound Him.* When you are bound with sickness, or bound with weakness, or bound in any other way, do not complain. Your Master was bound and I think we ought to be willing to be anything that Christ was. What was good enough for Him is good enough for us. “They took Jesus and bound Him.”

13, 14. *And led Him away to Annas first, for he was father-in-law to Caiaphas, who was the high priest that same year. Now Caiaphas was he who gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.* Christ could not die without the question of expediency turning up. I never knew any great sin in the world, nor any great heresy, nor any great combination of men to maintain it without the question of expediency coming under consideration. Expediency is the great Chr-

ist-killer! Many, nowadays, say to us, "Do not preach against error—it is not expedient to do so. Do not break away from evil associations—it is not expedient." How many there are of even good men who do certain things, not because they are right, but because they are expedient! But, Believers in Jesus, in the name of your Lord I implore you to hate expediency, since it put Jesus to death! It was a wicked expediency that would murder Christ in order to save a nation! But it did not really do so, after all, for the guilt of slaying Christ brought upon the nation the growing crime of Deicide.

15. *And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple: that disciple was known unto the high priest and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest.* This other disciple was, no doubt, John, who thus veiled himself as he did on other occasions.

16. *But Peter stood at the door outside.* It would have been better for him if he had stayed there—he would probably have been more out of the way of temptation than he was inside the palace of the high priest.

16. *Then went out that other disciple, who was known to the high priest and spoke unto her whom kept the door, and brought in Peter.* John doubtless acted thus out of kindness to Peter, but he was the means of bringing his friend into a place where he was not strong enough to keep his feet. You and I may act like that, perhaps, in perfect innocence and even with commendable kindness—yet we may be unintentionally doing our friends a great wrong! I notice that John seems to have been the first of the Apostles to associate with Peter after that terrible fall of his. And in his record of Peter's denial of his Lord, he does not mention his cursing and swearing as Matthew and Mark do. He appears to have felt great tenderness towards Peter—perhaps all the more so because he had been the innocent means of getting him into the place of temptation.

17. *Then said the damsel who kept the door unto Peter, Are not you, also, one of this Man's disciples? He said, I am not.* Ah, Peter! Ah, myself! If anyone is trusting in himself, he may soon utter a lie concerning his Lord as Peter did. Keep us, O God, by Your Grace, or else it will be so with us. It was nothing but a poor maidservant that cowed this brave Peter—the man whose sword was drawn just now in his Master's defense is not able, truthfully, to answer the maid's question, "Are not you, also, one of this Man's disciples? He said, I am not."

18. *And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals, for it was cold: and they warmed themselves. And Peter stood with them and warmed himself.* While his Lord and Master was being maltreated and abused over yonder at the end of the hall, Peter was warming himself at the servant's fire. Ah, he was getting cold spiritually while warming himself physically! And it sometimes happens that when men are warming their bodies, they are at the same time cooling their hearts. I have known a man warm himself at a very big fire through coming into possession of a large amount of property—but he has also grown very cold, spiritually, for these coals of fire do not warm the heart.

19-21. *The high priest then asked Jesus of His disciples and of His Doctrine. Jesus answered Him, I spoke openly to the world. I always*

taught in the synagogue, and in the Temple, where the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why do you ask Me? Ask them which heard Me, what I have said unto you: behold, they know what I said. Our Lord's teaching was never deceptive. He did not say one thing and mean another. He could truly appeal to His hearers concerning His teaching. It is a great thing for a preacher to be able to feel that his hearers know what he has said to them. We cannot always say that, for some of them forget and some of them do not understand what we say. Some of them do not give sufficient attention to know what it is that is said, but Christ's preaching was so clear and plain that He could truly say, "Ask them which heard Me, what I have said to them: behold, they know what I said."

22, 23. *And when He had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Do you answer the high priest so? Jesus answered him—Not as Paul did, "God shall smite you, you whited wall."* The Master is superior to the disciple at all points. Jesus said—

23. *If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why did you strike Me?* Let us pray that whenever we are despitely treated, we may keep our temper and be as composed as our Lord was. And if we must make an answer to our accusers, let it be as discreet and as justifiable as this answer of our Lord's.

24, 25. *Now Annas had Him sent bound to Caiaphas the high priest. And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself.* John thus resumes the narrative concerning Peter from the 17th verse—"Simon Peter stood and warmed himself."

25. *They said, therefore, to him.* Two or three or more of them speaking at a time said to him—

26-27. *Are not you, also, one of His disciples? He denied it and said, I am not. One of the servants of the high priest, being the kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, said, Did not I see you in the garden with Him? Peter then denied it again.* Ah, me, they who lie once will be all too apt to lie again! Those who deny Christ once will be apt to go to still greater lengths in their denial of Him. May they be stopped as Peter was!

27. *And immediately the cock crew.* May the cock crow for some who have been asleep up till now—and warn them that the night is far spent and that it is time for them to awake out of sleep—and wash their eyes with tears and repent of having denied their Lord!

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

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

CHRIST IN BONDS

NO. 2822

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 15, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 28, 1877.

*“Now Annas had sent Him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest.”
(The Revised Version says, “Annas therefore sent Him
bound unto Caiaphas the high priest”).
John 18:24.*

OUR only subject, on this occasion, is CHRIST IN BONDS—the Son of God as an Ambassador in bonds, a King in chains—the God-Man sent, bound—to take His trial in the court of the high priest, Caiaphas.

It seems to me that this binding of our Lord shows, first, something of fear on the part of His captors. Why did they bind Him? He would not attack them. He had no desire to escape out of their hands, yet, they probably thought that He might break loose from them, or in some way outwit them. Alas, that men should ever have been thus afraid of Him who came alone from Heaven, neither bearing arms nor wearing armor—who came to injure none, nor even to protect Himself against the harm that any might inflict upon Him—at first, lying as a Babe in a manger and all His life exhibiting rather the weakness of His Manhood than its strength! Yet His adversaries were often afraid of Him. So it still is—there is a latent, secret conviction in the minds of men that the Christ is greater than He seems to be. Even when they attack Him with their infidel weapons, they never seem to be satisfied with their own arguments, so they are continually seeking fresh ones. To this very day the ungodly are afraid of Christ and, often, their raging against Him resembles the noise made by the boy who, when hurrying through the graveyard, whistles to keep his courage up!

They also bound Christ, no doubt, to increase the shame of His condition. Our Savior said to those who came to arrest Him in the garden, “Have you come out as against a thief, with swords, and with staves to take Me?” And now they bound Him fast as though He were a thief—perhaps tied His hands behind His back with tight cords, to show that they regarded Him a felon and that they were not taking Him into a civil court where some cases of law might be pending, but they already condemned Him by the very act of binding Him! They treated Him as if He were already sentenced and not worthy to stand, a free Man, and plead for Himself before the Judgment Seat. Oh, what a shame that the Lord of Life and Glory should be bound—that He, whom angels delight to wor-

ship—that He who is the very sun of their Heaven should yet be bound as though He were a malefactor, and be sent away to be tried for His life!

We may also look at this matter of the binding of the Savior as an increase of His pain. I suppose none of you have ever been bound as our Lord was at that time. If you had been, you would know the discomfort and pain which must attend such action. John tells us that in Gethsemane, “the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound Him.” He had scarcely risen from His knees—and the bloody sweat was like fresh ruby dew upon Him—yet these men “bound Him and led Him away to Annas first.” I do not find any indication that His bonds were unloosed by Annas, or that He had even a moment’s relief or relaxation granted to Him. But, with the cruel ropes still binding Him fast, He was sent across the great hall into the other wing of the palace in which Caiaphas resided.

“Annas sent Him bound unto Caiaphas.” Then this, surely, must have been done in very wantonness of malice. I have already said that they seemed to have some sort of fear that their Captive would, after all, escape from them. Yet they might, readily enough, have banished that fear from their minds. There was no need to bind HIM! O cruel persecutors, look into His face! If you are resolved to lead Him away to His death, you may lead Him like a sheep goes to the slaughter. He will not even open His mouth to upbraid you! There was no need to put any bands upon One so gentle as He was. Out of very wantonness, I say, they must have done it, that they might express their hatred by every conceivable method, both in the little details and in the great end at which they were aiming all the while—namely, to put Him to a most painful death. Ah, me, how shamefully was our blessed Master maltreated in this inhospitable world! Men had often been regicides and we need not wonder at that when we think what tyrants they were who were thus slain—but these men were turning to *deicide*—putting to death the Son of God, Himself! And before they did it they heaped upon Him every mark of scorn and dishonor that was possible, that they might cause Him to die with opprobrium as well as with pain.

You who love your Savior will think with tender sympathy of how He was bound by these wicked men. My special objective is to try to find out what are the lessons which we may learn from the bonds of Christ.

I. The first lesson is this. From the binding of our dear Redeemer, I learn a lesson concerning sin. **THE BONDS OF CHRIST TEACH US WHAT SIN WOULD DO TO GOD IF IT COULD.**

The unregenerate heart, in its enmity against God, would treat Him exactly as the men of 1900 years ago treated the Son of God. What was done to Jesus is just what man would do, if he could, to the Lord God of Heaven and earth, Himself. “What?” you say, “would men bind God?” Ah, Sirs, they would do much more than that if they could, but they would certainly do that! They would annihilate God if they could, for, “the fool has said in his heart, No God”—that is to say, “No God for me!” He would kill God if it were possible. There would be no gladder news to many men who are living today than for them to be informed, with absolute certain-

ty, that there was no God at all! All their fears would be at once silenced by such tidings. As for us who love and trust Him, all our joys would be gone and our worst fears would be realized if God were gone. But, as for the ungodly, it would be the best news that was ever rung out from church steeples if they could be assured that God was dead! They would kill Him if they could, but, as they cannot kill Him, they seek to bind Him.

Observe how they try to do this *by denying His power*. There are many men who say that they believe in God, yet what sort of god is it in whom they believe? It is a god who is fettered by his own laws. "Here is the world," they say, "but let not anyone suppose that god has anything to do with the world." They seem to have a theory that somehow or other it got wound up, like a great clock, and it has been going on ever since! Their god has not even been to see it—indeed, the probability is that he cannot see! Their god does not see and does not know anything—he is not the living God. They pretend to pay Him the compliment of saying that there may be some great first cause—they do not know even that, for certain, because they do not know anything. We live in an age in which the man who professes to be a learned man, calls himself "an agnostic"—a Greek word which, in the Latin, signifies, "an ignoramus." That is, when you get to be a very clever man, then you become an ignoramus, knowing nothing at all! Such people go crowing, all over the world, that they do not know anything at all! They do not know whether there is any God at all, or if there is a God, they do not know that He has anything to do with the world. They say that it is going on just on its own. Their god may set worlds going if he pleases, but he has nothing do with them afterwards.

Ah, Beloved, the truth is that God's Laws are simply the ways in which He acts. There is no force in the world apart from God. All the potency of attraction is simply because God lives and pour His energy into the matter that attracts. Every moment it is God who works in all things according to the good pleasure of His own will. Omnipotence is, in fact, the source of all the potency that there is in the universe. God is everywhere and, instead of being banished from the world, and the world going on without Him, if God were not here, this planet, the sun, moon and stars, would retire into their native nothingness as a moment's foam subsides into the wave that bears it and is gone forever! God alone IS. All the rest—call them what you please—are appearances that come out of His ever-existing power. God IS. The other things may be or may not be, but God IS. Well did David write, under the Spirit's Inspiration, "God has spoken once; twice have I heard this: that power belongs unto God." But that is not the kind of god that the ungodly want—they want one whose hands they can bind so as to make him powerless!

Especially will they do this *with regard to Providence*. "Look," they say, "you Christian people pray and you are foolish enough to believe that because you pray, God hears you and sends you the blessings that you ask for." It is assumed that we are fools, but, I think, it is a mere assumption! Probably these gentlemen who are so generous in disposing of their epithets, may be giving away what really belongs to them! We are fools,

so they say. These men of culture, the thinking people—at least they are the people who call themselves by these high-sounding names and, having done so, to prove that their culture has made perfect gentlemen of them—they call all the rest of us, and especially all Christians, fools! Well, we are not anxious to contend with them as to that matter, and we are quite satisfied to take the position that we do take—and to be called fools—because we believe that God does hear and answer our petitions! Even when these people are willing to acknowledge that there is a god in Providence at all, his hands are tied so that he can do nothing! Well, as far as I am concerned, I would as soon believe in a god made out of the mud of the Ganges, or in the fetish of the Hottentot, as bow my knee to a god who could not hear and could not answer me!

Some unbelievers talk of a god whose hands are bound *so far as the punishment of sin is concerned*. “Men will die like dog,” so some of these doggish men say. “God will not punish sin,” say some sinners who imagine that they have prepared a dunghill for themselves to fall upon whenever God shall fling them out of the window as utterly worthless! They imbibe ideas that are contrary to the Truth of God about the Most High in order that they may be able to sin with impunity. But, whatever they may think or say, let us rest assured that there *is* a God and that He is a God before whom everyone of us must appear to give an account of the deeds done in the body, whether they are good or whether they are evil. We may be quite certain that although, in His long-suffering, He may patiently wait a while before punishing iniquity, yet His hands are not bound and He will lift them before long! And when He raises a hand to strike the man who has broken His laws, He will do it so effectually that the sinner shall know that, truly, there is a God who will not pass by transgression, or wink at sin when it remains unrepented of! Let us, then, be always happy to hear our testimony that God cannot be bound, but let us always expect to see unconverted men, in one way or another, attempting to bind the hands of the Most High as these sinners in Jerusalem bound the Christ of God.

Some people think that God ought to do this and He ought *not* to do that. And the moment you begin to reason with them, they do not refer to what the Scriptures say, but they have a preconceived notion as to what ought to be done or not done. That is to say, you could tie His hands so that *He must do what you judge to be right*. But if He judges any particular course to be right and it does not meet your tastes, then, straightway, you will either have no god at all, or else a god that shall be handcuffed by your reason and held in bonds to do your bidding! In the Person of our blessed Master brought from Gethsemane with His hands tightly bound, we see an exact picture of what wicked men would always do with God if they could, and what they actually do to Him, spiritually, in their own minds and hearts. God save us from being guilty of such a sin as that! Oh, that the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ may cleanse that sin away if it lies as a load upon the conscience of anyone whom I am now addressing!

II. Secondly, we have here A LESSON OF LOVE.

Our Lord Jesus was sent away, bound, by Annas to Caiaphas, but, before they bound Him, there were other bands upon Him. *Christ was bound by the cords of love* and who but Himself had bound Him thus? Of old, or before the earth was, His prescient eye foresaw all His people and their sin—and He loved them and He gave Himself to them, then, in the eternal purpose. And often did He look through the vista of the ages upon the men and women who were yet to be born and, with a near and dear love to each one of them, He pledged Himself that, for them, He would bear the shame and the spitting—and that He would even die in their place that He might redeem them unto Himself. So, when I see our Divine Master thus led to the judgment seat, I grieve over the bonds of cord with which men tied Him, but my heart exults over those invisible bands with which He bound Himself on purpose, by covenant, by oath, by Infinite, Immutable Love that He would give Himself to be a ransom for His people!

Then, following upon those cords of love, if you look closely, you will see His love again displayed in that *He was bound with our bonds*. We, dear Friends, had sinned against God and so had incurred the sentence of Infallible Justice. And now that sentence must fall upon Him! We ought to have been bound, but Christ was bound instead of us. If you and I had been bound with despair and hopelessly led away to that prison from which none shall ever escape—if this had been the moment when we were commencing to feel the torments of the Hell which our sins deserve—what could we have said? But, lo, in our place Jesus is led away to bear the wrath of Heaven! He must not lift His hands in His own defense, or raise a finger for His own comfort, for He is bearing—

***“That we might never bear
His Father’s righteous ire.”***

III. But now, thirdly, learn here A LESSON OF GREAT PRIVILEGE.

Our Lord Jesus Christ was bound and there flows from that fact its opposite—*then His people are all free*. When Christ was made a curse for us, He became a blessing to us. When Christ was made sin for us, we were made the righteousness of God in Him. When He died, then we lived. And so, as He was bound, we were set free. The type of that exchange of prisoners is seen in the fact that Barabbas was set free when the Lord Jesus Christ was given up to be crucified. And still more in His plea for His disciples in the garden, “If therefore you seek Me, let these go their way.” It is with wondrous joy in our hearts that we sing—

***“We were sore in bondage bound,
But our Jesus set us free.”***

Do you think we, dear Friends, use our liberty as we should? Do we not, sometimes, pray to God as if we were tongue-tied and had the bonds upon our tongue? Do we not go to the great coffer full of Grace and, instead of helping ourselves, as we have the right to do, we stand there as if our hands were bound and we could not take a single pennyworth of the abundant fullness that is laid up there for us? Sometimes when there is work to be done for Christ, we feel as if we were in bonds. We dare not stretch out our hands—we are afraid to do so—yet Jesus has set us free! O Believer, why do you go about as if you still wear shackles on your an-

kles? Why do you stand like one who is still in bonds? Your freedom is sure freedom and it is righteous freedom. Christ, the great Emancipator, has made you free and you are “free indeed.” Enjoy your liberty! Enjoy access to God! Enjoy the privilege of claiming the promises which God has given to you! Enjoy the exercise of the power with which God has endowed you! Enjoy the holy anointing with which the Lord has prepared you for His service! Do not sit and mope like a bird in a cage when you are free to soar away! I can conceive of a bird that has been in a cage for years—the cage may be all taken away—every wire of it and yet the poor thing has been so accustomed to sit on that perch inside the cage, that it takes no notice of the fact that its prison is gone! And there it sits and mopes. Away with you, sweet songster! The green fields and the blue sky are all your own. Stretch your wings and soar away above the clouds—and sing the carol of your freedom as though you would make it reach the ears of the angels! So let it be with your spirit, and with mine, Beloved! Christ has set us free! Therefore let us not go back into bondage, or sit still as though we were in prison—let us rejoice in our liberty this very hour and let us do so all our days!

IV. The fourth lesson from the binding of Christ is A LESSON OF OBLIGATION.

This may seem like a paradox in contrast with the previous lesson, yet it is equally true. Beloved, was Jesus bound for you and for me? *Then let us be bound for Him and to Him.* I rejoice in the sweet inability that results from perfect love to Christ. “Inability?” you ask. Yes, I mean inability. The true child of God “cannot sin, because he is born of God.” There are many other things that he cannot do. He cannot forsake His Lord, for he says with Peter, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.” He cannot forget his obligations. He cannot withhold his time, his strength, his substance from His Lord. He cannot become an earthworm and a money-grabber. He cannot wed his soul to any other, for Christ has espoused him to Himself as a chaste virgin. There are times when the child of God says, with Nehemiah, “Should such a man as I flee?” Or, “How can such a privileged individual as I am indulge in such-and-such a sin?” The ungodly sometimes jeer at us and say, “Ah, you cannot do such-and-such! We can.” And we reply, “We have lost no power that we ever wished to have, but we have gained the power of concentrating all our force upon righteousness and the Truth of God. And now our heart is bound too fast to Christ for us to go after your idols. Our eyes are now so taken up with the sight of our Savior that we cannot see any charms in the things with which you would bewitch us. Our memory is now so full of Christ that we have no desire to pollute the precious stores that lie therein by memories of sin.”

Henceforth we are crucified with Christ and that brings to us a blessed inability in which we greatly rejoice! Our heart may stir, perhaps, a little, but our hands and feet are fastened to the wood and cannot move. Oh, blessed is the inability when, at last, neither heart can love, nor brain can think, nor hand can do, nor even imagination can conceive anything that goes beyond the sweet circle of a complete consecration to

the Lord and absolute dedication to His service! Come, then, you angels of the Lord, and bind us to Him! Let this be the prayer of every Believer—“Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar.” Let nothing ever tempt us away from our Lord. You may count the cost of all Egypt’s treasure and then let it go—and it shall vanish like a dream, for there is nothing in it—

**“Solid joys and lasting treasure,
None but Zion’s children know”—**

and these shall remain with you who are bound to Christ—with Him to live, and for Him to die, if necessary. So, whenever we see Christ in bonds, let us pray that we, also, may wear His bonds and be just as much bound as He was. “O God,” let every Christian say, “I am Your servant and the son of Your handmaid. You have loosed my bonds, now bind me to Yourself and to Your blessed service once and for all!”

V. The last lesson is one which I pray that we may all learn whether we are saints or sinners. It is A LESSON OF WARNING.

Dear Friends, I have tried to picture, though I have done it in a very feeble way, Christ being bound with cords. And now I want to very solemnly say to all of you—Do not bind Christ with cords. Beware, you who are unconverted, that you never bind Christ. You may do so *by not reading His Word*. You have a Bible at home, but you never read it—it is clasped, laid away in a drawer with your best pocket handkerchiefs. Is it not so? That is another picture of Christ in bonds—a poor shut-up Bible that is never allowed to speak with you—no, not even to have half a word with you, for you are in such a hurry about other things that you cannot listen to it! Untie the cords—let it have its liberty! Commune with it sometimes. Let the heart of God in the Bible speak to your own heart. If you do not, that clasped Bible, that shut-up Bible—that precious Book hidden away in the drawer—is Christ in prison and, one day, when you little expect it, you will hear Christ say, “Inasmuch as you did this to the greatest of all My witnesses, you did it unto Me.” You kept Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah and all the Prophets in prison! And all the Apostles and the Master, Himself, you bound with cords and you would not hear a word that they had to say! Let not that be true of any one of you, dear Friends.

There are others *who will not go to hear the Word*. They do not attend any place of worship. They may have dropped in here once, but, as a rule, they never go anywhere to worship God. Here in London people live in the street where there is a soul-saving ministry, yet many of them never cross the threshold of the House of Prayer. In some streets, not one in a hundred ever darkens the doors of the place where God’s people gather for worship. Is not that tying Christ’s hands? How can the Gospel get to people who will not hear it—absolutely refuse to listen to it? They are really gagging our blessed Master and that is even worse than binding Him with cords! They thrust a gag in His mouth and make Him hold His tongue, as far as they are concerned. Some of them, if they could, would gag the messenger as well as His Master, for they do not want him. “Trouble us not,” they say. “Are you come to torment us before the

times.” And so they bind Christ and send Him away, just as Annas sent Him bound to Caiaphas.

There are some who both read the Bible and go to hear the Gospel, but they tie Christ up, all the same, by prejudice. Some people can never get a blessing through certain ministers because they have made up their minds that they will not be profited by them. You know how they come, with some preconceived notion, and though an angel from Heaven were to speak, they would pick holes in whatever he might say because of the prejudice which exists in their minds. Probably they can give no better reason for their antagonism than the person gave who did not like Dr. Fell—

**“I do not like you, Dr. Fell,
The reason why, I cannot tell.
But this I know and know full well,
I do not like you, Dr. Fell.”**

I have known men bind Christ in another way, *by delaying their decision*. They have heard a sermon and have felt its power—their soul has been impressed by it—but their chief idea has been to try to escape from Christ, or to bind His hands, if possible. I think I have told you before that once, when I was preaching in the country, the gentleman with whom I stayed, suddenly got up, towards the end of the sermon and went out. And a dear friend who had gone with me, followed him outside and asked him, “what brought you out here?” He replied, “If I had stayed there another five minutes, I would have got converted. Mr. Spurgeon seems to treat me just as if I were made of India rubber—he squeezes me into any shape he likes—so I was obliged to come out.” “But,” my friend said, “might it not have been a great blessing to you if you had been converted?” “Well, no,” he replied, “at least, not just now. I have some things in prospect that I really should not miss, so I cannot afford to be converted just now.”

There are others who do not act quite like that, but the result is the same. They say, by their actions, if not in so many words, “Now, Lord, I am going to tie You up for a little while. I mean to give heed to You, by-and-by. I hope Your blessed hand will be laid upon me for my salvation, but not just now, please—not just now.” Such people always use silken cords, but the binding is just as effective as it would be if they took an ugly pair of handcuffs, such as a policeman pulls out for a thief. The man says, “Permit me, Lord, to tie Your hands for just a little while—another month, perhaps—possibly another year.” Oh, that accursed procrastination! How many have been ruined to all eternity by it! It is the bond that binds the hands of Christ, the Savior, who say, “Now is the day of salvation.”

Other men bind the hands of Christ *by seeking pleasure in sin*. After having been impressed under a sermon, they go straight to some ungodly meeting place—a bar, perhaps, or the next day they go into society where every serious thought will, in all probability, be stamped out as men stamp out a fire! And what is this but binding the hands of Christ? I know some—I tremble as I think of them—who persistently do that which they know will prevent them from ever feeling the power of the Word of

God. Oh, that, by some means, they could be wrenched out of their present position and be carried right away where the Truth of God might influence them so that they might be led to Jesus' feet! I think I hear someone say, "That is a shocking way to bind Christ's hands." Then mind, my Friend, that you do not fall into that sin!

Now, in closing I need to speak to the Lord's own people for just a minute or two.

Do you not think, Beloved, that you and I have sometime tied Christ's hands? You remember reading this sentence, "He could not do many mighty works there"? His hands were tied, but what tied them? Finish the quotation—"because of their unbelief." Are there not many churches where they have tied the hands of Christ because they do not believe He can do any mighty works there? If the Lord Jesus Christ were to convert 3000 people, at one time, under their pastor's preaching, what do you think the deacons and elders of that church would probably say? "Well, we never thought that we would see such excitement as this—to think that it should have come into our place of worship! We must be very careful. No doubt these people will be wanting to join the church. We shall have to summer them and winter them—and try them a good deal—we do not like such excitement." Ah, Sirs, you need not trouble yourselves with any such expectation! God is not likely to give such a blessing to you—He never sends His children where they are not wanted and, as a rule—until He prepares His people to receive the blessing, the blessing will not come.

Do you not think, also, that *a minister may very easily tie the hands of Christ*? I am afraid I have done so, sometimes, without meaning to. Suppose I were to preach some very fine sermons—I do not do that, mark you—but just *suppose* I were to preach some very fine sermons that went right over people's heads? And what if a good old woman were to say, "I would not have the presumption to understand it, but it was very wonderful"—do you not think that I would be tying Christ's hands with garlands of flowers? And may we not come into the pulpit and talk a lot of theological jargon, and use words which are appropriate to us in the classroom, but quite misunderstood, or never understood at all by the mass of the people? Is not that tying Christ's hands?

And when a preacher is what they call very "heavy"—by which is not meant that he is weighty—but dull! Or when he is very cold and heartless, and preaches as if he were working by the piece, and would be glad to get it all over—when that is the case, do you not think that Christ's hands are tied? Have you never heard sermons of which you might fairly say, "Well, if God were to convert anybody by *that* discourse, it certainly would be a miraculous kind of miracle—something altogether out of the common way of miracles, for He would be using an implement that was positively calculated to produce just the opposite effect—and making it accomplish His purposes of Grace"? I have heard such sermons, now and then, to my great sorrow. And you Sunday school teachers must take care that you do not so teach as really to be hindrances to your scholars rather than helps, for that is to tie the hands of Christ—and to lead Him

into your class like Samson—bound to make sport for Philistines than to get honor to Himself. May we all have the Grace given to us to avoid such an evil as that!

And do you not think, dear Friends, that we who love Christ bind His hands *when we are cowardly and retiring, and never say a word for Him?* How can the Gospel save sinners if it is never spoken to them? If you never introduce Christ to your companions—never put a little book on your friend's table, never try to say a word about the Savior to him—is not that tying Christ's hands? The next thing to having no Christ at all is for the church to be silent concerning Him! It is an awful thing to contemplate what it would be if there were no Savior, but what difference is it if there is a Savior, but men never hear of Him? Come, you very timid people, do not excuse yourselves any longer! "Oh, but," says one, "I always was of a very timid disposition." So was that soldier who was shot for running away in the day of battle! He was guilty of cowardice and was put to death for it. If you have been, up to the present time, binding the Master by your retiring spirit, you should at once come forward and declare what Christ has done for you, that, with unbound hands, He may do the same for others!

And do you not think that *whenever we are inconsistent in our conduct*—especially in the family—we tie the hands of Christ? There is a father praying for his children that they may live before God. Five minutes later, listen to Him! Why, his boys hate the sight of him! He is such a tyrant to them that they cannot endure him. There is a mother, too, who is praying God to save her daughters. She goes upstairs and pleads very earnestly for them. Yet she comes down and lets them have whatever they ask for and never says a word by way of checking them in their evil courses! She acts like a female Eli to everyone of them—is not she tying the hands of Christ? What can she expect but that God, who works according to rules, will be more likely to let her unkind kindness influence her girls for evil, than to answer her prayers for their conversion? Let us be *holy*, dear Friends, for then we shall, by faith, see the holy God freely moving and working among us—and doing great deeds to His own Glory! So may He do, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: BY
JOHN 18:12-14, 19-26; MARK 14:53-65; LUKE 22:63-71; 23:1.**

The passages which we are about to read from three of the Evangelists, make up a continuous narrative of our Lord's trial before the high priest.

First, John gives us an account of our Savior's appearance before Annas, of which I need not say much, as I recently preached upon it. [Sermon #2820, Volume 49—CHRIST BEFORE ANNAS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge at <http://www.spurgeons.org>.]

John 18:12-14. *Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound Him, and led Him away to Annas first; for he was father-in-law to Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year.*

Now Caiaphas was he which gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.

19-21. *The high priest then asked Jesus of His disciples, and of His doctrine. Jesus answered Him, I spoke openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, where the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why ask you Me? Ask them which heard Me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said. What an admirable answer that was! Whatever He might have said about His doctrine, they would have twisted into a ground of accusation against Him, so He simply said, "Mine has been public teaching, open to all. I was not found in holes and corners, secretly fomenting sedition. I spoke in the streets; I spoke in the synagogue; I spoke in the temple; ask those who heard Me to tell you what I said." What more convincing answer could He have given?*

22-24. *And when He had thus spoken, one of the officers, who stood by, struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answer you the high priest so? Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why do you strike Me? Now Annas had sent Him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest. So there we see Him standing—bound before Caiaphas—the acting high priest for that year. Now follow the narrative as given by Mark.*

Mark 14:53, 54. *And they led Jesus away to the high priest: and with him were assembled all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes. And Peter followed Him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest: and he sat with the servants, and warmed himself at the fire. We may regard what was said to Jesus, by Annas and Caiaphas, as a sort of unofficial preliminary examination and, meanwhile, their fellow conspirators were scouring the streets of Jerusalem to gather together the members of the Sanhedrim—and also searching among the slums in order to find witnesses who could be bribed to give false evidence against Jesus.*

55. *And the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put Him to death; and found none. A pretty court that was, occupied in seeking for witnesses who might enable them to condemn to death a Prisoner against whom no charge had yet been formulated!*

56-59. *For many bore false witness against Him, but their witness agreed not together. And there arose certain ones and bore false witness against Him, saying, We heard Him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands. But neither so did their witness agree together. It was a rule that they should be examined separately, but there had not been time for them to be coached as to what they were to say, so one contradicted the other and it looked as if the trial must break down.*

60. *And the high priest stood up in the midst. Losing all patience, he stood up, in a furious rage at the way things were taking.*

60, 61. *And asked Jesus, saying, Do You answer nothing? What is it which these witness say against You? But He held His peace and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked Him, and said unto Him, are You the Christ? The Son of the Blessed? This time, according to Matthew's*

account, the high priest said to Jesus, “I command You by the living God that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God.” Being thus, as it were, put upon His oath, the Savior felt compelled to answer. He could not remain silent when such a great and important question was at stake.

62-65. *And Jesus said, I am: and you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of Heaven. Then the high priest tore his clothes, and said, What need we of any further witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy: what do you think? And they all condemned Him to be guilty of death. And some began to spit on Him, and to cover His face, and to buffet Him, and to said unto Him, Prophecy: and the servants did strike Him with the palms of their hands.* Perhaps we have the same narrative in Luke. Possibly, however, he gives us a continuation of the sad story—it is difficult to say which is the case.

Luke 22:63-71. *And the men that held Jesus mocked Him, and struck Him. And when they had blindfolded Him, they struck Him on the face, and asked Him, saying, Prophecy, who is it that struck You? And many other things blasphemously spoke they against Him. And as soon as it was day, the elders of the people and the chief priests and the scribes came together and led Him into their council, saying, Are You the Christ? Tell us. And He said unto them, If I tell you, you will not believe: and if I also ask you, you will not answer Me, nor let me go. Thereafter shall the Son of Man sit at the right hand of the power of God. Then they all said, Are You, then, the Son of God? And He said unto them, You say that I am. And they said, of what need we any further witness? For we ourselves have heard from His own mouth.*

Luke 23:1. *And the whole multitude of them arose, and led Him unto Pilate.*

HYMN FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—426, 291, 806.

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
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SECRET DISCIPLES ENCOURAGED NO. 3207

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 21, 1910.

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

***“Are not you also one of His disciples?”
John 18:25.***

BLESSED be His name, there are some of us who count it our highest joy to answer this question, “Yes.” Whatever may be entailed by the confession, we shall be glad to endure! We could not do otherwise than say, “He acknowledged us of old and He is still not ashamed to call us brethren and, therefore, we are not ashamed of Him, but we delight to call Him Master and Lord.” In an interview I had about a fortnight ago, with a dear and venerable friend who is just upon the borders of the grave, he said to me, “There is a verse in the Hymn-Book which I know you do not like, Sir, and which I do not like, though both of us have sometimes been obliged to sing it—

***“Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought.
Do I love the Lord, or no?
Am I His, or am I not?”***

“But I have no doubt about it,” he went on to say, “any more than I have about my own existence! Let others doubt if they like. I know I love the Lord. I am sure I do. If there is anything in all this world that is beyond a question to me, it is that I do love Him with all my heart, soul and strength.” That ought to be the condition of every Christian! There ought to be no question here. We should, each one, be able to reply at once, when asked, “Are not you also one of His disciples?” “I am! I count it my honor, my joy that He permits me to sit at His feet and to be instructed by Him, and to go forth into the world bearing His reproach.” But, at the same time, dear Friends, there are some in the world who could not go that length, of whom, nevertheless, we have the hopeful belief that they are His disciples.

I thought of speaking a little to such persons. This, perhaps, will be unfortunate for most of you, for I shall not be addressing many, perhaps, here present. Still, if there are but a few such, we must look after the one at the risk even of leaving the ninety-nine. So I address myself to those whom we assuredly suspect to be followers of Jesus, concerning whose faith we need to have a little better evidence and whose life we would see a little more consistent with their being truly His followers.

I. First, then, I would ask, WHY ARE YOU SUSPECTED OF BEING A DISCIPLE OF CHRIST? Please observe the reasons why Simon Peter was suspected, for the same reasons may be applicable to you.

He was suspected by some of being a disciple of Christ *because he had been seen with the disciples*. One of the servants of the high priest said to Peter, “Did not I see you in the garden with Him?” Now, there are some of you who are always seen in the House of God—not only at stated services which are attended by the general public, but you are seen at the Prayer Meetings, you are seen at times when the interest is more spiritual—and when only the spiritual, it would be supposed, would be attracted and find anything that would interest them—there are you found. It is not only in the House of God that you are seen with Christ’s people, but out-of-doors, too. You do not enjoy frivolous society. You are not at home in the haunts of vanity. Your companions are the godly. You delight in their conversation and the more spiritual the conversation becomes, the more you enjoy it!

Now, I do not know that you are a follower of Christ, but I have a strong suspicion that you may be and I would like to put these questions to you, if I might. “Are not you, also, one of His disciples? Did not I see you in the garden with Him? Why do you keep such company and love such society, if you are not one of them? Is not the old proverb true, ‘Birds of a feather flock together’? How is it that you love the footsteps of the flock and the way of the shepherd’s tents, if you are not one of the sheep? I dare not say that you are, for I cannot read your heart, but I will venture again to put the question, ‘Are not you also one of His disciples?’”

They suspected him, again, *because of his conversation*. Peter did not want to be known and, therefore, I do not suppose that he voluntarily said anything that would betray him. I daresay, if he conversed at all at the fire, he kept clear of all topics and subjects that would reveal him, or lead to the question being put as to whether he was a disciple or not, but, somehow or other, whatever he talked about, there was a sort of brogue, a twang in his speech, a something which showed that, at any rate, he was a Galilean—and they began to suspect that he might also be a companion of Jesus of Nazareth. It was his talk that betrayed him!

Now I do not know, dear Friend, whether you are a disciple of Christ, and I do not propose to press you to tell me, but excuse my asking the question. Your language and accent have about them a seasoning and a flavor of Christianity. You earnestly put aside from your speech everything unclean and you delight to speak words that honor Christ. If at any time in conversation there is a word said that seems to reflect upon the Lord Jesus, you are grieved at it and you would not repeat any sentiment or sentence that would dishonor Him. You are cautious and careful, too, about truth in your speech. You also desire to speak for the good of others. Especially during the last few months you have been very particular, and your prayer has been, “Open You my lips.” You have been afraid of

speaking those idle words for which God will bring men into judgment. Now, I do not know that you are Christ's disciple, but I suspect it, for a man is judged by his speech. We generally know what is in the well by what comes up in the bucket, and the metal of a bell can be pretty well judged by the stroke of the clapper. And I think we can form some estimate of who you must be when we perceive in your conversation the tone of a Christian, when we hear that you speak as one does whose heart has been renewed by Divine Grace. I shall, therefore, put the question to you, expecting an affirmative answer, "Are not you also one of His disciples?"

Further than this, Peter was recognized, I suspect, *as having acted for his Lord*, for the person who said, "Did not I see you in the garden with Him?" was a relative of him whose ear Peter had cut off. As for you, it is not long since you were angry when someone had blasphemed or spoken unkind words against one of God's servants, or against God's Gospel. I am not sure that you did well to be angry, but at any rate, it was a holy zeal that made you angry. Why, you were quite red in the face as you defended the Truth of God! I say again, I am not sure that you did well to be angry, but at any rate, while you were cutting off that fellow's ear with that sharp sword of yours, and dealing such hard blows for Christ—if I had been there to see you, I would have thought that you were one of His disciples—even though I would have known that your Master would not have wished you to use that sword, or to be so violent as you were. Yet your very zeal for Him though, perhaps, it was indiscreet, and perhaps not altogether what He could approve, showed that you really had some love to Him, some concern for His cause, some zeal for His Glory. Is it not so? Surely you are also one of His disciples! These things led them to suspect Peter, and these things lead us to suspect you.

One other thing, I doubt not there was about Peter, as he stood warming himself by the fire—*he was especially interested in the fate of Jesus*. Alas for him, he had so far forgotten himself that he tried, perhaps, to avoid showing that he took any particular interest in the trial. But I will guarantee you that those who could read faces could read something in Peter's face as it was lit up by the glare of the coals! When he heard them smite his Master with the palms of their hands upon His cheek, did you not see that tear roll down his face? He pretended he was brushing away a drop of sweat from his brow, but anyone who was watching him, especially one with the quick eyes of the maid that spoke, could see that it was a dewdrop of another sort that was falling from his eye!

Now, you have not *said* that you are a disciple of Christ, but have we not sometimes caught you unawares and read it in your face? The other Sunday, when we spoke of the Redeemer's sufferings, your soul was melted. When we talked of His glories, we could see how you exulted in the theme. And when the Gospel was freely preached to the chief of sinners, your eyes looked as if you understood it—and as if you loved it.

Though, perhaps, even now, you would hardly venture to say, "I am saved," yet you experience a joy and delight in hearing the Truth of God which you would not have known if you had not been one of Christ's disciples—and a holy trembling and heart-searching under the Word of God that you would not have experienced unless you had been first of all quickened by the Spirit of His Grace. Yes, the countenance will often betray what is going on within—and those dear ones who are saved—I have no doubt they have observed about you a great many things and have compelled them cheerfully to say, "We believe So-and-So is a Christian. We cannot doubt it. There is a something about his whole manner and conversation, his manner of speech, his mode of thought and style of action that betrays him as being a disciple of Christ."

Now, Beloved Friend, I cannot follow you home and judge as to your secret life, but I will put this question to you in various ways, in which, of course, I must leave Simon Peter out of the question. You have lately put your trust in Christ Jesus, alone. That is to say, if you have not done so, or if you are not sure you have done so, at any rate you have not any other trust and all the trust you have is set on Him. You see that there is an end of all perfection in the flesh and you are looking for the perfection which He gave to His people when He finished His atoning Sacrifice and sat down at the right hand of God. Though you cannot see much light, yet you know that there is no light except in Him and you have cast away forever that false light in which you once rejoiced. Well, I am glad, and I am inclined to put to you the question, "Are not you also one of His disciples?"

You have lately begun to pray and that not as a matter of form. You have left off that form you once repeated and now you pray from your very heart. Sometimes you cannot pray as you would—in fact, you never do make your petition quite such as you desire. Still, you pray as well as you can, with groans and tears and longings that you may be taught how to pray better. Well, I never yet heard of a praying soul that was not one of Christ's disciples! It was a token that Saul of Tarsus was a convert to Christ when it was said, "Behold, he prays." So I will put to you the question, since you utter the living prayer of a truly earnest soul, "Are not you also—despite your doubts, questions, and humble lamentations—are not you one of His disciples?"

Moreover, *you now have an interest in the Word of God*. The Bible was very dull to you once. A three-volume novel pleased you much better. But now anything that will tell you of your Lord and of His love, and will instruct you in His Truth—anything of that sort you care for—you have a hungering after it. Well, I have not yet known dead people become hungry and I do not know that I ever yet heard of a carrion crow that desired to feed on the food of the dove! I think there must be some change in you, or you would not love the clean winnowed grain which delights God's children. I am not sure about it, but still, I shall venture to put the

question and believe that I know what answer you will give, "Are not you also one of His disciples?"

Besides, *you know that there is a change in your life.* As a child, you are now striving to honor your parents. As a tradesman, you have now left off many practices that you once allowed yourself to adopt. As a common man speaking to others, you are now more charitable in your words than you used to be. There are things that were once amusements to you which yielded you pleasure, but which have now become vanity of vanities to you. Now you know that when you rise in the morning, the thing you are most afraid of is that you should do wrong during the day—and if you are troubled at night, it is because you have done a wrong. And the matter that pains you about it most is not the loss of custom, but the loss of a peaceful conscience. Now, I think if you are all this, surely you are also one of Christ's disciples!

I have suggested many hopeful things that would lead me to think that you are His disciple, but if you are not, then assuredly you are His enemy! What do you think of that? If I should make a list of this congregation and should write down all the disciples of Christ, (supposing I were able to do that), and if my pen were just about to be withdrawn from the paper, could you bear that I should say, "I am about to close this roll. I have written down all the disciples of Christ here. I have finished the list, and your name is not there"? I am sure you would say, "Oh, stay your hand a while, Sir! I was afraid I was not one of His, but now it comes to the push, I dare not withhold my name!" And I am certain that if I were then to take another roll and to begin to write down the names of all those who did not believe in Jesus, you would say, "Oh, no, do not do that! Stop a moment. Do not let my name be written down there! I could not stand that, for I think I am not quite His enemy. At any rate, I long to be His disciple."

I sometimes wish you would push yourself into this corner. If it came to the point, Beloved—if it really came to the point—some of you who have said, "I am afraid I do not love Him," because you do not love Him as you ought. Some of you who have said, "I am afraid I do not trust Him," because you have some doubts and some fears, I have no doubt that if it came to the point, notwithstanding all things, God would lead you to trust Him and to rejoice in Him! Remember that story of one of the martyrs who had been condemned to die for Christ, and who, about a week before he died, was full of fear and trembling? He was afraid of the fire and much cast down by the prospect of being burned. There was a fellow prisoner with him who scolded him for it and told him that he ought to trust in God, that he ought not to be dismayed, and ought not to be cast down. When the day came for them to burn together, the poor, weak, trembling man stood on the firewood and he said, before the fire was kindled, "Oh, He has come! He has come! He has come and He has filled my soul with His Presence!" He died triumphantly, while the other

man, who had scolded him for his lack of faith, recanted at the last moment and became a traitor to the Truth of God. The Lord will help you if you are but right toward Him. Still, I pray that you may be delivered from every question about whether you are His disciple or not.

II. Now, having thus uttered my suspicions about some of you, I shall, in the second place, demand from those of you who seem to be Christ's disciples, **WHY DO YOU NOT ACT AS IF YOU WERE A DISCIPLE?** "Are not you also one of His disciples?"

Why, then, are you not sharing His reproach? Peter is standing there warming his hands, looking to his personal comfort. His Master is over yonder being despised and rejected, maltreated and smitten. If you are one of His disciples, Peter, is this the place for you—among the ribald crowd around the fire? Is not your proper place at your Lord's side, to be laughed at as He is, falsely accused as He is, and buffeted as He is? I may be speaking to some who love Christ, or are to be suspected of it, but they have never borne His reproach. You are not numbered with any Christian Church because well, it is not a very respectable thing in the circle in which you move! You have not professed those Truths of God which you have believed because it would render you extremely unpopular if you did! You have not said in your household, "I am a Christian," because it is clear to you that your husband might not like it, or that your father might not have patience with it. You have slunk into the workshop and you have hidden your colors and you have been comfortable with ungodly men—and when they have uttered hard things about Christ, though you have not liked what they said, you have not expressed your disapproval—and so your silence gave consent to them.

"Are not you also one of His disciples," and do you refuse to share the reproach of Christ? Have you forgotten Moses, who, though he might have been like a king in Egypt, yet took his place with the poor despised, enslaved Israelites, "esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt"? Can you not take your place with Christ's poor people? Are you ashamed of them because they are not titled and rich, or because their literary standing is not very high? Are you ashamed of them because other people misrepresent and slander them? Has the offense of the Cross ceased? Do you expect that true Christianity will ever be fashionable? Do you believe for a moment, in your heart, that Christ spoke a lie when He said to His disciples, "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves"? If there is a religion concerning which all men speak well, woe be unto it, for it cannot be the religion of Christ! Do you not know that the way to Heaven is upstream? The current runs downward to the Gulf of Destruction! Are you not willing to take the Cross and go against popular opinion—and against everything else that is necessary for Christ's sake?

The day comes when they who have been ashamed of His Cross will find themselves losing His crown. "No Cross, no crown." This is what Christ, Himself, says "Whoever shall be ashamed of Me and of My Words,

of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed when He shall come in His own Glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels." If you dare not follow Him because you fear shame—shame shall be your perpetual inheritance! Remember that verse, "But the fearful, and unbelieving...shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone: which is the second death." Oh, that we may never be among those cowards, for those are the persons He means, not the fearing ones, but the fearful ones who dare not be reproached for Him! Is there listening to these words one who loves his Lord and knows the Truth, and knows where God's Church is, but has been afraid to join His people—ashamed to confess the Truth and to follow Christ? I come to you with this word and I would gladly look you in the face and say, "Are not you also one of His disciples?" Yet you go in and out with the ungodly and you warm your hands at their fire! And you are mirthful with their jollity and you are pleased with their ungodliness. "Come out from among them, and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing." Confess Christ before men that He may confess you before His Father and the angels in Heaven!

Again, if you are among Christ's disciples, *why are you not witnessing for Him?* It was not only that Peter was not sharing His shame, but that when Christ was on trial, it was due to Him that every person who could have spoken a good word for Him should do it—but everyone was silent. When Christ said, "I spoke openly," Peter might have said, "Yes, I have heard all He said and I have never heard Him utter sedition or blasphemy! Nothing of the kind has ever come from my Master's lips. If anything has been spoken in secret, I have been there. I have been with John and James in the most select circle of all His disciples and thus, too, I can bear witness that He is innocent." But, no, Peter is silent and instead of witnessing he denies his Master!

It is the duty of every Christian to be witnessing for Christ. Jesus is still on trial every day. He stands before the world, as it were, at this very hour, and the question is—Is He the Son of God or not? Witnesses are being examined every day for Him and against Him. "What do you think of Christ?" is a question which is stirring all this city and all lands, more or less! And now shall He who claims to be the Savior of men and the Head of the Church—shall He, while so many speak against Him, lack the evidence of anyone who knows Him, who has been with Him and loves Him? There are some of us who find it sweet to witness for Him that He is the very Christ of God—and we do not take any honor to ourselves for so doing—for flesh and blood have not revealed it to us!

But is anyone keeping back his testimony? "Why," asks one "what would *my* testimony be worth?" You do not know what it would be worth. "Nobody would notice me. I am only a humble woman in my family." What? Have you no desire that your family should know the Truth of God? Have you one little child on your knee, and have you never put your arms about that little one's neck and prayed that she might belong

to Jesus, or that the boy might be the Savior's? Have you never told those darlings of yours what Christ has done for you? You could not do it, do you say? Not talk to your own child of what is written in your own heart concerning your own Lord? Ah, if you cannot, cry to God against such a disability and be not satisfied till you have conquered your unholy shame, for unholy it is! If you are also one of His disciples, bear your witness to Him, even if it is but one who can hear it! If that one is all the congregation that God sends you, you have done your part. I am not accountable for the people that hear me, but only for the witness that I bear! And you shall not be accountable for the largeness or smallness of your sphere, but for the faithfulness of your testimony for Christ. Tell all with whom you come in contact that He is your Savior, a precious Savior, a true Promiser, a Promise-Keeper, a faithful Friend, a Helper in life and in death! And I say again you know not what may be the value of your testimony, for if it is borne but to a child, that child may grow up to bear testimony to tens of thousands! You know not what may come of a spark of fire. Do but let it drop and you may set half a continent on a blaze! "Are not you also one of His disciples?" If you are, then bear your witness as well as take up your cross!

Now, diverging a little from what some of you will think most practical, let me ask, "Are not you also one of His disciples?" *Then why are you not enjoying the privileges which belong to His disciples?* You have not been baptized! Yet He who said, "Believe," also said, "Be baptized." It is written of some, "These are they which follow the Lamb wherever He goes." I ask you, did not the Lamb go down into the Jordan? Was He not baptized? Have you followed Him wherever He goes? If You have not done so, in being disobedient to His will you have lost a great privilege! There is His Supper, too. 'Tis but an outward form, as the other ordinance is. Both are but emblems, but still the Lord has been pleased to say, "This do in remembrance of Me," and He often gives to His people very sweet manifestations of Himself in the breaking of bread. You are one of His disciples, or at least I suspect you are—but You have never been to the Lord's Table!

"There are others that can observe those things," you say. Stop! Suppose it is right for any one Christian to neglect the ordinances of God's House? Clearly there can be no exceptional privileges—it would, therefore, be right for all Christians to neglect these two ordinances! You are not a member of any Christian Church, but you think you are right in standing alone. If you are, so would all be! And clearly, the visible Church would become extinct—but it could never have been the Lord's intention that it should be so! He has not ordained that His people should live as individuals alone. He calls Himself a Shepherd, because sheep are gregarious. They gather together and they make a flock in a fold, and He would have His people so. If He had called them by the name of some other creature, it might be supposed that they would go to

Heaven separately and alone—but He calls them His *flock* and that signifies fellowship—union.

If you are right, then we should all be right in doing as you do. And where and how could the means of Grace be maintained? Would not almost the very preaching of the Gospel become extinct? For the Church of God “is the pillar and ground of the Truth,” by which is meant, I suppose, that, as in the Roman forum there were certain pillars upon which the decrees of the Senate were put up, so the Church is a pillar upon which God hangs up the Gospel—and its proclamation of the Gospel to the sons of men is the pillar and ground upon which God exhibits the Gospel to all onlookers. And truly it must be so. It is the Church’s business to evangelize the world and to maintain Christ’s ordinances. But where would the Church be to do this if all Christians were to be allowed to remain separate from the Church? Your business is to find some company of Believers, unite yourself with them and enjoy the privileges which Christ has given, such as His two ordinances of Baptism, and the Lord’s Supper—and all the other blessings which belong to the Church as constituted in His name. “Are not you also one of His disciples?” His disciples meet to remember Him and some of you turn your backs! They gather around His Table and feed upon the bread and wine which are emblems of Him, but you go away and seem to say, “We do not need these emblems. Christ has instituted an ordinance which we do not require, we can do without it. We are so spiritual that we do not need it.” O Sirs, say not so! If you are one of His disciples, do as He bids you!

But now a more cheering thought with which to close. “Are not you also one of His disciples?” *Then why are you not resting in His love, in His Grace and in His power?* You came in here tonight with a burden upon your spirit which is crushing you into the very dust. You are low and depressed and miserable, and people in the house where you live know it—and yet they know that you are a professed Christian! “Are not you also one of His disciples?” and did not He say, “Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them...Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these...Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? Or, What shall we drink?” You also are one of His disciples and yet you are vexing yourself with cares and troubles just like a heathen and a publican! Oh, but you have lost a friend, a child, a husband, or a father—and you are crushed into the very dust! You now have no hope and you are angry with your God—and yet Christ said, “Not as I will, but as You will.” “Are not you also one of His disciples?” Is this like your Master? He drank the gall cup and you put it away and fight against your God!

“But I am afraid of a trial that is coming upon me,” you say. Yet Paul said, “Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplica-

tion with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.” Your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things! And you, one of His disciples, are fearing for the future? O Friend, O Friend, does this become you? Is this right? I have come, just now, from the bedside of a dearly-beloved friend to whom I have already referred. Strange as it is, he has been unconscious two days to everybody else, but the moment he hears my voice, he opens his eyes and says, “Oh, how happy I am to see your face once again, my dear pastor!” And then he begins to pour out a blessed torrent of adoration and praise to his God! Barely alive and yet he says he is the happiest man alive and Christ is more precious to him than ever! He is gently sinking away rejoicing. He says he is as happy as ever he was in his life and, he thinks, more happy, though the death-gurgle is in his throat and he can scarcely breathe.

And you are afraid to die, are you? You are a disciple of that blessed Lord who is helping our dear Brother to die, but you think He will not help you, too? Why, thousands of His people have closed their eyes on earth, only to open them in Heaven! Thousands have died triumphantly! Thousands have passed through the River of Death calmly rejoicing in Jesus! And you also are one of the disciples of the same Master, the same Master who can—

**“Make a dying bed
Feel soft as downy pillows are”—**

the same Master who has said, “Fear you not, for I am with you: be not dismayed, for I am your God.” Yet you cannot trust Him who has been so faithful to others—yes, and let me also say, who has been so faithful to you up till now! Oh, if you are, indeed, His disciple, go and put that aching head of yours right on the bosom of your Lord, for within that bosom palpitates a heart that never changes and that never fails one of His disciples! Go and rest there. You may rest, for it is well—it will be well with you for the present, for the future, for time, for eternity! If you are one of His disciples, take His yoke upon you and learn of Him! Like He, be meek and lowly of heart, and you shall find rest unto your soul. Remember that it is not your place to question what God does, nor to arraign Him at your bar. Your duty is not to say, “My will be done,” but to remember that “it is enough for the disciple that he be as his Master, and the servant as his Lord.”

I trust the questions I have put to you, my Hearers, will not be lost upon you. It may strike you that it is not necessary to answer at once whether you are Christ’s disciple or not, but it will be very necessary to answer that question soon. I have lately been struck beyond measure with the fact of our mortality and the suddenness with which many of our friends depart out of this world. I heard, only this last week, “Brother So-and-So walked into my shop on Thursday. On the Sunday I heard that he was dead.” “Sister So-and-So was at the Communion service, and within 48 hours she died.” This is the world of the dying! You seem to be passing before me in a procession and I, too, am part of the procession,

myself! Oh, make sure work for eternity! Run no risk concerning your souls—not even this night’s risk, for this night, at midnight, without a knock at your door there may come the messenger saying, “Prepare to meet your God.” And then—and then, it *will* matter if you are Christ’s disciple, or not! It will *not* matter, then, whether you have been rich or not, educated or not—but it will matter for all eternity whether you are His or not, for remember the division—“These shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal.” God grant that you then may be with the company of the disciples of Jesus for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 18:12-27.**

Verses 12, 13. *Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus and bound Him, and led Him away to Annas first; for he was father-in-law to Caiaphas, who was the high priest that same year.* [See Sermons #2820, Volume 49—CHRIST BEFORE ANNAS and #2822, Volume 49—CHRIST IN BONDS—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Annas had been high priest before, and he seems to have been still regarded as high priest and to have been a leading spirit among the adversaries of Christ. The old sinner would not go to bed that night until he had seen the Man whom he hated brought bound before him. Sometimes hatred becomes a more powerful passion than even love, and here, while the disciples of Jesus all fled in terror, Annas, the Savior’s bitter foe, was wide awake and awaiting His arrival with those who had taken Him captive.

14. *Now Caiaphas was he who gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.* Therein uttering a prophecy which he did not fully understand, speaking like another Balaam through whom God spoke His Truth, as once He did through the ass that Balaam rode! Sometimes God makes the basest men the unconscious utterers of His Truth which they do not, themselves, comprehend.

15. *And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple.* Here is John’s usual modesty—he will not mention his own name, but simply speaks of “another disciple.”

15, 16. *That disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest. But Peter stood at the door outside.* John boldly followed Jesus and so was safe. Peter stood at a distance from his Lord and so was in danger.

16-18. *Then went out that other disciple who was known unto the high priest and spoke unto those whom kept the door and brought in Peter. Then said the damsel that kept the door, unto Peter, Are not you also one of this Man’s disciples? He said, I am not. And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals, for it was cold: and they warmed themselves; and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself.* Pe-

ter was in bad company. While he was warming his body, his soul was growing cold to his Master. Men cannot go into bad company without getting some hurt. It is said by a quaint old writer that if men go to Ethiopia, they may not become Ethiopians, but by the scorching of the sun they will grow blacker than they were before. It is always better to keep out of harm's way if we can. He that would not fall into a ditch should take care not to walk near the edge of it. So, if Peter wanted to stand fast, he should not have gone where he would be sure to be tempted.

19. *The high priest then asked Jesus of His disciples, and of His Doctrine.* This was a sort of preliminary examination before the Sanhedrin should try Him officially.

20-22. *Jesus answered him, I spoke openly to the world; I taught in the synagogue and in the Temple, where the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why do you ask Me? Ask them who heard Me what I have said to them: behold they know what I said. And when He had thus spoken one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand saying, Answer You the high priest so?* Here we get an exposition of one of Christ's own sayings. You know that He said, "Whoever shall smite you on your right cheek, turn to him the other, also." Of course Christ would carry out His own precept, so we see that He did not mean that His disciples were literally to turn the other cheek to those who struck them, but that they were to bear such treatment patiently, and not to give a railing answer. See how Jesus Himself turned the other cheek.

23. *Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why do you strike Me?* Nothing could have been more calm or more dignified and, at the same time, more full of the spirit of forgiveness.

24-27. *Now Annas had Him sent bound to Caiaphas the high priest. And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. They said therefore unto him, Are not you also one of His disciples? He denied it, and said, I am not. One of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, said, Did not I see you in the garden with Him?* [See Sermon #2106, Volume 35—"IN THE GARDEN WITH HIM"—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] *Peter then denied again: and immediately the cock crew.* We know that the Lord turned and looked upon Peter. He did not speak a word, perhaps lest Peter should fall into the hands of those who were round about him—but His look was sufficient to kindle in Peter the fires of repentance—and he went out to weep bitterly over his shameful denial of his Lord.

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

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

“IN THE GARDEN WITH HIM”

NO. 2106

**DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 8, 1889,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“One of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, said, Did not I see you in the garden with Him?”
John 18:26.***

PETER was on dangerous ground. When his Master was being buffeted, he was trying to make himself comfortable. We read of the high priest's servants, that they warmed themselves and Peter stood with them and warmed himself. He stood with them and they were rough servants of ill masters. He was in bad company and he was a man who could not afford to be in bad company—for he was so impulsive and so easily provoked to rash actions.

The Holy Spirit, having notified us once that Peter was on unsafe ground, in the words, “Peter stood with them and warmed himself,” especially observes that he remained there, which was worse still. Any man may inadvertently stumble upon a boggy piece of ground. But if he is a wise man, he will make every effort to pass it and be on sound soil again. He does ill to linger upon a quagmire, for thus he toys with danger and courts destruction.

The Holy Spirit has recorded it further on, in the twenty-fifth verse, a second time, “Simon Peter stood and warmed himself.” Take heed of abiding in the place of danger. You may be called in Providence to go through the Campagna when it reeks with malaria, but you are not called to live there. If you have to cross a sea, cross it. But do not try to cast anchor in mid-ocean and thus keep your ship continually amid the billows. Where there is peril there should be a prudent haste. Quick! Pilgrim, be quick and tarry not in the place of danger!

The enchanted ground may lie on the road to the Celestial City, and therefore it may be your duty to traverse it with anxious speed. But if you sit down in it—if you take your rest in any of the arbors there provided by the evil Prince, you may sleep yourself into no end of misery. Linger no longer in the wilderness than you are forced to do—hurry through the enemy's country, and rest not till you are in Immanuel's land.

Voluntary continuance on evil ground leads to repeated temptations. First the maid, then several men, and last of all this kinsman of the man whom he had wounded, began to try Peter in the high priest's hall. They put to him questions which led him to deny that he ever was a disciple of the Prophet of Galilee. The longer you stop in an evil place, the more numerous will your temptations become. Temptations are like flies—they come one or two at the first but by-and-by they buzz about you in swarms. When the deadly arrows from Satan's bow fly in such showers, it ill becomes you to be at ease. While you tarry on dangerous ground, your weakness increases.

Peter, who might at first have acknowledged his Master, did not do it, but denied Him. Having once denied Him, it was almost inevitable that he should do the same again. And so, again and again, he said, “I know not the Man.” And as the weakness increases and the sin gains force, the fault deepens in blackness. Thrice he denied his Master and in the end he added oaths and curses, as if it would be a sure proof that he had never been with Christ if he could swear.

One distinguishing mark of a Christian, in those days, was that he swore not at all, by any oath of any sort, upon any subject, good, bad, or indifferent. Thus Peter, seeing that he could profanely swear, was giving good evidence, as the listeners thought, that he could never have been with Jesus of Nazareth.

And so, dear Friends, you see the reason why, when you come near the place of temptation, you should hasten by it as quickly as possible. Linger not where the plague rages—stay not where temptation abounds. While Peter was getting increased velocity *into* sin, he was losing all his strength to get *out* of sin. Why, at the very first, when he had denied his Lord to the maid, he ought to have crept away into a secret place and wept, or more bravely still, he should have rushed right through the crowd up to his dear Master yonder, and have said, “Forgive Your servant for his treachery and cowardice.” But no, he perseveres in the falsehood he has spoken. He adds lie to lie and sinks deeper in the mire. Left to himself, his course is downward and there is no hope for the deserter.

The lesson of this is—again I say it—hasten out of the place of temptation. Flee from it as speedily as possible. There are some who are in positions of life which they ought to give up—positions which are sinful and cannot be held by persons who are honest, truthful and chaste. It is of no use to try to fight the battle of the Cross where some people are—they are harnessed to the chariot of the devil and they must come out of it, or be driven to destruction. If they are engaged in a trade which, in the very essence of it, is bad, let them get away from it.

If they are in associations which are distinctly sinful, they must break loose from those associations and not pretend to be Christians. Talking the other evening with a young girl who has, I trust, escaped from the grosser sin into which she might soon have fallen, I said to her—“There are three things you can do and those three things I will set before you by an illustration. When you get outside the Tabernacle, there will be a tram car. Now, go up to the car and put one foot on the car and keep the other foot on the ground, and if you do not come down with a smash I am very much mistaken. Yet many people try to keep in with the world and keep in with Christ and they will never do it—but will make a terrible fall of it before long.

“Now, the second thing that you can do is keep standing in the road in the mud and not get into the car at all. You can stop there and let the tram car go by—that is all fair and straight. If you want to live in the world and be of the world, well, live in the world and be of the world, and take what pleasure it can give you and reap the fruit of it at last. But there is a third thing you can do, namely, get right off the road into the car and let the car take you right away where it is going.”

Now, it is this third thing that I commend to each of you. Get right into Christ and let the Lord Jesus, by the power of His Holy Spirit, carry you away from the unclean place where you now stand, bearing you in safety along the tram-lines of holiness till He brings you to the terminus of Glory at His own right hand. May the Lord deliver you from halting between two opinions, or choosing the wrong opinion. And may He now grant you Divine Grace to leap into the Gospel chariot and leave all sinful company and doubtful ways behind so that you may acknowledge the Lord Jesus and be His true disciple!

So much concerning Peter and the mischief that he fell into. This brings me to consider one of the questions which led Peter into his denial of his Master. It is this question, "Did not I see you in the garden with Him?" Let us try to handle that a little. And may the Lord cause it to do us as much good as once to Peter it did harm!

I. And the first thing I say about it is this—MANY OF US HAVE HAD SPECIAL ASSOCIATION WITH OUR LORD. If any were to ask us, "Did not I see you in the garden with Him?" we should right gladly answer, "Yes, you have probably seen me. For I have often been there." We are by no means ashamed to admit that we have been much in the company of the despised Redeemer. Let us think how we have been, many of us, associated with our Lord Jesus Christ—it will do us good to consider our close connection with our Well-Beloved Lord.

The large proportion of the friends present tonight have been associated with him in Church fellowship. Our names are on the Church Roll as belonging to Jesus. We, voluntarily and cheerfully, first gave ourselves to the Lord and afterwards to His people, according to His Word. Some of us have had our names enrolled among baptized Believers for many years, and we are right glad to have them there. May they never be erased by any shameful act of ours.

But there may they stand until that day when the Church Rolls of earth shall all be swallowed up in the muster roll of the redeemed above! It is no small thing, to my mind, to have my name in the family register of God—

***"Recorded in some humble place
Beneath my Lord the Lamb."***

Yes, so far as the Church is concerned, we have been "in the garden with Him." For the Church is the garden wherein He walks and takes delight.

In consequence of this, we have been associated with our Lord in fellowship of worship. When His name has been praised, we have praised it. When solemn prayer has been offered in His name, we have said, "Amen." How many times have those of us who are in the period of middle life been gathered in His name in the great congregation! We have thousands of times expressed by word of mouth and, I trust, with our inmost hearts, our solemn union with our Divine Lord. This we have testified at the footstool of Grace, when we have been adoring the Most High in private, at the family altar, and in the more public assemblies of Believers. Several thousands of times we have been "in the garden with Him" in the early morning and in the cool of the day and on happy Sabbaths without number.

Many of us have gone further than this. We have been baptized into His death and thus we have solemnly declared that we are dead with Him and have also risen with Him. Even more solemn still, if anything can be more

solemn, we have eaten and drunk at His Table and the viands have been nothing less than His flesh and blood, representatively set forth in broken bread and the fruit of the vine. What sweet communion we have had with our blessed Lord at His Table! I am sure I could not tell you, and I think you could not tell me, how very near our Well-Beloved has been to us.

As I heard a newly-converted one say the other day, in simple accents, “There has been a mysterious mix-up. He has come into me to build me up and I have been as joined to Him as if I had eaten His flesh and had drunk His blood.” This is a very, very solemn business. If it has been true, it is solemnly delightful. If it has been false, it is solemnly ruinous. I know of nothing that can minister more to our condemnation than to have falsely avowed such a union with Christ as that which is set forth in the Holy Supper. I pray that we may not be found mere pretenders.

In a hundred acts of Church life we have been in the garden with Him—in fact, we have professed to be part and parcel of His mystical body. We have received others into our fellowship and we have sent them forth to other Churches in the name of Jesus. We have prayed with them as they have gone forth, as missionaries to the ends of the earth, to proclaim that same adorable name. We have been one with our Lord in acts of worship and fellowship and service. We count it our privilege, honor, and delight that it has been so.

But then, dear Friends, we have, some of us, been associated with Him in a yet higher sense still—I mean in distinct open testimony. We have preached His name—we have borne witness to the truth of His Word. We have pleaded with others. As though God did beseech them by us, we have prayed them, in Christ’s place, to be reconciled to God. We have proclaimed, in Christ’s name, mercy to the chief of sinners. And we have felt His power working with us, so that what we bound on earth was bound in Heaven, and what we loosed on earth was loosed in Heaven.

So much have we been identified with the Lord Jesus, that when, in the preaching of the Word, we declared the remission of sins to those who sought the Savior, they did seek Him and their sins were remitted. The Lord made us to be girt with His own solemn power and to stand in the place of His risen Self. What an association with Christ has this been! Others of you, Beloved, have been associated with Him in teaching the children. And you have come very near Him, for He said, “Suffer the little children to come unto Me and forbid them not.”

You have brought the young to Him and He has smiled upon you while you have been bringing them. Oh, yes, you have been associated with Christ in visiting the sick, and those in prison, in instructing the ignorant, in bringing in the wandering, in cheering the faint. You have taken upon yourself, by His Grace, this holy ministry, each one according to his ability. And thus, in the most practical ways, you have been “in the garden with Him.”

Yes, and to go further still, you have not only been associated with Him in *service* but also in *suffering* for His name’s sake. You had a battle to fight in your youth, against ungodly relatives and associates. And you fought it well for Christ’s sake. Some of you godly women have had to bear a living martyrdom, ever since you have been married, through the ungod-

liness and unkindness of your husbands. Certain of you have been despised, ridiculed, and rejected with Christ, and for Christ. Oh, it is a glorious thing!

Some of us know what it is to have our name cast out as evil and to have come down, in some men’s esteem, from the brightest heights to the darkest depths, solely and only because we will follow the Lamb wherever He goes and will shake ourselves clear of the infidelity of the present age, which is defiling the visible Church with its filthy leprosy. It is very sweet to be accounted a fool for Jesus! It is most joyful when one can go into his chamber and sing—

***“If on my face, for Your dear name,
Shame and reproaches be,
All hail reproach and welcome shame,
For You’ll remember me!”***

This is no small fellowship. And in this we have, many of us, possessed our full share. Yes, we can say that we have been in the garden with Him.

Once more—not only have we been with Him in Church fellowship, in service, and in some small measure of suffering, but we have been with Him in secret. O Beloved, we dare not tell that which we have enjoyed behind the veil with our All-Glorious Lord. But we have been with Him, sometimes, in His joy, till whether in the body or out of the body, we could not tell—God alone has known! It would not have taken us any trouble to slip into Heaven, we were so near the door and the door was so open. There would scarcely have needed to be a death, for we were already in the beginnings of the heavenly life. Our joy has been full when we have been in the garden with Him.

We have also had a measure of fellowship with Him in His anguish, when we have groaned out our very soul to see the apostasy of His Church. To see how those that should preach His Gospel do not preach it, but preach the very reverse of it. We have felt as if it were better for us to die than to live when we have seen this exceedingly great evil. When the sins and iniquities of Christians have come under our eyes, and the name of Christ has been blasphemed, and the precious Gospel has been despised because of the inconsistencies of professors, and the silly amusements of Church members, we have been afflicted with our Lord.

We have been with Christ almost in a bloody sweat concerning His base betrayal by His disciples. You know what I am talking of, some of you. The Lord does bring some of His people very near to Him, till they are in the garden with Him, in an agony of soul for sinful men. There have you been made to know what you cannot tell and to behold in your soul what no eye can ever see—and to hear in the heart that which shall never greet the ear of mortal man. Beloved, in these senses, you would be bound to confess your association with the Lord Jesus, and to say, “Yes, I have been in the garden with Him.”

II. Now I go a step further in the text. The question is, “Did not I see you in the garden with Him?” which leads me to observe that **MANY OF US HAVE BEEN SEEN OF MEN IN OUR ASSOCIATION WITH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.**

We did not want to be observed—we were far from courting observation. There are some of the Lord’s people who would like to go to Heaven with-

out being seen with the Lord Jesus in the streets by daylight. They desire to be saved and yet never be seen with their Savior. I do not think that the sin of this age, with most Christians, is obtrusiveness. Far more likely it is unholy fear. Some think it modesty. But I question whether this is its real name. I will not call it *cowardice*, but I will take their own expression and call it backwardness. They say they are of a "retiring" disposition, which I interpret in a way very little to their credit.

I have heard of a soldier who was of a very "retiring" disposition when the battle was on and he retired with great diligence as soon as the first shots were fired. I think I heard that he was hung up as a deserter and a coward. No good comes of a retiring disposition of that kind. We have that sort of "retiring person" with us nowadays but such people will have to answer for it when the Lord denies those who denied Him.

But, without desiring to be known, dear Friends, you that have been with Christ have been found out. And, first, you have been *seen* in the garden with your Lord by those associated in family life with you. It was not long before they discovered that you were a Christian. A man who carries in his hand a lot of roses will soon be known to bear it by the perfume which is scattered abroad. He that has Divine Grace in his heart needs not to advertise it. It will advertise itself.

Mother finds out that there is something very different in John from what there used to be. Sister Jane finds out that Mary seems quite altered from what she used to be. Father discovers that Mother is so different from what she was a little while ago. Like water in a leaking vessel, religion oozes out. Love to Jesus is sure to be found out. Believe me, Christian Brothers and Sisters, your friends know that you follow Jesus. They have known it long and they will yet say to you, "Did not I see you in the garden with Him?"

You were observed at private prayer. You were noticed reading the Scriptures. At first you blushed to find it commended, or to find it blamed. You do not do so now, for you are aware that everybody knows it. If you have not been found out, I should think you have no Divine Grace to spare, for even a little true religion is spied out in these days.

And you, dear Friends, have been found out by certain curious people that are always prying about. We do not admire them, but we can never get rid of them—certain persons from whom no secret can ever be hid. They seem to know things by instinct, and they tell them by compulsion—whispering them with the preface that nobody must repeat what they say—though they, themselves, take license to communicate the secret to everybody they meet. These tattlers soon find out that a man is a Christian and they speedily spread the intelligence, not always with pleasure—in some instances with malicious sarcasm.

They ferret out the fact of your change and when they see you, they sneeringly ask, "Did not I see you in the garden with Him?" We have been found out, especially by those whom our holy faith opposes. Here was one that had come to take the Savior as a prisoner and he was the man to pitch upon Peter. "Did not I see you in the garden with Him?" Just so. And when you come out and bear witness against an error, or when your

life bears hard upon evil conduct, you will assuredly be found out. Those who are on the other side will know you.

I hope that they will have good reason for knowing you. I hope that they will oppose you very much, and thus effectually drive you out of their fellowship. There are two seeds in the world—the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. And if the seed of the serpent never hisses at you, you may be afraid that you do not belong to the seed of the woman. God has put an enmity between the serpent and the woman—between the serpent's seed and the woman's seed—and so it must be till the end of time.

Take any opposition that you get from worldlings as a token for good—a sign that you are of a different race from those who despise you—a testimonial to your character from those whose homage to goodness embodies itself in persecution. "Oh, yes, yes," these people will say, "Did not I see you at the meeting house? Did not I hear of your being with that canting crew? Are not you one of those vile hypocrites?" And so on. That is the way in which they compliment us. Do you know all the pretty things they say of your leaders? We are not spared by foul tongues.

Oh, you that are common soldiers in the ranks, you may very well bear your portion of abuse. For if I heard you fretting, I should remind you that your leaders have had worse things to bear. Do you think that I lie on a bed of roses? Am I never opposed and slandered? I have my full, fair share of the world's abuse. But I am ready for twice as much, if necessary. We are willing to be so publicly in the garden with our Master, that His enemies may quote it against us, if they wish, and sneeringly ask, "Did not I see you in the garden with Him?"

Especially will this be known to those who are affected by our procedure. The gentleman whose ear had been cut off knew Peter. So did his kinsman, who, to his alarm, saw a sword come so very close to his kinsman's skull. He recognized Peter at once. And no wonder. It was only by the flash of one of those torches that he caught a glimpse of the disciple with the sword. But, as Peter cut off that man's cousin's ear, the impression made was particularly vivid.

So, if you begin to talk about Christ to people, if you ask them whether they are saved, some of them will thank you for your holy anxiety. But others, who choose to feel annoyed, will judge that you wantonly tread upon their feet, and they will feel that you have assaulted them. Deal faithfully with their souls and they will photograph your portrait on the sensitive plate of a very angry nature. They do not want to see you any more. They "fight shy" of you, and so on. For they judge you to be very rude and personal.

I hope that you will always have a little company of friends who will remember you by reason of their smarting ears. I do not invite you to cut their ears off—quite the reverse—rather heal their ears with a touch of Christ's golden ointment. But at the same time, make their ears tingle with your warnings and entreaties. Tell them about Christ Crucified. And then, the next time they see you, they will say, "That is the man that spoke to me about my sin and my Savior." Be recognized because of the earnestness of your concern for the salvation of others.

There are some of us—and a very considerable number of friends here tonight—who are known to have been in the garden with Christ by a vast number of persons. If some of you were to fall into grave sin and desired to hide yourselves, where would you go? Especially myself—where could I go? I could not go into any doubtful or questionable place, with the hope of being unknown, for someone would point me out in a moment. I wonder where I could get to without being perceived. I say I wonder, but I do not want to discover. Where could a well-known preacher go without being recognized?

I sat with a good Brother minister one day in the midst of a pine plantation, on the top of a hill, which is quite a ways from the usual haunts of men. We were talking together about the things of God and I was saying, if we deserted our Master where could we flee, so as not to be known? I said, “If we sat long enough even in this lone spot, I dare say some person would come along who would know us.” Almost immediately I saw the head of a man moving among the pine trees and watched him coming up the hill. I said, “I should not wonder if a friend of ours is coming now.”

It was a Brother who sits in the right-hand gallery, come to search for a secluded spot for a picnic. Yes, he had found us out. We could not get anywhere without being known. You and I had better keep our regimentals on and go through with the war and never be ashamed—for we cannot go away incognito. The day is past in which we can be hidden. If you are a Christian and have declared yourself out-and-out for Christ, never think of going back. For you cannot, without having the finger of shame pointed at you. In the district where you live you have become enthusiastic for the conversion of souls, you have lifted high the banner of Truth. You have declared that for Christ and Him crucified you desire to live and die.

Well, then, my dear Brothers and Sisters, you are bound to go forward even to the end. Else many a man and maid will point their fingers at you and say, “Did not we see you in the garden with Him?”—and how will you answer, if, afterwards, you are seen serving self and this present evil world?

III. That leads me to the third point, to which we have climbed up insensibly, namely, this—**WE ARE NOW THE SUBJECTS OF EXPECTATION.**

As we have been in the garden with Jesus and we have been seen there, we are now the subjects of very high expectations. That is to say, people expect a great deal from those who are known to be associated with Jesus. They are very unreasonable, sometimes, and expect far more than they are warranted in looking for—and consequently much more than they will ever get. I have known some to expect young Christians, who have just come to Christ, to be perfect—to know everything, to be able to preach a sermon, pray in public, give a five pound note and listen patiently to all the nonsense everybody chooses to talk.

Well, they may expect what they like, but they will not get unreasonable things. Should we expect from another what we cannot render ourselves? In these days they expect a man to do everything and then to attempt more. When you have toiled from morning to night and laid yourself out in

your Master's service—time, talents, substance, everything—somebody will snarl because you cannot do what he demands of you. The mercy is that we are *not* the servants of *man*—we are the servants of *God*. And if we please our Master, that is quite enough for us.

One Master is enough for the best of servants. If we are popular in Heaven, we may wisely be indifferent to the judgments of men. Unreasonable expectations we are not bound to meet. But there are expectations which are just and righteous. Men are quite right in expecting that, if you have been with Jesus, your character should be affected by association with Him.

For, first, you make a very high profession. You say, "I am Christ's." Well, then, they come to look at you and see what Christ's men are. If you are in an ugly temper, they will say, "Surely, this is not the work of God." If you are awfully stingy and never give anything away, they will conclude that it is not desirable to be a Christian. If you are sarcastic and find fault with everybody and everything, they will say, "That is not a very beautiful spirit." They are right, are they not? Can you blame them for thus judging?

Do you know how to turn a dirty penny in your business? That is no credit to the name of Christian. If you promise to send work home on Saturday night and your customers do not get it till a fortnight after, they will set small store by your Christianity. No one will think well of your religion if you do not tell the truth. When your word is passed, be sure that you keep it, or you will discredit your Lord and Master. I am not going into all the ways in which a man can so act in common life, as to lead people to exclaim, "That is not what we should have expected of a man that talks of following Jesus."

They have a right to expect a good deal from our sacred profession. What is our religion? Is it a semi-moral religion, like Mohammedanism? No, it is a holy religion, that would make you perfect if, by the Grace of God, you followed it to its ultimate issue. For it sets before you this as the object of ambition—"Be you perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect." Such a faith as ours ought to bring forth the noblest form of character. And when it does not, I do not wonder that the world is disappointed, and in its indignation speaks sharp things of us and of our faith. They have a right to expect a great deal from the disciples of such a Lord. Such a Leader! What ought not the followers to be? Such a Savior! What should the saved ones be? What manner of persons ought we to be who serve the holy, harmless, undefiled One?

Beloved, they may well expect great things on account of our comrades, with whom we are proud to be numbered. Consider who they were that went before us—those holy men and women who counted not their lives dear unto them. How faithfully they lived and served the Lord Jesus! Many of them went in a chariot of fire to Heaven, burnt quickly to death for Christ's sake. We are bound by our associations, bound by our Master, bound by the Truth of God we believe. We are bound by the profession we have made, to live, not as other men, but as men who are of noble lineage.

Men lifted up by a second birth, twice born, the elect of God—redeemed from among men—that we may be a kind of first fruits of His creatures.

IV. So, you see, we are brought where the world expects a good deal of us and when the world does not get it (that is the fourth point)—IF WE DISAPPOINT SUCH EXPECTATIONS—THE QUESTION MAY BE VERY PROPERLY PUT TO US, “Did not I see you in the garden with Him?”

It is a salutary thing for a man to know that his inconsistency is observed. Then he begins to see himself as others see him. It is very painful, very disagreeable. But, at the same time, very likely to bless the man. A man is apt to get a little angry about it. But it is a good thing for him to know how his conduct strikes other people. I have read of an old lady who gazed into a looking glass and remarked that they did not make good mirrors nowadays, for those which she used to look into, fifty years ago, showed her quite differently from what she now was. She said the looking glasses were very inferior in these times.

When the world observes that your character is inconsistent, it may be that it is a truthful looking glass, although it does not exhibit your beauties but shows up your wrinkles and blotches. Do not quarrel with the looking glass but quarrel with your own self. Depend upon it, you are disfigured with spots which you need to get rid of. When convicted by your conscience of an inconsistency, even though the conviction comes to you through an unkind, ungenerous remark of a wicked man, yet still take the lesson home and go to God for Divine Grace and forgiveness and begin again. A very plain-spoken enemy may do us ten times more service than an indulgent friend.

Such a question as this should effectually recall us to holiness—to deep repentance of the past and to strong resolves for the future. I will imagine that a certain Christian man has come to town for a holiday and during the season of his holiday in London, he is asked by a friend to go to a questionable place of amusement. I will imagine that he yields to the invitation and goes—though I am sorry even to imagine such a thing. Well, he has gone where he should not have gone.

And I should like some venerable minister, some saint of God, to meet him in the street as he comes out, and say to him, “Did not I see you in the garden with Him?” What a rebuke! How it would cut him to the heart! I have heard that even professing Christians, when they go over to Paris, will go where they ought not to go. And they have pleaded, as an excuse, that they wanted to see the manners and customs of the Continent. To put it in plain English, they want to join in with the manners and customs of Satan.

You have no more right to go into wrong places in Paris than in London. I should quite as soon be seen in a theater or a music hall in London as in Paris. Indeed, I am told that our home production is by far the safer of the two. You have no right to go anywhere where you are ashamed to be seen by Christian people, or by the whole world. We are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses in Heaven and in Hell and we should mind how we act. Take that to yourself, if you have crept into the devil’s dominions on the sly. Someone will catch you there and say, “Did not I see you in the garden with Him?”

And if you are ever tempted to conceal your religion, then I hope that this question will come whistling in your ears, "Did not I see you in the garden with Him?" I have sometimes been obliged to a wicked world for what it has done to inconsistent professors of religion. I remember a young man, in my early pastorate, going to a certain place of doubtful fame and in the midst of a dance, somebody cried out, "That is one of Spurgeon's people. Fling him out of the window." And out he went.

I felt grateful for that act of discipline from the Adversary. I wish that they would fling out of windows all among the people of God who dare join with the world and its evil pleasures. Those who were gathered in that assembly felt that they did not want the company of a downright hypocrite, and so they put him out of their synagogue. If you should ever be found in "gay company," or even in respectable company where evangelical doctrine is at a discount, I hope you will have things made uncomfortable for you. If you hold your tongue and are quiet and try to be one of the clan, where Jesus is dishonored, I hope this question will fall into your ear like a drop of burning lava, "Did not I see you in the garden with Him?" Stand up for your Master in all companies and in all places, or else renounce His service.

Now, I am going to use this question very briefly in several ways. The question may be put to a person by a friend who is very anxious to see him decided against the evil tendencies of the times. The only way of dealing with evil, according to the Scripture, is, "Come you out from among them: be you separate." When expediency pleads, "Do not come out. Make friends with error and be liberal," then may the Reprover ask, "Did not I see you in the garden with Him?" Your hope is fixed on Him that died without the gate—will you not take up your cross and go without the camp bearing His reproach? "Did not I see you in the garden with Him?"

The question may apply again, when a friend is hard at work for Christ, and under difficulty, requires your help. Laying his whole life upon the altar, he is hard put to it for want of money, or for want of personal assistance in teaching or preaching, and he appeals to you—he says, "You have something to spare, help me, for the Lord's sake, for whom I am striving with all my heart and soul! I am in a difficulty, come to my help." When you turn away and coldly say, "No, I cannot afford money or time," he might well ask, "Did not I see you in the garden with Him? Have you not had fellowship with the Lord. And will you not have fellowship with His servant in His work?" It is a good and profitable question.

I should like, at this time, to speak to some here whom I have never spoken to in my life before and introduce myself and beg for their sympathy and aid, saying to them, "Did not I see you in the garden with Him? Did not I notice you at the Prayer Meeting? I think I saw your face light up at a certain part of the sermon, as if you enjoyed it. Did I not see you in the garden with Him?"

A kind of freemasonry exists between Christians. If we meet with any that have been with Christ, it is, "Hail, fellow! Well met! You are my Brother, whatever your opinions may happen to be upon minor points." Oh, you that have been in the garden with my Lord and followed Him in the time of His shame, you are a Brother of mine, for I saw you in the gar-

den with Him and I rejoice to own the everlasting kinship! Give me a place in your sympathy. Mention me in your prayers.

We will put the question also in one other way—we will use it as an enquiry full of cheer to a faithful heart under depression. Yonder tempted Believer cries, "I am half afraid that I really cannot be a living child of God. I am very dull and drooping and distressed." My dear Brother, years ago we used to have fellowship with you in joy and peace, in hope and song. Not so very long ago you came out of the House of Prayer, saying, "It is none other than the House of God and the very gate of Heaven!"

You are down in the valley now. But, like Jeshurun, you were likely to ride upon the high places of the earth. Pluck up courage. You may now be in the desert with your Lord but you have been in the garden with Him and you will be again. Those bright days will come back. For dark nights last not forever.

You have become sleepy and dull and, perhaps, Laodicean and luke-warm—but the Lord will revive you. Remember the old times, the days of Heaven upon the earth, the Hermonites and the hill Mizar. Hope on, hope ever. He who has been with you, will be with you yet again. "Did not I see you in the garden with Him?"

I should like to be welcomed with that question as I enter the skies at the last. I should not object to have that spoken to me by some bright spirit as I pass through the pearl gate—"Did not I see you in the garden with Him?" "Yes, bright seraph, you may have seen me. And now you see that He casts not off His poor Friend in the day of His Glory." The angel of the Lord saw you when you repented, he spied you out in that little room where you wept alone because of sin. Upstairs in the solitary chamber, where you told the Lord how father and mother were opposed to you and yet you meant to follow the Lamb in all the ways of service and obedience, you were "seen of angels."

Beloved, the brave adherence of the least of our Lord's disciples is seen, known, and remembered in heavenly places. In the Last Great Day you that have been with Christ here and trusted Him amid the clouds and the darkness and the derision—you shall see Him and reign with Him—and He shall acknowledge you as His, since you were in the garden with Him in the day of His humiliation. God bless you! Amen.

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SECONDHAND NO. 2624

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 28, 1899.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 12, 1882.**

***“Are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others
tell you this concerning Me?”
John 18:34.***

I EXPLAINED this morning, [Sermon #1644, Volume 28—“*Our Lord's First Appearance before Pilate*”—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>] why our Savior put that question to Pilate. The Roman governor had asked Him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” And Jesus as good as said to him, “Have you, of your own knowledge, seen anything in Me that looks like setting up to be a king in opposition to Caesar? You intend, by asking Me that question, to enquire whether I have led a rebellion against your government, or the imperial authority which you represent. Now, has there been anything which you have observed which would have led you to make this enquiry, or do you only ask it because of what the Jews have been saying in their enmity against Me?” You will see, dear Friends, that our Lord asked this question in order that He might get from Pilate's own lips the acknowledgment that he had not seen any sign of sedition or rebellion in Him and that it might be proved that the charge had been brought to Pilate by those outside, and had not come from the Roman governor himself.

We will, now, forget Pilate for a while, for I want to use this question in two ways with reference to ourselves. First, I shall utilize it as a *warning against secondhand quibbles at Christ and His Gospel*. Some people have a large stock of them and we might say to each one of these quibblers, “Are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others tell you this?” Then, in the second place, I shall use the text as a *warning against all secondhand religion*, pressing this question home upon each one who speaks up for Christ, “Are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others tell you this?”

I. We will begin with the opponents of the Lord Jesus and consider our text, first, as A WARNING AGAINST SECONDHAND QUIBBLES AT CHRIST AND HIS GOSPEL.

There are a great many people in the world who really do not know why they oppose religion—and if you ask them the reason, they repeat some old bit of scandal, some stale slander upon Jesus and His Cross—and they give that as their answer. I firmly believe that there are thou-

sands, who are ranked among the opposers of the Gospel who have not anything to say against Christ of their own knowledge, but others have told them something or other, and they go on repeating and reiterating the old exploded obsolete objections that have been demolished thousands of times! And I suppose they and others of their kind will keep on doing the same thing right to the end of time.

As soon as Jesus Christ's Gospel was launched upon the world's sea, it had to encounter opposing winds, storms and tempests. Like a scarred veteran, the Gospel has had battle after battle to fight. In our Lord's own day it was opposed most vigorously. His Apostles found that wherever they went, their feet were dogged by those who railed at Jesus and His Word. And when the Apostles had all fallen asleep, the early Churches found that they had need of an order of men who became the apologists for the Gospel and who bravely stood up to defend it against the attacks of divers heathen philosophers, skeptics and heretics who arose wherever the Truth of God was preached. There was opposition everywhere to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ—and His servants girded up their loins to do battle for Him and for His Truth.

That great campaign has continued even down to this day and there is this very remarkable fact about it, that, at the present moment, most of the objections that are brought against the Gospel are those that were answered and silenced some hundreds of years ago! And even when they appeared, all those centuries ago, they were then only reproductions of some older objections which had been answered and, as the defenders of the faith thought, had been trampled out, like sparks of fire trodden under foot! But, somehow an ill wind has begun to blow, again, and the fire, which some hoped was finally extinguished, has burned up once more. Originality in skepticism has almost ceased to be—we scarcely ever hear anything fresh in the way of heresy nowadays. We are troubled with the very errors which our forefathers answered a hundred years ago, yet the adversaries of the Truth of God go on cleaning and sharpening their blunted shafts, that they may once more shoot them at the great shield of faith which is impervious to their puny assaults, for it can quench even the most fiery darts of the devil himself! The modern arrows of skepticism will be broken against that glorious shield, yet they will probably be gathered up by another generation that will follow the present one and the heretics and objectors in the future will do just as their fathers did before them. I want, at this time, to put to any quibbler whom I may be addressing, the question of our Lord to Pilate, "Are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others tell you this?"

And, first, I ask you to observe that there are many unreasonable prejudices. Some persons have great prejudices against the Bible. I will not repeat what they say, but I would like to ask every person who thinks ill of this blessed Book, "Have you read the Bible through, and read it thoroughly? Have you studied it? Are your objections your own? Come, now, did you make them yourself?" It is almost always found that objections are like the axe the young Prophet was using—they are borrowed—

and often they are objections against a Book which has not been read at all, and which has not been allowed to exercise its own influence upon the heart and the judgment of the person who is prejudiced against it to his own hurt! Other people have told men, such-and-such things, so they shut the Book and refuse to look into it for themselves.

There are other people who are *prejudiced against public worship*. You see, I am starting at the very beginning—those matters with regard to religion which are elementary. Of course, we are told that we shut ourselves up on Sunday in these dreary buildings of ours, and here we sit, in a horrible state of misery, listening to the most awful twaddle that ever was taught, our singing being nothing better than droning and the whole of our worship being something very terrible! If I were to read to you the descriptions of an English Sabbath which I have sometimes seen in newspapers, they might make you almost weep tears of blood to think that we poor souls should suffer so much as we do! Only you know that we are altogether unconscious of any such suffering! We really have been under the notion that we very much enjoyed ourselves while worshipping the Lord in His House. Many of us have the idea that the Sabbath is the happiest day in all the week and that, when we hear the Gospel preached, it is sweeter than music to us and makes our hearts leap within us for very joy!

Of course we are very much obliged to our friends for telling us how dull and how unhappy we are and for wishing us to be in a better condition. We can only say that, not being enabled to perceive any of these sorrows, we would advise them to retain their pity and exercise it upon themselves—for they certainly need it far more than we do! To any of you who make remarks of the kind I have indicated, I ask—“Do your difficulties concerning public worship really arise out of your attending the House of God, out of your hearing the Gospel preached—out of your joining in the songs and praises of God’s people?” Oh, no! It is those people who never come to our services who believe the Sabbath to be dull, the House of God to be dreary and the preaching of the Gospel to be a monotonous sound from which every sensible man would escape! I put the question of my text to every person who is prejudiced against the Bible, and prejudiced against our public worship in God’s House, “Are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others tell you this?”

Sometimes, *the prejudice concerns the preacher*. I will not say that it is so about myself, though I have had, in my time, more than my fair share of it. “Hear *him?*” says one, “I would not go across the road to listen to such a fellow.” Many have said that and the preacher, whoever he may be, is condemned without a hearing. If the objector were asked to give a reason for his prejudice, he might answer by quoting the old lines—

**“I do not like you, Dr. Fell.
The reason why, I cannot tell,
But this I know, and know full well—
I do not like you, Dr. Fell.”**

I should like to say to everybody who is prejudiced against any servant of Christ, “Do you say this of yourself?” Those absurd stories about the

preacher—did you really hear them, yourself, or did somebody tell you them? Would you like to be judged by the mere idle tittle-tattle of the street or of the newspapers? And if you would not, then be an honest, reasonable man and at least give the servant of God a hearing before you condemn him or his message! And, take my word for it, the most-abused preacher is very likely to be the very man whom God will bless the most! Not the one who is most praised, but the one who is most censured by the world, is probably the man who has been most faithful to his Master and to the Gospel committed to his charge. At any rate, be honest enough to reply to the question which our Lord put to Pilate, “Are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others tell you this?”

There is a remark sometimes made, and I fear it is a very common one, “Oh, I would not be a Christian, I would not be religious, for *it makes men so dreadfully miserable!*” Now, Friend, do you say this, yourself, or did somebody else tell you? Come, now, you say that religion is such a miserable thing—have you tried it for yourself? Have you experienced the misery that comes out of prayer—out of faith—out of repentance—out of love to God—out of being pardoned—out of having a good hope of Heaven? Have you ever proved what that dreadful misery is? I think if you had ever really tested these things for yourself, your verdict would be the very reverse and you would join with us in singing the lines that express what many of us most firmly believe about this matter—

**“’Tis religion that can give
Sweetest pleasures while we live!
’Tis religion must supply
Solid comfort when we die.”**

Yet you go on repeating that slander upon religion though you cannot prove it to be true and might easily learn its falseness! Let me appeal to you. Had you a godly mother? “Yes,” you say, “and it was her life that prevents my being altogether an unbeliever.” I thought so, but, if I remember her aright, she was a quiet good soul who, in her home, tried to make everybody happy. And though she had not much pleasure in her son, for he was wayward and willful, yet there was no unkindness on her lips—the law of love always ruled the house. She was a weak and feeble creature who derived but slender gratification from any of the outward enjoyments of life, but she had a deep, secret spring of peace and joy which kept her calm, quiet and happy. And now that she has gone to be with God, she has left a gleam of sunlight still behind in her sweet memory. You did not get from your mother, nor from other godly friends, your belief that religion makes men miserable! And I venture to say that, so far as you have had any actual personal observation of it, you have been inclined to come to quite the opposite verdict and to confess that, though you do not know how it is, yet, somehow or other, godliness does give to the people who possess it, peace of mind, happiness of heart and usefulness of life.

There is another slander that is spread abroad very widely, and that is *that the Doctrine of the Grace of God*—the Doctrine which we try to preach from this pulpit—has no sanctifying effect. That, on the contrary, *it is*

likely to lead people into sin. They say that if we preach, “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life,” and do not preach up good works as the way of salvation, it is clear that such teaching will lead people into sin! Clear, is it? It is not so to me! But, my Friend, will you answer this question, “Are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others tell you this?” Is it not a matter of history that there never have been stricter living men than the Puritans? What is the great quarrel against John Calvin, himself, but that when he ruled in Geneva he was too stern and too exacting in his requirements? It is an odd thing—is it not—that these Doctrines of Grace should, on the one hand, make men too strict as a matter of fact, and yet that the wiseacres who object to them should say that these doctrines are likely to lead into sin those who accept them? It is not found to be so by those who believe them!

Let me again appeal to any candid objector. My dear Sir, did you ever prove what it is to believe in the great love of God to you—that, for the sake of His dear Son, out of pure, unmerited Grace, He has chosen you, saved you and appointed you to eternal life? Did you ever believe that and then feel, as a natural consequence, that you would go and live in sin? I know that you never did, but that it was quite the reverse! “Here,” said some boys to a companion, “we are going to rob an orchard. Come along with us, Jack.” “No,” he said, “my father would not approve of such a thing.” “But your father is very fond of you and never beats you as our fathers do.” “Yes,” said the boy, “my father loves me very much and I love him very much—and that is the reason why I am not going to rob the orchard and so grieve him.” Now, you believe in the beating of the boys by the rod of the Law, do you not? And we, on the other hand, feel that because God loves us and will, in His infinite mercy continue to love us, therefore we must keep out of sin as much as we possibly can. We cannot do that horrible thing which would grieve His blessed Spirit. So I ask you, as truthful men, not to repeat that old slander concerning the Doctrines of Grace leading to sin until you have really had some reason to assert it because of what you, yourselves, have witnessed in the lives of Christian people! Do not say it again until you can truly say it from your own experience or observation! Do not repeat it simply because others tell you it is so.

Yes, and there are some who say that *there is no power in prayer*, that we may pray, if we like, but that we cannot change the purposes of God—that the laws of nature are fixed and immutable and, therefore, to pray is a piece of absurdity. “Are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others tell you this?” I will speak personally to you. Did you ever try to pray? Did you ever put this matter to the test—whether God will hear prayer or not? I do not think you can have put it to a fair test and I would like you to see whether God will or will not hear even *your* prayer if you cry to Him. If any say to me, “God does not hear prayer,” I have scarcely the patience to give them an answer! I live from day to day crying to God for this or that favor which I receive as certainly and as constantly as ever my sons had their meals when they sat at my table! I

knew how to give good gifts to my children and I know that my Heavenly Father gives good gifts to me. My evidence, of course, is only that of one man—and it may not suffice to convince others, though many of you, here, could add your testimony to mine—but I should like all objectors just to give prayer a fair trial before they are quite so sure about the inefficacy of it. Let them see whether real prayer, offered in the name of Jesus Christ, will not be heard even in their case!

I am certain that there is not a praying man anywhere on the face of the globe who does not bear this testimony—that God hears him. And if any say, “We do not pray and do not believe that God hears prayer,” what evidence have you to bring? You are altogether out of court, for you know nothing about the matter! But the man who does pray and then says, “God hears me,” is the man to be a witness, and the one who has a right to be heard. I have told you, more than once, what the Irishman said when there were five witnesses to prove that he had committed murder. He said to the judge, “You must not condemn me on their evidence—there are only five people here who saw me do it—I can bring 50 people who did not see me do it!” But that was no evidence at all and, in like manner, there are many who say, “You bring a certain number of people who pray, to prove that God hears them. But we can bring ten times as many, who do not pray, and who do not get heard.” What has that to do with the matter? Where is the evidence? You say it not of yourself but merely repeat, secondhand, what has been said by others, so often and so foolishly, that it sickens one to hear it!

It is beginning to be questioned in many quarters, nowadays, whether there is any real effect produced by prayer, except that of exciting certain pious emotions in the breasts of those who pray. This is a very pretty statement! We ought to be extremely obliged to those superior persons who allow that even so much may be done! I am amazed they do not assert that prayer is ridiculous, or hypocritical, or immoral! Their moderation puts us under obligations. And yet I do not know—when I look again at their admission, I thank them for nothing—for they as good as call us fools! Do they think that we perform a useless exercise merely for the sake of exciting pious emotions? We must be grievous idiots if we can receive benefit from a senseless function! We are not willing to whistle to the wind for the sake of the exercise. We should not be content to go on praying to a god who could be proven to be both deaf and dumb. We have still some little common sense left, despite what our judicious friends consider to be our fanaticism. We are sure that we obtain answers to prayer! Of this fact I am certain and I solemnly declare that I have received of the Lord that which I have asked at His hands. I am not alone in such testimony, for I am associated with multitudes of men and women who bear witness to the same fact and declare that they sought the Lord and He heard them. Take care, Brothers and Sisters, to record all instances of answered prayer so as to leave this unbelieving generation without excuse. Accumulate the facts and demonstrate the grand Truth of God! Multiply the testimonies till even the philosophers are

obliged to admit both the phenomena and the deduction rightly drawn from them.

There is one other gross slander to which I would reply, and that is a saying that goes round among troubled consciences—*that Christ will not receive sinners*—that the very guilty cannot be saved. They say that Christ can forgive and deliver up to a certain point, but if you get beyond that, He is no longer willing to pardon. Dear Hearer, has that foolish and wicked notion entered your head? Then I ask you, “Are you speaking for yourself about this?” Did you ever prove it to be true? Have you ever sought His face? Have you cried to Him for mercy? “Yes,” you say, “I have.” And then, further, have you thrown yourself at His feet, trusting Him to save you, and have you been refused? I know you have not! There was never a sinner, yet, who fell down before Him and determined to lie there and perish if He did not speak a word of mercy, to whom the Lord has not, sooner or later, spoken the Grace-word which has sent that poor sinner on his way rejoicing! I would at least like you to go and see whether Christ will receive you or not before you say that He will not do so.

Say not that the door of His mercy is shut, but go in while it is still open! If He casts you out, then He will have broken His word, for He has said, “Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out.” Do not call Him a liar and say that He will cast you out till you have, yourself, proved that it is so! And that, I know, will never be the case. I am afraid that there is another being who has been whispering that vile insinuation into your ear—and he is your archenemy who is seeking your destruction and, therefore, he has come and told you this lie against the infinitely-loving and gracious Savior! Believe him not, but come even now and put your trust in Jesus and you shall find that He will give you eternal life!

I have thus examined the question of my text with reference to the opponents of the Gospel. I shall now leave that part of the subject, praying the Holy Spirit to bless it to all whom it may concern.

II. Now, in the second place, I am going to speak briefly, but with much earnestness, to the many here present who are friends of the Gospel, but who have only a SECONDHAND RELIGION, if they have any at all. I want to have a word with you, dear Friends, about this matter. You and I have been talking a great deal about Christ. Now, have we been simply quoting what others have said? Have we been making extracts from other people’s experience, or is what we have said something that we can say of ourselves, and not what others have told us?

For, Brothers and Sisters, first, a *secondhand testimony for Christ is a powerless thing*. Take a man—as I am afraid is often done—with no Grace in his heart and send him to Oxford or Cambridge, with the view of making him a parson. Teach him the sciences, languages, mathematics and give him a degree. His friends want to get a living for him and the bishop’s chaplain proceeds to examine him. The first question ought to be, Is this young man a Christian? Is he truly converted? Does he know the Lord? Does he understand, in his own soul, the things he is going to

preach to others? For, if he does not, what good can he do in the Christian ministry? Perhaps he is sent to a school of theology to learn the various systems of doctrine. He must read the judicious Hooker. He must study Jeremy Taylor. He must take lessons in elocution and rhetoric. Then, possibly, his friends buy him some lithographed sermons that he may read and they get him some books, that he may make extracts from them to put into the sermons he preaches. Suppose that man is, all the while, unconverted? Suppose that he does not know anything about the working of the Grace of God in his own soul? What is the good of him as a teacher of others? No good at all! At any rate, at the best, he may be only as good as one of those newly invented phonographs which can repeat what is spoken into them. This man can read out what he has selected from other books, but that is all. We will suppose that he is a very decent sort of fellow—an amiable gentleman, well-instructed, well-behaved and so on—but all that he has to say is what other people have told him!

But now put into that man's pulpit, only for one Lord's-Day, a preacher who has known what it is to feel the burden of sin and to have it removed by faith in Jesus. Let him begin to speak to the people in downright earnest about the pangs and sorrows of true repentance. Let him tell them about their need of the new birth and about his experience of obtaining that great blessing and how, by Sovereign Grace, he was brought out of the darkness into the light, and even from death to life. Let that man be moved to speak of the peace of pardon through the precious blood and of the joys of Heaven laid up for all Believers—and then the people will wake up, I will guarantee you! This is something very different from the preaching to which they have been accustomed—and they will soon feel the power of it.

Yet the Lord sometimes uses even a preacher who does not, himself, understand the Truth he proclaims. I know a man who went and heard a certain minister preach, or rather, read a sermon, and it was such a good one that the hearer's conscience was smitten by it. The discourse was about the new birth and, the next morning, the man went off to the clergyman, and said, "Sir, I want you to explain this matter further to me, for I am dreadfully distressed by what you preached last night." What, do you think, this preacher said? He said, "Well, Jonathan, I am sure I never meant to cause anybody any uneasiness. What was it that gave you such trouble?" "Why," he replied, "it was that part of the sermon where you said that we must be born again." So the preacher said, "Well, here is the discourse. You see, by the dates upon it, that I have used it 13 times before, so I could not have made it with any special view to your case. I am very sorry, indeed, that it caused you any discomfort, and I will never preach it again if it brings people into trouble in this style." That was all the help the poor man could get from the parson, so he went out and found a true servant of God who knew the Truth of God, himself, and was not a secondhand retailer of it, and, through conversation with him and prayer, and the reading of the Scriptures, he was brought into

peace and liberty! I need hardly tell you that he does not go to hear that secondhand preacher now! He listens to a far humbler minister, who, nevertheless, preaches what he has tasted and handled of the good Word of Life.

Now, if any of you are going to be Sunday school teachers, or street-preachers, do not begin to talk about what somebody else has told you. Go and say what you, yourself, know, of a heart first broken by the power of the Holy Spirit, and then bound up by the application of the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ! Proclaim your message in a living way from the heart to the heart, or else your hearers will feel that there is no power about it, however nicely you put the Truth and however sweetly you describe it. There is all the difference between personal testimony to the Truth of God and a parrot-like repetition of it, that there is between the living and the dead! Let us only bear witness to what we really know—and then no one will need to ask us what our Lord asked Pilate, “Are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others tell you this?”

Now, further, the same thing is true *with regard to professors*. We have many friends who come, at different times, to join the Church, and their stories vary greatly. Some who come to see me cannot say much and they think that I shall be very dissatisfied with them because they make a great muddle of their narrative, and there is not much, after all, that comes out. But the people with whom I am least satisfied are those who reel off their yarn by the yard—they have it all ready to repeat and everything is arranged as prettily as possible! Yes, and as I listen to it, I know that someone has told them what to say and they have memorized it all for me to hear! But I like far better the testimony that I have to pick out in little bits, but which I know comes fresh from the heart of the trembling convert! Sometimes it costs the poor soul a tear or a real good cry—and I have to go round about in all manner of ways to get hold of the story at all—but that shows that it is true and that the man never borrowed it. I like to hear the experience of a Believer, when he comes straight out of the world and out of the ways of sin, to confess his faith in Christ. He does not know anything about the terms that Christian people use. He has not learned our phrases and it is a great delight to hear it all fresh and new. Yet it is always the same story in all the essential parts of it. However strangely he may narrate it, it tallies with that of others in the main points. Take the experience of a Christian man who has been brought up in the sanctuary from his childhood and extract the pith and marrow of it. Now take the experience of a man who has been a gambler, a drunk, a swearer, but who has been truly converted—and extract the pith of that. Talk to a peer of the realm who has become an heir of the Kingdom of Heaven and take the pith of his experience. Now get a chimney-sweep who has been brought to the Lord and get the pith of his experience. Put them all side by side and you will not know one from the other! There are always the same essential marks—death, birth, life, food—Christ in the death, the life, the birth, the food—repentance, faith, joy, the work of the Spirit of God! But it is very sweet to hear the story

told in the many different ways in which the converts tell it. The true child of Grace is always the same in heart, although the outward appearance may continually vary.

But, dear Friends, whenever you begin to make a profession of religion, take care that you never profess more than you really possess! Go just as far as you can go, yourself, by the Grace of God, and do not repeat what others tell you. To borrow another man's experience is dishonest. If it is not mine, how dare I say that it is? It is also very apt to be self-deceptive, for a man may repeat another person's experience until he really thinks he *did* pass through it, himself, just as a man may repeat a lie until it almost ceases to be a lie because he, himself, gets to believe what at first he knows was not true! That borrowing of the experience of others is usually worthless with those who have had much to do with men, for we who do know the Lord and are familiar with His people, very readily trip up those who only repeat what they have learned! Freemasons recognize one another by various grips and signs. A man may, perhaps, find out one of the grips, but he does not learn them all and, at last, he gets caught—and people say to him, “You are pretending to be what you really are not.”

Take, again, a man's handwriting. Someone may imitate my writing for a long while, but, at last, he does not copy some peculiar dash, or stroke, or mark which is characteristic of my style. And those who know, say, “That is not Mr. Spurgeon's writing—it is a forgery.” So there is a something—a sort of freemasonry—about Christianity. People may learn some of our grips, signs and passwords, but, by-and-by, they make a blunder and we say, “Ah, you are an impostor!” They may try to write after the fashion of a child of God and they may make the pot-hooks, hangers and straight strokes, but, as they get on further, there is a something or other that comes out in the long run which proves that they are only copyists after all. Therefore, I say to you, dear Friends—Do not attempt to repeat what others have told you about experimental godliness, but let your testimony only consist of what you can truly say out of your own heart and soul!

Let this be the case, also, *with regard to every man, whether he makes a profession of religion or not.* May God grant that all that we think we know, we may really know in our own souls and not have because we have borrowed it from others! In religion, proxies and sponsors are altogether out of place. I pray you never to be guilty of that horrible blasphemy—for I think that it is nothing less than that—of standing up before God and promising that a child shall keep His Commandments and walk in the same all the days of its life! Remember that in religion, there are certain things that must be *personal*. For instance, every man must be, himself, born—another person cannot be born for you. In like manner, “You must be born again”—personally, for yourself! There is no possibility of another person experiencing that new birth for you. If a man lives, he must eat for himself. You cannot take my meals for me—it is I, myself, who must eat them. And we must eat the flesh and drink the

blood of Christ by faith, each one for himself or herself—nobody can do it for another. In daily life each man must be clothed for himself. You may wear silk and satin, you may be dressed in the best broadcloth, but you cannot be clothed on my behalf—I must be dressed myself, or else go naked. So must each man put on the robe of Christ's righteousness, or be naked, to his shame, before God. Every man must repent of his own sin—make confession of his own sin, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for himself—love God for himself, obey the Lord for himself. There is no possibility of any other person, by any means, doing this for you! There must be personal godliness, or else there is no godliness at all. So, whenever you feel inclined to say for yourself, "I believe that I am a Christian. I believe this and I believe that," let this question come home to you, "Are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others tell you this?"

And, lastly, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, let me utter a word specially for your ears. *Never get, in your prayers, or in your talk, an inch beyond your actual experience.* Our calling is a very high one and one of the most serious difficulties in the way of ever attaining its greatest height is the impression that we have reached it when we have not. My own impression is that some Brothers and Sisters might have been almost perfect if they had not thought that they were so already! But they missed the blessing through that very thought! Many a man might have become wise, but he imagined that he had learned wisdom, so he was never really wise. You know that if you see a man who thinks that he is wise, you say to yourself, "How very foolish he is!" And you speak truly, too. The doorstep of wisdom is a consciousness of ignorance and the gateway of perfection is a deep sense of imperfection. Paul was never so nearly perfect as when he cried, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But if he had sat down and said, "I have attained and am already perfect," then would he have been in a fair way of missing the blessing of God. No, dear Brothers or Sisters, say no more than you can justify. There are many who do that in business—mind that you do not so act in spiritual matters! Look at that shop window—what a wonderful display! Now go inside the shop. Why, there is nothing there! No, for the man has all his goods in the window! You would at once say to yourself, if he wanted to deal with you, "I shall not trust him very deeply." Ah, and do we not know some who, spiritually, have all their goods in the window? It is a grand thing to have a great stock in reserve. Never mind if it is in the cellar, where you cannot see it—it is none the worse for being out of sight!

The great thing for all Christians is to have a good background, something behind that is real so that, if you pray, or if you speak to another, you will be prepared to back it up! I remember trying to be a blessing to a very shrewd boy in a Sunday school class when first I knew the Lord. I told him the Gospel—"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Then he asked me a straight question, "Teacher, have you believed?" I replied, "Yes, I hope so." He said, "Don't you know, Teacher? You ought to." "Yes," I answered, "yes, I do know. I have believed in Jesus." "Well,

Teacher,” he enquired next, “have you been baptized?” I replied, “Yes, I have.” “Then,” he said, “Teacher, you are saved.” I said, “I hope so.” “But,” he insisted, “*you are.*” Just so, and I found that I must say so, too—that I must not use even Christ’s words unless I meant to back them up by my own consistent character—otherwise I am throwing suspicion on my Master’s truthfulness! May the Lord bring us up to this point of Christian honesty—that when we cannot truthfully say a thing from our own experience, we will be honest enough to resolve, “I shall not say it till I can truly say it.”

When you think of a verse of a hymn, and it is a little in advance of your own position, wait till you come up to that point. There are numbers of hymns that I laid by, in that fashion, years ago. I wished that I could sing them, yet they seemed to stick in my throat and I could not. But my throat has been cleared a good deal lately, and I have been obliged, at last, to feel that I must have those very hymns, for they have become true to my soul and have made my experience a very happy one. Do not be in too much of a hurry in spiritual things any more than in temporal things. If you cannot eat meat, stick to your milk. Milk is for babes, so keep to milk till you outgrow it, You will choke with that tough bit of meat—you had better leave it for somebody else. Do not find fault with it, it is good for strong men, they do not need to be always drinking milk. Do not deny the strong man his meat, but let him have as much as he likes of it! As for yourself, if you are a babe in Grace, keep to your milk diet. But, in all your testimony, do not go beyond what is actually true to yourself. Often let my text lay its hand upon your shoulder and repeat this searching enquiry, “Are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others tell you this?”

May God grant a rich blessing to you all, dear Friends, for our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

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NO. 1086

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, DECEMBER 19, 1872,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“Pilate therefore said unto Him, Are You a king, then? Jesus answered, You say that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Everyone that is of the truth hears My voice.”
John 18:37.

THE season is almost arrived when by the custom of our fellow citizens we are led to remember the birth of the holy child Jesus who was born “king of the Jews.” I shall not, however, conduct you to Bethlehem, but to the foot of Calvary. There we shall learn, from the Lord’s own lips, something concerning the kingdom over which He rules and thus we shall be led to prize more highly the joyous event of His nativity. We are told by the Apostle Paul that our Lord Jesus Christ before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession. It was a good confession as to the manner of it, for our Lord was truthful, gentle, prudent, patient, meek and yet uncompromising and courageous.

His spirit was not cowed by Pilate’s power nor exasperated by his sneers. In His patience He possessed His soul and remained the model witness for the Truth of God—both in His silence and in His speech. He witnessed a good confession, also, as to the matter of it, for though He said but little, that little was all that was necessary. He claimed His crown rights and, at the same time declared that His kingdom was not of this world, nor to be sustained by force. He vindicated both the spirituality and the essential truthfulness of His Sovereignty.

If ever we should be placed in like circumstances may we be able to witness a good confession, too! We may never, like Paul, be made to plead before Nero but, if we should, may the Lord stand by us and help us to play the man before the lion! In our families or among our business acquaintances we may have to meet some little Nero and answer to some petty Pilate—may we be true witnesses! O that we may have Grace to be prudently silent or meekly outspoken as the matter may require, but in either case be faithful to our conscience and our God!

May the sorrowful visage of Jesus, the faithful and true Witness, the Prince of the kings of the earth, be often before our eyes to check the first sign of flinching and to inspire us with dauntless courage! We have before us, in the words of the text, a part of our Savior’s good confession touching His kingdom.

I. Note, first of all, that OUR LORD CLAIMED TO BE A KING. Pilate said, “Are You a king, then?” asking the question with a sneering surprise

that so poor a being should put forth a claim to royalty. Do you wonder that he should have marveled greatly to find kingly claims associated with such a sorrowful condition? The Savior answered, in effect, "It is even as you say, I am a king." The question was but half earnest—the answer was altogether solemn—"I am a king." Nothing was ever uttered by our Lord with greater certainty and earnestness.

Now, notice that our Lord's claim to be a king was made without the slightest ostentation or desire to be advantaged thereby. There were other times when, if He had said, "I am a king," He might have been carried upon the shoulders of the people and crowned amid general acclamations. His fanatical fellow countrymen would gladly have made Him their leader. At one time we read that they would have "taken Him by force and made Him a king." At such times He said but little about His kingdom and what He did say was uttered in parables and explained only to His disciples when they were alone.

Little enough did He say in His preaching concerning His birthright as the Son of David and a scion of the royal house of Judah, for He shrank from worldly honors and disdained the vain glories of a temporal diadem. He who came in love to redeem men had no ambition for the gewgaws of human sovereignty. But now, when He is betrayed by His disciple, accused by His countrymen and in the hands of an unjust ruler—when no good can come of it to Himself—when it will bring Him derision rather than honor, He speaks out plainly and replies to His interrogator, "You say that I am a king."

Note well the clearness of our Lord's avowal! There was no mistaking His words—"I am a king." When the time has come for the truth to be spoken, our Lord is not backward in declaring it. Truth has her times most meet for speech and her seasons for silence. We are not to cast our pearls before swine, but when the hour has come for speech we must not hesitate but speak as with the voice of a trumpet, giving forth a certain sound that no man may mistake us. So, though a prisoner given up to die, the Lord boldly declares His royalty though Pilate would pour derision upon Him in consequence thereof. O, for the Master's prudence to speak the Truth at the right time and for the Master's courage to speak it when the right time has come!

Soldiers of the Cross, learn of your Captain! Our Lord's claim to royalty must have sounded very singular in Pilate's ear. Jesus was, doubtless, very much careworn, sad and emaciated in appearance. He had spent the first part of the night in the garden in an agony. In the midnight hours he had been dragged from Annas to Caiaphas and from Caiaphas to Herod. Neither at daybreak had He been permitted to rest, so that from sheer weariness He must have looked very unlike a king. If you had taken some poor ragged creature in the street and said to him, "Are you a king, then?" the question could scarcely have been more sarcastic.

Pilate, in his heart, despised the Jews as such, but here was a poor Jew persecuted by His own people, helpless and friendless. It sounded like mockery to talk of a kingdom in connection with Him. Yet never earth saw

a truer king! None of the line of Pharaoh, the family of Nimrod, or the race of the Caesars was so intrinsically imperial in Himself as He, or so deservedly reckoned a king among men by virtue of His descent, His achievements or His superior character. The carnal eye could not see this, but to the *spiritual* eye it was clear as noonday.

To this day, pure Christianity, in its outward appearance, is an equally unattractive object and wears upon its surface few royal tokens. It is without form or comeliness and when men see it there is no beauty that they should desire it. True, there is a nominal Christianity which is accepted and approved of men—but the pure Gospel is still despised and rejected. The real Christ of today among men is unknown and unrecognized as much as He was among His own nation 1,800 years ago! Evangelical doctrine is at a discount, holy living is censured and spiritual-mindedness is derided.

“What?” they say, “This evangelical doctrine, do you call *it* the royal truth? Who believes it nowadays? Science has exploded it! There is nothing great about it! It may afford comfort to old women and to those who have not capacity enough for free thought, but its reign is over, never to return.” As to living in separation from the world, it is called Puritanism or worse. Christ in doctrine. Christ in spirit. Christ in life—the world cannot endure as King!

Christ chanted in cathedrals. Christ personified in lordly prelates. Christ surrounded by such as are in king’s houses He is well enough—but Christ honestly obeyed, followed and worshipped in simplicity, without pomp or form—they will not allow to reign over them. Few nowadays will side with the Truth of God their fathers bled for. The day for covenanting to follow Jesus through evil report and shame appears to have gone by. Yet, though men turn round upon us and say, “Do you call your Gospel, Divine? Are you so preposterous as to believe that *your* religion comes from God and is to subdue the world?”—we boldly answer—“Yes!”

Even as beneath the peasant’s garb and the pale visage of the Son of Mary we can discern the Wonderful, the Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, so beneath the simple form of a despised Gospel we perceive the royal lineaments of Divine Truth! We care nothing about the outward apparel or the external housing of the Truth of God—we love it for its own sake. To us the marble halls and the alabaster columns are nothing—we see more in the manger and the Cross. We are satisfied that Christ is the King, still, where He was likely to be king—and that is not among the great ones of the earth, nor among the mighty and the learned—but among the base things of the world and the things which are not, which shall bring to nothing the things that are, for these has God from the beginning chosen to be His own.

Let us add that our Lord’s claim to be a king shall be acknowledged one day by all mankind! When Christ said to Pilate, according to our version, “You say that I am a king,” He virtually prophesied the future confession of all men. Some, taught by His Grace, shall in this life rejoice in Him as their altogether lovely King. Blessed be God, the Lord Jesus might look

into the eyes of many of us and say, "You say that I am a king," and we would reply, "We do say it joyfully!" But the day shall come when He shall sit upon His Great White Throne and then, when the multitudes shall tremble in the Presence of His awful majesty, even such as Pontius Pilate and Herod and the chief priests shall own that He is a king! Then to each of His astounded and overwhelmingly convinced enemies He might say, "Now, O Despiser, you say that I am a king," for to Him every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that He is Lord!

Let us remember, here, that when our Lord said to Pilate, "You say that I am king" He was not referring to His *Divine* dominion. Pilate was not thinking of that at all, nor did our Lord, I think, refer to it. Yet, forget not that, as Divine, He is the King of kings and Lord of lords. We must never forget that, though He died in weakness as Man, yet He ever lives and rules as God. Nor do I think He referred to His mediatorial sovereignty which He possesses over the earth for His people's sake—for the Lord has all power committed unto Him in Heaven and in earth—and the Father has given Him power over all flesh that He may give eternal life to as many as are given Him. Pilate was not alluding to that, nor our Lord, either, in the first place.

But He was speaking of that rule which He personally exercises over the minds of the faithful by means of the Truth. You remember Napoleon's saying, "I have founded an empire by force and it has melted away. Jesus Christ established His kingdom by love and it stands to this day and will stand." That is the kingdom to which our Lord's word refers—the kingdom of spiritual Truth in which Jesus reigns as Lord over those who are of the Truth. He claimed to be a king and the Truth which He revealed and of which He was the personification, is, therefore, the scepter of His empire. He rules by the force of the Truth of God over those hearts which feel the power of right and Truth and therefore willingly yield themselves to His guidance, believe His Word and are governed by His will.

It is as a *spiritual* Lord that Christ claims sovereignty among men! He is King over minds that love Him, trust Him and obey Him because they see in Him the Truth which their souls pine for. Other kings rule our bodies, but Christ our souls! Other kings govern by force, but He by the attractions of righteousness—theirs is, to a great extent, a fictitious royalty, but His is true and finds its force in the Truth of God. So much, then, upon Christ's claims to be a king.

II. Now, observe secondly that OUR LORD DECLARED THIS KINGDOM TO BE HIS MAIN OBJECT IN LIFE. "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world." To set up His kingdom was the reason why He was born of the virgin. To be king of *men* it was necessary for Him to be *born*. He was always the Lord of All—He needed not to be born to be a king in that sense—but to be king through the power of Truth it was essential that He should be born in our nature.

Why so? I answer, first, because it seems unnatural that a ruler should be alien in nature to the people over whom he rules. An angelic king of men would be unsuitable. There could not exist the sympathy which is

the cement of a spiritual empire. Jesus, that He might govern by force of love and truth alone, became of one Nature with mankind—He was a Man among men, a real Man—but a right noble and kingly man and so a King of men. But, again, the Lord was born that He might be able to save His people. Subjects are essential to a kingdom—a king cannot be a king if there are none to govern.

All men must have perished through sin had not Christ come into the world and been born to *save*. His birth was a necessary step to His redeeming death—His Incarnation was necessary to the Atonement. Moreover, truth never exerts such power as when it is embodied. Truth spoken may be defeated, but Truth acted out in the life of a man is Omnipotent through the Spirit of God. Now Christ did not merely speak the Truth—He *was* Truth. Had He been truth embodied in an angelic form, He would have possessed little power over our hearts and lives. But perfect Truth in a human form has royal power over renewed humanity. Truth embodied in flesh and blood has power over flesh and blood and therefore, for this purpose was He born.

So when you hear the bells ringing out at Christmas, think of the reason why Jesus was born! Dream not that He came to load your tables and fill your cups—in your mirth look higher than all earth-born things. When you hear that in certain Churches there are pompous celebrations and ecclesiastical displays, think not that Jesus was born for this purpose. No, but look within your hearts and say, “For this purpose was He born—that He might be a King—that He might rule through the Truth in the souls of a people who are, by Grace, made to love the Truth of God.

And then He added, “For this cause came I into the world.” That is, He came out of the bosom of the Father that He might set up His kingdom by unveiling the mysteries which were hid from the foundation of the world. No man can reveal the Counsel of God but One who has been with God! And the Son who has come forth of the ivory palaces of gladness announces to us tidings of great joy! For this cause He also came into the world from the obscure retirement of Joseph’s workshop, where, for many years He was hidden like a pearl in its shell. It was necessary that He should be made known and that the Truth to which He witnessed should be sounded in the ears of the crowd.

Since He was to be a King, He must leave seclusion and come forth to do battle for His Throne. He must address the multitudes on the hillside. He must speak by the seashore. He must gather disciples and send them forth by two and two to publish on the housetops the secrets of the mighty Truth of God! He came not forth because He loved to be seen of men or courted popularity—but for this purpose—that the Truth being published, He might set up His kingdom. It was necessary that He should come out into the world and teach, or the Truth of God would not be known and consequently could not operate.

The sun must come forth like a bridegroom out of his chamber or the kingdom of light will never be established. The breath must come forth from the hiding place of the winds or life will never reign in the valley of

dry bones. During three years our Lord lived conspicuously and emphatically “came into the world.” He was seen of men so closely as to be beheld, looked upon, touched and handled. He was intended to be a pattern and therefore it was necessary that He should be seen. The life of a man who lives in absolute retirement may be admirable for himself and acceptable with God, but it cannot be exemplary to men. For this cause the Lord came forth into the world—that all He did might influence mankind.

His enemies were permitted to watch His every action and to endeavor to entrap Him in His speech. By way of test His friends saw Him in privacy and knew what He did in solitude, thus His whole life was reported. He was observed on the cold mountainside at midnight as well as in the midst of the great congregation. This was permitted to make the Truth known, for every action of His life was Truth and tended to set up the kingdom of Truth in the world. Let us pause here. Christ is a King. A King by force of Truth in a spiritual kingdom. For this purpose was He born. For this cause He came into the world.

Beloved, ask yourself this question—Has this purpose of Christ’s birth and life been answered in you? If not, what is Christmas to you? The choristers will sing, “Unto us a Child is born; Unto us a Son is given.” Is that true to you? How can it be unless Jesus reigns in you and is your Savior and your Lord? Those who can in truth rejoice in His birth are those who know Him as their bosom Lord, ruling their understanding by the Truth of His doctrine. He rules their admiration by the Truth of His life. He rules their affections by the Truth of His Person. To such He is not a personage to be portrayed with a crown of gold and a robe of purple like the common theatrical kings of men.

He is one brighter and more heavenly, whose crown is real, whose dominion is unquestionable, who rules by Truth and love! Do we know this King? This question may well come home to us, for, Beloved, there are many who say, “Christ is my King,” who know not what they say for they do not obey Him. He is the servant of Christ who trusts in Christ, who walks according to Christ’s mind and loves the Truths of God which Jesus has revealed—all others are mere pretenders.

III. But now I must pass on. Our Lord, in the third place, REVEALED THE NATURE OF HIS ROYAL POWER. I have already spoken on that, but I must do so again. We should have thought the text would have run thus—“You say that I am a king; to this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should *establish My kingdom.*” It is not so in words, but so it must mean, for Jesus was not incoherent in His speech. We conclude that the words employed have the same meaning as that which the context suggests, only it is differently expressed.

If our Lord had said, “That I might establish a kingdom,” He might have misled Pilate. But when He availed Himself of the *spiritual* explanation and said that His kingdom was *Truth* and that the establishment of His kingdom was by bearing witness to the Truth of God, then, though Pilate did not understand Him—for it was far above his comprehension—yet, at any rate, he was not misled. Our Lord, in effect, tells us that the Truth of

God is the preeminent Characteristic of His kingdom and that His royal power over men's hearts is through the Truth of God.

Now, the witness of our Lord among men was emphatically upon real and vital matters. He dealt not with fiction, but with facts—not with trifles, but with infinite realities. He speaks not of opinions, views, or speculations but of infallible verities. How many preachers waste time over what may be or may not be! Our Lord's testimony was preeminently practical and matter-of-fact. It was full of verities and certainties.

I have sometimes, when hearing sermons, wished the preacher would come to the point and would deal with something that really concerned our soul's welfare. What concern have dying men with the thousand trivial questions which are flitting around us? We have Heaven or Hell before us and death within a stone's throw—for God's sake do not trifle with us, but tell us the Truth at once! Jesus is king in His people's souls because His preaching has blessed us in the grandest and most real manner and set us at rest upon points of boundless importance. He has not given us well-chiseled stones, but real bread! There are a thousand things which you may not know and you shall be very little the worse for not knowing them—but O, if you do not know that which Jesus has taught—it shall go ill with you!

If you are taught of the Lord Jesus you shall have rest for your cares, balm for your sorrows and satisfaction for your desires. Jesus gives sinners who believe in Him the Truths of God which they need to know—the assurance of sin forgiven through His blood, favor ensured by His righteousness—and Heaven secured by His eternal life. Moreover, Jesus has power over His people because He testifies not to symbols but to the very *substance* of the Truth of God. The Scribes and Pharisees were very fluent upon sacrifices, offerings, oblations, tithes, fasting and the like—but what influence could all that exert over aching hearts?

Jesus has imperial power over contrite spirits because He tells them of His one real Sacrifice and of the perfection which He has secured for all Believers. The priests lost their power over the people because they went no further than the shadow—and sooner or later all will do so who rest in the symbol. The Lord Jesus retains His power over His saints because He reveals the *substance*, for Grace and Truth are by Jesus Christ. What a loss of time it is to debate upon the fashion of a cape, or the manner of celebrating communion, or the color suitable for the clergyman's robes in Advent, or the precise date of Easter! Vanity of vanities, all is vanity! Such trifles will never aid in setting up an everlasting kingdom in men's hearts!

Let us take care lest we also set great store on externals and miss the essential spiritual life of our holy faith. Christ's kingdom is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit! The power of King Jesus in the hearts of His people lies much in the fact that He brings forth the unalloyed Truth of God without mixture of error. He has delivered to us pure light and no darkness. His teaching is no combination of God's Word and man's inventions! It is no mixture of Inspiration and philosophy—silver without dross is the wealth which He gives His

servants. Men taught of His Holy Spirit to love the Truth of God recognize this fact and surrender their souls to the royal sway of the Lord's Truth—and it makes them free and sanctifies them—nor can anything make them disown such a Sovereign, for as the Truth lives and abides in their hearts, so Jesus, who *is* the Truth, abides also.

If you know what Truth is, you will as naturally submit yourselves to the teachings of Christ as ever children yield to a father's rule. The Lord Jesus taught that worship must be true, spiritual and of the heart or else it would be worthless. He would not take sides with the temple at Gerizim or that on Zion—He declared that the time was come when those who worshipped God would worship Him in *spirit* and in *truth*. Regenerate hearts feel the power of this and rejoice that it emancipates them from the beggarly elements of carnal ritualism. They accept gladly the Truth of God that pious words of prayer or praise are vanity unless the *heart* has living worship within it. In the great truth of spiritual worship Believers possess a Magna Charta dear as life itself. We refuse to be again subject to the yoke of bondage and we cleave to our emancipating King.

Our Lord taught, also, that all false living was base and loathsome. He poured contempt on the phylacteries of hypocrites and the broad borders of the garments of oppressors of the poor. With Him ostentatious alms, long prayers, frequent fasts and the tithe of mint and cumin were all nothing when practiced by those who devoured widows' houses. He cared nothing for white-washed sepulchers and platters with outsides made clean—He judged the *thoughts* and *intents* of the *heart*. What woes were those which He denounced upon the formalists of His day! It must have been a grand sight to have seen the lowly Jesus roused to indignation thundering forth peal on peal His denunciations of hypocrisy!

Elijah never called fire from Heaven half so grandly. "Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites," is the loudest roll of Heaven's artillery! See how like another Samson Jesus slays the shams of His age and piles them heaps upon heaps to rot forever! Shall not He who teaches us true living be King of all the sons of Truth? Let us even now salute Him as Lord and King. Besides, Beloved, our Lord came not only to teach us the Truth of God but a mysterious power goes forth from Him through that Spirit which rests on Him without measure—which subdues chosen hearts to truthfulness and then guides truthful hearts into fullness of peace and joy.

Have you never felt, when you have been with Jesus, that a sense of His purity has made you yearn to be purged of all hypocrisy and every false way? Have you not been ashamed of yourself when you have come forth from hearing His Word, from watching His life and, above all, from enjoying His fellowship—quite ashamed that you have not been more real, more sincere, more true, more upright and so a more loyal subject of the truthful King? I know you have! Nothing about Jesus is false or even dubious. He is transparent—from head to foot He is Truth in public, Truth in private, Truth in word and Truth in deed. Hence it is that He has a king-

dom over the pure in heart and is vehemently extolled by all those whose hearts are set upon righteousness.

IV. And now, in the fourth place, our Lord DISCLOSED THE METHOD OF HIS CONQUEST. "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness for the truth." Christ never yet set up His kingdom by force of arms. Mohammed drew the sword and converted men by giving them the choice of death or conversion. But Christ said to Peter, "Put up your sword into its sheath." No compulsion ought to be used with any man to lead him to receive any opinion, much less to induce him to espouse the Truth of God. Falsehood requires the rack of the Inquisition, but Truth needs not such unworthy aid. Her own beauty and the Spirit of God are her strength.

Moreover, Jesus used no arts of priestcraft or tricks of superstition. The foolish are persuaded of a dogma by the fact that it is promulgated by a learned doctor of high degree, but our Rabboni wears no sounding titles of honor. The vulgar imagine that a statement must be correct if it emanates from a person who wears lawn sleeves, or from a place where the banners are of costly workmanship and the music of the sweetest kind—these things are arguments with those who are amenable to no other.

But Jesus owes nothing to His apparel and influences none by artistic arrangements. None can say that He reigns over men by the glitter of pomp or the fascination of sensuous ceremonies. His battle-ax is the Truth of God! Truth is both His arrow and His bow, His sword and His buckler. Believe me, no kingdom is worthy of the Lord Jesus but that which has its foundations laid in indisputable verities—Jesus would scorn to reign by the help of a lie! True Christianity was never promoted by policy or guile, by doing a wrong thing, or saying a false thing. Even to exaggerate truth is to beget error and so to pull down the Truth we would set up.

There are some who say, "Bring out one line of teaching and nothing else, lest you should seem inconsistent." What have I to do with that? If it is God's Truth, I am bound to deliver it *all* and to keep back none of it! Politics in religion, like a sailing vessel dependent on the wind, tacks about here and there—but the true man like a vessel having its motive power within, goes straight onward in the very teeth of the hurricane. When God puts Truth into men's souls, He teaches them never to tack or trim but to hold to the Truth of God at all hazards. This is what Jesus always did. He bore witness to the Truth and there left the matter being guileless as a lamb.

Here it will be fit to answer the question, "What Truth did He witness to?" Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, what Truth did He *not* witness to? Did He not mirror *all* Truth in His life? See how clearly He set forth the Truth that God is love. How melodious, how like a peal of Christmas bells was His witness to the Truth that "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him might not perish but have everlasting life." He also bore witness that God is just. How solemnly

He proclaimed that fact! His flowing wounds, His dying agonies rang out that solemn Truth as with a knell which even the dead might hear!

He bore witness to God's demand for truth in the inward parts—for He often dissected men and laid them bare and opened up their secret thoughts and revealed them—and made them see that only sincerity could bear the eyes of God. Did He not bear witness to the Truth that God had resolved to make for Himself a new people and a true people? Was He not always telling of His sheep who heard His voice? Of the wheat which would be gathered into the garner and of the precious things which would be treasured up when the bad would be thrown away? Therein He was bearing witness that the false must die, that the unreal must be consumed, that the lie must rust and rot—but that the true, the sincere, the gracious, the vital shall stand every test and outlast the sun. In an age of shams He was always sweeping away pretences and establishing Truth and right by His witness.

And now, Beloved, this is the way in which Christ's kingdom is to be set up in the world. For this cause was the Church born and for this end came she into the world, that she might set up Christ's kingdom by bearing witness to the Truth. I long, my Beloved, to see you all witness bearers. If you love the Lord, bear witness to the Truth! You must do it personally. You must also do it collectively. Never join any Church whose creed you do not entirely and unfeignedly believe, for if you do, you act a lie and are, moreover, a partaker in the error of other men's testimonies. I would not for a moment say anything to retard Christian unity, but there is something *before* unity and that is, "Truth in the inward parts" and honesty before God.

I dare not be a member of a Church whose teaching I knew to be false in vital points. I would sooner go to Heaven alone than belie my conscience for the sake of company. You may say, "But I protest against the error of my Church." Dear Friends, how can you consistently *protest* against it when you profess to agree with it by being a member of the Church which avows it? If you are a minister of a Church, you do in effect say before the world, "I believe and teach the doctrines of this Church," And if you go into the pulpit and say you do not believe them, what will people conclude? I leave you to judge that.

I saw a Church tower the other day, with a clock upon it, which startled me by pointing to half-past ten when I thought it was only nine. I was, however, quite relieved when I saw that another face of the clock indicated a quarter past eight. "Well," I thought, "Whatever time it may be, that clock is wrong for it contradicts *itself*." So if I hear a man say one thing by his Church membership and another by his private protest, why, whatever may be right he certainly is not consistent with himself! Let us bear witness to the Truth of God since there is great need of doing so just now, for witnessing is in ill repute.

The age extols no virtue so much as "liberality," and condemns no vice so fiercely as bigotry—alas—*honesty*. If you believe anything and hold it firmly, all the dogs will bark at you. Let them bark! They will have done

when they are tired! You are responsible to *God* and not to mortal men. Christ came into the world to bear witness to the Truth and He has sent you to do the same—take care that you do it, offend or please—for it is only by this process that the kingdom of Christ is to be set up in the world.

V. Now, the last thing is this. Our Savior, having spoken of His kingdom and the way of establishing it, DESCRIBED HIS SUBJECTS—“Everyone that is of the truth hears My voice.” That is to say wherever the Holy Spirit has made a man a lover of the Truth of God he always recognizes Christ’s voice and yields to it. Where are the people who love the Truth? Well, we need not enquire long. We need not Diogenes’ lantern to find them—they will come to the light—and where is light but in Jesus?

Where are those that would not seem to be what they are not? Where are the men who desire to be true in secret and before the Lord? They may be discovered where Christ’s people are discovered—they will be found listening to those who bear witness to the Truth of God. Those who love pure Truth and know what Christ is, will be sure to fall in love with Him and hear His voice. Judge you, then, this day, Brothers and Sisters, whether you are of the Truth or not—for if you love the Truth, you know and obey the voice which calls you away from your old sins, from false refuges, from evil habits—from everything which is not after the Lord’s mind. You have heard Him in your conscience rebuking you for that of the false which remains in you. You have heard Him encouraging you for that of the true which is struggling there.

I have done when I have urged on you one or two reflections. The first is, Beloved, dare we avow ourselves on the side of Truth at this hour of its humiliation? Do we own the royalty of Christ’s Truth when we see it every day dishonored? If Gospel Truth were honored everywhere, it would be an easy thing to say “I believe it.” But now, in these days, when it has no honor among men, dare we cleave to it at all costs? Are you willing to walk with the Truth through the mire and through the slough? Have you the courage to profess unfashionable Truth? Are you willing to believe the Truth against which science, falsely so-called, has vented her spleen? Are you willing to accept the Truth although it is said that only the poor and uneducated will receive it? Are you willing to be the disciple of the Galilean whose Apostles were fishermen? Verily, verily, I say unto you, in that day in which the Truth in the Person of Christ shall come forth in all its glory, it shall go ill with those who were ashamed to own it and its Master!

In the next place, if we have heard Christ’s voice, do we recognize our life-object? Do we feel, “For this end were we born and for this cause came we into the world, that we might bear witness to the Truth of God?” I do not believe that you, my dear Brother, came into the world to be a linen draper, or an auctioneer and nothing else! I do not believe that God created you, my Sister, to be merely and only a seamstress, a nurse, or a housekeeper! Immortal souls were not created for merely mortal ends. For this purpose was I born, that, with my voice in this place and everywhere else, I might bear witness to the Truth of God! You acknowledge that—

then I beg you, each one, to acknowledge that you have a similar mission. "I could not occupy the pulpit," says one. Never mind that—bear witness for the Truth of God where you are and in your own sphere. O waste no time or energy, but at once testify for Jesus!

And now, last of all, do you own Christ's superlative dignity, Beloved? Do you see what a King, Christ is? Is He such a King to you as none other could be? It was but yesterday a prince entered one of our great towns and they crowded all their streets to welcome him—yet he was but a mortal man! And then at night they illuminated their city and made the heavens glow as though the sun had risen before his appointed hour. Yet what had this prince done for them? Loyal subjects they were and that was the reason of their joy. But O, Beloved, we need not ask, "What has Christ done for us?"—we will ask, "What has He *not* done for us?"

Emmanuel, we owe all to You! You are our new Creator, our Redeemer from the lowest pit of Hell! In Yourself resplendent and altogether lovely, Your beauties command our adoration! You have lived for us. You have bled for us. You have died for us! And You are preparing a kingdom for us. And You are coming again to take us to be with You where You are! All this commands our love. All hail! All hail! You are our King and we worship You with all our soul! Beloved, I beseech you, love Christ and live for Him while you can. Work while opportunity serves.

While I have been laid aside and able to do nothing, the great sorrow of my heart has been my inability to do Him service. I heard my Brothers shouting in the battlefield and I saw my comrades marching to the fight—and I lay like a wounded soldier in the ditch and could not stir—except that I breathed a prayer that you might all be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

This was my thought—"Oh, that I had preached better while I could preach and lived more for the Master while I could serve Him!" Don't incur such regrets in the future by present sluggishness, but live now for Him who died for you! If any present in this assembly have never obeyed our King, may they come to trust in Him tonight, for He is a tender Savior and is willing to receive the biggest and filthiest sinner who will come to Him! Whoever trusts in Him will never find Him fail for He will save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him!

May He bring you to His feet and reign over you in love. Amen.

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THE KING IN PILATE'S HALL NO. 2826

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 12, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MAY 4, 1884.

*"Pilate therefore said unto Him, Are You a king, then? Jesus answered, You say that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the Truth. Everyone that is of the Truth hears My voice."
John 18:37.*

OUR Lord was being cross-questioned by an unscrupulous, vacillating, contemptuous Roman official. So, as our blessed Lord and Master did not escape the ordeal of malicious questioning, let no disciple of His imagine that he will escape. "The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he is as his master, and the servant as his lord." Sooner or later the day will come when the profession that you have made shall be questioned and tested. To some of Christ's followers, this time of trial comes very soon after their conversion. Others are assailed at a later period. The cool, calm, calculating doubter suggests a question about this or that and everything that can be moved is shaken. Just as Pilate said to Christ, "Are you a king, then?" so will men say to you, "Are you a Christian? Are you really believing in Jesus? Have you been born-again? Are you a new creature in Christ Jesus? Are you fully sanctified?" And they will make these enquiries in such a tone of contemptuous ridicule that you will need all your strength, all your patience, an increase in your faith and in all your graces if you are to witness a good confession, as your Master did before Pontius Pilate.

When such a time comes to you, I cannot suggest to you a better model for your answer than that which your Lord gave to the Roman governor. At first, He did not answer Pilate. "Jesus gave him no answer." And a large portion of the inquisitive questioning to which we have to submit is not worth answering. Nor is it worthwhile for you and me to go up and down the world fishing for questions, or inviting the objections and quibbling of skeptics because we think ourselves so exceedingly clever that we are easily able to answer them. Believe me, you will have quite enough to do if you catch on your shield all the fiery darts that come without your invitation! You will have no need to ask to be led into temptation, or to seek permission to rush into it. Our Savior invited no questions from Pilate—He did not even condescend to answer all that Pilate had to say to Him—and the best thing for a Christian to do, in many of

his times of trial, is to say, with David, "I was dumb with silence. I held my peace, even from good; and my sorrow was stirred."

When the Master did reply, He set us an example that we may safely follow. Observe how He replied without any tartness, without even the appearance of anger. He was very courteous towards Pilate. He put what He had to say in a fashion which would commend itself to him. He knew that Pilate's chief jealousy was about His being a king and He tried to remove it by explaining that His Kingdom was not of this world, otherwise His servants would fight for Him so that He should not be delivered to the Jews. I cannot conceive of replies, to such a man as Pilate, more suitable, more calculated to have done him good if there had been any soil in Pilate's heart upon which the Good Seed could have fallen with the hope of growth. I pray that you and I, when we are assailed and questioned, may be wise as serpents and harmless as doves, giving a reason for the hope that is in us with meekness and fear, answering not with the objective of displaying our own skill or learning, but always with the motive of seeking the good of the questioner, if, perhaps, God may grant unto him repentance that he may come to the knowledge of the Truth of God. I admire and hold up as an example to you the exceeding sweetness of our Savior's replies to His carping critic.

Note, however, how bold He was, as well as wise and gentle—"You say that I am a king." He does not flinch from admitting the Truth, however distasteful it may be to His hearer. If this Truth troubles Pilate after our Savior's explanation that His Kingdom is not of this world, He cannot deny the fact that He really is a King, for He must speak the Truth come what may of it. I fear that sometimes, in our endeavors to be sweet in disposition, we have not been strong in principle. "Charity" is a word that is greatly cried up nowadays, but, often it means that in trying to be courteous, we have also been traitorous. Our speech has been soft and smooth, but it has not been sincere and true. Did you ever catch yourself wishing to trim off the corners of a Truth of God—or, at least, seeking if you could not omit something that might prejudice your hearer? If so, let me tell you plainly that he who wishes to alter *any* truth has already begun to lie! Though he may not actually do it, yet the very wish to change the Truth of God in any degree is a proof of perversity of heart which needs to be repented of and forgiven! We have already turned aside from the right path when we do not dare to say what God has taught us. Our Savior never acted like that—He was always true, transparent, clear, faithful. There was never in Him any holding back in the least degree. As He said to Pilate, "You say that I am a king. To this end was I born and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the Truth." Oh, that we might learn from our Savior the sacred art of blending Christ-like gentleness with holy courage—and Christ-like courage with gentleness such as His!

Observe, too—for it is worthy of notice—how modestly and unobtrusively our Savior answered Pilate's questioning. It is an unhappy circumstance that some men seem as if they cannot speak boldly without having somewhat of pride mixed with their courage. Full often our very

virtues lie quite near to the borders of vice. We aim at what is right, but, alas, we go beyond it, or we fall short of it, or hit the target where our shots do not count. Ah, Lord, what imperfect creatures we are! But our Savior was perfect in every respect. He only answered the questions of Pilate when it was right for Him to answer them and even then He seemed to take the words wherewith to frame His answer out of Pilate's own mouth—"You say that I am a king." "It is even as you have said." Our gracious Master is very straightforward, yet how modest He is! He seems to hide Himself even behind Pilate's words. He does not hide the Truth, yet, in a perfectly sinless way, He somewhat conceals Himself. I wish we could imitate Him in that respect. Even when we are, like Bayard, "without fear, and without reproach," we are very apt, at the same time, to be without any desire for the conflict against evil, or any wish to impose ourselves in the least degree upon the attention of others, even if a protest would be right from us. We never see any of this false shame in our Savior. So, if we have at all given way to it in the past, let us never repeat that sin.

The words of Paul, in his First Epistle to Timothy, are very properly rendered in the Revised Version, "Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed *the* good confession." It was more than a good confession that our Lord Jesus witnessed before Pontius Pilate, so the definite article is rightly used and, "the good confession," stands out prominently as an example for all His followers. It is concerning that good confession that I am about to speak as the Holy Spirit shall graciously guide me.

I. First, let us ask—WHAT WAS "THE GOOD CONFESSION" THAT JESUS WITNESSED BEFORE PONTIUS PILATE?

I think the good confession of our Lord was, first, *His avowal of His Kingship*—"You say that I am a king." Dear Friends, do not forget that our Savior was, at that time, a prisoner in bonds, on trial for His life. As far as the eye could see, He appeared to be absolutely in the power of Pilate—a man who was destitute of any kind of conscience and who cared nothing about what means he employed so long as he could attain his own evil ends. There stands Jesus, a bound Prisoner, before one who can order Him to be put to death. And the judge contemptuously says to Him, "Are you a king, then?" And He answers, with great gentleness, but most decidedly and undoubtedly, "I am a king, even as You say." I think I see Pilate's lip curl—I can imagine the supreme contempt with which he looked upon the miserable Victim before him, disowned by His own countrymen, who had brought Him there because, in their hate, they wished to have Him put to death—yet He talks about being a king! It may have been a merry jest for Pilate at the moment, but he did not dare to make it one afterwards. His wife would have stopped him had he sought to find amusement in Jesus of Nazareth!

At the time, it must all have seemed very strange to him. It takes a great deal of courage for a man to avow that which seems to be improbable and, indeed, impossible. He knows it is true, but the other man thinks it is a piece of fanaticism. "Ridiculous nonsense," he says, and he scorns the idea with a sarcastic grin. It is not easy, then, for a humble-

mindful spirit just as determinedly to acknowledge it. I believe that there is many a man who could stand upon a public platform and announce his convictions to an infuriated crowd, who would not dare to say the same things to a single individual. It took more courage for Christ to speak to Pilate, alone, as He did, than it has done for many a man to stand and burn at the stake, yet the Savior did it. Calmly and deliberately, He avowed the Truth of God, blessed be His holy name! "I am a King," He said, and so He is. In our hearts, we acknowledge His Sovereignty over us as individuals and His supremacy over the entire Church. No, more, His Father has given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as He has given Him. He has said it, "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion." "And He shall reign forever and ever," and all loyal hearts cry, "Hallelujah!" It was a good confession for the Nazarene, clothed in the common smock frock of a Galilean peasant, with gory sweat still upon His brow, with the ropes that bound Him still about His wrists, with the howling savagery of His countrymen behind Him, to say to Pilate, "I am a King."

Next, Christ's "good confession" was *His announcement of a spiritual Kingdom*. Pilate could not comprehend what He meant when He said, "My Kingdom is not of this world; if My Kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews." A spiritual Kingdom! Pilate would not have given the smallest Roman coin for such a kingdom as that! Our Savior's own countrymen did not understand what He meant by a spiritual Kingdom "not of this world." They were looking for a temporal prince, an earthly leader who would deliver them from the Roman yoke, but Jesus asserts that His Kingdom, whatever it is, and wherever it is, is a *spiritual* thing! This is the testimony that we are also trying to bear today and, sometimes we have to bear it before the very temporal power that thinks the church to be an instrument to be used for its own purposes—a sort of mental and moral police force to keep people in order—the officers themselves to be kept in order and dressed, governed, fed and maintained by an Act of Parliament and not able to lift so much as a little finger should the State forbid them to do so! This is a doctrine which needs some courage to utter it even now, but it is to be spoken, and must be spoken more and more loudly! Christ's Kingdom is not of this world! It borrows no power from the secular arm and would not accept it if it were offered. It is a rule of spirit over spirit, of mind over mind, of the Truth of God over the souls of men—and that man is a faithful witness for Christ who can unflinchingly bear this testimony even before the greatest and the proudest of the land! Our Savior did so when He said to Pilate, "My Kingdom is not of this world."

Another part of Christ's "good confession" was *a declaration of His life purpose*—"To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the Truth." There is many a man who is pursuing a calling which he would scarcely like to acknowledge. And there are others who think that their calling can be best pursued by stealthy, crafty, Jesuitical plans. But it was not so with the Savior. He boldly declared the purpose for which He had come into the world—why

should He conceal it? He who seeks to bear witness to the Truth of God should be true enough to declare what the objective of his witness is. And the Savior did so, before Pilate, and wherever He was! All His life He was a witness to the Truth—He was the truest man who ever lived! It is beautiful to notice the Truth of the Lord Jesus Christ even in small particulars. There is no rhetoric about our Savior's speech, because rhetoric is too often but a lie. He speaks as simply as a child. There is no attempt at any display of learning in our Savior's teaching. Because it is all solid Truth and Divine Revelation, there is no need that He should use the jargon of the schools, or call Himself a Rabbi or Doctor.

He spoke with authority and you can see how simply, how plainly, how heartily He did it. There was no particular garb to attract attention to the Savior, no priestly robes with which to dignify a kind of babyish authority. He was a Man among men, speaking what He knew in the language of the people which they could understand. There was no pomp, or ceremony, or show about His life and, especially, there was no sham or pretence. He was what He seemed to be, and He seemed to be just what He was! If you look upon any other man, you can see some attempt to hide his deficiencies, or to increase his influence by an appearance of greater strength than actually exists. In the Savior, you see Him altogether as He is. He wears His heart upon His sleeve. He speaks straight on and never turns aside to crooked ways. He never blushes or stammers—why should He? What has He to conceal? His teaching is delivered as from a mountaintop and men may stand and gaze—and, the longer they gaze, the better will they see what He wishes them to see! He has no curtain behind which there is something concealed—all is as open as the day. As a truthful man, He was a fit witness to bear testimony to the Truth of God. And what a breaker of idols, what a smasher of all shams He was! Pharisees and Sadducees, and Herodians got but short notice from Him. Nothing false could stand before Him. Even a scourge of small cords, when it was held in His hands, sufficed to sweep the buyers and sellers from the temple! And when He used the sledgehammer of denunciation, who could resist Him? His fan was in His hand and He thoroughly purged His floor. And this was His life purpose—that He might bear witness to the Truth of God—and He acknowledged that purpose even before Pontius Pilate.

Our Savior also witnessed "the good confession" *by His acknowledgment that there is such a thing as positive Truth*—"To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the Truth." There is need of just such witness as that today. "Now be very careful upon that point," says one. "Do you mean to say that there really is such a thing as the *Truth*?" By your leave, dear Sir, or without it, I will venture to assert that there is! "That reply is a very bigoted one because if there is a Doctrine that is the Truth, then that which is contrary to it is a lie." Precisely so, and by your leave, or without your leave, I say again that it is so and it must be so in the natural order of things. If this Doctrine is true, then that which contradicts it cannot be true! If God has spoken thus, that which is opposed to God and His Truth, is not from

Him and cannot stand on the same footing with that which is Divinely revealed. It takes a good deal of courage to say that, nowadays. If you go into society, you will get three cheers if you declare that you are an Agnostic—that you do not know anything—you are not sure of anything.

Others say that whatever a man believes, or does not believe, it really doesn't matter provided he is perfectly sincere. That is to say, if a man sincerely takes cyanide, it will not kill him! And if he sincerely goes without food, he will not starve. And if he sincerely refuses to breathe, he will do as well as those who do breathe, which is another lie. The statue of Christ was set up among the statues of Plato, Socrates and other notable men—and some thought it was an honor to Christ, but it was not. They would crown Christ, so they say, among the great ones of earth. Ah, but they cannot crown Him unless they “crown Him Lord of all.” Our blessed Savior is honestly intolerant! He says, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved, but He that believes not shall be damned.” Because He loves the souls of men, He will not bolster up the fiction of universal charity. And even before the Broad-church or No-church Pilate—He says that He has come to bear witness to the Truth. So there is the Truth, and that which is contrary to it is not Truth!

One other point in our Lord's “good confession” was *His separation of characters*, for He went on to say to Pilate—and I fear that most of us would have left out that sentence—“Everyone that is of the Truth hears My voice.” Do you hear that declaration, Pilate? You are the Roman procurator—a very great man—and this poor Prisoner of yours, whose life is now at your mercy, tells you plainly that everyone that is of the Truth hears His voice. Then, Pilate, if you are of the Truth, you will have to sit at His feet and listen to His words, and learn of Him! I can well conceive what Pilate thought as he turned on his heels and contemptuously asked, “What is truth?” He had heard quite enough of such talk as that—he did not want any more of such close dealing. But therein lies the Glory of the Master, that He is not content with merely teaching Truth of God, but, in His good confession before Pontius Pilate, He presses it home even upon His judge! And He divides and separates between the precious and the vile. So must you and I do, dear Friends, if we are faithful followers of “the faithful Witness.”

I dare not preach to this congregation as if you were all Christians, for you are not. I dare not deliver even one discourse under the delusion that all my hearers are saved, for, alas, they are not. This is the fault with multitudes of sermons—that they seem to carry the whole congregation to Heaven when possibly the major part of those present may be going down to Hell! That will not do. Remember what the Lord said to the Prophet Jeremiah, “If you take forth the precious from the vile, you shall be as My mouth.” But if there is no winnowing fan in our hand to separate the chaff from the wheat, we are not like Christ, nor has Christ sent us on His service. In this “good confession” of His, we see how clearly and solemnly—gently, I admit, but still most decidedly—He made a division and separation of characters and gave a test by which Pilate could judge himself if he had been willing to do so.

II. The time will not suffice for me to go fully into all the teaching of my text, but I want to ask, in the second place—TO WHAT TRUTH DID OUR LORD WITNESS?

He said to Pilate that He was born—that proves His Humanity. He also said that He came into the world and that, I think, shows His Divinity as well as His Humanity. He came on purpose to bear witness to the Truth and I believe that the life of Christ witnessed not only to all Doctrinal Truth, but also to everything that is true, especially to true-heartedness, simplicity, sincerity. His life was a testimony against all guile, craftiness, cunning, concealment—in that sense it was as testimony to the Truth of God.

But with regard to special Truths to which He testified, did not His very coming here and being born, bear witness to *the grand Truth that God is love and that God loves men?* The Infinite takes upon Himself the nature and form of an Infant. The Illimitable is encased within a human body. “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” We never can have a clearer testimony to the thoughtful care of God to men than we find in the coming of the Son of God as the Son of Man, except this—that, being found in fashion as a Man, He proved the love of God to sinners by the tears which He wept over the guilty and perishing and, best of all, by the blood which He shed for many for the remission of sins. As you see Christ dying on the accursed tree, say, “Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us.” He wills not the death of any, but longs that they should turn unto Him and live. The Savior’s death for the guilty proves that “God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” All His life the Savior was bearing witness to this grand Truth of God. Oh, that we may, none of us, dare to doubt it after He has backed it up by a life of self-abnegation and a death of sublime self-sacrifice!

He also bore witness, all His life, to *the spirituality of true religion*. He was always teaching Truth like this—“God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.” He wore no phylactery, He assumed no airs of an ascetic. Even in His eating and drinking, He was like other men, insomuch that they said of Him that He was “a man gluttonous, and a wine bibber”—a vile charge, without an atom of truth in it! He taught that true religion consisted not in long prayers, but in entering into the closet and sincerely seeking the Father’s face. It was not fasting thrice in the week, but it was truly praying, “God be merciful to me, a sinner.” It was not giving alms in public and sounding a trumpet before him, and in secret devouring widows houses, but it consisted in love to God and love to man. It was the work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart that Jesus preached—and He grandly witnessed against all the idolatrous and false forms of faith which, even down to this day, prostitute His blessed name!

In that sad hour our Lord Jesus was also a wonderful Witness to *the enmity of men to God*. He in whom there was no roughness or sternness, as there was in John the Baptist, came as the Messenger of love and mercy, for God sent Him not into the world to condemn the world, but

that the world, through Him, might be saved. He was the great Householder's Son, who was, "last of all" sent to receive the fruits of the vineyard, but the husbandmen said, "This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance." The men of this world were never so base—they never displayed so much of their utter malice against God as when they took His Son and put Him to a cruel and ignominious death. This was the culmination of human guilt. All the adulteries, murders, unnatural vices and accursed blasphemies that had ever defiled the race of mankind have not so certainly proved it to be a desperately fallen thing as the murder of the Son of God, the Savior and the Friend of men! This appalling crime of Deicide stands out without a parallel in the history of the universe! There was no guilt in the Lord Jesus for which He deserved to die, yet, with wicked hands, they crucified and slew Him.

Our Savior was also always a Witness to *the great necessity of a new creation*, a change of heart, a regeneration. To Nicodemus He said, "You must be born-again." And to His disciples, "Except you are converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." He also preached the absolute necessity of faith in Himself and did not mince the matter in the least—"He that believes on the Son has everlasting life: and He that believes not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." To all this Jesus steadfastly witnessed in life and in death.

And to this Truth of God He also bore witness, *that salvation was to be found only in Himself*. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." "If any man thirsts, let Him come unto Me and drink." His teaching was always concerning Himself—"I am the way, the truth, and the life." "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He never hesitated to bear witness to the Truth of God so it was but natural that part of His "good confession" before Pilate should be this plain declaration, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the Truth."

III. Now I will try briefly to answer a third question—WHAT HAD THIS "GOOD CONFESSON" OF JESUS TO DO WITH PILATE?

I answer, first, that *it gave Pilate a reason for acting justly*. It ought to have helped to stir any little conscience that Pilate still had and, also, to allay the jealousy which he may have felt because of the Savior's royal claims. Our Lord spoke thus out of kindness to Pilate.

I think, however, that the main reason for our Savior's testimony was that *it gave Pilate an opportunity to learn the Truth*. Had his soul been like the good soil—had he really ever been the subject of Sovereign Grace, he would have said to Jesus, "I will gladly hear what this Truth is if you will tell me." He would, at least, have spared time enough to hear from his strange Prisoner what this Truth was. There must have been an unusual force about our Savior's few short sentences that ought to have convinced even Pontius Pilate of His evident sincerity. Those eyes, so gentle, yet so piercing, must have looked Pilate through and through. The tone

of His voice must have been very different from anything to which Pilate had been accustomed in the courts of Nero. Jesus spoke as no other man had ever spoken in Pilate's Hall before—and had there been anything hopeful about him, he would have said, “Good Master, tell me what that Truth is to which You bear witness.”

And I say to you who are not converted, if you desire to be right with God, you will want to know what this Truth is for which the Lord Jesus lived and died. And when you do know it, if there is the right principle in your heart, then you will believe it and, believing it, you will assuredly be saved! There is such life-giving Truth in the Savior's teaching that you have but to hear it, and turn it over in your mind, and weigh it with the best judgment that you have, to be convinced that it is most certainly true! So I put it to you—if it is true, will you not believe it? Believing it, will you not yield to it and let it reign over your whole being, for it is the Truth of God from the mouth of the King? It is the scepter in the hand of King Jesus with which He rules over the hearts of all His loyal subjects!

IV. Now, to finish, I have to ask—WHAT HAS THIS TO DO WITH OURSELVES?

It has something to do with everyone of us, whether we acknowledge Christ or not. First, it suggests to our hearts this question—*Are we of the Truth?* For, if we are of the Truth, we shall hear Christ's voice! It is the voice of the King eternal, immortal, invisible! He is the King of Truth and He rules over truthful minds. Coming to be the Chief Witness to all Truth, He really occupies the throne of Truth. Now, dear Friends, are we of the Truth? For, if we are not, we shall not accept Christ. But if we are, we shall be glad to have Him as our King. I ask any man or woman here who has up to now refused Christ, whether he is not conscious of something missing from his life? Are you not sometimes half-inclined to believe in Jesus? Do you not have to do violence to your conscience by what you call, reason, but by what I venture to say is a most unreasonable travesty of all good reasoning? If you would but let that reason of yours go its own way and follow the track of the Truth of God, I believe that, before long, by God's Grace, you would be sitting at the Savior's feet and learning of Him!

The next thing that this testimony of Christ has to do with us is this. If, on our behalf, He witnessed “the good confession” for the Truth of God before Pontius Pilate, then it behoves you and me, not only to believe, but *to bear witness to the Truth*. Brothers and Sisters in Jesus, this looks to me to be but a small thing for us to do. If the Son of God has come into this world on our behalf and has not been ashamed to call us brethren, and to espouse our cause even at the cost of His life, I say that it looks to me to be but a small thing that He should ask of us that, if with our heart we believe in Him, we should with our mouth make confession of Him—that, if we believe in Him, we should also be baptized in His name, for it is His will that we should make an open confession before men if we really are His disciples.

There are new fashions in theology and new gods lately come up, and even new Christs and all manner of nonsense and novelty. But I am a

follower of the old Christ who is the same yesterday, today and forever—and I glory in being a fool for Christ's sake if it is a foolish thing to follow the Man of Nazareth, the Christ of Calvary who died as the Substitute for all who believe in Him—that by the shedding of His precious blood He might reconcile them unto God forever!

I appeal to some who I believe really do love my Lord and Master, but who are, like Saul of old, hiding away out of sight. Are you never going forth to fight for your King? Will you still continue in the ways of the world and yet profess to be a lover of the Lord? Cowards that you are, come out boldly for Jesus! If you are on Christ's side, acknowledge it. There never was a cause that better deserved to be openly confessed than His! If Christ is God, follow Him! But if Satan is God, serve him. If the world is worth your love, give your love to the world and say so—do not come sneaking in among Christians as if you belonged to them! But if the Lord Jesus Christ is worthy of your love, give it to Him and say that you have done so. Come to the front, unite with His people, share the scorn that falls upon them and whenever any man wishes to set Christ in the pillory, say to Him, "Put me there, too, for I am one with Him and have taken up His cause." When He comes—and He soon will come in all the Glory of His Father and of His holy angels, he who has denied Him before men, He will deny before the assembled universe! But he who has confessed Him before men, him will He confess in the Presence of His Father and of His holy angels. May that be my lot, and yours, dear Friends, without a single exception, for His dear name's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 18:28-40; PSALM 2.**

John 18:28. *Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas unto the Hall of Judgment:* That is to say, Pilate's Hall. Pilate, at that time, was probably residing in one of the old and sumptuous palaces of Herod, there holding His court during the time of the Passover.

28. *And it was early.* They were very eager to prove their enmity to Christ. They had spent the night and the earliest moments of the dawn in examining their illustrious Prisoner, condemning Him, abusing Him and now they were off to Pilate.

28. *And they themselves went not into the Judgment Hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the Passover.* What could defile such wretches as these? Yet they were afraid of ceremonial defilement, though neither afraid nor ashamed to saturate their hands in the blood of Jesus!

29. *Pilate then went out unto them.* He loathed and detested them, yet, for his own evil purposes, he would yield to their wishes and whims.

29, 30. *And said, What accusation bring you against this Man? They answered and said unto him, If He were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered Him up unto you.* As much as to say, "You may take that for granted. We would not have brought Him if He had not done wrong. You need not look into the matter, we have already heard the evidence,

and convicted Him, and so saved you all the trouble of trying Him. We only bring Him here for you to condemn Him.”

31. *Then said Pilate unto them, You take Him, and judge Him according to your law. “That is your way of doing such things, but it is not a method into which we shall fall. Our law does not condemn a man before it hears the evidence against him. I am not going to be your tool, to put this Man to death without hearing what is laid to His charge, and the proofs of His guilt. If you want that done, you must do it yourselves.”*

31. *The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death. “You Romans have taken from us the power of life and death, and we want Him put to death.” There was a clear confession that nothing short of Christ's death would satisfy them.*

32. *That the sayings of Jesus might be fulfilled, which He spoke, signifying what death He should die. Crucifixion was a Roman, not a Jewish method of capital punishment, so God overruled the wanton wickedness of the worst of men for the accomplishment of His own eternal purposes, without, however, diminishing their responsibility and guilt in the least degree. It was “by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God” that Christ was put to death, yet it was “with wicked hands” that they took Him and crucified Him.*

33. *Then Pilate entered into the Judgment Hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto Him, Are you the King of the Jews? He did not look much like it. There was little enough about His appearance or His apparel to suggest the idea of royalty.*

34, 35. *Jesus answered Him, Say you this thing of yourself, or did others tell it you of Me? Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? I can imagine him throwing all the scorn and contempt possible into the question. It was characteristic of the Romans, as we learn from the works of their great writers, that they utterly despised and detested the Jews.*

35-37. *Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered You unto me: what have You done? Jesus answered, My Kingdom is not of this world: if My Kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is My Kingdom not from here. Pilate therefore said unto Him, Are you a king, then? Jesus answered, You say that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I unto the world, that I should bear witness unto the Truth. Everyone that is of the Truth hears My voice. We might have expected that He would have said, “I came into the world that I might be a king.” But He explains that, as a Witness to the Truth, He was a King.*

38. *Pilate said unto Him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and said unto them, I find in Him no fault at all. He did not want an answer. He merely thought it such an unnecessary piece of trifling to talk about truth. He had so slight an idea of what the word might mean, that when he had said, “What is truth?” “he went out again unto the Jews, and said unto them, I find in Him no fault at all.” That was the truth about the Truth, from the lips of a man who cared nothing about the Truth of God, yet who was compelled to bear this testimony, “I find in Him no fault at all.”*

39. *But we have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the Passover: will you therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews?* Now Pilate may have thought if Christ were their King they would certainly prefer Him to a thief and a robber, so he was putting before himself an opportunity of escaping from judging Christ—and before them a test as to whether there really was in them any liking for the Christ, or any possibility of His becoming their King.

40. *Then cried they all again, saying, Not this Man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber.*

Psalm 2:1, 2. *Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the LORD, and against His Anointed, saying.* This raging company of the Jews was but an example of the universal opposition which there is to the reign of Christ, for it is not alone in Israel, but among the heathen, and among all people, that there is this opposition to the Christ of God!

3. *Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.* The bands of Jehovah and the bands of the Christ, His Anointed.

4, 5. *He that sits in the Heaven shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall He speak unto them in His wrath, and vex them in His sore displeasure.* His word, it seems, vexes them. There is no need of sword or javelin. The weapons of God's warfare are His words.

6-12. *Yet have I set My king upon My holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the LORD has said unto Me, You are My Son; this day have I begotten You. Ask of Me, and I shall give You the heathen for Your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron: You shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Be wise now, therefore, O you kings: be instructed, you judges of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.*

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

OUR LORD'S FIRST APPEARANCE BEFORE PILATE NO. 1644

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 12, 1882,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Pilate said unto them, I find in Him no fault at all.”
John 18:38.*

I SHOULD like, if God spares us, to present to you on Sabbath mornings the full story of our Savior's sufferings. We began last Lord's Day by going with Him to the hall of Caiaphas and it was a sadly solemn time when we beheld the Prince of Peace a prisoner, heard Him falsely accused and unjustly condemned. And then we saw Him abused till servants and subjects did spit in His face and make a mockery of Him. I hope that you will not be wearied with this subject. If so, it will be the fault of the preacher, for the subject is always full and fresh. Or if the preacher is not to blame, there will be something of censure due to his hearers. If we grow tired of the story of the Cross it will be a sad indication of secret soul-sickness and it will be well to observe the symptom and hasten to the great Physician for healing.

To true saints in a healthy condition there is no place more attractive than the place of our Lord's passion, where He accomplished the glorious work of our redemption. They love to linger along that Via Dolorosa which leads from Gethsemane to Golgotha—let us linger with them! When I stand and view my Lord, like the bush in Horeb, burning but not consumed, I hear a Voice saying to me, “The place where you stand is holy ground.” Nothing is more holy than the Person of our Divine Master! It is, therefore, well to be with Him. The anguish which He endured when He devoted Himself as a Sacrifice for us is holy, too, and so it is well to be with Him in His sufferings. His sorrows have a most sanctifying influence upon all who consider them with believing love.

I am persuaded that if we lived more in the atmosphere of the Cross, sin would lose its power and every Grace would flourish. When we draw very near to Jesus and have fellowship with Him in His sufferings, we raise a hue and cry against the sin which slew Him and resolve to be revenged upon it by departing from it, ourselves, and by warring against it whenever we see it in others. The Cross is that holy implement with which we make war with sin till it is utterly destroyed. Blessed and holy, then, are the thoughts which are awakened by our great Sacrifice. Nor is it only so, but the medicine which brings us health is, in itself, a joy—

*“Sweet the moments, rich in blessing,
Which before the Cross I spend,
Life, and health, and peace possessing,
In the sinner's dying Friend.”*

There is no noise as of them that make merry over their wine, no shout of them that triumph, no song of them that feast—but here is a grave—sweet melody as of hearts that have found rest. At the Cross we find a substantial joy, a far-reaching satisfaction, “the peace of God, which passes all understanding.” Here, you restless ones, is the cure of restlessness! Here shall you say, “O God, my heart is fixed, my heart is fixed. I will sing and give praise.” I shall not, therefore, make any excuse, even if for weeks to come I should lead you to the place of dragons where your Lord was sorely broken and help you to drink of His cup and to be baptized with His Baptism. May the Spirit of God come upon and open our eyes to read the sacred heart of Him whose sorrows are unrivalled—sorrows borne for love of us!

Let us go to the narrative at once with loving and lowly carefulness. Our Lord was condemned by the chief priests for blasphemy because He declared Himself to be the Son of God and told them that they should hereafter see Him coming in the clouds of Heaven to be their Judge. Tearing his garments, the High Priest said, “What need have we of any further witness? You have heard His blasphemy.” When the morning light had come and they had gone through the formality of a set trial by daylight—having really condemned Him in the night—they led Jesus away to Pilate.

According to tradition, He was led with a rope about His neck and His hands bound. And I can fully believe in the tradition when I remember the words of Isaiah—“He was led as a sheep to the slaughter.” It was a strangely sad procession which moved through Jerusalem a little after six in the morning. Those men of the Sanhedrin, in all their pomp and power surrounding this one poor Victim, whom they were about to deliver to the Gentiles with the one design that He might be put to death! Those wicked men of pride were as the dogs of whom the Psalmist sang when the hind of the morning was his tender theme.

When they came to the house of the Roman governor, they would not, themselves, enter within its doors. It is said to have been one of the many magnificent palaces which Herod the Great built for himself. The architecture was gorgeous, the floors were inlaid with choice marble and all the chambers were richly gilded and furnished with Oriental splendor. Into the great hall these scrupulous hypocrites would not enter because they must, by no means, be defiled by the touch of a Gentile for they had already commenced to keep the Passover. So they waited in the courtyard and Pilate condescended to come out to them and learn the pressing business which brought them there so early in the morning.

The Roman governor was proud, cruel and abhorred the Jews. But still, knowing their fanaticism and the readiness with which they broke loose at Passover times, he stood at his palace gate and heard their demands. He soon ascertained that they had brought him a prisoner, evidently a poor man, and in personal appearance emaciated, weary and suffering. About Him there was a mysterious dignity combined with singular gentleness and Pilate, for this and other reasons, evidently took a singular interest in Him. Fixing his gaze, first, upon the extraordinary Prisoner, he turned to

the angry priests and demanded, "What accusation do you bring against this Man?"

The one objective of the priests in bringing Jesus to Pilate was to get Him put to death, for when Pilate told them to go and judge Him according to *their* Law, they replied that they would gladly do so, but that the power of life and death had been taken from them, implying that nothing but His death would content them. They were, however, very anxious at this stage to lay the responsibility of His death upon the Romans. The fear of the people was still upon them and if they could secure his death by Pilate, then they might, in later days, protest that they merely handed Him over to the Roman governor and could not foresee that He would be handled so roughly.

They had not yet bribed the populace to cry, "Crucify Him," and they were willing to be on the safe side should the people make an uproar on His behalf. Humanly speaking, they could have put Him to death themselves, for He was entirely in their power and they frequently forgot the Roman law and slew men in riotous fury, as when they stoned Stephen. They had frequently attempted to stone our Lord, Himself, so that they were not always so mindful of Roman law! They might have taken His life on this occasion, but they were led by a mysterious impulse to desire that the actual responsibility of the deed should rest on Pilate.

Further on they were willing to join with the fickle throng in sharing the guilt of His blood, but as yet they would gladly throw it upon others. During their great festivals, if they took innocent blood, their hypocrisy made them wish to do it by forms of law and by an alien hand. To do this they must bring an accusation, for no Roman ruler would condemn a man till an accusation had been made. We shall, this morning, consider the two accusations that they brought. And after that we shall hear the verdict of acquittal which Pilate gave in the language of the text, "I find in Him no fault at all."

I. The first accusation, if you will turn to the chapter and read the 30th verse, was that our Master was A MALEFACTOR. "They answered and said unto Him, If He were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered Him up to you." He was said to be a malefactor, or doer of that which is evil—a person of such a mischievous life that He ought not to live. Upon which we remark, first, that it was a novel charge! It was hot from their mint, for when He stood before Caiaphas nothing was said of any evil that He had done, but only of evil that He had spoken. They charged Him with saying this and that, but not with *doing* any evil deed. The accusation of evil speaking had broken down and they did not venture upon it a second time because they knew very well that Pilate did not care what the man had *said*—all he would attend to would be some actual breach of law by act and deed.

The Romans were a practical people and so when Pilate led our Lord into the audience chamber, he said to Him, "What have You done?" He did not say to Him, "What have You taught or preached?" but, "What have You done?" For this reason, the priests brought forward this newly-invented accusation and totally unfounded charge that He was a bad

doer, which might mean little or much, as the hearer chose to interpret it—malice is seldom specific in its charges. The accusation of being a malefactor grew out of their malevolence and not out of any action of our Lord's perfect life. One is surprised that even hate should be so blind as to assail His perfections! Whatever men may think of our Lord as a teacher, candor demands that they admire His example and award it the highest need of honor.

Observe, the priests herein brought against our Lord a charge which they did not attempt to sustain. How craftily they evaded the task of supplying proof! They brought no witnesses, their evil perjurers were left behind. They even refrained from specific charges, but the general statement that He was a malefactor was supported only by their reputation. "If He were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered Him up to you," as much as to say, "You must take it for granted that He is guilty, or we would not say so. Here is our High Priest—can it be supposed that such a gem of an individual would bring a false accusation? We also are the chief priests and the scribes, and teachers of Israel—can it be imagined that persons of our station and sanctity could by *any* possibility have brought an innocent person before you to be condemned!"

This style of argument I have heard even in these days—we are expected to give up the faith because scientists condemn it—and they are such eminent persons that we ought to accept their dicta without further delay! I confess I am not prepared to accept their infallibility any more than that which hails from Rome! The Roman governor was not to be overridden by priests, neither are we to be led by the nose by pretended learned men. "If He were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered Him up to you." Oh, the hypocrisy of this talk! They had tried to bring witnesses, but no witness had been found. They had *hired* false witnesses, but these had so differed in their testimony that the whole thing broke down. They, therefore, go upon another tack and put their own names at the back of the indictment, as if that were quite enough and enquiry need go no further.

I think I see the scornful glance of Pilate as he bade *them* judge Him, themselves, if that was their style of justice. As for him, he must hear an accusation or dismiss them to do their own pleasure if they dare. He knew that through envy they had brought Jesus to him and he loathed the hypocrites as he heard the wretched syllables sibilating from their sanctimonious lips! They could not have sustained the charge and, so far, they were wise in not attempting the impossible. They might be foolhardy enough to wrest His words, but they hesitated before the task of attacking His deeds. Before His awful holiness they were, for the moment, out of heart and knew not what slander to invent. O Lord, we marvel that any men should find fault with You, for You are altogether lovely and there is in You no spot for falsehood to light upon!

But I want to call your attention to this remarkable fact, that although this charge of being a malefactor was a grievous one, a trumped-up one and unsustained by any evidence, yet it was never denied by the Lord Jesus Christ! It was useless to deny it before the *priests*. He had already

challenged them to find fault with His life, saying, "I spoke openly to the world; I always taught in the synagogue and in the Temple, where the Jews always resort. And in secret have I said nothing. Why ask you Me? Ask them which heard Me what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said." His appeal had been unavailing, for it was as useless to argue with them as for a lamb to enter into controversy with a pack of wolves eager to devour him.

But there might have been some use, one would think, in his answering to Pilate, for Pilate was evidently very favorably impressed with his Prisoner—and if the Savior had deigned to give a full account of His life to prove that instead of being a malefactor He had gone about doing good—might He not have escaped? The answer is this—our Lord had come on earth on purpose to be the Substitute for guilty men and so when He was called a malefactor, although it was not a truthful charge, yet He patiently bore the shame of it, as it is written, "He was numbered with the transgressors." He was willing to stand in the transgressor's place and when they put Him there, He did not stir from it. "He is dumb, He opens not His mouth." He says nothing because, though in Him is no sin, He has taken our sin upon Himself!

The question that Pilate put, "What have You done?" was one which Jesus might have grandly answered—"What have I done? I have fed the hungry, I have healed the sick, I have raised the fallen, I have restored the dead. What have I done? I have lived a self-sacrificing life, caring nothing for Myself or My own honor. I have been the vindicator of God and the friend of man. What have I done? Certainly nothing for which they could put Me to death, but everything so they should accept me as their Leader and their Savior."

We hear not a word of this. The exculpation would have been complete, but it was not spoken. He might have baffled His enemies as He had, before, vanquished those who came to take Him, so that they went back to their masters, saying, "Never man spoke like this Man." He might have cleared Himself before the Roman procurator and by coming forth in triumph, He might have escaped from their teeth. But because He would stand in our place, therefore when men imagined mischievous things against Him, He was as a deaf Man and, as a dumb Man He opened not His mouth. Let us adore and bless Him for His gracious condescension, His matchless Grace in standing in our place!

Yet further, our Lord willed that by being counted as a transgressor by Pilate, He might die the death appointed for malefactors by the Roman law. If the Jews had put our Lord to death for blasphemy, it would have been by stoning, but then, none of the prophecies concerning the Messiah spoke of His being dashed to the ground by stones. The death ordained for Him was *crucifixion*. John says in the 18th chapter at the 32nd verse, "That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which He spoke, signifying what death He should die." What was that saying? Is it not the saying in the 12th chapter of John's Gospel at the 32nd verse, "I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me. This He said, signifying what death He should die."

Being lifted up from the earth on the Cross was death which could only come from the Romans. The Jews, as I have said before, executed men by stoning, therefore He must be condemned by the Romans that His own words may be fulfilled. He had spoken even more expressly in a passage recorded by Matthew, in the 20th chapter at the 17th verse, where He had declared how He would die. "And Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem and the Son of Man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn Him to death, and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify Him: and the third day He shall rise again."

In order that the Word which He had spoken might be fulfilled, our blessed Master refused to plead before Pilate anything in answer to the question, "What have You done?" He stands as a transgressor, to die a transgressor's death! Therefore forever blessed be His adorable name for His voluntary endurance of penalty for our sakes! When I think of that word, "malefactor," another word directly leaps to my lips. Call Him not malefactor, but **BENEFACTOR!** What a benefactor must He be who, in order to benefit us, allows Himself to be branded as a "malefactor!" Only think that He who at this moment sits in the center of adoring angels should have been called, "malefactor!" That He from whose inexhaustible store of goodness all the saints in Heaven and on earth are fed, should yet be called, "malefactor!" That He who never thought of harm to men, but whose very soul is love, whose every word and thought has been kindness towards this fallen race, should yet be called, "malefactor!"

O Earth, how could you bear so grave a lie against the infinite goodness of the Son of God! And yet, forever blessed be His name, He does not hurl back the charge, for that would have been to ruin us. He meekly bears the scandal for our sakes. Should not this sweeten every title of reproach that can ever fall upon us? What if they call us evil names! They called the Master of the home, "malefactor," can they call us anything worse? Shall we look for honor where our Captain found nothing but shame? Therefore let it be our glory to bear shame and reproach for Jesus' sake. So much for the first accusation.

II. Secondly, when the priests and scribes found that merely calling Him a malefactor was not sufficient, these wretched men changed their tactics and, according to Luke, they charged Him with setting up to be A KING. They said that He worked sedition, that He forbade to pay tribute unto Caesar and made Himself out to be a king. These were three great lies, for Jesus had preached peace, not sedition. His example was submission, not rebellion. His spirit was that of a servant, not that of a turbulent party leader. He had never said that men were not to pay tribute to Caesar—on the contrary, He had said, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's," and submitted Himself to every ordinance of authority. He had never, in their sense, set Himself up to be a king.

If He had done so, many who were now His accusers might have been His partisans. The charge against Jesus of setting up to be a king in the sense in which they desired Pilate to understand them was utterly false,

for when the multitude had been fed, they would have taken Him and made Him a king, but He hid Himself. No, so far from wishing to be a king, when one said to Him, "Master, speak to my brother that he divide the inheritance with me," He said, "Who made Me a judge or a divider over you?" He put aside any approach to interfere with the reigning powers. His accusers must have known that if He had willed, He had power at His back to have supported His claims, even as He said to Pilate, that, if He had been a king of a worldly dominion, His servants would have fought for Him. His followers had been brave and courageous, and enthusiastic and they would, no doubt, have given no end of trouble both to the Jews and to the Romans if their Leader had claimed a temporal sovereignty.

But our Lord had made Peter put up his sword into its sheath and healed the wound which he had given. All His life He had preached peace and love and a kingdom which is righteousness and peace. He was no rival to Caesar and they knew it. And please notice that this charge of Christ being a king did not come from the governing power. When Pilate asked our Lord, "Are you the King of the Jews?" our Savior wisely replied, "Do you ask this of yourself, or did another tell you it of Me? Have you any reason to think that I am a leader of sedition? As the governor of this nation, you have to watch carefully, for the people are seditious. Have you ever seen or heard anything of Me that looks like an attack on your authority? Have you anything of your own knowledge that would lead you to bring a charge against Me?"

Pilate, knowing nothing whatever against Him and, indeed, scorning the idea that he knew anything about the Jewish people, whom he detested, replied haughtily, "Am I a Jew? Your own nation and Your own rulers have brought this charge against You, not I." A great point was gained when Pilate said this—the charge was shown to be a mere invention, since the eagle eye of the Roman procurator had never seen the slightest grounds for it. It was a frivolous charge on the very face of it. How could that harmless, forsaken Man be a peril to Caesar? What had the Roman legions to fear from that solitary Sufferer? He was too meek and pure to threaten warfare and strife in the domain of Tiberius! Look at Him and realize the absurdity of the situation!

Moreover, it would seem a strange thing that the Jewish people should bring before the Roman governor their own king. Is this the way that subjects treat their monarchs? If He is a leader of sedition, He does not seem to have succeeded with His own countrymen, for the heads of the people are seeking His death! There could be upon the face of it no chance of danger whatever from rebellion which was so summarily put down by the Jews, themselves. If they had not been besotted by their rage, they would, themselves, have shrunk from so absurd a position.

But yet I want you to note very carefully that the Lord never denied this charge in the sense in which He chose to understand it. He first explained what He meant by His being a King. And when He had explained it, then He openly confessed that it was even so. First, I say, He explained what He meant by being a King and notice carefully that He did not explain it away. He said, "My Kingdom," and, also, when Pilate said, "Are You a

king, then?" He said, "You say that I am a king." He was, then and there, a real King and He avowed it without reserve. We are constantly told that the Kingdom of Christ is a *spiritual* kingdom, and this saying is true. But I would have you take heed that you do not spirit away His Kingdom as if it were only a pious dream. Spiritual or not, the Kingdom of Christ on earth is real and powerful. It is real none the less, but all the more because it may fitly be called spiritual.

Jesus is even now a king. He said, "I am a king." Some say that His Kingdom is not yet, but is reserved for the latter days, but I declare that He is a king today and that even now Jehovah has set Him as King upon the holy hill of Zion. I bless God that He has translated us, "Into the Kingdom of His dear Son." "You are the King of Glory, O Christ." When I say, "Your Kingdom come," I do not mean that it may begin to be set up on earth, but that it may continue to be set up in new places, may be extended and grow, for Jesus has, at this very moment, a Kingdom upon the face of the earth and they that know the Truth of God belong to it and recognize Him as the royal Witness by whom the Kingdom of Truth has been founded and maintained.

You remember the remarkable saying which is attributed to Napoleon Bonaparte in his later days at St. Helena? "I have founded a kingdom by force and it has passed away; but Jesus founded His empire upon love and, therefore, it will last forever." Verily, Napoleon spoke the truth—Jesus, the right *royal* Jesus, is, today, Master of innumerable hearts! The world knows Him not, but yet He has a Kingdom in it which shall, before long, break in pieces all other kingdoms! True and loyal hearts are to be found among the sons of men and in them His name still wakes enthusiasm, so that for Him they are prepared to live and die. Our Lord is every inch a King! He has His Throne of Grace, has His scepter of truth, His officers who, like Himself, witness to the Truth of God, and His armies of warriors who wrestle not with flesh and blood and use no carnal weapons, but yet go forth conquering and to conquer!

Our Lord has His palace where He dwells, His chariot in which He rides, His revenues, though they are not treasures of gold and silver, and His proclamations, which are Law in His Church. His reigning power affects the destiny of the world at this present moment far more than the counsels of the five great powers! By the preaching of the Truth of God. His servants shape the ages and set up and cast down the thrones of earth! There is no prince so powerful as Jesus, and no empire so mighty as the Kingdom of Heaven. Our Lord also said that His Kingdom came not from this world, for that, I take it, is the more correct translation of the passage, "My Kingdom is not of this world." It came not from this world. It is a substantial kingdom, but it did not spring from the same sources as the kingdoms of the world, neither is it supported, maintained, or increased by the same power as that which the kingdoms of the world depend upon.

Christ's Kingdom does not depend upon the force of arms—He would have His followers lay these weapons all aside. Christ's Kingdom does not depend, as earthly kingdoms too often do, upon craft, policy and duplicity.

It used to be said that an ambassador was a gentleman who was sent abroad to lie for the good of his country, and I fear it might still describe full many an ambassador. What is the science of diplomacy but the art of deceit? When statesmen are thoroughly honest and are guided by principle, they are generally suspected—and an outcry is raised that the interests of the country will be sacrificed! But there is no diplomacy in Christ's rule—everything like crooked policy is of the devil—and not of Christ. He comes to bear witness to the Truth of God and it is by the Truth, not by force nor by craft, that His Throne is established among the sons of men and, therefore, it is not from this world.

To be a King is, indeed, so little wrong in the sight of Jesus that it is the ultimate purpose of His coming to earth. He came to save men, did He not? Yes, but still He says, "For this purpose was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth," which is another way of saying, "that I might be a King." This is His ultimatum! Christ is a Teacher that He may be a King—Christ is an Exemplar that He may be a King! Christ is a Savior that He may be a King. This is the great end and objective that He has in His life, His death, His Resurrection, and His Second Coming—that He may set up a Kingdom among the sons of men to the Glory of God! Oh that this great objective of His mission might be furthered in our time and consummated speedily in the long-promised age of gold!

The Master tells us that the main force and power of His Kingdom lies in the Truth of God. He came to be a King, but where is His scepter? The Truth! Where is His sword? It comes out of His mouth—He bears witness to the Truth of God. Where are His soldiers? They are men of Truth. Jesus Christ leads on a band of whom He says, "And you are My witnesses." His Kingdom consists in witnessing to the Truth of God and who are they that become His subjects? Why, those that are of the Truth—men who, hearing the Truth—know the joyful sound and accept it and feel its power. Dear Hearers, let each one of us ask himself, "Do I belong to His Kingdom? Will I have this Man to reign over me? Do I desire to get rid of everything in myself that is not true? Am I anxious to put down around me everything that is false and wicked?"

Do I wish to uphold God's Laws, because they are Truth? Do I desire to spread the principles of love and kindness, because they are the Truth of God? Am I willing to learn and so become the disciple of the greatest of all Teachers and then, am I willing to bear witness to what I have learned and so spread the sway of the Truth of God? If so, then I am of His Kingdom. I know that I address many who desire in their hearts, today, that Christ and His Truth may triumph, and they little mind what becomes of themselves. Let but His Gospel spread and the principles of righteousness prevail! And as for us, let us live or die, it shall be a matter of small concern! O King, live forever and we shall find our life in Your life and glory in promoting Your Glory, world without end! Such a spirit is of the Truth of God and we may assure ourselves that Jesus is our King.

Our Lord, having explained His meaning, confessed that He was a King. This is that to which Paul refers when he says, "The Lord Jesus, who be-

fore Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession." He did not draw back and say, "I am no King." Pilate might have delivered Him, then. But He spoke boldly concerning His blessed, mysterious and wonderful Kingdom and, therefore, it was not possible that He should be set free. This, indeed, was His accusation written over His Cross, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." Poor Pilate, he did not understand our Lord, even as the men of this world understand not the kingdom of Christ. He said to Him, "What is truth?" and without waiting for a reply he went out to the Jews.

Ah, Brothers and Sisters, let us never deny that Jesus is a King—but we shall deny it if we do not live according to His bidding. Oh you that claim to be Christ's but do not live according to Christ's Laws, you practically deny that He is King! I dread the men who say, "We believe and therefore we are saved," and then do not live in holiness—for these divide our Lord's offices setting up His priesthood and denying His kingship! Half a Christ is no Christ—a Christ who is a priest but never a king is not the Christ of God! Oh Brethren, live as those who feel that every word of Jesus is Law and that you must do *what* He bids you, *as* He bids you and *because* He bids you—and so let all men know that unto you Jesus is both Lord and God.

III. I conclude by noticing THE ACQUITTAL which Pilate gave to our Lord Jesus. He had heard the charge of being a malefactor, to which the Prisoner pleaded nothing. He had heard the charge of his being a King, which the Prisoner had most satisfactorily explained. And now Pilate, coming out to the people, said, "I find in Him no fault at all." Pilate, you have well spoken! Your verdict is typical of the verdict of all who have ever examined Christ! Some have examined Him with an unfriendly eye, but in proportion as they have been candid in the observation of facts, they have been struck with His life and spirit. It is a very rare thing to hear, even, the infidel rail at the Character of Jesus! In fact, some of the foremost skeptics as to our Lord's teaching have been remarkably impressed with admiration of His life.

No character like that of Jesus is to be seen in history, no, not even in romance. If anyone says the four Gospel are forgeries, let him try to write a fifth, which shall be like the other four. Why, you cannot add an incident to the life of Christ! Its details are unique—the fancy cannot imagine a fresh incident which could be safely joined on to that which is recorded. Every critic would cry out, "This is not genuine!" The life of Jesus is a roll of cloth of gold, the manufacture of which the art is utterly lost. His spotless Character stands alone and by itself—and all true critics are compelled to say they find no fault at all in Him.

Let me add that this verdict of Pilate is the verdict of all that have ever associated with Christ. One disciple who was with Christ betrayed Him, but he spoke nothing against Him. No, the last witness of Judas before he hanged himself was this, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood." If there had been a fault in Jesus, the traitor would have spied it out—his unquiet conscience would have been glad enough to find a sedative—but even he was compelled to say, "I have betrayed innocent blood." "Which of you convicts Me of sin?" is the challenge of Jesus, to which

there is no reply! Some of us have lived with Christ spiritually. In the course of His Providence, He has brought some of us very low by sickness, or by bereavement, or loss. Everyone saved by our Lord has come under the discipline of His house, for, "whom the Lord loves, He chastens and scourges every son whom He receives."

Now, what is the verdict of all here present who know Jesus, our King? For my part, I find no fault at all in Him. He is everything that is lovely. He is all my salvation and all my desire. Do you not think that out of the millions of Christians who have lived hoping in Christ, one would have told us if it is His habit to disappoint His people? Out of so many Believers who dwell with Him, surely some one or other of them, when they came to die, would have told us if He is not all that He professes to be! Would not some one or other have confessed, "I trusted in Christ and He has not delivered me! It is all a delusion"? Surely, out of the many we have seen depart, we would have found some one or two that would have let out the secret and have said, "He is a deceiver! He cannot save, He cannot help, He cannot deliver." But never one dying Believer throughout the ages has spoken evil of Him! All have said, "We find no fault at all in Him."

Mark you, that will be the verdict of everyone among you. If any of you reject Christ, when you stand at His Judgment Seat to be condemned because you believe not in Him and when that withering word, "Depart, you cursed!" shall consign you to your everlasting portion, you shall *then* be obliged to say, "I find no fault at all in Him. There was no failure in His blood—the failure was in my lack of faith! There was no failure in His Spirit—the failure was in my obstinate will! There was no failure in His promise—the failure was that I would not receive Him! There was no fault at all in Him. He never spurned me. He never refused to hear my prayers. If my Sabbaths were wasted, it was no fault of His! If I defied the Gospel, it was no fault of His. If I have perished, my blood is at my own door. I find no fault at all in Him." From all parts of creation shall go up one general attestation to His perfection. Heaven and earth and Hell shall all join the common verdict, "We find no fault at all in Him."

I will send you away when I give you three practical words to think of. The first is this—Beware of an external religion, for the men that called Jesus malefactor and falsely accused Him were very religious people and would not go into Pilate's hall for fear of polluting themselves! They were strong in rituals, but weak in morals. None are so inveterate against the principles of the Gospel as those whose religion consists in form and ceremony but does not affect their hearts! I charge you tear your hearts and not your garments! Follow Christ spiritually! Follow Christ in your very souls, or else sacraments will be your ruin and even in trying to keep yourselves from ceremonial defilement you will be defiling yourselves with hypocrisy.

The next thing is to charge you, dear Friends, and to charge myself, also, to shun all proud worldliness like that of Pilate. Pilate treats the whole matter with flippancy—he is a proud and haughty Roman—he hates the people whom he governs and though he has a conscience, and at first he shows a tenderness towards his prisoner—yet his chief end and

aim was to keep his office and amass money. And therefore innocent blood must be spilt. He must please the Jews, even if he murders the, "Just One." This selfish worldliness in which a man makes his gold and himself his god always treats religion with contempt. The man minds the main chance and sneeringly cries, "What is truth?" He knows what money is and what power is, but what is *truth*? It is a dream, a folly to him and he despises it.

There are persons around us now, clever time-serving men, with grand notions of their own abilities—and to them Jesus and His Gospel are matters for old women, servant girls and what they call a Puritan crew. Such topics are not for gentlemen of thought, culture and understanding, like their high and mighty selves. "What is truth?" they say. They are rather favorably inclined to religion, that is to say, they do not persecute, but they *despise*—which in some respects is worse. They say, "We are agnostics! We have no particular views. We are large-hearted and let every man think as he chooses, but still there is nothing in it—it is all matter of opinion. One man says this is the truth and another says that is the truth—and how are we to know? The fact is, there is no such thing as fixed truth at all—

***'For differing creeds let graceless zealots fight.
He can't be wrong whose life is in the right.'*** "

This is this great man's conclusion of the matter and yet it so happens that this gentleman's life is not in the right at all and, therefore, on his own showing he has not much joy of his pretty rhyme. I think I see him as he turns on his heels with, "What is truth?"

Let him be a warning to you! Come not near to such arrogant trifling. Be always foolish enough to be willing to judge candidly. Be so little clever as to be still willing to learn. Be so little certain of your own infallibility that you will at least hear reason and will enquire whether these things are so. Alas, I fear that through worldly pride many will have it said of them, as it is said of the Roman governor every day in the creed—"Suffered under Pontius Pilate." Oh, how many times has Christ suffered under just such people as Pontius Pilate?

Last of all, let us all submit ourselves to Jesus our King. Wayworn and weary, emaciated and broken down, with His face more marred than that of any man, yet let us bow before Him and say, "All hail You, King of the Jews! You are our King forever and ever!" If we are willing to acknowledge Him as our King in His shame and derision, He will, by-and-by, honor us when He comes in the Glory of the Father and all His holy angels with Him. Then shall He cause it to be seen that He has made us, who follow Him, to be kings and priests unto God and we shall reign with Him forever and ever! Amen.

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BARABBAS PREFERRED TO JESUS

NO. 595

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 16, 1864,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Then cried they all again, saying, Not this Man,
but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber.”
John 18:40.*

THE custom of delivering a prisoner upon the day of the Passover was intended, no doubt, as an act of grace on the part of the Roman authorities towards the Jews. And by the Jews it may have been accepted as a significant compliment to their Passover. Since on that day they, themselves, were delivered out of the land of Egypt, they may have thought it to be most fitting that some imprisoned person should obtain his liberty. There was no warrant, however, in Scripture for this—it was never commanded by God—and it must have had a very injurious effect upon public justice. The ruling authority would discharge a criminal, quite irrespective of his crimes or of his repentance—letting him loose upon society—simply and only because a certain day must be celebrated in a peculiar manner.

Since some one prisoner must be delivered on the paschal day, Pilate thinks that he has now an opportunity of allowing the Savior to escape without at all compromising his character with the authorities of Rome. He asks the people which of the two they will prefer, a notorious thief then in custody, or the Savior. It is probable that Barabbas had been up, till that moment, obnoxious to the crowd. And yet, notwithstanding his former unpopularity, the multitude, instigated by the priests, forget all his faults and prefer him to the Savior!

Who Barabbas was, we cannot exactly tell. His name, as you, in a moment will understand, even if you have not the slightest acquaintance with Hebrew, signifies “his father’s son.” “Bar” signifying “son,” as when Peter is called Simon Barjona, son of Jonah. The other part of his name, “Abbas,” signifying “father”—“Abba” being the word which we use in our filial aspirations, “Abba Father.” Barabbas, then, is the “son of his father,” and some mystics think that there is an imputation here, that he was particularly and specially a son of Satan. Others conjecture that it was an endearing name and was given him because he was his father’s darling, an indulged child. His father’s boy, as we say.

And these writers add that indulged children often turn out to be imitators of Barabbas and are the most likely persons to become injurious to their country, grieves to their parents and curses to all about them. If it is so, taken in connection with the case of Absalom and especially of Eli’s sons, it is a warning to parents that they err not in excessive indulgence of their children.

Barabbas appears to have committed at least three crimes—he was imprisoned for murder, for sedition and for felony—a sorry combination of offenses, certainly. We may well pity the sire of such a son. This wretch is brought out and set in competition with Christ! The multitude are ap-

pealed to. Pilate thinks that from the sense of shame they really cannot possibly prefer Barabbas. But they are so bloodthirsty against the Savior and are so moved by the priests, that with one consent—there does not appear to have been a single objecting voice, nor one hand held up to the contrary—with a marvelous unanimity of vice, they cry, “Not this man, but Barabbas!”

Though they must have known, since he was a notable well-known offender, that Barabbas was a murderer, a felon and a traitor, they still preferred him. This fact is very significant. There is more teaching in it than at first sight we might imagine. Have we not here, first of all, in this act of the deliverance of the sinner and the binding of the innocent, a sort of type of that great work which is accomplished by the death of our Savior? You and I may fairly take our stand by the side of Barabbas. We have robbed God of His Glory! We have been seditious traitors against the government of Heaven—if he who hates his brother is a murderer, we also have been guilty of that sin.

Here we stand before the Judgment Seat. The Prince of Life is bound for us and we are allowed to go free. The Lord delivers us and acquits us, while the Savior, without spot or blemish, or shadow of a fault, is led forth to Crucifixion. Two birds were taken in the rite of the cleansing of a leper. The one bird was killed and its blood was poured into a basin. The other bird was dipped in this blood and then, with its wings all crimson, it was set free to fly into the open field. The bird slain well pictures the Savior and every soul that has, by faith, been dipped in His blood flies upward towards Heaven singing sweetly in joyous liberty—owing its life and its liberty entirely to Him who was slain!

It comes to this—Barabbas must die or Christ must die—you, the sinner must perish, or Christ Immanuel, the Immaculate, must die. He dies that we may be delivered! Oh, have we all a participation in such a deliverance today? And though we have been robbers, traitors, and murderers, can we rejoice that Christ has delivered us from the curse of the Law, having been made a curse for us?

The transaction has yet another voice. This episode in the Savior’s history shows that in the judgment of the people, Jesus Christ was a greater offender than Barabbas. And, for once, I may venture to say that vox populi, (the voice of the people), which in itself was a most infamous injustice—if it is read in the light of the imputation of our sins to Christ—was vox Dei, (the voice of God)! Christ, as He stood covered with His people’s sins, had more sin laid upon Him than that which rested upon Barabbas. In Him was no sin—He was altogether incapable of becoming a sinner—holy, harmless and undefiled is Christ Jesus! But He takes the whole load of His people’s guilt upon Himself by imputation and as Jehovah looks upon Him, He sees more guilt lying upon the Savior than even upon this atrocious sinner, Barabbas.

Barabbas goes free—innocent—in comparison with the tremendous weight which rests upon the Savior. Think, Beloved, then, how low your Lord and Master stooped to be thus numbered with the transgressors. Watts has put it strongly, but, I think, none too strongly—

***“His honor and His breath
Were taken both away,
Joined with the wicked in His death,***

And made as vile as they."

He was so, in the estimation of the people and before the bar of justice—for the sins of the whole company of the faithful were made to meet upon Him. "The Lord has laid upon Him the iniquity of us all." What that iniquity must have been no heart can conceive, much less can any tongue tell! Measure it by the griefs He bore and then, if you can guess what these were, you can form some idea of what must have been the guilt which sunk Him lower before the bar of justice than even Barabbas himself.

Oh, what condescension is here! The Just One dies for the unjust! He bears the sin of many and makes intercession for the transgressors. Yet, again, there seems to me to be a third lesson before I come to that which I want to enforce from the text. Our Savior knew that His disciples would in all ages be hated by the world far more than outward sinners. Full often the world has been more willing to put up with murderers, thieves, and drunkards, than with Christians. And it has fallen to the lot of some of the best and most holy of men to be so slandered and abused that their names have been cast out as evil, scarcely worthy to be written in the same list with criminals.

Now Christ has sanctified these sufferings of His people from the slander of their enemies by bearing just such sufferings Himself, so that, my Brethren, if you or I should find ourselves charged with crimes which we abhor—if our heart should be ready to burst under the accumulation of slanderous venom—let us lift up our head and feel that in all this we have a Comrade who has true fellowship with us, even the Lord Jesus Christ who was rejected when Barabbas was selected! Expect no better treatment than your Master! Remember that the disciple is not above his Lord. If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, much more will they call them of His household. And if they prefer the murderer to Christ, the day may not be distant when they will prefer even a murderer to you.

These things seem to me to lie upon the surface—I now come to our more immediate subject. First, we shall consider the sin as it stands in evangelical history. Secondly, we shall observe that this is the sin of the whole world. Thirdly, that this sin we ourselves were guilty of before conversion. And fourthly, that this is, we fear, the sin of very many persons who are here this morning—we shall talk with them and expostulate, praying that the Spirit of God may change their hearts and lead them to accept the Savior.

I. A few minutes may be profitably spent in CONSIDERING, THEN, THE SIN AS WE FIND IT IN THIS HISTORY. They preferred Barabbas to Christ. The sin will be more clearly seen if we remember that the Savior had done no ill. No law, either of God or man, had He broken. He might truly have used the words of Samuel—"Behold, here I am: witness against me before the Lord and before His anointed: whose ox have I taken? Or whose ass have I taken? Or whom have I defrauded? Whom have I oppressed? Or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind my eyes? And I will restore it to you."

Out of that whole assembled crowd there was not one who would have had the presumption to accuse the Savior of having done him damage. So far from this they could but acknowledge that He had only conferred great temporal blessings upon them! O ravening multitude, has He not fed you

when you were hungry? Did He not multiply the loaves and fishes for you? Did He not heal your lepers with His touch? Did He not cast out devils from your sons and daughters? Raise up you paralytics? Give sight to your blind and open the ears of your deaf? For which of these good works do you conspire to kill Him?

Among that assembled multitude there were, doubtless, some who owed to Him priceless gifts and yet, though all of them His debtors if they had known it, they clamor against Him as though He were the worst trouble of their lives—a pest and a pestilence to the place where He dwelt. Was it His teaching that they complained of? Where did His teaching offend against morality? Where against the best interests of man? If you observe the teaching of Christ there was never any like it, even judged of by how far it would subserve human welfare. Here was the sum and substance of His doctrine, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and your neighbor as yourself.”

His precepts were of the mildest form. Did He bid them draw the sword and expel the Roman, or ride on in a ruthless career of carnage and rapine? Did He stimulate them to let loose their unbridled passions? Did He tell them to seek, first of all, their own advantage and not to care for their neighbor’s needs? No! Every righteous State must own Him to be its best pillar, and the commonwealth of manhood must acknowledge Him to be its conservator. And yet, for all this, there they are, hounded on by their priests, seeking His blood and crying, “Let Him be crucified! Let Him be crucified!”

His whole intent, evidently, was their good. What did He preach for? No selfish motive could have been urged. Foxes had holes and the birds of the air had nests, but He had not where to lay His head. The charity of a few of His disciples kept Him from absolute starvation! Cold mountains and the midnight air witnessed the fervor of His lonely prayers for the multitudes who now are hating Him. He lived for others—they could see this. They could not have observed Him during the three years of His ministry without saying, “Never lived there such an unselfish soul as this.” They must have known, the most of them—and the rest might have known, had they enquired ever so little—that He had no object whatever in being here on earth except that of seeking the good of men.

For which of these things do they clamor that He may be crucified? For which of His good works, for which of His generous words, for which of His holy deeds will they fasten His hands to the wood and His feet to the tree? With unreasonable hatred, with senseless cruelty they only answer to the question of Pilate—“Why, what evil has He done?”—with, “Let Him be crucified! Let Him be crucified!”

The true reason of their hate, no doubt, lay in the natural hatred of all men to perfect goodness. Man feels that the presence of goodness is a silent witness against his own sin and therefore he longs to get rid of it. To be too holy in the judgment of men is a great crime, for it rebukes their sin. If the holy man has not the power of words, his very *life* is one loud witness-bearing for God against the sins of His creatures. This inconvenient protesting led the wicked to desire the death of the Holy and Just One.

Besides, the *priests* were at their backs. It is a sad and lamentable thing, but it is often the case that the people are better than their religious

teachers. At the present moment the laity of the Church of England, as a whole, have honest consciences and would have their Prayer Book revised tomorrow if their voices could be heard. But their clerics care far too little about the Truth of God and are not very particular how they swear, or with whom they associate. So long as their Church can be kept together, Father Ignatius shall be heard in their assemblies, although Christ's call to the Church to purify herself, awakens only resentment and ill-will.

No matter that the throats of certain clergymen were exercised in hissing for a moment at the apparition of the bold Anglican monk—he is one of themselves, a brother of their own order—and their Church is responsible for all that he does. Let them come out and separate themselves and then we shall know that they abhor this modern popery. But so long as they sit in the same assembly and are members of the same Church, the sin is theirs, and we shall not cease to denounce both it and them!

If Evangelical clergymen remain in communion with Papists, now that they come out in their full colors, I will cease to say that they violate their consciences, but I shall doubt whether they have any consciences at all! Brethren, it is still the case that the people are better than their teachers. This people would not have crucified Christ had not the clergy of the day, the priests, the endowed ministers, cried out, "Let Him be crucified!" He was the Dissenter, the heretic, schismatic, the troubler in Israel. He it was who cried aloud against the faults of their establishment! He it was who could not be put down—the ignorant man from Galilee who would continue to clamor against them! The mischief-maker and therefore, "Let Him be crucified! Let Him be crucified!" Anything is good enough for the man who talks about reform and advocates changes in established rules.

No doubt bribery also was used in this case. Had not Rabbi Simon paid the multitude? Was there not a hope of some feast, after the Passover was over, to those who would use their throats against the Savior? Beside, there was the multitude going that way. And so if any had compassion they held their tongue. Often they say that, "Discretion is the better part of valor," and truly there must be many valorous men, for they have much of valor's better part, discretion. If they did not join in the shout, yet at least they would not disturb the others and so there was but one cry, "Away with Him! Away with Him! It is not fit that He should live."

What concentrated scorn there is in this fortieth verse! It is not, "this Jesus." They would not foul their mouths with His name, but this *fellow*—"this devil," if you will. To Barabbas they give the respect of mentioning his name! But "this"—whom they hate so much—they will not even stoop to mention. We have looked, then, at this great sin as it stands in history.

II. But now let us look, in the second place, AT THIS INCIDENT AS SETTING FORTH THE SIN WHICH HAS BEEN THE GUILT OF THE WORLD IN ALL AGES, AND WHICH IS THE WORLD'S GUILT NOW. When the Apostles went forth to preach the Gospel and the Truth of God had spread through many countries, there were severe edicts passed by the Roman Emperors. Against whom were these edicts framed? Against the foul offenders of that day?

It is well known that the whole Roman Empire was infested with vices such as the cheek of modesty would blush to hear named. The first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans is a most graphic picture of the state of society throughout the entire Roman dominions. When severe laws were

framed, why were they not proclaimed against these atrocious vices? It is scarcely fit that men should go unpunished who are guilty of crimes such as the Apostle Paul has mentioned, but I find no edicts against these things—I find that they were borne with and scarcely mentioned with censure.

But burning, dragging at the heels of wild horses, the sword, imprisonment, tortures of every kind were used against whom, do you think? Against the innocent, humble followers of Christ, who, so far from defending themselves, were willing to suffer all these things and presented themselves like sheep at the shambles, willing to endure the butcher's knife! The cry of the world, under the persecutions of Imperial Rome, was, "Not Christ, but Sodomites and murderers and thieves—we will bear with any of these—but not with Christ! Away with His followers from the earth!"

Then the world changed its tactics. It became nominally Christian and Antichrist came forth in all its blasphemous glory. The Pope of Rome put on the triple crown and called himself the Vicar of Christ. Then came in the abomination of the worship of saints, angels, images and pictures. Then came the mass and I know not what, of detestable error. And what did the world say? "Popery forever!" Down went every knee and every head bowed before the sovereign representative of Peter at Rome! The Church of Rome was equal in sin to Barabbas.

No! I do but compliment Barabbas when I mention him in the same breath with many of the popes, for their character was foul and black through and through, till even those who superstitiously looked upon them as infallible in their office could not defend their personal characters. The world chose the harlot of Rome and she who was drunk with the wine of her abominations had every eye to gaze upon her with admiration! And Christ's Gospel was forgotten—buried in a few old books and almost extinguished in darkness.

Since that day the world has changed its tactics yet again. In many parts of the earth Protestantism is openly acknowledged and the Gospel is preached, but what then? Then comes in Satan and another Barabbas, the Barabbas of mere ceremonialism and mere attendance at a place of worship is set up. "Yes, we are orthodox, so orthodox, so sound! Yes, we are religious, strictly religious! We attend our meeting house, or go to our Church. We are never absent. We attend every form." But you have no vital godliness—you have not been born again—you have not passed from death unto life! "That is all right! This will do! So long as we are as good as our neighbors and keep the outward rite, the inward does not matter."

This which is a foul robbery of God's Glory, this which murders men's souls, is the Barabbas of the present age! An outward name to live is set up and is received by those who are dead and many of you now present are quite easy and content though you have never felt the quickening Spirit of God—though you have never been washed in the atoning blood—yet you are satisfied because you take a seat in some place of worship! You give your guinea, your donation to an hospital, or your subscription to a good object, forgetting and not caring to remember that all the making clean of the outside of the cup and the platter will never avail, unless the inward nature is renewed by the Spirit of the living God!

This is the great Barabbas of the present age and men prefer it before the Savior! That this is true—that the world really loves sin better than

Christ—I think I could prove clearly enough by one simple fact. You have observed sometimes Christian men are inconsistent, have you not? The inconsistency was nothing very great if you had judged them according to ordinary rules of conduct. But you are well aware that a worldly man might commit any sin he likes without much censure. But if the Christian man commits ever so little, then hands are held up and the whole world cries, “Shame!”

I do NOT want to have that altered! But I do want just to say this—“There is Mr. So-and-So, who is known to live a fast, wicked, evil life. Well, I do not see that he is universally avoided and reprobated, but on the contrary he is tolerated by most and admired by some. But suppose a Christian man, a well-known professor, to have committed some fault which, compared with this, were not worth mentioning—then what is done? “Oh, publish it! Publish it! Have you heard what Mr. So-and-So did? Have you heard of this hypocrite’s transgression?” Well, what was it? You look at it. It is wrong, it is very wrong—but compared with what you say about it, it is nothing at all.

The world, therefore shows by the difference between the way in which it judges the professedly religious man and that with which it judges its own, that it really *can* tolerate the most abandoned, but *cannot* tolerate the Christian. Of course, the Christian never will be altogether free from imperfections. The world’s enmity is not against the Christian’s imperfections evidently, because they will tolerate greater imperfections in others! The objection must therefore be against the *man*—against the profession which he has taken up and the course which he desires to follow! Watch carefully, Beloved, that you give them no opportunity! When you see that the slightest mistake is laid hold of and exaggerated, in this you see a clear evidence that the world prefers Barabbas to the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now the world will change its various modes of dealing, but it will never love the Church better than it does now. We do not expect to see the world lifted up to become more and more absorbed into the Church, The union of the world with the Church was never the object of our religion. The object of Christ is to gather to Himself a people from among men. It is not the lifting up of *all*, but the calling out of *some*—the making of men to differ, the manifestation of His special and discriminating Grace—the gathering together of a people whom He has formed for Himself.

In this process morality is promoted and men are civilized and improved. But this is only indirectly God’s object and not His immediate end. The immediate end of the Gospel is the salvation of the people whom He has ordained unto eternal life and who, therefore, in due season are led to believe in Him. The world, to the end of the chapter, will be as much at enmity with true Believers as ever it was. “You are not of the world, therefore the world hates you.” This will be as true when Christ shall come as at the present moment. Let us expect it! And when we meet with scorn and persecution, let us not be surprised as though some strange thing had happened to us.

III. I come in the third place, and O for some assistance from on high, to observe that THE SIN OF PREFERRING BARABBAS TO CHRIST WAS THE SIN OF EVERY ONE OF US BEFORE OUR CONVERSION. Will you turn over the leaves of your diary, now, dear Friends, or fly upon the

wings of memory to the hole of the pit where you were lifted? Did you not, O you who live close to Christ, did you not once despise Him? What company did you like best? Was it not that of the frivolous, if not that of the profane?

When you sat with God's people, their talk was very tedious. If they spoke of Divine realities and of experimental subjects, you did not understand them, you felt them to be troublesome. I can look back upon some whom I know now to be most venerable Believers, whom I thought to be a gross nuisance when I heard them talk of the things of God! What were our thoughts about? When we had time for thinking, what were our favorite themes? Not much did we meditate upon eternity. Not much upon Him who came to deliver us from the misery of Hell's torments. Brothers and Sisters, His great love with which He loved us was never laid to heart by us as it should have been.

No, if we read the story of the Crucifixion, it had no more effect upon our mind than a common tale. We knew not the beauties of Christ! We thought of any trifle sooner than of Him. And what were our pleasures? When we had what we called a day's enjoyment, where did we seek it? At the foot of the Cross? In the service of the Savior? In communion with Him? Far from it! The further we could remove from godly associations the better pleased we were. Some of us have to confess with shame that we were never more in our element than when we were without a conscience—when conscience ceased to accuse us and we could plunge into sin with riot.

What was our reading then? Any book sooner than the Bible—and if there had lain in our way anything that would have exalted Christ and extolled Him in our understandings—we would have put the book away as much too dry to please us. Any three-volume heap of nonsense, any light literature—no, perhaps, even worse—would have delighted our eyes and our heart. But thoughts of His eternal delight towards us—thoughts of His matchless passion and His Glory now in Heaven never came across our minds, nor would we endure those who would have led us to such meditations!

What were our aspirations then? We were looking after business, aiming at growing rich, famous for learning or admired for ability. SELF was what we lived for! If we had some regard for others and some desire to benefit our race, *self* was at the bottom of it all. We did not live for God—we could not honestly say, as we woke in the morning, "I hope to live for God today." At night we could not look back upon the day and say, "We have this day served God." He was not in our thoughts! Where did we spend our best praise? Did we praise Christ? No! We praised cleverness and when it was in association with sin, we praised it none the less.

We admired those who could most fully minister to our own fleshly delights and felt the greatest love to those who did us the worst injury. Is not this our confession as we review the past? Have I not read the very history of your life? I know I have of my own. Alas, for those dark days in which our besotted soul went after any evil, but would not follow after Christ! It would have been the same today with us if almighty Grace had not made the difference. We may as well expect the river to cease to run to the sea as expect the natural man to turn from the current of his sins! As well

might we expect fire to become water, or water to become fire as for the unrenewed heart ever to love Christ!

It was mighty Grace which made us seek the Savior. And as we look back upon our past lives, it must be with mingled feelings of gratitude for the change and of sorrow that we should have been so grossly foolish as to have chosen Barabbas and have said of the Savior, "Let Him be crucified!"

IV. And now I shall come to the closing part of the sermon which is THAT THERE ARE DOUBTLESS MANY HERE WHO THIS DAY PREFER BARABBAS TO OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. Let me first state your case, dear Friends. I would describe it honestly, but at the same time so describe it that you will see your sin in it. And while I am doing so, my object will be to reason with you, and pray the Lord may change your will.

There are many here, I fear, who prefer sin to Christ. I may say, without making a guess I *know* that there are those here who would long ago have been followers of Christ, but that they preferred drunkenness. It is not often, it is not every day, it is not even every week—but there are occasions when they feel as if they must go into company—and as a sure result they return home intoxicated. They are ashamed of themselves—they have expressed as much as that. They have even gone so far as to pray to God for Divine Grace to overcome their habit. But after being the subject of convictions for years, they have up to now made no advance.

It did seem once as if they had conquered it. For a long time there was an abstinence from the fault, but they have gone back to their folly. They have preferred the bestial degrading vice—did I say *bestial*? I insult the beasts!—for beasts are not guilty of such a vice as this! The drunk prefers this degrading vice to Christ Jesus. There stands drunkenness, I see it mirrored before me with all its folly, its witlessness, its greed and filth. But the man chooses all that, and though he has known by head knowledge something concerning the beauty and excellency of Christ, he virtually says of Jesus, "Not this man, but drunkenness!"

Then there are other cases where a favorite lust reigns supreme in their hearts. The men know the evil of the sin and they have good cause to know it. They know also something of the sweetness of religion, for they are never happier than when they come up with God's people. And they go home sometimes from a solemn sermon, especially if it touches their vice, and they feel, "God has spoken to my soul today and I am brought to a standstill." But for all that, the temptation comes again and they fall as they have fallen before. I am afraid there are some of you whom no arguments will ever move. You have become so set on this mischief that it will be your eternal ruin.

But oh, think! How will this look when you are in Hell—"I preferred that foul Barabbas of lust to the beauties and perfections of the Savior who came into the world to seek and to save that which was lost!" And yet this is the case, not of some, but of a great multitude who listen to the Gospel and yet prefer sin to its saving power. There may be some here, too, of another class, who prefer gain. It has come to this—if they become truly the Lord's people, they cannot do in trade what they now think their trade requires them to do. If they become really and genuinely Believers, they must, of course, become honest! But their trade would not pay, they say, if it were conducted upon honest principles! Or it is such a trade and

there are some few such, as ought not to be conducted at all, much less by Christians.

Here comes the turning point—shall I take the gold, or shall I take Christ? True, it is cankered gold, and gold on which a curse must come. It is the fool's pence—it may be it is gain that is extorted from the miseries of the poor—money that would not ever stand the light because it is not fairly come by. Perhaps it is money that will burn its way right through your souls when you get upon your deathbeds. But yet men who love the world, say, “No, not Christ, give me a full purse and away with Christ.”

Others, less base or less honest, cry, “We know His excellence! We wish we could have Him, but we cannot have Him on terms which involve the renunciation of our dearly-beloved gain.” “Not this Man, but Barabbas.” Others say, “I would gladly be a Christian, but then I should lose so many of my acquaintances and friends. For the matter of what it comes to, my friends are not much good to me—they are such friends as are fondest when I have most money to spend with them. They are friends who praise me most when I am often at the ale-house—when I am seen plunging deepest into their vices. I know they do me mischief, but,” says the man, “I could not venture to oppose them. One of them has such a glib tongue and he can make such telling jokes! I could not bear to have him down upon me. And there is another, I have heard him give Christians such stinging names and point at their faults in such a sarcastic manner—I could not run the gauntlet of his tongue! And therefore, though I gladly would be a Christian, yet I will not.”

That is the way you prefer to be a serf, a slave, to the tongue of the scorner sooner than be a free man and take up the Cross and follow Christ! You prefer, I say, not merely by way of allegory, but as matter of *fact*—you prefer Barabbas to the Lord Jesus Christ! I might thus multiply instances but the same principle runs through them all. If anything whatever keeps you back from giving your heart to the Lord Jesus Christ, you are guilty of setting up an opposition candidate to Christ in your soul and you are choosing, “not this Man, but Barabbas.”

Let me occupy a few minutes with pleading Christ's cause with you. Why is it that you reject Christ? Are you not conscious of the many good things which you receive from Him? You would have been dead if it had not been for Him! No, worse than that, you would have been in Hell! God has sharpened the great axe. Justice, like a stern woodman, stood with the axe uplifted, ready to cut you down as a cumberer of the ground. A hand was seen stopping the arm of the Avenger and a voice was heard saying, “Let it alone, till I dig about it and feed it.”

Who was it that appeared just then in your moment of extremity? It was no other than that Christ, of whom you think so little, that you prefer drunkenness or vice to Him! You are this day in the House of God listening to a discourse which I hope is sent from Him. You might have been in Hell—think one moment of that—shut out from hope, enduring in body and soul unutterable pangs. That you are *not* there should make you love and bless Him who has said, “Deliver him from going down into the pit.” Why will you prefer your own gain and self-indulgence to that blessed One to whom you owe so much?

Common gratitude should make you deny yourself something for Him who denied Himself so much that He might bless you. Do I hear you say

that you cannot follow Christ because His precepts are too severe? In what respect are they too severe? If you, yourself, were set to judge them, what is the point with which you would find fault? They deny you your sins? They deny you your miseries! They do not permit you, in fact, to ruin yourself. There is no precept of Christ which is not for your good and there is nothing which He forbids you which He does not forbid on the principle that it would harm you to indulge in it.

But suppose Christ's precepts to be ever so stern—is it not better that you should put up with them than be ruined? The soldier submits implicitly to the captain's command because he knows that without discipline there can be no victory and the whole army may be cut in pieces if there is a want of order. When the sailor has risked his life to penetrate through the thick ice of the north, we find him consenting to all the orders and regulations of authority and bearing all the hardships of the adventure because he is prompted by the desire of assisting in a great discovery, or stimulated by a large reward.

And surely the little self-denials which Christ calls us to will be abundantly recompensed by the reward He offers! And when the soul and its eternal interests are at stake, we may well put up with these temporary inconveniences if we may inherit eternal life! I think I hear you say that you would be a Christian, but there is no happiness in it. I would not tell you a falsehood on this point. I would speak the truth if it were so, but I do solemnly declare that there is more joy in the Christian life than there is in any other form of life! If I had to die like a dog and there were no hereafter, I would prefer to be a Christian! You shall appeal to the very poorest among us—to those who are most sick and most despised and they will tell you the same.

There is not an old country woman shivering in her old ragged red cloak over a handful of fire, full of rheumatism, with an empty cupboard and an aged body who would change with the very highest and greatest of you if she had to give up her religion! No, she would tell you that her Redeemer was a greater comfort to her than all the luxuries which could be heaped upon the table of Dives. You make a mistake when you dream that my Master does not make His disciples blessed. They are a blessed people who put their trust in Christ!

Still, I think I hear you say, "Yes, this is all very well, but still I prefer present pleasure." Do you not, in this, talk like a child? No! Like a fool! For what is *present* pleasure? How long does that word "present" last? If you could have ten thousand years of merriment I might agree with you in a measure, but even there I should have but short patience with you, for what would be ten thousand years of sin's merriment compared with millions upon millions of years of sin's penalty? Why, at the longest, your life will be but very short. Are you not conscious that time flies more hurriedly every day? As you grow older, do you not seem as if you had lived a shorter time instead of longer? Perhaps if you could live to be as old as Jacob, you would say, "Few and evil have my days been, for they appear fewer as they grow more numerous."

You know that this life is but a span and is soon over. Look at the graveyards! See how they are crowded with green mounds. Remember your own companions—how one by one they have passed away. They were as firm and strong as you, but they have gone like a shadow that declines.

Is it worthwhile to have this little space of pleasure and then to lie down in eternal pain? I pray you answer this question! Is it worth while to choose Barabbas for the sake of the temporary gain he may give you and give up Christ and so renounce the eternal treasures of joy and happiness which are at His right hand forevermore?

I wish that I could put these questions before you as they ought to be put. It needs the earnest seraphic voice of Whitfield, or the pleading tongue of Richard Baxter to plead with you! But yet I think I talk to rational men. And if it is a matter of arithmetic, it shall need no words of mine. I will not ask you to take your life at the longest that you expect it to be—at eighty, say—crowd it full of all the pleasures you can imagine. Suppose yourself in good health! Dream yourself to be without business cares, with all that heart can wish! Go and sit upon the throne of Solomon if you will, and yet what will you have to say when it is all over? Looking back upon it, can you make more of it than Solomon did, when he said, “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity. All is vanity and vexation of spirit”?

When you have cast up that sum, may I ask you to calculate how much you will have gained, if, in order to possess this vanity, you have renounced eternal happiness and have incurred everlasting woe? Do you believe the Bible? You say, “Yes.” Well, then, it must be so. Many men profess to be Believers in Scripture and yet, when you come to the point as to whether they believe in eternal woe and eternal joy, there is a kind of something inside which whispers, “That is in the Book—but still it is not real, it is not true to us.” Make it true to yourselves and when you have done it and have clearly proved that you must be in happiness or woe—and that you must here either have Barabbas for your master, or have Christ for your Lord—then, I say, like sane men, judge which is the better choice and may God’s mighty Grace give you spiritual sanity to make the right choice!

But this I know, you will never make the right choice unless that mighty Spirit who alone leads us to choose the right and reject the wrong, shall come upon you and lead you to fly to a Savior’s wounds! I need not, I think, prolong the service now, but I hope you will prolong it at your own houses by thinking of the matter. And may I put the question personally to all of you separate—whose are you? On whose side are you? There are no neuters. There are no betweenites—you either serve Christ or Belial! You are either with the Lord or with His enemies! Who is on the Lord’s side this day? Who? Who is for Christ and for His Cross? For His blood and for His Throne?

Who, on the other hand, are His foes? As many as are not for Christ are numbered with His enemies. Be not so numbered any longer, for the Gospel comes to you with an inviting voice—“Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” God help you to believe and cast yourself upon Him now. And if you trust Him, you are saved now and you shall be saved forever! Amen.

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**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 6, 1877,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“He said unto the Jews, Behold your King.”
John 19:14.***

PILATE said much more than he meant and, therefore, we shall not restrict our consideration of his words to what he intended. John tells us considering Caiaphas, “and this spoke he not of himself,” and we may say the same of Pilate. Everything said or done in connection with the Savior during the day of His Crucifixion was full of meaning, far fuller of meaning than the speakers or actors were aware. Transformed by the Cross, even the commonplace becomes solemn and weighty!

When Caiaphas said that it was expedient that one man should die for the people, that the whole nation perish not, he little thought that he was enunciating the great Gospel principle of Substitution! When the Jewish people cried out before Pilate, “His blood be on us and on our children,” they little knew the judgment which they were bringing upon themselves which would commence to be fulfilled at the siege of Jerusalem and follow them, hanging like a heavy cloud over their race, for centuries! When the soldier with a spear pierced His side he had no idea that he was bringing forth before all eyes that blood and water which are, to the whole Church, the emblems of the double cleansing which we find in Jesus, cleansing by atoning blood and sanctifying Grace.

The fullness of time had come and all things were full. Each movement on that awful day was brimming with mystery. Neither could the Master or those around Him stir or speak without teaching some Gospel, or enforcing some lesson. Whereas on certain days frivolity seems to rule the hour and little is to be gathered from much that is spoken—on the day of the Passion even the most careless spoke as men inspired! Pilate, the undecided spirit, with no mind of his own, uttered language as weighty as if he, too, had been among the Prophets. His acquittal of our Lord, his mention of Barabbas, his writing of the inscription to be fixed over the head of Jesus and many other matters were all fraught with instruction.

It was to the Jews that Pilate brought forth Jesus, arrayed in garments of derision, and to them He said, “Ecce Rex”—“Behold your King!” It was by the seed of Abraham that He was rejected as their King. But we shall not think of them in order to *blame* that unhappy nation, but to remind ourselves that we, also, may fall into the same sin. As a nation favored with the Gospel, we stand, in many respects, in the same privileged condition as the Jews did. To us is the Word of God made known! To our keeping, the oracles of God are committed in these last days and we, though by Nature, shoots of the wild olive, are engrafted into that favored stock

from which Israel has, for a while, been cut off. Shall we prove equally unworthy? Shall any of us be found guilty of the blood of Jesus?

We hear of Jesus this day—are we rejecting Him? The suffering Messiah will be brought forth, again, this morning, not by Pilate, but by one who longs to do Him honor. And when He stands before you and is proclaimed, again, in the words, “Behold your King!” will you, also, cry, “Away with Him! Away with Him!”? Let us hope that there will not be found, here, hearts so evil as to imitate the rebellious nation and cry, “We will not have this Man to reign over us.” Oh that each one of us may acknowledge the Lord Jesus to be his King, for beneath His scepter there is rest and joy! He is worthy to be crowned by every heart! Let us all unite in beholding Him with reverence and receiving Him with delight!

Give me your ears and hearts while Jesus is evidently set forth as standing among you. And for the next few minutes let it be your only business to, “Behold your King.”

I. Come with me, then, to the place which is called The Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha, and there, “behold your King.” I shall first ask you to BEHOLD YOUR KING PREPARING HIS THRONE, yes, and making Himself ready to sit upon it. When you look, in answer to the summons, “Behold your King,” what do you see? You see the “Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief” wearing a crown of thorns and covered with an old purple cloak which had been thrown about Him in mockery. You can see, if you look closely, the traces of His streaming blood, for He has just been scourged and you may, also, discover that His face is blackened with bruises and stained with shameful spit from the soldiers’ mouths—

***“Thus trimmed forth they bring Him to the rout,
Who, ‘Crucify Him,’ cry with one strong shout,
God holds His peace at man, and man cries out.”***

It is a terrible spectacle, but I ask you to gaze upon it steadily and see the establishment of the Redeemer’s Throne. See how He becomes your mediatorial King. He was setting up a new Throne on Gabbatha, where He would reign as the King of pardoned sinners and the Prince of Peace! He was King before all worlds as Lord of all by right of His eternal power and Godhead. He had a Throne when worlds were made, as King of all kings by creation. He had, also, always filled the Throne of Providence, upholding all things by the Word of His power. On His head were many crowns and to Pilate’s question, “Are You a king, then?” He did fitly answer, “You say that I am a king.”

But here before Pilate and the Jews, in His condition of shame and misery, He was about to ascend and, first of all, to prepare the Throne of the heavenly Grace which now is set up among the sons of men that they may flee to it and find eternal salvation! Mark how He is preparing this Throne of Grace—it is by pain and shame endured in our place. Sin was in the way of man’s happiness—and a broken Law and justice required a penalty—and all this must be arranged before a Throne of Grace could be erected among men.

If you look at our suffering Lord you see at once the ensigns of His pain, for He wears a crown of thorns which pierce His brow. Pain was a

great part of the penalty due for sin and the great Substitute was, therefore, sorely pained. When Pilate brought forth our martyr Prince, He was the very mirror of agony. He was majesty in misery—misery worked up to its full height and stature. The cruel furrows of the scourge and the trickling rivulets of His blood down His face were but the tokens that He was about to die in cruel pangs upon the Cross! And these, together, were incumbent upon Him because there could be no Throne of Grace till first there had been a substitutionary sacrifice. It behooved Him to suffer that He might be a Prince and a Savior. Behold your King in His pains! He is laying the deep foundations of His Kingdom of mercy!

Many a crown has been secured by blood and so is this—but it is His own blood! Many a throne has been established by suffering and so is this—but He Himself bears the pain! By His great sacrificial griefs our Lord has prepared a Throne upon which He shall sit till all the chosen race have been made kings and priests to reign with Him. It is by His agony that He obtains the royal power to pardon—by His stripes and bruises He wins the right to absolve poor sinners! We shall have no cause to wonder at the greatness of His mediatorial power if we consider the depth of His sacrificial sufferings! As His misery is the source of His majesty, so the greatness of His pains has secured to Him the fullness of power to save. Had He not gone to the end of the Law and honored Justice to the highest degree, He had not, now, been so gloriously able to dispense mercy from His glorious high Throne of mediatorial Grace. Behold your King, then, as He lays deep in His own pain and death the basis of His Throne of Grace.

Nor is it only pain, for He wears, also, the tokens of scorn. That crown of thorns meant mainly mockery—the soldiers made Him a mimic monarch, a carnival king—and that scarlet robe, too, was cast upon His shoulders in bitter scorn—and thus did this world deride its God! The Evangelists give you the description in brief sentences, as if they stopped between each line to cover their faces with their hands and weep. So there He stands before the crowd, helpless, friendless, with none to declare His generation or give Him a good word. He is deserted by all who formerly called Him, Master, and He has become the center of a scene of rioting and ridicule. The soldiers have done their worst and now the chief men of the nation look at Him with contempt and are only kept back from the most ribald scorn by a hate too furiously eager for death to afford them leisure for their scoffs.

His enemies had done everything in their power to clothe Him with scorn and they were asking for permission to do more, for they cried, “Let Him be crucified.” Behold how He has left all the honor of His Father’s house and His own Glory among the angels—and here He stands with a mock robe, a mimic scepter and a thorny crown—the butt of ridicule, scoffed at by all! Yet this must be, because sin is a shameful thing and a part of the penalty of sin is shame, as they will know who shall wake up in the Day of Judgment to everlasting contempt! Shame fell on Adam when he sinned and then and there he knew that he was naked. And now

shame has come down in a tremendous hail upon the head of the Second Adam, the Substitute for shameful man, and He is covered with contempt.

“All they that see Me laugh Me to scorn.” It is hard to say whether cruelty or mockery had most to do with the Person of our Lord at Gabbatha, but by enduring these two things together He laid on an immovable Foundation the cornerstone of His dominion of love and Grace. How could He have been the King of a redeemed people if He had not thus redeemed them? He might have been Lord over a people doomed to die—the stern Ruler of a people who continued in sin and would so continue till they perished forever from His Presence. But He not seek such a kingdom. He sought a kingdom over *hearts* that should eternally be under obligation to Him. Hearts that, being redeemed from the lowest Hell by His atoning death, would forever love Him with the utmost fervency. His sorrow secured His power to save! His shame endowed Him with the right to bless! “Behold your King.”

Look at Him with steady eyes and see what a King He now is by right of benefit conferred. Behold, He has put away sin, forever, by the sacrifice of Himself and, therefore, all the ransomed ones agree that He should be king who smote the great dragon which devoured the nations. Behold, by His stooping to shame, He has dethroned Satan who was the prince of this world! And who should occupy the Throne but He who has won it and cast out the strong one who ruled before? Christ has done more for men than the Prince of Darkness could or would, for He has died for them and so He has earned a just supremacy over all grateful hearts.

As for death, Jesus, by yielding to death, has conquered it. Let Him be crowned with the victor’s wreath who has destroyed the world’s destroyer! In His shame you also see the Lord Jesus Christ fulfilling the Law and making it honorable. He who could honor that Law which otherwise would have cursed us, deserves to have all honor and homage paid to Him by the sons of men whom He has rescued from the curse! You see, then, our Lord, when He put on the old red cloak and submitted His brow to be pierced with thorns, was really establishing for Himself an empire—the foundations of which shall never be shaken! He was performing that saving work which has made Him King among sinners whom He saves and Lord of the Kingdom of Grace which through His death is bestowed upon men!

Note this, too, that men are kings among their fellows when they can show deep sympathy and give substantial succor. He who can sympathize wins power of the best sort, not coarse force, but refined spiritual influence. For this cause our Lord was afflicted, as you see Him afflicted, that He might have sympathy with you in your direst grief and in your most grievous dishonor. As the children were partakers of flesh and blood, He, Himself, also took part of the same. And as they must suffer, so the Captain of their salvation was made *perfect* by suffering. This gives Him His glorious power over us. He is a faithful High Priest, for He can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. And this ability to enter into our infirmities and sorrows makes Him supreme over our hearts. Look at your King in pain and mockery—and see how royal He is to your heart! How sover-

eignly He commands your heart to rejoice! With what regal power He commands your fears to lie still and how obediently your despondency yields to His Word!

Now, as it is with you, so is it on a larger scale in the world. The suffering nations will yet see their true Deliverer in their suffering Lord. That scepter of a reed will secure Him power far greater than a rod of iron. His love to man is proved by His suffering to the death on their behalf and this, when the Holy Spirit has made men wise, shall be to the myriads of our race the reason for proclaiming Him Lord of all! The kings and princes who rule mankind by reason of their descent or by the force of arms, have but the *names* of kings. The true kings are the great benefactors. The heroes are our kings, after all. We look upon those as royal who can risk their lives for their fellow men to win them liberty, or to teach them truth. The race forgets its masters but it remembers its friends.

Earth, but for Jesus, had been a vast prison and men a race of condemned criminals. But He who stands before us in Gabbatha, in all His shame and grief, has delivered us from our lost estate and, therefore, He must be King! Who shall say no to Him? If love must ultimately triumph—if disinterested self-sacrifice must obtain homage—then Jesus is and shall be King! If eventually, when the morning breaks and man's heart is purged from the prejudice and injustice occasioned by sin, the might shall be with the right and truth must prevail! Then Jesus must reign! The eternal fitness of things demands that the best should be highest, that he who does men most service should be most honored among them! In a word, that He who was made nothing of for man's sake should become everything to him. See, then, how the crown of thorns is mother to the crown which Jesus wears in His Church! The scarlet robe is the purchase price of the vesture of universal sovereignty and the mock scepter of reed is the precursor of the rod of nations with which the whole earth will yet be ruled! "Behold your King," and see the sources of His mediatorial power!

II. O you who see in your bleeding and rejected Lord, "the King in His beauty," come here, yet again, and BEHOLD HIM CLAIMING YOUR HOMAGE. See in what way He comes to win your hearts. What is His right to be King over you? There are many rights, for on His head are many crowns—but the most commanding right which Jesus has over any of us is signified by that crown of *thorns*—it is the right of supreme love! He loved us as none other could have loved us. If we put all the loves of parents and of wives and children all together, we can never rival, even for a moment, the love of Christ to us! And whenever that love touches us, so that we feel its power, we crown Him King at once.

Who can resist His charms? One look of His eyes overpowers us! See with your heart those eyes when they are full of tears for perishing sinners and you are a willing subject. One look at His blessed Person subjected to scourging and spitting for our sakes will give us more idea of His crown rights than anything besides. Look into His pierced heart as it pours out its life flood for us and all disputes about His Sovereignty are ended in our hearts. We acknowledge Him Lord because we see how He loved! How

could we do otherwise? Love in action, or rather love in suffering, carries an Omnipotence about it! Behold what His love endured and so, “Behold your King.”

Jesus, in the garb of mockery, marred with traces of His pain, also reminds us of His complete purchase of us by His deeds and death. “You are not your own, you are bought with a price.” Behold your King and see the price! It is the price of immense suffering, of most cruel shame! It is an incalculable price, for the Lord of All is set at nothing! It is an awful price, for He who only has immortality yields Himself to die! It is the price of blood. It is the scourging and bleeding and woe of Jesus—no, it is Himself! If you would see the price of your redemption, “Behold your King.” ‘Tis He that has redeemed us unto God by His blood! It is He that “made Himself of no reputation and took upon Him the form of a Servant; and being found in fashion as a Man, humbled Himself; and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross.”

You acknowledge that claim—the love of Christ demands it—you feel that from now on you live for Him, alone, and count it joy that in all respects He should reign over you with unlimited sway. Jesus, because He suffered, has acquired a power over us which is far superior to any which could be urged in courts of law, or enforced by mere power, for our hearts have voluntarily surrendered to Him and given Him the right of our free submission, charmed to give allegiance to such imperial love! Is it possible for a Believer to look at the Lord Jesus Christ without feeling that he longs to be more and more His servant and disciple? Do you not thirst to serve Him? Can you behold Him in the depth of shame without pining to lift Him up to the heights of glory? Can you see Him stooping thus for you without pleading with God that a glorious high Throne may be His and that He may sit upon it and rule all the hearts of men?

There is no need to argue out the right of King Jesus, for you feel it—His love has carried you by storm and it holds fast its capture. You cannot have a Savior without His being your King. And seeing such a Savior in such a condition, you cannot even think of Him without delighting to ascribe to Him all power and dominion! Could we escape His sway it would be bondage to us—and when we, at any time fail to admit it, it is our worst affliction! “Behold your King,” then, for He Himself is His own claim to your obedience! See what He suffered for you, my Brothers and Sisters, and from now on never draw back from any labor, shame, or suffering for His dear sake.

“Behold your King,” and reckon to be treated like He. Do you expect to be crowned with gold when He was crowned with thorns? Shall lilies grow for you and briars for Him? Never again be ashamed to carry His glorious name, unless, indeed, you can be so vile as to prove a traitor to such a Lord! See to what shame He was put and learn from Him to despise all shame for His Truth’s sake! Shall the disciple be above his Master, or the servant above his Lord? If they have thus maltreated the Master of the house, what shall they do to the household? Let us reckon upon our share of this treatment and, by accepting it, prove to all men that the de-

spised and rejected of men is really the King over us and that the subjects blush not to be like their Monarch!

Even though the cost is all the shame the world can possibly pour upon us, or all the suffering that flesh and blood can, in any condition, endure, let us be faithful in our loyalty and cry, "Who shall separate us? Shall persecution, or distress, or tribulation divide us from our King? No! In all these things we are more than conquerors! King of Grievs, you are King of my soul! O King of Shame, you are absolute Monarch of my heart! You are King by Divine right and King by my own voluntary choice! Other lords have had dominion over us, but now, since You have revealed Yourself after this fashion, Your name, only, shall govern our spirit!" Do you not see, then, that Jesus, before Pilate, reveals His claim in the appearance which He wears? "Behold your King."

III. "Behold your King," for a third time, that you may see Him SUBDUING HIS DOMINIONS. Dressed in robes of scorn and with a visage marred with pain, He comes forth conquering and to conquer! This is not very apparent at a superficial glance, for He is not arrayed like a man of war. You see no sword upon His thigh, nor bow in His hand. No fiery threats fall from His lips, nor does He speak with eloquent persuasion. He is unarmed, yet victorious! He is silent, but yet conquering!

In this garb He goes forth to war. His shame is His armor and His sufferings are His battle-axe. What do you think? How can it be so? I speak no fiction, but sober fact—and it shall be proven. Missionaries have gone forth to win the heathen for Christ and they have commenced with the uncivilized sons of sin by telling them that there is a God and that He is great and just. The people have listened unmoved, or have only answered, "Do you think we don't know this?" Then they have spoken of sin and its punishment and have foretold the coming of the Lord to judgment, but still the people stirred not, but coolly said, "'Tis true," and then went on their way to live in sin as before.

At last these earnest men have let fall the blessed secret and spoken of the love of God in giving His only-begotten Son and they have begun to tell the story of the matchless griefs of Immanuel! Then have the dry bones stirred! Then have the deaf begun to hear! They tell us that they had not long told the story before they noticed that eyes were fastened on them and that countenances were beaming with interest which had been listless before. And they have said to themselves, "Why did we not begin with this?" Yes, why, indeed? For this it is that touches men's hearts—Christ Crucified is the Conqueror!

Not in His robes of Glory does He subdue the heart, but in His vestments of shame! Not as sitting upon the Throne does He, at first, gain the faith and the affections of sinners, but as bleeding, suffering and dying in their place! "God forbid that I should glory," said the Apostle, "save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." And though every theme that is connected with the Savior ought to play its part in our ministry, yet this is the master theme. The atoning work of Jesus is the great gun of our battery! The Cross is the mighty battering-ram to break in pieces the bronze gates of human prejudices and the iron bars of obstinacy! Christ coming to be

our Judge alarms, but Christ, the Man of Sorrows, subdues! The crown of thorns has a royal power in it to compel a willing allegiance! The scepter of reed breaks hearts better than a rod of iron and the robe of mockery commands more love than Caesar's imperial purple! There is nothing like it under Heaven!

Victories 10,000 times 10,000 have been achieved by Him whom Pilate led forth to the multitude—victories distinctly to be ascribed to the crown of thorns and vesture of mockery! Are they not written in the book of the wars of the Lord? There will be more such as He is more frequently set forth in His own fashion and men are bid, in the Man of Sorrows to behold their King. Has it not been so at home as well as among the far-off heathen? What wins men's hearts to Christ today? What but Christ in shame and Christ in suffering? I appeal to you who have been newly converted—what has bound you as captives to Jesus' chariot? What has made you, from now on, vow to be His followers, rejoicing in His name? What but this—that He bowed His head to the death for your sake and has redeemed you unto God by His blood? You know it is so!

And oh, dear children of God, if ever you feel the power of Christ upon you to the fullest—till it utterly overcomes you—is it not the memory of redeeming grief which does it? When you become like harps and Jesus is the minstrel and lays His finger among your heartstrings and brings out nothing but praise for His dear name—what is it that charms you into the music of grateful love but the fact of His condescension on your behalf? Is not this your song, that He was slain and has redeemed you unto God by His blood? I confess I could sit down at the foot of His Cross and do nothing else but weep until I wept myself away, for His suffering makes my soul to melt within me. Then, if the call of duty is heard, I feel intensely eager to plead with others. At that time I am ready to make *any* sacrifice to bring others under my Lord's dominion! Then, by His Grace, I am full of a holy passion that even death could not quench—all this, I say, if I have but just come from gazing on the Redeemer's passion and drinking of His cup and being baptized with His Baptism!

The scepter of reed rules as nothing else ever did, for it awakens enthusiasm. The crown of thorns commands homage as no other diadem ever did, for it braces men into heroes and martyrs. No royalty is so all-commanding as that which has for its insignia the crown of thorns, the reed, the red cloak and the five wounds! Other sovereignties are forced and feigned. They are hollow compared with the Sovereignty of "the despised of men!" Fear, or custom, or self-interest make men courtiers elsewhere, but fervent love crowds the courts of King Jesus! We do not merely say that the marred Countenance is the most majestic ever seen, but we have *felt* it to be so on many an occasions. Yes, and feel it to be so now.

Do you want to make our hard hearts soft? Tell us of Jesus' grief! Would you make us, strong men, into children? Set the Man of Sorrows in our midst! There is no resisting Him. Look, also, at backsliders if you would see the power of the despised Nazarene. If they have gone away from Christ. If they have become lukewarm. If their hearts have become obdurate to Him who once could charm them—what can bring them

back? I know but one magnet which, in the hands of the Holy Spirit, will attract these sadly fallen ones—it is Jesus in His shame and pains! We tell them that they crucified the Son of God afresh and put Him to an open shame—and they look on Him whom they have pierced and mourn for Him!

O you, who, after having sipped of the communion cup, have gone to drink at the table of Bacchus! You, who, after having talked of love to Christ, have followed after the lusts of the flesh! You, who, after singing His praises, have blasphemed the sacred name with which you are named—may His Omnipotence of love be proven in you, also! What can ever bring you back but this sad reflection, that you, also, have twisted for Him a crown of thorns and caused Him to be blasphemed among His enemies? Still the merit of His death is available for you! The power and efficacy of His precious blood have not ceased, even for you! And if you come back to Him—and oh, may a sight of Him draw you—He will receive you graciously as at the first. I say to you, “Behold your King,” and may the Sovereignty of His humiliation and suffering be proven, this morning, in some of you as you shall come bending at His feet, conquered by His great love and restored to repentance and faith by His marvelous compassion! A sight of His wounds and bruises heals us, so that we grieve at our rebellions and long to be brought home to God, never to wander more.

Ah, dear Brothers and Sisters, we shall always find, as long as the world stands, that among saints, sinners, backsliders and all classes of men, Jesus Christ’s power is most surely felt when His humiliation is most faithfully declared and most believingly known! It is by this that He will subdue all things to Himself. If we will but preach Jesus Christ to the Hindu, it will not be necessary to answer all his metaphysical subtleties—the sorrows of Jesus are as a sharp sword to cut the Gordian knot. If we will go down among the degraded inhabitants of Africa, we shall not need, first, to civilize them—the Cross is the great lever which lifts up fallen men—it conquers evil and establishes truth and righteousness.

The most depraved and hardened learn of His great love and hearts of stone begin to beat—they see Jesus suffering to the death out of nothing else but love to them—and they are touched by it! And they eagerly enquire what they must do to be saved by such a Savior. The Holy Spirit works in the minds of many by setting forth the great love and grief of Jesus. May we who are His ministers have great faith in His Cross and from now on say, as we preach the suffering Jesus, “Behold your King.”

IV. In the fourth place I beg you to “Behold your King” SETTING FORTH THE PATTERN OF HIS KINGDOM. When you look at Him, you are struck, at once, with the thought that if He is a king He is like no other monarch, for other kings are covered with rich apparel and surrounded with pomp, but He has none of these. Their glories usually consist in wars by which they have made others suffer. But His Glory is His *own* suffering! No blood but His own has flowed to make Him illustrious!

He is a King but He cannot be put in the list of sovereigns such as the nations of the earth are compelled to serve. When Antoninus Pius set up the statue of Jesus in the Pantheon as one of a circle of gods and heroes,

it must have seemed strangely out of place to those who gazed upon its visage if the sculptor was at all true to life. It must have stood apart as one that could not be numbered with the rest! Neither can you set Him among the masters of the human race who have crushed mankind beneath their iron heels! He was no Caesar—you cannot make Him appear like one! Call Him not autocrat, emperor, or czar—He has an authority greater than all these—yet not after their kind. His purple is different from theirs and His crown, also. But His *face* differs more and His *heart* most of all. “My kingdom,” He says, “is not of this world.”

For troops, He has a host of sorrows. For pomp, a surrounding of scorn. For lofty bearing, humility. For adulation, mockery. For homage, spit. For glory, shame. For a Throne, a Cross. Yet there was never a truer King! Indeed, all kings are but a name, save this King, who is a real Ruler in Himself and of Himself—and not by extraneous force. Right royal, indeed, is the Nazarene! But He cannot be likened unto the princes of earth, nor can His Kingdom be reckoned with theirs. I pray that the day may soon come when none may dream of looking upon the Church as a worldly organization capable of alliance with temporal sovereignties so as to be patronized, directed, or reformed by them. Christ’s Kingdom shines as a lone star with a brightness all its own! It stands apart like a hill of light, sacred and sublime—the high hills may leap with envy because of it—but it is not of them nor like unto them. Is not this manifest even in the appearance of our Lord as Pilate brings Him forth and cries, “Behold your King!”?

Now, as He sets before us in His own Person, the pattern of His Kingdom, we may expect that we shall see some likeness to Him in His subjects. And if you will gaze upon the Church, which is His Kingdom, from the first day of her history until now, you will see that it, too, is wearing its purple robe. The martyrs’ blood is the purple vesture of the Church of Christ. The trials and persecutions of Believers are her crown of thorns. Think of the rage of persecution under Pagan Rome—and the equally inhuman proceedings of Papal Rome—and you will see how the ensign of Christ’s Kingdom is a crown of thorns—a crown and yet thorns—thorns but still a crown! The bush is burning, but it is not consumed!

If you, Beloved, are truly followers of Jesus, you must expect to take your measure of shame and dishonor. And you may reckon upon your allotment of griefs and sorrows. The “Man of Sorrows” attracts a sorrowful following. The Lamb of God’s Passover is still eaten with bitter herbs. The child of God cannot escape the rod, for the elder Brother did not and to Him we are to be conformed. We must “fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ for His body’s sake, which is the Church” (Col. 1:24).

Remember, however, that Christ’s sufferings, as a pattern, were not for His own sins, nor brought upon Him as a chastisement for His own faults. The sufferings which belong to His Kingdom are those which are endured for His name and for His Glory’s sake, and for the good of others. If men lie in prison for their own crimes, that has *nothing* to do with His Kingdom. If we suffer for our sins, that is no part of His Kingdom. But when a man loses of his substance for Christ’s cause, lays out himself to toil even

unto death, bears contempt and suffers hardness as a Christian—this is after the type of Christ’s Kingdom. When the missionary goes forth with his life in his hand among the heathen, or when a Believer in any way divests himself of comfort for the good of others, it is *then* that he truly copies the pattern set him in Pilate’s Hall by our great King.

I say to you Christians who court ease, to you who are hoarding up your gold, to you who will do nothing that would bring you under the criticism of your fellow men, to you who live unto yourselves—would it not be irony of the severest kind if I were to point to Jesus before Pilate and say, “Behold *your* King”? Living in undue luxury, amassing wealth, rolling in ease, living to enjoy yourselves! Is that *your* King? Poor subjects, you—and very unlike your Lord! But if there are among us those who, for His sake, can make sacrifices, we may look upon our King without fear. You who are undaunted by contempt and who would give all that you have, yes, and give *yourselves* to know Jesus—and are doing so—to such I say, “Behold your King,” for you *are* of His Kingdom and you shall reign with Him! In your conquest of yourselves you have already become kings! In reigning over your own desires and carnal inclinations for the sake of His dear love, you are already kings and priests unto God and you shall reign forever and ever!

He who is ruled by his passions in any degree is still a slave. But he who lives for God and his fellow men has a royal soul. The insignia of a prince unto God are still shame and suffering—which adornments are readily worn when the Lord calls him to do so. In Christ’s Kingdom those are peers of the highest rank who are most like their Lord and are the lowest and humblest in mind—and most truly the servants of all. The secondary princes of His Kingdom approximate less closely to Him and the lower you descend in the scale the less you are like He is in those respects. The Christian surrounded with every comfort who never endured hardness for Christ, who never knew what it was to be sneered at for Jesus’ sake, who never made a sacrifice which went so far as to pinch him in the least—if, indeed, he is a Christian—is least in the kingdom of Heaven.

Proud, rich men who give but trifles to Christ’s cause are pariahs in His Kingdom! They who are who are willing to be least of all, are the chief—they are princes who make themselves the offscouring of all things for His name’s sake, such as were the Apostles and first martyrs and others whom His love has greatly constrained.

V. Our concluding remark shall be, “Behold your King”—PROVING THE CERTAINTY OF HIS EMPIRE—for if, Beloved, Christ was King when He was in Pilate’s hands, after being scourged and spit upon, and while He was wearing the robe and crown of mockery, when will He *not* be King? If He were King at His worst, when is it that His Throne can ever be shaken? They have brought Him very low. They have brought Him lower than the sons of men, for they have made Him a worm and not a man, despised of the people, and yet He is King!

Marks of royalty were present on the day of His death. He dispensed crowns when He was on the Cross—He gave the dying thief a promise of

an entrance into Paradise. In His death He shook the earth, He opened graves, He split the rocks, He darkened the sun and He made men smite on their breasts in dismay! One voice after another, even from the ranks of His foes, proclaimed Him to be King, even when dying like a malefactor! Was He a King then? When will He *not* be King? And who is there that can, in any way, shake His Throne?

In the days of His flesh, “the kings of the earth stood up and the rulers took counsel together, saying, Let us break His bonds asunder, and cast His cords from us,” but He that sat in the heavens did laugh—the Lord did have them in derision and Christ on the Cross was acknowledged, in Hebrew, Greek and Latin, to be, still, the King of the Jews. When will He not be King? If He was King before He died and was laid in the grave, what is He, now, that He has risen from the dead? What is He, now, now that He has vanquished the destroyer of our race and lives no more to die? What is He now?

You angels, tell what glories surround Him now! If He were King when He stood at Pilate’s bar, what will He be when Pilate shall stand at His bar, when He shall come on the Great White Throne and summon all mankind before Him to judgment? What will be His acknowledged sovereignty and His dreaded majesty in the day of the Lord? Come, let us adore Him! Let us pay our humble homage in the courts of the Lord’s house this day! And then let us go forth to our daily service in His name and make this our strong resolve, His Spirit helping us, that we will live to crown Him in our hearts and in our lives—in every place where our lot may be cast—till the day breaks and the shadows flee away and we behold the King in His beauty and the land that is very far off.

None can overturn a kingdom which is founded on the death of its King! None can abolish a dominion whose deep foundations are laid in the tears and blood of the Prince, Himself. Napoleon said that he founded his empire by force and, therefore, it had passed away. “But,” he said, “Jesus founded His Kingdom upon love and it will last forever.” So it must be, for whatever may or may not be, it is written—“He must reign.” As for us, if we wish to extend the Redeemer’s Kingdom we must be prepared to deny ourselves for Christ. We must be prepared for weariness, slander and self-denial.

In this sign we conquer! The *Cross* will have to be borne by us as well as by Him if we are to reign with Jesus. We must both teach the Cross and bear the Cross. We must participate in the shame if we would participate in the Glory! No thorn, no Throne! When again shall be heard the voice, “Behold your King,” and Jew and Gentile shall see Him enthroned and surrounded with all His Father’s angels—with the whole earth subdued to His power happy shall he be who shall then, in the exalted Savior, behold his King! The Lord grant us this day to be loyal subjects of the Crucified that we may be favored to share His glory.

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THE PROCESSION OF SORROW

NO. 497

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 1, 1863,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“And they took Jesus, and led Him away.”
John 19:16.*

NEXT Saturday all eyes will be fixed on a great Prince who shall ride through our streets with his Royal Bride. Today I invite your attention to another Prince, marching in another fashion through His metropolis. London shall see the glory of the one—Jerusalem beheld the shame of the other. Come here, you lovers of Immanuel and I will show you this great sight—the King of Sorrow marching to His Throne of grief, the Cross. I claim for the procession of my Lord an interest superior to the pageant you are now so anxiously expecting.

Will your Prince be sumptuously arrayed? Mine is adorned with garments crimsoned with His own blood. Will your Prince be decorated with honors? Behold, my King is not without His crown—alas, a crown of thorns set with ruby drops of blood! Will your thoroughfares be thronged? So were the streets of Jerusalem—for great multitudes followed Him. Will you raise a clamor of tumultuous shouting? Such a greeting had the Lord of Glory, but alas, it was not the shout of welcome, but the yell of, “Away with Him! Away with Him.”

High in the air you bid your banners wave about the heir of England’s throne, but how shall you rival the banner of the sacred Cross, that day for the first time borne among the sons of men? For the thousands of eyes which shall gaze upon the youthful Prince, I offer the gaze of men and angels. All nations gathered about my Lord, both great and mean men clustered around His Person. From the sky the angels viewed Him with wonder and amazement. The spirits of the just looked from the windows of Heaven upon the scene, yes, the great God and Father watched each movement of His suffering Son.

But you ask me, Where is the spouse, the king’s daughter, fair and beautiful? My Lord is not altogether without His espoused one. The Church, the bride of Christ, was there, conformed to the image of her Lord. She was there, I say, in Simon, bearing the Cross, and in the women weeping and lamenting. Say not that the comparison is strained, for in a moment I will withdraw it and present the contrast. Grant me only this much of likeness—we have here a Prince with his bride. He is bearing his banner, and wearing his royal robes, traversing the streets of his own city. He is surrounded by a throng who shout aloud, and a multitude who gaze with profound interest.

But how vast was the disparity! The most careless eye discerns it. Yonder young Prince is ruddy with the bloom of early youth and health. My Master's visage is more marred than that of any man. Look, it has been blackened with bruises, and stained with the shameful spittle of them that derided Him. Your heir of royalty is magnificently drawn along the streets in his stately chariot, sitting at his ease—my princely Sufferer walks with weary feet, marking the road with crimson drops—not borne, but bearing. He is not carried, but carrying His Cross. Your Prince is surrounded by a multitude of friends—hark how they joyously welcome him!

And well they may. The son of such noble parents deserves a nation's love. But my Prince is hated without a cause. Hark how their loud voices demand that He should be hastened to execution! How harshly grate the cruel syllables, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" Your noble Prince is preparing for his marriage—mine is hastening to His doom. Oh, shame that men should find so much applause for Princes, and none for the King of kings! Yet, dear Friends, to some eyes there will be more attraction in the procession of sorrow, of shame and of blood, than in your display of grandeur and joy.

Oh, I pray you, lend your ears to such faint words as I can utter on a subject all too high for me—the march of the world's Maker along the way of His great sorrow. Your Redeemer traversing the rugged path of suffering—along which He went with heaving heart and heavy footsteps—that He might pave a royal road of mercy for His ENEMIES!

I. After our Lord Jesus Christ had been formally condemned by Pilate, our text tells us He was led away. I invite your attention to CHRIST AS LED FORTH.

Pilate, as we reminded you, scourged our Savior according to the common custom of Roman courts. The lictors executed their cruel office upon His shoulders with their rods and scourges, until the stripes had reached the full number. Jesus is formally condemned to crucifixion, but before He is led away He is given over to the Praetorian guards, that those rough legionaries may insult Him. It is said that a German regiment was at that time stationed in Judea, and I should not wonder if they were the lineal ancestors of those German theologians of modern times who have mocked the Savior, tampered with Revelation, and cast the vile spittle of their philosophy into the face of the Truth of God.

The soldiery mocked and insulted Him in every way that cruelty and scorn could devise. The platted crown of thorns, the purple robe, the reed with which they smote Him, and the spittle with which they disfigured Him—all these marked the contempt in which they held the King of the Jews. The reed was no mere rush from the brook, it was of a stouter kind, of which those of the east often make walking sticks—the blows were cruel as well as insulting. And the crown was not of straw, but of thorns, therefore it produced pain as well as pictured scorn.

When they had mocked Him, they pulled off the purple garment He had worn—this rough operation would cause much pain. His wounds, unstaunched and raw, freshly bleeding from beneath the lash, would make

this scarlet robe adhere to Him. And when it was dragged off, His gashes would bleed anew. We do not read that they removed the crown of thorns, and therefore it is most probable, though not absolutely certain, that our Savior wore it along the *Via Dolorosa*, and also bore it upon His head when He was fastened to the Cross.

Those pictures which represent our Lord as wearing the crown of thorns upon the tree, have, therefore, at least *some* Scriptural warrant. They put His own clothes upon Him, because they were the reward of the executioner. As modern hangmen take the garments of those whom they execute, so did the four soldiers claim a right to His raiment. They put on Him His own clothes that the multitudes might discern Him to be the same Man, the very Man who had professed to be the Messiah. We all know that a different dress will often raise a doubt about the identity of an individual.

But lo, the people saw Him in the street, not arrayed in the purple robe, but wearing His garment without seam, woven from the top throughout, the common smock frock, in fact, of the countrymen of Palestine, and they said at once, "Yes, it is He, the Man who healed the sick and raised the dead. The mighty teacher who was custom to sit upon the mountaintop, or stand in the Temple courts and preach with authority and not as the Scribes." There can be no shadow of doubt but that our Lord was really crucified, and no one substituted for Him.

How they led him forth, we do not know. Roman expositors, who draw upon their prolific fancy for their facts, tell us that He had a rope about His neck with which they roughly dragged Him to the tree this is one of the most probable of their surmises, since it was not unusual for the Romans thus to conduct criminals to the gallows. We care, however, far more for the fact that He went forth carrying His Cross upon His shoulders. This was intended at once to proclaim His guilt and intimate His doom. Usually the crier went before with an announcement such as this, "This is Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews, who for making Himself a King, and stirring up the people, has been condemned to die."

This Cross was a ponderous machine—not so heavy, perhaps, as some pictures would represent it—but still no light burden to a man whose shoulders were raw with the lashes of the Roman scourge. He had been all night in agony. He had spent the early morning at the hall of Caiaphas. He had been hurried, as I described to you last Sunday, from Caiaphas to Pilate, from Pilate to Herod, and from Herod back again to Pilate. He had, therefore, but little strength left, and you will not wonder that by-and-by we find Him staggering beneath His load, and that another is called to bear it with Him. He goes forth, then, bearing His Cross.

What do we learn here, as we see Christ led forth? Do we not see here the Truth of God which was set forth in shadow by *the scapegoat*? Did not the high priest bring the scapegoat and put both his hands upon its head, confessing the sins of the people, that thus those sins might be laid upon the goat? Then the goat was led away by a fit man into the wilderness, and it carried away the sins of the people, so that if they were sought for,

they could not be found. Now we see Jesus brought before the priests and rulers, who pronounce Him guilty. God Himself imputes our sins *to Him*. He was made sin for us.

And, as the Substitute for our guilt, bearing our sin upon His shoulders—for that Cross was a sort of representation in wood of our guilt and doom—we see the great Scapegoat led away by the appointed officers of justice. Bearing upon His back the sin of all His people, the Offering goes without the camp. Beloved, can you say He carried *your* sins? As you look at the Cross upon His shoulders, does it represent *your* sins? Oh I raise the question, and be not satisfied unless you can answer it most positively in the affirmative. There is one way by which you can tell whether He carried your sin or not—have you laid your hands upon His head, confessed your sins, and trusted in Him?

Then your sin lies not on you—not one single ounce of it lies on you—it has all been transferred by blessed imputation to Christ, and He bears it on His shoulders in the form of yonder heavy Cross. What joy, what satisfaction this will give if we can sing—

***“My soul looks back to see
The burden You did bear,
When hastening to the accursed tree,
And knows her guilt was there!”***

Do not let the picture vanish till you have satisfied yourselves once and for all that Christ was here the Substitute for you.

Let us muse upon the fact that Jesus was conducted without the gates of the city. It was *the common place of death*. That little rising ground, which perhaps was called Golgotha, the place of a skull, from its somewhat resembling the crown of a man’s skull, was the common place of execution. It was one of Death’s castles. Here he stored his gloomiest trophies—he was the grim lord of that stronghold. Our great Hero, the destroyer of Death, bearded the lion in his den, slew the monster in his own castle, and dragged the dragon captive from his own den. Methinks Death thought it a splendid triumph when he saw the Master impaled and bleeding in the dominions of destruction.

Little did he know that the grave was to be rifled, and himself destroyed, by that crucified Son of Man. Was not the Redeemer led there *to aggravate His shame*? Calvary was like our Old Bailey—it was the usual place of execution for the district. Christ must die a felon’s death, and it must be upon the felon’s gallows, in the place where horrid crimes had met their due reward. This added to His shame. But, methinks, in this, too, He draws the nearer to us, “He was numbered with the transgressors, and bore the sins of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”

But further, my Brothers and Sisters—this, I think, is the great lesson from Christ’s being slaughtered without the gate of the city—*let us go forth, therefore, without the camp, bearing His reproach*. You see there the multitude *are leading Him forth from the Temple*. He is not allowed to worship with them. The ceremonial system of the Jewish religion denies Him any participation in its pomp. The priests condemn him never again to

tread the hallowed floors, never again to look upon the consecrated altars in the place of His people's worship.

He is exiled from *their friendship*, too. No man dare call Him friend now, or whisper a word of comfort to Him. No more. He is banished from their *society*, as if He were a leper whose breath would be infectious, whose presence would scatter the plague. They force Him without the walls, and are not satisfied till they have rid themselves of His obnoxious Presence. For Him they have no tolerance. Barabbas may go free. The thief and the murderer may be spared. But for Christ there is no word but, "Away with such a fellow from the earth! It is not fit that He should live."

Jesus is therefore hunted out of the city, beyond the gate, with the will and force of His own nation. But He journeys not against His own will. Even as the lamb goes as willingly to the shambles as to the meadow, so does Christ cheerfully take up His Cross, and go without the camp. Look, Brothers and Sisters, here is a picture of what we may expect from men if we are faithful to our Master. It is not likely that we shall be able to worship with their worship. They prefer pompous and gaudy ceremonies. The swell of music, the glitter of costly garments, the parade of learning—all these must minister grandeur to the world's religion—and thus shut out the simple followers of the Lamb.

The high places of earth's worship and honor are not for us. If we are true to our Master, we shall soon lose the friendship of the world. The sinful find our conversation distasteful. In our pursuits, the carnal have no interest. Things dear to us are dross to worldlings, while things precious to them are contemptible to us. There have been times, and the days may come again, when faithfulness to Christ has entailed exclusion from what is called, "society." Even now, to a large extent, the true Christian is like a Pariah, lower than the lowest caste, in the judgment of some.

The world has in former days counted it God's service to kill the saints. We are to reckon upon all this, and should the worst befall us, it is to be no strange thing to us. These are silken days, and religion fights not so stern a battle. I will not say it is because we are unfaithful to our Master that the world is more kind to us, but I half suspect it is, and it is very possible that if we were more thoroughly Christians, the world would more heartily detest us. And if we would cleave more closely to Christ, we might expect to receive more slander, more abuse, less tolerance, and less favor from men.

You young Believers, who have lately followed Christ—should father and mother forsake you—remember you were bid to reckon upon it. Should brothers and sisters deride you, you must put this down as part of the cost of being a Christian. Godly working men, should your employers or your fellow workers frown upon you—wives, should your husbands threaten to cast you out—remember, without the camp was Jesus' place and without the camp is yours. Oh, you Christian men who dream of trimming your sails to the wind, who seek to win the world's favor—I do beseech you, cease from a course so perilous. We are in the world, but we must never be of it.

We are not to be secluded, like monks in the cloister, but we are to be separated like Jews among Gentiles—men, but not of men. Helping, aiding, befriending, teaching, comforting, instructing—but not sinning either to escape a frown, or to win a smile. The more manifestly there shall be a great gulf between the Church and the world, the better shall it be for both—the better for the world, for it shall be thereby warned. The better for the Church, for it shall be thereby preserved. Go, then, like the Master, expecting to be abused, to wear an ill name, and to earn reproach. Go, like He did, without the camp.

II. Let us now gaze for awhile upon CHRIST CARRYING HIS CROSS. I have shown you, Believer, your position. Let me now show you your *service*. Christ comes forth from Pilate's hall with the cumbrous wood upon His shoulder. Through weariness He travels slowly, and His enemies, urgent for His death, and half afraid, from His emaciated appearance, that He may die before He reaches the place of execution, allow another to carry His burden. The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel, they cannot spare Him the agonies of dying on the Cross—they will therefore remit the labor of carrying it. They place the Cross upon Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country.

Simon was an African, he came from Cyrene. Alas, poor African, you have been compelled to carry the Cross even until now. Hail, you despised children of the sun, you follow first after the King in the march of woe. We are not sure that Simon was a disciple of Christ. He may have been a friendly spectator, yet one would think the Jews would naturally select a disciple if they could. Coming fresh from the country, not knowing what was going on, he joined with the mob, and they made him carry the Cross.

Whether a disciple, then, or not, we have every reason to believe that he became so afterwards. He was the father, we read, of Alexander and Rufus, two persons who appear to have been well known in the early Church. Let us hope that salvation came to his house when he was compelled to bear the Savior's Cross.

Dear Friends, we must remember that although no one died on the Cross with Christ, for atonement must be executed by a solitary Savior, yet another person did carry the Cross for Christ. For this world—while redeemed by price of Christ, and by Christ alone—is to be redeemed by Divine power manifested in the sufferings and labors of the saints, as well as those of Christ. Mark you, the *ransom* of men was all paid by Christ—that was redemption *by price*. But power is wanted to dash down those idols, to overcome the hosts of error—where is it to be found? In the Lord of Hosts, who shows His power in the sufferings of Christ, and of His Church.

The Church must suffer, that the Gospel may be spread by her means. This is what the Apostle meant when he said, "I fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the Church." There was nothing behind in the price, but there is something behind in the manifested power, and we must continue to fill up that measure of revealed power, carrying, each one of us, the Cross with

Christ, till the last shame shall have been poured upon His cause, and He shall reign forever and ever.

We see in Simon's carrying the Cross a picture of what the Church is to do throughout all generations. Mark then, Christian, Jesus does not suffer so as to exclude *your* suffering. He bears a Cross, not that you may *escape* it, but that you may *endure* it. Christ does exempt you from *sin*, but not from sorrow. He does take the *curse* of the Cross, but He does not take the Cross of the curse away from you. Remember that, and *expect* to suffer.

Beloved, let us comfort ourselves with this thought, that in our case, as in Simon's, *it is not our cross, but Christ's Cross which we carry*. When you are molested for your piety. When your religion brings the trial of cruel mockery upon you. Then remember, it is not your cross, it is *Christ's* Cross. And how delightful is it to carry the Cross of our Lord Jesus? *You carry the Cross after Him*. You have blessed company! Your path is marked with footprints of your Lord. If you will look, there is the mark of His blood-red shoulder upon that heavy Cross. It is *His* Cross, and He goes before you as a shepherd goes before his sheep. Take up your cross daily and follow Him.

Do not forget, also, *that you bear this Cross in partnership*. It is the opinion of some commentators that Simon only carried one end of the Cross and not the whole of it. That is very possible. Christ may have carried the heavier end, against the transverse beam, and Simon may have borne the lighter end. Certainly it is so with you—you do but carry the light end of the Cross—Christ bears the heavier end—

***“His way was much rougher and darker than mine;
Did Christ, my Lord, suffer and shall I repine?”***

Rutherford says, “Whenever Christ gives us a cross, He cries, ‘Halves, My Love.’”

Others think that Simon carried the whole of the Cross. If he carried all the Cross, yet he only carried the wood of it—he did not bear the sin which made it such a load. Christ did but transfer to Simon the outward frame, the mere tree. But the curse of the tree, which was our sin and its punishment, rested on Jesus' shoulders still. Dear Friend, if you think that you suffer all that a Christian can suffer. If all God's billows roll over you, remember there is not one drop of wrath in all your sea of sorrow. Jesus took the wrath. Jesus carried the sin. And now all that you endure is but for His sake, that you may be conformed unto His image, and may aid in gathering His people into His family.

Although Simon carried Christ's Cross, *he did not volunteer to do it, but they compelled him*. I fear, Beloved, I fear that the most of us, if we ever do carry it, carry it by compulsion. At least when it first comes onto our shoulders we do not like it, and would rather run from it. But the world compels us to bear Christ's Cross. Cheerfully accept this burden, you servants of the Lord. I do not think we should seek after needless persecution. That man is a fool and deserves no pity, who purposely excites the disgust of other people. No, no! We must not make a cross of our own. Let

there be nothing but your religion to object to, and then if *that* offends them, let them be offended—it is a cross which you must carry joyfully.

Though Simon had to bear the Cross for a very little while, it gave him lasting honor. I do not know how far it was from Pilate's house to the Mount of Doom. Romanists pretend to know—in fact they know the very spot where Veronica wiped the blessed face with her handkerchief, and found His likeness impressed upon it. We know very well where that was *not* done! But, of course, Romanists know the very spot where Jesus fainted, and if you go to Jerusalem you can see all these different places if you are only fool enough to believe it all!

But the fact is, the city has been so razed and burned and plowed, that there is little chance of distinguishing any of these positions, with the exception, it may be, of Mount Calvary—which being outside the walls—may possibly still remain. The *Via Dolorosa*, as the Romanists call it, is a long street at the present time, but it may have been but a few yards. Simon had to carry the Cross but for a very little time, yet his name is in this Book forever, and we may envy him his honor.

Well, Beloved, the cross we have to carry is only for a little while at most. A few times the sun will go up and down the hill. A few more moons will wax and wane, and then we shall receive the Glory. "I reckon that these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." We should love the cross, and count it very dear, because it works out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Christians, will you refuse to be cross-bearers for Christ? I am ashamed of some professed Christians, heartily ashamed of them! Some of them have no objection to worship with a poor congregation till they grow rich, and then, indeed, they must go with the world's Church, to mingle with fashion and gentility.

There are some who in company hold their tongues, and never say a good word for Christ. They take matters very gently. They think it unnecessary to be soldiers of the Cross. "He that takes not up his cross and follows not after Me," says Christ, "is not worthy of Me." Some of you will not be baptized because you think people will say, "He is a Christian! How holy he ought to be." I am glad the world expects much from us and watches us carefully. All this is a blessed clog upon us, and a means of keeping us more near to the Lord.

Oh, you that are ashamed of Christ, how can you read that text, "He that is ashamed of Me, and of My words, of him will I be ashamed when I come in the glory of My Father, and all My holy angels with Me"? Conceal your religion? Cover it with a cloak? God forbid! Our religion is our glory! The Cross of Christ is our honor and, while not ostentatiously parading it, as the Pharisees do, we ought never to be so cowardly as to conceal it. "Come you out from among them, and be you separate, and touch not the unclean thing." Take up your cross and go without the camp, following your Lord, even until death.

III. I have now a third picture to present to you—CHRIST AND HIS MOURNERS:

As Christ went through the streets, a great multitude looked on. In the multitude there was a sparse sprinkling of tender-hearted women, probably those who had been healed, or whose children had been blessed by Him. Some of these were persons of considerable rank—many of them had ministered to Him of their substance. Amidst the din and howling of the crowd, and the noise of the soldiery, they raised an exceedingly loud and bitter cry, like Rachel weeping for her children, who would not be comforted, because they were not.

The voice of sympathy prevailed over the voice of scorn. Jesus paused and said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me. But weep for yourselves, and for your children.” The sorrow of these good women was a very proper sorrow. Jesus did not, by any means, forbid it. He only recommended another sorrow as being better—not finding fault with this, but still commending that. Let me show you what I think He meant. Last Sunday the remark was made to me—“If the story of the sufferings of Christ had been told of any other man, all the congregation would have been in tears.”

Some of us, indeed, confess that if we had read this narrative of suffering in a romance, we should have wept copiously. But the story of *Christ’s* sufferings does not cause the excitement and emotion one would expect. Now, I am not sure that we ought to blame ourselves for this. If we weep for the sufferings of Christ in the same way as we lament the sufferings of another man, our emotions will be only natural, and may work no good. They would be very proper, very proper—God forbid that we should stop them, except with the gentle words of Christ, “Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me.”

The most Scriptural way to describe the sufferings of Christ is not by laboring to excite sympathy through highly-colored descriptions of His blood and wounds. Romanists of all ages have worked upon the feelings of the people in this manner, and to a degree, the attempt is commendable. But if it shall all end in tears of pity, no good is done. I have heard sermons and studied works by Romanist writers upon the passion and agony, which have moved me to copious tears. But I am not clear that all the emotion was profitable. Let me show you a more excellent way.

What, then, dear Friends, should be the sorrows excited by a view of Christ’s sufferings? They are these—*Weep not because the Savior bled, but because your sins made Him bleed—*

***“It were my sins, my cruel sins,
His chief tormentors were.
Each of my crimes became a nail,
And unbelief the spear.”***

When a Brother makes confession of his transgressions—when on his knees before God he humbles himself with many tears—I am sure the Lord thinks far more of the tears of *repentance* than He would do of the mere drops of human sympathy. “Weep for yourselves,” says Christ, “rather than for Me.”

The sufferings of Christ *should make us weep over those who have brought that blood upon their heads*. We ought not to forget the Jews. Those once highly favored people of God who cursed themselves with, "His blood be upon us, and upon our children," ought to make us mourn when we think of their present degradation. There are no passages in all the public ministry of Jesus so tender as those which have regard to Jerusalem. It is not sorrow over Rome, but Jerusalem. I believe there was a tenderness in Christ's heart to the Jew of a special character. He loved the Gentile, but still Jerusalem was the city of the Great King.

It was, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, but you would not!" He saw its streets flowing like bloody rivers. He saw the Temple flaming up to Heaven. He marked the walls loaded with Jewish captives crucified by command of Titus. He saw the city razed to the ground, and sown with salt. And He said, "Weep not for Me, but for yourselves, and for your children, for the day shall come when you shall say to the rocks, Hide us, and to the mountains, Fall upon us."

Let me add, that when we look at the sufferings of Christ, *we ought to sorrow deeply for the souls of all unregenerate men and women*. Remember, dear Friends, that what Christ suffered for us, these unregenerate ones must suffer for themselves, unless they put their trust in Christ. The woes which broke the Savior's heart must crush theirs. Either Christ must die for me, or else I must die for myself the second death. If He did not carry the curse for me, then on me must it rest forever and ever.

Think, dear Friends, there are some in this congregation who as yet have no interest in Jesus' blood, some sitting next to you, your nearest friends who, if they were now to close their eyes in death, would open them in Hell! Think of that! Weep not for Him, but for these. Perhaps they are your children, the objects of your fondest love, with no interest in Christ. They are without God, and without hope in the world! Save your tears for them! Christ asks them not in sympathy for Himself. Think of the millions in this dark world! It is calculated that one soul passes from time into eternity every time the clock ticks!

So numerous has the family of man now become, that there is a death every second. And when we know how very small a proportion of the human race have even nominally received Christ—and there is none other name given under Heaven among men whereby we must be saved—oh, what a black thought crosses our mind! What a waterfall of immortal souls dashes downwards to the pit every hour! Well might the Master say, "Weep not for Me, but for yourselves."

You have, then, no true sympathy for Christ if you have not an earnest sympathy with those who would win souls for Christ. You may sit under a sermon and feel a great deal, but your feeling is worthless unless it leads you to weep for yourselves and for your children. How has it been with you? Have you repented of sin? Have you prayed for your fellow men? If not, may that picture of Christ fainting in the streets lead you to do so this morning.

IV. In the fourth place, one or two words upon CHRIST'S FELLOW SUFFERERS. There were two other cross-bearers in the throng. They were malefactors. Their crosses were just as heavy as the Lord's. At least one of them had no sympathy with Him and his bearing the cross only led to his death, and not to his salvation. I have sometimes met with persons who have suffered much. They have lost money, they have worked hard all their lives, or they have laid for years upon a bed of sickness. They, therefore, suppose that because they have suffered so much in this life, they shall thus escape the punishment of sin hereafter.

I tell you, Sirs, that yonder malefactor carried his cross and died on it. And you will carry your sorrows and be damned with them, except you repent. That impenitent thief went from the cross of his great agony—and it was agony, indeed, to die on a cross—he went from that place, to the flames of Hell. And you, too, may go from the bed of sickness, and from the abode of poverty, to perdition, quite as readily as from the home of ease and the house of plenty. No sufferings of ours have anything to do with the atonement of sin. No blood but that which *He* has spilt, no groans but those which came from *His* heart, no suffering but that which was endured by *Him*, can ever make a recompense for sin.

Shake off the thought, any of you who suppose that God will have pity on you because you have endured affliction. You must consider Jesus, and not yourself. Turn your eyes to Christ, the great Substitute for sinners, but never dream of trusting in yourselves. You may think that this remark is not needed, but I have met with one or two cases where it was required. And I have often said I would preach a sermon for even one person, and therefore, I make this remark, even though it should rebuke but one.

V. I close with THE SAVIOR'S WARNING QUESTION—“*If they do these things in the green tree, what will they do in the dry?*” Among other things, methinks He meant this—“If I, the innocent Substitute for sinners, suffer thus, what will be done when the sinner, himself—the dry tree—whose sins are his own, and not merely imputed to him, shall fall into the hands of an angry God?” Oh, you unregenerate men and women—and there are not a few such here now—remember that when God saw Christ in the sinner's place, He did not spare Him. And when He finds you without Christ, He will not spare *you*.

You have seen Jesus led away by His enemies. So shall you be dragged away by fiends to the place appointed for you. “Deliver him to the tormentors,” was the word of the king in the parable—it shall be fulfilled in you—“Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” Jesus was deserted of God. And if He, who was only imputedly a sinner, was deserted, how much more shall you be? “*Eloi, Eloi, lama Sabachthani?*”—what an awful shriek! But what shall be *your* cry when you shall say, “Good God! Good God! Why have You forsaken me?”—and the answer shall come back:

“Because I have called, and you refused. I have stretched out My hand and no man regarded. But you have set at nothing all My counsel and

would none of My reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity. I will mock when your fear comes.” These are awful words, but they are not mine. They are the very words of God in Scripture. Oh, Sinner, if God hides His face from Christ, how much less will He spare you! He did not spare His Son the stripes. Did I not describe last Sunday the knotted scourges which fell upon the Savior’s back?

What whips of steel for you, what knots of burning wire for you, when conscience shall smite you, when the Law shall scourge you with its ten-thronged whip! Oh, who will stand in your place, you richest, you merriest, you most self-righteous sinners—who will stand in your place when God shall say, “Awake O sword against the rebel, against the man that rejected Me. Smite him and let him feel the smart forever!” Christ was spit upon with shame. Sinner, what shame will be yours! The whole universe shall hiss you! Angels shall be ashamed of you—your own friends, yes, your sainted mother—shall say, “Amen” to your condemnation.

And those who loved you best shall sit as assessors with Christ to judge you, and condemn you! I cannot roll up into one word all the mass of sorrows which met upon the head of Christ, who died for us. Therefore it is impossible for me to tell you what streams, what oceans of grief must roll over *your* spirit if you die as you now are. You may die so, you may die now. There are more unlikely things than that you will be dead before next Sunday. Some of you will! It does not often happen that five or six thousand people meet together twice—it never does, I suppose.

The scythe of death must cut some of you down before my voice shall warn you again! Oh, Souls, I do beseech you, by the agonies of Christ, by His wounds and by His blood. Do not bring upon yourselves the curse. Do not bear in your own persons the awful wrath to come! May God deliver you! Trust in the Son of God and you shall never die. The Lord bless you, for Jesus’ own sake. Amen. Amen. Amen.

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“THE KING OF THE JEWS”

NO. 3123

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY DECEMBER 17, 1908.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, DECEMBER 6, 1874.**

***“And Pilate wrote a title, and put in on the Cross. And the writing was,
JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.”
John 19:19.***

IT was the usual custom of the Romans, when a man was put to death by crucifixion to affix to the cross, somewhere where it might be read, an account of his crime. His name and title would be given and the accusation that had been brought against him so that all who passed by might read the reason why he had been put to such an ignominious death. Our Savior, therefore, being numbered with the transgressors, must be treated in all respects as they were. If their accusations were published, so must He have His accusation published among the sons of men. How wondrous was the condescension that He, whom all Heaven adored as the ever-blessed Son of the Highest, should be hanged upon a tree and that He should have His accusation written up over His head just as if He had been a common malefactor!

I wish we could realize both the dignity of His Person and the shame to which He was exposed. If we could realize this we would be filled with grief for Him and with thankfulness to Him that He condescended to die the death of the Cross. I wish it were possible for us to now stand at the foot of the Cross with Mary and John and the other disciples, and to hear the ribaldry and scorn for a moment—and then to look up and see that sorrowful face and that tortured body—and to read in Hebrew, Greek and Latin, “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.” It was a very remarkable thing that Pilate should have written, as Matthew and Luke say that he did, “This is the King of the Jews,” and we do not at all wonder that the chief priests said to Pilate, “Write not, the King of the Jews, but that He said, I am King of the Jews.” But Pilate answered, “What I have written, I have written.” Divine Providence always has its way! It matters not who may be the persons concerned, God knows how to work His own will with them. It was His purpose that His Son should not die upon the Cross without a public proclamation of His innocence and an official recognition that He was what He had said He was, namely, the King of the Jews! Who was to put up such a notice over His head as He hung there? Peter might have been bold enough to attempt to do it, but he would certainly not have succeeded, for the Roman legionaries jealously guarded every place of execution. Even John, daring as he might have been in such a crisis, could not have achieved the task! It was best that

it should be done by authority, done by the Roman governor, done with an official pen and so secured that no envious chief priest dared to pluck it down and no hand of a scoffer could be lifted up to blot out its testimony. It was privileged writing because it was written by the pen of a Roman official—and there it must stay, under the authority of the Roman Law as long as the body of Jesus hung upon the Cross. See what God can do! He can make the vacillating Pilate to become stubborn and He can make him resolve to do what one would have thought would have been the last thing he would have done! Though his motive probably was to ridicule the Savior, yet the thing was done as God would have it—and Jesus on the Cross hung there proclaimed by Roman authority as “the King of the Jews.”

It may appear to you, at first sight, that there is not much importance in this fact, but I think I shall be able to show you that there is if you will sit down now, at the foot of the Cross, and look up to your Crucified Lord and read this writing again. I shall ask you to read it in two lights. First, *in reference to man*. And, secondly, *in reference to Jesus Christ Himself*.

I. First, read Pilate’s proclamation IN REFERENCE TO MAN.

This is a picture of how the world rejects the Savior. The Savior had truly come into the world. That He might be known to be a Savior, He had taken the name of Jesus, that is, Savior. That He might be known as One who was very humble and lowly, He had condescended to dwell among men of the very humblest kind and, therefore, He had chosen to dwell at Nazareth and to be called the Nazarene. Thus He was known as Jesus, the Savior—and as Jesus of Nazareth, an approachable and lowly Savior. Jesus had come into the world to save men and He had commenced His mission by saving many from diseases which had been regarded as incurable. He had opened blind eyes, unstopped deaf ears, given speech to the dumb, cleansing to lepers and He had even raised the dead to life! There were also many whom He had healed of spiritual infirmities, for He had given faith to the faithless and holiness and excellence of character to those who, until then, had lived in sin.

He was indeed Jesus the Savior, but how did men receive Him? Did they come and fall at His feet and kiss the very dust He trod upon? One might not have been surprised if they had done so, but they did not. Did they gather around Him with joyful clamor, all sick ones eager to touch the hem of His garment that they might be made whole? There were a few who did so—“a remnant according to the election of Grace” who received Him—and to them, “He gave power to become the sons of God, even to them that believed on His name.” But it was not so with the mass of mankind! Discerning in Him something strange and singular, seeing in Him no enmity, no sinful anger, no pride, no bitterness—seeing in Him only superlative love, yet they must treat Him most foully, for His life was spent in poverty and reproach—and at last He was condemned to die on the accursed tree! The world hung Him up upon the felon’s gallows and, in doing so, men said, “This is the Savior, the Nazarene, and this is how we treat Him. We do not want to be saved from sin, for we love it. We do not want to be saved from rebellion and to be brought into peace with

God through Jesus Christ, so this is what we do with God’s Ambassador! This is how we serve Him who comes with words of reconciliation and Grace upon His lips—we hang Him up to die, for we do not want Him.” This is only a specimen of what all sinful hearts do till they are changed by Grace—they will not have the Savior to rule over them!

“Oh,” says someone, “you bring too harsh a charge against me!” Is it so? Have you received Jesus? Do you believe in Him? Has He become your Savior? If not, why not? Can you give any justifiable reason for your unbelief and rejection of Him? It seems to me, and I leave your conscience to decide whether it is so, that by remaining in unbelief, you do practically say, “I prefer to be damned forever rather than believe in Jesus Christ!” At any rate, that is your choice at this present moment. And if a man will show his objection to Christ to so great an extent that he would be cast into Hell sooner than let Jesus save him, you may depend upon it that there dwells in his heart sufficient enmity to Christ to hang Him up again upon the Cross if He were here once more! Christ would be hanged tomorrow if He came here among unregenerate hearts—yes, by the very people that hang their ivory crosses about their necks and put them on their prayer books and fix them on their walls! They would cry, as their predecessor did of old, “Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him!” To this day, when Substitution is preached, and the blood of Atonement, and salvation by simple faith in Jesus—not by “sacraments” and priests and good works—men foam at the mouth with rage, for they still hate the Christ, the only Savior of the sons of men!

Next I see here that *man slays the Incarnate God*—“Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews.” Whether Pilate intended to indicate that He was the Messiah, at any rate the Jews saw that this would be the meaning attached to His inscription over Christ’s head. It would be said that their Messiah was crucified, consequently they desired that the writing might be altered, but Pilate would not alter it. Now, the Messiah of the Jews was none other than God in human flesh. Did not Isaiah speak of Him as Immanuel, God with us? He was that promised “Seed of the woman” who was to bruise the old serpent’s head. This was He of whom David said, “The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit You at My right hand until I make Your enemies Your footstool.” He was David’s Son, yet He was also David’s Lord, and there He is—He has come among men and as God, He came to tabernacle in human flesh and dwell among men! It is a wonderful story that tells us how He was found as a Babe in Bethlehem’s manger, where the shepherds came to adore Him and how He grew up among men as a Man like other men, working at the carpenter’s bench in the shop of His reputed father, yet all the while He was God veiled beneath the humble form of the Son of Mary! Even when the time came for His manifestation unto Israel, He was still veiled, though His Godhead every now and then flashed through the veil of His Humanity. He bade the sea be still when its wild uproar threatened to engulf the vessel in which He and His disciples were. He worked such wonders that it was clear that all things obeyed Him. The fish came in swarms from the deep to the net which He had bidden His disciples cast into the sea. And the loaves and fishes

were multiplied in His hands and theirs, through His miraculous power. Men could not help seeing that He was more than man and that He was, indeed, the Son of God, as He claimed to be. Yet the husbandmen, to whom He was sent by His Father, to ask for the rent of the vineyard that had been let to them, said, “This is the heir; come, let us kill Him and let us seize on His inheritance.” In other words, they said, “This is the God-Man; let us do with Him what we would do with God if we could.” So they hanged Him up like a felon, and put a label above His head, as much as to say to God, Himself, “This is what we have done to One who was more like You than any man we have ever heard of before, and One who says that He and You are One.” O Sirs, this wicked world never went so far in wickedness as it displayed on that occasion! The essence of every sin is enmity against God and when any sin is analyzed, it is always found that its essence is this, “No God.” Sin is a stab at the heart of God. Every time we sin, we practically say, “We do not want God’s government. We do not want God’s Laws—we do not want God.” I once heard an eloquent divine who had been accusing men of great sin, finish his indictment by using this remarkable expression, “this deicidal world.” There he reached the climax of the Truth of God, for this is a deicidal world! It cannot actually put God to death, but it would do so if it could! And in putting Christ to death it showed the enmity towards God that was really in its heart. The world would not put its own god to death, the god that men imagine, the god that their own intellects fabricate, the god like themselves, of whom I spoke this morning, [See Sermon #1206, Volume 20—HEART-KNOWLEDGE OF GOD—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] but as for the God of the Bible, there are millions of men who would be glad to put that God out of His own universe if they could! Yet He is Jehovah, the one living and true God.

Thirdly, I see here that *man’s chief objection to Christ is His authority*, for the pith of that inscription was, “Jesus the *King*.” Pilate did not write, “This is Jesus the Teacher,” or many might have said, “Let Him teach what He pleases, it is no concern of ours. We do not care what the Seers see, or what they say.” Pilate did not put up, “This is Jesus the Priest.” Many would be quite content to let Him be the great High Priest if they also might be priests. But Pilate wrote, “This is Jesus the King,” and that is the target at which they shoot all their arrows! You remember that the writer of the Second Psalm says, “The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against His Anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.” The resolve of human nature until it is renewed is always this, “We will not have this Man to reign over us.” Men might be willing for Christ to save them, but not for Him to reign over them. Such laws as these—“You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” “You shall forgive till seventy times seven,” the law of love, the law of gentleness, the law of kindness—man says that he admires them, but when these laws come home to him, and lay hold of the reins of his ambition, cramp his covetousness and condemn his self-righteousness, straightway he is offended! And when Christ says, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but

My words shall not pass away.” When He begins so teach the necessity of absolute purity and to say that even a lascivious glance of the eye is a sin, then men reply, “His rule will never do for us!” And they hang Him up to die because they will not submit to His authority.

Once more, we learn from this narrative that *man ridicules Christ’s Kingdom*. Pilate did not hate Christ. He probably did not think enough of Him to expend any of His hatred upon Him. I have no doubt that he thought that Jesus was a poor enthusiast who had been living alone so long that He had addled His brains. He was well meaning and perhaps clever, but at the same time, not the sort of man for a Roman governor to dispute with. He was very sorry to have to put Him to death, for there were so many good points about the poor Creature that he did not wish to let His enemies destroy Him. When the question of Christ’s Kingdom came up, I can imagine how scornfully Pilate asked Him, “Are You the King of the Jews?” How contemptuously he must have looked down upon such a poor emaciated Creature who seemed to be despised by everybody, as Christ said, “My Kingdom is not of this world,” and Pilate asked, “Are You a king, then?” half laughing as he spoke. He must have felt as if he could fairly laugh Him to scorn and I have no doubt that it was in that spirit that he wrote, “This is Jesus, the King of the Jews,” doing it in a vein of grim sardonic humor, first, towards the Jews and secondly, towards Christ Himself, as much as to say, “This is the great King that the Jews have been looking for. They are going to fight Caesar and get free—and this is the ringleader who is to help them to defeat all the legions of haughty Rome.” Among the ungodly, at the present day, the idea of a *spiritual* kingdom is quite beyond their comprehension—they cannot make out what it is. The relation between Church and State will not be settled by the statesmen of any political party. There is a very singular relation between the two, though they are as dissimilar as materialism is from spirit. The realms of the two often overlap one another—you cannot draw a line and say, “So far is the State, and so far is the Church.” The fact is the true Church of God is never subordinate to the State—it moves in another sphere altogether and rules after another fashion! A *spiritual* kingdom, according to some people, means certain laws and regulations that are drawn up by the bishops and synods and councils, but that kind of kingdom is no more spiritual than an Act passed by the House of Commons and the House of Lords! It is only another kingdom of the flesh, an ecclesiastical State of a similar kind to the secular State, but as for the spiritual Kingdom of Jesus Christ, it is not a thing that you can see with your eyes or understand after the manner of men. “You must be born-again” in order to get into it, or even to see it! [See Sermon #3121, Volume 54—THE NECESSITY OF REGENERATION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] It is too ethereal to be checked by human legislation. It is a mighty power which Christ has set up in this world—a power mightier than all secular states combined—a Kingdom like the stone cut out of the mountain without hands which will break in pieces every other power and fill the whole earth in God’s appointed time! Oh, that we saw its power more manifest

nowadays in the hearts of men—the power of that Kingdom of which Christ is the King, this blessed Book is the Law, the Holy Spirit is the great Executive and each of us is a servant in the courts of the great King living and acting according to His will!

“Oh,” you say, “this is ridiculous!” Yes, I thought you would say that. That is what the world always says of the Kingdom of Christ—that it is ridiculous. They can understand a kingdom in which there is a head like the Pope, and in which there are cardinals, bishops and priests. They can understand the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the Archbishop of York, and all that appertains to Episcopalians, but to know that we are one with Christ, that He has made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, that His saints are to reign with Him forever and that the weapons of our warfare, though not eternal, are “mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds”—they do not understand it, nor do they want to understand it! This is why they still hang up Christ the King and say, “If this is His Kingdom, we do not want to belong to it and we do not believe in it. Away with it! It is not worthy of our consideration, it is only a few low-minded fellows who will always be the subjects of such a Kingdom as that.” This is “as it was in the beginning” and “is now”—but not as it “ever shall be, world without end,” for the King is coming, a second time, in all the splendor of His Glory and He will let the world know that although His Kingdom is not like others, and is not to be kept up by gold, pomp, rank, dignity and physical force, yet it is a Kingdom which shall last when earthly princes and thrones shall all have passed away! And everyone who belongs to that Kingdom shall possess a crown and a glory before which all the pomp of this world shall pale forever!

II. Now, secondly, I have to ask your attention to the subject in quite another way, IN REFERENCE TO CHRIST. What did that inscription over His head mean?

It meant, first, that *Christ's honor was clear*. Look at the inscription over the head of that thief who is hanging on the next cross. “Put to death for robbery in the mountains where he was taken red-handed, having stabbed one of the guards who attempted to arrest him.” You quite understand that inscription and you pass on to Jesus. You want to know about the crime of which *He* has been guilty—you are quite sure that they will put over His head an account of the worst thing He has ever done. There are the chief priests and scribes and a multitude of the Jews watching to see what is written—and there is Pilate wanting to excuse his own conscience. If he can write anything that will exonerate him from the guilt of putting Christ to death, he will be sure to write it. So he takes his pen in his hand and he writes, “This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.” “Well,” you say, “is that all that can be brought against Him, that He is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews?” Yes, that is His only offense—they cannot sum up His guilt in any other words. His crime is that He is what He is, that He was a Savior, that He dwelt at Nazareth and that He was the King of the Jews. Now, no exoneration of His Character could be better than that of this official accusation against Him! And if this accusation brings nothing against

Him, think how much may be said in His favor by His friends. When a man is brought before the judge, his accuser is quite sure to say all he can against him. And when Christ was about to be put to death, those who were responsible for that colossal crime had to make out as grave a charge against Him as they could. But this was all they could do—they could not bring anything else against Him except that He was Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews. See, then, how absolutely without blemish and without spot was the Lamb of our Passover! See how He “knew no sin,” though He was made a Sin-Offering for us, “that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” Exult, Christians, in this public and official testimony to the spotless purity of His whole life and Character!

Next, as far as Christ is concerned, we may view this inscription as *the explanation of His death* as well as the clearing of His Character. Keep that superscription clearly in your mind’s eye, “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.” That is the reason why He died. Jesus died first because He was Jesus, because He was the Savior. That is the meaning of it—not that He might merely be made an example—not only that He might bear witness to the Truth. But that cruel death means Atonement and salvation by Atonement. Let us all look up to Him upon the Cross. If we have done so before, let us look up to Him, again, and say, “Yes, blessed Lord, we see that You did die and that You did die to save us. And we magnify You because this was the cause of Your death, that You were the Savior.” The whole title that Pilate wrote signified that Christ was the Messiah—and He died because He was the Messiah. “Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself.” This was the wonderful language of the Prophet Daniel, “cut off, but not for Himself.” Cut off because He was the Sent One of God, the Anointed of the Most High! The Prophet Zachariah had also recorded the Words of Jehovah, “Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the Man that is My Fellow, says the Lord of Hosts.” There, Beloved, you have the whole reason for Christ’s death condensed into a sentence! Jesus dies because He is the Savior, the anointed and prophesied Messiah, sent of God to be the King of the Jews and of the Gentles, too!

But, thirdly, as far as Christ was concerned, this inscription over His head was *a claim which was there and then announced*. He is hanging on the Cross and there is no trumpeter to make a proclamation of His kingship, but He does not need any such herald, for the same soldiers who fasten His hands to the wood, fasten up an inscription which is the best proclamation possible, for it is in three different languages that all mankind may read it, “This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.” He claims to be King, so stand at the foot of the Cross, I pray you, and acknowledge His claim! If you would have Jesus to be your Savior, you must have Him as your King—you must submit to His government, for He claims the right to rule over all who acknowledge Him to be Jesus! More than that, He claims to rule all mankind, for all power is given unto Him in Heaven and in earth, and we are bidden to proclaim His Kingdom throughout the whole world and to say to all men, “Jesus of Nazareth is your King, bow

down before Him. You kings, bow before Him, for He is King of kings! You lords and nobles, bow before Him, for He is Lord of lords! And all you sons and daughters of men, bow at His feet, for He must reign! And even if you are His enemies, He must reign over you! In spite of all your enmity and opposition, you must be brought to lie at His feet. The claims of Christ, therefore, were published even from the tree on which He died, so do not resist them, but willingly yield yourselves up to Jesus, now, and let Him be King to you henceforth and forever!

And then, not only was a claim of His Sovereignty made by the affixing of this title, but *His reign was then and there proclaimed*. In an earthly monarchy, as soon as one king is gone, it is usual to proclaim His successor. And by that accusation written up over the head of Christ, a proclamation was made throughout all the earth that Jesus had assumed the Throne and He has never ceased to reign! He went back to His Father and returned again to the earth and dwelt here for forty days. And then His feet left Mount Olive and He ascended to His Throne, and there He sits “expecting till His enemies are made His footstool.” His Kingdom is established—do you all belong to it? It is a Kingdom that, in a certain sense, was recognized on the Cross by Pilate’s proclamation, though it had existed long before, for His Kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom! Do you belong to it, or are you outside of it, opposed to it, or indifferent to it? Remember that he that is not with Christ is against Him! Those who are not on His side, He reckons to be on the other side! Are you, my Brothers and Sisters, in the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ? If so, I know that you look with delight upon that inscription and as you trust to the blood of Christ to cleanse you, you cast your eyes up to that dear head that was crowned with thorns and rejoice to think that Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews, is also your King and Lord and Savior!

I want to make just this other remark about this inscription. Inasmuch as Pilate would not alter it, it seems to me *that God set forth to mankind that He would never have it altered*. Pilate could have sent for that inscription and, with a few strokes of his pen, could have inserted the words that the chief priests wanted, “*He said, I am King of the Jews.*” But Pilate would not do it and the High Priest could not do it—and the devil could not do it and all the devils in Hell and all the wicked men upon earth, with all their rage—cannot do it now! God has said it as well as Pilate “What I have written, I have written.” “Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion.” He must reign and no power can ever take away His Kingdom from Him! His Church still prays, “Your Kingdom come,” and that Kingdom is yet to come in all its fullness when the whole of Israel shall be gathered together and shall accept Him as their Lord and King! Yes, more than that, for “He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before Him and His enemies shall lick the dust. Yes, all kings shall fall down before Him: all nations shall serve Him.”

Dearly beloved Friends, this is the conclusion of the whole matter, *let us cheerfully accept Him as our King*. Have we done so? Then let us try to

push His conquests on yet further and seek to extend the boundaries of His Kingdom. Are you doing this? Then, do it yet more earnestly and do it with the right instrument, for the great weapon of conquest is the Cross. It was on the Cross that the proclamation was first lifted up and it is by the Cross that it must be carried to the ends of the earth—not by human learning or eloquence, not by bribery, or the help of the State and I know not what besides, but by the setting forth of Christ evidently crucified among the sons of men. The Cross is its own battle-axe and weapon of war. “In this sign shall you conquer.” Let the whole Church preach Christ more, live Christ more and then the proclamation of His Kingdom, which was first fastened up on that Cross, shall be emblazoned throughout the whole world and the power of His Kingdom shall be felt to the very ends of the earth!

I looked into the darkness and I thought I saw a Cross before me. And I saw Him who did once hang upon it. But, as I looked at it, that Cross seemed to grow. It seemed to become a tree and I saw it strike its roots down deep until the lowest depths of human misery had been touched and blessed by them. Then I saw that tree tower on high, piercing the clouds, passing through the very firmament up above the stars, lifting Believers up upon it and bearing them to the very Throne of God by its majestic power! Then I saw that tree stretch forth its mighty branches on every side. Their shadow fell across this highly-favored land of ours and also fell across the land on the other side of the sea. As I watched, the blessed branches stretched out to Europe, to Asia, to Africa, to America and to Australia, also. I watched it grow till it became so vast a tree that its shadow seemed to cover the whole earth! And I blessed and adored the God of Heaven that He had instituted so mighty a power for the blessing of the sons of men! O Jesus, once crucified but now exalted, so let it be! And let us be Your humble instruments in promoting the extension of Your blessed reign! And we will always adore You, as we do now, not only as “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews,” but as “the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords to whom be honor and power everlasting. Amen.”

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 19:1-37.**

Verse 1. *Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged Him.* This was one of the most terrible punishments to which a man could be sentenced. The Roman scourge was no trifle. It tore off the quivering flesh of the agonized sufferer for it was constructed on purpose to do so. It was generally made of the sinews of oxen, intertwined with the knuckle bones of sheep and small slivers of bone. This torture our blessed Savior endured. These are the stripes with which we are healed.

2. *And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on His head, and they put on Him a purple robe.* Mockery was blended with cruelty. They might have made Him a crown, yet surely it need not have been one of thorns unless they intended to put Him to the utmost torment that

they could conceive. By this crown of thorns our blessed Lord was crowned King of the curse, for the earth was cursed through Adam's sin—and part of the sentence pronounced by God in the Garden of Eden was, "Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to you." So Christ wore the mark of the curse which man's sin had brought upon the world.

3. *And said, Hail, King of the Jews! And they smote Him with their hands.* This was the homage which the Son of God received from men! Harmless and gentle, He came here with no purpose but that of doing good—and this is how mankind treated Him.

4, 5. *Pilate therefore went forth again, and said unto them, Behold, I bring Him forth to you, that you may know that I find no fault in Him. Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate said unto them, Behold the Man!* Was there ever such a sight of majesty in misery before or since? Yet He needed not to endure all that ignominy—He was no vanquished monarch unable to maintain His own rights. He was still "over all, God blessed forever," and He could have smitten everyone there to death if He had pleased to do so. But He was the Lamb of God's Passover, so He meekly suffered.

6, 7. *When the chief priests therefore and officers saw Him, they cried out, saying, Crucify Him, crucify Him! Pilate said unto them, You take Him and crucify Him: for I find no fault in Him. The Jews answered Him. We have a Law, and by our Law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God.* They no doubt understood that He claimed to be Divine and so He did. I have heard some say that He was a good man, but not God. If He was not God, He was certainly not a good man, for no good man, who was only a man, would claim to be God, or lead others to believe that He was Divine! If He was not actually Divine, He was a rank impostor! But He was Divine and, therefore, we worship and adore Him equally with the Father and the Spirit.

8-10. *When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was the more afraid; and went again into the judgment hall, and said unto Jesus, Where are You from? But Jesus gave him no answer. Then said Pilate unto Him, Speak You not unto me? Know You not that I have power to crucify You, and have power to release You?* Pilate talks like some great one, yet how contemptibly little he was! Vacillating, cowardly, unable to do what he knew was right. His poor Victim who stood before Him was infinitely greater in character than he was.

11. *Jesus answered, You could have no power at all against Me, except it were given you from above: therefore he that delivered Me unto you has the greater sin.* Christ referred to Judas and through him to the Jews who had conspired to put Him to death. But what tenderness it was on the part of Jesus to make an excuse as it were, even for Pilate! He was notable for making excuses for the guilty. That was a remarkable excuse that He pleaded for His murderers, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." There was never another such a tender heart as His. He was so gentle and so kind that all their cruelty only moved Him to pity them and pray for them.

12-14. *And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release Him: but the Jews cried out, saying, If you let this Man go, you are not Caesar's friend: whoever makes himself a king speaks against Caesar. When Pilate therefore heard that crying, he brought Jesus forth and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha. And it was the preparation of the Passover, and about the sixth hour: and he said unto the Jews, Behold your King!* [See Sermon #1353, Volume 23—ECC REX—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] What mockery there was in Pilate's use of this title, and yet how true it was! They asked to have Christ put to death, yet He was their King. Their accusation was transparently false and Pilate made them see that it was so.

15-17. *But they cried out, Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him! Pilate said unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar. Then he delivered Him to them to be crucified. And they took Jesus and led Him away. And He bearing His cross went forth into a place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in the Hebrew, Golgotha.* The Inspired writers seem to delight to give us the Hebrew names of these notable places that are linked with Christ's last agonies. And they are still very precious to Christians, Gethsemane, Gabbatha, Golgotha—three names never to be forgotten by those who were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ!

18. *Where they crucified Him, and two others with Him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst.* As if to show that they thought Him the worst of the three and, therefore, gave Him—shall I call it the place of chief dishonor?

19, 20. *And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the Cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. This title then read many of the Jews: for the place where Jesus was crucified was near to the city and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin. So that all who gathered around the Cross might read it.*

21, 22. *Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews, but that He said, I am king of the Jews. Pilate answered, What I have written, I have written.* He could be stubborn about some things which shows that he had strength of mind if he had chosen to use it. Yet He was beaten to and fro like a shuttlecock by these wicked men and seemed to have no power to resist them.

23. *Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments. For they had stripped Him. He must be naked because sin makes us naked and His garments must be a covering for us. They “took His garments”—*

23, 24. *And made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also His coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the Scripture might be fulfilled.* They knew nothing about that ancient prophecy, yet God ordained that they should act thus, “that the Scripture might be fulfilled.”

24. *Which says, They parted My raiment among them, and for My vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did.* Doubtless, on the dice there fell the blood of Christ, yet they still gambled there. There is, perhaps, no sin which so effectually hardens the heart as that of gambling—it is a sin with which Christians should not have even the remotest connection!

25-30. *Now there stood by the Cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple standing by, whom He loved, He said unto His mother, Woman, behold your son! Then said He to the disciple, Behold your mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home. After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to His mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, He said, It is finished!* [See Sermons #421, Volume 7—IT IS FINISHED! and #2344, Volume 40—CHRIST’S DYING WORD FOR HIS CHURCH—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] *Consummatum est. “The work is done, Redemption is accomplished. The salvation of My people is forever secured.”*

30-37. *And He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost. The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the Cross on the Sabbath, (for that Sabbath was an high day), besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. Then came the soldiers, and broke the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with Him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that He was dead already, they broke not His legs: but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side and forthwith came out blood and water. And he that saw it bares record and his record is true: and he knows that what he says is true, that you might believe. For these things were done, that the Scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of Him shall not be broken. And again another scripture says, They shall look upon Him whom they pierced.*

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

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

THE SHORTEST OF THE SEVEN CRIES

NO. 1409

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

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

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

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

Thoughtful men have drawn a wealth of meaning from them and in so doing have arranged them into different groups and placed them under several heads. I cannot give you more than a mere taste of this rich subject, but I have been most struck with two ways of regarding our Lord's last words. First, they teach and confirm many of the doctrines of our holy faith. “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” is the first. Here is the forgiveness of sin—free forgiveness in answer to the Savior's plea. “Today shall you be with Me in Paradise.” Here is the safety of the Believer in the hour of his departure and his instant admission into the Presence of his Lord. It is a blow at the fable of “purgatory” which strikes it to the heart.

“Woman, behold your son!” This very plainly sets forth the true and proper humanity of Christ, who, to the end, recognized His human relationship to Mary, of whom He was born. Yet His language teaches us not to worship her, for He calls her, “woman,” but to honor *Him*, who in His

direst agony thought of her needs and griefs, as He also thinks of all His people, for these are His mother and sister and brother. “Eloi, Eloi, lama Sabachthani?” is the fourth cry, and it illustrates the penalty endured by our Substitute when He bore our sins and was forsaken of His God. The sharpness of that sentence no exposition can fully disclose to us—it is keen as the very edge and point of the sword which pierced His heart.

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

A second mode of treating these seven cries is to view them as setting forth the Person and offices of our Lord who uttered them. “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do”—here we see the Mediator interceding—Jesus standing before the Father pleading for the guilty. “Verily I say unto you, today shall you be with Me in Paradise”—this is the Lord Jesus in kingly power, opening, with the key of David, a door which none can shut, admitting into the gates of Heaven the poor soul who had confessed Him on the tree. Hail, everlasting King in Heaven, You admit to Your Paradise whomever You will! Nor do You set a time for waiting, but instantly You set wide the gate of pearl! You have all power in Heaven as well as upon earth.

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

“I thirst,” is His human body tormented by grievous pain. Here you see how the mortal flesh had to share in the agony of the inward spirit. “It is finished” is the last word but one and there you see the perfected Savior, the Captain of our salvation, who has completed the undertaking upon which He had entered—finished transgression, made an end of sin—and brought in everlasting righteousness. The last expiring word, in which He commended His spirit to His Father, is the note of acceptance for Himself and for us all. As He commends His spirit into the Father’s hand, so does

He bring all Believers near to God and from then on we are in the hands of the Father, who is greater than all and none shall pluck us from His hands. Is not this a fertile field of thought? May the Holy Spirit often lead us to glean here!

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

I cannot say that it is short and sweet, for, alas, it was bitterness, itself, to our Lord Jesus! And yet out of its bitterness I trust there will come great sweetness to us. Though bitter to Him in the speaking, it will be sweet to us in the hearing—so sweet that all the bitterness of our trials shall be forgotten as we remember the vinegar and gall of which He drank. We shall, by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, try to regard these words of our Savior in a five-fold light. First, we shall look upon them as THE ENSIGN OF HIS TRUE HUMANITY.

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

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

Our Lord, however, endured thirst to an extreme degree, for it was the thirst of death and more which was upon Him—it was the thirst of one whose death was not a common one, for, "He tasted death for every man." That thirst was caused, perhaps, in part by the loss of blood and by the

fever created by the irritation caused by His four grievous wounds. The nails were fastened in the most sensitive parts of the body and the wounds were widened as the weight of His body dragged the nails through His blessed flesh and tore His tender nerves. The extreme tension produced a burning feverishness. It was pain that dried His mouth and made it like an oven—till He declared, in the language of the 22nd Psalm, “My tongue cleaves to My jaws.” It was a thirst such as none of us have ever known, for not yet has the death dew condensed upon our brows. We shall, perhaps, know it in our measure in our dying hour, but not yet, nor ever so terribly as He did.

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

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

Ah, beloved, our Lord was so truly Man that all our griefs remind us of Him! The next time we are thirsty we may gaze upon Him! And whenever we see a friend faint and thirsting while dying we may behold our Lord dimly, but truly, mirrored in his members. How near akin the thirsty Savior is to us! Let us love Him more and more! How great the love which led Him to such a condescension as this! Do not let us forget the infinite distance between the Lord of Glory on His Throne and the Crucified dried up with thirst! A river of the Water of Life, pure as crystal, proceeds today out of the Throne of God and of the Lamb, and yet once He condescended to say, “I thirst.”

He is Lord of fountains and all deeps, but not a cup of cold water was placed to His lips. Oh, if He had at any time said, “I thirst,” before His angelic guards, they would surely have emulated the courage of the men of David when they cut their way to the well of Bethlehem that was within the gate and drew water in jeopardy of their lives! Who among us would

not willingly pour out his soul unto death if he might but give refreshment to the Lord? And yet He placed Himself, for our sakes, into a position of shame and suffering where none would wait upon Him! And when He cried, "I thirst," they gave Him vinegar to drink! Glorious stoop of our exalted Head! O Lord Jesus, we love You and we worship You! We would gladly lift Your name on high in grateful remembrance of the depths to which You did descend!

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

From now on, also, let us cultivate the spirit of resignation, for we may well rejoice to carry a Cross which His shoulders have borne before us! Beloved, if our Master said, "I thirst," do we expect to drink every day of streams from Lebanon? He was innocent and yet He thirsted—shall we marvel if guilty ones are now and then chastened? If He were so poor that His garments were stripped from Him and He was hung up upon the tree, penniless and friendless, hungering and thirsting, will you groan and murmur because you bear the yoke of poverty and need? There is bread upon your table, today, and there will be at least a cup of cold water to refresh you. You are not, therefore, so poor as He.

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

Once again, as we think of this, "I thirst," which proves our Lord's humanity, let us resolve to shun no denials, but rather court them that we may be conformed to His image. May we not be half ashamed of our pleasures when He says, "I thirst"? May we not despise our loaded table while He is so neglected? Shall it ever be a hardship to be denied the satisfying draught when He said, "I thirst"? Shall carnal appetites be indulged and bodies pampered when Jesus cried, "I thirst"? What if the

bread is dry? What if the medicine is nauseous? For His thirst there was no relief but gall and vinegar—dare we complain?

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

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

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

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

Nor is this all. We know from experience that the present effect of sin in every man who indulges in it, is thirst of soul. The mind of man is like the daughters of the horseleech, which cry forever, “Give, give.” Metaphorically understood, thirst is dissatisfaction—the craving of the mind for something which it has not, but which it pines for. Our Lord says, “If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink”—that thirst being the result

of sin in every ungodly man at this moment. Now Christ, standing in the place of the ungodly, suffers thirst as a type of His enduring the result of sin.

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

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

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

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

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

III. We will now take the text in a third way and may the Spirit of God instruct us once again. The utterance of, "I thirst," brought out A TYPE OF MAN'S TREATMENT OF HIS LORD. It was a confirmation of the Scrip-

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

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

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

We read, "The soldiers also mocked Him, offering Him vinegar." When our Lord cried, "Eloi, Eloi," and afterwards said, "I thirst," the persons around the Cross said, "Let Him be, let us see whether Elijah will come to save Him," mocking Him and, according to Mark, he who gave the vinegar uttered much the same words. He pitied the Sufferer, but he thought so little of Him that he joined in the voices of scorn. Even when man pities the sufferings of Christ—and man would have ceased to be human if he did not—still he scorns Him! The very cup which man gives to Jesus is at once scorn and pity, for, "the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel." See how man at his best mingles admiration of the Savior's Person with scorn of His claims—writing books to hold Him up as an example and at the same moment rejecting His Deity! Admitting that He was a wonderful Man, but denying His most sacred mission! Extolling His ethical teaching and then trampling on His blood—thus giving Him drink, but that drink, vinegar!

O my Hearers, beware of praising Jesus and denying His atoning Sacrifice! Beware of rendering Him homage and dishonoring His name at the same time! Alas, my Brothers and Sisters, I cannot say much on the score

of man's cruelty to our Lord without touching myself and you. Have we not often given Him vinegar to drink? Did we not do so years ago before we knew Him? We used to melt when we heard about His sufferings, but we did not turn from our sins. We gave Him our tears and then grieved Him with our sins! We thought, sometimes, that we loved Him, as we heard the story of His death, but we did not change our lives for His sake, nor put our trust in Him—and so we gave Him vinegar to drink.

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

We may well remember our faults this day—

***“We, whose proneness to forget
Your dear love, on Olivet
Bathed Your brow with bloody sweat.
We, whose sins, with awful power,
Like a cloud did over You lower,
In that God-excluding hour.
We, who still, in thought and deed,
Often hold the bitter reed
To You, in Your time of need.”***

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

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

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

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

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

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

And now, Brothers and Sisters, our blessed Lord has, at this time, a thirst for communion with each one of you who are His people, not because you can do Him good, but because He can do you good. He thirsts to bless you and to receive your grateful love in return. He thirsts to see you looking with believing eyes to His fullness and holding out your emptiness that He may supply it. He says, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." For what does He? It is that He may eat and drink with you, for He promises that if we open to Him, He will enter in and sup with us and we with Him. He is still thirsty, you see, for our poor love, and surely we cannot deny it to Him.

Come, let us pour out full flagons until His joy is fulfilled in us! And what makes Him love us so? Ah, that I cannot tell, except His own great love. He must love—it is His Nature. He must love His chosen whom He has once begun to love, for He is the same yesterday, today and forever. His great love makes Him thirst to have us much nearer than we are. He will never be satisfied till all His redeemed are beyond gunshot of the enemy. I will give you one of His thirsty prayers—“Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My Glory.” He wants you, Brother, He wants you, dear Sister, He longs to have you wholly to Himself!

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

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

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

Certain philosophers have said that they love the pursuit of truth even better than the knowledge of truth. I differ from them greatly, but I will say this, that next to the actual enjoyment of my Lord’s Presence, I love to hunger and to thirst after Him. Rutherford used words somewhat to this effect, “I thirst for my Lord and this is joy—a joy which no man takes from me. Even if I may not come to Him, yet shall I be full of consolation, for it is Heaven to thirst after Him, and surely He will never deny a poor soul liberty to admire Him, and adore Him, and thirst after Him.” As for myself, I would grow more and more greedy after my Divine Lord and when I have much of Him I would still cry for more—and then for more and still more! My heart shall not be content till He is All in All to me and I am altogether

lost in Him. O to be enlarged in soul so as to take deeper draughts of His sweet love, for our heart cannot have enough!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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THE SAVIOR'S THIRST

NO. 3385

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

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

THE early Christians were known to think and talk far more of our Savior than we do. Some of them were, perhaps, not quite so clear upon justification by faith as they ought to have been, but they were very clear about the merits of the precious blood. And if they did not always speak very clearly about the Doctrines of Grace, they spoke with wonderful power and savor about the “five” wounds—about the nail marks and the spear wound. I could wish that our religion would go back somewhat more to that personal apprehension of Christ than it does. By all means let us have dogmatic teaching, setting forth those most precious Truths of God that are our consolation, but better than all is the Person of Christ Himself—the Way, the Truth, and the Life. We should do well if we more often stood in meditation at the foot of the Cross and viewed His wounds, counted the precious drops as they fall and sought fellowship with Him in His sufferings. Some of those early saints wrote long treatises on the solitary wounds of Jesus—many of them passed whole days in contemplation of some minute part of His passion. We cannot imitate them in this respect—we have not the leisure. I am afraid we have not the mental application they possessed. Nevertheless, let us explore the sacred mystery as best we can. At this time would we get away to Calvary and there stand and hear our Redeemer crying, “I thirst,” as He bears for us the guilt of sin.

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

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

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

made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of Grace and truth”

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

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

Further, my Brothers and Sisters, we are quite certain that our Lord, in saying, “I thirst,” must *have felt the extreme bitterness of thirst*. He was no complainer. You never heard a word come from His lips when it might have been withheld. He must have been driven to dire extremity, indeed, when He thus proclaimed to friends and foes that He was thirsting for a drop of water. Some have said that this cry, “I thirst,” coming, as it does, after the far more bitter and awful cry, “My God, My God, why have You

forsaken Me?" was an evidence of a turn in the Savior's conflict—that during all the first part of our Savior's suffering He was taken up with such anxious thought and with such internal anguish that He could not think of the thirst, which, grievous as it was, was but a minor pain in comparison with what He felt when His Father in justice turned away His face from Him—and that now He begins to collect His thoughts for awhile and is able to fight with His own personal bodily pains. It may be so. Possibly that cry was an indication that the battle had turned and that victory was coming to the suffering Hero. But, ah, Brothers and Sisters, however there may have come a gleam of sunshine in this cry compared to the blacker darkness, you can never dream what a thirst that was that parched the Savior's mouth and lips! You will never feel such a thirst as He felt to its direst extent. Cold, hunger, nakedness and thirst may fall to your lot, but there was more of grief in His thirst than you can ever know! There was a bitterness here which my language cannot possibly bring out!

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

He does not use language like that of Cassius when he laughed at Caesar because he was sick and said—

***"And when the fit was on him I did mark
How he did shake—'tis true this god did shake—
His coward lips did from their color fly!
And that same eye whose head does awe the world
Did lose its luster—I did hear him groan!
Yes, and that tongue of his that bade the Romans
Mark him, and write his speeches in their books,
Alas, it cried, 'Give me some drink, Titinius,'
As a sick girl."***

And why should it not? He was but a man. He was but “as a sick girl,” and what is there in a sick girl to despise, after all? Jesus Christ said, “I thirst,” and in this He says to every sick girl, and every sick child, and every sick one throughout the world, “The Master, who is now in Heaven, but who once suffered on earth, despises not the tears of the sufferers, but has pity on them on their beds of sickness.”

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

Once more, in this cry of our Lord, “I thirst,” *I think I see a trace of the Atonement which He was then offering. The pangs of Christ upon the Cross are to be regarded as a substitution for the sins and sorrows of ungodly men—*

***“He bore that we might never bear
His Father’s righteous ire.”***

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

Behold, then, when Emmanuel stood for us and suffered in our place, He, too, must thirst! He must be deprived of every comfort, stripped naked to the last rag and hung up on the Cross as though earth rejected Him and Heaven would not receive Him! Midway between the two worlds He dies in the most abject poverty! And because of our sin, He cries, "I thirst!" Beloved, never seek for companionship with any who would ignore the miseries of the Lord, for, depend upon it, in that proportion they lessen the glory of the Atonement. If it is but a light thing for the sinner to rebel against God, it was not a light thing for Christ to redeem him! It covered Christ with the greatest luster, for, after all, it stands out as one of His most resplendent works that He has redeemed us from going down into the Pit, having found a ransom for us! By so much the greater the love, by so much the greater is the salvation. Think not lightly of sin and its punishment, lest you come to think lightly of Christ and what He suffered to redeem you from your guilt! The cry, "I thirst," is part of the substitutionary work which Christ performed when He thirsted, because, otherwise, sinners would have thirsted forever and have been denied all the pleasure, joy and peace of Heaven.

The meditation upon this cry as proceeding from our Lord invites one more remark. Will it be straining the text too far if we say that underlying those words, "I thirst," *there is something more than a mere thirst for drink?* Once, when He sat upon the well of Samaria, He said to the poor harlot who met Him there, "Give Me a drink," and He got a drink from her—a drink that the world knew nothing about when she gave her heart to Him, obedient to His Gospel. Christ is always thirsting after the salvation of precious souls and that cry on the Cross that thrilled all who listened to it was the outburst of the great heart of Jesus Christ as He saw the multitude, and He cried unto His God, "I thirst." He thirsted to redeem mankind! He thirsted to accomplish the work of our salvation! This very day He still thirsts in that respect, as He is still willing to receive those who come to Him, still resolved that such as come shall never be cast out and still desirous that they may come! Oh, poor Souls, you do not thirst for Christ, but you little know how He thirsts for you! There is love in His heart towards those who have no love to Him! Christ would not have you die. Christ would not have you cast into Hell! Give yourselves up, then, to the gentle sway of Him who for your souls' good, said, "I thirst." Oh, I wish that all we who love Christ knew more of this hungering and thirsting after the redemption of our fellow men. The Lord teach us to sympathize with them! If He wept for sinners, may our cheeks never be dry! He was in anguish for their souls, and we will not restrain our anguish because they will not be saved, but ignorantly, carelessly, or resolutely despise the Gospel of Christ!

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

II. OUR RELATIONSHIP AND OUR BEARING TOWARDS THIS CRY.

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

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

“Nearer, my God, to Thee; nearer to Thee.”

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

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

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

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

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

III. TO UNGODLY MEN AND WOMEN.

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

I shall not stay to picture, even in Christ’s own words, the agony of lost spirits. But I bid you keep this on your minds. If Christ, who was God’s Son, suffered so bitterly for sins that were not His own, how bitterly must you, who are not God’s sons, but God’s enemies, suffer for sins that *are* your own? And you must so suffer unless Christ, the Substitute, stands for you! He was no Substitute for all, but only for His own people. You say to me, “Did He stand for me?” I can tell you if you can answer this question, “Do you trust Jesus Christ? Will you now trust Him?” If so, a simple child-like faith in Jesus will bring you salvation! Now, remember, if you believe, all your sins are laid upon Christ and, therefore, they can never be laid upon you! If you believe, Christ was punished in your place and you can never be punished, because he was punished for you! Substitution—this is the groundwork of our confidence! Because He was

accursed, we cannot be accursed, for, if we believe in Him, all that He suffered was for us—and we stand absolved before the Judgment Seat of Christ. The Lord give you this simple faith in the Redeemer this very night! And then He will see in you of the travail of His soul and the thirst of His great heart will be satisfied! The Lord bless you. Amen.

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

Let us read two Psalms of penitence. Repentance and faith go hand in hand all the way to Heaven. Repenting and believing make up a large measure of the Christian life. First, let us read the 51st Psalm, penned by David after his great sin with Bathsheba, when, by the instrumentality of Nathan, he had been led to repentance. What if we have not fallen into any gross open sin? Yet, perhaps if we could see our hearts as God sees them, we should be as much ashamed as the Psalmist was when to the music of his sighs and groans, he poured out this Psalm.

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

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

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

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

5-7. *Behold, I was shaped in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part You shall make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.* “Behold,” he says, as if to go to the bottom of it, and to show that sin was not an acci-

dent with him, but that he, himself, was sinful. It was a grand faith—it was an Abrahamic faith—that when a man had such a sense of sin as David had, he at the same time could believe in the cleansing power of the blood! For you who do not know what sin is, and who have never groaned beneath the burden, to talk about the pardoning blood—oh, it is easy enough and there is nothing in it! But for a soul that knows the guilt and feels it and is burdened by it, still to believe in the power of the atoning Sacrifice—this is faith indeed! David had seen the priest take the bunch of hyssop and dip it in the warm blood of the goat or the bullock, and then sprinkle it—and he says, “Lord, do the same with me—with that richer blood of Divine Atonement!” That blood which, in David’s day, was yet to be shed! “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.”

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

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

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

good times when men are under a sense of pardoned sin. None serve Him so well as those whose sins are washed away—who feel the same within.

Now, we will read the **32nd Psalm**.

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

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

MATTHEW 26:59-68; LUKE 23.

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

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

61. *At last came two false witness, and said this—They did not say any other word, as if they did not know any word in any language vile enough for Him. “This”—our translators have very properly put in the word *Fellow*.*

61. *Fellow said, I am able to destroy the Temple of God, and to build it in three days. He never said anything of the kind! It was a most wicked misrepresentation of what He had said. If men wish to find an accusation against us, they can do it without any materials.*

62-64. *And the high priest arose and said unto Him, Do You not answer? What is it which these witness against You? But Jesus held His peace. And the high priest answered and said unto Him, I command You by the living God, that You tell us whether you are the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus said unto him, You have said it: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall you see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of Heaven. He binds them over to make their appearance before Him when He becomes the Judge and they shall take the place of the criminal!*

65, 66. *Then the high priest tore his clothes, saying, He has spoken blasphemy! What further need have we of witnesses? Behold, now you have heard His blasphemy, What do you think? He looks round upon the seventy elders of the people who were sitting there in the great council*

and “They answered and said, He is guilty of death.” Probably Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus were not there—they were the only two friends the Lord had in the Sanhedrin.

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

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

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

4, 5. *Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people, I find no fault in this Man. And they were the more fierce, saying, He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place.* When Pilate heard them say Galilee, he caught at that—he did not wish to displease the multitude.

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

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

9. *Then he questioned Him in many words: but He answered him nothing.* “No,” says good Christopher Ness—“John Baptist was Christ's voice and Herod had killed him—there Christ would not speak—as if He would say, ‘No, no,’ you did cut off John Baptist's head, who was My messen-

ger, and since you have ill-treated My ambassador, I, the King of kings, will have nothing to say to you.”

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

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

13-16. *And Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, said unto them, You have brought this Man unto me, as one that perverts the people, and, behold, I, having examined Him before you, have found no fault in this Man touching those things whereof you accuse Him. No, nor yet Herod; for I sent you to him and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto Him. I will therefore chastise Him, and release Him.* Ah, that word, “chastise,” slips so glibly over the tongue! But you know what it meant, when the Roman lictors laid bare the back and used the terrific scourge! “I will scourge Him,” said Pilate. Perhaps he thought that if he scourged Him, His suffering would induce the Jews to spare His life.

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

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

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

CHRIST'S DYING WORD FOR HIS CHURCH NO. 2344

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, JANUARY 21, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 3, 1889.

*"It is finished."
John 19:30.*

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

May God the Holy Spirit help me to handle aright this text that is at once so small and yet so great! There are four ways in which I wish to look at it with you. First, I will speak of this dying saying of our Lord *to His Glory*. Secondly, I will use the text *to the Church's comfort*. Thirdly, I will try to handle the subject *to every Believer's joy*. And fourthly, I will seek to show how our Lord's Words ought to lead *to our own awakening*.

I. First, then, I will endeavor to speak of this dying saying of Christ TO HIS GLORY. Let us begin with that.

Jesus said, "It is finished." Let us glory in Him that it is finished. You and I may well do this when we remember how very few things *we* have finished. We begin many things and, sometimes, we begin well. We commence running like champions who must win the race, but soon we slacken our pace and we fall exhausted on the course. The race commenced is never completed. In fact, I am afraid that we have never finished *anything* perfectly. You know what we say of some pieces of work, "Well, the man has done it, but there is no, 'finish,' about it." No, and you must begin with, "finish," and go on with, "finish," if you are, at last, able to say broadly as the Savior said without any qualification, "It is finished."

What was it that was finished? His lifework and His atoning Sacrifice on our behalf. He had interposed between our souls and Divine Justice and He had stood in our place to obey and suffer on our behalf. He began this work early in life, even while He was a Child. He persevered in holy obedience 33 years. That obedience cost Him many a pang and groan. Now it is about to cost Him His life and, as He gives away His life to finish the work of obedience to the Father, and of redemption for us, He says, "It is finished." It was a wonderful work, even to contemplate—only Infinite Love would have thought of devising such a plan! It was a wonderful work to carry on for so long—only boundless patience would have continued at it—and now that it requires the offering of Himself and the yielding up of His earthly life, only a Divine Savior, very God of very God, would or could have consummated it by the surrender of His breath! What a work it was! Yet it was finished while you and I have lots of little things lying about that we have never finished. We have begun to do something for Jesus that would bring Him a little honor and glory, but we have never finished it. We did mean to glorify Christ—have not some of you intended, oh, so much? Yet it has never come to anything. But Christ's work, which cost Him heart and soul, body and spirit—cost Him everything—even His death on the Cross! He pushed through all that till it was accomplished and He could say, "It is finished."

To whom did our Savior say, "It is finished"? He said it to all whom it might concern, but it seems to me that He chiefly said it to His Father, for, immediately after, apparently in a lower tone of voice, He said, "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit." Beloved, it is one thing for me to say to you, "I have finished my work"—possibly, if I were dying, you might say that I had finished my work—but for the Savior to say that to God, to hang in the Presence of Him whose eyes are as a flame of fire, the great Reader and Searcher of all hearts. For Jesus, I say, to look the dread Father in the face and say, as He bowed His head, "Father, it is finished; I have finished the work which You gave Me to do"—oh, who but He could venture to make such a declaration as that? We can find a thousand flaws in our best works! And when we lie dying, we shall still have to lament our shortcomings and excesses. But there is nothing of imperfection about Him who stood as Substitute for us and, unto the Father, Himself, He can say, concerning *all* His work, "It is finished." Therefore, glorify Him tonight! Oh, glorify Him in your hearts, tonight, that even in the Presence of the Great Judge of all, your Surety and your Substitute is able to claim perfection for all His service!

Just think also, for a minute or two, now that you have remembered what Jesus finished, and to whom He said that He had finished it, *how truly He had finished it*. From the beginning to the end of Christ's life there is nothing omitted, no single act of service ever left undone! Neither is there any action of His slurred over, or performed in a careless manner. "It is finished," refers as much to His Childhood as to His death. The whole of the service that He was to render to God, when He came here in human form, was finished in every single part and portion of it. I take up a piece of a cabinet-maker's work and it bears a good appearance. I open

the lid and am satisfied with the workmanship. But there is something about the hinge that is not properly finished. Or, perhaps, if I turn it over and look at the bottom of the box, I shall see that there is a piece that has been scratched, or that one part has not been well planed or properly polished.

But if you examine the Master's work right through—if you begin at Bethlehem and go on to Golgotha and look minutely at every portion of it, the private as well as the public, the silent as well as the spoken part—you will find that it is finished, completed, perfected! We may say of it that, among all works, there is none like it! It is a multitude of perfections joined together to make up one absolute perfection! Therefore, let us glorify the name of our blessed Lord. Crown Him! Crown Him, for He has done His work well! Come, you saints, speak much to His honor and in your hearts keep on singing to the praise of Him who did so thoroughly, so perfectly, all the work which His Father gave Him to do!

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

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

I am persuaded that it was so intended to be used, for none of the Words of our Lord on the Cross are addressed to His Church but this one. I cannot believe that when He was dying He left His people, for whom He died, without a word. "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do," is for sinners, not for saints. "I thirst," is for Himself, and so is that bitter cry, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" "Woman, behold your son!" is for Mary. "Today shall you be with Me in Paradise," is for the penitent thief. "Into Your hands I commend My spirit," is for the Father. Jesus must have had *something* to say, in the hour of death, for His Church and, surely, this is His dying word for her! He tells her, shouting it in her ear that has become dull and heavy with despair, "It is finished." "It is finished, O My redeemed one, My bride, My well-beloved for whom I came to lay down My life. It is finished, the work is done!"—

"Love's redeeming work is done.

Fought the fight, the battle won."

"Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it." John, in the Revelation, speaks of the Redeemer's work as already accomplished and, therefore, He sings, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." This Truth of God is full of comfort to His people.

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

***"No more the bloody spear!
The Cross and nails no more,
For Hell itself shakes at His name
And all the heavens adore.
There His full glories shine
With uncreated rays,***

***And bless His saints' and angels' eyes
To everlasting days."***

I also like that expression in another of our hymns—

"Now both the Surety and sinner are free."

Not only are they free for whom Christ became a Surety, but He, Himself, is forever free from all the obligations and consequences of His Suretyship. Men will never spit in His face again! The Roman soldiers will never scourge Him again! Judas, where are you? Behold the Christ sitting upon His Great White Throne, the glorious King who was once the Man of Sorrows! Now, Judas, come and betray Him with a kiss! What, man, dare you not do it? Come, Pilate, and wash your hands in pretended innocence and say, now, that you are guiltless of His blood! Come, you scribes and Pharisees, and accuse Him and oh, you Jewish mob and Gentile rabble, newly risen from the grave, shout now, "Away with Him! Crucify Him!" But look! They flee from Him! They cry to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him that sits on the Throne!" Yet that is the face that was more marred than any man's—the face of Him whom they once despised and rejected. Are you not glad to think that they cannot despise Him now, that they cannot entreat Him now?—

***"'Tis past—that agonizing hour
Of torture and of shame"***

and Jesus says of it, "It is finished."

We derive further comfort and joy as we think that not only are Christ's pangs and sufferings finished, *but His Father's will and Word have had a perfect completion.* Certain things were written that were to be done and these are done. Whatever the Father required has been rendered. "It is finished." My Father will never say to me, "I cannot save you by the death of My Son, for I am dissatisfied with His work." Oh, no, Beloved, God is well pleased with Christ and with us in Him! There is nothing which was arranged in the eternal mind to be done! No, not a jot or tittle—Christ has done it all! As His eyes, those eyes that often wept for us, reads down the ancient writing, Christ is able to say, "I have finished the work which My Father gave Me to do. Therefore, be comforted, O My people, for My Father is well pleased with Me and well pleased with you in Me!"

I like, sometimes, when I am in prayer, to say to the great Father, "Father, look on Your Son. Is He not all loveliness? Are there not in Him unutterable beauties? Do You not delight in Him? If You have looked on me and grown sick of me, as well You may, now refresh Yourself by looking on Your Well-Beloved. Delight Yourself in Him—

***"Him, and then the sinner see,
Look through Jesus' wounds on me."***

The perfect satisfaction of the Father with Christ's work for His people so that Christ could say, "It is finished," is a ground of solid comfort to His Church forevermore!

Dear Friends, once more, take comfort from this, "It is finished," for *the redemption of Christ's Church is perfected!* There is not another penny to be paid for her full release. There is no mortgage upon Christ's inheritance. Those whom He bought with blood are forever clear of all charges, paid for to the utmost! There was a handwriting of ordinances against us,

but Christ has taken it away, He has nailed it to His Cross. "It is finished," finished forever. All those overwhelming debts which would have sunk us to the lowest Hell have been discharged—and they who believe in Christ may appear with boldness even before the Throne of God, itself. "It is finished." What comfort there is in this glorious Truth of God!—

**"Lamb of God! Your death has given
Pardon, peace, and hope of Heaven!
'It is finished,' let us raise
Songs of thankfulness and praise!"**

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

III. Now, thirdly, I want to use this expression, "It is finished," TO EVERY BELIEVER'S JOY. When our Lord said, "It is finished," there was something to make every Believer in Him glad. What did that utterance mean? You and I have believed in Jesus of Nazareth. We believe Him to be the Messiah, sent of God. Now, if you will turn to the Old Testament, you will find that the marks of the Messiah are very many and very complicated. And if you will then turn to the life and death of Christ, you will see in Him *every mark of the Messiah plainly exhibited*. Until He had said, "It is finished," and until He had actually died, there was some doubt that there might be some one prophecy unfulfilled—but now that He hangs upon the Cross, every mark, every sign and every token of His Messiahship has been fulfilled and He says, "It is finished." The life and death of Christ and the types of the Old Testament fit each other like hand and glove. It would be quite impossible for any person to write the life of a man, by way of fiction, and then in another book to write out a series of types, personal and sacrificial, and to make the character of the man fit all the types—even if he had permission to make both books, he could not do it. If he were allowed to make both the lock and the key, he could not do it, but here we have the lock made beforehand! In all the Books of the Old Testament, from the prophecy in the Garden of Eden right down to Malachi, the last of the Prophets, there were certain marks and tokens of the Christ. All these were so very singular that it did not appear as if they

could all meet in one Person. But they did all meet in One—every one of them—whether it concerned some minute point or some prominent characteristic! When the Lord Jesus Christ had ended His life, He could say, “It is finished; My life has tallied with all that was said of it from the first Word of prophecy even to the last.” Now, that ought greatly to encourage your faith! You are not following cunningly-devised fables, but you are following One who must be the Messiah of God since He so exactly fits all the Prophecies and all the Types that were given before concerning Him!

“It is finished.” Let every Believer be comforted in another respect, that *every honor which the Law of God could require has been rendered to it*. You and I have broken that Law, as all the race of mankind has broken it! We have tried to thrust God from His Throne. We have dishonored His Law. We have broken His Commandments willfully and wickedly. But there has come One who is, Himself, God, the Law-Giver, and He has taken human Nature, and in that Nature He has kept the Law perfectly! And, inasmuch as the Law had been broken by man, He has in the Nature of man borne the sentence due for all man’s transgressions. The Godhead, being linked with the Manhood, gave supreme virtue to all that the Manhood suffered. And Christ, in life and in death, has magnified the Law and made it honorable. And God’s Law at this day is raised to even greater honor than it had before man broke it! The death of the Son of God, the Sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, has vindicated the great moral principle of God’s government and made His Throne to stand out gloriously before the eyes of men and angels forever and ever! If Hell were filled with men, it would not be such a vindication of Divine Justice as when God spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, and made Him to die, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God! Now let every Believer rejoice in the great fact that, by the death of Christ, the Law of God is abundantly honored! You can be saved without impugning the holiness of God! You are saved without putting any stain upon the Divine statute-book! The Law is kept and mercy triumphs, too.

And, Beloved, here is included, of necessity, another comforting Truth. Christ might well say, “It is finished,” *for every solace conscience can need is now given*. When your conscience is disturbed and troubled, if it knows that God is perfectly honored and His Law vindicated, then it becomes easy. Men are always starting some new theory of the Atonement and one has said, lately, that the Atonement was simply meant as an easement to the conscience of men. It is not so, my Brothers and Sisters—there would be no easing of the conscience by anything that was meant for that, alone. Conscience can only be satisfied if God is satisfied! Until I see how the Law is vindicated, my troubled conscience can never find rest. Dear Heart, are your eyes red with weeping? Look to Him who hangs on the tree! Is your heart heavy, even to despair? Look to Him who hangs on the tree and believe in Him! Take Him to be your soul’s atoning Lamb, suffering in your place. Accept Him as your Representative, dying your death that you may live His life, bearing your sin that you may be made the righteousness of God in Him! This is the best *quietus* in the world for every fear that conscience can raise—let every Believer know that it is so.

Once more, there is joy to every Believer when he remembers that, as Christ said, "It is finished," *every guarantee was given of the eternal salvation of all the redeemed*. It appears to me that if Christ finished the work for us, He will finish the work *in us*. If He has undertaken so supreme a labor as the redemption of our souls by blood and that is finished, then the great, but yet minor labor of renewing our natures and transforming us even unto perfection, shall be finished, too! If, when we were sinners, Christ loved us so as to die for us, now that He has redeemed us, and has already reconciled us to Himself, and made us His friends and His disciples, will He not finish the work that is necessary to make us fit to stand among the golden lamps of Heaven and to sing His praises in the country where nothing that defiles can ever enter?—

***"The work which His goodness began,
The arm of His strength will complete!
His promise is yes and Amen,
And never was forfeited yet!
Things future, nor things that are now,
Not all things below nor above,
Can make Him His purpose forego,
Or sever my soul from His love!"***

I believe it, my Brothers and Sisters. He who has said, "It is finished," will never leave anything undone! It shall never be said of Him, "This Man began, but was not able to finish." If He has bought me with His blood and called me by His Grace, and I am resting on His promise and power, I shall be with Him where He is, and I shall behold His Glory, as surely as He is Christ the Lord and I believe in Him! What comfort this Truth of God brings to every child of God!

Are there any of you, here, who are trying to do something to make a righteousness of your own? How dare you attempt such a work when Jesus says, "It is finished"! Are you trying to put a few of your own merits together, a few odds and ends, fig leaves and filthy rags of your own righteousness? Jesus says, "It is finished." Why do you want to add anything of your own to what He has completed? Do you say that you are not fit to be saved? What? Have you to bring some of your fitness to eke out Christ's work? "Oh," you say, "I hope to come to Christ one of these days when I get better." What? What? What? What? Are you to make yourself better and *then* is Christ to do the rest of the work? You remind me of the railways to our country towns! You know that, often, the station is half-a-mile or a mile out of the town, so that you cannot get to the station without having an omnibus to take you there. But my Lord Jesus Christ comes right to the town of Mansoul! His railway runs close to your feet and there is the carriage door wide open—step in! You have not even to go over a bridge, or under a subway—there stands the carriage just before you. This royal railroad carries souls all the way from Hell's dark door, where they lie in sin, up to Heaven's great gate of pearl where they dwell in perfect righteousness forever! Cast yourself on Christ! Take Him to be everything you need, for He says of the whole work of salvation, "It is finished."

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

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

***"Let the water and the blood
From Your riven side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Cleanse me from its guilt and power!"***

IV. I close by saying, in the fourth place, that we shall use this text, "It is finished, TO OUR OWN AWAKENING.

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

"Rescue the perishing,

**Care for the dying,
Snatch them in pity from sin and the grave.
Weep over the erring one,
Lift up the fallen,
Tell them of Jesus, the Mighty to save."**

My inference from this saying of Christ, "It is finished," is this—Has He finished His work for me? Then I must get to work for Him and *I must persevere until I finish my work, too*—not to save myself, for that is all done—but because I am saved! Now I must work for Him with all my might and if there comes discouragements, if there comes sufferings, if there comes a sense of weakness and exhaustion, yet let me not give way to it, but, inasmuch as He pressed on till He could say, "It is finished," let me press on till I, too, shall be able to say, "I have finished the work which You gave me to do." You know how men who go fishing look out for the fish. I have heard of a man going to Keston Ponds on Saturday to fish and staying all day Sunday, Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday! There was another man fishing there and the other man had only been there two days. He said, "I have been here two days and I have only had one bite." "Why," replied the other, "I have been here ever since last Saturday and I have not had a bite yet! But I mean to keep on." "Well," answered the other, "I cannot keep on without catching *something*." "Oh!" said number one, "but I have such a longing to catch some fish that I shall stay here till I do." I believe that fellow would ultimately catch some fish if there were any to be caught! He is the kind of fisherman to do it and we need to have men who feel that they must win souls for Christ—and that they will persevere till they do! It must be so with us, Brothers and Sisters—we cannot let men go down to Hell if there is any way of saving them!

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

One word of caution I must give you. *Let us not think that our work is finished till we die*. "Well," says one, "I was just going to say of my work, 'It is finished.'" Were you? Were you? I remember that when John Newton wrote a book about Grace in the blade, and Grace in the ear, and Grace in the full corn in the ear, a very talkative body said to him, "I have been reading your valuable book, Mr. Newton. It is a splendid work and when I came to that part, 'The full corn in the ear,' I thought how wonderfully you had described *me*." "Oh," replied Mr. Newton, "but you could not have read the book rightly, for it is one of the marks of the full corn in the ear that it hangs its head very low." So it is and when a man, in a careless, boastful spirit, says of his work, "It is finished," I am inclined to ask, "Brother, was it ever begun? If your work for Christ is finished, I should

think that you never realized what it ought to be." As long as there is breath in our bodies, let us serve Christ! As long as we can think, as long as we can speak, as long as we can work, let us serve Him! Let us even serve Him with our last gasp and, if it is possible, let us try to set some work going that will glorify Him when we are dead and gone! Let us scatter some seed that may spring up when we are sleeping beneath the hillock in the cemetery. Ah, Beloved, we shall never have finished our work for Christ until we bow our heads and give up the ghost!

The oldest friend here has a little something to do for the Master. Someone said to me, the other day, "I cannot think why old Mrs. So-and-So is spared—she is quite a burden to her friends." "Ah," I replied, "she has something yet to do for her Lord, she has another word to speak for Him." Sister, look up your work and get it done! And you, Brother, see what remains of your lifework yet incomplete. Wind off the ends, get all the little corners finished. Who knows how long it may be before you and I may have to give in our account? Some are called away very suddenly—they are apparently in good health one day—and they are gone the next! I should not like to leave a half-finished life behind me. The Lord Jesus Christ said, "It is finished," and your heart should say, "Lord, and I will finish, too—not to mix my work with Yours, but because You have finished Yours, I will, by Your Grace, finish mine."

Now may the Lord give us the joy of His Presence at His Table! May the bread and wine speak to you much better than I can! May every heir of Heaven see Christ, tonight, and rejoice in His finished work, for His dear name's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITIONS BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM 121. AND 122.

Psalm 121:1. *I will lift up my eyes unto the hills, from where comes my help.* No help comes from anywhere else but from the eternal hills. Let us lift up our eyes, therefore, hopefully expecting help from the hills—it is on the road—it "comes." The Psalmist, with the eye of faith, could see it coming, so he watched its approach.

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

3. *He will not suffer your foot to be moved.* He will not endure it, He will not suffer it. Many would like to trip you up, but He will not allow it—He loves you too well.

3. *He that keeps you will not slumber.* You may slumber, for you are frail, but He is a Watchman to whose eyes sleep never comes. You are always safe. Alexander went to sleep, he said, because Parmenio watched.

And you may take the sleep of the beloved because Jehovah watches over you.

4. *Behold, He that keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.* Behold it, that is, mark it—put a *nota bene* at the side of it, take cognizance of this as a great and sure Truth of God! Jacob went to sleep with a stone for his pillow, but He that kept him did not sleep. He came to him in the night watches and revealed to him His Covenant.

5. *The Lord is your keeper: the LORD is your shade upon your right hand.* Oh, what a Keeper we have! Can you not trust Him? Will you not be at peace in your mind if it is, indeed, true that Jehovah keeps you and is your Guard in the hour of danger?

6. *The sun shall not smite you by day, nor the moon by night.* Then, when can you get hurt? If you are protected both day and night, these make up all the time! God does not make a new sun for His people, the sun would smite us as well as others, but He takes the sting out of the sun's excessive brightness. And we have the same sickly moon as others have, with the same influences over us, but God takes care that the moonbeams do not harm His people. Neither the sun of prosperity nor the night of adversity—neither the light of Truth of God nor even the dimness of mystery shall injure one of the chosen seed.

7. *The LORD shall preserve you from all evil: He shall preserve your soul.* That is the soul of our preservation—if the life, the soul, is kept, then are we altogether kept.

8. *The LORD shall preserve your going out and your coming in—*Your early days of youth, when you are going out into life—and your coming in when the older days creep over you and you are coming into God and Heaven. Your going out into business and your coming in to private devotion.

8. *From this time forth, and even forevermore.* Let us, therefore, feel restful at this time, and even forevermore, having the Lord for our Keeper and Preserver.

Psalm 122:1. *I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD.* I was glad for their sake, glad to think they were so willing to go. I was glad, also, for my own sake, for I was glad to go, too.

2. *Our feet shall stand within your gates, O Jerusalem.* Happy men who were citizens of such a city! Happy worshippers coming together to the place whose very name signifies the vision of peace, the metropolis of God, type of the New Jerusalem which is from above!

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

4. *Where the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the LORD.* The Church is the point of meeting—“Where the tribes go up.” The Church is the place of “testimony”—and saints go to hear testimony and to bear it. I wish there was

more of this bearing testimony among Christian people and that they looked upon it as a sacred duty to tell others what God has told them. "To give thanks unto the name of the Lord"—that is another part of true worship—praise, joyful thanksgiving should be one of the saints' continual avocations. Let us not forget it at this time. Some are here who have been sick—let them give thanks unto the name of the Lord. Some are here who are still weak, yet able to come up with God's people—let us give thanks unto the name of the Lord. We have all some special mercy, some choice favor for which to praise His name. Then let us all give thanks unto the name of the Lord!

5. *For there are set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David.* If any of the people had been wronged by the petty magistrates, they went up to Jerusalem and made their appeal to the king. Here may we bring our suit before God and order our case before Him, for He is true and just, and nothing shall go amiss that is left with Him.

6. *Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.* Pray for it now, breathe a silent prayer to God.

6. *They shall prosper that love You.* God loves those who love His Church and love His cause—and He rewards them with prosperity, as much of earthly prosperity as they can bear, and prosperity to their souls beyond measure.

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

8. *For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now pray, Peace be within you.* Let us say it, for the sake of beloved ones in Heaven, and dear ones on earth who are on the way there, "Peace be within you."

9. *Because of the house of the LORD our God I will seek your good.* Not only pray for it, but work for it, give for it, live for it! "I will seek your good!" God bless to us these two Psalms and put us all in a right state of heart tonight! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—122 (SONG 1), 944, 300.

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CHRIST'S FINISHED WORK

NO. 378

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL 4, 1861,
BY THE REV. OCTAVIUS WINSLOW, D.D.,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

"It is finished!"
John 19:30.

THERE never existed but one Being who in Truth could affirm of His work—"It is finished!" Incompleteness and defect trace the most vast, elaborate and accomplished products of human genius and power. That brilliant volume of history at a period of thrilling interest falls from the death-struck hand of its author, fragmentary and incomplete. That magnificent work of art fades before the glazed eye of the painter and the sculptor at a moment when the pencil is pointed and the chisel upraised to impart the last and perfecting touch. That splendid edifice, the conception of a master mind, with all its architectural skill and beauty is but a monument of human forethought and power, blinded and cramped in its range.

Thus, contemplate man's noblest achievements—the intellectual and the physical—the touch of human imperfection and incompleteness mars and traces all. The great truth, then, stands out like a constellation flaming in its own solitary orbit, that there never was but *one* man who could gaze with complacency upon His work and, with His expiring breath, exclaim, "It is finished!"

That man was the God-Man, Mediator. He, as the Son and yet the Servant of the Father, relinquished His Throne for a Cross that He might accomplish the redemption. Work out the salvation of His Church—the people given to Him of God—and who, on the eve of that redemption and with all the certainty of an actual atonement, could thus breathe His intercessory petition to Heaven, "I have *finished* the work which You gave Me to do."

We summon you this evening around the Cross of Calvary to listen to the words now breathing from the quivering lips of our dying Lord—"It is finished!" And understand that believing as I do most firmly and solemnly that no Scriptural doctrine or no revealed Truth will ever be able to crush the infidelity of the present day—we meet to explode the many errors and heresies—fearful and fatal which are inseparable from this age of licentious thought, unchecked utterance and freedom of opinion.

We summon you this evening to proclaim the one remedy—the simple, full, unreserved exhibition of the ATONEMENT, the SACRIFICIAL and FINISHED WORK of the Lord Jesus Christ! I am most anxious and earnest on this important and impressive occasion to bend upon it your especial, devout and solemn attention.

Oh, that our modern theological controversialists—the men who are desirous of contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints—who are putting on their armor and furbishing their weapons for the approaching conflict? Oh that they might learn the secret of their might wherein their great strength lies! It is not in accumulating around the Cross the stores of ancient and modern lore. It is not in a strife of arms, dazzling and distinguished by profound intellectualism, learning and eloquence—but in a simple, bold, uncompromising presentation of the Atoning and Finished Sacrifice of Christ! The lifting up, in its naked simplicity and solitary, unapproachable grandeur of the Cross of the Incarnate God, the instrument of the sinner's salvation, the foundation of the believer's hope, the symbol of pardon, reconciliation and hope to the soul.

In a word, the grand weapon by which error shall bow to Truth and sin give place to righteousness. The weapon by which the kingdoms of this world long in rebellion against God will be crushed, enthralled and shall yield to Messiah's specter. They *shall* submit to the undisputed supremacy and kind reign of Jesus.

I ask you why the large amount of corroding doubts, gloomy fears and painful forebodings which so essentially and so widely impede the religious progress of the Lord's people? What is invading and beclouding the spiritual joy and hope of the Lord's people? I believe it is mainly traceable to imperfect, crude and dim views and apprehensions of Christ's complete work. False notions of the Savior's finished salvation which He has wrought for His Church. Not distinctly seeing that all is done—the great debt paid, the mighty bond cancelled, the full atonement made and sin all and freely forgiven.

I am still the more desirous of placing this great, this cardinal and precious Truth prominently and broadly, as the Lord the Spirit shall help me, before the present assembly, trusting and believing that, in answer to prayer, there will be tonight the presence and power of the Holy Spirit descending, invisible and noiseless, upon your souls, sealing upon your hearts this grand, this essential, this saving Truth—the FINISHED WORK OF CHRIST. "It is finished."

Let us consider these memorable words—

I. AS THE CRY OF A SUFFERER. And what a Sufferer! Contemplate for a moment *the Divine dignity* of the Sufferer. Here was no ordinary Sufferer, my Brethren. We approach the scene of the crucifixion and we behold three individuals alike suspended upon three different crosses, two on either side and one in the center. They all suffer—all languish—all die. But the sufferings and death of One is attended by circumstances so strange and events so unparalleled, by prodigies so miraculous and sublime, that we are led to exclaim in wondering awe, “Who is this?”

And the voice of prophecy replies, “This is He of whom I spoke—‘Awake, O sword, against My shepherd and against the Man that is My Fellow, says the Lord of Hosts—smite the Shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered.’ ” My dear Hearers, if throughout the life of Christ I could fasten upon no other event confirming the doctrine of the Godhead of Christ, I would be willing and satisfied to predicate my argument in vindication of His essential dignity upon the closing scene of the Cross—the last moments of His parting life. If His life were destitute of fact, His death would alone supply the evidence that He who died upon Calvary was none other than the Son of God!

Hold fast the doctrine of Christ's essential Deity, for upon it, as upon a rock, reposes the entire and stupendous fabric of the ATONEMENT. The sufferings of Christ were *expiatory* and *vicarious*. You are aware that by many this fact is denied. The only solution of the mystery of Christ's death offered by the school to which I refer, is that which presents our Lord as a model of patience and resignation in suffering—a saint in virtue—a hero in endurance. And thus, the Cross of Christ is deprived of its magnificence and robbed of its glory.

But our Lord suffered as an expiatory offering, as a vicarious victim. All suffering is, *in a sense*, vicarious—not in the fullest meaning of the term, as conveying the idea of *substitution*, but simply and only in the sense that all suffering is the effect and consequence of sin. The man who violates the laws of his physical nature—who puts the empoisoned cup of intemperance to his lips to steal away his brains. Who wastes his substance in riotous living. Who herds among the unclean and sacrifices to his baser passions health, property, character—shall suffer as a consequence of his lawlessness, folly and sin. He cannot trample upon the laws of his physical and mental constitution with impunity—he shall *suffer*.

These sufferings shall not expiate his transgression, but they shall follow in its wake a sure and dire consequence. Our Lord's sufferings were also the result and consequence of sin—sin not His own, but His people's. And in the fullest and most emphatic meaning of the terms, were

expiatory and vicarious—sufferings, not only the fruit of sin, but more than that, suffering expiatory of sin— sufferings, substitutionary and vicarious, sacrificial and atoning. There are theologians who dispute this statement, who deny this doctrine. But I challenge them to explain these sufferings of our Lord satisfactorily upon any other hypothesis than this.

I bring them back to the idea that all human suffering is the effect of sin—our Lord suffered the death of the Cross. Was not that death in some way connected with sin? Most assuredly! Had there been no sin there had been no suffering. This granted, we advance a step further and claim for that death of Christ, a substitutionary character, an atoning nature—a sin-atoning result. And so the revealed Truth stands out in all its magnitude and glory. And this is the only clue to the mystery—“*He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities.*” “*Who, His own self, bore our sins in His own body on the tree.*” “*Christ also has loved us and has given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet smelling savor.*” “*The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleans us from all sin.*”

Behold the Almighty Sufferer! There hung the Son of God, bearing the sin and enduring the curse of His Church—putting away the one and exhausting entirely the other—by the sacrifice of Himself. To all the demands of God's moral government, to all the claims of Law and justice, Jesus now on behalf of the people for whom He stood as Surety, gave a full, honorable and accepted satisfaction. Come, poor sin-burdened, heart-broken penitent and sit beneath the shadow of this tree of life and its bending fruit of pardon, peace, joy and hope shall be sweet to your believing taste.

But the sufferings of Christ were *unparalleled and intense*. Never since the universe was formed was there such a Sufferer as Jesus. He was the Prince of Sufferers. No sorrow ever broke the heart like that which rent His in two. Truly could He challenge the universe of sufferers and ask, “Is it nothing to you, all you that pass by? Behold and see if there is any sorrow like unto My sorrow.” No, Lord! Your sufferings had no parallel, no sorrows were ever like unto Yours! I do not go with the Greek Church, as you know. I differ from it both ecclesiastically and doctrinally. But I admire and love what is good, find it where I may. And I perfectly assent to the remark of my beloved Brother, made in the vestry before the service, “That there's some good in all Christian communions and creeds and that it is our wisdom to accept what is good and leave what is evil.”

Now, there is a sublime sentence in the liturgy of the Greek Church, which I have often pondered with emotion—“Your unknown agonies.” Yes! the agonies of our sin-suffering, sin-atoning Lord were unknown.

They were in their intensity known only to His own holy soul. No angel could ever fathom their depth, no finite mind shall ever be able to gauge the breadth, to scale the height, to conceive even of the agony of His soul when He exclaimed, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? I can bear the abandonment of My disciples—one has denied Me, another has betrayed Me, all have forsaken Me—but O My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

We may form some idea of their character, else how can we with Paul have fellowship with Him in his sufferings? First, there was the *physical* element—our blessed Lord suffered bodily. Men of science and of sanctified intellect have endeavored to analyze and describe the physical agonies which Christ endured, when His heart was broken with grief. But physiology in its noblest triumphs has never been able fully to portray what the Savior endured when, like the rending rocks around His Cross—

***"That heart was torn asunder,
Never once defiled by sin."***

Then there was *mental* agony. The mental grief He endured, who can conceive? His mind was a human mind and all the more sensitive because it was a sinless mind. The human sympathy of Christ infinitely transcends the most exquisite sympathy that glows in *our* bosom just because it was the sympathy of a pure and sinless humanity. There is selfishness in *our* sympathy. We love to sympathize with the sufferer because we love the sufferer and we are paying a homage to our love to the creature when we take the hand and dry the tear and speak the words of consolation. But the sympathy of Christ was all the more exquisite and all the more tender and all the more human because it was all the more free from sin.

The perfect sinlessness of Christ's sympathy did not in the slightest degree affect the perfect humanity of His sympathy. He was more human than you and I are, because His humanity was entirely free from sin. We are not all human. We possess a part of a demoniacal nature. Sin has impaired all those glorious virtues and excellencies which our humanity in its primitive condition possessed and ours is a distorted, paralyzed, altered humanity. Let your humanity be restored to its original righteousness, to its primitive purity—let it be elevated, renewed, sanctified, ennobled, as your humanity will be if you are believers in Christ and as you gradually recede from sin you will approach the perfect. As sin is eliminated and purged away from your nature, your crushed, your bruised, your bowed humanity will rise in its original purity and majesty and

glory and you will be all the more human because you approach all the more to the purity of the Divine.

But the *soul-suffering* of our Lord was more intense than all. This was inconceivable, indescribable. Listen to the cry in Gethsemane, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." The billows of God's wrath began now to penetrate His nature, the storm to break in upon His soul. Oh, that was a terrible moment! It was only now that He began to succumb to the woe. Before this He had maintained a comparatively calm and uncomplaining demeanor. The tempest until now was *without*. When a vessel, coursing its way over the ocean, is arrested by a storm—the fierce winds blowing, the ocean broken into billows, seething, raging, roaring—as long as his gallant boat plows its way and keeps its course, the mariner treads its deck undaunted by fear, confident in the strength and firmness of his vessel to outride and outlive the tempest.

But let the cry be heard, "a leak! A leak! A plank is sprung, the waters are coming in!" And in a moment, despair enters and enthrones itself upon the brow and the hearts of the stern sons of the sea die within them. Beloved, that was the moment of our Lord's deep, unknown agony, when He could exclaim, "*Save Me, O God, for the waters are come into My soul. I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing. I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow Me. All Your waves and Your billows are gone over Me!*"

All this, O child of God, was for *your* soul! It pleased the Lord to crucify Him and put Him to grief for you. By His stripes you are healed. Your healing flows from His wounds, your joy from His sorrow, your glory from His abasement, your riches from His poverty. Your hope beams through the darkness which enshrouds His holy soul. Oh, was ever love like Christ's love? In what else can we resolve all this mystery of unknown agony—of intense, unparalleled suffering, but in the "love of Christ which passes knowledge." "Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it." O mystery of suffering! O deeper mystery of love!

But these sufferings now are over. Hear him cry—"It is finished!" Have you ever stood by the dying bed of one you have loved—and have marked the throb, the throes of agony, the maddening convulsion, the terrible shaking of the earthly tabernacle? Have you watched as pin after pin and beam after beam has fallen a shattered wreck—and as you caught the last breath that floated from the pale, quivering lip and closed those eyes in death—has not your heart in the depth of its grief felt something like a thrill of joy and gladness that the sufferings of the loved one now were over? Rejoice then—rejoice that the sufferings of Jesus are finished. That the storm and the tempest will no more beat around Him.

The sun of God's love shall no more darken over Him for He took the cup, pressed it to His lips, exhausted the last bitter drop and then shouted out in words that made Heaven reverberate with its melody and Hell to ring with its mightiness, "It is finished!" Child of sorrow, child of suffering, rejoice that the sufferings of your Lord are over. Rejoice that in all the suffering and all the trial and all the sorrow through which He leads you Home to Himself. He took your cup of grief, your cup of the curse, pressed it to His lips, drank it to its dregs, then filled it with His sweet, pardoning, sympathizing love and gave it back for you to drink and to drink forever.

II. Secondly and more briefly, "It is finished" is not only the cry of a Sufferer, it is THE LANGUAGE OF A SAVIOR.

Our Lord's mission to our world was simply and singularly to save. He came for no other object than to save man, to give His life a ransom for many, to provide, to execute an expedient devised in the Eternal Council and purpose and love of the Triune God. He came to secure the full redemption of His Church—an expedient that should harmonize and unite all the moral attributes and perfections of His being and then lower from the battlement of Heaven to sin's fathomless depths the golden chain of mercy, pardoning mercy, to which, if in faith you take hold, it will lift you up to the Throne from where it came.

It is the fashion of the present day to ignore the Saviorship of Jesus. His Person, His life and His death are represented in any and every form except to acknowledge that He died on the Cross in the character of a Savior and that faith in the merits of His obedience and love are the efficacy of His death and constitute the only basis on which a lost sinner can build his hope of Heaven. I ask you, my beloved Hearers, what is the grand object of modern heresy but to undermine the Cross of Christ, to ignore the sacrifice of His death, to blot out the glorious atonement and to reduce the splendid paraphernalia of Calvary with all its moral and sublime results, to a mere nonentity? His death, His obedience was the obedience of the Law-maker in the form of the Law-fulfiller to a Law which man had broken and violated. That perfect and complete obedience of that broken Law is the righteousness that justifies the ungodly and places him that believes spotless before God.

Hold fast that Truth—the imputed righteousness of the Lord—our righteousness worked out and complete in His perfect obedience to the precepts of a broken Law. His death on Calvary was an atonement to Divine justice. The shedding of His blood was for the remission of man's sins. The paying out of His soul to death was the perfect honor given to the moral government of Jehovah. He went out of the streets of Jerusa-

lem staggering beneath the beam on which He was to be impaled. With lowly footsteps He ascended that sacred hill Calvary. And there, like a lamb led to the slaughter, He gave Himself up uncomplainingly and unreservedly into the hands of His executioners. They stretched Him on that tree, transfixed His limbs to those beams, lifted it and let it fall into the place excavated for it to stand. And there the Son of God poured out His holy soul unto death! Why? Why? Why?

Oh, my Brethren, it was to harmonize justice and mercy, holiness and Truth, to blend in one vast bow of hope all these Divine attributes, that they might span the moral Heaven and encircle our lost humanity! It was then He gave up His soul unto death and offered up that sacrifice for sin, which man, in his madness, folly and infidelity, dares in this our day to ignore and to deny.

Yes, it is the language of a Savior. Those words speak hope to the hopeless, pardon to the guilty, acceptance to the lost. They tell you, O poor sin-smitten, burdened sinner that there is hope! There is pardon even for *you*. He has finished all that Justice asked—that the Law demanded. He has finished the mission His Father had confided to His hands. He has finished the grand oblation that has to restore to God's moral government the glory it had lost in man's apostasy. He has finished all the ancient types, predictions and shadows. He tore the veil in two and opened the bright pathway for the sinner to retrace his steps back to Paradise, back to God and once more feel the warm embrace of his Father's forgiving love. And yet this is the work, this is the atonement, this is the sacrifice which modern essayists dare with scorn and unbelief to trample beneath their feet.

Oh, it is the language of a Savior which bids you come. Poor broken-hearted Sinner, with all your burden of sin—believe and be saved! It bids you come without money and without price. It tells you the blood He poured from His broken heart can wash out and cancel the deepest stain that is on your soul. It tells you there is room in that bosom which He laid bare to the lightning-stroke of God's wrath. It tells you dry your tears, embrace the Cross, trust in the finished work of Christ—fling to the heavens all your own righteousness—enwrap up by faith in the righteousness of Christ and all the choirs of Heaven shall tune their harps of gold and make the heavens reverberate with their songs of praise over your submission in faith to the atonement of the Son of God.

III. Lastly and only one word or two on this—it is THE SHOUT OF A CONQUEROR.

Christ was a man of war, our glorious Joshua was He. He had come to gird on the sword, to invest Himself with the armor and to go out and

battle with Satan, with sin and with Hell. It was a terrible conflict, it was a fearful battle. He girded Himself for the mighty and the solemn work and He completed it, He finished it. He met his foes on the battlefield, confronted all His enemies and on the Cross He destroyed—He divested death of its sting, triumphed over Satan, the grave and Hell. And as He expired, He exclaimed, “It is finished! “Oh what a sublime conflict was that, my Brethren, when the Captain of our salvation met single-handedly and overcame the powers of darkness, fought the fight, won the victory and died, saying “It is finished!”

With two or three brief inferences from the subject I will close.

1. *What a spring of comfort flows from it to the true Believer amid his innumerable failures, flaws and imperfections.* What service do you perform, what duty do you discharge of which you can say, “It is finished”? Alas, not one. Your service is imperfect, your obedience is incomplete, your love is fluctuating—yes, upon it all are the visible marks of human defilement and defect. But here is the work which God most delights in, “finished.” “*You are complete in Him.*” Turn, then, your eye of faith out of *yourself* and off of all your own doings and deal more immediately, closely and obediently with the finished work of Immanuel.

Come away from your fickle love, from your weak faith, from your little fruitfulness, from your uneven walk, from all your shortcomings and imperfections and let your eye of faith repose where God’s eye of complacent love reposes—on the finished work of Jesus. God beholds you only in Christ—it is not upon *you* He looks, but on His Beloved Son and upon you in Him, “wherein He has made us accepted in the Beloved.”

2. If Christ’s atoning work is finished, what folly and what sin to attempt to supplement it! What vast numbers are doing this! Away with your tears, your confessions, your duties, your charities, even your repentance and faith, if these things dare to take their place side by side with the finished work of Christ. See that you attempt to add *nothing* to it. In a similar strain of exhortation let me

3. *Warn you of the utter worthlessness and fallacy of all grounds of faith and of all human hope that comes in conflict with the finished work of Christ.* My dear Hearers, you have nothing to do in the great matter of your salvation but to accept in faith the one offering made once for all by God manifest in your nature. Cast your deadly doings at the foot of the Cross. Cease from your own works. Cease from your own righteousness. Cease from resting in your confessions, in your tears, in your prayers, in your going to your Church or your Chapel. Oh, cease from all this and in simple faith accept—take hold of—the Divine work of the Lord Jesus Christ!

God wants no more sacrifices. God asks no other atonement. God looks for nothing on your part to propitiate His regard, or present you with acceptance. He is satisfied with the Divine work of Christ—with His obedience—and with His blood. And if tonight, sin-burdened and distressed one, you will abjure all your own doings and rest in the finished work of Christ—the one eternal redemption He has offered—God will expand His arms of love and embrace you, take you into a covenant, filial relation to Himself. And from that moment your path to eternity will be like the sun, growing brighter and brighter unto the perfect day. All is done! Christ has done all. Christ has suffered all—all He asks of you is in faith to receive His glorious Sacrifices. Believe in Him and be saved!

4. Beware of the errors of the day, the tendency of which is to veil the light and glory of Christ's finished work and to mislead, misguide and misdirect souls on their way to the Judgment Seat. The fact is too patent to ignore and it would be affectation to veil it—that there exists at the present moment a theological school in our land—which by the press is endeavoring to circulate doctrines and statements which go to undermine the Divine inspiration and authority of the Bible and to cast the pall of darkness and of death over the splendors of the Cross.

I warn you of these terrorists and against their errors. Perfidious men! False to your Master and recreant to His Truth. You may attempt to veil the luster of the Cross, you may sepulcher incarnate Truth, roll upon it your stone, seal it and set your watch. Truth shall leap from the dark chamber in which you attempt to entomb it and shall walk this earth again—a thing of life, light and beauty. Rejoice, O Christian, that all these attempts to subvert the Truth as it is in Jesus, God will laugh to scorn and finally His Gospel shall fully and universally prevail—

“Truth crushed to earth, shall rise again!

The eternal years of God are hers;

But error wounded writhes in pain,

And dies amid her worshippers.

And now, from my heart, I ask the blessing of the Triune God upon my beloved Brother, the grand substance of whose ministry I believe from my very soul is to exalt the finished work of Jesus. And I pray that this noble edifice, reared in the name and consecrated to the glory of the Triune God, may for many years echo and re-echo with his voice of melody and of power in expounding to you the glorious doctrines and precepts of Christ's one finished atonement. And God grant that none of you may be found rejecting to your everlasting woe the doctrine of the Cross.

You may attempt to laugh it to scorn. You may make your excuses for its rejection. But the hour is coming, yes, the hour is near, when death confronting you—the veil falling upon all earthly scenes, rising upon all

eternal realities—you will discover the unbelief and contumely that could trifle with the atonement, dispute it in life and in health, fail you in your solemn hour and you will find yourself on the brink of eternity, without a plank, without a life-boat, without a star of hope to cheer the dark spirit's travel to the bar of God.

Reject it—deny it at your peril. Your blood be upon your own heads. And may God grant in His grace that before long you who have believed in Him, confessed Him and loved Him here on earth, may cluster around His Throne, gaze upon His unclouded face, unite in the anthem of the blessed and from those lips which once uttered that glorious sentence—“It is finished,” receive the “Well done, good and faithful servant,” and by His grace hear with joy, “Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundations of the world.”

And to God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, we will all unite in one eternal ascription of praise. Amen.

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“IT IS FINISHED!”

NO. 421

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

***“When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, He said, It is finished:
and He bowed His head and gave up the ghost.”
John 19:30.***

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I. LET US HEAR THE TEXT AND UNDERSTAND IT.

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

He is dragged through the streets of that Jerusalem which had killed the Prophets and would now crimson itself with the blood of the Prophets' Master. He is brought to the Cross. He is nailed fast to the cruel wood. The sun burns Him. His cruel wounds increase the fever. God forsakes

Him. "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" contains the concentrated anguish of the world. While He hangs there in mortal conflict with sin and Satan, His heart is broken, His limbs are dislocated. Heaven fails Him, for the sun is veiled in darkness. Earth forsakes Him, for "His disciples forsook Him and fled." He looks everywhere and there is none to help. He casts His eye around and there is no man that can share His toil.

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

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

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

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

No, to puzzle this wise man further, we remind him of prophecies so apparently contradictory that one would think they never could meet in one man—such as these, "All kings shall fall down before Him and all na-

tions shall serve Him." And yet, "He is despised and rejected of men." He must begin by showing a man born of a virgin mother—"A virgin shall conceive and bear a Son." He must be a man without spot or blemish, but yet one upon whom the Lord does cause to meet the iniquities of us all. He must be a glorious one, a Son of David, but yet a root out of a dry ground. Now I say it boldly—if all the greatest intellects of all the ages could set themselves to work out this problem, to invent another key to the types and prophecies—they could not do it.

I see you, you wise men—you are poring over these hieroglyphs—one suggests one key and it opens two or three of the figures. But you cannot proceed for the next one puts you at a nonplus. Another learned man suggests another clue—but that fails most where it is most needed—and another and another and thus these wondrous hieroglyphs traced of old by Moses in the wilderness must be left unexplained, till one comes forward and proclaims—"The Cross of Christ and the Son of God incarnate"—then the whole is clear, so that he that runs may read and a child may understand.

Blessed Savior! In You we see everything fulfilled which God spoke of in old by the Prophets. In You we discover everything carried out in substance which God had set before us in the dim mist of sacrificial smoke. Glory be unto Your name! "It is finished"—everything is summed up in YOU!

2. But the words have richer meaning. Not only were all types and prophecies and promises thus finished in Christ, but *all the typical sacrifices of the old Jewish Law were now abolished as well as explained.*

They were finished—finished in Him. Will you imagine for a minute the saints in Heaven looking down upon what was done on earth—Abel and his friends who had long ago before the flood been sitting in the glories above? They watch while God lights star after star in Heaven. Promise after promise flashes light upon the thick darkness of earth. They see Abraham come and they look down and wonder while they see God revealing Christ to Abraham in the person of Isaac. They gaze just as the angels do, desiring to look into the mystery. From the times of Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob they see altars smoking, recognitions of the fact that man is guilty and the spirits before the Throne say, "Lord, when will sacrifices finish?—when will blood no more be shed?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

As long as a creature lives it is bound to obey and as long as a free agent exists on earth it would be in danger of violating the vow of its obedience. If Adam had been in Paradise from the first day until now, he

might fall tomorrow. Left to himself there would be no reason why that king of nature should not yet be uncrowned. But Christ the Creator, who finished creation, has perfected redemption. God can ask no more. The Law has received all its claims, the largest extent of justice cannot demand another hour's obedience. It is done, it is complete. The last throw of the shuttle is over and the robe is woven from the top throughout. Let us rejoice, then, in this that the Master meant by His dying cry that His perfect righteousness wherewith He covers us was finished.

4. But next, the Savior meant *that the satisfaction which He rendered to the justice of God was finished*. The debt was now, to the last farthing, all discharged. The atonement and propitiation were made once and for all and forever—by the one offering made in Jesus' body on the Tree. There was the cup, Hell was in it, the Savior drank it—not a sip and then a pause—not a draught and then a ceasing. He drained it till there is not a dreg left for any of His people. The great ten-thronged whip of the Law was worn out upon His back. There is no lash left with which to smite one for whom Jesus died. The great cannonade of God's justice has exhausted all its ammunition—there is nothing left to be hurled against a child of God.

Sheathed is your sword, O Justice! Silenced is your thunder, O Law! There remains nothing now of all the griefs and pains and agonies which chosen sinners ought to have suffered for their sins, for Christ has endured all for His own Beloved and "it is finished." Brethren, *it is more than the damned in Hell can ever say*. If you and I had been constrained to make satisfaction to God's justice by being sent to Hell we never could have said, "It is finished." Christ has paid the debt which all the torments of eternity could not have paid. Lost souls, you suffer today as you have suffered for ages past, but God's justice is not satisfied, His Law is not fully magnified.

And when time shall fail and eternity shall have been flying on, still forever—the uttermost never having been paid, the chastisement for sin must fall upon unpardoned sinners. But Christ has done what all the flames of the pit could not do in all eternity. He has magnified the Law and made it honorable and now from the Cross he cries—"It is finished."

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

They shot their hellish darts into His heart. They poured their boiling cauldrons on His brain, they emptied their venom into His veins. They spat their insinuations into His face. They hissed their devilish fears into His ear. He stood alone, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, hounded by all the dogs of Hell. Our champion quailed not, but used His holy weapons, strik-

ing right and left with all the power of God-supported manhood. On came the hosts, volley after volley was discharged against Him. No mimic thunders were these, but such as might shake the very gates of Hell. The Conqueror steadily advanced, overturning their ranks, dashing in pieces His enemies, breaking the bow and cutting the spear in sunder and burning the chariots in the fire, while he cried, "In the name of God will I destroy you!"

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

"Traitor!

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

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

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

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

"It is finished!"

Hear the dying Savior cry."

II. Secondly, LET US HEAR AND WONDER.

Let us perceive what mighty things were effected and secured by these words, "It is finished." Thus He *ratified the Covenant*. That Covenant was

signed and sealed before and in all things it was ordered well, but when Christ said, "It is finished," then the Covenant was made doubly sure, when the blood of Christ's heart bespattered the Divine roll. Then it could never be reversed, nor could one of its ordinances be broken, nor one of its stipulations fail. You know of the Everlasting Covenant—God covenants on His part that He would give Christ to see of the travail of His soul—that all who were given to Him should have new hearts and right spirits. They should be washed from sin and should enter into life through Him.

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

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

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

***"Tis by the merit of His death
Who hung upon the tree,
The Spirit is sent down to breathe
On such dry bones as we."***

Then the Spirit which Christ had aforesaid promised perceived a new and living way by which He could come to dwell in the hearts of men and men might come up to dwell with Him above. That day, too, when Christ said—"It is finished," *the words had effect on Heaven.* Then the walls of chrysolite stood fast. Then the jasper-light of the pearly-gated city shone like the light of seven days. Before, the saints had been saved as it were on credit. They had entered Heaven, God having faith in His Son Jesus. Had not Christ finished His work, surely they must have left their shining spheres and suffered in their own persons for their own sins.

I might represent Heaven if my imagination might be allowed a moment as being ready to totter if Christ had not finished His work—its stones would have been unloosed—massive and stupendous though its bastions are. Yet they would have fallen as earthly cities reel under the throes of

earthquake. But Christ said, "It is finished," and oath and Covenant and blood set fast the dwelling place of the redeemed, made their mansions safely and eternally their own and bade their feet stand immovably upon the Rock. No, more. That word, "It is finished!" took effect in the gloomy caverns and depths of HELL. Then Satan bit his iron bands in a rage, howling, "I am defeated by the very Man whom I thought to overcome! My hopes are blasted. Never shall an elect one come into my prison, never a blood-bought one be found in my abode."

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

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

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

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

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

God neither asks nor accepts any other sacrifice than that which Christ offered once for all upon the Cross. Go next to the foolish among your own countrymen who call themselves Protestants but who are Papists after all—who think by their gifts and their gold, by their prayers and their

vows, by their church-goings and their chapel-goings, by their baptisms and their confirmations to make themselves fit for God. And say to them, "Stop, 'it is finished.' God needs not this of you. He has received enough. Why will you pin your rags to the fine linen of Christ's righteousness? Why will you add your counterfeit farthing to the costly ransom which Christ has paid into the treasure-house of God? Cease from your pains, your doings, your performances, for 'it is finished!' Christ has done it all."

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

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

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

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

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

Come with me, poor Soul and you and I will stand together this morning, while the tempest gathers, for we are not afraid. How sharp that

lightning flash! But yet we tremble not. How terrible that peal of thunder! And yet we are not alarmed and why? Is there anything in us why we should escape? No, but we are standing beneath the Cross—that precious Cross—which like some noble lightning rod in the storm takes to itself all the death from the lighting and all the fury from the storm. We are safe. Loud may you roar, O thundering Law and terribly may you flash, O avenging Justice! We can look up with calm delight to all the tumult of the elements, for we are safe beneath the Cross.

Come with me again. There is a royal banquet spread. The King Himself sits at the table and angels are the servitors. Let us enter. And we do enter and we sit down and eat and drink, but how dare we do this? Our righteousness are as filthy rags—how could we venture to come here? Oh, because the filthy rags are not ours any longer. We have renounced our own righteousness and therefore we have renounced the filthy rags. And now, today we wear the royal garments of the Savior and are from head to foot arrayed in white, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. We stand in the clear sunlight—black, but comely—loathsome in ourselves, but glorious in Him! Condemned in Adam, but accepted in the Beloved. We are neither afraid nor ashamed to be with the angels of God, to talk with the glorified, no, nor even alarmed to speak with God Himself and call Him our Friend.

And now last of all, I publish this to *sinner*s. I know not where you are this morning, but may God find you out. You who have been a drunkard, swearer, thief. You who have been a blackguard of the blackest kind. You who have dived into the very kennel and rolled yourself in the mire—if today you feel that sin is hateful to you, believe in Him who has said, "It is finished." Let me link your hand in mine, let us come together, both of us and say, "Here are two poor naked souls, good Lord, we cannot clothe ourselves." And He will give us a robe, for "it is finished." "But, Lord, is it long enough for such sinners and broad enough for such offenders?" "Yes," says He, "it is finished."

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

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

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

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

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

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ON THE CROSS AFTER DEATH NO. 1956

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 3, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“The Jews therefore, because it was the Preparation Day, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath day was a high day), besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with Him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that He was dead already they did not break His legs. But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out. And he who has seen has testified, and his record is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you may believe. For these things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled, ‘Not one of His bones of Him shall be broken.’ And again another Scripture says, ‘They shall look on Him whom they pierced.’”
John 19:31-37.*

CRIMINALS who were crucified by the Romans were allowed to rot upon the cross. That cruel nation can hardly be so severely condemned as our own people who, up to a late period, allowed the bodies of those condemned to die to hang in chains upon gallows in conspicuous places. The horrible practice is now abandoned, but it was retained to a time almost, if not quite, within living memory. I wonder whether any aged person here remembers such a horrible spectacle. Among the Romans it was usual, for there are classical allusions to this horror showing the bodies of persons crucified were usually left to be devoured by ravenous birds. Probably out of deference to the customs of the Jews, the authorities in Palestine would, sooner or later, allow of the interment of the crucified, but they would by no means hasten it, since they would not feel such a disgust at the sight as an Israelite would.

The Mosaic Law, which you will find in the Book of Deuteronomy, runs as follows—“If you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but you shall surely bury him that day” (21:22, 23). This alone would lead the Jews to desire the burial of the executed, but there was a further reason. Lest the land should be defiled upon the holy Sabbath of the Passover, the chief priests were importunate that the bodies of the crucified should be buried and, therefore, that their deaths should be hastened by the breaking of their legs. Their consciences were not wounded by the murder of Jesus, but they were greatly moved by the fear of ceremonial pollution! Religious scruples may live in a dead conscience.

Alas, this is not the only proof of that fact—we could find many in our own day!

The Jews hurried to Pilate and sought, as a blessing, the merciless act of having the legs of the crucified dashed to pieces with an iron bar. That act was sometimes performed upon the condemned as an additional punishment—but in this instance it was meant to be a finishing stroke—hastening death by the terrible pain which it would cause and the shock to the system which it would occasion. Ferocious hate of our Lord made His enemies forgetful of everything like humanity—doubtless the more of pain and shame which they could cause to Him, the better would they be pleased. Not, however, out of cruelty, but out of regard to the ceremonials of their religion, they, “besought Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away.” I have already told you that this breaking of the bones of the crucified was a Roman custom. We have evidence of this, since there is a Latin word, *crucifragium*, to express this barbarous act. Pilate had no hesitation in granting the desire of the Jews—what would he care about the dead body since he had already delivered up the living Man?

Soldiers go at once to perform the hideous operation and they commence with the two malefactors. It is a striking fact that the penitent thief, although he was to be in Paradise with his Lord that day, was not, therefore, delivered from the excruciating agony occasioned by the breaking of his legs. We are saved from *eternal misery*, not from *temporary pain*! Our Savior, by our salvation, gives no pledge to us that we shall be screened from suffering in this life. It is true, as the Proverb has it, “All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked; to the clean and to the unclean.” Accidents and diseases afflict the godly as well as the ungodly. Penitent or impenitent, we share the common lot of men and are born to troubles as the sparks fly upward. You must not expect, because you are pardoned, even if you have the assurance of it from Christ’s own lips, that, therefore, you shall escape tribulation! No, but from His gracious mouth you have the forewarning assurance that trial shall befall you, for Jesus said, “These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me you might have peace. In the world you shall have tribulation.” Suffering is not averted, but it is turned into a blessing! The penitent thief entered Paradise that very day, but it was not without suffering. Say, rather, that the terrible stroke was the actual *means* of the prompt fulfillment of his Lord’s promise to him! By that blow, he died that day, otherwise he might have lingered long. How much we may, any of us, receive by the way of suffering it were hard to guess—perhaps the promise that we shall be with our Lord in Paradise will be fulfilled that way.

At this point it seemed more than probable that our blessed Lord must undergo the breaking of His bones, but “He was dead already.” It had pleased Him, in the infinite willingness with which He went to His Sacrifice, to yield up His life and His spirit had, therefore, departed. Yet one might have feared that the coarse soldiers would have performed their orders to the letter. Look, they do not! Had they conceived a dread of One around whom such prodigies had gathered? Were they, like their centu-

tion, impressed with awe of this remarkable Person? At any rate, perceiving that He was dead already, they did not use their hammer. Happy are we to see them cease from such loathsome brutality. But we may not be too glad, for another outrage will take its place! To make sure that He was dead, one of the four soldiers pierced His side with a spear, probably thrusting His lance quite through the heart. Here we see how our gracious God ordained, in His Providence, that there should be sure evidence that Jesus was dead and that, therefore, the Sacrifice was slain.

Paul declares this to be the Gospel, that the Lord Jesus died according to the Scriptures. Strange to say, there have been heretics who have ventured to assert that Jesus did not actually die. They stand refuted by this spear-thrust. If our Lord did not die, then no Sacrifice has been presented, the Resurrection is not a fact and there is no foundation of hope for men! Our Lord assuredly died and was buried—the Roman soldiers were keen judges in such matters and they saw that, “he was dead already” and, moreover, their spears were not used in vain when they meant to make death a certainty.

When the side of Christ was pierced, there flowed from it blood and water—upon which a great deal has been said by those who think it proper to dilate upon such tender themes. It was supposed by some that by death the blood was divided, the clots parting from the water in which they float and that in a perfectly natural way. But it is not true that blood would flow from a dead body if it were pierced. Only under certain very special conditions would blood gush forth. The flowing of this blood from the side of our Lord cannot be considered as a common occurrence—it was a fact entirely by itself! We cannot argue from any known fact in this case, for we are here in a new region. Granted, that blood would not flow from an ordinary dead body, yet remember that our Lord’s body was unique, since it saw no corruption. Whatever change might come over a body liable to decay, we may not ascribe any such change to His frame and, therefore, there is no arguing from facts about common bodies so as to conclude from them anything concerning our blessed Lord’s body. Whether, in His case, blood and water flowed naturally from His holy and incorruptible body, or whether it was a miracle, it was evidently a most notable and remarkable thing and John, as an eyewitness, was evidently astonished at it—so astonished at it that he recorded a solemn affirmation in order that we might not doubt his testimony. He was certain of what he saw and he took care to report it with a special note in order that we might believe—as if he felt that if this fact was truly believed, there was a certain convincing power which would induce many to believe on our Lord Jesus as the appointed Savior! I could enter into many details, but I prefer to cast a veil over this tender mystery. It is scarcely reverent to be discoursing anatomy when the body of our adorable Lord is before us. Let us close our eyes in worship rather than open them with irreverent curiosity.

The great task before me this morning is to draw truth out of this well of wonders. I shall ask you to look at the events before us in three lights—first, let us see, here, *the fulfillment of Scripture*. Secondly, *the identifica-*

tion of our Lord as the Messiah. And thirdly, *the instruction which He intends.*

I. I ask you to notice THE FULFILLMENT OF SCRIPTURE. Two things are predicted—not a bone of Him must be broken and He must be pierced. These were the Scriptures which now remained to be accomplished. Last Lord's-Day morning we were, all of us, delighted as we saw the fulfillment of Scripture [#1955—*Jesus Declining the Legions*] in the capture of our Lord and His refusal to deliver Himself from His enemies. The theme of the fulfillment of Scripture is worth pursuing yet further in an age when Holy Scripture is treated with so much slight and is spoken of as having no Inspiration in it, or, at least, no Divine Authority by which its Infallibility is secured. You and I favor no such error! On the contrary, we conceive it to be to the last degree, mischievous. “If the foundations are removed, what can the righteous do?” We are pleased to notice how the Lord Jesus Christ and those who wrote concerning Him treated the Holy Scriptures with an intensely reverent regard. The prophecies that went before of Christ must be fulfilled—and holy souls found great delight in dwelling upon the fact that they were so!

I want you to notice, concerning this case, that *it was amazingly complicated.* It was negative and positive—the Savior's bones must not be broken *and*, He must be pierced. In the type of the Passover lamb, it was expressly enacted that not a bone of it should be broken—therefore not a bone of Jesus must be broken. At the same time, according to Zechariah 12:10, the Lord must be *pierced*. He must not only be pierced with the nails and so fulfill the prophecy, “They pierced My hands and My feet,” but He must be conspicuously *pierced* so that He can be emphatically regarded as a Pierced One. How were these prophecies and a multitude more, to be accomplished? Only God, Himself, could have brought to pass the fulfillment of prophecies which were of all kinds and appeared to be confusing—and even in contradiction to each other!

It would be an impossible task for the human intellect to construct so many prophecies, types, foreshadowing and then to *imagine* a person in whom they should all be embodied! But what would be impossible to men has been literally carried out in the case of our Lord! There are prophecies about Him and about everything connected with Him—from His hair to His garments, from His birth to His tomb—and yet they have *all* been carried out to the letter! That which lies immediately before us was a complicated case, for if reverence to the Savior would spare His bones, would it not also spare His flesh? If a coarse brutality pierced His side, why did it not break His legs? How can men be kept from one act of violence—and that an act authorized by the *authority*—and yet perpetrate another violence which had not been suggested to them? But, let the case be as complicated as it were possible for it to have been, Infinite Wisdom knew how to work it out in all points—and He did so! The Christ is the *exact substance* of the foreshadowing of the Messianic prophecies!

Next, we may say of the fulfillment of these two prophecies, that *it was especially improbable.* It did not seem at all likely that when the order was given to break the legs of the crucified, Roman soldiers would abstain

from the deed. How could the body of Christ be preserved after such an order had been issued? Those four soldiers are evidently determined to carry out the governor's orders. They have commenced their dreadful task and they have broken the legs of two of the executed three. The crosses were arranged so that Jesus was hanging in the midst—He is the second of the three. We naturally suppose that they would proceed in order from the first cross to the second. But they seem to pass by the second cross and proceed from the first to the third! What was the reason of this singular procedure? The supposition is, and I think a very likely one, that the center cross stood somewhat back and that thus the two thieves formed a sort of first rank. Jesus would thus be all the more emphatically, "in the midst."

If He was placed a little back, it would certainly have been easier for the penitent thief to have read the inscription over His head and to have looked to our Lord and held a conversation with Him. Had they been placed exactly in a line, this might not have been so natural. But the suggested position seems to suit the circumstances. If it were so, I can understand how the soldiers would be taking the crosses in order when they performed their horrible office upon the two malefactors and came last to Jesus, who was in the midst. In any case, such was the order which they followed. The marvel is that they did not, in due course, proceed to deal the horrible blow in the case of our Lord! Roman soldiers are apt to fulfill their commissions very literally—they are not often moved with much desire to avoid barbarities. Can you see them intent upon their errand? Will they not even now mangle that sacred body? Commend me for roughness to the ordinary Roman soldier—he was so used to deeds of slaughter, so accustomed to an empire which had been established with blood and iron, that the idea of pity never crossed his soul, except to be mocked as a womanly feeling unworthy of a brave man! Yet behold and wonder! The order is given to break their legs—two out of the three have suffered—and yet no soldier may crush a bone of that sacred body! They see that He is dead already and they do not break His legs.

As yet you have only seen one of the prophecies fulfilled. He must be pierced as well. And what was that which came into that Roman soldier's mind when, in a hasty moment, he resolved to make sure that the apparent death of Jesus was a real one? Why did he open that sacred side with his lance? He knew nothing of the prophecy. He had no dreams of Eve being taken from the side of the man and the Church from the side of Jesus. He had never heard that ancient notion of the side of Jesus being like the door of the ark, through which an entrance to safety is opened. Why, then, does he fulfill the prediction of the Prophet? There was no accident or chance here! Where are there such things? The hand of the Lord is here and we desire to praise and bless that Omniscient and Omnipotent Providence which thus fulfilled the Word of Revelation! God has respect unto His own Word and while He takes care that no bone of His Son shall be broken, He also secures that no text of Holy Scripture shall be broken! That our Lord's bones should remain unbroken and yet that He should be pierced seemed a very unlikely thing, but it was carried out! When next

you meet with an unlikely promise, believe it firmly. When next you see things working contrary to the Truth of God, believe God and believe nothing else! Let God be true and every man a liar! Though men and devils should give God the lie, hold on to what God has spoken, for Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one jot or tittle of His Word shall fall to the ground!

Note again, dear Friends, concerning this fulfillment of Scripture, that *it was altogether indispensable*. If they had broken Christ's bones, then that Word of John the Baptist, "Behold the Lamb of God," had seemed to have a slur cast upon it. Men would have objected, "But the bones of the Lamb of God were not broken." It was especially commanded twice over, not only in the first ordaining of the Passover in Egypt, but in the allowance of a second to those who were defiled at the time of the first Passover. In Numbers, as well as in Exodus, we read that not a bone of the lamb must be broken. How, then, if our Lord's bones had been broken, could we have said, "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us," when there would have been this fatal flaw? Jesus must remain intact upon the Cross and He must also be pierced, otherwise that famous passage in Zechariah, which is here alluded to, "They shall look on Me whom they have pierced," could not have been true of Him. *Both* prophecies must be carried out and *they were* so in a conspicuous manner!

But why need I say that this fulfillment was *indispensable*? Beloved, the keeping of every Word of God is indispensable. It is indispensable to the Truth of God that He should always be true, for if one Word of His can fall to the ground, then all may fall—and His veracity is gone. If it can be demonstrated that one prophecy was a mistake, then all the rest may be mistakes. If one part of the Scripture is untrue, all may be untrue and we have no sure ground to go on. Faith loves not slippery places! Faith seeks the sure Word of Prophecy and sets her foot firmly upon certainties. Unless all the Word of God is sure and pure, "as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times," then we have nothing to go upon and are virtually left without a Revelation from God!

If I am to take the Bible and say, "Some of this is true and some of it is questionable," I am no better off than if I had no Bible! A man who is at sea with a chart which is only accurate in certain places is not much better off than if he had no chart at all. I see not how it can ever be safe to be "converted and become as little children" if there is no Infallible Teacher for us to follow. Beloved, it is indispensable to the honor of God and to our confidence in His Word, that every line of Holy Scripture should be true! It was evidently indispensable in the case now before us and this is only one instance of a rule which is without exception.

But now let me remind you that although the problem was complicated and its working out was improbable, *yet it was fulfilled in the most natural manner*. Nothing can be less constrained than the action of the soldiers. They have broken the legs of two, but the other is dead and so they do not break His legs. Yet, to make sure that they will be safe in omitting the blow, they pierce His side. There was no compulsion put upon them—they did this of their own proper thought. No angel came from Heaven to stand

with his broad wings in front of the Cross, so as to protect the Savior! No awful protection of mystery was hung over the sacred body of the Lord so that intruders might be driven back with fear! No, the quaternion of soldiers did whatever they wished to do. They acted of their own free will and yet, at the same time, they fulfilled the eternal counsel of God! Shall we never be able to drive into men's minds the Truth of God that *predestination* and free agency are both *facts*?

Men sin as freely as birds fly in the air and they are altogether responsible for their sin—and yet *everything* is ordained and foreseen of God! The fore-ordination of God in no degree interferes with the responsibility of man! I have often been asked by persons to reconcile the two Truths of God. My only reply is—They need no reconciliation, for they never fell out. Why should I try to reconcile two friends? Prove to me that the two Truths do not agree. In that request I have set you a task as difficult as that which you propose to me! These two facts are parallel lines—I cannot make them unite—but you cannot make them cross each other. Permit me, also, to add that I have long ago given up the idea of making all my beliefs into a system. I believe, but I cannot explain. I fall before the majesty of Revelation and adore the Infinite Lord. I do not understand all that God reveals, but I believe it! How can I expect to understand all the mysteries of Revelation, when even the arithmetic of Scripture surpasses My comprehension, since I am taught that in the Godhead the Three are One, while in the undivided One I see most manifestly Three?

Need I measure the sea? Is it not enough that I am borne up by its waves? I thank God for waters deep enough for my faith to swim in! Understanding would compel me to keep to the shallows, but faith takes me to the main ocean. I think it more to my soul's benefit to *believe* than to understand, for faith brings me nearer to God than reason ever did! The faith which is limited by our narrow faculties is a faith unworthy of a child of God, for as a child of God he should begin to deal with infinite sublimities, like those in which his great Father is at home. These are only to be grasped by faith. To return to my subject—albeit the matter must be as Scripture foreshadowed, yet no constraint nor inducement was put forth. But, as free agents, the soldiers performed the very things which were written in the Prophets concerning Christ.

Dear Friends, suffer one more observation upon this fulfillment of Scripture—it was *marvelously complete*. Observe that in these transactions a seal was set upon that part of Scripture which has been most exposed to skeptical derision, for the seal was set, first of all, upon the *types*. Irreverent readers of Scripture have refused to accept the types. They say, "How do you know that the Passover was a type of Christ?" In other cases, more serious persons object to detailed interpretations and decline to see a meaning in the smaller particulars. Such persons would not attach *spiritual* importance to the law, "Not a bone of it shall be broken," but would dismiss it as a petty regulation of an obsolete religious rite.

But observe, Beloved, the Holy Spirit does nothing of the kind, for He fixes upon a minor particular of the type and declares that this must be

fulfilled. Moreover, the Providence of God intervenes so that it shall be carried out. Therefore, be not scared away from the study of the types by the ridicule of the worldly-wise. There is a general timidity coming over the minds of many about Holy Scripture—a timidity to which, thank God, I am an utter stranger! It would be a happy circumstance if the childlike reverence of the early fathers could be restored to the Church and the present irreverent criticism could be repented of and cast away. We may delight ourselves in the types as in a very Paradise of Revelation! Here we see our best Beloved's beauties mirrored in 10,000 delightful ways. There is a world of holy teaching in the books of the Old Testament and in their types and symbols! To give up this patrimony of the saints and to accept criticism instead of it would be like selling one's birthright for a mess of pottage! I see in our Lord's unbroken bones a setting of the seal of God upon the *types* of Scripture!

Let us go further. I see, next, the seal of God set upon *unfulfilled prophecy*, for the passage in Zechariah is not yet completely fulfilled. It runs thus—"They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced." Jehovah is the speaker and He speaks of "the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem." They are to look on Jehovah whom they have pierced and to mourn for Him. Although this prophecy is not yet fulfilled on the largest scale, yet it is so far certified, for Jesus is pierced—the rest of it, therefore, stands good—and Israel shall one day mourn because of her insulted King. The prophecy was fulfilled in part when Peter stood up and preached to the eleven, when a great company of the priests believed and when multitudes of the seed of Abraham became preachers of Christ Crucified. Still it awaits a larger fulfillment and we may rest quite sure that the day shall come when all Israel shall be saved. As the piercing of their Lord is true, so shall the piercing of their hearts be true and they shall mourn and inwardly bleed with bitter sorrow for Him whom they despised and abhorred. The point to mark here is that a seal is set in this case to a prophecy which yet awaits its largest fulfillment and, therefore, we may regard this as a pattern—and may lay stress upon prophecy, rejoice in it and receive it without doubt, come what may.

I have said this much upon the fulfillment of the Word concerning our Lord. Let us learn, therefore, a lesson of reverence and confidence in reference to Holy Scripture.

II. But now, secondly, and briefly, THE IDENTIFICATION OF OUR LORD AS THE MESSIAH was greatly strengthened by that which befell His body after death. It was necessary that He should conclusively be proven to be the Christ spoken of in the Old Testament. Certain marks and tokens are given and those marks and tokens must be found in Him—they were so found.

The first mark was this—*God's Lamb must have a measure of preservation*. If Christ is what He professes to be, He is the Lamb of God. Now, God's lamb could only be dealt with in God's way. There is the lamb. Kill it, sprinkle its blood, roast it with fire, but break not its bones. It is God's lamb and not yours, therefore thus far shall you come, but no further. Not a bone of it shall be broken. Roast it, divide it among yourselves and eat

it—but break no bone of it. The Lord claims it as His own and this is His reserve. So, in effect, the Lord says concerning the Lord Jesus—“There is My Son. Bind Him, scourge Him, spit on Him, crucify Him, but He is the Lamb of My Passover and you must not break a bone of Him.” The Lord’s right to Him is declared by the reservation which is made concerning His bones. Do you not see, here, how He is identified as being, “the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world”? It is a mark of identity upon which faith fixes her eyes—and she studies that mark until she sees much more in it than we can, this morning, speak about, for we have other things to dwell upon.

The next mark of identity must be that *Jehovah our Lord should be pierced by Israel*. So Zechariah said and so must it be fulfilled. Not merely must His hands and feet be nailed, but most conspicuously must He, Himself, be *pierced*. “They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him.” Pierced He must be! His wounds are the marks and tokens of His being the real Christ. When they shall see the sign of the Son of Man in the last days, then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn—and is not that sign His appearing as a Lamb that has been slain? The wound in His side was a sure mark of His identity to His own disciples, for He said to Thomas, “Reach here your hand and thrust it into My side: and be not faithless, but believing.” It shall be the convincing token to all Israel—“They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one that mourns for his only son.” To us, the opened way to His heart is in His flesh, the token that this is the Incarnate God of Love, whose heart can be reached by all who seek His Grace.

But I have not finished this identification, for observe, that when that side was pierced, “and immediately blood and water came out.” You that have your Bibles will have opened them already at Zechariah 12—will you kindly read on till you come to the first verse of the 13th Chapter, which ought not to have been divided from the 12th chapter? What do you find there? “In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.” They pierced Him and in that day they began to mourn for Him! But more, in that day there was a fountain opened! And what was that fountain but this gush of water and of blood from the split side of our redeeming Lord? The *prophecies* follow quickly, one upon another—they relate to the same Person, to the same day—and we are pleased to see that the *facts* also follow quickly upon one another, for when the soldier with the spear pierced the side of Jesus, “*immediately* blood and water came out.” Jehovah was pierced and men repented—and beheld the cleansing fountain within a brief space! The men who saw the sacred fountain opened rejoiced to see in it the attestation of the finished Sacrifice and the token of its cleansing effect.

The identification is more complete if we add one more remark. Take all the types of the Old Testament together and you will gather this, that *the purification of sin was typically set forth by blood and water*. Blood was always conspicuous. You have no remission of sin without it. But water was also exceedingly prominent. The priests, before sacrificing, must

wash—and the victim, itself, must be washed with water. Impure things must be washed with running water. Behold how our Lord Jesus came by water and by blood—not by water, only, but by water *and* blood. John, who saw the marvelous stream, never forgot the sight, for though he wrote his Epistles, I suppose, far on in life, the recollection of that wondrous scene was fresh with him. Though I suppose he did not write his Gospel until he was a very old man, yet when he came to this passage it impressed him as much as ever and he uttered affirmations which he was not at all accustomed to use! “He who has seen has testified, and his record is true: and he knows that he is telling the truth” In solemn form he thus, after a manner, gave his affidavit before God’s people that he did *really* behold this extraordinary sight!

In Jesus we see One who has come to atone and to sanctify. He is that High Priest who cleanses the leprosy of sin by blood and water! This is one part of the sure identification of the great Purifier of God’s people, that He came both by water and by blood—and poured out both from His pierced side. I leave these identifications to you. They are striking to my own mind, but they are only part of the wonderful system of marks and tokens by which it is seen that God attests the Man Christ Jesus as being in very deed the true Messiah!

III. I must close by noticing, thirdly, THE INSTRUCTION INTENDED FOR US in all these things.

The first instruction intended for us must be only hinted at, like all the rest. *See what Christ is to us.* He is the Paschal Lamb, not a bone of which was broken. You believe it. Come, then, and act upon your belief by feeding upon Christ! Keep the feast in your own souls this day. That sprinkled blood of His has brought you safety—the Destroying Angel cannot touch you or your house! The Lamb, Himself, has become your food. Feed on Him! Remove your spiritual hunger by receiving Jesus into your heart. This is the food of which, if a man eats, he shall live forever! Be filled with all the fullness of God as you now receive the Lord Jesus as God and Man. “You are complete in Him.” You are “perfect in Jesus Christ.” Can you say of Him—“He is all my salvation and all my desire”? “Christ is all and in all.” Do not merely learn this lesson as a doctrine, but enjoy it as a personal experience. Jesus our Passover is slain, let Him be eaten! Let us feast on Him and then be ready to journey through the wilderness in the strength of this Divine food, until we come to the promised rest.

What next do we learn from this lesson but this? *See man’s treatment of Christ.* They have spit on Him; they have cried, “Crucify Him, crucify Him.” They have nailed Him to the Cross. They have mocked His agonies and He is dead—but man’s malice is not yet glutted. The last act of man to Christ must be to pierce Him through! That cruel wound was the concentration of man’s ill-treatment of Jesus. His experience at the hands of our race is summed up in the fact that they pierced Him to the heart. That is what men have done to Christ—they have so despised and rejected Him that He dies, pierced to the heart! Oh, the depravity of our nature! Some doubt whether it is total depravity. It deserves a worse adjective than that! There is no word in the human language which can express the

venom of the enmity of man to his God and Savior—he would wound Him mortally if He could. Do not expect that men will love either Christ or you, if you are like He? Do not expect that Jesus will find room for Himself in the inn, much less that He will be set on the throne by guilty, unrenewed men. Oh, no! Even when He is dead, they must insult His corpse with a spear thrust. One soldier did it, but he expressed the sentiment of the age. This is what the world of sinners did for Him who came into the world to save it!

Now, learn, in the next place, *what Jesus did for men*. Beloved, that was a sweet expression in our hymn just now—

***“Even after death His heart
For us its tribute poured.”***

In His life He had bled for us—drop by drop the bloody sweat had fallen to the ground. Then the cruel scourges drew purple streams from Him. And as a little store of life-blood was left near His heart, He poured it all out before He went His way. It is a materialistic expression, but there is something more in it than mere sentiment—that there remains among the substance of this globe a sacred relic of the Lord Jesus in the form of that blood and water. As no atom of matter ever perishes, that matter remains on earth even now. His body has gone into Glory, but the blood and water are left behind.

I see much more in this fact than I will now attempt to tell. O world, the Christ has marked you with His blood and He means to have you! Blood and water from the heart of God’s own Son have fallen down upon this dark and defiled planet—and thus Jesus has sealed it as His own and, as such, it *must* be transformed into a new Heaven and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness! Our dear Lord, when He had given us all He had, and even resigned His life on our behalf, then parted with a priceless stream from the fountain of His heart—“and immediately blood and water came out.” Oh, the kindness of the heart of Christ, that did not only, for a blow, return a kiss, but for a spear thrust returned streams of life and healing!

But I must hurry on. I can also see in this passage *the safety of the saints*. It is marvelous how full of eyes the things of Jesus are, for His unbroken bones look backward to the Paschal lamb, but they also look forward throughout all the history of the Church to that day when He shall gather all His saints in one body and none shall be missing. Not a bone of His mystical body shall be broken! There is a text in the Psalms which says of the righteous man—and all righteous men are conformed unto the image of Christ—“He keeps all His bones: not one of them is broken.” I rejoice in the safety of Christ’s elect! He shall not permit a bone of His redeemed body to be broken—

***“For all the chosen seed
Shall meet around the Throne,
Shall bless the conduct of His Grace,
And make His glories known.”***

A perfect Christ there shall be in the day of His appearing, when all the members of His body shall be joined to their glorious Head, who shall be crowned forever! Not *one* living member of Christ shall be absent—“Not a

bone of Him shall be broken.” There shall be no lame, maimed Christ, no half-worked redemption! The purpose for which He came to accomplish shall be perfectly achieved to the glory of His name!

I have not quite done, for I must add another lesson. *We see here the salvation of sinners.* Jesus Christ’s side is pierced to give to sinners the double cure of sin—the taking away of its guilt and power and, better than this—sinners are to have their hearts broken by a sight of the Crucified. By this means they are also to obtain faith. “They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him.” Beloved, our Lord Jesus came not only to save sinners, but to seek them! His death not only saves those who have faith, but it creates faith in those who have it not! The Cross produces the faith and repentance which it demands. If you cannot come to Christ *with* faith and repentance, come to Christ *for* faith and repentance, for He can give them to you! He is pierced on purpose that you may be pricked to the heart. His blood, which freely flows, is shed for many for the remission of sins. What you have to do is just look and, as you look, those blessed feelings which are the marks of conversion and regeneration shall be worked in you by a sight of Him!

Oh, blessed lesson! Put it into practice this morning! Oh, that in this great house many may now have done with self and look to the crucified Savior and find eternal life in Him! For this is the main end of John’s writing this record. And this is the chief design of our preaching upon it—we long that you may believe! Come, you guilty! Come and trust the Son of God who died for you! Come, you foul and polluted! Come and wash in this sacred stream poured out for you! There is life in a look at the Crucified One! There is life at this moment for every one of you who will look to Him! God grant you may look and live, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE BEFORE SERMON—John 19:13-42.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—910, 276, 277.**

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THE PIERCED HEART OF JESUS

NO. 3559

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 12, 1917.

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

***“Then came the soldiers and broke the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with Him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was dead already, they broke not His legs, but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side, and forthwith there came out blood and water. And he that saw it bares record that his record is true: and he knows that he is telling the truth, that you might believe. For these things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled. A bone of Him shall not be broken. And again another Scripture says, They shall look on Him whom they have pierced.”
John 19:32-37.***

WHAT a wonderful conjunction of Prophecy and Providence! I want you to behold it, and admire it. Two texts of Scripture predict, the one in Exodus the other in Zechariah (such a long interval having occurred between the distinct records), the former that not a bone of the Paschal Lamb should be broken—the latter that He should be pierced. How were these two to be fulfilled in the minuteness of one incident? The rough Roman soldier comes with the iron bar to break the bones of the three prisoners who have been crucified. He has orders to break their legs. The well-disciplined soldier acts almost mechanically, according to orders. Roman discipline was of the very sternest kind. Will not the soldier, therefore, break the legs of Jesus? No! Moved by some strange impulse, he marks that one of the three, Jesus, who is called Christ, is already dead. Though commanded to break His legs, he forbears—but, most likely to clear himself of all doubt on that point, he pierces His side with a spear! The willfulness of the soldier, wavering though wanton, thus fulfilled both the prophecies of which he must have been, himself, totally ignorant! And this was brought about, first, by his not doing what he was ordered to do and, secondly, by doing what he had not been ordered to do! Oh, how inscrutable the mystery of Providence! How marvelously does God rule the sons of men while He leaves them to their own free will! Did not this soldier act altogether as a free agent, whether following the dictates of his reason or the impulse of his temper, when he thus unwittingly, by his singular conduct, verified to the letter the words of Prophecy as precisely and entirely as if he had been a mere puppet

moved with wires at the instigation of another mind and another hand than his own? This was not an accidental circumstance, or a singular coincidence—it was Providence—a sublime purpose of God brought to pass by simple means. Irregularities among men do not disorganize the ordained purposes of Heaven, and what we think to be chaos is a well-ordered system far beyond our imagination, into which we vainly attempt to peer.

I need not detain you with any speculations arising out of the piercing of our Savior by the spear. It has been, I think, very soberly argued that in all probability the physical cause of our Savior's death was a broken heart. In a scientific treatise by one who had studied the anatomy of the subject, and investigated cases which appeared, after death, to bear some resemblance to our Savior's case, it has been shown that when, on the heart being pierced, a small portion of blood and water has flowed, death has been traceable to a broken heart with intense grief. So, if we may assign a physical cause to the death of our Lord, it appears most probable to have been so occasioned. It was anguish that, in the first stage, produced a bloody sweat in Gethsemane, and in the last stage ruptured His heart. Not, however, that I am inclined to attach any importance to such arguments or speculations. For my part I do not see that there is any analogy, or that analogy need be sought between the case of the Savior and the case of any common man. The anatomist would be baffled with an analysis! The body of any ordinary person would exhibit symptoms of corruption. From this, He that hung upon the Cross was exempt. When death comes, and the vital spark quits the human frame, the process of decomposition speedily begins. But our Lord saw no corruption! Overshadowed as was His virgin mother by the Spirit at her conception, His birth was predicted as "*that holy thing* which shall be born of you." Through the entire course of His life on earth, the Spirit rested upon Him in a special manner. And even after His soul had left His body, the Spirit preserved and kept that body so that the prophecy was fulfilled, "Neither will You suffer *Your Holy One* to see corruption." Hence you search in vain for a parallel. The disparity of any instances that might be sought for is so palpable that you really have not any data to start with, or any premises to reason upon in the effort to judge of what happened in the anatomy of the sacred body of our blessed Lord. Instead of following speculations which rather belong to the physician than the theologian, I desire the Spirit of God to conduct us into some spiritual reflections arising out of the piercing of the heart of Jesus Christ by the soldier's spear. One observation, I think, lies upon the very surface of the narrative.

I. EVEN AFTER OUR LORD'S DEATH, MEN RUDELY ASSAILED HIM.

Was it not enough that they had scourged His back? Did it not suffice that they had put a crown of thorns on His head? Was it not sufficient that they had nailed His feet and His hands to the Cross? And yet after they were satisfied that the life had been forfeited to the law, and the body was already dead, nothing could content human cruelty till His heart was pierced with the lance! Say, now, was not this man who pierced Christ's heart a fair, though a foul, sample of our sinful race? His heartless act a type of our headstrong profanity? We, too, after the Savior's death, have pierced Him! Shall I show you how? The crime is so common that you come to condone it. His Godhead is His Glory. *Deny His Deity* and you not only detract from His dignity, but you make Him unworthy of our confidence! This is to thrust the spear into His very heart! Your tone is treacherous when you say, "He is but a Man. Though an admirable Teacher, I can only regard Him as a finite creature." Oh, how many people go up and down among us professing to be members of a Protestant Church and Believers in the Scripture, who yet will not acknowledge the miracles of Christ to be authentic, worked in token of His own Personal authority, bearing the witness of His Father, and conveying a clear proof that He was the Son of God? The Lord have mercy upon those who in this respect pierce our dear Redeemer afresh! If any of us have been guilty of this sin, may we be converted from our dangerous error, and led to avow Him, like Thomas, "My Lord and my God."

They pierce Him, too, who *attack the Doctrines which He taught*, and the testimony which He delivered. The Truth of God was in Christ's heart—it was written there. Whatever He preached with His lips, He sanctified with His life. His heart was a fountain whence came all those Doctrines which reveal the Father to us. If men attack any Truth revealed to us by Christ, they do in effect what the soldier did in fact—they do *spiritually* as this Roman soldier did *literally*—they thrust at His heart! If you disparage the words that Jesus spoke, or call in question the Truth that He showed to His disciples and made manifest in the Word of God, what is there left of that mission in which He made known the will of God, the Father? To proclaim this Truth He came! To bear witness to this Truth He died! He witnessed a good confession before Pontius Pilate. If you touch those Doctrines, you touch the apple of His eye—no, you pierce His heart again! How do they also thrust at His heart *who persecute His people!* And has He not often been wounded thus through all the centuries that have transpired since He ascended up on high to the Father's right hand? Saul of Tarsus pierced His heart, for Jesus said, "Why do you persecute Me?" The sufferings of the men and women, hauled to prison, and beaten in the synagogue, and compelled to blaspheme, were injuries wantonly and wickedly done to Christ, Himself! And what shall we say of the martyrs, their groans in the prisons, their cries at the rack,

their pangs at the stake, their blood so cruelly shed—have not all these touched the Savior’s heart?

So, too, every rude jeer and ribald jest, every hard word and bitter taunt aimed at a follower of Christ is a reproach of the dear Lord and Master for whose sake it is meekly borne. But on their part, “who whet their tongue like a sword,” it is aimed at the heart of Jesus, on whom they cannot otherwise wreak their vengeance, now, for He cannot henceforth suffer, except in sympathy with the sufferings of His saints!

And there is yet another class of persons who, although Christ’s sufferings are over, still continue to pierce Him. They are such as pretend to be His disciples, but they lie and practice a foul hypocrisy! Are there any such present? I tremble as I ask the question. As there were false apostles of yore, so there are foul apostates in these days! Their profession is only the prelude to their perfidy. They make solemn pledge to obey Him, but, like Judas, they only wait for a suited opportunity to betray Him. They will sell the Savior for silver—only let the price be high enough—their principle is low enough! Their conscience will not hesitate to “crucify the Lord afresh, and put Him to an open shame.” Oh, you inconsistent professors! Oh, you graceless men and women! How dare you come to the Table of His fellowship? You have a name to live, and yet you are dead! You are crucifying Him! You are piercing Him! The guilt of the Roman soldier clings to you!

I fear, too, there is another class that pierces His heart—it includes *those who refuse to believe in His willingness to forgive them*. When under conviction of sin, it may be difficult to believe that one can be pardoned, but when the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is revealed to us and His infinite condescension that brought Him to suffer for us—it does seem unbelievable that any should doubt Him! Yet there are some who link their chains, sit down in despair, and say, “He is not willing to forgive.” So unkind, ungenerous a thought as that—that He is unwilling to forgive—pierces Him to the heart and cuts Him to the quick! I know some of you do not mean this. You are startled, now that you think what you are doing. I pray the Lord you may humbly trust Him! Oh, do not doubt Him—the Son of God, who suffered for His enemies, surrendering His life, even for the ungodly! Will you, *can* you still distrust Him? Will you doubt the testimony which God has given concerning His Son? Were it not far better that you honored Him by casting yourselves at His feet? Angels that sing His praises night and day unceasingly do not honor Him more than you will do, if, all black and defiled as you are, you will come and trust Him that He can wash you and make you whiter than snow! Oh, do this and pierce His heart no more!

Some men pierce the heart of Christ *through their carelessness*. They trifle and even scoff because they have not known Him, or sought by any

means to learn what claims He has upon their homage. They disparage those Divine features of His ministry which they have never properly understood. So they pierce the heart of Christ out of ignorant prejudice! They are unacquainted with the Gospel. All that they have heard or read about it has been from the tongue or pen of opponent or satirist, and then, catching their temper, they have joined in reviling it! Alas, too, there are some who malign the Savior out of mere malice. Though they know better, yet they willfully blaspheme His name. Stop, oh, stop, and pierce Him no more, I pray you, lest He that has meekly endured so long as the Lamb of God, should suddenly stir Himself up as the lion of the tribe of Judah and make you feel the terror of His Power, who will not feel the majesty of His love! So much for our first point. Even after Jesus' death, there are those who still pierce Him. Our second thought is such as I am charmed to give you.

II. THESE ATTACKS UPON THE SAVIOR ARE OVERRULED TO DISPLAY HIS GRACE THE BETTER.

His heart is pierced, it is true, but with what result, my Brothers and Sisters? Does there flash from it fire? Does the peal of thundering wrath roll over the sinner's head? Ah, no! It is like the sandal tree that perfumes the axe that wounds it. That spear, no sooner is it withdrawn from the wound, than there gushes a fountain of blood and water. *The attacks that are made upon Jesus Christ only display His virtues.* Observe how this is brought about. If the Truth of God is attacked, and the Gospel is assailed, what is the immediate consequence? Why, then, the saints search deeper into it, so they come to understand the Doctrine better! They learn the arguments by which it is sustained and they love the Truth of God with fonder, as well as stronger convictions, till they feel moved to sacrifice themselves for it! The heart of Christ was opened by the spear, and often the heart of the Truth of God is revealed by the opposition brought to bear against it. They think to confute our Doctrines—they do but confirm our faith in their verity! Where they think they shall prove us fools, they help to make us sages! They drive us to the root of the matter and they rather establish us in the precious Truth! The March wind tears not up the oak, but roots it more firmly in its native soil. So shall it ever be with attacks made upon our Lord and Master! We shall understand Him the better and discover more of the Scriptures that were fulfilled in Him!

Moreover, it often happens that when Christ is opposed by persecution, *the Gospel is proclaimed with more zeal*, and diffused with more rapidity. The saints who were, in early days, persecuted in Jerusalem, went everywhere preaching the Word of God. What if I say the spear of persecution does, as it were, set the atoning blood flowing more freely among the sons of men, and make the purifying water of the Savior's Sacrifice to

be dispersed over a wider area, and among a larger population? Shall I compare the persecuted Church to an oppressed nation, and remind you that, like Israel in Egypt, the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and grew? The spear let loose the blood and water from the heart of Jesus, and the spear of persecution lets loose the Gospel—and compels Christian men who might have rested in inglorious ease to go forward and laboriously dispense the Gospel of salvation, telling the Grace of God to perishing men! So, too (but let no man turn this into evil), the very sin of men which does wound Christ becomes the means of magnifying God's Grace! Though it is a vile thing to say, "Let us sin that Grace may abound," yet is it a most glorious Truth of God that where sin abounds, Grace does much more abound! Thus the cleansing power of the blood becomes more renowned by reason of the sin that made this wondrous Sacrifice necessary. Perhaps we had never known the Savior so well if we had not seen sin so clearly in the lives of the pardoned ones, who afterwards were washed, cleansed and sanctified by His purifying energy. The very opposition that comes forth is overruled for His triumph! The stronger His foes, the louder the shout of victory when He returns from the strife!

And when the Church is assailed (which is one way of piercing Christ) she gets *some immediate benefit from the grievous trial*, for persecution acts like a great winnowing fan that drives the chaff away from the floor on which the pure grain is housed. It is to the Church like a refiner's fire. The mere dross is separated. The faithless, who are found among the faithful, soon apostatize, while the sterling gold and silver, the genuine lovers of Christ, are purged and purified by the ordeal through which they are compelled to pass! Oh, blessed Savior, they do pierce You, and pierce You they may, but You are honored, for their bitter reviling elicits Your sweet virtue! They may thrust their spears into Your very heart, but by giving forth Your own energy of love and mercy, and greeting them with salvation, You do conquer those who thought to conquer You! Put these two things together Brothers and Sisters—man still continuing to wound the Savior—and the more redundant display of the Savior's Grace as the consequence! Then find a total if you can.

Another thought, which diverges a little from the last, may help us to pursue our meditation. Since the soldier sent His spear into the Savior's heart—

III. THE WAY TO THAT HEART IS OPEN.

It was always open, in fact, for He always loved the sons of men, but now you can see it open! It was no little wound that was made by the lance, for into it, we read, Thomas put His hand. What a gaping fissure must that have been into which the Apostle might put his palm! "Reach here, your hand, and thrust it into My side." He still lives, as no one of

us could live, with a passage to the heart always open! In His very flesh He testifies to us today that His heart is ready to receive any message that His children may choose to send—and equally ready to respond with the love that has its fountain there! Behold the open heart of Jesus! It is open that all the Divine Grace that is within it may freely flow to undeserving sinners. Think not, Sinner, that you have need to open Jesus' side. The blood has flown freely. Say now, will you come and wash in it? You have not to beg for cleansing, as though it were a gift hardly to be obtained by importunity—it flows, it still flows! He is willing—as willing as He is able, and as able as He is willing—to cleanse you from your guilt! Whatever there may be in the heart of Christ, it all flows out! The precious liquid is kept within, but set loose for every needy, thirsty soul. His heart is open!

It is open for the doubter to put his hand into it now. Where are you, Thomas? Do you ask some hard thing and say, "Except I see this and that, I will not believe"? Oh, Trembler, weighed down by your sins and your weakness, do you not see Him this day in Glory, with His heart still open towards you? Put your hand into the wound and say, "My Lord and my God." Accept your Savior without hesitation or delay! Come and find rest in Him. His side is open for your hand to reach His heart. It is open—that side is open—for those who pierced Him to look in to see what they have done, and lament it. But see how tender is His heart, and go to Him without fear. You pierced Him—look at Him and mourn because you did so. You sinners, though you did put your Lord to death, His heart is open to you! He invites you to come and receive His mercy that He has treasured up for you. Oh, come, come! He will receive you now. His heart is open to sympathize with the griefs and woes, the prayers and pleadings, the desires and longings of all His people!

You know we have to get to some men's hearts through their ears, and through their eyes. In not a few of our callous race, these passages are choked up. You show them sorrow, and they see it without emotion. You cannot reach their heart. If you tell them a pitiful tale of deep distress, they hear it with indifference, for somehow the story loses its way in the mazes of the ear—it does not reach the heart. Far otherwise is it with your Lord. His heart is so accessible that you need not fear He will not hear you, or that He will not heed your faintest cry! You will feel that you can come close, straight, quick to Him, by a near passage you reach His very soul at once. Say not, then, that no one sympathizes with you! Jesus does! He cannot fail to pity, solace, or to cheer. His pierced heart sympathizes far more quickly than the most tender heart that ever lived before or after. His love passes the love of women, tender as that is. There is no love like that of Him with the open heart—the love of Jesus with the opened heart—with the open side!

I cannot express to you what I see in this bare fact, this blessed Truth. I wish I could. But it would be still better if you could see the same. Oh, I can come to Him, now, and put my prayers into His side—can come and put my desires into His side! Oh, Jesus, “all my desire is before You, and my groans are not hid from You. I have but five senses, You have a new one—You have a new way to Your heart such as we poor mortals have not. I and my Brothers and Sisters may be inattentive, but You never are. You are He of the wounded heart—forever sympathetic—forever full of gentleness!”

I might linger on this thought, but I prefer leaving it to your meditation, lest I should darken it with words. So let us finish with a last reflection.

IV. A WOUND IN CHRIST’S SIDE REVEALS THE HEART OF JESUS IN ITS PRECIOUSNESS.

That spear did, as it were, break the alabaster box and let out the sweet perfume. What, then, was there in the Savior’s heart? Men carry in their hearts that which is dearest. The true man is what he is at the heart’s core. What was our blessed Redeemer’s life-thought—the compelling motive of His life-work? Upon what did He most of all concentrate the desires and affections of His heart? See you not that when pierced, there flowed forth blood and water? Those two things, then, must have been the nearest to the purpose of His heart. Hence I discern that in my Lord’s heart, there was, first, a strong determination to purge sinners from their guilt by His blood. The atoning Sacrifice is not merely the hand blood of the Savior’s work, nor is it merely the foot blood of the Savior’s journeying through the vale of tears—it was His heart’s blood, indicative of heart-work—it was the blood of Redemption shed for us. He loved that work. He was straitened till He could accomplish it. And let me tell you it is Christ’s joy to wash you from your sin! Start not back because your conscience is troubled. He has opened a fountain for your uncleanness—in the very midst of the house of David has He opened it. He delights to take away your guilt—

***“Dear, dying Lamb, Your precious blood
Shall never lose its power,
Till all the ransomed Church of God
Is saved to sin no more.”***

It has not lost its power! Then let it plead for me! To me let it be precious! Let me feel its potent virtue. By it may I have boldness. Like the Apostle, may I say, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God who justifies; who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died.” Oh, to have the blood applied to the conscience! Rest not till you hear it speak peace through your whole nature, till you see the curse removed and are assured that there now is, therefore, no condemnation for you because you are in Christ Jesus! It is Christ’s heart-work to redeem His

people by His blood. Oh, that He may now see of the travail of His soul in your redemption!

Moreover, Beloved, in Christ's heart there was the water as well as the blood. He would have His people sanctified as well as pardoned. He would deliver them from the power as well as from the guilt of sin! I believe this is very near Christ's heart. That He may present His Church without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, is His design as well as His desire. His Spirit is working to this end. That He might not allow so much as a single stain to rest upon the nature of His people is alike the pleasure and the purpose of Christ! He has put their guilt away by the Sacrifice of Himself. This is done. Yet He continues to demand their self-sacrifice, that He may put away their evil propensities, the fruit of their first father's fall. My Soul, glorify the pierced heart of Christ! Give Him to see in yourself the effect of the water that flowed from His heart! "Be you holy," He says, "as I am holy." "Be you perfect," He says again, "even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect." Deny the flesh with its affections and lusts! Separate yourselves from sinners! Avoid partaking of other men's sins! Like Christ, be you "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." This can only be effected by the Spirit's vital application of the Savior's atoning death. Stay at the foot of the Cross. Live under the influence of His Passion. Pray that you may rise out of this world's fading, failing vanity, into newness of life through His pierced heart! In other words, let us stand in penitence before the Crucified One and mourn that we pierced Him. But let us stand in His Propitiation, rejoicing that His piercing has procured our pardon!

So let us go on our way, resolved, by His help, that we will glorify Him "in all manner of holy conversation and godliness." For, "He that saw it bares record, and his record is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth, that you might believe." May you believe, may you all believe the record is true! Believing, you shall have life through His name! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 27:50-66.**

Verse 50. *Jesus, when He had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.* Christ's strength was not exhausted—His last word was uttered with a loud voice, like the shout of a conquering warrior! And what a word it was, "It is finished"! Thousands of sermons have been preached upon that little sentence, but who can tell all the meaning that lies compacted within it? It is a kind of infinite expression for breadth, and depth, and length, and height altogether immeasurable! Christ's life being finished, perfected, completed—He yielded up the ghost—willingly dying, laying down His life as He said He would! "I lay down My life for the

sheep. . . I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again.”

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

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

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

55-56. *And many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto Him: Among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the Mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee’s children.* We have no record of any unkindness to our Lord from any woman, though we have many narratives of the loving ministry of women at various periods in His life. It was meet, therefore, that even at Calvary, “many women were there beholding afar off.” The ribald crowd and the rough soldiers would not permit these timid, yet brave souls, to

come near. But we learn from John 19:25 that some of them edged their way through the throng till they “stood by the Cross of Jesus.” Love will dare anything.

57, 58. *When the evening was come, there came a rich man of Arimathaea, named Joseph, who also, himself, was Jesus’ disciple. He went to Pilate, and begged for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered.* This rich man of Arimathaea, named Joseph, a member of the Jewish Sanhedrim, was Jesus’ disciple, “but secretly for fear of the Jews” (John 19:38). Yet when his Lord was actually dead, extraordinary courage nerved his spirit and he boldly went to Pilate and begged for the body of Jesus. Joseph and Nicodemus are types of many more who have been emboldened by the Cross of Christ to do what, without that mighty magnet, they would never have attempted! When night comes, the stars appear—so in the night of Christ’s death, these two bright stars shone forth with blessed radiance! Some flowers bloom only at night—such a blossom was the courage of Joseph and Nicodemus.

59, 60. *And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulcher, and departed.* Our King, even in the grave, must have the best of the best—His body was “wrapped in a clean linen cloth, and laid in Joseph’s own new tomb, thus completing the fulfillment of Isaiah 53:9. Some see in this linen shroud an allusion to the garments in which priests were to be clothed. Joseph’s was a virgin sepulcher, wherein up to that time no one had been buried, so that, when Jesus rose, none could say that another came forth from the tomb instead of Him.

That rock-hewn cell in the garden sanctified every part of God’s acre where saints lie buried. Instead of longing to live till Christ comes, as some do, we might rather pray to have fellowship with Jesus in His death and burial.

61. *And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulcher.* Love and faith were both typified by these two Marys sitting over against the sepulcher. They will be the last to leave their Lord’s resting place, and the first to return to it when the Sabbath is past! Can we cling to Christ when His cause seems to be dead and buried? When the Truth of God is fallen in the streets, or is even buried in the sepulcher of skepticism or superstition, can we still believe in it and look forward to its resurrection? That is what some of us are doing at the present time. O Lord, keep us faithful!

62-64. *Now the next day, that followed the day of preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, Saying, Sir, we remember that that Deceiver said, while He was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the Sepulcher be made sure until the third*

day, lest His disciples come by night, and steal Him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first. Those punctilious priests and Pharisees, who were so scrupulous about keeping the Sabbath, did not mind profaning the Day of Rest by holding a consultation with the Roman governor! They knew that Christ was dead and buried, but they still stood in dread of His power. They called Him a “deceiver,” and they even pretended to “remember” what “He said, while He was yet alive.” At His trial, their false witnesses gave another meaning to His words, but they knew all the while that He was speaking of His Resurrection, not of the Temple on Mount Zion! Now they are afraid that, even in the sepulcher, He will bring to nothing all their plans for His destruction. They must have known that the disciples of Jesus would not steal Him away and say to the people, “He is risen from the dead”—so they probably feared that he really would come forth from the tomb! Whatever conscience they had, made great cowards of them, so they begged Pilate to do what he could to prevent the rising of their Victim.

65, 66. *Pilate said unto them, You have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as you can. So they went and made the sepulcher sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch.* The chief priests and Pharisees wanted Pilate to make the sepulcher sure, but he left them to secure it. There seems to have been a grim sort of irony about the governor’s reply, “You have a watch; go your way, make it as sure as you can.” Whether he meant it as a taunt, or as a command to secure the sepulcher, they became unconsciously witnesses that Christ’s Resurrection was a supernatural act! The tomb in the rock could not be entered except by rolling away the stone, and they guarded that by sealing the stone, and setting a watch.

According to the absurd teaching of the Rabbis, rubbing ears of corn was a kind of threshing and, therefore, was unlawful on the Sabbath—yet here were these men doing what, by similar reasoning, might be called furnace and foundry work, and calling out a guard of Roman legionaries to assist them in breaking the Sabbath! Unintentionally, they did honor to the sleeping King when they obtained the representatives of the Roman emperor to watch His resting place till the third morning, when He came forth Victor over sin, and death, and the grave! Thus once more was the wrath of man made to praise the King of Glory, and the remainder of that wrath was restrained.

—Adapted from the *C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

THE WATER AND THE BLOOD

NO. 3311

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 18, 1912.

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

*“But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side,
and forthwith came there out blood and water.”
John 19:34.*

IT is with much fear and trembling that I usually stand upon this platform—not that I shrink before the face of the multitude however large, but the weight of the subject which I have continually to bring before your minds fills my own soul with awe. And yet it is with more than usual anxiety I approach my subject this evening, because although it is full of tender interest and touching pathos, I feel that without the unction of the Holy Spirit, it would be insipid and unprofitable. And yet, on the other hand, with that Divine anointing, it is one of the richest topics that can possibly engage our meditation!

Readers of old theology will have remarked how constantly the fathers were accustomed to dwell upon the wounds of Jesus slain. And this fifth wound which penetrated His heart was peculiarly attractive to them. They said a great many things about it. Some, indeed that were fanciful, but other remarks that were truly excellent and well deserve to be treasured up. I would it were more the practice of Believers nowadays than it is to study the very Person of Christ, as well as the Doctrines of the Gospel, and to learn the Divine lessons which are discoverable in the wounds of Jesus as well as the sacred admonitions bequeathed to us by the words of His mouth.

One of these old Divines says that Jesus Christ was typified by our first father, Adam. As Adam fell asleep, and out of his side Eve was taken, so Jesus slept upon the Cross, the sleep of death, and from His side, where the spear was thrust, His Church was taken. He who redeemed us unto God by His blood, formed us as a peculiar people for Himself. The Church is one with Him—she came out of His side, and as He looks upon her, He can say—“You are bone of My bone, and flesh of My flesh. With My blood have I redeemed you.” Others have been pleased to compare Christ to the Rock in the wilderness, which was smitten, and this spear-thrust is the great cleft in the Rock. You may remember how Toplady puts it—

***“Rock of Ages, cleft for me!
Let me hide myself in Thee.”***

And he clearly has this in view, for the next lines are—

***“Let the water and the blood
From Your riven side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Cleanse me from its guilt and power.”***

I do not consider this allusion fanciful, nor can I think it distorts the type. Moses hidden in the cleft of the rock, that he might see God’s Glory, had not a standing place one-half so glorious as you and I have when, sheltered in the wounds of the Savior slain, we see the glorious Justice and the Infinite Love of God reconciled in the Person of the dying Lamb.

In the course of reading, I have met with some remarkable expressions in regard to this great wound of Christ. Some have called it, “a gate of Heaven.” Why should I object to the title? Do we not enter into Heaven through the wounds of Jesus? It is, of course, a metaphorical expression, yet quite allowable. If the teaching is that there is no other way of access to God except through the torn veil of Christ’s body—and that veil was torn in two, indeed, when the soldier with the spear pierced His side—we may, without straining the thought, call that wound one of the gates of Heaven. Another calls it “a celestial window, a window of Paradise,” and we have versified that idea in one of our own familiar sonnets—

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

Another writer, carried away by the consideration of this spear-thrust, calls it “a palace of refuge.” A palace! Surely, never kings had such an one! Solomon’s palace of ivory was nothing like it! And what a refuge it is! When the poor heart, like the dove hunted by the hawk, needs a shelter, if it can fly to Jesus’ wounds, it is sheltered from all its sins. Well does our song put it—

***“Come, guilty souls, and flee away
Like doves to Jesus’ wounds!
This is the welcome Gospel Day,
Wherein free Grace abounds.”***

I forget the name of the writer, who, in speaking upon his Master’s wounds, seems to get so exalted and carried away by the subject that He calls this wound “the sacred wellhead of the rivers of golden sand which cover all the earth”—two rivers, one of water and the other of blood. Two quickening rivers that carry life through the realms of death. Two purifying rivers cleansing the Augean stable of this filthy world. Two mighty rivers which bear the elect vessels onwards towards the sea of everlasting bliss, not one of them suffering shipwreck on the voyage, for this mighty river is too deep to have quicksands, too broad for the mariner to be cast away upon a rock-bound shore! I like the thought, and so let it be—the sacred wellhead of that river of more than golden sand—the streams whereof make glad the multitudes of God’s chosen throughout the earth!

In this wound of Christ, caused by the soldier, I discern four obvious meanings. It has many more, but these four will be enough to occupy our attention this evening.

I. It was THE MARK OF PROPHECY. In order that it might be fully known that Jesus Christ was the Messiah that was to come, the Prophets had given many marks, all of which must be found in the Person of the Man who should be the Great Deliverer. Among the rest was this one that John quotes, "A bone of Him shall not be broken." This description concerned the paschal lamb, of which it was expressly said by the Lord, through Moses, that they were never to break a single bone of it. Its joints were to be separated after it had been roasted with fire, but not a bone was to be snapped. Now, if Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God's Passover, it is necessary that He should never have a broken bone. And yet it looked as if His bones would be broken. The rough soldier brought up a great iron crowbar and, with an awful blow, smashed the legs of the poor thief who hung on one side of our Lord, but half-dead, in order to hasten his dissolution. It was a strange thing that he passed by Christ, who was in the middle. I know not what it was that made him do so—whether some flash of majesty beamed from that dead face, or whether some singular instinct checked his arm. But he went and administered the dreadful blow to the thief on the other side. And now he came to Christ and perhaps raised the iron rod—when he saw that He was already dead! His head was hanging down upon His bosom and the man saw clearly that there was no need to administer the deathblow to Him. It was a strange thing that his hands should be so restrained. The soldiers of that day were wanton enough. They were just as likely as not to have broken the bones even though the man were dead—but Divine Prophecy must have it so and, therefore, not a bone of Jesus can be broken!

And then the Prophet Zechariah had said concerning the Messiah, "They shall look upon Him whom they have *pierced*, and they shall mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son." Now up till that moment our Lord had not been pierced, except as to His hands and feet, and this would scarcely have been a carrying out of the word, "*pierced*." Somebody would have said, "Well, but He never was pierced so as to cause His death—there was no such piercing as the text indicates." But now that the soldier, moved by the mysterious impulse, lifts his lance and thrusts it deep into the side of Christ—now did Prophecy set its mark upon Christ—now did history identify Him—the Man without broken bones yet the Man whose side was pierced! Him for whom Israel should one day mourn! Him whom His enemies should one day confess to be their King!

My dear Brothers and Sisters, has it ever struck you with admiring wonder that Jesus Christ should answer to Prophecies so complicated and types so manifold—should answer even with coincidences the most minute to them all? It would be almost impossible to count the types of Christ which are given in the Old Testament. It would, perhaps, be easy to count the prophecies, but very difficult for anybody to form a character in which all these should be blended and fulfilled! It has been said that if you were to give all these types and all these prophecies to the

wisest of men of all ages, and say to them, "You are required to compile a biography of a man who shall answer to all these," they must certainly give up in despair! You can find men who will make a key to fit any lock—by diligence of labor, no matter how complicated the mechanism may be, the thing may at last be done. But I will defy all the wisdom that ever was in humanity to form a key that will fit the exceedingly complex words of all the types of the Old Testament and all its prophecies! How palpable then the evidence is. Our Lord Jesus Christ answers to them all. Just as the stamp in the wax answers to the seal that stamped it, the Providence that transpired corresponds with the predictions that forestalled His course! He went as it was written of Him! There He is and He fulfils types that look the most opposite and prophecies which seem to run counter to one another!

If anybody thinks that the stories told by the four Evangelists are spurious, I would suggest to him to go and write a fifth—to try to write another that would as much correspond with the Old Testament—and with the other four, as those four do with the Old Testament and with each other! And when that task was done, I would then give him another problem to solve before he could have reasonable ground for suspicion that Jesus of Nazareth was not the Messiah. Account for the incredulity of the Jews in the presence of those evidences that have produced conviction among the Gentiles upon any other hypotheses than that which ratifies their own Scripture! If the Old Testament is the Word of God, it seems marvelous to us that men do not receive Jesus as being the Shiloh that was to come, the promised Messiah, the Prince of the kings of the earth! Jewish unbelief amazes us! Yet I suppose if we judged aright, our own lack of faith in Jesus, notwithstanding the rational credit we give to His mission as a popular creed, is still more amazing! If that is gross unbelief which rejects Christ, while acknowledging the Old Testament, what shall I say of you who refuse allegiance to Him and yet profess to believe both the Old and the New? If they that receive the first yet stumble at the second, what shall I say of those who receive both and yet, over the head of this double belief professed, give not their hearts to the Crucified Son of God, and put not their trust in the merit of His precious blood, but still continue afar off from Him by wicked works?

Some time ago, when in Italy, at a town on the Italian side of the Alps, I saw one Sunday afternoon, in a quiet walk alone, a sight which struck me very much and which remains fixed upon my memory. There was outside the town a mountain and the way up the sides of which were different representations of the progress of our Lord, from the Garden where Judas betrayed Him to the place of His Resurrection. The figures were as large as life, carved in either stone or wood, and painted to imitate nature. When I got to the very summit of the hill, there was a church. There was no one in it and I pushed open the door and went in. All was still. It was a large building and all around it were images of the Prophets and the Apostles. There stood Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and all

the rest—one knew the usual portraits of them. And up in the dome, at the very top of the church, was a large and striking image of the Savior. Now, what struck me about the church was this—that the images of those Prophets and Apostles who stood there had their fingers all pointed upwards, so that, when I went in, I could not help looking up to the top to see what they were pointing at! All round the church there were the words, in Latin, “Moses and the Prophets spoke concerning Him.” And there stood Moses and the Prophets, carved in stone, and all pointing to Him! Isaiah had a little scroll in his hand on which was written, “The Lord has made to meet on Him the iniquity of us all.” Jeremiah had a scroll in his hand, on which was written, “Behold, and see if there is any sorrow like unto My sorrow, which is done unto Me.” I think the church just represented the Truth in that case. It is even so. All the Prophets stand as a complete circle of distinct testifiers and, with uplifted fingers, they all concur with John the Baptist when he said, “Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world.” They all point to Christ. If you read the life of Christ and then read what they said of Him, you will be persuaded that this is He which was to come!

II. But to pass on, we may look upon the spear-thrust in the side of Christ as THE ESCUTCHEON OF SHAME.

While our Lord lived, He was the subject of every form of scorn. He was scourged as none but a felon might be according to the Roman Law. He was spat upon and mocked, as even a felon ought not to have been. That crown of thorns, that reed scepter and that old scarlet cloak—who could have invented a more shameful insignia for One who was greater than all the kings on the earth but who was brought exceedingly low? And our Lord’s death, itself, was a great portion of His shame. It was a shame for Him to die—and ignominy for Him to die the death of hanging on the Cross. Heraldry has so emblazoned the symbol that we do not ordinarily apprehend the real shame to which Christ was exposed. Were I to preach to you tonight that a certain man who was hanged was very God, people would begin to say, “Why do you preach of one who died on the gallows as a felon?” Literally and truly, that is just how Jesus Christ died, according to the customs of His times. Crucifixion was to the Romans what hanging is to us, only it was worse. It was more shameful, for crucifixion was reserved for the very worst of crimes. Not all murderers were so punished, but only the worst and vilest crimes with murder to aggravate them received this opprobrious doom. People hang crosses round their necks and wear them as ornaments—I wonder whether they would make ornaments of gallows? Yet it means that. It is just the same thing and this is the shame of Christ. This is the very shame in which Paul rejoiced and gloried, that Jesus Christ was not ashamed to be ashamed! That He was willing to be made ashamed and a curse for us! That He was content to be treated with all the scorn that human malignity and inhuman cruelty could heap upon Him!

But, Beloved, when Christ was dead, they might certainly have ceased from their scorn. But no, the brutal Roman soldiers were not very nice as to what they did with living bodies. They would not, therefore, be particular as to what they did with dead bodies! Therefore this soldier, in a mere freak of wanton brutality, thrust his lance into the Savior's heart. It was the last kick of the old enemy. It was, as it were, the last of the spit from the foul mouth of human slander and hatred. It was the last thrust that human malice could give to the Lord of Life and Glory! I see in this the mark, the crowning emblem of the shame which He endured.

Well, and what then? Why, it should teach us, dear Friends, what a shameful thing sin must be! For, though Christ was no sinner, yet when our sins were laid upon Him, look how God treated Him and permitted Him to be treated as an outcast—to be covered with the utmost shame! Ah Sin, what a shameful thing you must be! Blush, Christian, that you should be guilty of it. Blush again, that you do not blush more often! Be ashamed that you are not ashamed of sin, and be offended that your heart should be so stolid over a thing so detestable.

Another thought springs up, namely, that if Christ was put to so much shame for us, how glad we ought to be if we are sometimes allowed to be put to shame for Him! Oh, there are some people who cannot bear shame—they can endure anything else but ridicule and laughter! As John Bunyan says, “of all villains, Shame is the most shameless for he will go and make sport and fun of the Christian's virtues and mock at that which he ought to admire.” Well, child of God, supposing today you have your face spat upon for Christ? 'Twere scarcely worthwhile to wipe it off! Ah, if you had to live a dying life, to be thrown in a dungeon, or to live upon the rack—as long as it was done for Him who bore all this for you—the thought might sweeten the wormwood and turn the gall into honey, that you were thus honored to have fellowship with Him in His sufferings! I leave that view of this wound of Christ with you, praying that it may nerve your hearts with a glorious courage as you see Jesus thus shamefully wounded for you.

III. This lance wound was THE SEAL OF DEATH UPON OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. His enemies were so determined to put Him to death that they dragged His life out of its principal organ and then they pierced it, namely, the heart. It was not possible that Jesus Christ could have lived another moment longer, even had He been alive at that time—but when the heart was touched, death must come. Those who understand anatomy tell us that the pericardium around the heart was pierced and they say that from that there flowed the blood and the water. But I am extremely doubtful whether the pericardium in any state whatever could have yielded a sufficient quantity of lymph, for though there is water there, there is only a small quantity. In the state in which our Savior was, blood and water might have been found naturally in His heart, but only in a very small and infinitesimal quantity. The fountain that flowed from there was miraculous, not natural but *supernatural*—or if natural,

yet so exalted and so increased in quantity as to become in itself supernatural.

Certainly, however, the piercing of His heart was the indication to all mankind that “He was dead already.” Now, little as that may seem in the eyes of those of you who do not love Him, it is a most important thing to those who trust Him, for remember, if Jesus Christ had not died, you and I would have perished! It was of no use for our expiation that He sweat great drops of blood unless He had perfected the Sacrifice. The Law required if— if Christ had not laid down His life, the Law would have required ours. In due time, our souls would have been cast into the Second Death on account of sin if Jesus had not died, actually and truly died. But we are quite sure about it now, for His heart was pierced. Indeed, I may say that this is the one keystone of the whole Gospel system, for if Jesus did not die then, we have no Resurrection. If He died not then, He did not rise—and if we have no evidence of Resurrection, the whole of our religion becomes a lie! But, Brothers and Sisters, He did die. His soul left His body. That corpse that was taken by Joseph of Arimathea was as lifeless as any that was ever committed to the sepulcher! And He did rise again, in proof to us that we who die and those we have parted with on the confines of this mortal life who are, alas, all truly dead, shall certainly rise again and in their flesh shall see God! This is a simple Truth of God for you to hear, perhaps, but never did angel have such weighty news to tell as I have told you tonight—that God was made flesh—the very God that made Heaven and earth took upon Himself our nature and as such He died, literally died for us! The God-Man, the Mediator, Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God and the Son of Mary, died, was crucified and had His heart pierced for us! And if we depend upon this, we may rest secure. If He died, then we need not die! If He died for us, then we cannot die the Second Death. If Jesus was punished in our place, the sting of death is taken away, the Law is satisfied and every soul that believes in Him shall have eternal life!

IV. But I cannot tarry longer upon that and, therefore, I come to the fourth point. This heart wound of Christ is also to be called THE SOURCE OF PURITY. The text tells us that there issued from it a double flood of blood and water. We are not at a loss to explain this because the Apostle John, in his Epistle, has told us that our Lord “came by water and blood; not by water only, but by water and blood,” and he explains it by the connection that Christ came into the world by blood to take away the guilt of sin, and by water to take away the power of sin—by blood to remove the punishment, by water to remove the filth. [See Sermon #3252, Volume 57—“BY WATER AND BLOOD”—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

Now, dear Friends, let us say that *there is no blood and no water that can wash away sin anywhere but in Christ*. All the blood of bulls could not take away sin, though offered by Aaron, himself, the father of the Levitical priesthood! And all the water in the world, though consecrated by

bishops, cardinals and popes, cannot take away a single spot of iniquity! The only blood that can cleanse us from God's wrath is the blood of Jesus Christ, Himself, and the only water that can wash out of us the damning stain of sin is the water which came from Jesus Christ's heart! If you want to be thus doubly washed, go to the Son of God for the washing! Go nowhere else, I pray you, for every other trust is but a delusion and a lie. Jesus Christ can put away the guilt of every sin. Though you have been a drunk, an adulterer, a whoremonger, a thief, a murderer, yet the blood of Jesus Christ can wash you from the accumulated filth of years—and the water from Christ's side can take away your propensities to sin, change your nature and make you holy instead of filthy—can make you pure in heart instead of polluted in spirit! Nothing else can do it. No lie was ever more extraordinary than the lie that baptismal water can regenerate the soul! I marvel more and more that I should find myself living in an age of such idiots and have almost come to think that Carlyle was right when he spoke of our nation as "Consisting of twenty million people, mostly fools." So it seems to be, or else such a dogma as this would have been kicked out of the universe years since—and banished once and forever to the limbo of lunacy as an outrage on common sense! Is God the Holy Spirit confined to water, as that the priest's dropping it on the child's brow can work regeneration in the child's soul? Believe it not, it is a foul lie! But hold you to this—that which alone can work regeneration is the water from the side of Christ—and when faith can get that, and trust that, the matter is done! Faith relies upon the sacred double flood! Then the heart is renewed, the man is changed, the soul is saved by Jesus Christ!

Remember, too, that *the water and the blood flowed from the same place and flowed together*. And, therefore, if a man would be saved, He must have the two. Tens of thousands would like to escape from Hell, but they have no wish to escape from sin. Are there not multitudes who are very anxious to get rid of the punishment, but are not at all concerned to be delivered from the habit of iniquity? Oh, yes, the drunk would gladly be forgiven, but he would like to keep to his tippling. Yes, the lecherous man would gladly have his constitution restored and his iniquity blotted out, but he must go to his dens of infamy again! Such is *not the religion of Christ*. The religion of Christ demands of us that if we take Christ, we should take Him for the double purpose—pardon for past sins and to deliver from sins to come. I think it was Celsus, the ancient philosopher, who jeered at the great Christian advocates, saying, "Your Master, Christ, receives all the filth of the universe into His Church! He tells you to go about to find out thieves, drunks, harlots and such like, and to tell them to come to Him! Your religion is nothing better than a hospital into which you thrust lepers." "Yes," said he who argued with him, "you have spoken well. We do receive them as into a hospital, but we heal them, Sir, we heal them! And while into the one door the spiritually and morally blind, cripples, and maimed come in as they are, the

Great Physician touches them with His Grace and cleanses them with the water and the blood—and they are not what they were any longer.”

Now, am I addressing one man who feels that he is saved by faith, and yet he is sinning as he used to do? Give up that belief, Sir, or it will ruin you! I pray you do not indulge in it, for it is a delusion of Satan! Do I address one man who has a hope that perhaps he can so trust Christ as to be saved, and yet continue to live in his own wicked way? If anyone has told you that, he has told you a lie! Rest assured that you are mistaken! Christ never came to be the minister of sin. He came to save us, not *in* our sins, but *from* our sins. He will forgive us all manner of iniquities, but not if we love the iniquity and continue in it! If you hug sin to your bosom, the viper will sting you—and no power, either human or Divine—can extract the poison unless the viper, itself, is taken away. You must have both the water and the blood—and I pray that you may have both.

Now, Christians, I have done when I have put to you one question. Answer it and answer it truthfully. It is this—Beloved Friends, have you got such a hold of Christ as you should have in His double capacity as your Pardoner and your Sanctifier? I know you plead the blood for your remission. I know that is all your hope. I know that the blood of Christ is your comfort and your hope, but have you got the water quite as fully? You have a bad temper, perhaps. Well, it is a pitiable circumstance, but surely, if Christ can forgive a bad temper, He can remove a bad temper, too! Did you ever bring your bad temper to Christ to have it washed away with the water? You should have done so, for He can do it. Perhaps you have got an envious spirit—a murmuring spirit? Naturally so, you are generally depressed and downhearted. Did you ever believe in the power of Christ to kill envy and to lift you up above murmuring? You should do so. You believe that Christ can forgive this sin. Well, that is through the power of the blood—but do you think that the water is less potent than the blood—that Christ can forgive what He cannot subdue? Oh, think not so! Think as well of the Spirit and His sanctifying power as of Christ and His justifying righteousness!

“Well,” says one, “I have a besetting sin which I do not think I shall ever quite overcome,” My dear Brother, why not? It strikes me that the Christian ought to get his greatest victories from his weakest points—and if you have a besetting sin, I think you ought to be distinguished by its opposite virtue! I do not know that it was so, but I always have a notion that Moses was, by his natural constitution, a thoroughly quick-tempered man. I think so from the fact that when he saw the Egyptian smiting the Israelite, he did not stop a minute, but he slew him at once and hid him in the sand. That looks to me to be the breaking out of the real Moses. But what did he become by the Grace of God? Why, after his spirit was subdued, he became the meekest of men and often was quiet where you and I would have spoken! Now, why should it not be so with us? It strikes me that the worst-tempered man who becomes a Christian

ought to make this a strong point and to strive to become the best-tempered. There are some Christians who naturally have a little weakness in their hand and cannot open it well. If they get a little money in it, they are very apt to get their joints tied together very tightly! But, when Divine Grace comes in, I think they should try to defeat the devil by being more than ordinarily generous—so that, whereas other Christians might be content to give less, they say to Satan—“O my enemy, you have held me in bondage in this way, but in wherever else you may get the upper hand of me, you never shall in this, for I will take care that whenever you tell me not to give a shilling, I will give two in order to let you see that you are no master of mine and that I have got rid of the foul sin of stinginess!” Do let us, each one, act upon this great Truth of God, that as Christ has the power to forgive us our sin, so He also has the power to cleanse it away!

And, my dear Brothers and Sisters, let us get closer to Christ! Let us be bedewed more often than we have been before with the water and with the blood! Let us live in the spirit of this double purification and be it ours to find this blessed stream lead us right up to the heart of Christ, from which it flowed, that we may understand the everlasting love which dwells there deep in its eternal fountains—and may rejoice and be glad in it all our days!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 19:23-37.**

Verse 23. *Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments. They had already stripped Him, no element of shame was lacking in His substitution for us. He stooped as low as our sins could have thrust us that He might bring us up from the very depths of degradation and shame!*

23, 24. *And made four parts, to every soldier a part, and also His coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said therefore among themselves, Let us not ear it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the Scripture might be fulfilled, which says, They parted My raiment among them, and for My vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did.* Quite unaware of the ancient prophecy, yet in complete accord with Divine Predestination, these soldiers did exactly according to the eternal purposes of God! It is very amazing how, in practice, the free agency of man tallies exactly with the Predestination of God. We need not enquire how it is, but we may admire that it is so. “These things therefore the soldiers did,” yet the motive which swayed them was not the fulfillment of the Divine Will, but simply the common sense thought that it would be a pity to spoil such a garment by tearing it and partly, also, by that innate love of gambling which is found everywhere, in every age, so that often men would sooner run the hazard of winning all than take the safe one fourth which might fall to their lot! Let us reve-

rently adore the whole scheme of Providence by which God's determinate purpose is carried out in every jot and tittle, while the free agency of man is left unfettered.

25. *Now there stood by the Cross of Jesus, His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.* These gracious women stood by the Cross. We call them the feebler sex, but we must grant that they are the stronger of the two in anything which has to do with pure disinterested love. Yield the first place to them.

26. *When Jesus therefore saw His mother.* Here was another pang for Him—He could not be spared anywhere. He must recollect in His death everything that would cause Him grief—"When Jesus therefore saw His mother"—

26, 27. *And the disciple standing by, whom He loved, He said unto His mother. Woman, behold your son! Then said He to the disciple, Behold your mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.* There was no specific direction given to John to entertain Mary. It was quite enough for the Lord to call his attention to her by saying "Behold your mother." How I wish we were always in such a state of heart that we did not need specific precepts, but a hint would suffice. Dear Friends, do not need pressing or driving to holy duty! Be not as bulls that must be goaded, but rather have within you such a spring of love that it shall be a delight to do anything that may give joy to the heart of the Well-Beloved! When you see Him on the Cross, is there anything you can deny Him? Will you not think spontaneously of what you can do to please Him?

28. *After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, I thirst.* There was yet a little more to be done—all the great things were accomplished, but He would keep even the least particles of prophecy, so He cried, "I thirst."

29, 30. *Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to His mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar—*He did receive that. He had refused the drugged draught which they had first offered to Him to lull His pain, but He accepted this, which was simply weak wine, no doubt a little sour, possibly bitter. When He "had received the vinegar"—

30. *He said, It is finished: and He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost.* [See Sermon #421, Volume 7—IT IS FINISHED and #2344, Volume 40—CHRIST'S DYING WORD FOR HIS CHURCH—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Incarnate Love has fulfilled its self-imposed task! Jesus, as the Substitute for sinners, was condemned to die and He died that He might finish the work of our Redemption—

"It is Finished."

Hear the dying Savior cry."

31. *The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the Sabbath day, (for that Sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.* To prevent a ceremonial error, they are

willing to commit brutal cruelty! Indeed, they had already committed the more brutal cruelty of putting Christ to death. How particular some men are about some merely human rubric—yet the Divine precepts of the Law they violate with impunity! God save us from a conscience which will stick at some minute point which is of no consequence, but will allow us to commit great sin! We have heard of a Spanish bandit who confessed to his priest, after having murdered a great many persons, not his robberies and his murders, but the fact that a drop of blood had spurted on his lips on a Friday, and thus he had defiled the feast day by taking animal food! Ah me, conscience is a strange thing, yet some call it “the vicegerent of God.” I believe it is no such thing, but that it very soon becomes as depraved as any other power of the human mind! We have need of far more than conscience to keep us right.

32. *Then came the soldiers, and broke the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with Him.* With a huge iron bar smashing the great bones of their legs.

33, 34. *But when they came to Jesus, and saw that He was dead already, they broke not His legs: but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side and forthwith there came out blood and water.* See how, even after death, His heart its tribute poured out for us. We have not only the love of Christ’s heart blessing us while He lives, but after He died there was the stream of blood and water to cleanse us from sin’s guilt and power!

35-37. *And he that saw it bares record, and his record is true: and he knows that he is telling the truth, that you might believe. For these things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled, a bone of Him shall not be broken. And again another Scripture says, They shall look on Him whom they pierced.* [See Sermon #1956, Volume 33—ON THE CROSS AFTER DEATH—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

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

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

A ROYAL FUNERAL NO. 2390

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,
DECEMBER 9, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 7, 1888.**

*“And after this, Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came, therefore, and took the body of Jesus. And there came, also, Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pounds weight. Then took they the body of Jesus and wound it in linen strips with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulcher, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus, therefore, because of the Jews' preparation day; for the sepulcher was near at hand.”
John 19:38-42.*

LET US go to this grave, but not to weep there—no, not to shed so much as a single tear! The stone is rolled away, our Lord's precious body is not there, for Christ has risen from the dead! It may be that, like Mary at the sepulcher, we shall see a vision of angels, but if not, we may behold a company of comforting Truths of God which still linger about the empty tomb of our ascended Lord!

We are expressly told, in Holy Scripture, that our Lord was buried. It was evidently not sufficient for us merely to be told that He died—we must also know that He was buried. Why was this? Was it not, first, that we might have a certificate of His death? We do not bury living men and the Lord Jesus would not have been buried if the Centurion had not certified that He was certainly dead. The Roman officer had probably seen Christ's heart pierced by the soldier's spear, when blood and water flowed forth from His side. At any rate, when his men went to execute the *coup de grace*, which finished the lives of the other two, by the breaking of their legs, they were so certain that He who hung in the middle was really dead that they broke not His legs. Christ's being given up for burial was Pilate's certificate that He had not merely pretended to die, but that it was a real death and that His body had no life remaining in it. This is an essential point, for if Jesus did not die, He has made no Atonement for sin. If He died not, then He rose not—and if He rose not, then your faith is vain, you are yet in your sins! The sepulcher, therefore, occupies a very important place in the story of the death of Jesus.

Again, was He not buried to fulfill a type which He had, Himself, chosen? Like as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the fish, in the heart of the sea, even so was the Son of Man to lie for that

time in the heart of the earth. The casting of the runaway Prophet into the sea quieted the angry waves—the tempest fell asleep when he was given up as a victim—and Christ’s being cast into the sea of death has quieted the storm of almighty wrath! We sail, today, as on a sea of glass because Christ was buried in those awful billows. He must fulfill the type of Jonah, or else He spoke not aright concerning Himself when He said, “An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the Prophet Jonah.”

Further, was not our Lord buried to make His battle with death and His triumph over it more complete? He has conquered death, but He has also burst open the castle of death, that is the grave. He has bearded the lion in his den, the Douglas in his hall. In this matchless duel, He has set Himself to fight not only with death, but with death and the grave combined—and hence the paean of victory is not merely, “O death, where is your sting?” but it is also, “O grave, where is your victory?” Christ’s victory is altogether complete. He has led captivity captive, because He became a captive. He has vanquished all death’s allies, as well as death, itself, by going down into the grave and rending its bars asunder.

Beside all this, did not our Lord die and condescend to be buried, to sweeten the grave for His people? Rightly did we sing just now concerning the tomb—

***“There the dear flesh of Jesus lay,
And left a long perfume.”***

Unless the Lord should speedily come, as He may—God grant that He may!—we shall fall asleep and these bodies of ours will be committed to the silence of the grave. We must not dare to dread the sepulcher—where Christ has been, we may safely and honorably go. As I told you, the other day, He left the fine linen to be the furniture of our last bed. He left the napkin rolled up by itself, that weeping friends might dry their tears thereon. He also left the myrrh and aloes, about one hundred pounds’ weight, which Nicodemus brought. I never heard that they were taken away from the tomb—Jesus left them there and they still shed their sweet fragrance throughout the graves of all His saints! We are not going to a noisome vault, but to a perfumed chamber hung with the fine linen sheets that encompassed the Christ, and odorous with the spices that shed their sweetness upon Him! To die is now our *gain*—to sleep in Jesus is to be blest, indeed!

I may add, also, that I think our Lord was buried so that, from His tomb, He might leap to His Throne. He goes to the lowest depths that from there He may rise to the loftiest heights! You, too, Believer, may go as low as the grave, but you can never go any lower—and when you are at your lowest, you are then on your way to your highest! Your Lord stooped to conquer, so must you. You will have won the victory over death when you lie, stark and cold, upon your last bed. The adversary may think that he has defeated you—

***“When silent is your pleading tongue
And blind that piercing eye,”***

and inactive that once diligent hand, but it is not so—you shall *then* have broken loose from everything that hinders you from entering upon your highest service for your Lord—and you shall have entered that Holy

Place where you shall see His face and serve Him day and night in His glorious Temple!

I like to think of Jesus as going down into the lowest parts of the earth when I remember that He that descended is the same who also ascended. This should encourage us to feel that, sink as we may, lower and yet still lower, we shall rise all the higher because of that sinking—and shall enter still more completely into fellowship with Christ both in His sufferings and in His Glory! It was necessary, then, my Brothers and Sisters, that there should be a new tomb in the garden close by Golgotha and that our Lord should lie there. It is a very wonderful thing that He, whose face is the light of Heaven, whose hands are sceptered with the government of the universe and whose very feet are sandaled with the stars, should yet bear the image of death upon His pale Countenance and should lie there lifeless, to be handled by others, and to be wrapped as any other dead man might be, in fine linen and sweet spices.

But my subject at this time is concerning the wonderful working of God with regard to the burial of Jesus. The Providence of God began with the body of Christ from the very first, even from His Conception, and it followed Him right to the last, even to His burial. You see the Holy Child in the manger and you notice how all things round about minister strangely to Him. Throughout His life all things worked together for His good—not to screen Him from suffering, but to *cause* Him to suffer—and to make Him triumphant through those sufferings! And when He came to die, I see the finger of God displayed at every part of that dread tragedy. But now that He is dead, will that kind Providence forsake Him? Ah, no!

I want to stop here and say to you who anxiously ask, “What will become of me when I die? I am so very poor and needy”—never think about that matter—you have enough to do to trust God till you die! As to what is to become of your body when you are dead, never fret about that! It is wonderful how God takes care of the very dust and ashes of His chosen, how, sometimes, they receive in death respect and honor which they never thought would have come to them, and after they have passed away, their children and their household are blessed of God for their sake. The God of the living forsakes not His saints in dying, or after death! As Ruth would cleave to Naomi and said, “Where you die, I will die, and there will I be buried,” so, with greater faithfulness, does God cleave to His people! He will see them buried and take care of their children after they are gone. This is His comforting promise, “Leave your fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let your widows trust in Me.”

Now let me remind you how God took care of the First-Born among many brethren. Jesus is dead and in the hands of wicked men. The executioners have Him in their charge, those same executioners who just now broke the legs of the two thieves, have hold of Christ! But that precious body must be preserved, not a bone of Him must be broken, no disrespect must be paid to that Immaculate Being. Death and Hell would have reveled in insulting Christ’s body if they could. As Achilles dragged Hector by the heels round the walls of Troy, so would Satan have liked that men should have mauled the dead body of Christ. He would have

cast Him to the dogs or to the vultures if he could have had his way, but so it must not be! Many a man who has been a prince has been buried with the burial of an ass, but this great Savior, whom men despised, must have a royal funeral! How is He to have it? That is the point I wish to bring to your notice and, before I have finished my discourse, I hope I shall be able to prove to you that everything required for Christ's burial was supplied.

I. The first requisite was SOMEONE TO OBTAIN THE BODY.

The law has executed Jesus, though wrongfully, and His body, therefore, belongs to the executioner, or, at any rate, to the law. Who is to rescue that precious body from the clutches of the law? Ah, you may look your eyes out, but you cannot see the man who can accomplish this task—yet God knows where He is! There is one Joseph, who has an estate at Arimathea, a wealthy man, a member of the Sanhedrim, “an honorable counselor.” He appears upon the scene and he is the right man to do what is required, for he is a *secret disciple*. He has great respect for that dead body, for he had great regard for Jesus while He was alive. As we look Joseph up and down, we say, “Yes, if he will do his best, he is the very man for this emergency.” He is under great arrears of obligation to his Lord, whom he scarcely acknowledged in His lifetime—yet he is a real disciple. Joseph, if you can do anything in this matter, we give you this solemn charge—go and get the body of Christ.

He was, besides, *an official and influential*. Therefore he could gain an entrance where a private person could not. And, what was still more to the point with such a man as Pilate, he was *a rich man*, for in those days, in the courts, everything went by favor. The poor man's cause might be just, yet he could not secure a hearing. But the gold in a rich man's hand would speak more loudly than the most convincing arguments upon a poor man's tongue. So this secret disciple is the one to beg the body of Jesus because he is an honorable counselor and also because he is rich. If he is willing to undertake the task, he is the man to accomplish it.

But my heart misgives me, for Joseph has been secretly a disciple and, therefore, I conclude that he must be *very timid*. During the last two years or so, he has really been a follower of Christ, and yet he has stayed in the council. He has been a member of the Sanhedrim, yet he has not spoken out against its evil deeds! Ah, me, I am afraid that he will not be able to go and speak to Pilate. But note, Brothers and Sisters, what Mark tells us about him—“Joseph of Arimathea went in *boldly* unto Pilate and craved the body of Jesus.” God can make a coward bold as a lion in the day when He needs him! And this good man, full of honor and abounding in wealth, said, “I will go to Pilate.” Why, this cruel vacillating governor will put a man to death if he aggravates him! Who knows how this interview may end?

But Joseph says, “I will go to Pilate.” He obtains admittance and he asks for the body of Jesus. Pilate exclaims, “Why, He is not dead yet!” “Yes, He is,” answers Joseph, “I have seen Him die.” When the Centurion comes, he certifies that He is dead. Pilate cannot imagine what Joseph can want with a dead man's bones, but he says, “You may have His body. Take Him down, you may have Him.” So Joseph comes back to the

Cross. He has proven that he was the very man for this work. We would never have thought of *him*, but God had him in reserve for the hour of need and brought him to the front at the right moment!

Now you see Joseph hurrying away from Pilate's Hall to the hill of Calvary, where the crosses are still standing. He has, in his hand, the order signed by the governor. He shows it to the officer in charge and he is a man of such prominence, so well known as an honorable counselor, an official gentleman and a person of wealth, that everybody is ready to help him. He, himself, is probably first and foremost in raising the ladder, helping to pull out the great nails, and to let down the blessed body. He is the man for this work, for *he is objectionable to nobody*. He has been a counselor, so that those on the side of the Sanhedrim do not object to him. The holy women stand watching him, but they have no fears as to his action—they know him, for he has probably done them many a kindness privately in days gone by—and they know that he has been a secret disciple of the Lord. He has brought with him fine white linen which he was well able to buy. He reverently takes the body of Jesus down from the Cross and tenderly wraps it round with the costly winding-sheets which he has purchased—and so this trying business is finished without interference from anyone.

I hope that these details do not seem trivial to you, for nothing is trivial that concerns our Lord and His cause. In the Tabernacle and the Temple, even the nails had to be duly prepared, and I think that, in this matter of providing a suitable person to go and get the body of Jesus out of the hand of the legal custodian, we ought to admire the wonderful goodness of God! Depend upon it, if, at any other time, there should be some great and terrible task to be accomplished, God will find the man to do it! If one shall be needed, by-and-by, at peril of his life to bear witness for Christ, the right person will be found! And until this chapter of Divine Providence shall come to an end in our Lord's eternal Glory, there shall never be a crisis, however crucial, but the man shall be found whom God wants, or the woman who is to occupy the place which the Lord has for her to fill!

Thus, Joseph has obtained the body of Jesus from the hands of Pilate and he may do what he will with it—that is the first point.

II. The next requisite is SOMEONE TO BURY THE BODY.

We do not want one man to carry away that body and lay it in the grave, for such a person as Jesus should have an honorable funeral. Now see what happens! There is another man, also a counselor, “a ruler of the Jews,” “a master of Israel,” yet another secret disciple who had come to Jesus by night—he appears at just this very moment! “There came, also, Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night.” Now we have two mourners for our Master's funeral. James and John—where are you? They cannot hear my question! Peter and Bartholomew, where are you? They are too far away—they cannot hear me. Who will follow the body of Jesus to the grave? Who will be chief mourner? There are some gracious women, brave enough to stand afar off, and willing enough, if beckoned, to come and join the sad *cortege* that attends the corpse to the tomb. But how honorable to Christ was it that the first two and the chief mourners

on that sorrowful occasion should be two members of the Sanhedrim—Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus—two men of note, two reputable individuals who were held in honor even among the Jews who crucified Christ!

First, let me say of these two men who attended the burial of our Lord, that *they did Him honor*. Thus was fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy, "He made His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death; because He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth." All the while until Christ had paid the dreadful price of our redemption, He was despised and rejected of men, but as soon as He could say, "It is finished," and the debt was fully paid, He must not be despised and rejected any more! Now, rich men must come and do Him homage and, accordingly, Joseph and Nicodemus came. It may seem only a little thing, but it indicates the turn of the tide, just as the floating of a straw may do. Jesus is no longer derided, nor even attended only by the poorest and most obscure of Galileans, but Joseph from Arimathea, and Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, attend the funeral of the great Lord and Savior of men—and so pay such honor as they can to His dead body!

While they thus did Him honor, *they received from Him much more honor*. Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, it was a great privilege that was accorded to these two men! I stand and wonder how it was that this position was allotted to two who had kept so long behind the scenes. They had lost—they had lost—I cannot tell you how much they had lost, two, perhaps three *years* of constant fellowship with Christ and of instruction from His own dear lips! They had lost incalculably! They were in the rear of all Christ's disciples—Mary Magdalene was in front of them, the woman that was a sinner was far ahead of them—they were right in the rear rank. Yet their Master, in the splendor of His Grace, gives them this privilege even while He, Himself, lies dead! To them is accorded the high honor of handling His blessed flesh and laying Him in the tomb.

I am afraid that some of you secret Christians who never come out boldly for Christ will not have such an honor as this. If the Lord ever uses you at all, it will be in some sad business such as a funeral—but even that will be an honor to you, if you are permitted to attend Him in His death though you have not shared the glory of His life. You lose—oh, you lose incalculable gifts by not acknowledging your discipleship! Yet I pray that there may come a time and that it may come at once, when even *you* will come out and do what you can for your Lord, saying to yourself, "Now is the hour when even I, timid as I am, must acknowledge Him." When soul murder is in your streets, when heresy is in your pulpits, when apostasy is in your churches, you are unfaithful to the last grain of your spiritual manhood if you who love Christ do not come out boldly on His side and declare that you belong to Him! If you never have confessed Him before men and you neglect this opportunity, wherein there is the greatest and most urgent of need, I fear that you will never acknowledge Him at all.

Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus were both needed for this sad task and though we should never have thought of inviting them to perform it, yet they were the only two men connected with Christ who were

exactly fitted for the office. And, as I have said, they thus honored Christ and He thus honored them. I should also say, Brothers and Sisters, that among all the disciples, there were *no more sincere mourners for Christ than these two men*. I think that I hear Joseph fetch a deep sigh and say, "Ah, Nicodemus, how wicked I have been, for I have not been with Christ as I ought to have been! I ought to have gone with Him to prison and to death. Instead of that, I have been among the ungodly, rich and honored." "Ah," says Nicodemus, "and I went to Him by night and He talked so sweetly to me, but I have been hiding away ever since. I feel ashamed to touch this blessed blood-stained hand. I realize that it is a high honor to be allowed to handle these dear feet and to wrap the linen all about them, but I do not deserve such an honor, I am sure." And they would stop and weep, and sigh again, to think of how they had ill-treated their Lord, by what they may have thought was modesty, but which conscience now tells them was nothing else than shameful cowardice!

And I do not think that out of all Christ's followers, there were any who would be *more tender with that blessed body*, for they were gentlemen. They were not countrymen or fishermen, used to handling and being handled roughly—they were of a more tender mold, and when they looked on that dear form, how gently would they treat it! Being also men of property, they would have many servants able to help them in all sorts of ways. In His wonderful interment, our Lord Jesus could not have been better attended, nor have been buried by men who would have performed the mournful duty with more solemn feelings, more hushed reverence. They loved Him, yet felt that they had acted in an unloving manner towards Him and, now, they also felt that the best they could possibly do was all too little for the Blessed One who had sealed the forgiveness of their cowardice by permitting Himself to be entrusted to their hands.

I can see great love about this dead Christ, and great pity, and great kindness, that even His lifeless body would be giving life to the faith and hope of Joseph and Nicodemus and should be firing them with fresh ardor! While they looked upon His corpse, they must have been compelled to resolve that never more would they be ashamed of Him whom they had helped to lay in the grave.

So far we have, in imagination, brought our Lord Jesus Christ into the hands of two most suitable persons to bury Him.

III. The next requisite is THE MATERIALS NECESSARY FOR THE BURIAL.

The manner of the Jews is to bury the body wrapped in strips of fine white linen—where is that? I do not believe that Peter has a yard of it anywhere. I hardly think that James and John have anything much finer than fishermen's coats and so forth. *Fine linen*—let it be the best that can be bought! Let it be white as snow for wrapping around this perfect body! But where is it to be obtained? Joseph has it! He is a man of wealth, who can get anything that is needed, and he has brought with him the best winding sheets in which to wrap the Savior's body.

But we must also have *mixed spices in abundance*, fifty pounds' weight at the least. "Oh," says Nicodemus, "I have brought one hundred pounds' weight with me, and if I could have found a conveyance, and more spices

had not been superfluous, I would have brought *many hundred pounds* weight of myrrh and aloes, well mingled according to the art of apothecary, with which to surround that blessed form.”

See, my Brothers, Christ needed for nothing when He was dead—do you think that He will need anything while He is alive? “Ah, but our little Church, our poor cause, is needing money badly and we are going to get up a bazaar.” What? And you have not thought about going to your Lord for what you lack? The fact is, the Church of God has been looking to the devil to find funds for the Lord’s work instead of seeking aid from the Lord, Himself! It is a pity that we cannot come back to Him who, even when He was dead, had a hundred pounds’ weight of myrrh and aloes brought to Him! Cannot we trust Him for all that is required for His service? It will be a better and a brighter day for the Church when she believes that if Christ needs myrrh and aloes, He can get them! Does not the Lord say, “The silver is Mine and the gold is Mine...Every beast of the forest is Mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills...If I were hungry, I would not tell you: for the world is Mine, and the fullness thereof”? Let us go forth to fight the Lord’s battles without any doubts concerning the commissariat of His army! He can provide and He *will* provide—only let us trust Him and not go down to Egypt for help, nor lean upon an arm of flesh.

As Nicodemus gave so freely to the dead Christ, how generously ought you and I to give to our living Lord! If we have anything in the world, let us give it all to Christ. Even if we have nothing left but a grave, which we have provided for our own funeral, yet let us surrender that, as Joseph did when he gave up his new tomb that his Lord and Master might lie therein.

Thus, you see, that all that is needed for Christ’s burial is there already! So I leave that part of our subject and go on to the next.

IV. Another requisite is A PLACE WHEREIN TO BURY THE BODY. We have the body, Pilate has given us that. We have the spices and the fine linen and we have the two men ready to bury the body. Now we need a tomb.

It would be very convenient and also very important, if we could get *a sepulcher near at hand* because, you see, if the body of Christ had to be carried a long way to be buried, the Jews would say, “Ah, they switched it on the road! They took it a mile or two out of the city and the Christ who rose from the dead is not the Christ that was buried.” But here, just at the bottom of this rocky hill which is called Golgotha, there is a garden, and in that garden there is a tomb. Hark the Providence of God in this matter, for that tomb belongs to Joseph, and there the Savior’s body is lovingly laid! He did not and He could not lack a tomb when it was required! When the time came for Him to be buried, the sepulcher was there already prepared, hewn out of the rock!

It would also be a great advantage if it could be *a new tomb*, wherein never was anybody buried, for if they buried Him in an old tomb, the Jews would say that He had touched the bones of some Prophet or other holy man and so came to life. Ah, well, Joseph’s is a new tomb—there are no bones there, for nobody has ever been buried there before!

It would seem, too, to be the proper thing for our Lord to have *a tomb in a rock*. You cannot fitly put Him in sand who is, Himself, the Rock of Ages. No, let our Lord Jesus, with that grand Immutable Love and eternal faithfulness of His, let Him lie in the solid rock! There it is, all ready for Him, just the very kind of tomb that is needed for Him who is the Rock of our salvation!

If it should also be *a tomb in a garden*, there would be a touch of familiar beauty about that arrangement. One likes that the very surroundings of Christ's grave should be instructive. I cannot stop to tell you about all the beauty and the instruction which cluster around a garden—the gardens of Scripture, especially, are most fruitful subjects, and our Lord's garden-tomb might suggest to us a most profitable theme for meditation.

Thus, Christ's tomb is the very thing we would wish for Him. In no secondhand grave, in no town ditch, in no pauper's grave dug out of the earth, but in a rich man's sepulcher, worthy of a king—it is there that the Christ must lie! See how God provides for His Son and learn how He will provide for *you*. If He provides for His Son when dead, He will provide for you while living—therefore be comforted whatever your condition may be!

V. There is one more difficulty and, perhaps, it is the worst of all, for it concerns **THE TIME FOR THE BURIAL**. You see, it is very late in the afternoon and, besides, it is the "preparation" for a very important Sabbath, and these good people cannot do any work on the Sabbath—their consciences will not permit them to do so, for they are strict Jews. But it so happened that they obtained the body just in time to wrap it round about with the spices and with the linen, and then we are told, "There laid they Jesus, therefore, because of the Jews' preparation day; for *the sepulcher was near at hand*." To me, it is a very pretty thought that when there was so little time, the place of burial was so near. It would have taken all the lingering twilight to have carried Jesus far, but the right place was near! Providence knew all about the difficulty and provided for it!

Next, they could not take much time with the body and *the ceremony was the more fitting for Christ's rising*. Beloved, whenever you cannot do anything for your Lord as you would like to do, do the best you can and you may depend upon it, that you have done just what ought to be done! "Oh, no!" they say, "Oh, no! We would have liked to have wrapped Him up much more leisurely and more delicately—we would have made a finished work of embalming that precious body." Listen! Nothing more was needed. Jesus was not going to be in the sepulcher long. God's Holy One could not see corruption! He did not need to be embalmed, for He was to be up again so soon and, therefore, a hurried burial was quite sufficient.

Listen again—there is another thing worth mentioning. *The incompleteness brought them early to the sepulcher*. If they do not finish their task of love on the evening of the Crucifixion, they will be there early in the morning, when the Sabbath is over, to complete it! That was *precisely* what was needed, that, as soon as the Master was risen, on that first day of the week, they should be there to see Him—but they would not have

been there to see Him, perhaps, if they had not come, as the holy women did, with more spices to finish the work which had been, comparatively speaking, so roughly and hurriedly done on that dread evening!

It was all right and I drew much comfort and joy out of this fact when I was thinking it over. I said to myself, "Sometimes I am so oppressed with the care of the many things entrusted to me that I cannot study my sermon as I would like." Perhaps it is all the better for that—the Master does not need studied sermons. It may also be that it suits the hearer all the better. If you cannot bury Christ as you would like to because there is not time, when you have done the best that you could, and sorrowed over it, you have done the very thing that your Lord wants you to do! Rest content with that and just say to yourself, "He takes the will for the deed, and all my blundering and mistakes He overlooks because I did it all out of love for His dear name."

I have talked thus to you about Christ's dead body. Oh, that I had an opportunity of speaking to you about Him as the living Lord! But as I cannot, for our time is gone, I would ask you to just stoop down and, in faith and love, kiss those wounds, admire that pierced hand, that other hand, that nailed foot, that other foot, that side with the spear gash, that dear face with closed eyes and then say, "He bore all this for *me*—what have I done for Him?" "God bless you! Amen."

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

Mark 15:34-47; John 19:38-42; 1 Corinthians 15:1-9.

Concerning the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall read in three portions of the New Testament. First, in the Gospel according to Mark, the 15th chapter, beginning at the 34th verse.

Mark 15:34. *And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, Lama Sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?* It is, "My El, My strong God, My mighty One, why have You forsaken Me?"—the most bitter words that were ever uttered by mortal lips—and expressing the quintessence of agony. Alas, that my Savior should ever have had to say as much as this when He hung upon the Cross, suffering and dying for me!

35. *And some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said, Behold, He calls Elijah.* Did they misunderstand His bitter cry of woe? Could they mistake what He meant? Was it not, on the part of these people that stood by, a willful wicked witticism upon what our Lord Jesus had said? We fear that it was so.

36, 37. *And one ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave Him to drink, saying, Let Him alone; let us see whether Elijah will come to take Him down. And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost.* His last words were, "It is finished."—

***"It is finished!"—Oh what pleasure
Do these charming words afford!
Heavenly blessings without measure
Flow to us from Christ the Lord—
'It is finished!'
Saints, the dying words record."***

38, 39. *And the veil of the Temple was rent in two from the top to the bottom. And when the Centurion, who stood over against Him. The officer who had charge of the arrangements for the execution—"when the Centurion, who stood over against Him"—*

39. *Saw that He so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this Man was the Son of God. Probably saying a great deal more than he understood! There was something so extraordinary about this central Sufferer that the Centurion could not understand who He could be unless He was truly, "the Son of God."*

40, 41. *There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses and Salome; (Who also, when He was in Galilee, followed Him, and ministered unto Him), and many other women which came up with Him unto Jerusalem. Where was Peter? We know that John was near the Cross, but James and the rest of the Apostles were apparently hiding away. But the holy women were there!*

42, 43. *And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is the day before the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, an honorable counselor, which also waited for the Kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus. I have no doubt that Pilate was very surprised that a member of the Sanhedrim should come and ask for the body of Jesus, when, a little while before, he had put Him to death, really, by the mandate of that body of men!*

44, 45. *And Pilate marveled if He were already dead: and calling unto him the Centurion, he asked him whether He had been any while dead. And when he knew it of the Centurion, he gave the body to Joseph. This very Centurion who had declared that Jesus was the Son of God now came forward to bear witness that he had seen Him die. And then Pilate told Joseph that he might go and take the body.*

46. *And he bought fine linen. This was probably the first time that fine linen had touched the flesh of the Son of Man—He had been accustomed to much coarser stuff in His lifetime—but now Joseph "bought fine linen."*

46, 47. *And took Him down, and wrapped Him in the linen, and laid Him in a sepulcher which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone into the door of the sepulcher. And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses beheld where He was laid. That is Mark's account of our Lord's death and burial, very terse and very suggestive. Let us now read John's description of the sad scene.*

John 19:38-40. *And after this, Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came, therefore, and took the body of Jesus. And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight. Then took they the body of Jesus. Oh, how tenderly and with how many tears, did they take their Lord's body from the Cross!*

40-42. *And wound it in linen strips with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. Now in the place where He was crucified there was a*

garden; and in the garden a new sepulcher, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus, therefore, because of the Jews' preparation day; for the sepulcher was near at hand. John's Gospel contains some particulars not mentioned by Mark. And the same may be said of Matthew's account and Luke's. Read them all when you are home and ponder the wonderful story! The Apostle Paul, speaking of our Lord's Resurrection, mentions His burial. We will now read in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, just a few verses from the 15th chapter.

1 Corinthians 15:1. *Moreover, brethren I declare unto you the Gospel—Mark that Paul writes concerning "the Gospel." We shall see now what, "the Gospel" is.*

1-3. *Which I preached unto you, which also you have received, and wherein you stand, by which also you are saved, if you keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless you have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you, first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.* That is the central Truth of the Gospel.

4. *And that He was buried.* That is an essential part of the Gospel.

4. *And that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.* This is the bright light of the Gospel, the Resurrection of our Lord from the dead—

5-9. *And that He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: after that, He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, He was seen of James; then of all the Apostles. And last of all He was seen of me, also, as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the Apostles, that am not meet to be called an Apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God. Yet He was one among the many testifiers to the fact that Jesus really died, was buried and rose from the dead, of which we will speak more particularly, by-and-by.*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—306, 832.

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MAGDALENE AT THE SEPULCHER— AN INSTRUCTIVE SCENE NO. 2119

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 22, 1889.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 24, 1889.**

*“Then the disciples went away again unto their own homes. But Mary stood without at the sepulcher weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down and looked into the sepulcher and saw two angels in white sitting, the one at the head and the other at the feet, where the Body of Jesus had lain. And they said unto her, Woman, why do you weep? She said unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord and I know not where they have laid Him. And when she had thus said, she turned herself back and saw Jesus standing and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus said unto her, Woman, why do you weep? Whom do you seek? She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said unto Him, Sir, if you have borne Him, therefore, tell me where you have laid Him and I will take Him away. Jesus said unto her, Mary. She turned herself and said unto Him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master.”
John 20:10-16*

I WANTED to speak tonight to Believers who have lost the joyful Presence of their Lord and who are saying, “Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!” But when I thought of that matter, I said to myself, Many will be in the congregation who have never yet found Him. Therefore they will not have known His sweetness by experience, and yet they may be longing to find Him. Is it possible to benefit two classes at once?

“Well, well,” I said to myself, “I can speak to the saint, for she who figures in the text was Mary. But I can also, at the same time, talk to the sinner. For she was Magdalene, and that name has somehow become connected with penitent sinners.” I pray, at the beginning, that if there is one here who has long been a Mary, and has followed Christ lovingly—and if there is another here who is more like what is commonly but erroneously known as a Magdalene, both the Mary and the Magdalene may find direction and consolation in my discourse.

I shall have no other preface but these remarks. For we have before us a long text to be handled in a short time and I would not perform my task slightly. We will advance by a series of observations.

I. Our first observation shall be this—A SOUL SEEKING JESUS HAS WAYS OF ITS OWN.

Read carefully the tenth verse—“Then the disciples went away again unto their own homes. But Mary,” Mary had her own way of proceeding. Mary was seeking Christ more intensely and affectionately than even the choicest of the Apostles. They were more able to wait for events than her eagerness would allow her to do. John was able to go home, because he

had seen and believed. Peter went home all the more readily because a cloud darkened his sky.

Mary was of another order from either of these—she loved and longed to see Him whom she loved. Whether He was dead or alive, she would find Him. When you are seeking the Lord, it brings out your individuality. Every truly anxious soul must seek the Lord in his own way. Each case is peculiar—each seeker feels himself to be one by himself. There are not two Mary Magdalenes. And Mary differs from John and Peter.

One part of her way was this—that she would stay at the sepulcher after others had gone to their own homes. So have I seen the lover of the Lord lingering at the Mercy Seat when the prayers of others were ended, and remaining in the use of the means of Divine Grace when others had enjoyed a full portion of them. The meeting is very early in the morning but Mary must be there. And if the meeting was at a distance, she trudges over the miles. One saint is noted for Bible reading and nothing will attract her from it. Another abounds in private prayer and is mighty on her knees. Another feels bound to go where Christ Jesus is earnestly talked about, and therefore he spends many an hour with the Lord's people.

Perhaps Peter and John had other necessary business to attend to and their duty called them away from the tomb. But Mary stood there still, hoping to hear something about her Lord and, at least, to know where they had laid His Body. It is a blessed thing when the heart becomes so resolved to find Christ that it cannot be happy without Him. When it cannot even live without Him. When you are resolved to wait at the posts of Wisdom's doors until the Incarnate Wisdom appears to you, you will not have to wait long.

Mary had ways of her own beside, for she stood there "weeping." I do not read that, upon this occasion, either Peter or John shed a single tear. They may have done so, but the Holy Spirit has not recorded the fact. Yet He has recorded it of this earnest seeker that she, "stood without at the sepulcher weeping." She wept as if her heart would break. Where was her Lord? What had they done with that Sacred Body? She had seen it wrapped in spices and fine linen and laid in the tomb of Joseph—where was it now?

The tomb was evidently quite empty of all but the burial garments—where was the Body? What new indignities had the cruel ones put upon it? That dear mangled Body—to what malicious treatment was it now exposed? She stood, in deep emotion, sorrowing as love, alone, can sorrow when its beloved object is in peril. It is a great thing, dear Soul, when you cannot find Christ, to weep your eyes out till you can. When you cannot live without Him for very heartbreak, when all the joy of life is gone, when existence becomes only another name for grieving after an absent love—and that love the Lord Jesus.

Then you are not far off from the happy hour of finding Him. Tears may be as the dew of the morning, the sure prophets of the rising sun. At any rate, many search for Jesus with tears in their eyes. Mary did something more, which was according to her own mode of action—"she stooped down and looked into the sepulcher." They that would find Chr-

ist must stoop to look for Him. They must not merely wait for Him but look for Him on their knees.

I have known some people pretend to wait for the Lord and they have kept up the pretense to their soul's ruin! They never looked to Him by faith. I have known some weep much but they would not open their eyes to look to Jesus and be saved. True seekers look for Jesus in the Scriptures. They search for Him in the hearing of the Word. They cry after Him in their private room. This is well. If you would be saved, seek Jesus and He will find you. Cry evermore, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him! I would come even to His seat."

No heart has ever earnestly looked after Jesus but what before long He has been seen. If there is this waiting, this weeping, this stooping, this looking—there will be an appearing in mercy and a recognition in joy. Mary, who looks for Jesus, shall see Him.

Note this peculiarity—she looked in the wrong place. She looked into the sepulcher for the living and risen Jesus. Earnest, true-hearted, zealous, was Mary. But she labored under a mistake. Well might the angels say, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here but is risen." Thus have I known true penitents seek the Lord where He cannot be found. They have expected to undergo a sort of inward purgatory, and they have sought for Jesus in their own feelings. He is not there. They have imagined that they must be carried away with despair before they might lay hold upon the Savior. Yet the Lord is not in the wind of feeling, nor in the fire of despair—His Presence is known by His still small voice.

They have not looked with a simple, childlike trust to Jesus. But they have gone about to this, and that, and to other thing—and all in vain. They have sought for Jesus among forms, and ceremonies, but in vain. Possibly they have gone to human priests, or sages—these are as dead as the tombs. Priest-craft and philosophy are no places for the living Christ to be found.

Yet I am glad that Mary looked into the tomb. For, though she looked in the wrong place, it was a good thing to be looking for Jesus after any fashion. Better blunder in seeking Christ than be so wise as to go away from Him. I mean, better to be a sincere, but foolish, seeker after Jesus, and fall into a hundred errors of doctrine, than to be highly cultured and all the while to be looking to self, or to the world and forgetting the Lord Jesus. Poor Seekers! You are in trouble. I see it by your tears. There is hope for you, for you have eyes and are looking out for something better than you can find in yourselves, or in your fellow men.

I am sure of you, for you will not run away to your home. You stay near the place where Jesus was last seen. You are not rolling stones but you abide in earnest hearing, in Apostolic doctrine, and in prayers. Your constancy and your eagerness are cheering signs that Divine Grace is beginning its work in your hearts. Comfort is on the way to you, I can see the light of it reflected in those tears which glisten in your eyes. God grant that we may not be disappointed in you, for His name's sake!

II. But now, going a little further on, I would observe, secondly, that A SOUL SEEKING JESUS MAKES SMALL ACCOUNT OF ANYTHING ELSE.

Mary, when she looked down, saw the angels sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the Body of Jesus had lain. At any

other time, if Mary Magdalene had seen two angels, she would have been astounded, so as to lose her balance, through reverent fear. A vision of angels to a holy woman—there is something overpowering in it. A vision of angels, even to the ungodly soldiers that watched the grave of Christ, had made them faint and become as dead men.

But if you read the passage attentively, you will see that Mary talked to these angels as if they had been good men whom she had met before. She was not abashed by them. When they say to her, “Woman, why do you weep?” she answers them, very plainly, “Because they have taken away my Lord and I know not where they have laid Him.” She is not frightened at spirits and angels. Neither is a soul that is in earnest after Christ to be put away from its search by any sort of diversion.

The true enquirer would ask of angels, or of the most eminent saints, concerning the Lord Jesus. It will be only too glad to ask of anybody, or to answer a question from anybody, if it may thus hope to find Jesus. Did you ever note the all-subduing power of a great desire? When God makes the heart tender and sets it longing after Jesus, it forgets its own feebleness and ceases to be alarmed by that which once distressed it. A longing soul would break through angels and through devils, through Heaven and through earth to reach Jesus. We must have Him. We must behold the Well-Beloved. Our soul is all on fire for Him, it cannot be restrained, it will burn its way to Him as the flame makes its way across the prairie. We want Jesus and we will not be content with anything short of Him.

Notice, too, as proof of what I have said, that when a soul is seeking Christ, nothing but Christ’s own Word will satisfy it. This holy woman was not content with what the angels said. Though they said to her, “Woman, why do you weep?” those shining ones do not appear to have comforted her at all. She went on weeping. She told them why she wept but she did not, therefore, cease her tears. And, believe me, if the angels of Heaven cannot content a heart which is seeking after Jesus, you may depend upon it that the angels of the Churches cannot do so.

We may preach as best we can, but the words of man will never satisfy the cravings of the heart. The seeker needs Jesus—Jesus only—Jesus certainly. You read the best of books and heard the most faithful of testimonies when you were seeking, and yet you came away and cried, “Alas, I have not found Him. I have not found Him. And I cannot be content till I do so!” Beloved, never sit down short of Christ. For short of Christ is short of salvation. Whatever you hear, never be content with hearing—long to find Him of whom you hear.

However sweetly the story is told, the mere hearing of the Truth of God must never be enough for you. You want for your salvation a *personal* Christ, to be heard by your own heart and received by your own faith. And I entreat you, never rest until this is your happy possession. Find HIM—Him whom your soul loves—Him in whom alone your soul may trust. Let not voices from Heaven, if you could hear them, much less the voices of godly men and women on earth, ever content you, apart from the Lord Jesus Christ, who is All in All.

Furthermore, a soul seeking Jesus is glad to confess Him. It was awe-inspiring to behold angels arrayed in white. It was a rare gift for the

Magdalene to gaze upon, those shining ones sitting in solemn state at the head and the foot of the spot where Jesus had once laid! But it did not so overpower Mary as to prevent her open acknowledgment of her Lord. When she spoke to Peter and John, in the second verse, she said, "They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulcher." But when she addressed the angels, she said, "They have taken away *my* Lord and I know not where they have laid Him."

It might not be necessary to say, "my Lord" to the two Apostles, who knew exactly what she was. But she had not seen those angels before, and she would not let them go without their knowing that Jesus was her Lord, her very own. And so she puts it, "They have taken away my Lord." I like that amazingly. Are you a seeking saint? Whether you see Him or do not see Him, He is still yours. And you must hold to it that He is still your own. "My Beloved is mine and I am His." And if I do not just now behold the smile of His face, yet He is my Lord. I have given myself up to Him. And, if He does not own me as His servant, I will still claim Him as my Master.

Come what may, if I walk in darkness, I will cleave to Him the more closely, for I will not wander from Him. Where should I go? If all Heaven does not shine upon me, I shall still look up that way. I have fallen into a fog and can scarcely see my way beyond my hand—but yet I am my Lord's for all that, and I am not ashamed to declare it. "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." His I am and Him I serve. My ear has been bored to the doorpost, and I am His happy bondman forever. Come death, come life, come darkness of soul, or joy of spirit. Whatever happens, I am my Lord's. Such holy constancy will be rewarded.

In the true seeker, the one cry of the soul is Christ, none but Christ, Christ alone. Mary looks beyond all others. Angels may come and angels may go—but she neither seeks nor fears *them*. She blushes not to confess her Lord before the white-robed spirits. But she seeks Him and must find Him. O Child of God, keep to the one object of your search! O Sinner, when once you feel your need of Jesus, bend all your desires towards Him and seek Him alone! If all your search is after Jesus, you shall find Him. Let not a Heaven of angels suffice to take you off from searching for your Lord and His salvation.

O Child of God, when you have lost the light of your Lord's face, feel that you must have it back again, or die in the dark. And when you thus feel, He will return to you. He never set a soul longing for Himself, and Himself only, without gratifying the longing which He has created. Hunger and thirst after the Lord Jesus are blessed attributes. For He who *created* them will *satisfy* them. Oh, that the Lord would cause us to faint and pine after Himself more and more, and then visit us with that which is our soul's only fullness, namely, His precious, priceless Self!

III. Thus have we handled the second point sufficiently. Let us now make a third observation—A SOUL SEEKING JESUS MAY HAVE HIM VERY NEAR, AND NOT KNOW IT.

Read, "When she had thus said, she turned herself back and saw JESUS standing and knew not that it was Jesus." He was behind her while she stood looking into the sepulcher. And though she did not perceive it, His Presence operated upon her. She had been speaking to the angels

and answering their question. And suddenly she was conscious that someone was standing just behind her. How came she thus to feel? Some think that, as Mark describes, the angels, as standing up. The Lord had, at that moment, come behind Mary and the holy angels, perceiving their Lord, rose up to do Him honor.

They had been sitting in contemplation at the place of His sepulcher but as soon as they caught sight of their Lord, they stood up, as if to do His bidding. From their movements Mary concluded that someone was passing behind her. It may have been so. For assuredly the angelic guards would have paid Him instant reverence. But, on the other hand, *rising* is scarcely so much a method of saluting a superior in the East as it is in the West. Let us suggest something else.

You have been sitting at your table, writing, and a friend has come behind you with noiseless tread but yet all of a sudden you have been aware of a presence. Before you had heard or seen, you were impressed—what if I say overshadowed? Was it not so with Mary Magdalene and the Savior? I am not superstitious if I assert that something very similar happens to me when Jesus is near. Many a Believer will tell you that he has, at times, when he has been in prayer, or hearing the Word, or meditating, felt as if he could be sure that the Lord stood near him.

There could, of course, be no palpable impression upon the flesh. For now, after the flesh, we know Him no more. But yet His Presence has impressed our souls. There are influences of mind on mind which are beyond the recognition of science. The great spirit of our Lord has means of making itself spiritually known to our spirits—means which flesh and blood know nothing of—and which lips could not describe. I have discerned the special Presence of my Lord with me by a consciousness as sure as that by which I know that I live. Jesus has been as real to me, at my side in this pulpit, as though I had beheld Him with my eyes.

I appeal to the experience of many of you. Have you not been moved by a mysterious influence which has overawed, inspired, and impressed you beyond description? A Divine, majestic, delightful and hallowing Presence has been near you. And you have turned to look at a something which was so distinct that you would not have been surprised had it been visible to you. Mary did not discover at first that it was the Lord, but she felt His powerful influence, and then, “she turned herself back and saw Jesus.”

The next thing to be noted was that she saw Jesus standing. The word is better rendered “beholds,” as in the Revised Version. It does not merely mean that she saw Him. But His Presence fixed her gaze. She steadily observed Him. She could not take her eyes off Him. She beheld Him intently. For she seemed to say, “I must have seen that face before. Can it be He? It is wonderfully similar. But the thought cannot be entertained.”

She stood, and beheld Jesus with steadfast gaze. Thus would we hold our meditations fixed upon His Person. This may be so. And yet we may not know that the Lord is with us, though we are conscious of more than human company. In the case of a seeking sinner, Jesus has really come to him and has been comforting him and yet he did not know that it was Jesus. He dreamed that He was far away. His soul felt so tender, so

melted, so ready to yield, so near to God, that he was sure some holy power was ruling him. But he knew not that it was Jesus.

Occasionally, you and I have known such secret touches of heart and conscience, with such bright hope and burning love, that we have wondered at ourselves, and yet we have not dared to believe that it was the Lord Himself who was thus at work upon us. And yet it was even so. We were looking for Jesus by His own light. Our hearts burned, and yet we did not perceive from where came the fire. Jesus may be very near, and yet we may fear that He has gone from us in anger.

What was it, do you think, that prevented her seeing and knowing her Lord? Shall we say that her unbelief and sorrow dimmed her eyes? Was it that, like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, her eyes were held? Very possibly. Was it her tears that blinded her to the Divine vision? Not so likely. For tears full often cleanse the spiritual vision. Weeping for an absent Christ has often made us quit a sin which at some prior time had prevented fellowship with Jesus. What was it, then? I think it was that the sight was

not what she expected. She was longing to see Jesus. But, perhaps she only hoped to see Him wrapped in grave clothes.

And so, you notice, that the Evangelist puts it, "She saw Jesus *standing* and knew not that it was Jesus." If she had seen Him lying down, with the image of death upon His face, she would have known Him. But to see Jesus *standing* was far more than she could have hoped for. She had seen His lifeless Body taken down by Joseph and Nicodemus, and she had helped to wrap Him in spices and fine linen. But to see Him standing, alive, was more than she could have dreamed of. The rapture was too great for her to expect or believe. And we marvel not that it is written "she knew not that it was Jesus."

Beloved, our conceptions of our Lord are so poor and low, that if He were to come to us in even a moderate degree of His Glory, we should fail to apprehend that it was really He. John knew Him, he had laid his head on His bosom, but he says, "When I saw Him, I fell at his feet as dead." So overpoweringly beyond all that John could have expected, was the vision of the Lord in His Glory. It is true the Lord Jesus did not manifest Himself in that manner to Mary. But still, the particular posture of *standing* was beyond what she looked for, and therefore He was not perceived.

It may be that the Lord Jesus is truly appearing to some sinner here. But as the appearance is not what he expects, he is unable to hope that it is his Savior. You are told simply to trust Him. And this is hardly what you looked for—you thought that you would suffer an experience of amazing sorrow. You looked for an affair which could be put into a biography. Tell me, did you not? But you will not have anything of the sort. You hear a voice which cries, "Only trust Him, only trust Him." Obey that voice and enter into immediate rest.

You thought that you would be driven to the verge of madness, and then be relieved with a joy which would make you dance. But instead, you are led quietly to *trust*. So long as you are truly saved, what does it matter? The Lord Jesus is present wherever there is humble faith in Him,

for that plant never grows except where He sets His pierced foot. Believe and then know that it is Jesus.

And you, dear Brothers and Sisters, who have lost the Presence of Christ a while, perhaps you expect Him to come tonight and carry you away in a sacred transport. Instead of which, it may be He will calm you and fill you with repose, or He may even rebuke you and send you out to work and suffer for Him. May you have the discernment, however your Lord may come, to know that it is the Lord! Though He comes not in the way in which you looked for Him, yet be not so blind as to mistake Him for another. But if you should even think that your risen Lord is the gardener, you might not be so very wrong. If, under that misapprehension, you should ask Him to dress the garden of your heart and pluck up your weeds and water your plants, it would be well with you.

Still, He may be near you and yet you may not know Him. Take comfort from this fact. And though you mourn your own dullness of apprehension, do not utterly condemn yourself. Under her misapprehension, Mary did not catch the tone of our Lord's voice when He asked her why she wept. Our Lord quoted the question of the angels, as if to show that He would gladly support the word which His servants had spoken. Happy messenger, whose words can be repeated by his Master! But yet Mary's ear was heavy and she perceived not her Lord.

Ah me, we also may be in such a state that we do not discern the blessed Lover of our souls, though He speaks in the language of consolation! We would have ventured to predict that never would Mary Magdalene have forgotten that dear voice. But she did so. And what wonder if we do the same?

In a word, she was so far from discovering her Lord that she took Him to be her foe rather than her Friend. She imagined that the gardener had borne the Body away. Was he so unwilling to have a corpse within the region of his gardening that he had put it in a corner, that no one might perceive it? She humbles herself to him and offers to carry away the form to which she feared he had such an objection. "Tell me where you have laid Him and I will take Him away." He to whom she spoke had not taken away her treasure—He had brought it *to her*—yes, He was Himself that Treasure!

Beloved, you and I also have reckoned our best Friend to be our enemy—so foolish are we and so soon mistaken. In the darkness of our souls we judge unrighteously and complain of our Lord whom alone we ought to praise. He knows our ignorance and He forgives.

IV. Upon my fourth observation I will be very brief—A SOUL SEEKING JESUS WILL DO ANYTHING TO FIND HIM.

Mary Magdalene was still seeking. And when she saw one standing before her, whom she thought to be the gardener, what did she do? Why, she enquired of that gardener where she might find Him whom she loved. She was willing to learn from anyone. If you are in earnest to find the Lord Jesus, you will not be particular about where you go, or of whom you learn. No matter whether the preacher is a doctor of divinity or a converted coal heaver, so long as he preaches Christ, you will be glad to learn from him.

She supposed Him to be the gardener. But yet she said to Him, "Sir, if you have borne Him, therefore, tell me where you have laid Him." Many have been happy to learn of Jesus from fishermen and cobblers. Does my Friend object to my hearing an illiterate man? Ah, Sir, when I am seeking eternal salvation, I care little about the philosopher—I want the experimental Christian. For him I feel a deep respect. And, even if I know him to be only a gardener, I speak to him reverently as, "Sir."

When a man is not truly seeking the Lord, he wants short sermons and these of a high literary order, or else adorned with attractive rhetoric. But when he is, with his whole heart, seeking for the Savior, he is not so concerned about polite phrases and ecclesiastical correctness. He looks eagerly for a practical direction how he may come to Jesus. And he will take that from any man or woman, be their station what it may. Let him be a chimneysweep, if he will lead me to Jesus, I will follow.

So it was with this holy woman. She desired to find the Lord and she was altogether absorbed in that one pursuit. She speaks as if everybody was equally intent upon the one theme. For instead of mentioning the name Jesus, she says, "If you have borne Him, therefore." Why, Mary, what are you talking about? "About Him," she says. But who is this of whom you speak? Ah, Friends, to her there was but one "Him" in all the world, just then! Oh, to be thus absorbed!

Such was the desire of Magdalene to find the Lord Jesus, that she feared no ghastly sight. Let her know where the Body is laid and she will be there. That Body, which had bled so much from its five wounds, must have been a heart-breaking sight to a tender-hearted woman. But she is not dismayed. Let the Body be how it may, it is the flesh and blood of her dear Lord and she must pay it homage. Wounds or no wounds, she would behold it. A wounded Christ is altogether lovely in the eyes of His redeemed.

His blood, flowing for me, clothes Him with a royal crimson robe in my eyes. I fear nothing, so long as I may but come to Him. Dear Hearts, if you long for salvation, you will not find fault with those who preach the doctrine of the Cross, the wounds, the blood! You will not kick at the doctrine of a crucified Savior, your Substitute condemned at the bar of justice. You want Jesus who died. You must behold Him for yourself by faith and no ridicule of the vain, or sneer of the proud, or cavil of the doubting, can make Him uncomely in your eyes.

Notice that she dreads no heavy burden. She says, "I will take Him away." Why, Mary, you could not bear away so great a load! You would fall beneath the weight of a man's corpse! You are not strong enough for the sad task! Ah, but she thought that she could bear the blessed burden and she meant to try! She would have accomplished it. Faith laughs at impossibility and cries, "it shall be done." But love actually performs the deed. A heart that is burning with love has about it a seven-fold energy, whose capacity it would be hard to calculate.

It would seem a grim and terrible task for a woman, at early morning, to be carrying from its grave the corpse of one who had been hanged upon a tree. But she offers herself for the deed and is even eager for it. To a soul that would gladly find Christ, nothing is too hot or too heavy, nothing is too cold or too sickening. We would do anything, refuse noth-

ing, and suffer everything, if we might but clasp Him in our arms, our Jesus and our All.

Yet was she wedded to her old mistake—she continued to seek the living among the dead, for she looked again into the sepulcher. Thus have I seen seeking souls cling to their original mistake and follow up those erroneous but natural hopes which are surely doomed to disappointment. How do I know that Mary began to look again into that sepulcher? Observe that, in the sixteenth verse we read, “She turned herself and said unto Him, Rabboni!”

That is the second time she *turned* herself. The first time she turned and looked at Jesus, whom she supposed to be the gardener. Now, if she had to turn again to see Him, she must, in the meanwhile, have faced in the old direction, and must, therefore, have been peering again into the empty tomb. That is the difficulty which we have with poor seekers when they are in their fits. We persuade them from looking to themselves and their feelings, but they are soon back again at that unprofitable work. We tell them, “He is not here, for He is risen. Look not to your own dead self, with its feelings and resolves, for Jesus is not there.”

For a while they listen to us and try to look to the Lord. But they do not know Him, and so their eyes insensibly return to the old place, looking again into the sepulcher of self, to find a living hope in the things of death. Still, even this mistaken persistency shows how anxious they are, and how desperately they are set upon finding salvation. Though they make serious mistakes, and even repeat them, yet they cannot give up. For nothing short of Christ will content them.

V. And that brings us to our fifth point—A SEEKING SOUL MAY FIND JESUS THROUGH ONE WORD.

We might be wise to clip our sermons down and make them much shorter. Long discourses have often missed the mark. Our Lord’s one word gave Mary all she sought. He said to her, “Mary.” And at once she knew Him and cried, “Rabboni.” Only one word! Jesus can preach a perfect sermon in one word! O dear Friends, when you cannot say much to an anxious enquirer, say a single word. Who knows what that one word may do? When you cannot repeat a sermon, quote a verse. “A verse may hit him whom a sermon flies.” Do not think that strength lies in length—it is often the reverse.

Though Mary came to herself by one word, that one word was from Jesus Himself. He and the angels together had not comforted her with a sentence, but one word from His heart went to her heart. That one word of love from His lips, “Mary,” brought that other word of reverence from her lips, “Rabboni.”

Dear Friends, beseech the Lord to speak in His own all-powerful way at this time. In the meeting for prayer, you prayed for me that I might speak and I hope the Lord heard you. But now go yet further and cry, “Speak, Lord! Speak Yourself! The angel of the Church has spoken and You have sealed his message, but now, we entreat You, go further and You speak one word Yourself, by Your own Spirit!”

That one word was the Magdalene’s own name. It was as though He had said, “I have called you by your name—you are Mine.” Words, when they are spoken with a general bearing, may prove feeble. When the an-

gel said, "Woman," and Jesus himself said, "Woman," that name belonged to a large class of individuals. And Mary did not take it to herself. But when our Lord said, "Mary," there was but one Mary present, and therefore it came home to her without fail.

This is what is needed—an assured, *personal* application of the Word. This our Lord grants when the message comes right home to you, as if you were the only one present—the preacher looks at you, speaks to you, and gives such personal details that you are sure that not the preacher, but the preacher's God is speaking to you. Then it is that you find the Lord and know of a surety that it is He.

That word from the Master's lips, that word—your own name—that word shall wake the echoes of your heart by arousing happy memories and recalling hours of sweet delight. When a soul knows that Jesus knows its name, it soon begins to know Jesus for itself. Who but He could have said, "Mary" with that emphatic accent, with that peculiar intonation? Who but He could have brought all her life to remembrance, not so much by the word itself, as by the meaning which He threw into it, and the vivid flash of His eyes which went with it?

One glance of His eyes darted the light of God into her spirit. "Mary!" was the Open Sesame of her heart and mind. Oh, now she has Him! Lord, speak in this fashion to some seeker who is here looking for You! Lord, speak to John and Peter, to Jane and Sarah! Let the message come to many hearers from Your own lips, to Your own glory!

VI. The last head is this—A SEEKING SOUL WILL RESPOND WITH REVERENCE TO THE WORD OF JESUS.

Mary said at once, "Rabboni." This is a Hebrew word, signifying "Master," or, as Parkhurst says, having a Chaldee particle within it, which makes it to mean "My Master," or, as I have heard some say, "Great Master." At any rate, she meant that He was her Lord and Teacher. He knew her heart, He understood her inmost soul, and therefore she acknowledged Him as her Lord. He had called her by her name and she recognized that all-controlling voice. He was her Master, since He could so divinely know and move her heart.

Even thus may we each one say, "My God, my Savior, convinced by Your knowledge of me and overpowered by Your condescension towards me, I feel that You have the sole right to my love, my trust, my obedience! You are within and about me, nearer to me than hands and feet, nearer to me than even the blood that flows from my heart. And therefore I joyfully submit my whole being to You, to be ruled and instructed by You as my sole Lord and Rabbi!"

In addition to this, she feels that she knows Him. He is no stranger to her. Had He been a stranger, He might have said, "Mary," many times. But because He was the Good Shepherd that knows His sheep and calls them by name, therefore Mary, as one of His sheep, responded to His call. Mary knew Him—do you know the Master? Beloved, do you know the Lord Jesus? To know Him is life eternal! Have you this life? Not to know Him is an ignorance dark as death.

I do not say, do you know *about* Him? But do you know HIM? Has the Lord ever spoken to you? Has he spoken one almighty syllable which has thrilled your very soul? If so, you will at once take Him to be your Teach-

er and yield your intellect to His instruction. From now on you will only want to know what He chooses to reveal. But what He reveals will satisfy your reason at once.

From now on opposing philosophies will go to the wind and you will learn of Him. From now on your own thoughts and speculations will seem as the chaff of the threshing floor, compared with the words which He teaches, which are full of weight and Divine authority, even of light and power eternal. Tonight, from my very heart, I call Jesus, “Rabboni.” I will have no Rabbi but Christ—no Master but my Lord Jesus. By all His knowledge of me and all His revelation of Himself to me, I take Him to be to me my Teacher and Lord.

“Rabboni” means also “Master” by way of authority. Mary confessed herself the follower of Jesus. Where He led the way, she was resolved to follow, even as our hymn puts it—

***“I am Yours and Yours alone,
This I gladly, fully own;
And, in all my works and ways,
Only now would seek Your praise.”***

From that time, even if it had not been so with her before, Mary Magdalene was one of those of whom it could be said, “They follow the Lamb wherever He goes.”

Happy man and happy woman, who will keep close to every footstep of the Lord. If you are seeking Him at this hour, pray that, at this moment, He may speak the revealing word, so that you may from now on feel that a change has come over you, the likes of which you have never known. May you experience a sacred twist which shall affect your whole character! May Jesus touch your heart so that your whole body, soul and spirit shall never forget that touch in time or in eternity! Amen.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON.

I hope my readers may have as much enjoyment in reading this sermon, as fell to my lot when preaching and revising it. At this present time I have lost my voice. But I feel especially thankful that this unusual inconvenience has happened to me only when it does not hinder me in the Lord’s work. Still, I would beg the prayers of my loving readers, that I may soon be able to speak, so as to be heard in the great congregation.

I take this opportunity, on this sermon for the Sunday before Christmas, to send my sincere Christian salutations to all, in every place, who read this discourse. The God of all Grace bless you and your household with the mercies which come of our Lord’s first advent and with a happy expectation of the high privileges which await Believers at His second and more glorious appearing!

C. H. S.

MENTONE, DECEMBER 14, 1889

Adapted from *The C.H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

“SUPPOSING HIM TO BE THE GARDENER”

NO. 1699

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 31, 1882,
BY C. H. SPURGEON.
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“Supposing Him to be the gardener.”
John 20:15.

I WAS sitting, about a fortnight ago, in a very lovely garden, in the midst of all kinds of flowers which were blooming in delightful abundance all around. Screening myself from the heat of the sun under the overhanging boughs of an olive tree, I cast my eyes upon palms and bananas, roses and camellias, oranges and aloes, lavender and heliotrope. The garden was full of color and beauty, perfume and fruitfulness. Surely the gardener, whoever he might be, who had framed, fashioned and kept in order that lovely spot, deserved great commendation. So I thought. And then it came to me to meditate upon the Church of God as a garden, and to suppose the Lord Jesus to be the Gardener, and then to think of what would most assuredly happen if it were so.

“Supposing Him to be the Gardener,” my mind conceived of a paradise where all sweet things flourish and all evil things are rooted up. If an ordinary worker had produced such beauty, as I then saw and enjoyed on earth, what bounty and glory must surely be brought forth, “supposing Him to be the Gardener”! You know the “Him” to whom we refer—the ever-blessed Son or God—whom Mary Magdalene, in our text, mistook for the gardener. We will, for once, follow a saint in her mistaken track—and yet we shall find ourselves going in a right way! She was mistaken when she fell into “supposing Him to be the gardener,” but if we are under His Spirit’s teaching, we shall not make a mistake if now we indulge ourselves in a quiet meditation upon our ever-blessed Lord, “supposing Him to be the Gardener.”

It is not an unnatural supposition, surely, for if we may truly sing—

***“We are a garden walled around,
Chosen and made peculiar ground,”***

that enclosure needs a Gardener. Are we not all the plants of His right hand planting? Do we not all need watering and tending by His constant and gracious care? He says, “I am the true vine: My Father is the vine-dresser,” and that is one view of it. But we may also sing, “My Well-Beloved has a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: and He fenced it, and gathered out the stones from it and planted it with the choicest vine”—that is to say, He acted as gardener to it. Thus has Isaiah taught us to sing a song of the Well-Beloved touching His vineyard. We read of our Lord just now under these terms—“You that dwells in the gardens, the companions hearken to Your voice.”

To what purpose does He dwell in the vineyards but that He may see how the vines flourish and care for all the plants? The image, I say, is so far from being unnatural that it is most pregnant with suggestions and

full of useful teaching! We are not going against the harmonies of Nature when we are "supposing Him to be the Gardener." Neither is the figure unscriptural, for in one of His own parables our Lord makes Himself to be the Dresser of the vineyard. We read just now that parable so full of warning. When the "certain man" came in and saw the fig tree, that it brought forth no fruit, he said unto the dresser of his vineyard, "Cut it down: why does it cumber the ground?"

Who was it that intervened between that profitless tree and the axe but our great Intercessor and Interposer? He it is who continually comes forward with, "Let it alone this year, also, till I shall dig about it and fertilize it." In this case He Himself takes upon Himself the character of the vine-dresser and we are not wrong in "supposing Him to be the Gardener." If we would be supported by a type, our Lord takes the name of, "the Second Adam," and the first Adam was a *gardener*. Moses tells us that the Lord God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. Man, in his best estate, was not to live in this world in a paradise of indolent luxury, but in a garden of recompensed toil! Behold, the Church is Christ's Eden, watered by the River of Life and so fertilized that all manner of fruits are brought forth unto God! And He, our Second Adam, walks in this spiritual Eden to dress it and to keep it—and so, by a type, we see that we are right in "supposing Him to be the Gardener."

Thus, also, Solomon thought of Him when he described the royal Bridegroom as going down with His spouse to the garden when the flowers appeared on the earth and the fig tree had put forth her green figs. He went out with His beloved for the reservation of the gardens, saying, "Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes." Neither Nature, nor Scripture, nor type, nor song forbids us to think of our adorable Lord Jesus as One that cares for the flowers and fruits of His Church. We err not when we speak of Him, "supposing Him to be the Gardener."

And so I sat still and indulged the suggested line of thought, which I now repeat in your hearing, hoping that I may open many roads of meditation for *your* hearts, also. I shall not attempt to think out such a subject, thoroughly, but only to indicate in which direction you may look for a vein of precious ore.

I. "Supposing Him to be the Gardener," we have, here, THE KEY TO MANY WONDERS in the garden of His Church. The first wonder is that there should be a Church at all in the world—that there should be a garden blooming in the midst of this sterile waste! Upon a hard and flinty rock the Lord has made the Eden of His Church to grow. How came it to be—an oasis of life in a desert of death? How came faith in the midst of unbelief, and hope where all is servile fear, and love where hate abounds? "You are of God, little children, and the whole world lies in the Wicked One."

Why this being "of God" where all, besides, are fast shut up in the devil? How came there to be a people for God, separated, sanctified, consecrated and ordained to bring forth fruit unto His name? Assuredly it could not have been so at all if the doing of it had been left to *man*! We understand its existence, "supposing Him to be the Gardener," but noth-

ing else can account for it. He can cause the fir tree to flourish instead of the thorn—and the myrtle instead of the briar—but no one else can accomplish such a change!

The garden in which I sat was made on the bare face of rock and almost all the earth of which its terraces were composed had been brought up there from the shore, below, by hard labor and so upon the rock a soil had been created. It was not by its own nature that the garden was found in such a place, but it had been formed by skill and labor. Even so, the Church of God has had to be constructed by the Lord Jesus, who is the Author as well as the Perfecter of His garden. Painfully, with wounded hands, He has built each terrace and fashioned each bed—and planted each plant. All the flowers have had to be watered with His bloody sweat and watched by His tearful eyes. The nail prints in His hands and the wound in His side are the tokens of what it cost Him to make a new Paradise. He has given His life for the life of every plant that is in the garden! And not one of them had been there on any other theory than "supposing Him to be the Gardener."

Besides, there is another wonder. How came the Church of God to flourish in such a clime? This present evil world is very uncongenial to the growth of Divine Grace and the Church is not able, by herself, to resist the evil influences which surround her. The Church contains within itself elements which tend to its own disorder and destruction if left alone. Even as the garden has present in its soil all the germs of a tangled thicket of weeds, the best Church that ever Christ had on earth would, within a few years, apostatize from the Truth of God if deserted by the Spirit of God! The world never helps the Church—it is all in arms against it! There is nothing in the world's air or soil that can fertilize the Church even to the least degree.

How is it, then, that notwithstanding all this, the Church is a fair garden unto God, and there are sweet spices grown in its beds and lovely flowers are gathered by the Divine hand from its borders? The continuance and prosperity of the Church can only be accounted for by "supposing Him to be the Gardener." Almighty strength is put to the otherwise impossible work of sustaining a holy people among men! Almighty wisdom exercises itself upon this otherwise insuperable difficulty. Hear the word of the Lord and learn the reason for the growth of His Church below. "I, the Lord, do keep it: I will water it every moment, lest any hurt it. I will keep it night and day." *That* is the reason for the existence of a spiritual people in the midst of a godless and perverse generation! This is the reason for an election of Grace in the midst of surrounding vice, worldliness and unbelief! "Supposing Him to be the Gardener," I can see why there should be fruitfulness, beauty and sweetness, even, in the center of the wilderness of sin!

Another mystery is also cleared up by this supposition. The wonder is that ever you and I should have been placed among the plants of the Lord! Why are *we* allowed to grow in the garden of His Grace? Why me, Lord? Why me? How is it that we have been kept and tolerate in our barrenness, when He might, long ago, have said, "Cut it down: why does it cumber the ground?" Who else would have borne with such waywardness as ours?

Who could have manifested such infinite patience? Who could have tended us with such care—and when the care was so ill-rewarded, who would have renewed it so long, day after day, and persisted in designs of boundless love? Who could have done more for His vineyard? Who could or would have done so much? A mere *man* would have repented of his good intent, provoked by our ingratitude!

None but God could have had patience with some of us! That we have not long ago been slipped off as fruitless branches of the vine—that we are still left upon the stem, in the hope that we may ultimately bring forth fruit—is a great marvel! I know not how it is that we have been spared, except upon this ground—“supposing Him to be the Gardener”—for Jesus is all gentleness and Grace, so slow with His knife, so tardy with His axe, so hopeful if we do but show a bud or two, or, perhaps, yield a little sour berry! So hopeful, I say, that these may be hopeful prognostics of something better, by-and-by. Infinite patience! Immeasurable long-suffering! Where are they to be found, except in the breast of the Well-Beloved? Surely the hoe has spared many of us simply and only because He who is meek and lowly in heart is the Gardener!

Dear Friends, there is one mercy with regard to this Church which I have often had to thank God for, namely, that evils should have been shut out for so long a time. During the period in which we have been together as pastor and people, and that is now some 29 years, we have enjoyed uninterrupted prosperity, going from strength to strength in the work of the Lord. Alas, we have seen many other Churches that were quite as hopeful as our own torn with strife, brought low by declension, or overthrown by heresy. I hope we have not been apt to judge their faults severely, but we must be thankful for our own deliverance from the evils which have afflicted them. I do not know how it is that we have been kept together in love, helped to abound in labor and enabled to be firm in the faith, unless it is that special Grace has watched over us.

We are full of faults! We have *nothing* to boast of! And yet no Church has been more Divinely favored! I marvel that the blessing should have lasted so long and I cannot figure it out except when I fall into “supposing Him to be the Gardener.” I cannot trace our prosperity to the pastor, certainly. Nor even to my beloved friends, the elders and deacons, nor even to the best of you with your fervent love and holy zeal. I think it must be that Jesus has been the Gardener and He has shut the gate when I am afraid I have left it open. And He has driven out the wild boar of the woods just when he had entered to root up the weaker plants. He must have been about at nights to keep off the prowling thieves—and He must have been here, too, in the noontide heat to guard those of you who have prospered in worldly goods—from the glare of too bright a sun.

Yes, He has been with us, blessed be His name! And that is why all this peace, unity and enthusiasm! May we never grieve Him so that He shall turn away from us, but rather let us entreat Him, saying, “Abide with us. You that dwells in the gardens, let this be one of the gardens in which You deign to dwell until the day breaks and the shadows flee away.” Thus our supposition is a key to many wonders.

II. Let your imaginations run along with mine while I say that “supposing Him to be the Gardener” should be A SPUR TO MANY DUTIES. One of the duties of a Christian is joy. That is a blessed religion which, among its precepts, commands men to be happy! When joy becomes a *duty*, who would wish to neglect it? Surely it must help every little plant to drink in the sunlight when it is whispered among the flowers that Jesus is the Gardener! “Oh,” you say, “I am such a little plant! I do not grow well! I do not put forth much foliage, nor are there so many flowers on me as on many round about me!” It is quite right that you should think little of yourself—perhaps to droop your head is a part of your beauty—many flowers had not been half so lovely if they had not practiced the art of hanging their heads.

But “supposing Him to be the Gardener,” then He is as much the Gardener to you as He is to the most lordly palm in the whole domain! In the Mentone garden, right before me grew the orange and the aloe, and others of the finer and more noticeable plants. But on a wall to my left grew common wallflowers and saxifrages, and tiny herbs such as we find on our own rocky places. Now, the gardener had cared for *all* of these, little as well as great! In fact, there were hundreds of specimens of the most insignificant growths, all duly labeled and described. The smallest saxifrage could say, “He is my gardener just as surely as he is the gardener of the Gloire de Dijon or Marechal Neil.”

Oh feeble child of God, the Lord takes care of you! Your heavenly Father feeds ravens and guides the flight of sparrows—should He not much more care for you, oh you of little faith? Oh, little plants, you will grow rightly enough! Perhaps you are growing downward, just now, rather than upward. Remember that there are plants of which we value the underground root much more than we do the hull above ground. Perhaps it is not yours to grow very fast. You may be a slow-growing shrub, by nature, and you would not be healthy if you were to run to wood. Anyway, be this your joy—you are in the garden of the Lord and, “supposing Him to be the Gardener,” He will make the best of you! You cannot be in better hands!

Another duty is that of valuing the Lord’s Presence and praying for it. We ought, whenever the Sabbath morning dawns, to pray our Well-Beloved to come into His garden and eat His pleasant fruits. What can we do without Him? All day long our cry should go up to Him, “O Lord, behold and visit this vine and the vineyard which Your right hand has planted.” We ought to agonize with Him that He would come and manifest Himself to us as He does not unto the world! For what is a garden if the gardener never comes near it? What is the difference between it and the wilderness if he to whom it belongs never lifts up spade or pruning-hook upon it? So that it is our necessity—that we have Christ with us—“supposing Him to be the gardener.”

And it is our bliss that we have Christ walking between our beds and borders, watching every plant, training, tending, maturing all. “Supposing Him to be the gardener,” it is well, for from Him is our fruit found. Divided from Him we are nothing! Only as He watches over us can we bring forth fruit. Let us have done with confidence in *man*! let us forego all attempts to supply facts of His spiritual Presence by routine or rant, ritualism or

rowdyism—but let us pray our Lord to be always present with us—and by that Presence to make our garden grow!

“Supposing Him to be the Gardener,” there is another duty and that is, let each one of us yield himself up entirely to Him. A plant does not know how it ought to be treated—it knows not when it should be watered or when it should be kept dry! A fruit tree is no judge of when it needs to be pruned, or dug, or fertilized. The wit and wisdom of the garden lies not in the flowers and shrubs, but in the *gardener*. Now, then, if you and I are here, today, with any self-will and carnal judgment about us, let us seek to lay it all aside that we may be absolutely at our Lord’s disposal. You might not be willing to put yourself implicitly into the hands of any mere man, (pity that you should), but surely, you plant of the Lord’s right-hand planting, you may put yourself without a question into His dear hands!

“Supposing Him to be the Gardener,” you may well say, “I would neither have will, nor wish, nor wit, nor whim, nor way, but I would be as nothing in the Gardener’s hands, that He may be to me my wisdom and my all. Here, kind Gardener, Your poor plant bows itself to Your hands—train me as You will.” Depend upon it, happiness lives next door to the spirit of complete acquiescence in the will of God! And it will be easy to exercise that perfect acquiescence when we suppose the Lord Jesus to be the Gardener. If the Lord has done it, what has a saint to say? Oh you afflicted one, the Lord has done it—would you have it otherwise? No, are you not thankful that it is so, because so is the will of Him in whose hands your life is and whose are all your ways? The duty of submission is very plain, “supposing Him to be the Gardener.”

One more duty I would mention, though others suggest themselves. “Supposing Him to be the Gardener,” then let us bring forth fruit to Him. I do not address a people, this morning, who feel no care as to whether they serve God or not. I believe that most of you desire to glorify God, for being saved by Grace, you feel a holy ambition to show forth His praises who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. You wish to bring others to Christ because you, yourselves, have been brought to life and liberty in Him. Now, let this be a stimulus to your fruit-bearing, that Jesus is the Gardener. Where you have brought forth a single cluster, bring forth a hundred, “supposing Him to be the Gardener”!

If He is to have the honor of it, then labor to do that which will give Him great renown. If our spiritual state were to be attributed to ourselves, or to our minister, or to some of our fellow Christians, we might not feel that we were under a great necessity to be fruitful. But if Jesus is the Gardener and is to bear the blame or the honor of what we produce, then let us use up every drop of sap and strain every fiber that, to the utmost of which our manhood is capable, we may produce a fair reward for our Lord’s travail! Under such tutorship and care we ought to become eminent scholars. Does Christ train us? Oh let us never cause the world to think less of our Master!

Students feel that their alma mater deserves great things of them, so they labor to make their university renowned. And so, since Jesus is Tutor and University to us, let us feel that we are bound to reflect credit upon so great a Teacher, upon so Divine a name! I do not know how to put it, but

surely we ought to do something worthy of such a Lord! Each little flower in the garden of the Lord should wear its brightest hues and pour forth its rarest perfume because Jesus cares for it. The best of all possible good should be yielded by every plant in our Father’s Garden, supposing Jesus to the Gardener!

Thus much, then, on those two points—a key to many wonders and a spur to many duties.

III. Thirdly, I have found in this supposition A RELIEF FROM CRUSHING RESPONSIBILITY. One has a work given Him of God to do and, if he does it rightly, he cannot do it carelessly. The first thing when he wakes he asks, “How is the work prospering?” And the last thought at night is, “What can I do to fulfill my calling?” Sometimes the anxiety even troubles his dreams and he sighs, “O Lord, send now prosperity!” How is the garden prospering which we are set to tend? Are we broken-hearted because nothing appears to flourish? Is it a bad season? Or is the soil lean and hungry? It is a very blessed relief to an excess of care if we can fall into the habit of “supposing Him to be the Gardener.”

If Jesus is the Master and Lord in all things, it is not *mine* to keep all the Church in order. I am not responsible for the growth of every Christian, nor for every backslider’s errors, nor for every professor’s faults of life. This burden must not lie on me so that I shall be crushed by it. “Supposing Him to be the Gardener,” then, the Church enjoys a better oversight than mine! Better care is taken of the garden than could be taken by the most vigilant watchers, even though by night the frost devoured them and by day the heat! “Supposing Him to be the Gardener,” then all must go well in the long run. He that keeps Israel does neither slumber nor sleep—we need not fret and despond.

I beg you earnest workers who are becoming depressed, to think this out a little! You see it is yours to work under the Lord Jesus—but it is *not* yours to take the anxiety of His office into your souls as though you were to bear His burdens! The under-gardener, the workman in the garden, needs not fret about the whole garden as though it were all left to him. No, no! Let him not take too much upon himself. I pray you, bound your anxiety by the facts of the case. So you have a number of young people around you and you are watching for their souls as they that must give account. This is well, but do not be worried and wearied, for, after all, the saving and the keeping of those souls is not in *your* hands, but it rests with One far more able than yourself! Just think that the Lord is the Gardener.

I know it is so in matters of Providence. A certain man of God in troublous times became quite unable to do his duty because he laid to heart so much the ills of the age. He became depressed and disturbed and he went on board a vessel, wanting to leave the country which was getting into such a state that he could no longer endure it. Then one said to him, Mr. Whitelock, are you the manager of the world? No, he was not quite that. “Did not God get on pretty well with it before you were born and don’t you think He will do very well with it when you are dead?” That reflection helped to relieve the good man’s mind and he went back to do his duty! I want you, thus, to perceive the limit of your responsibility—you are not the Gardener—you are only one of the Gardener’s boys, set to run er-

rands, or to do a bit of digging, or to sweep the paths. The garden is well enough managed even though you are not head manager in it!

While this relieves us of anxiety it makes labor for Christ very sweet because if the garden does not seem to repay us for our trouble, we say to ourselves, "It is not my garden, after all. 'Supposing Him to be the Gardener,' I am quite willing to work on a barren piece of rock, or tie up an old withered bough, or dig worthless sod, for, if it only pleases Jesus, the work is, for that one sole reason, profitable to the last degree! It is not mine to question the wisdom of my task, but to set about it in the name of my Master and Lord. 'Supposing Him to be the Gardener,' lifts the ponderous responsibility of it from me and my work becomes pleasant and delightful."

In dealing with the souls of men, we meet with cases which are extremely difficult. Some persons are so timid and fearful that you do not know how to comfort them. Others are so fast and presumptuous that you hardly know how to help them. A few are so double-faced that you cannot understand them and others so fickle that you cannot hold them. Some flowers puzzle the ordinary gardener—we meet with plants which are covered with thorns and when you try to train them, they wound the hands that would help them. These strange growths would make a great muddle for you if you were the gardener—but, "supposing Him to be the Gardener"—you have the happiness of being able to go to Him constantly, saying, "Good Lord, I do not understand this singular creature. It is as odd a plant as I am, myself. Oh, that You would manage it, or tell me how! I have come to tell You of it."

Constantly our trouble is that we have so many plants to look after that we have not time to cultivate any one in the best manner because we have 50 more all needing attention at the same time! And then, before we have done with the watering-pot, we have to fetch the hoe and the rake and the spade! These multitudinous cares puzzle us, even as Paul was, when he said, "That which comes upon me daily, the care of all the Churches." Ah, then, it is a blessed thing to do the little we can do and leave the rest to Jesus, "supposing Him to be the Gardener."

In the Church of God there is a discipline which we cannot exercise. I do not think it is half so hard to exercise discipline as it is *not* to be able to exercise it when you feel that it ought to be done. The servants of the householder were perplexed when they might not root up the tares. "Did you not sow good seed in your field? Why, then, has it tares?" "An enemy has done this." "Would you, then, that we go and gather them up?" "Not so," said he, "lest you root up the wheat with them." This afflicts the Christian minister when he must not remove a pestilent, hindering weed. Yes, but "supposing Him to be the Gardener," and it is His will to let that weed remain, what have you and I to do but to hold our peace? He has a discipline more sure and safe than ours and, in due time, the tares shall know it! In *patience* let us possess our souls.

And then, again, there is that succession in the garden which we can not keep up. Plants will die down and others must be put into their places or the garden will grow bare, but we know not where to find fresh flowers! We say, "When yonder good man dies, who will succeed him?" That is a

question I have heard many a time, till I am rather weary of it! Who is to follow such a man? Let us wait till he is gone and needs following! Why sell the man's coat when he can wear it, himself? We are apt to think, when this race of good Brethren shall die, that none will arise worthy to unloose the laces of their shoes! Well, Friend, I could suppose a great many things, but this morning my text is, “Supposing Him to be the Gardener,” and on *that* supposition I expect that the Lord has other plants in reserve which you have not yet seen—and these will fit *exactly* into our places when they become empty—and the Lord will keep up the true Apostolic succession till the day of His Second Advent!

In every time of darkness and dismay, when the heart sinks and the spirits decline, and we think it is all over with the Church of God, let us fall back on this, “Supposing Him to be the Gardener,” and expect to see greater and better things than these! We are at the end of our wits, but He is not at the beginning of His! We are nonplussed, but He never will be! Therefore let us wait and be tranquil, “supposing Him to be the Gardener.”

IV. Fourthly, I want you to notice that this supposition will give you A DELIVERANCE FROM MANY GLOOMY FEARS. I walked down the garden and I saw a place where all the path was strewn with leaves, broken branches, stones—and I saw the earth upon the flower beds tossed about and roots lying quite out of the ground—all was in disorder! Had a dog been amusing himself? Or had a mischievous child been at work? If so, it was a great pity. But no—in a minute or two I saw the gardener come back and I perceived that he had been making all this disarrangement! He had been cutting, digging, hacking and making a mess—and all for the good of the garden!

It may be it has happened to some of you, that you have been a good deal pruned, lately, and in your domestic affairs things have not been in so fair a state as you could have wished. It may be in the Church we have seen ill weeds plucked up and barren branches lopped, so that everything is in disarray. Well, if the Lord has done it, gloomy fears are idle! “Supposing Him to be the Gardener,” all is well! As I was talking this over with my friend, I said to him—“Supposing Him to be the Gardener,” then the serpent will have a bad time of it. Supposing Adam to be the gardener, then the serpent gets in and has a chat with his wife, and mischief comes of it. But supposing Jesus to be the Gardener, woe to you, Serpent—there is a blow for your head within half a minute if you do but show yourself within the boundary! So, if we are afraid that the devil should get in among us, let us always, in prayer, entreat that there may be no space for the devil because the Lord Jesus Christ fills all and keeps out the adversary.

Other creatures besides serpents intrude into gardens—caterpillars, palmerworms and all sorts of destroying creatures are apt to devour our Churches. How can we keep them out? The highest wall cannot exclude them! There is no protection except one—and that is, “supposing Him to be the Gardener.” Thus it is written, “I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, says the Lord of hosts.” I am sometimes troubled by the question, What if roots of bitter-

ness should spring up among us to trouble us? We are all such fallible creatures, supposing some Brother should permit the seed of discord to grow in his bosom? Then there may be a Sister in whose heart the seeds will also spring up, and from her they will fly to another Sister and be blown about till Brothers and Sisters are all bearing rue and wormwood in their hearts. Who is to prevent this?

Only the Lord, Jesus by His Spirit! He can keep out this evil, "supposing Him to be the Gardener." The root which bears wormwood will grow but little where Jesus is! Dwell with us, Lord, as a Church and people! By Your Holy Spirit reside with us and in us, and never depart from us, and then no root of bitterness shall spring up to trouble us! Then comes another fear. Suppose the Living Waters of God's Spirit should not come to water the garden, what then? We cannot make them flow, for the Spirit is a Sovereign and He flows where He pleases. Ah, but the Spirit of God will be in our garden, "supposing our Lord to be the Gardener." There is no fear of our not being watered when Jesus undertakes to do it! "He will pour water on him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground."

But what if the sunlight of His love should not shine on the garden? If the fruit should never ripen; if there should be no peace; no joy in the Lord? That cannot happen "supposing Him to be the Gardener," for His face is the sun and His Countenance scatters health-giving beams, nurturing warmth and perfecting influences which are necessary for maturing the saints in all the sweetness of Grace to the Glory of God! So, "supposing Him to be the Gardener" at this, the close of the year, I fling away my doubts and fears and invite you who bear the Church upon your heart to do the same! It is all well with Christ's cause because it is in His own hands! He shall not fail nor be discouraged! The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hands!

V. Fifthly, here is A WARNING FOR THE CARELESS, "supposing Him to be the Gardener." In this great congregation many are to the Church what weeds are to a garden. They are not planted by God! They are not growing under His nurture. They are bringing forth no fruit to His Glory. My dear Friend, I have tried often to get at you, to impress you, but I cannot. Take heed, for one of these days, "supposing Him to be the Gardener," He will reach you and you shall know what that Word of God means, "Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted shall be rooted up." Take heed to yourselves, I pray!

Others among us are like the branches of the vine which bear no fruit. We have often spoken very sharply to these, speaking honest truth in unmistakable language—and yet we have not touched their consciences. Ah, but "supposing Him to be the Gardener," He *will* fulfill that sentence—"Every branch in Me that bears not fruit He takes away." He will get at you, if we cannot. Would God, before this old year were quite dead, you would turn unto the Lord with full purpose of heart so that, instead of being a weed, you might become a choice flower! That instead of a dry stick, you might be a sappy, fruit-bearing branch of the vine! The Lord make it to be so!

But if any here need the caution, I pray them to take it to heart at once. "Supposing Him to be the Gardener," there will be no escaping from His

eyes! There will be no deliverance from His hands. As “He will thoroughly purge His floor and burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire,” so He will thoroughly cleanse His garden and cast out every worthless thing!

VI. Another set of thoughts may well arise as A QUIETUS TO THOSE WHO COMPLAIN, “Supposing Him to be the Gardener.” Certain of us have been made to suffer much physical pain, which often bites into the spirits and makes the heart stoop. Others have suffered heavy temporal losses, having had no success in business, but, on the contrary, having had to endure privation, perhaps even to penury. Are you ready to complain against the Lord for all this? I pray you, do not do it! Take the supposition of the text into your mind this morning. The Lord has been pruning you sharply, cutting off your best branches and you seem to be like a thing despised that is constantly tormented with the knife.

Yes, but “supposing Him to be the Gardener,” suppose that your loving Lord has worked it all, that from His own hands all your grief has come—every cut, every gash and every slip—does not this alter the case? Has not the Lord done it? Well, then, if it is so, put your finger to your lips and be quiet until you are able, from your heart, to say, “The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord.” I am persuaded that the Lord has done nothing amiss to any of His people! I am persuaded that no child of His can rightly complain that he has been whipped with too much severity—and that no one branch of the vine can truthfully declare that it has been pruned with too sharp an edge!

No, what the Lord has done is the best that could have been done! The very thing that you and I, if we could have possessed infinite wisdom and love, would have wished to have done! Therefore let us stop each thought of murmuring and say, “The Lord has done it,” and be glad. Especially I speak to those who have suffered bereavement. I can hardly express to you how strange I feel, at this moment, when my sermon revives a memory so sweet dashed with such exceeding bitterness. I sat with my friend and secretary in that garden some 15 days ago and we were, then, in perfect health, rejoicing in the goodness of the Lord. We returned home and within five days I was struck with disabling pain. And worse, far worse than that, he was called upon to lose his wife.

We said to one another, as we sat there reading the Word of God and meditating, “How happy we are! Dare we think of being so happy? Must it not speedily end?” I little thought I should have to say for him, “Alas, my Brother, you are brought very low, for the delight of your eyes is taken from you.” But here is our comfort—the Lord has done it! The best rose in the garden is gone. Who has taken it? The Gardener came this way and gathered it! He planted it and watched over it, and now He has taken it. Is not this most natural? Does anybody weep because of that? No, everybody knows that it is right and according to the order of Nature that He should come and gather the best in the garden!

If you are sorely troubled by the loss of your beloved, yet dry your grief by “supposing Him to be the Gardener.” Kiss the hand that has wrought you such grief? Beloved Brothers and Sisters, remember, the next time the Lord comes to your part of the garden—and He may do so within the

next week—He will only gather His own flowers, and would you prevent His doing so even if you could?

VII. “Supposing Him to be the Gardener,” then, there is AN OUTLOOK FOR THE HOPEFUL. “Supposing Him to be the Gardener,” then, I expect to see, in the garden where He works, the best possible prosperity! I expect to see no flower dried up, no tree without fruit! I expect to see the richest, rarest fruit, with the daintiest bloom upon it, daily presented to the great Owner of the garden. Let us expect that in this Church and pray for it! Oh, if we have but faith, we shall see great things! It is our unbelief that straitens God. Let us believe great things from the work of Christ by His Spirit in the midst of His people’s hearts and we shall not be disappointed!

“Supposing Him to be the Gardener,” then, dear Friends, we may expect Divine union of unspeakable preciousness! Go back to Eden for a minute. When *Adam* was the gardener, what happened? The Lord God walked in the garden in the cool of the day. But “supposing Him to be the Gardener,” we shall have the Lord God dwelling among us and revealing Himself in all the Glory of His power and the plenitude of His Fatherly heart—making us to know Him—that we may be filled with all the fullness of God. What joy is this!

One other thought. “Supposing Him to be the Gardener,” and God to come and walk among the trees of the garden, then I expect He will remove the whole of the garden upward with Himself to fairer skies, for He rose and His people must rise with Him! I expect a blessed transplantation of all these flowers below to a clearer atmosphere above—away from all this smoke and fog and damp—up where the sun is never clouded, where flowers never wither, where fruits never decay! Oh, the glory we shall then enjoy up yonder, on the hills of spices in the Garden of God! “Supposing Him to be the Gardener” what a garden will He form above and how shall you and I grow there, developing beyond imagination!

“It does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like He is, for we shall see Him as He is.” Since He is the Author and Finisher of our faith, to what perfection will He conduct us! And to what Glory will He bring us! Oh, to be found in Him! God grant we may be! To be plants in His garden, “Supposing Him to be the Gardener,” is all the Heaven we can desire!

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A HANDKERCHIEF

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***DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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***“Jesus said to her, Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?”
John 20:15.***

IN the Garden of Eden, immediately after the Fall, the sentence of sorrow and of sorrow multiplied, fell upon the woman. In the garden where Christ had been buried, after His Resurrection, the news of comfort—comfort rich and Divine—came to a woman through the woman's promised Seed, the Lord Jesus Christ. If the sentence must fall heavily upon the woman, so must the comfort come most sweetly to her. I will not say that the Resurrection reversed the curse of the Fall, but, at any rate, it took the sting out of it, lifted it up and sanctified it! There was reason enough for the woman to weep after the sentence had been pronounced upon her, but there is no reason for her to weep now that Jesus Christ has fulfilled the promise which followed upon man's disobedience, namely, that the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head.

Observe the wise method followed by the Divine Consoler. In order to comfort Mary Magdalene, our Lord put a question to her. It is often the wisest way to relieve minds that are swollen through grief to allow them to find the natural end of their sorrow by asking them why they are weeping. We have to do this with ourselves sometimes. We enquire, “Why are you cast down, O my Soul? And why are you disquieted within me?” The soul begins to ask for the reason of its grief and often finds that it is insufficient to justify so bitter a sorrow and, perhaps, it even discovers that the sources of its sorrow have been misunderstood and that, if they had been rightly comprehended, they would have been sources of joy instead! He who would be wise in dealing with the daughters of grief, must let them tell their own story and, almost without a single sentence from you, their own story will be blessed by God to the relieving of their grief.

Moreover, it is always wise, before we attempt to comfort anyone, to know what is the peculiar form and fashion which grief has taken. The physician who without investigation should at once proceed to apply a remedy to his patient, might be giving the wrong medicine for the disease. He has to make his diagnosis of the malady, to see whence it came, what are its symptoms, and how it works—and then the physician adapts his medicine to the case. Sit down with your sorrow, my Friend,

and let us hear what ails you. What causes you to fret? What causes your soul to travail? Possibly the sorrowing ones will themselves direct you to the right remedy for their malady and so you shall be able to speak a word in season and, “a word spoken in due season, how good it is!” You are at present like a man groping in the dark and you will be as one pouring vinegar upon niter if you sing songs to a heavy heart! And you will make matters worse which you had hoped to make better unless you find out the cause of the mourner’s tears.

My one objective at this time is to take this question of our Lord to Mary and apply it to all who are sorrowing here. And although I shall keep to the text and repeat the question, “Woman, why are you weeping?” I shall hope that other sorrowers besides the women here will find comfort from the words which the Holy Spirit will teach me to speak. I shall ask, first, *is it natural sorrow?* And secondly, *is it spiritual sorrow?*

I. We will first enquire about that which is common to us all without exception, IS IT NATURAL SORROW? Is it sorrow which springs from our human nature and is common to all who are born of woman, to whom sorrow comes as a portion of our heritage?

Well, my Friend, what is the cause of your grief? What ails you? *Is it because you are bereaved?* Have you lost someone who was very dear to you? Then your grief is not unusual and your weeping is not unpardonable, for Jesus wept as He stood at the grave of His friend Lazarus. But let not your weeping go beyond due bounds. Your tears are right enough so far, but they may be wrong if they go any further. There is a weeping of regret and of a lacerated spirit, upon which God looks with pity, but there may come a weeping of rebelliousness upon which even our Heavenly Father may feel that He must look with anger. “Why are you weeping?” Will you look into your heart, Beloved, and see whether the cause of your grief is such as does fully justify it, or see whether you have already carried it too far? You have lost a child—a lovely child, but, my Sister, you have not really lost your child. Do you count that lost which is in Christ’s keeping? Do you count that baby lost which is up among the angels? If your child had been taken to be a prince in a palace, you would not have said that he was lost! Inasmuch as he has been caught away to be with Jesus, say not that he is lost. You are the mother of one who can see the face of God and thus says the Lord unto you, “Refrain your eyes from weeping, for your children shall come again from the land of their captivity.”

Have you lost your husband? It is a heavy blow and well may you weep, but still, who took him from you? Was it not He who lent him to you? Bless the Lord that you have had all those years of comfort and joy! And say with Job, “The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” The loss of your husband has made a great void in your life, but the Lord will fill that void. Do you know Him? Then He will be a Husband unto you and a Father to your fatherless children. He has said, “Leave your fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let your widows trust in Me.” You are a widow. Then trust in the

Lord. If you are a widow without faith in God, then yours is a sorrow, indeed, but if the widow's sorrow shall drive her to trust in Christ as her Savior, if she shall look up and in her deep sorrow trust herself with the great Helper of the helpless, she shall find her loss to be a gain!

“Woman, why are you weeping?” Whatever relative or friend you have lost, your God will be more to you than the loved one could ever be! The Well-Beloved, the Lord Jesus Christ, is better to us than all earthly friends. And when they are taken away from us, He more than fills the space which once they occupied, so that, if we have less of human love, we have more of the Divine—and thus we are gainers rather than losers! Look forward to the Resurrection and be comforted. Remember that the worm has not consumed the beauty forever, neither has the precious temple of the body been given up to everlasting ruin. If they fell asleep in Christ, as surely as they were buried they shall rise again in beauty, in the image of Jesus Christ! So let us not sorrow as those who are without hope. Brush away your tears, or, if they must fall, smile through them in sweet resignation to the Divine will and be still.

“Why are you weeping?” Is there another reason for your sorrow? *Do you weep because you are very poor?* There are some who do not know the sorrow of poverty, who will, perhaps, blame you. But I know that there are some of you who have a hard task to find a livelihood—a task at which a slave might be pitied. In this great city many toil till they wear themselves almost to skeletons—and even then scarcely find food enough to keep body and soul together! There are some of the choicest sons and daughters of the Lord who seem to be the lowest of all in the scale of this world's possessions! And their lot, from morning to night, is one of incessant drudgery. Were it not for these sweet Sabbaths, to live on earth would be to them altogether a bondage! But weep not, my poor Sister. Weep not, my poor Brother. There is One who was poorer than you are who will bear your burdens for you! Jesus Christ was poorer than poverty because He had once been so exceedingly rich—and none are so poor as those who come down from wealth to poverty. You know that though He was rich, yet, for our sakes, He became poor, that we, through His poverty, might become rich. Poor mourner, remember the promise to him that walks righteously and speaks uprightly—“Bread shall be given him, his waters shall be sure.” Remember, also, how the Lord Jesus said to His disciples, “Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Why, if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?” “Behold the fowls of the air, for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your Heavenly Father feeds them.” So, will He not feed you, also? Wipe away your tears! Bend your back to the burden which God has laid upon you, “and be content with such things as you have, for He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you.”

“Woman, why are you weeping?” Suppose that neither of these causes account for your sorrow, *have you a beloved sick one at home?* Yes, and you may well weep if that sickness has been long—and if it wears away the beauty from the cheeks and the brightness from the eyes and if it costs innumerable pains and anguish only to be understood by those who suffer it and those who watch, hour by hour, by the sufferer. I can understand your weeping and yet, Beloved, your case is in Christ’s hands and you may safely leave your dear ones in His hands. He never sent a trial to any child of His unless it was so necessary that to have withheld it would have been unkind! Accept it as the Lord’s love-token. Besides, remember that He can recover our loved ones if He deems it wise, or He can sustain them in their sickness if He does not see fit to recover them. And he can give them a joyful exit from this world and an abundant entrance into His everlasting Kingdom. So do not weep too much, but say, “It is the Lord. Let Him do what seems good to Him.”

Possibly, however, the weeping may come to us because *we have sickness in our own bodies*. While we are sitting or standing here, some of us little know the amount of suffering that may be felt by the person who is sitting next to us. I have often wondered how some of my beloved hearers ever manage to get here at all—yet they are here, although full of pain. They find a sweet forgetfulness, at least for a little time, while the Word is being preached and they cannot forego the pleasure of mingling with the people of God, even though it costs them many a sharp pang. Yet I would urge even such sufferers to dry their tears. It may be that the dreaded disease of consumption is gradually wearing away the life, but, my Sister, it is no ill thing to just swoon away into Heaven and to gently pass from this life to another and a brighter day! Perhaps you are suffering from some painful disease which is known to be fatal. Well, that is only another way of bringing a King’s messenger to take you swiftly Home. If you have no Christ, you may well weep if you have received your death-wound, for after death comes judgment. This disease is a messenger sent to bid you prepare to meet your God. Suppose you were smitten down today? God has given you a timely warning. Take it, I pray you, and, instead of weeping over your sickness, may the Holy Spirit enable you to weep over your *sin* and to trust in Christ as your Savior, for then all shall be well! If we have believed in Jesus, we need not weep, even though the dread archer may have lodged the fatal shaft quite near our heart. What is there to weep about? When a Christian has received an intimation that he is soon to be with his Savior in Glory, we may congratulate him that he is the sooner to be out of the strife and the sin—and to forever wear the crown of victory and glory! So we will not weep about that.

Perhaps I am addressing one who says, “My sorrow is neither bereavement, nor personal sickness, nor the sickness of friends, nor poverty—I sometimes think I could bear any or all of those trials. I have been the victim of a treacherous friend *I trusted and have been deceived*. I gave my heart’s best affections and have been betrayed.” You, too, dear

Friend, are not alone in that trial. There was One, far better than you, on whose cheek came the hot kiss from the betrayer's lips, so that Jesus said to Judas, "Do you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?" Many have had so-called friends who, in the time of testing, have been more cruel than avowed foes. They have been as the cunning fowler who spreads his net so warily that he may catch the little birds. Well, if your case is like that of the birds, fly away to Jesus! Trust Him, for He will never deceive you. If Jesus shall fill that vacancy in your heart, it will have been a blessed vacancy! A broken heart is best healed by a touch of the pierced hand of Jesus! Get away to Him, you Hannah, you woman of a sorrowful spirit—go to the "Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief," and He will find a balm for your spirit.

I cannot go further into these natural sorrows—they are so many and the river of grief is so deep and rapid. But, whatever your sorrow may be, one piece of advice I have to give to every weeping one—find the Divine Comforter and, whatever your griefs may be, they shall be relieved!

II. Now I come to our main question, which is this, IS IT SPIRITUAL SORROW? If so, *is it sorrow for others, or sorrow for yourselves?*

I will begin with the nobler form. "Woman, why are you weeping?" Do you weep for others? Are there some whom you love and for whom you have often prayed who remain in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity? This is a suitable subject for mourning. Weep not for those who have gone to be "forever with the Lord," for all is well with them! But weep for those who are living in sin—for the young man in his unbridled lust who has dishonored his father's name—for the daughter who, in her willfulness, has gone astray into the paths of transgression. Weep for the heart that will not break. Weep for the eyes that will not weep. Weep for the sinners who will not confess their sins, but are resolutely seeking their own damnation! Ah, my dear Friends, when you are weeping like that, you are weeping as your Savior did when He wept over Jerusalem—and God will put your tears into His bottle. Be comforted, for those tears of yours are omens of good to the souls you pity, for, as surely as you groan and sigh and cry over these beloved ones, you are doing what you can to bring them the blessing! And I think that is a token that the blessing of God is on its way to them. You remember that it is written that "the power of the Lord was present to heal" on a certain occasion? Why was it more present, then, than at any other time? Was it not because there were four men who were breaking up the roof to let down a sick one into the room where Christ was? Wherever there is real concern for souls, although it is only in four persons, there is about the ministry a power of an unusual kind! Go on, then, and still weep, but not hopelessly, not with the bitterness of despair. The Lord will see your tears and will hear your prayers, and will grant your petition, even though you may not live to see it! Perhaps when you are in Heaven, your son, your husband, your sister—over whom you now are weeping, shall be brought to Christ.

Possibly, however, the sorrow for others relates to the church with which this mourner is connected. It is often my lot to meet with Brothers and Sisters coming from country towns who say to me, "What are we to do? The place of worship where we attend might almost as well be pulled down, for there is no life, no energy, no power there." Oh, it is wretched work, indeed, when that is the case! Many towns and villages would be all the better if the meeting house and the parish church, too, were utterly demobilized—because then they would feel that they had not any religious means at all and would, perhaps, be stirred up to seek them! But now there is dead formalism in both places. There is nothing worse than sluggishness in the pastors and members of a church. What is the use of a dead church? It is no use at all! The fact is, the better a church is, the sooner it rots when it is dead. The man who is very stout is the very worst person to keep in the house when once he is dead—and the church that seems to be most packed with Divine Truth is the most obnoxious to all when once the life goes out of it.

Well, my dear Friends, if you are sorrowing over the low condition of the church to which you belong and the state of religion in general in the neighborhood where you live, I would not stop your tears, yet I would try to comfort you, and I would advise you to take the case to your Lord. He is the Head of the Church, so carry that burden to Him. Do not go about finding fault. Do not try to sow dissension and dissatisfaction, or you will do hurt instead of good. But lay the matter before your Lord and Master and give Him no rest till once again He puts forth His almighty power and raises His Church to life!

Now I must leave this point, but I think that it is a grand thing to sorrow and weep for others. We ought to make it a rule of our life to bear the sorrows of other people. If sinners will not repent, we cannot repent for them. If they will not believe, we cannot believe for them. True religion can never be a matter of sponsorship, but we can do this for sinners—we can say to the Lord, "O Lord, these sinners will not feel their sin, but we feel it! It grieves us and cuts us to the heart! O Lord, will You not give them repentance? Will You not cause these sinners to believe in You? We confess their iniquity before You, for we know the guiltiness of their hearts in rejecting You. We weep and mourn that they will not admire Your beauty and will not yield their hearts to You, but, dear Savior, *do* win their hearts in answer to our prayer. They are far away from God by their wicked works—bring them nearby Your precious blood." That is what I mean. And if you can do this, appropriating, as it were, the sins and sorrows of mankind to yourself, you will be showing your sympathy with them in the best possible way. Woman, if you weep thus for others, blessed are you among women!

But, now, "why are you weeping?" *Is it for yourself?* Are these spiritual sorrows on your own account? Are you a sorrowing child of God? Do you know yourself to be a Christian and yet do you weep? Then, what is the cause of your grief? Do you miss your Lord's Presence? If so, there is reason enough for your weeping, yet why should you weep? He is present

even now—you have not seen Him, but He has seen you and is gazing upon you at this very moment. Beloved mourner, do not say, “I am out of fellowship with Christ and I am afraid I cannot return to that blessed experience for months.” Listen to this text—“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hears My voice and opens the door”—that is all—“I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.” It was to the angel of the Church of the Laodiceans, the lukewarm Laodiceans, that these words were written! And they are also written to you, my Sister, and to you, my Brother if you have grown lukewarm. Be willing for Christ to come to you and, before you are aware, your soul shall make you like the chariots of Amminadib! Do not imagine that restoration to communion with Christ need occupy a longer time than conversion—and remember, conversion is often worked instantaneously! So you may be lifted up from the depths of despondency to the heights of sacred fellowship with your Lord before this present service closes. Be of good cheer and let your joy be renewed this very hour!

But perhaps you say, “I weep because I have grieved my Lord.” Those are blessed tears, although the offense which caused them is grievous. Well may we be grieved when Christ has been grieved by us, but, mourning Soul, though He is rightly grieved with you, remember this gracious declaration, “He will not always chide: neither will He keep His anger forever.” And this comforting promise, “For a small moment have I forsaken you; but with great mercies will I gather you. In a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on you, says the Lord your Redeemer.” Only confess that you have transgressed against the Lord, your Redeemer, and you may come back to Him at once! No, even now He comes to meet with you and He brings with Him the basin and the towel, that He may wash your soiled feet, for He has washed you once in His blood and now He will again wash your feet and you shall be clean, every whit, and shall walk with cleansed feet in renewed fellowship with your Lord!

Possibly some of you say that your sorrow is that you are not as holy as you wish to be. Ah, that is a sorrow which I share with you, for I can say with the Apostle Paul, “When I would do good, evil is present with me.” And though I hear of some who do not find that evil is present with them, I suspect that the reason is because they do not know themselves as they really are, or they would find that it was so with them, at least at times. If I could, I would be without one sinful thought, or word, or deed, or imagination, or wish—and so would you—and because you cannot be so at present, you weep. It is well that such tears should fall, only do not let these tears dim your view of Christ! Do not let those longings prevent your knowing that you are perfect and complete in Christ Jesus! Do not let your struggles hinder you from believing that Christ has conquered sin *for* you and that He will yet conquer sin *in* you. Do not let anything take away from you the full conviction that sin shall be altogether destroyed in you and that Christ will present you to His Father, “without

spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing,” “holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in His sight.”

Perhaps you say that your sorrow is because you can do so little for Christ. Ah, there again I have sympathy with you, but do not fret about that. Those of us who have the largest opportunities, are often those who most regret that we can do so little avail ourselves of them. But I know some godly women who are confined to the house with the care of a numerous family, or, worse still, are confined to their bed in constant pain—and one of their greatest griefs is that they can do so little for Christ. But, Brother, Sister, do you not know the rule of David and the rule of David’s Lord? They that abide by the supplies shall have the same portion as they who go out to the battle! You are like the soldiers who have to keep in the rear and guard the baggage. But when the King comes back with all the active troops who have been doing the fighting, you will share the victory with them! You who are at home keeping the camp preserve many things which might be forgotten if we were all on active service. Be you comforted, then, if you are called to suffer or to be in obscurity—you shall be equal to the man and woman who are called to labor more prominently. Do what you can! I do not know that Christ Himself ever praised anybody more than He did that woman of whom He said, “She has done what she could.” I daresay she wanted to do a great deal more, but she did what she could. And if you have done what you could, it is well.

“Ah,” says another, “but I am conscious of a great deal of weakness. What I do is done so badly. Even in prayer, I do not always prevail. My petitions often seem to come back to me unanswered.” Well, dear Friend, do not altogether regret your weakness, for there was one who said that when he was weak, he was strong. If you have many infirmities which make you weak, there is a way of glorying in infirmities because the power of Christ rests upon you! Suppose that you are not only weak, but that you are weakness itself—that you are nothing and nobody? When you have reached that point, the cause of your weeping will have vanished because where you end, there God begins! And when you have done with self, then Christ will be All-in-All to you and you will lift up your voice in praise of Him who has done such great things for you!

Many strange things happen to young Christians between the time of their conversion and their entrance into Heaven. Their program of life is seldom carried out. The map which they make of the route is not according to the true geography of it. They reckon that as soon as they have believed in Jesus they will enter into sweet peace and rest, which is probably correct, but they also suppose that this peace and rest will always continue and probably increase—that they will go to Heaven singing all the way, along pleasant roads and paths of peace—and that the light upon their way will get brighter and brighter till it comes to the perfect day! They feel so happy and they sing so sweetly that they imagine it will always be with them just as it was in the first hours of their Christian experience. They are like persons who have, for the first

time in their lives, come into the bright light of day after having lived in a deep mine, or been immured in a dark dungeon! They ask what season of the year it is and they are told that it is springtime, that the flowers have begun to bloom, but that there are more to follow. They hear the birds singing, but they are told that there are brighter days to come, that May is a fairer month than April and June still brighter, and then will come the months of harvest when the sickle shall be thrust in among the golden grain.

All this is very cheering, so this new beginner plans that tomorrow he will be out all day upon the green grass, or in the gardens admiring the bursting buds and gathering for himself many a delightful garland of flowers! But, perhaps, when he gets up tomorrow morning, the Heavens are black with clouds and a torrent of rain is falling. "Oh," he says, "I never reckoned upon this!" Then, perhaps, in June, there comes such a hurry-burly in the sky as he never thought of—flames of fire and loud thunders out of the Heavens and dreadful drenching showers intermixed with rattling hail. "Oh," he says, "I never calculated upon this! I thought the months were to grow brighter and brighter and that, at last, there would come the golden harvest." We tell him that these rains and storms all conduce to the very result which we promised him and that they are by no means contrary to our statement. We were only giving him a brief outline of the year's history and these things are by no means contrary to our outline—nor need he fear but that the month of harvest will come in due season. It is true, young Christian, that you will have a light upon your road and that it will grow more and more bright unto the perfect day! It is true that the ways of wisdom "are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." Your highest conception of the joy to be found in Christ is not an exaggerated one. However much delight you may anticipate, you shall have all that and you shall also have even more, as you are able to bear it! But intermittent times will come—strange times to you—in which your joy will seem to be dead and your peace will be fearfully disturbed. Your soul will be "tossed with tempest and not comforted." You will sorrowfully sit in sackcloth and ashes and you will not go to the table of feasting, but to the house of mourning. There will you be made to drink the water of tears and have your bread salted with grief. Be not surprised, then, when this comes to pass, as though some strange things had happened to you. Remember that we have told you of it. We who have gone further on the road to Heaven than you have gone, tell you that there will come dark times and stormy times—and we bid you prepare for them.

Now I must turn to others in our assembly. "Woman, why are you weeping?" Perhaps you say, "O Sir, I dare not put myself down among the saints!" Well, then, will you put yourself down among the sinners? "Yes, I am a sinner," you reply, "yet I think—I hope I am not altogether without some little faith in Christ. I sometimes feel myself inclined to love Him but, oftentimes, I am of another mind, averse to all that is good."

Ah, my Friend, I know you and I have met with many like your class. I said once to one of your sort, "You say that you are not a Christian." "No," she said, "I fear I am not." "Then," I asked, "why do you go to the House of God on the Sabbath? Why don't you stay at home, or go where sinners go?" "Oh, no, Sir," she answered, "I could not do that! When I hear people blaspheme the name of Christ it cuts me to the quick. And I am never as happy as when I am with the people of God. I enjoy the hymns that they sing and while I am with them, my heart gets so warm that I feel as if I must praise the Lord. I think it is a great mercy that I cannot help blessing and praising God." "Well, then," I said, "I think that you must really have some faith in Christ or you would not feel and act as you do."

I remember hearing of a minister who wrote down these words, "I do not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," and asked a person who was full of doubt to sign her name to that declaration, but she would not do that! She did believe in Christ though she did not think that she believed. I once offered a person who said she had no faith, a five pound note if she would give up her faith, but she said that she would not take a thousand worlds for it! Mrs. Much-Afraid, and Mr. Despondency, and Mr. Feeble-Mind, and Mr. Ready-to-Halt—there are plenty of that family still living! And I know why you weep, good woman, for you also belong to that tribe! Well, then, if you cannot come to Christ as a saint, come to Him as a sinner! If you have made a mistake and have really never trusted in Christ—do it now! If you really have not repented and have not believed and have not been renewed in heart, remember that it is still written, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." And, "whoever will, let him take the water of life freely." If the title-deeds of your spiritual estate are not genuine, but forgeries, do not dispute the question with one who is wiser than yourself—come straight away to Jesus Christ, empty-handed, in the manner in which He bids all sinners come to Him—and then I shall not have to ask, "Why are you weeping?"

But, last of all, is this person who is weeping, a seeking sinner? Christ not only said to Mary Magdalene, "Why are you weeping?" but also, "Whom are you seeking?" for He knew that she was seeking HIM. I would give all I possess if I might always preach to weeping sinners who are seeking Christ. I sometimes think that I would like to be always weeping on account of sin, if I might be always sure that I was seeking Jesus. It is possible that there has come into this place someone who is seeking a Savior. Ah, weeping woman! Do you weep because sin burdens you? Do you weep because sweet sin has become bitter to you? Do you weep because the things wherein your soul once delighted have now become your torment and your grief? Then I rejoice over your tears for they are precious in God's sight! They are more valuable than the finest diamonds in the world! Blessed is the soul that can repent of sin!

But, possibly, your weeping is because you are afraid of being rejected by Christ. Put every tear of that kind away for there is no fear of one sinner who comes to Christ being rejected by Him! As I reminded you

just now, He has said, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” Come, then, you burdened sinner! Come, you heavy-laden soul and trust yourself with Jesus! And then He cannot—unless He can completely change, and that is impossible—He cannot reject you! Come and trust Him even now and you shall be saved this very hour!

But, perhaps, your weeping is for this reason. You say, “Alas, I have been awakened before this and I thought that I would seek the Lord. I did get some hope and I fancied that I was relieved of sin, but I have gone back and my last end has been worse than the first.” Well may you weep if that is really the case and I cannot forbid you to do so. But, my dear Friend, if you came falsely once, that is only one more reason why you should now come truly! If you once built on the sand and that house is gone, it is but another argument for building on the rock! If you were excited and mistook a transient emotion for the work of the Spirit of God—if you put presumption in the place of faith, do not do it again, but come, just as you now are, and rest your weary soul on Christ’s atoning Sacrifice and you shall find peace—immediate and permanent peace!

But possibly you weep because you say, “If I came to Christ, I fear I should not hold on to Him to the end.” I know you would not by yourself, but I also know that He will hold you on if you will but come and trust Him! It is not you who has to keep Christ—it is Christ who has to keep you! I should not wonder if your former failure arose from your having so much to do with it. So, have nothing to do with it this time! If you are very weak, lean all the more heavily on your Beloved. No, if you are *nothing*, let Christ be all the more to you because of your nothingness! If you are black with sin, give all the more praise to the blood that can make you whiter than snow! If you realize that you are lost and fear that you will be found among the damned, flee the more eagerly to those bleeding wounds which give life, not merely to perishing sinners, but to sinners dead in trespasses and sins!

“Ah,” says one, “I think you have invited me, but I feel as though I cannot come and I weep because I cannot come for I do not properly understand the matter.” Well, then, dry your tears and listen while I tell you the story again. And we who believe in Jesus will pray the Holy Spirit to lead you to understand the Truth of God. The Father, whom you have offended, does not ask you to *do* anything to make Him pleased with you. He does not wish you to contribute either good works or right feelings in order to make an atonement for your sin. His dear Son, Jesus Christ, has made the only Atonement for sin that can ever be made! What the Father bids you do is to accept what His Son has done and trust alone to that. Can you not do this? What more do you need, you doubting, sorrowing seekers, but that you trust in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was nailed to Calvary’s Cross, but is now risen from the dead and gone back to His Glory with the Father? We sometimes sing, in one of our hymns—

**“What more can He say than to you He has said,
You who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?”**

And I say the same to you who are seeking Christ! “What more can He say to you?” What sort of a promise would you like Him to make to you? Shall it be one like this, “Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow”? You say that you would like such a promise as that—well, there is that very one in the Bible! Or would this one suit you, “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon”? Or would this one meet your case, “The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin”? Surely this one must suit you, “Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Or this message, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Or this, “Seek you the Lord while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near.”

If these do not meet your case, I do not know what you would wish to have. My Lord, by His blessed Spirit, seems to have put the Gospel into all sorts of lights to suit all sorts of eyes, and He tells us, His ministers, to labor for this end, to get you to look at Jesus Christ. I have tried to do this and I beseech you not to be content with your weeping, or your feelings, or your Bible searching—do not be content even with prayer! This way of salvation is, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ!” So, rest in Him—that is believing! Trust in Him, depend upon Him—that is another way of believing in Him. And when you have done that, you are saved—saved the moment you believe in Jesus! The great work of salvation then commences in you, as the work of salvation for you is already complete and you shall be saved from your sins, made new creatures, and made holy creatures through the power of that blessed Spirit whom Jesus Christ bestows upon those who believe in Him!

May God bless the words I have spoken to the comfort of some! I believe He will. I expect He will. I know He will! And He shall have the Glory. Amen.

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

“NOLI ME TANGERE”
(“TOUCH ME NOT”)
NO. 2561

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, MARCH 20, 1898.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 4, 1888.

*“Jesus said unto her, Touch Me not, for I am not yet ascended to My Father: but go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God.
John 20:17.*

I COMMENCE my discourse by remarking that it was very amazing that our Lord Jesus Christ, after His Resurrection, should give so early and so clear a manifestation of Himself to Mary Magdalene. Out of her He had cast seven devils. I suppose it was literally so and that there had been in her a great deal of spiritual as well as moral defilement. It may not really be so, but it certainly was the current notion of the early Church that Mary Magdalene was not only a great sufferer who had been relieved, but a great sinner who had been purified. Yet she is the first to hear a word from the risen Christ and to behold Him face to face! I may be addressing some great sinner at this moment. Dear Friend, the greatness of your sin may not prevent you from yet occupying a first place among the saints! If you seem to be sorely beset by Satan, as though seven devils were in you, there is no reason why you should not be filled with the seven spirits of God and become even a leader in the Church of Christ! There are first that shall be last, but there are also last that shall be first. Such a case as that of Mary Magdalene should give great encouragement to those of you who seem to be far away from Christ—if He calls you to humble penitence and childlike confidence in Himself, you may yet be one of the nearest and dearest of His disciples—and His manifestation of Himself to you may be even clearer and sweeter than to some of the more publicly known among His people.

The special thing to be noted about Mary Magdalene is that she had gone to the grave to find Christ. She had made a mistake about the con-

dition in which she would find Him, but she had made no mistake about this point, that she must somehow find Him—and when the other disciples, having repaired to the sepulcher and not seen Him, had gone their way—she still remained. There she stands, to weep if she cannot find her Lord, for she feels that nothing else will content her. She must wait at the sepulcher until she finds Him. And, my dear Friends, if there is anyone here who *will* find Christ, it is the one who *must* find Him! When you are at such an extremity that you say, “Give me Christ, or else I die,” you shall have Christ! And when, as a child of God, your heart and your flesh cry out for Him. When you have a hungering and a thirsting after Him that cannot be stopped, then He will manifest Himself to you as He does not to the world. It will be a happy thing for you, if, having come into this place seeking the Lord, you should, all of a sudden, discover Him to be here and would even hear Him speak your name as he said, “Mary,” and she responded at once, “Rabboni, my dear Master.” Oh, that your eyes might be opened, my Brother, if they are shut! My Sister, may you have given to you the spiritual perception which will discern the Presence of the spiritual Christ who is in the midst of His people even now! May you, on the seat where you are sitting, feel as you have not felt of late—ravished, carried away into a holy ecstasy with this thought, “My Lord has come to me! He has spoken to me! He has revealed Himself to me! I perceive Him and I rejoice in Him!”

We'll then, if you are in that happy state, my text is addressed to you, for no Scripture is of any private interpretation. If true to Mary Magdalene, it is also true to all who are in the same condition as Mary Magdalene was. Right down these 18 or 19 centuries, the voice of Christ comes sounding to persons who are like her to whom that message was first uttered! He who said to Mary, “Touch Me not, but go to My brethren,” says the same thing to every Mary and every John who has suddenly discovered Him to be present with them! As far as the language of Christ on that occasion is capable of adaptation to anyone's case, so far does the Spirit of God speak it to that person now.

I. The first thing that I see in my text deserving of notice is THE CAUTION. There stands the Lord Jesus Christ and Mary perceives that it is the Lord. And the first impulse of her being is to grasp Him and hold Him lest He should vanish. Yet the Master keeps her from too near an approach, saying, “Touch Me not, for I am not yet ascended.” What does this caution teach us?

Well, first, it teaches that *we may make mistakes even when we are nearest to our Lord* and enjoying the most rapturous fellowship with Him. There are things which we may try to do which we are not allowed to do.

O Brothers and Sisters, where will not sin follow us? If we lay our hands upon the horns of the altar, sin will follow us even there! We cannot shut our door so fast as to shut out Satan—neither can we be so engrossed in prayer as to be sinless even then. Our very prayers need to be prayed over! Our tears need to be wept over! Our repentance has something in it that needs to be repented of! Our faith is mixed with unbelief and our spiritual life, itself, often has much of death about it. Sin penetrates our holy things and however near we may get to Christ, we may still make blunders and mistakes—and the Master may have to say to us, as He said to Mary, “Touch Me not.”

The kind of mistake into which we may fall is indicated by the text, for we are very apt to carnalize spiritual things. When our Lord gave to His disciples the ordinance of bread and wine to be an emblem of His body and His blood, very soon even good men began to talk as if there were some kind of witchcraft or black magic about it, so that the bread did actually become His flesh and the cup did literally become His blood. That was carnalizing a great spiritual Truth of God. The most of us are so unspiritual—we are so affected by our senses—that we soon bring down pure spiritual Truth into the groveling regions of flesh and sense. It is very possible for you to do this even when you are in communion with Christ. You may get to think of Christ according to some picture you have seen—you may even have before your mind’s eye some image of Him, though you would abhor with all your heart all image worship and picture worship! Yet it is easily done by the mind and so you may be carnalizing—making into flesh, as it were—materializing what should be pure spiritual worship!

It is easy to make your love of Christ to be no longer spiritual, but sensuous, until even your enjoyment of Christ’s Presence may come to be no true devotion at all. I have no doubt that many a man feels very pious in the dim religious light of some old cathedral when the organ peals forth and tender tones are heard—when the choir, or, if you will, the whole body of the people sing, there is a feeling all over the audience which is mistaken for true religion—yet it is often precisely the same feeling which is produced by an orchestra and by good music anywhere! It would be produced if the song was in Italian and if not a word of it was understood! And to imagine that this is true worship is a mistake, indeed! It is simply that the ear is pleased, the taste is gratified—there is a mysterious influence in the solemn aisle and vaulted roof—but that is all. Never make that blunder, dear Friends, for if you do, the Savior will have to say to you, “Do not give Me material things in the place of spiritual communion.” It is not to be a matter of the body of Christ grasped by the

hands—soul must commune with soul and spirit with spirit, and our fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ must be through the Holy Spirit—and not after any carnal method.

We may blunder, again, when we are very near to Christ, by seeking after that which we really do not need. Was it wrong for Mary to try to touch the Lord? Certainly not, for He permitted Thomas to put his finger into the print of the nails and to thrust his hand into His side. He also said to all His disciples, “Handle Me, and see, for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see I have.” It would have been wrong if Thomas and the other Apostles had not touched the Master, yet the Lord refused that touch to Mary. She did not need it—she knew that He was the Christ and that He was risen from the dead! Thomas doubted it and the other disciples had some lingering questions, hence they were allowed to have certain signs which Mary did not need and which the Savior did not let her have.

I have known some very feeble-minded Christians who have been cheered by a dream. It seems to me the most absurd thing in the world is to be encouraged by a dream, yet it encouraged them. Why have not I had such a dream? Because I do not need it and it would be of no use to me. I believe there are some minds so feeble that they would scarcely get any faith at all if there were not some touch of the supernatural about them. And the Lord may permit it to them, but do not you ordinary Christians begin to crave anything of that kind, for you do not need it and you will not have it! You should rise to the far loftier dignity of those of whom Christ said, “Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.” Cast yourself on Christ! Spiritually believe in Him and so realize Him—do not ask for what you really do not need—for these signs and tokens are not meant for you.

Once more, in our Lord’s Presence, we may sometimes make a mistake by *asking to have, now, what it will be better for us to have, by-and-by*. See how Jesus puts it to Mary, “Touch Me not”—that is, not *now*—“for I am not yet ascended.” There will be opportunity for all that in good time. Did you go up into your little room, the other night, and pray, “Lord, if I am, indeed, Your child, give me now such raptures as I have heard your servant Rutherford had”? Yet you have not had them. Well, do not worry about that—you are not yet fit for them. “Touch Me not,” says Christ. “Ask not this of Me just yet—another day this experience will be more appropriate, less dangerous and more useful.” Do you not see that you may make a mistake, even when you are with your Master, by asking what is not good for you, or at least what is not good for you just then?

I think also that the Lord said to Mary, “Touch Me not,” because He meant to add, “but go to My brethren.” This teaches us that *it is very easy for spiritually-minded people to get to be selfish in their enjoyments*. I have known some who spent a great part of their lives in a meditative, contemplative enjoyment of Christ. And God forbid that we should altogether blame them! But there is a more excellent way—it is sometimes better to go and tell our Brethren good news from Christ than it is for us to have fellowship with Him. I have often known what it is to be enjoying my Master’s Presence when the time has come for preaching—and I have been inclined to wish that I might stay with Him—but it is wrong to think so. There is an old Romish story which has a good lesson in it. A monk was in his cell and he thought he saw a vision of Christ, but just as he was looking with rapture upon his Lord, the bell rang and he knew that it was his turn to take his place at the monastery gate to feed the poor that were standing there. As he left his cell, he heaved a deep sigh, and said, “Ah, me, that I should have this work to do and lose the company of my Lord!” He took his turn of an hour or two at waiting on the poor and when he went back to his cell, with a heavy heart, thinking that he should never see that blissful sight again, there was his Master waiting for him and a voice said to him, “If you had stayed, I would have gone. But as you went, I have stayed to manifest Myself to you.”

Take the meaning out of that legend and you will learn that if you shut yourself up in your room rather than go down to the Sunday school, you will make a great mistake. I am persuaded that there are some good Christian people who have two spiritual meals every Sabbath—and do not get very fat, even then—who would be much stronger in soul if, after they have had their one meal, they went out among the poor and needy, seeking the lost ones for Christ and telling them of His love. If this hint shall reach some living, loving heart and make it a little wiser in its course of action, it will bring great glory to God.

II. I have taken up so much time with the caution, that I must be very brief upon the second head which is THE MISSION—“Go to My brethren.” Mary Magdalene, instead of remaining in solitary communion with Christ, was sent upon a mission and that was for two reasons.

First, *it was better for herself*. Hear this, dear Friends, it is better for you to do good to others than to have all the enjoyment of Christ to yourself—better for you to be turned out into the cold to go and comfort the distressed, than for you to stay in the warmth of your Master’s Countenance and *not* do good to others!

Secondly, *it was better for the disciples*. However bright and happy Mary might be with Christ, that would not help Peter and James and

John and the other disciples. They were all sorrowing, for they were all doubting. They thought their Master dead. They did not yet understand the saying that He had risen from the grave. Surely Mary must not be selfish—she has seen the Lord, so she must remember that others have not seen Him—and she is therefore bid to go and deliver to them a message from Christ.

It is very interesting to notice that Mary did not stay a minute after the Master said to her, “Go.” As soon as the Lord commissioned her, away she went! The next verse says, “Mary Magdalene went”—with swift feet she hastened to the place where the disciples were—“Mary Magdalene went and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord and that He had spoken these things to her.” Come, my Brothers, come, my Sisters—leave, for a while, the happy quiet nook where you met with Jesus! Come out and tell others what you have seen. Who knows but that they, also, will be led to see Jesus? And when you have told what you have *seen*, do what is still better—tell what He has *said*! What you have seen is good, but there may be a mistake in it. What Christ has spoken is perfection and there is no error in that. Relate your own experience and tell the Gospel, too, to all with whom you come into contact—and cease not to do so. To see Christ is blessed, but unless we tell what we have seen, the blessing may be like a talent in a napkin, or a candle under a bushel. I would like to come round to each one of you and to say, “Dear Brother, dear Sister, do you live in the light of God’s Countenance? Has Jesus Christ shone upon you? Is He your Beloved and are you His beloved? Then come and let Him have the use of your tongue! Let Him have the use of those bright eyes of yours to tell with beaming countenance what the Lord has done for you and what He has said that He will do for others!

III. Now, thirdly, we have to consider THE TITLE—“Go to *My brethren*.” Do you hear that? “Go to *My brethren*.” I do not remember that the Lord Jesus ever called His disciples His brethren till that time. He called them “servants.” He called them, “friends.” But now that He has risen from the dead, He says, “My brethren.”

Notice then, first, *they were His brethren, though He was about to ascend to His Throne*. The fact that Christ had risen from the dead did not take Him further away from His people—it brought Him nearer, for He goes on—“and say to them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father.” It is clear that there is no greater distance between us and Christ, now that He has ascended, than there was when He had not ascended—no, that inasmuch as He did not call them brethren while He was yet among them before His death and did call them brethren when He said, “I ascend

unto My Father, and your Father”—if there is any difference, Christ ascended is nearer to us than Christ on the earth!—

***“Now though He reigns exalted high,
His love is still as great!
Well He remembers Calvary,
Nor let His saints forget.”***

This is a very blessed Truth of God, but it is a great mystery. I can understand that Christ is my Brother when I see Him weary, sitting on the well at Sychar. When I see Him in the garden, agonizing even unto sweat of blood, I know that He is my Brother. But if my eyes could see Him as John saw Him, when, “His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and His eyes were as a flame of fire; and His Countenance was as the sun shines in its strength,” I think I would need great help to call Him, “Brother,” then! And I might not need to do so, for it is not said that the disciples called Christ, “Brother,” but that *He* called them, “brethren.” Oh, for Grace to believe that the crowned, reigning, exalted Christ is the Brother of our soul! His Nature in Heaven is our nature! He has a sympathy in Glory with His people still in tribulation. He is pleading our cause in Heaven as much as ever He did on earth and He is as truly our Covenant Head—as really one with us—now, as ever He was when He was here. And hence, when He had risen and was about to ascend, He said, “Go to My brethren.”

There is another side of this Truth of God that is worth noticing—*they were His brethren, though they had forsaken Him in His shame*. I was reading, in the life of the famous Thomas Boston, the author of *The Fourfold State*, that one day he was very burdened and depressed in spirit, and was walking up and down his room in great trouble about his own standing before God, for, mark you, they who lead others to Christ and help others to confidence in Him, often have trembling in their own soul—as Boston had at that time. It happened that his little daughter was in the room and she said to him, “Father, Jesus said, ‘Go to My brethren.’ They were His brethren, still, though they had forsaken Him.” Boston said, “In a moment, I caught at that.” They were still His brethren, although there was one of them who had denied Him with oaths and curses! Yet that very one was especially mentioned by the angel who said, “Tell His disciples *and Peter*.” All the rest forsook Him and fled yet Jesus said, “Go to My *brethren*.” This is a tie which you cannot break!

If you had a brother who had misbehaved himself. And if you had been obliged to advise him to flee the country and he had gone far away—and you knew that he was living an evil life—yet he would still be your brother. Born of the same parents, the bond between you two must last on. I believe in the final perseverance of the saints and I cannot

make out how those get on who do not believe it. If Christ was my Brother yesterday, He will be my Brother to all eternity. I do not believe in these relationships coming to an end—they seem to me to be fixed. My child is my child forever, let him be what he may. And if I am Christ’s brother, and Christ is my Brother, we are joined together by a bond which cannot be broken. “*Quis separabit?*” “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?”

Come, Brothers and Sisters, listen to me! Have you been getting cold in heart? Still, Christ is your Brother and He acknowledges it. As I have reminded you, the Master did not call His disciples, “brethren,” till after they had all forsaken Him. What? Does His Grace seem to grow as our sin grows? It seems so—“Where sin abounded, Grace did much more abound.” This wondrous love ought to break your hearts. If any of you have been false to Christ. If you have been ungrateful, cold, unspiritual—will not this bring you back? He still acknowledges you as His! He still calls you brethren. Come along back to Him—let there be no time lost! Come weeping to His feet and say, “My Brother, I confess my transgressions and ask pardon of You because You change not and You still call me Your brother.” I will not enlarge upon this theme, though it is a very sweet one. It is a sort of cluster of Eshcol. I should have liked to press and squeeze it till it filled the cup with its generous juice, but I hand it over to you. Take it home and rejoice that your Lord still says, “Go to My brethren.”

IV. Lastly, we have to consider the message, THE TIDINGS. “Go to My brethren, and say to them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God.”

Notice that *this message was far above their fears*. They thought that He was dead. “Oh, no,” He says, “I ascend.” They thought His body had been taken away and they should never have the mournful pleasure of knowing where it was. Surely the guards or somebody had broken the seal and stolen away that blessed form! But He shows how vain were their fears, for He says, “I ascend.” Now, child of God, whatever your fears are, throw them all out! You have no need of any of them! If Christ is yours and you are trusting in Him, fear not! The Lord says to you, “Fear not,” and will you keep on fearing when He bids you not to fear? I pray you, do not! What you dread will never come to pass. There is something infinitely better than that in store for you!

In the next place, *this message was above their hopes*, for all that they hoped for was that they might find the dead body of Christ. But He talks about ascending, so He is alive and their hopes are far exceeded! What are your hopes, dear Brothers and Sisters? Are you hoping to have some

good thing from the Lord? There is something better than that laid up for you! “He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.”

Further, *this message was beyond their wishes*, for I am sure that when they knew that Christ was alive, they wanted Him to stay with them. It would have cheered them very much if Christ had said, “Go tell My brethren that I am going to stay with them for the next hundred years.” No, no, no! They were to have more than they wished for—it was expedient for them that Christ should *not* stay with them. It was to their advantage that He should go to be with the Father—it would bring them greater blessings to have Him gone than to have Him tarry—so that the message sent to them was above their wishes. And the Lord will do for you more than you wish for. He will be better to you than your highest desire—therefore be of good cheer!

But what Mary had to say to them was also *beyond their knowledge*, their comprehension, beyond the grasp of their understanding. As yet they knew not that Christ must rise from the dead, so I am sure that they did not know what He meant by ascending. But it was true, though they did not understand it. Blessed be God, there are thousands of blessings true to you although you cannot yet get a grip of them! God will do more for you than you can understand. Your imagination may enlarge itself, yet He will go beyond that. I quoted, just now, Paul’s words, “He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.” Now think some great thought, like one who lay dying and said, “Oh, for big thoughts!” We shall not need big thoughts, then, for we shall come into the region of great realities. But however great your thoughts, Christ can exceed them. He said to His disciples, “I am going up into Glory to plead for you.” They did not know what He meant, yet His words brought them incalculable blessings.

I think I hear somebody say, “Well, I am so glad I can get as far as that, I can feel comfort in Christ’s ascending to my Father.” Yes, but I want you to go further than that, for I am to tell you that He is coming again! There is always to be something yet beyond—whatever you attain to, there is something more to be reached. That same Jesus who went up from us into Heaven, will so come in like manner as they saw Him go up into Heaven. With the trumpet of the archangel and with the voice of God, He shall descend a second time upon the earth, no more to suffer, no more to invite disobedient and rebellious men who shall reject Him—but He shall come to rule the nations with a rod of iron and to gather together His own people that He may be “admired in them that believe.” This is the great hope of the Church! Reach forward to it and be not sat-

isfied with anything that as yet you have received, or that as yet you understand. O heirs of immortality, infinite bliss opens before you! Unspeakable glory awaits you! Be of good courage and if, for the present, you may not have all the fellowship with Christ you really wish for, because He says, “Touch Me not,” yet wait till you shall be taken up, or He shall come again to receive you unto Himself, for then, where He is, you shall also be, with all the godly company that has gone before!

As for you who have no part nor lot in this matter, I am very sorry for you. I would God that you had. Whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ shall have all this and much more than tongue can tell. Oh, that you would believe in Him, now, and live forever! God grant it, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALMS 20 AND 21.**

The 20th Psalm is a prayer for the king going forth to the conflict—a prayer for David. Better still, a prayer for great David’s greater Son. The 21st Psalm is a song of victory for the returning conqueror, it is a *Te Deum*, as the King has triumphed and has returned from the conflict to enjoy the congratulations of His loyal subjects.

Psalm 20:1. *The LORD hear you in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend you.* This is a prayer for David, a prayer for Jesus and a prayer for every child of God. “Jehovah hear you in the day of trouble.” What do you need? Remember that the Lord gives you this promise, “Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me.” “The name of the God of Jacob defend you.” The God that took care of Jacob when he slept with a stone for his pillow. The God that guarded him when he was a stranger in a strange land and brought him home again. The God that wrestled with him at Jabbok, the God that made all things work for him, instead of against him, as he feared “the name”—the Character, the Attributes, the Glory—“of the God of Jacob defend you.”

2. *Send you help from the sanctuary.* “Help from the holy place, help from the sprinkled blood, help from the Mercy Seat, help from the golden pot that had the manna, help from Aaron’s rod that budded, help from Him that shone between the cherubim—send you help from the Holy of Holies.

2. *And strengthen you out of Zion.* That is to say, with His own power, His own Glory, which He manifests in the midst of His people.

3. *Remember all your offerings, and accept your burnt sacrifice. Selah.* This God did to His dear Son and this He is prepared to do to all His people. Whenever we give anything to the cause of God, we ought to do it with all that solemnity and all that willingness which was seen in God's own people in the olden time, remembering that it is to Him we bring it, and the chief point for our consideration is, "Will He accept it?"

4. *Grant you according to your own heart, and fulfill all your counsel.* We cannot pray this for everybody. We pray it for Christ and we pray it for the Lord's sanctified people, that He may grant them the desire of their heart and fulfill their counsel.

5. *We will rejoice in Your salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up our banners: the LORD fulfill all your petitions.* What a wonderful prayer this is! May it be granted to each of you!—

"The Lord fulfill all your petitions."

6-9. *Now know that the LORD saves His anointed; He will hear him from His holy Heaven with the saving strength of His right hand. Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God. They are brought down and fallen: but we are risen, and stand upright. Save, LORD. Or, "Hosanna."*

9. *Let the King hear us when we call.* Now turn to the Psalm of victory. It corresponds very beautifully with the litany which we have just been reading.

Psalm 21:1. *The King shall joy in Your strength, O LORD; and in Your salvation how greatly shall He rejoice!* See how greatly Christ rejoices, how full His heart is of gladness as He sees God's power put forth, and God's salvation accomplished among men.

2, 3. *You have given Him His heart's desire, and have not withheld the request of His lips. Selah. For You present Him with the blessings of goodness.* That is to say, "You go before Him," as you have seen, in pictures, some great conqueror preceded by those who strewn his path with roses, so has God strewn the pathway of Christ with innumerable blessings.

3. *You set a crown of pure gold on His head.* Is He not of royal race? Has He not achieved a mighty conquest? Is He not King of kings and Lord of lords?

4. *He asked life of You and You gave it to Him, even length of days forever and ever.* "You gave Him a resurrection from the dead as our Mediator, and as such He lives."

5. *His Glory is great in Your salvation.* It is the distinguishing mark of God's salvation that Christ's Glory is great in it. In the beginning, in the middle and the end of it, everywhere you see the name of Jesus written in large letters of light. In His salvation, the Father has glorified His Son.

5-8. *Honor and majesty have You laid upon Him. For you have made Him most blessed forever: You have made Him exceedingly glad with Your countenance. For the king trusts in the LORD, and through the mercy of the Most High He shall not be moved. Your hand shall find out all your enemies. That very hand that was nailed to the tree shall find out all the adversaries of the Cross.*

8. *Your right hand shall find out those that hate You. “Hide wherever they may, You will find them. They may stand in the high places and defy You; but You will hurl them down.”*

9. *You shall make them as a fiery oven in the time of Your anger. “Not only shall they be cast into the fire, but they shall, themselves, be as a fiery oven in the time of Your anger. They shall torment themselves and shall be their own destruction.”*

9-11. *The LORD shall swallow them up in His wrath, and the fire shall devour them. Their fruit shall You destroy from the earth, and their seed from among the children of men. For they intended evil against You: they imagined a mischievous device which they are not able to perform. But that did not diminish their sin. When a man has devised an evil thing, even if he cannot carry it out, he is guilty of it!*

12. *Therefore shall You make them turn their back, when You shall make ready Your arrows upon Your strings against the face of them. As if God would single out the enemies of Christ to be targets for His arrows and fill them with the darts of His displeasure. Who would wish to be in such a plight as this?*

13. *Be You exalted, LORD, in Your own strength: so will we sing and praise Your power.*

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—327, 785, 942.

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY
TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

CHRIST'S MANIFESTATION TO MARY MAGDALENE NO. 2733

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 30, 1901.

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

*“Jesus said unto her, Touch Me not; for I am not yet ascended to My Father:
but go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father,
and your Father; and to My God, and your God.”
John 20:17.*

THIS was the first appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ after His Resurrection. In sundry places and at divers times, during the ensuing 40 days, He appeared to different disciples, showing Himself openly to them when they were assembled for worship and at other times. But this was the first occasion of His being seen by any of His followers after He had risen from the dead. The whole incident is full of consolation and we who are poor weary pilgrims through this earthly wilderness need some words of comfort every now and then to cheer us on the road. May the Holy Spirit sweetly assist us in meditating now upon the things of Christ—and may our hearts burn within us as He speaks to us by the way!

I. First, IT IS PECULIARLY ENCOURAGING TO REMEMBER THAT THE FIRST PERSON TO WHOM OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST APPEARED AFTER HIS RESURRECTION WAS MARY MAGDALENE.

Mark expressly says, “Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven devils.” Romanists will have it that Jesus Christ first of all appeared to the Virgin Mary, His mother, and they have invented some curious stories in order to give her this peculiar honor. This shows that, in their opinion, there was a special favor conferred upon the person who first beheld the risen Savior—and I need not say that their assertion that it was the Virgin Mary is just another instance of their common practice of perverting the Truth of God. Undoubtedly, Mary Magdalene was the first person who saw the Savior after His Resurrection—at least, if the Roman guards saw Him when they shook and became as dead men through fear of the angel who rolled away the stone from the sepulcher, they were not Christ's disciples—so I mean that Mary Magdalene was the first of His faithful followers who had the honor of seeing Him after He rose from the dead!

It was a woman, then, who first beheld the risen Savior. It was a woman who was first in sin. It had, therefore, to be a woman who should first behold Jesus Christ when He rose from the grave. If there is—and

there certainly is some degree of opprobrium connected with womanhood, because Eve first of all touched the forbidden fruit, there is a far greater degree of glory now connected with it, because Mary Magdalene first of all beheld the Savior after His rising from the tomb!

Not only was it a woman to whom Christ first manifested Himself after His Resurrection, but it was a woman out of whom He had cast seven devils. I am inclined to think that there were other devils in Mary Magdalene beside those that made her a demoniac. Luther used to say of her, "So many devils, so many sins." She had been first a sinner, then she became a demoniac and afterwards Christ changed her into a saint. How strange it was that Jesus should appear first to her! What? Give the highest honor to her who had the most of sin! Sweet thought! Then, if—

"I, the chief of sinners, am"—

if I have an interest in the blood of Christ, there is no reason why I should not climb to the greatest heights of fellowship and enjoy the best of the good things which the Lord has prepared for them that love Him! When Jesus takes a sinner to Himself, his pardon is so complete—so totally does God, for Christ's sake, overlook all previous sins—that, although he may not be as great a saint as the very chief of the Apostles who did most grievously rebel, so that he only obtained mercy because he did it ignorantly in unbelief, he may be the most highly-favored of the servants of the Lord and may have very special Revelations made to him. The experience of Mary Magdalene should be a great source of comfort to you who, after years of sin, have lately found the Savior. Think not that those years that you spent in folly, though they must always make you weep, will be the means of robbing you of fellowship with Him. Oh, no! He will restore to you the years that the locusts have eaten and He will not take away from you the pleasure of enjoying the bliss of God on earth—and certainly He will not diminish your glorious happiness when you shall stand before His Throne above!

In thinking over this subject, I have come to the conclusion that Mary Magdalene was selected to see Christ first because she loved Him most. John loved Jesus much, but Mary loved Him more. John looked into the empty sepulcher and then went home. But Mary stood there and wept until her risen Lord appeared to her! Love, you know, is a keen-eyed Grace. People usually say that love is blind. In one sense, the saying is true, but, in another sense there never were such good eyes anywhere as those which love carries in her head. Love will look for Jesus and discover Him where none else can! If I set the unloving to read a Chapter in the Bible, they will find no Savior there. But if I ask the gracious Robert Hawker to read that same portion of Scripture, he finds in it the name of Jesus from beginning to end! If I beg one who is simply a critical scholar, to study a Psalm, he sees no Messiah there—but if I set an enthusiastic lover of the Savior to read it, he sees Him, if not in every verse, still, here and there he has glimpses of His Glory!

If you want to see Jesus and to have sweet Revelations of His Glory, you must love Him. I must add to that remark, that you must weep for Him much, you must seek Him diligently, seek Him in the darkness and the twilight, seek Him when the sun has risen, seek Him at the sepulcher

before the stone is rolled away—you must seek Him when you behold that the stone is gone, you must seek Him in the hollow tomb, you must seek Him in the garden, you must seek Him in life, you must seek Him in death and then—the more diligent you are in seeking, the greater is the probability that Christ will manifest Himself to you and that you shall rejoice in finding Him!

Mary Magdalene was one of those who went forth bearing precious seed. She went forth weeping, but she returned to the disciples rejoicing, bringing her sheaves with her, for she had a joyous message for them. She had sown in tears when she went to seek her Lord, but she wept with joy when she found Him in the garden! Happy was that woman who found Jesus and who believed—truly she might rejoice in Him, for she was highly favored among women!

You see, then, that there is much sweetness, far more than I can tell you, in the thought that Mary Magdalene was the first person who was chosen to see the Lord Jesus Christ after His Resurrection.

II. Secondly, we will notice SOME REASONS FOR THE PROHIBITION GIVEN IN THE TEXT. Why was it that Jesus said to Mary, “Touch Me not”? And why was it that He gave this very strange reason for the prohibition, “for I am not yet ascended to My Father”?

There seems to me to be great comfort in this message. I know it has comforted me, so I think I understand it aright. When Mary Magdalene had recognized her risen Redeemer and had called Him, “Rabboni, that is to say, Master,” her next impulse was to cast herself upon Him and embrace Him. But Jesus said to her, “No! Embrace Me not”—for that is the real meaning of the word—“I have something for you to do for Me, so I cannot allow you to stop to manifest your affection. There will be plenty of time to do that another day. I want to send you to My disciples at once with a message—therefore, cling not to Me. The strengthening of My disciples is preferable even to the embracing of your Lord. Cling not to Me, for I am not yet ascended.”

It strikes me that Mary was half afraid that her Master would go away, directly, and she thought, “That is my Master, for I know His voice, but I fear that He will vanish—the Spirit of God will take Him away.” She thought concerning Christ just as Obadiah did concerning Elijah. When Obadiah found the Prophet, Elijah said to him, “Go, tell your lord, Behold, Elijah is here.” “And he said, What? Have I sinned, that you would deliver your servant into the hands of Ahab, to slay me? As the Lord your God lives, there is no nation or kingdom where my lord has not sent to seek you: and when they said, he is not there; he took an oath of the kingdom and nation, that they found you not. And now you say, Go, tell your lord, Behold, Elijah is here. And it shall come to pass, as soon as I am gone from you, that the Spirit of the Lord shall carry you where I know not; and so when I come and tell Ahab, and he cannot find you, he shall slay me.”

Obadiah expected that Elijah would be spirited away—and Mary thought the same concerning Christ. So she said to herself, “I will hold Him fast. This may be my only opportunity, so I will not let Him go.” But Jesus said, “I am not going away; I shall be here a little while longer;

there will yet be time enough for embraces. The first thing I want you to do is to go to My disciples and tell them that I have risen from the grave, and that I am about to ascend to Heaven."

If you ask, "Why did Jesus speak thus to Mary Magdalene?" I think it is not difficult to explain the reason. Let me suppose that one of you have said, "I will have an hour for quiet meditation. I will cast myself upon my knees, I will open the Word of God—I will seek the Spirit to rest upon me and I will hope that I shall be able to see Jesus and to clasp Him in my arms." Just as you have formed this resolve, a friend calls and says that he has an important engagement for you to fulfill. Perhaps he wants you to attend a Prayer Meeting, or to visit the sick, or to see some enquirer, or to do something for the Lord's cause, and you say, "There now, I expected to have had this evening for contemplation. Oh, I wish I had not so much to do with the Church, for it robs me of my quiet hours! I love those sweet seasons of retirement when I can embrace the Savior and clasp Him to my heart. Why is it that I am to go out and feed the flock and not find time for fellowship and communion so long and frequent as I desire?" Whenever you feel inclined to talk like that, think that you hear your Master saying to you, "Embrace Me not! There will be time in Heaven for that. Go you to My brethren and carry to them some words of consolation, for while it is sweet for you to embrace Me, it is sweeter to Me for you to go and embrace My poor brother and show him the way into My Kingdom."

God forbid that we should say one word against the high joys of contemplation! It is a blessed employment, but, sometimes work is better than worship—or rather, work is worship in its best form. Sometimes it is a higher service to go to see the sick than to be at home on your knees. Sometimes it is a more devout way of serving God to be busy for the Church, even in what seems to be temporal matters, than to be seated at home, like Mary of old, at the feet of the Savior, listening to His words, but doing nothing for His cause. I believe Martha is, at times, a great deal more than Mary. If Mary had always sat at the Savior's feet, she would have deserved no commendation. It was well that she sat there, then, for it was a proper occasion, but if she had always sat there and left Martha to attend to the serving, alone, then it would have been an abuse of her privileges! There are times when the Master must say, "Embrace Me not; but go to My brethren, and tell them that I ascend to My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God."

III. Now, having noticed these two portions of our text, which I think are full of comfort—if not to you, they certainly have been to me—I will now endeavor to dilate upon THE MESSAGE OF OUR LORD TO MARY MAGDALENE.

Jesus said to her, "Go to My brethren." It is a remarkable fact that, *the higher Jesus Christ gets in Glory, the more sweet are His expressions of love.* You know that before His death He said to His disciples, "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knows not what his lord does: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you." Yet now that He had risen from the dead, He called them by a still higher name! Possibly some of them

thought, "If He should rise from the dead, He will be ashamed of us poor fishermen. He called us 'friends' when He was in His poverty—will He not return to that word, 'servants,' when He rises in majesty from the tomb?" No, when He had risen in dignity, it was just the reverse! The higher His dignity, the lower His condescension. "Go to My *brethren*."

There is another thing to be noted about that sweet word, "brethren," as Christ then used it, for His disciples were never in a more sinful condition than they were at that time or, rather, they had never so grossly sinned as they had done a little before the Savior's Resurrection. They were with Him every day—they were, all of them, in a measure faithful, and never forsook their Master and never denied Him—till He came to die. Yet, all the time they were true and faithful, He called them friends. You would have thought that when three of them slept in the garden during His awful agony, when all forsook Him and fled and when especially Peter denied Him, the Savior would have said, "I called you friends when you were faithful. I will now see whether I can stretch a point, even to call you servants." But we see that the blacker their sin was, the stronger was His love—the more defiled they were, the more sweetly did He talk to them! He said to them, in deeds though not in words, "Henceforth, I call you not friends, for a mere friend is no relation, but I call you brethren, for My Father is your Father, and My God is your God."

Carry those two sweet thoughts away with you, for sweet, indeed, they will be to you if the Holy Spirit shall teach you the full meaning of them—that the higher the Savior gets, the more free is He in the expression of His love. And that other thought, that the farther the disciples ran away from their Master, the more lovingly did He call them back again! This is marvelous and strange, but it is nevertheless true—who cannot derive comfort from such thoughts as these? I know, you feeble followers of Jesus, you have sometimes thought that He loved His people when He was on earth, but that now He reigns exalted on high, He has forgotten such of them as you are, but, be assured that inasmuch as He has reached the summit of His Glory, He does now manifest the summit of His love! The more He is exalted, the more does He manifest Himself.

Possibly, some of you are thinking that you have so greatly sinned that you cannot expect Him to love you. If so, you can appropriate this thought that *the sweetest promises in the Bible are for the very people who deserve them the least*. There are promises for those who follow close to their Savior, and very sweet ones, too, but some of the most tender promises in the Word of God are for those who have wandered furthest away from Him. Take, for instance, this gracious message, "Return, you backsliding Israel, says the Lord; and I will not cause My anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, says the Lord, and I will not keep anger forever. Only acknowledge your iniquity, that you have transgressed against the Lord your God, and have scattered your ways to the strangers under every green tree, and you have not obeyed My voice, says the Lord. Turn, O backsliding children, says the Lord; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion." Blessed Jesus, when we should have thought that our sins would cause You to speak most harshly against us, we find that You have the

softest words for those who have most erred—that our sins, which must make You angry—also seem to make You invite us back again with sweeter words than You use to those who have not grieved You as much as we have done!

Note again, *every time our Lord Jesus Christ says anything to His brethren, it is something that requires faith on their part.* Why did He not say, “Go and tell My brethren that I have risen from the grave”? Because they did not need any faith for that. He had risen—that was a fact that they could discover by their eyesight—and some of them by their touch. “No,” He says, “I will make large drafts upon my people’s faith. Go and tell them that I am about to ascend to My Father—that is something great for them to believe.” Do you know, Christian Friends, that the more you have of the manifest Presence of Christ, the more faith you require? Have you not often asked to have a promise brought home to your heart by the special influences of the Spirit? Now, remember, the more promises you have, the more faith you will require. The words of Christ demand faith on our part. A manifestation from Christ is as truly a demand upon our faith as when He hides His face from us. When He hides His face, He requires us to still believe in Him even when He says nothing. But when He speaks, He requires us to believe something that He says. The more manifestations Christ grants to you, the more is your need of faith.

“I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God.” Luther was right when he said that all the pith of divinity lay in the pronouns. “My Father and *your* Father.’ He is ‘My Father’ by eternal generation. I was begotten of My Father before any of the worlds were made. He is ‘your Father’ by regeneration. He has begotten you again unto a lively hope by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. He is ‘My Father,’ as I am the Head of the Church—I call Him Father in my Christhood, as God and Man. And as I am your Representative, and you are all gathered up in Me, He is your Father, too—‘My Father, and your Father.’” How sweet is the word, Father, in such a connection! He is our Father because He has the deepest love to protect us—and if we doubt whether His power is equal to His love, let us notice what Jesus next says, “I ascend to My God, and your God.” And inasmuch as God is Omnipotent, and the Father is Love, you have all the love you need and all the power equal to that love! It seems sweet to hear Christ calling His Father, His God. As He was a Man, the Father was His God. As He was Christ, the God-Man, the Father was God over Him and, speaking as a Man, He could say, “My Father is greater than I.” God the Father being greater than the Mediator, who said, in effect, “As Man, I worship Him even as you worship Him. As Man, I look up to Him as My Father the same as you do. He is My Father as He is your Father.”

I have only to make one other remark, *how beautifully the Savior refers to the Believer’s union with Himself!* The whole Bible, when it is rightly understood, points to the Believer’s union with Christ, and this sweet verse is full of that blessed Truth of God. Christ and His people have united interests. When Christ calls God His Father, we may call God “*our* Father,” too. In His inheritance we have a joint interest—He is Heir of all

things, and we are joint-heirs with Him. In relationship, Christ and His people are closely united. His brethren are our brethren—His Father is our Father. Even in service, as Christ was Man, as He was the Servant of God for our sakes, so the Master whom He served is the Master whom we serve—and we together take the same service upon ourselves, believing that we together shall have the same Kingdom conferred upon us and shall reign with Christ forever and ever.

An old divine calls Mary Magdalene *apostola apostolorum*, that is, the Apostle to the Apostles. An Apostle is one who is sent—and Mary Magdalene was sent to those whom Christ, afterwards, sent to the ends of the earth. In like manner, a poor humble woman may be an Apostle to one who shall afterwards be a great divine. Let us hear, then, what this great Apostle to the Apostles has to say to us. She does not now tell us that Jesus Christ is about to ascend, she tells us that He *has* ascended and whenever we draw around the Table of our Lord, let us derive sweet influence from the fact that Jesus Christ has ascended! He ascended as a Conqueror, leading captivity captive. He ascended as a Forerunner for us, entering within the veil. He has ascended to make preparation for His people, according to His promise, "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there you may be also." He has ascended as our Intercessor—there He stands forever interceding before the Throne of God for us, His children, His friends, His brethren!

Oh, that we may now put our unfeigned and constant trust in Him who died, putting equal trust in Him who rose again, making this our glory, both in His dying and in His rising, that He has ascended up on high and taken His lawful place at the right hand of God, where He also makes intercession for us!

Oh, that those who are dead in sin were quickened by God's Spirit that they might know something of the preciousness of having a Father in Heaven, the same Father that Jesus Christ had! Sinner, I pray the Lord to teach you to believe in Jesus Christ. And if you have sinned with Mary Magdalene, may He help you to believe, with her, that you may share in her sweet manifestations and have a gracious message like hers to tell some day to the rest of your brethren!

**EXPOSITIONS BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 40; MATTHEW 16:21-23.**

Isaiah 40:1, 2. *Comfort you, comfort you My people, says your God. Speak you comfortably to Jerusalem.* The loss of comfort is no small loss. God would have His people happy. They are in the best condition for serving Him and less likely to be overcome by the temptations of the world when the joy of the Lord is their strength. Therefore, three times over He bids His ministers comfort His people. O Triune Jehovah, help Your servant to now fulfill this commission!

2. *And cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished,* After all, Beloved, you have not to fight your own battles. Under one aspect, you may have to do so, but the great fight is already over—that fight which is so

much greater than all others—that the lesser ones are scarcely worthy of the name of warfare. You have but to scatter the foes whom your great Captain has vanquished—and to march boldly onward because He has cleared the way before you.

2. *That her iniquity is pardoned.* Oh, when that is the case, what does it matter about the warfare? Brothers and Sisters, if you have a sense of forgiven sin, you may well bear the trials of the way. The sting is gone from death itself when sin is pardoned and, therefore, it is certainly gone from life as well

2. *For she has received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins.* If the Lord's ancient people could thus be comforted in their seasons of sorrow, how much more may we be cheered when we think of all the blessing which has come to us through the sorrows of our great Covenant Head! All is settled now. "It is finished," was our Savior's cry from the Cross. Our debts are all paid, so we may well be comforted.

3. *The voice of him that cries in the wilderness, Prepare you the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.* You have not to turn the wilderness into a garden—you have only to make "a highway for our God." It is the Presence of God that you need, O sorrowing Soul, O mourning Church! Let the Lord but come to you, and then all shall be well. Your business is to give heed to the cry, "Prepare you the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God."

4. *Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low* That is what must happen to you who are very great and highly exalted—you will have to be made low. But as for the lowly ones, they shall be exalted. It is in this way that God comes to His people, marching over hills that have been overthrown, and over valleys that have been filled up and leveled to make a highway for the King.

4, 5. *And the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough plain, and the Glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD has spoken it.* That is the great purpose and end of nature, of Providence and of Grace—that the Glory of the Lord may be revealed. It is already revealed—but many men do not see it. Yet it is God's purpose "that all flesh shall see it together." Do we all see it, dear Friends? Are we not far too apt to take glory to ourselves and to make out that we are strong, that we are wise? Ah, too often that is the case, so it is the Lord's work to put an end to all that folly, so that nothing shall remain but the Glory of the Lord, that all flesh may see it, and see nothing else.

6-8. *The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withers, the flower fades: because the spirit of the LORD blows upon it: surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades: but the Word of our God shall stand forever.* So, you see, there is a withering work to be done by the Spirit of God—withering up all the glory of the flesh to the intent and purpose that the Glory of God's Word may be revealed and that Jehovah, Himself, may be seen in His majesty and might! This is the great battle of all the ages. Sometimes men have set up a golden calf to be worshipped. At other times, blocks of wood and stone.

But idolatry is universal wherever man is found. We are all far too prone to trust in something else instead of in God—and God is always jealous of these rivals of His—these Dagon that dare impiously to stand in the Presence of the Ark of the Lord.

9. *O Zion, that spreads good tidings, get you up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that spreads good tidings, lift up your voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!* That is the point which we need to reach, where we may see God—where we may be conscious of His Presence—where we may trust in His Grace—where we may lean on His arm. And, oh, we need to have the voice very much lifted up before we can hear this cry, “Behold your God!” We run after this sight, and that, and the other, and forget Him who alone is worth seeing. “Behold your God,” you who are sorrowing, you who are perplexed, you who are sorely burdened! Behold your God and you shall be strengthened and comforted.

10, 11. *Behold, the Lord GOD will come with strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him: behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him. He shall feed His flock like a shepherd: He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.* This is what the Good Shepherd is constantly doing. Nobody else can do it. He alone can protect the weak, who are His lambs, and succor those whose inward sorrows bring them into deep distress. And there is nothing which He cannot do, for He is Omnipotent. Then why do you not trust Him? You remember what the Lord Himself says, by the mouth of Jeremiah—“Cursed is the man that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm, and whose heart departs from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good comes; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited. Blessed is the man that trusts in the Lord, and whose hope is the Lord. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreads out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat comes, but her leaf shall be green: and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.” Now comes a verse by which we are taught the greatness of God—

12. *Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and meted out Heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?* Who has done all this but God? Then, after that, is there anything too hard for Him to do? And who is so worthy of your confidence as this Omnipotent One? Oh, let the thunder of His power make you ashamed of the weakness of your unbelief!

13, 14. *Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD, or being His counselor has taught Him? With whom took He counsel, and who instructed Him, and taught Him in the path of judgment, and taught Him knowledge, and showed to Him the way of understanding?* Do you want greater wisdom than His? Are you perplexed because you cannot understand all mysteries? What would your wisdom and understanding be if they were placed side by side with His? A single drop of water, compared with all seas and oceans, has a larger magnitude than all your powers have compared with

the greatness of your God and all His glorious attributes! Trust Him, then, and let Him lead you wherever He wills.

15. *Behold, the nations are as a drop in a bucket, All the nations—Jews and Gentiles, the vast multitudes of China, and India, and all other nations—all these are but as a drop in a bucket—the one drop that trembles on the bucket's brim when all the rest of the water is gone!*

15. *And are counted as the small dust of the balance.* That little imperceptible dust that does not turn the scale of an ordinary balance and for which you would need the most sensitive scales in order to discover its presence! That is all that the whole of the nations of the earth are in comparison with God! Yet, sometimes we fancy that one man is so great that all must give way to him. Whereas, if we trust in God, and think as God thinks, a whole nation will be to us as a drop in a bucket, or as the unseen dust of the balance. Well did Dr. Watts sing:—

**“Great God! How infinite are You!
What worthless worms are we!
Let the whole race of creatures bow,
And pay their praise to Thee.
Your Throne eternal ages stood,
Ere seas or stars were made!
You are the ever-living God,
Were all the nations dead.”**

15, 16. *Behold, He takes up the isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering.* Set Libanus itself on fire—let all its forests of cedar be the wood to burn the sacrifice, and all its cattle the victims upon the altar—yet are they but as a child's toy in the sight of the All-Glorious Jehovah. There is nothing in them that can satisfy His infinite heart!

17, 18. *All nations before Him are as nothing; and they are counted to Him less than nothing, and vanity. To whom then will you liken God? Or what likeness will you compare unto Him?* Now, children of God, do not miss the meaning of this passage by saying that it relates to the heathen. True, it does, but not to them alone. When the heathen liken God to sticks and stones, they scarcely act worse than some of His people do, for, sometimes, we do not even think as well of our God as we do of ourselves. You, being evil, are constantly supplying your children's needs, yet you doubt whether God will supply yours! You liken Him to an ungenerous father, or to a forgetful and faithless friend, one who changes with the wind. Oh, dear Friends, have you not so likened Him? If so, let the rebuke to the heathen be also a rebuke to you. This is what the heathen do—

19, 20. *The workman melts a graven image, and the goldsmith spreads it over with gold, and casts silver chains. He that is so impoverished that he has no oblation—No precious metal—*

20-26. *Chooses a tree that will not rot; he seeks unto him a cunning workman to prepare a graven image that shall not be moved. Have you known? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is He that sits upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretches out the heavens as a curtain, and spreads them*

out as a tent to dwell in: that brings the princes to nothing! He makes the judges of the earth as vanity. Yes, they shall not be planted; yes, they shall not be sown: yes, their stock shall not take root in the earth: and He shall also blow upon them, and they shall wither, and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble. To whom, then, will you liken Me, or shall I be equal? says the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high. Look at the stars.

26, 27. *And behold who has created these things, that brings out their host by number: He calls them all by names by the greatness of His might, for that He is strong in power; not one fails. Why say you, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, My way is hid from the LORD, and my judgment is passed over from my God?* You see, it is another form of that same sin of forgetting God, or thinking little of God. It does not matter much whether it takes the form of atheism or of idolatry, it is the same kind of evil—it is getting away from God, or neglecting Him and, in our case, when we get depressed in spirit and fancy that God forgets us, it is the same sinful nature working in the same sinful manner. May God help us to forsake every form of evil!

28, 29. *Have you not known? Have you not heard that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, faints not, neither is weary? There is no searching of His understanding. He gives power to the faint.* Come now, faint heart, and swoon away at His feet! Come to Him in all your weakness! Do not try to conceal it, but trust Him to remove it. “He gives power to the faint.”

29. *And to them that have no might He increases strength.* What a mercy it is to have no might that God may increase our strength! What a curse it is to be so strong in yourself that you do not go to the Strong for strength!

30. *Even the youths.* With all their vigor. “Even the youths.”

30. *Shall faint and be weary, and the young men.* Though more confirmed in strength. “The young men.”

30, 31. *Shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles.* That is their first mode of progression, in which, perhaps, there is more flight than is good for them! “They shall mount up with wings as eagles.”

31. *They shall run, and not be weary.* That is an improvement upon the flying, but they shall still further improve their pace, for running is not the best pace at which a man can go. Enoch did not run with God, but he walked with Him. And so, as we grow in Grace, we shall advance, from flying to running, and from running to walking. This is the wise, sober, steady mode of going to Heaven!

31. *And they shall walk, and not faint.* The Lord help us to attain to that blessed rate of progression in which we shall “walk, and not faint,” for His dear Son’s sake!

Matthew 16:21. *From that time forth began Jesus to show unto His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.* He had previously spoken somewhat darkly concerning His death, but it was so sad and so strange a Revelation to His disciples that they could not think He really meant quite what He said. But now He be-

gan definitely and plainly to tell them about the future, and even to enter into details concerning His death and Resurrection. He knew all that the work of redemption would involve for Him. He had counted the cost, but—

***“When the Savior knew
The price of pardon was His blood,
His pity ne’er withdrew.”***

It must have been very saddening, but, at the same time, very profitable to the minds of the Apostles to be led by their Lord in this direction.

22. *Then Peter took Him, and began to rebuke Him, saying, Be it far from You, Lord: this shall not be unto You.* The margin reads, “Pity Yourself, Lord,” as though Peter meant to say, “God grant, of His infinite mercy, that this may not be true! How can it be that such an One as You are should die?” He probably thought that Christ’s death would be the end of His Kingdom, the ruin of all His people’s hopes, the quenching of the Light of Israel. So, in his zeal for his Master’s cause, he cried, “This shall not be unto You.”

23. *But He turned, and said unto Peter, Get you behind Me, Satan: you are an offense unto Me: for you savor not the things that are of God, but those that are of men.* Notice the contrast between the 18th verse and the 23rd. In the 18th verse, Christ had said, “You are Peter, and upon this rock will I build My Church.” And here He is saying, “Get you behind Me, Satan.” I do not understand our Lord to have called Peter, Satan, but to have looked right through Peter and to have seen Satan standing behind him, and making use of the Apostle to be His spokesman. The best of men may sometimes serve the devil’s turn better than a bad man would. He may speak through those who love the Lord, words which are contrary to the mind of Christ. So Christ sees Satan lurking, as in an entrenchment, behind Peter, and He says, “Get you behind Me: you are an offense unto Me.”

The idea of pitying Himself—the thought of shirking the task upon which He had entered—was offensive to Him. There was a savor about it of the things of men—of self and of self-saving, instead of self-denial and generous, disinterested, Godlike self-sacrifice. Oh, that we would always speak as Christ did on this occasion—whenever anything is proposed to us by which we would avoid the cross that He intends us to carry! When anyone wants us to moderate our zeal, or to tone down our opinions, less we should have to suffer for our faithfulness, let us reply, “Get you behind me, Satan.” What has a soldier of the Cross to do with avoiding the battle with evil? He should be always ready for the good fight of faith. What has an heir of Heaven to do with the saving of himself? Let him say with the Apostle Paul, “I count all things but loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.”

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

JESUS IN OUR MIDST

NO. 1254

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 12, 1875,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week,
when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled
for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst,
and said unto them, Peace be with you.”
John 20:19.*

WE do not wonder that when certain devout Greeks came up to keep the feast at Jerusalem they said to Philip, “Sir, we would see Jesus.” Who would not want to see Him? Who that has been redeemed by His precious blood does not long to behold Him? As a child pines for its mother, so have we been sick with strong desire to behold our Lord! Yet to see the King in His beauty with these eyes of ours is denied to us for the present. But the reasons for delay are so gracious that we are well content to tarry. It is better for us that the bodily Presence of our Lord should be withdrawn, for otherwise the Comforter would not come unto us and the Comforter, even the blessed Spirit, brings us richer gifts than even the personal Presence of Christ could have conferred!

Still, reasons cannot utterly remove longings, and we would still be glad to behold our Lord. Is it not natural that a soldier should wish to hear his Captain's voice? At least there is something excusable about it, if, every now and then, we dare to wish that we could have a glimpse, even if it were ever so short, of our own Well-Beloved, altogether lovely Lord. If we could but catch a glimpse of that face whose brightness outshines the sun, how it would stimulate us! But, Brothers and Sisters, it must not be. Until He, Himself, shall come, or till He shall take us up to be with Him where He is, we must be content with faith and postpone our desires for sight.

So far as the needs of the Gospel kingdom are concerned, the need for eye-witnesses is over. Apostles who had seen the Lord are required no more. Forty days of our Savior's tarrying here below sufficed to let a sufficient number of persons fully assure themselves that He had actually risen from the dead. And Jesus took great care that there should be left behind a body of evidence concerning the actual resurrection of His body which would render that fact indisputably certain to all candid minds. Probably there is no statement of human history which is better sustained by evidence than this fact—that Jesus of Nazareth who hung upon the Cross and died, did afterwards rise again from the dead!

The time of eye-witnesses is now over. More evidence would be superfluous and we are now in the mid-ocean of faith. The Lord knows that sight interferes with faith, and, therefore, He does not give us a mixture of the two. We do not walk by sight *and* faith, but, “we walk by faith, *not by*

sight.” To let us occasionally see, would, in fact, remove us out of the realm of faith and bring us down from the high position of Believers to the low platform of sightseers. Adieu, therefore, for a while, O Sight! Yet, dear Brothers and Sisters, there are *spiritual* visits from Jesus which are more than sufficient substitutes for His bodily Presence and these we may still desire and expect.

Christ may be really present where He is not materially present! There is a discerning of the Presence of Christ which we must all have, especially when we come to the communion table, for we are told that he who there discerns not the Lord’s body eats and drinks unworthily. There is a discerning of the Lord’s Presence in the midst of His people which is essential to the power of our assemblies. I pray that we may have this, even now, and if we do, we shall not be a whit behind those who saw Jesus with their eyes and heard Him with their ears! I do not think there is any privilege which the actual bodily Presence of Christ could bestow which we may not obtain at this moment by the actual *spiritual* Presence of Christ, if we do but exercise faith in Him as being in the midst of us.

He has said, “Lo, I am with you always,” and this is the pledge of every conceivable good. Concerning this Presence I shall speak, using the story as told by the Evangelists as a sort of type of that spiritual communion which I hope we may now realize.

I. Our first point this morning shall be, THERE IS A PECULIAR MANNER IN OUR LORD’S COMING TO HIS DISCIPLES. You will see, first, that *He comes gladly to them.* I am sure He came gladly, for He came so soon and so often. First, He appeared to Mary Magdalene, then to Simon, then to the two at Emmaus and then to the 11 at Jerusalem. There are at least four times in a day in which the Risen One seeks His Brethren. These visits of His were in different places, somewhat remote from each other. It was a busy day with Him, this first day after He had risen from the dead! How true it was after His Resurrection, even as it was in ages long ago, that His delights were with the sons of men.

He evidently loved to be where His people were. He might have gone away and spent the 40 days in the desert, triumphing on the scene of His former conflict. Or He might have surveyed the earth in lonely travel, but instead He spent His sacred leisure with His people. And on the first day after He had risen from the grave we have record of no less than four interviews which He had with His disciples. Remember that on each occasion He came right willingly and showed Himself freely. Magdalene, it is true, went to the tomb seeking Him, but He might readily have remained unknown had He so desired.

I know not where Simon was when his Lord met him, but he, also, did not find Him as the result of search. As for the two disciples at Emmaus, they were going away from Jerusalem and evidently were not seeking Him, yet He joined Himself to their company. And the 11 had met to console each other, but not to meet with Jesus—that was a matter beyond their expectation. The doors were shut. No sentinel stood ready to look for the appearing of the Lord Jesus, but He came to them all of a sudden, an uninvited guest! I gather from this, Beloved, that our blessed Lord delights to

manifest Himself to His people even now, for we know that He is the same as always.

After a *spiritual* manner He is glad to come and sup with us that we may sup with Him. He is not reluctant to visit the places where His people assemble. It is the joy of His soul to look those in the face for whom He shed His blood and to hear their prayers and praises and accept their offerings. You have not, today, therefore, in the prayer which I trust you are breathing to Him, to urge an unwilling guest to come where He cares not to be. You have not to lay hold of Him and constrain Him, saying, "Abide with us." He will be glad to reveal Himself to you as He does not unto the world. Jesus comes cheerfully where He is cheerfully received. He even comes to those who invite Him not and, therefore, He will surely turn aside and tarry with you who are longing for fellowship with Him.

He came on that occasion, also, to those who were quite unworthy of so great a privilege—for who were those eleven? God forbid we should say a hard word against those honored men, but in reference to their Master they had not behaved as they should have done. It is written, "Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled." Among that 11 there was not one who had stood up in his Lord's defense, not even the man who had leaned his head upon His bosom. No, one who was not the least among them had, with oaths and cursing, denied Him! They had not forgotten Him or renounced His cause, or else they would not have met as they were doing. But they had all disbelieved the promise of His return, or else they had not met in fear and trembling as they did that night.

I think some leaders would have refused to acknowledge such followers, or at best would have sent them cold commands and denied them their company till they were in a better spirit. Our Master came to His cowardly, faithless disciples and stood in the midst of them uttering the cheering salutation, "Peace be with you!" My Soul, why should He not come to you, though you are the most unworthy of all whom He has bought with His blood? Though you assuredly have been unfaithful, cowardly and unbelieving, yet even upon *you* may His light arise and into your ears may He speak the peaceful benediction, even as He did unto the eleven. This ought to be a point of great comfort to you, this morning, and great incitement to hope that you will obtain the Lord's spiritual Presence, unworthy though you are.

Note again, the manner of His coming. He came to the full assembly of the Apostles and their companions, *after He had been seen by the few*. That is to say, first one had seen Him, then another one. And then two—and then the full quorum of the 11 and they that were with them were favored with His company. I am glad, my Brothers and Sisters, to know that this morning early, soon after break of day, a few of the household of faith met under this roof and found their Master among them displaying His love. I know, also, that a second time, before we assembled in this upper room for worship, there was in the basement below another company gathered together, who sought and found our Lord. And, moreover, one at least is here who saw Jesus early this morning in his own chamber while privately worshipping.

These are good tokens, my Brethren, for now that we have all come together, many more than 11, and now that all our hearts are eager after Him, we shall surely meet with Him! Since the Brothers and the Sisters say, "We have seen Him this morning. We saw Him in our chambers. We saw Him as we walled to the house of prayer. We met Him in the early morning Prayer Meeting," this is good news to us and confirms our hope that He will come to us, also. Yes, Beloved, He will come to the feast! Even now I see Him and His Presence makes my heart burn within me!

Our Lord came to His disciples *when they were met together quietly*, secluded from the world, shut in as much as they could be from its cares and distractions. The 11 and the more trustworthy Brethren had appointed this midnight rendezvous for no purpose but that of quietly considering their condition, cheering each other's hearts and waiting upon God. They had nothing to buy or sell, or debate upon. They had laid aside business cares and domestic troubles and then their Master came. It is a good thing for the saints to be shut in and the world shut out. I hope we are in that position now. You must not expect Jesus to show Himself to you if your heart is at home with the children, or away at the workshop, or traveling to and fro through the earth, seeking after vanity!

But with the doors all shut about us, even in this great Tabernacle we shall see our Beloved. If we can but shut the world out we may expect to feel His Presence and to have Him breathe upon us as He did upon those of old. Not in the noisy street, but in the quiet chamber, Jesus comes. Not at the market, but in the meeting. Not in the street, but in the sanctuary will His gathered people have their clearest sights of Him.

Having all met together, the next noticeable point as to the Lord's coming was that *they were all thinking about Him and talking about Him*. The uppermost subject was Jesus whom they had followed as their Master and whom they had seen die—and of whom it was said that He had risen from the dead. I suppose they prayed together, but I am sure their prayers all had reference to Him. I do not think they sang, but if they did, I think they must have selected a Psalm which had an evident allusion to Him. Some of them may have spoken. I have no doubt Simon Peter did, but it must have been to tell how the Lord had revealed Himself to Him and was risen, indeed!

And Magdalene in that quiet assembly may have, again, told of the vision of angels which she saw and how she met the Master and mistook Him for a gardener. And now there come in two Brothers, sweating from their rapid journey from Emmaus, who are just in time before the assembly breaks up to repeat the same gladsome tidings! Everything that night was about Jesus, directly and distinctly about Him. There were no discussions as to doctrines and no questions about ordinances. They spoke wholly of Jesus who died, Jesus who was said to have risen, and they said one to another, is it, indeed, so? Thus while all their hearts and tongues were taken up with Him, Jesus manifested Himself to them.

Now I hope our Lord will come this morning, for I know some who think less and less every day of everything but Jesus. They now account a sermon to be precious or to be vile in proportion as it is full of Him, and

reckon a day well spent or ill just in proportion as they have spent it with Him. He is the Alpha and Omega, head, front, chief, Lord, all, yes, All in All to us! And if there are many such present today, you may depend upon it, Jesus will not stay away and we shall feel the delights of His fellowship! Still, someone will say, "Perhaps He will not come here, for there are many barriers and we, ourselves, are not, perhaps, in the very best condition to receive Him."

Stop, Brothers and Sisters, and ask yourselves—were there no difficulties *then*? The doors were shut and the disciples were in fear. I do not know how Jesus came into the room! Some think He passed through the closed door by miracle, albeit that his body was substantial flesh and bone. Others suggest that He opened the door by miracle and then it closed again. I care not how, but there He was, though the doors were shut! And I know this, that whatever doors there may be between my Lord and my soul, though they were doors made of seven times plated steel, He could pass through them or could open them to get at my heart when it longs after Him!

Brethren, if there are mountains between you and Christ, behold, He comes leaping like a roe or a young hart over the separating hills! *Nothing* can keep Him back from you except yourself—and if you will that He should come—He wills to come and is on His way, even now. No considerations of domestic suffering or of personal pain. No remembrance of the trials of the week, or even the present temptations of Satan shall avail to keep back your Lord and Master! Surely you are aware He can make your soul like the chariots of Amminadab! But perhaps you are afraid He will not visit you because you have a fear which you cannot shake off.

So had the disciples, or they would not have closed the doors so carefully. They feared the Jewish mob which might try to slay them as they had done their Lord! And though you may be fearing the troubles of the week before you, the Lord will not despise you for it. Perhaps some very heavy cloud hangs over your spirit right now. Well, your Lord can pierce through clouds! Does not the sun look forth from the heavens though the morning is lowering and dreary? Shines he not even though the fogs and mists gather about our city? And Jesus comes, though sins encompass us and doubts and fears and cares hang thick about our path!

He comes as the dew which waits not for man, neither tarries for the sons of men. I see no reason why, now, at this very instant, we may not hear the voice of our Beloved! Blessed Lord, we beseech You to come, for come You can, as well we know! At favored times I have felt as though His very shadow were over me, as though the touch of His right hand were upon me and I heard Him say to me, "Fear not, I am He that lives and was dead." And why not again? Why not now? There are many reasons which make us hope that we shall, this morning, behold Him! Let us look up, and with one hearty cry, "Come, Savior, and reveal Yourself to us now as You do not unto the world!"

II. Secondly, OUR SAVIOR HAD A PECULIAR MANNER WHEN HE WAS COME, so, if He is here, this morning, we may expect Him to be here in something like the following fashion. *He stood* in the midst of them. He

stood, suddenly stood—where they had seen no one the moment before—He stood, plainly revealed. He did not flash across the room like a meteor, but He remained in one position as though He meant to tarry for a while. *He stood in the midst*—He took the place which a teacher should occupy, the position which naturally belongs to the Master and Lord.

I rejoice to think of my Lord Jesus as taking the midst of the circle when He visits His Brethren. I love the name of Calvin, but I always regard him as sitting on one side of the room. And I love the name of Wesley, but I regard him as occupying another side place in the assembly. There are many preachers in the Church, but not one of them is in the midst of the family circle of the redeemed. The Lord, alone, is there—the center of all hearts. Others are present and they shine with differing lights, but He is the sun! He is the center and ruler of the system of His Church.

This morning, in addressing you, I stand in body in your midst, but no doubt my preaching does not consort with the experiences and feelings of all present. I must stand on one side, but if my Lord will reveal Himself to you, I am sure we will all give Him the chief place! He will be the center of all our loves and delights. I would not yield precedence to you, Brothers and Sisters, in my desire to honor my Lord as the chief Beloved of my soul, and I feel sure that whatever your condition, you all agree to magnify *Him* and are all glad to look in the same direction, namely, to Him alone. Though our views may sometimes differ, yet our views about Jesus are the same, and our hearts' best affections all unite in Him. Well, then, if He is here, this morning, we shall all feel that we find a common meeting place in Him, that our confidence is in Him, our consecration is to Him, we belong to Him, He belongs to us and we are happiest among the happy because He gathers us all around His loving heart.

When He stands in the midst, the next thing we find is that *He speaks, and His word is, "Peace be with you."* The Presence of Christ, this morning, will be signaled by the bestowal of a deep sense of peace. You will not be able to tell one another why you feel such profound quiet, but it will vividly come before you that Jesus loved you from before the foundations of the world, that your names are engraved upon His hands, that He has bought you with His precious blood, that you are near and dear to Him and that where He is, there you shall be, also, and your souls will feel as if they were more than content. Your experience will be that of the Psalmist when he said, "My soul is even as a weaned child."

It is a glad hour when we need nothing more, but are filled with all the fullness of God! When we can heartily say, "Whom have I in Heaven but You, and there is none upon the earth that I desire beside You?" Cares are gone, delight is come, longings are satisfied and desires fall asleep on His bosom, when Jesus is present! No sound of war is in the camp, nor voice of them that mourn. The time of the singing birds is come and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land. After observing that our Lord spoke, we next find that *He showed*—showed Himself to His disciples. Jesus did not come into their midst to show them a new thought, a philosophic discovery, a deep doctrine, a profound mystery, or, indeed, anything but *Him*—

self. He was a sacred egoist that day, for what He spoke of was Himself and what He revealed was Himself.

What a sight was that for the disciples! They saw the very Christ! They had seen Him for three years before, but not as one who had been dead and passed through the sepulcher! And now He stood before them, as the First-Begotten from the dead. The most conspicuous things He showed in Himself were His wounds—His hands, His feet, His side. Oh, if my Lord is present here this morning, the chief object of faith's vision will be Himself—and the most conspicuous point in Himself will be the emblems of His passion! The mind cannot contemplate a more blessed object than the wounds of Jesus—fountains of redemption, doors of eternal life, sources of hope, scale of Heaven!

Look, you saints, look even now to your crucified Savior! As far as He enables you, come close to Him and put your finger into the nail prints, and say, "My Lord and my God"! Those sacred scars of His are the sure tokens of sin forgiven, punishment borne by the Substitute and the soul forever emancipated from her slavery! This is what Jesus does when He comes to us in spirit—He makes Himself more dear than ever by fuller and more condescending discoveries of His love, so that we know and believe the love which He has towards us. In so doing *our Lord opens up the Scriptures*. He did so to the eleven. Jesus Christ's Presence is always known by His people by the value and the beauty which they are led to attach to the Scripture at such times.

The Bible is one book in the dark and another book in the light. Do you not, sometimes, take up the Scripture and as you read it, feel that it is like reading any other book, only that it involves a responsibility which another book does not bring upon you? At such seasons you get no sweetness out of it, but rather bitterness. But when Jesus takes the Book, He looses the seven seals and with His finger lights up every line and bids you look, if you will, through the hole in His hand and read the promises in that fashion! Ah, how they glow and glisten! Then the Book talks with you and you detect the Voice to be that of the Beloved Himself!

There is life in the Lord because Christ is there who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life—and is, Himself, the eternal Logos, the true Word of God. Yes, Jesus Christ's Presence never teaches a man to despise Scripture and look to inner light, or personal revelation—for much of supposed special revelation is the child of superstition and conceit—whereas in the Scriptures we have a more sure word of testimony. The more light a man has directly from the Spirit, the more he prizes the light of the Spirit in the Word. And the more truly he gets into communion with the unseen Christ, the more does he delight in the Truths of God as revealed to him in the pages of Inspiration. May we know Christ's Presence by that sign and token this morning!

Dear Friends, the Lord's Presence among His followers that day had this peculiarity about it, again, that then *they forgot all their fears*. As He had given them peace with God, so now He puts aside the fear of the Jews and every other fear which had distressed them. They had been frightened, at first. They thought He was a spirit, but now, as they gathered

about Him and saw Him eat with them, they gathered around Him as sheep around a shepherd and they felt at home. I am sure, as they went to their houses, they had no fears of Jews as they passed through the midnight streets. And when they reached their doors they felt joyous and light of heart. Whatever their pecuniary circumstances may have been, they had no longer any care, for they had seen the Lord!

Jesus Christ's Presence will be known to you this day by the forgetting of your cares. There is a text in Solomon where he says, "Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that are of heavy hearts. Let him drink and forget his poverty, and renumber his misery no more." The love of Jesus is that blessed strong drink whose Presence is the wine of which if a man will drink, he shall forget his misery and shall remember his sorrow no more! If Jesus Christ does but give to the man of downcast spirit, the spiced wine of His pomegranate by making him feel that He is near him and that He loves him—if He does but make him conscious that the Redeemer's self is no fiction but a very present Friend and Helper—then whatever the trial may be, he shall bear it readily! The cross shall cease to be a load and the road beneath his pilgrim foot shall become smooth.

Brethren, we cannot enjoy, as yet, the Presence of Christ corporeally, but I have already shown you that all the blessings which His bodily Presence could bestow, we can realize if our Lord, after the same fashion, shall be present with us *spiritually* today.

III. Now thirdly, THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST WITH HIS DISCIPLES EXCITED VARIOUS EMOTIONS. These emotions may be excited by His *spiritual* Presence quite as readily. At first they were terrified, for they thought Him a spirit. It is a sad sign of man's depraved nature and of his gross carnality that the presence of a spirit is the source of alarm to him. If we were more spiritual than we are, we should not fear to meet beings of our own order, but should delight to think of the presence of disembodied spirits and should be glad enough to commune with them!

Because the disciples were unspiritual they were alarmed and when the alarm ceased a little, Jesus said to them, "Why are you troubled? And why do thoughts arise in your hearts?" I suppose they began to think of their ill conduct to their Master and conscience made them tremble. We are told by Mark that He also upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart. In gentle tones He chided them for having been so unbelieving and they must have felt this, also, to be a source of troubled thoughts.

Meanwhile they doubted whether it could be the risen Savior. But when they were convinced by indisputable signs, they greatly rejoiced and almost at the same time the very vividness of their joy blinded them into another doubt. Like a pendulum, they swung from joy to unbelief! After doubt went, they rejoiced, and then wonder came, and then doubt again, so that they scarcely knew where they were, they were in such a state of excitement! John, if you notice, gives a very calm account of it all, for he looked at it rather from Christ's point of view than from the disciples' and, having had his head so lately on Christ's bosom, he was, perhaps, more believing than the rest. Luke's picture of it shows us the contending emo-

tions at work in the breasts of the assembled Brothers and Sisters, for Luke was a physician and accustomed to watch symptoms and phases of feeling. He looked at it from the human side and, therefore, he gives us a fuller description of the tossing to and fro, the hopes, fears, joys, sorrows, questions and comforts of the hour.

Well, we will leave the 11 and come to ourselves. Suppose, a moment, that our Lord were actually to appear among us this morning? I will not say I wish He would, because we know Him no more after the flesh and there is no blessing which His corporeal Presence could bestow but what we have already in His spiritual Presence. But if He were to come, my Brethren, what would be our state of mind towards Him? I hope we should not be terrified. I think the most of us who believe in Him would be more likely to be overjoyed than at all frightened, but I am sure we should all be filled with *the profoundest awe*.

The sight of HIM! Our Master and Lord! Should we not, like John in Patmos, fall at His feet as dead? Would not the bliss of that vision be too great for these frail bodies? At any rate, we would devoutly bow the knee before Him and reverently adore Him! And oh what adoration would we give to the Lamb that once was slain! To that dear and ever blessed Son of God who has washed us from our sins in His own blood! Brethren, we would turn this Tabernacle into a temple and this hallowed hour into a fragment of Heaven's eternity! If our Lord would but come here and show Himself among us, what overflowing love should He have from us! How would our hearts melt while He spoke! Brothers and Sisters, He is here!

Let us give that loving adoration to Him even now! Let us bow before Him and with prostrate reverence of heart worship the Divine Son! Why should it not be so? Brethren, may the Holy Spirit lead you into the depths of devotion now! I have no doubt we should feel a marvelous degree of serene joy to think that at length we were with our Lord. When we went home and told our friends who were not here, we would say to them, "We have had some sweet Sundays, but we have never before had such a Lord's-Day as this, for He who is Alpha and Omega walked among us and spoke with us! We forgot Brother Spurgeon—he went back to his seat and held his head in delight—we thought no more about him, for his Lord absorbed our attention! The joy we had in seeing Jesus was worth waiting for."

Well, dear Friends, we shall not have our Lord's crucified body here so as to feel peace from the sight of our eyes and the hearing of our ears, but He is here, really. And all the facts which cluster around His Presence which would be legitimate reasons for peaceful joy, we have already, for He has died and redeemed us and He has gone into His Glory! And remember, He is pleading for us and He is coming again to take us Home to Himself! These are, by His Grace, the fundamental reasons for peace. We have all the real causes of joy that we should have if the Man of Nazareth did stand in our midst! Therefore let us be calmly glad and wholly at rest this morning. God help us to be so!

Surely, also, many would be melted down with *deep contrition* in our Redeemer's Presence. Some of us would have to say, "Lord and Master,

have You come to ask an account of our stewardship? We are ashamed to look You in the face, we have done so little for You.” There is one who might say, “I have been a member of a Church for years, but I have neither helped in the school, preached in the villages, visited the sick nor rendered any service whatever. I have eaten the fat and drank the sweet in the House of the Lord, but that is all that I have done.” Brothers and Sisters, here, before the spiritually present Lord you may make the same confessions and be humbled on account of them. I wish you would.

Though Jesus is not here with that dear face to tenderly chide you, yet He is here, by His blessed Spirit, to gently remind you of your forgotten obligations. By His wounds and by His bloody sweat, I do entreat you to be loiterers no longer, but go work in His vineyard and cease not till life’s sun goes down! “Ah,” says one, “but if our Lord were here, I would tell Him my great trouble and ask for His sympathy and help. I would come to His feet and beseech Him to save my husband and to convert my ungodly son.” Do it, Sister, do it NOW, for He will hear you as assuredly as if we heard His footsteps in these aisles!

His Spirit, who has put the desire into your soul, is the pledge of His Presence. Breathe the prayer and expect the blessing and your expectation shall not fail. I hear another Believer cry out, “Ah, if my Lord were here before me, I would pour out my glad soul in praise and tell Him how I love Him! I would kiss His feet and wash them with my tears.” Do it NOW, my Friend, for though you have not the flesh and blood of Christ present, yet Jesus in *spirit* is here and though His body is up in Glory, yet your tears and thankfulness will reach Him and be as acceptable to Him as if He were here in body! Even now His heart will accept the emotions of your soul! Let them flow out before Him as perfume from the flowers.

“Ah,” says one, “if I did but see the Lord I should leave this morning’s assembly feeling that I could now lead a higher life than ever I had led before. I could not look at Him without saying, ‘You altogether lovely One, I pledge myself to You, for You to live, for You to die and all I have and all I am shall be Yours forever.’” Beloved, do it unrestrainedly and unfeignedly even NOW! Do it now, I say, for He will just as well accept you, looking out from the Glory Land above, as though He looked down upon you from this platform!

I wonder what the scene would be with some hypocrites who are present, if Christ were to come. Ah, how they would wish they had never made a profession of religion! Oh Judas, Judas, how would you bear to see the risen glory of Him whom you betrayed? Are you here this morning, Judas? And you, vacillating Pilate, who knew the right but did the wrong—how will you meet the Man in whom you found no fault but yet condemned to die? There may be many here who have despised Him, who have reviled His people and ridiculed His Gospel, albeit that Jesus shed His blood for the sons of men!

Well, although Jesus is not here in body, yet will He soon come in Person to judge the quick and dead! And if you dare not meet Him now, how will you meet Him then? Thus says the Lord, prepare for His advent, for

behold He comes to judge mankind, and woe onto those who shall be found wanting in the day of His appearing.

IV. The last thing of all is this. Jesus Christ, when He came among His disciples, LEFT CERTAIN PERMANENT GIFTS which also can be realized by His *spiritual* Presence. One of the most precious gifts He left them was *the realization of His Person*. Those who saw Him that day never thought of Him, from then on, as a mere historical person, or a dream, or a phantom. You have read a great many histories but you have never realized the persons of history as you have realized your own father and mother and children. But the disciples must have realized Christ, for they saw Him and some of them touched Him and put their finger into the print of the nails.

Now, it is very desirable that we should, all of us, realize the reality of Jesus Christ as God and Man, and we can do it, this morning, if He will come and overshadow us with His Presence. There are some of us to whom Christ has been a world more real than ourselves, for we have sometimes scarcely known whether we were in the body or out of the body, when He has been near. But we have always known whether *He* was in the body or out of the body. We have felt as if wife and father and mother were shadows that would pass away—but we have realized the eternal existence of Christ and have known that He could not pass away. And so *spiritually* we have grasped Him more firmly than we have our own friends and kin.

The most real thing under Heaven to my soul is the Lord Jesus Christ! Brethren, can you all say that? If you can, then Christ has been present with you this morning. I do not say that I can use this language always. Alas, alas, when my Lord has gone, it is not so with me! But when I know He is near, there is no force that does so completely constrain me, no impulse that does so utterly hold me spellbound as the impulse that arises from His Presence, and the magnificence that flows out of His love shed abroad in my soul. Every child of God knows it is so and thus it is clear that without seeing Christ with the eyes, you can obtain the blessing of *realizing* Him.

Next He gave to them all *a commission*, He said, “Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.” He has never laid His hand on your shoulder, my Brother, and said, “Go and tell the Gospel to poor sinners.” He has never touched you, my Sister, and said, “Woman, I have sent you to bring your companions to Me. Go and tell them of My love!” No, but He has virtually done it by the commission which He gave to all His disciples! And He does it powerfully and specially by His Spirit to many of us whenever we realize His Presence. We cannot sit down at the feet of Christ without feeling that we must work for Him! I defy any man to live near Christ and to be lazy! Our Lord walks a smart pace and if you will keep company with Him you must go His rate. But if you loiter and linger and waste time, Christ will be on ahead and leave you to yourself.

I pray Him to commission some of you this morning! I tried last Sunday morning to call out young heroes for Christ. I do not know whether the Lord called them out by me or not, but I pray that Jesus would do it! If

today He should appear, the Crucified One, with face more marred than that of any man—with pierced hands, with side opened by the deep gash—if He should speak personally to each of you, and say, “My Son, My Daughter, go and serve Me, from this day, until I come,” with what energy would you go forth to His service, even if it were to the ends of the earth!

The last gift He gave them was *He breathed on them*. His breath was the Spirit of God. This was the first drop of the shower of the Spirit which afterwards was shed so plenteously at Pentecost. He breathed on them and though they did not get the fullness of the Spirit, yet they obtained a measure of it and they became qualified to fulfill their commission. Oh that He would breathe the Spirit upon us now! No, we need not ask for it, Beloved, for our Lord has given the Spirit once and for all to all His people! He has baptized His Church into the Holy Spirit and into fire—and the Spirit remains with us always—only you must believe the might which that Spirit bestows upon you.

Oh Brother, oh Sister, I beseech you do not estimate yourself according to *your* ability, according to *your* experience, *your* learning and the like, but according to that Divine energy which rests upon you if you are called of God to service! What are the powers within? They are feebleness itself! But the power from *above* is the power of *God*! Gird on this mystic belt, this Divine Omnipotence, and if you know how to wear it by faith, you shall break through a troop and leap over a wall. “All things are possible to him that believes.”

May Jesus Christ, then, may His Spirit be so among us that each one of us may be conscious of obtaining a fresh anointing this very morning! And in that strength we shall go forth to new service for the glory of God. May God bless you for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
Mark 16:9-16; Luke 24:36-44; John 20:19-24.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—907, 766, 785.**

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THE EVIDENCE OF OUR LORD'S WOUNDS

NO. 2061

A SERMON DELIVERED
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, DECEMBER 2, 1888
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

*“Then said He to Thomas, Reach here your finger and behold My hands.
And reach here your hand and thrust it into My side: and be
not faithless but believing.”
John 20:27.*

AMONG US in this day we have many persons who are like Thomas—dubious, demanding signs and tokens, suspicious and oftentimes sad. I am not sure that there is not a slight touch of Thomas in most of us. There are times and seasons when the strong man fails and when the firm Believer has to pause a while and say, “Is it so?” It may be that our meditation upon the text before us may be of service to those who are touched with the malady which afflicted Thomas.

Notice, before we proceed to our subject in full—that Thomas asked of our Lord what he ought not to have asked. He wanted to put our risen Lord to tests which were scarcely reverent to His sacred Person. Admire his Master's patience with him. He does not say, “If he does not choose to believe he may continue to suffer for his unbelief.” But no. He fixes His eye upon the doubter and addresses Himself specially to him. Yet not in words of reproach or anger. Jesus could bear with Thomas, though Thomas had been a long time with Him and had not known Him. To put his finger into the print of the nails and thrust his hand into His side was much more than any disciple had a right to ask of his Divine Master.

And yet see the condescension of Jesus! Rather than Thomas should suffer from unbelief, Christ will let him take great liberties. Our Lord does not always act towards us according to His own dignity but according to our necessity—and if we are really so weak that nothing will do but thrusting a hand into His side, He will let us do it. Nor do I wonder at this—if, for our sakes, He suffered a spear to be thrust there—He may well permit a hand to follow.

Observe that Thomas was at once convinced. He said—“My Lord and my God.” This shows our Master's wisdom—that Thomas indulged Him with such familiarity, because He knew that, though the demand was presumptuous, yet the act would work for Thomas' good. Our Lord sometimes wisely refuses—saying, “Touch Me not. For I am not yet ascended.” But at other times, He wisely grants, because, though it is too much for us to ask, yet He thinks it wise to give.

The subject for our present meditation is just this—the cure of doubts. Thomas was permitted to put his finger into the print of the nails for the curing of his doubts. Perhaps you and I wish that we could do something like it. Oh, if our Lord Jesus would appear to me for once and I might

thrust my hand into His side! Or, if I might for once see Him, or speak with Him—how confirmed should I be! No doubt that thought has arisen in the minds of many. We shall not have such proofs, my Brethren, but we shall have something near akin to them, which will answer the same purpose.

I. The first head of my discourse shall be this—CRAVE NO SIGNS. If such signs are possible, crave them not. If there are dreams, visions, voices, ask not for them.

Crave not wonders, first, because it is dishonoring to the sacred Word to ask for them. You believe this Bible to be an inspired volume—the Book of God. The Apostle Peter calls it, “A more sure Word of prophecy; whereunto you do well that you take heed.” Are you not satisfied with that? When a person, in whose veracity you have the utmost confidence, bears testimony to this or that, if you straightway reply, “I would be glad of further evidence,” you are slighting your friend and casting unjust suspicion upon him.

Will you cast suspicion upon the Holy Spirit, who, by this Word bears witness unto Christ? Oh, no, let us be content with His witness. Let us not wish to see but remain satisfied to *believe*. If there are difficulties in believing, is this not natural, when he that believes is finite and the things to be believed are, in themselves *infinite*? Let us accept the difficulties as being in themselves, in some measure, proofs of the correctness of our position, as inevitable attendants of heavenly mysteries, when they are looked at by such poor minds as ours. Let us believe the Word and crave no signs.

Crave no signs, because it is unreasonable that we should desire more than we already have. The testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ, contained in the Word, should alone suffice us. Beside that, we have the testimony of saints and martyrs who have gone before us, dying triumphant in the faith. We have the testimony of many still among us who tell us that these things are so. In part, we have the testimony of our own conscience, of our own conversion, of our own experience—and this is convincing testimony. Let us be satisfied with it. Thomas ought to have been content with the testimony of Mary Magdalene and the other disciples but he was not. We ought to trust our Brethren's word. Let us not be unreasonable in craving after proofs when already proofs are afforded us without stint.

Crave no signs because it may be you will be presumptuous in doing so. Who are you to demand a sign from God? What is it He is to do before you will believe in Him? Suppose He does not choose to do it, are you therefore arrogantly to say, “I refuse to believe unless the Lord will do *my* bidding”? Do you imagine that any angel would demean himself to pay attention to *you*, who set yourself up to make demands of the Most High? Assuredly not. It is presumption which dares to ask of God anything more than the testimony of Himself which He chooses to grant us in His Word.

It is, moreover, damaging to ourselves to crave signs. Jesus says, “Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed.” Thomas had his sign and he believed. So far, so good—but he missed a blessing peculiar to those who have not seen and yet have believed. Do not, therefore,

rob yourselves of the special favor which lights on those who, with no evidence but the witness of the Spirit of God, are prepared at once to believe in the Lord Jesus unto eternal life.

Again, crave no signs, for this craving is highly perilous. Translated according to many and I think translated correctly, our Savior said, "Reach here your finger and put it into the print of the nails. And become not faithless but believing"—intending to indicate that Thomas, by degrees, would become faithless. His faith had grown to be so little that if he continued insisting upon this and that, as a sign or evidence, that faith of his would get down to the very lowest. Yes, he would have no faith left. "Become not *faithless* but believing."

Dear Friends, if you began to seek signs and if you were to see them, do you know what would happen? Why, you would want more. And when you had these, you would demand still more. Those who live by their feelings judge of the Truth of God by their own condition. When they have happy feelings, then they believe. But if their spirits sink, if the weather happens to be a little damp, or if their constitution happens to be a little disordered—down go their spirits and straightway, down goes their faith.

He that lives by a faith which does not rest on feeling but is built upon the Word of the Lord, will remain fixed and steadfast as the mount of God. But he that craves for this thing and that thing as a token for good at the hand of the Lord, stands in danger of perishing from want of faith. He shall not perish if he has even a *grain* of living faith—for God will deliver him from the temptation. But the temptation is a very trying one to faith.

Crave, therefore, no sign. If you read a story of a person who saw a vision, or if you hear another declare that a voice spoke to him—believe those things, or not, as you like. But do not desire them for yourself. These wonders may, or may not, be freaks of the imagination—I will not judge. But we must not rely upon them, for we are not to walk by sight but by faith. *Rely* not upon anything that can be seen of the eyes or heard of the ears. But simply trust Him whom we know to be the Christ of God, the Rock of our salvation.

II. Secondly, when you want comfort, crave no sign but TURN TO THE WOUNDS OF YOUR LORD. You see what Thomas did. He wanted faith and he looked for it in Jesus wounded. He says nothing about Christ's head crowned with glory. He does not say that he must see Him "girt about the paps with a golden girdle." Thomas, even in his unbelief, is wise. He turns to his Lord's *wounds* for comfort. Whenever your unbelief prevails, follow in this respect the conduct of Thomas and turn your eyes straightway to the wounds of Jesus. These are the never-failing consolation, from which, if a man does once drink, he shall forget his misery and remember his sorrow no more. Turn to the Lord's wounds. And if you do, what will you see?

First, you will see the tokens of your Master's love. O Lord Jesus, what are these wounds in Your side and in Your hands? He answers, "These I endured when suffering for you. How can I forget you? I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands. How can I ever fail to remember you? On My very heart the spear has written your name." Look at Jesus, dead,

buried, risen and then say, "He loved me and gave Himself for me"! There is no restorative for a sinking faith like a sight of the wounded Savior. Look, Soul, and live by the proofs of His death! Come and put your finger, by faith, into the print of the nails and these wounds shall heal you of unbelief. The wounds of our Lord are the tokens of His love.

They are, again, the seals of His death—especially that wound in His side. He must have died, for "one of the soldiers, with a spear, pierced His side and forthwith came there out blood and water. And he that saw it bare witness." The Son of God did assuredly die. God, who made the heavens and the earth, took to Himself our nature and in one wondrous Person He was both God and Man. And lo! This wondrous Son of God bore sufferings unutterable and consummated all by His death. This is our comfort—for if He died in our place—then we shall not die for our sins. Our transgression is put away and our iniquity is pardoned. If the Sacrifice had never been slain, we might despair. But since the spear wound proves that the great Sacrifice really died—despair is slain, hope revives and confidence rejoices.

The wounds of Jesus, next, are the marks of identity. By these we identify His blessed Person after His resurrection. The very Christ that died has risen again. There is no illusion—there could be no mistake. It is not somebody else foisted upon us in His place—but Jesus who died has left the dead, for there are the marks of the crucifixion in His hands and in His feet and there is the spear-thrust still. It is Jesus—this same Jesus. This is a matter of great comfort to a Christian—this indisputably proven doctrine of the resurrection of our Lord. It is the keystone of the Gospel arch. Take that away, or doubt it and there remains nothing to console you. But because Jesus died and the same Person rose again and ever lives, therefore does our heart sweetly rest believing that "them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." And also that the whole of the work of Jesus is true, is completed and is accepted of God.

Again, those wounds, those scars of our Lord, were the memorials of His love to His people. They set forth His love so that His chosen can see the tokens. But they are also memorials to Himself. He condescendingly bears these as His reminders. In Heaven, at this moment, upon the Person of our blessed Lord there are the scars of His crucifixion. Centuries have gone by and yet He looks like a Lamb that has been slain. Our first glance will assure us that this is He of whom they said, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!"

Steadily look with the eyes of your faith into Glory and see your Master's wounds and say within yourself, "He has compassion upon us still—He bears the marks of His passion." Look up, poor Sufferer! Jesus knows what physical pain means. Look up, poor depressed one! He knows what a broken heart means. Can you not perceive this? Those prints upon His hands, these sacred stigmata, declare that He has not forgotten what He underwent for us but still feels for us.

Once again—these wounds may comfort us because in Heaven they are, before God and the holy angels, the perpetual ensigns of His finished work. That passion of His can never be repeated and never needs to be—

“After He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, He sat down on the right hand of God.” But the memorials are always being presented before the infinite mind of God. Those memorials are, in part, the wounds in our Lord's blessed Person. Glorified spirits can never cease to sing, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain.” For every time they gaze upon Him they perceive His scars. How resplendent shine the nail-prints! No jewels that ever gemmed a king can look one-half so lustrous as these. Though He is God over all blessed forever, yet to us, at least, His brightest splendor comes from His death.

My Hearer, whenever your soul is clouded, turn to these wounds which shine like a constellation of five bright stars. Look not to your own wounds, nor to your own pains, or sins, or prayers, or tears—but remember that “with His stripes we are healed.” Gaze, then, gaze intently upon your Redeemer's wounds if you would find comfort.

III. This brings me to my third point. Whenever faith is staggered at all **SEEK SUCH HELPS FOR YOUR FAITH AS YOU MAY.** Though we cannot literally put our finger into the print of the nails and may not wish to do so, yet let us use such modes of recognition as we do possess. Let us put these to their utmost use. And we shall no longer desire to put our hand into the Savior's side. We shall be perfectly satisfied without that. You that are troubled with doubts and fears, I give you these recommendations—

First, if you would have your faith made vivid and strong, study much the story of your Savior's death. Read it—read it—read it—read it. “Tolle—lege,” said the voice to Augustine, “Take it—read it.” So say I. Take the four Evangelists—take the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah—take the twenty-second Psalm. Take all other parts of Scripture that relate to our suffering Substitute and read them by day and by night till you familiarize yourself with the whole story of His griefs and sin-bearing. Keep your mind intently fixed upon it. Not sometimes but continually.

Crux lux—the Cross is light. You shall see it by its own light. The study of the narrative—if you pray the Holy Spirit to enlighten you—will beget faith in you. And you will, by its means, be very greatly helped, till, at last, you will say, “I cannot doubt. The Truth of the atonement is impressed upon my memory, my heart, my understanding. The record has convinced me.”

Next, if this suffices not, frequently contemplate the sufferings of Jesus. I mean by that when you have read the story, sit down and try and picture it. Let your mind conceive it as passing before you. Put yourself into the position of the Apostles who saw Him die. No employment will so greatly strengthen faith and certainly none will be more enjoyable!—

***“Sweet the moments, rich in blessing,
Which before the Cross I spend,
Life and health and peace possessing
From the sinner's dying Friend.”***

An hour would be grandly spent if occupied in turning over each little detail, item and incident in the marvelous death by which you are redeemed from death and Hell. You will be surprised to find how this familiarizing of yourself with it—by the help of the Holy Spirit—will make it as

vivid to you as if you saw it. And it will have a better effect upon your mind than the sight of it would have done. For probably the actual sight would have passed away from your mind and have been forgotten—while the contemplation of the sorrowful scene will sink deep into your soul and leave eternal lines!

You will do well, first, to read and know the narrative and then to contemplate it carefully and earnestly—I mean not to think of it for a minute or two at chance times but to take an hour or two that you can specially set apart on purpose to consider the story of your Savior's death. I am persuaded, if you do this, it will be more helpful to you than putting his finger into the print of the nails was to Thomas.

What next? Why, dear Friends, the Lord has a way of giving His people wonderful realizations. I hope I shall not say anything incorrect with this remark. There are times with us when the Lord is present with us and we are strongly impressed with that fact. Therefore we act under a sense of that Presence as if the Divine Glory were actually visible. Do you know what it is to write a letter to a friend feeling as if the Lord Jesus were looking over your shoulder? I know what it is at times to stand here and preach and feel my Lord so near me that if I had literally seen Him it would not have surprised me.

Have you ever, in the watches of the night, lain quietly when there was no sound but the ticking of the watch and thought of your Lord till, though you knew there was no form before you, you were just as certain that He was there as if you could see His sorrowful countenance? In quiet places all alone—you scarcely like to tell the story—in the lone wood and in the upper chamber—you have said, "If He spoke I should not be more certain of His Presence. And if He smiled upon me I should not be surer of His love."

These realizations have sometimes been so joyfully overwhelming that for years you have been lifted by them beyond all power of doubt. These holy summer days banish the frosts of the soul. Whenever a doubt is suggested to me about the existence of my Lord and Master, I feel that I can laugh the tempter to scorn for I have seen Him and spoken with Him—not with these eyes but with the eyes of my inner life I have beheld my Lord and communed with Him!

Nor is it merely in seasons of enjoyment that we get these helps but in times of deep distress. Prostrate with pain, unable to enjoy any comfort, unable even to sleep—I have seen the soul of the Believer as happy as if all sounds were marriage peals. Some of us know what it is to be right gleesome, glad and joyous in hours of fierce trial because Christ has been so near. In times of losses and bereavements—when the sorrow stung you to the quick and you thought, before it came, that you never could bear it—you have been so sustained by a sight of the sacred Head once wounded and by fellowship with Him in His sufferings, that you have said, "What are my griefs compared with His?"

You have forgotten your sorrows and sung for joy of heart, as those that make merry. If you have been helped in this way, it will have all the effect upon you that ever could have come of putting your finger into the print of

the nails. If, perhaps, you have been given up to die and have, mentally, gone through the whole process of dying—expecting soon to stand before the bar of God and have been happy and even exultant—then you could not doubt the reality of a religion that bore you up above the surging billows. Now that you are again restored to life for a little longer the remembrance of your buoyant spirits—in what you thought to be your dying hours—will answer all the purpose to you, I think, of putting your finger into the nail-prints.

Sometimes the strengthening influence may be afforded under the stress of temptation. If ever, young man, you have had a strong temptation hurling itself against you and your feet have almost gone—wait, let me not say “young man”—if ever a man or a woman of any age has had to cry out, “God, help me—how shall I escape out of this?” And you have then turned your eyes and seen your Lord and beheld His wounds. If you have felt at that moment the temptation had lost all power, you have had a seal from the Lord and your faith has been confirmed.

If at the sight of your Lord you have exclaimed, in presence of the temptation, “How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?” Then my Beloved, by the Grace of God, you have had the best proof of your Redeemer's power to save. What better or more practical proof could you desire?

In these times, when the foundations of our faith are constantly being undermined, one is sometimes driven to say to himself, “Suppose it is not true.” As I stood, the other night, beneath the sky and watched the stars, I felt my heart going up to the great Maker with all the love that I was capable of. I said to myself, “What made me love God as I know I do? What made me feel an anxiety to be like Him in purity? Whatever made me long to obey my God cannot be a lie.” I know that it was the love of Jesus for me that changed my heart and made me, though once careless and indifferent to Him, now to pant with strong desires to honor Him.

What has done this? Not a lie, surely. A Truth, then, has done it. I know it by its fruits. If this Bible were to turn out untrue and if I died and went before my Maker, could I not say to Him, “I believed great things of You, great God. If it is not so, yet did I not honor You by the faith I had concerning Your wondrous goodness and Your power to forgive?” And I would cast myself upon His mercy without fear. But we do not entertain such doubts. For those dear wounds continually prove the Truth of the Gospel and the Truth of our salvation by it. Incarnate Deity is a thought that was never invented by a poet's mind, nor reasoned out by philosopher's skill. Incarnate Deity, the notion of the God that lived and bled and died in human form, instead of guilty man—it is itself its own best witness. The wounds are the infallible witness of the Gospel of Christ.

Have you not felt those wounds very powerful to you in the form of assistance in times of duty? You said, “I cannot do it, it is too hard for me.” You looked to Jesus wounded and you could do anything. A sight of the bleeding Christ has often filled us with enthusiasm and so with power—it has rendered us mighty with the omnipotence of God. Look at the Church of Christ in all ages. Kings and princes did not know what to do with her.

They vowed that they would destroy her. Their persecuting edicts went forth and they put to death thousands upon thousands of the followers of Christ. But what happened?

The death of Jesus made men willing to die for Him. No pain, no torture could keep back the believing host. They loved Jesus so that though their leaders fell by bloody deaths, another rank came on and yet another and another, till despots saw that neither dungeon, nor rack, nor fire could stop the march of the army of Christ. It is so now. Christ's wounds pour life into the Church by transfusion—the lifeblood of the Church of God is from Jesus' wounds. Let us know its power and feel it working within us to will and to do of His good pleasure.

And as for those who do not trust Him, what shall I say? The Lord help you to do so at once. For as long as you do not trust Him, you are under an awful curse—for it is written, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus, let him be Anathema Maranatha"—cursed at the coming of the Lord. May it not be so with you! Amen.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON.

BELOVED READERS—Thanks be unto God for thirty-four volumes of sermons thus completed. May they continue to be blessed of God long after the preacher and his present readers have entered into rest. The speaker is still laid aside by weakness, but the Word of the Lord never loses its power. His voice can only be heard of a few thousands but the printed page will talk to multitudes. Let us pray that the still small voice of the Holy Spirit may sound in the heart of readers for many generations to come.

A book may enclose the spikenard of a Truth of God, which, when forgotten, it shall give back to men with all its first perfume. The generation which now is may treat the Doctrines of Grace as if they were worthless but these priceless gems will yet be prized by a more enlightened age and judged to be of infinitely more value than all the tinsel which amuses our contemporaries. I am content to preach today to a comparatively small circle since I believe that the Truths I deliver are revealed of God for the salvation of multitudes innumerable. In some future day the Lord whom I serve will vindicate every faithful testifier of them from the reproach of men. At the same time, I praise God that even so many have been found faithful to the ancient faith of our fathers. Grace be with them all.

At the close of the year I salute my Brethren and entreat a place in their daily prayers. I ask that I may be allowed to return to my pulpit in health and may see the cause of our Lord prospering everywhere.

Yours in Christ,
C.H. Spurgeon

End of the Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit —Volume 34 —

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A MEMORABLE INTERVIEW

NO. 3541

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 7, 1916.

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

***“Then He said to Thomas, Reach here your finger, and behold My hands; and reach here your hand, and thrust it into My side; and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered, and said unto Him, My Lord and my God.”
John 20:27, 28.***

WE are, all of us, apt to fall into a wrong state of heart, not because we are unconverted, nor yet because we are false to Christ, but simply because of our natural infirmities. So long as we are in this body, exposed to trial and temptation, we shall be prone to start aside like a broken bow. Thomas was a true-hearted follower of Jesus. He loved his Master. It had been a severe shock to his sensitive disposition and his thoughtful mind to see his Master betrayed, arraigned, scourged, crucified, dead and buried. He could not, at once, rally from the agitation it caused him, or think it possible that Jesus could have risen from the dead. Pondering the matter scrupulously, it seemed to him to involve too great a miracle to be credited—far beyond anything to be expected! He would require, he said, very clear and satisfactory proofs before he would believe it. In like manner, you and I have, each of us, our characteristic faults. We may not be too thoughtful, like Thomas—we may, perhaps, be too thoughtless—and that is quite as mischievous. Even our pleasing qualities which adorn us as virtues may become our temptations. The best point about us, as a sound judgment was in the case of Thomas, may become the very snare that entangles us. Let no man judge his fellow. Above all, let no man exalt himself. He that is in his best estate, today, may be in spiritual poverty tomorrow! He who rejoices in God and walks in holy consistency may, before another sun has risen—few, though the hours of interval are—have felt his feet slide from under him and so fallen from his steadfastness as to have dishonored his God, and pierced himself through with many sorrows!

God grant that our meditation may be for the comfort of some present, while we proceed to notice *the Master and the servant*—Jesus and Thomas—*narrowly looking at the actions of them both.*

I. LET THE MASTER FIRST ENGAGE OUR ATTENTION—THE MASTER IN THE PRESENCE OF AN UNBELIEVING DISCIPLE WHO HAS TREATED HIM WITH NO LITTLE PRESUMPTION AND RASHNESS.

How exquisitely touching, His gentleness! Does He upbraid Thomas? Is there indignation in His tone? Is there petulance in His chiding? Does He exclaim, “How dare you doubt that I am alive?” Or turns He upon him with some rough sentence, asking “Why this impertinence that you should speak of putting your finger into My wounds, and thrusting your hand into My side? Unworthy servant, from this moment I disown you for having spoken so disrespectfully of your Lord and Master.” No, far from it! He rather takes Thomas on his own ground, considers his infirmities, and meets them precisely as they are, without a single word of rebuke until the close—and even then He puts it very lovingly. The whole conversation was, indeed, a rebuke, but so veiled with love that Thomas could scarcely think it so. He speaks to him as if nothing had occurred to give any cause of offense, or by his presumption to occasion any estrangement.

Dwell for a moment on *the mercy which our Lord must have shown—and the blessed patience He must have exercised*, to bear thus with Thomas. Ought he not to have known from the Old Testament that the Christ would rise from the dead? Had he not been reminded once and again by his Master of the prophecies which spoke concerning the death of Christ, and the Glory that should follow? Had he not heard the Master, Himself, frequently say that the third day He would rise again? He must have been present with the other Apostles when they turned His oracular sentences over in their minds and said, one to another, “What does He mean by this, that He shall suffer and that He shall rise?” And had He not just before seen the women and conferred with the Apostles who testified that they had found an empty tomb, that they had been told by angels that Jesus had risen—yes, more—that when they were sitting together, Jesus had appeared in their midst? Yet, so strong was his unbelief, that he puts his own judgment against their assertion of fact, against the Inspired Scriptures, against the thrilling words that fell from the Master’s own lips, against the united, concurrent acknowledgment of all the Brothers! And do you think not, Brothers and Sisters, that our willfulness is sometimes as irrational and unwarranted as his? We harbor doubts in the teeth of accumulated evidences and then credit ourselves with being wise and right, while we disparage all others as being foolish and wrong! The principle which lies at the root of all the heresies and the schisms that tear and divide the Church is just that self-confidence which will not let us yield, even though better men than ourselves—yes, though the united consent of the whole Church should bear testimony to

a fact or a Truth of God to which we disagree! Through some lack of information or through some flaw of judgment, we judge differently from our companions and forthwith our self-approbation is unyielding, and our conduct is intolerant! It was no small scandal thus to put himself in opposition to the Master, in opposition to the Scripture and in opposition to all his fellow servants! Still, our Lord Jesus Christ forbears to utter a word of denunciation. He just says, "Reach here your finger and behold My hands; and reach here your hand and thrust it into My side; and be not faithless, but believing." Softer words He could not have spoken! He responds without reproach. Such loving kindness and tender mercy as David was known to sing of old, did our blessed Redeemer show!

Another ground for admiring our Lord's great patience with Thomas is *that Thomas had dared to dictate the terms upon which he would believe*—and he had selected such terms as must have been most offensive had Jesus Christ been of a lofty, imperious, uncondescending spirit. Who is Thomas that he should put his hands into those wounds so lately healed? That side pierced by the soldier's spear? Is Thomas to make another road to that sacred heart? Strange that he should have asked so mysterious a sign to strengthen his faith! What? Was there no other way of believing in his Lord but that he must pass his finger and his hand into the very wounds of that blessed body? Ah, see how presumptuous the servant! See, also, how sympathizing the Master! Was it not asking too much—far too much? Such a prayer ought not to have come from a disciple who had never forsaken his Master, much less from Thomas, who had fled with the rest, and had been absent when the Apostles had gathered together and seen the Master! But yet Jesus is so forbearing towards him. I know not whether to wonder more at the impertinence of the servant or the clemency of the Master! Let us take the lesson to ourselves. Have we during the past week fallen into a signal state of gross unbelief? Have we been thinking harsh thoughts of God? Has some sin suspended our communion with our Savior? Are we now cold at heart and void of spiritual emotion? Do we feel quite unworthy to draw near unto Him who loved us with so great a love? Be not desponding! The God of All Patience will not desert you! The love which our Lord Jesus Christ bears to His people is so great that He passes by their transgression, iniquity and sin! No, there is no anger on His part to divide you from your Lord. Behold! He comes over the mountains of your sins! He leaps over the hills of your follies. Since He thus graciously comes to you, will you not gladly come to Him? Do not think for a moment that He will frown or repulse you! He will not remind you of your cold prayers, your neglected closet, your unread Bible—nor will He chide you for losing occasions of fellowship—but He will receive you graciously, love you freely and grant

you just what, at this moment, you need! I pray you notice the Master's patience. Come to Him, dear child of His, you beloved disciple of His, and have fellowship with Him now!

While we are speaking of the Master, I should next like to call your attention to *the Master's great care*. He had been to see His disciples once. He had stood in their midst and said, "Peace be unto you." He had given them their commission, had breathed upon them and given them the Holy Spirit. But there was an absent one. Well, "what man of you having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, does not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go and seek after that which has gone astray?" There was one missing and Jesus must come again! There must be the same salutation of peace. There must be the same blessing bestowed, again, for Thomas must not be left out in the distribution of spiritual gifts. Thomas ought to have sought after Christ, especially after having been absent on the first occasion when He visited them. He surely ought to have said, "My Master came to me and I was not there! I will, therefore, seek Him, be He where He may, and I will tell Him how I regret that I should have missed the golden opportunity of His Presence." But, Beloved, Thomas did not seek His Master. Therein He was just like we are! It is preventing Grace, Brothers and Sisters—it is Grace that is beforehand with us—even with our faint desires, which comes to us from Jesus Christ. Oh, how our Lord outruns us! Our sense of need is not as swift of foot as His perception of our need! Long before we know we need Him, He understands that we require Him and He comes to us to bless us! It was for one He came, and for that one who did not seek Him! He was found of one who sought Him not! You might have thought that Thomas would have been as well left alone a little while. We would have said, "Well, if he is so obstinate as to lay down such conditions, let him cool a bit! Let him just stop awhile in the cold till he is willing to come in at the door, and not to make conditions that he must come in at the window, or by some way of his own. So let him wait, for beggars ought not to be choosers, nor should impertinent disciples be tolerated." Yes, but Jesus will tolerate what we will not—and He will put up with us when we cannot put up with our Brothers and Sisters! We have not half as much to bear with from them as He has from us! Though Thomas might thus have been left, and deserved to have been left, yet Jesus came to him because He knew that His coming to him would be much better than letting him stay away. So, Disciple, do not say to yourself, "I cannot come to the Table tonight, I do not feel fit! I shall not strive after fellowship with Christ—I do not feel as if my soul could enjoy it." No, but it will do you no good to stay away! Will you turn aside from the Master? Will you refuse the symbols of His death? Be not so rash and inconsiderate, I entreat you! Why should He

not come to you? Before that bread is broken, you may have experienced a delightful change in the state of your heart and, with pleasing surprise you may be crying out, like Thomas, “My Lord and my God.” And, oh, is it not blessed to think that Christ does not stop till His disciples invite Him? He does not wait for them to get ready for Him! No, He comes to them and meets them—and finds them before they have sought Him! If you are in the mood of Thomas, perhaps you may be insisting upon some signs and wonders, as he did. Know you not that the Master can give you His own sign, unfold His own wonder and bestow upon you such a blessing that your heart shall scarcely have room enough to receive it? His tenderness and His care baffle all our thoughts and expectations!

Though we have already observed it, linger, I beseech you, upon *the Master’s matchless condescension*. Behold the Lord of Life, who had overcome the sharpness of death and passed out of the portals of the tomb in triumph, having spoiled principalities and powers and overthrown sin, death, and Hell—the Son of God, at whose Resurrection angels had attended, glad to wait as servants upon His royalty, that Lord—what do you think? He must strip Himself to gratify a disobedient, unbelieving disciple—yes, He must strip Himself! It were not enough to show His hands—that were kindness—but those hands must be touched and those wounds, themselves, must be probed by a finger all too curious! It would have been profane, had it not been for the Divine Pity that allowed it! The way into His heart must be revealed. Well, well, but He did it. Angels must have been shocked when they heard a *man* say, “I will not believe unless He bares His side to me”—still, He did it! Yes, just before He died, you will remember how He laid aside His garments and took a towel and girded Himself, and washed His disciples’ feet. Now that He is risen from the dead, He is the same Christ—and if He condescended, then, to wash His disciples feet, He will condescend, now, to bear with a disciple’s bad manners and will even meet him in his infirmities! If they cannot be healed without a sight of His wounded Person, he shall gaze upon His side again! He will do anything for the love of His people. There is no kindness too costly for Christ to show!

Now then, you who, while eagerly longing for His company, hide your face and blush for very shame, do you say, “Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. My heart is not worthy to receive You as a guest”? True, you are not worthy—neither was Thomas. Yet you shall have His favor and rejoice in the light of His Countenance if you sigh and cry for it! Doubtless you have been very far, during the week, from what you, yourself, wish you had been. Nevertheless, “He will blot out your iniquities like a cloud, and your transgressions like a thick cloud.” Your old friends may have passed you in the street and did not recognize you be-

cause you are now so poor, but Jesus knows you! No one, perhaps, knows the privations you have had to put up with, poor Christian. You fancy you are despised and neglected by everybody—perhaps it may be your fancy, yet it is cutting to the heart even to think that your Christian Brothers and Sisters look down upon you! But Jesus never looks down contemptuously on His people. He condescends to stand on their platform and put Himself on a level with them with a sacred familiarity suited to their case. Full often He draws most near with most engaging smiles to those who are in the saddest plight. This is how Jesus is known to act. He never speaks proudly and loftily. His condescension unto His children, like His watchfulness over them, is unvarying!

Once more, *the Master's bounty* challenges our admiration and our confidence. When Thomas had received what he asked for, you might easily have conjectured that he would be put down in the second class of disciples. Instead of that, however, he was well commended in the Apostleship, and though not present when Jesus breathed on them and said, "Receive you the Holy Spirit," yet on the Day of Pentecost Thomas received the same cloven tongue and the same power as the rest. Indeed, we have reason to believe that Thomas became as earnest an Apostle, as faithful a witness, and as blessed a martyr of the faith of Christ, as either Peter or James! The Master will not stint His goodness because we once and again display our meanness. No, Beloved, He will give us according to our ability to receive. If we are not able to receive, today, He will enlarge our desires and expand our capacities till tomorrow we may be able to receive from His fullness and Grace for Grace! Come, then, you hungry, starving Souls, you Believers who are coming near to penury and spiritual bankruptcy—draw near in the spirit of love to Christ who is as certainly present in this place with us as He was with them in that chamber where the 12 were gathered! Draw near in spirit and in truth to Him and your souls shall be enriched to your own profit and to the Glory of God! And now I have a few words to say about—

II. THE SERVANT.

Thomas, struck with the Master's knowledge of what had been going on in his heart and overwhelmed with the manifestation of the Master's Presence and His Power, exclaimed, "My Lord and my God." These five words are full of meaning. Let me endeavor to interpret them for you. First, *they were an expression of faith*. Thomas now avows the faith which before he had disclaimed. "I will not believe," he said, "except—except—except." Now he believes a great deal more than some of the other Apostles did—so he openly avows it. Thomas was the first Divine who ever taught the Deity of Christ from His wounds! Nor has every Divine since then been able to see the Deity of Christ in His wounded Humanity

risen from the dead. This Thomas did. He declared the proper Humanity of Christ when he touched Him and he declared His proper Deity when he avowed Him to be both Lord and God! Thomas was slow in arriving at facts, but he had a comprehensive mind—and when he did arrive at a conviction, he grasped it thoroughly in all its bearings. Peter would be impetuous and leap to a conclusion, but Thomas must consider the circumstances, weigh the testimony, try, judge, and prove the evidences before he acknowledged a Truth of God. When his judgment did yield assent, he was firm. There was no shaking. He understood the Truth he adhered to better than others. Delightful in the ears of Christ, my Brothers and Sisters, is the expression of our faith! Let none of us hesitate to go over in our minds our avowal of faith in Him “who lives and was dead, and is alive forevermore.”

It well becomes us, sometimes, to perform what the Catholics call, “acts of faith.” I mean in holy contemplation and quiet meditation, to declare before the Lord that we believe in the facts that are made known to us and the Doctrines that have been delivered to us. We believe that Jesus is the Son of God—forever be His name adored! That He is self-existent and full of Power and Glory! We believe that He laid aside that Glory and became a Man in the likeness of sinful flesh, that He did not disdain to sleep upon His virgin mother’s breast. He lived a life of holiness and died a death of scorn and ignominy. He slept in the tomb and the third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into Heaven. He sits at the right hand of God, even the Father. He reigns over all things for His people, having power over all flesh that He may give Eternal Life to as many as the Father has given Him. He shall shortly come to judge the quick and the dead. Among the sons of men He shall reign. He shall sit upon the Throne of His Father David. Prayer, also, shall be made *for* Him continually and daily shall He be praised!

The short but expressive avowal of faith which Thomas made suggests to me this word of counsel. We should frequently make before God a declaration of our faith in the Deity of our Lord Christ and in all the Glories which surround His Character. Let this be done vocally when you can—or otherwise mentally—for the exercise is profitable. But these words, “My Lord and my God,” sound a little different to me from a simple avowal of faith. It was, as someone has said, *like the cry of a dove that at last had found its mate*. Poor Thomas! He doubted his Master, but he needed Him and could not be happy without Him! Now he has come flying back and he has found Him, and he seems to put his head, as it were, into the bosom of his Master, and to begin to weep and sigh like a poor child that has lost its mother in the streets of London and, when it is brought back again, cannot say anything else but, “My mother,” and, “my mother,”

and,” my mother,” and feels so happy to think it has found, again, the dear bosom on which to rest! So Thomas seems to say, “I have found You, my Master, my Lord and my God.” He seems to humble himself, as though he would say, “How could I doubt You? Where have I been? What have I been thinking? What has my obstinate mind driven me to? What did I say? What did I ask? How could I be so impertinent? My Lord and my God! You have forgiven it all and in Your Presence I seem to moan it out in those few words. Your silly servant, Your foolish servant, but You, my blessed Master, my condescending Master, ‘my Lord and my God!’” Well now, Beloved, there is something very sweet in this. Though I called it moaning, still there is much music in it. Come now, you who have wandered, come and tell Christ at the Table all about it! Come and tell Him that you are grieved and that you are not so grieved as you ought to be. Tell Him you are sorry that you should not have lived with Him day by day. Your self-reproach may well be keen—

**“Wretch that I am to wander thus
In search of vain delights.”**

Penitently bewail before Him that you should have been so bewitched as to cleave to things below, and let your God, your Savior, go! Intense feeling commonly finds expression in few words. Silence is sometimes more thrilling than speech. “My Lord and my God” is the breathing of a contrite heart relieved in having found the Grace it needs!

The short prayer, however, “My Lord and my God,” is the outcome of more than one emotion. If it involved a pang, it included an intense pleasure. Was it not *a joyous astonishment which begot those words*? It was so sweet to Thomas that he hardly thought his fellow disciples would be able to appreciate so great a wonder. It was too much for himself, so he addresses himself to the Master, as if He, alone, being the greatest marvel, could sympathize with him. “I marvel,” he seemed to say. “I could not have believed it! I saw the traitor kiss Your cheek. I saw You dragged off with staves and lanterns to that lion’s den! I saw You when You were in Pilate’s hall, tried and mocked. I saw You when You were fastened to the tree. I stood there and I saw You bleed and die. I saw Your body taken down and wrapped in spices—and is it the same, the very same? Oh, yes, I recognize You. I know those hands. I took those loaves from them when the thousands were fed in Galilee. I know that face—full many a time have I looked with beaming eyes on that loving Countenance of Yours! I know that side—it is the same side I saw the soldier pierce, and I know it! It is the same! It is Yourself, Yourself, Yourself, the risen Christ! Oh, wonder of wonders! I can say no less! I can say no more! “My Lord and my God!””

Well now, holy wonder, Beloved, is no mean kind of worship! It is, perhaps, no mean part of the worship of Heaven. I like that verse we sing—

***“Then let me mount the starry way,
To the bright worlds of endless day
And sing with rapture and surprise,
Your loving kindness in the skies.”***

Will it not be a surprise when we get there? Though, indeed, we shall see nothing in Heaven but what we have been told of on earth for it will be just such a Heaven as God has told us of—yet we shall say that the half was not told us because we did not understand what we heard and could not enter into the meaning of deep spiritual revelations! Oh, what astonishment might seize upon us now if we could really grip the thought—and I hope we shall! “Jesus has loved, and lived, and died for me—and now He lives and pleads for me!” Oh, Believer, get to see Christ now with the optics of your mind! See Him now exalted in the highest heavens, though once rejected of men and, as with astonishment you behold the ineffable splendor of that starry Throne of God, surrounded by ten thousand times ten thousand of the chariots of God, and chariots of messengers of fire, all waiting to obey His Sovereign Will—as you see the Man whose head was once crowned with thorns, from the highest seat that Heaven affords claiming Eternal Sovereignty, bow your head in devout astonishment, fall at His feet and, giving tongue to your rapture, exclaim, “My Lord and my God!”

And did not Thomas, by such an exclamation as this, *renew his personal betrothal to Christ and his positive consecration to His service?* “My Lord,” he says, “You Are, and I am Your servant. My God, henceforth You Are, and I am Your worshipper as long as I live.” Beloved, years ago some of us were first spiritually espoused to Christ. Gladly would I remember those blessed hours when my young heart went out after Him and His blessed heart of love was revealed to me! We ought not to forget those times, for He does not forget them. He says to Israel, “I remember you, the kindness of your youth, and the love of your espousals.” With what enthusiasm we sung—

***“’Tis done—the great transaction’s done!
I am my Lord’s, and He is mine—
He drew me and I followed on
Glad to obey the voice Divine.”***

Perhaps many years have passed over you since then, but whether they have been many or few, I am sure we have not been invariably true to those vows and resolutions. Our memory of Him has not been equal to His mindfulness of us. Now, if the Lord should come to you afresh and give you a choice season of fellowship with Him, would it not be a most

suitable response to give yourself up to Him afresh? Should we not often do this? Would not the freshness of close fellowship be peculiarly suitable for the renewal of our Covenant with our Lord, and of our consecration of ourselves to His service? On that night you were baptized, you could sing sincerely—

***“High Heaven which heard the solemn vow,
That vow renewed shall daily hear,
Till in life’s latest hour I bow,
And bless in death a bond so dear.”***

Oh, that God’s Holy Spirit would enable you now to say in your soul, “Jesus, the despised of men, whom the great ones of this world know not, in whose blessed Person and redemptive work they will not believe, I take You, my Master. I acknowledge You to be my Lord. Your people shall be my people. Your God and Father shall be my God. Your blood shall be my confidence, and Your Law my rule. Your love shall quicken my love. Your life shall be my example. Your Glory shall be the one objective for which I strive. You, O Christ, are ‘my Lord and my God.’” So shall your faith abound and all your Graces flourish!

Do I hear some timid voice from this congregation whispering a complaint? “Ah, there is nothing for me! He is speaking to the disciples. When the doors are shut, I am shut outside as a stranger. There is nothing for me. I am a sinner.” Oh, but I tell you, if you will but knock, Jesus Christ will come outside to you! The doors are not shut to keep out poor sinners from the Presence of the Savior! Do you need Jesus to reveal Himself to you? Exalted in the highest heavens, He looks down upon you now! His voice is calling you, “Come unto Me, and I will give you rest.” Oh, poor Sinner, if you cannot put your finger into the print of the nails, yet believe that Jesus died! Then trust Him and rely upon His merits. Cast yourself flat at His feet! Stay yourself upon His Passion and Atonement, and you shall be saved—saved now—saved without a moment’s delay! So shall all these other joys be your, for you, too, shall be numbered with the family and you shall feast upon the children’s meat, and be partakers of all the privileges of the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
*John 20:18-31***

Verse 18. *Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken these things unto her.* She was a true woman—one whom they had known well enough to be quite able to trust her, and her witness ought to have been believed—but there were some that doubted.

19. *Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in their midst, and said unto them, Peace be unto you.* How He came there, we do not know, but doors cannot shut Him out. Is there any door between my soul and Christ, tonight, then? Have I shut myself up in the chamber of doubt, despondency, unbelief? He can come to me! While the doors are yet shut, He can appear within my spirit and say, "Peace be to you. "Oh, that He would do so! Do we not cry to Him to come and breathe peace upon us?"

20. *And when He had so said, He showed unto them His hands and His side.* That they might be sure it was He—the same who had died by crucifixion—that they might see how intimate He was with them—familiar—that His scarcely healed wounds should be seen by them.

20. *Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.* Oh, for such a sight! There is a depth of gladness in a risen Christ. Those wounds preach peace and joy!

21-23. *Then said Jesus to them again. Peace be unto you: as My Father has sent Me, even so send I you. And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said unto them, Receive you the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.* Thus did Jesus Christ support and make forever true the preaching of His Word. Do we declare that the sins of penitents are remitted? They are remitted. Are we, in His name, bidden to declare that, "He that believes not shall be condemned"? So shall it be. He will make the Word of God which is uttered to be true. We shall not speak without our Master making the utterance of His Word to be a matter of fact.

24. *But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.* Perhaps he lived a long way off, or else, being rather slow, he had stopped about, doubting, and fearing, and questioning, and he had not got there in time. Anyway, he was not there. "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is," for it will be a loss to you, as it was to Thomas.

25. *The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe.* Dogged, obstinate unbelief! Some have said he was a large-hearted man, who investigated truth. I do not see it. He had not gone to the tomb, like Peter and John, to look at the grave clothes, and to discover that Christ was not there. He does not appear to have investigated the testimony of Mary Magdalene and of the others. He was just as narrow-minded as he very well could be, as I believe modern doubters are with all their boast of their wonderful thoughtfulness and

liberality! We have only their own opinion, I am sure, upon that matter—but when a man sounds his own trumpet, there is not much in it.

26, 27. *And after eight days His disciples were again within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in their midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then He said to Thomas. For our Lord has a way of making personal application of His word. He looks after the sheep that is sick, and severs it from the flock, that He may deal with it in His wisdom. “Then He said to Thomas.”*

27, 28. *Reach here your finger, and behold My hands; and reach here your hand, and thrust it into My side; and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto Him, My Lord and my God. And whether Thomas did put his finger into the print of His nails or not, we cannot tell. Everyone may think as he likes about that. He may have done so, or he may not, but this one thing happened, that he, “answered and said unto Him, ‘My Lord and my God.’” He made a splendid leap from the depths of doubt to the firm rock of confidence! With two blessed “mys” he seems to grasp Christ with both hands, and in two grand words he pictures Him, “My Lord and my God.”*

29. *Jesus said unto Him, Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed. That is the faith—the true faith—that needs no buttressing and props, but believes the testimony of God.*

30, 31. *And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God: and that believing you might have life through His name. God grant that the objective of writing the New Testament may be answered in each one of us!*

—Adapted from the *C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

“MY LORD AND MY GOD!”

NO. 1775

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 13, 1884,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“And Thomas answered and said unto Him, ‘My Lord and my God!’”
John 20:28.*

WHEN the Apostles met on the first Lord’s Day after Jesus had risen, Thomas was the only disciple absent out of the eleven. On the second Lord’s Day, Thomas was there and he was the only disciple doubting out of the eleven. How much the fact of his doubting was occasioned and helped by the fact of his former absence, I cannot say, but still, it looks highly probable that had he been there at the first, he would have enjoyed the same experience as the other 10, and would have been able to say as they did, “We have seen the Lord.” Let us not forsake the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is, for we cannot tell what loss we may sustain thereby. Though our Lord may reveal Himself to single individuals in solitude as He did to Mary Magdalene, yet He more usually shows Himself to two or three, and He delights, most of all, to come into the *assembly* of His servants.

The Lord seems most at home when, standing in the midst of His people, He says, “Peace be unto you.” Let us not fail to meet with our fellow Believers! For my part, the assemblies of God’s people shall always be dear to me. Where Jesus pays His frequent visits, there would I be found—

*“My soul shall pray for Zion still,
While life or breath remains.
There my best friends,
My kindred dwell.
There God my Savior reigns.”*

I know that full many of you can most heartily say the same. Oh, that we may behold the Lord Jesus in the present assembly! On the second occasion, Thomas is present, and he is the only one out of the 11 who is vexed with doubts. He cannot think it possible that the Lord Jesus, who was nailed to the Cross, and whose side was pierced, could have really risen from the dead. Observe joyfully the Lord’s patience with him. All the others had been doubtful, too, and the Lord had gently upbraided them for their unbelief and the hardness of their hearts.

But Thomas is not convinced by the ten-fold testimony of his Brothers, who, each one, well deserved his implicit confidence. After the plain way in which the Lord had told His disciples that He should be crucified and would rise again from the dead, they ought to have expected the Resurrection—and inasmuch as they did not, they were to be blamed—but what

shall we say of him who, in addition to all this, had heard the witness of his 10 comrades who had actually seen the Lord? Yet there he is, the one doubter, the one sturdy questioner who has laid down most stringent requirements as to the only way in which he will be brought to believe. Will not his Lord be provoked by his obstinacy?

See how patient Jesus is! If we had been in that case and had died for those people—and had passed through the grave and risen again for them—we would have felt very greatly grieved and somewhat angered if they had refused to believe in what we had done. But our Lord shows no such sign. He is tender among them as a nursing father. He rebukes their unbelief—that was necessary for their sakes—but He manifests no vexation of spirit. Especially on this occasion He shows His tenderness toward Thomas and addresses His first words to *him*. If Thomas will not be convinced except by what I must call the most gross and materialistic evidence, our Master will give him such evidence!

If he must put his finger into the print of the nails, he shall put his finger there! If he must thrust his hand into His side, he shall be permitted to take that liberty! Oh, see how Jesus condescends to the weaknesses and even to the *follies* of His people! If we are unbelieving, it is not *His* fault, for He goes out of His way to teach us faith—and sometimes He even gives what we have no right to ask, what we have no reason to expect, what it was even *sin* in us to have desired! We are so weak, so ignorant, so prone to unbelief that He will do anything to create, sustain and strengthen our faith in Him! He condescends to men of low estate. If through our own folly we are such babes that we cannot eat the meat which is fit food for men, our Lord will not grow weary of giving us milk, but He will even break the bread into morsels and take away the hard crusts that we may be able to feed thereon. It is not His will that one of His little ones should perish and, therefore, He chases away unbelief, which is their deadliest foe.

Our Lord had special reasons for turning as He did to Thomas, that day, and for taking so much trouble to bring Thomas out of his unbelieving condition. The reason must have been, surely, first, that He desired to make of Thomas a most convincing witness to the reality of His Resurrection. Here is a man who is determined not to be deceived—let him come and use the tests of his own choice. If you tell me that the Resurrection of our Lord from the dead was witnessed by men who were prepared to believe it, I reply that the statement is totally false! Not one among that company even *knew* the meaning of the Lord's prophecy that He would rise, again, from the dead! It was hard to make *any* of them catch the idea—it was so foreign to their thought—so far above their expectation. In Thomas we have a man who was especially hard to be convinced. A man who was so obstinate as to give the lie to 10 of his friends with whom he had been associated for years!

Now, if I had a statement to make which I wished to have well attested, I would like to place in the witness box a person who was known to be exceedingly cautious and wary. I would be glad if it were known that, at the first, he had been suspicious and critical, but had, at length, been over-

whelmed by evidence so as to be compelled to believe. I am sure that such a man would give his evidence with the accent of conviction as, indeed, Thomas did when he cried, "My Lord and my God!" We cannot have a better witness to the fact that the Lord is risen, indeed, than that this cool, examining, prudent, critical, Thomas arrived at an absolute certainty!

Further, I conceive that our Lord thus personally dealt with Thomas because He would have us see that He will not lose even one of those whom the Father has given Him. The Good Shepherd will leave the 99 to seek the one wanderer! If Thomas is the most unbelieving, Thomas shall have the most care! He is only *one*, but yet he *is* one, and the Lord Jesus will not lose one whom He has ordained to save! You and I might have said, "Well, if he will not be convinced, we must leave him alone. He is only one—we can do without his testimony—we cannot be forever seeking a solitary individual. Let him go." Thus might *we* have done, but thus Jesus will not do! Our Good Shepherd looks after the units—He is tenderly observant of each separate individual—and this is a ground of comfort to us all! If one sheep is lost, why not the whole flock? If one is thus cared for, all will be cared for!

This note is also to be heard in reference to *this* matter—it is to be feared that the dull, the slow, the questioning, the anxious, the weak in faith make up a very considerable part of the Church—I do not know that they are in the majority, but they are certainly far too numerous. If all Christians were arranged and classified, I fear we could not, many of us, place ourselves in the front rank, but a large portion would have to go among the Little-Faiths. Our Lord here shows us that He has a condescending care for those who lag behind. Thomas is a week behind everybody else, yet his Lord has not lost patience, but waits to be gracious.

The other 10 Apostles have all seen the Lord and been well assured of His Resurrection for the last seven days. But that is no reason why the latecomer should be left out in the cold. Our Lord does not leave the rear rank to perish. We know that in the wilderness, the Amalekites slew the hindmost of the children of Israel. But when King Jesus heads the army, no Amalekites shall smite even the hindmost of His people, for the Glory of the Lord shall bring up the rear! The walls of Zion enclose babes as well as veterans! The Ark of our salvation preserves mice as well as bullocks! Our Solomon speaks of the hyssop on the wall as well as of the cedar in Lebanon—and the Glory of the Lord may be seen in the preservation of the glowworm's lamp as truly as in the sustenance of the furnace of the sun!

Now, if there should be any in this assembly who honestly have to put themselves down in the sick list, I beg them to take comfort while I try and set forth the experience of Thomas and what came of it. First, I shall call your attention to the *exclamation of Thomas*, "My Lord and my God!" Secondly, we will consider, *how he came to it*. And thirdly, *how we come to it*, for I trust many of us have also cried, "My Lord and my God!"

I. Let us consider THE EXCLAMATION OF THOMAS, "My Lord and my God!" This is a most plain and hearty confession of the true and proper Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is as much as a man could say if he

wished to assert indisputably and dogmatically that Jesus is, indeed, God and Lord. We find David saying, “O Lord of Hosts, my King, and my God,” and in another place, (Psa. 35:23), he says, “My God and my Lord,” terms only applicable to Jehovah! Such expressions were known to Thomas and he, as an Israelite, would never have applied them to *any* person whom he did not believe to be God! We are sure, therefore, that it was the belief of Thomas that the risen Savior was Lord and God.

If this had been a mistake, the Lord Jesus would have rebuked him, for He would not have allowed him to be guilty of worshipping a mere man. No good man among us would permit a person to call him God and Lord—we would feel like Paul and Barnabas when they tore their clothes because the men of Lystra were ready to sacrifice to them—how much more would the holy Jesus have felt a revolting of spirit against the idea of being worshipped and called, “My Lord and my God,” if He had not been of such a Nature that He “thought it not robbery to be equal with God!” The perfect Jesus accepted Divine homage and, therefore, we are assured that it was rightly and properly given. And we here, at this moment, offer Him, by His Grace, the same adoration!

To escape from the force of this confession, some who denied our Lord’s Deity in olden times had the effrontery to charge Thomas with breaking the Third Commandment by uttering such a cry of surprise as is common among profane talkers. Just as thoughtless persons take the Lord’s name in vain and say, “Good God!” or, “O Lord!” when they are much astonished, so certain ancient heretics dared to interpret these words—“My Lord and my God!” It is clear to any thoughtful person that this could *not* have been the case. For, in the first place, it was not the habit of a Jew to use any such exclamation when surprised or amazed. An irreligious Gentile might have done so, but it was the last thing that would occur to a devout Israelite.

If there is one thing about which the Jews in our Lord’s times were particular beyond everything, it was about using the name of God. Why, even in their sacred books they have omitted the word, “Jehovah,” and have only written “Adonai,” because of a superstitious reverence for the very *letters* of the Divine name! How can we, then, believe that Thomas would have done what no Jew at that time would have *dreamed* of? Israel, after the Babylonian captivity, had many faults, but not that of idolatry or irreverence to the Divine name! I do not know what an Israelite might have said under the influence of a great surprise, but I am absolutely certain that he would not have said, “My Lord and my God!”

In the next place, it could not have been a mere exclamation of surprise, or an irreverent utterance because it was not rebuked by our Lord—and we may be sure He would not have suffered such an unhallowed cry to have gone without a reprimand. Observe, too, that it was addressed to the Lord Jesus—“Thomas answered and said unto *Him*, My Lord and my God!” It was not a mere outburst of surprise addressed to no one, but it was an answer directed to the Lord who had spoken to him. It was also such a reply that our Lord Jesus Christ accepted it as an evidence of faith, for in the 29th verse He says, “You have believed,” and that confes-

sion was the only evidence of His believing which our Lord had received from Thomas. A mere outcry of confused astonishment in irreverent words would never have been received as a satisfactory proof of faith!

Sin is not an evidence of faith! The slander proposed by the Arian must, therefore, be rejected with derision. I am almost ashamed to have mentioned it, but in these days, when every kind of error is rife, it is necessary to bring to light and break in pieces many idols which we had rather have left with the moles and bats. I regard this cry of Thomas, first, *as a devout expression of that holy wonder* which came upon him when his heart made the great discovery that Jesus was assuredly His Lord and God. It had flashed upon the mind of Thomas that this august Person whom he had regarded as the Messiah was also God. He saw that the Man at whose feet he had sat was more than man and was assuredly God, and this amazed him so that he used broken speech.

He does not say, "You are my Lord and my God," as a man would say who is making a doctrinal statement, but he brings it out in fragments. He makes adoration of it. He cries in ecstasy, "My Lord and my God!" He is amazed at the discovery which he has made and probably, also, at the fact that he has not seen it long before. Why, he might have known it and ought to have perceived it years before! Had he not been present when Jesus trod the sea? When He hushed the winds and bade the waters sleep? Had he not seen Him open the blind eyes and unstop the deaf ears? Why did he not cry, "My Lord and my God," then?

Thomas had been slow to learn and the Lord might have said to him, as He did to Philip, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet have you not known Me?" Now, all of a sudden, he *does* know his Lord—knows Him to such a surprising extent that such knowledge is too wonderful for him! He had come to the meeting to prove whether He who appeared to his Brothers was the same Man who had died on Calvary, but now he seems to have forgotten that original question—it is more than answered—it has ceased to be a question! He is carried far further by the flood of evidence! He is landed in a full belief of the Godhead of Jesus! He spies out within that wounded body the indwelling Godhead and, at a leap, he springs beyond the conviction that it is the same Man, to the firm assurance that Jesus is God and, consequently, in broken accents, but with double assurance, he cries, "My Lord and my God!"

My Brothers and Sisters, how I wish you would all follow Thomas this morning! I will stop a minute that you may do so. Let us wonder and admire! He that had not where to lay His head. He that suffered scourging and spitting, and died on Calvary is, nevertheless, God over all, blessed forever! He who was laid in the tomb lives and reigns, King of kings and Lord of lords! Hallelujah! Behold, He comes in the Glory of the Father to judge the quick and the dead! Let your spirits drink in that Truth of God and be amazed at it! If the fact that Jesus, the Son of God, suffered and bled and died for you, never astonishes you, I fear that you do not believe it, or have no intelligent apprehension of the full meaning of it! *Angels* wonder, should not *you*?! Oh, let us feel a holy surprise, today, as we real-

ize the Truth that He who has redeemed us from our sins by His blood is the Son of the Highest!

Next, I believe that this was an expression of *immeasurable delight*, for you observe he does not say, "Lord and God," but, "*My Lord and my God!*" He seems to take hold of the Lord Jesus with both hands, by those two blessed "mys"—"*My Lord and my God!*" Oh, the joy that flashed from the eyes of Thomas at that moment! How quickly his heart beat! He had never known such joy as at that instant and, though he must have felt deeply humbled, yet in that humiliation there was an excessive sweetness of intense satisfaction as he looked at His Divine Lord and gazed on Him, from the pierced feet up to the brow so marred with the crown of thorns, and said, "My Lord and my God!" There is, in these few words, a music akin to the sonnet of the spouse in the Canticles when she sang, "My Beloved is mine, and I am His."

The enraptured Apostle saw the Friend of his heart standing before him, shining upon him in love and knitting His heart to him. I pray you follow Thomas in this joy in Christ. I pause a minute that you may do so. Jesus now stands before you, visible to your faith. Delight yourselves in Him! Be always ravished with His love! He is altogether lovely and altogether yours! He loves you with all the infinity of His Nature! The tenderness of His Humanity and the majesty of His Deity blend in His love to you. Oh, love the Lord, you, His saints, for He deserves your hearts! Therefore at this moment say, "My Lord and my God!"

More than this, I believe that the words of Thomas indicate *a complete change of mind*—in other words, a most hearty *repentance*. He has not asked of the Lord Jesus to be permitted to put his finger into the print of the nails. No, all that has gone without debate. If you look at the chapter you will find no statement that he ever did handle the Lord as he had, at first, proposed. Whether he did put his finger into the print of the nails and his hand into His side must forever be unknown to us until we see Thomas in Heaven and ask him the question. If you read the Savior's words as *commanding* him to do so, then we may conclude that he did so—but if you read them as only *permitting* him to do it—then I think he did not do it.

I put the question to a dear companion of mine—I read the passage and then I asked—"What do you think, did Thomas put his hand into Christ's side?" And the answer from a thoughtful mind and a gentle heart was this—"I do not think he could. After the Master had so spoken to him, he would shrink from doing so, and would think it willful unbelief to attempt it." This reply coincided exactly with my own convictions. I feel sure that had it been my case, I would have felt so ashamed at ever having proposed such a test, and so overwhelmed to find the Lord yielding to it, that I could not have gone an inch further in the way of seeking tokens and proofs unless I had been absolutely commanded to do so. So, judging Thomas to be like ourselves and, indeed, much better than any of us, notwithstanding his imperfection, I gather that he completely turned round and, instead of putting his finger into the print of the nails, he cried, "My Lord and my God!"

The Savior said to him, "Because you have seen Me, you have believed." Now, I lay no stress upon it, but it would seem probable that the Savior might have said, "Because you have *touch*ed Me, you have believed," if Thomas had, indeed, touched Him. But inasmuch as He only speaks of *sight*, it may be that sight was enough for Thomas. I do not insist upon it, but I think it right to suggest it. I feel it is not unreasonable to conclude that all Thomas did was to look at his Lord. He could do no more—the delicacy of his spirit would not permit him to accept the offered test—his reverence stopped him. He saw and believed! In Him we see a complete change of feeling—from being the most unbelieving of the 11, he came to believe more than any of them and to confess Jesus to be God!

This exclamation is also *a brief confession of faith*, "My Lord and my God!" Whoever will be saved, before all things, it is necessary that he is able to unite with Thomas heartily in this creed, "My Lord and my God!" I do not go in for all the minute distinctions of the Athanasian Creed, but I have no doubt that it was absolutely necessary, at the time it was written, and that it materially helped to check the evasions and tricks of the Arians. This short creed of Thomas I like much better, for it is brief, pithy, full, sententious and it avoids those matters of detail which are the quicksands of faith. Such a belief is necessary—and no man can truly hold it unless he is taught by the Holy Spirit. He can say the *words*, but he cannot receive the spiritual Truth! No man can call Jesus, "Lord," but by the Holy Spirit. It is, therefore, a most necessary and saving creed that we should cry to the Lord Jesus, "My Lord and my God!" I ask you to do this, now, in your hearts. Renew your faith and confess that He who died for you is your Lord and God.

Socinians may call Jesus what they please—to me He is God over all, blessed forever! I know that you say, "Amen!" Further than this, do you not think that these words of Thomas were *an enthusiastic profession of his allegiance* to Christ? "My Lord and my God!" It was as though he paid Him lowliest homage and dedicated himself, then and there, in the entirety of his nature to His service. To Him whom he had once doubted, he now submits himself, for in Him he fully believes. He does as good as say, "Henceforth, O Christ, You are my Lord and I will serve You. You are my God, and I will worship you."

Finally, I regard it as a *distinct and direct act of adoration*. At the feet of the manifested Savior, Thomas cries, "My Lord and my God!" It sounds like a rehearsal of the eternal song which ascends before that Throne where cherubim and seraphim continually cry, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth." It sounds like a stray note from those choral symphonies which day without night circle the Throne of the Eternal! Let us, in solemn silence, now present our souls before the Throne of God, bowing in reverent adoration unto Him that was, and is, and is to come, even the Lamb that was slain, who is risen, and who lives forever.

"My Lord and my God!" O Son of Mary, you are, also, Son of the Highest, and unto my heart and spirit you are my Lord and my God and I worship you this day! We have not time or else I would sit down and invite

you to spend a few minutes in private, personal worship, following the example of Thomas in adoring our Lord and God.

II. Our next division is to be headed with the question—HOW DID HE COME TO THAT EXCLAMATION? Have you ever thought what Thomas’s feelings were when he went to the meeting that evening? His going needed a complicated explanation. Why did he mingle with men whose assertions he doubted? Could he have fellowship with them and yet call them liars? Suppose Jesus Christ to be dead and not risen—why does Thomas go? Is he going to worship a dead man? Is he about to renounce the faith of the last two years? How can he hold it if Jesus is not alive? Yet how can he give it up? Was Jesus Christ, Lord and God to Thomas when he first entered that meeting? I suppose not. He did not, when he entered the room, believe Him to be the same Person who had died.

The other disciples believed and Thomas was now the lone doubter—peculiar, positive, obstinate. Has it never happened to other disciples to drift into much the same condition? Thomas was a lot out of catalog that evening—he was the odd person in the little gathering and yet, before service was over, the Lord had completely changed him. “Behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.” The first thing, I think, that led Thomas to this confession of his belief in Christ’s Deity was that *he had his thoughts revealed*. The Savior came into the room, the doors being shut—without opening the doors He suddenly appeared before them by His own Divine Power.

Then and there, pointing to Thomas, He repeated to him the very words which Thomas had said to his Brothers. They had not been reported to the Savior, but the Savior had read Thomas’ thoughts at a distance and He was, therefore, able to bring before him, his exact words. Notice that the Savior did not say, “Stoop down and put your finger into the nail prints in My feet.” Why not? Why, because Thomas had not said anything about His feet and, therefore, the Savior did not mention them! Everything was *exact*. We, in looking at it, can see the exactness, but Thomas must have felt it much more. He was overwhelmed! To have his thoughts put in plain words and to hear his own words repeated by Him whom they concerned, this was truly amazing! “Oh,” he says, “He who now speaks to me is none other than God! And He shall be my Lord and my God.” This helped him to his assured conviction that the One who had read his thoughts must be God.

He was aided still further, for as soon as he perceived that this was the same Jesus with whom he had conversed before, *all the past must have risen before his mind* and he must have remembered the many occasions in which the Lord Jesus had exercised the attributes of Deity. Those past conversations, thus revived before him, must all have gone to support the conviction that Jesus was none other than Lord and God. And then, I think, *the very air, and manner, and Presence of the Savior* convinced the trembling disciple. They say there is a divinity that hedges a king—that I am not prepared to believe, but I am sure there was a majesty about the look of our Lord—a more than human dignity in His manner, tone, speech

and bearing! Our Lord's personal Presence convinced Thomas, so that he saw and believed.

But perhaps the most convincing arguments of all were *our Lord's wounds*. It seems a long way round to infer the Deity of Christ from His wounds, yet it is good and clear argument. I shall not set it out in order before you, but leave you to think it out for yourselves! Yet one little hint I would give you—here is a wound in His side more than sufficient to have caused death. It has gone right to the heart—the soldier pierced His side with a spear and forthwith flowed there out blood and water—proving that the heart was pierced. The opening was still there, for the Lord invited Thomas to thrust his hand into His side—and yet Jesus lived!

Heard you ever such a story as this—a man with a gaping wide death wound inviting another to thrust his hand therein? Had our Lord been living after the way in which *we* live, by the circulation of our blood, one can hardly see how this could have been possible! *Flesh and blood*, being subject to corruption, cannot inherit the Kingdom of God, but the Savior's risen body came not under that description, as, indeed, His buried body did not, for He saw no corruption. I invite you to note well the distinction which may be seen in our Lord's words concerning His own body. He does not speak of His body as flesh and blood, but He says, “Handle Me and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see I have.” It was a real body and a material body, for He took a piece of a broiled fish and honeycomb and did eat before them—but still His Resurrection body, living with an open wound in His side, reaching to the heart, was not after the manner of men.

So even in the wounds of Christ, we read that He is Man, but not mere man! His wounds, in various ways, were evidence to Thomas of His Deity. Anyway, the glorious fact rushed upon Thomas's astonished mind in a single moment and, therefore, he cried out, “My Lord and my God!”

III. Finally, let us see HOW WE MAY COME TO IT. That is our final point and the most practical of all. I doubt not that the Spirit of God was at work with Thomas, at that time, very mightily—and that the true cause of his enlightenment was heavenly illumination. If ever any one of us shall cry in spirit and in truth, “My Lord and my God!” the Holy Spirit must teach us. Blessed are you who can call Jesus, “Lord and God,” for flesh and blood has not revealed this unto you, but the Father from Heaven.

But I will tell you when Believers do cry, “My Lord and my God!” I remember the first time it filled my heart. Burdened with guilt and full of fears, I was as wretched as a man could be outside of Hell, when I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.” I did look, then and there, by His Grace! I gave a faith-glance to Him who suffered in my place and, in an instant, my peace was like a river! My heart leaped from despair to gladness and I knew my Lord to be Divine! If anyone had said to me, then, “Jesus Christ is not God,” I would have laughed him to scorn! He was beyond all question, my Lord and my God, for He had worked a Divine work in me!

It may not be an argument to anybody else, but forgiveness consciously known in the soul is a conclusive argument to the man who has ever felt it! If the Lord Jesus turns your mourning into dancing! If He brings you up out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay and sets your feet upon a rock and establishes your goings, He is sure to be your Lord and God from that time on and forever! In the teeth of all that deny it—in the teeth of all the devils in Hell—the redeemed heart will assert the Godhead of its Savior! He that has saved me is, indeed, God, and beside Him there is none else. This first avowal has proved to be only the beginning of these confessions. We remember many other acknowledgments of the same fact.

We were severely tempted and yet we did not slip, nor stain our garments, a wonder that we escaped! He that kept us from falling, *must* be God. I know some moments in my life when I could stand and look back in the morning light upon the valley through which I had passed in the dark—and when I saw how narrow the pathway was; how a little step to the left or to the right must have been my total destruction and yet I had never tripped, but had come straight through in perfect safety—I was astounded and, bowing my head, I worshipped, saying, “The Lord has been my refuge and my defense. He has kept my soul in life and preserved me from the Destroyer, therefore will I sing songs unto Him as long as I live.” Oh, yes, dear children of God, when your heads have been covered in the day of battle, you have magnified the Keeper of Israel, saying, “My Lord and my God!”

We have felt that we could not doubt, again, and have joyfully committed ourselves to His keeping as to the guardian care of a faithful Creator. Such, also, has been the case in time of trouble, when you have been comforted and upheld. A very heavy affliction has fallen upon you and yet, to your surprise, it has not crushed you as you feared it would have done. Years before you had looked forward to the stroke with agonizing apprehension and said, “I shall never bear it.” But you *did* bear it and, at this moment, you are thankful that you had it to bear! The thing which you feared came upon you and when it came, it seemed like a feather compared with what you expected it to be—you were able to sit down and say, “The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.”

Your friends were surprised at you—you had been a poor, wretchedly nervous creature before, but in the time of trial you displayed a singular strength such as surprised everybody! Most of all, you surprised yourself, for you were full of amazement that in weakness you were made so strong. You said, “I was brought low, and He helped me.” You could not doubt His Deity then—*anything* which would rob Him of Glory you detested, for your heart said, “Lord, there is none that could have solaced my soul in this fashion save only the Lord God Almighty.” Personally I have had to cry out, “It is the Lord,” when I have seen His wonders in the deep. “O my Soul, you have trodden down strength.” My soul shall magnify my Lord and my God, for, “He sent from above, He took me; He drew me out of many waters. He brought me forth, also, into a large place: He delivered me, because He delighted in me.”

There have been other occasions less trying. Bear with me if I mention one or two more. When we have been musing, the fire has burned. While studying the story of our Lord, our faith in His Deity has been intensified. When the Spirit of God has revealed the Lord Jesus *to us* and *in us*, then we have cried, "My Lord and my God!" Though not after the flesh, yet in very deed and truth we have seen the Lord. On a day which I had given up to prayer, I sat before the Lord in holy peacefulness, wrapped in solemn contemplation. And though I did not see a vision, nor wish to see one, yet I so realized my Master's Presence that I was borne away from all earthly things and knew of no man save Jesus, only. Then a sense of His Godhead filled me till I would gladly have stood up where I was and have proclaimed aloud, as with the voice of a trumpet, that He was my Lord and my God!

Such times you, also, have known. Jesus is often known of us in the breaking of bread. At the Communion Table many a time we have seen and adored. It was very precious—we were ready to weep and laugh for joy. Our heart kept beating to the tune of, "My Lord and my God!" Perhaps it was not in any outward ordinance that your soul thus adored, but quite away in the country, or by the seaside, as you walked along and communed with your own heart, you were suddenly overpowered with a sense of Jesus' glorious Majesty, so that you could only whisper to yourself as in a still small voice, "My Lord and my God!" Or perhaps it was when you were laid aside with illness that He made all your bed and then you knew His Divine Power.

It was a long and weary night to those who watched you, but to you it was all too short and brimmed with sweetness, for the Lord was there, and He gave you songs in the night! When you awoke you were still with Him and felt ready to faint with overwhelming delight because of the brightness of the manifestation. At such a time you could have sung—

***"My Christ, He is the Lord of lords,
He is the King of kings!
He is the Sun of Righteousness,
With healing in His wings!
My Christ, He is the Heaven of heavens,
My Christ, what shall I call?
My Christ is first, my Christ is last,
My Christ is All in All!"***

I will tell you, yet again, when Jesus has been Lord and God both to me and to you—and that is in times when He has blessed our labors—and laid His arm bare in the salvation of men! When our report has been believed by those who rejected it, before, and the Lord has sent us a happy season of revival, we have given to Him the glory and rejoiced in His Omnipotent Love!

We prayed for our children and when, to our surprise—it is a shame to say, "to our surprise," for it ought not to have surprised us—the Lord heard our prayer and, first one, and then, another, came to us and said, "Father, I have found the Lord!" Then we knew that the Lord, He is God, and our God, too! We looked up from our prayers with tears in our eyes to think the Lord Jesus could have heard such weak petitions. And we said

in the depths of our hearts, “My Lord and my God!” We went out and tried to teach a dozen or two in a cottage—poor, broken words were all that we could utter—but the Lord blessed it and we heard a poor woman crying for mercy as we came out—and we said inwardly, “My Lord and my God!”

If you have been in the Enquiry Room after some Brother, whom God greatly honors, has been proclaiming the Word with power, and if you have seen the people falling right and left under the shafts of the Divine Word, you must have cried, “This is no cunningly devised fable, no fiction, and no fancy,” and your heart must have throbbed with all its life, “My Lord and my God!” Have you not felt as if you would dare to go through the very streets of Hell and tell the grinning fiends that Christ is King and Lord forever and ever? The time is very soon coming with some of us when we shall have our last opportunities in this life to find this true. How comforted and refreshed have I often been when visiting dying saints. Truly the Lord has prepared a table for them in the presence of the last enemy.

I can truly say that no scenes that these eyes have ever beheld have so gladdened me as the sight of my dear Brothers and Sisters when they have been departing out of the world unto the Father! The saddest scene has been the happiest! I have known some of them in life as self-distrusting, trembling, lowly-minded Believers—but when they have come into the Valley of Death, they have displayed no fear, no doubt, but all has been full assurance! Placid, calm, beautiful, joyful and even *triumphant* have been the last hours of *timid* Believers! As I have heard their charming words, I have been certain of the Godhead of Him who gives us victory while we die! It is faith in His name that makes men strong in death! When heart and flesh fail us, only the living God can be the strength of our life and our portion forever.

How sweet to know Jesus as our living God in our dying moments! In Him we rejoice with unspeakable joy and full of glory, as we say unto Him in death, “My Lord and my God!” Come, Brothers and Sisters, be of good cheer! A little further on and *we* shall come to the narrow stream! This we shall cross in an instant and then it will be but a short, short time! Twenty years is soon gone, a hundred years, even, fly away as on eagles’ wings—and then we shall be forever with the Lord in Glory! How sweetly will we sing to His eternal praise, “My Lord and my God!”

There shall be no doubters in Heaven! No skeptics shall worry us there! But this shall be the unanimous voice of all the redeemed—“Jesus is our Lord and God.” The united Church, freed from every spot and wrinkle, and gloriously arrayed as the Bride of Christ, shall be conducted to His Throne and acknowledged as the Lord’s Beloved. And then shall she with full heart exclaim, “My Lord and my God!”

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 20:1-29.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—309, 337, 650.**

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FAITH WITHOUT SIGHT NO. 2721

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 7, 1904.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 6, 1880.

***“Jesus said to him, Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed:
blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.”
John 20:29.***

WE count those people blessed, indeed, who lived in our Savior's day and saw Him when He dwelt here among men. And truly blessed were their eyes, for they saw, and their ears, for they heard what kings and Prophets had long desired to see and to hear, yet were not so privileged. But we who now believe in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ have a blessing superior to theirs, for the benediction of the text is not to those who saw and believed, but to those who “have not seen, and yet have believed.” No doubt Thomas was highly favored when his Lord said to him, “Reach here your finger, and behold My hands; and reach here your hand, and thrust it into My side.” This was an act of very remarkable condescension on Christ's part. I can scarcely conceive that any other of the 12 Apostles was more tenderly treated than was this doubting disciple. Nevertheless, though Thomas was greatly privileged, there is a superior blessing, as his Master told him—and that blessing, I hope, belongs to many of us—“Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.”

How often have you said in your heart, “They are indeed blessed up yonder, for they behold Christ face to face. Their eyes see the King in His beauty in the land that is very far off.” Yes, Beloved, they are truly blessed—none can dispute that, for John heard the voice from Heaven saying to him, “Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.” There is indescribable bliss for all those who behold their Savior's face and who wear His name on their foreheads. Yet, dear Friends, think not that all blessedness is reserved for the glorified, for we also have much here! It almost seems as if Christ had commenced to preach again His Sermon on the Mount, or to add another beatitude to those He then announced—“Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed.” We must wait for the blessing of sight till the blessed by-and-by, in the land of the hereafter, but, just now, it will be quite enough to fill us to the very brim with joy if we can take in the full meaning of this message of the Master.

This blessedness belongs to us who have not seen and yet have believed—not to all here present, if there are any who are still in unbelief. The Lord have mercy on you, dear Friends, and bring you out of that

state of death and deadly danger, giving you faith in Him even now! Oh, that you might begin to believe in Him this very hour! But I thank God that there are many of us who do believe in Jesus and who have received life through His name. And though we have not at present seen Him, yet He declares that we are truly blessed.

I. So, the first thing I shall have to say is, **PARTAKERS OF THIS BLESSEDNESS, DO NOT LET US TRY TO DIMINISH IT.**

We have a blessing, peculiar and singular, through not having seen and yet having believed, so let us not try to diminish it, first, *by pining for a voice, or a vision, or a revelation*—something which is like sight—so that it could not then be said of us that we have not seen. Have you ever had this kind of thought, when you have been living by faith alone? Perhaps you have said to yourself, “Oh, but—but if God would in some way reveal Himself to me so that my very senses might assist my faith! If I might be hidden away in some cleft of the rock and might see the hem of Jehovah’s robe! Or if I might hear some Divine voice but whisper that I am His—then I would, indeed, rejoice and never doubt again! If I might see some miracle, something that I was sure was the finger of God. If I might get near enough to God to be impressed for life with what I saw—whether it was a burning bush or some wayfaring man whom I might entertain as an angel unawares—or even if it were some terrible judgment, yet if I could but feel certain that God had come near to me so that I should never doubt again, what a grand thing it would be!”

Brother, Sister, do not ask for anything of the kind! Do not wish to have it even if you could, for “blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.” You want to see, you are pining for something which is practically the same as sight! You do not feel content to swim in the pure sea of faith, but your Lord will not give you what you childishly crave. After all, it is only vanity that you are pining for, so He will deny it to you and will say, “My child, instead of wanting to see, believe, trust, follow Me in the dark, for it is better for you not to see. Even if you did see and believe, yet you would have obtained only an inferior gift, for the higher blessing, the cream of blessing belongs to those who have not seen, and yet have believed.”

Next, do not try to diminish the blessing, when you are in trouble, *by asking for some remarkable and special Providence to open to you.* “Oh,” says someone, “I have asked for that many a time.” Well, you may, if you feel led to do so, but, still, believe in God if no particular and almost miraculous Providence is manifested. God’s Providence is always at work and we make mistakes in putting down some things as Providences, and others as not. You escape in a railway accident and say that is a Providence. Yes, but it is just as much a Providence that you go to town six days a week and there is no accident. You are supplied with bread when you are out of work and in need—that is a Providence. Yes, but it is just as much a Providence when you are *not* out of work and do not fall into need. I do not say that you are not to pray for Providence to help you, but I do urge you not to be continually pining after those singularities of Providence which are picked out of some men’s biographies of which more than is right may be made. Do not say, “I expect God to do for me

some wonderful, strange thing, or else I cannot trust Him.” No, “blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed”—they who, through the whole of their lives, know that the right hand of God has been leading them steadily on. Though there is nothing they could write about and put down as a sort of semi-miracle, yet they believe that *all* things are working together for good for them, and will bring out Divine purposes filled with love and Grace.

Again, do not diminish the blessing *by craving after ecstatic experiences*. It is a very delightful thing, you know, to have your soul made, “like the chariots of Amminadib,” and to be carried right away with holy delights. Such sacred joys have been given to many saints—even Paul had to write, “Whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knows”—and we do look upon some of those happy seasons with special delight, but we must not say, “I cannot trust in God because I have no such experiences. I cannot rely upon His promises, or cling to the atoning Sacrifice because I am denied these high spiritual joys.” Oh, no! Trust Him even if it is all dark around you! Rely upon Him though you cannot see a star in the night. If, like Paul, for a day and a night you have been in the deep. Or if, through many days and nights, neither sun nor moon shall appear, still trust in the Lord. Though you have not even had any spiritual joy arising out of the conscious possession of Divine life in your soul, still cling to Him whose everlasting arms have never yet failed any clinging soul, and whose loving kindnesses and tender mercies are just as sure in the darkest night as in the brightest day!

There is another way in which we may diminish this blessing of faith without sight and that is, *by always demanding clear arguments to answer every objection that may be raised*. Some of us have lived long enough to have been informed, a great many times, that the Gospel has suffered most serious injury through the assaults of some learned man who has made a wonderful discovery which, it is supposed, will undermine the very foundations of revealed religion. When we were boys, the great arguments against the Scriptures used to be founded upon stones dug out of the bowels of the earth. Geology had come up and, therefore, Christianity was to go down! Since then, we have seen a great number of remarkable things come and go—and some dear souls who have been very timid, have been considerably shaken and troubled.

Well now, beloved Friends, let us hear our Lord saying to us, “Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed,” and let us come to this point—that we know what we know, and it is Divinely fixed in our soul that it is so and, therefore, if an objection is raised against what we believe, we feel certain that it goes to be answered. It may not always be our duty to answer it—we may not have the special knowledge that is necessary for that task. We have a proverb which says that “fools set stools for wise men to tumble over” and, any fool could throw a stone into a well, which a very wise man could not get out again. And, nowadays, it seems to be the business of a great many learned fools to find difficulties for wise men to answer.

We have something else to do beside answering them. If you try to satisfy every man who starts a new theory, you will have nothing to do but to answer objections! One says that there is no such thing as matter—but if I prick myself with a pin and the blood flows out, I do not need any other argument to convince me! I hope that you, dear Friends, have made up your minds that certain things are matters of conviction to you and that you will not dispute about them. For instance, the Presence of God the Holy Spirit in your soul must be so truly a matter of personal consciousness that whatever argument may be urged against it, you may say, “Well, I may not be able to answer your argument, but I know that there is a reply to it. I have not seen, yet I have believed. Though I could not form a syllogism, nor argue upon the matter to your satisfaction, yet I know within myself that God is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. I know, too, that He is my Father, that He has begotten in me a new life which I never had till His blessed Spirit worked it in me. I know that He has lifted me up into a new world and has given me to see and to know what I never even dreamed of until I came to trust in Him—so let that stand for my answer.” It may not satisfy an objector, but it will satisfy yourself.

Yet again, we may diminish this blessing *by being overanxious for success in our work*. We ought to be very anxious to win souls for the Lord Jesus Christ, but blessed is the man who goes on faithfully preaching the Gospel even if he does not immediately see souls converted, and who believes in the power of the Gospel, even though for the moment it is not manifest to him. Blessed, too, is the Sunday school teacher who has not yet seen one child in his class brought to the Savior, but who still believes that there will be many, and who keeps on teaching them, and crying to God for their salvation!

Just once more, we must try not to diminish this blessing *by wanting always to have the concurrent faith of others to support our own*. There are some people who can believe only while everybody else around them believes—if cheerful friends come in and encourage them, they feel bright and happy. That is a kind of seeing by proxy—somebody else sees, so you believe. But blessed is he who has not seen, even with other people’s eyes, and yet has believed! Blessed is he who says, “I can stand alone. If there is nobody else who believes this Truth of God, I know it is true, for I found it in the Scriptures. If everybody else denies it, I affirm its truthfulness and I rest in it, for I am sure about it. ‘Let God be true, and every man a liar’—not merely *some* men liars, but every man an liar if he contradicts the God of Truth. Let them all go whatever way they will—I stand steadfastly for God and my faith in Him shall not be shaken.” This is a blessed way of living and I pray that you, dear Friends, may not rob yourselves of this benediction of our Lord even in the slightest degree, but that you may be resolved to claim as your own the beatitude in our text.

II. Secondly, and briefly, DO NOT LET US THINK THAT THIS BLESS-EDNESS IS UNATTAINABLE.

If we are, indeed, believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, let us believe that this benediction is ours and that it is possible for us to believe though we

do not see. For, observe, that *God deserves to be believed*. Apart from every other consideration, His own personal Character is such that He ought to be believed. If, my Brothers and Sisters, God had spoken to us in the Scriptures and revealed a Truth which had no analogy in nature—which was not supported by the judgment of learned men and to which our own experience seemed to be a contradiction—yet, nevertheless and notwithstanding, God must be believed! If every morsel of evidence that ever came in our way had to be placed in the opposite scale and we had nothing but, “God has said it,” to put into this one, the fact that God has said it ought, to every loyal heart, to weigh down all the rest! Though you have not seen, surely you are never going to compare your poor eyes with God! Though you have never heard, surely you are not going to set the evidence of your eyes against the declaration of God who cannot lie!

For my part, I am determined that if all my senses were to contradict God, I would deny every one of them and sooner believe myself to be out of my right mind than believe that God could lie! And I desire to feel that in every emotion of my spirit, every throb of my heart, every thought of my brain and everything that is contrary to the plainly-revealed Truth of God, I will count myself a fool and a madman—and I will reckon God to be wise and true. If we can exercise such faith as that—and I am sure God well deserves it, for the infinite Creator, the ever-blessed Faithful and True, cannot be guilty of falsehood and cannot even err—so, if we trust Him as He ought to be trusted, then shall we realize the blessedness of which our text speaks.

Further, dear Friends, look along the whole line of history, and *note how the saints have trusted in the Lord*, and see whether He has not been true to them. Trace the Inspired record from the days of Noah to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and see what it will prove to you. Has He said anything and has He not done it? Has He promised and then has He ever failed to keep His word? Has He threatened and has He not carried out the threat? Look through the biographies of all who have trusted Him. Has He deceived any one of them? Has it ever been shown that it is a foolish thing to believe God? Was there ever a man who truly trusted in the unseen Jehovah and who, by doing so, was made a fool of? Find him out, if you can—in a Bible story or anywhere else—the man who really believed in God and, afterwards, came back saying that he had believed a fiction, or that, if God existed at all, He had broken His promise and deluded the man who relied upon it. No, there is no such case, and there never shall be one! The whole roll of the past confirms the faithfulness of God.

I also appeal to you who have believed in God and ask *if your own experience has not warranted your faith*. Brothers and Sisters, ever since you have known the Lord and up till now, how has He treated you? Has He ever given you any occasion for distrusting Him? Rightly looked at, has there even once occurred, in the whole of your personal or family history, anything that reasonably permitted you to suspect the truthfulness of God? O Brethren, I have sometimes called myself ten thousand, thousand fools in one for ever doubting the faithfulness of my God! When I look back over my own life, it always seems remarkable—to me, at any

rate—as anything that has ever been found in the pages of fiction. Oh, how wonderfully and how graciously has God dealt with me! What do I not owe to His faithfulness and truth? Doubt *You*, my Lord? I could doubt all except You—and doubt myself most of all! Cannot all of you, Beloved, who love the Lord, say the same?

Some of you have been through deep waters. You have been very sick, or very poor, or perhaps you have lost many dear relatives and friends. You have been greatly cast down in spirit. You have gone through fire and through water. Well, now, how has the Lord dealt with you in all these experiences? I know that you have found His mercy to be—

“Always faithful, always sure.”

Well, then, He deserves to be trusted although you cannot see Him. You know what kind of a man he is of whom we say, “Trust *him*? Yes, I would trust him as far as I could throw Him, but no further!” But what a dishonor you would put upon your God if you could not trust Him any further than that! Indeed, that is no trust at all, it is sight. Do not, therefore, begin to doubt God because you cannot see Him and because, to reason and sense, difficulties seem to intervene, but bravely trust Him when you see Him not, for He well deserves to be believed. The history of His whole Church proves that He is worthy to be trusted—and your own personal history proves it, too.

III. I have spoken but briefly upon that part of our subject, although much more might be said upon it. But I want to devote a little more time to one other point. DO NOT LET ANY OF US MISS THIS BLESSING THROUGH NOT SEEING THE GROUND OF IT.

It is a blessed thing to trust God when you cannot trace Him—to believe when you cannot see. For, first, *this is a sure mark of a spiritual and renewed mind.* There were some who saw Christ who, nevertheless cried, “Away with Him, crucify Him!” There were some who saw Christ and who could not help perceiving that there was a wonderful power in Him, yet they did not believe in Him and they were not saved by Him. There were persons who saw Christ and who even, in some sense, believed in Him, yet who believed not with true saving faith. But if any of you who have not seen Him, really believe in Him, this is the evidence that you are the children of God!

Let me remind you of that description of the people of God which is given by Peter in his first Epistle, the first chapter, and the 8th and 9th verses—“Whom having not seen, you love; in whom, though now you see Him not, yet believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.” So that the people who have received the salvation of their souls are those who love the One they have never seen—and who even rejoice in Him whom they do not see! You may conclude that you are truly a child of God—you may make certain of your election and of your adoption into the Lord’s family if you can truly say, “I am one of those who have not seen the Lord Jesus, and yet I have believed in Him. I can say to Him—

‘I love You, dearest Lord! And will, Unseen, but not unknown.’

Next, this kind of man is indeed blessed *because, believing when he has not seen is a proof that his heart is right towards God*. I do not know any better evidence that two persons are agreed with one another than that they fully trust each other. If I have a friend in whom I so implicitly trust that I do not need any evidence, there should be no writing between him and me. He shall not need to say that what he says is true—if he only says it, then I am certain of the truth of it. That is because my friend and I are on such good terms with one another. And when you trust God in spite of all outward appearances and surrounding circumstances, it is a comfortable proof to yourself that you are on good terms with God, that you are walking in sweet fellowship with Him and it is one of the most blessed facts in your whole history!

Perhaps God is chastening you just now and your heart is very heavy. There are many things which seem to discourage you, but you can still say, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.” Ah, my dear Friend, you are among the blessed of the Lord! Yes, among the very choicely blessed ones, for it is clear that there is no quarrel between you and your God. You have been reconciled to Him and you are walking with Him, even though you are walking in the dark. I like that saying of the old Scotchwoman though it sounds strange. When someone said to her, “Perhaps, after all, God’s promises will not be true to you and you will be lost.” “Well,” she answered, “if I am lost, He will lose more than I shall.” It seems a strange thing for anyone to say, but the good woman meant that the Lord would lose His honor and His Character for truthfulness if He allowed one to be lost who had trusted in Him. That showed that she was on good terms with God and understood Him—and all such people are greatly blessed.

Again, dear Friends, those who believe Christ, whom they have not seen, are blessed *because their character and conduct in this respect are most acceptable with God*. I do not know anything which gratifies a man more than to be implicitly trusted. There are not many of us who are worthy of such confidence, but when people do absolutely trust us, we feel that they have given us all the honor that they can possibly put upon us. No flattery can ever equal that warm glowing praise which is passed upon a man when we put entire confidence in him. And our Lord delights for us to just give ourselves up to trust in Him in that fashion. I do not believe that the seraphim in Heaven praise the Lord as much, in all their hallelujahs, as a poor tried child of God does when he trusts himself entirely in his Heavenly Father’s hands. And it seems to me that the darker the night is, and the heavier the burden is, and the more crushed the spirit is, if we can fully trust Him, then, the sweeter is the music of our resignation and the more acceptable is the homage which we pay to God. Ah, though You break me up until I am small as the grains of March dust, and though You blow upon me as with a hurricane that threatens to drive me away, yet shall every atom of my being trust in You, and believe You, O my God!

If we can carry out that resolution, it will honor God and be acceptable to Him in the highest degree. Without faith, it is impossible to please God. Is it not strange that the eternal God can ever be “pleased” with us?

It is a wonderful thing, certainly, that we poor creatures should, by any means, be able to give pleasure to the infinitely-happy God—yet so we do when we trust Him.

Again, you shall find that the man who believes without seeing is truly blessed *because that faith brings comfort to his own soul*. I desire to bear my own testimony concerning this matter. I have never been so happy, in my whole life, as when I have had nothing to trust to but God. Those times in which I have been flung into the sea and been compelled to swim because I could not touch the bottom anywhere, have been the most joyous times to my own heart. If I had to select the choicest hours of my life—those which I would like to have over again—they would be those times in which I may have been thought rash and imprudent, but in which I have been enabled just to believe God and to leave everything in His hands. At such times I have seen the iron, swim! I have seen the Lord's hand working marvelously in the midst of the earth and it has given me the utmost delight!

Now, is not every Christian here able to say just that? It is not your happiest time when the barn is full and when the vats run over the brim, for, sometimes, you have been satisfied with the abundance of your earthly mercies but your happiest time has been when there was only the last handful of meal at the bottom of that barrel and you had to scrape it up to make a cake for the Prophet—yet there was always enough to make a cake! And when the oil only dribbled out of the cruse, and you thought it would soon be dried up, yet the Lord told you it would never be exhausted, and it never was! I think it is better to have that barrel of meal, and that cruse of oil, than it would be to have the biggest vat of oil you ever saw, and the largest granaries full of corn, so long as you have this promise for your motto—"The Lord will provide." If the Lord will provide, you cannot have a better Provider! He is not in the habit, as the God of Providence, of doing anything sparingly. He fills the stores of the widows and orphans and feeds them well. And when He feeds His own children, He feeds them well. Happy is that man, and blessed in his own heart is his sense of intense comfort, who can say, "I cannot see, but I do believe."

There is another reason why such a person is blessed, and that is that *he is having formed in him a grand character*. It is a poor character that lives only on what it sees—that is the beast's character—it is quite satisfied as long as its eyes can perceive the pasture. There is no great character that can ever come to a man who has no faith. The heroes among men are all men of faith—even those who are heroes concerning common matters, the heroes of patriotism—though it may not always be faith in God that they possess, yet is it faith of *some sort* that braces them up and makes them superior to the doubters all around them. No man could be a William Tell who had not firm confidence and, certainly, no man could have been a Martin Luther who had not full and entire trust in his God. It is a wondrous education to a man to be compelled to trust his God—to be driven right out from paddling along the shore in his little canoe by a big rolling wave which carries him right out to sea—and there he is taught to be a mariner who can brave the tempest and laugh at the

hurricane! We would always remain children and have to be carried in our mother's arms, in long clothes, if we had not trials and troubles. God often hides Himself in order to teach us to trust Him more—and so, God helping us, we grow to be men.

And, lastly, let me remind you that *we are very likely coming to a time when we shall need to believe without the use of our eyes*. If our Lord Jesus Christ does not soon come, some of us shall die. And if your faith depends on your sight, what will you do when your eyes are in the grave? They are going to be there—you will not be able to carry a single particle of this wonderful telescopic, microscopic, optical arrangement of yours with you to Heaven. I have seen many of my dear friends die and I know that their eyes were still in their bodies, for I looked into them and helped to close them. They did not take them away with them, so how do they get on, now that they have no eyes? I have seen their ears left behind and laid in their coffins—and all their senses have gone, like their seeing and hearing. And if they could not believe without their senses, what would they do in the disembodied state where they now are before the Throne of God?

Why, they commune with Christ without the intervention of the flesh! Then, do so now, Beloved! Do not always be needing to use these poor eyeballs, these dim glasses, here, for they do not see much. There are angels in this place, flying to and fro while I am preaching. I cannot see them—it is my eyes that make me blind—but I shall see them when these eyes are gone. My Lord is also here. I know He is, for He gave His promise of old that He would be, and He is sure to keep His word. But I cannot see Him—and that is the fault of these poor eyes of mine. When they are gone, then I shall see Him! When I get rid of the encumbrances of eyes and ears—

***“Then shall I see, and hear, and know
All I desired or wished below!
And every power find sweet employ
In that eternal world of joy.”***

What would I do if I could not draw near to God without my eyes and ears and hands, without touch and taste, when I am so soon to live in a world where there will be no hands, or eyes, or ears until the Resurrection morning? Then we shall get our bodies back again, but, until then, if we are to be blessed at all, it must be in the way our Lord says in the text—by faith without sight! So, Brothers and Sisters, if you want to enjoy great blessings. If you wish to lead a happy life and to die a triumphant death. If you would have a glorious time between death and the coming of Christ. If you would see your Master's face with acceptance in the day of His appearing, ask that this blessing may be yours—“Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.”

Now I close when I have just said to you who do not know whether you are converted or not, but are waiting until you have some wonderful impression, or until you hear a voice down in the garden, or until you have a striking dream or see an apparition and so on—all that rubbish will be of no use to you! Just believe in the Lord Jesus Christ without any of those things! You are a sinner and Jesus Christ is a Savior—so come and trust Him. Though you see Him not, yet is He to be found by you if you

seek Him with all your heart. Therefore, wait for none of these things that I have mentioned, but come and trust Him—and blessed shall you be in believing although you cannot see Him! The Lord add His blessing, for Christ's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 20:19-31.**

Verse 19. *Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and said unto them, Peace be unto you.* He has not risen from the tomb many hours before we find Him thus coming to His disciples. His love to them was too great to permit Him to be long absent from them. He had said to them, "A little while, and you shall not see Me and again, a little while, and you shall see Me." So He kept His word. He stood in their midst and said unto them, "Peace be unto you." He is the Lord and Giver of peace just as much, now, as He was then! Oh, that He would speak peace to the hearts of all His people now! May each believing soul among you have a deep peace! May all your troublous thoughts come to an end and every anxious mind be calmed! Peace! Blessed peace! Oh, that the Spirit of peace would breathe it upon us all! "Peace be unto you."

20. *And when He had so said, He showed unto them His hands and His side.* These were the marks to help their recognition of Him. These were the memorials to excite their gratitude. These, too, were the tokens of His condescension, for a man does not show His wounds to any but to those whom He loves. "He showed unto them His hands and His side." You cannot see that sight, Brothers and Sisters, but you can meditate upon it. Think how He gave those blessed hands to the nails and that precious side to the soldier's spear—and, as you think of them, let your love flow forth unto Him who suffered thus for you.

20. *Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.* I should think they were glad! They had been afraid of the Jews, but they forgot that fear when they saw the Lord. I suppose that, at first, when He suddenly appeared in their midst, they were afraid of Him. But now there was first a sacred calm and then there was a ripple of holy gladness on the surface of the still waters of their souls. We cannot see Him, Brothers and Sisters, with these eyes of ours, but by faith we can behold Him! So we may have gladness even as the disciples had. We ought to be the happiest people in all the world because Christ is ours and is spiritually with us as He promised that He would be.

21. *Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as My Father has sent Me, even so send I you.* "You are to go forth and to bless the world, even as I have done. My Father has sent Me; and 'even so send I you.' You are to be My delegates to carry on My service—My commissioned officers to go forth to conflict and to conquest in My name."

22, 23. *And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said unto them, Receive the Holy Spirit: whose sins you remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose sins you retain, they are retained.* This is as much

as for Christ to say, "I will back up your ministry. When you preach that men are condemned for sin of which they have not repented, I will make it to be so as a matter of fact. When you declare pardon to all who trust in My precious blood, I will make it so. That Truth of God which you preach shall have My seal of approval set upon it. My power shall go forth with your proclamation of the Truth, so that it shall be seen that you are not proclaiming a fiction. When you preach My Gospel, I will remit the sins of all who believe it. And when you pronounce sentence of condemnation on such as remain in unbelief, I will confirm your declaration!"

24. *But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.*" Very likely, loving Jesus, as he evidently did, very much, Thomas was broken-hearted when he found that his Master was dead. So, when his fellow disciples told him that Jesus was alive, he could not believe it. He felt that the news was too good to be true. He had fallen into a fit of despondency and got away, as broken-hearted, depressed people often do, trying to get quite alone, when Christian company would be one of the best ways of finding comfort and solace. So, "Thomas was not with them when Jesus came."

25. *The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord.* "We have seen the Lord. There is no mistake about the matter, for we have all seen Him." And thus, with loving, anxious desire, they tried to cheer him and to make him participate in the gladness which they themselves had enjoyed. Dear Friends, always look after your weak Brothers and Sisters. If there is a Thomas who is depressed and sad, and who therefore shuns you, do not shun him, but find him and try to tell him what you have learned by way of comfort for your own heart. Perhaps God will use it to comfort him, also.

25. *But he said unto them, Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe.* Thomas should not have said that, because, after all, it was not true. I do not suppose that he did put his finger into the print of the nails, and thrust his hand into Christ's side, yet he did believe. We sometimes say a great deal that would have been far better left unsaid and, especially when our spirit is depressed, it is a token of wisdom to feel, "We are hardly in a condition of mind in which we can speak as we ought, so we had better remain silent."

26. *And after eight days again His disciples were within, and Thomas with them.* That is better. His love brought him out, you see, away from himself. And it often happens that by getting a man away from himself, we get him away from his worst enemy.

26. *Then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.* His first salutation, after His resurrection, was such a choice one that there could not be a better, so He repeated it when He appeared the second time. Peace is so rich a blessing that even the Divine Master can say nothing sweeter to His faithful followers! So again He says to them, "Peace be unto you."

27. *Then He said to Thomas, Reach here your finger, and behold My hands; and reach here your hand, and thrust it into My side: and be not*

faithless, but believing. Our dear and condescending Master would give to His feeble and somewhat petulant disciple all the proofs he had asked to have! He shall have evidence clear as noonday if he must have it. Thomas, however, as I suppose, was wise enough not to accept the gracious offer of his Lord. Sometimes it is wise not to take what God may put in our way. You remember how Balaam was allowed to go with the men sent to him by Balak, and he did so, yet it would have been much wiser of him if he had not gone. I do not think that Thomas put his finger into the print of the nails, or thrust his hand into his Master's side. On the contrary, we read—

28. *And Thomas answered and said unto Him, My Lord and my God.* Leaping out of the slough of doubt onto the rock of confidence by a single spring, and getting further, perhaps, than others had done who had before outstripped him, he inferred the Deity of Christ from His wounds and His Resurrection—a grand chain of argument of which we have not the intervening links. His thoughtful mind made him feel that if Christ was, indeed, risen—the same Christ who had died—it was proved by those death-wounds that He was both Lord and God—while his personal, appropriating faith, realizing the identity of the Savior, made him say, “My Lord and my God.”

29. *Jesus said to him, Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed.* That is well.

29. *Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.* That is better.

30, 31. *And truly, many other signs did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you might have life through His name.* Now, dear Friends, has the purpose for which this Book was written, been answered in your case? Have you been led to “believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God,” and so to believe that you “have life through His name”? If not, why not? May you have Grace to answer that question, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen. 225

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—48, 785.

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

THE MAIN MATTER

NO. 1631

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 6, 1881,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

***“Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that, believing, you might have life through His name.”
John 20:30, 31.***

THE public life of our most blessed Lord Jesus Christ was brief. Few suppose it to have exceeded three and a half years but yet, what a full life it was! It had in it not only enough to compose the four Gospels, each one of which is sufficient to lead men to saving faith, but so much remained over and above that, the Apostle John makes this remarkable statement—“And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written, every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.” Our Lord’s life was as ample as His own festivals—it feeds thousands—and with the fragments that remain many baskets might be filled!

A man may complete a great and fruitful life in two or three years, while another may have existed as long as an antediluvian and yet his life may be poor and powerless. Not only did the Lord Jesus speak and do great things as to number, but there was a world of *power* in each word and work. He did not display a multitude of feeblenesses, but each individual outcome of His life was grand enough to have been a marvel if considered by itself! As was the Doer, in whom “dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily,” such were the deeds—they, also, were full of Grace and the Truths of God!

There was a fullness of Divine wisdom, Grace and power about each act of Jesus. Hence the Apostle, here, speaks of the Lord’s acts as *signs*—“many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples.” There was a mass of instruction in all our Lord’s movements. Nothing about Him was trivial. He preached by His entire life, preached a marvelous array of Truths and preached them with living freshness! Never is He twice the same, though always the same. When we find Him repeating His discourses, as we sometimes do, if the Sermon on the Mount sounds like the Sermon on the Plain, yet a different drift, aim and tone create a singular variety. Each separate act of the Lord is a sign of something beyond itself and the whole of the acts put together display an ocean of doctrine without bottom or shore.

What a Christ was this! Oh that His Spirit may dwell in us, that our lives, also, may be rich and full! Rich to the Glory of God, and full to the blessing of our fellow men. Yet, dear Friends, though the whole of Christ’s life has not been written, we perceive in our text that what *has* been recorded is the most useful part of it and that it was preserved for our bene-

fit. The Inspired record was written with a purpose—the facts were wisely culled and collected out of the entire mass on account of their bearing upon the desired objective and enough has been preserved to effect a design which, above all others, is most important to us. “These are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that, believing, you might have life through His name.”

May our reverence to the Inspired Gospels lead us to give earnest heed to their design and objective, for it would be profane to baffle their purpose by refusing their testimony. First, this morning, let me speak a little with you upon the design of all Scripture, which is faith. Secondly, upon the great Object of true faith, which is Jesus the Christ, the Son of God. And then, thirdly, let us further commune together upon the true life of the soul which is linked and wrapped up with the name of Jesus Christ, in whom we are led to believe by the testimony of the things written concerning Him.

I. First, then, dear Friends, THE OBJECTIVE OF ALL SCRIPTURE IS TO PRODUCE FAITH. There is no text in the whole Book which was intended to create doubt. Doubt is a seed self-sown, or sown by the devil—and it usually springs up with more than sufficient abundance without our care. The practice of reading skeptical works is a very dangerous one—we have enough tendency to sickness in our own constitutions without going to fever hospitals to test the atmosphere. Holy Scripture is no mother or nurse of doubt—it is the creator of a holy confidence by revealing a sure line of fact and truth.

It has been thought by many expositors that John here refers only to the things which Jesus did *after* His Resurrection—“Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples.” But I think there are abundant reasons, with which I need not trouble you just now, to show that John must have referred to the whole of our Savior’s life and to all the acts of it—and that the book which he speaks of is his own book, the Gospel which contains his own life of Christ. John includes the whole story of Jesus of Nazareth in the reference of the text. I venture to go much farther and to say that the statement that John made here, though it must refer to his own Gospel, is equally true of the entire Scriptures.

We may begin at Genesis and go on to the Book of Revelation and say of all the holy histories, “These are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.” Though this Bible is a wonderful library of many books, yet there is such a unity about it that the mass of the people regard it as *one* book and they are not in error when they do so. This one Book has but one design and every portion of it works to that one end. Of the whole canon of Inspiration we may say, as we read every detail, “These are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.”

Observe, then, no part of Holy Scripture was written with any wish to magnify the *writer* of it. Many human books are evidently intended to let you see how profound the thoughts of their authors are, or how striking is their style. Self-consciousness is often apparent and the man is seen as well as the fruit of his mind. If some authors can, at any time, introduce themselves, they do not hesitate to do so, even though they have to go out

of their way to do it! But you shall never detect the least degree of this in any of the writers of sacred Scripture. True, they did not set that foolish fashion of certain “brethren” in modern times who call attention to their own modesty by placing their initials on their title-pages instead of their names.

We have no Prophet of the Lord named D. N. J., or M. C. H.! And those who bear such initials in these days are by no means veiled writers, but are as well-known as if their names were written out in full. The Inspired authors freely write David, Job, Isaiah, John, Matthew—and why shouldn’t they? Having given their names, how very little of themselves will you ever find in their books? They lose themselves in their theme and hide themselves behind their Master. A most striking instance of this is found in John’s Gospel. John was a man above all others fitted to write the life of Christ. Did he not know more of Jesus by observation, by intimate fellowship and by hearty sympathy with Him than any other of the Evangelists?

And yet he has left out many interesting facts which the others have recorded—others, mark you—who did not actually see the facts as he did. Speaking after the manner of men, this silence is very wonderful. Can you guess how much this abstinence cost the Apostle? The other three Evangelists received much at second hand, though, truly, by the Spirit of God. But John literally and personally *saw* these things! He beheld them with his own eyes and yet he gives us fewer incidents in the life of Christ than the other Evangelists. What self-forgetfulness was this! He is silent because his speech would not serve the end he aimed at. And the most striking point is this—he omits, as if of set purpose, those places of the history in which *he* would have shone.

He and James and Peter were frequently selected by the Master to be with Him when others were excluded. But of these occasions John says nothing. At the resurrection of the daughter of Jairus, it is said of the disciples, as well as of the relatives and the multitude, that the Lord put them all out and only suffered the three to be with Him. This was a singular honor, but John does not say a word about the raising of the daughter of Jairus! What self-oblivion! I should not have omitted it if I had been writing, nor would you. If we had been writing apart from the inspiration of the Spirit, we should have treasured up those special incidents of favor and we should not have thought ourselves egotistical, either, but should have considered ourselves as specially called to record a miracle which was witnessed by so very few!

The Spirit of God, in moving John to write, took such full possession of him that he wrote only that which worked towards the one great objective. No matter how interesting the event, he leaves it unrecorded if he judges it to be aside from his design. Notice, next, that only three were with our Lord at His Transfiguration—and John was one of them. John does not mention that august event except it is that He says, “We beheld His Glory, the Glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of Grace and truth,” in which there may be a reference to it, but it is by no means clear! At any rate, he does not narrate the circumstance, but leaves it to other pens.

This is a moral miracle! What uninspired man could have left out such a vision from his page? Even more striking is the fact that the Master, when He took with Him the 11 to the garden, left the major part of them at the gate, but He led the three further into the garden and bade them wait at about a stone's-cast distance, where some of them heard His prayers and observed His bloody sweat. John, who was one of them, says nothing about it! Had he forgotten it? That were impossible! Did He doubt it? Certainly not! But the omission shows you that these incidents were not written with the view of honoring John, but that the reader may be led to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God! He leaves out that which would have brought John into the front, in order that he may fill up the whole foreground of his canvas with the portrait of his Lord. Everything is subordinated to the one grand end—"that you should believe that Jesus is the Christ."

What a lesson is all this to us who write or speak for God! Let us labor for this one thing, that we may lead men to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God! If any sort of preaching would exalt *ourselves*, let us choose another, lest we hide the Cross of Christ! If we can occupy the space with something more forcible, let us omit the choicest piece of oratory. Let us prune the vine of our speech that all its sap may go to fruit and let that fruit be the bringing of men to believe that Jesus is the Christ!

Further, notice that Holy Scripture was not written with the mere view of imparting knowledge to men by presenting them with a complete biography of Jesus Christ. The one objective of Scripture is that you may believe on Jesus Christ. It was not the aim of the Evangelists to present us with a complete life of Jesus Christ. Observe the difference between such a writer as John and an ordinary biographer. Usually when you see a biography advertised, it will be your wisdom to save your money, for scarcely ever is there a biography written that is fully worth the money asked for it. I can point you to biographies stuffed full of letters which might just as well have been burned—and common places which might as well have been forgotten. The good man never did anything in his life except that he married a wife and took a holiday and traveled through Switzerland and went to Venice and Rome!

Every scrap that he wrote home about, the most common incident of travel, is secured and inserted as if it were a priceless gem. It is just the same that every Tom and John and Mary would have said, and yet it is paraded as something heavenly! The book must be swelled out and so the biographer gives us every bit of sense or nonsense that he can find. There must have been great searching of drawers, great writing to first cousins, uncles and aunts, to know if they have an old letter anywhere of the dear deceased! All manner of small talk is inserted because, to speak the truth, our lives are mostly so little that if we do not blow them up with wind there will not be enough to make a volume for the book-market!

How different is the biography of Jesus of Nazareth! The signs and wonders which He did are not written to make a book—they are not even written that you may be informed of all that Jesus did—these are written with an end, an aim, an objective—"That you might believe that Jesus is

the Christ, the Son of God.” Matthew, when he writes of “Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham,” leaves out everything that does not bring out Christ in connection with the Kingdom of God. He paints Messiah, the Prince, and he will not be taken off from his work. Luke brings forth Jesus as the Man and you see how wondrously he keeps to that one line of things. But when you get to John, and he is about to bring forth the Lord Jesus as the Son of God, he omits numbers of details that show our Lord in other lights and other aspects.

Here Jesus is not so much the King in His Kingdom—He leaves that to Matthew—he sticks to his own point which is indicated by his opening sentences—“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” He desires to set forth our Lord’s glorious Messiahship, personal Sonship and Deity! And he adheres to that and to that, alone. The Evangelists do not attempt, merely, to increase our knowledge, but they aim to win our understandings and to conquer our hearts for Christ! Notice yet again, dear Friends, that the Gospels and the other Books of Scripture were not written for the gratification of the most godly and pious curiosity.

Truly, I would have liked to have acted to our Lord as Boswell did to his friend, Dr. Johnson! I would have thought it an honor to have noted down every choice word He dropped and every act He did. I would have recorded the very color of His hair and you should have known whether His eyes were blue or hazel! I would have left on record every incident about the very fabric of that hem of His garment which the woman touched. Would not any of you have done so? Do you not love Him so much and prize Him so greatly, that you would have thought the smallest trifle about Him to be a gem of knowledge? Our love ennobles everything that has to do with our adorable Lord!

But the writers, Inspired by the Holy Spirit, were not led astray by this feeling. They knew their Object and gave their whole strength to Him! The Holy Spirit did not send His servants to gather up interesting details and preserve curious facts. None of them wrote to gratify your curiosity, even about the things which concern your Lord and Master. You shall be told that which shall lead you to believe Him to be the Son of God and you shall be told no more, for had all been written, you might have spent all your time in trying to know Christ after the flesh! But now He has preserved only that which, by His blessing, shall teach you to know Him after the spirit. It is not to gratify curiosity but to beget *faith* within the soul that the memoirs of our Lord are written by the Evangelists.

Again, the Scriptures are not even written with the view of setting before us a complete example. I want you to notice that. It is true that the Gospels set before us a perfect Character and we are bound to imitate it. It is true that when we read the life of Christ we may learn how to live and how to die—but that was not the first and chief design of the writers—they wrote that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that, by believing, we might have life through His name! Good works are best promoted, not as the first, but as the second cause. They come as the *result* of faith and he that would promote that which is pure and honest and holy, had best promote faith in Jesus Christ, the Savior!

The Scripture does not go in for flowers, first, nor even for fruit, but it plants roots and, therefore, it aims at implanting faith in Jesus Christ, for when we have believed in Him, the faith that works by love will be sure to produce a sacred imitation of His most beloved and perfect Character! Yes, let the truth stand as I have put it, “these are written,” first and last, with no other end and objective but this, “That you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.” Open his Gospel and see how John, all through it, keeps to his design. It would be worth while to spend the whole morning and a half dozen other mornings, in showing you that John never takes his eyes from this one point. You will soon perceive that his Book contains a series of testimonies borne by persons led to faith in Jesus as the Christ.

John, in the first chapter, teaches the Truth of God which he was about to prove—read the 17th and 18th verses, “The Law was given by Moses, but Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” Here you see that Jesus is the Christ. “No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.” There is “the only-begotten Son,” and the two verses show us that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. John had been convinced of this at our Lord’s Baptism by the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Him and, therefore, he bore this witness at the commencement.

Almost immediately after follows the conversion of Andrew—and what does Andrew witness? He says to his brother, Simon, “We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ.” Close on the heels of that comes Nathanael’s testimony. He says, “Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel.” Directly after follows the changing of the water into wine at the marriage of Cana in Galilee—one of the seven miracles which John mentions—and he never mentions any more than those seven. And of this, the first of the seven, he says, “This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His Glory; and His disciples believed on Him.” The miracle was intended to produce faith and *did* produce it! At the end of each record of a miracle, John tells us that some believed in Him and generally that they came to believe that He was the Christ, the Son of God.

That memorable third chapter concerning Nicodemus shows us how that enquiring master of Israel came to believe in Him and how the Lord was revealed to Nicodemus as both the Sent One and the Son, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved.” In the fourth chapter you get to the well at Sychar, where the Lord manifests Himself to a poor fallen woman—and she is convinced and hastens to tell her friends—and they, by-and-by, know that this is, indeed, the Christ, the Savior of the world!

In the case of the raising up of the nobleman’s son in the same chapter, you are reminded by John that the father was led to faith in Jesus and the natural inference is that you ought to be led to display a like confidence. In the fifth chapter the healing of the impotent man at the pool is narrated in order to introduce the statement, “But I have greater witness

than that of John: for the works which the Father has given Me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me." When 5,000 had been fed, we read, "Those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, "This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world."

In the 69th verse of the sixth chapter you find Simon Peter saying, "We believe and are sure that You are that Christ, the Son of the living God," and so in the seventh chapter, "others said this is the Christ," being convinced by that which He had spoken. To the man born blind, Jesus said, "Do you believe on the Son of God?" and the man's practical answer was an avowal of faith and an immediate act of worship. But I am afraid you would soon grow weary if I were to dwell upon every incident which would prove my point. The whole Book is made up of modes of reasoning by which men have been led to believe in Jesus!

It might have been written for the sake of the Unitarians of our own time. It contains repeated declarations that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and a series of testimonies of persons brought to see this by the signs that Jesus worked among them. Study John's Gospel with that view and you will see how the Lord brings one to believe on Him by a call which came with Divine authority. A second by unveiling the secrets of her life. Another by answering his prayers. Another by enlightening his mind. Of the whole of His disciples, our Lord gives the secret reason of their discipleship in His matchless prayer, "For I have given unto them the words which You gave Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from You, and they have believed that You did send Me."

Throughout the whole Book, the strain is the same, for it begins with Andrew's confession, "We have found the Messiah," and ends with Thomas, to whom Jesus said, "Reach here your finger, and behold My hands." Thomas cries in ecstasy, "My Lord and my God!" And this is almost the top stone of the confessions and achievements of faith, but not quite, for here is the crown of all, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." You Bible readers who have never believed in Jesus as the Christ, have read in vain! You have read to your own condemnation, but not to your salvation!

Oh, you that are afraid that you may not be allowed to believe in Jesus, dismiss that foolish fear, for this holy Book is written *on purpose* that you may believe and, therefore, it is clear that you have full liberty to do so! Every time John dipped his pen into the ink he breathed the prayer, "Lord, bring men to believe in Jesus by that which I have written." And he closed his Gospel by declaring the innermost longing of his living soul, "These are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." My dear Hearer, your immediate conversion to faith in the Lord Jesus is the objective of this Book. God grant it may be fulfilled in you!

II. We turn, in the second place, to a subject which is a step further—THE GREAT OBJECT OF TRUE FAITH IS CHRIST JESUS. The text does not say, "These are written that you might believe the Nicene Creed," for good as that creed is, it was not, then, composed, and is not the chief object of faith. It does not say, "These are written that you might believe the Athanasian creed." A very good creed, but rather savage, and also not

then devised. No, no—“These are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, you might have life through His name.” That is to say, the faith which brings life to the soul is faith in the Person, offices, Nature, and work of Jesus—and though you may be in the dark about a thousand things and may make mistakes about 10,000 more—yet if you believe in the Messiah, the Son of God, you have eternal life!

First, I am to believe in Jesus that He is the Christ, that He is the promised Messiah, anointed of God to deliver the human race. I must believe that this is He whom God promised at the Garden of Eden when He said, “The Seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s head.” This is the Sent One who is come to seek and to save that which is lost—in Him we are to believe, for it is written—“Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.” Next we are to believe that He is the Son of God—not in the sense in which *men* are sons of God, but in that *higher* sense in which He is the only-begotten Son of God, One with the Father, eternally and indissolubly One. “The Word was with God,” but more than that, “the Word *was* God.”

Now, this is to be believed if we would live unto God. “Whoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwells in him and he in God.” “Who is he that overcomes the world, but he that believes that Jesus is the Son of God?” A Jesus who is not Divine could give us no power to overcome the world! But in His Godhead we find our strength. Put the two together, that He, the Divine One, became Man, and was sent into the world to redeem us—and we have the right idea of Immanuel, God With Us! Will this belief save us? Assuredly it will, but listen while I explain. First, believe this to be a matter of *fact*. Having believed it to be a matter of fact, go on to look into the record concerning Him till you are undoubtedly sure of it—for these are written that you might believe with the fullest confidence that Jesus is God and Savior.

When you are sure of the fact, the next thing is to accept it for yourself—agree that Jesus shall be *your* Anointed, through whom *you* will get the anointing which comes upon Him as the Head and descends to you as the skirts of His garment. At the same time, unfeignedly consent that He shall be your God and cry with Thomas, “My Lord and my God!” You are getting on, now, to complete faith—go one step further. Yield yourself up to the grand Truth of God which you have received, for that is *saving faith*—the submission of yourself to the Truth of God. Acting upon the conviction of its truth, I must say—since Jesus is now my Savior, He shall save me! Since He is the Christ anointed for me, I will trust Him and share His anointing! Since Christ is the Son of God, I will rest in Him, that I, also, may become in Him a child of God.

That is the point. “He that has the Son has life: and he that has not the Son of God has not life.” Accept Jesus as He is set forth, for to “as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” The faith which receives Christ as He is revealed as the Messiah and as the Son of God, is the faith which has eternal life—and the Scriptures are written that you

way have this faith! I want you to notice one more thing and that is, we are to receive Jesus of Nazareth as being the Christ and the Son of God on the ground of the written Word of God.

See—"These are *written* that you might believe." From this it is clear that the ground of acceptable faith is the written Word of God and it is vain to look for any other. "Oh," says one brother, "I could believe, but I do not feel as I ought." What have your *feelings* to do with the truth of the statement that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God? I read in the newspaper such-and-such a statement about affairs in Europe. I may have sufficient cause for doubting the news, but it certainly would not be a good reason if I were to say, "I do not believe the telegram because I do not feel that it is true." How can our *feelings* affect matters of *fact*? They are either true or not, altogether apart from the condition of the hearer.

Now, here is a testimony concerning Jesus borne by John and three other Evangelists. If these things are true, then they are true whether your heart dances for joy or sinks in despair. Whatever becomes of our changeable feelings, facts are stubborn things and alter not! Experience cannot make a thing true and frames of mind and feelings cannot make a thing to be a lie which is, in itself, true! Over the head, then, of all the storms, turmoils and changes of my poor, weak, silly nature, there rises a Rock that is higher than I, higher than all things! A Rock which cannot be moved, let the storm rage as long as it will—Christ Jesus, the anointed Son of God died in the place of all who trust in Him! I trust in Him and I am saved!

If He is, indeed, commissioned of God to save Believers. And if He is, Himself, God, pledged to save Believers, then I, as a Believer, am as safe as the Throne of God, or the presence-angels which surround it! Whatever I feel or do not feel, I am a saved man since I heartily believe that which the Book was written to teach me, namely, God's Gospel to men, embodied in Jesus Christ, who, being the Son of God, is anointed of the Lord to save His people!

III. So I come to the third point, which is this, that THE TRUE LIFE OF A SOUL LIES IN CHRIST JESUS AND COMES TO THAT SOUL THROUGH FAITH IN HIM. I understand by the life of a soul only one thing, and yet for the sake of clearing it we must divide it a little. First, when a man has been found guilty of death, if by any means that sentence is removed from him, he may be said to obtain life, life in its *judicial* form. Suppose that a person who is condemned to die is by some just and lawful means acquitted? In that fact he finds life. That is the first form of life that every man has who believes that Jesus is, indeed, the Christ. He is acquitted, pardoned, justified and, therefore, he *lives*.

Through the righteousness of Jesus Christ, he is made just in the sight of God and, being covered with perfect righteousness, he lives and must live forever. He is absolved, for he has believed in Christ Jesus, and by that act, he has accepted the righteousness of God and escaped from death. The guilt has been removed and, therefore, the penalty cannot be inflicted. This judicial life is attended with an imparted life. God the Holy Spirit is with Believers, breathing into them a new, holy, heavenly life.

They are dead to the world and buried with Christ, but they live unto God, never more to be slain by sin.

The life of Christ is infused into them by the Spirit of the living God, even as the Lord Jesus has testified, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that hears My word, and believes on Him that sent Me, has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." Observe that this life *grows*. It continues to gather strength and as it increases, it is spoken of, by John, as life, "more abundantly." That life never dies! It is impossible that it should ever be destroyed! It is a living and incorruptible Seed which abides forever. The life of saints on earth is, in fact, the same life as that of saints in Heaven. There is no change in the substance of the new life when we enter Glory—only that it grows and develops and reaches perfection in Heaven. The Believer's life on earth is Christ—his life in Heaven is the same.

As far as our *spiritual* nature is concerned, we have undergone the Resurrection and are raised from the dead—and the life that we live here is the Resurrection life—yet the Resurrection has not passed already, for as to the body it must be changed, and if it dies and is buried it shall be raised again at the sounding of the last trumpet. We are waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body from the power of death, waiting in the full assurance of hope. The soul even now lives in newness of life, for we are quickened by the Spirit of God! The new life enters the soul in and through believing and is the same life which we shall exercise forever at the right hand of God, even as Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believes on Me has everlasting life."

I need to enlarge a little upon the fact that this life comes with *believing* because I need it to be noticed that it really comes with believing apart from any other necessary circumstances. One person complains to me, "Sir, I cannot tell exactly when I was converted and this causes me great anxiety." Dear Friend, this is a needless fear. Turn your enquiries in another direction—Are you alive unto God by faith? Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God? Are you resting and trusting in Him? "Yes," you say, "with all my heart." Well, never mind about *when* you were converted. The fact is before you and its date is a small matter. If a person were to say to you, "You are not alive," how would you prove that you *are* alive? A good plan would be gently to step on his toe, or do something to make him feel that you possess life. I do not think it could be necessary for you to find your birth certificate because if you held it in your hand and said, "This document is conclusive," it would not be half so convincing a proof of life as some distinct *act* of life!

If I thought that I knew the very moment in which I was born again I might be mistaken. Indeed, little reliance can be placed upon our judgment or our memories. I would sooner believe, *today*, than be quite sure that I began to believe 30 years ago! Perhaps very few of you know the exact minute at which the sun rose this morning—and yet you do not doubt that it has risen, for at this present moment you are enjoying its light! Some mornings you can tell the instant of the sun's rising, but frequently it is so cloudy that the sun is up before you know it! A man would be an absolute lunatic who should say, "I do not believe that it is daylight, for I

do not know when the sun rose.” Date is a very small and unimportant matter compared with certainty and fact!

Do you believe in Jesus Christ? Then you are alive unto God and life is the evidence of birth. “Well,” says another, “but I hardly know *how* I was converted.” That, again, is another minor matter. Some of us can trace the way in which the Lord led us to Himself and we are very grateful to the instrument by whom we were brought to a knowledge of the Truth of God. But our text does not state that the Bible was written that you and I might trace our faith in Christ to John, or to anyone else. No, it was written that we might believe in Jesus Christ as the result of testimony—and I care not one farthing by what testifying agent you were brought to do it—so long as you do but believe because of the witness of the Word of God.

I am sure whatever the outward means of your faith, the Spirit of God must have worked it, for there is no living faith apart from His sacred working upon the mind. If you sincerely believe, the mode in which you gained your faith need not be enquired into. “Well,” says one, “but I want to know that I am alive unto God by my feelings. I feel often so sad and full of pain.” Listen, is not pain as good a proof of life as pleasure? If anybody said to me, “I know I am alive because I feel so well,” I should reply, “And I sometimes know that I am alive because I feel so ill.” Rheumatic pain is as rare a proof of life as a thrill of delight—and so, anxiety about your estate and hatred of sin and grief over your imperfection are just as sure signs of spiritual life as the highest joy or the liveliest energy! Do not worry yourself, therefore, about that. If you believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and are resting in Him, it is well with you.

“But,” says one, “I change so much. I feel sometimes as if I must be a Christian, but at other times I feel as if it were out of the question that I could be saved.” Yes, and do you not change a great deal as to your bodily life, too? I do, I know. Why, this heavy, damp, thick atmosphere half poisons me! Lift me up a few thousand feet on a mountain side, with a good stiff breeze blowing, and I feel quite another man! Are these changes reasons for questioning my being alive? No, no! Quite the reverse. The reason why I feel these changes is because I *am* alive, for I reckon that if I were a broomstick or a brick wall the atmosphere would not matter much! If you have no *spiritual* life, you will know few changes, but because you *are* alive these variations must and will occur to you.

I make you smile. I wish I could smile away some of those fears which hang like a nightmare over certain of the best of you. “But I have such conflicts within,” cries one. Ah, dear Friend, there are no conflicts in dead men! There would be no warfare between faith and unbelief if you were not on the Lord’s side! If our whole being remained in its natural death, there would be no inward fighting, but inasmuch as there are two minds within you, depend upon it—one of those minds is the mind of God! This inward conflict should not cause you to doubt, but rather lead you to cling the more tenaciously to your conviction that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, the Savior of men!

Faith in Jesus begets life and this life will flourish or decay very much in proportion to our faith. Believe firmly and your life shall be vigorous. Believe tremblingly and your life will be faint. Yet all depends upon “the

name.” Is not that a blessed word, “that believing, you might have life through His name.” The *name* means the whole Character of Christ—all His offices and relationships, all the work He has done and is doing—we “have life through His name.” We have no life anywhere else but in that name! Jesus Christ said to Lazarus, “Lazarus, come forth,” and why did he come forth? Why, because at the back of the word which called him, there was the name of Christ who quickens the dead!

Why were demoniacs cured? Was it not because unclean spirits knew the name of Jesus and trembled at it? The devil and death, sin and despair—they all yield to that name! When some began to exorcise in another name, the devil leaped upon them and cried, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are you?” That name has power in Heaven, has power on earth, has power in Hell, has power everywhere! And if we trust in that name and live to the Glory of that name, we have life through that name!

I come back to my beginning and there I close—the one thing, the main thing, the *only* thing is that we hold on to Jesus Christ through thick and thin, through foul and fair, up hill and down dale, in the night and in the day, in life and in death, in time and in eternity—that we steadfastly believe that Jesus of Nazareth, who died upon the Cross, is the Messiah of God, yes, the Son of God, sent to cleanse away iniquity and bring in perfect righteousness! Whether we see Him on His Cross or on His Throne, all our hope, all our trust must be fixed in Him and so we shall live when time shall be no more!

Verily, I say unto you, those who thus trust Him shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of His hands, for He has said it, “I give unto My sheep eternal life.” Stay there, O true Believers, and let none entice you from your steadfastness! If any of you have never exerted this faith, may the Lord bring you to Jesus at once! This sacred Book was written on purpose to make you believe! The Spirit is given to lead you to believe! The objective of every preaching of the Gospel is that you may believe! Therefore come and welcome! And at this hour believe on the one saving name and live thereby. God grant it for His name’s sake. Amen.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON. Mentone, November 19th, 1881. TO FRIENDS AT HOME—I am happily resting. Pray that I may gather strength in body, soul and spirit, and return to my labor to perform a far greater work than has ever been given me up to now. At this time revival services are being held at the Tabernacle and I beg all friends to strive together in their prayers for a great and extraordinary blessing. Especially let all members of the Church be up and doing, for time is short, men are dying, wickedness abounds and there is need that the Gospel be preached with power. With fervent love in Christ Jesus, Yours forever, **C. H. Spurgeon.**

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THE TWO DRAUGHTS OF FISHES

NO. 443

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 6, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Now when He had left speaking, He said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a draught.”
Luke 5:4

“And He said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and you shall find some. They cast therefore and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.”
John 21:6.

THE whole life of Christ was a sermon. He was a Prophet mighty in word and deed. And by His deeds as well as His words He taught the people. It is perfectly true that the miracles of Christ attest His mission. To those who saw them they must have been evident proof that He was sent of God. But we ought not to overlook that probably a higher reason for the miracles is to be found in the instruction which they convey. To the world without, at the present time, the miracles of Christ are more hard to believe than the doctrine which He taught. Skeptics turn them into stones of stumbling and when they cannot object at the marvelous teaching of Jesus, they attack the miracles as monstrous and incredible.

I doubt not that even to minds seriously vexed with unbelief, the miracles, instead of being helps to belief, have been trials of faith. Few, indeed, are there in whom faith is worked by signs and wonders. Nor, indeed is this the Gospel way of bringing conviction to the soul—the secret force of the Living Word is the chosen instrumentality of Christ—and wonders are left to be the resort of that Anti-Christ by whom the nations shall be deceived. We, who by Divine Grace have believed, view the miracles of Christ as noble attestations to His mission and Divinity. But we confess that we value them even more as instructive homilies than as attesting witnesses.

It is our conviction that we should lose much of the benefit which they were meant to convey to us, if we were merely to view them as seals to the roll, for they are a part of the writing of the roll itself. The marvels worked by our blessed Lord are acted sermons fraught with holy doctrine, set forth to us more vividly than it could have been in words. We start with the assumption upon which our sermon will be grounded this morning—that Christ’s miracles are sermons preached in deeds—visible allegories, truths embodied, principles incarnated and set in motion. They are, in fact, the pictures in the great book of Christ’s teaching—the illustrations by which He flashed light into dim eyes.

We have heard of some ministers who could say that they had often preached from the same text but they had never delivered the same discourse. The like may be said of Christ. He often preached upon the same Truth of God but it was never precisely in the same manner. We have read in your hearing this morning, the narrative of two miracles (Luke 5, and John 21), which seem to the casual observer to be precisely alike.

But he who shall read diligently and study carefully, will find that though the text is the same in both, the discourse is full of variations.

In both the miraculous draughts of fishes, the text is the mission of the saints to *preach* the Gospel—the work of man-catching—the ministry by which souls are caught in the net of the Gospel and brought out of the element of sin to their eternal salvation. The preacher is compared to a fisherman. The fisherman's vocation is a toilsome one. Woe be to that minister who finds his calling to be otherwise. The fisherman must go forth in rough weathers and at all hazards. If he should only fish in a calm sea he may often starve. So the Christian minister, whether men will receive the Word with pleasure, or reject it with anger and wrath, must be ready to imperil reputation and risk comfort.

Yes, he must hate his own life, also, or he is not worthy of the heavenly calling. The fisherman's is a rough occupation—no dainty fingers may come in contact with his nets. It is not a trade for gentlemen, but for rough, strong, fearless men, who can heave a rope, handle a tar-brush, or scour a deck. The ministry is not meant for your dainty souls who would go delicately through this world without a trial, an offense, an insult, or a sneer. Such work is meant for men who know how to do business on great waters and can go abroad upon the sea, not fearing the spray or the waves. The fisherman's calling, too, must be carried on perseveringly. It is not by one grand haul that a man makes his fortune. He must constantly cast forth his net.

One sermon makes not a preacher. He who shall but now and then deliver himself of some carefully prepared oration, is no true minister of God. He must be instant in season and out of season. He must cast his net in all waters. He must in the morning be at his work and in the evening he must not withhold his hand. To be a fisherman, a man must expect disappointments. He must often cast in the net and bring up nothing but weeds. The minister of Christ must reckon upon being disappointed—and he must not be weary in well-doing for all his disappointments—but must in faith continue in prayer and labor, expecting that at the end he shall receive his reward. It needs no great labor for you to work out at leisure the comparison between fishermen and the Gospel ministry, the simile is so aptly chosen.

The two narratives before us have a degree of uniformity. That shall be our first point. *But they have a greater degree of dissimilarity.* We will bring that out in the second place. And, then, thirdly, we will suggest *some great lessons which they both combine to teach us.*

I. First, then, IN THESE TWO MIRACLES THERE ARE MANY POINTS OF UNIFORMITY. They are both intended to set forth the way in which Christ's kingdom shall increase.

1. First you will perceive that in both miracles we are taught that *the means must be used.* In the first case, the fish did not leap into Simon's boat to be taken. Nor, in the second case, did they swarm from the sea and lay themselves down upon the blazing coals that they might be prepared for the fisherman's feast. No, the fishermen must go out in their boat. They must cast the net. And after having cast the net, they must either drag it ashore, or fill both boats with its contents. Everything is done here by human agency.

It is a miracle, certainly, but yet neither the fisherman, nor his boat, nor his fishing tackle are ignored. They are all used and all employed. Let

us learn that in the saving of souls God works by *means*. So long as the present economy of Grace shall stand, God will be pleased by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. Every now and then there creeps up in the Church a sort of striving against God's ordained instrumentality. I marked it with sorrow dating the Irish Revival.

We constantly saw, in some excellent papers, remarks which I thought exceedingly injurious—wherein it was made a subject of congratulation that no *man* was concerned in the work. No eminent preacher, no fervent Evangelist. The whole was boasted to be conducted without human instrumentality. That was the *weakness* of the Revival, not its strength. You say it gave God more glory. Not so. God gets the most glory through the use of instruments. When God works without instruments, doubtless He is glorified. But He knows Himself in which way He gets the most honor and He has Himself selected the plan of instrumentality as being that by which He is most magnified in the earth.

We have this treasure. How? Alone? Without any earthly accompaniments? No. But in earthen vessels. What for? That God may have less glory? No. But in the earthen vessels on purpose, "that the excellency of the treasure may be of God," and not of us. God makes the infirmity of the creature to be the foil to the strength of the Creator. He takes men who are nothing in themselves, and works by them His splendid victories. Perhaps we would not admire Samson so much if he had dashed the Philistines in pieces with his fists, as we do when we find that with such a weapon, so unadapted to the work, as the jawbone of an ass, he laid on heaps the thousands of his foes.

The Lord takes ill weapons, that with them He may work great deeds. When He said, "Let there be light and there was light" without any instrument, He showed His glory. But when instead, thereof, He takes the Apostles and says again, "Let there be light," and sends *them* forth who were darkness in themselves and makes them the medium of lighting up a dark world, I say there is a *greater* glory. And if the morning stars sang together when they first saw light upon the newly made earth, surely the angels in Heaven rejoiced even more when they saw light thus streaming upon the dark earth through *men*, who, in and of themselves, would only have increased the blackness and made the gloom more dense.

God works by *means* of men whom He especially calls to His work and not as a rule without them. The hypocrite strives to get rid of the pastorate but he never can, for the Lord will ever continue to give pastors after His own heart to feed His people and all attempts made by the flock to dispense with these pastors will lead to leanness and poverty of soul. The outcry against the "one man ministry" comes not of God, but of proud self-conceit—of men who are not content to learn although they have no power to teach.

It is the tendency of human nature to exalt itself which has raised up these disturbers of the peace of God's Israel, for they will not endure to submit themselves to the authorities which God has Himself appointed. They abhor the teachings of the Apostle, where he says, by the Spirit of God, "Obey them that have rule over you and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable to you."

Brethren, I warn you, there is a spirit abroad which would pull down the men whom God Himself has raised up, that would silence those into

whose mouths God has put the tongue of fire, that foolish men might prate according to their own will to the profit of no one and to their own shame. As for us, we shall, I trust, never cease to recognize that agency by which the Lord works mightily among us. We would check no ministry in the Church of God. We would but be too glad to see it more abundantly exercised. Would God that all the Lord's servants were Prophets!

But we enter our solemn protest against that spirit which, under presence of liberty to all, sets aside the instrumentality by which the Lord especially works. He will have you still keep the fishermen to their nets and to their boats. And your new ways of catching fish without nets and saving souls without ministers, will never answer, for they are not of God. They have been tried and what has been the result of the trial? I know not a Church in existence that has despised instrumentality but it has come to an end within a few years either by schism or decay.

Where upon the face of the earth is there a single Church that has existed fifty years where God's chosen instrumentality of ministry has been despised and rejected? "Ichabod!" is written upon their walls. God rejects them because they reject God's chosen way of working. Their attempts are flashes in the pan, meteoric lights, will-o'-the-wisps, swellings of proud flesh, bubbles of foam, here today and gone forever on the morrow.

2. Again, in both our texts there is another Truth of God equally conspicuous, namely, that *means of themselves are utterly unavailing*. In the first case you hear the confession, "Master, we have toiled all the night and have taken nothing." In the last case you hear them answer to the question, "Children, have you no meat?" "No"—a sorrowful No. What was the reason of this? Were they not fishermen plying their special calling? Verily, they were no raw hands. They understood the work. Had they gone about the toil unskillfully? No. Had they lacked industry? No, they had *toiled*. Had they lacked perseverance? No, they had toiled *all night*.

Was there a deficiency of fish in the sea? Certainly not, for as soon as the Master comes, there they are in large number. What, then, is the reason? Is it not because there is no power in the means of themselves apart from the presence of Christ? The Great Worker who does not discard the means would still have His people know that He uses instrumentality, not to glorify the *instrument*, but for the sake of glorifying Himself. He takes weakness into His hands and makes it strong, not that weakness may be worshipped, but that the strength may be adored which even makes weakness subservient to its might.

Brethren, let us as a Church always keep this in mind, that without Christ we can do nothing. "Not by might, nor by power but by My Spirit, says the Lord." Put no dependence upon societies, upon committees, upon ministries, upon anything that we can do. Let us work as if it all depended upon us. But let us come to God depending upon Him, knowing for sure that it does not rest with us, but with Him alone. Let us send forth the missionaries to the heathen. Let us send forth our men into the dark streets and lanes of London. Let us scatter tracts. Let us distribute the Word of God. Let us send forth preachers by scores from our "School of the Prophets." But when this is done, let us not sit still and say, "Now it is all accomplished, good must come of it." No, Lord, unless Your blessing descend from on High, as well might we have done nothing, for no eternal results can follow.

How often this drives me to my knees! The surprising work which God is doing in connection with this place lifts up my heart with joy. But then the fear lest it all should come to nothing for lack of His blessing casts my spirit to the very earth. You will remember, I dare say, that one Brother was moved, some time ago, to distribute a volume of the sermons preached here to every student in Oxford and Cambridge. After that had been done and some two hundred thousand sermons had been distributed, he then gave them to every member of Parliament, to every peer of the realm and to princes, kings and emperors of Europe. Having accomplished that work, he has another in hand of great magnitude.

Dear Friends, as I think of these books traveling everywhere among high and low, the rich and poor, in all places of the land, my heart is glad. But then, if God withholds the blessing, as well had they never been born in the press and circulated by human hand. What good can they do? Let the net be ever so broad, ever so strong, and let it be ever so industriously cast into the sea, yet we shall toil all the night and take nothing unless the Master comes to bless the work.

Let us, then, be always in prayer for the blessing. Let us remember that we have done nothing until we have prayed over what we have done. Let us consider that all the seed we have put into the ground is put there for worms to eat, unless we have dropped into the soil the preserving grain of prayer to keep that other grain alive. We shall have harvests if we wait on God for them, but after all our sowing, if we look to the soil, the seed, or the sower, we shall see nothing for our pains.

3. Thirdly, there is clearly taught in both these miracles the fact that it is *Christ's Presence that confers success*. Christ sat in Peter's boat. It was His will that by a mysterious influence drew the fish to the net, as though He had a hook, a secret hook in each of their jaws. As though He could stop them in their sportive leaps and hurry them all to one common spot. It was His Presence on the dry land, when He spoke from off the shore to His toiling disciples out yonder and said, "Cast the net on the right side of the ship"—it was His Presence that drew the fish to the place where they were taken.

Oh, Brethren, we must learn this—that it is *Christ's Presence* in the midst of the Church that is the Church's power—the shout of a King in the midst of her. It is the Presence of Christ's great representative, the Holy Spirit, that is to give the Church force. "I, if I am lifted up, will draw all men unto Me." *There* is the attraction. The Spirit gives the power and we must tarry until we get it. But when we have it, then we cannot preach in vain, for we become "a savor of life unto life" to those who hear. Christians, Christ's Presence with you must be *your* power. Be much in fellowship with Him. Catch much of His Spirit. Meditate much upon His sufferings. Keep close to His Person. And then, wherever you go, there shall be a power about you which even your adversaries shall be compelled to acknowledge.

Oh that we had more of Christ's Presence in us as a Church! Lift up your hearts for it. If Christ is here at all, let us not grieve Him. "I charge you, O you daughters of Jerusalem, that you stir not up nor awake my love till He pleases." And if He is not here, let us rise from the bed of our sloth and go forth and seek Him, crying, "Oh You whom my soul loves, tell me where You feed, where You make Your flock to rest at noon!" And if you find Him, I charge you hold Him and let Him not go till you bring

Him into your mother's house, into the chamber of her that bare you, even the Church of Christ. There will we hold Him, there will we embrace Him—and He shall show to us His love.

4. In both instances the *success* which attended the instrumentality through Christ's Presence *developed human weakness*. We do not see human weakness more in non-success than in success. In the first instance, in the success you see the weakness of man, for the net breaks and the ships begin to sink and Simon Peter falls down with—"Depart from me for I am a sinful man, O Lord." He did not know so much about that till his boat was filled. But the very abundance of God's mercy made him feel his own nothingness.

In the last case, they were scarcely able to draw the net because of the multitude of fishes. Brethren, if you or I would know to the fullest extent what utter nothings we are, if the Lord shall give us success in winning souls we shall soon find it out. As we see first one, and then another, and then scores and then hundreds, brought to the Lord Jesus, we shall say, "Who has begotten me these? How can such wonders be worked by me?" And we shall fall prostrate before the footstool of Sovereign Grace and confess that we are unworthy of such amazing favors.

Let the Church spread, let her conquests be many, let her overrun whole provinces with her heavenly arms and instead of man becoming more famous, man shall sink lower and lower and it shall be more and more fully perceived that it is the Lord. Little works, such as have been common in our Churches for years, where twos and threes are added, are quite consistent with great self-congratulation, and so is utter barrenness. Mark the pompous carriage of many a fruitless preacher and see if it is not so.

Let the Lord make bare His arm and the man humbles himself in the dust, for when hundreds are ingathered, this cannot be the minister, this is the finger of God. The man is forgotten, then, in the very abundance of his success and the Lord, alone, is magnified in that day. Oh that God would do in the Churches of England some great and stupendous works by all His ministers! Then would they discover their own weakness and *then* would the name of God be glorified!

You frequently meet with the observation, if a man is successful in winning souls, "I am afraid he will grow proud: how we ought to pray that he may be kept humble!" Brethren, that is a very necessary prayer for *anybody*. But it is no more necessary for the man who is successful than for the unsuccessful one. In fact, it is an assumption of pride on any person's part to think that he has less need to pray against pride than any other man. Think not that when the Church prospers, it becomes necessarily proud. No, the very fullness of the boat makes it sink, and the very abundance of the miracle makes us cry out the more, "It is the Lord," for we feel that it could not have been of man, for it is out of man's reach to have accomplished such wonders.

So far, then, there is a likeness running through the whole. Means must be used—means alone, unavailing—Christ's Presence gives the success. That success develops human weakness and leads to the exclamation—"It is the Lord."

II. Having, then, shown the likeness, you will be still more interested in REMARKING THE DISSIMILARITY.

Allow us to say in the commencement, that we think the first picture represents the Church of God as we see it. The second represents it as it really is. The first pictures to us, the *visible*, the second the *invisible*. Luke tells us what the crowd see. John tells us what Christ showed to His disciples, alone. The first is common truth which the multitude may receive, the next is special mystery revealed only to spiritual minds. Observe, then, carefully, the points of divergence.

1. First, there is a difference in the orders given. In the first, it is, "Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a draught." In the second it is, "Cast the net on the right side of the ship." The first is Christ's order to *every minister*. The second is the secret work of His Spirit in the Word. The first shows us that the ministry is to fish *anywhere* and *everywhere*. All the orders that the Christian has, as to his preaching, is, "Launch out into the deep and let down your net." He is not to single out any particular character.

He is to preach to everybody, sensible sinners and insensible sinners. He is to preach to the dead dry bones of the valley as well as to the living souls. He is not to look where the fish are, but just to throw the net in, doing as his Master tells him, "Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." Those ministers who preach only to the elect should remember this. Our business is to include all sorts of fish and not to be particular about where we are, but just splash the net in. What if we are in town, or city, or village? What if we are among the rich or poor, learned or illiterate? What if we are among the debauched or immoral? We have nothing to do with that—our duty is the same, to "launch out into the deep, and let down the net"—that is all.

Christ will find the fish—it is no business of ours. The secret truth is that when we are doing this, the Lord knows how to guide us, so that we, "cast the net on the right side of the ship." That is the secret and invisible work of the Spirit, whereby He so adapts our ministry, which is in itself general, that *He* makes it particular and special. We speak to all, and He speaks to some. We blow the trumpet, but only the bankrupt debtors hear it—only those who are truly of the Spirit of God know the joyful sound and rejoice therein. We cannot single them out, but God can. We thrust in the blessed loadstone of the Gospel, and that heavenly magnet has an affinity to some hearts which God has quickened, so that as many as were ordained unto eternal life believe.

The Apostles preached to the crowd but the Lord God, the Holy Spirit, who had decreed the salvation of His chosen, sent the Word home with power to the chosen and separated ones. What a joy it is to think that we always have a picked congregation here, for the *Lord* has picked them! Though they are crowded together promiscuously—here the good, and there the bad, all sorts mingled and mixed together—yet God brings them in according to His eternal purpose and all the while there is a core of chosen souls inside the mass of the congregation to whom God is applying the Word. We cast the net, after all, on the right side of the ship and we do find it full.

2. In the first instance you will clearly see that there is a distinct plurality. The fishermen have nets—in the plural. They have boats—in the plural. There is plurality of agency employed. Each man seems to come out distinctly. In the next case, it is one. There are many men but they are all in *one boat*. They unitedly drag the net and it is but *one net*—there

is no division, it is all one. Now, this is the visible and the invisible. To us, the means that God makes use of to bring sinners to Himself are various.

Sometimes we are in one boat trying to catch all the fish we can. There is another boat over yonder and they are trying to do the same. We ought to consider them as being partners and whenever our boat gets too full, we should beckon to our partners in the other ship to come and help us. We ought not to look upon those Brethren who differ from us as though they were emptying the sea and competing against us. The more the merrier. The more men to do good, the more will the Lord's name be praised. I think, in many of our towns where some of our whining Brethren say that all good people should go to one Chapel, that it is far better to have three or four.

I question whether the plurality of agency involved in denominations is not a great benefit and blessing. Instead of, in the slightest degree, standing out against my Brethren for carrying out their convictions, I praise them and look upon them as partners in another ship. Our denominational distinctions help to keep us awake—thus we stir one another up and do far more good in the world than would be the case if there were only a nominal Church. God would have the agency diverse. There must be several nets and there must be several fishermen and these fishermen in different boats.

So far as we are able to see, there will always be a Paul and a Barnabas, who cannot get on together. There will always be outward divisions in the ministry. And I avow myself the advocate and lover of these things. As I said last Sunday, the thing called Sectarianism I do not disown but maintain.

But let us look to the inward. In John they are all in one boat, all fishing together, all dragging one net. Ah, Brethren, this is what is really the fact. We do not see it, but all God's ministers are dragging one net and all God's Church is in one ship. Oh, I bless God for that sweet doctrine! It is no use striving after outward uniformity. We shall never see it. Neither the texture of the human mind nor the will of God require it. It is of no use to contend against the diversities which exist in the great visible Church. I do not know that these differences are evils.

They are the natural results of man's finite character and must and will exist to the end of the chapter. It is the unity of the *Spirit*. It is unity in *Christ Jesus*. It is unity in *love to one another* that God would have us regard. Let us learn this unity from the fact, that after all, though we may look as if we differed, yet if we are God's ministers, there is only one ministry. If we are God's Church, there is only one Church in the world. There is only one spouse of the Lord Jesus. There is only one fold and one Shepherd. Though to our eyes it will always be so, two boats, or twenty boats—two nets, yes, fifty nets—yet to Him who sees all things better than we do, there is only one boat and one net. And they shall all, who are taken in that one net, be safely brought to shore.

3. Thirdly, there is another difference. In the first case, how many fish were caught? The text says, "a great multitude." In the second case, a great multitude are taken, too, but they are all counted and numbered. "An hundred and fifty and three." Luke does not tell us how many were caught the first time, for there were some of them not worth the count-

ing. But the second time, you will perceive the exact number is recorded, “an hundred and fifty and three.”

What was *Peter's* reason for counting them? We cannot tell. But I think I know why the Lord made him do it. It was to show us that though in the outward instrumentality of gathering the people into the Church, the number of the saved is to us a matter of which we know nothing definitely, yet secretly and invisibly the Lord has counted them even to the odd one. He knows well how many the Gospel net shall bring in. See where the Word is preached what a great multitude are brought in! Thousands, tens of thousands are added to the different Churches of Christ and make a profession of their faith.

It were impossible to reckon all over Christendom how many have been taken in the outward net of the visible Church of Christ. But, Brethren, it is quite possible for it to be known of God how many shall be brought at last and how many now are in the *invisible* Church. He has counted them, foreordained their number, fixed them, settled them. The number, “an hundred and fifty and three” seems to me to represent a large definite number. They shall be in Heaven a number that no man can number, for God's elect are not few. But they shall be a number whom God can number, for “the Lord knows them that are His.”

They shall be a number certain and fixed, which shall neither be diminished nor increased but shall abide the same according to His purpose and will. Now, I, as a preacher, have nothing to do with counting fish. My business is with the great multitude. Splash goes the net again! Oh Master! You who have taught us to throw the net and bring in a multitude, guide into it the hundred and fifty and three!

4. Yet again, notice another difference. The fish that were taken the first time appear to have been of all sorts. The net was broken and therefore, doubtless some of them got out again. There were some so little that they were not worth eating and doubtless were thrown away. “They shall gather the good into vessels and throw the bad away.” In the second case, the net was full of great fishes. They were all great fishes, all good for eating, all the one hundred and fifty and three were worth keeping. There was not one little fellow to be thrown back into the deep again.

The first gives us the outward and visible effect of the ministry. We gather into Christ's Church a great number. And there will always be in that number some that are not good, that are not really called of God. Sometimes we have Church meetings in which we have to throw the bad away. We have many blissful meetings where it is gathering *in* the fish—and what big hauls of fish has God given to us! Glory be to His name! But at other times we have to sit down and look our fish over, and there are some who must be thrown away—neither God nor man can endure them.

Thus is it in the outward and visible Church. Let no man be surprised if the tares grow up with the wheat—it is the order of things, it must be so. Let none of us wonder if there are wolves in sheep's clothing—it always will be so. There was a Judas among the Twelve. There will be deceivers among us to the end of the chapter. Not so the invisible Church—the Church within the Church—the holy of holies within the temple. In that there is none to throw away. No. The Lord who brought them into the net, brought the right sort in. He did not bring one hypocrite or apostate. And having brought them in to the exact number of one hundred

and fifty and three, they cannot one of them get out again—but they are kept in that net, for that net does not break.

They are in the secret invisible Church of Christ and they cannot get out of it, let them do what they may. They may even give up their nominal profession, and thus get out of the visible Church but they cannot give up their secret possession. They cannot escape from the secret and invisible Church and they shall all be kept there till the net is dragged to land and the whole hundred and fifty and three saved.

6. Yet again, you notice in the first case the net broke and in the second case it did not. Now, in the first case, in the visible Church, the net breaks. My Brethren are always calling out “the net is broken!” No doubt it is a bad thing for nets to break. But you need not wonder at it. We cannot just now, when the net is full, stop to mend it. It will break. It is the necessary consequence of our being what we are that the net will break.

What do I mean by this? Why, that instead of having some one denomination, we have twenty or thirty? The net is broken. I do not at all grieve over it. I believe it is what must be as long as we are flesh and blood. For until you get a set of perfect men, you never will have anything but these divisions. The net must break and will break. But glory be to God, the net does not break after all in reality, for though the visible Church may seem to be rent and torn to pieces, the invisible Church is one. God’s chosen, God’s called, God’s quickened, God’s blood-bought—they are one in heart and one in soul and one in spirit. Though they may wear different names among men, yet they still wear before God their Father’s name written on their foreheads. And they are, and always must be one.

You perceive, Brethren, that I do not advise you to strive for a nominal unity. The more you strive after that, the more divisions there will be. Certain Brethren left many of our denominations and formed, they said, a Church that should not be a sect. All they did was to make a sect the most sectarian of sects—the most narrow and most bitter of cliques, though containing some of the best men, some of the best Christians and the ablest writers of the times. You cannot make a visible uniformity, it is beyond your power—the net is broken.

There now! Take care of the fish and leave the net alone, but still maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of perfectness. Take care that you are not a schismatic in your heart, that you hold no heresy in your soul, that you are one with all them that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. And in this you will soon see that the net is not broken but that the saints are one. Ah, I bless God that when once we get with God’s people—it does not matter what they are—we soon find the net is *not* broken. There are many a godly clergyman of the Church of England with whom I commune with the greatest joy and I have found the net was not broken.

And in conversing with Brethren of all denominations, some who from doctrine, some who from sentiment stand wide as the poles asunder, I have still found and known that there was such a real and perfect harmony of heart that the net was not broken. I do not believe that charity would ever have had such perfect work in Christ’s Church if it had not been for our being divided into tribes, like the twelve tribes of old. It is no charity for me to love a Brother who thinks as I think—I cannot very well

help it. But for me to love a dear Brother who *differs* from me in some points—why there is exercise and room for my charity!

And as God has left trials and troubles to exercise faith, I believe He has left us in many doctrinal difficulties on purpose—to exercise our love till the day shall come when we shall all grow to the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus. The net is not broken, Brethren. Do not believe it, and when you read about this denomination, and that, do not be grieved at these names and tribes, but rather, thank God for them. Remember, that is the visible Church and the net is broken. But there is an invisible Church where the net is not broken—where we are one in Christ and must be one forever.

There are several other points of difference but I think we have hardly time to enlarge upon them. I will only hint at them. In the first case, which is the visible Church, you see the human weakness becomes the strongest point. There is the boat ready to sink, there is the net broken, there are the men all out of heart, frightened, amazed and begging the Master to go away. In the other case it is not so at all. There is human weakness but still they are made strong enough. They have no strength to spare, as you perceive, but still they are strong enough, the net does not break, the ship goes slowly to land dragging the fish.

And then, lastly, Simon Peter pulls the fish to shore. Strong he must have been. They were just strong enough to get their fish to shore. So in the visible Church of Christ you will often have to mourn over human weakness—but in the invisible Church, God will make His servants just strong enough—just strong enough to drag their fish to shore. The agencies, means, instrumentalities—shall have just sufficient force to land every elect soul in Heaven—that God may be glorified.

Then, notice, in the visible Church, they launched out into the deep. In the second case, it says they were not far from the shore, but a little way. So today our preaching seems to us to be going out into the great stormy deep after fish. We appear to have a long way to reach before we shall bring these precious souls to land. But in the sight of God we are not far from shore. And when a soul is saved, it is not far from Heaven. To us there are years of temptation and trial and conflict. But to God, the Most High, it is finished—“it is done.” They are saved—they are not far from shore.

In the first case, the disciples had to forsake all and follow Christ. In the second, they sat down to feast with Him at the dainty banquet which He had spread. So in the visible Church today we have to bear trial and self-denial for Christ, but glory be to God, the eye of faith perceives that we shall soon drag our net to land and then the Master will say, “come and dine.” And we shall sit down and feast in His Presence, with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of God.

III. The time is gone and I close by NOTICING ONE AMONG MANY LESSONS WHICH THE TWO NARRATIVES IN COMMON SEEM TO TEACH. In the first case, Christ was in the ship. Oh, blessed be God, Christ is in His Church, though she launch out into the deep! In the second case, Christ was on the shore. Blessed be God, Christ is in Heaven. He is not here, but He has risen. He has gone up on High for us. But whether He is in the Church, or whether He is on the shore in Heaven, *all our night's toiling shall, by His Presence, have a rich reward.*

That is the lesson. Mother, will you learn it? You have been toiling long for your children. It has been night with you as yet. They give no evidence of Divine Grace. Rather they give many signs of sin and they grieve your spirit. Your night's toiling shall have an end. You shall at last cast the net on the right side of the ship. Sunday school teacher, you have been diligently laboring long and with but little fruit. Be not discouraged, the Master will not let you work in vain. In due season you shall reap if you faint not. And as these disciples had a great sea harvest, so shall you have a harvest of souls.

Minister, you have been plowing some barren rock and as yet no joyful sheaves have made your heart glad. You shall, doubtless, "Come again, rejoicing, bringing your sheaves with you." And you, O Church of God, travailing for souls, meeting daily in prayer, pleading with men that they will come to Christ, what if they are not saved yet? The morning comes, the night is far spent, and the Master, Himself shall soon appear. And though He may not find faith on the earth, yet His advent shall bring to His Church the success for which she has waited—such success that as a woman remembers no more her travail because a man is born into the world—so shall the Church remember no more her toils, her efforts and her prayers, because Christ's kingdom has come and His will is done on earth even as it is in Heaven.

Work, dear Friends! If there are any of you that are not working, *begin now*. If there are any of you not saved as yet, the Lord grant that when the Word is preached, you may be caught in it as in a net. We do throw it out once this morning. We hope to throw it again this evening. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved," for "he that believes and is baptized shall be saved and he that believes not shall be damned."

Flee to Christ! Escape from the wrath to come! May the Spirit apply that Word to you, and lead you to the place where high on Calvary with bleeding hands and feet the Savior dies! One look at Him and you are saved. Look, Sinner, and live! God save you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

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THE POWER OF CHRIST'S PRESENCE

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*"Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said unto Peter, It is the Lord."
John 21:7.*

I AM going to speak, on this occasion, to my Brothers and Sisters who are workers for Christ. When our Lord met His Apostles by the lake and provided for them that memorable meal, He did not think it out of place to say to Peter, "Feed My lambs; feed My sheep." These practical exhortations were regarded by Him as quite in keeping with holy fellowship and so, though we are coming to the Communion Table at the close of this service, I feel that I am only right in speaking upon practical matters to you, my fellow laborers and fellow soldiers in the work and warfare of Christ. And I pray that God will, through me, speak to all here who love our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

You know that we read in the Gospels according to Luke and John, of two miraculous draughts of fishes. [See Sermon #443, Volume 8—THE TWO DRAUGHTS OF FISHES—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] The one that is recorded in this Chapter from which our text is taken was, in several respects, similar to that which was worked at an earlier period of our Lord's history.

Before He called His Apostles, He worked the miracle of giving them a great haul of fish after they had toiled all the night and had taken nothing. And then, after He had died upon the Cross and risen from the grave, He repeated the miracle in almost identical fashion. I think there was a great lesson which our Savior intended His disciples to learn from that repetition. The miracle was a picture—and He wanted them to look upon it and catch the idea it was meant to convey—and as they had probably not all caught it the first time, He held the picture up before them again, that they might have another opportunity of learning the lesson which He had intended it to teach them.

You notice that in both instances they had toiled—they had toiled all the night—but they had toiled in vain. The night was the best season for fishing, as it still is. They had toiled in the place where they had often caught fish before, for they were experienced fishermen, apt at their craft. Yet after using all the means that had been successful at other times, they were unsuccessful, for they had taken nothing. They had toiled perseveringly, too, for it was not only *at* night that they had toiled, but *all* the night. From the time when they pushed forth from the shore,

in the moonlight, until the morning star warned them of the dawning of the new day, they had toiled. Yet they had taken nothing.

This teaches us that we may work for Christ and try to win souls for Him—and do that work at the best time, in the best way and even persevere in doing it—and yet be unsuccessful. We must be unsuccessful if, like the disciples, we are laboring without the Master's Presence. In both instances, the turning-point was when the Master came. On the first occasion, He borrowed Peter's boat and preached a sermon from it to the crowd upon the shore. And then He said to Peter, "Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a draught." In the second case, He bade the disciples, "cast the net on the right side of the ship." But in both instances it *was the appearance of Jesus that filled the net* and filled it so miraculously that the despairing toilers of the night realized that Someone who was more than man had spoken to them—and they fell down to worship Him as Divine. So whenever Jesus comes to His workers, however unsuccessful they may have been, they are sure to succeed when He is there! Yes, and to succeed beyond their own expectations—just as the disciples were surprised that by the same hands which all night had taken nothing, 153 great fishes should be taken—and out of the same nets which were empty all the night, (save here and there a piece of tangled weed to mock their hopes), there should come so many great fishes upon which they and others might be feasted to their full! The Apostles could not do anything without their Lord and neither can we—so the main point for us to remember is that we need Jesus Christ to come into our midst—and this point I shall try to drive home with all my might, praying God the Holy Spirit to stir up the hearts of His people so that they may have a great longing to be useful in the winning of souls and realize that this can only be achieved by those who enjoy true fellowship with Christ!

I. I want, first, to show THE DISSIMILARITY AND THE SIMILARITY OF OUR POSITION TO THAT OF THE APOSTLES UPON THIS OCCASION.

First, *there was a dissimilarity in which the advantage is altogether on our side.* The Apostle Peter and his brethren had been fishing unsuccessfully, but they had not been commanded to fish. They may or may not have been right in fishing at that time, but at any rate, they were doing it on their own account. Peter said, "I am going fishing." It was his own work, done entirely in accordance with his own will—Christ had not bidden him go fishing. But in our case, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, we have our Lord's commission, "Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." We have received this Divine commission, so that when we preach the Gospel, we are not fishing as amateurs or self-sent volunteers, but as those who are sent by the Most High to do His bidding. When He commissions anyone, there is a sort of implied guarantee that He will give him success. At any rate, He will not send His servant upon a fool's errand, but by some means or other, He who gives the authority will be sure to give the power that is needed to go with it. "Wisdom is justified of *all* her children." You, dear Brothers and Sisters, in trying to serve God, each of you in your proper sphere, have done what

you were sent to do, for Jesus has said to you as He said to His disciples, "As My Father has sent Me, even so send I you." Remember that passage almost at the end of the Revelation, "Let him that hears, say, Come." Having heard the Gospel, you have tried to say, "Come," to the people and you have not gone beyond your commission in doing so, for you were commanded to do it! Every Believer is a priest—under the Christian dispensation there is no other priesthood save that of our Lord Jesus Christ and that which is common to every Believer in Him. So when you, having believed on Him, have gone to speak of Him to others, you have only exercised that royal priesthood which is rightly yours, for He "has made us kings and priests unto God." So, first, the Apostles went fishing without having any commission to fish and, therefore, they were unsuccessful. But we have an advantage over them because in the *Gospel* fishery, every true child of God who casts the net is commissioned by his Master to do so!

The disciples also had not their Master with them. All the night when they were casting the net and drawing it in, and finding nothing in it, they were by themselves. But that is not the case with us. As a Church we can say that we have had the Master's Presence with us these many years. Oftentimes in our assemblies we have been as sure of His Presence as we can ever be sure of anything! Our hearts have been rejoiced, purified and sanctified by gazing upon Him by faith. There have been Prayer Meetings in which I hope all of us have felt bowed down and humbled like Peter was when the Master was in his boat. And there have been times of solemn rejoicing over converted sinners in which the Lord Jesus has been manifestly in our midst! His promise, "Lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world," has been most graciously fulfilled in our experience and we, therefore, bless the Savior that we have not to wait for Him to come to us, for He has long been with us and has never left us! These many years the simple preaching of Jesus Christ and Him crucified has filled this House of Prayer as it is tonight. People know that there is nothing to be heard here but the old, old story "of the Crucified Savior, yet let the weather be as rigorous as it may, still will the crowds come to hear the Word of the Lord—and in this we do rejoice and evermore will rejoice! In this respect, also, we have the advantage over the fishermen on the Sea of Galilee.

And so we have in another point—because the Master was not with them, they caught nothing—but it cannot be said of us that we have taken nothing. I do not know that it would be right for us to try to compute how many souls have professed to have found the Savior during the years in which we have worked together, but I believe, Brothers, we may say this to the Glory of God and to the honor of the simple Gospel that we have preached—the number who have joined this Church, alone, can only be spoken of by thousands. And if we were to speak of tens of thousands, yes, and many tens of thousands who here and elsewhere have found the Savior under the Word preached by us, we would not exaggerate in the least. We put the crown upon the head of our Master, but

what joy we feel that it has been so! Suppose that He had left us? Vain would it have been for us to preach the Word, even with earnestness, for earnestness, alone, will not convert souls. There must be the Presence of Jesus to bless men—and it has been with us, year after year, even unto this day, glory be to His holy name! [The years referred to number approximately 20.]

In these points, then, our case is dissimilar to that of the Apostles when they were toiling all the night and had taken nothing.

But we are precisely like the Apostles in certain other points, the first of which is that we would have taken nothing if the Master had not helped us. No child would have come from the Sunday school to say, "I love the Savior and wish to confess my faith in Him and to unite with the Church here." No young woman would have come out of that large and blessed Bible class if the Lord had not put the right words into the lips of the Sister who speaks for Him there. No young man would have been converted in our senior classes if the Spirit of God had not gone with the conductors. And from this pulpit no Word of Life would have been spoken if it had not been first given to us by God and then sent home to the hearts of our hearers by the Holy Spirit. We would have "taken nothing" without our Lord!

And even now, Brothers and Sisters, our success is wonderfully like the non-success of the Apostles, for we have scarcely taken anything in comparison with what still needs to be taken! Even when we speak of tens of thousands converted, what are they in comparison with the millions all around us in this vast city? When God gives us an increase of a hundred or a 120 in a month, we are glad and thankful, but large as those numbers are, what are they compared with the perishing myriads of London alone? Why should we not have 3,000 converts in a day as on the day of Pentecost? Why is it that our Churches are not multiplied till they cover this city in every part? Why does not the old Church of Christ, (for such we are), the old Catholic and Apostolic Church of Christ, come more to the front instead of lingering in the background? It is because we have not yet the fullness of the Master's power as we must have it—and desire to have it to the praise of His Glory! Christ's Presence, if He would but come among us in the fullness of His strength, would do so much more for us than anything that we have ever seen—that we would be as much astounded by the increase as the Apostles were by the two great draughts of fishes! Christ had but to will it and the fish came swimming in shoals to the net—and He has but to will it and souls will be converted by millions to Himself and His Gospel! He had but to give His disciples the directions to where to cast the net and the same net that had been empty would become full. And He has but to teach His ministers how to preach, and touch their lips with a burning coal off the altar to fire them with a Pentecostal enthusiasm—and they would speak in a way in which as yet they have never spoken and with a power they have never yet experienced! Such days are promised and they will surely come. We are not straitened in God. We are straitened in ourselves. If we have not those

glorious days of ingathering, it is because some sin of ours still keeps the Master's Glory from us. Oh, let us turn to Him and may He graciously turn to us!—

***“Let our mutual love be fervent,
Make us prevalent in prayers!
Let each one esteemed Your servant
Shun the world's bewitching snares,
Lord, revive us,
All our help must come from You!”***

II. Now, secondly, I have to speak upon THE MEANS WHICH WE ARE TO USE SO AS TO GAIN OUR MASTER'S PRESENCE. I have tried to show you that all our success must come from Him and all that He gives us must be ascribed to Him. So how can we secure His Presence? We have it in a measure—how can we have it more fully?

Well, let us always remember that *He comes just where He wills to come*. There is absolute Sovereignty about the work of Christ in the Kingdom of His Grace. As the wind blows where it wishes, so does the Spirit of God work wherever He pleases. I do not think that we can always account for the great success of one preacher and the non-success of another by anything that we can see. We have to fall back upon the Sovereignty of God and say, “God wills it and, therefore, it is.” He will have us know that Sovereignty is His Divine prerogative. He has the key of David—He opens and no man shuts. He shuts and no man opens. If He wills it, the rain shall descend steadily to make fat the fields. But if He wills it, He can restrain the dew of Heaven until the most fertile Church shall become barren as the mountains of Gilboa! He exercises His power not according to *our* will, but according to His own will—we must never forget that.

At the same time, what course should we take in order to secure His Presence? I reply, first, that *we had better go on with our work for Him*. If we want Christ to bless us and we are doing work for Him, we had better keep on steadily doing it. These disciples of His had been fishing all night. Perhaps if they had not fished at night Christ would not have given them fish in the daytime. He does not often come to bless idlers—He acts Sovereignly, as I have said, but He generally gives His blessing to those Churches that do the most for Him. I have always found that an earnest Gospel ministry and a prayerfully united Church will have God's blessing when others will not have it. Go on, Sunday school teachers, go on, tract distributors! Go on, Evangelists—go on, all of you who are laboring for Christ—keep, each one, to his own service and even if it has been night with you and you have taken nothing, still keep on at your toil! Probably the best way to bring the Master to you is to labor for Him with all your might.

Sometimes, however, *it will be necessary for us to wash or mend our nets*. In the miracle recorded by Luke, we find that the fishermen, after toiling all night, were washing their nets—and either on that occasion, or on a similar one, some of them were mending their nets. Every Church needs to do that and every Church member, every Christian worker

needs to do that. The preacher will do well to adopt another style—to study more diligently and to make himself more proficient in the knowledge of the Word. Sunday school teachers must more carefully study the lessons for their classes and go to their scholars better prepared for their work. Your nets will often need washing and mending if you are to be fishers of men—and all of you will be more likely to get the Master's blessing if you pay more attention to the means you are using for doing good in His service! Christ does not want slovenly work, nor is He likely to bless those who think that any kind of service will do for Him. I have heard of a preacher who thought that whatever came first into his head was good enough for his people. On one occasion, he informed one of his officers, at the end of his sermon, that he had never thought of it before he entered the pulpit. And the good Elder replied, "I thought so while listening to you. I thought that if you had considered it beforehand, you would never have said what you did." We all need to wash and mend our nets—I mean that we all need to do Christ's work in the best possible way—and that is the way in which we are most likely to be privileged with His Presence.

On that first occasion, the fishermen had been listening to Christ's words, for they had, at His request, turned their boat into a pulpit in which He sat down and taught the people who stood on the shore. Was there any connection between that incident and the great haul of fish? I think there was and that if they had not granted Christ's request, and listened to His sermon, He would not have blessed them with that multitude of fish. At all events, I know that a worker will always be all the better for waiting a while and sitting as a learner at Christ's feet—reading the Word for Himself, or listening to the Truth as it is preached by some God-sent minister. The message may strike a keynote in your heart which shall so influence your whole life that, henceforth, you shall be in a different condition and more likely to be blessed of the Most High.

Do you ask, "What is there that will bring Christ to a Church and keep Him there?" I reply, in a word, *prayer*. There is no force in nature that is equal to the power of prayer! The law of gravitation holds the planets in their orbits and links the sun to all the spheres that circle round him, but prayer has before now made gravitation, itself, cease to exert its energy! "Sun, stand you still upon Gibeon," said Joshua—who had first spoken to the Lord about the matter—"and you, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon"—and sun and moon stood still! We speak that which, to many nowadays, only causes ridicule, but to our minds it seems ridiculous to doubt that God listens to the voice of men. When men are made in the image of God—twice-made and so made His children—surely their believing prayers shall move the heart of their heavenly Father! You remember what Christ said to His disciples, in His Sermon on the Mount? "If you, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in Heaven give good things to them that ask Him?" Of course He will listen to the voices of those whom He so dearly loves! You know, Beloved, that there is power in prayer.

When Believers meet together and unitedly cry, "Lord, revive Your work. Put more power into the ministry. Make the hearts of Your people to be more full of love and zeal. Save the ungodly. Awaken the unconcerned!"—It will be done. It is not with us merely a matter of hope that earnest prayer will bring blessing to the Church and to the world—it is a matter of fact it must be so! The laws of Nature may be suspended, but laws that appertain to God's own Character for truth and faithfulness cannot be suspended. He would not be God if He did not answer prayer! His own promises bind Him to do so. O you that doubt Him, try Him! If any of you question the power of prayer, see what has already been done by it. As for you who are the servants of the living God and who have access to His Mercy Seat, you have but to ask and to receive—you have but to seek and to find—you have but to knock and the door shall be opened to you! Brothers and Sisters in Christ, join one another in praying Christ to come into our midst! Do pray for a blessing, pray mightily for it—and rest not day nor night till that blessing comes!

We must, however, add to prayer *the waiting for that blessing that we seek*. After Christ had ascended to Heaven, His disciples went to an upper room and waited there till the Holy Spirit was given to them on the day of Pentecost. They did not sit there thinking that perhaps the promised blessing might come, or might not come, but there they waited till they heard the "sound from Heaven as of a rushing mighty wind" and the "cloven tongues, like as of fire, sat upon each of them." So let us come together in our assemblies *expecting the blessing* which the Lord has promised, for the blessing will certainly come if we believingly expect it. "Open your mouth wide," says God, "and I will fill it!" Oh, for the capacity to believe God, for assuredly God will never dishonor our faith!

And then, to our expectation, we must add *the opening of our own hearts to receive the blessing*. We want the Savior to bless us and He says, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with Me." He is ready to bless you, Beloved—are you ready to be blessed by Him? O you that love Him, fling wide the doors of your heart and ask Him to come in! He has bought you with His heart's blood—will you not give Him your heart's best love? He is Himself your Beloved, your Husband, your All-in-All, so treat Him not as a stranger. Let Him not stand and knock any longer, but open wide the door and bid Him come in! Is it your will, dear Brothers and Sisters, to receive Him? Do you really want Him? Do you long for more of Him? You will have to be very prayerful and very careful if He does come to you, for He is a jealous lover—and when He dwells in the heart, He looks with severe eyes upon anything contrary to His will that is done by His own dear ones—just as a king will tolerate in a stranger what he would not endure from a courtier. I am afraid we sometimes pray for sanctification and do not really wish for it—and I am also afraid that we sometimes ask for a great blessing and do not really wish for it. Do you believe that Christ can come to us and bless us? Are you living as if you expected Him to come to you? If so, when He

comes you will be overawed by the majesty of His Presence—and you will say with John, “It is the Lord.” As we hear of blessing in the Sunday school, we shall say, “It is the Lord.” As we hear of the work of Grace in the Bible classes, we shall say, “It is the Lord.” And at every Church Meeting, as we hear the stories of those who have been brought to believe in Jesus, we shall say, “It is the Lord,” for no one else could have worked so blessed a work in our midst!

I wish I knew how to put this subject before you so that every believing heart would be affected by it to the highest possible degree—but I do not—and therefore, as we are coming to the Communion Table, I will try to use the sacred feast to stir up you who are serving Christ to pray for more of His Presence. You have here before you the memorials of His love to you. He gave His body to be broken for you, His heart to be pierced for you. Has Christ done all this for you and will you not do much for Him? You are saved, your sins are covered, you are His dear child—then will you not spend and be spent for Him? If the Master were to come and stand here tonight instead of me—and show you His pierced hands and feet and then were to call you, His own people, up, one by one and put such questions as these to you, (I will give you the questions directly)—I wonder how you would feel? You would come up these stairs dazzled with His beauty and overwhelmed with His love as He gazed upon you! And then He would say to each one of you, “My blood-bought one, what are you doing for Me? Are you feeding My sheep? Are you feeding My lambs?” I think I see you blush and hear you reply, “My dear Master, I have been with some of Your lambs this afternoon.” “But did you really feed them?” “I spent a happy hour with them.” “Well but did you feed them?” “I endeavored to do so, good Master, but I am ashamed to say that I did not feed them as I should have done.” “But did you feed them as My lambs, and as I would have fed them? Did you love them? Did you speak affectionately to them? Did you tell them about Me? Did you try to bring them to Me? Did you pray over them? Did you send them away feeling that their teacher longed that they should all know the Savior?”

Well, the Master is not here in bodily Presence and I will not put such questions to you, but I would like you to put them to yourselves and to think that you hear the Master putting them to you, even as of old He said, “Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?” I think I hear Him call up some Brother and say to Him, “You who are redeemed by My precious blood, what have you done for Me?” I think I see you blush as He says to you again, “What have you done for Me?” At last you say, “I am a member of the Church.” “But what have you done for Me?” “I sometimes put something into the offering box.” “But what have you done for Me?” He shows His hands, lays bare His side and says, “I suffered this for you—what have you done for Me?” I fear that there are some members of this Church who would not like to be put to such a test as that! And for my own part, I would desire to say to the Master, “Give me a few more years in which to serve You better and give me more Grace that I may be more diligent in the service that You have allotted to me.” And I pray you, be-

loved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, if you feel that you must present the same prayer, make this your solemn resolution that, by His Spirit's help, you will lay yourselves out—body, soul and spirit—for His dear sake.

But, alas, there are some of you who do not love Him at all! Some of you to whom the Christ of God is quite a stranger. Oh, that your hearts were changed! For remember that He will soon come in His Glory and all His holy angels with Him! And you who will not now kiss the silver scepter of Mercy that He holds out to you in the preaching of the Gospel, must then feel the weight of that iron rod of Justice with which He will break the ungodly and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessels! Be wise, therefore, and trust the Savior now! The Lord grant that you may do so and then, having trusted Him for yourself, may you serve Him with all your heart and soul as long as you live on this earth—and then go to join that great multitude which no man can number of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues who stand before the Throne of God and before the Lamb—forever ascribing their salvation to His Grace!

Have you ever heard the story of the poor man, in deep distress of mind, who one night dreamed a dream? He found himself outside the gates of Heaven and he sat down and wept, for he longed to enter. Presently he heard sweet music and saw a company of people approaching with palm branches in their hands. He asked who they were and one of them said that they were the noble army of martyrs coming to take their thrones. Then he wept much and said, "I cannot enter with you." While he sat mourning, he heard the trumpet sound, again, and another company came along singing, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain." He said to them, "Who are you?" They replied, "We are the goodly fellowship of the Prophets and Apostles." And he wept again, for he said, "I cannot enter with you." Presently another company came, chanting the praises of the Grace of God. And he said, "Who are you?" They answered, "We are the preachers of the Word, and the deacons and elders of the Church." Again he said, "I cannot enter with you." He sat down and wept till, by-and-by, he saw a larger company coming, marching like an exceedingly great army, and singing sweetly as they came. In the very front rank was the woman that was a sinner, with her rich voice leading the song. And near her was the thief who, at the last, had prayed, "Lord, remember me." They came along right jubilantly and he asked them, "Who are you?" And they answered, "We are the company of great sinners, saved by great mercy." At once he said, "I can go in with you!"

And, Brothers and Sisters, that is the company to which you and I belong! And when we enter Heaven, they will welcome us just as heartily as they did the martyrs, the Prophets and the Apostles! Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners—and when sinners repent, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God, and joy in the heart of God, Himself, because they have sought His pardoning mercy! If any of you are not saved, it is not because there is any lack of mercy in the heart of God! If

you perish, it is not for want of an open door set before you! So come in while you may!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 21.**

Verse 1. *After these things Jesus showed Himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and on this wise showed He Himself.* May every one of you, my fellow disciples, realize that Jesus is showing Himself to you! He is only to be seen in His own Light. He must show Himself to us, or else we shall never see Him.

2. *There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of His disciples.* He had told them to go into Galilee and gave them the promise, "There shall you see Me." So now they were by the Galilean Lake. They were keeping their appointment with Christ and as He always keeps His appointment with His people, He was there to meet them as He had promised.

3. *Simon Peter said unto them, I am going fishing. They said unto him, We will go with you.* Their Master had told them to wait, but they could not wait. Surely when they were in Galilee by His command, they might have trusted Him to supply their needs, but their faith was slack, so Peter said, "I am going fishing," and the others were much of the same mind—waiting had become weary work, as it often does with our faint hearts—so they said, "We will go with you."

3. *They went forth, and entered immediately into a ship; and that night they caught nothing.* As is generally the case with us in our will-work and will-worship. When we are not guided of God, but go entirely according to our own mind and will it will be thus with us, also. Men attempt some business speculation without asking guidance of God and they make a miserable failure of it, so that it might be written of them as of the disciples, "That night they caught nothing."

4. *But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus.* They were thinking of fishing, so they saw boats, nets and the sea. If they had been thinking of Jesus, they would have looked for Him—and when He came, they would have known Him.

5. *Then Jesus said unto them, Children, have you any meat?* "Have you anything to eat?"

5. *They answered Him, No.* But that was not His fault.

6. *And He said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and you shall find.* They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it in for the multitude of fishes. He testified His Presence by crowning their exertions with His blessing. And soon they had a great catch of great fishes—a great contrast to their night of fruitless toil.

7, 8. *Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the lord, he girt his fisher's*

coat unto him, (for he was naked), and did cast himself into the sea. And the other disciples came in the little ship, (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits), dragging the net with fishes. We often come very slowly to Christ because we will drag that net with fishes. We have such a deal of care, anxiety, and trouble when we need not have any at all—and so we come slowly, “dragging the net with fishes.”

9. As soon, then, as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread. Why did they want to go fishing on their own account? Christ had all that they needed ready for them—there was the fire and there were the fish cooking on it, ready for their breakfast. It was the Lord Jesus Christ's business to provide for them and He did so.

10, 11. Jesus said unto them, Bring of the fish which you have now caught. Simon Peter went up and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three and for all there were so many, yet the net was not broken. And there lay those 153 big fishes on the beach. Christ had no need of them but perhaps He condescended to use some of them for that morning meal, as He said to Peter, “Bring of the fish which you have now caught.”

12. Jesus said unto them, Come and dine. [See Sermon #2072, Volume 35—BREAKFAST WITH JESUS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Or, “Come and break your fast after your long night's toil.” How they must have opened their eyes to see the fish ready cooked for them to eat!

12. And none of the disciples dared ask Him, Who are You? knowing that it was the Lord. “It was the Lord”—“the Lord” who had asked them if they had any food, “the Lord” who had filled the net which had previously been empty, “the Lord” who had given them His own fish from His own fire that they might have breakfast with Him! O good Master, if we have been toiling all week and have caught nothing, call us now to come and eat of that which You have, Yourself, prepared!

13-15. Jesus then came and took bread, and gave them some, and fish likewise. This is now the third time that Jesus showed Himself to His disciples after that He was risen from the dead. So when they had dined, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, Do you love Me more than these? “More than this lot of fish, these boats, these nets? You gave them all up for Me once, but now you have taken to them again—do you really love Me better than your fishing and your fish?”

15. He said unto Him, Yes, Lord; You know that I love You. He said unto him, Feed My lambs. [See Sermon #1684, Volume 28—“FEED MY LAMBS”—A SUNDAY SCHOOL SERMON—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] “Do not go after fish any more, but attend to My business—‘feed My lambs.’ The proof of your greater love to Me than to all worldly things will be found in your doing of the work which I have committed to your charge.”

16. He said to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, Do you love Me? [See Sermons #117, Volume 3—DO YOU LOVE ME? And #1281, Volume 22—“DO YOU LOVE ME?”—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

He said unto Him, Yes, Lord; You know that I love You. He said unto him, Feed My sheep. "Quit the sea. I am giving you no more business there—come now and be a pastor to My blood-bought sheep."

17. *He said unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, Do you love Me? Peter was grieved because He said unto him the third time, Do you love Me? And he said unto Him, Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.* [See Sermon #2669, Volume 46—COMFORT FROM CHRIST'S OMNISCIENCE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Thrice he had denied his Lord, so thrice he must be questioned concerning his love to the Lord whom he said he did not even know. And then for the third time he was re-commissioned by his Lord.

17-19. *Jesus said unto him, Feed My sheep. Verily, verily, I say unto you, When you were young, you gird yourself, and walked where you willed: but when you shall be old, you shall stretch forth your hands, and another shall gird you, and carry you where you would not. This spoke He, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And When He had spoken this, He said unto him, Follow Me. Peter's death was to glorify God, so he might well be content, painful though it was to be.*

20, 21. *Then Peter, turning about, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved* [See Sermon #1539, Volume 26—"THE DISCIPLE WHOM JESUS LOVED"—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] *following; which also leaned on His breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrays you? Peter seeing him said to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Our Lord never answered such a foolish, inquisitive question as this! And therefore—*

22. *Jesus said unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to you? You follow Me.* That is how Christ would answer any similar questions that we might put to Him. We need not concern ourselves so much about what is to happen to others until we have made our own calling and election sure. "What is that to you? You follow Me."

23. *Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to you? This is only one of many instances in which Christ's words have been twisted and made to mean something quite different from what He intended.*

24, 25. *This is the disciple who testifies of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true. And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written, every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.*

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

VISITS FROM THE LORD

NO. 3481

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 14, 1915.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 1, 1871.

“Therefore, that disciple whom Jesus loved said unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment (for he was naked), and plunged into the sea. But the other disciples came in the little boat; for they were not far from land (about two hundred cubits), dragging the net with fishes.”
John 21:7, 8.

UNTIL our Lord should pour out the Spirit upon His Apostles, they had to wait. It was expedient for them that He should go away and ascend into His Glory. Then when He had received gifts for men and had distributed those gifts, they would be able to go forth in the power of the Spirit, preaching the Gospel. Until then they must wait, and they must not be idle. Therefore they returned to their ordinary trades and once again the little boat plowed the familiar waves of the sea of Tiberias. There they had many old associations brought up before them. And there, moreover, on the memorable night of which we are now to speak, they learned a lesson which would be instructive to them throughout the whole course of their fishing for men! Their condition and position were very much like our own. We, as a Christian Church, are engaged in the great soul-fishery, seeking by any means to bring some to Christ. Out on the dark waters of the Dead Sea of Sin we seek to bring the souls of men, *not to destroy them*, but that Christ may save them! This is to be the Church's perpetual work. She must never cease from it. For this purpose is she kept in the world and if she does not answer this purpose, she is faulty before her Lord.

Just now we are much in the condition of these Apostles. There is upon some of our spirits a dissatisfaction with the success that we have had of late—in fact, a dissatisfaction with all the success that either we or the Christian Church generally have had for years past. We cannot quite say, with the Apostles, that we have caught nothing. Glory be to God, there are thousands of souls that have been won to Christ in this house, and in many other places where Christ is preached! But compared with the great mass of mankind—compared with the world that “lies in the Wicked One—we might almost say, “We have caught nothing.” Relatively, it comes to very, very, very little—and the Gospel-fishery does not grow, today, as it did at the time of Pentecost, or as it has done at

other seasons when God has granted revival and refreshing from His Presence. We are, therefore, like the disciples—we are engaged in the fishing, but we are not satisfied with the results! Now we know what they, perhaps, at the time forgot—that there is only one thing that can change the aspect of affairs, and that is for Jesus to appear in our midst and speak to us, giving us the word of direction and, also, Himself acting as the attractive power to the souls of men, that they may come to the Gospel net! I may go round to all our agencies, if Jesus is absent, and ask them, “What is your success?” The Sunday school will have to say, “We have taken nothing.” The Evangelists at the street corners will have to say, “We have taken nothing.” The young men sent forth from the college to preach will have to return the same sorrowful answer! And alas, for us who stand here and preach to this congregation, we, too, shall have to say, if the Master is not with us, “We have toiled all night, but we have taken nothing.”

Oh, sorrowful account to have to render to God and our fellow men! Yet such it must be. But if Jesus shall come, how changed it all shall be! Then shall the preacher become wise! He shall know where and how to cast the net! He shall select those topics that shall stir the soul—that shall fire the heart! And then, Jesus being present, men shall be as willing to receive the Gospel as the preacher is to preach it! It shall be as much the will of the fish to get into the net, as it is of the fishermen to cast the net! Oh, may the Master come to us! I believe He has come. I think I see Him. Some of my Brothers and Sisters tell me they already perceive it. He has never been entirely absent from us, but we need Him to speak a mighty word, a majestic word—a word that shall compel, by sweet constraints of Grace, tens of thousands of souls to come to Him and live!

Now tonight my one subject is to the Church here, and to God’s people elsewhere, who are in the same state of hope and anxiety. I want to speak about Jesus Christ’s coming. The all-importance of it you all feel. You all, I trust, as workers for Christ, desire it. Now, Beloved, let us notice, first, when Jesus comes—

I. WHO WAS THE FIRST TO SEE HIM.

The first to see Jesus was John. He said, “It is the Lord.” The other disciples perceived Him by-and-by. We know they did, for it is written, “Knowing that He was the Lord”—but the first to see Him was John. What do we gather from this?

Why, first, *that the brightest eyes in the Church are the eyes of those who love most.* They perceive Christ first who have most affection for Him! If He is gone, these are the first to sigh. If He returns, these are the first to rejoice with unspeakable joy. Knowledge is said to open the eyes, but as for me, the dust of many learned tomes has often beclouded them. It is thought that men of education will be the first to perceive the Savior, but it was not so in the Savior’s day, for these things were hidden from the wise and prudent—but they were revealed unto babes! Let love be

your education. Grow in love. To love is better than to know, for a man may know, and only eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil—and perish by it—but he that loves, obeys, and he shall eat of the Tree of Life and dwell in the midst of the Paradise of God! Blessed John! Your head had been on the Savior's bosom and, therefore, your eyes were like the eagle's. No angel, one would think, could see as well as Milton's angel, Uriel, that dwelt in the midst of the sun. He was familiar with the light. He dwelt in the full blaze of the orb of day—in the very midst of it! And, "He that dwells in love dwells in God." And "God is Light," so he who dwells in the Light of God sees all things. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." The heart that is purified with the celestial flame of Divine Love is the heart that can see God!

But note that in the text John does not describe himself as loving Christ. Much more humbly and instructively does he put it. "That disciple who loved Jesus said unto Peter, It is the Lord!" No, that is my misreading of it! It is, "That disciple whom Jesus loved." Oh, yes, and that is the way that Grace in the heart always teaches us to read it! It is not so much that we love Him, as that He loved, and still loves us! Superabundant love in the heart of the Man, Christ Jesus, towards that choice and chosen spirit had made John a loving disciple. He had not loved so much if Christ had not loved more. He would have told you if you had questioned him about his love, as Peter did—"The Lord who knows all, knows that I love Him." But if you had spoken about Christ's love to him, ah, then his face would have brightened, his eyes would have flashed with delight and he would have said, "He loves me. Ah, and I have had many a sweet word from Him. And my head has often been healed of all its aches when I have laid it down upon His breast." He would have ascribed it all to Christ's love and had little to say of his own! So, Brothers and Sisters, if the love of God is shed abroad in your hearts, you will be quick to see the same. It will not be so much your love as His love that makes you quick of the eye. Then will your eyes become like the eyes of the spouse in the song, "As the eyes of doves by the rivers of water, washed with milk and fitly set." Now the dove, no doubt, can see its home from a very, very long way. Let the pigeon loose and it flies to its dove-cote at once. Ah, those whose eyes Christ has "washed with milk and fitly set" can see their Lord afar off, and they fly to Him with swift and clipping wings—nor are they satisfied till they roost once more at His feet or on His bosom.

Thus, then, those that are quick to see the Savior are those who love Him—better still, those whom He loves much.

Now note that even John appears to have *perceived the Presence of Christ very much through His work*. As soon as the fishes were taken in the net, then John said, "It is the Lord." And, Brothers and Sisters, if we want to be assured of the Master's Presence in the Church, it must be by the results! I am ashamed of some Christians who are afraid of anything like a holy excitement, or a gracious revival. If there are two or three add-

ed to the Church in a year, they say, "This is the finger of God," but if there are many, then straightway they begin to question! Now I think this is not reasonable, for surely when there are great fishes, a hundred and fifty and three, then we may say, "It is the Lord." We may be pretty sure when there are so many brought that God is at work there, and we may perceive the Presence of Christ. I was noticing the other day some statistics that have been given of certain revivals in different districts of the United States. It has been said that those gathered in during a period of revival are usually an injury to the Church, and more frequently backslide than any other—but taking a range of some eight years in certain churches, it was found that of those persons added during seasons of refreshing from God, the percentage who afterwards backslid was much less than—scarcely, indeed, one half—the percentage of backslider in those churches which had not experienced revival, but had only grown at the slow plodding rate which some of our "sound" Brothers and Sisters so greatly admire! It was found that instead of being worse material, they were better material—and that these stood the fire even better than any other. This I know—that I would like to run the risk—I would like to run the blessed risk of seeing thousands coming forward to profess their faith in Christ! 'Tis true, we will have some, no doubt, that will turn out to be hypocrites, but I would not refuse some chaff if I could get ten times as much wheat! Who will give up a gold mine because there is quartz in it? Who is it that will shut up a coal pit because there happen to be some slates amidst the coal? No, blessed Master, come! and let us have the net full to bursting if You will—and then we shall say—"It is the Lord!" His great works reveal Him even to the eyes of love!

Note, further, that *the man who first discovered that Christ was present did not long keep the secret*, but, turning round to his neighbor in the boat, he whispered to him, "It is the Lord." Ah, and this is a lesson to us. If any of you that are the King's favorites and have close fellowship with Him, should perceive that He is in the Church, oh, tell it to us, for we are of your mind! We count the King's Company to be the most grand blessing out of Heaven! Whisper to some of us, for we shall be so rejoiced to hear the blessed news! But John did not tell all of them. He told it to Peter, for Peter was very near to him. I think John had been partly the means of Peter's falling. I think so. You notice how John tells us and no one else does—that he was a kinsman to one who kept the door and he took Peter in? And I fancy that he used to smite himself about that, and say, "I ought not to have run the risk of taking Peter there. I ought not to have put him where he would have those questions asked." And he seems always to stick hard and fast to Peter and to be with him, because though he, of course, had none of Peter's sin, he felt that somehow, accidentally or unwittingly, he had led Peter into the place where he sinned—and so he loved him very much and he gave him the first intimation of the good news. Said he to him, "Brother Peter, it is the Lord." Oh, if you perceive the Lord, tonight—if you get a good word from His lips—have not

you some Beloved one that you can tell—one, perhaps, that has been a backslider and is now returning to the Lord with broken bones? Oh, tell him! Tell him! Tell him at once, “The Lord is here amidst us. Our Beloved stands and shows His wounds and His pierced hands. Look, my Brother! Look to Him and rejoice with me!” Ah, but you may also tell it to whomever you will, for this is a piece of good news that nobody need ever keep secret! Tell it! Tell it wherever you have the opportunity—that Jesus Christ is visiting His Church! Bid poor sinners come and look to Him whom they have pierced, and live! When you have told it to some, tell it to many more and bid them communicate the blessed tidings that Jesus, mighty to save, still waits to receive sinners and to blot out their transgressions—

**“Tell it unto sinners—tell—
Jesus Christ can save from Hell,”**

and is present, revealing Himself to His Church and doing wonders in the congregation!

Thus much upon those who first see Him. Now a few words upon—

II. THOSE WHO FIRST GET AT JESUS CHRIST.

Peter—quick, hot, impulsive—no sooner hears that it is the Lord than he buckles on his coat, plunges into the sea, and swims to shore to reach his Master! They were not all Peters—it was a mercy they were not. But there was one Peter and it was mercy that there was. Nobody may blame Peter. Nobody may blame those who did not follow Peter. They were quite as right who stayed in the boat as Peter was, who swam to the shore! But I know that wherever Jesus Christ is truly present, there will be some bold noble spirits that will make a dash to get at Him. They love Him—they will be among the first to reach Him—to enjoy His Presence. Yet if any of them feel moved tonight to do some deed of enthusiasm, let me take them by the hand a moment. Peter would reach his Master, but he first girds on his coat. There is reverence in Peter, though there is haste and enthusiasm. He will not come before Christ all in a careless manner—unclothed. He has too much respect for His Master. O Soul, if you would serve the Lord, serve Him with holy fear, for though He is very near to you, He is *God*—and you are man. Take off your shoes when you would serve Him, for the place where you stand is holy ground! Be not rash in your worship, nor in your vows, nor in your actions! Gird yourself and then serve Him.

But that once done, Peter commits himself boldly to the waves! Sink or swim, he will be at his Master’s side and so he strikes out right gallantly for the shore. Nothing can stop him. He impetuously gets through the breakers and the surf, and is at his Master’s feet! Oh, how I wish there were some Peters in this congregation, true lovers of Christ, who, feeling that Christ is come among us, would say, “For the love I bear His name, I will be one of the first to serve Him! Here I wrap myself in the garment of zeal. It shall be my cloak and from this day I will give up all for Christ. I will serve Him beyond all others if I can, and if any can exceed me, it

shall be my lack of power that makes me second, but not my lack of will!" It would not do for me to say who Peter is, nor to suggest to a man who is not Peter that he should act as Peter would, but I have noticed that every so often in the Church there will rise up men and women who will say, "We will consecrate ourselves unto the Lord." Sometimes they do it by going forth into the mission field. Perhaps I have a young Peter here who, like Carey of old, and Marshman, and that band of heroes, may feel in his soul the fire burning and say, "I must, and I will preach Christ in the regions beyond." Possibly, however, it may be at home that the same gifts and Graces may be exercised, and I have one here, perhaps, who says—oh, I would I had many hundreds who are saying—"God helping us, we will enter upon something which, though it is apparently beyond our strength, and rather venturesome, yet shall be done! We will plunge into the sea to reach our Master. We will brave anything so that we may get to Him!"

Ah, there are those who will always repress anything like Divine enthusiasm and yet, mark you, the brightest ages of the Church have been those in which men consecrated to God have risen above the dictates of common prudence and have dared for Christ what others of a cooler temperament could have not dared! Oh, may the Master send the sacred fire into this congregation! I shall never rest content until I have going out of this Church many who count not their lives dear to them to preach the Gospel among the heathen! I wonder how it is this has not broken out among us before? Is it my ministry that is faulty in this respect? It may be so. Then will I cry to Heaven to be taught better. But at Hermansberg, under Pastor Harms, the whole village seemed to be moved with a desire to carry Christ's Gospel to Africa—and they emigrated in shiploads to become missionaries there! Of course, many said that Harms was infatuated. Blessed infatuation! May it fall upon many of Christ's ministers! The Moravian Church in years gone by had scarcely a member who was not a missionary. When they joined the Church, they gave themselves up to the Church and to Christ. Oh, when shall we come to this—if not all of us, yet, at any rate, the Peters who shall throw themselves into the sea that they may get to their Master? Knowing that it is the Lord who is in their midst, they shall be able to do venturesome deeds, brave deeds, for the glory of His name!

But I will not dwell on that, but just mention next how *the rest came to Christ*. We have seen who first saw Him. Afterwards they all saw Him. We have seen who first reached Him. Afterwards they all reached Him and I think the second did no worse than the first. For how came the rest of the disciples? In a little boat—I suppose in their fishing vessel, dragging the net after them. I feel that to be my particular department and suppose the lot of most of my dear Brothers here. We are tied to this Church, and we have the net. And though I would gladly enter often into fellowship with Christ by a bold dash, somehow or other I generally have to drag a net after me! I want to commune with Christ, but I have about a

thousand souls that I have to preach to on the coming Sabbath. I want to rejoice in the Lord with unspeakable joy, but often get cumbered with much serving. There is this poor soul in trouble, and that poor heart who needs consolation. Well, well, if the Master bids us drag the net, we won't leave it, but keep a hold of it and if we come a little more slowly, nevertheless, if we are doing His bidding, our slow pace shall be as accepted as Peter's swimming! And many of you, dear Friends, would be very wrong if you were to give up your common callings. You are like the fishermen with the net—you have to drag it. If you should say, "I will give myself up to Christ. I will row to shore. I shall renounce my business. I shall leave all my earthly callings"—I think, unless I was quite certain you were a Peter, I would say, "Brother, go back! Drag the net. It must be brought to shore. There are your children. Oh, what a care they need and how wrong you would be if you neglected them!"

I remember a man, whose children were most neglected, who used to frequently go out preaching in the country villages. I know that once or twice he was spoken to about it, but he never mended matters. While he would be preaching, his children would be in the streets! He lived to see them grow up reprobates—and the sin was at his door. Stick to Christ! Drag your net and bring your family after you. Let this be your vehement desire—that your children shall be brought to Him! Or you have servants, or a little district in some place in London. Don't run away from your work! A Brother wrote to me some time ago telling me how much distressed he was in his mind. He said he thought he should never be happy till he got out of business. I said, "Don't run away from Satan. Fight the devil where you are! Tell the devil you will grapple with him where you are, and you mean to beat him right there." Oh, if God in His Providence has made you a servant, very well—beat the devil as a servant! And if you are a tradesman, don't say, "I cannot keep this trade and honor God." Do not let it be said that our God is the God of the hills and not the God of the valleys, and that it is only certain people in certain places who can honor Him! No, in every place you can honor your Master! Keep to your net. *Drag it to Christ, however.* Oh, what a drag it will be, sometimes, to bring it Christ's way!—all the business and all the work you have to do—to do all for Christ! Yet this is true religion—to sanctify not only the vessels of the altar, but the pots and the bells that are upon the horses—to make everything holiness unto the Lord! God grant us Grace to do this! May He send us here and there a Peter and, at the same time, may He keep the bulk of you, while steadfast in your callings and diligent in business, to be "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." Oh, blessed Church that shall thus unanimously be drifting towards Christ and be heartily seeking after fellowship with the dear Redeemer—some impetuously, all industriously—and all successfully!

Now this leads me a little farther on. Supposing we should reach the Savior, as I trust we may, each man after His own order—

III. WHAT WILL BE THE RESULT OF COMING TO CHRIST?

Three results. The first will be *refreshment*. He will say to us, "Come and dine." Ah, how well fed are those whom Christ feeds! When we go up to the House of Prayer and look to the pulpit, we are disappointed. But if we go and look to the hills from where comes our help, we are never disappointed! What can the pastor do unless the superior Shepherd shall give us the daily food? I might well say to hungry souls, as the King of Israel said to the woman in Samaria, when she spoke of their having eaten her child in famine, and asked the king to help her—"Woman, if the Lord does not help you, how shall I help you?" And so might we all, with the most anxious desire to do good, yet reply, "If the Lord does not help you, how can we help you?" No, Brothers and Sisters, it is not in the power of ordinances, any more than of ministers, to feed souls! There is nothing in the bread and wine of the Communion Table that can spiritually nourish us. There you have bread—no more—wine—no more. It is only when, through these, *you get to Jesus*—when you pass through the doorway of the outward and get into the inward, into the *spiritual*—it is only then that your souls are entertained! And once get there, His banqueting table is better than that of Ahasuerus! There is no such feast as that which Jesus gives—of "fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees, well refined." By your enjoyments in the past, my Brothers and Sisters—by those ravishing moments when your souls have burned within you with intense delight—ask Him to come to you again! Beseech Him to favor you tonight with this refreshment. And mark you, that prayer need not be a selfish one, for all the strength that is gained in communion with Christ will afterwards be spent in the service of Christ!

But again. When the disciples had all come to our Lord, and had dined, the next thing was *examination*. It was addressed to Peter especially—but it must have been a lesson to all the rest of them—"Do you love Me?" The very first question that we should ask ourselves concerning our Christianity is this, "Do you love Me?" The second is, "Do you love Me?" The third is, "Do you love Me?" Answer that, and all is answered! The old orator said that the first essential of eloquence was delivery or action. The second was delivery. The third was delivery. So we will say that the first essential of a truly healthy Christianity is to love Christ! And the second is to love Christ! And the third is to love Christ! Our Lord would not talk of commonplace things at that time. He selected a vital topic, and this is always vital—"Do you love Me? Do you love Me? Do you love Me?" Beloved Brothers and Sisters, I hope you will always be sound in the faith but then that is little comparatively to what it is to be sound in loving Christ! I trust, Brothers and Sisters, you will always be holy in life—but that can only be as you love Him in the heart. Out of the heart the life proceeds! He is the fountain—our actions are but the streams. Do, then, pass the question round among you, "Do you love Me?" I desire to put it to myself. I beg you to put it to yourselves. Pause a moment. Do you love Christ? What say you? With a true love? With a love that is such

as He demands, that is above the love of mother or of child? “Do you love Me? You are coming to My Table, you are baptized—you are a member of the Church—but do you love Me?” Is it so? I trust you can reply, “Lord, You know all things: You know that I love You.”—

“Yes, I love You and adore—

Oh, for Grace to love You more!”

Well, then, lastly, after coming to the Savior, who had given them refreshment and caused them to examine themselves, the next thing was that it ensured for them *commissions of service*. Before the Lord blesses a Church, He *prepares* it for the blessing. A number of sailors wrecked on a desert island are thirsting for water, but suppose a shower comes at once—it will be a wasted blessing! They must be so thirsty that they are led to put up an apparatus for catching the water when it comes—otherwise the water comes too soon and is lost! I love to see a Church in such state of agony for God’s Grace that it has, as it were, the reservoirs ready to hold the Grace when it comes! “They that pass through the Valley of Baca make it a well.” They “make it a well.” The water does not rise in the well. “The rain also fills the pools.” Yet they dig the wells to hold the rain—and the rain comes. Remember that notable incident when Israel and Judah were engaged against the King of Edom! The Prophet said, as he took his harp and began to play by Inspiration, “Make this valley full of ditches!” And they wondered why—but they dug the trenches and made the troughs all along the valley. By-and-by, the water came and filled the valley, and the host was refreshed! We need to make this valley full of ditches. We need, as a Church, to be ready and waiting for the blessing!

You see, Christ prepared Peter and all the Apostles by saying to them, “Feed My lambs. Feed My sheep. Shepherd My flock.” And He says to you, tonight, “Are you refreshed by My Presence? Have you examined yourself and seen that you love Me? Now, then, gird up your loins and prepare for the service of the Church.” I want, Brothers and Sisters, to see among us men and women who are looking after Christ’s sheep and lambs! I hope it is not so everywhere, but I met the other day with a good Brother who has attended for a long time this Tabernacle, to whom nobody has ever spoken yet, as he told me. I do not know where he sits—at least, I half think I do, but I shall not tell you, because then somebody or other would find out who he was. But I will suppose he sits anywhere you like, all around you, and your own consciences shall judge. Now ought it to be so? Ought a person to come here Sunday after Sunday, and no one ever give him a brotherly salutation, or say a word concerning his soul? Oh, that you were looking out in the neighborhoods where you live, and in the part of this building where you sit, for opportunities of doing good! I know that there are persons who are longing to be spoken to, and they wonder why you do not speak to them! They are Christ’s lambs and they need carrying in some kindly bosom. Oh, Look after them and help them! You do not know how half a word said in Christ’s

name during your journeying about your business may be life from the dead! As it is said by Herbert, “a verse may strike him whom a sermon flies.” So a little word from you may be effectual where the most earnest public ministry might fail!

Oh, Beloved, the Lord is not slack! We are slack! If we have not a blessing, we are straitened somewhere, but it cannot be in Him! We are straitened in our own hearts and sympathies. What is that memorable text of the Prophet, “Bring you all the tithes into the storehouse that there may be meat in My house; and prove Me now herewith, says the Lord of Hosts, if I will not pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it.” We are not to say that we are proving the Lord to give us a blessing because we pray. The test He puts us to is bringing the tithes into the storehouse—that is to say, what is God’s due! Am I giving less of my substance than I ought to give? Am I giving less of my time than I ought to give? Am I giving less of my talent than I ought to give? If I withhold anything that is really God’s tithe, I am not proving God! But when we are all giving and doing to our utmost, then we prove God and we shall see whether He will not open the windows of Heaven and pour us out a blessing such as we shall not have room enough to receive!

I charge you, my Beloved—you who have been the flock of my care these many years—remember the history that God has given us during these 17 years. We were very few when we began, but there was a living seed among us, and there was mighty prayer—and a blessing came. “By terrible things in righteousness” God answered us! But the answer did come. What Prayer Meetings we had at Park Street! How often we sat down and wept under the Divine Influence! Thank God, the Holy Spirit overshadowed us! What ardor there was among you, then, and how many souls were brought to Christ! Since then He has led us on from strength to strength. He has never failed us! Never is this place empty or deserted. Crowds still come to listen to the Word of God! Oh, shall we not have a blessing as we had it before? I trust we may. And we shall if you are all, to the full measure of your obligations, engaged in the service of your blessed Master and seeking strength from on high! By the hands that were nailed for you—by the feet that were pierced for you—by the head that was crowned with thorns for you—by the heart that poured out blood and water for you—by the Christ who died for you—I implore and beseech you, lay yourselves out upon the altar of God, and say, “Henceforth, for us to live is Christ. Christ is all. We desire to say continually, ‘The Lord be magnified.’”

Oh, that some here who know little enough about this might desire to know it! Poor Soul, if you desire Christ, Christ desires you! And if you will have Him tonight, you shall have Him! If you believe that Jesus is Christ, and have put your trust in Him as your Savior, you are saved! Look to Him now! God help you to do it, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 24:13-35.**

Verses 13-15. *And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass, that while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus, Himself drew near, and went with them. Where two talk of heavenly things they shall not be long without a third! Jesus loves holy company, and He will join Himself to those who in their conversation join themselves to Him.*

16, 17. *But their eyes were held that they should not know Him. And He said unto them, What manner of communications are these that you have, one to another, as you walk, and are sad? The first part of that question some professors might be ashamed to answer, "What manner of communications are these that you have, one to another, as you walk?" It is not always that all Sunday talk is Sabbath talk—not always that we converse as we should upon the things of God. We are, many of us, blameworthy here.*

18, 19. *And one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto Him, Are You only a stranger in Jerusalem, and have not known the things which are come to pass there in these days? And He said unto them, What things? And they said unto Him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a Prophet mighty in deed and in word before God and all the people. Just as a schoolmaster, though he knows more than the children, yet asks them questions to see what they know. So did the Savior, "What things?...And they said to Him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a Prophet mighty in word and deed." I ought to have said, "in deed and word." You see my mistake. That is how we put it, "word and deed," for our words go first, but with Christ, the practical comes first, and then commences the doctrinal.*

20-24. *And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and have crucified Him. But we trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, today is the third day since these things were done. Yes, and certain women, also of our company, made us astonished, which were early at the sepulcher; and when they found not His body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that He was alive. And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulcher, and found it even so as the women had said: but Him they saw Him not. They made out a very clear case against their own unbelief here. They had the evidence of the women, and they had the evidence of the men of their own company. The women, they knew were honest. About their own company they could have no doubt, but yet they did not draw the inference which was clear*

enough, namely, that Jesus had risen and that what He said He was, He had proven Himself to be.

25, 26. *Then He said unto them. O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the Prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His Glory? Is not this just what He said He would do?*

27, 28. *And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. And they drew near unto the village, where they went: and He made as though He would have gone further. Never had they had a shorter walk in their lives! His holy talk had made the journey seem as nothing, and sorry they were to see the village—and especially when they found that their Companion had an idea of going further.*

29. *But they constrained Him saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening and the day is far spent. And He went in to tarry with them. O wise disciple, when you have your Master to hold Him! “I held Him,” says the spouse; “I held Him, and I would not let Him go.” So may it be with us.*

30, 31. *And it came to pass, as He sat at dinner with them, He took bread, and blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him; and He vanished out of their sight. Sometimes when you do not remember a friend who has greatly changed, or from whom you have been long apart, some old familiar sign will bring it all back and as with a rush of memory, you know him at once! Now if this were an ordinary meal, as perhaps it was, Jesus was so in the habit of giving thanks that they knew Him by that. I wish we knew every Christian by the same sign. Or if this were, indeed, a celebration of His own sacred festival, then again they knew, for is not this the sign between Christ and His people? And is not this Table the place where Jesus meets His Beloved? “And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him.” But they knew Him to see Him no more that night.*

32-35. *And they said, one to the other, Did not our hearts burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures? And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, Saying, the Lord is risen, indeed, and has appeared to Simon. And they told what things were done in the way, and how He was known of them in breaking of bread. Did they go to their beds? The day was far spent—late traveling was dangerous in Israel. Ah, dangerous or not, they are so overwhelmed with joy that they must go and communicate what they had seen!*

—Adapted from the *C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

BREAKFAST WITH JESUS

NO. 2072

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

“Jesus said unto them, Come and dine. And none of the disciples dared ask Him, Who are you? knowing that it was the Lord.”

Or, as we have it in the Revised Version,

*“Jesus said unto them, Come and break your fast. And none of the disciples dared enquire of Him, Who are you? knowing that it was the Lord.”
John 21:12.*

THE Lord Jesus is thoughtful of bodily wants. In His earlier days He fed multitudes of people, on two grand occasions, with bread and fish. And now that He has died and risen from the dead and is in the body of His Glory, He still thinks of the hungering bodies of men and calls to the fishermen, “Children, have you any meat?” Finding that they have nothing, He makes a breakfast for them. “Come and break your fast” falls very condescendingly from His lips and it proves to us how He cares for the temporal needs of the poor.

Here is warrant for the servants of God endeavoring to feed the hungry crowd. We are not to buy them with so-called charities, for that our Lord never did. Loaves and fishes are a very poor spiritual bait and catch none of the right sort of fish. The feeding must come because they need it and for the love of God and with no ulterior aim. As the Savior fed the people, so, according to our ability, we may attempt to do without fear that we shall therein be going beyond our legitimate province.

Our Lord and Savior was particularly mindful in this case of the wants of His own people. These seven Apostles were supplied by His care. If any of you are in needy and trying circumstances, catch this fact and be encouraged. He that said to the seven, “Come and break your fast,” will not forget you in the time of your need. On your part, now is the time for the exercise of faith. And on His part, now is the season for the display of His power. If you look to your fellow men perhaps they may fail to help you—they are far too apt to give the cold shoulder to those who are not well-to-do. But if you look to Him, you shall have your prayer answered.

“In some way or other the Lord will provide.” I cannot tell how, any more than I can tell you how our Lord provided that fire of coals, or how he procured the fish which was broiling on the fire. But there was the fire and there was the fish. And so, in the Lord’s own way, it shall be seen that the Lord will provide. “Trust in the Lord and do good; so shall you dwell in the land and verily you shall be fed.” He that taught you to say, “Give us this day our daily bread” did not teach you an empty phrase.

O you whose need presses so closely as even to make you acquainted with hunger, behold how Jesus pities you and look to Him to aid you. For

He is the same now as He was by the lake of Galilee. Go a step further. As Jesus is so careful of the condition of His people that He will have their bodies fed, we may be sure that He will have their souls nourished. I said to myself, as I considered my return among you, "The first thing we will do when I get home shall be to feed the servants of God, that they may be in good working order." Our Lord began this third manifestation of Himself not with prayer, but with food. Much had to be said and done. But they must breakfast first.

They were to be questioned, rebuked, instructed, commissioned, warned. But they must first be fed. The essential thing that morning was a fire of coals and broiled fish and bread. For they must be put into good condition, and then they would be ready to hear what their Lord should say to them. Things that were of prime importance must yet be kept back a little while until they could bear them and profit by them. And that they could not do while they were cold and hungry. Therefore fire and food.

Now, if it was so with the body, how much more is it so with the soul? I want you, therefore, this morning, to ask the Lord to spread a table for you in the wilderness. May your song at this time be—

***"The Lord's my Shepherd, I'll not want,
He makes me to lie down
In pastures green. He leads me
There by quiet waters."***

Many things call for your earnest attention. But it will be poor haste if you rush to work without refreshing the inner man. Pause a while and feast with your Lord in order that you may be able to attend to your pressing duties.

If you had a tree to fell, you would count it no loss of time, first, to sharpen your axe. When the axe is sharp, then the tree will come down all the sooner—sharpen therefore, the axe of your mind. This morning have nothing to do but to attend to the feeding of your soul. The Lord's first miracle was at a wedding feast. And in the miracle now before us He provides a breakfast. His is no starveling Gospel, He gives us all things richly to enjoy. Hear His cry, in the ancient Song of Songs—"Eat, O Friends; drink, yes, drink abundantly, O beloved." Dear child of God believe and doubt not. Should a choice morsel come your way, partake of it with a believing confidence.

I. First, I shall invite you TO SEE THE IMPORTANCE OF A FEAST WITH JESUS. Jesus says to you, "Come and break your fast." And His words are never without the deepest meaning. See the importance of a meal with Jesus. It was peculiarly needful to these men because they were in a needy condition. They were wet, cold and hungry. A fire of coals was a fine center for them, whereat they could dry their jerseys and warm their hands. The fish, fresh from the sea and from the fire, was most suitable for their hunger. Before them Jesus spreads the old food with which He always fed the people—food pleasant and easy to digest.

Bread, with a relish of fish, was the constant menu of all our Lord's feasts. Jesus does not like to see His servants wet and cold and hungry. And so He provides for the removal of these discomforts. Depend upon it, what Jesus does not like to see is not good for us. It is not well for us to

be unhappy. If, therefore, you feel this morning, in your inmost souls, uncomfortable and much out of sorts, your Lord does not wish you to be so. The thoughts of your own misery will hinder your thoughts of Him and prevent your rendering Him good service. My Master bids me, this morning, to see to it that all hands are provided with good cheer.

Gladly, therefore, do I invite you to the fire of coals which is furnished by His glowing love. Cheerfully do I set before you the holy food of sacred Truth furnished by His Word. And I would thus fulfill His command to me, "Feed My sheep." It is important, dear Child of God, that you should be happy. It is important that you should be in a flourishing spiritual condition within. Therefore, come and break your fast with Jesus. Many a battle has been lost because the soldiers were not in good condition for the fight. Let it not be so with you. You need stamina if you are to do hard and long work for Jesus and His Truth. And there is no keeping up the stamina without heavenly food. It is important, considering the condition of many of you, that you should have a meal with Jesus at once.

Besides, they were weary with a night's fruitless toil. As I told you in reading, it was "night" and "nothing" while Jesus was away. Have I not before me some servants of God who have not seen any good following their exertions of late? They have fished for men but the nets have remained empty. It is dreary work, toiling all night and taking nothing. I know this, because I know still better the reverse of it. Oh, it is a blessed thing to have a successful season by the little river of retirement, when one is away from the great sea of the city!

In my late seclusion it has seemed to me that the fish kept coming up to my line and biting at my hook, though I had not on purpose baited it! The Lord sent me persons to receive a blessing and they had a quiet word and went on their way rejoicing. Alas, it is not always so. You may have a widespread net cast into the great sea and no end of fishes all around you and yet you may take nothing—that night's work yielded nothing but splash and haul, disappointment and fatigue. If you are in that condition, you evidently need encouragement. Times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord will be your present want. The Savior calls to you, "Come and breakfast. Leave the boat and the nets and forget the night's vain toil and come and commune with Me." Weary Worker, worried and weeping, cease your complaining and come to the fire and the food which Jesus provides for you.

You will remind me that before the breakfast the disciples had taken a great number of fish and had counted them. Just so. And that is another reason for calling them to feast with Jesus. Catching fish is a fine business, but being fed is equally needful. No fisherman can live on catching and counting. It is a very deceptive thing for a man to sustain his faith upon the success of his labors. Our tendency in a revival is to rejoice over converts, and count them "a hundred and fifty and three." It is not wrong to count your converts if Christ gives them to you—the awkward part of it is that you are apt to count in with the fish a number of frogs—I mean a sort of convert that Jesus never sent. You may, if you please, count every convert and say, "a hundred and fifty and three." But do not think that

this will nourish your own soul. You cannot sustain the life of Divine Grace upon the grace received by others.

Believe me, you must in secret draw from the Divine storehouse your personal supplies, or you will be famished. You will find it very hungry work if you try to live on catching and counting! You must be *yourself* watered, or your watering of others will dry up your soul. The most successful Evangelist, if he attempts to live on his own work, will suck up the wind. If a teacher of children, or a conductor of young men's classes makes the food of his soul to be his success in the service of God, he will feed on ashes. O you that have had grand times in preaching or teaching, do not be content with these! Grace for your office is one thing—Divine Grace for *yourselves* is another. It is well to catch fish. But even that would be sorry work if you perished with hunger yourselves.

Again, dear Friends, I think it was a very necessary thing that they should break their fast, for the Lord Jesus Christ was going to search their hearts. "When they had dined"—notice that, not till then—Jesus questioned Peter. When they had breakfasted, "Jesus said, Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?" "When they had breakfasted," not before. He would not deal with Peter, or any of them, while they had empty stomachs. I beg you to feed well this morning because you will have to be overhauled before long, and it will be well to have heart to bear it. Truth will be preached to you another day which will blow quite through you, like a mighty wind—Truth which will burn as an oven and like a refiner's fire. Get yourself in good order for Cross-examination.

Prepare your soul for the hour of trial when the business of the hour will be to answer the question, "Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?" Ah, dear Friends, if heart-searching trials come upon us when we are lean and famished, they pull us down dreadfully, for we are out of condition. But the same measure of heart-searching administered to us when soundly nourished by communion with Christ will do us much good—

***"Though cares like a wild deluge come,
And storms of sorrow fall;
When I have fed with Christ at home,
My soul defies them all."***

He that is right with God can bear to be questioned. He that is nourished and built up with heavenly food can bear to examine the grounds of his faith and to test the foundations of his hope. Such a man can face the inquiry—

***"Do I love the Lord or no?
Am I His, or am I not?"***

So, therefore, because heart-searching times will come before long, I entreat you to comfort your souls with a morsel of bread.

Remember, also, that they were about to receive a commission—they were to be told to feed Christ's lambs and sheep. But I think I hear you say, "That commission, like the examination, was directed to Peter." I know it. But I am also sure that when the Lord said to Peter, "Do you love Me?" the question went home to them all. What the Lord said to Peter especially, He was talking to them all. Have you ever felt, when a word of warning has been addressed to your friend, that it was even more applicable to yourself than to him? An indirect admonition is, to some extent,

more powerful than one personally directed. Nathanael, Thomas, James, John and the others were quite as truly addressed by the Savior as “Simon, son of Jonas.”

The arrow shot at Simon was not lost upon the sons of Zebedee. Certainly they were, all of them, to feed the lambs and pastor the sheep. And the commission which was given distinctly to Peter was meant for all the Lord’s servants. See, then, the necessity for their breaking their fast. If they are to feed others, they must be fed themselves. “The husbandman that labors must be first partaker of the fruits.” He that waters others must be himself watered. “They made me the keeper of the vineyards. But my own vineyard have I not kept,” was a very sorrowful lament. And the Lord would not have His people imitate it.

Jesus was going to give them a blessed work to do, and therefore He would put them into working order before He allotted it to them. O Brothers and Sisters, it may seem a very small thing for you to feed your own selves but it is not so. I would have you strong, yourselves, that you may labor for others. You cannot be made a blessing to those around you till you are blest yourselves. Your usefulness largely depends upon your personal joy—“The joy of the Lord is your strength.”

Once more, our Lord was going to give to one of them a warning and by that one to hint much the same heritage of trials to the others. “Another shall gird you and carry you where you would not.” Crucifixion awaited Peter, and a martyr’s death, in some form awaited all those who were present except John. This the Master lets them know. But He does not mention it till they have dined. Do not reckon upon an easy journey between here and Heaven. If you do, you will be mistaken. For “in the world you shall have tribulation.” If the Lord loves you, He will chasten you—it is the Covenant mark. Marvel not when you fall into manifold trials. But rather rejoice in this, that you have evidence herein that your Father has not forgotten you but is still training you for His Heaven.

But while we give you that warning, we invite you to come and feed on heavenly bread and refresh your souls with those spiritual luxuries whereby men are made ready for labor and suffering. “Eat that which is good and let your soul delight itself in fatness,” that you may be prepared to do that which is good and delight yourself in sacrifice. It is no trifling matter, therefore, when I say to you, in the words of the Old Version, “Come and dine,” or in the more exact phrase of the Revision, “Come and break your fast.” Thus much for the importance of the matter.

II. Secondly, I want you to SEE JESUS HIMSELF ACTING AS YOUR HOST. It was Jesus who cried to them, “Children, have you any meat?” It was He that said, “Bring of the fish which you have now caught.” It is He that gives the invitation, “Come and break your fast.” Jesus is Master of the feast. He condescends to the feast. Is it not wonderful that the Holy Lord should have communion with His faulty followers? Yet He will breakfast with us—with us who doubted Him, as Thomas did. With us who denied Him, as Peter did. With us who forsook Him and fled, as all the rest did.

He, always sinless, was now without physical necessities. He had risen from the dead and He did not need to eat, yet did He still have familiar fel-

lowship with sinful man. On one occasion He ate a piece of a broiled fish and honeycomb. And I suppose that on this occasion He also ate with them. For one does not ask others to come and dine and then Himself refrain from eating. He communed with them by that bread and by that fish. It was wonderful condescension. But will the Lord still come and commune with us? Will He, “without whom was not anything made that was made,” have fellowship with a sinful mortal like I?

Take comfort, you who are conscious of sin, from the fact that His last close companion here below was a thief! And the first that passed the pearly portal with Him and entered into His kingdom was that self-same justly executed one. Come along with you, you child of God, conscious of your gross unworthiness—come, for He invites you now to feast with Him. This shall be your nourishment, not only the food which He prepares for you, but His company, too.

Notice that Jesus, as the Host, prepared the feast. We shall never know how that fire of coals was kindled—some speak confidently of it as the work of angels. But why introduce angels where they are not needed? They can kindle fires, doubtless—but so can the Savior without their aid. There was the fire of coals and there was the fish. Where did He get the fish? All sorts of idle speculations have been raised about His having bought it from a passing boat. There is no need of such inventions. Doubtless both fire and fish were the products of creative power. We have before us one of those miracles which were commonplace to the Savior. He spoke and there was the fire and the fish laid thereon and a crisp cake hot from the coals.

Dear Friends, your soul can never feed except upon what Jesus has prepared for you. His flesh is meat indeed. But there is no other meat for souls. He has not to kindle a fire for your comfort—it is burning now—it has been kindled long ago. There was never a morsel of manna in the mouth of any child of God but the Word of the Lord supplied it. There was never food yet for a true heart but what it came from Him who is our life and the food of our life. “How can this man give us His flesh to eat?” said they of old—but that is exactly what He does. All that He gives to us of spiritual nourishment is of His own preparing.

What is equally wonderful to me is this—after the Lord had prepared it, He Himself was the waiter at the feast. Read verse thirteen—“Jesus then came and took the bread and gave it to them and likewise the fish.” When there are seven at table, a host might well be justified in saying, “Dear friends, you are welcome to all that is before you, help yourselves.” But we cannot help ourselves—He who prepares the feast must also bring the food to us. “Jesus then came and took the bread and gave it to them and likewise the fish.” Only *one* serving the food and that the Lord Himself!

O Master, we know there is good spiritual food in Your Word but we are not able to appropriate it. Come Yourself and lay home the promise to the heart. You know what a way our Lord has of making us to lie down in green pastures—we do not even lie down of ourselves. He places the nourishing Word in the heart. Remember that passage in Hosea which in the original says, “Behold, I will allure her and bring her into the wilderness

and speak to her heart.” I can speak to your ears but Jesus speaks to the heart.

The Lord Jesus, by the work of the Holy Spirit, has a way of conveying the heavenly food into us so that we receive and inwardly digest it. And it then enters into the secret part of the soul and is assimilated and we are truly built up. I pray that the Holy Spirit may thus work at this time. Look at your Host. It is the Lord Himself who lovingly condescends to commune with you and in a wonderful way prepares the feast and with boundless condescension Himself helps you to it.

All the while He was doing this He showed Himself. “This is now the third time that Jesus showed Himself to His disciples.” The chapter opens by saying, “And on this wise showed He Himself.” When the Lord was handing out that bread He was showing Himself and they could see Him serving them. And when He brought them the fish to eat, they saw Him revealed as the very Christ. They saw more of Him in giving the bread and the fish than they would have seen if He had stood still to be gazed upon. Jesus feeding us is Jesus revealed. If He had stretched out His hand for them to examine the nail-prints, they would not have seen Him so well as when that hand gave them food.

Oh, if the Lord Jesus will come to you individually, as I pray He may, and bring you heavenly food this morning, you will see Him—see Him with eyes full of tears. Are there not times with you when Divine Truth comes home to you in such a sweet, comforting, nourishing way that you have said, “It is the Lord. He is Himself the sum and substance of His own blessed Gospel. He has Himself brought me into His banqueting house and His banner over me is His own love”? A vision of Christ is the most filling thing in the world. If we may but see Him in Glory, that shall be the Heaven of Heaven.

If I were the dying thief I would be happy to die with Him side by side on the Cross and count it bliss to be with Him there. But what must it be to pass through the pearly gate with Him and to be with Him in His kingdom, as that same dying thief was? This is your morning’s portion—do not miss it. “He showed Himself.” Is it weeks since you have seen your Lord? Oh, then, heave a great sigh and say, “Lord, show Yourself to me.” Is it days since you have had actual fellowship with Jesus? Oh, that your heart might break after Him now! Do not be satisfied to let this morning’s sitting break up without your having seen the Lord—everyone of you who are His true disciples.

O dear Friends, you that hear about Christ and just let it glide by—what are you worth? What sort of Christians are those who do not know the vitals of Christianity, the secret enjoyments of rapturous love? Outside, in merely external religion, everything is cold and dreary and I do not wonder at people getting weary of it and giving it up. The glory lies *within* the veil. We must see Jesus. Our home is where God reveals Himself to His people. Little drops of religion are poor things. Oh, for Madame Guyon’s torrents! Oh, that the sacred torrent would bear us away! That mighty river, not the river Kishon, but what if I call it Kedron?—the Kedron of His suffering love, which is a torrent indeed! Oh, to be borne

along by the stream of Free Grace and dying love until one is conscious of nearing the unfathomable depths of love unsearchable!

Thus much about our Host. Mine is a poor talk. God grant that, by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, you may get far beyond me and see Him whom having not seen we love!

III. Now, SEE THE PROVISION. I have tried to call you to the feast and I have also tried to point out our Host. Now, attentively regard the provisions. There are two parts. First, there was what He had mysteriously prepared—the fish laid upon the coals. And, secondly, what He had graciously given. For He said, “Bring of the fish which you have now caught.” It was the same sort of fish, no doubt. But it came in two ways.

First, let us note the mysteriously prepared provision. Look at the fish which is broiling on the coals! Mysterious fish! Mysterious coals! Feed now with all your hearts upon the mystery of everlasting love. “I have loved you with an everlasting love.” Feed on the mystery of the Covenant of Grace, when, on your behalf, the blessed Son of God stood Sponsor and Surety before the great Father and the Father covenanted for His Son’s sake to bless His chosen. Oh, the mystery of the eternal gift of the elect to Jesus and the gift of Jesus to His elect! Before the world began all this was provided for our need. Cannot you feed on this?

Think, next, of the kinship of Christ to you. He came to Bethlehem that He might take our nature. He lay an Infant on a woman’s breast. He was cradled as a Child. He abode here a suffering, wayworn man. Was not that a beautiful verse we sang just now, which began—

***“Jesus, our Kinsman and our God,
Arrayed in majesty and blood
You are our life, our souls in You
Possess a full felicity”?***

Yes, He is Brother to you—of your nature, of your flesh and of your bones—your next of kin, sworn to redeem you and even espoused to you. Jesus is Brother to you who are in adversity. Feed on that.

Here is another fish of the kind found only in the sea of mysterious love—I point you to His effectual atonement. He has finished His lifework for you and poured forth the price of your redemption—minting it from His own heart. He has washed you from your sins in His own blood. He has made you kings and priests unto God. He has bought you with a price, so that you are not your own. The dying Christ bore your penalty—the living Christ has ensured your acceptance and your immortality. “Because I live,” says He, “you shall live also.”

While He shows Himself to you this morning, He gives you these ancient things to feed upon. Come, feast upon the love that had no beginning, the love that can know no end, nor change, nor be measured. Remember your living and everlasting union with Him. The union between you and the Ever-blessed is inseparable. “Who shall separate us?” Come, I pray you! Break your fast, you who are most weary and worn and sad! Stay not back from the table but eat to the full. My Beloved, eat of these fish laid on the coals—these mystic, marvelous things—in the preparation of which you have had no hand but which Jesus before time began has prepared for you.

But the feast was also made of what the Lord had graciously given and they had drawn out of the deep. The Lord has caused us to obtain many precious things by His own Spirit. And these we have made our own, taking them in our net and dragging them to shore. Let us feed on mercies *experienced*. Just now to myself these are very many—"a hundred and fifty and three." I can scarcely count the favors the Lord has given me of late. My net is not broken but I wonder it is not. For the draught of benefits is so great—He daily loads me with benefits. I desire abundantly to utter the memory of His great goodness. Cannot you do the same and in the memory find a feast for love? "A hundred and fifty and three"—an odd number but large—a number which, if you have been careful in your gratitude, may be very exact for all that—even the last three must not be forgotten—

***"Streams of mercy never ceasing
Call for songs of loudest praise."***

"How precious, also, are Your thoughts unto me, O God!" The Lord has dealt well with His servants, according to His Word. Let us rejoice in His name as He has revealed it to us.

Have you not a net full of answers to prayer? Some here present have received such blessings that they may be compared to great fishes. When we have many fishes we expect them to be small but ours are all great fish. Oh, the great goodness of a great *God* to great *sinner*s in the times of their great need! Let us be satisfied with the Lord's great goodness to us when in trouble we have sought His face. "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." "I sought the Lord, and He heard me." Come, feed upon what you have already tasted and handled, both of His Word and work. Rejoice in what you have seen Him do *in* you, and *for* you. Why, here are great fishes, a hundred and fifty and three.

The provision on the lake shore was more than enough for seven men, however hungry they might be. Was it not? They might eat as much as they liked without any fear of exhausting the supply. And after the meal, they would not have left twelve baskets full alone, as there had been at the former feast, but a superabundance for their Brethren, or for any wanderers along the shore. Now, dear Friends, try for a minute or two to dwell upon the wonders of God's Truth and Grace to you. Think of what He did in your conversion. What He has done in the time of temptation—how He has supplied your needs. And how He has given you enjoyments of His love.

I was looking back through former volumes of my sermons and I noticed how often a sermon occurs without a date upon it. I know what that denotes. It means that I was ill and in great pain. Two or three times in almost every year I have to hear the Lord preach to me in the chamber of sickness and I am unable, therefore, to preach to you. These were bitter things at the time. But I bless the Lord for them all and for raising me up again and again and renewing my strength. He will not leave me now. Cannot you also turn to your diaries and remember the loving kindness of the Lord and speak well of His name? All this will be to you a fire of coals and fish drawn from the deep sea.

I am almost done. I do not know whether you have been fed. But I hope you have. I would again invite you in Wisdom's name, saying, "Come, eat of My bread and drink of the wine which I have mingled."

IV. But, lastly, SEE HOW THE GUESTS BEHAVED THEMSELVES. I hope if you are fed well, you will behave in the same way. These guests of our Savior's, we find, "dared not ask Him, Who are you? knowing that it was the Lord." Come, let us get close up to our Lord.

When a soul draws near to Jesus, its words are few or none. Notice what the disciples said to the Master on this occasion. They only spoke one word and that word was "No." John spoke to Peter but not to the Lord. All the time before breakfast and all the time they were at breakfast, they never said anything to Him but, "No." That one deep "No" betrayed the vacuum, the emptiness, the hunger—that was all they had to say. You, also, may say as much to your Lord as that—"Lord, I am nothing, nobody. I have nothing. I can do nothing without You." Not another word is recorded as coming from them.

That devotion which must always show itself by shouting may be very genuine but it is to be feared that it is superficial. Deep waters run silently. Great feeling is dumb—there is a frost of the mouth when there is a thaw of the soul. Words are often a wall between our spirit and the Great Spirit. I think I remember reading of George Fox sitting down with a crowd of people round him and for a long time he never said a word. They were all watching and waiting. And if it had been myself, I should have stood up full soon and have said something, like a fool.

But he was a wise man and he sat still. It takes a very wise man to hold his tongue so long. George Fox kept silent that he might famish the people from words. A grand lesson for them and one that might be useful to some of you. You must have words! Fine words! Wonderful words! A big mouthful of words is fine food for fools. Some preachers seem to think that saints can feed on their eloquence but they need more substantial meat. Could we not put things prettily if we were to try and throw out to you great bouquets of flowers? What would be the good of it? You want food. You want Christ. And if you could get Jesus Himself, words would be an impertinence—your own words as well as mine.

As there were no words, so there could be no doubtful questions. Whenever a man gets away from communion with Christ, he begins to ask a host of questions. Persons who have no religion have always a selection of religious questions, varying from the stupidity of, "Who was Cain's wife?" onward to, "What will man become by evolution?" When a soul has drawn near to Jesus and has been fed by Him, it is no more troubled with doubts than a man at the equator is bitten by frost.

"I believe in the Bible," said one. "How can you do that?" sneered another. "Because I know the Author," was the fit reply. If you are walking in the light with your Lord, questions and doubts are heard no more. You adore in deep restfulness of soul, "knowing that it is the Lord." How did the disciples know this? By reason? Well, the knowledge is not unreasonable. But we rise higher—we know Jesus by contact, by conversation and by a consciousness—or shall I call it an overpowering conviction?—which needs no supporting argument. When we fall at His feet in lowliest rever-

ence of joyful love, we believe and are sure. We become doubt-proof. As an iron-clad throws off the ball which is hurled at it, so a love-clad heart defies all the suggestions of skepticism.

They ate the bread and fish that morning, I doubt not, in silent self-humiliation. Peter looked with tears in his eyes at that fire of coals, remembering how he stood and warmed himself when he denied his Master. Thomas stood there, wondering that he should have dared to ask such proofs of a fact most clear. All of them felt that they could shrink into nothing in His Divine Presence, since they had behaved so cowardly. Yet were they also silent for joy.

Did you ever feel the bliss of dying to self? As you near the vanishing point of self?—the glory of the Lord dawns on you with immeasurable splendor! To grow bigger and bigger and bigger until you fill the halls of fame and your name echoes round the world, is the ambition of the vain and it is an abomination. But to grow less and less, till the Lord God is All in All—that is the joy of saints and it is a sweet smelling offering—

***“The more Your glories strike mine eyes,
The humbler I shall lie—
Thus, while I sink, my joys shall rise
Immeasurably high.”***

They were silent in wonder as they gazed on the risen One. He was all over wonder to them—a world of beauties and of miracles. When He fed them, when He gave them the bread, when He gave them the fish—it was a melting season. They remembered how He washed their feet. But then He was in His state of humiliation. And they marveled yet more that now He was risen He would still be among them “as One that serves.” They were dumb with surprise and gratitude and love.

I suppose they could not speak because they felt such deep, unutterable reverence for His majesty. They felt, with Jacob, “How dreadful is this place!” God was manifest in the flesh and they beheld His Glory. Therefore Peter speaks of himself as “a witness of the sufferings of Christ and also a partaker of the Glory that shall be revealed.” What could they do but, while they apprehended that Glory, remain quiet and inwardly adore? The practice of occasional quiet affords healthy nourishment to the soul. A sitting silently at the feet of Jesus is of more worth than all the clatter of Martha’s dishes.

Communion with Christ will teach you a reverence which words cannot express. There is an exceeding weight of glory which would break the backs of all the words of all languages should we essay to load them therewith—

***“Come, then, expressive silence,
Muse His praise.”***

“Praise waits for You, O God, in Sion: and unto You shall the vow be performed.”

Brethren, have you fed? Have you had breakfast with Jesus? If so, I am well content. But I would remind you that when you come here again, you must hear what your Lord has to say by way of question and command. For, “when they had dined,” solemn business began. It must not be with us as with Israel—“The people sat down to eat and to drink and rose up to

play.” But we rise to work and suffer and to go far towards Heaven in the strength of the meat we have enjoyed.

Someone will ask, “Have you not a word for the unconverted this morning?” Indeed, I have something better than words. When we set forth the provisions of Divine Grace before the godly, we are really inviting poor hungry sinners. The sight of food is a fine creator of appetite. When the prodigal returned to his father they brought forth the best robe and put it on him. And they put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet. But when it came to the eating, what was done? The father did not say, “Bring forth the fatted calf and feed my son with it. His words were—“Let us eat and be merry.”

Why, I thought he was caring most for his returning child? Yes, but he was faint and sick at heart and needed to have *his* appetite aroused. One sure way to induce another to eat, is to eat, yourself. If he stands there and his sadness has taken away his appetite, you eat and be merry and you will soon find that his mouth will begin to water and he will be ready to feed with you. I do hope some people will feel an appetite coming to them this morning and will cry, “I long to feed on heavenly bread and to have my heart refreshed in the Presence of the Lord Jesus.”

O poor Heart, believe in Jesus and He is yours! Children of God, just as you can enjoy Christ and show that enjoyment in your lives, you will be fascinating others to your Lord and thus by your means I shall not have preached in vain to the unconverted.

O you who would gladly come to Jesus, look at the first chapter of this Gospel of John. The word is there, “Come and see.” While in this last chapter of John it is, “Come and dine.” Remember that the first thing to do is to “Come and see,” or *look* to Jesus. He says, “Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth.” Look to Jesus, see Him dying in your place to put away your guilt. Look with the appropriating glance of faith, trusting in Him. And then before long you shall feed on him, to your heart’s delight. The Lord send his blessing upon this word, for His name’s sake! Amen.

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TWO LOVING INVITATIONS

NO. 633

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

“Come and see.”
John 1:39.

“Come and dine.”
John 21:12.

THE one text is in the beginning and the other at the end of John's Gospel. There is a mystery here. Here is typified a growth which it were well for us to understand. “Come and see,” is for babes in Grace—“Come and dine,” is for strong men in Christ Jesus. We must notice the order. “Come and see,” is the beginning of spiritual life as it is the beginning of this Gospel. “Come and dine,” is a high after-privilege of the spiritual life and a blessed result of it. “Come and see,” is the Gospel's cry to those outside its pale—it has nothing to conceal, it wears no mask, it has no most holy place into which entrance is forbidden. It has a “sanctum sanctorum,” but the way into it is open. Open and above-board in all its doings, the Truth as it is in Jesus bares its bosom secrets and cries to every passerby, “Come and see.”

The seals of the book are broken, the darkness is rolled away, the vision is open and with clarion note the invitation is issued, “Come and see.” Romanism may conceal its worship under the Latin tongue. Difficult phraseology and polished periods may hide from the multitude the teaching of professed Protestants, but the true preacher of Christ declares, “I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.”

The shutters of every window are open. The key is put into every lock and every door is thrown wide open. Investigation is courted upon every point—the Gospel stands at her door and says, “Come in here, come and see.” You have this short sentence, “Come and see,” as, first of all, an encouragement to enquirers. Many of you are like John's disciples. They had heard John preach and they believed his word and when they saw Christ, to whom John pointed, they followed Him. But not *knowing* Him, they followed Him with a question upon the tip of their tongues—“Master, where do You dwell?” He said, “Come and see.” You also are anxious to know Christ. You have heard His Word preached by some of His witnesses and you want to know Him personally for yourselves. You have a pressing question to put tonight and Jesus encourages you to ask. No—to come and get your own answer with your own eyes. “Come,” He says, “Come and see.”

There are three ways, I think, by which persons are to, “Come and see.” One is by *observation*. We ought to give attention to the teaching of the

Gospel, to weigh it and prove it. If it is found false we are to cast it away with decision. But if it is found worthy of our attention we are to hold it fast and never let it go. Many persons are careless. They will consider the last new novel, or they have been clamoring to get the "Life of Julius Caesar," to see what the Emperor of the French can have to say upon that subject. But concerning Christ Crucified they have no curiosity. They frequent their place of worship without feeling enough interest in the affair to ask themselves why they go. They do not expect to understand what they hear, or if they understand it they care not whether the thing is true or not. It is nothing to them that Jesus should die.

Now surely a theme which involves *eternal* consequences, a matter which deals with my immortal *spirit* ought not to be put into the background and left to careless inadvertence. I ought, at least, to give it something like the consideration which it claims at my hands. But some look at it through colored spectacles. They are prejudiced against the Gospel. They observe it, they say, but their observation is tinctured by themselves and by their own character. Some persons make up their minds as to what the Gospel ought to be before they try to find out what it is. They do not come to the Bible, nor to the hearing of the Word in order to discover what the Truth of God is. No, they sit down and dream and fashion in their own minds just such a sort of concoction as they imagine Gospel Truth should be and everything which is contrary to this they will kick against, like the foolish ox which kicks against the goad.

It would be no use for me, in astronomy, to make an hypothesis and then go out with a telescope and say, "That star ought not to be where it is. According to my theory Jupiter ought not to have moved as he has moved and therefore I do not believe in Jupiter, nor in the stars, for I do not like their goings on." Who but madmen talk thus? I must always shape my views to *facts*, and regarding the Bible as the great storehouse of facts, I must take care that I go to it with a candid and unbiased judgment. May God help me to do so. To find out what the Truth of God is, "Come and see," but ask God to open your eyes that you may behold the wondrous things which are written in His Law.

Does anyone enquire how he can come and see in the matter of observation? We invite you, dear Friends, to a diligent reading of Scripture as one means of seeing. The worst-read book in England is the Bible. People read a verse of it, or half a chapter in the morning and think they understand it. Suppose anyone were to read a poet in that way. Let the world's favored poet, Shakespeare, be treated in such a style as that and what man could ever appreciate his beauties? If you get a poet, say Cowper—you read "The Task" through. You do not think of snatching a line or two here and there—if you did you would be like the Greek teacher who carried a brick about as a specimen of a house which he had for sale.

If you read Young's, "Night Thoughts," it is true that almost every line is noteworthy and is as fine-tuned as a distinct proposition. But still he who would appreciate the beauties of Young must read the "Night Thoughts" through, or, at least, read a book at a time. Yet there are thousands of you who never did read one of the Gospels through, never read one of the Epistles through with a studious mind desiring to catch the drift and to

understand the sense. And do you dream you will ever know what the Bible teaches by just recalling a portion here and a portion there? Impossible! Absurd! If you have any care to, "Come and see," read the Bible in a common-sense way and sit down with the determination that, as far as the human mind can find out what God means, you will know what He has revealed concerning His Son. I am not afraid of what the consequences will be if you do that! If, moreover, you seek the aid of the Divine Spirit, your search cannot be in vain. You shall see Jesus and rejoice in His great salvation.

Then next, I earnestly desire you to *hear* the Gospel as well as read it—only take care that what you hear *is* the Gospel. It is very easy to find Divines of flowery speech and flowing tongue, from whom, in a course of seven years, you would probably learn nothing whatever of the doctrines of the Covenant of Grace. It has been said that if you were to hear a lecturer on geology or astronomy deliver some twelve or thirteen lectures you would be able to pick up a pretty clear idea of the system of geology or astronomy, which the lecturer meant to teach. But I declare and protest, and will prove it by sermons printed by sundry authors, that you might hear thirteen thousand sermons of some men without knowing what system of Divinity they taught, if, indeed, they have any system of Divinity at all!

What do you go to God's House for? Is it to have your ears tickled? Do you go to the place of worship that you may admire the eloquence of man? Go to your theater or your senate if this is your desire! Such places are the legitimate arena for display—come not to God's House for that. There we should resort to learn to *pray*. We should come that we may, in the words of our text, "see." See ourselves, and better still, see the Lord Jesus! This should be the first enquiry as we go up the steps into the place of meeting—"Sirs, we would see Jesus." And if Jesus is not to be seen there, no matter how brilliant the display of fireworks with which the sermonizer may indulge you—that is not the proper place in which to spend the precious hours of Sunday!

We would see Jesus! We would know what we must do to be saved! Observe then, observe carefully. Keep your eyes open, not only to the world of Nature, but to the Book of God and the lives of His people and thus, "Come and see." Truly, Enquirer, there is a better way of coming and seeing and that is by *believing*. If you can at once believe God's Word, you shall see far better than if you are merely a seeker and, surely, the revelation of God in Christ may well demand your implicit faith. See how true others have found it. If the proposition is, "can Christ forgive sin?"—hear what others say who can sing of pardon bought with blood and of promises applied to their souls with power breathing peace and pardon to their hearts!

Do you remember your mother? Do you remember the glitter of her eyes in death's dark hour? Do you remember how she bore her dying testimony that all that God had said concerning Christ was true? That He was able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him? She was no woman given to deception! If I remember rightly you can say of her that she was a common-sense, shrewd woman—not easily deceived and

yet in that last article of death—when every sham comes crumbling down and all that is mere paint and tinsel is broken and dashed away, she found the solidity of her hopes and rejoiced in them!

You have other friends. In business they are not second-rate men. With regard to matters of common sense you would trust them as well as any that you know. They are not hot-headed and enthusiastic. They are not likely to be carried away by the multitude, after some hare-brained prophet. And yet steadily and solemnly they tell you that Christ has given them new hearts and right spirits. That He has changed their lives. That He has given them a peace and a joy they never knew before. They tell you that they have answers to prayer—that whenever they spread their case before God, their heavenly Father hears them and sends them speedy relief. They tell you that they find in religion a spring of moral action such as was never found in the mere precepts and teachings of law and conscience.

Now believe these men. If they were the worst men in the neighborhood. If they were the felons and rogues of trade, I would recommend you *not* to believe them—but since they are the best in the world and rank high in your esteem—at least trust them so far as to come, yourself, to a candid observation of these things and believe that at least there is some truth in them. I would to God, dear Friends, that you would believe these things to be true concerning Christ's ability to save because you have Cod's Word for it. And if you ask me how I know it is God's Word, I can take you in vision to Nineveh.

See the excavated cities and palaces, the winged bulls and lions buried in the rubbish—all which tell us that that Book which spoke of them before they were discovered—must have a high antiquity. And the volume which, written in the times of their glory, yet told of their tremendous fall, must have had an inspiration in it not belonging to common books. The best proof of this inspiration is, perhaps, to be found in this—that we know that God wrote *another* book, the book of Nature. And as the two works of one author are quite sure to exhibit some common points in which you may find out the author's idioms, so every student of Nature and Revelation has been able to say that the two volumes bear marks of the same Writer. And the more they have studied both books, the more they have said, "We find the same God in the one as in the other."

The God of Nature is kind and good. So is the God of Revelation. The God of Nature is the terrible God of the avalanche and thunderbolt, the tempest and the whirlwind. And the God of this Book is terrible out of His holy place when He comes to judge the sons of men. We find that the very same imprimatur which is set upon the book of Nature is also stamped upon the Book of God. We should be glad, therefore, if you could believe this and believing this you would soon, "come and see." For mark you, the best way of knowing about Christ is to try Him, to experience Him! And since you want to know if He can forgive sins, trust Him to forgive yours. You want to know if He can change the human heart—trust Him to change yours.

You long to know if there is a peace that passes all understanding which will still the throbs of your guilty heart. Try Him and see! You pant

to learn if there is a joy which can gild your darkest hours with sunlight and make the dreary passage through the shades of death to be full of life and hope—try Him and see! We are not afraid to stake all upon the trial. I will cheerfully be bondsman for my Lord and Master. If there can be a soul that does sincerely trust Him that shall not find, even in this life, salvation, and in the world to come, eternal joy, then I am content to be deceived, or content to suffer the deceiver's doom!

Beloved, if we only promised you something to be had in the *next* world, you could not make the test at once. But that which we hold out to you is *present* salvation. It is not some future joy merely, but *present* joy! Oh, if you trust Jesus Christ you shall, "come and see," that sin is mastered as well as pardoned! That the guilty conscience is pacified forever and that your joy and peace can begin this side of the grave. Enquirer, "come and see!" Oh, pass not by! Neglect not the exhibition of Divine love and Grace, but, "come," oh, "come and see!" May the Holy Spirit bring you, for His name's sake.

Very hurriedly let me notice the next point. I think this invitation may be well addressed to every beginner in the school of Christ as well as to every enquirer. We ought not to be satisfied with merely being saved. As soon as ever we are saved—the moment we believe in Christ—our next business is to learn more of Christ. You want to know the doctrines, dear Friends. It is well to be thoroughly established in the faith. "Come and see." Search the Scriptures! See what God has revealed and be established in His Divine Truths. Every precept as well as every doctrine cries to you, "Come and see!"

Every promise says, "Come and see!" Do not run short of promises! It is bad when a man is out of money. And the Christian, when he is without a promise in his hand is somewhat like a person without ready money in his purse. Study the promises. "Come and see." As to experience, too, the Lord says, "Come and see." Do not talk of Tabor's height, as though you could never climb it. From the *top* of it there comes a voice, "Come and see." Do not speak of Pisgah, as though your feet might never tread its consecrated summit. The voice says, "Come and see." If there is any point of communion, or height of fellowship as yet unreached by you, there peals forth from its excellent glory the endearing exhortation, "Come and see." No boundary is set about the Mount of God! No fiery wall conceals the secret of the Eternal. "The Spirit of the Lord is with them that fear Him. He will show them His Covenant." All Revelation cries with one voice, "Come and see!"

I think this is the cry of the Gospel to every sinner, "Come and see." Perhaps it is easier to use the eyes than any other organ except the ears. This I know, it is more *pleasing* to use the eyes than the ears. You can keep a set of children as happy as the birds of the air with a picture book—when they would probably go to sleep if you were to talk to them. The eye has the greatest power of conferring pleasure. Whether it conveys truth to the heart more rapidly than the ear does, I cannot say. At any rate it does so most pleasingly and for this reason, among others, Christ bids us to use the eyes. He hangs upon His Cross before you and cries,

“Come and see.” And He adds this promise—“Look unto Me and be you saved, all you ends of the earth.”

What is there to see? God made flesh! He that made the heavens veiling Himself in manhood! Is not this something? God came down to you, poor Sinner, that He might take you up to Himself! What is there to see? There is the Son of God bleeding for human sin! His griefs are such that no tongue can explain them and no pen can write them—but they are not for Himself—for in Him is no sin. “Come and see,” for if you see the griefs of Jesus and take them to be your trust, you shall be saved! “Come and see.” Do you ask what there is to see? This same Jesus rises from the tomb! He could not have risen if He had not been God, or if He had not completed the great work of His people’s redemption!

He ascends. The clouds receive Him! Up there in Heaven He stands pleading for sinners, pleading for us and, “He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them.” “Come and see!” “Come and see!” I am often asked, “Sir, how can I get faith?” I believe that faith comes from Christ and is His gift to sinners. Sit down in your chamber tonight when you get home, you that want to believe, and just think over this—*GOD* made flesh! If you will think of that, I pray the Holy Spirit visit you and then the thought will strike you—“That is wonderful! Who could have dreamed of it? God suffering instead of man that the justice of God might be fully satisfied and the mercy of God might have full scope!”

While you are thinking of this wonder and picturing the wounds and looking to the blood and thinking that you almost hear the dropping of the blood upon the Mount of Calvary, I think you will, you scarcely know how, find yourself ready to sing—

***“I do believe—I will believe
That Jesus died for me;
And on the Cross He shed His blood
From sin to set me free.”***

You *cannot make yourself* believe. Faith is the gift of God and the work of the Holy Spirit. But it comes through *hearing*, and hearing is principally blessed to the working of faith, because it gives you a sight of Christ in meditation and, as some say, “seeing is believing.” Certainly such a sight as hearing gives is often made the channel by which the soul believes in Christ. “Come and see!”

Oh you worldlings! Turn your eyes here and see the Savior die! Maybe the spectacle will cool your hot blood and drive away your fever of worldliness and care! Oh, you giddy, careless men and women, look here and see your Redeemer bleed! Possibly you may be sobered by the sight. Oh young men and maidens in your early youth! Since you may soon feel the arrows of death, look here and make your immortality secure! You grey-headed ones who have lost your vigor and spent your strength in sin, yet may the Holy Spirit bring *you*—“Come and see!” Oh, there is mercy yet, “Come and see!”

The great sight is not withdrawn—it is no dissolving view that melts away—it is no burning bush from which you are bid to keep off by the words, “Draw not near here.” But here, over the Cross, hangs the motto

and from the Mount of Calvary rings the silvery trumpet note, “Come and see! Come and see!”

**“There is life in a look at the Crucified One;
There is life at this moment for you.”**

II. The second text is, “COME AND DINE.” That is better—that is closer, nearer, dearer—more substantial than “come and see.” That may be done at a distance, though “come” seems to invite us to make the distance less. But, “Come and dine”—that implies the *same* table, the *same* meat—yes, and sometimes it means to sit side by side and lean our head upon the Savior’s bosom. Here is nearness familiar and domestic—“come and dine.”

Understand that while we are sinners *faith* brings us into a justified state by simply looking to Christ though the soul has had no enjoyment of Him. But after believing, *faith* then assists us really to *enjoy* Christ. I know some of you are wishing and expecting to enjoy Christ first, and believe him afterwards. I would correct your error. You must take God’s mercies in their order and season. And you will not find, “come and dine,” in the first chapter of John—there it is, “come and see.” Believe Jesus first and you shall feed on Him afterwards!

Certain of you seem to me to be content to believe Christ and to say, “I am safe,” without wishing to know the blessed enjoyment which is to be found in Him. It should not be so. You are not to be content with the first chapter of John. But go on to the last and be not satisfied so long as there is a “yet” beyond. If you have seen Christ—if you have touched Christ—if you have put your finger into the print of the nails, be not satisfied till you know the meaning of the text, “Except a man eat My flesh and drink My blood, there is no life in him.” “Come and dine,” then, implies greater enjoyment than, “come and see.”

“Come and see” gives peace, but, “come and dine,” gives *ecstasy*—rapture—what shall I call it? It gives Heaven on earth, for it gives Christ. “Come and dine” must be experimentally understood before you can read the Book of Solomon’s Song with profit. “Come and see” can read the Evangelists. “Come and see” can read many of the Epistles. “Come and see” may wander delightfully through the Book of Psalms. “Come and see” may enrich itself with Proverbs. But the Tree of Life, which is in the midst of the garden—that is, the Book of Canticles [Song of Solomon]—is not to be eaten of except by those who have heard the Master say, “Come and dine.” I would to God that all the Lord’s people were not merely delivered from the chains of sin and washed in the Savior’s blood but brought into the banqueting house, where waves the banner of redeeming love!

There is more enjoyment, then, in the one than in the other. And there is also more nearness. When I first believed in Christ I felt a distance between myself and Him and the only nearness that I could get was to lay my hands upon His head and confess my sins. But I hope some of us, after a few years of believing, know what it is to sit at His feet with Mary! To lean upon His bosom with John! Yes, and to say with the spouse, “Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth, for His love is better than wine.” O Beloved, there is a nearness to Christ which the worldling can only laugh at if he should hear us talk of it!

Read “Rutherford’s Letters,” and you get glimpse of what it is to dine with Christ. Turn to “Hawker’s Morning and Evening Portions,” or even, if

you will, wander amidst the quaint rhymes and sweet poetry of dear George Herbert—there you have, “come and dine” carried out in sweetest prose. Oh, to get so close to Christ that you can sing with a modern hymn writer—

**“So near, so very near to God, I cannot nearer be;
For in the Person of His Son I am as near as He!
So dear, so very dear to God, I cannot dearer be;
The love wherewith He loves His Son
Such is His love to me!”**

This is a high attainment, but rest not satisfied till you have gained it. Yet, once more, “come and dine,” gives us a vision of union with Jesus because the only meat that we can eat when we dine with Christ is Himself. We do not provide the supper. When He dined on that occasion with His disciples, Peter dragged a net full of fishes out of the sea. But when they came on shore they found a fire already kindled and fish laid on it, so that the fish they ate did not come out of the sea—by their net—at any rate. Christ found the fish and lit the fire. And He found the bread and then said, “Come and dine.” Ah, and the fire that warms our heart when we have fellowship with Him comes from Himself! And the fish that we eat is His own and the wine that we drink flows from His own heart.

Oh, what union is this! It is a depth that reason cannot fathom, that we eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ! Here we stand and look and look and look and though the water is clear as crystal, like the sea of glass before the Throne of God, yet to the bottom of it angelic sight can never reach! One with Jesus—by eternal union—one! What does this mean, Believer?—

**“One when He died. One when He rose;
One when He triumphed over His foes!
One when in Heaven He took His seat,
And angels sang of Hell’s defeat.”**

Can you comprehend it?—

**“This Covenant stands secure,
Though earth’s old columns bow,
The strong, the feeble and the weak
Are one in Jesus now.
Oh, sacred union, firm and strong,
How great the Grace, how sweet the song,
That worms of earth should ever be
One with Incarnate Deity!”**

And yet it is so. And he that has listened to the Savior’s voice, “Come and dine,” knows it to be so and rejoices! In this, also, you find an invitation to enjoy fellowship with the saints. You are not to eat your morsel alone, but in company. We sit down in Heaven with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—at the marriage supper of the Lamb—and no small part of the heavenly bliss is connected with the fellowship which exists among the saints in Gory. So also with our present feasting on the fat things full of marrow which Christ spreads before His chosen ones. We enjoy the company as well as the feast and find our happiness augmented by the society of kindred minds. The Supper of the Lord is the table of communion, not only with the Master but also with all who love Him in sincerity and truth.

One of the surest ways of introducing discord into the midst of a Church is for the minister to starve the people. Hungry men are sure to be

quarrelsome. On the contrary, to unite a flock in closest bonds of love let the minister say, "Come and dine!"—and then put before them the finest of the wheat, honey out of the rock and wine upon the lees well refined. If you would have sweetest fellowship with each other, live on Christ! Enter into the banqueting house, sit beneath the banner of love and you will find that sacred commingling of spirit with spirit which will prove that you are one in Christ Jesus.

Christians may differ on a variety of points. They may not see eye to eye on this thing and on that, but they have all one spiritual appetite and if we cannot all *feel* alike, we can all *feed* alike on the Bread of Life sent down from Heaven. Get nearer to Christ and eat of His flesh and drink of His blood and you will find yourself linked more and more in spirit to all who are like yourself, supported by the same heavenly manna. We do not expect to see all Christians agreeing, but we are sure that one of the most likely plans for cultivating a brotherly spirit is to listen to Christ's words, "Come and dine."

We see in these words the source of strength for every Christian. To look at Christ is to live, but for *strength* to serve Him you must come and dine. When our Lord had raised the daughter of Jairus He commanded them to give her meat so that she might be strengthened. And so He says to all of us, "Come and dine." We need as much food for the soul as for the body and unless we eat we shall be fainting by the way. Are there not many Christians who allow themselves to suffer a great deal of unnecessary weakness on account of neglecting this precept of the Master? I hold that we are bound to lift up the feeble knees and drooping hands—and in order to do this we must live by faith on the Son of God and listen to His voice as He says, "Eat, oh My Friends, yes, drink, oh My Beloved."

If you want to be as Mr. Feeblemind, I can give you the receipt. Take only a small portion of spiritual food morning and night in your closets. Neglect family prayer. Never attend a Prayer Meeting. On no account speak about religious matters during the week. Go late to the House of God and fall asleep when you get there. As soon as you leave the place of worship talk about the weather. Confine yourself to these rules for a few weeks and you will very soon be reduced low enough to allow Satan to attack you with every chance of giving you a severe and dangerous fall.

Doctors tell us that nowadays the classes of disease most prevalent are those which indicate a low condition of the vital forces. And I think that we are suffering in the Church from the same sort of maladies. You never hear of anyone who is *too* zealous, *too* rash in venturing himself for Christ! There was a time when the Church had to censure her young converts because they courted persecution and invited martyrdom! Now we need to stir up the Church and to urge on our people to more self-sacrifice for the cause of Christ.

You need never fear that anyone will kill himself with too much work—we must rather lament that there seems so little exuberance of spirit and vital force among Christians. We, none of us, need to put ourselves on a low diet—on the contrary, we ought to accumulate strength and urge every power to its full dimension in the Master's service! For this purpose, "Come and dine." All your strength depends upon union with Christ! Away

from Him you must wither as a branch severed from the vine. Feeding on Him, you will be like the branch which is drinking up the sap from the parent stem. You will be strong enough to bring forth fruit and fill your post among the other members of the one great band of Christians!

We can see, moreover, in these words the foundation of the Christian's growth and progress in spiritual things. To see Christ is to begin the Christian's life, but to grow in Divine Grace we must, "come and *dine*." The early history of the first disciples is by no means satisfactory. They were evidently only babes in spiritual things. How little they seemed to comprehend the Savior's mission. He liked to say, "Have I been so long time with you and yet have you not known Me, Philip?" They misunderstood the nature of His Kingdom and were continually displaying a carnal and selfish spirit. It is evident that the early dawn of spiritual life is all they had then received. They had *seen* Jesus. They loved Him and followed Him even unto trial and disgrace—but yet they were far from possessing the *Spirit* of Christ.

Now after they had reached this stage of living *on* Christ they became new men. It is no longer mere sight, but an inward appropriation of Christ Jesus by faith and the consequences are manifest. They are seen developing themselves under the blessed outpouring of the Holy Spirit into workmen that needed not to be ashamed. They endured hardness as good soldiers of the Cross. They fought a good fight and they finished their course with joy. A higher order of life is clearly theirs. They have risen in the scale of spiritual existence! A clearer light shines around them and they have manifestly grown in Grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ! Beloved, we long for your edification! We covet for you the best gifts, and therefore we say, "Come and dine."

Many Christians remain stunted and dwarfed in spiritual things so as to present the same appearance year after year. No springing up of thought and feeling is manifest in them. They exist but do not grow. The reason is evident—they are not taking of Christ—and they neglect to appropriate to themselves the blessing which He is waiting to bestow. Why should you rest content with being in the tender green blade when you can go on and reach the ear and eventually the full corn in the ear? I would that all God's servants were more in earnest to develop that good thing which has been implanted in them by the Holy Spirit!

It is all very well to keep other men's vineyards, but you must not neglect your own. Why should it ever be winter in our hearts? We must have our seed time, it is true, but oh, for a spring time—yes, a *summer* season—which shall give promise of an early harvest! Now if you would ripen in Grace you must live near Christ—in His Presence—basking in the sunshine of His smiles. You must hold sweet communion with Him. You must leave the distant view of His face and come near, as John did, and pillow your head on His breast. Then you will find yourself advancing in holiness, in love, in faith, in hope—yes, in every godly gift! What a joy it is to see men and women daily living on Christ! You may watch them grow as you have watched the flowers and trees in the gardens expanding under the genial showers and sunshine of the last few weeks.

It robs a deathbed of its terrors to see the aged Christian rapidly preparing for Glory, but I would rather the man grew before he was about to be taken from us so that we might be the better for his expanded Graces and enjoy his beauty of holiness a few years here on earth. We do not grudge the saints in Glory anything—but it would be a mercy to us if Christians would try and get as much of perfection and maturity as possible a few years sooner—so as to gladden our eyes with some bright blossoms as well as the somber green blades. It is all very well, the fresh verdure in early spring, but I like also the russet hues of autumn and the rich clusters of the vintage with the songs of the reaper and the shout of “harvest home!”

The golden grain is a goodly and pleasant thing to see as the field waves in the autumn breeze. So, also, I like to mark maturity in Christ’s fields, as well as in the earthly ones. It is a glorious sight, an experienced saint—a man who has been much with Jesus and learned of Him—who has caught the Master’s spirit and reflects it brightly to all around! As the sun rises first on mountaintops and gilds them with his light and presents one of the most charming sights to the eyes of the traveler, so is it one of the most delightful contemplations in the world to mark the glow of the Spirit’s light on the head of some saint who has risen up in spiritual stature, like Saul, above his fellows! For then, like some mighty Alp, snow-capped, he reflects, first of all, the beams of the Sun of Righteousness and bears the sheen of His brilliance high aloft for all to see—and seeing it—to glorify His Father which is in Heaven! That you may thus grow in Grace, listen to the Master’s voice—“Come and dine.”

We notice one more thought and then must conclude. Here is preparation for service. “Come and dine,” says the Master. But before the feast is concluded, He says to Peter, “Feed My lambs.” And again, “Feed My sheep.” Further adding, “Follow Me.” All the strength supplied by Christ is for *service* and for use in His vineyard. When the Prophet Elijah found the cake baked on the coals and the cruse of water placed at his head as he lay under the juniper tree, he had a commission to go forty days and forty nights in the strength of it, journeying towards Home, the mount of God. So also with us—we eat so as to be able to expend our strength in the Master’s service. We come to the Passover and eat of our Paschal Lamb with loins girt and with our staff in our hand—so as to start off at once when we have satisfied our spirits.

Some Christians are for living *on* Christ but are not so anxious to live *for* Christ. Now I rejoice to know that I can spend and be spent for the Lord. And I find in labor for Christ that, “it is more blessed to give than to receive.” I never feel so like the Master as when I go about trying to do good. Heaven is the place where saints feast most and work most. They sit down at the table of our Lord and they serve Him day and night in His Temple. They eat of heavenly food and render perfect service. Now earth should be a preparation for Heaven—come and dine—and then go and labor! Freely you receive—freely give! Gather up all the fragments of your feast and go and carry it to Lazarus at the gate! Yes, carry the loaves and fishes to others—as the disciples did when the Lord had multiplied their

little supply—to satisfy the thousands who were famishing for want of food.

We have yet to learn more concerning the design of our Lord in giving us His Grace. We are not to hold the precious grains of Truth like a mummy does the wheat, for ages, without giving it a chance of growing. No, feed yourself and then go forth and bid others come and eat and drink. Go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in, that there may be many more rejoicing with you in the Light and Life of Christ! Why does the Lord send down rain upon the thirsty earth and give sunshine and genial refreshing breezes? Is it not that these may all help the fruits of the earth to yield food for man and beast? Even so the Lord calls us in to enjoyment and feasting that we may afterwards go out to labor and service.

My dear Hearers, I always seek to see you fruitful in all good works, to do His will who provides all things for us richly to enjoy. You are aware that our Father is glorified if we bring forth much fruit and so shall we be His disciples. Eat, then! Spare not—you are welcome to as much as you can consume! But when you have eaten the fat and drunk of the sweet, go and tell of it to sinners round that the starving may come and find “wine and milk, without money and without price.” You are to preach the Gospel to every creature—proclaim the good news of water from the Rock Christ Jesus which flows in the midst of the world’s wilderness, so that all may drink and live. Tell of the finest of the wheat on which you have feasted.

Bid the prodigal leave the husks which the swine eat and return to the Father’s house, there to eat of the fatted calf and feast at the parental board. Tell them there is room in the Savior’s heart! And never cease proclaiming His matchless love and power and His willingness to say to all, “Come unto Me all you that are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest.” “Come and dine.”

I send you away, however, wishing to make the first part of the sermon the more telling to most of you—“Come and see.” You are black with sin, but blackness does not blind the eye. Your righteousness is nothing better than filthy rags, but the most ragged beggar may *look*. Our strange old proverb says, “A cat may look at a king,” and the blackest sinner out of Hell may look at Christ! And though he has sin well near as devilish as that of Lucifer, yet, looking to Christ all manner of sin and of iniquity shall be forgiven him!

Look, Sinner—look! May the Holy Spirit now open those eyes of yours and turn them to the Savior’s Cross and make you live! May the best of Heaven’s blessings be yours tonight and in eternity! Amen and Amen.

Adapted from *The C.H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

“FEED MY LAMBS”— A SUNDAY SCHOOL SERMON NO. 1684

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 15, 1882,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“So when they had dined, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me more than these? He said unto Him, Yes, Lord; You know that I love You. He said unto him, Feed My lambs.”
John 21:15.*

READ the whole chapter and observe the change of scene. First, they are on the lake fishing, casting their nets at Christ’s command, and dragging to land a multitude of great fishes. They have all come on shore and when they have breakfasted, their faces are not turned to the sea, but to the pastures on the hillside. These are clothed with flocks and the Master says no more about fishermen and fish, but speaks of shepherds and sheep. Herein lies a parable—the servants of the Lord Jesus are first, fishermen, and then shepherds. The first work of Christ’s servants is comprised in that commission, “Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature,” or, “Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a draught.”

They begin their heavenly vocation as fishers, even as Jesus said to them at the first, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” Their earliest work is to preach the Gospel, which is like the letting down of a great seine net, enclosing life of all kinds. They are not to make a selection of characters so as to preach only to likely persons—that would be comparable to angling—a figure which is used in the Old Testament in connection with *destruction*—and not in reference to *salvation*, even as Amos says, “The Lord God has sworn by His holiness, that, lo, the days shall come upon you, that He will take you away with hooks, and your posterity with fishhooks.”

In Gospel fishing we let down the big net and thus encompass many of all sorts. In the act of preaching the Gospel, all are fish that come to the net—the sorting of the good from the bad is to be done another day. Our urgent work—I mean yours and mine, my Brothers—is to go out into the world and proclaim the blessed Gospel of salvation to all who care to hear us. We are to go into every place to which we can gain access—“into all the world,” “into the streets and lanes of the city, into the highways and hedges”—anywhere and everywhere the world over. Our one instrument as fishers for Christ is the Gospel of the Grace of God. God forbid that we should use any other. May the Lord help us to keep to our fishing and may we come and instantly receive Divine direction as to how and where

to cast the net so that we may have a full net, and yet a net unbroken, with which we may fish again.

After this is done, and while it is being done, another art is to be practiced. Fishing is not all, as many seem to think. It is a great part of our service and would God it were more attended to, but after it has been attended to, *shepherding* comes in, and is a work of equal weight. Our Lord Jesus Christ would have His servants attend to this second task with all their hearts. If souls are converted, they have been brought up from the depths of sin and the scene changes—we see a flock, “the Church of God which He has purchased with His own blood.” This flock needs as much care as any other, yes, it needs to be tended with the utmost labor and watchfulness.

The Lord Jesus, Himself, is the Good Shepherd who laid down His life for the sheep, the Great Shepherd who is brought, again, from the dead and the Chief Shepherd under whom He has appointed shepherds to watch for the souls of men. He will have those of us whom He calls to His service to shepherd those who are converted—leading, protecting, feeding, comforting and succoring them. He will call us to account if we neglect this charge, for He will require His flock at our hands, saying, “Where is the flock that was given you, your beautiful flock?” This shepherd work is so important that three times the Savior bids us attend to it, saying first, “Feed My lambs,” then, “Feed My sheep,” or, as some old manuscripts have it, “My little sheep,” and then, again, “Feed My sheep.”

We are to feed the babes in Grace; to shepherd the young men in Christ Jesus; and to feed the older ones who feel many growing infirmities and need, again, the comforts of their earliest days. Three times over are we thus bid! Are we, then, so apt to fail in this? Jesus spoke but once to Death, and Lazarus came forth. Are we more deaf than the grave and must we be thrice commanded? Let us no longer be disobedient to the heavenly mandate! We must never so evangelize the outside mass as to forget to fold and feed those within! We are to disciple all nations and then to *teach* them all things whatever Christ has commanded us!

Not every man that can haul in a net is ready, at once, to tend a flock. We need much Grace, for the Lord Jesus Christ spent years in most industriously educating the 12, training the 70 and getting ready a band of followers who were not only saved, but educated, so as to teach others. We must not be indifferent to this matter. The quiet work of building up Believers must be steadily pursued, even though those who sound a trumpet before them may despise such ministries.

I shall speak, this morning, upon work within the fold—the feeding of the sheep and lambs—and this I shall do in order that I may help our beloved Sunday school teachers. This is their day and if I do not seem to speak directly or exclusively to them, I hope I shall, nevertheless, say much to stimulate and direct them in their invaluable labors. I ask for them your most earnest prayers and loving sympathies—and of many I would beg a more practical cooperation with them. Concerning this shepherding for Christ, let us first note the sphere—“My lambs.” Secondly, the man for it—one like Simon, son of Jonas. Thirdly, his preparation for it.

Fourthly, the work itself and, fifthly, the motive under which the feeding is to be carried out. Briefly on each point. Oh for help from the Spirit of God!

I. First, think of THE SPHERE. Although in the other instances, Jesus says, “Feed My sheep,” yet in this first instance, He says, “Feed My lambs.” To whom does He refer? I think, first, to such as are little in Grace. They have but a grain of mustard seed of faith as yet—their love is not a flame, but a spark—the leaven of Grace within them has begun to work, but all the measures of meal are not yet leavened. The spiritual life in these is like a candle newly lit, apparently in danger of being suddenly blown out and, therefore, needing great care.

Weakness is an idea in the word, “lambs,” and so, in the Church of God, all such as are weak—and, alas, how many there are—all such as are doubting, all such as are slenderly instructed, all such as are easily bewildered in doctrine, cast down in spirit and apt to be staggered—all such, I say, are to be watched over with special care and, therefore, Jesus mentions them particularly and separately and in the first place. If our kindness should neglect the strong, it would be a sad pity, but it might not entail so much damage as if we neglect the weak! What says the Apostle? “Comfort the feeble-minded; support the weak; be patient towards all men.”

In our numbers we always have a few who wear the weeds of spiritual widowhood. These are very sincere, but sadly anxious, scarcely knowing what full assurance means, but yet true and resolute. Their faith is a trembling one, crying, “Lord, I believe; help You my unbelief.” Such are not to be blamed, nor avoided, nor despised, nor in the least degree discouraged. But, inasmuch as we, ourselves, may also be tempted with like fears, we are to console them. We ought to know that if we are strong, our strength lies not in ourselves, for our own strength is perfect weakness and, therefore, we should deal graciously and tenderly with the weak of the flock. I think this is the reason why the weak were committed to Simon Peter in this particular case—because he had been very weak, himself—he had denied his Master through his fears and thus he was taught to have compassion on other trembling ones.

He who is, himself, compassed with infirmities, knows the heart of the weaklings. He can enter with sympathy into their doubts and their distresses, for he has felt the same. I say, therefore, this morning, in the name of the Lord Jesus, to all of you who love Him, “Look well to the weak ones of the Church.” But I cannot think, as some expositors do, that weakness is the main idea in the word, “lambs,” for the notion of a lamb is not confined to the thought of weakness, since full-grown sheep may be weak and lambs may be vigorous. But the most prominent thought is that of *youth*. The lambs are the young of the flock, So, then, we ought to look specially and carefully after those who are young in Divine Grace. They may be old in years and yet they may be mere babes in Grace as to the length of their spiritual life and, therefore, they need to be under a good shepherd.

As soon as a person is converted and added to the Church, he should become the object of the care and kindness of his fellow members. He has

but newly come among us and has no familiar friends among the saints. Therefore let us all be friendly to him. Even should we leave our older comrades, we must be doubly kind towards those who are newly escaped from the world and have come to find a refuge with the Almighty and His people. Watch with ceaseless care over those newborn babes who are strong in desires, but strong in nothing else! They have but just crept out of darkness and their eyes can scarcely bear the light—let us be a shade to them until they grow accustomed to the blaze of Gospel Day. Addict yourselves to the holy work of caring for the feeble and despondent.

Peter, Himself, that morning, must have felt like a newly enlisted soldier, for he had, in a sense, ended his public Christian life by denying his Lord, and he had begun it, again, when he “went out and wept bitterly.” He was now making a new confession of his faith before his Lord. And Brothers and, therefore, because he was thus made to sympathize with recruits, he is commissioned to act as a guardian to them. Young converts are too timid to ask for our help and so our Lord introduces them to us—and with an emphatic word of command He says, “Feed My lambs.” This shall be our reward, “Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these, you have done it unto Me.”

But surely we must include in this those who have been converted while young in years. We thank God exceedingly that we have among us and round about us many dear children that already know Christ. We have never, as a Church, thought that a certain number of years must have passed over a child before it can confess its faith in Christ and be received into the Church. It is sometimes said that we teach adult Baptism. We do nothing of the sort! We practice *Believer’s* Baptism, and baptize all who confess faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, whether they are children or adults! Our enquiry as to fitness does not refer to age, but to *faith*.

The number or the fewness of days or years is no consideration, whatever, with us! Our question is, “Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ?” If that is fairly answered, we say at once, “What hinders you to be baptized?” However young a Believer may be, he should make an open confession of his faith and be folded with the rest of the flock of Christ. We are not among those who are suspicious of youthful piety—we could never see more reason for such suspicions in the case of the young than in the cases of those who repent late in life. Of the two, we think the latter are more to be questioned than the former, for a selfish fear of punishment and dread of death are more likely to produce a counterfeit faith than mere childishness would. How much has the child missed which might have spoiled it! How much it does not know which, please God, we hope it never may know! Oh, how much there is of brightness and trustfulness about children, when converted to God, which is not seen in elder converts!

Our Lord Jesus evidently felt deep sympathy with children and he is but little like Christ who looks upon them as a trouble in the world and treats them as if they must necessarily be either little deceivers or foolish simpletons! To you who teach in our schools is given this joyous privilege of finding out where these young disciples are who are truly the lambs of

Christ’s flock! And to you, He says, “Feed My lambs.” That is, instruct such as are truly gracious but young in years. It is very remarkable that the word used here for, “feed My lambs,” is very different from the word employed in the precept, “feed My sheep.” I will not trouble you with Greek words, but the second, “feed,” means exercise the office of a shepherd, rule, regulate, lead, manage them, do all that a shepherd has to do towards a flock. But this first, “feed,” does not include all that—it means distinctly *feed*—and it directs teachers to a duty which they may, perhaps, neglect, namely, that of instructing children in the faith.

The lambs do not so much need keeping in order as we do who know so much and yet know so little—who think we are so far advanced that we judge one another and contend and emulate. Christian children mainly need to be taught the doctrine, precept and life of the Gospel—they require to have Divine Truth put before them clearly and forcibly. Why should the higher doctrines, the doctrines of Grace, be kept back from them? They are not, as some say, bones—or if they are bones, they are full of marrow and covered with fatness! If there is any doctrine too difficult for a child, it is rather the fault of the teacher’s conception of it than of the child’s power to receive it, provided that child is really converted to God.

It is ours to make doctrine simple—this is to be a main part of our work. Teach the little ones the whole Truth of God and nothing but the Truth, for instruction is the great need of the child’s nature. A child has not only to live as you and I have, but also to grow, therefore he has double need of food. When fathers say of their boys, “What appetites they have!” they should remember that we, also, should have great appetites if we have not only to keep the machinery going, but to enlarge it at the same time. Children in Grace have to grow, rising to greater capacity in knowing, being, doing and feeling, and to greater power from God. Therefore, above all things, they must be fed. They must be well fed or instructed, because they are in danger of having their cravings perversely satisfied with error.

Youth are susceptible to evil doctrine. Whether we teach young Christians the Truth of God or not, the devil will be sure to teach them error. They will hear of it, somehow, even if they are watched by the most careful guardians. The only way to keep chaff out of the child’s little measure is to fill it to the brim with good wheat. Oh that the Spirit of God may help us to do this! The more the young are taught, the better—it will keep them from being misled. We are specially exhorted to feed them because they are so likely to be overlooked. I am afraid our sermons often go over the heads of the younger folk, who, nevertheless, may be as true Christians as the older ones. Blessed is he that can so speak as to be understood by a child! Blessed is that godly woman who, in her class, so adapts herself to girlish modes of thought that the Truth of God from her heart streams into the children’s hearts without let or hindrance!

We ought, especially, to feed the young because this work is so profitable. Do what we may with persons converted late in life, we can never make much of them. We are very glad of them for their own sakes, but at 70, what remains, even, if they live another 10 years? Train up a child

and he may have 50 years of holy service before him! We are glad to welcome those who come into the vineyard at the 11th hour, but they have hardly taken their pruning-hook and their spade before the sun goes down—and their short day’s work is ended. The time spent in training the late convert is greater than the space reserved for his actual service. But you take a child-convert and teach him well and, as early piety often becomes eminent piety, and that eminent piety may have a stretch of years before it in which God may be glorified and others may be blessed, such work is profitable in a high degree!

It is also most beneficial work for ourselves. It exercises our humility and helps to keep us lowly and meek. It also trains our patience. Let those who doubt this, try it, for even young Christians exercise the patience of those who believe in them and are therefore anxious that they should justify their confidence! If you want big-souled, large-hearted men or women, look for them among those who are much engaged among the young, bearing with their follies and sympathizing with their weaknesses for Jesus’ sake!

You see the sphere which is presented to your zealous activity. Will you not occupy it? Many of you are already engaged in it—see to it that you fulfill your high calling—and to the utmost, feed the lambs!

II. Secondly, let us speak of THE MAN who is to do this. I look upon my text as addressed, not to Peter, only, but to those who are like Peter. What if I say it is addressed to us all? As servants and lovers of Jesus, He says to us, “Feed My lambs.” Who should do it? Christ selected Simon Peter as a leading man. He was one of the chief of the Apostles, if we may use such a word. He was one of the triumvirate that led the van—Peter, James and John. But though a leading man, he was to feed the *lambs*, for no man may think himself too great to care for the young.

The best of the Church are none too good for this work. And, dear Friends, do not think because you have other service to do, that, therefore, you should take no interest in this form of holy work, but kindly, according to your opportunities, stand ready to help the little ones and to cheer those whose chief calling it is to attend to them. To us all this message comes—“Feed My lambs.” To the minister and to all who have any knowledge of the things of God, the commission is given. See to it that you look after the children that are in Christ Jesus. Peter was a leader among Believers, yet he must feed the *lambs*.

But he was especially a warm-hearted man. Simon Peter was not a Welshman, but he had a great deal of what we know as Welsh fire in him. He was just the sort of man to interest the young. Children delight to gather round a fire, whether it is on the hearth or in the heart. Certain persons appear to be made of ice and, from these, children speedily shrink away—congregations or classes grow smaller every Sunday when cold-blooded creatures preside over them! But when a man or a woman has a kindly heart, the children seem to gather readily, just as flies in these autumn days swarm on a warm sunny wall. Therefore Jesus says to warm-hearted Simon, “Feed My lambs.” He is the man for the office!

Simon Peter was, moreover, an experienced man. He had known his own weaknesses. He had felt the pangs of conscience. He had sinned much and had been much forgiven and now he was brought, in tender humility, to confess the love and loveliness of Jesus. We need experienced men and women to talk to converted children and to tell them what the Lord has done for them, and what have been their dangers, their sins, their sorrows and their comforts. The young are glad to hear the story of those who have been further on the road than they have. I may say of experienced saints—their lips keep knowledge. Experience lovingly narrated is suitable food for young Believers, instruction such as the Lord is likely to bless to their nourishing in Grace.

Simon Peter was now a greatly indebted man. He owed much to Jesus Christ, according to that rule of the Kingdom—he loves much to whom much has been forgiven! Oh, you that have never entered upon this service for Christ and yet might do it well, I beseech you, consider your obligation to Jesus! The state of our schools at the present moment is a strong argument for your aid! We have plenty of children and few teachers—around this place of worship many schools are doing their work in a lame and halting manner for lack of teachers. O you who owe so much to Christ, will you not feed His lambs? Ought you not to be forward to offer yourselves? Will you refuse Him? Come forward at once and say, "I have left this work to younger hands, but I will do so no longer. I have experience and I trust I yet retain a warm heart within my bosom. I will go and join these workers who are steadily feeding the lambs in the name of the Lord!"

So far as to the man who is called to feed the lambs.

III. Thirdly, when the Lord calls a man to a work, He gives him THE PREPARATION necessary for it. How was Peter prepared for feeding Christ's lambs? First, by being fed, himself. The Lord gave him a breakfast before giving him a commission. You cannot feed lambs or sheep, either, unless you are fed yourself. It is quite right for you to be teaching a great part of the Lord's-Day, but I think a teacher is very unwise who does not come to hear the Gospel preached and get a meal for his own soul. First be fed, and then feed!

But especially Peter was prepared for feeding the lambs by being with his Master. He would never forget that morning and all the incidents of it. It was Christ's voice that he heard—it was Christ's look that pierced him to the heart! He breathed the air which surrounded the risen Lord and this fellowship with Jesus perfumed Peter's heart and tuned Peter's speech, that he might afterwards go forth and feed the lambs. I commend to you the study of instructive books, but above all I commend the study of Christ! Let *Him* be your library! Get near to Jesus. An hour's communion with Jesus is the best preparation for teaching either the young or the old.

Peter was also prepared in a more painful way than that, namely, by self-examination. The question came to him thrice over, "Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me? Do you love Me? Do you love Me?" Often the vessel needs scouring with self-examination before the Lord can fitly use it to

convey the Living Water to thirsting ones. It never hurts a true-hearted man to search his own spirit and to be searched and tried by his Lord. It is the hypocrite who is afraid of the truth which tests his profession—he dreads trying discourses and trying meditations—but the genuine man wants to know for certain that he really does love Christ and, therefore, he looks within him and questions and cross-questions himself.

Mainly, dear Friends, that examination should be exercised concerning our love, for the best preparation for teaching Christ’s lambs is love—love to Jesus and to them. We cannot be priests on their behalf unless, like Aaron, we wear their names upon our breasts. We must love or we cannot bless! Teaching is poor work when love is gone—it is like a blacksmith working without fire, or a builder without mortar. A shepherd that does not love his sheep is a hireling and not a shepherd! He will flee in the time of danger and leave his flock to the wolf. Where there is no love, there will be no life—living lambs are not to be fed by dead men!

See, Brothers and Sisters, we preach and teach love—our subject is the love of God in Christ Jesus! How can we teach this if we have no love, ourselves? Our objective is to create love in the hearts of those we teach and to foster it where it already exists. But how can we convey the fire, if it is not kindled in our own hearts? How can we promote the flame whose hands are damp and dripping with worldliness and indifference, so that he acts on the child’s heart rather as a bucket of water than as a flame of fire? These lambs of the flock live in the love of Christ—shall they not live in ours? He calls them His lambs and so they are—shall we not love them for His sake?

They were chosen in love; they were redeemed in love; they have been called in love; they have been washed in love; they have been fed by love and they will be kept by love till they come to the green pastures on the hilltops of Heaven! You and I will be out of gear with the vast machinery of Divine Love unless our souls are full of affectionate zeal for the good of the beloved ones! Love is the grandest preparation for the ministry, whether exercised in the congregation or in the class. Love and then feed! If you love, feed! If you do not love, then wait till the Lord has quickened you and lay not your unhallowed hand to this sacred service!

Thus I have described the sphere, the man, and his preparation.

IV. Let us now consider THE WORK, “Feed My lambs.” I have already given you the gist of this subject. With the weak of the flock, with the new converts in the flock, with the young children in the flock, our principal business is to *feed*. Every sermon, every lesson should be a feeding sermon and a feeding lesson. It is of little use to stand and thump the Bible and call out, “Believe, believe, believe!” when nobody knows what is to believe! I see no use in fiddles and tambourines—neither lambs nor sheep can be fed upon brass bands! There must be doctrine—solid, sound, Gospel doctrine to constitute real feeding. When you have meat on the table, then ring the dinner bell—but the bell feeds nobody if no food is served up.

Getting children to meet in the morning and the afternoon is a waste of their steps and yours if you do not set before them soul-saving, soul-

sustaining Truth of God. Feed the lambs—you need not pipe to them, nor put garlands round their necks—but feed them. This feeding is humble, lowly, unostentatious work. Do you know the name of a shepherd? I have known the names of one or two who follow that calling, but I never heard anybody speak of them as great men. Their names are not in the papers, nor do we hear of them as a trade with a grievance, claiming to be noticed by the legislature. Shepherds are generally quiet, unobtrusive people. When you look at the shepherd, you would not see any difference between him and the plowman, or the coal miner. He plods on uncomplainingly through the winter and in the early spring he has no rest, night or day, because the lambs are needing him—this he does year after year—and yet he will never be made a Knight of the Garter, nor even be exalted to the peerage, albeit he may have done far more useful work than those who are floated into rank upon their own beer barrels.

So in the case of many a faithful teacher of young children! You hear but little about him, yet he is doing grand work for which future ages will call him blessed. His Master knows all about him and we shall hear of him in that Day—perhaps not till then. Feeding the lambs is careful work, too, for lambs cannot be fed on anything you please, especially Christ’s lambs. You can soon poison young Believers with bad teaching. Christ’s lambs are all too apt to eat herbs which are deleterious—it is necessary that we are cautious where we lead them. If men are to take heed what they hear, how much more should we take heed what we teach? It is careful work, the feeding of each lamb, separately, and the teaching of each child, by itself, the Truth of God which it is best able to receive.

Moreover, this is continuous work. “Feed My lambs,” is not for a season, but for all time. Lambs could not live if the shepherd only fed them once a week. I reckon they would die between Sunday and Sunday—therefore, good teachers of the young look after them all the days of the week as they have opportunity—and they are careful about their souls with prayer and holy example when they are not teaching them by word of mouth. The shepherding of lambs is daily, hourly work. When is a shepherd’s work over? How many hours a day does he labor? He will tell you that in lambing-time he is never done. He sleeps when he can, taking much less than forty winks, and then rousing himself for action. It is so with those who feed Christ’s lambs—they rest not till God saves and sanctifies their dear ones.

It is laborious work, too. At least he who does not labor at it will have a terrible account to render. Do you think a minister’s life is an easy one? I tell you that he who makes it so will find it hard enough when he comes to die. Nothing so exhausts a man who is called to it, as the care of souls, and so it is, in measure, with all who teach—they cannot do good without spending themselves. You must study the lessons. You must bring forth something fresh to your class. You must instruct and impress. I have no doubt you are often driven very hard for material and wonder how you will get through the next Lord’s-Day.

I know you are sorely pressed, at times, if you are worth your salt. You dare not rush to your class unprepared, to offer to the Lord that which

costs you nothing. There must be labor if the food is to be wisely placed before the lambs, so that they can receive it. And all this has to be done in a singularly choice spirit—the true shepherd spirit is an amalgam of many precious Graces! He is hot with zeal, but he is not fiery with passion. He is gentle and yet he rules his class. He is loving, but he does not wink at sin. He has power over the lambs, but he is not domineering or sharp. He has cheerfulness, but not levity; freedom, but not license; solemnity, but not gloom. He who cares for lambs should be a lamb, himself, and, blessed be God, there is a Lamb before the Throne of God who cares for all of us and does so the more effectually because He is in all things made like unto us!

The Shepherd spirit is a rare and priceless gift. A successful pastor or a successful teacher in a school will be found to have special characteristics which distinguish him from his fellows. A bird, when it is sitting on its eggs, or when the little ones are newly-hatched, has about it a mother-spirit, so that it devotes all its life to the feeding of its little ones. Other birds may be taking their pleasure on the wing, but this bird sits still the whole day and night, or else its only flights are to provide for gaping mouths which seem to be never filled!

A passion has taken possession of the bird and something like it comes over the true soul-winner! He would gladly die to win souls! He pines, he pleads, he plods to bless those on whom his heart is set. If these could but be saved, he would pawn half his Heaven for it! Yes, and sometimes, in moments of enthusiasm, he is ready to barter Heaven altogether to win souls and, like Paul, he could wish himself accursed, so that they were but saved! This blessed extravagance many cannot understand because they never felt it—may the Holy Spirit work it in us, so we shall act as true shepherds towards the lambs. This, then, is the work, "Feed My lambs."

V. Lastly, let us consider THE MOTIVE. Our Lord Jesus heard Peter's assurance of love and then He said, "Feed My lambs." The motive for feeding the lambs was to be his Master's and not his own. Had Peter been the first Pope of Rome and had he been like his successors, which, indeed, he never was, surely it would have been fitting for the Lord to have said to Him, "Feed *your* sheep. I commit them to you, O Peter, Vicar of Christ on earth." No, no, no! Peter is to feed them, but they are not his, they are still Christ's. The work that you have to do for Jesus, Brothers and Sisters, is in no sense for yourselves. Your classes are not *your* children, but Christ's. This is not *my* Church, but Christ's.

The exhortation which Paul gave was, "Feed the Church of God," and Peter, himself, wrote in his Epistle, "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind." Let these lambs turn out what they may, the Glory is to be to the Master and not to the servant! And the whole time spent, labor given and energy put forth is, every particle of it, to redound to His praise whose these lambs are. Yet while this is a self-denying occupation, it is sweetly honorable, too, and we may attend to it feeling that it is one of the noblest forms of service!

Jesus says, "My lambs: My sheep." Think of them and wonder that Jesus should commit them to us! Poor Peter! Surely when that breakfast be-

gan, he felt awkward. I put myself into his place and I know I should hardly have liked to look across the table at Jesus, as I remembered that I denied Him with oaths and curses. Our Lord desired to set Peter quite at his ease by leading him to speak upon his love which had been so seriously placed in question. Like a good doctor, He puts in the knife where the anxiety was festering—He enquires, “Do you love Me?” It was not because Jesus did not know Peter’s love, but in order that *Peter* might know for sure and make a new confession, saying, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.”

The Lord is about to hold a tender controversy with the erring one for a few minutes that there might never be a controversy between Him and Peter again. When Peter said, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You,” you half thought that the Lord would answer, “Ah, Peter, and I love you.” But He did not and yet, He did. Perhaps Peter did not see His meaning, but we can see it, for our minds are not confused as Peter’s was on that memorable morning. Jesus did, in effect, say, “I love you so that I trust you with that which I purchased with My heart’s blood. The dearest thing I have in all the world is My flock. Look, Simon, I have such confidence in you; I so wholly rely on your integrity as being a sincere lover of Me, that I make you a shepherd to My sheep. These are all I have on earth, I gave everything for them, even My life, and now, Simon, son of Jonas, take care of them for Me.”

Oh, it was “kindly spoken.” It was the great heart of Christ saying, “Poor Peter, come right in and share My dearest cares.” Jesus so believed Peter’s declaration that He did not tell him so in words, but in deeds! Three times He said it, “Feed My lambs; feed My sheep; feed My sheep,” to show how much He loved him. When the Lord Jesus loves a man very much, He gives him much to *do* or much to *suffer*. Many of us have been plucked, like brands, from the burning, for we were “enemies to God by wicked works.” And now we are in the Church among His friends and our Savior trusts us with His dearest ones! I wonder, when the prodigal son came back and the father received him, whether when market-day came, he sent his younger son to market to sell the wheat and bring home the money. Most of you would have said, “I am glad the boy is back, but at the same time, I shall send his elder brother to do the business, for he has always stuck by me.”

As for myself, the Lord Jesus took me in as a poor prodigal son and it was not many weeks before He put me in trust with the Gospel, that greatest of all treasures—this was a grand token of love! I know of none to excel it. The commission given to Peter proved how thoroughly the breach was healed—how fully the sin was forgiven—for Jesus took the man who had cursed and sworn in denial of Him and bade him feed His lambs and sheep! Oh, blessed work, not for yourselves, and yet for yourselves! He that serves himself shall lose himself, but he that loses himself does really serve himself after the best possible fashion! The master motive of a good shepherd is love. We are to feed Christ’s lambs out of love. First, as a proof of love. “If you love Me, keep My Commandments.” If you love Me, feed My lambs. If you love Christ, show it and show it by doing good to

others, by laying yourself out to help others that Jesus may have joy of them.

Next, as an inflowing of love. “Feed My lambs,” for if you love Christ a little, when you begin to do good, you will soon love Him more! Love grows by active exercise. It is like the blacksmith’s arm which increases in strength by wielding the hammer. Love loves till it loves more and it loves more till it loves more—and it still loves more till it loves most of all—and then it is not satisfied, but aspires after enlargement of heart that it may copy yet more fully the perfect model of love in Christ Jesus, the Savior! Besides being an inflowing of love, the feeding of lambs is an outflow of love. How often have we told our Lord that we loved Him when we were preaching? And I do not doubt you teachers feel more of the pleasure of love to Jesus when you are busy with your classes than when you are by yourselves at home.

A person may go home and sit down and groan out—

**“Tis a point I long to know
Oft it causes anxious thought,”**

and wipe his forehead and rub his eyes, and get into the dumps without end. But if he will rise up and *work* for Jesus, the point he longs to know will soon be settled, for love will come pouring out of his heart till he can no longer question whether it is there! So let us abide in this blessed service for Christ that it may be the delight of love, the very ocean in which love shall swim, the sunlight in which it shall bask! The recreation of a loving soul is work for Jesus Christ! And among the highest and most delicious forms of this heavenly recreation is the feeding of young Christians—endeavoring to build them up in knowledge and understanding—that they may become strong in the Lord. The Lord bless you, dear fellow-laborers in the Sunday school, from this time forth and for evermore! Amen.

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DO YOU LOVE ME?

NO. 117

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, FEBRUARY 15, 1857,
REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.**

“Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, Do you love Me more than these? He said unto Him, Yes, Lord, You know that I love You. He said unto him, Feed My lambs. He said to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me? He said unto Him, Yes, Lord You know that I love You. He said unto him, Feed My sheep. He said unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me? Peter was grieved because He said unto him the third time, do you love Me? And he said unto Him, Lord You know all things. You know that I love You. Jesus said unto him, Feed My sheep.”
John 21:15-17.

How very much like Christ before His crucifixion was Christ after His Resurrection! Although He had lain in the grave and descended into the regions of the dead and had retraced his steps to the land of the living, yet how marvelously similar He was in His manners and how unchanged in His disposition. His Passion, His death and His Resurrection could not alter His Character as a Man any more than they could affect His attributes as God. He is Jesus forever the same. And when He appeared, again, to His disciples, He had cast aside none of His kind manners. He had not lost a particle of interest in their welfare. He addressed them just as tenderly as before and called them His children and His friends. Concerning their temporal condition He was mindful, for He said, “Children, have you any meat?” And He was certainly quite as watchful over their spiritual state, for after He had supplied their bodies by a rich draught from the sea, with fish (which possibly He had created for the occasion), He enquires after their souls’ health and prosperity. He began with the one who might be supposed to have been in the most sickly condition, the one who had denied his Master thrice and wept bitterly—even Simon Peter. “Simon, son of Jonas,” said Jesus, “Do you love Me?”

Without preface, for we shall have but little time this morning—may God help us to make good use of it!—we shall mention three things. First *a solemn question*—“Do you love Me?” Secondly, *a discreet answer*, “Yes, Lord, You know that I love You.” And thirdly, *a required demonstration of the fact*. “He said unto him, Feed My lambs.” Or again, “Feed My sheep.”

I. First, then, here was a SOLEMN QUESTION which our Savior put to Peter, not for His own information, for, as Peter said, “You know that I love You,” but for Peter’s examination. It is well, especially after a foul sin, that the Christian should well probe the wound. It is right that he should examine himself, for sin gives grave cause for suspicion and it would be wrong for a Christian to live an hour with a suspicion concerning his spiritual estate unless he occupies that hour in examination of himself! Self-examination should more especially follow sin, though it ought to be the daily habit of every Christian and should be practiced by him perpetually. Our Savior, I say, asked this question of Peter, that he might ask it of himself. So we may suppose it is asked of us, this morning, that we may put it to our own hearts. Let each one ask himself, then, in his Savior’s name, for his own profit, “Do you love the Lord? Do you love the Savior? Do you love the ever-blessed Redeemer?”

Note what this question was. *It was a question concerning Peter’s love.* He did not say, “Simon, son of Jonas, do you *fear* Me.” He did not say, “Do you *admire* Me? Do you *adore* Me?” Nor was it even a question concerning his faith. He did not say, “Simon, son of Jonas, do you *believe* in Me?” But He asked him another question, “Do you *love* Me?” I take it that is because love is the very best evidence of piety—love is the brightest of all the Divine Graces—and hence it becomes the best evidence. I do not believe love to be superior to faith. I believe faith to be the groundwork of our salvation. I think faith to be the mother Grace and love springs from it. Faith I believe to be the root Grace and love grows from it. But then, faith is not an evidence for brightness equal to love. Faith, if we have it, is a sure and certain sign that we are God’s children and so is every other Grace a sure and certain one, but many of them cannot be seen by others. Love is a more sparkling one than any other. If I have a true fear of God in my heart, then am I God’s child. But since fear is a Grace that is more dim and has not that halo of glory over it that love has, love becomes one of the very best evidences and one of the easiest signs of discerning whether we are alive to the Savior! He who lacks love, must also lack every other Grace in the proportion in which he lacks love. If love is little, I believe it is a sign that faith is little, for he who believes much, loves much. If love is little, fear will be little and courage for God will be little. Whatever Graces there are, faith lies at the root of them all, yet do they so sweetly hang on love, that if love is weak, all the rest of the Graces most assuredly will be so. Our Lord asked Peter, then, that question, “Do you love Me?”

And note, again, *that He did not ask Peter anything about his doings.* He did not say, “Simon Peter, how much have you wept? How often have

you done penance on account of your great sin? How often have you on your knees sought mercy at My hand for the slight you have done to Me and for that terrible cursing and swearing wherewith you did disown your Lord, whom you had declared you would follow even to prison and to death?" No, it was not in reference to his *works* but in reference to the state of his *heart* that Jesus said, "Do you love Me?" He did this to teach us that though works do follow after a sincere love, yet love is more excellent than works—and works without love are not evidences worth having. We may have some tears, but they are not the tears that God shall accept if there is no love to Him. We may have some works, but they are not acceptable works if they are not done out of love to Him. We may perform very many of the outward ritual observances of religion, but unless love lies at the bottom, all these things are vain and useless! The question, then, "Do you love Me?" is a very vital question—far more so than one that merely concerns the outward conduct. It is a question that goes into the very heart and in such a way that it brings the whole heart to one question—for if love is wrong, everything else is wrong! "Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?"

Ah, dear Beloved, we have very much cause for asking ourselves this question! If our Savior were no more than a man like ourselves, He might often doubt whether we love Him at all. Let me just remind you of sundry things which give us very great cause to ask this question—"Do you love Me?" I will deal only with the last week. Come, my Christian Brothers and Sisters, look at your own conduct. Do not your sins make you doubt whether you love your Master? Come, look over the sins of this week—when you were speaking with an angry word and with a sullen look, might not your Lord have touched you and said, "Do you love Me?" When you were doing such-and-such a thing, which you right well know in your conscience was not according to His precept, might He not have said, "Do you love Me?" Can you not remember the murmuring words because something had gone wrong with you in business this week and you were speaking ill of the God of Providence for it? Oh, might not the loving Savior, with pity in His languid eyes, have said to you, "Do you love Me?" I need not stop to mention the various sins of which you have been guilty. You have sinned, I am sure, enough to give good ground for self-suspicion, if you did not still hang on this—that His love *to you*, not *your* love to Him, is the seal of your discipleship! Oh, do you not think within yourselves, "If I had loved Him more, would I have sinned so much? And oh, can I love Him when I have broken so many of His Commandments? Have I reflected His glorious Image to the world as I should have done? Have I not wasted many hours within this week that I might

have spent in winning souls to Him? Have I not thrown away many precious moments in light and frivolous conversation which I might have spent in earnest prayer? Oh, how many words have I uttered, which if they have not been filthy (as I trust they have not) yet have not been such as have ministered Grace to the hearers? Oh, how many follies have I indulged in? How many sins have I winked at? How many crimes have I covered over? How have I made my Savior's heart bleed? How have I done dishonor to His cause? How have I in some degree disgraced my heart's profession of love to Him?" Oh, ask these questions of yourself, Beloved and say, "Is this your kindness to your Friend?" But I hope this week has been one wherein you have sinned little openly as to the world, or even in your own estimation, as to open acts of crime.

But now let me put another question to you, *Does not your worldliness make you doubt?* How have you been occupied with the world, from Monday morning to the last hour of Saturday night? You have scarcely had time to think of Him. What corners have you pushed your Jesus into to make room for your bales of goods? How have you stowed Him away into one short five minutes, to make room for your ledger or your day-book? How little time have you given to Him! You have been occupied with the shop, with the exchange and the farmyard—and you have had little time to commune with Him! Come, just think! Remember any one day this week—can you say that your soul always flew upward with passionate desires to Him? Did you pant like a hart for your Savior during the week? No, perhaps there was a whole day went by and you scarcely thought of Him till the winding up of it. And then you could only upbraid yourself, "How have I forgotten Christ today? I have not beheld His Person. I have not walked with Him, I have not done as Enoch did! I knew He would come into the shop with me. I knew He is such a blessed Christ that He would stand behind the counter with me. I knew He was such a joyous Lord Jesus that He would walk through the market with me! But I left Him at home and forgot Him all the day long." Surely, surely, Beloved, when you remember your worldliness, you must say of yourself, "O Lord, you might well ask, 'Do you love Me?'"

Consider again, I beseech you, *how cold you have been this week at the Mercy Seat.* You have been there, for you can not live without it. You have lifted up your heart in prayer, for you are a Christian and prayer is as necessary to you as your breath! But oh, with what a poor asthmatic breath have you lived this week! How little have you breathed? Do you remember how hurried was your prayer on Monday morning, how driven you were on Tuesday night? Can you not recollect how languid was your heart when on another occasion you were on your knees? You have had

little wrestling this week—little agonizing. You have had little of the prayer which prevails! You have scarcely laid hold of the horns of the altar. You have stood in the distance and seen the smoke at the altar, but you have not laid hold of the horns of it. Come, ask yourself, do not your prayers make you doubt? I say, honestly before you all, my own prayers often make me doubt and I know nothing that gives me more grave cause of disquietude. When I labor to pray—oh, that rascally devil—fifty thousand thoughts he tries to inject to take me off from prayer! And when I will and must pray, oh, what an absence there is of that burning fervent desire! And when I would come right close to God—when I would weep my very eyes out in penitence and would believe and take the blessing—oh, what little faith and what little penitence there is! Verily, I have thought that prayer has made me more unbelieving than anything else! I could believe over the tops of my sins, but sometimes I can scarcely believe over the tops of my prayers—for oh, how cold is prayer when it is cold! Of all things that are bad when cold, I think prayer is the worst, for it becomes like a very mockery—instead of warming the heart, it makes it colder than it was before! It seems even to dampen its life and spirit and fills it full of doubts whether it is really a heir of Heaven and accepted of Christ. Oh, look at your cold prayers, Christian! And say is not your Savior right to ask this question very solemnly, “Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?”

But stop! Again—just one more word for you to reflect upon. Perhaps you have had much prayer and this has been a time of refreshing from the Presence of the Lord. But maybe you know you have not gone so far this week as you might have done in another exercise of godliness that is even better than prayer—I mean communion and fellowship. Oh, Beloved, you have this week had but little sitting under the apple tree and finding its shadow great delight to you! You have not gone much this week to the banquet house and had its banner of love over you! Come, think about it, how little have you seen your Lord this week? Perhaps He has been absent the greater part of the time. And have you not groaned? Have you not wept? Have you not sighed after Him? Surely, then, you cannot have loved Him as you should, or else you could not have borne His absence! You could not have endured it calmly if you had the affection for Him a sanctified spirit has for its Lord! You did have one sweet visit from Him in the week and why did you let Him go? Why did you not constrain Him to abide with you? Why did you not lay hold of the skirts of His garment and say, “Why should You be like a wayfaring man and as one that turns aside and tarries for a night? Oh, my Lord, You shall dwell with me! I will keep You. I will detain You in my company. I cannot

let You go! I love You and I will constrain You to dwell with me this night and the next day. As long as I can keep You, I will keep You.” But no, you were foolish. You did let Him go! Oh, Soul, why did you not lay hold of His arm and say, “I will not let You go”? But you did lay hold on Him so feebly, you did allow Him to depart so quickly, He might have turned round and said to you, as He said to Simon, “Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?”

Now, I have asked you all these questions because I have been asking them of myself. I feel that I must answer to nearly everyone of them, “Lord, there is great cause for me to ask myself that question,” and I think that most of you, if you are honest with yourselves, will say the same. I do not approve of the man who says, “I know I love Christ and I never have a doubt about it.” Because we often have reason to doubt ourselves, a Believer’s strong faith is not a strong faith in his own love to Christ—it is a strong faith in Christ’s love to him! There is no faith which always believes that it loves Christ. Strong faith has its conflicts and a true Believer will often wrestle in the very teeth of his own feelings. Lord, if I ever did love You, nevertheless, if I am not a saint, I am a sinner! Lord, I still believe. Help You my unbelief! The disciple can believe when he feels no love, for he can believe that Christ loves the soul. And when he has no evidence, he can go to Christ without evidence and lay hold of Him, just as He is, with naked faith and still hold fast by Him! Though he sees not His signs, though he walk in darkness and there is no light, still may he trust in the Lord and stay upon His God—but to be certain at all times that we love the Lord is quite another matter. About this we have need continually to question ourselves and most scrupulously to examine both the nature and the extent of our evidences.

II. And now I come to the second thing which is A DISCREET ANSWER. “Simon son of Jonas, do you love Me?” Simon gave a very good answer. Jesus asked him, in the first place, whether he loved Him better than others. Simon would not say that—he had once been a little proud—more than a little—and thought he was better than the other disciples. But this time he evaded that question. He would not say that he loved better than others. And I am sure there is no loving heart that will think it loves even better than the least of God’s children. I believe the higher a man is in Grace, the lower he will be in his own esteem and he will be the last person to claim any supremacy over others in the Divine Grace of love to Jesus! But mark how Simon Peter did answer—he did not answer as to the quantity but as to the quality of his love. He would assert that he loved Christ, but not that he loved Christ better than others. “Lord, I cannot say how much I love You, but You know all things,

You know that I love You. So far as I can assert—as to the quantity of my love, I cannot say much about it.”

But just notice, again, *the discreet manner in which Peter answered*. Some of us, if we had been asked that question, would have answered foolishly. We would have said, “Lord, I have preached for You so many times this week. Lord, I have distributed of my substance to the poor this week. Blessed be Your name, You have given me Grace to walk humbly, faithfully and honestly—and therefore, Lord, I think I can say, ‘I love You.’” We have brought our good works before our Master as being the evidences of our love. We should have said, “Lord, You have seen me during this week. I say as Nehemiah did of old, ‘Forget not my good works. O Lord, I thank you. I know they are Your gifts, but I think they are proofs of my love.’” That would have been a very good answer if we had been questioned by our fellow man and he had said, “You do not always love your Savior.” But it would be foolish for us to tell the Master that! Peter’s answer was wise—“Lord, You know that I love You.” You know the Master might have said to Peter, had he appealed to his works, “Yes, you may preach and yet not love Me. You may pray, after a fashion, and yet not love Me. You may do all these works and yet have no love to Me. I did not ask you what are the evidences of your love—I asked you the fact of it.” Very likely all my dear friends here would not have answered in the fashion I have supposed. But they would have said, “Love You, Lord? Why, my heart is all on fire towards You! I feel as if I could go to prison and to death for You! Sometimes, when I think of You, my heart is ravished with bliss. And when You are absent, O Lord, I moan and cry like a dove that has lost its mate! Yes, I feel I love You, O my Christ.” But that would have been very foolish, because although we may often rejoice in our own feelings—they are joyful things—it would not do to plead them with our Lord, for He might answer, “Ah, you feel joyful at the mention of My name. So, no doubt, has many a deluded one, because he had a fictitious faith and a fancied hope in Christ. Therefore the name of Christ seemed to gladden him. You say, ‘I have felt dull when You have been absent.’ That might have been accounted for from natural circumstances. You had a headache, perhaps, or some other ailment. “But,” you say, “I felt so happy when He was present that I thought I could die.” Ah, in such manner Peter had spoken many a time before, but a sorry mess he made of it when he trusted his feelings, for he would have sunk into the sea but for Christ—and eternally damned his soul, if it had not been for His Grace, when, with cursing and swearing he thrice denied his Lord! But no, Peter was wise. He did not bring forward his frames and feelings, nor did he bring his evidences—though they are good in themselves—he did

not bring them before Christ. But, as though he shall say, “Lord, I appeal to Your Omnipotence. I am not going to tell You that the volume of my heart must contain such-and-such matter, because there is such-and-such a mark on its cover, for, Lord, you can read inside of it. And, therefore I need not tell You what the title is, nor read over to You the index of the contents. Lord, You know that I love You.”

Now, could we, this morning, dear Friends, give such an answer as that to the question? If Christ should come here. If He were now to walk down these aisles and along the pews, could we appeal to His own Divine Omniscience, His Infallible knowledge of our hearts, that we all love Him? There is a test-point between a hypocrite and a real Christian. If you are a hypocrite, you might say, “Lord, my minister knows that I love You. Lord, the deacons know that I love You. They think I do, for they have given me a ticket. The members think I love You for they see me sitting at Your Table. My friends think I love You, for they often hear me talk about You.” But you could not say, “Lord, You know that I love You.” Your own heart is witness that your secret works belie your confession, for you are without prayer in secret and you can preach a 20 minute prayer in public! You are stingy and parsimonious in giving to the cause of Christ, but you can sport your name to be seen! You are an angry, petulant creature, but when you come to the House of God, you have a pious whine and talk like a canting hypocrite, as if you were a very gentlemanly man and never seemed angry! You can take your Maker’s name in vain, but if you hear another do it, you would be mighty severe upon him! You appear to be very pious and yet if men knew of that widow’s house that is sticking in your throat and of that orphan’s patrimony which you have taken from him, you would leave off trumpeting your good deeds! Your own heart tells you that you are a liar before God! But you, O sincere Christian, you can welcome your Lord’s question and answer it with holy fear and gracious confidence! Yes, you may welcome the question. Such a question was never put to Judas. The Lord loved Peter so much that He was jealous over him, or He never would have thus challenged his attachment. And in this kind does He often appeal to the affections of those whom He dearly loves. The response likewise is recorded for you, “Lord, You know all things.” Can you not look up, though scorned by men—though even rejected by your minister, though kept back by the deacons and looked upon with disesteem by some—can you not look up and say, “Lord, You know all things, You know that I love You”? Do it not in brag and bravado. But if you can do it sincerely, be happy! Bless God that He has given you a sincere love to the Savior and ask Him to increase it from a spark to a flame and from a grain to a

mountain. “Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me? Yes, Lord, You know all things. You know that I love You.”

III. And now here is a DEMONSTRATION REQUIRED—“Feed My lambs—feed My sheep.”

That was Peter’s demonstration. It is not necessary that it should be our way of showing our love. There are different ways for different disciples. There are some who are not qualified to feed lambs, for they are only little lambs themselves. There are some that could not feed sheep, for they cannot at present see afar off. They are weak in the faith and not qualified to teach at all. They have other means, however, of showing their love to the Savior. Let us offer a few words upon this matter.

“Do you love Me?” Then one of the best evidences you can give is *to feed My lambs*. Have I two or three little children that love and fear My name? If you want to do a deed which shall show that you are a true lover and not a proud pretender, go and feed them! Are there a few little ones whom I have purchased with My blood in an infant class? Do you want to do something which shall give evidence that you are, indeed, Mine? Then sit not down with the Elders, dispute not in the temple! I did that Myself—but go and sit down with the young orphans and teach them the way to the Kingdom. “Feed My lambs.”

Dearly Beloved, I have been of late perplexing myself with one thought—that our Church government is not Scriptural. It is Scriptural as far as it goes. But it is not according to the whole of Scripture! Neither do we practice many excellent things that ought to be practiced in our Churches. We have received into our midst a large number of young persons. In the ancient Churches there was what was called the Catechism Class—I believe there ought to be such a class now. The Sabbath school, I believe, is in Scripture. And I think there ought to be on the Sabbath afternoon, a class of the young people of this Church, who are already members, to be taught by some of the elder members. Nowadays, when we get the lambs, we just turn them adrift in the meadow and there we leave them. There are more than a hundred young people in this Church who positively, though they are members, ought not to be left alone! But some of our Elders, if we have Elders—and some who ought to be ordained Elders—should make it their business to teach them further, to instruct them in the faith and so keep them hard and fast by the Truth of Jesus Christ. If we had Elders, as they had in all the Apostolic Churches, this might in some degree be attended to. But now the hands of our deacons are full—they do much of the work of the eldership but they cannot do any more than they are doing, for they are toiling hard already. I would that some here whom God has gifted and who have time, would

spend their afternoons in taking a class of those younger Brothers and Sisters who live around them, to their houses for prayer and pious instruction, that the lambs of the flock may be fed. By God's help I will take care of the sheep. I will endeavor under God to feed them, as well as I can, and preach the Gospel to them. Yonder that are older in the faith and stronger in it need not that careful cautious feeding which is required by the lambs. There are many in our midst, good pious souls who love the Savior as much as the sheep do. But one of their complaints which I have often heard is, "Oh, Sir, I joined your Church. I thought they would be all Brothers and Sisters to me and that I could speak to them and they would teach me and be kind to me. Oh, Sir, I came and nobody spoke to me." I say, "Why did you not speak to them, first?" "Oh," they reply, "I did not like." Well, they should have liked, I am well aware, but if we had some means of feeding the lambs, it would be a good way of proving to our Savior and to the world that we really do endeavor to follow Him! I hope some of my friends will take that hint. And if, in concert with me, my Brothers in office will endeavor to do something in that way, I think it will be no mean proof of their love to Christ. "Feed My lambs," is a great duty—let us try to practice it as we are able!

But, Beloved, we cannot all do that. The lambs cannot feed the lambs. The sheep cannot exactly feed the sheep. There must be some appointed to these offices. And therefore, in the Savior's name, allow me to say to some of you that there are different kinds of proof you must give. "Simon son of Jonas, do you love Me? He said unto Him, Yes, Lord, You know that I love You." Then preserve that Prayer Meeting. Attend to it—see that it is kept going and that it does not fall to the ground. "Simon son of Jonas, do you love Me?" See to your servants—see that they go to the House of God and instruct them in the faith. There is a Sister _____. Do you love Christ? "Yes, Lord." Perhaps it is as much as you can do—perhaps it is as much as you ought to do—to train up your children in the fear of the Lord! It is of no use to trouble yourselves about duties that God never meant you to do and leave your own vineyard at home to itself. Just take care of your own children. Perhaps that is as good a proof as Christ wants of you that you are feeding His lambs. You have your own office, to which Christ has appointed you—seek not to run away from it but endeavor to do what you can to serve your Master therein! But, I beseech you, do *something* to prove your love! Do not be sitting down doing nothing. Do not be folding your hands and arms, for such people perplex a minister most and bring the most ruin on a Church—such as do nothing! You are always the most ready to find fault. I have marked it here, that the very people who are quarrelling with everything,

are the people that are doing nothing, or are good for nothing! They are sure to quarrel with everything else, because they are doing nothing themselves—and, therefore, they have time to find fault with other people! Do not, O Christian, say that you love Christ and yet do nothing for Him! Doing is a good sign of living. And he can scarcely be alive unto God that does nothing for God! We must let our works evidence the sincerity of our love to our Master. “Oh,” you say, “but we are doing a little.” Can you do any more? If you can, then do it! If you cannot do more, then God requires no more of you. Doing to the utmost of your ability is your best proof. But if you can do more, inasmuch as you keep back any part of what you can do, in that degree you give cause to yourselves to distrust your love to Christ! Do all you can to your very utmost. Serve Him abundantly. Yes and superabundantly—seek to magnify His name! And if ever you do too much for Christ, come and tell me of it. If you ever do too much for Christ, tell the angels of it—but you will never do that! He gave Himself for you—give yourselves to Him!

You see, my Friends, how I have been directing you to search your own hearts and I am almost afraid that some of you will mistake my intention. Have I a poor soul here who really deplores the listlessness of her affections? Perhaps you have determined to ask yourself as many questions as you can with a view of reviving the languid sparks of love. Let me tell you, then, that the pure flame of love must be always nourished where it was first kindled. When I admonished you to look to yourself, it was only to detect the evil. Would you find the remedy, you must direct your eyes, not to your own heart, but to the blessed heart of Jesus—to the Beloved One—to my gracious Lord and Master! And would you be ever conscious of the sweet swellings up of your heart towards Him, you can only prove this by a constant sense of His tender love to you! I rejoice to know that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Love and the ministry of the Spirit is endeared to me in nothing so much as this—that He takes of the things of Jesus and shows them to me, spreading abroad the Savior’s love in my heart until it constrains all my passions, awakens the most tender of all tender emotions, reveals my union to Him and occasions my strong desire to serve Him! Let not *love* appear to you as a stern duty, or an arduous effort! Rather look to Jesus, yield yourself up to His gracious charms till you are ravished with His beauty and preciousness! But ah, if you are slack in the proofs you give, I shall know you are not walking with Him in holy communion.

And allow me to suggest one profitable way of improving the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper. That is—while you are partaking of it, my Friends, renew your dedication to Christ. Seek this morning to give yourselves

over afresh to your Master. Say with your hearts, what I shall now say with my lips—"Oh, my precious Lord Jesus, I do love You! You know I have in some degree given myself to You up to this time, thanks to Your Grace! Blessed be Your name that You have accepted the deeds of so unworthy a servant. O Lord, I am conscious that I have not devoted myself to You as I ought. I know that in many things I have come short. I will make no resolution to live better to Your honor, but I will offer the prayer that You would help me to do so. Oh, Lord, I give to You my health, my life, my talents, my power and all I have! You have bought me and bought me wholly—then, Lord, take me this morning, baptize me in the Spirit. Let me now feel an entire affection to Your blessed Person. May I have that love which conquers sin and purifies the soul—that love which can dare danger and encounter difficulties for Your sake! May I henceforth and forever be a consecrated vessel of mercy, having been chosen of You from before the foundation of the world! Help me to hold fast that solemn choice of Your service which I desire this morning, by Your Grace to renew." And when you drink the blood of Christ and eat His flesh spiritually—in the type and in the emblem, then I beseech you, let the solemn recollection of His agony and suffering for you inspire you with a greater love, that you may be more devoted to His service than ever! If that is done, I shall have the best of Churches. If that is done by us, the Holy Spirit helping us to carry it out, we shall all be good men and true, holding fast by Him—and we shall not need to be ashamed in the awful day.

As for you who have never given yourselves to Christ, I dare not tell you to renew a vow which you have never made! Nor dare I ask you to make a vow which you would never keep. I can only pray for you, that God the Savior would be pleased to reveal Himself unto your heart, that "a sense of blood-bought pardon" may "dissolve your hearts of stone." That you may be brought to give yourselves to Him, knowing that if you have done that, you have the best proof that He has given Himself for you! May God Almighty bless you—those of you who depart, may He dismiss with His blessing—and those who remain, may you receive His favor, for Christ's sake. Amen.

Adapted from *The C.H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

“DO YOU LOVE ME?”

NO. 1281

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 27 1876,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?”
John 21:16.*

This is a very short and simple text and some would think it very easy to say all that can be said upon it, but, indeed, it is a very large text and too full of meaning for me to attempt to expound it all. The words are few, but the thoughts suggested are very many. There are subtle meanings, too, in the original Greek well worth considering, and allusions which deserve to be followed out. I intend, at this time, to confine myself to one point, and to ask your consideration of one thought only. May the Spirit of God prepare our hearts for our meditation and impress the Truth of God upon them. My one point is this—*our Lord asked Peter whether he had a love to His Person*. The inquiry is not concerning his love to the kingdom of God, or the people of God—it begins and ends with his love to the Son of God.

“Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?” He does not say, “Do you now perceive the prudence of My warnings when I bade you watch and pray? Simon, son of Jonas, will you, from now on, cease from your self-confidence and take heed to My admonitions?” It is not even, “Do you now believe My doctrines? Do you now trust in One whom, the other day, you denied?” Neither is it asked, “Are you pleased with My precepts? Are you a believer in My claims? Will you still confess Me to be the Son of the Highest?” No, these matters are not brought under question, but the one inquiry is, “Do you love Me? Have you a personal attachment for Me, to My very Self?”

He calls him by his old, unconverted name, Simon, son of Jonas, to remind him of what Grace had done for him and then He asks only about his love. The question deals with personal attachment to a *personal* Christ—and that is my sole subject. Observe that our ever wise and tender Savior questioned Peter about his love in plain terms. There was no beating about the bush. He went at once to the point, for it is not a matter about which ambiguity and doubt can be endured. As the physician feels his patient’s pulse to judge his heart, so the Lord Jesus tested, at once, the pulse of Peter’s soul. He did not say, “Simon, son of Jonas, do you repent of your folly?” Repentance is a very blessed Grace and very necessary, but it was wiser to look, at once, to Peter’s *love*, because it is quite certain that if a disciple loves his master he will deeply grieve for ever having denied him.

The Lord does not even ask His follower about his faith which might well have been put under question, for he had with oaths said, “I know

not the Man.” It would have been a highly important question, but it was answered when Peter avowed his love, for he who loves, believes, and no man can love a Savior in whom he does not believe. The Lord left every other point out of His question, or perhaps I ought, rather, to say *concentrated* every other point into this *one* inquiry—“Do you love Me?” Learn from this fact that one thing is necessary—love to Jesus is the chief, the vital point to look to.

This question the Lord asked three times, as if to show that it is of the first, of the second and of the third importance—as if it comprised *all* else and, therefore, He would again and again and again insist upon it—as orators dwell with repetitions and emphatic sentences upon topics which they would urge home upon their hearers. This nail was meant to be well fastened, for it is struck on the head with blow after blow. With unvarying tone and look, the Lord enquired, “Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?” It shows what weight our Savior attached to the matter of his love, that He asked him about *that*, about *that only* and about *that three times over*.

When you are examining yourselves, look mainly to your hearts and make thorough inquisition into your love. Is Jesus really loved by you? Have you a deep attachment to His Person? Whatever else you trifle with, be earnest here! Remember that the Lord Jesus, Himself, asked the question and He asked it until He grieved Peter. So long as he was but recognized as a *disciple*, Peter must have felt ready to receive the severest possible rebuke and think himself gently treated. Therefore it was not easy to grieve him. Our Lord was slow at all times to cause pain to any true heart, yet on this occasion, for wise reasons, He reiterated His inquiry till He touched Peter’s unhealed wounds and made them smart. Had he not made his Master’s heart bleed? And was it not fit that he should feel heart-wounds himself? A threefold denial demanded a threefold confession—and the grief he had caused was fitly brought to his memory by the grief he felt.

Now, this morning, if I press this question until I grieve some of you, till I grieve myself, also, I shall not be censurable for having done so. To comfort you would be a good work, but sometimes it may be better to grieve you. Not always is sweet food the best thing we can bring you—bitter medicine is sometimes more important. I shall not have pushed the question beyond its legitimate sphere if I should so present it as to stir your hearts even to anguish! True love has more or less of pain about it. Only the mere *pretender* passes through the world without anxious inquiry and heart-searching. Better far that you should be grieved today and be found right at last, than that you should presumptuously feel yourselves secure and be deceived in the end!

We remarked that the question was put by our Lord Himself. What if the Lord Jesus should meet you today and should say to each one of you, “Do you love Me?” If the question came at the end of one of our sermons, or just as we had done teaching, I should not wonder if it startled us. Found, as we are, in His House, having just sung sweet hymns in His honor, having united in prayer and heartily joined in His worship, it would

seem strange to be questioned as to our love to Him and yet it would not be unnecessary. Imagine, then, that your Lord has found you quite alone and is standing before you. Think of Him touching you with His hand and gently asking, “After all, do you love Me?”

How would you feel under such a question? Would you not be struck with it and, perhaps, with shame begin to tremble and think over a dozen reasons why such a searching question was suggested to you just now? And if the Lord were to repeat it three times and each time put it distinctly to *you*, and to you only, would you not feel great searchings of heart? Yet would I have you so receive the question. Let it come to you now as from Jesus. Forget that it is spoken by the minister, or written in the text. Bear it only as spoken by Jesus, by that same Jesus who has redeemed you from death and Hell by His most precious blood!

He addresses it to you rather than to others—is there not a cause? Singling you out of the company, He gazes on you fixedly and says, “Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?”—you know why there is such cause to question you. Answer for yourself, alone, for He puts the enquiry only to you. Never mind Nathanael, now, nor Thomas, nor the two sons of Zebedee—“Do you love Me?” Really, truly does your heart beat true towards Jesus of Nazareth? Come, Peter, yes or no? You say, “Yes,” but is it so? Is it so? Is it so? I want the enquiry to come to my own soul and to yours this morning, as if Jesus really stood before each one of us and said, “Do you love Me?”

May the Lord grant us Grace to make solemn enquiry as to this matter, to bear honest witness and to give a true answer which shall be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

I. Our first observation shall be this—LOVE TO THE PERSON OF CHRIST MAY BE ABSENT FROM OUR HEARTS. Unhappy thought and yet most certainly true! Even in *our* hearts there may be no love for Christ! I know of nothing which can screen any one of us from the necessity of the question. Our gifts and apparent Graces may prevent our *fellow creatures* questioning us, but nothing should prevent our questioning *ourselves*, for certainly there is nothing which will prevent the Lord, Himself, from putting the enquiry to us.

No outward religiousness renders this enquiry needless. Are we professors of religion? Are we very constant in attending to outward forms of worship? Do we enter very heartily into all the public exercises of God’s House? Yes, but there are thousands who do that, hundreds of thousands who do that every Lord’s-Day and yet they do not love Christ! My Brothers and Sisters, are not multitudes wrapped up in forms and ceremonies? If the service pleases the eyes and the ears, are they not quite content? Love to the Person of Christ has not occurred to the mass of avowed worshippers of Jesus!

We know others to whom the end-all and be-all of religion is an orthodox statement of doctrine. So long as the preaching is according to the confession of faith and every word and act is piously correct, they are well pleased. But no love to Jesus ever stirs their hearts—religion to them is

not an exercise of the heart at all—it is mere brain work and hardly that. They know nothing of the living soul going out towards a living Person, a bleeding heart knit to another bleeding heart, a life subsisting on another life and in love with it. We know Brothers and Sisters who carry this very far and if the preacher differs from them in the merest shade, they are overwhelmed with pious horror at his unsoundness—and they will not hear him again—even if he preaches Christ most preciously in all the rest of his discourse, it is nothing, because he cannot say correctly their “Shibboleth.”

What is orthodoxy without love, but a catacomb to bury dead religion in? It is a cage without a bird! The gaunt skeleton of a man, out of which the life has fled! I am afraid that the general current of Church life runs too much towards externals and too little towards deep burning love to the Person of Christ. If you preach much about emotional religion and the heart-work of godliness, cold-blooded professors label you as rather mystical and begin to talk of Madame Guyon and the danger of the Quietist school of religion. We would not mind having a little spice of that, even if we were blamed for it, for, after all, the realizing of Christ is the grand thing! The faith which is most blessed is faith which deals most fully with the Person of Jesus Christ. The truest repentance is that which weeps at the sight of His wounds and the love which is most sweet is love to the adorable Person of the Well-Beloved.

I look upon the Doctrines of Grace as my Lord’s garments and they smell of myrrh, aloes and cassia. I look upon His precepts as His scepter and it is a rod tipped with silver. And I delight to touch it and find comfort in its power. I look upon the Gospel ordinances as the Throne upon which He sits and I delight in that Throne of ivory overlaid with pure gold. But oh, His Person is sweeter than His garments, dearer than His scepter, more glorious than His Throne! He, Himself, is altogether lovely, and to love HIM is the very heart’s core of true religion! But perhaps you may not love Him, after all. You may have all the externals of outward religiousness and yet the secret of the Lord may not be with you. It will be vain to reverence the Sabbath if you forget the Lord of the Sabbath! It is vain to love the sanctuary but not the Great High Priest, vain to love the wedding feast but not the Bridegroom! Do you love ME? That is the question. “Simon, son of Jonas, do you love ME?”

Nor, Brothers and Sisters, would the highest office in the Church render it unnecessary to ask the question. Peter was an Apostle and not a whit behind the very chief of them. In some respects he was a foundation stone of the Church and yet it was necessary to say to him, “Do you love Me?” There was once an Apostle who did not love the Lord. There was an Apostle who coveted 30 pieces of silver—a goodly price was that at which he sold his Master. The name of Judas should sound the death-knell of all presumptuous confidence in our official standing! We may stand very high in the Church and yet fall to our destruction! Our names may be in the list of religious leaders and yet they may not be written in the Lamb’s

Book of Life. So, my Brother minister, deacon, or elder—it is necessary to put to ourselves the question, "Do you love the Lord?"

The enjoyment of the greatest Christian privileges does not render this question unnecessary. Peter and James and John were the three most favored of all the Apostles. They witnessed certain of our Lord's miracles which were done in secret and beheld by no other human eyes. They beheld Him on the Mount of Transfiguration in all His Glory and they saw Him in the Garden of Gethsemane in all His agony and yet, though thus favored, their Lord felt it necessary to ask of their leader, "Do you love Me?" O my Brother, you have had high enjoyments, you have been on Tabor, illuminated with its transporting light and you have also had fellowship with Christ in His sufferings, or, at any rate, you think you have.

You are familiar, alike, with inward agonies and spiritual joys! You have been the friend of the Lord and eaten bread with Him and yet, remember, there was one who did this and yet lifted up his heel against Him! Therefore it is necessary to say to you, my Brother, "Do you love the Lord?" Do you really love Him, after all? For it is not certain that you do just because of what you have seen and enjoyed. It is easy to invent a remarkable experience, but the one thing necessary is a loving heart. Take heed that you have this.

Nor, my dear Brothers and Sisters, *does the greatest warmth of zeal prevent your necessity of this question.* Peter was a red-hot disciple. How ready he was both to do and to dare for his Master! How impetuously he cried when he was on the lake of Galilee, "Lord, if it is You, bid me come to You on the water." What daring! What faith! What vehement zeal! And here, too, in the narrative before us, when the Lord was by that same Sea of Tiberias, Peter, in his headlong zeal, cannot wait until the boat touches the shore. He girds on his fisher's coat and plunges in to meet the Master whom he loves and yet, with that headlong zeal before Him, the Lord says, "Do you love Me?"

Yes, young man, you are earnest in the Sunday school, you have sought the conversion of the little ones and succeeded above many! You encourage others and give impetus to every movement in which you engage. And yet you need to enquire whether you do, in very deed, love the Lord or not. Perhaps, my dear Brother, you stand up in the corners of the streets and face the ungodly throng and delight to talk of Jesus, whether men oppose or not. Yet are you *sure* you love Jesus? My Sister, you visit the poor and care for the needy. You lay yourself out to do good to young people and are full of warmth in all things which concern the Redeemer's cause. We admire you and hope your zeal will never grow less—but for all that, even to *you* must the question be put—"Do you love the Lord Jesus?"

There is a zeal which is fed by regard to the opinions of others and sustained by a wish to be thought earnest and useful. There is a zeal which is rather the warmth of *nature* than the holy fire of Grace. This zeal has enabled many to do great things and yet, when they have done all, they have been as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal because they did not love Jesus Christ! The most zealous actions, though they naturally lead us to

hope that those who perform them are lovers of Jesus, are not conclusive evidence and, therefore, we must still enquire, "Do you love the Lord?"

Yes, dear Friends, and I will go a little further—*the greatest self-denial does not prove it*. Peter could say, "Lord, we have left all and followed You." Though it was not very much, yet it was all Peter had and he had left it all for the good cause, without having gained any earthly good in return. He had been frequently abused and reproached for Jesus' sake and he expected to be reproached still more, yet he was loyal and willing to suffer to the end. Yet the Lord, knowing all that Peter had sacrificed for His sake, nevertheless said to him, "Do you love Me?" For sadly, strangely true it is that men have made considerable sacrifices to become professed Christians and yet have not had the root of the matter in them.

Some have even been put into prison for the Truth of God and yet have not been sincere Christians. It is not for us to say, but it is to be feared that in the martyr days some have given their bodies to be burned, yet because they had not love, it profited them nothing. Love is essential. Nothing can compensate for its absence. And yet this precious thing may not be in your hearts! O God, I tremble as I remember that perhaps it is not in mine! Let each one hear the question, "Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?" I must press the point still a little further. It is often necessary for us to ask this question because there are other points of religion besides the emotional. Man is not all heart—he has a brain and the brain is to be consecrated and sanctified. It is, therefore, right that we should study the Word of God and become well instructed scribes in the kingdom of Heaven.

Peter went to college three years, with Jesus Christ for a tutor, and he learned a great deal—who would *not* from so great a Teacher? But after he had been through his course, his Master, before He sent him to his life-work, felt it necessary to inquire, "Do you love Me?" Brother, you may turn over the pages of your book. You may digest doctrine after doctrine. You may take up theological propositions and problems and you may labor to solve this difficulty and expound that text. You may answer the questions, till, somehow or other, the heart grows as dry as the leaves of the volume and the book-worm feeds on the *soul* as well as the paper, eating its way into the spirit. It is, therefore, a healthy thing for the Lord to come into the study and close the book and say to the student, "Sit still a while, and let Me ask you, 'Do you love Me?' I am better than all books and studies. Have you a warm, human, living love for Me?"

I hope many of you are very diligent students—if you teach in the Sunday school you ought to be. If you preach in the streets or in cottage meetings you ought to be. How shall you fill others if you are not full yourselves? But, at the same time, look most of all to the condition of your *heart* towards Christ. To know is good, but to *love* is better. If you will study, you can solve all problems. Yet, if you love not, you have failed to comprehend the mystery of mysteries and to know the most excellent of sciences. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. Look well, then, to the question, "Do you love Me?"

Much of Christian life, also, ought to be spent in active labor. We are to be up and doing! If there was anything to do, Peter was the man to do it. He had gone forth to preach the Gospel and even the devils had been subject to him! Peter had worked marvels in Jesus' name and he was ordained to work yet greater wonders. Yet, despite all that Peter had done, his love needed to be examined. Even though those feet of Peter's had walked the sea, which no other man's feet had done, yet Peter must be asked, "Do you love Me?" He had just dragged that huge net to the shore with all that host of fishes, a hundred and fifty and three! With great skill and mighty effort he had drawn the whole catch on shore, yet this did not prove his love.

There are preachers of the Gospel among us who have dragged a full net to shore—the great fishes have been many! They have been great and successful workers, but this does not prevent its being necessary for the Lord to examine them as to their *hearts*. He bids them put aside their nets for awhile and commune with Him. Shut up the Church Book. Fold up the membership roll and have done counting your fishes! Come into your chamber, Jesus means to ask you something! "In My name you have cast out devils, but did you love Me? You cast the net on the right side of the ship, as I told you, but did you love Me? You drew to shore that catch of fishes, but did you love Me?" Brothers and Sisters, this is the solemn fear, "Lest after having preached to others I myself should be a castaway." Lest after bringing others to Jesus and serving God well in the school, or in some other sphere, you should, nevertheless, make a dead failure of it, because you have not loved Jesus Himself!

I must press the question again and again, and I pray the Holy Spirit to let its power be felt by every one of us. Possibly we may have been called to contend earnestly for the faith. And we may have been battling with the King's enemies on this side and on that and standing up for the Truth of God even as for dear life. It is well to be a good soldier of Jesus Christ, for this age needs men who are not afraid to bear reproach for speaking out the Truth of God with strong, stern words. But to this spirit it is most important that the question should come, "Do you love Me?" A man may be a very firm Protestant but may not love Christ. He may be a very earnest advocate of Divine Truth, but he may not love Him who *is* the Truth, itself! He may maintain Scriptural views as to Baptism and yet he may never have been baptized into Christ.

A man may be a staunch Nonconformist and may see all the evils against which Nonconformity is a protest, but still he may be conformed to the world—and be lost, notwithstanding all his dissent! It is a grand thing for every Christian warrior to look well to this breastplate and to see that he can promptly reply to the question, "Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?" Putting all together, let me say to you, Beloved—however eminent you may be in the Church of God and however distinguished for services or for suffering—do not evade this question! Bare your heart to the inspection of your Lord! Answer Him with humble boldness while He says

to you, again and again, even till He grieves you, "Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?"

II. We will now turn to a second head. WE MUST LOVE THE PERSON OF CHRIST OR ALL OUR PAST PROFESSIONS HAVE BEEN A LIE. It is not possible for that man to be a Christian who does not love Christ. Take the heart away and life is impossible. Your very first true hope of Heaven came to you, if it ever did come at all, by Jesus Christ. Beloved, you heard the Gospel, but the Gospel, apart from Christ, was never good news to you. You read the Bible, but the Bible, apart from a personal Christ, was never anything more than a dead letter to you. You listened to many earnest entreaties, but they all fell on deaf ears until Jesus came and compelled you to come in.

The first gleam of comfort that ever entered my heart flashed from the wounds of the Redeemer. I never had a hope of being saved until I saw Him hanging on the tree in agonies and blood. And because our earliest hope is bound up, not with any doctrine or preacher, but with Jesus, our All in All, therefore I am sure, even if we have only lately received our first hope, we must love Jesus, from whom it has come. Nor do we merely begin with Him, for every Covenant blessing we have received has been connected with His Person and could not be received apart from Him. You have obtained pardon, but that pardon was through His blood. You have been clothed in righteousness, but *He* is the Lord, your Righteousness. He is, Himself, your glory and your beauty.

You have been cleansed from many sins by conversion, but it was the water from His opened side which washed you. You have been made the child of God, but your adoption has only made you feel more akin to the Elder Brother, through whom you are made heirs of God. The blessings of the Covenant are, none of them, separate from Christ, and cannot be enjoyed apart from Him any more than light and heat can be divided from the sun. All blessings come to us from His pierced hands and, therefore, if we have received them we must love Him. It is not possible to have enjoyed the golden gifts of His unbounded love without being moved to love Him in return. You cannot walk in the sun without being warmed, nor receive of Christ's fullness without being filled with gratitude.

Every ordinance of the Christian Church, since we have been converted, has either been a mockery, or else we have loved Christ in it. Baptism, for instance—what is it but the mere washing away of the filth of the flesh and nothing more unless we were buried with Christ in baptism unto death? Like as He rose from the dead by the Glory of the Father, even so we, also, might rise to newness of life! The Lord's Supper, what is it? What but a common meal for the eating of bread and the drinking of wine, unless Christ is there? But if we have come to the Lord's Supper as true men and not as false-hearted hypocrites, we have eaten His flesh and drunk His blood—and is it possible to have done that and *not* to love Him? It cannot be!

That communion with Christ which is absolutely essential to ordinances is also sure to produce in the heart love towards Him with whom

we commune. And so, Beloved, it has been with every approach we have made towards God in all the long years of our Christian life. Did you pray, my Brother? Did you really speak with God in prayer? You could not have done it except through Jesus the Mediator. And if you have spoken to God through the Mediator, you cannot remain without love to One who has been your door of access to the Father. If you have made a profession of religion, how can it be a true and honest one unless your heart burns with attachment to the Great Author of salvation? You have great hopes, but what are you hoping for? Is not all your hope wrapped up in Him? Do you not expect that when He shall appear you shall be like He is?

You are hoping to die triumphantly, but not apart from His making your dying bed soft as a pillow of down. You are hoping to rise again, but not apart from His Resurrection, for He is the first fruits of the Resurrection harvest. You expect to reign upon earth, but it is with Him. You do not expect a millennium apart from the King. You expect a never-ending Heaven, but that Heaven is to be with Jesus where He is and to behold His Glory. Since, then, everything that you have obtained—if, indeed, you have received it from the Lord—has Christ’s name stamped on it and comes to you direct from His pierced hands. And it cannot be that you have received it unless you love Him.

Now, when I ask the question, remember that upon your answer to it hangs this alternative—a hypocrite or a true man, a false professor or a genuine convert—a child of God or an heir of wrath. Therefore answer the enquiry, but answer it with deliberation. Answer it conscientiously, as though you stood before the bar of Him who now so tenderly enquires of you, but who will then speak in other tones and look with other glances, even with those eyes which are like a flame of fire. “Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?”

III. Our third consideration is this—WE MUST HAVE LOVE TO THE PERSON OF CHRIST OR NOTHING IS RIGHT FOR THE FUTURE. We have not finished life yet—a long pilgrimage may possibly lie before us. Now all will go right if we love Christ, but nothing can proceed as it should if love to Jesus is absent. For instance, Peter is called to feed the lambs and feed the sheep, but for a true pastor, the first qualification is love to Christ. I gather from this incident and I am sure I do not press it unduly, that Jesus Christ, meaning to make Peter a feeder of His lambs and sheep, acts as a tester to see whether he has the proper qualifications. And He does not so much inquire about Peter’s knowledge or gifts of utterance, as about his *love*, for the first, second and third qualification for a true pastor is a loving heart.

Now, mark, what is true of a pastor is true of every useful worker for Christ. Love is essential, my dear Friend. You cannot work for Christ if you do not love Him. “But I can teach in the school,” says one. “No, not as school *should* be taught, without love to Jesus.” “But I am connected with an interesting society, which is doing much good.” “But you are not glorifying God unless you are connected with that society because you love Jesus Christ.” Put down your tools, for you cannot work profitably in my

Lord's vineyard unless your heart loves Him. His vines had better be untrimmed than be pruned by angry hands. Let the lambs alone, Sir, you will never rear them if your heart is hard and ungentle. If you do not love the Master, you will not love His work, or His servants, or the rules of His House—and we can do better without you than with you. To have an unloving worker grumbling about the Lord's House and vineyard would be distressing to the whole family. Love must be in the heart, or true service cannot come from the hands.

Then, again, perhaps suffering lies before you—and if your heart is not true to Christ, you will not be able to patiently endure for His name's sake. Before long the time came for Peter to glorify God by death. Peter has to be girded and to be taken where he would not. Now, can he be fit for martyrdom if he does not love Jesus? Tradition says that he was crucified with his head downwards because he felt it too much honor to be put to death in the same position as his Lord. It may be so. No doubt he was put to death by crucifixion and it was his strong, deep love which made him more than a conqueror. Love makes the hero. When the Spirit of God inflames love, He inspires courage.

See then, O Believers, how much you need love for the future. Young Christian, you will have to run the gauntlet before you enter Heaven. I do not care what sphere of life you occupy, you are very particularly favored if somebody does not mock at you and persecute you. Between here and Heaven you will be tried and, perhaps, your foes will be the men of your own household! Many will watch for your stumbling and even place stumbling blocks in your way. To walk steadily you will need to carry the fires of love in your heart. If you do not love Jesus intensely, sin will get the mastery over you. Self-denials and humiliations, which would be easy with love, will be impossible without it. Rightly to work or to suffer, or to die, we must love Jesus with all our hearts.

Look, my Brothers and Sisters, if we have no love for Jesus Christ's Person, our piety lacks the *adhesive element*. It fails in that which will help us to stick to the good old way to the end and hold out to the end. Men often leave what they like, but never what they love. Men can deny what they merely believe as a matter of mental conviction, but they will never deny that which they feel to be true and accept with heartfelt affection. If you are to persevere to the end, it must be in the power of love. Love is the great *inspiring force*. Many a deed in the Christian life is impossible to anything but love. In serving Christ you come across a difficulty far too great for judgment, far too hard for prudence, and unbelief sits down and weighs and calculates. But love, mighty love, laughs at the impossibility and accomplishes it for Jesus Christ.

Love breaks through troops. Love leaps over walls and, hand-in-hand with Faith, she is all but Omnipotent! No, through the power of God which is upon her, she can do all things for Jesus Christ her Lord. If you lack love, your energy is gone. The force which nerves the man and subdues his foes is lacking. Without love, too, you are without the *transforming force*. Love to Christ is that which makes us like He is. The eyes of love,

like windows, let in the Savior’s image and the heart of love receives it as upon a sensitive plate until the whole nature bears its impression. You are like that which you love, or you are growing like it. If Christ is loved, you are growingly becoming like He. But without love you will never bear the image of the heavenly. O Spirit of God, with wings of love, brood over us till Christ is formed in us!

My Brothers and Sisters, there is one other reflection—without love for Christ we lack *the perfecting element*. We are to be with Him soon. In a few more weeks or months, none of us can tell how few, we shall be in Glory. Yes, you and I. Many of us shall be wearing the white robes and bearing the palm branches. We shall only buy two or three more almanacs, at the outside, and then we shall keep no more reckoning of days, for we shall be where time, with its little eddies and currents, shall be forgotten in the eternal rainbow of the ages. But if we do not love Jesus, we shall not be where He is. There are none in Heaven that have not first learned to love Him here below. So we *must* have love for Jesus, the future imperiously demands it and, therefore, I put the question with all the greater seriousness and vehemence, “Simon, Son of Jonas, do you love Me?”

IV. But now I will suppose I have received an answer from you and you are able to say you *do* love Jesus. Then my fourth and closing head must be, IF WE DO LOVE HIM, WHAT THEN? Why then, if we do love Him, let us *do* something for Him, for Jesus Christ replied to Peter the moment he said, “You know all things, You know that I love You”—“Feed My sheep.” Very kind, it was, of the Savior, because He knew from His own heart that wherever there is love there is a desire for *activity*. Because Jesus loved so much, therefore it became His meat and his drink to do the will of His heavenly Father.

And so thinks Jesus—“Peter loves Me and his heart will ache if I do not give him something to do. Go and feed My lambs, go and feed My sheep.” Brother, Sister, if you love Christ, do not idle away this Sunday afternoon! If you love Christ, get to work! What are you doing? Attending the means of Grace and getting a good feed. Is that all? Well, that is doing something for *yourself*. Many people in the world are very busy at feeding—among the most active with knife and fork—but I do not know that eating a man’s bread is any proof of love to him. A great many professing Christians give no proof of love to Christ except that they enjoy sermons. But now, if you love Jesus Christ as you say you do, prove it by doing good to others—“Feed My sheep.”

I see a company of Brethren met together to hold a conference and to grow in Grace. Very excellent, indeed—grow away, Brothers and Sisters, as fast as ever you can—I like to see you as a flower garden, all a-growing, all a-blowing. But when you have done all that, I pray you do not congratulate yourselves as though you had done a mighty fine thing, because there is nothing in it unless it leads you to work for *others*. To publish accounts of such happy gatherings is like telling the poor people of White-chapel that the Lord Mayor and Aldermen had a fine banquet of turtle soup. Suppose I read that you have had a splendid series of meetings?

Well, I am glad you enjoyed yourselves, but the point is this—if there is anything in it, get to work!

If you love Christ, feed His sheep and lambs. If it is not all talk. If it is not all much ado about nothing. If it is not all fuss—get to soul-winning! Get down among the poor and needy! Get down among the lost and wandering! Get down among the dark and ignorant and hold forth Jesus Christ as the balm of Gilead and the Savior of sinners! After all, this is the test of how much you have grown in Grace—this is the test of your higher life—this is the proof of how much you have become like Jesus. What will you do for Him? For if you do not go, now, and feed His sheep and feed His lambs, it does not matter what you say or what you think you enjoy—you do not give that proof of love which Jesus asks for.

I put it in this final word—when next you teach your classes, or your own families—do it for love of Jesus. Say to your heart, “I love Christ and now I am going to teach for love of Him.” Oh, there will be a grand class this afternoon, my Sister! You will get on mightily if you teach for love of Him—every word you say will be powerful since it is suggested by love of Him! That girl who makes so much noise and troubles you so much, you will bear with her for love for Him. That restless young urchin, you cannot get the truth into him—you tell him many tales and when you have done he wants another. You will patiently give him another for the love of Christ.

When you pray with the little ones, pray because you love them for Christ’s sake. You are going to preach, do the preaching for love of Christ. We sometimes do it because it is our turn to do it, but it should never be so. You know how delightfully servants will wait upon you if they do it for love. You have been out for a few weeks and at last you come home. Look at the room! What a welcome it is before you! They have half destroyed the garden to bring in the flowers to make the table look nice for you! That supper—well, it is just the same supper that any Mary or Jane would have cooked, but see how it is put upon the table! Everything seems to say it is done for love of master and mistress, to show our affection and respect for them—and you enjoy it indescribably, because it tells of love!

Now, tomorrow and as long as you live, do everything out of love to Christ! It will spread flowers over your work and make it look beautiful in His eyes. Put love’s fingers to work, love’s brains, love’s eyes, love’s hands—*think* with love, *pray* with love, *speak* with love, *live* with love and in this way you will live with power and God will bless you for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 21.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—786, 787, 640.**

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“FEED MY SHEEP”

NO. 3211

**A SERMON
TO MINISTERS AND STUDENTS,
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 18, 1910.**

***DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE PASTOR’S COLLEGE CONFERENCE,
ON FRIDAY MORNING, APRIL 13, 1877.***

***“He said unto him, Feed My sheep.”
John 21:16.***

THOSE whom the Lord addressed, and especially Simon, had become fishermen. “Simon Peter went up and drew the net to land, full of great fishes.” In the early part of your career most of you were fishermen, or men-catchers and, truly, to be fishers of men should be your ambition all your lives. But you have now become something more—the fisher has developed into a shepherd. The fisherman represents the Evangelist who casts the net into the waters and draws the fish to land, but it is not to him that Christ says, “Feed My sheep”—that is reserved for those of greater maturity and experience. Many of you have now for years been settled in one sphere and while you will continue to fish, I trust that more and more you will remember that you now have other duties to perform—you have to feed as well as to fish, to handle the crook as well as the net. We now leave the sea wherein we were drifted to and fro, and we abide among our own flocks, standing and feeding in the strength of the Lord. We cease not to do the work of an Evangelist, but we pay special attention to the duties of the pastor, for He who once said, “Cast the net on the right side of the ship,” now says to us, “Feed My sheep.” I am addressing disciples to whom the Lord has shown Himself—may He now at this happy season commission us anew and send us home with the Word which He spoke to Peter resting in our hearts!

I. This was a sort of ordination of Peter to the pastorate. He needed to be publicly recognized, for he had publicly offended. And his ordination commenced with AN EXAMINATION BEARING ON THE WORK. “Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?” Our Lord does not admit any to the oversight of His flock without first of all questioning them as to their inner condition. Neither should any man dare to accept such an office without great self-examination and searching of heart. Many questions should be put to our hearts and answered as in the sight of God, for no man rightly takes this honor upon himself but he that is called thereunto—neither is every man fitted for the work but he, alone, who is anointed of the Lord. You will observe that the examination

was directed to the state of Peter’s heart—and so *it touched the innermost spring of all his religion*—for if love is absent, all is vain—the heart of godliness is missing where love is lacking.

Love is the chief endowment for a pastor. You *must* love Christ if you mean to serve Him in the capacity of pastors. Our Lord deals with the most vital point. The question is not, “Simon, son of Jonas, do you *know* Me?” though that would not have been an unreasonable question, since Peter had said, “I know not the Man.” He might have asked, “Simon, son of Jonas, do you know the deep mysteries of God?” He did know them, for his Lord had called him blessed for knowing that which flesh and blood had not revealed to him. Our great Bishop of souls did not examine him with regard to his mental endowments, nor upon his other spiritual qualifications, but only upon this one, “Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?” If so, then, “Feed My sheep.” Does not this plainly show us that the chief endowment of the pastor is to love Christ supremely? Only such a man as that is fit to look after Christ’s sheep. You will fulfill that office well if you love Jesus—your love will keep you in your Lord’s company, it will hold you under His immediate supervision and will secure you His help. Love to Him will breed a love for all His sheep and your love for them will give you power over them. Experience testifies that we never gain a particle of power for good over our people by angry words, but we obtain an almost absolute power over them by all-enduring love—indeed, the only power which is desirable for us to have must come in that way! I have had the high pleasure of loving some of the most objectionable people till they loved me. And some of the most bitter I have altogether won by refusing to be displeased, and by persisting in believing that they could be better. By practical kindnesses I have so won some men that I believe it would take a martyrdom to make them speak evil of me. This has also been the experience of all who have tried the sacred power of love!

My Brothers, learn the art of loving men to Christ! We are drawn towards those who love us and when the most callous feel “that man loves us,” they are drawn to you at once—and as you are nearer to the Savior than they are—you are drawing them in the right direction. You cannot look after God’s people and properly care for them in all their sins, temptations, trials and difficulties, unless you love them. You will grow sick and weary of pastoral work unless there is a fresh spring of love in your heart welling up towards them. A mother tires not of watching by the bedside of her sick child because love sustains her—she will outlast the paid nurse by many an hour! Love props her drooping eyelids. Even so, “the hireling flees because he is an hireling and cares not for the sheep,” but, “the good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep.” If you really love the sheep, you will be ready to spend your life for them or even to lay it down for their sakes. Love, then, I take to be the chief endowment of the pastor—although having that, I trust you will not fall short in any other re-

spect but be thoroughly furnished unto every good work. Do not forget what you have been told about study and culture, but remember at the same time that the heart has more power in pastoral work than the head. In this ministry, a humble, godly, ill-educated man with a great, warm, heart will be blessed far more than the large-headed man whose heart is a little diamond of rock-ice which could not be discovered without a microscope even if he were dissected!

The Lord Jesus Christ connected His examination upon the matter of love with the commission, “Feed My sheep,” because our work in *feeding the flock of God is the proof of love to the Lord*. Do we not tell our people that love must be not in word, only, but also in deed? We judge whether any man has love to Christ by testing what he will do for Christ. What suffering or reproach will he endure for Him? What of his substance will he consecrate to His service? What of himself will he use for the Lord? We can tell which of us, as a minister, is proving his love to Christ by ascertaining who is really shepherding Christ’s flock and laying out himself for the benefit of the Lord’s redeemed. The man to whom Jesus said, “Do you love Me?” was the same who before had said “Lord, if it is You, bid me come unto You on the water.” Some among us would readily venture upon that water-walking, for it would be something extraordinary and brief, and this would suit us, for we are not given to plodding perseverance. Our zeal is great and we dash off as Peter did, though soon, like he, we begin to sink! Note well that Christ does not say, “Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me? Go and walk the water.” The Master seems to say, “You have done enough of that in your young days, now go and quietly feed My sheep. It is hard, tiring, quiet work—and if you have no love to Me, you will soon weary of it. ‘Feed My sheep,’ ‘Feed My sheep,’ ‘Feed My sheep.’ Three times I bid you do it, that you may continue in the work as long as you live, for thus will you have given proof of the reality of your affection for Me.” Brothers, go back to your flocks and feed them well, and so give fresh evidences of your love to your Lord!

This pastoral work for Christ is the craving of love in every heart that is set apart for the Lord. Every soul that truly loves Him longs to do something for Him. It cannot do otherwise—love must serve its Beloved—it yearns to go and lay its offering at His feet! No pressure was needed to make the forgiven sinner wash Christ’s feet with her tears, wipe them with the hairs of her head and anoint them with precious ointment. Her heart suggested it and she hastened to obey. And if you, my Brothers, are true pastors, you cannot help looking after the wandering sheep. You naturally care for your people. You have a sacred instinct which compels you to be lovers of men’s souls. You see how little girls, as if it were naturally in them to act as nurses, will kiss their dolls and fondle, caress, dress and care for them as mothers do for their children—and just so we have seen mere lads converted to Christ and intended by the Lord to become pastors, who, before they have been out of their teens, have begun

to speak of Jesus to their little friends and companions. The Lord has caused them even from their new birth to feel a shepherd’s propensities strong within them! It was so with some of us—we could not have helped preaching even if we could—we were born to preach when we were born—again! Let us, then, indulge the sacred passion to the fullest!

Brothers, since we have been at this work, it has been to us *the stimulus of love*. The way to love another more is to do more for Him. When a man has done a kindness to you, he will love you—the receiver may be unmindful of the favor, but the giver has a better memory! There is no fear of our Lord’s ceasing to love us, since for us He has suffered even unto death! The supreme Sacrifice made once for all renders it impossible that He should do otherwise than rest in His love. Even so, if we labor and pray, and practice self-denial for others, we are sure to love them all the more. Then, too, as you go on feeding Christ’s sheep, building up His people and cheering His discouraged ones, you will love your Master more—and your love for Him will act again upon you and cause increased love to the people—and so on evermore! Those over whom you have most agonized have delighted you most when at last they have been converted. Your joy has been increased as you have waited for the realization of your hope!

This feeding of the sheep is to the love which is the matter in question, *a sphere of communion*. “Feed My sheep” unites us in service with Jesus. Love longs to be with Jesus and in fellowship with Him. The Lord was about to ascend to Heaven when He said to Simon, “Feed My sheep,” and Simon could not as yet go with Him. But if he would accompany his Lord while abiding here, he must follow on his Lord’s work and abide with his Lord’s flocks. If we will undertake labors of love for those whom He has redeemed. If we will go wherever His sheep are lost, seeking—

**“With cries, entreaties, tears, to save,
To snatch them from the fiery wave”—**

we shall soon find ourselves where Jesus is! He is always at that business. He still seeks poor sinners and if we are engaged in the same search, we shall be with Him—we shall enter into His feelings, we shall share His desires and feel His sympathies! When thus with Him, we shall witness His heart-breaking throes and almost see His bloody sweat streaming down when He was agonizing for souls, for we shall in some feeble measure feel the same! You cannot understand your Lord till you have wept over your congregations! You will understand *Him* then, as you see Him weeping over Jerusalem. If you feel towards your hearers that you could die to save their souls, you will then have fellowship with the death of your Lord. In grief over backsliders and joy over penitents you will commune with the Redeemer in the most practical manner. You must feel a shepherd’s feelings and give practical proof of it by daily feeding the flock—otherwise your fellowship with the Great Shepherd be will mere sentiment and not fact.

So much about the previous examination of the candidate for the pastorate. But it is worth noting that the examination is often needed in later life, for we need to be *kept* right as well as to be *made* so. Our Lord comes to us, this morning, with the old question. He pauses at each man and questions Him just as at the first. He seems to say, “You have read many men’s books, do you still love *Me*? You have heard many conflicting opinions, do you still love *Me*? You have been very poor and worked, do you still love *Me*? Your people have treated some of you very badly, you have had to go from place to place, you have been slandered, reviled, maligned—do you still love *Me*? You have been sorely put to it to find sermons. I have sometimes left you, as you thought, to make you acknowledge your weakness—do you still love *Me*?”

Imagine that He changes His tone and says, “Simon, son of Jonas, you have not been all that you promised. You thought you would go to prison and to death with Me, and you never dreamed that you could have been so cold-hearted in My service as you have been—and have lived at so great a distance from Me as you have done. But do you still love Me? If so, remember that in going back to your ministry, you must gather renewed strength from renewed love! Love Me more and then feed My sheep.” We rejoice as we listen to His gracious voice! And each one of us answers, “Lord, You know all things—You know that I love You—and by Your Grace, I *will* feed Your sheep.”

II. Secondly, let us LOOK AT THE PERSON EXAMINED IN RELATION TO THE WORK. Perhaps he may bear the same relation to you as he does to me. Painfully do I know myself to be a successor of one of the Apostles—not of Judas, I hope, but certainly of Peter. I could have wished that it had been John whom I had succeeded, but although it is only Peter, it is some consolation to know that he was also “an Apostle of Jesus Christ” notwithstanding his terrible fall.

Why did the Savior examine Peter rather than any other? *Because Peter was in peculiar need of a re-ordination.* Had he not received it from his Lord, some would have asked in later days, “Was he really an Apostle?” And others would have replied, “He thrice denied his Master, surely he is not one of the twelve.” We cannot help feeling that blindness has seized the church of Rome when she boasts of the commission to feed Christ’s sheep having been given to the Apostle Peter, when, with half an eye anyone can see that our Lord addressed these words to Peter because at that time he was the *least* of the twelve! He had denied his Master. The others had not and, therefore, he was the one concerning whose Apostleship distrust was most likely to arise! The sheep would in all probability have refused to recognize him—they might have said, “We cannot receive food at your hands, for we remember how you were frightened by a silly maid, how you denied your Lord and supported your denial with oaths and curses.” Therefore, came the Voice to Peter, *who needed it.* If there is one with us now who feels like conscience-stricken Peter, let him hear

the text! Dear Friend, if you have any doubt about your call, and even if there should be as grave cause for that doubt as there was in Peter's case, yet still, if you feel that you love the Lord, hear Him again commission you with, “Feed My sheep.” In your present condition, which is rather that of the weeping penitent than of the assured Believer, it will be well to go to your work very steadily, for it will comfort you, deepen your piety and increase your faith.

Our Lord called Peter to this work because it would be peculiarly beneficial to him. He knew how sincere his repentance was and how hearty was his grief on account of his great sin and, therefore, lest he should be overtaken with too much sorrow, He said to him, “Feed My sheep.” If nothing had been spoken personally and especially to Peter, he might have mourned heavily, saying, “Alas, I denied my Master, I swore that I never knew Him.” And when the Lord was gone up again into Glory, instead of standing up as he did on the day of Pentecost to preach that memorable sermon, he might have been found at home weeping. Instead of going up to the Temple with John at the hour of prayer, he might have stayed in his chamber and there mourned all day. Grief is best expelled by other thoughts. When you have been cast down, it is well when some important engagement has called off your attention from your trouble. And I think the compassionate Master raised Peter out of what might have grown into a morbid condition of continual grief by bidding him feed His sheep. He seemed to say, “Come here, My dear disciple. I know you are sincerely penitent, and I have fully forgiven you for denying Me as you did. Mourn no longer, but go and feed My sheep.” Then, as the Lord fed the sheep by him and blessed him to the conversion of others, he would feel certain that his Lord did not remember his faults—and thus he would learn how perfect was the pardon he had received! I do not know that there is a Brother with us, this morning, who is in the condition of Peter, but if I did know such an one and could read his heart, I would go out to him and say, “Come, Brother, we are not going to cast you out—we consider ourselves lest we, also, be tempted. You have been converted, once, as a sinner—you must now be converted as a minister. And when you are converted, strengthen your Brothers. Yes, my Brother, go back to your Lord and Master and then, with all your soul inflamed with love for Him, feed His sheep and the Lord bless you in so doing!”

Dear Brothers, in Peter's case we see a man zealous for his Lord, but of imperfect character. And we see how *his failure had been overruled by God to prepare him for his life-work* of feeding Christ's sheep. John did not need such preparation and the other nine did not require it. It was only Peter who needed to be thus rebuked by a display of his own weakness. This man was too great, too self-confident, too much Peter and too little a disciple—and he must, therefore, come down. Probably nothing could have brought him to his true bearings like his being left to see what was in his heart. We speak with bated breath when we say that to

some men, a painful break-down has been the making of them. They became, from that time, free from their former self-esteem and were as cleansed and emptied vessels—fit for the Master’s use! A deep sense of our weakness and a humbling consciousness of unworthiness form a considerable part of our qualification for dealing with Christ’s sheep. Because you are a sinner, you will deal lovingly with sinners. Because you know what backsliding means, you will be very gentle and forbearing with backsliders. Because you have broken your own bones, you will be very careful how you handle those who have broken theirs.

You see, then, that this feeding of the sheep, as I have already shown you, would benefit Peter in the particular condition in which he then was. And it is not hard to see that *it would benefit him by keeping his rashness in check*. I know some beloved Brothers who are impetuous and, God bless them, I love them none the less for that, especially when they know how to bridle their impetuous spirits and only allow them to dash out against evil! But some are rashly impetuous and strong-headed—and it will need considerable discipline to make them into useful, workable men. But when the Lord has done this, they will become those determined, independent, resolute men of mark and mind who are so valuable to the Church of God! Such Brothers need the education of a pastorate to curb and to develop them. You did not know how foolish you were till you had to deal with fools and found that you could not suffer them gladly. You did not know how passionate you could be till you had to meet with quick-tempered people like yourself! You did not know how rash you could be till you fell into the society of a dozen rash men like yourself who egged you on in your fool-hardiness. You have now discovered that where you fancied there was a great deal of strength, there was a vast amount of weakness! I believe that the Peter of the Epistles grew out of the Peter of the Sea of Tiberias and the Peter of the denial, by means of the Grace given him while feeding the flock of God. Peter was a bigoted, narrow-minded Jew—he could not readily believe that any others beyond the chosen nation were to be saved! But when he mixed with mankind and was sent to the house of Cornelius, his heart grew larger, although it was not as large as it should have been till Paul boldly withstood him to his face because he was to be blamed! “Feed My sheep” is, therefore, Beloved, a commission intended for your own good as well as theirs.

It touched me very much to find our Lord addressing Peter by his old name of Simon, son of Jonas. I do not know why He should not have said, “Peter, do you love Me?” John writes, “Jesus said to Simon Peter.” Why did not our Lord call him so? Was it not, in the first place, to remind him of his natural weakness? He is not called Petros, the stone, the rock—but the son of Jonas, the son of a timid dove—and it is under that name that he is commissioned to feed the sheep. Brothers, if this morning you are filled with a consciousness of your own weakness and unwor-

thiness, the Master says to you, “Still go and feed My sheep.” If you are not, in your own opinion, fit for the work, still let the sheep be fed! Do not let them suffer because you are not in a right state of mind and heart. These sheep—what have they done? Why should they starve? It is only too true that you have sinned, but let not that sad fact rob the people of a full display of the Gospel next Lord’s-Day. “Feed My sheep.” Go as Peter, if you can, but when you cannot do so, go as, “Simon, son of Jonas.”

But I think there was a deeper reason and one which touched me more, why our Lord said, “Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?” This was his old name before he was converted, for when Jesus first saw him, He said, ‘You are Simon, the son of Jonas.’ Nothing will help you to feed the flock of God, Brothers, like recollecting the time and circumstances when you were first brought to Jesus. If it were possible, which it is not, I would like to be converted every Sunday morning before preaching. At any rate, I would like to feel that tenderness of heart, that admiration for my Savior, that all-absorbing love to my Lord—and that wonderment at the Grace of God toward me which I felt when I was converted!

There may have been another reason why Jesus said, “Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?” Perhaps it was because when Simon had discovered that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God, his Master said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona; for flesh and blood has not revealed this unto you, but My Father which is in Heaven.” By repeating that name, our Lord made Peter remember, in addition to his conversion, the many happy seasons which he had enjoyed in which the Lord had manifested Himself to him as He does not unto the world. We are bound to preach of the things which we have tasted and handled. If, like John, we have been in Patmos, let us not cease to talk of Him that walks among the golden candlesticks. Come down from the mountain to tell of what you have seen there. Be filled with recollections of all the blessed communion you have enjoyed with Christ and then speak about Him to others—thus the joy of the Lord shall be your strength. You will then have no doubt of your call to the ministry, but you will say, “that which was from the beginning, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life, declare we unto you.” “We speak what we know and testify what we have seen.”

III. In the third place, I must confine myself to giving you a mere outline of THE WORK ITSELF, as our time is flying so fast. What have we to do, then? “Feed My sheep.” In the English, you have the command three times over, “*Feed My sheep.*” What are we to do with the sheep? *Feed! Feed! Feed!* That seems to be the whole of our business, “*Feed My sheep.*” Truth to tell, the middle Greek word properly means shepherd them, guide them, lead them, go before them as a shepherd does. The first and last words are the same, *feed*. In each of the three sentences

there is a minute difference, but twice out of three times in the original, the word is *feed*. If I mention nothing else but feeding as the pastor's duty, it will be the very best lesson I could have given you, even if other valuable duties are cast into the shade. Wherever you are weak, be strong in the pulpit! Give the people a good hearty meal whenever you preach! They will put up with a great many defects if you will only feed them. An Englishman is in a good condition if he is fed. Feed him and he will be all right. But if you dress him and do not feed him, he will not care for the clothes you put on him, however fine they are. You may wash him if you like, but you must feed him! There is an inward, powerful persuader which convinces a man that to be happy and healthy, he must be fed!

Now, God's people are the hungriest people in the world—they never seem to be satisfied! If you watch a flock of sheep feeding in a clover field, you will be surprised to see how they will eat. They eat, and eat, and eat—and so God's people are a hungering, craving people. It is written, “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.” They, “shall be filled.” It does not say they shall have a nip and a bite, and then be driven away and, therefore, we are to treat them as God would have them treated—feed them, feed them to the fullest! Never be afraid of being too free with the food, or of giving them too much sound Doctrine and Gospel food!

Some want to drive the flock, but that will never do. We must feed, not drive. We will *lead* them, you say—that is very good but do not lead lean sheep—feed and fatten them, and then they will gladly follow! Perhaps you wish to govern them. Well, the middle word does mean govern after the Gospel fashion, but if you somewhat govern, yet give two supplies of feeding for one of ruling! You will be sure to succeed if you keep to the feeding. Blessed be God, you have not to invent a new food for His sheep! It is written, “Feed them,” but it is not written, “invent food for them.” God has appointed the proper food for His sheep—hand that out to them—and nothing else. The Pope of Rome, who claims to be the lineal successor of the Apostle of whom we are speaking, attempts to feed in a strange manner. I wonder how many of the sheep are able to feed on his allocutions and other specimens of cursing. He seems to be mainly engaged in uttering maledictions upon the wolves! I see no food for the sheep. How is it that he has founded no Bible Societies in Rome for the circulation of the pure Word of God? One of his predecessors has called the Protestant version, “poisonous pastures.” Very well, then, why not circulate a pure version? Why not spend a part of Peter's pence in distributing the Epistle to the Romans? Why not exhort priests, cardinals and bishops to be instant in season and out of season, preaching the Gospel according to the commission of the Lord? Verily, Peter at this day is crucified head downwards at Rome! The tradition is symbolic of the fact, for the Apostle is placed in a wrong position and exalted to honors which are a crucifixion to him.

Brethren, you have to *feed* Christ's sheep. Our Lord says, “Feed! Feed! Feed!” He begins with, “Feed *My lambs*.” My little lambkins, or young Believers—these need plenty of instruction. “Feed My sheep” comes next. Feed the middle-aged, the strong, the vigorous—these do not require only feeding—they also need to be directed in their Christian course and to be guided to some field of earnest service for Christ—therefore shepherd them. Then in the last, “Feed My sheep,” you have the gray-headed Believers in Christ. Do not try to govern these, but feed them! They may have far more prudence and they certainly have more experience than you have and, therefore, do not rule them, but remind them of the deep things of God and deal out to them an abundance of consoling Truths. There is that good old man. He is a father in Christ. He knew the Lord 50 years before you were born—he has some peculiarities and in them you must let him take his own course—but still feed him. His taste will appreciate solid meat. He knows a field of tender grass when he gets into it. Feed him, then, for his infirmities require it. Feed all classes, my Brothers—that is your main work—mind that you not only get good food for the sheep, but feed them with it!

A farmer one day, after he had listened to a simple sermon which was the very opposite of what he generally heard, exclaimed, “O Lord, we bless you that the food was put into a low crib today, so that Your sheep could reach it!” Some Brothers put the food up so high that the poor sheep cannot possibly feed upon it. I have thought, as I have listened to our eloquent friends, that they imagined that our Lord had said, “Feed my giraffes.” None but giraffes could reach the food when placed in so lofty a rack! Christ says, “Feed My sheep”—place the food among them. Put it close to them.

Take care, also, that you *feed yourselves*. “Who rules over freemen should himself be free.” We will alter the line into “Who feeds Christ's sheep should himself feed on Christ,.” A preacher who is starved in soul will be likely to starve his hearers. Oh, fatten yourselves on Christ, dear Brothers! Ask to have the promise fulfilled, “I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness, and My people shall be satisfied with My goodness, says the Lord.” May the Holy Spirit work this in you!

Having fed them, your work should also comprehend all the rest that a shepherd does for his flock. Neglect none of these things. Go before them! Set them an example, encourage them and direct them in difficulty. Let your voice always be familiar to them. Carry the lamb in your bosom, gently lead those that are in circumstances of pain and peril, care for all the flock—be tender with any that may wander, seek after them—and bring them back!

Now what does all this involve? *Knowledge*. You must “feed them with knowledge and understanding.” *Watchfulness*. No shepherd can afford to slumber and at one part of the year he must be up all night, for the lambs are being born. When you have a lambing time on, or, in other

words, a blessed revival, you will need to be especially watchful! And, as the wolf comes not only at lambing time, but at all other seasons, you should be always vigilant against him.

One of the chief qualifications of a true pastor, and one that is not very common, is a great deal of *patience*. Perhaps you say, “These people are so sinful, and erring, and foolish.” Yes, they are like sheep! And if they were not so, they would not need you or any other shepherd! Your calling would be abolished if all Christ’s people were strong and able to instruct others. Be very patient with them, as a nurse is with the child committed to her to watch, and love, and teach. What an honor this office puts upon you! To belong to the College of Fishermen with Peter, James and John is a great honor. But the work of the pastor is still nobler. Well did they speak of old of shepherd-kings, for the shepherd’s business is such as is worthy of a king! Indeed, amid his flock he is the truest of kings. What a line of shepherds can be traced right through the Word of God! Your business is one which the first martyr followed, for Abel was a keeper of sheep. Stand like he in the midst of your flock, ready to sacrifice life, itself, at God’s altar! You are following the business of Jacob, who said to Laban, “In the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from my eyes.” Yours is the calling of Joseph, who even when exalted to a throne, was still “the shepherd and stone of Israel.” Whatever your position may be, Brothers, be shepherds! You are following the trade of that noblest of woman born, I mean Moses, who kept the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, in the desert and there beheld the bush on fire out of which God spoke with him. He who led the people like a flock all through the wilderness was ready like a true shepherd to lay down his life for the flock, even asking to have his name blotted out of God’s Book if by that means they might live! You are following the occupation of the men after God’s own heart! If a man in these days is after God’s heart, let him be a shepherd of the flock. “He chose David, also, His servant, and took him from the sheep-folds: from following the ewes great with young He brought him to feed Jacob, His people, and Israel His inheritance.”

I hope, my Brothers, that like David, that in your youth you have slain both the lion and the bear, and that if an uncircumcised Philistine comes in your path, you will defy and destroy him in the name of the Lord! You are following the trade of God’s only-begotten Son! The Lord had but one Son and He made a Shepherd of Him! Imitate that *Good Shepherd* of the sheep who loved them and laid down His life for them. Trust that *Great Shepherd* of the sheep, whom “the God of peace has brought again from the dead through the blood of the Everlasting Covenant” and, by-and-by you shall see the *Chief Shepherd* and “shall receive a crown of glory that fades not away.”

Never forget that it is *Christ’s sheep* that you have to feed! Jesus said, “Feed My sheep.” Many find fault with the churches of the present day—

but the easiest work in the world is to find fault! My dear Brothers, bad as I know some of the Churches to be, I know no better people than God’s people—and with all their faults I still love them! I find my choicest companions and my bosom friends among them! I love the gates of Zion, for—

**“There my best friends, my kindred dwell,
There God my Savior reigns.”**

I always feel, in reference to my own people, that if they can put up with me, I can very well put up with them. They are Christ’s people—therefore love them and feel it to be an honor to do anything for those who belong to Jesus!

Much honor lies in the fact that our Lord says to each of us personally, “Feed My sheep.” I think that I see Him here among us. He of the pierced hands and the marred Countenance, with the crown of thorns about His brow stands in this hall and speaks to us. Or, if you will, with all His glories on, He comes among us! He looks on us all and even on me, my dear Brothers—and He says to each of us, “Do you see those poor tempted people? They are My sheep. I have loved them from before the foundation of the world. Will you feed them for Me? I have called them out of the world by victorious Grace, will you feed them for Me? I have provided abundant pasture for them, will you feed them for Me? I have bought them with My blood—behold the memorials of My purchase in My hands and My feet, My head and My side—will you feed them for Me? I have also loved you, and you love Me—will you feed My sheep for Me? I will feed *you*, will you feed *them*? Your bread shall be given you and your water shall be sure—will you feed My beloved ones for Me? I have gone to prepare a place for them in My own sweet pastures on the hill-tops of Glory. Will you feed them till I come again? I will feed them through you by the Holy Spirit—will you be My instruments?”

Do we not all reply, “Beloved Master, we think it our highest honor to be privileged thus and, cost us what it may, we will spend our lives in feeding Your sheep”? Brothers, say not much by way of a vow, but say much by way of prayer! Lord, help us all henceforth to feed Your sheep! Amen.

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

COMFORT FROM CHRIST'S OMNISCIENCE NO. 2669

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 8, 1900.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 15, 1882.

*“Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.”
John 21:17.*

PETER was somewhat pressed. He felt that he was pushed into a corner and compelled to look into his own heart and divulge its innermost secret. To be asked once, in the presence of his Brothers, whether he loved his Lord more than they did, had a tendency to humiliate him, for he had boastfully declared that, though all men should be offended because of Christ, he would not. But to be asked, next, whether he really loved Christ at all, sank him to the ground with holy shame. And when his Master asked him, the third time, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?” Peter was grieved—not angry—that could not be his condition under such circumstances, nor was he rebellious, but, at last, his heart was effectually touched by his Master’s skillful hands and he was grieved, just as true love is always grieved when it is questioned, but most of all grieved when it is questioned again, and again, and again. Now, the enormity of his guilt in denying his Lord has come home to him—and the grief which he had caused his gracious Master is now reflected in his own deep and contrite sorrow. “Peter was grieved because He said unto him the third time, Do you love Me?”

Our Savior’s thus pressing him closely was no doubt necessary as a salutary discipline to Peter. It was not unkindness, but the highest form of honest tenderness which led our Lord to act in this way. I suppose that if such a thing had occurred in any of our churches as for some leading member to deny that he knew Christ, and to go the length of denying it with oaths and curses, and to commit that great sin three times in the presence of many witnesses, so that the fact could not possibly be doubted, it would have been absolutely necessary, according to the teaching of the New Testament, to exercise discipline upon such a man—and I think that he would have been excluded from church fellowship. The Apostle Paul, writing concerning one who had been guilty of gross sin, says that with such a man we can have no fellowship—no, not so much as to eat with him. And he would have said the same about Peter.

Peter had denied Christ with oaths and curses. It was a most heinous sin and surely the purity of the Church would be put in jeopardy—the very existence of the Church as a testimony for Christ would be hazarded

by the retaining of such a man in its communion. According to such a rule as that, I suppose we must always judge. But the Lord Jesus Christ possessed attributes which we have not. He was Omniscient and, therefore, He could read Peter's heart. It was not necessary for Him to do what it might be lawful and even necessary for us to do. He knew that Peter's heart was right, notwithstanding all the evil of which he had been guilty. So, instead of refusing to have fellowship with him, the Savior first eats with him—Christ literally bids him come to breakfast. And then He exercises what I may call a sort of church discipline upon him, though I mean that expression in no hard or unkind sense.

Paul wrote to Timothy, "Then that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear," and our Lord acted in that manner on this occasion. The six other Brothers, who might fitly be regarded as representing the entire Church, were present, and the Savior began gently, but firmly, to probe Peter's heart and to probe it again, and yet again, until He perceived that He had touched him in the most tender possible place—and had drawn from him this last and most solemn declaration of the sincerity of his love—"Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Thrice had he denied his Lord. It was right, therefore, that he should thrice confess his love. And so his Master constrained him to do by His thrice-repeated question, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?"

Let us, dear Friends, as we think over this sad incident of Peter's sin, and of our Lord's gracious way of restoring him to his former office by a gentle act of discipline, put ourselves through a little heart-searching. It may be that, thanks to the restraining Grace of God, we have not sinned as Peter did, but we have sinned in some other way. We have, all of us, sinned quite enough to make us ask, "Lord, do we love You?" Instead of waiting for Him to put the question to us, we will ask it of ourselves—Do we really and truly love the Lord? Let us also believe that our Lord, as He stands at this moment among us and walks from pew to pew, bows His head over each one of us, and asks, "Do you love Me?"

As He does so, let us not evade the question, or play tricks with it. Let not, any one of us, say, "I hope I do," or, "I am afraid I do not." We either do or we do not—and the only answer that will be satisfactory will be, "Yes," or, "No." If we say, "No," it will be so far satisfactory that we are speaking the truth and, possibly, we may be helped to start back from so terrible a truth as that—that we do not love the Lord Jesus Christ—and that will be good for us, especially if it shall lead us to yield to Him. A man should always know the consequences of what he is doing, that he may do it with his eyes open and, then, perhaps, he will see the folly and the sin of it and take to a better course. But if, dear Friend, you can answer, "Yes," to Christ's question, then say it. Slowly, thoughtfully, as in the Presence of the Eternal God, say, "Lord, I ask You to bear witness on my account, for Your word is faithful and true. You know all things; You know that I love You." If you can say that, it will be a happy thing for yourself, and it will be a blessed thing for those who are round you, for, now, being assured of your own love to Christ, you will endeavor to win

others to share that love, that many of you together may be able to say to Christ—

**“Yes, we love You, and adore;
Oh, for Grace to love You more!”**

Now, coming to the text, I am going to try to do two things—first, to *examine Peter's reply*. And then, secondly, to *invite you to examine yourselves to see whether you can each give the same reply*.

I. First, let us EXAMINE PETER'S REPLY. “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.”

I begin with the observation that it is quite clear, from his reply, that *Peter was no Unitarian*. He had no doubts about the Divinity of Christ, for he said to Him, “Lord, You know all things.” Now, there is no being conceivable as knowing all things except God! And if it is true that Jesus Christ knows all things, then He possesses that Omniscience which is one of the essential attributes of Deity. I find that, nowadays, there is a sad increase of that pestilent heresy which is practically a return to the old Arianism which sought to rob Christ of His true Glory and reduce Him to the level of a mere man. We, at any rate, are not tainted with that fatal error—God grant that we never may be! No, He who as Man, is our Brother, is also God, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, whom we worship and adore! And we think and speak of Him as possessing every attribute that is essential to the Deity and, therefore, as possessing this one—that He knows all things. He searches the hearts and tries the reins of the children of men, for He is, assuredly, “very God of very God,” or, as Paul says, in his Epistle to the Romans, He “is over all, God blessed forever.”

My next remark upon our text is that Peter's mention of Omniscience in connection with Christ, and in connection with our declaration of love to Him, may be regarded *as a fact very full of awe*, because the Christ with whom we have to deal knows everything of which we are thinking. He reads all that is in the very core and center of our soul! We are in the Presence of One whose Infinite knowledge takes in, at one glance, the whole of our lives—past, present and future.

My dear Friends, if we remember that fact, it becomes a very solemn thing for us to make an appeal to Him to bear witness that we do really love Him. Peter said to Christ, “Lord, You know all things,” which in his case meant, “Lord You know that when the damsel said to me, ‘You, also, were with Jesus of Galilee,’ I denied it and said, ‘I know not what you say.’ And when another maiden said, ‘This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth,’ I denied with an oath, and said, ‘I do not know the Man.’ And then, as if to settle the matter once and for all, and make my accusers believe that I could not be one of Your followers, I took to profane swearing and, with oaths and curses, like any son of Belial or lewd fellow of the streets, I did blaspheme and swear.”

Yes, the Master had read the inner thoughts of Peter, as well as heard his words. Jesus knew all about how mean and cowardly he was to be afraid of a couple of silly maids and of those who stood with the throng in the High Priest's palace. Yet Peter says, “Lord, You know all things; You

know that I love You.” As we think of poor Peter and his answer to Christ’s question, let us remember that Jesus also knows everything that *we* have done since we were converted as well as before—all those times in which our thoughts have been impure and unclean, or our desires have wandered beyond the bounds of that which is right and proper—or our temper has been hasty and hot, or our spirit has been angry and proud. He sees the whole of our life in a single instant! God’s mind does not need a certain space of time to think of one wrong thing which we have done and then, afterwards, to think of another—it is all present before His eye at the same moment! As when a man rises in a balloon, above London, and sees it all at once spread before him, so God, from His Throne on high, sees our whole life at one glance. Just think of His pure and holy eyes seeing every portion of all your lives—your life at the table, your life in the parlor, your life in the kitchen, your life at your work, your life in the bedchamber, your life everywhere—and, as you think of all that being under His immediate gaze, I think it must become a very solemn thing for you to say to Him, “Lord, You know all this and yet I dare call You to witness that I do love You notwithstanding all that You have seen.” Brothers and Sisters, it is not by any means a trifling matter if our Lord only knows the sin of last week. Will you just think for a minute what it has been? Perhaps some of you may have grievously wronged the Savior during the week. If so, and remembering that He knows it all, can you yet creep up to Him and say, “Lord, though I am fully conscious that You know all that has happened, yet, for all that, I do say, You also know that I love You.” That is a fact full of awe.

It is, in the next place, *a fact which suggests to us that we should be very sincere*, for, if the Lord knows all things, then anything like an attempt to profess a love which we do not possess is utterly foolish, for God will search it through and through and discover its falseness. Then, in addition to being very foolish, it must be very wicked and insulting to the Lord. To tell another human being, whom you do not love, that you love him, would be a most cruel thing to do, and also a most impudent and impertinent thing. But to voluntarily express to God an affection which you do not feel is a very near approach to blasphemy! If it is not blasphemy in words, it certainly is in thought and intent. God knows, Friend, whether, when you joined the Church, you were really a follower of Christ. That night, when you were baptized, He saw all that was done and He knew exactly whether it was to you only an outward form, or whether you were really, in a spiritual sense, dead and buried with Christ. And when this service is over, it will be vain and futile for you to come to the Communion Table and eat the bread, and drink of the cup, unless in your very soul you are trusting Christ and believing in Him unto salvation. If you are determined to deceive someone, deceive your equal—play tricks with your fellow creatures—but never think to deceive the Most High who sees through you as if you were made of crystal and, at this moment, is watching each beat of your heart and reading not only what is on your tongue, but what is in your mind and will come forth from your lips, by-and-by! Oh, let us never, in our testimony, talk beyond

our own line, or boast of virtues which we never possessed! And in our prayers, let us never pray as if we had an experience which we have never felt, but let us say to Jesus, "Lord, You know all things." Let us be intensely sincere before Him and it shall be a blessed thing if, being so, we then dare to say, "yet You know that I love You."

Further, dear Friends, this is a fact which not only fills us with awe and suggests to us sincerity, but it is *a fact which inspires us with hope*. At times, the Grace that is really in us is scarcely visible to ourselves. I have often rejoiced that God's Omniscience has enabled Him to spy out Grace in me which I could not see—and I feel sure that there must be some of you who sometimes are led to question whether there is any Grace in you or not. You ask, "Where is that grain of mustard seed?" Fie on you! Fie on you! You ought to have watered it till it grew into a tree! But remember that even when you cannot see the Grace that is in you, God can! When you are brought into such a state of diffidence and dependency that you are half afraid there is not any real love to Christ in your soul at all, yet, if it is there, He can see it, for He put it there, and He values it very highly and has a quick eye to spy it out.

"Lord, You know all things; therefore, I do bless You that You know every place where I have been and You know my secret love passages with You." That is a blessed thought. I have no doubt that when Peter said to Christ, "You know all things," he not only remembered his sin, but he recollected his going out and weeping bitterly. And he also remembered that look that Jesus gave him—such a look as you and I could not give to anyone. I do not know what Peter said to the Lord while he was weeping bitterly, but there must have been many a sigh, many a groan and many a tear in that time of anguish. Peter no doubt got away into a corner, all alone, and he was ready to cover himself with sackcloth and ashes, as he there groaned, wrestled and cried. He did not know what to do with himself and while he was thus praying, perhaps his Lord let in the light of the Gospel and made him recollect some such promise as this, "He that covers his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesses and forsakes them shall have mercy." And Peter had some comfortable gleams of hope even amid the darkness and, after a while, he even dared to speak to his Lord, and tell Him how he loved Him.

And now Peter says, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You, for between You and me there has been some love passages which nobody knows but Yourself and myself. My eyes, all full of tears, have met Your eyes all full of love. And my heart all breaking has touched Your heart which was pierced upon the tree. Your wounded hands have been laid to my sores and Your weeping eyes have looked my tears away. You know, Lord. You know all things; You know that I love You." So, dear Friends, you see that there is something exceedingly sweet about that Omniscience which has read the secret motions of our spirit towards the Lord. Even when they have been so feeble that we could scarcely see them, ourselves, God has seen them!

And do you not think, dear Friends, that there is something very blessed in Peter's plan of bringing in Christ's Omniscience to answer his

Lord's question about his love, inasmuch as *it meets our inability to speak?* Some of us can speak fast enough, but others have the holy gift of silence which is a great blessing. They cannot say much, but they can look up to their Savior and say, "Lord, You know all things; You know that we love You." I have heard of a young Christian woman who was asked to tell before the church the story of her experience, but she could not utter a word, till, just as she was going out of the room, she turned around and said, "I cannot speak for Jesus Christ, but I could die for Him." Then the one who was in charge of the meeting, said to her, "Come back, dear Sister, you have said quite enough for us to know that you love the Lord."

No doubt there are many who find it easier to live for Christ than to speak for Him—they have not that gift of speech. Let me remind you who must always be the silent members of the Church, that you may be blessed in your silence by reflecting upon this fact—God knows all about what you cannot explain to your fellow Christians. His Omniscience sets aside the necessity of your being able to express your love fluently and you, also, can say, "Lord, You know all things; You know that we love You."

And is not this fact *a sweet encouragement to any of you who are persecuted for Christ's sake?* Our enemies do not burn us now, or stretch us on racks, but they still have many methods of showing their malice. They know how to torture us and some of them are very ingenious in the art of tormenting. I have known some say—ungodly parents will say it to their daughters—sometimes, wicked men will say it to their gracious wives—"You know very well that all your idea about being religious is that you want to be different. You go to your place of worship because you like to be different from everybody else—that is the only reason you have." Possibly, you do not know what to say to them, but you can always say *this* to your Savior, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You."

Then, again, if there is some little fault to be found with you in the family, down they come upon you, crying, "Ah! that is your Christianity, is it? You are one of those who have professed to be religious and joined the Church!" Mark you, Friends, they will do a hundred times worse things, themselves, and think nothing of it, but if they can catch *you* tripping in the slightest degree, they magnify your little slip into a grievous fall! Now, it would be quite fair for them to do so if you set up to be perfect, but as you never did that, it is an unfair thing to charge you with insincerity because of imperfection. Do not let them have the opportunity of saying even that, if you can help it. Yet, sometimes, when you have given them no occasion for finding fault with you, they will make one—invent an accusation for which there is no foundation. Well, if they do so, never mind. Let them say what they will, but lift up your eyes to Heaven, and say, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You."

A man of God—as upright a Christian man as I know—came to me, not long ago, in great trouble because somebody had said that he had been drunk. He was dreadfully cut up about it, for he had been a teetotaler for many years, and nothing of the kind had occurred. "Well," I said,

“you are only tarred with the same brush as others of us.” And then I added, “As for me, I have had all manner of false and cruel things said about me! I remember that an influential daily paper said of me, at the time of the Surrey Gardens accident, ‘We would place in the hand of every right-thinking man, a whip to scourge from society such a ranting charlatan.’ Yet I am still here, notwithstanding all that was said. Moreover, when most abused, I used to go to bed at the same hour as I would have done if they had not slandered me—and I believe that I ate my dinner with as hearty an appetite as if everybody had been praising me.”

One gets by degrees into such a condition that it does not matter what people say. And, after all, does it ever really matter what they say? Let them throw mud at you till you are covered with it from head to foot—the kind of mud they fling has a tendency to come off when it is dry and to make the garment that it once sullied look even brighter than it was before! Do not fret yourselves about these slanderers and persecutors, but just get alone and say to the Lord, “You know all things.” They do not and it is a good thing for us that they do not! If they did, then they might find plenty of fault with us—and find some real faults in us—but they do not know everything, and they generally hit on the very thing of which we are quite innocent, but, “Lord, You know all things; You know that we love You.”

This seems to me to be a blessed text for you to take home and to carry with you wherever you go in the midst of a ribald world, for *it will often remind you of a precious Truth of God*—“You know all things; You know that I love You.” Of course He does! If you do really love Him, it is His own love in you returning to where it came! And He knows that it is there. If you do love Him, it was He who made you love Him! This plant of paradise never grows of its own accord in the dunghill of our nature—neither does it grow anywhere unless it is planted by the hand of God. He who gave you that love watches over it to bring it to perfection. Being a plant of His own right-hand planting, He will water it every moment and, lest any hurt it, He will keep it night and day. Having loved the Lord here on earth, you shall love Him, by-and-by, in Heaven, where, with all the blood-washed company, you shall find it the very Heaven of your Heaven to live forever adoring Him whose eternal love, Sovereign Grace and almighty power have at last made you perfect and brought you Home to love Him even as He loves you, according to your capacity.

II. There I must leave the text, so far as it especially concerns Peter, and come now to speak briefly upon the second part of the subject, which is, TO INVITE YOU TO EXAMINE YOURSELVES TO SEE WHETHER YOU CAN EACH GIVE THE SAME REPLY—“Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.”

First, *some say the same as Peter did, though they ought not to do so.* They say that they love Christ. “Yes, oh, yes, we love Him!” Let us talk to one of these glib speakers for a few moments. When did you begin to love the Lord? “Oh, I—I—I *always* loved Him.” When were you converted and renewed in heart? “Oh, I do not know that I ever was.” Stop, then, Friend, before you say again that you love the Lord. Do you truly trust

the Savior? Are you resting the whole weight of your soul upon Him? If you say, "No," then you do not love Him, for the only love which Christ will accept is born of *faith*. Love is the flower which grows out of the root of faith.

Perhaps you think that you are very good and that you will probably get to Heaven by your goodness. If that is your notion, then I am sure you do not really love Christ. You admire your beautiful self—you have been so good and so excellent that you do not want to be saved by the sinners' Savior! You want a special, particular Savior for you—a saint-Savior, not a sinner's Savior. Then I know you do not love the Christ of the Bible—the Christ of Calvary. You may love a sort of antichrist of your own inventing, but you do not love the Christ of God. Let me ask you another question. You say that you love Christ, well, then, for what do you thank Christ? "Well, I believe that there are some imperfections in me, and that Christ makes up for them." Do you? Then, in your esteem, He is only a makeweight, just to compensate for your deficiencies. His seamless robe of righteousness is to be torn to patch up your old rags! How many of you want to make Christ a kind of extra horse to drag the load up the hill? That is all you think of Him—but do you imagine that Christ and your poor team are to be joined together like that? Is it to be partly self-salvation and partly salvation by Christ? If that is your idea, you insult the Savior—it may be unwittingly, but I am sure you cannot really love Him.

I have heard of a very excellent man—one of the holiest and best of men—who, when he lay dying, said, "Lord, when I estimate my works, I have to remember that Your estimate is so very different from mine that I think it best to leave this business altogether—and only trust my Savior." I have heard of another who said, when he was dying, that he began to sort out his works and some he thought were good, and some were bad. But after he had sorted them a little, he felt that the good ones were so very like the bad ones, when he came to really look closely into them, that he pitched the whole lot overboard and just trusted himself to Christ. That was a very wise and sensible thing to do! And I am sure that no man among you loves Christ unless he is trusting to Him only, and to Him wholly.

What is your view of Christ, dear Friend! Is He your Master as well as your Savior? This is a question which I want to put very pointedly, for I heard a person ask, the other day, "Is Baptism essential to salvation?" Listen! This man means to do only that which is essential for his own salvation—that is all. To get into Heaven is all that he cares about, so he asks, concerning one thing or another, "Is it essential to salvation?" A soldier in her Majesty's army says, when an order is given to him, "Is this essential? Shall I be shot if I do not obey it?" Drum him out of the regiment, for what is the good of him? I look upon Christ as my Lord and Master and if He bids me do something, though there may be in it nothing whatever to my profit, I am bound to do it because He is my Master and Lord! "Is it essential to salvation?" is a sneak's question! I dare not use a milder term. I am often ashamed to answer those who make such

an enquiry. The message to you is, "Whatever He says to you, do it." Did you come into the world merely that you might get saved? Is that all? Oh, poor, mean wretch! The Lord save you from being so selfish! How can you even get to Heaven when your sole ambition is, somehow or other, to save your own skin? To get inside the pearly gates and enjoy yourself—that is your notion of Heaven! But that is the very thing from which you have to be saved! I hope you will come to have quite another idea. I live not to save myself, but to glorify Him who has saved me. I work not because I hope to escape from Hell by what I do, or to get to Heaven by what I do, but because Christ has saved me and now, out of gratitude to Him, if there is anything He wishes me to do, I do it without a question, saying to Him—

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

Get rid of selfishness, or else you cannot truthfully say that you love Christ! You are only loving yourself and baptizing selfishness with the name of Christianity.

But, next, I think that *there are some persons who ought to say what Peter did and yet they are afraid to do so*. Some of the most beautiful, tender, loving, genuine, true-hearted people in the world are, nevertheless, so timid and so jealous of themselves—and they have such brokenness of spirit—that they dare not say that they love Christ, though I am sure that, if any people in the world do love Him, it is these poor people! There are many who are so hard and harsh towards these dear tender, broken-hearted ones, that I like to cheer them all I can. I wish that they would grow stronger. I wish that they would become bolder. I wish they were braver, but, then, I know that among these who dare not say publicly that they love Christ, are many who love Him vastly more than some who can talk very glibly about it.

I have told you before of the two friends who were shut up in prison and one said to the other, "Oh, I do dread to-morrow morning! I am afraid that when I come to feel the fire, I shall recant. I know that I never was good at bearing pain and I have heard that the pain of being burnt to death is very dreadful." So the other turned round upon him and said, "I am ashamed of you talking like that! You know very well it is for Christ's cause that we are going to die. I am sure that I shall not have any such fear—I could bear a thousand deaths for Christ! I feel such courage in my spirit that I do not dread the pain and I am ashamed that you do." They both came to be chained to the stake and the boastful man recanted and saved his skin. But the poor timid man stood bravely in the midst of the fire and burned to death—and kept saying, "Lord, help me! Lord, help me!"

I believe that it often happens that those who are so trembling in themselves, are, nevertheless, sound to the core, while many of your high-flying gentlemen who get perfect in about three minutes and then begin to preach to those of us who have been, perhaps, 30 years in Christ, and tell us that we ought to be as perfect as they are—which we

were before they were born—will be blown away like thistledown by the first wind that comes! And that the solid, weighty lumps of gold—these humble broken-hearted saints—will endure even to the end. Still, dear Brother, where are you? Mr. Despondency, I mean. I want you to say, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.” Where are you, Mrs. Much-Afraid? I think I have read about you in *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Mrs. Much-Afraid, Mr. Despondency, Mr. Feeble-Mind and Mr. Ready-to-Halt, who had the crutches, and went limping all his life, yet, once upon a time, when Mr. Great-Heart cut off Giant Despair's head and brought it to the pilgrims, they said that they would all dance, and Ready-to-Halt danced on his crutches and said that he hoped, by-and-by, to be where he should not be encumbered with them.

Come along, all you poor tried souls, let this be a time of rejoicing with you! Say in your spirit, if not in words, “Yes, Lord, we cannot hold back any longer! We must say it—‘You know all things; You know that we love You.’” And when you have once said it, keep on saying it, my dear Brothers and Sisters, and the Lord keep you up to that blessed mark till, when the trumpet sounds in the morning and you wake up in the endless day, you shall say, “Yes, Lord, I did love You and I love You now, and I will love You forever.” God grant that we may *all* say that, for Christ's sake! Amen.

Before we go, let us sing this one verse—

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

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—711, 788, 639, 804.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 26:1-14.**

Verse 1. *In that day.* Or, rather, as we may read it now, “In this day”—
1-3. *Shall this song be sung in the land of Judah; We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks. Open you the gates, that the righteous nation which keeps the truth may enter in. You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You: because he trusts in You.* Here is the song which we are to sing in this Gospel day. The theme of it is God and the city which He has built, and which He has given to us to be our heritage forever. “We have a strong city.” Yes, Beloved, a very strong one, for although the devil has exercised all his ingenuity for these thousands of years, he has not been able to destroy it. He has thrown in the bombshell of persecution. He has tried to undermine it with his subtlety and cunning of false doctrine, but he has not yet been able to do anything effectually against the strong city. “We have a strong city” and she is just as strong, now, after all the desperate attacks that have been made upon her walls, as ever she was. Against her, the gates of Hell cannot prevail!

The Church of Christ is never in danger. "We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks." After noticing the security of the city, the Prophet bids us "open the gates, that the righteous nation which keeps the truth may enter in." It is the Gospel minister's business to seek to open the gates. It is the Christian's business, in some sense, to open the gates. Yes, we should all of us be endeavoring, if possible, to "open the gates, that the righteous nation"—that is, the righteous people—"may enter" into the Church. But, after all, the Lord Jesus Christ is the great Opener of the gates! He opens the gates to let His people in. And, mark you, they do not all come in at one gate. The command is, "Open you the *gates*." Some come in by means of one Doctrine, and some by means of another. We are not all converted by the same agency. Some come in at the Sunday school gate. Others come in at the gate which is kept by pious parents. Many come in at the gate of the preached Word. But all the gates should be open—"Open you the gates, that the righteous nation which keeps the truth may enter in."

The Prophet next describes the peaceableness of this city. The gates are open, but no enemy ever enters in, for he says to the Lord, "You will keep Him in peace—peace," as the original has it, in double peace. "You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You." There is nothing like staying the mind on God. If you stay the mind on anything else, you cannot have perfect peace, for that something else may fail you. If you trust in horses and in chariots, horses may tire, and the wheels of the chariots may break. But he who trusts in the Lord shall dwell "in perfect peace." Let the earth be all in arms abroad, the Believer dwells "in perfect peace, because He trusts in You."

4, 5. *Trust you in the Lord forever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength: for He brings down them that dwell on high.* Some of you dwell so much "on high" that you do not believe the Doctrine of Original Depravity. You are very good by nature, according to your own ideas. Well, remember this declaration of the Prophet—"He brings down them that dwell on high." Others of you boast of your free will capacity and you think you have power to do anything outside the assistance of the Holy Spirit. Ah, but, "He brings down them that dwell on high." Others of you do not know what a doubt or a fear is, but you wrap yourselves up complacently in your self-sufficiency and say, "We are secure!" Ah, but, "He brings down them that dwell on high."

5. *The lofty city, He lays it low.* No one can lay God's city low, but God can lay the lofty city low.

5-7. *He lays it low, even to the ground; He brings it even to the dust. The foot shall tread it down, even the feet of the poor, and the steps of the needy. The way of the just is uprightness: You, most upright, do weigh the path of the just.* God "weighs the path of the just" in scales. We read elsewhere that God weighs the spirits and weighs our actions. Here we are told that He "weighs the path of the just." Those words, which were used by the Prophet when he went to Hezekiah and said, "What have they seen in your house?" would serve for a very striking text. But it is still more important to consider what *God* has seen in *our* house and in

our *hearts*, for God weighs our actions. He weighs our private thoughts and our public deeds. He “weighs the path of the just.” But, according to the Prophet, “the way of the just is uprightness,” even after it is weighed! Notwithstanding all the sin that is mixed with it, in the main it is “uprightness” ascending towards God.

8, 9. *Yes, in the way of Your judgments, O LORD, have we waited for You; the desire of our soul is to Your name, and to the remembrance of You. With my soul have I desired You in the night; yes, with my spirit within me will I seek You early: for when Your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. Alas, it is often the case that when God's “judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness” for a little while—and then forget it. All too often they are like the child who merely learns his lesson by rote and repeats it under the fear of the rod—and then forgets all about it on the morrow. They “learn righteousness,” but, soon, the effect of the warning is all gone and then God sends fresh judgments upon the earth to teach the inhabitants further lessons.*

10-12. *Let favor be showed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the LORD. LORD, when Your hand is lifted up, they will not see: but they shall see, and be ashamed for their envy at the people; yes, the fire of your enemies shall devour them. LORD, You will ordain peace for us: for You also have worked all our works in us. Troubled saint, what a precious passage this is for you! Poor, tempest-tossed soul, what a glorious utterance! “Lord, You will ordain peace for us.” There shall come an ordinance from God that His people shall have peace! “You will ordain peace for us: for You also have worked all our works in us”—so they must be good works, but those works which God did not work in us are bad ones.*

13, 14. *O LORD our God, other lords beside You have had dominion over us: but by You only will we make mention of Your name. They are dead, they shall not live; they are deceased, they shall not rise. Many of us can look back to the time when we made idols of business and of worldly things. But now these lords are dead and they shall not live again—they are buried out of our sight—and they shall not rise from their graves.*

14. *Therefore have You visited and destroyed them, and made all their memory to perish. And a blessed thing it is when the memory of our sins perish and we have no desire to be enslaved by them again!*

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

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY
TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

“DO I LOVE THE LORD OR NOT?”

NO. 3524

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 10, 1916.**

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

***“Peter was grieved because He said unto him the third time, Do you love Me?”
John 21:17.***

THIS is a pointed question which demands a personal answer and should, therefore, stir up full and frequent self-examination. “Do you love Me?” It is a probing question that is likely to excite much grief when pressed home to the sensitive, tender-hearted disciple, even as Peter was grieved because the Lord said unto him the third time, “Do you love Me?” Yet it is a pleasing and profitable question to as many of us as can give a like solemn and satisfactory response to that of Simon Peter, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.”

I. IT IS VERY NECESSARY THAT ALL DISCIPLES, EVEN THE MOST PRIVILEGED, THE MOST TALENTED AND THE MOST FAMOUS, SHOULD OFTEN BE ASKED THE QUESTION—HEAR IT IN THEIR SOULS AND FEEL ITS THRILLING INTENSITY—“SIMON, SON OF JONAS, DO YOU LOVE ME?”

It must have been momentous, indeed, or the Savior would not have repeated it to Peter three times at one interview. He tarried on earth but 40 days after His Resurrection. The opportunities for conferences, therefore, with His disciples would be few. On what subjects, then, should He speak to them but those which appeared to Him of the weightiest import? Of the times or the seasons that must presently transpire, He refrains to divulge a secret. With the fulfillment of ancient predictions that prompted the curiosity of the Jew, or the solution of metaphysical problems that harassed the minds of Gentile philosophers, He did not meddle. I neither find Him interpreting obscure prophecy, nor expounding mystic Doctrine—but instead, thereof, I find Him inculcating personal piety! The question He propounds is of such vital importance that all other questions may be set aside till this one question is positively settled, “Do you love Me?”

Hence, Beloved, I infer that it is of infinitely more consequence for me to know that I love Christ than it is to know the meaning of the little

horn, or the ten toes, or the four great beasts! All Scripture is profitable to those who have Grace to profit by it, but would you both save yourself and those who hear you, you must know Him and love Him to whom Patriarchs, Prophets and Apostles all bear witness that there is salvation in none other, and no other name given under Heaven whereby we must be saved! You may whet your appetite for logic, but you cannot, with your heart, believe unto righteousness while you occupy your thoughts, your tongues, or your pens wrangling about Calvinism and Arminianism, sub-lapsarianism and supra-lapsarianism, or any of the endless controversies of the schoolmen and sectarians! “Do you love Me?” that is the moot point! Can you give an affirmative answer? Will your conscience, your life, your God, attest the verity of your love to Him? Then, though you are no doctor of divinity, though you cannot decipher the niceties of systematic theology, though you are unable to rebut one in a thousand of the subtleties of the adversary, yet you have an unction from the Holy One! Your love approves you, your faith has saved you and He whom your soul loves will keep you for time and for eternity—you are blessed! To my mind, I say, the gravity of the question is palpable from the time at which it was put. During the few days of our risen Lord’s sojourn, He would not have given it such distinct prominence had it not been, in Peter’s case, the evidence of his repentance, his restoration and the full recognition he received.

But, Brothers and Sisters, what question can more *closely appeal to ourselves*, to each one of us? Love is one of the most vital of the Christian Graces. If faith is the eye of the soul, without which we cannot see our Lord savingly, surely love is the very heart of the soul and there is no spiritual life if love is absent! I will not say that love is the first Grace, for *faith* first discovers that Christ loves us, and then we love Him because He first loved us. Love may be second in order, but it is not second in importance. I may say of faith and love, that these are like two roes that are twins—or rather of faith, and hope, and love, that these are three Divine sisters who mutually support one another—the health of one betokening the vigor of all, or the decline in one the weakness of all. “Do you love Me?” Why, the question means, Are you a Christian? Are you a disciple? Are you saved? For if any man love wife, or child, or house more than Christ, he is not worthy of Him. Christ must have from every one of His disciples, the heart’s warmest affection! And where that is not freely accorded, depend upon it, there is no true faith and, consequently, no salvation, no spiritual life. On your answer to that question hangs your present state. Do you love Jesus? If the answer is, “No,” then you are still in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity! But if the truthful an-

swer of your soul is, “You know all things; You know that I love You,” then, weak as you are, you are a saved soul—and with all your mourning and trembling, your doubts and misgivings, the Spirit of God bears witness with your spirit that you are born from above! The sincerity of your love to Christ shows more plainly than anything, the verity of your relation to Him!

Oh, *what searching of heart* this question demands! Do not flatter yourselves with any false confidence. Many persons have been deceived upon this matter. Alas, they are partial judges who sit in judgment of themselves—for every defect they have an excuse—they find mitigating circumstances to whitewash their basest crimes. No marvel to me, but infinite pity for them that they choose their own delusions and become the dupes of their own infatuation! Their feelings, enhanced by the music of a hymn, or impassioned by the fervor of a sermon, they mistake for an inspiration of faith and love—and when the emotions pass off, as they quickly do—they grow loud in their professions. At first their own hearts were deceived. At length they practice deception on others. O you church members! I beseech you, do not conclude that you are members of the *invisible* Church because you are members of the visible Church! Though your names may be inscribed on the roll of the faithful, here, do not be too sure that they are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life! Never take your position before God for granted. Do not shrink from a rigid scrutiny as those who never dare ask the question! Do not disparage self-examination like those who dare to think it is the devil who sets them to the task when he would beset them with legal terrors! Believe me, Satan is too fond of lulling you into presumption to aid or abet in awakening you to make sure of your condition! There is a gross infatuation which is the counterfeit of faith in God. Its credulous victims believe a lie and they fondly cling to it like limpets to a rock. But sound Believers are not afraid of vigilant self-examination—they are prepared to endure an even more severe test—they say, “Search me, God, and try me.” It is your hollow dissemblers who resent all questionings and take umbrage at any suspicions. The man who knows that he has pure gold to sell is not afraid of the chemicals with which the goldsmith tests it, nor even of the crucible into which he may cast it. Not so the impostor who hawks a baser metal—he entreats you to be satisfied with his warranty, though it is as worthless as his wares! Search yourselves! Examine yourselves, whether you are in the faith! Prove yourselves! Know you not that Jesus Christ is in you, except you are reprobates?” By the cries of souls who, concerning faith, have made shipwreck, while they dreamed they were sailing gloriously into harbor—I beseech you make sure work for eternity and take

care that your answer to the question, “Do you love Me,” is well weighed, truthful and sincere—lest you should crash on the same reefs and be lost. Forever lost!

And, dear Friends, I am sure the more closely we examine ourselves, the more *need for self-examination* we shall discover. Can you not recollect much in the tone of your thoughts and the temper of your actions that might well lead you to suspect that you do not love Christ? If this is not so with all of you, I know it is so with me. Mournfully must I confess that when I look back upon my past service for my Master, I could wish to blot it out with tears of penitent compunction, so far as my share in it has been concerned! Wherein He has used me, let Him have all the glory, for to Him it belongs. His be the praise! For me there remains shame and confusion of face because of the coldness of my heart, the feebleness of my faith, the presumption with which I have trusted to my own understanding and the resistance I have offered to the motions of the Holy Spirit. Alas for the carnality of our minds, the worldliness of our projects and our forgetfulness of God in times of ease! It is strange to me if we have not all cause to mourn over delinquencies like these. And if it is so with those of us who still can honestly say that we know we love our Lord, what scruples, what perilous scruples might some of you entertain whose conduct, character and the tenor of your lives may well raise a graver question!

You imagine that you love Christ. Have you fed His lambs? Have you fed His sheep? Have you given that proof which our Savior imperatively requires of you? What are you doing for Him now? It is poor love that spends itself in professions and never comes to any practical result! Let this enquiry, then, pass round—

***“What have I done for Him who died
To save my precious soul?”***

Alas, then, if instead of having, like the beloved Persis, labored much in the Lord (Rom 16:12), might we not, some of us, suspect ourselves of having so acted as rather to dishonor His name? Are you not tenderly conscious that Christian people full often lend their sanction by a loose conversation and lax habits, to the sins which the world has allowed and applauded? Jerusalem becomes a Comforter to Sodom when those who call themselves people of God conform to the usages of society—and of such society as is corrupt to the core! They say, “Ah, you see, there is no harm in it, for the saints, themselves, indulge in it! They are of the same mind as we are! They make a great pretence, but to no great purpose, for they do as we do.” God forgive us if we have opened the mouths of the Lord’s enemies after this fashion! Surely such failures and such offenses

make it necessary for us to ask whether we love the Lord or not! And though we may hesitate to answer the question, it is well to raise it, lest, closing our eyes in carnal security, we should go on to destruction! Let us put the question to ourselves again, and again, and again, for the question will not mar our faith, nor even mar our comfort, as long as we are able to fall back upon Peter’s reply, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.” And now, presuming that we are, all of us, convinced that the question is expedient and becoming, let me remark that—

II. IT IS A QUESTION WHICH, WHEN RAISED, OFTEN CAUSES GRIEF.

Peter was “grieved,” but the Lord Jesus Christ never grieved one of His disciples heedlessly. *This goes again to prove the need of the question.* He was rather for comforting, cheering and blessing them. He inflicted no needless pain. He shielded them from bootless anxiety. Yet Peter was grieved. Now why should you and I be grieved when the enquiry turns upon our sincerity? You know that if we do not canvass the matter, ourselves, our foes will be prompt enough to suspect us, especially if we are in a public position. The clearer your character, the keener the assault. Satan—and he is the accuser of the brethren—said, “Does Job serve God for nothing? Have You not set a hedge about him?” The devil’s taunting question has become a proverb with the profane! What worse can they say of the Christian minister than this, “Is he zealous for nothing? Has he not a motive? Is there not selfishness in the background?” Base insinuations will, I suppose, be freely uttered about you whatever may be your position in the world. Of the tradesman who fears the Lord, they will say, “Of course, he makes it pay.” As for the merchant who consecrates his wealth for the love of Christ, they ask, “Do not you see that he is seeking notoriety? Is it not a cheap way of getting up a name?” We are sure to have the question raised. Sometimes it sorely grieves us *because of our pride.*

We do not like to have our feelings chafed in such a manner. I cannot help thinking there was some sin in Peter’s grief. He was grieved as one who felt himself aggrieved—“Is it not too bad to ask me three times! Why should the Lord thus distress me? Surely the blessed Master might have put more confidence in me than to press a question which stings like a reproach.” Yet what a poor simpleton he was to think so! How much harm comes from answering in a hurry? When our profession is canvassed, we ought not to be angry. Did we know our own hearts, we would keenly feel the accusations it would be reasonable to lay against us—and the poor defense that conscience could make! When my enemies are finding fault with me, and forging lies to injure me, I sometimes think to my-

self that though I can exonerate myself from their charges, there are other faults of which they are not cognizant that humble me before God beyond their utmost surmise! Their conspiracies cannot explore the secret of my confessions when I lay the imaginations of my heart before Him against whom only I have sinned. How dare we whisper into the ears of our fellow men the wish, the whim the like, or the hate that haunts one's breast, or anything of the multitude of vanities that float along the rapid current of one's mind! What would they think of us who do not know how rightly to think of themselves? Surely *pride is put out of countenance*, for the worst opinions our enemies can form of us are probably as good as we dare to entertain of ourselves, taking the evil of our hearts into consideration! The heart is a very sink of evil! If we have not perceived it, we have yet to discover it. The voice Ezekiel heard speaks to us—“Son of man, I show you greater abominations than these.” Little charm you can find, because little cheer you can get out of these sermons which wither your vain conceit! But they are not the less profitable. You prefer the small still voice of a kindly promise, or the rich tones of a glorious prophecy—and then you congratulate yourselves upon the happy Sabbath you have spent! I am not quite so sure that your emotions are the truest test of your interests. Is that always the most wholesome food your children get which has most sugar in it? Do they never get surfeited with luxury till they need medicine? Is comfort always the choicest blessing we can crave? Alas, we form so high an estimate of our estate, that to question whether we love the Lord Jesus Christ or not, lowers our dignity, annoys, vexes and sadly grieves us!

Not that pride is the only incentive. *Shame crouches full often in the same obscure corner* where pride nestles. Both alike are disturbed by a gleam of daylight. Peter must have felt, when he heard the question for the third time, “Do you love Me?” as if he could hear the cock crow again. He recollected the scene and circumstance of the dark betrayal hour. Does not the Lord remember my fear and my cowardice, the lies I told, the cursing and swearing I gave way to, and the paltry excuse that edged me on when the taunt of a poor silly maid was too much for an Apostle? Ah, she annoyed me, she irritated me, I was conquered. I became a traitor, a blasphemer, almost an apostate. The tears, the bitter tears he wept on the morning of the crucifixion when Jesus looked upon him, welled up again from his heart into his eyes as the risen Lord looked into his face and made him conscious of how richly he deserved to be asked the question, “Do you love Me?” Yes, and like bitter memories may cover some of us with shame! Bitter as gall must the recollections be to some of you who have so backslidden as to publicly dishonor Christ. I do not

want to say an unkind thing to you, but it is good, sometimes, to keep a wound open. The Bible tells of some sins God has freely forgiven and yet fully recorded. It is no marvel if we cannot forgive ourselves for having in any way brought dishonor and reproach upon the Cross of Christ. The grief is healthy. We sing—

***"What anguish does that question stir,
If you will also go?"***

But what deeper anguish may that other question stir, "Do you love Me?" Our cheeks may well mantle with a crimson blush when we remember what grave cause for suspicion we have given to our Lord!

Not that wounded pride and conscious shame are the only sensations. *Perhaps fear distressed him.* Peter may have thought to himself, Why does my Lord ask me three times? It may be I am deluded and that I do not love Him." Before his fall he would have said, "Lord, You know that I love You. How can You ask me? Have I not proved it? Did I not step down into the sea at Your beck and call? I will go through fire and water for You." But Simon, son of Jonas, had learned to be more sober and less loud in his protests. He had been tried. He had attempted to stand alone and he had proved his palpable weakness. He looks dubious, he seems hesitant, he feels scrupulous. He is alive to the fact that the Lord knows him better than he knows himself. Hence the diffidence with which he asserts his confidence—"You know all things; You know that I love You." A burned child is afraid of fire and a scalded child shudders at hot water. So a precocious Peter feels the peril of presumption. His timidity troubles him. He hesitates to give his word of honor. Distrust of self distresses him. He dreams his former downfall over and over again. The hypocrisy of his own heart horrifies him! What can he say? He answers the Accuser, or rather he appeals to the Appellant, "You know all things; You know that I love You." His previous guilt causes his present grief. Should like horrors haunt you, Friends, give no place to grievous misgivings! Do not encourage them. Go quickly to the Cross! Behold the crown of thorns! Fly at once, poor guilty Sinner, to the great Atonement which was made by the Lord upon the tree and let that fear be ended once and for all!

Not that it was all pride, or all shame, or all fear—*I think there was also love in it.* Peter *did* love his Master and, therefore, he did not like to have a doubt or a dark suspicion cast on his sincerity. Love is a very jealous emotion and keenly sensitive when questioned by those on whom it intensely dotes. "Why," Peter seems to say, "my Lord and Master, what would I not do for You? Though I was so false and so faithless in that hour of trial, yet I know that I am true in the very bottom of my heart. My fall has not been a total one, nor a final one. There is in my soul, my

Lord, a true, deep and honest love to You—I know there is.” He could not bear to have that love questioned. What would the wife say if her husband should ask, “Do you love me?” And if, after she had given a fond assurance of affection, he should repeat the question solemnly, and with an earnest and a penetrating look—especially if she had done much to grieve him and to make him suspect her—I ask, what would she say? Oh, I can understand how her love at last would make her heart feel as if it must burst! With what earnestness she would exclaim, “Oh, my husband, if you could see my heart, you would see your name written there!” It is hard, even in the conjugal relationship, to have a suspicion cast upon your affection! Because of the tenacity of his love, Peter was grieved. Had he not loved Christ so ardently, he would not have felt the grief so acutely. Had he been a hypocrite, he might have fired with anger, but he would not have grieved after this fashion. I tell some of our dear young people who get into trouble and say they are afraid that they are hypocrites, that I never yet knew a hypocrite who said he was afraid he was one, and those who say that they are afraid they do not love Jesus and are timid and trembling—though I do not commend them for their trembling—yet I have a much better hope of some of them than I have of others who are loud in their declarations and vehement in asserting, “Though all men forsake You, yet will not I.” One is comforted to hear the confidence with which some of our young Brothers and Sisters can speak. Their warm expressions of love refresh us. Yet we cannot help feeling that they have got to be tried. Perhaps they will not be less confident in Christ when trial comes. They may be less confident in themselves and it is just possible that, though their voices may be quite as sweet, they will yet not be quite so loud. Years of trial and temptation—and especially any experience of backsliding—will pluck some of the feathers out of us and make us feel humble before the Lord. This grief of Peter, what a complex passion it was!

III. BUT IF IT HAS GRIEVED US TO HEAR THIS QUESTION, IT WILL BE VERY SWEET IF WE CAN TRULY GIVE THE ANSWER, “YOU KNOW ALL THINGS; YOU KNOW THAT I LOVE YOU.”

Surely the preacher need not say any more if the hearers would just say what is in their own hearts. Let the question go round. With all your imperfections and infirmities, your wanderings and backslidings, can you nevertheless declare that you do love the Lord? Can you join in that verse—

***“You know I love You, dearest Lord,
But, oh! I long to soar
Far from the sphere of earthly joy,
And learn to love You more”?***

If you can say that you love Christ from your very heart, how happy you ought to be! That love of yours is only a drop from the fountain of His own everlasting love. It is a proof that He loved you before He made the earth. It is also a pledge that He always will love you when the heavens and the earth shall pass away. “I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Jesus’ hand is on you, or else your heart would not be on Him—and that hand will never relax its grip! He, Himself, has said it, “I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand.” Now let your heart say, “What shall I do? What shall I render to Him whom I love?” And the Savior’s answer to you will be, “If you love Me, keep My commandments.” You know His “commandments,” as to the holiness of your life, the nonconformity of your spirit to the world, your private communion with Him. You know His commandment concerning your profession of your faith by Baptism. You know His commandment, “This do you in remembrance of Me,” as often as you break bread and take the cup of fellowship. You know His commandment, “Feed My lambs; feed My sheep.” Remember this—“If you love Me, keep My commandments.”

As for you who do not love my Lord and Master, what can I do but pray for you, that His great love may now overcome your ignorance and aversion—until, having first been loved of Him, you love Him in return? Jesus Christ would have you trust Him! Faith is the first Grace you need. Oh, come and depend upon Him who did hang upon the Cross! When you rest in Him, your soul is saved and, being saved, it shall become your constant joy to love Him who loved you and gave Himself for you! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 21.**

Verses 1-3. *After these things Jesus showed Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias; and on this wise showed He, Himself. There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called the Twin, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee and two other of His disciples. Simon Peter said unto them, I am going fishing. They said to him, We are also going with you. They could not do better. Idleness is the most injurious condition in which a man can be found. A preacher is much better occupied fishing than doing nothing!*

3. *They went forth, and immediately entered into a ship; and that night they caught nothing.* Even Apostles may fish and catch nothing. Do not be discouraged, you who, when you are endeavoring to fish for souls, for many a day catch nothing.

4. *But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus.* Yet He was their old familiar Friend! Was it their unbelief? Let us hope not. Was it that a remarkable change had passed over the Master—that, after His Resurrection from the dead, there was a glory about Him quite unusual, such as they had never seen before, except when they were with Him on the holy mount? Perhaps so.

5. *Then Jesus said unto them, Children, have you any food?* Just the kind of language you would expect from Him—to call them children, and to inquire even about their temporal needs. For evermore the Lord had an eye to the temporal condition of the 12, as well as to their spiritual. "Have you any food?"

5, 6. *They answered Him, No. And He said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and you will find some. They cast, therefore, and now they were not able to draw it in for the multitude of fishes.* Christ knows where fishes are. He knows where you are, then, my Friend, though you do not, perhaps, know where you are yourself! You have got out of your own latitude, mentally and spiritually. You could not describe yourself, but Christ knows every minnow in the brook, and every fish in the lake, and knows where you are. Christ can bring fish where He wants them to be. He brought them into the net. Christ can bring souls into His net tonight. At His will, their will shall sweetly yield itself up, and they shall come into the net!

7. *Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his fisher's coat, (for he was naked). He was in his undress.*

7, 8. *And did cast himself into the sea. And the other disciples came in the little boat, (for they were not far from land, but as it were, two hundred cubits), dragging the net with fish.* It is all very well of Peter to be in such a hurry, but somebody must keep hold of the net. It is not always the most venturesome that is the most practical. We are glad to have some splendidly rash brethren, but we are equally glad that the rest are not quite so rash and are a little more prudent.

9. *As soon, then, as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread.* Christ had provided this. We are to catch fish as if we should have nothing to eat if we did not, but yet we are to depend upon Him as if we never caught a fish ourselves. Do every-

thing as if you had to do everything—but trust in God as if you had to do nothing! The blending of these two will make a wise Believer. “They saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread.”

10. *Jesus said unto them, Bring some of the fish which you have just caught.* “I do not need it in order to entertain you, for I already have fish here. Still, bring it.” Nothing is given in vain. Use it.

11, 12. *Simon Peter went up and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken. And Jesus said unto them, Come and dine. And none of the disciples dared ask Him, Who are You? Knowing that it was the Lord.* Inwardly conscious that it was Christ’s habit to speak as He had spoken. Nobody could have caught His manner, and besides, what secret instinct enabled them to discern their meek and lowly Lord, even through the Glory which surrounded Him?

13, 14. *Jesus then came and took the bread, and gave it to them and likewise the fish. This is now the third time that Jesus showed Himself to His disciples after He was raised from the dead.* Count the visits of Christ. “This is now the third time.” We ought to remember Christ’s visits to us so well and so thoroughly that we could tell how many times He has been with us. “This is now the third time.”

15-17. *So when they had dined, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, Do you love Me more than these? He said unto Him, Yes, Lord, You know that I love You. He said unto him, Feed My lambs. He said to him, again, the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, Do you love Me? He said unto Him, Yes, Lord, You know that I love You. He said unto him, feed My sheep. He said unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, Do you love Me? Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, Do you love Me? And he said to Him, Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You. Jesus said unto him, Feed My sheep.* Nobody can feed Christ’s sheep unless they love Him, and when we love Christ, the most practical way of showing it is by taking care of His lambs—His little ones—and of all those that are His—His sheep. Love will teach us how to do it. Love will sign our commission and ordain us to the work. The Master went on to say—

18. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, When you were young, you girded yourself, and walked where you wished; but when you shall be old, they shall stretch forth your hands, and another shall gird you, and carry you where you would not.* Peter, you will have to be girded with an iron chain and taken off to prison—and taken off to a cross to die!

19. *This spoke He, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said unto him, Follow Me.* That is your life

business. Follow Me, even though you end, as I did, on a cross. Follow Me. I am a Shepherd. You must be a shepherd, too, and as the sheep follow you, so do you follow Me.

20, 21. *Then Peter, turning about, seeing the disciple whom Jesus loved following; who also leaned on His breast at supper, and said, Lord, who is he that betrays You? Peter seeing him, said to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? What about this man?*

22. *Jesus said unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to you? Follow Me.* We ought not to be curious about the future of anybody. We must not be inquiring into what is not revealed! And what the Savior said on this occasion was misunderstood—if the words of Jesus, even when He spoke them—were misunderstood so as to become the foundation of a false tradition, you may judge how little value can ever be put upon tradition in the Church!

23. *Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, he shall not die, but if I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to you?* The Word of God is to be trusted—not tradition—for in the handing of a message from mouth to mouth, it generally varies. It sometimes loses its very essential spirit, and sometimes may be made to say the very reverse of what was said. Stick to the Word of God—and leave the traditions alone!

24, 25. *This is the disciple which testifies of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true. And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written, every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.* Such a full life—so pregnant with meaning—so active, and all its activity so intensely real and spiritual, that to write a life of Christ is an impossibility! And though there have been many very admirable “lives of Christ” in our time, I recommend you to keep to one which is the best of them all—and that one is written by four Inspired authors—the Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are the best life of Christ out of sight! All others must be but mere helps to the understanding of these four.

—Adapted from the *C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

“THE DISCIPLE WHOM JESUS LOVED”

NO. 1539

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, MAY 23, 1880,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“The disciple whom Jesus loved; who also
leaned on His breast at supper.”
John 21:20.*

Our Lord loved all His disciples—“having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.” He said to all the Apostles, “I call you not servants; for the servant knows not what his Lord does: but I have called you Friends; for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you.” And yet within that circle of love there was an innermost place in which the beloved John was favored to dwell. Upon the mountain of the Savior’s love there was a knoll a little higher than the rest of the mountain and there John was made to stand, nearest to his Lord. Let us not, because John was specially loved, think less, even in the slightest degree, of the love which Jesus Christ gave forth to the rest of His chosen. I take it, Brothers and Sisters, that those who display an extraordinary love to one are all the more capable of great affection to many and, therefore, because Jesus loved John most, I have an enhanced estimate of His love to the other disciples.

It is not for a moment to be supposed that any one suffered from His supreme friendship for John. John was raised and they were not lowered, but raised with him. All Believers are the dear objects of the Savior’s choice, the purchase of His blood, His portion and inheritance, the jewels of His crown. If, in John’s case, one is greater in love than another, yet all are eminently great and, therefore, if it should so happen that you dare not hope to reach the height of John and cannot look to be distinguished above others as “the disciple whom Jesus loved,” yet be very thankful to be among the brotherhood who can each say, “He loved me, and gave Himself for me.” If you have not attained unto the first three, be happy to belong to the host of those who follow the Son of David.

It is a matchless privilege and an unspeakable honor to enjoy the love of Jesus, even if you march among the rank and file of the armies of love. Our Lord’s love to each of us has in it heights immeasurable and depths unfathomable. It passes knowledge. Yet would I not utter this word of good cheer to make you remain at ease in a low state of Grace—far rather would I excite you to rise to the highest point of love—for if already the Lord has loved you with an everlasting love, if already He has chosen you and called you and kept you and instructed you and forgiven you and manifested Himself to you, why should you not hope that another step or two may yet be taken and that you may climb to the very highest emi-

nence? Why should you not, before long, be styled like Daniel, a “man greatly beloved”? Or like John, “that disciple whom Jesus loved”?

To be loved as John was, with a special love, is an innermost form of that same Grace with which all Believers have been favored. You must not imagine, when I try to exhibit some of the lovable traits of John’s character, that I would have you infer that the love of Christ went forth towards John in any other way than according to the Law of Grace, for whatever there was that was lovable in John it was *worked in him by the Grace of God*. Under the Law of Works John would have been as surely condemned as any of us and there was nothing legally deserving in John. Grace made him to differ, just as truly as Grace separates the vilest sinner from among the ungodly. Though it is granted that there were certain natural characteristics which made him amiable, yet *God* is the *creator* of all that is estimable in man and it was not till the natural had been, by Grace, transformed and transfigured into the *spiritual* that these things became the subject of the complacency of Christ Jesus.

Brethren, we do not speak of John today as if he were loved because of his works, or stood higher in the heart of Christ on the ground of personal merit, of which John might glory. He, like all the rest of his brethren, was loved of Jesus because Jesus is all love and chose to set His heart upon him. Our Lord exercised a sovereignty of love and chose John for His own name’s sake. And yet, at the same time, there was *created* in John much that was a fit object for the love of Christ. The love of Jesus was shed abroad in John’s heart and thus John himself was made fragrant with delightful odors. It was all of Grace—the supposition of anything else is out of place! I look upon this special form of our Lord’s love as one of those “best gifts” which we are bid earnestly to covet—but most emphatically a *gift* and *not* a wage or a purchasable commodity.

Love is not bought. It never talks of price or claim. Its atmosphere is free favor. “If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would be utterly despised.” The most supreme love is to be sought for, then, after the analogy of Grace, as gracious men seek greater Grace and not as legalists chaffer and bargain for reward and desert. If ever we reach the upper chambers of Love’s palace, Love, herself must lead us up the stairs! Yes, and be to our willing feet the staircase itself. O for the help of the Holy Spirit while we speak upon such a theme!

I. And now, to come nearer to the text, first, dear Friends, LET US CONSIDER THE NAME ITSELF—“The disciple whom Jesus loved.” Our first observation upon it is—it is a name which John gives to himself. I think he repeats it five times. No other writer calls John, “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” John has thus surnamed himself and all the early writers recognize him under that title. Do not suspect him, however, of egotism. It is one of the instances in which egotism is quite out of the question. Naturally, you and I would be rather slow to take such a title, even if we felt it belonged to us because we would be jealous for our reputation and be afraid of being thought presumptuous. But with a sweet na-

iveté which makes him quite forget himself, John took the name which he knew most accurately described him, whether others quibbled at it or not.

So far from there being any pride in it, it just shows the simplicity of his spirit, the openness, the transparency of his character and his complete self-forgetfulness. Knowing it to be the truth, he does not hesitate to say it. He was sure that Jesus loved him better than others and, though he marveled at it more than anyone else, yet he so rejoiced in the fact that he could not help publishing it, whatever the consequences might be. Often there is a deal more pride in not witnessing to what God has done for us than in speaking of it. Everything depends upon the spirit which moves us. I have heard a Brother with the deepest humility speak with full assurance of the Divine love and while some have thought that he was presumptuous, I have felt within myself that his positive testimony was perfectly consistent with the deepest humility and that it was his simple modesty which made the man so utterly forget himself as to run the risk of being thought forward and egotistical.

He was thinking of how he should glorify God and the appearance of glorifying himself did not alarm him, for he had forgotten himself in his Master. I wish we could bear to be laughed at as proud for our Lord's sake. We shall never have John's name till, like John, we dare wear it without a blush. It is a name in which John hides himself. He is very wary of mentioning John. He speaks of “another disciple,” and, “that other disciple,” and then, of “that disciple whom Jesus loved.” These are the names by which he would travel through his own Gospel, “incognito.” We find him out, however, for the disguise is too thin! But still, he intends to conceal himself behind his Savior. He wears his Master's love as a veil, though it turns out to be a veil of light.

He might have called himself, if he had chosen, “that disciple who beheld visions of God,” but he prefers to speak of *love* rather than of prophecy. In the early Church we find writings concerning him in which he is named, “that disciple who leaned on Jesus' bosom,” and this he mentions in our text. He might have been called, “that disciple who wrote one of the gospels,” or, “that disciple who knew more of the very heart of Christ than any other,” but he gives the preference to love. He is not that disciple who *did* anything, but who *received* love from Jesus—and he is not that disciple who loved Jesus, but “whom Jesus loved.” John is the man in the silver mask, but we know the man and his communications and we hear him say, “We have known and believed the love that God has to us. God is love and he that dwells in love dwells in God and God in Him.”

The name before us is a name in which John felt himself most at home. No other title would so well describe him. His own name, “John,” means the “gift of God” and he *was* a precious gift from God the Father to His suffering Son and a great comfort to the Savior during the years of His abode among men. Jesus doubtless counted him to be His Jonathan, His John, His God-gift and He treasured him as such. But John does not so much think of his being of any service to his Lord as of that which His Lord had been to him. He calls himself, “that disciple whom Jesus loved”

because he recognized the delightful obligation which springs out of great love and wished to always be under its royal influence. He looked on Jesus' love as the source and root of everything about himself which was gracious and commendable. If he had any courage, if he had any faithfulness, if he had any depth of knowledge it was because Jesus had *loved* these things into him.

All the sweet flowers which bloomed in the garden of his heart were planted there by the hand of Christ's love, so when he called himself, “that disciple whom Jesus loved,” he felt that he had gone to the root and bottom of the matter and explained the main reason of his being what he was. This endearing name was very precious to him because it evoked the sunniest memories of all his life. Those short years in which he had been with Jesus must have been looked upon by him in his old age with great transport, as the crown and glory of his earthly existence. I do not wonder that he saw Christ, again, in Patmos, after having seen Him once in Palestine as he did see Him—for such sights are very apt to repeat themselves. Such sights, I say, for John's view of his Lord was no ordinary one.

There is at times an echo to sights as well as to sounds and he who saw the Lord with John's eagle eyes—with his deep-seated inner eyes—was the likeliest man in all the world to see Him over again in vision as he did see Him amid the rocks of the Aegean Sea. All the memories of the best part of his life were awakened by the name which he wore and, by its power, he often renewed that intimate communion with the living Christ which had lived on during the horrors of the Crucifixion and lasted to the end of his days. That charming name set all the bells of his soul a-ringing—does it not sound right musical? “The disciple whom Jesus loved.”

That name was a powerful spring of action to him as long as he lived. How could he be false to Him who had loved him so? How could he refuse to bear witness to the Gospel of the Savior who had loved him so? What leagues of journeying could be too long for the feet of that disciple whom Jesus loved? What mobs of cruel men could cow the heart of the disciple whom Jesus loved? What form of banishment or death could dismay him whom Jesus loved? No, in the power of that name John becomes bold and faithful and he serves his loving Friend with all his heart. I say, then, that this title must have been very dear to John because he felt himself most at home in it. The secret springs of his nature were touched by it. He felt his whole self, heart, soul, mind, memory all comprehended within the compass of the words, “The disciple whom Jesus loved.”

It was a name which was never disputed. You do not find anyone complaining of John for thus describing himself. General consent awarded him the title. His brethren did quarrel with him a little when his fond mother, Salome, wanted thrones for her two sons on the right and the left hand of the Messiah, but the love of Jesus to John never caused any ill will among the Brethren, nor did John take any undue advantage of it. I believe that the Apostles tacitly acknowledged that their Lord was perfectly right in His choice. There was something about John which made his brethren love him and, therefore, they did not marvel that their Lord

should make him His most intimate friend. The truly loved one of God generally receives the love of his brethren. Yes, and even the love of the ungodly, after a sort, for when a man's ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.

While David walked with God all Israel loved him and even Saul was forced to cry, “You are more righteous than I.” John was so loving that he gained love everywhere. We may well be eager after this choice blessing since it, alone, of all known treasures, excites no envy among the brethren, but rather makes all the godly rejoice. Inasmuch as saints wish to be greatly loved, themselves, they are glad when they meet with those who have obtained that blessing. If we would smell of myrrh and aloes and cassia, we are glad to meet with those whose garments are already fragrant. You never find John lecturing his brethren, or acting as a lord over God's heritage—but in all gentleness and lowliness he justified the affection which our Lord manifested toward him.

II. Thus much, then, with regard to the name. Secondly, LET US LOOK AT THE CHARACTER WHICH LAY BELOW IT. I can only give a miniature of John. It is quite impossible, in the few moments of a sermon, to draw a full-length portrait and, indeed, I am not artist enough to accomplish it if I should attempt the task! In the character of John we see much that is admirable. First, let us look at his personality as an individual. His was a large and warm heart. Perhaps his main force lies in the intensity of his nature. He is not vehement, but deep and strong. Whatever he did, he did right heartily. He was simple-minded—a man in whom there was no guile. There was no division in his nature. He was one and indivisible in all that he felt or did.

He did not entertain questions. He was not critical. He was not apt to spy out faults in others and, as to difficulties, mental or otherwise, he seems to have been happily without them. Having pondered and come to a conclusion, his whole nature moved in solid phalanx with forceful march. Whichever way he went, he went altogether and right resolutely. Some men go two ways, or they tack about, or they go towards their objective in an indirect manner. But John steams straight forward with the fires blazing and the engine working at full speed. His whole soul was engaged in his Lord's cause, for he was a deep thinker, a silent student and then a forceful actor. He was not impetuous with the haste of Peter, but yet he was determined and thorough-going and all on fire with zeal.

He was exceedingly livid in his beliefs and believed to the utmost what he had learned of his Lord. Read his Epistle through and see how many times he says “we know,” “we know,” “we know.” There are no, “ifs,” about him. He is a deep and strong Believer. His heart gives an unfeigned assent and consent. There was an intense warmth about John. He loved his Lord, he loved his Brethren. He loved with a large heart, for he had a grand nature. He loved constantly and he loved in such a way as to be practically courageous for his Master, for he was a bold man, a true son of thunder. He was ready to go to the front if he was bound to do so, but in a

quiet way and not with a rush and a noise—his is not the dash of a waterfall, but the still flow of a deep river.

Putting all together that we know about his personality, we look upon him as a man who was the reverse of your cold, calculating, slow-moving son of diffidence. You know the sort of persons I mean—very good people in their way, but by no means fascinating or much to be imitated. He was quite the reverse of those dried, juiceless Brethren who have no human nature in them—men who are somewhere about perfect—for they have not life enough to sin. They do no wrong, or rather they do nothing at all. I know a few of those delightful people, sharp critics of others and faultless themselves with this one exception—they are heartless. John was a hearty man—a man of brain, but of soul, too—a soul which went out to the tips of his fingers. He was a man who was permeated with intense but quiet life—in a word, a man to be loved. His life was not that of an ice-plant, but of the red rose. He carried summer in his countenance, energy in his manner, steady force in all his movements. He was like that other John of whom he was once a disciple, “a burning and a shining light.” There was warmth as well as light in him. He was intense, sincere and unselfish by nature and a fullness of Divine Grace came upon him and sanctified these virtues.

Let us now view him in his relation to his Lord. The name he takes to himself is, “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” Jesus loved him as a disciple. What sort of disciples do masters love? You that have ever been teachers of youth know that if teachers had their choice, certain persons would be selected before others. If we teach, we love teachable people! Such was John. He was a man quick to learn. He was not like Thomas who was slow, argumentative, cautious. But having once assured himself that he had a true Teacher, he gave himself right up to Jesus and was willing to receive what He had to reveal. He was a disciple of a very keen eye, seeing into the soul of his Instructor’s teaching. His emblem in the early church was the *eagle*—the eagle which soars, but also the eagle which sees from afar.

John saw the spiritual meaning of types and emblems. He did not stop at the outward symbols, as some of the disciples did, but his penetrating soul read into the depths of the Truth of God. You can see this both in his Gospel and in his Epistles. He is a spiritually-minded man. He stays not in the letter, but he dives beneath the surface. He pierces through the shell and reaches the inner teaching. His first master was John the Baptist and he was so good a disciple that he was the first to leave his teacher! You hint that this did not show that he was a good disciple? Indeed it did, for it was the Baptist’s aim to send his followers to Jesus! The Baptist said, “Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world” and John was so good a follower of the forerunner that he immediately followed the Lord, Himself, to whom the forerunner introduced him.

This he did without a violent jerk—his progress was natural and even. Paul came to Jesus with a great start and twist, when he was put upon the lines on the road to Damascus. But John glided gently to the Baptist

and then from the Baptist to Jesus. He was not obstinate, neither was he weak, but he was *teachable* and so he made steady progress in his learning. Such a disciple is one that a teacher is sure to love and John was, therefore, “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” He was full of faith to accept what he was taught. He believed it and he believed it really and thoroughly. He did not believe, as some people do, with the fingertips of their understanding, but he gripped the Truth of God with both hands, laid it up in his heart and allowed it to flow from that center and saturate his whole being.

He was a Believer in his inmost soul, both when he saw the blood and water at the Cross and the folded grave clothes at the sepulcher—he saw and believed. His faith worked in him a strong and enduring love, for faith works by love. He believed in his Master in a sweetly familiar way, “for there is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear.” Such a trustful, confiding disciple is sure to be loved of his teacher. John had great receptiveness. He drank in what he was taught. He was like Gideon’s fleece, ready to be saturated with the dew of Heaven. His whole nature absorbed the Truth as it is in Jesus. He was not a great talker—I think he was almost a silent disciple. So little did he say that we have only one saying of his recorded in the Gospels. “Why,” says one, “I remember two or three.” Do you remind me that he asked that he might sit on the right hand of Christ? I have not forgotten that request, but I answer that his mother, Salome, spoke on that occasion.

Again, you tell me that at the supper he asked, “Lord, who is it?” Yes, but it was *Peter* who put that question into his mouth. The only utterance that I remember in the Gospel which was altogether John’s is that at the sea of Tiberius, when he said to Peter, “It is the Lord.” This was a very significant little speech—a recognition of his Lord such as the quick eyes of love are sure to make. He who lived nearest to Jesus could best discern Him as He stood upon the shore. “It is the Lord,” is the gladsome cry of love, overjoyed at the sight of its Beloved! It might have served John as his motto—“It is the Lord.” O that we were able amid darkness and tossing to discern the Savior and rejoice in His Presence! “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God”—and such was the beloved disciple!

One great trait in John’s character as a disciple was his intense love for his Teacher. He not only received the Truth of God, but he received the Master Himself. I take it that the leaning of a man’s faults often betrays his heart more than his virtues. It may seem a strange observation to make, but it is true. A true heart may as well be seen in its weakness as in its excellence. What were the weak points about John, as some would say? On one occasion he was intolerant. Certain persons were casting out devils and he forbade them because they followed not with the disciples. Now, that intolerance, mistaken as it was, grew out of love to his Lord! He was afraid that these interlopers might set up as rivals to his Lord and he wanted them to come under the rule of his beloved Jesus.

At another time the Samaritans would not receive them and he asked his Master if he might call down fire from Heaven on them. One does not

commend him, but still it was love to Jesus which made him indignant at their ungenerous conduct to their best Friend. He felt so indignant that men should not entertain the Savior who had come into the world to bless them, that he would even call fire from Heaven—it showed his burning love for Jesus. Even when his mother asked that he and the brother might sit upon thrones at the right hand and the left hand of Christ, it was a deep and thoughtful faith in Jesus which suggested it. His idea of honor and glory was bound up with Jesus! If he gives way to ambition it is an ambition to reign with the despised Galilean. He does not want a throne unless it is at his Lord's side.

Moreover, what faith there was in that request! I am not going to justify it, but I am going to say something to moderate your condemnation. Our Lord was going up to Jerusalem to be spit upon and to be put to death and yet John so thoroughly threw himself into his Lord's career that he would gladly share in the fortune of his great Caesar, assured that it must end in His enthronement. He is content, he says, to be baptized with His baptism and to drink of His cup—he only asks to share with Jesus in all things. As a good writer says, it reminds one of the courage of the Roman who, when Rome was in the hands of the enemy, purchased a house within the walls. John heroically asks for a throne at the side of One who was about to die on the Cross, for he feels sure that He will triumph!

When the cause and kingdom of Christ seemed ready to expire, yet so whole-hearted was John in his faith in God and his love to his beloved Lord that his highest ambition was still to be with Jesus and take shares with Him in all that He would do and be. So, you see, all through John loved his Lord with all his heart and, therefore, Jesus Christ loved him. Or let me turn it the other way—the Lord loved John and, therefore, John loved the Lord Jesus. It is John's own explanation of it—“We love Him because He first loved us.” I must ask you to look at John, once more, as an instructed person. He was a beloved disciple and remained a disciple, but he grew to know more and more and, in that capacity I would say of him that doubtless our Lord Jesus loved him because of the tenderness which was produced by Grace out of his natural warmth.

How tender he was to Peter, after that Apostle's grievous fall, for early in the morning John goes with him to the sepulcher. He is the man who restored the backslider. He was so tender that our Lord did not say to John, “Feed My lambs,” for He knew he would be sure to do it. And He did not even say to him, “Feed My sheep,” as He did to Peter—He knew that John would do so from the instincts of his loving nature. He was a man who, under the tutorship of Christ, grew, moreover, to be very spiritual and very deep. The words he uses in his Epistles are mostly monosyllables, but what mighty meanings they contain! If we may compare one Inspired writer with another, I should say that no other Evangelist is at all comparable to John in depth.

The other evangelists give us Christ's miracles and certain of His sermons, but His profound discourses and His matchless prayer are reserved for that disciple whom Jesus loved. Where the deep things of God are con-

cerned, there is John, with sublime simplicity of utterance, declaring unto us the things which he has tasted and handled. Of all the disciples John was most Christ-like. Like will gravitate to like. Jesus loved John for what He saw of Himself in him—*created by His Grace*. Thus I think you will see that, without supposing John to have possessed any merit, there were points in his personal character, in his character as a disciple and in his character as an educated, spiritual man which justified our Savior in making him the object of His most intimate affection.

III. Very briefly, in the third place, LET US REVIEW THE LIFE WHICH GREW OUT OF THIS EXTRAORDINARY LOVE OF CHRIST. What was the life of John? First, it was a life of intimate communion. John was wherever Christ was. Other disciples are away, but Peter and James and John are present. When all the disciples sit at the table, even Peter is not nearest to the Lord Jesus, but John leans his head upon His bosom. Their communion was very near and dear. Jesus and John were David and Jonathan over again. If you are a man greatly beloved you will live in Jesus, your fellowship will be with Him from day to day.

John's was a life of special instruction. He was taught things which no others knew, for they could not bear them. At the latter end of his life he was favored with visions such as even Paul, himself, though not a whit behind the chief of the Apostles, had never seen. Because of the greatness of his Lord's love to him, He showed him future things and lifted up the veil so that he might see the Kingdom and the Glory. They shall see most who love most. They shall be taught most who most completely give up their hearts to the doctrine. John, therefore, became a man in whose life there was amazing depth. If he did not say much as a rule while his Lord was with him, he was taking it all in for future use. He lived an inner life. He was a son of thunder and could boldly thunder out the Truth of God because, as a thundercloud is charged with electricity, so had he gathered up the mysterious force of his Lord's life, love and truth.

When he did break out, there was a voice like the voice of God in him—a deep, mysterious, overwhelming power of God was about him. What a flash of lightning is the Apocalypse! What awful thunders sleep within the vials and the trumpets! His was a life of Divine power because of the great fire which burned within. His was not the flash of crackling thorns beneath a pot, but the glow of coals in a furnace when the whole mass is molten into a white heat. John is the ruby among the twelve—he shines with a warm brilliance reflecting the love which Jesus lavished on him. And his life was one of special usefulness. He was entrusted with choice commissions involving high honor. The Lord gave him to do a work of the most tender and delicate kind which, I am afraid, He could not commit to some of us.

As the Redeemer hung upon the tree dying, He saw His mother standing in the throng and He did not commit her to Peter, but to John. Peter would have been glad of the commission, I am sure, and so would Thomas and so would James—but the Lord said to John, “Behold your mother!” And to His mother, “Woman, behold your son!” And from that hour that

disciple took her to his own home. So modest, so retiring—I was going to say, so *gentlemanly*—was John that he was the man to take charge of a broken-hearted mother. Said I wrong that he was a true gentleman? Divide the word and surely he was the *gentlest* of *men*. John has a delicate air and considerate manner, necessary to the care of an honored woman. Peter is good, but he is rough. Thomas is kind, but cold. John is tender and affectionate.

When you love Jesus much, He will trust His mother to you—I mean His Church—and the poorest people in it, such as widows and orphans and poor ministers. He will trust them to you because He loves you much. He will not put everybody into that office. Some of His people are very hard and stony of heart and more fit to be tax-collectors than distributors of alms. They would make capital officers in an army, but not nurses in a hospital. If you love Jesus much, you shall have many delicate offices to perform which shall be to you proofs of your Lord's trust in you and renewed tokens of His love. John's life was, moreover, one of extraordinary heavenliness. They call him John the Divine and he was so. His eagle wings bore him aloft into the heavenly places and there he beheld the Glory of the Lord.

Whether in Jerusalem or in Antioch, in Ephesus or in Patmos, his conversation was in Heaven! The Lord's Day found him in the spirit, waiting for Him that comes with clouds—so waiting that He who is the Alpha and Omega hastened to reveal Himself to him. It was the love of his Lord which had thus prepared him for visions of the Glory. Had not that love so enkindled his own love as to hold him faithfully at the Cross all through the agony, he might never have been able to gaze upon the Truth of God. He had lovingly followed Him who had been pointed out to Him as the "Lamb of God" and, therefore, he was made meet to see Him as the Lamb in the midst of the Throne—adored of angels and redeemed saints, whose harps and viols are engrossed with His praise! O that we, too, could be freed from the grossness of earth and borne aloft into the purer atmosphere of spiritual and heavenly things!

IV. We close by saying, very briefly, LET US LEARN LESSONS FOR OURSELVES from that disciple whom Jesus loved. May the Holy Spirit speak them to our inmost hearts. First, I speak to those of you who are still young. If you wish to be "the disciple whom Jesus loved" begin soon. I suppose that John was between 20 and 25 when he was converted. At any rate, he was quite a young man. All the representations of him which have been handed down to us, though I attach no great value to them, yet unite in the fact of his youth. Youthful piety has the most profitable opportunity of becoming eminent piety.

If you begin, soon, to walk with Christ, you will improve your pace and the habit will grow upon you. He who is only made a Christian in the last few years of his life will scarcely reach to the first and highest degree for lack of time and from the hampering influence of old habits. But you who begin soon are planted in good soil with a sunny aspect and should come

to maturity. Soldiers who enlist early under the banner of our David have hope of becoming veterans and attaining to the first three.

Next, if we would be like John in being loved by Christ, let us give our heart's best thoughts to spiritual things. Brothers and Sisters, do not stop in the outward ordinances but plunge into their inner sense. Never allow your soul, on the Lord's Day for instance, to be thankful and happy merely because you have been to the place of worship. Ask yourself, “Did I worship? Did my soul commune with God?” In the use of the two ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, content not yourself with the shell, but seek to get at the kernel of their inner meaning. Rest not unless the Spirit of God, Himself, dwells within you. Remember that the letter kills—it is the spirit that gives life. The Lord Jesus Christ takes no delight in those who are fond of broad phylacteries and multiplied sacraments and holy performances and superstitious observances. The Father seeks those to worship Him who worship Him in spirit and in truth. Be spiritual and you are among those who are likely to be men greatly beloved.

Next to that, cherish a holy warmth. Do not repress your emotions and freeze your souls. You know the class of people who are gifted with refrigerating power. When you shake hands with them, you would think that you had hold of a fish—a chill goes to your very soul! Listen to them sing. No, you cannot hear them! Sit in the next pew and you will never hear the gentle hiss or mutter which they call singing. Out in their shops they could be heard a quarter of a mile off, but if they pray in the Prayer Meeting, you must strain your ears. They do all Christian service as if they were working by the day for a bad master and at scanty wages. But when they get into the world they work by the piece as if for dear life. Such people cannot be affectionate.

They never encourage a young convert, for they are afraid that their weighty commendation might exalt him above measure. A little encouragement would help the struggling youth mightily, but they have none to offer. They calculate and reckon and move prudently and anything like a brave trust in God they set down as rashness and folly. God grant us plenty of rashness, I say, for what men think imprudence is about the grandest thing under Heaven! Enthusiasm is a feeling which these refrigerators do not indulge. Their chant is, “As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen!” Anything like a dash for Christ and a rush for souls they do not understand. Mark this, if you follow such people home, you will find that they have little joy, themselves, and make very little joy for others. They are never quite certain that they are saved and if they are not sure of it we may readily guess that other people are not.

They spend, in anxious thought, the strength which ought to have gone in hearty love. They were born at the north pole and live amid perpetual frost—all the furs of Hudson's Bay could not warm them. About them you see none of the rich tropical flowers which bedeck the heart upon which the Sun of Righteousness shines with perpendicular beams. These chilly mortals have never traversed the sunny regions of heavenly love where the

spices of holy delight load all the air and apples of gold are everywhere within the reach of glowing hearts. The Lord bring us there! Jesus Christ loves warm people! He never shines on an iceberg except to melt it. His own life is so full of love that its holy fire kindles the same flame in others and thus He has fellowship with those whose hearts burn within them.

The fitness for love is love. To enjoy the love of Jesus we must overflow with love. Pray for earnest, eager, intense affection. Lay your hearts among the coals of juniper till they melt and glow. Dear Brothers and Sisters, if you want to be the man or woman that Jesus loves, cultivate strong affection and let your nature be tender and kind. One who is habitually cross and frequently angry cannot walk with God. A person of a quick, hot temper who never tries to check it, or in whom there is a malicious remembrance of injuries, like a fire smoldering amidst the embers, cannot be the companion and friend of Jesus whose spirit is of an opposite character! A pitiful, compassionate, unselfish, generous heart is that which our Lord approves. Forgive your fellow as if you never had anything to forgive. When Brethren injure you, hope that they have made a mistake, or else feel that if they knew you better they would treat you *worse*! Be of such a mind towards them that you will neither give nor take offense. Be willing to lay down, not only your comfort, but even your life for the Brethren! Live in the joy of others, even as saints do in Heaven. Love others so as to forget your own sorrows. So shall you become a man greatly beloved.

Last of all, may the Spirit of God help you to rise to heavenliness. Do not be miserable money-grubbers, or sordid earthworms. Do not be pleasure hunters and novelty seekers. Do not set your affection upon these children's toys which will be so soon broken. Be you no more children, but men of God! Oh to find your joy in Christ, your wealth in Christ, your honor in Christ, your everything in Christ—this is peace. To be in the world but not to be of it. To linger here as if you were an angel sent from Heaven to dwell, for a while, among the sons of men, to tell them of Heaven and point them the way—this is to abide in Christ's love.

To be always ready to fly, to stand on tiptoe waiting for the heavenward call, to expect to hear the trumpet ring out its clarion note, the trumpet of the coming of your Lord—this is to have fellowship with Christ! Sit loose, I pray you, by this world, but get a tighter grip of the world to come—so shall Jesus' love be shed abroad within you. Throw your anchor *upward* into the placid sea of Divine Love and not like the seamen, downward, into a troubled ocean. Anchor yourselves to the eternal Throne and never be divided, even in thought, from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. May it be my privilege and yours, Brothers and Sisters, to lean these heads of ours on Jesus' bosom till the day breaks and the shadows flee away. Amen and Amen.

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FOLLOWING CHRIST

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**A SERMON
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**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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***“What is that to you? You follow Me.”
John 21:22.***

[Other sermons by Mr. Spurgeon on FOLLOWING CHRIST are as follows—#403, Volume 7—
THE BROKEN COLUMN; #1530, Volume 26—FOLLOWING THE RISEN CHRIST;
#2273, Volume 38—FICKLE FOLLOWERS and #2324, Volume 39—
THE FOLLOWERS OF THE LAMB—

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ONLY a moment or two before, our Lord had said to Peter, “Follow Me,” yet He found it necessary to repeat that command from which it is clear that the Lord Jesus, Himself, might be here and might speak to us in the most plain terms and yet His words might not make the impression upon our hearts that we sometimes think they would. Yet even though Jesus Christ Himself should speak to us, we should not feel the full force of His words unless the Spirit of God applied them to our hearts. This reflection may teach us not to indulge in idle regrets that Jesus is not here now in bodily Presence, or to say, “I wish that I had been living on the earth in Christ’s day.” The fact is, if the Holy Spirit shall bless the word that is spoken to you by the humblest Christian alive, it may be quite as useful to your soul as though the Master, Himself, had been here and the Truth of God had fallen upon your ears direct from His own lips!

Peter’s mind seems to have been distracted from the command to follow the Savior by a very simple incident. “Turning about,” it is said, he saw John following—and the sight of his fellow disciple awakened his curiosity and he put to the Master the speculative inquiry as to John’s future, “Lord, and what shall this man do?” To which the Master replied, in the words of my text, “What is that to you? You follow Me.” This teaches us that the presence of even the holiest man may sometimes call us off from following our Master. It is certain that thousands of serious impressions have been lost through idle chit-chat after sermons. The Sabbath’s services lose many of their benefits to us through the common habit of talking on the way home from a place of worship about anything and everything rather than the one subject that ought to engross our minds. Some of the best people in the world may, involuntarily, turn our minds from that line of thought in which the Savior would have them run, so let us constantly pray, “O Lord, keep our eyes, keep our ears, keep our hearts from wandering away from You for, if not, we shall soon forget the sound even of Your own voice and the impressions which may have been made upon us!”

I think we have greater reason to ask the Lord to impress more deeply upon us the Truth of God we have received than to ask Him to give us more Truth, for what we already know might suffice us if we did but know it better. And if we kept in mind the things which we have already heard, we might almost be satisfied even if we heard no more. One sermon a Sunday, really cut into the soul as with the point of a diamond, would be of more real, permanent value to us than two sermons which we hear, but speedily forget because we happen to meet an acquaintance on our way home, or have our thoughts diverted by some other simple means.

Dear Friends, do not let our thoughts be thus diverted at this time, but let us come to the principal point and keep to it. And that point is this—that *the main business of our life is to follow Jesus*. And, secondly, *to effect this, we had better avoid all idle speculations*—and indeed, questions not altogether idle had better be left alone that we may keep to the one main business of our life. *The reasons for doing this* are very clear—and with them I shall close my discourse.

I. First, then, THE MAIN BUSINESS OF OUR LIFE IS TO FOLLOW THE LORD.

I can truly say to every one of you that the main thing you have to do in this world is first to follow Christ until you find Him as your Savior or, in other words, the first thing for you to do is to look to Him, to trust in Him. We live in vain if we do not live unto God and if we do not live by faith in Jesus Christ, the one and only Savior. “Live in vain,” did I say? It were better for you, dear Hearers, and for me, that we had never been born if we should live and die without faith in Jesus Christ! You may neglect your business, you may neglect what you will—but do not neglect your souls. First, *first*, FIRST—beyond and before everything else—must be the matter of your own personal salvation! On board a vessel that is going down, a man may forget his luggage and many precious treasures that he has with him. It is for his life that he is concerned. Even Satan spoke the truth for once when he said, “Skin for skin, yes, all that a man has will he give for his life.” Let it be so with you in the highest sense. Make your soul your first care, for what shall it profit you if you gain the whole world and lose your own soul? So the first thing for you to do is to follow Christ for life, for salvation—looking to Him by faith, in obedience to the Apostolic command, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.”

Procrastination often comes in to cause the solemnities of the Gospel to seem less serious. “There is plenty of time,” we say. “We are quite young as yet and we have many years in which to think of these things.” Where the sere and yellow leaf is beginning to fall, there is something else to put away thoughts of eternity. There is another daughter to be married, so a few more hundreds of pounds must be saved up for her. And then when you have retired to your country house, you will think about “making your peace with God”—as if it were nothing to you that you are “condemned already” because you have “not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God,” and as if it were a matter of no importance to be an enemy of God and to be unsaved for 50 or 60 years

of sin—as if it were a small thing to have the leprosy of sin still eating into your immortal spirits! Why, if there were no Hell, sin would be, to a right-minded man, such a vile thing that he would long to escape from it and dread it as he now dreads the pains of Hell. Oh, that all here had even half such a sense as Christ had of the solemnity of the things of which I am speaking! That would drive us to our knees and we would not dare to go out of this house unsaved—and all through this building we would hear the cry that arose on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?”

Keeping more closely to my text, I have to say that *after we are saved, the main business of our life is still to follow Christ*. When sin is pardoned and the eternal safety of the soul is ensured, the next thing is to seek the purity of the soul and to secure a character that shall be worth having throughout eternity. There is no character which is worth having which is not fashioned according to the Character of Christ. He is absolute perfection! In Him is nothing redundant and from Him nothing is omitted which ought to be there. To be perfect, we must be like Jesus. “Looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith,” we are to conquer this sin and to overcome that passion and, in the power of God’s Spirit, to cultivate this tender Grace and that other bolder virtue! The one thing we are to aim at is to tread in Christ’s footsteps, to do what He did and, as far as He is imitable by us, to do it as He did it and to be as He was in the midst of the sons and daughters of men. If I am a Christian, I am not to be following Calvin, or Arminius, or any other earthly leader—I am to mold my doctrinal opinions, my thoughts, words, character and acts after the model of Christ’s!

The same Law applies to the whole of our life-service. If we would do what we were created to do—if, being trees of God’s planting, we are to bear the fruit He meant us to bear, we must follow Jesus Christ! We are sent into the world, under Him, upon the great errand of seeking the lost—

**“Tis all our business here below
To cry, ‘Behold the Lamb!’”**

—some from the pulpit, but every Christian from some place or other. To each individual Believer, Christ has given a position which nobody else can so well occupy and from that position he can influence some other person or persons whom God will bless through him. I do not believe that any Christian was created merely to keep a shop—he was created to serve God in his trading. Notwithstanding all man’s sin, a man is such a noble work of God that he cannot have been intended merely to measure off yards of silk, or to weigh pounds of sugar, or to sweep street crossings, or to put on crowns, robes and diamonds. There is something grander than that for man to do! The little birds are made to sing God’s praises and I, who am of more value than many sparrows, must be meant to sing God’s praises too! This is especially true concerning us who profess to have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ and to have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit. Our life has an outlook towards the Infinite—there are windows in our life that look towards God. Look out of them, O Christian! With your windows open towards

God, live in the light of His Countenance and seek in all things to please and honor Him! It is your life-work to honor God, to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ, to be the instrument by which God shall illustrate His almighty power—the black foil from which He shall display the brightness of His Grace. You are to be the means of spreading abroad in this world the savor of Christ’s name—but you cannot do this unless you follow Christ.

And, mark you, for each one of us there is a special vocation in which we can follow Christ. I do not believe that all of you would be following Christ if you were to attempt to preach. Even Christ never attempted to do what His Father did not intend Him to do. A man once asked Him to officiate as a lawyer or a judge, but He replied, “Who made Me a judge or a divider over you?” One beauty of Christ’s life was that He kept to His calling and did not go beyond His commission. And you will be wise if you do the same. If you are a servant, you can follow Christ by ministering to the comfort of all who are in the house. If you are a mother, you can follow Christ by training up your children for Him. Every man has his own particular calling and every Christian’s calling should be especially for God. One is called to the foreign mission field—let him go, in God’s name, to the regions beyond—let him not stay at home. Another is called to go from house to house to visit the sick, to care for the poor and so on—Bible-woman, City Missionary, I greet you in Christ’s name and bid you keep to your own work and never run away from it! One is called to teach an infant class and another to care for the lads or the lasses—and all are fitted for the work to which they are called by God. And to each one the Master says, “Follow Me and keep to the work which My Father has given you to do, even as I pleased not Myself by selecting My own work, but did that which My Father had appointed for Me.”

II. Now secondly, IN ORDER TO FOLLOW CHRIST IT WILL BE A WISE THING TO LET A GREAT MANY OTHER THINGS ALONE.

Peter wanted to know about John—“What shall this man do?” But Jesus said, “What is that to you? You follow Me.” From this answer of Christ, we learn that *we are not to be curious as to what God is going to do with other people*. I will tell you what thoughts have been passing through the minds of some of us. One has said, “I am a poor humble believer in Jesus. I have to struggle with poverty and need, yet God graciously helps me and I can tell of many instances of His delivering mercy.” Well, dear Friend, God is greatly glorified by this testimony! But when you go on to ask about those rich people who have everything that heart can wish, “What is God going to do with them?” I can only reply, “What is that to you? Follow you Christ and be not curious about others.” It is equally wrong if a rich man says, “There are those poor people who are converted, but who cannot give much to the cause of God and who need education to enable them to teach others—what will the Lord do with them?” That is nothing to do with you, my Brother. You have to follow the Lord, yourself, and to mind your own business! Someone else says, “There’s such-and-such a man—really, I can’t see any ability in him! He tried to preach the other day and I was glad when

he stopped, for it was very poor talk.” I must confess that I have sometimes felt like that when I have listened to a friend, but I have said to myself, “What is that to me? God knows His own servants better than we do and He knows where to place them, and how to use them to the best advantage.” Possibly, someone says, concerning a fine orator, “A man who blazes away at that rate thinks too much of himself for God to bless him.” But Christ says, “What is that to you? You follow Me.” God has all sorts of stones in His Temple and some of them are of such a strange shape that I am glad the placing of them is not left to me, for I could not do it! I am thankful that God never sent me into the world to make people perfect, but to use them as I find them. And I believe that He also uses them as He finds them and gradually prepares them for higher uses and for the place which He means them to occupy in His Temple above. So do not say, “I am wondering what this man will do and what that man will do, and what others around me will do”—but do what you can for Christ and, as for others—leave them to the Master!

Further, *this rule also applies to the character of others*. How much some people are concerned because a certain man is so purse proud! It seems to be a sort of consolation to them to think how much better they are than he is. Another is very frivolous and they frequently bring his character into their conversation, apparently as a means of showing how superior in sobriety they are. To everyone of that stamp, Christ seems to me to say, “What is that to you? You follow Me,” and then the imperfections of your neighbor will not lie so near to your heart.” I have heard of a minister who, wishing to bring the Truth of God home to the hearts and consciences of his people, said that he should like to pass a Reform Act—that everybody should reform one person and then all would be reformed. He meant that they should all reform *themselves*, but one man said, “The minister is quite right! Everybody is to reform one and I am going home to reform our Mary.” That is often our idea—that we must reform *somebody else*—but if we could bring ourselves to feel that weeding our own garden, watering our own plants and fulfilling our own vocation is what God requires of us, how much better it would be for the entire Church of Christ!

I think the same rule applies, to a large extent, to *remarks concerning the general condition of Christian Churches*. There are some of my Brothers who assure me that these are the most terrible times through which the world has ever passed. They cannot discover any ground for congratulation—everything seems to wear to them a most gloomy aspect. It may be so, yet I think I can see much reason for thankfulness as well as much cause for sorrow and regret. We are constantly told that this is a crisis, but I recollect that when I first came to London, 20 years ago, [1853] I was told that it was a crisis and it seems to have been a crisis every few weeks since! Some people appear to imagine that the future of the universe depends upon a meeting which they propose to hold in a month or so—yet so far God has managed the affairs of the universe without any help from them and He still reigns as universal King and Lord notwithstanding all the efforts of the Pope, the Devil and *Essays*

and Reviews! I have come to the conclusion that instead of trying to set all my Master's servants right at once, my first and most important work is to follow my Lord—and I think, my Brothers, that it will be wise for you to come to the same conclusion!

Suppose a man is set by his master to plow a field? His main business is to go up and down that field until he has plowed it all. But suppose that, instead of doing so, he gets into a comfortable corner under the hedge and tells his fellow plowman that the whole system of farming adopted by his master is a mistake, that this field is being sown with the wrong sort of seed, that his master does not understand the best manure to use and that if he were make me his manager, the whole farm would pay much better that it now does? If his master comes while he is talking like this and asks, "John, what have you been doing?" and he replies, "I have been expounding to William a better plan of farming than you have adopted," his master would probably say to him, "I shall have to discharge you unless you give up these speculations. Get on with your plowing at once and leave the management of the farm to me." And I would say that to many Christians—Get on with your plowing! Get to your own proper work! Teach that class in the Sunday school. Speak to sinners about Christ whenever you can and try to win them for Him—but leave those greater and deeper things to your Master. Go on following Him with all your heart and serving Him with all your might. He has His special servants whom He calls to great works of reform, those whom He uses as His speaking trumpets to proclaim the Truth upon the solemn matters with which the most of us have not so much to do.

The same rule applies to many theological questions. For instance, the puzzling problem concerning the origin of evil. I am not so much troubled about how evil came into the world as about helping to get it out! Practical common-sense seems to say, "If there is a thief in the house, let us catch him, or else get him out. And after that we will try to find out how he got in." Our Lord Jesus Christ did not come into the world to tell us how sin was brought here, but He came to show us the only way in which sin can be taken out of the world—and that is by the door which He opened in His own side. It is by His death that sin is to be expelled from the earth!

Then there is that great and weighty question concerning the relation between Divine Sovereignty and human responsibility. You may go to one place of worship and you will hear about very little except Divine Sovereignty. And you may go to another place and you will hear about little except human responsibility. Or you may have heard me preach about both Truths of God [See Sermon #77, Volume 2—DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY; #194, Volume 4—HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY and #207, Volume 4—SOVEREIGN GRACE AND MAN'S RESPONSIBILITY—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] without any attempt to "reconcile" them, as I believe that they have never been at enmity against one another and, therefore, there is no need for any reconciliation! It has been a great temptation to many good men to get to fighting about these Truths when they would have been better employed in preaching the Atoning Sacrifice of Christ. I believe that before the foundation of the world, God chose in Christ all those whom He will eternally save. And I equally believe that

whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be eternally saved, that salvation is all of Grace and damnation is all of man's sin—that God will have the glory of every soul that is saved—and that every lost soul will be responsible for its own ruin.

I think my text also applies to those prophetic studies in which so many seem to lose their way. I am not much encouraged to follow their example when I see how the students of prophecy denounce each other and disprove each other's theories. There are some prophetic Truths that ought to be constantly preached, as for instance that the Lord will surely come again and that there will be a Final Judgment when the righteous shall have the full glories of Heaven, and the wicked shall know the woes of Hell. But as to the dates of the various events foretold in the prophecies that are still unfulfilled, I think I have something better to do than to puzzle my brains over them. "Oh!" say some, "but we now have the right theory." So others thought 20 years ago! But it did not prove to be right, nor did the theory that was held a hundred years ago, or 200 years ago, or even more! Yet men go on building up their card house of speculation and Time comes and pushes it all over with his finger! I advise you to study Matthew, Mark, Luke and John—and to preach the crucified Savior of which the Gospels and Epistles will tell you! And when you get to the Revelation, keep it in its proper place and ask the Holy Spirit to teach you the meaning of its mysteries. May God save this generation from the follies of some of the generations that have preceded it—and may we be most of all concerned about being born-again, about faith in Jesus, about preaching His Gospel and following Him all the days of our life!

III. Now, lastly, THERE ARE MANY REASONS WHY WE SHOULD CONFINE OUR LIFE-WORK TO THE FOLLOWING OF CHRIST. And those reasons are these.

First, *our powers are limited*. Mine are, I know, and I should like to use what powers I have in the work of following Christ in preaching the Gospel and seeking to bring others to follow Him.

Next, *our time is limited*. We may all of us live but a very short time. And at the longest it will be but a brief life. I have heard of a minister who used to say that he would be thankful, in his last hours, that he had been enabled, by God's Grace, to spend the greater part of his time in inviting sinners to the Savior. And I should like to live—and I should like you, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, to live in such a way that when we come to die, we may be able to say, "There, that is the kind of life I would like to have lived, now that I am at the end of it." Suppose anyone should live to fight for the Baptist denomination? When he dies, men would say, "Well, he was a thorough Baptist and he fought well for his denomination." But that would be a poor wreath to lay on his coffin! Would you care to have a long Latin inscription on your tombstone recording the fact that you were always hammering away at some important Doctrine? Or would you wish to have it said, "There lies a man who charmed a few Christian people with the deep spirituality of his teaching, but that was all he did"?

I covet and I think I am right in doing so, the honor of having it said of me, "That man lived to snatch sinners like brands from the burning." I hope some of you will have it said when you are gone, "That woman lived to bring her children to Christ. That girl lived to talk to those she met with about the dear Savior who had been so precious to her that she wished all others to enjoy the same blessing." Oh, that each one of us might live to glorify God! To be like an arrow shot from Christ's bow by His own pierced hand! To feel an impetus given to us to bear us right on to the center of the target of the Glory of God, nothing turning us aside, either to be thought good, or to be thought great, or to be thought learned, or to desire to gain honor or esteem among our fellow men—but just to glorify God by the conversion of sinners through the Holy Spirit's blessing resting upon our labors!

Having but little strength, it is best for us to use it all in one direction. Some men know too much to be powerful for anything. They are like water that is spread over the meadows and not like the stream that runs along in a narrow channel and, therefore, concentrates its energy and renders real service to mankind. "This one thing I do," is a good motto for any man, if he does that one thing well. And the one thing that I will seek to do shall be to glorify God by following Jesus and doing the work He has given me to do! For, my Brothers and Sisters, suppose that you and I should make out the mystery of predestination? Suppose we should become adepts at prophecy? Suppose we should become exceedingly learned in a thousand subjects and yet should go down to our graves without having ever glorified God? We should find no apology for our neglect in all that we had done! Nobody will be lost, as far as I know, through my getting a wrong theory of prophecy, but thousands may be saved if I know the Truth concerning Christ and Him Crucified and preach Him with all my might! I do not know that I shall love the Savior any the less if I make a mistake about some of the great mysteries of the Kingdom, but I do know that if I give myself up wholly to His service and am the means of bringing others to do the same, I shall have no regrets compared with those I should have felt if I had neglected this all-important matter. I charge all of you, men and women, in these evil days to keep close to Jesus! Follow Him with the utmost care, reverence and love. Follow Him with intense ardor and with all your heart, soul and strength—and make that the one thing for which you live! Do not let anything divert you from the straight path of obedience to your Lord, for to that you are called above everything else! If men come to you talking about mental culture and modern thought, stand firm to this—that you will follow Christ wherever He leads you!

I wonder what God would have each of us here do? You may think I am falling into Peter's error if I press this point upon you. I wonder what there is for us to do as a Church? Do you think, dear Friends, that we are doing all that we ought to do for this neighborhood? We have heard about what our missionaries have been doing in foreign lands and most of us have something to do with that. But I think the principal point for us is—What is to be done in Newington? What is to be done for Christ all around this region? You tract-distributors, are you earnestly attending to

your work? You Sunday school teachers, are you faithfully doing your work for God? I will not bid you forget the foreign field, but still, our first concern must be our own class, our own immediate neighborhood. Many of you have come from different parts of London—what are you doing for the district where you live? Every Christian should first seek the good of those nearest to his own door. Some of you have come from the country—what are you doing in your own village? You say that you have been hearing a man of God preach the Truth. That is quite right, but is that working for God? There is a young man over there who professes to be a follower of Christ and who often speaks at the debating club. Do you, My Friend, ever preach in the street, or teach in the Sunday school? Then I am ashamed of you! Or rather, are you not ashamed of yourself? There is a man over there who is making money. I do not say that he is doing wrong, but My Friend, have you ever consecrated to God the part which belongs to Him? If you keep it for yourself, it will canker all the rest!

I might say to someone here, “You ought to be taking a Bible class for young women.” I might say to others, “You ought to be teaching in the Sunday school. You come here twice on the Lord’s day, but you have no business to come here twice—you ought, once at *least*, to go to work for Christ.” I am pleased with some whose consciences prick them so that they say, “Dear Pastor, do not imagine that we are forsaking you! We would be glad to be here, but we have been down at the lodging-houses, or down in Golden Lane, or over at Bethnal Green.” That is right and I am glad when I see somebody else in their seats! With four or five thousand members in the Church, if they all come here at each service, where are our converts to come from? Am I to cast the Gospel net into the midst of the fish that are already caught? If you stay away to let a sinner come here in your place and if you are, yourself, seeking to bring sinners to Christ, you are doing two good things! I want everyone of you to be living to do good to your fellow men and seeking to save souls for the Glory of God! The enemies of the faith are very busy and very earnest—and they seem to use up all their material. The moment a man gets into the Church of Rome, there is sure to be something found for him to do and I want to see all of you used to the utmost of your power. You are free men and women and, therefore, not to be controlled by me. I do not prescribe what you are to do, but cannot you, as independent men and women, obey the sacred dictates of the Spirit of God and each of you drop into your proper place?

Give up all speculating, I beseech you—give up reading books merely for the sake of curiosity, and, in God’s name, get to work for Him! The graves are filling, our cemeteries are filling, and Hell is filling too! Meanwhile, the dupes of Satan are compassing sea and land to do all the mischief that they can. If you really are what you say you are, the servant of Him who wept over Jerusalem—if you are bought with the blood He shed on Calvary’s Cross—I charge you to consecrate yourself, this very hour, to that form of Christian work to which your Master calls you and follow Him through evil report and good report! Follow Him in

the path of duty and let nothing turn you aside from your life-work of glorifying God! May God bless you all, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 21.**

Verse 1. *After these things Jesus showed Himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and on this wise showed He Himself.* Jesus loved to show Himself to His people. Of old, His delights were with the sons of men. So now that He had risen from the dead, He was not ashamed to visit His brethren and He did not disdain to make Himself known to them—and He will still show Himself to us after a spiritual fashion, if we sincerely desire to see Him.

2. *There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of His disciples.* As John was the writer of this record, he did not put his own name there, but merely mentioned “the sons of Zebedee.”

3. *Simon Peter said unto them, I am going fishing. They said unto him, We will also go with you.* Men who are in a right state of heart cannot willingly be idle. So, if these Apostles cannot preach for a time, they will go back to their old employment and seek to catch fish.

3. *They went forth and immediately entered into a boat and that night they caught nothing.* Brothers and Sisters, without Christ's Presence, that is what always happens—“they caught nothing.” But notice what the next verse says.

4. *But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus.* We must remember that a great change had taken place in Him and that the disciples were at some distance from the shore. They saw a person standing there, but they were not sure who it was.

5. *Then Jesus said unto them, Children, have you any food?* This is not an exact translation of our Savior's words. He might too readily have revealed His identity if He had spoken like that. His question was more like a common fisherman's salutation, “Lads, have you any food?”

5. *They answered Him, No.* Jesus likes us to admit that we do not possess anything of our own before He gives us the blessing He is waiting to bestow. He lets us see that the table is bare before He loads it with His bounty so that He may have all the praise and glory for what He gives us.

6. *And He said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you shall find some. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.* This is another proof of the difference between Christ's Presence and Christ's absence.

7. *Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved (again John does not mention his own name) said to Peter, It is the Lord.* “It is only He who could spy out the fish and only He who could fill the net with them. It is just His way of acting. ‘It is the Lord.’” The eyes of true love are very quick. Peter was not the first to recognize Jesus—John was—for He loved Him most.

7. *Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment (for he had taken it off) and did cast himself into the sea. He had such reverence for his Master that he would not appear before Him without a sufficient covering, yet he was in a hurry to get to Him. Peter always was in a hurry—yet he was grandly impetuous as a rule. I wish that some “slowpokes” had a little of his pace!*

8, 9. *And the other disciples came in the little boat, (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits) dragging the net with fishes. As soon as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there and fish laid thereon, and bread. How that fire must have reminded Peter of his denial of his Lord! He saw his Master by the light of the charcoal fire—and that is how he saw Him on the night when he denied Him.*

10, 11. *Jesus said unto them, Bring of the fish which you have now caught. Simon Peter went up and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty-three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken. On the previous occasion when Peter’s net was miraculously filled by Christ, we read that the net broke. That was Peter’s own net, but this time I suppose it was not Peter’s, but one that he had borrowed and probably he had no time to mend it, so the Master took care that it should not break. He always has His own ways of working—and they always fit the circumstances of the case and show His thoughtful care of His people.*

12. *Jesus said unto them, Come and dine. The Revised Version is more correct—“Come and break your fast”—“Come and have your breakfast.”* [See Sermon #2072, Volume 35—BREAKFAST WITH JESUS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

12-15. *And none of the disciples dared ask Him, Who are You? knowing that it was the Lord. Jesus then came and took the bread and gave it to them, and likewise the fish. This is now the third time that Jesus showed Himself to His disciples, after that He was risen from the dead. So when they had dined. When they had broken their fast—but not until then, for Christ does not talk to men when their hunger might make them inattentive.*

15. *Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, Do you love Me more than these? He had talked as if he did—“Although all shall be offended, yet will not I.”*

15. *He said unto Him, Yes, Lord; You know that I love You. He was wise in not measuring his love in comparison with that of his fellow disciples, or in speaking of the quantity of it, but he affirmed that even Christ knew that he did really love Him.*

15-17. *He said unto him, Feed My lambs. He said to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, Do you love Me? He said unto Him, Yes, Lord; You know that I love You. He said unto Him, Feed My sheep. He said unto Him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, Do you love Me? Here is a lesson for all who would be pastors of Christ’s flock. The first necessity of a true pastor is love to Christ. The second necessity of a true pastor is love to Christ. And the third necessity of a true pastor is love to Christ. A man who does not love the Great Shepherd cannot properly feed either His sheep or lambs. If his own heart is not right towards the Divine*

Owner of the sheep, he cannot be a true under-shepherd to Christ's flock.

17-19. *Peter was grieved because He said unto him the third time, Do you love Me? And he said unto Him, Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You. Jesus said unto him, Feed My sheep. Verily, verily, I say unto you, When you were young, you gird yourself, and walked where you would: but when you shall be old, you shall stretch forth your hands, and another shall gird you, and carry you where you would not. This spoke He, signifying by what death he should glorify God. Peter was to stretch out his hands and be nailed to a cross as his Lord was.*

19. *And when He had spoken this, He said unto him, Follow Me. "That is to be your rule, whether you feed My sheep or lambs, or whether you stretch out your hands upon a cross and die as a martyr—"Follow Me."* That is also the rule for all of us who love the Lord. O Lord, help us to obey it!

20-25. *Then Peter, turning about, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on His breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrays You? Peter seeing him, said to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus said unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to you? You follow Me. Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, he shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to you? This is the disciple which testifies of these things, and wrote these things. And we know that His testimony is true. And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.*

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

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